



UNDERCURRENTS

Newsletter of the Bluegrass Dive Club / www.bluegrassdiveclub.com

October 2023

Volume 53, Number 5

October Newsletter and November Club Meeting

October Newsletter

Meeting: Tuesday, November 14th
Time: 7:30-PM **Elections**
Social at 7:00

Location: Roosters
Program: **Roatan Trip**

President's Message

By John Geddes



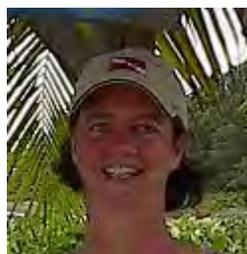
As we come to the close of the year, Elections will be next month, so if you like to serve its not to late to throw your hat in the ring.

We will be having the Christmas Party December 9 at the home of our gracious Host and Hostess, Tracey Combs and Alan Stubbs located at 704 Andover Village Dr in Lexington. Bring a dish! More to come.

Pics are from Alex and Bart on the recent Club trip to Roatan. 🚩

Vice President Report

By Kris Harn



Per the By-laws, elections are to be in the month of November. As of now there are no open offices, but nominations can be made from the floor on November 14th. Nominees for elected board positions are:

President - Kathryn Bowers

Vice President - Kris Harn.

Secretary - Charlie Denham

Treasurer - Dan Miller

Trip Director - Natasha Bowers, with assistant Kristen Bowers

Safety Information Director - Bart Bertetto

Newsletter Editor - John Geddes

Webmaster - Alex Fassas 🚩



Trip Director Report

By Leigh Ann Bowe Geddes



We would like to convene a Dive Committee meeting at 1:00 PM on Saturday, November 4th, at Bronte Bistro at Joseph-Beth Booksellers in Lexington Green. If you are interested in participating in the planning of future Bluegrass Dive Club trips you are welcome to join us. Please RSVP directly to me via [email](#), so that I shall know whether to expect the masses, or no one. 🚩



2023 BGDC Officer's

John Geddes, President	608-0682
Kris Harn, Vice President	333-6911
Charlie Denham, Secretary	621-8655
Dan Miller, Treasurer	948-5133
L. A. Bowe-Geddes, Trip Director	553-6251
Kathryn Bowers, Safety Info Dir.	619-0166
Alex Fassas, Webmaster	582-1600
Newsletter Editor, VACANT	

From the Treasurer

By Dan Miller



2024 Membership Dues \$10.00 / \$20.00
New Member first year / Second year

Single & Family (1 diver)

Family (non divers)

Family (2 or more in same house)

Renewal: Please send payment to the address listed below or [online](#). Please make sure to include your mailing address and phone number, and it is essential that we also have your current email address.

Contact / Mail to: Bluegrass Dive Club c/o
Dan Miller
824 Gunpowder Drive
Lexington, KY 40509

New Members: Visit the website to fill out an [on-line form](#) or to access a Microsoft Word printable form. [CLICK HERE](#). 🚩



Webmaster

By Alex Fassas



Tales from the Watery Web

10 Club members went on a dive trip to Anthony's Key Resort on the island of Roatan, Honduras and 12 came back from the trip. No one was pregnant when we left. What happened? (Answer elsewhere in the newsletter)

Since the Club's last trip to Anthony's Key Resort they have been busy with improvements to the facilities. There are new lobby and dining restaurant & bar buildings at the waterside. Quite a bit more upscale than previously. The food and service has been kicked up a notch with inside dining, meal choices from a rotating menu, and a dedicated service staff that was happy to handle our every need. We did miss the thrice daily walk up the stairs to the restaurant and bar.

Dale Anderson and Kathryn Bowers earned their PADI Advanced Open Water Diver certifications while on the trip. Dale decided to seek the certification after having been denied permission to go on certain dives on a previous diving trip because he lacked the Advanced certification. Kathryn sought the certification to make her more confident in her diving skills and it was obvious that this paid off for her. Congratulations to both of you on the achievement!

Our group had a dive boat almost to ourselves with the addition of three other divers, with whom we quickly came to know both on the dive boat and at the pool for apre' dive happy hour. I am happy to report very healthy coral and 84-86 degree water temperatures for our 26 August to 2 September, 2023 trip. The fish life was not as abundant as some other Caribbean locales but we did have our share of very interesting critters. Many dives where we saw seahorses that were 4-7" tall, frog fish,

the largest hawksbill turtle I have ever seen (estimate shell length of 5 feet), and finished the week with a spotted eagle ray that did a slow arcing glide past our group. The visibilities were mostly good in the 60' or better range.



