



Regular **SCOTTISH DIVER**

contributor, MCS Scottish

Conservation Manager and

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Co-ordinator Calum Duncan is

in the hot seat this time ...

■ **WHERE DID YOU LEARN TO DIVE?**

● Following the disappointment of missing dive training at school (teachers' strike) and then being unable to get my HSE ticket whilst studying at Heriot-Watt (stricter medical), I finally learnt to dive at the PADI 5-dive star centre on Kho Pha-Ngan Thailand, having travelled north from Malaysia after I'd been helping on a study of mangrove swamps! I got another PADI ticket, training in Milford Sound, New Zealand and then converted to BSAC with Lothian Divers when back in Edinburgh. Note to self, I must join ScotSAC too!

■ **WHAT TYPE OF DIVER ARE YOU?**

● With a marine biology background, and Seasearch being part of my work in Scotland, marine life is obviously a big part of why I dive, no matter how small or obscure that life. This means that whatever peat-darkened corner of a sea loch or silt-laden shallows I might end up diving in, I usually find something positive to say about it! As readers may know, I also take a camera in but am far from being a 'proper underwater photographer'.

■ **YOUR FAVOURITE PIECE OF KIT?**

● Diving for me is more about being in the water and seeing what lives there rather than getting too involved with the kit, beyond it working and being serviced. However I do like the new ergonomic, high visibility mask that I bought last summer with an Edinburgh Diving Centre voucher!

■ **DIVE BUDDY - WHO DO YOU ENJOY DIVING WITH MOST?**

● I would have to say underwater photographer Sue Scott as it was a real education diving with Sue in her 'front-garden' at Strome narrows, Loch Carron, where she introduced me to the weird and colourful flameshells building nests in banks of maerl in the narrows and the tiny, perfectly concealed camouflage shrimps on seaweed fronds.

■ **FAVOURITE DIVE SITE?**

● I have been lucky enough to dive all over the world, but, I would have to say that my favourite dive site is St Abbs! I never tire of diving there and, driving back up the A1, marvelling at how lucky we are to have this beautiful place almost on Edinburgh's doorstep. The west and north coasts are richer and more spectacular in many ways, and never fail to inspire and impress, but St Abbs was my first Scottish diving after having dived all over the world, and I had a memorable summer working and diving at the Voluntary Marine Reserve that set me on my present career path, so it will probably always occupy that top-spot.

■ **BEST COUNTRY VISITED?**

● In terms of amount of diving done and variety, I would have to say New Zealand, where I lived for the best part of two years. I volunteered at Leigh Marine Lab for a few

months and buddied Shane Kelly who was doing work on spiny lobsters in the world-famous no-take marine reserve. Mind you, it was also a treat diving the sponge gardens beneath the Pitons on honeymoon in St Lucia last year!

■ **WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GO DIVING?**

● On a personal level, what I love about diving is how it literally refreshes my view of the world, and I return to the surface happy and content! It is a privilege to be able to breathe under the water and see these fantastic living things and their habitats that so few people know are even there. The social aspect is also great, sharing that enthusiasm with others and in turn learning from them. Marine conservation is of course a motivation - both personally and professionally. I think Seasearch is a great tool to add to divers' appreciation of what they see and to get more out their diving.

■ **DREAM DIVE BUDDY?**

● My wife! Carole and I love snorkelling together, and it would be lovely some day to go diving together!

■ **DREAM DIVE DESTINATION?**

● It is the unusual that draws me and if my thoughts turn overseas, it is the coldwater coral reefs of Norway, the fjords of Chile, giant octopus in Vancouver Sound, muck diving in Sulawesi or jellyfish swarms in Pulau that spring to mind. I would also love to dive St Kilda, Mingulay, Flannan Isles, Shiant Isles, Rockall, Cornwall, the Isles of Scilly ... the list goes on.

■ **BEST DIVE BOOK EVER READ?**

● Not necessarily dive books per se, but the Rachel Carson series Under the Sea-Wind, The Sea Around Us and The Edge of the Sea, to which my father introduced me, were an inspiration. As was Jules Verne's '20,000 Leagues Under the Sea'!

■ **WHAT BUGS YOU MOST ABOUT DIVING?**

● When the gear and rigmarole that can be diving becomes the ends rather than the means. Dave Gordon summed it up well last month as saying that 'competition' was what bugged him - I'd share that view. Diving should be fun!

■ **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE DIVING TO NON-DIVERS?**

● Once you get your buoyancy right, and can really relax into it, diving itself is the closest you can get to being in an alien world. Nothing else compares to the feeling of weightless exploration in three dimensions that allows you to get so close to wildlife, including mobile species like fish and crustaceans. You simply can't get as close to wild animals on land. Diving can be as involved or as minimal as you want, from the pure underwater experience to technical theory and its mechanical applications, to a great excuse for socialising!