

## From the Founder

By Michael Feld  
President/Founder

Welcome to the inaugural issue of Oceanblue Currents, the official newsletter of Oceanblue Divers. If you are new to the club, this is a good place to learn more; if you're an old hand, it'll help keep you up with our latest activities, social events, trips, destinations, news about the oceans, and all things diving. It's also a place for questions and answers, feedback, humor, and member participation. We're looking for people to help expand and improve the newsletter, so if you're a writer and would like to contribute, please let us know.

Oceanblue Divers is a very young club, founded just under two years ago, in June of 2006. In that time we've accomplished a lot; we're the fastest growing scuba diving club in the country with over 1000 members; we've taken eight successful dive trips to destinations around the world (with more to come!); raised more than \$20,000 for marine ecology-based charities such as the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and Shark Research Institute; and we've taught people about the state of the oceans, while enjoying them ourselves. This is more than some dive clubs accomplish in years!

That said, we're not resting on our laurels. We have big plans for the future, and we hope you'll be a part of them. We

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## A Dive Community is More Than the Sum of Its Parts

By Roger Williams  
Dive Evangelist

Divers love diving. That may seem obvious enough, but the simplicity of the statement is only matched by the depth (no pun intended) to which it is true. Divers love diving in a way that it fills them, saturates them. They love thinking about diving and daydreaming about diving and talking about diving and being around other divers.

That last bit is the most crucial. Being around other divers. While even the most solitary pastimes—povernapping, for example—are enriched by a community of fellow practitioners, because of the travel and gear intensity of our sport, scuba diving is a communal activity of necessity.

We find each other bleary-eyed and coffee-guzzling in the lobby of resort hotels at 7 a.m. to await the shuttle to the dive boat while the rest

of the hotel still slumbers, ignorant of the wonder we are off to enjoy. We trade smiles and groans and comment about how it's way too early, but in the end, any one of us would suffer waking up at any hour to go diving. Sometimes you share only a single boat ride with those folks, sometimes



Divers practice skills in a quarry

you bump into each other a few times over the course of the week. Either way, it is rare that you get back to your hotel room without having learned their names, isn't it?

Liveboard dive boats make the waking-up part easier, since all you have to do is open your eyes and backroll and you're on the reef. They also make not for acquaintanceships, but friendships. A week of stumbling over one another's fins on the dive deck, passing one another the salt and pepper, trading stories of the rarest wildlife you've

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### Oceanblue Currents

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Oceanblue Divers is dedicated to:

- Promoting the sport of diving
- Furthering dive education and dive safety
- Fostering environmental responsibility, respect for the environment, and low-impact diving
- Increasing environmental awareness for others and ourselves
- Organizing travel to the best dive destinations on the planet
- Building community among the divers of the New York City area—and around the world!

# Make Some Friends For Life

*By Michael Strickland*  
*Editorial Director*

You've got plenty of reasons to go on an Oceanblue Divers trip:

**Great value:** Just compare them to any comparable trip offered by a dive shop if you want proof.

**Fantastic destinations:** This past year, Oceanblue has traveled to Sulawesi, Bonaire, Cozumel, Roatan, the Bahamas, Key Largo and California's Channel Islands (not to mention exotic Dutch Springs).

**No hassle:** The trip organizer handles all the trip planning and preparation for you.

**Fun people:** You'll hang out with a group of fun divers.

Most people probably book dive travel based on the first two items:

price and destination. But in my mind, that last one—fun people—is the oft-overlooked but best reason to go on an Oceanblue Divers trip.

So far, I've traveled with the club on five of the trips (Bahamas, Cozumel, Bonaire, the Channel Islands and Roatan). On those trips, I haven't just met new divers—I've made friends for life. Now, Oceanblue happy hours are more than just fun and informative evenings for me: they're reunions with great friends.

If you're new to the club, or if you feel like you haven't gotten to know as many of our members as you'd like, my advice is: "Go on a trip." You'll greet strangers in the airport on the morning of your departure, and bid a fond farewell to new friends on your return.

