



Sounding

*Newsletter of the
South Shore Neptunes*

Calendar 2022

March

- 3/1 General Meeting
- 3/6 Club Dive
- 3/8 Program: Nantucket Lightship Museum by Robt Mannino, Jr., Director
- 3/15 Board Meeting
- 3/20 Club Dive

April

- 4/3 Club Dive
- 4/5 General Meeting
- 4/12 Board Meeting
- 4/19 Speaker: Sarah McCormack: Whale & Dolphin Conservation
- 4/24 Club Dive :Beach Clean-up. Location TBA

May

- 5/1 Club Dive
- 5/3 General Meeting
- 5/10 Board Meeting
- 5/15 Club Dive
- 5/17 Program: NOAA & Stellwagen Bank
- 6/7 General Meeting
- 6/12 Club Dive
- 6/14 Board Meeting
- 6/21 Program
- 6/26 Club Dive
- 7/5 General Meeting
- 7/10 Club Dive
- 7/12 Board Meeting
- 7/24 Club Dive

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ACTIVITIES, & REMINDERS

- **In the News: 2022 Boston Sea Rovers 68th Annual Clinic, September 30 - October 2, 2022. Danvers Doubletree Hotel**
- **Underwater Rugby hours:** *Wednesday* nites 8:00-9:30 PM at Westwood HS pool. **Joe Gomes** is working on a history of underwater rugby and needs photo credits and any sorts of media that could help him illustrate the sport across time. He can be reached at: <jsgomes@gmail.com>
- **Club General, Board, and Program night meetings are now in person (attend only if you are feeling well) or by Zoom until further notice.** The **Annual Banquet** has been **postponed indefinitely**. On the other hand, **All Club Outdoor Activities listed on the Calendar remain live with social distancing rules in effect as per 2022.**
- **Mass Non-Commercial Lobster License Updates:2021 Non-Commercial Lobster Permits Extended Through February 28, 2022:** Due to delays in the processing of 2022 permit renewals and the new MassFishHunt permitting system, the Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has extended the validity of 2021 Non-Commercial Lobster Permits through February 28, 2022. Valid 2022 permits will be required beginning on March 1, 2022. For more info go to:<<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/MADMF/bulletins/3050011>>
- **Bay State Council: Dues have increased from \$5.00 to \$10.00.** Neptunes members pay \$8.00 to join BSC and the Club covers the remaining @2.00 per person balance. For an update on the **Back Beach Lawsuit**, please check out this link: <https://www.gloucestertimes.com/news/broken-phone-leads-back-beach-neighbor-committee-to-drop-deadlines/article_e300d7a2-2dea-11ec-bbdd-b399db5595cd.html?fbclid=IwAR0OzQI8Of33-

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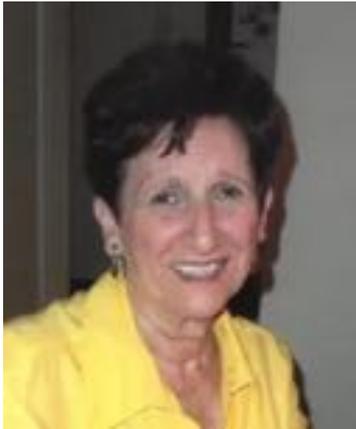
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- **Newsletter:** To help add interesting content to the newsletter, please send me (robisonr25@yahoo.com; or newsletter@southshoreneptunes.org) any first-hand accounts, stories, photos, or both about your exploits as a Neptune for potential publication. Photos or clippings enhance stories, so please include them if you can. Don't forget

ACTIVITIES & DIVES

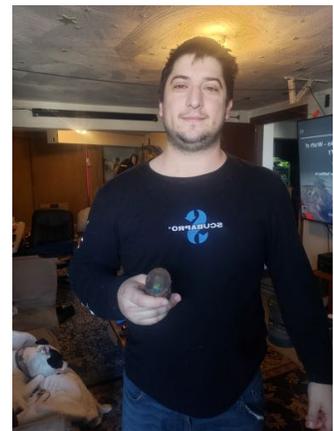
The scheduled **February 6 Club Dive** turned out to be another one of those dives into breakfast at McKay's Breakfast and Lunch Café. On hand were **Ken Hayes, Doug Easton, Jay Theriault, Rob Robison, Rob Vice, Rob Foley, and Tommy Lo.**

