

FALL ISSUE

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# SCUBA PRESS

THE DIVER'S MAGAZINE

## Gone Divin' Our local dive season is still going strong

### Bay Islands of Honduras

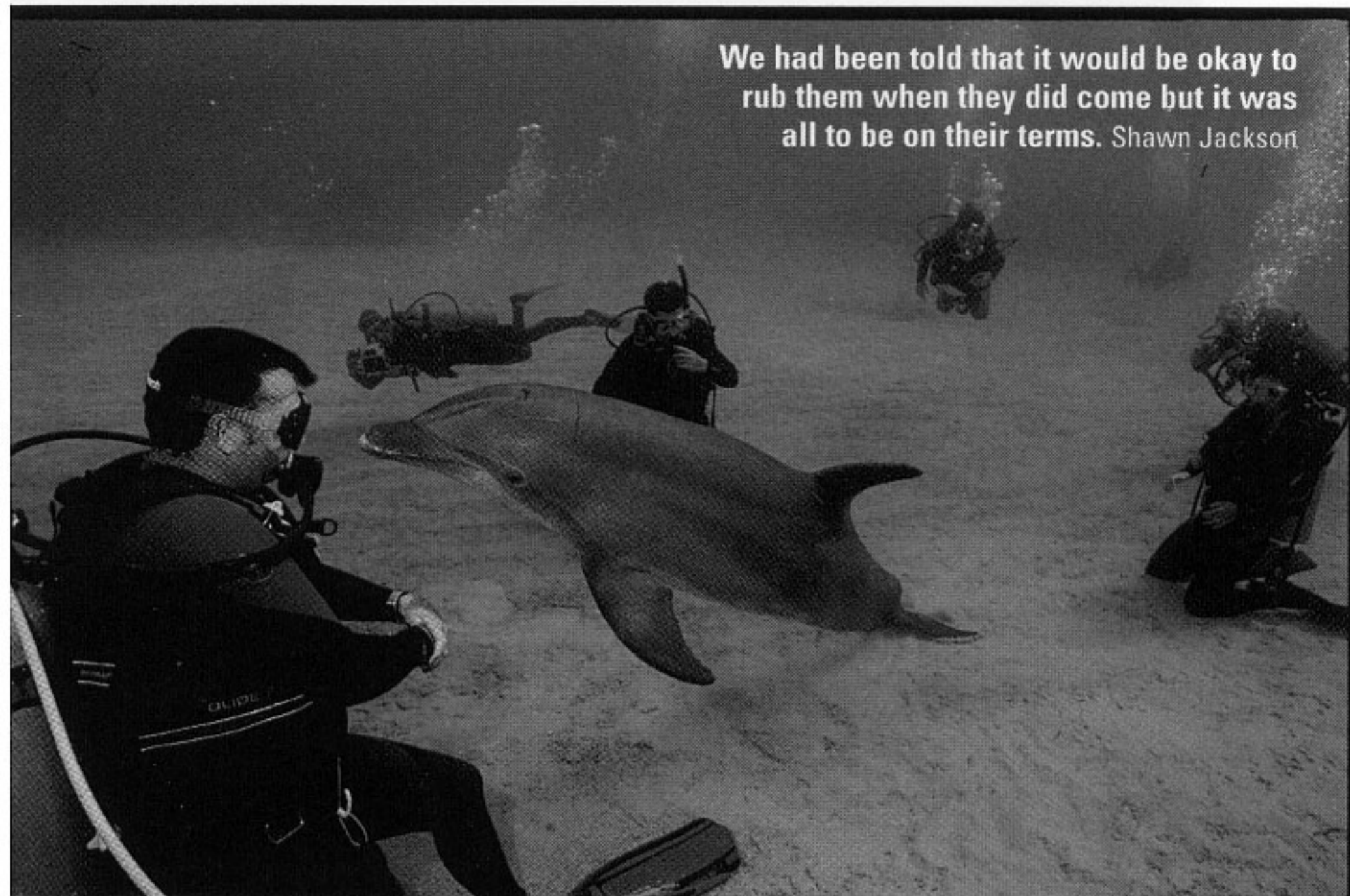
Roatan, Utila and Guanaja—Can't get enough

**CHILLING OUT** in Resolute Bay  
**'WRECKREATIONING'** in Kingston  
Planning an underwater **VIDEO SHOOT**

**+** No buddy to dive with?, Buoyancy Control (II),  
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*A friendly giant Pacific octopus  
beneath the pilings at Argonaut Wharf,  
in Discovery Passage at Campbell  
River, B.C., photo by Jett Britnell*





We had been told that it would be okay to rub them when they did come but it was all to be on their terms. Shawn Jackson

Jennifer Keck, a full-time educator with a master's degree in marine biology. Interestingly, AKR's summers are now busier than the winters because of the one-week kids' dolphin summer camps that begin early June and run through early September. Kids spend the day learning about and caring for the dolphins while their parents are off diving. A comprehensive museum of island history, offices, and dolphin pens with viewing bleachers are also part of the facility.

Cruise ships now call at Roatan. AKR runs a good business providing the passengers with close-up encounters with dolphins. Tourists are taken to Bailey's Key by open boat while the dolphin stars follow their own outboard, steered by a trainer across the open water. Dolphin trainer Junior explains a bit about dolphin physiology before everyone hits the water.

### "I'VE PROBABLY DONE OVER 2,000 OPEN-WATER DIVES WITH THESE GUYS AND EVERY TIME IS DIFFERENT."

tures are available for purchase, of course, since the revenue helps finance the research operation. It's a good skit for \$25 US, and adults and kids alike get a lot out of it. People can pay more (about \$65 US) and snorkel with the dolphins here too. However, the real experience is the open-water dolphin dive (about \$75 US) out at the reef.

Bruce Plunkett took us out to a flat, sandy-bottom area with coral outcroppings where we knelt or sat comfortably at about 16 metres, waiting patiently for the dolphins to come to us. We had been told that it would be okay to rub them when they did come but it was all to be on their terms.

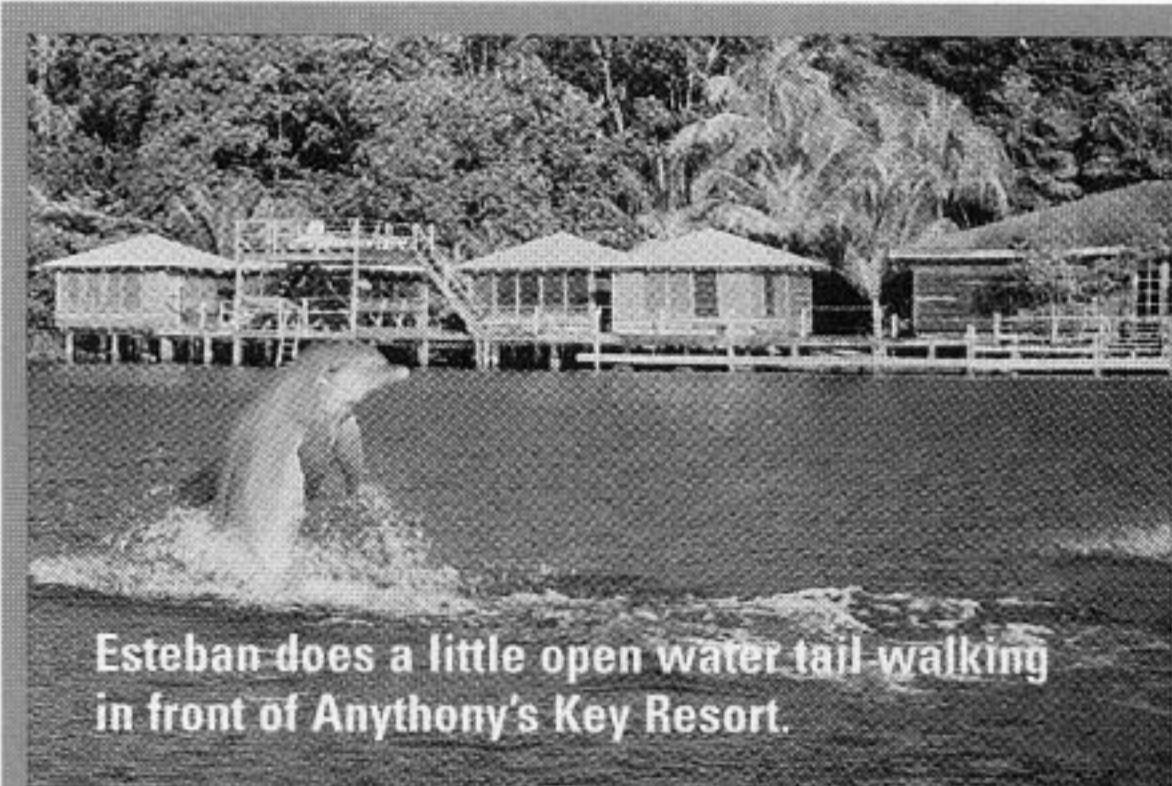
"It's okay to stroke them on their bodies," he says. "But be careful never to touch their eyes or genitals. Just imagine someone sticking their finger in your eye; and as far as the other goes, you don't want to start something you can't finish."

