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where the bubbles go, so I've never used that as a criterion. My two favorites today are the Oceanic Delta and the new (1996) Sherwood Magnum.

### **Ben Davison:**

I'm a sport diver, not a technician. So I'm not impressed with regulator advertisements, because I don't understand them. My eyes glaze and my attention wanders when I'm presented with esoterica about balanced and unbalanced pistons or hype like "the most advanced and easy-breathing regulator ever."

When I decided to scrap my 14-year-old Tekna regulator — the one

that made me look like I was nibbling a chrome Polish sausage — I did just what I recommend to our readers. I read the U.S. Navy tests of regulators that we publish in these pages whenever they become available.

I want a regulator rugged enough to work properly after getting banged around on long trips. But I also want assurance that no matter how deep I venture, how low the tank pressure, or how hard I work to breathe, the regulator will still give me air as long as there's any left in the tank.

To me, these are the variables that separate one regulator from another. They are the variables

that require independent confirmation, not manufacturers' hype.

The U.S. Divers Micra exceeded all the standards of the U.S. Navy Experimental Dive Unit, all the way down to 198 feet, and that's why I bought it.

I thought about a comparable Scubapro model that tested about the same. But the price tag on the Micra, on sale for roughly half the Scubapro price, made it an easy choice.

So I'm a happy mouth breather, knowing that when I get too deep and too carried away with the big-fish action, my regulator will deliver until I come to my senses and head homeward. ■

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## **Where the Fish Are**

### ***Have fun and help science***

If you're a fish freak and want to know which reefs in the wider Caribbean have the most species, we've got the answer for you — and it's bound to be a surprise.

The Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF), founded by Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach, has trained and used volunteer divers to census fish species and populations in several areas of the Florida Keys (Key Largo, Islamorada, Marathon, Key West, and Dry Tortugas) and compare them with those in the Dominican Republic, Grand Cayman, Bonaire, and Belize.

In Florida, as you might imagine, the greatest numbers of species recorded were in Key

Largo (205 species), followed by Key West (174), Islamorada (173), the Dry Tortugas (162), and Marathon (151).

Parrotfish were the best represented in the Keys, groupers the least. The grouper population was highest in Key Largo, where there's no spearfishing. Artificial reefs may help preserve some species: in Islamorada, jewfish were seen only at the artificial reef.

One interesting finding is that 20 percent more species were observed at sites with greater diver visitation than at those less visited. However, species such as the great barracuda and purple reef fish were found only at less-dived sites.

And the winner? The Florida Keys, with 242 species, followed by

Bonaire (211), Belize (211), Dominican Republic (Parque Nacional del Este — 168 species), and Grand Cayman (157 species). Overall, parrotfish were the most widely represented species and groupers the least. Yellowtail snapper and redband parrotfish were the most abundant, while great barracuda and purple reef fish were the least abundant.

REEF conducts fish surveys to document changes in coral reef communities. You can join the census by contacting REEF, at 305-451-0312, for further information.

There's one more trip scheduled this year — a field study of Bimini's reefs October 26–November 2. The cost is \$800 for accommodations, air from Ft. Lauderdale, diving, and REEF course and materials; meals are not included. Call REEF at the above number or Scuba Bimini at 800-848-4073. Only a few spots are left, but 16 trips for next year will be announced soon. ■