

new license-holder can prowl the bays, reefs and jetties of Oregon's rocky coast with a "C" card—the key to gear rentals and air supplies at accredited dive shops.

Eugene Skindiver Supply's Mike Hollingshead, 29, has been diving since he was nine, long enough to see big changes in equipment and the people who are drawn to the sport.

"The growth in the last three years has been tremendous," says Hollingshead, whose father founded the shop 30 years ago. "So many women have come into the sport that equipment manufacturers are creating whole new lines of down-sized gear. People are looking for active sports because they're in better shape and have more money than 10 or 20 years ago. They're interested in adventure, and there's plenty of that in diving."

On the other hand, says Seasport's Cheesman, is the serenity of the dive and the peaceful exploration of the deep.

"It's another world, an innerspace that's both peaceful and easy to get into," he says. "You don't have to be macho and studly to be a diver. Just be yourself, and know your limits."

"It's an adventure sport," says Anderson's Sporting Goods Steve Adams, who runs the diving program for the group's three stores out of the Corvallis operation. "You can make a dive as thrilling or challenging as you want, establish and challenge your limits and get enormous satisfaction from your achievement. There's always another plateau: licenses for deep diver, instructor, rescue diver, photographer, hunter and more."

SCUBA RESOURCES

Oregon's rocky coastline has become an internationally-recognized haven for divers seeking the rich marine life and good visibility offered by the mix of offshore reefs, countless sheltered coves and cold waters.

Kept warm by their own body heat in today's well-fitting and colorful wetsuits, which usually include gloves, a hood and boots, divers are seldom concerned with ocean temperatures that usually range from 48 to 52 degrees. Despite sensational press reports, sharks are not considered a hazard. Of three non-fatal attacks off the Oregon coast in the last six years, none involved divers.

"More people die of bee stings in the state of Oregon than shark attacks from all over the world," said one divemaster at Eugene Skin Divers Supply.

What regional divers look closely at are current conditions that can range from mild to outright treacherous in the tiny coves and pockets that dot the coastline. They also select their dive spots based on changing visibility conditions, which can vary between 40 to 80 feet on the reefs and from 20 to 40 feet in the jetties and bays.

Unlike California, which many divers say has both pollution and over-fishing problems, the Oregon coast offers divers an abundance of spear-fishing or photographic opportunities. With the world's largest specimens in its octopus populations, Oregon also offers ling cod, cabezon, rock fish, wolf eel, crab, shell fish, flounder and dozens of other tasty prizes. Mammal populations of sea lions, seals and

whales add to the underwater color.

Locally, divers prize the clear waters and rich marine life found in the Coos Bay-Pt. Orford area, excellent, although periodic, crabbing at Florence and the easy diving conditions found at the Newport jetty.

AREA DIVE SHOP GUIDE

Eugene—Eugene Skin Divers Supply, 1090 W. 6th St., 342-2351. Gear sales, rentals, air, accessories, training. Open water scuba class certification (PADI) course, \$145 (price includes all gear rentals and student textbooks, including dive tables).

Springfield—Seasports Inc., 1147 Main, 726-2055. Sales, service, rentals, weekly dive trips, certification training (PADI). In addition to weekend open water dives, the firm holds freshwater dives during the week.

Corvallis—Anderson's Sporting Goods, 137 SW 3rd, 757-1666. The PADI course here, at \$80, includes four open-water dives. An active club slates weekend dives throughout Oregon and Washington. Students are required to purchase their own personal gear, which includes mask, snorkel, fins and boots.

Newport—Newport Water Sports, PO Box 1676, South Jetty Rd., 867-3742. Owner Dan Bunch offers a two-week full certification course (PADI, NAUI & NASDS) as well as a short course of one week for resort certification ("cocktail card"). The full certification course, at \$175, includes six lectures, six pool and six open water dives.

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