

KELP KRAWLERS DIVE CLUB

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Truk Lagoon

by Scott Boyd

Early in World War II, the Japanese Empire had built up Chuuk Atoll as an impenetrable forward supply base. Their Pacific Fleet operations against the Americans was supplied and directed from the military bases at Chuuk, which were protected by heavy fortifications surrounding the lagoon. Unfortunately, for the Japanese, the defenses may have been impenetrable by a Land and Sea invasion, but they never envisioned the changing landscape of warfare and the power of the Aircraft Carrier.

Operation Hailstone descended on Truk Lagoon on February 17, 1944. One of the largest Naval armadas ever amassed, including nine aircraft carriers, unleashed one of the largest air-sea strikes in naval history. After two days of heavy bombing, strafing and torpedo runs, 45 Japanese Naval ships lay at the bottom of the lagoon, along with 250 aircraft. Twenty-seven additional vessels were severely damaged, and 90% of Chuuk's fuel supplies were destroyed along with 50% of the ground installations and airfields.

Sixty two years later, a group of Ohio-based wreck divers along with the Boyds and Hamricks from Olympia, made the long trek to Chuuk to join the Truk Odyssey and dive the WWII wrecks sunk during operation Hailstone. Early protection of the wrecks and their artifacts by the people of Chuuk makes Truk Lagoon one of the world's best locations for wreck diving and drinking in the amazing history of a location with so many wrecks that are within reasonable diving limits.

The Truk Odyssey has to be one of the most comfortable live aboard dive boats I have ever had the pleasure of diving from. The cabins are extremely spacious and comfortable. The dive deck is well proportioned and works very well. The salon is cozy and the dining room outstanding with its massive and well appointed bar. The food was plentiful and good, but not great, but hey we were there to dive, and no one starved to death.

I especially liked the crews' attitude about diving. They gave exemplary dive briefings, describing the major features and photo ops on the deck as well as those deep within the wrecks for those divers desiring penetration.

They treated us as adults and let us dive where and when we wanted, even making a special trip with the six tech divers onboard so we could dive the San Francisco Maru. This was



extremely refreshing after spending the previous week on the Palau Aggressor with the constant admonishment not to be late, deep, do any deco, etc., or risk getting "the chicken."

Nitrox is supplied at about 29 – 30% at no additional cost. There are large steel cylinders available in addition to both single and double aluminum 80's as well as deco bottles filled with 80% Oxygen for those qualified. The crew was extremely accommodating, and outfitted Janet and I out with rental gear until our dive gear finally arrived from Palau three days late.

The highlight of our week on the Truk Odyssey had to be my dive on the San Francisco Maru. Known as the "million dollar wreck", the San Francisco Maru lies much deeper than the wrecks typically visited by divers. Because of this depth, it is in very good condition, with minimal deterioration and less encrustation. The deck lies at about 165' and has 3 of the small, but photogenic 3-man jungle tanks on the deck. These tanks just looked so out of place, sitting on the decks under the water, but they make for great pictures.

The forward hold is loaded to the brim with land mines, bombs and artillery shells. The second hold is absolutely jammed with large military trucks. At the depth of 175' you feel as though you've had a few happy pills, but the moderately clear and warm water caresses you, and the deep, deep blue at this depth is stunningly beautiful. After poking around the two holds, photographing the tanks, mines, trucks and the amazing forward gun, my 20 minutes

