

2022-23 NextGen Report

**Around the World
in (1)80 Dives**
*a NextJenn Scholar's
(2022-23) Journey*

Jenn Thomson

HOUSTON

SARDINIA

DAHAB

DUBAI

NASA



Global Underwater Explorers NextGen Scholar 2022-23, Jennifer Thomson

Journey and Training

This year has been so transformative, with such a lot of outputs – so check out the GUE YouTube channel [here](#), and my website <https://jennelizabeththomson.com/gue>. I set out on this year to explore the intersections of GUE recreational instructing, extreme exploration, astronaut training, ocean conservation, and scientific diving. I think I achieved this and more! For now, here are a few key stats:

180 DIVES: Doubling my dive count from ~150 to over 300

9 COUNTRIES: UK, Egypt, UAE, Oman, USA, Croatia, Netherlands, Sardinia, Indonesia

PROJECTS

- Antarctica Dec 2022 - WAP expeditions
- 2023 media creator / project co-ordinator
- Dahab Jan 2023 - REEF check surveys
- Dibba March 2023 - EMP / coral surveys
- Musandam March 2023 - Live-aboard
- Sardinia 2023 - seagrass research program
- Sardinia June 2023 - GUE Creative Trip
- Hawaii-Mexico transit Aug 2023 - Inkfish
- UK Oct 2023 - BBC NHU / DEEP visits

EXPERIENCES

- Florida 2022 / 2023 - GUE conferences / diving
- Dahab Jan 2023 - the 25+ experience dives
- Deep Dive Dubai Feb 2023 - skills / media
- Houston March 2023 - NASA NBL visit
- Seattle March 2023 - GUE community events
- Sardinia May 2023 - project diving
- The Fifth Point Oct 2023 - beach cleans / diving
- Indonesia November 2023 - Bali / Sing diving
- Dubai Dec 2023 - GUE project development

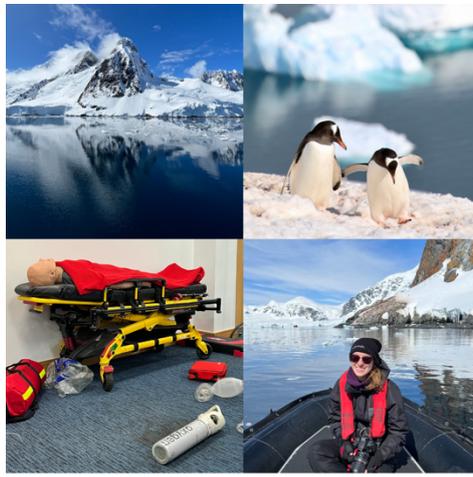
Summary of courses / GUE dive training

- DAN DMTC** – Chantelle Newman, London UK, December 2022
- DOUBLES PRIMER / TRIM** – Dorota Czerny, Deep Dive Dubai UAE, February 2023
- GAS BLENDER** – John Kendall, Deep Dive Dubai UAE, February 2023
- PHOTOGRAMMETRY** – John Kendall, Deep Dive Dubai UAE, February 2023
- DRYSUIT PRIMER** – Gemma Thomas, Deep Dive Dubai UAE, February 2023
- REC 2** – Oliver Ober, Krnica Croatia, April 2023
- SCIENTIFIC DIVER** – Erik Wurz, Zeeland Netherlands, April 2023
- ITC (REC 1 / FUNDIES)** – Dorota Czerny / Andrea Marassich, Base 1 Sardinia, May 2023
- DOCUMENTATION DIVER** – JP / AM Bresser, Vinkeveen Netherlands, June 2023
- REC 1 (instructor workshop)** – Gemma Thomas, Panama City Florida, November 2023