Briefing over, groups of six or eight persons waded into the water, under the direction of the trainers, who signal their dolphin to come in for rubs, hugs and kisses, all photographed by professionals from AKR. The pic-

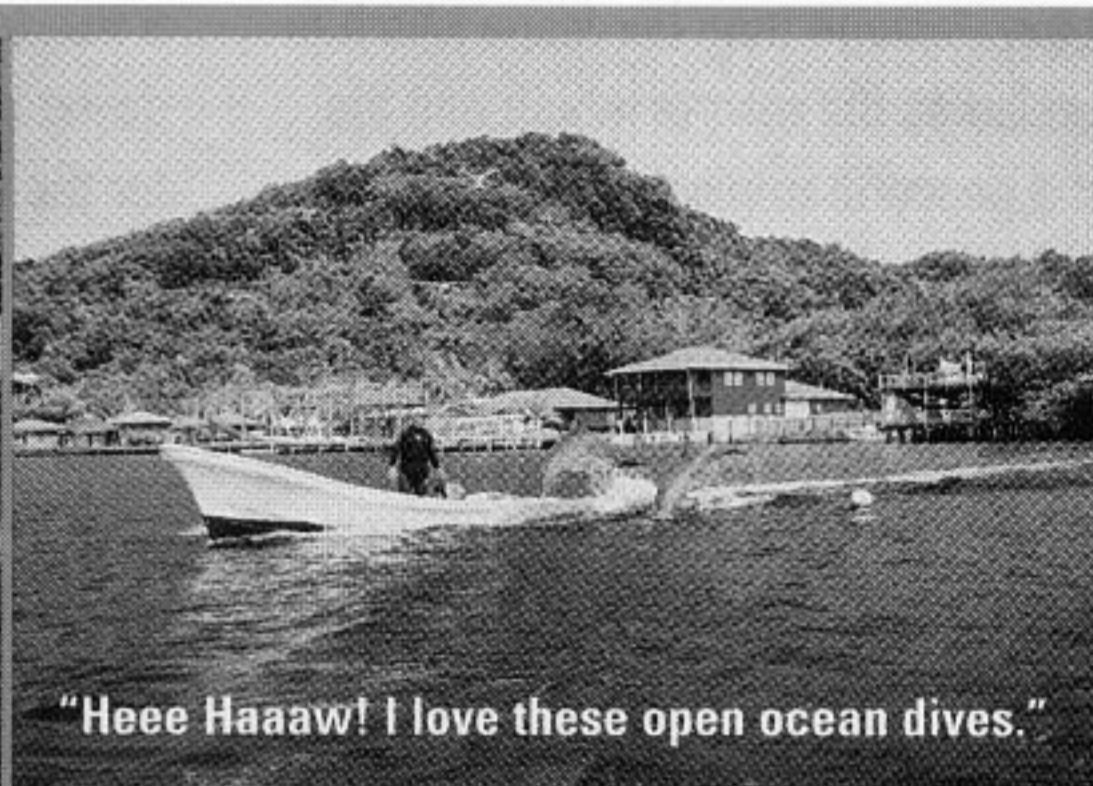
We waited. And waited some more. It was probably only a couple of minutes, but that line from *Jurassic Park* sprang to mind: "You have a dinosaur tour but, John, where are the dinosaurs?" As in the movie, we were not to be disappointed. The viz was over 30 metres and we thought we had all angles covered, but Esteban suddenly appeared out of nowhere. Apparently he'd been supplementing his diet on the reef and was just swallowing his catch-of-the-day.

Esteban picked out Plunkett and happily rolled over for a quick rub before taking off again. As he headed out to sea, presumably to hunt again, his partner Paya streamed in to greet us. Paya checked all of us out, looking for pats and recognition as he played. Esteban returned, and we must have given off some good vibes because the two of them kept rolling and swooshing around us, keeping us mesmerized for more than 45 minutes as they swam freely through the coral and back to us. Their interaction with Plunkett was delightful, and it was obvious that both human and mammals enjoy their jobs to the fullest.

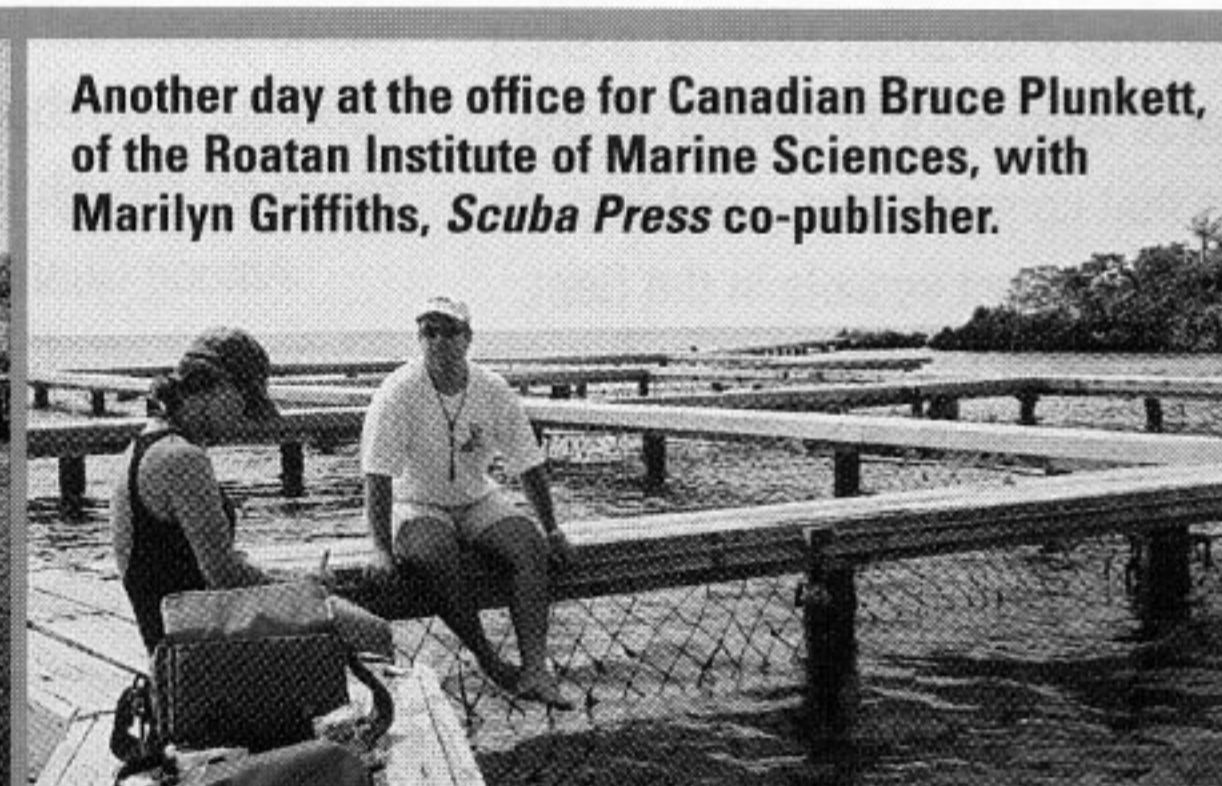
It was the grand finale that was the biggest thrill of all: we saw what a dolphin looks like from underwater when it jumps. As if by mutual agreement, the pair headed for the surface at a speed that's been estimated at 32 km/h. They exploded through the surface with enormous power and we were even able to glimpse their above-water arch before they re-entered, streaking back to the bottom to get ready for another leap. Plunkett says, "I've probably done over 2,000 open-water dives with these guys and every time is different. I never get tired of it because you never know what's going to happen. It's their call."



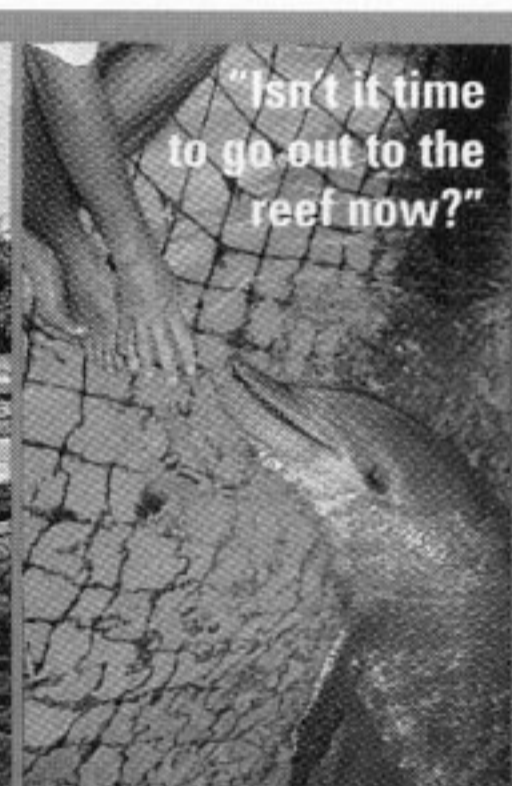
Esteban does a little open water tail walking in front of Anthony's Key Resort.



