

### Creature from the Black Lagoon is a Fellow of the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences

**Ricou Browning** (1930-2023), better known as "The Creature from the Black Lagoon," began his underwater odyssey at an early age. Born in Jensen Beach, Florida, on



the Atlantic, he appeared in Grantland Rice underwater films as a pre-teen. As a teenager at Wakulla Springs, Ricou was a lifeguard and put on underwater shows for the glass bottom boat tours at

which time he helped develop hose breathing, prior to the invention of scuba gear.



1954 movie poster



## OK, Dippers ... it's time for the Second, Second Saturday Scuba Dive ... on Sunday!

These Dippers finally got in the water for the February 8th, Second Saturday Scuba (S3) Dive . . . on Sunday, February 16th. Due to rough 20-30 foot swells, on the 8th, it was suggested a hot toddy and a movie by the fireplace. So the February 8th dive was postponed until Saturday, the 15th.

As folks monitored the conditions, it was determined that Mother Nature wasn't having any of it. She wasn't a happy camper and continued to stir up the ocean. But, the forecasts started to improve, and the group decided to go for the S3 Dive on Sunday, the 16th.

Showing up for the dive included, above from left, Chris Ekberg, Sim Upadhyayula, Barbara Davis, Eva Alexander and Grace Chi.

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While still in high school, Ricou helped clear and develop Weeki-Wachee Springs, later becoming underwater show producer and performer; again utilizing his hose breathing techniques. Following his performances in three "Creature" films, Ricou joined Ivan Tors Films as Second Unit Director and President of the Underwater Studios in Nassau, Bahamas, for such projects as "Aquanauts" and "Sea Hunt."

Later he became President of Ivan Tors Studios in North Miami. Considered the "Oscar" of diving, the NOGI Awards are presented annually by the Academy of Underwater Arts and Sciences (AUAS), recognizing pioneers and leaders who have had a significant impact on the exploration, enjoyment, safety, and preservation of the underwater world.

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER



## Hi All!

Conditions have been variable so far this year, but we've had some good dives in spite of the sometimes challenging conditions. Let's keep it up! We have a number of prospective members who will be looking to dive with us in the coming months. Come and dive with the club on our regularly scheduled S3 dives and makeup dives and consider signing up to coordinate a dive yourself!

We recently heard some good news about the status of the Giant Giant Kelp Restoration Project (G2KR). Starting in the Spring of 2025, trained recreational divers will be able to collect red urchins in a much larger area near Tankers Reef and commercial divers will be able to collect purple urchins. You can read the Iconic Kelp Action Plan here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/19uYVha8qeN6f5raEskcpR3N9-4rVWQqv/view.

There are a number of ways people can volunteer for the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary (MBNMS). Here's a link for more information: https://montereybay.noaa.gov/getinvolved/volunteer/welcome.html.

I've participated in Snapshot day for the last couple of years, and it's lots of fun. Volunteers go out and test water quality throughout the sanctuary's watersheds one day each spring. This year it will be held on July 12th. Check out the opportunities to protect our sanctuary!

Stay safe and Let's go diving! - Barbara

## Fisherman's Illegal Scheme Exposed

### KRON4 San Francisco

A commercial trawl boat owner was found with over 2,000 pounds of

unlawfully caught fish, some of which were hidden behind a false wall of the vessel.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife surveilled the fisherman after he was seen unloading

burlap sacks off a boat and into a vehicle. He was then followed to a local restaurant, where he attempted to hide the fish and flee the scene. Among the fish in his possession were halibut, sole, sand dabs, and filleted salmon, none of which had been declared as commercial catch.

