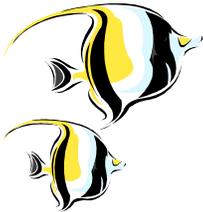


LABUE NEWS

Los Angeles Black Underwater Explorers

February 2008

Volume 13 Issue 2



LABUE GOES TO BELIZE

Get ready! Start making plans! LABUE'S 11th annual club trip will be to the world renowned diver's paradise of Belize! LABUE will be returning to Belize for another round of world class diving, good food and great socializing as only LABUE can do it. For 8 days, participants will experience diving commonly included in all lists of the best sites in the world. Spectacular reefs, canyons, stalactites, large varieties of fish and more are all in Belize. **Fantastic** is the only word to describe the diving. The dates are from April 16-23, 2008. The club will again be housed at the SunBreeze Hotel on the edge of the fascinating town of San Pedro, a quaint village with sand streets on Ambergris Caye. The SunBreeze has a restaurant and bar overlooking the ocean and has its own dock and dive shop on its premises.

The package price of \$1068 per person double occupancy for LABUE members and \$1118 for non members includes 7 nights at the SunBreeze, 4-2 tank local dives and 1-2 tank dive trip to the Blue Hole and Lighthouse Reef (lunch included), a 1 tank night dive, snorkel stop at Shark Ray Alley, hotel fees and taxes and round trip local air transfer from Belize City to San Pedro on Maya Air. Round trip airfare from Los Angeles to Belize is **not** included. The prices also include a \$50 donation to the club and a commemorative T-shirt. The non diver rate is \$608 when accompanying a diver. Single person supplements are available. A non-refundable \$500 deposit is now being accepted on a first-come, first-serve basis. Final payment is due by March 1, 2008. Reservations for 20 people have been made. Please make your check payable to LABUE. All travelers are required to make their own air arrangements from LAX to Belize City.

Belize is tucked away on the Caribbean coast of Central America. It boasts the second-largest barrier reef in the world, 70 types of hard corals, more than 400 species of fish and an endless array of world class dive sites. Don't miss out on what will surely be another great LABUE adventure.



President's Message by Bob Simmons

It seems like we just returned from our club trip to Fiji and Australia, and all the wonderful memories, and it is already time to get ready for Belize. The question arises as to why the two trips were scheduled so close to each other. The answer is simple. Our club trips have always been scheduled to coincide with the lowest rates combined with the best time of year to dive a particular locale.

In the case of the Caribbean, an optimum time is in mid April immediately after the rates drop to the off season levels. In the South Pacific on the other hand, since the seasons are reversed south of the equator, the best time occurs during our fall months. Hence, we selected the October-November time frame. This explains why the gap between trips sometimes varies from 6 to 18 months. While it might complicate budgeting for the trips, I personally it is better to go to the best places during the

best times, rather than establish a set club trip schedule and increase the chances of experiencing less than optimum dive conditions.

This will be our second club trip to Belize and for good reason...the diving is as good as it gets. From large pelagics, to schooling fish, to macro subjects to beautiful coral formations, Belize has it all. Combined with warm water and great visibility (during the best time of the year), Belize is as close to perfection as we can get. The Blue Hole and Lighthouse are world famous and be on everyone's list of *must dive* sites. We still have spots available. I welcome you to join us.



Dedicated to Expanding the Knowledge and Enjoyment of Scuba Diving among African Americans

Beach Dive by Debora Ewing

The next beach dive will take place on Saturday March 1 at Whites Point (San Pedro). Louis Emile is the dive master and he will give the dive briefing at 8:00 a.m. The confirmation notification will be sent out in the upcoming weeks. This is a state beach; therefore, there is a day parking fee of approximately \$9.00. There are also restrooms. This is a rocky beach site with lots of marine life to enjoy. Last year the Beach Dive Program was a tremendous success due solely to the continued participation of the membership. The success of the Program was recognized by the President at the Christmas meeting. Let's plan to do even better in 2008. The Beach Dive Committee looks forward to seeing you March 1. If you'd like to sign up for this dive, please contact Debora Ewing at (909) 240-7022.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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EASTER EGG DIVE

