

2023



NEXTGEN

SCHOLARSHIP



GUE NextGen Scholar 2023-2024, Harry Gunning

CONTENTS:

1. What did you do in your Scholarship year?
2. What did you learn?
3. How has your diving improved?
4. How you plan to make a difference, in conservation, education and/or exploration
5. Next steps and goals for the future
6. Finances (budget) and training (course) summary
7. Acknowledgements

What did I do?

Throughout my year as the 2023/24 GUE NextGen Scholar, I embarked on an incredible journey of diving, exploration, and personal growth. My training began with the **GUE Fundamentals Course**, where I learned essential diving skills, including buoyancy control, trim, and propulsion techniques. This course laid the groundwork for my subsequent achievements and became the foundation for everything I learned about safe, effective, and responsible diving. Under the guidance of GUE instructor Rich Walker, I was introduced to critical concepts such as teamwork, situational awareness, and problem-solving, which shaped my approach to diving and my understanding of GUE's high standards for safety and discipline.

Next, I participated in the **Scientific Diver Course** with GUE instructor Erik Wurz in the Netherlands, where I learned advanced techniques for underwater data collection, scientific surveys, and marine species identification. This training was directly aligned with my professional aspirations as a marine biologist and wildlife documentary researcher. I applied these skills while diving at a Project Baseline site in Scotland and during other underwater surveys, gaining valuable experience in real-world marine conservation projects.

I also worked on planning and executing dives with specialized equipment, such as long-hose setups and primary lights. My experience with **technical diving** was another major milestone. Although I had originally intended to complete the Tech1 course, the demands of balancing my professional work schedule with training meant that I could not complete this training within my scholarship year. Nevertheless, this led me towards the opportunity of undertaking the **Recreational 3** course which felt more accessible to me considering the time, money and logistics involved. The skills learned on the Recreational 3 course, led by Annika Persson, will allow me to pursue deeper and longer divers both on a professional and recreational level. The experience of preparing for such courses reinforced my commitment to continuing my diving education and improving my technical skills in the future.

What did I learn?

The most valuable lesson I've learned during my scholarship year is the importance of

discipline, safety, and teamwork in diving. The GUE training emphasizes precision and preparedness, principles that extend far beyond diving and into all areas of my life. The challenges of mastering advanced skills—like buoyancy and trim adjustments—helped me understand how small adjustments can make a big difference in both safety and performance underwater. I learned to focus on the details, such as adjusting my trim for my specific height, which greatly improved my diving technique.

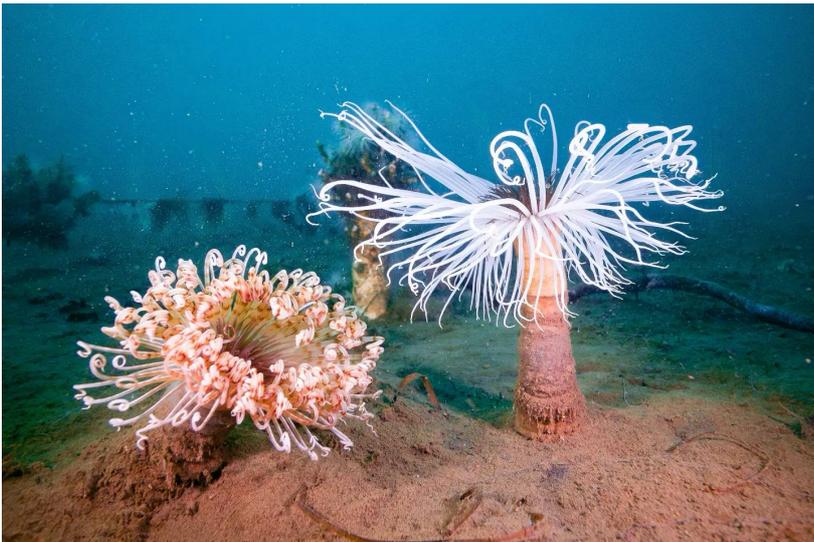


I also deepened my understanding of the critical relationship between diving and marine conservation. Through the scientific diver course, I learned how to apply scientific methods in underwater research, and I gained practical experience in conducting surveys and collecting data. This experience solidified my commitment to conservation, emphasizing that responsible, data-driven exploration is essential for protecting marine ecosystems.

How has your diving improved?

