

expedition to Silver Banks was spectacular. Excellent boat and crew. Encountered lots of whales in environmentally safe way. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; fax 985-384-0817; e-mail [info@aggressor.com](mailto:info@aggressor.com); website [www.aggressor.com](http://www.aggressor.com))

**Wind Dancer, February 2001, Peter T. Hartlove, Longmont, CO.** Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 76-78 F. Logged dives: 500+. Snorkeling only trip. Great trip and we had good weather. the crew, Capt. Paul, Bret, Karen, Burt, Franklin, Hew, Tony (fab cook) and Guerline, is great and the food was plentiful, well rounded and very tasty, overall, great! A shortie wetsuit of mine came up missing at the end of the trip. You start with a flight to Puerto Plata in DR. After customs, your bags are whisked onto a taxi and off to the boat. After a 9 hr crossing (ours took 11 due to rough seas, the Wind Dancer handled it well) you are on the Silver Banks, a relatively shallow area where your anchor in these protected waters for the next 6 days. Some 4-6 thousand Atlantic Humpbacks pass through this area for challenging, mating and calving. Two custom tenders with double 4-stroke Honda motors are used with max 9 guests per boat. The boat is stocked with sandwiches, water, pop, fruit and candy. The day involves riding the water in these tenders, looking for whales and maneuvering for possible encounters. Tom Conlin drives one and the very capable Bret, captains the other. You rotate boats each day. Snorkeling only. We had surface activity including fin-slapping, tail-

lobbing and great breaches including synchronized repeated double breaches. Our in-water encounters included a short (15 min) encounter with a rambunctious juvenile, a short (20 min) encounter with a mother and her 2 weeks old calf the first day and an 1.5 hour encounter with a full grown male later in the week. He circled, twisted, rolled, swan upside down and otherwise just enjoyed playing and showing off. (Ph: 800-932-6237 or 305-669-9391; fax 305-669-9475; e-mail [dancer@peterhughes.com](mailto:dancer@peterhughes.com); website [www.peterhughes.com](http://www.peterhughes.com))

## HONDURAS

**Aggressor IV, December 2000, Samuel B. Johnson, Eureka IL.** Vis: 3-40 ft. Water: 77-78 F. Dives logged: 178. Water; choppy, surge, strong currents. Frankly disappointing. We were not taken to particularly attractive or interesting dive sites. The damage to the reefs of Roatán by Mitch was much greater than I anticipated. I stayed a few days at a Roatán land-based operation, and their boat managed to take me to sites far better than the ones at which the Aggressor boat moored. The Aggressor sites had coral in poor shape, relatively few large fish, no pelagics, and relatively few critters. No one was anyone going out of his way to help divers have interesting dives. I'm used to being asked by someone, "Good dive?" and some interest shown in the answer. On this boat, I wasn't even asked. The crew member who was supposed to be "always" on the dive deck when the "pool was open,"

wasn't even always there to log us going into the water or to help us back out. Relaxed atmosphere for experienced divers. On board, things were just okay. The food was okay (the soups were excellent). The cabins were okay, although the banging bathroom door meant you left the bathroom closed all the time, when it actually needed airing, and repeated complaints about excessive air conditioning were never taken seriously. The divemasters were competent and when safety was at issue they were completely satisfactory, e.g., a couple of occasions when divers had to be fetched because they were too far from the boat and in strong currents. The weather was poor, and that didn't help. (Ph: 800-348-2628 or 985-385-2628; fax 985-384-0817; e-mail [info@aggressor.com](mailto:info@aggressor.com); website [www.aggressor.com](http://www.aggressor.com))

**Aggressor IV, December 2000, Jim Johnson, New York, NY.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 78-81 F. Dives logged: 200+. The boat is old and in need of significant updating. The crew was very friendly, but lax/sloppy regarding dive briefings and safety. The dive sites were average at best, and for the most part boring.

**Aggressor IV, February 2001, Gary Purdom, Bainbridge Island, WA.** Vis: 50-75 ft. Water: 77-78 F, calm and flat. Dive restrictions: 130 feet. Dives logged: 150+. The captain (Bill) could not have been more accommodating. Any reasonable request was honored with a smile.

**Aggressor IV, March 2001, Ellen Bland ([theellens@txucom.net](mailto:theellens@txucom.net))**

**Conroe, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy no currents. Boat is well arranged with comfortable rooms. Queen beds were very nice. Upper single bunk small for larger divers. Household type toilets and showers in each room were great. Food was good and there was plenty of it. Warm towels and warm water showers on dive deck. Plenty of room on board to visit with others, or find a quiet place to rest or read. Three rentable (\$10/dive) dive scooters were fun. Captain Charlie and the entire crew went out of their way to assist divers both in and out of the water. They waited on us hand and foot. Windy weather (35mph winds) kept us on the North side of Roatán for most of the dives, so many of the sites were missed. However, the Captain Charlie managed to find a diversity of sites which suited everyone. Boat was stable at anchor. Good photo prep area, separate rinse tanks, on board E6 Processing and slide shows, rental photo and video equipment, on board photo and video courses. Crew knowledgeable and always ready to offer help or suggestions.