"Heee Haaaw! I love these open ocean dives."



Another day at the office for Canadian Bruce Plunkett, of the Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences, with Marilyn Griffiths, Scuba Press co-publisher.



"Isn't it time to go out to the reef now?"

photos Robert Choquette

## The down and dirty on Flipper **Dolphin myths exposed and strange-but-true dolphin factoids.**

**No superior intelligence.** Yes, dolphins do have extremely large brains, but this is because they need it to manage their advanced sonar communication (echo location) ability. Their actual intelligence might be compared to that of a smart domestic dog. "Sparky, sit! Good boy! Here's a sardine."

**Fear of sharks.** Flipper was a fraud. Dolphins do not kill sharks. So, where does this if-you-see-dolphins-around-it's-safe-to-swim thing come from? Bruce Plunkett of Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences explains. "If you're

swimming with dolphins, there won't be any sharks around because dolphins are afraid of them. If the dolphins suddenly take off, get the hell out of the water. Sharks are coming and the dolphins have run for the hills."

**No magical healing powers.** Many people believe that disabled children and adults exposed to dolphins as part of a treatment program show remarkable improvement in their condition. However, studies show that similar people exposed to programs involving interaction with dogs or horses or other animals respond

equally well. It seems it's the relationships developed through caring for and about animals that stimulates healing, and that goes for any animals.

**Won't jump as a means of escape.** The reason dolphins don't leap over the low dolphin pen-walls or fishing nets to escape, even though they are perfectly capable of doing so, is that they see underwater netting as a solid wall and don't realize it stops just at or slightly above the surface. (See also, 'No superior intelligence'!)

**Hatred of remoras.** Like most divers, dolphins absolutely can't stand remoras (who try to hitchhike a free ride and a free meal) and they'll take off fast when a remora is spotted in the neighbourhood.

**Never totally sleeps.** A dolphin does shut down half its brain, however, providing it with needed rest while keeping the other half alert. When one half has sufficiently rested, the other half takes a turn to catch a few zzzs.

### Dive In

AKR: [anthonykey.com/akr/rims](http://anthonykey.com/akr/rims)

# Regulars

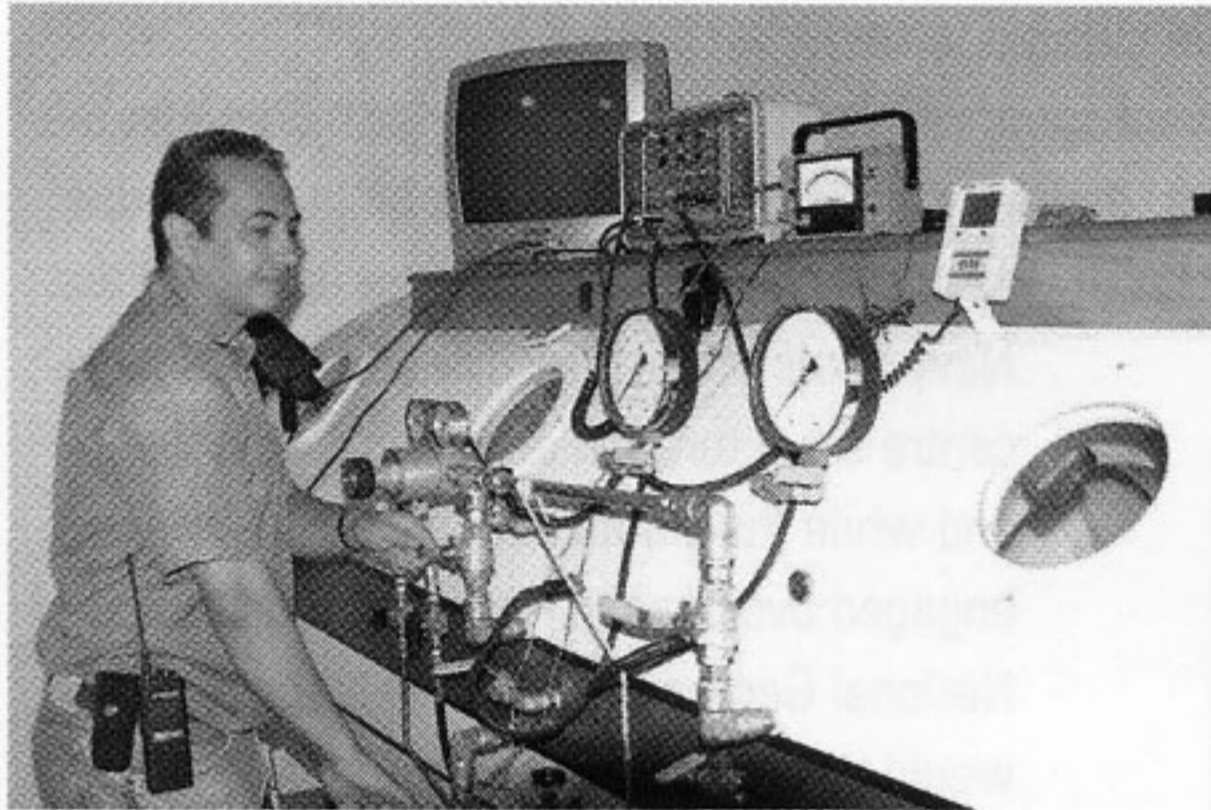
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Gone divin'.
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**OK, we missed the Happy Hour, but heck, we got an hour of happy diving before calling it a day. Anthony's Key Resort, Roatan, Bay Islands, Honduras. Robert Choquette**

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## Full-Fledged Medical Clinic at AKR

Anthony's Key Resort announces the opening of the Cornerstone Clinic, "in an effort to give back to the community and to aid the people of this small Caribbean Island," says resort owner Julio Galindo. The popular resort, well known by divers worldwide, is



located in the Bay Islands off Honduras' north coast.

"The clinic is able to treat and care for local people who don't have the means to pay for medical treatment," Galindo says. The clinic, which also offers emergency treatment to visitors, has three

doctors, one emergency technician and a lab technician. In addition to the existing hyperbaric chamber, plans include a fully-equipped laboratory, an x-ray machine, and an ultrasound machine. The clinic has rooms for overnight observations, an emergency room, and a small pharmacy. There are also small apartments for the doctors and technicians.

Galindo says the resort caters to divers and has always had a decompression chamber. "Our safety record is top of the line, impeccable. We have been in business over 30 years and Anthony's Key has created a very good reputation in the diving world. The clinic will serve the entire region, including commercial fishermen and lobster divers." For more information, [anthonykey.com](http://anthonykey.com).



Noel Jackson

## The Iceman Cometh

*Scuba Press* travel and adventure editor, Jim Kozmik, also moonlights as a professional underwater cameraman. He's seen here on assignment north of Churchill, Manitoba, working on a docudrama about the First Nations co-produced by the BBC and the Discovery Channel. Jim Kozmik is in the minus 2° Centigrade water surrounded by 1.5 m of solid ice. Rob Shannon, from Oakville Divers, Ontario, is the the frosted safety diver in the background, with two production crew.

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With shark diving, you're dealing with wild animals. It's like being in a game park in Kenya, without the Land Rover. Shawn Jackson

# THE POOL'S OPEN

Beyond its plentiful Caribbean diving, Roatan is a friendly and exotic island... and a bargain to boot.

by Robert Choquette and Marilyn Griffiths

"I ONLY DIVE ON DAYS THAT END IN 'Y'" TELLS A FADED STICKER ON THE WATER-TAXI SHELTER. THAT PRETTY MUCH REFLECTS THE *MODUS VIVENDI* AT ANTHONY'S KEY RESORT, THE PREMIER DIVE RESORT OF ROATAN IN THE BAY ISLANDS, 55 KM OFF THE NORTH COAST OF MAINLAND HONDURAS IN THE WESTERN CARIBBEAN: DIVE, DIVE, DIVE, AND THEN SOME MORE.

In the 30 years from 1749 to 1779, the English occupied the natural harbour that is located on the northwest coast of 60-km-long Roatan in the Bay Islands of Honduras. No fools the English, they were taking advantage of the relative protection offered by two small islets hugging Roatan's shore, Bailey's Key and Anthony's Key. Two centuries or more later, the only English people you'll encounter at Anthony's Key—yes, the name has stuck even after all these years—have swapped the red jacket for the dive skin and count themselves among the cohorts of world-travelers who indulge their passion at Anthony's Key Resort (AKR).

Originally the creation of American Paul Adams in 1968, AKR started as an all-inclusive resort with a casino, since converted into a museum and a research laboratory. Current owner Julio Galiano Sr., who's been right there from the beginning, purchased the resort in 1980, and today it is an all-encompassing family business. Julio Sr. is still at the helm, and he is assisted by sons

Samir and Julio Jr., who supervise the daily operations, and daughter Haydee, who runs the reservation office in Miami, Florida.

