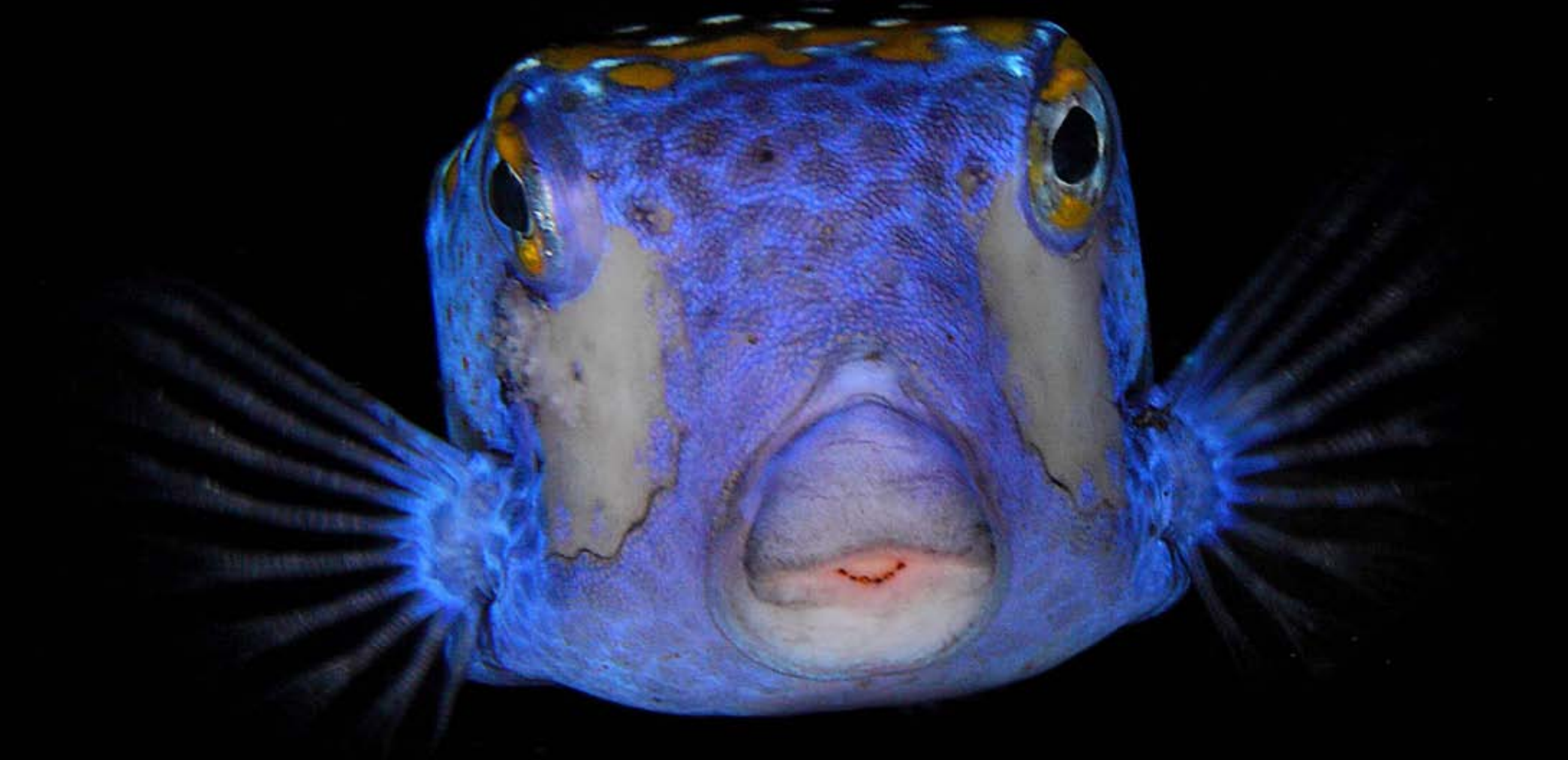


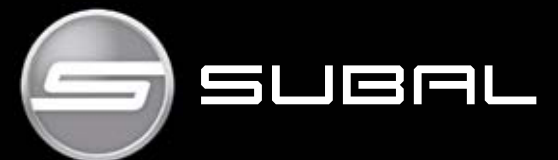




Our motive: Your passion

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

^w | www.subal.com



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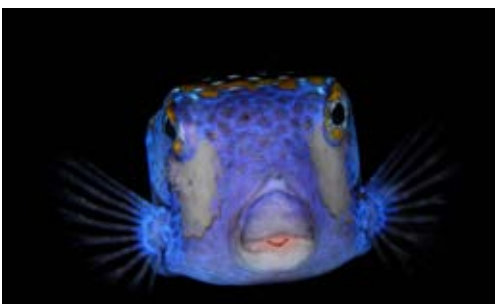
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Underwater Photography
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Publisher/Editor Peter Rowlands
www.pr-productions.co.uk
peter@uwpmag.com

Underwater Photography

A web magazine UwP52 Jan/Feb 2010

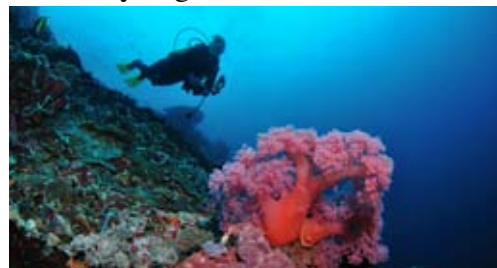
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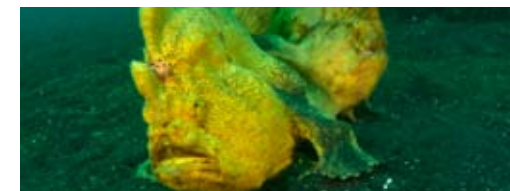
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Editorial

First of all, Seasons Greetings to you all and best wishes for 2010. The end of this year marks the end of the first decade of the 21st century and the rate of change since 2000 has been nothing short of meteoric.

Ten years ago digital photography was in its infancy, UwP hadn't even been born and traditional film stock was still the market leader yet, as is so typical in today's ever increasing pace, the decline in demand for film took the industry by surprise and saw the collapse of fundamental brands such as Ilford and to a certain extent, Polaroid.

Fast forward to the end of the decade and Kodachrome had gone and new models of digital cameras were appearing almost monthly. The transition was complete, irreversible and, with the benefit of hindsight, inevitable.

Progress came in leaps and bounds and it is only by looking back that we can see how far we have come. No more 36 exposures, instant feedback without conventional processing and a dramatic increase in quality

are progressions which none of us would give up now that they are the norm.

Unfortunately such rapid progress comes with an environmental cost in terms of raw materials which are only slightly counteracted by the elimination of chemical processing. The rate at which camera models are replaced can be measured in months for compact cameras and not much more than a couple of years for top end digital SLRs but surely there is light at the end of the tunnel. How many megapixels do we really need and surely the desire to upgrade will be less compulsive as the quantitative improvements get smaller.

I see the rapid rate of change in the photography market slowing down in the next decade but what I thought was going to happen in the publishing world has not yet taken place. However I am convinced that just as film gave way to digital so too will printed publications become electronic. Newspapers are already struggling with falling ad revenue and increasing competition from the internet, TV and radio. Magazines are fairing slightly

better but I feel their clock is ticking and if they do not gear up for electronic production and distribution they will find it increasingly hard to compete.

You dear reader can relax in the knowledge that in 2001 UwP was the world's first electronic format magazine and as such almost eliminated its production and distribution costs. The result is a free magazine for you to download thanks to the support of advertisers and contributors. It is a symbiosis which works well in a specialist market so, in return dear reader, support our advertisers to protect our future and consider making a small donation to our contributors who give up their time and impart their talent free of charge.

You can make a donation at
www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

2010 Calendars from Jeremy & Amanda Cuff

Photographers and photojournalists Jeremy and Amanda Cuff have published a pair of 2010 Calendars titled "Diving Dreams" and "Sensational Socorros".

Jeremy said, "The Diving Dreams 2010 Calendar features a variety of images, mostly from our dive travels over the last three years, and includes destinations such as Hawaii, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines and Egypt."

"The Sensational Socorros 2010 Calendar features a collection of images from Mexico's remote Socorro Islands, with all images captured during an excellent week aboard the Solmar V liveaboard."

Both of the 2010 Calendars can be obtained from Jeremy & Amanda at a cost of £7.25 each including postage.

For further information, please visit Jeremy & Amanda's website .



www.ja-universe.com

Dive Fest 2010

30 APRIL - 3 MAY 2010
PENTEWAN SANDS HOLIDAY PARK
CORNWALL



HOME TICKETS WHAT'S ON DIVING CONTACTS

Dive Fest 2010 takes place over the May bank holiday weekend from 6pm on Friday 30th April to 5pm on Monday 3 May 2010 and is set to be even bigger and better than this year's festival – for a start the event is a day longer!

Dive Fest is the UK's biggest diving festival and takes place at Pentewan Sands Holiday Park in

Cornwall. The idea is that divers from all over the UK get together for a huge party, complete with live music, food, events and equipment stalls. The first such event took place in May 2009 and was a massive success, with more than 1,000 divers attending.

www.divefest.co.uk

Shark Diving Expedition In the Bahamas on a Live Aboard



Our comfortable 26 meter vessel leaves from West Palm Beach Florida

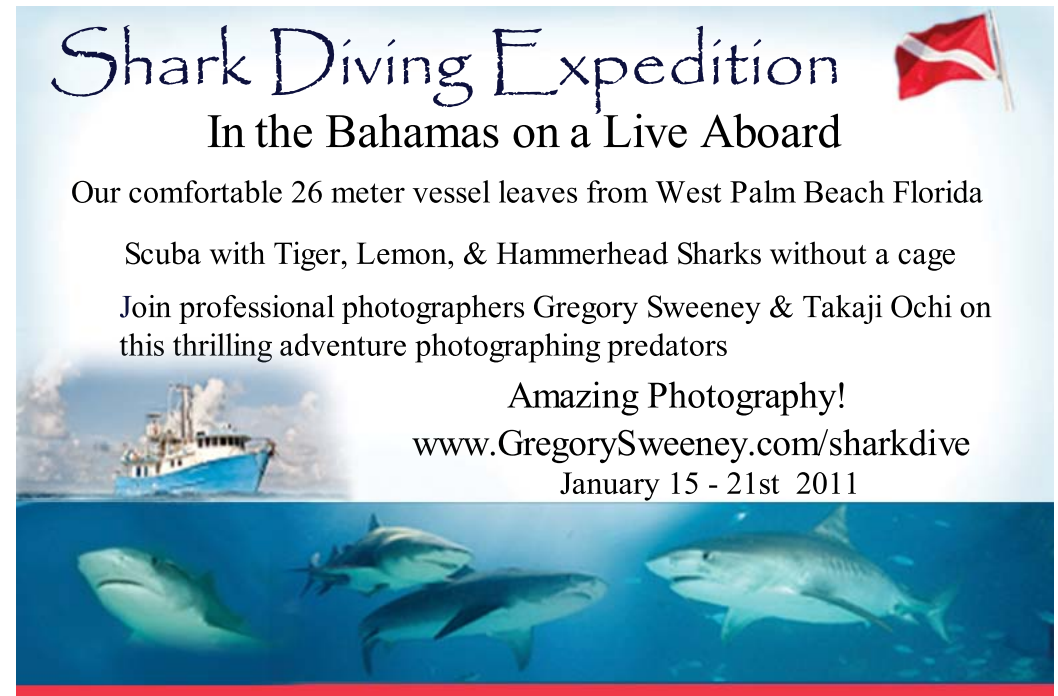
Scuba with Tiger, Lemon, & Hammerhead Sharks without a cage

Join professional photographers Gregory Sweeney & Takaji Ochi on this thrilling adventure photographing predators

Amazing Photography!

www.GregorySweeney.com/sharkdive

January 15 - 21st 2011



Cageless Shark Diving on MV Dolphin Dream

January 15th-21st 2011



Get up close to shark species with a captain who has been in the shark and dolphin encounter business for 25 years. For 5 days our crew uses their extensive knowledge of the waters of the Bahamas to find the best areas to bait the sharks. The crew maintains safe conditions while guests experience uncaged encounters with tiger, lemon, great hammerhead, bull, nurse, and reef sharks. Your hosts Takaji Ochi and Gregory Sweeney are professional underwater photographers who want to share the thrill and magic of these threatened species with like minded divers and photographers.

This is a photographer's dream: different (and sometimes rare) species of sharks circle above you and pass right in front of you. The waters of the Bahamas are well known for its clear visibility and bright sand bottom. The 86' vessel is both comfortable



and built for safety and has plenty of room for camera equipment to be properly handled. You hosts Ochi and Sweeney both have traveled the world photographing underwater species such as whales, dolphins, seals, sharks, and manatees. There individual works have appeared in magazines, books, and art galleries.

Guests must have dive experience in a variety of situations ideally including some deep diving and diving in currents. Water temperature and the frequency of our dives will require a wetsuit of at least 5mm. All black or mostly uniform colored equipment is recommended: you want the sharks to concentrate on the chum, not your colored dive gear.

The trip costs \$3,000 USD and is limited to 10 experienced scuba divers only.

www.gregorysweeney.com/sharkdive

Digital Centre North Sulawesi

Opening in April 2010, the Digital Photo & Video Centre will be the only dedicated centre in North Sulawesi for all things photography and videography.

This comfortable facility, based at Kima Bajo Resort & Spa, is built by photographers for photographers and will be fully equipped with state-of-the-art hardware and software, providing an enormous range of photo, video, editing & printing services.

www.eco-divers.com



They come in **breath-catching colours**; in **shifting shapes**; in **astounding 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
diving@kimabajo.com

www.ECO-DIVERS.com



Guadalupe
Great white shark photography workshop
with Charles Hood
22nd - 29th September 2011



Over the past 30 years Charles Hood has captured on film most of the worlds big sharks, whether it be from a cage or free-swimming. Sometimes he only had a few days to get a result, so planning and pre-setup are essential. Of course, nowadays, with the advent of digital technology, we can review the images we have taken after each dive, but understanding the characteristics of the picture is vital.

Charles, an accomplished underwater photographer and journalist, will make yet another visit to Guadalupe Island to lead this tour, which is his choice for the most photographic and exciting shark encounter on earth. Charles will be on hand for informal photographic discussion and critique. Underwater photographers of all levels will

certainly benefit from Charles's knowledge and experience.

Although Solmar V can take up to 22 passengers, a maximum of 16 are taken to Guadalupe to allow for maximum cage time. Solmar V operates 2 four man cages using a proprietary swivel system which hooks to the swim platform making it very easy and safe to get in and out of our cages even in rough weather. The submersible cage allows us to descend a little further into the realm of the Great White Shark. Although the submersible cage lowers to only about 6 meters below the surface of the water, it provides a completely different perspective to your shark diving experience.

www.divequest.co.uk

www.uwpmag.com

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Specialists in Underwater Photography Trips

Martin Edge: Raja Ampat, Sulawesi and Mexican Cenotes

Alex Mustard: Sea of Cortez & Komodo and Rinca

Charles Hood: Great White Sharks of Guadalupe

Shannon Conway: Art of U/W Photography in Bali & Raja Ampat



Photo: Shannon Conway

www.divequest.co.uk
01254 826322



Alex Mustard Underwater Photography Workshop

Red Sea. 27th June to 4th July 2010
£1125. London to London - full package price

Join underwater photographer Alex Mustard in June 2010, for his popular underwater photography workshop in the northern Red Sea. As in previous years, this workshop is scheduled specifically to coincide with the aggregations of snappers, emperors, trevallies, batfish, barracuda and unicornfish at Ras Mohammed. But we will also dedicate time to photographing the photogenic wrecks and reefs that characterise this region.

