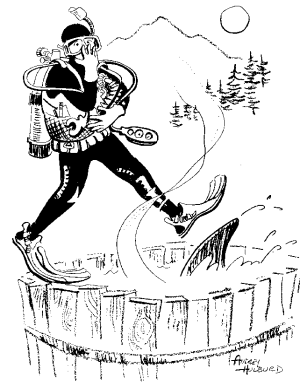


MARIN SCUBA CLUB NEWSLETTER

Volume 15 Number 7

July, 2008



White Sea Bass for Dinner

by John Kushwara

[Ed. Note: For new members, John is past president of the Club and has moved to Santa Barbara, where he's enjoying a different kind of diving.]

The white sea bass was once prevalent from Baja to the Monterey peninsula, and as far north as Alaska in warm water periods. Their meat is prized for its texture and mild flavor. These qualities led to its decline. Commercial gill netters were decimating the populations to try to meet the demand of discriminating diners at the finest seafood restaurants.

Thanks to Hubbs-SeaWorld which has a hatchery, and volunteer fishermen and spearfishermen who staff the grow-out facilities, the population has made a resurgence. Last year the white sea bass spearfishing world record was broken off Malibu: 93 pounds. There is a hot run of fish at the time of this writing.

Divers can only take them freediving. Most scuba divers will never see one. They are very sensitive to movement and sound and the squeal of an ear clearing is enough to clear the vicinity of the fish.

I've learned that it is a necessity to flood one's wetsuit, purging all the noise-producing air. Other instructions: wear ankle weights so your heels don't break the surface when finning, pre-pressurize the sinuses so there is no noise while clearing, don't touch your fins together, don't brush the kelp, move slowly, make a perfect surface dive and then submerge to 15-30 feet and swim slowly and silently through the kelp. Doing this proficiently, the diver may be rewarded with a sighting.

This takes us to my third trip to Santa Cruz Island. I am gaining awareness on every trip. I am becoming quieter, and as the season progresses, more fish are showing up. At 7:30 am. the sun was out, no wind, and as we passed the break-



Whale of a Time in Monterey

by Larry Clinton

Late last month, Jane and I visited Monterey and tried a whale watching expedition out of Fisherman's Wharf. Our expectations weren't high, but we were pleasantly surprised. On Saturday, we had no trouble booking four spots for Sunday morning aboard the 100' Princess, which departs three times a day year round. In fact, when we arrived at the yellow building at the end of the wharf for our 10:30 departure, there was still space available.

The day was overcast and chilly, but the water was like glass as we motored out through the yacht harbor and past the breakwater. We saw a few otters and lots of sea lions, plus plenty of seabirds. A naturalist kept us informed and entertained, as she spotted and described the various species along the way.

In less than an hour we reached the edge of the Monterey Bay Canyon – third largest undersea trench in the world. In winter and spring, grey whales pass by here on their annual migration between Alaska and Mexico. Then, as the seasonal upwelling brings rich nutrients into warmer shallow waters, humpbacks travel all the way from Papua, New Guinea to feed here.

We watched three humpbacks sounding, close enough for those with telephoto lenses to photograph. Several other humpbacks spouted, spy-hopped and did their thing in the distance. Two types of dolphins played near the boat, a couple actually swimming under the hull for our amusement. Tiny looking harbor porpoises broke surface farther out. An unidentified 8' shark swam right toward the boat on the surface for a few seconds, and we were entertained by a small flock of albatross, which look very regal until they try to take flight, beating their wings furiously against the surface of the ocean.

The boat sells basic refreshments (suggestion: bring your own) and has a roomy salon where you can peer out large clear windows if it's too chilly outside. Very worthwhile at

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water the ocean was gently undulating, not even a swell. Anacapa and Santa Cruz were visible in the distance, seemingly much closer than usual. Sea lions were cavorting as we left the harbor. Soon a pod of porpoise was moving to cross our bow, with a few playing in our bow wave. Baitfish skittered on the surface, pelicans dove all around, and we moved forward to the island.