October 2022

-ANNUAL GUE CONFERENCE-
-HIGH SPRINGS FLORIDA-



December 2022

-POLAR EXPEDITION / DAN DMTC-
-ANTARCTICA / DIVER MEDIC LONDON-



January 2023

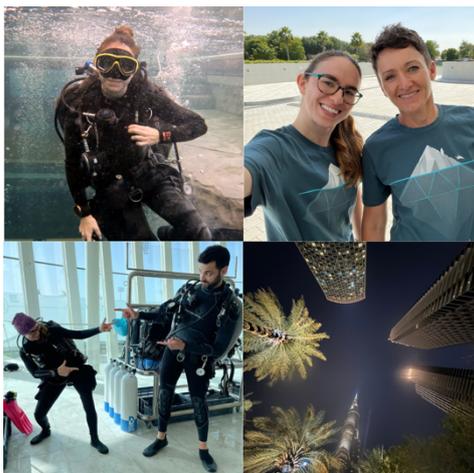
-25 EXPERIENCE DIVES / CLEAN UPS-
-SCUBA SEEKERS, DAHAB EGYPT-



OCTOBER 2022: I was blown away by the enthusiasm, kindness and generosity of the community at the GUE conference. Everyone made me feel so welcome – even though I was worried how people would perceive me: focusing on recreational skills, scientific diving and education. I left with so many contacts for the year ahead, the beginnings of a plan, and a determination to give everything this year.

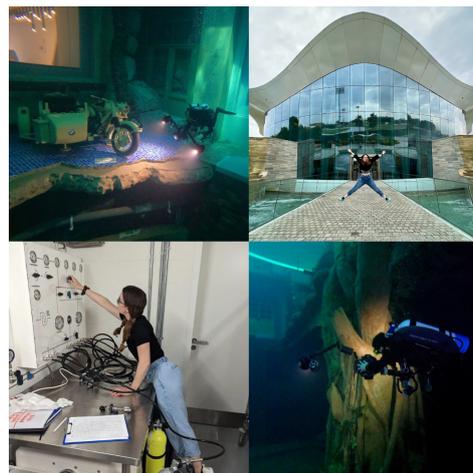
DECEMBER 2022: Having the flexibility of the GUE scholarship to make the year my own, meant I could finally partake in a masters-level research expedition to Antarctica, one which had been delayed by 1000 days. Being able to join the DAN DMTC for a few days in London was a good introduction back into training and gave me a chance to refresh my skills again, whilst trying to plan full-time travel.

JANUARY 2023: Being invited over to Scuba Seekers Dahab, and being able to dive BPW after a long time, gave me the first hint of confidence again! The lifelong connections I have made will serve me well into the future, and I look forward to going back and interning a Fundies class with Sameh!



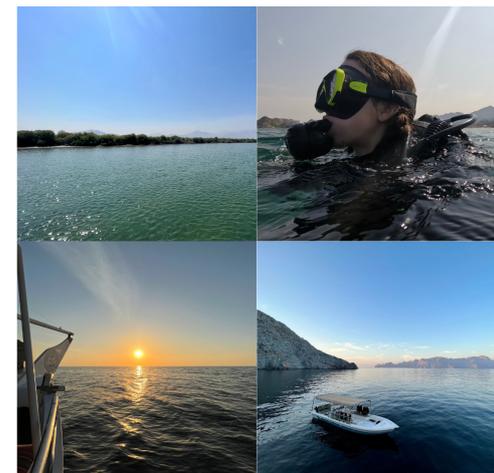
February 2023

-TRIM / DOUBLES / DRYSUIT-
-DEEP DIVE DUBAI UAE-



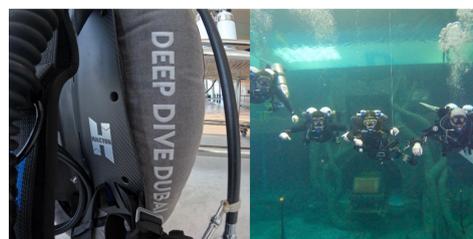
February 2023

-GAS BLENDER / PHOTOGRAMMETRY-
-DEEP DIVE DUBAI UAE-



March 2023

-SURVEY DIVES / EXPLORATION-
-DIBBA UAE / MUSANDAM OMAN-



FEBRUARY 2023: The ability to go diving whenever I could at DDD pushed up my dives and the confidence in myself. I was so grateful to Dorota for giving me trim workshops and fundamentally the skills to correct my positioning / proprioception. Doubles was never even on my radar, and so to do this was amazing. I left having completed 3 more courses: Drysuit, Photogrammetry and Gas Blender, which gave me practical skills that I used throughout my year, and a physical change in my diving!

