

DIVE LOG

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the United Divers of New Hampshire



1999 Jay Lewis Annual Picnic



*In Memory of Jay Lewis
Dedicated to the safe enjoyment of the sea.
United Divers of New Hampshire*

Photos by Lea Nichols



Jay Lewis Memorial Picnic

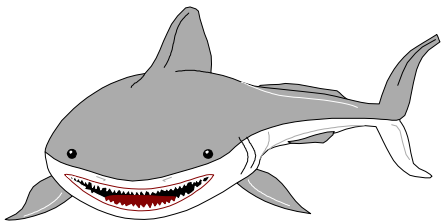
Photo by Lea Nichols

President's Corner

The sixth annual Jay Lewis picnic was a great success. There were a few less people there because of the rainy weather, all in all a good crowd. Many people helped move the Jay Lewis memorial bench from Wayne's, truck and then attach the legs to the base with epoxy. Holes were dug for the bench fittings to anchor it to the ground at Great Island Common in Newcastle, NH. The bench is inscribed with John Jay Lewis' name and the words "Dedicated to the safe enjoyment of the sea." Stop by and check it out the next time you are in the vicinity.

Food was plentifully and the chefs did a wonderful job, grilling hamburgers, hot dogs and chicken. This has been a good year for diving with lots of sunny weather on the week ends, I hope it continues.

Soon it will be time for elections, the annual banquet, featuring Ed Jameson with his 3D underwater slide show. I have seen his show and can say its very good. Hope to see you all there.



DIVE LOG

The Newsletter of the United Divers of New Hampshire

Editors: Lea Nichols
Don Eva

Support: Gary Thuillier

Submissions

Editorial contributions may be e-mailed to COMPTUS@aol.com or FAXed to 603-487-5513. Submissions can also be sent on paper or PC floppy to:

Lea Nichols
342 Lyndeboro Road
New Boston, NH 03070

Please include a brief byline and author contact information with your submission. Submission shall automatically constitute an expressed warranty by the contributor that the material is original and is in no way an infringement on the rights of others. While no compensation is paid for published submissions, a byline indicating the source of an article will always be provided. Authors grant *Dive Log* and United Divers of New Hampshire first print rights to the submission. *Dive Log* and its editors reserve the right to edit all materials as needed. The opinions stated in the articles in *Dive Log* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the United Divers of New Hampshire or the editors of the *Dive Log*. For further information, please contact Lea Nichols at (603) 487-2726.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions to *Dive Log* are included in the UDNH membership fees. Non-members may subscribe to the newsletter for \$15/year. Subscription inquiries should be addressed to Lea Nichols as well.

Advertising

Rates for a full year placement (6 bimonthly issues) range from \$75 to \$360, depending on placement size and location. For detailed information on advertising in *Dive Log*, contact Don Eva at (603) 672-5608 or dpeva@aol.com

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Website:

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WOLF FISH or EEL

photo and text by Gary Thuillier

Ever since my first encounter with this hideous looking creature I've asked myself (and others as well) "is it a fish or an eel?". Here in the NorthEast it is commonly called a Wolf fish though many of those I've asked claimed it was actually an eel. In the Pacific Northwest the very same critter is known as a Wolf eel. Well finally an article appeared to me in SPORT DIVER magazine. One of those back issues I must have overlooked, October 1998 to be exact. The following is an excerpt from that piece simply titled EELS

by Frank Viola:

A wolf eel's physical eel-like appearance (long continuous dorsal and anal fins without a pelvic fin) is responsible for the common name, but it is not a "true" eel. It is more correctly known as the wolf fish since unlike a true eel the wolf fish has scales, a premaxillary (jaw) bone and spines in the fins.

My thanks to Mr. Viola for clearing up such a long standing curiosity.

Nubble Dive

By Cindy Conlin

I can't think of a better way to kick off summer this year than a dive at Nubble Light. Keeping in mind that diving is prohibited on Sundays in high season due to the volume of tourist traffic, I was determined to dive Saturday of Memorial Day weekend.

Anyone who has been to Sohier Park in the summer has likely seen divers sprawled with their gear on the northern rocks. Those rocks are flat enough to set up gear, survey the conditions, and be detached from the bustle of cars coming and going. High tide tends to be easier for divers, because there are less slippery wet rocks to trip over during entry.

