

AQUANEWS

30th Anniversary of the AquaNews

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Diving The Keys

Peter Bein

It has been a while since I have taken pen to hand, so to speak, to write about Keys diving. It has not been great until recently. Hurricanes, waves, rain and poor viz are a deterrent here.

Between July second and eighth I have gone down eleven times to explore the artificial reef system in Key Largo and Islamorada. I am on the "W" list at a number of diving establishments and receive calls or e-mails whenever there is a WRECK dive.

My first call came at 6PM Sunday, July second from Tilden Dive Center here in Marathon. "We are doing the Thunderbolt tomorrow, check-in at 8AM."

My gear was already set up so the following morning I left my house at 7:45 to arrive at the shop on time. Things don't get any better than this.

I was greeted as an old friend when I entered the shop as I had not been there since before the flood last October. I get the local rate of \$45, things don't get better than this.

Everybody was buddied up so I had to go solo - OK with me.

The Thunderbolt was scuttled on March 6, 1986 as part of the Florida Keys Artificial Reef Association project. She now lies intact and upright, on a sand bottom, 120 feet below the surface, four miles south of Marathon, off Key Colony Beach.

The Thunderbolt was built along with fifteen other sister ships by Marrietta Manufacturing Company at Point Pleasant, West Virginia under contract to the US Army during World War II. The Thunderbolt, then named Randolph, was launched on June 2, 1942. These ships were built to plant and tend defensive coastal minefields for the Army's Coast Artillery

Corps. However, in 1949 this function and the Randolph were transferred to the Navy. While in the Navy, this vessel was never commissioned and remained in the Navy Reserve Fleet, first in South Carolina and then in Florida. Caribbean Enterprises of Miami purchased the vessel in 1961 and later Florida Power and Light bought her for research on the electrical energy in lightening strikes -- hence her new name, Thunderbolt.

Eventually FP&L donated the ship to the Florida Keys Artificial Reef Association.

The ship's hull is 189 feet long with a forecastle, which served as the cable handling area, and has a cruiser stern. The ship was stripped of all but a few pieces of equipment prior to sinking. The most prominent remaining features are a horizontal cable handling reel which lies at eighty feet and is centered on the after-end of the forecastle deck, and the remains of the ships superstructure, including the observation deck located at seventy-five feet. The aft-end of the superstructure has been cut away, exposing the interior of the hull at the engineering space. The rudder and propellers, which lie at 120 feet, also remain to complement the stern section of the hull.

Marine life about the wreck include Jack crevalle, amberjack, grouper, barracuda, cobia, sharks, tarpon and even a jewfish.

We hooked into the bow mooring ball and I descended onto the deck to find the famous cable reel. I penetrated the deck and dropped down the staircase to the engine room. Then transgressed the hull through to an opening in the aft deck to the stern line.

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AQUANEWS

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ROCKLAND AQUANAUTS ORGANIZATION. WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS & PHOTOGRAPHS ARE ALWAYS WELCOMED & ENCOURAGED. SUBMIT MATERIALS FOR PUBLICATION BY THE 19TH OF THE MONTH

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Diving The Keys

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I cruised back toward the bow, through the pilot house, and waited a while before making my ascent. In all I had a twenty-six minute dive, warm water. Thirty foot viz, a good dive, I surfaced with 1200 pounds NITROX.

Our second dive was a typical Florida reef, The Horseshoe. Maximum depth of twenty-four feet, actually a long safety stop. I spotted a few lobsters a school of scrolled filefish and a free-swimming spotted moray. It was an OK dive. I was down for forty-six minuets and came up with 1600 pounds NITROX. I should have used air.

The July third dive. I received a call from Divers City in Tavernier. They had two divers from Ft. Lauderdale doing the Duane, would I care to join them? It is always a pleasure to do a dive with these people.

The US Coast Guard Cutter Duane lies upright in 130 feet of water one mile south of Molasses Reef off Key Largo. After being decommissioned on August 1, 1985, as the oldest active US Military vessel; the Duane was donated to the Keys Association of Dive Boat Operators for use as an artificial reef. On November 27, 1987, she was towed to Molasses Reef, her hatches opened, her holds pumped full of water and down she went to begin her final assignment.

