

Currents



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In this issue:

Expanding Horizons and Creating Memorable Experiences

NDPA Symposium 2013

EUDI Show 2013

Magnificent Maldives and the Liveboard Experience

My Instructor Does Have Cool Fins, But...

Encouragement, Patience and Persistence Pays Off

Ice Diving – A Cold Experience

Continuing Education and Contact Info

Expanding Horizons and Creating Memorable Experiences

Whether you have been a scuba instructor for decades or are currently a divemaster or dive supervisor, you have the opportunity to impact the lives of your students and influence their diving adventures. Whether it is taking time in providing health and safety education for divers, such as breath holding, practicing static apnea and shallow water blackout, to preparing them for what hidden treasures they may encounter on a dive, such as marine life and corals; there is always room for growth and improvement for both the student and the teacher.

Have you taken a voyage on a dive cruise where you live on board a boat for the length of your trip and explore more remote dive sites? Did you remember it fondly? Would you go again? Have you shared your memories with your students? Do they know they too can venture on this type of vacation? Where would you go? Who would you get in touch with? What could you recommend to your students? By sharing what you have learned and undertaken, helps others – from students and fellow divers to other leadership team members – become aware of the vast resources and environments that are available for diving. Do you have a favorite diving spot and would you like for others to enjoy this gem? We would love to hear from you.

Interestingly, as you create neat and memorable opportunities for your students, you too will come away a little more enlightened. Introducing others to new experiences can be a rewarding endeavor – which you already know if you teach. But never forget – you too can enjoy new sights and create fresh memories as you dive, you are always a student.



NDPA Symposium 2013

By Tom Leaird, SEI & PDIC CEO, Instructor Trainer

During the week of March 13 to 16 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, the National Drowning Prevention Alliance, NDPA, held their annual symposium with an attendance of more than 220 water professionals from around the country. As a member of the alliance, Tom Leaird, the CEO of SEI and PDIC, attended as many sessions as time would allow. Prior to the morning and afternoon sessions and during breaks, time permitted networking opportunities in the trade show area which included at least 25 vendors providing information on items related to water safety. The agenda included over 30 presentations - many of which were ground-breaking information on research currently being conducted in the area of water safety and drowning prevention.

Dr. Neal Pollock from Divers Alert Network, spoke on "Shallow Water Blackout." As we have known in recent years, free divers returning to the surface after an extended dive to depth can arrive at a point where the diminishing partial pressure of oxygen becomes insufficient to maintain consciousness, known as hypoxic blackout. This is true shallow water blackout. The current world record for a "no-limits" dive is 702 feet - using a weight to carry the diver down and a lift bag to bring him up. Many other similar events are attempted for record using various methods. Whether diving for spearfishing, or just pushing one's limits, the real danger to these divers is excessive hyperventilation prior to the dive. These records become official when upon surfacing the diver removes goggles, gives an OK sign, and says their name. The divers without sufficient remaining oxygen to do this are disqualified.

Dr. Pollock tells us that four or more hyperventilation breaths will wash out enough triggering carbon dioxide that the diver is at risk of blacking out during ascent. One or two hyperventilation breaths are usually safe. In addition, a surface interval of at least twice as long as the dive time is necessary to bring in enough oxygen prior to an additional dive. Dives practicing free dives should do so in pairs with one diver down while the other rests and ventilates on the surface. Even better would be three divers together with one diver ready, one diver recovering, and one diver down.

Another parallel, often incorrectly called shallow water blackout, is practicing static apnea (sitting in shallow water holding the breath in an attempt to increase endurance.) Here again, excessive hyperventilation causes hypoxia to occur before sufficient carbon dioxide triggers breathing. Dr. Tom Griffiths noted that this practice does not increase endurance and continues to result in several deaths annually. Tom Leaird spoke to Dr. Griffiths and Dr. Pollock encouraging them to come up with appropriate names for these effects while discouraging the activity. Swimmers attempting to set underwater breath-hold distance records are warned to limit hyperventilation breaths and spend several minutes on the surface between these very dangerous dives. Adequate supervision is always required when practicing breath-holding underwater. If a diver or swimmer becomes unresponsive during a breath hold, a buddy must be there to bring him or her to the surface immediately. A pool patron enters

and announces to the lifeguard, "I'm going to practice holding my breath sitting in the shallow end - don't worry about me." This person must NOT be allowed to do this. Without an in-water buddy constantly watching, this person is at risk of drowning.

Another presentation from Dr. Peter Antevy, included playing several 911 emergency call tapes with the operator attempting to gain information from an hysterical mother whose child has drowned and is attempting to bring help. After five or six of these and showing the picture of the child on the screen, there wasn't a dry eye in the place. Dr. Antevy is gathering data from across the country in an attempt to change the protocol and methods used by 911 operators and the 911 systems to upgrade the process. He also praised the use of intravenous epinephrine in the early minutes and the use of air instead of pure oxygen as it avoids excess oxygen (oxygen toxicity) in children - together doubling survival outcomes. We look forward to this research providing data that will improve survival of drowning victims - especially in children. Of course, prevention is key and is heavily dependent on education.

