

# MARIN SCUBA CLUB NEWSLETTER

Volume 24 Number 2

February, 2017

## **Member Spotlight: Ralph Daniel, Ph.D.**

By Gil Zeimer

Certified in 2000 with two of his adult children when he was living in Santa Barbara, Ralph Daniel, Ph.D., loves diving. The problem is, he just hasn't dived much.

"I've only done a handful, but I look forward to many more through the Marin Scuba Club," he said. Ralph is a Clinical Psychologist with an office in Larkspur and a home in San Rafael, where he'll be hosting our spring potluck on May 20.

### **Channel Islands Cold Water Diving.**

Ralph was certified in the Channel Islands through day trips with the Anacapa Dive Center. "It was cold water, but one of the best places to enjoy underwater life and scuba," he added. "My favorite things to see while diving there were the sun filtering through the kelp, the playful sea lions, and of course, the bright orange Garibaldi damselfish.

"My son goes diving much more than I do, because he lived in Australia for a semester. My daughter is also an amazing diver. She sips air while I gulp it."

### **Santa Barbara Is An Underwater Paradise.**

Santa Barbara Channel is a wonderland for

## **Octopus Smarts, Part II**

To turn off a light, you could use the switch. Or you could squirt a jet of water at a bulb until you short-circuit the power supply. That is what octopuses have done in at least two aquariums, and it's a sign that they're smarter - and much more rascally - than most of us realize. Here are some excerpts from a recent Washington Post report:

Peter Godfrey-Smith offers a tour of "The Mind of an Octopus" in the January issue of *Scientific American Mind*. It's an essay adapted from his book "Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea and the Deep Origins of Consciousness."

He explains that the nervous system of the octopus evolved entirely differently from the human variety. While an octopus has concentrated neurons in a brain that provides some oversight, most of its neurons are in its arms. These limbs can touch, smell and taste independently. An arm that has been surgically removed can still reach and grasp.

"They are probably the closest we will come to meeting an intelligent alien," Godfrey-Smith writes.

Octopuses even seem to recognize individual humans. At a lab in New Zealand, one octopus singled out a staff member for special treatment, dousing her with water whenever she passed behind the tank. Studies have confirmed that octopuses can tell people apart, even those wearing identical uniforms.

As Godfrey-Smith points out, "This ability makes



*Ralph in Cabo San Lucas with Marc Paris, Bryan Eckert and Ellen Sackoloff (front to back).*

*Photo by Barbara Wambach*

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## **Ralph Daniel**

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whales with humpbacks, blue whales, minke whales, and orcas. It's one of the best places to whale-watch, not just summer, but year-around.

Ralph shared a story about the U.S. Navy: "Some environmental groups had stopped the Navy from doing sonar tests in the Channel. Humpbacks can communicate over 2,000 miles underwater, and once the Navy stopped their sonar testing, humpback and blue whales came back in force!"

### **Red Sea Warmer Water Diving.**

Ralph had heard many stories that diving in the Red Sea was supposedly one of the best places on Earth. "But it was quite disappointing for me in Eilat, the southernmost city in Israel," he noted. "There were few hotels and rare cargo ships 30 years ago in the Gulf of Aqaba—the water was crystal clear and full of coral and fish. When I dove there a few years ago, there are so many ships coming through the nearby ports that the visibility was very disappointing."

### **Very Interested in Mammals That Can Think.**

Before Ralph moved to San Rafael from Santa Barbara three years ago, he had been trained and certified by NOAA in the Channel Islands National Sanctuary as a whale watching guide. "I love snorkeling, diving, swimming, kayaking and whale watching in the ocean."

### **Ralph's Bucket List**

"Anywhere the club wants to go, I'll go," Ralph concluded. "I'll take a refresher course so I'm safe. I especially want to dive in Australia and New Zealand, and see humpbacks in NZ."

## **Mysteries of the Channel Islands**

Last month, videographer Mike Boom took us on a Mystery Tour of the Channel Islands, as he's seen them while diving with underwater IMAX filmmakers Howard and Michele Hall over the past 4 years. Mike's sumptuous hi def video took us soaring through kelp forests. We enjoyed close-ups of giant black sea bass off Santa Barbara Island, and witnessed the devastation of urchin barrens where sea urchins have devoured all the kelp and now share the sea floor with brittle star gardens, horny sea hares, and feuding fringeheads.

Check out more of Mike's work at <http://www.laughingeel.com>.

## **Octopuses**

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sense if an animal is social or monogamous, but octopuses are not monogamous, have haphazard sex lives and do not seem to be very social."

In several other ways, octopuses can seem quite human. He highlights research showing that some will "play" with objects, even after determining that they're not food. They exhibit short- and long-term memory.

And when they're in captivity, they try to escape. They're clever about it, Godfrey-Smith explains, noting that they're "unerringly able to pick the one moment you are not watching them." If that fails, they have other ideas - like that lightbulb squirting trick. It got so expensive at one lab that the octopus responsible got released back to the wild.

