

# Scuba & H2O

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$20

ADVENTURES MAGAZINE



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DIVING MUSEUM

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THE VALLEY OF BATS

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## Publisher's Note: February is here!

Welcome to the February 2020 edition of Scuba & H2O Adventures Magazine!

With a new decade comes a fresh assortment of stories for us to share with you, our readers. Since we have reestablished our publication over the last two years, our drive and commitment to sharing solid, factual news have never been stronger. Our monthly articles, columns, and reviews are fueled by communities the world over, who have made strides in science, history, charity, travel, adventure, and many other pursuits related to the sea.

Because of you, our readers, members, and advertisers, we have been able to cover a swath of topics on all things ocean. With your help, we've developed a network of non-profits, scientific organizations, clubs, and mom and pop establishments, whose voices are often blanketed by media more concerned with pomp and circumstance and celebrity than good old fashioned, shoe leather journalism.

Scuba & H2O Adventures Magazine is committed to the tenets of strong, fact-based journalism. Our writers, be they specialists on wreck diving or environmental experts, are dedicated to bringing you engaging and endearing pieces each month. We take pride in our devotion to independent media and longform prose: eschewing simple lists and declarative, often abrasive, headlines for a more comprehensive and welcoming approach.

As acclaimed philosopher and media luminary Marshall McLuhan once famously stated, "The media is the message." In this vein, Scuba & H2O Adventures Magazine will continue to serve as a beacon for communities through direct interaction and collaboration, bereft of annoyances common in digital media. This is a magazine for you and by you: a publication formed and shaped by your stories and experiences. Drop us a line - we'd be glad to speak with you.

*John Tapley*  
Managing Editor

### About the Cover:

Heed the warnings of a female Sea Lion - Photo taken by Eco-Photo Explorers

### FOR THE RECORD: CONTACT:

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Publisher: Selene Muldowney | selene.dnn@gmail.com  
Senior Editor: John Tapley | dnn.editor@outlook.com  
Interns: Andrew Pierzchala  
Reagan Muldowney  
Regional Correspondents: Gary Lehman - NE  
John C. Fine - SE  
Environmental Consultant: Bonnie McKenna  
Advertising Sales: Rick Stratton  
rickstratton.dnn@gmail.com  
www.ScubaH2OMag.com

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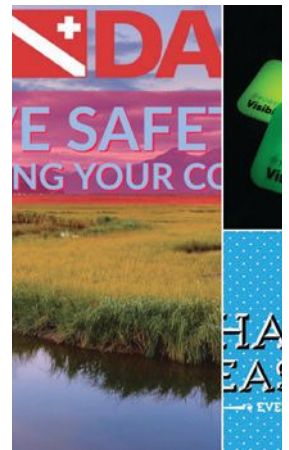
SOUND  
BITES

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Shout-outs!

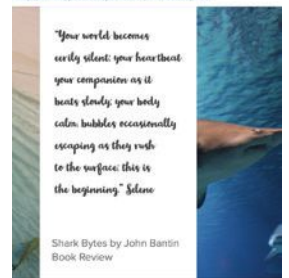
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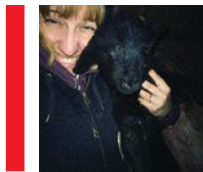
## INSTAGRAM

Book review on John Bantini's impressive impression on sharks! Shark Bytes is a great read - a must read for any ocean aficionado. John Bantini  
Fernhurst Books  
#bookreview #sharkbytes #fernhurstbooks #sharkbitesbookreview  
<http://www.fernhurstbooks.com/publication/?p=578820&a=68>



Shark Bytes by John Bantini  
Book Review

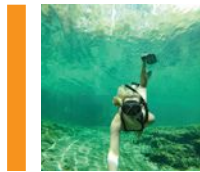
# Regular Contributors



SELENE  
MULDOWNEY



JOHN TAPLEY

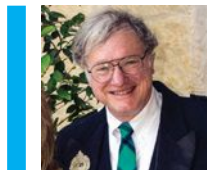


CAITLYN  
RUSKELL

Caitlyn is Content Writer and Editor for Divers Alert Network in Durham, NC. She is an active PADI and NAUI Instructor, RAID Rebreather Instructor and graduate of the University of Georgia.



A BEACH IS NOT ONLY A SWEEP OF SAND, BUT SHELLS OF SEA CREATURES, THE SEA GLASS, THE SEAWEED, THE INCONGRUOUS OBJECTS WASHED UP BY THE OCEAN. **HENRY GRUNWALD**



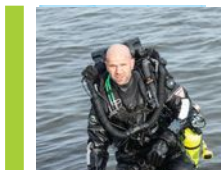
GARY  
LEHMAN

Gary came to diving later than most, and loves to get away when he can – which is not enough! Some of the most memorable experiences ever for Gary have been underwater with his club buddies, turtles and sharks! When not diving or thinking about it, he writes about it!