MARCH 2023: I was very grateful for the free accommodation and diving that James Campbell from Freestyle Divers gave me in Dibba UAE, and to put my marine biology background to good use! To explore a remote peninsula on Oman as my first liveaboard was amazing; one of the most incredible places I have dived. I feel so privileged to have gone, and proud of my confidence on those dives!



April 2023

-ISS ASTRONAUT DIVE TRAINING-
-NASA NBL, HOUSTON-

April 2023

-GUE SEATTLE COMMUNITY-
-SEATTLE WASHINGTON-

May 2023

-GUE REC 2-
-KRNICA CROATIA-



APRIL 2023: The NASA NBL was one of the most inspiring places I went to in my scholarship year – with thanks to the amazing network of people from the GUE conference that supported my desire to merge the space and marine sciences. A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to witness behind-the-scenes ISS astronaut training and to meet some of my heroes. Also, the Seattle community is like a second home – with lifelong friends, offers to return, and memories of the events the board organised for me.

MAY 2023: Grateful for the chance to finally brush up on the skills which I had missed out on in my sporadic scuba journey before GUE: navigation, line work and rescues in Rec 2. And on the course I most wanted to do: I finally I saw all my skills culminate in my Scientific Diver course. For the first time I felt confident in the water, loved my drysuit, and was able to conduct complex data-collecting dives. I left with equally great connections, and offers to participate in scientific projects with Erik in the future!

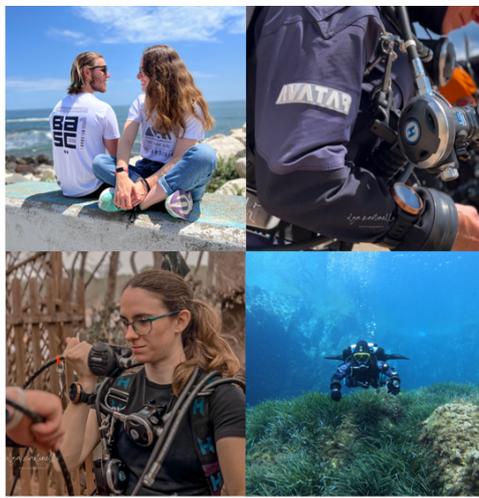
JUNE 2023: One of the most transformative months of my scholarship year. The ITC was the most challenging yet rewarding courses, and I left with a quiet confidence that could make it one day – for I had the tools to combat my weaknesses, and I (actually had some) strengths which complemented the team. Producing and organising a documentary and scientific project simultaneously was worth it when we saw the results of the NextGen Legacy project. Here’s to being part of the team at Phreatic!

JULY 2023: Thank you to JP and AM Bresser on the offer of future sponsorship. Documentation Diver gave me valuable insights in the challenges of project management, and perseverance when injured!