In Memoriam



The South Shore Neptunes express their deepest sympathies to **John Blackadar**, whose sister Mildred Kinsley, passed away after a serious illness. for more information , go to: [<https://keohane.com/services/mildred-m-kinsley/>](https://keohane.com/services/mildred-m-kinsley/)

Sunday, Feb. 13, 2022 Rob Foley, Doug Eaton, and Chuck Zarba dove **Pleasure Bay** (*Photos and report by Rob Foley*) near the boat dock looking for treasure. Treasure items found included an assortment of bottles by Chuck, a Crown Royal bottle by Doug, and an epoxy plastic paperweight globe by Rob Foley. *Photo and report by Rob Foley.*



Evening Programs February 15 and 23, respectively. Special thanks to **Susan Long** for her stimulating and exciting program regarding **Live Aboard Diving in the Sea of Cortez**. Here's a link to her program, in case you missed it: **Socorro Island** aboard **Rocío del Mar**: [<https://www.mexicoliveaboards.com/>](https://www.mexicoliveaboards.com/), **Sea of Cortez** aboard **Quino el Guardian** [<https://youtu.be/ZfK89SIFg8I >](https://youtu.be/ZfK89SIFg8I), and **Heroes del Mar** [<https://youtu.be/SmGd2ZVKNQ>](https://youtu.be/SmGd2ZVKNQ)

Also, many thanks are in order to **Les Corkill, from Atlantis Dive Resorts**, who extolled the virtues of diving with Atlantis Resorts in the Philippines.

Finally, Neptunes **Tommy Lo** and **Ken Hayes** are to be thanked for their efforts bringing these two speakers to our meetings educate our members.

Back to diving:

The weather has been inhospitable for diving on the weekends all month long. On the other hand, I did manage to get away with my wife, Carol, to **Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, Feb. 16 - Feb. 23**, (*Story & photos by Rob Robison*) for a little winter warm water diving and some much needed R & R. What follows is a **chronicle of the six boat dives** I made, while vacationing there at the Ocean Blue and Sand

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From

JOHN & KATHY BLACKADAR

Resort, an H10 4.5 star hotel. It's a beautiful place. Originally, this was supposed to be a small family vacation with our daughter; however, she changed jobs and couldn't make the trip, unfortunately. The only drawback to this resort hotel is that it is an enclave in the main, which is not usually our cup of tea, but the staff, accommodations, and food were great. After getting settled in our room, I went down to the onsite Pelicano Dive Shop (Right) to check in—nice people. After a 3:00 AM wakeup that same morning to catch the early bird flight, it was time for a long nap before supper.



Dive Day1. I was up a bit before sunrise on Thursday (Feb 17) morning and headed over to breakfast, arriving about 15 minutes before the breakfast bar opened. So I took some pics of the incredible sunrise over the beach. I wasn't the only one doing that. The German, English, Spanish and guests of other nationalities were already out on the beach doing the same thing.

After a light breakfast, I assembled my dive gear, hauled it over to the dive shop, introduced myself to three new dive buddies and the divemaster, suited up, and got ready to go. The divemaster and his crew loaded our gear, weights, and tanks into the panga, inflated some heavy duty rubber tubes underneath the boat, and pushed it into the water using the tubes as rollers. We all hopped in and took off across towering



waves and swells. My new buddy, a 68-year old Texan named Chris, who had dived with the

Pelicano Dive Shop the day before, warned me about the 9' waves and swells. He wasn't kidding. We had to hang on for dear life all to the way to the dive site. I mentioned to him I never dive in

such rough water. The dive master said they go out in much worse conditions all the time. Ugh!



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Where's Fingers when we need him?
Closeup at right.



Chris and I back rolled off the boat into the surging sea with a British chick, named Anita, her Kiwi husband, Andy, plus divemaster Dave, and headed down. Truth be told, it has been 39+ years since I have dived in such monster underwater surges, in this case only to see a near naked



underwater landscape. We found interesting rock/coral formations, two decent sized spiny lobsters, a nice turtle, lots of small schools of grunts, a few yellow tail

runners, a few scattered parrot fish, only one of which could remotely be classified as an adult, a few squirrel fish, tangs, and such. There were scattered soft corals, usually purple fans, and a few other types; mostly however, the corals were either in nascent stages of regeneration or were large, brown, and often not looking like they were in very good condition. Perhaps because the winds and waves and underwater surges are so strong on this side of the island, they can't grow easily. I really don't know.

