

with a few hammerheads and more reef sharks. The walls and corals were spectacular with quite good fish life, turtles, and dolphins. The diving at Rum Cay was poor with current and could have skipped this island entirely. We moved after just two dives.

Conception Island was quite good and the crew took us to a tidal river with mangroves for snorkeling. The crew was given less than a week to move from Grand Turk to the Bahamas so they did not have a great knowledge of local sites.

**Wind Dancer, August 2002, Beth, NY, NY.** Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 40 to 100 Feet. Surge. "Swim with wild dolphins" Bahamas itinerary. air 90's, water 80's, viz 40'-100', current — mild to strong, seven days of sun! All sites were north of Grand Bahama Island, in the Atlantic, on the edge of the white sand shoals where dolphins live. Except the last day's single dive that was close to the island — not so many fish and not great viz. Seems like divers who travel the world poo-poo at Bahamas diving, but I found it excellent. (I have Red Sea, Palau and Caribbean with which to compare this). These sites too far for day boats. Sharks and turtles on most dives. Reefs were teeming with fishes. Some strong current but it didn't bother me. (Some people were annoyed but hey this is the Atlantic and we're scuba diving). You do two morning dives that were never a disappointment (except the last day, because it was close to the island), then spend the afternoon in the tender on the flats looking for dolphins. Of

the five afternoons, only one resulted in personal encounter for twenty mins (of course it was the only day I didn't go out looking for them.). Bring foul weather gear because it gets cold on the tender when you are out there for hours. I did see dolphins twice from the boat. *Wind Dancer* usually does T&C. Captain Brett is a really cool nice guy and runs a great boat and crew. Best food I've had on an American liveaboard. They have a professionally trained chef, Tony, a really nice guy. push for an afternoon dive rather than dolphining. <http://www.peterhughes.com>

## BELIZE

**Belize Aggressor III, June 2001, Alisse & Denis Ryan, Seattle, WA.** Vis: 40-80 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Logged dives: 80. Good: Crew's friendliness and helpfulness. Food was tasty with lots of variety, homemade. Dive platform was organized well. Diving had a variety of fish life. Lots of queen angel fish; saw several spotted eagle rays, turtles and a shark. Health of corals was good (though less than Bonaire). Easy to get 4-5 dives/day including night dives. American Airlines lost luggage. Belize City is a rat hole. It was so windy we could only dive the leeward side of Long Caye. One passenger was obnoxious. Pack light. Rooms are tiny. (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))

**Belize Aggressor, March 2002, Glenn Snyders ([snyders21@cox.net](mailto:snyders21@cox.net)) Va Beach, VA.** Experience: 251-500

dives. Vis: 60 to 80 Feet. Water: 78 to 80 F, choppy no currents. *Belize Aggressor* showing its age. The crew was good but not outstanding in terms of service. They did recover from a first day accident leaving them without their usual engineer who was hospitalized. The food was plentiful but not creative. They asked us to buy more beer and diet soft drinks before departing because "they are expensive." (So why do they advertise drinks included?). The layout of the boat is not conducive to eating and socializing as an entire group, but the inside space saving makes the dive deck spacious and user friendly. Despite the poor weather, the diving was great with lots of small and large creatures and healthy coral. I was hoping for more from this trip especially with 11 of my good dive buddies along.

***Belize Aggressor III, June 2002, Wendy Ewald (wenewald@cox.net) Trinidad, CA.*** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 80 to 85 F, calm. Family week so there were other parents and kids. My 10-year-old-son and a 10-year-old boy got certified by Wayne Hassen, the boat owner. He was safety conscious and I felt comfortable with my son at 35 feet and above. My 8-year-old daughter spent a lot of time using the SASY snorkeling system and loved it. The crew was fantastic and so were the other passengers. The food was plentiful. Nothing fancy but tasty. My husband and I were certified to use Nitrox. Wayne arranged land tours after we disembarked and we spent

time at Jaguar Paw Jungle Resort. We went cave tubing and toured Mayan Ruins. E-6 processing so that all photographers could view their work and get advice for improvement. Unfortunately the processor broke and my husband lost a roll of film. It was fixed but we chose not to process any more film. It ended up breaking again and the film had to be processed by hand.

