



Neptunes Sounding Newsletter

ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS

Calendar, 2017

3/5 Club Dive

3/7 General Membership Mtg

3/11-12 Boston Sea Rovers Annual Show @ DoubleTree in Danvers <bostonsearovers.com>

3/14 Board Meeting

3/26 Club Dive

April 4 - General Mtg Speaker

4/9 Club Dive

4/11 Board Meeting

4/23 Club Dive

5/2 General Membership Mtg

5/7 Club Dive

5/9 Board Meeting

5/21 Club Dive

Club Officers, 2017

Todd Alger - President

Doug Eaton - Vice President

Rob Robison - Secretary/Newsletter

Theresa Czerepica - Treasurer

Board of Directors: John Blackadar, Tom Guild, Ken Hayes, Garrett Kane, Joe McAndrews, Jay Theriault, Rob Vice, Jeannine Willis, Chuck Zarba

southshoreneptunes@gmail.com

In Memoriam: Robert J. Cochrane, former director of the MBTA's Employee Assistance Program, school bus driver, husband, father grandfather, and **South Shore Neptune**, on Feb. 25, 2017. He was buried Mar. 6 in the Mass National Cemetery in Bourne. For more information and online guest book, go to <www.cartmelldavis.com>

DUES Reminder: If you haven't already, **please pay your \$35 dues**, checks payable to *South Shore Neptunes*, as soon as possible.

Newsletter Delivery: Our printing costs doubled this past year; as a result, we need your help to cut costs. If you would like to receive the newsletter by email, please inform the newsletter editor, Rob Robison, at <robisonr25@yahoo.com>.

SAVE the DATES: March 21 Speaker Matthew Lawrence (NOAA) about new wrecks, plus Stellwagen Bank update & more! @Neptunes clubhouse, 7PM

April 4 Speaker Victor Mastone, Director & Chief Underwater Archaeologist, Mass State Archaeology Board, @Neptunes clubhouse, 7 PM

April 12 Bay State Council meeting, Neptunes clubhouse, 7:30 PM

April 18 Diving Cocos Island, video/slideshow presentation by Rob Robison

MAY 27-JUNE 3 Bonaire Trip. The dates are carved in stone for the Bonaire Trip! Saturday May 27 through Saturday June 3. We will be staying at the all inclusive Plaza Beach Resort. A deposit of \$100+ per person is required to hold your spot and 16 Neptunes have already signed up! We have coordinated with a travel person for the flights. Contact <debi@waylandtravel.com>. **ACT NOW!**

Sea Rovers 63rd Annual Clinic

The 2017 Boston Sea Rovers Annual Clinic was a weekend event filled with excellent sessions and wonderful film slices from the evening program that was not to be missed. This year's exhibit hall complete with dive gear, including rebreathers and a very large underwater camera and housing display from Backscatter, plus travel opportunities to literally the seven seas, clubs like ours, and councils of all sorts rounded out the clinic and offered something for everyone. As usual our table and display paired with Bay State Council's became a focal point for those interested in what can be done to enhance the Bay State diving experience and where one can find a buddy to dive with and share some underwater fellowship. Special thanks to Blackie, Angelo, Ken and Teri Hayes, Doug Eaton, Todd Alger, Tommy Lo, Chuck Zarba, Garrett Kane, Jeannette Willis, Theresa, and Rob Robison for their contributions large and small in transporting, setting up, and tearing down the Club and Bay State Council displays, creating the slide show displays, manning the tables, taking photographs, and providing sandwiches and snacks. Photos of club member presence at the clinic can be found on Page 10, as well as on the Club Facebook page.

February Dives

Back River Dives

Update: **Doug Eaton** and **Rob Vice** have added more Neptunes, including **Todd Alger, Tommy Lo, Chuck Zarba**, and **Garrett Kane**, to their merry band of bottle and artifact hunters in the Back River (The Editor).

