



The Mouthpiece



September 2011 THE ACTIVE DIVERS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park

By Carol Cox

Have you ever wondered what the gorgeous reefs off the coast of Florida looked like thousands of years ago? If you get a chance, take an hour or so to look at the fossilized reefs at Windley Key Fossil Reef Geological State Park at mile marker 84.5 on the Overseas Highway in the Florida Keys (across the highway from Hog Heaven and just past Smugglers Cove. There is a brown Florida State Park sign just before the entrance but be sure to slow down....going south, it is a sharp right turn into the parking lot.)

This park was originally a quarry for the 'Key Largo Limestone' used to build Flaglers Railroad to Key West. To stand in the center of what used to be a limestone pit and look around at the walls of fossilized coral is amazing. You can see the patterns of sea fans, brain coral and other corals turned to stone embedded in the walls and blocks of limestone scattered around the remains of the quarry. There are also several original pieces of machinery on display that were used to cut the limestone into blocks.

To see the intricate patterns of brain coral or a sea fan or many other corals represented, petrified into limestone is amazing. To think that the walls around the exhibit used to be living matter is quite something. The floor of the quarry is now about six feet lower than the remaining walls of fossilized coral and the ridges of where the coral was cut are clearly visible. Take one of the several well marked nature trails from the visitors center to see native trees and more of the fossilized coral walls. Tours are self guided and a guide book is available from the visitors center or, guided tours take place twice a day. Admission to the fossil reef area is a couple of dollars but well worth the admission price. The park is open Thursday through Monday from 1am to 5pm. This Florida State Park is a must see for anyone who appreciates the coral reefs and how they looked thousands of years ago.



North Key Largo July 30.....Shark!

by Carol Cox

We had a busy day at Atlantis Dive Center in Key Largo on July 30. It started out as 'kinda iffy' weather wise with 15-20 knot winds predicted and possibly 4-6 foot seas.

Hardly....it was not what I'd even call a bouncy day. The sun was shining and there was a nice breeze but not the rough conditions we thought we'd be diving in. The first dive was at Minnow Caves at North Dry Rocks and yes, there were minnows. Several ADA divers were seen hanging out in the caves, pretending to be minnows. The resident groupers, jacks and a barracuda or two were also hanging out, watching the action. The surge was minimal and the water was a nice toasty 85 degrees. There were also quite a few legal size lobsters around who were well aware of being in a sanctuary and besides, mini lobster season was over two days ago. I found an illegal lobster (not size but in an abandoned mesh bag) and after determining he was very much alive, I untangled the mesh around him. He was squeaking at me the whole time, as if saying 'get me out of here!' so he was a happy lobster when I freed him and he shot away under a rock.

The second dive was at South South Ledges, not too far from North Dry Rocks, again nice 'finger' coral channels to follow along. I spotted two lionfish during this dive and since Capt. Slate has a 'license to kill', I tried out my new lionfish spear but to no avail as my spear was too short. 'I gotta get a longer spear!' All I did was push them around as they dove under the coral. To make up for the lost lionfish, we found a really big Goliath Grouper in a hole that was barely big enough to contain him (no, I did NOT try to spear him, which is not only illegal but he could have swallowed my head whole). Estimates were at 5 feet long and maybe a hundred or so pounds....and a 'don't mess with me' look in his eyes. I had decided to leave my camera on the boat for a change and just 'go divin' but the big guy would have made a nice shot. It's amazing what you can see when you don't have a camera in front of your mask all the time. We also saw several colorful Queen Angels, Spadefish, Barracudas and again, tons of lobsters.

