



KELP KRAWLERS DIVE CLUB

December 2004

Volume 20, Number 12

What I learned during Summer Vacation - Part 2 - by Jerry Ehrlich

Well, I promised to finish last month's rant so here goes.

Lets start with argon. Argon is a better insulator than air and it is way, way better than helium. If you are diving any kind of helium mix as a breathing gas, you really cannot put it in your dry suit. You will get very cold, very quickly.

Several years ago Mike Beyer and I were so jazzed about diving helium mix breathing gas that we did a dive and used our 30% helium back gas to inflate our dry suits. Cold, really cold, like your suit started seriously leaking 10 minutes into the dive, but of course it wasn't leaking, the helium was transferring the heat away from you faster than you could generate it. Did not do this again, ever.

So I have used argon as an inflation gas for many years and swear by it for helium mixes. Recently I have been doing a bunch of nitrox diving and I decided to try a dive without the argon. No difference, none, nada, zilch, I was just as warm putting nitrox in my suit. I have

tried it for about 30 dives. The dives have all been around an hour in length, a few longer, and I have not been cold.

The obvious variable here is the helium. Not using a helium mix? Argon is a waste of money and extra gear for no reason. Several divers I respect, including Greg Volkhardt have told me this, and I did not believe it.

OK, now I believe it. Good undergarments will better serve those of us doing cold-water recreational nitrox or air diving than argon.

Short answer; if you are getting chilled, add a capilene shirt under your dry suit garment. Weezle makes an excellent undershirt that works with all dry suit undergarments and anything Patagonia makes works well.

See you at the Christmas Party :o)

ps: I hope you have been diving. November has been one of the best visibility months in several years.

New Years Day Dive

Who: all KelpKrawlers, Aquanuts, families, hangers on, groupies, etc.

What: Club Dive at the Rock with a Potluck after, club will furnish some roasted chicken, soft drinks, paper plates, etc. CLUB IS PICKING UP BEACH FEES :O)

When: Saturday, January 1, 2005 meet up around 10:00 AM, dive around 10:30 and eat after first dive, around 12:30 or so.

Where: Hoodsport 'N Dive

Why: Because it is FUN!!!!

This was our best attended club dive last year. A nice way to spend New Years Day actually doing something besides sitting in front of the life energy removal unit... err I mean TV :o)

Thanks,
Jerry

November Meeting Attendance:

Karen & Mike Beyer, Scott & Janet Boyd, Wayne Campbell, Rick Cooper, Jerry Ehrlich, Steve Fornoff, Rodger Gomez, Steve Griffith, Jeff Hamilton, Duane & Debbie Hamrick, Bonnie Knights, Becky Lundin, Alan and Ingrid Niles, Israel Ortiz, Richard Penny, Sue Treinen, Greg Volkhardt, and Kerstin Wilson, for a total of 22 people.

2004 OFFICERS

President
Jerry Ehrlich
943-9148

Vice President
Greg Volkhardt
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Treasurer
Wayne Campbell
789-3467

Secretary and Editor
Becky Lundin
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Historian
Mike Beyer
754-7705

MEMBERSHIP

Kelp Krawler dues:
\$15 for a single membership
\$25 for a family Membership.

Make checks payable to:
Wayne Campbell
(Kelp Krawlers)

Mail to:
Becky Lundin

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2005 Club Officers Elected

President: Jamie Welsh
 Vice President: Steve Fornoff
 Treasurer: Wayne Campbell
 Secretary/Editor: Scott Boyd
 Historian: Rodger Gomez

Calendar of Events

December 17th: Christmas Party
 January 1st: Club Dive @ Sund Rock

Turks and Caicos Trip Report - Mike Beyer

Flying has never been my forte, but I do love warm water diving. I dive almost every weekend either in Puget Sound or Hood Canal. Every once in a while I suffer through agonizing hours of business class flights to dive warm. This November I did just that, returning to the Turks and Caicos, this time to Provo to dive with Art Pickering's Provo Turtle Divers.

The sun glared painfully bright off the 42' white fiberglass hull of "Chuck's Honey". My sunglasses had fortunately been the only casualty inflicted by American Airlines on my luggage. Considering that they had airlifted Karen and I with 140 pounds of luggage over 3500 miles to Provo the day before, it seemed a small price to pay. At this moment, however, they were sorely missed. The short bus "Chuck Wagon" had picked us up at the shop and whisked us a few short bumpy miles over Provo's coarse roads to arrive at Discovery Bay where the "Honey" was lashed to the dock.

