



Calendar 2018

2/25 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 3/4 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 3/6 General Meeting
 3/10-11 Boston Sea Rovers
 Annual Clinic, Doubletree
 Hilton, Danvers, MA Info at
BOSTONSEAROVERS.COM
 3/13 Board Meeting
 3/18 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 3/20 Program: Roy Chamberlain,
 Knife Sharpening; Newsletter
 assembly

3/21 Bay State Council Meeting
 4/3 General Meeting
 4/10 Board Meeting
 4/15 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 4/17 Program TBA & Newsletter
 assembly
 4/29 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 5/1 General Meeting
 5/5 Clubhouse cleanup
 5/6 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 5/8 Board Meeting
 5/11 RAGNAR Cape Cod Relay Race
 5/15 Program TBA & Newsletter
 assembly
 5/20 Club Dive, @clubhouse 9 AM
 5/23 Night dive, location TBA
 5/27 Boat & scallop dive
 6/2 U-Boat Dive off Block Island
 \$108 pp., max 7 divers

Neptunes Sounding Newsletter

ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS

- Pay your \$35.00 club dues!
- Underwater Rugby tourney in Montreal, Feb 24-25. More info from Jay Theriault
- Mark Your Calendars: MARCH 10-11 Boston Sea Rovers
Annual Clinic, Doubletree Hilton, Danvers, MA. Info at
BOSTONSEAROVERS.COM & flier on P. 7.
- June 2 U-Boat Dive near Block Island. Cost \$108 pp. See TSunday, odd Alger for more info.
- Angelo sought hospital care for infection from cut and so did Roy Chamberlain for help with the flu
- 2018 Budget reviewed and will be presented, as amended, to membership at the March General Meeting
- The Board approved May 11 RAGNAR Cape Cod Relay Race support via advertising and volunteers. Club support generates income for the club. For more info, contact Jeannine Willis.

JANUARY-February: Activities and Dives

2018 Annual Awards Banquet

Fifty Neptunes and their guests attended the Annual Awards Banquet, held at The Common Market on Saturday, January 27, 2017. Neptunes Award Winners for 2017 included Todd Heino—Life Member; Chuck Zarba—Best Photo; Todd Alger—Largest Lobster; Doug Eaton—Best Artifact; Garrett Kane—Rookie Diver of the Year; Diver of the Year—Doug E, 1st; Todd Al, 2nd. Chuck Z, 3rd. Please visit the SSN Neptunes Facebook Page for all 187 banquet photos here: https://www.facebook.com/pg/SouthShoreNeptunes/photos/?tab=album&album_id=10155824311530923

January February Diving

Todd and Rob V dove **Sunday, January 14** at Pleasure Bay. The air temperature was a chili 16° in the water was 33°. When Todd spit in

Calendar 2018, cont.

6/5 General Meeting
 6/10 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 6/12 Board Meeting
 6/19 Program TBA & Newsletter assembly
 6/20 Night dive, location TBA
 6/24 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 7/1 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 7/3 General Meeting
 7/10 Board Meeting
 7/15 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 7/17 Program TBA & Newsletter assembly
 8/5 Duxbury Beach outing
 8/7 General Meeting
 8/14 Board Meeting
 8/19 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 8/21 Program TBA & Newsletter assembly
 8/26 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 9/2 Club Dive,@clubhouse 8 AM
 9/4 General Meeting
 9/11 Board Meeting
 9/16 Bay State Council Treasure Hunt& Coastal Cleanup (tentative)
 9/18 Program TBA & Newsletter assembly
 9/22 NE Aquarium Tropical Fish Rescue
 10/2 General Meeting
 10/7 River Run
 10/9 Board Meeting
 10/16 Program TBA & Newsletter assembly
 10/28 Club Dive @clubhouse 9 AM
 11/4 Club Dive @clubhouse 9 AM

his mask, his spit froze by time he went to rinse it out. Todd also had trouble getting out of his wrist seals at the end of the dive, he was that cold. Rob swam over a bed of bay scallops, though neither of them found any lobsters. One bottle was found on the dive.

