

The 2011 Global Diving Conference: A Success All Around

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The first-ever Global Diving Conference was well attended, with attendees hailing from more than twenty different countries.

FOUR HUNDRED DIVERS from around the world converged upon the campus of Christian-Albrechts University in November 2011 for the first-ever Global Diving Conference in Kiel, Germany. Scheduled over two and a half days, the conference was organized by Global Underwater Explorers (GUE) and sponsored by a number of well-known diving-related organizations, such as GUE, PADI, and DAN Europe, as well as Beyond the Shore (BtS), Halcyon, and Wetnotes. The event was staffed by personnel from those organizations, along with

the hard-working members of AMLA, the university's Working Group for Maritime and Limnic Archaeology. The conference was organized around lectures and diver education, with speakers from all over the world sharing their expertise with enthusiastic divers from more than twenty different countries. It was quite a crowd! There was also plenty to entertain the wreck- and cave-diving enthusiasts, with explorers unveiling projects that took place in Finland, Mexico, Russia, and Sweden, just for starters.



GUE's president and founder, Jarrod Jablonski, kicked off the festivities with an opening address, welcoming the many explorers, educators, and diving enthusiasts to the inaugural diving event. The morning began on a serious note, with a discussion about the current state of diving—as sport, hobby, and livelihood—and continued with speculation about the future of diving and “where we go from here.” It was, by all accounts, a productive and engaging session that left many of the participants hopeful and feeling proactive about their involvement in the future of diving. This energy and enthusiasm set the tone for the rest of the weekend, which saw a number of conservation-oriented lectures and projects on the agenda, including GUE's Project Baseline initiative, which aims to protect and preserve the world's aquatic sites.

The main conference lectures were held in the very spacious main auditorium; topics of discussion ranged from analyses of industry, agency, and diver practices to conservation, and from science and decompression theory to wreck discoveries.

Some highlights include:

- ▶ Pierre-Yves Cousteau (son of Jacques Cousteau) spoke about Cousteau Divers, the organization he founded in 2010. This recent initiative has much in common with GUE's Project Baseline, which also aims to share information about the aquatic environment in order to help worldwide conservation efforts.
- ▶ History and old shipwrecks have fascinated divers since the dawn of scuba, and this was very apparent when Richard Lundgren spoke about the discovery of the Swedish wreck *Mars*. Pictures of 450-year-old cannons on a shipwreck are awe-inspiring even for many hardcore cave divers.
- ▶ Dr. Simon Mitchell delivered two interesting lectures on in-water recompression and the supposed benefits of deep air diving. His expertise and humor made it as entertaining as it was interesting.
- ▶ Dr. Alf Brubakk talked about the importance of exercise for decompression safety, and many were undoubtedly happy to hear that even just one exercise session per week is enough to see some benefits.
- ▶ Phil Short and Jarrod Jablonski discussed the advantages and disadvantages of rebreather diving. This was followed by a panel debate regarding organizational rebreather diving practices, which informed the audience as to how a few different diving organizations are currently approaching the subject.

Participants were also given the opportunity to break into smaller groups and attend presentations specific to their interests on a wide range of topics, ranging from cave exploration in the UK and Canada, to the discovery of the wreck *Moskva* in the Black Sea, to particular types of diving—e.g., rebreather, cave, cold-water, and underwater photography. There were also several science lectures to choose from, including the discovery of ancient fish, the behavioral patterns of Thresher sharks, and the degradation of the oceans.

In addition to the educational seminars and exploration presentations, a number of additional events were held to entertain conference attendees. Two Project Baseline workshops were held to introduce the concept and mission of GUE's conservation initiative to those who may not have had an opportunity at conferences past to learn about it, as well as to provide interested individuals with a brief overview of the data-entry/publishing side of the project. In addition to great networking opportunities for local Project Leads, the workshops also afforded attendees with valuable Q&A time with Project Director Todd Kincaid on topics such as how to get a project started, what types of data collection are relevant to different aquatic environments, and where Project Baseline is headed. The workshops were well attended and garnered much positive feedback.

Fieldtrips organized by AMLA began with a tour of the Haithabu Viking Museum and reconstructed settlement. An enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide led the groups and provided them with a glimpse into the life of a Viking living in the area in the 9th century. Attendees then traveled to Laboe for a tour of the German submarine U-995. This particular submarine took part in WWII, and visitors were allowed to walk the entire length of this historic vessel. The final stop of the day was at the IFM-GEOMAR Institute where visitors got a guided tour of the facilities, as well as a lecture on the institution's research areas around the world. Participants were shown some of the research instruments and vessels that the institute uses out in the field, and many divers were surely jealous of both the six-thousand-meter depth-capable ROV, as well as the research submarine Jago, which has a four-hundred-meter operational depth.

Other events included dinner socials, one of which was hosted by the friendly staff of Baltic Dive Center. Attendees were able to mingle and meet new people, as well as catch up with old friends and colleagues. Overall, participants felt that the 2011 Global Diving Conference was a resounding success. Several local newspapers covered the event—with articles running before and after the event—each with positive reviews.

We would like to thank our sponsors for their generous support and financial help, since without them the conference would not have been nearly as successful. We had a great time in Kiel, and we look forward to seeing everyone again in 2013!

Visit www.globaldivingconference.com for detailed information on 2011 speakers and sponsors, and stay tuned for information on the 2013 Global Diving Conference.

GDC Sponsors: AMLA, BtS, DAN Europe, GUE, Halcyon, PADI, and Wetnotes

