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ScubaH2Omag.com

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SCUBA & H2O

ADVENTURES



**ISLAMORADA
FLORIDA
LAID BACK
ADVENTURE**

**STELLWAGEN BANK
NATIONAL
MARINE
SANCTUARY**

**INCREDIBLE
SPEARFISHING
IN ALABAMA**

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Diving into Spring



As our country and watersports industry moves into spring, we shift gears and begin throttling up for the summer season. Our colder regions begin thawing out and we look forward to these all too brief summertime adventures. In this edition we have a variety of stories to offer, so sit back, relax and take a look at what's happening in diving.

In our Southeast regional news item, we profile the LRAD, (Lionfish Removal and Awareness Day), taking place in Florida in late May. For over a decade, the southeastern United States coast has been assaulted by invasive lionfish, which has wreaked havoc on native reefs and environments. In response, the state of Florida will soon conduct a series of events aimed at educating the public on this ever present threat. The event will encourage divers and anglers throughout the state of Florida to remove lionfish from local waters in a simultaneous effort. **Read about this important story beginning on page 6.**

In our Southeast feature, we profile the incredible diving and community of Islamorada, Florida. Veteran journalist and diver John C. Fine takes us on a laidback adventure in the Florida Keys as he describes his latest trip to this beautiful destination, including an important message on ocean protection. **Read JCF's account on page 8.**

Our Northeast regional news piece features the Long Island Dive Association (LIDA). Written by Northeast divers and LIDA volunteers, Michael Salvatore and Christopher Weaver (Eco-Photo Explorers) the story chronicles the history of this important Northeast dive association and its impact on the local dive community. The 37 year old non-profit regional organization is dedicated to the promotion of local diving, the representation of diver's interests throughout the diving and general community, and the protection of divers rights through outreach to local and regional government officials. From humble beginnings this organization has served the dive community through several decades and has grown to be a significant and powerful voice for divers' rights. **Read their heartwarming story beginning on page 14.**

In our second Northeast regional news story we feature the iconic Beneath the Sea show (BTS), held annually in Secaucus, New Jersey. This year's show was a stirring success and showed the Northeast dive community that giants still command. While many of the dive industry complain about the lack of business and lack of customers, BTS showed no lack of either. Many exhibitors were out of materials on Saturday afternoon, a sure sign that the audience was larger than anticipated. **Read this important story on page 16.**

In our Northeast featured destination, we profile the amazing Stellwagen Bank - New England's only National Marine Sanctuary. Designated by Congress in 1992, the 842-square mile Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary is managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS). The story, written by Matthew Lawrence, a maritime archaeologist working for the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, gives a profile of this incredible natural resource. **Read this great story beginning on page 18.**

ABOUT THE COVER:
Outstanding photo by Matthew Lawrence in Stellwagen Bank, NMS

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We encourage readers to participate in determining the content of this publication by giving us their opinions on the types of articles they would like to see. We invite letters to the editor, manuscripts and photographs related to diving or dive-related business. Send us your stories and photos!

The History of the Long Island Divers Association (LIDA)

Text and Photography by
Michael Salvarezza and Christopher
Weaver (Eco-Photo Explorers)

The Long Island Divers Association (LIDA), a 501(c)(3) non-profit regional organization dedicated to the promotion of local diving, the representation of diver's interests throughout the diving and general community, and the protection of divers rights through outreach to local and regional government officials, has a 37-year old record of advocacy for divers in the Long Island, New York area. From humble beginnings this organization has served the dive community through several decades and has grown to be a significant and powerful voice for divers rights.

The idea for LIDA originated on a cold winter's day in 1979 inside the cozy confines of the once iconic dive shop in Bay Shore, Long Island known as Diver's Way. This dive shop was, for many local divers, the place where they learned to dive. It was a full service dive shop with the instantly recognizable, eye-catching figure of a scuba diver adorning the outside of its sprawling building - visible from the nearby highways. Inside, the shop featured a life-sized figure of a gorilla in a dive suit: the classic image



used by all hard-core divers at the time, which identified them as "gorilla divers". Diver's Way was more than a dive shop. It was a destination.