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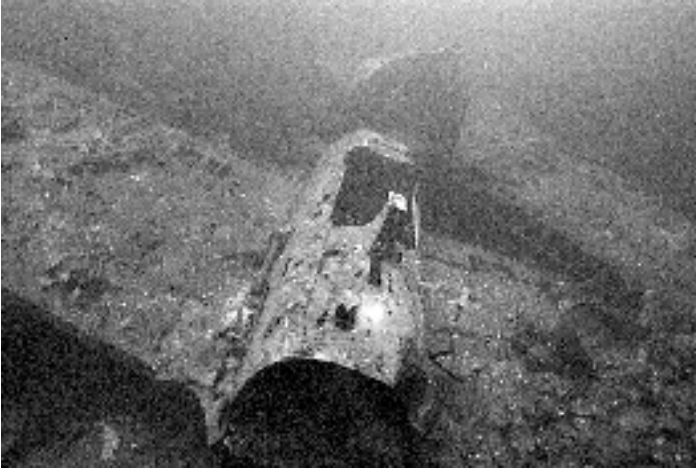
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of bottom time was up, and it was time to start heading back toward the surface for some hang time to let the dissolved nitrogen out of our tissues.



Captain Nick was a hoot, convincing the girls that they had a “garden” growing on the roof deck with tomatoes and lettuce crops. The girls actually were going to climb the ladder to look at the garden before several of us broke up laughing. He also went out of his way to make daily trips to town until our dive gear eventually showed up so we could dive our own gear instead of rental gear.

Other highlights from the trip include delving deep into the engine room and machine shop of the Fujikawa Maru to photograph the very famous R2D2 air compressor. It was a tight fit getting my monstrous camera housing with strobes into the machine shop, but the result is certainly a classic. There are also Japanese Zeros in the holds of the Fuji, which are amazing and very small. The torpedoes and periscopes on the sub-tender Heian Maru were sobering as well as the HUGE torpedo holes in some of the ships, like the Kiyosumi Maru.

Truk Lagoon has long been on my list of “must see” dive locations, and truly does live up to its amazing reputation. I can also honestly say, its one of the few locations that I would actually return to. The islands themselves are depressing, being rife with unemployment. The dive tourism dollars we bring in is almost the entire economy. However, the rich history quietly awaiting divers in the lagoon will enrich your understanding of the world and will give you a new perspective on the history of war.

Dive Reports

Sixgill Sharks at Owens Beach

Sunday, August 6th, 2006 *by Scott Boyd*

The second annual Sixgill Shark Club Dive was well attended, with two boats anchoring just off of the beach and three old farts braving the crowds and heat at Owens Beach to dive from shore and swim with the Sixgills. Rodger, Mike and I set up our gear on a picnic table and then waddled into the water to swim out to

the boats to start our dive. We descended to about 95’ and then turned West and swam to the barge.

At the barge, we spotted a small octopus out and about, which called for a few photos, and we made a circuit around the barge to say hello to all of the cute critters hiding out amongst the giant barnacles. Mike and I headed out West for a while, but didn’t see much except for a couple of Ratfish, so we returned to the barge and ran into Rodger.

Rodger was a bit excited, and indicated he’d just seen a shark below the barge. Mike and I swam down below the barge and then ran into Mark and Carolyn. We told them there was a shark in the area, and continued East. About 50’ after leaving them, we spotted a medium-sized male sixgill shark. I swam quickly to get in front of the shark (for a few photos) and turned the shark back towards Mike. The shark really wasn’t very happy with me swimming so close to him, and didn’t stick around too long, but both Rodger and Mike were able to see their first Sixgill Sharks.



I was also able to get a couple of photos showing the entire shark, which I had not been able to do on previous encounters with them. Our team of old shore divers had accomplished their goals for the dive, and left the water with large smiles on our faces. In fact, I think Rodger is STILL smiling!

Divers were: **Dave Miller, Colleen, Jeremy and Courtney Brown, Lloyd, Andi Mohrle, Mark Reece and Carolyn Thomas, Cory, Mike Fitz, Rodger Gomez and Scott Boyd.**