Oh, yeah... you'll do some great diving too.



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want to be true to our motto, which is "America's Ultimate Scuba Diving Club." To that end, we're going on more trips, planning better events, and this year we're offering our first training classes. We've begun to create surveys to see what it is you are interested in learning about, even expanding beyond traditional "dive" training, into areas of physical fitness and adventure, which will help us all be better prepared for our time under water.

As always, we welcome your feedback, so please let us know your

thoughts to help us to improve the club.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Mike Strickland for taking on the challenge of creating this newsletter, and for his countless contributions to the club in general. Thanks also go to the other newsletter contributors, Roger Williams, Steve Marriner, Tara Losoff, and the rest of the Executive Committee for their valued and engaging contributions. Finally, I'd like to thank each and every one of you for your support, and be sure to look forward to bigger and better things to come for Oceanblue Divers!

# Diving Our Faces Off in Roatan

By **Michael Strickland**  
*Editorial Director*

I'd been to Roatan, the largest of Honduras' Bay Islands, only once before. Back in 2004, Roatan was just one of many stops during a three-week tour throughout Honduras. This time, the trip was all about Roatan and diving with buddies from Oceanblue.

The island boasts some of the best diving in the Caribbean, and shares the world's second-largest barrier reef system with nearby Belize. The reef—and all of its dive sites—lies just offshore, and the wall quickly falls off into the Cayman Trench, nearly as deep as Mt. Everest is tall. What makes Roatan's reef so distinctive and exciting to explore is its “spur and groove” structure, which features lots of crevices and swim-through tunnels.

When the 21 of us arrived at the Inn of Last Resort (aptly named, as it turned out) for our weeklong “Dive Your Face Off” trip, we were happy to find a lush jungle hideaway, air-

conditioned rooms and a bar manned by eager-to-please bartender Ziggy. Sun-baked manager “Captain Ed,” looking more salty than the nearby ocean, gave us a briefing with our welcome cocktail. Our fellow traveler Chuck described him well by scrawling a warning on the resort's graffiti-encrusted lagoon bar: “Be careful, you're two drinks away from becoming Captain Ed.”

Despite a few issues with the dive boats on our first two dive days (ask one of us at the next happy hour if you haven't heard the story), we had a great time. Ziggy made a signature chocolate piña colada, the lagoon offered snorkeling that was almost as good as the offshore diving, and the weather was close to perfect.

As we debated whether to make the trek to West Bay Beach on our last afternoon, or simply stay at the resort and relax at the lagoon (we chose the latter), we realized that, “last resort” or not, we should have booked two weeks instead of one.

## Oceanblue Divers Trip Schedule

If you missed the recent dive travel-themed happy hour, you may not know we've got some “dive trips of a lifetime” planned for 2008 and 2009. Sign up now at [www.oceanbluedivers.net](http://www.oceanbluedivers.net)!

### North Carolina: Wrecks & Sharks

May 22-26, 2008  
 Dive WW II wrecks while sand tiger sharks circle nearby.

### Dive 'n' Dash: Jost Van Dyke, BVIs

August 8-13, 2008  
 Come with us to the funnest of the British Virgin Islands!

### Explore the Exumas in Liveaboard Luxury

September 6-13, 2008  
 We'll cruise some of the most unspoiled parts of the Bahamas.

### By Popular Demand: Maldives

February 11-17, 2009  
 You asked, we organized it: we're going to the Indian Ocean.

### Diving+Culture: Egypt, the Red Sea and Pyramids

May 22-June 3, 2009  
 We're diving Sharm El Sheik and then seeing the ancient world!

### Dragons & Diving in Komodo, Indonesia

August 1-16, 2009  
 A true “final frontier” of diving on an ultra-luxury liveaboard.



Divers wind down at Sundowners in Roatan's West End after a fun day of diving.

# Offgassing with Captain

## Salty McSalt



It's funny how usually us divers are asked by non-divers something like, "Cap'n McSalt, aren't you scared of sharks?"

