



WOMEN DIVERS HALL OF FAME™

Congratulations to the 2024 Scholarship/Training Grant Winners

The Women Divers Hall of Fame™ (WDHOF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to honoring and raising awareness of the contributions of outstanding women divers. WDHOF provides educational, financial, career and mentorship opportunities to the diving community throughout the world. Each year, WDHOF awards scholarships and training grants that provide financial and educational support to individuals of all ages, particularly those who are preparing for professional careers that involve diving.

The Women Divers Hall of Fame scholarships and training grants are awarded yearly in the spring at Beneath the Sea in Secaucus, New Jersey. The program began in 2002 with three scholarships. This year we had a record number of applications and we will be awarding \$57,000 to 47 individuals who are passionate about our water planet and looking to grow in their knowledge and skills.

A special thank you goes out to Shirley Pomponi, our Scholarship Chair, and her committee members for all of their hard work and many, many hours spent on our program.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Cecelia Connelly Memorial Graduate Scholarship in Underwater Archaeology

\$2,500.00, sponsored by the Connelly family
(WDHOF Member Mary Connelly)



Meg Walker
Queensland, Australia

Meg is a Ph.D. Candidate at Griffith University in Australia, focusing on megafauna fossil assemblages from the underwater caves in Mount Gambier, South Australia. With a background in archaeological and evolutionary sciences, she aims to investigate past environments and bone biology. As part of her research, she is undertaking Scientific and Cave

Diver training with the Cave Divers Association of Australia with the aim of developing methods to conduct systematic research, and safely recover fossils from these unique sites. Meg's research centers on the interplay between underwater caves, bone deposition and fossilization. By identifying indicators of aquatic submersion across bone surfaces and microstructures, Meg aims to establish another proxy to detect past environmental change for submerged cave systems. This method will explore the links between changing environments, human occupation of Australia, and megafauna extinctions.

Captain Wayne Haddon Memorial Applied Marine Conservation Graduate Research Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by Sea of Change Foundation
(WDHOF Member Anne Haddon)



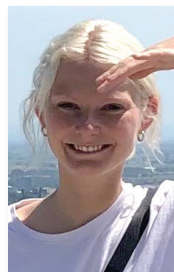
Juliette Jacquemont
Washington, United States

Juliette is a French Ph.D. student conducting her research at the University of Washington (Seattle, USA). Her dedication to conservation grew through volunteering with marine conservation NGOs, which convinced her to pursue a career at the interface of science, management and policies. Juliette was

offered the opportunity to join a pioneering research project to advance the conservation of deep reefs in the Mediterranean, a highly diverse but understudied and underprotected marine ecosystem. This fellowship will allow her to cover expenses for Juliette to join this research expedition and contribute her expertise on the assessment of deep-reef fish communities, with the goal of improving their protection status.

Graduate Marine Conservation Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Member Meg Donat



Ashlynn White
Glasgow, Scotland

Ashlynn's passion for the ocean began at a young age, and she got dive certified when she was 11. After completing her Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology at the University of Glasgow, Ashlynn decided to further her studies at the same institution and is currently pursuing a Master of Research in Ecology. With a love for coral reef ecosystems,

Ashlynn embarked on a university expedition to Thailand during her undergraduate program to lead a research project on the coral-eating snails, *Drupella*. Her fascination with these creatures deepened, motivating her to continue studying them for her Master's thesis research. Her research will center on the metabolic response of *Drupella* to increasing temperatures, aiming to enhance understanding of how these organisms will react to the rise in global sea temperatures. Ashlynn is excited to use this grant to travel to French Polynesia, where she will collaborate at the CRILOBE lab to conduct her research.

Max Benjamin Memorial Graduate Marine Conservation Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Member Cecile Benjamin



Maya Munstermann
California, United States

Maya is pursuing her Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, with research focusing on the effects of climate change and marine heatwave events on kelp forest ecosystems. Through a variety of methods, such as scuba field sampling, genomics, experimental and statistical modeling, she is interested to uncover how warming oceans

are playing a role in ecosystem shifts from kelp-dominated states to urchin barrens. Her studies focus on purple sea urchins from both the larval and benthic adult life history stage perspectives and how rising temperatures, food availability, and habitat of origin influence resilience or vulnerabilities to climate change. This work directly relates to marine conservation and management practices along the California coastline.

