



# SEATREK BVI: A UNIQUE FAMILY OF COMMITTED NAUI PEOPLE

BY ANGIE COWAN, NAUI 53628, DIRECTOR OF MARINE SCIENCE AND INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR

*“It was night when I first arrived, but I could still feel the humidity in the air as I got off the plane. As I waited in line at the British Virgin Islands immigration desk that first time of many to come, little did I know I was heading towards events that would shape my life for the next 10 years.”*

— Colin Jones

SeaTrek BVI is a family-owned, at-sea teen summer camp that affords its participants exceptional training in scuba, sailing, and marine science throughout the British Virgin Islands and other tropical locations. SeaTrek students experience the islands as crew of live-aboard catamarans that serve as their homes and mobile classrooms during SeaTrek’s two- and three-week-long voyages. Since its inaugural voyage in 2003, SeaTrek has taught countless sailing courses, certified many NAUI divers, and inspired many students to pursue careers in marine science and the dive industry.

While SeaTrek provides some of the highest quality scuba, sailing, and marine science instruction in the industry, what our students and staff gain from their experiences with us encompasses so much more. SeaTrek is all about personal and professional growth, setting and achieving goals, overcoming challenges and facing fears, learning the value of hard work and commitment, and sharing one’s self and one’s knowledge with others so that they too may enjoy the same benefits. That’s what we’re all about—hard work, dedication, and giving back. At SeaTrek, we call it “Paying it Shoreward.”

I have greatly benefited from working for SeaTrek and with our staff and students over the years. Serving as the SHIP internship coordinator the past two years has been an especially rewarding and valuable learning experience for me. As one of our older and more senior staff, I get immense pleasure and satisfaction from being a part of the growth of our interns and younger staff members. I get to see them hone the skills necessary to become SeaTrek staff members. In fact, ninety-five percent of our paid staff positions are occupied by former students who went on to complete our SHIP internship program. Watching these young people grow in their leadership and develop into SeaTrek's future scuba instructors, captains, and biologists is a truly rewarding experience.

Course Directors Ralph "Monk" Daniel and Kat Daniel, and Instructor Kris Kordyzo are the cornerstones and founders of SeaTrek BVI. They work relentlessly to train, mentor, and support SeaTrek students and interns, preparing them for positions as SeaTrek staff members and industry professionals at the top of their field. Rather than taking my word for it, we thought it best to hear it directly from them. The following biographies were written by several of our staff members who have worked very hard to become the highly qualified captains, dive leaders, and biologists who make SeaTrek what it is today—a product of the effort, training, and commitment that Captain Monk, Captain Kat, and Captain Kris have put into SeaTrek and the hundreds of students who have voyaged with us.

## MEET OUR STAFF

### COLIN JONES: CAPTAIN, NAUI INSTRUCTOR TRAINER



Colin, aka "Farva," has been with SeaTrek BVI for ten years. He was a student for two voyages, participated in the SHIP Internship program, and became a full-time staff member in 2007.

It was night when I first arrived, but I could still feel the humidity in the air as I got off the plane. As I waited in line at the British Virgin Islands immigration office that first time of many to come, little did I know I was heading towards events that would shape my life for the next 10 years. When I first went to SeaTrek BVI I already knew I loved diving and the ocean but had no idea I could turn that into a career. By the end of that first summer I was hooked; I wanted to go back, wanted to learn more. My second year I had decided to try and become a NAUI Divemaster. It was the first step of many to come. The skills were fun, and for the first time I was feeling what it was like to be a leader—to be in charge and have people counting on my skills to make sure they are kept safe in the wonderful world that diving allows one to access. SeaTrek has taught me how to lead and what having true responsibility is like. Now I get to see these new youths come down and experience what I did all those years ago. It is my job to impart the knowledge I've acquired over the years to make sure that these new NAUI divers and divemasters acquire the skills they will need to be safe, proficient divers and dive leaders. My hope is that they feel that same confidence and responsibility that I did when I joined NAUI and became a part of the SeaTrek family.

### ELLIE HAYWOOD: CAPTAIN, NAUI INSTRUCTOR, ASSISTANT BIOLOGIST



Ellie, aka "Ellie-bird," has been with SeaTrek BVI for six years. She was a student for two voyages, participated in the SHIP Internship program, and became a full-time staff member in 2008.

I grew up in Wisconsin on the Mississippi River. I was entranced with the world under the waves, most likely a byproduct of the Little Mermaid, Free Willy, and various family vacations to the Yucatán. Later, I

poured over books about reef ecosystems and marine mammals. It was a particularly cold, bleak winter when SeaTrek became part of my life. Captain Monk and Captain Kat encouraged me to write an essay for a scholarship to attend SeaTrek the following summer. I had great admiration for the staff members who taught me my first open water course and captained the vessel I lived on. It was my first summer in the British Virgin Islands, and I was already hatching plans to try and work for them. Starting out as their nanny I worked my way towards becoming a NAUI divemaster. Capt. Kat also realized how much I liked handling the sailing and started training me as a captain. In 2011, I obtained my USCG captain's license and began running the sail cats for our program, and in 2012 I became a NAUI instructor.

