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MIZZOU

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[Home](#) » [Fall 2011](#) » [Around the Columns](#) » Dive in, the water's fine

Around the Columns

Dive in, the water's fine

Ahh, scuba diving. The choreographed schools of neon fish. The sculpted backdrops of coral and sponge. The crystal-clear aquamarine water — in the West Indies, perhaps.

If you're in the Midwest, the water is murkier, the floor is muckier, and the fish might be earth-toned carp and catfish.

Kevin Drews, MU Scuba Club president and fisheries and wildlife major, leads a group of 20 divers who explore rivers and lakes in Missouri and neighboring states. It's an unusual freshwater hobby with all the fishing and jet skiing in the area, but Drews and his buddies can't get enough.



Amphibious Tigers submerge themselves year-round as members of the Mizzou Scuba Club. Photo courtesy of MizzouRec

“In the ocean, you’ll have 100-foot visibility,” says the senior from Foristell, Mo., who studied lemon sharks in the Bahamas while interning at the [Bimini Biological Field Station Shark Lab](#). “In a lake, you can only see from two to 15 feet, depending on the conditions, but we have a lot of fun.”

Scuba stands for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus, and most of Mizzou’s

aquatic aficionados join the club having already obtained Advanced Open Water certification through MU's diving class.

Club members have explored Bull Shoals Lake on the Arkansas-Missouri border, where they camped on a houseboat when they weren't spearfishing and exploring subaquatic terrain.

Members come from all walks, but they tend to be active adventure-seekers. Ryan Stevenson of St. Louis plans to be a diver in the U.S. Navy, and Liza Babington of St. Louis wants to join a fire rescue salvage team.

While training with nitrox (a special nitrogen-oxygen breathing mixture used for longer dives), Drews swam in a [Mermet Springs, Ill.](#), quarry where owners have submerged an ambulance and an airplane for divers to investigate. Several scenes from the 1998 film *U.S. Marshals* were shot at the location.

And these Tiger sharks don't shy away from ice diving, either.

Some people will dump thermoses full of warm water down their wet suits before jumping in," Drews says. "But the important thing is to make sure you don't stay in long enough to get hypothermia."

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