
dogtooth and yellowtail tuna, six or seven whitetip sharks, and three very large gray sharks. Towards the end of the dive, Dan pointed frantically to a deeper depth, where I saw swimming six or seven abreast a huge school of hammerheads; they looked like a freight train moving down a track.

The next day, we went back out to Outer Limits and saw a school of six eagle rays, the usual schools of tuna, and more whitetip sharks. At the end of our second dive, as I was getting ready to pull myself onto the boat, Ben started screaming to look down. I did, and saw a minke whale suspended next to the boat, observing us.

Now it's back to diving in the Northeastern U.S. with five-foot viz and 65° water. Ouch.

Jeffrey Falk
Flushing, New York

Recycled Water Bottles: The New Environmentalism?

Dear John Trigger:

I was intrigued to see the item about the *Galapagos Aggressor* in the July issue of *In Depth*. I was on the *Aggressor* on an 11-day cruise in March. While we had a wonderful trip, there were a lot of small things that went wrong, consistent with your other reader's experience in February. On the 6th day of the 11-day cruise, we ran out of beer, some sodas, and bottled water. (For the record, we had a group of very light drinkers — the people who did drink had only a beer or two and only at the end of the day.) We didn't actually find out about the water for a couple of days, since they were fishing the empty water bottles out of the garbage and refilling them from the tap without telling us. Needless to say, this caused a near-mutiny among the passengers since, among other things, a

couple of passengers had been sick. In addition, the air conditioning in our cabin went out on the 6th day and was not fixed. (One of the other cabins lost its A/C around the same time and theirs was not fixed either.)

On balance, we did have a great trip and I would go back in an instant, but I couldn't resist responding to the strangely familiar story of shortages on the *Galapagos Aggressor*.

S. Douglas Borisky
New York

Random Scatterings

News on line and in letters

Only in America: Subscriber Dennis Munden spent a June week in St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. While he got the best of service from **Virgin Island Divers**, he was not comforted by what he saw underwater — and in the markets: "I had been told that the dive sites had little damage from last year's killer hurricane. If that's true, then they have been in poor shape for a while. There was much broken coral and silt on the reefs, and the fish life was disappointing. I saw three angelfish the whole week. Then I visited the local supermarket and understood why: they were selling French angels and even trumpet fish. . . ." Trumpet fish? I wonder if they sell foot-long hot-dog buns along with them.

If I have to read about a shark-bite incident, Martin Richardson's story is the kind I like to see — the shark gets punched, the diver survives, and dolphins come to the rescue. As he was diving in the **Red Sea** off Egypt's Sinai peninsula, one or more sharks hit Martin, taking a big bite of rib and muscle and puncturing his lung. While he screamed to his friends in the boat to help him, the shark(s) returned for another bite. Catching sight of a shark's head in the

bloodied water, Martin punched it as hard as he could. Undaunted, the shark returned for a third mouthful and extracted another pound of flesh. From here the story gets more upbeat. Martin's friends in the boat say that a pod of playful dolphins warded off the shark for two vital minutes, giving them time to pull him aboard the dinghy. For those who want to believe it, the dolphins seemed concerned about the welfare of the planet's master species; skeptics say that this defensive behavior is common when mothers are protecting their calves from predators. Martin survived.

If you have a flexible travel schedule and get e-mail, check out **Island Dreams' Electronic Diver list**. It's an alert on last-minute dive travel deals and specials. The last posting listed *Wind Dancer* in Honduras, a \$200 discount; *Rembrandt Van Rijn* in Belize, second person, half price; *Turks and Caicos Aggressor*, \$200 discount. (800-346-6116 or 713-973-9300, fax 713-973-8585, info@islandream.com or http://www.islandream.com/island/index.htm)

Imagine that on your next dive you come across 700 divers lounging around the reef listen-

ing to "Yellow Submarine," "Too Many Fish in the Sea," "Theme from Jaws," and "Mac the Knife." It could happen. Speakers suspended in the water above the reef at the Underwater Music Festival in **Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary** (Florida Keys) belted out the tunes to the gathering. Participants described the experience as like having a big Walkman that doesn't press on your head.