The work is hard and staff pull long hours, but it's all so incredibly worth it. To this day when I walk on a boat to work or go diving with someone, people always comment afterward, "Wow, who trained you?" Aside from the wonderful skillset I learned working with SeaTrek, I also learned a plethora of things about my own life. I experienced first-hand the joy of taking someone underwater for the first time and instilling love for the underwater world. The staff members at SeaTrek have this incredible way of helping young people build confidence and realize that their dreams are possible. Working with SeaTrek was definitely the foundation of my path towards conservation and marine science. I couldn't think of a more supportive and knowledgeable crew of professionals with whom to have my first dive/sail and marine science experiences.

### LAURYN CELLERS: CAPTAIN, NAUI INSTRUCTOR



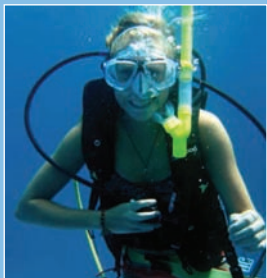
Lauryn, aka "LuLu," has been with SeaTrek BVI for seven years. She was a student for three voyages, participated in the SHIP internship program, and became a full-time staff member in 2011.

Many years back my family and I chartered a vessel and went scuba diving in the British Virgin Islands. We had such a good time that my parents began to look up scuba diving summer camps in the BVI, and they stumbled upon SeaTrek. When I was 14 I attended SeaTrek as a student and this continued for the following two summers until I had the opportunity to participate in the SHIP internship



program. This summer will be the fourth summer that I have been working for SeaTrek. Since I began my journey working for SeaTrek, I have earned my divemaster and instructor certifications and my USCG captain's license. SeaTrek has made sailing and scuba diving a major factor in my life and something I enjoy very much. I am currently an undergraduate majoring in biology. After I graduate from college I am not extremely sure as to what I would like to do, but right now I have my eyes set on becoming a U.S. Navy Diver.

#### KASEY FOX: NAUI INSTRUCTOR, ASSISTANT BIOLOGIST

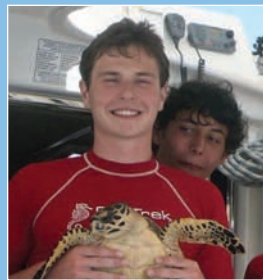


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Kasey, aka "KuKu," has been with SeaTrek BVI for five years. She was a student for four voyages, participated in the SHIP internship program, and became a full-time staff member in 2013.

At age 16, I found my way down to the British Virgin Islands for my first summer with SeaTrek with absolutely no diving or sailing experience. Like many 16 year olds I was low in confidence and was struggling to find myself. Although I grew up in the landlocked state of Colorado, I always had a deep interest in the ocean and all the mysteries it held. Through much research, I landed myself in the BVI aboard the SeaTrek Explorer, a 43-foot catamaran. After my first three-week voyage I returned home with tanned skin and bleached hair, but my appearance wasn't the only thing that changed. I had met lifelong friends and discovered an overwhelming amount of confidence. I knew that SeaTrek would become my home away from home. Each summer I returned and obtained a new certification, and my skillset grew. I climbed my way up from a reserved open water diver to a poised NAUI instructor in just four years. Not only did I accomplish new certifications, but I worked harder than I ever had in my entire life. You can't fully understand how hard, yet rewarding, it is to work at a camp like SeaTrek without being there yourself. That is exactly what creates the close-knit family of SeaTrek, being around people at close quarters to see you at your very best and your very worst. This experience is truly unique and provides a result that may not be found anywhere else. There is nothing more rewarding than the tasks I have taken on at SeaTrek, and I owe this company more than I could ever possibly return.

#### GUS MELOY: NAUI INSTRUCTOR, LEAD BIOLOGIST



Gus has been with SeaTrek BVI for four years. He was a student for three voyages and became a full-time staff member in 2013.

I first came to SeaTrek in the summer of 2011 as an advanced diver but with minimal experience. I had discovered my passion for diving the previous summer while diving in Tahiti and was eager to progress my diving education with SeaTrek. Living aboard a 46-foot catamaran for four weeks in the British Virgin Islands, I was blown away by the level of safety and instruction I received. Simply put, it was a diving immersion program, and I quickly became fluent picking up my rescue, master diver, and divemaster certifications. The breadth of knowledge and confidence in my training that I took away was invaluable to me getting my first job in the diving industry, assisting classes at my university.

