

MANIFEST

A Message From the Wheelhouse

Mine Diving in Sweden

Gauntlet II Adventures

2022 Diving Highlights

Gauntlet News

THE LOOKOUT

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Northern Atlantic Dive Expeditions, Inc.

<https://northernatlanticdive.com>

info@northernatlanticdive.com

Editors-in-Chief:

Heather Knowles
David Caldwell

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A Message From the Wheelhouse

Thanks for checking out Issue #15 of The Lookout. This issue covers our 2022 diving season, which came with quite a few changes and challenges as we emerge from the pandemic and find our way forward. One of the most notable was the very high price of diesel fuel which really impacted operating costs and the number of offshore trips we could do while keeping customer costs reasonable. However, we do what we always do and made the best of it, and did some really good diving along the way!

We'd like to thank all our customers and crew for your continued support and participation aboard Gauntlet. In 2023, we hope that you'll join us on our adventures whether you are looking for training or just some great wreck diving off the coast of New England!

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Lookout!

Heather and Dave

Sweden Mine Diving

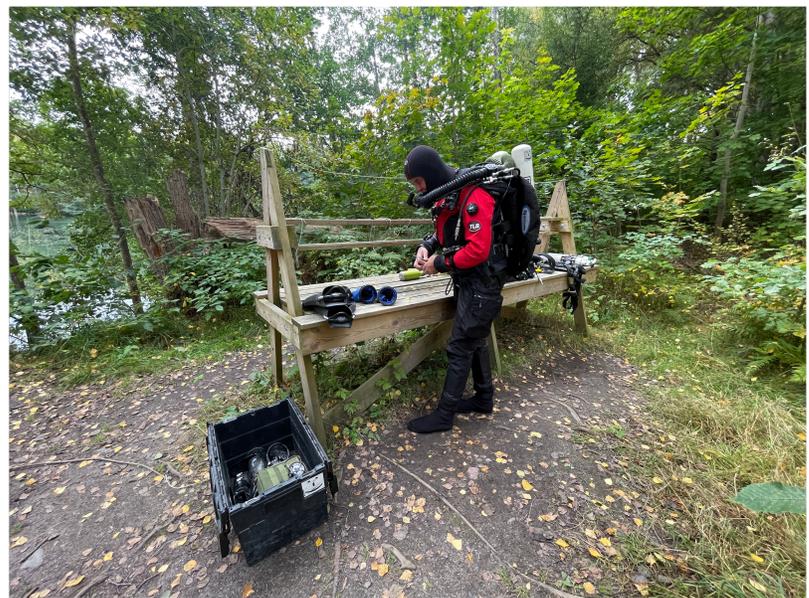
We were long overdue to return to international diving adventures, but it was not totally clear what the best option would be since many well-known and attractive locations were still emerging from the pandemic, with travel and testing restrictions lingering. However, we had plans to visit family in Sweden and with that as the main driver for the trip, decided to look around to see what kind of diving options existed. While we already knew there is plenty of wreck diving in the Baltic, mine diving would better suit our schedule. After a little poking around we discovered there was indeed some mine diving that looked interesting. We connected with a guide that could handle all logistics and diving arrangements through our NAUI network. Before we knew it, we had a diving trip to Sweden on the books!

While we had done plenty of warm water travel, this would be one of the first involving cold water diving - really cold water! So, we needed to travel with our heavy undergarments, heated garments and consider we would need extra batteries for running the heated garments—in addition to everything else we needed to bring. This is a legitimate challenge given how much airlines have limited baggage allowance and batteries that can be carried on. We had to opt for an approach where we rented everything we absolutely did not need to have as a personal item, which meant renting bail-out regulators, primary lights and the heater canisters. This made things so much easier logistically and allowed us to focus on packing the rebreathers, camera and personal gear. The other big factor was that since we were traveling somewhere cold we also needed warm clothing. This was not a diving trip where a few tee-shirts and a pair of shorts would do!

