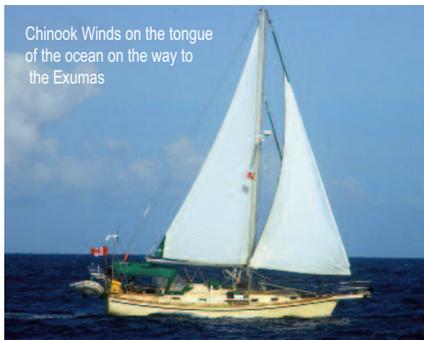




Spring 2014

# BUDDYLINES

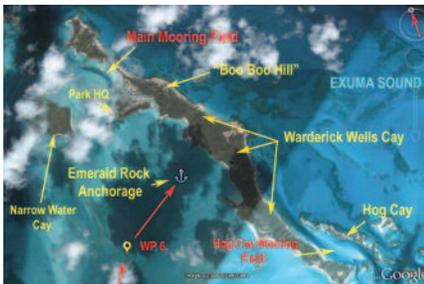
## Newsletter



Chinook Winds on the tongue of the ocean on the way to the Exumas



The "car" (dinghy)



Google view of Warderick Wells. The Coral Garden site is under the cloud just below the arrow for Park HQ

## Exuma Land and Sea Park and Thunderball Cave

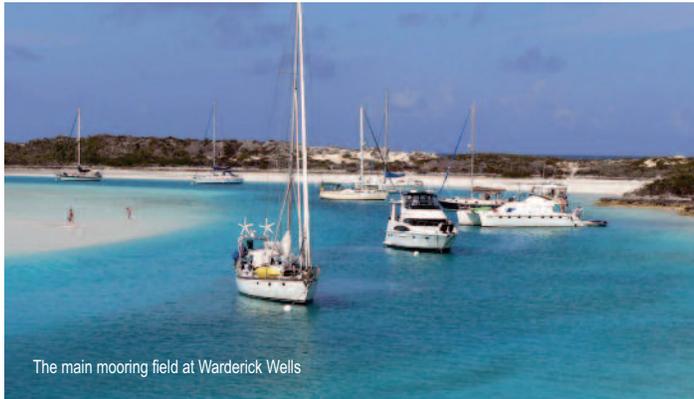
by Marion Prodaehl

We cruised the Northern and Central Exumas aboard our own boat, *Chinook Winds*, an Island Packet 38. *Chinook Winds* allowed us to visit places generally only accessible by private yacht and we loved the Exuma Land and Sea Park. Much of the Bahamas are very shallow and some of the most beautiful sites are just as fun to explore with a snorkel, mask and a good set of fins as with a full scuba outfit. During the winter months most people will wear a shortie or light weight full wet suit. Boyd and I had left those items back in Canada and so we made do with a t-shirt for our snorkeling forays. The couple (Bill and Gayle) we were buddy boating with wore shorties with weight belts.

Bill and Gayle are retired marine biologists who have an enduring fascination with everything under water and we learned much from them. To find sites to explore they looked at their charts for any indication of a number of rocks or small corral heads grouped together. Then off we would go in our respective RIB dinghies looking for places that might prove interesting. We checked out several sites at the Exuma Land and Sea park.

Lawson Woods rates the Exuma Land and Sea Park as five stars for both scuba and snorkeling in his guide, **Dive the Bahamas**. Since the park is protected no one takes fish, sponges or conch from the area

and the abundance of marine life is incredible. Permanent moorings have been installed for the visiting boats and that protects the underwater area from anchor and chain damage.



The main mooring field at Waderick Wells

We visited three underwater areas at the Waderick Wells area of the park and hiked along the trails on Waderick Wells Cay.

First we zoomed with the dinghies from the Emerald Rock anchorage area around the south end of Waderick Wells and then into the Hog Key mooring field. We looked for a sandy spot and threw out the anchors, ensured they were well hooked and splashed into the turquoise water. The corals were pristine and the fish abundant and we spent a good hour just hanging about and finning along the shore of the Waderick Wells side of the mooring field.

Here we saw schools of silvery fish about a foot long each (snappers?), a file fish, a queen angel fish, some squirrel fish,

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A file fish



Schools of silver fish (snappers?)



