



Text by Simon Pridmore  
Photos by Andrey Bizyukin

You are chatting with a diving friend and the conversation turns to mutual acquaintances. “Do you know Bob and Carol?” your friend asks. “Oh yes, good divers!” you reply. We will usually refer to someone as a good diver when they are not around. We will rarely say it to their face. And it is something that we all rather hope people say about us behind our backs. The politically correct response when someone says “so-and-so is a good diver” is to nod sagely in agreement, rather than object. But what does it mean? What are the qualities that make someone a good diver?

This is the second of two articles designed to provoke discussion on the topic. In the first article in the previous issue of *X-Ray Mag*, I covered some of the more obvious characteristics. Here are a few more.



*What Does It Take to Be*  
**A “Good Diver”?**  
*— Part Two*

**A good diver Doesn't believe their own propaganda**  
People are very willing to create heroes and many need someone to follow. If you have been diving for a while, this could be you. After all, it is relatively easy

to build a legend in this small world we operate in just by living long enough or being particularly adept at using social media. And this is fine. However, while the people who respect you and dive with you may think you are infallible and

capable of extraordinary feats, their faith alone does not make you super-human. It is easy to fall into the trap of feeling that you have to live up to perceptions and undertake dives that you are not really comfortable with. Good

divers understand this and are alert to the dangers.

**Knows when to break the chain**  
Good divers are also aware of a phenomenon known as the “incident pit.”





for any reason without having to explain themselves to anyone. When one member of a dive team gives the "up" signal or "turn" signal, the rest of the team acknowledges and complies immediately, no questions asked, either at the time or subsequently.

It does not matter if the threat to safety was real or simply imagined. For example, a diver may abort a dive simply as a result of misreading his or her contents gauge. The thinking is that if one member of the team believes there is a safety risk, then that belief in itself is enough to put the team in danger if the dive continues.

