



# KELP KRAWLERS DIVE CLUB

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## Lost Fin

by Amy Kurtenbach

How I lost my Fin in Neah Bay.

I had the pleasure of accompanying Justin of Underwater Sports on yet another dive adventure of the year. For most of us, it was our first opportunity to dive in Neah Bay. Porthole Charters hosted the trip. There were two trips out each day, morning and afternoon, with around 6 divers on each boat. The morning divers were: Janet and Scott Boyd, Steve Sutton, Wendy Rude, John Brown, and myself. The weather forecast was typical, overcast with chance of rain. The diving gods were not going to cooperate. Our adventure was drenched with sun all three days. The weather could not have been better.

### **Day 1:**

The first day of the trip we all had the bug to dive Duncan Rock. Why not, the Straight of Juan De Fuca looked like a swimming pool from the marina. Day one and Duncan Rock was a bust! Mike our responsible captain, and owner of Porthole Charters, could see breakers over the elusive rock as we approached. No worries, our day was filled with wonderful diving. We dove Waddah Island Fingers and Mushroom Rock. Mushroom Rock reminded me of a scene from the movie Finding Nemo. Grey Whales were spotted frequently that day. As John and I swam through krill so thick that I could not see him from 2 feet away, my mind wandered.... would I be swallowed by a whale and blown out of a blowhole somewhere in Sidney Harbor, Australia??? Well, interesting enough, as John and I surfaced from our safety stop, our boat was about 100 feet away and all eyes were looking at a large grey whale alongside the boat. We waited (patiently) for our pick-up.

### **Day 2:**

Again, sunshine and the Straight looked like a lake. Would this be the day??? As we boarded the boat with excitement, we had our first equipment tragedy. Wendy tore her neck seal....aarg! With no opportunity to fix it, we sadly had to see her go. Such a beautiful day and what bad luck! Wendy was fairly upbeat about the whole thing (no surprise if you know Wendy). And, as supportive divers, we all told her that she would be missed. We told her we would attempt to TRY HARD not to brag to her about the tales/fables of the day. Heck,

that's what friends do! So, down one diver we started our day.

Our first dive was wonderful (don't tell Wendy). We dove Waddah Island East. It is a beautiful dive site just outside of the marina. The visibility was outstanding—40' to 65'. Just to name a few critters we spotted: wolf



eels, octopus, blue and black rockfish, china and tiger rockfish, canary and vermillion rockfish, cabezon, ling cod, and a long nose skate. The dive was beautiful but our safety stop was the highlight.

A female sea lion found John and myself as curious sorts and decided to join us for our entire safety stop, which by the way, was extended well beyond three minutes. She would just hang upside down watching us from 5' away, or in an act of boredom, start swimming around us trying to urge us to play. She was very disappointed when we boarded the boat. She swam around the boat trying to get us to jump back into the water. Janet was tempted but we had other plans.

The second dive of the day was now in question. Would we, could we.... why not...well we did! Mike, our captain, thought Duncan Rock looked good, probably the best he had seen this summer. So, a little edgy following the dive briefing hearing stories of the ocean, strong currents, coastguard, advanced dive, surge, China, etc. we all jumped into the Pacific Ocean. Frankly, you're crazy if you were not freaked-out!

The dive is what it was touted to be. The visibility was outstanding, the beautiful rainbow of colors was remarkable, and the prolific life growing on the extensive rock formation was

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extraordinary. I do not have the writing skills to describe all we saw and to give it justice. Duncan Rock is worth the build-up---it really is!!!



Well the next equipment tragedy cursed us.... this time it was Scott. He tore his neck seal. What bad luck.... again.... aarg #\$\$ %&\*@!

### **Day 3:**

We boarded the boat on day three with what was left of the original divers: Steve, John and myself. Justin and Chris joined us from the afternoon boat. All were a little tired from two packed days of diving. Today, Troy was our captain (Mike had Seahawk tickets). Due to rough seas caused by an off shore storm, we dove Waddah Island East a second time and Third Beach.

Waddah Island was not a disappointment as a repeat dive. Actually it was fun to see many of the same critters. Unfortunately,

the long nose skate that we spotted the day before was not having a good day. Sadly, two sun stars were devouring the fish, and a pregnant wolf eel, also seen the day before, was beginning to lay her eggs. Her stomach was swollen. She was upside down under a rock, and had what appeared to be a large tumor extended from her midriff. I'll tell you there is nothing more humorous than listening to a bunch of divers explaining what a pregnant wolf eel giving birth looks like...you had to be there.

