

Young divers in the Kids Scuba dive camp on Tioman Island, Malaysia, enjoy the underwater world with a few of the cartoon characters from Scuba Rangers/SSI such as (clockwise) Spinner, Sargent Major, Puffer, Captain Kelp and Hammerhead

Kids Love to Dive

Reaching out to a new generation of divers

Edited by Gunild Symes
Photos courtesy of Syed Abd Rahman and Kids Scuba

One of the largest children's diving clubs on Earth is in Malaysia, where the diving is world-class. X-RAY MAG talked with Syed Abd Rahman, director of Kids Scuba—the biggest Scuba Rangers program in the world—to find out the key to their success and how it is influencing the popularity of diving in Malaysia.

X-RAY MAG: What is Scuba Rangers? What is Kids Scuba? Where are you located?

SAR: Scuba Rangers is a special scuba diving club for kids ages 8-12. Kids Scuba Malaysia started in 2004. We are a member of Scuba Schools International (SSI) and a Scuba Rangers Award Winning Instructor Training Facility. We operate at the Maybank sports center swimming pool in Bangi, just 30 minutes drive from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about yourself, your background and why you started Kids Scuba.

SAR: I've been diving about 20 years now in places throughout

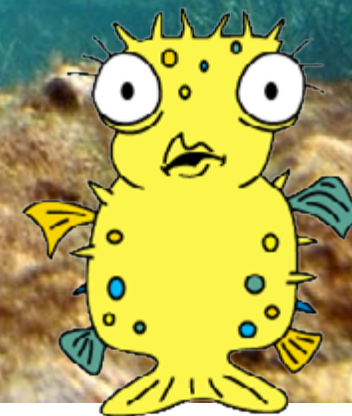
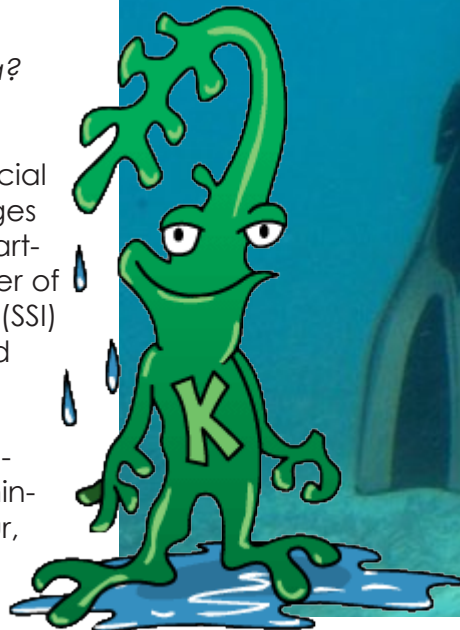
Asia. I am a very keen diver and committed to the sport. I love teaching kids in the sport of Scuba Diving. In fact, my daughter became the youngest

PADI Seal Team diver in Malaysia. Initially, when she followed me on my diving trip abroad, we only saw other kids diving. After her certification, I started Kids Scuba

Malaysia in 2002, with the Scuba Discovery program conducted in the pool. The goal was to let other kids in Malaysia share the sport and enjoy the underwater world

that Malaysia has to offer. I then took my Scuba Rangers Instructor Training course back in 2004 in Singapore. In 2006, I was upgraded to the level of Scuba Rangers

Instructor Trainer for Malaysia and was awarded the Leading Scuba Rangers Club in South East Asia. There was no looking back for me after that! (Smile)





Syed Abd Rahman (in blue third from right) celebrates with the kids, parents and staff of the 2009 Kids Scuba Camp on Tioman Island



Kids Scuba

enjoying with them the underwater world. The other part is seeing the kids grow with the program, becoming responsible divers with good buoyancy and being good dive buddies who appreciate the marine life and conservation of the marine ecosystem.

email me, not forgetting to remind me over and over about what to do and where to go next. Whew!

X-RAY MAG: What are the biggest surprises, insights, or loves the kids have in diving the underwater world?

X-RAY MAG: What do kids say to you about their experience with Kids Scuba?