Exploration Dives with the Down Time

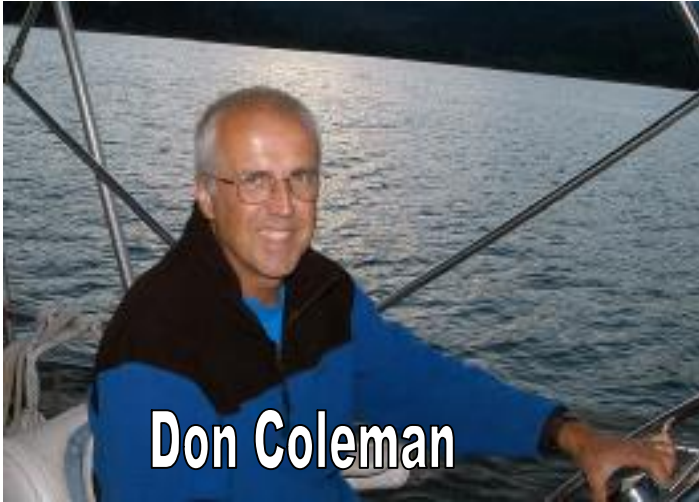
Saturday, August 26th, 2006 *by Scott Boyd*

When I received an email from Don Coleman asking if I wanted to go look for new dive sites in Hood Canal, it took about 3 seconds for me to call him and say, “when should I be there?”

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Janet and I arrived on the new Down Time late in the afternoon, and Don has sure fixed the new boat up nicely. Both he and Diane spoiled us as usual, and we quickly loaded our gear and headed South to look for new sites.



We dove one site near Jorsted that was marginal, and then ventured across the canal to look at another promising location, but decided by the look on the Depth Finder and shoreline, that it wasn't even worth getting in the water. So we ventured back to the West Side and dropped into another promising location.

There was some rock structure and the divers were hanging around a rock ledge at about 75', but it wasn't very big and there wasn't much to see. I headed out South, swimming along at about 65' for about 5 minutes and ran into a big wall, with a large overhang that was covered with Anemones.

A large Octopus had taken up residence in a prime location under a boulder on top of the wall, and there were huge schools of rockfish hanging just off the end of the wall. The top of the wall was about 45' and the bottom varied from 70' - 80'. It reminded me somewhat of the south wall of Sund Rock. There were Sail-fin Sculpins flitting about in the diagonal cracks of the wall, and I even spotted a Rhinoceros crab (golf ball crab) hiding in a crack.

After almost an hour of exploration, I surfaced with a huge grin on my face. The new wall I discovered is going to make an excellent dive site after a bit more exploration. We then had a

wonderful dinner on board as the Down Time slowly cruised back to Pleasant Harbor Marina and we admired the sun setting over the Olympic Mountains.

The new Down Time is so much nicer than their previous boat, which was awesome. The faster boat speed enables it to more easily reach even more distant dive sites. We have always had a great time whenever we go out with Pacific Adventure and this was no exception. I would encourage divers to give Don a call and book a trip on the Down Time. Maybe he'll take you to the new wall.

Diamond Knot

Thursday, August 3rd, 2006 by Scott Boyd

We had much better weather for our Diamond Knot dives this time than our previous adventure last Thanksgiving. The seas were calm but I saw lots of Scopalomine patches onboard, as nobody was taking any chances.



The currents were brisk as usual, but we were able to make two excellent dives on the stern section of the Diamond Knot. Most of my previous dives had actually been on the forward section, so this was like exploring a nice new wreck.

Inside the wreck, I found a couple of HUGE black rockfish that were the size of groupers. I'm not sure who was more startled,
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DIVE SHOP NEWS:

Capital Divers 866-3684
www.capitaldivers.com

Akumal Cave diving trip November 4 - 15. Nitrox, argon and hyper filtered air fills available. **Bandito Charters** on Sep 17, Oct 14, Nov 12 and Dec 9.

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.

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me or the big fish. They didn't stick around long enough to ask.

We did have the misfortune of sucking up a mooring line into one of the Hamilton Jets on the Dash, so spent a lot of time trying to clear out the rope. Unfortunately, we found it had worked itself into the sealed bearings, so had to limp back to Port Angeles on one engine (and cancel the second day of diving). I guess the curse of the Diamond Knot is still working strong!



