

Emerald Sea Dive Club

www.emeraldseadiveclub.org

January 2008

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Membership Renewal Form

***If none of your information has changed, all you need to do is print your name on the first line, sign and date the bottom line and return this form with your dues.**

Name (First, Last) _____ email address _____

Address: _____ City _____ ZIP _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone (optional) _____

Date of birth _____ How long have you been diving? _____

Do you have any medical problems that could affect your diving or participation in the club activities? If yes, please explain _____

Person to notify in case of an emergency _____

Phone _____ Relationship _____

Are you an insured member of DAN? _____ Membership # _____

Check here if you are interested in the "Big Buddy Program"

I HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE that SCUBA/skin diving can be dangerous. The possibility of serious injury or death is present. The proper use of equipment and techniques can be used to greatly minimize these risks. Emerald Sea Dive Club promotes safe diving practices in its activities, but cannot guarantee that accidents will not occur.

I FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGE that it is the responsibility of each diver to ensure that they follow accepted diving practices and to maintain the safety of their own diving equipment. Each diver should evaluate every diving situation with respect to his or her skill level and decline to participate if there is any doubt of performing a safe dive.

I FURTHER ACKNOWLEDGE that by participating in Emerald Sea Dive Club events, and in signing this release, each member takes responsibility for their own actions. Emerald Sea Dive Club accepts no liability for injury or death that may occur during club activities.

I DO HEREBY AGREE AND HOLD HARMLESS AND INDEMNIFY the Emerald Sea Dive Club, its members or its officers, including but not limited to club members who provide their boats for club activities, for any injuries or damages that I, my equipment, my family, heirs or assigns may suffer as a result of Emerald Sea Dive Club activities, including SCUBA/skin diving.

The scope of this indemnity and hold harmless agreement includes both ordinary and gross negligence.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Oh, Solo ... Me? ... Oh!

by Bob Bailey

Last week I received an e-mail from a friend who wanted an instructor's perspective on solo diving. He asked "How do I determine if I'm ready for solo diving"? It's a good question, but difficult to answer ... especially for an instructor representing a training agency that mandates diving with a buddy. But I gave it some thought, and I'd like to use this month's column to share some of those thoughts with you.

All of us were trained to dive with a buddy. Virtually all of the training agencies hold to the premise that it's just safer and therefore something we should do. And because diving is mostly a social activity, it's usually more fun to dive with someone you can share your underwater experiences with. But more and more people are looking at going solo as an alternative approach to diving. For some it holds a particular attraction either for specific activities like spear fishing or photography, where diving with a buddy requires effort not directly related to the diving activity, or simply because it allows a degree of freedom that one cannot attain by diving with a buddy. Whatever reasons one has for considering solo diving, it should not be taken lightly. As with my friend, you should ask yourself whether you're ready. And you should carefully consider the risks, skills, training, and equipment you would need to go it alone.

Why Solo?

The logical place to start would be to ask yourself why you would want to dive solo. Perhaps it's because you've had a bad experience with a buddy or are having trouble finding dive buddies. Is solo diving really the right response to that issue? Or perhaps you have a schedule that makes it difficult to find dive buddies when you're available to dive. Whatever the reason, it's important to assess whether or not solo diving is really the right approach.

Am I Ready?

Solo diving is very much about making an honest assessment of both your skills and your mental strengths and weaknesses.

- Can you function with your mask off or flooded?
- Can you doff and don your BCD underwater?
- Can you recognize the onset of stress or the beginnings of a panic cycle and take steps to stay in control of yourself?
- Would you know what to do if you were bent or injured and alone?

When you're solo diving, you won't have another diver to help you out of any difficult or unexpected situations, so you need to plan accordingly and be able to respond to any emergency in a calm and rational manner. The mantra Stop, Breathe, Think, and Act is far more important when solo than when you're diving with a buddy. You have to be able to anticipate the risks, be extra vigilant to avoid them, and be methodical to resolve the ones you can't avoid.

What Skills Do I Need?

First and foremost, you need to be very comfortable with basic diving skills ... you should have good buoyancy control, be able to function with a flooded (or lost) mask, and be able to recover a lost regulator.

Dive planning becomes crucial. Pre-dive preparations need to be made with more emphasis on risk-avoidance. During the dive it is crucial to maintain an awareness of where you are and stick to your dive plan. After the dive, guess what? You're still alone. Make sure you've thought through how to safely end the dive and exit the water. This is particularly important if you're diving from a boat or in surf because there isn't anyone available to help you.

Good gas management skills are essential. Never plan on your redundant air source as part of your gas supply; it's there strictly for emergencies. You also need to account for the fact that it may take you longer to solve a problem than it would with a buddy and plan your gas reserves accordingly.

You should be able to comfortably remove and replace your gear underwater because in the event of an entanglement there won't be anyone around to help you. And finally, you should be comfortable with your ability to do a controlled emergency swimming ascent (CESA). Because if all else fails, you may have to abandon your rig and swim for the surface.

How Much Redundancy Is Enough?

The primary logic behind diving with a buddy is so that if some piece of equipment fails, you have your dive buddy there to assist you. Dive buddies provide each other with redundancy. If a piece of equipment fails you can still end the dive safely. When solo diving, you have to bring your redundancy with you. At a minimum, this means a completely independent source of air ... such as doubles or a pony bottle. A second cutting device is also something you should take with you. EMT shears are highly recommended in addition to a standard dive knife. At least one of your cutting devices should be attached to a lanyard, so that if necessary you can attach it to your wrist to avoid accidentally dropping it. Another important consideration is a spare mask, so that you do not lose your sight if something happens to the one you're wearing. Less fundamental, but also important will be some sort of signaling device, such as a deployable surface marker buoy and a reel or spool, as well as a Dive Alert or other audible device. Of course, you should be proficient in the proper use of all of your gear.