Many other subjects concerning water safety were presented. Research now underway will affect our teaching in the future. Therefore as scuba instructors, it is important to constantly keep up to date on changes in our recreational activity. The NDPA symposium next year will occur during the month of March in Dallas, Texas. A representative from our agencies will again attend to bring back the latest in water safety for our instructors. Always keep learning.

Success for SEI & PDIC Italia

EUDI Show 2013

Submitted by Alessandro Talamona, SEI & PDIC Italia Course Director, Italy

The “EUDI Show 2013” was recently held in Milan over 3 days – from February 15-17. This event was held in conjunction with the most important tourism fair in Europe – “BIT” (International Tourism Exchange).

Some EUDI Show 2013 facts:

- 150 exhibitors
- 30,000 participants
- 130 events with the participation of more than 4,000 divers.

Our organization has experienced great success and our booth attracted a strong amount of curious visitors.

The two important moments for SEI & PDIC Italia were as follows:

1. The organization of a workshop, during the “Master of Diving” presented by Doctors Claudio Cagnola and Ivan Luccherini, both underwater archaeologists from the University of Oristano, with Fausto Salsa. The subject was: *Archaeology Between Land and Sea: Research of The Port of Fenicio, Tharros-Oristano, Sardinia*, with 60 participants.
2. More than 100 participants attended the meeting on the main stage Sunday the 17th during which Alessandro Talamona and Davide Cecamore (SEI & PDIC Italia leadership) presented SEI & PDIC Italia There’s A Difference. Following the speech, we were glad to present the new teaching method and we concluded with the 2012 AWARDS.

The next important event of SEI & PDIC Italia will be the celebration

of our fourth anniversary to be held on the Portofino Promontory in June 2013.



Massimiliano Fiorese slicing ham. (A variety of small events in the booth resulted in sharing 170 sandwiches, 9 kg (almost 20lbs) San Daniele ham, 5 kg (over 11 lbs) of gongorzola cheese, 5 kg (over 11 lbs) of parmigiano cheese, 4 kg (almost 9 lbs) of salami, and 25 liters (over 6 ½ gallons) of good important red and white wine).



Group in front of booth.



Tom Leaird image on the screen during main stage presentation.



Alessandro Talamona and Davide Cecamore presenting an award.



Group on stage with awards.

Magnificent Maldives

By Gabrielle K. Gabrielli, Ph.D., SEI Instructor, Florida

Like many other SCUBA instructors, I love teaching but I also enjoy SCUBA diving for pure pleasure. I find that a SCUBA vacation getaway replenishes my joy for the sport and makes me a better instructor as a result. My annual treks have taken me to Fiji, the Philippines, South Africa, Galapagos, Belize, and many others. This year, I decided to visit my 75th country by booking one of my "bucket list" destinations - the Republic of the Maldives. It is a long, narrow country formed by 26 atolls, which are ring-shaped coral reefs, islands, or chains of islands surrounding a lagoon.

Diving with SingleDivers.com

Because planning is such a major part of my real life, I decided to return to dive with a group that does all the planning for you, SingleDivers.com (SD). Their tag line is, "Why Dive Alone?," so it is perfect for buddyless divers like me. Don't let the name fool you; as founder Kamala Shadduck says, "Our only hookups are to tanks." The group, which has been in existence for nearly a decade, boasts over 8,000 members from 35 different countries. Everyone attending an SD trip must complete a form in advance with details of their SCUBA diving experience as well as roommate preferences for those who do not want a single room. I was paired with an excellent roommate, Susan, who also became my dive buddy. She is an avid cave diver and rescue instructor from Arkansas who shared my passion for diving. We were both the first to analyze our cylinders (Nitrox fills were included in the price) and two of the only on the boat who didn't sit out any of the 34 dives. Most divers were very experienced and enthusiastic to dive all four dives per day, though some like the

eldest in our group, Elisabeth (Liz) from Canada, said, "I'm almost 70; I enjoy diving but don't need to do it as much as I used to. I am happy reading, sitting on the shade deck, getting a massage, and relaxing...and just going on the easier dives without all the current."

Arriving in the Maldives

After a 40-hour journey from Tallahassee to Atlanta to Houston to Moscow to Singapore, I finally landed in the Maldives International Airport in Hulhulé. After clearing passport control, I picked up my checked bag at the carousel then waited in a long line to have my baggage x-rayed. All baggage that enters the Maldives is x-rayed to ensure that no forbidden items are brought in including alcohol, pork, dogs, firearms, pornography, or religious idols. Upon seeing the sign, I discreetly tucked my Catholic crucifix (given to me by my great grandmother from Italy) into my shirt then removed the necklace completely for the remainder of the trip to be respectful of the culture. The population is almost completely Sunni Muslim, so shops and offices close during four prayer times per day and on Fridays. Public observance of any religion other than Islam in the Maldives is prohibited.