Graduate Marine Conservation Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by **Ocean Wishes Foundation**
(WDHOF Member **Margo Peyton**)



Nawras Abbes
Jendouba, Tunisia

Nawras is a devoted marine researcher from Tabarka, Tunisia. Her name translates to “seagull” in Arabic, aligning her destiny with the vast oceanic world. Currently a second-year Ph.D. student at the University of Tunis El Manar, Nawras collaborates with Aix Marseille University, exploring gorgonian genomics and ecology along the Tunisian coast. As a certified diver and member of the Tabarka Diving Club, the Ocean Wishes Scholarship will enhance her thesis work, particularly the expensive sampling aspect. Her commitment to marine conservation extends beyond her Ph.D. studies, encompassing research, education, and advocacy. Recognizing the significance of responsible environmental practices, Nawras strives for a positive impact on her corner of the world, ensuring future generations enjoy thriving marine life while coexisting harmoniously with the environment.

Rachel Morrison Memorial Graduate Marine Conservation Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by **John & Jeanne Morrison**



Gabriela Wood
Wellington, New Zealand

Gabriela is a second-year Ph.D. student at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. Under the supervision of Prof. James Bell, she is working on temperate marine sponges in the northern (Ireland) and southern hemispheres (New Zealand). Her research is focused on how temperate marine sponges respond to increased nutrients and temperature in light of climate change. Pursuing a Ph.D. at her age (her colleagues are on average 20 years younger than she) was a risk she was willing to take, not only to further her understanding of the natural world, but also to return to the roots of her love of the oceans, to reset, and to gain the experience necessary to pursue the role of a research faculty member at a four-year university setting. This grant will allow her to fund part of her research and ultimately bring Gabriela closer to her goal.

Coral Conservation Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by **Richard Laurence Parish Foundation**
(WDHOF Member **Robin Parish**)



Miriam Pierotti
New Zealand

Miriam is a passionate diver and a Ph.D. candidate in Marine Biology at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Her research project aims to expand the general understanding of black coral biology and ecology by conducting monitoring surveys and population genetic studies in remote areas of the South Island of New Zealand. The goal of her research is to investigate how endemic black coral populations respond to environmental impacts to support future management, protection, and conservation efforts of these important species. Miriam is dedicated to preserving marine biodiversity and making scientific initiatives accessible to the general public.

Sea Grass Conservation Scholarship

\$2,000.00, sponsored by **Richard Laurence Parish Foundation**
(WDHOF Member **Robin Parish**)



Melissa Palmisciano
California, United States

Melissa is a Ph.D. Candidate at Hopkins Marine Station of Stanford University and an AAUS-certified scientific diver. She is interested in studying the impacts of climate change stressors such as ocean acidification, warming, and hypoxia on physiology and species interactions in nearshore communities, and how these organismal-level effects scale up to alter ecosystem functioning. This scholarship will support Melissa’s research exploring the impacts of ocean acidification on grazing relationships and seagrass disease at an underwater CO₂ vent in Ischia, Italy.

Sherry Reed Memorial Undergraduate Marine Conservation Scholarship

\$1,500.00, sponsored by **family and friends of WDHOF Member Sherry Reed**



Sarani Ranaweera
Western Province, Sri Lanka

Sarani completed her Bachelor’s degree in Mass Media from the University of Colombo (Sri Lanka) and is currently studying for Bachelor of Law degree at University of London. Sarani holds a PADI Advanced Open Water Diver License and is currently pursuing her PADI Rescue Diver License. She is volunteering with Earth Lanka Youth Network as a Project Coordinator and a Hub Leader of Sustainable Ocean Alliance Sri Lanka. With her previous WDHOF award, she implemented her first coral in-situ conservation project in Batticaloa district, Sri Lanka. As her recent achievement, Sarani participated in COP 28, where she engaged in a panel discussion on “Fostering Equitable Just Transitions through Nature-Based Solutions.” Sarani is an entrepreneur and is currently looking forward to producing textile materials and products from recycled PET bottles.