After returning to the dock in still gorgeous sunshine, we had a nice Bar B Que with myself doing the cooking honors. I was pleased when someone told me that those were the best hamburgers they ever ate (okay, I have a secret recipe but I'm not tellin'). After everyone had their fill of burgers, hotdogs, chicken and brownies, a few of us went out for a night dive on the City of Washington. Now I've been on the 'City' dozens of

times and know the layout but I have to admit, at night it was a little spooky, knowing full well that in 12 hours time, Captain Slate would be here doing his Creature Feature and feeding his sharks, eels and groupers. An eel was sighted near the beginning of the dive and we had a close encounter with a nurse shark towards to end but before that, we turned off our dive lights and watched the bioluminescence in the water. Directly in front

of me was a vertical line of 5 lights and others were near. It was like being in the Abyss movie. After turning our lights back on, we came across a nurse shark under the 'City'. He was resting on the bottom and needless to say, my video light was much too bright, even for his poor vision. I kept my video running for about a minute and half and by then, he'd had enough and pushed past us out into the blackness as he swam away to find a nice dark place to rest until morning. Wow, close encounter with a shark at night....gulp! The dive was over much too soon but that wasn't all. The stars were shining bright and the big dipper was next to us in the sky on the ride in. A perfect ending to what was predicted to be a 'rough' day on the seas.



September

- 9-4 Sun pm Boca Raton (*Advanced*) \$49
Drift Dive in swift currents, giant turtles, grouper, schooling fish and outstanding color. Depth 80-100', visibility 40-100'. Many wreck/reef sites to choose. See advanced criterion this issue.
- 9-10 Sat pm Tavernier \$49
Sites may include: Conch Reef, Davis Ledge, Hens & Chickens, Little Conch, Capt. Tom's Ledge, 40' Ledge, Fish Trap, Horseshoe. Average depth 30', average visibility 40-60', many morays, schooling tropicals, unusual pillar corals.
- 9-10 Sat Night Tavernier \$49
See the same reef at night and see a whole new reef! Never been on a night dive? Now your chance and we'll even teach you how it's done.
- 9-18 Sun am BNP \$59
Sites may include: Rocky Reef, Elkhorn Forest, Ball Buoy, Far Out Reef, Cuda Ledge. Usually no currents, massive corals, small caves. The Keys "Best Kept Secret", only one commercial boat allowed in area. Depth 20-30', vis. 30-60'.
- 9-25 Sun pm North Key Largo \$49
Sites may include: The Christ of the Abyss, the Elbow, N. Dry Rocks, N. N. Dry Rocks, Grecian Rocks, Carysfort, Shark Reef. Average depth 30', usually no current. Average visibility is 30-50' with many tropicals, morays, cudas.

October

- 10-2 Sun pm W. Palm (*Advanced*) \$49
Dri Dive in swi currents, giant turtles, grouper, schooling fish and outstanding color. Depth 80-100', visibility 40-100'. Many wreck/reef sites to choose. See advanced criterion this issue.
- 10-8 Sat pm N. Key Largo \$49
Sites may include: The Christ of the Abyss, the Elbow, N. Dry Rocks, N. N. Dry Rocks, Grecian Rocks, Carysfort, Shark Reef. Average depth 30', usually no current. Average visibility is 30-50' with many tropical's, morays, cudas.
- 10-15 Sat pm Islamorada \$49
Just 4 miles past Tavernier, sites may include: Hammerhead, The Canyon, El Infante, Crocker, No Name, The Valley Aquarium, Alligator. Average depth 30-40', visibility 40-50'. Some current, many fish, shallow wrecks.
- 10-23 Sun pm Eagle Wreck (*Advanced*) \$49
The EAGLE, named for its donor, The Eagle Tire Company, is a huge freighter, lying on it's side in about 115' of water. Two green morays call it home, as do tarpon and barracudas. We call it a great dive! See advanced criterion this issue.
- 10-29 Sat pm Ft Lauderdale (*Advanced*) \$49
Double your pleasure with the best of both worlds! A reef followed by a wreck. A plethora of flora and fauna, just waiing to be explored. See advanced criterion this issue.

