

DIVING INTO THE PAST:

Doug Duch

DEPTH FINDER:

Doug Duch

PERFECT DAY:

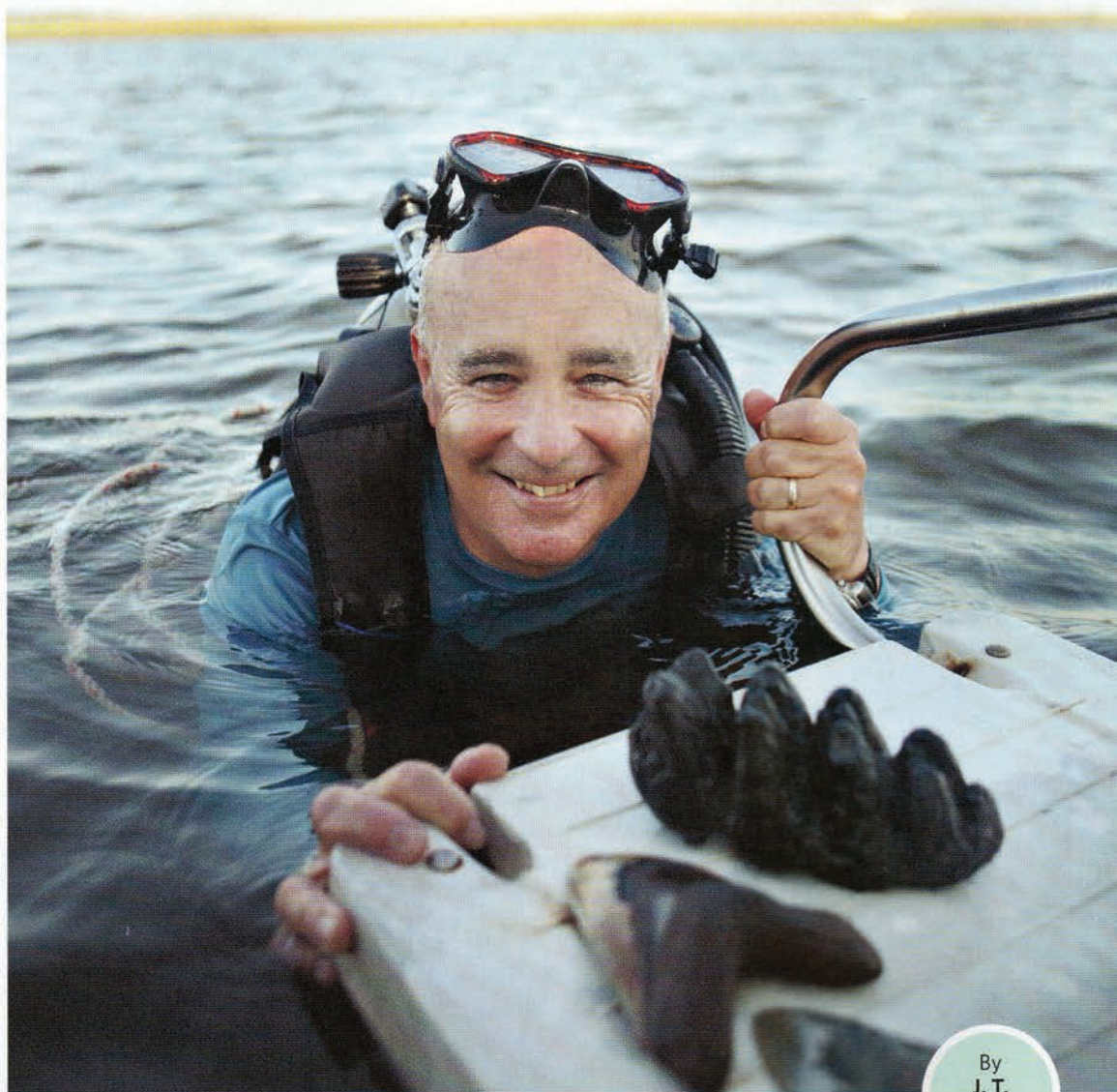
A neap tide, 82-degree water and bright sunshine.

BOAT DRINK:

Mojitos (white Bacardi, sugar, fresh mint and soda. Pulverize the mint and sugar with a muddler).

SWEET SPOT:

Bonna Bella Yacht Club for dinner and a cruise.



By
J. T.
Blatty

Doug Duch is a stockbroker during business hours, but he spends his weekends in what he considers to be a far more predictable world: the ancient riverbed 40 feet below the surface of the Wilmington River.

With an hour of air in his tanks, Doug descends into primordial darkness, pulling himself downward along his boat's anchor line to a prehistoric layer of the river's floor. Here, he searches for the 5- to 7-inch fossilized teeth of a giant shark: the megalodon.

"In the stock market, there are so many unknowns," Doug said. "When I'm diving, everything is planned and executed."

Everything, that is, but what Doug will find when he gets there.

In the past decade, he's surfaced with a plethora of

prehistoric treasures, among them a 6 ¼-inch megalodon tooth, an extinct rhinoceros tooth, mammoth teeth and a walrus tusk that has raised eyebrows in universities across the South and at the Smithsonian.

"All of these creatures were right here — walking, swimming — it's so amazing to me," Doug marveled.

Ever since an article on "meg" divers transformed this recreational diver into a prehistoric adventurer 10 years ago, Doug has stopped at nothing in his quest for "the big one:" a 7-inch megalodon tooth.

In the meantime, Doug's other finds — including his permanent collection on display in Georgia Southern University's Natural History Museum — help locals understand the story of life in the Coastal Empire 2.5 million to 5 million years ago. ■