The Skipper, Dave was a large, jovial, younger man. His sandy blonde hair was thinning and he was far less tanned than I would have expected. He had traded in his Virginia accent and marine biologist gig for a dive shop and navy shorts with a white floral print. His comfortable red T-shirt was sun and salt faded almost to a pink. I coveted his shades. That it was his show and his boat was obvious, but any hint of coarseness in his tone was tempered by his quick smile and animated mannerism.

Nobody wore shoes on the Honey. Dave gave his well-rehearsed boat briefing. The Honey was well laid out as a dive boat, with a sun deck that had ample seating just aft of the covered fly bridge. Navigational equipment was modern and the vessel had life rafts, oxygen, marine radio, cell phone and a roomy functional head. She had twin freshwater showers midships on the covered lower deck and a sturdy camera table for those so inclined. A large swim step with twin ladders was on the stern. The main deck was open and felt roomy, even with our 15 divers. Tanks were secured to the sides and long wide benches made gearing up a snap, even with a full house.

Mooring lines were cast and the Honey's twin diesels rumbled to life. She began to idle us slowly out of the harbor. We fussed

with our kit placing BCD's and regulators on tanks, stowing fins under the benches and spitting in masks. I smiled as I assembled our seemingly feather light lead belts for ballast. For Northwest divers who are used to 30 pounds of ballast, a 4-pound belt seemed somehow risqué. With a twist of the tank valve, my SPG needle snapped up to 3100 psi. Just like Mad Mike's garage, low fills were not going to be an issue with this charter.

Once out of the harbor the deck listed momentarily to stern and vibrated under our tingling feet as the twin screws torqued the Honey up and onto a plane. We were headed southwest across the shallow Caicos bank headed for a small islet named French Cay. Even at 20 knots we had ample time to prepare our gear and bask topside in the warm November sun. Low thin puffy clouds filtered portions of the bright blue sky. The cool sea breeze ruffled our hair and kept the 85-degree air temperature in check.

Twenty-five minutes from the harbor the Honey's stern lurched up onto her own tail wake as the diesels suddenly idled down. She veered hard to starboard as someone called "dolphins"! The two cetaceans breached and swam slowly off to the west ignoring the big noisy boat with gawking humans leaning over her gunwale. Soon we were again headed for French Cay. Provo's ancient low coral hills sank into the distance and seemed to slip below the aquamarine waters of the Caicos bank. Ahead a line of dark blue water grew broader and longer to the horizon as we approached the Bank's edge and the Atlantic sank to 7000 feet. Before long we slowed to a gentle drift and the mooring buoy was secured to our bow line.

There was a low-pressure cell developing over Dominica several hundred miles to the south. This was drawing wind out of the north to feed the storm. Typically, this first site had 3 to 6 foot seas on calm days when the wind blew from the south. Today the site did not really live up to the name Rock and Roll with only mild two foot seas. Captain Dave gave a detailed dive site briefing on a white board with fading color markers, and we made final gear checks. The sandy bottom was clearly visible from the deck. Dark spots indicated prolific coral heads that advanced to the wall. I was used to diving with steel doubles and a canister light back home. With my ultra light warm water kit, I was able to prance to the swim step like a ballerina. I grinned through my second stage and did a classic giant stride between swells.

As I hit the water, two things immediately struck me. I had forgotten what 100 plus foot visibility looks like, and just how noisy Caribbean reefs are. The constant crackling of eating parrot fish and the living coral itself seems deafening to Northwest divers accustomed to silent emerald seas. We were in 45 feet of water above a sand channel, beyond that were large coral buttresses that jutted out into the vast blue water like castle ramparts. A large shape loomed in the distance. The spotted eagle ray effortlessly faded into the blue water off the wall. The water temperature was a balmy 82. The water was thick with reef fish of all shapes and sizes. Damsels, blue headed wrasse, yellow-

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tail, blue tang and schoolmasters dominated the shallower coral heads and waters above them. Purple sea fans and other soft corals wafted like ferns in a gentle breeze. Barracuda patrolled the top of the wall. Deeper down on the wall, tube, barrel and row pore sponges competed with hard corals for living space. Blue chromis, queen angelfish, four-eyed butterfly and trumpetfish drifted around the deeper structures. Stoplight Parrot fish ate coral and made sand.

