

undercurrent

The Private, Exclusive Guide for Serious Divers

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Archipelago Adventurer II, Indonesia

Raja Ampat: where one feels like a king

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Dear Fellow Diver:

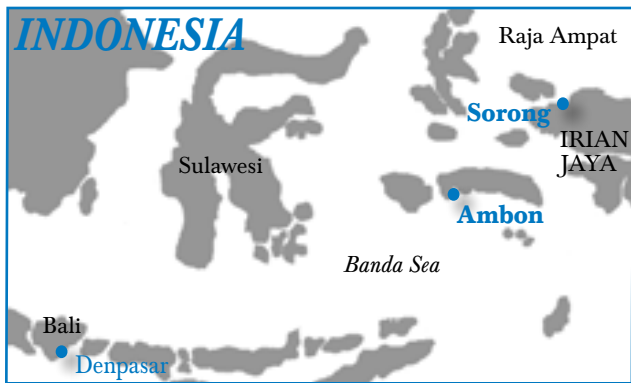
Within an hour of arriving at Ambon Island airport in Indonesia's South Moluccas, I was whisked from Maluku Divers' new resort on the outskirts of the harbor to the Adventurer II and to one of this area's famous muck dives. Called Air Manis (a.k.a. the Fishing Factory), it's a pier loaded with strange and amusing creatures. Observing a beaky dragon sea moth waddling on its winged pectoral fins, a pair of harlequin shrimp dragging away a sea urchin, and a variable neon slug with an intense red-orange margin that seemed to have its own power source, I knew I'd arrived at a world-class diving destination. I was ready for my 10-day itinerary from Ambon to Sorong.

The Adventurer II is a traditional Indonesian two-masted schooner, 35 meters of rich, lustrous teak and mahogany, which in yesteryear could have appropriately flown the skull and crossbones. Its sails are only raised for show or when the craft's single screw stops turning. It's kept spotless by 22 pleasant, courteous and hardworking crewmembers who ensure it runs like an upmarket Swiss watch. Even with the full complement of 18 handpicked Americans, dive and meal schedules went smoothly.

My buddy and I enjoyed a larger-than-usual liveaboard cabin with a tiled shower, three windows (no port-holes here) and individually controlled AC that could bring the temp down to 65 degrees, a blessing given the relentless equatorial heat and humidity. By the time I had completed my first dive each day, my cabin



Archipelago Adventurer II (photo by Mark Snyder)



was clean, and fresh sheets and towels in place. However, several cabins leaked (not mine) during the episodic heavy rains, not unexpected in a wooden boat. The crew got most leaks under control quickly. Dan, the boat's majordomo who was fresh from the hospitality industry in Orlando, was a relaxed, funny and obliging chap of 25 who easily could be mistaken for an instructor at a skateboard park -- pull a wallie, dude.

Each diver was assigned a seat with a storage box underneath. You put on your wetsuit and carry small gear down a wide-stepped gangplank to one of two assigned zippy, unsinkable aluminum skiffs, each holding nine divers. Tank, fins, weight belt, etc., are waiting on board. At the dive site, the crew helps you don your tank. The assistance I received donning and doffing my gear was almost embarrassing. Between dives, my wetsuit was spirited away for rinsing in a mild and divine-smelling detergent and returned dry and inoffensive. If it was raining, the crew put wet gear in the engine room to dry. The skiffs were not crowded, even when full. Tanks were aluminum 80s, although they have a few oversized tanks. Everyone dove nitrox; the boat's membrane system made for quick and precise fills. At the end of each dive, I found a clean, dry towel at my seat on the liveboard.

The divemasters allowed as much diver freedom as was consistent with safe diving and scheduling requirements. Being mostly experienced and headstrong photographers, divers went their own way at a dive site. So accommodating was the crew that when one photographer, following a particularly scenic dive, realized her memory card had become corrupted and her images were lost, the DM immediately took her back to the site and let her shoot again. The boat is especially well equipped for photographers, with an outside camera storage shelf with a safety net over it, a dedicated air-conditioned room with battery chargers, a flat-screen TV and individual tables for cleaning and fiddling with photo gear.

I don't know why it's named "My Reef," but I'm willing to claim it. Damselfish were in a territorial humbug over a small piece of table coral. An ornate wobbecong shark lazed on the reef like a tatty Persian carpet. A juvenile spadefish spun in graceful circles while estuarine halfbeaks hung out above. At Neptune's Sea Fan, I was mesmerized by flocks of flitting and feuding anthias that speckled the reef with splashes of lavender, orange, peach and violet. A school of humphead parrotfish, with foreheads looking like the finish on a poorly maintained used car, allowed a close approach.

With calm seas, water in the 85-degree range, visibility from 40 to 80 feet and seldom a need to go deeper than 50 feet, conditions for doing four dives a day were nearly ideal. I was disappointed, however, by the swarms of floating plastic bags and other trash. Ambon Harbor was by far the worst.

The Raja Ampat diver must keep currents in mind. While the boat endeavored to select sites and times to minimize exposure, currents can become ripping and change directions rapidly and capriciously. Diving here is not for the unfit. And on the matter of fitness and health, Ambon Harbor serves as a sewage system and city dump, meaning divers commonly develop external ear infections and swollen lymph nodes after spending time in the water here. (Take appropriate ear hygiene measures and bring a bottle of Ciprodex Otic or the like.)

Ever seen that picture on the front of Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock's Diving Indonesia's Raja Ampat? It's Boo Rock, a site that rocks with fabulous soft corals in rainbow hues. The "windows" in the rock make a boffo underwater frame for photos, as do the throngs of tropicals drawn to this lush site. At nearby Boo Cape, I experienced both wonder and vertigo at the endless, opposing rivers of yellowtail, bluestreak and lunar fusiliers, midnight snappers and smalltooth emperors. I also spotted frilly

Chinese dragon nudibranchs in powder blue and white, as well as a hirsute orangutan crab.

The cheery divemasters Made (pronounced ma-day) and Bram (short for Abraham) pointed out a plethora of creatures I otherwise would have missed -- camouflaged crinoid shrimp; spindly sea spiders; robust and ornate pipefishes hanging snout-down and motionless ("You can't see us"); and tiny, cheerleader-like pom-pom crabs waving even tinier white anemones in their claws. The Most Magnificently Minuscule Award goes to the pigmy seahorses hiding in sea fans that I could barely see even with my magnifying glass. On one dive a DM stealthily placed a crinoid on the dive beanie of another; it was hilarious to watch him fin about unknowingly sporting the creature like a plume.

