



**GLOBAL  
UNDERWATER  
EXPLORERS  
SWEDEN**

# Annual Report 2023



**"A huge thank you  
to each and everyone of  
you who contributed to  
our work for a cleaner sea"**

*Per Normark, chair GUE Sweden*

Global Underwater Explorers, GUE, is a diving organisation that train divers on all levels. For 25 years, GUE has actively supported exploration and conservation initiatives around the globe. We have a network of skilled divers that are able to support the different projects. One example of this is that GUE Sweden had divers from Germany and Poland participating in our projects last year.

GUE Sweden is non-governmental organisation created to support and manage exploration and conservation projects in Sweden. All divers participate on a voluntary basis.

This report is a short summary of our activities in 2023 in regards to our two projects; Rena Botten (Clean the Bottom) and Operation Spöknät (Operation Ghost Net).

Chair GUE Sweden: Per Normark

Editor, vice chair GUE Sweden: H el ene Hagerman

Photographs: @ GUE Sweden

Date: March, 2024

# There is a lot more to do!



Rena Botten has now been running for six years. In 2023, we conducted nine clean ups and had over 50 divers in the water for more than 100 hours. Together with our partners on land, we managed to retrieve more than 15 tons of garbage out of the water.

Within Operation Spöknät we finalised mapping and documenting ghost nets in Blekinge and Kalmar counties. In the majority of sites, nets have been observed and we are now planning to retrieve these during 2024 and 2025.

About 3.000 lobster pots are lost every year. So, this year Operation Spöknät launched a pilot project retrieving lobster pots. During one weekend on the west coast in Sweden (just outside Lysekil) we managed to pick up over thirty pots and released trapped lobsters and crabs.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to our work making all our activities possible; participants, sponsors, partners and authorities.

We will continue our engagement for a cleaner sea and hope that you will continue to support us in our endeavour to clean our sea.

Per Normark,  
Chair GUE Sweden



Rena Botten started six years ago and since then we have cleaned many sites along the coastline of Sweden.

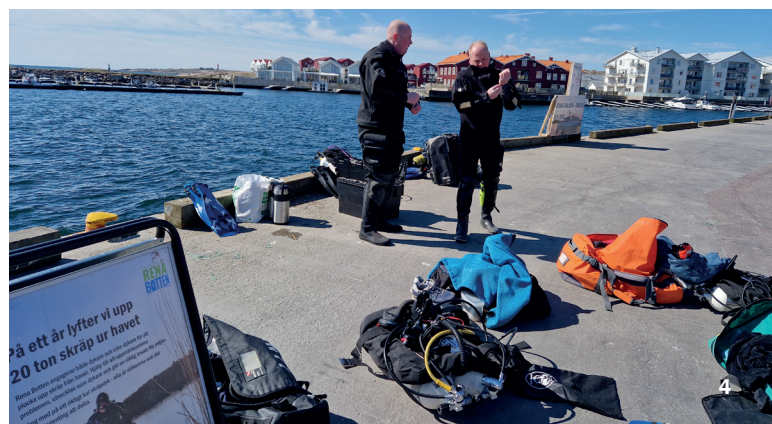
### **Cleaning activities**

During 2023 we conducted five cleanings in the vicinity of Stockholm and four on the west coast of Sweden. Together we managed to retrieve more than 500 tires, a significant number of batteries and old fishing gear as well as a lot of other stuff that doesn't belong in the sea.

During the year we have returned to a number of spots with the ambition to "close" these. Some sites we now consider clean while others are still in need of further cleaning.

### **Collaborations**

Central for our operation is cooperations with different stakeholders and we are glad to have had constructive and fruitful cooperations with local authorities and other organisations. Great dialogue with and support from Rotary and the local authorities in Sollentuna and Danderyd. On the west coast, the authorities in Tjörn and Sotenäs have showed a strong continuous support for our activities.



Several boat clubs have also cooperated with us when cleaning their harbours. We have continued our cooperation with Clean Sea in several different areas. All our mentioned collaborations partners have contributed with personnel on land as well as coffee, lunch and other essentials.

But it doesn't always go the way you want.

