



Lunarfins Scuba Club

Jennifer Opiela-Miksch

February 18th.

“Treasure of Cocos Island”

Tells about her adventures

Cocos Island is a lush, green uninhabited island resting 342 miles off Costa Rica's Pacific coast. Rocky pinnacles surrounding Cocos are beacons for big animals and big action. Schooling hammerheads, countless white-tip sharks, mantas, tuna and even whale sharks call Cocos home.

Jennifer Opiela-Miksch was able to visit this island in 2022 with a group aboard the Aggressor and produced her film “Treasure of Cocos Island” about her adventures there.

Jennifer is CoOwner of Aggieland Scuba in College Station, PADI Master Scuba Diver Trainer, and current dive club president. She is an associate member of the Women Diver's Hall of Fame and a member of their Social Media Committee. She is also a member of the Houston Underwater Photography Society and Ambassador for the dive app, Dive with Buddy. All of her activities center around filming and showcasing the beauty of the world she finds underwater and encouraging more people to join in on the fun and adventure.

--

Jennifer Opiela-Miksch

PADI MSDT #412868

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83674642772?>

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2772 Passcode: 076802



Lunarfins Board Meetings

are held every other month on the 2nd Thursday of the Month. Our next meet will be on **Mar. 9** if you want to attend contact Brion Saathoff at brionsaathoff@icloud.com > before 7:00 PM. on day of meeting to get the zoom access code.

It will be a ZOOM Meeting

If you have an item to bring before the board, contact any board member to get on the agenda.

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Frances Boutin,
Annette & Pete Hasbrook,
Johnnie & Sonny King,
Crystal Lee,
Jessica Lee,
Mike Peters,
Ja Van Pruet,
Tom & Cindy Reuland,
Brion Saathoff,
Bob Sanders,
Justin Wallace,



Lunarfins
P.O. Box 57514
Webster, TX
77598-7514

Events Calendar

(Tentative plans)



Membership

2024 Membership dues are now being accepted from **April 1st, 2024 to March 31st 2025**

“The renewal form and dues payment is required as soon as possible prior to April 1.

Please bring the form (below) to the next meeting or mail it in.

Please fill in all fiANelds completely so that records can be verified this time around.

Don't forget to check your interest (s) and if you want to be included in the directory.

Membership Application

<https://www.lunarfins.com/>



Feb. 4th — Due to weather — Jan. General Meeting with Paul Cather Deaton will give his presentation

Feb. 14th — Happy Valentines 

Feb. 15th — Lunarfins Get-Together — P. 5

Feb. 18th — General Meeting — Jennifer Opiela-Miksich — Treasure of Cocos Island

Feb. 22nd — Mardi Gras on the Beach P. 5



Mar. TBA — Lunarfins Get-Together — To be Amazed.

Mar. 17th — St. Patrick's  **Day**

Mar. 18th — General Meeting — Dennis Deavenport — Rusting Wrecks & Isotopes

Apr. 15th — General Meeting — Justin Wallace & Scott Singleton — “Extreme Pacific -Truk Wrecks & Outer Atolls of French Polynesia

Apr. 20th — Easter Sunday —



ELECTED OFFICERS

President	Brion Saathoff
Vice President	Ja Van Pruett
Secretary	Frances Boutin
Treasurer	Cathy Strahan
Social Director	Mike Peters

APPOINTED

Media Manager	Dennis Deavenport
Training information	Jessica Lee
Trip information	PJ Campagna
	Jessica Lee
TGCC Representative	Tom Burns
Advisor	Dennis Deavenport
Advisor	PeeWee Dwire
Advisor	Mike Peters
Newsletter	Ja Van Pruett
Website	Tom Burns

Do you have any ideas for event or

Topics for Speakers for 2025?

Please share them with any of our officers.

Lunarfin's President's Notes



Hello Lunarfins,

I hope everyone made it through the freeze without any major issues. The January meeting has been moved to the 4th of February so we can still enjoy Paul Cater Deaton's presentation "Tomorrow the Mara", if you can't make it, we will be on zoom, the meeting Id and password is on page 1.