Upon further investigation, officials found the false wall on the trawler, which is where more salmon fillets were discovered. In addition, the trawler contained 2,365 pounds of halibut, which was later sold by CDFW. The funds raised were donated to the Fish and Game Preservation Fund. Low salmon stocks have resulted in the fish's being put on a banned list since 2023 to help restore the population. The Pacific Fishery Management Council reported in February that only 6,100 fall-run Chinook salmon returned to

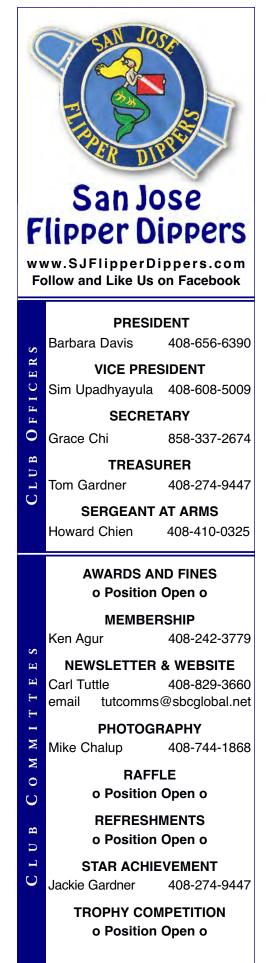


spawn in the upper Sacramento River in 2023, a serious decline from the 175,000 average between 1996 and 2005.

The publication noted salmon have been negatively affected by

low water levels following drought conditions. Meanwhile, in addition to exacerbating the dry season, the warming climate has increased water temperatures, affecting salmon's natural habitat and reducing food sources for young salmon in the Pacific Ocean.

A formal complaint in the case was submitted to the San Francisco District Attorney's Office, CDFW said. Illegal river diversions are also an issue, further decreasing vital water supplies that healthy salmon need. In October, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed into law Assembly Bill 460, which increased fines for anyone caught engaging in this activity.



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We'll be having our in-person General Meeting this month. If you come please bring a refreshment to share! We'll have a live Skype connection for those who still prefer to meet virtually.

### Membership

Ken Agur

We're a dive club and we're diving! If you're looking for a dive buddy look no further. We offer all certified divers great dives, great fun and great friends! See the Club's website for more information on becoming a member (Membership Requirements). We'd love for you to join us!

Photo: *Eva Alexander* presents *Ken Agur* the club patch for his new jacket! How long did he wait for this moment?

Happy Birthday! These Dippers are completing another trip around the Sun this month: *Howard Chien, Carri Edger* and *Don Mercado*. ♥



continued from front page

The group did 2 dives at MacAbee, where they found the pinnacle on the first dive. Vis was around ten feet, lots of nudibranchs and big fish were seen.

Chris was trying out a new drysuit for the first time, and it leaked on the first dive. He tried to do the second dive, but the leak was too much, so he bailed.

Eva had a harbor seal come and play with her fins on the second dive. Could this be the same seal that had a close interaction with Grace during Monastery dives?

Barbara reported that she saw a nudibranch she hadn't seen before and couldn't identify it. It looked like a type of flatworm and it was mostly blue.

After the dives. Barbara recommended to Grace, Sim and Eva go to a restaurant called Noodle Bar, in Marina, after dropping tanks off at a Aquarius to get filled. Everyone had nice warming bowls of soup. A couple of divers ordered water with no ice and commented that they had been diving and were cold. The waitress was very concerned and asked if we wanted hot tea!

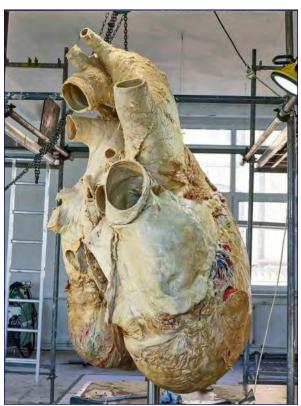
So another successful adventure. Check out the calendar for this month's S3 dive on March 8. 📀

# **Fun Facts**

This is the heart of a Blue whale. Weighing in excess of 1,300 lbs (±600 kg), it is the size of a small car. The gigantic heart beats 8-10 times per minute, and each heartbeat can be heard from over 2 miles (3.2 km) away. (Photo: Royal Ontario Museum.)



These are baby stingrays. Some would say they look like aliens stuck inside ravioli.



Pufferfish release a toxin when they puff out that is meant to impair the attacker so they can safely escape. Ironically, this doesn't work on dolphins in the same way, it actually gets them high. So they purposely inflate them and pass them around to their dolphin friends for fun! ◆



## Octopus Arms Controlled by a Nervous System

### Michelle Starr

Octopuses tend to keep secrets, but we've just learned how they achieve their extraordinary dexterity.