The Duane was built in 1936 at the US Naval Yard in Philadelphia. She is a 327-foot long Treasury Class Cutter, one of seven such vessels, and was named for William J. Duane, secretary of the treasury under Andrew Jackson. She had various assignments before being sent to the Atlantic in 1941, where she eventually served with the US Atlantic fleet. Her service included an impressive wartime and peacetime record. On April 17, 1943, she and her sister ship, the Spencer, sank the German U-Boat, U-77. She participated in four rescues at sea, picking up a total of 346 survivors. In 1980 she was an escort vessel for thousands of Cuban refugees coming to the United States. Her last assignments included Search and Rescue work and Drug Enforcement.

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Members of the Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc.

We need articles for our newsletter! Any help is appreciated. Contact our webmaster webmaster@rocklandaquanauts.org

Rockland Aquanauts Organization Inc. Mission Statement:

To provide, promote, and advance environmental protection, care, and voluntary clean-up of waterways by any and all lawful means; to promote the importance and care in every manner possible by environmental awareness and otherwise; to purchase, print, publish, and circulate literature to promote the importance and care of the waterways and the work of the Corporation. To perform all acts the Corporation may deem appropriate or advisable in such operation; to establish, provide, and voluntary clean-up waterways, to encourage, support and subsidize the cleaning and protection from pollution.

Diving The Keys

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On a clear day the outline of the Duane can be seen from the surface as it was on this trip. The mast and crow's nest protruding high above the hull, can be encountered at sixty feet. At seventy feet, just forward of amidships, is the navigating bridge. The superstructure deck is at ninety feet and the main deck lies at 100 feet. The hull lies completely in tact with the original rudders, screws, railings, ladders and ports making an impressive display. With large pelagic fish, barracuda, yellowtail snappers, angelfish, wrasse, damselfish, spotted blenny, trumpet fish, and even a jewfish. The hull is virtually covered with fire coral so be careful.

We did a hot drop to the stern line and I descended to find a large black grouper on the deck. Huge hogfish circled warily. I entered the superstructure through a portal and followed a preset cave line into the bowels of the Duane and found myself in the laundry room. There were washers, dryers and pressing machines, a good find. I returned to the deck and continued forward to the pilot house and the captain's meeting room complete with desk imbedded on the floor. I found three toilet bowls, one broken off and dropped in the companionway. This wreck is being desecrated illegally.

I left the superstructure and continued to the bow line for a slow ascent, safety stop and a pickup by Diversity, the Divers City boat.

I was down for thirty-one minutes and surfaced with 1000 pounds NITROX. It was a spectacular dive. Our second dive was a deep drift along Molasses Reef at sixty feet. This site has the healthiest coral that still exists in Key Largo. I found a weight belt with eight pounds of soft weights which I quickly donned. I pumped some extra mix into my BC in order to remain neutral. I surfaced with 1000 pounds NITROX after a fifty-two minute drift.

We headed back to Tavernier and I celebrated with a Yingling Larger.

July fourth brought my old Rockland Aquanaut dive buddy, Max Estroff, to the Keys. He called and said that he was diving with Tavernier Dive Center for a double dip on the Spiegel Grove. I have written about the Grove many times in the past so I will give you a brief synopsis of her history.

The Spiegel Grove was launched on December 10, 1955, commissioned June 8, 1956, and retired October 2, 1988. At 510 feet she was the largest vessel intentionally sunk as an artificial reef until this year, The Spiegel Grove was a landing dock ship (LDS 32). She resides 140 feet below the waves in an upright position, thanks to hurricane Dennis on July 9, 2005. Prior to the storm she lay on her starboard side for almost three years. She spent twelve years tethered in the Navy's Mothball Fleet on the James River in Virginia until Monroe County took title in May 2002. She was towed to the Keys and scuttled in June 2002, but that in itself is a whole other story previously told.

We tied onto the line amidships attached to the superstructure and encountered the hulk at seventy feet. We immediately entered and toured a good part of the interior descending down three deck levels through the wreck. Good viz was lost but renewed as we passed through the interior passages. It was a fun dive with a max depth of 117 feet for forty-two minutes. I returned to the surface with 900 pounds NITROX. The second dive, at the same location, was down to ninety-six feet for forty minutes and 1100 pounds NITROX remaining after a six minute decompression obligation. Another good day.

July fifth yielded another Tavernier Dive Center double dip on the Duane. We spent most of the dive in the interior and discovered the largest jewfish that I have ever seen, at least eight feet long and more than that around. Another good dive at 110 feet for thirty minutes surfacing with 900 pounds NITROX. Second dive the same but I spotted a huge nurse shark on the sand below the stern gunnel. It was still another good day.

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Fossil Fuels Said to Damage Ocean Life

July 06, 2006 — By Randolph E. Schmid, Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Corals and other marine creatures are threatened by chemical changes in the ocean caused by the carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels, a panel of scientists warned Wednesday.