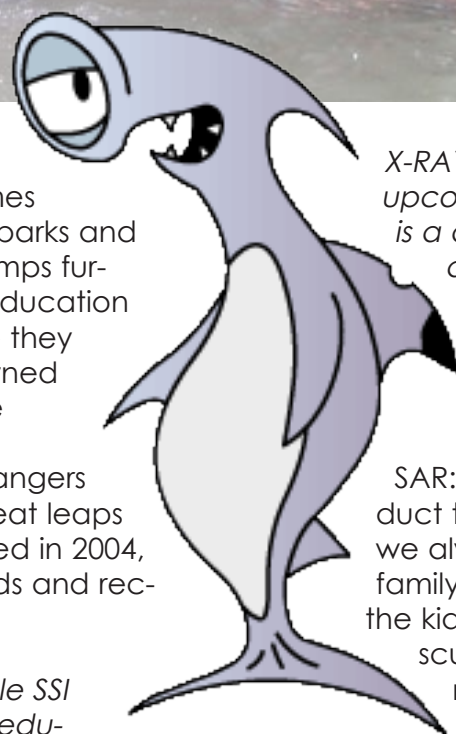
SAR: The kids love the so-called Nemo

X-RAY MAG: Kids Scuba is the largest organization for kids of its kind in the diving world. Why is it so popular and what are you doing that's making it such a success? What do the Scuba Rangers mean to Malaysia and diving in Malaysia?

SAR: The Scuba Rangers program is flexible in that it allows the Instructor to be creative with the speciality courses but within the training standards. An example is the underwater painting ranger speciality program in Malaysia. After teaching the kids through the five sessions of the Rangers level, starting with the Red, White, Blue, Silver and finally the Demo Ranger, the young rangers can look

forward to our Kids Scuba Camps organized three times a year at selected marine parks and islands of Malaysia. The camps further facilitate their scuba education and underwater skills, while they are able to see the reknowned Clownfish "Nemo" from the Disney animation, *Finding Nemo*, in real life. Scuba Rangers In Malaysia have made great leaps and bounds since we started in 2004, gaining International awards and recognition.

X-RAY MAG: Tell us what role SSI has in the Scuba Rangers' education.



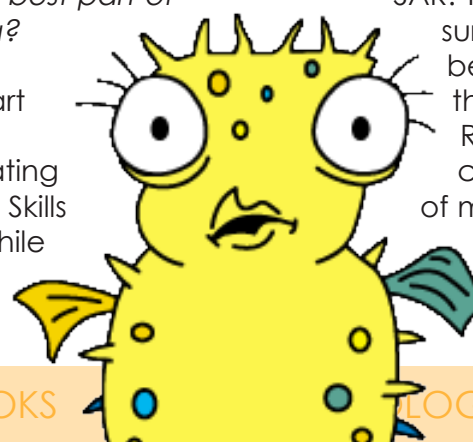
X-RAY MAG: One of the upcoming events of Kids Scuba is a dive camp at Sipadan and Mabul islands. Tell us about it and what kids can expect to do, see, learn when they are there.

SAR: Whenever we conduct the Kids Scuba Camp, we always emphasize a total family-oriented program, where the kids will have a chance to scuba dive at the shallow reefs up to five meters

with a ratio of two rangers per Instructor or Dive Leader. The dive is always the first priority! Without fail, the Rangers will be asking me every minute once we reach the island— (laughs)—followed by the education on the marine ecosystem and coral reefs. While we take the Scuba Rangers kids to go diving, moms and dads, brothers and sisters, can have a good time on their own and dive at their own leisure.

X-RAY MAG: What is the best part of your job with Kids Scuba?

SAR: For me, the best part of teaching the Scuba Rangers course is educating the kids the Right Scuba Skills and Scuba Discipline, while



SAR: They love it, and they make sure they checkmate me first before I can even plan for the next event. My Scuba Rangers are my bosses; they can really take the time out of me. They call me, text me on their mobile phones, and

clownfish toys that we put in the pool during their weekly training session. We also include toys such as underwater torpedos, underwater frisbees, and hula hoops, which are placed under water during the rangers training program. One of the most awaited speciality programs we conduct is the Night Rangers



SAR: Scuba Rangers, a kids scuba activity club, was started in 1999 by Paul Oberle of Louisiana, United States. He pioneered child-specific scuba training techniques and educational philosophies. Affiliated with Scuba Schools International (SSI) (www.divessi.com), Rangers Clubs are found worldwide. Though the Scuba Ranger classes cater for kids aged 8-12, parents and teenagers are also welcome, as we encourage a family-oriented water sports program.