"Scared of 'em," I always laugh right at them, "Heck yes, I'm scared of them. Vicious killers, they are."

Nowadays in the touchy-feely, eco-conscious dive classes, they're teaching about how no species of shark is any more interested in you than they are of a nuclear submarine. But you just listen to me, whoever came up with that lie never had to fight a 14-foot sand tiger off their stringer of 10 seabass.

Yes, I know what the catch limit on seabass is, I was carrying my friend's catch, too. And his friend's. While they waited on the boat.

All's I'm saying is that once those monsters get a whiff of fish in the water, they turn into mindless eating machines with nothing but death in their heads.

I got a couple of good hits in. They say you should punch a shark right in the nose and that it makes them dizzy or something. Well, I don't know if that worked or not. If it did, that's probably the only thing what kept that beast from eating me after he got a hold of my stringer and swam off like a dirty thief.

"But Cap'n," you might say, "I've seen sleeping nurse sharks and huge schools of hammerhead sharks and cute, little leopard sharks and all sorts of sharks in my dives and I've never had any problem with them at all."

And I'd say it's only a matter of time. Can't trust those fish. It's in their creepy eyes.

Why, not two years ago I was on a reef in the Bahamas wanting to get a picture of myself with a nurse shark, like a novelty shot. So I told my randomly assigned dive buddy before we got in the water that he should bring my camera and get a picture of me with the stupid fish.

That *supposedly* docile animal instantly turned on me and tried to bite my arm clean off as soon as I grabbed it by the tail and pulled it out from under the ledge where it was hiding (probably plotting the next attack on an innocent victim). For some reason, my buddy was too busy trying to get me to let go of the shark that he didn't even get the picture!

"Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but bubbles," he was babbling at me even before we were back on the boat. When I explained that I was trying to get him to

take a picture, he just stormed off and asked the divemaster for a new buddy. Some

people just don't appreciate nature.

Lemme tell you something else. You have all your peaceniks talking about how sharks are an integral part of the food-web-whatchamacallit.

Then, right in the same breath, they're

complaining about over-fishing. I have the perfect solution for them. Those sharks are eating all our fish. Why don't we get rid of all the sharks, and then there will be more fish for us!

I hear they have a really efficient way of getting rid of sharks in Asia where they pull them out of the sea and hack off all their fins to make soup. Now here's the good part, they throw the still-living, finless shark back into the ocean to sink to the bottom and drown.

Seems too good for their kind, if you ask me. But what works, works. Shark populations are declining incredibly fast, thanks to the demand for shark fin soup. Why, I eat buckets of the stuff myself. I like to do my part.

I tell you another animal you can't trust: stingrays. Always hiding in the sand like you can't see them. Why would they be hiding if they weren't up to no good?

Diving should be about sitting down right on a coral reef and relaxing, not about having to avoid animals that are trying to do you harm. So am I scared of sharks? Yes, but they'd do well to be scared of me, too.



*Captain Salty McSalt has been diving since long before you have. No matter where you've been diving, he was there at least 10 years earlier when it was still pretty. He has been to 500FSW on air and has seen fish that you've probably never heard of. Like the Blackfooted Trumpetbanner. See? You never heard of that, did you? Me either, but the Captain insists he has seen shoals of them.*

## Ask the Captain

Got a burning question? Captain Salty McSalt's got the answer. He taught Jacques Cousteau how to scuba dive, so he can sure teach you a thing or two. Send your question to [salty@oceanbluedivers.net](mailto:salty@oceanbluedivers.net).

## And the Survey Says....

*We will soon distribute a comprehensive survey to the entire membership in an effort to build a more complete picture of what you need and want from your dive club. We'll be asking you questions about your diving experience, what kind of training you'd like us to offer, and much more.*

*The effectiveness of this survey is directly proportional to your participation; if we don't hear from you, we don't know how to better serve you. So when we distribute the survey, we'd really appreciate your input.*

*And remember, wetter is better!*

### ***Have you updated your online profile lately?***

Please take a moment to update your profile on Oceanblue Divers' Meetup site.