Food was plentiful, a toothsome mix of Indonesian and "Asian fusion" cuisine that alternated between fish, crustaceans, chicken and meat. A variety of sambals, chili-based sauces, could be added to spice things up; I loved the ones made with fruit and at the upper end of the "heat index." Breakfast possibilities included eggs, either plain or atop fried noodles or rice, French toast and Indonesian fish or chicken "porridge." Most meals included fresh fruit and breads baked onboard. Canned soft drinks are available for the taking, while Bintang beer cost \$3.50 and mixed drinks \$6.50. A measured glass of modest red or white wine was an outrageous \$11.50. Imported alcoholic beverages reportedly are taxed at 300 percent but even so, this wine price must violate some international maritime piracy law.

Soberly finning at 60 feet along Melissa's Garden, as pretty and pristine as sites get, I was treated to meadows and cascading plateaus of table and other hard corals flecked with crinoids in an array of yellows, teals, blacks, whites and burgundies. Stands of acropora coral, tipped in powder blue and pink, were home to schools of chromis that darted above and juvenile domino damsels that popped in and out as if driven by a steam calliope. Sheltering underneath were pairs of pennant bannerfish, turning slowly in the water as if obtuse triangles suspended on a thread. Against this delicacy and detail, a massive humphead wrasse cast a wary eye my way as it lumbered past. Oriental sweetlips with kissers that could suck a golf ball through a keyhole rested in the garden's shade. The scene made me feel privileged to be a diver.

At Batanta, along a shallow and featureless black sand slope, I had the good fortune of watching the elusive wonderpus forage along the bottom. Compact and sleek, its rich, brown-reddish color and crisp white markings stood out starkly against the dark sand. Its Latin name, Wunderpus photogenicus, struck me as spot on. Martian-like tiger mantis shrimp obsessively tidied their already immaculate abodes.

Diving Indonesia's Raja Ampat

Here's a definitive guide book on what authors and marine photographers Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock call "the greatest repository of tropical marine life on earth." And anyone who has dived it knows they speak the truth. This 146-page book is filled with descriptions of mind-blowing dive sites, along with good descriptions of the area, the people and what you need to know to dive there. And the photos of unusual critters will knock your socks off.

Burt and Maurine, who post frequently on *Undercurrent's* online blog, work with Indonesian branches of several NGOs, including Conservation International, to show Raja Ampat's incomparable marine life to the world and explain why it should be treasured. Whether or not you think you'll ever get to Raja Ampat, you should own this book just to nurture your dreams. **Order it now by going to www.undercurrent.org/UCnow/bookpicks.shtm** and clicking on a photo of the cover. Our profits will go directly to tropical reef conservation.



Archipelago Adventurer II

Diving (<i>experienced</i>)	★★★★★
Diving (<i>beginner</i>)	★★★★
Snorkeling (<i>there is basically none</i>)	★
Accommodations	★★★★
Food	★★★★
Service and Attitude	★★★★★
Money's Worth	★★★★1/2

★ = poor ★★★★★ = excellent

Caribbean Scale

My final dives finished with a bang at a site called Manta Sandy, where the four kings of Raja Ampat saw fit to parade. On each of two dives, the first manta showed up within 10 minutes. They did lazy loops over the coral heads as various cleaner fish assiduously plied their trade. As I knelt in the sand, one animal repeatedly passed over me at arm's length -- a veritable manta lap dance. Between rays, the site offered gardens of spotted garden eels and barred shrimp gobies standing guard while commensal blind shrimp partners tirelessly pushed detritus from their joint burrow.

Overall, I would rate the Archipelago Adventurer II among the best of many liveaboards I have dived from,

and Raja Ampat diving truly is magical and unique. Sadly, there now are about 20 operators diving this national marine park, and as many as 10 at a time have been observed off Misool Island. While this was the only location where I saw other dive boats (three, to be exact), it was the off-season. Like so many other exotic "hot spot" destinations, it's best to dive it sooner rather than later.

-- Doc Vikingo



Diver's Compass: The Archipelago Adventurer II has various itineraries depending on the season; the Sorong/Ambon Raja Ampat trips typically run from mid-October to early April . . . Cabins are \$400 per person, per night, double occupancy . . . Flights to Ambon are available from various Indonesia airports, including Jakarta and Bali . . . Visa and MasterCard are accepted but cash, preferably Indonesian Rupiah, is preferred for tipping . . . The boat has a full line of rental gear, a well-stocked first-aid cabinet and lots of oxygen . . . The nearest recompression chamber requires a long flight to either Sulawesi, Jakarta or Darwin, Australia . . . March air temperatures were 90 degrees in the day-time, 75 degrees at night, both with a higher heat index; that's the start of the rainy season so expect at least passing showers (or heavier) daily and somewhat reduced visibility . . . Website: www.archipelago-fleet.com

Little Cayman, Maui, Grenadines...

overlooked, misunderstood dive sites worth mentioning

For the traveling diver, there are always new developments, but there are also places that get overlooked, even misunderstood.

Little Cayman Island. While it is frequently touted as a getaway for divers who want some of the better Caribbean diving and no development, one Little Cayman alternative doesn't get a lot of ink. Paradise Villas is little heralded but it is a well-regarded, small beachfront development just perfect for people who want nice digs and good diving. Michael Hynan (Grafton, WI) can't stay away. "We made our ninth visit to Little Cayman, staying again at Paradise Villas. Our 2001 stay convinced us that vacationing with the resort operators, Marc and Sabine, was a guaranteed wonderful experience. We are in a wonderful nine-year rut. We enjoy cooking in

occasionally and we make good use of the hot plates and grills Paradise Villas offers. The frozen meats from the local grocery store have been of consistent good quality. To minimize costs, we appreciated being able to order from the lunch menu when we eat our evening meals at the Hungry Iguana. We made eight two-tank trips with Conch Club Divers, a top-notch operation. A divemaster picked us up in a van for the trip to the pier at Little Cayman Beach Resort to get on the Conch Club's boat Sea Esta. It is a 42-foot Newton with head, camera table, water, snacks, etc. We were always the first dive boat to leave in the morning, giving us the pick of the best spots. Bill, the owner, runs a well organized, fun operation that includes talented divemasters and excellent briefings. Tim and Ann seem to have been with Conch Club Divers forever. Tim gets a gleam in his eye when it is time to catch a lionfish, and Ann is the mistress of finding small creatures underwater."