When I get to Nubble, I'm usually so excited to be there that I have to bound down the rocks to get closer to the ocean. I want to be physically close to the water, to submerge myself in the harmony of the calm underwaters. It is there with the salty mist surrounding me that I want to be, and right at that moment, there's no other place on this earth more enticing to me.

After a few deep breaths the ocean rejuvenates me enough to begin the shuttle of scuba gear from the car to the rocks. It's not as cut-and-dry as it sounds, though — fellow scuba divers stop to chat, wishing they were in my place ... tourists want to know what we see down there ... fishers inquire about the size of the stripers — it's all part of the camaraderie that adds to my experience of diving at Nubble. Perhaps other places are more isolated, but they don't give me the sense of community I feel in enabling visitors to live vicariously through me — if only for 20 minutes.

As much of a hurry as I may have been in to get there, there's no reason to rush anymore. Talking to visitors is

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all part of it. On Saturday, I met someone from Georgia who had done his outdives at Nubble 25 years ago — IN DECEMBER!! Of course for me, 25 years ago is so black and white that maybe New England had a different climate then, or maybe it was formerly part of the tropics. As a relatively new diver, a diver of 25 years is as much my idol as the local Jacques Cousteau. My greenness doesn't show through or matter, for my new acquaintance was wishing he had his gear with him. Live for the moment, because I've got mine.

My Georgia acquaintance leaves me setting up my buoyancy control device (the cool people call it a BC) and I connect the low-pressure inflator hose to it, which will enable me to control my buoyancy under water. The hose is low-pressure because only small amounts of air are needed for buoyancy control. After I attach my regulator to the tank, I turn on my air, check the pressure gauge and see a good solid 3,000 psi (pounds per square inch). With an aluminum-80 tank, I can stay under at 40 feet for about 50 minutes. The dive tables quote different numbers and it's all charted out, but 50 minutes is about how long I can tolerate the cold May water, in New England anyway.

I breathe through my regulator to make sure it works properly, check my octopus (an extra regulator for my dive buddy in case of emergency), pick up my BC by the back to make sure I secured the tank tightly, and pump some air into my BC to make sure the low-pressure hose is attached correctly.

With the gear all set up, there is nothing left to do but squeeze into my wet suit. So of course, I take a break and again survey the scene, check the point of entry, check the time, see if my buddy needs help carrying anything or setting up his gear — all in the name of anticipation — to stall. I can't wait to see what it looks

like down there, to be back with the crabs and lobsters and hundreds of hermit crabs, sea anemones, and sea urchins. Every time it looks pretty much the same, but it is always new and magical and full of new life. I'm so eager get wet that I'll even don my wet suit (against my better judgment) as a step in that direction.

If you have ever tried to pull tight jeans on, this is nothing like it. Think instead of pulling a tire up over your entire body, leaving the bottom at the bottom and s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g the rest of it to go all the way up and over your head. Picture yourself standing there, holding the thick black rubber, exerting effort just to breathe.



Cindy Conlin & Kerry Hurd Gearing Up

Photo by Linda Hurd

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Had almost enough? Now pull the tire down the other side. This is squeezing into a wet suit, and just about as pleasant.

Fortunately, the booties and gloves are much more cooperative when it comes time to put them on. The hood is another battle entirely and donning it should be saved until the last possible moment. I don't put my flippers on until I get in the water. There is a reason seals and dolphins don't live on land. I take their hint.

To stay under water with all these buoyant things attached to me, I wear 20 pounds of lead in the form of a belt. It feels great on my hips. Really. Now it's time to hoist my oversized tank and BC onto my back, which sounds relatively straightforward. With a 7 mm wet suit on and the resulting joints that bounce back upon bending, "slipping into" a BC — with 40 awkward pounds attached — is an incredible euphemism.

Back in the real world of the parking lot, the spectators who watched the wet suit escapade are still spectating. *In a few minutes, I'll be bobbing at the surface and this will all be worth it.*

For the moment though, a calculated walk to the surf is at hand.

Carrying my fins in one hand and my mask and snorkel combination in the other, I can balance until I am in deep enough to float. Putting fins on while the waves surge up and back takes practice. Even after three years of diving at Nubble, I still breathe through my regulator rather than my snorkel while I don my fins. Too many times I have up-ended and gotten a taste of the salt before I was ready. Scuba diving should be easy, so I take the easy way.