The February meeting will be on the 18th with Jennifer Opiela-Miksch "Treasure of Coos Island". I have not had the opportunity to make it to Costa Rica yet, but it is on my list. Please join us again if you cannot be there in person, we will zoom it.

Our sister club, Bay Area Divers has had to make the decision to sunset the club, I know it was not an easy decision as the club just celebrated their 50th anniversary, we are inviting the BAD members to join Lunarfins and we will be continuing some of their social events, Kirk Leissner will be hosting his annual Mardi Gras on the beach Feb 22nd (pg. 6). and Mike Peters is hosting a luncheon at Mediterraneo Market and Cafe on Feb 15th (pg. 6).

We will also be adding the Underwater Poker Run (benefitting ACWA) and the underwater pumpkin carving contest later this year along with the spring checkout dive, so there will be a lot more local opportunities to do some diving and socializing.

We had a really good turnout for the Gulf coast council of club's banquet, it was good to visit with everyone and catch up on what's happening.

I would like to congratulate Sonny King on his Lifetime Achievement, he has spent many years and many hours promoting our sport and has helped many divers over the years.

Congratulations also to Jessica Lee, Crystal Lee, Peewee Dwire, Ja Van Pruett, Justin Wallace, Craig Beasley and Betsy Beasley. You have all worked hard to promote the clubs and our sport and a big thank you to Frank Burek for all the work that you put in for the council and the clubs. (BAD, CHUM, HUPS, and LUNARFINS)

And thank you Martin Daniels and Dennis Deavenport for putting together and running the presentation.

Keep in mind the Houston Underwater Film Festival is coming up in April, do not forget to leave room on your dance card, it is a great two-day event April 12th & 13th and there are some really good films this year.

Happy Valentines and I hope to see you soon,

Fins up,
Brion Saathoff



Happy Birthday! to
anyone that has
a birthday this month!
May your day be wonderful!



Welcome!, Welcome!, Welcome!

We (Lunarfans) are happy to announce that Bay Area Divers has merged with our club, as of January's 9th, 2025. You are welcome at any of our events. You will need to fill out an application to join. Let one of the board know. We will have applications at every meeting or you can go online at our website <https://www.lunarfins.com/>

Lunarfin's Raffle — Let's Make Some Money

Lunarfans's will be offering raffle items at meetings. Tickets will be very reasonable and the items raffled off will be interesting and worth having. Cathy Strahan our treasurer has also donated several gifts.

Each month will be a great item and you never know till you come and see what you can pick from what we are offer. Dennis Deavenport has in the past donated one of his photographs. Bring a few extra dollars to the meeting to help Lunarfans earn money for social events If you have something you would like to donate let one of the BOD members know. *Your friendly Board of Directors*

Seaside Chats

February 12, and 19, 6:30 p.m. CT

What are benthic landers? What kinds of items can you find on Texas beaches? What can corals tell us about climate history? What are we doing to help coral reefs in crisis?

Answers to all of these questions are coming soon in the form of Seaside Chats, our annual speaker series about science and conservation happenings in and around Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and the Gulf of Mexico.

These presentations take place on Wednesday evenings in February, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. (Central Time).

- Presentations are **FREE** and presented via webinar. Our speakers include sanctuary staff and guests from partner organizations.
- Anyone is welcome to attend, but presentation content is most suited to those in middle school and above. In fact, these programs make excellent extra credit assignments for students.
- We are happy to provide attendance certificates for all participants and **continuing professional education (CPE) hours for teachers.**
- All webinars are recorded, then captioned and posted to the National Marine Sanctuaries and FGBNMS websites.

More information about each of the presentations and links to webinar registration can be found on the [Seaside Chats page](#) of the FGBNMS website.