All too soon, 45 minutes had elapsed and Karen and I swam back to the boat. As the last divers were beginning to exit, Dave the Skipper got my attention when he spotted a hawksbill turtle cruising the top of the wall. I rolled my eyes at him and thumbed back towards the boat to indicate everyone but Karen, Jean the divemaster, Dave and I were going to miss this. Dave and I flanked the turtle taking photos. We returned to the boat and finished our safety stops. At about 57 minutes I heard Karen grunt my name. I looked at her and she was pointing behind me. I turned to see a large spotted eagle ray in about a foot of water not fifteen feet from the boat and us! I swam towards it snapping photos as she got Dave and Jean to look. My flash began to spook the huge fish and Dave shot like a torpedo after it with his digital camera locked on target. What a fantastic first dive! Throughout the week we saw breathtaking undersea vistas, more dolphins, turtles, sharks, southern stingrays and flights of multiple eagle rays. The diving was superb. I spent 632 minutes on ten dives off Provo.

We had dinner and drinks a few nights with the Turtle Divers' crew at the Tiki Hut. Dave has great people working for him. Dave and Melinda were in the midst of purchasing Turtle Divers from retiring Art Pickering. Several days Art joined us to captain the boat with his trusty Jack Russell, Dewey. Dewey has great sea legs and loves to ride the prow barking at flying fish and dolphins. Murray was an Australian instructor who was helpful spotting small critters like juvenile spotted drums and banded shrimp. Jean and Steve were from Canada. I really liked them. They had extensive experience working patiently with special needs divers to experience what we all take for granted. What a thrill diving was for me my very first time. Imagine being wheelchair-bound as a paraplegic or suffering from MS. Now imagine the brief soothing respite granted by weightless SCUBA. Steve and Jean are working with developers of a resort undergoing a remodel project next to the dive shop to have the lodging wheelchair accessible. I hope the developers listen. This would make Providenciales a Mecca for divers with physical limitations. The divers would be in great hands, as were we. Special needs discover SCUBA is Steve and Jean's favorite type of instructional class.

Three years ago, we took a dive trip to Grand Turk. Mitch Rollings of Blue Water Divers runs a great operation. The reefs start a bit shallower, so there are huge sea fans and prolific soft corals at the top of the wall. The boat rides were only 10 minutes and fish were everywhere but the reefs seemed to lack pelagic species. Fewer divers frequent Grand Turk so the reefs are in top health, not that I found Provo's lacking. It all comes down to

surface interval attractions. GT has only a couple restaurants, and a small disco. The Salinas breeds mosquitoes so don't forget Deet and a few good books. The upside is you have a Caribbean beach to yourself and the locals are warmhearted. Provo is thick with open air cafe's, fine dining, shopping and even a casino. The bugs are not an issue on Provo. Our favorite restaurant on Provo was Baci. They had fine wines, exquisite entrees, and delicious pizza. Not many people dive the Turks and Caicos compared to other Caribbean locations. They should, it's all fantastic diving.

Special thanks to Blue Diamond Divers for organizing the trip, and to new and old friends we shared the times with. I'll see you at the surface interval....

"Mad" Mike Beyer

Cushion Star (*Pteraster tessellatus*.) by Scott Boyd

The Cushion Star is about 6 inches across with 5 thick, short arms that are yellow to tan in color. This sea star is commonly found in areas of broken rocks or on deep rock walls at depths ranging from 30 to 1500'. They are widely distributed from Japan and the Bering Sea in Alaska to California and are often found in the vicinity of cloud sponges, which are their favorite food.



To help protect itself from fish and other predators, the cushion star excretes huge amounts of thick mucus that must taste bad to predators. So bad in fact, that Roland Anderson warns about keeping cushion stars in the same aquarium with Octopus, as the copious amounts of slime released are detrimental to the health of the GPO's and have been known to clog aquarium filters. Because of this "slime", cushion stars are also commonly called Slime Stars. These stars have a very thick but soft body, which earned them their common name of cushion or pin cushion star.

Cushion Stars are used by scientists to produce steroids. Two new steroid sulfates have been isolated and a new minor steroid sulfate identified from our friendly local sea star *Pteraster tessellatus*.

November Club Dives - by Jerry Ehrlich

I had the pleasure of diving both club dives with Pacific Adventures (www.pacadventure.com) Mike Beyer made quite a find here. This is a quality operation run by very nice people who know boats and diving. Safety is always paramount and they are very professional in a friendly way. The service level is beyond expectation.

The club did 4 dives over 2 weekends with Don and Diane, the co-skippers of the operation. We did Rosies Ravine first and it was great. What dive is not great in 40 foot visibility? We were greeted by dog fish and all manner of finned friends on this dive. We were diving in three separate buddy teams but we all wound up back at the anchor line after about an hour long dive. Completely unplanned but very cool to have 6 of us doing free ascents at once.

