



S.T.A.R.S. International Newsletter

May 2010

Asian Carp on the Verge of Invading Lake Michigan

Kevin HIGHLY recommends that any/all of our local participants and staff attend the next meeting of the Chicago Scuba Meet-Up Club on May 18th. Their next guest, speaker Josh Ellis (Metropolitan Planning Council), will address the severe threat the non-native species that has encroached on the Chicago River. This is truly a crisis. Since late 2009, Asian Carp have threatened closing the navigational locks into Lake Michigan dominating the newspapers. What has been largely missing from these discussions is a longer-term look at the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS) to consider what kind of system overhaul might be necessary to support the region's economic and environmental goals, while also addressing the threat of invasive species transfer between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River.

Josh Ellis will elaborate on how the Asian carp should serve as a catalyst for rethinking a wide range of CAWS issues. Josh has been an associate with Metropolitan Planning Council since 2006 and his focus is on advancing MPC's environmental and economic goals through policy research, advocacy, and community engagement. Josh manages MPC's water resources protection initiatives, co-authored "Before the Wells Run Dry", and now works with state, regional, and local leaders on strategies to sustainably manage Illinois' finite water resources. The meeting will be held in the basement at Lalo's Restaurant on Clybourne in Chicago starting at 8:00 pm following the business meeting at 7:30 pm. This is a great group of folks and will be a combo of food, fun, and discussion.



Featured Volunteer for May: Matt Schirmacher

Matt Schirmacher is one of the many great volunteers for S.T.A.R.S. International. He is an electrical engineer who has worked for Motorola for over 13 years. He always enjoyed being in the water, so much so that he became a lifeguard when he was 15 and then a certified diver at 19. One of the greatest joys he got out of life guarding was teaching swimming lessons to youngsters of all ages. Watching

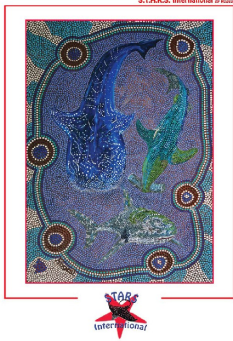
the kids, both then and now with STARS, overcome their fears or apprehensions to be successful in the water Matt says is simply awesome. Getting involved with S.T.A.R.S. gave Matt the chance to continue to grow and learn from experienced istructors and other volunteers but also from the kids. Matt says, "I only hope that the kids get as much out of this program as I do."

"To share often and much . . . To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



Fundraising and Rogest Print Sales



Fund raising by S.T.A.R.S. staff and participants this year has frankly not been what it needs to be. The economy and lack of personnel focused on the fund raising requirements has slowly put us deeper in the red than ever before. This is a unique program which has a different business model that truly requires a working program to raise dollars rather than pre-funding a full season based upon speculation, advertisement, or solicitation.

The lack of funding and 2010 invoices for equipment already purchased to reach Week 9 are slowly applying the brakes on our summer diving plans. It is critical now that each of us seek out resources within the community that can either contribute or coordinate opportunities for fund raising projects (community funds, donors, sponsors, etc...).

In addition, we need to secure small

donations to sustain operations monthly. We currently have about 75 Rogest S.T.A.R.S. International prints available to sell that could easily yield over a \$1,000 if each participant simply sold off 3-4 poster prints to friends and contacts. We strongly urge you to help us see the program through 2010 by making a small contribution to the efforts of so many volunteers.



Dive Masters in Training



S.T.A.R.S. International has more "pros in training" this year than ever before. In the Assistant Instructor class, Ann still has a minimal amount of work to finish, while the Divemaster candidates, Gil, Ana, Mike, Irene, and now Matt Mursewick, have varying amounts of work to complete before the end of season in just 5 months. Mike Johnson is putting his stake in the ground way out in front of the others with expectations of becoming an Instructor in 2011. Way to go MIKE!! Mike completed the AI SDI online course in a record setting 1 week truly burning up the Internet to get it done.

The Cove... Second Exclusive Showing

If you have not already seen the award-winning documentary, "The Cove", make time in your schedule to see it on May 15th @ 6:30 pm at the Helix Camera & Video Building, 8th floor downtown at 310 S. Racine. This encore showing by the Illinois Scuba Council is free with donations solicited at the door to support Ric O'Barry's efforts in Taiji, Japan to save the dolphins from certain slaughter in the fall and coming seasons. The heart wrenching films screams for a "call to arms" by all divers and activists who appreciate these incredible aquatic mammals. **DO NOT MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY OR MISS THIS FILM** this year. It will surely change the way you look at ocean preservation, Sea World, and Flipper forever.



2010 ICSSD Underwater Competition



April 11th found S.T.A.R.S. leadership in their third annual Illinois Scuba Council Underwater Competition. With a seasoned team of **Ann Paulsen**, **Gil Valencia**, **Kevin Vaughn**, and new comer **Jennifer McGregor**, the team finished one point off the first place UASC Scuba Club. Top events for the team were the ping pong ball snorkel push and the "flying" underwater tricycle event featuring Ann and Gil. Video of the event is available upon request. The excitement of the event has led S.T.A.R.S. leaders to host the first ever **S.T.A.R.S. International Underwater Competition** on May 22nd featuring the participants of this year's program at Larkin High School. This will be a spectator event held at the pool from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm. See you there!!

