

Underwater Photography

a web magazine
Issue 49
July/Aug 2009



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www.aquatica.ca

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Underwater Photography
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Publisher/Editor Peter Rowlands
www.pr-productions.co.uk
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Editorial

Charity begins at the dive site

The subject of excess baggage charges always creates a flurry of responses on the internet forums but I, for one, would have no problem with them if they would just be consistent and up front about the rules and costs before I pack. That way I can pack to protect my equipment properly.

In addition another annoying thing about travel with most airlines is that their baggage guidelines often never filter down to the check-in clerks and we are faced with a lottery every time we approach the counter.

My other final niggle about excess baggage charges is that I don't see the planes getting smaller and becoming critical about their payload.

But what really annoys me even more than this is the bleeters on the forums who complain about excess baggage charges when they are already booked on a \$5000 trip (and no doubt traveling with camera equipment worth well in excess of that) going to a location most hard working people could only dream of visiting once, let alone several times, and where the local standard of living and healthcare is woefully underfunded.

We are extremely privileged to be able to go to the places we do and rather than donate money to carbon offset schemes (which to my mind are of dubious longterm use anyway and prey on our human guilt gene) we should research the location and seek out a local charity to support.

Bruce Yates, for example, who supplied the cover shot and review of Aquatica's Canon 5D Mk11 housing in this issue donates all of the profits from his underwater photography to his charity of choice, *International Children's Surgical Foundation*.

ICSF provides free surgery to third world children suffering from treatable disfigurements. Patients treated by ICSF are initially identified by local doctors and consist primarily of children suffering deformities that the local doctors are unable to treat due to inadequate training and expertise.

We are all expected to tip the staff at our resorts but rarely do we give a thought to others in the country's we dive in.

A comparatively small donation from us can make a huge difference to local lives. Consider giving to the ICSF (their details are on Page 27) or seek out a charity of your choice but, either way, do it.

www.icsfoundation.org

Kodachrome



I suspect many UwP readers won't have a clue what I'm on about with this one but here goes.

Kodak recently announced that it was ceasing production of its legendary slide film Kodachrome with the processing facility to follow in about 18 months. Now I haven't exposed a roll of Kodachrome since 2001 but that doesn't stop me feeling a sense of loss.

With Kodachrome, except as I understand it in the US, the purchase price included processing, mounting and return postage so at the end of your holiday you sent off your rolls to Kodak. They then arrived back about a week later in an iconic box which greeted you on your doormat when you got back from work.

The mere sight of the distinctive box made your heart skip a beat as you opened it up and spread the mounted slides onto a lightbox. The next few minutes were spent doing the Kodachrome Loupe Dance (KLD) as

you bent forward to check the focus on a particular slide and with smooth coordination brought the magnifying loupe up to your eye.

At this point, the dance, over the years, evolved into two distinctive styles - there were those who straightened up fully to take an overview of the slides and then repeat the KLD while the other, more professional style would stay bent and hop along the slides one by one with skillful choreography saving their eyeball from being prodded by the loupe.

Either way you checked your focus and composition in detail then either punched the air in delight or slid the offending, unsharp image off the edge of the lightbox and into a real, physical waste basket.

Throughout its lifetime Kodachrome has produced some extraordinary, iconic images and its presence defined an era; even inspiring Paul Simon to write a song about it and so eloquently capture its performance and place in our photographic history.

Time and technology may move on but it doesn't necessarily move for the better and Kodachrome reflects a era when good things took time.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

www.uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

MarineLife Keyword List

5% discount for UwP readers



MarineLife Keyword List is an importable keywords file created by professional underwater photographers and educators Marty Snyderman, Barry Guimbellot, and Eric Cheng to simplify marine wildlife keywording workflow. It contains keywords for over 12,000 species of marine life and includes not only common names, but also genus and species names, and full taxonomic structure.

Searchable by common name or part of the common name, the keyword list ensures that you will never again have to type in long pseudo-Latin scientific names when keywording your images in Aperture or Lightroom. In addition, a number

of other taxonomic names such as the kingdom, phylum, class, order, family and other sub-categories exist as parent keywords and are automatically applied when you tag your image (in Lightroom).

MarineLife Keyword List can currently be imported

into both Adobe Lightroom and Apple Aperture without adversely affecting your current keyword database. Upon import, the keywords are available for immediate use in keywording your marine wildlife images.

A simple affiliate program is also available for retailers or enthusiasts interested in becoming resellers.

MarineLife Keyword List sells for \$99 and is available as a direct download.

<http://marinekeywords.com>

UwP readers can get a 5% discount by entering the code: 43UR90I7

New Underwater Photography Family Courses



Maria Munn is launching new underwater photography courses for families in July. Perfect for children who are qualified Junior Divers, these courses guarantee lots of fun in a great learning environment for all the family to come back from their holidays with fantastic photographs. Morning sessions consist of easy classroom techniques with puppets and the afternoon pool session now has swimming toys and illuminated submarines for even more enjoyment for everyone and guests can now build their own underwater reef.

Special children's prices are just £75 at all our course venues at

Bromley, Oxford or Leeds. Non-diving partners are welcome to come free of charge and relax in the holistic surroundings of the Bromley and Oxford locations.

All courses now include a special Ocean Visions Certificate as well as free tailor-made tips for each guest's camera. Contact Maria at maria@oceanvisions.co.uk or on 07957 621915. The first courses will start on Saturday 11th July in Bromley, Kent with free child places available on selected mid-week dates.

www.oceanvisions.co.uk

UnderwaterVideography.com

UnderwaterVideography.com is the first web site geared specifically towards professional and aspiring professional underwater videographers.

Started in 2009 by founder Joe Holley, UnderwaterVideography.com gives industry professionals a place to showcase their work, trade ideas, discuss equipment and informally meet with other underwater professionals. UnderwaterVideography.com also serves as a great place for anyone interested in underwater video to learn some of the “tricks of the trade”.



www.underwatervideography.com

Come Dive with me website

Whether you are an Open Water Diver, A Diving professional, A Club Diver, Instructor, Entry Level Diver or even a Camera man filming for National TV, you need to dive with a BUDDY to ensure that you dive safely and within the safety requirements set out by your governing diving body.

This site has been put together to help you find a diving partner with similar experience and/or interests to dive with. Feel free to navigate the site by using the easy to find Dive

Links throughout the site or click on the Dive Flag below to continue to find your diving partner. They have tried to make the site as interesting as possible with FREE downloadable pages for your dive log, some images for you to browse through, PADI info, UK Diving advice and a Lost and Found page plus many helpful Dive Links to shops, forums and Manufacturers.

www.comedivewithme.co.uk



They come in **breath-catching colours;**
in **shifting shapes;** in **astonishing disguises;**
tinchy tiny or really **rather grand...**
and always there is more to **dive** and to **enchant**



Dive North Sulawesi – Bunaken, Bangka & Lembeh

Kima Bajo Resort & Spa is an idyllic setting with a range of villas to suit most budgets. Eco Divers' large, comfortable, fast boats take you to over 30 dive sites with special trips to Lembeh & Bangka also in the frame!

Small dive groups, big experience, warm welcome

Kima Bajo Resort & Spa, Manado
www.kimabajo.com | www.eco-divers.com
diving@kimabajo.com



Marsa Alam caverns



After many months of research and some very long dives by the Marsa Alam Emperor technical dive team, mapping of some caverns has finished meaning guests can now do the PADI Cavern Specialty.

For many years guides have said there were caverns in the area and had guided a few highly experienced divers into them on occasions. Eventually, dive guide, Mo, finally found them again and started to draw a map of the entrance area, duly named 'Mo's Cavern' in honour of their founder.

A technical dive team finished putting the final pieces to this and have now mapped and permanently lined over 130 metres of cavern with still some to do.

Emperor Divers has its own PADI Cavern Instructor and Cavern trained guides so now guests can learn new diving skills and then enjoy the caverns with their guide.

Course sizes are limited to just two students and take either two or three days so early booking is essential as it's already proving very popular.

www.emperordivers.com

Escape to Nature



Escape to nature is a long term project of two adventurous professional photographers and movie makers, Libor Špaček and Petra Doležalová.

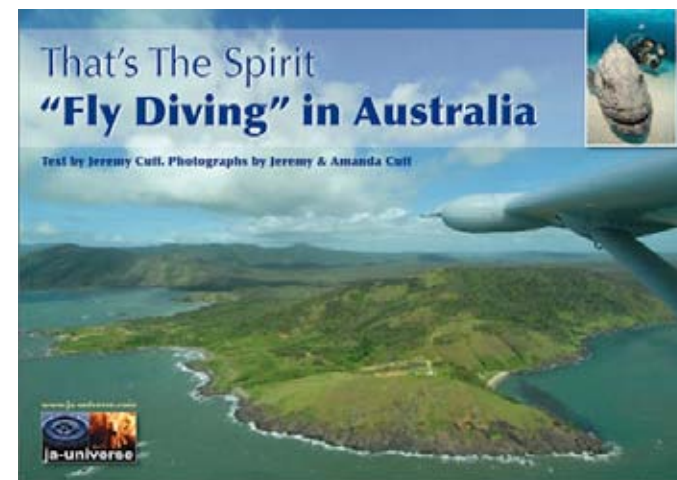
Our sense of feeling for nature led us to the idea of capturing the natural world in our productions and to share it with you. We would like to show everything that we are passionate about, what no one can forget, what everybody needs for life, what every person has to preserve, and what everybody has to know, and how people have to save the future!

You can read a story about us preparing for an adventure, planning and shooting everything that is happening backstage. We take photographs and make documentary movies from each of our trips. Then we publish everything on our website and in Travel Exhibitions, Magazines, Books, Calendars, DVDs, TV Channels, and etc.

We would like to inform you about our first planned exhibition of our project "Escape to Mauritius". The exhibition will be in the cloister of a Franciscan Monastery in Prague, Jungmannovo namesti (Jungmann square) in August 2009.

www.escapetonature.eu

Fly Diving Australia



Photographers, photojournalists and BSOP members Jeremy and Amanda Cuff have published a new PDF feature about "Fly Diving" on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, which describes in words and images the experiences of diving this unique area in a unique way.

Jeremy said, "Fly Diving is a great way of seeing two aspects of the Great Barrier Reef from one trip and is ideal for divers who for reasons of personal preference, time limitations or cost considerations are unable to do a week long liveaboard itinerary. The feature provides a comprehensive overview of the trip, which we'd recommend for any diver visiting the Cairns area."

The "Fly Diving" feature can be viewed and/or downloaded from Jeremy and Amanda's website. Go to the "text" section, choose "Australia". For the PDF version, scroll to the bottom of the page to find the link.

www.ja-universe.com

Papua New Guinea: A quest for diversity
with Alex Mustard
5th to 25th May 2010



The aim of this trip is to seek out and record as many underwater species as possible, concentrating on finding those rare and little-photographed creatures.

Underwater photographer and marine biologist Alex Mustard will lead this trip and, although there will be no formal teaching, Alex will be happy to give advice throughout.

The trip involves diving in both Milne Bay and New Britain. Milne Bay will offer some spectacular wrecks and coral walls as well as some more thrilling pass diving with the larger schooling and feeding fish.

Next it's off to Walindi Plantation resort to dive the rich and diverse reefs of New Britain - all with Alex Mustard at your side to help you get the very best out of one of the worlds most diverse diving regions!

Non-diving partners will enjoy the remote nature of this trip and will be welcome to come along.

At Milne Bay you will be welcome to visit the local villages and special shore excursions can be arranged at Walindi Plantation Resort.

www.divequest.co.uk

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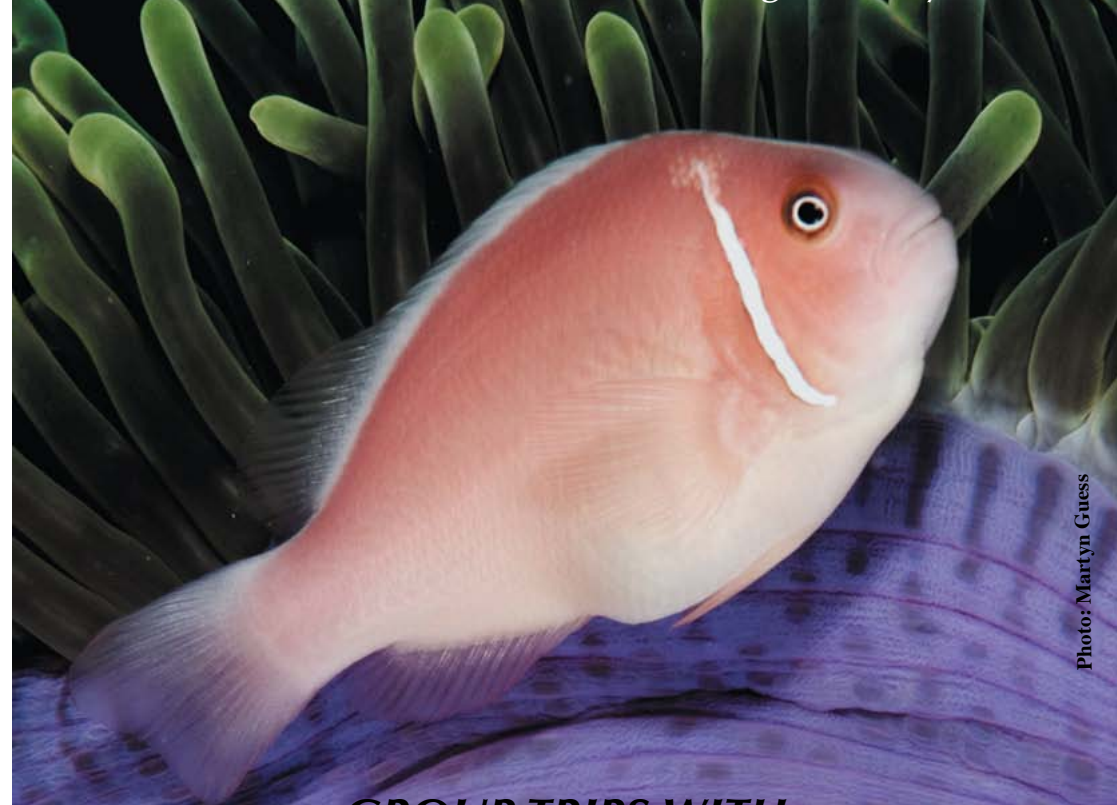


Photo: Martyn Guess

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Works with digital still housings



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AutoFlash Sensor

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Single or Dual Tray

Mounting Hardware

Fits Ikelite • Canon • Olympus • Sony housings



underwater systems • 50 W. 33rd. Street • Indianapolis, IN 46208 • 317.923.4523

www.ikelite.com

49/9



New Products

Aquatica "HD WAVE"



Aquatica Digital are pleased to introduce the new "HD WAVE", their first High Definition Video Housing for the NEW Sony HDR-XR500V/520V HD camcorders.

Built with the same high quality solid aluminum construction as their digital SLR housings, no compromise was taken to create the New "HD WAVE" Video Housing.

Keeping in mind total ergonomics and underwater balance, its compact design makes the unit extremely user friendly.

Their engineers worked very hard on its design, giving a 30° viewing angle on the large side LCD viewfinder for optimal filming capabilities.

Giving access to almost all key camcorder functions, including the critical Manual White balance function; it will give users the ability

to create the best possible HD video underwater.

Controls: On/Off, Record/Standby, Photo, Zoom Telephoto / Zoom Wide, Home Button (touch screen access), Option Button (touch screen access), Tele Macro (touch screen access), White Balance One Push (touch screen access), Manual Control Knobs to access Focus, Exposure, AE Shift & WB Shift. Smooth Slow-Motion Functionality (touch screen)

Dimensions: 7" D x 4.8" H x 9.5" W (14.5" with handles) 17.7cm D x 12.2cm H x 24cm W (37cm with handles)

Weight: On land 7.5lbs (Kg) fully loaded w/camera battery and lens. In seawater slightly negative buoyancy Operating Depth: 300 feet / 90 meters.

They are in full production of



the New WAVE HD housing and on schedule for mid June delivery. It will ship fully loaded with standard wide angle lens, UR PRO color correction flip filter, wet alarm and hydrophone for the low price of \$2395USD.

Please contact your local Aquatica dealer for all other inquiries or to place your order for the new WAVE HD Video housing. They are receiving many inquiries for this unit and their first production will be limited as they did not anticipate such a demand.

www.aquatica.ca



Seatool Nikon D300 housing



Small and light enough to hand carry on aircraft, the Seatool ND300 offers exceptional underwater balance.

All camera controls are placed within easy reach, even for divers with small hands. The command dials and shutter release are exactly where you expect them to be for effortless operation, even one handed.

Your new Seatool ND300 housing comes standard with connections for optically fired strobes with optional single or dual Nikonos style bulkheads.

The Seatool ND300 offers three viewfinder options: Optical window, 45° or 180° Inon Magnifying Viewfinders.

www.reefphoto.com
www.seatoolusa.com

Sea & Sea MDX-5D MkII dSLR Housing

The latest addition to the MDX housing range, the MDX-5D MkII for the Canon 5D MkII digital SLR, is available this June.

Precision machined from solid block aluminium and boasting a more aggressive design, integrating smooth curves and sharp edges, the MDX-5D MkII housing has been cut thinner than conventional models to reduce size while maintaining rigidity. This compact design allows the user to reach the main and quick control dials more easily. By adjusting the chassis inside the housing the quick control dial has been moved closer to the grip than on conventional models, so shutter/aperture adjustment is further improved. This all adds up to provide the user with comfortable and intuitive handling.

Two bulkhead connectors are fitted as standard: one 2-pin type-N connector for manual flash control and one 6-pin YS Converter connector for dedicated TTL. The YS Converter connector accepts the optional YS Converter/C which works with YS-Series strobes to provide automatic



TTL flash adjustment.

The usual Sea&Sea refinements are standard such as a built-in leak detector, camera mounting tray, port lock and locking latches. Finished in a metallic dark olive coloured, highly corrosion resistant anodized coating, the housing measures 336x170x139mm (WxHxD), weighs approx. 2,400g (housing only) and is depth rating to 60m.

Suggested retail price is £3060.30 inc. VAT.

www.sea-sea.net

LMI Bluefin Canon S10/S100



Light and Motion has stepped off of the Sony reservation and built a new Bluefin housing for the Canon HF S10/S100). The new Blufin 'C' is packed with features never seen before like manual white balance, exposure and manual focus, all from the wireless fingertip control handles.

The Canon S-10 is an exciting camcorder with a large sensor that takes great video even in low light. This is the first time Light and Motion has ventured beyond the Sony line of camcorders but they couldn't pass up the Canon S10.

Camcorderinfo.com says this:

'Canon has certainly made some improvements this year with the HF S10: a new lens and sensor that produce incredibly sharp videos and photos, a new processor that allows for simultaneous photo recording and less noise, and an excellent new custom control dial that offers smooth and precise focus adjustment.'

www.reefphoto.com



Seatool Sony XR500 & XR520



The Seatoool XR500 & XR520 underwater housing for the Sony HDV Handycam XR500 & XR520 is one of the smallest, lightest underwater video housings ever produced.

