

# BRANDON SCUBA CLUB

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It has been a while since our last newsletter, I hope you enjoy this one. I would like to thank Jean Olenick for the article on diving in Saba and the pictures from Saba on this page. Also thanks to Dave Ford for the article on diving in Jamaica.

Our next club event is the "Clear Diving" dive and BBQ at Glen Beag on August 23rd. Please come out and support your scuba club. If you would like to go or just need more information call Dave Ford at 728-9732.

Our next club meeting is on September 8th. Our last meeting was in June, but it wasn't well advertised so not very many people came out. We will decide if the Melon dive (a replacement for our very successful pumpkin dive) will be held. We can set a date for our Christmas party and also discuss what type of activities the scuba club should plan. This is your dive club, without member support, it will cease to exist.

Dive safe,

Ed Burrige  
burrige@mts.net



## Brandon Scuba Club Meeting And BBQ

6 PM September 8th, 2008  
4138 Centenial Blvd Brandon, MB



## **Presidents Message**

Welcome back to a summer of diving. I hope everyone had a good winter. I'm sure many of you had some good diving trips over this past winter and the rest of us would love to hear about them. Not much has happened since the last newsletter. Looking forward to meeting new and old divers this summer.

Safe diving everyone!  
Don Sutherland

## **Saba, Dutch Antilles, West Indies**

Saba is a tiny island rising steeply from the Caribbean. It is accessible from St Maarten, either by ferry or by air. By far, air is the most exciting option, ([www.fly-winair.com](http://www.fly-winair.com)) as Saba boasts the shortest runway in the Caribbean. There are three communities on Saba – Hell's Gate, Windward and The Bottom. Windward is the "largest" and also the community with the most services. The entire population is only 1500 people; the whole island is like visiting a small town.

The main diving attraction to the island is the pinnacles. These are basically the tops of submerged islands. They are at about 100 meters depth. The usual day is a dive to the pinnacles followed by two shallower dives. The pinnacle dives are typical deep dives- down a line, swim a bit and back up the line, there is a good deal of life on top of the pinnacles but a short time to spend there. My favorite dive was Diamond Rocks, which is a pinnacle but it rises above the surface, the dive depth can be 80 - 100 m but you shallow up as you go around the pinnacle, it was full of sea life, and many string rays in the sand plains around the rock. Green turtle, reef sharks, tarpon and many smaller fish, corals, sponges were seen on the dives, the visibility was good and the currents were very variable. The wind always blows so the idea is get in the water and go down as the surface can be choppy.

There are three dive shops on Saba, the one we chose was [www.sabadive.com](http://www.sabadive.com) with Mike and Sally Myers. They provided excellent service and years of experience on Saba. The other two are Seasaba and Saba Divers @ Scouts Place.

The Swinging Doors is the place to go after a days diving, the beer is cold and the company good. Albert barbeques on Tuesday and Sunday, don't miss that!

Saba also offers excellent and challenging hiking. Just hiking the road is a challenge, its nine miles long, on an island that is less than 2 miles at its widest point! If you get tired you just hitch a ride by pointing in the direction your going. Perfectly safe - first island we've visited that our taxis had no door lock!

If you're looking for off the beaten track, quiet, and safe Saba might be the place for you.

## Is it possible to find a needle in a haystack?

How 'bout finding a diamond ring at the bottom of Clear Lake? After a weekend up at the lake, Ed & Elaine came home to several frantic telephone messages. Ed called the gentleman and learned that his wife's diamond ring fell off while they were boating at Clear Lake. He wanted Ed to go and look for it. He assured Ed that he marked the spot where the ring fell off. So, always up for a challenge, Ed got a hold of Ron Curtis, and five days after the phone call they met the guy and his wife at the lake.

It seemed that someone removed the weighted coke can that was placed in the water to mark the area where the ring fell off. After going back & forth several times, they found an area that looked familiar so Ed & Ron got their gear on and went to do what most people would think impossible. Finding a diamond ring at the bottom of Clear Lake.

But that is exactly what they did do, they found the diamond ring at the bottom of Clear Lake lodged between two rocks.



## Scuba Diving at the West End / Negril, Jamaica

Six of us were on our second dive of the day, and Mikey - our divemaster - had dropped back to help one of the divers with an equipment problem. So, I was just poking along at a depth of 18m (60 feet), when a solitary porpoise emerged from the void, coming straight at me. He was roller-coasting over the small coral heads, looking for any unsuspecting fish who may have strayed too far from shelter. I threw up my arms in greeting and let out a yelp into my regulator. The porpoise rolled onto his side, belly towards me, and glided past just beyond my reach. I spun around, and as he reached the other divers behind me, he circled them several times, causing them to yelp into their regulators. After a few seconds of this little game, the porpoise veered off, heading back into the blue, and just disappeared. What a buzz!

