



The Newsletter of the Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD)

Buddy Line

April, 2007

DFL Charity Award Voting Results from February 13 Meeting

by Kelly Thiemann

As a part of an annual club ritual, four non-profit representatives made presentations to the Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD) to request funds for LGBT health-related programs. The presentations ranged from food programs for women with breast cancer to a newsletter to help spread the word about treatment options for men addicted to crystal meth. This year, NCRD received \$10,328 in proceeds from Diving For Life (DFL), resulting from the fun and good times in St. Lucia this past September. Club members voted to award the funding as follows:

Project Open Hand – Breast Cancer Nutrition Services - \$5,500. The funding will provide twelve women and their families with groceries for one year. The program's services include a daily, home-delivered hot meal or seven frozen meals delivered all on one day. Also included are nutrition education, support and follow-up. Groceries are also provided for women who are feeling better and want to cook but don't have the energy to go to the grocery store. It also helps people who have different dietary needs from the meals that are pre-cooked. Meals

are delivered in Alameda and San Francisco counties only.

Larkin Street Youth Center – Rapid Testing Program - \$4,828 (with another \$86 each kicked in by Larry Chow and Charles Brinkley for an even \$5,000). The Rapid Testing Program will provide anyone with a swipe of their cheek cells with a Q-tip an HIV determination within twenty minutes. Counseling is also provided for those who test positive. Larkin Street Youth Center's goal is to test every young person between the ages of 18 to 24 years.

The second organization, San Francisco AIDS Foundation's Speed Project, is a harm reduction program for gay, bi and hetero-flexible men in San Francisco who use speed. The project hosts a weekly drop-in group, secondary syringe exchange, produces the community magazine *Speedometer*, hosts community forums, workshops, movie nights and outreach in the Tenderloin and Castro



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Honorable Mention: Two worthy organizations were not awarded funding but deserve recognition of their efforts in the LGBT community. The first, ProLatino, is looking for funding to provide a rapid test site at the Mexican Consulate in San Jose. They are also looking for funds to help keep the one paid staff member through the end of the year.

neighborhoods in San Francisco.

Please consider giving a donation to any or all of these organizations. Thanks to all who recommended the charities and to everyone who braved the parking to hear the presentations and make the decisions.



Support Your Local Chamber! Fund-Raising Ocean Rescue Seminar to Benefit Pacific Grove's Hyperbaric Chamber on May 5

Pacific Grove's Ocean Rescue Unit will conduct a one-day, public educational seminar on Saturday, May 5, to benefit our local Monterey Bay hyperbaric chamber. The chamber is staffed by all-volunteer doctors, nurses and others in support of emergency medical cases requiring recompression treatment.

The conference, entitled "Dive Smart", will take place from 8am-5pm at the Robert H. Down Elementary School at 485 Pine Avenue in Pacific Grove, California.

Several talks related to dive medicine will surely appeal to recreational and commercial divers as well as doctors, nurses and DMTs who handle dive emergencies. Medical experts will address a variety of interesting topics, whose impressive line-up includes:

- Marty Nemiroff, M.D., *Cold-Water Near-Drowning: A Northern Exposure*
- Frank Butler, M.D., *Physics and Physiology: Re-breather Accident Case Studies*
- Maida Taylor, M.D., *Women and Diving: Top 10 Questions*
- Paul Cianci, M.D., *Hazardous Marine Animals*
- Allen Dekelboum, M.D., *Your Ears and Sinuses Under Pressure*
- Karl Huggins, *Dive Computers and the Elephant: Realities, Limitations and Responses*
- Dag Shapshak, M.D., *DCS / AGE*

This fund-raising event will also feature a silent auction and raffle. Prizes, sponsored by local businesses, include a drysuit, dive gear and an underwater camera housing.

The price of attending this one-day seminar is a modest \$65 for those who pre-register by April 27th. Registration at the door will be \$90 per person. An Italian buffet lunch, catered by Antonella's Ristorante, is included for those who pre-register.

Professional credits for attendance are available at extra cost. NAUI (but not PADI) instructors may earn 0.8 PDUs for attending this seminar, while CMEs or CEUs are available for RNs, CHTs, EMTs, DMTs and physicians.

