

The Snorkel Keeper

the official newsletter of the

Rochester Scuba & Snorkel Club

Education, Experience, Community

Rochester, Minnesota USA

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Congratulations

Josh Fulton	Ice Diver
Mark Murch	Ice Diver

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President's Corner

By Ron Nelson

Hi gang, looking forward to another year for the dive club. We have some exciting new ideas for the club, from different ideas for meeting presentations to a few good dive ideas. If anyone has some ideas for the club I sure would like to hear from you. Better yet, I'd love to see you at the meetings. Almost all of the ideas are recreational diving with the passability of a summer party to go with Pirates Up the Wazee.

Just Wacky

Christopher Columbus is credited with being the first European to see the Virgin Islands. He named the islands 'Once Mil Virgenes' ('Eleven Thousand Virgins') in honor of the feast day of Saint Ursula and the 11,000 virgins who were martyred with her.

RMS Rhone

By John Westgard

For the first time in my diving life, I was able to say I had achieved THE most spectacular dive(s) to date. On Thursday, February 10th my wife Paige and I hopped on board the Hey Now – a 26' Norman dive boat run by Low Key Watersports in St. John. We spent the big \$\$, had our passports at the ready, loaded on the dive gear (and my ever present Sea Bands) and with 6 others headed out towards the British Virgin Island of Tortola to “check in” with the customs station in Soper’s Hole – a pretty famous bay on the island.. The reason it is famous: BlackBeard – the real Pirate! He loved that bay due to it’s layout, location, and ability to sail out and capture other ships at a moments notice.

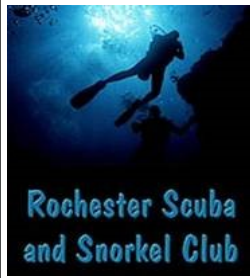
Upcoming Events

Feb 18-20 – Our World Underwater Donald E. Stephens Convention Center, Rosemont, IL

Feb 26 - Upper Midwest Scuba and Adventure Travel Show - Northland Inn

March 5-11 – Travel with MDC Sports to the Bahamas aboard Blackbeard's Cruises

March 15 – Scuba Club Meeting – Clarrion Inn

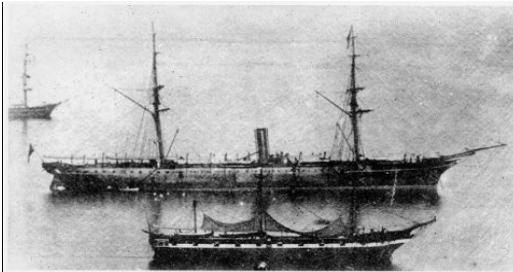


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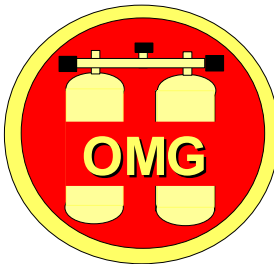
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Let me back out of the bay a moment. The dive trip was to the R.M.S. Rhone which lays to rest at the bottom of the ocean. The *RMS Rhone* was a royal mail steam packet ship that transported cargo between England, Central and

South America, and the Caribbean. She was one of the first iron hulled ships, powered by both sail and steam. Built in 1865 at the Millwall Ironworks facility on the Isle of Dogs, London. (This is the same company that built another real famous shipwreck – can you name it?) She measured in at 310 feet long and had two masts with a 40-foot beam. Her propeller was the second bronze propeller ever built, and she was one of two ships deemed unsinkable by the British Royal Navy. (also a hint for the name of that other real famous wreck I mentioned...guess it's bad luck to be so confident) All this background info can be found at this web-link: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RMS_Rhone

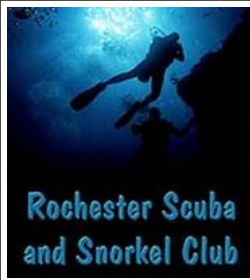


We arrived in the bay, for about a :20 wait for the crewmember of the Hey Now to present our passports. During this time, our friend, longtime resident of St. John and one heck of a great photographer – Steve Simonsen, presented us with an in-depth dive briefing of what we would soon be seeing first hand. The briefing started with a short history lesson of the ship, the area, and the events that transpired resulting in the sinking of the Rhone and the death of all but 6 crew. An amazing story, so click or copy & paste the above link and read for yourself! Steve is very passionate about this wreck, and post-dive I now know why. Plus it was cool to learn about the real Blackbeard Pirate and see where he used to hang out. Btw...he was captured in the Carolinas, beheaded and the head stuffed in a basket at the end of a pier as a warning to other would-be pirates. You can look that story up on your own...this is about the Rhone!



