

There's a lot to explore under the sea

Confederation Divers celebrate 20 years of guiding residents below the surface

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Warmer weather marks a time for adventure for many New Brunswickers, and what mysteries are more intriguing than those held underwater?

Confederation Divers, a diving centre located in Rexton, is celebrating 20 years of venturing into the waters near home.

Whether you're interested in photography, shipwrecks, flora, fauna or just tackling another watersport, Jody Pratt, president and master instructor at Confederation Divers, said there is something for everyone.

"I guess it really depends on somebody's likes on land," said Pratt, who has multiple Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) certifications. "If they're a photographer, normally that's the person that's going to take up underwater photography. If you're a history buff or wreck enthusiast, then obviously that's the diving you're going to get your-

self into. For the most part, our group seems to follow along, and as long as we're in the water, we're having fun."

Confederation Divers began in 1994 as a diving club, and was formed into the company it is today in 1996. It has since grown to include offer dive certification and training, chartered dives, an introduction to underwater diving, equipment rentals and they have expanded to offer dive services at Atlas Park in Pointe-Verte.

The local centre is also a means for many to begin or complete certification for a diving adventure abroad, and learning to dive locally can be a gateway to international adventure, as PADI courses are recognized around the world, and can be completed in modules.

Pratt said while many who directly compare an underwater dive in the Richibucto River system or Northumberland Strait to the those they completed in southern resort destinations are often disappointed, New Brunswick and Maritime waters hold

their own wonders.

"Less than a kilometre away from the shop here, there's a wreck of the Dwina, which was a local-made schooner back in the heyday when schooners were predominantly built here in the area, late 1800s anyway," he said, adding the divers find all sorts of historic artifacts on their outings.

The plants and animals are also evolving all the time, especially as water temperatures change.

For those who are afraid to try diving in or fear they're not a good enough swimmer, Pratt said divers are encouraged to keep their dives within their own abilities, for safety and enjoyment.

"We started at the age of 10, and I've certified people that were into their early 70s," he said. "For somebody to stand on the sidelines with their arms crossed and say, 'I'm too old or out of shape,' I've heard all those stories and countered them all with, 'Well, let's go give it a try.' Once they give it a try, it's a whole other story then."



**DIVE
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Rexton For those interested in getting involved and trying it out, Confederation Divers is also offering 20 per cent off recreational course fees for new divers this season. You can contact them through their website, Facebook group or contact their dive centre (11 Cail Cr.).

Above: A Confederation Divers led course does pool work. Left: Jody Pratt, president of Confederation Divers, said that most people get past any underwater reservations as soon as they try it for the first time. Submitted photo.