

Buddy Line

April, 2006

NCRD To Explore Thailand and Myanmar in 2007 Liveaboard Adventure

by David Zippin

Photos used with permission from Fantasea Divers and Siam Dive 'n' Sail

Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD) is sponsoring an exciting dive trip to Thailand and Myanmar from March 23 to April 2, 2007. Sixteen lucky NCRD divers will spend 9 days and 10 nights on the luxurious and highly-rated *Ocean Rover* liveaboard, diving in the exotic Andaman Sea.

Phuket, Thailand, the home port for this trip, is the gateway to some of the world's most varied and amazing diving in the Andaman Sea on the west coast of Thailand and Myanmar (aka Burma). We'll be visiting legendary dive sites in the Similan Islands, the Burma Banks, and the Mergui Archipelago.

The Similan Islands, a national park protected under Thai laws, are blanketed in lush tropical jungle and ringed by some of the most exquisite beaches in the country. Among the Similans' top dive sites are East of Eden, home to schools of sweepers densely packed in coral crevices, and The Hideaway, where lionfish and butterflyfish swim along high-profile coral heads. Perhaps the most iconic dive attraction in all the Andaman Sea is Richelieu Rock in the Surin Islands, due north of the Similans. Richelieu is just a speck on the map, too far offshore for day boats. But for divers on our liveaboard, the reward is visibility that can be in excess of 120 feet and stunning biodiversity. Along Richelieu's eastern pinnacle, we expect to see marine life in all shapes and

sizes, from enormous Malabar grouper to the smallest creatures, such as tiger-tail seahorses and ghost pipefish.





The Mergui Archipelago of Myanmar, similar in size to the Bahamas, covers 14,000 square miles and includes about 800 islands, many uninhabited. Wild elephants and tigers are said to roam the larger, more remote islands. While we'll likely run across other dive boats in the Similans, in Mergui there's a sense of stumbling into an untouched marine wilderness. Diving highlights include juvenile ribbon eels, seahorses, and both fimbriated and jeweled morays, often occupying the same hole. Sites may swarm with cuttlefish, black-blotched morays and lionfish. Big-fish highlights in Myanmar include silvertip sharks, bull sharks, gray reef sharks, big nurse sharks, mobula rays, great topside wildlife and rainforest. In short, be ready for anything! This is one of the last pristine diving areas in the world.

Water temperature in the Andaman Sea averages around 27°C (about 80°F). Sometimes thermoclines occur. Repeated diving in this temperature probably requires a 3mm or 5mm full wetsuit or shorty for most people. With the 9-day trip, we expect to get in 34-38 dives, averaging 4 per day.

This is not a trip for beginning divers due to the sometimes strong and often unpredictable currents. NCRD recommends this trip for advanced beginner, intermediate, or advanced divers. If you expect to have less than 40 dives by the trip date, or you have not been diving in several years (and won't by trip time), please contact the trip organizer prior to sending your deposit to discuss whether this trip is right for you.



The Boat

The *Ocean Rover* was built in 2000 as a dive boat. Liveaboard guests consistently write rave reviews of

(continued on page 4)

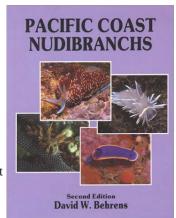
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Pacific Coast Nudibranchs Revisited

by Timothy P. Shannon, Esq.

I first encountered Behrens' book, <u>Pacific Coast Nudibranchs</u>, about 15 years ago when I was just certified and awestruck by our upclose and personal contacts with the marine life under the sea. An NCRD diver, **Jackie Lee**, took me on several excursions in the waters off Carmel. Conditions were unbearably surgy, all the dives akin to roller-coaster rides without re-

straints to hold you down, and I could not understand why Jackie insisted on continuing these exercises in endurance. But, she kept pointing out amazingly colorful and strangely



shaped creatures called nudibranchs. I was then introduced to Behrens' book as a guide to this diverse genus. I still search for these every time I get in the water, and each discovery never fails to mesmerize.