S.T.A.R.S. Cruiser Updates

The new S.T.A.R.S. equipment truck (dubbed the "STAR Cruiser") has made slow yet steady progress both internally and externally to bring it to a Starship class transporter. With the help of many talented volunteers, the STAR Cruiser has tank racks for 28 cylinders, equipment racks for over 30 sets of gear/wetsuits, weight bins, equipment mats, floats, first aid/DAN O2 kit access, and a large lockable steel box for valuables. The vehicle is a rolling dive shop minus a compressor. On the outside, volunteers have added 6 ambulance scene lights donated by **Capt Tony** and **Irene Bach** which will illuminate the darkest night for NIGHT DIVING or late night loading. Mechanically pieces and parts are being updated before or after failure with the end result planned to give us a solid and dependable vehicle good for miles of transport. Special thanks go out to **Layne Holter**, **Frank Kross**, **Matt Schirmacher**, **Cary-Grove High School Auto Shop**

for many hours of effort and bloody knuckles.

We are more than legal!... We're cruisin'!

After countless rumors about the legality of our new STAR Cruiser and its precious cargo, **Kevin** took the tablets to the mountain and held a call with the Illinois DOT Hazmat unit. Our special purpose and non-profit status were clearly laid out to the state officials to determine what permits, licensing, or markings were needed to be in both state and federal compliance when hauling the volume of compressed air that we do. Fortunately, we were pleased to learn that above all else, commerce laws involving permits, licensing, and markings DO NOT apply to us being a non-profit venture and having a vehicle with a GVWR of 9,000 lbs. We are not only blessed for interstate travel, but we have a contact name within the IL DOT Hazmat unit to provide to anyone who questions our rights. The



concerns of the Hazmat unit about our cargo will lead to a further upgrade of the vehicles cargo straps to ensure the load will not break lose during any possible incursion or non-catastrophic event. A huge sigh of relief for us in the coming months.



S.T.A.R.S. Ice Diving



April 23rd and near frigid conditions.... Sounds like Chicago right? Well somehow it doesn't quite add up for an indoor pool dive. Well due to a boiler failure at the school the kids got their first near-taste of diving Lake Michigan in the spring with a pool temp hovering near 58 degrees and exposure protection not appropriate for the conditions.... All the kids lacked was muddy water and 6 inch visibility. Next time you see the S.T.A.R.S. participants see if their teeth ever stopped chattering... and also please encourage the staff to return from their near mutiny. The only smiles that day were from the sides of the pool from folks that were not diving.



From the Tank as Reported by Kevin

Things at the Rainforest Café at Woodfield Mall are still "Bubbles Up". As I may have mentioned before, we have a small array of "bully fish" which are very territorial and that like to chew on the dive staff during our routine work. Those troublesome fish obviously never read the Rainforest Code of Conduct about employee harassment. As luck would have it, the store curator decided to punish those bully fish by pulling them out of their small society with nets for a few days so as to disorient them in the fish pecking order. The plan was to reintroduce them back into the same tanks after giving them a time-out. One of these bully fish was a blue and yellow Hogfish that had it in for me regularly when I worked in the archway tank. I had been talking to my big, red, Grouper buddy in the cylinder tank about the troublesome Hogfish... as he always seems to listen. Well as luck would have it, the Hogfish inadvertently got released into the wrong tank while the curator was on vacation... coincidentally into the same tank as my large, red, Grouper buddy. When morning came, my red Grouper friend was not up for breakfast and the Hogfish had vanished. Seems he may have gotten in the way during the night when the Grouper went looking for a midnight snack. I just wonder if Hogfish really taste like bacon? Back to work scrubbing until next month.

Dive Kulture Makes Strides for Participants Jobs

Very much like S.T.A.R.S., Dive Kulture has an unspoken goal to get participants and graduates find employment with their new skills and interest once they become certified. Two of the Dive Kulture students started working for "Massachusetts Board of Underwater Archaeological Resources", a federal agency which is part of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management. The kids have started a real job that involves lots of data entry and maybe a little bit of field work. Their boss was really surprised at the end of the day because Director Laura Medrano had not called him 100 times to check-in on the kid's progress. He sent Laura an e-mail to let her know how well the youngsters had done and admitted that it was the first time that office had ever hired such young people to work for them.

Another Dive Kulture participant volunteers at the New England Aquarium and is having a ball feeding the animals in the big ocean tank. Some students will be working for Save the Harbor/Save the Bay as Marine Educators. Another participant is working with the South End Technology Center actually teaching other kids about computers totally unrelated to the water.

A few participants are lifeguarding and thinking about taking a special course to become lifeguards who can do rescue scuba divers in the pool. If a pool has a lot of people diving, the lifeguards will need to know how to rescue a diver, not just a regular person in a swimsuit.

Something Laura is very serious about is instilling a sense of Dive Kulture ownership in each youngster as she sends them off on these job opportunities. Laura lets them know that they can't just think about themselves; but instead must keep "the program" in mind and how they represent the program, Laura, and every participants. The impact each participant has on the people who hire them, reflects a larger group of people in the community trying to make an positive impact on the neighborhood.

Laura explains to them that when they work, they have to do a "good job", not only to keep their job, but also because they represent an organization/company bigger than themselves too, and the reputation of the organization depends on each employee.

Everyone's Invited

Elgin High School

May 19 - 6 pm

Elgin Fire Dept.

Dive Team

& Billy Shells

and

May 26—6 pm

Israel Vargas

Inspirational Speaker

"if we did all the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves."

Thomas A. Edison