Jurassic Park or Adventure Diving Around Cocos (*Isla del Coco*) Island, CR

Story by Rob Robison

Photos by Anibal Morales, Javier Martí, Rob Robison, & Olga Van de Veeer

At 6 AM on Thursday February 9, 2017, I boarded an American Airlines flight at Boston Logan International connecting in Dallas with my Columbus Sea Nags dive buddy, Donn

Ellerbrock, for our continuation flight to San José, Costa Rica and eventually Cocos Island. I left Boston just in time to beat the Nor'easter blizzard that descended upon the airport an hour and a half later, shutting down all departing flights for the remainder of the day. While en route to Dallas, it was apparent from the view from the plane window that the Midwest was blanketed with snow, a poignant reminder of how wonderful it was to be heading some place warm in the dead of winter.



Source: <http://www.lantrisantdivers.com/cocos2008.htm>

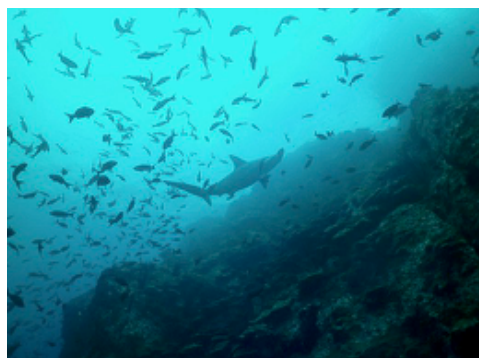


Photo courtesy Anibal Morales, Dive Master Okeanos II

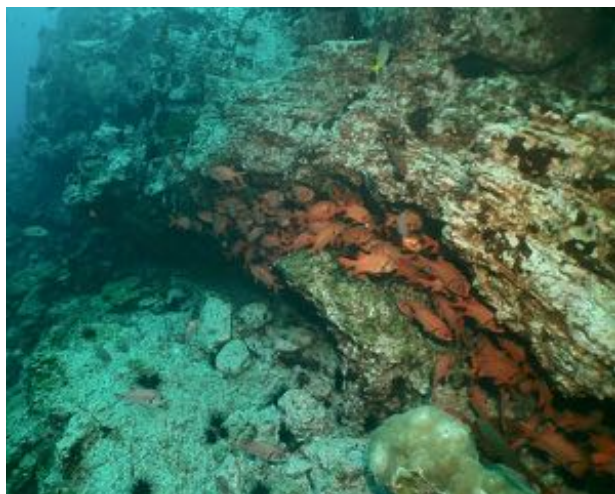
After landing at San José's international airport and whisking through customs, we were picked up by a livery and driven to the Holiday Inn Express, where we spent the night and awaited transport the next day to Punta Arenas and our dive boat to Cocos. The island lies 300KM (186 miles) to the West Southwest of Punta Arenas, CR. Thirty-six hours later, I awoke at 6:00AM CST to the clanking sound of the anchor chain and anchor deploying. We had arrived at *Isla del Coco*, in the middle of nowhere, in the midst of the vast Pacific

Ocean. I hopped out of bed and rushed on deck to see what looked like a scene from the movie, *Jurassic Park*, complete with waterfalls and all-encompassing jungle-like vegetation. It turns out part of the island was in fact used for one of the flyover scenes in the movie.

How did I become interested in Costa Rica's Cocos Island? It began as an offhand conversation with the president of the Boston Sea Rovers, Ethan Gordon, whom I met, fittingly enough, on last summer's South Shore Neptunes'-sponsored shark dive, 30 miles off Point Judith, RI. After much conversation, I became convinced this was the trip for me. In the end, diving Cocos Island from Aggressor Fleet's Okeanos II 120' X 28' live aboard dive vessel became a reality because the 25% discount for taking the trip in early February 2017 was too significant to pass up. Besides, Ethan told me he found the Cocos experience to be superior in some ways to diving the Galapagos. Having no point of valid comparison, I am not in position to say one way or another, but I can opine that diving Cocos Island is a dream come true. How else to explain diving on semi-submarine rock protrusions, dramatically forged from tremendous seismic upheavals jutting out of the sea in conical formations like orca teeth or jagged shark incisors, amidst schools, no I mean clouds of watermelon painted fish (Pacific creolefish), frequent rivers of Blueline (AKA



Bluestripe or Blue-and-Gold) snapper, to be precise, or soldierfish on nearly every one of the 24 dives we made day and night over a seven-day span.