Already blamed for a greenhouse effect warming of the climate, much of this added carbon dioxide is dissolving in the oceans, making them more acid.

Such a change can damage coral and other shells and sealife, according to the panel of researchers convened by the National Science Foundation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Geological Survey.

"A most fundamental property of ocean chemistry, pH, is changing and will continue to change as long as CO2 emissions are increasing. That is not debatable," Joan Kleypas, the report's lead author and a scientist at the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo., said in a briefing.

The pH scale measures how acid or alkaline a substance is, rating from 0 to 14 with 7 being neutral. The lower the number the more acid something is.

"In the oceans pH is a relatively constant property and it has not changed over time scales of hundreds of thousands and probably even millions of years," Kleypas said.

"The pH changes that are occurring in the ocean today are truly extraordinary," she added. The oceans are normally slightly alkaline. Their average surface pH was 8.2 in 1800 and is headed for a predicted 7.9 by the middle of this century, she said.

"But we are only beginning to understand the complex interactions between large-scale chemistry changes and marine ecology. It is vital to develop research strategies to better understand the long-term vulnerabilities of sensitive marine organisms to these changes," Kleypas said.

The researchers estimated that between 1800 and 1994 the world's oceans absorbed 118 billion metric tons of carbon, reducing the natural alkalinity of seawater. A metric ton is 2,205 pounds.

Richard Feely, an oceanographer at NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory in Seattle, said "this is leading to the most dramatic changes in marine chemistry in at least the past 650,000 years."

Chris Langdon at the University of Miami said studies show that coral calcification consistently decreases as the oceans become more acidic. That means these organisms will grow more slowly, or their skeletons will become less dense, a process similar to osteoporosis in humans. That threatens reefs because corals may be unable to build reefs as fast as erosion wears away the reefs.

Source: Associated Press
from www.enn.com

Diving The Keys

(continued from page 3)

July fifth yielded another Tavernier Dive Center double dip on the Duane. We spent most of the dive in the interior and discovered the largest jewfish that I have ever seen, at least eight feet long and more than that around. Another good dive at 110 feet for thirty minutes surfacing with 900 pounds NITROX. Second dive the same but I spotted a huge nurse shark on the sand below the stern gunnel. It was still another good day. July eighth brought me back to Divers City for a three dive trip.

The Bibb, sister ship to the Duane, the Duane and the Eagle. The Bibb and the Duane were great with 100 foot viz. In the Duane I followed a new companionway moving forward and down within the superstructure to a sloping stairway leading to the engine room. I decided to use the progressive penetration method and return to this spot the next time I do the Duane.

The Eagle, a 287 foot freighter was scuttled with dynamite in 120 feet of water on December 19, 1985, as an artificial reef. She settled on her starboard side four miles off Islamorada. The entire superstructure with a crow's nest and cargo booms remain in tact. Because her profile rises over forty feet proud over the ocean floor you encounter the wreck at sixty-five feet. The entire ship was torn in half during hurricane Georges. This made penetration to all areas of the wreck very accessible.

WE descended on the stern and shimmied through a small opening in the superstructure and traversed the after half. Upon reinvestigating the open rooms I found the synagogue. Four monster jewfish crammed into a good sized area with another wanting to pass us to get inside with the rest of the family.

Outside and above silver sided tarpon and barracuda kept a watchful vigil of the large intruders, us. This experience will always stay imbedded in my memory.

We sailed through the fore section and ascended the bow line back to the boat.

Again I had a twenty-eight minute dive with a max depth of 112 feet and a twelve minute decompression. I boarded the boat with 1000 pounds NITROX and slept all the way home.

Peter Bein, July 10, 2006, Marathon, FL

Don't forget - New minimum lobster size in NJ

3 13/32" measured from the rear of the eye socket along a line parallel to the centerline of the body shell to the rear of the body shell.

Divers may take 6 lobsters a day - no extra parts and no sale of diver caught lobster.
(If you sell lobsters, you will be considered commercial and there are other rules.)

No person shall possess any lobster with eggs attached or from which eggs have been removed or any female lobster with a v-notched tail.

The use of spears, gigs, gaffs or other penetrating devices as a method of capture for lobsters is prohibited.
A license is required for the use of pots or traps for the capture of lobsters.