November

- 11-6 Sun am BNP \$59
Sites may include: Rocky Reef, Elkhorn Forest, Ball Buoy, Far Out Reef, Cuda Ledge. Usually no currents, massive corals, small caves. The Keys "Best Kept Secret", only one commercial boat allowed in area. Depth 20-30', vis 30-60'.
- 11-13 Sun pm W Palm (*Advanced*) \$49
Dri Dive in swi currents, giant turtles, grouper, schooling fish and outstanding color. Depth 80-100', visibility 40-100'. Many wreck/reef sites to choose. See advanced criterion this issue.
- 11-20 Sun pm Speigal Grove (*Advanced*) \$49 BBQ \$10
Come explore our local big one. Lots to see and plenty of challenges. See advanced criterion this issue.

The French Touch

When Lon asked me to write a review of the dive on August 6, it was like homework for me. Like back in school. Write in English! Not easy. Try to write in French and you'll see. But as the challenge does not scare me, I'll try to describe these two dives with my « French Touch » and my bad english. So please, forgive me...

Arriving at Tavernier threatened by the remnants of Emily, we were happy to find a weather rather pleasant, neither too hot nor too wet, perfect for diving.

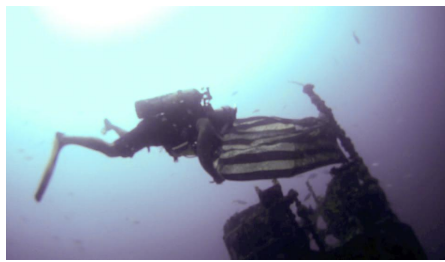
Private boat for 6 divers, friendly crew, what a luxury diving afternoon !

Lon paired quickly buddies and I had to dive with Moe and Lon. After a quick but complete briefing by Lon, I tried to explain the diving French particularities to my buddies: gauge in bar, computer in meter, Octopus at the left side, the snorkel in the pocket... They do everything different these Frenchies (or reverse ?). But fortunately, the language of the dive is universal! We jumped into the water just above the Duane's wreck along the line to the ship. We were welcomed by a couple of friendly turtles who accepted to be caressed very courteously. Hundreds of fish around the ship lies perfectly straight on the ground with the American flag floating on. No doubt I am in America and I love it!

Ascent quietly, drink water and eat some fruit offered by one of the divers (she will forgive me if I forgot her name) and here we are immersed for a shallow dive on the Snapper reef, wide coral reef where we found a good size moray eel, beautiful sponges and corral formations, a myriad of fish and even a small Nurse Shark frolicking just below the boat.

Finally, two beautiful dives, a rather warm sea, friendly company, what could be better for a Frenchy far away from home. Thank you to ADA for welcoming me so kindly. I hope to follow diving with you during my frequent coming in Florida.

Laurent Amanou from Paris – France.



(Continued from Page 5)

Even though it wasn't on the menu, many overstuffed steamed lobster tails drizzled in herbed butter kept showing up at our table. One night we were treated to a total of eight large luscious lobster tails, one for nearly each person in our group. Seafaring fishy tales shed little light on the mystery of the lobsters' origin, but indicated that large burly men with strong hands may have played a role.

The next morning's dive took us to Coral Gardens, site of the World's Largest Brain Coral, measuring 16 by 22 feet. A glimpse underneath this massive coral revealed not one but two nurse sharks, one of whom decided to treat us to a free swim around the Coral Garden. The end of this dive turned into Mr. Toad's Wild ride part 2, as the incredibly swift current jettisoned us through the garden up to our safety stop location.

Because of our morning flight, afternoon diving was out on the last day, so we opted to explore topside adventures. We boarded a bus to Argyle Falls, one of the most scenic waterfalls in Tobago. A short hike through the rainforest revealed a lush tropical landscape of towering bamboo plants and several varieties of popular houseplants growing right out of the ground.