And remember that redundant gear doesn't include the extra brain of a dive buddy. You need to always keep yours focused and alert.

OK, So Am I Good To Go?

As with any aspect of diving, proper training is important. At least one agency currently offers a solo diving class for recreational divers. It may also be possible to get training through the judicious choice of a diving mentor ... someone who has the experience and is willing to work with you to assure that you have the requisite skills to dive solo.

And there are some "Rules of Thumb" that can be applied to solo diving:

- Distribute your weights in such a way that both you and your rig can be independent of each other. In other words, if using an integrated BCD, consider putting some of your weights in a harness or weight belt that you wear. Remember, if you have to remove the BCD underwater you want to be able to maintain control of both yourself and your doffed rig without one sinking while the other tries to rocket to the surface.
- Manage stress and anxiety by maintaining an awareness of your pulse and breathing rate. Be on the alert for signs of narcosis or any other condition that would lead to distorted thinking. And adopt stricter criteria for when it's time to consider aborting the dive.
- Dive at sites you are familiar with. Avoid sites with known entanglement hazards, currents, or other risks that may become unmanageable without help.
- Always let someone know where you will be diving, when you expect to be done, and what to do if you are overdue. It's always a good idea to contact that person as soon as you have safely exited the water.

And finally, recognize that there are quite a few things that no amount of gear will help you with, such as injuries or medical problems. So put some thought into what you would do in an emergency. And finally, use good judgment to conduct your dive in a way that minimizes risks. In other words, a solo dive isn't a good time to try to pet a shark or feed an eel.

SPECIAL AWARDS

by Greg & Laura Becvar

Laura and I thought we should write a few words about SCUBA Santa's Special Awards, but first a couple quick honorable mentions for stories which did not make it into our ceremony.

For months, everyone kept speculating where Bruce might be. Well, at the Christmas party we heard the whole story. He was captured by the Borg and assimilated. (If you don't understand that last statement, you need to study Star Trek history.) Bruce was sent to a star system in the Diverticulosis Nebula. Bruce's connection to the Borg hive was severed when a viral video infected the starship he was on. He managed to hop an Orwellian freighter and returned to us, just in time for the party. You would have thought he would be traumatized by this experience, but no, he's the same old Bruce (except for the greenish complexion and the new mechanical hand).

A couple of months ago, Tina gave an excellent slide show on her trips to the Caribbean Is. called Utila. An honorable mention award that is now bestowed to Tina is based on the most common theme in her slide show. Apparently Tina can't resist taking airport bar photos. And not only that, she put a photo of Buck's head on a pole (a Freudian slip?), and paraded his ghostly apparition around at the Christmas party!

Why does ESDC do the SCUBA Santa Awards? Part of the joy of diving are the great friendships and the funny stories that happen over the course of a year. The stories are about what club members have doing over the year. They can be crazy, goofy, silly and/or humorous. The stories show that our membership is a diverse group which not only loves to dive, but loves to have fun together.

Where does SCUBA Santa get the stories about club members? Santa and his assistants are always watching & listening, making lists, checking them twice. And in November we start putting the awards together, based on what we have seen and learned.

How does the Santa Team come up with the ideas for the awards? Some situations just present the ideas to us. Broken leg? Well a crutch with a fin attached just makes perfect sense to us! We bounce ideas off one another and once we've decided on the award, we come up with the certificate. The ideas for the certificates come pretty much the same way.

Can I submit a story to Santa? Of course you can, Santa can't be everywhere. The only two rules that we have are that the story must be from the current year, and must be about diving, a member or club related.

How much information do I need for the story? A few facts and general information about the situation is all that is needed. Santa's team makes up what we don't know ;-). Of course you may embellish the story on your own if the mood strikes you.

Can I be SCUBA Santa next year? Yes, with board approval and the understanding that the current Santa's team must be included in the creative process for the next year's awards.

Laura & I have a lot of fun doing this. Thank You for giving us all the great stories and letting us entertain you. Questions, ideas, stories for '08 Holiday Party can be submitted to Greg at tridoxia@yahoo.com



Once again it's time to recognize a few divers with "special awards". This is a time honored tradition at ESDC which we started way back in 03.... These short stories are based on real occurrences; however some of the facts have been changed so we can have a laugh or two.... As always remember, these awards are personal awards, but don't take them PERSONALLY.

First off, do we have any members who have recently joined and who have never been to the Christmas Party? Ok, I'd like you to sign in for eligibility for next year's "Special Christmas Awards" Here's the sign in sheet (toilet paper), its 2 ply; press hard to make 2 copies.

But...But...Officer! Award: This member was overheard saying to a police officer at Edmonds, "Please slim Jim the passenger door lock, because yesterday when I was locked out, another officer broke my driver side door lock."

Keys/retractor- Linda

Break a Leg Award: This person has spent many long nights on the computer working tirelessly for ESDC. However he has been a very poor dive buddy. ...Why you ask? He broke his leg while playing one of those fake sports, you know; beat the ball with a snowshoer racket. Poor Sabine hasn't gotten much diving in either due to Glenn's condition which lasted most of the summer.