For the background of this ruling, check out:

www.scubanj.org/lobster_reg_04.html

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Scientists find new shark species off the South Carolina coast

Updated 6/13/2006 5:55 PM ET

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — A new genetically distinct species of hammerhead shark, the ninth recognized species of hammerhead, has been discovered off the South Carolina coast, scientists say. The new species appears to be rare and lives off the South Carolina coast. Classified under the genus *Sphyrna*, the shark will be called the "cryptic species" for the time being.

Joe Quattro, a biology professor at the University of South Carolina, worked with Jim Grady of the University of New Orleans and Trey Driggers of the National Marine Fisheries Service in making the find. Quattro discovered the new species while studying along the coast with biologists from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources.

Quattro and his colleagues found that genes in the mitochondrial DNA — the DNA passed from mother sharks to their offspring — differed significantly among sharks that were classified as scalloped hammerhead sharks.

The studies also revealed that another independent genetic marker differed substantially between the two groups of scalloped hammerheads.

"This cryptic shark was genetically distinct," said Quattro, whose research was published recently in the journal, *Marine Biology*.

Scalloped hammerheads are common along the coast and sharks of the cryptic species were found from Florida to North Carolina. The newborn cryptic sharks, however, were found mainly along the South Carolina coast.

"The apparent abundance of the cryptic species in coastal South Carolina could be a result of sampling, but it might also highlight the fact that the South Carolina bays are the more important nursery grounds for the cryptic species," Quattro said.

Something as simple as the salinity of the water might explain why the sharks prefer the South Carolina coast, said Quattro, who plans a field trip this summer to tag the cryptic sharks so scientists can learn more about them.

Because they seem to have a narrow geographic distribution, the sharks may be at greater risk for extinction. "If South Carolina's waters are the primary nursery grounds for the cryptic species and females gather here to reproduce, these areas should be conservation priorities," Quattro said.

Stingray Divers

Dive on the best-rated live-aboard, Odyssey Adventures to see the “ghost fleet” of Truk Lagoon, unquestionably the world's best shipwreck diving destination. The number, variety, and size of the wrecks and the spectacular marine life that grows on them are unequalled. In February of 1944, the US Task Force 58 attacked Japan's fortress of Truk Lagoon. More than 400 Japanese planes were wiped out and some 50-60 ships were believed sunk in this Micronesian lagoon (one hour flight from Guam).

Boat departs

9/10/06

To

9/17/06



Cost Odyssey. Boat fee PACKAGE PRICE \$ 2495.00 plus air fare
Air fare \$1530.00

Airfare available thru (Continental Airline), fees, port
And transfers, included, plus one night in Blue Lagoon Hotel,
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5 1/2 days diving (up to 5 dives per day)
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For just \$250 more) many other locations available

Deposit: \$500 (\$250 non-refundable)

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Email: info@stingraydivers.com
762 Grand Street, Brooklyn, New York, 11211

Phone 718-384-1280

Fax 718-302-0465

Proposed Dive schedule
For
Hessian Lake, Lake Sebago, Lake Welch

Hessian Lake

Saturday June 3rd 2006 at 9:00 AM
Sunday July 9th 2006 at 9:00 AM
Saturday August 5th 2006 at 9:00 AM
Sunday September 10th 2006 at 9:00 AM
Saturday September 30th at 10:00 AM
Sunday October 8th at 10:00 AM
Saturday October 14th at 10:00 AM

Lake Sebago

Saturday June 24th at 9:00 AM
Sunday July 23rd at 9:00 AM
Saturday August 26th at 9:00 AM

Lake Welch

Sunday September 17th at 10:00 AM

Only the Lake Welch dives are still pending approval, all other dives are confirmed

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

Rockland Aquanauts Organization 2006 Dues

I guess it is that time of the year again, Membership Dues are due.
Last year all our members received much more than they gave out to the
Organization.

As usual you will be receiving a tax donation for the first \$25.00. All members
who attended the Annual Dinner not only received money off their own dinner
but they also received money off theirs guests dinner. Everyone whom
attended also received prizes, some worth many times the cost of their Dues.
Don't forget the Annual Picnic as well as all the BBQ lunch's after the Lake
Dives.

So please send in your \$42 dues early to;

Rockland Aquanauts Organization
c/o
Paul Galeazzi Jr.
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Valley Cottage New York
10989



Rockland Aquanauts
Post Office Box 387
New City, NY
10956

July 2006

Diving The Keys New Shark Species Found, New Minimum Size Lobster, Fossil Fuels Said to Damage Ocean Life

*****Don't forget*****

The Next Dive of Lake Sebago is scheduled for:

Sunday July 23rd 9:00 AM at the Administration Building