To sign up, please download and mail the registration form found online at <http://www.pgfire.com/> Click on "Ocean Rescue Unit" in the left-hand sidebar, then on "Public Education" in the top right gray banner.

If you would like more information, please call (831)373-2094 or contact Margaret B. Donat, R.N., by email at megdonat@yahoo.com.

(Editor's Note: NCRD is not a sponsor of this event and does not endorse it. This information is presented as a convenience to club members who may be interested.)



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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.


Winners Announced for NCRD's Monthly Photo Contest

For January and February, 2007

On January 28, Ed Bierman was diving off the Northern California Rainbow Divers' *Cypress Sea* charter in the cool waters of Monterey Bay and photographing his subjects with a NikonD80 and a 60mm macro lens. His image of snails on hydrocoral took first place in our January photo contest. Congratulations, Ed! This excellent cold-water shot is a colorful addition to our monthly showcase.

In February, Mark Showalter was busy diving in French Polynesia, where he captured this shot of a red-lip cleaner wrasse and grey reef shark as they swam past. To capture this winning image from our February contest, Mark used an Olympus C-8080 camera inside a PT-023 housing, equipped with an Inon D2000 strobe. Congratulations to Mark for his beautiful underwater image.

All entries in the contest to date have been posted in the "Galleries" section of the Northern California Rainbow Divers' website at www.rainbowdivers.org/galleries.php

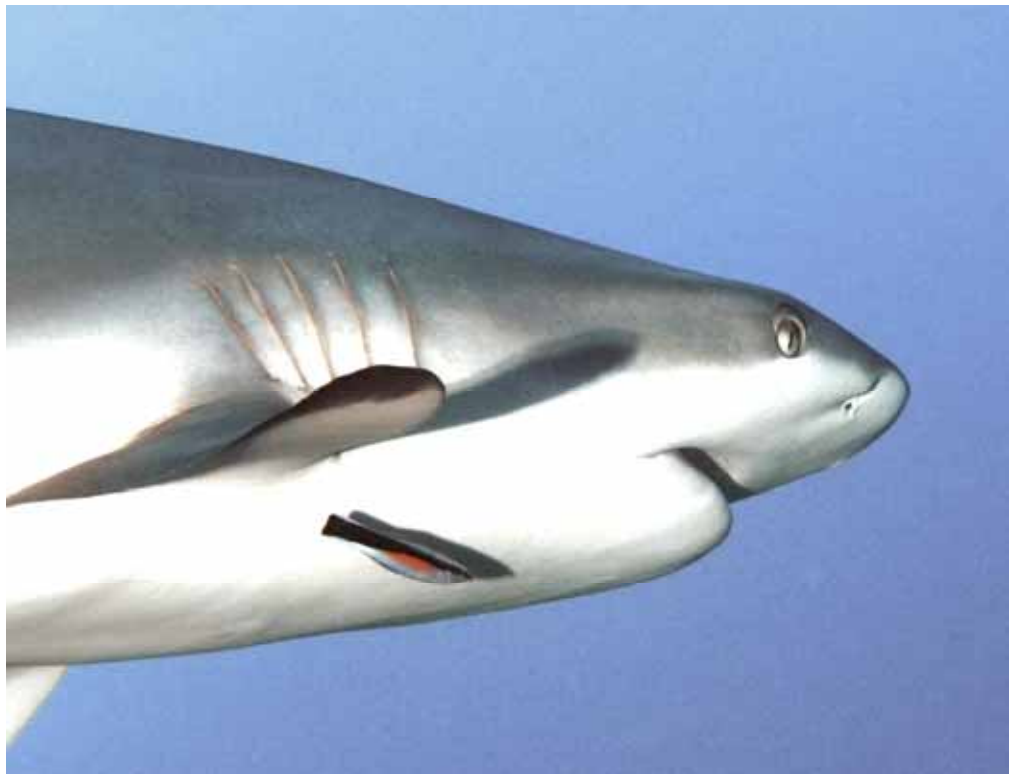
April 5 and May 5 are the deadlines for submitting photo contest entries for March and April, 2007, respectively. Full details are available online at the NCRD website: 

www.rainbowdivers.org/photocontest.php



JANUARY WINNER: Hydrocoral with Snails

Photo by Ed Bierman



FEBRUARY WINNER: Grey Reef Shark and Red-Lip Cleaner wrasse

Photo by Mark Showalter

Leg Cramps — Ouch!