The first cold water to seep into my wet suit is exhilarating. It's always colder than I expect it to be,

and it crawls slowly through the openings — my neck, hands, and feet. Since wet suits are tight and meant to keep water in so that it warms up by my body temperature, the water does not move around all that much. Thus it spreads painfully slow down my back, over my tummy, and eventually into the legs. Did I mention that it's always colder than I expected?

When I'm ready to descend, I let the air out of my BC and make my way to the bottom. Instantly the spectators are gone, the noise is silenced, and a deep calm settles in my soul. At last, alone again with the ocean! I actually have a dive buddy with whom I am conversing via crude diver sign language, but I can't hear him. It opens a whole new world to experience everything yourself and communicate with your eyes and hands only. It's quite refreshing. If I turn my head sideways, he's virtually not there. Just some curious fish and peaceful sea kelp. The novelty of being able to breathe under water is a wonderful thing. It allows me to see and experience places I could not otherwise. And once you learn, you never forget, like riding a bike. It's like an addiction though, the more I dive, the more I want to quit my job to dive every day. It's as routine as going to my mailbox, yet as extraordinary as traveling in space. The dichotomy is brilliant, I only wish I could thank whoever thought of it.



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Many go to the beach to be near the beauty, myself included. But there is something unique about underwater beauty that I can't quite put my finger on. It has to do with being immersed in the beauty instead of standing next to it. It's somewhat like a travel magazine for wannabe travelers: just not there yet. Anyone can go to Nubble and see its beauty. Nubble is a wonderful place. Something was always missing, though. I could stay there all day and not get enough. There was a barrier — a glass ceiling so to speak — beyond which I could never get. Picnics weren't enough to quench my thirst. I was happy but not satisfied. There was always something I still desired, some unreachable contentment for which I longed.

For me, I have to feel the beauty — totally immerse myself in it. I always wished I could hug the lighthouse, or pet the ocean. I would sit on the rocks to get closer, but an element of involvement was just out of reach. When I scuba dive, the beauty of the lighthouse and the ocean come together and come alive. Putting myself in the water changes my relationship to the beauty. The scenes are so vivid and take on new meaning. Suddenly the Sohier Park parking lot and its visitors look like a page out of

Yankee magazine. The whole picture is so exhilarating and rejuvenating that it becomes quite habit-forming.

The magnitude of the ocean and all its many forms of life really hits home when I get to the bottom. Before me I see seaweed, rocks, starfish of innumerable variety, creepy crabs, and bold fish. The lobsters are there too, but they are scaredy-cats and you have to look for them. Under rocks are the best spots, where lobsters back up into their little dugouts and wait for food to swim by. They are so funny: they look so creepy and imposing, but if you shake a stick at them — literally — they will retreat. It's fun to find them hiding, almost like a scavenger hunt! Laws forbid me from touching them and if I were to come to the surface with one I'd likely be thrown in jail, but common sense tells me not to touch them anyway for one simple reason: big claws, little fingers.

The same goes for crabs, although they move so fast I couldn't imagine getting my finger stuck in one. Hermit crabs are a different story, though. Just like the ones in the pet store, they move when they think no one is looking. The minute I swim over them they snap back into their shells. It's so cool to swim over 50 or 60

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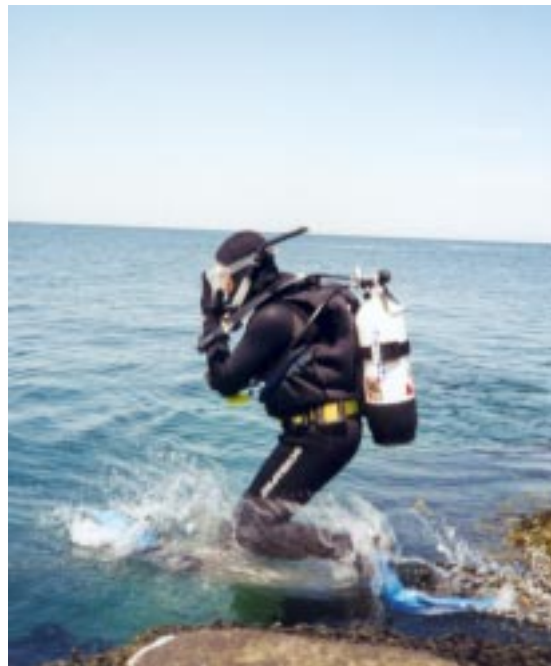
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hermit crabs in a stretch and see them all pull in as I pass. It's like the wave, only I am the wave and the crabbies are the football fans standing up and sitting back down. I feel so effective, like the commander-in-chief of a little crab army.

