



“Dive Log”

The monthly newsletter of the United Divers
of Central Massachusetts

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Muck Madness in Manado

By Jim McKnight

UDCM members who attended the Jonathan Bird presentation last May saw a leading underwater photographer expound on his picture taking adventures in the Galapagos. I had the pleasure of diving with Jonathon and learning firsthand the art of digital underwater photography. Mike Walsh, who has also presented at our club, told me about the trip and I booked with Jonathon Bird Dive Adventures (www.jonathanbird.net/diveadventures.htm) in March. While I had been on Pacific dive trips before (Truk & Bikini), I had not experienced one designed by a UW photographer for UW photographers with specific subjects in mind. Manado lies at the northern tip of Sulawesi (formally Celebes) in the middle of the Indonesian archipelago. To the east on the other side of Lembeh Strait lies Lembeh Island. To the west is Bunaken National Park which includes numerous islands in addition to a coastal strip on the mainland. Divers Lodge Lembeh (www.diving-on-sulwasi.com) lies on the southwest side of Lembeh Island and is reached via the mainland port of Bitung. Rob Sinke, a dutch PADI dive instructor, and his Indonesian wife Linda run the facility with the help of a large, entirely local staff. The lodge was built for divers, there is no swimming pool, tennis court, health spa, etc., but there are first class divemaster-guides, comfortable boats, good food and fine camaraderie among the guests and staff. We did three or four dives per day depending on dive site location and if there was a scheduled night dive. Our group of nine was divided up with two video photographers and guide in one boat, three divers plus two guides in a second boat and four divers with two guides (including Jonathan, Mike and myself) in the third. During the 9 days of diving I did 34 dives and took over 2000 pictures and my picture total was far less than Jonathan's or Mike's. The dives were well within recreational limits averaging 40 to 60 fsw max for the so called muck dives and 90 fsw max for reef dives.



Cont.. on page 2

All dives were made with Nitrox 32 averaging about one hour or more in the water.

Upon entering the water for the first time my first thought is "What are we trying to photograph, old tires? I've seen more life in a fresh water quarry." The guide motions to me to approach closer and points to a pink blob sitting on some weeds. As I close in the pink blob turns into a hairy frogfish and he's got his lure out fishing! I take half a dozen shots and one turns out to be a real keeper. And so it went dive after dive, with the guides finding various frogfish, scorpion fish, the venomous blue ring octopus, the rare mimic octopus, crabs camouflaged with sea urchins, numerous lionfish, flying grunards, ghost pipefish, morays etc.. In addition to classic muck diving Lembeh does support several very healthy reefs with lots of picturesque hard and soft corals, nudibranchs and schools of reef fish. The "house reef" located near the resort made for a very interesting night dive. The main attraction is a colony of mandarin fish who live in a nest of dead coral and mate just after sunset. The plan is to lie at the edge of the coral, (watch out for the sea urchins!) lights pointed away from the subject and wait until the action starts. Couples will leap into view and complete the mating ritual right before your eyes. I believe they carry on shamelessly every night, so if you don't get your shot the first time you can try again. Moving on after the mandarin party, we found a large stonefish who cooperated by staying perfectly still, a beautiful red and black ribbon worm slowly swimming along and the biggest crab I've ever seen. The crab is called a sponge crab because he is clothed with a living sponge. This guy was as big around as a dinner plate with large lobster like claws and definitely belonged in a pot.

Our nine days went by all too quickly. Our party then split up with Mike and myself plus two other divers moving on to the Bunaken side of the peninsula and the rest returning home. The Hotel Santika together with the Thalassa Dive Center is located on the mainland within Bunaken National Park with easy access to the dive sites. The hotel is a classic tropical resort with all the amenities one would expect. It was nice to have air conditioning again, but after diving Lembeh the three days of diving Bunaken was a bit anti-climatic. All the dives were drift dives in the 70 to 90 fsw range. There are walls, reefs and pinnacles with tons of schooling tropical fish and photogenic hard and soft corals. We did encounter some strong currents and surges especially in the northern most islands which made photography difficult. There was one guide for four divers and after nine days of one for two that was a real downer. We were all spoiled by this time. I have posted detailed critiques of both Divers Lodge Lembeth and Hotel Santika/Thalassa Dive Center. On the Undercurrent web site (www.undercurrent.org).