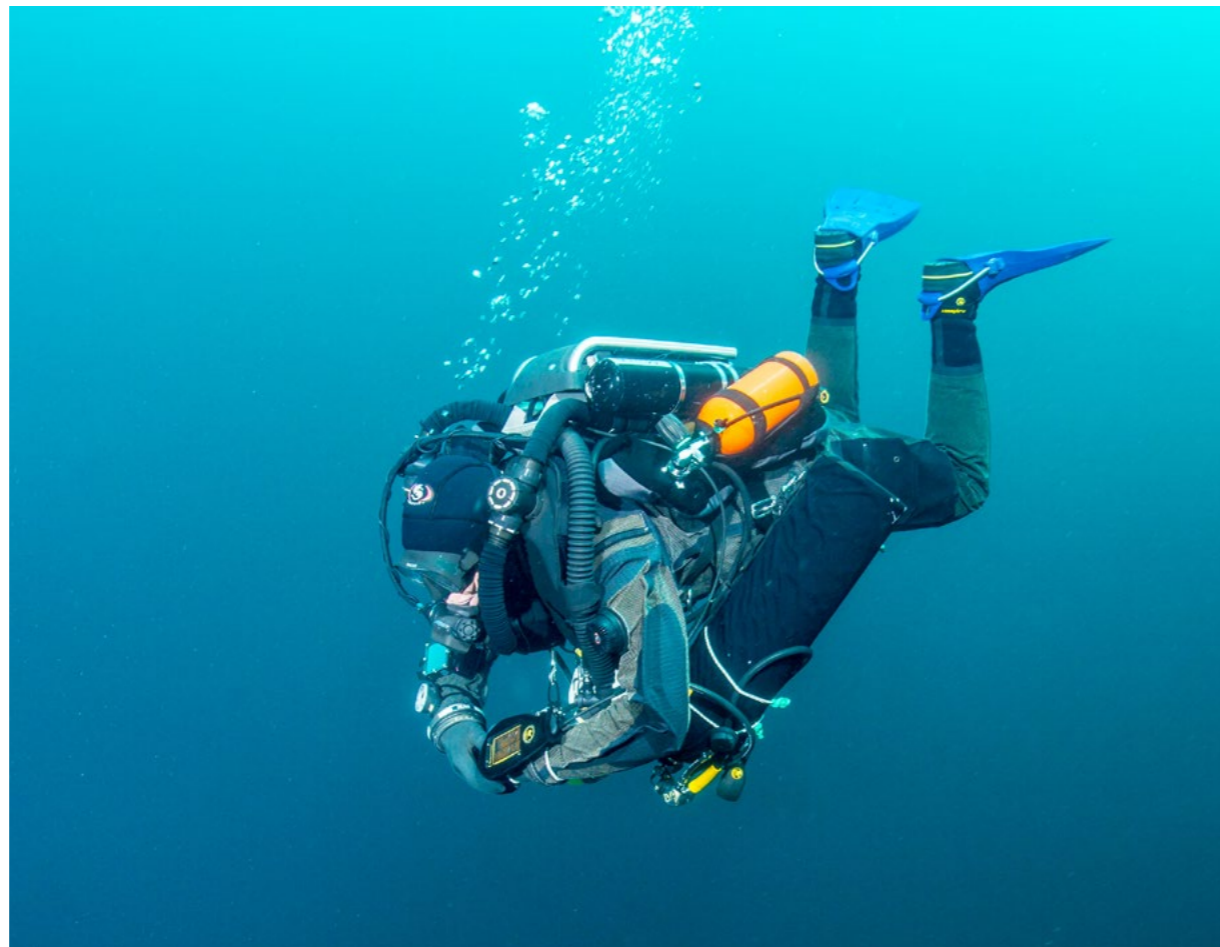
**Stays in dive-shape**

Good divers know that the more frequently they dive, the

Most accidents are an accumulation of events that, if unchecked, can take a diver into an increasingly unmanageable situation. This is the incident pit. Once you are in it, it is often too late.

The chain of events leading up to the accident can sometimes only be visible afterwards—but not always. Good divers are always alert for apparently minor events that might lead to more serious situations and have the presence of mind to pause when they perceive an incipient emergency. They then decide quickly if the apparent threat may be genuine and, if so, they have the discipline and courage to break the chain, call the dive team together and abort the dive, to live to do it again another day. They do this even though they know this may lead to criticism from others in the dive team, especially if it turns out, after the fact, that there was no significant threat.

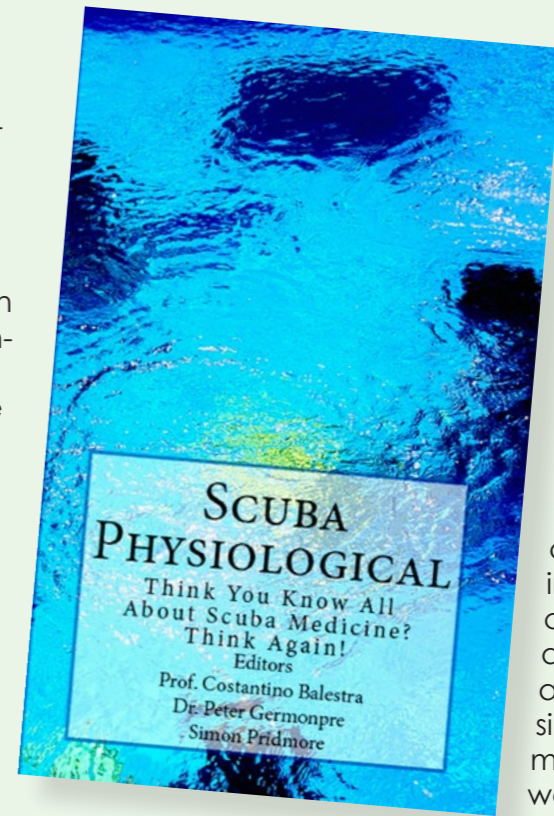
Cave divers have a useful rule designed to eliminate fear of recrimination and it saves lives. This rule is that any diver can abort any dive at any time



# A New Book for Scuba Divers!

If you are a diver, much of what you learnt about topics such as decompression sickness and narcosis in your scuba diving class is over-simplified and some of it is just plain wrong, as diver training agency texts have not kept pace with the science. Despite 170 years of research, the nature of decompression sickness and decompression stress remains unknown. Great advances have been made to make diving safer, but there are still glaring gaps in our knowledge. *Scuba Physiological* provides us with a good summary of what we know, a glimpse of where current science is taking us, and some good tips to make us all safer divers now.

The chapters in *Scuba Physiological* were originally written by scientists in



the field of decompression research as part of a three-year project called PHYPODE (Physiology of Decompression). Simon Pridmore is not an expert on diving medicine but, when he came across the material, he knew that many people in scuba diving beyond the scientific community would be interested in it. So, he contacted the original authors and proposed an abridged, edited, simplified and re-formatted e-book, which would make the information more accessible general population of divers. They thought it was a great idea and *Scuba Physiological* is the result.

*Scuba Physiological: Think You Know all About Scuba Medicine? Think Again!* by Simon Pridmore is available on: **Amazon.com.**

more in tune they are with their equipment, their skills and the diving environment. Someone who is operating well within their comfort zone is much more relaxed, confident and able to deal with any curveballs that the gremlins of the sea may throw his or her way. An easy way to stay dive-fit is to join a club or a local dive centre, which keeps divers active year-round by organising pool sessions or beach dives. These are often no-pressure, low-cost occasions in which divers can hone their skills and improve. There will often be more experienced divers and professionals around to answer questions. Sometimes, of course, the advice may be forthcoming whether you have asked for it or not! It is almost always well-intentioned though.