Pacific Coast Nudibranchs: A Guide to the Opisthobranchs Alaska to Baja California, by David W. Behrens, 2nd Edition, 1991, is published through Sea Challengers of Monterey, California. Dave Behrens has been studying nudibranchs and sea slugs since the 1960's. He is a recognized authority on the subject, having published over 35 articles on marine ecology and taxonomy. He has been a biologist for Pacific Gas and Electric since 1974 and is a Research Associate with California Academy of Sciences.

This field guide is a small paperback book that fits easily into a backpack or dive gear bag at 113 pages. It's fragile, though; when I first opened the book, the binding came apart and the pages fell out across my desk, a possible concern if using the book at a dive site. The paper stock is thick and slightly water resistant, though not laminated.

The book is divided into three sections: Introduction, Description (Order and Species), and Bibliography, plus an Index. The introduction presents a detailed overview of the species, including illustrations of sensory, respiratory, and reproductive organs. Theories

on feeding, coloration, camouflage, and reproduction are provided in great detail. Observations of the species' behaviors and interactions with the marine ecosystem are described, as are environmental variations pertinent to each species. Nudibranchs are the most familiar of the five orders of opisthobranchs presented.

The Order Descriptions detail the traits of the five orders: Cephalaspidea, Anaspididea, Notaspidea, Sacoglossa, and Nudibranchia with its five suborders: Doridacea, Dendronotacea, Arminacea, and Aeolidacea.

The Species Descriptions section is the heart of the Behrens' field guide. This section covers nomenclature and identification of each order, suborder, and family of the species. An amazingly stunning and colorful photograph of each species accompanies its detailed description, which includes its name, identification, radula, range, size, natural history, and etymology, as well as its date of discovery and who discovered it. This info is exceptionally helpful when identifying animals discovered during a dive. The diver can match what was seen underwater with the photograph and then read the description. The images and narratives specify the environment in which a species can be found and where that environment is located. Though a scientific treatise, the book is written in plain English and is easily readable. The bibliography provides sources for supplemental material on the subject. The index helps to confirm and cross-reference findings.

I recommend this book to anyone fascinated with nudibranchs, as the author intended its use for the general public. I now bring it with me again on all my diving excursions. I give this book a rating of Four and One-Half Dolphins. The photographs alone are worth the purchase price (retail, \$26).

Northern California Rainbow Divers,

a California non-profit mutual benefit corporation

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CLUB POLICIES

Board meetings are held once a month and are open to any member in good standing. If interested in attending, please contact any of the Board members listed above for location.

Membership dues are \$35/year, \$55/year for domestic partners at the same address, and \$20/year for a newsletter-only subscription to addresses >150 miles from the SF Bay area.

Advertising is available for \$7/month to club members for a business card-size ad, or for \$10/month for non-club members. If you are interested in advertising, please contact the editor. NCRD does not warrant, recommend or guarantee the products or services contained in advertisements in this newsletter.

Unless otherwise noted, all monies paid for club-sponsored events are non-refundable.

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Thailand Diving To Be Featured at April Club Meeting by Peg Stone

Date: Thursday, April 20, 2006

Time: 7pm schmoozing; 7:30pm meeting begins Location: LGBT Center, 1800 Market Street, San Francisco

Another warm-water fantasy come true: Rainbow Divers is going to Thailand and Myanmar on the *Ocean Rover* for ten days in March/April of 2007. Come see what the fuss is all about and decide whether you can stand to miss this great adventure to the Andaman Sea, Similan Sea, Burma Banks, and the Mergui Archipelago.

Fabulous photographer **Jim McDermott** will show us images of Thailand diving and the incredible creatures to be found in the clear waters on the far side of the world. **David Zippin**, the Rainbow Divers coordinator for this 2007 trip, will be on hand to answer questions.

SCUBA Show 2006

by Dale Sheckler

The 19th annual SCUBA Show, the largest annual dive expo in the western U.S., will take place on June 24-25 at the Long Beach Convention Center in Long Beach, California. The show will consist of 57,000 square feet featuring the latest gear, exotic and popular dive travel destinations (many offering show discounts), dive shops, manufacturers, and diving experts. Several exhibitors also offer free drawings for valuable prizes.

Additional activities at the show include a demo and trial tank for trying scuba for the first time or trying out the latest revolutionary equipment. The continuous underwater film festival will return bigger than ever, featuring premier films on a mega-screen, along with seminars by top diving experts, door prizes and a Saturday night party.