This trip was a valuable learning experience for me both as a diver and photographer. I hadn't previously appreciated the benefits of a dive routine purposefully designed to get first class photographs of unique sea creatures. I don't think I will ever again go to some dive resort and hope for the best. Joining a group like the one lead by Jonathan Bird almost guarantees better results than diving on your own. Considering the Manado region, the muck diving in Lembeh is really worth the price of admission. I'm not knocking Bunaken National Park, the scenery is beautiful both above and below the water, but I wouldn't go halfway round the world just for that experience. One word on diving conditions, neither Lembeh nor Bunaken represents pristine diving. Lembeh is a busy waterway with ocean going ships and hundreds of small boats. In addition, some of the dive sites are close to populated villages so visual pollution is a real problem. Bunaken also has its' share of undesirable filth and it's supposed to be a protected national park. Much of Bunaken's problem apparently comes from discharges by live-a-boards; that's really dirtying your own nest!



On the way back Mike and I had a day in Singapore and went to Singapore Botanic Gardens. This is a beautiful place with super photo opportunities and the admission is free, but make sure you go early before it gets too hot. For shopping, especially for photo and electronics, I recommend "Little India" which, as the name implies, is populated by Indian immigrants. This area has hundreds of shops and a number of Hindu temples. Be prepared to bargain.

There are a few of my photos in this issue. To see Mike Walsh's photos go to <http://home.comcast.net/~walsh2000/lembeh/> .

Message From Our President

Hello one and all!

Can you believe it? Another dive season and another year has come and gone. We had a nearly perfect summer with ideal weather just about every weekend. Fall 2007 and winter 2008 has turned out to be quite the contrary. Even with the brutal temperatures we still have a group of hardy divers braving the elements. Here's to those making the best of the frigid temperatures and bringing in the New Year the right way!

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere gratitude to the 2007 board of directors. Thank you Ken, Peter, Donna, Karen, Melanie, and Mark for the time and energy that you put into this club! I would also like to thank Derrick for the fantastic job that he did on the website this year! I also look forward to working with the 2008 board of directors to continue in the positive direction that the club is in.

I hope by now you are all aware that Stan Waterman will be speaking at our January general club meeting. I am so excited to see what he has in store! He has graciously offered to join us free of charge to make up for the glitch that took place at the banquet. He felt terrible about the mistake and truly wants to make it up to us the best that he can. I am sure that it will be a presentation worth not missing. Please feel free to invite your family and friends to the event as well. Admission is free and dinner and drinks will be offered for purchase. It should be a great evening and I look forward to seeing you all there!

Last but by no means least, the board of directors has been discussing different options for dive outings, dive trips, and other club events. We would love to have your input! Is there a new location that you would like to dive or a site that you would like to revisit? Please let us know! We will do our best to accommodate any suggestions that you might have. We have also discussed developing a committee to organize the local shore dives. If this is something that you would be interested in participating in please contact any one of the board members.

I look forward to working with all of you to make this club the best dive club it can be! I cannot wait to see how we will grow throughout the course of the year! I have had a wonderful time meeting and diving with all of you! We have a wonderful group of serious divers that will be sure to make this club the most active dive club around!

I would like to wish you all a very happy, safe, and wet (or dry for those drysuit divers) New Year!

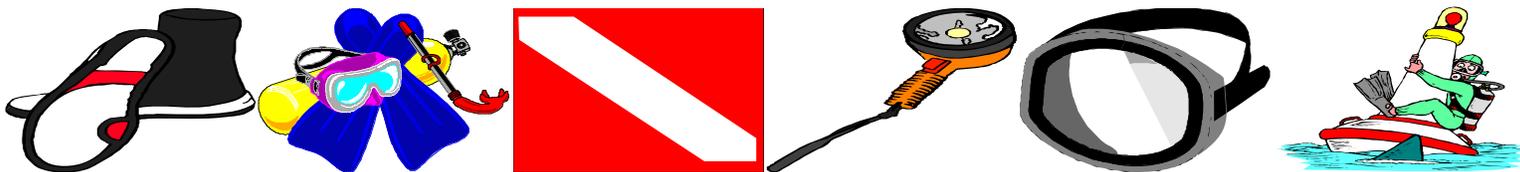
Dive! Dive! Dive!