Fin crutch- Glenn

Old Fart Diver's Association Award: I'm applying for a new certification for Skip. The requirements to get this card are: You have to have a diving c-card, be 50 yrs old or have 250 logged dives. And no doubt there are many in this club who qualify for this card. Skip is uniquely qualified because of his jenesaisquoi, if you know what I mean. This certification is awarded by the Old Farts Divers Assoc.

OFDA Cert card- Skip

There's No Such Thing as Too Much of a Good Thing Award: This diver does everything in a really BIG way....bought the big truck to haul gear, wants to do more & more diving and get more advanced training, always gets the best deals on equipment, and always looking to add divers for her buddy list. She bought a ginormus camera system, we affectionately called the Mars Lander, and it has terra bits of memory and is able to shoot billions of pictures. You know her as Johanna, I know her as INXS Diver.

Jo- INXS CD

Weather or Not Award: This team has been actively planning dives for the club for the past year to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Hood Canal, the Caribbean, and locally. We love 'em for planning dives but I really have to give them a more accurate weather predictor because when they plan a trip, more often than not, it pours cats and dogs, the wind rises to hurricane force, or the water freezes over.

Pam & Andy-Magic 8 Ball

Booty Award: Upon exiting the water in Edmonds this member announced everyone present in the parking lot that she had a cold booty. Now the ears of several guys perked up when she continued to talk about her cold booty. A few even volunteered to warm her up. At that point she had to make it clear, that Hey it's the booty on my foot that's cold!

Jill- Wool Sox

Hamming it Up Reward: After a rewarding day of diving at Hood Canal this member was so pumped she did a triple back flip into a blackberry thicket. Her buddies had to use all their skills and emergency training to rescue her. When they finally got her out she jumped right back in to the thorns to clown for the camera.

Loogpla- canned ham

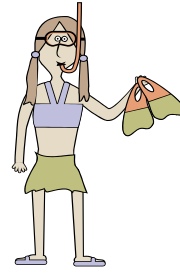
Psychosomatic Dive Toe Disorder Award: This award comes to us from one of our very own medical professionals. This fellow diver had a physical manifestation of a psychologically suppressed bout of anger. This toe pain was really a psychosomatic transfer of his overwhelming desire to put his foot into the backside of a certain dive boat operator (preferably when she was leaning over the gunnel). If he had not been restrained by dive buddies, this would have become a real physical injury.

Jack- Foot Massager

Almost Cat Food Award: This next diver managed to wrap himself up in line while spear fishing in the San Juan's, but he was still lucky enough to get his fish. He is well known for his lucky ways . . . then he went deer hunting. While he was waiting for that tasty venison to come by, a cougar decided our dive buddy was the lunch. His luck didn't run out this time thanks to his Marine Corp Rifle training. That cat is now the rug lying in front of the proverbial fireplace.

Rich- silver bullet beer

Wrong Way Robert Award: This diver was donning his dry suit at Seacrest for his first dive. As he labored to pull up the legs the suit just didn't seem to fit right. As he pulled the suit to his chest something still didn't feel right. He sat down and a strange expression flashed across his face. His buddy asked him what was wrong. So he showed her. He realized when he sat down he was sitting on the relief zipper. The suit was on back-ass-wards.



Robert- Instruction Manual

Instructions for donning a dry suit

- 1.** Write with magic marker on you right leg (1). Repeat with left leg (2). Repeat right arm (3) and left arm (4).
- 2.** Identify front of suit (A) and back of suit (B). Front can be IDed by it's inflate valve, which way the boots point, and possibly a relief zipper (z).
- 3.** Face the back side of suit. ID legs on suit left (a), right leg (b) right arm (c) and left arm (d).
- 4.** Place your right leg (1) into right leg (b). Put left leg (2) into left leg (a). Note: Be careful not to put legs (1) or (2) into arm (c), (d), or neck (e).
- 5.** Pull suit up to waist (w). Verify leg positions are correct and proceed to next step.
- 6.** Put right arm (3) into right arm (c), repeat left arm (4) into left arm (d).
- 7.** Carefully push head (X) through neck seal (e). Note: Do not put (xxx) through neck seal, it comes out through (z).
- 8.** Have buddy zip up your suit. Did you forget something? If you do not have (z) go to step 9.
- 9.** Reverse procedure, make mad dash to restroom. Start over from step 1.



DIVE REPORT

by Janna Nickels

Winter has set in full force but there's still some great diving and critter watching to be had out there in spite of the rain and cold. We're also entering Spiny Lump sucker season, so keep your eyes out in the shallows on kelp and eelgrass. Maybe you'll get lucky (unlike me) and see one! Also beware of feisty Lingcod - its nesting season and their attitude changes dramatically this time of year.

Online all the time!

Is this cool or what? Now you can enter your data ONLINE for the Pacific NW!! No more scan forms (unless you really want to use them - they'll still work), no more scrounging around to find a pencil. No more stamps and trips to the post office. All you need to do is go to www.reef.org and register (if you already have a REEF member number) or join REEF (it's free) if you don't have a member number yet. Then just click on "Submit Data Online" and you're on your way.

Can't remember your number?

The REEF folks have thought of that one too - and have a lost number lookup feature on the new website! Just go here: <http://www.reef.org/user/numberlookup>

Cool Critter Sighting

Darlene Stonecypher and her husband found a real rarity at Day Island Wall a few weeks ago, and got a great photo! It's a Marbled Snail fish and a really neat-looking critter. Take a look:

<http://www.pnwscuba.com/critterwatchers/coolcritters.htm>

Critter of the Month

It lives underwater. It's not a fish. It's pink. Check it out!