Saturday, February 3 Diving at Nantasket Beach. Neptunes **Jon Willis and Rob Robison**, plus dive buddies Brian Smith and Peter Ninh suited up for a cold plunge. Our max depth 17'; vis 5-10'; water temp 32°F, dive time: 35 min.

Sunday, February 4 Doug Eaton and Matt Meyer scalloped off Marblehead. After 25 minutes, Doug's regulator free flowed. Scalloping was very poor, only 4-5 apiece.

Diving Roatan or Bust and Exploring Belize, Part 1

Story and photos by Rob Robison, unless indicated otherwise.

After a wildly successful live aboard experience with the Aggressor Fleet diving Cocos Island, Costa Rica, in February of 2017, Columbus (OH) dive travel companion, Donn Ellerbrock, and I settled on Roatan in early January 2018, on the new Roatan Aggressor. Unfortunately, Donn passed away while on a dive trip to Bonaire in early October. We had both planned to depart a day or two early in case of bad weather. As luck would have it, a once-in-30-years storm disrupted my plans. The weather caused me to be rerouted twice. Reroute one had me departing Boston on Saturday Jan. 6 to Grand Cayman, instead of Houston with its direct connection to Roatan, and transferring to Roatan via Cayman Air. But that was scuttled after an eight hour wait at Logan. JetBlue was unable to ready a plane in time to make the Roatan connection in Grand Cayman.

Reroute two had me shuttling to Newark on United for an overnight stay and an 8 AM departure to Belize the following day, with a connection via Tropic Air to Roatan. This one was successful but produced misfortune Number 3 when I discovered my dive gear bag had not made it to Belize and Roatan with me. In fact, it remained in Newark. In the meantime, because of all the rerouting, I missed the first day's diving. I thought all was lost until I was informed that a taxi was awaiting me at the airport to take me to the boat dock at French Bay Roatan, where I was met by the Aggressor's boat engineer who ferried me a few miles out to sea to catch up with the dive boat at the end of the first day's diving. I made it just in time for dinner and genuflected to all the diving gods who had finally smiled upon me and this trip. All the crew and passengers were extremely welcoming, especially my new roommate, Brian. As luck would have it, Johnathan, the dive master and operating officer, was able to outfit me with a complete set of dive gear, so I was able to make all of the dives for the remainder of the week. He also set in motion and bird-dogged a successful process to eventually find and retrieve my dive gear bag. Thanks, *Johnathan!*

Before giving you my log of dives, here are some facts you should know about the new Roatan Aggressor: it is a 118' long, 22' wide, steel live aboard that can carry up to 18 passengers and 8 crew. It has a hot tub on the second deck that many of us took advantage of often. On this trip we numbered about 15 passengers, nearly equally split between men and women. Only one

Calendar 2018, cont.

11/6 General Meeting

**11/11 Club Dive, @clubhouse
9 AM**

11/13 Board Meeting

**11/20 Program TBA &
Newsletter assembly**

**12/2 Club Dive, @clubhouse
9 AM**

12/4 General Meeting

**12/9 Club Dive, @clubhouse
9 AM**

12/11 Board Meeting

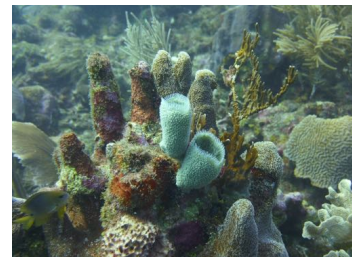
**12/18 Program TBA & News-
letter assembly**

was a brand-new diver. The rest were advanced to very advanced and well-traveled. Our chef was French and the meals were simply outstanding. The meal of the week had to have been the steak and lobster tail combo that was out-of-this-world, melt-in-your-mouth delicious. Accommodations were typical of the Aggressor live-aboards I have experienced to date: comfortable but tight, with in suite heads and showers and bit of room to stow some gear and changes of clothing. Towels, linens, blankets, bathrobes, pillows, and soap are provided.