Christine

Message From the Secretary

Hello everyone. Welcome to a new year of the United Divers newsletter. I would just like to take this time to remind you that this is your newsletter. Any help you can give to fill the pages with club/dive related stories and news it would be much appreciated. If you have a story that you would like to put in the newsletter but are unable to set it up on a computer to send me you can write it out and I will type it into the newsletter. If you have pictures that you would like to published in the newsletter send them to my e-mail with a description. You can e-mail me at aeroboss@yahoo.com or from the club website. All stories that are received by the fourth Thursday of the month will be in the following months newsletter.

Kris



January/February 2008

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					18 Dinner with Stan Waterman 6:30 pm	19
20 Ski trip to Wachusett MT.	21	22	23	24	25	26
27 Dive of the Month @ Back Beach	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4	5	6	7 BOD Meeting @ Ixtapa 6:30 pm.	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16

Upcoming Events

Jan 18- Dinner with Stan Waterman @ The Bull Run in Shirley MA. Food will be available to those who want to order. This is the clubs January General Meeting

Jan 20- Ski trip to Wachusett Mountain. You must sign up at the January meeting. Meet at the mountain at 8am.

Jan 27- Dive of the Month is back. Rick Boucher is doing a dive at Back Beach on Cape Ann. Time and meeting place TBA.

Feb 7- Board of Directors meeting @ Ixtapa 6:30 pm. Club members are welcome to come and share any ideas or issues that they would like the board to address.

Feb 17- Dive of the Month at Fort Wetheral, RI. Time TBA

Feb 21- February's General meeting @ Slatterys in Fitchburg. Meeting to start at 7 pm.

March 6- Board of Directors meeting @ Ixtapa 6:30 pm. Club members are welcome to come and share any ideas or issues that they would like the board to address.

March 8-9 Boston Sea Rovers 54th International Underwater Clinic

March 16- Mystic aquarium and sea-port club trip. More info to come.

March 20- March General meeting @ Slatterys in Fitchburg. Meeting to start @ 7 pm.

March 22- Dive of the Month. Location and time TBA.

For any and all Calender updates please check out the club website www.uniteddivers.org