The queen angel fish is hiding



Squirrel fish and something else, coral and sponges

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**Exuma Land and Sea Park and Thunderball Cave**

*...continued*

and an eagle ray. (Sorry, no photo of the ray.) There was one boat in this mooring field and because of the strong easterly wind they were kind of stuck there in some nice calm water as the seas out in the Exuma sound were quite rough. With the dinghies we were able to stay to the west of Hog Key and could get in and out without much difficulty - we just had to pay attention to the depth of the water as sometimes it was only a foot or so deep.

Since our boats were moored close to Emerald Rock we took the time to swim out to it and then slowly snorkeled around it while peering into the myriad of little crevices. We found nothing out of the ordinary except multitudes of little fish, gobies, blenies and some bright yellow and purple basslets.



The whale skeleton at park headquarters

Just off the Park headquarters is a reef that is best explored at slack water as the current can get pretty strong at other times. While waiting for the right conditions we did a bit of hiking on land, checked out the little store in the park headquarters and inspected the whale skeleton mounted by one of the beaches. For our walk we headed up to Boo Boo Hill where over the years visiting yachts would leave a piece of driftwood with their boat's name and date of their visit, although the practice is no longer allowed. Close to Boo Boo Hill is a blow hole and we had some fun getting our hats blown off with a loud whoosh as the waves forced the air up with quite a bit of energy.



Boo Boo Hill (Boyd and Gayle)

Eventually we got to go snorkeling at the Coral Garden site just below the park office. Here the coral was in excellent shape and again we saw a multitude of fish - among them three huge stingrays, a sharpnose puffer, some gray angel fish, more squirrel fish and lots of blue tangs and sergeant majors. At both this site and the one at the Hog Cay mooring field we saw worms - beautiful little christmas tree worms and feather duster worms. If you bring your finger close to them they snap right into a hard shelled little tube.



Feather duster worms

Warderick Wells was one of my favorite places and we plan on returning there again in the future. First we have to purchase another boat though, as *Chinook Winds* was sold. This time we are searching for a modest catamaran that will be big enough to comfortably have some guests aboard. We will let **BUDDYLINES** readers know when that happens in case any one would like to join us for a bit of time!

**North Battleford Scuba Community Inc.**

- by Dennis McCullough

On April 13 we have an Underwater Gymkhana – a morning of games, contests and challenges with lunch provided at the end of the morning. Cost is 20 per person and \$7.50 for lunch for those who don't want to dive. Contact me to register or for more information.



May 13 is our *Discover Scuba Day* – a day long series of Discover Scuba experiences at the new Aquatic Centre. \$40 per person – a new group every three hours. Again, contact me for further information.

We have a Rescue Diver course underway with an Advanced Diver course planned for late May. There will also be a Peak Performance Buoyancy course and anything else we can get going.

Tuesday nights will be our weekly dive night at Atton's Lake at 6:30 pm – everyone welcome, just let us know in advance whose coming.

The third weekend in June is my *Definitely Diving Days* at Atton's Lake – diving, challenges, games, socializing with camping and a steak dinner thrown in.

## The Side Mount Phenomenon by Justin Rings

So what is all the fuss about? That was the first question I asked, probably the same one you asked yourself. Well two tanks are better than one, redundancy; lower centre of gravity, easier on your back. These are all things I kept hearing, and then I was asked the simplest of questions. "Why do you wear the scuba tank on your back?" I had to pause, "well . . . um . . . that is how I was taught" was the most true answer I could give. So it was that question and my answer that peaked my curiosity.

I began sifting through all the information I could find on the Internet, and there is a lot of it. It quickly became evident that side mount dive was becoming very fashionable, many instructors and "experts" were lining up to "cash in." A large amount of the information I was finding simply seemed to be "cut & paste" from other web sites, gear configuration details were complex and confusing. When I set up some of my equipment in the fashion described by the "experts" on these websites my gear was difficult to reach and some of it was downright dangerous. This is scuba diving, it doesn't need to be complex, how hard do we need to make this?

I wasn't ready to give up on Side mount diving just yet. I decided to "taste the kool-aid" so to speak; I had my local dive shop order me a side mount BCD from a reputable manufacturer. I took my new side mount BCD home, sat down in my garage with some tanks, regs, and weights. "Ok, what makes sense" was the question I asked myself. I came up with a couple of different ideas, when put to the test in the water some worked better than others. During this period I also began looking for a reputable instructor to teach me Side mount diving.

