

PARADISE Dive Club

May 2004

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Volume 10, Issue 5



President's Log

by Patty Bryant

The month of May is upon us, and you know what that means – it's time for our annual Santa Cruz Island camping trip. As I write this, I'm looking forward to both the Refugio Earth Day cleanup weekend and the Santa Cruz Island trip.

I missed out on the Earth Day cleanup last year, as our rig dive on platform Grace was scheduled for the same day. I'm anxious to participate in the cleanup again, and I'm looking forward to hanging out with the Aqualliers and the UCSB gang. By the time you read this, our Refugio weekend will be over, and I'm sure that we will have had a great time.

I always look forward to the Santa Cruz Island trip, as it is one of my favorite events of the year. If you want to join in on the fun at Santa Cruz and you haven't signed up yet, be sure to call Mark Silva or me right away as time is running out. The *Truth* departs at 7:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 6th, to take us and all of our gear to the island – so don't miss the boat.

The arrival of the month of May also means that it is membership renewal time. Our membership year runs from May 1st to April 30th, so all of those wonderful benefits that you receive by being a PDC member will expire in a few days if you don't renew your membership. And as Bruce pointed out in his article last month, the benefits are many. I am very proud to be a member of the Paradise Dive Club, and I hope that you are too. I enjoy being a part of a club where I see great camaraderie not only among the members of our club, but with the members of other dive clubs as well. And let's face it, folks – not only do we have the coolest logo, but we do a lot of fun stuff! So I hope that you will join us for another year of fun with the PDC.



Cabezon at Refugio reef - photo by Stacey Kimsey

Join the club, enjoy the benefits

- ∅ Monthly meetings with entertainment — they're fun! they're educational!!
- ∅ Raffle prizes (who doesn't like prizes?)
- ∅ Great dive buddy pool
- ∅ Beach & boat dives, including weekly night dives
- ∅ Club BBQs & other activities
- ∅ Free airfills & gear discounts at local dive shops
- ∅ Free use of club's underwater camera
- ∅ Right to proudly wear the official PDC t-shirt (because

Mark your calendars...

We meet on the last Tuesday of the month

**April Meeting at Rusty's Pizza
(yes, one more time)**

10 East Cabrillo (in the lighthouse)
and

**May Meeting at Victoria's Café
(really, we mean it this time)**

2220 Bath Street (next to Encina Lodge)

6:30pm - social hour; 7-8:30pm - meeting

Dispatches from a Wednesday Night Dive

by Dan Lindsay

With Daylight Savings Time back in your timepieces, you might discover that the Wednesday night dives are more like late-afternoon/evening dives! A collection of PDC divers met recently for such a dive at the Biltmore steps, and began to suit and gear up while watching a significant pod of whales cruising (and blowing) by. Their telltale spray showed them to be quite near the beach as they slowly headed north for the summer. We lost sight of them off East Beach. In trail was the usual collection of dolphins, about 100 yards offshore. Conditions in the water were quite good despite the swell. In fact, many of us remarked how this was the first dive in some time where we never lost our buddy during the entire dive. Water temps are rising as well, with this recent dive around 63°F. We counted lobsters and octopus during our time below. We're predicting a good lobster population by the end of September!

For those of you thinking about joining in on a Wednesday night dive, be sure to get on the e-mail list. We try to get out the e-mail that confirms the location by 4pm on the day of the dive. With summer just around the corner, the Wednesday night dives will generally be starting at 6:30pm—the plan is to rendezvous at that time, and actually hit the water around 7. By the time we're done for the evening it is around 9pm. The sites are chosen somewhat at random, but mostly based on daily observations of surf conditions. Our weeknight range runs from Rincon Point to Tajiguas, so get going with joining in so that you can learn what's underneath the water at our local beaches!

To be added to the Wednesday night dive e-mail list, send a note to Dan Lindsay at edgy01@aol.com or Carl Gwinn at carlgwinn@yahoo.com.

Paradise Dive Club Officers

President - Patty Bryant	684-6342
Vice President - Mark Silva	969-2014
Secretary - Dan Lindsay	964-5020
Treasurer - Denise Foxwell	962-8113
Membership - Bruce King	895-9292
Publications - Stacey Kimsey	637-4487
Sgt at Arms - Mark Dombrosky	647-5245
Entertainment - Mark Bursek	564-1923
Raffle - Ralph Goldsen	681-0400
Webmaster - Ray Janik	637-4486
Photographer - Denise Foxwell	962-8113
Historian - Cheryl Weakliem	967-2827

Sponsors:

Anacapa Dive Center	963-8917
Aquatics	967-4456
DECA Diving	564-1923
Blue Water Hunter	564-6677
Truth Aquatics	962-1127

Visit our Web site at
<http://kelp.chem.ucsb.edu>

E-mail newsletter articles to
sdkimsey@yahoo.com

Membership: \$25/year (May-April), includes monthly newsletter. A complimentary subscription will be provided to dive clubs that reciprocate with a subscription to their newsletter; contact the membership coordinator at kingbh@cox.net for details.