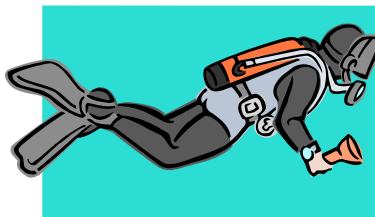
<http://www.pnwscuba.com/critterwatchers/critterofthemonth.htm>

REEF ID Courses - Anacortes in February

Whidbey Island Dive Center (thanks Pete!) and WWU's Shannon Point Marine Center (thanks Nate!) have been busy setting up the REEF Fish and Invertebrate ID courses for February. If you live anywhere near that area, this is your chance to take these **free** classes that will change your diving. More info and online signups here:

<http://www.pnwscuba.com/critterwatchers/classes.htm>

That's it for this month - keep diving and have fun with the new online data entry!



Dances with Seals

by Bob Bailey

I love December. The other night I went to Cove 2 for my usual Thursday night dive and there wasn't another car in sight: No divers, no one fishing off the pier, no occasional pedestrian. Perhaps due to the recent heavy rain it was a little too quiet. Our usual meet time came and went and no one showed up for the dive. Hmmm ... does everyone else know something I don't know?

I walked out on the fishing pier and looked down at the water. It had an unhealthy brown color to it and looking down a piling I could see maybe a foot. The wind was blowing and with the 38 degree temperature it was downright chilly. Maybe it won't be so bad if no one shows ... but I figured I'd give it a while so I got into the car and waited.

About 15 minutes later, one of my usual dive buddies pulled in. We talked about conditions and decided that sure ... we'd go diving.

We geared up, did our checks and surface swam out to the buoy where we usually start our dive. It was obvious that the top layer was fresh-water runoff it was very murky and very ... very ... cold. We didn't delay our descent. Dropping down through the first few feet was like being suspended in a muddy and refrigerated Italian dressing. Although my buddy was only about three feet away I could just barely make out his dive light.

But at about 6 feet, like a blanket, we dropped through the halocline. Not only did viz clear up to a very nice 20-25 feet but the water temperature went up about six degrees as well. Nice ... maybe this wasn't such a bad idea after all.

Unfortunately, we only got to enjoy the nice viz for about 3 or 4 minutes. The signs were there almost from the beginning ... the little wisps of kelp floating against the current, the silt tornadoes where there should have been no water movement at all, we had visitors. Or perhaps it's more accurate to say that we were the visitors and our hosts had arrived to greet us. Our "hosts", you see, were harbor seals. Ah ... winter in Elliot Bay ... this is what we have to look forward to for the next three months.

At first they maintained their distance, just close enough so we could see them in the beam of our lights. But as we made our way down the line to our first objective, the dolphins at around 100 feet, they became less wary. Or perhaps they were just a little slow getting into the social scene. Like all good hosts they made sure we were properly entertained and didn't feel like they were ignoring us, making high-speed passes in front of our masks, darting barrel-rolls around us, and occasionally, just to make sure we were properly appreciating all their effort, squeezing beneath us and sandwiching themselves between our bodies and the bottom. A couple of times I could feel a slight pressure on my chest and stomach as they pushed through the silt. All the while they were darting after the terrified fish that we were down there to look at.

And what a mess they made, viz dropped to a total silt-out quite a few times. I was really glad to be doing this with a buddy I was familiar with and trusted to stay where I expected him to be.

Now, let me pause a moment to point out that so far we had only seen two seals. I knew there was a third seal out there by the visual "clues" created by their turbulence but so far I hadn't noticed that it was

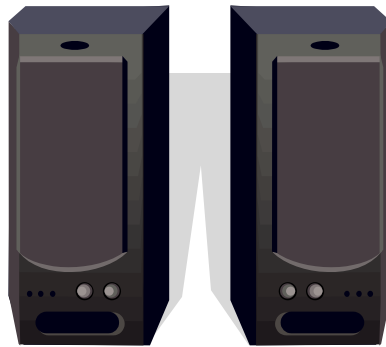
a pup. He (or she) was keeping a careful distance ... probably having never seen divers before and wary of something that was big enough to maybe enjoy a tasty seal pup snack. But as the dive progressed I think the little critter started to realize the value of dining by dive light ... he finally made a wary pass, snatching unsuccessfully at a fish that had wandered into our dive lights and darting away almost as quickly as the fish did. It was a cute little thing, roughly the size of a mottled gray basketball with a head and a tail.

We progressed from the dolphins to the I-beams to the jackstraw pilings to the Honey Bear, our usual cove tour, and the three seals stayed with us the entire time (after all, we were the only "guests" in the cove this evening). And they were getting friendlier as the dive progressed. A few times they would bump into us or stop and try to nibble on a fin or a glove but the pup kept its distance. Finally, we left the Honey Bear and headed back to the entry. At about 20 feet I suddenly felt a pressure on my left arm and my dive light was forced up a couple inches. Looking over I realized I had this cuddly little basketball tucked up underneath my arm, good grief, the pup had adopted me.

I did my best to just ignore the little critter and go on about my dive. After a few seconds, he swam away ... only to return a minute or so later and try to snuggle in on the other side. Nope, you're not a cat, go find a daddy seal to read you a bedtime story or something.

The three of them followed us all the way to the entrance. And when we stood up to take off our fins three heads popped out of the water staring at us with those liquid black eyes as if to say they weren't done playing yet.

But by that time there were a few other divers gearing up in the parking lot. I'm sure they had an entertaining evening with our winter dive hosts.