by Peg Stone

Cruising along underwater on a beautiful morning dive, Albert noticed his buddy had accelerated ahead of him. A dim shape in the blue led both divers to kick hard to get a better look: a seal? A mola mola? Just as Al saw the image emerge into the shape of a sunfish, a searing pain shot through one calf. He whirled and contorted, stretching out his leg. He turned to gesture to his buddy for help, but his friend, focused on the mola, disappeared fast into the watery blue. Albert realized he was rising and heading up too fast. He tried to kick his way down with his good leg, panic setting in.

Leg cramps — who hasn't had them? While sometimes a good stretch (pulling up on the end of the fin of the affected leg, while keeping the leg straight, works best) can clear them, they can not only ruin a good dive but also, as the example above shows, cause a small difficulty to become a large one, starting the ball rolling toward a lost buddy, DCS, and other quite unrewarding dive problems.

The good news: there are several steps you can take to get rid of these demons of the muscles before you ever don your wetsuit. Even better, they're easy to do!

What causes leg cramps? Lack of conditioning is the first cause always cited. But "exercise more" is not the only prescription. Dehydration plays a major role as does electrolyte imbalance (more on this later) and finally, potassium levels. This oft-neglected mineral is rarely consumed by people in sufficient quantity.

So, what can you do to get rid of those nasty cramps before they occur? First of all, keeping those calf muscles in shape is a good idea. Swimming with training fins is ideal exercise but simply walking a lot is great, too. You say you don't have time? How about all those times you are standing in line or waiting for the bus or train or waiting for a light to change? How about all those times you are on the phone? Repeatedly rising up on your toes, heels off the floor, is a great way to shape up those calves. And there are probably 20 times in your day when you can whip out 50 calf raises without changing your routine a bit.

Second, hydration is key. "Water, water everywhere, and drinking every drop" is the diver's motto for any number of good reasons. Reducing caffeine intake and laying off the booze while diving avoids actively dehydrating yourself. In the tropics, drinking a couple more quarts than usual is a great idea. When I started diving, one experienced buddy suggested hydrating at least three days in advance. The same is suggested to endurance athletes before an event. Especially for drysuit divers, avoiding "hyper-hydration" during the dive day can be, well, very "relieving."

And maybe not just any hydration. The March, 2007, issue of *Bicycling* magazine (hey, there's a great way to shape up your calves!) reported that a test of Gleukos sports drink, while not doing much for the bikers, eliminated debilitating leg cramps in a scuba-diving tester, compared to water alone. Gleukos claims to deliver "natural" energy to muscles faster than other sports drinks and is evidently not too sweet. It contains glucose, which can be found in many common foods, including grapes, figs, sweet fruits and honey. So try some grape juice before your next dive!

Now, the last preventive: potassium. Potassium, a mineral, assists in muscle contraction; it also helps maintain fluid and electrolyte balance in body cells. Potassium is also important in releasing energy from protein, fat, and carbohydrates during metabolism. Now you can see the whole picture coming together: muscles contracting, fluids and electrolytes available in the muscle cells, energy being released: happy muscles and no cramps!

Are you getting enough potassium? That depends on what you eat. Don't count on a multivitamin to take care of your potassium needs. The RDA for potassium is 3.5 grams — not micrograms or milligrams, but grams. My multi provides 80 mg, listed as 2% of the "daily value." Many multi's don't have any potassium in them at all. Potassium is literally too big to fit 100% of the needed amount into a single pill and certainly not into a multivitamin that has lots of other vitamins and

minerals crammed into it. I take four potassium pills a day, which equals only 12% of the potassium RDA. This, in combination with common food sources of potassium, got rid of the evening leg cramps I had been experiencing after shifting my diet to higher protein, lower simple carbs.

