



# Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD)

# Buddy Line

February, 2008

## NCRD Parties Down at Annual Holiday Bash

by Michelle Barker

On December 20, the Rainbow Divers headed back to the Steinhart Aquarium for another fun-filled holiday party. For the second year in a row, the folks at the Aquarium welcomed us to their temporary quarters on Folsom Street. It's so nice being able to breeze right through the lines of folks waiting to get in because we are on "The List"! The lights are dimmed, the cash bar is open and the live band is jamming as we stroll through the exhibits. Before our party, we saw some really wonderful critters on display, with everything from snowflake eels twining through PVC pipes to the world's creepiest looking turtles.

The club reserved a private room upstairs so we could all congregate, socialize and stuff our faces with delicious food. Wallins dive shop sponsored the party this year (thanks, Wallins!) and the extra bit of love went a long way. We had plenty of finger foods to tempt even the most jaded holiday appetites!

Over in one corner, we had a Hollywood-esque "swag" table with fun toys like little nemo-

themed slinkys, puffy foam-fish pens, magic kaleidoscopes and a collection of fabulous door prizes to be won. A projector cycled through some fantastic photos and presentations from the club dives this year. To compliment this glamorous atmosphere, we had tons of fabulous NCRD folks show up! The room was filled with dive maniacs talking (ok, bragging) about all the amazing dives we've had and all the fun stuff we have coming up.

We had a few presentations given by some of the team. David Zippin (MC for the evening) gave a "State of the Club" address, Ralph Wolf broke down the club's financial state of affairs and Tim Shannon got up to give a run down of some of the upcoming local dives we'll have in 2008. We also got to hear about the incredible



David Zippin  
photo by Ed Bierman

warm water destination dives we have planned: **Cocos Island**, **Papua New Guinea**, and **Palau**. OH MY! We also elected new board members who have been coerced, I mean privileged, to give up some diving in order to keep the club running well.

Cat Aboudara, a representative from the California Academy of Sciences, gave us an overview of the exciting new aquarium opening back in Golden Gate park in 2008. Cat and her team have some amazing volunteer diver opportunities in their incredible new 20,000 gallon coral-reef exhibit. This tank will hold the largest live-coral exhibit in the country in the deepest coral reef tank ever undertaken in the northern hemisphere. For more info on the new building and about becoming a volunteer diver, see <http://www.calacademy.org>.



**2008 NCRD Board & Volunteers!**

**Board Members**

*President, David Zippin*  
*Vice President, Karen Doby*  
*Treasurer, Ralph Wolf*  
*Secretary, Sharon Ponder*  
*Board Members-At-Medium*  
*Michelle Barker & Peg Stone*

**Volunteer Staff**

*Local Dive Planner, Tim Shannon*  
*DFL Liaison, Kelly Thiemann*  
*Membership Planner, Larry Chow*  
*Newsletter Editor, Peg Stone*  
*Program Planner, Michelle Barker*  
*STARS Software Development,*  
*Karen Casella*  
*Trips-Away Coordinator, Peg Stone*  
*Webmaster (acting), Ralph Wolf*

## President's Corner

by David Zippin

NCRD is off to a great start in 2008 with the renewed commitment and enthusiasm for our venerable newsletter thanks to Peg Stone and Sharon Ponder!

Our new group of volunteers is dedicated to making our club even better than it has been. For example, Tim Shannon, our Local Dive Planner, has an action-packed schedule of local dive trips from Mendocino County to Big Sur (go Tim!). Peg Stone is leading two fabulous trips this year, to exotic Cocos Island in March and Palau in November. And our own Kelly Theimann is leading the international Diving For Life trip to Thailand in October, which hopes to

break DFL attendance records. Michelle Barker, our Program Chair, is cooking up a great set of meeting events for the year. And Ralph Wolf, our returning Treasurer, and Karen Doby, our Vice-President, are leading a new "web team" of experts to retool our web site and automate club functions.