At just 1.5kg it's small and light enough to hand carry on aircraft and because the housing body conforms so closely to the camera, the housing attains nearly neutral buoyancy (slightly negative) for effortless handling underwater.

The housing utilizes a flip out mirror & lcd reversing circuit, allowing the user to take advantage of the camera's LCD Screen for composition. Optional 3" external monitor now available.

www.reefphoto.com
www.seatoolusa.com

Ikelite Housing for Nikon D-5000



The heavy duty thick wall dSLR housing is molded of corrosion free clear polycarbonate, features full capabilities, and operates safely to 60m (200 feet). The housing "O" ring seal is a masterpiece in fail-safe simplicity compared to designs that require stuffing the "O" ring into a groove. You can see that the "O" ring is sealed.

The housing size and weight provides neutral buoyancy and superb handling underwater. Camera installation is quick and simple. The dependable controls are conveniently placed at your fingertips, and kept water tight with Ikelite pioneered Quad-Ring® seal glands proven to be the most reliable method for sealing controls.

Controls for all camera functions

are provided with the exception of the diopter adjustment control. AE/AF lock can be activated with your thumb while holding the housing's handle. An oversized zoom knob can be comfortably reached with the fingertips of your left hand.

All camera modes including D-Movie and Live View can be accessed through the housing. An ergonomic control for recording start/stop allows the camera's video function to be accessed effortlessly with your right thumb.

The housing back provides a crystal clear view of the camera's LCD screen for picture review and when using the live-view function for framing. The Ikelite Super-Eye magnifier provided with the housing offers enhanced viewing of the

camera's viewfinder while wearing a diving mask.

The housing includes iTTL conversion circuitry that puts perfect exposure at your fingertips. The TTL mode provides four 1/3 f/stop increments over or under flash compensation that is added to or subtracted from any compensation entered into the camera. Seven manual power settings in half-stop increments allow for complete creative control. All choices are obtained by simply rotating a knob on the housing back.

www.ikelite.com



**Subal ND30 Housing
for Nikon D300
with GS Magnifying
or 45° viewfinder**



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Monty and Python.
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on Subal packages**

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www.reefphoto.com

New FIX LED1000DX and LED500DX now shipping



The next generation of FIX LED Focus lights are here! Building upon the success of Fisheye's HG20DX Halogen and LED48DX LED lights, these new lights harness the latest in LED technology to provide increased power and burn times.

LED1000DX and LED500DX are valuable tools for both still photo

and video shooters. Wide even beams combined with outstanding output are ideal for video applications, and the lights variable power dial allows still photographers to dial in just the right amount of light for focusing.

Fisheye has carefully considered the feedback of users in the field, offering an improved locking mechanism, larger and easier to operate power dial, and a large knurled battery cap that is easier to open.

A wide range of accessories is available from Fisheye and other vendors allowing this light to be mounted on any camera system. Warming filters are available for video shooters, and red filters for sensitive marine life.

www.reefphoto.com



5 **important reasons to make Reef Photo and Video your choice for underwater photo and video**

1 **We are divers and photographers**

Everyone on our friendly staff is an underwater photographer. We use the gear that we sell, and we keep up with the latest imaging products for both underwater and topside.

2 **U/W photography is our only business**

We're not a dive shop and we're more than a camera store. We concentrate all of our energy on the constantly changing world of underwater imaging.

3 **Selection and Inventory**

Our huge inventory from over 58 manufacturers means that we probably have what you need in stock. Orders for in-stock items placed by 4pm EST ship the same day!

4 **Service After the Sale**

Our in-house technicians are experts in repair and service of your equipment. In addition, our custom shop can fabricate those 'outside-the-box' parts that you may require.

5 **Free Ground Shipping!**

Orders over \$200 qualify for **FREE** domestic Ground shipping via UPS!

www.reefphoto.com

Easy Dive Leo housing



The Leo housing is designed to be compatible with every digital reflex camera available on the market.

In Europe Easydive designed, produced and patented USB FotoControl, an electronic push-button panel that brings about a revolution in the idea of underwater photography. This panel can remotely select all reflex camera controls. This feature makes Leo housing universal and unparalleled.

The standard version designed by Easydive includes a LEO housing equipped with USB FotoControl push-button panel to select the following controls: time + / - , diaphragm + / - , preliminary shutter release, shutter release, ISO + / - , mode switch, exposure meter. Furthermore an additional push-button panel with customized programs can be installed on request.

Leo is the most versatile and reliable housing for reflex cameras

available on the market because it has special bayonet fitting rings compatible with a very large number of spherical optical window types that are already available on the market.

www.easydive.eu

usaNexus.com
858-481-0604



45 degree finder



Fiber optic sync



D70



D2x



D200



D80



1Ds MarkII



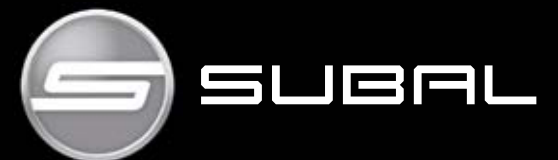
5D



Our motive: Your passion

Precise underwater housings from Subal.
Designed for hands - made by hands.

^w | www.subal.com



Underwater landscape prints



Underwater photographer Jim Hellemn has captured the amazing color and beauty of endangered coral reefs in a collection of unique panoramic images photographed in the hotspots of marine biodiversity.

Limited edition prints are produced with state-of-the-art printing technology using long life pigments and acid-free paper. Finished prints are protected with a high gloss UV laminate.

Prints may be ordered framed or as "loose" prints shipped in tubes ready to frame at your location. Framed prints are mounted on 3/16 black gator to ensure a smooth surface and enhanced print life.

Custom prints are available in your choice of size, cropping, media, finish and framing. A wide variety of

available image media and fabrication techniques enable you to create nearly limitless display possibilities for home and commercial uses, including canvas, fabrics, backlit images, wall paper and even tile mosaics. You may use the high res gallery viewer as a tool to explore images and croppings, then tells us what you have in mind. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination!

Keep in mind that most of the images displayed in the high res gallery can be reproduced at high quality at sizes up to 20 - 70 feet or more, depending on the display application.

Please contact them for more information or a quote.

www.portraitofacoralreef.com

Fantasea Canon PowerShot A480 and Nikon Coolpix L19/20 housings



Fantasea Line announces the release of two new housings specifically designed for the Canon PowerShot A480 and the Nikon Coolpix L19/L20 digital cameras. The new housings, depth rated to 60 meters/200 feet, are fully functional providing photographers with access to all camera functions. Fantasea's new compact housing design and improved construction ensures easy handling and accurate access to camera functions through the critical placement of push-button controls. Fantasea housings feature a double O-ring seal on all controls, anti-glare hood over LCD screen, removable flash diffuser and a 46mm threaded lens port.

www.fantasea.com

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*Quality Camera Systems
for all levels of
underwater photography*

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RDX - Polycarbonate Housings



MDX & MDX PRO
Machined Aluminium Housings



Visit our **new** website...
Online Sales & Users Community

www.sea-sea.net

01803 663012 info@sea-sea.com

Sea & Sea DX-2G Digital Compact



Introducing the new High Spec Underwater compact camera system from Sea&Sea.

Featuring a 12 megapixel CCD, 2.7" high contrast LCD monitor (with 160 degree angle of view), 24-72mm 3x optical zoom lens, plus full manual control, RAW capture, improved image engine and buffer memory along with "Sea&Sea" underwater mode and SDHC compatibility, the new DX-2G offers full creative control to the underwater photographer in all manner of situations. Using their years of experience in underwater photography Sea&Sea have built a highly practical and rugged polycarbonate housing for the new DX-2G with a depth rating of 55m. It has neat little touches such as

a flip down flash diffuser, fibre optic cable connectors and an accessory shoe-mount for spotting lights and small strobes. The housing accepts the same Sea&Sea wide-angle and close-up conversion lenses as the DX-1G it replaces as well as Sea&Sea strobes which help to expand the range of subjects and opportunities available to the underwater photographer. Also available is an external macro diffuser for use with the camera's built-in flash and a lens caddy to keep your extra lenses safe when not in use. Suggested Retail Price on the DX-2G is £869.95.

For further information please contact Sea&Sea Ltd in the UK; 01803 663012

www.sea-sea.net

www.uwpmag.com

Kastesa UHR-LM8 housing for Leica Digital Camera M8

As the presses were due to start rolling with UwP49, Sim Chee Ghee of ScubaSymphony e mailed these pictures of the UHR-LM8 housing for the Leica M8 Digital Camera.

UwP hopes to include a full review in the next issue but 'til then here's some initial photos.



www.scubasympphony.com

SEA&SEA
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for all levels of
underwater photography*

Strobes - for all makes of housing



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**Want to upgrade
to First Class?**

**It's almost free
with Ultralight.**



Upgrading from a compact camera to a DSLR system is a big move financially but it does open up a whole new potential for you. Fortunately if you chose Ultralight for your compact strobe mounting arm system, it will cost very little (or even nothing) to upgrade. The same arms and arm clamps will perform seamlessly and you'll be upgraded to First Class in no time at almost no cost.



Made in
the USA

www.ulcs.com

**"Often copied,
never equaled"**

Subal Strobe Case SN-900

Subal have announced their new housing for the Nikon SB-900 strobe.

It is machined from black Acetal resin and provides full push and turn button controls. The dome port maximises the angle of coverage underwater and the strobe will give Professional i-TTL (intelligent TTL) performance and is compatible with Nikon FX and DX format SLR cameras.

A 5 pin sync cord is included and there is an M8 and 3/8 Whit base adaptor for mounting ball joint arms and an M6 top plate to attach aiming lights.

The SN-900 is 110mm in diameter and 260mm long, weighs 1.3kg on land and is slightly positive underwater. It is depth rated to 70 metres.

www.subal.com



Digital Nikonos Industry Design Challenge



Here is the DPG Nikonos Challenge:

Produce an adapter or modify a camera to work with existing Nikonos lenses, particularly the 15mm or Nikonos RS wide angle lenses, or build a digital back for existing Nikonos bodies.

Awards

For any manufacturer who develops a working prototype, we will provide 6 months of free advertising on DPG. If you are already an advertiser, we will extend your contract for 6 months.

For any individual who comes up with a working prototype, if you so desire, we will help you market the solution to the underwater photography community and the dive industry via advertising on DPG and our media partners worldwide. Otherwise we will sing your praises via a PR release to the industry.

Winners will also receive a very cool trophy, and the pride and glory of accomplishing what Nikon and the rest of the industry deemed as impossible or simply not worthwhile.

We will accept entries through Dec. 31, 2009

Are all of the Nikonos systems out there really just paperweights? Are the superior optics of Nikonos lenses such as the 15mm or RS lenses really never going to see the light of day (or water) again? Is it impossible to produce adapters that will allow them to be used on digital cameras? These are the burning questions that have crossed my mind lately.

There is a large contingency of underwater photographers who have nostalgically shelved our once trusted Nikonos lenses, which in the digital age have become practically useless. Before we totally write off these lenses as paperweights, DPG is challenging the industry, or any innovative do-it-yourselfer, to come up with a way of adapting these lenses to work with any existing digital camera.

www.divephotoguide.com

Interview with Hubert Lacour

**President of Dyron, Underwater Imaging Products
Bordeaux, France.**

By Sim Chee Ghee



SIM: Bonjour Monsier Lacour!

HL: Hello SIM.

SIM: What's the prognosis for this year's young Bordeaux? Good year?

HL: Should be a very good year. I'll put a bottle aside for you!

SIM: Dyron specialises in underwater camera accessories, it seems that you do a lot of research to come up with niche market products to cover the shortcomings of underwater housing manufacturers. Would you say that manufacturers should improve on accessory products?

HL: Dyron's aim is to manufacture "intelligent" underwater products. Most of the manufacturers never have really been underwater or are not

divers and don't really know the needs of underwater photographers. Dyron aims to fill these needs.

SIM: Can you highlight some Dyron products?

HL: All Dyron's products are innovative, creative and quality. Our fisheyes are real Fisheyes that allows to obtain a 180° shot underwater, and with it's perfect hemispherical dome, allows taking pictures without any aberrations or blurred sides and the definition is exceptional.

The fisheyes allow full zoom through



to infinity, allow switching from a round picture to the 160° ultra wide angle or 100° wide angle and in between. From now on, you will be able to take over/under pictures, which used to be impossible.

Our lenses are innovative as they are the only ones in the world to offer no vignetting at all on Ikelite housings for example (DY.46WA24) 100% of the picture is available.

Short Port M67 for Ikelite Housing G10/SX200 is unique on the worldwide market.

Fisheyes for Patima's Housings are also unique worldwide.

SIM: You have the 45 degree viewfinder for DSLR housings and it's detachable underwater. Please tell us more about it..

HL: The Dyron view finder 45° is the only one of the world which is removable under water - for travel it's perfect.

You put it on Sea-Sea, Ikelite, Aquatica housing directly on the existing view finder.

This is our best success of year 2008.



SIM: Some of the products you carry, I've been looking all over for them and I'm sure many others as well. Where do you get your ideas to invent such products, from taking underwater photos yourself perhaps?

HL: My own experience and my own needs. I realized that some of the products available on the market were not meeting my real need so I just decided to fix it.

SIM: Do share with us the history of Dyron. When did it all start? Were you tired of looking for an accessory you couldn't find anywhere and started making your own?

HL: Started in my garage from passion and then it started to grow and grow and now we are a team on 5 people.

Ideas just kept coming in, and Dyron was born

SIM: What does the name Dyron stand for and where did it came from?

HL: We wanted a name that sounded 'high def' and serious. Dyron does that for us.





Sim: Where can one buy Dyron products?

HL: Nederland, Australia, Germany, NZ, Poland, UK, Italy, Malaysia, Spain, Sweden, USA and Japan . We also have a dealer's listing on our trilingual website.

Sim: Does Dyron offer any warranties?

HL: Most of our products have a 5 years warranty.

Sim: How do you see the future of underwater imaging? Camera manufacturers are merging photography and videography, DSLR is going full frame and doing video, etc

HL: It is impossible to answer this question today. Personally I think that those 3 segments, compact and video have about a good 10 years in front of them.

Sim: When do you think the Megapixel war will end? Gigapixels on a Canon Ixus perhaps?

HL: In about a year or two at the most.

Sim: Any new products planned?

HL: Always !!!! and many ideas are being "explored" like carbon float arm system, new fisheyes with crystal domes, Quantum Macro lens....and more.

Sim: Are you more of a macro photographer or do you prefer wideangle?

HL: Personally, I prefer the fisheyes, followed closely by the wide angle. The macro lens is limited but the macro lens Asian market is a interesting market for us and on which we are going to work especially during 2010 by developing even better unique products

Sim: Merci bien for this interview!

HL: You are welcome. It was a pleasure !!

www.dyron.fr

Sim Chee Ghee
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Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards.

These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

www.magic-filters.com

Diving with the Aquatica Canon 5D Mark II

with Bruce Yates

Strange as it sounds, I want to begin this discussion of Aquatica's new housing for the Canon 5D Mark II by stating that underwater camera housings just don't get any better than Seacam. I've used two different models now (Canon 1Ds MkII and 1Ds MkIII), and LOVED them. In fact, I still have a 1Ds MkII Seacam, with no immediate plans to sell it. I also can't say enough positive things about Stephen Frink (Seacam U.S. distributor) and his operation; without exception, they have been responsive, easy to deal with, and provide extraordinary customer service (not to mention Steve's considerable testing and educational work).

Indeed, I have found precious little about Seacam to complain about...except the cost. We poor Americans, with our sick dollar (getting sicker all the time, it seems), have seen the cost of new Seacam equipment – which is priced in Euros – skyrocket to the point that it is downright prohibitive for many non-pros like myself, who just take

underwater photos as a hobby (and very expensive one at that!).

So awhile back at a scuba show, as I looked at all the new toys, the Aquatica booth in particular got me thinking. I looked at the build quality of their 1Ds Mark III housing – which was surprisingly high – and their prices, which were surprisingly low (relative to Seacam's, in U.S. dollars). I began thinking seriously of changing brands when the time came for my *next* housing purchase. Sealing the deal was the fact that Jean Bruneau of Aquatica said they were planning to come out with an adapter that would permit the use of Seacam ports on Aquatica housings. That was no small issue, considering the amount I have invested in Seacam ports and extension rings.

So...to cut a long story short, when I bought my new Canon 5D Mark II, I was one of the first to put in an order for an Aquatica housing. I received it a few weeks ago, just in time for a 1-week trip to Rangiroa, French Polynesia.



Canon 16-35mm at 16mm 1/60 @f9, ISO 400





The Aquatica 5DII housing feels solid and sturdy, and every part meshes precisely. It is truly a professional-grade housing.



Canon 16-35mm at 19mm 1/80 @f7.1, ISO 200. Two Inon Z-240 strobes



Canon 16-35mm at 16mm 1/80 @f7.1, ISO 200. Two Inon Z-240 strobes

The following are my observations but note that I have only used Seacam housings previously so that is my frame of reference.

Build quality The build quality is excellent. The Aquatica 5DII housing feels solid and sturdy, and every part meshes precisely. It is truly a professional-grade housing. It has a moisture alarm, and I like the way the camera mounts onto a tray, and the mounting tray slides solidly on two rods and latches in place, so there is no question of it being in place. I actually prefer this to the Seacam mount, which requires that you screw and unscrew into the camera's tripod hole each time (I stripped the threads in one of my early 1D MkII bodies doing that). The only build aspect for which I still give a distinct nod to Seacam is the absorbent "fuzz" that covers the inside of Seacam housings, just in case any bits of moisture find their way in. Although I've never needed it because I've never had a Seacam leak, anyone who has ever seen salt water

sloshing around inside their housing (even a few spoonfulls can fry a camera) instantly appreciates the value of Seacam's absorbent liner.

Design and ergonomics The design and ergonomics are also excellent. Knobs and controls are easily accessible, in a few cases slightly more so than Seacam for my particular hands, and in no cases less so. (Each person's hands are different, so it's worth getting your hands on ANY housings you're considering.) I especially appreciate the pronounced finger grooves on the handgrips, which allowed use of controls while only keeping a finger or two on the grip, and also the large white labeling of all of the major buttons. My only complaint was that the top of the rear window covers the top line of info of the camera's rear screen (i.e., shutter speed, aperture, etc.), except when viewed from an extreme angle. Not a huge problem - just the only less-than-optimal thing I noticed. It is possible that the window position was limited by maintaining

housing strength for the eyepiece above.

Ports The port adaptor (allowing use of Seacam ports) ended up being far less useful than I had hoped. While it indeed allowed me to use my Seacam ports, the fact that the adapter itself is approx. 19-20mm thick meant that it significantly limited which LENSES could be used with those Seacam ports. For example, with the Seacam Superdome, I could not use my Sigma 15mm fisheye or Canon 14mm-II, two lenses I really like for wide angle photography. To use those, I will need an Aquatica dome port. Since traveling with multiple dome ports is a hassle, this diminishes the value of the adapter.

