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Spearfishing Champs Propose Ban On Sport

By CARTER HAGUE
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A former champion spearfisherwoman has proposed a ban on spearfishing in Virgin Islands waters.

Valerie Taylor, a recent visitor here with her husband, Ron, made the proposal while waxing enthusiastic over the marine habitat here.

Mrs. Taylor was four times women's spearfishing champion of Australia while her husband was world men's champion. Both, she said, have since turned against the sport.

"It's extremely bad," she said, nothing that spearfishing has a drastic effect on the reef-fish population. Parts of Australia's 1,200 mile-long Great Barrier Reef are barren of fish now, she said.

The Taylors spent 10 days here, diving in V.I. waters, taking photographs for a book for Time-Life's wilderness series. Dr. Mary Lou Pressick of Island Resources Foundation is scientific consultant for the book.

The couple has dived all over the world and, before coming here, had been in the Bahamas. She described the waters there as "bloody awful."

They both consider the Virgin Islands one of the top spots in the world for diving for sport, photography and science, and she suggested that the entire V.I. underwater area be made a national park.

While the waters in parts of the Bahamas are as clear, she said, that area does not have the teeming marine life of the Virgin Islands.

Accessibility she listed as possibly the top asset of the V.I., noting that while Australia and the South Pacific have spectacular underwater environments, they are remote from population centers.

In four weeks of diving throughout the Caribbean, said

Mrs. Taylor they had seen more in their stint in the V.I. than anywhere else in the area.

Their credentials in the underwater world are formidable. Besides their spearfishing experience, they are well-known as an underwater photography team.

He was a cinematographer in the popular movie on great white sharks, "Blue Water, White Death," and both have worked on underwater scenes for "Jaws" another shark movie now being filmed.

Her work in "Blue Water, White Death" was even more remarkable. A slight, pretty blonde, Mrs. Taylor dove among

the great whites, the most feared of sharks, for the cameras' benefit.

She expressed surprise that more underwater movie work has not been done in the Virgin Islands, citing the weather, clarity of water and convenience of the area.

At present, they have a series, "Taylors' Inner Space" running on Australian television and he said that CBA has expressed interest in running a similar series for U.S. audiences.

Reiterating her call for conservation of the underwater environment here, she said in parting, "I don't know if you realize what you've got here."

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