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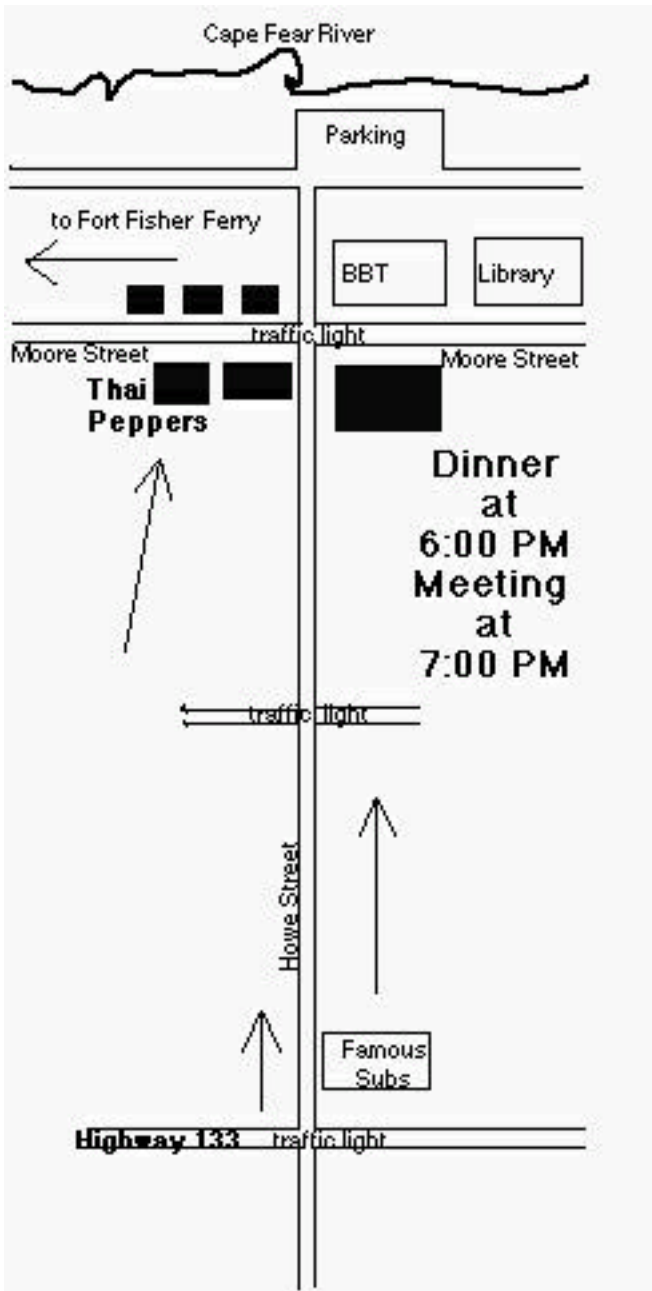
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## Through My Mask

by Steve Bland

Here we are, half way through the year and still waiting for a club dive. The club divers were again blown out for the May dive. But, luck is with us. We are going to try the Hebe again. This time it will be on Sunday, July 25<sup>th</sup>. The night dive is on for Sat. June 26<sup>th</sup>, and the Wrightsville Beach dive is rescheduled for June 13<sup>th</sup>.

The night dive will be on a wreck instead of a ledge for safety's sake.

**Boat status:** Fred Walker has offered his boat for the night dive, and we can get a larger boat if the demand for spaces exist. There was a lot of interest shown by members at the last meeting for this dive. But no one has contacted Bryan to be put on the trip roster or provided a deposit. The trip will cost \$50 per person and must be paid when you sign up; it is first come gets the 2 or 3 spaces that are available. As I said above, if there is demand we will look for a larger boat. If you want to go, now is the time to say so and sign up. The Wrightsville Beach dive currently has one space open. If you want it, send 68 dollars to the club, PO box or give the money to Bryan or Brenda. There are four divers committed to the Hebe dive. The boat for the Hebe dive has lots of room, but it will soon be filled by the captain if no one in the club shows interest.