Exhibit hall hours are Saturday 10am to 6pm and on Sunday from 10am to 5pm. Admission is \$9 and includes admission to the exhibit hall and film festival (seminars are an additional charge). Discount coupons are available from California dive stores, California dive charter boats and California dive clubs.

For more information on *SCUBA Show 2006*, call (310) 792-2333 or visit the website online at URL www.saintbrendan.com.

February Dive Photo Contest Winner!

In February, **David Zippin** was diving off Maui when he spotted this Hawaiian cleaner wrasse doing its job on an orangeband surgeonfish. A very lucky shot, taken with a Canon PowerShot A620 in a Canon housing with a Sea & Sea YS-25 strobe. For this winning image, David receives a \$10 credit toward any NCRD event of his choice.

The deadline for submitting March entries is April 5; complete details are available on the NCRD website at www.rainbowdivers.org/photocontest.php

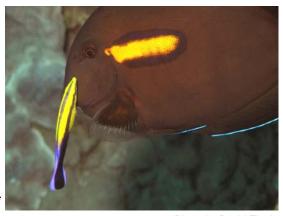


Photo by David Zippin

DFL Funds Distributed to Five Local Charities

by Kelly Thiemann

On a dark and stormy night, representatives from eight non-profit organizations made presentations to NCRD in hopes of securing some portion of the club's record-high 2005 DFL proceeds of \$18,100. Five of these were awarded funds for health-related programs in the SF Bay Area, ranging from medical equipment to stipends for peer educators.

Three organizations did not receive awards yet deserve recognition for their work in the community. The Stop AIDS Project requests funding for its mobile outreach program. The Metropolitan Community Foundation needs support for Friday night hot meals in the Castro and Mission Districts in San Francisco. The AIDS Emergency Fund and Breast Cancer Emergency Fund provide emergency relief of \$500-\$600 to people for rent, food, and utilities. Please consider giving tax-deductible donations to these worthy groups.

Thanks to all who recommended the charities and braved the rain to attend the presentations and make the hard decisions.

2005 DFL Award Recipients

Healing Waters \$5,000	For scholarships to 15 to 24 people with HIV and AIDS for recreation trips involving water (white- water rafting and sea kayaking)	
Lyon-Martin Clinic \$5,000	For subsidies to 10 people for medical treatment	
Gay Men's Health Collective of the \$3,000 Berkeley Free Clinic	For equipment to conduct STD training	
Asian and Pacific Islander Wellness \$3,600 Center	For six stipends of \$600 each for peer educators	
Magnet \$1,500	For partial payment for a new server for client computer records.	

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Thailand Liveaboard ...

(continued from page 1)

the boat's comfort and crew's high level of service and good food. The boat has 8 comfortable cabins, each with A/C, in-room toilet and shower. Six of the 8 rooms have a double bed and single bunk on top. Two rooms have twin bunks.

The boat layout is perfect for diving. Two inflatable skiffs operate at all times so everyone can dive at once. The dive deck is spacious with lots of storage space. The boat operator is Fantasea Divers, in business since 1979. In 1986, they became Phuket's first 5-Star PADI Dive Center, offering a complete program of diving courses, day trips and liveaboard cruises, and in 1997, became the first company to be officially licensed by the Burmese Ministry of Tourism for cruises in the Mergui Archipelago.

The Price

Because NCRD has chartered the entire boat, we were able to secure a substantial discount of 15% off the retail price that we are passing on to you. A 25% minimum deposit will hold your reservation. We are keeping the price low for everyone, so there is no discount for non-divers. The cost is \$2,635, and includes a free NCRD membership; NCRD members pay \$2,600. The price includes unlimited diving, accommodations, snacks, all meals, soft drinks, tanks and weights/belts, and airport and hotel transfers.

Not included are port & park fees of \$150, Nitrox fills, dive equipment rental, alcoholic beverages, tips, hotels, or airfare to/from Phuket, Thailand. Proof of medical evacuation insurance and proof of dive injury insurance is required for all passengers. Tips for the dive crew (optional, typically \$5-15/day) are not included.

This will be an exciting trip to start off 2007. I hope you can join us on this fabulous boat for some fabulous diving! To sign up, visit the club website online at http://www.rainbowdivers.org and click on the link to the Thailand trip. If you have any questions, please contact me at thailand@rainbowdivers.org.

