

The Scuba Sports Club of Westchester, New York

Our 43rd year serving the local and northeast dive community !

The Scuba Sport Club's SUMMER/FALL 2018 Newsletter



Gary Lehman, Newsletter Editor



The Anchor Line



Denise Blais, President



Welcome to the SUMMER 2018 issue of The Scuba Sports Club Sea Swells!

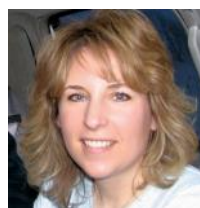
We invite all members of the diving community to contribute; please contact Gary at gary.a.lehman@gmail.com with your articles—and photos! Our Club Newsletter includes features about our Club's diving and social calendar; our diving adventures, social/educational events, occasional equipment and health issue discussions, and profiles on some of the more colorful and intrepid characters in our local diving community (of which there are many!), and other features of interest.

In this issue we will hear a new diver's gracious and admiring comments about one of our own, Melissa, who in pursuit of her Divemaster certification had this individual as a student, mentoring him through adversity and new diving issues. His letter to PADI is heartwarming, and we are happy that he had such an excellent dive training experience with Social Director Melissa! She gets our vote of distinction for meritorious service to our community!

This current issue also reflects our Club's active diving-fanning out all over the globe for fantastic diving and other adventures! Come with us to Bonaire, Key Largo, San Salvador, Ustica (near Sicily)... and ...GALAPAGOS ! And get information about the environmental impacts of the planned Army Corps of Engineers projects to the Hudson River estuary; enjoy the venerable Featured Creature column, get an update on travel/tropical diseases —and join The Scuba Sports Club's trek to Mt. Everest Base Camp to fight cancer!

Find the articles of interest to you, then relax and enjoy — and make your plans, your dive adventures, and all your dreams come true—with... The Scuba Sports Club !

Gary
Sea Swells Newsletter Editor



Hi Everyone,
I hope you all are enjoying the warm Summer weather! As we prepare for the second half of the year please know the Board is still continuing to plan lots of fun things to do!

We had our annual trek to Las Mananitas Mexican Restaurant for dinner in July, a trip to San Salvador in August, we have a Rescue Refresher session and annual Seal Dive in Gloucester in Sept., a sold out trip to Grenada and a visit to the NYC Aquarium Ocean Discovery:Sharks! Exhibit in October. And last but not least, the Holiday Party to end out the year! We have selected a great new venue for same, so stay tuned!

We are always trying to add new things to our calendar. So please watch for emails, come to our meetings or check our website for the latest list of events going on! If you have ideas on other things to do, please let us know and we'll try and put something together.

Thank you everyone for your continued support of TSSC! I look forward to seeing you all at the coming events!

Sincerely,
Madame President

Denise
Scuba Sports Club President

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Photo courtesy Brian Rice



TSSC CLUB OFFICERS and DIRECTORS 2018

(We always welcome our Club membership to join our leadership

President	Denise Blais
Vice President	Jack Ricotta
Secretary	Michelle Memoli
Membership	Al Miller
Dive Planning	Jack Ricotta
Treasurer	Sheri Buchman
Program Director	Allan Rios
Director at Large	Gene Miceli
Executive Director	Kenneth Salstrom
Past President	Tom Butcher
Newsletter	Gary Lehman
Environment and Legislative	Judy Dronzek
Safety	Nick Lappano
Social Director	Melissa Lonquich
Webmaster	Denise Blais
Legal Advisor	Robert Schrager
Founder	Zig Zigahn
Co-Founder	Soliman Shenouda



Photo courtesy Brian Rice

Club Dive Trips, Deco Stops — Event Planning Calendar for 2018



What's on the radar, More to come!

(We love to hear new ideas!)

Event	Club Contact	Date
47th Annual Wappinger Creek Water Derby	Bob Bak https://www.thescubasportsclub.org/events/aquatic-explorers-canoe-race/	April 28
Bonaire Dive Club Trip	Jack Ricotta	April 28—May 5
Captain Mike's Beach Cleanup	TSSC Directors	May 20
Memorial Weekend BBQ/Dive	TSSC Directors	May 27
Club Dive: Tubbataha Philippines	Jack Ricotta	June 7-18
Club Dive: San Salvador, Bahamas	Jack Ricotta	August 4-11
Annual Seal Dive in Gloucester, MA	Jack Ricotta	September 15, 16
Rescue Diver Refresh at ScubaNY	Melissa Lonquich	September 22
Grenada	Jack Ricotta	October 4-8
Deco Stop Ocean Wonders: Sharks!	Melissa Lonquich	October 27
Explorers Club Sea Stories	Gary Lehman	November 10
Holiday Party	Melissa Lonquich	December 15
NYC Christmas Tree / Lights / Store Fronts and Dinner !	TBD	TBD





The Scuba Sports Club Safety Series

Please be sure to join the Club General Meetings to take advantage of the Safety Series presentations, which will be given by our Club's Directors/Officers. Keeping safe practices in mind, and mentally practicing and pre-visualizing situations - can be crucially important to assuring safe diving always. This is especially the case when multiple circumstances suddenly present at the same time, creating potentially dangerous and adverse situations. Correct and automatic responses are a function of awareness, anticipation, training, practice, and forthright actions. Our reasoning and anticipation are our very best defense!

MONTH

TOPIC

PRESENTER

MONTH	TOPIC	PRESENTER
March 14	Knives and Cutting Tools Review	Tom Butcher
April 11	Service that Regulator !	Gene Miceli
May 9	Buddy System, Techniques and Tools	Michelle Memoli
June 13	Garments Overview (wetsuits, gloves, boots, hood)	Mikhayl Abrahams
July 11	Dive Computer Primer	Nick Lappano
August 8	Knowing Your Gear – Practice, Practice, Practice!	Nick Lappano
September 12	Zika Update and Tropical Diseases Update for Divers	Gary Lehman
October 10	Optimizing Air Consumption - Tips and Techniques	Kenny Salstrom
November 14	Diving Within Your Limits	Jack Ricotta



Scuba Sports Club Member In The Spotlight...

Melissa Lonquich Gets On The Scoreboard !



Dive Hoods Off to Melissa, and we couldn't have said it any better ourselves! Melissa is a leadership member here at The Scuba Sports Club, our Social Director and instrumental in the vitality of our Club. Melissa is a candidate for Divemaster, and as such has the responsibility for teaching and training new divers in the ways and means of diving. What a wonderful shout out in the letter attached below, written about Melissa's attentive, nurturing instruction by one of her new students. We here at the Scuba Sports Club wish the student, "T.B." all the best in his diving career, and we salute Melissa for the great work she is doing to support and advance scuba diving, bringing aboard one admiration-filled diver at a time !

Dear PADI,

I just wanted to take a moment to tell you about the wonderful people I have met, and the rewarding experience that I've had at Scuba New York in Yonkers. After experiencing my first dives through the Discovery Scuba program with the St. Thomas Dive Club (who are also wonderful people, and offer a great first experience), I knew that I'd want to continue onward, earning my open water certification.

Scuba N.Y. was recommended to me by a few close friends. So, I called up. The first person I spoke to was Rob, the owner. I found him to be very professional, knowledgeable, and patient. As I had a lot of questions. Particularly about my health. I have a serious ongoing issue, that is being dealt with. I was concerned that it would cut my lessons short. It did. Rob immediately reassured me that my money and effort would not be wasted. He allowed me to re-do, and continue my lessons when I was able. Since my lessons were interrupted, I had the pleasurable experience of being taught by three different instructors. Emelio, who is the chilliest man alive, and can make anyone feel relaxed in the water. Brian Rice, the man! He will make sure you know what you're doing, and is also a great photographer. Lastly, there's Bob. Bob is one of those teachers you have in high school that you will always remember. He'll make you laugh. He's patient. However, you have to earn his signature. Each, of course, had their own teaching style, but all were extremely professional. They made sure we all had the skills we needed to safely move on to the next step. They created a fun and safe environment, while individualizing their instruction to fit their students needs. I have been a teacher for twenty two years. They are excellent at what they do.

While I came and went, meeting and working with the various instructors/divemasters, one person was almost always present. She was an important person that truly helped me to: feel comfortable in the water, learn the necessary skills, monitor my health issue, be confident, and feel like part of the Scuba N.Y. family. She is divemaster candidate Melissa Lonquich. Mel was with me from beginning to end: in the pool, the classroom, and my open water dives. She's very proficient, a highly effective teacher, very friendly, and full of interesting stories about her life and diving experiences. Both, in and out of a shark tank. Her personal strength and optimism are contagious. She really makes you feel like there's nothing that you can't do. After finishing my last open water dive at Dutch Springs Pa., I was very excited to have Mel take me on my first dive as a newly certified diver. We were both full of smiles, and couldn't wait to get back in the water. I knew immediately, that I will continue my diving education with Brian, and Mel. I'm sure that one day I will enjoy a vacation, diving with them, and the rest of the Scuba N.Y. family. They are great people, with whom, to enjoy the underwater world and its inhabitants.

Sincerely,
T. B.



Diving Ustica, on Northwest Coast of Sicily !

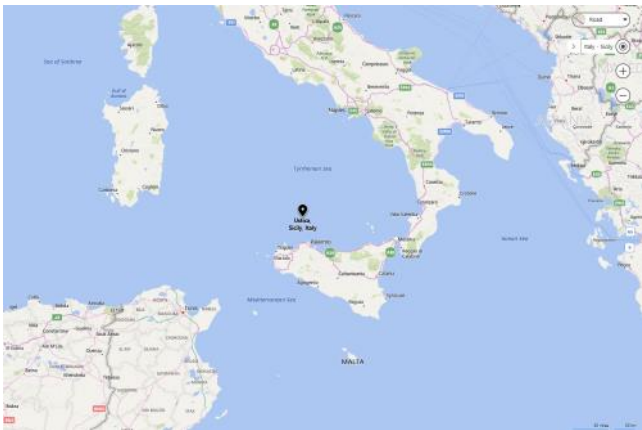


Michael Dino Ferrari

My girlfriend Olga and I enjoyed a fabulous dive vacation on Ustica from June 18 - June 25, 2018. Ustica is a picturesque island off the northwestern coast of Sicily (north of Palermo). The waters are protected and pristine with an abundance of sea life, complemented by the gentle Mediterranean waters with astounding visibility - *Mare Nostrum*, the Roman name for the Mediterranean. Technically, the island is located in the Tyrrhenian Sea, which is the body of water between Sardinia (to the west), Naples (to the east), and Sicily (to the south). The island has about 2,000 year-round residents. There is a car ferry from the Sicilian city of Palermo which takes about 45 minutes.