New Rangers proudly display their awards and certificates

Puffer (left) Children taking the Kids Scuba Pledge (above)





PETER SYMES

Speciality, which we only conduct once a year with exclusivity. The rangers get to dive at night in the pool with full dive gear coupled with Dive Torch and Light Sticks. We even decorate the hula hoops underwater with light sticks! And most of the mom and dad divers get to dive along as well. It's really a valuable experience, as the kids will go back smiling about their achievement and will tell everyone in their path—I mean everyone—about their diving experience. After educating them in the pool, the young Rangers look so much forward to the Scuba Camps where they can see the lovely Clownfish "Nemo" for real, sea turtles, the Sargent Major fish and appreciate the real marine life, but to a limit of five meters in a confined water environment.

X-RAY MAG: How can kids and parents get involved? How do they get signed up for the next camp at Sipadan-Mabul?

SAR: We will inform the Scuba Rangers well in advanced about our camps, and we will published it on our website for the yearly Scuba Camp calendar. We also have a bulletin board at the pool and inform the Rangers and moms and dads on the Scu-

ba Camp dates and venues. As the camp is open exclusively to the Scuba Rangers and Families. The Kids Scuba Camp in Mabul/ Sipadan has been full since July 2009, with 97 pax in total with 61 divers.



X-RAY MAG: Does it cost a lot of money? What about equipment? Is it expensive? And travel? How expensive is it?

SAR: The Scuba Rangers course in Malaysia is about RM850.00 = USD250 per pax for five sessions. All equipment is provided during the course with add-ins such as breakfast, hot and cold refreshments, and lunch for all students with moms and dads as well. We make sure the kids do not go back hungry! They can really eat after a pool session. An average Kids Scuba camp costs about RM1000.00 = USD350.00 per pax including accomodation, diving and land transfers. The rates are applicable to the western Malaysia islands, but are not applicable to the islands off Sabah, as they offer different rates.

X-RAY MAG: What is the most important aspect, insight, inspiration you and participants get from Scuba Rangers?

Scuba Rangers of the Kids Scuba booth at the Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) 2009 in Kuala Lumpur

SAR: The Scuba Rangers have a very important pledge that says: "As a Scuba Ranger, and a member of the diving community, I pledge to have fun, continue my diving education, protect the aquatic environment, dive responsibly, and participate in my community, my family, and my future in a positive way. Way to go, Scuba Rangers!" All rangers have to recite the pledge every time as a group before the start of the class.

Scuba Rangers is the only dive course in the world with a pledge, and it's a very healthy pledge covering the areas of fun, education, aquatic environment, responsibility, community, family and the future. Maybe the other agencies should follow suit as well. Just kidding!

X-RAY MAG: Where do the participants come from?

SAR: The participants come from various



RECOGNITION & AWARDS

Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) Singapore April 2006: "Rising Star Award – South East Asia " from SSI International for achievements in certifying the most numbers of SSI Scuba Rangers in Asia and organizing the first Kids Scuba Camp in South East Asia in March 2005

Malaysian International Dive Exhibition (MIDE) Kuala Lumpur in July 2007: "The Best Dealer Award 2007 – Scuba Rangers Certifications"

Asia Dive Expo (ADEX) Bangkok April 2008: "Single Largest Scuba Rangers Program in the World" from Mr. Ed Christini, Director of International Division, SSI International from Colorado USA

Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) Kuala Lumpur, July 2008: "Sports Diving Magazine - Australia Award" for the success of Malaysia SSI Kids Scuba and Scuba Rangers program in Malaysia

Malaysia International Dive Expo (MIDE) Kuala Lumpur, July 2009: Three awards, namely, "Best Scuba Rangers Club", "Best Scuba Rangers Certification" and "Best Scuba Rangers Instructor Award" for the success of Malaysia SSI Scuba Rangers program in South East Asia

Syed Abd Rahman (left of banner) with children participating in the Kids Scuba Camp on Tioman Island

