

# Quest

The Journal of Global Underwater Explorers



Vol. 25, No. 4 – November 2024

**PHOTOGRAPHER  
PORTFOLIO:  
KEITH KREITNER**

**SAMPLE**

**AN ARCTIC ADVENTURE**  
Diving, exploration, and wildlife encounters in the far north

**ACCESSING THE DEEP**  
Follow Harry's journey as this year's GUE NextGen Scholar

**DIVING FOR CONSERVATION**  
A successful citizen science project in Croatia open to everyone

**COMMUNICATION**  
Part three: The ultimate guide to hand signals

**EDUCATION · CONSERVATION · EXPLORATION · COMMUNITY**



# GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR DIVING



## THE FUNDAMENTALS OF BETTER DIVING



Global Underwater Explorers

\$24.95  
€19.95

GUE's strong commitment to exploration and conservation sometimes requires high-tech tools such as submersibles.

showed the degradation in water quality in a way that scientific measurements, data, and graphs never could. In light of this process, at least once per year, many groups, consistently perform more elaborate documentation, further submersible programs, such as GUE Documentation and Science Diver by curricula. All these efforts, small and large, lead to a growing body of data that means changes to the environment that are often neither easy to observe. This process and the resulting data support public awareness and the development of more sophisticated measurements where appropriate.

As a steadily growing initiative, more than 100 Project Baseline divers, under the banner of Project Baseline, are now active around the world in environments ranging from coral to tropical reefs and from shipwrecks to freshwater lakes. They also online meetings take place, coordinated by Project Baseline staff and volunteers who share their and support each other in their global endeavors. Divers have also started to visit other projects, enjoying the friendship and hospitality of their teams while sharing equipment and expertise to their diving. Project Baseline is a GUE initiative but remains open to all divers, or even non-divers. As a volunteer endeavor, this project has many important roles to fill, whether that means joining the documentation of the water's surface, acting in a supporting

an ambitious program, including a diving vessel and two submersibles capable to 300 m/1000 ft. With these assets, GUE spent the last multi-year project that began in Florida and concluded in the Mediterranean. The vessel began her journey in Florida and sailed to the coast of Portugal, where participants con- ducted ecological and cave survey projects. The Project Baseline initiative then set sail across the Atlantic Ocean for the Azores to conduct more deep-water survey work. This effort continued along the coast of Portugal, engaging with existing deep research crews already underway for several years. All projects were able to work in tandem with the other divers, organize themselves into teams, and operate at project level with little or no preparation. After Portugal, GUE teams made their way into the Mediterranean, where divers visited contemporary and ancient shipwrecks, culminating in the exploration of a 2300-year-old trading vessel off the coast of Sicily. GUE maintains a close relationship with the Italian military known as the Operative Unit of the Sea, and supports conservation initiatives across Italy. In this case, GUE divers were able to recover 16 artifacts from 150 m/500 ft. These artifacts included a range of amphora alongside one of the most mar- velous finds, an ancient star burner used for sacrifice by mar- rying feasts. Divers accumulated a wealth of documentation, including video and thousands of images, ultimately producing a full- scale 3D digital replica of several dive sites, thereby developing

45 YET, THE SIMPLEST TOOL OFTEN PROVED TO BE THE MOST POWERFUL. TWO PHOTOGRAPHS, SEPARATED BY 10 YEARS.

RELIANCE UPON ARBITRARY RULES WHEN DETERMINING IMPORTANT PARAMETERS SUCH AS GAS PLANNING IS A RECIPE FOR DISASTER.

Get more photos in an important part of safe diving and must be included in every training program.

Read and prepared for this eventually will likely respond more comfortably. The GUE system focuses on helping the diver in late a safe rescue. Even if the out-of-gas diver remains calm and first breath is guaranteed to be an effective one, as it comes from the diver was just breathing from.

The first part of our regulator configuration is the direct feed to the wing inflator. This hose should be an appropriate length to match the compressed hose on the wing itself. In a double cylin- der configuration, the hose is fed from the right post first stage. In the event of a leaking or free-flowing inflator, divers can shut down that valve with their right hand, and since both the com- pressed hose and the rear wing dump are on the left, divers can use their left hand to dump gas.

THE CAT FORMULA  
CAT = C (consumption) x A (average depth) x T (time to surface)

CONSUMPTION x A x T = AVAILABLE GAS

CAT Formula example  
Planning a recreational dive to 30 m/100 ft, while using a 12-liter tank filled to 230 bar. What is the MDT needed for this dive?

Metric  
C = 40 L/min (20 L/min x 2 diver)  
A = 2.5 ATA (30 meters / 10 m + 1)  
T = 11 minutes (30 meters / 30 m plus one minute at depth)  
MDT = 40 L/min x 2.5 ATA x 11 minutes = 1100 L in their 12 L tank to safely reach the surface while sharing from one cylinder.

Imperial  
C = 100 ft/min (50 ft/min x 2 diver)  
A = 3 ATA (30 meters / 10 m + 1)  
T = 11 minutes (30 meters / 30 m plus one minute at depth)  
MDT = 100 ft/min x 3 ATA x 11 minutes = 3300 ft in their 12 L tank to safely reach the surface while sharing from one cylinder.

Single tank/double tank - same configuration  
The single tank diver and the double tank diver have exactly the same regulator configuration. The pressure gauge memory and favorably low-air warning is placed in the water marker in front of the diver on either what type tank is used.

110

111

# NEW EDITION AVAILABLE NOW!

Order today at [www.GUE.com](http://www.GUE.com)

Available in English, German, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, and Korean.

# EDITOR'S LETTER

## CONSCIOUS EXPLORATION

**S**cuba diving, by its nature, isn't the most eco-friendly activity. If you're looking to explore the underwater world with the smallest possible carbon footprint, snorkeling or freediving and biking to the dive site are the best options. Unfortunately, air travel, compressors to fill tanks, and dive boats with large outboard engines contribute to environmental degradation. I'm sure you're aware of this already, and I apologize for pointing out this uncomfortable truth. Often, we undertake dive travel under the banner of eco-tourism, but some might argue the term is an oxymoron, as there's very little that's truly green about tourism.