Once all the logistics were set, we made our way to Stockholm where the trip began. We needed to rent a vehicle as we would be visiting 3 mines all within about 3 hours of Stockholm and a few hours of each other. We discovered nothing is particularly large in Sweden though, certainly not the vehicles. The biggest SUV barely fit our gear and us—and it was quite a scene at the airport loading 6 bags into an airport bus to get over to the car rental lot. Once we got sorted, we had a few days to hang out with family before meeting our guide Anders Etander at the hotel. Once we met, we quickly got on the road for our first adventure, which would be a dive to the "A-Mine at Kamtorp" in Katrineholm. This was about 2.5 hours from Stockholm and the most remote location of the three sites we visited.

A-Mine

The A-Mine was an iron ore mine, like many in Sweden. This mine however was a pit mine which had been flooded once work stopped. We traveled into the woods, driving down a dirt road until arriving at a rather mucky looking pond. To enter the mine, we would need to swim along a line in near zero visibility and descend to about 60 feet, then enter through an opening in the stones. This sounded a lot like home! The site itself was built out enough to make diving relatively easy. There are benches, a fire pit to keep warm and steps down into the water. This site is off the beaten path and



Suiting up for the first dives of the trip at the "A-Mine at Kamtorp" iron ore mine.

not very well known except to locals so we felt fortunate to get the opportunity to dive there.

We had done some preparation of our gear in advance but needed to do full assembly on site where we could fully unpack everything and set up for diving mode. It was then we discovered Heather's X-CCR had significant damage from transit, damage not easily identified until assembling the rig and discovering it would not hold pressure. This was a show-stopper and being out in the middle of nowhere with 3 people and 2 sets of working dive gear posed some challenges. However, we made the best of the situation and while coming up with Plan B for the week decided to take turns diving 1 rebreather. Anders took Dave for a dive and then upon return Heather used Dave's rebreather to go for a dive. This worked quite well and although we lost one dive in total, everyone got to dive. During this time, we put Plan B into motion which was to get Anders' open circuit gear while we reached out to iQSub to see if they could overnight a part to repair the rebreather.

The A-Mine reminded us of Esperanza in Vermont. The pond was murky with low visibility, we had to swim through several layers of low/no visibility to pop out into clearer water. Even then the visibility was 20-25 feet. It was a good introduction to Sweden mine diving and definitely got us excited about all the things we would see. Unlike Esperanza, these mines were chock full of mining equipment, larger and more complex in layout. A-Mine was a good shakedown dive and thanks to our diving at Esperanza we felt well prepared to dive in this environment. Other than the struggle of overcoming equipment issues and getting things adjusted and weighted right, it was a good set of first dives! Unfortunately we did not take photos, the circumstances required simplifying things—sometimes this is how it goes!



Heather getting ready to make the 80m, 384 step climb out of Tuna Hastberg mine. The gear gets a ride but you must walk!

Tuna Hastberg

Following the day at A-Mine, we drove a few more hours to Ludvika where we would be diving Tuna Hastberg mine for the next 3 days. It was a long day and well into evening when we arrived. However everything had been perfectly arranged for us and we were able to check in and get settled. Anders had gone several hours back to get his open circuit gear, then several hours back to Ludvika to make it possible for us to continue diving as a group.

The next morning we gathered and headed over to Tuna. This mine is the crown jewel of the mines in Sweden. Tuna Hastberg is a very large iron ore mine which features both diving and adventure tourism. It is large with many levels to explore (some of which require special permission due to the depths involved). One of the things we were about to appreciate was just how physically demanding mine diving is—not just the diving, but all the doing involved in getting to the water's edge. While A-Mine was a lot like Esperanza, this mine involved descending deep underground to access the level closest to the water's edge. In this case, that involved descending down 80 meters (~240 feet), then another 10 meters / ~30 feet or so from the upper platform to the lower platform. While our equipment could be lowered and

raised using a lift, the lift was not certified to carry people, which meant we had to climb up and down 80 m of stairs (about 384 steps) each way. To say this was a leg burner would be an understatement. Additionally, Tuna being an adventure mine, the set up did require a high degree of



Diving the mines in Sweden involves a lot of logistics moving gear!

situational awareness and care to avoid potential injury. Falling on the steps would mean falling quite literally all the way. For this reason it was a slow and careful process. We wore helmets and carried lights when outside of the lighted areas.