- Your replies to the profile questions help us measure the dive experience of our members, so that we can plan appropriate events and trips.
- Posting a picture of yourself helps your fellow members recognize you at our events.

## Community, cont'd from page 1

seen, and just sitting in the hot tub on the sundeck during the surface interval. You learn not just your fellow divers' names, but their kids' names. And, just as often as not, you learn their email addresses so that you might exchange dive stories well into the future.

The folks at the dive shop know your name too, don't they? They know what sort of diving you like and where you've been. The best thing about a really great dive shop is that while you may walk in simply because, say, you need a new mask strap... you wind up standing there talking about diving for an hour and a half. The conversation starts with the cat behind the counter and before you know it, everyone who walks through the door gets involved and you have a diving salon on your hands.

Oceanblue Divers is one among many dive clubs worldwide (and not to disparage any other club, but it is admittedly the best) with the critical function of actively fostering the dive community. I say "critical" because, while it may not be apparent: the diving community is threatened.

The price of travel continues to rise with the price of jet fuel. Dive shops close due to cost-cutting competition, because manufacturers don't allow them to compete. People seek the inconsistently reliable advice of message boards instead of finding like-minded folks whose opinions they can trust.

This is not to say that people are going to stop traveling altogether or that the internet is evil, but the dive industry as a whole is hurting right now, and that's a fact. I'm not worried, though. I've already seen an inspiring example of how a community is as strong as its members.

I started my diving addiction in a land-locked area of Virginia. The addiction had an easy fix at the local quarry. Despite being three hours from any sort of ocean, a large and rich dive community had built up around that quarry's shores. Weekend after weekend there were the anxious and excited faces of Open Water students and just as many faces smiling as they set up a smoker (this is Virginia, after all, real barbeque) to cook while the chef was diving. Then, after all the gear was packed up, circles of lawn chairs would start drawing themselves

down by the water so divers could eat and trade beers and laugh..

But, "land-locked" is a house of cards for an aquatic sport.

The quarry was infested with zebra mussels. Nasty, pestilent little buggers. Parks Services considered how to treat the problem with one leading option: a chemical treatment which would have rendered the quarry undiveable for several seasons *and* killed off a good deal of wildlife other than the mussels. It would have been catastrophic to the local dive community as well as the local ecosystem. So the community rallied.

Clubs and shops banded together and made their case to the Parks Services that a lower impact alternative must be pursued. The community prevailed and the quarry stayed open. The mussels still got "whacked," though.

The happy hours are fun, the presenters have all been fascinating, and the vacations are always a blast. But Oceanblue Divers, to me, is more than the sum of its parts. To have a diving community as involved and as dedicated as you folks is transcendent.

Let's do our best with it. Let's keep making it count.

## 6 • Events & Activities

### Oceanblue Divers Training Courses to Debut in Spring

This spring, we will debut our long-awaited training activities with a pair of safety-focused courses:

#### **Saturday-Sunday, May 31-June 1 ■ 10:00 am CPR/AED/First Aid Course**

This two-day course is far more comprehensive than the standard CPR course, and will specifically be geared toward emergency response in diving situations. Certification earned by taking this course is the “BLS Health Provider Level” from the American Heart Association. Registration preference given to those taking the July rescue training course (see below). Cost: \$175.

#### **Friday-Sunday, July 18-20**

#### **Intensive Rescue Training course with Lifeguard Systems**

A full weekend of rescue training by arguably the best dive training company on the planet, Lifeguard Systems. This course will go well beyond typical Rescue Diver training/certification that you’d get from just about any dive shop anywhere. Meet at Dutch Springs at 6 pm on Friday night.

For more information, or to register for these training courses, visit [www.oceanbluedivers.net](http://www.oceanbluedivers.net) or email Oceanblue Divers Training Director Steve Marriner at [steve@oceanbluedivers.net](mailto:steve@oceanbluedivers.net).



