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Story by: Chief Editor

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**Lobster Hunting
Season is On !!**

Narration Contributed by:

Chief Editor



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Lobster Diving....

.....a nostalgic adventure



Salvaging a
Derelict Lobster
Trap in Florida

Lobster Diving Dave grew up in the Keys and Miami, and as young man he remembers going out hunting for lobster, and he's going to share his story.....

When I was about 10 yrs old and my brother 7, my parents, my mom and step-dad at the time, started to collect tropical fish down around Boca Raton, where there used to be reefs there, which are now covered up with sand, and we also spent a lot of time in the Keys. My biological father had been a shrimp boat captain back in the 50's in the Keys, and we lived in Key West. Short time later, he moved to Miami for a cushier job, which was running site-seeing boats, and he did that up till when he was 75 yrs old. His last boat he ran was the Jungle Queen.

But getting back to lobster diving and spear fishing in the Keys, we did a lot of that starting young like I said, and lobster diving is not an easy thing when your just skin-diving, which is what they call snorkeling now. Because you have to hold your breathe, you have to look for lobsters and they way you find them is they make burrows, like little caves. They clean out all the silt and dirt and some of those caves can go way, way back in, some two to three feet. So you might ask, "How do you get 'em out? "



Well, if the cave is shallow enough you can reach in with your hand, grab the lobster and try to get them by the head, which is a difficult thing because he's got two very strong antennae that are covered with spikes. So you have to have a glove on so you don't get torn up by those spikes. You have to grab the lobster, and pull him out. Sometimes it takes a lot of force-they have a very big muscle in their tail which they can ball up, and try to jam themselves in there. You have to always be careful too, to look inside where you're grabbing for the lobster.

Sometimes there might be a Moray Eel in there. The Moray Eel is a very dangerous eel because they have two sets of jaws and what they do is they bite down on you, and a second set comes out of their throat and bites a piece off. There's been a few divers who lost a

finger; I got about 15 stitches one time from a Moray Eel, but I knew to pull away quick enough where he couldn't get me with the second set of jaws, otherwise I'd be missing that finger. So you have to be sensible about it. The best lobster diving is when you find a big brain coral that has nice openings, you look inside and you see about 5 or 10 of them in there that you can work, and if there's two entrances underneath the brain coral, you can use what they call a 'tickle stick', which basically, you shove it in there and you aggravate lobster by poking him toward the opposite hole. And you have somebody waiting on the other side, hopefully with a net, so when he shoots out, you get him in the net.

Now sometimes, they're very crafty, they come out the hole and make a right or left turn and avoid the net, so then the diver with the net has to use whatever breathe you have left to go after him, and put the net carefully, slowly behind him, and then with your tickle stick in the other hand you wack him on the bottom right in front of him, and he shoots into your net. Now, then you want to wrap the net with the movement of your wrist, and uh,...trap him in the net. Then he goes up into the bucket, and uh, with the rest of dinner.

Nice, did you actually sell these lobsters?



No, we didn't sell the lobsters, although I worked for a commercial lobster fisherman he was a Cuban named Elio, he and I became good friends in Hialeah. He had a ranch, and he was probably one of the best fisherman that I've ever worked with. In early June, when the yellow tail would spawn I would do commercial fishing with him, and he knew just how to get you on the spot using his plotter, he knew just where all the fish were.

Tell me, when you used to do this as a young boy, which spots did you lobster harvest in?

Well, we used to go to Big Pine Key, back then, off of Big Pine Key, about 7 miles out was a place called Looe Key, which is a fantastic reef big, big gigantic coral fingers with deep caverns and white sand

bottom, beautiful place, you could find every fish in the world, all the tropical fish; like french angel, queen angel, high hats, jack nights, cardinals....these are all fish that you could put and keep in your aquarium. We collected those too, and we had a 50 gallon tank at home, where, you know, we enjoyed watching these fish. But lobster fishing at Looe Key was always very good.

Which Key?

It was called Looe Key, and it's really just a reef just 7 miles out off of Big Pine Key. It's protected now, you cannot do any kind of spear fishing, lobstering, or you can't even take coral...it's protected by the Federal Government, so it's still a great place to go and dive, you know, just to look.



Okay, and when was the most recent time you've gone lobstering?

Well, I went lobstering out here in the Atlantic, last year, I went with a friend of mine, Kenny Nelson, and Kenny had the boat, and he has a machine called a hookah which is a compressor that shoots air down to as many as two divers, at 60 feet, and so, uh, we didn't do so well. We would have probably done better in the Keys, but we got a few, it was enough.

David, tell me about the lobster traps, you said you used to take old ones' that were abandoned or that escaped and you would use them.

Yeah lots of times you might find some abandoned traps that were somewhat dilapidated, the lobster fisherman just left them there could've been a prop from somebody's propeller cut off the buoy and sometimes you find some lobster in those old traps, and you'd be able to just open them up and take them out. And if you happen to



have any bait on board, you can re-bait the trap, come back and check it in a couple of days. During Hurricanes, these traps often times got blown up around the bridges and became a nuisance and the government would give out contracts to have them removed, but most of our lobsters came right out of holes and from underneath coral heads and things like that.

On the environmental side, didn't you say they used to start using plastic lobster traps?

Yeah, they allowed it for a while, then they decided not to do it anymore. I think one of the main reasons they went to plastic for that short period of time is because of the Jewfish population coming back. Now, the Jewfish love lobster. Jewfish is the Goliath Grouper, they can get to be huge, up 800 lbs. I've never seen one 800 lbs., but I've seen a couple of 400 lb'r, and I had one that tried to eat my 30in black grouper I had shot. He was trying to take it away from me. And Elliot one time had shot a quite a nice red grouper out in the Gulf, and a 100lb Jewfish came up and grabbed the grouper right out of his hand, and uh, he held on and fought with it to get it back, and pulled Elliot underwater.