ALEC PEIRCE

Alec Peirce is recognized as one of the finest scuba diving presenters of his generation. He holds instructor certifications with seven different scuba training agencies plus many honorary awards from the scuba industry including the prestigious "Platinum Pro 5000 Diver".



ERIC  
PETKOVIC

Erik is an explorer, author, maritime historian, shipwreck researcher, and technical diver with over 20 years of diving experience. Erik has been featured in dive publications worldwide, is the author of three books, and regularly presents at the largest dive shows and museums in the country.



JAMES  
LAPENTA

I am a recreational and technical SCUBA Instructor whose primary goal is to create divers that are safe, skilled, and competent. I'd rather lose business than certify an unqualified diver. It is my moral and ethical duty to call out unsafe practices, standards, and those who defend or use them.



BONNIE  
MCKENNA

Destined to a life with adventure, Bonnie McKenna took her open water dive in 1955 with no wetsuit or BCD, a J-valve tank, double hose regulator, and fins that weighed a ton. She explored the world, with camera in hand, as an international flight attendant. Now retired, she spends her time working as a photojournalist and conservationist.



JOHN C  
FINE

The author Dr. John Christopher Fine is a marine biologist, Master Scuba Instructor and Instructor Trainer. He is an expert in maritime affairs and has authored 26 published books. His large format coffee table book: TREASURES OF THE SPANISH MAIN contains information and photographs of Spanish colonial shipwrecks.



GENE  
PETERSON

An accomplished wreck explorer, historian, speaker, instructor, and business owner, Gene is a man who wears many hats, and who has made significant strides in surfacing the deep history of New Jersey shipwrecks. Gene has over 40 years of experience in these fields, and we look forward to sharing his stories and expertise in future editions.



MICHAEL  
SALVAREZZA

Michael Salvarezza and Christopher Weaver have been diving the waters of the world since 1978. In that time, they have spent thousands of hours underwater and have accumulated a large and varied library of photographic images. They have presented their work in many multi-media slide presentations, and have appeared previously at Beneath the Sea, the Boston Sea Rovers Underwater Clinic, Ohio ScubaFest and Our World Underwater.

Eco-Photo Explorers (EPE) is a New York based organization and was formed in 1994 to help promote interest in protecting the environment through knowledge and awareness through the use of underwater photography.



CHRISTOPHER  
WEAVER



MARK  
NORDER

Mark has worked as a diver and dive supervisor for more than 30 years. He works in locations as diverse as Alaska's Bering Sea, the Missouri River and Gulf of Mexico. Mark currently resides in Southern California.

A close-up photograph of a large tortoise's head, showing the intricate patterns and textures of its scutes. The colors range from dark grey to light brown, with some blueish-grey tones. The tortoise is looking towards the right of the frame.

# DESCENT TO THE V

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY MICHAEL SALVAREZZA & CHRISTOPHER P. WEAVER, ECO-PHOTO EXPLORERS

A close-up photograph of a Giant Galapagos Tortoise. The tortoise's head is in the foreground, showing its large, dark eye and nostrils. Its shell is a mix of brown and grey tones with distinct scutes. The background is a blurred, rocky surface.

# ALLEY OF THE BATS

The Giant Galapagos Tortoise is iconic

The Galapagos Islands are well known amongst divers as a world-class destination for adrenaline drenched shark dives and heart pounding Whale Shark encounters. Indeed, divers the world over have either traveled to this spot (or dreamed of it) in the hopes of witnessing the fabled schools of Hammerhead Sharks off Darwin and Wolf Island. It is here, perched along rocky walls that tumble into the depths, that divers brace themselves against fierce currents watching a veritable parade of marine life that includes schools of Jacks and Creole Fish, squadrons of Eagle Rays, curious Dolphins and seemingly ambivalent Green Sea Turtles. But it is the hundreds of Scalloped Hammerheads, the hulking Galapagos Sharks and the majestically huge Whale Sharks that command the true attention and focus of all who come here.

## The Galapagos are, in a word, magnificent.

Straddling the equator some 620 miles off the west coast of Ecuador, this isolated archipelago of roughly 125 volcanic islands and islets represents a true laboratory of natural history. Made famous by the visit of Charles Darwin in 1835, the Galapagos support more than 3000 species of flora and fauna and it was the subtle variations in several species of birds and tortoises from isolated island to island that led Darwin to his theories of natural selection, theories that remain controversial to this day.

