

Under the Sea

Students discover the world of underwater breathing in the University's scuba classes

Scuba class

Two upper-division credits can be earned for the basic scuba class listed in the spring schedule under PE aquatics. The cost is \$300 and includes books, certification fees and gear, as well as transportation and hotel for the final dive trip to Hoodspout, Wash. Students continuing in scuba classes can earn credit all the way to the master instructor or course director level of certification.

By G. Jaros
Oregon Daily Emerald

Exploring an underwater world filled with giant sea anemones, pacific giant octopus and wolf eels is just one "giant stride" away for adventurous students.

The "giant stride" is the step students in a "Discover Scuba" preview class took off the blue-tiled edge of Leighton pool and into the deep end of new experience. Breathing under water was a first for most of the students who came to find out if scuba might be for them.

"You forget you can breathe sometimes," said Andrea Buttler, a psychology senior who found herself holding her breath a few times during the class.

"Discover Scuba" was offered last Thursday night for students who are interested in scuba but aren't sure they want to take

the introductory class offered at the University.

"It's sort of a try before you buy night," said Ron Vearrier, lead instructor for the University scuba program.

"Discover Scuba" night began poolside with brief instructions about the equipment involved and how to use it. Minutes later, students were geared up and being shown how to take that first step, called the "giant stride," into the water. The key to success was firmly holding the mask on and not bouncing off the side of the pool.

"I had fun and really enjoyed myself," said Dustin Preuitt, a senior in math. "I thought it was a great way to get introduced to the sport."

Students who take the basic scuba class, also called the open-water class, will learn the necessary skills to prepare themselves for the end-of-the-term dive in the Puget Sound out of Hoodspout, Wash.

Seeing students' reactions during that first dive is what makes teaching scuba worthwhile for Vearrier.

"What gets me is the

look on someone's face when they see a fish or an octopus," Vearrier said. "When someone sees a 6-foot octopus, they're stoked."

You can hear the squeal of enjoyment at depth with a regulator, Vearrier said.

Students who complete the open-water class earn basic certification, which allows them to dive almost anywhere in the world to a depth of 60 feet. The maximum recreational depth is 130 feet.

Following the introductory class is the advanced class, which Vearrier said is students' favorite because they go on night dives.

"The night dives are great because of the abundance of color," Vearrier said. "The light spectrum is brought back, and everything is illuminated." When diving during the day, the color spectrum is lost; for example, you lose the color red at 10 feet, Vearrier said.

The University scuba program is the third largest in the country and the largest on the West coast. The program has been going more than 15 years and has more than 10 instructors who offer 40 years of collective experience.

When asked to recall the most exciting or funny student diving experience in Hoodspout, he laughed and said,

"There was a dead harbor seal underwater, and one of the students didn't know it was dead. She got face to face with the seal," Vearrier said.

"Later, she went on about how it looked right at her and about what a bonding experience with nature it had been. No one ever burst her bubble."



Surf is up on Oregon beaches as surfers flock to stormy waters

Although the weather can be wet and unpredictable, the state's coasts offer primo surfing waves

By Dan Strieff
for the Emerald

Unbeknownst to most Oregonians, their coastline offers world-class surfing — for those who are willing to brave the less-than-ideal weather conditions.

Oregon cultivates a tough breed of surfer. This coastline is known for its particularly powerful, hard-breaking waves as well as wet, often unpredictable weather.

The cold weather and the ruggedness of Oregon's coastline can be deterring.

"People who take up surfing in Oregon must really love it, because it really is rugged," said University senior and devoted surfer Thomas Horn.

Bryan Bates, coordinator of the University Surf Club, cited the rugged beauty and sparsely populated Oregon beaches as being integral to his surfing experience.

"One of the things that makes Ore-

gon surfing great is that the beaches are so pristine," he said.

Oregon's coastal waters are attractive to surfers for many reasons. Not only are the waves powerful, but the swells are also consistently surfable.

Also, the water tends to be warmer in the winter months when the current moves up from California, and a bit cooler in the summer, when the current comes down from Alaska. As a result, the tepid water nearly offsets the uncomfortable Oregon winters. This enables true diehards seeking the harder-breaking winter waves to not miss much time in the water.

Additionally, as surfing is just gaining popularity in this state, the beaches are seldom crowded. Although this is in itself a major advantage over many top spots, it may not last much longer.

"Our secrets are really out," Bates said. "Recently, there has been a big

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Thomas Horn
Senior

rise in the number of people surfing in Oregon."

Both Bates and Horn point to the attitudes that permeate much of surf culture as being important to their experience. They remarked on how positive the surfing atmosphere is, as well as the dramatic rise in environmental awareness within the surfing community. This offers a sharp contrast to the stereotype of the irresponsible and reckless surfer.

For example, Bates and the Surf

Club often aid in cleaning up the beaches they frequent, while Horn markets his own brand of surfboards made entirely from hemp.

Surfing has been profoundly influential and inspiring for Horn.

"I think that surfing is the closest thing to the sublime that I could possibly come to physically," he said.

Bates pointed to the physical and psychological benefits of the sport. "It is one of the hardest but most rewarding sports there is."

He also indicated that the sport has become open to more people. Although it has long been a male-dominated sport, the fastest-growing surfing population is women.

Ultimately, people surf for simple enjoyment. Horn was quick to bring up the old surfing adage demonstrating the attitude on the water: "The best surfer is the one who is having the most fun."