Guest speaker for this month is Bruce Higgins. He will be giving an update on the underwater park and what is planned for the future and talk about the invasive Tunicate in the park and what is being done to eliminate it.

Calendar Contest

Calendar Contest

by David L Ripley

I would like to thank all of the photographers who participated in the calendar contest. There were fourteen photographers who submitted a total of 150 photos. Eight photographers won spots in the calendar. First place went to Bob Bailey, second place went to Rich Carton and third place went to Andy Norton. Congratulations!

There are 16 calendars left for sale on a first come first served basis--\$10 each. They will be available at the January meeting or, if you want them sent to you send your check to: ESDC PO Box 73 Edmonds, WA 98020. Add \$3 for postage for each calendar ordered.

I am looking forward to next year's contest and would like to hear your suggestions for improving it. Rules will be posted in February's newsletter.

My Journey: Costa Rica to Cozumel

by Phil Morgan-Ellis

Several months ago I got word ESDC was planning a trip to Cozumel. I jumped at the chance and told my brother about the trip. My brother and I have been divers for several years but we had never dove together. And I hadn't seen my friends from the ESDC for several years, ever since I moved to Costa Rica. Mexico's not that far away. Should be an easy trip, yes?

I went to Travelocity.com to get tickets. Easy trip? No. I would need to fly to Miami, wait for 18 hours to catch a flight to Cozumel. I felt I could trust Travelocity.com so booked the tickets. For some reason, this time, they insisted on sending me paper tickets. Now there's something you need to understand about Costa Rica. Houses don't have numbers and streets don't have names. So getting mail is a bit of a problem. But Travelocity.com was adamant that

they needed to snail mail me the tickets, so we tried.

Of course the tickets got lost. Of course Travelocity.com would not help but said the airline would be able to issue me tickets at the airport. Which was true, but Travelocity.com failed to mention that it would cost me \$1,136 to do so; over twice the price of the original ticket. But I hadn't seen my brother for about 3 years and my friends from the club in over 2, so I bit the bullet. You only live once.

The flight was the most unpleasant that I have ever experienced. Thank you Travelocity.com! But I made it. I arrived in Cozumel. Tired and exhausted I dropped off my gear and set off to explore the town. In short order I found Loogpla and the gang doing what they do so well, eating. I joined them for lunch and a beer and then returned with them to Aqua Safari where we were staying.

Our first day of diving was on Tuesday. There were four dives scheduled. Our boat left dock at 8:30 a.m. The first dive was the usual, cautious, “let's see if these guys can put their gear on and use it” checkout type dive; not very challenging, but very beautiful. There were coral reefs with lots of colorful fish of all sizes. It's always great to get into the water, better with friends. Toward the end of this dive I notified the dive master that my air was at 700 and he instructed me to make my way to the boat. I went to tell me dive buddy when I saw Loogpla below me signaling that I should come down and take a picture of something, my first turtle of the trip. It was a medium size animal tearing apart a piece of coral. I got a few pictures and then decided to move to movie mode. Because of all the debris being thrown into the water several large fish were hanging around to take advantage of the feeding opportunity. Good pictures, great video, neither helped my air situation. Cozumel is an island with lots of dive sites scattered around the perimeter, most at depths of less than 100ft. While by Northwest standards not very deep it is the deepest I've been in the Caribbean. Our second dive was Paradise Reef. They all have a Paradise Reef, don't they? We began to see lots of very large lobsters which were a great attraction for the photographers.

After dive two we returned to shore and ate at the Restaurant Costa Brava. These dive trips are as much about eating as diving and this was a great find. Cute old Mexican man ran it with his wife (?). Whenever she picked up a tip she crossed herself with it. The seafood was really great! We decided to eat breakfast there the next day.

Back to the boat for dive three and then our night dive. The night dive was nice but not spectacular. I understand that often these night dives are quite nice, there was a photographer there with all sorts of grand and expensive equipment but he only shot a few minutes of video. He told me later that there are usually lots of octopi out but that he was skunked that time.

On our second day of diving we were met at the boat by a really cute, young, cute . . . did I

mention cute girl with a big underwater video camera. Looked like something you could take to 300ft. She got on the boat and kept shooting video. We all never were sure why but could guess. She got into the water with us and continued shooting. This day we were taken to reefs that were much more spectacular. I guess we passed our first day test. These reefs were more like giant thrusts up from the sea bottom into the water, in places 50ft tall. It was quite the experience swimming in between them and exploring the life on their surfaces. We returned to Costa Brava for breakfast. Not a good idea; great seafood but poor breakfast.

Dive two was a drift dive. I had been told since getting to Cozumel that most, if not all, the dives would be in very strong current. Guess this one was going to be the great drift dive. I left my camera on board the boat. I've seen wild drift dives at Hornby Island and it's no place for a camera. Well, this wasn't Hornby Island. It was a decent drift with a current of about 1.2 knots. We flew along the edge of a wall that dropped off for about 30ft., always staying on top of the wall, never knowing where our dive buddy was. At one point I found myself all alone and was interested to see more of the wall so I moved out about 20ft from the edge. Not descending but out over the abyss. Don't know where that pesky dive master came from but he wanted me to come back. And that is when I got the greatest photo opportunity of the dive. As I approached the edge of the wall I could see several very large fish going wild over something. My path was taking me right over the action. When I got there was the largest turtle I've ever seen in the sea. It must have been over 5ft long, tearing apart some coral, flinging debris into the water, much to the glee of these fish. Perfect shot! Great moment! All I needed was my camera and enough warning to get it set up before flying over the scene. Great shot! But sadly, only in my head. Back to Costa Brava for seafood.

