



GLOBAL
UNDERWATER
EXPLORERS
SWEDEN

Annual Report 2024



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 Poland and South Korea 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 2024 in regards to our two projects; Rena Botten (Clean the Bottom) and Operation Spöknät (Operation Ghost Net).

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Photographs: @ GUE Sweden
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A productive year

Rena Botten has now been running for seven years. In 2024, we conducted eight clean ups and had numerous of divers in the water and support on land.

Operation Spöknät went from mapping and documenting ghost nets in Blekinge and Kalmar counties to actually retrieving them. During a few summer weeks, we managed to bring about a ton of nets up to the surface and to recycling.

More than 3.000 lobster pots are lost every year. In 2023, Operation Spöknät launched a pilot project retrieving lobster pots and we were happy to be able to extend that work in 2024 with more activities.

In addition to supporting 8+fjordar with the actual situation on the bottom, we managed to retrieve about 60 lobster pots.

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

Environmental impact

Abandoned fishing gear, ghost nets and lobster pots, continue to trap marine animals, causing slow and painful deaths, while simultaneously breaking down and releasing microplastics into the sea. Chemicals and microplastics from tires, batteries, electronics are in the same way polluting the ocean. The removal of this gear is a critical step in preserving marine biodiversity and mitigating pollution in Swedish waters.

Our two projects, Operation Spöknät and Rena Botten, continue to address important environmental problems, combining diving expertise with a commitment to marine conservation. The progress made in 2024 and earlier years serves as a strong foundation for future efforts.



Partners at sea

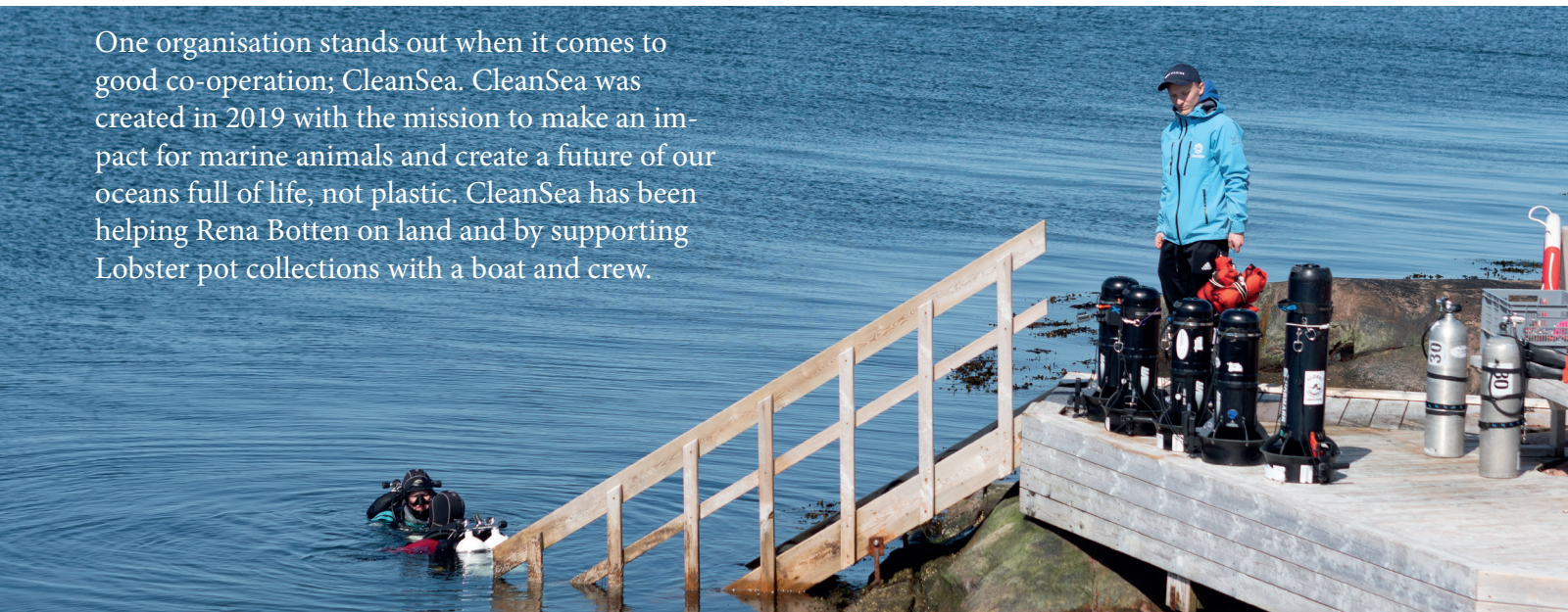
It has been inspiring to see several municipalities shoulder their responsibility and helping us clean the ocean in different ways; first and foremost by taking responsibility for the garbage once out of the water and making sure it goes to recycling. Danderyd, Haninge and Sotenäs have all done a great job. We would like to mention Tjörn in particular. In addition to helping out with recycling, they also made a financial contribution to our efforts during the year. In Stockholm, Djursholm Rotaryklubb, Skärgårdsstiftelsen, Vrakdykarpensionatet and Xylem Watermark have all supported our activities in different ways.