Our group made a special trip to the dive site "Doug's Dream" that was named in memoriam for Doug Geddes. The site is located between the sites Sponges and The Channel, just east of the channel at Milton Bight and Turquoise Bay Dive & Beach Resort. The mooring ball and line were missing, but we entered for the dive right on the coordinates for the site and half way between two other two dive site markers. We swam eastward toward Sponges and soon were treated to numerous large barrel sponges. Although due to the missing mooring ball and line we did not locate the naming plaque we were satisfied to have visited the location. Back aboard the dive boat we shared memories and stories about our friend Doug Geddes. Carol Call misses her off times dive buddy. We all agreed that as long as each of us lived each day to the fullest and continued to travel and chase adventures that, like Doug Geddes, we were "Chasing the dream."

There will be a slideshow of our Roatan trip pictures at the next club meeting. 🚩

Safety Information Dir.

By Kathryn Bowers



October Safety topic: Safety Stops

Last month I along with 9 other club members traveled to Anthony's Key resort. It was a wonderful trip in every way. I hadn't been to Anthony's Key before so can't really speak to the improvements but the facilities and food were top notch. The diving was good with healthy reefs, something I was very happy to see after all I had heard about the devastation of Florida's reefs due to a marine heat wave in our coastal waters. I also took the opportunity to add Advanced SCUBA Diver to my certification and I'm very glad I did. I feel my dive skills are improved and my confidence has increased. I would wholeheartedly endorse their school for anyone looking to add to their own dive training. The Advanced course is 90% performance so lends itself to being accomplished at the resort without requiring a lot of "study time" or homework while everyone else is enjoying their vacation.

For this month's Safety information article I wanted to offer 2 articles on safety stops, we all do them on every dive but would you believe they weren't always common place? Read on to get a refresher on safety stops, some tips on how to spend the time, and a history of their practice.



What is a safety stop?

Put simply, a safety stop is a pause a scuba diver makes during their return to the surface after a dive.

The pause, or stop, is typically conducted at a depth of 5 meters (18 feet) for between three and five minutes - just before the diver surfaces.

In recreational sport diving, most agencies are aligned in saying that you should complete a safety stop on any dive that is deeper than 18m/60ft; 18m/60ft being the generally accepted depth at which a dive becomes considered 'deep'.



That said, performing a safety stop on every dive, regardless of depth, is extremely good practice and should be encouraged.

Scuba diving is about diving well within, not at, limits.

Manufacturers of dive computers usually program their products to automatically remind a diver to perform a safety stop on any dive that is conducted below a depth of 10 meters. The computer will also monitor depth and count down from three minutes for the time that the diver spends within a suitable no stop depth range.

The purpose of a safety stop is to help maximize the opportunity for the nitrogen that has been absorbed by a diver during their time under water to be slowly and safely released.

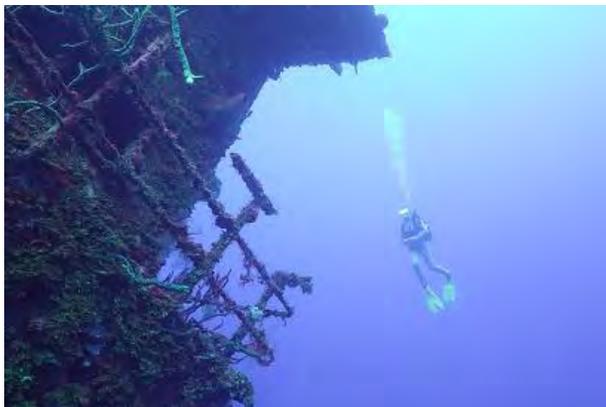
It will not eliminate all nitrogen so the ascent from the safety stop to the surface should still be conducted slowly.

Safety Info Director Cont.

Although the term 'no decompression diving' has been coined over the years it is something of a misnomer. It should more accurately be referred to as 'no decompression stop diving' as **every diver absorbs nitrogen, and therefore needs to decompress, on every dive.**

What is meant by the term 'no decompression diving' is that recreational sport divers limit their exposure to nitrogen absorption (basically the time and depth of their dives) to mean that they can proceed directly to the surface.