The workshop is aimed at experienced photographers and is designed to help you progress from taking images that come out to photos that really stand out. The workshop will focus on various wide angle techniques, but will also cover fish portraiture and composition. The talks are given in as short lectures during the day, before the dives, leaving the evenings free for reviewing the day's images.



For several years, Alex has been running his workshops on MY Whirlwind, winner of Liveaboard of the Year in the 2008 Diver Awards and operated by Tornado Marine Fleet. She has been especially chosen for this trip because of her underwater photographer-friendly design, great hospitality and the diving freedom essential for producing stunning images.

The workshop is also available without flights, Sharm to Sharm for £925.

For more details please contact Alex at

alex@amustard.com



DPG Relaunch Guide

This new website represents a new era for DPG ... and for the underwater photography and video communities, and the industry.

We have added some powerful new features and figured that it would be a good idea to give you some pointers on how the new website might be most useful to you. So whether you're a long time DPG'er or this is your first time on the site, this guide should be a great way to get to know the new DivePhotoGuide.

If you are a member of the "old" site, your profile will have transferred over. If you are not a member yet, then the best first step is to register for a free membership. While you can access a lot of the site without registering, becoming a member will greatly enhance your DivePhotoGuide experience, as it will allow you to participate as part of the community. As they say, membership has its privileges. You will be able to upload galleries, comment on articles and photos, review equipment, participate in photo contests, and gain first access to DPG Expeditions.

www.divephotoguide.com



Peter Scoones
Masterclass
February 6th 2010



is uniquely matched by his technical skill to literally build from scratch the camera and optical technology to make that imagined shot reality. From 70mm stereo NDT systems for oil rig platform inspections, to the live broadcast underwater cameras he developed for the BBC's "Reefwatch" to today's High Definition television cameras, Peter's technical abilities remain unchallenged.

Peter Scoones continues to be at the cutting edge of underwater photography and remains one of the most in demand working underwater cameraman in the business, which is why Optics is so grateful to Peter for taking time out of his busy filming schedule to offer this masterclass.

Peter is renowned for his generosity in sharing his years of pioneering and hard won underwater photography expertise with others. He's contributed thousands of words of advice through books and magazine columns and co founded, with Colin Doeg, the British Society of Underwater Photographers.

This is a wonderful opportunity to learn firsthand from an underwater imaging master craftsman with an incredible track record. Don't miss it!

For bookings call Mark or Steve. Tickets are just £69.00.

www.oceanoptics.co.uk

Ocean Optics is honoured to have Peter Scoones providing an exclusive one day presentation of underwater photography technology, techniques and tips. This is a very special opportunity to raise your underwater photography skills to a higher level: The information Peter will share with you is based on fifty years of setting the gold standard in underwater imaging.

Peter Scoones has the rare ability, even with so many successes already behind him, to keep coming up with new innovations to capture the underwater world in ways that haven't been seen before. His imagination for creating an image in his minds eye

www.uwpmag.com

DIGIDEEP.com
the online directory for digital underwater-imaging equipment



Your online resource to more than

2.700 underwater imaging products - photo & video

5.200 enthusiastic underwater photographers

600 news, articles, reviews and travel reports

5.000 images in our weekly photo contest

...growing every month!



**join the
contest
and win
a funky
t-shirt!!!**

<http://www.digideep.com>

New Products

Nauticam NA-7D housing for Canon EOS 7D

Nauticam USA proudly announces the manufacturing of an underwater housing accommodating the groundbreaking Canon EOS 7D Digital SLR Camera.

Nauticam engineers have incorporated design suggestions from top Canon shooters worldwide in an effort to build a 7D housing that is a completely logical extension of the camera making no ergonomic compromises. The resulting design is small, light weight, attractively styled, and provides effortless camera control.

Video enthusiasts will appreciate the special attention given to the video/still photo mode and video start/stop button and their convenient proximity to the right grip. Nauticam shooters can switch from still photo to video shooting, and start recording a video clip without removing their right hand from the handle. No awkward camera shake inducing reach is required!

An underwater photographer should not have to remove their hands



from the housing handles. Every control placement decision made during the design of the housing was based on this principal.

Fingertip access to Shutter Release, Main Control Dial, Quick Control Dial, AF-ON, Still Photo/Video Mode, Video Start/Stop, Star, AF Point Selection, and Set are all offered from the soft rubber overmolded right grip. AF-On, Still Photo/Video Mode, and Video Start/Stop are operated by ergonomic thumb levers. Star, AF Point Selection, and Set are accessed by “piano key” controls built into the backplate of the housing, and easily reached from the right grip.

All eight control directions and center push are offered by the innovative Nauticam Multi-Selector joystick control pad. The multi selector is an extremely important control for Canon shooters, allowing quick changes to focus point, camera menu settings, and the quick control menu.



Zoom/Focus knob, Power Switch, and pushbutton operation of Quick Control, Menu, Picture Style, Info, Playback, and Erase are all easily accessed from the left grip. All pushbuttons are angled toward the handle to provide comfortable access.

Depth Rating: 100m.

Dimensions: 350mm (193 mm without handles) x 183mm x 137mm

USA Retail Price, \$2800

www.nauticamusa.com

Kastesa UHC-LD4 for Leica D-Lux4/ Panasonic LX-3



The Kastesa UHC-LD4 housing for Leica D-Lux4/Panasonic LX-3 is made from solid aluminium and weighs 700g on land (without camera)/100g underwater (with camera and is depth rated to 45m.

The important joystick function on the camera is controlled by levers rather than push buttons and a Nikonos 5 pin bulkhead is fitted to fire external strobes.

The housing retails for \$1335.

www.scubasympphony.com

Aquatica Canon 7D housing



Aquatica is proud to announce its latest addition, a housing for the new Canon 7D. With an 18MP APS-C CMOS sensor and 1080p HD video recording with manual controls, this camera/housing combination is the ultimate refinement of underwater imaging at the moment.

Being introduced on Aquatica housings for Canon is the options of Optical Fiber and/or regular Nikonos and Ikelite bulkhead connectors to take full advantage of the newer technologies available in underwater strobes on the market today.

This light weight housing is machined from solid aluminum, now with our new 5 axis machining center we are able to reduce weight like never before. It is then treated and anodized to military specification, then painted and baked with a robust



weather and wear resistant powder coating, this housings maybe light but will still benefit from the same 300 ft. + depth rating that has set us apart from our competitors for so long.

The 7D housing features easy access to the vital video function controls while retaining its ease of operation for still imaging, it has the same mounting bayonet that will accept our existing accessories as well as ports, including our tack sharp Megadome, Aqua View finder and remote control cord, we have now a tool for fulfilling the needs of the most exigent underwater imaging individual.

www.aquatica.ca

It's a WRAP for Light & Motion



Light & Motion is pleased to announce it has received the 2009 WRAP – Waste Reduction Awards Program from the State of California.

“We are thrilled to be recognized for our work to reduce our waste, streamline our business and contribute in a meaningful and measurable way to treading a little more lightly each year while improving our products, workplace and community” said Daniel Emerson, CEO for Light & Motion.

The WRAP award is a California Statewide program that recognizes businesses who demonstrate annual reductions in their waste stream. The Award requires a rigorous tracking of incoming and outgoing materials, energy, and waste along with documentation of improvements and efficiency gains across all the material and energy streams. More information can be found at

www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WRAP/

www.uwimaging.com

Nauticam
USA

Nauticam NA-D90
Nikon D90 housing



“It's the future”

- Excellent ergonomics.
- Designed by underwater photographers.
- Patented Locking Port Release Lever.
- Patented Expanded Viewfinder.
- Port Adapters for Other Housings
- Optical Flash Connectors for Nikon CLS, Inon S-TTL, and Sea & Sea DS-TTL.
- Rubberized Ergonomic Handles.
- Proven Construction Materials.

www.nauticamusa.com

Ikelite DS161 Movie Substrobe



Ikelite Nikon D3000 housing



Controls for all the Nikon D3000 functions are provided. 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.

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.

www.ikelite.com

Nexus Nikon D40



The Nexus Nikon D40 housing provides full control over the camera's functions. Dual sync ports and dual Fiber optic ports are provided.

The Nexus Nikon D40 housing is sturdy, lightweight and small for travel.

There is an optional 45 degree viewfinder available and there is a wide range of lens ports.

www.usanexus.com

Gates Canon HF-S11

The Gates HF-S11 heralds a new generation of refined underwater HD imaging. With a full 8 megapixels, big LCD viewfinder window and Gates Precision ports, clarity previously unavailable in a compact housing are at your command.

www.gateshousings.com

STOP PRESS

Nauticam Nikon D300s, D700, and D300 housings



News just in is that Nauticam are now shipping housings for Nikon D300s, D700, and D300 cameras.

Please contact them for further details

www.nauticamusa.com



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



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www.reefphoto.com

Seatool CX520 housing for Sony HDR-CX520V and 500V



Well balanced underwater yet ultra compact the Seetool CX500 housing for the Sony HDR-CX520V and 500V allows for shooting in various occasions from professional filming to using as a sub-camcorder, or simply as dive record. Two models are available: CX500 PRO with an external monitor and a touch screen, and CX500 with a monitor mirror.

The LCD monitor provides variable angle 2.7 inch 16:9 HD LCD monitor. The angle can be freely adjustable from 0 to 90 degrees depending on shooting situations.

Built-in internal flip filters enable to apply the filter inside the housing. Just flip the lever to apply the orange

filter to correct bluish tint to restore vivid colors. Switchable to the pink filter to correct greenish tint.

The foldable monitor and grip-handle enable easy compact packing.

There are two types of rear cases - Small size for the FH-60/FH70 batteries and Large size for up to the FH-100.

Weight in air: 1340g / 2.96 lbs

Size W160 x D190 x H123 (6.24 x 7.41 x 4.79 inch)

Depth Rating 60m / 200ft.

www.fisheye-jp.com
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

Sea & Sea YS-02 slave strobe



With a circular beam angle of 100°x100° and guide number of up to 20, the YS-02 is a new compact-type slave strobe that can be used for all applications from wide-angle to macro photography. You can use the YS-02 as a manual slave strobe with the guide number control function, which can set the light level to any of ten levels. Properly exposed images can be taken with the adjustable light level control dial. The YS-02 is equipped with a pre-flash cancel mode (*1) that is compatible with a wide range of digital cameras with a pre-flash. Power comes from four

AA batteries for a powerful and long-lasting strobe, so you can enjoy taking pictures all day long without having to recharge the batteries. The recycle time takes 1.9 seconds with nickel-metal hydride batteries (2700 mAh) for stress-free continuous shooting. You can fully exercise your creativity with the YS-02, which can be used as a primary strobe or secondary strobe in a wide range of applications, from compact digital cameras to digital SLR cameras.

www.seaandsea.com

www.uwpmag.com

usaNexus.com
858-481-0604



45 degree finder



D70



D200



1Ds MarkII



Fiber optic sync



D2x



D80



5D

XD Amphibicam X3 Pro Housing for the Sony PMW-EX3 camcorder

Releasing into the depths, a brand new member of the Amphibicam® family, the XDAmphibicam X3 for the Sony® PMW-EX3. A prosumers delight, this compact housing boasts the full access of the PMW-EX3 camcorder controls.

With a ton of features to keep any pro thrilled, you will find all the important features such as White Balance, ND Filter, Gain, Shutter Speed, Iris, Zoom, and Manual Focus are all at your fingertips.

Some might call it the little brother of the HD Amphibicam with matching features, except it is better suited for travel with its compact size.

Sooner than you expect, in its underwater debut, it shows off its finest moments with superior balancing and handling. It brings to the videographer a sense of being one with the housing while allowing any diver the freedom to enjoy the experience.

Amphibico's continued innovation brings to the forefront the meticulous engineering that satisfies the most discerning videographer, who expects no less than perfection.

The Amphibico brand has always



been associated with high quality construction and reliability, and this is no different with the XDAmphibicam X3 Marine U/W housing.

www.amphibico.com

Plaber introduce TTX01



Most hard watertight cases are made in standard PP but our R&D department has developed an enhanced compound, still based on PP, now balanced with additional High Performance Resins.

TTX01 allows us to produce cases lighter in weight yet stronger in robustness. How? The special mix we added, make the walls of the HPRC shell more elastic and thinner, increasing the shockproof degree and the lightweight. On the top of that, maintaining PP characteristics, HPRC are acidproof, scratchproof, able to resist to extreme weather conditions and temperature changes (all the sizes are tested from - 40° C up to 80°C).

The HPRC 2600 Hard Case for example measures 18.9"x14.17"x7.79" internally and 21.65"x16.53"x8.46" externally and weighs 9.37 lbs

www.hprc.it

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Machined Aluminium Housings



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Nanuk cases



Nanuk is a new line of professional quality protective Plasticase, designed for professionals who need to rely on robust, lightweight, and high-performance cases for uncompromising protection in the harshest environments. Nanuk is the evolution of protection.

These cases stand out thanks to a winning combination of four features: design, protection, functionality, and durability.

Cutting-edge design with bold contemporary lines and contours gives Nanuk a unique identity among it's competitors. No protection case has ever made such a daring style statement. In addition, Nanuk was designed to adapt to the users' evolving needs.

Plasticase developed Nanuk's new, high-impact NK-7 resin to withstand environmental extremes. With their rounded corners and reinforced wall construction, Nanuk

cases are built to absorb shocks, providing optimal impact resistance and protection to sensitive equipment. In addition, all Nanuk cases are watertight and impervious to dust and dirt.

Nanuk cases come loaded with numerous standard features that professionals value, which competing products offer only as options. They are equipped with the PowerClaw Latching System (patent pending), which prevents the cases from opening unexpectedly during transport or when dropped.

The foldable handle is molded from NK-7 resin and over-molded with soft-touch rubber for greater comfort.

As a result of their exceptionally robust construction, Plasticase is able to offer a lifetime warranty on its Nanuk cases.

www.nanukcase.com

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Seacam 5DMKII



Aquatica 5DMKII



Aquatica D90



LEOII-Universal DSLR Housing



Subal D300S



Nauticam D90 with white
balance dome port



Epoque C1010 for
Canon 100D, 450D, 500D



Patima XR-520



Epoque Xacti HD2000



Fisheye G11



Patima G11



Canon G11 (WP-DC34)



Sea&Sea DX-2G



New! Big Eye Dome Lens
for Canon G11



heinrichs  weikamp



Visions in the Sea Review

The Visions in the Sea 2009 underwater photography festival was held in Manchester over the weekend of the 7th & 8th November and was a huge success. With a packed out audience at every talk, wonderful entries and winners in the international photography competition, fantastic presentations, Gala Dinner, stands and an in-water tuition afternoon – Visions in the Sea had it all for every level of underwater photographer.

With all that – we also raised over £2000 for the Shark Trust – by auctioning off prints, books, lessons and dives at the Gala Dinner (Duxy and Ali worked their charm to get as much money for this important charity) generously donated by our guest presenters, holding a quiz, and selling limited edition 4th Element T-shirts that were designed by Jim in person especially for the event. These are still available!

Cathy Church, who had come over from the Cayman Islands to support the event, opened proceedings with a rare appearance for her in Europe with a brilliant talk on “getting up close”. She also assisted divers in the pool to get some great shots of our artificial reef that will stand them in good stead the next time they go

diving.

This was followed by the ever popular Duxy showing us that you do not need to break the bank to get great photos. Martin Edge inspired us with shallow natural light techniques that could be used by free divers as well as scuba divers. Martin also got into the pool on Sunday to teach willing students these techniques using imitation Jellyfish floating at the surface. After a well earned lunch we were back at it with a superb lesson on how to master our strobes by Alex Mustard. Alex also succeeded in donating the print that raised the most money at our auction – with competitive bidding for his wonderful shot of a weedy seadragon reaching £370.