On this day in 1979, Bob DiBona, owner of Diver's Way, spoke with local divers Bob Auteri, Phil Fulco, and Les Glick about the growing problem of shoreline access for divers. As Long Island became more and more developed, many of the once popular dive sites were closed for a variety of reasons, including private ownership, local government prohibitions, and encroaching land development. Coupled with a lack of communication, coordination, and camaraderie between dive shops, dive clubs, and dive boats on these issues, divers were quickly being shut out of the very sport they came to love.

The idea for an organization that could be the voice of divers across all of Long Island was born, and in December, 1980, the organization known as the Long Island Divers Association (LIDA) adopted its first constitution and set of by-laws. Phil Fulco was named the first president of LIDA and he began working exhaustively by speaking at dive club meetings, organizing regular LIDA meetings, working with dive conferences such as Beneath the Sea, and writing countless letters to various government officials seeking their help in protecting diver access rights on Long Island.

Phil served as President for three years until 1983, when Ray Jahr, a LIDA member at the time, was elected into the office. One of Ray's first objectives was to find a way to sustain the efforts of LIDA



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financially. The first LIDA Film Festival was launched on October 1, 1983 at a local high school and drew over 500 attendees. This film festival soon became an annual tradition and the audiences swelled to nearly 1,500 people a few years later.

With funds coming in from the Film Festival, LIDA was now able to more effectively pursue its mission of advocating divers' rights. Under the leadership of subsequent Presidents, such as Edith Hoffman, Mike Moramarco, Jack Levy, Ralph Ascoli, Christine Schnell, Paula Jerman, Lynne Maher, Gus Bricker, Steve Burke and Bill Pfeiffer, LIDA also became involved in supporting the dive community by supporting efforts such as the annual Aqua Woman dive, various organized beach cleanup dives, and other activities that served to bring the dive community closer together.

Throughout its 37 years, LIDA has always stood for divers' rights but it also recognizes the need to enable divers to find fun and interesting places and ways to dive to fuel the continuance of the sport and drive the economics of the dive industry on Long Island. Through its nearly four-decade history, LIDA has sponsored wreck dives, beach dives, beach barbecues, hyperbaric chamber tours, and historical dive equipment

demonstrations: all with the intent of giving divers reasons to dive. It has even partnered with the New York City Harbor School to provide marine sciences students from Governor's Island an opportunity to experience one of Long Island's best dives. The program encourages future divers to stay and dive locally.

Some of the successes of LIDA's efforts to preserve diver's rights to local waters are evidenced by the recent triumphs it has achieved under the leadership of its current President, Barry Lipsky.

In 2015, for example, the Ponquogue Bridge (a local shore diving spot that has enthralled local divers for years with its magnificent array of marine life) was threatened with demolition. LIDA quickly jumped in and, after several impassioned meetings with local government officials and a successful underwater bridge inspection, the bridge - along with one of the best dive spots on Long Island - was preserved.

In 2016, Secret Beach in the town of Greenport was also re-opened to diver access through LIDA's efforts after years of being locked down. This, too, is one of the best dive spots on Long Island and it

is once again accessible by local divers because of LIDA.

"Going forward, LIDA is looking forward to continuing its legacy of successfully securing and saving access to the shores of Long Island for divers," says Barry Lipsky, current President of LIDA. "It is important that divers today preserve the rights of divers tomorrow. Long Island waters have some fantastic and adventurous dive opportunities. LIDA wants to do all it can to allow divers to access these wonderful dive locations for the divers today and for all those in the future."

Diving as an industry is at a crossroads. In some ways, the demographic for divers is shifting towards an older profile as fewer young people take up the sport. LIDA is part of the equation for helping transform scuba diving for future generations. Without question, if there are no places to dive, there will be no divers diving locally and this can only hurt the businesses that depend on the revenue that divers, both new and old, bring. LIDA continues to play a vital role in helping preserve these special locations where all divers, young and old, can enjoy the sport of scuba diving. 

Long Island Divers Association



LIDA is a not-for-profit regional organization dedicated to the promotion of local diving, the representation of divers interests throughout the community, and is staffed completely by volunteers.

Members can contribute to the mission through the following:

- Attendance at critical LIDA planning and strategy sessions
- Contribution to beach and ocean cleanups
- Participation in local dive events
- Attendance at the annual LIDA Film Festival

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