

## Winter Adventures in the Sun



*Linda Hurd in Aruba*



*Linda & Kerry Hurd view total solar eclipse in Aruba*

Photos by Kerry Hurd

## Kerry and Linda's 1998 Aruba Trip

First a little background - we began scuba lessons in August 1997, and were certified in September 1997. Our diving experience had been five dives in Silver Lake in Harrisville and seven (six for Linda) dives at Back Beach in Rockport MA. Aruba would bring us our first boat dives, our first "warm water" dives, deeper dives, and potentially our first night dives.

The primary goal of our trip was to see the total solar eclipse on Thursday, February 26. The leaders of our trip are avid scuba divers and recommended anyone interested to be certified before going to Aruba. One of them had his son and one of his daughters do their out dives in Aruba. We read up on diving in Aruba, and found one of the best sites is the Antilla. At 400' in length, it has been known as the largest wreck in the Caribbean. There are also several other ships, planes, and a tugboat. Since the beaches slope very gradually, almost all of the diving is by boat. We called Pelican Watersports (the diving outfit associated with our hotel, La Cabana) and they said to sign up for dives after arrival. We did a few more pool sessions with our gear, including a full dress rehearsal at the YMCA after one of the UDNH meetings. We also rented a Sea and Sea MX-10 from Fred at Underwater Photo-Tech in Londonderry. So with our experience and knowledge increased a bit and our gear packed, we headed to Aruba on Sunday, February 22.

We were told that Pelican opens at 8:30 am on Monday morning, and so we were there. We signed up for the six dive package, starting rather shallow, and building up (or is it down?) in depth. After exploring around a bit, we went back to our room and found a message that several of the dives for which we had signed up were already booked. So we went back to Pelican and signed up for: Tuesday's two-tank dive, Tuesday's night dive, Wednesday's Pedernales shipwreck dive, and a two-tank dive on Friday. This gave us the rest of Monday off, so we explored the area around the hotel, including its three pools, and Eagle Beach, located across the street. I did some snorkeling and was surprised at the visibility - while standing I couldn't even see my fins. I also took my first few underwater photos.

Tuesday morning dawned sunny, warm, and humid - as usual. Temperatures day and night were in the mid-eighties, with quite a breeze going all the time. Not just a gentle breeze - this was a 20-30 mph gale! We took the shuttle to Pelican's port at the Holiday Inn (five minutes from our hotel) and got checked in. Our first dive site was Plonco Reef. We were feeling a bit apprehensive due to the large waves - three to five footers. (Fortunately the Dramamine was working.) I did not bring the camera for the first dive, because it was my first dive in these conditions. Holding onto my mask, regulator, and weight belt buckle, I stepped off the platform and entered the rather chilly water (even



### The Newsletter of the United Divers of New Hampshire

Editors: Lea Nichols  
Gary Thuillier

Support: Don Eva

#### Submissions

Editorial contributions may be e-mailed to [COMPTUS@aol.com](mailto: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](mailto:dpeva@aol.com)

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#### Website:

Newsletters and other current info are available at our website: <http://www.strokeofcolor.com/udnh>, graciously hosted by Jake & Linda Richter.

with a 3/2 mm wetsuit). Linda followed shortly. I flashed the "okay?" sign, and did not receive the normal response. She kept on shaking her head "no". The dive guide requested we all release the tow line, but Linda kept on shaking her head. The guide went to her and saw the wide eyes and heard the near-hyperventilation. Time to get her back on the boat. I followed and kept on asking Linda if she was all right, and she said she would be and for me to continue the dive. After seeing her safely back on the boat, we began our descent.