Jukka Nurminen showed us the treasures found beneath the Baltic Sea, Ali Hood from the Shark Trust informed us about the important work of this organisation and reminded us why we were all there. The day then the day reached its climax with a talk on Wreck Photography by Charlie Hood. On Sunday we sprang back into action with wonderful shots of Pilot Whales in Gibraltar by Mark from Ocean Optics, followed by Maria Munn showing us how to get the money shots with a compact



Cathy Church and Alex Mustard

camera.

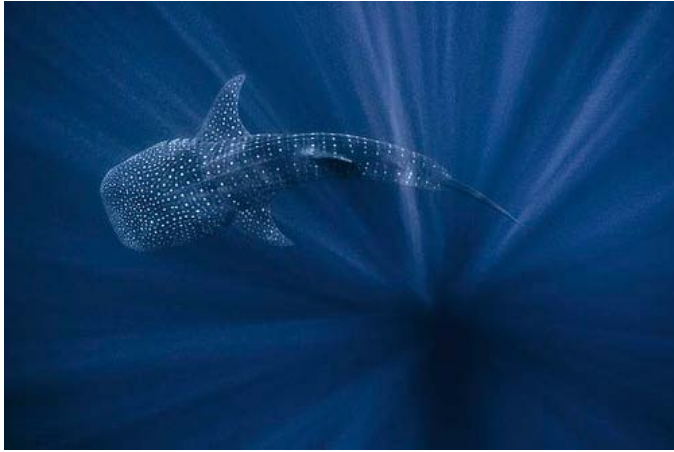
Peter Scoones provided the grand finale by showing his award winning filming of wildlife around the world. He also allowed lucky participants at our in-water teaching session the chance to use his underwater video equipment that he used for iconic BBC series such as Blue Planet and Life.

The 3 hour long in-water tuition session saw Steve, from Ocean Optics, using an underwater comms system, take a group of divers to try out different INON lenses and



Peter Scoones

strobes with tuition using an artificial reef system sunk to the bottom of our 5m pool. Martin Edge and Cathy Church also got in to assist our underwater photographers in macro and wide angle techniques. Nick, from Frogfish Photography, assisted with those that wanted to photograph our professional model (Amy Finnimore) who also wore a monofin provided by the British Freediving Association. Another diver model from Orca Divers (Dawn Ticehurst) provided delegates the opportunity to practise various shots and poses. Orca Divers



Best in Show, Judged by Martin Edge, winning a trip with Worldwide Dive and Sail was Rene Kral with a great shot of a Whale Shark dappled in sunlight.

also provided scuba equipment for those that wanted to get in and have a go. Duxy, from Cameras Underwater, provided surface advice before each diver got into the water. The Cayman Island Department of Tourism also provided artificial coral from their Dive Show stand.

As well as the Visions in the Sea International Underwater Photography Competition, visitors could peruse the stands by the Shark Trust, Frogfish Photography, Ocean Optics, African Space, Cameras Underwater, Cayman Island Department of Tourism, Dive Quest, NUPG and BSoUP. With lots of underwater photography and videography equipment on display for visitors to look at, places to go for wonderful underwater photographic opportunities and the companies to help then get here and underwater photography clubs from both the north and south of England as well as a display of the competition prizes to whet their appetite for the next event alongside Peter Scoones' underwater



Suunto British Open, judged by Charlie Hood, 2nd place winning a D6 is Mark Thomas with a shot of a Tompot Blennie

video equipment that he designed himself. A photographic "Dive Safari" with Andrew Woodburn was a very popular holiday option being offered by African Space and Frogfish Photography for September 2010.



O'Neill Open Macro, judged by Dr Alex Mustard and Cathy Church, winning an O'Neill wetsuit was Thomas Vignaud's shot of a small group of fish taking shelter in a jellyfish taken in the south of France.

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Nikon's Creative Lighting System Underwater

by Don Silcock

Prior to the digital revolution, in the days when we were all shooting film, the ability to use Nikon's Through The Lens (TTL) flash system for macro underwater photography was a major bonus and in over 90% of circumstances it would deliver extremely accurate exposures.

All that changed when Nikon released the D100, the DSLR camera that convinced most underwater photographers using Nikon equipment that it was time to "go digital". TTL compatible third party strobes would no longer work with the new DTTL flash system and it looked like we had no option but to use manual for both wide-angle and macro.

Not that I did not try though, and my SB80DX flash housing acquired more frequent flyer points than I had, on its return flights to its manufacturer, as I tried to get it to work reliably.

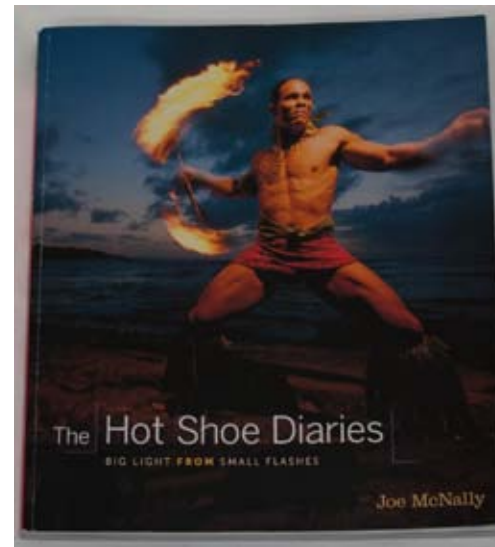
I eventually gave up and moved on to using manual only, figuring that I was over TTL.... then a couple of months ago I bought Joe McNally's fantastic book, the Hot Shoe Diaries.

Joe is a New York based photographer who manages to combine superb people photography with some of the funniest writing you are likely to ever find in a "how to" photography book. His images are simply stunning and he gets the results he does by pushing the boundaries of Nikon's Creative Lighting System – CLS.

Joe's book and his DVD with Bob Krist on the Nikon CLS literally turned the lights on for me with the use of flash and have made a huge difference to my travel photography images.

So... having come to realize the potential of Nikon's flagship flash, the SB900, above the waves I was naturally drawn to its use below them!

Of particular interest was the ability to adjust the light beam emitted from the SB900, using its custom settings menu, and the Flash Value (FV) Lock functionality that I had found so useful in difficult lighting situations with my travel photography.



SB900 Illumination Pattern

Nikon provides three options for this in the SB900's Custom Settings menu:

- Standard: Whereby the light emitted from the flash matches the image circle of the camera, providing even lighting across it but with some light fall-off at the edges.

- Center Weighted: Here the light emitted is stronger in the center of the image and falls off more at the edges and Nikon recommends this lighting for portrait type shots.

- Even: This lighting minimizes the light fall-off at the edges, making it good for situations where you need "even" lighting across the whole image.

For macro underwater photography I was really interested



to see how the center weighted light pattern would affect close up portrait type shots, particularly the ones where the subject is surrounded by reflective matter such as bright sand.

I was hoping that the functionality would allow me to isolate the subject more easily than I can do with my Inon 240Z strobes on manual power. I have long sought an easy way to do this, including homemade "snouts" that would direct

the light, but all to no avail...

SB900 Flash Value (FV) Lock

With photography, every so often I have an “aha moment” when it suddenly dawns on me how other people manage to get some of the results they do.

Flash photography above water has always been something of a dark art to me (pardon the pun, but it’s literally true...). I have rarely been satisfied with my results and when I was, I never really understood what I had done to get them!

Yes.... I tried reading the Nikon flash & camera manuals, but rarely have got past the first few pages before being overcome with an irresistible urge to drink beer or have a wee nap - I mean who writes that stuff?

FV Lock was such an aha moment and my investment with Mr McNally was paid back instantly – it’s the best thing since sliced bread!

Basically what FV Lock does is allow you to position the camera focus point on the area of the potential image you want perfectly exposed, press a button on the camera that you have assigned the function to, and the SB900 emits a pre-flash to establish the light required.

You then recompose the overall image, press the shutter and bingo you

have the result you wanted! This even works if you change the aperture or shutter speed, because the smart stuff inside the SB900 compensates for the changes.

So Which Housing?

A quick email to the Australian distributor of my camera housing left me with heart palpitations at the cost for their version of a strobe housing, so I turned to the underwater photography oracle and posted a question on the Wetpixel forums...

Sure enough, the very next day several responses had come back and I was put on to the Korean manufacturer Patima, who made what appeared to be a very slick looking housing for about 60% of the price of the European one I had previously been quoted.

An Internet search revealed Fun In Taiwan, which I at first thought must be some kind of massage parlor, had the Patima housing in stock & were very responsive, managing to get me everything I needed and shipped to me two days before I departed for 2.5 weeks diving at Tufi in Papua New Guinea.

The wharf & house reef at Tufi has a great selection of critters in amongst all the flotsam & jetsam laying on the slope of the main fiord, so I figured I would have all the



subject matter I needed to test out the SB900.

But What About The Shadows?

Conventional wisdom is that the big potential downside of using a housed strobe is that because it’s only possible to fire one unit on iTTL, harsh shadows are created which detract from the overall effect of the image.

This was the same with DTTL (when it worked...) so I was familiar with the issue, but decided to give it a try anyway by using a remote slave. I have some Sea & Sea YS90 & YS30 strobes I keep as back-ups and I reckoned the YS30 should provide the additional light to reduce the harsh

shadow associated with the use of a single strobe.

I tried this set-up quickly at home before leaving for Tufi, with the Patima & SB900 wired in to the housing, which requires the connectors in the Subal housing to be set to the TTL connection on the small circuit board inside the housing, and it seemed to work.

I set the YS30 on to its slave mode and I seemed to get good exposures, but when I tried the same set-up underwater at Tufi wharf it did not work.

What seemed to happen is that when the FV Lock function on the SB900 is initiated, the pre-flash also fires the YS30 slave and it fools Nikon’s CLS system into calculating

the wrong overall exposure. The same thing happens when I did not bother with the FV Lock and just fired the shot, so I quickly retired the YS30 again and went with the single SB900 to see what the results would actually be like.

The Roger Steene Approach

About 6 years ago I did a Milne Bay trip on Ron Vanderloos boat MV Chertan and on the same trip was Roger Steene – an incredible character and the godfather of Australian underwater photography.

Roger's images are something else and I learned two big things from him on that trip. First of all I found out about the Nikkor 70-180mm macro zoom that Roger swears by and I have subsequently become a great fan of...

Secondly, Roger only used one strobe – a Nikon SB102 on TTL, which he also swears by. At that point in time he was shooting film and given the results he gets I suspect he probably still is! He mounted the strobe at zero degrees above the port, laying almost parallel to the port but angled slightly down.

He was adamant that this was the best way to take fish & critter portraits, so when I hit the problem with the YS30 I decided that it was time to see if the same approach

would work for me.

Above Water Test - FV Lock

The set-up I used for the various tests was a Nikon D300 mounted in a Sam Chae modified Subal D200 housing, Nikkor 70-180 macro zoom & composite EXR port and SB900 & Patima housing mounted a la Roger Steene as shown in Image 1.

I assigned the FV Lock function to the AE-AL button on the back of the D300 using the Custom Settings menu – the Subal housing has an external control for this button.

I used the D300's Custom Setting's menu and the AF-S setting on the camera to set the auto-focus so that I could half-press & hold the shutter button to lock the focus point while composing the overall image.

Before I took the rig underwater at Tufti wharf I did some test shots in my room and Test Shot_01 shows the FV Lock activated on the white area of the Wet Wipes container right next to the Made in Australia logo, whereas the Test Shot_02 images was with FV Lock activated on the metal cap of the O Ring grease container.

It's very clear that the exposure on the first shot is perfect for the selected area and the rest of the bright white plastic is also virtually spot-on, but the O Ring grease container is under-exposed.



Test Shot_01 with FV Lock on the area circled in red

On the second test image the top of the O Ring container is perfectly exposed, but the white plastic of the Wet Wipes container is quite badly over-exposed.

Underwater Tests - FV Lock

Using the same set-up I looked around the wharf area for two objects that would offer similar contrast to the ones in the above water tests, but the best I could find initially was a Coke can.... So I did two test shots, UWTest_01 with FV Lock activated on the dark area of the can above the Coca Cola logo, which exposed that area well but over-exposed the rim of the can.

UWTest_02 was taken with the FV Lock set on the rim of the can, which resulted in a perfect exposure for that area.

I think these two shots illustrate the value of FV Lock underwater &



Test Shot_02 with FV Lock on the area circled in red



UWTest Shot_01 with FV Lock on the area circled in red



UWTest Shot_02 with FV Lock on the area circled in red

replicate the above water test shots and demonstrate the key point of being able to quickly select the area of the image you want perfectly exposed – all achieved by the press of one button while composing the overall image.

Underwater Tests - Illumination Pattern & FV Lock

Then I found two contrasty objects and arranged them side-by-side to test the SB900's Standard & Center Weighted Illumination Patterns.

Image UWTest_03 uses the Standard pattern with no FV Lock at all, while UWTest_04 has the FV Lock set on the dark object to the left and UWTest_05 has FV Lock set on the light object.

Image UWTest_06 uses the Center Weighted (CW) pattern with no FV Lock at all, while UWTest_07 has the FV Lock set on the dark object to the left and UWTest_08 has FV Lock set on the light object.

I think that what these shots show is that iTTL works very well overall, even when not using FV Lock, and the Center Weighted Illumination Pattern creates a much nicer effect than the Standard Pattern.

Real Photos

I then went in search of subjects that would suit the approach I believe iTTL and the Nikon CLS can offer underwater and found some nudibranchs doing their thing and a nicely positioned scorpion fish.

In both cases I used the CW pattern and FV Lock on the area of



UWTest_03 uses the Standard pattern with no FV Lock at all



UWTest_06 uses the Center Weighted (CW) pattern with no FV Lock at all

the image I wanted perfectly exposed. I was particularly pleased with the nudibranch image as it has a really nice look to it (in my opinion....) and makes the nudis stand out against the background.

With the scorpion fish, notice how the edges of the image are subdued and the light colored shell thing in front of the fish's face does not detract from the image – if I had been using my Inon's for this shot I



UWTest_04 has the FV Lock set on the dark object to the left

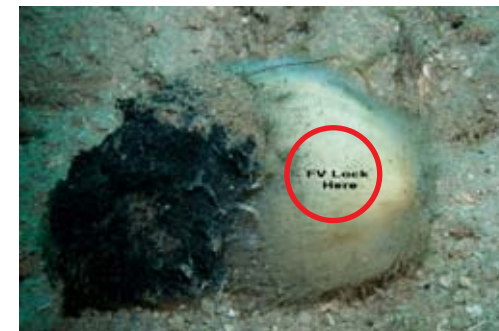


UWTest_07 has the FV Lock set on the dark object to the left

would have almost certainly over-exposed that part of the image!

Conclusion

I was so busy at Tufi diving and photographing the offshore reefs, which are at there very best in October & November when I was there, that I did not get time to do more testing of the SB900 and iTTL/CLS, but I really do think there is significant creative



UWTest_05 has FV Lock set on the light object



UWTest_08 has FV Lock set on the light object to the right

potential with it.

Just take a look at Joe McNally's site & blog if you want to see what the same basic set-up can do above water...

I have not used any of the iTTL converters available on the market, so I cannot offer a comparison, but the ability to quickly & easily select the area of the image to perfectly expose does work ... But assuming a Standard Illumination Pattern is used,



D300 in modified Subal D200 housing, Nikon 70-180 macro zoom, SB900 in Patima housing ISO 200 - f16 @ 1/60, SB900 @ center weighted and FV Lock @ light patches of nudis.

which seems logical, then a housed SB900 takes iTTL to a higher level of potential creativity – subtle maybe, but significant overall.