The next item about the night dive are the requirements for dive safety. First, two lights: a large primary light with a smaller second light; second, a cylume light stick tied on your tank valve.

The next picnic June 19<sup>th</sup> will be at Pine Lake at Boiling Springs Lake (see map). This is due to ongoing repairs at the marina and the concern that the grills will not be usable.



Next meeting: June 8 at 7:00  
p.m. at Thai Peppers  
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**Officers and interested persons to  
meet at Thai Peppers the 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Tuesday at 7pm**

### **Minutes From the Last Meeting by Sally Thomas**

This meeting was primarily one in which descriptions of the most recent dives were center stage. Jim Attack, and Trex had just completed one that day. Alston is looking for fresh water nearby.

#### Old Business:

- Schedule of club dives for the last weekend of each month. A night dive is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, June 26 on Fred's boat for SW of the Tower. The dive will begin in the late afternoon with the possibility of doing 3 tanks.
- July 25 will be the rescheduled date for the Blown-away *Hebe* dive. There will be plenty of room for new divers to sign up for this dive.
- The May 23 dive off Wrightsville Beach on Bob Beason's boat was blown out and is rescheduled for Sunday June 13<sup>th</sup>. At this time the boat has one spot.
- August 28-29 a Morehead City dive is still viable.
- September 26 is open for suggestions.

#### New Business:

- Scott Fowler presented information regarding the Great American Fish Count to be conducted July 1-14. A REEF fish identification seminar will be given June 26 at 10 a.m. at the Fort Fisher Aquarium free of charge.

- John Rories volunteered to demonstrate his ocean kayak at a future club meeting. He says it is a great platform for diving.
- Our scheduled speaker ran into a last minute conflict so we had a great time talking dive, dive, dive (swapping lies). Next time we'll just have to hear all about Roatan

### **Club Members Dive Roatan**

By Bryan Woodard

As many of you already know, I took what was for me the first vacation in about 20 years this month. I don't want to bore you with repeated tales of Monkey La Las ( a local drink and a large lizard); clear, calm and warm tropical water; friendly dolphins; Green Moray Eels; or Spiny Headed Blennys. But I do want to give you a sense of what Roatan and Anthony's Key Resort is like in case you ever want to visit that part of the world. Plus I want to thank Bob and Janet Beason for putting together this trip.

Roatan is 30 miles long and 7 miles wide, the tip of a submerged mountain I'd guess, poking its top above the Caribbean sea thirty two miles from the Honduras coast. It is 950 miles from Miami international airport, and Taco airlines will take you there.

I didn't see any flat land on the island besides the runway that our plane landed on. Hills, valleys, and small mountains topping out at 900 feet rise straight out of the sea and are overgrown with tropical plants. Anthony's Key Resort is on the north side of the island near the west end. With the prevailing wind and sea from the southeast, the water on the resorts door step is always passive.

The resort is understated. All the the buildings and bungalows are unpainted treated lumber. The construction is straight forward , solid, and clean. The dive shop, air station, snack and photo shops are built on a long dock right at the waters edge. The restaurant, bar and main office are built into the side of a mountain above the docks and require a walk up



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several flights of steps . The resort also includes a souvenir shop and the dolphin institute.

Bungalows are on a 3 acre palm tree covered island a hundred yards off the docks. Each bungalow is built on stilts at the water's edge and are shaded by several palms. A pair of hammocks on a shaded deck wait outside each pair of bungalows.