One of the other very cool things is sand dollars. Sand dollars tend to live in colonies. They are social creatures I think, because where there is one, many others gather. Did you know that they are dark brown or black? The white ones you see on the beach and in the craft stores are dead and most likely bleached to be pretty. In their own environment, they have a thick brown coating much like cilia. They are living and eating, just like the fish and me. Upon close inspection, I can see a trail leading up to some of the sand dollars. They actually move — albeit slowly — and leave traces of where they've been.

I become so immersed in my new world that I tend to forget it's not my world. I'm breathing and floating and checking out all the life, just as simple as if I did belong there. My pressure gauge tells me how much air I have left, which is like a countdown to reality. I take full advantage of the solitude at such a busy tourist attraction. This is my home for now. Mine and my buddy's, that is. We check on each other and point out neat things. It's a great way share our experience.

I have never had a closer experience with fish than on Saturday of Memorial Day weekend. I was checking out what looked like a blue fish. Not a tropical blue, mind you, but a midnight blue. If I had my identification cards with me I could figure out what genus and species it is, but since I didn't, I relied on memory. I just wish I had a backup drive. So my buddy and I are examining this fish, and it goes into a staring contest with me. It sat about 2 feet away from my face for at least 30 seconds before slowly turning away.



Kerry Hurd Splashing Down Photo by Linda Hurd

Wow, pretty brave fish. He — or she — kept circling back, closer each time. Finally it was inches from my mask. I could see its teeth. I could COUNT its teeth! Its lips opened and closed, the way fish do, and I was glad it was only an 8-inch fish. It approached from an inch or two away and then bumped into the glass of my mask, two or three times. Neither I nor my buddy could believe it. I was mesmerized. I think I even held my breath. After a minute, I turned to my buddy. His eyes were as wide as mine and his expression said it all. Incredible.

Moving on, I see sea urchins and more starfish, strippers, sculpins and sea ravens. Sea ravens are the coolest fish because they're so ugly. They're round in the front and skinny in the back like a tadpole. They are not smooth fish: they have bumps that resemble warts

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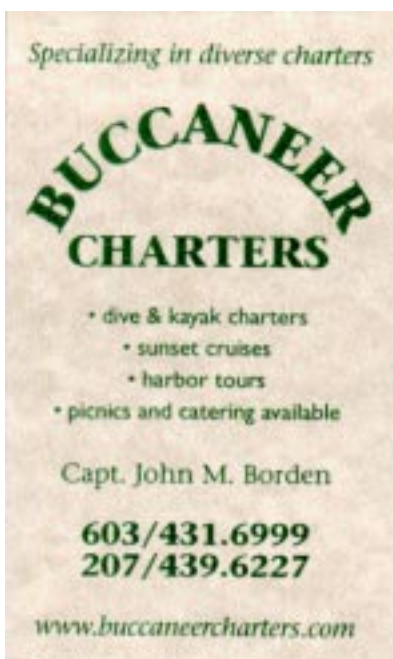
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and fins that imitate a stegosaurus' fan. Their eyes protrude from their heads in much the same way alligators' do. The word I most commonly use to describe them is medieval. Usually sculpin and sea ravens let divers touch them. Petting them is like iguanas or lizards, they are not soft or fish-like.

Dives usually end when one diver is cold or low on air. I like to swim back to my entry point under water because it is easier than battling waves and currents, so my dive buddy and I predetermine an air pressure at which to turn around and head back. With the cold May water on Memorial weekend, I chose to swim back on the surface where the water is significantly warmer. Upon surfacing, my buddy and I exchange the thoughts and exclamations we couldn't convey accurately. "What I was trying to say when I did that was look at its teeth!" "Did you see the size of that lobster? That thing has been alive way too long!"

