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Galapagos Marine Life in Danger & Silly Season in the Keys

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Galapagos Marine Life in Danger. These are lights from the 265-vessel Chinese fishing fleet that threatens the Galapagos. The boats are now operating at the edge of the protected marine reserve taking fish and sharks from the major migration route between Cocos and Malpelo, and the world is up in arms about it. The fleet of Chinese “ghost ships” were falsely reporting their location within New Zealand waters while they fished off the Galapagos Islands. Six of the fleet are transmitting false information via their Automatic Identification System transponders. The Ecuadorian Navy has deployed its limited fleet to protecting the reserve but with little hope of stopping the fishing and protecting the animals traveling past. This includes the largest female whale sharks. In 2018, scientists equipped with Thruster units on their scuba tanks, managed to make ultra-sound recordings on the distended bellies of three of these pregnant giants, aiming to unravel one of the ocean’s great mysteries -- where do they give birth? But, more research is needed to untangle the significance of the area to whale shark reproduction. “Unchecked

Chinese fishing just on the edge of the protected zone is ruining Ecuador's efforts to protect marine life in the Galápagos," the former Quito mayor Roque Sevilla has said. (*BBC*)

Silly Season in the Keys. At the close of July, a North Carolina man, Christopher Curlee, who was in the Florida Keys for lobster mini season, was cited for stealing large specimens of staghorn coral from a reef he had dived. A few days later, Justin Stuller, 38, a Florida resident and experienced spear-fisher, who had previously been bitten by an alligator in similar circumstances, was attacked by an 8-foot lemon shark while attempting to recover an injured fish. He required two dozen stitches and now sports a slight limp. (*Miami Herald & Fort Myers News-Press*)

Your Old Dive Gear and Memorabilia Wanted: Blain Roberts, founder of the legendary Lahaina Divers, and his wife Kim are breaking ground for the nonprofit Mermaid Museum, right next to their award-winning Westport Winery in Aberdeen Washington. Their mission is to teach ocean ecology from seashore to seafloor, immersing the experience in mermaid mythology. If it's time for you to downsize and clean out that garage while getting a tax deduction for your contribution, contact Kim Roberts at kimroberts2@hotmail.com to see if they can use what you have. Specifically, they are looking for any large taxidermy specimens of fish and crustaceans, black coral (and jewelry), larger shells, historic dive equipment, mermaid collectibles from movie costumes to posters, and any items that are marine or vessel related they we can weave into the mermaid stories, like a sextant to discuss celestial navigation. www.mermaidmuseum.org

The US Navy Thumbs its Nose at Orcas. The number of Orcas is rapidly declining in the Pacific Northwest, but the U.S. Navy still wants to undertake seven years of military exercises ranging from testing torpedoes to firing projectiles into the sea at seven times the speed of sound, to piloting mine-detecting undersea drones, and deploying underwater sonar and exploding 1,000 pound bombs across a vast ocean area from northern California to Alaska, including Puget Sound in Washington. Scientists know that the tests would interfere with Southern resident orcas' hunting, feeding, socializing and breeding. The Navy estimates the orcas would be disturbed 51 times a year. All sorts of marine mammals in Washington, from seals to humpbacks, gray whales and more would also be affected nearly 2 million times to Level B disturbance during the life of the program, according to Navy estimates. The governor of Washington, agencies and environmentalists want NOAA to take back its assessment of negligible impact, and to incorporate new limits to significantly reduce harm to orcas and other marine mammals. [See more here.](#)

Travel for American Divers Still Limited. At the moment it looks like American divers are still limited to the Bahamas, Turk & Caicos, Mexico (Cozumel and Baja California) and some parts of the Caribbean for foreign travel destinations. Since restrictions are subject to change, check local regulations concerning entry before you book. If you are planning to visit or travel through European countries, we urge you to check the websites of the relevant U.S. embassies or consulates for information on restrictions, foreign quarantine policies, and urgent health information provided by relevant authorities. (*travel/state/gov*)

A Few Divers Are Traveling: Mexico is still viable for divers. Glen Madsen (UT) wrote of Costa del Sol on Cozumel this July, "The island looked like a movie scene of an abandoned town when we first arrived," and dived with Dive-With-Cristina. He reports being on "the only dive boat in sight." Bobby Munno (NY) went to St. Croix (USVI) also in July and rented an entire dive boat from Cane Bay Dive Shop, for his exclusive use, thereby avoiding any social distancing problems. He said the Cane Bay team "were a delight to deal with." Otherwise, the wrecks of the Florida Keys beckon. If you're looking for a place to go, read recent reports from our readers at www.undercurrent.org

Hawaii Extends its Quarantine Rule. Hawaii delayed its plan to allow out-of-state visitors to return to the vacation hot spot by a month because of an increase in coronavirus cases in the state and on the U.S. mainland. In late June, the governor's office announced that travelers could visit Hawaii beginning August 1, no

quarantine required, by presenting a negative Covid-19 test taken within 72 hours of boarding a flight. Without one, passengers arriving from the mainland would have to strictly quarantine for 14 days, a policy in place since March that has scared away most tourists and wrecked Hawaii's tourism industry. The state has now extended its mandatory quarantine for all visitors until September 1. (*Hawaii Tourism Authority*)

Stay Safe –

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