Another friend of mine named Ron in Marathon he was a lobster diver, was going down a ledge collecting lobsters and I think he might've had a tank on, and huge group, 300-400 lb'r grabbed him on the head and actually split his scalp open, he had to have it sewn up.



Wow!! Going back to the plastic traps, didn't you say the government banned them? They had to start using traps made of wood and metal?

Yeah, the wood traps came way before the plastic ones, but they only last maybe a season, then they deteriorate. You know, wood deteriorates under the sea water. So for a while, some of the lobster fisherman would try to use the plastic ones because they'd hold up under attacks from the Goliath grouper, and they would last for many seasons. But I think the government banned them because of the environment.

-Contributed by Chief Editor



WELCOME
TO FLORIDA





For the last 4 1/2 years Coral Reefs of Florida have had a bout with a disease caused by a bacteria that is slowly killing the reefs and it's inhabitants. While a local university is exploring use of an anti-biotic as well as instructing scuba divers with precaution with spreading it even more, now the Coral Reefs are facing another threat. Coral Reefs in the Keys are facing the threat of being destroyed with chemical pollution synergistic with global warming. Two chemicals found in sunscreen (not mineral sunblock) are not only toxic to humans, but have long done irreparable damage to marine life, imposing on the ecosystem of Florida's southernmost sunny paradise.

Oxybenzone & Octoxinate are just two of the few other chemicals generously bottled in over-the-counter as well as prescription sunscreens. As millions of consumers use these products, our freshwater and oceans can't hold up under the demand to naturally dissipate or rid the waters of these toxins. Therefore, last year Hawaii has officially banned the use of chemical sunscreens on their beaches. Key West has followed suit immediately after. The National Park Service reports 4 to 6 thousand tons of sunscreen wash-off into coastal reef areas. They also recommend use of mineral sunblocks containing only zinc oxide & titanium dioxide, two minerals not found to be harmful to the environment since they are inert and biodegradable, safer and more effective for human application. They are also less likely to wash or sweat off, being their cling-like metallic properties reflect harmful rays, rather than permeate your skin as well as eco-waterways.

Naturally, as humans consume these topical solutions, these run off the skin at rinse stations or just come off when visitors want to take a direct dip in the beautiful emerald waters to cool off. The creams and sprays applied are posing additional dangers to coral habitat. Patrick Rice, a chief science and research officer at Florida Keys Community College contributes, "Oxybenzone is an oil and it floats on the surface, these items should be banned as they have no place in our waters in the Florida Keys."

Gwen Filosa of Miami Herald states, "Many who support the ban say it's a step in the right direction to preserve the reef." The same article shares the sentiments of toxicologist, Joe DiNardo who worked on the Hawaiian ban, "It's not really not an emotional issue; it's really just science. It's hard to do something about global warming. We can do something about chemical pollution today and that's what the whole concept is about."

So what kind of protection would agree with the environment when going out to the water? Personally, I use two name brands, Garden Goddess and Badger. There are many others out there, as well. Clicking this linked article will help you with deciding environmentally-friendly protection that proves healthier for your family while protecting the Coral Reefs:

<https://www.skincareox.com/40-best-organic-sunscreens-non-toxic-natural/>

Products I recommend that would be consistent with Active 'Mineral' Ingredients are "Garden Goddess", "Badger", and "Sol Bar", & select "Alba Botanica" which states clearly on their website: "Free of ingredients identified to have potential adverse impact to coral reef." Sunflower is another one to consider.

Check your cabinets & closets for Active Ingredients. Quite a few popular Chemical Sunscreens have the following additional Active Ingredients to look out for, ones that are synthetic or chemical, such as:

Octisalate and Avobenzone 3.0%, Homosalate 15.0%, Octisalate 5.0%, Octocrylene 10.0%, Oxybenzone 6.0%; ect.

Alphabetical List of Chemical Sun"screens":

Avobenzene
Diethylamino
Hydroxybenzoyl
Hexyl
Benzoate*
Disodium
Phenyl
Dibenzimidazole
Tetrasulfonate*
Homosalate
Octisalate
Octinoxate
Octocrylene
Ensulizole
Octyl
Triazone*
Ethylhexyl
Triazone*
Oxybenzone
Bis-
Ethylhexyloxyphenol
Methoxyphenyl
Triazine*
Methylene Bis-
Benzotriazolyl
Tetramethylbutylphenol*
Tris-Biphenyl Triazine*

Alphabetical List of Mineral Sun"blocks":

Titanium Dioxide
Zinc Oxide

Both Lists Provide.....UVA + UVB Filters



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Horny reptiles with razor sharp teeth are not your regular pet, but here in Florida you are bound to come across one. There are plenty sight-seeing destinations that involve the ancient reptiles. Whether you would want to get close or not, it's a memorable decision lasting for lifetimes. In fact you may want to take one home. But that would not be possible. Why, you ask?

Out of the 5 million alligators in the Southeastern US, a whopping 1.25 million are native to Florida alone. Though there are enough to go around, it doesn't mean they can live just anywhere in the continental planet. They prefer their marshy home environment full of swamps, rivers and lakes. They've had hundreds of years to make the humid wetlands their breeding grounds among the wetlands, generally away from humans, claiming kingly occupation of the precious Everglades.

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