I met up with the entire group in the open-air (aka hot!) airport in Malé, the Maldives, though I had met three of the women on previous SD trips to Galapagos and the Philippines. Transport from Hulhulé Island to Malé was via dhoni, which is a handcrafted boat traditionally made from coconut wood and in modern days, motorized. The dhoni to and from the airport to Malé takes about 10 minutes and costs \$1 U.S., though I learned that the

dollar bill must be crisp or it will not be accepted. I was the only one in the group who didn't stay at a hotel that night because I have a friend there with a guest room, so I was thankful to get to see how the locals live. My friend Andrew also happens to be a seaplane pilot for Trans Maldivian Airways, and he arranged a flight for me to see how gorgeous the islands of the Maldives are from above. It was my first ever seaplane ride, though as a private pilot myself, I was thrilled with the experience and very impressed with the water landings! The airline has greater passenger volume than any other seaplane hub in the world and is the most convenient way to travel from island to island.

Dhivehi is the official language of the Maldives, though it was generally not difficult to find people who spoke some English. I asked how to say, "Thank you" in Dhivehi, and the word "Shukuriyyaa" became my most frequently spoken word as there was much for which to be thankful. After an overnight stay in the Muslim country, we boarded a small boat that took us to what would be our home for 10 nights in the Indian Ocean. The crew greeted us with enthusiasm, though they work extremely hard and have tight turnaround between trips; they had just said goodbye to their previous guests a couple of hours earlier.

We sailed with Worldwide Dive and Sail on the Siren Maldives, a 34-meter (112-foot) traditional Indonesian "gaft-rigged Phinisi" handcrafted from ironwood and teak. There were 14 divers, all from the United States and Canada, and all part of the SD group. The diverse group of eight women and six men were all

Magnificent Maldives, continued

first-time visitors to the Maldives. The cabins were modest yet not as cramped as my last liveaboard, each with a small bathroom and most with two single beds. Worldwide Dive and Sail bills itself as a company that built its fleet of boats specifically for SCUBA divers. Many in our group are also underwater photographers and appreciated the camera cleaning and recharging station as well as the audiovisual network throughout the vessel.

Visiting an Orphanage...and a Challenge to Fellow Divers!

One thing I love about the SD group is that founder, Kamala Shaddock, always encourages her SCUBA divers to pack school supplies for local orphanages. In my bag alone, I had packed over 10 pounds of school supplies including pencils, flash cards, paper, and educational books. When we all combined our supplies, we had enough to supply the school for a year! In all the countries SD has visited, Vilingili Orphanage was the first to say that nobody had ever visited them before to bring supplies. Our surprise about the lack of donations there prompted a challenge made by Kamala and a local dive group, Atoll SCUBA. Other divers have already responded and have pledged to bring more supplies in the future.

Dining on Amazing Cuisine

I have found it to be a challenge on past International liveaboards to get adequate nutrition, especially as an athlete who doesn't eat meat. Weeks before sailing, divers were required to complete Worldwide Dive and Sail online forms that included dietary preferences. I noted that I don't eat meat but I do eat fish, I love vegetables, and I prefer very

spicy foods including hot sauce. I was pleasantly surprised by the amazing cuisine that chef Alibe from India and assistant chef Saman from Sri Lanka prepared! The carnivores always had meat selections including chicken and beef (and hotdogs for breakfast), and there was always fish - usually tuna, a staple in the Maldivian diet - but the selection of vegetarian and vegan cuisine including scrumptious tofu, handmade gnocchi, and my personal favorite, pumpkin curry, was outstanding! My favorite breakfast became a traditional Maldivian

breakfast called huni roshi, which is a unleavened coconut bread typically served with mas huni, a mixture of tuna, coconut, lime, hot peppers, and onions. Fresh, delicious salads and fruit including pineapples, oranges, apples, watermelon, and passion fruit accompanied each meal. Although SCUBA diving burns about 450 calories per hour and we were diving about four hours per day, eating so much great food and skipping my usual running and bicycling workouts led to a six-pound weight gain from the trip! It was worth every pound, though.

Eat, dive, sleep, repeat!

Liveaboards offer opportunities to dive in places that you couldn't otherwise dive, especially in a remote island nation like the Maldives.

We joked that all we did on the Siren Maldives Central-Southern itinerary was eat, sleep, and dive. My typical day was:

05:30 wake up then eat a slice of toast and Nutella with coffee

06:30 dive brief then 60-minute dive

08:30 breakfast of huni roshi, mas huni, and fresh fruit

11:00 dive brief then 60-minute dive

13:00 lunch of tuna filet, pumpkin curry, rice, salad, and fresh fruit

14:30 dive brief then 60-minute dive

16:30 snacks of samosas (vegetarian pastries) and sweets

18:30 night dive brief then 45-minute dive

20:00 dinner of tofu vegetable pasta, grilled eggplant, salad, and fresh fruit

21:00 sort through photos and videos

22:00 lights out for bedtime

A view of one of the many beautiful Maldivian atolls from a seaplane



Photos from the Maldives



Above: Seaplane Landing with Trans Maldivian Airways, Malé

Below: Gabrielle and Trans Maldivian Airways pilot Andrew Farr who arranged for private pilot Gabrielle's first seaplane ride



Above: Marc and Derek Enjoying a Free San Miguel after Diving



Left: Gabrielle, orphanage director, Kamala, and Donna at Vilingili Orphanage in the Maldives where we delivered many school supplies