Our week started late on May 9 with the only free drinks of the week, a short orientation, and then off to our bungalows to get settled in. The next day started early with a check out dive at the dock to see if we could clear our mask, take our regulator out of our mouth and put it back in without drowning, and generally demonstrate that we were not an accident waiting to happen. A 6 minute boat ride put us on our first dive site called, *Overheat Reef*. With 30 feet of clear water under the boat and 150 feet of water less than a biscuit toss from our port side, and no current, the possibility of a good dive looked pretty good. Fifty-five minutes of bottom time and the boat is back to the dock for air and snacks, followed by a second dive, followed by lunch followed, by a third dive, followed by happy hour, followed by a 5 star dinner. This is the tropics, and they don't know from day light savings time. The sun goes down at 6:30 their time. Dinner is at 7:00, and after a 3 dive day sleep came by 8:30 or 9:00 for just about everyone with the exception of Annie Martin.

The days followed pretty much this pattern. Night dives came and went, a picnic on the beach and a evening barbecue with local dancers, a tropical wedding at sunset with by beautiful tropical flowers , the bright eye and laugh of a dolphin, the feel a dophlin's skin, each moment slipping gently into long term memory, snapshots in a mental scrapbook.

A tropical paradise with no friends to share the moments of discovery and 5 hour lay overs between flights at Miami International would be dull indeed. Bob & Janet Beason, Pete & Julep Bryan, Jim, Sally, Annie & Sam Martin, and my friend Brenda Vrooman are Descenders all: Good divers, good traveling companions, good friends; film at eleven

## **Dive into The Great American Fish Count** by Scott Fowler

**What is the Great American Fish Count?** The GAFC is an annual fish census by trained volunteer scuba divers and snorkelers. The purpose of the event is to mobilize and educate the recreational diving community and to increase the awareness and level of concern regarding the condition of our fisheries and marine environment. The GAFC also provides divers a non-extracting activity. The data gathered during the GAFC will provide valuable and much needed information on fish species diversity, abundance, and distribution.

**And its History?** In 1992 a small group of recreational divers and marine biologists from the Channel Islands National Park conducted a standardized visual fish census. Their effort was modeled after the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, and quickly grew into an annual event. In 1997, twenty-seven information and training seminars were held and 439 participants submitted 372 surveys from the Pacific, Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

**How is the Data Collected?** A standardized visual census method is used during the GAFC in order to obtain useful and valid information. The method allows for the unrestricted movement throughout the dive site and requires minimal effort and equipment. Divers record all species encountered that can be identified. The relative abundance of each species is also recorded during and after the survey. At the conclusion of the dive each volunteer diver records the sightings on a pre-printed form that is then returned to be entered into a database.

**How can I get involved?** The GAFC is a fun, educational, and environmentally friendly activity that promotes stewardship among divers toward the marine environment. there are several ways to become involved. Divers are needed to conduct fish

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### Puffer Love by Scott Fowler

The inlet side of the north jetty at Wrightsville Beach can be a wonderful dive site when the weather refuses to cooperate with offshore ventures. Most people do not realize the extent of the marine life found just a few feet from the shore. I try to dive the jetty often and never become bored with the interesting marine creatures that call this area home.

On one particular dive, I truly believe a fish fell in love with me. I was looking among the sand and boulders for shells when I saw a blur through the side of my mask. I rotated my body so that I could get a good look at the "shark" I thought was about to eat me. Instead of blue water white death, I was greeted with a smile—well sort of. A Bandtail Puffer (*sphoeroides spangleri*) was hovering right at eye level, just a few inches from my mask. This fish is very common in our area, and I'm sure most of you have seen one. Even if you haven't, they are usually olive-brown above and pale below with well defined round black spots, aligned in a row on the lower sides of the body. They get their name from the fact that they have two black bands on their tail—one at the base and one at the end. They range from Massachusetts all the way down to Brazil, including the Bahamas and the Gulf of Mexico. Well, this particular fish seem to be holding his pose just so I could identify him. I watched him for a while as he stared back through my mask. I was suddenly struck with a feeling that there was a great amount of intelligence in those eyes. He seemed to be watching my every move and pondering me (maybe he's was trying to identify what kind of fish I was). We stared into each other's eyes for quite awhile. Eventually though, I grew bored with him and continued exploring. He must have fallen in love with me because each time I would stop, the same fish would be just behind and off to the right of me. I guess he just wanted a friend. Not to be rude, I accepted him as my new dive buddy and swam along with him by my side.