The second dive site was Third Beach. This dive site is best described as a finger rock formation that extended from shore. The critters John and I spotted included: Canary and blue rockfish, wolf eels, ling cod, cabezon, etc. It too was a beautiful dive site and a nice dive to end the weekend.

Oh yeah, my fin. The last dive of the weekend, after I don't know how many dives I have done over the years, I lose my balance on the step of the boat and drop my fin into the sea. John, my hero, jumps into the water to look for it (fins do not float). I quickly borrow a fin from Steve, who sat out the last dive, and jumped in after John. Fortunately, I found John, we had a nice dive, but we did not find the fin.

I am grateful that I was able to have three great days of diving. All in all, the entire group, equipment failures aside, had no real diving accidents. We completed the weekend with new dive stories, pictures, and I now have an excuse to go shopping!

### **Dissolved Oxygen Problem Continues in Hood Canal**

Our warm summer and lack of rain may be great for outside activities, but the affect of the dry weather appears to be stressing the critters in our beloved Hood Canal. Articles in the newspaper, and news reports, are telling us that 2006 may surpass 2003 as the most severe fish kill on record in Hood Canal. Reports are saying that scientist are pouring over the evidence and monitoring data gathered to date. The theory, the problem is a result



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of a series of factors, some natural, some man-caused. The problem could be linked to a combination of changes in the ocean climate, water quality and contamination, or too many nutrients from organic sources.

Predominantly, reports that I have read and watched on the news are looking to divers and their perception of what we see while diving. Largely, the reports from recreational divers describe a huge concentration of fish above 35 feet that are in obvious distress and struggling for oxygen.

Divers are the eyes underwater. Reporting what we see while diving can be correlated to data gathered through monitoring and reviewing material in the historical archives. Our reports help scientist quantify data. Please continue to report your dive observations to Teresa Sjostrom. It is very easy. The link is provided below and can be found on the Kelp Krawler Website.

Don't be surprised if while diving in the Hood Canal a scientist, a reporter, or the general public asks you what your are seeing, or requests your opinion of the problem. Please take the time to share with them your perception of the state of the canal. Public awareness of the problems increases the possibility of procuring scientific grants and research, government funding, public education program, and if necessary, revised regulations and enforcement protocols.

<http://www.hoodcanal.washington.edu/divers/index.jsp>  
[http://komo1000news.com/news/story\\_m.asp?ID=45596](http://komo1000news.com/news/story_m.asp?ID=45596)



## The Prez Sez

*by Steve Fornoff*

Everyone was sad to hear about the untimely death of Steve Irwin (The Crocodile Hunter) in the waters of the Great Barrier Reef. We never want to learn of a diver or snorkeler having such an untimely death. This is a reminder for all of us to constantly be aware of our surroundings during a dive and to always have our own safety in mind, as well as the safety of your fellow divers.



Steve Irwin's death was very tragic; however, we must also remember he seemingly always took huge life threatening risks on almost every one of his TV shows. Even the news articles reporting his death show pictures of him handling some of the world's deadliest snakes, wading and swimming in croc infested murky waters, jumping on the backs of 14 foot killer crocodiles, handling large iguanas, and stalking too close to wild bull elephants. He pursued a life of danger; it was dangerous for him and for those around him, even his family. We can assume there were safety precautions taken in the filming of his activities; nevertheless, it always looked dangerous.

The point is, there is a lesson we should learn from this and we must be ever so careful while we are diving. Steve was killed while snorkeling too close to a stingray; apparently the ray felt threatened and defended itself with it's razor-sharp tail. I must admit I also have swam close to stingrays, maybe even close

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## DIVE SHOP NEWS:

### **Capital Divers**

**866-3684**

[www.capitaldivers.com](http://www.capitaldivers.com)

Akumal Cave diving trip November 4 - 15. Nitrox, argon and hyper filtered air fills available. **Bandito Charters** on Nov 12 and Dec 9.

### **Hood Sport 'n Dive**

**(360) 877-6818**

[www.hoodspordndive.com](http://www.hoodspordndive.com)

The shop has now moved to a new location in Hoodspport with convenient boat access. Stop by, say hello and fill up with some nitrox while you wait. Offering discounted access to the **Sund Rock Marine Preserve** for paid members.