Visitors to these islands are often immediately struck by the fearlessness of its land animals; Galapagos Sea Lions cast a wary but almost indifferent eye to visitors. Land and Marine Iguanas go about their business unperturbed by human observers. Blue-Footed Booby Birds sit vigilantly on their scratched out nests on the barren volcanic soil, tending to their eggs and largely ignoring the two-legged creatures walking about and snapping pictures of them! This cautious ambivalence is one of the reasons tourism to the Galapagos is so popular.



SCUBA Divers who venture into the inviting waters around the main islands are immediately startled by the surprisingly cool waters here...temperatures can range from a frigid 56 degrees Fahrenheit to a comfortably warm 75 degrees. In fact, populations of the northernmost penguin species (Galapagos Penguin) actually make their homes here, an odd juxtaposition of polar wildlife on the equator! And, although the waters around the main islands are interesting enough for divers, the real action lies some 12 hours away by boat at the uninhabited islands of Darwin and Wolf.

Our quarry at Darwin and Wolf was, not surprisingly, the schools of Hammerhead Sharks. But we were also hoping for encounters with Whale Sharks, and were not disappointed on both accounts! Literally hundreds of Scalloped Hammerhead Sharks swam lazily back and forth in the currents as we watched awe-struck. Every so often, a Galapagos Shark would emerge from the blue and swim uncomfortably close as it seemed to search the rocky walls for prey. Interestingly, on one occasion we actually observed a small school of five Galapagos Sharks schooling with the Hammerheads. And on one memorable morning, after rising at 5:30am in the hopes of an early encounter, we swam with three 45-foot Whale Sharks in a series of dream dives at Darwin that we will never forget.

But, there are other fascinating mysteries here, natural oddities that are easy to overlook in the pursuit of “Mr. Big”. It was late afternoon at Wolf Island when we descended along a sloping rocky bottom at a dive site known as “The Anchorage”. With daylight waning, our search was not for schools of sharks but, rather, a rarely seen and incredibly weird marine enigma...the Red-Lipped Batfish!

Among photographers, the Red-Lipped Batfish (*Ogcocephalus darwini*) is every bit as legendary as the huge animals swarming the swift seas around Darwin’s Arch a few miles away. A rather odd looking fish, the Batfish



is a bottom dweller that spends its life hopping around the sea floor, perched on its modified pectoral and ventral fins. Occasionally, this diminutive little creature (7 inches maximum length) will find the motivation to swim short distances, which it does with sideways strokes of its tail. Of course, it is the face that makes for the most interesting photos: bright red lips and a long blackish-brown horn. Under this protuberance is a small-concealed lure, the purpose of which continues to stump scientists. Still, this oddly patched together “Mr. Potatohead” face is a face that only a mother could love.

