

President's Log by Steven Trainoff



Do you ski naked? Of course not! Then why do some people think that cold-water divers dive in nothing more than a bathing suit? Diving is as much about thermal protection as it is about tanks, regulators, and BCDs. How many of you have had a variation on the following exchange while traveling?

Tropical Diver (TD): "Oh, you are a diver too? I love to dive. Where have you done most of your diving?"

Me: "I love to dive off the coast of California. The kelp forests in the Channel Islands are some of the most spectacular habitats in the world. It is like flying through an exotic rainforest with fish and sea lions dashing through the swaying fronds"

TD: "But isn't the water (looking a little squeamish), like freezing?"

Me: "Well, in the summer it gets up into the mid to upper 60s, but in the winter, it drops down to the low 50s. With a good wet-suit or better yet, a good drysuit, it is absolutely doable..."

TD: "Brrrr!?! (with a knowing smile) I NEVER get in the water unless it is over 80."



I was able to do 50-60 minutes dives without any problem, although even with dry-gloves, my fingers started to get cold at the end of each dive. The one big glitch with my gear occurred on the very first dive. I was down 46 minutes and the neck seal on my drysuit leaked, badly. I came up soaked to the waist. It turns out that my neck seal had leaked on my last dive in SB too, but I thought that it was because I had a surface swim through the kelp. No; it was just its time. It could have been a show stopper, but when I bought my DUI drysuit I opted for the ZipSeals to deal with this exact problem. I zipped a spare seal on and 5 minutes later I was good to go. I was dry as a bone for the rest of the trip.

The inside passage is a fascinating dive destination. It is an ocean passage that is protected from waves by a network of islands. For most of the trip the water was as flat as a lake, although being ocean, it is subjected to strong tidal flows. We only did two dives a day, carefully timed to slack tide.

You can then see TD thinking: "You must be crazy." Well, maybe I am, but as much as I love diving in tropical destinations, there is more to the oceans than coral reefs. Don't get me wrong, coral reefs are beautiful, but I can't understand someone who is proud that 3/4 of the worlds oceans are off limits to him or her. Case-in-point, consider the trip that Gretchen and I just took to Alaska. I have to say up front, that Alaska and British Columbia had some of the most interesting and beautiful diving that I have ever done.

We took the Nautilus Explorer (NE) on a 10 day trip from Vancouver to Juneau through the inside passage. The NE is a magnificent 116' dedicated dive boat. On our trip we had 19 passengers and 7 crew. The crew work amazingly hard and provide an unparalleled live-aboard experience.

As much as I contend that cold water diving can be excellent, I will be the first to admit that it can be challenging. The water on this trip was a uniform 45F, but my drysuit was up to the task.





The trip was a photographer's dream. It is hard to list everything that we saw and did. Every day had a new revelation. British Columbia and Alaska are dominated by superlatives, everything is on a bigger scale than our normal existence.

Since we were traveling in late summer, the water was green and visibility was limited to 10-15 feet for the upper 30-40 feet. Drop down below this plankton bloom and a magical world awaited. Visibility increased to 50-100ft and the ocean was illuminated by a magical emerald glow unlike anything I have experienced before. Much of the sea life was familiar enough. There were kelp greenlings, lingcod, and rockfish. There were metridiums and gorgonians, but they all looked the victims of a nuclear accident. They were enormous! There was also plenty that was new: giant pacific octopus, wolf eels, and ratfish.

One high point of the trip was when we took the NE up the Wrangell Narrows to the LeConte Glacier. LeConte is 21 miles long and 1 mile wide. It is the southernmost tidewater glacier in the world, which means that at its terminus it spills into the ocean. Where it meets the water it is 200ft high and 800 feet deep, and the fluctuating tides put a lot of stress on the ice, guaranteeing a continuous supply of calving icebergs. It also is also famous for its "shooter" icebergs. These are bergs that break off under the water and rocket to the surface with enough force that they can leap out of the water. We saw a couple of bergs calve from the top with resounding booms, but we didn't see any shooters. However, the trip to and from the glacier was through narrows filled with floating (and grounded) icebergs. They got so thick that the water was more like a slushy. Although Captain Mike Lever took it at dead slow, you could see and hear them grinding along the hull with a groaning sound that gave everyone mental images of the Titanic.

After observing the glacier show, the real fun began. There was a couple other small sight seeing boats in the area. One shouted to us that they were crazy Canadians. I shouted back that we were American and I asked if they were going in the water. They noticed all of the dive gear on deck and said "No. Are you crazy???" I'd rather be diving in Tahiti!" Without missing a beat, I shouted back, "If that's the case, you are headed in the wrong direction!!!" We then donned our drysuits and jumped over the side. We were only snorkeling since the water beneath the glacier is very turbid due to all of the ground rock and dirt that gets churned up by the calving.

Climbing on an iceberg is trickier than it looks because they are as slippery as... well... wet ice. I was surprised at how massive, even the smallest berg is. They are roughly a metric ton per cubic meter. The small iceberg that we climbed on must have been at least 50-100 tons. After playing "king of the ice mountain" and "wet seal", it was time to leave. Too bad, because it was a complete blast. I have never seen a group of adults giggle quite so much.