Each March, right before Easter, LABUE shares a dive charter with Pacific Wilderness aboard the Bottom Scratcher for an unusual trip to Catalina Island. The event, called the Easter Egg Dive, involves the crew tossing golf balls (ie Easter Eggs) into the ocean surrounding the boat and the divers trying to retrieve as many of them as possible. Prizes are awarded for each ball (egg) retrieved. This dive is always a lot of fun and puts a different spin on what would otherwise be a regular dive. With only 15 spots available for club members, this boat sells out every year. The weather has been picture perfect lately and the diving has been fantastic. This fun boat will be the perfect time for divers to get reacquainted with the water. But hurry, the spots will sell out fast. Contact DonCosta Seawell at (310) 876-1260 or any Board member to confirm a reservation. Even though most boats are charging more than \$125 for a day dive trip to Catalina Island, LABUE is offering the spots for \$90 to club members. Membership clearly has its privileges. This dive trip will be held on Saturday, March 22 and will open for reservations at the February 12 General Membership Meeting.

Next Meeting

The next General Membership Meeting will be on Tuesday, February 12 at the Museum of Natural History located on Exposition Blvd, across from USC. In 2001, 53 LABUE members participated in LABUE's club trip to Ambergris Cay in Belize. It was a very memorable trip. The weather was beautiful and the diving was unbelievable. With visibility over 100' and the water temperature at about 83 degrees, the conditions were excellent. Most divers saw several unusual critters, large and small, including spotted eagle rays and bull sharks. Diving the Blue Hole and Lighthouse Reef were the highlights of the diving experiences. In addition, the food in San Pedro was very inexpensive and quite tasty. All in all it was a great trip. Club Treasurer Richard Rice has compiled a 20 minute video featuring the highlights of that trip. He will be showing the video at the February meeting. After viewing the video, everyone will have a better idea of what diving and vacationing in Belize with a group of friends is all about. Plan now to attend this fun meeting which will begin at 7pm.

Contact Information

If your contact information has changed (home address, phone #s, e-mail address), please be sure to advise the Membership Committee Chairperson, Bettye Linares (brlinares1@yahoo.com). Without this information, it is difficult to keep the annual buddy list current. Members receive the buddy list upon renewing. We thank everyone for their continued support.

Membership Renewal

Membership renewal commenced as of January 1, 2008. The annual dues amount remains at \$30 for an individual and \$45 for a family membership (living in the same household). The first 50 renewing members submitting dues prior to April 1, 2008 will be eligible to receive \$10 LABUE bucks coupons which can be applied towards club attire and specified activities. Also becoming a club member provides the opportunity for you to pay a discounted price for club boat dives; participate in the club's bi-annual elections, and receive personalized club business cards (5). Each year the club depends on the collection of membership dues to help balance the budget. Some club activities (such as charter boat dives) require advance deposits. Other expenses include rent for the meeting room at the Museum of Natural History. The \$10 coupon along with participation in one event will more than recover the dues amount. The club needs your support and asks that all members renew in a timely manner.

**FIJI WELCOMES LABUE**

Discover Scuba

Once again, LABUE will be sponsoring a Discover Scuba Program in which participants are introduced to the basic concepts of scuba diving and are allowed, if interested, to try on full scuba gear and perform a controlled dive under the supervision of George Linares, a certified instructor. This introductory session is held in the classroom at Pacific Wilderness in San Pedro. The supervised dive is held at their pool at the same location. This year's event will be on Sunday, April 6, 2008 from 9am to noon. The price remains at \$15. Participants are required to bring swim suits and a towel. Scuba gear is provided courtesy of Pacific Wilderness. It is noted that everyone must already know how to swim. This session is not a swim class. The purpose of Discover Scuba is to give potentially interested applicants a glimpse into the beautiful underwater world and to provide a general introduction into the topics fully covered in a regular certification program. Last year, due to an overwhelming response, the club sponsored the event on two different occasions. In addition to instructor George Linares, and his wife, Bettye, who coordinates the activities, several club members are also in attendance to help out as needed. All in all, Discover Scuba is a great way to expose folks to diving as well as to get acquainted with club members, many of whom started out by attending a similar program. Contact Bettye Linares at (661) 946-1516 to reserve a space in this year's program.



