

The Surface Times

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An Amazing Night Dive By Danny Bouska MSDT

Have you ever had a dive which sticks in your mind because it was absolutely fantastic? A trip to the Utopia Dive Resort on Utila Honduras in April of this year provided just such an experience. The resort has a fabulous house reef which is a short walk and swim from your room's front door. The Divemaster "Juca" had our gear at the beach when it was time for our night dive. During the dive briefing, Juca stated that toward the end of the dive, we would settle into a sandy patch in about 20' of water. He asked that when we get to the sand, we kneel in a circle and turn off our lights and allow our eyes to become accustomed to the darkness. All the divers were experienced night divers so had no issues with turning off their lights.

We entered the water as the sun began to set to the west behind the Honduran mountains on the mainland some 15 miles away. The transition from day to twilight and then to dark was amazing in itself as the fish which scurry around during the day, began to take refuge in the reef. We swam thru several sandy patches and some coral heads and within a few moments we were swimming along the reef wall. The water was turning a deep blue as light began to wane. Soon it was dark and as we swam along the reef, shining our lights on the wall and searching the waters, the orange reflection from the eyes of the reef shrimp caused the reef to sparkle. As the shrimp were approached, they scampered further back into the reef to avoid this "scary approaching predator".



We saw small decorator crabs, shrimp, brittle stars, arrow crabs, sea baskets, and sea cucumbers which were stretched out from the reef like a fire hose on the sand. What was thought to be the highlight of the night was the finding of an octopus. The octopus stayed tucked against the reef,

but showed off with displays of blues and browns under the dive lights while spreading itself out against the reef.

The group returned to the area along the wall where we had started our dive. After swimming over the top of the reef, we settled into the sandy area which Juca had described. He motioned for use to extinguish our lights and as they were switched off, the darkness surrounded us. Slowly, my eyes became accustom to the available light and the outline of the reef surrounding the sandy area could be seen. I asked my-



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Training Specials

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Working with the Fearful Student

by David Crocker

As dive instructors we've all had difficult students. Some just can not be helped. As a dive-master I was working the initial swim class. One student was late for the first confined water class and when she walked into the pool area I greeted her cheerily and instructed her to go ahead and begin her swim. She took one look at the other students swimming their laps and said "Ain't no way" then turned and walked out of the building. Even though the instructor caught up with her in the parking lot he could not persuade her to come back to the class. This student was obviously not salvageable. So what do you do when a student who has completed the class work balks at getting in the water or learning and practicing the skills?

One of the most important parts of our job as instructors and dive-masters is helping the student divers to overcome their fears and bolster their confidence. If a diver is not confident it's unlikely he or she will ever become a good diver and in all likelihood will not continue to dive. Recreational diving is supposed to be fun and it is our goal as instructors and dive-masters to make the students' dive experience enjoyable.

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Creature Feature

Attention Tropical Western Atlantic fishwatchers -- the *Neon Goby has been split into two species*. The original Neon Goby, *Elacatinus oceanops*, retains the common name and is geographically known only from So. Florida and Flower Gardens and Alacran reefs in the Gulf of Mexico. This goby can be distinguished by the bright neon blue stripe from snout to tail with a sharp blue-against-black edge.



Neon Goby (*Elacatinus oceanops*) is found in South Florida and the Flower Gardens and Alacran reefs in the Gulf of Mexico. Photo by Paul Humann.

The Caribbean Neon Goby (new common name), *Elacatinus lobeli*, is known only from the Bay of Honduras, from Xcalak in Yucatan through Belize to the Bay Islands of Honduras, including off-shore reefs. It can be distinguished by the pale blue or grey borders along the bright blue neon stripe running from snout to tail. Genetic analyses indicate that the two species have been separated for about 800,000 years.



Caribbean Neon Goby (*Elacatinus lobeli*), is known from Belize and Honduras. Photo by Paul Humann.



Working with the Fearful Student

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How do we achieve this objective? First we have to understand what their difficulty is. There are two types of problem students. The ones who say "I can't..." and the ones who say "I won't...". The afore mentioned student was an "I won't" and there is nothing you can do with them. The "I can't" students are the ones who can be taught because their "I can't" is usually indicative of natural fear or lack of self-confidence. These students require extra patience and forethought on the part of the instructor and dive-master.

One way of dealing with the fearful student is to have more one-on-one time with them. Explain the skill to the student in simple steps. Have the student look into your eyes as they do the steps. Place your hand on their forearm for reassurance. Since the first skills are done kneeling in shallow water explain that all they have to do if they feel panic is to stand up immediately. The most important thing to remember as instructors and dive masters is communication. Ask the student what is the problem? Why is it bothering them? Then deal with the answer to that question.

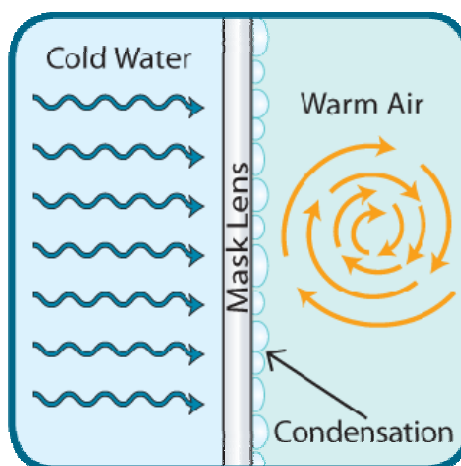
For instance I once had a student who stated she was claustrophobic and didn't think she'd be able to breath underwater with the equipment. I had her hold on to the side of the pool with her face in the water for about ten minutes until she realized that the gear did work and she was able to breath without difficulty. Without her communicating her problem I would not have known what to do to alleviate her fears. A big part of being an instructor or dive master working with a student is to learn how to listen to the student and ascertain what their fears are and then come up with a way to overcome those fears.