***Belize Aggressor, August 2002, Craig & Ruth Campbell, Long Grove, IL.*** Water: 84 F. Dives logged: Craig: 285, Ruth 242. Dive restrictions enforced: 130'. All but one dive site on Light-house Reef. There was significant wind and the boat made large rapid swings about the mooring line. Unless you were patient and let the boat swing to you at your safety stop, leaving the water became a chore. Visibility was 30-40 ft. With the boat moored in 30-40 feet of water you could be under the boat at the end of a dive, look up and not see the boat. Diving was just ok. With all of the hype about how good Belize diving is, we expected better. Fish life was not abundant, we saw nothing large, and the reef was not in good condition. Option of doing two or three dives at each dive site. With the exception of Aquarium, we only felt it necessary to dive on the first dive at each site. However, there were others on the boat who made nearly every dive. We explored the interior of Belize, visiting Mayan ruins at Lamanai, Coracol, Xunantunich and Tikal (Guatemala); cave tubing and river canoeing. Katie Valk of Maya Travel Services

(Mayatravel@btl.com) is extremely knowledgeable on what to do, where to go and where to stay in Belize.

***Belize Aggressor III, August 2002, Reed Nescher, Beaumont, CA.***

Experience: Over 1000 dives. Vis: 60 to 120 Feet. Water: 81 to 84 F, calm. Five or more dives per day! Nitrox — great bottom times and not that old tired feeling. Hot tub on second deck was great after the night dive. The food was fantastic. The cabins are fine for the time you spend in them. Well maintained and almost bug free. If you pack right there is plenty of room for two and the bed feels great after five dives. Small problems with heads and Nitrox, but the crew is right on it. The captain (Sam) did everything to see to our comfort and enjoyment. Juan, Chris, and Steve are great hands and crew. Cooks did a great job of three meals and snacks all day. The shower, soap, and hot towels on the back deck were the best. Hang your skin and it would dry by the next dive. If you shower with it and take it off in the shower it was always clean and did not pick up that special smell that comes with a week of diving. The sea life was great and you found some new creature on every dive both big and little. Sights in Belize are right out of National Geographic, caves, ruins, and wild animals you name you can see it. Belize City should be seen once, but that maybe enough. Three level camera table. Lots of help. Low pressure air and camera towels on table. E-6 processing, big TV for video.

***Nekton Pilot, November 2001, Lionel Specter, Albuquerque, NM.***

Vis: 40-60 ft. Water: 80-82 F. Dives logged: 300+. Dive restrictions enforced: 130', 500 psi back. 13th live-aboard. First day cloudy but got better thru the week. Sunny by the weekend. Diving was typical Caribbean diving. Take 6 lbs. + off weight belt. Cabins roomy due to box shape of ship. Food good and plentiful buffet style. Did not dive Blue Hole which I think is over rated anyway. (Ph: 800-899-6753 or 954-463-9324; e-mail [info@nektoncruises.com](mailto:info@nektoncruises.com); website [www.nektoncruises.com](http://www.nektoncruises.com))

***Nekton Pilot, December 2001, Rickie Sterne/Chrisanda Button***

([rickandchris@alltel.net](mailto:rickandchris@alltel.net)) Elkins, AR. Experience: 51-100 dives. Vis: 60 to 100 Feet. Water: 77 to 78 F, calm no currents. We are new divers and easy to please. Diving was very good. Walls were covered with large (5'-6') barrel sponges, tube sponges, rope sponges and branching black coral. Soft corals abound. Lots of little stuff: Christmas tree worms, feather dusters, flamingo tongues and shrimps. Plenty of tropicals, shrimp and gobies in cleaning stations, morays on every dive and turtles on most dives. Two eagle rays, three Southern stingrays, and one yellow ray. One octopus on every night dive, squid, large crabs and lobsters. A school of horse-eyed jacks and a barracuda or two entertained on the deco bar. Accommodations compact but comfortable and clean. The food is good, plentiful, and frequent. Both hot and continental breakfasts daily. Fresh-baked cookies

between the morning dives. Lunches are soup-salad-sandwich. Afternoon snacks were savories. Dinner is like eating a friend's company meal every night. Popcorn after the night dives and juices were always available. We enjoyed the educational slide presentations each evening. Divemasters were attentive and safety-oriented. We signed on and off the boat for every dive. When the tie wrap on my mouth-piece broke, Larry had it replaced so fast that our third buddy didn't know there had been a problem. The steel 95 tanks are great. Most of our bottom times were more than an hour.

***Nekton Pilot*, January 2002, Jill (crockerjc@aol.com) Austin, TX.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 199 Feet. Water: 78 to 90 F, calm. Capt. Jon was fabulous. Gave us excellent dive briefings and slide shows on corals. Excellent staff — upbeat and humorous! Lots of fun. We rang in the new year at midnight underwater. Great trip! Good setups for both photo and video equipment. Lots of help if you needed it.

