



*Christmas tree worms*



*Blue parrotfish*

# Bankies In Bonaire

The Caribbean island of Bonaire proved a popular destination with Keith Waugh and 8 of his Clydebank SAC comrades. Warm waters, abundant sealife, plenty of sunshine and good food all played their part in what was a great diving holiday ...

IN APRIL 2009, a party of 8 divers plus three non divers from Clydebank Sub Aqua Club travelled to Bonaire, one of five islands of the Dutch Antilles. Bonaire is situated to the north of Venezuela, in the southern Caribbean. After a short flight from Glasgow to Amsterdam, a four hour wait then a gruelling 9 hour flight from Amsterdam to Bonaire, we finally arrived at the Eden Beach Resort at around 3am (Bonaire time). The plan was to sleep until about midday, however by 9am everyone was up and rarin' to go (so much for jet-lag), and by 12.45 we had checked in at the Dive Centre, collected weights, belts and 12 litre cylinders and were in the water at the quite spectacular Eden Beach 'Front Porch' dive site.

The Wannadive Dive Centre at Eden Beach is very relaxed about diving. You fill in a disclaimer form then a dive guide points to the sea and says, "there it is, go dive!"

The diving on Bonaire is also very easy. Most of it takes place on the

sheltered west side of the island. All the dive site car parks are marked with boulders painted yellow, with the name of the site in black. Off shore there is a marker buoy. All you have to do is pick a site, kit up, swim a short distance across coral sand to the start of the reef, drop-off (marked by the buoy) and dive.

The weather on Bonaire varies little. Air temperature is between 28°C and 32°C all year round. The water is 27°C all year with underwater visibility at around 40 metres - slightly better than Loch Fyne. The wind seems to blow fairly constantly but lightly from the east, hence the reason virtually all the dive sites are on the sheltered west coast.

The map of the Bonaire dive sites shows them all numbered and named. We soon found that we could just about pick any number and we were bound to get a great dive site, though I must admit that all the sites were very similar. The corals were in great condition with very few broken, unlike the Northern Red Sea. The fish life was prolific and remarkably tame - great

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*Jolthead porgy*



*Longmouth seahorse*



green moray eel



four eye butterfly fish

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Bonaire is located in the southern Caribbean

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for the photographers amongst us. The main problem each day was the decision on whether to go north from Eden Beach or south. The dive package included a boat dive over on the small island of Klein Bonaire. The day we went it was a little windier than usual so it made a slightly more interesting trip and we could dive at the dive guide's first choice. However it was still a good dive with plenty to see under water.

One of the best dive sites for me was the wreck of the *Hilmer Hooker*. It was 'allowed' to sink after it had been found carrying drugs in 1984. The full story can be read at [www.caribinn.com/hilma-hooker.html](http://www.caribinn.com/hilma-hooker.html). The wreck lies on its starboard side in 29 metres depth and is very easy and safe to penetrate. There were three large tarpon in residence on the wreck during our two dives. The fish life was quite prolific, though we didn't see any sharks. Dolphins were sighted from the Eden Beach Bar on a number of occasions, but sadly not underwater. The main marine life consisted of blue and midnight parrotfish, fench angelfish, banded and foureye butterflyfish, moray eels, spotted stingray, barracuda, turtle, french and smallmouth grunt, jolthead porgy, bigeye, squirrelfish, spotted drum, schoolmaster, spanish hogfish, various cardinalfish, trumpetfish, scorpionfish, graysby, various basslet, seahorse, lizardfish, goatfish, damselfish, tarpon,

scrawled filefish, porcupinefish, smooth trunkfish, spotted trunkfish, peacock flounder, blue tang, whitespotted filefish, honeycomb cowfish and probably many more. Most of us were diving over the hour on the majority dives as the water was so warm and the fish life and corals so mesmerising.

In the evenings most of the party went into the main town of Kralendijk (pronounced – Kralendijk) where there were plenty of restaurants catering to all tastes. The Eden Beach Bar also served a selection of meals where one or two of us occasionally had a rest from big meals. It seemed that we had a reputation of being 'that big party of 11' at two or three restaurants in Kralendijk.

April is not quite the main season for tourists, though there were regular visits from cruise ships, so the town was not too busy most of the time. We knew when a cruise ship had arrived as the beach at Eden Beach filled up.

The holiday was organised by our friendly branch chairman Tom Burke, and the party consisted of Brian Tierney, Gordon Downie, Keith Waugh, Michelle and John Morgan, Brenda and Iain Kennedy, their children Matthew and Scott and Brenda's mum Brenda. On behalf of everyone in the group, thanks Tom for organising a great holiday. Any plans for 2010?



tarpon on the wreck



shrimp in barrel sponge