

PADI say...

It happens: People accidentally drop things from docks, off boats or even while scuba diving. If you've ever lost something in the water and wanted to go find it, then the PADI Search and Recovery Diver Specialty course is for you. There are effective ways to search for objects underwater that increase your chances of success. And there are good and better methods to bring up small, large or just awkward items. Search and recovery can be challenging, but a whole lot of fun.

For more information about the PADI Search and Recovery course, visit www.padi.com or contact your local PADI dive shop or resort.



PREREQUISITES

- Minimum age: 12
- (Junior) Advanced Open Water Diver or equivalent qualifying rating or (Junior) Open Water Diver with PADI Underwater Navigator Specialty

Next month: PADI NIGHT DIVER

Search and Recovery Diver

In this instalment of the PADI Specialty of the Month series, PADI Advanced Open Water Diver **Matt Griffiths** (Sport Diver art director) tries his hand at search and recovery diving in the cool waters of Capernwray

Photographs by
Frogfish Photography

So at watching the PADI Search and Recovery DVD one evening I remember thinking to myself 'this looks great fun, but challenging'. As it turns out, I was right. This is one of the most-challenging specialties I have completed. There is a lot to think about and remember, however it is great fun and highly recommended! My experience...

Dive one started out with me on the surface demonstrating I could effectively tie the three knots required: bowline, two half-hitches and a sheet bend. Once my instructor Phil was satisfied (and trust me, he isn't an easy man to please), we entered the water and descended down to the 6m training area to repeat the knot-tying process which I found considerably more difficult with 5mm gloves on! I then set about completing two search patterns, one to find a small object over a 15-metre squared area and another to find a

medium-sized object which weighed 10kg or more over a 30-metre squared area. I found the expanding square search pattern the most effective for finding the objects. In both cases, once the object had been found I had to demonstrate I could safely rig the item to a lift bag and bring it to the surface in a controlled manner.

Dives two and three gave me more practice at finding lost items but over a slightly larger search radius. Dive three also introduced the 'jackstay' search pattern which requires you to work in perfect co-ordination with your buddy to make sure nothing is missed. I found the jackstay the most-complex pattern to use, however I couldn't help but feel it would be suitable in almost every case, big or small object. It is primarily designed for searching for smaller lost items but in the generally murky UK waters I would use this pattern if I was ever in the position of searching

for something I had lost. Again, after every completed dive I had to lift the object to the surface in a slow controlled manner. The final dive gave me the opportunity to organise, plan and conduct a search utilising all the resources and bodies I had at my disposal. I was given a small hint as to which direction my missing torpedo shell was located, but that was it! Okay Matt, time to put your thinking cap on... Firstly I briefed the group on my plans, what role I wanted them to play, which pieces of equipment I wanted them to carry and made sure that everyone understood who their buddy was and the hazards that could occur, such as a loose line escaping from one of many reels we were carrying. After a thorough buddy check we entered the water and I led the group to the area where I wanted to begin the search. Instructor Phil was close at hand watching my every move as I, and my trusty buddy Yo-Han,

executed a jackstay search pattern over a 60-metre squared area. After what seemed like a lifetime, I saw the torpedo shell taking shape in the gloom - we had found it! I gave Yo-Han the 'okay' to collect in the line and meet me at the torpedo shell. I signalled Phil to pass me the rope (which was, in fact, dog Paddy's lead) I was using to attach the lift bag I had carried down with me to the shell. I decided to use a bowline knot because it was the one I found easiest to execute and the easiest to remember. I waited for Yo-Han to join me and then we began putting small blasts of air into the bag via my octopus to start lifting the torpedo shell off the sandy bottom. It was soon floating and we began to ascend slowly, keeping a cautious eye on the bag and using the dump valve to let little bursts of air out as the air inside expanded. We at no point attached ourselves to the rising object or hovered above it, in case of a runaway

ascend. I made sure I could always move freely away and let it go if I had to. With the torpedo shell lifted, everyone at the surface, all gear checked and accounted for, we as a team had completed what we set out to achieve. I felt elated having co-ordinated the dive from start to finish with no hiccups along the way. After a short surface 'rest' interval, we made our way back to the shore for a well-earned coffee and de-brief. Driving back I couldn't help but think how much harder it would be to perform any search pattern in a current, but that's for another day... ■ PS: Special thanks to instructor Phil for a superbly taught course.

NB: Matt's continued PADI education has been supported by Frogfish Photography, PADI EMEA, Mares, Apeks, DiveLife, Suunto and Fourth Element.