

Newsletter - Triton's Call

NASJAX SCUBA DIVING CLUB

17 January 2019

www.nasjaxscubadivers.org



Nassau, Bahamas

Photo by Kim Walther and Bill Davis



Greetings, divers!

We started 2019 with a look back at 2018 and an open discussion with suggestions for what people liked and wanted for this new year. Based on your responses we'll try to schedule a picnic/dive trip on Rainbow River some time this spring, we'll do more gear swap meetings, we'll consider more vegetarian options for the Christmas dinner, and we'll all continue to look for guest speakers willing to talk to us about any underwater topic of interest.

As always I am humbled and grateful to serve this club as President. Our group travels the world and partakes of this technical sport, seeing and experiencing places on this planet few of our neighbors and friends have ever imagined. This year our fellow club members will travel the globe to such far-flung exotic destinations as Fiji and South Africa in addition to local rivers, springs, Florida coastal dive sites, and Caribbean destinations not as far away. It is an honor to be a member of this group of world-traveling divers.

To close this month's meeting we held a brain-storming session to consider alternate meeting venues. Several members noted that Tuesday nights would work better than Wednesday nights and we are open to changing our traditional first-Wednesday-of-the-month meeting schedule to a Tuesday. We have always tried to book a venue which provided meals, but are considering meeting halls or other places to which we could bring our own fast food and beverages if we desire without being pressured to buy whatever the establishment serves. Stay tuned for updates as we may move our meeting next month and try out new meeting places until we find one we like better. And of course if you have suggestions please let me know and we will investigate and evaluate new potential meeting sites.

Dive safely and enjoy life!

Monster Molyneux

Upcoming Dive Trips and Events

Key West – March - Bill Davis and Kim Walther

Bahamas (Tiger Beach) – March - Mark Vogel

Little Cayman – April - Mark Vogel

Cuba – June - Bill Davis and Kim Walther

South Africa – June/July - Mark Vogel

Cozumel – July - Marshall Gross

Gadeloupe – July - Marshall Gross

Fiji – September - Marshall Gross

Caribbean Cruise – December - Bill Davis and Kim Walther

Dive Club Executive Officers' Reports

Safety

There was a discussion about a 13-year old boy who died on his first open water dive in Hawaii. He got separated and due to the low visibility conditions and he was lost. Read more about it here:

<http://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/2019/01/08/year-old-who-died-after-dive-incident-off-hawaii-kai-identified-visitor-mongolia/>

Treasurer - Evan Ball

We started 2018 with \$720 and ended 2018 with \$638. With all expenses we were only down \$82. Expenses included \$76 for our Post Office box, \$60 to register as a business, \$175 for the website, \$264 for t-shirts, \$150 raffle prizes, \$1885 for the Christmas party. We made \$1020 in Christmas dinner ticket sales and \$1600 from raffles and dues which brought us almost even with where we started the year. Please remember to pay your 2019 dues.

Webmaster - Sharon Green

The website is doing well. We had 849 unique visitors last month (December). Pictures from the Christmas party are requested. If you are planning a dive send the info and the calendar will be updated. Please put "NAS JAX DIVE CLUB" in the subject of the email so I know to open it.

Secretary – Craig Stoops

I am very happy to be the Secretary for the dive club and I look forward to getting to know everyone. Just a reminder that if you can send your dive reports via email to me before the meeting, that will help me with accuracy in the newsletter.

Vice President – Venessa Wood

The issue of needing a new place to meet is high on the agenda for the club. Feedback from the club is requested on any topic. Please come to the Eboard meetings if you would like. This month's Eboard meeting will be at my house on January 23rd at 6:30 pm. The more people that attend the better.