Left: Vilingili Orphanage Director Smiles with Singledivers.com Founder Kamala



Left: Beautiful Girls Enjoying their Maldivian Fishing Village Home



Above: Kamala, Derek, and Que Ready for More Great Diving



Left: Private Pilot Gabrielle Enjoying Trying the Pilot's Seat of a Seaplane



Above: Rare Sighting of Sailfish at Golden Wall, Felidhoo Atoll



Above: Sunset for Maldives Siren Divers



Above: Maldives Siren SCUBA Liveboard Sailing the Indian Ocean

From Gabrielle Gabrielli

Below: Kuda Giri Wreck, South Malé Atoll, Maldives



Left: Leaf Fish at Vadinolhu Kandu



Below: Soft Corals and Giant Clams at Embudhoo Canyon



Right: Starfish at Gaadho Reef, Haddhunmathi Atoll, Maldives



Right: Yellow Blackspotted Puffer at Ranikan, South Malé Atoll



Left: Worldwide Dive and Sail SCUBA Instructor and Dive Guide Shaff Documenting Our Dives

Below: Hard Corals at Guraidhoo Corner



Left: Octopus Illuminated in Red on Night Dive



Left: Endangered Hawksbill Turtle Enjoying Vilingili Reef



Above: Large Manta Ray near Cleaning Station at Kurali Kandu



The Liveboard Experience

Magnificent Maldives, continued from page 5

The crewmembers on the Siren Fleet were attentive, friendly professionals who went above and beyond to make sure that our diving experience in the Maldives was excellent. Our dive guides were three highly qualified SCUBA instructors: Tom, a charming, handsome athlete from England; Shaff, a talented Maldivian published author and photographer who is also a former instructor for the Maldives National Defence Force Special Forces and Coast Guard who was close to President Nasheed on the day of the coup, and Heiko, a thoughtful and attentive German who was the newest addition to the crew. There was no diving on our first day, but what follows is a summary of subsequent days of diving. Our typical daytime dives were 30 meters (100 feet) for 60 minutes, and our typical nighttime dives were 15 meters (50 feet) for 45 minutes. Water temperatures were about 26°C (78°F) and air temperatures were highs of about 31°C (88°F) and lows of 26°C (78°F), so it was ideal especially for those in our group escaping winters from their homes in Alaska and Canada.

Day Two — We broke into groups of three, each group with a guide sharing two dinghies. Our first dive was an excellent checkout dive on Feydhoo Wall. There was very little current and we enjoyed seeing pipefish and banded coral shrimp. After our morning dive then breakfast, Shaff and two other crewmembers joined me, Kamala, Donna, and Joanne who went to the orphanage in North Malé to deliver our bounty of school supplies and tour the facility. They were many children over capacity, but it was evident that the staff loved the children and took very good care of them. Several little children clung to Kamala and played with her blonde hair as she lifted them up, fascinated with how different she looked than fellow Maldivians. We all exchanged smiles and left with gratitude, them for the visit and the supplies, and us for the opportunity to learn about the orphanage and all they are doing for the children. After returning to the boat by dinghy, we enjoyed three more dives that day including Embudhoo Canyon, Kuda Giri wreck (a highlight was seeing peacock mantis shrimp) and our first night dive of the trip where we saw scorpionfish and a sleeping turtle. We quickly learned the importance of a reef hook in the Maldives as many of the channel dives have extremely strong currents.

Day Three — Our early morning dive began at Guraidhoo Corner where we saw lots of snapper, amberjack, oriental sweetlips, and two eagle rays. An afternoon dive at Ranikan provided the usual eels and puffers. One of our dives on this day was clearly jinxed, Kahanbu Thila, though thankfully it was not a trend! My group had a diver lose a weight belt, another group was dropped into blue water and missed the sight completely, and the third group decided to call the dive after hearing of the challenges of the first two groups. Fortunately, our night dive at The Jetty at Alimanta was one of the coolest night dives I have ever experienced; it is known for being one of the best night dives in the Maldives, which is why there were so many other divers there. We saw octopus, nurse sharks, black tipped reef sharks, and stingrays, among other things. I captured a shark attacking a ray on video, and it was surreal to see the bright moonlight and dozens of beams of flashlights (or torches, as the locals say) illuminating the plethora of large sea life. It was so amazing that I would have been thrilled to stay and dive there every night!

Day Four — We enjoyed four more dives including Miyaru Kandu and Devana Kandu (“kandu” means “channel”) where we saw several spotted eagle rays, grey reef sharks, and huge Napoleon wrasse. On our third dive on Golden Wall, strong current provided an excellent and rapid drift dive through the channel past beautiful yellow soft corals covering the wall. It was on this dive that I saw my first ever sailfish, which was nearly 3 meters (10 feet) long and swam right over a few of us! The final dive of the day was at Fotteyo Kandu with more soft corals covering the wall and lots of fun swim throughs.

Day Five — After another morning dive at Fotteyo Kandu, we enjoyed exploring more swim throughs at Fahumi Giri, where white bush corals danced in the current. Next, we dived Rakeedhoo Faru before our crossing to Laamu. Our night dive was uneventful until Susan spotted an octopus, so the group hung out with the fascinating creature for a while. Que’s red Sola flashlight created quite the eerie scene without scaring our octopus friend. By this point, Derek, the youngest SDer on the trip at age 31, was gaining confidence with his new camera setup and also captured the fascinating scene.