Of course, the Center Weighted Illumination Pattern effect can probably be done quite well in Photoshop, Lightroom or Capture NX.... but I much prefer to get the image as close to “final” in the camera. Plus having & understanding the functionality available underwater will make you much more creative when looking for subject matter.

The “shadow issue” of using a single strobe was not particularly noticeable, using the Roger Steen approach, but I have an idea on how to deal with it in circumstances it could be a problem. I’ll leave that for a future article, as I will for how iTTL & CLS could be used for wide-angle....

In summary I would say that the upside of a housed SB900 is additional functionality & creativity, but the downside is size & price – probably twice what a conventional



D300 in modified Subal D200 housing, Nikon 70-180 macro zoom, SB900 in Patima housing, ISO 200 - f16 @ 1/60, SB900 @ center weighted and FV Lock @ space between the eyes.

strobe costs by the time you have bought the SB900 and housing.... But you do get to use the SB900 above water, which needs to be taken into account.

Finally the Patima housing is really nice and worked perfectly, offering full access underwater to all the functions of the SB900

Don Silcock

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Cold water accessories

by Adam Hanlon

For us divers in the North Northern Hemisphere, water temperatures are dropping, air temperatures plummeting, and visibility is improving! This conundrum has forced me to make some modifications to my Subal ND2, using some excellent products that have become available. The key issue is that cold water demands thick gloves and the majority of housing and strobe manufacturers use control knobs that you simply can't get hold of whilst wearing them! I tend to use dry gloves over the winter months, and whilst these are (arguably) more dextrous than wet mitts, the stock housing and strobe controls become very difficult or impossible to operate.

I bought a pair of excellent Inon Z220 strobes in the summer of 2008, and as the water cooled, pretty rapidly discovered that, as TTL is not possible with my set up, I couldn't control my strobes output with my gloves on! I put a post onto the wetpixel forum, and found that I wasn't alone! In particular, Jonas Odell contacted me with pictures of a "cold water" extender he produces. This easily retro fits onto the Inons existing knobs, and gives plenty of grip even when wearing dry gloves. Jonas is from Sweden, so I guess cold water is a normal challenge!

I duly ordered a pair, and in very quick time, the extenders appeared. They fit simply over the existing knobs, and are held in place with a grub



screws that mesh into the tension pin holding the strobes control knob. They only take a few minutes to fit, and can be easily removed.

These make a massive difference. Wearing thick dry gloves and after over an hour in very cold water, I can still easily adjust my strobes output! As the pictures show, the extender protrudes above the height of the sync cable and battery compartment, so you can actually get your fingers and, more importantly, gloves, in to adjust settings. For anyone planning to use Inon strobes in cold water, these should be a standard modification.

At much the same time, I heard of a company called XIT404 which produces great accessories for Subal, Sea & Sea, and Aquatica housings. One of their products is a zoom/focus knob "extender" which fits over the existing zoom control and gives a lot more purchase than the stock item. It was originally designed to give more fingertip control for macro focusing (particularly in conjunction with one of their focus gears) but it also gives a lot more grip when wearing big gloves!

The knob attaches to the zoom knob with a friction fit. It works best with a wrap of electrical



tape (supplied) to take up any slight differences in size caused by temperature etc.

In practice, I mostly use the zoom control with my Tokina 10-17. When going from scenic wide angle to close focus fish portraits, it is critical to be able to use one finger on the control. With the extender and my big gloves on, I find I can rapidly and accurately control the lens, almost as if I wasn't wearing the gloves at all!

Adam Hanlon

Inon extenders - Jonas Odell's e mail
jonas.odell@bredband.net

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Wide-Angle Macro Photography

Another Perspective...

By Don Silcock

Imitation, as they say, is the sincerest form of flattery.... so let me start off this article by thanking Alex Mustard for sharing his experiences pioneering the technique of using wide-angle lenses to shoot macro type subjects.

I really like trying new techniques to produce images that are "different" and Alex's results with the Nikon 10.5mm fisheye lens coupled with a teleconverter (TC) made me want to experiment and see what I could produce.

The basic concept behind the technique is to use the close focusing capabilities of the 10.5mm fisheye, but adjust its field of view using a TC so that you get a sharp image of the creature and a sense of its overall environment.

This approach differs from the "normal" macro photography, where we tend to isolate the creature from its environment.

The key to the technique is maneuvering the camera really close to the subject so that it fills a substantial part of the overall frame and then being able to light the

subject. Both elements require specific skills and practicing on a fixed subject that thinks it's invisible, such as a frogfish or scorpion fish, is the way to start.

My first attempts at the technique were on a trip to Milne Bay late last year using my spare Subal dome port (the early 6" version) as I had sold the small DP54B dome that Alex recommends a few years earlier, figuring that I would never need it again....

I soon realized that a small dome is really essential for this technique to work because even the curvature of the medium size 6" dome makes it nearly impossible to light the subject without getting light flare from the strobes in the overall image.

Subal DP54B Dome Port

This port was the first dome I ever bought and it will work with any wide-angle lens down to a 20mm. Subal no longer make it, so I had to search EBay for several weeks before eventually tracking one down in the USA.

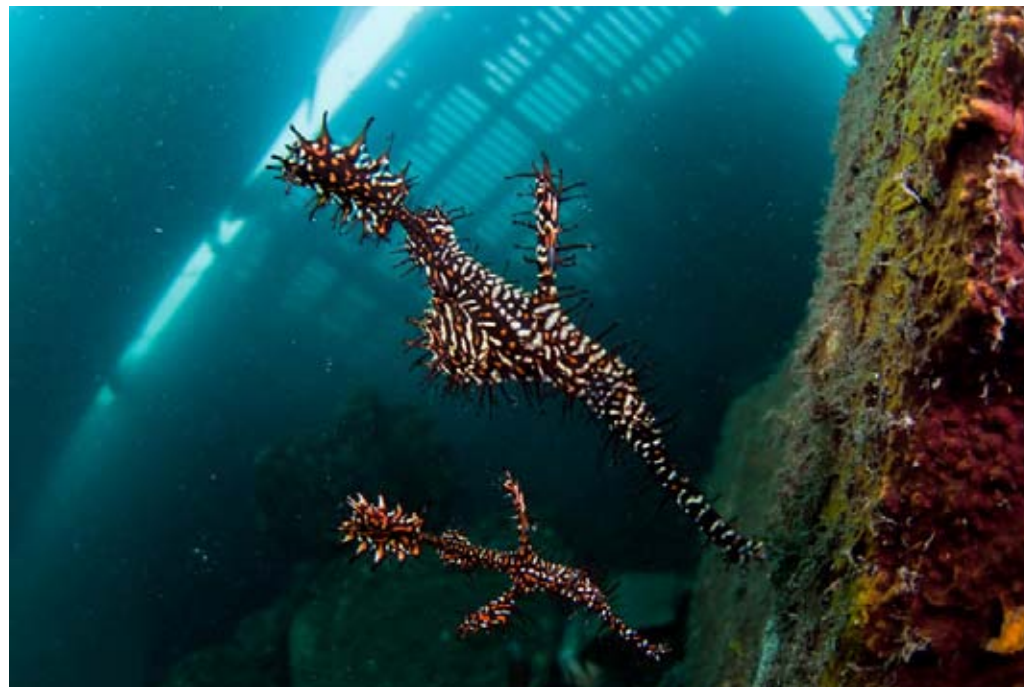


Image wamacro_01 It took me a couple of dives before I was satisfied with the sharpness of the ghost pipefish main subject. Nikon D300 in Subal D200 housing, Subal DP54B dome, Nikon 10.5mm & Kenko 1.5x TC, manual – f5.6 @ 1/50



It's a 4" dome and it's small profile & curvature makes it possible to position twin strobes either side of the lens shade cutouts at 45 degrees left & right so that you can edge light the subject even when it's almost touching the dome.

Basically if you want to have a go at this technique, you will need to get one of these ports if you use Subal, or an equivalent for your specific housing.

Lenses, Teleconvertors & Extension Rings

Alex Mustard used the 10.5mm Nikon, a Kenko 1.5x TC and a 20mm extension ring in his first successful attempts with the technique and then Mark Webster recently documented his success with the 10-17mm Tokina, 2x TC, home made zoom ring & 35mm extension ring.

The TC changes the lenses field of view; depending on which one you use, while the extension ring positions the lens so that there is no vignetting or cut-off

My initial efforts with the DP54B were also done with the 10.5mm Nikon, a Kenko 1.5x TC and a 20mm extension ring, but I really struggled to get sharp focus on the subject. This was more to do with me adjusting to the technique I think, than anything to do with the actual set-up, and while

I really liked the way I could include significant areas of the environment – in this case Tufi Dive Resort's jetty – it took me a couple of dives before I was satisfied with the sharpness of the ghost pipefish main subject – Image wamacro_01

I also tried the same set-up on larger subjects, provided in ample supply by the local Tufi kids who use the nearby public jetty as their swimming pool – Image wamacro_02

I decided to see how the Sigma 17-70 lens would work with the 1.5x Kenko TC, and found it was much easier to "drive" than the 10.5mm Nikon. I used a 38mm extension ring (20mm + 18mm), which gave me a zoom range of 17mm to around 45mm, before the lens hit the inside of the dome, and allowed me to do macro wide-angle at the 17mm end and more or less traditional macro at the 45mm end.

At the 17mm end I could get very close to the subject and get it really sharp, while including enough of the critter's environment to provide a nice sense of location.

At the 45mm, the Sigma allowed to fill the frame with medium size creatures such as an octopus.



Image wamacro_02 I tried the set-up on larger subjects, provided in ample supply by the local Tufi kids who use the nearby public jetty as their swimming pool. Nikon D300 in modified Subal D200 housing, Subal DP54B dome, Nikon 10.5mm & Kenko 1.5x TC, manual – f11 @ 1/160



Images wamacro_07 & wamacro_08



The variable power settings on my twin Inon 240's, plus the very special "Don Silcock diffusers" (hand crafted from milk containers...) to soften the light slightly, but without reducing it too much like the Inon ones tend to do, all worked a treat – even when the main subject is extremely close to the port.



(Left) At the 17mm end I could get very close to the subject and get it really sharp, while including enough of the critter's environment to provide a nice sense of location. Nikon D300 in modified Subal D200 housing, Subal DP54B dome, Sigma 17-70mm & Kenko 1.5x TC, manual – f10 @ 1/50
(Right) At the 45mm, the Sigma allowed to fill the frame with medium size creatures such as an octopus. Nikon D300 in modified Subal D200 housing, Subal DP54B dome, Sigma 17-70mm & Kenko 1.5x TC, manual – f13 @ 1/125



Viewfinder

Alex mentioned in his original article that small housings are better suited to this technique, as they allow you to get lower. My results in a converted D200 Subal housing, using a Nikon D300, supported that conclusion but I also found my Inon 45 degree finder a major benefit as it allowed me get really low and look up, so that I could include more of the environment.

My Subal housing was modified

by Backscatter in California to accept the Inon 45 degree finder and (once I got used to it...) has had a major positive impact on my results overall.

Conclusion

Wide-angle macro photography underwater probably is not for everyone, as it's more difficult to do and depends on finding the right subject matter, but if you are looking for a different look & feel to certain images then it's a great way to achieve

that.

For a relatively minimal additional investment in a teleconverter, extension ring and small dome port you can use your existing lenses in a completely different way to obtain results from a new perspective.

What I found really interesting was to dive Tufi jetty, which I have done literally dozens of times but mainly using the Nikon 70-180mm zoom (my personal favorite "traditional" macro lens), with these

new set-ups. I found that I was looking at subjects, I knew would be there & how to find them, but in a completely different way which I believe has to be a good thing.

Don Silcock

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A Conversation With... Kurt Amsler

By Alex Mustard

For this instalment in my Conversation With series you find me on the island of El Hierro out in the Atlantic, which before Columbus sailed to the Americas was thought of as the end of the world. It's a suitably dramatic destination to meet one of the undoubted legends of underwater photography, Kurt Amsler.

We are both here as judges for the El Hierro Open Fotosub competition; and it is certainly a highlight of my year to spend the week together. Despite his long and illustrious career, Kurt's enthusiasm and passion for underwater photography and the oceans remains undimmed. He is an inspiring person to be around and I honestly could have filled a whole year of this interview series, from the conversations during the week.

It is impossible to summarise the multitude of highlights in Kurt's career here. Suffice to say that he has shot 1000s of stories for magazines, written many books and photographed high profile advertising campaigns. His competition record is also a full

house. He won the 2nd CMAS World Championship in 1987, he was named Grand Master at the 1987 Brighton Festival that included the prize of a Rolex watch, his book *Maldives* won the best book of underwater photographs at the Antibes Festival in 1994, and he has won awards in just about every other competition, including the BBC Wildlife Photographer of the Year. With Kurt's experience of so many years at the top of underwater photography, I was keen to get his perspective on the past, present and future. I also wanted to discuss what photographers today can learn from the past, to improve our images.

Kurt, of course, remains highly active, he still writes for *Diving* and *People Magazine* and still shoots for his big clients (he is sponsored by Nikon, Rolex and Scubapro/UWATEC). He also runs very popular workshops from his home in the south of France and on liveaboards. He has very active role refining underwater camera gear for Seacam. Seacam deserve a lot of credit to taking such a progressive approach of



Kurt Amsler with a handful of trophies at the CMAS World Championship 1987, which he won.

working with someone who can test their kit extensively in the ocean. It was fascinating to ask about all the refinements and design philosophy that Kurt has helped introduce into their line of housings and strobes.

It is also impossible to talk with Kurt without wanting to discuss the work he has done for marine conservation. He started SOS-Seaturtles back in the 1980s and it is no exaggeration that it has saved millions of turtles. SOS-Seaturtles still has many active causes and if you

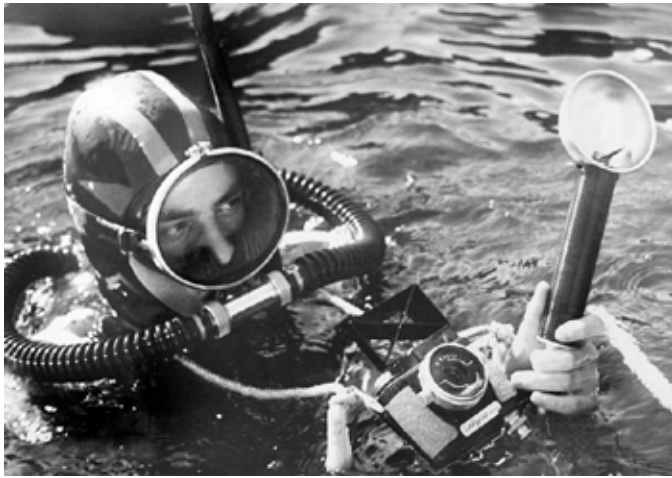


Kurt with his Seacam system, including Seaflash 150 strobes, in El Hierro, 2009. Photo A Mustard.

read this interview, please click on the link at the end and see what you can do to help.

Alex: I'd like to start with a historical perspective. What do you feel have been the big milestones in underwater photography that you have seen?

Kurt: It is best to start at the beginning of the 1960s, because before that it was mainly just a few



Kurt with his CalypsoPhot and flash bulb system in 1963. Photo J Lanvanchy.

divers taking pictures. At that time there weren't many housings – most were using the Hans Hass Rolleimarin, so when the CalypsoPhot came out, it was a milestone. It made it much cheaper than shooting medium format and that really doubled the number of people.

