



- [HOME](#)
- [NEWS](#)
- [KIT](#)
- [SKILLS](#)
- [GO DIVING](#)
- [PHOTOGRAPHY](#)
- [FORUMS](#)

Home > News > People In Diving

Wednesday 11 February 2009 | Personalise | Help

Subscribe!

**SUBSCRIBE**

Members Logon

Email:

Password:

[forgot your password?](#)

**FREE BATFISH FINS**

Join DIVE now



Join now to be automatically entered into our monthly draw and win a pair of Ralf Tech Batfish Fins.

[why join?](#)

**Shopping Partners**

[More online retail shops](#)

- [Ocean Visions](#)
- [Mares](#)
- [Suunto](#)
- [Diveline](#)
- [321Splash.com](#)
- [Travelling Diver](#)
- [Direct Dive Gear](#)
- [Watersports Warehouse](#)
- [Underwaterworld](#)
- [Scuba-shop24](#)
- [Mike's Dive Store](#)
- [Cameras Underwater](#)
- [Sunderland Scuba Centre](#)
- [Jurassic Coast Diving](#)
- [Blue Water Sports](#)
- [Oxygene Cranleigh](#)
- [Aditech](#)
- [Adventures in Diving](#)
- [Travel Money Services](#)

**Travel Partners**

[More travel partners](#)

[H2O Dive](#)

PEOPLE IN DIVING 21 / 04 / 06

## The Art of Diving

By Nick Hanna

*Described by David Doubilet as 'The best diving book since Cousteau's Silent World', The Art of Diving offers a 21st-century view of the underwater world. It combines beautiful photographs by Alexander Mustard with a wide-ranging text by Nick Hanna.*

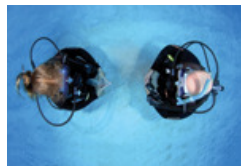


Photo: Alex Mustard



Photo: AM



Photo: AM



*Described by David Doubilet as 'The best diving book since Cousteau's Silent World', The Art of Diving offers a 21st-century view of the underwater world. It combines beautiful photographs by Alexander Mustard with a wide-ranging text by Nick Hanna that covers subjects as diverse as Fish watching and Why we dive. Here we present extracts from an inspiring chapter which looks at the spiritual side of diving*

### Spiritual scuba

This sense of re-entering the sea, of reclaiming our watery heritage, has led to the development of a new approach to scuba diving that places specific emphasis on the spiritual aspects of being underwater. It has been called Zen diving, spiritual scuba, aquatic yoga, yoga scuba and yoga diving, and has inspired courses in places as far apart as Egypt, Turkey and the Caribbean.

The first of these courses was in the Red Sea resort of Dahab, just over 100km (62 miles) north of Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt's Sinai peninsula. This is where American-born instructor Monica Farrell teaches yoga diving. Monica has worked in the Red Sea since 1998 and is an advanced technical diving instructor with more than 3,000 dives under her weight belt. Significantly, she has also studied yoga in India. 'I began by trying out yoga techniques in my diving classes,' she explains. 'I noticed straight away how the asanas [yoga postures] helped with general fitness as well as helping to cope with the different technical skills that you need to learn on the diving course.' She also became aware of how the breathing exercises lowered stress levels for divers of any ability, and how students who practised just the most basic yoga techniques found themselves more comfortable in the water and seemed to get more from their dives.

Thus was born yoga diving, in which the combination of the two skills emphasizes how a physical experience - like an asana posture or a dive - can also become an inner one. 'My experience is that your ability to stay in the moment - the blue, the colour, the fish, the feeling of floating, your own breathing - that experience of being in the present can be heightened,' explains Monica, adding that, 'Diving can act as a window for expanding consciousness.'

### Mind, Body and Spirit diving



Adverts
























Find your nearest [Dive Centres](#) [Charter Boats](#) [Overseas Dive Centres](#) [Divers](#)

Recruitment

Find a job in the [dive industry](#)

RSS

-  [Active Diving Holidays](#)
-  [Responsible Travel](#)
-  [Red Sea Divers](#)
-  [Regaldiver](#)
-  [Emperor Divers](#)
-  [Divequest](#)
-  [Grenada Grenadines](#)
-  [Scuba en Cuba](#)
-  [Marine Expeditions](#)
-  [Malaysia Tourism](#)
-  [Travel Money Services](#)
-  [blue o two](#)
-  [Geo-Dive](#)
-  [Dive Tours](#)
-  [Bonaire Fun Travel](#)
-  [Maldives Scuba Tours](#)
-  [Tony Backhurst Scuba Travel](#)
-  [Dive The Reef](#)
-  [Scuba Diving Tenerife](#)
-  [Tenerife Sun Dive Centre](#)
-  [Buddies](#)