The dive deck is set up so that each diver has a seat on of the two dive-deck-length benches (port and starboard), each of which has a tank well to hold your tank and BC and a hookup to the compressor for either compressed air or Nitrox (@31%). Tanks are filled immediately after completing each dive. Plus, each seat has space underneath for dive equipment. A long steel hanger pole runs the length of the dive deck on either side complete with heavy duty plastic hangers for drip drying wetsuits in the breeze. Hot showers and rinse tanks greet divers as they exit the water, and a camera table is provided to help photographers manage their gear. Most of the time, I showered on the fantail after diving. It is so refreshing. Aside from the simply outstanding crew and food, the best part of this live aboard is that everything was shipshape and worked like it was supposed to. Nitrox was available as advertised for a nominal charge.

Due to intemperate weather conditions, all of our dives took place on the south side of the island. Diving each day began at 8 AM. We dove twice in the morning and three times in the afternoon including the night dive. A mid-morning snack was served daily sandwiched between the two dives, as well as

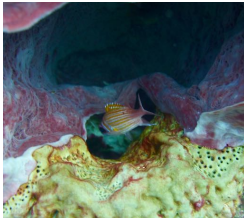
between dives 3 and 4 after the noon meal. Supper followed immediately after the night dive. I dove four times per day every day, including all three of the night dives, which I must say were the best I have ever experienced from shore or boat, due to the abundance and variety of marine life encountered and the clarity of the water. A fourth night dive was scuttled due to a swarm of sea wasps that had surrounded the boat.



To give you a clearer sense of the diving experienced, what follows is a distillation of my dive log.

Monday, January 8. The morning dives consisted of two wall dives that began around 40 feet and, in my case reached 62 and 65 feet respectively. I was immediately struck by the large beautiful barrel sponges, azure vase sponges, pipe fish, red and yellow striped sea horse, Atlantic spade fish school that swarmed Capt. Eddie and me, long-spine Squirrel and Soldier fish, Damsel fish, large Queen angel, large Channel Cling crabs, Fan branching corals, Gorgonians, Chub schools, cleaner shrimp, Arrow crabs visible in some of the sponges, feather duster and Christmas tree-style worms and other critters too small for me to capture or see. Visibility ranged from 75-80' to maybe 100. The water temperature provided food for thought. The Aggressor loaner Aqualung Legend and i300 dive computer were brand new, so I compared dive stats with my personal dive computer and discovered while bottom time and depth were virtually identical to my own, (the one piece of gear along with my camera gear, that I

hadn't checked at Logan), the thermometers varied significantly. Mine read 75° on the first dive and 73° on the second, while the Aqualung computer read 3 degrees higher.

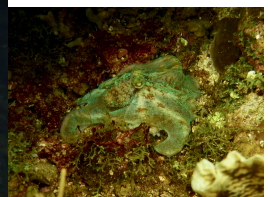


The PM Dives: I dove immediately after lunch, skipped dive 4, and returned to the water for the night dive, a pattern I repeated every day. First up was *Virginia's Wall*, a bit shallower than the morning dives. I bottomed out at 48 feet and returned to the boat early because I was feeling chilled in the 73°-75° water. Regardless, I enjoyed two great dives both around 46-47 minutes with water temps between 73°-75°. I saw many small crabs, Pillar corals, blue tube sponges and a small Channel Cling Crab, an Indigo Hamlet and a Blue Hamlet but lost the use of both Sea Dragon strobes for some unknown reason. The **Night Dive** in the same place, different direction, produced a literal parade of lobsters walking down a washout, shrimp in a long tube sponge, and a pale teal/lime colored octopus among others. Fortunately, I was able to capture much of the night time beauty with the two Sea Dragon photo video cam lights (1200 Lumens & 2300 Lumens) I had brought for shooting video. They also worked well with stills. Vis was terrific!