The fine control these almost-alien

animals have over each of their eight arms is at least partially down to the segmentation of the nervous system circuitry that governs it. This discovery by researchers at the University of Chicago helps us understand the strange way cephalopods navigate the world. and may even inform future designs for soft robots. "If you're going to have a nervous system that's controlling such dynamic movement, that's

topus (Octopus bimaculoides) under the microscope, they found something that they had never seen before. Along the axial nerve cord, the neuronal cells are packed into segments, separated by gaps called septa, rich with connective tissue, where the nerves and veins exit to connect to muscles nearby.

Following these connections, the



Octopus bimaculoides, the California two-spot octopus. (Cassady Olson)

a good way to set it up," says neurobiologist Clifton Ragsdale. "We think it's a feature that specifically evolved in softbodied cephalopods with suckers to carry out these worm-like movements."

The octopus nervous system is among the most unusual on Earth. Unlike in other intelligent animals, it's highly distributed, with a significant proportion of its 500 million-odd neurons spread throughout the eight arms. In fact, more neurons reside in the arms than in the octopus's head.

Octopus Arms Have Even Weirder Nervous Systems Than We Thought. Their arms are capable of making decisions independently and can even continue to react to stimuli after being severed. Each has more degrees of freedom than we can count, and any of its hundreds of suckers, able to "taste" the chemistry of the octopus's environment, is able to change shape independently.

The neurons in the octopus's arms are concentrated along an axial nerve cord that undulates down the length of each arm, with nodes centered around each of the suckers. It seems complex and focused, and a team led by neuroscientist Cassady Olsen wanted to study it in detail to see if they could learn more about how it functions.

When they put longitudinal slices of arm from the California two-spot oc-

researchers found that nerves from multiple segments connect to different muscle regions –

suggesting that segments the work together to control the muscles with a high degree of precision. They found that the nerves for the suckers also connect via the septa, creating a sort of nervous spatial map of the suckers, and allowing for the fine, individual control of each one as the octopus uses them to sense its environment through touch-tasting.

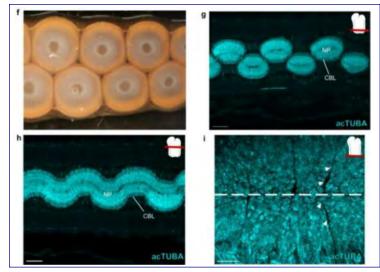
"Thinking about this from a modeling perspec-

tive, the best way to set up a control system for this very long, flexible arm would be to divide it into segments," Olson says. "There has to be some sort of communication between the segments, which you can imagine would help smooth out the movements." The next step was to try to figure out the relationship between the segmentation of the axial nerve cord and its function by looking for similar architecture in another group of cephalopods: squids.

These animals diverged from octopuses around 270 million years ago, and their appendage arrangement is slightly different. Squids have eight sucker-lined arms too, but also two tentacles that have no suckers along the stalk, with suckers on the clubs at the end. Squids and octopuses use their limbs differently: octopuses to explore, move across the seafloor, and manipulate objects, while squids use theirs in open water to grab and hold prey.

The researchers found that the architecture of the axial nerve cord in the longfin inshore squid (Doryteuthis pealeii) is quite different from that of octopuses. In addition, there was no segmentation in the suckerless stalks of the tentacles – but nerve segmentation was found in the suckered clubs.

The finding suggests that a segmented nervous system is related to the control of suckered appendages, and is crucial to fine, dextrous control. Squids probably don't need as many segments because they don't use their suckers for exploration the way octopuses do. "Organisms with these sucker-laden appendages that have worm-like movements need the right kind of nervous system," Ragsdale says. "Different



The architecture of the octopus nervous system, showing (f) the arm, (g) the nerves of the suckers, (h) the axial nerve cord and (i) the neuronal segmentation. (Olson et al., Nat. Commun., 2025)

cephalopods have come up with a segmental structure, the details of which vary according to the demands of their environments and the pressures of hundreds of millions of years of evolution." The research has been published in *Nature Communications*.

## Update on California Sport Fishing Regulations

CenCal Odyssey Newsletter

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has updated its California Ocean Sport Fishing Regulations guide (PDF), and encourages anglers and all outdoor enthusiasts coast-wide to download and review the January 22, 2025 version.