**COMPETITION**

**WIN AN OCEANIC  
REGULATOR,  
OCTOPUS, BC AND  
GAUGE PACKAGE  
WORTH £950**



**OCEANIC**  
INNOVATION FIRST

**WIN A VRX DIVE  
COMPUTER WORTH  
£1,295 EACH**



**TECHNOLOGY**

**WIN ONE OF FOUR  
TUSA MASK,  
SNORKEL AND FIN  
SETS WORTH £138  
EACH**

Photo: AM



Photo: AM



Photo: AM



Photo: AM



Photo: AM



Photo: AM



Photo: AM

Alex and I are on the deck of a small day boat off the West End of Grand Cayman. We're diving with Ocean Frontiers, but before we can even think about getting in the water we're having a gentle stretch. At least, we're trying to: there's not much room on the deck, what with everybody's gear all over the place. But instructor Steve Schultz isn't letting us slacken off: he's devised a set of stretches for divers, specially designed for the confined space of a boat deck. 'Stretching helps to condition the body, loosen up before a dive and avoid the strains associated with physical activity such as lifting tanks,' says Steve. He points out that a lot of the muscles used in diving are not normally used in everyday activities, so they are often tight and cold when you start the dive and are more easily injured as a result. This explains why divers often complain of bad backs, leg cramps, tense neck muscles and so forth.

The stretches we're doing are part of a course called mind, body and spirit diving (MBS). It brings Schultz's experiences with transcendental meditation, martial arts and other disciplines into this PADI speciality, which he has already taught in the Caymans, Turks and Caicos, Bonaire and on board the Belize Aggressor. 'Early on in my experience as a diver I found that there were ways to step over into the realm of the momentous almost every time I dived,' he says. He also explored yoga, hypnosis and sports training in search of that same sense of well-being. But when he started teaching scuba, he became alarmed by the high drop-out rate among new divers; it seemed that these divers somehow never really reached the point of real comfort and exhilaration. So he set out to design a system that would apply gentle discipline and spiritual impetus to the whole process in order to make each dive a more meaningful experience.

The techniques involved in MBS scuba include meditation, breathing, visualization and yoga and stretching exercises. These enable you to decrease your air consumption, increase your comfort levels and enhance your interaction with marine life. The process can re-invent your diving, claims Schultz, by turning it into something much more personal and spiritual. 'You can increase your enjoyment,' he says, 'and even have the opportunity to touch into religious and mystical experiences that are only limited by your faith and imagination.'

**All in the mind**

Visualisation is a key component of the MBS course. The main aim is to create a positive attitude when diving by visualising a successful outcome to the dive. This can be useful when dealing with tasks that might be worrying you, such as clearing your mask. Schultz describes how, when working with students who have problems of this kind, he first gets them to relax through meditation so that they step aside from the fear and emotion of the problem. He then works through a visualisation exercise that breaks the task down into individual steps so that the students can 'see' themselves performing it without fear or worry. Affirmations also help to reinforce the students' belief that they will succeed without problems.

Visualisation and affirmation, according to Schultz, can also be useful for improving specific skills, such as underwater photography or wreck penetration. 'They are very powerful tools used by world-class athletes and performance coaches worldwide,' he explains. 'They are subtle techniques in that, rather than actively teaching, the teacher empowers students to work through his or her own issues,

**What is RSS?**

**RSS**

**DIVE FEST**



**Photo Competitions**



**Books**





Photo: AM

whether that's mask removal, first deep dive, first night dive, or whatever. I once had a diver who was afraid of seeing fish,' he recalls. 'We worked together to get her over it.'

Another way of tackling fears and phobias associated with diving and being underwater is a technique called Neuro-Linguistic Programming, or NLP. This method is designed to replace automatic responses and unwelcome feelings with more empowering thoughts. NLP expert Brendan O'Brien claims that it can be used to calm nerves, conquer fears and help divers feel confident about their ability to cope with problems. This can be particularly useful for beginners, whose perfectly

natural fears are often unwittingly exacerbated by their instructors. 'It's the most unnatural thing in the world to do,' says O'Brien. 'Put this thing in your mouth, stick your head underwater and breathe through it - it runs contrary to all our natural instincts.' Trying to calm a beginner by telling them that there's nothing to fear, explains O'Brien, can have precisely the opposite effect. 'It's all about the power of suggestion,' he says. 'If you say to someone "Don't worry", actually what you're inviting them to do is to worry.'

Instead, instructors should be setting their pupils up for success with simple strategies, such as asking them on the way to the pool what they're good at. 'By suggesting things that give you confidence,' says O'Brien, 'then you start wiring the brain for confidence.'

#### Fooling around

Like Steve Schultz, Monica Farrell worries that instructors are often not trained to deal with beginners' phobias. But she approaches the problem from a slightly different perspective. After yoga to help with relaxation, Farrell takes her students into the ocean with the idea of play uppermost - suggesting, for instance, that they play with their masks or buoyancy jackets. Any notion of 'skills tests' that must be passed or failed can wait until the students are already competent at the task. 'If you start with the idea that it's simply enjoyable play,' she says, 'then the "performance levels" tend to take care of themselves.' In this way, Farrell recognizes an essential aspect of Zen diving: namely the importance of cultivating a 'playful mind'. And performing underwater manoeuvres such as swimming upside down or looping-the-loop is a good way to start.