Our itinerary was flight from JFK to Naples..ferry from Naples to Palermo (overnight cabin) then hydrofoil from Palermo to Ustica. Those of us who have family in Italy certainly can easily enhance the vacation with family get-togethers. In our case, while in Naples I visited with my daughter, and participated in my granddaughter's baptism; and in Puglia I participated in my son's wedding in Brindisi! I have enjoyed diving here so much that this was my fourth trip back!

Here is the geographic layout:



100' visibility, how does that grab you! Worked for us! The food at our hotel was always outstanding, and of course the fish and seafood was delectable. We were less than two miles from the main square on the island, so our apres-dive activities and strolling around town was magic.

And the wines! And pastas! The pasta with tuna and capers was truly supreme; all produce, fish and meats utterly fresh. To which we say...

“Mangiarberebeneinsieme” (Dine&WineWellTogether!)



Diving Ustica, on Northwest Coast of Sicily !



Our resort apartment where we stayed had a terrace, little kitchen, private bathroom, air conditioning (not that we needed it) and had lovely local appointments from the ancient and historic countryside. And lots of fun neighbors with whom we could share our adventures from the day! These included use of scooters and bicycles to explore the island, which is a great additional activity on the island. One can go trekking, caving, and explore the local historic sites on this ancient island.

And of course, diving! Dives are in the morning from 9.00am to 12.30pm and in the afternoon from 3.00pm to 6.30pm 7 days a week from Easter to October. Night dives are also available. The 40' dive boat was purpose-built with a big dive deck close to the surface of the water and big easy-to-use ladders. Hot and cold freshwater showers welcome you aboard. There is a deco bar 3.5 meters (around 15') down with four regulators so you can hand at your safety stop in comfort. The diving is spectacular, supported by a PADI-certified dive center staff. Training at all levels is available through divemaster. We are diving in a protected marine-reserve of unusual biodiversity in these pristine waters. Several of the dive staff members are also informal naturalists and with some formal marine biology training. This informs the pre-dive briefings and enhances the diving greatly. Language spoken is nominally English with German, Flemish, French and of course Italian also spoken by guests and staff. Every dive was a guided dive with two divemasters. The dive briefings were in English. We had Belgians, Italians, Americans, French, German and Norwegian divers, and English was the common language spoken by all.

By far the best dive was at Scoglio del Medico - beautiful coral formations, schools of jack fish and barracuda. Visibility was 100 ft!

It is our hope to return to Ustica and hope that we can dive and share these magnificent waters with our good friends from The Scuba Sports Club!

Va Bene!?!? Sounds good to us, too !!!!!!!!!!!!!



Diving Ustica, on Northwest Coast of Sicily !



Photos courtesy Profundo Blu Resorts



Galapagos & Machu Picchu Joe Rinaldi

Photos courtesy Brian Rice



Last June I had the opportunity to visit one of my “Bucket List” dive destinations when SCUBA NY ran a trip to the Galapagos Islands. As a bonus SCUBA NY offered an additional side trip to Machu Picchu! Both trips were led by my good friend Brian Rice, who went out of his way to address every small detail to make this a truly memorable trip for everyone.

After an overnight flight from JFK to Guayaquil, Ecuador, Brian lead us on an impromptu tour of the some of the more historic sections of Guayaquil, which is the largest city in Equador and has quite a bit of history of its own. The next morning, we took a short flight to the Galapagos Islands where we were greeted warmly by Nelson, our Aggressor fleet staff guide, who made sure that everyone in our group (and our gear) was safely transported to the boat that would be our home for the next week.

Once on board, Nelson took the time to familiarize everyone with the amenities the boat had to offer and to find out from each member on the trip what they were most interested in seeing. Over the next week we were had the opportunity to make twenty (20) dives over some of the most interesting landscape in the world.

Aside from our initial check out dive, all the diving was made from “Panges” (Zodiac style inflatable boats). The reason for the Panges, was to be able to get the divers as close as possible to where the best diving locations were and to maneuver around the strong currents that circle the islands.

I had heard for years about the strong Galapagos currents, and the currents were every bit as challenging as I had been lead to believe. However, during his dive briefings Nelson would tell us the easiest way to overcome what I had been so concerned about. The technique was usually to descend quickly and find a vantage point in the rocks (there is almost no coral in the Galapagos islands) that is protected by the current. Then you sit and wait for the sea life show to begin. And what a show it turned out to be!

We were treated to schools of Hammerhead sharks too large to count. There were also white tipped reef sharks and moray ells and turtles everywhere you looked. I was reminded of the three-ringed circus that my parents took me to as a child as there was something fascinating going on all around you! And if that wasn't enough, we had playful sealions darting around us during our safety stops on almost every dive!

While there was something to thrill every diver on this trip, the high point for me was when we were treated to a visit from a couple of Whale sharks! Those giant gentle creatures seemed to not mind the paparazzi treatment from every diver on the trip who wanted to snap a picture of these majestic animals.



Galapagos & Machu Picchu Joe Rinaldi

Photos courtesy Brian Rice



Given the unique location of the Galapagos Islands, the air temperature in June was warm during the day, but cool at night. The water temperature varied from the mid 70's to the upper 60's depending on which of the islands we were diving at. The crew made everyone comfortable by having warm towels waiting after every dive along with hot coffee, tea or hot chocolate. I should also point out that the Aggressor crew worked very hard to ensure the comfort and safety of every diver. The crew would be quick to accommodate a side trip after the divers were picked up to get a closer view of some of the unique sea or bird life that happened to be nearby.

After our week-long dive trip, we flew back to Guayaquil, where our group celebrated for one night before about half went back home and the other half went on to visit Machu Picchu. The second half of the trip, while not including any diving, was still very interesting. We flew into Cusco, Peru which is a city around 11,000 feet high. The effect of the "thin air" made itself know to me quite quickly when I began to feel dizzy just going up a short flight of stairs. However, being curious we all chose to explore this ancient city rather than rest at our hotel.

Cusco was the originally capitol of the Inca empire. After the Spaniards came, they built over the Inca's structures, and the city has a unique blend of South American and Spanish accents. The cuisine is very different from what I am used to, and during our brief stay we were treated to such staples as alpaca, guinea pig and yucca balls. One member of our group even found the only micro-brewery in the city (which was much better than I expected).

The next morning, we boarded a train to Machu Picchu, which is fortunately a couple of thousand feet lower in altitude than Cusco. That lower elevation made walking around Machu Picchu much easier. And walk is what you do in Machu Picchu! While the architecture and building techniques are truly impressive, the only way to see it is to walk up and down thousands of steps.

Machu Picchu is after all located on a mountain, so to get the most use of the land the builders did a lot of terracing the landscape. Which makes for a lot of steps! But to be honest, all the walking is worth it to see the impressive building techniques the Incas employed. The Incas did not have access to steel tools, so every stone was shaped by hand with a soft metal chisel. Nevertheless, some of the stones were so well fitted that you could not get a sheet of paper between the joints.

As if the masonry work was not impressive enough, the alignment of the buildings clearly showed that the builders had a very advanced understanding of the movement of the sun and the stars as the windows and sight lines were arranged to have optimal views of the equinoxes and solstices.



Galapagos & Machu Picchu Joe Rinaldi

Photos courtesy Brian Rice



After two days of exploring the wonders of Machu Picchu, our group returned to Cusco, to spend more time exploring that fascinating city. By this time, we were more acclimated to the higher altitude, so we were able to handle our walking tour which included the unique churches, temples and forts around this fascinating city.

To be honest, the short time that I spent in Machu Picchu & Cusco was not nearly enough to fully explore either location. However, I am nevertheless thankful for the time that I did get to spend in these truly unique locations. I would also wholeheartedly recommend the Galapagos Islands to any diver who has a desire to see vast schools of sharks, marine iguanas and friendly sea lions. I am also grateful to Scuba NY for setting up this amazing trip, and to Brian Rice for his tireless efforts to make this journey special for everyone involved.



Horses, Frogs and Ostracods

Amanda Slattery



Sitting on my balcony in the afternoon sunshine with gentle waves lapping at the coral shoreline below I am reflecting on my week at the Divi Bonaire. Diving was intensive and the dive setup was convenient. Air and Nitrox tanks were available 24/7 at the end of the dive pier. Pressure gauge, enriched air analyzer, mask defogger, spare O-rings and weights were always available. Large freshwater rinse tanks stood ready for salty gear, with specially marked tanks for cameras. Lockers had been pre-assigned and we quickly chose our weights before the dive shop closed. The first order of business was a general briefing by Dive Shop Manager Serge within minutes of our arrival at the hotel and Nick immediately organized the five of us into a checkout dive. We were ready to hit the ground running on our first morning.

Three boat dives per day had been arranged and Al had skillfully negotiated a deal which included breakfast and lunch. The daily routine was two morning boat dives, lunch, afternoon boat dive and, for some, a night dive. So four dives per day was the norm. Nick routinely managed five. Sightings usually included Tarpon, Turtles, Sharptail, Green and Spotted Moray Eels and one Chain Moray. Trumpetfish and French Angelfish were ubiquitous and on one dive we saw a Frogfish and two Seahorses. Al was on an Octopus quest, which was often successful.

The writer enjoyed her first “real” night dive at 9pm and put others’ Rescue Diver skills into action by making a giant stride off the end of the dive pier with inflator and high pressure hoses tangled. Haste makes waste.

The highlight of the week was the appearance of a phenomenon unique to Bonaire. Four nights after a full moon tiny seed shrimp perform a mating ritual forty minutes after sunset, in which they pulsate with blue bioluminescence for about half an hour. On the appointed night, intrepid Nick led a party of explorers, entering the water at sunset, to a sandy patch by a large anchor at a depth of 30ft. Comfortably seated, with lights extinguished, we waited. Right on cue, with Tarpon circling above, these Ostracods performed their other-worldly blue dance. We were spellbound. What a privilege to have witnessed such a display. This trip to Bonaire will remain in memory for a lifetime.