Another reader, John from Napa, CA, says "The Paradise Villas are right on the water, and are charming with 'Caribbean rustic elegance.' Marc, Sabine and Michelle took very good care of us. The service from Patrick and Emma at the Hungry Iguana restaurant was great and the food is not fancy but quite good. The curry lovers among us said that the curry served on "Curry Night" is among the best they have ever had." (www.paradisevillas.com; www.conchclubdivers.com)

Maui. This is a sometimes misunderstood island because if you don't understand the geography, you might book your accommodations an hour's drive from your dive operator . . . and they leave as early as 7 a.m.! R.C. Jennings (San Diego CA) writes, "Silly me staying up in Napili and driving all the way to Kihei." Regardless, he thought Prodiver Maui was first rate and "the captain and Eric, the guide, had great attitudes. I saw a calf, its mother and two escort male whales on the way out to Molokini. Great drift dive. Lots of good talk and info during surface interval." Maui boats run directly from Lahaina and the harbor near Kehei; the drive between the two is about half an hour, given the traffic there these days. (www.prodivermaui.com)

Also, the serious Maui diver needs to seek out serious dives. Virtually every operator does the standards like Molokini Crater, the Arches on Lanai, and Turtle Reef but there are less dived sites. Nick Phelps (Berkeley, CA) went out with Lahaina Divers in April and liked their big boats. "They dive Molokai, Molokini and Lanai, and offer increasing discounts the more you dive with them. Molokai (45-foot visibility and 73 degrees at depth) is definitely for advanced, experienced divers. There were 10-foot swells on the outbound leg, during the dives, and even higher seas on the return trip. Current wasn't bad but it picked up in the channel between Molokai and Mokoho'oniki. Dive one was off Mokoho'oniki and included Fish Rain. I saw three individual hammerhead sharks and a thresher shark from a distance as we got to depth. Current wasn't a problem. Max depth was 93 feet; bottom time was 48 minutes on 31 percent nitrox. Dive two was off Mokoho'oniki and I saw a school of 10 hammerheads cruise slowly by. The largest was probably nine feet long. Individual hammerheads were seen at other points in the dive. There was more current but it wasn't a problem. I'm sure it's why we saw more sharks on the second dive. Max depth was 98 feet; bottom time was 39 minutes on 31 percent nitrox. Molokini's back side was without current so there were only a few of the larger deep water fish. Dive one was Reef's End. Great creatures like a blue dragon nudibranch and a banded pillow crab. Max depth was 102 feet; bottom time was 49 minutes. Dive two was Flying Sea Cliffs. More great creatures, like a large sponge crab, eels, lobster and some decent-sized trevally. I stayed at Aston Maui

Thailand Violence Affects Lembeh

With political demonstrations and violence in Bangkok, travelers are being warned to avoid Thailand. The U.S. State Department recommends on its website (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_4888.html), "U.S. citizens should defer all travel to Bangkok and defer all non-essential travel to the rest of Thailand."

Jenny Collister, owner of the dive travel agency Reef and Rainforest, says she's encouraging divers who have plans to visit Thailand to fly to Phuket via Singapore or Hong Kong. "All the liveabpards are based in Phuket, where it's business as usual." However, the violence is having repercussions on dive destinations outside Thailand. No one is currently able to make reservations at Kasawari Lembeh Resort in Indonesia's North Sulawesi region - - its booking office is in Bangkok and it's not open.

Peter Hughes Leaves Peter Hughes Behind

After starting his namesake liveboard business 25 years ago, moving it out of DIVI, where he was employed, and selling it to Aggressor Fleet owner Wayne Brown in 2008, Peter Hughes resigned as president of Peter Hughes last month. He will become president of a startup company called DivEncounters, Inc., which he will be running with Santiago Dunn, owner of the Ecoventura fleet of Galapagos liveboards. While he says he's grateful to Brown for purchasing the company during tough economic times for the dive industry, Hughes told *Undercurrent* he left to be more hands-on in the dive business again. "Working in this new company with an old, trusted friend offers me the challenges that I did not enjoy in my previous position,

and the challenges I need to keep myself motivated and excited about the industry."

Hughes had surgery in late May but after his recovery, his responsibility will be to manage the *M/V Galapagos Sky* (formerly *Sky Dancer*), raise the bar on operations and service, and consider future product expansion, which means more of Brown's boats may gravitate to Hughes. He also plans to outfit boats exclusively with Scubapro gear. "For 15 years, I've been a staunch supporter and user. After I sold my company, the new owner preferred AquaLung over Scubapro, to my great distress. So as soon as I was my own boss again, I switched, re-establishing my old long-standing relationship." So divers don't have to deal with airline overweight charges, Hughes has just ordered 10 complete sets of Scubapro gear, including 10 female and 10 male wetsuits, for the *Galapagos Sky*.

Kaanapali Villas – my only mistake of the trip – which was 15 minutes north of Lahaina Divers' shop. Nice location but a complete bush league operation. Its main lobby is sealed off and under noisy construction, and a lot of parking spaces were taken up by workers' pickup trucks. They charge an additional \$13-per-day facilities fee. Basics like the coffee maker and screen doors were broken. Cheap cabinets and dirty carpet were part of their premium service." (www.lahainadivers.com)

Grenadines. For well-traveled divers, there's not a lot of new in the Caribbean but one unheralded area where I've had some fine dives has been the Grenadines, which is dotted with little islands and resorts. Few of our readers go there, thanks to inconvenient flights, plane changes and travel time, but you can be rewarded – or disappointed – as Craig Condron (Spokane, WA) found out at the pricey Petit St. Vincent Resort, where most of the bungalows are on the beach, and the food and staff get raves. "Grenadines Dive is on Union Island and had a 9:30 a.m. pickup at the resort for a two-tank morning dive. Most dives were drifts in a moderate current. The divemasters were always in a hurry, kicking with the current instead of drifting. My first dive was a reef west of Petit Martinique. Of 900-plus dives all over the Caribbean and Pacific, this is the deadest reef I have ever seen. A reddish-brown algae grew on 85 percent of the reef, the other 15 percent showed signs of disease. Just a few small fish. The gorgonians looked like dead stick bushes with the algae waving on their branches. However, two days later I went to Mayrere Garden, where most of the reef seemed healthy -- thousands of chromis and Creole wrasse followed by small hunting packs of horse-eye jacks, large schools of chubs and snappers, and an occasional nurse shark and southern stingray on the bottom. One of the "fishiest" dives I've had in the Caribbean. Clipper's Point is one of the nicest reefs I have seen in the Caribbean. Vase, tube, barrel and rope sponges stood up tall from this shallow bottom. Encrusting sponge filled in the gaps. A moderate current gently moved us along through schools of fish. Many cleaning stations of yellowline arrow crabs and Pederson cleaning shrimp hiding in corkscrew anemones. At Glen's Point there was so much to see, I simply watched Buddha-style just off the bottom. The current was doing the work and I did the sightseeing. If you dive with Grenadines Dive, request the west side of Union Island." (www.psvresort.com; www.grenadinesdive.com)