The adapter is somewhat more useful with macro, especially if you shoot only auto-focus (AF), because most macro lenses require extension rings anyway. If you want to use manual focus (MF), however, which most of us eventually do, there's a problem. The MF knob on the Aquatica housing is



Sigma 50mm 1/60 @f8, ISO 200. Two Inon Z-240 strobes



Canon 16-35mm at 35mm 1/80 @f16, ISO 400. Two Inon Z-240 strobes



in their port, whereas Seacam's MF knob is in the housing.

I have since learned that there is partial (for certain lenses) solution to this problem. A company called Xit 404 has designed a few gear sets that employ Aquatica's zoom knob—located on the left side of the housing—to manually focus the Canon 100mm macro lens, as well as a few others.

Their gear sets (\$325) are available through www.backscatter.com. While that is most of the cost of an Aquatica macro port (\$390 at B&H Photo), it at least provides an option that doesn't require buying another port.

I was initially discouraged that my Seacam ports aren't going to be as useful with the Aquatica housing as I'd hoped. But the fact is that, for the cost of a new Seacam housing, I can pay for the Aquatica housing AND replace my ports, extensions and gears. And I can always sell one or more of my Seacam ports to help pay for it.

Optional viewfinders I find the regular viewfinders for both Seacam and Aquatica housings unsatisfactory for my big-nosed face, which I don't enjoy cramming up against the housing in order to get a decent view. I have used the optional Seacam S180 viewfinder for years, and absolutely love it. (I also tried the S45 for awhile, but—while many people swear by it—I never *could* get used to the

angle, so I sold it). Naturally, at the same time I ordered the Aquatica housing, I purchased their "Aqua View" viewfinder.

Both the Seacam S180 and the Aquatica Aqua View have three primary advantages:

1. They put your eye (meaning your mask) several inches BEHIND the back of your housing, so you don't have to jam your nose/cheek up against the housing to see what's in the viewfinder;
2. They have optics that magnify the image in the viewfinder to make it larger;
3. They can be adjusted for your specific eyes (i.e., like a prescription lens).

Both of these premium viewfinders accomplish all three very well. I personally (others might feel differently) give a slight edge to the Seacam S180 - it seems just slightly easier for my eye to see the edges of the image (the camera's exposure arrow, for example). However, I don't want to give the impression that the Aqua View is a bad product.

On the contrary - it is a *great* add-on to the Aquatica housing. I just don't think it is *better* than the Seacam viewfinders, and it certainly would be no reason to switch from one brand to the other.

Video Video controls—limited though they may be on this 5DII—are readily accessible on the back of the Aquatica housing. At the time of my trip, Canon was about to release a firmware update enabling manual control of aperture, shutter speed and ISO. Without that control, I only toyed with the video function of the camera on a few dives. Considering the fact that the camera chose all of the exposure settings (far less than optimal for underwater), and I was stuck with one focus per video clip (the 5DII has no auto-focus in video mode), it did a surprisingly good job.

Because the ability to shoot video with a DSLR is such a revolutionary development, I expect Stephen Frink and other experts to be doing extensive testing of the video capabilities with manual exposure controls in months ahead, and I'm sure you will see the results reported here and elsewhere. Suffice it to say that, with the new firmware update that provides far more control of video settings, this camera is capable of producing outstanding underwater video. My guess is that the next generation 5D will incorporate video

auto-focus, which will make it a truly great dual-purpose tool. For now, it will frustrate those seeking the best of both worlds in "point & shoot" mode, but will reward those willing to learn how to coax the most from its various lenses and video settings.

Value The value of the Aquatic 5DII housing is excellent, especially in U.S. dollars. I realize that value is subjective; a race car driver may feel his \$300,000 race car is a good "value", especially if it helps him **MAKE** money by winning races. Similarly, as I said earlier, you can't do better than a Seacam housing, and I am confident that Seacam will remain a staple of professional underwater photographers worldwide for the foreseeable future. OTOH, if you can't quite justify spending that kind of money, I can honestly say that Aquatica – at least judging by the 5DII - is producing truly top-notch housings.

I'm not willing to say that the Aquatica 5DII housing is *better* than Seacam's housings. But to even be compared to Seacam is an honor, and I'm not sure the Aquatica isn't roughly *as good* overall. And that is high praise indeed.



Bruce Yates

www.UnderwaterReflections.com

Bruce lives in Seattle, in the Northwest corner of the USA, and considers himself a "serious amateur" photographer. He donates all profits from his photography to charity. Currently, his selected charity is the International Children's Surgical Foundation, a small volunteer medical organization that corrects facial deformities of children in lesser-developed countries, including some whose waters divers are lucky enough to visit and enjoy.

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How many countries have you visited on dive trips, and noticed how lovely the local children were?



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Dr. Geoff Williams, with My Anh, a Vietnamese patient.

Geoff Williams is not a diver. He is a plastic surgeon specializing in children's facial reconstruction. But his life's mission has been giving unfortunate children in the Philippines, Thailand, Mexico, and other such countries that we divers frequent a chance at normal lives.

Geoff gave up his lucrative plastic surgery career and spent his life savings to organize—and pay for—small teams of volunteer surgeons and nurses to travel to countries with very limited health care (e.g., Kenya, Bolivia, Peru, Pakistan, Vietnam and Tanzania, as well as the above) to repair facial deformities in children.

Geoff takes no salary. In fact, his mother runs his International Children's Surgical Foundation (ICSF) from her home in Idaho, also for no pay. They want all the donations they receive to go to helping children—to changing lives. And that's what they do—change children's lives, giving them at least a chance of not being lifelong outcasts.



"I've spent time with Geoff Williams in person, and I've been so moved by his selfless devotion and the work he's doing that I now donate all profits from my photography to ICSF."

Bruce Yates, Seattle
www.UnderwaterReflections.com



"... I think the moms are more my patients than the kids are. There's something about a mother of a disfigured child. They've spent years thinking it's hopeless and then it's fixed. It's a wonderful feeling to relieve their anxiety."

— Dr. W. Geoff Williams



This Kenyan mother suffered great anxiety when her baby was born with a cleft lip, knowing that in Kenya it can be difficult for the poor to find treatment. In this photo she is leaving the hospital after her baby received surgery from ICSF. Her smile says it all.

International Children's Surgical Foundation

You can help Geoff's work, too. Even a little will help. Most of ICSF's surgeries cost only a few hundred dollars, a fraction of what we all spend on a dive trip...and not much to give a child a shot at a normal life.

So give back to the people of countries whose natural beauty you have experienced. Visit www.icsfoundation.org to learn more. Watch the short video on the home page, and then, if you want to help, click on "How to Help" to make an online donation.

www.icsfoundation.org



Epoque ERX-C1010 review

by Dan Bolt

For those of us with a more restricted budget for our photographic kit these are very interesting times indeed. Gone are the days where there was a distinct difference in price between a compact camera and it's bigger SLR brothers, in fact you can now spend considerably more on a compact camera than you have to on an entry-level dSLR.

We're not quite at the same price-point when it comes to housings but even these are starting to become more affordable. Take, for example, the new Epoque ERX-C1010 for the baby Canon 1000D dSLR camera: for around £1250 you can get the camera, image stabilised kit lens, housing and flat port. That's not a whole lot more than a Canon G10 compact camera in an Ikelite housing and is actually less than the Panasonic Lumix LX3 in a UK Germany housing. So leaving aside the differences in camera spec & lens/port issues, prices like that can make the jump from compact to dSLR a lot less painful on the wallet.

Looking more closely at the Epoque ERX-C1010 (I'll call it the C1010 for brevity) it's plain to see that a lot of thought has gone into this resin/polycarbonate housing. Don't

for one minute think that because it is 'only' a plastic, 40m rated housing that it is not a serious bit of kit.

Although weighing in at less than 2Kg holding it in your hands gives you the impression of quality, purpose and practicality.

Upon closer inspection there are a number of nice touches which prove the amount of thought that has gone into the design of the C1010. The hotshoe connector has a nice little docking groove for when it's not needed, and there is a specific slot for silica-gel tabs that will help control condensation issues. The finish to every part of the housing is superb and in the box you are supplied with a spare o-ring, grease and (more importantly!) a manual in English too.

The C1010 is one of a growing number of housings that allow for the internal flash to pop-up and be used for firing optically controlled strobes. Epoque do say that (with restrictions) the internal flash can be used as your sole light source, but it's power, position and coverage are all so restricted that they render it almost useless for this purpose. There are no built-in slots to hold optical sync cables but at first glance it looks like

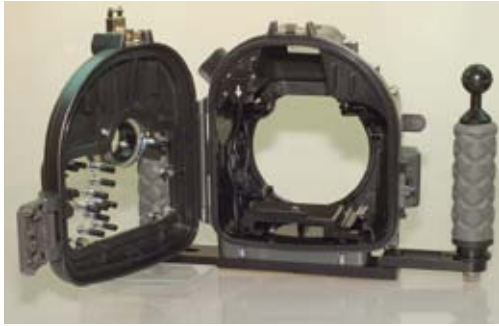


Sigma 15mm Fisheye. f18, 1/200th, ISO100. Spiny Starfish

you could position them on the flat face of the diffuser. Sadly, with either of the two dome ports mounted there is not enough room to use that either! However, some clever use of an old slate and the shoe mount quickly solved that issue and flash firing

works perfectly with my YS27's.

If you did want to use hard-wired strobes, Epoque will fit either a 5-pin or 6-pin bulkhead, and if you like your TTL then Epoque also make a housing for the Canon 430EX(II) flash. As a side note, Jurgen from Sealux will



convert the Epoque 6-pin cable to work with their flash housings if, like me, you have those in your kit bag.

The screw-threaded port mount and 4 available ports will allow you to use an impressive list of 7 lenses, I won't go into that as Sim Chee Ghee's article covered those in detail in the last UWP issue. But one lens they don't list is the Tokina 10-17mm Fish-Eye Zoom. It does (just) fit behind the smaller dome port, is useable with some slight edge softness and the closeness of the lens to the port will make 50/50 shots quite difficult. The focus gear for the EF-S 18-55 kit lens can be amended to control it's zoom too. Missing from the list of optional extras are any extension rings for the ports so at the moment you are limited to this list, but it isn't much of a limitation.

The ports used by Epoque are glass (not acrylic) and rather than re-inventing the wheel the domes are made and badged by Athena - a really good move as these are superb pieces



(Above) Lundy Seal . Sigma 15mm Fisheye. f8, 1/200th, ISO400. (Right) Seaweed. Tokina 10-17mm Fisheye at 10mm, f14, 1/125th, ISO400. (Below) Spiney Starfish. Canon EF-S 60mm Macro, f10, 1/60th, ISO200.

of glass to work with.

This review is primarily about the housing, but I would be missing a trick if I didn't mention the camera. All land-based reviews of this baby Canon have moaned about its poor implementation of 'Live View'. From their point of view it is actually almost useless, but if you know its limitations and work within them it can be very useful, especially with prime lenses. The big issue is that in order to achieve focus the camera raises and lowers the mirror a number of times, which takes time and, quite frankly,

feels bloody awful in your hand while the camera clunks it's way though the cycle. But if you turn autofocus off in the Live View menu and use manual focusing then all this palava is avoided and the Live View becomes a very useful tool indeed. Take the EF-S 60mm macro; it's got full time manual focus and is a dream to use in this housing with Live View switched on.

Most of my time in the water is spent breath-holding so size and weight of my kit is always an issue for me. This housing fits that bill perfectly, and especially with the





Shore Crab . Tokina 10-17mm Fisheye at 10mm, f5, 1/60th, ISO400.

dome fitted because it only requires a little added buoyancy to become neutral in the water.

All camera controls are accessible through the C1010 and even with 5mm gloves on in 6C water it is easy to use. Just about my only niggle with the design is the zoom/focus lever that stands very proud of the front left corner of the housing and, to me, looks a bit susceptible to knocks and bumps.

Having double o-rings on the large back door gives you a nice sense of security, and the large clear back also lets you see signs of water ingress

before it becomes catastrophic.

In use it became obvious that using the optional eye-piece extension would be beneficial as it is possible to press various buttons with your nose/regulator/snorkel if you just use the standard eye-piece. Even without it you can see through the view-finder well enough to compose your shots and confirm the focus point selected by the autofocus.

It was also apparent that while the C1010 is designed to be held in one hand, in reality the positioning of the grip, strap and the shutter-release lever requires you to be a very



Lundy Seal . Sigma 15mm Fisheye. f13, 1/160th, ISO400.

dexterous person indeed; and if you have to wear thick gloves you can forget it. Having said that, by adding either a single or dual handled tray it suddenly becomes a joy to use with the lever positioned perfectly and giving a nice positive feel with enough feedback to be able to hold focus and recompose easily. The tray mount is a thick block of aluminium giving a good solid base for any arms you may want to use.

If you approach this housing with an open mind then I don't think it will fail to impress. You don't have to lower your expectations, but you

do have to realise that it reaches its price point in the market because of what it doesn't have: It's not made out of aluminium, it only has 1 flash bulkhead, there are no built-in optical synch cable ports, there are no built-in arm mounts and would will need to add your own handles. But it does what you expect it to do perfectly and even coupled with the cheapest dSLR/Kit lens combination Canon have ever made you can get some superb results.

Dan Bolt

www.underwaterpics.co.uk

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Sea & Sea DX-2G

by Peter Rowlands

Compact digital cameras and their small underwater housings have revolutionised not just the underwater photography world but also even diving itself. They are available in almost every dive shop at a price and with a performance that make them hard to resist. However, not all combinations of camera and housing are perfect but when one comes along from Sea & Sea you have to take notice because they are an underwater housing producer rather than a camera manufacturer and that is an important difference.

I think it's fair to say that, for a while, during the evolution from film to digital, Sea & Sea lost the plot a little. I suspect they were caught out by the speed of change and for a manufacturer it's a slow process to change production schedules and turn the ship around. Fortunately, for us, they did and their product range is right back on target with excellent housings for DSLR and video cameras as well as strobes and video lights.

In the compact camera world, being a housing manufacturer first and foremost, Sea & Sea has a big advantage in that it can look at the camera market for a model best suited to underwater photography and then make a housing for it.

Unless I am very much mistaken (which, to be honest, is not unheard of) the camera inside the Sea & Sea DX-2G is a rebadged Ricoh Caplio GX200 and right from the start this is a very well specified and to my mind often overlooked camera in the land market. It's right up there with the Canon G10 and



Panasonic LX3 – that's how good it is and on what level it competes but from now on it's a Sea & Sea 2G and the housing is a DX-2G.

Compact digitals at this upper level provide most capabilities but the 2G has some nice additional touches which impressed me. Firstly, for land use, there is the ability to use an optional external electronic LCD viewfinder for both previewing and post viewing images. Anyone who has tried to see the LCD screen in bright sunlight and then tried to view the resulting image will understand how virtually impossible it is. This optional LCD viewfinder will transform your enjoyment of photography on bright days. Second is the ability to pre-assign 2 Function buttons to your most needed controls. For me it is Manual White Balance





and Flash Output and being able to ‘one touch’ these controls makes shooting so much quicker. Thirdly there is the ability to switch between 3 “My” settings for differing shooting situations. This saves time having to scroll through menus. Fourthly you can switch from 1st curtain to 2nd curtain flash sync and finally, to prove where I come from and how easily I’m impressed, there is the ability not only to shoot 4:3 and 3:2 format but also 1:1. I know this is achieved by simply cropping full image and that I could easily do that in post processing but the camera does it for you and lets you compose in

a square format. That’s the format all the great 60’s photographers used and it still impresses the hell out of me.

Aside from my rambling minutiae the 2G’s main features are that it has a 12 megapixel sensor, a very useful 24-72mm lens, RAW and/or JPG shooting a 2.7” LCD screen and SD/SDHC/MMC card slots. It can be powered by AAA batteries or an optional rechargeable Lithium-ion battery which is to be highly recommended and Sea & Sea UK can supply this for a very reasonable £20 when buying the camera/housing.

Optically the DX-2G produces excellent results up to 400 ISO but, in common with most small chip compact cameras, above this speed, colour noise becomes noticeable. A workaround is either conversion to black and white or use post processing software such as Noise Ninja.

Moving onto the housing this is where you see the big advantage in having a housing manufacturer as the designer because it is designed to get the best out of the camera’s performance whilst underwater. In addition to being able to control all of the camera functions, it is designed to expand to suit your

needs with the ability to fire external slave strobes as well as being able to attach an accessory wide angle lens and a small strobe on the accessory shoe. These are capabilities which place the DX-2G housing well ahead of most of the competition.

The build quality of the housing is extremely high and the design is ergonomically excellent making the camera almost easier to operate underwater.

If there are any downsides the 2G cannot shoot HD video and it would have been nice to have a 16:9 shooting format even by simple cropping as with the 1:1 so if these are really important to you then the Sea & Sea DX 1200HD would be worth considering.

Pricewise at £869.95 it’s more expensive than most other camera/housing combinations but I doubt if they will have the build quality, camera performance and photographic expandability which the Sea & Sea DX-2G combo has in spades.



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Fuji F200EXR

by Rob Spray

In the constantly shifting camera market there's a dividend to be gained from ploughing a different furrow. Most brands try to establish a niche for themselves and for Fuji it is the dark. When low light performance was the bane of digital photography they built a reputation for clever solutions and held a brave resolve in sticking to larger, lower resolution sensors rather than rushing into the unproductive megapixel race a few years back.

Now the ex-champions of conservative pixel counts have decided that they can offer it all and have built their new F200 around a new 'Super CCD EXR' sensor which has 12 million pixels and still works in the dark. They claim the sensor can offer high resolution, low noise and capture highlights. Then they muddy this by saying that it can switch between these three modes on the chip itself – thus implying that the alleged holy trinity aren't really all available at the same time.

The F200 has followed the F100 and appears to be its twin brother. The F200 is the kind of solid, well built trinket which anyone would welcome.

Apart from the USB and battery doors the body is metal clad. Although the buttons are plastic, there aren't many of them as the screen occupies most of the back panel. It's not wafer thin but is easy to stow in a pocket until the 3 section lens is powered up. The top and bottom surfaces are slightly concave which is supposed to make it easy to hold and certainly succeeds in adding a little style to the oblong profile.

The matching WP-FXF200 dive housing is equally pleasant to play with too. Reassuringly rigid and devoid of vulnerable protrusions it should survive life on board even UK dive boats and so should be easy to keep safe in the tropics where things are more genteel. The most notable feature of the case is the clever way it includes two 'o' ring seals on the back door, a unique feature in a case this size. It's a very neat arrangement which has a piston type 'o' ring on the door – like Canon cases do – and a gasket 'o' ring inside – the style that Olympus prefer. Either should be enough and they're both well screened from falling silt within a deep groove so they don't need cleaning all the



time. Throughout a week of use the 'o'-rings never collected the slightest speck of dirt. This is a very well designed sealing system which makes the set ideal for a school set up where maintenance and care might be 'variable'.

The only feature which seems absent from an otherwise well thought out little case is a shutter lever. A simple direct button does work but underwater it can be very difficult to feel for the half pressed position when your hands are cold, wet and gloved. The shutter button itself is a

little wobbly as it has to 'reach' across under the zoom control. This kind of wobble can wear a sealing 'o' ring faster than normal and since I hope you'll be using the shutter button an awful lot you had better keep an eye on it!