Another highlight of the trip was diving on the wreck of the Transpac. This was a large fishing boat that sank in a narrow channel in 1986. The inexperienced captain came upon a barge in the middle of the night, and instead of turning right-to-right to avoid a collision, he turned left and got "t-boned". The thing that makes this wreck interesting is that although the passage is narrow, the walls are very sheer and the channel is extremely deep. In the middle the depth is over 1500ft. When the boat wrecked, it slid against one of the walls, and instead of plunging into the abyss, it came to rest with its stern on a small ledge at 250ft. The bow sticks straight up in the water column and the superstructure juts out into the channel. It is a deep dive, with the top of the bow at 115 ft. We adjusted our Nitrox mix to 27% and did the dive. The visibility at depth was excellent, at least 80ft+. I don't normally like deep dives since they go so quickly and I get narc'd pretty easily, but this one was fascinating. The wreck is beautifully intact, with all of the windows unbroken in the wheelhouse.

Yet another highlight was diving off of Inian Island, which has a Steller Sea Lion rookery about a half a mile away. Steller Sea Lions are more gregarious than the California Sea Lions we are used to. Of course they have also been dusted with the magic Miracle-Gro that affects everything in Alaska. An adult male California Sea Lion may get as big as 500-600lbs, whereas a Steller will top the scales at 2000-2200lbs. As someone said, imagine a Grizzly bear with fins! As soon as we splashed, the welcoming party of juveniles and females put in an appearance, and in the space of a moment they were dive-bombing us, nibbling on fins, and tugging on our drysuits. I was in photographer heaven, until a big adult male came up and ROARED at me underwater. I didn't hear as much as feel an earthquake in my chest. In this game of dominance, I was bound to lose. I beat a hasty retreat to a crack in the wall and waited for Mr. Big to go his way.

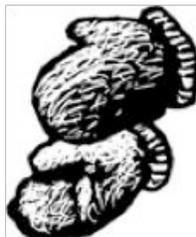


Even though the diving was wonderful, there were plenty of things to do topside. I am running out of space, but let me list a few of the amazing sights and experiences that we had. We saw pods of Orca, Humpback Whales breaching completely out of the water. We hiked up to a hot springs, and roamed around an abandoned cannery ghost town. We saw bears and eagles and even arctic puffin. We donned the drysuits and emulated the salmon by swimming (crawling) up a salmon stream. And on the last day were we treated to the spectacle of Bubble-net Feeding. This is a mind-blowing sight. A group of 5-20 Humpback Whales simultaneously dive. Then they swim in a circle and blow a ring of bubbles around a school of baitfish. The bubbles scare the fish into the center of the bubble-net, and then the Humpbacks blast through the center of the trap and leap out of the water with their mouths gaping. They crash into each other with a tremendous splash. Once they have found a productive fishing ground they repeat this performance over and over again until they are gorged.



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We ended our trip with three days in Juneau, during which we saw the local sights, but mostly relaxed and recovered from the constant action of our vacation by hiking and dog sledding. At the end of the trip someone asked me if I would do more cold water diving. I looked at them like they were crazy. "Are you kidding? This was one of the best trips I have ever done. OF COURSE I would do it again; in a heart-beat!" I am a cold-water diver and the whole ocean is my playground. For more photos visit my web site at <http://www.flickr.com/drsteve>



Skip the earmuffs, skip the mittens, there is nothing like a drysuit to keep you toasty!

Paradise Dive Club Events

September 2008

20 - Coastal Clean Up Day

The Vandenberg Aqualiers will be joining us for this event

26 - Lobster Opener at Midnight!

27 - Lobsterfest at the home of Steven Trainoff and Gretchen Beckert

Bring a bug and a side dish to share. No bugs available, bring your favorite beef, chicken or fish to roast on the barbie!

October 2008

25 - Pumpkin Carving Contest

November 2008

8- Golf Ball Challenge

With lobster

season coming up soon NOW is the time to check all of your gear for needed repairs, have your tanks inspected and get a new fishing license if you don't have one. Also, make sure that you know the rules for which bugs can be taken and which ones remain free for next year's season.

News of Some of the Old-time PDC'ers... Paul Weakliem

Longtime friend of PDC, Bob Evans (of Force Fins fame) was featured in an article in the latest Journal of Diving History (the magazine of the Historical Diving Society). Bob is a fixture in the Santa Barbara dive community, and it was good for many of us to enjoy his company again on Ed's reunion trip earlier this summer. The article has several pictures from his shop on Anacapa street, next to Anacapa Dive Center. When PDC was formed in the mid-90's one of the charter members was Elaine Hyde, whose glass-blowing studio occupied this space, and when we'd stop off to get tanks filled at Anacapa, a visit to Elaine was always in the stars (and occasionally Bob would be there too). Elaine now lives up in Los Olivos with husband Stephen Mattsson, and we'll get her out diving again - it may just take some warmer water!