Indonesia. If you're looking for a new liveboard, the *Damai* is it, say readers Phil and Patricia Tobin (Portland, OR). They asked our dear friends Beth and Shaun Tierney from London, England (authors of *Diving the World* and *Diving Southeast Asia*) to join them and three other couples in November to experience the brand-new liveboard out of Sorong, Indonesia, on the northern edge of Irian Jaya. "The ship is a new Phinisi two-masted schooner and the brain child of Alberto Reija, who helped design this luxurious boutique liveboard and also acts as the cruise director. This is a liveboard most divers would find hard to imagine, let alone get a

chance to spend 11 delightful nights on at the edge of West Papua. Every amenity one could imagine was there. Wine, pop, nitrox, diving lights, diving gear, fancy soaps and lotion were all included. The cruise is expensive but with all the extras and level of luxury, this is an outstanding value. Our room, #1, was downstairs. The dimensions were larger than our master bedroom at home. We had two king-size beds, a separate room with a bathtub and shower, two separate desks, a separate room for the toilet and meters of room to walk around, with plenty of large drawers to store clothes. The woodwork in our room was meticulously done, with plenty of natural light from four portholes and a multi-functional lighting system at night. The other rooms were much the same, just with different bed configurations. All the rooms had air-conditioning. When we landed in Sorong, two pieces of luggage were missing. We were told that Lion Air's plane was too heavy so they were left behind. Before we had departed port aboard the *Damai*, the crew had purchased extra clothes for us and another diver. We were outfitted with brand-new dive gear. Once the luggage was located, it took an extra day to arrive; Alberto had it brought over to the *Damai*. Alberto had handpicked most of the 18 staff members from previous boats he had been involved with. Diving was some of the best in the world. The critters are plentiful, the soft and hard corals are outstanding, and with mild currents, the numbers of fish are beyond belief. We encountered mantas, wobbegong sharks and Napoleon wrasse the size of VW bugs. At the other end of the spectrum, we found tiny critters, all the way down to pigmy seahorses.”

“Before each dive, at least two of the dive guides would make a quick check of conditions below so that when Alberto gave his dive briefings, the information would be current. Four or five dives a day were normal. The dive deck was unique in that each station has its own rinsing tank between you and the next diver. The staff takes your readied gear and places it on the appropriate tenders, designed by Alberto. Your tank slips into a hole so they stand ready for you to slide your arms into the BCs. The communal area was small but adequate. The dining area is on one side of the room, chairs and chesterfields are on the other, with a wide-screen TV in between. The camera room was big enough for six people maximum at a time but there were plenty of 110- and 220-volt outlets and drying towels and shelves for storing extras. At the rear of that deck were chaise lounges and chairs for evening chats. The food was tasty and plentiful. Each guest was given a couple of choices before each meal and if one did not like what was going to be served, the chef would whip

At Indonesia's Triton Bay, the Locals Are Restless

We've heard rumors of liveboards being waylaid by residents of Triton Bay, in the West Papua province of Indonesia, and a letter from reader Michael Emerson (Minneapolis, MN), who dived in nearby Raja Ampat this spring, explained that there is indeed trouble in paradise.

“Our boat, the *Damai*, had been in the Triton Bay area and crew members were approached by locals, who demanded a high fee for diving in the area. The boat paid the fee but was then told passengers could not dive there anyway. The locals attempted to take one of the dive dinghies by force but were unsuccessful. As a result, our boat would not dive that area because of the risk. Later, we met the captain of the *Arenui*, who had similar encounters with the locals. Their interactions were more intense. The boat pilots threatened to harm passengers if a large fee was not paid.

“Apparently the underlying issue concerns who has authority over the area. Because of the remoteness,

the Indonesia government and the local government have declined to be involved. Disputes between local groups make the situation worse. We were told most liveboards would not return there until the situation has been calmed.”

Jenny Collister of dive travel agency Reef & Rainforest confirmed to *Undercurrent* that the incidents have occurred for a while. “For now, the boats are keeping Triton Bay on their schedule but if looks like bad things are going on, they switch it to Raja Ampat.”

MSY Seahorse owner Txus Reiriz is more positive. “We've never found any problem with the locals. They usually come to the boat and ask for petrol in exchange for their fish catch. What we have recently heard is that one 'smart' new liveboard owner went there and started giving money to any local who approached the boat, and I can guess the rest. Hopefully the local authorities will take care of the situation, sooner or later, as they did when it happened in Raja Ampat.”

up something else. Our wine glasses were never left half empty.” Trips in 2011 run \$465 to \$485 per person, per night. (www.dive-damai.com)

Truk. One of our long-time writers visited Truk last year and when he left, he felt enough moral outrage to e-mail me. “In June 1989, I dived Truk Lagoon, visiting the Japanese ships and planes that went to the bottom in 1944. The wrecks were littered with artifacts that looked as if they had not been disturbed other than to have been picked up and inspected by divers from time to time. Holds were full of belts of machine gun ammunition. Wheelhouses and bridges had binoculars and other navigational gear. Sailors’ cabins had shoes and clothing strewn around. Bottles and boxes were everywhere. The general impression was that these were fully equipped ships that just happened to be sitting on the bottom instead of floating on the surface. The pre-dive briefings every day included a warning not to remove anything from the wrecks, and to leave everything we saw in place. Although some obvious trophies such as brass portholes were already gone, our dive bags were inspected frequently by government authorities when our boat got back to the dock.

“In September 1999, I returned and never heard anyone told to leave the artifacts alone, probably because most small items that could be carried away already had been stolen. Nobody ever checked our dive bags on return to the dock, either. Large pieces such as bicycles and cannon rounds were still there but the little stuff that seemed so poignant on my first trip was thinning out. All of the rooms I swam through were nearly bare. A few samples had been assembled by the guides into sad, on deck show-and-tell displays (groups of lanterns, books, etc.), but these gave me none of the eerie feelings I had on the first trip, when a glance into a cabin showed that time had stopped when the bombs came down.

“In August 2009, I went back yet again and nearly all the artifacts that could possibly be jammed into a BC pocket or up a diveskin sleeve have vanished. There was no check at the dock after each day’s diving, though there was a cursory search of my luggage when I checked in at the airport for my flight home. The airport “inspection” would not have found anything below the top layer of clothes in my suitcase.”

Technical divers now flock to Truk for deep diving and wreck penetration. For the sport diver, it’s no longer about experiencing the inner life of the sunken vessels. Yes, the evidence of life aboard the wrecks once so evident has all but disappeared; now it’s about the beauty of the festooned wrecks. Kimiyo Aisek, founder of Blue Lagoon Dive Shop, worked hard and effectively to prevent looting but his influence and ability to police the lagoon, and especially prevent the locals from pillaging the wrecks, declined with his aging and eventual death in 2001. While no doubt recreational divers have taken home artifacts, the dirt-poor Trukese themselves have been the main harvesters. An excellent history of Truk diving can be found at the website www.truklagoon.com/history.htm

-- Ben Davison

Price-Fixing Dive Shops on Catalina Island

undercover dive operator bests them

On small islands and remote locations, one must wonder whether dive shops collude to create a better financial deal for all parties involved, i.e., fix prices. Well, it happened in California, as two dive shop owners on Santa Catalina island fixed the prices of their dive trips for at least four years. The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office recently charged one of them, John W. Mello of Catalina Diver Supply, with an antitrust and unfair competition case – using recordings made by another Catalina dive shop owner to nab him in the act.