Nudi's Galore!

Text and Photos by Maureen McEvoy

Ahhhh, nudibranchs . . . where do I begin? My love, fascination, appreciation and obsession with nudibranchs (pronounced nuda - branks) and more accurately opisthobranchs, the wider, more inclusive category, began 25 years ago in a tide pool in Pacific Grove. I wasn't a diver then and had never thought about diving or marine life when I accidentally stumbled across a tide pool one day. The first encounter I had with our delicate little friends was when an elusive flash of blue/orange/red color appeared in a limp cluster of green eel grass at low tide. I had the good fortune to be with a biologist acquaintance, and I yelled over to her to come quick. It was the strangest looking bug, slug, critter (I didn't know) that I had ever seen. And oh so beautiful! It was my first Hermissenda crassicornis. I was hooked from that moment on.

I set out that day to find out everything I could on intertidal life, nudibranchs and eventually, all things marine. When I started diving in 1987, my obsession knew no boundaries. I read and researched (pre-internet, mind you) everything I could and started to build my library. And still, hundreds of hours and dozens of books later, I felt I was only beginning to understand our wonderful little sea slugs.

Nudibranchs, the ones we most often see, are basically shell-less snails. Nudibranch translates to "exposed gill", describing the gill plume we often see on the top, posterior end of the animal. They belong to the phylum Mollusca

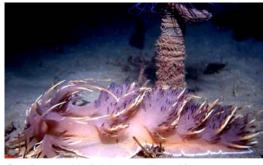
and as molluscs, have had a shell somewhere sometime in their development but have evolved out of it as adults. The species we most often see in Monterey fall into 3 basic groups or suborders: Doridna (Dorids), Aeolidina (Aeolids), and Dendronotidae (genus Dendronotus most often). Each of these have

very distinct characteristics, including eating habits, defense mechanisms, internal organs, external organs and other factors that make them very unique from one another.



Hermissenda crassicornis

An interesting fact about nudibranchs is that they are all hermaphrodites. This means they all have complete, functioning, male and female reproductive organs. This opens up their dating possibilities hugely. For example, all a Hermissenda has to do to mate is find any other Hermissenda, sidle up along side (right side to right side), and copulate. No dinner, flowers, phone calls –



Dendronotus iris (rainbow nudibranch)

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Dorids mating



Dorid eggs

just find someone like yourself (another plus) and go for it. There are some rare instances of "courting" behavior, but this usually entails nothing more than some bristling of the cerata, a little biting and some posturing (no comment!). Once two nudibranchs successfully copulate, fertilized eggs can be deposited by both critters shortly thereafter.

Within a month to 60 days, the eggs will have hatched, and the next generation of nudibranchs will be out in the open and fending for themselves.

One of my favorite spots on the planet for "branching" (looking for nudibranchs), is none other than Breakwater in Monterey. I know my more illustrious and better traveled diver buds might argue with me, but I personally have never seen more diversity in nudibranchs anywhere else than in our own Monterey. A great dive for nudies is along the big pipe and out to the metridium fields at Breakwater. Along the way, you pass through "groves" of Pachycerianthus fimbriatus (tube anemones), and this is where you should keep your eyes open for beautiful and bountiful Dendronotus iris (rainbow nudibranch). Dendronotus can be seen in and amongst



Dendronotus iris, red variation

the anemones doing what nudibranchs do: mating, laying eggs, eating and looking for other Dendronotus.

The Dendronotus can grow up to 6" in size and come in a couple color variations ranging from ivory to a deep, dark red. This nudibranch can be seen not only eating the Pachycerianthus but also having sex on their stalk and then laying



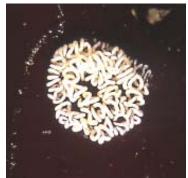
Dendronotus eggs on Pachycerianthus

their egg masses on them as well — a one-stop Dendronotus service center.

Another way to spot nudibranchs is to look for their eggs. Each nudibranch species lays a unique type of egg mass. Dendronotus eggs look like spaghetti strung all over the tube anemones. A Hermissenda might lay its delicate little egg spiral, often the size of a dime, on a flat piece of red algae. Dorid eggs are usually the color of the "parent" – yellow, for example. These are good clues that a nudibranch is somewhere nearby.