The mine itself offers both diving and adventure tourism (exploring, zip lines, corporate events, etc). So, some parts are built out to a high degree of comfort. There is a full fill station, heated rooms, lit passage with decking to walk on, and heated bathrooms. However given the vastness of this mine, one can venture off into undeveloped parts quite easily. It is literally a labyrinth where one could just keep going and going to see what is around the corner!

The diving part of the mine is vast with many, many areas to explore—so much so we barely scratched the surface with our visit. We did two dives each day, which was a lot given the water temperature was 40 degrees, and the air temperatures were not much warmer outside of the heated area. For longer and/or deeper dives, there are decompression habitats. It was clear to us that to be diving in a place like this regularly, heated garments and even warmer insulation for hands and feet are necessary. Since the depths we were diving on this trip were within 130 feet, it was possible for Heather to dive open circuit with nitrox fairly easily but it was distinctly colder. Diving CCR with recirculated gas (that is eventually warmer) to breathe is preferred.

The visibility in Tuna is outstanding - while some areas were a little cloudy like any environment, most parts were crystal clear. The mine features multiple “levels” which were mining levels. Within these levels there were large areas of passage and tighter/smaller tunnels that went to specific areas. The mine is full of mining equipment from wheel barrels, to



Diving in the Tuna Hastberg iron ore mine in Sweden. This is the 120m level, which is about 115 feet deep.

tools, ladders and other structures that would have been part of the environment and work area before it was full of water. To say this is an amazing place would not be doing it justice—it is very impressive all around. With a scooter and set up to decompress in the habitats, there is some serious diving to be done here. One could easily spend a week diving Tuna and still have more to see.

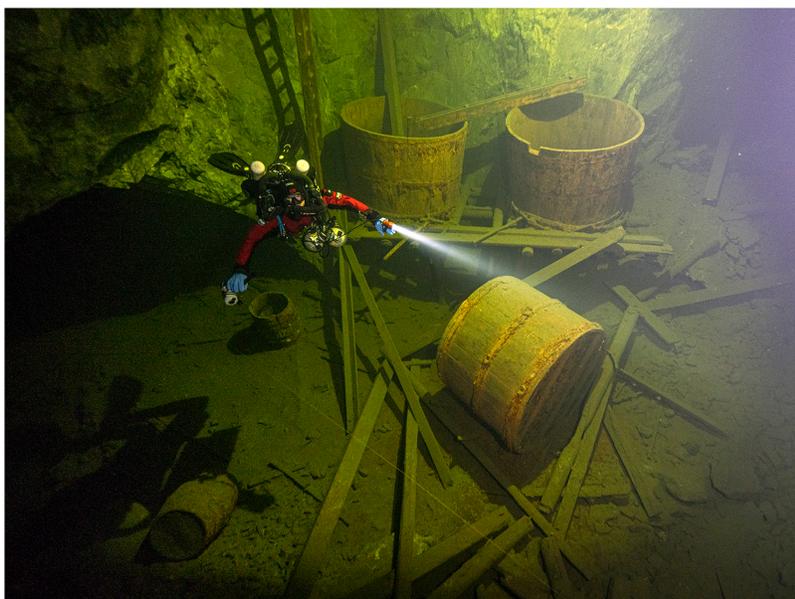
During our time in Ludvika we were able to coordinate with iQSub and arrange for a part to be sent. On day two of our time in Ludvika we received the expedited part. It was amazing that it came from the Czech Republic to a small town in Sweden without a hitch! The hotel staff was so helpful; they signed for the package and allowed us to work on the rig in the lobby bar area to repair it. By midweek Heather was happily back in action on her X-CCR. We were most grateful to iQSub for the incredible customer support!



Sala Silver Mine

After our last day in Tuna, we headed over to Sala, which is a silver mine. This mine is part of a historic site and it a bit more developed as a visitor site, though the diving infrastructure is still in development. This mine has a reputation for being the coldest mine with water temperatures of 37-38 degrees. The water also has a yellow tinge which makes for an interesting hue. The mine is deep underground and has a smaller, tighter feel due to the methods involved in mining for silver. To reach the water's edge one must descend 155 meters (~520 feet) underground. Thankfully the lift takes both equipment and divers!

The heated room inside Sala Silver Mine. No clocks, no daylight, no cell service, only diving!