### **Underwater Sports**

**493-0322**

[www.underwatersports.com](http://www.underwatersports.com)

The Olympia Shop is now pumping hyper filtered Air. Discounted air cards for Kelp Krawlers: 10 fills for \$25.

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enough to struck by it's tail. Never again!

We must have a healthy respect for the critters of the sea. Sting-rays, sharks, turtles, barracudas, eels, fireworms, stinging jelly-fish, whales and every sea critter down to the smallest nudibranch has the right to be left alone and untouched by divers. My dive buddies will be the first to advise I should follow my own advice as I always try to pet wolf eels to bring them out of their dens and to swim out about with us. When on our warm water trips, I have a very good friend that is often tempting barracuda with bright shiny objects. This is exceptionally dangerous because barracuda are indeed attracted to shiny objects and when they make their move to attack, they are so aggressive and are so fast that they cannot call off their attack. So if this person wants to keep all of her fingers, don't tempt the barracuda.

In our local waters, we have the elusive six-gill shark. It is my understanding these gentle giants can also be deceptively quick and will bite if they feel threatened. Pulling on their fins or tail is highly not advisable; also camera flashes close to their eyes can cause a defensive reaction. Should I ever be lucky enough to see one, it will be to observe and not to touch.

Please always dive safe; be safe for you and be safe for your dive buddy. Keep on diving!



## Channel Islands,

*by Mike Scholl*

I left Saturday morning for the September 24-26 Optiquatics trip to the Channel Islands. After making it thru the baggage screening and security without a single cavity search, I knew this would be a good trip. To add to the good omens, the flight went almost directly over St Helens and just to the side of Crater Lake, with clear skies, the view was fantastic. Hopefully the viz would prove just as inviting.

Landing in the war zone of LAX, 30 minutes late didn't dampen the trip; I had already planned at least a 2-hour wait for baggage and shuttle to Ventura. After a brief spell of apprehension when my camera case came up missing (later found in oversize baggage) the shuttle finally arrived to take me up to Ventura to have dinner and meet the boat. I would be arriving a couple hours

early so it gave me time to walk the beach and check out the Channel Islands Visitor Center out on the point.

I found a small bar playing live blues and discovered a new ale called Firestone, the good omens continue. After meeting up with Joe and almost all of the rest of the group at a local Mexican restaurant, I found that this would be an eclectic mix made up of individuals from all over.

Among the group were, Bill, a software engineer, from Adobe, with a new version of the Photoshop program, Erin, software instructor, specializing in Adobe Photoshop, Dave, a dive shop owner from Huron, MI, Chris, a professional wildlife photographer and Karis, a naturalist and shift captain volunteer at Oregon Coast Aquarium, (from Olympia of all places) who arrived later that night. There would be 9 of us altogether.

At dinner we were informed that due to high winds and conflicting swells we wouldn't be able to dive the northern islands, we'd hit the southern islands instead. It was only a slight cloud as maybe we'd get out to do a seal dive on this trip, one could only hope.

Southern Islands it is and we stashed gear and hit the bunks. It was a great crossing with very little swell, it was almost like sleeping at home.

Morning found us headed to Ship Rock off Twin Harbors only to pull back to another site due to current running at 1½ knots. Standing on deck, with the fresh island scents and calm water, what could be better? Looking over the rail, the bottom was clearly visible at 40 ft!

Sunday we spent doing various sites along the edge of the island with glamorous names like the bay north of Arrow Point. The skipper did his best to keep us out of the current, and did a great job at that. Upon hitting the water for the first dive, I found 50-60 ft viz, blue water and bait balls. I cut the first dive short and headed back for my camera.

Ever try to photograph a bait ball? Twitchy-er than a cat in a room full of rockers. I went down a bit deeper to try my hand at wide angle. It's so cool to do a dive and look up at the sun from 60 ft and light shafts coming down thru the kelp. I think I made 3 dives the first day and we headed to Avalon for the night.

I've done Avalon before so elected to stay on board and watch the city lights and stars. Oh did I mention that the weather was perfect? Mid 70's and blue skies and temperate evenings. Since the wind and swells were against us still, we spent the night anchored just outside Avalon harbor.

