

## Artificial Reefs Offer Fish Refuge at Local Lake

As the ice starts to form on Stony Lake, fish will be struggling down in a new artificial reef system placed in the lake this year by the divers in US Scuba Center.

Head Diver refers to the structures as Fish Gardens. The idea is to place the reefs in Stony Lake near the Dica, a resident of US Scuba Center that also runs the scuba gear store. The project is part of an experimental program that is being tried for the first time in fresh water

provided technical support and transportation of the Reef Balls from US Scuba Center to the site.

The project started this summer, with divers from US Scuba Center participating in a special "Reef Ball" Diver Certification Course. Divers mapped the lake and took core samples of the substrate, size and type of fish in a given area of the lake. This baseline data will help determine if the reef balls increase the amount of fish life that a lake can support.

The Reef Balls were made by pouring the concrete into specially prepared fiberglass molds. The divers made four sizes of Reef Balls ranging from 12 inch diameter and 4 feet tall and five feet wide. The Reef Balls are shaped like a dome and filled with holes that allow fish to swim in and out easily.

The team of Research Divers conducted by Sellick used life logs to place the Reef Balls in the lake.

Preliminary follow up counts indicate that the fish already find the Reef Balls an attractive and safe haven. Study has already set up top-sighting on the reef balls as well as algae that grows food for the fish.

Divers who take the Research Course taught by Sellick are given three marine shells on the bottom of the lake country for samples and one type of fish catching and feeding the trapped one. Research Course divers in the future will collect follow-up data, counting one percent and number of fish who have established the Reef Balls as home and a feeding station. The study will continue over the next three years. The study will be carried by the National Reef Ball Group for education.

Ray Fitzgibbon from Oakland Township was participating in the Project through the summer and fall. Kathy observed large numbers of fish, slugs and a variety of shells at the Reef Balls. A night heron was also seen feeding on the fish wastes.

Bob and Carol of US Scuba Center, Michigan, are participating in the project to improve the quality of water in the lake. This project is just a continuation of what both have always attempted to do in their professional underwater projects.

US Scuba Center sponsors a diver and snorkeler USBA and Master's class in which all members are encouraged to participate in Michigan activities about the world's most visible freshwater diving area and the life.

Education is an important motivation for this project.

project for the divers and local school systems, as well as to Vets. The original Reef Ball will be participating in the program by making more Reef Balls that they will use divers put in the lake. Underwater video with the handmade cameras providing a home for fish. A elementary class in Port Huron is already making plans to create a Reef Ball.

"The educational value of this project alone makes it worthwhile," said them, "and the potential for improving Michigan's lakes is exciting beyond words."

US Scuba Center offers a variety of educational programs from the Discover Scuba Class to one night introduction courses. Beginning Scuba Lessons, Advanced Divers and the Specialty Classes including the Research Diver Course. A Scuba Snorkeling Class is even offered which stresses preservation of the underwater environment. US Scuba teaches classes through the Riverfront, Troy, Ann Arbor and Westland Community

education. "Right from the time you finish your first lesson, you are on the road to becoming a scuba diver. The only barrier is your own imagination. We have classes for 10 to 15 years old."

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The Sellick, managed US Scuba and Ray Fitzgibbon divers prepare a fish garden for the lake.

The fish in the new Reef Balls, a type of artificial reef that has been proven to re-establish marine ecosystems in salt water. In salt water the Reef Balls provide a suitable habitat for fish of all sizes and increases their numbers and size, allowing the water to support a greater variety of fish.

Tom Sellick, manager of US Scuba Center has been working on the priority of the Department of Natural Resources and the Reef Ball Development Group of Ann Arbor. US Scuba Center applied for a special grant through the Reef Ball Group, in the summer, and shaped concrete balls in the first inland lakes in Michigan. "This is the first time the reef balls have been tried in fresh water lakes," according to Sellick. "If they prove as successful as they have in salt water, they could provide means of increasing marine life in Michigan's inland and great lakes."

"If a fish lives inside the reef, he has a very small territory to protect," Sellick said. "This means he does not have to waste much energy competing with other fish for a limited food source; this should allow them to grow larger and live for the lake to support a greater variety and number of fish."

Mike Peroni of American Aggregates in Oxford, has been an important supporter of the project. American Aggregates, owners of the lake, are lake owners and are also considering improving the lake's ecosystem and the fish habitat of Stony Lake. American Aggregates were enthusiastic supporters of the project. W.R. Guier, General President of USBA, Ohio also supported the program with a certain amount of over 5 tons of cement to build 18 Reef Balls. Mark Knaus of Knaus Brick was one of the divers and



US Scuba Diver under the direction of Tom Sellick placed 18th pound Reef Ball in Stony Lake.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### CONGRATULATIONS!

Anne Howarth, a fifth year student at Oberlin College and Oberlin Conservatory, was recently elected to the Ohio Beta Chapter of Phi Kappa Phi Society, who will graduate in May 1997 with degrees in Horn Performance and an Honorary Doctorate. She is the daughter of Mary and David Howarth of Rochester, Ohio.

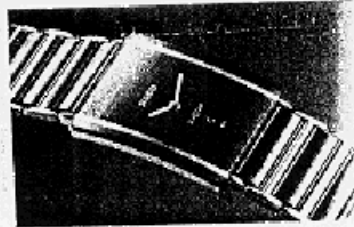
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