Unfortunately we had to cancel some planned activities due to a landowner, local authorities, and a private entity not having a interest in contributing to a clean sea. We will continue the dialogue with the ambition to be able to clean these sites.

For a more dynamic report on the activities of Rena Botten, please have a look [here](#).



*Rena Botten was established in 2017. The ambition is to contribute to a cleaner sea through engaging divers, authorities and landowners in cleaning activities and to raise awareness about the problem to the wider, and non-diving, society.*





## **We NEED you!**

There is so much work to do, so we are always in the need of more participants; in the water, on land or on the boat, for all our projects.

Everyone is welcome regardless of certifying agency and there is no cost to your participation.

Please contact us at [info@guesweden.se](mailto:info@guesweden.se) for more information and to sign up.



## Operation Spöknät

GUE Sweden launched Operation Spöknät, in 2019, with the aim of improving the environment in the sea by locating, documenting and salvaging ghost nets.

During the year we finalised mapping and documenting ghost nets in Blekinge and Kalmar counties. These activities have been ongoing for a couple of years now, possible due to financial support (through LOVA-funds) from the two counties. In total, we have conducted many weeks of sonar operations and dived and documented more than 70 locations. Ghost nets have been observed (and documented) on more than half of all these sites. Most of the nets were still actively ghost fishing.

During the year we also conducted another training

class for retrieval divers and initiated a pilot project regarding retrieving lost lobster pots (*see page 8*).

During 2024 and 2025 we are planning to clean documented sites from observed ghost nets.

### What are ghost nets and why is it important to talk about?

Spöknät (Ghost nets) is a collective name for fishing gear that has been lost for various reasons and that, through its presence in the sea, catches fish, seals, porpoises, birds and other animals that meet a slow death. The nets can drift in the sea but also get stuck on wrecks or at bottom formations. The nets also break down slowly and thereby add microplastics to the sea.



## PILOT PROJECT **Lobster pots**



Operation Spöknät

In 2023, Operation Spöknät launched a pilot project retrieving lobster pots on the west coast, in Lysekil. During one weekend, with only seven divers, we managed to pick up over thirty pots and release several lobsters and crabs

During the regular lobster fishing season on the west coast, the assessment is that about 3.000 lobster pots are lost. This is not only a financial loss as each lobster pot costs at least €100, but it also puts stress on the marine eco system through continued ghost fishing and plastic pollution.

The work of salvaging lost lobster pots can be divided into four main parts; identification of relevant areas,

localization of pots, salvage followed by handling and recycling.

After mapping and documentation, we equipped our divers with DPVs and lift bags. The local high school contributed with personnel and a boat. Once we located a lobster pot at the bottom, two lift bags were attached and the lobster pot was sent to the waiting boat on the surface. We consider this method very efficient to continue working with.

For more information, please read our report "Salvage of lost lobster pots" (in Swedish) [here](#) or have a look at "Salvage of ghost nets from Bremö 2022" (in English) [here](#).



# Plan ahead for 2024 - join us!



We, together with many other organisations, are doing our best to contribute to a clean sea.

But there is so much more to do!

In 2024, we plan to conduct **twelve cleanings with Rena Botten**, **five weeks of retrieving ghost nets** in the Baltic Sea and **three occasions to salvage lobster pots** within Operation Spöknät.

Rena Botten will be active in the Stockholm area as well as on the west coast. We will continue our work, in close cooperation with partners and authorities, to retrieve as much garbage as we can out of the sea.

Operation Spöknät will mainly operate during the summer period. Base camp will be in Sandhamn, in Blekinge, with access to sites both Blekinge and Kalmar counties.

A new lobster pot retrieving project will be initiated, this time together with CleanSea. We will also be supporting the initiative 8fjordar with divers for their lobster pot project, which will last for the next three years.

There are a lot of activities planned for next year.

**So, sign up to help in our work or make a financial contribution to keep our efforts alive!**

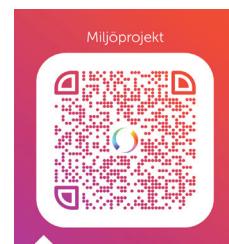


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save the oceans,  
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