Compared with many other all-inclusive resorts of the Caribbean, AKR may seem small in size. "Nevertheless, we are self-contained," insists manager Samir, pointing out that AKR produces its own power and fresh water and treats its sewage. True, there may not be the same level of glitz and disco entertainment as there is on the larger islands of the Caribbean or the mainland—the evening's entertainment centres on the Frangipani bar—but AKR makes up for it by providing a close-to-nature experience and a family-friendly top-level dive operation. Besides, when they're not out there night-diving, divers typically go to bed early, setting themselves up for the next glorious day.

Guests at AKR are lodged in small wooden cottages that have neither telephone nor TV. Most are located on the 3.2-ha island known as Anthony's key that is

accessed by a 30-second water taxi ride from the property's hillside. Many of the 41 units on the key are built over the water on stilts and have hammocks on the deck in pure Bay Island style. The resort's other 15 units are located on the hillside.

"People like to be close to the water," Samir says. "All the units used to be all-screened with ceiling fans, but some of them now have air-conditioning. We're not planning to expand beyond the 56 existing units. We'll keep improving what we have while keeping everything rustic and simple."

That said, the resort announced a short time after our stay in April that it was expanding its decompression facility into a 24-hour medical clinic open to the local population, including the commercial lobster divers who too often push the envelope. "It is one way to give back to the community," Julio Sr. says.

AKR's dive operation is a smooth one. The resort owns a fleet of fast and modern 12.5 and 14.5-metre



FISHERMEN  
HAVE LONG  
FEARED THE  
MANTAS  
BECAUSE OF  
THEIR SIZE  
AND HABIT  
OF LEAPING  
OUT OF THE  
WATER.

remember that mantas are powerful animals that may unintentionally harm you. It is best to let the mantas approach you of their own choice. If you decide to make the first move, go slowly and be sure that you are in the manta's line of sight. Manta rays are known to enjoy the feeling of scuba exhaust bubbles against their skin but it is suggested that no large bubbles be sent their way. It may be tempting to touch a manta but lesions will develop on the skin when a thin coating of mucous is

removed, and it appears as though mantas that have been touched are less likely to approach humans again.

Manta ray diving is possible in almost any waters where they are found. Well known centres for manta diving include Yap, an island in Micronesia, and the Kona island of Hawaii. For more information visit [mantapacific.org](http://mantapacific.org)

—Cathy Christensen

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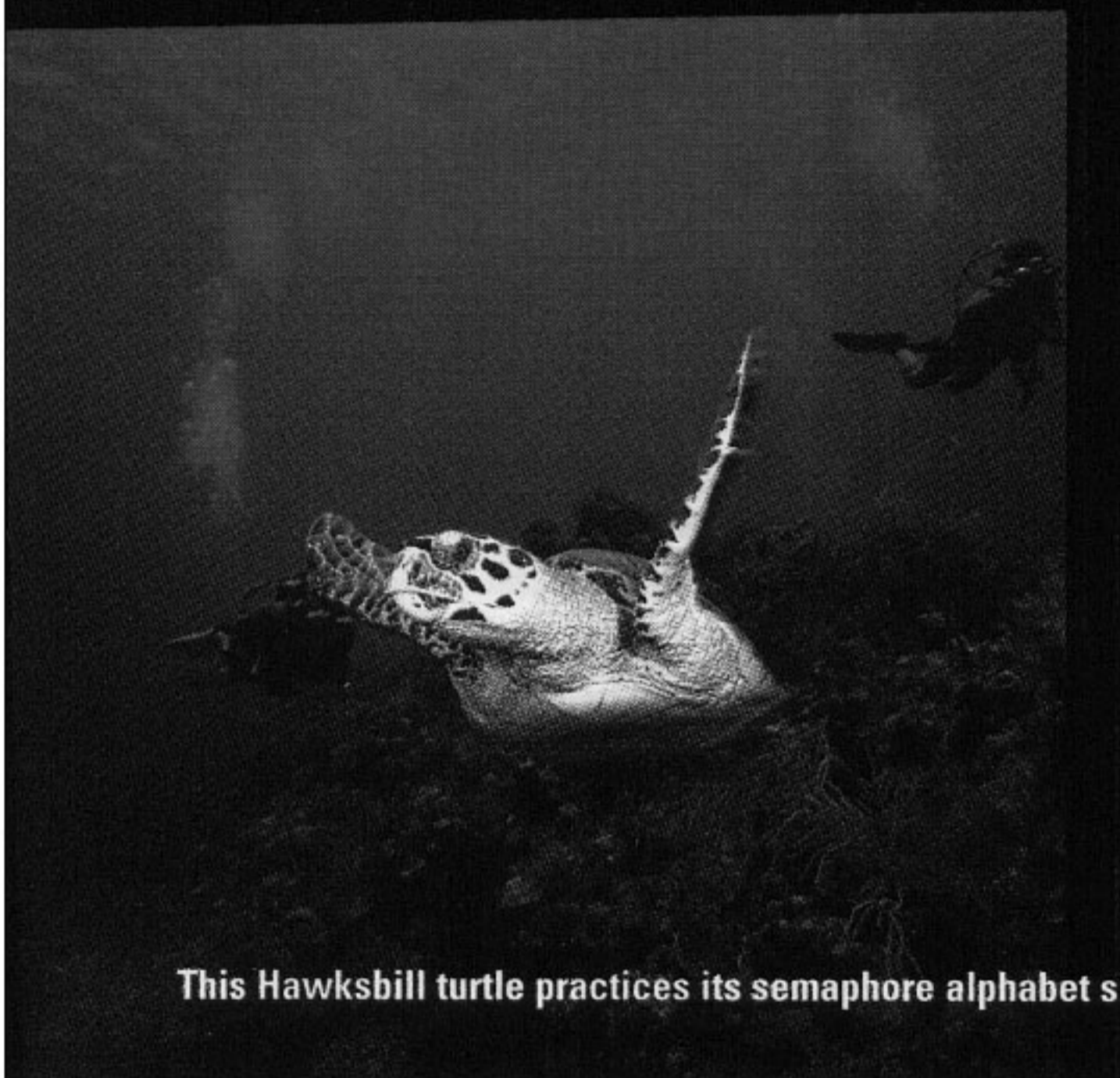


As we settle in, several large Caribbean reef sharks are waiting for us.  
Antonio Matias

[top] The neighbourhood is not what is used to be.

[middle] Seahorse diving has floundered since the introduction of shark diving.

[bottom] Purpletip anemone looking for Nemo.



This Hawksbill turtle practices its semaphore alphabet signals. Enrich Bush

boats. At capacity, it can handle 130 divers per day. Three boat dives a day plus two night dives a week are part of the standard package. Besides the unlimited shore diving from the key, it's all boat diving. Divers are assigned for the week to a boat having its own divemaster and captain. All the dive staff are from Roatan, the largest and most-developed of the eight islands collectively known as the Bay Islands.

Tanks are carried on board for you and most of the time staff will set up your BCD and regulator, and change tanks between dives. Prior to the first dive, all guests are asked to do a check-out dive, which is an opportunity to figure out weighting and take care of last-minute glitches before hitting the open reefs. Although the resort lists 35 dive sites, including a couple of large shipwrecks, it's been our experience to be mostly offered the sites located within a short boat ride, seldom exceeding ten minutes. Less time boating translates into more time in the water.

The two morning dives, 8:30 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., take you at depths around 23-26 metres. The afternoon 2:30 p.m. dive is slightly shallower but, generally speaking, average depths tend to be in the deeper range in

Roatan. It comes as no surprise that nitrox is quite frequently used. For the very popular Tuesday and Thursday night dives, the shallower Mike's Place and Eel Garden sites are often selected and never disappoint, as octopuses are usually on the prowl. Typically, the fringing reef starts in 6 metres where it slopes progressively to the top of the drop-off at about 13 metres. The coral-laden vertical wall drops well beyond recreation diving limits to about 55-60 metres before plunging into the abyss after a short sandy plateau. At many sites, the fore reef features spurs, grooves, and sand channels that shelter a varied marine life and create numerous swim-throughs.

