

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Bar Harbor cleanup volunteers dive into their work — literally



Eric Russell | BDN

Tour boat operator and scuba enthusiast Ed Monat assists two scuba divers Saturday who were participating in an annual harbor clean-up event in Bar Harbor. A dozen divers spent several hours Saturday pulling up unnatural debris from the harbor floor. *Buy Photo*

By Eric Russell, BDN Staff

Posted May 07, 2011, at 4:35 p.m.

BAR HARBOR, Maine — They could have simply waited for the trash and debris to wash up on the shore, but there was no guarantee all the debris would make it.

Besides, where's the fun in that?

A dozen scuba divers spent their Saturday in the still-cold water of Frenchman Bay off Bar Harbor, participating in what has become an annual cleanup event.

Ed Monat, better known as Diver Ed, a local tour boat operator and scuba enthusiast, has been organizing the efforts since the mid-1990s, when he was the town's harbor master. Monat was not among the divers Saturday, at least not initially, but was plenty busy helping divers secure their scuba gear and tanks of air.

"I may have to go in and clean up after these guys," he joked.

Ailin Rafferty, 27, of Bass Harbor met Monat while scuba diving awhile back but this was the first year he participated in the cleanup.

"I was just going along the bottom near the pier and the [boat] mooring field, looking for things that obviously are not organic," Rafferty said shortly after climbing from the water into Monat's tour boat. "It's not as littered as I would have thought."

Some of the divers were having a difficult time staying submerged and Monat offered them lead weights. Rafferty, wearing a full-length wet suit, said he was comfortable while diving but admitted the water was quite cold.

Most of the debris collected consisted of beer bottles and cans, broken fishing poles and unidentifiable rusted pieces of metal. Sometimes, divers found car keys and cell phones. Rafferty said one of the most interesting things he pulled up on Saturday was a child's bike that, by the looks of it, had been in the water for some time.

The strangest thing that has been found in the last 15 years, according to Edna Martin, Monat's wife, was a bronze bust of William Proctor, co-founder of the multinational manufacturing corporation Proctor & Gamble.

Where is the bust now?

"It's in our living room," Martin said with a smile.

The volunteer divers began the cleanup at about noon and continued through Saturday afternoon. When thousands of summer visitors flood Bar Harbor in the coming weeks and notice the bay is clean, they can thank the volunteers who spent a brisk day in May trolling the ocean floor.

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