The next milestone was the modular systems of Nikonos and MotorMarine. With one camera you could do six techniques: close-ups, two macros, two wide angles, standard lens. So that was a big innovation. From that moment on people could start taking pictures with just a little money.

Although before that was the arrival of electronic flashes, which was also a milestone. Using flash bulbs was very complicated and expensive. I remember when we were first in the Red Sea in 1964, I had a Rolleimarin and CalypsoPhot with bulbs, so each photo cost you 60 Swiss cents! It made you think. But looking back it



Kurt was inspired to dive and photograph underwater by Hans Hass. In 1984 he worked with Hans Hass (right) making the film The Maldives – Paradise Transformed.

was good training to be very selective. 12 pictures, 12 bulbs for the whole dive.

Alex: A good discipline.

Kurt: And even now, shooting digital, I don't shoot like the others I am still selective. I don't do thirty pictures of one subject. Just because you do more it doesn't mean that they get better, especially if you are not changing anything.

Alex: And the animal is probably getting less relaxed too.

Kurt: My training was to think twice before you bend your finger!

Then, of course, the most recent milestone is digital. Underwater photography has been exploding since then, and it is good, because normal divers have a much bigger horizon now.

Alex: I think it helps those of us who are serious about our photography. Because the more people who have tried it, the more divers there are

who can appreciate what goes into a really top level photo.

Kurt: I agree. If they have tried it, they realise it is not that easy.

Alex: You mentioned discipline as something you brought forward from the early days, what do you think that photographers today can learn from the history? I think that there was a lot of creativity in the work you and others did in the 70s and 80s, which used techniques that have either been forgotten or have dropped out of fashion.

Kurt: What I have realised is that over the past 25 years the creativity has disappeared. In the early days it was black and white photography and you have to deal with light. It was available light only, even with ISO 125 film, pushed to ISO 250 you could make pictures at 70m (230ft). These photographers learned how to read the light.

Nowadays the photographers have one or two strobes and they are in love with them ! They are very high-tech, have a lot of switches and did cost a lot of money.....

Alex: He he he. You are saying that they are so in love with their strobes they don't think of anything else?

Kurt: Yes , they don't think about other light sources anymore, And that reflects in their pictures. They don't care about the sun, they don't know these days if the sun is behind you the water is more blue, if it is in front of you, everything is more diffuse. They just rely on their strobe. And the key to underwater photography is mixing light, ambient and strobe. Mixing it the way you want. This is art. [Underwater] photography can be art, but these days it has become purely technical.

Alex: Which is ironic when you consider how easy the technical side of photography is now, with

the newest cameras.

Kurt: We have not see one photo in this competition where the photographer has used the strobe off the camera.

Alex: I did that! I'll show you. Here is a moray I shot on the first day.

Kurt: Yes, you did it, but not one person in the competition. When I look back to the competitions in the 1980s, that was common, we all had 10 metre strobe cables, with the E/O connector. If there was a cave then there would never be strobes on the camera. We would shoot a black foreground, and then we placed the strobe outside the cave where the model is looking in, to get depth in the picture. And the problem is not just in competitions, in the magazines it is very rare to see something creative.

Alex: I have feeling that part of the problem is that these days it is very easy when you start underwater photography to get a good picture without the basic knowledge. The equipment is so capable.

Kurt: I would say this is 80% of people. The basics of understanding the light underwater aren't necessary to get a photo when you start these days. But that will only take you to a certain level, at that point you need more knowledge. Many photographers reach that level and are unable to progress.

It is like in sport, which always

and still plays a big part of my live. If you decide to become good, you have start by training all your muscles. At the beginning you will not need all of them, but when you reach a certain level you will need them all. If you forget to train the muscles that aren't necessarily important at the medium level, you will never make it to the top.

It is the same thing in photography. It can be strange to hear that semi-professional photographers, who are publishing and winning prizes, they have absolutely no knowledge about the basics. They understand their camera inside and out, but not the light, or the basics of picture composition.

Alex: They are unable to reach their full potential. If a photographer now wants to learn more about light, do you have any suggestions on how to do this? Maybe shoot available light only for a few days?

Kurt: Or taking more landscape pictures in the evenings and mornings [on land]. Or just walking through the forest and look against the sun, through the trees and realise how the light works. If the sun is behind a trunk it is a sunburst.

Alex: I have often thought that the light coming through trees is like being underwater.

Kurt: Yes this is a good example! Just pay attention to the light

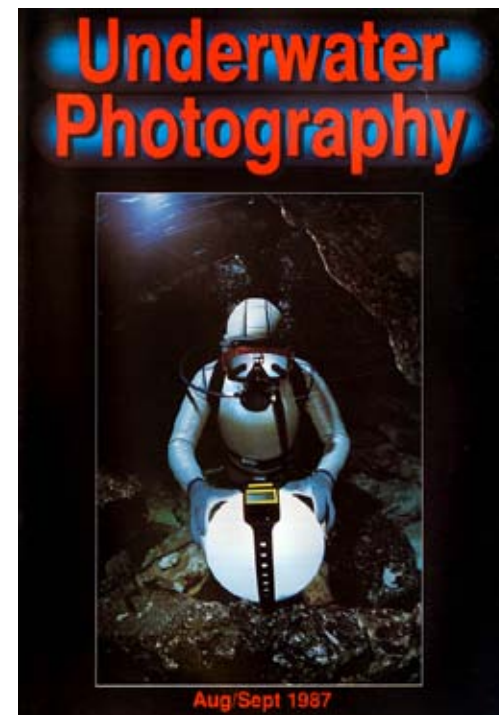
wherever you are. Light is the basic of photography. In 1839, Daguerre and Niépce had to use light and we still use light. Even with digital, without light there is nothing. Once the photographer understands light, their pictures will look different.

Alex: Spend your time studying the light, not the specifications of the latest camera!

Kurt: Ha ha. Exactly.

Alex: I'd like to move on a talk about your work developing underwater cameras because I think it is fascinating. In the past you have worked on, for example the Nikonos RS and the Subal F5 housing, but with you switch to digital, 8 years ago, you have taken that to another level in with your work with Seacam, where you are in charge of helping them in the development of all their equipment. I think a lot of other brands suffer because there is not enough input from real underwater photographers.

Kurt: It is just the same approach as in many other products. For example, in my other love windsurfing, the guys who make the boards don't have to be surfers, they have to be good shapers. The guys who sell the boards, they don't have to surf, they need to understand the market. In these companies everything is divided. So they have test-riders, people who do nothing else but



An advertising image that Kurt shot for UWATEC for their touch activated Aladin computer, featured here on the cover of Peter Rowlands' original, printed Underwater Photography magazine. There is an article inside the issue, where Kurt explains how it was done.

surfing. And they are the ones who will know if a new board really is good or not. If the foot-straps are in the wrong place, they realise it immediately.

It should be the same in underwater photography and that is what Seacam is doing. I know that

the housing manufacturers have a hard time with the current economics. They have to work a lot and they have to do it all by themselves: they do the design, the construction, the marketing and deal with the suppliers, the dealers. There is no time to go diving and test. And anyway they are not able to test because they are not full time photographers and trained enough to dive in all conditions.

Alex: They are too busy making housings.

Kurt: They are engineers. So they must have a test driver. I call myself the test driver for Seacam.

Harald Hordosch is a great engineer and his father as well. Harald understands a lot about cameras and also he is a brilliant photographer, but he is not the guy spending 500 hours a year underwater. He hasn't the time. So Stephen Frink in the States and myself in Europe are his test drivers. We use the housings in all conditions. Under the ice, with gloves, without gloves, deep, shallow, cold water, warm water or under extreme conditions as recently 600m inside caves. Immediately, if there is something not right, we know.

Alex: So what are the important design factors in a housing?

Kurt: The most important thing is not to restrict what is possible with the camera on land. Why do Canon and Nikon spend hundreds of hours giving

their prototypes to people - men, women, children? Refining the design until they have the right balance and everyone can control everything important without taking the eye from the viewfinder. And some housing manufacturers don't understand or don't want to believe it. It is always the moment you take your eye from the viewfinder to change the shutter speed that the fish will open its mouth.

So our philosophy is not to limit any of the possibilities of the camera with the housing. Without taking the eye of the viewfinder, you should be able to adjust everything you can with the camera on land.

Alex: Also when you take your eye away to change something, you push the camera forward to see what you are doing and you push it towards the subject and scare it.

Kurt: The balance is the other crucial factor in Seacam housings, the equilibrium, trim. So many different things have to be put into a housing.

Alex: The other factor I really admire in Seacam is that they listen to photographers and are bringing a lot of innovations, ideas that are coming from what photographers need: external dioptres, the polecam system and the new fisheye/macro domeport....

Kurt: Things that give you more possibilities getting subjects on the pix and makes the life easier. I am



Kurt Amsler "The key to underwater photography is mixing light: ambient and strobe. Mixing it the way you want. This is art." Split level shot with Seacam superdome and D200.

actually a lazy guy.

Alex: Ha ha. No you are not!

Kurt: OK, I am not lazy, but if I can find an easier way I will take it. So I have more time to get a better photo, or to get something else on the dive. I am always looking for the most direct way to Rome, as Julius Caesar was saying: the straight road to Rome! That's how I teach my students too.

Alex: Also I must ask you about the Seacam 150 strobe, especially the Kurt Amsler Edition?

Kurt: I started with flash bulbs, then a land strobe in a housing, then the American Oceanics, the blue ones...

Alex: ...the 2003?

Kurt: Yes. Then in about 1976 or 78, David Doubilet convinced me to try Sea & Sea when I met him in Australia. I used many of their strobes until the YS120 and also the Nikon SB105. The Sea & Sea strobes just always worked. I saw lots of people having problems with other strobes,

especially those manufactured in Germany! And I said to them, why can the Japanese strobes [Sea & Sea and Nikonos] work for twenty years, and yours are always breaking.

Alex: I have had my share of problems, with non-Japanese strobes, mentioning no names!

Kurt: Seacam's first strobes were either housings for land strobes or using the electronics from other underwater strobe manufacturers, and we had lots of these coming back because of these electronics. In the end, Harald said "Enough, we will do our own 100% Seacam strobes".

Alex: So what were the design criteria for the Seacam 150?

Kurt: First it had to be small for its power, for travel and water resistance. Neutrally buoyant and balanced. A 135 degree beam, so that you can light up a fisheye with one strobe if you want to – placing the strobe above and a bit behind the camera.

The 150 is a strobe which can do everything, for both macro and wide angle, so we use a mid-point on colour temperature. Also the battery pack is removable, which also means you can have spares, so you can swap to a full charge and keep shooting, and is also important for security checks at airports. In built LED target lights low for macro and bright for wide. LED's use up much less energy from

the battery.

Alex: You told me the other day that when you were developing them you were even dropping them on purpose!

Kurt: Yes. But I was not playing around, I was simulating what can happen when working with a piece of equipment in the real world.

Alex: On boats, in a hurry anything can happen.

Kurt: In the end, thirty years of my wishes are in these strobes. The customer feedback we have had now, people are very, very happy.

Alex: In the last part of the interview I would to talk about conservation. I think that one of the reasons you are held in such high regard in the underwater photography community is not just your images, but also that you give time to other photographers when you meet them. And perhaps more than that, is the huge amount of environmental work that you have done, particularly because to but it bluntly, you have put your balls on the line to fight for marine life. We all share the sentiments, but not many of us get as actively involved, what drove you to make a difference and fight?

Kurt: My father was a professional sport and action photographer and at the same time a mountaineer; he did lots in the Himalaya and all over. And he was



Extreme underwater photography testing, 600m underground and underwater during the Rolex Awards Exhibition 2008. The human remains that Arturo González and his colleagues excavated in Yucatan's cenotes have shed new light on the early human settlement of the Americas. Photo Kurt Amsler.

shocked by the human impact, even in these remote places. And he started the campaign Keep Our Swiss Mountains Clean. I was a child at the time, but I certainly got inspiration and a respect for nature and animals from that.

Then when I started diving, it was immediately clear to me that what divers were doing at the time was not fair to the marine environment. And also, thanks to photography I have had

and still have a very good life. I don't just want to profit from the underwater world, I want to give something back. I started more than 30 years ago now, with the sea turtles, and after this shark conservation and fighting to free dolphins from captivity.

Many photographers seem to only think about themselves, making money from pictures of sharks and turtles without considering putting something back. And simply, I think



A photographer and grouper on one of Kurt's workshops in the Mediterranean. The groupers are a real conservation success story, a rare sight 20 years ago, many dives sites now are home to more than 20 of these beautiful fish.

this is wrong, not to say pure egoism.

Alex: So with the turtles, how did it start?

Kurt: At the start it was one third of my earnings funding the project. In those days I didn't have sponsors, now we have Nikon, Seacam, Tour Operators, Scubapro and many others supporting it. But in the beginning I just printed the brochures, went to Hurghada and distributed them. I talked to responsible people and got them to stop the turtle business in Hurghada. Before that in the 1980s the shops there were full of turtle shells.

Alex: But fighting for the rights of animals doesn't always win you friends. I think some photographers can be afraid to stick their head above the parapet.

Kurt: Of course, not everyone likes me. I have had threats on my

life in certain parts of the world, but I was in the special forces in the Swiss army, I know how to defend myself! Ha ha ha.

Alex: Ha ha ha.

Kurt: Also some photographers don't like me because I've said to them "you're a great photographer, you've made good money from your pictures, but I never see your name associated with protecting the marine life, working with a conservation organisation".

Well-known photographers should use their popularity, their voice to get these messages out to the diving community and the public. It is wrong just to show the beauty of the oceans, otherwise people leave lectures thinking "Why should I give money to GreenPeace or Sea Shepard. Everything is OK in the ocean, the dolphins are smiling, the coral is

growing..."

Alex: So photographers should be shooting more than just the beauty shots.

Kurt: They should be photojournalists, showing both sides, make people care with beautiful pictures and then bring in the other side, the shadow-side of the story. Many photographers do this already, but more should.

Alex: Finally then, given your long experience in the oceans, you must have seen a lot of these changes first hand. But I know already this week, we have talked about some positive stories, which show good conservation projects really work.

Kurt: At the end of the 70s, beginning of the 80s, the ocean was just a big garbage place and thanks to all the films and pictures, by Hass, by Cousteau, by everyone. The public began to care and things changed. When I first started talking about sharks being in danger from fishing, people thought I was crazy. Now people know the truth. It has changed a lot.

Marine parks can make a big difference. Near my home on the south coast of France, 25 years ago it was very hard to find a grouper. The big ones were hidden, the small ones were not there anymore. Then they ban grouper fishing and introduced marine parks and for the last 15 years,

each year there are more groupers. Now there are lots of dive sites with 20 or 30 groupers.

Alex: If you give nature a chance, take our foot of its neck, recovery can really happen. That is why it is so important to get involved in conservation projects, they do work, they can make a massive difference.

Kurt: It is important to remember it is never too late. Saying it is too late or that I am just one person are excuses.

Alex: We are the ones who go underwater and see these things – this is not a problem that someone is going to solve. We have to get the message out, because we are seeing it with our own eyes. If you are an underwater photographer you have tell these stories.

Kurt: But you have to do it. You.

Alex: I think that is a good message to finish on. Thank you very much Kurt.

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SOS Seaturtles
www.sos-seaturtles.ch

Kurt Amsler
www.photosub.com

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Fakarava Atoll's Tumakohua Pass

with Colin Gans

One might be mistaken for thinking that diving the same pass each day would become a little monotonous but with the volume and variety of life which passes through Fakarava Atoll's Tumakohua Pass there is little time for boredom or complacency. Fakarava is renowned as a remote destination less frequently visited and for its parade of grey reef sharks.