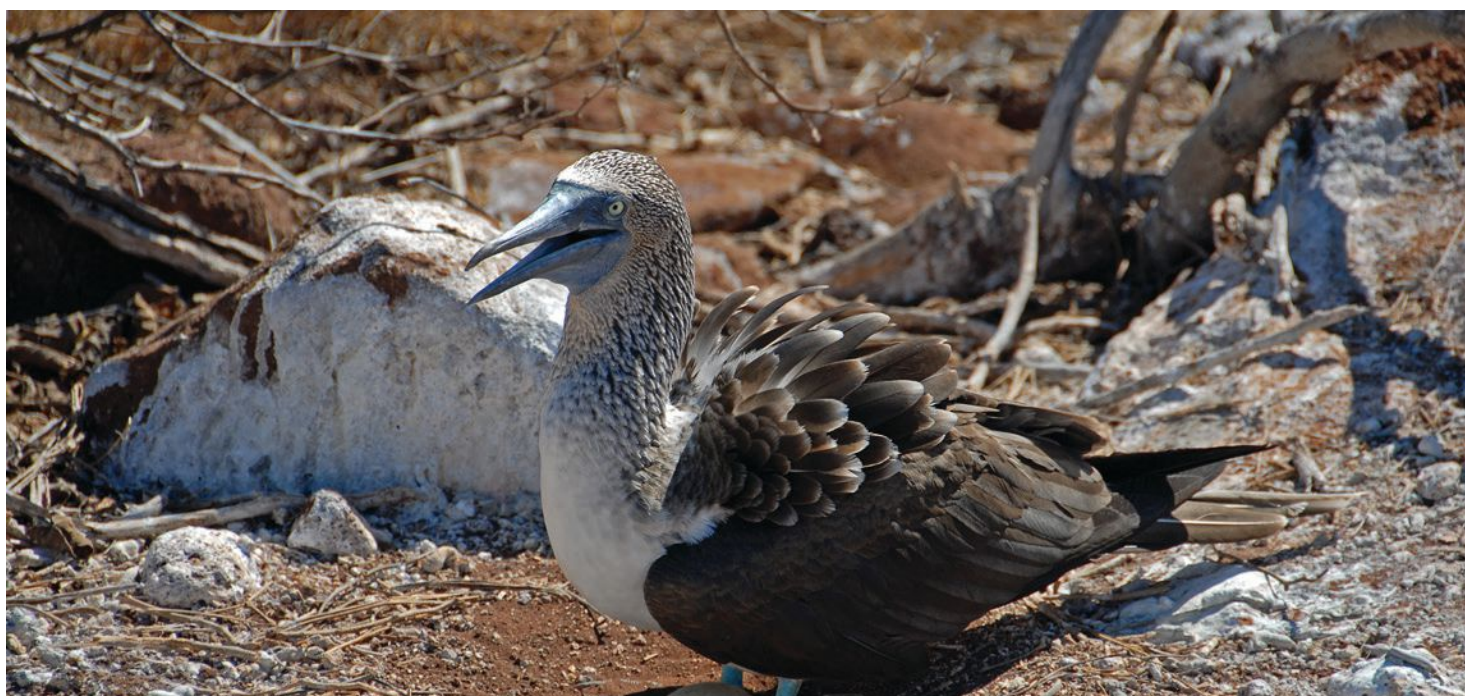
Red-Lipped Batfish are limited in distribution. Originally endemic to the Galapagos, some specimens have now been found off Peru and the coast of Ecuador. However, they are rarely seen and we were quite skeptical when we entered the water with a promise from the dive master that they would be here. So, as we descended the rocky slope to a sandy bottom in 100 feet of water, our hopes were not very high. Perhaps we would find one or maybe two fish. Perhaps we wouldn't see any. The cameras were ready, but we were very much in doubt.

And then, as our eyes adjusted to the diminished late afternoon light, there they were! Dozens of them! Everywhere we looked. At first, they looked like small rocks on the sand. Soon, however, we became quite adept at distinguishing them from their surroundings and it was quite easy to spot them. If we approached one to photograph it, we had to be careful not to rest on top of another one inadvertently. If we focused our attention on an individual in front of us, two more would hop away to our left or right. And if we approached one too quickly, it would swim away, only to reveal another just a few feet beyond.

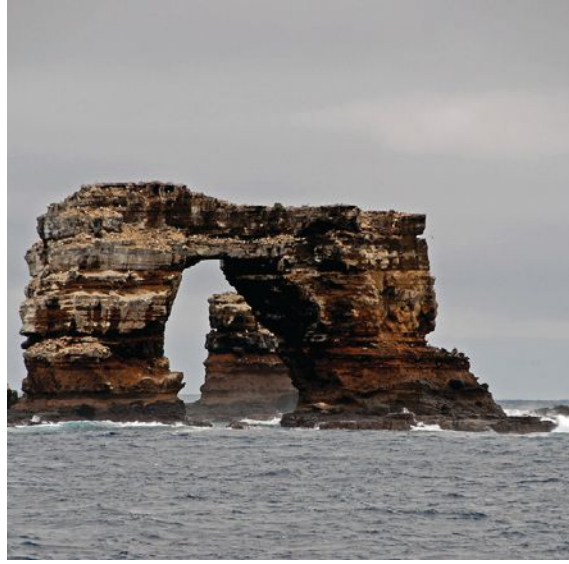
Red-Lipped Batfish are generally active at night, and feed on snails, crabs, crustaceans and small fish. They are light brown in color, with variations of light beige, cream or blue-gray and they have two dark longitudinal stripes along the back. They can be found in shallow water down to 150 FSW, but at “The Anchorage”, the resident population seems to stay between 80 and 100 feet.

The Batfish are not only found at Wolf Island, although that is the best place to see them. They can also be found throughout the Archipelago, and are abundant at Punta Vincente Roca, Tagus Cove and Gardiner Island off Espanola.

Our dive at “The Anchorage” and the search for the Red-Lipped Batfish was quite a success. These strange looking fish are just another example of nature's infinite variety and are a fascinating example of adaptation to a specific ecological niche. Or, perhaps, they are an example of Nature's sense of humor! Either way, we think “The Anchorage” should be renamed “The Valley of the Bats”.







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