That said, we're not going to stop doing what we love. Instead, we can seek ways to offset our carbon footprint by contributing to the preservation and awareness of the underwater world through documentation. Divers have a unique perspective, and by capturing the beauty and fragility of marine ecosystems through photography and videography, we can inspire others to care about ocean conservation. These visual stories can motivate action, from supporting marine protection efforts to encouraging personal environmental responsibility.

Divers also contribute to scientific research, participating in citizen science programs that collect valuable data on marine life and environmental conditions. Documenting threats such as coral bleaching, plastic pollution, and overfishing helps highlight critical issues and advocate for sustainable practices in tourism and industry. Sharing these experiences through blogs, social media, and educational content increases public awareness about the urgent need to protect marine ecosystems.

Ultimately, by combining our passion for diving with advocacy and documentation, we can play a vital role in promoting the long-term preservation of the ocean.

In this issue (on page 38), you can join Kirill Egorov on his journey to Norway to dive the Arctic. His article beautifully encapsulates this idea with the following quote:

Protecting, documenting, and learning about these incredible places is essential, and sharing those experiences through photographs and stories can inspire others to care for them too. It's much harder to harm something you've seen—either in person or through someone else's lens."

By integrating responsible practices into our adventures, we play a vital role in preserving the ocean for future generations.

**Jesper Kjøller**  
Editor-in-Chief  
[jk@gue.com](mailto:jk@gue.com)





**Editor-in-chief**

// Jesper Kjøller

**Editorial panel**

// Michael Menduno

// Amanda White

**Design and layout**

// Jesper Kjøller

**Copy editing**

// Pat Jablonski

// Kady Smith

**Writers**

// Brad Beskin

// Harry Gunning

// Myriam Spicka

// Erik Wurz

// Kirill Egorov

// Daniel Riordan

// Nuno Padrao

// Dorota Czerny

// Fred Devos

// Todd Kincaid

// Chris Le Maillot

// Jarrod Jablonski

**Photographers**

// Kirill Egorov

// Constantin Ene

// Jesper Kjøller

// Harry Gunning

// Bori Bennett

// Keith Kreitner

// Erik Wurz

// Myriam Spicka

// Marcel Wilke

// Petr Polach

// Phil Davidson

// Su Eun Kim

// Claudio Provenzani

// Julian Mühlenhaus

**Illustrations**

// Alexandra Huth

Quest is published quarterly by  
Global Underwater Explorers  
18487 High Springs Main Street,  
High Springs, Florida 32643  
[www.GUE.com](http://www.GUE.com)

# IN THIS ISSUE

## 6 QC CORNER // REQUALIFICATION?

GUE instructors are required to requalify every four years, but no similar requirement exists for GUE divers. However, could a requalification strategy benefit divers as well?

## 12 NEXTGEN – THE YEAR IN RETROSPECT

As a passionate wildlife documentary researcher and the 2023/24 NextGen Scholar, Harry Gunning's journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. Harry shares some of his adventures, his love for underwater photography, and his vision for the future of diving.

## 24 CITIZEN SCIENCE IN CROATIA

Fifteen GUE divers traveled to the island of Krk in Croatia on an invitation from instructor and marine biologist Erik Wurz, who had arranged a week-long citizen science project.

## 38 ARCTIC ADVENTURES // FAR NORTH

Kirill Egorov's Arctic trip combines cold-water diving, stunning landscapes, and polar wildlife encounters. This article captures the beauty, challenges, and unique experiences of Arctic exploration for adventurous divers and nature lovers.

## 52 PORTFOLIO // KEITH KREITNER

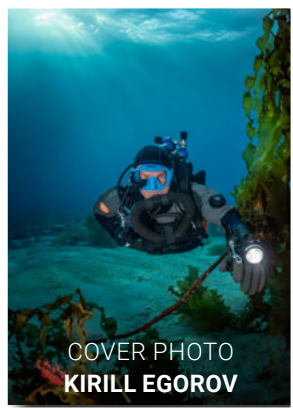
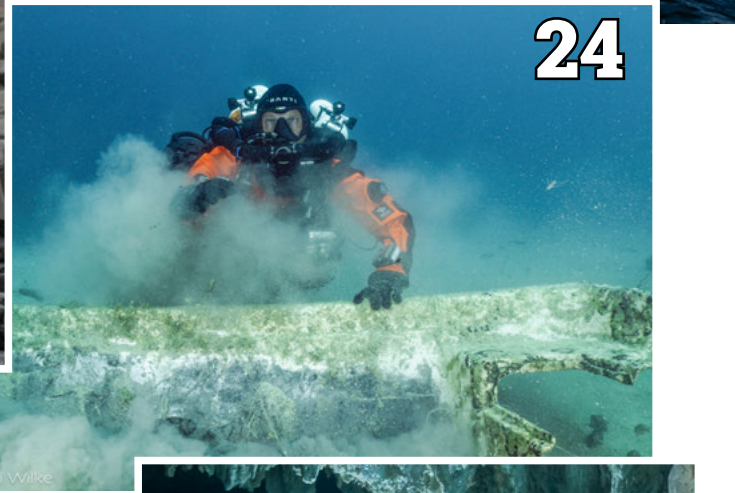
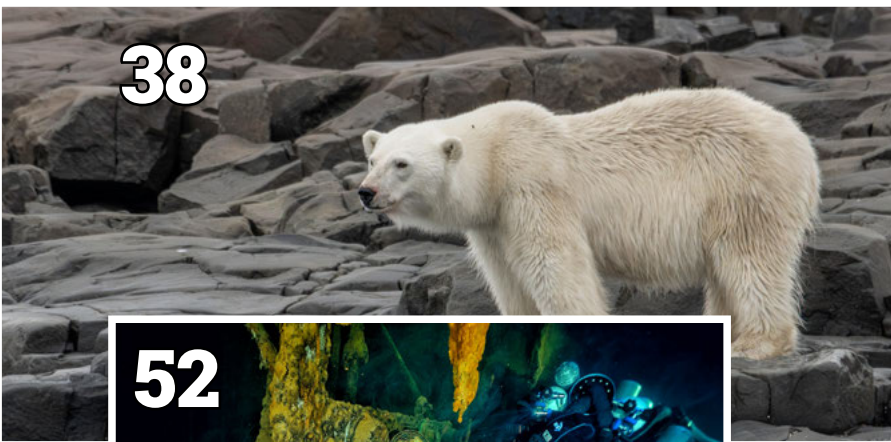
Keith's photography captures action as it unfolds, especially around historic wrecks. Fascinated by their final moments, he strives to convey this emotion in each image, sharing these hidden stories with the world.