Ear clearing was going okay, but then it seemed to take a bit more effort. I figured I must be at least 30-35 feet deep, and checked the depth gauge. Sixty feet! How did that happen? Oh well, I was still with the dive group and we started moving off. I was behind them a bit, and as I started forward, I noticed a fish off to the left. Wow - a barracuda! My first fish in the Caribbean! As I mentioned before, I was not carrying the camera, so I got no photo. Even from about 25 feet away, I could see his teeth! I tried to remember some facts about them - they are usually territorial fish, and will sometimes guard an area. They are often attracted to bright, shiny objects. They often ignore divers. This one seemed to notice me, but he stayed in his area as I swam on with the group. Again, I was surprised at the visibility. I could not see the surface, I could not see the bottom, and I often couldn't see our whole group. We slowly ascended as we

headed towards the reef, and at about 40 feet, it got interesting. I saw my second barracuda there, which was much smaller than the first. There were many different kinds of fish and coral. As a matter of fact, there seemed to be a bit too much. I was used to cruising along Back Beach and glancing at a lobster by some kelp, while noticing a hermit crab or two, or perhaps a flounder in the sand. Here there were several types of fish new to me, plus all sorts of soft corals, hard corals, and sponges. I had been warned several times already not to touch anything, particularly the fire coral. My buoyancy control wasn't great, but was acceptable. I just didn't float too close to anything. As usual, I was sucking down the air quicker than most others, so I came up to about 15-20 feet to use less air and do my safety stop, and kept the dive party under me. After 36 minutes, my first Aruban dive was over, and I was climbing back on the boat. Linda could have been better - the boat was heaving quite a bit in the waves, so she was looking a little green.

We did our surface interval at a fuel station to refill the boat, drink plenty of water, and snack on our dive standard, fig newtons. Our next site was the Sonesta airplanes (one is a Convair 400, and the other is a Beech 18). Linda had recovered enough during the refill to give it another try. This dive was shallower, and with calmer seas. This time Linda's problems were with her ears. She just couldn't get her ears to clear while trying to head

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down. So it was back to the boat again for her, now feeling a little frustrated. She told me to go on my way, so down I went, this time with the camera. Maximum depth was actually again about 60 feet. This time our objective was two planes. Swimming through the murky water and seeing a plane appear is a great experience - and a bit spooky. We were allowed penetration at this site - go in the side cargo door, swim along the fuselage, and exit by the tail. I took a quick look at it and thought - nope, not this time. So I followed the other divers' bubbles to the end of the craft, and we continued on our way. The second plane was a bit of letdown, mainly because it was in so many parts. It looked like it could have been anything made of metal. Oh well, the first one was worth it.

We returned to the dock and picked up the shuttle back to the hotel. My next dive was to be in the evening - my first night dive! Pelican does all of their night dives at the Antilla, so even though the day dives were booked, I would still get to dive this huge ship. Linda was not allowed to even try this dive, because Pelican has a policy of not allowing a diver to night dive unless (s)he has done some daytime diving with them. Linda went on the boat ride to the site, and watched our lights from the deck. I was glad to be able to try out my new lights - the primary, the secondary, and the tank light. We entered the water a short time after sunset, and right away noticed all the brilliant colors of the coral out in full bloom. There were a few resting fish, including parrot fish that had not yet spun their cocoons. Depth was about 50 feet. I saw a huge porcupine fish, about 2 1/2 feet long. I did not know they reached this length. Unfortunately, the picture I took had too much backscatter to see it. We floated around the huge bulk and drifted up the deck, which lies sideways. After too short a time, we went back to the boat for our fresh water rinses. What a great dive - absolutely amazing at night!

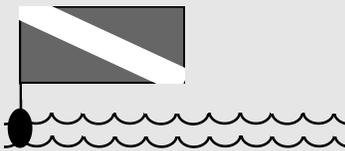
Wednesday brought our first shallow dive - about 30 feet at the Pedernales. For this dive, Linda got down and we saw lots. We were able to arrange that with the dives that Linda had paid for, but would not be doing (the two-tank dive on Friday), that she could change one of those to another

Pedernales dive on Saturday morning, and I would use the second dive at the same time.

Thursday was a day off for nitrogen releasing and the eclipse, which was spectacular!