In the morning we witnessed one of largest displays of excess wealth I've ever seen, a marlin tournament. Just before dawn the boats came out of hiding in the harbor and milled about like a bait ball till some unknown signal sent them off in search of poor defenseless marlin. Reminded me of the Roadrunner and Wiley Coyote cartoons, with boats from Acme ranging in size from a mid 20ft to well over 100ft yachts, talk about overkill. I'm rooting for the marlin.

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We headed back up to try Ship Rock and found it still taching at 1½ knots so we tucked in close to some little dove bays and rock formations. Another glorious day of 60ft viz, bait balls, searching kelp stalks for the elusive kelp fish, topping it off with a night dive.

Our last day we headed for Anacapa Island and the marine preserve there. I didn't find as many nudibranchs as my first trip but the diving was still awesome. Had some seals to play with and followed a large bat ray as it fed on the sandy bottom.

All in all it was a fantastic trip with good diving, great viz, cool people and an over abundance of food. Fat IS buoyant and I think I needed an extra 2 lbs in my BC by the end of the trip. The crew made the trip, it's not as luxurious as some boats, however the food and diving more than make up for any shortcomings.

I'm looking forward to my next trip with Optiquatics aboard the Peace, oh and yes; Joe did develop my film this time.



**Dive Reports**

**Day Island Wall** *by Steve and Carolyn Fornoff*

The weather was perfect for a dive at Day Island Wall on Saturday Sept. 30th; there was a light wind, the sun was setting and the moon was rising overhead. Six Kelp Krawlers set out for a dusk dive and 'splashed' a little after 6pm. The current was perfect for this site, it went from a .9 ebb to a .9 flood; it doesn't get much better than that for diving around the Narrows.

Carolyn & Mark Reese and Dave Miller set out to dive deep on the South Wall while Ken Domingo, Carolyn & Steve Fornoff followed along on the South Rim to check out the wolf eels and octopus living in 'Condo Row'. The diving was effortless as we allowed the gentle ebb current float us along the wall. This was a great dive site for Dave Miller to celebrate his 100th dive.

As we drifted on to the North Wall, we sighted grunt sculpins, several large (6") sailfin sculpins, and a couple of small octopus out of their dens. There were 2 good sized octos in their dens and 6 or 7 pairs of wolf eels keeping their eyes on us as we drifted by. On the south wall one 6' long male wolfie came out to check on us, he must have decided we were not a viable food source and he quickly swam away.

During the course of our dive we saw a large number of shrimp, kelp crab, sailfin sculpin, rock fish, painted greenling, sole, perch, red irish lords, other varieties of sculpins, and some painted anemones. Then as we got to the end of the North Wall the current changed to a gentle flood and we slowly drifted back to the exit point. I must say that after the short swim to get to the wall, we hardly had to use our fins at all.

Afterwards, we went to Steamers Chowder House at Titlow Beach where we were joined by Rick Cooper and Mike Fitz for a bite to eat. Mike and Rick were diving at Owens Beach with John Brown looking for the elusive six-gill sharks. Mike and John scored by sighting a 5' six-gill, but poor Mr. Cooper saw none. It appears the sharks have all gotten together and decided to allow other divers to spot them, but they have vowed to never let Mr. Cooper see even one of them.....ever!

A good time was had by everyone, and the most important thing was, we all 'got wet'. Keep on Diving!

**Sund Rock** *by Scott Boyd*

On Wednesday, September 27th, a very brave Scott Koplín and I made a deep dive off of the North Wall at Sund Rock to asses the health of the sea whips. This was the result of the recent catastrophic fish kills due to the low dissolved oxygen in the canal. Our primary focus was to observe and photograph the sea whip beds below the North Wall at depths where there was almost no observation and collection data available.

I mention that Scott K. is a very brave guy because he made this dive in a wet suit. I think my response to Scott's dive request was something like, "you want to go how deep? In a wetsuit?".

**Calendar of Events**

- Oct 7 -8th** Oysterfest 25th Anniversary. Shelton with the Aquanuts. Contact John Tupper.
- Oct 14th** Club Boat Dive, Sunrise County Park, meet at Point Defiance Boat Ramp at 3 PM. Contact Scott Boyd.
- Oct 17th** Club Meeting, 7:00 PM, Dirty Dave's Pizza Parlor. Jeff Carr presentation on Shipwrecks.
- Oct 31st** Photography Contest Deadline for entering your awesome Underwater Images.
- Nov 21st** Club Meeting, 7:00 PM, Dirty Dave's Pizza Parlor. Election of new Dive Club Officers.
- Dec 16th** Christmas Party at the Steamboat Island Grange.