***Nekton Pilot*, March 2002, Susan Sampson and dive buddy (susanraesampson@hotmail.com), Renton, WA.** My dives logged: over 100. Weather conditions: windy. Water condition: flat to choppy, no currents. Vis: 70-100 ft. Water: 79-81 F. Dive restrictions enforce: 130 ft., return with 500 psi, no diving after any alcohol consumption. The *Nekton Pilot* was a comfortable vessel that provided us nearly flawless live-aboard service for diving the outer reef of Belize. Only 13 divers and one

snorkeler, short of the 32 the boat can accommodate. Spacious setup station on the dive deck for each pair of divers, with a generous cubby hole for fins, masks, etc.; warm towels and hot fresh water showers on the dive deck for after each dive; private bathrooms in each stateroom; slide film developing; and television monitors for digital camera and video operators who wanted to view their photos on the big screen (when they weren't being used to run movies from the collection on board). Wind confined us to the lee side of Turnoff Islands, Long Cay, and Half Moon Cay, but the wall and reef there were packed with corals, sponges and the tropicals and critters. We encountered turtles with some frequency, and spotted dolphins and one sailfish or marlin. Tarpon bombed through the nightlights on the stern devouring smaller fish that the lights had attracted, and a huge school of horse-eyed jacks swam in a funnel cloud pattern under the pontoons of the boat. We had one side trip to the bird sanctuary on Half Moon Cay to see the red-footed booby birds and frigate birds. Cpt. John, a marine biologist by training, enriched the dive experience with his briefings on fish and critter identification and ecology of the reef. American style comfort food like turkey dinner with mashed potatoes and dressing, barbecue, steak and lobster. Ran out of coffee on the fourth day of a week-long cruise; that hurt. The crew made it a good experience.

***Nekton Pilot*, March 2002, Dale Thompson (dthompson1@san.rr.com)**

**Del Mar, CA.** Experience: 251-500 dives. Vis: 70 to 100 Feet. Water: 79 to 81 F, calm. On par with the best diving I've had — healthy reefs, lots of big and small fish, crab, lobster, stingrays and spotted eagle rays, turtles. Others saw sharks, I didn't. Sunny with light breezes during the day, wind picked up at night to 20 knots or so. Boat ride smooth and steady. Crew was friendly, competent, and hard working. Dive operations well run and we got all the diving in we could want. Slide shows in the evening well done. Food well done, good variety. Condition of boat unsatisfactory. Lower deck state-rooms "rained" condensation every night and often during the day — poor design they need to fix with some ventilation (there is no fresh air in cabins. When I got to my room, found it stinking of mold and mildew, framed photo on wall colored and stained with active growth, water streaks down the wall from condensation trails, area around exhaust for room's a/c black with mold/mildew, a/c intake dusty and dirty; moisture absorbent bag in room full and growing mold/mildew. Throughout boat's lower deck, interior carpet worn, filthy, and stained with grease/oil. Several times could not get into cabin after dinner when sewage system blocked and the crew had to access piping to run roto-rooter by lifting carpet and underlying deck plates in hallway. Exterior deck carpeting badly worn and frayed. Presented tripping hazard to passengers at head of aft sun deck stairs and on dive deck

where edges lifting up caught diver's flippers every day. Apparently cost of importing new carpet through Belize high, but cost of a lawsuit will be higher.

**Sun Dancer, August 2002, Judy Flagg, Wallingford, CT.** Experience: 101-250 dives. Vis: 50 to 100 Feet. Water: 82 to 86 F, calm. 2nd cruise in Belize for the *Sun Dancer*. Peter and Alice Hughes were on the boat that week. The boat was spotless and the room we were assigned was spacious by live aboard standards. The salon where they served all meals, was large and air conditioned. The food could not be better, Janis can really cook! The dive staff was excellent. At each new site we were given a great briefing. The dive deck was spacious and getting into the water was an easy giant stride. The diving itself beautiful. We saw lots of lush coral and tropical fish. There were large groupers and turtles on every dive. We saw several spotted eagle rays and one person saw and photographed a hammerhead shark. (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))

## CAYMAN ISLANDS

**Aggressor IV, December 2001, David S. Johnson, Wildomar, CA.** Vis: 80-120 ft. Water: 80 F. Dives logged: 132. Overall performance of crew was great. Weather could have been better but good none the less. (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))