Mello owned Catalina Diver Supply for 23 years until he sold it in 2008. But a few years before retiring, he conspired with another Catalina dive shop owner, Bob Kennedy of Scuba Luv, to hike up prices of their dive trips. Then the two tried to coerce the third Catalina dive shop owner, Rob Moore of Dive Catalina, to join them. In February 2008, Kennedy approached Moore with proposed prices for dive trips. He spoke openly about price fixing, saying that if Moore raised his prices, Kennedy and Mello would charge that same price.

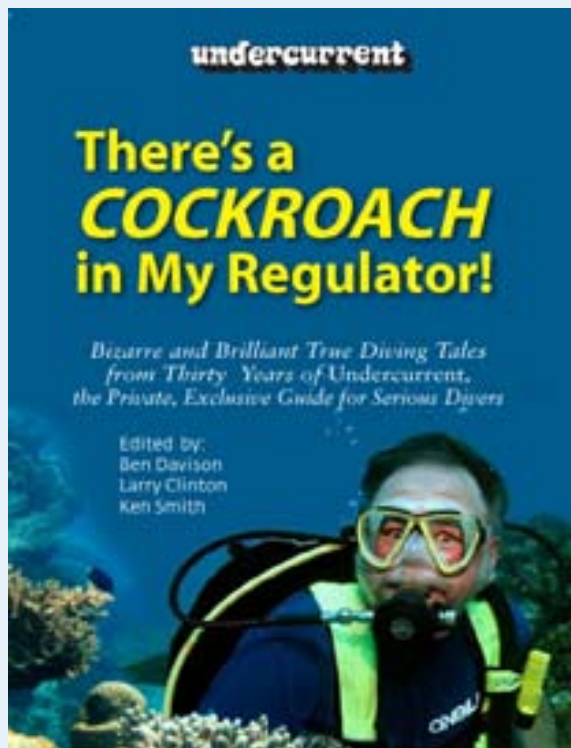
Kennedy and Mello were the only suppliers of compressed air on Catalina, so when Moore refused to go along, the two other men closed ranks and tried to shut his business down by refusing to supply him with air. On the morning of March 18, 2008, Moore visited Kennedy's Scuba Luv to get tanks filled. One of the employees told him: "Bob says no more air for you." Later that day, Moore went to Mello's Catalina Diver Supply to fill his tanks there. Same situation. An employee told him: "Sorry, it's John [Mello]. No more air for you."

Moore then complained to the Los Angeles D.A.'s office. Their attorneys turned Moore into their "agent," setting him up with a recording device to tape statements by Mello or Kennedy about their price-fixing scheme. On March 20, Moore met with Mello to ask why he was being frozen out. Mello said, "I wanted to go up on prices and if anything, I thought you wanted to . . . We gotta work together or it can't work at all. Bob [Kennedy] will go up on prices. He wants to work together. And I said the same thing."

The Best Summer Read for Divers is Available June 8

Thirty-five years of *Undercurrent* has produced weird tales, insightful articles, a unique look at diving's history and plenty of quirkiness. We run stories no other publication would dare touch - - and we're very proud of it.

For years, I've been hoping to bring our most unusual stories into one volume. And at last we've done it. A puffer bites off a diver's finger . . . why nitrogen narcosis is a myth . . . a woman molested underwater by her dive guide . . . how to meditate at 60 feet . . . diver limericks from our readers' contest . . . what divers did when face to face with a polar bear underwater . . . a Florida liveaboard finds floating bundles of cocaine . . . the family of a deceased diver sues his buddy for negligence . . . 30-year-old equipment predictions for the 21st century . . . a diver commits suicide underwater rather than run out of air . . . the protocol for peeing in your wetsuit . . . and yes, the diver with a cockroach in his regulator.



Our 240-page paperbound book begins to mail on June 8. So you still have time to purchase it at our pre-publication discount price of \$17.95 (plus postage). Simply go to www.undercurrent.org and click on the cover icon. You won't find a better summer read for divers. I guarantee it.

-- Ben Davison

Unbelievable diving yarns, jaw-dropping stories, unconventional wisdom, stupid diver stunts, the dive industry's secret history, mystery, murder, intrigue . . . the best of the true and unusual stories published by Undercurrent. -- Bret Gilliam

When Moore asked why Mello was refusing him air, Mello said, “I guess Bob said he didn’t want to fill them, so I won’t fill them either . . . Bob came up to me before and said, ‘If you don’t sell air, I won’t. So I just said OK. That’s how it came about.”

After gathering evidence that Mello and Kennedy had been fixing prices for at least three years, the D.A. charged Mello, and Kennedy as his co-conspirator, with unlawful competition. Kathleen Tuttle, deputy-in-charge of the D.A. office’s antitrust section, called it “a textbook example of price fixing.”

The case was settled out of court in February. Without admitting liability, Mello agreed to pay a total of \$11,000: 4,000 in civil penalties, \$5,000 in legal and investigative costs, and \$2,000 in restitution to Ron Moore. Also, Mello agreed not to engage in any more price-fixing activity or unfair competition in the dive business, but he’s not prohibited from working in it. As for Kennedy, his co-conspirator, he is still listed on Scuba Luv’s website as the owner.

- - Vanessa Richardson

Why Divers Get Bad Deals on Life Insurance

unless you say you stay above 100 feet

If you’ve had a difficult time getting a good rate on a life-insurance policy because you let on that you’re a scuba diver, you’re not alone.

Reader Bill Markley (La Canada, CA) told us that he was recently turned down for term insurance solely because he is a scuba diver. “I was 63 when I applied and in good health. I am a lawyer, and the American Bar Association offers a group plan by New York Life for ten-year term insurance. New York Life has three levels of coverage, as most life insurance companies do: Preferred, Standard and the priciest, Select. The Preferred and Standard rates for my age are substantially lower than I currently pay. I am on blood pressure and cholesterol meds, and slightly overweight according to their charts. Concerned this information would automatically put me in the Select category and thus waste my time applying, I called an underwriter at New York Life. I described my medical issues. He stated that he didn’t see any reason why I wouldn’t qualify for at least the Standard rate. We did not discuss diving.

My doctor gave them a glowing report on my health, but I got a letter saying they had approved me only for the priciest policy.”