### Upcoming Happy Hour Speakers & Presentations

#### **Thursday, April 17**

#### **Rick Morris, Film Producer**

Rick Morris’ documentary “Infinite Oceans” features compelling underwater footage and interviews with Howard & Michele Hall, David Doubilet, Stan Waterman and others.

#### **Thursday, May 15**

#### **Mark Snyder, Professional Underwater Photographer**

Mark Snyder specializes in producing wide angle images that utilize specific lighting techniques. His portfolio has been published in Fathoms Magazine.

#### **Thursday, June 19**

#### **Gaelin Rosenwaks, Oceanographic Researcher**

Gaelin Rosenwaks will discuss her research on the migratory movements of giant bluefin tunas.

#### **Thursday, July 17**

Speaker TBA.

#### **Thursday, August 21**

#### **David Gallo, Director of Special Projects, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution**

David Gallo was one of the first oceanographers to map the undersea world with unprecedented clarity and detail, and co-led expeditions to the Titanic and the Bismarck.

#### **Thursday, September 18 – Evan Kovacs, Underwater Film Producer**

Evan Kovacs has worked on over 30 episodes of the History Channel’s underwater adventure series Deep Sea Detectives, and currently serves as the show’s lead underwater cameraman.

**As always, Oceanblue Divers happy hours—and membership—are FREE!**

*Note: Dates and speakers are subject to change.*

## Local Diving Calendar

#### **Sunday, June 8 ■ 1:00 pm**

#### **Dutch Springs Season Kickoff**

That’s right, folks, it’s time to kick off the dive season AND celebrate Oceanblue president and founder Michael Feld’s birthday! We’ll start the season off right with lots of diving and grilling. Some club members will even camp out and dive all weekend. It’s going to be great fun, you won’t want to miss it!

#### **Saturday, June 14 ■ 6:00 am**

#### **San Diego on the RV Garloo**

The San Diego was a US Armored Cruiser as long as a 50-story building. It sank in 1918 when it hit a mine placed by a German U-Boat off Fire Island. This wreck is alive with history and a great way to spend Flag Day. **FULL—RSVP to get on wait list.**

#### **Sunday, July 6 ■ 5:00 pm**

#### **Free Dive on the John Jack with Captain Zero**

The wreck sits in only 55 FSW and is a short boat ride from the dock. We will be leaving the dock at 5pm, so this will be a one-tank dive.

#### **Sunday, October 5 ■ 8:00 am**

#### **Encore Dive on the John Jack**

Missed the July 6 dive on the John Jack? Here’s your chance to do it again, and close out the local diving season with style. We’ll do a 2-tank dive in the warmer waters of the late season brought close inshore by the Gulf Stream.

Visit [www.oceanbluedivers.net](http://www.oceanbluedivers.net) to RSVP for these events, or email [larry@oceanbluedivers.net](mailto:larry@oceanbluedivers.net).

## Shark Overfishing Leads to Scallop Fishery Collapse

According to a 2007 study in the journal *Science*, decades of overfishing of Atlantic sharks like the dusky shark caused the collapse of the U.S. shellfish industry.

With the disappearance of Atlantic sharks, populations of their former prey, cownose ray, have grown tenfold. Scallops are a central part of the rays' diet. The study shows that the population boom of cownose rays put an end to North Carolina's century-old Bay scallop fishery in 2004.

Without a recovery of Atlantic sharks, researchers fear the migrating

rays will consume U.S. shellfish populations beyond recovery.



Photo courtesy of Andy Murch, [Elasmodiver.com](http://Elasmodiver.com)

The dusky shark is just one of 48 federally managed fish stocks that

were damaged by overfishing in 2006. Reckless overfishing continues to put our fish, birds, marine mammals, and all of ocean life at jeopardy.

Make a statement to preserve ocean life! Tell the National Marine Fisheries Service to revise its rules for overfishing and conduct environmental review to protect fish like the dusky shark and the ecosystems that depend on them.

For more information, visit the Conserve Our Ocean Legacy website at [www.oceanlegacy.org](http://www.oceanlegacy.org), or take action at [http://actionnetwork.org/campaign/dusky\\_sharks\\_TL](http://actionnetwork.org/campaign/dusky_sharks_TL).