Dive Reports

Craig Stoops and Arvilla Scureman

Craig and family went back to Mexico for the Thanksgiving holiday where Craig and his son Harmen did two dives at the Cenote known as Dos Ojos. Craig also dove just off the beach in Akumal and saw a lot of Green sea turtles. Craig, Arvilla, Harmen and Sophie did a two tank dive off the reef in Tulum. Dive shops used included La Calypso dive center, <http://lcalypsodivecenter.com/>, Akumal Dive Center, <https://www.akumaldivecenter.com/> and Mexidivers, <https://mexidivers.com/>.

Bob Carmichael

We took the new RV down to the Keys for the first three weeks of December and stayed in Tavernier and dove five times with the Conch Republic <http://conchrepublicdivers.com/>. A couple trips were made on the Spiegel Grove, a couple of trips on the Duane and one trip on the Eagle. All were good dives with with 35 to 40-foot visibility. The current was very strong on the dive to the Duane. In the sanctuary we saw three or four lobsters running around. Art LaRue's lobster tickler that was left at the Conch Republic was safely returned.

Mark Vogel

I did a short cruise to Nassau for a few dives. One site was the "Lost Blue Hole" an effortless spiral dive down to 105 feet. Lots of life in the hole. Next dive was to Barracuda Reef with a max depth of 30 feet and there was also a lot of life. Bahamas diver was the company I used: <https://www.bahamadivers.com/>

Marshall Gross

We made a trip back to Bonaire. We stayed at the Sand Dollar again. Some of the rooms are privately owned which can increase the variability in the quality. The diving was spectacular. They are no longer killing the lion fish that are found. A box of Fruit Loops is now \$7.50 on the island economy.

Monster and Annette Molyneux, Bill Davis and Kim Walther, Craig Stoops and Arvilla Scureman

Having had a great experience on a cruise ship vacation with diving at various ports of call, Bill Davis and Kim Walther were anxious to do it again. They proposed a weekend cruise to the Bahamas leaving on Friday, January 4th and returning on Monday the 7th with Saturday and Sunday to get in some diving. A total of eight dive club members made the trip with Bill and Kim, including Monster, Annette, Craig, Arvilla, and their children Harmen and Sophie.

The group had made reservations with Stuart Cove's dive shop <https://stuartcove.com/> in Nassau for a two-tank boat dive that first day. On disembarking our Royal Caribbean cruise ship on Saturday morning we were directed around the pier area to a Customs building where they put paper stickers on our gear bags. Once we made it beyond the port's gates out to the street a large van rolled up to take us to Stuart Cove. It turns out the dive shop is on the other side of the island and the main road goes along the shoreline, so it took us about 45 minutes to get there.

Once we checked in and changed into our wetsuits we boarded the waiting dive boat and found we had it almost entirely to ourselves. A couple of other divers and the dive master were the only people going in the water besides our group. Another boat left the pier just before we did and it was packed to the max with divers, so we felt lucky to have a semi-private boat of our own.

The best information we'd had before the trip was to expect water temperatures around 72°F, but the water turned out to be around 79°F so we could have made the trip without our heavy wetsuits. The first dive was to around 60 feet in an area called Big Crab featuring two sunken wrecks. Visibility was around 50-60 feet.

Immediately on diving to the bottom we spotted several sharks, from 9-foot reef and white-tip sharks to smaller 4-foot silky sharks. As it turns out, the other dive boat was featuring a shark-feeding adventure so there were sharks prowling all around.

The two wrecks were called Ray of Hope and the Bahama Mama. Both featured large grouper and other solitary fish like a giant midnight parrotfish. Inside the first wreck was a room with a school of fish who seemed to be hiding out from the sharks just outside. The dive was tiring as we had to fight a current to get to each of the wrecks. Even though we were told our first dive would be a drift dive, there was a good deal of "uphill" swimming involved to get to the wrecks.

The boat was pitching and rolling in 2-3 foot seas which made getting back aboard a little challenging, but we all managed to get back and switch our gear over for the second dive.

