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SCUBA News (ISSN 1476-8011)

Issue 150 - November 2012

<http://www.scubatravel.co.uk>  
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Welcome to the 150th issue of SCUBA News. Over 12 years ago our first issue announced the launch of our Top Ten Dives List and asked for your votes. And you are still voting (thanks) at <http://www.scubatravel.co.uk/topdives.html>.

In this our 150th issue, we review our Book of the Year: *The Ocean of Life* by Callum Roberts. A book which should be compulsory reading for every policy maker and politician.

Thanks to everyone who "liked" us on [Facebook](#). We didn't quite make our 500 target but you certainly gave us a boost.

I hope you find the newsletter interesting, but should you wish to cancel your subscription please do so at <http://www.scubatravel.co.uk/news.html>

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What's New at SCUBA Travel?



[Red Sea Life Guide](#)

Find photos, identification tips and lifestyle notes on the fish, invertebrates and mammals of the Red Sea.

<http://www.scubatravel.co.uk/redsea/redsealife.html>



[Diving Honduras](#)

The Bay Islands of Honduras - Roatan, Utila and Guanaja - offer low-cost but good Caribbean diving. See also the letters below.

<http://www.scubatravel.co.uk/americas/honduras.html>



Diving Board

We've retired our Diving Board in favour of Facebook comments. Let us know whether you think it is a good idea or not - see

<http://www.scubatravel.co.uk/forum/>

For regular announcements of what's new at the SCUBA Travel site see our [Twitter feed](#) and our [Facebook page](#).

Letters

Diving Roatan and Utila Islands: Honduras

Hello

Roatan and Utila are only a few miles apart geographically but a world of difference. The diving is similar but everything else is different. Lots of Americans on Roatan, the cruise ships come here 2 times per week and everything gets a little crazy during that time. Lodging, food, diving are all more expensive, yet not any better than Utila. Certain people are attracted to Roatan and others to Utila. I am with Utila. There is a lot of development on Roatan and property values have skyrocketed. All and all, Roatan was OK, I will probably never go there again. However, I would recommend staying at an all inclusive such as Coco View Resort, Anthonys Key, etc. Roatan has a great airport.

Utila is the overall best value for your diving dollar. In Roatan, your best value is the all inclusive dive operations. Though some are much better than others. Decent Caribbean diving, but the reefs are not comparable to Cozumel or Indonesia. Fish are plentiful and Whale shark sightings are the best of any place I have been.

Some of the sites we dived in Utila were Spotted Bay, West End CJs Drop off, Blackfish Point, Joshua's Swash, Great Wall, Black Bird Point and Black Hills. The North side is interesting diving but not any better than the south side. The visibility ranged from 60 to 100ft. Depths were 40 - 90ft. Most dives are wall dives except for Black Hills which is an incredible sea mount. Corals and sea life are prolific in Utila. We saw, lobsters, big crabs, mature Spotted Drum, Blow Fish, Puffer Fish, Porcupine fish, Burr Fish, Frog Fish, lots of Jacks, Stone fish several turtles, several moreys, eagle rays, lots of interesting corals including sea fans and barrel sponges. All the dives were excellent. Three out of 5 days of diving Utila we dove with Whale Sharks. Utila is the only dive destination I know of, where you can just about be guaranteed a Whale Shark episode between mid February to April.

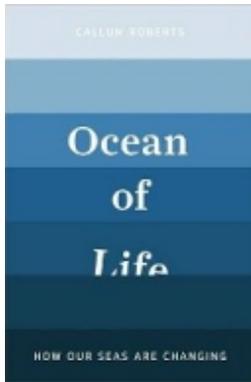
Bill Mashek, [Rubicon Adventures](#)

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Dear Sirs,

10 days on Roatan Island early August. Stayed at Anthony's Key Resort. My son got his OW cert and I completed Rescue. Peter and Tati run the public portion of the dive operation there and they are fantastic people. The rest of the dive crew are all very professional, and accommodating. Clean, fast boats, good captains. Hotel side of the deal was very nice. Good food, service and staff. Hurricane Ernesto prompted the resort to evacuate all of the guests for 24 hours. They handled the accommodations & transportation for all of the guests and kept us well informed. Had the boats reassembled and had us back in the water within 36 hours. Most all guests were impressed with how they handled a not so good situation. Diving was good, not excellent. I expected to see more critters. Reef was in pretty good condition. Boats do not have to travel far to get to get to the dive sites. I would return just to see my new friends Peter and Tati.

Book of the year: Ocean of Life, How Our Seas are Changing



[Ocean of Life](#), How Our Seas are Changing

by Callum Roberts

May 2012

ISBN: 1-8461439-4-2

400 pages, from £14.99 (Kindle) or £16.00 (Hardback)

Did you know that almost all hand creams contains plastic granules, added as an exfoliant? These granules end up washed out to sea. Here they gather toxins on their surface before being eaten by plankton who mistake them for fish eggs. From plankton they pass up the food chain and back to us. Just one of alarming ways in which we are needlessly damaging the oceans

In his book "Ocean of Life", Professor Callum Roberts details threats posed by the cosmetic industry, fishing, noise, rising sea-levels, global warming, acidification, fish farming and so on. Towards the end of the book, just when you're beginning to think the state of the seas is hopeless, he provides a series of simple solutions to reverse the damage and protect the oceans.