Soldierfish river



Pacific Creole fish



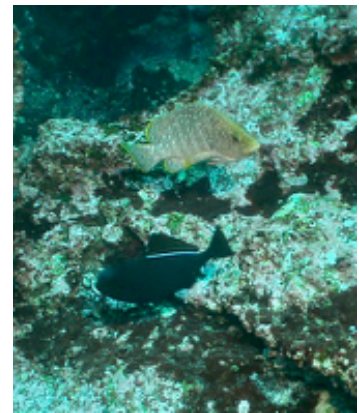
Blueline snapper shield

Sharks were everywhere. These dives were punctuated by astonishing schools of scalloped Hammerhead Sharks swimming in formation high up in the water column, down deep below us, or staring us right in the face. White tipped reef sharks galore foraged or slept singly or in pairs on the bottom, when not scouring the rocks in packs at night



Marbled ray (L) Barred filefish

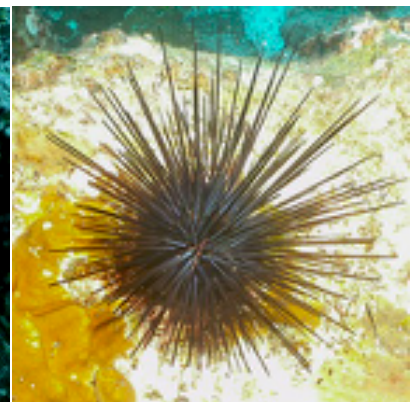
Soft coral tree



Middle row L-R: Guineafowl Puffer, Mexican Hogfish, Leather Bass & Black Durgon triggerfish.

Bottom row L-R: Moorish Idols, Sea cucumber, Spiny sea urchin

searching for easy prey. Occasional black tips and infrequent 12' to 15' long Galapagos or Silky sharks made their appearances day or night. Often appearing alone or with others were Marbled rays, occasional Spotted eagle rays, and a turtle or two that had escaped hungry tiger sharks. Long black-spined sea urchins coated rock indentations and turned the knees of the unwary into pin cushions, spiny lobsters peeked out from under rocks and precipices, as did octopuses, while small schools of Leather bass delighted the eye. Once in a great while a two-hundred pound plus tuna (Our dive master indicated there are many



up to 4 times that size swimming around the island) would appear out of the blue and glide by like the Graf Zeppelin, a most unforgettable and awe-inspiring sight if there ever was one to behold (Sorry! No photo.), and undoubtedly the most memorable visual underwater event I have from the trip.



Spotted boxfish



White tips



If you are looking for lots of all types, and a colorful tiny fish *a la* satisfied. On the other of fish, more fish in far of species than I have of the 70s, to be sure, protected national park everywhere, contrasting



of colorful soft corals, sponges rainbow-like aquarium full of *Bonaire*, you will be less than hand, the rock mounts are full greater abundance regardless seen anywhere since the end thanks to the island's status. And color is with the gray stone-based

background we dove against. What does exist is dramatic and definitely worth the trip. In the words of the Aggressor Fleet's promo video, Cocos Island is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, offering the largest most consistent schools of hammerheads in the world. If ever there was a poster child for marine conservation, Cocos Island would definitely take one of the prizes.

Diving Cocos is a unique, large animal, advanced adult diving experience, unlike anything I have ever faced in the Caribbean or elsewhere, due to the consistently deep diving, strong currents, and surges present on nearly every dive. I pegged only 2 of 24 dives shallower than 66'. With the exception of the night dives, virtually all of the dives really didn't begin until we reached 70' or deeper. Visibility routinely exceeded 100' - 150' or more with water temperatures fluctuating between 82° - 84°F, unless one dipped beneath the thermocline. The coldest temperature I recorded was 78°F on only two occasions. Three or 5mm suits offer more than adequate thermal protection, even when diving up to 4 times per day.

Because of our distance from shore and the deep diving agenda, this is not a place for playing games with decompression issues. One of our dive companions suffered decompression sickness on the first day. Neither he nor anyone else recognized his symptoms until the following day. It took another day and half or more to evacuate him by boat back to Punta Arenas (there's no helicopter), home to the nearest hyperbaric chamber,

in which he spent 7.5 hours all told. Had it not been for our well-trained captain, our two diving doctors on board, one of whom fortuitously had just finished DAN decompression training, our link to DAN, and our well-equipped boat, our companion would have faced debilitating complications if not worse. Likewise, this was not a place to get lost from the group and dive into blue water, either. We were all equipped with GPS units just in case.