When we arrived the kelp was laying down, indicating a strong current. We moved around to find suitable visibility and current we could dive in, finally anchoring in a large clearing surrounded by a kelp forest. We started the ritual of donning the dive gear, relaxing, and clearing the mind of distractions. After the final ritual of purging all air from our suits, we loaded our spearguns and headed out. The water vis. was 15 to 30 feet, with a thermocline at about 30 feet. The bottom was 60 feet below.

I made several dives working out the kinks and getting relaxed. Then I saw a white sea bass in the distance -- no there were 2, 10, no probably 25 moving slowly away into the haze. Skirting the edge of an opening, I saw another school. The minimum size was 30," probably barely legal. I did not want to chance shooting an undersized fish so I passed.

A few more dives and another school, or possibly the same one, but this time there was a larger fish at the front. This was a nice quarry, but he had passed me already. It is known that if you look at a fish, or move in its direction, it will vanish. I figured the fish was already gone, so what the hell. I did a summersault to change my direction 180 degrees, and fired. It was a perfect shot, stoned him, not even a quiver. I swam the 37lb. fish back to the boat. A nice first white sea bass, a good shot, and an easy recovery.

The next fish was not so easy. It was smaller, about 25 pounds, but my shot was not as good. He went to the bottom and wrapped the line around the base of the nearby kelp. The first dive was to stop the fish from its continued struggles. The second, third, and fourth dive to 40' -50' were to extract the fish from the tangle of line and kelp. I finally freed the fish and returned to the boat.

By this time it was late afternoon. We had been freediving since 8:30 am with only short breaks for snacks or liquid. The sun had ducked behind the island but it was still calm, and those areas not in the shadow of the island were a beautiful collage of blues, yellows and oranges. Pelicans were still diving for bait, sea lions were still cavorting. We took a last swim, sans wet suits, to refresh for the ride home. As we cruised home the red fireball of a sun was setting behind Point Conception. The sea was shimmering pink with purple hues, gradually deepening to blackness as the sun's last rays lost contact with the sea. We were experiencing exhaustion and elation at the same time. Another great day on the ocean.



Crew Overboard Drills Scratched

The Crew Overboard Drills scheduled for July 19 and 20 have been postponed. The organizers, a non-profit called Serving Others Aid Relief, were recruiting divers with wetsuits to serve as volunteer "victims" for yachting crews to practice rescuing. If and when this event gets rescheduled, we'll let you know.

Monterey Whale Watching *continued from page 1*

\$40 a person. Our two hour excursion was smooth and pleasurable, and got us back to the dock in time for a hearty seafood lunch.

We were told that blue whales (the largest mammals ever to live on earth) traverse these waters in the fall. So a return trip might be in order! For more information, go to www.princessmontereywhalewatching.com.

Listen to the Fish

Although Cousteau called it the "Silent World," the ocean is full of noises from fish and other denizens of the deep.

Naturalists as far back as Aristotle have known that fish make sounds. Of the 30,000 species out there, about 1,200 sound producers have been cataloged, though far fewer have been recorded, according to the N.Y. Times. For most fish, the sonic mechanism is a muscle that vibrates a swim bladder similar to our vocal cord. The gas-filled bladder is used for buoyancy, but it can also serve as a sort of drum.

Other fish use stridulation, rubbing their bones together kind of like plinking the tines on a comb, or using a ratchet mechanism on their pectoral fins to make sounds. Fish sounds have been documented as a way to attract mates, to show aggression and to express fear or distress, but other subtle "speech" characteristics go undeciphered.

Then, there's the herring, which releases bubbles from his anus in a "Fast Repetitive Tick" (get the acronym?).