Discover Scuba 2007 Classroom

Museum Rules

Our club constantly receives new members and guests. These individuals could not possibly be aware of the conditions under which the Museum Of Natural History agreed to let us use one of its conference rooms. One of these conditions is that our attendees are not permitted to stop and enjoy the many exhibits available in the museum. The museum regularly charges an admittance fee to those wishing to view the attractions and facilities on display. Obviously attendees to our meeting do not have to pay this fee and, therefore are not entitled to roam about the premises. An honor system is in effect but LABUE doesn't want to abuse the privilege. Secondly, our meetings are to be conducted in a business meeting format, which do not permit children not old enough to appreciate the purpose of the meeting. Some of our attendees have unknowingly violated the terms of our agreement. For this reason, it is necessary to review these rules from time to time to ensure that we can continue to use this very fine facility.

Chamber Evening

Each year a fund raiser is held on behalf of the Catalina Hyperbaric Chamber. Since all divers rely on these chamber facilities to be available wherever we may be diving around the world, it is our responsibility to help ensure that our 'own' chamber is there and properly maintained...just in case. LABUE proudly supports Chamber Evening by purchasing a table for this dinner event annually held at the Long Beach Aquarium. The aquarium is normally closed in the evenings. However, participants in this event will have full access to all exhibits and attractions, allowing viewers to see the exhibits in the evening light when many fish are more active. Major dive related gifts (regulators, computers, fins, dive bags etc.) are raffled off to lucky attendees. Anyone interested in participating in this year's event, which will be held on May 7, 2008, beginning at 6pm, may reserve a spot for a non refundable deposit of \$20. The total ticket price is \$90, which includes a full 'sit down' dinner, 2 non alcoholic beverage coupons and 10 raffle tickets. In addition, anyone reserving a spot and paying for it by February 29 will also receive a \$10 LABUE Bucks certificate. By accepting reservations early in the process, LABUE will be better able to determine the exact number of tickets to confirm.

Christmas Program

At LABUE'S last meeting of the year, being that it was the Christmas season, the club had a different kind of session. The highlight of the evening was the Steal-A-Gift game in which everyone brought a wrapped gift to put under the Christmas Tree. After a few yearly review highlights, everyone was given an opportunity to pick a gift, contents unknown. After the gift was opened, however, anyone could 'steal' the gift if they so chose. Needless to say, the results were hilarious. Even though there was a dollar limit placed on the value of each gift, some prizes were certainly better than others...and were stolen...much to the chagrin of the original 'owner.' Following the game, the special dinner meal was to die for. Combining the festivities with the Holiday Season atmosphere and, of course, all of the members made for a great way to end 2007 and head into 2008.

SPOTLIGHT

By Debora Ewing

INTERVIEW OF ERIC SHEPHERD

Eric is one of LABUE's newest members. On the second Tuesday of the month, you will usually find him attending LABUE's General Meeting.

Where were you born? Los Angeles

What is your favorite food? Lobster

What is your profession? I'm a nurse and I'm also a contractor. *How did you get into nursing?* I started as an anesthesia tech and I was looking to move up.

When you were growing up, what did you dream of becoming? A general construction contractor.

What prompted you to take up scuba diving? Do you have any other hobbies or activities? I used to watch Sea Hunt and so that started it. I took a scuba diving course in college back in the 70s. My other hobbies are motorcycle riding, skiing and fishing.

How did you find out about LABUE? Francois Desamours' (LABUE member) daughter went to a daycare which was run by my wife.

What did you think of traveling with LABUE this past October? Would you do it again? I thought it was great and would definitely do it again. *What was your favorite memory in hanging out with LABUE in Fiji and Australia?* I'd have to say the camaraderie. It was amazing the way everyone got along.

Now that you're back from Australia, are there any other dive destinations that you would like to enjoy in the near future? I am actually looking forward in going to Belize. Anything in the tropics would be wonderful.

What do you like most about LABUE? I enjoy getting together with so many black people to go diving.

Is there anything you would like to see LABUE do in the future that is currently not being done? Nothing that I can think of offhand.

Tell me something that our readers would be surprised to learn about you? Probably that I am a nurse.

**Reminders:**

- ** **General Membership Meeting—2/12/08**
- ** **Easter Egg Boat Dive—3/22/08**
- ** **Discover Scuba—4/6/08**