As to food sources of potassium, they are plentiful. Sweet potatoes (694 mg) and potatoes (610 mg) are great, as are bananas (422 mg) and fish (3 oz. at about 475 mg). Spinach, oranges, melons — these are all good sources as well as artichokes, asparagus, and green beans. Bran is a great source. However, you have to eat a lot of these to add up to 3500 mg. And really, do you eat bran cereal with yogurt for breakfast, tuna and spinach with an orange for lunch, and lean red meat with a sweet potato for dinner and melon for dessert? If not, you may have less potassium than a hard kick against an ocean current might demand.

If leg cramps are common on your dives, try adding some potassium supplements just to "top off" your intake from your diet. As your mother always told you, drink plenty of fluids, maybe even some grape juice right before your dive. And the next time you're on the phone, stand up and do those calf raises! Your legs will thank you (and so will your buddy)! And the next time you wear shorts, well, take another turn down the cat walk, girlfriend!



February Fun and March Madness with NCRD

A Photo Tour



Maui Divers

Photo by Sharon Ponder



Green Sea Turtle, Maui Photo by Ron 'Coyote' Lussier



Harlequin Shrimp, Costa Rica Photo by Karen Doby



Wolf Eel, Monastery Beach Photo by David Zippin

Despite occasional winds and winter chill, February and March brought good times to Northern California Rainbow Divers. A lively bunch headed over to Maui, Hawaii, where the humpback whales were busy serenading divers with their haunting songs. Surfing lessons, an evening BBQ, and excellent marine life sightings (whales breaching, green sea turtles, imperial shrimp hanging out on their sea cucumber hosts, manta rays, frogfish, etc.) kept the camaraderie lively.

Closer to home, NCRD member Dean Bradley was honored as a "local hero" by the Oakland City Council for her free retrofitting seminars in her neighborhood and for inspiring changes in city policies. Congrats, Dean!

Monterey Bay diving saw several days of terrific visibility. David Zippin spotted his first-ever wolf eel at Monastery Beach. He clarifies, "It's the males that have flabby, whitish heads, not females. He's so cute!"



Wave Babes Photo compliments of Sharon Ponder



Imperial Shrimp, Maui Photo by Robert Martin



Dean Bradley



Cabezon, Monterey Bay Photo by Kevin Gardner

A Whale Tale

by Larry Chow

I hate cold-water diving. Getting out of the water in less than thirty minutes, blue-lipped and shivering is just not fun for me. So it took more than a little prodding from Ralph, as well as a gift certificate to Wallin's from my sister, for me to take a dry suit class with Maureen.

Three weeks later, I'm going to do my first shore dive in a dry suit. It's a club dive at Macabee Beach, and Maureen is there. She's going to buddy with another student, so Ralph will be my DM/buddy. It's just a shore dive, right? There probably won't be much to see and we'll mainly practice skills with the new suit. I'm a little nervous about being in the ocean, so Ralph & I decide to leave our cameras onshore to avoid distractions. We form a mini-group with Gabe and Kevin. After reviewing the plan, the four of us enter the water for our first dive.

The visibility is fantastic for Monterey, about 50 feet, so it's going to be a relaxing, easy-to-navigate dive. Mostly we just cruise the kelp and see what's out there. We pass some nicely sized lingcod and cabezons as well as a few nudibranchs. Before we know it, 50 minutes have passed. Gabe and Kevin, with their AL80s, wave goodbye and head back to shore. We've still got time since we're diving AL100's, and I wasn't shivering or numb in the new suit. Ralph and

I continued our dive, poking around in the cracks while slowly making our way back to shore. At some point, I look up for what must be my 100th buddy check of the dive. Ralph is about 15 feet to my right, and we're in 40 feet of water. He's fine, teasing a hermit crab, but there's a faint gray shadow growing behind him. At first, I think it's a cloud passing overhead, but it is moving kind of fast and it's just a little too, well... sparkly.

Suddenly I see it. It's the head of a giant-normous whale! I blink a few times before I really believe it's there with us. I start screaming in my regulator for Ralph, but he's in his own world. Her head catches up to him, and I can see that he's about 20 feet from the whale while I'm still 35 feet away. I start swimming towards them, trying to get Ralph's attention while screaming and cursing myself for not bringing the video camera. I try to remember as much detail as possible: the grooves on her belly which extend past the pectoral fin, the fins themselves — why are they so long and droopy? the placement of the eye, the shape of her face -- kind of flat like a duck beak, the sunlight dancing on her back sparkling like sequins, and the tail that seemed too small for this enormous 40-foot-long animal.