Dive three was a shallow reef. When we got back from the last dive of the day we were told

there would be a “preview” of the video that was taken. OK...6:30 preview...7:30 supper. We met in the dive shop classroom and watched her, the really cute girl, DVD. At the end she, the really cute girl, asked how many of us wanted to purchase a copy (no surprise). There were 11. OK... it would only be \$60/copy. The room fell silent. Sixty dollars? Each? (*Editor's note: Buddy and I paid \$125 for our Cozumel dive tape!*) Hands immediately went down. Well, we could buy the master for \$350 and make our own copies. She left empty handed. Did I mention this was the really cute girl?

Eating is important on these trips and Loogpla had heard of a great restaurant...“La Perlita”, a short taxi ride away. Was the food there tremendous, or what! Do these guys know how to eat!!

Breakfast the next day was an interesting problem. We were to take an 8 a.m. ferry to the mainland. The plan was to eat before we left. However the restaurant by the ferry hadn't opened by the time we arrived. So we decided to take an earlier ferry and eat on the other side. It would be later. Restaurants would be open. Good theory, poor practice. The few restaurants on the other side didn't open before noon. So we snacked as we could and were then picked up for diving at “Dos Ojos”. Dos Ojos is a series of sink holes, or caverns on the mainland. I've been hearing lately a lot about the importance these sink holes had on the Mayan culture. The Mayan's were the only major culture to have evolved in the history of civilization that did NOT arise along a river. These sink holes seem to be the reason.

As we drove out we had quite a long discussion with our dive master/driver. One of the popular activities in the area consists of diving with dolphins. These dolphins live in artificial pools and “eco-tourists” are invited to get into the water with these “wild” dolphins. There were several of these pools behind the dive shop. Our master/driver was telling us that in reality these dolphins lead a short life once placed in the ponds. Because of the handling and the confinement of the animals

they quickly get sick and soon die. Once they get sick they are abandoned back to the sea (where they are soon fish food) and the animals are replaced with healthy ones sold on the black market. I've seen many examples of “eco-tourism” of this nature since coming to Central America. Capitalism flourishing!

We arrived at the “dive site”, in the middle of the jungle. Walked down to the entrance and received a rather “illustrative” dive briefing. Another situation where I wish I had my camera. You really had to be there. We had two dives in these caverns; both no more than 45ft in depth and for me my first experience in a cave or cavern. Something I've always said I'd never do. It wasn't that bad. It was very much like slowly flying through caves. The water was so clear as to not even be there. That, plus the dark, made for an interesting experience. Above us, trapped by the ceiling, were pockets of air from all the divers. The impression was very much like we were moving upside down through the air above small ponds of water. Few fish, much geology.

We were taken through in groups of four. Most of the caverns were very twisted so we couldn't see very far ahead. But when it opened up we could see more of what was around us; a constant parade of divers. They were all in a line, following a rope on the bottom of the cavern; reminded me a bit of Disneyland. But it was a really great introductory experience of cavern diving.

Our final day of diving . . . only two dives remain. The first was the “Devil's Throat”. This WAS the trip of cavern diving. The Devil's Throat is a series of short, narrow caverns that begin at 95ft and descend to 125ft. The inside of THESE caverns were like the reefs we've been diving, but very much enclosed. The walls were covered with what looked to me like very large tube worms. Fish were hiding along the way and at one point a very large lobster. We dove two of these caverns and ended our dive at a small but lively reef. Our final dive of the day and of Cozumel was on the wreck of the Felipe Xicotenctl.

The next day was about packing up and packing out. I had the last flight scheduled and used much of the day to spend time with my brother and his wife. They left around noon and I at 1 p.m.

You'll recall that I had to purchase a duplicate ticket for my flight in San Jose. My original ticket had me leaving Cozumel on the 8th of December, returning to San Jose on the 9th and I had school starting the 10th. OK...my DUPLICATE ticket had me leaving on the 9th and returning to San Jose on the 10th. This was the first I knew of it! I was stuck. No way out of Cozumel until Sunday. But what the hell, there are worse places to be stuck. I returned to town in a van full of Texans that were beyond belief. They made the cohorts in "O Brother, Where Art Thou?" look like college professors. I have

never been around such ignorance and stupidity. They made the skits on *Saturday Night Live* look like a poor imitation of the reality of . . . of whatever that was.

Saturday night and Sunday in Cozumel is not like any other time in the week. The partying during Saturday night is wild and out of control. The bars are in full tilt until about 4 a.m. Then the party ends and the town abandoned. No cruise ships, no one on the streets, no shops open anyplace. The only thing that is open is the church. I WAS able to find a place to eat breakfast (the "quiche" place) and made my way BACK to the airport. This time I flew out without incident. Eleven hours in Miami and back home, finally!

Great diving, great friends, but I'll NEVER fly that route or use Travelocity.com again!

Cozumel

by Skip Stacy

With visions of conch, grouper and shrimp dinners, fantastic viz. in warm water and sunny tropical weather dancing in our heads, Chris and Kimberly Waterhouse, Loogpla Cowden, Cathy Duchamp, Marylou Hernandez, Linda Perry, Linda Putman and her son Doyle landed on the beautiful island of Cozumel. This was the "3rd times a charm for me" and charming it was. We stayed with Aqua Safari right on the waterfront with 3rd floor rooms above their dive shop. Through customs and a taxi ride to the shop, to checking in and getting settled into our rooms we ate lunch and dinner less than 3 hours after landing. We also met up with Phil Morgan -Ellis who had retired to Costa Rica after being our webmaster from Pt. Angeles for a number of years. His brother Larry and Larry's wife Sherri, who both dive, also met us there; they flew in from Utah. We had enough divers to get a whole dive boat to ourselves. Later was some snacks and the Ladies found the McDonalds for a late evening French Fry Fest. A good night's sleep as the next day was a 4 dive day for most of us.