All in all, it is shaping up to be one of the best years ever for the club. I hope you are as excited as I am and I hope you'll pitch in to make the club fun, safe, and interesting for all LGBT divers in northern California!



## Dear Dive Nerd



**If I get a drysuit, will I have to add weight to be neutrally buoyant, compared to the 7mm wetsuit I now use?**

Most likely. It depends on how thick your drysuit undergarment is. For a typical 5-11' 175# male, you should expect to add about 10 pounds of lead going from a wetsuit to a drysuit. You're adding more insulation to keep you warmer, so you need more lead to sink it.

Unlike a wetsuit though, you should not have to add air to your BC at depth. You should not have any large bubbles 'rolling around' in your drysuit either. You should feel slightly vacuum-packed during the dive, but not uncomfortably so.

If your drysuit is bubbly or you need to add air to your BC during the dive, you are over-weighted.



### Northern California Rainbow Divers, Inc.

#### BOARD MEMBERS

President, David Zippin  
 president@rainbowdivers.org  
 Vice President, Karen Doby  
 vp@rainbowdivers.org  
 Secretary, Sharon Ponder  
 secretary@rainbowdivers.org  
 Board Member-At-Medium, Michelle Barker  
 programs@rainbowdivers.org  
 Board Member-At-Medium, Peg Stone  
 trips@rainbowdivers.org

#### VOLUNTEER STAFF

Local Dive Planner, Tim Shannon  
 diveplanner@rainbowdivers.org  
 Diving For Life Liaison, Kelly Thiemann  
 dfl@rainbowdivers.org  
 Membership Planner, Larry Chow  
 membership@rainbowdivers.org  
 Newsletter Editor, Peg Stone  
 editor@rainbowdivers.org  
 Layout/Design, Sharon Ponder  
 Program Planner, Michelle Barker  
 programs@rainbowdivers.org  
 STARS Software Development, Karen Casella  
 starsadmin@rainbowdivers.org  
 Trips-Away Coordinator, Peg Stone  
 trips@rainbowdivers.org  
 Webmaster (acting), Ralph Wolf  
 webmaster@rainbowdivers.org

#### Trip Leaders 2008

Peg Stone, Cocos Island Liveaboard  
 David Zippin, Tawali Resort, PNG  
 Peg Stone, Palau Liveaboard

<http://www.rainbowdivers.org>

#### 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 \$8/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.

## Ambergris Caye, Belize

by Kelly Thiemann

Diving for Life's Sixteenth Annual scuba diving party and fundraiser started for me in November 2006 at DEMA's annual trade show in Orlando, Florida. I had instructions from DFL's Board of Directors as co-organizer of this year's trip to find a resort that would be cheap and in the Caribbean that could hold up to 150 gay and lesbian scuba divers. What I found was Ambergris Divers and Banana Beach Hotel at Ambergris Caye in Belize.



*Diving Interval, (seated) - Karen, David, Kathy, Dennis, Alan, Sharon & BJ  
photo by Dennis Nix*

Twenty-three NCRD members were able to attend this year's event. Diving was done off of finger reefs just outside of the island's barrier reef. The water and ocean conditions were reasonably clear given that a Category 5 hurricane had rapidly passed through the area about a month before. At the beginning of almost every dive you would be greeted by



*Nurse Shark & Turtle  
photos by Ralph Wolf*

nurse sharks and large groupers in a sand channel between the canyon reef structures.

Dives would feature drifting over various reefs and exploring small tunnels or swimthroughs. Spotted eagle rays and turtles could be viewed on some sites.