Chuck & Jeffrey's Excellent Adventure

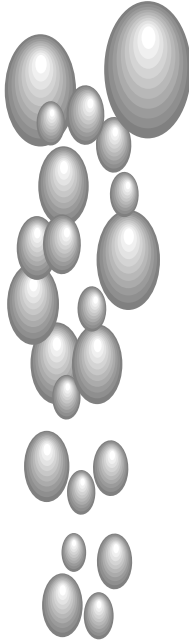
It was Truk Redux night at last month's meeting, when Chuck Ballinger and Jeffrey Zankel revisited their deep diving expedition to Truk Lagoon. This presentation included more underwater photos and video from the world famous WWII wreck site. Thanks for all your deep thoughts, guys!

Membership Roster Revised

by Larry Clinton

I've had a number of corrections to the roster circulated last month, the main one being that couples were not listed individually. So members will find an updated version in this newsletter. You'll find it a valuable tool for networking, lining up dive buddies, and making social connections. The rosters will be available to any prospects who join the club within the next couple of months.

BOTTOM TIMES



July 16 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. California Marine Life Protection Act - PLUS - Tech dive expedition to explore America's deepest coral reef (at the Dry Tortugas).

August 6 (Wed.): *Newsletter deadline.* Contact Larry at click@dipsymusic.com.

August 10-12 (Sun.-Tues.): *Peace liveaboard trip*, So. Channel Islands. Call Elliott (415) 461-6644.

Aug. 20 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. Ships to Reefs - Sites and info about sinking naval vessels for reef habitats. Call Chuck (415-381-1989).

Sept. 13 (Sat.): *Cypress Sea boat dive* (3 Dives), Monterey. Call Pierre at SF Reef Divers (415-285-6293).

Sept. 17 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. Program TBA. Call Chuck (415-381-1989).

Oct. 3-5 (Fri.-Sun): *Fall abalone campout*, Van Damme State Park, Mendocino. Call Jane (415) 332-6196.

Oct. 11 (Sat.): *Cypress Sea boat dive* (3 Dives), Monterey. Call Pierre at SF Reef Divers (415-285-6293).

Oct. 15 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. California Wreck Divers, Lost Ships off our Coast. Call Chuck (415-381-1989).

Nov. 8 (Sat.): *Cypress Sea boat dive* (3 Dives), Monterey. Call Pierre at SF Reef Divers (415-285-6293).

Nov. 19 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. Santa Cruz artist Bryant Austin's life size whale images. Call Chuck (415-381-1989).

Dec. 13 (Sat.): *Cypress Sea boat dive* (3 Dives), Monterey. Call Pierre at SF Reef Divers (415-285-6293).

**Marin Scuba Club
PO Box 3408
San Rafael, CA 94912**



Next Meeting

Wed., July 16

Program:

**Cal. Marine Life Protection Act
PLUS
America's Deepest Coral Reef**

**Happy Hour 6:00-7:00
Socializing: 7:00
Meeting: 7:30-9:15**

**Seafood Peddler,
100 Yacht Club Dr.
San Rafael
(Look for tall boat sign
off East Francisco)**

**MARIN SCUBA
CLUB
NEWSLETTER**

The Club meets the
3rd Wednesday of each month
(**except December**)

**Marin Scuba Club
Board of Directors
www.marinclub.org**

President

Elliott Zalta driftinez@comcast.net (415) 461-6644

Vice President

Nathan Cobert ncobert@earthlink.net (415) 479-1777

Treasurer

Barbara Sebring gandbsebring@msn.com (415) 499-0799

Secretary

Arlene Rudy arudy24@aol.com (415) 927-2672

Membership Coordinator

Alberta Chaison albertachaison@yahoo.com (415) 453-9556

Newsletter Editor

Larry Clinton click@dipsymusic.com (415) 332-6196

Activities Coordinator

Jane Clinton jkclinton@comcast.net (415) 332-6196

Program Coordinator

Chuck Ballinger bukchalngr@comcast.net (415) 381-1989

Webmaster

John Brenneis webmeister@marinclub.org (415) 407-3161