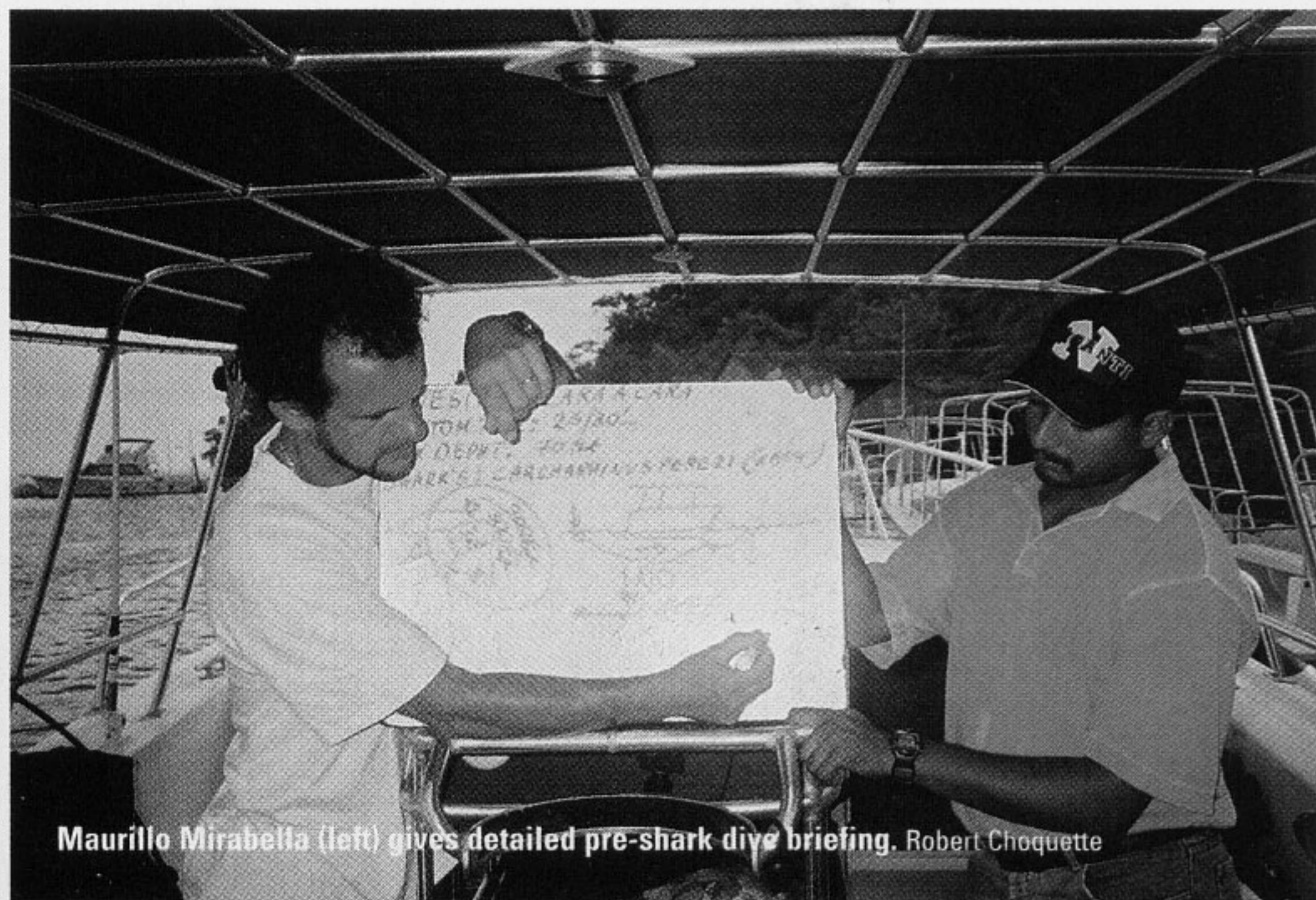
So what makes a dive resort a very good dive resort? For one thing, when the entire staff cares—from the water taxi driver, to the wait staff in the dining room and at the bar, to the dive shop and photo shop crew, to the front desk people and the management—you're off to a good start. Then, there's the resort life which, at AKR, is of the no-nonsense variety. It's casual, yet proper. Finally, the diving must be plentiful, varied and exciting. Check. Check. Check.

Mary's Place is such a site. Located on the south side of the island, past the airport and just off Sarah

Cay (about a 40-minute boat ride from AKR), Mary's Place is the must-do dive on Roatan. Divemaster Markos, who has nearly two decades of diving experience in Roatan, briefed us on the dive before declaring the pool open. The plan called for a quick descent to get away from the topside turbulence due to the high waves and to give us as much bottom time as possible on this fairly deep dive. The site is vertical-sided plateau-covered soft coral and sponges—look for the resident sea horses near the top—holed with two vertical swim-throughs. We followed Markos into the chimney's top opening, a secret spot hidden among the soft coral, the gorgonians and the sponges. Deeper into the convoluted chimney, we swam past outcroppings of black coral that clung to the walls like an A.Y. Jackson Georgian Bay pine. Markos indicated that we had the option of exiting our crevice through tunnels at 24, 30 or 33 metres. It was our choice, and we all came out at the same depth. We followed a deep channel near the base of the wall, and were checking out a spotted eagle flying by only to realize we were well over 36 metres. The visibility was so clear, and with the sparkling sunlight still casting strong shadows, we had no inkling of depth.



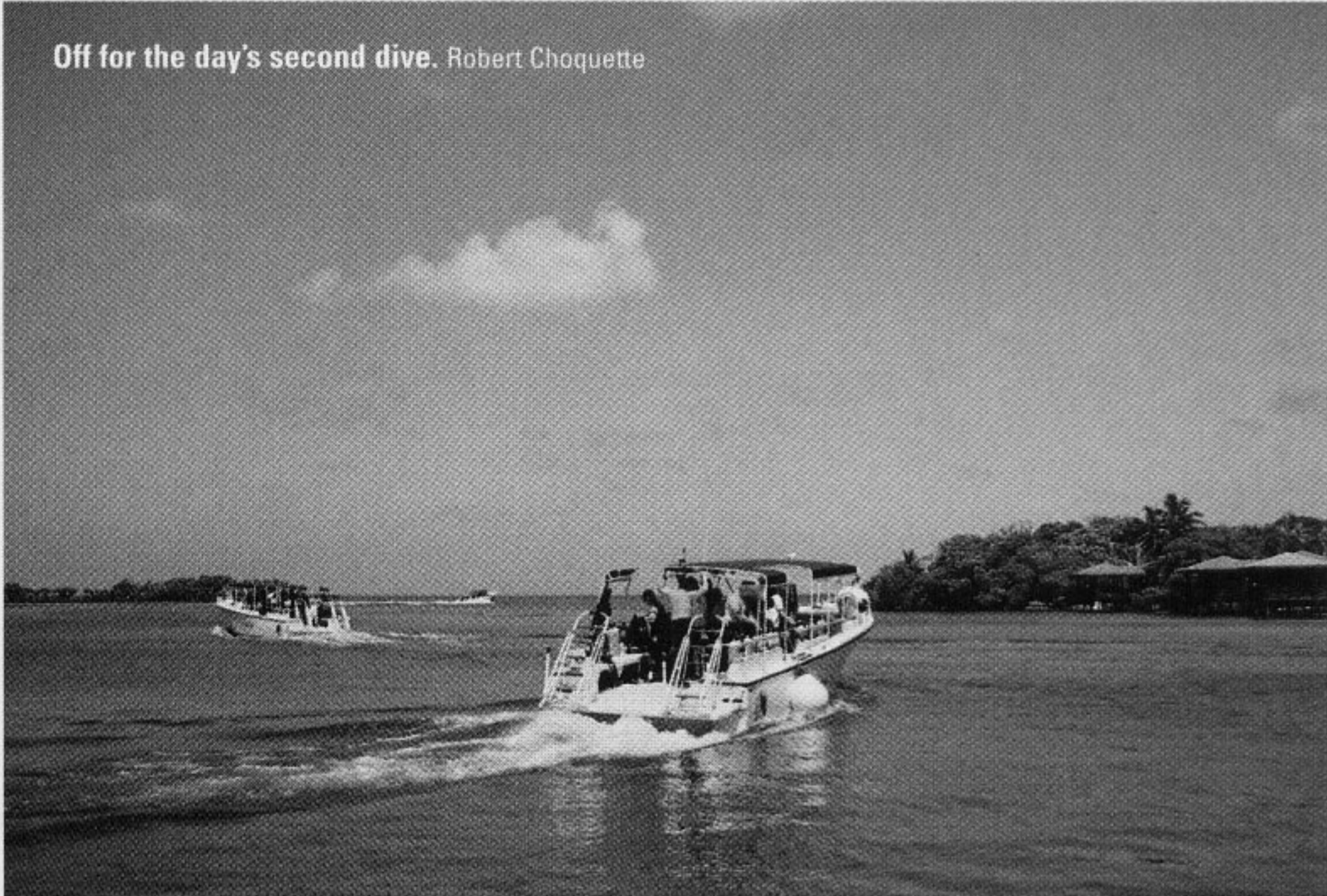
View from breakfast table overlooking Anthony's Key. Marilyn Griffiths



Maurillo Mirabella (left) gives detailed pre-shark dive briefing. Robert Choquette



Surface interval at Tamaya beach at Roatan's west end. Robert Choquette



Off for the day's second dive. Robert Choquette

Possibly the best dive of the week was a drift dive at Herbie's Fantasy on the current-swept western tip of the island. Developed as a marine park, the marine life is protected from spearfishing and lobstering in the West End and Sandy Bay sectors. Markos had warned us we were up for quite an adventure and was he ever right!