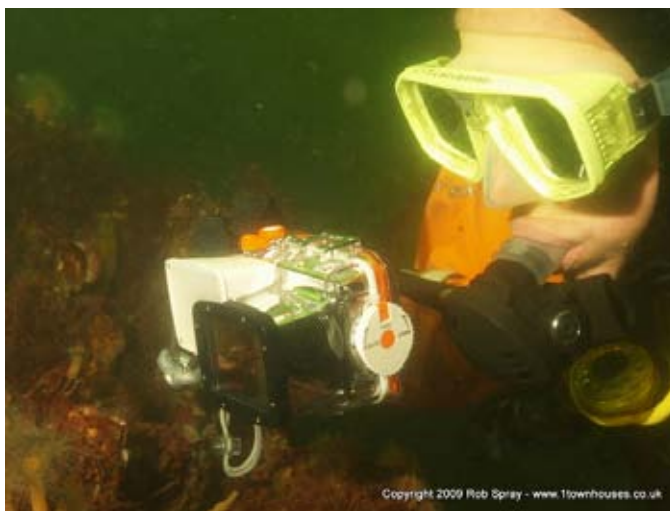
Another thing which became apparent was that while the macro performance is good on paper, down to 3cm, as soon as you zoom in that's long forgotten. By the time you are fully zoomed in it can't focus much less than half a metre away. Some cameras nobly maintain the minimum



possible distance at each stage of zoom but the Fuji, like many, makes a sudden step up. This severely limits what you can do close up, but it's not a unique failing. You hit the happiest medium at around 1/3 zoom but basically you have to get closer for more magnification so there's hardly any point zooming in. It's simply not a great macro lens though the results are very sharp, there's nothing wrong with the quality of the optics.

Far from being sophisticated the F200 is a bit of a raver. Especially close up it appeared to allow red, and to a lesser extent blue, to overload, rendering deeply coloured areas posterised and short of texture. At first I thought that it was simply poor flash control at close quarters but some shots well over a metre away were suspect too.

The battery in the F200 is pretty small, barely larger than those in some of the smallest cameras so it's no surprise that it has limited life. On a surface day out the F200 lasted for 206 shots, including lots of fiddling with menus and plenty of flash use. It's far from spectacular but easily lasted for



two 50 minute dives. More impressively the F200 showed no signs of fatigue even toward the end of the second dive and the flash was still cycling impressively fast – easily fast enough to cope with moving from shot to shot every few seconds.

Around a pair of caves the F200 made a great attempt at some very difficult interiors, dark walls with bright exterior views and sullen skies. Often it was holding detail in deep shadow we hadn't seen with our eyes, whilst also coping with bright areas. To do this it rarely dropped below ISO200 which didn't appear to compromise quality too much but was a trick it seemed to rely on a lot and many scenes which appeared quite unremarkable were shot at elevated speed too. This resulted in a strange mixture of surprise and disappointment where chance shots taken to see what would happen were really quite good and easy shots taken to keep seemed rather lifeless. Perhaps controlling the highlights and capturing the shadow is all very well but like a child who can only play one tune the F200 needs to learn when to try something different.



The F200 certainly does have good low noise and good low light performance but I'm not sure it should be resorting to raising 'film' speed whilst still losing light by increasing shutter speed and closing the aperture way beyond what is required. If the ISO100 performance isn't better than the ISO200 and 400 performance then why is it included? A curious user (i.e. me) might suspect something... is this simply required because a limited choice of lens aperture needs ISO to be the main mechanism for light control?

The F200 boasts a whole heap of modes... including a 'Manual' mode which is really very nominal – the aperture can be set only fully open or closed. That's 3.3 or 9 at wide angle and 5.1 or 14 zoomed in – absolutely no use for finely balancing strobe and ambient light. A three stop step (1/8 or 8x as much light) just isn't a fine adjustment.

The F200's piece de resistance is its eponymous EXR mode which is such a full auto that it will try to sort out your life completely. Apparently this is a full time job and it sets to work



adjusting itself continuously even when set down on a table pointing at a static scene. I'd imagine this would hammer the battery life. It's also very annoying to have a camera that rattles and clicks as though it is operated by clockwork. If the results spoke for themselves perhaps this could be forgiven but underwater waiting for the camera to shuffle around was a bit of a non starter – so it was ignored there. On a sunny day I turned the dial, which is very easy to spin as you pick it up, to EXR and watched it cope with extreme highlight and deep shadow around a concrete quay and glittering sea. Shooting into the sun or shadow the camera switched modes to keep exposure

under control under real duress. This was a real tour de force of the EXR sensor, holding onto a blazing sky behind a badly lit smiling face. Boats which were silhouetted in the bay weren't flat black or eroded by burnt out highlights. A really impressive performance – great dynamic range, highlight control and clean shadows with detail.

In searching for the best initial setting for use underwater I was torn between Program and, to my horror, the Noddy Underwater mode. There's not much to choose really but if you do slide around to P you can select goodies like centre focus, spot metering and exposure compensation. In Underwater mode control is

severely limited – you can go to the ISO item in the menu just to discover you can't change it!

The F200 is also impressively fast for a compact. Focus snaps in predictably and accurately. Underwater the yellow focus confirmation generally means sharp results, which is good as it's hard to hold half pressed. This makes it very useful as a note taking camera, you can move from subject to subject almost as fast as you can find them – it has no trouble having the flash ready for the next shot.

In general the best aspect of the camera is its build. The fit and finish is excellent and the controls are pretty crisp – but they are also very small. To add spice most of the controls are also concave and need the precision of a finger nail to operate. I have small fairly hands and even the tip of my index finger can cover the four way pad and menu button entirely. I'm not sure what someone with big banana fingers would make of it! In the dive case this isn't so much of a problem but the buttons are still very close together, the dial remains small and in thick gloves with cold hands using it is harder than it really needs to be.

As a camera for the well heeled surface traveller the F200 won't disappoint. It's fast and, at a high level, responsive and nice to use. Unfortunately digging deeper isn't

rewarded as most of the magic is only available in automated modes and trying to go your own way won't get much better results.

Underwater the case is excellent, aside from the small buttons, and the F200 remains easy to use. Its tendency to elevate film speed even under close up flash can be overcome in Program mode and it is fast and fun if you don't need to do much macro work.

On land

Pros: Fast, well built, strong totally auto camera work for a normal user, good in low light, low noise at high ISO. Retains highlights tremendously well.

Cons: Over enthusiastic reds in strong or flash light, poor macro performance in practice, complex menus, interfering scene modes, crippled 'Manual' mode, tiny buttons.

Underwater

Pros: Tough very secure and easy to maintain housing. Small and easy to use major functions. Accessory shoe for lights etc.

Cons: Macro limited. Flash coverage uneven and flash control unreliable, controls small for cold, gloved hands, no shutter lever. Boxed port limits additional lens options.

Rob Spray
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Compact course

Pt3

with Maria Munn

Welcome back for the last part of getting you up and running with your compact camera. In this chapter we are going to have a brief look at choosing and using a strobe as well as a few tips on shooting video.

Strobes Using a strobe when a beginner can be the most daunting piece of equipment when starting out in underwater photography, but the difference that it can make to your photos underwater is incredible.

Loss of light is apparent after descending just a few metres and loss of red happens within that same distance and a strobe is an excellent choice of underwater photographic equipment for putting vivid colours and punch back into your subject.

Regardless as to whether you are using your built-in flash with your camera underwater or an external strobe, using the lowest possible Film Speed setting for your subject will ensure richer, punchier colours. Ideally, I would recommend 80-100 (ISO 64 for the Olympus Models) for Macro and Static Subjects, or 200

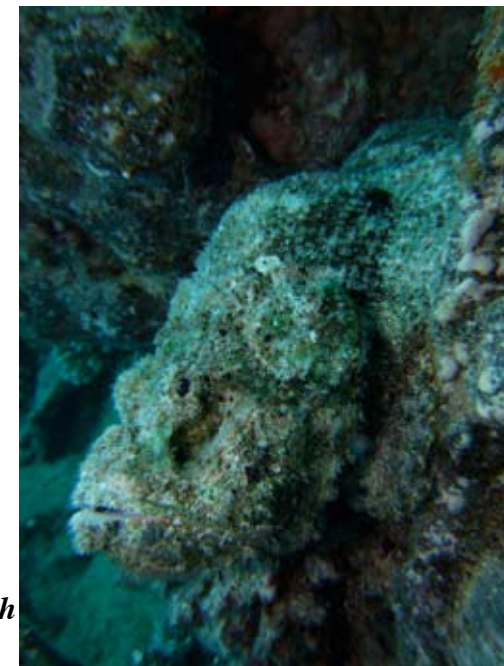
for faster moving subjects such as Anemonefish. If a higher film speed is used, or indeed the Automatic Underwater Setting, this can result in overexposed subjects.

The built-in flash on most compact cameras will work very well underwater as long as you are within a foot of a small subject and as long as the diffuser is attached to the front of the housing to soften the light and make it spread further. Exceptions to this are the latest Canon Powershots and Fui Finepix 200 model where the port of the camera's housing is too large for the built-in flash to cover a close-up subject without causing a shadow. If you are too far away from your subject, you run the risk of the 'blizzard effect' and this applies when using a larger strobe as well. So what do you need to know before investing in one?

Choosing an External Strobe It is always good to ask around for advice on choosing a strobe or have a look on one of the specialist underwater photography forums where users share



(Above) This photo was taken in the Socorro Islands, Mexico and I was delighted that just one strobe could light up such a large subject as this Pacific Manta Ray. Taken with a Fuji F30, Inon Fisheye Lens and Inon D2000 Strobe with -0.5 diffuser ISO 200, f8, 1/60th sec
(Right) Normal Stonefish with Just Flash. Taken with a Fuji F30, Inon Close-Up Lens and D2000 Strobe ISO 200, f5.6, 1/60th sec



their experiences with others such as Wetpixel or DivePhotoGuide.

Before using any external strobe with your camera, it is very important to cover up the external diffuser of your camera's housing so that the light from the built-in flash which triggers the external strobe to fire does not accidentally light part of your subject. This can cause shadow problems and it is very important to place the fibre optic cable directly onto the diffuser. I always would recommend a fibre-optic cable (don't forget a spare as

they are very fragile) to be attached from the strobe and attached to the diffuser with a Velcro Foot to make sure that it will fire. Inon make black diffuser covers for their own fibre optic cables to fit into which replace the white ones on the wide-angle adaptors. (Note that the latest Inon S2000 model is now triggered by a wireless transmitter). If your camera has a Flash Exposure Compensation Setting such as the Canon Powershot series, it is useful to turn the flash setting to low to trigger the external



This photo was taken in Nuweiba with the strobe placed over the middle of the camera. A Number 1 Diffuser was used and the Flash Setting on Number 2. Fuji F31 with Fuji Strobe. ISO 100, f5.6 @ 1/60th sec



Bright sunlight has produced flare in the bottom left part of the photograph. Fuji F30, Inon Fisheye Lens and Inon D2000 Strobe with -0.5 diffuser ISO 100, f5.6, 1/60th sec



Remember when using your built-in flash or a strobe for the White Balance to be set on Auto. If it is accidentally left on Manual/Custom White Balance, subjects can have a very pink tone!

strobe as this will not only stop the compact's housing from heating up, but it will also make the batteries last longer.

The main question you need to ask yourself is what kind of photographs do you like and always check that the beam of light emitted from the strobe will be able to light up the subjects which you like to take photos of. If you are solely interested in capturing macro and close-up

critters and their habitats or abstract shots, then a small strobe such as an Intova, Fuji, Nano or Epoque 150 DS Strobe will suffice.

With the Intova, Fuji or Nano models, it is important to synchronise the camera with the flash unit itself by placing them opposite each other. The picture which is overexposed indicates which setting the flash unit should be kept on. These kits come with a set of three different diffusers and

normally I find the Number 1 diffuser to be adequate for most situations giving a nice even coverage to macro subjects. In the picture shown here of the Moray Eel which was taken with a Fuji F30 and a Fuji strobe, it has worked extremely well here to light up not just the moray eel but also it's habitat adding extra punch and definition.

Wide Angle Strobes For those looking to capture vibrant reef scenes, turtles, other divers or wanting the flexibility of being able to light up most subjects underwater, a strobe with a larger coverage of light is necessary. For more creative possibilities, it is always better to have a camera with at least control over the aperture settings to be able to control exposure of your chosen subject.

A fantastic entry level strobe for any enthusiast is the Epoque 230 DS or the Sea & Sea's YS 27. They can be used with either the Epoque or Inon wide angle lenses. All you need to do to take beautiful vibrant pictures of such subjects is to get close and staying within a foot works best to bring out rich, punchy colours. These strobe give a coverage of 110 degrees with the diffuser and are triggered by the internal flash of your camera using a fibre optic cable. As mentioned before, always stick the little velcro pad on the diffuser of the camera and cover with duck tape or black velcro to avoid any light escaping and giving backscatter issues.

The only thing you need to remember is if shooting where there is plankton, nutrients or maybe divers in front of you kicking up sand, then a strobe will illuminate all of the particles.

For those who are thinking of progressing to a D-SLR set-up further



Giant Frogfish can be truly enormous subjects to photograph, and here as I didn't have my wide angle lens to be able to get close to the subject and fit the whole subject in, two strobes were really needed to be able to light up the whole of the frogfish as he was swimming past me. However, instead I focused on just the face of the frogfish and my one strobe did a great job in lighting the subject. Canon Ixus 980. ISO 200, f8, 1/500th sec

on, then a strobe such as Sea & Sea's YS 110 or for those using Inon's Fisheye Lens with their compact, the Inon D2000, Z240 or latest model S2000 will bring out the full potential and creativity using both the lens and the strobe together. The photo pictured here from Ras Mohammed was taken using just one Inon D2000 strobe with a Fuji F30 and Inon's 165 Fisheye Lens giving fantastic vibrant colour to the subject. The only thing to watch out for is glare from the sun at the bottom left or right of your photograph.

A modelling light on a strobe can also be a very useful feature, especially on a night dive to help your camera focus on the subject underwater. Simply press the button on the back of your Epoque 230 DS or Inon strobe and either a laser or a light will be emitted for a short period of time. I use the Red Filter with my Inon Strobe when using the modelling light as it helps not to scare the creatures at night. Some guests ask me about torches for modelling lights, but from experience, pointing a torch light in front of a shy subject,

especially a sea-horse, not only can the light damage the subject's eyes, but subjects such as puffer fish will be even more determined to look the other way!

One Strobe or Two Course Guests always ask me if it is necessary to shoot with one strobe or two. This again depends on your subject and what you like to take pictures of. One strobe is enough for close-up and larger subjects, but two strobes can really help to give an extra dimension to a photograph as well as being able to photograph even larger subjects. The second strobe will normally be set at a lower power to act as a fill-in light for the subject. Diffusers for both strobes are highly recommended and also that the strobes are placed as far away from the camera as the arms will permit. Two strobes are ideal for giving gorgeous shots of wrecks covered with corals or reefs.

TTL or Slave Some strobes work by a system called TTL which means Through The Lens. This is where the camera reads the amount of light emitted from the camera and lights the subject accordingly. However, in bright, shallow conditions this may not work adequately. It is nice to be able to get used to using the Manual Settings on a strobe and by simply turning the dial either to the left or to

the right, the adequate lighting setting can be found very easily. Slave strobes work by the user setting the dial to the appropriate Guide Number found on the strobe's dial which matches your set aperture. Again, this can simply be adjusted by the user and with practice, the correct setting can easily and quickly be found.

Positioning of Strobe Again this is very dependent on your subject and some prefer to shoot with the strobe at a 45 degree angle with the strobe placed on the left-hand side of your camera. However, this can sometimes cause a shadow to the other side of your subject where the light hasn't been able to reach. Placing the strobe over the middle of the camera can give a nice even light over far more of your subject and has been used for all of the pictures shown.

Finally always remember not to get too close to other underwater photographers with strobes as theirs can set yours off underwater and vice-versa. Before you know it all your battery power could disappear. And of course, don't forget to pack spare or rechargeable batteries, especially when shooting in colder waters.

Video Mode The video mode can be one of the most overlooked features on a compact camera, but for me, this is what makes a compact camera

underwater so versatile and a fantastic way to bring home wonderful holiday memories. Some of the newer models such as the newer Canon Ixus 990 or Sea & Sea's 1200 both have High Definition Movie Capability and can be played back on an HD TV. Most of the compacts record in Quicktime Format at 30 fps and simple editing can be done and music easily added.

The beauty of the Canon models is that the Manual White Balance Setting can be used whilst in video mode, as can the ability to record in Black and White and Sepia. This is perfect with a wide-angle lens for wreck scenes, giving them a creative feel. I use the Macro Setting whilst in movie mode to make sure that my subject is as sharp as possible underwater. The Casio Models also have access to the White Balance settings as well as being able to change the exposure as well.

For those compacts which don't have access to the Manual White Balance Mode, then an Auto- Magic or UR Pro Filter is essential to capture the true colours underwater.

Whilst videoing with any camera, but even more so with a compact, it is extremely important to stay as still as possible and to move the camera slowly, panning with the subject and avoiding any extreme jerky movements. The zoom facility cannot be accessed in the movie mode

so make sure that you are close to your subject, filling up the frame but without disturbing anything around you. Subjects can look better going from left to right, but naturally this can depend on the subject.

I hope you will now feel as confident as my course guests do to get up and running using your compact and experimenting with the many different controls that you have. It all takes time and lots of practice. Remember that if you are taking one nice picture out of 100 you are doing really well. Think about your subject underwater before you take a photo, check that the background compliments the subject and be aware of the marine environment around you.

If you have any questions, then feel free to drop me an email at maria@oceanvisions.co.uk or why not just drop me a line to let me know how you are getting on.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer full of fantastic underwater photo opportunities.

Maria Munn

www.oceanvisions.co.uk

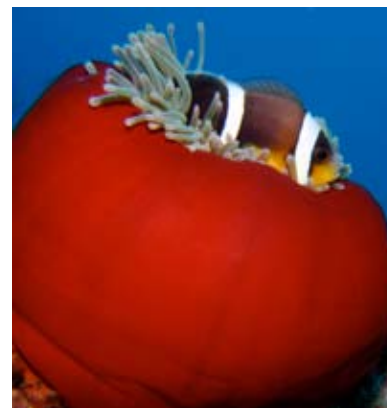
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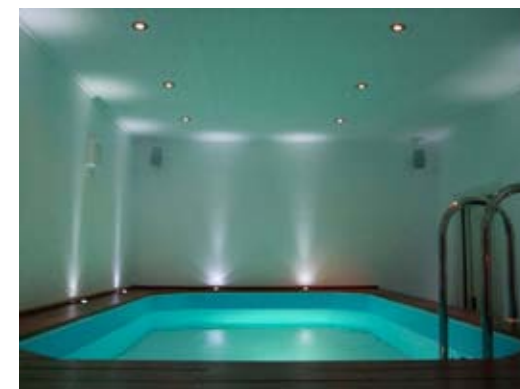
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Panoramas

by Joseph C. Dovala

The extensive wide angle view in paintings, known as the panorama, has been around a long time. Irish painter Robert Barker has been given credit as the first artist to coin the term “panorama” in the late 18th century. Less than 50 years later, in 1844, the first successful photographic panorama camera was invented by photographer Friedrich von Martens. Since these early pioneers, there have been countless cameras and techniques utilized in the pursuit of the wide format view. Of course, the digital age has now brought the often tedious and challenging procedures to just a few clicks of the computer mouse. Well, maybe a little more effort is required than that but anymore it doesn't take a skilled artist to produce interesting images – even underwater!

