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Costa Rica Opens & Florida Scuba Charters Sued

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21 september 2020 17:54

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September 21, 2020



Costa Rica Open to Divers from More States. Good news for divers who wish to visit Cocos Island, famous for encounters with big schools of scalloped hammerhead sharks: Residents of 18 states are now welcome to visit and more to come. Visitors from 45 other countries are also welcome, including from the U.K., the E.U., and Canada. [Details here.](#)

Florida Scuba Charters Sued. The family of a woman diver who died from her injuries while diving near Florida's Lake Worth Inlet last March 29 is suing the operators of the dive boat *Southern Comfort*. Mollie Ghiz-Flynn died after being drawn into the propellers while waiting to board the vessel. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, accuses Florida Scuba

Charters, which owns the *Southern Comfort*, of negligence. The captain reversed to the divers, a hazardous move, drawing Ghiz-Flynn and her husband Sean under it. The accident occurred when Palm Beach County, due to the pandemic, had prohibited recreational diving, and boat ramps had been closed to recreational vessels. Under the control of the same skipper, owner of Florida Scuba Charters Dustin McCabe, the vessel had been out the previous day and had almost caused a similar tragedy when divers were dragged under the boat as it reversed up to them. One diver saved herself from serious injury by pushing away with her spear-gun. You can read the full suit [here](#).

Don't Speak Ill of the Dead. After we noted the death of controversial shark expert Erich Ritter in the last email, some readers asked why we did not reprint John Bantin's article about him from 1999. There's no doubt Ritter's approach to sharks was out-of-step with many other shark experts. [John's article](#) shows why.

Battle of the Oldies. Not to be outdone by a stripling Brit Ray Woolley, who's only 96 years old and made a record-breaking dive to 139 feet in Cyprus last August, an Illinois man is seeking Guinness World Records recognition as the world's oldest scuba diver after he took dive to celebrate his 100th birthday. Bill Lambert of Rockford made a 27-minute dive in South Beloit's Pearl Lake on Labor Day. Maybe not as deep as the more experienced diver Woolley, but give him more time -- he didn't even learn to dive until he was 98.

Put Another Dollar In. Drew Richardson, CEO of PADI, drew some flack when he announced to members and dive centers that PADI was successfully improving corporate profitability by firing employees and charging full membership fees for 2020. At a time when the industry is facing decimation of its regional dive centers through travel restrictions brought about by the pandemic, it spawned both angry and satirical responses on social media.

Pandemic Restrictions Threaten Beach Clean-Ups. In an ordinary year, Californians gather along the state's beaches, parks, and waterways on the third Saturday of September to pick up trash before it can make its way into the Pacific. Every cigarette butt, bottle cap, and plastic bag in sight is collected and recorded, each a new point in a massive data set built over 35 years of coastal clean-ups. With the clean-up cancelled, both the ecosystem and the data describing it are at risk. Masks, gloves, and other COVID-19-related trash are piling up in remote marine ecosystems. *Hakai Magazine*

U.S. Shark Fin Smugglers Shut Down. A shark fin smuggling operation based in California and Florida and worth millions of dollars has been shut down. Starting in 2010, members of the conspiracy began using false documents, fake businesses, and dozens of bank accounts in the U.S., Mexico, and Hong Kong to hide the proceeds. Agents from the DEA, HIS, and Fish & Wildlife Service carried out 22 search warrants in Georgia, Florida, Michigan, and California, and seized nearly \$8 million in gold and diamonds. *NYTimes*

A Regular Webinar to Enjoy during Enforced Isolation. Special guests Amos Nachoum, big animal expedition leader, and Dr. Sylvia Earle, joined naturalist Liz Taylor for a discussion on how underwater photography has advanced so much to bring us the wondrous, the vulnerable, and the surreal anomalies of nature to each of us through awe-inspiring images. You can watch it [here](#).

Stay Safe,

Ben Davison, editor/publisher
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Undercurrent May Issue



- [St.Helena. Is it the most difficult-to-get-to diving destination?](#)
- [Tough times for members of the diving industry - How are they coping?](#)
- [Tales of woe from those who found their trips cancelled.](#)
- [Can you trust that dive guide?](#)
- [Afloat and lost at the surface of the ocean - and how to avoid it.](#)
- [Bad Covid-19 News for divers? Experts don't agree.](#)

- and much, much, more

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