Sherry Reed Memorial Undergraduate Marine Conservation Scholarship

\$1,500.00, sponsored by **family and friends of WDHOF Member Sherry Reed**

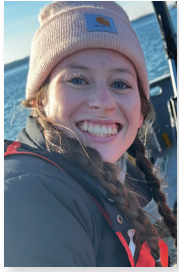


Ashley Gambrell
South Carolina, United States

Ashley is a junior at Clemson University, pursuing her Bachelor’s degree in Biological Sciences with a minor in Chemistry. She is Advanced Open Water certified through SSI and is working on her Divemaster certification. Her love of the ocean led her to join a marine ecology research team under Dr. Michael Childress at Clemson. Her project will investigate how extreme heat events have impacted sea urchin abundance and herbivory in the Florida Keys. This information will help predict algal coverage on reefs as oceans continue to warm. Her dream career is to be a professor conducting marine ecology research. Through this position, Ashley hopes to continue her current work as a Supplemental Instruction leader by facilitating the professional, academic, and personal growth of students, while also helping to understand the world’s changing oceans.

Undergraduate Marine Research Internship

\$1,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Members **Drs. Sue Morra Shoemaker & Kathleen Dudzinski**



Nicole Snow
Maine, United States

Nicole is currently a junior at Maine Maritime Academy studying marine biology with a minor in environmental sustainability. She quickly gained a passion for the ocean at a young age, which has led her to where she is now, working towards her dream career as a marine biologist. She received her PADI Open Water Certification in 2022, and this summer she will be working towards her Advanced Certification. Nicole will be assisting with research this summer in Anacortes, Washington, using her scuba skills to study various octopus species and one echinoderm species.

Jim Leffard Memorial Training Grant for Underwater Photography

\$1,500.00, sponsored by WDHOF Associate **Rosemary Kurtii**



Isabel James
California, United States

Isabel is a Ph.D. student in Geography at UCLA. Her dissertation research explores the connectivity and politics of shared fisheries in the Gulf of Mexico. With a background in environmental policy, she first pursued diving to learn more about marine ecosystems through a scientific lens. As an AAUS Scientific Diver, she now volunteers with The Bay Foundation in support of their kelp restoration work. Isabel aims to integrate underwater photography in her research to investigate spearfishing practices. She aspires to pursue a career in interdisciplinary fisheries research with actionable impacts on marine conservation.

TRAINING GRANTS

Diver Medical Education Grant

sponsored by WDHOF Member **Chantelle Newman**



Chi Felton
London, United Kingdom

Chi began teaching recreational diving in 2015 and is now a technical diving instructor and expedition leader. She has spent the majority of her career based in a Marine Protected Area in North Sulawesi, Indonesia, and looks forward to expanding her experience in other parts of the world. Her passions include exploration diving, marine conservation and dive safety, and with every channel she hopes to increase access to technical diving for women and minority groups. This award will allow her to ensure safer conditions while working in more remote locations.

Instructor Advanced Education Dive Training Grant

\$2,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Member **Jeanne Bear Sleeper**



Sierra Rafacz
Arizona, United States

Currently studying marine biology, Sierra is pursuing a career to serve the community and enhance access to the underwater world. Sierra currently works as a Master Scuba Diver Trainer for Nova Southeastern University's Academic Diving Program. She loves teaching scuba and getting to share in people's first experiences under water. Looking to take a stronger leadership role in her community, Sierra is pursuing her Staff Instructor certification to aid future instructors throughout their course. She also aims to give back to her community and make scuba more accessible by earning a specialty instructor certification in Adaptive Diving.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Photography

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Emily Bews
Washington, United States

Emily is an aspiring marine ecologist with a B.S. in Environmental Science from San Diego State University. At SDSU, she earned her open water and advanced certifications, and later her scientific diving and rescue certifications. She has since worked in aquaculture research, environmental monitoring, and ecotourism, and will be beginning her Master's degree at the University of Washington in fall 2024. Utilizing the training and equipment supported by this grant, Emily is excited to explore photography as a tool for science and communication. She also hopes to use photography and videography to advocate for marine conservation and education through sharing her experiences under water.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Photography

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Mai Bonomo
Merkaz, Israel

Mai is a passionate ocean lover, particularly intrigued by the unusual world of underwater invertebrates. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Marine Ecology and Molecular Biology, focusing on the ecology and taxonomy of sea cucumbers in the northern Red Sea. She feels lucky to be part of the research community in the Red Sea, which has an incredibly rich and interesting reef, with many questions yet to be asked. The WDHOF photography scholarship will allow her to capture and convey the underwater beauty she encounters through her research.

