

Where the Girls Are...

Text by Cindy Ross
GirlDiver.com

GirlDiver has taken over Mermaid Matters! We are pleased to introduce X-RAY MAG's new editor for issues and stories related to women and diving: Cindy Ross is a certified diving instructor specializing in scuba diving education for women and girls. She is the founder and director of GirlDiver.com and DiveForTheCure.com (an organization committed to raising awareness and funds for breast cancer research through national diving events in the U.S.). GirlDiver will appear as a regular column in X-RAY MAG. Please send your comments, suggestions for stories and inquiries to Cindy Ross at: cindy@girl-diver.com.

Gorgeous neoprene clad GirlDivers have long graced the covers of the scuba periodicals, gear catalogues and dive shop posters, but lately, there seems to be an increasing trend of GirlDivers actually showing up at the dive sites.

Women in scuba are some of the strongest, most confident women in the world. Our sport draws women who are willing to explore a part of the planet most will never see, in an environment not designed for human habitation. The gear is intensive, both in weight and storage considerations, as well as initial entry cost into the sport. To the women of scuba, it is but a small price to pay to be witness to the deeper arenas of life around the world.

According to PADI—the world's largest certification organization—the ratio of females to males in Open Water certification classes is on the rise. There is close to a 50/50 ratio in beginning classes. However, according to DEMA (Diving Equipment and Marketing Association), the "active" divers are still predominantly male (86 percent).

Coming into the pool, however, are women who want to make diving easier for other



Funky Fins—fun fins with creative imagination

women to actively stay with the sport, not just get certified. What does it take? Fun colors? Better fitting gear? A more zen-like experience in the underwater realm?

So where are the girls?

Here's a list of just a few of the females promoting the sport of scuba in a manner which encourages other women to come on board. Women dedicated to building our sport, not specifically for women, but simply in a softer

way, to encourage women to become more active with scuba and maybe introduce the boys to a different view under the waves.

GirlDiver

Seattle—Dedicated to promoting the sport of scuba for women of all ages, all over the globe. This site has articles created for women to help with everything from gear selection to dealing with the effects of the sea salts on hair. GirlDiver has a line of clothing and boutique items, with fresh, new inventory on the near horizon. Believing that proper training and education is what creates lifelong divers, the GirlDiver focus is on creating a fun environment with an emphasis on education.

With the goal of catering to the fast emerging female diving market, GirlDiver made the decision to bring a full line of gear into rental designed specifically for the female physique. The She Dives line from Mares was chosen as the official gear of GirlDiver. As the first head to toe scuba kit designed for women, by women, it matched the mission of GirlDiver. "Our clients are thrilled with the fit of the gear. A lot of women are intimidated by the gear considerations necessary for our cold water diving environment, but with the improved fit and function of gear designed for their shorter torsos, and allowing for some feminine curves, the fit of the gear is more comfortable right from the start. We find that with proper fitting gear in a gear intensive sport, the process of learning to dive has become much easier," says GirlDiver teammate Leigh Ann Boswell. www.girldiver.com

Funky Fins

UK—While on holiday, Michelle Lewis came up with a better design for fins. Funky Fins sport brilliant graphic designs that seem to float in the water. With Hibiscus and Water Droplets set on a warm water fin platform, these are



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says you have to have neon yellow paddles on your feet anymore?
www.funkyfins.com

Miss Scuba

California—Szilvia Gogh has launched a new website providing an online dive travel resource just for women. Szilvia says she noticed divers in California are predominantly men, so she created a site with the help of her friends that allows women divers to interact with each other. On this website, scuba girls can find journeys, photos, travel tips and gear reviews coming from fellow scuba girls. Scuba Girls from over a dozen countries are profiled on this site. www.miss-scuba.com

Liquid Fit

Florida—This GirlDiver creates wetsuits that fit like they were POURED on you. In her quest to find a great fitting wetsuit for herself, a company was launched. She has helped handicapped divers, irregular shaped divers (what's regular anyway???) and specialty divers with the right suit... the right fit. Carolyn

Tomes, founder, says, "The first time I ever snorkeled, I knew I was hooked. I knew I had to get closer. I got into the wetsuit industry because I saw that there was

a great need for divers to have well-fitting suits, especially women divers. For many years, women divers have been forced to wear suits that were not anatomically correct. I have

always loved beautiful colors in all aspects of my life. Creating bright beautiful wetsuits has brought great joy to my life." www.liquidfit.com

Diversitea

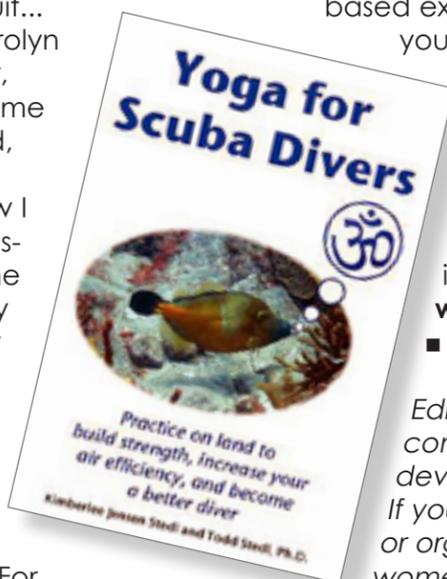
Texas—Janine Davis, an herbalist since 1989, blended her passion for diving and her expertise in herbal medicine in 2001 to support the health of fellow divers. This herbal tea blend containing molybdenum as its driving nutrient is reported to help divers not only with their hydration needs, but also with Nitrogen absorption in the blood stream. More information on testing methods can be found on her website. www.diversitea.com

Eighth Element Yoga

Seattle—Kimberlee Stedl has combined her passion for yoga with her love of diving to develop a series of exercises specifically designed to enhance diving. Her new book, *Yoga for Scuba Divers*, teaches the fundamental philosophies of yoga in relation to scuba, as well as land based exercises that will increase

your breath control and build the core muscle groups we use for hauling heavy tanks and carrying scuba gear over uneven terrain. They will be holding the first ever dive/yoga week in Dominica in early 2009.

www.8thelementyoga.com



Editor's note: This is not a complete list of organizations devoted to women in diving. If you know of a dive business or organization committed to women and girls in diving or run by women divers, please forward the information to the editor at: cindy@girldiver.com



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Equipment manufacturers, like Mares, are recognizing the fit and function necessary for female dive gear. It's more than just going pink

gracing the feet of female divers on all continents. But it's not just the look of the fin that the female divers love, it's the function. The foot pocket is comfortable, and the fin material allows the fin to be just flexible enough for comfort, while stiff enough to provide the quick acceleration you need underwater. Who

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