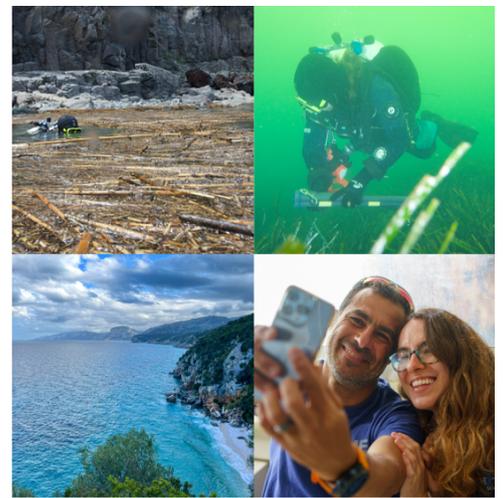
May 2023

-GUE SCIENTIFIC DIVER-
-ZEELAND NETHERLANDS-



June 2023

-GUE ITC (REC / FUNDIES)-
-BASE 1 SARDINIA-



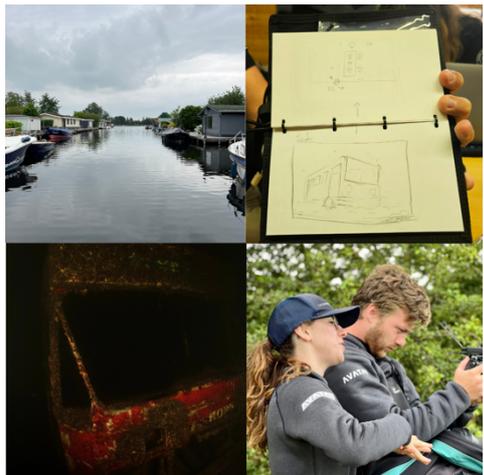
June 2023

-NEXTGEN REC PROJECT / FILMING-
-BASE 1 SARDINIA-



AUGUST 2023: Interactions with the previous scholar gave me the chance to expand my expedition vessel experience in terms of abyssopelagic science – eternally gratefully for this topside transit with Inkfish! Sailing across the Pacific is something I will never forget. I forged great connections and strengthened my desire to work part-time on expedition vessels for scientific diving / exploration.

OCTOBER 2023: So humbled by the kindness of the GUE communities when I had to cancel my plans for September and October due to illness, as the offers to come and dive with them still stand! However, this meant I could forge connections with the most amazing organisations – DEEP and BBC NHU – as well as meeting the next Scholar in person, helping develop GUE’s project portal, and dive in the North Sea. Here’s to the final push in November: a Rec 1 workshop, and the 2023 conference!



July 2023

-GUE DOCUMENTATION DIVER-
-VINKEVEEN NETHERLANDS-



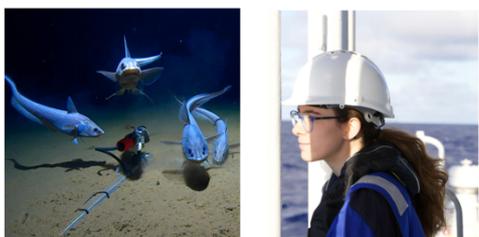
August 2023

-INKFISH PACIFIC TRANSIT SCIENTIST-
-ABYSOPELAGIC, HAWAII-MEXICO-



October 2023

-SEA-SPACE NETWORKING / DVING-
-DEEP / BBC NHU / FIFTH POINT UK-



Reflections and Outputs

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT –

That anything is possible if you put your mind to it. In my 2022 application, I wanted to A) complete Scientific Diver and Photogrammetry courses to enhance project diving skills; B) complete Rec 2 to improve trim and buoyancy, and 3) become an OWSI and work in a neutral buoyancy lab. I have met all of the above and more. By conducting foundational scientific training, participating in an ITC, and visiting neutral buoyancy labs / expedition vessels, I am learning how to become an astronaut trainer, scientific dive explorer and instructor. And aside from knowledge and skills acquisition, navigating this year has changed who I was as a person, and has shaped my future. Past me would never have dreamed of texting a CEO of a space company and arranging a meeting, public speaking on stage or to a camera, actively sharing their struggles online, or spontaneously spending their life savings on a trip around the world. I have learnt to seize any opportunity, and carve out my own future. However, most of all, I have learnt that others really do believe in me, and I should try to do the same :)

HOW HAS MY DIVING IMPROVED –

Apart from: beyond all recognition? Under Doro's guidance, I went from someone who likes warm water and subconsciously majorly over-arches (Feb 2023), to someone who prefers to have a drysuit, doubles and a corded light; and understands the foundational concepts to correct trim (May 2023).



Not only have I met my personal diving goal at the start of the scholarship – to have a shift in mindset and be confident in any situation / gear configuration – but I have way surpassed it by tackling my fears head on. In particular, learning about my personal body tension and underwater proprioception was pivotal for me. I now have the tools to combat past mistakes and I am actively working towards trim and buoyancy perfection. Simply, by focusing on reactional diving, scientific research and instructing, I have become a better foundational diver. I now have the teaching / scientific experiences to make a difference in aquatic conservation, education, and exploration. Next up – future tech pass?