## Scuba Divers: Act Now for the Future of Our Oceans

By **Tara Losoff**  
*Ecology Director*

As scuba divers, we have the opportunity to explore a world of new experiences and discoveries that many cannot. With this opportunity comes the responsibility to take care of marine ecosystems now for future generations. You may have encountered the degradation of a coral reef, the effects of an oil spill on an ecosystem, or other consequences of human development and practices. Right now, you have a chance to make a difference for our oceans. Take Action Today!

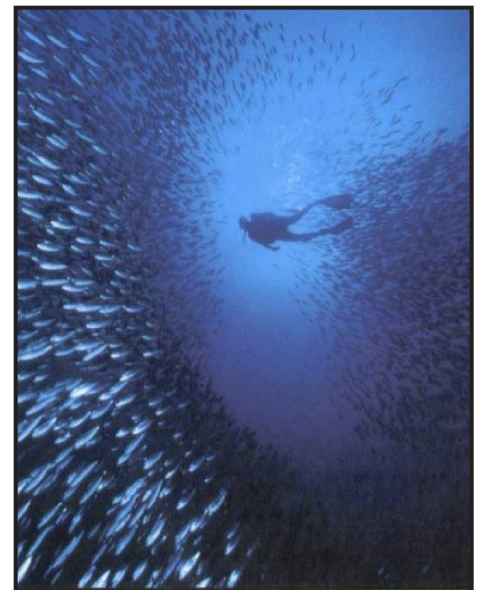
Scuba divers have an incredible potential to protect the oceans we love. More than 3 million Americans are estimated to be scuba certified by the year 2010. It is also estimated that the scuba diving industry brings in over \$700 million to the United States

economy every year. With the large number of scuba divers and the revenue the industry creates, the diving community has a great opportunity to become a powerful force in the debate over the future of our ocean environment.

Can you imagine never again having the thrilling experience of swimming next to a shark or exploring a thriving coral reef on a dive trip? The disappearance of ocean fish has direct consequences for the future of marine ecosystems.

Unfortunately, overfishing is known to be occurring on 25 percent of fisheries in U.S. waters with cascading impacts on ocean life. Unsustainable fishing practices not only threaten the future of scuba diving, fishing, and seafood but they also have broad consequences for sea turtles, marine mammals, seabirds, and other forms of marine life.

Overfishing practices will also have unpredictable effects on our coral reefs and the many species of grouper, snapper, butterflyfish, and angelfish that inhabit them. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is taking public comments as it revises its rules for overfishing and environmental review. Tell NMFS to End Overfishing Now!



## 8 • Fun & Games

### Try Your Luck at Some Scuba Diving Trivia

Answer the following trivia question to win a T-shirt!

*Whose invention cut the number of hoses needed on a regulator in half?*

The first Oceanblue Divers member to email the correct answer to [trivia@oceanbluedivers.net](mailto:trivia@oceanbluedivers.net) will receive a free “Wetter is Better” T-shirt!

Test your knowledge with these additional questions (answers below):

1. What times of day are predators most active on a coral reef?
2. What is another name for the Bannerfish?
3. “Jaws” author Peter Benchley was the grandson of the great humorist Robert Benchley, who suffered from what foreshadowing phobia?



*Trivia answers: 1. Dawn and dusk. 2. Coachman. 3. Hydrophobia.*

### That sinking feeling...

Three instructors and their students are on board a dive boat in the middle of the ocean. There's a NAUI instructor, a PADI instructor, and an SSI instructor. Everything is going fine, until the boat springs a leak, and starts to sink.

The SSI instructor says to his students, “Okay... we're in the middle of the ocean, so we might as well do our deep dive.”

The NAUI instructor says to his students, “Okay... we might as well do our navigation dive, so let's get our compasses out and swim towards shore.”

The PADI instructor says to his students, “Okay... for \$25 extra you guys get to do a wreck dive!”

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