**Aggressor IV, March 2001, Dr. Barry Galison ([footman@ix.netcom.com](mailto:footman@ix.netcom.com)) Boca Raton, FL.** Vis: 50-80 ft. Water: 81 F. Dive restrictions: Try not to go past 110 ft. For the most part the weather was good. Some wind kept us from diving some areas especially the last day. The food was good and the chef tried to please everyone but I think they didn't wash the fruits and vegetables because

almost everyone had stomach problems. The captain and the staff were really helpful and fun to be with. You were able to dive your limits. They had scooters you could rent and one person got certified on a re-breather. The coral heads and walls were beautiful. Much reef fish and schools but not as much big fish as I saw in Belize on the Aggressor 2 years ago. Lots of turtles, a couple of beautiful eagle rays and 3 seahorses. The air conditioning was difficult to regulate from port side to starboard side and the starboard side failed the night before docked to go home. The generators were very noisy and made it hard to sleep unless you used earplugs. Other than that it was a good trip.

**Aggressor IV, March 2001, Peter Hartlove, Longmont, CO.** Vis: 80 ft. Water: 78 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: more than 500. Restrictions: 130 ft. This Aggressor boat is functional but not as nice as most. The air conditioning on my side of the boat was problematic, requiring opening the doors at night to stay reasonably comfortable. Several of our group came down with diarrhea at the end of the trip. The food was okay, served cafeteria style, efficient. The diving was good. Saw most of the typical reef fish. Our group saw 5 seahorses, I found 2, one was yellow with black stripes (a tiger). I tried a scooter. What a hoot! The crew was enthusiastic and had fun with us.

**Aggressor IV, May 2001, Ron Johnson (GrtDay@msn.com), Katy, TX.** Experience: 501-1000 dives. Vis: 75 to 150 Feet. Water: 81 to 83 F,

calm no currents. Capacity for 20 people, but there were only 11. Captain Erwin Westby was the photo-pro, second Captain, and instructor on The *Belize Aggressor* and *Aggressor* operation in Cuba. This was our 5th trip with Erwin. His is now the youngest Captain in the Aggressor Fleet. His crew revered him and he ran an excellent ship! Erwin still has the same smile that has been opening doors for him for years. Chef Leek is a treasure. Every meal was an Epicurean delight. . Scrumptious, imaginative, and outstanding! Diving the Bay Islands is also outstanding. We had perfect weather, flat seas, and no current. We dove Utila, Cayo's Cochinos, and Guanaja. The Sea Mounts are awe-inspiring. The Jado Trader is ho-hum, but the reef surrounding it is great. Diving couldn't have been better...except for the sea critters: sea wasps, sea lice, jellyfish pieces, blood worms, no-see-um's. The Bay Islands are overrun with these nasty-ass critters. I heartily recommend a skin and hood for all diving. Many of our fellow passengers left with multiple stings all over their bodies. The Bay Islands *Aggressor* is a HUGE ship with lots of wasted and underutilized space. The dining salon was like a big 50's diner. There was no video facility to watch while dining. The music speakers sucked. The bar and the food made up for it. Downstairs, there was a video salon with 2 13" minuscule Daewoo poor-picture TV's. The salon was too large to be able to watch these TV's. They needed a DVD player and much larger TV's. We had one of the premium top-deck rooms with a king-

size bed. Well worth the extra expense. Very comfortable and spacious. The whole ship had kind of musty-fishy smell. The most affordable of all the *Aggressor* boats: Excellent photo deck. They had no Nikonos equipment for rental. All they had were the cheapie Moto-Marines. What a joke!

***Aggressor IV*, June 2000, Bob Losey (RFLosey@qwest.net) City Chandler, AZ.** Logged dives: 258. This was a new boat to *Aggressor* Fleet — old sow to everyone else. Dirty, buggy. The crew was not very special either. Accommodations (we had the best — one of the two suites on the upper deck, the room was dirty, old carpeting, had not been updated in years, no storage and smelled very bad. I found out on the second night aboard it had cockroaches also. Dining was all outside (right outside our cabin door). The helpers put the food on a warming trays in the middle of the deck, tables where around the outsides. No air circulation existed unless you opened the clear plastic curtains surrounding the eating area. The food was so-so, not even close to gourmet, the fruit was excellent, but then they did not do anything to it. For 5-1/2 days we dove the following areas (note this is up to 5 dives per day) - Half Moon Bay Wall, Eel Garden, Kriptos Cave, Thbana's Wall, Nitrox Alley, Valley of the Kings, Lighthouse Reef and one day we dove the wreck of the Halliburton off Utila. We just simply kept repeating those dives throughout the week. I heard that the reason we could not dive any other dives sites was that the boat was

far too heavy and would end up pulling the mooring loose. My wife and I have been on several *Aggressor* live-aboard's and all where very nice to great, but how can *Aggressor* advertise this as a luxury live-board!