Not too long ago wanting to shoot panoramas automatically meant using a tripod. While this option produces the best results, especially with critical end use requirements, it's by no means necessary. None of the images accompanying this article used a tripod in their making. There are some considerations that one needs to think about when stitching



Stitching a series of images together give the viewer a better “sense of place” of a ship wreck’s final home.
Subal ND2 housing, Nikon D2x w/ Nikkor 10.5mm FE, 1/200sec, F/11, ISO 200.

(Right) This image is only composed of two frames. Due to the depth and dark conditions a full panorama wasn’t doable but putting two pics together did give the wreck more scale.
Subal ND2 housing, Nikon D2x w/ Nikkor 10.5mm FE, 1/30sec, F/7.1, ISO 200.



underwater images together. The main one, of course, is subject matter. Just sewing up a bunch of shots willy-nilly not only will be very difficult on the computer, but they're not likely to have much of a visual impact. When deciding on a panorama it's best to give a voice to the resulting photo. A section of reef or ship wreck can be a good choice as long as the flow

makes sense. That is, will the finished wide angle give the viewer a sense of place?

As we all know, creating a sense of place underwater is a big challenge. Even in the best visibility we just don't have the opportunity to share something like the grandeur of the Grand Canyon. And the widest fisheye lens still gives only a close snippet

of what we experience as divers. The physics of water plays havoc in other ways too. The blues or greens across an underwater pano may change hues and create all kinds of post processing problems; thus creating blotches of color shifts from one image to another. Remember, all those dense H2O molecules along with all the other “stuff” in the water column are



Often it's necessary to make sure you have some kind of reference toward scale. None of these images contain a diver, which would have clued the viewer into the size of the shipwreck.

Subal ND2 housing, Nikon D2x w/ Nikkor 10.5mm FE, 1/125sec, F/5.6, ISO 200.

likely to mess with light rays trying to penetrate the surface. This scattering and absorbing of the photons can make a non-uniform color spectrum across the angle of view. If you have the Photoshop skills and the desire, you can rectify much of this during post processing using layers and masks. I don't have the skills or the desire to spend so much time in front of the monitor so there are a couple of tricks that can help.

The first isn't really a trick but one of the main rules in shooting wide angle underwater and that's to shoot at an upward angle. Capturing some of the surface ripples and sunlight reflections help to break up the background, and allow the stitching to be more camouflaged than

straight monotone color and lighting. Another way to achieve this is to use the natural elements in the shot. For example, in a kelp forest there are lots of possibilities to use the upward fronds to frame out certain areas. That way the color variations aren't as noticeable and much easier to isolate with software to smooth out tonal gradations. This same technique could be used with reef formations or with sections of a ship wreck.

On land, the first rule of making panoramas is lots of overlap. In other words, make sure that each image overlays the preceding photo by at least 30% more. This makes sense underwater as well but it's not a deal breaker if you don't. To make a "perfectly" clean panorama



without needing to clean up artifacts or misalignments is asking a lot, especially underwater. In addition, getting the whole view from a static position is often not possible due to limited vision. And moving around is pretty much a requirement for many shots. Couple this with the lack of a tripod and the physics of the fluid environment and you've got quite a challenge. Fortunately, with the many software tools available today breaking the rules has never been easier.

Processing programs are too numerous to list, but they range from free to pick your price. I personally use Panorama Maker 3.5 (new version is now 4.0) and find it very easy to use. You have some manual control on where the program decides to create the overlap, so with a few clicks and drags you can modify the look of the final composition. I believe this feature to be critical for underwater stitching. Like many aspects of photography the best way to learn it is to do it. This is an inexpensive



Shooting a panorama with moving subjects can be done but they can't be moving too fast; and they require far more work in post processing. Jack mackerel school at Anacapa Island off the Southern California coast. Subal ND2 housing, Nikon D2x w/ Nikkor 10.5mm FE, 1/125sec, F/8, ISO 200.

experiment at only \$40.00 or so. Of course, Photoshop and other image file editors can do multiple stitching too. You can make it as simple or complicated as you like.

There are basically three steps from start to finish in producing your panorama; this is true whether you're topside or 200 feet below the surface.

Step One: Setting up the camera and acquiring desired images.

It is important that some camera settings be done manually or else the auto programs will try and optimize each frame capture. This will cause problems when you try to put them together. White balance should be adjusted to a favorite setting. I typically use cloudy so that all the images will have the same light temperature. Color variances are

troubling enough without building them in right up front during capture. Also, by shooting in RAW, you can modify white balance during post processing and get more manageable outcomes.

I have also obtained better results by shooting in manual exposure mode. With camera meter auto settings there maybe too much variability between shots. It's also important to isolate subject movement as much as possible to a single frame. This will ensure sharper subject matter and eliminate the same person in two places at one time (unless that's what you want). Having multiple moving subjects like fish and divers across more than one frame works, it just may take more effort to create smooth transitions. I also don't usually change

aperture or focus position between frames. A point to keep in mind is the fewer parameters changed between one image to another will make construction of the panorama that much easier.

Another consideration is lens choice. There is no doubt that rectilinear lenses are more suitable for seamless overlaps. Rectilinear lenses yield images where straight lines show as straight lines as opposed to a curvilinear lens, i.e. fish eyes, which show strong barrel or pincushion distortions. Of course, in the real world, most wide angle lenses show some type of distortions depending on the lens, focal length, manufacturer, etc. But curvilinear lenses can wreck havoc with the flow of a pano because of what they do to a horizon.

Fortunately for us we don't need to worry about this underwater. Also, you can reduce the distortions by making sure you have enough overlap between the images. I haven't had any significant issues using a fish eye lens for u/w panoramas.

Step Two: Importing images to panorama making software.

Much of this procedure depends on the software you're using but some details are consistent across all types. One of the criteria for choosing the type of software is the degree of automation you prefer. The more "decisions" left to the program, the less control you'll have. On the other hand, being too much of a control freak may bog you down with unnecessary minutia. Usually, the most effective manual intervention is best used in fine tuning overlap control set points. I have found that many times Panorama Maker selects just fine and no further alignment has to be done by me. Where there's not enough overlap or lots of featureless area like blue water then I often get involved.

It may only take a single effort by the software to sew the images together in an acceptable way, or it could take repeated control set point modifications to properly join them. It really depends on how the image sequence was taken and somewhat on the subject matter.



A panorama helps to give a more expansive view of a giant kelp forest, such as this one at Anacapa Island off the Southern California coast.

Subal ND2 housing, Nikon D2x w/ Nikkor 10.5mm FE, 1/125sec, F/9, ISO 200.

Step 3: Post processing of the stitched panorama.

No matter how wonderful the individual pictures were sutured together, there will always be at least some clean up of seams and artifacts. You will usually have to crop the finished rough pano as well, for the program often needs to adjust photos vertically. In fact this can be extensive when hand holding the sequence.

Clean up of the image mainly consists of some localized cloning and use of the spot healing brush. Both of these tools can take care of most rough areas caused from the stitching. This may also be the time to do some dodging and burning once you see how all the elements work together in the final output.

While certainly not a new technique, the underwater panorama can put some pizzazz into your wide angle views. These don't have to be confined to the traditional concept

of wide angle either. Vertical or horizontal wide format macro views may do the trick. So if you're looking for a new way to tell a story, try your hand at knitting a few photos together for that extra wide vista.

Joseph C. Dovala
www.jcdovala.com



Bikini Atoll is now closed once again! But at least you can still see some of the majesty of the "Nuclear Fleet."



By popular demand an expanded version of the eBook, *Ghost Fleet of Bikini Atoll* by Joseph C. Dovala, is now available. With almost 4x the pages it contains nearly 100 photos and much more text. The book is in PDF file format easily read by a number of free existing software programs such as Acrobat Reader. Electronic photo books, or eBooks, are able to showcase high quality images and text in a new, exciting, inexpensive, and environmentally friendly way. They have relatively small file sizes, usually less than 20mb. *Ghost Fleet of Bikini Atoll* (12mb, 89 pages) is only \$5.95 each emailed. Please visit www.jcdovala.com for details.

Fisheyes For FX

Replacing the 10-17mm

by Alex Mustard and Jeff Hartog

Fisheye lenses are considered special effect optics on land. Used occasionally to create fresh perspectives with their ultra wide coverage and barrel distortion. Underwater the situation couldn't be more different. Fisheyes are the mainstay of wide angle photography and there are many underwater photographers who shoot little else. They are popular because of the power they bring to underwater images, opening up space and cutting through the murk of the underwater world, as well as working easily behind dome ports.

Beneath the waves, their inherent characteristic, that they forego a rectilinear image to achieve their ultra wide coverage with characteristic barrel distortion, is not so problematic. We rarely have to deal with a horizon or straight lines in natural subjects, and experienced users become so used to composing fisheye images that it is hard to spot any barrel distortion in their shots. Unless, that is, they want you to see it for artistic reasons, such as to enhance the curves in a subject, such as a school of fish or the stern of a wreck.

Judging by my inbox in the last six months, triggered particularly by the arrival of housings for the 5D Mk2 and D700, has seen lots of people making or contemplating the switch to full 35mm frame digital. Of course, full frame digital SLRs have been around for a number of years, but certainly for Nikon users the D700 has thrust the option into the mainstream of underwater photography. And one of the first questions that



Seal – The Sigma 15mm offers considerably closer focus than the Nikon 16mm. If you are used to the 10.5mm or 10-17mm, the 16mm is disappointing in this regard. Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm, Subal housing. Inon Z240 strobes. 1/200th @ F13, ISO 800. ©AM

Soft coral in mangrove – Fisheyes are mainstream lenses underwater, opening up space and allow us to photograph the largest scenes from close distance. Their distortion is hidden by most natural subjects. Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm, Subal housing. Inon Z240 strobes. 1/125th @ F13, ISO 200. ©AM



comes up is “what lenses do I need?”. In this article we focus on the fisheye options for Nikon users planning the switch to full frame.

The choice, at first, appears straightforward. Nikon have made a 16mm fisheye for many years, case closed. Well not quite. We were all very happy with the 16mm when shooting Nikon film SLRs, but since we've tasted more exotic fruit. In 2006 Tokina released the 10-17mm zoom and underwater photographers quickly embraced it. The

biggest strength of a fisheye lens is that it is very wide, but this is also one of its biggest drawbacks. For some subjects it is just too wide meaning missed opportunities and wasted dives. The Tok neatly addressed this problem and most found that they could shoot almost anything with it. But frustratingly this DX lens has no equivalent in FX.

There is an amusing irony that many moaned about converting to digital because of the effect of the DX crop factor on their lenses,

and now it is a DX lens that it is causing similar complaints with changing back to FX. This is a new problem too, because the D700 and 5D Mk2 are the first mainstream full frame cameras released since the Tok. The situation was very different for Canon users, when original 5D appeared back in 2005.

The choice for the FX Nikon user comes down to two: Nikon 16mm and Sigma 15mm. I own both and although there are noticeable differences they are small; if you already own one, there is little financial sense in buying the other. I generally favour the Sigma, I find its more recent design produces marginally sharper images and it focuses considerably closer than the Nikon 16mm. The lack of close focus of the 16mm is also immediately noticeable when coming from a DX lens like the 10-17mm or Nikon 10.5mm. The Nikon 16mm, however, is better at resisting flare when shooting into the sun than the Sigma, and its removable filter holders make it much easier to fit and remove gels. But the bottom line is that both perform well giving the traditional 180° corner to corner coverage.

The biggest change from DX is depth of field. If on DX you usually shot at F8-11 then you really need to be at F13-16 on FX. This is particularly critical on close focus wide angle shots and for split levels, which require plenty of depth of field. FX cameras typically perform well at higher ISOs, so one solution to counter the need for smaller apertures is to increase the ISO. Alternatively, more powerful strobes become appealing to maintain the depth of field we've become used to.

The increasingly common solution to reduce the coverage of fisheye lenses is to add a weak teleconverter to the lens and a small port extension ring to your dome. Popular teleconverters include the Kenko 1.4x and 1.5x versions, although if you



are planning to buy one, take your camera and lens to the shop to ensure everything fits together. Not everything is compatible. Teleconverters do degrade image quality, but most people find the loss hard to spot and find the advantages of the option of an approximately 100° fisheye, with little distortion, far outweigh the negatives. I use this setup routinely and have shown the resulting images to many discerning eyes and nobody can see any drop in quality from using the teleconverter underwater.



Frogfish and sponges – The teleconverter combo can also be used with a small dome as a macro-wide angle lens. Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm, 1.5x teleconverter. Subal housing. Inon Z240 strobes. 1/25th @ F13, ISO 200. ©AM

Diver and cuttlefish – Using a teleconverter on a fisheye restricts the angle of coverage and also the distortion, creating an alternate wide angle optic. Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm, 1.5x teleconverter. Subal housing. Inon Z240 strobes. 1/90th @ F13, ISO 800. ©AM

The main role of the fisheye teleconverter setup is to provide an alternative focal length for wide angle, while preserving the fisheye tradition of performing well behind dome ports and the focus range of the lens. The angle of coverage with these teleconverters is comparable to the 17mm end of the Tok on DX, which many have found so useful. This focal length is particularly suited to big animal photography and tighter shots including divers. Of course, unlike with the Tok, we have to make the



Sponges in cave with diver – On FX it is important to stop down more than DX lenses to achieve a comparable depth of field in 180° close focus wide angle shots. Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm, Subal housing. Inon Z240 strobes. 1/30th @ F13, ISO 200. ©AM

choice before the dive. But on the positive side, for relatively little investment and baggage weight, this solution adds a new focal length to your arsenal.

Another use for the fisheye teleconverter is for macro-wide angle photographs, which I wrote about in UWP Issue 35, although to make the most from this technique it requires purchasing the small diameter dome port. This technique requires very short camera to subject distances, to achieve foregrounds with macro like magnification. A small dome is essential for getting a high quality of light onto the subject in such confines. The full possibilities of this technique cannot be released with typical sized domes.

In the last few months, my friend, Jeff Hartog has been experimenting with a third option, hoping to have the best of all worlds. And he has kindly agreed to let me report on his findings here. He has



At the widest setting, 10mm, there is slight cut off which needs to be removed either by selective cropping or cloning. ©JH

been experimenting with using the Tokina 10-17mm on a teleconverter on his D700, which converts it to approximately a 16-27mm fisheye zoom on FX. Ryan Canon dug out a zoom gear that worked with the Tok once the teleconverter was fitted.

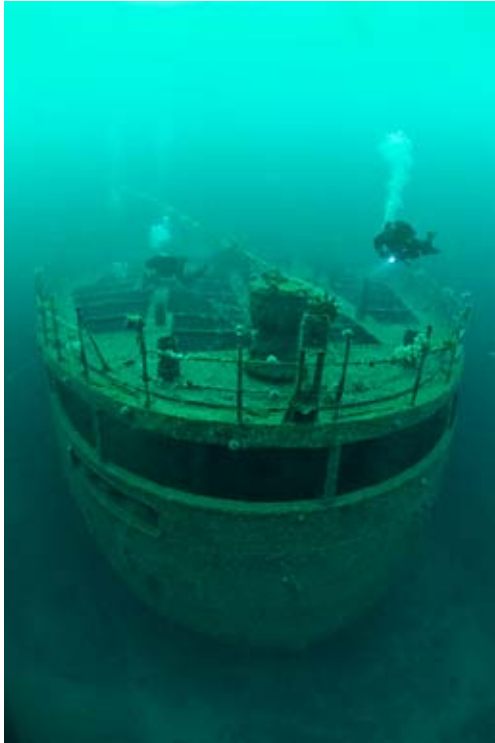
In theory this approach should be troublesome and I was certainly sceptical. The Tok, for all the praise lavished on it by underwater photographers, rarely gets good reviews from land photographers because it suffers significant chromatic aberrations, manifested as clear purple fringing on contrasting edges towards the corners of the frame. It is reasonable to expect a teleconverter to magnify this fault. Furthermore, the Tok is known to be prone to hunting and failing to lock on subjects when autofocus, due to it being a slowish lens with a widest aperture of f3.5-f4.5. A teleconverter will make it slower still and should magnify any AF



Zooming in slightly eliminates any vignetting. ©JH

problems.

As Jeff says, “I did some quick tests in the pool, which demonstrated pretty decent performance beginning at f5.6 (f8 effective), with no cut off beyond 11mm. I was encouraged and took the combo on my trip to Jardin de la Reina. In the field, I was pleasantly surprised to see that my Frankenlens, as Alex subsequently dubbed it, retained the exceptional close focus ability of the Tokina without any apparent loss of sharpness. Furthermore I did not notice any significant decrease in autofocus speed on the D700, nor was there any apparent increase in purple fringing sometimes seen with this lens. In practice I have found that the Tokina 10-17 with 1.4 TC on my D700 performs just as it did without the TC on my D200, and is the perfect complement to my 17-35 for wide angle underwater action.”



Green wreck – With non-close focus wide angle shots, wider apertures give acceptable depth of field on FX. Nikon D700, Sigma 15mm, Subal housing. No strobes. 1/40th @ F7.1, ISO 800. ©AM

photography, where blue water will not reveal corner aberration issues, the Tok + TC is probably the best option, particularly if you already have one and can find a suitable zoom gear.

However, for all round fisheye work, I don't see an outright winner in the current choices for FX. All have their strengths depending on what you plan to shoot. At present the most accurate conclusion is it is different tools for different jobs. I have spoken to Tokina in the UK and their official response is that they cannot confirm or deny whether Japan is working on a full frame fisheye zoom. The 10-17mm has been a popular seller for them, and they are well aware that more and more photographers are switching to full frame. Watch this space.

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We recently dived together in the Bahamas, photographing oceanic whitetips on a JASA/Wetpixel trip, and comparing our shots from prime fisheye and Tok both on teleconverter, there was no noticeable difference in optical quality. I also think that the D700, which shares its AF system with the D3 made up for any loss in AF performance. No teleconverter exactly matches the Nikon crop factor (1.57), so there will always be some cut off with the Tokina at 10mm on FX, but this is usually less than 5%. In any case, this can easily be cloned away or cropped out of the frame.

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And Now For Something Completely Different...

by Mark Webster

The title of this piece will mean something to those of us who have reached a certain vintage, particularly in the UK. The phrase comes from an early 1970's comic series 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' which enjoyed cult status and still makes an occasional comeback even overseas. If you remember this then you will also remember the early days of Red Sea diving when there were no facilities and a trip entailed Land Rovers, camping in the open on the beach and of course diving from the beach only. Obviously these were great character building days which we enjoyed (I think) until the appearance of the first live aboards which gave us greater access to the offshore sites and kept the sand off our O rings.