My diving has dramatically improved over the past year. I've gone from being a basic single-tank diver to gaining proficiency in advanced diving skills and technical setups. The **Fundamentals Course** set the stage for this transformation by challenging me to refine my buoyancy and trim, which in turn enhanced my stability and comfort underwater. Diving with doubles, long hoses and primary lights has also made me more confident in different diving conditions. My skillset has also grown through the scientific diver course, where I had to apply core diving techniques in a scientific context, often requiring more meticulous control and efficiency. This has made me a more versatile and effective diver, able to conduct research-focused dives while maintaining safety and precision in challenging environments. On Rec 3, all the above skills were combined to allow greater focus on decompression and more complex dive plans.

How you plan to make a difference, in conservation, education and/or exploration:



My primary goal is to contribute to **marine conservation** through responsible diving, scientific research, and visual storytelling. I am currently working on the **Blue Planet III** series, a project that deepens my commitment to showcasing the wonders of the underwater world. Through this platform, I have the opportunity to share the urgent need for ocean conservation with a global audience, using film to foster greater awareness of the challenges facing our oceans.

As I continue my work in **wildlife documentary research**, I plan to highlight the importance of accessibility and diversity within the diving community. By promoting the idea that diving should be accessible to everyone—not just those with financial means or specific physical abilities—I hope to inspire more people from diverse backgrounds to experience the underwater world and become ambassadors for marine conservation. I also plan to incorporate the principles of GUE's education model into my outreach, ensuring that divers of all levels understand the importance of safety, respect for marine life, and environmental stewardship. In the future, I aim to deepen my involvement in **scientific research** by conducting more data-driven underwater surveys and contributing to marine conservation projects. I believe that divers, as direct witnesses to the underwater world, have a unique role to play in monitoring and preserving marine ecosystems.

Next steps and goals for the future:

I aim to continue my work with **Blue Planet III** and other conservation-driven documentary projects, utilizing my skills in underwater photography and research to raise awareness and inspire action. I also plan to seek out opportunities for teaching and mentoring others in the diving community, especially those from underrepresented groups, to ensure that future generations have the knowledge and tools to contribute to marine conservation.

Lastly, I am committed to pushing for more inclusivity and diversity in the diving world, working towards breaking down barriers that prevent marginalized groups from engaging with diving and conservation. I believe that by making diving more accessible, we can broaden the scope of marine exploration and conservation efforts, ensuring that everyone has a role in protecting our oceans.

In conclusion, my journey as a GUE NextGen Scholar has been a transformative experience, both personally and professionally. It has given me the tools, knowledge, and inspiration to make a meaningful contribution to the future of diving, exploration, and marine conservation. I am excited for what lies ahead and grateful for the opportunities the scholarship has provided.

Finances Summary (GUE travel budget):

Course	Activity	Spending
Fundamentals \$0	UK course – self-transfer in own vehicle	\$0
Scientific Diver \$300	Flights – Bristol to Amsterdam	\$300
Recreational 3 \$2200	Flights – London to Cancun	\$~840
	Hire Car – 10 days	\$~420
	Accommodations – 9 nights at Zero Gravity Dive Centre	\$810
	Airport transfer – Bristol to London	\$~94

I am also exceedingly grateful for Halcyon Dive Systems for their equipment budget, which allowed me to purchase a customized NextGen Scholarship Halcyon legend wing and doubles system in the GUE configuration.

Training Summary:

Course	Instructor	Location
Fundamentals <i>Recreational Pass</i>	Richard Walker	Vobster Quay, UK
Scientific Diver <i>Pass</i>	Erik Wurz	Scharendijke, Netherlands
Recreational 3 <i>Pass</i>	Annika Persson	Puerto Venturas, Mexico

Acknowledgements:

Many people helped and supported throughout the year, from answering questions on email to offering opportunities and courses I wasn't always able to attend. Below are the main people I worked with to make this year a reality.

- **Richard Walker** – for offering the Fundamentals course free of charge and supporting my training and development in the UK diving scene.
- **Erik Wurz** – for offering the Scientific Diver course free of charge and inspiring me to go out and start my own scientific projects.
- **Annika Persson** – for offering the Recreational 3 course free of charge and for being a fun and calm presence in the depths of jungle cenotes.
- **Martin and Vanessa Hynd** – for offering room and board at their lodge on Skye and showing me their Project Baseline site.
- **Jenn Thomson** – for encouraging me to apply for the scholarship and believing in my pursuits and making the scholarship work around a busy schedule even when I thought I couldn't.
- **Jarrold Jablonski** – for inviting me out to Florida and ultimately offering this unique and world-class opportunity to become a role-model for divers everywhere.