**Lionel Barrymore, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Edward G. Robinson, Claire Trevor, Al Miller and the Rest of the TSSC TEAM —
HEADED FOR KEY LARGO !!!!!**



Al Miller

Our scuba diving trip to Key Largo began on Thursday morning as we arrived at Westchester County Airport. While going through TSA security with Gene Miceli, Nick Lappano, Ed Van Dolson and myself, we ran into one of TSSC's newest members, Kevin Cushing, flying off to Chicago on a business trip. I do believe that Kevin would have preferred skipping O'Hare for a flight to Ft Lauderdale with the eventual destination of the Keys..

Once crossing onto Key Largo, we made our customary stop for lunch and refreshments at Jimmy Johnson's "Big Chill". We celebrated our arrival with a toast to the extended weekend of diving with Rainbow Reef Dive Center.

Rainbow Reef had handled our diving and hotel reservations with the Holiday Inn. By the way, we learned that Rainbow Reef had recently purchased Ocean Divers, another familiar dive operation.

Friday morning began with breakfast across the four lane Overseas Highway at Doc's Diner. Upon checking in at the dive shop, we were given a wrist band for Nitrox and another to indicate which vessel we would be on. Once underway aboard the Tropical Odyssey, we listened to a briefing and were told that our first dive would be on the Duane, a former US Coast Guard cutter.

It was a magnificent morning with the sea extremely calm. On previous attempts that I had been on to dive the Duane, the current was always too swift making the dive impossible and leaving me disappointed — but not today. The ocean was a beautiful blue and the descent on the mooring line was slow and deliberate. All of a sudden, the Duane appeared. It was an impressive sight that we dove on for roughly 20 minutes or so at 100 ft. After our exploration of the ship, we began a slow ascent back up the mooring line. Having broken a tooth a day before which resulted in an emergency root canal, I was warned by the endodontist that the pressure on ascent might cause discomfort. It did, but not enough to dampen my enthusiasm. The remaining three dives of the day were shallow reef dives.

Saturday morning began the same way, the difference being that the Spiegel Grove, a 510 foot US Navy landing dock vessel, was our first dive destination of the day. Lady Luck held as the current was not a factor. The usual barracuda stood guard along with other species calling the wreck home. Our small group was complimented after the dive by our instructor/guide for giving him the ability to spend more time on this dive than normal. A shallow reef dive followed but we took the afternoon off in preparation for a Saturday "Night Dive".



**Lionel Barrymore, Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, Edward G. Robinson, Claire Trevor, Al Miller and the Rest of the TSSC TEAM —
HEADED FOR KEY LARGO !!!!!**



Al Miller

The night dive for me was uneventful. While others did see octopus and a reef shark, I was blessed with more lobster than I had ever seen on a dive.

After our usual Doc's breakfast on Sunday morning, we listened to the same briefing aboard the Odyssey that we had heard so often before. Oddly enough, the seas remained dead calm for the third straight day as we made our way to the Duane once again. On this dive, we finally observed a nurse shark, green moray and a Goliath grouper.

The remaining dives on Sunday were all shallow reef dives. Although a Goliath grouper of several hundred pounds crept up on my left shoulder and startled me, what was noticeably different from previous trips to Key Largo was the lack of reef life. A possible theory was that sand displaced onto the reef last year by Hurricane Irma covered the coral and moved the fish from their normal surroundings.

Rainbow Reef had a new gimmick (at least for me). The wristbands given before each trip could be taken to their retail store for a spin of the wheel and a possible prize. I won't mention any names but, after suggesting that we go to the store and receiving grief about it from one individual, he spun the wheel and won a free trip valued at around \$80. The rest of us received a hug from the male store clerk.

The last morning began again with a Doc's breakfast. In an effort to avoid being run over with commuter traffic, I sprinted (yes sprinted) across Overseas Highway and leapt over a sizeable puddle in front of the diner. As I waited for my dive buddies to cross, I could see that they were hysterically laughing at me. What made matters worse, the waitress witnessed my athletic ability and re-enacted it in full splendor to the amusement of all in the diner.

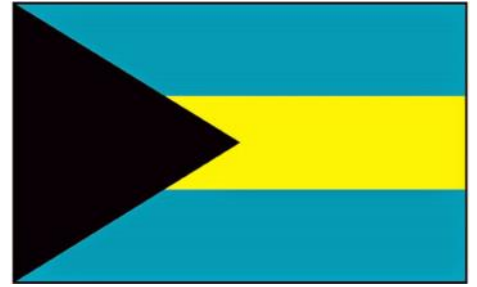
After picking up souvenirs for the family, we made our way back to Fort Lauderdale. We took a tour of the area, had lunch, and arrived back at the airport for our flight back home. As we sat waiting to board the aircraft, my three friends began shining their dive lights on the ceiling to compare beam brightness. When asked if I wanted in, I chuckled at the clowns sitting across from me. Meanwhile, the guy sitting next to me was a diver and said he understood. Of course, I tried to sign him up as a TSSC member but, he explained that heart issues kept him from diving now. He asked if we were on his flight and to make a long story short, I did not recognize him nor him me. Nearly thirty five years passed since I served with him on the Harrison, NY PD where he later became the chief-of-police.

I know that I am already looking forward to my next dive trip to the Keys and hope that the recovery of the area continues both above and below the water for all of us.



San Salvador, Bahamas Trip

Denise Blais



When you hear the words San Salvador you probably think immediately of the city of San Salvador, El Salvador in Central America. But the Bahamas has a small island called San Salvador and that's where TSSC was headed.

This trip started early for those folks flying out of JFK. Our flight was scheduled for 6:30 am. So that meant we had to be up around 2:00 am to get ourselves together, park our car and go through the check-in process. Being that we had a connecting flight in Miami we were all hoping we could check our bags all the way through. However, when we arrived the only way to check in was through the automated kiosks which only allowed us to check in to Miami. The American Airlines folks that were manning the kiosks couldn't really answer our question about our luggage and referred us to another check-in line that was a mile long. Ok I'm exaggerating! But everyone felt it wasn't worth our time waiting in line to probably be told it wasn't possible as each leg of our flight was a separate reservation. So off to the security check in line we went! At least for most of us.

While waiting at the gate to board the flight we noticed that three people hadn't shown up yet. Come to find out Colleen (sorry to call you out Colleen but it's too funny not to share!) set her alarm for 2:00 pm instead of 2:00 am and had just woken up. There was no way she was going to make it to the airport in time to take the same flight. So she started looking into other flights right away. In the end, unfortunately she wasn't able to make it work and couldn't meet up with us. Sorry we missed you Colleen!! From now on we will make note to give you a proper wake-up call! Good news is you might have guaranteed a top spot on the Friggin Ziggan Award list for this year!

Our flight to Miami went off without a hitch. Once we arrived in Miami we had to get our bags and recheck in all over again. Even paying another \$25 bag fee! Luckily we had plenty of time to get us to our next gate. We met up with Michelle and Mikayl Memoli and Steve Reichenbach in the American Express lounge where we were able to eat some snacks and catch a quick drink. At the gate we met up with Craig Speranzi and Wendy Hickman. We had met Craig and Wendy on the Cuba trip that TSSC took a couple years ago. We stayed in touch and they have since become members of TSSC to enjoy in many future trips (lol, we hope we haven't scared them off just yet!).

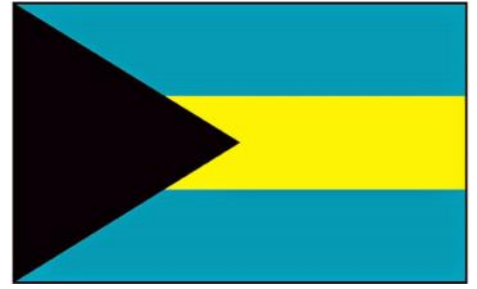
When you arrive in San Salvador there isn't much for an airport. You walk down the stairs of the airplane and walk across the tarmac to a tiny building where you go through "Customs". They check your passport and just ask you what's in your bags. Our hotel greeted us at the airport with a punch drink where we all piled into various combinations of cars to drive us two minutes to the hotel. We probably could have walked to the hotel from the airport.

The only two hotels on the island are Riding Rock where we stayed and Club Med which was right next door to us. The staff was well organized and the check in process was pretty simple. They brought our bags to our rooms and it was time for lunch! It turned out that Lada and Judy had been at the airport in JFK but missed our flight by just a couple minutes. So they didn't arrive until the next day. Unfortunately, without their luggage! But they were good sports about it. Much better than I would have been! The dive shop outfitted them with some rental gear so they wouldn't miss out on the fun! Lada got his suitcase a day or so later. Judy didn't get her bag until two weeks after we returned from the trip!! Can you believe it!! That's American for you!



San Salvador, Bahamas Trip

Denise Blais



The weather while we were there was absolutely beautiful every single day! The water was warm and the seas were calm. Making it very easy diving. The Dive Shop employees are actually all from Michigan who have worked with Riding Rock to get the shop and boats up to US standards. They had flown in just to take care of our group and another group from VA. We were the last group for the season. They don't have tourists all year long. That's kind of how remote San Salvador is. The set up on the boat was simple. Once you had a spot, that's where you stayed all week. They would fill the tanks via a hookah system every lunch and evening. So there was no unloading and loading of new tanks every time. The dive shop was very organized in how they got everyone there weights, giving us instructions on how the boat is run and how the week was going to play out. The only thing we really had to do was enjoy the week!

The food at Riding Rock was delicious! Everyone who was staying at the resort ate at the same time. Buffet style for breakfast and lunch and served our food for dinner. In the morning you would select from two options for lunch and dinner. Everything was homemade! The bread and desserts were delicious!

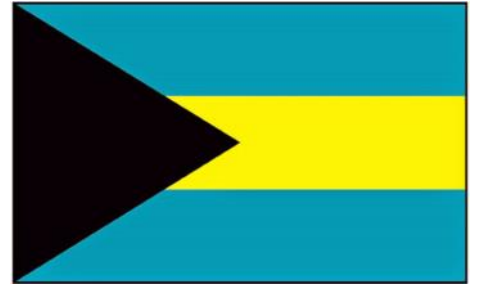
As far as the sea life in San Salvador, we saw sharks on every dive. So if you like sharks (who doesn't?! Stupid question!) San Salvador is the place to go! One of the days we were all lucky enough to come across 4 Hammer Head sharks. I screamed through my regulator when I saw that they weren't just average sharks we had seen up to that point. Another bucket list item to check off for most! It was great! They stuck around for 5-10 minutes checking out those that were deep enough to get up close to them. What an experience! I will forever remember San Salvador for this special moment. As far as smaller sea life, I'm not going to lie, there wasn't a lot. We did see a turtle and some rays. During a night dive we saw a baby nurse shark and a pretty big lobster right out in the open. Which was odd because we didn't really see any throughout the daytime. The coral was beautiful! Huge sponges that take years to get to that size. No wrecks to discover, but lots of wall diving to be had.