We surfaced 45 minutes after the dive began, from 45' in 78° water, and struggled back into the panga. I promptly fed the fish all my breakfast, or so I thought, as a result of the towering waves and underwater washing machine motion. Matt Meyer would have been proud of me.

We motored to the second dive site and repeated our efforts; this dive was even more strenuous. We coursed a labyrinth of swim through channels in the coral and bedrock, and surfaced after 45 minutes from 36,' struggling back into the boat once again. The surges were so strong on this dive I gave up any



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pretense of underwater photography about half way through and just tried to relax as much as possible and go with flow. Back on board, I promptly gave the fish an encore chum explosion of whatever contents remained in my stomach. I haven't regurgitated from seasickness while diving since 2007, while exploring the NC wrecks



off Cape Hatteras! The dive operator promised the next day's dives would be on the calmer side, and would be a bit more reasonable. I hoped so because I was shook for the remainder of the day and didn't fully recover until after having swigged my second beer at supper time.



Dive Day 2. Diving Catalina Island, near Puerto Romana on the Río Romana.

Friday morning, the dive shop took about 10 of us on an hour and a half van ride to Puerto Romana to pick up a motorized catamaran boat to dive some beautiful spots in much calmer waters around nearby Catalina



Island.

We made two dives. The first was a wall dive, meaning you drop over a wall that is loaded with coral and that plunges



down to 100' or more. I saw the types of corals, sponges, and fish I have come to expect on these trips: blue chromis, creole wrasse, squirrel fish, loads of tiny colorful fish you might find in an aquarium, a couple of good sized trumpet fish; organ, vase, and other tube sponges, brittle stars, a



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seahorse or two, some small yellow stingrays, plus the biggest and fattest lion fish I have ever seen, though the photos I took do not do its genuine size any justice.



Seahorse



My max depth was around 50' or so and the vis was 50 - 100' on this and the follow-up dive. Interestingly and because most of the divers are resort divers, meaning the only time they dive is when they are on a vacation, the dive shop I'm diving with limits dives to 45 minutes of dive time and depths not much beyond 50' or so. Given the types of people that they deal

with and their lack of experience, this is a good thing. It was also good for me. On this trip I wanted to relax and not feel the pressure of a three to five dives per day routine, at depths ranging from 60 - 100+ feet.

The second dive was shallower and on an underwater plateau, so to speak. It featured a great variety of barrel sponges, small yellow / green stingrays, schools of yellow grunts, goat fish, some yellow striped snapper or runners, and more. I saw a lizard fish and for the first time ever a scorpion fish, plus some black sea horses. On all four of the dives (Thurs. & Fri.) we saw at least





one spiny lobster. My max depth was 38'. On these two dives the water temp hovered between 78-80 degrees or so. On the dives back at the resort temps have been 77-78°, too.

I almost forgot to mention the catamaran, a win-engined boat we were diving from, was loaded with somewhere between 60-80 divers, including some snorkelers, a few wives, girlfriends, infants and grandparents. After finishing our dives or snorkel experience,

we were shuttled over to the island for a beach BBQ. We were hungry. I also forgot to mention a number of the snorkelers were very comely string bikini-clad young women. They didn't have wetsuits of any kind to wear. As soon as they jumped in, I could hear their shocked expressions of dismay about the colder than expected water temperature. The northern Caribbean waters are not quite as warm as the central and southern areas especially between January and March. I was glad to have brought among my 5 mm (3/16") thick jumpsuit. As a result, I have had zero issues with the water temp. Also, a number of these women warmed back up on the beach before and after the bbq by going topless. (Yes, I looked! 😊 Sorry. No photos.)

As an aside, we were hit by three squalls or short, strong, and cold pop up downpours after the bbq and on the way back to port. One of the crew started passing out shots of cheap rum to all of us to help warm up. It did help, but by the time we returned to our resort starting point, I couldn't wait to run back to the room for a very long hot shower! What a day!