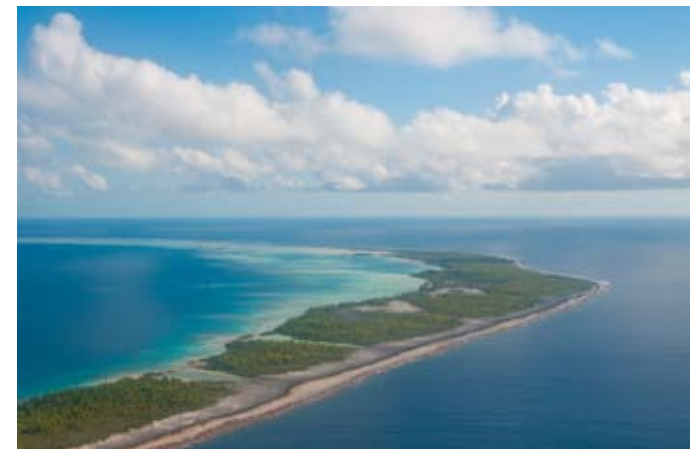
One of a group of many low lying atolls in the South Pacific's Tuamotus group of French Polynesia, like its sister island, Rangiroa; Fakarava has two deep water passes which concentrate marine life entering and egressing its large rectangular shaped lagoon. A higher proportion of divers visit the more easily reachable north pass which is relatively close to the airport. The only way to reach the Tumakohua (south) pass is by boat; a fact which in my opinion places this location in my 'special places to visit' category. The waters of the protected lagoon are vast and it is not possible to see land when facing inwards looking up its 60 kilometre length.

After researching the atoll for dive sites I decided on spending all my time at the south pass which, at 200 metres wide, has the appeal of being more confined when compared with the other atoll passes in the region. The pass itself has a maximum depth of roughly 33 metres and during the incoming tide life passes through this marine bottleneck, at



Sealux Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 17mm, manual exposure, 1/160th @ F9, ISO 250

Fakarava is renowned as a remote destination less frequently visited and for its parade of grey reef sharks.



speed, providing photo opportunities for the underwater photographer.

Once in the lagoon proper, conditions are generally calm and protected although not nearly as interesting from a marine wildlife photography perspective as the pass itself. The pass, the depths surrounding the pass entrance and the outer reef are really what make for the action: one of the few places on our planet where it is still possible to see schools of more than 200 grey reef sharks gathered in parade as tidal flows turn over water in the lagoon. On a single dive, I encountered six species of shark: grey reef shark, blacktip shark, blacktip reef shark, whitetip reef shark, silky shark, and tawny nurse shark. In addition to this, other species of shark including giant hammerheads are reported. Grouper, mantas, eagle rays and many other big fish were evident along with cetaceans. The hard coral harbours many interesting varieties of smaller creatures including molluscs and nudibranchs but a 'muck diving' destination this is not.

The influx of fresh water on an incoming tide provides best visibility for image making and while diving on the outgoing tide is interesting, more turbid conditions are generally experienced. Timing is everything with pass diving and the knowledge of the guide or boatman of where and



Sealux Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 10mm, manual exposure, 1/250th @ F14, ISO 250

when to drop you in is key. I began my 8 days of diving here around the new moon and each day's incoming pass dive was later than the previous with the boatman assessing the timing of still water for the drop-in. Staying at the Tetamanu village on the pass itself provided an added benefit of quickly being able to assess tidal conditions. We observed significant tidal flow and a 'river' was quite evident in the pass around mid tide.

Some days we entered outside the pass in blue deep water of 300 metres plus and on one particular dive at 30 metres depth we were visited by a curious pair of silky sharks coming in from opposite directions to investigate us. Having only blue water; no bottom or reef walls as a point of reference in such a situation can make things a little disorientating and on this occasion our guide needed



Sealux Nikon D300, Nikon 12-24mm at 24mm Manual exposure, 1/160th @F7.1, ISO 250

to surface in order to reacquaint himself with the direction of the pass entrance. Once resigned to 'going with the flow' the diving can be effortless and tantamount to simply being an observer on a moving stage. On other days I made use of a reef hook to remain stationary and capture the action.

The 'incoming tide' dives mostly end in a small channel leading up to the dive centre at the village and here the resident napoleon wrasse wait to greet you along with numerous blacktip reef sharks whose antics

in breaking the surface of the water while hunting provide entertainment. In the evenings at dusk I found the appearance of the blacktips to be strangely comforting in the calm and tranquility of the lagoon. One night as we were sitting in the small 'restaurant', built on poles on the water located just on the edge of the channel, we were distracted by the sound of a cetacean blow. Moments later in the moonlight just metres away from where we sat, a humpback whale emerged and blew again, this time so close that it startled us and



Accommodation wise one cannot get any closer than this to the action with the restaurant above water and water lapping the poles of the small accommodation bungalows at high tides.

its back glinted in the moonlight as it gently submerged and continued on its way out the pass to the open sea.

At the time of my visit, excluding other guests, there were only six people resident at the intimate village of Tetamanu. The main attraction of this locale is that it is situated on the south pass itself.



*The local Napoleons are friendly.
Sealux Nikon D300, Nikon 12-24mm
at 12mm Manual exposure, 1/200th @
F10, ISO 250*

While day trippers from the north may get to dive the south pass on occasion, the only practical way of doing so over a number of days is to stay close to the pass itself to avoid lengthy commutes by boat. Accommodation wise one cannot get any closer than this to the action with the restaurant above water and water lapping the

poles of the small accommodation bungalows at high tides. The village is run along traditional lines and it would be hard not to get to know the locals during a ten day stay. Locally grown herbs, fruit and vegetables in season are used for meals with fish and coconut delicacies in obvious abundance. Chickens are kept in the village mainly for eggs but fish and rice certainly form the staples. The diet of mainly fish and rice resulted in some weight loss during my ten day stay and not being fully conversant in French turned into an opportunity to catch up on reading. Solar power provides lighting in the village and battery recharging is available in the restaurant; preferably during daylight hours. A torch is useful after dusk and if it rains for a few consecutive days then power becomes a scarce resource. Mosquito repellant is also useful. While I did not find these limitations to be particularly inconvenient and are to be expected when visiting remote locations they are worthwhile knowing about from a planning perspective. The focus of this visit for me was really all about pass diving and the photo opportunities it presented.

Staying at Tetamanu village on the Tumakohua pass of Fakarava in order to experience consecutive days of diving here is best enjoyed by intrepid underwater photographers

who can create their own entertainment and are not too phased by language barriers or more limited menus. This is very special location and one whose shark population and ecosystem will hopefully survive in environmentally challenging years to come.

Getting to Tetamanu from Fakarava airport involves a short car journey to the wharf followed by a speed boat trip down the length of the lagoon. Depending on conditions the boat trip can take two hours or more. The domestic internal flight between Fakarava and Papeete takes just over an hour. The cost of the internal flight is high and in my case matched the cost of the fare for the international leg. International flights to Tahiti (Papeete) are available from many destinations including Paris and Auckland with Air Tahiti Nui.

Colin Gans
www.UnderwaterDisplay.net



Diving Cocos

With Michael Gallagher

We were a real mixed bag - an Israeli, 4 Americans, 4 Brits, 4 French, 2 Japanese, 2 Russians, a Turk plus a token Aussie - all lured from our respective homelands thousands of miles away to the isolated sea mount that is Cocos Island in the Eastern Pacific. Our collective interest was not to search for buried pirate treasure, for which the island is famed, but which has yet to been found, nor to admire the scenery, which not too long ago featured in one of the spectacular opening scenes of Jurassic Park. Instead our quest was to experience some of the most exhilarating and unspoilt diving on the planet. Expectations amongst us ran high - this is real “dive trip of a lifetime” stuff.

Actually to refer to Cocos Island as “isolated” is somewhat of an understatement - it lies a good 400 miles off the west coast of Costa Rica in Central America, which meant that our 10 day liveaboard trip comprised of a rough 36 hour crossing, 7 days of actual diving, then another long 36 hours ploughing relentlessly back to the mainland. Not to forget that getting yourself to Costa Rica in the

first place is hardly a walk in the park either, unless that is you're an American.

Such is its remoteness that at present only two operators offer trips to Cocos Island - the Undersea Hunter Group and the Aggressor Fleet. The reputation that Cocos Island enjoys amongst keen divers, combined with the limited number of liveaboard trips which visit the island, usually ensures that punters need to be booking

All underwater shots taken with Canon 50D in Hugyfot housing with dual Ikelite DS125 strobes and focusing light. Lens used for all wide angle shots was a Tokina 10-17mm FE lens, with the camera set to shutter priority 1/160s and -1 exposure compensation. Lens used for all macro shots was a Canon 60mm macro lens with camera set to manual mode, 1/200s and f22. All topside shots taken with Canon Ixus 75 compact camera set to auto.





months if not years in advance to avoid disappointment. I was lucky enough to snag a last minute spot on Sea Hunter (a big thanks to Mark at Divequest for this).

Despite its unpromising name, “Dirty Rock” quickly became my favourite dive site. It didn’t look too promising from the panga either - just a small lump of rock barely breaking the surface, 10 bumpy spray-splashed minutes away from the sheltered bay where the mothership had anchored. Underwater was a completely different story though - its charms were irresistible. Strong surface currents demanded negatively

buoyant backward rolls off the panga, after which we would descend swiftly to a flat open area in about 30 metres of water, a well established cleaning station for hammerhead sharks.

It surprised many of us to learn that hammerhead sharks are extremely skittish creatures - they may grow up to 3 metres long, look truly fearsome, but I’ve met clownfish before who’d be more than capable of scaring them away. So it is vital that divers hide from view as much as possible, and otherwise make every effort to appear submissive to the sharks, if close encounters are to be had. Otherwise, as our group learnt by painful



experience, a quick flick of their tail and they’ve disappeared into the inky depths quicker than you can press your shutter release. Hiding ourselves behind rocks and wedging ourselves into gullies around the cleaning station, we would wait for the stars of the show to arrive. Normally it didn’t take too long for the unmistakable outline of a hammerhead shark to appear, twitching in open invitation to the resident barberfish and angelfish to get to work. It’s a fair deal for all concerned - the sharks rid themselves of their parasites, the cleaner fish get a free meal, and the divers get treated to a remarkable show.

Once our appetite for hammerhead voyeurism was sated, it would then be time to slowly ascend up the rocky wall, past turtles, Mexican hogfish, marbled rays, moray eels and a myriad of other denizens of the deep, to drift out into the blue. The anticipation was thrilling

- in the middle of the Pacific Ocean anything could turn up. For most of the time it was nothing, but all the waiting was worthwhile when big pelagics such as silky sharks, barracuda, wahoo, bottlenose dolphins and a jumbo shoal of horse-eye jacks made their respective appearances. Some of the other divers on our trip, who were diving from a different panga, even saw whale sharks and

mating hammerheads.

Other memorable dive sites around Cocos Island included Weston Bay for its bold and inquisitive silvertip sharks, Punta Maria for its schooling Galapagos sharks, and Alcyone (named after Jacques Cousteau’s boat which visited Cocos Island in the eighties) for its abundance of swirling hammerheads and whitetip reef sharks.

Observant readers will have noticed that sharks are a real feature of diving at Cocos Island. Yet despite the presence of such a large number and variety of sharks, the setting sun does not signal the end of the diving day. On the contrary, it’s time to kit up once more for a truly astonishing night dive at Isla Manuelita coral gardens, where hundreds of whitetip reef sharks congregate to hunt anything unfortunate enough to be caught in the torch beams of divers.



The dive brief is clear - stay off the bottom and out of the way of the swirling masses of sharks for an experience guaranteed to pump the adrenaline of even the most jaded of divers.

For all these dives I found the Tokina 10-17mm FE zoom lens and twin strobe combination to be just right. A focusing light helped too, particularly on the early morning dives when the visibility tended to be a little gloomy. I switched to a macro set-up just twice, both times for night dives which followed the more traditional formula of searching for small critters on the reef, to be

rewarded with intimate portraits of parrotfish, lobsters, crabs, boxfish, shrimp and other weird and wonderful creatures of the night.

Happily for me, the facilities for photographers on board Sea Hunter were superb - dedicated rinse tanks, big worktops with compressed air hoses, and spacious individual storage units with built-in charging stations. It's a high calibre liveaboard in all other respects also - great food, fantastic staff (hi guys if you're reading this!) and comfortable cabins.

The 36 hour boat ride across to Cocos Island gave me plenty of time to dwell on how extraordinary the diving would need to be to justify all the time, expense and effort involved in making the trip. All I could think about on the way back was why hadn't I done this sooner, and when could I do it all over again!

Michael Gallagher



HARVEST REFUGIA – *SAFE HAVEN BENEATH THE SEA*



By Joseph C Dovala

The concept of Harvest Refugia originated with the ancient Greeks. They realized that if they hunted all the available animals in a province there would soon be nothing left. Therefore, they set aside a parcel of land protected from all hunting so as to be a source of shelter and safety for game animals where they could reproduce without harassment. They were serious about this because the penalty for violating it was death!

It would seem that “modern man” has been unable to grasp this concept. Why? The reasons are many: ignorance, greed, unable to accept facts, lack of information, and apathy. Without going into laborious detail here I’ll just leave you with this.....**YOU DO THE MATH!**

Human Over-Population.....	6,800,000,000 (and counting)
Fishing within 200 miles of land.....	98% (most open ocean is desert)
Commercial take of fish per year.....	90,000,000 metric tons
Sport and poaching take of fish per year.....	Unknown (millions of anglers)
Costs incurred for \$70 billion worth of fish.....	\$124 billion (\$54B subsidies)
For every 1 pound of shrimp taken.....	6 pounds of other sea life dies
Avg. population densities in reserves.....	90% higher (than unprotected)
Current amount of ocean protected.....	< 1/10 of 1% (not sustainable)

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Before it really is too late.

Daytrippin' on the GBR

with Tim Rock

As my home is in Guam, I often get asked by friends traveling through Micronesia if its worth their time to stop here for a few days for diving. Normally Palau or Yap are the big regional attractions, but many folks figure since they've come all this way, why not cram in a few dives at another destination? I think Guam is a very well-kept secret and I try my best to steer them to the best land sites and the dives. Given Guam's past, history buffs love it and the water here is always clear and warm.

And so it was just a couple of months ago I found myself in somewhat the same predicament as my friends. I was going to Cairns to do some topside photo work that included taking in numerous attractions. This included visits to wooded preserves and sanctuaries, great rain forest tracts and the edge of the wild Outback. I was fortunate to see koalas, wild wallabies, kangaroos and a kookabarra! Crikey!

There were huge crocs up in the Hartley's croc farm and we took in some highly entertaining cultural shows from Aboriginal and Trobriand islanders. And one invigorating morning we even saw the sun rise from 3,000 feet up while resting in the basket of a hot air balloon. And we spent one evening listening to the waves lap in at the shores of cozy Palm Cove.

This combined with a big festival in



All underwater images were taken with an Aquatica AD90 Housing, Ikelite DS 125 Strobes & chords, Nikon D90 Camera, Tokina 10-17 lens



There were huge crocs up in the Hartley's croc farm

downtown Cairns that included a parade and fireworks kept me pretty busy. But, I did have one daytime period somewhat free and I've always wanted to have the Great Barrier Reef as an entry in my Indo-Pacific saturated logbook. So prior to the trip I contacted Lisa Monks at Tropical North Queensland and she confirmed that I could indeed get the log entries I desired with relative ease. She put me in touch with Reef Magic Cruises. They told me they supplied everything (tanks, weights, a 3mm shorty wetsuit, BC, reg, (even fins and mask if needed)).