Weather in early February was calm, warm—mid 80s to low 90s—ranging from overcast to sunny, with calm seas on the passages to and from the island and for the entire time at anchor. Clear nighttime skies were full of stars, made highly visible by the total absence of any source of light pollution. For the record, I was never seasick over the entire 10-day trip and did not take any motion sickness medications whatsoever. Our captain indicated that



14'-15' Galápagos shark on night dive, courtesy of Javier Martí

once the rainy season begins in April, the water cools a bit and attracts a wider range of large animals including Manta rays, tiger and mako sharks, as well as whale sharks, turtles, and larger-sized schools of hammerheads than we saw.

In addition to the large sharks, interesting rays, large schools of sliver pelagic fish, and eye-popping tuna, King angels were a new visual treat as were the Guinea fowl pufferfish, Chinese trumpetfish, Mexican hogfish, Zebra, Spotted, and White-Mouthed moray eels, needlefish, Mantis shrimp, Pacific creolefish, and Barred filefish, to name but a few. One of our dive companions dove down to 120', found, and photographed the rare red-lipped Batfish. In addition, we were fortunate to frequently dive on hammerhead cleaner stations, flushed by constant currents and thermal upwelling, which accounted in large part for the abundance of these large, powerful creatures. One in particular stood out, *Alcyón*, a site well off shore, originally discovered by none other than Jacques Cousteau. All in all, we dove on 11 different sites. And even though we made repeat dives on a number of these, the dives were never the same. There was always something new or different and awe-inspiring to see.

With all the energy expended diving on a daily basis—we dove from two 27' – 30' Zodiacs powered by single Suzuki 140s—it was great to return to warm refreshing showers on the

fantail of the boat, platters of fresh-cut fruit to rinse the saltwater taste from our mouths after each dive, and delightful meals, usually gourmet at night, with gourmet desserts par for the course. Although I didn't jot down the menu for every meal, here's a sample of what we feasted on daily:

Breakfast:	6:00AM	Coffee, tea and water available for the early risers,
	6:30AM	Assorted cold, hot cereal, assorted juices, breads & butter (toaster available), pastries, ham, cheese, yogurt, breakfast sausages, Canadian bacon, or bacon, fruit
	7:00AM	Eggs to order
Lunch	12:30PM	Tacos: tortillas beef/chicken, refried beans, <i>pico de gallo</i> , <i>guacamole</i> , sour cream, fruit or ice cream dessert
Dinner	6:30PM	Chicken breast, carrots & broccoli, rice, Passion fruit mousse dessert. I also remember Mexican Night, Costa Rican Night, Sushi Night, Burger Night, Thanksgiving-style Roast Turkey Night when our chef personally carved an enormous bird for us, Steak Night, and numerous fish dinners/lunches...

When at anchor, evening meals were celebrated with cloth napkins and table cloths. Wine and beer were available for all evening meals. Quite honestly, there was something for everyone to eat at every meal and the food was simply outstanding. Our dining crew couldn't have been more courteous, helpful, nor easier to work with. No one could have asked for more. The same can be said for our captain, dive masters and their helpers along with our boat pilots, and the boat engineer. It was great to be able to dive with aluminum 100s, Nitrox, and to have everything on board actually work, including in our staterooms. All was in good repair, shipshape, and clean.



Yellow trumpet



Reef Coronet fish & divers



Tubastrea corals and urchins



Crown of Thorns starfish, courtesy of Olga D. Van de Veer

We were 22 divers from the following countries in no particular order: France, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Scotland, England, Canada, Japan, and the US. Everyone got along well. All were experienced well-traveled divers who made all 24 of the available dives. One couple was making their third dive trip to the island on the dive boat. That by itself is a testament to the quality experience the Aggressor Fleet's Okeanos II provides any diver who seeks the thrill of adventure diving on Costa Rica's Cocos Island. In a nutshell, diving into it just doesn't get any better than this, folks. It was so much fun!



Rob

After all that effort, it was time for Donn and me to take a snooze.
Be sure to attend the **April 18** meeting to watch the **slide show and videoclips from the trip!**

Sea Rovers Clinic Photos by Theresa Czerepica



For the rest of the photos, go to the Club Facebook page. Everyone had a great time.



