

More pāua to you Harry Marshall-Lee!

Young Fish Tommy Glass (accounts executive at Alpine Salmon) chats to commercial pāua diver Harry Marshall-Lee.

For most people, diving for pāua is a rare treat but for 23-year-old Harry Marshall-Lee it's a full-time career.

"I've always been a keen diver, hunter and fisherman," he says. "I started out in school holidays working on a kina boat in Bluff. A few years later I messaged a pāua diver on Facebook, that one message led to my dream job."

Harry laughs as he remembers those early days. "When I started, I was green as, had no clue what I was doing, I couldn't tie knots or anything. The cool thing is it's a great industry to learn in, I felt really supported - people want you to do well."

Three and a half years on, Harry is harvesting around 15 tonnes of pāua each season. While many imagine endless sunny days in the water, the reality is often quite different. "You might only dive 100 days a year, but you've got to be ready to work with half a day's notice. Winter can be brutal - the hardest part is putting on a cold, wet wetsuit in the dark and you think, 'Why am I doing this?' But once you're in the water, the rest of the day is awesome."

Harry recalls a day diving in the Foveaux Strait when it was snowing at sea level. "The freshwater layer on top felt like it was bloody eight degrees - crazy!" He laughs again, remembering a morning when he woke up to find his wetsuit frozen solid after being left outside overnight.

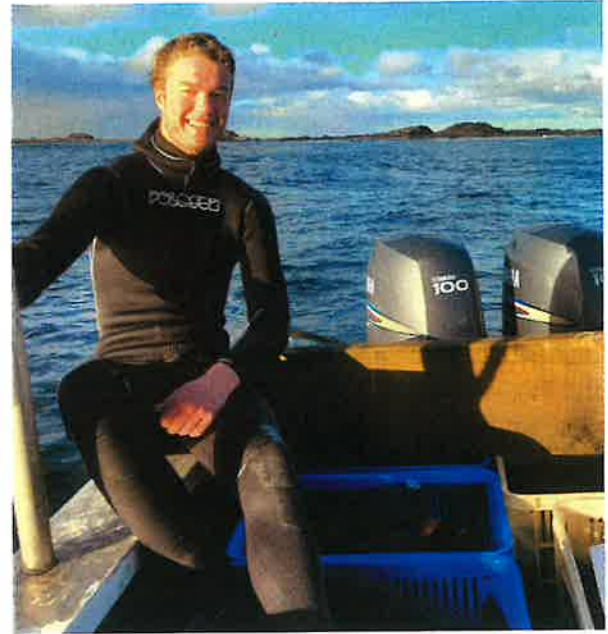
Of course, there are also the dream days - crystal clear summer water, a quick half-day dive to collect his quota, swimming with dolphins, and heading home early. "It's literally the dream, I ask myself, 'Is this for real? I'm getting paid for this? This is awesome.'"

The sustainability of the pāua industry is at the heart of what matters most to Harry. "Pāua take eight to ten years to reach legal size and rarely move far from where they're born. In well-managed areas, you'll see plenty of pāua year after year. In heavily fished recreational spots, it's a different story."

Pāua diving is one of the most self-regulated parts of the seafood industry. "We often fish above the legal-size limit to protect breeding stock. We want the fishery to stay healthy - it's our livelihood. I care about the fishery, deeply. I hope it will provide my income for the rest of my life so of course I'm going to look after it."

For young people thinking about diving as a career, Harry is upfront about the challenges - frozen wetsuits, early starts and long days in the water. But for him the rewards are unbeatable.

"Spending your 'office hours' in some of New Zealand's most stunning coastal spots while playing a direct role in keeping one of our most unique fisheries thriving for future generations - you just can't beat it."



Harry Marshall-Lee.

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Harry's pan-fried pāua

Tenderise pāua until the white muscle is level with the rest of the pāua. Slice it thinly, then bring a pan to high heat. Add a little oil and garlic, followed by the pāua. Cook until nicely browned - this won't take long. Remove from the heat, stir in melted butter, and season with salt and pepper.