Obviously I could go on and on about nudibranchs (and you're thinking, "she already has"), but I'll stop

here. I'll follow up with other fascinating articles on nudibranch cerata, rhinophores, gill plumes, etc., but I don't want to get you too worked up all in one article. Let it suffice to say, these little critters are worth the price of admission when it



Hermissenda eggs

comes to diving, and I would love to enlighten anyone who's interested with a personal tour of my favorite "branching" sites.



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February Fun and March Madness with NCRD

A Photo Tour by Ralph Wolf and Maureen McEvoy









Despite occasional winds and winter chill, February and March brought good times to Northern California Rainbow Divers. Dr. Steven Webster (top left), co-founder of the world-class Monterey Bay Aquarium, leads a motley band of NCRD'rs on a coveted behind-the-scenes tour. Here, he explains how the aquarium keeps its machinery running. (Top right) Rainbow Divers discover the secret to growing jellyfish in captivity inside the invertebrate lab. (Second down on left) Peg Stone inspects the aquarium's custom-built "Finebago" for transporting large animals.

The magnificent geological rock formations of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve set the scene for the club's tide pooling excursion in Moss Beach. Tidepools (third down on left) are extensive at low tide. Maureen McEvoy (right) demonstrates an up-close and personal technique for locating and identifying shallow-dwelling animals and plants. A Pisaster Sea Star (lower left) finds a home amid rocks, sand, and shells in the tide pool.

In March, NCRD welcomed noted marine biologist **David Behrens** (lower right), whose talk and stunning slideshow on nudibranch behavior had everyone all agog.







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Dear Dive Nerd



Ever had a dive-related question but didn't know whom to ask? One of our long-time, seasoned divers and divemasters extraordinaire is now available to help! No question is too silly or difficult for our dive nerd. Give it a try! All questions may be sent to DiveNerd@rainbowdivers.org

What exactly is the issue about shark fin soup? Are environmental groups really trying to tell people what they can and shouldn't eat?

The problem with shark fin soup is that the whole shark is killed, but only its fins are used. Sharks are slow to mature to reproductive age, and they are being killed at an unsustainable rate at over 100 million sharks per year, world-wide. This is not about feeding people. Shark fin soup is considered a delicacy and luxury. In truth, it is a very wasteful form of conspicuous consumption.

Yes, I think environmental groups are trying to tell people what not to eat. It's a bold move, but in this case, I support them. As divers, I think we should all educate ourselves on this issue. If you travel across the Pacific on business, ask your travel agent not to book you into hotels that serve shark fin soup. Many hotels continue to serve this dish because they fear they will lose business if they take it off the menu. We should do our part to show that taking the soup off the menu can attract eco-conscious travelers.

I'm looking for ways to make my wetsuit warmer. Would drysuit seals at the wrists and ankles make a noticeable difference?

Be honest, have you *ever* peed in your wetsuit? Think about it. The water balloon look at the ankles is not attractive!

Basically, what you have invented is the semi-dry suit. They've been around for years, though I've never used one. They certainly don't seem to be taking the diving world by storm. If you google them and read what people say, a picture emerges of something with all the hassle of a drysuit, but at the end of the dive you're still standing around dripping wet.

You're on the right track though. For a cold-water wetsuit, you want to limit the water leaks under the suit. If cold water gets in, it's going to be warm when it leaves, and that is a tremendous heat leak.

I wouldn't advise a particularly tight suit though, since that would be uncomfortable, restrict breathing and might even limit circulation and contribute to cold hands and feet. Instead, you want a suit that fits comfortably without bagging up anywhere. When you try it on, don't just stand with your hands at your sides. Move your hands in swimming motions, do some knee bends, walk around or squirm like a seal to see if it bunches up.

Try suits from different manufacturers. This usually requires visiting several competing dive shops. They all have a different idea of how people are shaped. I know BareTM makes suits in more than just the usual S, M, L and XL sizes. They have 12 women's and 15 men's rack sizes! Stores hate this, by the way, since it's difficult to keep all sizes and colors in stock, but you do have a good chance of finding a rack suit that really fits well.

