

Society Singles

A SOLID WEEK OF UNFETTERED FUN

BY SCOTT D. JONES

It didn't matter if you were without a buddy during the recent Singles Week event at Fantasy Island Resort in Roatan, Honduras. After all, more than a hundred enthusiastic divers came ready to team up and explore the warm Caribbean waters.

The highly popular event, now in its third year, attracted 117 diverse participants from as far away as Hawaii. The draw? Joining like-minded singles who crave underwater adventure. And that's just what they got.

The spacious, all-inclusive resort, boasting a new swimming pool complete with swim-up bar, felt like adult summer camp — but few summer camps can deliver three daily boat dives, shallow wrecks and incredible coral reefs.

Seven dive boats left promptly every morning, giving divers the opportunity to visit virtually every site on Roatan's south shore. Favorites included Calvin's Crack, Mary's Place and Valley of the Kings, which provided many divers with their first glimpse of a seahorse.

"That dive made the whole week," said Karen Schnebeck from San Diego. "I have been diving for years but never have seen a seahorse before. That's why I came!"

That wasn't the only underwater first on this trip. David Metzloff of Atlanta recalls several encounters with moray eels. "I've never seen an eel swim in the open before. One of our divemasters coaxed a large green eel out of its hole. What an incredible sight."

There was some debate among the divers about whether the water temperature was 83, 85 or 86°F (depending on whose computer you consulted). But everyone agreed that the water was warm and full of things to see.

"I'm used to long boat rides," said Chris Walkowiak, a school teacher from Buffalo, New York, "so I was pleased that there was so much to encounter close to shore."

Walkowiak and a dozen others competed in one of the week's many contests — an underwater photo contest sponsored by SeaLife Cameras. Walkowiak's

FOR MORE INFORMATION



More on the Web:
For more info on this year's Society Singles venue, go to fantasyislandresort.com.

colorful shot of a queen angelfish finished second. "There was so much to shoot that I had a hard time selecting which shot to enter," she admitted.

Following the afternoon dives, participants competed for prizes donated by Henderson, Sherwood and Trident during pool games, beach races and a volleyball showdown.

According to Nick Palandra, event organizer and Fantasy Island marketing director, there is certainly a market for the single traveling diver.

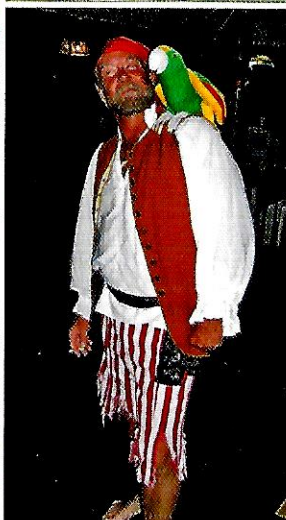
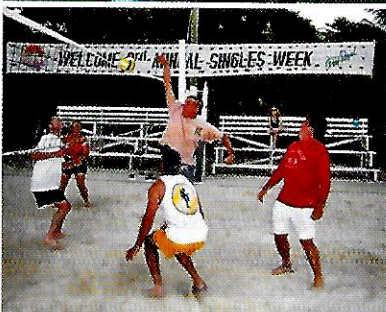
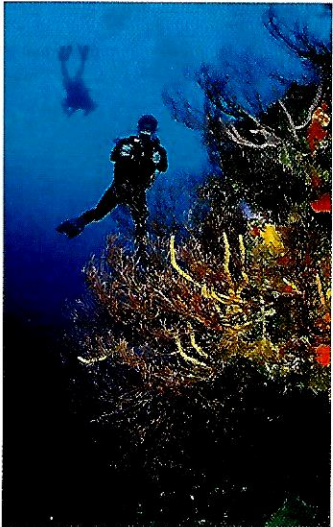
"This was our largest week ever, and it just keeps getting bigger and bigger. We're already planning next year's Singles Week with great incentives for our returning guests."

It's not certain who logged the most dives during the week, but some ambitious divers aimed for 50. By week's end, nearly everyone had smiles on their faces as they packed gear and signed one another's logbooks.

A rum punch- and beer-fueled Pirate's Night party ended the week as guests dressed accordingly to compete in Fantasy Island and Taca Airline's costume contest for the Best Dressed Pirate and Best Dressed Wench. Later in the evening a drawing was held for a Windjammer Cruise.

Sponsors for this year's event included Taca Airlines, Sherwood, Henderson, Trident, Rum Reggae, SeaLife Cameras, Ikelite, Windjammer, Fantasy Island Resort, Romeo's Restaurant, Gio's Restaurant, Waihuka Adventure, Jungle Canopy and South Shore Canopy.

PARADISE AND PIRATES
Smiles, seahorses, seascapes and camaraderie were all part of the scene as 117 PADI Diving Society members descended on Fantasy Island Resort, Roatan, for the 2006 edition of Society Singles Week.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY DAVID BENZ (5) BOTTOM LEFT: TY SAWYER

SPORT DIVER

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