Diving from the beach was great fun but was quickly forgotten with the convenience of live aboard diving, but I have often wondered how the beach diving experience would compare today. Many of the big name sites on the Sinai peninsula, which were first found as beach dives, now have large hotel developments on the shore. Over

the intervening years these sites have also seen a great many divers, so their present condition does not compare to those early heady days. But further south on the Egyptian mainland coast there are still pockets of coastline where the development has not been so aggressive yet and reportedly the beach diving is still good. So in the spirit of 'something completely

(Top) The tent accommodation at Marsa Shagra comes in standard and Royal. Both have proper beds and power – the Royal is larger and has a fridge and fan. If you come in the winter bring your woolly pyjamas and it gets cool at night. Nikon D200, 10-17 FE zoom, ISO100 Programme mode. (Right) Some of the truck beach dives reveal some spectacular hard coral growth in just a few feet of water. Most of the marsas have a sandy channel between the reefs which preserves the corals from diver or snorkeler damage during entry. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, ISO100, manual WB, f11 1/125.



different' we decided to sample this, but without the hardship of camping, and selected the 'eco resort' at Marsa Shagra close to Marsa Alam which has been developed around its own house reef.

The description 'eco resort' may be a touch ambitious, although I do remember when this dive operation was first established with only tent accommodation and staying here would have been quite rustic. Now the resort has developed significantly and offers four levels of accommodation – two in tents and two in rooms and chalets. There are still parts of the resort which retain that campsite feel, and there is even a Bedouin café on the beach by the tented section to give you that Lawrence of Arabia feeling in the evening. However, the latest developments provide excellent facilities including a well appointed restaurant with seating inside and an open dining terrace overlooking the bay. As the passing years have softened me I did not object to this at all, but if you are determined to go a little more rustic then there are smaller developments at Marsa Nakari and Whadi Lahami. In order to look after the cameras properly of course.....my wife and I selected an air conditioned Madyafa chalet which offers the most spacious accommodation and in fact does have a very handy high



There are two types of truck transport dependant on the group size and the distance you are travelling. This is the larger, some may say more comfy one. Nikon D200, 18-200mm zoom, ISO100 Programme mode.

Anthias are of course found on every dive and, like clown fish, are a magnetic subject which encourages you to shoot them again and again. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO100, f11 1/80.

work surface with power sockets and good lighting for camera preparation and charging. Being in a tent may be more challenging for the serious photographers with lots of kit, although I do know some who have used this accommodation.

If you cannot forget the real world for a week you will be relieved to know that your mobile phone will work here and there is WiFi for your computer. There is a small charge for the latter if you use the resort router, or you can use a free connection if you buy a drink in the Bedouin café.

The dive centre is located on



There is a small jetty at the entrance to the house reef where you can board the shuttle boats or the speed boat for a longer trip. Nikon D200, 18-200mm zoom, ISO100 Programme mode.

the beach and is well laid out and organised. Once you have signed up you will receive a thorough briefing on how the diving works and the various dive options open to you. The first dive is with a guide along the house reef just to check you are not likely to drown yourself and thereafter all house reef dives can be made with your buddy. Sadly solo diving is forbidden here. As the marsa is a natural bay there is a north and south option to the house reef which you can dive from the beach or use the resident RIB shuttles to take you out and pick you up if desired. Doing this



can take you a reasonable distance out along the seaward side of the reef and all you need to do is post your dive plan on the white board with planned dive time and indicate if you want to be picked up. You need to observe your predicted dive times otherwise they will come looking for you. As photographers are easily distracted I found it best to take a boat out and swim back along the reef to the beach and also add a little extra to the expected dive time.

The standard dive package here includes unlimited beach diving on the house reef, including use of the

shuttles, and also beach diving by truck at sites further afield which depart twice a day. All that is required is to decide on the destination and place your name on the list the evening before. Most of the truck dives were within 20 minutes drive of the resort.

If you fancy something a little more adventurous then you can choose a 'speedboat' dive (a larger RIB with twin engines) to an offshore reef site or a longer road trip to a beach dive at a more remote location. Both these options cost between EU10-20 and again could be booked a day before. Other offshore options are a little more expensive and include Dolphin Reef which is a full day excursion by day boat. One offshore option is Elphinstone Reef which is a 20-30 minute boat ride offshore, but as we were familiar with this site from live aboard visits we declined this opportunity. One strange thing about the Elphinstone dive was that they would not let anyone use nitrox. There was no clear explanation for this other than for reasons of 'safety', although of course the guide could be trusted with this dangerous gas mix. Pointing out that there were numerous live aboard clients diving on nitrox there every day cut no ice and this policy left me puzzled.

One worthwhile trip that we did make is to the wreck of an 'un-named'



(Left) The excursion to the wreck of the Hamada at Marsa Abu Gosoon is worth the effort as the stern section is very intact with some nice hard and soft corals slowly engulfing the steel. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, ISO100, manual WB, f11 1/60. (Right) The wreck of the Hamada is perfect for photographers being shallow and generally having good visibility. Your guide will most likely lead the rest of a group away on a full tour and penetration leaving stern to you. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO100, f11 1/60.



freighter at Marsa Abu Gosoon which is about 75 minutes south by mini-bus from Marsa Shagra - the truck with all the diving kit goes ahead of you to set up for your arrival. Although the dive centre knew little of the history of this wreck, a quick internet search revealed a lot more detail:

The wreck is known as the Hamada (although this may be a local name) and was Cypriot freighter operated by Phemios Navigation

Company. Launched in 1965 and built by J Lewis & Sons of Aberdeen and powered by a 7 cylinder diesel engine built by British Polar Engines Ltd of Glasgow. She sank on 28 June 1993 whilst en route from Yambo in Saudi Arabia with a cargo of plastic granules. Whilst the official report apparently states she caught fire and sank in deep water, she was found hard up against the coastal fringing reef so perhaps the loss was more due

to a navigation error.

The first thing you notice here as you walk towards the beach is the glint of the sun on thousands of plastic granules in the sand which have washed up from the wreck. There is an easy entry and a short swim past a healthy reef to the wreck which is well broken at the bow and midships, but the stern with its accommodation and engine room is almost entirely intact and lies on her starboard side.

As the stern stands higher and almost reaches the surface the majority of the coral growth has concentrated here and the steel surfaces are peppered with hard and soft corals. There are some nice soft corals in the port side companionway and you can penetrate the wreck if that appeals to you where you will find the usual glass fish and hatchet fish in residence. There is also a small school of friendly bat fish on the starboard side close to the sand at a maximum depth of 15m, so there is plenty to keep you busy here for the two dives that the excursion offers. Just to the seaward side of the wreck in 21m there is an eel grass bed which our guide told us has a population of seahorses. However, I declined the search and shot wide angle for both dives. Other dive centres also come here, so look for the opportunity to dive between the groups and have the wreck to your self. We elected to make our second dive immediately to avoid the crowd. Lunch is served at a Bedouin restaurant beside a mangrove lagoon a few minutes drive from the wreck which is very good and offers the chance to sample Bedouin coffee and the hookah pipe if you are brave.

We made many of our dives on the house reef and it is this opportunity to dive the same area repeatedly which will appeal to most photographers. The north reef has very healthy hard corals with

all the usual inshore species here in abundance. The reef is very easy to navigate and we chose to be dropped off on the seaward side of the reef and swim back to shore for most dives. Although you don't expect pelagic action here, almost anything can turn up and we saw large black tip reef sharks on two occasions and there is a resident school of barracuda seen on most dives. As you come into the shallows of the marsa you will find schools of sardines feeding close to the surface and benthic species such as crocodile fish, scorpion and stone fish and rays. The south reef is equally productive but the corals are less lush in the marsa and on the seaward corner as this is the reef facing the prevailing wind direction and waves. It is worth taking the shuttle boat out on to the offshore southern end of the south reef and swim north to be picked up on the point as the corals definitely improve there.

The truck drives take you to some very nice sheltered reefs often in a neighbouring marsa. It may be best to choose the early morning trip as many of these sites are also visited by snorkelling groups from the nearby hotels and they tend to arrive later in the morning. One site that should not be missed is the now famous Marsa Abu Dabbab with its resident dugong and green turtles. On three out of four days the dugong was seen by groups



(Left) Lion fish are seen on most dives and will be found on top of the reef early in the morning and before dusk providing the opportunity to put the sun behind the subject. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO100, f16 1/125. (Right) Another Red Sea trade mark fish is the clown fish or anemone fish. No matter how many images you have of these fish it is hard to resist just a few minutes to take one more. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO100, f16 1/60.



from the dive centre, so it is a chance not to be missed, but once again choose the early morning departure to avoid the crowds. The green turtles are almost guaranteed and you will also see guitar rays briefly before they flee. The fringing reef on the south side of the bay is particularly good once you swim out to the point and there are some nice pinnacles here

with resident groups of lion fish.

So was the return to the roots of Red Sea diving worthwhile? In a word yes and a resort like this is certainly worth considering if you are trying to hone techniques or perhaps test some new kit. You can return to a location on the house reef as often as you want with a different lens or to try different lighting etc. to improve results with



Crocodile fish are common on the sand on both the north and south house reefs. They are normally very approachable so even with a wide angle lens on you can take a portrait shot. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO100, f16 1/125.

a particular subject. Undoubtedly the sites do not have the variation in topography that you would experience from a live aboard, but that is not necessarily what underwater photography requires. How often have you felt that you would like another chance at a particular subject when you review the images? The diving is easy and relaxed and when diving on the house reef you can arrange your timetable to suit yourself. In the evenings you can dive again or watch

www.uwpmag.com

the sun go down whilst sipping a beer or Bedouin coffee or review your images and plan how to improve the subject on the following day. It was great to wander into the Red Sea from the beach once again, but I don't miss those rocks under my sleeping bag from those early days!

Mark Webster
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Crack diving in north Iceland

with Gísli A. Gudmundsson

For the exploring diver, few things are more exciting than underwater wrecks and cracks. Recently a few divers from a small town in northern Iceland went pioneering into one such crack, in an area not commonly known except perhaps to a few divers. As far as we know this crack hasn't been explored before and definitely not photographed with a professional camera.

The whole area is quite exotic and unique. Positioned in the midst of Kelduhverfi at the bottom of Öxarfjörður, with the national park in Jökulsárgljúfur and the famous Ásbyrgi nearby. The landscape is sculpted by volcanic action and glacial movement since the latter part of the last ice age, which was about 10-700 thousand years ago. Active volcanoes are not far away and the area still is seismically active with minor earthquakes occurring every now and then. The last major drift in Kelduhverfi occurred in 1975-76, changing and forming many of the cracks there, which belong to the same fracture zone as one of Iceland's

well known volcanic areas Krafla.

The day before our trip we contacted the landowner to explain our plans. Fortunately he was almost as excited as we were but emphasized that diving on his land was totally at our own risk. By 9 in the morning we were standing in front of the farm in such wonderful weather. His daughter guided us to the cracks which we had passed a few minutes earlier without noticing them, positioned on both sides along the road to the farm.

To begin with, our hopes went sour because of the amount of sediment afloat in the biggest crack. But with some exploration in the area we found one part with especially clear water, similar to the famous lake at Thingvellir with Silfra crack - a favorite spot for many divers. The formation of the area here is

Sigurður Eyvald is delighted with their findings. This crack is going to make many divers happy!! Aquatica A-200, Nikon D200, P-Mode. Exposure Time: 1 / 90, FNumber: 2.8, Focal Length: 10.5, ISO Speed Ratings: 200



of the same geological sort as in Thingvellir, lying on the North-Atlantic Ridge where the North-American and Eurasian plates drift apart. The water is very cold, varying from 2-6°C, because of the glacial origin of the groundwater. The brilliant clarity of the water suggests a current through the crack from underwater springs. We decided to have a go at it and save the rest of the area for later.

It can be difficult to climb - or slide rather - down to the water with all the equipment and a careful approach is very important to make sure nothing goes wrong. With steep cliffs on both sides and heads just above water we were ready to go down to a world that has been hidden until now.

It was quite a unique experience to drift in between the edgy cliffs with those striking colors of blue, green and brown all around us and the water so extraordinarily clear. We only went down to about 14.5 meters, but the total depth must be at least 10 meters more in some places.



Einar Hansen is leading the small group through the exciting dive!

Aquatica A-200, Nikon D200, P-Mode. Exposure Time: 1 / 30, FNumber: 2.8, Focal Length: 10.5, ISO Speed Ratings: 125

We noticed some tunnels and cave openings as we went but those will have to wait for later exploration, which only well trained and experienced cave and wreck divers are certified to do. The crack is about 0.8-1 kilometers long but the clear part is only about 4-500 meters. Not one but three huge rocks lie stuck between the cliffs and swimming under them thinking about earthquakes and volcanoes is not for the

feint hearted.

The crack is divided by rock slips in several places. In the south end we could swim under the hanging rocks into quite small and shallow parts, though it can be very dangerous. We saw small trout swimming curiously around us, but not too close though. Later the landowner told us that as a young boy he used to fish there with some success but the catch was never big. 30-40 years have



(Above) Einar Hansen is entering the crack on the second dive. Aquatica A-200, Nikon D200, P-Mode. Exposure Time: 1 / 50, FNumber: 3.5, Focal Length: 10.5, ISO Speed Ratings: 640 (Right)



Einar Hansen is about to swim under the huge rock which is stuck between the walls.

Aquatica A-200, Nikon D200, P-Mode. Exposure Time: 1 / 30, FNumber: 2.8, Focal Length: 10.5, ISO Speed Ratings: 640

now passed since the last fish were caught there.

Before returning home we thanked the 83 year old farmer for sharing his knowledge of the area and great hospitality and showed him the photos we had taken.

We are determined to go back for better photos and stay for a longer period of time. One more hidden treasure has now been found and simply must be explored further.

Gísli A. Gudmundsson



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Khao Sok caverns

by Ayesha Cantrell

As a dive instructor it's amazing to show your students a cuttlefish with its dinner tightly lodged in its beak dancing in your torch light. They surface amazed, something they will never forget yet while the scene is captured in my mind it wasn't captured by my Nikon! There are many such images I have mentally stored, what a photographic library I would have now if only I'd been out with my camera instead. So when one of my good friends asked me to come and photograph a largely unexplored underwater world, I jumped at the chance.

Khao Sok National Park in Thailand is an area usually visited for the ancient rain forest, jungle trekking and wildlife spotting opportunities. This lush area is dominated by 165kmsq lake which was created by a damming project, limestone pinnacles tower out of the water creating a stunning vista all around. Transport is by traditional Thai longtail boat only and the area is peaceful and serene. The damming heightened the water, flooding some amazing formations that have all but passed into history. Careful exploration and research is beginning to locate some of these

submerged sites and this is what I was here to document.

Over the years as my diving has progressed I have taken my camera along, adding it cautiously to new environments and skills. I'd logged many technical dives before taking my camera to depth and still survey a new wreck or site before getting the camera wet, this trip was no exception. For salty sea dogs, fresh water can be an interesting and somewhat wobbly experience, so our first dive was to be a short orientation, leaving the camera on the boat.

The experience was mesmerising but clearly the photographic challenge was to be an interesting one. The first few meters of water are misty, before giving way to crystal clear water but the top layer is certainly going to obscure the available light. Jungle debris means swimming around large fallen trees giving you the impression of diving through an enchanted forest. Entering the grotto is like swimming into a huge bowl shaped room with

Subal Nikon D200, 10.5mm lens, Inon strobes, 1/8th sec @ F5.6 ISO 500



home to very little life, only curious catfish. It was abundantly clear that they were very confused by these noisy bubble blowing creatures who seem to be carrying slices of the sun in their hands. They seemed to pop out, swim around and then rest on the exact spot I was eyeing up as a possible platform to steady the camera. Evidently they were going to be as constructive to photography as a kitten with a ball of wool.

Having surveyed the area, and got comfortable with fresh water buoyancy we surfaced to debrief and plan the next dives mission. I briefed my buddies on what I wanted to achieve on the next dive. I opted for what I perceived to be the simpler shots first and testing my set up with the available light by photographing the entrance structures and formations in silhouette. I wanted to do this without divers in the frame first, partly so that they could enjoy their dive without posing, but mainly so I had the shots to brief them on positioning within the frame when I needed them. I always find this easier particularly when your models are not underwater photographers as it can be difficult for them to visualise the shot you are aiming for.

Submerging and getting into position, I found that the sites I have located to stabilise the camera are not the best, but I managed to reposition

myself accordingly. Due to using such a wide angle lens, the camera shake is minimal and the results look good. I decide to try and light up a stalactite in the foreground with my strobe and this seems to be quite effective too. The one good thing about working in such low light conditions is that the playback screen is easier to review than in the bright light of shallow reefs. This allows me to more easily adjust my exposure. In addition, in bright light I often experience more difficulty in aiming the strobe light just right but these conditions make it much easier to train the focus light exactly where it is required. You don't get good without bad though and I soon realise that in much darker conditions that camera functionality is going to be difficult to see. The camera system is still new enough that not all the functionality is committed to memory by feel.

My buddies have explored the grotto on either side of the entrance, keeping well in sight but ensuring their torch beams do not enter my frame. For the majority of this dive I move very little and this gives many of the catfish the opportunity for a closer look at this strange creature. They seem emboldened by my immobility and one practically sits on my shoulder as if viewing the results of my images too. Catching something out of the corner of my eye



Subal Nikon D200, 10.5mm lens, Inon strobes, 1/13th sec @ F2.8 ISO 500

I turned and was mask to whisker with my would-be critique. It certainly made me jump. While the fish only stared back quizzically, my heart was racing and my hands shaking which is plainly no good for slow shutter speeds. As we head out of the grotto my buddy signals for me to come and have a closer look at what seems to be a small cave. Shining my torch beam in here I see one monstrous catfish filling the space. This colossal

fish is the size of a Labrador but without the happy-to-see-you waggy tail and certainly gives me pause for thought; what if he suddenly becomes interested in photography too?

Surfacing and getting onto the boat before my imagination runs wild with catfish nightmares, I'm pleased that we are heading off to another site for an orientation dive there. This site is a little different in terms of structure and following the guide lines around

is a little like taking a fairground ghost train. Sculptures materialise like would-be ghosts in flowing white sheets and are brilliant in their majesty. Focussing is clearly going to be frustrating and stabilising would be out of the question. That's tomorrow's challenge to sleep on but for now we head to our accommodation. Simple huts float on rafts on the lake and the sunset is captivating. The electric supply here is by generator only, hence no laptop to review the images on a larger scale. Given the availability of water from both above and below, I didn't fancy chancing my luck bring my baby with me anyway. However the images look good and are enough to brief tomorrow's modelling assignment.

Rising with the dawn, I'm eager to get in the water again, the nights ruminating over today's challenge has offered little other than to treat the whole dive as if night diving and not get frustrated. Relax, enjoy the dive and do my best was the attitude I submerged with and it proved to be the right one. When I couldn't get the camera to focus, I let it be and enjoyed what I was seeing. I surfaced with some interesting results but it's obvious that my next trip here will involve two strobes and a little more buddy participation. I believe disconnecting one strobe from its arm would give some fantastic results but



Subal Nikon D200, 10.5mm lens, Inon strobes, 1/13th sec @ F2.8 ISO 500

this is certainly better co-ordinated with my photography buddy after a few more dives to survey the site and set some realistic objectives.