One of the highlights of my trip was diving the Blue Hole, Half Moon Caye and Long Caye (Aquarium) sites. The Blue Hole is a trip down to 120 feet to swim through stalactites and stalagmites. Coming back up it becomes a shark dive with black-tip reef sharks and a bull shark. Half Moon Caye wall had better visibility and much more marine life than did the reefs surrounding Ambergris Caye. After a picnic lunch on Half Moon Caye it was off in search of the Red-Footed Booby Sanctuary (that would be a bird). In moving from Half Moon Caye to the Aquarium site, we stopped to visit several boats that were moored together. It was the base of operations for the conch divers. The season had just opened, and these men were free diving for conch in this area (not in the Marine Preserve). This dive featured the divemaster taking the left-over rice from lunch and slowly feeding the fish so that he was engulfed in fish (mostly Jacks) for the entire dive. Three weeks after this dive trip, the same boat -- *Miss Mel*, run by Amigos del Mar dive shop -- caught fire and sank on the return trip from these dives.

The real reason for DFL is the fundraising. Live and silent auction items and raffle items are donated by local dive shops and then participants bid on them during various events held throughout the week. This year over \$80,000 was raised. Funds are then returned to local LGBT charities. This year NCRD will be distributing \$13,525 in DFL funds (see sidebar). I won a dive computer in the raffle!

Little Orphan Annie, Elphaba & Glinda, and Avenue Q's Lucy the Slut and her handler were all spotted at the Broadway Party. Who knew that life as a blond could be so fun!

The second highlight was my visit to the Mayan ruins at Lamanai. Climbing to the top of a Mayan temple with steep steps



*Climbing to the top of a Mayan Temple  
photo by Kelly Thiemann*

and a rope was worth it to get to the view. Of course so were the hour boat ride, hour bus ride, and another hour boat ride to get there. And then we had to come back the same way, but romance was in the air....

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## Oceanic Manufacturing Facilities Tour, October 12, 2007

### by Peg Stone

I stared at several boxes crammed with \$1400 “heads up display” scuba masks. Still lacking their lenses, they awaited shipping to Navy SEALs somewhere in the world. I saw Sharron Zoyhowski, looking at the same boxes with the same lust in her eyes. I caught her eye and we smiled at each other. “Wouldn’t that be damned nice to have!” we thought. So many, so close, so out of reach!

We were with a group of Rainbow Divers (Scott Upper, Jonathan Clemmer, and Gabe Acevedo-Bolton) touring the Oceanic manufacturing and shipping facility in San Leandro. Oceanic gave us a terrific tour on a very rainy Friday afternoon, graciously showing us around the plant and explaining their products, quality control, and production processes with patience and clarity. We came away impressed with their obsessive quality control, their testing procedures (and contraptions!), and their pursuit of innovation.

Oceanic is really one of five or six companies that form Undersea Technologies. In the world of scuba manufacturers, Oceanic is a sea lion in a world of whale sharks: small, smart, quick, and feisty. Their competitors for the most part comprise components of much larger corporations. Founded by the Hollis brothers out of their interest in scuba and their tinkering with early scuba photo equipment, the company now employs 450 people with two manufacturing factories

abroad as well as the San Leandro facility. As a small business, Oceanic focuses on constant innovation, figuring that they can stay ahead of their larger, slower competition in this way.

In San Leandro, Oceanic manufactures a number of their products, including their first and second stages. They also manufacture computers, regs and other equipment for other scuba brands, including Aeris, which they own, and Sherwood and other scuba brands that are separately owned.

Oceanic also makes a lot of equipment for firefighters, the military, and other related uses. They make the pressure gauges for all military aircraft. They innovated the heads-up displays integrated into masks, now hitting the civilian market. They served as the original lab for the “Scuba Lab” tests, creating the testing parameters for regulators.



*This little pressure cooker allows Oceanic to perform quick pressure checks on regulators at depth, as part of its work with Scuba Lab*

The Hollis’ also created and own the Tawali Resort that Rainbow Divers will be visiting in August of 2008. We had the good fortune to see the shell of the decompression chamber,

newly epoxied, that will be in service in Tawali by the time we get there!