Jan/Feb Tide Chart



DATE		HIGH				LOW				☀		☾
		AM	hgt	PM	hgt	AM	hgt	PM	hgt	rise	set	qtr
17	Thu	5:38	9.6	6:18	8.2	-	-	12:05	0.1	7:09	4:36	
18	Fri	6:40	9.7	7:25	8.2	12:19	0.7	1:09	-0.1	7:09	4:38	
19	Sat	7:42	9.9	8:29	8.3	1:21	0.6	2:12	-0.4	7:08	4:39	
20	Sun	8:44	10.2	9:30	8.6	2:22	0.5	3:11	-0.7	7:07	4:40	
21	Mon	9:42	10.4	10:26	8.9	3:20	0.2	4:07	-1.0	7:07	4:41	
22	Tue	10:37	10.5	11:18	9.1	4:15	0.0	4:58	-1.1	7:06	4:43	☀
23	Wed	11:28	10.5	-	-	5:07	-0.2	5:46	-1.1	7:05	4:44	
24	Thu	12:06	9.3	12:17	10.3	5:57	-0.3	6:31	-1.0	7:05	4:45	
25	Fri	12:51	9.3	1:03	10.0	6:45	-0.1	7:15	-0.6	7:04	4:46	
26	Sat	1:35	9.2	1:49	9.5	7:32	0.1	7:58	-0.2	7:03	4:48	
27	Sun	2:18	9.1	2:35	8.9	8:20	0.4	8:41	0.4	7:02	4:49	
28	Mon	3:02	8.8	3:23	8.3	9:08	0.8	9:26	0.9	7:01	4:50	
29	Tue	3:47	8.6	4:14	7.8	9:59	1.1	10:14	1.4	7:00	4:52	☀
30	Wed	4:36	8.4	5:09	7.4	10:53	1.4	11:05	1.8	6:59	4:53	
31	Thu	5:28	8.2	6:07	7.1	11:50	1.5	11:59	2.1	6:58	4:54	
1	Fri	6:23	8.2	7:07	7.1	-	-	12:49	1.5	6:57	4:56	
2	Sat	7:19	8.3	8:04	7.2	12:54	2.1	1:46	1.3	6:56	4:57	
3	Sun	8:13	8.5	8:56	7.4	1:49	1.9	2:38	1.0	6:55	4:58	
4	Mon	9:02	8.9	9:43	7.8	2:40	1.6	3:24	0.6	6:54	4:59	
5	Tue	9:48	9.2	10:25	8.1	3:27	1.2	4:07	0.2	6:53	5:01	
6	Wed	10:31	9.6	11:05	8.5	4:12	0.8	4:47	-0.2	6:52	5:02	☀
7	Thu	11:12	9.8	11:43	8.9	4:55	0.4	5:27	-0.5	6:51	5:03	
8	Fri	11:54	10.0	-	-	5:38	0.0	6:07	-0.7	6:49	5:05	
9	Sat	12:22	9.3	12:36	10.0	6:22	-0.3	6:47	-0.8	6:48	5:06	
10	Sun	1:02	9.6	1:20	9.8	7:07	-0.5	7:30	-0.7	6:47	5:07	
11	Mon	1:45	9.8	2:07	9.5	7:55	-0.5	8:15	-0.4	6:46	5:09	
12	Tue	2:30	9.9	2:59	9.1	8:46	-0.4	9:04	0.0	6:44	5:10	
13	Wed	3:21	9.8	3:55	8.6	9:41	-0.2	9:58	0.4	6:43	5:11	☀
14	Thu	4:16	9.7	4:57	8.2	10:42	0.0	10:57	0.8	6:42	5:13	
15	Fri	5:18	9.5	6:05	7.9	11:47	0.2	-	-	6:40	5:14	
16	Sat	6:24	9.5	7:14	7.9	12:01	1.0	12:55	0.2	6:39	5:15	

Advertise in the Newsletter

The club is offering up advertising space in all the newsletters for the rest of the year. For \$75 your company will have a business card size ad(3in x 2.5in) in every newsletter. For \$100 your company will have a double business card size ad(3in x 5in) in every newsletter. In addition to your ad being seen in the newsletter you will also be featured on the club website. Your ad on the website will not always be in the same spot the ads on the website will be on a rotating basis so every advertiser gets equal visibility. If you would like to place an ad but don't have a design to place in the newsletter an ad can be designed for you. Questions or comments can be sent to aeroboss@yahoo.com or you can call Kris Dufour at 978-855-3302.

Meeting Time and Location

The United Divers meet once a month on the third Thursday of the month at Slatterys located at 106 Lunenburg Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420. There is ample parking provided in the rear of the building. The meeting will be taking place in the event room near the back right of the restaurant. The meeting will begin at 7pm with a social hour beginning at 6:30pm. If you should have an questions please feel free to contact any member of the Board of Directors.



United Divers of Central Mass

Dive Log

United Divers of Central Massachusetts
P.O. Box 57
Fitchburg, MA 01420
www.uniteddivers.org

Email; For newsletter correspondence please contact Kris at secretary@uniteddivers.org



The Purpose of the United Divers of Central Massachusetts

The purpose of the United Divers of Central Massachusetts is to promote the sportsmanship and sport of SCUBA diving by stimulating our members to achieve the highest standards of safety and proficiency in Scuba diving. To promote friendship and wholesome social activity among its membership. To promote educational programs that will provide fundamental knowledge supported by actual hands on experience in a variety of areas including; safe diving practices, conservation of marine ecosystem, first aid and handling diving related emergencies, to organize group SCUBA diving trips, educational and social events that will allow our membership to accomplish all of the above.



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P.O. Box 57
Fitchburg, MA 01420