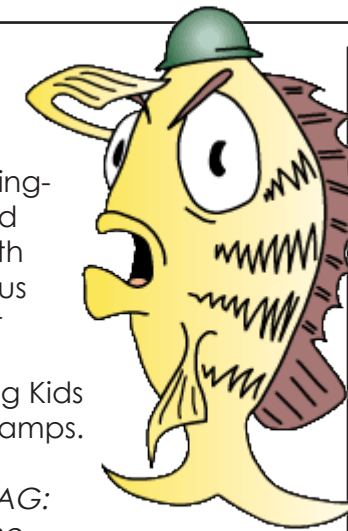
Syed Abd Rahman, Director, Scuba Educator
SSI - Scuba Rangers Instructor Trainer #21643
SSI - Dive Control Specialist Instructor #21643
ITDA Sports Diving Instructor Trainer # 298868
IHMP Dive Medic Instructor #298866

KIDS SCUBA "Underwater Adventure For Kids" SSI Award Winning Instructor Training Facility; The Leading Scuba Rangers Club in Asia & The Largest in the World 2007; Tel: 6019-3176705 (Syed) or 6019-3826705 (Nadia) Dive Center: 603-51918005; Email: kidsscuba@yahoo.com Website: www.kidsscuba.com

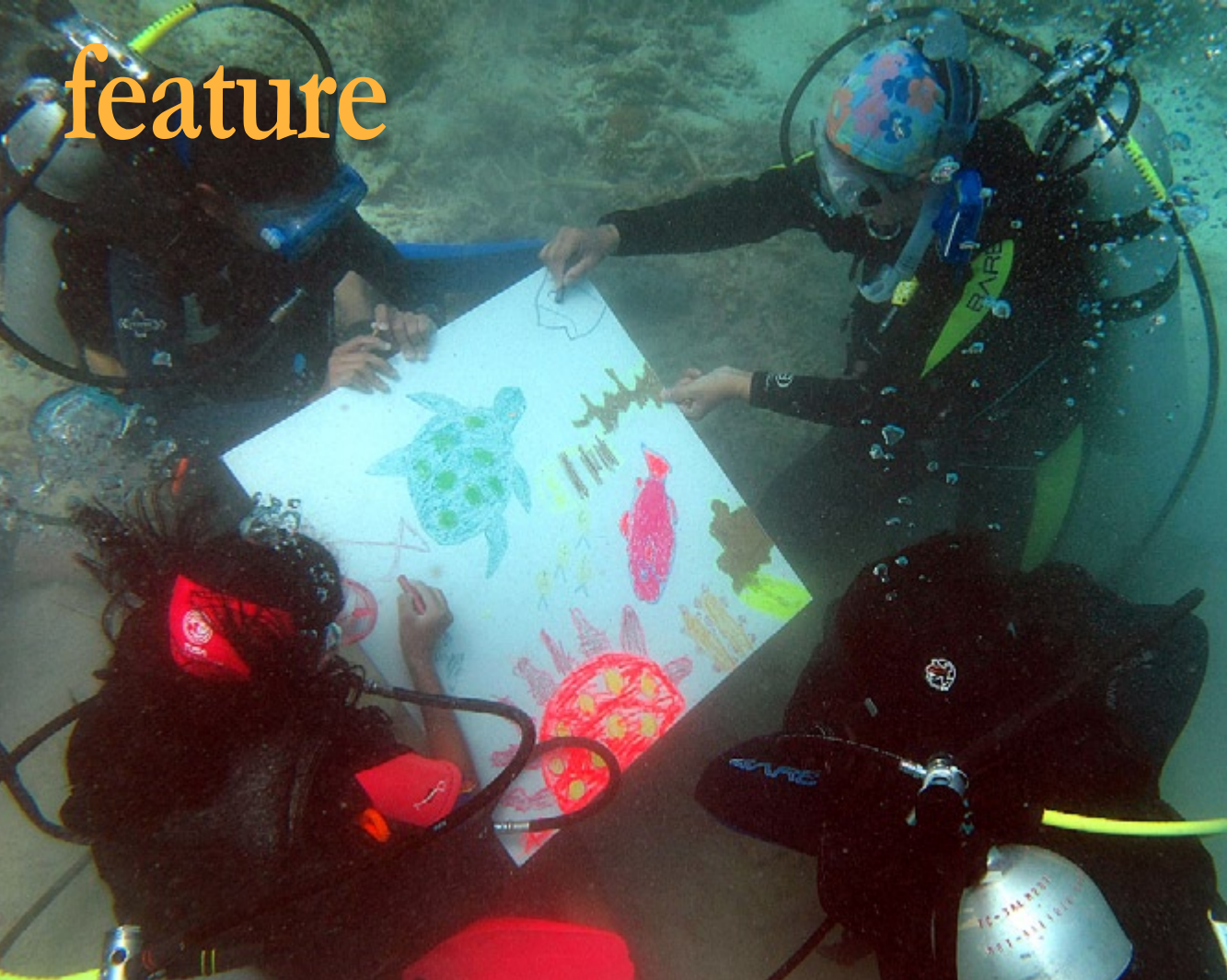
parts of the region. We have families from Singapore, Hong Kong, United Kingdom, Australia, United States and even South Africa joining us during our past and upcoming Kids Scuba Camps.