## 58 UNDERWATER COMMUNICATION, PART 3

Hand signals are essential for divers to communicate vital information, from confirming well-being to managing emergencies. This guide offers a comprehensive overview of signals, helping divers convey messages clearly and respond promptly during dives.

## 74 CAVE DIVING // HAZARDS

If divers are ignorant of cave hazards, they will have to deal with unexpected problems that will impede their exit and add significantly to task loading and stress. We will discuss the most significant potential hazards posed by a cave environment. These hazards can contribute to a loss of visibility, disorientation, stress, fatigue, and more.





# VOLUNTARY REQUALIFICATION?

GUE instructors are required to requalify every four years, but no similar requirement exists for GUE divers. However, could a requalification strategy benefit divers as well? Drawing from his own experience with skill degradation after excessive reliance on scooters, Brad Beskin highlights the importance of skill refreshment. Frequent practice is essential to maintain precision and team cohesion. This QC Corner encourages divers to consider voluntary requalification to ensure they remain proficient, even without a formal mandate.

**I**'ve just returned from High Springs, Florida, where I retook GUE's Cave Diver Level 2 course. Well, most of it—Hurricane Helene cut into the back half. But, nevertheless, I retook Cave 2, and it was an outstanding experience. Let me explain.

For September, I'd planned a relaxing week in High Springs for some much-needed cave diving. To say the least, 2024 has offered up a healthy serving of unexpected stress, and I desperately needed to decompress—both literally and figuratively. There's nothing quite like a few

familiar runs through my favorite cave systems to clear the mind and refresh the soul.

About a week before departure, I got a text from my friend and instructor, Kirill Egorov: "I have had a cancellation for Cave 2 for the week you're in town. Do you want to fill the third spot?"

I jumped at the opportunity. Yes, perhaps the desire to spend my vacation repeating challenging training I'd already completed belies some deeply seeded masochism. But my true motivations were quite simple: I needed it. I needed to retake Cave 2.

Brad with Kirill Egorov during the DPV Cave course that laid the foundation for his trigger-happy enthusiasm.



PHOTO BORI BENNETT







PHOTO JESPER KJØLLER

## Faulty Fundamentals

Let's go back a bit further. This all started in April, when I, as a confident, energetic, and freshly minted Tech 1 diver, accompanied Kirill for a celebratory dive in a renowned Mexican cenote. Swimming two stages in Mexico should have been of little concern to this DPV Cave card holder.

Wrong! The dive was an unmitigated disaster on my part. No, nothing broke and we didn't have any true emergencies. But I was practically void of all the buoyancy, stability, trim, and control I've spent years trying to refine. Nothing went as smoothly as it should have, and I looked as fresh out of Cave 1 as any new GUE cave trainee.

Now, we all have bad days. We all have those dives that leave us hoping no one was running the GoPro. But this was different, and I will never forget asking myself during our brief deco, "what happened to my fundamentals?" I had passed Tech 1 the day before, and now a relatively simple Cave 2 dive was raising self-doubt about my in-water competency.

We surfaced, and after apologizing profusely to Kirill and the diving gods, I asked, "is it possible to earn Tech 1 and lose Cave 2 in the same twenty-four hours?" Patiently, he laughed and explained, "yeah, that was pretty bad. I think you spend too much time on the DPV trigger, and that has become your crutch. Your precision skills have dulled. Revisiting them wouldn't hurt."

Frustratingly, and per usual, he was right. While I had completed several multi-stage cave dives in the previous months, all of them were predominantly scooter dives—that is, they were all scooter dives with minimal swimming at the far end after dumping the stages. In truth, I hadn't swum two stages from full to empty in ages. My focus on finesse had been limited.

Kirill then suggested, "why don't you come fill a third teammate spot in a Cave 2 course? Participate in the class as a trainee, and we'll see if we can refresh some of what's stagnated."





A gas switch is a prime example of a core skill that can benefit from regular refresh workshops to prevent skill drift.

### **Danny's great idea**

It was a brilliant idea with benefits to both my personal diving and quality control role. I said, "tell me when you have a spot open, and I'll be there."

It was also a rather familiar idea. In fact, I admit I had forgotten that GUE Training Council Chair Danny Riordan proposed a similar initiative to me a few years ago. Danny's point: GUE requires its instructors to requalify at a certain interval, but we do not impose a similar requirement for our divers. Rather, divers renew with a personal attestation to continued accrued experience. Nevertheless, there's interest in continued skill development and refinement. Danny proposed an optional requalification process that would help refresh skills, identify drift, and prescribe remedial dives to address it. This would be useful to both the diver and future teammates or project managers who would be working with them.

Danny's idea is fantastic. In addition to the benefits above, a "requalification" offers divers the opportunity to either continue working with

their instructor(s) or experience the tutelage of others. And it would provide instructors an added mechanism to build community and maintain relationships with trainees after they finish their courses.

Demand for this kind of re-training is evident. Successful events like Leading Edge in Vancouver, BC, allow GUE divers to gather to drill, refresh, and identify drift. I'd like to see all of our Instructor Trainers and Evaluators coordinating community events like Leading Edge on an annual basis.

But there is also demand for this kind of refreshing of skills in a smaller, team-of-three setting. In fact, I spoke to a dear friend and intrepid explorer who told me they'd jump at the opportunity for a similar trip back to Cave 2 to refresh emergency skill sets and problem-solving.