Friday was another two tank dive, this time with 21 divers! The first dive site was DePalm Slope, and was split into three groups - shallow, medium, and deep. I was part of the medium group, which suited me just fine. The deep group went to about 116 feet, and also had the shortest dive. I dropped down with my group and we came up a bit, leveled off and began looking. I checked my depth gauge - I had reached 78 feet! If I had noticed it sooner, I would have gone down four more feet to double my previous record of 41 feet in Silver Lake. Oh well. The funniest thing on this dive was noticing a big group of divers around one spot. They were pointing and the one with the video camera was shooting at something. I glanced over and thought maybe it was that round helmet-looking thing. I took one picture of the divers pointing. The dive guide had the group move on, and I swam over to the other side to have a look. The helmet-looking thing was not a helmet, but a kind of neat looking sponge. Was this what they were looking at? Or perhaps there was a moray eel or spiny lobster underneath some of the corals. I shrugged and pointed the camera in the general direction and took a picture. After this 32 minute dive, and back on the boat, most people were talking about the great seahorse they saw! I said nothing rather than admitting I hadn't seen it. But I hopefully had a photo of it. After getting the film developed, I looked eagerly at the photo. I've been able to figure out two possible seahorses in the photo. So I guess I got a photo of it. Next time I'll use the close-up lens - if I can tell what I'm taking a photo of.

The second dive was at Baracadera Reef, and was shallower. This time we were in two groups. The dive guide was a large man who wore shorts and a T-shirt



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continued from previous page

(with his scuba gear, of course). Most people wore a shorty. I guess I was getting used to the water because as I did more diving, I did not get as chilly, and actually stayed quite comfortable. I used up another roll of film on this dive, which can be a relief so that I could concentrate on looking at things rather than wondering if they would make a good picture. That was the main reason I took 24-exposure film rather than 36.

Even though we were leaving Sunday, we did a dive on Saturday. We know of the 24-hour rule between diving and flying, which we adhered to. Our dive was in the morning, and our flight was in the evening, so we would have a minimum of 30 hours between diving and flying. We were able to dive the Pedernales again, but this time at low tide. Maximum depth was about 25 feet, and so we were able to stay under for 50 minutes. This was my favorite dive of the trip for several reasons. One was that Linda was able to get down okay (slowly) and seemed to enjoy herself once down. The seas were quite calm. We saw many incredible fish, including a porcupine fish the dive guide inflated, a pair of cornetfish, and a brown moray eel swimming about. (Of course, I was out of film for the posing cornetfish and the eel, but I still had a great time.)

On Sunday morning, we went on a semi-submarine ride that was fantastic! The semi-submarine is basically a two-story boat, with the first story underwater, with windows. We viewed a hazy plane wreck and a pretty good reef, but the highlight was the Antilla. I got to see it in the daytime, and it was amazing! Huge, with loads of fish, coral, ferns, etc. A great view.

We then got to wait in line again to be transported to the airport, where we waited in line to get checked on, followed by waiting to board, followed by waiting in line to get on the plane. The flight back was smooth, like the trip down.

All in all a nice trip, highlighted by the eclipse. Would we return to Aruba? Not without a special reason. We enjoy shore diving, and we've heard that Bonaire is the shore

diving capital of the world, so if we return to the Caribbean, it would be to Bonaire, as long as diving was the primary reason for going.





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### Les Escoumins Trip

*Don Eva*

About 3 hours drive northeast of Quebec City, where the Atlantic tidal waters flow in and out of the St. Lawrence River, is a wonderful small village which provides some excellent cold water diving and quaint Quebec charm.

Members of the New England Aquarium Dive Club, as well as several of our club members, have made the trip a number of times-- for diving, whale watching, and socializing with some of our Canadian diving counterparts. Last year four of us stayed at the L'auberge de la Plongee de les Escoumins, a youth-hostel-like hotel, which provides inexpensive, basic lodging and meals, plus access to dive sites and air. Other, more upscale accommodations are available for those wanting more privacy or services. At the other end, there is a campground in town, also.

This year's trip is planned for the end of August. Some divers will probably be making a week-long trip of it, while others will make it just a long weekend.

Contact Don Eva (603) 672-5608 or Jean Stefanik (603) 647-1063 if you're interested.

