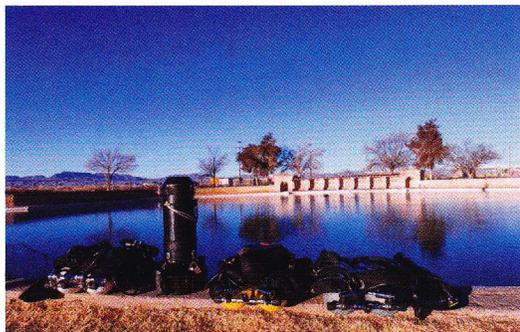


BEYOND THE PANHANDLE

Article and Photography: Jennifer Idol



Pictured above from left to right: James Williams, John Mills, Bryan Aho, Jennifer Idol, Trey Lessard, Stacey Blankenship, Dan Kelly, Tiffany Laskin, Leo Laskin, and Jason Speckman

Rising from Texas

Divers form a new GUE affiliate

People think big in Texas. When those people are divers, they dream of ways to explore. So at the end of 2014, a group of Texan cave divers formed the South Central Underwater Explorers (SCUE).

This group of motivated divers created the team as divers Dan Kelly and Trey Lessard started talking about their aspirations. They shared their excitement and connected with more like-minded divers. Bylaws were set and Facebook groups created. Dan Kelly, Trey Lessard, Jennifer Idol, James Williams, Joe Koester, Stacey Blankenship, and Sam Meacham were all elected to the board of directors.

The team defined their mission: We are dedicated to education, conservation and exploration in the waters of the South central region of the United States. To represent the team, Jennifer Idol created a logo that fit within the GUE system and shared the passion this team holds for exploration in and around Texas. At this point, the team formalized and set the stage to begin developing projects. They are eager to begin exploration, mapping, photography, and videography in local cave projects.

Divers have been working with team members and instructors Kyle Harmon, Doug Mudry, and Meredith Tan-

guay to develop diver skills. The team continues to add instructors to its ranks with Sam Meacham recently completing the requirements to teach the GUE Fundamentals program and Jason Wright working toward his instructor certification

SCUE divers bring their skill set and team attitude to project development. From exploration by veteran divers Sam Meacham and Fritz Hanselmann, to leadership by Dan Kelly, and graphic design and photography skills by Jennifer Idol, this team is filled with talent. While the team is still developing official members, 42 divers are part of the group at this time.

SCUE held their first group dive at Balmorhea Springs, Texas. The energy was high as divers met from all regions of the state and realized they share the same passion for cave diving exploration. SCUE was officially accepted as a new GUE affiliate this February. Team development takes time, hard work, and patience. This group of divers certainly seems dedicated to the road ahead and you are among the first to learn of this spirited group from Texas and beyond.

Jennifer Idol is an underwater photographer and designer for her company, The Underwater Designer.