### **Fundamental flaws**

Now, my original Cave 2 experience was unquestionably top-notch. I had a stellar instructor, a hard-working and competent teammate, and a challenging and formative experience. ▶▶

A team of newly certified Fundamentals students performs the GUE EDGE drill flawlessly; however, the procedure can lose its sharpness over time if not regularly refreshed.



PHOTO JESPER KJØLLER

So, to be certain, what I'm identifying here is not a training deficit, and nothing herein is to be read to criticize that experience. Rather, to Kirill's point, it is a diving deficit on my part that arose under two flaws.

First flaw: I don't dive enough. Full stop. Second flaw: When I dive, admittedly, I want to fly on the back of a big scooter. It's not that I'm lazy, per se. But it's really fun. And, I worked really hard to get that DPV certification so I wouldn't have to swim anymore, right? Again, wrong. Part of me forgot why we dive caves in the first place—it's rather challenging to appreciate the geology, fossils, strata, etc. when one is at top pitch.

This is where I'd start to quote a bunch of scholarly stuff to you about drift and human error, *Quest* reader. But you already get a plentiful dose of human factors, so I trust you can go and verify what I'm talking about on your own time at your own pace. Let's agree that skills drift and we are wired to resist acknowledging it. This is problematic and usually made evident by the worst kind of situations.

I count myself lucky that I emerged from my dive with Kirill presenting only with bruised ego and elevated humility.

### **Cave 2, Partie Deux**

Fast forward to September, where I found myself once again in the Professor's classroom: Cave 2, part two, which was some of the most fun I've had diving in a long time.

First, I want to thank my two outstanding teammates and congratulate them for passing Cave 2. I truly hope my presence did not detract from your experience, and I look forward to diving with you again soon.

Now, disabuse yourself of any notion that Cave 2 is easy—even the second time around. The course is one of GUE's most challenging, as it poses complex emergency scenarios that require gas, time, and team management under the pressure of darkness and a literal ceiling. Add in Florida's flow dynamic, and one can have a rather stressful day. Lights-out, gas sharing exits on the line can make for skinned knuckles and banged foreheads. Light man-



agement, gas switches, and decompression all come into play, and sequence matters.

Nevertheless, the course was so much fun. There's a thrill that lies in managing your way out of the cave, blindfolded and sharing gas, and knowing you have what it takes to support a unified team of GUE divers. It's a constant logic problem that changes on you with each flex of the bubble gun: [lights fail] "Now you're Diver 1, and I'm Diver 3." [bubbles, hand and light signals, gas sharing]. "Ok, you're Diver 1, and we'll be back here sharing gas." [backup light disappears]. "Excuse me, do you have any more backup lights?" [more bubbles, more hand and light signals...]. But you figure it out together as a team. That's beyond rewarding. And it's refreshing to know that I can still manage it, despite admittedly not thinking about, for example, team positioning during gas sharing in a very long time.

To be certain, I failed in many ways: I mis-managed the flow, I addressed failures in ineffective and/or inefficient ways, and I forgot a lot of crucial components to emergency procedures. As always, Kirill was there to reinforce these failures as learning opportunities. And, at times, I succeeded. In this specific scenario, it's hard not to attribute my success to some familiarity with the skill sets as compared to the first go-around. For example, I'm proud to say my line work into the Ear at Ginnie was rather clean (having practiced a time or two since the first Cave 2). But Kirill, never to waste a good debrief, was able to make valuable micro-re-

finements to my route, tie-off technique, body positioning, etc. Even where I think I was on point with a skill, I am confident I improved in a meaningful way on account of the course.

Of course, Hurricane Helene cut the course short. In fact, we were ejected from Peacock by park staff so abruptly that we still have some gear in the cave. But the portion we completed was incredibly valuable to me. I have a clear map of what I need to practice, and how, on each and every dive. And, unexpectedly, I'm excited to spend some more time swimming slowly while leaving the scooter in the truck. I think I'll be retaking GUE courses routinely throughout my diving career.

### **Requalification?**

Now, rest assured that your certifications are safe; GUE does not have plans for a mandatory requalification program for its divers. But perhaps a voluntary program would be of interest: e.g., spend three days with an instructor to identify where skills have drifted, what techniques have stagnated, and how the diver should spend their next few dives refining and practicing. Would you participate in such a workshop?

In the meantime, would you retake Cave 2? What about Tech 1, or even Fundamentals? When was the last time you refreshed your skill set with a GUE Instructor? When was the last time you evaluated drift? Have your precision skills dulled? If so, what are you going to do about it? ■



**Brad Beskin**

Brad Beskin has been diving actively for approximately 29 years. He first became involved with GUE by taking Fundamentals in 2001, and then Cave 1 with Tamara Kendel in 2003. He is now a proud GUE DPV Cave diver and is actively working his way through

GUE's technical curriculum. When he is not diving, he earns his living as a civil litigator in Austin, Texas, and he also finds time to act as Director of Quality Control and the Chair of the Quality Control Board for Global Underwater Explorers.



# ACCESSING

*– My journey as the GUE NextGen scholar*

Diving is a unique adventure—an exploration of unseen worlds that only a fortunate few can access. For some, it is a hobby; for others, it becomes a lifelong passion. For Harry Gunning, both are true. As a passionate wildlife documentary researcher and the 2023/24 NextGen Scholar, his journey has been nothing short of extraordinary. The experiences Harry has had within the GUE community have not only shaped his perspective on diving but have also influenced his work and everyday life. In this article, he shares some of his adventures, his love for underwater photography, and his vision for the future of diving.



# G THE DEEP

TEXT **HARRY GUNNING**  
PHOTOS **HARRY GUNNING & ERIK WURZ**





---

**“As my marine experiences grew, diving seemed to be the obvious next step for someone like me—I remember the walls of my bedroom covered in amazing pictures from diving magazines. However, dive training was always an unattainable goal due to my financial situation.**

---

**B**efore I explain my scholarship year, I want to describe where my diving journey began and how it fits into my overall goals for the future. Growing up in a small seaside town, my friends and family thought I was mad when I wanted to pursue scuba diving. While my dad played in the brass bands, I was in the rockpools playing with the crabs. Each trip to the beach was its own micro-expedition and exploration into life under the sea. My passion grew stronger when I began working at the local aquarium before I eventually pursued a degree in marine biology at the University of St Andrews.