Another thing to look for in the suit is wide overlap between the layers. I like having a hooded vest over a one-piece suit. The alternative is farmer john + jacket + hood. The hooded vest covers much of the zipper and collar on the one-piece to help prevent leaks.

Henderson also makes a wetsuit called "hyperstretch". The nylon facing bonded to the rubber has a much more open weave, like stocking material instead of like a bed sheet, so it's much more elastic. It's not as durable as regular neoprene and does tend to get snagged by Velcro, so I'd be surprised to see it used for rental suits. For personal gear used for only 20 or 30 dives a year, it could be a good choice. It is comfortable and very easy to get on and off, and an especially good choice for people with larger hands or feet or joint problems since you don't do nearly as much twisting and pulling to get out of it.

Pay extra attention to how the hood fits and covers your face. If the hood is baggy, consider wearing a thin warm-water hood underneath to fill the extra space with insulation instead of cold water. Make sure that nothing interferes with your mask seal, though.

Other things you can do to stay warm and enjoy the dive more have nothing to do with the wetsuit.

Get *plenty* of rest before diving. Don't stay up late fiddling with gear and then get up just a few hours later to drive to the dive site. Sure, the water will wake you up, but you'll feel run down and get cold fast. If you're diving Saturday, try prepping your gear on Thursday night instead.

Get a warm polyester fleece hat. Look for one that blocks wind, covers your neck, and keeps you warm even if it's wet. If the day is cool, wear it until right before the dive. In any case, put it on as soon as you get out of the water.

Lay off the sugar and caffeine but eat plenty of carbohydrates before diving. You'll burn more calories cold-water diving than you would bicycling for the same amount of time. Eat accordingly! Pasta for dinner and hot cereal for breakfast work well for me.

Bring a large thermos of boiling water to the dive site. It'll stay warm for 6-8 hours easily. Tea, instant soup or oatmeal really takes the chill off between dives. Bring enough to share, and you may never have to look for a dive buddy again!

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General Meetings

April 20

May, TBD: in South Bay Location!

Location

LGBT Center, SF 1800 Market Street @ Octavia www.sfgaycenter.org

Getting There

The Muni Metro lines J, K, L, M, N, the F streetcar, or Muni Bus lines 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 21, 26, 47, 49, 66 and 71 all run within 5 blocks of the Center; many run within 1 block.

Also, take BART to SF Civic Center, then transfer to Muni Metro or F lines.

Calendar	Please see details at http://www.rainbowdivers.org/calendar.php	
San Francisco Bay	Monterey Bay	Far Away
Apr. 11, 13 Class/Pool Sessions Wallins Dive Center San Carlos, CA. Stress and Rescue Diver Apr. 20 General Meeting, 7pm LGBT Center, SF. DFL Award Presentations plus TBA May TBD General Meeting South Bay Location TBD Wreck and Tech Diving Jun. 10-11 San José Pride Jun. 12-Jul.2 Class/Pool Sessions Wallins Dive Center San Carlos, CA. SSI Open Water Class Jun. 24-25 San Francisco Pride Jul. 9 NCRD BBQ & Swap Meet	Apr. 1 Pt. Lobos w/ Rainbow Rec Apr. 2 NCRD Charter: Escapade Apr. 15 Class Ocean Sessions Stress and Rescue Diver Apr. 15 Hyperbaric Chamber Tour Pacific Grove, CA. Apr. 16 NCRD Charter: Sanctuary May 27-28 Monterey Weekend Jun. 17-18 Monterey Weekend Jul. 1-2 Class Ocean Sessions SSI Open Water Class Jul. 15, NCRD Charter: TBD Jul. 15, MBARI Open House Jul. 16, Point Lobos Dive	April 29 –May 6, 2006 Inn of Last Resort Roatan, Bay Islands, Honduras May 6-13, 2006 Diving w/ GLUG: Whale Sharks Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras July 28 to Aug. 4, 2006 Wakatobi Dive Resort Sulawesi, Indonesia September 16-23, 2006 DFL @ Anse Chastanet St. Lucia, BVI, Caribbean November 10-12, 2006 Annual Vision Liveaboard No. Channel Islands, CA. includes Wreck Diving March 23 to April 2, 2007 Ocean Rover Thailand Liveaboard



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