The next summer I returned to SeaTrek for the ultimate challenge and experience—the Instructor Training program. Initially I struggled greatly, but my Instructor Trainer believed in me and helped me transform into a public speaker capable of teaching to a very high NAUI standard. Upon returning from the BVI as a green instructor, my boss, a veteran instructor with over 3000 certified divers to his name, was able to see the before and after of my training experience and had no qualms giving me my own classes to teach. My professors also noticed an enormous difference in the quality of my academic talks.

SeaTrek offered me a position as their lead biologist the following summer. My science background and ITC and work experience as an instructor made teaching science feel very natural. I enjoyed being able to foster such curious minds and facilitate the pure love of science I saw in so many young students' faces. Now a semester away from graduating with a B.S. in geology and a minor in mathematics, I am poised to start the next chapter in my academic life with graduate school. I don't know where I'll be going yet, but wherever I do go, the skills and experience I have gained from SeaTrek will serve me greatly.



Kat Daniel (left) with new NAUI Instructors Krista Rainsier, Aly Yingst, Lauryn Cellers and Kasey Fox in 2013.

### ALY YINGST: NAUI INSTRUCTOR, ASSISTANT BIOLOGIST



Aly has been with SeaTrek BVI for four years. She was a student for three voyages, participated in the SHIP internship program, and became a staff member in 2013.

At the age of 16, when most teenagers are dreaming about their first car, I was dreaming about life in the ocean. The ocean

had enchanted me throughout my life, but growing up in Pennsylvania did not give me the opportunities that I craved to discover more about what covers over 70% of the planet. Once I found out about SeaTrek, I knew that it would be the perfect place to finally learn about the ocean, but my expectations did not come close to the incredible reality. My time at SeaTrek, whether as a student, intern, or staff member, shaped me into the person I am today. To influence others in appreciating the ocean as I do, I was able to become an assistant biologist, NAUI divemaster, and then instructor, a title I never even dreamed was possible when I first learned how to scuba dive. Recently, I studied abroad in the Galapagos Islands, where the skills I had learned at SeaTrek assisted me in the classroom and in the water. A lot of this success came from the FATHOMS (Focused Adventure Through Hands On Marine Science) program at SeaTrek. Through this program, I came to understand the value of a hands-on/experiential education, and I developed a passion and curiosity for the ocean that will never leave me. I believe that happiness is found in experiences, and I consider myself one of the luckiest people in the world to have been able to experience SeaTrek at such a young age.

### SHELBY MUNSTERMAN: NAUI DIVEMASTER, ASSISTANT BIOLOGIST



Shelby has been with SeaTrek BVI for eight years. She was a student for seven voyages, participated in the SHIP internship program, and became a full-time staff member in 2014.

SeaTrek has been a part of my life for a long time. I can no longer remember what it felt like to have a summer when I didn't go to the boats and learn something new in the British Virgin Islands. SeaTrek and the SHIP

internship program have both helped me grow as a person. Without these things in my life I would not be as responsible or as confident as I am today. Success in SeaTrek is earned by hard work, and that ability isn't something I would have realized without the boats. Before SeaTrek, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to continue my future plans as a marine biologist, but learning and teaching as a student and staff member has solidified me to the idea. It has also kept me motivated in school. Without SeaTrek I would be a different person and may not even be at school for the same reason or major.

Interning with the SHIP program and earning my divemaster certification introduced me to the work that would be required as a future staff member at SeaTrek. It is much more demanding to meet the needs of our students and the job than it appears. As a student at SeaTrek, everything flows smoothly and without a hitch, but the work that goes into that smoothness wasn't apparent to me until I was part of the SHIP program. Since I have Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), it is difficult for me to stay organized and focused all the time. However, the environment at SeaTrek, as well as the responsibilities I chose to take on over the summer, have helped me overcome problems with organization and procrastination. SeaTrek has impacted my life. The more I accomplish while on the boats the more I feel I can accomplish when back at school, and it's all thanks to everything I've been able to do at SeaTrek.

And there you have it—the future of SeaTrek BVI and valuable members of the NAUI organization. These fine young people are not only excited to further their own skillsets and accomplish personal goals, but they look forward to “Paying it Shoreward.” Just as SeaTrek's dedicated senior staff helped make their time as students a fun, learning-filled, and life-changing experience, they hope to do the same for the next generation of SeaTrekkers. You can find out more about SeaTrek BVI's programs on our website (<http://www.seatrekbvi.com>) and Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/seatrekbvi>). We look forward to hearing from you and perhaps sailing and diving with you in the future!

For additional information, please contact SeaTrek's Director of Operations, Capt. Monk Daniel directly: [info@seatrekbvi.com](mailto:info@seatrekbvi.com) 1-877-467-2454.