Just off the crest of the wall we were greeted by schools of larger fish, like yellow snappers, horse-eye jacks and very friendly giant groupers that didn't mind being patted. At around 24 metres, we came across a nurse shark, a couple of hawksbill turtles, two free-swimming green morays and a southern stingray. Back in the shallows a great barracuda was shadowing a huge ball of silversides. It was crazy. Drift dives are often rewarding as you cover so much ground with no effort. Herbie's Fantasy was a textbook-case example of maximum reward for minimum effort.

A good way to combat reef fatigue is to do something entirely different at some point during the week. So, we skipped a scheduled boat dive and went shark diving. The operation is run by Waihuka Adventure Diving Center owned by Maurillo Mirabella and Sergio Tritto, two Italians who have been running the dives for five years. At a rate of two to four dives a day, they have logged thousands of dives with the toothy creatures and they have the shark-encounter experience dialed. For convenience, we were on one of AKR's boats and received a detailed pre-dive briefing before leaving the resort.

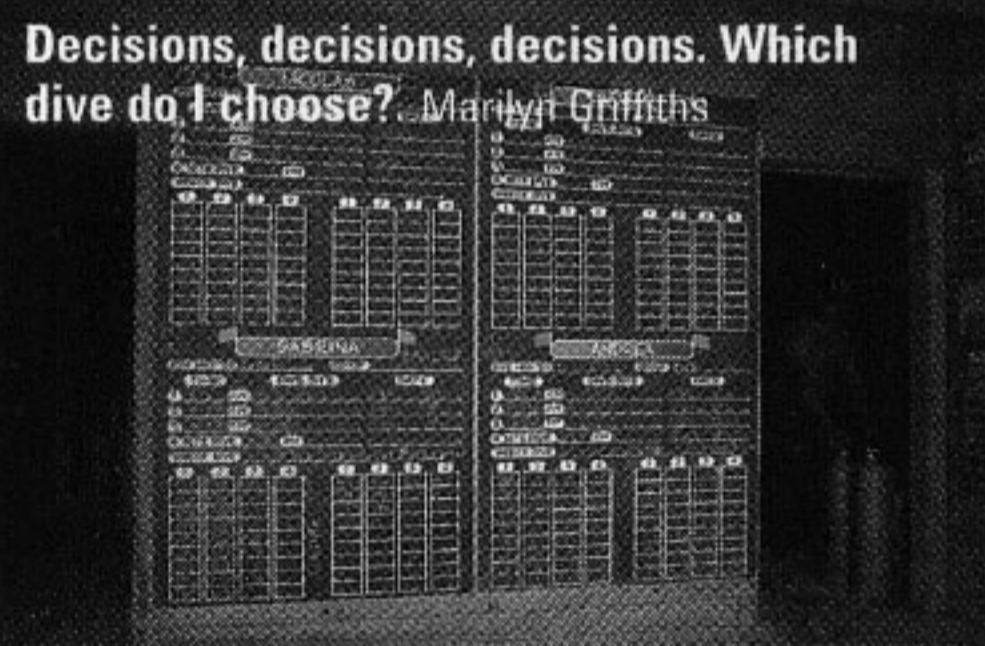
The selected site called Cara to Cara (it means 'face to face' but think of it as 'in you face') is located five km off the southwest point of the island. With shark

diving, you're dealing with wild animals and knowledge of that factor contributes to the buildup of excitement prior to entering the water. To keep it on the safe side, Maurillo has the entire dive 'choreographed.' We are to pull ourselves along the current line to the descent line, leading us to a sandy patch 20 metres deep. We can see several sharks waiting for us near the feeding area as we head down. "Hi fellas!"

The site is configured in such a way that the kneeling divers have their backs against a three-metre wall, which prevents sharks from sneaking up behind you. A good tip is to add some extra weight to your belt to stay solidly put with your arms crossed on your chest.

The feeding drill is quite simple. The bait is contained in a covered bucket which is lobbed into the centre of the sandy patch. The sharks, who seemingly know the drill, swim patiently in circles, building an appetite. This is the best time to take some photos as they come within arm's length. After 25 to 30 minutes, Maurillo grabs the bucket once again, cracks the lid open and tosses it into the fray. The 18 Caribbean reef sharks, ranging from 2.5 to 4.0 metres, clean up the bait in a few explosive seconds. Then it's over. Most of the sharks take off; others linger. The next feeding is just a few hours away.

One enjoyable aspect of dive holidays is the time you spend on the dive boat speeding to or from a dive site. It's an occasion to look at the island landscape,



Decisions, decisions, decisions. Which dive do I choose? Marilyn Griffiths



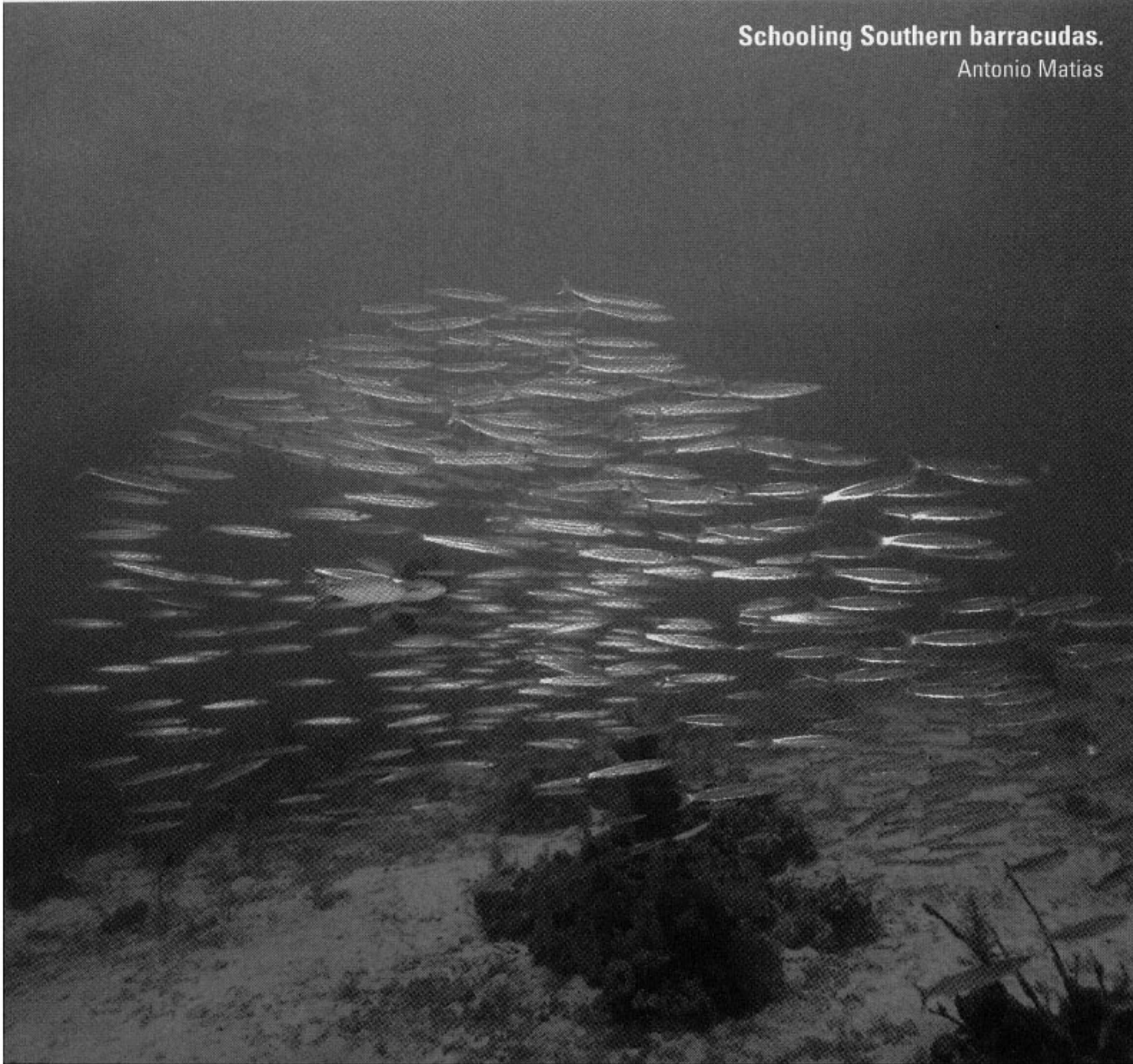
Between dives. Robert Choquette

which in the case of Roatan is very lush, and to observe the marine life from a different perspective, such as the ever-fascinating flying fish, or wild dolphins that occasionally come to play in the bow waves.

Diving is a great leveler. At any dedicated dive resort, such as AKR, guests are there to dive and nothing else. Wherever you come from or whatever you do for a living doesn't matter. That rings particularly true when dive boats are back at the dock between dives. Dozens of wet people in wetsuits (often stinky) gather on the spacious docks lined by the camera shop, the snack bar, the lockers and the dive shop, to stretch their legs, get something to drink, fill their logbook, compare notes and plan the rest of the day. Sure enough, there'll always be someone who'll tell you that their group sighted a rare whale shark or a manta ray. "Yeah, buddy, you buy me a *Salva Vida* at the bar tonight and I'll listen to your story." Inwardly, you're doing the math: "Jeez, I've got 12 dives left. What are my odds of seeing one of those too?"