As we are gently lifted and lowered by the passing waves, the Nubble is in the background. I am at peace because I am inside the beauty, surrounded by the water and the sky. I can appreciate the island and the park, the calm and the lure of the ocean. The exhilaration is enough to make my day complete and my heart content.

There are still spectators, most likely different ones than on our way in, but they have become background. All I can feel through my smile is the ocean and the air and the Nubble.



Club Meetings

Meetings are held the first and third Mondays of each month, January through November. We encourage potential members to attend a meeting or two to experience our club before joining. The meetings are held at the YMCA on 30 Mechanic St. (off of Elm Street) in Manchester. The meetings start at 7:00 PM. Each meeting consists of a short business portion followed by a variety of presentations and discussions. Immediately following the club has an hour of pool time for swimming, trying out gear, and the occasional game of underwater hockey. Members and guests often meet afterwards at a local restaurant for food and drink.

Extreme Weather

Meetings will be held if the YMCA is open. You can call them at 603-623-3558. Check close to the meeting time as the front desk often has no advance warning of early closures.

Membership

Annual dues for membership for 1999 in the United Divers of New Hampshire are \$30/individual or \$45/family. Dues are not prorated for members who join later in the year. To join, please contact Don Eva at 603-672-5608

Get in the Swim

After every meeting, the YMCA pool is open to our dive club for an hour of fun and fitness.

Don't wait for the ice to thaw before trying out that new equipment, the pool is the perfect place. Check out the club calendar for special presentations in the pool like dive knife use or trying out a dry suit. So bring a suit and a towel to every meeting and get into the swim.

United Divers of New Hampshire Contact Information - 1999

President	Mike Griffin	603-673-9250
Vice President	Kerry Hurd	603-672-8325
Treasurer	Gary Thuillier	603-487-3001
Secretary	Karen Marion	603-880-0293
Dive Coordinator	Tom Tremblay	603-625-8459

Meeting schedule: 7:00-8:15pm - meeting & presentation ,
8:30-9:20- pool time, 9:20-9:30 - Hot Tub!

Meetings and Events

September 18 Coastal Cleanup. Contact Karen Marion @ 603-880-0293.

September 20 Meeting

October 2 Seamark '99. Gala party at the New England Aquarium to benefit the Cotting School vision clinic. This is the 25th anniversary year.

October 4 Meeting

October 18 Meeting

November 8 Meeting Annual Officers' Elections. Be sure to show up . . . or else you may be elected to something!

November 20 Annual Club Banquet

Weather

Current marine weather for New England can be accessed on the world wide web at NWS.FSU.EDU/BUOY/



Internet connection - a new place in the *DiveLog* for businesses with websights.

With the growing trend of web advertising and the fact that this newsletter can be seen online it makes good sense to put your connection here. Call Lea Nichols for pricing details.

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Dive Computer: *Orca Marathon*- excellent condition w/ new battery. \$100. Contact Mike Griffin @ 603-673-9250.

TIDES

The following abbreviated tide tables are for High Tides only based on Portsmouth Harbor. This guide is a quick reference only and should not be used for dives requiring exact times for slack tide. My detailed information is available at maineharbors.com.

Sat Aug 28	1:00 PM	Sat Oct 2	5:45 PM
Sun Aug 29	1:45 PM	Sun Oct 3	6:45 PM
Sat Sept 4	6:45 AM	Sat Oct 9	12:00 PM
Sun Sept 5	7:45 AM	Sun Oct 10	12:30 PM
Sat Sept 11	1:00 PM	Sat Oct 16	4:45 PM
Sun Sept 12	1:45 PM	Sun Oct 17	5:45 PM
Sat Sept 18	6:00 AM	Sat Oct 23	10:30 AM
Sun Sept 19	7:00 AM	Sun Oct 24	11:15 AM
Sat Sept 25	11:45 PM	Sat Oct 30	4:15 PM
Sun Sept 26	12:15 PM	Sun Oct 31	4:30 PM

DIVE LOG

United Divers of New Hampshire
P.O. Box 4176
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Forward and Address Correction Requested

DIVE LOG

Dive Log is the bi-monthly newsletter of the United Divers of New Hampshire, an organization dedicated to educating divers and expanding the knowledge of diving in the State of New Hampshire and New England.

In This Issue:

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