At one point, I thought I saw a sand dollar and stopped to dig it up. Well my little buddy swam right down beside my hand to see what I was doing. Puffer's favorite foods are crabs and hard-shelled invertebrates, so I guess he thought I was going to treat him to dinner. He hovered just

above the bottom and kept his eyes trained on the sand, yet glanced up at me every once and a while to make sure I was still there. I tried this trick several times, and on each occasion he assumed his place and watched. He never found anything suitable for eating, although he did pick up a few small rocks and shells and then spit them out with disdain—a picky eater.

Well, to make a long story short, my dive buddy stayed with me for the rest of the dive. Even though I swam to the other end of the jetty and back to shore, my new friend never left my side. He was always just a few inches away and would stop and investigate whenever I did. Later that day when the needle on my pressure gauge started into the red, I knew it was time to leave. I found it hard however to leave such a faithful companion. But eventually I stood in the shallow water and slowly walked away.

Since that encounter, the Bandtail Puffer has been one of my favorite fish to watch. They seem so intelligent and curious. Most are very approachable and with slow, non threatening movements and provide lots of amusement when you kneel on the bottom and stir up some sand with your hands. The trick never fails to get them excited.

I have dove the jetty many times since that day and yes I look for my friend. I have yet to find another puffer as friendly as my buddy, but I still always stop to look at them and wonder if I'm seeing the same fish. In retrospect, I guess it was me who fell in love.

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### Club Goes on Line with New Website

[www.bcinet.net/cfddiveclub](http://www.bcinet.net/cfddiveclub)



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counts during the first two weeks in July. These divers don't need to be experts in fish identification but they do need to know the basics. Training seminars offer volunteers the opportunity to learn fish ID skills and the census method. Our seminar will take place on Saturday, June 26<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m. at the Fort Fisher Aquarium auditorium. The seminars will last about two hours and will be free and open to the public. GAFC Survey Kits will be available for \$20.00 and include an underwater survey slate, color ID card, Underwater survey paper, survey report forms, and a GAFC T-shirt. Even if you are not interested in volunteering for a survey dive, this would be a good chance for you to brush up on your fish ID skills. Please make plans to come out and support a great cause.