“On my application, I disclosed that I dive. When New York Life called to go over my application, they asked me several questions about diving - - how often, how deep have I gone and the average depth I dive, what level of certification I have, and do I wreck dive. My doctor gave them a glowing report on my health, but I got a letter say-

ing they had approved me but only at the very costly Select level ‘due to hazardous activities (scuba diving).’ I consider driving on Los Angeles freeways to be hazardous, not diving. Is this a common problem? Is there any recourse?”

Unfortunately, qualifying for the best rates involves more than getting a clean bill of health from your doctor. Insurers also try to identify people who lead “risky” lifestyles, including divers. They’re more forgiving of someone on blood-pressure medication than a healthy bungee jumper, mountain climber or diver (bike racing and helicopter skiing also make the list). Generally speaking, if you engage in activities that

What's More Dangerous, the Rebreather or the Diver?

Ken Kurtis, owner of Reef Seekers Dive Company in Beverly Hills, CA, took issue with this sentence in John Bantin's piece on rebreathers in our March issue: "The use of a rebreather statistically appears to increase the risk in the hobby of scuba diving." Kurtis says that's a simplified statement that may not be entirely correct.

"It could be that rebreather divers are engaging in behaviors (deeper, longer, more complex mixes) inherently more dangerous than diving on air. Because they're not doing the 30-minute, 30-foot reef dive, the 'safer' dives are not part of their mix, and their accident rate appears higher. So it's not that rebreathers are more dangerous, it's that divers are doing more dangerous things and happen to be on rebreathers. It's like playing Russian Roulette: The more often you spin the chamber, the greater your chances are of finding the chamber with the bullet.

"It could also be that rebreathers attract a segment of thrill-seeking divers more willing to engage in risky behavior. Or perhaps people who are drawn to rebreathers generally don't have the discipline required to use such a complex machine. The guy who runs out of diluent in his rebreather is likely to be the same guy who runs out of air in his scuba tank. That he did it on a rebreather may be nothing more than a coincidence.

"We had a guy here in L.A. who turned off his rebreather electronics between dives because he wanted to make the battery last as long as possible and save money by not changing it as often. Guess what happened? On his final dive, he forgot to turn the units back on, descended to 100 feet, likely went unconscious within five minutes from the buildup of carbon dioxide in the breathing loop, and died never knowing what hit him. So I think when you look at these types of accidents, you have to look at the equipment, circumstances of the dive and the diver. The totality of that needs to be considered before jumping to any conclusions. And from a statistical analysis point of view, there simply isn't enough data to draw any reliable conclusions."

John Bantin replied: *"That misses the point. Saying the man who runs out of diluent is just as likely to run out of open-circuit gas is not addressing the problem, that it is not how much gas you've got but what the gas you are breathing is composed of. Carbon dioxide or oxygen poisoning are insidious dangers, and rebreathers require the discipline of a helicopter pilot in preparation to be safe. Has every diver got that? I think not! Many rebreather deaths have occurred at the surface or in very shallow water.*

"The main thrust of my piece was the fact that many secondhand rebreather units are coming onto the market for private sale without any control as to whether the buyers gets properly trained before going diving with them."

insurance companies believe are risky, you're knocked out of the running for a Preferred or Preferred Plus policy. At best, you may qualify for a Standard policy but toss in a few medical conditions and you're relegated to something below that, thereby paying more on your policy.

But your rates could change depending on what you tell the insurance company about your diving habits, says Jack Kelly, an *Undercurrent* reader and owner of insurance agency Vector Benefits in Bloomfield Hills, MI. "Most insurance companies use an underwriting manual that doesn't penalize divers who stay above 100 feet. If you admit to diving down to 120 feet four times a year, the manual calls for an extra flat rate, usually an extra \$2.50 to \$5 per \$1,000 per year. But if you admit to less than 100 feet, you usually can get the Preferred rate or better."

What's considered risky can vary by company. For instance, some will rate you negatively if you dive too frequently for their taste. But by shopping around, you may find a company that doesn't penalize for diving. Jack Dolan, spokesman for the American Council of Life Insurers, says companies will often change their criteria from year to year to be competitive. If you are hanging up your fins and done with diving, you can apply for a new policy and ask the company to lower your premium. If it won't, another insurer might.

And don't lie about your diving habits. If you have a fatal accident, your decedents may get nothing. If the company discovers you were a diver before you signed the paperwork, it won't pay your benefit. Or if you said you always stayed above 100 feet and they download your dive computer and see 50 technical dives below 130 feet in the past year, ditto.

But that only applies for the first two years, says Kelly. The insurance company can challenge the validity of your policy during that time on the basis that you held back information. “After that, even if you said you were a low-risk diver and they found you always dove, they have to pay your claim, even if you died during a technical dive.”

Despite this “incontestable clause,” there are exceptions in which the insurance company may contest your policy after the two-year period, such as cases of deliberate fraud. But the “incontestable clause” is the most important clause on your life insurance policy, diver or not. Make sure this clause is included in your policy and you know what the specified time limit is before it expires.

-- Vanessa Richardson

The New *Alert Diver* Magazine

is DAN straying from its mission?

Thirty years ago, Diver's Alert Network (DAN) began as an arm of Duke University Medical School to inform divers about medical issues while sponsoring research through its affiliation with Duke. When DAN discovered it could sell insurance to divers, its membership took off and grew past 200,000 in the 90s. Since then, other diver insurers have entered the market so DAN, now a nonprofit corporation, took up more commercial ventures to spawn growth. Today, like many nonprofits, DAN has broadened its original focus and is now a business earning \$10 million a year.



For thousands of divers, DAN has provided superb emergency medical service. Its research into diving medical and safety issues is invaluable. DAN has endless admirers in the dive community. However, when Doc Vikingo, a frequent contributor to Undercurrent, sent us a blog for posting on our website that questioned the latest changes in DAN's magazine, Alert Diver, we wanted to see what DAN officials had to say about it. Here is Doc's blog, with our follow-up.

* * * * *

Diver Alert Network's new quarterly, *Alert Diver*, published by Stephen Frink and company, is a handsome magazine that makes its prior incarnation appear like an ugly stepsister. Then again, it now appears DAN has a lot more money to play with. But is it straying from DAN's stated raison d'être?

The back story: Stephen Frink was released as director of photography and columnist for *Scuba Diving* when Bonnier Corporation bought the magazine in 2009. As a recently resigned DAN board member, Frink got himself elevated to publisher of *Alert Diver* with a massively increased budget. Apparently *Alert Diver* is turning into a general-circulation, commercial magazine featuring underwater photography pieces.