Day Six — Our early morning dive was at Gaahuraa Kandu where we made full use of our reef hooks again in the heavy current to admire many schools of grey reef sharks. The second group of divers was fortunate to see a rare sighting of a Mola Mola! Next we moved from larger sea life in heavy current to more relaxing dives at Birthday Thila and Hakura Thilla. There was a great deal of reef fish and macro life amongst the beautiful hard corals, and a highlight was seeing a sleeping baby shark. After gorging on a hearty lunch, we had our first island excursion as a group before our night dive at Muli Giri. We walked amongst the coral lined walls and marveled at how different life seemed to be in the fishing village. Children played joyfully in the streets and two beautiful girls cheerfully posed for me when I asked if I could take their picture. The fisherman appeared not as thrilled about tourists or cameras, but it was such a beautiful scene with the brightly colored fishing vessel that I couldn’t resist a distance shot.



Above: Kamala using her Nautilus Lifeline Marine Radio and GPS system to call the ship to retrieve us!

Above: Steve, Derek, Patrick, and Susan extend their safety sausages after we were swept away in heavy current and had to end our dive early.

Diary of Gabrielli Gabrielli

Day Seven — Our morning dive on Kurali Kandu, also called Valley of the Ray, was my favorite daytime dive of the entire liveaboard trip, especially because I always get so excited to see the bigger marine life! While visibility wasn't as good as at other sites, we had an amazing time watching gorgeous manta rays circling around us in the channel as they were going to and from their cleaning stations. There was also an adorable baby spotted eagle ray hovering above us and checking us out for a good amount of the dive, as well as some ghost pipefish and a free-swimming leopard eel! Unfortunately not every dive can be perfect, and our next dive at Olhugiri Kandu was a bust. In extremely heavy current, my group got separated from our guide Shaff, but thankfully we stuck together and made a group decision to surface early as the ripping current swept us so far off course that we thought we might be carried to another ocean soon. We got to use our safety sausages (Susan has one she calls "Super Big Dave"!) and to test our rented Nautilus Lifeline Marine Radio and GPS systems. They worked great, and after reaching the crew, a dinghy came to retrieve us.

Day Eight — Our first dive of the morning was Diyamigili Corner where some of us got to see turtles and I saw a hammerhead shark, and then it was off to Vadinolhu Kandu where we saw more grey reef sharks, marble rays, countless puffer fish, and a few leaf fish. Things were a little bumpier this day and it made getting in and out of the dinghy much more challenging. A funny thing happened to Steve in my group when we were seated and putting our fins on before our journey to the dive site; he accidentally prematurely back rolled into the ocean before we left the ship. Once we saw that he was prepared enough to retrieve his regulator and put his fins on, we all belly laughed including the crew who claimed that no diver had ever done that before. Our third dive of the day was at Secret Giri where we saw lobster and nice macro life. On our night dive at Gaadhoo Reef, we saw a beautiful ornate ghost pipefish, then after dinner we began our 10-hour night crossing to Gaafu Alife. Crossings are known for being a bit rough, and though ours was better than the typical crossings, it was a sleepless night for me and other light sleepers who felt the ship rocking and rolling and heard various unsecured items clanking throughout the night.

Day Nine — Our first dive of the day was on Matu Giri and brought much joy to the macro lovers in our group including Kamala. For our next two dives at Vilingili Kandu and Koodoo Kandu, we enjoyed stonefish, pipefish, and large sea life including spotted eagle rays, white tipped reef sharks, and grey reef sharks in the current. My dive buddy Susan joined me and the other hardcore divers who wouldn't miss a dive while the crew provided a relaxing island excursion for those like Liz, Joanne, and Donna who preferred to enjoy their time out of the ocean, too. Our night dive at Vilinaili Reef was a transition dive from dusk, and we saw many beautiful turtles and rays.

Day Ten — Our final dives of the liveaboard journey were in the very southern Maldives on Vilingili Kandu and Reef, and the reef could not have been a more wonderful dive on which to end the trip! We saw many rays, reef squid, and turtles. I had a special experience hanging out with a hawksbill turtle, and I swear that we danced together and checked each other out as I took pictures and video of the magnificent creature. He also checked Donna out and swam right up to her mask within inches of touching her. After our last dive, the crew took care of rinsing and hanging our gear while many of us partook in enjoying a cold brew with our delicious meal. Next, the crew raised the Maldives Siren fleet's sails and we got to see her in all her glory! For the rest of the day, we exchanged pictures and video and reminisced about how amazing our trip was and how fortunate we were to have experienced it.

Day Eleven — Alas, it was time to say, "Shukuriiyaa" then leave the boat that we had called home for 10 nights. We watched the hardworking crew cleaning and preparing for their next guests who they would greet that same day. After a short dinghy ride to Kaadedhdhoo Island, we rolled our luggage from dockside down the deserted street to the not yet opened airport. To say that it was remote was an understatement. Thankfully Tom, Shaff, Alibe, and other crewmembers were there to help us find our way. The entire trip was fabulous, and I have never known 10 nights to pass so quickly!



