

PARADISE DIVE CLUB

Club Business | Catalina Island | Morro Bay, CA



Upcoming Meetings

Club meetings at Cody's Cafe
7:00pm, but show up early for
dinner and socializing.

October 27

November 24

January 26

Deco Stops

5:30pm, 2nd Friday
after the club meetings

Club Sponsors

- [Truth Aquatics](#)
- [Santa Barbara Aquatics](#)
- [Blue Water Hunter](#)
- [The Eagle Inn](#)
- [Channel Island Dive Adventures](#)

Editor's Note

This special edition of the club's newsletter is dedicated to two trips club member Jacek Smits took in September. The first one was a day trip to Catalina Island and the second one was a camp & dive weekend in Morro Bay, CA. All text and photos by Jacek Smits, unless otherwise noted.

Club Business

Staff Writer

First, a little bit of club business. At the September meeting of our club the annual elections were held for seats on the board. Paul Bullock nominated a new board and asked for an up-or-down vote of the members present. The new board was enthusiastically and overwhelmingly approved in a single round of voting. Additionally, Ivan Girling was acknowledged for winning this year's photo competition with his photo of a horn shark. Congratulations go to Ivan!



Ivan Girling's winning photo of a horn shark.

Dive Club Officers

President	Paul Bullock
Vice President	Tim Doherty
Past President	Kellen Tobin
Treasurer	Jim Axtell
Secretary	Véronique Lisi
Membership	Ludovico Cavedon
Sgt. at Arms	Michel Giroux
Entertainment	Juan Beltranena
Social Media	Jacek Smits
Publications	Jacek Smits

Mission Statement

Paradise Dive Club is a diving and social club. The Club provides a setting that allows continued growth in our sport and one where friendships can develop and flourish. Paradise Dive Club promotes fun, safe diving related activities and environmental awareness. The Club was founded to provide social and recreational opportunities to people with mutual interests in snorkeling, scuba and free diving, and to educate and inform its members and the general public in matters related to diving and the ocean, particularly in regard to issues involving coastal Santa Barbara County.

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Trip Reports

Jacek Smits

One of my goals for this summer was to explore different dive opportunities and destinations in order to add some variety to my diving, and then to share those experiences with the club in case other members are looking to branch out a bit as well. In the end I picked two different dive boats out of San Pedro with day trips to Catalina, and a weekend of camping and diving in Morro Bay, CA. I wrote up a trip report on my first San Pedro boat in the August newsletter. This newsletter has the rest.



Rubberlip surfperch at Blue Cavern SMCA

Catalina Trip

I was booked on a September 6 day trip to Farnsworth Banks and Blue Cavern State Marine Conservation Area with [Channel Island Dive Adventures](#) on the [Asante](#) out of San Pedro. Both dive sites are at Catalina Island and fairly famous, which is why I wanted to go there. Farnsworth Banks is a pinnacle that comes up to around 55 feet deep some three miles off the west side of Catalina. Blue Cavern SMCA is just east of Two Harbors. In the week leading up to this trip I came across a pair of articles in my various news feeds about some very special encounters at these locations: a 15-18 foot [great white shark](#) at Blue Cavern SMCA and [juvenile oar fish](#) at Farnsworth Banks. Clearly I had every reason to be excited about this day.

Midnight Hour (was Farnsworth Banks)

The Asante dive boat was easy to find and board in San Pedro. It's a bit spartan but a very fast boat and it takes only 14 divers (their web site says 12, but there were definitely 14 divers on board). We left around 6:45am and it took about 1 hour and 20 minutes to get to Farnsworth Banks. Unfortunately, when we arrived the dive site was completely taken over by small fishing boats and it was impossible to squeeze us in. Instead we went to dive the wreck of the Midnight Hour off the west end of Catalina. It is a 61' long commercial squid boat that sank in August of 2011. I never cared for looking at rusting boat on the bottom of the ocean and this was no exception. The boat is sitting at 110 feet and we hit a major thermocline at 50 feet. It was really cold down there. Basically I looked at it, swam around it, and went back up the anchor line. There just wasn't that much to see from my perspective.



Safety stop at Blue Cavern SMCA

Blue Cavern SMCA

After the Midnight Hour we went to Blue Cavern SMCA. Boats are not allowed to anchor in this conservation area so we dove off a live boat. The dive site has some terraced shelves and during the briefing the captain told us to leave the top shelf behind and go deeper in order to find some of the caverns it is famous for. As I went over the edge of the first shelf it quickly got darker and the visibility went down quickly as well, so I decided to hang out on the top shelf and enjoy the few patches of giant kelp that were shimmering in the sunlight filtering through the water. Lots of wildlife in those patches of kelp too. The top shelf also had an interesting rocky structure that made it fun to swim through and explore. I had a beautiful, relaxing dive and, given the stories of the other other divers, I think I made the right decision. This is a good dive site to go back to.