Another type of student is the one who has no fear of the water but who just can't do the skills. I had a student who could not clear his mask. I even came in to work extra time with him. Every time he tried to clear his mask he would panic and stand up out of the water. I asked him to explain to me step by step what he did each time. He thought for a moment and said, "I flood my mask and then take a deep breath through my nose and blow it back out". At this point I stopped him and asked "What is around your nose when you're inhaling?" He thought for a second then grinned, and said "Oh shut up". He then knelt down and performed the skill perfectly. Sometimes it's just little things that we take for granted because we've been doing this for so long ourselves and take for granted like "everybody knows that you don't inhale through your nose underwater with or without your mask on. But he was so intent on the task of clearing his mask that he didn't think of the consequence of inhaling through his nose.

In my experience both as an instructor and dive-master I have found that communication with the student is the best way to work them through the skills. We have to know why they're having trouble before we can address the issue. The 'why' can vary greatly and all 'whys' cannot be solved in the same manner. So as instructors and dive masters we need to be patient and sensitive to the student's fears and/or difficulties with a given skill.

How Anti-fogs Work

Mask fogging results from warm humid air inside the mask meeting a lens surface cooled by water. Warmer air is capable of holding more water vapor (water in gas form) than cooler air. Therefore, when air is cooled, a portion of its water vapor condenses into tiny liquid droplets, or "fog". Anti-Fogs prevent fogging by creating a thin, invisible film on the lens which creates a "sheeting effect" - eliminating the formation of condensation droplets.





Travel 2010 – 2011

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Diving provided by We B Divin' Cozumel includes snacks, drinks and lunch on the boat. Towel service, fresh water shower & gear stowage provided on board.

Truk

November 27 — December 04, 2011

\$3280 plus airfare, double occ
Est airfare DFW to Tkk is \$1800
(unless you have miles (-;)

1 night in a hotel in Chuk, est \$75



An Amazing Night Dive

Continued from Page 1 self, what was producing all this light? Why am I able to see so well on a moonless night with no artificial light? As my eyes continued to adjust, I was filled with amazement as the water surrounding me was lit with thousands of fluorescent lights. The lights seemed to be hanging like the proverbial "icicle lights" one sees at Christmas. Fluorescent "bulbs" were suspended in the water as if hanging on a string.

One by one Juca took us out over the reef and into the black waters surrounding Utila. After swimming about 5 yards from the reef, I turned and looked back toward the reef. There are no words which would truly describe the sight I saw as the feeling of being suspended in outer space surrounded by thousands of stars overwhelmed me. Juca swam in front of me and as he did, the luminescence he displaced sparkled causing him to look like a comet traveling thru the stars.



Soon with air getting low, it was time to leave the mystical site behind and return to the artificial lights at Utopia Dive Resort.

What was this strange site I had seen? The lights I had seen are called "Strings of Pearls". They are actually the mating display of ostracods. Ostracods are tiny crustaceans, about the size of tomato seeds and use their bioluminescence to attract mates in the same way as fireflies. It's a common phenomenon throughout the Caribbean and is usually best seen about one half hour after sunset or moonset. Male ostracods release their bioluminescent chemicals into the water as a string of dots. It's a species-specific display very similar to Morse code. The spacing of the dots in the water is unique to a particular species so females, recognizing the code for their own species, can swim to the end of a string of dots and know that they'll find an eligible male. If you want to read a more scientific description of the phenomenon you can find it in:

Morin, J.G. (1986) "Firefleas" of the sea: Luminescent signaling in marine ostracode crustaceans. Florida Entomologist 69, 105-121.

Additional knowledge in Night Diving can be obtained by taking the Night Diver Specialty and as you gain experience and have the opportunity to see the "String of Pearls" don't just walk, take that giant stride into the water and see this fascinating phenomenon for yourself.



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The Surface Times

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We B Divin' is your personal resource for scuba training (PADI), equipment sales, service, and travel.

We pride ourselves on individualized training, especially for people with water related anxieties. Our rental gear includes SeaQuest weight integrated BCD's (women's and men's), computers, and regulators for state of the art training and the ultimate in safety.

Remember, enjoyment and safety are enhanced by comfort and proper fit. We will personally fit you, whether your primary interest is diving or snorkeling.

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Think Outside the Bowl!

There is much to learn, many places to go and much to see.



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Divers Alert Network

DAN Travel Insurance

This is Dan's newest product. I am sure that I have not reviewed every Trip Cancellation and Interruption policy available out there on the market, but this one is very competitive in benefits as well as cost. Also, of course, when we use this

product we are supporting DAN which is always a plus.

Travel insurance is good for those who want to plan a trip but have pending concerns like the health of a loved one. It is very valuable when planning a BIG trip like Truk. Many times trips like this must be planned far in the future and we

simply cannot know what life will put on our plate in the interim. So this type of insurance protects us from a total loss.

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[DAN Dive Insurance](#)

Divers Alert Network

Membership

DAN is the only organization I am aware of that is actively pursuing medical dive research. They provide assistance to all divers (regardless of membership status) through 800 phone numbers and will accept collect calls from anywhere in the world. This alone is

worth our support with membership fees of \$29 per year. The included subscription to Alert Diver is just a bonus.

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I cannot stress enough how valuable it is to have this coverage. Check the details from our web site by clicking here

[DAN Dive Insurance](#)