Our final day of diving included spotting these two enormous short-tailed stingrays hiding in the sand at Vilingili Kandu.

Marveling about the Magnificent Maldives Trip

Once we arrived in Malé, many of us went our separate ways. Kamala, Derek, Donna, and Que went on to Lembeh to join other SDers for the second part of the trip to enjoy the unusual macro life. Joanne and Patrick went to Sri Lanka, and Steve, Susan, Matt, Deb, Liz, and I went to Singapore. Those of us who flew on Singapore Airlines marveled at how wonderful the customer service is (not to mention the free wine and beer to accompany delicious meals). Marc and Wayne flew Emirates and said it was even better. Overall, I highly recommend visiting the Maldives for your next SCUBA journey, especially if you are a diehard diver like me who doesn't mind some strong current, and do check out Worldwide Dive and Sail. It is no wonder that their trips are consistently full while others in the "safari" business struggle there. It is not always easy to get to the Maldives (I had seven plane trips on my journey home), but it was well worth the effort!

Visit <http://scubawithgabrielle.com> to see additional photos and videos from the trip. For questions, email gabrielle@scubawithgabrielle.com

My Instructor Does Have Cool Fins, But...

By Carol Reed, SEI & PDIC Instructor Trainer, Indiana

After many weeks of classroom and pool skills, the big day arrives. Your students will experience open water for the first time. You overhear them talking after the first day of dives and someone asks, “what did you see on your open dives”? The reply, “my instructor’s fins”.

At that point it is probably appropriate to have a discussion about buddy positioning, but what else can you as the instructor do to ensure your students see more on their first dives than your fins?

Begin with the first class. Show just a few pictures of marine life. Just enough to “wet” their appetites. A colorful parrotfish, (*see picture 1*) octopus, (*see picture 2*) or maybe some angelfish. We all dream of beautiful tropical dives, and for some, that’s where their first open water dives occur. But for those of us landlocked miles from coastlines, open water dives are often in a local lake or quarry. A question often asked early in the class is, “What is there to see in a quarry”? We cannot forget our local environment. “Hook” them with a few pictures of common freshwater fish, or maybe the prevalent turtle of the area.

During class lectures, once you reach Chapter 5, “Diving Environment” in Graver’s text, another opportunity to get your students ready to explore their local dive site has arrived. The “Diving Environment” chapter is full of wonderful information. Expand on Graver’s information by telling and showing students what they will encounter in just a few short weeks on their first open dives.

Next time you dive your open water site, regardless of whether it is salt or fresh water, take a good hard look. What is unique about it? Every site can have unique features, you just have to really look. After 34 years of diving, and over 2,700 dives in my local dive site, Philips Outdoor Center, one would think there is nothing left to see and nothing left to learn. However, each new dive is an adventure!

Determine some interesting features and incorporate pictures and information about these things during the “Diving Environment” lecture. When you observe a unique feature, do a little research on it. Recently, Tom Leaird shared a Fish and Lake Management catalog with me. Browsing through it, I learned new details about growth rates, feeding habits and mating habits of our common bass (*see picture 3*) and bluegill fish (*see picture 4*) families.

In addition to the bass and bluegill, the following are examples of what my dive site has to offer. I will show these things to my students as much as possible on their open water dives.

We have turtles (*see picture 5*) to seek in the summer. Seeing, or even getting to hold a turtle and examine it up close makes a premier dive for the student. About ten years ago we began seeing freshwater sponges (*see picture 6*). I always show my student divers some sponges on the first or second dive. By the second day of dives, a dive objective is to have the students find sponges and point them out to me. About five years ago, we began seeing what appeared

to be polyps (*see picture 7*) growing in cold water on stationary objects. Some research revealed them to be a Freshwater Hydra.

The limestone in which our quarry was dug is 300 to 400 million years old. Hunt for fossils! (*see picture 8*) During the environment lecture, I pass around a display box with a selection of fossils that are typical from this age of limestone. Included in the display is a dried specimen of freshwater sponge and some freshwater snail shells. Philips Quarry has a couple of good displays of these same fossils still attached to the walls. When the instructor points out the fossils, students are able to understand what they are seeing – an example of the geological history of the area.

Three large catfish (*see picture 9*) reside in our quarry. Spotting one of these creatures makes for an awesome dive. Getting eyeball to eyeball with it is even more exciting. Our newest residents are seven paddlefish that were purchased by an SEI instructor from a fish hatchery and given a new home in our quarry in the fall of 2012. Sighting one or more of these elusive creatures is truly a treasure hunt, but with a little luck, they can be found. Two weeks after the paddlefish arrived, one of my students sighted one, and immediately after surfacing, began asking what the “strange-looking” fish was. Time to update my environment lecture!