The updated guide is now available on the CDFW Fishing Regulations web page, in the CDFW License App, and on the CDFW Marine Region's comprehensive Ocean Sport Fishing web page. Regulation changes and updates include the following:

• When filleted at sea, lingcod fillets must retain all of the skin on each fillet (not just a small patch of skin). (CCR T14 §27.65(b)(3))

• When filleted at sea, California scorpionfish (sculpin) fillets can be of any size, and must retain all of the skin on each fillet (not just a small patch of skin). (CCR T14 §27.65(b)(9))

• When filleted at sea, kelp greenling and rock greenling fillets must retain all of the skin on each fillet. (CCR T14 §27.65(b)(8))

• The minimum size limits for cabezon, California scorpionfish (sculpin), kelp greenling, and rock greenling have been eliminated. There are no minimum size limits for these species. (CCR T14 §28.28(c), §28.29(c), and §28.54(c))

The regulation summary tables begin on page 45 in the guide.  $\diamondsuit$ 

## California Diving & Aquatic Studies Scholarship

CenCal Odyssey Newsletter

To promote a better understanding of the environment we so love to explore, the Central California Council of Diving Clubs, CenCal, is offering our annual California Diving & Aquatic Studies Scholarship.

Once again, for 2025, we are planning to award \$2,000 to support a student engaging in studies of underwater habitats. Aquatic related programs in the disciplines of biology, physical sciences, marine education, maritime archaeology, historical and social aspects of marine resources or the science of diving are relevant for consideration.

We must, however, enter a caveat that due to limited funding: Should

more than one outstanding candidate be identified we would have to divide the \$2,000 award between them. More information is on the CenCal website: www.cencal.org

### Dive Boats' Propellers Are Dangerous Undercurrent

Stay away if the engine is running. In yet another Cozumel dive boat propeller accident, five people, including four tourists, were injured by their boat propeller while on a February 2 snorkeling adventure. They were attempting to board their catamaran, *Capitano Primero*, when their legs hit the churning propeller. All were transferred to a local hospital with injuries that authorities said were "not life-threatening," and nobody was in danger of amputation. *Riviera Maya News*.

## **Pioneer Diver Passes**

At the age of 88, *Hal Watts* has passed. Watts,

who became "Mr known as Scuba." is also associated with coining the bestknown saying in the sport: "Plan your dive – dive your plan." This, he savs. was simply adapted from the motto he had heard as a young private pilot: "Plan your flight – fly vour plan."

When he had

started in diving it was normal for the divers to take to the water without exchanging any words about what they intended to do while under water, he once said.

Watts was born on 10 June, 1935 and discovered scuba diving 20 years later while working for his master's degree at John Marshall Law School in Atlanta, Georgia. He didn't follow up on that single dive until six years later, by which time he had moved to Orlando, Florida. Noticing a small ad for used scuba gear in a newspaper in 1961, he decided on a whim to buy it.

The seller suggested that Watts read the US Navy Diving Manual before meeting him at a hotel swimming pool for a practical demonstration of the equipment. His first open-water dive using the kit was to a depth of about 50 feet on 22 February, 1962 in Crystal River, where he reported being spooked by a manatee, but by that time he was hooked on this new sport.

Later that same year he set up his shop Florida Diver's Supply (FDS), from where he started training cavedivers and, from 1963, issuing the first FDS Cave Diver certification cards. The year he set up the school he was also offered the post of training director and first open-water instructor for the National Association of Skin Diving Schools (NASDS) by its founder John Gaffney, becoming NASDS's sole trainer of cave-divers.

Watts carried out what he said was his first deep dive, to 246 feet. Over the following years his speciality dive-club the Forty Fathom Scubapros would make a great many dives to that depth and beyond on air in Florida. In 1967 Watts set an official world record for deep air dives after reaching a depth of 390 feet, and in 1970 set a cave

year

first

manual

published

depth record of

416 feet. That

he

extended range

deep diving, and

Ned DeLoach to

produce the film

Deep Diving in

Wakulla Springs."

SSI Platinum Pro

Award recipient

Watts was an

commissioned

instructor

also

the

for



with more than 10,000 dives under his belt when he retired from diving.

