

Be an Underwater Superhero with Diver Ed

By Melinda Rice

They call him Diver Ed, and "fun" is the name of his game.

Long a fixture around Mount Desert Island for the "dive-in theater" he operates in the summer with his partner, Edna Martin, Eddie Monat is a commercial and recreational diver, and a diving instructor. He's recently started a scuba diving club in the area that he calls The League of Underwater Superheroes.

FIND IT K3
See County Map on Page 24

"It's just an excuse to pull people together who want to dive," he says.

For those who would rather watch than actually do the diving themselves, Dive-In Theater cruises start May 25 and run every day through Oct. 10. Times vary, so check the Web site (www.divered.com) or call (288-DIVE) for specifics.

There are a lot of ways to see Frenchman Bay from the waterline up, but Diver Ed is the only one who offers landlubbers a peek beneath the waters. As it turns out, there's a lot of cool stuff down there.

"It's surprising," says Bar Harbor resident Jeff Miller, a local diver and student of Diver Ed.

"There's lobsters, crabs, scallops ... tons of different starfish. It's neat to see stuff walking along the bottom," he says. "This is their world and they're going about their daily lives."

A typical tour lasts about two hours. Reservations are required, so phone ahead. After climbing aboard the Dive-In Theater boat, *The Seal* — a stable, 51-foot, 49-passenger motor vessel built of double-plank mahogany then fiberglassed — at the College

of the Atlantic docks, guests settle in for a trip out to that day's dive site. Captain Edna likes to find someplace calm.

Diver Ed will climb into his diving drysuit with the help of any kids aboard who want to give him a hand. Unlike a wetsuit, which allows a thin layer of water near a diver's skin, the drysuit seals out the water. With the right layers underneath, a diver will stay toasty, even in Maine's chilly waters.

Once suited up, Diver Ed hops overboard equipped with a waterproof camera and microphone. Whatever he sees, the folks on board see, too.

Last year Diver Ed pulled up a 42-inch-long lobster from the bottom — that's a whole lotta lobster. He focuses in on scallops, crabs, sea cucumbers, urchins, fish and any other critters or interesting man-made debris he might find.

"There's nothing better," he says. "This is just such a fun thing to do."

Once or twice a year he has an encounter with a playful gray seal that will latch on to one of his swim fins and tow him backward for a bit. He's caught a couple of monkfish after they clamped down when he put his hand in their mouths by accident. Last year he found a "big meaty shrimp" of a species he has yet to be able to identify. He once was bumped by a mako shark.

But he says one of the coolest things he ever found in Frenchman Bay was a cast bronze bust of the "Proctor" from Proctor & Gamble near the ferry terminal.

Diver Ed isn't the only one who gets his hands wet, though. He brings critters up from the bottom for guests to touch and examine. A lot of kids



PHOTOS BY MIKE STAGGS, AKA GHETTO DIVER

This group of scuba divers, led by Diver Ed (in the white T-shirt), could be superheroes in disguise.

end up with starfish on their heads.

"... it was one of the highlights of our trip. Our son has told everyone how he kissed a Jonah crab, a sea urchin and a sea cucumber! We can't wait to see our pictures!" wrote one happy client Randy Sobel of Toledo, Ohio.

For those who want to get under the surface themselves, Diver Ed gives scuba lessons.

He offers a basic open water certification class for \$400. All gear is included, though he does encourage students to have their own masks, fins and snorkels. He also offers more advanced courses including drysuit diving, navigation, rescue, night diving, fish

identification and dive master. He is even developing a course — tongue firmly in cheek — for underwater superhero certification for

anyone who wants to join the scuba club. Most club members have taken classes with Diver Ed.

"Eddie and Edna are super great people and always concerned about safety," says student and club member Jim Everly. Within the club he's called The Flying Fish.

Scuba diving can be an expensive, gear-intensive hobby. But the club tries to make sure it has extra gear

on hand so anyone who wants to dive can.

"Most clubs have a fee to join, but we don't," says Diver Ed.

The Seal and the services of Diver Ed and Captain Edna can be reserved for private parties and dive charters as well.

Under the waves, or riding them at the surface, Diver Ed always has a good time and shares that with his clients.

CASTINE
SEE MAP ON PAGE 24-K7

More than 100 historic markers in this town characterized by its 18th century architecture.

Compass Rose Bookstore and Café

3 Main St., Castine
207-326-9366



Hours

Wednesday through Saturday
10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Best Sellers, Classics, Maine Authors, Maritime/Nautical, Gifts, CD's, Good Food, and the Best Coffee Around

Visit our Web site
www.compassrosebooks.com

We ship!

"The Quintessential Downeast Bookstore"

SPECIAL EVENTS at the WILSON MUSEUM

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Saturday, June 9
3 p.m. | <i>Enrichment through Paper Dolls</i>
Presentation by long-time collector Mary Seeley. |
| Thursday, June 14
4-6 p.m. | <i>Identifying Rocks & Minerals</i> , Dr. Roger Hooke
Four-Part Series - June 14, 21, 28 and July 5
Limited to 10 people.
Registration required: (207) 326-9247 by June 1st |
| Sunday, June 24
3 p.m. | <i>Members' Reception</i>
Classical guitarist, Jesse Reed |
| Saturday, June 30
All Day | <i>Eastern State Normal School Alumni Meeting</i>
Beginning at 10:30 a.m. with coffee/pastries
Noon Luncheon: Guest Speaker, Esther Rauch
Registration required: (207) 326-9247 by June 15th
Hosted by the Wilson Museum at the MMA |



The Wilson Museum

120 Perkins Street, Castine, ME 04421
(207) 326-9247 info@wilsonmuseum.org
www.wilsonmuseum.org

Open daily except Mondays, 2 to 5 p.m., May 27 - September 30



Wait, here's a superhero now.