Our General Meeting — South Shore Grille

Be sure to check out their menu

<https://soshoregrille.com/league-city-south-shore-grille-food-menu>

February 4th., 6:00 pm

Come at 6 pm—and order, 6:30—announcements & social

Speakers start at 7:00 pm —will be a ZOOM presentation

2800 Marina Bay Dr. League City TX 77573



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2800 Marina Bay Dr. League City TX 77573

February Get-To-Gethers



Lunarfins Get-to-gather

Mediterraneo Market & Café

Feb. 15th. 2:00 pm

1400 NASA Road 1 Unit D, Nassau Bay, TX 77058

Please **RSVP** — **Mike Peters** (we need 15 members)

@281-481-9091

Greek eats, wine & beer

Mardi Gras *On The Beach*



February 22, 2025 at 45th Street and Seawall

We will set up on the beach at 45th Street and the Seawall. You absolutely will not be able to drive down Seawall, it will be barricaded, as well as every road that intersects with the Seawall along the parade route. The actual parade route starts at 57th, goes east to 25th, and from there travels to the strand. The noon parade will reach our spot about 1PM-ish, and last roughly 45 minutes. The best way to get there from I-45 is to travel down Broadway. Turn right on 45th street. For the early arrivals, there is some parking at Academy and the Goodwill behind it. We will have an Old Smokey to use for what you bring. Please, no glass containers, this is the public beach. Be sure to bring folding chair, food, drink, and weather appropriate gear (chapstick, sunscreen, poncho).



About our Members Congratulations!!

Diver of the Year

Jessica Lee



About our Members Congratulations!!

Crystal Lee has received

Diver of the Year, 2 years in a row.

& Brion Saathoff

Monthly Underwater Challenge



About our Members Congratulations!!

PeeWee Dwire

Diver of the Year for TGCC



Ja Van Pruett

**Diver of the
Year for HUPS**

About our Members Congratulations!!

Justin Wallace



**Advanced
Photographer of the
Year**

**Jackie Reid
Award
for
Photographer
Excellence**

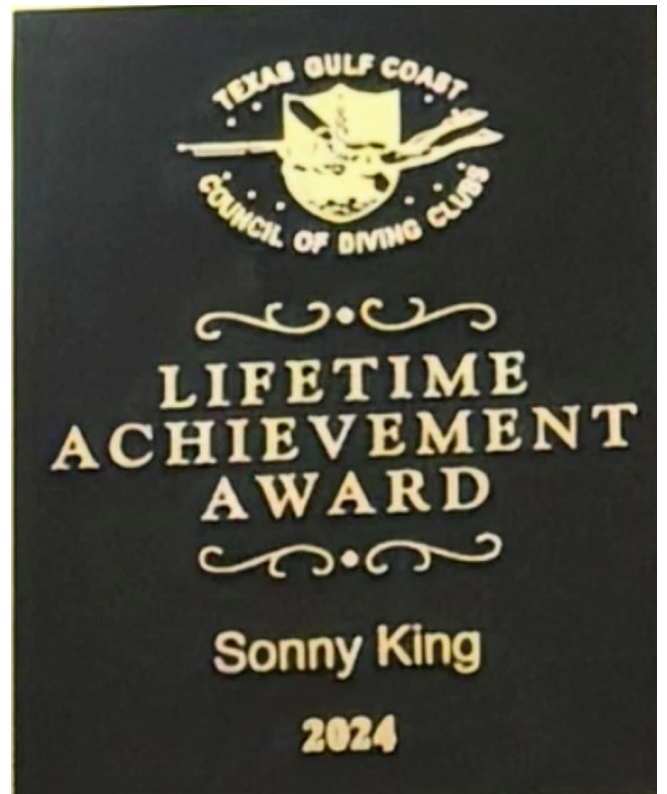


About our Members

Congratulations!!

Sonny King

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



[Elaine King Ousley Nevarez](#) “Today was a great day for my dad, Sonny King, (aka King Neptune) as he was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award for all of his contributions in the scuba diving community in Houston over the past 60 years. As a young girl I remember my dad participating in many spear fishing contest in Galveston where he won many trophies. He served on the board of the Houston Underwater Club, and led several dive trips to Grand Cayman. He always kept an eye on me while diving and I recall once on a night dive he tied a rope between us to keep me close. I have such great memories of the underwater world that he exposed our family to. Thanks so much, dad ”

About our Members Congratulations!!