For those of you who dive open dives in the saltwater environment, don’t overwhelm students with too much information at first. Try to pick out

two or three unique features. As I think back on some of my vacation salt water dives, I remember certain reefs or wrecks that stood out simply because they had unusual features not present on other sites. Examples are:

- “Firecoral Reef”, where the firecoral was so prevalent it grew on everything including abandoned lobster traps. The sculptural effect was incredible.
- On another reef we found a multitude of Flamingo Tongues, (*see picture 10*) and found many more very easily, once our eyes became accustomed where to look.
- A shipwreck we discovered literally “bloomed” at night with Basket Starfish, and challenged divers on a day dive to find all the hiding places the creatures inhabited during the day.
- And what about cleaning stations? So hard to find at first, but easy to identify after a few sightings. And the list goes on . . . what wonders does your site hold?

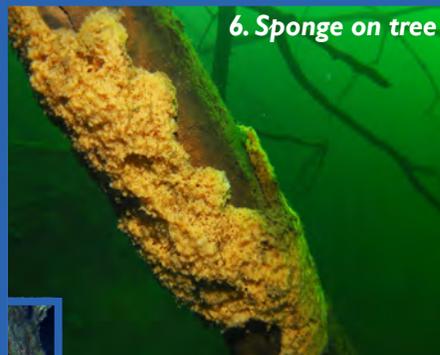
In the SEI Open Water instructor manual, the certification exam test bank includes standard environment questions. Hopefully you are aware that each instructor is to write a few additional questions covering the “local environment”. This allows for each instructor to customize his or her exam to fit local dive site conditions.

Prepare your students to see more than your fins on their first open dives! Pick out just two or three unique features of your dive site. Discuss and illustrate in class. About half-way through the first dive, when the students are getting the “hang” of being neutral and able to level out with you, point out those unique features. Bring them back from a great dive, and leave them with a hunger for the next.

*Photo selections 1-7 and 9-10 from Carol Reed
Photo 8 submitted by George Guy, PDIC Instructor, Little Salt Springs, Florida*



1. Sleeping parrotfish



6. Sponge on tree



2. Octopus



7. Polyps



3. Bass on pipe



8. Horse teeth fossil



4. Close up of bluegill



9. Catfish in cave



5. Turtle in red leaves



10. Flamingo tongue

Encouragement, Patience and Persistence Pays Off

By Tim Thorsen, SEI & PDIC Instructor Trainer, Florida

Picture yourself; suspended 60 feet under the sea... no cares or worries, even the laws of gravity have lost their hold. You're in a liquid atmosphere that is teeming with life. You wonder, as you hover weightless in the water, is this real or am I dreaming? Right then a giant sea turtle nudges you from behind and you realize... This is for real... You are a diver...



This short passage I have used over the years to instill a sense of imagination into potential students or divers to inspire them into taking classes or seeking further education in diving. It has always brought me back to an image in my mind of an experience I once had with a diving student that was a bit more of a challenge than many when she made her first dives in the open water. We all have those occasional students that stand out in our minds and who actually teach us something about diving in the process of their learning to dive. One student comes to my mind when I read the above passage — one that had challenges with almost every skill she attempted.

I worked with her time and again to accomplish each and every task in the pool, all in preparation for the inevitable open water dives. She was an elementary school teacher and she would always say to me that “I can’t do it”, only to have me respond to her that if one of her students would tell her the same thing that she would encourage them to try and try

again. As most of us know, diving is often referred to as being 60 percent mental and 40 percent physical. From my experience working with divers from all walks of life, the reality is more like 95 percent mental. It is a matter of psychosomatics. The body will respond to what the mind tells it to do. This student, we will just call her “Jean”, would eventually accomplish each task after several attempts, but every effort would begin with the same statement, “I can’t”. With encouragement, patience, and certainly persistence, I would move through each skill with eventual success and then proceed to the next.

When the day came that Jean would venture into the open Gulf of Mexico for the first time, I must admit, I had a little trepidation. Would she have learned from the progression of skills in the pool and really be prepared for the open water, or would something come up that would scare her away from the sport forever. While our group knelt on the sandy sea floor of the Gulf of

Mexico in a depth of about 50 feet, everyone progressed through the mundane tasks of mask clears, regulator clears, simulated buddy breathing and such prior to our finishing up with a short tour of the barge wreck that lay near and the conclusion of our dive. Just prior to my signaling to everyone to follow me on the tour portion of the dive, one of the resident loggerhead sea turtles showed up and was headed straight for Jean from behind. My first thought was, should I show her this experience of a lifetime and hope it doesn’t turn into that fight or flight situation we all hope to avoid, or should I try to avoid it and keep the dive simple. Right then, I decided that to give an okay signal to Jean and she promptly responded with the same appropriate signal. I then placed one hand on her shoulder, pointed to my own eyes signaling to look, then pointed over her shoulder in the direction of this 300 lb. turtle, now just 2 or 3 feet from her head. Jean looked in the direction that I indicated and then suddenly in a quick jerk turned back to me

with the biggest eyes filling a mask that I had ever seen. This was not the typical sign of panic that you think of when you see this response but it was a sign of utter excitement. She threw her hands up in the air and I could swear that I even heard her yell with a “yahoo” from the experience. Later after the dive when she recounted the event with others on the boat, her enthusiasm told me that I had made the right decision. I had worked with her long and hard and given to her something that will remain with her for life. More important, she gave to me something also, the pleasure of knowing that I had made possible an inspiring event that would surely become the topic of conversations for years to come.