There's not much to do on San Salvador. But one of the nights the staff put together a karaoke night. I think people could hear us from all sides of the island. Let's just say none of us should quit our day jobs to go on tour! But it was fun none the less! evident on everyone there until a few days into the trip. I'm not sure how much bug spray really even helped. But most of us were wiped out from diving and were in bed pretty early every night. Ok maybe I'm speaking for just myself!



San Salvador, Bahamas Trip

Denise Blais



Oh did I mention you didn't really want to be outside past dusk or early morning as the no-see-ums were brutal. They are named so appropriately because you would feel them biting you with no prior awareness. It seemed like the welts didn't become evident on everyone there until a few days into the trip. I'm not sure how much bug spray really even helped. But most of us were wiped out from diving and were in bed pretty early every night. Ok maybe I'm speaking for just myself!

As the week came to a close it was sad to think about going back home. Prior to leaving we had quite a stretch of rainy weather and we learned we would be going back to less than perfect weather again. On the last day a few of us rented a car and David Henry drove us around the island. They drive on the wrong side of the road there. I don't think the island even had 1 traffic light. Kind of a nice change to rush hour traffic experienced in the states every night. The most well-known and advertised spot on the island was a white cross noting where Christopher Columbus was said to have landed first on his expedition to the new world. Another was a lighthouse that you could climb up to get a good view of the island. Other than that our tour around the island was coming across multiple buildings that must have once been some families pride and joy. But was since destroyed probably from years of tropical storms that have passed over the island. I believe they said only around 1000 people live on the island. Most of which work at Club Med.

Our travel day home was quite an experience. We had to take a bus to Club Med to check in for our flight. Apparently because the airport is not yet equipped with baggage scanning devices and normal weight scales etc. Consistent access to the internet proved to be the biggest challenge for them in order to check us in. First they were a few people short that morning. Then the two stations that were open were both competing for the Wi-Fi and baggage tag machine to print out our tags. It felt like eternity standing there in the heat with our "going home" clothes never seeming to move forward in the never ending check in line. At one point they had to reboot the computer system which didn't go over well with all those still patiently waiting to check in.

Once we checked in we took the bus back to Riding Rock for lunch. Then off to the airport which appeared to be more of the same endless waiting to get through security. Our flight took off on time and was only about an hour or so long. Or so we thought! Apparently, some thunderstorms were going through Miami at the time of our arrival and the airport kept closing and opening. So we had to circle until they reopened. And of course when it reopened every other flight was also arriving. We had limited time to get through customs and recheck in for our next leg of our trip. Luckily our next flight was also delayed so it all worked out.

Once we boarded the flight to JFK they seemed to have some issue getting a closing count report which required us to spend the next 2-3 hours sitting on the tarmac waiting. We were supposed to arrive in JFK at around 9pm. But didn't get back to JFK until 2:00am in the morning. Which of course began our next journey home.



San Salvador, Bahamas Trip

Denise Blais



We had parked at a new parking place because the Parking Spot is no longer available at JFK. So we followed a similar process of gathering our bags and then calling the service to send the van to come pick us up. When we called they kept hanging up or not getting through to them. Which you can image at 2am in the morning is not the time to playing that game. Finally, we got a hold of them and they directed us where to wait for the van. So we waited and we waited and we waited for over a half hour and still no van. At this point there was not a soul left at our terminal. We decided to take a cab to the parking place to claim our car. They said they had been overwhelmed with the flights coming in and refunded our cab fare. Now the drive home.

I think the only thing all of us were running on at the point was the adrenaline from having such a hellish journey home and just wanting to get home. Finally, at around 4 am that dream became a reality.

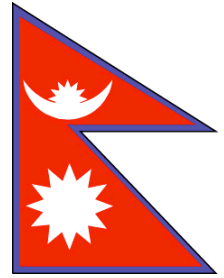
Despite the challenges with flights, airports, parking and internet connections overall it was a great trip! I hope I can speak for all that went that we had a great time, enjoyed some great food and a beverage or two and got to know each other a little better!



TSSC Fights Cancer — Mt. Everest Base Camp Trek !



Gary Lehman



From June 1 to June 22 I traveled to the capital city of Kathmandu in Nepal, then to the mountain town of Lukla with two friends with the objective of climbing to Mt. Everest Base Camp. The trip was a long dream of mine. It was formed the basis of a fund-raising effort to fight cancer under the auspices of an organization with which I have been associated since 2002. One of my friends with whom I climbed (Dave) is an individual whom I know professionally (Dave is not known to the Club) – but my other friend is well-known to many members of our Club, Parag Joshi -- who has joined Jody Deevy and our Club on many dive trips. Parag is respected and admired for his good cheer, common sense, supreme photography (really off the charts and of scientific importance in his documenting via photography of rare and endangered birdlife in his home country of India). Parag lives in Gujarat, India and joined Dave and I in Kathmandu.

I am deeply grateful to our Club for having donated the proceeds of our Club's May 50/50 raffle. And equally to our own Al Miller, who donated his winning portion of the 50/50. In return for the Club's support, it was my very great pleasure to bring with me The Scuba Sports Club banner, and to proudly hoist it at Mt. Everest Base Camp with our friend Parag. Similarly, we hoisted the Swim Across America/Making Waves to Fight Cancer banner at EBC. Photos appear below. Proceeds went to Memorial Sloan Kettering, MD Anderson Children's Cancer Center, Northwell Cancer Research, and Cold Spring Harbor laboratories for cancer research. These are some of the most highly respected treatment and research organizations in the world of cancer fighting! My climb was dedicated to my older sister Judy, who taught me to swim in 1963 when I was seven years old, and who concluded her battle with pancreatic cancer in 2009 following a nine-month battle.

Dave and I flew into Kathmandu in Nepal and spent a few days touring the historical and cultural sights there, as well as meandering through the maze of warrens in the ragtag, bohemian, fun and colorful Thamel District. We then flew from "Kat" to the foothills of the Himalayas to the town of Lukla, whose airport is known as one of the (if not THE) most dangerous airports in the world. The runway is only 66' wide and 1,000' long, and it is built on a hill. So, aircraft landing will land uphill (which helps slow them down) and will takeoff racing downhill (which of course helps them gain air-speed quickly so that they are able to remain aloft once the runway disappears out from underneath the aircraft with a 1,000 meter drop-off! Quite thrilling – both the landing and takeoff!





TSSC Fights Cancer—Mt. Everest Base Camp Trek ! Gary Lehman



We trekked 40 miles northeast out (and 40 miles back) over (and down and up and down and up, mostly up! And then on return, mostly down) hill and dale for nine days with two full days as rest stops. As we ascended from 9,000' to 18,000' the vegetation thinned in direct proportion to the air thinning.

As divers, we know that at sea level the air we breath is about 28% oxygen. Well, that percentage remains the same at 18,000' however the air density is 50% at that altitude which means that each breath takes in only

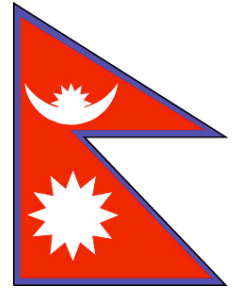


14% oxygen. This can cause problems such as high-altitude pulmonary edema, in which the lungs fill up with fluid. There are medications such as Diamox which alleviate to considerable extent this fluid buildup by forcing increased urination. I was on Diamox, as was Parag. Dave eschewed its use, and did fine; he is in superb condition and wanted to test his limits. (This is actually a pointless endeavor, because there are actually no limits to Dave's mountaineering prowess).

We camped at 18,000' on the ninth and last night before descending 500' to Everest Base Camp. The climbing season had concluded four weeks earlier and the tent city was gone, along with all the prospective summitteers and climbers. All the ladders through the notorious Khumbu Ice Falls had been removed by the Sherpa teams. Only a few trekkers were in evidence and actually, at the early hour that we were there, we were the ONLY humans in sight. Occasionally dogs from the local high-altitude settlement of Gorak Shep would hang out to keep us company (and hope for a treat, which were of course forthcoming from yours truly); and occasional ravens which were no doubt intent on exactly the same thing.

I went for an EKG and stress test before finalizing my plans for this trek. I wanted to make sure there were no structural defects or other issues which might arise en route. Being at 18,000' is a bad place for bad things to suddenly happen. I checked out fine. This is a trek on a trail, with no helmets, spikey things on boots, or ice axes. This was obviously an involved cardiovascular endeavor for which either considerable cardio training or a committed athletic lifestyle is prerequisite. I was wearing a Polar heartbeat monitor and was carefully watching the beats/minute so as to not redline too hard and too long for my six-decade old ticker. When things got really tough up particularly steep sections, I just slowed down. My teammates were in better baseline condition, younger, and had been training more – so we just kept in touch via walkie-talkie, which fortunately worked as advertised and which had a surprisingly long range in this mountainous region. The local Nepalese military took an interest actually in our walkie-talkies and at first wanted to confiscate them, but decided upon further inspection that we were rather clearly not a particularly viable national security threat. They wished us well on our journey.

TSSC Fights Cancer —Mt. Everest Base Camp Trek ! Gary Lehman



Many of us have seen films of the Himalayan region, and have seen videos of the suspension bridges which ease the travel from ridge to ridge, crossing over raging streams and rivers which are delivering water to the great rivers of India to the south. Those bridges seem in the photos daunting, and in the event, they are. I did videotape and photograph them, however my courage would flag on occasion and I would expeditiously complete my traverse of the bridge to get the heck off it! Some of the yaks which are used for animal transport are only semi-domesticated and can be ill-tempered at times. So..... with these bridges, interesting situations can develop when ill-tempered yaks on supply trains are headed towards you – on the very same narrow bridge....But with the help of our guides and porters, we made it through these and all other adversities!

