



# Try Dive Stirling

**Chris Lamb, Diving Officer at Stirling Branch reports on the club's recent involvement with the local community which he hopes will inspire future members of ScotSAC ...**

SHOTLINES

STIRLING BRANCH recently staged a successful try dive session with some 37 pupils from Dunblane and Wallace High Schools taking part. Pupils and teachers who hope to travel to South Africa on a school trip with marine involvement next year, approached Stirling Scuba to help them prepare.

On the day we had a fantastic turnout of instructors who dedicated their time to make it a great experience for these go-getting young people. We had many comments of how much they loved it and how what felt a rather scary prospect at the beginning turned into an enjoyable experience which left them wanting more.

They were a charming group of young people and it was a pleasure for us to be part of their exciting journey. It also allowed us to

introduce the sport to the next generation of potential ScotSAC members. These teenagers will act as great ambassadors for the sport among their family, friends and neighbours in our area and we hope this will encourage other clubs to look at similar opportuni-

ties to grow their reputation and numbers.

We have since had several enquiries from pupils and parents and although our club is physically unable to train 50/60 pupils and parents we have supplied them with details of other clubs and organisations to consider.

Stirling Club were part of a similar scheme three years ago when another group from Dunblane embarked on a marine biology course and from that we grew our club membership. New members under 16 years are only permitted if a parent is an active member, so we enrolled parents keeping up with their teenagers' aspirations!

It worked out so well for all involved because as the youngsters qualified and went on to employment/University we gained long-term members in the parents. Even those who had no notion to dive but are keen to be a part of things have got involved by helping with shore cover, BBQs etc and they are part of the regular apres dive at the pub on club nights. Their help is invaluable and should not be taken for granted. They



were the unsung heroes of last year's successful dive conference as it was them who raised £1500 for the conference and almost £500 for the RNLI at the ceilidh. We take this opportunity now to say thank you.

We wish the youngsters all the best for their forthcoming trip to South Africa and an update of their progress will feature in a future edition of **SCOTTISH DIVER**.



## blue o two Bids Are In



THANKS TO the kindness of a lucky competition winner, Louise Coy (who generously donated one of her spaces on a liveaboard trip to the Red Sea), blue o two is pleased to announce that an online auction for the luxury trip has raised £910 for the UK shark and marine conservation charity Bite-Back.

The winning bid of £910 was placed by Sean Chinn who snapped up a scuba diving holiday on board the award-winning *M/Y blue Horizon* during its 'Project Shark: Simply the Best' week. Every penny from the winning bid of £910 will go to Bite-Back and its 'Hacked Off!' campaign to make Britain's restaurants shark fin free.

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# Colling All Shark Lovers



Image courtesy of Basking Shark Scotland 2013

IF SHARKS are your thing, then the Coll of the Sharks Festival based on the idyllic Isle of Coll could be a great reason to get away from it all in August. The annual Basking Shark festival couldn't take place at a better location as the Hebridean waters surround-

ing Coll are considered Scotland's (and possibly the World's) hotspot for basking sharks.

The Festival involves six days of shark and marine based events that cater for enthusiasts, adults, kids, locals and visitors

alike. Taking place between Thursday 21 and Tuesday 26 August, the festival is a long weekend of events that celebrates the wonderful marine environment of the Isle of Coll.

During the festival you can take boat trips to see or swim with the sharks and other wildlife. There will be sunset trips where you can swim/dive with hundreds of seals or snorkel round the reefs in pristine waters. You can land on a remote beach and watch the sun set in Hebridean paradise! There are also land based island tours, sunset trips and self guided tours of the island can also be taken.

The showpiece event will be a guest speaker presentation evening, taking place on the Saturday night in the An Cridhe hall. The evening will bring locals and visitors together to the home of Scottish basking sharks! In 2013 there was a full house and four excellent presentations. This year's speakers are yet to be confirmed.

If you would like to know more about the festival visit: <http://baskingsharkscotland.co.uk/coll-of-the-sharks-festival/>

## Marine Conservation For the Next Generation

PARENTS AND grandparents may already be familiar with CBeebies favourite - the Octonauts, those underwater adventurers whose rallying cry 'Explore! Rescue! Protect!' is met with glee from its pre-school audience. In what seems an obvious collaboration Silvergate Media has announced that Octonauts will now be partnering with the Marine Conservation Society (MCS), the leading charity for the protection of UK seas, shores and wildlife.

The partnership will see Octonauts being featured in the MCS supporter magazine, on membership pack collateral and across the Society's digital platforms. In addition, Octonauts will be collaborating with MCS at some of their key events during 2014 such as the Beachwatch Big Weekend event in September (19-22).