DAN's mission statement and vision statements can be read in full at www.diversalertnetwork.org/about/index.asp, but I'll highlight the most relevant content (I'm the one highlighting the words in bold):

"Divers Alert Network (DAN) is a 501(c)(3) **non-profit medical and research organization dedicated to the safety and health of recreational scuba divers** and associated with Duke University Medical Center.

"Founded in 1980, DAN has served as a lifeline for the scuba industry by **operating diving's only 24-hour emergency hotline, a lifesaving service for injured divers**. Additionally, DAN operates a **diving medical information line, conducts vital diving medical research, and develops and provides a number of educational programs** for everyone from beginning divers to medical professionals.

"DAN's Mission Statement: DAN **helps divers in need with medical emergency assistance and promotes diving safety through research, education, products and services.**"

"DAN's Vision Statement: **"Striving to make every dive, accident- and injury-free."**

In the above material, I was unable to find any description of the roles of DAN and *Alert Diver* in advancing underwater photographic skills, travel location reviews, marine conservation, dive gear, and the like. Yet the current Spring 2010 edition, while admittedly including a number of diving safety and medicine pieces, is filled with such off-topic articles, several of them as big feature pieces.

For example, photography features like the eight-page spread "Pushing the Envelope (Three Advanced Photo Techniques Taught by Pros Who Perfected Them)" and the 12-page feature "Imaging," plus a page of Frink's reviews on underwater photography books, are the most egregious examples. There are travel articles on California's Anacapa Island, the Alger Underwater Preserve, the Cayman Islands, and an eight-page feature titled "The Essentials of the Maldives," with photos by Frink and Dennis Liberson, former chairman of DAN's board of directors who became the (unpaid) executive chair of DAN Holdings last fall.

There's a Conservation section with stories about saving seagrass beds, how NOAA is keeping tabs on reefs, and the effect of plastic garbage on the world's oceans. On the topic of gear, there's an article about backplate buoyancy systems.

Now I'm not saying that such pieces don't make for an interesting, entertaining, flashy and rather expensive publication, or that some folks don't much enjoy it. The issue is, are such articles consistent with

Night Time Raid on Fiji's Lagoon Resort, Beqa Divers

At 8 p.m. on Friday, May 7, a team of security guards was deployed to Lagoon Resort. Their instructions came from the Fiji Development Bank: Secure the property, block the road and don't let anyone into the resort. At 8:30 p.m., Beqa Adventure Divers manager Andrew Cumming got a phone call from Lagoon Resort owner Jim Sherlock about the situation. He went to the resort, and he and Sherlock met with the head of the security team. The chief informed them that the resort was closed, effective immediately, because of failure to make mortgage payments, and entry to the property was not allowed.

Cumming told him Beqa was a separate business and merely a tenant that rented space on the resort's grounds. There was no change in the directive, the security chief told him. That meant Beqa's Saturday trip

for 20-plus divers had to be canceled. Cumming spent all day Saturday negotiating with multiple Fiji authorities, including the Ministry of Tourism and the Prime Minister's office. At the end of the day, Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama gave the go-ahead for Beqa to open up again. It was business as usual for the dive shop on May 9, and Beqa got all its divers booked at Lagoon Resort re-housed to a hotel nearby.

As of late May, Lagoon Resort is still closed. Sherlock told *Undercurrent* he has filed an injunction to remove the roadblocks that prevent people from entering the resort. It's now before the court, and he hopes the roadblocks are removed by early June. Cumming wrote on Beqa's blog last month (www.fijisharkdiving.blogspot.com), "We have signed documents with the bank that cover us for the medium term but, when it comes to our long-term future, we shall need to examine the court ruling. Worst case, we would eventually have to relocate, and have already scouted several suitable locations."

Nekton Cruises Shuts Down

In the past couple of years, we've received reader reports from divers going on Nekton's Caribbean-based liveboards that, while they've had a good time, the two barge-like boats were showing their age. It looks like "continually increasing cost of operations, decreased discretionary income of consumers and overall economic difficulty" also took a toll. Nekton's website cited these as the reasons why it closed operations as of May 17.

There are currently no specifics about how or when Nekton is refunding divers who booked trips. The website originally said it would list a point of contact for claims in early June. Now that has been changed to the "middle/beginning" of June. "If you have travel insurance, please use a copy of this announcement for pursuing a claim with your insurer."

Nekton did not work with wholesalers, so travel agents can't help out with getting money back, but Tim Webb, president of travel agency Caradonna Dive Adventures, recommends those who booked trips with their credit cards should call the card company to dispute the charge (this goes for any dive trip you book).

The Aggressor and Explorer fleets have offered to honor Nekton's unfulfilled reservations. Aggressor will take payments made to Nekton toward future trips on their Caribbean liveboards; divers pay the price differences between the Nekton and the Aggressor reservations (www.aggressor.com). Explorer Ventures will give a 50 percent discount for Nekton divers who paid for trips in full (www.explorerventures.com).

money. "It faced the same issues that other magazines, like *Undercurrent*, face – the cost to produce, print and mail issues, and the lack of advertising support. So I asked, with the support of DAN management and its board of directors, what if we put together a high-quality quarterly that offered better service to readers, was supported by advertising, and saved DAN money?"

Frink says the next issue will feature an interview with Nick Bird, director of DAN's medical operations, about DAN's medical education and research efforts. There will be articles from the Nature Conservancy about the Coral Triangle, and experts discussing overfishing. Overall, Frink says, 30 to 40 percent of *Alert Diver* pages are devoted to DAN research, education and medicine, and 30 percent is devoted to environmental issues. We'll assume the other third is for underwater photography and travel.

"There are no reviews of dive resorts or travel providers," Liberson says. "We focus on the diving and destinations because our members like it. And we get feedback from them that this is the only magazine they read cover to cover."

Neither man sees a problem with *Alert Diver* taking ads. "We've always accepted ads, it's just that in the past they had no interest in being in it because it was so poorly done," says Liberson. Frink says ad revenues go toward supporting DAN and funding DAN projects, which can be costly. "Like DAN's research project on

the mission and vision statements of DAN and a proper use of members' dues? Are they the most appropriate use of limited DAN resources given how the organization represents itself to its members and the public? Does their primary purpose seem to be the advancement of medical services and research related "to the safety and health of the recreational diver?"

* * * * *

Undercurrent's senior editor Vanessa Richardson then talked with Frink and Liberson, asking about the role of *Alert Diver* in DAN's organization and overall mission.

Liberson says *Alert Diver* serves as a method of communication with DAN members and the general public. "The predominance of content is mission-related as it has always has been. The difference now is we've got more commissioned content than ever before and we have professional editors. What we heard is that the old *Alert Diver* had useful information but it was difficult for people to read. Now it's more reader-friendly and visually appealing. We now hear that people read it cover to cover, so we're doing a better job delivering mission content and getting more people to read about diver safety."