The second dive was Elephant Wall (rocks). I have been diving the canal for longer than I care to admit and I have never really found this site. PacAdventures knows exactly where it is and how to dive it. This is one of the best dives on Hood Canal, if not all of Puget Sound. The wall begins with a rock outcropping that turns into a shear wall that drops to about 100 feet. Plenty of overhangs, nooks, crannies and caves to peek in. It is not quite up to the fish bowl, but pretty close and since it is in the Wikitikeh Marine Conservation Area, it will get there.

The visibility on this dive was 40 feet or better from surface to bottom. I love this site, it is absolute aces, of course the water clarity may have something to do with it :o)

We started our charter the following week with this site. It did not disappoint. The visibility was not quite as good in the top 40 foot, maybe 25 to 20, but below that it was 40 or better again. There were nice schools of herring to hang out in for most of the dive. It is a big enough structure to hold your interest for many dives and I am looking forward to returning.

The last dive we did was Flag Pole Rock. Most of us did the shallower structures and they were quite nice. We ascended to the top of the shallower structure before doing a free ascent to the surface and the top of this structure is magnificent with a great show of invertebrate life.

Two great weekends of diving with a truly professional operation led by some very nice folks.



Nov-Dec Club Dives - by Mike Beyer

Low clouds threatened drizzle the morning of November 21st as Jerry drove the dive van past the Westside of Olympia. As we drove further north, the cloud cover broke and by Shelton we had left the front behind us. This was perfect northwest dive weather. Clear skies, no wind, sunshine that allowed ample light penetration, and cold air to keep from sweating up a drysuit. We arrived at Pleasant Harbor and were met by fellow divers Duane and Debbie Hamrick, as well as Scott and Janet Boyd. Pac Adventure skipper, Don and his crew of one Diane, ferried us south to our first dive at Rosie's Ravine/Goby Gardens. This site has a deep basalt wall starting at 90' and another structure from 60' up. Depending on your planned profile, you should see wolf eels and lots of Quillback Rockfish deep. Shallow you will see Blackeyed Gobies, and their cousins the Bay Goby. Jerry and I spotted a few Tube Snouts as well. Visibility was easily thirty feet!

The Second dive was at Elephant Wall just south of Mike's Beach. The vis was approaching forty feet here. We saw the NW big four here. Dogfish buzzed all six of us. Sky-blue puffy jowl Wolf eels stared back from their dens looking like cantankerous old men who had lost their false teeth. Giant Pacific Octopus slept in their dens waiting for dusk's hunting hour, and a fair-sized Lingcod made a cameo by parting a schooling sea of small Shiner Perch. Herring balls and large schools of both Striped and Pile Perch drifted off the wall. In the shallows there were abundant Painted Greenlings.

Heavy fog, not rain, threatened to sock us in on the 28th. But as we got just past Hoodspout it broke to cold blue skies for an identical replay of last week's weather. This time it was Rodger Gomez paired with Greg Volkhardt, Karen and I, and Jerry Ehrlich and Scott Boyd filling in last minute for two sick Kelp Krawlers. We returned to Elephant Wall and even after mid-week rains, the visibility was holding a solid thirty-five feet. Karen and I dipped down to a Wolf eel den at 95', found an octopus den with eggs, but no mother at 100'. As we wormed our way up the wall we found an octopus in a den at 50 feet. The huge schools of juvenile Shiner, adult Pile, adult Striped Perch and Herring were still there. As with last dive, Karen and I were buzzed by a young male dogfish. Karen said it was the first one for her. If you have not been diving with Pac Adventure, go. If you have but have not been to Elephant Wall, request it.

My failing drysuit zipper finally died. I sat out the second dive since I was soaked and cold from the first. Karen buddied up with Jerry and Scott and they did the shallow reef at Olsen's, AKA Flagpole Rock. Greg and Rodger attempted the tricky U/W navigation to the deep knuckle. I stayed in the warm cabin and ate a third helping of chicken noodle soup. Don and Diane have treated the club wonderfully this year. As a club, let's try to support them in '05. Speaking of support, they have a son and a son-in-law both serving in far away scary places. The prayers of Karen and I and the rest of the Kelp Krawlers go out to them this holiday season.