As my marine experiences grew, diving seemed to be the obvious next step for someone like me—I remember the walls of my bedroom covered in amazing pictures from diving magazines. However, dive training was always an unattainable goal due to my financial situation.

Determined to overcome these obstacles, I saved up my money for a discover dive. Despite my passion for the sea, my initial experience of diving was full of challenges. Pain in my ears

during descent and an inattentive instructor forced me to abort the dive prematurely. It was disheartening to realize that the activity I idolized for years was more challenging and scarier than I had ever imagined. Maybe diving wasn't meant for me?

It was another four years before I built up the courage to give it another go—this time between lectures and in a drysuit in Scotland. With the guidance of a skilled instructor, I experienced pure enjoyment without any discomfort. After that, diving was a part of my life, but it was still a luxury and real progression felt far out of reach.

I was looking for the next step in my diving career when I found out about the GUE NextGen Scholarship. I believed there was a route to enable me to dive as well as pursue all my science and conservation interests. GUE made that previously unattainable goal a real possibility for me.

So, what did I get up to?

In 2023, I was awarded the GUE NextGen Scholarship, designed to support and encourage young divers who show exceptional promise and commitment to the values of GUE: excellence, education, and conservation. The scholarship provided funding for advanced training,



Last year's scholar, Jenn Thomson, passed the baton to Harry Gunning during the GUE Conference in Florida in November 2023.



PHOTO HARRY GUNNING





Harry gained advanced skills in data collection, underwater survey techniques, and marine species identification during the Scientific Diver course.

PHOTO ERIK WURZ

equipment, and the chance to dive with some of the world's most experienced explorers—a dream come true!

## Fundamentals

Completing the GUE Fundamentals course was the best way to kick off the New Year (even if the air temperature was almost freezing). It served as the foundation upon which all my subsequent training and experiences were built. Led by GUE Instructor Rich Walker, the course provided me with a comprehensive understanding of core diving skills, such as buoyancy control, trim, and propulsion techniques.

The course was like no other training I had ever taken. It was rigorous and challenging at times, but I particularly enjoyed the emphasis on teamwork, situational awareness, and problem-solving. Beyond the technical aspects, the GUE Fundamentals course instilled in me a disciplined approach to diving, ensuring that I always prioritize safety. This ethos is something I pass onto divers I meet, both within and outside GUE training.

Before Fundamentals, I was a single-tank diver who had never used a long-hose setup (let alone primary lights, backup lights, wetnotes, and compasses). I was used to diving with a backplate, but not one built for doubles, and it was a bit of a learning curve to think about every single detail specific to me. For instance, for those who have not met me before, I am quite tall (198 cm/6.5 ft to be precise) and this has an impact on trim and lung capacity. Rich was the first instructor to ever point this out to me in the context of my diving and to get me to think about what I can do to help maintain the GUE standards of diving. I enjoy learning and improving, and GUE seems to be a place that actively encourages it.

## Scientific Diver

The Scientific Diver course was one of the main courses I wanted to conduct as part of my year, and something I noted in my initial application. As a marine biologist and filmmaker, I am often surrounded by amazing researchers doing in-





PHOTO HARRY GUNNING

The Scientific Diver course emphasized the importance of teamwork, precision, and efficiency.

credible projects, and the Scientific Diver course allowed me to get stuck in and give back.

GUE Instructor Erik Wurz was the perfect trainer for this course. Not only is he a marine biologist working in the world of marine conservation, but he is also an active scientific diver. Something I didn't realize about GUE from the outset is that every instructor must practice what they preach. All are using their diving in their everyday lives, which makes the instruction relevant and experienced.

The course was my first time travelling abroad with all my dive gear to Scharendijke Peninsula in the Netherlands. I managed to squeeze it all into one suitcase (including my drysuit), but next time I will get some excess baggage. Erik was an excellent host, and together with the other students, we spent five days diving, exploring the Dutch reef balls and lobster burrows. It was also my first time putting into practice all my Fundamentals skills and applying them across a busy week of learning and project diving. It was exhausting!

From specialized training in data collection and underwater survey techniques to marine species identification, I learned to apply advanced scientific methods in a new and challenging environment. The training emphasized the importance of teamwork, precision and efficiency, ensuring that our findings were both accurate and impactful. I even got to put these skills into practice when I visited a Project Baseline site later in the year.

### Bucket list

When considering all of these factors, it became clear that not every opportunity was going to be possible. Part of being honest is acknowledging that when you cannot take advantage of an opportunity, it doesn't mean you are any less grateful for it being offered. So, I want to thank those who offered amazing opportunities—even when I couldn't come dive. A special thanks goes to Faith Ortins, a GUE member who I met at the GUE Conference. As a prominent polar explorer and marine biologist, we stayed in touch throughout ▶▶



Before Fundamentals, Harry had never used a long-hose setup or dived with doubles. Standing at 198 cm (6.5 ft), adjusting his gear for trim and lung capacity was a unique challenge.



PHOTO HARRY GUNNING



## FACT FILE // DECISION MAKING

I've had many discussions about which course could be next. I wanted to do a course that would build upon my Fundamentals training, develop my core skills further, and open the door for potentially more complicated dives. I've never done decompression dives before, but this might change in my next and final course of the year. In November 2024, I will be completing my Rec 3 course in Mexico with GUE Instructor Annika Persson, and I couldn't be more excited.

It might seem straightforward to fly to a location, undertake a course, and then go onto the next one, but there are many factors that must be considered before undertaking any class. The decision process had me coming back to the GUE value of honesty—both with myself and with others. Here are some of the considerations I think about before taking a course:

### **What sort of diving do I enjoy doing (and will I be doing in the future)?**

I'm a wildlife enthusiast, and most marine life can be found within the top section of the water column. I love dives that allow me to see lots of life and spend lots of time with them to observe different and unique behaviors. When deciding between different

courses such as Tech 1 or Rec 3, I had to consider how likely it would be that I would be conducting dives at that level in the future.