A friend of mine from Vancouver contacted me; he was hosting a Side mount diver course at his dive shop in July. The instructor was Jeff Loflin, the PADI course director who had worked together with Jill Heinerth to develop the Side mount program for PADI. This was an opportunity to take the class from the man who had written the manuals. So I signed up for the course and

impatiently waited for July to come around. Hollis Gear, a scuba equipment manufacturer, was also promoting the course. Hollis provided regulators and Side mount BCD's for the course, this was a nice touch because at the end of the course you could purchase the gear you had been using at a special discount. (I was the only student that did not purchase the gear after the course, this was simply because I had purchased all of my Side mount equipment the summer before).

The course was a lot of fun, as we worked through the recreational portion of the Side mount course. We worked with one and two cylinders, configurations, and entry techniques. As we progressed into the technical aspect of Side mount diving; working with three, four, five, and then six cylinders of different sizes I was finding that each morning I was not sore. I find that after a week of diving my lower back and shoulders become stiff and sore, this was not the case. At the start of dive we would each carry our cylinders down to the water and clip them off. We then walked back to the car and put the rest of our gear on, walked back to the water and donned the cylinders in the water. You spend a couple of extra minutes getting ready in the water but it is well worth it for the ease of movement through the water and zero stress on your body.

I found that just like being a brand new open water diver there was still a lot to learn and the gear felt awkward for the first few dives. The ease of movement through the water and the extra freedom of movement are amazing, defiantly well the change over. With the exception of a technical diving class I taught last summer I have not been scuba diving with tanks on my back in two years and I don't see why I would go back. I strongly encourage anyone who is a diver to give Side mount diving a try, even just once. You will see what the phenomenon is all about.

For more information on Side mount diving contact your local dive shop or dive club. You can also email any questions to me.

**Justin@tekdivers.ca**

## Moose Jaw Barracudas

We have our annual Drive and Dive scheduled for June 15 at Lovering Lake. This is a fun event as long as the weather participates. We are planning our annual summer dive weekend

Waterton Dive Weekend - August 14 - 17. There are a lot of activities to do in this park so this could be fun for the entire family.

The Club Dive night this year will be Tuesday nights. We will likely get going in late May depending when the ice disappears. We hope to see good turn out this year. We generally leave the Scuba Guys Dive shop by 6:00 pm and hit the water at Lovering Lake by around 7:00 pm.



We are working on a Winter Dive get away. We are looking to see who may be interested in going to Roatan in early February.

That is all we have on the go for now. We are all just anxiously awaiting the ice to melt so we can start the diving season.

### Kelsey Scuba Club Activities 2013/2014

The Kelsey Scuba Club had a "famine/feast" fall and winter teaching term this year - 3 students completed the fall term classes, and 12 are currently finishing the winter term. Interest was so high in the second term that we had to turn some students away.

The club hosted a Space Club dip session last spring (and has another scheduled for April this year). The dip session lets aspiring young astronauts experience scuba "weightlessness" and underwater construction activities in the same manner that actual NASA astronauts are trained.

The club certified Brent Lucyshyn from the Saskatoon Fire Department as an ACUC Open Water Instructor. Brent has been a huge benefit assisting with instructing duties in the class and the pool during the year, adding some fresh new ideas and techniques to the club's teaching repertoire.

The club also hosted a very successful Scout scuba dip session that allowed 10 young Scouts and their parents to experience scuba.

**Open Water Certifications for this year's students are scheduled for the weekend of June 21- 22 at Candle Lake.**



### Saskatchewan Underwater Council Inc.

Box 7651, Saskatoon SK S7K 4R4

## Membership Renewal Information

MEMBERSHIP FEE STRUCTURE IS: Single Membership is \$30  
Family Membership is \$35

- You will receive:
- BUDDYLINES - 4 ISSUES
  - DIVER MAGAZINE - 8 issues (Reg. \$49.98 newsstand price) - your name will be passed on to Diver Magazine for mailing
  - Reduced rate on all SUC and Co-hosted SUC Events

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership: \$30 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership: \$35 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

City/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Total = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

If you wish to receive Buddylines by e-mail.

Make Cheque or Money Order Payable to the Saskatchewan Underwater Council Inc.

**The Saskatchewan Underwater Council compiled a Dive Sites Manual of favourite dive spots throughout Saskatchewan. The cost of the manual is \$10. For more information please call Clifford Lange at 306-374-8341.**