The Great Barrier Reef runs the greater length of Australia's central eastern to northeastern coasts. It's considered the world's largest natural coastal coral barrier reef. Waters are generally clear on the outer wall and the chance for fish schools, healthy corals and good Pacific diversity abounds.

So I packed just my trusty fins, mask and



snorkel. I had a new Aquatica D90 housing, which is light, compact and easy to hand carry onto a plane. I put a 10-17 Tokina wide angle zoom on the Nikon D90 body and packed a pair of Ikelite DS125 strobes in my carry-on camera case. Flying Continental, I didn't have the hassle of the luggage restrictions that you get with most Australian and New Zealand carriers. But it was still easier just to hand carry everything in case of a baggage mix-up. The camera was easy to sport as a back-up for the other assignments. When the dive day came, I assembled the kit the night before. I was staying at the new Shangri-La Marina that has a great harbor view and is within spitting distance of the Reef Fleet Terminal at the Cairns boat basin.

So I boarded a rather spacious and well-provisioned catamaran, the Reef Magic. On the trip out I was given a procedural briefing by some friendly instructors, signed the waiver, showed my dive card and was told a bit about the dive sites we would visit. Three dives were planned, one to a wall and crevice area not often seen, one in a channel and one along an outer reef wall. Anticipation. A little over an hour later I was watching the crew hook up to a permanent mooring just inside the vast expanse of the GBR.

Things happened quickly. The ship sits at the mooring for five hours and we had three planned dives, so we had to get outfitted and on the dive boat quickly. All went smoothly and the next thing I knew I was taking a giant stride and heading down through a crevice that opened to a wall and the outer reef.

This first site had plenty of swim-throughs, some big gorgonians fans, a few nudibranchs (which I didn't try to shoot with the 10-17) and a very healthy upper reef. We got back in time



for lunch. I had some nice bar-b-q (what else, it's Australia), salads and other fresh veggie offerings and we were off again before I could say Waltzing Matilda.

The second dive was hyped as "going to be good" as it was in a barrier reef pass and the tide was going out. It didn't disappoint. We saw large groupers and barramundi. Sea turtles swam across the sea floor. Our guide took us over to a school of yellowtail barracuda and then into another school of juvenile blackbar barracuda. We stopped at a bommie with a sea fan so big four divers could hide behind it and ended at yet another nice upper reef area with tons of surgeonfish and nice hard table coral growth.

We did have time to throw in a snorkel. The mooring is next to a reef that has a very tame and photogenic Napoleon (Maori) wrasse. The fish is very used to people and makes a great subject.

The third dive was also a quick turn around and a nice drift along an outer reef wall.

We also wanted to take an optional helicopter ride. It flies below 2000 feet so the chance of bends is nil and offer the opportunity to spot mantas, tiger



sharks and other big critters from the air as well as photograph the vast reef and its inner islands and sea mounts. But, we were too late to do that. Maybe next time.

Before I knew it, I had three logged GBR dives and was watching as we headed back past islands and bays. Then, the main coast started to come into prominent view. We did keep a watch out as we were told this was also humpback migration season in the area and there was a pure white



humpback seen breaching just days before. Whale watching just finished its first full season in Cairns with a very high success rate for whales and other marine mammals and it appears it will be a go again in 2010 during the June through August period. So if you're an ocean person, you've got diving, snorkeling and whale watching all at your disposal.

That night we headed up to the quiet and cozy Palm Cove. Wild roos and wallabies were feeding in the fields as we rolled down the highway as dusk approached. Our colorful driver Steve told tales of big crocs in the rivers. We had dinner under the stars and recounted our day on the GBR. While it may not be a live aboard week of nice diving, Cairns area has lots to offer and a dive day can fill a few logbook pages if you choose to daytrip dive Tropical North Queensland.

Tim Rock
www.doubleblue.com

*See more of Tropical North
 Queensland at Tim's website at:*
www.photoshelter.com/c/timrock

Contacts:
Diversion Dive Travel
www.diversionoz.com

Tropical Nth Queensland Official Site
www.cairnsgreatbarrierreef.org.au/



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Flores and Bali

Contrasts in Indonesia

Text and Photos by
Nigel Marsh and Helen Rose

Planning a recent trip to Indonesia we wanted to do two different dive destinations. Bali was high on our list, so that decision was easy, but for our second location we picked a more obscure and little known destination, the island of Flores. The diving and range of photographic subjects were brilliant at both sites, but the differences between the two destinations made for some interesting comparisons.

Bali is of course well known amongst divers, a very popular island for tourists it attracts millions of visitors each year that come to shop, surf, dive or just relax on the beautiful beaches. Flores on the other hand, located 500km east of Bali, is less well known and only receives a handful of visitors each year in comparison. Most of these tourists come to Flores to see its volcanos, the famous coloured volcanic lakes at Keli Mutu and traditional villages. Very few divers visit Flores, most only use it as a jump off point to explore its famous neighbour, Komodo. But this wasn't always the case as in the 1980s Flores was a popular dive destination, however that all changed in 1992 when the island was devastated by an earthquake and tsunami, which killed over two thousand and virtually destroyed the dive industry.

But the tsunami had little real impact on Flores's dive sites, so we booked a week on the island staying at Sea World Club, a dive resort established in 1976. The resort is located twenty



Beach hut accommodation at Sea World Club, Flores



The rugged coastline of Nusa Penida, Bali and just a few of the dive boats at Manta Point, Bali



The new Liberty Dive Resort, Tulamben, Bali

Giant volcano sponges are typical on the wall dives at Flores, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 180, f8, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe



A confusing mass of divers looking for mola mola at Crystal Bay, Nusa Penida, Bali, Canon IXUS 110

minutes east of Maumere, a small town on the north east corner of the island, and is very secluded, with lovely beach bungalows set amongst the palm trees. Our week of diving was to be in and around Maumere Bay, which is ringed by islands and offers reef dives, muck dives and one shipwreck. For the week we dived Flores we did a combination of boat dives to the outer islands and shore dives on the house reef and muck sites, and apart from the first day, we were the only divers staying at the resort. This is not a reflection of the quality of the diving, far from it, more the fact that very few divers know about Flores.

This was in stark contrast to Bali, where we spent four days shore diving at Tulamben, with Liberty Dive Resort, and two days at Padang Bai, diving out at Nusa Penida with Aquamarine Diving. Both these destinations, on Bali's east coast, are well known and extremely popular with divers. At



Helen with a bumphead parrotfish, early in the morning on the USAT Liberty wreck, Tulamben, Bali, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 1/100, f7.1, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe

Tulamben we not only had another dozen divers staying at the same dive resort, but had to contend with several hundred divers staying at nearby resorts, and several more hundred that visit the dive sites each day on day trips. That's a lot of divers in the water on only a handful of dive sites!

We also had to contend with the same sort of problem at Nusa Penida, we were hoping to see a mola mola, but so was everyone else, meaning lots of divers. It is hard to complain about the number of divers, as these are very popular dive sites and we were just another couple of masks in the crowd. Also on most dives this wasn't a problem, but at times the volume and behaviour of some of the divers did deter from enjoying the experience. Let's look at a comparison in the diving between Flores and Bali.



Shrimp goby on the muddy bottom at the Wairterang wreck, Flores, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 1/100, f11, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe

REEF DIVING

The reef diving at Flores was superb and mainly done around the offshore islands that fringe Maumere Bay. All these reefs featured walls dropping from 6m to 200m, and are decorated with gorgonians, soft corals, black corals, sea whips and some giant sponges. At Besar Island we dived walls at Margajong, Ruteng and Taat, and saw a nice variety of reef fish, reef sharks, quiet a few pelagic fish and a surprising number of turtles, but they were all a little camera shy. At nearby Babi Island the walls were riddled with caves and home to dozens of batfish. All these walls were great for wide angle photography, but a little poor in macro subjects.

The reefs fringing the main island on the other

hand were much better for macro photography. Here we dived walls and coral gardens. At Wair Gete we found mantis shrimps, moray eels, sea stars, nudibranchs, a variety of anemonefish, crayfish and a very photogenic cuttlefish. While at Tanjung Dart there were dozens of blue spotted lagoon rays, reef sharks, trevally and a lovely group of shrimpfish dancing above a gorgonian. On all the reef dives at Flores we enjoyed 30m visibility and 28C degree water.

The reef dives at Tulamben, at the Coral Gardens and The Drop-off, were also good, with some lovely corals, although the Coral Gardens could also be classified as a muck site. We concentrated on macro photography at these reefs, finding a wide range of reef fish and invertebrate species. The visibility was not as good as Flores, around 15m, and we didn't even attempt wide angle, as there were just too many bubbles from other divers, but the macro subjects were endless; shrimps, long-nose hawkfish, nudibranchs, crabs, octopus, cuttlefish, ghost pipefish, moray eels and an amazing amount of blue ribbon eels. Even though we enjoyed the dives at both sites, we didn't enjoy the behaviour of some divers, with people not waiting their turn to photograph a subject, just barging in.

The big surprise was the quality

of the reef dives at Nusa Penida. We had booked here to see a mola mola, but were more impressed with the reef dives we did, great corals and fewer divers. Nusa Penida sits in the Lombok Channel and is constantly washed by strong currents and upwellings, perfect conditions for corals to flourish, but the water can be cool, 19C to 22C degrees, but also very clear, with 30m visibility. We did reef dives on coral gardens and walls at Bett Point and Gamat Bay, with both sites having beautiful soft corals, sponges, sea whips and gorgonians. With the wide angle lens on, as hoping to see mola mola, the reefs delivered some good photo opportunities. At Bett Point we found abundant reef fish and numerous pelagic species, but the highlights were a banded sea snake, a lovely giant anglerfish and a surprise visit by a mola mola. While at Gamat Bay we saw moray eels, scorpionfish, giant trevally and masses of reef fish.

Diving the most popular dive sites at Nusa Penida, Manta Point and Crystal Bay was a little disappointing. The dive sites were very crowded, a dozen dive boats all throwing in divers at the same time, and there must have been a hundred divers in the water at Manta Point. We did see four manta rays, but they didn't come close to any of the divers, who could blame them. The visibility was also poor at Manta Point at 12m,



Radiant soft coral at the drop off at Bett Point, Nusa Penida, Bali, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 1/100, f8, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe

and the coral gardens were not very colourful, so not much else to look at if you couldn't see a manta ray. While at Crystal Bay, the main mola mola site, the corals were superb, because of the currents, and we saw a sea snake, a marble ray and plenty of reef and pelagic fish. But we also had to contend with over crowding, dozens of divers one day and no mola mola. Fortunately when we did see two mola mola we were in a small group with no other divers around. Not the best experience, but we did get to see these amazing fish, if only for a minute. The

dive operators really need to stagger the divers at these sites, but with the tricky currents it can be difficult.

MUCK DIVING

The muck diving at Flores was a bit of a mixed bag. Potentially there are some great muck diving sites here, and we did see an interesting range of critters, but the dive guides at Sea World Club generally get few requests for muck diving, as most of the visiting divers don't realise there is any available. Even so, at



A pair of porcelain crabs on the Sea World Club House Reef, Flores, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, 60mm lens, 1/125, f13, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe



Harlequin shrimps are common at Seyara Secrets, Tulamben, Bali, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, 60mm lens, 1/125, f13, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe



A giant anglerfish at Bett Point, Nusa Penida, Bali, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 1/125, f8, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe

Old Ankermi Muck, Wair Blerer and Nangahale we dived on back sand/mud and found imperial shrimps on sea cucumbers, anemones, pipefish, shrimpfish, nudibranchs, a sea horse, a stargazer, bobbit worms, scorpionfish, a demon stinger, mantis shrimps and plenty of shrimp gobies. At most of these sites there were adjoining coral gardens, where we found a good number of blue ribbon eels.

The best muck diving site at Flores was right in front of the Sea World Club on the black sand and the house reef. Here we found a burrowing snake eel, a shaggy anglerfish, moray eels, ghost pipefish, shrimpfish, nudibranchs, garden eels, sea stars, pipefish, porcelain crabs, cuttlefish, stingrays, lionfish and more blue ribbon eels.

While there is no muck diving at Nusa Penida, Tulamben is famous for its muck and Seraya Secrets ended up being our favourite dive site, great critters and few divers. On the black sand here we saw harlequin shrimps, crinoid shrimps,



A swimming crab shelters under an anemone at the USAT Liberty wreck, Tulamben, Bali, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, 60mm lens, 1/100, f11, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe



Ribbon sweetlips at home on the USAT Liberty wreck, Tulamben, Bali, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 1/80, f8, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe



Exploring the Wairterang wreck, Flores, Nikon D90, Ikelite Housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens, 1/50, f7.1, ISO 200 and single Inon Z240 strobe

hairy squat lobsters, orang-utan crabs, dragonets, painted anglerfish, ghost pipefish, mantis shrimps, nudibranchs, shrimpfish, a snake eel, jawfish and many other species. Of course having a good guide, that knows the site like the back of his hand, was an invaluable asset, and our guide Jink from Liberty Dive Resort, knew where every critter was before entering the water.

www.uwpmag.com



Sea World Club dive boat on the beach at Flores

WRECK DIVING

The USAT Liberty wreck is without doubt the number one dive site in Bali, if not the whole of Indonesia. And it certainly lived up to its reputation. Unfortunately, it is also swamped by divers daily, most arriving on day trips, so we found the best time to dive the wreck was very early in the morning. These early morning dives were just magic. The 120m long wreck lies in 5m to 27m parallel to the shore and is covered in coral and reef fish. And as much fun as it was to explore the holds and other parts of the wreck, the highlight was the marine life attracted to the ship. From schools of trevally to pygmy sea horses, the USAT Liberty wreck has it all. Reef sharks, barracuda, groupers, ghost pipefish, leaf scorpionfish, garden eels, batfish,



Dive boats and fishing boats pack the bay at Pandang Bai, Bali

sweetlips, angelfish, but the best were the bumphead parrotfish that sleep on the wreck. We shot both wide angle and macro on this wonderful wreck and were never short of subjects.

We had heard there was a small wreck off Flores before we arrived so were keen to check it out. The Wairterang Wreck rests in a sheltered cove and is accessible from the shore, lying in 13m to 32m. The 50m long wreck is thought to be a tank landing ship sunk during World War Two. The wreck is pretty broken up, with a sparse covering of corals, but is a haven for marine life. Gropers, batfish, pipefish, rock cod, lionfish, triggerfish, sweetlips and rabbitfish were just some of the species we saw. A school of trevally cruises above the wreck and invertebrate species abound, including shrimps and nudibranchs. We enjoyed this



The towering Mount Agung, Tulamben, Bali

wreck so much, even with only 12m visibility, that we dived it twice.

Overall we enjoyed all the dives we did in Bali and Flores and came home with a wonderful collection of images. Both areas have good and bad points, but we were glad we had split our time between the two destinations, as it gave us a more rounded holiday, with a little bit of everything.

Nigel Marsh and Helen Rose
www.nigelmarshphotography.com

More information about Flores
www.sea-world-club.com

More information about Tulamben
www.libertydiveresort.com

More information about Nusa Penida
www.aquamarinediving.com

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The Great White Footed Shrimp Expedition

By **Everett M. Turner Jr**

Our great white-footed shrimp expedition was a quest to identify a small-unknown shrimp. My wife, Essi Evans and I have been avid fish and critter watchers (and photographers) since we started diving in 1987. One of our favorite dive destinations is Grand Cayman. That is where this story begins.

In February of 2009 we were diving Sea Fan Reef, the house reef at Cobalt Coast Dive Resort on Grand Cayman's North Wall. It is a great shore dive with plenty of fish and lots of creatures, common and uncommon; enough to keep a photographer busy for a 2-hour shore dive. While poking around near the top of the mini-wall we noticed a brown sponge with a number of little -excruciatingly small, actually- white-footed shrimp sitting in the out pour openings. I took a few photos and later that evening we began our quest to identify these critters.