Two-spot Octopus at Bird Rock

Bird Rock

Our third site was Bird Rock which is just off Two Harbors. The dive was along the north-east wall which was covered with a wide variety of algae and there were lots of critters to find as well. I got to play hide-and-seek with a Two-spot octopus. Any dive you get to do that is a great dive. With the variety of algae on the wall it was very colorful dive. It was easy and shallow, and the perfect end to a good day of diving. After a relaxing hour-long dive we all got back on board and it was a quick trip back to San Pedro where we arrived around 4pm.

In Summary

The boat was a good boat and it was well run. It's easy to get to and there's ample parking close by. It's small and there's not much room to bring your gear bag along so I put that back in my car after loading my gear on the boat. It has no galley and what the boat provided as lunch and snacks was somewhat disappointing. Next time I will bring my own along. Two great advantages of using this boat are the limited number of divers and the speed with which it gets to Catalina. The pre-trip organization and communication by Ken Kollwitz's CIDA was very good as well. If you haven't dived with CIDA, give them a try. Ken runs good trips. All in all a good experience for a quick day trip to Catalina and I will pick this boat over the Pacific Star out of San Pedro. See the August newsletter for that report.

Morro Bay, CA

I went up to Morro Bay with Ivan, Kellen, and Ludovico for a camp and dive weekend. The purpose was to explore diving opportunities in that area and how well it would work for one of those quick get-the-heck-out-of-town weekends. At a two hour drive it's close enough to make it worthwhile. We all drove up Friday afternoon and met up at [Morro Bay State Park](#) to set up camp, have some dinner and chat while sitting around a camp fire. Nobody stayed up particularly late as we were supposed to meet Shawn Stamback of [SLO Divers](#) (of [YouTube](#) fame) at 7:15am the next morning to go diving.

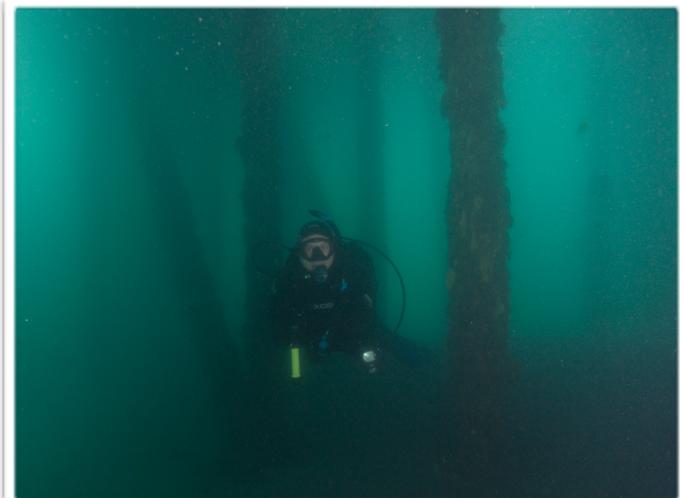
SLO Divers

We met Shawn at his boat in the marina that was just across the street from Morro Bay SP. It couldn't have been any easier. It's not a big boat and has few amenities, but Shawn does a good job running it and works very hard to give the divers a nice day. It can take six divers but he prefers to limit it to four because of the small space. You have to bring everything yourself including two full tanks if you want to do two dives. And it's easiest to get into your wetsuit on the dock before departure.

The first site he took us to was one he had only recently discovered and it didn't have a name yet. The site was approximately 2 miles south-



Men In Black (a.k.a. Fantastic 4); Photo by Shawn Stamback



Kellen under the North T-Pier

west of Spooner's Cove. It was an interesting reef structure with all kinds of rocky outcroppings, crevices, and depths varying from 35-85 feet. Visibility wasn't great (about 15 feet), the water was a bit green and it was fairly dark at depth, but it was an interesting dive nonetheless. I'd love to go back here on a day with clear water.

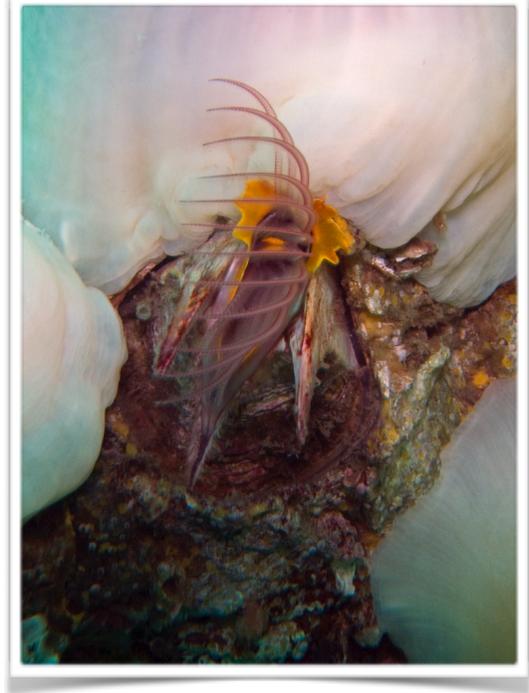
For the second dive he took us to the 10-E Buoy site. These days it's also called 10-E Pinnacle as the warning buoy was removed several years ago. This was a stunning dive. There are two pinnacles but we only dove one. It was completely covered in metridiums and had all kinds of critters all over it: giant acorn barnacles, nudibranchs, blue-ring top snails everywhere, blood stars and bat stars everywhere you looked. Depth range was similar to the first site and the water was a little clearer here. It was a beautiful dive site and I definitely want to go back to this site again.