### **When can I go?**

I am working full-time throughout my scholarship year. My job also entails extended periods away from home, with the average TV researcher spending two to three months on location every year. Taking all of this into consideration, finding a week that I could commit to a course ended up being the biggest challenge.

### **How much will the gas bill be?**

I'm sure many can relate to the rising cost of helium edging out the diving community, and this is something I had to seriously consider when thinking about doing the Tech 1 and Rec 3 courses.

### **Am I ready?**

GUE courses are challenging and don't just start when you arrive. Months of preparations and practice are often required. For example, I had my eye on taking Tech 1. I was diving frequently, and my skills were improving; however, balancing this with work and time away became a constant juggling act.



PHOTO HARRY GUNNING

the year. Her kindness and generosity led to offers of expeditions and opportunities that have never been accessible to me. Unfortunately, I was never quite able to make the dates work due to a busy work schedule organizing and sometimes attending my own shoot expeditions. Despite our best efforts, Antarctica will have to remain on the bucket list for now until the timing is right.

## Storytelling

One of the most exciting aspects of my journey as a GUE NextGen Scholar has been the opportunity to explore some spectacular underwater sites. Diving with the seals at Lundy Island this summer was an unforgettable experience that perfectly encapsulates the magic of UK diving and the values that GUE holds dear. Lundy Island, a Marine Conservation Zone, is renowned for its rich biodiversity, but the playful grey seals are the true stars of the show. Diving in these waters, I had an incredible opportunity to interact with these curious creatures up close, guided by GUE's principles of respect for marine life and responsible diving practices. Underwater photography is one of my greatest passions. For me, photography is not just about capturing beautiful images but also about storytelling and conservation.

Another memorable dive this year was in Kyle of Lochalsh, visiting the Project Baseline site that was set up and monitored by GUE members and Project Baseline coordinators Martin and Vanessa, who also run a lovely BnB on the Isle of Skye. Scotland holds some of the best diving opportunities in the UK, yet few of the lochs are truly explored. Diving with Martin and Vanessa was a privilege. They showed me the local scenery and sites full of brittle stars, scallops, and anemones. Some of the animals here are found nowhere else in the world, and they are stunning.

## Commitment to conservation

As a researcher on Blue Planet III, I have the incredible opportunity to contribute to one of the most ambitious underwater documentaries ever produced. Being a part of Blue Planet III is both a professional milestone and a deeply personal journey, reinforcing my commitment to ocean conservation and the importance of sharing these stories with a global audience.

Conservation is a core value for me, and my experiences as a GUE NextGen Scholar have only strengthened my commitment to protecting the oceans. I believe that divers have a unique role to play in conservation efforts given their direct interaction with the underwater environment. Through education, advocacy, and responsible diving practices, I am looking forward to applying what I have learned to making a positive impact on the marine ecosystems I love.

## Looking ahead

As David Attenborough famously said, "No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced." The future of diving and marine conservation is intertwined with the need for increased accessibility and diversity in the diving community. Currently, diving remains largely inaccessible—not only

financially but also mentally and physically. This lack of accessibility and diversity hinders our collective ability to fully achieve conservation goals. If not everyone has a seat at the table—or a fin in the water—then our conservation efforts will struggle to reach their full potential.

Over the past decade, organizations within the diving community have made significant strides in fostering greater inclusivity and diversity. However, we still have much further to go to ensure that everyone can experience the wonders of the underwater world.

To envision the future, we must look to the past. Pioneers like Simone Melchior Cousteau,