Argyle Falls offers four separate pools to explore, each at different heights. We stayed mostly in the largest main pool at the bottom, as we watched daring souls scale the rock faces to dive into the pools from the rocks above. One particular brave soul climbed to the highest rock face and executed a perfect swan dive into the murky pool below. When some questioned the wisdom of his brave escapade, he indicated that he had smartly checked the pool depth with his dive watch beforehand to ensure that it was sufficient to safely break his fall. Ah the wisdom of ADA divers!

Dinnertime conversation on the last night revolved around the popularity and success of this trip and how we can plan future ADA international dive trips which will rival the level of success and enjoyment of this trip. Several locations were suggested: Bahamas, Cozumel, Bonaire, etc. Our hope is that the success of this trip will inspire future ADA international trip planning where we can discover wonderful new diving destinations with the camaraderie and family atmosphere of our ADA diving buddies.

Packing for the trip home revealed an accidental switch of wetsuits between one of our divers and another Miami resident staying at the resort. Upon meeting us at the airport to return the suits to their rightful owners, he heard about how much fun we had and now he wants to join ADA. So the quest for recruiting new members continues.

The early-morning bus ride back to the airport was somewhat subdued, yet always a thrilling ride on the long and winding road. It led to a thankfully uneventful journey back home with visions of future exciting ADA international diving trips dancing in our heads. Only two questions remain: 1) Where to next? and 2) Will YOU be there?

Adventure Abounds for ADA International Dive Trip to Tobago

By Rachel Hancock Davis

Tobago. Unspoiled. Natural. Full of adventure. Lots of adventure was in store for the 12 ADA divers who embarked on our ADA dive trip to Tobago, our first international trip in some years. So hungry was our appetite for international dive travel that not only did the trip sell out quickly, but there was a waiting list. For the lucky ones that made it on the trip, Tobago offered plenty of unspoiled and natural adventure for our group.

The adventure really started the afternoon before, when the chain of frantic emails and phone calls came in informing us that our flight to Trinidad, where we would connect to Tobago, had been cancelled. But true to the solid buddy system that is alive and well between ADA members, we took care of each other to get the word out and were rebooked through Barbados, then on a very large plane from Barbados to Tobago.

Adventure was the theme through the long lines and woefully slow counter service of MIA, our hometown airport, gateway to the Caribbean. While our initial flight to Barbados was relatively uneventful, once in Barbados we encountered a very long wait to get through customs. This, coupled with computer problems at the British Airways check-in counter, caused some of us at the back of the line to frantically sprint for the huge plane in our socks, with shoes and bags in hand.

Apparently fate had it covered, because after the stress of getting through the airport in Barbados we boarded the world's largest puddle-jumper, a 368-passenger Boeing 777 aircraft complete with recliners for our 20-minute flight to Tobago. Little did we know the adventure was just getting started.

Tobago, the smaller of the two islands comprising the dual island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, is only 26 miles long and 6 miles wide. We were destined for the seaside diving village of Speyside, at the opposite end of the island from where our very large jetliner deposited us.

Our dive group gathered outside the terminal as we watched our bags of scuba gear handed efficiently in island-style through the back windows of the bus, and piled up high on the rear seats. As we boarded our coach, ADA Safety Officer and Trip Leader Daryl Johnson jokingly told us to "Get ready for Mr. Toad's Wild Ride."

And a wild ride it was. There are only two main roads on the island of Tobago, the north route and the south route. The bus driver informed us that it would take 1-1/2 hours to travel the 25 miles to the small village of Speyside, where we would spend the next three days diving to our heart's content. Once the wild ride began, it was immediately obvious why this particular journey took 90 minutes to complete. Tobago is very mountainous, and in places the mountains rise directly up out of the sea. At times the road rolled along the seaside, then up very steep mountainous grades to rise hundreds of feet above the vast ocean, around endless sharp hairpin turns, only to descend down even steeper grades, around randomly parked cars, the occasional pedestrian, road construction cones, roaming stray dogs and goats, and various other hazards. Thank goodness for bus driver skill and brakes in good working order.