Our final dive was back to catfish cave, as I was beginning to refer to it in my mind. I sank beneath the surface with some trepidation for the fishy fiend that lurked beneath and immediately checked out his lair.

Not finding him there did nothing to allay my angst, like the spider in the bathroom that becomes more fearsome when he's no longer there. Slightly spooked, I carefully surveyed my surroundings for him or his minions before giving myself a good talking to. I turned my attention to my models, who were clearly amused at my developing phobia,



Subal Nikon D200, 10.5mm lens, Inon strobes, 1/40th sec @ F6.3 ISO 500

and directed them into position. Whilst it was noticeably their first modelling assignment, we all had fun, we all learnt something and certainly achieved some passable results.

I think it's easy to get discouraged when taking photographs underwater and my early days saw a few tantrums due to disappointment at not being able to capture what I saw.

I think every underwater photographer should remember that the reason they took it up was because it was fun and they enjoyed it. Whether you have a simple point and shoot or a more advanced system, it's key to keep in mind to enjoy the experience and go easy on yourself. The more you dive and shoot, the more you will learn. Recognise the times when you should just leave the camera alone and enjoy what you are seeing. Remember unless you are quite lucky, very few of us have the opportunity to dedicate the dive to just achieving one perfect shot and measuring ourselves against those that do is hardly fair. If you have the correct approach you should

be able to look back at your favourite shots and smile both at the memory of both the dive and process of capturing the image.

Ayesha Cantrell



Dive Khao Sok
National Park

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The Eel Man of Ambon

by Rod Klein

Arriving in Ambon, I enter the small arrival terminal at the airport and am greeted by the wiry, high energy Ambonese man that is Yongki. He is the driver, “go-fer”, expediter, and overall indispensable guy that an expat-owned dive operation needs to help get things done. He’s also always on time, which is a big deal in this part of the world. Another virtue is that everyone knows Yongki. He’s greeted by almost everyone as we walk outside. I’m thinking, “I’m with the right guy”. He loads my gear into his black, well-worn SUV. I buy him a juice and myself a coke at a sidewalk stand outside the airport and we’re off.

As we take the 90-minute drive to Maluku Divers, I ask Yongki, for the record, to spell his name since I can’t quite understand his pronunciation. He gives it a shot but, although he can speak English, he doesn’t really know the English letters of the alphabet. It takes about 15 minutes for me to figure out how to say and spell his name and I continue to try and pick his brain about the local area and culture. Instead of driving all the way around Ambon

Bay to the resort, he uses the local ferry that cuts some time off the drive and I get a little extra taste of the local culture. Everyone is friendly and the kids are really interested in me...a short, fat, bald, white guy from who-knows-where.

While some liveaboards include diving in Ambon Bay on their itineraries, it is Maluku Divers, located in the village of Latuhalat on the southern tip of Ambon that has taken on the task of bringing diving back to the area. Founded by American John “Buck” Randolph and Brit Andy Shorten, Maluku Divers is the first actual land-based dive operation that has opened since “the conflict”. Currently, it is a fairly basic facility but the advantage of Maluku Divers over the occasional liveaboard operation is the knowledge that they have of the local diving and its critters.

During my stay at Ambon with Maluku Divers, I not only had incredible diving but I experienced the local culture of Latuhalat Village and the adjacent Namalatu Beach. On the weekends families would gather and kids would play in the waves. I



(Left) These eels are said to be sacred and are under the watchful care of the village patriarch, 61 year old Maggnus. He has adopted these eels and feeds them every day with raw eggs. (Right) This is Yongki. He is the driver, go-fer, expediter, and overall indispensable guy that an expat owned dive operation needs.



visited the local fish and fruit markets transported from my room to the dive center in a bechak, visited the local war memorial cemetery in honor of the allied troops kept by the Japanese during World War II, and toured the area with the colorful Yongki. But it was my visit to Waii that provided the crowning jewel in what had turned out to be not only a great diving experience but an enriching cultural experience was well.

The word for water in Indonesian is “air” but in the Ambonese dialect water is “waii”. About an hour north of Maluku Divers is the aptly-named village of Waii. The land where the village is built has a natural fresh water stream that runs through it. Over the years the village has built up the sides of the stream with concrete and it provides fresh water for the village, a place where the local women wash their family’s clothes



Waii's local fresh water eels are similar to the salt water species of conger eel.



Looking like smoke, a broken raw egg spills into the fresh water stream providing another treat for one of the eels.



Village patriarch and protector of the eels, Magnus with a group of local kids from the village. My presence with scuba gear caused a lot of excitement.

as well as being the local swimming hole for the village children.

The stream is an L-shaped channel and just a meter deep until the end, where it turns into a kind of cul-de-sac. There is a large tree at this end and some benches where people gather. At this point the stream bed becomes about three meters deep. This part of the stream is the home to a large number of fresh water eels similar in size and shape to salt water conger eels. These are said to be sacred and are under the watchful care of the village patriarch, Magnus. 61 years old with short white hair and a few missing teeth that become obvious when he smiles, Magnus has adopted these eels and feeds them every day with raw eggs.

He claims that there are hundreds of eels in this area of the stream and as soon as he steps into the shallow area adjacent to the eels' domain, several of the bigger residents swim out to greet him. In the village, it is forbidden to harm the eels in any way and stories of bad children turning into eels are

forever used as a way to keep the village's younger kids in line.

As soon as I see the stream, meet Magnus, and hear that there are "hundreds" of eels in the water, I tell my hosts that I have to go in to see for myself...and I really want to take my camera. About 15 minutes of discussion and negotiation takes place. Magnus understands why I'm in Ambon. He understands that the island has suffered since "the conflict" and that any opportunity to help the area or encourage people to come back to Ambon is a good thing. It is agreed that I can come back in two days and bring my scuba gear. We will pay him and the village about 100,000 rupiah for his kindness... about \$10.

So two days later we're back. This time with scuba gear, camera, housing and strobes. This, of course, is a huge event for Waii village and I attract a lot of attention. It's not everyday that a white American with scuba gear comes to dive with the local eels. As a matter of fact, it was a village first.

So with Magnus' blessing I step into the ten-foot deep stream without scuba just to check things out. Whoa, it's a little chilly...not the 84 degrees that I've been used to while diving in the Banda Sea. Good thing I brought a 3mm wetsuit not only for protection from scrapes on the shallow bottom but from the chilly fresh water stream.

As soon as I step in, two of the eels swim right up to me, certainly thinking I've got raw eggs waiting for them. They are just curious and not dangerous in the least. As a matter of fact, once I put on my scuba gear and start making bubbles they retreat into the many holes in the side of the stream wall.

I motion to Magnus to come in and start to offer the eggs and it takes a few minutes before one of the shy eels decides to overcome its fear of me and go grab a free meal. By this time I have an audience of maybe 15 kids and a few curious adults, everyone laughing and cheering at the unusual site of me taking pictures of their sacred eels. He feeds

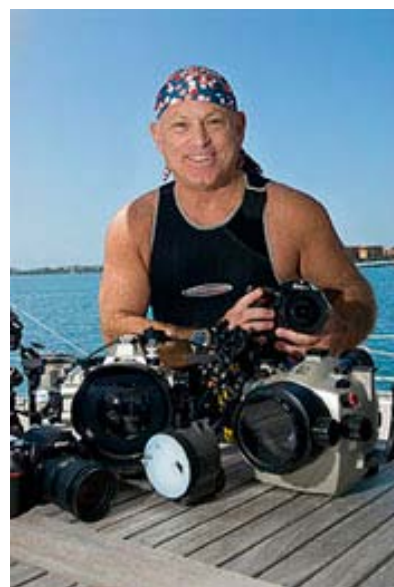


Maggnus feeding one of the local eels

from two huge six-foot speakers on the porch of one of houses at the entry to the village and overlooking the stream. So here I am in Ambon, Indonesia, in a stream filled with fresh water eels, cheering kids, women washing clothes, and Celion Dion blasting from two six-foot stereo speakers in a village house with no running water. I'm thinking to myself, there is no way to explain this to anyone; you just have to be here and see for yourself.

I wouldn't have changed a thing. Except maybe the music... a little Bruce Springsteen would have definitely expanded the culture!

Rod Klein
www.rhkuw.com



the eels for about half an hour and then motions that he wants to find one of the bigger eels further upstream in the shallow area that the kids swim in. I follow him with the camera, and like the Pied Piper, the village kids follow us on our next stop. There are eels everywhere in the stream, even where the women are washing clothes. No one seems to mind.

There's a sort of surreal aspect to this whole encounter. The whole time I'm in the stream with Maggnus and the eels very loud music is coming

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Phi Phi Island Marine Park

Phi Phi Ley, Bida Nai & Bida Nok

by Tobias Reitmayr

I would say I know this place like my vest pocket (literal translation from German). After almost 4 years diving fulltime in these waters, I feel extremely familiar with the waters around Phi Phi Island in South West Thailand. But still there are creatures I have not come across and conditions of the sea that still surprise me. And that is what the thrill of this Andaman Sea is about; you don't know what awaits you after the next coralhead and the currents might be very different from what the tide chart tells you. I've lived and worked in other places and seas but have not experienced the kind of oceanic moodiness that I find here.

This tiny group of islands lies around 40 km off the Phuket peninsula in Thai waters on the continental shelf with depths of around 30m everywhere. The Islands consist of impressive limestone rocks enthroning the dark and sometimes troubled waters. The seasons are defined by the south west monsoon that brings rain and waves in the months from around May to September. Best traveling time could be after the busiest months of November, December, and January

when the conditions are still good but the island is not that crowded. A morning and an afternoon ferry runs everyday between Phi Phi and Phuket or Krabi. Over the years tourism kept growing thanks to the proximity of the huge holiday destination Phuket and the Hollywood movie The Beach in 1998. A massive backlash came with the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, but the tourism industry came back surprisingly quickly to its previous level.

There are around 15 dive shops gathered mainly around the tiny village of Ton Sai on the main Island of Phi Phi Don. The islands are designated a marine park which bans fishing in the surrounding waters. Trips go out every day to the local dive spots of Phi Phi Ley with its famous Beach of Maya Bay and the two amazing southern rocks of Bida Nok and Bida Nai. The trips go out in the morning or afternoon reaching the local sites in about 20-40 mins, depending on the boat. In the following I will describe the diving around Phi Phi Ley and the Bida islands.

Compared to the East side of



Canon EOS 350d, Sea&Sea housing, Canon 18-55mm, YS-90auto, 1/200, f8, manual mode

Thailand with its famous dive spots around the island of Koh Tao and Samui and Phangan, the Andaman sea offers a much higher diversity of marine life.

Bida Nai & Bida Nok **'The two raisins in the cake'**

Hardly do you find a day without a dive boat on these two rocks in the southern marine park. Even from the surrounding mainland divers are



Phi_Phi_viewpoint : view of Ton Sai village from the viewpoint

taking the 2-3 hour long journey one way by boat to get a glimpse of the fringing reefs around these two rocks located about 300m away from each other.

Walls, swim throughs, overhangs, caves and sandy slopes are encountered on these circular dives ranging from 0-30m depth. In the morning there can be wonderful light and I love to have a wide angle setup then with me. Visibility can be very different, in high season around



Canon EOS 350d, Sea&Sea housing, Canon 18-55mm, YS-90auto, 1/125, f10, manual mode

10-25m and in low season 4-15m, depending very much on the local conditions. Hard coral fields with Acropora, leather corals, huge gorgonians, sea whips colonise the slopes of the shallow areas. The walls are covered with Dendronephthya soft corals of all colors that spread their arms into the current, barrel sponges and bubble corals are abundant. Between the two rocks lies Fantasy Reef, a great and mystical outcrop surrounded by staghorn corals. Here we find groups of huge Pickhandle Barracudas, Tall-fin Batfish, Bigmouth and Bigeye Trevallies and snappers. There is a good chance of encountering leopard sharks, seasonally the very shy but gracious Black Tip Reef Sharks, sometimes Bamboo Sharks and Hawksbill Turtles are seen commonly. Macro lovers will be able to dive on the Bidas over and over again: seahorses, Ghostpipefish, Durban Dance Shrimp, Squat lobster



Canon EOS 350d, Sea&Sea housing, Canon 10-22mm, YS-90auto, 1/100, f8, manual mode

and shrimp, Anemone crab, Longnose Filefish, Frogfish, various species of sea slugs. Of course you want to have an experienced guide with you to find the specimen of interest. Also the currents around full and black moon can be strong and limit your range of diving on these rocks especially on the smaller one Bida Nai.

Phi Phi Ley

This uninhabited 3km long island is famous for The Beach, for its birds nests which are harvested by local families as delicacies, and of course the diving. Located 2km south of the main island Phi Phi Don, it hosts many different dive sites around its coast, being totally accessible only in high season due to the western waves that make the west side too rough in low season. In general the sites are more pleasant for beginners than the Bidas when strong currents are expected but visibility seems to be a little lower here.

Also here you find very diverse dive sites with



Canon Powershot A95, Canon housing, internal flash, automatic settings

walls, boulders, overhangs and coral fields. It's home to similar marine life as the Bidas, but with slightly less diversity. Leafy Ghostpipefish, Pipefish and Razor Shrimpfish have adjusted themselves to the debris from the plants of the island. On almost every dive Hawksbill Turtles can be found resting, feeding or catching a breath. Close to Maya Bay exist several interesting flooded cave systems with dripstones and a specialized marine life community. Staghorn corals and tree soft corals are more abundant on the east side where less wave movement is found over the year. Harlequin shrimp, clown frogfish, the comet and the Longnose Filefish are further macro highlights on Phi Phi Ley. Although the sites were only moderately affected by the tsunami in 2004 we find the north east destroyed table coral fields. The local diver community has some reef rebuilding projects running here.

I can highly recommend these islands to the underwater photo community, I have had an uncountable number of wonderful photo dives here and hopefully more too. To me it makes sense



Canon EOS 350d, Sea&Sea housing, Canon 18-55mm, YS-90auto, 1/100, f8, manual mode

to be based on the island for photo trips as it is the closest and most convenient way to access the dive sites (2 dives 8am and 1pm). Several breathtaking diving areas that are also reachable from Phi Phi I haven't even mentioned: The Shark Point Marine Park with the King Cruiser Ship Wreck and Anemone Reef, as well as the extra-terrestrial underwater sea mounts of Hin Daeng and Hin Muang (only accessible in high season). The Phi Phi Island Marine Park is also a good alternative to the world famous Similan Island Marine Park 65km west of Khao Lak in Thailand, as

it hosts a similar marine life and is accessible with only half day trips.

Tobias Reitmayr
www.divologist.de



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Black Corals of La Palma

by Glenn Lawyer

The edge of the reef is 100 meters off the beach. A brisk surface swim brings us to the buoy. We follow the rope down to the mooring, 22 meters below. Three meters further west the bottom falls away, descending from 25 meters to more than 70. The first bushy shapes appear, ghost-like, at 35 meters. Soon they turn into a forest, continuing down well past the limits that sane divers respect.

These are the black corals of La Palma, *Antipatharia Wollastoni*. In the light of the torch, however, they are orange, or sometimes red. This color comes from living tissue which connects the individual polyps, covering their chitinous skeleton. Each polyp has 6 unbranched tentacles. The polyps are fully exposed. They are unable to retract, and receive no structural protection from the skeleton. Their only defence against current is a slight, weak contraction.

It is the skeleton which is black. It is composed of multiple layers of helically wound chitin fibers, anchored to a framework of fine spines. This arrangement provides

great strength along with some flexibility. The fibers in the helical winding have similar alignment which prevents cracking or buckling when twisted or bent. The skeleton is less rigid than wood, while having a density between that of wood and shell. They sway most gracefully in currents and eddies.

The skeleton has motivated a centuries-old harvest for the jewelry trade. Not only does it polish to a beautiful sheen, but it was once considered to ward off disease. The name *Antipatharia* is derived from its supposed anti pathogenic properties. The Mediterranean species, *A.*

The west coast of La Palma., f/11.0, 1/640, Canon 17-85 mm, aperture priority; ISO 200; Canon 20d

(Right) The skeleton has motivated a centuries-old harvest for the jewelry trade. Not only does it polish to a beautiful sheen, but it was once considered to ward off disease. f/11.0 (1/60), Tokina 10-17, manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20d; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240





These are the black corals of La Palma, Antipatharia Wollastoni. In the light of the torch, however, they are orange, or sometimes red. This color comes from living tissue which connects the individual polyps, covering their chitinous skeleton. f/9.0 (1/160), Tokina 10-17, manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20d; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240



These dead branches are almost always colonized by encrusting anemones. f/11.0 (1/160), Canon 100mm macro, manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20d; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240



Living Antipatharias seem to have few commensals. This is difficult to explain, as their dense, branching structure seems to offer ideal cover for small fish. f/11.0 (1/160) Canon 100mm macro manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240.

subpinnata, has for some time been extremely rare shallower than 70 meters. Not all the news is bad, however. Scientists at Italy's Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA) recently found almost 30,000 colonies of A. subpinnata coral at a depth of between 55 and 100 meters (180 and 328 feet) in the Strait of Messina. Here they are continually fed by the passing currents, which in the old days were personified by the monsters Scylla and Charybdis.

The corals in La Palma are healthy and abundant. Juveniles were common as were many larger specimens as much as a meter wide. I hesitate to guess at their age, though if their growth is

similar to the California Christmas tree coral (A. dendrochristos), they are probably less than 100 years old. A different species of black coral, which grows in the depths of the abyss, was recently shown to live for over 4,000 years by EB Roark et al at Stanford University ("Extreme longevity in proteinaceous deep-sea corals"). Over 250 species of black coral are known, with many of these found in depths below 1000 meters. All, including the relatively shallow-dwelling Antipatharias, lack symbiotic algae. They do not need the sun to generate food, and in fact appear to not tolerate sunlight very well. A. Wollastoni is generally found only below 35 meters, though some exceptions are

reported in the shadow of overhangs at 20 meters in Tenerife.

Some of the larger specimens on La Palma are covered in what appears to be grey dust. It may be sediment which has washed down the reef face, as it appears more common on the shallower corals. We did not see much of this below 42 meters, nor does one see it at all dive sites around the island. We did not test the sediment hypothesis, however, and other explanations are possible. It could, possibly, be the residue of the tissue which once covered the skeleton.

On many of the coral, a single central branch had died, leaving the side colonies alive. These dead

branches are almost always colonized by encrusting anemones, which Georg identified as Zoanthidea *Gerardia* by its horned skeleton-- Georg's early training as a biologist has never left him. Interestingly in light of the recent discovery of the lifespan of black corals, a 1995 article measuring the age of *Gerardias* collected from 620 meters depth off the Bahamas banks found their age to be 1800 +/- 300 years ("Gerardia: Bristlecone pine of the deep-sea?", by Ellen Druffel et al.).

I was not able to learn if the anemone killed the coral, or only took advantage of already dead branches. In most cases they appeared to co-exist, with both species appearing healthy. The ocean, however, is a battleground. As the coral dies, the anemone moves in. The skeleton of a fully dead coral can be totally encrusted with the anemone. While the *Z. Gerardia* is the most common resident of dead coral, it is not the only one. One coral had a white bloom, reminiscent of a chrysanthemum.