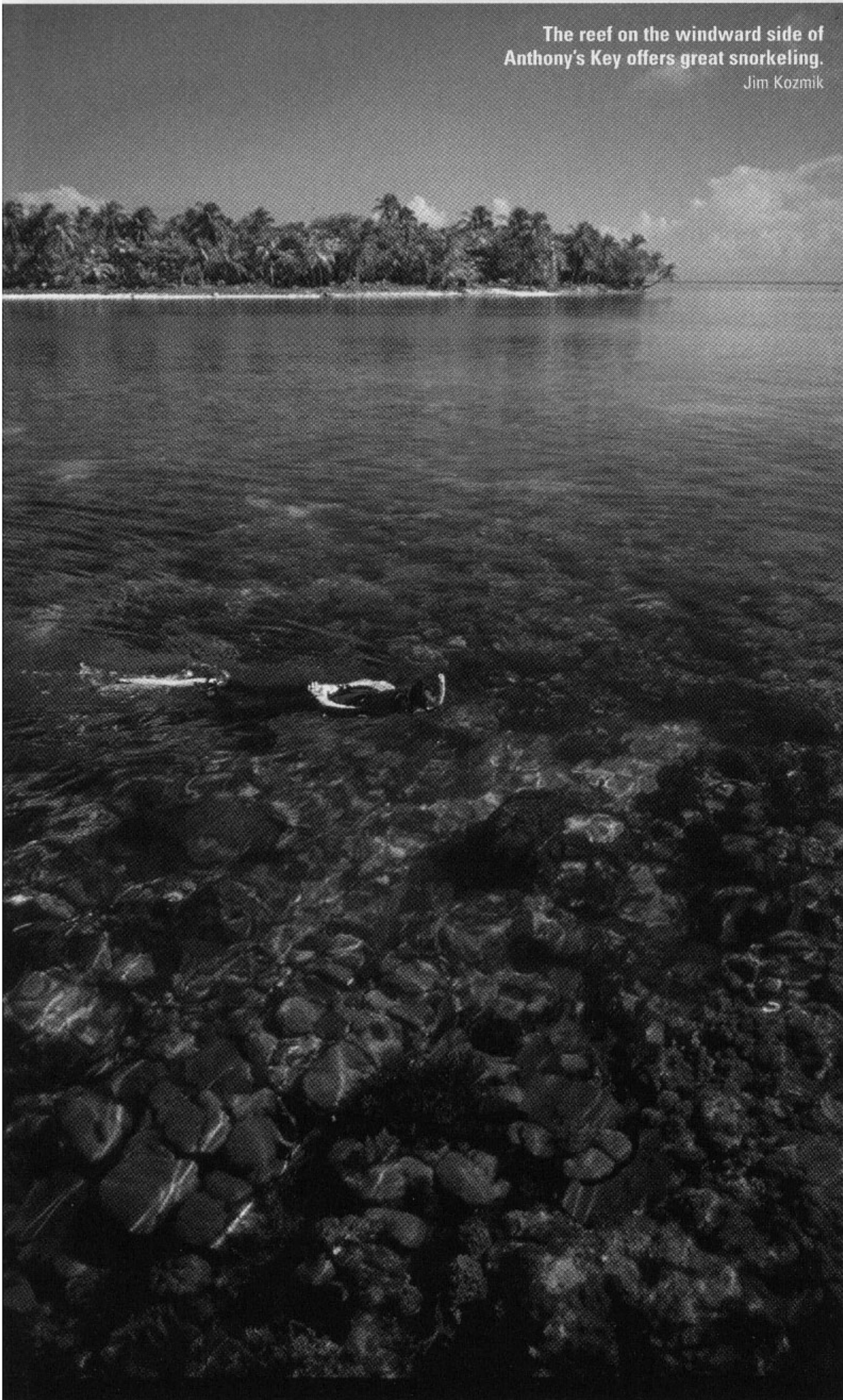
Schooling Southern barracudas.  
Antonio Matias



Each story has a silver(side) lining.  
Antonio Matias



The reef on the windward side of  
Anthony's Key offers great snorkeling.  
Jim Kozmik



Stained glass in Anthony's  
Key dining room. Jim Kozmik



Marilyn Griffiths

## Dive In

**Getting there:** New direct charter flights Toronto-Roatan with Air Transat will be offered later in the year starting December 10, 2004 and running until April 12, 2005. Continental and American Airlines, offer non-stop or direct daily flights from Houston or Miami to Roatan. Central American airlines TACA and Sol Air, Honduras' newest airline (866)3SOL-AIR, or online at solair.net, fly daily to Roatan via the international airport at San Pedro Sula on the mainland.

**Entry requirements:** A valid passport is required.

**Language:** Spanish is spoken in mainland Honduras, but English is readily spoken throughout the Bay Islands.

**Time Zone:** Central standard time, or one hour behind EST, two hours ahead of PST.

**Electricity:** Same as in Canada: 110 volts/60 Hz generated by the resort.

**Currency:** The Honduran lempira (HNL), valued at press time at 13.84 HNL to \$1 CAD. US dollars are accepted everywhere. Credit cards are widely accepted by resorts and dive shops.

Peak season: March, April, July and August.

**Weather:** Expect daytime highs in the 24°-26°C range in winter and 28°-35°C range in summer. Nights are breezy and reach 18°-20°C year round. The peak hurricane months are September and October. The rainy season runs from November to early January.

**Water conditions:** The visibility averages 24 metres and can peak at 30 metres or more. Expect water temperature around 28°C during summer and 25°C in winter.

**Recompression chambers:** Both AKR and Fantasy Island Beach Resort, on the south side, operate a chamber.

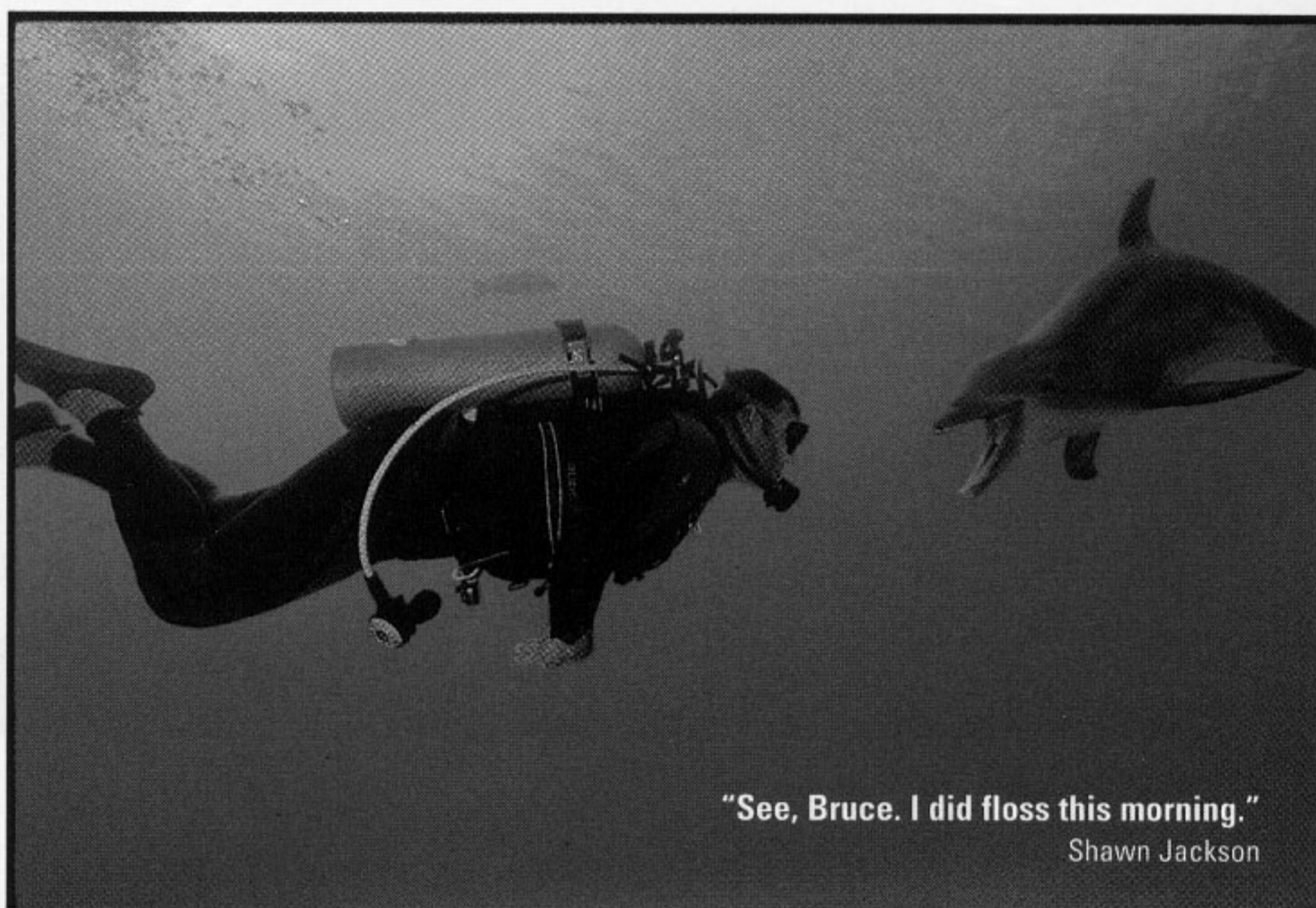
**Travel tip:** Bring plenty of bug dope against flying insects such as sand flies and no-see-ems.

