

The OWL MANAC

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE WET OWLS, THE DIVING CLUB OF BURTON'S DIVE SERVICE

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THE CLUBHOUSE

THIS MONTH'S CLUB MEETING IS TO BE HELD ON THURSDAY MAY THE 19TH AT 7PM AT THE STORE. TOM FALARDEAU WILL BE SHOWING ONE OF HIS LATEST DVD CREATIONS. PLEASE CONFIRM YOUR ATTENDANCE SO WE CAN SET UP THE PROPER SIZED ROOM.

The summer dive schedule is coming along and you will notice a slight change in the "standard" dive type this year. We would like to concentrate our dives around the newer divers among us to give more opportunities for basic and intermediate level divers to join in, gain

some experience and have some fun. A final dive schedule should be posted by the end of this month on the website.

Speeding Ticket

A police officer stops a blonde for speeding and asks her very nicely if he could see her license.

She replied in a huff: "I wish you guys would get your act together.

Just yesterday you take away my license and then today you expect me to show it to you!"

Sent in by Bill Barnard

SHOP TALK

WITH MAY UPON US, THE LOCAL DIVE SEASON HAS BEGUN. ALBEIT A LITTLE SLOWER THAN USUAL WITH THE ON-AGAIN, OFF-AGAIN RAIN AND THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER TEMPERATURE BEING ONLY 43 FAHRENHEIT. IT IS HERE NEVERTHELESS.

This summer we have plans to run a few courses that have not been run for quite a while. We are arranging a Rescue Diver course (or two), a Master Scuba Diver course, Equipment Knowledge programs as well as the usual Scuba Diver, Advanced Scuba Diver and Nitrox Diver courses. We would also like to run a Divemaster course this summer for those interested in moving into leadership. A couple of our instructors will be upgrading to Instructor Trainer level so we can run NAUI Instructor courses and they will also be upgrading to teach NAUI's new Intro to Tech program.

While we are on the subject of training, we are now organizing a DAN Oxygen Administration program for any who is interested or looking to re-certify (recommended at least every two years). A First Aid & CPR course is also in the near future. We will finalize the schedule for this when the instructor becomes available shortly.

Getting your dive equipment serviced is an important, but often overlooked springtime task. The shop is already quite busy with regulator and tank servicing but fear not, we will put in whatever time is required to make sure your equipment is safe and in top performance for

this year's dive season. Don't wait too long. Get your equipment serviced now so you don't have to interrupt your summer diving. For those of you with equipment that is quite old, such as dive computers that run U.S. Navy tables or regulators that weigh more than your tank, we have some interesting upgrade pricing offers available to you. It is increasingly difficult to service older equipment as parts become scarce and the equipment becomes more and more brittle and prone to breakage. Let us help you upgrade your equipment to the latest technology and you can increase your safety and enjoyment of the sport. Please contact the shop for specific details.

Lastly, for those that do not yet have any equipment but have been thinking about it, don't forget to check out the Specials and Packages on our website. There are always deals to be had.

Bill & Bart

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Don't forget
May 8th

Mothers'
Day!



A Word From the Editor

Sorry I am late, but it was almost the end of the month, and I had no article whatsoever to count on. Then, Neptune must have seen me crying, for Captain Tom came to the rescue with yet another great article of interest.

Dark Addiction is all about a strong drug. It gets into your entire system and suddenly, you are utterly and completely hooked. Yes, you have guessed: It's all about cave diving.

Take care! Reading about it is tantamount to being hooked. Imagine how I feel, not having dived for the past 2 years. I would be very satisfied just doing the Rothsay. However, my time is coming. I will probably be able to dive by June if my specialist says it's OK. I had to have cataract surgery and a 6 month period after the procedure is obligatory.

One thing I must say is that Tom and the likes of him live up to their beliefs and writings. I remember one of Tom's articles stating that one should never stop learning and practicing. I must admit, it is a way to keep on diving and finding it interesting. Not only is he doing just that, but he also takes photos and films to boot.

The big question is: What will he do for an encore? I guess, I will have to be patient and wait for an end-of-the-month when I just might learn the answer to that question.

In the meantime, I invite you to turn the page and enjoy what some of them are doing. Till next time then. And as they say in the Underwater parlance: "See you under"!

Marcel

Global Warming

Good news for coral reefs

The growth rate of coral reefs will increase 35 per cent by 2100 due to the greenhouse effect and warmer ocean temperatures, according to Australian Scientists.

"Our analysis suggests that ocean warming will foster considerably faster future rates of coral reef growth that will eventually exceed pre-industrial rates by as much as 35 per cent by 2100," says Dr Ben McNeil, an oceanographer from the University of New South Wales.