If you hold up last month's *In Depth* to a mirror, the map of Roatan would show **Bay Island Beach Resort** on the correct side of Anthony's Key Resort (east side) and the photograph of the resort would also be correct. The next time a mirror is required, I'll try to warn you in advance. . . .

If you're into dangle diving, contact **Buff Divers** at 704-784-2092. They recently commandeered Manta Resort for a naturist trip (with the owner's permission) and have some new ones planned for the future. . . . If it's deep diving and you've got deep pockets, maybe **Bikini Atoll** in the Marshall Islands is your thing. Reports are starting to come in on this atoll, which has just been opened up to divers for the first time in 50 years. Atoms were split here, so expect to sign a release about radiological concerns, but rest easy: returning divers report that they do not glow in the dark. However, it is suggested that visitors refrain from eating the coconuts, as plants with deep roots may store radiation in unacceptable amounts. Although the wrecks are in deep water (130-180 feet), they are in excellent condition, including the almost 1,000-foot-long aircraft carrier *Saratoga*. For a few divers who are willing to put up with hard-to-get-to, hanging-on-a-deco-line, Boy-Scout-camp-type facilities at a premium price (\$2,750 for diving, lodging, and meals, and around \$1,600 in airfare from the West Coast), this is going to be a site that surpasses Truk as the wreck capital of the world. Look for a full report in these pages soon.

In June I printed a warning that the dive travel agency **Tropical Concepts** had stopped answering the phone. Arthur Shore, past president of Tropical Concepts, writes that he and his wife, Michelle, left that firm in August 1995. They hope their own reputations will not be tarnished by the adverse publicity resulting from the closing of Tropical Concepts. They have since started Tropical Tours, Inc. (713-855-6900, fax 713-855-0139, diver@neosoft.com, or <http://tropical.scubamaster.com>)

Politics and diving don't mix. Two cases in point: Most live-aboards leaving out of **Thailand**, such as the *Fantasea* and the *Sai Mai*, have some itineraries that include the Burma Banks. For political reasons Myanmar (which is what Burma is now called) has not issued permits for diving in their waters. It's a situation that everyone believes will change, but if you were planning on seeing the big-creature action of the banks, be sure to check on the status before plunking down your money. Also, the **Southern Red Sea** remains a political quagmire. Jean Gray (Belle Head, New Jersey) reports from her trip in July that the Egyptian Coast Guard, which governs boat operations in the Red Sea, prohibits any scuba diving at the Brothers, Daedalus, the Tiran Islands, or Zabargad, as well several other premier dive sites.

One last caution — beware of the **Bermuda Triangle**. Chinese scientists have come up with a new theory that cosmic gas — not magnetic fields or aliens — may be the cause for the mysterious disappearances of ships and aircraft. Cosmic gas formed during earth's infancy is stored in the earth's crust and is released by such occurrences as earthquakes, cracks in the plate, or volcanic action. Leaks that take place underwater result in drastic decreases in water buoyancy, causing ships to sink. Next time you get caught in a downcurrent, you'd better think twice — it might be cosmic gas. ■

In Depth is the consumer newsletter for sport divers that reviews scuba destinations and equipment. We accept no advertising. Subscriptions are \$78 a year (addresses in Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean, add \$15; other foreign addresses, add \$30).

In Depth (ISSN 1087-4771, USPS 001-198) is published monthly by Ben Davison's Elephant Socks Publishing, Inc., 125 East Sir Francis Drake Blvd., Larkspur, CA 94939, with the December issue being the book-sized annual *Travelin' Diver's Chapbook*. Second-class postage paid at Larkspur, CA and additional mailing office. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *In Depth*, P.O. Box 1658, Sausalito, CA 94966. Copyright ©1996 Elephant Socks Publishing, Inc.

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John Q. Trigger

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Printed on recycled paper 

In
Depth

Sep. 1996 Vol 11, No. 9