Lesli Zador, VP Brand & Marketing at Silvergate Media said: "We know that Octonauts is already helping to inspire and educate young children about the ocean and our partnership with MCS reaffirms our serious commitment to the marine conservation values at the core of our brand.

"The Marine Conservation Society's messages mirror ours very closely and we're delighted to be able to deliver some exciting Octonauts content for their younger members."

Debbie Stenner, Marketing Manager for MCS added: "A vital part of MCS' work is to inspire and engage young people and their families about marine

wildlife and conservation. The partnership with Octonauts will add a whole new dimension to our programme for children and we're very much looking forward to working together."



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We are pleased to announce that Divelife has been voted WINNER of 'Best Retailer' and 'Best UK Dive Centre' in the SPORT DIVER magazine awards 2014.

# The Art of Snorkelling

**Snorkelling is an activity that anyone can enjoy - and Lochaline Dive Centre is just the place to give it a go as Dougal Crawford explains ...**

OVER THE last few months Lochaline Dive Centre (LDC) has been expanding what it offers in terms of marine based outdoor activities, specifically in the world-renowned Sound of Mull, a body of water home to historic shipwrecks, diverse wildlife, and stunning scenery above and below the surface. Traditionally focused on providing scuba divers with the best possible experience diving here in the Sound, LDC is now offering the same high standard of service and expertise in a broader range of activities.

The introduction of one activity in particular which has garnered a lot of interest is snorkelling. Snorkelling allows people of all ages to dive in and enjoy the marine environment in a safe and accessible way. The new Snorkel Safaris being offered at LDC this summer give participants the chance to explore the amazing underwater world of the Sound, get up close with the wildlife that lives beneath the surface, the reefs and sea bed environments that are home to a whole host of animals and plants, and even catch a glimpse of ancient ship wrecks that lie on the seabed.

In addition to the Snorkel Safaris, LDC is also offering a Snorkel Experience try-dive and the BSAC (British Sub Aqua Club) Dolphin Snorkeler and Snorkel Diver courses, all to give prospective snorkellers the knowledge and technique in the water to really get out and explore with confidence.

However, the journey to becoming a snorkel centre is not without its own hurdles. Already being affiliated with BSAC and offering many of the BSAC qualification and training for divers, it was obvious that having our snorkel services affiliated and qualified with BSAC was the way to go. First on the agenda for LDC was to host the BSAC SITCA (Snorkel Instructor Training Course and Assessment) training course. The course was held by BSAC instructor and author of the Snorkel Diver and Advanced Snorkeller manual Lizzie Bird, and Paul Burden who runs snorkel trips and sessions for Highland Council.

The course provided the perfect training and coaching for existing staff at LDC as well as new recruits from the University of Highlands and Islands in becoming effective and qualified snorkel instructors. The two-day course was filled with lectures on the theoretical aspects of being a snorkel instructor, as well as extensive pool based practical sessions covering all aspects of water safety and rescue techniques. When the course finished LDC had a group of enthusiastic and qualified BSAC Snorkel Instructors, but that was only the beginning.

Next on the agenda was getting the chosen snorkel instructors through all the protocols and courses needed for working with children and young people. As snorkelling is a great activity for all age groups, it was of the highest importance to LDC that the instructors were fully trained and aware

of the best ways to train and work with young people in order for them to have the best experience possible. All snorkel instructors at LDC attended the Highland and Islands council child protection course, and have joined Disclosure Scotland's PVG (Protecting Vulnerable Groups) Scheme.

Next step in the process was deciding the best sites for the snorkel safaris and snorkel experiences to take place. As LDC has many years experience diving in the Sound of Mull, our staff and instructors already have in depth knowledge of the area. This is particularly important when it comes to knowing where the best marine life can be found, and when the tides will allow snorkellers to have the most enjoyable experience while still being safe in the water. LDC's Snorkel Officer Catriona Hoon – avid snorkeler and diver – was tasked with mapping out all the incredible snorkel sites in the Sound of Mull and finding the best times to go out and explore them according to the tides.

As you can see becoming a snorkel centre is not a straightforward process, but one which LDC saw as necessary for getting people out into the water in the most enjoyable and safest way while having their own marine adventure. LDC would also like to thank Highlands and Islands Enterprise for their help and support necessary to the success of the venture.

For information check online at [lochalinedivecentre.co.uk](http://lochalinedivecentre.co.uk) or follow us on Twitter @divelochaline.



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