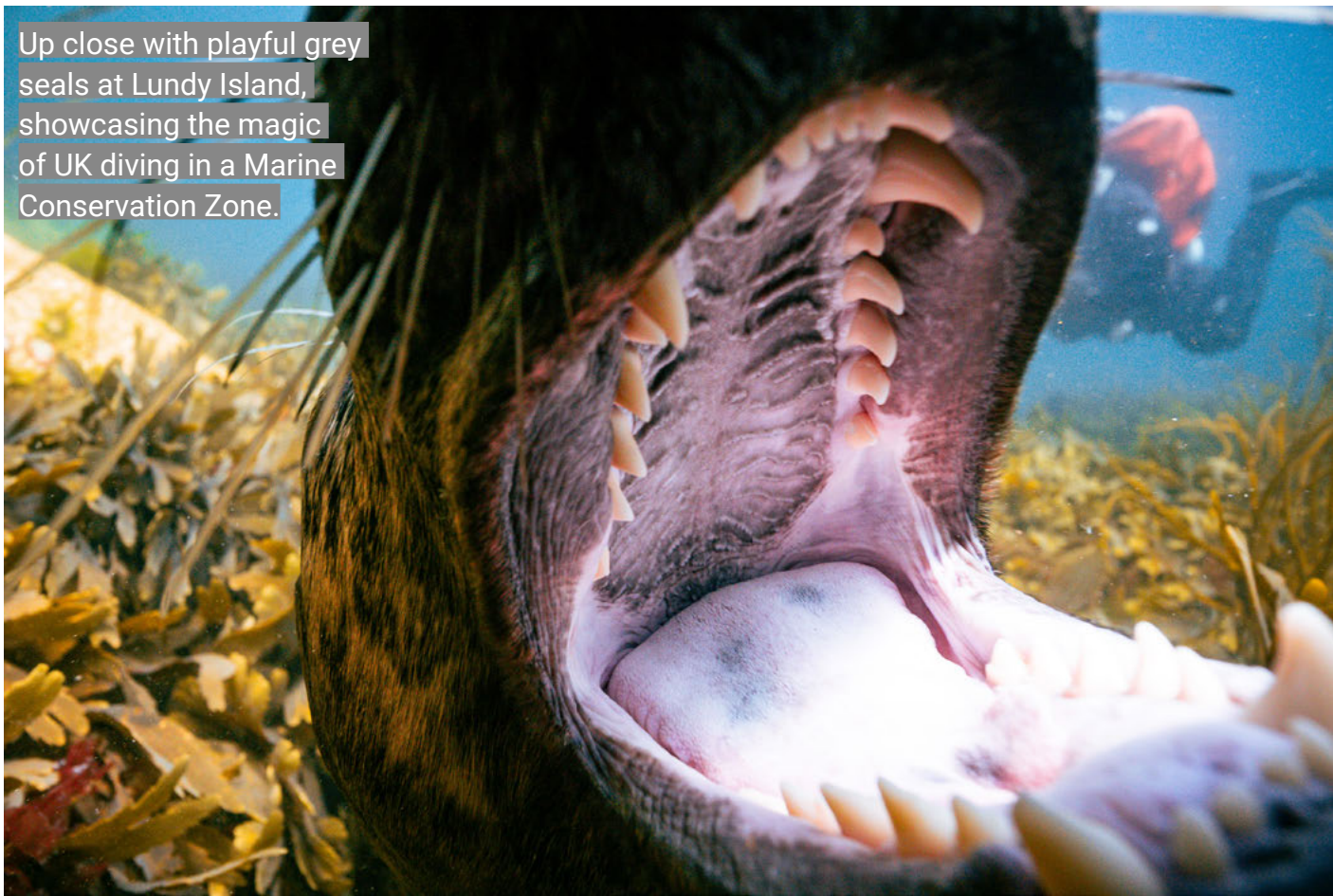
---

**“For me, photography is not just about capturing beautiful images but also about storytelling and conservation.”**

---



Up close with playful grey seals at Lundy Island, showcasing the magic of UK diving in a Marine Conservation Zone.



PHOTOS HARRY GUNNING



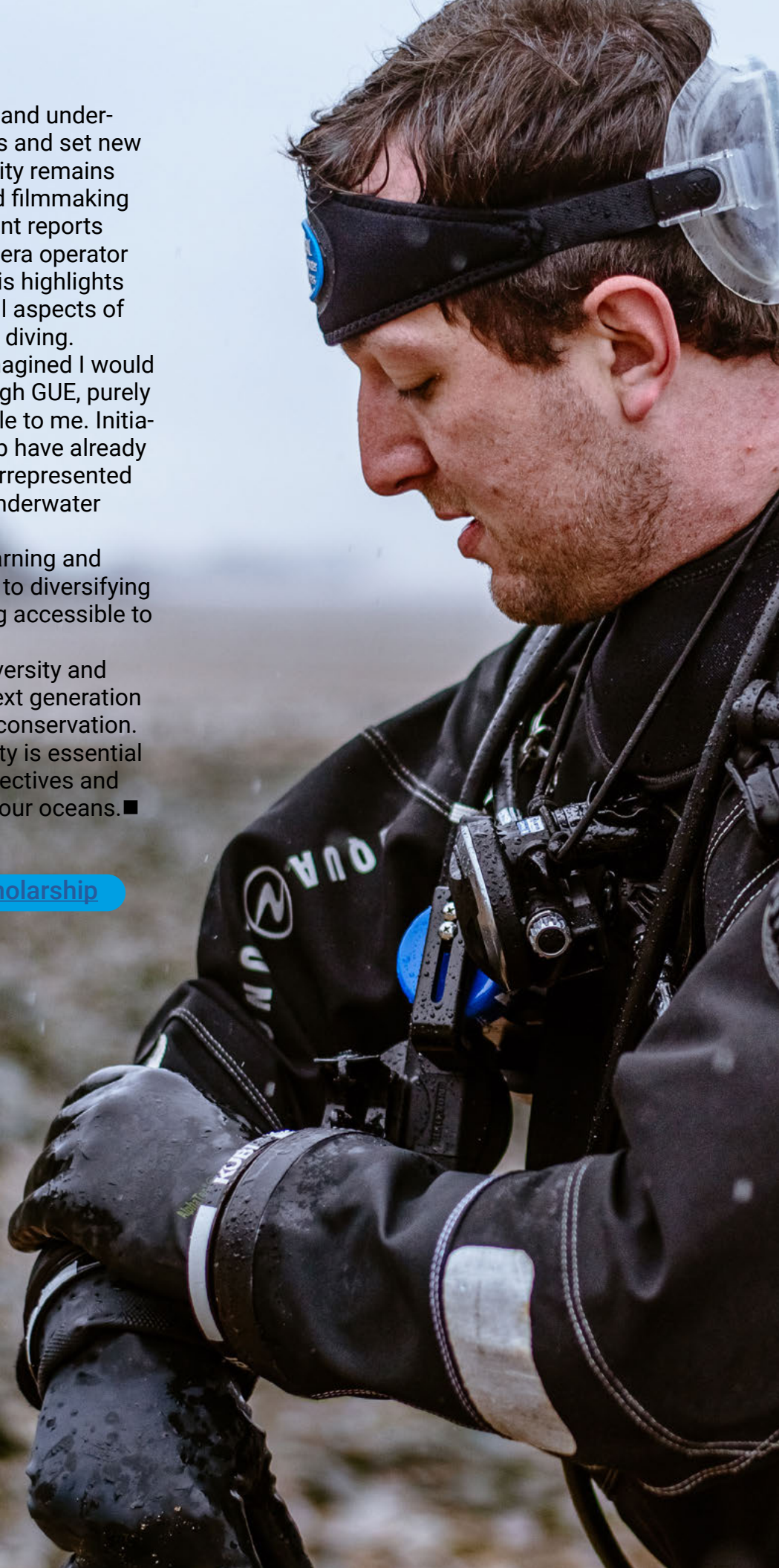
the world's first female aquanaut and underwater videographer, broke barriers and set new standards. Yet, even today, diversity remains a challenge in the underwater and filmmaking industries. In wildlife filming, recent reports highlighted that only 6.3% of camera operator roles are occupied by women. This highlights the ongoing need for change in all aspects of conservation storytelling, not just diving.

When I was younger, I never imagined I would get the opportunities I have through GUE, purely because they seemed inaccessible to me. Initiatives like the NextGen Scholarship have already enabled several divers from underrepresented communities to experience the underwater world.

GUE embodies the ethos of learning and self-improvement, which extends to diversifying our community and making diving accessible to those from various backgrounds.

