



ACADEMY OF UNDERWATER ARTS & SCIENCES

2024 NOGI Recipients

The AUAS is an international, multi-disciplinary, non-profit organization dedicated to recognizing pioneers and leaders who have had a global impact on the exploration, enjoyment, safety, and preservation of the underwater world. AUAS is committed to supporting its members as they pass on the stewardship of the sea to future generations.

Louis Prézélin | NOGI, Arts



For over 30 years, Louis Prézélin documented countless facets of the world oceans from Alaska to Antarctica. His images range from the dance of tiny fragile planktonic creatures to the majesty of mighty whales. Throughout his career, his passion for the sea drove a deep motivation to capture the fascinating beauty of the undersea world and inspire his audience to love it and to protect it.

Born and raised in France, Louis started scuba diving in 1964 on the rugged coast of Brittany. He later served in the military as a Helicopter Rescue Swimmer with the French Air Force. In 1968, Louis enthusiastically joined the Cousteau Expeditions as an on-camera subject diver and began roaming the world on the legendary Calypso during the filming of the wildly popular television series, *The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau*. During years of wild expeditions from one Cousteau series to another, Louis honed his skills through intense hands-on technical training in underwater imaging and filmmaking studied at the Santa Barbara Brooks Institute of Photography. For many years, Louis explored waters in remote parts of our planet, fulfilling his lifelong goal of capturing visually, the wonders of the sea.

During Louis' tenure as a member of the Cousteau team, he participated to over 50 shows of television series which reached millions of viewers around the world and garnered multiple EMMY awards as well as Cable ACE awards, CINE GOLDEN EAGLE awards and PEABODY award for the Amazon series.

In addition to his filming activities, Louis directed the development of several advanced underwater cameras and lighting systems for the Cousteau Society as well as Jean-Michel Cousteau Ocean Futures Society. Louis also contributed to the filming of shows and series for National Geographic, Discovery Channel, ABC American Sportsman and The Travel Channel.

Besides his commitment to documenting the sea, Louis Prézélin also worked on a number of feature films, documentaries and TV commercials worldwide as a director of photography, operating remote-controlled helicopters with FLYING CAM prior to the coming of drones to the film industry.

Louis Prézélin is currently retired and lives in Santa Barbara California.

Lad Akins | NOGI, Environment



Lad Akins has dedicated his life to working in citizen science, conservation and diving. His work has included more than 40 years of diving, serving as a US delegate on marine-protected areas in South Africa, discovering and describing new species of fish, solo piloting deepworker submarines around the US and Mexico, saturating for eight days in the Aquarius Underwater Habitat, starting and leading the Reef Environmental Education Foundation, and authoring a best in the world cookbook on invasive lionfish. He has authored or co-authored more than 30 peer reviewed publications which have been cited over 2,400 times, served on numerous

multi-agency panels and advisory groups and led over 100 ocean related expeditions around the world. Lad has been recognized as a NOAA Environmental Hero, Oris Sea Hero, Scuba Diving Hero of the Sea, Eleanor Fletcher Lifetime Achievement awardee and is an inductee in the Scuba Diving Hall of Fame. A US Coast Guard licensed captain and multi-agency scuba instructor, Lad has dived more than 10,000 dives around the world. He has lectured extensively on conservation issues and invasive species and been featured on numerous major media networks and documentaries. His current work as Curator/Captain at the Frost Museum of Science and Captain/Instructor at Quiescence Diving focusses on reef restoration and continuing to introduce the public to the marine environment and conservation. Lad lives in Key Largo, Florida.

Jim Gatacre | NOGI, Distinguished Service



Jim Gatacre is a NAUI Instructor. In 1972, while attending college, he sustained an injury to his right arm that left it paralyzed. He started scuba diving in 1973 to recover emotionally and to re-establish his self-image that had been severely damaged. In 1975 he helped organize and teach the first scuba course for people with disabilities at the University of California Irvine (UCI). He has a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from UCI.

In 1981 he founded the Handicapped Scuba Association. Working closely with the industry's leading underwater educators from PADI and NAUI, he learned the fine art of developing Physical Performance Requirements, the bedrock of safe underwater education.

From 1984 to 1986, applying scientific method, he took over two years training divers with disabilities while evaluating performance and certification requirements to complete the HSA Physical Performance Requirements and Multilevel Certification.

Encouraged by PADI & NAUI, he wrote the *HSA Instructor Manual* and HSA Instructor Training Course (ITC). He taught the first HSA ITC in 1986.

Jim has made two films with Jean-Michel Cousteau. *Freedom in Depth* in 1983, a California diving classic, and *To Fly in Freedom* in 1992, filmed in Fiji featuring Jean-Michel, his father Jacques-Yves Cousteau, and HSA divers from six countries.

Shirley Pomponi, Ph.D. | NOGI, Science



Dr. Shirley Pomponi is a Research Professor at Florida Atlantic University-Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. She earned her Ph.D. in Biological Oceanography from the University of Miami. An ocean explorer and marine biotechnologist, her research focuses on development of sustainable methods to produce sponge-derived chemicals with human health applications. She has more than 100 peer-reviewed scientific publications and is co-inventor on several patents. In 2022, she received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society for In Vitro Biology.

Dr. Pomponi has served on numerous blue-ribbon panels to provide recommendations on ocean science priorities and policies. In 2008, she received the Champion of the Oceans Award for her leadership to ensure that our oceans are sustainably managed and preserved for the benefit of future generations.

Dr. Pomponi has participated in dozens of research expeditions worldwide and made more than 300 dives in the *Johnson-Sea-Link* submersibles. In 2019, she participated in the NASA Extreme Environments Mission Operation (NEEMO 23), living and working in the Aquarius Underwater Habitat with NASA and ESA astronauts.

Dr. Pomponi was inducted into the Women Divers Hall of Fame in 2003. She chairs the WDHOFScholarship Committee, which has awarded more than US\$500,000 to nearly 500 individuals.

Jeffrey Bozanic, Ph.D. | NOGI, Sports & Education



Dr. Bozanic continues to make meaningful contributions to global scuba education and has given generously of his time to NAUI, NSS-CDS, DAN, NOAA, IANTD, SDI-TDI, and the Boy Scouts of America.

Early in his career he improved NAUI's instructor exams, serving on NAUI's Standards Committee and eight years on NAUI's Board.

While pursuing a doctorate in oceanography, Dr. Bozanic focused on water chemistry in submerged caves, identifying the need for academic standards in cave diving to mitigate unnecessary risks.

Determined to increase safety, he dedicated six years as a Director on the Board of the American Academy of Underwater Sciences, tirelessly advocating for the adoption of scientific cave diving standards.

Recognizing the limits of decompression, dive gear and gases, Dr. Bozanic pushed to adopt standards for nitrox, rebreather, and mixed gas in scientific diving programs. He authored *Mastering Rebreathers* - widely considered the seminal textbook on the topic. He co-authored the *Antarctic Research Diving Manual*, and edited the *NOAA Diving Manual*.

Dr. Bozanic remains active in research diving, collecting new species of animals. As Director of Training at Blue71, Dr. Bozanic is leading a team pioneering new methodologies to safely prepare a new generation of sport and scientific divers.