WOMEN DIVERS HALL OF FAME MISSION

The Women Divers Hall of Fame's two-part mission includes:

- Recognizing women divers who have made outstanding contributions to the exploration, understanding, safety and enjoyment of our underwater world and
- Supporting the underwater world and its associated careers by promoting opportunities for women and men in diving through scholarships, internships and mentorship opportunities and a worldwide network of industry contacts.

To learn more about the Women Divers Hall of Fame, visit www.wdhof.org

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Professional Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Pin-Wen Chen
Texas, United States

Pin-Wen is an underwater archaeologist involved in various underwater cultural heritage and archaeological research projects in Taiwan. Driven by a profound interest in maritime history and shipwreck research, she is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Texas A&M University. Additionally, she was elected as the Student President of the Archaeological Diving Club. Pin-Wen's goal is to inspire more divers to protect underwater cultural heritage and encourage students to learn diving, immersing themselves in the magnificent and calm atmosphere of the ocean. This grant will help her to achieve her Divemaster certification, which will assist in organizing future diving research and training events.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Professional Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Carina Burroughs
New York, United States

Carina is an interdisciplinary marine scientist and diver currently working for NOAA Fisheries as a West Coast Ocean Alliance Fellow. She has a Master's in Coastal and Marine Resource Management, and her thesis research investigated social and ecological changes in a coral reef ecosystem at a national park in Mexico. Carina is an AAUS Scientific Diver and a PADI Rescue, Drysuit, and Enriched Air Diver. Her past professional diving experience includes working as a scientific diver at an environmental science consulting company. Carina plans to pursue Divemaster training to support citizen science and underwater education through dive leadership.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Professional Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Yuen Azu
Michigan, United States

Yuen is a recent Amherst College graduate working at Biscayne National Park as a Scientists-in-Parks intern, where she dives frequently to restore the park's coral reefs. She began pursuing marine biology after getting scuba certified her first year as an undergraduate and has since become a scientific diver. Along with her aspirations to research and protect corals, Yuen is intent on advancing her diving career to assist others with underwater research. She will obtain a Divemaster certification with the training grant to open avenues for becoming a diving safety officer.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Professional Diving

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Sydney Bell
Florida, United States

Sydney is a researcher, artist, diver, and ocean advocate on a lifelong mission to save our seas through a combination of art, science, and outreach. While working on her Ph.D. in Australia studying coral reefs, she also runs an online sustainable ocean art/apparel business inspired by her underwater adventures/photography, donating 100% of profits and raising public awareness for ocean nonprofits. Her unique position as a scientist and artist with an entrepreneur/marketing/fundraising skillset in an ever-growing online world presents a rare power to capture people's hearts around the globe and make the maximum impact possible in marine conservation. Her long-term goal is to create a remote field station in the Caribbean where she can train the next generation of scientists in underwater research techniques and lab skills, involve the local community in conservation, and invite visiting scientists to conduct their research in a state-of-the-art research facility.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Professional Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Tyler Christian
Florida, United States

Tyler is a researcher at NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory, conducting fieldwork and lab analyses for marine ecosystem assessments in south Florida. She is also a Master's student studying marine biology and ecology at the University of Miami, Rosenstiel School of Marine, Atmospheric, and Earth Science. Growing up in Kansas, she didn't discover her passion for scuba diving until college and recently completed her Scientific Diver certification. In her free time, she loves spending time in and on the water scuba diving, freediving, and paddling. She plans to use this grant to continue her training to become a better diver recreationally and professionally.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Recreational Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Bonnie Toth Advertising and Design** (WDHOF Member **Bonnie Toth**)