We arrived at the Blue Waters Inn, a tranquil slice of heaven situated on Batteaux Bay in the village of Speyside. This area is known for the best diving in Tobago, much of it done in swift currents. All of our oceanfront rooms came equipped with seaside verandas mere steps from the beach. Each veranda had its own hummingbird feeder, to which we were treated with regular visits from the tiny hovering birds darting swiftly from the tall treetops above to get a drink of the precious nectar, then swiftly darting away. The property also offered free of charge kayaking, snorkeling, nature trails and plenty of relaxation.

The first morning began with a hearty hot breakfast featuring the "Diver's Decadence" omelet. At our first dive briefing we were taught the back-roll entry, the only way off the primitive wooden dive boat. One of our divers remarked that it was the identical boat they had used when visiting the resort 20 years before, the only difference being that they had finally replaced the canvass on the bimini top.

The ADA family feeling was evident as we crowded onto the small boat for the short 10-minute trip out to the reef past dramatic volcanic rock formations towering up from the depths. Flocks of nesting gulls screeched at us from the verdant hillsides as we roared past. The sea in Tobago has endless motion, consistent with her strong currents at depth. As we geared up for our first plunge perched precariously on the boat's thin edge, the stocky Tobagonian dive masters bellowed 3-2-1: and plunge! Backward off the side tumbling wildly into the green-tinged 87-degree water.

Descending under the 15-foot top layer of green silt revealed a clear and striking landscape of coral beds like a lovely colorful carpet, and nothing like what we normally see in South Florida. Large deep purple vases of coral were everywhere, enclosing sweet surprises such as curious coral crabs, arrow crabs, and juvenile fishes seeking shelter from their larger brethren. The walls were full of marine life, most notably a plethora of spiny and Spanish lobsters, with the occasional prehistoric-looking slipper lobster. Many green and spotted eels were present, as well as a ringed sea snake, turtles and nurse sharks. A mid-trip night dive treated us to fantastic video from Frank Young of a large octopus propelling itself along the coral, and an up-close and personal view of coral crabs and their enchanting eyeballs. As the dive boat drifted along under the light of the full moon, the newlyweds gazing upon the moonlight on the water topside also noticed the distant glow of the surfacing divers lights and alerted the Captain to the divers location. The captain beat a swift path back to the divers, and once again the ADA buddy system prevailed.

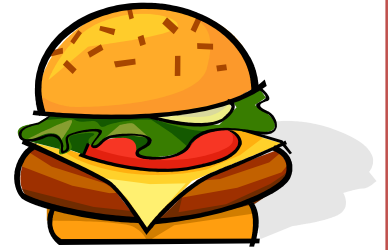
We were treated to a lovely dinner each night in the nautically-themed Fish Pot restaurant. Here we enjoyed typical Caribbean fare such as the local catch of the day, hearty soups, fresh baked rolls and delicious hamburgers. At each meal we asked for their ridiculously spicy homemade green pepper sauce on the side, for those daring enough to try it and sniffle.

(Continued on page 4)

Post Dive BBQS

Cost \$10.00 includes-

Grilled hotdogs, hamburgers, chicken, Potato Salad, Coleslaw, chips and fixins. Soda & Beer.



While divers are tending their gear, our chef of the day will be preparing a feast fit for a King/ Queen or at least for hungry divers. We invite all divers on the above dates to join us for good outdoor food and telling tall fish tales. Please send \$10 along with the dive fees, you may make one check for both.

DIVE AND EAT FREE

That's right, on our BBQ days you can earn a free dive and free eats. It's easy, just volunteer to be the chef of the day and you go for free.

Here's how it works— You buy the food and bring to the dive, after which you and the Safety Officer will prepare and serve.

The supplies and menu list will be faxed to you a few days prior with an exact list of needed items. Then you submit a receipt and your expenses will be reimbursed. Call Lon for more info and sign up.

ADA KEEPING DIVE COSTS DOWN

1. We do not plan to raise our local dive prices this year.
- 2 We are offering free beach dives this year in the metro area. No need to drive long distances to dives.
3. Our prices are still the lowest in town.

