Project Hector

In December this year I will attempt to swim without fins 100 meters down below the surface of the sea and back on a single breath.
hectometer *ˈhektəˌmētərl (abbr: hm) a metric unit of length equal to one hundred meters.*

Announcing a dive in this way creates a very different dynamic to a competition, where there are no set expectations other than to do your best (whatever that might be). With Project Hector there will be only one target, and only one way to get there...

It is the first time since 2007 that I have announced a world record attempt as a stand alone event. There are two main reasons we are doing it this way. The first is that it allows us to plan the dive better, especially the filming and safety systems that we will use. The second reason is that I have a weakness for the idea of a 'pure dive,' and in competitions the only feasible way for safety is to use a lanyard attached to the freediver, effectively 'tethering' them to the descent line. Instead for Project Hector we will have a team of divers stationed along the descent line who can intervene in the event of an emergency, but who otherwise stay at a distance. Without the necessity for a lanyard, it will be a completely 'free' freedive.

I'm excited, if slightly intimidated, by the task ahead of me. When I first got into freediving, the world record without fins was 60 meters. It seemed like a freakish, unrepeatable performance. Gradually, as I started to discover the sport I realized that the boundaries might be a lot deeper. I set a goal for myself of 76 meters in two years time, thinking that if I aimed for something outlandish then even if I fell short I might still be at a world class level. Three years later (2005) I was at 76 meters, but the world record was by then 80, so I shifted my goal to 92 meters (which made a nice round number of 300 feet). Even before I reached that earlier this year, people started asking me about the 100 mark. "Do you think it's possible?" "When do you think you'll get there?"

Ahh, numbers…

Sometimes its worthwhile to remember what a meter actually is:

the distance travelled by light in a vacuum in one 299,792,458th of a second.

So 100 meters is just 100 of those. And 100 itself is only a fancy number because we happen to have ten fingers to count on. Meters and multiples of them aren't written into the sea, or anywhere in nature, and becoming fixated on these abstracts is like getting scared by a monster that you yourself have dreamt up. And yet we do.
I guess whether it's a manmade construct or not, the number is a symbol that we can use to place a line in the void and pause for contemplation.
But don't worry, I won't be doing any of that at 100 meters!

William.

If you are interested in owning a piece of this dive then go here to find out how:
http://www.verticalblue.net/project_hector.htm

Good luck!
by EricG on 2010-10-27 06:20:03

What's interesting about the distance of the meter isn't only that it's how far light travels in a vacuum in 1/299,792,458 of a second, but that that same number (299,792,45 in meters per second is actually the speed of light.rnrnThis means that 1 meter is directly related to the speed of light, making the meter not an arbitrary distance, but rather one determined by the laws of physics!rnrnAin't science awesome!rnrnAnyway. Rock it! You're video through the Arch is still one of my favorite freediving videos to date, and so inspiring!
by Kevin on 2010-10-27 07:42:20

hi i am a Maldivian i am a free diver i would like to know more about free diving.i am interested in your courses as well.rnhope ill get the help i need from yourn
by ali nasih on 2010-10-27 07:44:56

@Kevin: to say that light travels 1/299,702,458 meters in a second and 299,792,458 meters per second is the speed of light is the same thing. A meter is still an arbitrary length - it's just been defined by one of the few constants in the universe (speed of light). If a meter was the distance light travels in exactly 1 millionth of a second that might be a little less arbitrary..rnrn@Ali Nasih, we will put your e-mail address on the mailing list to receive more information regarding courses
by William Trubridge on 2010-10-27 10:15:18

The meter was intended to equal one ten-millionth of the length of the meridian through Paris from pole to the equator. However, the first prototype was short by 0.2 millimeters because researchers miscalculated the flattening of the earth due to its rotation. Still this length became the standard.
by Sam Trubridge on 2010-10-27 12:25:44

Go William! Best of luck and all of my belief in you!
by Sam Trubridge on 2010-10-27 12:27:34

100 meter 'pure' free dive is both humbling and exciting...awesome!
by Tomas on 2010-11-12 18:41:48