Living Antipatharians seem to have few commensals. This is difficult to explain, as their dense, branching structure seems to offer ideal cover for small fish. The lack of commensals was also observed in the California corals, at depths of 90--300 meters. Direct observation from a submarine lead Dr. Milton Love of USCSB to conclude that only 15% of live colonies had invertebrates living among the polyps.

Contradicting this finding is the claim that a commensal shrimp, the *Periclimenes Wirtzi*, is fairly common on *A. Wollastoni* in the Azores, at depths of 30-40 meters. I spoke with Dr. Cedric d'Udekem at the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences, who wrote the first scientific description of the species in 1996 (naming it after Peter Wirtz, who collected the samples). He said that in the Azores



I was not able to learn if the anemone killed the coral, or only took advantage of already dead branches. In most cases they appeared to co-exist, with both species appearing healthy. The ocean, however, is a battleground. As the coral dies, the anemone moves in. The skeleton of a fully dead coral can be totally encrusted with the anemone. f/13.0 (1/160), Tokina 10-17, manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20d; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240.

each black coral is usually occupied by at least a few *P. Wirtzi*, and sometimes by hundreds.

Nonetheless, Georg says he has never seen one in La Palma, adding wryly that perhaps he should spend more time looking for 1cm long clear-bodied shrimp and less time watching the divers he is escorting.

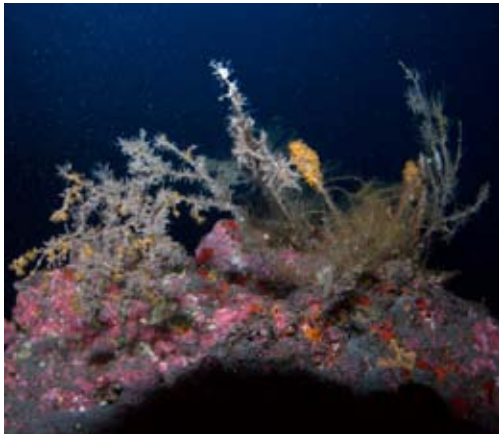
Almost every article I found on the black coral, and they were few, remarked that little is known about them. One article backed up this claim by citing two additional sources. Though I would like to know more facts about the coral, it isn't book knowledge I am after. They are enchanting, wondrous, waving me down into the deeps. I wish I



Each polyp has 6 unbranched tentacles. The polyps are fully exposed. They are unable to retract, and receive no structural protection from the skeleton. Their only defense against current is a slight, weak contraction. f/11.0 (1/160) Canon 100mm macro manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20d; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240.

could stay longer, and one day I will.

Photographing *A. Wollastoni* is easy. They are abundant below 35 meters and don't move much. Past 40 meters attractive subjects are everywhere. Good photographs, however, are more challenging. The depth limits the time available, and (at least in my case) slows and confuses the thoughts. I try to plan my shots before I go into the water, and make the final settings of my rig (strobe placement, shutter/aperture) while still shallow. Natural light at those depths has no color, making a strobe essential. My slowness of thought made it difficult to judge proper exposures. I have a nice collection of photos showing coral backlit with horribly blown



Some of the larger specimens on La Palma are covered in what appears to be grey dust. It may be sediment which has washed down the reef face, as it appears more common on the shallower corals. f/13.0 (1/160) Tokina 10-17 manual exposure; ISO 200; Canon 20d; Aquatica A20; single Inon z240

out sunbursts from depths of 45+ meters. Next time I will use exposure bracketing. The confusion of thought, and the dearth of commensal species, makes wide-angle easier than macro. Macro requires too much thought to find and frame the perfect single branch, even when the shot was planned ahead. Bashing a dome port into the lava near the base of a coral bush is much simpler, and likely to capture the entire coral lit orange against the blue background water (provided the lens is 17mm or wider). I hear the scratches can be polished out.

The depth should not frighten nor discourage you. The dives are shore dives, making safe profiles easy even for those without advanced technical dive training. Georg is a skilled and conservative guide. He is a three-star CMAS instructor, supplemented by a great deal of technical diving training

and experience.

Georg and Barbara were my gracious guides during this and many other excursions to the underwater wonders of La Palma. Georg has operated Tauch Partner La Palma dive center since 2005, and has been diving La Palma since 1991. I have been diving here since 2003, and exclusively with Georg since he took over the shop.

Glenn Lawyer



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Guidelines for contributors

The response to UwP has been nothing short of fantastic. We are looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography. We are looking for work from existing names but would also like to discover some of the new talent out there and that could be you! UwP is the perfect publication for you to increase your profile in the underwater photography community.

The type of articles we're looking for fall into five main categories:

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc

Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards

Subjects - Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

**If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.**

E mail peter@uwpmag.com

How to submit articles

To keep UwP simple and financially viable, we can only accept submissions by e mail and they need to be done in the following way:

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 144dpi

Size - Maximum length 15cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 15 cm wide and verticals would be 15cm.

File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality. This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

3. Captions - **Each and every image MUST have full photographic details** including camera, housing, lens, lighting, film, aperture, shutter speed and exposure mode. These must also be copied and pasted into the body of the e mail.

Parting Shot 1

Jacques Cousteau reportedly proclaimed Ginie Springs as “the clearest water on earth”. Ginie Springs, located near Gainesville, Florida, has four diveable springs – the Ginie ballroom, the Devil’s Ear, the Devil’s Eye, Little Devil, and Dogwood spring. The Devil’s system is a cave diver’s paradise with 30,000 feet of tunnels, but the springs are also a very popular site for open water divers.

The most popular spring, the Ginie Ballroom, is a cavern whose entrance begins in about eighteen feet of water. The opening is about six feet in width and immediately opens into a thirty foot chamber with a nine foot ceiling. Then there is a large sloping room of approximately 60 feet by 70 feet which angles downward to a depth of 60 feet. A large grate prevents divers from entering the cave system.

The Devil’s Eye is a round shaft of limestone that begins in about six feet of water and drops to 20 feet where it meets the cave entrance. The Devil’s Eye connects to the Devil’s Ear, another entrance into the cave system at the river’s edge. The third spring, Little Devil is a forty foot long fissure that drops to forty five feet. For safety reasons, only certified cavern or cave divers are allowed to dive with lights in the Devil’s Spring system.

Dogwood Spring is a small spring around 12 feet deep and is primarily enjoyed by snorkelers.

All of these springs have been incorporated into one of Florida’s best camping and recreational parks, complete with bathrooms, hot showers, a full service dive shop, and a country store.



Canon 40D, Aquatica housing, Tokina 10-17 lens at 10mm, f10, 1/640 sec, ISO 200, ambient light

The springs here are a year round 72 degrees and flow into the Santa Fe River which often flows dark with tannin. The tannin in the river contrasts with the crystal clear water exiting the springs making for beautiful photography. The accompanying photograph was taken after exiting

a cave dive from the Devil’s Ear spring shooting up into the river with the diver silhouetted against the noonday sun.

Douglas Ebersole
www.debersole.com

Parting Shots 2

I was lucky enough to have the time and money to join Alex Mustard in Indonesia earlier this year. A predominantly British group travelled out to the Lembeh strait, where we were later joined by a few more divers and headed east in a small and somewhat rickety turboprop aircraft to the wonders of Raja Ampat.

This is the story of the first week, in Lembeh:

The Lembeh Resort sits facing the volcanoes of the large island of Sulawesi, which are almost enough, at sunset, to distract the keenest underwater photographer from the delights hidden in the volcanic muck of the strait itself (frogfish, lacy Ambon scorpionfish and mating mimic octopus, to mention but a little of what we found). It was the first time in such “critter” richness for me, but my obsession was with the mandarinfish...

Now, I’ve visited Mabul in Malaysian Borneo, and missed the mandarinfish there, so they became another of my “if only I could get a shot of that” wish-list. I’m pretty sure that most photographers end up haunted by these wish-lists.

... anyway, five minutes’ swim from the showers at Lembeh resort is a thicket of fine stag coral that is home to a community of mandarinfish, pyjama cardinalfish and banded pipefish. The perfect opportunity to shorten my wish-list! Or so I thought...

Mandarinfish perform in the evening, darting out of the coral in mating pairs; there is about a second to grab a shot in the failing light as the sun hides behind the volcanoes.

On the first night I took a 105mm micro-Nikkor lens to capture the small mandarinfish:



fantastic! For about ten minutes the mandarins were shooting out of the coral, spawning, and dashing back... except that my red focus light completely failed to work with the long lens and my D200. Great dive, no images.

On the second night I was determined: I missed a great dive out in the strait, but the mandarins were going to be mine: 60mm lens, fast AF, I knew where the fish were, great! Except for two divers with video... which need bright, white lights, and if there is one thing that mandarinfish do not like, it’s bright light. So, no fish at all.

On the third night, despite the absence of video, there weren’t any fish near me: over there, yes, and then if I moved, back where I had been, but in front of my lens? No, none at all.

By this time the other members of the team were a bit worried, after all, everyone has pictures of mandarinfish, haven’t they? I succumbed to the octopus, squid, scorpionfish, frogfish that were keeping everyone else entertained. But, there was the wish-list...

... one night remaining, I went back to the coral thicket. A little flicker of movement, a hint of blue and orange: there, in the depths of the coral a large male. Was there a female? Yes! Slowly



moving through the dusky water... a fraction of a second later rushing a few centimetres above the coral spines, in the viewfinder, flash! One shot.

That was it, six-and-half hours, and one shot.

And the volcano sunset was there every night, at the same time, before the night dives that I missed because of mandarinfish obsession.

Tim Priest

Parting Shot 3

The island of Niihau is located 17 miles southwest of Kauai, and is often referred to as Hawaii's "forbidden island". It's been largely off limits to visitors since 1864, when Elizabeth Sinclair purchased the island from King Kamehameha V.

Niihau has remained in the ownership of her descendants (the Robinsons), who've attempted to preserve the Hawaiian culture and language among the small population by preventing any influx of settlers from the outside world.

As the waters around Niihau aren't privately owned, anyone can visit on a boat provided they don't actually land. To get out there, you must base yourself on Kauai, and be prepared for early starts and a possibly rough crossing of the Kaulakahi Channel of 1.5 to 2 hours outbound and up to 2.5 hours on the return leg. Most of the dive sites are centred around Lehua Rock, a spectacular semi-submerged crater located off Niihau's north east.

We knew from our research that we'd have "a chance" of Hawaiian Monk Seal encounters in these waters and at best we hoped for a swift "fly past". However, our expectations were raised during the dive briefing

for Vertical Awareness (which as the name suggests, is a vertigo inducing wall dive) when the dive guides explained how to behave around the seals.

Although sometimes curious of divers, Hawaiian Monk Seals are often skittish and wary, and are more likely to stick around if divers don't swim directly at them. Instead, a slower and more "meandering" approach tends to be more successful and if you're able to get close, it's a good idea to ensure that the seal has enough space to make an exit. Sporadic rather than constant eye contact were also considered good advice as it's thought that the seals finds it less threatening.

And so, we were treated to some amazing Hawaiian Monk Seal encounters, most memorably at Vertical Awareness where we were able to approach to within touching distance of one individual whilst it rested on the rocky plateau close to the wall.

Every few minutes, the seal would surface for air and return to the same spot. In this image, the seal appears to be "laughing" at Scott, one of the dive guides. Sometimes, the "monk" (as some locals call



Nikon D200/Subal housing combination with a 10.5mm fisheye and Subtronic strobe. Settings were 1/40th, f8 and ISO100.

them) would vocalize with a throaty growl which is thought be territorial before relaxing to check out its own reflection in my dome port as I tentatively edged closer. Even the crew considered our encounter very special.

The "forbidden island" of Niihau is the "wild frontier" of diving in the Hawaiian Islands and rewards

the visitor with some spectacular underwater experiences. It's truly world class and full of photographic potential. And it's probably the best place to get encounters with one of world's most endangered marine mammals, the Hawaiian Monk Seal.

Jeremy Cuff

www.ja-universe.com

Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?

If so e mail me

and yours could be the next "Parting shot".

peter@uwpmag.com

www.uwpmag.com

Canon D10

by Rob Spray

This is one camera which pictures don't do justice. As soon as you pick it up the bulbous curves fit into your hands the way a cuboid just can't. It's Canon's first waterproof digital camera, back last century they had APS snorkelling models but it's been a long dry spell. Interestingly they haven't toyed with more conservative ratings, the D10 is rated to a market leading 10m (i.e. Olympus matching). It sits at the top of a range of one! Price and size wise it's top of the market too. The name is odd, fitting the scheme Canon uses for SLRs but there's absolutely no chance of confusion in the flesh!

Appearance dominates a first encounter with the D10. There's plenty of shiny bits, exposed stainless fasteners and all those curves to play in the light. It takes a while to spot that while there is metal, the vast majority of the body is painted plastic, so the beautiful finish may suffer from bumps and scrapes. The internal frame is metal allowing the most extrovert flourish on the D10, lanyard fixing points at each corner. Real statement pieces of machining these allow the camera to be attached to an amazing cast, locking 'nipple' in three ways

more than necessary.

The rating puts it head to head with the third 10m Olympus model, the TOUGH 8000. It seems quite clear that Canon have taken note of their experience and the D10 seals look very impressive. The waterproofing of the D10 takes a slightly different tack from the Olympus. Both have two hatches and on both the smaller has just a lipped gasket but the larger is fitted with a real 'o'ring on the D10 where Olympus stick with a larger lipped rubber gasket. Both work fine, we can confirm that both are effective to double their rated depth. The 'o' ring will be more fiddly to clean and should be lightly greased, which makes debris stick to it...

The two companies have chosen different basis of their designs with the D10 quite conventional within its Faberge egg casing and Olympus using folded optics, lots more exterior metal and more of a Rolex motif. The use of a conventional lens has both strengths and weaknesses. The Canon lens is brighter, at f2.8, than any competitor but has more limited range and less effective macro. Close up the protruding lens casts flash shadows on small subjects, this vignetting is increased by a stout aluminium ring which secures the front port and could so easily have been threaded for filters and extra lenses. As the case must rigidly cover the lens in all positions



it cannot retract so the D10 isn't a true pocket camera, unless you want to enjoy some Carry On humour of course :-). The 3x zoom starting at the equivalent of 35mm is the least flexible lens in this part of the market with many competitors starting at 28mm.

Putting what seems to be a Powershot chassis into a case instantly benefits from the development of that very successful line and the D10 is fast and logical to use. Like the Olympi it assumes you will probably

use Auto or Program and keeps its welter of scene modes accessible but compact. Shooting video is given top level status rather than hidden which is a good choice given the likely use of the D10 for family holidays.

The control layout of the D10 will be familiar to anyone who has tried a Canon Powershot, bar the use of buttons for zoom control and mode switching - instead of hard to seal dials and sliders. The ergonomics are easy to figure out and the two button for the two level - picture and system

– menu is a treat after digging through some others. It's a shame that macro is always its second focus choice after landscape as I'm a fiend for small stuff and I'm not sure I've ever been so surprised by a mountain that I needed that option first under my trigger finger.

Unlike a lot of compacts these days the D10 has no internal memory for pictures. Surprisingly there's no small card in the box either, bear this in mind if you plan to present one as a gift.

As we went on we had to keep lowering our expectations on battery life, days underwater really do drain it when you use flash and have the screen on for long periods. In use which included quite a lot of menu hopping and flash use we managed 140-160 shots per charge, not very impressive. As usual with a small camera a spare battery is part of the kit you'll want for a day out.

There's no case supplied, which is a shame as that groovy paint job deserves protection. Given the price a neoprene slip case would have been a great addition to the package – and help the camera float if it falls out of reach, it sinks on its own! I assume other colours will become available as the current splash of blue is a separate panel.

In water it's strange to handle a 'naked' camera, much easier to see

the control markings than one which is housed. With bare hands the cluster of small buttons isn't a problem but in colder water any gloves make it hard to feel those which are recessed beside the screen. The soap-like shape is also predictably slippery in gloved hands. The lanyard 'nipple' can be moved to suit your grip but can't be said to make a vast difference.

I'm pleased to say the D10 returned some good looking results from its first dive. The default program setting allowed it to use a fast enough shutter and strong enough flash so that the vivid underwater world of the Dutch oyster beds lit up in all their surprising glory. What was more surprising was that the D10 didn't struggle to focus in the cloudy, albeit bright shallow waters. Even at macro distances it was quite straightforward to get sharp results. The one fly in the ointment is that with the projecting lens surround and flash set well back, subjects less than 15cm away are masked from the flash. However as the working distance stays at 30cm throughout the zoom range (the minimum 3cm minimum distance is available only at fully wide) it is still practical to photograph quite small animals, although focus is more ponderous at telephoto. The easy access to video shooting makes it simple to capture clips to show friends. The clips are



Dawn really took to the D10, though it's tricky to use in gloves

fine but with many cameras offering HD capture it's a shame that the D10 only offers VGA. Still camera video is still a bit of a novelty but this is fine for YouTube to show the lobster that went for you! Each 1 minute of video takes the place of about 40 full size photos, so even with just a 1 GB card you have room for about 12 minutes of video (or 340 pictures).

I suspect for many people using exactly the same camera underwater, with no housing, might get them past the mental block some have about

submerged photography and ease them into this hobby. The 10m depth limit is going to cramp your style for a lot of diving but a tropical snorkeller could get great use out of. The screen is bright and contrasty making use in the shallows quite practical and sharp enough that the option to enlarge the screen centre as focus confirmation was genuinely useful.

At low ISO pictures are very good but noise reduction creeps in fast as film speed increases. Image stabilisation means the D10 can hold



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Some of the reef residents are quite feisty

low ISO longer and controls what noise there is well. Shots at ISO50-160 are really very sharp, beyond ISO200 you won't enjoy all your 12 Megapixels as detail is reduced. This is done well and for most uses high ISO turns out attractive results. On the surface the D10 seemed slightly too liberal in handling highlights, quite willing to burnout even central detail to keep the overall exposure on track. For the most part that produced punchy photos but occasionally faces would get the treatment and spoil a picture. My girlfriend, who abhors all

things technical, found the menus easy but was annoyed that every power cycle dropped her settings for macro and zoom.

The lanyard nipple system offers plenty of choice, which is marvellous of course, but why make it like a bar of soap to start with? A few bumps or some rubber on the right hand side would have worked wonders and also protected the case. In common with a lot of cameras it would have been sensible to raise or dimple the shutter button to make it easier to find with cold and/or gloved hands.



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It was good going for a compact to catch these arguing fish

It's very easy to be seduced by the looks of the D10 and assume it's just a good time Charlie, a toy. Underneath the sexy skin is a nice, amenable camera of the kind you would have been very happy to use a year or so ago before everything had to be complicated. That's not to say it isn't capable, the 12 Megapixel sensor produces clean, sharp pictures on and under water which you could make into posters. The user interface is the best kind of simple which means you can take advantage of those moments you bought a waterproof camera to



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This crops shows the excellent low ISO detail

capture.

Pros: Great looks, good results straight away underwater, easy menu ergonomics and flexible modes

Cons: Protruding lens bulky and masks macro flash, no case, easily scraped, extrovert nipple! Below average battery life. Auto power off short.

Rob Spray
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