Back underway from Soper's Hole and it was very rough and wet 45-minute ride past Tortola and to the dive site at Salt Island. The ride was not as bad as I thought it would be (for those that know me I get seasick pretty easy) as I rode at the top of the boat next to the Captain. Lots of





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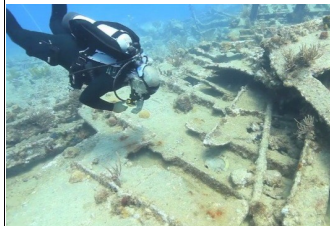
Have you been on a scuba diving trip? Send a story to the editor for inclusion in the next Scuba Club Newsletter !!!

salt spray up and over the boat and in my face, but better than heaving below! Once at the dive site, we quickly suited and geared up while Missy (Instructor/Guide/Crew Member) gave a quick “how we’re going to do this” type of instruction for in & out of the water and the wreck itself.

Dive 1 was the front half of the wreck, with some fairly open swim thru areas and despite the 150-plus years at the bottom of the ocean... very recognizable as what it was. I did feel a bit of anxiety at the start of the dive – guess the stress of the ride over didn’t help out much. Quickly realized this was going to be a great dive, all gear at 100% and I

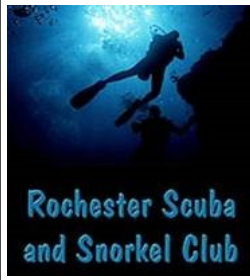


was good to go! Followed the mooring line down to the bottom which got us out of the mild current, and away we went to see history. This was my first real shipwreck in Salt Water. I had been on the wrecks in Superior, but this was different. No silt for one thing, and actual living things everywhere too. The Rhone is one big ship! Peaked into some port holes and saw lots of cool stuff. Even a nurse shark was hanging out under a debris ledge!



Dive 1 on my computer showed temps at surface and depth from 81 – 79 degrees. Started the dive at 9:55am, total of only :35 minutes and a max depth of 74'. Covered mostly the Bow Section. There was a bit of a current once you raised above the wreck itself, and we had to use the

mooring line to ascend to the boat, which is tied off to it. No drift diving! We took just over an hour for a surface interval just around the corner where the crew whipped up for sandwiches, chips, salsa, candy bars and pop or water – perfect! Forget that healthy fruits and stuff – give me crap and I’ll keep it down easier! Fun interval as Steve continued with tales of island life, more history lessons and stories of locals and legends. Sure glad we’re friends as I can see this relationship being priceless!



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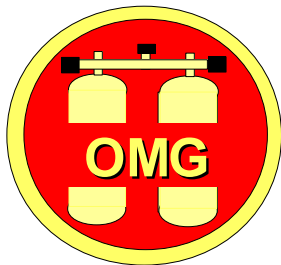
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Back around the point to the dive site, and onto the area of the mi/back section of the wreck. This part was the main area that got smashed into the point and busted apart, so it's pretty spread out and splayed open. Similar to the Hesper, but way cooler! This is the part of the wreck where there are some interesting "things" still visible...like a silver spoon "welded by time" to the ship. Dive 2 is where we encountered the propeller. Massive! At one point we went under the screw shaft, and between the propeller blades. Have never done that before. One cool thing was a port hole with the glass still in it. Rumor/legend/superstition says it was she one of the 6 survivors was at, so people rub the brass and glass for good luck and an eventual return to the site. Steve is starting a documentary about the Rhone, and that day was his first at shooting it in HD video. He threw together a cool little 1-minute spoofer for me – again...hit the link and wait for it to load – kinda funny!

<http://s5.photobucket.com/albums/y15...t=RMSRhone.mp4>



Dive 2 – very relaxing dive and was able to take time to look closely at the wreck. Entered the water at 11:29am for :46 minutes bottom time and a max depth of 65'. Same water temp and by the way – viz good that day and nearly 90 feet.

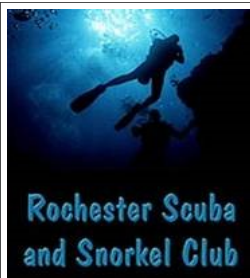


Back on board and we started the

hour-long trip back to the U.S. Virgin islands and to customs in St. John. The whole customs routine was quite silly actually – guess the British Government just wanted a way to collect \$25 from every poor schmuck that wanted to dive there! The ride back was great as we were not fighting the wind at all. Sunny and beautiful, plus the boat has a nice stereo system and we had tunes cranked! We easily cleared customs in St. John, pulled into Cruz bay and unloaded. Paige and I were back to the villa by 2:30 and ready for a nap! Good day all in all. Kinda pricey, but not your every day trip! This is a dive sight I plan on visiting more, and hopefully I can worm my way into Steve's documentary...that would be cool!