All craziness aside, I wasn't really looking forward to seeing and photographing all of the dead fish and carnage that I had been reading about. We arrived in the parking area and found a dead baby seal washed up on the beach. This pup was not a victim of the low dissolved oxygen, but was ominous nonetheless.

After we geared up, we descended through the murky water and swam out to the top of the wall. At the top, we found several dead rockfish and ling cod laying on the bottom. As we continued our descent, the North Wall reminded me of the low oxygen events of the past years. There were lots and lots of nudibranchs out, but almost no fish.

At the base of the wall, we did begin to see signs of recovery. There were a few rockfish, lings and perch that greeted us. Swimming down through the sea whip beds, we noted that they appeared mostly healthy. There were a few stressed whips at 80', but the deeper we ventured, the better the sea whips looked.

The sea whip beds bottomed out just past 150', so we turned and began concentrating on the other critters we were observing. There were lots of crabs and flatfish about, and I was heartened by what appeared to be mother nature making a slow, but deliberate come back.

On the way back up, we spotted the old anchors off of fish pen wall, and several very interesting critters, including a stubby squid just doing his best to ignore me and a giant wrymouth, which is just about the ugliest fish I have ever seen in my entire life.

There was a very nasty layer of water at our 20foot stop. It was thick, red and no doubt very dead. Gauge reading was nearly impossible and staying with your buddy required the occasional touch contact. I was hanging out and actually had a ling cod accidentally run into me. Now, you know the viz is bad when the fish run into you.

After surfacing, we both decided that life was improving at depth, and that the north winds were bringing in some much needed oxygen to the water column. The low oxygen event is by no means over, but appears to be improving, so I'm hopeful for the future.

## The Plunge

*Poem by Paul Jeffers*

To jump off a boat into the deep,  
is first accomplished by offering your feet.

Awash with bubbles and foam galore,  
one can dispel any notions of shore.

Awaiting ahead is mystery and intrigue,  
hidden by visions which are burry and bleak.

When plagued with wayer invading your face,  
you realize your eye-site fades with this air space.

Bumped from behind you recoil one knee,

feeling the bottom you choke with glee.

Confident now you clear your mask,  
finding it easy lying on your back.

Struggling up and adjusting your gear,  
you manage to swallow some of your fear.

Seeing an object you squint and strain,  
hoping it's solid so you can maintain.

Flushed with butterflies and oxides toboot,  
you realize your food, and aim to shoot.

Spearing a monster found in legend and lore,  
mysteriously shrinks in your bag of chores.

Un-cocking your gun the beauty moves in,  
looking you over, what curious fins.

Swimming about in this aquatic wonder,  
leaves no doubt why we venture under.

One is immersed with visual pleasures,  
every fathom sharing memorable treasures.

Luminous images entice you out to sea,  
revealing its wonder for few to see.  
With air getting low, your regretfully leave.

## September Meeting Notes

The **Christmas Party** will be held at the **Steamboat Island Grange on December 16th**. John Tupper briefed the dive club on the **Oysterfest activities on the 7th and 8th**. A sign-up sheet was passed around for volunteer to help the Aquanuts. Jeff Carr gave a brief introduction to the shipwrecks he'll be covering at the next meeting.

**Members Present: Richard Penny, Steve Sutton, Rick Cooper, Carla Thurmond, Ken and Starr Knutson, Dave Miller, Colleen Symmons, Amy Kurtenbach, John Brown, Carolyn Reece, John Cipriano, Jeff Carr, John Tupper, Brad Congdon, Carolyn and Steve Fornoff, Paul Jeffers, Mike Scholl, Janet and Scott Boyd**

## October Dive Club Meeting

The October 17th speaker will be shipwreck expert **Jeff Carr** with a **presentation** on several of our **local shipwrecks**. You won't want to miss this presentation!

## Upcoming Trips:

**Akumal** Cave/Cavern Diving. Nov. 4 - 15th, contact Wayne.  
**Sulawesi** trip, Jan. 10-23, contact Bonnie Smith.  
**Dominica** trip - Feb. 3 - 10, contact Steve or Carolyn Fornoff.