Meeting Location

Please join us for one more meeting at Rusty's Pizza! Our move to Victoria's Café has been delayed by a month. Our first meeting at the new location (2220 Bath Street, next to Encina Lodge) will be on May 25.

May boat dives:

- Friday, May 28, a free-diving trip aboard the *Peace*, 2am departure, \$85; call Blue Water Hunter, 564-6677
- Saturday, May 1, on the *Spectre*, 7am departure, \$75; call Aquatics, 967-4456
- Saturday, May 8, on the *Truth*, 6am departure, \$90; call Anacapa Dive Center, 963-8917
- Sunday, May 9, on the *Peace*, 7am departure, \$95; call Anacapa Dive Center, 963-8917
- Monday, May 31, on the *Spectre*, 7am departure, \$75; call Aquatics, 967-4456



Welcome to our new member!

Aaron Edelheit



Trip Report – Culebra

article & photos by Ilya Nemenman

One day last fall, my wife and I decided that it was the time for a vacation. We didn't want to get even more tired walking museum corridors or hiking volcanoes. So when a friend mentioned to us the small Caribbean island of Culebra, halfway between Puerto Rico and St. Thomas, we decided to try that. Geographically, this is the most western of the Virgin Islands. This is also the Last Virgin of the Caribbean, with no developed tourist industry and no night life on its 20 square miles, very relaxed living, and some of the best beaches anywhere.

Fewer than 2,000 people live on the island; 200 of them are gringos and Europeans who came there long ago for a vacation and stayed. They run most of the businesses, so no knowledge of Spanish is necessary to visit. With tourism starting to build up (there are roughly 300 guests on the island during busy periods), the island is not as cheap as it used to be, but it still is a better value than elsewhere in the Caribbean. Getting there is easy (we flew Continental to San Juan and then caught an island-hopper to Culebra proper), but with only mom-and-pop-run guest houses and car rental agencies, it is tough to make local arrangements remotely. The relaxed style of living also takes its toll, as many places have the following posted hours: "Open some days. Closed the others." Thus innumerable failed attempts precede a successful phone call to make a reservation at any local establishment.

People are warm and cheerful and are in no rush to do anything. The beaches, framed by coconut palms and crystal clear water, are indeed amazing (see my pictures at menem.com/gallery/Culebra_Dec03). When we went to less-accessible places, we usually had a mile of sand to us alone, more coconuts than we could crack, and more rays



in the sandy bottom and small, colorful fishes around occasional rocks than we could count. I could write a lot about the personalities we met there, and the beautiful time we had, but most people reading this will instead be interested in...

...The diving. During WWII, the sea around Culebra was a Navy bombing range. As a result, it did not suffer the destruction of commercial exploitation, and the area was later declared a marine preserve and a bird refuge. Diving can be great here, but there is still unexploded ordnance to be found, so hiring a guide is wise. There are two dive shops on the island, both run by immigrant couples. With no competition and growing demand, this duopoly charges a lot and provides the same service (adequate, but not great). The only difference between them is that one advocates spectator diving and does not allow spear guns on their boat. I chose them.

At 9am I showed up at the dive shop and saw Walter, the owner and our guide, and four more divers fitting their gear. Two of them were former Santa Barbarans, now living in Colorado Springs. What a coincidence! Complaining about the storms that made the previous month the wettest in history and the water blooming, Walter took us to his boat in the mangroves in the Ensenada Honda, the island's inner harbor, which hundreds of years ago served as a refuge to pirate ships waiting for Spanish galleons departing from San Juan.

In the usual slow and relaxed Culebran way, it took us a couple of hours to depart and to get to small islands in the national bird refuge northwest of Culebra and its mile-long satellite, Luis Pena. These barren rocks, barely sticking out of the water at low tide, form a chain that connects Culebra to the northeast of Puerto Rico, and makes this part of the ocean dangerous to navigate.



continued on next page

Ilya Nemenman's trip report on Culebra, cont.



The first dive was at Cayo Lobito, www.culebradivers.com/lobito.htm. The sea was somewhat bumpy (though not like during the fish count trip to Santa Rosa last summer), and the current line extended very fast. We couldn't see the bottom, and I guessed the visibility to be roughly 50 feet, much less than the 100-foot vis I got later when snorkeling at the other side of the island, and a lot less than the "unlimited" visibility a tour book had promised. I was somewhat disappointed, especially after recent dives in the Red Sea, where the water was so clear that I couldn't see it. But still the conditions were OK.

After leaving the shiny pieces of gear on the boat, all six of us jumped in. Immediately the reason for being careful became clear: a two-yard-long giant barracuda was floating still right under the boat, looking for sparkling fish scales and waiting to become someone's special friend. The dive took us down 80 feet to some of the most unspoiled reefs I've ever seen. The bombing range and then the preserve had, indeed, kept people out. To fight the current, we kept close to the bottom. The healthy mix of soft and hard coral was so thick and rich that it felt almost like being in a forest.