Safe diving everyone and come see us on St. John sometime!



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Featured Fish – Zebra Fish

The zebrafish, *Danio Rerio*, is a tropical freshwater fish in the minnow family. The zebrafish is native to the streams in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar in the southeastern Himalayans.



The fish is named for five uniformed horizontal blue stripes on the side of the body. The zebrafish can grow to 2.5 inches and is a popular aquarium fish. They are hardy and considered good for beginners. Zebrafish have the ability to regenerate fins, skin, the heart and can regenerate the brain while in the larval stages. The heart muscle regeneration does not make use of stem cells. Instead mature heart muscle cells regress to a stem cell like state and redifferentiate. The British Heart Foundation has published intentions to study the application of this ability to humans.

Featured Recipe – Zebra Cookies

Ingredients

2 C. Granulated sugar
1/2 C. Vegetable Oil
2 tsp Vanilla
4 oz unsweetened baking chocolate (melted and cooled)
4 Eggs
2 C. flour
2 tsp. Baking Powder
1/2 tsp. Salt
1 C. powdered Sugar
About 6 dozen Hershey Hugs

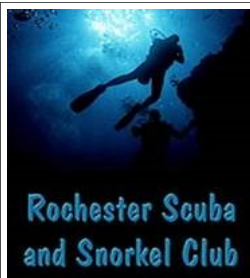
Directions

In large bowl, mix granulated sugar, oil, vanilla and chocolate. Mix in eggs, one at a time. Stir in Flour, baking powder and salt. Cover and refrigerate at least 3 hours. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Grease cookie sheet. Shape dough into 1-inch balls. Roll in powdered sugar. Place about 2 inches apart on cookie sheet. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until almost no indentation remains when touched. Immediately press 1 Hershey's Hug in center of each cookie. Remove from cookie sheet. Cool completely on wire rack.



Makes about 6 dozen





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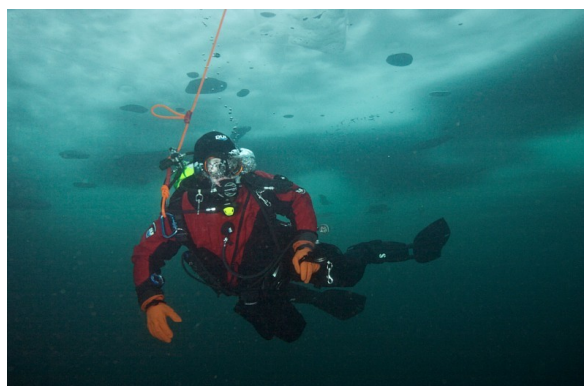
Have any photography related questions? Send them to Roger to be discussed in a future article.

Photo Critique of the Month

text and photo by Roger Southwick

Pro photographers use a secret and powerful tool: the trash bin. Learning to identify a bad photo is a critical skill if you plan to show your pictures. With digital cameras it's easy to shoot a lot of frames, but no one wants to sit through a slide show of 500 pictures when 450 should have been discarded. How do you analyze a photo? Rather than read a boring list of items, let's work an example.

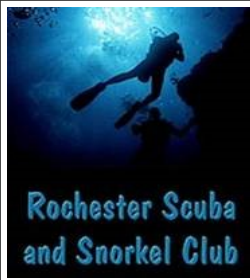
Here's a shot of Josh Fulton during an ice dive at Lake Wazee in January 2011. You can tell what's going on, and there's balanced light on the subject and background so it looks natural. The composition has both diagonal and curved elements which give a feeling of movement. The subject stands out from the background.



[Click to see larger image](#)

So what's wrong?

