

CAREER PROFILES:

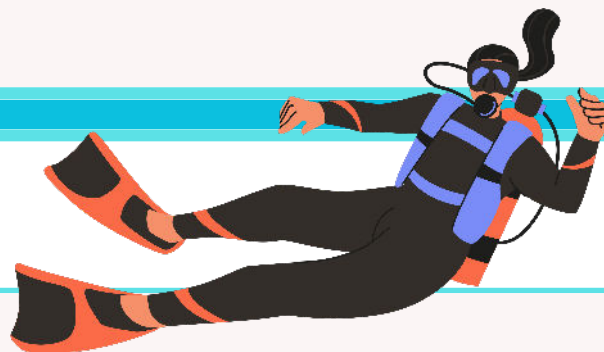
NAME: AOIBHEANN GILLESPIE-MULES

SCUBA DIVING INSTRUCTOR / ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION OFFICER



AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR JOB:

My work has combined scuba diving, marine conservation, photography, and environmental education. I teach people how to dive safely and responsibly, run marine awareness programmes, support citizen science surveys, and inspire communities to care for the ocean. I've also coordinated volunteers, led reef monitoring projects, and delivered education programmes about marine biodiversity and climate impacts.



WHAT WORK EXPERIENCE, QUALIFICATIONS OR TRAINING WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR GETTING INTO THIS CAREER?

Starting with scuba training, such as an Open Water course and progressing further if you enjoy it, is a great first step, and you can often train locally through a dive club. Degrees in marine biology or environmental science can be helpful but aren't essential, as volunteering with conservation projects and citizen science programmes provides valuable hands-on experience. First aid, water safety, and communication or education experience are also important, but ultimately real-world experience and genuine passion matter just as much as qualifications.



WHERE ARE YOU USUALLY BASED? E.G. AN OFFICE, A LAB, A RESEARCH VESSEL, A HOME OFFICE

These days I'm mainly based in Ireland, (North West) working in Environmental Education, and diving locally with Inishowen Sub Aqua Club (Diving Ireland), carrying out surveys for Seasearch Ireland and teaching dive courses locally. Previously, I worked in the Philippines (South East Asia) and carried out my dive training across a number of countries including Africa (Mozambique), Indonesia (Bali), and Thailand (Phuket).

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN THIS LINE OF WORK?

10+ YEARS

BESIDES FORMAL QUALIFICATIONS, WHAT SKILLS OR TRAITS ARE MOST USEFUL FOR YOUR TYPE OF WORK?

Strong communication and teamwork skills are essential, along with the confidence to work with people of all ages and backgrounds in both educational and practical settings. Organisation and problem-solving help manage the varied demands of the role, while adaptability is key when conditions or plans change. Empathy and leadership are also important for supporting and guiding others, especially in learning environments. Above all, a genuine love for nature, combined with a willingness to keep learning and empower others, is what makes the work meaningful and impactful.

WHAT'S A TYPICAL WORKING DAY LIKE FOR YOU?

No two days are the same! It might include teaching diving skills, leading underwater surveys, delivering workshops to schools, organising clean-ups, editing underwater photos, writing reports, or supporting volunteers. Some days I'm in the sea; others I'm planning projects or creating education resources.

**WHAT ADVICE
WOULD YOU GIVE TO
A YOUNG PERSON
INTERESTED IN THIS
CAREER PATH?**

TIME to
STUDY



Follow your curiosity. Spend time outdoors. Volunteer whenever you can. Learn to swim well. Try diving if it interests you. Don't worry if your path isn't straight - mine certainly wasn't! Surround yourself with inspiring people, connect with others, keep building skills, and remember that protecting the ocean starts with caring about it. Every positive action counts.

**WHAT'S YOUR
FAVOURITE
PART OF YOUR JOB?**

Helping people fall in love with the ocean. Seeing someone take their first breath underwater, and their first encounters with all types of marine life - from turtles, sharks, seals, to kelp forests, seagrass or stunning colourful reefs never gets old. I also love empowering others with knowledge - when people understand marine life, they naturally want to protect it.

**WHAT'S THE MOST
CHALLENGING
PART OF YOUR JOB?**

Witnessing environmental damage - coral loss, plastic pollution, or even careless tourism/diving - can be very hard and upsetting. But it also motivates me to keep working on education and behaviour change, because small actions by many people really do add up



HOW DID YOU GET INTO THIS CAREER?

I grew up loving the sea - rock pooling, swimming, and spending as much time near water as possible. During my Marine Science degree in Galway, I volunteered in Mozambique on a whale shark and manta ray project, and that experience changed everything. After that I saved up, and decided to travel abroad where I trained as a diver, and completed my Divemaster (PADI) Internship in Bali, where I was inspired by instructors who combined conservation with diving. I later became an instructor in Thailand, and eventually moved to the Philippines to work at an eco-dive centre for a number of years building up experience and then joined Marine Conservation Philippines (NGO). There I became Senior Instructor and Volunteer Coordinator, managing diving internships, leading reef surveys, turtle awareness programmes, and marine education projects. I returned to Ireland during the pandemic and now combine diving & photography along with environmental education & outreach inspiring people to connect with our incredible underwater world right here in Ireland