*Shell of Recompression Chamber bound for Tawali, PNG*

Inside the large warehouse, we wandered along halls created out of two-by-fours and chain-link fencing, or walls with large windows opening into different sections of the manufacturing process. Boxes of o-rings and plastic components, all carefully quality checked, sat ready for assembly. Strange on-off manufacturing machines stood on the factory floor. Workers sat on stools, tools neatly arranged around them, performing extremely fine repetitive tasks.

We saw some really cool stuff. Machines that open and close regulator valves a million times to make sure that the quality standards stay strong over time; a machine that cuts a solid brass rod into pieces and drills it with the holes and threading for high and low pressure ports, as it begins the process of becoming a high end first stage regulator. Dials, drill arms, test equipment with large calibration dials sat next to

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## Thailand and Myanmar Diving Adventure

### by David Zippin

For 10 days in March and early April, 16 NCRD divers had an amazing adventure in the waters of the Andaman Sea in western Thailand and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma). Our adventure began in Phuket, Thailand, when the luxury dive boat *Ocean Rover*, left port on a hot, stormy evening. The unusual weather foretold our future: a trip full of surprises!

Our diving started at a pinnacle in Thailand off Kho Bon in the Similan Islands. Here, huge schools of fish, like blue-streaked fusiliers, bluestripe snapper, bluefin trevally, and chevron barracuda swirled around us. Divers also saw several large diurnal octopi, mating cuttlefish, and many large giant manta rays. At



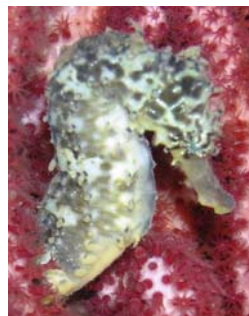
the famous Richelieu Rock near the Thai border, things just got weirder. Diving at this time of year in Thailand, divers are often rewarded with visibility of 100+ feet and warm waters of 83 degrees or more. However, we experienced strong thermoclines and plankton upwellings that reduced visibility to 5-20 feet in some locations. A local El Nino effect may have been responsible for the wildly varying diving conditions we encountered. But to

our cold-water Pacific Coast divers, chill and murk were nothing new! The strangest and rarest sighting of the trip came when Karen Doby and I got separated from our buddies in the poor visibility and separately stumbled upon a 10-foot-long giant guitarfish hunting just below us on the sea floor with a large school of cobias and longfin bannerfish in tow. We were both excited and terrified alone with this sinister-looking relative of sting rays (we peed in our wetsuits!).

We knew the diving in Myanmar would be special when visibility improved to 40-50 feet and many of us saw our first whale shark on the first dive of the day!



The giant juvenile, about 15 feet long, kept coming back to investigate our group. We did four dives that day and saw three different juvenile whale sharks, at least one on every dive. Many of us, including Sharon Ponder, Alan Scott, and Marty Hogan, got so close we could almost touch



them. During the course of the week, divers saw many photogenic critters: tiger-tail seahorse, harlequin

shrimp, porcelain crabs, bearded scorpion-



fish, common lionfish, four species of anemonefish, reef squid, Shultz's pipefish, smashing mantis shrimp, ornate ghost pipefish,



octopus, gaudy nudibranchs, and many species of morays.

However, predatory sharks, once common in these waters, were noticeably absent from the area. We did spot a few white-tipped reef sharks, black-tipped reef sharks, and the spectacular zebra shark. The wasteful fishing practice of shark finning has clearly taken a heavy toll on the sharks in the Andaman Sea.

We had many celebrations on the trip, which added to the fun. Peg Stone celebrated her 700<sup>th</sup> dive (go Peg!), Ralph Wolf his 500<sup>th</sup>, Larry Chow his 300<sup>th</sup> and Claudia Cappio and I celebrated our 200<sup>th</sup>. Claudia and Marty Hogan also celebrated birthdays on board (they both look so good at 39!).

Many on the trip felt that the *Ocean Rover* qualified as one of the best dive boats they had ever been on; for some, it was the best.