Divers were: **Mark and Carolyn Reece, Jerry Whatley, Justin Kurz, Barb Roy, Scott Boyd and Chris McRae.** Many thanks to Justin Kurz of Underwater Sports for setting up several charters to the Diamond Knot and Neah Bay this year.

August Meeting Notes

Scott Boyd presented a Video/Slideshow of his recent trip to Palau and Truk lagoon along with a slideshow by Duane Hamrick. The meeting was very well attended (especially for an August meeting). Thanks to everyone that showed up, we had a good time.

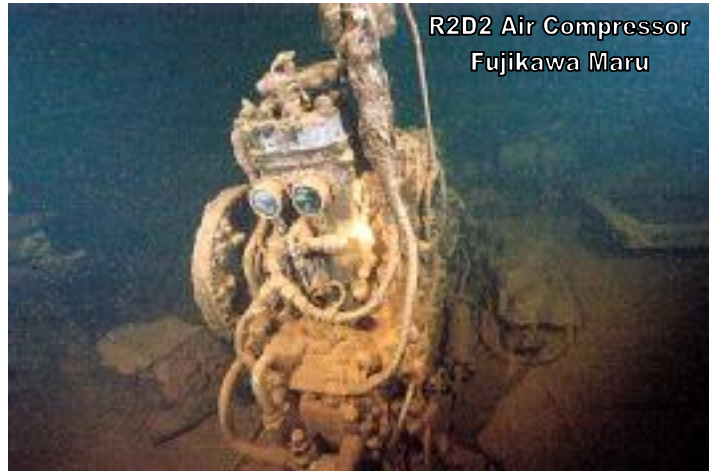
The dive club looked at all of the Logo Contest entries and decided to send them to Jeff Williams and have him design a new logo for us based on our designs. Most of the submitted designs are very similar.

Members Present: Michael Fitz, Deb Cowan, Steve Griffith, Becky Lundin, Rodger Gomez, Steve Sutton, Amy Kurtenbach, John Brown, Duane and Debbie Hamrick, Mike Scholl, Mark Reece and Carolyn Thomas, Jerry Ehrlich, Alan and Ingrid Niles, Steve and Carolyn Fornoff, Richard Penny, Paul Jeffers, Kelko Boyne, Ken Knutson, Jeff Hamilton, John

Cipriano, Brad Congdon, Mint Vu, Laura Schleyer, Rick Cooper, Viviana and Joel Olivares, Andy Mohrle and Scott and Janet Boyd.

September Dive Club Meeting

The September 19th Speaker will be none other than the amazing **Vern Morgus!** Vern has been diving longer than most of us have been alive. He taught lots of local divers how to dive, and has some amazing stories covering the history of diving in our area. You won't want to miss this presentation!



Upcoming Events:

Neah Bay with Porthole Charters - Friday September 22 through Sunday September 24. Contact Underwater Sports.

Cave/Cavern Diving in Akumal, Mexico. November 4 - 15th. Contact Wayne at Capital Divers for more information

Sulawesi trip, January 10-23, 2007, contact Bonnie Smith

Dominica Dive Trip - February 3 - 10, contact Steve or Carolyn Fornoff.

Underwater Photo Contest

Photographers, be sure to submit your best images from the Pacific Northwest to the **Kelp Krawlers Photo contest.** Selected images will be published in **Northwest Dive News** magazine and **Cash Prizes** are being awarded.

Calendar of Events

- Sept 19th** Club Meeting, 7:00 PM, Dirty Dave's Pizza Parlor. **Vern Morgus** on the History of PNW diving.
- Sept 22-24** Boat Dive, Neah Bay with Porthole Charters. Contact Underwater Sports.
- Oct 7 -8th** Oysterfest 25th Anniversary. Shelton with the Aquanuts.
- Oct 17th** Club Meeting, 7:00 PM, Dirty Dave's Pizza Parlor. Underwater Photo Contest
- Nov 21st** Club Meeting, 7:00 PM, Dirty Dave's Pizza Parlor.
- Dec ???** Christmas Party.