Founder of the Professional Scuba Association International, he held the world record for a deep air cave dive. He trained six other world record deep air divers, including his daughter, Scarlett Watts, who in 1999 established a women's world record deep air dive to 425 feet.

Hal was among the first recreational divers to dive on the *Monitor*, the civil war ironclad, off Cape Hatteras, NC.

He is credited with the idea of the octopus regulator, which he developed with Scubapro and Sportsways.

## "Black Demon" Mysteriously Rises to Ocean's Surface

Researchers believe they've recorded potentially the firstever sighting of an adult abyssal fish in broad daylight. The researchers were working on a shark research campaign for the NGO Condrik and were surprised by an unexpected visitor off the coast of Tenerife, sparking excitement from marine biologists around the world.

Previous sightings of the "black demon" have been limited to submarine images, dead individuals or larvae. Usually found at depths of between 300 meters (980 ft) and

2,000 meters (8,200 ft), an adult abyssal humpback anglerfish or Melanocetus johnsonii was seen near the surface in what might be the first-ever sighting of the species in broad daylight.

Just 2 kilometers off the coast of Tenerife, the underwater photographer David Jara Boguñá first spotted the otherworldly deep-sea fish. Researchers haven't determined why this fish showed up near the surface, but some scientists speculate that some individuals of the species sometimes rise up to the



surface during the El Niño weather event which reduces the amount of cold water upwelling off the coast of North America.

Marine biologist Laia Valor who was also part of the shark expedition, told the EFE news agency: "We were returning to port when I saw something black in the water that didn't look like plastic or debris. It seemed unusual. We spent a couple of hours with it. It was in poor condition and only survived for a few hours."

She added: "There could be thousands of reasons why it was there. We simply don't know. It's an extremely rare and isolated sighting. While we can't say it never happens, if it were more common, we would see it more frequently. This could very well be the first time it has ever been filmed in these conditions."

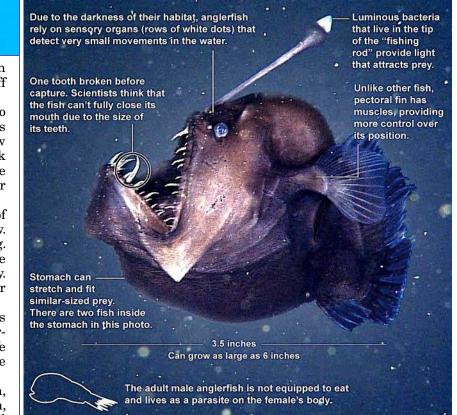
After the fish passed away, the researchers brought it to the Museum of Nature and Archaeology (MUNA) in Santa Cruz de Tenerife where the body will be studied further to advance knowledge about this elusive species.

Despite a large mouth full of sharp teeth, the humpback anglerfish sports a bacteria-laden, bioluminescent lure on its head to attract and



catch prey in the dark realms it lives in.

In spite of their fearsome appearance, they are much smaller than many assume. Females can grow up to about 18 centimeters (7 inches), while males are significantly smaller, reaching only around 3 centimeters (1.2 inches). This unexpected encounter provided a rare glimpse at a species that is seldom seen outside its deep-sea environment.



# DIVE & ACTIVITY CALENDAR

## Sim Upadhyayula

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### SATURDAY, MARCH 1 NO SCHEDULED DIVE

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5 BUSINESS MEETING: 7:30pm

The meeting will be held **virtually via Skype**. All members are invited to attend. Please email *Carl Tuttle* if you need the link to join. Bring your own food, drinks, and internet connection and we'll discuss ideas for upcoming dives and events.

### SATURDAY, MARCH 8 SECOND SATURDAY SCUBA (S3) BEACH DIVE: LOCATION TBD

Coordinator: *Sim Upadhyayula*, (email: toytacous@yahoo.com or text/phone: 408-608-5009). Join the Flipper Dippers for this month's Second Saturday Scuba! Be sure to watch your email for an update on a location and coordinator.

### SATURDAY, MARCH 15 NO SCHEDULED DIVE

## **GENERAL MEETING** WEDNESDAY, MAR 19

The **in-person General Meeting** will be held at **7:30 PM** at the Knights of Columbus Santa Maria Hall 2211 Shamrock Dr., Campbell. The **virtual meeting** will continue to be hosted via Skype.