**Know more:** For more information on AKR check out [anthonyiskey.com](http://anthonyiskey.com) or call 1-800-227-3483. Also for more information on Roatan, visit [roatanonline.com](http://roatanonline.com) or [letsgohonduras.com](http://letsgohonduras.com).

# Have you hugged your dolphin today?

## A visit to the Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences *by Marilyn Griffiths*

As we step onto the dock en route to what will be our cottage at Anthony's Key Resort (AKR) for the week, two dolphins jump and cavort in the wake of the five-metre flat-bottom outboard pulling in behind our boat. There on Roatan, one of the Bay Islands in the Caribbean off Honduras, a small crowd starts to gather. Needless to say it is not for our benefit but for the dolphins'. Their names, we soon learn, are Paya and Esteban, and it turns out that this is a regular Sunday occurrence, a get-acquainted stint for the week's newly arrived guests to get them stoked about their main focus—dolphins and diving.



"See, Bruce. I did floss this morning."  
Shawn Jackson

Canadian Bruce Plunkett, animal training manager and assistant director of the Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences, dangles his feet in the water as we perch on the narrow pen-enclosure fence. Below, a couple of dolphins eagerly play and chase like pups waiting for us to take them out for a run.

"This is my dream-come-true job, one where I can be involved in serious dolphin research and at the same time interact and observe dolphins in the open ocean," Plunkett says. "This is one of the few places in the world with an open-water program."

Originally from Maple, Ontario, Plunkett, a graduate of Guelph University in marine biology and psychology, took on this job in 1996, having begun his fin-to-flipper experience in 1985 working with the marine show at Canada's Wonderland, north of Toronto, and at similar operations in Vancouver, Mississippi and the Bahamas. Roatan is it for him now, the place where he lives with his wife and five-month-old daughter, Joan, in a home he has just finished building.

The Roatan Institute of Marine Sciences began in 1990 as a joint-program with AKR. Director Eldon Bolton, originally from Mississippi, joined the project 18 months after its inception and has been here ever since. "Our program is continuously evolving, and the focus is interaction between people and dolphins, to educate and entertain, tell the truth and dispel the myths," Bolton says.

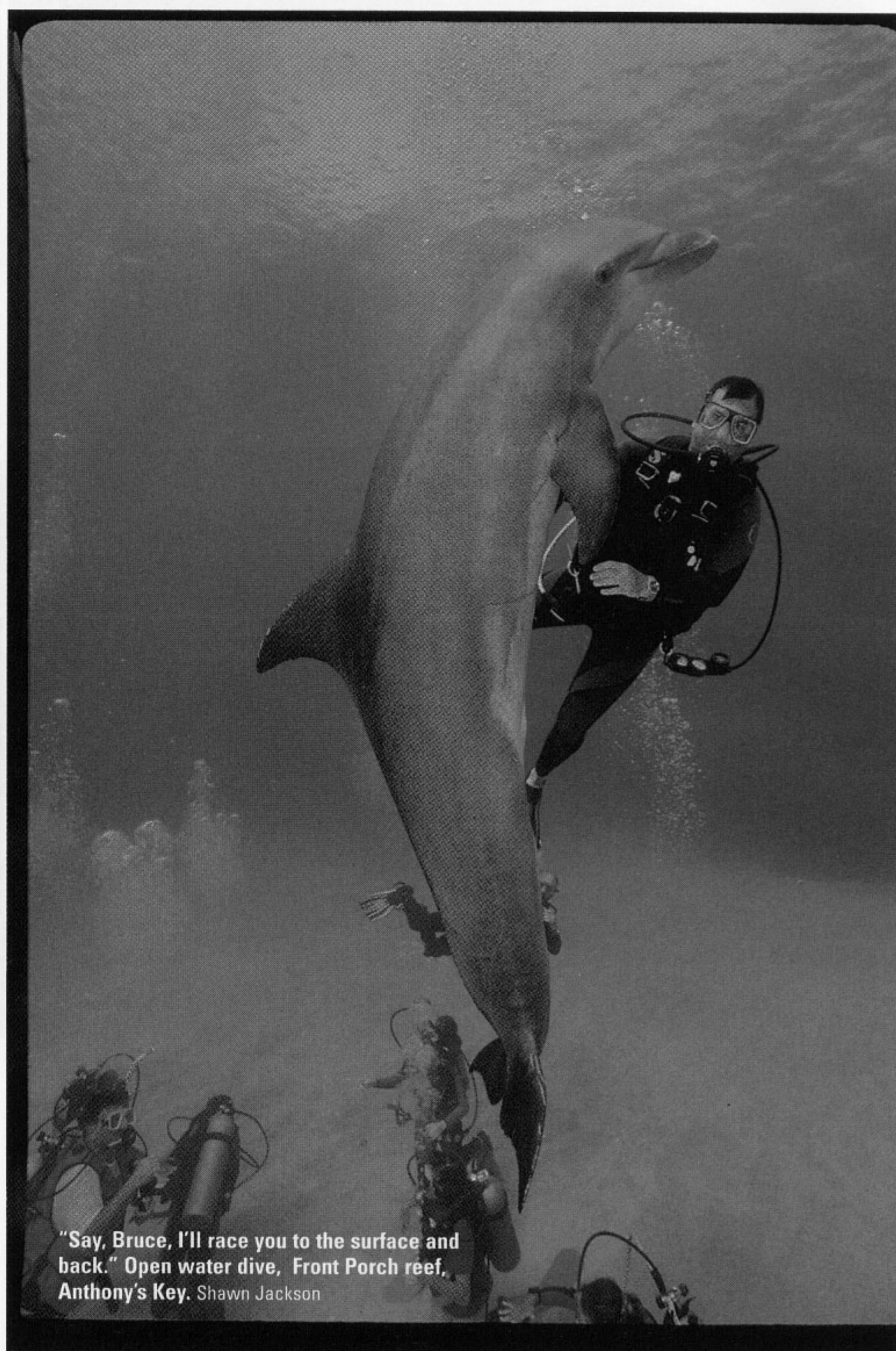
Fifteen bottlenose dolphins are active in the program, five of which were born in captivity. All training is

done through positive reinforcement, the rewards being fish, attention, and rubs. Dolphins are incapable of hearing words, since the external meatus, which is the main path of sound conduction in land mammals, is closed in cetaceans. All signals therefore are by hand or whistle. School starts when the dolphins are four to six months of age, by which time they are already almost two metres in length. As with humans, some dolphins are fast learners and others are not. It takes up to a year of working with an animal before it's taken into the open ocean.

In 1998 as hurricane Mitch approached, threatening the pens and as it turned out destroying them, the whole pod was escorted through the open ocean down-island for protection. All returned except one, who for no known reason took off.

One of the stars of the program is Paya, a 20-year-old male and a real ham who, Plunkett assures us, thoroughly enjoys performing for the camera. He has appeared internationally on postcards, posters, calendars—you name it, he's done it. Wherever a dolphin picture turns up, it could well be him saying 'cheeeese.'

Feeding 15 hungry dolphins is an expensive proposition and there's just no viable means of keeping up the fish supply locally. So, fish is imported frozen from



"Say, Bruce, I'll race you to the surface and back." Open water dive, Front Porch reef, Anthony's Key. Shawn Jackson

(where else!) Newfoundland. Capelin is trucked from the Rock to Miami and then shipped by boat at a cost of about \$2 per kg. Considering each dolphin consumes up to 20 kg a day, keeping these guys well fed and healthy is a costly proposition. The risk of localized power failures and consequent overload of unexpected thawed fish is ever-present, so storage freezers are located strategically throughout the island.

The institute is housed in a well-designed complex, originally built as a casino, right next door to the dive resort. Over the years, visitors from some 30 universities and ecological organizations from around the world have been provided with lodging, a small lab and a classroom to aid in their field research. Some 85-90 percent of their activities are in general marine biology, focusing on coral reef studies. Activities relating to dolphins are two-fold: the research and educational aspects; and the very necessary recreational revenue-generating programs such as dolphin dives, swims and encounters that fund the other initiatives.

The educational programs are coordinated by