**Practises defensive diving**

An ability to anticipate problems before they occur is something all divers should be taught right from the beginning. Some call this defensive diving. Technical divers refer to it as adopting a "what if" approach.

Good divers will consider all the problems that might occur on a dive and ensure they know in advance exactly how they will deal with any emergency that occurs. If something goes wrong, they will therefore be able to react quickly, correctly and with the minimum of fuss.

**Comes back slowly**

A disproportionate number of accidents occur in respect of divers who have taken a few years away from the sport and then try to come back at the same level



# opinion



## Good Diver

thoughts that cross my mind when I hear someone praised as being a "good diver." It's quite an accolade!

Simon Pridmore is the author of the international bestsellers, *Scuba Confidential: An Insider's Guide to Becoming a Better Diver*, *Scuba Professional: Insights into Sport Diver Training & Operations* and *Scuba Fundamental: Start Diving the Right Way*. He is also the co-author of *Diving & Snorkeling guides to Bali and Raja Ampat & Northeast Indonesia* and a new adventure travelogue called *Under the Flight Path*. He recently published two new books, *Scuba Physiological: Think you Know All About Scuba Medicine? Think Again!* and *Dining with Divers: Tales from the Kitchen Table*. For more information, see his website at: [SimonPridmore.com](http://SimonPridmore.com).

of diving they were at before the break. When you are diving regularly and frequently, good diving behaviour is automatic and correct responses are instinctive. However, these habits often fall away when you have not been in the water for a while.

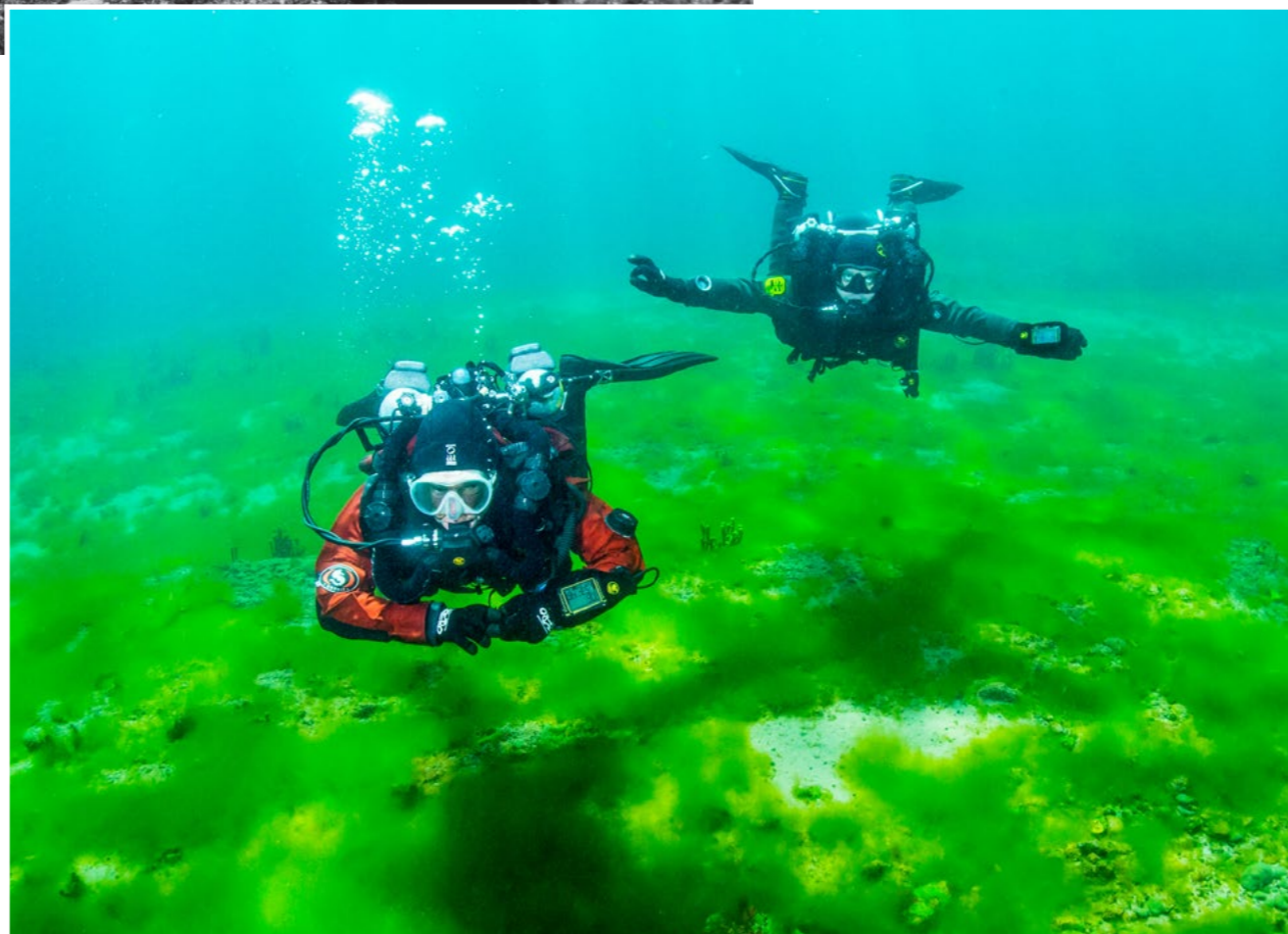
Good divers, when coming back to the sport, will reacclimatise slowly. They may spend time with an instructor or an experienced friend to go through skills in a pool or shallow water before embarking on a few easy dives first. Every diver returning from a break in diving will benefit from an hour or two spent with another, more current, diver to help them with skills, remind them of techniques they might have forgotten, review their posture in the water and correct any lapses in their finning technique. Come to think

