

# Kittiwake Turned on Her Side!

Recently we caught up with Joanna Mikutowicz, Managing Partner of [DiveTech](#), and asked her to give us an update on the status of the Kittiwake after tropical storm Nate. Jo, or “Pinky Jo” as her friends call her, became Open Water certified on her 15th birthday in 1997 at Bob Soto’s in Grand Cayman, and she knew she wanted to grow up and become a Scuba Diving Instructor in Grand Cayman. After becoming a PADI Course Director and Director of Training at Ocean Concepts in Hawaii, she moved to Grand Cayman and joined DiveTech in 2012. There she advanced to become boat captain, MKVI rebreather diver, SSI Free Diving Instructor, and now Managing Partner.



**PP:** Jo, first tell us what tropical storm Nate did to the Kittiwake.

**JM:** *The Kittiwake, that was once standing upright in 65 feet of water with the top decks in about 15 feet of water, now leans on her port side. She slid a bit closer to the edge of the reef making the dive about 10 feet deeper with the shallowest part now in about 35 feet of water.*

**PP:** When did this happen?

**JM:** *This happened the first week in October.*

**PP:** What were your emotions as you jumped in the water to first evaluate her?

**JM:** *I was really nervous at first. I had heard lots of rumors about what had happened to the Kittiwake, that it had fallen over the main wall, that it has been broken*



*in half and half of it was sitting on the reef, that it was pretty destroyed. I was also concerned for all of the marine life that had lived on the Kittiwake that it might not be there. It was like going back to find friends after a hurricane had passed. I jumped in*



*with a bit of hesitation and sort of had one eye closed afraid to see what was going on.*

**PP:** Tell us what you actually discovered.

**JM:** *I found that the Kittiwake was actually ok. The structure of the Kittiwake was just as it was before, all of the areas that you could previously swim through we still accessible, it was just leaning on its port side and*

*was about 5-10 feet deeper. There was no part of the wreck touching the reef. Also, all of my underwater friends were still there. The wreck was teeming with marine life and it was business as usual.*

**PP:** What did it take to clean her up and make her diveable again?

**JM:** *Not much actually. We went out and spent one afternoon giving it a good once over and making sure it was settled into its new spot and not moving around. Also*



*checked to make sure there were no large pieces of metal hanging anywhere causing*

*hazardous conditions for divers. The next week we went back and picked up loose pieces of metal that were out in the sand or laying on the reef just to remove them so they didn't end up on the reef if another storm passed by.*



**PP:** How is a dive on the Kittiwake different today than it was before Nate?

**JM:** *It's a completely different dive. It requires a bit more buoyancy control as you swim through her as well as a bit more focus on your orientation as everything is*

*leaning on its side so it can be disorienting. Its definitely more interesting now, new places to discover and new ins and outs of the wreck.*

**PP:** We've dove her three times with you in her previous upright position, and every one of them was awesome. What are the added plusses to diving her now?



**JM:** *The Kittiwake is more interesting. It just requires a bit more concentration swimming through her. Paying closer attention to your depth and buoyancy control making you a better diver. All of the interior rooms that you were able to swim through before are still there and all of the marine life is still there so the dive will be just as enjoyable as it always was.*



**PP:** We're hearing something about a new swim through. Tell us more.

**JM:** *Where the Kittiwake is close to the reef now it formed a new swim through, with the reef on one side and the wreck on the other.*

**PP:** Tell us about diver safety, now that she's on her side.

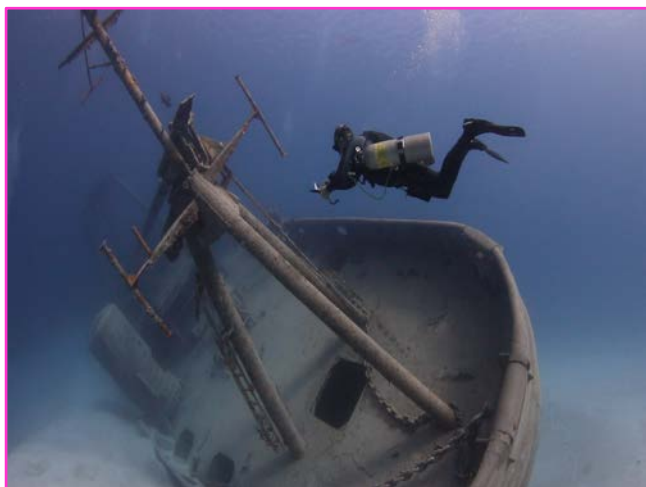
**JM:** *Divers just need to be more aware of their depth as you will find you spend more time between 50-70 feet rather than 30-50 feet like it used to be. So pay close attention to your no deco limits. Buoyancy control is also important, a wreck on her side can be a bit disorienting making it hard for divers to determine if they are going up or down or staying level.*

**PP:** How stable is the Kittiwake from further movement in the future?

**JM:** *I think it's pretty stuck in. She has a large amount of sand built up inside of her and on her port side*



*creating a nice sand bank on the side she tends to shift to during a storm.*



**PP:** What do you see this change doing to future diver interest?

**JM:** *For people that have not dove it in the past I think it will draw the same interest that it always has. And for those people that come back year after year and say they don't need to dive the Kittiwake becaues they have already done it, well hopefully now they will also dive it again as it's a completely new dive site.*

So the good news is that the Kittiwake is safe for divers. The better news is that one of Grand Cayman's most popular diving attractions, the Kittiwake, has become a completely different dive experience. And we can't wait to experience the different Kittiwake, for the first time, again!