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS



Winners of the LLA Award Winners—[Jack Allyn](#), Tammy Allyn, Frank Burek, Joyce Burek, Jesse Cancelmo, Jim Morrison, [John Ringrose](#), [Randy Widaman](#), [Dick Zingula](#), Ja Van Pruett, Ken Knezick, Mark Leiserowitz, Fred Toole, Tom Burns, Dennis Deavenport, Rodney Dwire, David Lenderman, Todd Rushing, Sue Watson, Kirk Leissner, Debbie Mensay, Jim Mensay, Polly Swerdlin, Roger Veteto, [Dwight \(Clint\) Moore](#), Mike Peters, Tom Collier, Todd Haskin, Robert Straight, Sonny King ([Blue — Divers that has passed](#))



This year 2024

The Dive Community Memorial Plaque added Peggy Lee Widaman name to honor her.

Peggy had a gift for spreading energy, laughter, love, enthusiasm, creativity and compassion.

Peggy came several years in a row to help with HUFF and for the Lunarfins Christmas Party.

She will be missed.

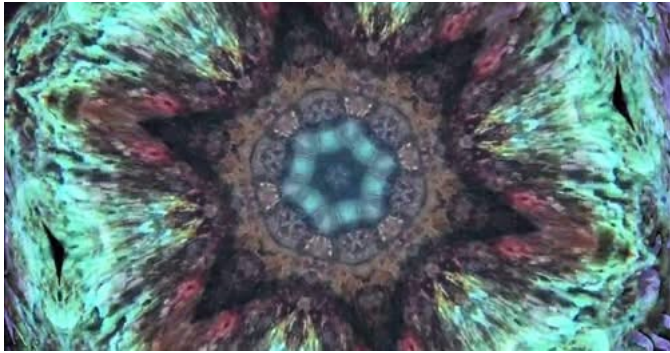
About our Members (Continued)

Francis Boutin & Ken Erickson



About our Members (Continued)

Dennis Deavenport



2025—"Aquamation" - Mix-Match Festival

This is an eight-minute presentation on Exploring Limits in Filmmaking for Underwater videography. It was presented at the MATCH Theater in Houston January 18

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEs4_urZwRs

The other presenters are Craig Beasley, Betsy Beasley, Paul Cater Deaton, David Lenderman, and Justin Wallace.



Well crap. Now the Lizzards.



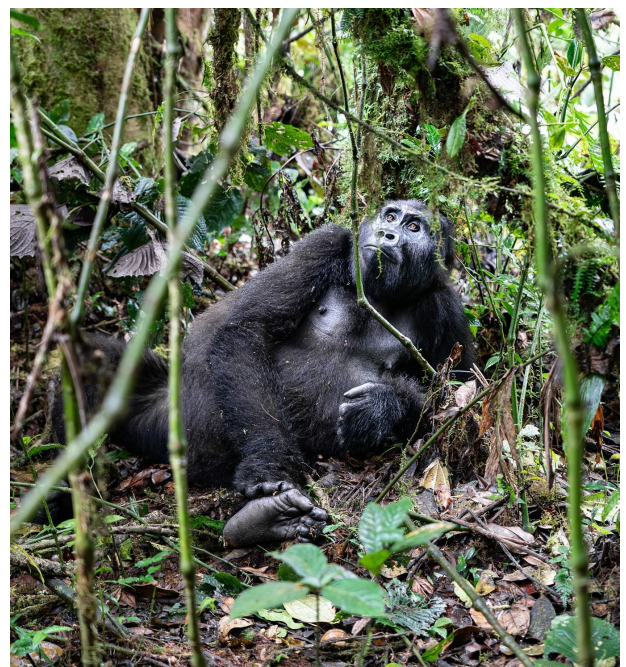
About our Members (Continued)

Paul Cater Deaton

I've been shooting live music for decades now, and last night's show with [Drake Milligan](#) was the most fun musical shoot I'd done in a long time. Loads of energy, great fun.



Sound check with [The Powell Brothers](#). They're opening for [Drake Milligan](#) at the [Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce](#) Country Music Festival and I've got the best seat in the house.