Traversing the coral, we were lucky to see a couple of lobsters and a smallish leatherback turtle (about a yard in diameter). These creatures lay eggs on remote beaches of Culebra in the spring, but are difficult to spot during the rest of the year. Then we caught a glimpse of a nurse shark passing by. Maybe it was the current, maybe the shark or the barracuda, but the coral seemed otherwise deserted. The current kept us breathing hard, and soon three of the divers, just fresh out of the dive class, were sent back to the boat. Walter and I and a former Santa Barbaran stayed for a few more minutes, but the fish did not come.

The second dive was at El Mono, www.culebradivers.com/mono.htm. Current dropped, and visibility did too. We didn't see any big beasts this time, but the whole underwater island was full of giant schools of small fishes unfamiliar to me. The marine life diversity was a lot less than that of the Red Sea. However, the sheer number of fishes made it feel like we were swimming in a rich fish stew. Again, half of the divers went up soon, and the three of us stayed down to see a ray and to explore underwater caves and grottoes, where crabs ran away in fright from our lights.

Overall, I enjoyed the diving. It was not spectacular, but it was good. Some of the things were strange (no strict buddying, splitting up in the middle of the dive, etc.), but I attributed them to Culebra's relaxed way of doing things. I wanted to dive again, but a surprise awaited me the next day when we went to the Carlos Rosario beach, where a coral reef comes within ten feet of the shore. Snorkeling there was amazing, like nothing I've seen before: a beautiful reef wall and a plateau with depths of 1 to 40 feet. At this depth the colors are amazing, and, with no currents, the diversity and the number of fishes were fantastic. Even my wife, who does not swim, could look at the fishes while standing in the water by the wall.

I snorkeled and free-dived there with my dive computer on, and three hours later the computer said that I had "only" 200 minutes or so remaining at 30-foot depth. A lot of time underwater without the scuba gear! So from that day onward I did not dive. Instead we spent time on the beaches, snorkeled, and took a sea kayak to the nearby islets, where there were yet more beaches, and yet better snorkeling.

Culebra is amazing! And you don't have to dive to enjoy it!



June is National Scuba Month . . .

. . . and to celebrate, we've got some great events lined up!

We're planning a **dive/BBQ/swap meet at Summerland Beach on June 12**. So do your spring cleaning, and unearth some of that long-forgotten dive gear from the dark corners of your closet—that lime green dive skin might be just the thing your fellow club member is looking for!

Then on **June 25**, join us for a summertime **deco stop/happy hour at Shoreline Beach Café**. Sip a Corona, watch the dolphins go by, and remember what put the “paradise” in Paradise Dive Club.

And for a fun weekend checking out the latest scuba toys or dreaming about your next exotic dive vacation, don't miss the **Scuba Show** at the Long Beach Convention Center, **May 22 and 23**. See www.saintbrendan.com for details. A dollar-off coupon is available on the PDC Web site or at local dive stores.



Sea lion at Anacapa Island - photo by Dave Burroughs

Keep Receiving This Newsletter – Don't Forget to Renew Your PDC Membership!

Dear Members,


This is a reminder that PDC membership renewals are due May 1, 2004.

Please consider supporting our club by renewing your membership. Membership dues help offset the costs of many club benefits and activities such as the monthly newsletter, our monthly meetings, and BBQs & campouts. If you haven't already done so, please download the membership renewal form from the Web site at <http://kelp.chem.ucsb.edu/membership/membership.htm>, and send the completed form along with the annual membership dues of \$25 to Paradise Dive Club, c/o Bruce King, P. O. Box 21311, Santa Barbara, CA 93121. Send me an e-mail if you have any questions; I'm at kingbh@cox.net.

Thank you for supporting PDC.
Bruce King
PDC Membership Coordinator

May 2004

Don't Forget...
MONTHLY MEETING
 April 27 at Rusty's Pizza
 May 25 at Victoria's Café

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	← Santa Cruz Campout →	
9 →	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24		26	27	28	29
30	31					

April meeting entertainment::
Steve Trainoff

Upcoming Events

- Summerland Beach dive/BBQ/swap meet - June 12
- Deco stop (happy hour) at Shoreline Beach Café - June 25
- Group campout at Refugio - Sept. 17-18

Wednesday night dives

To find out where the group is diving or to be added to the night dive e-mail list, contact Dan Lindsay at edgy01@aol.com/964-5020, Carl Gwinn at carlgwinn@yahoo.com/968-5694, or Mark Silva at 969-2014.



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 Santa Barbara, CA 93121



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 Santa Barbara, CA 93109
 805-564-6677
<http://www.blueh2o.com>



Sea Landing - 301 West Cabrillo
 Santa Barbara, CA 93101
 805-962-1127
<http://www.truthaquatics.com>



5822 Hollister Avenue
 Goleta, CA 93117
 805-967-4456
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