By broadening our scope of diversity and accessibility, we can foster the next generation of leaders in marine and climate conservation. A more inclusive diving community is essential to achieving our conservation objectives and ensuring a sustainable future for our oceans. ■

[www.gue.com/nextgen-scholarship](http://www.gue.com/nextgen-scholarship)





“Initiatives like the NextGen Scholarship have already enabled several divers from underrepresented communities to experience the underwater world.”



**Harry Gunning**

Harry Gunning is a wildlife documentary researcher and filmmaker, with credits including work for National Geographic, Disney+, and the BBC. Growing up on the northeast coast of England, his passion for the ocean led him to pursue a career in marine conservation. He holds a BSc in Marine Biology from the University of St Andrews, specializing in marine mammal ecology

and polar biology. Harry has worked with the British Antarctic Survey and completed a study abroad program in New Zealand. He also honed his media skills as a freelance photographer and videographer, filming for TeamGB and the BBC. Harry is currently a researcher on BBC's Blue Planet III.



# GUE PREMIUM DIVE CENTERS

**Area 9 Mastery Diving – Kralendijk, Bonaire**

➔ [www.masterydiving.com](http://www.masterydiving.com)



**Base1 – Sardinia, Italy**

➔ [www.baseone.it](http://www.baseone.it)



**Deep Dive Dubai – Dubai, UAE**

➔ [www.deepdivedubai.com](http://www.deepdivedubai.com)



**Dive Centre Bondi – Bondi, NSW, Australia**

➔ [www.divebondi.com.au](http://www.divebondi.com.au)



**Duikcentrum de Aalscholvers – Tilburg, Netherlands**

➔ [www.aalscholvers.nl](http://www.aalscholvers.nl)



**Eight Diving – Des Moines, WA, USA**

➔ [www.8diving.com](http://www.8diving.com)



**Exploration Diver – Hangzhou, China**

➔ [www.facebook.com/qiandaolake](https://www.facebook.com/qiandaolake)

**Extreme Exposure – High Springs, FL, USA**

➔ [www.extreme-exposure.com](http://www.extreme-exposure.com)



**Islas Hormigas – Cabo de Palos, Spain**

➔ [www.islashormigas.com](http://www.islashormigas.com)



**Living Oceans – Singapore**

➔ [www.livingoceans.com.sg](http://www.livingoceans.com.sg)



**Scuba Academie – Vinkeveen, Netherlands**

➔ [www.scuba-academie.nl](http://www.scuba-academie.nl)



**Tech Korea – Incheon, South Korea**

➔ [www.divetechkorea.com](http://www.divetechkorea.com)





## Third Dimension Diving – Tulum, Q. Roo, Mexico

➔ [www.thirddimensiondiving.com](http://www.thirddimensiondiving.com)



## Zen Dive Co – Los Angeles, USA

➔ [www.zendive.com](http://www.zendive.com)

zen dive co.

## Zero Gravity – Quintana Roo, Mexico

➔ [www.zerogravity.com.mx](http://www.zerogravity.com.mx)



# GUE DIVE CENTERS

## Buddy Dive Resort – Bonaire

➔ [www.buddydive.com](http://www.buddydive.com)



## Dive Alaska – Anchorage, AK, USA

➔ [www.divealaska.net](http://www.divealaska.net)



## Faszination-Tauchsport – Sauerlach, Germany

➔ [www.faszination-tauchsport.de](http://www.faszination-tauchsport.de)



## KrakenDive – Tossa de Mar, Spain

➔ [www.krakendive.com](http://www.krakendive.com)



## Living Oceans Malaysia – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

➔ [www.livingoceans.com.my](http://www.livingoceans.com.my)



## Moby Tek Dive Center – Pahang, Malaysia

➔ [www.moby-tek.com](http://www.moby-tek.com)



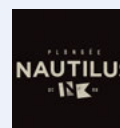
## Paragon Dive Group – Arizona, USA

➔ [www.paragondivestore.com](http://www.paragondivestore.com)



## Plongée Nautilus – Quebec City, QC, Canada

➔ [www.plongeenautilus.com](http://www.plongeenautilus.com)



## Scuba Adventures – Plano, TX, USA

➔ [www.scubaadventures.com](http://www.scubaadventures.com)



## Scuba Seekers – Dahab, Egypt

➔ [www.scubaseekers.com](http://www.scubaseekers.com)



## Tauchservice Münster – Münster, Germany

➔ [www.tauchservice.info](http://www.tauchservice.info)





## Tech Asia – Puerto Galera, Philippines

➔ [www.techasia.ph](http://www.techasia.ph)



## Unique Diving Center – Shanghai, China

➔ [www.uniquediving.cn](http://www.uniquediving.cn)



# SUPPORT GUE

Become a member today and get full access to the rest of Quest!

Sign up at [www.gue.com/membership](http://www.gue.com/membership)

Additional benefits include:

	Conservation \$39	Silver \$150 \$200+ in perks	Gold \$350 \$600+ in perks	Platinum \$1,000 \$1200+ in perks
Limited edition Platinum member-only jacket				✓
Free admission to the biennial GUE Conference for each year of membership				✓
Free access to GUE PDF books; discount on GUE's DecoPlanner 4 software			50%	FREE!
Free registration for all GUE classes for the duration of your membership (intern registrations not included)			*Limit Two	✓
Discount on GUE.tv, GUE's video learning site designed to educate and inspire divers of all training levels		50% OFF \$150 Value	FREE! \$300 Value	FREE! \$300 Value
Personalized GUE gear stickers		5 Small 5 Large	10 Small 10 Large	20 Small 20 Large
Member-exclusive mask strap with monochrome GUE logo		✓	✓	✓
Free high-quality, annual member t-shirt; receive a new shirt with every renewal!		✓	✓	✓
Free access to all current GUE course presentation materials (PDFs)		✓	✓	✓
Your membership helps support conservation initiatives, including Project Baseline	✓	✓	✓	✓
Discount on GUE Store purchases	5%	10%	15%	25%
Quest PDF: GUE's quarterly online journal	Quest	Quest	Quest	Quest
Subscription to GUE's private Quest mailing list	✉	✉	✉	✉
Access to GUE training supplements and procedural manuals	✓	✓	✓	✓