We loaded our gear and tanked up and headed quite a ways south for our check out dive with the dive masters and making sure we were weighted properly. The coral heads on the 1st reef dive were enormous and teeming with life and I can't even guess how good viz. was and viz. was like this the whole time. Some of us had to add more weight but the 2nd dive was as good as the 1st. Back in for a real quick lunch, most snacked or went to McDonalds, but I remembered a close place from last time and got a quick order of conch ceviche (Honduran: fish with garlic) to go and ran back to the dock to wolf it down. The 3rd dive was as good as the 1st two dives and as we had our only night dive of the trip later we were back in to eat half a meal at the place I lunched at and then a short nap and then out for the night dive. Many more things out in the open for this one: The long stretched out sea cucumbers. We could sneak right up to the parrotfish in their secreted cocoon and almost pet them. There were eels out in the open. A couple of pretty good sized lobsters. Shining the lights on all the fish and it seemed like

they just stared back to kind of say "Its night and you can't bother us" but we could look. It ended too soon but it was dinner time. Back to the same little restaurant and it seemed like we ate forever.

The next day there were three dives with a little more time for lunch after the 1st two. One dive was a terrific current dive and we could fly through the water and land behind large coral heads or fly into a grotto opening with schools of fish and grouper and snapper all together getting out of the current. I would look ahead and see pairs of queen angelfish and French angelfish and time a current swoop right over them to almost pet them; the same with a big grouper resting behind a big barrel sponge. One of the dives was a giant green Moray just stretched out in the open, barely under a coral ledge and a couple of small turtles, one a baby and the other probably a teen-ager. It seemed like the diving day always ended too soon but there were beautiful sunsets and it was time to, you guessed it, EAT. This time it was way across town to a little place that Linda and Doyle had been to on a previous trip. They had been building us up to go there and it was something else. Cathy and Loogpla had whole fish. Linda Perry and I split a sea food platter and so did a couple of others and some had steak. The sea food platter was served on about a 20" by 32" cookie sheet and had everything, even (sorry Wendy, Don't Hate Us) octopus. I had to be careful to make sure to leave room for the key lime pie. The next day we were up trying to find something early for breakfast because we had to be on the fast ferry to the mainland for our ceñote dives, the limestone sinkholes of the Yucatan Peninsula. We took an earlier ferry as nothing was open until 7 a.m. but nothing was open in Playa Del Carmen either but we managed to find some little stalls and a mocha stand and then it was time to meet our rides and dive masters. We rode with our dive masters to their dive shop in a resort that would top anything I've seen anywhere.

Shops, cafes, condos, fancy marina, everything anyone needed in order to hide from the rest of the world. We were met by Clyde Margolis (Jeff had business) and Jerry and Deborah Dollar also showed up. They were staying in Cancun and met us there to dive the ceñotes. I was wishing they would have come over with us for a day but it was not to be. Off again to the ceñotes (Dos Ohos, which I had the chance to dive the 1st trip). Unloading and a good briefing we teamed up with our dive masters (four divers to one dive master) to weight check and then we were off. Underwater caverns with the line trails, it was just like I remembered it, but only better, that having to be just short of out of this world; viz. as far as our lights would penetrate and stalactites and stalagmites of enormous size. Bluest of blue with shimmering rays of sun sparkling in and then darkness but with light shining through again around the next turn. Once again it ended too soon. We switched out cylinders and hand lunch in the jungle. Then back for the 2nd dive, a different route but the same Viz. and the same blue and light rays. This time a mid-point surface into a bat cavern to float on top and shine lights onto thousands of stalactites: a cathedral under the earth just for our benefit. Then back out for the return to Playa Del Carmen. Our truck was even pulled over for a spot drug-contraband check with about 20 armed soldiers surrounding us and a vehicle mounted machine gunner keeping an eye on us but we were back on the road quickly.

Playa Del Carmen was ice cream and snacks as this night's meal would be the best. Pepes overlooking the waterfront was simply fantastic with its sea food and Argentine beef. I had the grouper and I think it was actually the size of two but I still had room for another key lime pie slice. The next day there were only two dives before noon as the next day was the flight out. Linda and Doyle were leaving this day so we said our good byes before we left to dive that morning. This was probably the hi-light of the diving on the Cozumel side. We had gotten permission for the dive masters to take us through the Devils Throat; a narrow, vertical tunnel that started at about 75-80 feet, went in about 8-10 feet then dropped vertically and came out around 130 feet around giant coral heads with another little horizontal tunnel to swim through and then more giant coral heads with life all over. There was a good safety stop by everyone and then on to the 2nd dive they also got permission to take us on . . . the wreck C-53 (hope I got the # right). Our first trip to Cozumel we penetrated this for several deck levels and also did a night dive on it. This was no longer allowed by Aqua Safari due to deterioration of the structure but we were allowed to dive the outside on this dive as long as we did no penetration whatsoever. Our diving

finished up on a smaller, shallower reef. We had done 11 dives on this trip and also missed all that flood and wind in Seattle. In the afternoon we a rented a taxi van to tour the other side of the island. We ended up at world famous "Marley's" hammocks and food; a few shops and a chance to leave our mark on Cozumel. EMERALD SEA DIVE CLUB, 2007 was permanently (or at least till a hell of a hurricane hits) inscribed about 15 feet up on the underside of a timber beam on the roof of a pole building by Linda Perry who stood on a pole and Marylou's shoulders. Among the thousands of names it was the most stand-outish up there and hopefully all future trips by members of ESDC will get the chance to search for our name and add to it.