We were so happy to fulfill our long-held dream of going to Mt. Everest Base Camp, completing our trek successfully; and we were so grateful to the Club and Club member Al Miller for the support they offered to fight cancer from the 50/50 -- and similarly to all the Club members who so generously individually contributed; and members of the dive community, our work friends, neighbors, families, and our personal friends who reached deep to support the fight against cancer and become virtual teammates. Similarly, we were so pleased to help out in a small way the Nepali economy and our porter friends who helped us achieve our dreams. Nepal suffered a devastating earthquake in 2015 and is still early in the recovery phase following the abject devastation all over the country, and particularly in the homeland of the venerable Gurkhas in north central Nepal. It is a fascinating country with a spellbinding culture and history and a trip there will be an unforgettable experience! Please reach out to me at gary.a.lehman@gmail.com for any detailed feedback on the trek if you are interested, and I will share any and all observations and recommendations (which for brevity's sake I am excluding from this article).

Photos can be viewed online at: <https://www.imageshappen.com/p497416592>







Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

Avian flu! Zika! Ebola! Dengue Fever! Yellow Fever! Cholera! Bubonic Plague! Food-borne illnesses! We haven't seen these or maybe not even heard of some of these... but they can be deadly. Can we travel anywhere safely for scuba diving? (One look at the following website is almost enough to change a dive vacation to a “staycation” - and remodel the kitchen instead! <https://www.aljazeera.com/topics/categories/health.html>)

So, can we travel to remote locations and dive our dream dive site? YES - of course we can, and we do. It is important however to take systematic and reasonable precautions, and ...to see a travel doctor well in advance of travel.

(This article was written after careful research at the websites listed below, and has been reviewed by two physicians for reasonableness. However, the author is not a physician, so that must be noted.)

This article is relevant for many scuba diving clubs - including The Scuba Sports Club of Westchester (www.thescubasportsclub.org) – because *we do so many international trips* thanks to our dive planning team which plans our trips so successfully, and makes them happen for us! Our club (and our members individually) have been diving at an impressive array of dive destinations. Some of these locations are domestic; some international; some are warm, blue water; and some are cold, green water. And some are right around our own area, such as Dutch Springs, Pennsylvania; wrecks on the bottom off the south shore of Long Island; and several emerging Long Island dive locations. Our Clubs trips and membership have not been impacted by tropical diseases – *but one of the points of this discussion is that there is always a first time, and it is well-advised to be prepared.*

In this article we will focus on diseases encountered during travel generally, and some tropical diseases in particular. A disease is a “condition specific to a location or a general illness that affect a body system(s)”. We will not be discussing diving injuries (such as decompression illness) or specific sea-life plant or marine animal threats for divers. Local operators in our remote dive destinations can *sometimes* be relied upon to give honest and open assessments about those, and that – *in combination with your own research and discussions with other divers who have been to these locations*, should suffice to alert you to those kinds of threats.



Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

Personal research into risk factors before traveling to remote locations such as Raja Ampat (Indonesia), the Andaman Islands (India), San Salvador (Bahamas), Galapagos (Ecuador), Tubataha (Philippines), Egypt's Red Sea and so many of the other fantastic dive destinations is an excellent idea.

But how to start preparing for safe international travel? How about start at the very beginning... This will include getting immunizations to protect us against rubella, measles, mumps, diphtheria, tetanus, and polio. These diseases may be thought to be retreating here in the US, but 1) globalization, human migration and international contacts via improved transportation will serve to cause these diseases to increase in frequency here in the US, and 2) remoter areas which are some of our exciting international diving locations might have a higher baseline incidence of these diseases.

Even if you think or know that you had your shots "...way back, whenever it was...", you may need to get a booster shot. After you get the required inoculations, it is advisable to bring a color copy of your World Health Organization-issued *International Certificate of Vaccination* which documents the immunizations you have received, and when/where you got them. When you get your vaccinations, you will be given the "Carte Jaune" or yellow card. This is essentially your vaccination passport. So keep it handy and safe! Health requirements to gain entry into the country at the airport can change from year to year, so it is a good idea to pay the extra fee to get your visa via the host country embassy (or service center) while still here in the US, and before you leave for your destination. The visa application process will spell out what health requirements are in effect at the time of your travel. If you don't take this precaution, you could conceivably show up at your destination, get in line intending to get your visa at the airport - and then wind up being sent right back to where you came from, because you don't have this or that shot. This can happen. Or, even worse -- you might get quarantined on the runway... <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/09/emirates-flight-quarantined-york-passengers-fall-ill-180905144736197.html> In addition, getting the visa beforehand eliminates the possibility that you will get stuck behind a 747 aircraft which just unloaded a whole big group of British or Canadian tourists who with some frequency travel in large groups! So, the best recommendation is to get the visa beforehand in order to avoid unpleasant surprises.

Travel to any developing country puts the spotlight on the advantages of a consultation with a travel doctor. Each trip location is likely to be different, and the activity range may be different, so each international trip warrants a separate visit to a travel doctor. There may be vaccinations recommended (or *required for entry to the country* at the airport) for your destination.



Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

Normally, travelers will face a spectrum of risk, for which an assessment is made by the travel doctor based on a number of factors. These include whether the travel destination has a higher risk than baseline (home country); length of time in destination country (the longer, the greater the risk); and whether risky geographic locations in the destination country will be visited (i.e. backcountry areas are generally riskier than popular, modern tourist all-inclusive resorts); and what the primary activity(s) will be. Personal medical history can also factor in to the travel doctor's recommendations, whether that involves (for example) the required use of a bronchial inhaler for asthma, or a prescription for an EpiPen for extreme allergies, or the use of other medications.

Your doctor can also provide you with a personalized list of medications and recommendations, for example topical steroids for sunburn or rashes. And recommendations will provide the common-sense stuff, such as use of either a UV-protected baseball cap with a protective neck flap to protect the top of the head and back of the neck from tropical sun, or just a wide-brimmed hat like the one worn by Indiana Jones! (From personal experience, the former is a better choice as it provides some protection for the back of the neck from wind and rain, which was my experience on the way to Mt. Everest Base Camp in June 2018.)

It is best to have the consultation 4-6 weeks before international travel, because sometimes there is a latency between start of medications and the beneficial effects of those meds; in addition, your physician may recommend that you start the meds and monitor your reaction(s) for any possible side effects; and the fact is that medications and vaccinations might simply not be in stock at your corner pharmacy and may be only available by special order. (Anti-malaria pills can have pronounced side effects for some individuals (and not-so-much for others), so it is best to understand what those are going to be and to get through those side effects before traveling internationally. This was my experience with other climbers before my trip to Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania).

Typically, the travel doctor will recommend/prescribe a range of medications, perhaps including some of the following:

- Tamiflu
- Imodium
- Zithromax
- Amoxicillin

These or other medications might be indicated based on individual health and medical circumstances and conditions.



Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

While seeing a travel doctor is most important, personal research is important as well, and this can include browsing websites such as the US State Department, Divers Alert Network, and the Center for Disease Control, World Health Organization, the International Society of Travel Medicine, and Shoreland/Travax (at www.TripPrep.com , which is what many travel doctors use as a reference...):

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>

<https://www.diversalertnetwork.org/medical/>

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/>

<http://www.who.int/>

<https://tripprep.com/destinations/>

<http://www.istm.org/>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/Search/?q=health>

<https://www.gapyear.com/destinations>

The State Department has a special informational section on Zika: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/your-health-abroad/zika-virus-information-for-travelers.html>

...and the Center for Disease Control also has a special section:

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

Keeping Safe: Reviewing some basics... following are not necessarily restricted to medical considerations... and this is of course *by no means* a complete list of precautions...

- Don't think bad things can't happen to YOU. They can, hopefully never will- but they might unexpectedly
- Use the United States State Department STEP program – Smart Traveler Enrollment Program... <https://step.state.gov/> to protect you while abroad
- Divers Alert Network. Mandatory. Enough said.

Divers Alert Network provides dive accident insurance. But you will also be *well advised* to get travel insurance also, either through DAN or thru the agency of your choice. The standard DAN dive accident plan will not protect you from financial loss in the event you fall ill or get injured while on a dive vacation if the incident or occurrence is due to non-diving circumstances. So, get travel insurance to protect yourself because many (perhaps most) insurance policies will protect you here in the USA, but that protection stops the minute you leave the country



Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

- *Strong recommendation* to make sure that there are no State Department travel advisories to the region you intend to travel to. The travel brochures and operators sometimes can't or won't be forthright about current things going on, whether it is natural or man-made or political or... whatever. So, check the State Department website just to be sure. <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>
- *Strong recommendation* to double check that your dive insurance will cover you for diving accidents in your travel destination country or region. It is a simple phone call to make to double check and potentially avoid financial catastrophe for your family
- While making that call, determine if your dive insurance is a primary insurance or secondary insurance (your primary insurance will be used first)
- Grim though the subject might be, repatriation of remains might be a sticky point. In at least one religion, cremation of the deceased is not permitted. If the insurer intends for their remains to be returned without cremation, this can create a very expensive outside-of-insured provision. Basically, the question is are "re"mains or "cre"mains repatriated under the provisions of the policy. Human bodies are considered a biohazard and very special (and expensive) circumstances and provisions are required to repatriate remains vs. cremains (remains which have been cremated). Therefore, if this is an issue, the question must be asked and the answer determined fully, and the policy specifically examined to verify/validate this provision meets expectations
- An overabundance of caution will direct that before you start diving, you confirm the location of the nearest appropriate medical facility and check out their website; standards of care, cleanliness, equipment, and physician/caregiver status can vary widely in the travel destination and may seem wholly inadequate compared to the travelers experiences. In some cases, physicians are providing their services at no charge (this was the case in Nepal) and these physicians were superlative, *but* the equipment was substandard and refrigeration was not always available for medications, presenting great challenges for advanced health care in the case of severe illness
- Make sure you have cell phone/internet service or *exactly where* it is available...this will help you keep in contact with family, friends, and medical resources which might be located across the country or several time zones away
- It is always advisable – whether traveling far and wide or staying close to home- that all divers should complete a CPR/First Aid/AED class or refresher to stay current every two years. Completing an Advanced Oxygen course is also highly recommended. This training can save the day at any time or at any location
- At the resort, always make note of your hotel fire escape route outside your hotel room, and hope you NEVER NEED IT



Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

- On the dive boat, *listen to the safety briefing* - and be aware of the muster station location and where the life vests are
- If you are at a resort and don't have confidence in the chlorination of the pool, don't go in unless necessary
- If there are stray dogs or cats, be extra careful to avoid their droppings. People do not knowingly seek out droppings, but sometimes they can be just beneath the surface of the sand, as was the case with dozens of stray dogs at the beach at Mirrisa, Sri Lanka. And avoid temptation to pet dogs as rabies is a risk as well as intestinal parasites
- Use flip flops or shoes like Crocs whenever possible, because walking barefoot introduces many significant and unnecessary risks
- If you are camping, you may also need to shake your sneakers out in the morning to get rid of spiders or scorpions (yes, it happens...)
- If you are camping, it is not a bad idea to check to make sure no reptilian guests have decided to slither into your protective sleeping bag for a visit
- In the water or at water's edge, be on the lookout for corals, jelly fish, and sea anemones - all of which can sting badly
- And of course, pay attention to dive briefings for warnings about currents and undersea hazards
- Bottled water only, and ice cubes might be of if you *know* there were made from bottled water. The ever-present concern though is rebottled tap water; a way for unscrupulous locals to make a quick buck at tourists' expense. In general, carbonated water is safe – these are usually sealed at the plant of manufacture and if the sparkling is gone, the water is suspect
- Don't let down your guard once you get back to the main town. The microbes in town are still alien to your system
- Don't even rinse your toothbrush with tap water
- No street food - and eat at the better restaurants which cater to tourists
- Only eat fruit which you yourself peel
- Use common sense: if you doubt the freshness or it appears in any way "off", don't consume it. If there is spotty electricity, how certain can you be of requisite refrigeration? Buffet lunches? hmmm... Maybe. Use your judgement... Freshly cooked food will work well, but buffet food sitting around in hot sun... not so much. I myself had a violent gastro issue from buffet food in Moshi, Tanzania. Never again. I don't know whether it was uncleanliness from food preparation or food gone bad in the hot sun; I arrived at the buffet several hours after the rest of the team due to a slower rate of descent from the high camp
- Personally, I love salad but sorry, don't eat salad. When the lettuce or other ingredients were washed they might have picked up bacteria from the water used to wash them. Or have residual insecticide clumps...



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Gary Lehman

I just received the September *Alert Diver* magazine, the magazine of Divers Alert Network. The current column "From The Safety Stop" parallels the points made in this article, with added emphasis that statistics seem to show that driving to/from the dive site involves more risk to the diver than the dive itself; and that trauma onboard liveaboards is also a matter of concern. The article in *Alert Diver* also forcefully makes the case for non-dive related travel and medical insurance

There are two diseases we will focus on, one of which has gotten a lot of press - and one which hasn't. **Specifically, we'll cover the Zika virus and dengue fever** (which generally has not gotten much press but should). Before going there, here are some of the major problem diseases found in tropics and worldwide...

Disease	Description	Avoid and Resolve
Hepatitis A	Virus, due to poor hygiene	Careful hygiene; inoculation
Travelers diar-	Bacteria, giardia or virus	Hygiene; Imodium; Pepto,
Typhoid fever	Contaminated food and water	vaccination
Malaria	Mosquito infection	Vaccination and protection
Dengue fever	Virus from mosquitoes	Protection from mosquitoes
Yellow fever	Virus from mosquitoes	Vaccination and protection
Zika	Virus from mosquitoes and intimate	Protection from mosquitoes,

OK .. Zika... This is a terrible disease because it causes fetal brain defects. So, if you are (or are planning on becoming) pregnant, either avoid the countries where there is an elevated risk; or stay above 6,500'; and if you do go, take extreme precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes (see discussion below on that...)

While zika is a particular risk for fetuses (and therefore females of child-rearing age), adult women and men are also at risk for severe flu-like symptoms - which can cut short a dive vacation.

These include:

Fever

Rash

Headache

Joint pain

Conjunctivitis (red eyes)

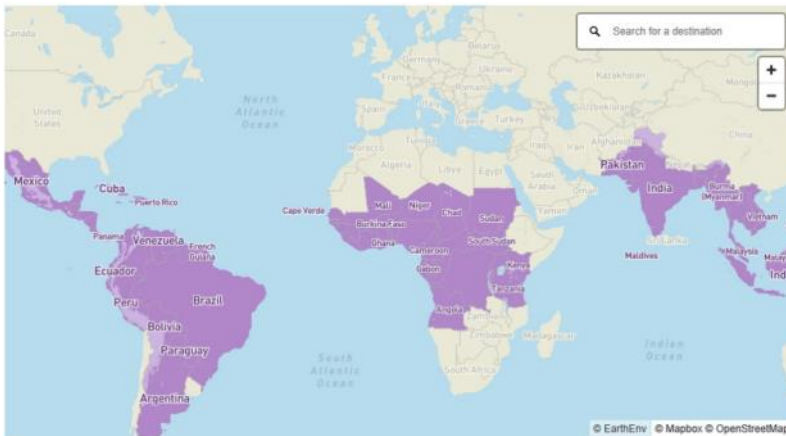
Muscle pain



Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

Gary Lehman

Here is a snapshot of the worldwide risk... The risk extends from Mexico, through the Caribbean, Africa, South Asia and through South East Asia... A lot of great diving in those locations, but.. from a Zika perspective, beware... In 2018 there have been no reports of Zika in the continental US



Twenty percent of individuals who get the virus will show symptoms. Zika is insidious because in some cases, the victim is asymptomatic and doesn't even know they are infected. *This can cause them to transmit the disease to intimate partners who may then become pregnant, and whose baby would then be at risk.*



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Has There Been Any Progress in the Fight Against Zika ?

The world medical community went into emergency overdrive in 2016 to fight zika. The World Health Organization (WHO) classified zika as “a public health emergency of international concern” in 2016. The call went out to leadership research and development communities worldwide for vaccination and treatments alternatives. 45 candidate vaccinations are under development, and some have progressed to human clinical trial. So, progress is being made.

So, Exactly How Can A Person Minimize Their Risk of Being Bitten By Mosquitoes?

The US Center for Disease Control recommends repellents with the following compositions:

DEET (this is the best prevention, but important to follow instructions and avoid overexposure to skin in particular... <http://www.npic.orst.edu/faq/deet.html>)

Picaridin (known as KBR 3023 and icaridin outside the US)

IR3535

Oil of lemon eucalyptus (OLE)

Para-menthane-diol (PMD)

2-undecanone

Covering arms and legs to the maximum degree possible is useful. Tucking pants into boots helps prevent insect intrusion. Apply sunscreen first, then repellent. Reapply repellent after activity or time, as directed. Read the instructions for your insect repellent. Keep the screen door shut. Use bed nets (CDC has recommendations on particular models on the website). Avoid large bodies of standing water.

And Dengue Fever...

Dengue fever represents a risk for scuba clubs during trips to our tropical island paradises... This article hopefully will raise awareness about this disease. This awareness is currently significantly lacking. Objective here is for all of us to *not find out the hard way*. Foreign operators may at times minimize the risk, but it is significant. We worry about the wrong things sometimes. Some of us worry about shark attack, despite the evidence to the contrary. But too many people ignore real and present dangers, among them dengue. Operators may be reluctant to be forthright and upfront about the danger; they have a business to protect. They may give a passing reference or perhaps even dismissive short shrift to the potential of this or that disease to strike the unwary and unknowing. Tragically, a Filipino friend of the family lost both a niece and a nephew on the island of Cebu to dengue. This health professional stated that the deaths occurred in a rural remote area on the developing island of Cebu, far from the bustling modern metropolis of Manila. This family friend further advised that health care on

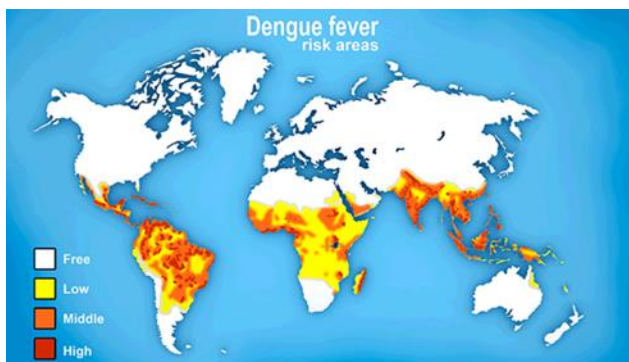


Update on Zika and Dengue, and a Harrowing Personal Account

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Cebu is occasionally substandard, especially for the locals in remote villages. But being in denial of or the misinterpretation of symptoms can gravely impact the victim, causing sometimes fatal delay of vital treatments. As is so often the case, early detection and correct identification is paramount.

This article also provides testimony from another friend, one who unfortunately was impacted terribly after contracting dengue fever. This could be any one of us, now or in the future.



Mosquitoes carry the virus which can be transmitted to the victim when they are bitten. It causes flu-like symptoms, which can result in disease misidentification. As the following dengue risk map shows, many of our treasured dive locations are in the risk zone. Urban and rural poor are at risk – but dengue is an equal opportunity disease. Mosquitoes do not do an ‘income check’ before they alight on the unwary victim for a fill up. Dengue happens at high-end dive resorts and in upscale communities. There has to be a reason for such a radical increase in reported

cases (up 30% in past fifty years); in part better reporting is the reason behind more documented cases, but there must be other factors which are not yet understood to explain the surge over the past fifty years. The WHO has been aggressively compiling statistics on reported cases and identifying dengue hot spots. It is speculated that globalization is in part responsible for the increased incidences of dengue. Easier, faster inter-regional transportation can facilitate several kinds of pandemic disease spread. Today dengue is becoming a leading cause of death and hospitalization among children and adults in regions-at-risk.

And yes, dengue has been reported in the United States, in Texas and in Florida. Why would we assume that globalization of dengue would somehow avoid the continental 48?

The WHO article highlights several concerning facts: once infected (and recovered), there are different strains of dengue, and once the victim gets dengue they become *more susceptible* to repeat infection by a variant dengue virus - and a worse illness. Furthermore, there is no specific treatment for dengue at this time. Symptomatic relief including blood transfusions, platelet replacement, hydration/electrolyte replacement and fever reduction is about it. But, aspirin and ibuprofen are dangerous, due to their blood-thinning effect. Thus, initial self-prescribed treatments for “oh, it’s just the flu” could push the victim into a worsening dengue fever illness by initiating bleeding out. The WHO’s resolute commitment to combatting dengue fever indicates that the best defense against dengue fever is an aggressive mosquito control program. WHO task forces analyze areas for dengue ‘hot spots’ and attack the source aggressively. These methods are expensive however, and unless there is significant funding available from transnational relief organizations, local community leaders will have the challenge of deciding to *either* invest scarce resources in dengue control, or towards meeting



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other current human services needs and requirements such as health centers, schools, waste treatment facilities (a major source of mosquitos), and roads/electricity/bridges.

