

# Advanced Scuba Course

## Pre-Conference

One of the advantages of being semi-retired is the opportunity to fly down to Florida a few days before the conference for some scuba diving at John Pennekamp Coral Reef State Park. I had arranged to take the Advanced Open Water PADI course at the Amoray Dive Centre on Key Largo. This course consists of some



textbook study as well as five specialty dives. Three are compulsory: navigation dive, deep dive and night dive. Two other must be selected from a fairly large number available. Of course, the ice dive or cave dive were not available on Key Largo. I selected the underwater naturalist dive and the underwater photography dive,

since I had recently purchased a SeaLife Reefmaster underwater digital camera and external strobe.

The navigation dive consisted of distance estimation under water by counting "kicks". Kicks were calibrated by swimming a known distance, and counting how many kicks (left + right = 1 kick) were required. Knowing the approximate distance travelled per kick gives a simple method for estimating distance, which is accurate enough over a few tens of meters, a typical dive. Also included was underwater navigation using a compass. I was required to swim and out-and-

back line using a compass, and swim a square pattern using a compass for turns and "kicks" for distance.

A deep dive is any dive over 60'. Nitrogen dissolving in the blood can produce a narcotic effect called narcosis, and can be quite dangerous. The euphoria induced can



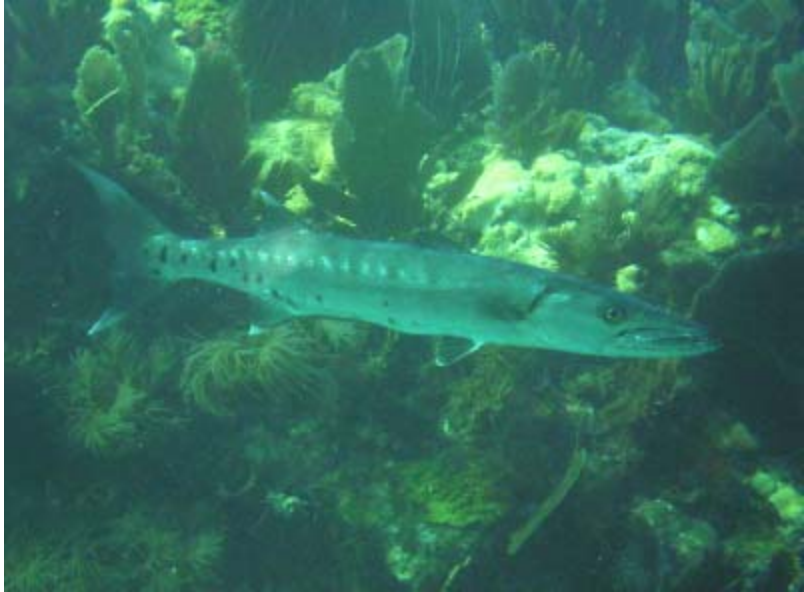
cause a diver to forget certain things, like monitoring air and ascending before it runs out. The maximum limit for sport diving is generally considered about 130'. Air consumption increases with depth, and allowable no-decompression time decreases.

The night dive was a rather spooky descent onto a World War II wreck. The Benwood was a large cargo ship

that had been torpedoed by a U-Boat off Key Largo, and sank in 40'-50' of water. It was an attraction for parrot fish, who seemed to use it as a dormitory at night.

I have included a few selected underwater pictures. Best shooting distances are 2'-6'. Beyond 6', particles in the water reduce visibility, and render subjects indistinct. This is common in waters where there is a fair amount of runoff from the land. Dry, desert-like islands (such as Grand Cayman) generally have much better visibility.

Mr. Barracuda



Not sure of this one.



Jellyfish



Queen Angelfish