"Our finding stands in stark contrast to previous predictions that coral reef growth will suffer large, potentially catastrophic, decreases in the future," says McNeil, who led and published the research in the journal *Geophysical Research Letters*, with colleagues Dr Richard Mearns of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) and Dr David Barnes from the Australian Institute of Marine Science, Townsville.

Warmer seawaters and global warming: will they save our coral reefs?

Previous research has predicted a decline of between 20 and 60 percent in the size of coral reefs by 2100 relative to pre-industrial levels due to increasing CO2 levels in ocean surface waters. The new research suggests that present coral reef calcification rates are not in decline and are equivalent to late 19th century levels. Coral reefs are built from calcium carbonate when red algae cement together a framework of coral skeletons and sediments. Seawater surface temperatures and the quantity of carbonate in seawater dictate their growth rate.

The Australian scientists have observed the calcification-temperature relationship at significant reef-building colonies around the world in the Indo-Pacific and at massive Porites reef colonies in Australia, Hawaii, Thailand, the Persian Gulf and New Ireland.

The predicted increase in the rate of coral reef calcification is most likely due to an enhancement in coral metabolism and/or increases in photosynthetic rates of red algae, according to the scientists. They used projections of ocean warming and CO2 concentration from a CSIRO climate model that accounts for atmosphere-ice and ocean carbon cycles.

"Our results show that increases in coral reef calcification associated with ocean warming outweigh decreases associated with increased atmospheric CO2", says CSIRO's Dr Richard Mearns. "While initially showing a decrease in calcification up to 1964, ocean warming outweighs the CO2 effect and stimulates recovery of coral reef calcification. Our results represent an average over the entire coral reef community and it will be important to undertake more specific regional analysis of models to better understand future changes in regions such as Australia's Great Barrier Reef."

Dr David Barnes from the Australian Institute of Marine Science in Townsville says: "Coral reef calcification and the changes suggested in our research are separate to the adverse future effects of coral bleaching which is associated with the corals symbiotic micro-algae, and the significant impacts of human activities such as poor water quality, and unsustainable fishing on many of the worlds coral reefs."

Please think about a small contribution to
The Owlmanac

I'm not asking for your loot, only a paragraph or two.

No experience is negligible, no outing is just so-so.

Send me your funny picks. Send me your one liners.

Pass on to divers around you your little tricks.

Make others profit from your good and bad experiences.



Dark Addiction

by Tom Falardeau

I AM SAD TO REPORT THAT SIX OF YOUR BRETHREN HAVE SUC-CUMBED TO AN INCURABLE DISEASE RECENTLY AND THEIR DIVING WILL NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. LIKE ALL SUCH STORIES, IT STARTED OFF WITH THE BEST INTENTIONS, AND IT WAS LONG IN PLANNING AND PREPARATION. EARLY IN APRIL, TWO BY TWO, THE SIX OF US HEADED TO FLORIDA VIA THE UNITED STATES' WONDERFUL INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM, LEAVING BEHIND A DAMP AND CHILLY SPRING TO REVEL IN SUMMER-LIKE TEMPERATURES AND SUNSHINE IN THE HIGH SPRINGS AREA.

First to arrive and succumb were Art Williamson and Jim Clark. A few days later, Marie and I joined them, followed within a few hours by Marc Grondin and Radu Trandafir. What transpired in the days following our arrival caused our downfall. We made the mistake of diving Florida's incomparable caves under the tutelage of cave instructor Ralph Di-Panfilo, through whose hands all six of us would pass during our first week there.

Art was the first victim, taking the two day cavern course, followed immediately by the Intro to Cave, on which Marie joined him. Marie then immediately went on to the Cave Apprentice course, joined by Radu and Jim, while Marc and I completed our Full Cave. Having fallen hard for cave diving, Radu and Jim decided to finish Full Cave during our second week there. Needless to say that such superb divers as us passed the grueling training with flying colours. The WetOwls now count four Full Cave divers and two cave divers whose training will be completed later this year.

The trip started under rather inauspicious conditions, with Northern Florida getting water-logged from constant rain, flooding out the cave diving sites. We arrived, unsure how much time we would have until the last caves "blew" – two sites remained open, the Devil's Eye system at Ginnie Springs and the Manatee system at Manatee Springs State Park. All through our first week, we and our instructor nervously watched the rising water level at Ginnie, praying that we would be able to complete our training before the site flooded out. Somehow Mother Nature must have liked us, because the water stopped rising after our first week there, and then started dropping. We got our two weeks of cave diving, and it was a blast, not least because the flow (as we

call the current in caves) was down in both systems, allowing us to penetrate further and with greater ease than normally. Think Lock 21 and you'll get an idea of what the flow normally is in Devil's. This time around, it was more like at the Rothsay, although with the waters receding it was picking up.