This mine has more rules for diving which requires two divers topside while others are in the water, so it is necessary to coordinate with another team to dive there. Where at Tuna we literally had the entire mine to ourselves for 3 days (which was a little spooky at times being the one ones down there!), this mine requires a bit more protocol. We were going to be sharing the mine with another team of Swedish divers so we worked out everything for us to do 1 dive in between their two dives.

Once again it was a lot of doing

to shuffle equipment from the lifts to the diving platform. From the lift platform it was a few hundred feet to the diving platform. Fortunately there are hand trucks to ferry equipment back and forth. As mentioned, Sala is the coldest of the mines we visited and that includes the air temperatures. We spent time in the heated room, which was a large space with a heated floor. The lighting throughout this mine is very dim and it has a darker, gothic feel to it. We suited up in the warm area, then popped out to get into our diving rigs.

Splashing into the water it was much darker without the same kind of bright lighting penetrating the water by the platform like Tuna. It was cool to see a different set up with a more challenging environment. We descended to the bottom near the platform where we picked up the line to our destination, the Barrel Room. The Barrel Room is a dive that requires a guide or being certified to dive to this level after having done the required number of pre-requisite dives (and being signed off by a guide). We were lucky to be diving with Anders and get sneak peaks into parts of the mine that take locals more dives to gain access to without a guide. The Barrel Room was unique because it featured large large wooden barrels which had been unsuccessfully used in an attempt to extract silver chemically. Miners attempted this after learning that the women doing laundry for miners discovered they could recover silver dust from the clothing in the washing process - and earned more money than the miners doing so! Unfortunately this did not scale and the barrels were abandoned, now a very cool sight for divers to see!

We dived until the cold began to take over. After 5 days of diving and 8 dives, overcoming many equipment problems (which also included a significant suit leak), it was time to bring the trip to a close. When we reached the surface back in the parking lot, we broke down the equipment, repacked our little SUV for the return to Stockholm and said our farewells. We were most appreciative of the incredible guiding and support from Anders and everyone we met along the way. We will definitely be back and highly recommend Anders if planning to do some mine diving in Sweden!



Anders, Heather and Dave at the Tuna Hastberg mine.

Gauntlet II Adventures

This year we further expanded our local boat diving footprint with an effort to diversify our adventures and increase using the Gauntlet II in the New England inland area. While we can use this boat on the ocean, we are subject to many of the same challenging weather issues that impact us on the larger Gauntlet. So, it has been great to have the opportunity to use the boat in Lake Champlain where there is so much to explore and a lot of options to re-position and launch from different places depending on the weather.



Gauntlet II in Lake Champlain, ready for adventures!

We made 3 trips to Lake Champlain and got to build some experience running the boat as well as visit sites that were new to us.

Since there was little rain this summer, the lake had extremely good visibility (15-25 feet) on some wrecks where the visibility might be only a few feet otherwise. This allowed us to more reliably plan dives and get some photos and video in along the way.

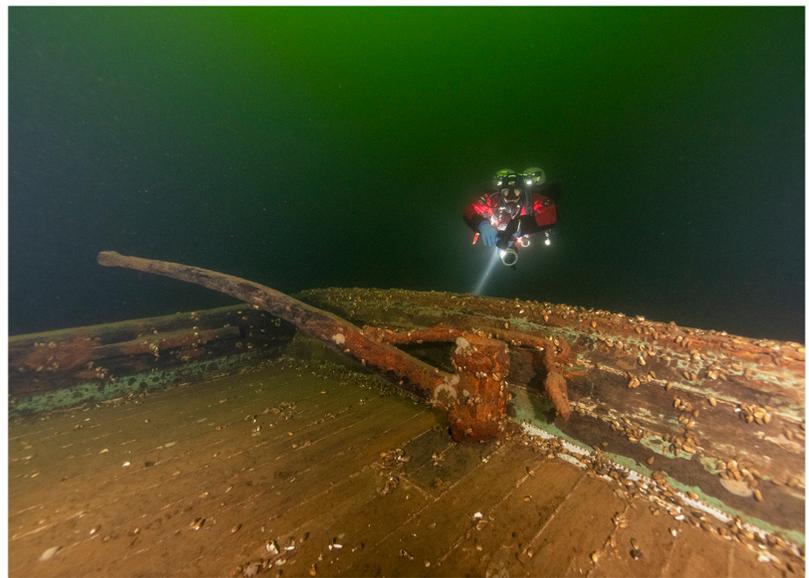
We visited some of the off-the-beaten path sites such as the Cornelia, Wreck F and the Port Kent Canal Boat, but we also hit some of the preserve sites such as the Phoenix.