There is no need for them to manage their nitrogen exposure through decompression stops.



Contrary to what many think, there is no way in which you can eliminate the risk of decompression sickness if you scuba dive. Performing a safety stop, however, is an excellent way of reducing this risk.

Our advice is **always to perform a safety stop on every dive if possible.**

Is a safety stop mandatory?

In a word, no. There is no obligation or requirement to perform a safety stop - it is optional.

The key difference between recreational sport diving and recreational technical diving is that in sport diving divers can ascend directly to the surface without the need to stop (provided they ascend slowly and do not exceed their maximum ascent rate).

It may be **best practice and is certainly highly recommended** but there is no obligation to perform one.

Indeed there are circumstances where you should not consider completing a safety stop as we cover in our blog '[Can I ignore my safety stop when diving?](#)'.

So you should **always plan and intend to complete a stop at 5m/18ft but be prepared to ignore it if circumstances dictate.**

If you are diving in good, safe conditions then performing a safety stop should absolutely be the norm.

So I just have to hang around for 3 minutes do?

Well, yes - you can if you want - or not!

When shore diving we always look to complete the dive by drifting to the exit point at a depth of 5m/18ft - that way the safety stop is completed as part of the dive when we're still looking at the fish and searching for critters.

The shallows can be a great place to find marine life that is often missed - it was during a safety stop that we first encountered a seahorse. So make the safety stop part of the dive if possible.



If you're diving from a boat then naturally this is less of an option, but it is a great opportunity to practice skills.

Practicing buoyancy control and hovering is an obvious choice but the safety stop also lends itself brilliantly to skills such as mask removal and replacement and alternative air source drills - naturally make sure your buddy is aware beforehand.

Safety Info Director Cont.

You can also use the opportunity to practice sending your DSMB (*Delayed Surface Marker Buoy*) to the surface but we recommend that the boat captain is aware just so that they understand it's a training drill.

Dive Bunnies Blog Post [Dive Bunnies What is a safety stop in diving? \(dive-bunnies.co.uk\)](http://dive-bunnies.co.uk)

When should I skip my safety stop?

A safety stop is about reducing the risk of decompression sickness.

It does nothing to reduce other potential risks and that is the trick - recognizing when other risks have exceeded the decompression concern.

When you need to surface (either planned or otherwise) consider whether a safety stop is appropriate and sensible. In the vast majority of situations it will be but there are occasions when it's not.

If, for example, the surface conditions have changed and you're facing significant swell that means your safety stop would be conducted in something of a washing machine, consider simply surfacing.

Occasions on which we have elected to not complete a safety stop are:

Jelly Fish: Following a dive in the Canary Islands our group was surfacing and had been joined by a smack of jellyfish (yes that is the collective noun - we checked!). The smack was floating around between the surface and around 8m/25ft. We didn't know if they were harmful but we called off the safety stop and proceeded directly to the boat.

Lightning: This was again in the Canary Islands. A storm developed whilst diving and we could see the lightning lighting up the dive site (really impressive to see!). The dive boat had also signaled, 'Abort dive'. It's worth considering that a lightning strike can penetrate up to 6m/20ft in salt water so not somewhere you want to be hanging around.

Illness: We had a diver who had vomited through his regulator underwater. He was

uncomfortable enough for us to decide that we needed to proceed directly to the surface.

Injury: A diver had suffered what turned out to be a minor head injury whilst not concentrating passing into a wreck. Although not serious the cut on his head was sufficient for us to decide we needed to get back to the surface.

The above are simply situations where Dive Bunnies guides have decided to abort the safety stop - it is not exhaustive and we would add things such as **out of air** and **diver lost** situations would also necessitate not completing a safety stop.

Perversely the most serious incident that we have ever been involved with under the water resulted in a decision to complete the safety stop. Due to the likelihood of us being on the surface for some time prior to being picked up we did decide that the safety stop needed to be completed to minimize the risk of decompression sickness.

So I should always plan to complete a safety stop?

Yes - you should always plan to complete one.



It is better to plan on a safety stop and not need one rather than need a safety stop and not having planned for one. This is also why it is so important that recreational sport divers observe there no decompression limits.