North T-Pier

Sunday morning we dove the North T-Pier in the Morro Bay harbor. There are some rules for diving this site: you have to check in and out with both Harbor Patrol and the Coast Guard, which, fortunately, are located right next to each other and right at the dive site. Furthermore, you are to stay away from the Coast Guard side of the pier and definitely have to stay away



Urticina piscivora at Site With No Name



Giant Acorn Barnacle at 10-E Buoy site

from their boats. We were allowed to walk down the "Harbor Patrol — Authorized Personnel Only" ramp and do a controlled seated entry into the water from the dock. Once we were all in the water we went down and disappeared under the pier for what turned out to be a nice, relaxing hour-long dive, even though at times it got a little cramped with four divers in between the pillars of the pier. We dove the pier at slack high tide and there was an interesting change in current that you need to take into account if you're planning to do this dive. It was the obvious result of massive amounts of tidal water entering and leaving the harbor's mouth. There was lots to see: sheep crab, decorator crab, mussels, clams, fringehead and other fishes, nudibranchs, plenty of corynactis and other anemones. The structure of the pillars holding up the pier gave it an extra dimension. This is also a dive I want to do again.

In Summary

I really enjoyed this weekend of camping and diving in Morro Bay and have no problem recommending a weekend like this to

all of you. Diving in Morro Bay has a lot to offer and is sufficiently different from our local beach dives and day trips to Anacapa or Santa Cruz that it is worth going up there. Water temperatures are definitely lower: on Saturday we hit 59°F at the 10-E pinnacles and under the pier it was in the low 60s. One downside is that you have to drive down to Los Osos to get your tanks filled. It's about a 20 minute drive from Morro Bay so it's not that bad but you will have to take that into account when planning your weekend. Morro Bay SP was rather dusty and noisy, and it is very much a family camp ground with roaming bands of feral children running through our camp site. There were quite a few dogs too. Personally, I'll probably try a different camp site next time or I may AirBnB it.

We all arrived early evening Friday, Saturday was completely taken up with diving and a trip to fill the tanks, and Sunday we all went home after lunch. So we didn't explore much else while we were up in Morro Bay. But I've visited Morro Bay before and, even if the diving gets canceled because of the conditions, it's a beautiful coastal area that has lots of alternatives to offer. I'll definitely go back again and try it yourself. I doubt you'll be disappointed.

Jacek Smits

www.jaceksmits.com

Upcoming Club Events

Staff Writer

- First Saturday of the Month: Oct 3, Nov 7, Dec 5
- Pumpkin Carving Contest: Saturday, October 24
- Holiday Party: TBD

Message Board

Staff Writer

Remember that our Meetup presence also has a message board attached to it. It's a great way to organize some (beach) diving with other members of the club. At least, with those who are on Meetup. So that's yet another reason to join the club on our Meetup group! The message board hasn't been getting a lot of use so that's why we're promoting it a bit now. [Check it out!](#)



Metridium farcimen at 10-E dive site

Odds & Ends

Staff Writer

Solar Powered Slug

The *Elysia tuca* slug feeds on a species of seaweed (*Halimeda incrassata*) by sucking out its cytoplasm, including chloroplasts and a toxic compound. The slug then uses the chloroplasts to convert sunlight into energy and the toxic compound for its own defense mechanism. Link to [article at C&EN](#).

Magic Disappearing Trick

Sea sapphires appear and disappear as they swim. Scientist have discovered that this is because of a very precisely layered array of transparent crystal plates on their back, and the sapphires' adjusting their angle to the light beams. Link to article at [EurekAlert](#).

Kermadec Ocean Sanctuary

New Zealand created one of the world's largest ocean sanctuaries in the Kermadec region, which is in the open ocean north-east of the north island of New Zealand. It covers 15% of New Zealand's economic zone and, at around 600,000 km² (231,661 square miles), it is twice the landmass of New Zealand. Link to the [official brochure](#).

The Epic History of Sharks

BBC Earth wrote an article on the history and development of shark. Link to the [article at BBC](#).

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