After a relatively short surface interval we were dropped at our next dive site which was nicknamed the Pumpkin Patch. Currents there were negligible, depth was only around 30 feet, and we had a very relaxing long dive among abundant corals and every kind of colorful reef fish we typically find in the Caribbean and Atlantic, including a beautiful green moray, large spade fish, and various species of grunts, parrotfish, butterflyfish, jacks, angels, damsels, etc.

We asked about the lionfish we saw on this dive and were told by the divemaster that they didn't spear them here because it was dangerous with the shark feeding activity going on. They were afraid that spearing a lionfish might cause the sharks to become aggressive since they were used to the daily shark-encounter dives and were accustomed to getting handouts from divers.

Back ashore we had a long ride back to the cruise ship pier in a crowded van which stopped to drop passengers at some hotels along the way. Back on the ship we got cleaned up and we were all able to sit together at the "formal night" late evening meal in the main dining hall to compare notes on what we saw while diving. What a great diving day!

Sunday morning bright and early the ship moored outside Coco Cay, a private island in the Bahamas owned by the Royal Caribbean cruise company. We had all purchased a dive package from the cruise line and the eight of us were the only people on the excursion. We had an early muster aboard and were escorted to the first shore-bound tender leaving the ship.

On the island a friendly dive master helped us set up our gear and stow our gear bags. We then trudged to the beach wearing our tanks and waded in to a sandy shallow bay with rows of beach chairs set up on the shore. Once we were in the water and had performed weight checks, people on three jet skis towing floating "sleds" approached. Going one per jet ski we took turns being towed out of the bay to a buoy in the channel inlet. We held onto a rope at the buoy and waited until the entire group was assembled, then descended together for the underwater tour.

The depth for this dive was only around 35 feet on an out-and-back loop along the island reef wall. Again, the visibility was around 60 feet with 79°F water temperature. The first things we saw were large spotted eagle rays. They flew close by us in small groups. During this dive we also saw Southern rays and smaller yellow stingrays in the sand on the bottom. In addition to the usual assortment of fish and corals we saw solitary eels, lobsters, and tiny creatures like an arrow crab, cleaner shrimp, and nudibranchs.

After the dive we changed clothes and joined the rest of the ship for a massive beach picnic and some leisurely activity along the beach before taking the tender back to our cruise ship.

The next morning we were back at Port Canaveral, where the only adventure was breaking a wheel on one of Monster's suitcases and finding out that if you take some homemade beef jerky with you on the trip, you'd better eat it all because US Customs will hassle you if you try to enter the country with any meat -- even if you bought it at Publix before you left and prepared it yourself. Fortunately, no fines or jail time resulted, but Monster was dismayed at losing half a bag of Annette's delicious homemade jerky!

Special thanks to Kim and Bill who coordinated the trip and showed us the ropes along the way. Diving with people you know is the best way to enjoy this sport. Let's do this again soon!

Dippy Diver Award - For minor diving offenses. No nominations this month.

Coprolite Diver Award - For more serious diving infractions. No nominations this month.

This Month's Raffle Winners:

No raffle this month.

Members present at the January dive club meeting:

Glen Akins, Bill Allen, Evan Ball, Bob Carmichael, Bill Davis, Ed Fite, Sharon and Richard Green, Marshall Gross, Mitch Maxson, Monster and Annette Molyneux, Elmer Osborne, Rick Reckert, Billy Schofield, Arvilla Scureman, Craig Stoops, Vera Thomas, Chet and Dawn Tomlinson, Mark Vogel, Kim Walther, Eric Wilson and Vanessa Wood.

First Time Visitors to our Dive Club: None

NASJAX DIVE CLUB OFFICERS for 2019

President - Monster Molyneux

Vice President – Vanessa Wood

Secretary – Craig Stoops

Treasurer – Evan Ball

Safety Officer – Ben Storey

Webmaster- Sharon Green

JAX Dive Club T-Shirts for Sale

Our dive club now has four different colors of t-shirts for sale for only \$15 each. We have all sizes. If you would like one, contact Venessa Wood. We've added lime and sapphire blue colors to our line of shirts.