of it, we could all probably use a little of that sort of thing from time to time, even if we are not returning to the sport after a break.

### Guards against overconfidence

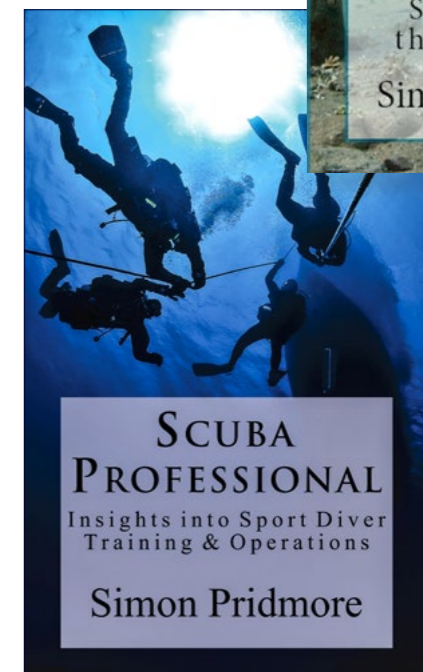
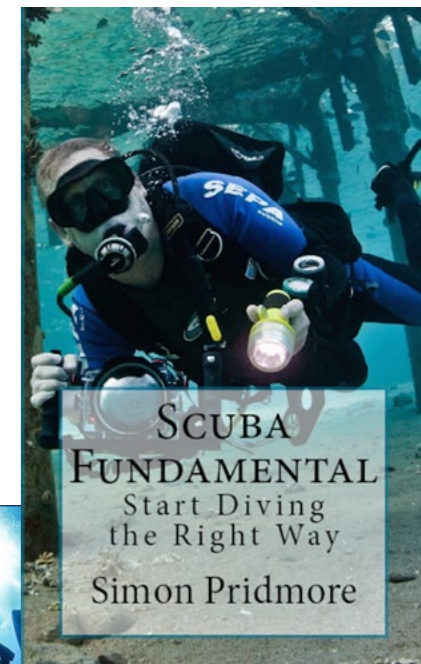
This final point goes back to the dangers of complacency I mentioned in the first part of this article in the previous issue. Tragedy does not only strike new divers, experienced divers also die each year, often through overconfidence. Familiarity with the sport can misguide some into thinking that somehow the laws of physics do not apply to them anymore and that they can cut corners and ignore the rules that they preach faithfully to others. Good divers are always on guard for signs of overconfidence in themselves and others they dive with.

So, these are some of the

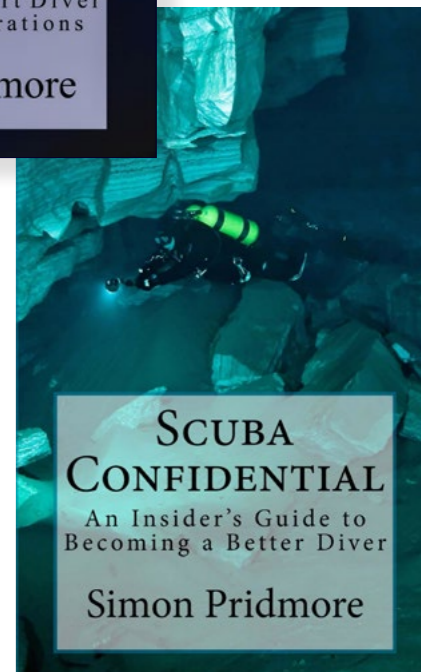


## Get the trilogy!

Three books by Simon Pridmore no diver should be without



Available as paperback, ebook and audiobook at Amazon, Audible and iTunes



Click on the book cover to go to the order page, or go to the link below

[simonpridmore.com](http://simonpridmore.com)