



KELP KRAWLERS DIVE CLUB

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www.kelpkrawlers.org

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MEMBERSHIP
Kelp Krawler dues:
\$15 single or
\$25 for a family
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Small Hole Cenote

by Scott Boyd

After setting up for a traverse from Calimba to Grand Cenote, we'd failed to locate the owner and key for Calimba two days in a row. Our backup plan was taking pictures in Cuzan Nah, probably the most highly decorated underwater cave in the world. This was my first attempt at underwater cave photography, and I was a bit nervous. There are a few tight spots going in and I did NOT want to damage any of the beautiful formations.

My worrying turned out to be for nothing. We easily made it into Cuzan Nah, and I unfolded my strobe arms and began blinding my trusty cave guide Pietro with my strobes as I tried to capture some of the incredible beauty of the delicate cave formations in this area. Pietro is an excellent photographer himself and turned out to be the perfect dive model. I had equipped him with a remote strobe, and he was very good at using it to paint the cave with light while I took photos.

After spending about 20 minutes snapping nearly 200 photos, it was time to head back to Grand Cenote, and I felt elated. I could tell a few of my pictures had turned out very well and was excited that my first attempt went so well. How could my day get any better?

It takes a good 40 minutes to swim out of Cuzan Nah, dragging the beast (my camera) with me. After surfacing, we walked back up to the truck and discussed where to go next as it looked like Calimba just wasn't going to work out. Pietro had a smile on his face as he remarked, "I have never taken another photographer in Cuzan Nah that did not touch anything or break something. You did very well, and I have a special treat for you. The entrance is very small, but you'll like it." That's about all he would say, as we loaded up the truck and headed back to Tulum.

We dropped my rental car off in Tulum and

headed south on highway 307. We passed all of the cave systems I knew anything about, including Mayan Blue and Naharon. Eventually, we stopped along side the road and walked into the jungle. I was looking around for a Cenote, and Pietro pointed at a small puddle underneath a rock overhang. I said to him, "you're kidding, right? Were not really going in there are we?" He said, "yes we are, if you keep to the right and then work your way at an angle to the left, you can just squeeze through in a set of doubles."

We geared up at the truck and walked down to the "puddle." Kneeling and sitting in the puddle, there isn't even enough room for a bubble check, and the silt on the bottom instantly turned the puddle into mud. Most amazing was a bit of cave line that came up out of the water and was tied to the rock wall. Pietro advised that you can't really touch the line on the way in and said, with a grand gesture, "be my guest."

I submerged and wiggled my way into the opening, descended a few feet and became stuck, shifted left, wiggled, descended, then stuck, angled left, descended and glided out into a large clear cave. I dropped down to where the line T'd and waited for Pietro. He soon appeared through the silt around the very small entry and we did our bubble checks, etc. He pointed to a stone shelf above the main line and I was absolutely stunned. Sitting on the stone shelf were two large Mayan water pots, perfectly preserved after spending more than 4,000 years submerged in this hidden cave. I was to find out later that this cave system, called Chan Hol, which means "Little Hole Cenote" in Mayan, is newly discovered and has only been seen by a few divers. This was also apparent from the large volume of percolation present as we swam along the main line and from the presence of such amazing artifacts so near the entrance.

We continued our dive into this new cave through tight restrictions that would suddenly



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open into large spaces filled with crystal clear water. Many fire pits were observed that had been used when this cave system was completely dry, perhaps more than 10,000 years ago during the last ice age. The ceilings and walls around the fire pits were scorched with black, in sharp contrast to the nearly white limestone that makes up the cave.



Burned animal bones and wood can be found near the fires pits, and two jumps later, the human remains of an ancient Mayan lie scattered beneath a very low overhang. There is barely room to get in and view the skeletal remains, which sends shivers down my spine thinking that this individual passed away in the cave so many centuries ago. As we turn to exit, just 10 feet away from the skeleton, a collapsed section of the ceiling lies on the floor of the cave. Red markings on the white limestone bear witness to the possibility that cave paintings once graced the low ceiling of this area. Wow, it doesn't get much better than this!

As we slowly returned to the entrance, my mind tried to come to terms with the amazing history I had seen. We stopped again at the Mayan pots, and spent 10 minutes examining them closely without touching them. From a distance, they looked like brand new terra cotta jugs. Observed closely, you could see they were very fragile from the thousands of years spent underwater. Much of the surface had dissolved away and they were half full of silt. I was in awe that Mayan hands had once carried these pots full of water back to their shelters such a long time ago.

Crawling out through the entry proved even more difficult than sliding in. The same path I took in just kept getting me stuck, and I found myself laughing as I spent a good two minutes, only 10 feet from the surface, stuck and unable to move forward. Eventually, I found the right combination and slid out into Chan Hol and waited patiently at the surface for my guide.

Pietro surfaced and asked how I liked the dive? "Oh my god," I replied, "that is the most incredible experience I have ever had. I can't believe those pots are still sitting right there, in plain sight!" We loaded up the truck and headed back to Akumal, with me unable to wipe the silly grin off of my face.

The silly grin must have been too apparent as we arrived at the condo. Rogelio, one of our cave instructors and a good friend had just arrived with the cavern class and asked me where I had dove today. I replied, "Chan Hol." He immediately whipped around and exclaimed, "that's not for tourists, who took you there?!" Further adding, "I haven't even been there yet! Where is it?" I just smiled, unable to wipe the grin, now termed, "shit-eating" off of my face. Nobody pinch me please, I don't want to wake up!