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Cuttlefish, Whaleshark, Seahorse  
Porcelain Crab and Octopus  
photos by Sharon Ponder

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half gallon plastic tubs of water. We saw displays of all the components of pressure gauges and regulators, and a wall with scores of first and second stage regulators, all neatly labeled.



Display of 1st & 2nd Stage Regulators

We saw a display of every pressure gauge made for the military, with hand lettered labels specifying which aircraft the gauge went into. The clean room had a jug of kitty litter and one of simple green sitting inside.

We bumped into a guy in the halls who had in his hand a component used to create water-cooled compression pumps, leading to an interesting discussion of

the three factors needed for combustion: heat, oxygen, and combustible material. Explosions have occurred when compressing air (20% oxygen) into tanks, and the temperature for combustion drops as the oxygen percentage in the gas rises. By cooling the compressor at critical points, the only one of the three components that can be removed from the explosion equation – heat – can be removed, preventing the lubricants inevitably present in the compressor machinery from igniting in an oxygen-rich environment.



Sherwood SPG Faces  
Used in assembly of SPGs at Oceanic  
Each SPG is individually calibrated

We loved this: diving, cool machines, physics discussions, more cool machines, testing equipment, more dive talk. What a great tour!

Oceanic's operation really impressed me. They are fanatical about innovation and quality assurance. Their newest offerings, a small bubble that seals off first stages from leakage if the "dust cap" leaks during after-dive soakings and the HUD in masks, demonstrate their commitment to identifying ways to improve their products and engineering the solutions.

We adjourned to a local San Leandro hofbrau and contemplated what we'd seen and swapped dive tales over 20 ounce specialty beers (drinking and "dry" diving can mix, after all). As we emerged (designated drivers ready to take the wheel), the rain had started to clear and a rainbow arched over the East Bay hills. Nuff said? Another great Rainbow Divers day...



*(continued from page 5)*

The boat is very well designed for diving, with a spacious and well-organized dive deck, a comfortable lounge with a plasma TV and a large library, and relatively large cabins. We dove almost exclusively off of skiffs. The crew made the trip truly superb. Their positive, can-do, friendly attitudes on the dive deck and everywhere else on the boat made the trip fun

and relaxed. As icing on the cake, the crew volunteered to wash our dive gear when the trip ended! The divemasters provided top notch services—very knowledgeable, safety conscious, and always willing to point out hard-to-find critters without causing any disturbance or reef damage.

Overall, we had a terrific adventure, with many surprises underwater, and fabulous treatment in

the friendly hands of our crew. The memories of whale shark close encounters will last a lifetime.

Post-trip update: In June 2008, the *Ocean Rover* will change owners and relocate to Manado, North Sulawesi, Indonesia for cruises there and in the hot new destination of Rajah Amphat.



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This year DFL will be held in Thailand at Phi Phi Island (approximately 50 miles east of Phuket). Check out the DFL website at [www.divingforlife.org](http://www.divingforlife.org) for more information.



The seventeenth annual DFL jamboree will be held **October 18 – 25, 2008.**

There are already 15 NCRD members registered; please consider joining us!



## Diving For Life Success! Vote on February 20th—Rainbow Divers to Donate \$13,525 to Local Charities

by Kelly Thiemann

Twenty-three Northern California Rainbow Divers (NCRD) members attended the sixteenth Annual Diving For Life Scuba Jamboree at Ambergris Caye, Belize, this past September 2007. One hundred fifty-one LGBT divers from gay dive clubs around the world came to dive, party and raise funds for local health-related charities. The monies raised are allocated back to participating dive groups on a pro-rata basis. Total amount raised was \$80,000 through a combination of live and silent auctions and a raffle. Locally donated dive items from Pinnacles Dive Center (Novato) and Wallin's (San Carlos) were used to raise funds. NCRD will receive \$13,525 to distribute to charities.