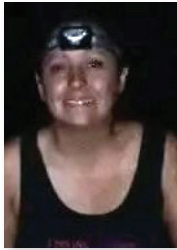


Michelle Halpin
Washington, United States

Michelle is a graduate of the University of Washington with a degree in biomedical engineering. She grew up on the beaches of Washington, gaining a love for the ocean from an early age. Since getting her open-water certification in Seattle, she's become an AAUS scientific diver, spent 5 years volunteering for Kelp Reef Check completing scientific surveys along the west coast of the United States, and started a sustainability focused company, Silt Skincare. She is passionate about kelp forest conservation and plans to use this grant to obtain her Divemaster certification, allowing her to pursue greater involvement in scientific diving expeditions.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Recreational Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Ocean Wishes Foundation** (WDHOF Member **Margo Peyton**) & donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Francín Varela Murcia
Bay Island, Honduras

Francín is a passionate Honduran biologist dedicated to marine conservation, currently serving as the Executive Director of the Bay Islands Conservation Association (BICA-Utila chapter). Her journey has led her to acquire valuable expertise in studying and monitoring terrestrial and marine organisms and ecosystems, like sea turtles, the Swamper Iguana, fish, benthos, and corals. Her work has been instrumental in monitoring stony coral tissue loss disease in the Bay Islands and actively participating in coral restoration efforts. As a member of the Atlantic and Gulf Rapid Reef Assessment team, she has supported reef health monitoring at diverse sites in the country.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Recreational Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Tannia Delapaz
California, United States

Tannia, a C5 quadriplegic/hemiparalysis survivor due to a surgical error, was once a dedicated paramedic. Now disabled, she finds solace and joy in scuba diving since 2019, reveling in the freedom and pain relief it brings. Her desire to enhance her skills stems from a commitment to safety and a thirst for adventure. Tannia seeks advanced certifications to broaden her diving horizons, increase her value in dive groups, and fuel her personal growth journey. With a focus on safety and a passion for exploration, she embraces diving not just as a hobby but as a transformative and liberating lifelong adventure.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Recreational Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



**Pasindu Ukwatta,
Eshadi Mendis,
Bharathi Ukwatta,
Tharushi Dissanayake**
Central Province, Sri Lanka

Pasindu graduated from Kingswood College, Kandy, and is currently pursuing studies in engineering technology with a keen eye on university entrance. Fueled by an enduring passion for ocean activities, he is a proficient swimmer and is eager to elevate his scuba diving skills. As a proactive team leader, Pasindu is leading a group of four who are dedicated to shaping a future intertwined with underwater technology. Their commitment to ocean conservation is evident through their active involvement in beach cleanups and shallow water restoration projects. Pasindu's relentless dedication to combating marine pollution underscores his unwavering passion for preserving our oceans.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Scientific Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Blue Green Expeditions** (WDHOF Member **Faith Ortins**)



Mikayla Carrier
North Carolina, United States

Mikayla is a first-year Master's student at North Carolina State University studying how bioacoustics can be used as a tool to assess ocean reef health, effects of climate change, and biodiversity. After earning her B.S in Biology from Scripps College in Claremont, California, Mikayla obtained her Divemaster certification and spent two years working abroad at Forfar Field Station on Andros in the Bahamas and the School for Field Studies on South Caicos. Mikayla's passion for the ocean was fostered through her parents' enthusiasm for diving. She loved her time abroad gaining Divemaster experience and is excited to obtain her Scientific Diver Certification to further expand her expertise in diving and research.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Scientific Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**

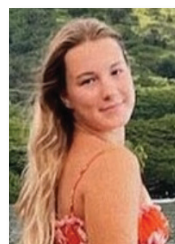


Irati Maruri
Las Palmas, Spain

Irati started diving in 2014, in the cold Atlantic waters of the Azores Islands. She has worked for nine years as a scuba diving instructor around the world in four different continents. Now settled in the Canary Islands, she works in environmental education with local schools and also as a scuba diving instructor in a diving center. She has just finished her Master's in Marine Biology through the University of the Algarve in Portugal and is actively participating in scientific research projects. With this grant for advanced scientific training, she will be able to expand her knowledge and skills as a diver and a scientist, expanding her professional opportunities, and be able to help out in new future conservation projects.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Scientific Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Morgan Rossiter
Hawaii, United States

Morgan is a third-year undergraduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Science in marine biology with a minor in psychology. She is originally from the island of Bermuda and has a deep love for the ocean but only found her passion for scuba diving after moving to Hawai'i to further her education in 2021. Since then, she has completed her open-water certification, a field course in underwater ecological surveying techniques, and is keen to attain her scientific diving certification, supported by this grant, to pursue a career in marine biology research. She is very excited for the research possibilities that will arise in the future as a result of having obtained this training.