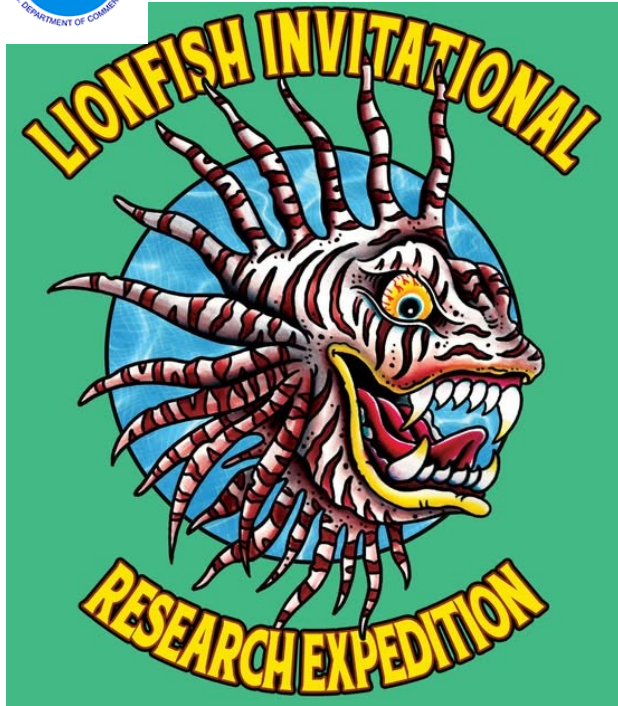


Bustin' with pride over here! To be in the semifinals with these remarkable photographers is humbling.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DFGI1syPK9P/?igsh=MXc1aHRrbTZlaGtjMw==>



NOAA's Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary



Apply now to participate in the 2025 Lionfish Invitational!

The Lionfish Invitational is a research-based citizen science expedition to remove invasive lionfish from Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary and its surroundings. <https://www.lionfishinvitational.com/>

There are four trips planned this year:

June 22-26

July 20-24

August 18-22

September 21-25

All trip activities within the sanctuary are conducted under federal permits.

Applications are due by midnight on March 1,

Stanley Fontenot



About our Members (Continued)

Pete & Annette Hasbrook



About our Members (Continued)

Cindy & Tom Reuland



January 21st — Snow, but not thick enough to ice skate.



Tom Reuland with NASA astronaut Christina Koch at the NASA Day of Remembrance. Christina is Mission Specialist I for the Artemis II mission to the moon scheduled for April 2026 aboard an Orion spacecraft launched on a Space Launch System (SLS) rocket.

. Photo taken on 1/23/25 in the astronaut memorial tree grove at NASA/JSC.

About our Members (Continued)

Bob Sanders



Happy new year from Yosemite



January 7, 2025 —Way to start off the new year... Mandatory evacuation order



Sent in by [Michael Peters](#)

Sand Dollars

4/16/2023 Updated: 10/16/2024



Sand dollars are not actually white when alive, are related to sea stars and sea urchins, use spines to eat, have a "jaw" with five teeth-like sections, can be aged by counting growth rings on their exoskeleton, often live in large groups, can't survive long out of water, and their underside looks quite different from their beautiful top surface with many spines and a mouth for feeding.

Key points about sand dollars:

Appearance when alive: Unlike the bleached white color you see on the beach, live sand dollars are usually purple or brown.

Family ties: Sand dollars are closely related to sea stars and sea urchins.

Feeding mechanism: They use tiny spines to capture food particles like plankton and algae.

Mouth structure: Inside a sand dollar is a jaw with five sections of small teeth used for grinding food. Sometimes a sand dollar "chews" its food for 15 minutes before swallowing. It can take two days for the food to be digested. Scientists can age a sand dollar by counting the growth rings on the plates of the exoskeleton. Sand dollars usually live six to 10 years.

Aging process: Scientists can age a sand dollar by counting the growth rings on the plates of the exoskeleton. Sand dollars usually live six to 10 years.

Social behavior: Sand dollars often live in large groups, sometimes with hundreds in a small area.

