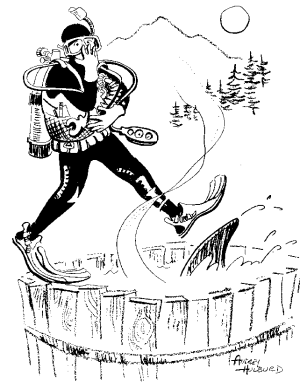


MARIN SCUBA CLUB NEWSLETTER

Volume 17 Number 10 October, 2009



Discovering Okinawa

by Portia Igarashi

[Ed. Note: long term members will remember Portia Igarashi and Steve Stecher, who have been cruising Central America and the Pacific for the past several years on their catamaran, Dream Caper. Portia recently sent us the following dive trip report.]

When I was chosen to arbitrate an employment case at a U.S. military bases on Okinawa Island, I was surprised to discover that Okinawa is located in the Ryukyus, Japan's southern-most islands, and is actually much closer to Taiwan than mainland Japan. Once I found out that these are tropical islands and reportedly have great diving, my husband Steve quickly decided to join me. We found ourselves in Okinawa in early September during typhoon season. Luckily, there were no typhoons but there was too much wind which caused the cancellation of 2 of the 3 planned days of boat diving.

We managed to get a spot on the 40' boat of American owned Asian Dive Tours. Our divemaster, Dave, whose parents own the operation, was friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. The boat sliced its way for 45 minutes through the beautiful waters of the South China Sea to the Chibishi Island group, 3 small uninhabited islands, southwest of mainland Okinawa.

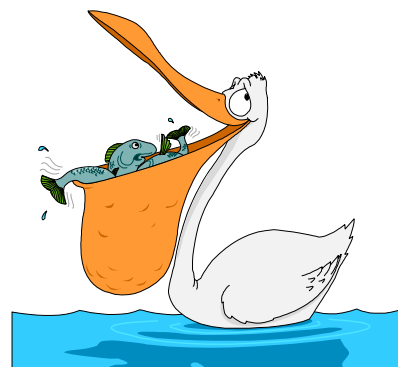
Under sunny skies, we anchored in a protected bay. Visibility was 80-100' and water temperature around 84 degrees. Our Lycra skins were plenty warm. During our two 45 minute dives, we went no deeper than 58' and enjoyed swimming through cave-like channels which were covered by soft and hard corals. We sighted an octopus, green eel, yellow striped black snake, 5' long tube worm and a black with white/yellow nudibranch. White, black and orange (Finding Nemo) clown fish were hiding in waving anemones. There was some current on the surface but nothing much down below.

We were told that the Chibishi Islands were used as the staging area for the bombing of Okinawa by the U.S. troops during World War II, which leveled Okinawa after eighteen days of constant bombardment. Looking at the serene white sandy beaches and blue water, it was hard to imagine such a merciless attack on distant Okinawa.

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Membership Coordinator Needed

After years of handling both Membership and Publicity, Alberta Buller has decided to concentrate her efforts as Publicity Coordinator. That leaves us in need of a Membership Coordinator who can help greet guests, follow up on membership renewal campaigns, and help find new strategies to attract and retain members. If you're interested, Alberta will be available to get you up and running in this important job. Please contact her or any other Board member listed on page 4 of this newsletter.



You Said a Mouthful, James

It's clear that James Martin, photographer and author of "The Islands of San Francisco Bay," loves talking about our local waters, ghost towns, and wildlife. In September, he showed us over 220 images from the book, which is also featured on his website: www.islandsofSFbay.com.

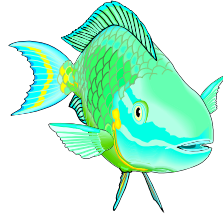
Inspired by photos of birdlife from Jim's presentation, Virginia Bria submitted the following chestnut:

A wonderful bird is a pelican,
His bill will hold more than his belican.
He can take in his beak
Food enough for a week;
But I'm damned if I see how the helican.

Having searched the internet for dive companies, we were expecting to pay \$250 each per day for 2 boat dives including equipment. Luckily, we were referred to Asian Dive Tours which charged only \$80 each for 2 dives including the equipment and divemaster. The diving was beautiful and their boat was top notch as were their personnel .

The next day, we were able to dive in the morning to meet the 24 hour rule of no diving before our departure flight. There are coral reefs just offshore, many only accessible from the shore. We chose to dive off the Sunabe Seawall which was only 4 blocks from our hotel. There are numerous dive shops dotting each street in this area. We chose the Arc Dive Shop which is at the seawall right next to the main entrance to the ocean. We rented a full set of gear, except for wetsuit, for \$40/day plus \$5 per tank. The locals all come here with their own gear and dive for only \$5 per tank.

After gearing up, we easily walked the 60' to the stairs leading down to the water. It was high tide so we simply turned on our air, slipped on our fins and masks, and floated into the water. Approximately 80' past the shallows, we came upon the drop-off covered with large soft corals in blue, lavender, vanilla, tan, and pink. The soft corals were super sized, reportedly from the nitrates released by a nearby sewage treatment plant and the runoff from the landscaping at nearby Kadena Air Force Base. There were numerous channels to follow and overhangs to inspect, all abundantly covered with soft corals and with healthy hard corals here and there; especially beautiful were the fluorescent blue tipped hard coral



clusters Small powder blue/silvery fish contrasted beautifully with the lush brown soft corals. Lots of brightly colored tropical fish flitted about while large multicolored triggerfish and parrotfish swam by. It was truly a "garden" of unusually large and healthy soft corals. We easily had 60' of visibility. Hundreds of divers frequent this area daily because of its easy accessibility, and groups of beginner classes are always in motion. Yet, the soft coral and hard corals are hardly damaged or even disturbed by this activity. By the end of our second dive, the tide had gone out some which made it a bit more tricky to exit the ocean since we had to walk 20' in shallow water and waves to the stairs.