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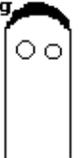
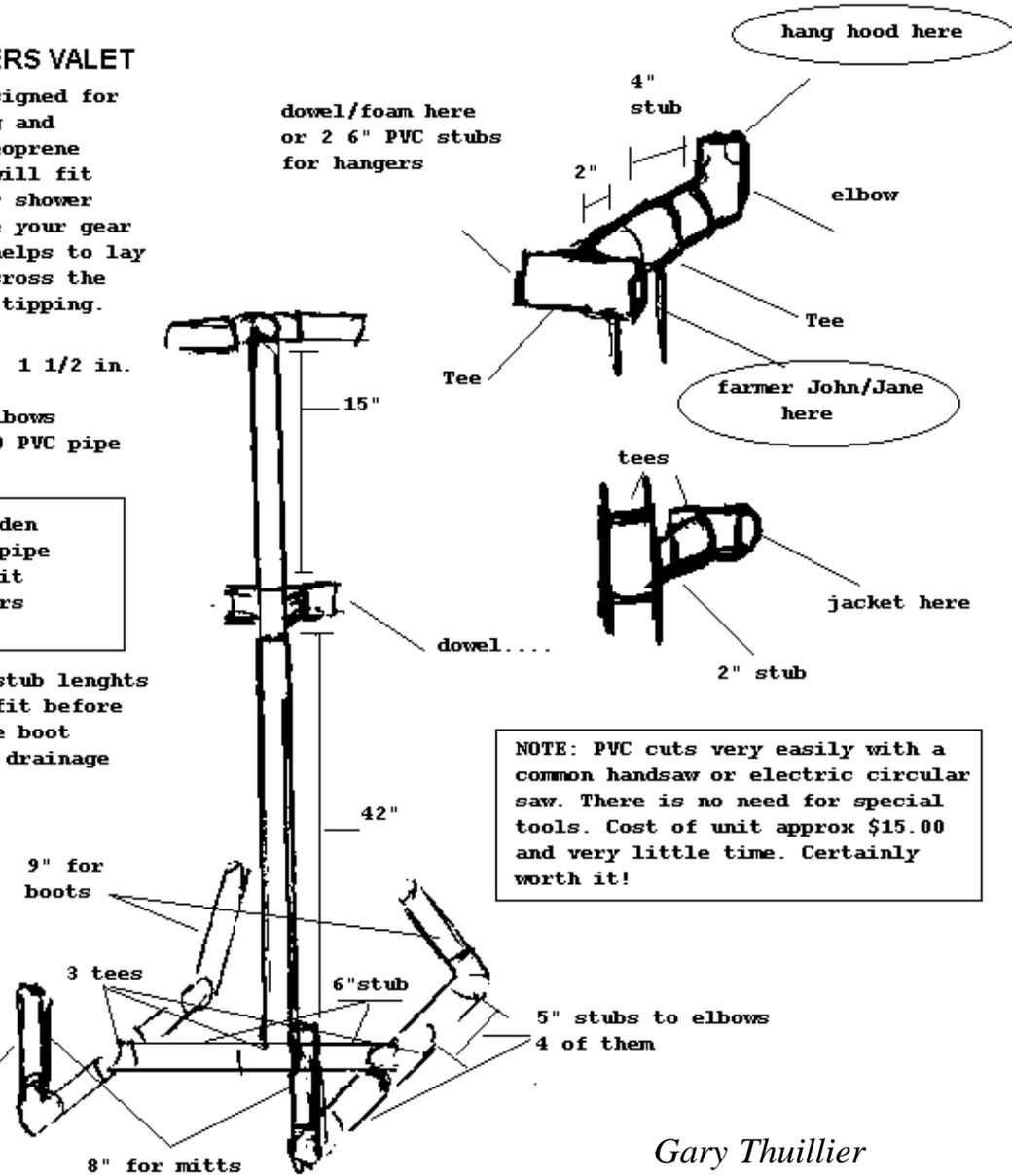
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optional 3/4 wooden dowel with foam pipe insulation over it for padded hangers

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round off ends to allow venting or drill holes

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## New England Great American Fish Count

In 1992, a small group of recreational divers and marine biologists from the Channel Islands National Park conducted a standardized visual fish census. Their effort was modeled after the Audubon Christmas Bird Count, and quickly grew into an annual event. In 1997, twenty-seven informational and training seminars were held and 439 participants submitted 372 surveys from the Pacific, Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

This year Jim Stewart, Environmental Affairs Coordinator for the New England Aquarium Dive Club, is organizing the New England contingent of divers for the census, and is looking to clubs such as UDNH to participate.

The census is quite simple — each group selects a dive site and dives it during the first two weeks of July every year. During the dive, team members record the types and approximate number of fish they see. This information is gathered and fed into a database, where various marine biologists and other nerdy types can play with the numbers to determine fish population trends.