Fragility out of water: If you find a live sand dollar, be sure to return it to the water as they cannot survive long out of the ocean.

Underside appearance: Unlike the smooth top, the underside of a sand dollar has a complex structure with a mouth, anus, and many spines.

Danager – Sand dollars do not bite.

However, their long spines can cause puncture wounds and their small bones in their spines can cause a burning sensation if they puncture the skin. Be careful when handling the underside of a sand dollar.

What is the trick to finding sand dollars? To increase your odds of finding a sand dollar, scour the shallow waters of a beach during low tide. Sift through seaweed or shell piles. Venture into the dunes to look for buried and long-forgotten dollars. Keep searching and you just might find that lucky sand dollar!

What does the sand dollar mean spiritually? -- What is Sand Dollar Symbolism? For many, sand dollars represent the beauty and power of the ocean, reminding us of our connection to the natural world and the wonders it holds. Others see sand dollars as a symbol of personal growth and transformation, representing the potential for spiritual enlightenment and renewal.

In what states is it illegal to take a live sand dollar? The fine is \$500 for taking live sea creatures from South Carolina beaches. Florida and Georgia also have similar laws, and some are left up to local municipalities.

Did you know that these humble echinoderms have been stirring the imagination for centuries? There's a particularly lovely Christian legend about sand dollars representing the story of Christ's birth and resurrection.

If you've ever noticed the star-shaped pattern on the top of a sand dollar, the legend tells us that it represents the Star of Bethlehem, guiding the wise men to baby Jesus.

And when you flip the sand dollar over, there's an outline of a poinsettia, the Christmas flower. Inside, if you carefully break a sand dollar, you'll find five tiny white 'doves' – these are said to symbolize peace and the joy that spread when Christ rose from the dead.

Isn't it amazing how such a small creature can hold such deep and symbolic stories? Whether or not you connect with these tales religiously, they certainly add another layer of wonder to the humble sand dollar.

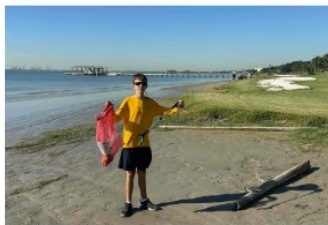
Remember the next time you come across a sand dollar, it's more than a pretty keepsake; it's a symbol of the profound beauty and complexity of the world around us.

Open Enrollment For BSA SEA SCOUT SHIP EAGLE 1503



www.scubadivingship.com

Sea Scouts BSA is adventure in, on, around, and under the water. Chartered by Sport Divers of Houston, SSS Eagle 1503 is a co-ed scouting unit for youth ages 14-20. Youth that are 13 and have completed the 8th grade are also eligible to join. Sea Scouts enjoy a range of maritime and aquatic focused activities such as scuba diving, sailing, and rowing sports like kayaking and canoeing. Sea Scouts develop teamwork and leadership skills through opportunities to learn and master seamanship and scuba diving. A greater set of core values and ethics to live by are instilled through volunteering and participating in service projects, such as beach cleanup, cleaning attractions at Mammoth Lake, food drives, and toy drives. Ship meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of the month from 4-6pm at Sport Divers of Houston. For more information, email our Skipper, Kevin Reams, at kgreams@gmail.com or our Ship Committee Chair, Thomas Fitzgerald, at ship1503@scubadivingship.com.



Join us on Facebook @ www.facebook.com/groups/scubadivingship



American Charitable Watersport Activities Foundation



2025 Supporter Registration

The “American Charitable Watersport Activities Foundation” (ACWA) was established by SCUBA divers on March 31, 2023. ACWA is recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) public non-profit charity. Staffed by non-paid volunteers, ACWA’s administrative and donation support is provided annually by members of our community.

Supporter Registration for the “American Charitable Watersport Activities Foundation” (ACWA) is open to Dive Clubs and Individuals who reside in the United States of America. 2025 registration is \$20.

“Supporters” on record for 2023 or 2024 are listed on a “Supporter Master List” and need not complete this form. They continue their charity efforts with their 2025 payment of \$20 to ACWA’s treasurer - Mark Leiserowitz (contact information listed below).