THE FUTURE –

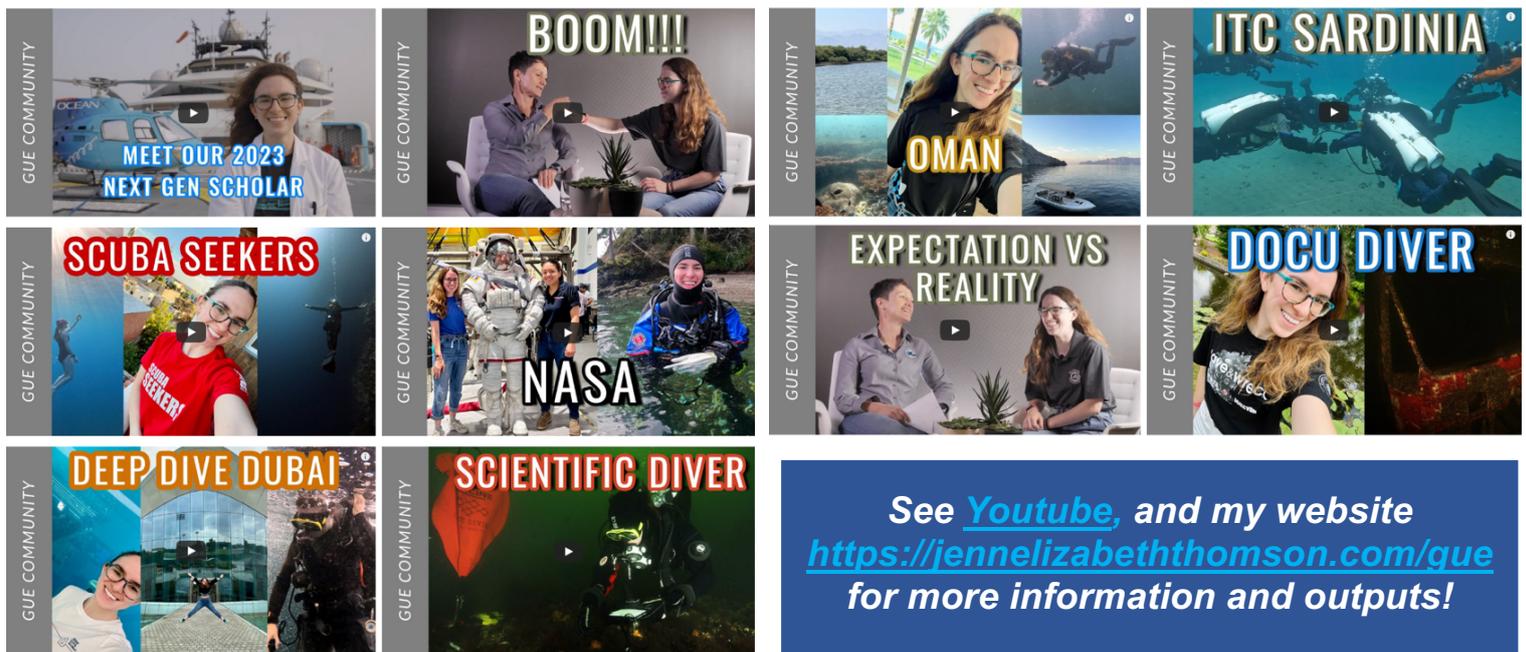
I remember putting on my application that I aspired to become an “ocean astronaut” and bridge the gap between scientific exploration, expedition vessels, and Neutral Buoyancy Labs. Trying to make a simultaneous career out of all these disciplines is not easy, however I am so much closer to achieving this than a year ago, thanks to the GUE Scholarship, the leverage that I have achieved with it, and the freedom to network with fantastic organisations. Currently, I am in active conversations with several organisations that seek to push the limits of human exploration via making next-generation training pools and underwater space stations: NASA, DEEP, PROTEUS and Blue Abyss. I have further sown the seeds with opportunities within expedition vessel organisations such as OceanX, Ocean Census / Nautilus, and Infish. It would be amazing to get contractor positions with several of these organisations and then continue to serve on expeditions – and help the sea-space sciences in multiple ways! However, what I never expected was to form a long-term future within GUE, not only as a future Rec 1 instructor one day, but with Phreatic / Base 1 / GUE for future project management coordination. Alongside the NextGen Legacy Project, I am determined to stick with GUE and grow and develop this organisation as well. But most of all, continue to share my story and inspire others!