Congratulations are due to several Kelp Krawlers and friends. **Mark and Carolyn Reece, Corey Butcher, Jeremy Brown and Wayne Fowler** successfully completed their Full Cave training in Mexico on this trip! Whoo Hoo! They even had time to enjoy a couple of "real" cave dives in Car Wash (Room of Tears) and Mayan Blue.

Scott will be showing a 15 minute Video Slideshow from this trip at the January Dive Club Meeting. This includes video from Chan Hol and the Mayan Artifacts observed there. Additional cave diving photo galleries are posted at http://www.boydski.com/diving/trips/Cave_Diving/

Oysterfest

The Aquanuts made a generous donation of \$700 from their proceeds at Oysterfest to the Kelp Krawlers for our help during the festival. Many thanks to the Aquanuts for both the donation and for their excellent work at Oysterfest. Hopefully, we'll see most of the Aquanuts at the Christmas Party on December 16th!

Photo Contest Results

Congratulations to the winners of the first Kelp Krawlers Underwater Photography Contest. **Carolyn Reece** walked away with the top honors, winning the "Best of Show" award for her beautiful photo of a tube dwelling anemone. Our judge, **Rand McMeins** (one of the best underwater photographers in the

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world) had this to say about Carolyn's stunning image:



"I love this shot. It's a great example of something we all could have found and shot but for some reason didn't or couldn't see the potential. Graphics is very important to me in U/W photography. I'm always on the lookout for lines, curves, angles, patterns, etc. If you look closely, you will see all of that here. Plus, the image draws you right into it. Most excellent vision on this."

Scott Boyd's simple shot of a *Flabellina Fusca* nudibranch took top honors in the Macro category. The judge commented, "Nice composition, beautiful subject caught in a wonderful position. I like the curl of the body softening the spiky appearance."

Additional photo contest winners were, **Carolyn Reece** took 1st, 2nd and 3rd place in the compact camera category. **Alan Niles** took 2nd place and **Marty Heyn** took 3rd place in the Macro category. **Scott Boyd** took 2nd place and **Alan Niles** took 3rd place in the Wide Angle category.

All of the winning entries can be viewed in their full glory on the kelp crawler web site at http://www.kelpkrawlers.org/Contest/photo_contest.htm. Rand's comments on all of the images are also available on the web site for those that missed our last dive club meeting.

November Meeting Notes

The dive club was thrilled to have Vern Morgus as our guest speaker. Vern started diving in the 40's and certified several thousand local divers over the many years since his first adventures with an "Aqua Lung."

In 1950, Vern moved to Shelton and started "Morgus Diving & Marine" with the area's first breathing air compressor. Vern taught Scuba classes and certified the area's first divers.

One of Vern's most memorable stories was the open water class dives he conducted during the Columbus Day Storm in the 60's. Those of us that can remember that storm were amazed that they actually went in the water and dove that day!

New officers were elected for the Dive Club. Your 2007 officers are:

- President:** Amy Kurtenbach
- Vice President:** Dave Miller
- Secretary:** Carolyn Reece
- Treasurer:** Ingrid Sutton
- Historian:** John Cipriano

Congratulations to a great group of officers. We should have a great year in 2007! Officer duties are posted on the web site,

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Hood Sport 'n Dive

(360) 877-6818

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

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



Alan Niles took top honors in the Wide Angle division with his "Prime Waterfront Real Estate" photo, shot on Browning Wall. Rand had this to say about Alan's amazing image:

"Nice composition. Placing the divers light beam in the lower left 3rds intersection makes for a nice balance. The reef scene is lit nicely and very colorful. A real sense of "being there" captured."

DIVE SHOP NEWS:

Capital Divers

866-3684

www.capitaldivers.com

Nitrox, argon and hyper filtered air fills available.

Bandito Charters on Dec 9.

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and prior officers are more than happy to help out as needed. Be sure to support your dive club and help out where you can. I know Carolyn would appreciate some dive reports and trip reports from all of you budding authors!

Christmas Party

The Christmas Party will be held at the Steamboat Island Grange on Saturday, December 16th from 6 PM to 10 PM. Please bring something good to eat (it's Potluck) and whatever your preference is to drink. Bring a gift if you'd like to participate in our traditional "white elephant gift exchange."

Dave Miller will be spinning some good tunes, and we usually have a pretty darn good time. I hope to see you there!

Directions:

**Prosperity Grange #315
3701 Steamboat Island Rd. NW
Olympia, WA 98502**

From Highway 101, turn NorthWest on Steamboat Island Road, follow the road for about 1/2 mile and you'll see the Grange on the Left side of the road.

Please contact Carolyn Fornoff to sign up for set up or clean up at the Christmas Party! Set up and decorating is starting at 10 AM.



Dominica trip - Feb. 3 - 10, contact Steve or Carolyn Fornoff.

Florida trip to dive the **Oriskany**, Feb 16 - 18, contact Bill Haynes.



Steve Sutton, makes Cake for his 100th Dive in Roatan!



Upcoming Trips:

Sulawesi trip, Jan. 10-23, contact Bonnie Smith.

Calendar of Events

- Dec 16th** Christmas Party at the Steamboat Island Grange. White elephant gift exchange.
- Jan 1st** New Year's Dive, Sund Rock, 10 AM. Pot Luck Brunch.
- Jan 16th** Club Meeting, 7 PM. Dirty Dave's Pizza. Scott Boyd Video Slideshow, Cave Diving in Chan Hol.