



# WETSUIT INNOVATION

Hello Corey,

You may recall we spoke a few weeks back after my recent holiday. Just to remind you, Sian and I took a campervan around the South Island for a couple of weeks soon after arriving back here. It wasn't really a diving holiday, but I took some snorkelling gear, my cameras, and a spear gun. The plan was "food and a few opportunistic photos". Wherever we went I was always keeping an eye open for any interesting fresh water photo opportunities. So, in various places I jumped into likely looking streams, rivers and lakes in search of something a bit different.

Prior to all this I had to buy a wetsuit. Over the last couple of years with my diving being mainly of the deep technical variety, I have become something of a habitual dry suit diver. You can't snorkel in a dry suit, and my old wetsuit had seen much better days. So I needed a new wetsuit. I was seeing my old mucker Pete Mesley at Dive HQ about some technical diving issues, and he started trying to talk me into one of your Pinnacle one piece suits. To be honest, (and to borrow from fast food type terminology) I have always been a "two piece diver with hood", and you should probably add "thick as possible" (the rubber not the diver) in there somewhere. I have tended to regard one piece suits with a degree of suspicion, and have never owned one. However, Pete is nothing if not persistent, and I was persuaded to buy one of your "Polar" models.

In this modern day and age we are all very quick to complain when something doesn't measure up to our expectations, but we are a bit slow to acknowledge something that is good. I try not to be like that, and hence my reason for writing.

This is the story. About half way through our trip we drove up to the car park at the foot of Fox Glacier on a grotty day. It was even hailing at one stage. This is only a few hundred metres from the foot of the glacier, and it's hardly a tropical area. Getting out of the van, I noticed just off to the

side of the car park, a small tarn I guess you would call it which to the trained eye, and to my horror, appeared exquisitely clear. I say horror because in the same instant as noticing its clarity I realised I could not resist getting into the bloody thing to have a look. Given that it was full of freshly melted artesian water from the glacier, I knew that the temperature would only be a few degrees at best.

Short of someone taking your wetsuit to the Antarctic, I don't think it will ever get a better test, and I write to you because the thing was simply fantastic. I did get into the tarn, and it was breathtakingly clear and cold. The first thing I noticed was that I didn't get the usual ice diving "knife through the skull" headache behind the forehead; basically because the hood is so well made that it covers the most of the face not covered by mask almost completely. Sure, water leaked in, albeit slowly, and that is what you expect. But I could not believe how warm this one piece suit kept me in such cold water. Indeed, what drove me out in the end was that after about 25 minutes my hands would no longer operate the camera controls. I couldn't even feel the camera controls!! I had a bit of a shiver once I was out of the water, but I really didn't feel cold in there. I still have trouble believing this. In 30 years of diving and having owned many wetsuits (including quite a few of your family's earlier models) I have not dived in one nearly as good as this. As a bonus, it is much less bulky than most of the others I have owned.

So, well done to you and John. Outstanding in my view. I have attached a couple of photos. There are two



topside shots showing me beside the tarn and in it, and one of my underwater ones. Unfortunately, as is often the case in fresh water there was not much in there! The photo is taken with a Nikonos 5 with a Nikkor 15mm lens and Kodak VS 100 film. Two strobes, one synch and one slave (there had to be something in the photo!). Keep up the good work.