The flight out ended things too soon and my memory of landing in Seattle in 28° weather with shorts and a t-shirt still makes me cold. Thanks to everyone for FUN . . . FOOD . . . and TERRIFIC DIVING!!

**** REMEMBER ****

If you do not have your 2008 membership dues paid in full by February 27th, you will no longer receive a newsletter. The February issue will be your last. Please, pay promptly so you do not miss any fun?

Board Members

President	Jill Keeler	jillk@bjbrewster.com
Vice-President	Rich Carton	crich4scuba@verizon.net
Secretary	Adria Ali	adriaali@yahoo.com
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Big Buddy Coordinators	Wendy Drucker	wcdrucker@clearwire.net

Other Stuff

Membership Dues

\$30 for a single membership \$47 for a family membership

Winning \$50.00

You could win a \$50.00 ESDC check by hosting club dives. Every time you sponsor a club dive your name "goes into a hat" and twice a year a raffle will be held and one person from each drawing will receive \$50.00 from ESDC as a **Thank You** for sponsoring dives, friendships, and fun! Remember, a club dive is a dive approved by Shawn Miller, Activities Coordinator, and placed on the clip-board and on the ESDC web site. This is a great way to meet club members and have lots of fun. **Book your dives today!** Remember: the more dives you book the more chances you have of winning.

Another way of winning is to submit stories, articles, or other information to the newsletter. Your name "goes into another hat" and twice a year a raffle will be held and one person from each drawing will receive **\$50.00**.

Continuing Education Reward

When you take a class that furthers your diving experience, such as Advanced Open Water, Rescue, Dive Master, etc., show The Board your certification card and you will receive a congratulatory \$15.00. This offer is only good one time per calendar year.

ESDC Mailing List

E-mail (this person?), our mailing list moderator, (name and address to be filled in later) to be put on the ESCD yahoo group mailing list (www.groups.yahoo.com/group/ESDClist) where you can communicate with other members regarding various dive topics, find dive buddies, or let everyone know about a planned dive that did not make it to the newsletter or clipboard in time. **Join the list so YOU won't be left out!**

Our Next Meeting

Wednesday, January 9 at Alfys Pizza

4820 196th SW Lynnwood WA 425-775-5459

Board meeting, **6:00 p.m.**; everyone is welcome to join. General meeting, **7:00 p.m.**

How to Get to Alfys:

Heading north on I-5: take exit 181B (196th St SW/Alderwood Mall Pkwy). At the top of the exit there is a stop light, turn left. At the next stop light turn left onto 196th St SW proceeding to 48th. Alfys is on the south side of the road. (Alfys is 4 blocks down from The Rock.)

Heading south on I-5: take exit number 181 (Lynnwood). At the top of the exit there is a stop light, turn right onto 196th St SW, proceed to 48th. Alfys is on the south side of the road. (Alfys is 4 blocks down from The Rock.)

How to Contact Us

Visit our web site: www.emeraldseadiveclub.org

Write us: Emerald Sea Dive Club

PO Box 73

Edmonds WA 98020

Contact any of the board members via telephone or e-mail www.groups.yahoo.com/group/ESDClist

Divers on the Loose

▣ Greg Becvar	360-659-2853	tridoxia@yahoo.com
▣ Skip Stacy	425-775-2410	
▣ Greg Goebel	206-915-8371	greg@brinybay.com Available Wed. and Thurs. only

If you are interested in being included on this list please contact the editor.



Newsletter articles deadlines

February	January 28
March	February 25
April	March 24
May	April 28
June	May 26
July	June 23
August	July 28
September	August 25
October	September 29
November	October 27
December	November 24

Sunny Bonaire:

Are you looking for fun and excitement on your next dive vacation away from the big hotel?

I am hosting an adventurous dive trip to Bonaire on Mar. 1-8, 2008. We are staying among the locals at a beautiful self catering vacation townhouse with full kitchen and only two minutes walk to the beach. It is surrounded by tropical gardens with its own private porch and garden with hammock and sun bed in a quiet residential area or Belnem just south of the Airport.

Bonaire is known as being one of the top three scuba dive destinations in the world. Beautiful underwater landscapes, crystal clear waters, and because of this, it is perfect for snorklers and/or scuba divers ranging from novice to advance with visibility being 60 to 100 feet. There are more than 90 dive sites on the island and the reef is so close to shore we can explore the majority of them without ever boarding a dive boat.

We will have an automobile during our stay. Just drive in our pickup truck, pick a spot, gear up and walk on in! The dive sites are marked with yellow stones along the road to help us find “our” prime spots. We could go the entire trip without boarding a boat but most likely we’ll want to, especially if it's going toward Klein Bonaire.

For only \$1095.00 (approx.) you'll get R/T air, car rental, 6 nights lodging, 5 days of unlimited shore diving, air, and NITROX (limited).

If you would like to join us for this trip please see Loogpla at the meeting or e-mail at loogplacowden@att.net or call at 206-399-5682.

DIVE and EVENT CALENDAR

DATE	DIVE	SPONSOR
Saturday-Saturday March 1-8, 2008	Bonaire, CA	Loogpla, 206-399-5682 loogplacowden@att.net