In 2003 Scuba Diving magazine ran a cover story on 137 Ways to Play Underwater. This included ideas and techniques on how to kiss underwater (plan it beforehand, and make sure you synchronise your regulator removal); how to drink a soda at 30m (give it a good shake before descending, pop the top off and suck while crushing the can); and even how to dive naked. For the last of these, it quoted Frank Lombino of the Nautical Nudists Dive Club in Florida, who insisted that people like being taught in the nude but that conditions must be just right: 'Hell yeah, you can get injured!' he warned, 'I worry about the coral more than the fish. You don't want to be around any fire coral, for instance.'

Playing around underwater is a good way to improve your confidence and aquatic skills. Children do it naturally. Recently I went underwater with my two sons, Luke and Oscar, while they learned to dive on a junior open-water course in the Red Sea. I felt like a wise, ponderous marine mammal as I finned along calmly and slowly beneath them while they frolicked energetically around a shallow reef like a couple of baby seals, chasing fish.

A 'playful mind' could also include listening to music underwater. Take a waterproof MP3 player, for instance, and dive with Handel's Water Music, or an aria from Bizet's opera, The Pearl Fishers. Or you could join in with the annual Lower Keys Underwater Music Festival off Big Pine Key, Florida, when more than six hundred divers descend with everything from guitars to trombones to help the fish dance.

#### A sea change

Being underwater can change you, often profoundly. For Hans Hass, paradoxically, it led him to stop diving for a decade. 'My many years of diving undoubtedly wrought a kind of change of consciousness,' he wrote. 'Underwater, you have a strange freedom which is not possible on land. Down there you gain a detachment from the human world such as is scarcely to be found elsewhere.' This detachment led him into a ten-year study of human evolution during which he sold his beloved boat, Xarifa, and immersed himself in politics, economics and law. 'This happened because I still remained underwater in principle,' declared Hass. 'Our watery abode, the starting point for this whole development, remained constantly before my eyes and virtually forced upon me a different and unaccustomed way of looking at things.'

Whether we're connecting with our inner selves or merely pondering the seeming infinity of the oceans, a return to the sea has primal echoes that evoke for us the origins of life. Rachel Carson [the American marine biologist and author] reflected that humans, being unable permanently to re-enter the sea like the seals and whales, have used ingenuity and reason to 're-enter it mentally and imaginatively'. Mankind's search beneath the oceans, she concluded, is a search for: 'a world long-lost, but a world that, in the deepest part of his subconscious mind, he had never wholly forgotten'. As we race around our cities and towns, worries Carson, we may forget that we live on a watery planet. But on a long ocean voyage, with only the stars and the sea for company, man discovers the truth: 'that [our] world is a water world, a planet dominated by its covering mantle of ocean, in which the continents are but transient intrusions of land above the surface of the all-encircling sea'.

• The Art of Diving ISBN: 0954519922 is published by Ultimate Sports and costs £20. It will be available in all good bookshops from the beginning of March.

For more information see the website [www.artofdiving.com](http://www.artofdiving.com)

**NEW Children's Books**  
**ONLY 5.99 each**  
**CLICK HERE to order!**

**100 Best Dives of Cornwall**  
**£16.95**  
 from all good dive shops

**RED SEA REEF GUIDE**  
 by Helmut Debelius  
**Click Here to buy one**

#### Shark DVD

**SHARKS**  
**The Big Ten**  
 DVD  
**BUY NOW!**

## WRITE YOUR KIT REVIEW & WIN

#### QUICK LINKS

Take me straight to

#### Search articles

Search articles for:

Look in:

Title and text

Search

#### SUBSCRIBE!

**OUTSTANDING SUBSCRIPTION OFFER TO DIVE MAGAZINE**



**SAVE 25% ON THE COVER PRICE, 12 ISSUES FOR ONLY £35 OR £8.75 BY QUARTERLY DIRECT DEBIT!**

**PLUS, YOU ALSO RECEIVE A COPY OF GREAT OCEAN ADVENTURES DVD SIGNED BY MONTY HALLS FOR FREE!**



SUBSCRIBE

# NEW

 Bookmark this  Printer friendly version

Want to send this article to a friend? Please [join here](#)

## Adverts



[Scuba Diving Equipment](#)




[www.simplyscuba.com](http://www.simplyscuba.com)

## MEET THE TEAM




## Forum Hot Threads

 7435 Total Messages

 [Learning in the Red Sea](#)  
by Sue B

» [Loads More Threads](#)

## Comment on this in our forum:

 You say:

Using this form will also register you with the site.

Message: [expand](#)

**New Users**  
[Join Us](#)

**About DIVE**  
[About Us](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)  
[Terms and Conditions](#)



**Contact Us**  
[Dive staff](#)  
[Advertise with us](#)  
[FAQ](#)