WHAT IS NEXT FOR ME –

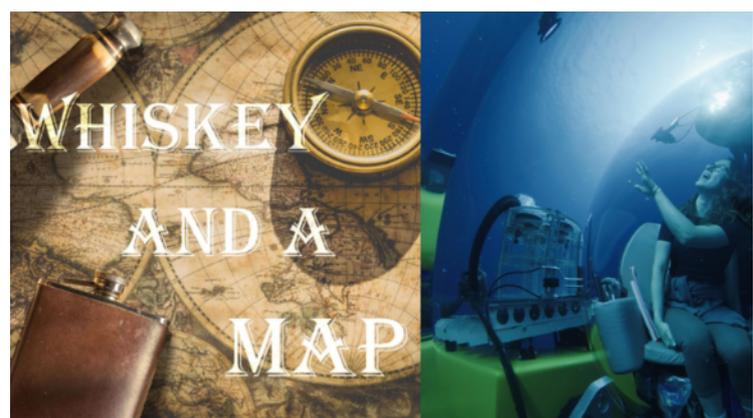
Next year, the main steps for me will be to get a job and start making back some of the money / debt that I incurred this past year, hopefully via some of the routes as aforementioned. I will also continue along the path of becoming a Rec 1 Instructor, by getting some internships, continuing to work on gaining signatures, and developing my skills! Of course, I will be going back to Sardinia at some point to also help out Phreatic / GUE project coordination, as well as maybe heading to New Zealand and Tonga for diving and expeditions. If everything goes well, fingers crossed that 2024 will bring a host of opportunities, and I will take the first steps into a nomadic-diving-expedition-scientist lifestyle. If not, then it is just a longer journey :). However, the first step will be in December 2023 – where Dorota and I will meet in Dubai to form a company together, to kickstart our project diving aspirations and outputs.

DELIVERABLES –

Speaking of outputs, I think it is safe to say that I did a lot this year! I set out to produce 1 personal blog post and 1 YouTube video a month (doing all the editing myself) – and I almost did that! In addition, I delivered 4 large pieces of media / content for various organisations: [DAN Europe](#) (deep pools and next-generation testing centres), InDepth (global scientific diving standards), [GUE.tv](#) (BTS of organising scientific projects), and Quest journal (reflections of a NextGen scholarship). A large chunk of my time this year was devoted to the organic inception and creation of the [NextGen Legacy Project](#) – pairing seasoned researchers with young scientific divers, and to build the scholarship community. I have also produced many social media takeovers, recorded podcasts, collaborated with big scuba brands, and much more! In addition, by starting to help with GUE's project co-ordination, social media, and future work with Base 1 / Phreatic, this year is so much more than a scholarship!



See [Youtube](#), and my website <https://jennelizabeththomson.com/que> for more information and outputs!



Acknowledgements

I will not shy away from the fact that I spent all of my life savings on this year (and had to borrow money from my family!). Without the finances I had saved up previously, I would not have been able to go on all these amazing experiences. However, I have been overwhelmed and humbled by the sheer generosity of the GUE community, in an effort to help me outside of the direct scholarship benefits. So, this section is split in four ways: highlighting the long-term support from certain individuals, offers for the future, direct financial / scholarship aid, and additional gestures each month.

Part 1: long term support throughout

MENTORSHIP: Dorota Czerny

From the moment we met, we knew it would be a perfect match. Before the GUE conference, I had planned my year roughly, with the instructors, courses, and locations that matched my goals for the 2022-23 scholarship. Within my first 5 minutes of meeting Dorota in person, she also mentioned her ideas for me based off my goals... which of course were the exact same instructors, courses and locations as myself. Knowing that we were perfectly in sync with each other was amazing. She has been a constant source of advice, communication, and support regardless of how busy she has been herself. From giving extra trim classes, Pilates sessions and doubles training – to ITCs, and working professionally and personally together; we have gone from friends to partners. To the future and many more memories!

LEADERSHIP: Jarrod Jablonski

Maybe the biggest support action of them all? For the inception: for choosing to believe in me, and for starting this amazing journey!