We have encountered divers who think it is acceptable to routinely breach their NDL and incur mandatory longer 'safety stops'.

Safety Info Director Cont.

At the point a safety stop becomes mandatory it becomes a decompression stop.

Unless you have completed initial technical training you will not be qualified to manage decompression obligations and it is extremely likely that your insurance will be negated in the event that you make a habit of breaching no decompression limits.

Any recreational sport diver who thinks that 'going a bit too deep for a bit too long' is fine and ends up with an extended safety stop is completely ignoring the fact that someone may need urgent help.

Technical divers are trained to deal with emergencies under the water. Recreational sport divers are trained to surface as soon as possible to deal with emergencies at the surface.



So everybody in a group has to dive in a manner that means safety stops can be sacrificed.

What about decompression sickness?

We all know that diving is one of those activities that are as safe or as dangerous as the individual involved wants to make it.

Although most of us elect to dive in a way that makes scuba extremely safe and enjoyable, there is a level of risk that simply cannot be completely removed.

Decompression sickness (DCS) is one of those. **The only way to guarantee you will never suffer a DCS hit as a scuba diver is to never dive.**

It's no different from driving. You can keep to the speed limit, ensure your car is properly serviced, enable all the safety features and wear a seatbelt - but you can't eliminate the risk of being involved in an accident.

Performing a safety stop is no different. It absolutely reduces the risk of suffering a decompression incident and is something that you should plan and expect to do. But it only deals with the decompression risk - there are occasionally other risks that come to the fore.

This is why diving sensibly and within your no decompression limits is so vital as it ensures you can ascend directly to the surface if someone in your group needs attention. Dive Bunnies Blog [Dive Bunnies Can I ignore my safety stop when diving? \(dive-bunnies.co.uk\)](http://dive-bunnies.co.uk)



Today, safety stops are a common practice. Every diver knows that before ascending, one should stop at 5 meters / 15 feet for three minutes to help off-gas the nitrogen absorbed while diving. The purpose of the safety stop is to unload nitrogen, however it's intended to give your body time to release that nitrogen slowly. As opposed to forcing the nitrogen out too quickly which can create bubbles and lead to decompression sickness. The safety stop also reminds divers to look out for obstacles that may be in the way of their ascent.

It wasn't that long ago that safety stops were not common practice. Here's a look at the evolution of safety stops and how the current recommendations came to be.

1970s

Many of the practices that recreational divers use today came from military divers.

Safety Info Director Cont.

The ascent rate of 18 meters / 60 feet per minute began with the US Navy as a compromise between free swimming combat divers and the needs of hardhat commercial-type diving. More recently, the Navy revised it to a slower 10 meters/ 30 feet per minute. Andrew Pilmanis conducted one of the first studies on safety stops in 1974, examining ascent rates and bubble formation in divers.

1980s

The *PADI Open Water Manual* recommended safety stops in the 1984 edition. The 1988 release of the *Recreational Dive Planner* introduced safety stops to a wider audience. This step, along with PADI's "S.A.F.E. Diver" campaign, was a big help in educating divers. Slowly Ascend from Every Dive became an acronym dive instructors passed along to new students.



1990s

In 1994, graduate student Donna Uguccioni wrote her master's thesis on safety stops that expanded on the work of Pilmanis from the 1970s. Her study used Doppler tests to determine that divers who practice safety stops have less bubble formation in their bloodstreams than those who don't. All of this,

combined with the popularity of dive computers, continued awareness of the importance of safety stops.



2000s

Today, it is well-known that safety stops are beneficial for all divers. Most divers wouldn't dream of not doing a safety stop. Dive computers now remind divers to do a safety stop. This simple practice has improved dive safety in many ways. Now that it is considered rudimentary, it is surprising to realize it wasn't common practice 30 years ago.

PADI Blog Post [History of the Safety Stop \(padi.com\)](https://padi.com/history-of-the-safety-stop) The 11th and 12th members on the Roatan trip are new members from the trip. More about them in a future Undercurrents. 🚩

Bluegrass Dive Club 2023 Calendar

October

24, Tuesday E.C. Meeting

November

14, Tuesday Club Meeting (Elections)

28, Tuesday E.C. Meeting

December

9, Saturday Christmas Party