An individual might *not* contract dengue fever if bitten by an infected mosquito. The person bitten may suffer a quickly-passing illness and only experience a glancing blow from the disease. But if someone gets dengue, they are probably not going to know it right away. The resort infirmary is probably not going to know for sure either, given the similarity of early symptoms to flu. Only a laboratory blood test at an appropriately-equipped health center can provide reliable disease identification. Locals who might be informed (or not) may give a person who is reporting symptoms 'the bums rush', in order to not heighten concern amongst other guests – and jobs can be hard to find and keep in some areas. And, for that matter, symptoms may not appear -- until the last days of the dive trip.

Progress Against Dengue?

The World Health Organization has been hard at work on many tropical diseases for a long time and has a website devoted to information exchange on many of these diseases (http://www.who.int/neglected_diseases/en/). Dengue is prominently part of this lineup of major threats and has received much focus due to radically increased reported cases in the past twenty-five years. Advanced outbreak detection and military-style 'search and destroy' missions have made significant localized (albeit only temporary) progress. Procedural changes in waste management in the risk zones by local populations can further reduce the frequency and intensity of outbreaks. But medically, there is not much good news to be garnered from the WHO reports as far as treatment and inoculation.

A Harrowing Personal Account and Experience with Dengue Fever....

A friend of mine contracted dengue in the Philippines. The whole experience end to end was horrendous from every angle, but this account fortunately has a happy ending. This person who was infected with dengue was and is a leadership member of the greater NY diving community; continues to love advanced diving; is a respected resource for all new divers; has resumed career advancement; and is part of the adventurous, joyful heart and soul of divers and diving in the Greater NYC metro area. My friend wants to share his/her experience in an as-wide-as-possible forum because the disease is poorly-understood, can be devastating and life-changing, and my friend wants to raise awareness about dengue fever. If someone reads this personal account, with the result that they are able to avoid getting dengue or are successful in aggressively seeking appropriate, effective medical intervention for themselves or a stricken friend, then sharing of this horrific dengue experience will have benefitted someone and therefore all of us. So, hats off and all respect to our contributor who has shared with all of



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us their experience related to this illness, in full detail with nothing (including errors in judgement) held back, *in order to help others in our sport.*

Subject intrepid diver was traveling solo (not in company with a group of fellow Metro area divers) on a *remote* island in the general vicinity of increasingly-popular Coron. It is on this remote area that the diver was bitten by the mosquito. Symptoms slowly built up without excessive initial concern; but with progression the diver became increasingly alarmed. Early dengue fever symptoms mimic many other ailments, so it is understandable, especially given that 1) dengue is relatively unknown and 2) some resort staff may be loathe to acknowledge the risk, that neither the diver nor the local staff were quickly associating the symptoms with dengue and misdiagnosed it. Our diver believed that if the local staff did have such a suspicion, they were withholding that thinking.

Dengue symptoms include:

- Continuous stomach pain; internal bleeding may occur due to hemorrhage
- Nausea and vomiting, dehydration from uncontrolled bowel incontinence
- Severe headache
- Pain behind the eye (known as Retro-orbital pain)
- Explosive, crushing sensation on bones, and severe pain in joints and muscles
- High fever ranging up to 106°F (and higher..) (106 starts the 'death zone')

Our diver had no easy access to internet or telephone in this remote area. After a couple of days, subject experienced severe dehydration; raging and near deadly temperatures over 106F; shivering; paralyzing weakness; excruciating feeling of crushing, breaking bones; fading in and out of lucidity; and uncontrolled incontinence. By sheer Providence, a fellow diver was a Red Cross employee (although with a non-medical role), and was terribly alarmed by the condition. Eventually the realization crystallized through intermittent windows of lucidity that a doctor visit was critically needed. Our victim managed to get to the resort administration building and did some internet searches on the symptoms. At that point the diver self-diagnosed the illness as dengue. But a definite diagnosis was needed. My friend reported that the resort staff ridiculed the belief that dengue was the illness, and obstructed the diver's efforts to get proper medical treatment. Our diver's new knowledge that people *die from dengue, even with medical attention*, was sufficiently empowering to get to another island 1.5 hours away which had a proper infirmary (and not to the one originally offered by resort staff). It was here that the diagnosis was confirmed; diver's temperature was dangerously high at 106+ F.



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Several “Monday morning observations” ... Had a DAN staff medical professional been consulted, it is a fair bet that they would have at least called out the possibility that dengue fever was a possible underlying illness and alerted to the danger of the situation. With a fever that high, our diver should have been medically evacuated to a location where the fever and treatments could have begun sooner. The US Embassy should have been alerted to render whatever assistance was appropriate, especially in a dangerous illness (the diver in question had even signed up for the State Department’s Smart Traveler Enrollment Program!). But due to the illness thought processes were corrupted, the Embassy was not contacted, and the diver decided to stay at the resort for treatment including daily blood work to check platelet levels. The staff at the resort and local infirmary were unaware that DAN medical evacuation was an option. (A case can certainly be made that diving with fellow club members, as in this instance, would have been an advantage due to shared concern, assistance and better shared decision-making unaffected by illness.) Our diver even discouraged family and a close friend from coming to their assistance, out of a sense of not wanting to ‘inconvenience’ others (a noble but terribly bad call under the circumstances, and due to corrupted thinking).

After over a week of dangerously-high temperatures abated, and after enduring excruciating speedboat rides, nauseating and sweltering bus rides, and interminable airplane delays our diver was able to return to the main island of Luzon (where Manila is located). Diver checked into a modern health spa for a six-week rest and recuperation.

Rule ONE: get travel insurance for medical treatment, evacuation, and associated expenses resulting from non-diving accidents. Rule TWO: reread Rule One. The personal expenses incurred by the diver were “off the Richter Scale” high. And, would have been radically higher except for some other extenuating circumstances. My friend had a six-month bedbound convalescence once back in the greater NYC Metro area and resumed work-from-home – fortunately with a very understanding employer.

A harrowing account from every angle, but one from which we can all benefit very greatly – and possibly save a life. *Again, heartfelt thanks to my friend for sharing this experience in such detail with each of us.* The take-aways here are a greater awareness of dengue fever - but hopefully also a better understanding of how circumstances can combine to create suddenly gravely dangerous situations, and why it is so important to reach out for and accept help when danger is near. As divers we are extended family, and we are here to look out for each other and get through adversity together.



Who's Place Is It?

Judy K.



We scuba divers enter the oceans and marvel at the beautiful corals; we observe the amazing various colored fish; and most of us also hope to see sharks. But the most promising thing we do - before we even giant stride and splash into the water - is to realize that we are entering an environment in which we are guests. However, it is also the case that too often, people don't have the same respectful environmental outlook when it comes to our animal neighbors, that is the terrestrial animals with which we share the environment. If the animal on our property is a coyote, fox, raccoon, skunk or other "pest", we too often seek to chase them out of their home - which happens to be on "our" property. Sadly, most of the time running the animals out of their homes on "our" property winds up killing these animal neighbors. Imagine if everyone who went into the ocean had that way of thinking? When that happens, the oceans become devoid of life and are starkly and disturbingly empty. We certainly found out on a small scale, when the film JAWS was released, and the resulting devastation of sharks it caused.

The reintroduction of wolves is a startling success story which we need to understand... Wolves (like sharks) are apex predators. WITHOUT wolves, there are no predators capable of culling elk and moose populations - which results in overgrazing of the land. New plant life is highly vulnerable. This overgrazing threatens the physically smaller pronghorn antelope, which have less vegetation to graze. Ultimately the elk and moose will run out of grazing opportunities also. When wolves are reintroduced, their predations of moose and elk are not fully consumed by the wolves, leaving leftovers for so many scavenger species - which benefit from the wolves' predations. New trees can flourish, because there are fewer elk and moose to eat the new vegetation growth. Elk and moose cannot exactly hang around and overgraze with impunity, because the wolves are always on the prowl looking to make a predation. (This is exactly analogous to the fish off Chatham, Massachusetts. The fish actually benefit from the presence of the white sharks – which keep the seals from overfeeding the local fish populations.) With more trees (due to reduced elk and moose overgrazing), there are more birds and beavers to create wetland marshy areas, which in turn become fish hatchling nurseries. How about that... wolves as the apex predator actually create fish nurseries, and thereby rejuvenate and restore health to the natural environment! Nature and associated interconnectedness is truly an incredible thing to behold and cherish and it is our duty to understand these processes...

Unfortunately, a lot of people are just not always on the same page as environmental scientists who understand these land and wildlife management concepts. Too many people wish to subvert and prevent natural processes, and have a "protect me from the creatures and nature" mentality. This unfortunately is exactly what is happening now to our amazing coastline. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is considering six different alternative projects to "protect" our region against coastal storms – including plans to build massive, in-water barriers which would permanently damage the critical Hudson River estuary complex.



Who's Place Is It?

Judy K.



These barriers will cut off certain areas, block wildlife migration corridors and block the tidal flow. Gates would be put into place to allow movement for ships - but not the fish. These barriers would not protect our communities from flooding caused by sea level rise – only flooding from coastal storms. Many environmentalists believe only the construction option worth considering is for shoreline-based measures, such as dunes, dikes and levees. Such measures would protect against flooding from storms AND sea level rise, while leaving our rivers to run free and wild.

Why do we have these proposals? Because people who live along the waterways now demand protection from it. AND possibly because the US Army Corps of Engineers is looking to justify its existence with big-budget projects. It doesn't seem fair to me. All this – in an effort to protect property from the possibility of future storms -- but missing the reality of sea level rise? I understand protecting one's property -- but the idea of building a seawall, significantly changing the topography, and blocking off the natural habitat of spawning animals seem too damaging and borders on an environmental atrocity. It seems to be a lot of wasted time money and effort to build something to stop both Mother Nature and her creatures at the same time.