Please contact *Carl Tuttle* for more details on the in-person meeting or a link to the virtual Skype meeting.

# Celebrate 60 Years of the San Jose Flipper Dippers!

Entertainment: • Social Hour • Sign Up for Dives

### SATURDAY, MARCH 22 NO SCHEDULED DIVE

### SATURDAY, MARCH 29 BEACH DIVE: LOCATION TBD

Are YOU interested is coordinating? Pick your favorite spot and contact *Sim Upadhyayula*. (email: toytacous@yahoo.com or text/phone: 408-608-5009) and let him know your plans.

UPCOMING IN APRIL 01 Pt. Lobos Reservations for May 17 02 Business Meeting 12 Second Saturday SCUBA U/W Easter Egg Hunt

16 General Meeting - SJFD 61 Years Old



## Memorial Day & Labor Day Camping Updates

Camping reservations for Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends is now officially underway.

The State is updating the restrooms at Henry Cowell Redwoods Park and canceled Dippers' reservations for the **Memorial Day** week. So those Dippers jumped online and scored 4 campsites at **Brannan Island State Recreation Area** from May 22–26. It's located in the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta on Highway 160 near the town of Rio Vista. The island is about 1-1/2 hour drive from San Jose (not during afternoon commute times!). There's bike riding, hiking, kayaking, wine tasting and more! As the date gets closer, we'll put additional information in the newsletter and send out emails to see who is interested in joining the group.

For Labor Day week, Dippers have scored campsites at Van Damme State Park from Aug 25–Sept 1. The park is south of the town of Mendocino. There's diving, bike riding, hiking, kayaking and more! As the date gets closer, we'll put additional information in the newsletter and send out email reminders.

There's always camping space to share so keep an eye out if you're interested in participating in some great outdoor fun! Stay Tuned.

## Pt. Lobos Dive Reservations on April 1st for May 17 - No Fool'n

We're going diving at Pt. Lobos! If you want to go, you'll need to get online to make a reservation on Tuesday April 1st. The system opens up at 8 AM in the morning – but check on Monday evening as sometimes they open early. We'll send out an email listing who has a reservation and who has space for a buddy.

So here's the drill:

- On Tuesday, April 1st, go to the Point Lobos Scuba Site:
- https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page\_id=28353
- Click on the month of May and then scroll down to May 17th.
- Sign up as a buddy team.

You'll be asked for the agency that issued your c-card and its number. If you don't have your buddy's c-card number, or a buddy, just write in TBD. We can always find somebody who wants to go diving at Pt Lobos.

Be sure to do this early as the weekend park reservations fill up fast. The charge for diving is \$30 (+ Processing Fee). So work out your buddy teams, set a reminder on your calendar, wake up early on April 1st to make your reservation, and we'll see you in the water.

**Carl Tuttle**, (408-829-3660, email: tutcomms@sbcglobal.net) is coordinating so be sure to let him know if you made a reservation. We'll have a list of those with a reservation to create teams of 2 divers. Kayaks are optional and a reservation is not required but a \$10 fee will be requested at the park kiosk.

NOTE: All certified divers are encouraged to attend San Jose Flipper Dippers' dives. Non-Club members will be required to show proof of certification to the dive coordinator prior to entering the water with our group. Please sign up for dives at the General Meeting or call the coordinator. This is needed in case of cancelation or changes.



San Jose Flípper Díppers c/o 1108 Sunset Landing Río Vista, CA 94571-5148

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#### 2025 COMING EVENTS Are you looking for someone to dive with? March 5 **Business Meeting** March 8 Second Saturday SCUBA March 19 **General Meeting** The San Jose Flipper Dippers Dive Club is a great way to meet divers who are April 1 Pt. Lobos Reservations for May 17 always having fun times. Come join us! **April 2 Business Meeting** April 12 Second Saturday SCUBA -00000 **U/W Easter Egg Hunt April 16** General Meeting -SJFD 61 Years Old Apr 25-May 7 **Bonaire Dive Trip - Sold Out** May 7 **Business Meeting May 10** Second Saturday SCUBA **May 17 Pt. Lobos Dive May 21** General Meeting Watch This Space - Much More To Come! See the Club's Website for the full Calendar www.SJFlipperDippers.com