First problem: Bubbles. Sometimes a trail of exhaled bubbles can be an interesting part of the composition, if they are located above the diver to give a feeling of depth. Here they just get in the way of the diver's mask. What caused this problem? The obvious answer is "pressing the shutter at the wrong time". Learning to watch a diver's breathing takes some practice, but in this case it wasn't that simple. In the very dim and low-contrast conditions under the ice, the SLR camera's auto-focus system took a while to lock focus. (Point & shoot cameras can have a very noticeable delay; usually depressing the shutter button part way will help to lock focus and allow faster response when the shutter is fully pressed.) One way to fix the problem is to use the LED modeling lights that are built into the strobes. The lights turn off when the strobes fire so there's no worry that they'll show up in the image. For darker situations



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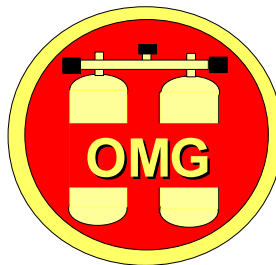
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(like deep shipwrecks or at night) you might need to use a powerful light to lock focus, then move the light away and trip the shutter.

Second problem: Low contrast. Even though visibility was around 60 feet, there's a lack of contrast -- things look a bit fuzzy and washed out. Why is that? One reason was underexposure; post-processing required brightening the image digitally, which brings out a grainy appearance. Solution: expose properly; use the histogram when reviewing the image on the LCD preview screen. Another cause was shooting through too much water, about 36" here. In my rush to assemble the camera I neglected to install the zoom gear, so the lens was stuck at 22mm (narrow angle) rather than 10mm (wide angle). Using 10mm would have allowed the lens to be very close and still get Josh entirely in the frame, and shoot through only about 18" of water. Solution: Use a checklist when assembling the camera system, and have a test procedure to catch these mistakes before you leave for the dive site.



Third problem: This photo was the only recognizable shot of Josh from that dive, so in some ways it must be kept. Solution: Take many similar photos of a subject so you can make better use of the trash bin later, even when the image review looks good. Some details are too small to see on those tiny LCD screens while underwater. Assume that any shot will have something wrong and take some more. Also discuss the dive / photo plan ahead of time with your subject diver so you're not trying to chase someone who isn't posing for photos.

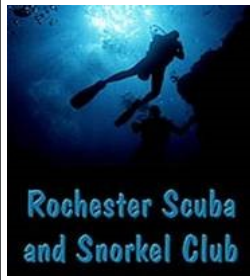


What other problems can you find? How would you fix them?



General suggestion: Stay in practice. It was my first time in the water in 8 months, first ice dive in 3 years, and first dive using recently serviced gear that was reconfigured for a single tank. Might as well take a camera too! Stress causes mistakes. (Remember to first dive safely, *then* take pictures.)

The important lesson: Even photos that end up in the trash bin can teach us something -- learn from the mistakes. Next time we'll get it right!



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Have any activities or events that you'd like the
Scuba Club to do? Send a note to the president or
discuss with one of the officers.

Just for Kids

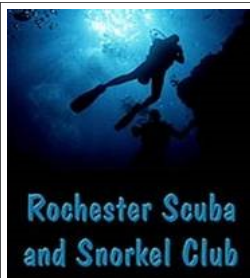
With a growing number of young divers in the group, a major focus of the scuba club this year is events and activities for kids.

Look forward to:

- Fun things being put into Lake Wazee to explore
- Special Presentations by kids and for kids
- Family outings like Pirates Up the Wazee
- Special dive activities at the pool and Lake Wazee

We need to hear from you. Do you have an idea for topics, events or trips geared toward kids? Junior Divers, what would you like to see and do?





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Do you have stories to share? Send them to the editor for inclusion in the next Scuba Club Newsletter!!

You Gotta Wear Something

Now that warmer weather is upon us, the Scoober Doers have come up with the perfect summer look for the well dressed diver. Orders are now being taken for the newly redesigned Scuba Club T-Shirt.



This classic yet stylish garment will not only let others know that you are part of the exciting world of scoober doers but also that you aren't afraid to make a statement and be seen.

You can place orders at the Scuba Club meeting or by contacting Dan at:

Rochester Scuba and Snorkel Club
c/o Dan Lovik
1504 7th St NE
Rochester, MN 55906

Short sleeve shirts are \$10.00 and come in standard sizes. Long sleeve and hoodies are also available at \$12.50 and \$25.00 respectively.

Registration Form

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership (\$25) <input type="checkbox"/> Family Membership (\$50)		<p>Don't Hesitate.</p> <p>Please complete this form and return with your payment.</p> <p>Please make checks payable to Rochester Scuba & Snorkel Club.</p> <p>Rochester Scuba & Snorkel Club c/o Dan Lovik 1504 7th St N.E. Rochester, MN 55906</p>
Name:		
Address:		
City:	State:	
Phone:	Zip:	
E-Mail:		
Additional Family Members:		