For Now, all ADA dives in 2011 will remain \$49. **Boat Ticket only!** Except the BNP dives which are \$59.

These prices may be changed without notice.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FROM ADA



Roger Miller

Veeva Kemerer

Carol Cox

Michael Mathews

Francois Benjamin

J. Boyd

Fredrick Cassity

Mathew Kiernan

Josefina Hansen

Gabriel Kaufman

ADA RULES & REGULATIONS

FOR ALL ADVANCED DIVES (DEPTHS OVER 60') ADA DIVERS MUST:

1. Be current (dive activity within the previous 3 months).
2. Have the approval of an ADA Safety Officer.
3. Have a minimum of 25 logged dives.
4. Carry an alternate air source (octopus), time keeping device and depth

ADA GUIDELINES FOR COMPUTER ASSISTED DIVING

1. Members using dive computers may extend their time underwater ten- (10) minutes beyond the time allowed by the tables.
2. Computer assisted dives must be well within the NO DECOMPRESSION LIMITS.
3. Members should understand and follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
4. If a computer diver is budded with a diver using the tables, both must follow the tables.
5. If a buddy-team is using unlike computers, both must follow the more

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE SAFETY OFFICERS' COMMITTEE

All members are reminded to read the "Rules & Guidelines for Diving Activities" you received with your membership package. Number 16 states, "All divers must be present for the pre-dive briefing". If the diver is not present for the entire briefing, diving privileges may be revoked for that dive. Please plan to arrive on time - or better yet - a bit early. We thank you and appreciate your cooperation.

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR LOCAL DIVE TRIPS

Because of our contractual agreements with our service agents - dive shops and boat captains, we must notify them - usually seven days in advance - of the final number of spaces we are paying for. Thus, if our members cancel less than seven days in advance, we regret that *NO REFUND OR CREDIT* can be given, unless trip cancellation insurance has been purchased at the time of the dive trip payment (see next news article!)

ADA TRIP CANCELLATION INSURANCE

The Board of Directors has approved a unique concept in local diving: *NO FAULT INSURANCE!!*

For an additional \$5.00, per person, per local dive trip, members can eliminate the worry of losing their dive fees because of an unforeseen change of plans.

If, for any reason you are unable to attend a local dive for which you are scheduled and have paid the insurance, ADA will credit your dive fee to another date. *The \$5.00 insurance is non-transferable and non-refundable!*

When you make a reservation, ask for dive trip cancellation insur-

IMPORTANT WEATHER INFORMATION

Before departing for the dive site, confirm weather condition with Lon or the designated Safety Officer. It is the responsibility of the member to call; we cannot call you due to the large number of divers involved. For morning dives, call between 6 and 10 p.m. the night before the dive. For afternoon dives, call between 9 and 10 a.m. the morning of the dive.



HOW TO MAKE DIVE RESERVATIONS



1. Check this newsletter or the annual calendar for upcoming dives.
2. Call Lon at (305) 251-4975 to make a reservation. Please do not leave requests on his answering machine, the trip may be full.
3. We will hold your reservation for four (4) days from the date you call. If we do not receive payment within four days, your space may be given to other members. If you wish to confirm receipt, call Lon.
4. Ask for details about the trip when you call. Otherwise, details will be given when you call for a weather check. (See "Important Weather Information" this and every issue)
5. * Make your check payable to ACTIVE DIVERS ASSOCIATION, not to any individual, and mail to:
Jerry Kosakowski , 8221 N.W. 8th Pl. Plantation, FL 33324 You may also pay online via PayPal on the "Dive Schedule" page.



Are you on Facebook? Join the ADA page here:

<http://www.facebook.com/ActiveDivers>

We can post your photos and share dive stories!

Send your pics and info to Helen at:

activediversassoc@gmail.com



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ACTIVE DIVERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

September 2011

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