When the reefs of Cozumel got trashed by Hurricane Wilma in 2005, I began looking for good dive sites that were easily accessible from Manitoba. Belize is okay, but Negril has better soft and hard coral than the Yucatan has seen for years, and an extensive variety of marine species. [What's lacking is the high-energy that comes from exploring the Blue Hole; or drift diving off Palancar Wall, looking off into the void, hoping to spot a passing *white-tip shark* or *spotted eagle ray*.]

There are three dive shops in the Negril area:

- a) Negril Scuba Centre at the Negril Escape & Spa Resort, West End;
- b) Marine Life Divers at the Samisara Hotel, West End;
- c) Sun Divers at Point Village Resort, on the north end of Long Bay beach.

[Note: Sun Divers is for sale for approx. US\$200,000; contact Emily for details.]

All the West End hotels are located along a jagged coastline of limestone cliffs, varying from 5-10m high, and those shore dives require a short walk from the dive shop to the shoreline, a stride entry into the surge, with a ladder for that climb back onto solid ground. Sun Divers has built a concrete moorage beside their Long Bay shop, and has a boat that can carry 8 divers out to the reef about 700m off and along the beach.

Pelagics that I saw at Negril were a large pod of *porpoise* that cruise along West End, the *eagle ray* that breached while feeding off Point Village Resort, a medium-sized *barracuda* at West End, a *remora* who spent an entire dive trying to latch on to me, and a *southern sting ray* at West End; I was told about several *nurse shark* on Long Bay reef, and periodic *whale shark* sightings along the north coast.

My favourite reef fish are in the *hamlet* family, and there were plenty of *barred*, *indigo*, *butter*, *yellow-belly*, and *golden*, while Emily has seen the occasional *shy*. Several *sharp-tailed eel* live in the sand patches and I watched one of them crush and eat a small *crab*, while another was most interested in my camera lens. There were numerous *yellow ray* and *peacock flounder*, who quickly secreted themselves on the sandy bottom. Groups of *squid* only came close when I didn't have my camera in hand. One large *green moray* refused to come out and play, while the *chain moray* and several *spotted moray* watched and panted as we swam by their coral heads. *Queen angelfish*, *rock beauty*, *four-eye butterflyfish*, and *blue tang* provide lots of local colour. Numerous *lobster* and large *crab* are at home in the walls of the cliffs and coral reef. I saw one *Nassau grouper* who had eluded the local poachers, while schools of *grunt*, *snapper*, and *blackbar soldierfish* congregated under the coral overhangs.

All three dive shops provide a van shuttle service to collect divers from hotels in the Negril area. Overall cost for my 13 dives (9 shore dives, 4 boat dives) with two different dive shops was US\$361.53 (US\$27.81 @ tank). Not bad at all.

## **Decompression Sickness**

All divers know that their time underwater has limits beyond air supply, cold, and fatigue. The limits relate to how deep you go and result from nitrogen gas dissolving in your body tissues. During a dive, the increased pressure causes nitrogen from the air you breathe to dissolve into your body tissues. The deeper you dive and the longer you stay, the more excess nitrogen your body absorbs.

When you ascend, the pressure surrounding you decreases and the excess nitrogen cannot stay dissolved in your body, so it begins to come out of solution. Your body does not use nitrogen, so what goes into solution must come back out and leave your body. As long as you keep excess nitrogen within reasonable limits, your body eliminates it. To ensure you are within these limits, you should use dive tables and computers which allows you maximum times at a given depth.

If you stay underwater beyond these limits, your body absorbs so much excess nitrogen that when you ascend and surface your body cannot eliminate the nitrogen as fast as it comes out of solution. This causes the excess nitrogen to form bubbles in your blood vessels and tissues. This is called decompression sickness (DCS), sometimes also called "the bends".

Signs and symptoms of DCS include paralysis, shock, weakness, dizziness, numbness, tingling, difficulty breathing and joint and limb pain. If a diver has symptoms of decompression illness they should seek medical attention. First aid for decompression illness includes having the diver lie down and breathe oxygen.. Almost all cases of decompression illness require treatment in a recompression chamber, during which the diver is put back under pressure to help the body absorb bubbles in the tissues. The picture below is a recompression chamber located in Cozumel.