SOCIAL MEDIA / HR / MARKETING:

Devina Wijaya, Kady Smith, Amanda White

For being an endless source of help, in answering my questions and sorting out all the logistics throughout the year! For allowing me to amplify my blogs and social media presence through GUE. And Devina – for becoming a true friend whether meeting in Seattle (and having the entire itinerary planned for me), Florida or Jakarta – you are a true gem of a human, and we will connect for life!

QUEST / IN-DEPTH / YOUTUBE: Jesper Kjøller, Michael Menduno, Nico Lurot

All - for allowing me the creative freedom to document and write anything and everything; for believing in my voice and passion (even when my skillsets lack on the technical side!). For always wanting to hear my story ideas or talk photography! And Nico – for being such a source of encouragement, true friendship, and a shoulder to lean on at the very beginning! Here's to more laughs around the world!



Part 2: future offers of support

To all those that offered for me to come and visit them (places which I was unable to go). To Imad Farhat, Guy Shockey, Jaime Huertas, Sven Nelles, Jerome Dec, and Lu Chen: I will come to Cyprus, Vancouver, Bonaire, Mexico, France, China SOON (once I have money again!). And of course, again to the entire Base 1 team and Scuba Seekers team for being so supportive due to my cancelled plans (due to health issues) in September and October, and will welcome me back in the future. Thank you!

Part 3: direct sponsorship from the NextGen scholarship

GUE SCHOLAR TRAVEL	HALCYON DIVE GEAR	GUE SCHOLAR MISC.
Flight UK - Egypt (£215)	Flare EXP 5.2 (\$879)	GUE Platinum membership
Flight Egypt – UAE Dubai (£172)	Scout 3 cell x 2 (\$472)	GUE.tv membership
Flight Houston – Seattle (£236)	200 Reel (\$135)	GoPro Hero10 (with housing)
Flight Seattle – Zagreb (£635)	100 Spool x 2 (\$68)	GUE Conference 2022 registration
Flight Zagreb/Split - Amsterdam (£199)	Drysuit Inflation Kit (\$114)	GUE Conference 2022 flights from LAX – GNV and back (\$1300)
Houston Airbnb (£190) – later changed to the below items:	Long Hose stow stick (\$21)	GUE Conference 2022 High Springs accommodation
Bus Pula - Split (£40)	Tech gloves medium (\$52)	
Bus Rotterdam – Karlsruhe (£40)	Expedition bag (\$145)	
Flight Karlsruhe – Cagliari (£112)	3.3 CC DAM (\$118)	
	Line cutter (\$33)	
	CF PRO with webbing (\$509) – later exchanged for a small CF backplate and a CF STA	
	Bolt snaps (\$75)	
	Double enders (\$60)	
	SHIPPING (\$200)	

Part 4: other scholarship support (month-by-month)

JANUARY – SCUBA SEEKERS, DAHAB – EGYPT

- Sameh Sokar:** all recreational diving covered for the month (gas and gear rental)
- Sameh Sokar / Scuba Seekers:** discount on accommodation (and paying for the electricity!)

FEBRUARY – DEEP DIVE DUBAI, DUBAI – UAE

- Jarrold Jablonski:** for allowing me to come and dive whenever I wanted for the entire month
- Dorota Czerny:** for the **Doubles course** and many a trim lesson / Pilates and exercise classes, mentorship and for allowing me to learn so much during my time here.
- Gemma Thomas:** for the **Drysuit course**, and being a **student volunteer** in ITC classes
- John Kendall:** for the **Gas Blender and Photogrammetry courses**
- Nevecan Uludas:** giving me a place to sleep / free accommodation for the month
- Tito Sagaseta:** for the driving, doubles practise, and videography dive guide practise

MARCH – FREESTYLE DIVERS, DIBBA - UAE

- James Campbell:** all diving covered when I was there for the month (all gas, rental, boats)
- James Campbell:** for free accommodation and the chance to go to Oman at a discount

