

KELP KRAWLERS DIVE CLUB

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Buoyant Holiday Spirits

by Jerry Ehrlich

I have had the pleasure of diving with many different divers over the past few months. Planning these dives is really fun. We figure an appropriate depth, time, and route for all involved and in we go. I have truly been lucky to dive with so many talented divers, sometimes purely on a random basis. Thanks to all of you.

Divers of varying skill levels have different issues and to expect a diver with a dozen dives to be spot on is unrealistic. No matter how many dives you have it's all about buoyancy control. New divers stay relatively shallow because they have not mastered buoyancy to a level where they can guarantee a slow, normal, controlled ascent. The results of an uncontrolled ascent from 40 feet are generally of little consequence, while losing buoyancy control ascending from 80 feet can land you in the decompression chamber. Multiply this risk by a significant factor for a multi dive day and again for continuous days of diving.

While sharing wonderful underwater experiences with divers of the entire skill spectrum, I noticed a common buoyancy issue regardless of experience. Many divers struggle with buoyancy in the last 10-15 feet to the surface at the end of the dive. Divers with hundreds of dives who dive regularly were not exempt.

This became a major factor in planning dives, unless we had dove together before, I just assumed they were going to struggle in the upper water column.

Many of the divers had very good dry suit technique, which leads me to believe they may be under weighted. There has been so much emphasis on not being over weighted, perhaps some of this is a result. Two sure ways to require more ballast are switching from steel tanks to aluminum tanks or adding more or thicker undergarments to stay warm.

There is a great deal of confidence and in-

creased comfort level to be gained when you are sure you can maintain control of your dive (buoyancy) from beginning to end. Particularly at the end when you are at greatest risk from a decompression perspective.

The easiest way to see if you are weighted properly is to check your weight in the water with a nearly empty tank. A shore dive is appropriate. Bring two tanks to your regular diving environment, for most of us that is cold saltwater. One tank is full for the real dive, and one has 500 psi in it for the buoyancy check.



Set your gear up with the 500 psi tank first. Have your buddy accompany you into water about 5 or 6 feet deep. Vent your dry suit and BC. Lay down on the bottom. You should be able to breathe normally and maintain your depth. Be sure and take everything you would take on a dive, cameras, etc.

Inhaling a big breath should start your ascent. please do not forget to exhale immediately :o)

Exit the water, adjust weight accordingly, switch to full tank, go diving.

Another confidence builder is beginning your shore dives in chest deep water. Just lay down and dive.

Looking forward to diving with as many of you as possible this coming year. I dive pretty much every weekend and I like diving during the week :o) Just drop me an email and we will go diving.

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MEMBERSHIP

Kelp Krawler dues:
\$15 single or
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Dive Site Reports: **San Juan Islands**

The San Juan Islands offer some of the best diving that our area has to offer. Our vacation plans were abruptly changed by a Hurricane that wiped out our destination, and rather than heading all of the way north to Canada as we often do, we decided to turn left to Anacortes and take the ferry to Friday Harbor. We were NOT disappointed.



Dawn Ulrich and Mike Hilliard purchased Island Dive and Watersports from the former owners last year, and were just Married last month (Underwater in their Inspiration Rebreathers of course). They were our hosts, providing not only spectacular diving, but the "Divers Cabin" that we stayed at, hidden away in the woods on their property.

We hauled way too many tanks up with us, and the dog (she had a blast). We also invited the Hamrick's to join us for a very pleasant 5-day weekend of diving, dining and relaxing.

Winter is the right time to visit the islands for divers. The visibility was spectacular, and the price of lodging and transportation was about half what it costs in the summer. As the only divers chartered that weekend, we had the boat to ourselves and enjoyed going where we wanted, when we wanted.

The diving itself is spectacular. The sites are just covered with color and critters that we do not typically see in other parts of the sound. We spotted and photographed hundreds of beautiful nudibranchs, vibrant Puget Sound King Crabs as well as colorful kelp greenlings. The sun streamed down through the kelp forests and highlighted many decorated and mosshead warbonnets. For an underwater photographer, the many dive sites we visited were just loaded with bright scenery and animals that became incredible images.