***Aggressor IV*, June 2001, Tom Anderson, Westford, MA.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 60 Feet. Water: 82 to 84 F, choppy currents. . The good folks of the *Aggressor* fleet took great care of us. The transition from the airport to the boat went well. We've never been with a better crew on a live aboard. They worked hard to find sheltered, high quality dive sites while a tropical storm was churning away to our north. The crew gave great briefings and left us free to dive our own profile. The videographer produced the highest quality dive video we've ever had. The divemasters were always ready to provide a tips as to where we could find the best critters. Great macro photography: A Spanish dancer, grape cluster nudibranch, cryptic teardrop crab, reef scorpionfish, spotted sea hare. Many octopus, a friendly hawksbill turtle, and a pair of seahorses.

***Aggressor IV*, July 2001, Stan and Gretchen Gettis (forgett@bellsouth.net) Miami, FL.** Vis: 65-80 ft. Water: 80-83 F, calm and flat. Logged dives: 500+. Dive restrictions: 130 ft. Captain Erwin and his outrageous crew, chef Leetch, Candace, Chantal, Slim, Cayetano, made the trip. The diving was average but Capt. Erwin made sure if there was something unusual, we saw it. Learning anything from Captain Erwin is an unbelievable

guy and can and will teach you anything. Fantasy Island hotel has many bugs. (None on the boat).

**Aggressor IV, August 2001, Tori Jacobson (Tori1996@aol.com)**  
**Chatsworth, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 40 to 65 Feet. Water: 79 to 82 F, choppy surge currents. Took TACA and got to Aggressor 10 hours late. Hurricane warning caused boat to go back to the harbor and miss a day of diving. Currents and vis tested your navigation ability. Crew on boat was great! Food would have been better if the flies did not get to it first! Took land tour on Roatán. Highlights consisted of growing fences, (trees with barbed wire), iguana farm, and a stop at the 'Yaba Ding Ding' gift shop. Healthy coral and lots of little critters. 2 sea horses on wall at 3 Kings was the highlight of the week! Caters to UWPs. Very helpful. 2 big camera tables and separate rinse tank.

**Aggressor IV, August 2001, Charles Stearns (CRStearns@aol.com)**  
**Lilburn, GA.** Vis: 35-40 ft. Water: 82-84 F. Dives logged: 700+. Dive restrictions enforced: 130'. First Annual Under Water Photo Shoot Out sponsored by Skin Diver Magazine. Kathy Knoll did an outstanding job of organizing forums, accommodations, prizes. Instructors were excellent including Stan Watterman, David Fleetham, Jim Church, Rick Frehese. Final night awards banquet was outstanding with local dance entertainment. Accommodation choices were Bay Islands Aggressor, Fantasy Island, Coco Beach and Anthony's Key Resort. Diving conditions and marine life were not near what they were

before Hurricane Mitch went through a few years ago. At times I was 40 feet deep under the Aggressor and could hear but not see the boat! Frequently there was a surge. Saw no turtles, few eels, only two or three eagle rays. The Bay Islands have always provided great macro opportunities. These opportunities were also lacking. The dolphin experience at Anthony's Key Resort is not to be missed; Try to do the surface images at sunset; the dolphins coming up out of the water with the sun behind them are beautiful winners in any photo competition.

## ST. MAARTEN, SABA, ST. KITTS, STATIA

**Caribbean Explorer, February 2001, Mike Szathmary (szathmarym@aol.com) Greer, SC.**  
 Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 75 Feet. Water: 77 to 79 F, calm, no currents. My second live aboard and the best week of diving I ever had. Did all three of the shore excursions and still got in 23 dives. Unique and pristine sites. I had read that the diving in Statia and St. Kitts was mediocre but I did not find this to be the case. The crew was great, the food was good to great and the boat was more than adequate. (Ph: (800) 322-3577 or 903.887.8521; fax 903.887.8526; e-mail info@explorerventures.com; website www.caribexplorer.com/caribbean)

**Caribbean Explorer, March 2001, Dave and Elaine Hollabaugh (dhollaba@ktis.net) Fulton, MO.**  
 Vis: 50-100 ft. Water: 78-82 F. Dives logged: David: 335, Elaine: 230.