

On Saturday, May 19, the dive season on the lake was officially opened. Gary Humel, Mike and Georgann Wachter, and Kevin Magee on Gary's boat and Greg Ondus and Michelle Foss on Greg's boat went diving out of Lorain. Greg's boat was sporting its new name "Pirate" on the back along with a graphic of a buccaneer - very stylish - and the pirate flag was flying overhead. On the way out it was also noticed that Doug and Rose Simon's sailboat "Simon Sez" was also sporting its new name and a wizard (named Simon?) on the back.

The day was perfect. Despite a marine forecast for 1'-2' waves growing to 3' over the day, there wasn't a gust of wind to be found anywhere, and the lake was absolutely flat. It was mirror flat, in fact, with barely a ripple to disturb the lake for miles around. And one could see for miles as the air clarity was astounding. Visibility was unlimited, and from 15 miles out in the lake the whole Ohio coastline from Perry to Cleveland to Lorain was clearly visible to the limits of the curvature of the horizon. Throughout the day, the anchor line just stayed limp whenever we anchored since there were no winds or currents. It was bright and sunny with barely a cloud in the sky, and the air temperature was comfortable at 60 deg F.

The first dive site was the "Dundee," a large 210' long three-masted wooden schooner/barge that sank in 75' of water 14 miles off Rocky River. Mike and Georgann were the first into the water followed by Greg and Michelle a few minutes later. Gary and Kevin stayed topside to watch the boats and entered the water later after Mike and Georg came back up. Visibility on the bottom was superb at about 25'-30', and Kevin noted that he could see the full 35' width of the wreck by swimming just 5'-10' inside the gunwale. Zebra mussels barely coated the wreck, which is pretty much the same as last year. Bare wood was visible on the top parts of the wreck with the sides only lightly covered with small mussels. All the deck equipment and pieces of the wreck could easily be identified with only a light coating of very small mussels evident. Several 2"-3" gobies were seen on the wreck and were probably responsible for the missing mussels.

Mike and Georg found a net snagged at the stern with live perch still caught in the net. They did their humanitarian duty and freed about five of them, then Greg and Michelle freed a few more, including a pregnant female. Georgann found some scuba gear treasure and retrieved it. Although dive conditions were nearly perfect, it was, as Mike noted, DARNED cold on the bottom. The bottom temperature was 43 deg F with a mild thermocline at 30'-35'. The surface water temperature was about 50 deg F. Mike discovered that a hole in a glove fingertip will indeed make one's hand go completely numb before the end of the dive. Mike, Georgann, Greg, and Kevin dove dry while Gary and Michelle dove wet. Kevin reported being quite warm and comfortable for his whole 30- minute dive, and he had no holes in his diving apparel. Kevin and Gary finished their dive by moving the anchor off the wreck and swimming through the cargo holds under the decking. Midges and non-biting flies were evident during the surface interval

while everyone ate a pleasant lunch. Before moving to the next site, however, Kevin had to gear back up and release the anchor, which had become hopelessly re-snagged in the wreck. He discovered it had fallen down into one of the open cargo holds and had become tangled in some old rope at the bottom.

We then moved to the "Admiral," a tugboat about five miles away in 70' of water. It sank during World War II in 1942 during a December snowstorm. Conditions at this wreck were very similar to the "Dundee," although visibility was a little less at maybe 20'-25'. It was also noted that the zebra mussels were again absent or very small from the bottom to about a 60' depth, which is equal to the engine room level. Above 60', however, the zebra mussels suddenly become quite large and more numerous, obscuring many of the details of the wreck, including the bridge and upper levels of the wreck. This is unlike last year when the entire wreck was virtually free of mussels. Mike and Georgann explored off into the debris field and found yet more scuba gear treasure. This time Georgann let Mike do the work of bringing it to the surface. Gary, Greg, and Kevin explored around and inside the wreck, which can be easily penetrated. Afterwards, the anchor was released, and this time it stayed released.

It was the perfect day to open the dive season. If this is any indication of the rest of the dive season, then it's going to be great. The pool is now open!