Frink says he resigned as a DAN board member last fall before taking over the publishing role. *Alert Diver* was being published six times a year for DAN members and was losing a lot of

flying after diving; it took 12 years of research and cost \$250,000 to fund. The advertising model is funding a nonprofit that gathers the body of knowledge about scuba diving. And if we can support their business, we're thrilled."

Now *Alert Diver* is free for anyone to read online as a digital issue. Frink says the magazine doesn't make less money but it is saving DAN a boatload by publishing fewer times and taking ads. "I hope it becomes a profit center but for now, it's far less than a loss leader." Says Liberson, "We want to provide safety information to members and nonmembers. Getting their contact information then lets us reach out and ask if they want to become DAN members."

DAN has a contract with Frink's company to publish *Alert Diver*, and Frink says "the publisher has day to day editorial control, [but] . . . the entire editorial team has significant influence on our final products. . . . However, I clearly understand that I work for, and am answerable to, DAN Holdings management and board of directors. DAN retains the final say."

Over the years, plenty of dive magazines have died: *Ocean Realm*, *Fathoms*, *Skin Diver* and most recently, *Adventure Diving*. *Scuba Diving* is still alive, though it has about a quarter of the circulation it once did. That leaves two magazines, both of which have the advantage of serving an existing customer base. *Sport Diver* serves newly certified PADI divers, and *Alert Diver* serves DAN members. So the cost of acquiring new subscribers remains low for both magazines, which is why they can exist at all as the magazine publishing world shrinks. All three magazines compete against each other for advertising revenue. *Scuba Diving* and *Sport Diver* skew their editorial content to the advertisers. Doc Vikingo is saying that *Alert Diver*, given its mission, dare not go there.

Like other nonprofit organizations - - e.g., the Sierra Club and AARP - - DAN has become a multi-faceted business. Its challenge is to ensure that the drive for magazine revenue from advertisers does not dilute its guardianship role for diver safety. As the mission statement implies, as a professional organization, DAN's magazine must be an independent voice. Having watched so many dive magazines cater to their advertisers in their editorial content, I trust that the "new" *Alert Diver*, with the publisher having editorial control, will not weaken DAN's independent stance.

- - Ben Davison

Good News for Marine Parks

In our March issue, we wrote how deteriorating reefs are causing more divers to give up the sport or travel farther afield - - and why the dive industry needs to get a voice on marine protection issues. A recent study in the journal *PLoS One* shows why long-term support is crucial. University of North Carolina marine scientists found the protective effects of marine protected areas (MPAs) strengthen over time, but a long time.

After comparing coral cover in MPAs to those in nearby unprotected areas between 1969 and 2006, they found MPA coral declined initially, then slowed and began to increase. In the Caribbean, coral cover

declined for 14 years after protection began but then increased. In the Asia Pacific, cover declined for the first five years but eventually reached annual growth rates of two percent over two decades.

Now, if authorities could just keep the fish from being taken. Some Caribbean marine parks have limits on fishing but it may not be enough. On its Web site, Bonaire's National Marine Park states, "Trolling along our protected west coast often attracts tuna, wahoo, barracuda or mahi mahi," and it also recommends the best places to bonefish. The Cayman Islands has size limits on groupers and protected spawning areas during certain months but outside those designated waters, it seems to be fair game. While the permitted fishing is typically line and hook only, that still hurts a region already lacking in big fish.

Flotsam & Jetsam

Lots of Dead Divers At This Resort. We recently found this offer from Shermans Travel on the Web. "If you're ready to trade in your snorkeling equipment for an oxygen tank but want to avoid a drawn-out (and expensive scuba diving course, then head down to The Sands at Grace Bay in serene Turks & Caicos. Beginning June 1, this beachfront resort is offering guests the chance to earn their PADI Open Water Diving Certification with a five-night "Diving for Dummies" package for just \$925 per person!" Yup, with a tank full of oxygen, this is a real Diving for Dummies course and certainly not at all drawn out.

Cozumel Literally Turns Into a Theme Park. Some of our readers have complained about the Disneyfication of Cozumel. Here's more reason to fret. California developer Elated Worldwide plans to build the first amusement park on the island. Mayan Adventures Theme Park is scheduled for a 2013 opening. Elated says it will be the world's most eco-conscious amusement park, powered by the world's largest solar farm. "The park will be divided into four quadrants, capturing a season of the year – thus the very essence of Mother Earth." Better plan your dive trips now before the kiddies descend.

Step Zero II: Preparation for a Liveboard Trip. This is part two of Dennis Adams and Kathy and Peter Swan's guide to preparing for a dive photography trip, this time focusing on how to do it on a liveboard. They did much field research and photo-taking aboard the *Paradise Dancer* in Raja Ampat. For divers taking their first liveboard or preparing for the photography trip of a lifetime, this is a good guide to ensure you have a good time and don't leave any essentials behind. The list price is \$42.50, and it also comes in a Kindle version for \$8.95. Order at www.undercurrent.org and our profits go to save coral reefs.

OMS Recalls 20,000 BCs

Ocean Management Systems is recalling 20,000 BCs after they discovered the seal ring can crack, posing a drowning risk. The BCs were sold in black or red between May 2006 and August 2008. The item and serial numbers for recall are here (www.omsdive.com/recalls.html); check for the numbers printed on the warning label, in the BC's non-inflation area. Take the BC back to an OMS dealer for new parts to be installed free of charge, call OMS at 877-791-0315, or e-mail recall@omsdive.com

The Scottish Scuba Pervert. Some joker is giving us divers a bad name. He's running around Irvine Beach Park wearing nothing but a diving mask, a balaclava and a wetsuit top, flashing the ladies, and he's been doing it since 2007. So the police have upped the patrols and believe their increased presence "will be enough to put 'doggers' off meeting up for seedy sex sessions at the beauty spot," reports the *Irvine Herald* on May 14. It goes on to quote a police source saying, "The scuba pervert has been a real thorn in our side. He has a habit of coming out the woodwork in the better weather so hopefully we'll get him this time round. The Beach Park has become something of a pervert's paradise and it's something the top brass want to clamp down hard on." And that's a quote.

Happy Anniversary, Vandenberg. It's been a year since the naval ship sank to the ocean floor near Key West. Dive shops say both divers and fish are flocking to it. REEF's Lad Akins confirms that 113 species of fish have been documented, including the bank butterfly fish, which usually lives below 150 feet. But is the best way to celebrate its anniversary to drive underwater scooters around it? The Wreck Racing League is starting the first Vandenberg Underwater Grand Prix, a two-day event on June 12-13, with test drives and a skills competition. If you feel like buzzing the *Vandenberg*, sign up at <http://wreckracingleague.com>

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