The book includes 58 photos. The first three graphically emphasise the massive reduction of fish size over the past 50 years. they show a recreational fish catch in Key West, Florida in the 1950s, 70s and 2007. From many fish as big as the fisherman in the 1950s, to still lots of fish but considerably smaller in the 70s to much fewer and even smaller fish in the present day. The book makes the point that corporate greed is destroying fishermen's livelihood and fishing industry representatives are in denial. Amazingly, in 1889 fishermen caught more than twice as many bottom fish (cod, haddock, plaice and the like) as today. For every hour spent fishing today - with all our electronic gadgets to find the fish - fishermen land just 6% of what they did 120 years ago!

Roberts suggests remedies ranging from the global - such as the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants which has been signed by most of the world's nations - to local - such as beach clean-ups by volunteers to remove the plastic before it gets into the sea. Placing areas off-limits has proven time and again to be a powerful tool: we need interconnected safe havens. Luckily, more and more nations are now creating marine protected areas.

I highly recommend this book. In fact, I think it should be required reading for every politician. The points are made with stories and anecdotes in an extremely clear way. The science is there to back the stories up, but no scientific knowledge is required to understand the points being made. Callum Roberts succeeds in presenting his case in a way that is open to everyone. One of the best books of this year. Buy it. You will find it both fascinating and shocking.

About the Author:

Callum Roberts is professor of marine conservation at the University of York. He has been a visiting Professor at Harvard and was consultant to the [BBC's Blue Planet](#).

Ocean of Life is available in [Hardback](#) and [Kindle](#) editions, from [Amazon.co.uk](#), [Amazon.com](#) and other bookshops.

For more book reviews see <http://www.scubatravel.co.uk/interview.html>



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EU to close shark finning loophole

The barbaric practice of slicing off the fins of sharks and discarding the live bodies at sea will be outlawed following a historic vote in the European parliament. MEPs voted overwhelmingly 566 to 47 to close a legal loophole and ban finning despite opposition from Spain and Portugal.

Mozambique creates Africa's largest coastal marine reserve

The Primeiras and Segundas have been approved as a marine protected area in Mozambique making this diverse ten-island archipelago Africa's largest coastal marine reserve.

Atomic Aquatics Recalls Cobalt Dive Computer

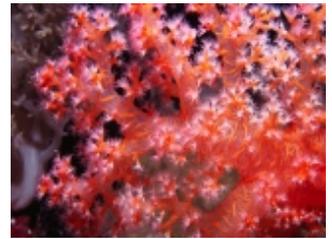
Divers warned to stop using Cobalt Dive Computers from Atomic Aquatics which were manufactured between 31 May 2010 and 16 April 2012.

South Pacific Island Proven Not to Exist

A South Pacific island, shown on marine charts and world maps as well as on Google Earth and Google Maps, does not exist, Australian scientists say.

Corals call for fish aid when attacked by Seaweed

Corals under attack by toxic seaweed do what anyone might when threatened: they call for help.



A Million Species in the Oceans?

The oceans may be home to nearly a million marine species but two thirds of them remain undescribed.

Coral autopsy reveals Great Barrier Reef collapse

Nutrient-rich slurry from farms has been causing coral populations on Australia's Great Barrier Reef to crash for 90 years.

How Noisy were Whales before Industrial Whaling?

Concern is growing that human-generated noise in the ocean disrupts marine animals that rely on sound for communication and navigation. In the modern ocean, the background noise can be ten times louder than it was just 50 years ago. But new modeling based on recently published data suggests that 200 years ago - prior to the industrial whaling era - the ocean was even louder than today due to the various sounds whales make.



Sick turtles a warning sign for Barrier Reef

Scientists have slammed Australian coal port expansion as turtles with potentially fatal infections continue to wash up on North Queensland shores.

Australia imposes two-year ban on supertrawlers

Australia banned supertrawlers fishing in its southern waters for two years on Monday, saying there was uncertainty about the impact of such large vessels on species such as dolphins and seals.

Dolphin 'sponging' spans centuries

Bottlenose dolphins using sponges to protect their noses while foraging is a technique that the animals discovered in the 19th century, a study has found.

Increased income a reality if EU votes for fish stock recovery

Enabling fish stocks to return to healthy and sustainable levels will result in an increase in

Decision makers must follow scientific advice and not increase bluefin tuna quotas

WWF calls on decision makers and the fishing industry to follow the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) Scientific Committee's advice to ensure the bluefin tuna quota in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean remains the same and does not exceed 12,900 tonnes annually.

'Humane' fishing net wins Dyson award

A young British designer has won a prestigious international award for creating a "humane" net to make fishing more sustainable by preventing small fish from being trapped.

Papa pipefish's pregnancy good for young's immunity

In the role-reversed world of the pipefish, it is the males that carry the pregnancy - which helps deliver more resilient offspring



Fertility technology could quickly pinpoint oil leaks at sea

Technology developed to detect fluorescence for fertility monitors and pregnancy tests could be used for early detection of oil leaks at sea.

Ocean Waves to Power Sensor Buoys

Harvesting wave energy from the sea will power ocean sensor buoys, eliminating the need for batteries and allowing extended operation of autonomous sensors.

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