2022 Diving Highlights

Local diving featured some great dives to Stellwagen and seldom visited wrecks. We also had several classes running, introducing divers to newer technical diving sites.

Coyote and Technical Dives

The Coyote is one of the best technical dives in the 150-200' range in Mass Bay. It is a large wreck with a lot to see. We made 4 trips to the wreck this summer, not counting the ones we scheduled but were blown out due to weather. During those trips, and using a GoPro, one of the divers worked on a photogrammetry project. The preliminary results are very cool and it will be interesting to see this wreck fully mapped. One can rarely see it all on this wreck even with many dives because the visibility is usually not good enough to take it all in at a distance.



Exploring a shipwreck in Lake Champlain.

One thing that stands out from this season is the decline in number of technical divers interested in diving the deeper shipwrecks (as opposed to doing light tech dives at sites with depths up to about 130-140'). There are many great sites throughout Mass Bay in the 150-250' depth range but diving

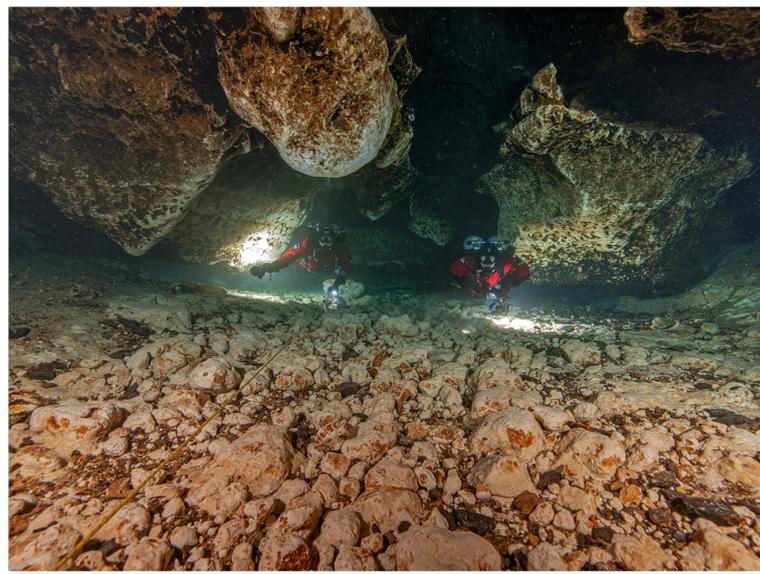
them requires a critical mass of people willing to go in order to make it cost effective and worthwhile to install moorings. Diving these wrecks also requires a commitment to diving regularly since weather is often a factor impacting our ability to get out. If there are wrecks on your “wish list” drop us a note to let us know. We’ve dived many of the Mass Bay wrecks over the past 22 years and are happy to return to them if there are qualified and willing divers wanting to go!

Cave Diving in Florida

We were fortunate to make two trips to Florida this season visiting both the High Springs area and Marianna where we got to enjoy great conditions at Jackson Blue!



Exploring the remains of the wreck of the Coyote.



Exiting the Henkle restriction in Ginnie.

Gauntlet News

Gauntlet is docked in our winter slip. We plan to **resume charters in March 2023.**

Get excited for 2023 diving and come see us present on **Shipwrecks of Lake Champlain** at the SECONN & UCAPSC New England Wrecks Symposium (NEWS) on March 4, 2023 in Groton, CT.

In the meantime, check out the [Gauntlet Blog](#) for updates and videos. For questions about the upcoming season, training or if you would like to join our email list, drop us a note.

Light Monkey, Divesoft, and Dive Xtras! Let us know if you’re interested in any of these great products!

Thank you again for your support and participation. We look forward too seeing you in 2023!