Saturday, I skipped the two morning dives and took a break. Besides, I had worn the skin completely off the knuckle of one of my toes, needed to bandage it, and give it a rest. It really hurt! Fortunately, there was no diving over the weekend until Monday, which gave my toe a much needed rest

Dive Day 3. Monday proved exciting on the water. While Carol grabbed a chaise under the shade provided by a thicket of Palm trees to finish her book, I hopped on the panga for another exercise in terror, challenging 10-12' waves and swells, to go diving on the outside of the barrier reef protecting the north side of the Island's shore. On the way





mask, fins, snorkel, and tank before being the first to back roll off the gunnel into the drink. While hanging onto the side awaiting the other two divers and the divemaster, a huge wave

out going against the wind, sometimes we were barely able to motor over the seemingly 2 story crests before they crashed on top of us. Really hairy!

Somehow, the boat captain found the mooring amidst all the waves and froth and tied up. I was smarter this time and had suited up completely beforehand, so that all I had to do was put on my



swept over me and tore my snorkel off, sending it to Davey Jones's locker. That has never happened before!

Eventually, everyone made it into the water successfully. We emptied our BCs, headed down the

anchor line to the bottom 40-42' away, and began our dive. The bottom was very much like the first dive I made last Thursday—large limestone rock formations sparsely pin-cushioned with a small number of sea fans in various stages of development, some sea whips and soft branching corals scattered about, some small elongated sponge corals, and some prepubescent fire corals to keep divers on their toes. A sting from one of





those leaves welts and pain lasting for days. The vis was a murky 15-20', due to the sand being kicked up by the overhead wave action, which produced a washing machine effect on the



bottom. By the end of dive 2, I was on the cusp of nausea—but held on this time!

We swam in a long, relatively slow looping switch back pattern traversing the channels between the underwater rock formations. The same familiar fish

reminiscent of last Thursday's dive showed up from time to time; however, I was more intent on timing the surge motion to follow and not lose sight of the divemaster than on taking photos; that is, until we turned a corner and practically ran into an exceptionally large long stingray, semi-buried in the sandy

bottom. I was able to take some good photos, including an eyeball shot! (Pictured above)



Not long after, my buddy needed to go up. He was short on air and suffering from a headache, as it turned out. So the divemaster returned us to the anchor line to ascend back to the heaving boat. When the dive master and the third diver popped up about @ 10-15 minutes later, he brought a surprise— my lost snorkel. Apparently, it had sunk right under the panga

Dive 2 was similar to last Thursday's, but even more uneventful, with the exception that my snorkel fell off again. Only this time, as we descended via the anchor line, I watched for it. As the bottom began to appear, I scanned behind me and spotted what I hoped would be the offending piece of





equipment, left the anchor line, swam away from the group, and found it resting peacefully on the bottom. I stuck it between my mask strap and face, regained contact with the group, and spent the next 42 minutes underwater timing the back and forth surges, which seemed even worse than those on the first dive. Needless to say, I was ever so glad to return to the boat from the 77° water and head for shore.

Once back on dry land, we rinsed our gear and left it to be hung out to dry. I made a beeline for our room and a very

hot shower, and promptly fell asleep for a most welcome cat nap. I couldn't take any more surging. The effect stayed with me most of the afternoon, so I eschewed Tuesday's morning dives, enjoyed some tranquility on the beach, and packed up dive equipment that was in a much drier state than normal to take back home.

Looking back on the 6 dives over 3 days, it was a great experience in a number of ways. First, I learned that even at age 73, I can still dive successfully in tough challenging conditions. Second, there is beauty where ever you dive, no matter how bleak it may seem. I found interesting rock formations and signs of its former glory in the form of turtles, coral in the process of regenerating, and a very large sting ray. Though I did not spot any nudibranchs, apparently they were there, as another diver so informed me later. I must have been too machine-washed to notice, I guess. Finally, there are wonderful places to dive all around the Dominican Republic, but the north side of the island is not the place to visit for a big, relaxing, and colorful underwater experience. On the other hand, the people we met on this former Spanish colonial island were terrific. One couldn't ask for better!

Until next time, safe living and safe diving everyone!

Rob



South Shore Neptunes



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