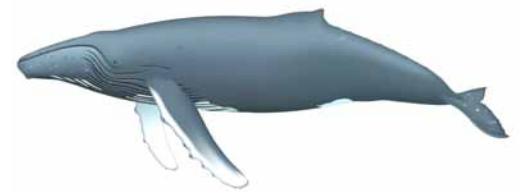
Finally, Ralph decides to see what I'm yelling about. He's in no hurry, obviously just expecting a seal as he turns around to follow my finger. By then the whale has begun to pass, so his first glimpse of her is a close up! He said later it wasn't just "look, a whale..." it was more like "look left; a whale's head! Look right; here comes the tail!" It takes him a few seconds to process this. A whale is cruising past... in shallow water... on a shore dive!

Time stops and we both swim toward the enormous shape. She's silent, graceful, and seems to be going in slow motion. She's barely making a ripple on the water's surface a few feet above her. She comes in from the north and curves between us and the shore before heading back out into deep water. She seems oblivious to us, even though we're

both finning like mad now.... Even at her laziest filter-feeding pace, it quickly becomes apparent there is no way we can keep up. She's streamlined and built for moving through the water. We are not. So we both stop and just hang weightless; trying to remember the details and watching her slowly turn back into a shadow and disappear.

We are both stunned, thinking "did that really happen?" Suddenly Ralph remembers we're still diving! He grabs his gauges and points to mine. We're getting low, but there's no crisis, so we quickly exchange okays. Then we're both giddy, like we've won the lottery. Ralph does a little dance before giving me a big hug, and we turn back to shore.

We practically run back to the cars -- not easy with 25 pounds of lead plus gear -- and ask everyone "Did you see it? Did you see IT?" Sadly, no one else in our group had seen her, but a freediver confirmed our sighting and agreed she was nothing short of majestic.



In hindsight, the whole encounter probably only lasted 60 seconds, but it's a minute that we'll remember forever.

Back home, we compared notes and debated how close and big she really was. A quick web search and the long neck creases clinched the identification as a humpback whale. Ralph based his length guess on some sketches we made and the distance from air to sand that was reported by our depth gauges, though I still think she was bigger than he does. This was my first whale sighting underwater and a first for Ralph too. Between us, we have almost 900 dives logged. We've since met people with nearly 2,000 dives logged who haven't seen a whale underwater, so maybe we really did win the lottery.

I guess it's true what they say: you never know what you're going to see on a cold-water dive!



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

Are we stylin' or just dissin' the reef if we wear tropical gloves in warm water?

Tropical gloves in warm water are almost always frowned upon. If you get cold, wear a thicker wetsuit, longer sleeves or a thicker hood. If your body core is warm, you can afford to send blood to keep the hands and feet warm.



People say they need gloves to protect their hands from the reef, but the reef then has no protection from the damage caused by the gloves! Leaving the gloves off makes it a fair fight. Soon you'll learn the skills needed to get along better with the other underwater critters.

With good buoyancy control and some common sense about where you put your fingers, you'll quickly learn to dive gloveless in tropical waters without getting cold, damaging the reef, or cutting up your hands.

What's the best medicine to use if my ears are a little stuffed up?

First of all, we are all recreational divers, so we should only do a dive if

it seems like it's going to be fun. If it seems like a painful or risky challenge, or just plain work, don't do it! You have nothing to prove other than that you have good judgment about when to dive.

But, if you are a little stuffed up and you want to dive anyway, I prefer to take Sudafed 4 hours before the dive and again right before the first dive starts. I don't want it wearing out during the dive!

If after taking Sudafed you still can't clear your ears easily, abort the dive and see a doctor before you do some permanent ear damage.

How will I know if it is working and that I can dive? I don't want to risk a reverse squeeze.

You should be able to clear your ears easily on the surface before the dive. Just hold your nose and gently blow. If both ears "pop" with minimal effort and get slightly positive pressure, you're okay to dive. The key to clearing is to clear gently, early and often. Keep the ears slightly overpressured during the descent and reinflate them whenever they become equalized. Do *not* descend so far that your ears become underpressurized.