The project is designed to be simple and fun— divers are encouraged to enjoy their dives, and are given fish identification briefings in order to tell the difference between a sea bass and a lobster.

UDNH would like to participate in this project, so we need volunteers to show up and count. Contact Don Eva, (603) 672-5608, [dpeva@aol.com](mailto:dpeva@aol.com), or for more details contact Jim Stewart directly, at (978) 970-2670, [js2186@concentric.net](mailto:js2186@concentric.net).

## Tides

The following tide times are for the weekends in May & June 1998, based on tables at Boston, MA. You should figure in approximately 15 minutes later for Portsmouth, NH to Portland, ME. When diving midweek you add roughly one hour to each day. \*CAUTION\* For dives which require strict adherence to slack times use published tide tables for the specific area.

Sat May 9	H-11:09am	L-4:54pm
Sun May 10	H-11:46am	L-5:32pm
Sat May 16	L-9:25am	H-3:39pm
Sun May 17	L-10:13am	H-4:28pm
Sat May 23	H-10:01am	L-3:47pm
Sun May 24	H-10:54am	L-4:40pm
Sat May 30	L-9:32am	H-3:52pm
Sun May 31	L-10:24am	H-4:46pm
Sat June 6	H-9:50am	L-3:32pm
Sun June 7	H-10:32am	L-4:16pm
Sat June 13	L-8:18am	H-2:32pm
Sun June 14	L-9:04am	H-3:18pm
Sat June 20	H-8:45am	L-2:28pm
Sun June 21	H-9:41am	L-3:24pm
Sat June 27	L-8:18am	H-2:36pm
Sun June 28	L-9:05am	H-3:24pm

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### 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 1998 in the United Divers of New Hampshire are \$25/individual or \$40/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 - 1998

President	Mike Griffin	603-598-0151
Vice President	Tom Tremblay	603-625-8459
Treasurer	Gary Thuillier	603-487-3001
Secretary	Don Eva	603-672-5608
Dive Coordinator	Ken Anderson	???
Ass't Dive Coord.	Ron Mann	603-883-9015

## Meetings and Events

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

**May 2 Dive & Picnic** @ Great Island Common, Newcastle Contact Gary Thuillier (603) 487-3001 for details

**May 4 Meeting & Underwater Olympics**

**May 16 Cape Anne dive Weekend** Contact Gary Thuillier (603) 487-3001

**May 17 Bay State Council of Divers Treasure Hunt** Stage Fort Park, Cape Anne, MA Contact Gary Thuillier (603) 487-3001 for details & directions.

**May 18 Meeting - Dave from Dive Winnepesaukee** Yucatan Peninsula & Cenote diving

**June 1 Meeting**

**June 6&7 Smuttynose Island trip. (tentative)**

**June 15 Meeting**

**July 1-15 Great American Fish Count (GAFC)** Contact Don Eva 603 672-5608 for info.

**July 24-26 Hermit Island Camping/Diving Weekend** Contact Tom Tremblay (603) 625-8459 for details & directions

**August 15 (tentative) Annual Jay Lewis Picnic.** Lobster Raffle

**August (Late) LesEscoumins Quebec Dive Trip** with Aquarium Dive Club  
Contact Jean Stefanik 603 647-1063

**September 27 National Coastal Cleanup**

Look for a full schedule of Summer dives in the next issue.

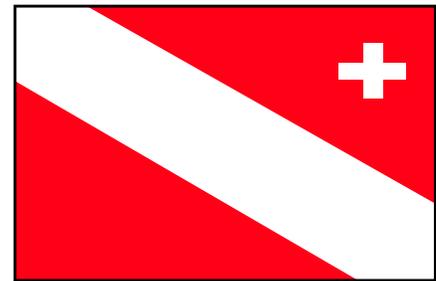
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*Tech Tips is a new column for members to share their knowledge, ideas and/or inventions. All submissions welcome.*



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Forward and Address Correction Requested



*Dive Log* is the 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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- Tech Tips
- Aruba Diving & Eclipse trip
- Great American Fish Count
- Do-It-Yourself Divers Valet
- Weekend Tide info