Tuesday, January 9 Morning dives: We explored *Calvin's Crack*, a sea crack that begins at 20' and empties out @ 80', complete with a Toadfish, Moray Eel, Lizard fish, Jaw fish, Sea Horse, Mantis Shrimp, Blue Chromis, assorted sponges, lobsters, and more.

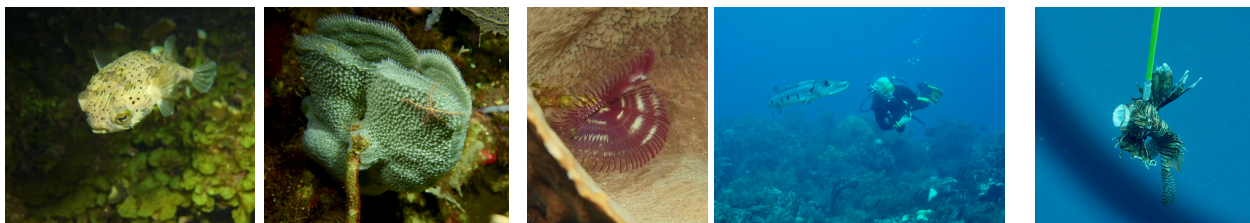
PM and Night Dive: Pirates' Point (AKA The Bulldozer). On this dive, a school of blue runners accompanied us on the descent. We spotted lionfish, another Chanel crab, large brown feather duster worm and a sponge worm. Some saw squid and a giant moray. On the **night dive**, we found two octopuses, a File fish, a large purple Split-Half Feather Duster worm, 2-3 lobsters, some brittle stars, some very tiny red Teardrop crabs on Finger sponge tips and on a Fan coral blade, several large Channel clinging crabs, 2 lettuce-style nudibranchs, 1 Lizard fish, 1 Conch, 1 King Helmet snail, perhaps a Stocky Cerith snail, several squirrel fish, Damsel fish, some Flamingo Tongue snails, and perhaps a Spotted Cyphoma snail on soft coral branches, & more! Wonderful dive!



Wednesday, January 10. Captain Eddie started the engines started @ 4:35 AM, cast off the mooring lines and pointed our prow toward **Cayos Cochinos** Sea Mount, located 30 miles south of Roatan. Diving began at 7 AM. Seas were much calmer than anticipated, and the current was significantly stronger than described: Barracuda showed up for the first time along with two huge Nassau groupers, a Horse Eye Jack, lots of Barrel sponges: 70,' vis, 80+'.

Due to the current, the captain motored the Aggressor far up current for Dive 2. We all crowded the dive platform to make a group entry, head straight down for the bottom, and drift back along the sea mount. My max depth was 84,' 78°. There were schools of all sorts of fish. Willie, our dive master, brought along his pole spear to spear two lionfish for the shark dive bait barrel. I shot lots of video, including some footage of a big Bermuda chub off in the distance. We drifted over many enormous barrel sponges, often in clusters. This dive should be named, Land of the Giants or the Aquarium Dive.

The early afternoon dive took place in a pass between the two sections of the Cayos Cochinos Sea Mounts called **Toon Town**. Here we saw for the first time beautiful Blue Bell tunicates galore, Filefish, Blow/Boxfish, lots of sponges, rivers and rivers of blue Creole Wrasse. Oceans of color bathed us. Fans, lots of soft coral bushes, and whips where everywhere. My max depth read 57'. The vis here was reduced to about 50-60' due to last night's storms, still more than acceptable to a New England or inland quarry (AKA mud hole) diver. The late **afternoon dive** was scrubbed due to deteriorating weather conditions, which caused us to return to the south side of Roatan for protection. Likewise, the **night dive** was scratched because of an unexpected infestation of Sea Wasps where we had anchored. No one wanted to chance getting stung, which can generate anaphylactic shock in those allergic to the toxin.