### **Bon Bini Bonaire**

From the moment we saw the large airport mural saying "Bon Bini Bonaire," all 26 club members and friends knew we were in for a warm welcome in the Netherlands Antilles. Our recent stay at Captain Don's Habitat was marked by friendly faces, good food, easy diving, and a variety of topside activities as well.

Divers had a boat all to themselves, and took lots of photos and video footage, which will be shared at our May 17 meeting. Others enjoyed snorkeling, kayaking, and exploring the island. The only glitch arose when Mike and Alissa Ralston's dive bag failed to show up. But the resort lent them replacements, and when they do get their gear, it will probably have more frequent flier miles than they do!

## **Alaska Liveaboard Diving**

On February 15, Club member Ted Lee will present an illustrated talk on diving Southern Alaska with the Nautilus Swell, which he calls "the Last of the Great Northern Liveaboards." The boat, built in 1912 as a coal fired steam tug, was retired in 2014.

When Ted heard that the last liveaboard to regularly dive Alaskan waters was leaving the dive business, he decided he had to get dry suit certified and go north, to see if the rumors of amazing diving were true. He encountered an abundance of wildlife, wrecks, and unusual experiences above and below the chilly green waters that reignited his love of diving.



*MSC divers aboard their dedicated dive boat, Ocean Freedom.  
Photo by Larry Clinton*

# BOTTOM TIMES

**Feb. 15 (Wed.):** *Ted Lee, "Southern Alaska with the Nautilus Swell"* Club Meeting, 7:30. Saylor's Restaurant, Sausalito. \$5 for non-members.

**Mar. 1 (Wed.):** Next newsletter deadline. Submissions to [click@dipsymusic.com](mailto:click@dipsymusic.com).

**Mar. 9-12 (Thurs.-Sun.):** *San Francisco International Ocean Film Festival*, Cowell Theater, Fort Mason Center. Details at <http://oceanfilmfest.org>.

**Mar. 15 (Wed.):** Muralist Jim Hellemn, *Portrait of a Coral Reef.* Club Meeting, 7:30. Saylor's Restaurant, Sausalito. \$5 for non-members.

**Apr. 19 (Wed.):** Filmmaker Mischa Hedges, *"Of the Sea"* (local sustainable fish). Club Meeting, 7:30. Saylor's Restaurant, Sausalito. \$5 for non-members.

**Apr. 22 (Sat.):** *Earth Day*. Details at <http://www.calendar-365.com/holidays/earth-day.html>.

**May 6-7 (Sat.-Sun.):** *Scuba Show 2017*. The Long Beach Convention Center. Details: <http://scubashow.com>.

**May 17 (Wed.):** Club presentation: *Images of Bonaire*. Club Meeting, 7:30. Saylor's Restaurant, Sausalito. \$5 for non-members.

**May 20 (Sat.):** *Spring BBQ potluck* at Ralph Daniel's home in San Rafael. For info contact Barbara Wambach at [blwambach@comcast.net](mailto:blwambach@comcast.net).

**June 9-11 (Fri.-Sun.):** *Spring Dive & Dine*, group campsite at Russian Gulch State Park, Mendocino. Contact Barbara Wambach for details: [activities@marinclub.org](mailto:activities@marinclub.org).

## Two Dive Trips Planned

MSC Activities co-Chair Barbara Wambach is planning two unique dive trips for this October and for next January. Both require commitments by March 1.

In early October, Barbara is planning to book 8 nights and 6 days of diving at Mexico's Banco Chinchorro near the border of Belize. This reserve, below the Mayan Riviera, is known for pristine reefs and is home to almost 200 wrecks dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Cost is approximately \$2,000 or less per person double occupancy including airfare.

Barbara also invites club members to join her aboard the Solmar V January 6th, 2018 for a 9 day trip from Cabo San Lucas to the Revillagigedo Archipelago (aka Socorro Islands). These islands have been compared to the Galapagos or Cocos Island in Costa Rica for big animal encounters. Barbara has reserved 2 standard rooms and 3 superior rooms on the Solmar V. Cost @ \$3599 plus 16% tax, airfare to Cabo and one night's hotel, but a group of six divers will be entitled to a discount on the liveaboard.

For more information or to reserve a spot on either trip, see Barbara at the Feb. 15 meeting, or email her at [blwambach@comcast.net](mailto:blwambach@comcast.net).

**Marin Scuba Club promotes safe diving. Remember to plan your dive based on the conditions, be aware of your skills and equipment and stay with your buddy.**

**Marin Scuba Club**  
**29 Gate 6-1/2**  
**Sausalito, CA 94965**



***Next Meeting:***  
**Feb. 15 (Wed.):**  
***Ted Lee:***  
***"Southern Alaska***  
***with the Nautilus Swell"***

**LOCATION:**  
**Saylor's Restaurant**  
**2009 Bridgeway**  
**(between Olive &**  
**Spring Sts.), Sausalito**

**MARIN SCUBA CLUB**

**The Club meets the**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday**  
**of each month**  
**(except December)**

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