The activities by Operation Spöknät have been made possible by the regional administrations in Blekinge, Bohuslän and Kalmar Län by financial support through LOVA-funds. These funds are crucial and cover expenses for things like boats, gas, and specialized equipment.

One organisation stands out when it comes to good co-operation; CleanSea. CleanSea was created in 2019 with the mission to make an impact for marine animals and create a future of our oceans full of life, not plastic. CleanSea has been helping Rena Botten on land and by supporting Lobster pot collections with a boat and crew.

Outreach

An important part of our activities is to spread the message about the situation in the oceans and what we are doing to address it. With that in mind, we participated in the Gothenburg boat fair and during parts of Västerhavsveckan. Despite all information efforts over the last several years, people are still ignorant of the problem and positively surprised when they see our activities making a difference. During Västerhavsveckan, visitors had a chance to see our interactive map and try some of the gear out. Especially the younger generation appreciated the opportunity to fill lift bags to simulate lifting a ghost net, a tire or a lobster pott.





RENA BOTTEN



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.

Rena Botten continued its activities for the seventh consecutive year. On the west coast, four clean ups were conducted and another four in the Stockholm region. During all events,



we had between five and ten divers in the water and a similar amount of people on land to receive the garbage.

The focus of the cleaning operations is on things that are dangerous to the environment and marine life in one way or the other; tires, batteries and electronics that release dangerous chemicals as well as old fishing gear. As a result of our efforts, there is now hundreds of tires as well as boat and car batteries less in the ocean. We also managed to get some old fishing gear, outdoor furniture and numerous cans and bottles up, as well as different kitchen appliances. All garbage retrieved went to a proper recycling process.





Operation Spöknät

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

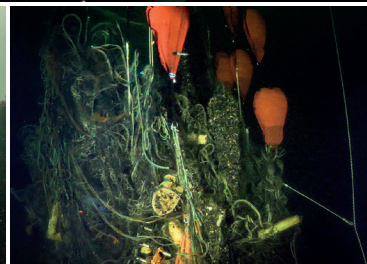
Following years of efforts to locate and document ghost nets, 2024 was the year we turned to retrieve the nets located. And what a start.

We are happy to see that our efforts paid off. We managed to retrieve around one ton of ghost nets. But it was also an important confirmation that our methods, training, long hours and efforts spent

engaging people and authorities in our effort had results. In the Baltic Sea, we managed to clean two ship wrecks in Kalmar county; Nicomedia and Bremö.

In Blekinge, we stumbled into a wreck that we had not been able to document earlier but which is full of nets actively ghost fishing. We made an overview but concluded that we need to return with a plan for more focused efforts. A mission for in 2025.

Most of the nets are still actively ghost fishing.



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, 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.



"We retrieved around one ton of ghost nets from two ship wrecks during 2024."



Lobster pots

GUE Sweden launched Operation Spöknät - Lobster pots in 2023 as a pilot project in Lysekil. The initiative aims to locate and retrieve lost lobster pots and other trap fishing equipment, contributing to a healthy marine ecosystem.

During 2024, a focused GUE Sweden effort was conducted to recover lobster pots from three different areas. In total, approximately 60 lobster pots and other traps were recovered.

Additionally, we spent six days supporting 8+fjordar, a project by five municipalities on the west coast, by locating and documenting lost lobster pots. Seven locations were surveyed and mapped.

These efforts highlighted both challenges and successes. Poor visibility on silty seabeds often reduced efficiency, while operating in well-coordinated buddy teams and carefully planning dives using nautical charts and compass bearings proved essential for effectively covering target areas.



"More than 60 lobster pots
and other traps were recovered
in waters along the swedish
west coast during 2024"





Join us in our efforts in 2025

It looks like 2025 is going to be a busy year.

Rena Botten is planning more than ten events,

Lobster pots will clean on four occasions while Operation Spöknät will be actively retrieving nets for five weeks. In all projects, we will target some old areas to verify if they stay clean or have been littered again, as well as a number of new places.

We will also continue working with established reliable partners, as well as trying to find new partners and places to clean.

All participants contribute on a voluntary basis, showcasing the dedication and passion of the diving community.



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.

But it is not limited to diving. We need municipalities to take their responsibility for garbage in the nature, which this actually is, mainly by financing recycling but also in preventing further garbage being released.

Finally, we also need financial contributions to be able to keep going. Anyone can make a small contribution by sending some money by swish and if someone is interested in a more structured cooperation.

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





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**Help us
save the oceans,
support our work!**

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