If you are interested in further information about the scholarship programs or would like to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit our website at:

www.wdhof.org

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Scientific Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Member **Dr. Caron Shake**



Jessie Dolliver
Oxfordshire, United Kingdom

Jessie is a Ph.D. student in the University of Oxford. She completed an undergraduate degree in Botany in Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, and subsequently a Master's degree in Zoology studying seagrasses and macroalgae. She is passionate about seaweed as she grew up on the Irish Atlantic coast, which is a global seaweed biodiversity hotspot. She has a goal of one day starting a research laboratory to conserve these underappreciated organisms and particularly to study their responses to climate change. She accepted a Ph.D. in genetics and biochemistry at the University of Oxford in order to develop the high-level skillsets required to study these organisms. She is a BSAC Sports Diver and is excited to use this dive training grant to expand her scientific diving skills.

Dive Training Grant - Technical Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by TDI (WDHOF Member **Stephanie Miele**)



Gretchen Hilt
Louisiana, United States

Gretchen is a first-year Master's student at Southeastern Louisiana University. With a Bachelor's degree in Marine Science from The University of Tampa and a love for herpetology (the study of amphibians and reptiles), she is lucky enough to combine those two worlds in her research. She is investigating environmental DNA (eDNA) as a conservation tool to detect and monitor the elusive Georgia Blind Cave Salamander (*Eurycea wallacei*) in submerged cave systems in the Floridian Aquifer system, as well as conducting the first complete ecological survey of these understudied habitats. Gretchen has been diving for over 6 years, with the last two spent as a Divemaster at her favorite dive shop in Tampa, FL. Gretchen is ecstatic to utilize this grant for her cave diving certification, which will allow her to conduct her research effectively and safely.

Advanced Dive Training Grant - Technical Diving

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Jocelyn Alcantara-Garcia
Delaware, United States

Jocelyn is an educator and conservation scientist – a chemist working for and on cultural heritage, to preserve, understand, and learn from it. She is a professor at the University of Delaware (USA) with a joint appointment in Art Conservation and Chemistry & Biochemistry. Her cross-disciplinary work bridges STEM with the humanities, researching objects from the human past, their making, and their degradation chemistry. Her lifelong affair with water is taking her research on material culture to waterlogged objects: she aims to understand the unique challenges they face using nondestructive methods, and to develop better preservation strategies, including when they need to be extracted.

Sea Cadets, Sea Scouts, ROTC, JROTC, Military Academy Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Member & Co-founder **Jennifer King**



Thomas Ye
Virginia, United States

Thomas is a junior at Langley High School in McLean, Virginia. He enjoys outdoor adventure and environmental stewardship as a member of Sea Scout Ship 1942 and Boy Scout Troop 55B, as well as a cadet first lieutenant with the Civil Air Patrol William P. Knight Squadron. He has earned his open water and advanced scuba certifications and has participated in numerous scuba and sailing adventures. In 2023, Thomas represented the U.S. Sea Scouts as a contingent member of USA Ship 15 at the 25th World Scout Jamboree in South Korea. He received the 2022 VA Youth Conservation Leadership Institute award, as well as the 2023 VA Youth Conservation Camp scholarship and the 2022 VA Camp Wood & Wildness scholarship. Since 2017, he has volunteered over 618 hours for his local community, earning four "President's Volunteer Service Award" medals and the "StrongTogether Volunteer Fairfax" award. Thomas intends to use this award to obtain the rescue diver certification.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by WDHOF Member **Patti Gross**



Alicia Ray
Oaxaca, Mexico

Alicia works closely with men and women from coastal communities, including fishers, tourism service providers, and marine wildlife monitors, who are actively seeking more sustainable ways to interact with their environment. As part of her role, she provides ongoing support and assistance to ensure the sustainable performance of community social processes. With the grant, Alicia will have the opportunity to immerse herself more deeply in their daily activities, gaining firsthand experience and refining her skills in addressing marine-related issues. Guided by her background in environmental science, Alicia's approach to marine conservation and diving is fueled by her profound passion for the sea and coastal communities.