X-RAY MAG: What is the impact of Scuba Rangers on diving as a sport in Malaysia? Do you get a lot of support from area dive businesses and resorts? If so, how do they help? What more do you need from interested dive businesses who want to get involved?

SAR: The Scuba Rangers have a good and



The Scuba Rangers have a good and healthy impact on the sport in Malaysia.



Scuba Rangers drawing what they see, creating art under the waves

trainer and consultant. I can be reached at kidsscuba@yahoo.com or my office in Subang Jaya, Malaysia at tel. +603-51918005 or mobile at +6019-3176705. Our website is www.kidsscuba.com.

X-RAY MAG: What else would you like our readers to know?

SAR: Kids Scuba in Malaysia organizes Main Kids Scuba camps for Scuba Rangers and their families three times per year (on Malaysian school holidays) to various lovely marine parks and islands in Malaysia, such as Tioman Island, Redang Island, Lang Tengah Island, Langkawi Island and the lovely islands of Sabah.

Rangers program in Malaysia.

X-RAY MAG: Any future plans for Kids Scuba Malaysia?

SAR: We plan to train more Scuba Rangers Instructors in Malaysia and in Asia and to expand the program to the other regions as well, such as India, China and the Middle East. This in turn will educate more Scuba Rangers to be responsible divers with good and knowledgable underwater skills.

X-RAY MAG: What would you tell other directors who want to start a similar program in their locations? Will you help them as a consultant? If so, how? And how can they reach you?

SAR: I would very much like to assist in any way possible if any course directors, instructors, or resorts want to start a Scuba Rangers Program anywhere. Yes, I will assist and help them as a

Kids Scuba

hundreds of the "little and cute Scuba Rangers" we have trained grow and become good and responsible teenage scuba divers with good values, appreciating marine life and the ecosystem.

For me, the hundreds of Scuba Rangers we have trained are the next, future generation of divers. It is up to us to educate them and give them the right values to appreciate ocean life and the marine ecosystem.
— Syed Abd Rahman

For me, the hundreds of Scuba Rangers we have trained are the next, future generation of divers. It is up to us to educate them and give them the right values to appreciate ocean life and the marine ecosystem. If we don't do it now, we might not know what's going to happen 15 to 20 years from now to the lovely marine parks of the world... Let's all do our bit for the environment of the ocean starting with the young ones. ■

Dive T-Shirts for Kids



Lots of fun designs on various colors and organic styles in kids & toddler sizes. Bulk discounts & international shipping. Plus, a percent of all sales goes to ocean conservation. Find them at The X-RAY MAG Store!

www.cafepress.com/xraymag

healthy impact on the sport in Malaysia. It has grown with a strong impact on sports tourism to promote the islands in Malaysia as a dive destination that caters to families as well.

Yes, we do have good and strong support from the Malaysian government, Tourism Malaysia, state

government as well as selected dive resorts and instructors of all levels and agencies in Malaysia. The Scuba Rangers in Malaysia gets very strong support from the local media, TV stations, newspapers and magazines, which cover our programs regularly.

They (the media) actually have a very strong impact on the Scuba

During the camps, the Rangers can gain a deeper appreciation for marine life with a series of interactive marine education classes conducted every night including video presentations, quizzes and lots of prizes to win.

The Kids Scuba camp also encourages family bonding among family members during the program, as moms and dads get to dive with the Jr. Open Water kids and the kiddie Scuba Rangers to enjoy the sport, meet new families, appreciate the lovely marine life of Malaysia while having loads of fun with other families.

X-RAY MAG: Final thoughts?

SAR: During all the Kids Scuba Camps organized and successfully conducted since 2004, I personally have seen



Scuba Rangers at MIDE 2009