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Dive reports continued:

After soaking my suit last weekend, and getting chilled to the bone I got a nasty cold. I had to sit out December's dive on the 4th at Sund Rock with Karen. We spent the time at the shop showing Ron and Mike our recent TCI photos. The following souls did go diving and enjoyed good visibility: Jerry Ehrlich, Jeff Hamilton, Steve and Carolyn Fornoff, Jamie Welsh, Sue Treinan, Katie Morgan, and Bob and Joel Richart. Returning to the shop we all enjoyed gourmet Turtle Cheesecake as an early-happy-birthday-to-me excuse for a club dive.

I have enjoyed coordinating the club dives this year. I hope that in the future Historian will encompass Dive Coordinator as well. The club members have not been very active diving together as a group the last seven years or so. I think this has changed now. In the ten months we held club dives, twenty-seven divers logged sixty-nine dives!

Happy Holidays, Mad Mike.

Letter from Dan Hannifous

Mike, Jerry... please share with the rest of the Kelp Krawlers,

I can't say thanks enough for letting me be part of your monthly gathering. I appreciated the chance to share some info on the low DO issue in the canal. Much of the challenge with folks that frequent or live on the canal is providing them with information that will provide a better understanding of the issues that face the canal and the marine critters that live there.

I anticipate that at some point, as contributing factors to the low DO are better understood, folks are going to be asked to change the way they impact the canal. If they understand their relationship to the canal, they will tend to be more likely to make those changes.

I look forward to working more closely with you and the other dive shops and dive groups as we get the dive observation program going. There are funds earmarked to come to the dive 'community' for their participation in the low DO research.

I've drafted a budget as part of the Hood Canal Dissolved Oxygen Program that will provide each of Hoodsport N Dive, Pac Adventure, Mikes Dive Center, Mikes Beach Resort with \$1000 each for the next three years (\$12,000 total) for supplies, and to distribute and collect the data forms. There is also \$2000 in the budget for the creation/publication of the slates with the dive observation form. The funding will likely be available in January and I anticipate being able to 'formally' implement the diver observation program at that time.

Thanks for the time you've invested in communications, edits to the dive form, and in the canal in general.

Thanks again for your time and if you have any concerns, questions, comments, observations... let me know.

Dan Hannifous
Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group
22871 E. State Route 3
Belfair, WA 98528-9341
360-275-3575
hcwater@hctc.com

Christmas Party Potluck/Gift Exchange

When: December 17 at 7:00pm

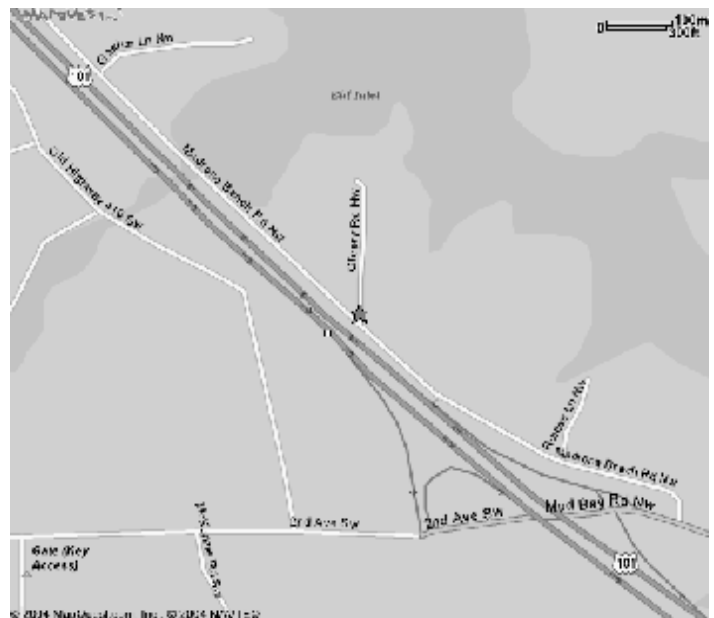
Where: Perpetual Motion, 630 O'Leary St. NW, Olympia (see map)

What to bring: Potluck food, beverages, gift exchange gift, casual attire

Optional Items: Designated Driver

Perpetual Motion is located next to the Mud Bay Park n Ride. The west entrance to the Park n Ride is on O'Leary Street.

See the map below, or go to www.mapquest.com for driving directions.



Note from the editor:

As this year comes to a close, I'd like to thank everyone in the club for showing up to meetings, participating in club dives & events, and submitting articles to the newsletter. It really helps the board members when people give them ideas about where they would like to dive, & what they would like to learn about in meetings. And of course please submit articles to Scott Boyd for the newsletter!! It will make his life much easier. :)

Remember: **Dive safe and play nice!!!!**