Ella Jean Morgan Memorial Dive Training Grant for Young Women

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Frank Boulanger**



Cathleen Deauna
Ilocos Norte, Philippines

Cathleen is a fourth-year student at the Mariano Marcos State University working on her Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology. She lives in Pias Sur, Currimao, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. This grant will allow Cathleen to become even more involved in her field and give her skills she can use in her future career. She aims to help connect more people to life under water through scuba diving and inspire women into the water.

Lori Yost Memorial Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Amisha Nakhwa
Maharashtra, India

Always captivated by the natural world, Amisha holds a Master's degree in Animal Behaviour, and wishes to pursue a Ph.D., narrowing her focus on behavioural studies of marine megafauna. Belonging to the native fishermen community of coastal Mumbai, she developed an intrinsic connection towards marine life, fueling her desire to contribute to its conservation. Through her involvement with wildlife research and non-profit organizations, she has dedicated herself to this cause. She is currently studying sensory biology of carnivores like pinnipeds. Acquiring a diving certification will help expand her abilities while facilitating her research efforts requiring working alongside marine fauna in-situ.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Ocean Wishes** (WDHOF Member **Margo Peyton**) & donations to the **WDHOF scholarship fund**



Zahra Hasan
Texas, United States

Zahra is a Master's student in the Coastal Conservation and Restoration Ecology Lab at the Texas A & M, Corpus Christi, Harte Research Institute. For her Master's thesis, she is developing methods for restoring cyanobacteria mats on wind-tidal flat habitats in South Texas. She aspires to continue working as a coastal ecologist post-graduation, prioritizing science communication and advocating for responsible stewardship of coastal resources. Zahra is excited to take advantage of her university's proximity to the coast and obtain her open-water diving certification. She believes that this skill will allow her to become a more well-rounded scientist as she explores new opportunities beyond the intertidal zone.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Oceanic Research Group** (WDHOF Member **Christine Bird**)



Julia Mayer
British Columbia, Canada

Julia is a Ph.D. student at the University of British Columbia's Institute for the Ocean and Fisheries. Her research aims to improve public understanding of climate change's impact on our oceans and the ensuing consequences for coastal ecosystems. Specifically, her thesis seeks to determine the spatial extent of kelp seaforestation projects along British Columbia's coastlines, as the restoration and management of kelp forests are considered essential for climate mitigation and adaptation. This grant enables her to enhance theoretical knowledge by immersing herself in local kelp forests, experiencing firsthand their wide range of contributions to the surrounding environment and communities.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **SDI** (WDHOF Member **Stephanie Miele**)



Shelby Larubina
Connecticut, United States

Shelby's curiosity and infatuation with the coastal landscape of Long Island Sound led her to the University of Connecticut, where she received her Bachelor's degree in marine science. She now works there as a research technician for both the Department of Marine Sciences and the Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve. Projects she's involved with focus on eelgrass restoration and conservation, water quality monitoring and oxygen-nutrient budgets in coastal sediments. Moving forward, she is excited and hopeful that this grant will bolster her career by expanding her skillset and allowing her to explore the marine environment in novel ways.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **Stream2Sea** (WDHOF Member **Autumn Blum**)



Fatema Hirkani
Maharashtra, India

Fatema has never been sure of her goals in life and was unaware of the procedures involved in doing anything beyond school. However, she did end up falling in love with the marine environment after watching a movie about seahorses, which inspired her, and she pursued her career as marine biologist. Although the video broadened her interest in marine life, her first intertidal walk ensured that she would never look back. She has always been motivated to learn more about and comprehend these animals by witnessing them flourish in their natural habitat and just being themselves. Ever since, she has been going on walks between the tides and showing others what she observes. With the help of this funding, she aims to learn more about such marine organisms submerged in water and thriving in the big blue.

In Fatema's words: There's a place beyond this land, A place just meant for those who can survive with salt in their system, A place just meant to be seen by those who can dive in.