Years later, I would receive the occasional post card from Jean from remote dive locations, thanking me for helping her to get over her fears and learning to dive. She would become one of the most active divers I had the opportunity to know. As time went on, the cards would slowly cease and I lost touch with this special student, but she taught me that one person can make a difference in another person’s life. If they just take a moment extra of their time to be patient, give of themselves, and do what they know is right inside, they will receive more rewards from the experience than what they give to the person that they are teaching themselves.

For me after more than 35 years of diving and over 20 years teaching diving, some would think that the experiences would begin to become mundane or even boring. I have to admit, on a small scale, some dives do almost seem more like work than fun, but in the past two years, it has all become a whole new experience exploring the underwater realm. I ventured into the world of “The Silent Side of Diving” and took on the task of developing training programs for Recreational Closed Circuit Rebreathers. This has given me an entirely new perspective into diving, because now instead of having the occasional encounter that I would cherish for years and only hope to share with others, it seems that each and every dive I find myself in the

water with marine life that I have never experienced before I got into diving closed circuit.

The warm moist air, the almost unlimited bottom time, the ease of breathing, the absolute silence without all the bubbles... has helped me to not only become part of the environment, but to share it with the natural inhabitants in a way that the previous 30 years had never done. Almost every dive I have one of those “Jean” experiences and it has enriched my life in so many ways by being able to welcome others into this new and exciting sport of Recreational Closed Circuit Rebreather Diving. Everyone should try it. It will give you those opportunities of a lifetime, again and again.



Loggerhead turtle from Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Caretta_caretta_060417w2.jpg

Training and Experience A Must

Ice Diving... A Cold Experience!

By Manfred Altmann, PDIC Instructor Trainer, Germany

In Germany, the best time for ice diving is from January through the middle of February. Good training and technique make all the difference.

Here is a short overview:

- Never dive without rope and a good line tender!
- Protects the ropes
- Go over the line signals with the line tender - practice before the dive!
- Speak with all divers and line tenders prior to the dive and discuss emergency procedures
- Have operational security or backup divers ready and available
- On location, provide enough material for rescue measures
- Even with a rope, use a compass to stay on course
- Always dive with 2 separate redundant air sources, better still with one double device and follow your machines
- Use diving places you are familiar with when going ice diving
- Pay attention to your body temperature
- Underwater: touch nothing and carry out nothing
- Properly close entrance holes and clearly mark the opening so others will know to avoid the hazard!

Sadly, 2 to 3 ice divers die every year in Germany often from carelessness.



The diver's group "Gervershof" ice diving in a lake on the Lower Rhine.



Educator and photographer: Manfred Altmann and Dirk Karshuening.

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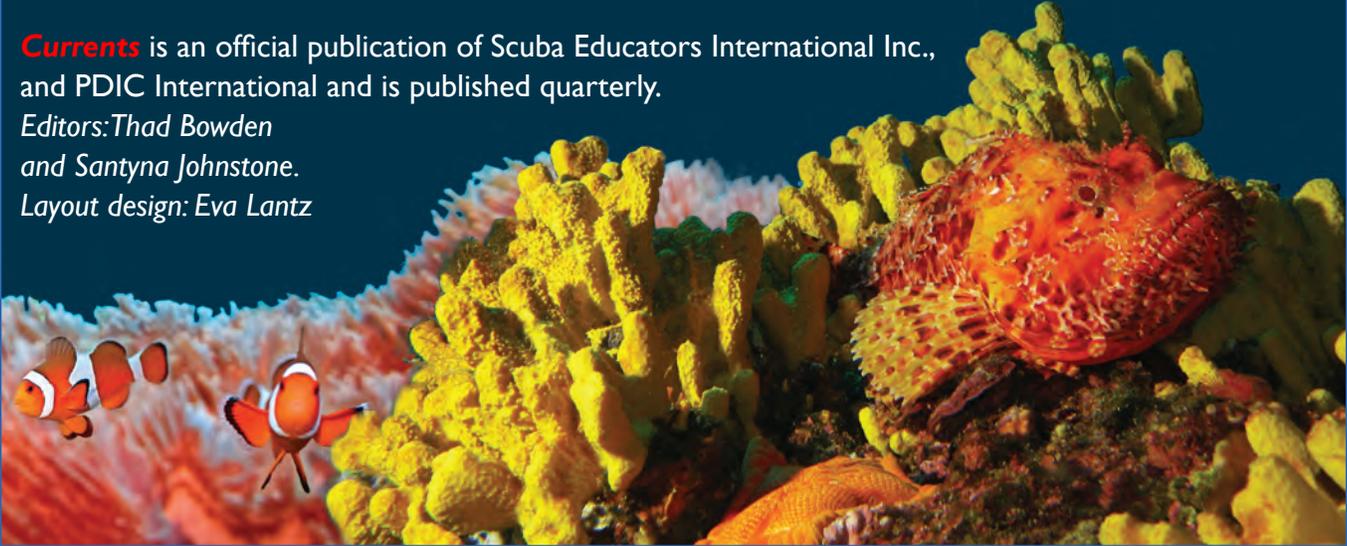


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