



Winter Diving

If I have a favorite time of year to go diving it has to be in the early part of spring as new life is just starting to get going. However, a very close second is winter diving, especially in Scotland.

There is little to match a crisp February or March day with a sharp frost, or even snow on the ground, for clearing away the cobwebs and giving you that good to be alive feeling.

The anticipation of entering the mirror calm but apparently black water is tempered by an expectation of the chill it will offer, only to be rewarded by the relative warmth of the water and the sheer enjoyment of being in this unique environment that few people get to see.

The only difficult bit is the reluctance to leave the water for the cold of the surface and getting changed. But the final reward of a post dive drink beside a roaring fire in the local hostelry and the smug satisfaction of a rewarding day's activity put the final icing on the cake.

Jim Watson (BSAC Safety & Development manager)

WINTER DIVING

Last month we hinted at the value of continuing diving until the end of the year as part of preparation for type of diving you want to do next year. The concept of a diving season is one that is a symptom of the changing seasons in the UK and often results in a significant blip in the incident statistics as divers begin diving again over the Easter weekend. Continuing to dive throughout the winter is one way of maintaining dive fitness and preparation for a new season but it is also so much more.

FITNESS

Going to the gym, running, swimming and other sports are all good ways of maintaining physical fitness but are a poor substitute for the 'real' thing. We all go diving for the enjoyment we derive from it and so continuing to dive into the winter can keep us dive fit and extend our experience.

SKILLS

As we focused on last month the opportunity to practice new and existing skills is a great way to maintain dive fitness and prepare for the opportunities of a new dive season. If winter diving means being restricted to inland sites or shore diving it is a valid means of maintaining interest during a dive especially during safety stops.

ENJOYMENT

Hard to believe that winter diving can be enjoyable when you compare the benefits of staying in a nice warm bed against braving the elements to go diving. Many people when they first experience winter diving are pleasantly surprised by how much they enjoy it and much of this is due to the fact that the water retains a reasonable temperature much longer than that experienced on the surface. The temperature records at Stoney Cove for example show the average water temperature remaining at 12.5 (Oct), 10.3 (Nov) & 8.2 (Dec) all above the average air temperature. The sea temperatures on the west coast of Scotland for example remain high until well into the New Year.

NEW EXPERIENCES

At the very least the seasonal changes experienced with marine life are worth the effort with some species becoming more sluggish and approachable. As certain life dies back (seaweeds) or enters an inactive phase it often makes other species easier to spot and winter storms frequently uncover previously hidden features including wrecks allowing for fresh discoveries.

Winter diving has much to offer but you will never know and learn to appreciate it if you don't give it a try.

Think SAFE – Dive SAFE

Jim Watson

BSAC Safety and Development manager

For more detail and information please visit www.bsac.org/safety