Zale & Saxon Memorial Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by **friends of Evelyn & Suzie Dudas**



Caroline DeSouza
Massachusetts, United States

Caroline is an undergraduate student, studying Biology and Economics at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Her research focuses on exploring the relationship between algae and coral host in stony corals, and identifying species of algae that are biomarkers of Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease resistance in the coral microbiome. While she is new to marine disease ecology, she is excited to utilize her dive training to further her research and career in Marine Biology. Her future goals are to obtain her advanced scientific diving certification and dive with her lab.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Victoria Cheung
Michigan, United States

Victoria is a Master's candidate in Environment & Sustainability at the University of Michigan. Her interests lie at the intersection of climate change and public health, through a lens of social justice. She hopes to bridge research with practice in the sustainability movement. She plans to utilize diving as both a tool for sustainability and exploration of her favorite planet.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Merlyn Antony
Delhi, India

Merlyn is a Ph.D. candidate with disciplinary training in Mathematics and Development Studies. In her research in the Andaman islands, India, she hopes to look at the precarious lives of the fishers using the lens of human ecology and thereby draw attention towards species interdependencies to gauge fishing in the tropical waters. In the time when she is

not fussing about her research, she enjoys people gazing and cooking up a storm in the kitchen.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Thilini Mallawaarachchi and Heshan Sanjana
Western Province, Sri Lanka

Thilini(team leader) and Heshan(team mate) are two dedicated undergraduates from Ocean University of Sri Lanka who work as research partners and share a passion for ocean conservation. Engaged in turtle conservation programs and

active members of numerous volunteer organizations, they are now poised to expand their efforts into underwater research. With receiving this dive grant for basic dive training, they are eager to utilize this opportunity to further their conservation endeavors and explore new avenues for marine protection and research.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Raquel Ibarra
California, United States

Raquel will receive her B.S. in Biology with a concentration in Environmental Science in April 2024. Due to her experience with two research projects at her university, Raquel aspires to continue laboratory research and specialize in marine animals. She has accomplished 200+ hours of volunteering,

educating herself about ocean conservation and marine animals. Scuba diving is crucial to her career goals, and she soon decided to be PADI Open Water Certified. With this grant, she plans to be certified and move on to an Advanced Open-water Diver course. Raquel's end goal is to be a scientific diver studying corals.

Basic Dive Training Grant

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Kylie Hollis
Florida, United States

Kylie is a senior at the University of Florida, graduating with a B.S. in Environmental Science and a B.S. in Marine Sciences. She is currently working in the Coastal Ecosystems and Watersheds Lab, doing an independent research project on oyster settlement dynamics. Through this, she's found a love for coastal ecology and understanding how human activity

impacts these ecosystems, and especially the biogeochemistry and faunal relationships within them. By getting her basic diving certification, she hopes to expand her interest and experience in biogeochemistry and ecology to the world's benthic communities, researching our impacts on a vulnerable, important community.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Shachini Dharmalal, Charani Paduwawala, Nimanka Dharmasiri, Samadi Premadasa
Central Province, Sri Lanka

Shachini is leading a research team focused on aquaculture. They recently completed their B.Sc. (Hons) in Coastal and Marine Resources Management from Ocean University of Sri Lanka.

Their academic journey has provided them with an extensive understanding of marine resources, covering biology, fisheries, marine ecology, oceanography, and marine archaeology. As the Earthlanka Aquaculture Team, their diverse roles and collective expertise are dedicated to advancing the field of aquaculture and ensuring sustainable management and preservation of our valuable marine ecosystems. With this grant, they aim to make a lasting impact on marine conservation and inspire others to join in preserving the biodiversity of the underwater world.

Basic Dive Training Grant

\$1,000.00, sponsored by donations to the **WDHOF Scholarship fund**



Sithara Jayawardhana, Piyumini Pradeehansi Rathnayake, Sajani Gunathilaka, Madhushika Nethmini Wijekoon
Central Province, Sri Lanka

Sithara leads the Earthlanka Policy and Advocacy Team in Sri Lanka. The team is conducting research at one of the top environmental institutes in Sri Lanka, addressing real-world environmental challenges and contributing to conservation

efforts. The team has diverse academic backgrounds--environmental management, biotechnology, and sociology. They aim to use the grant to help further their research on coral reef ecology, focusing on identifying key factors contributing to coral resilience in the face of climate change. Through their work, she hopes to inspire others to join the effort in protecting our precious marine environments for future generations.