Also earlier this summer, Jonathan and I were at a fair on a tilt-a-wheel, and while we whizzed around I recognized Andre Terroux in the next car at the same time he recognized me. We got off the ride (thoroughly disoriented now) to catch up as the kids got back in line to go again. We first met Andre on a somewhat ill-planned PDC event where a bunch of us with kayaks and small inflatables left from Haskell's beach (where the Bacara now is) to go do a dive at Naples. Well, the problem is none of us had GPS and we only had a vague idea where the reef was but we figured there would be kelp there. Somehow we did eventually find the reef, and had a nice dive, didn't lose too much equipment, and most importantly came back with everybody. Surprisingly, after this, Andre decided he did want to become a member of PDC, and we spent many years diving with him, including off the boat he later bought. Andre and Frederique had a daughter several years ago, and they moved to France a few weeks ago - he said to say goodbye to all his PDC friends, and they will see you in Paris!

Local Dive Calendar

September 2008

Truth Aquatics 962-1127 call for prices, boats, and specific destinations, or go to their website; www.truthaquatics.com.

- 1 day outer islands dive, 4am dep., 9/4, 9/12, 9/21,
- 1 day inner islands dive, 6am dep., 9/20
- 2 day beginning diver trip, 4am dep. 9/12
- 2 day limited load dive BUG SEASON OPENER 4am dep., 9/26 (1/2 trip is Truth Aquatics)
- 3 day dive 4am dep., 9/1, 9/19, (1/2 trip is Truth Aquatics)
- 3 day limited load dive 4am dep., 9/14

Trips to Exotic Places!

Anacapa Dive Center 963-8917,

Indonesia, with add-on to Bali, May 2009

Increase Your Knowledge!

Annie Crawley will be hosting two limited load dive trips in September. September 2nd-6th to the Southern Channel Islands, and Sept 7-10 2008 to the northern Channel Islands. This is a 4-day dive trip on board the Vision. There will be instructors on-board to teach you photographic imaging and editing techniques. There will also be a number of photography "toys" to try out. This is an all inclusive package. The cost is \$875 for the Southern Islands and \$825 for the Northern Islands. Book both trips for \$1650! Contact Annie at anniecrawley.com for more information.

Don't Forget! This month we will be electing our new club officers including a new newsletter editor. The Board meets once a month for dinner and discussion of Club issues (its more dinner and relating of the latest dive gossip), and to plan events. contact one of our officers if you are interested in running for office!

Channel Islands Divers San Nic trip. - Paul Weakliem

Looking for something new to do this bug season? Channel Islands Divers is again doing their two day trip to San Nic. It's Oct 4/5, which is a rare Saturday/Sunday trip, so you don't need to take days off work even! This is the trip that Mark Silva and I did a few years ago where I caught (and released) the 11+ lb bug; he's still out there, and now bigger, so go see if you can find him again! San Nic. is a great place to go bug diving, where 5 pounders are routine. The cost of the trip is \$350 which is a good deal, and the Channel Islands Divers are a great bunch of people to go on a trip with. If you are interested or want more information, e-mail Ken at dive@channelislandsdivers.org

PDC Thursday Night Dives!

To find out where the group will be diving, or to be added to the night dive e-mail list, sign up at http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PDC_midweek_dive, or send e-mail to PDC_midweek_dive-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Membership

\$25/year for individuals, \$40 for families. Membership runs May-April and includes a monthly newsletter, free air-fills, and other benefits. For details or to join, contact Noah Philips at nphilips@gmail.com

Newsletter

Send newsletter items to Gretchen Beckert at gbgreymutt@cox.net

Website

www.paradisediveclub.org

Join the coolest club in town!

1. Monthly meetings with entertainment.
2. raffle prizes (we all need new dive stuff)
3. Great dive buddy pool
4. Beach and boat dives, AND weekly night dives
5. Club BBQs, and other activities
6. Free air-fills and gear discounts at local dive shops
7. Right to proudly wear the official PDC T-Shirt (nobody has a logo as cool as ours).

Dive Club Officers

President	Steven Trainoff	571-1622
Vice President	Geof McFarland	685-6001
Treasurer	Mark Silva	453-2001
Secretary	Jim Axtell	685-9025
Membership	Noah Philips	nphilips@gmail.com
Newsletter	Gretchen Beckert	571-1622
Circulation	Ovidio Mora	683-4999
Sgt at Arms	Akiles Ceron	564-1230
Entertainment	Mark Bursek	564-1923
Historian	Cheryl Weakliem	967-2827



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Blue Water Hunter

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Santa Barbara, Ca 93109
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Truth Aquatics

301 W. Cabrillo Blvd.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
805-962-1127

Anacapa Dive Center

22 Anacapa St
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
805-963-8917

Many thanks to our sponsors for their generosity including air-fill donations and gear discounts!

Meeting Place

The August 26th meeting will take place at
Petrini's Restaurant in Santa Barbara.
14 West Calle Laureles.

Feeding frenzy at 6:30pm, meeting at 7pm