Now you know my position is to not create any barriers which affect the free movement of creatures, just for our short-sighted benefit. If you'd like to take a look at the proposals, please go to <http://www.nan.usace.army.mil/Media/Fact-Sheets/Fact-Sheet-Article-View/Article/644997/fact-sheet-new-yorknew-jersey-harbor-tributaries-focus-area-feasibility-study/>

Viewing this online discussion on the referenced website will help give you context and an understanding of the issues. If you'd like to make a comment on the issue, please do so -(by end of September - because this is still at the proposal stage, which can therefore potentially be stopped. We scuba divers care about the oceans, estuaries and their inhabitants; not just peoples private property. Please engage and help defeat these ill-advised proposals and support our Hudson River estuaries and environment!

Judy K.



Featured Marine Life

by Rick D'Amico

Irish Moss (Algae) (*Chondrus crispus*)

Chondrus crispus is commonly found in our region. Divers will see it attached to rocks while beachgoers will see it washed up along the shore.

It is classified as a species of red algae, but its color can vary. Usually it's purplish, but it can appear in various shades of red, brown, or green. Its shape also can vary, particularly the broadness of its leaves. It grows from a holdfast (generally attached to a hard surface) and branches into forks, creating a fan-like shape. *Chondrus* grows from approximately 3 to 6 inches. The ends can be flat or wavy. The photos below illustrate how *Chondrus crispus* can vary in appearance.



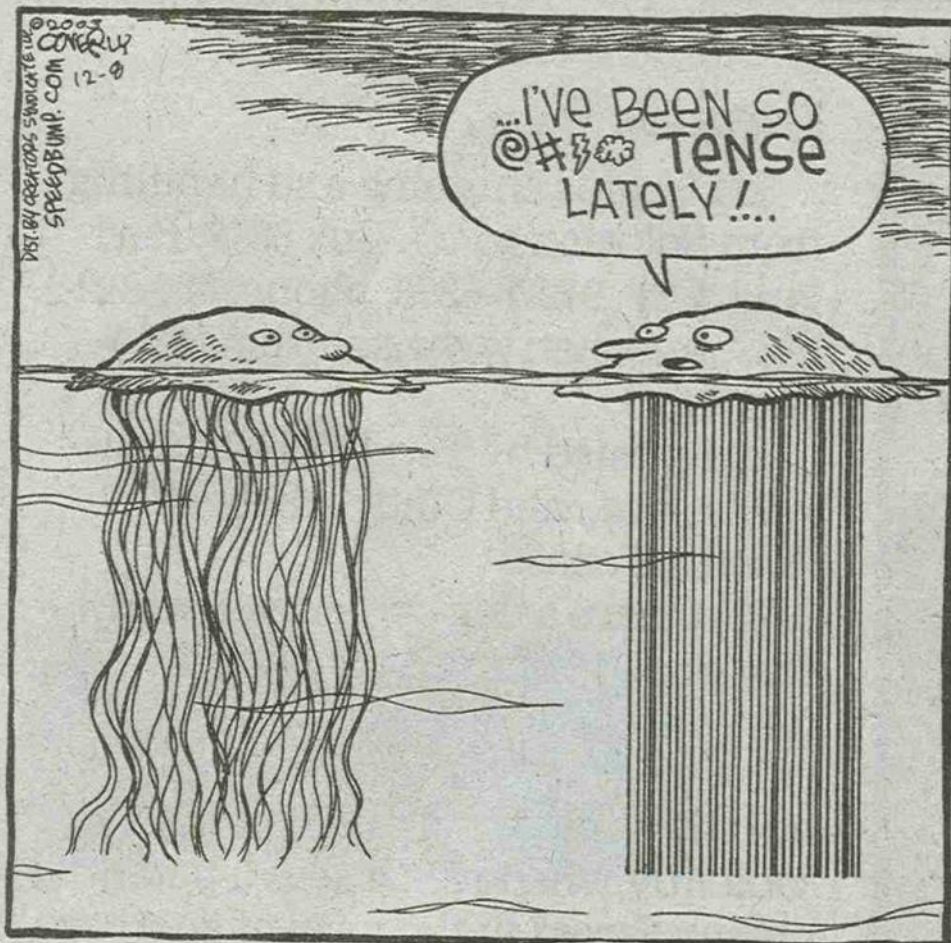
As one might infer from its name, Irish moss is found in Ireland. Actually, it's quite cosmopolitan, being found along the Atlantic coast of Europe and the Atlantic coast off Canada and the U.S. It is also believed to be found in the Pacific, although there's some question about it; it could be another species of *Chondrus*. It is found, and is often quite common, on rocky substrates from the mid-intertidal zone to subtidal zone to the depth where photosynthesis stops taking place.



Irish moss has a number of uses. It is an industrial source of carrageenan, which is used as a thickener and stabilizer in milk products such as ice cream and processed foods. Carrageenan is also used to remove organic compounds from beer or wine, either to improve clarity or adjust flavor or aroma. It is also used to make agar, which is a culture media for bacteriological laboratory studies. This lowly, little seaweed gives us a lot.



Speed Bump





MARINE TRIVIA

Compiled by Lada Simek

What does the sea urchin *Archeopneustes hystrix* carry in its intestines?

Ans: A fire worm, which can live outside the sea urchin but stays inside for protection.

Tiny particles of magnetite have been found inside the skulls of Chinook salmon. What might be their function?

Ans: They may allow the fish to detect the earth's magnetic field, hence act as an internal compass.

The parasitic barnacle *Sacculina carcini* are known to do what and to whom?

Ans: They pierce a hole in one kind of crab, the larva enters the host, multiply, seek out and lodge in the gut. From there the invader spreads throughout the crab, eventually castrating it.

Gray snappers on Grand Bahamas Island eat what unusual food?

Ans: Brown flower bats. The fish swim underground 1000 feet to a cave where the bats give birth and feed on the babies that fall in the water.

Some sea snakes see light not only with their eyes but also with what other part of the body?

Ans: Their tails have light-sensitive organs which tell them when they are completely hidden.

True or false: Camels eat fish.

*Ans: True. The oil sardine *Dardanelle longiceps* found in the Arabian Sea is commonly fed to camels.*

Traditionally, what do fishermen in Guam and Saipan use to poison fish?

Walruses in the Bering Sea normally eat shellfish as clams, but in 1970's, what other item was found on their menu?

Ans: Seals-they capture them by stabbing them with their tusks.

If all the dissolved salts in the oceans were dried and spread out over the land, how many feet thick would the layer be?

Ans: 150

Luffariella variabilis is an encrusting sponge from Palau, produces what useful substance?

Ans: Manoalide, an effective pain killer and anti-inflammatory agent.



MARINE TRIVIA

Compiled by Lada Simek

What do tropical trigger fish in Alaska, starving seabirds in Peru and drought in Africa have in common?

Ans: All of them are caused by a severe El Ninos.

True or false: Gnathostomulida have greatly reduced parenchyma, monociliated epidermis and a tubular intestinal sac

Ans: Obviously true

What gas is found in the floats of the giant kelp, *Macrocystis pyrifora* ?

Ans: Carbon monoxide

Many squids can change color rapidly, switching from one to another in seconds. What is curious about this ability?

Ans: Squid do not appear to be able to see colors.

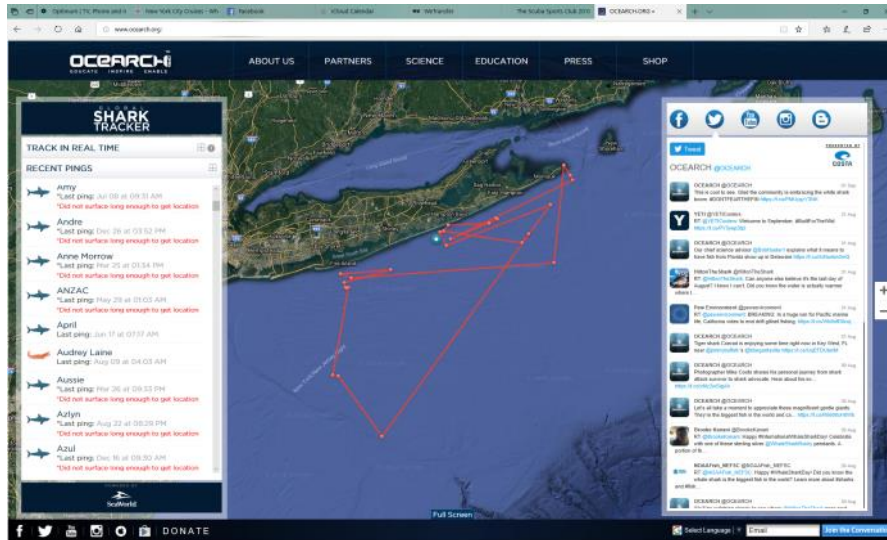
What is the most widely distributed reptile in the world?

Ans: The leatherback turtle, which is found in all the oceans in the world between the tropics and the arctic.

White Shark Azlyn Pinged to Say “HELLO” — AGAIN !!

Gary Lehman

Azlyn at 5', 69lbs was first tagged off Montauk by team Ocearch on August 25, 2017. Her story was in a recent Sea Swells issue. Well, we are delighted to report that Azlyn pinged at the surface on August 22, 2018., just shy of a year after she was initially tagged! Her location was not able to be determined since her dorsal fin was not at the surface long enough to transmit/receive the GPS coordinates. However, it is great to know that she is doing fine, and doing what white sharks do... which is what this project is all about !



And Around The Dive Shop.....

LOCAL DIVE SHOPS.....AT YOUR SERVICE!

Looking for dive-related gifts? Need to upgrade your gear?

Here is a list of shops that may just have the right one for your best dive buddy or for yourself!

 <p>Ski and Scuba Connection 26 Saint Roch Ave Greenwich, CT 06830 Tel. 203-629-4766 www.skiandscubaconnection.com</p>	 <p>SCUBA NEW YORK 2037 Central Park Ave Yonkers, NY 10710 Tel. 914-779-2966 and 2672 Gerritsen Ave Brooklyn, NY 11229 Tel. 718-769-0099 www.scubany.com</p>
 <p>Abyss Scuba Where the fun begins! www.abyss-scuba.net (914) 244-3483 29 Marble Avenue, Pleasantville, NY 10570</p>	 <p>Captain Mike's Diving School 530 City Island Ave City Island, NY 10464 Tel. 718-885-1588 www.captainmikesdiving.com</p>
 <p>Oceanblue DIVE CENTER</p>	 <p>Oceanblue Dive 108 Bedford Street Stamford, CT, 06901 www.oceanbluedive.com</p>



www.divenewsnetwork.com or www.scubah2omag.com