New “Supporters” need to complete this form to provide ACWA with contact and IRS reporting information. To join as an individual (must be a certified scuba diver, or a member of a dive club) - fill out the application below. Please print legibly as e-mail addresses will be utilized to keep supporters abreast with the charity’s status and your name as identified below, used in any future donation reporting required by you or the IRS.

Dive Club _____

or

Certifying Agency: _____ C-Card Number: _____

Make Checks Payable To: **ACWA, c/o Mark Leiserowitz, 5205 De Milo Dr., Houston, Texas 77092.**

Name: _____ Phone / Cell Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The Lunarfins Scuba Club was organized in 1963 by a small group of divers who worked at the Manned Spacecraft Center, as Johnson Space Center (JSC) was known back then. The club grew primarily through the sponsorship of SCUBA training classes, local dive trips and social activities. Since that time, membership has broadened to include anyone interested in diving. The majority of our members are in some way affiliated with NASA but this is not a requirement for membership and we have members from all across the board.



Lunarfins

119 South Circle Drive
Liverpool TX 77577

281-851-5206

webeditor@lunarfins.com

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/687047211312336>

Website:

<https://www.lunarfins.com/>

TGCC

<https://www.tgccdiving.org/>

TPWD reefs:

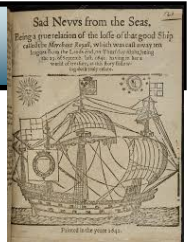
https://tpwd.texas.gov/landwater/water/habitats/artificial_reef/



The Royal Merchant — Sill unlocated



Sent in by [Michael Peters](#)



The Royal Merchant was a 17th-century English merchant ship that sank in 1641 while carrying a large amount of gold and silver. The ship's wreck has never been found, but it is considered one of the most valuable shipwrecks in history. The Merchant Royal had been used to facilitate trades with Spanish colonies in the New World in the first half of the 17th century. While docked in Spain for repairs, the ship's captain [cut a deal with that country's government](#) to deliver silver and gold to Antwerp — which added considerably to what was already a heavy load of precious metals on board.

The repairs, however, failed to resolve the Merchant Royal's problems: As storms rolled in, leaks overtook the ship, and the pumps failed to work. The vessel sank 34 miles from Land's End, laden with gold and jewels.

Many have searched for it but the wreck has yet to be located. Whoever finds it will have access to some \$1.25 billion in treasure.

In 1786, this ship dropped off 800 slaves in the Caribbean and left with what Allen generally calls “a whole lot of gold coins” — before it met its fate by running into a reef and sinking.

Texas tycoon Carl Allen has invested millions into treasure hunting — and has his eye on some 280,000 coins said to be stranded on a sunken slave ship. Allen and his crew found four of the coins — just enough to tease the promise of more.

“They salvaged 100,000 coins out of 380,000. That leaves 280,000 coins to be found,” Allen told The Post. “We’re looking at it right now.”



Trips Offered by Dive Shops etc.

Captain Beard Charters

1011 Casco Rd – Freeport TX

captainbeardcharters.com/index.shtml



Island Dreams

10245 Kempwood Dr E119 – Houston TX

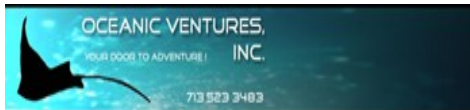
www.divetrip.com



Oceanic Ventures

5808 Newcastle Dr. – Houston TX

oceanicventures.com



REEF Trips

Dive Vacations That Count – Key Largo FL

reef.org/trips



Texas Dive Center

364 FM 1959 #D – Houston TX

txdivecenter.com/



Giglin' Marlin Dive & Swim

4502 Almeda Rd – Houston TX

giglinmarlin.com



Maximum Scuba

134 Gulf Freeway North – League City TX

maximum-scuba.com



Outside The Asylum

15015 Westheimer Rd #H – Houston TX

otadiving.com



Sport Divers

20814 Gulf Fwy #60 – Webster TX

sportdivers.com



Texas Scuba Adventures

2315 Mechanic St #120 – Galveston TX

texasscubaadventures.com

