

prepared is important to me. I always follow the first and most important rule of cave diving. The rule is you never, ever dive alone. The other scientists and I usually go into a cave with teams of divers. We are always checking on each other to make sure everyone is OK. Our dives usually last about an hour and a half, but can be as long as three hours or more.

Dangerous Dives Pay Off

My team has discovered completely new creatures. Some of them are related to animals living in caves on the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean. Others are related to animals on the opposite side of Earth. Our team also discovered the deepest underwater cave in the U.S. The cave is in Texas, and it is hundreds of feet deep.

In my lab, I have students working on different projects. Some students are looking into how high the sea was during the Ice Age more than 10,000 years ago. This was a time in which sheets of ice covered much more land compared to today. We're also finding cave animals that are related to each other but live on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean. These species separated about 110 million years ago when the ocean formed. We're also finding out how the environment affects animals in saltwater caves.

Our research is important, especially for endangered species and protecting the environment. Many cave animals can be found only in one cave and nowhere else on Earth. If that cave is polluted or destroyed, it could wipe out an entire species.

I am 69 years old, and the risks of cave diving are still worth it. I have the chance to discover new sea animals. I have been the first person to see certain underwater caves, and I swam in some of the bluest and purest water on Earth. I will take that sort of research and its challenges any day. I love it, and I will tell you with all honesty that I can't wait until my next trip.

Tom Iliffe teaches about sea life at Texas A&M University in Texas.

Answer the following questions on lined paper

- 1) Write a 5-8 sentence summary of the article.
- 2) Why do you think the author wrote this article from a first person point of view?
- 3) What can we learn about real world science from reading this article?
- 4) What would make you interested enough to find the answer to if you had to go through this level of danger to investigate?