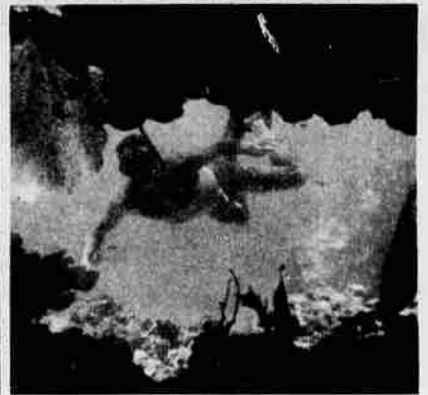
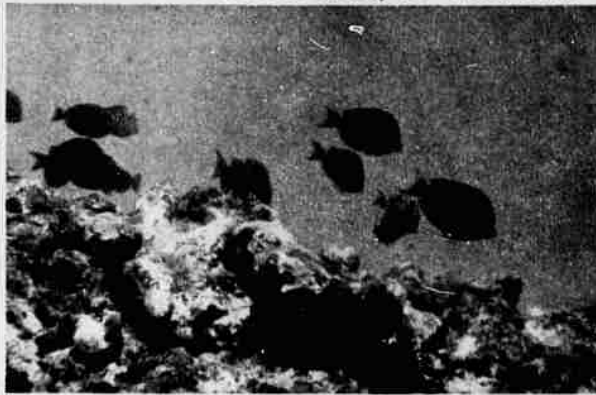


Divers must get within six feet to spear fish. Some divers are content merely to "fish-watch." Exploring sea caverns is fun, too.



sight- seeing beneath the sea

OTH^{ER} WORLDS are always more attractive than man's own, which may account for the amazing boom in underwater exploration in recent years.

Skin diving, virtually unknown before World War II when demolition and salvage experts developed it, now lures some five million enthusiasts into Neptune's depths to see how the other half lives.

Equipment varies from a kid's two-dollar face mask with snorkel to \$200 underwater lungs and special suits which keep the adventurer dry and cozy while he spearfishes, photographs, or just noses around. About \$30 million a year is spent on such equipment, a 1,000 percent increase in a decade!

While almost any local water hole fascinates the intrepid skin diver, most look forward to a plunge into the bays, lakes, and rivers of Florida. In these pictures, experts show why with a submarine tour of the Crystal River.

This is a merman's paradise: wild prairies of sea grass, caverns framed in waving flora, bizarre creatures every bit as curious as man himself. For a moment the diver experiences the unearthly sensation of finding a new existence. But wait! Something else lurks in the depths—a discarded picnic box, the inevitable beer can. This is man's world, after all.

Photos from FPG



Using both basic and advanced types of breathing apparatus, these rubber-finned skin divers glide almost effortlessly through a slow-motion world of alien beauty.