Thursday, January 11. We awoke to a sunny and bright day--finally, at long last! Up until now, our weather, while in the mid 70s to low 80s, has been overcast and occasionally drizzly for much of the trip. ***Cara a Cara—AKA The Shark Dive*** began at 7 AM to beat the dive tourists from the cruise liners who had pulled into port the night before. Once again, we, loaded up the fantail for a group dive, a simultaneous jump straight down to 72,' where we arrayed ourselves in a semi-circle more or less. Johnathan, our dive master, brought down a plastic pail full of holes with 2-3 dead, chopped up lionfish for bait. Large Caribbean reef sharks, a big Black Grouper, a Nassau Grouper, and maybe a Yellow Fin Grouper appeared instantly and began nosing around the pail. Jaw fish were flitting about and there was a large feather duster worm on rock directly in front of us when we landed on the bottom but all disappeared. We were not allowed to use flash or video cam light to illuminate our photographs, which might have attracted unwanted attention from the large carnivores. Our bottom time was 38 minutes. *Mary's Place*; 80' dive with a swim through crack tunnel 2 times with the dive finishing in 15-25' water near the boat: A fairly large tarpon (no photo) was sighted off in the distance. I found a lobster under a large coral

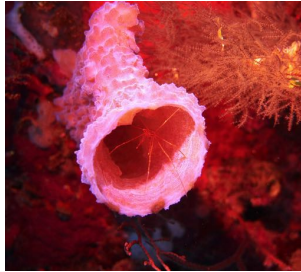


head. Other sightings included a Queen Angel, assorted sponges, branching coral , etc.

We repeated our dive through **Mary's Place** after lunch, this time hitting 86'. Saw my first Orangutan/ Neck Crab, Flamingo Tongue (2) snails, an Arrow Crab in a tube sponge, nice river-like schools of blue Creole Wrasse at end of the first crack and more. The water was colder this time (73°) and a stronger current had begun to run. For the **Night Dive** we descended on *Mr. Bud's Wreck*, a shrimp and lobster trawler, to find it coated with all sorts of undersea growth. Along the way we ran into a spotted moray, lobsters, large Channel Cling max depth was 58' and the vis

Friday, January 12. We made were cleaner shrimp, large Mutton much more. Afterwards, it was dry, as we steamed back to port.

Looking back at this dive part of this dive vacation that did Outstanding: crew, food, equipment, dive buddies—diving. The reefs were in excellent with corals and invertebrates in full glory for virtually all of our dives, although some evidence of coral bleaching was visible. Still, there was quite an abundance of fish life, especially of the smaller varieties. It is unfortunate that the weather did not cooperate enough to enable us to explore the north side of the island and the island of *Utila*. What we would have found, I do not know, but weather is a potential hazard of diving Roatan in early



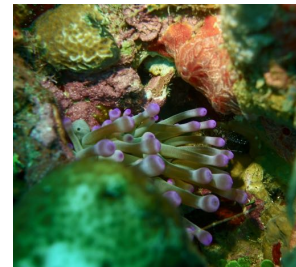
Crabs, a Harlequin Bass, and more. My was excellent!

our final dive at *Caribe Point*, 57.' There Snapper, Lionfish, a deep wall, and time to rinse out gear and hang it out to

experience, I have to say there was no not rise to the level of Excellent to accommodations, borrowed dive gear, everyone got along famously--and condition, color-wise and health-wise,



January. I wonder if we would have seen some turtles, rays, and other larger critters. I guess I will have to save that experience for next time. Diving the Roatan Aggressor was a marvelous dive vacation, one that is worth repeating sooner rather than later. Now, its time to think about diving into it locally. I'm tired up. Let's go for it!



Rob