If you wait until you feel the pressure building on your ear drums to clear them, it will take a large, violent effort to fix them. It's better to go up and try again at a shallower depth. If you can't clear, don't go any deeper! Either abort the dive or alter the dive plan to hang out at whatever depth you were able to get to.

If you know you are having a bit of ear trouble, but it's not so bad that you want to abort the dive, you should still play it safe and start your ascent

earlier. Begin ascending with plenty of air and bottom time remaining. A reverse squeeze on ascent can be disorienting, but it usually resolves itself in a few moments. If it does happen, you'll really appreciate not being rushed to the surface by other considerations.

How many calories do I burn off on an average 45-minute, cold-water dive?

Seems like a million, but it's probably about 400-500. Shore dives are probably more because you have to swim and walk farther.

Does it make a difference if I wear a wetsuit or drysuit?

Wetsuits lose more heat, but drysuits usually have more drag in the water. I'd guess the wetsuit burns more calories though, just because it feels like it takes more out of you.

But please... lose weight in a gym or by altering your eating habits at home. You have to eat a healthy amount of food when diving. Please don't try to invent a 10-pounds-in-2-days miracle SCUBA diet. Diving is *not* a good place to have a low-blood sugar crisis.



General Meetings

April 10
August 14
October 9

Meeting Location

Castro Community
 Meeting Room, 2nd Floor
 501 Castro Street, SF.
 @ 18th Street

Getting There

The Muni Metro lines J, K, L, and M, the F streetcar, and Muni bus lines 24, 33, 35, and 37 all serve the Castro neighborhood. Also, take BART to SF Civic Center, then transfer to Muni Metro or the F streetcar.

Calendar

Please see details at
<http://www.rainbowdivers.org/calendar.php>

San Francisco Bay	Monterey Bay	Far Away
<p>Apr. 10 <i>General Meeting</i> 501 Castro Street, SF Castro Community Meeting Room, 2nd Floor</p> <p>May. 6 <i>Volunteer's Meeting</i> Palo Alto, CA</p> <p>May. 7-23 <i>Open Water Class</i> Classroom/Pool Sessions Wallin's Dive Center San Carlos, CA.</p> <p>Jun. 9-10 <i>San José Pride</i></p> <p>Jun. 23-24 <i>San Francisco Pride</i></p> <p>Jul. 22 <i>NCRD BBQ & Swap Meet</i></p> <p>Aug. 14 <i>General Meeting</i> Location & Topics TBA</p> <p>Sep. 2 <i>Volunteer's Meeting</i> Palo Alto, CA</p> <p>Oct. 9 <i>General Meeting</i> Location & Topics TBA</p>	<p>Apr. 21 Boat Dives <i>Sanctuary Charter</i> Blue Fish Cove Point Lobos, CA</p> <p>Apr. 22 Shore Dives <i>Butterfly House,</i> <i>Stewart's Point</i> Carmel, CA</p> <p>May. 5 "Dive Smart" Seminar <i>by the Ocean Rescue Unit</i> <i>of PG Hyperbaric Chamber</i> Pacific Grove, CA</p> <p>May. 26-27 Open Water Class Open Water Sessions Monterey, CA</p> <p>Jun. 16 Shore Dives Point Lobos, CA</p> <p>Jun. 17 Boat Dives <i>Cypress Sea Charter</i> Monterey, CA</p>	<p>March 23 to April 2, 2007 <i>Ocean Rover Liveaboard</i> Thailand and Myanmar</p> <p>May 11-13, 2007 <i>Salt Point, Gerstle Cove,</i> <i>Fisk Mill Cove, Timber Cove</i> Sonoma Coast, CA</p> <p>July 30 to August 6, 2007 <i>Galapagos Eco Explorer I</i> Liveaboard Galapagos Islands, Ecuador</p> <p>Sept. 29 to October 6, 2007 <i>Diving For Life</i> Banana Beach Resort & Mata Rocks Resort Belize, Central America</p> <p>March 20-31, 2008 <i>Undersea Hunter Liveaboard</i> Cocos Island, Costa Rica</p>



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