We knew Ralph, our instructor, from our visit to Ginnie last year, and he was all fired up to train us. The training was quite something. Diving in open water, you can recover from most mistakes and live to tell the tale. If you are in a cave, 1,200 feet from the opening when something goes wrong, you had better know how to get yourself and your teammates out, otherwise you die. It's that simple, and cave training is all about learning how to survive. Each of the four levels of cave training leading to the Full Cave certification works on the same model – you just get more complex navigation the higher your training gets. Classroom lectures are followed by dry land practice in using, marking and following guidelines, discussing scenarios and planning the dive. Each course is then made up of a minimum of four dives over two days, in two separate cave systems. Each dive follows a similar pattern: you enter the cavern/cave and explore to your heart's content within the limits imposed by that particular level of certification until you reach your pre-planned turn around air pressure (cave diving imposes rigorous gas management principles: the rule of thirds is inviolable, except where you want to use even less gas for penetration).

Once the dive is turned, however, everything that can go wrong does, always initiated by the instructor, who becomes our torture master. Lights go out mysteriously, forcing you to use your backups, or exit blind with your hand on the permanent guideline, known as the gold line, a team member is out



of gas, forcing an air-share exit (and that is where the 7 foot primary hose comes into its own). Often both events happen simultaneously, forcing the team to exit blind, moving by touch while sharing air. Then you have the really fun drills: a team member gets lost and you have to not only realize you're missing someone but find him/her. Ralph often played the disappearing team member and he was nasty. He had the ability to vanish in the cave without us seeing, until he had us so sensitized that he couldn't move without us keeping an eagle eye on him. Then there is my favourite: with lights completely out, you get pulled off the gold line and have to find it again by touch. The better we do at these drills, the harder



the instructor makes them – his job is to ensure we can survive in a cave and he pushed us to our limits. Needless to say that on training days, we were beat and in bed early. Many things quickly became second nature, such as calculating



thirds and gas management, constant awareness of the dive team and the surroundings and the ability to lay a guideline without tangling. According to Ralph we were already pretty good divers going into the courses: we had excellent buoyancy skills, good awareness and team skills – but we came out of the training much better divers nonetheless. It helped that we had been diving together, in some cases for years, had the right gear configuration and had been practicing safe diving skills regularly. Many cave trainees arrive on the course lacking many of the basics and don't enjoy the experience quite as much as we did.



The diving itself is fantastic. The cave environment is so different from what we know up here, it is hard to describe in words. The feeling you get swimming through narrow tunnels that suddenly open into rooms so wide your light can't reach the opposite wall or ceiling is amazing. The rock formations, carved out over millennia have beautifully weird

shapes and colours. And the cave critters, if you meet them, are fun to watch: catfish, albino crayfish, cave shrimp, as well as local cave divers who know the system so well they almost look like they live there. The cave diving community is pretty unique. People are friendly, talkative and will gladly accept strangers into their midst – provided of course you demonstrate proper skills and respect for the cave. We made several friends and plenty of acquaintances during our time there.

The problem with cave diving is that it's addictive. People who take cave training come out of there in two categories: the ones for whom it was a nice experience, but... and the ones who get hooked. Problem is, you don't know you're hooked until it's too late. By the time our second week rolled around and we were diving for fun, our instructor from last year, Rose Meadows, came by the dive site to chat while we were between dives. She took one look at our faces, grinned widely and said, "Boys, you're hooked, I can see it." And goshdurnit, she was right. I have never found it so hard to leave at the end of a dive trip. We even delayed our departure for home by a few hours to get one last dive in. But we will be back. Before leaving Florida, we made our reservations at the hotel for our next trip, in November! At that time, Art and Marie will be completing their Full Cave course. Yes, it's a long drive, about 22 hours in all, but it's worth every minute.



Right now, the six of us aren't even focusing on the local dive season which is starting up – we're only thinking about the time we return to cave country in the fall.

I made a video of the Devil's Eye system, a dive in which we went 930 feet in from the entrance, and will be showing it at the May club meeting. If the notion of cave diving interests you, come on by and see for yourself what I cannot describe with mere words.

We will be returning to cave country November 19-26, 2005 and anyone interested in joining us to start or continue their cave adventure is more than welcome. You can talk to either Marc, Marie or me for further details about the training and the arrangements.

As for us, the diving up here will never be the same again. We are going to miss our crystal clear, warm-watered caves in the south this summer.

Dive safe, y'all

Tom