APRIL – NASA NBL, TX and SEATTLE, WA - USA

- Valeria Turcios:** for showing me backstage of the NASA NBL, dive operations, and seeing Johnson Space Centre. For the free accommodation, and the university diving operations
- Matthew Dominik:** for showing me his ISS training routine, Artemis missions and space suit
- Joseph Bosquez:** for connecting me with NASA NBL divers during the GUE conference
- Devina Wijaya (and family):** for planning the week and the free accommodation! For showing me around all of Seattle, whale watching etc (**ft. Danny Tong!**)
- 3Ric Johanson** – for showing around the coolest scientific photography lab ever!
- THE ENTIRE GUE SEATTLE / 8DIVING COMMUNITY:** board members that gifted me gear to rent, gas, the events throughout the week, and the weekend takeover that was organised. Special thanks to **Andrea Peteresen / Samuel Chesham** who commuted from Vancouver Island to see me, and all individuals who came to the meet-and-greet and dive takeovers!

MAY – KRNICIA – CROATIA, and ZEELAND - NETHERLANDS

- ❑ **Ollie Ober:** for the **Rec 2 course (and future intern offers!)**
- ❑ **Erik Wurz:** for the **Scientific Diver course**
- ❑ **Erik Wurz:** for letting me stay with him for the night / driving across the country with me from Veenendaal to Zeeland, and an extra day's diving to practise with drysuits

JUNE – BASE 1, CALA GONONE - SARDINIA

- ❑ **Dorota Czerny / Andrea Marassich / Francesco Cameli:** the **ITC Rec 1 / Fundies course**
- ❑ **Dorota Czerny:** the gifted doubles wing and gloves / getting me a discount with AVATAR
- ❑ **THE ENTIRE BASE 1 FAMILY / FRIENDS:** for the rental and gas and the chance to dive whenever I wanted and make my own projects / science and documentaries this month

JULY – VINKEVEEN - NETHERLANDS

- ❑ **JP and AM Bresser:** for the **Documentation Diver course (and future intern offers!)**
- ❑ **Scuba Academie:** free gear rental and gas
- ❑ **Jonathon Grimond:** a brand new pair of scubapro jefins blue cameo

AUGUST – HAWAII-SAN DIEGO, TRANS-PACIFIC TRANSIT – INKFISH EXPEDITIONS

- ❑ **THE ENTIRE INKFISH TEAM:** for allowing me to partake! Especially to **Annika** for making this happen, **Bhakti and Jeane** for the logistics, and to all scientists / crew / media on Inkfish

SEPTEMBER & OCTOBER – DEEP, BBC NHU, FIFTH POINT - UK

- ❑ **THE ENTIRE DEEP TEAM:** for inviting me to come along, see the R&D workshops, campus and partake in discussions: **Mike Taylor, Dawn Kernagis, Phil Short, Kirk Krack and Rob**
- ❑ **Dawn Kernagis:** for giving me the option to see the hyperbaric chambers at Duke University
- ❑ **THE FIFTH POINT TEAM:** all those that allowed me to come back and partake in beach cleans / dive with them when I could around the North East!
- ❑ **Harry Gunning (2023 scholar):** for free accommodation in Bristol / enabling BBC NHU visits!
- ❑ **BBC NHU TEAM:** for allowing me to come and meet the Blue Planet III team for the day

NOVEMBER – PANAMA CITY, HIGH SPRINGS - FLORIDA USA and BALI - ASIA

- ❑ **Gemma Thomas:** for the **GUE Rec 1 instructor workshop (and future intern offers / and the chance to come and dive in Tioman for a few months in the future!)**
- ❑ **Monica Schul:** for the free accommodation in Gainesville
- ❑ **Corey Jablonski:** giving me the option to stay in the speaker's hotel at the GUE conference
- ❑ **Gemma Thomas:** for showing me Singapore, and organising a few days diving in Bali
- ❑ **Devina Wijaya:** for flying me out to Jakarta (enabling me to go diving in Bali!)

DECEMBER – DUBAI / SARDINIA / REMOTE

- ❑ **Dorota Czerny:** for inviting me to participate in the future of GUE and Phreatic together!

Thank you to everyone – now here is my way to give back with the NGLP:
Join the community [here](#) today



Welcome to the NextGen Legacy Project - a way to give back to the GUE community