A must see for divers is the Churaumi Aquarium, a 1.5 hour bus ride north. It is the second largest aquarium in the world (we're told) where you can watch 3 large (30-40') whale sharks, 10' manta rays, and eagle rays along with every large fish imaginable as you eat lunch at your table.

We enjoyed our Okinawa diving experience enough to have whetted our appetite for more. The Kerama Islands an hour west of mainland Okinawa, made up of raw limestone rock formations, reportedly provide a great backdrop to fantastic diving and the coral reefs at some points are unparalleled. There are unexplained underwater ruins at Yonaguni Island and manta rays off the rain forest island of Ishigaki.

Okinawa is well worth the 2.5 hour flight from Tokyo. Exotic, tropical, delicious food and great diving! Although we spoke no Japanese, most restaurants have English menus and photos; hotel personnel speak some English; and pointing to a map usually results in finding one's way.



Free Holiday Potluck Dec. 12

Our annual free holiday party will have a new setting and new activities this year, so save the date of Saturday afternoon, Dec. 12. The party will be at Barbara Wambach's waterfront home on Strawberry Point, and we'll be starting at 4 PM to enjoy the spectacular bay views. After our potluck dinner, we'll have a spirited gift exchange. If you have underwater photos or videos to share, please bring them on a CD or DVD to play on the large screen TV. Watch for more information by e-mail and in the November newsletter.

Reminder: Next Meeting 10/28

Due to the Catalina trip, we are rescheduling our October meeting to the fourth Wednesday in the month, the 28th.

Please join us October 28, at the same time (happy hour till 7:00 PM, socializing 7:00-7:30, meeting 7:30-9:15), same place (Flatiron, 2nd & B Sts., San Rafael). Our program will be presented by the Marine Mammal Center.

Try the E-Mail Option

If you received a printed version of this newsletter, you're one of the few who haven't switched to e-mail delivery. Everyone else is enjoying many advantages of receiving this newsletter as an e-mail PDF attachment:

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Get it quicker. No printing or mailing delays.

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Share it. Forward a copy to interested friends or neighbors.

To join the Eletronic Era and save the club some money, notify Larry Clinton at click@dipsymusic.com.

BOTTOM TIMES

Oct. 18-21 (Sun.-Wed.): *Dive Trip to Catalina Isthmus, Banning House, Two Harbors.* Call Nathan (415-479-1777).

Oct. 28 (Fourth Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. Marine Mammal Center. Call Jeffrey (415- 898-7752).

Nov. 4 (Wed.): *Newsletter deadline.* See below.

Nov. 14 (Sat.): *Cypress Sea boat dive* (3 Dives), Monterey. Call Pierre at SF Reef Divers (415-285-6293).

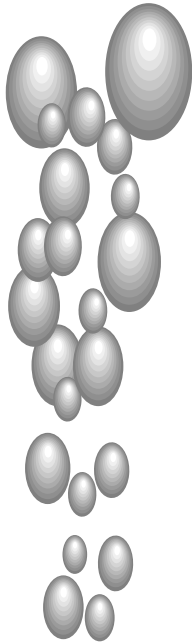
Nov. 18 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. Gil Zeimer, Images from Kosrae, Micronesia. Call Jeffrey (415- 898-7752).

Dec. 12 (Sat.): *Holiday Potluck.* Barbara Wambach's home, 371 E Strawberry Dr., Mill Valley. Call Arlene (415-927-2672).

Jan. 9 (Sat.): *Cypress Sea boat dive* (3 Dives), Monterey. Call Pierre at SF Reef Divers (415-285-6293).

Jan. 20 (Wed.): Board Meeting, 6:00, *Club Meeting*, 7:30. Program TBA. Call Jeffrey (415- 898-7752).

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



We Need Your Help!

We need articles, recipes, short notes, pictures, SCUBA funnies or whatever for future newsletters and for our website.

Website: E-mail photos with a caption and/or article and photo credits to John Brenneis (webmeister@marinscuba.org). If you do not have access to a scanner, mail photos along with captions and photo credits with a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want the photos back. Ric's address is 1 Issaquah Dock, Sausalito, CA 94965.

Newsletter: Deadline is usually the first Wednesday of the month - two weeks before the meeting.

Send materials for future articles in one of the following ways. Note that these are listed in priority order.

1. E-mail text to Larry at click@dipsymusic.com. It's best to just send the material in the body of the e-mail and not as an attachment.
2. Send a CD to the address below. MS Word - PC format is preferred, otherwise include a note as to what the format is.
3. Fax typed manuscripts to 415-339-1361.

Pictures and Graphics - E-mail JPEG files to click@dipsymusic.com or mail CDs or hard copy to Larry Clinton, 29 Gate 6-1/2, Sausalito, CA 94965.

Marin Scuba Club
78 Edward Ave.
San Rafael, CA 94903



Next Meeting

Wed., October 28
(fourth Wed.)

Program:
Marine Mammal Center
Happy Hour 6:00-7:00
Socializing: 7:00
Meeting: 7:30-9:15

The Flatiron, 724 B St,
San Rafael

MARIN SCUBA
CLUB
NEWSLETTER

The Club meets the
3rd Wednesday of each month
(except Oct. & December, 2009)

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