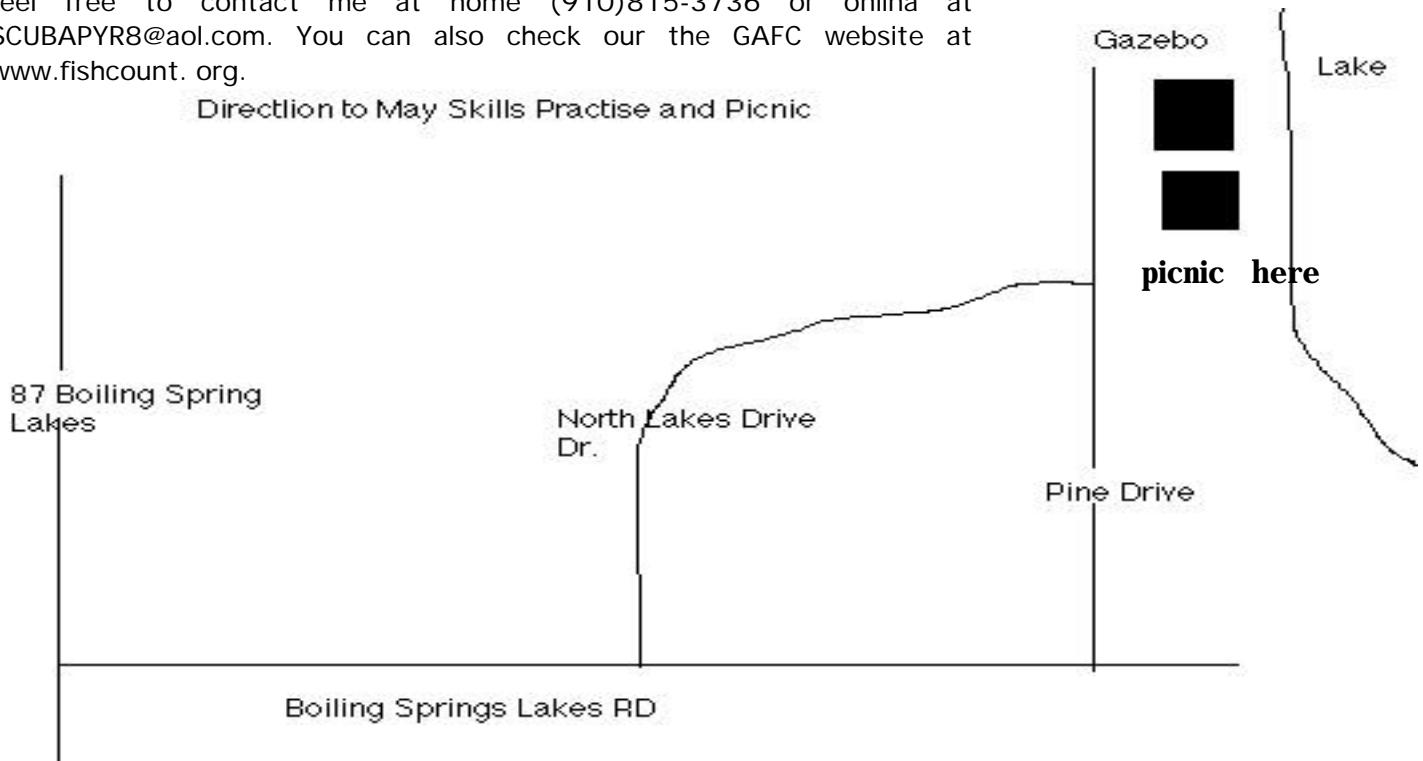


**How about the survey Dives?** The dives can be conducted anytime between July 1 and 14<sup>th</sup>. I am still looking for charter captains who are interested in participating. It would be nice to have a few members from the club to all dive on the same day. Keep this in mind though— even if you don't get a chance to dive during that time, you can still make a survey dive anytime and any place. All the data is still used by REEF and NOAA's National Marine Sanctuary Program.



**Interested or need additional information?** Please feel free to contact me at home (910)815-3736 or online at SCUBAPYR8@aol.com. You can also check our the GAFC website at www.fishcount.org.

Direction to May Skills Practise and Picnic





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### **MEMBER BENEFITS**

- Newsletter Keeps you abreast of local diving information including offshore charters, lake activities, meetings and social gatherings.
- Educational There will be interesting and educational guest speakers at each monthly meeting plus seminars and speciality courses.
- Charters Cape Fear Descenders will work hard to book comfortable boats to exciting offshore wrecks. Charter costs are usually less than typical walk- on rates.
- Socials Throughout the year the club will sponsor social events such as picnics, quarry days, and the holiday banquet. These events should draw good crowds, good company and good fun.

Club membership is based on the calendar year January 1st, through December 31st. Membership dues are payable January 1st. There is a grace period that extends through March.

### **CLUB DIVING INSTRUCTORS**

Tom Roberson	PADI	457-4776
Wayne Strickland	NAUI	457-5201
Jeff Marlow	PADI	(910) 799-1794
Cheryl Smith	PADI	(910) 793-9799
Richard Mathews	PADI	(910) 686-9290
Scott Fowler	PADI	(910)815-3736

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**PO Box 11123  
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