Dawn and Mike are also a hoot. The dive shop and boats are well appointed and well run to make diving easy, informative and extremely entertaining. This was our first trip to the San

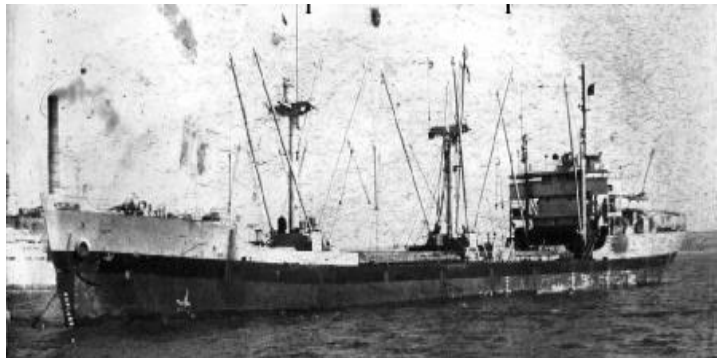
Juan Islands, and we'll be going back for many more trips!

Diamond Knot **Its not a dive, its an adventure!**

Several Kelp Krawler members braved the winter weather and stormy seas to venture out to the Shipwreck of the Diamond Knot on Thanksgiving Weekend. Surface conditions were very bad, with a huge swell rolling through topped by confused wind waves that tossed the "Dash" around like a cork.

Most of the divers were turning a bit green around the gills as we hooked the wreck and Dive Master Craig Miller descended to tie in to the wreck. Currents proved much too strong, and Craig lost the upline and was blown off the wreck. We recovered the tackle and eventually found Craig's Surface Marker Buoy and recovered him as well.

After a few hours tossing around in the Straights, we successfully hooked the wreck, and descended into a fierce current. Both of my regulators were free-flowing from the pressure of the current and all of my hoses were vibrating as I descended down the line, hand over hand to the wreck below. My camera was buffeting in the current behind my back, and I was unable to physically pull it around in front of me until I finally reached the wreck below and was able to get out of the current.



Staying in the cargo holds and in the lee of the current I spotted several Kelp Greenlings, Yellow Tailed and Black rockfish amongst the lush growth on the wreck. I took a few pictures, but every time I raised my camera or my head over the gunnel, I was blown back into a summersault by the ripping current.

I decided to forego my original dive plan with its 15 minutes of deco as I didn't really want to spend 15 minutes flapping in the breeze like a flag so stuck to a "no deco" schedule for the dive. After about 30 minutes, it was time to head up the line again, which proved very challenging as I approached the surface. Once on the surface, I released the buoy and rapidly floated East to the dive boat to be picked up. All in all it was definitely an Adventure. I'm not sure I'd call it a dive!

November Meeting Notes:

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Our November meeting was well attended and featured **Ernest Brooks II**, a noted professional photographer, educator and ambassador for the photographic industry. Ernest was recently inducted in the Scuba Diving Hall of Fame and has won international acclaim for underwater photography and audio/visual presentations. Mr. Brooks moved to Olympia three years ago from his hometown of Santa Barbara and now keeps his "girls" safe in the garage out on Johnson Point.

Ernie's recent work includes his book, the **Silver Seas, a Retrospective** and a PBS special with Jean Michael Cousteau that should be out in January. Penne MacNee won a free copy of Ernie's book and the rest of the club was truly enthralled listening to Ernie describe his life and work as he displayed his remarkable Black and White images.

New officers were elected for the 2006 calendar year. Steve Fornoff was elected as President and fearless leader. Amy Kurtenbach was elected as Vice President. Ingrid Sutton was elected as Treasurer. Mark Reece was elected as Historian/Dive Officer and Scott Boyd agreed to retain the job of Secretary/Editor for another year.

Christmas Party

The Kelp Krawler Christmas party was held at Cascade Photographic on December 3rd. There was a wealth of good food, good drink and good cheer to spread around.

The White Elephant gift exchange proved to be as popular as ever as the "thieving" started once some of the truly exceptional gifts were unwrapped. I think poor Carolyn had every gift she chose stolen from her, including the T-shirts! Way to go Steve!

Special Thanks go to **Alan Niles** for letting us use his business for the party and to **Debbie Hamrick** and **Janet Boyd** for the decorations. The party was very fun and successful, the food was great and the decorations and entertainment were festive and put everyone in the mood for Christmas!



DIVE SHOP NEWS:

Capital Divers

866-3684

www.capitaldivers.com

Palau trip on the Palau Aggressor June 25-July 2 2006 (still 2 spots left). Nitrox, argon and hyper filtered air fills available.

Bandito Charters on **Saturday, Nov 19** and Dec 18.

Dive Safe and Play Nice!!

Hood Sport 'n Dive

(360) 877-6818

www.hoodportndive.com

The shop is now pumping nitrox while you wait, trimix, deco gases, and argon. Also, they are offering discounted access to the **Sund Rock Marine Preserve** for paid members.

Underwater Sports

493-0322

www.underwatersports.com

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