Now comes the fun part, choosing which charities will be recipients of the funds. Last year's recipients include: Project Open Hand – Breast Cancer Nutrition Services and Larkin Street Youth Center's HIV Rapid Testing Program. You may already know about the good work that some of these organizations do, and it will

be *your* job to nominate a group that should receive our support.

At our February 20<sup>th</sup> club meeting, nominations will be accepted from NCRD members and short presentations can be made either by sponsoring members or by representatives of the nominated groups. After group representatives depart, the members present will decide whether to grant all of the funds to one charity or to split it among several groups. Voting is always hard, as these are all worthy groups and any contribution will make a significant impact on their budgets and activities.

Please consider sharing information about your favorite health-related local non-profit with your fellow members. Nominated groups must be 501(c)(3) organizations and serve the health needs of lesbians and/or gay men.

Even if you don't have a group to nominate, please come to vote! Let's celebrate giving something back to our community while having fun times with our fellow divers.



### Donating to Charity: Here is How It Works

- NCRD members contact eligible 501(c)(3) charities serving the LGBT community.
- If a charity is interested, the nominating NCRD member should contact Kelly Thiemann by February 5<sup>th</sup> to get on the nomination agenda.
- At our February 13 general meeting, each charity will make a 10-minute presentation describing what they would do and how they would use the funds.
- After the presentations, charity reps are excused, and NCRD members present at the meeting will choose one or more recipients and the award amounts.
- The selected recipients will be notified and must provide DFL with appropriate documentation (such as tax-exemption letter, etc.)
- DFL will send the funds directly to the recipients.
- At our next meeting, NCRD will have a public presentation award.

For more information, please contact Kelly Thiemann, our DFL Liaison at:  
[dfli@rainbowdivers.org](mailto:dfli@rainbowdivers.org)

## General Meetings

**February 20th, 7:30 p.m.**

**Future Meetings: TBD** (look for notice in next newsletter & on the NCRD website)

## Meeting Location

Castro Community Room  
2nd Floor, 501 Castro St  
(Corner of 18th & Castro)  
San Francisco

## Getting There

The following all serve the Castro neighborhood:

- Muni Metro lines: J, K, L and M.
- The F Streetcar
- The Muni Bus Lines: 24, 33, 35

You can also take the BART to SF Civic Center and then transfer to Muni Metro or the F Streetcar.

## 2008 Calendar of Upcoming Events & Trips

### Local

**February 3**, boat dive, *Cypress Sea* out of Monterey

**April 18-20**, shore dive, North Coast diving at Salt Point

**March 23**, shore dive, Lover's Point

**May 17**, shore dive, Coral Street day dive, night dive at Breakwater Pipeline

**May 18**, boat dive, *Beach Hopper* Charter

**June 6-9**, liveaboard, *Vision* to Big Sur coast (advanced divers only)

**June 14**, shore dive, Pt Lobos

**June 15**, boat dive, Big Sur on the *Cypress Sea* (advanced divers only)

**July 12**, boat dive, *Cypress Sea*

**July 13**, shore dive, S. Monastery

**August 15**, shore dive, Breakwater

**August 16**, shore dive, Otter Cove (Pacific Grove)

### Far Away

**March 21-31, 2008 [Sold Out]**

*Undersea Hunter Live-aboard*, Cocos Island, Costa Rica

**August 16-30, 2008 [Sold Out]**

*Tawali Resort*  
Papua New Guinea

**October 15-25, 2008 [Register**

**Now!] *Diving For Life***  
Phi Phi Island, Thailand

**November 19-29, 2008**

**[Currently full but if wait list grows—we may get a bigger boat!]**  
*Ocean Hunter II Liveaboard*  
Palau, Micronesia

*Please see details at*  
[www.rainbowdivers.org/calendar.php](http://www.rainbowdivers.org/calendar.php)



Northern California Rainbow Divers  
601 Wellsbury Way  
Palo Alto, CA 94306