Having no luck, the next day I described them to any one who would listen. No one had ever seen or heard of them until I mentioned them to our friend Cindy (Cynthia Abgarian). She had seen and photographed them in the past but had also had no luck in

identifying them. She was very keen to know what they were. We soon moved on to other subjects and other finds and then we were back in Canada and back to work, the shrimp mostly forgotten.

In June of 2009 we were once again diving in Cayman and again we found the shrimp in the same brown sponge. The shrimp were not too shy but appeared to dislike the bright light. They were more active and more out of the outpour opening when there was cloud cover or later in the afternoon. What you cannot tell from the photo is how small these shrimp really are. They are about the size of carpenter ants. They also seem to be constantly associated with even smaller white sponge worms. More pictures were taken but still no identification was made.

Upon return to Ontario, I decided to send my shrimp photos to Les Wilk of ReefNet, publisher of the DVD Reef Fish Identification Florida, Caribbean Bahamas. Les has often identified other fish and critters for me. Les reported back that he had seen other photos of this shrimp but that he did not know the identification/classification. He forwarded the photos on to Dr. Sammy



(Above) Expedition members, Dora (left), Essi (center) and Cindy (right) enjoying a coke at Cobalt Coast Resort after a successful collection. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, EF-S 18-55mm, auto exposure f/3.5-5.6 f/4.5, 1/200, ISO 100 30mm.

(Right) White-Footed Shrimp (Periclimenes harringtoni) in sponge outpour opening. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, Sea Tool housing, EF-S 60mm macro lens, Inon Z-240 strobe, manual exposure f/11, 1/200, ISO 200.





Cindy took This White Foot (Periclimenes harringtoni) She managed to capture it fully out, a rare occurrence. Note the sponge worms. Olympus E-520 Olympus housing, Dual Inon Z-240 strobes, 50mm Zuiko macro lens with EC 1.4 teleconverter, manual exposure f/10,1/125, ISO100.



This photo was re-cropped to show the sponge worms associated with the shrimp. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, Sea Tool housing, EF-S 60mm macro lens, Inon Z-240, manual exposure strobe f/8,1/200, ISO 100.

De Grave of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Oxford, U.K.

Sammy wrote back: "It is either an undescribed or non-colour recorded species of Periclimenes/ Cuapetes. People have promised me specimens before, but none have materialised. Without an actual specimen I cannot really be sure which, as about 4-5 species in that genus in the Carib still have no colour documentation." This was now getting exciting, the possibility of an undescribed species and perhaps a chance to name it!

I contacted our friend and diving buddy, Dora Valdez, manager at Cobalt Coast Resort and asked her about the possibility of collecting specimens. Having previously shown Dora the white-footed

shrimp, she was very keen to help. She contacted Nancy Easterbrook, owner of Divetech dive operation at Cobalt Coast Resort with whom we have been diving for the last 9 years, to ask for her assistance in contacting the Department of the Environment (DOE) on Grand Cayman.

In short order we had a contact, Mr. Timothy Austin of the DOE. Sammy agreed to contact him and provide the necessary information and credentials to obtain a permit to collect specimens of our little white-footed shrimp.

While waiting for the permit, Dora- also an avid photographer, set out to get some more pictures of the shrimp. She enlisted Simon Dixon, friend, fellow photographer, dive instructor at Divetech

and marine biologist in her quest. They found more sites with the white-footed shrimp. In addition to Sea Fan Reef, they found them at Lighthouse Reef, Sand Hole, School House Reef, and a number of other sites with shore and boat access. The shrimp appeared to be always in the same type of sponge, likely the Touch-Me-Not Sponge.

The Permit arrived very quickly, with very specific details in regards to who was allowed to collect, how many shrimp could be collected and when and where they could be collected. And thus began our expedition. The members were Essi, Cindy, Dora, Simon and I. The permit was valid for September 1 to November 1. We were allowed 6 specimens and they had to be collected outside of marine zones. Collection took place in October.

Sammy sent us detailed instructions on collecting, handling, processing and mailing the specimens. Dora and Simon did some preliminary scouting prior to Cindy, Essi and me arriving on island. As we met to discuss our little shrimp hunt expedition, we soon realized that Sammy's directions for collecting the shrimp (shoeing them into a collection bottle) were not going to work, as the shrimp seemed to stay within the sponges' outpour openings. Cindy provided the capture means, straws from Panera Bread and a 20cc syringe.

Simon and Cindy were the collectors. Our first attempt was successful and convinced us all, but especially Simon, that the sponge was indeed the Touch-Me-Not Sponge. Simon had decided to forgo the syringe and just sucked up the shrimp through the straw, not an easy task at 25 feet of seawater. This worked well and we got a nice specimen; however, Simon ended up with quite a burning sensation in his mouth and on his lips and tongue.

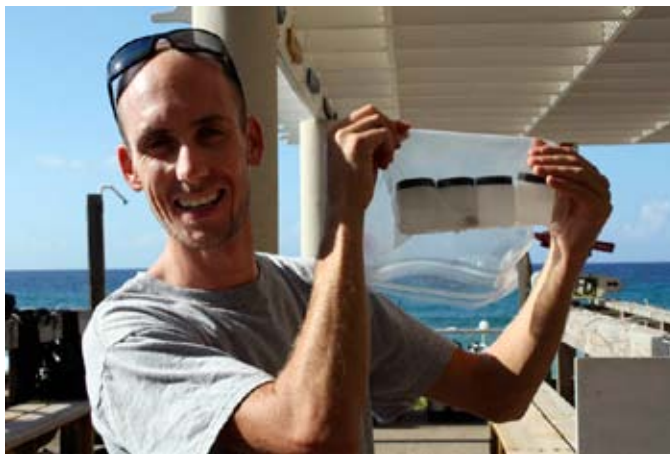
The rest of the collections were uneventful with the syringe and straw.

We processed the specimens according to instructions and Dora sent them on their way to Oxford. We talked of our success in collecting the white-footed shrimp and discussed what we might name it if it were a new specimen as we all anxiously waited for word from Sammy.

We were all back home when word arrived. Sammy wrote: “Unfortunately for me, white foot is not a new species. Sadly it is one of those species for which the colour pattern has not been documented fully. They are *Periclimenes harringtoni* Lebour 1949 (Pontoninae), still quite an exciting find though. The species is only known from two locations in the scientific literature: Bermuda (type locality, single specimen, reported by Lebour 1949) and Tortugas (4 specimens, reported by Holthuis, 1951). Interestingly it seems to have taken another 50+ years before found again (your find). As far as I know no colour photos of this beast [sic] have ever been published, Holthuis (1951) does give a short colour description, which sort of matches, but omits the white hands on the chelae. Anyway, it is that species for certain, the morphology matches the descriptions perfectly.”

“There may well be specimens in museums, which have not been reported upon, but the Smithsonian does not appear to have any.” And so our little expedition to find and identify a hopefully new species of shrimp ended, or so we thought.

It turns out that along with the white-footed shrimp we had collected a few of the sponge worms. Sammy sent these along with the photos of the worms we had taken (actually shrimp photos inadvertently showing the worms) to Leslie H.



Simon with the specimens just about ready to send. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, auto exposure EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 f/13, 1/250, ISO 200, 36mm.

Harris, Collection Manager, LACM-Allan Hancock Foundation Polychaete Collection, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, and Los Angeles California. She is of the opinion that the worms are an undescribed species and confirmation of this is pending. So check your photos carefully, you never know what might be lurking there that you didn't see!

All our expedition members have dived Cayman frequently. We have our favorite sites and are fans of the northwest point area, from West Bay dock to Barker's. We like to explore the shallow areas that are seldom dived and have been rewarded many times with unusual finds. A friend and sometimes dive buddy of our expedition team, Jonathan Dietz, described these areas in a recent article in UWP. As our shrimp hunt only occupied a few days of our time we spent a considerable time exploring these areas.

Two of my favorite sites are Lighthouse Reef and Sea Fan Reef. There is an abundance of critters



Dora's mantis shrimp, probably a Dark Mantis (Neogonodactylus curacaoensis). Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, Patima housing, Canon 100mm lens, dual Sea & Sea YS-110 strobes f/13.0, 1/125 ISO 100.



Cindy took this pretty Blue Streak nudibranch (Dondoeice occidentalis) on a night dive. Olympus E-520 Olympus housing, Dual Inon Z-240 strobes, 50mm Zuiko macro lens with EC 1.4 teleconverter, manual exposure f/10, 1/80, ISO 100.



Gaudy Clown Crab (Platypodiella spectabilis). We found 4-5 of these on a night dive at Sea Fan Reef. They were very active. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XSi, Sea Tool housing, EF-S 60mm macro lens, Inon Z-240 and Inon D-2000 strobes, manual exposure f/16, 1/200, ISO 200.

there for the photographer, macro or wide angle. Essi and I have found pipe horses, several types of pipefish, gaudy clown crabs, and scarlet cleaner shrimp along with all the other common cleaner shrimp, nudibranchs of various kinds, miniature mellos, stippled cling fish, spotted and fingerprint cyphomas, Caribbean reef spiders, neck crabs, decorator crabs, dusky and yellow head jaw fish, green

banded gobies, lancer dragonets, sail fin blennies, triple fin blennies, bumble bee shrimp, purple crowned sea goddess, striated sea hares and of course the white-footed shrimp to name but a few. The week of the shrimp hunt Cindy found a Long Horn Blenny at Lighthouse Reef, something not reported in Cayman as far as we know. Dora found a very photogenic sea horse.

All in all the “Great White-Footed Shrimp Expedition” was a great success for us.

Sammy De Grave would like to know the range of the white-footed shrimp in the Caribbean. We know we were not the first to spot or photograph it but no one has done the follow up that we did. If you have seen it and have photo documented it contact him, sammy.degrave@oum.ox.ac.uk or me, everett@dollyjebenterprises.com

Everett M. Turner Jr



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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.

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Malta's Gentle Giants

(and some colourful jellies)

by Paul Colley

For the majority that will not know this author (I am a relative newcomer to the world of underwater photography), I first learned to use a compact digital camera underwater in 2005. After a few diving trips with it and (crucially) an inspiring lesson from Martin Edge, I converted to using a digital SLR in 2008. Opportunities for me to take photographs are limited given commitments to my full time job. However, in early October 2009, I had the great pleasure of joining a group of fellow servicemen from Royal Air Force sub-aqua clubs across the United Kingdom for a week-long expedition to the Maltese archipelago. Our objectives were centred on the many ship and aircraft wrecks around Malta, some of which have important historical connections with our Service. But we also took an opportunity to dive with some captive giant Bluefin Tuna, which are the main subject of this article. As President of the Royal Air Force Sub Aqua Association, I am also trying to encourage some of our many divers to develop their photography skills

(and to improve mine at the same time). The dive with the Tuna was judged by all of us to be quite unusual and something beyond our collective experience that far.

I had been inspired to complete this dive by reading a short article about Bluefin Tuna in a dive magazine, which I chanced upon just before I went to Malta. It fascinated me, especially because the author of that article had concluded that he should have taken his camera with him. I was determined to replicate that author's experience, but with

(Top) The fish that I photographed for this article had been caught by fisherman and placed in a huge circular pen, about 80 metres or so in diameter.

(Right) The D300 auto focus and tracking systems worked well with fast-moving fish. Selecting a subject at range and then holding half action until the composition was right seemed to work best.

Subal Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17 at 13mm, 1/200th @ F9 ISO 100



a camera in hand and my expedition leader was kind enough to fold the request into his overall plan. A local dive company called Maltaqua were providing us with excellent logistic support in Malta and they put us in touch with the people who had access to the Tuna pens in St Paul's Bay, which is located to the North West of Malta.

The guides told me that there were about one thousand fish in the pen and that their market value was over 1 million Euros; sadly, they were nearly all destined for the Asian sushi market. Readers will probably be aware that the Bluefin is under severe stress from over-fishing, especially in the Mediterranean. Less than one month before we dived, the European commission had agreed to back a proposal to ban all trade in Bluefin Tuna. Despite optimism that this might lead to a fishing ban, the move was blocked in late September by the Mediterranean nations with a vested interest in the industry. The fish that I photographed for this article



The guides told me that there were about one thousand fish in the pen and that their market value was over 1 million Euros. Subal Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17 at 17mm, 1/200th @ F8 ISO 100

had been caught by fisherman and placed in a huge circular pen, about 80 metres or so in diameter. Although I had mixed feelings about diving with fish destined for the sushi market, there was a crumb of good news. The diving is helping the Tuna in a small way, because a proportion of the money generated from it is being used to buy some of the fish, which are then released back into the wild. But this was too good an opportunity to miss anyway, because

Bluefins are becoming rare and they are difficult to approach in the wild. From a photographer's perspective, despite the worrying plight of the fish, the environment inside the pens provides a wonderful opportunity to observe and photograph these gentle giants.

The experience was quite surreal. You jump from your dive boat to a position just outside the circular pen, which sits in about 50 metres of water. The depth to the bottom of the net that



Some weighed up to 450Kg; they were absolutely huge fish and they became accustomed enough with us to make an occasional close pass which, even at a modest 6 knots, was enough to buffet the camera with the wake. Subal Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17 at 17mm, 1/200th @ F8 ISO 100

forms the pen is about 35 metres. You have to swim up to a floating circular boom, from which the huge net is suspended. From there you pull yourself rather inelegantly over the booms and into the pen, assisted by two guides. Once inside and as we prepared to dive, the Tuna were already rising up at speed to take some baitfish inside the pen. On pushing my face under the water to get a first glimpse of them,

it was a very impressive sight; several hundred big Tuna were circling about 5 metres below us in a massive shoal with shafts of sunlight playing on their backs. The shoal had considerable depth to it; it was not possible to see the bottom, but it looked as though it might extend to below 20 metres. Tuna are built for speed and shaped like bullets with smooth green-blue backs punctuated by bright yellow spines;

the latter were clearly visible while looking from above. Having picked up my camera from dive buddy Joanna and waited for her to join me inside the pen, we signalled ready to descend and dropped straight into the middle of the swirling mass below. We settled at about 18-20 metres, where most of the action seemed to be.

Although capable of 10 times the speed, the Tuna cruised around the pen at about 6 knots or so. Some weighed up to 450Kg; they were absolutely huge fish and they became accustomed enough with us to make an occasional close pass which, even at a modest 6 knots, was enough to buffet the camera with the wake. Sometimes, they even passed close enough to push the strobe arms backwards. Tuna normally have their pectoral and pelvic fins pushed close into the body for streamlining, but as they manoeuvre, the fins pop out like miniature air brakes on an aircraft, allowing them to turn quickly and in a small radius. It was a fascinating experience just to watch them swimming and occasionally to see their fins jutting out into the flow. I swam gently against the stream of the shoal or tried to hover in mid water looking for an elusive head-on shot. It felt at times as though I was standing on a motorway with juggernauts thundering towards me, only swerving at the last sensible moment to miss. The shoaling behaviour of the fish also generated a moderately strong vortex that slowly pulled us downward. It was like being inside a huge, but very slow and powerful washing machine. Accurate depth control was difficult and, because the Tuna sometimes tended to swim from high to low, looking at them through a viewfinder for extended periods – especially when detached from the visual references provided by the edges of the pen – was quite disorientating. Despite being

used to flying at very high altitudes and speeds in fighter aircraft, diving inside the pen gave me something that I had not experienced before; a hint of vertigo. The dive was thus a very unusual experience in its own right.

I am far from an expert photographer, but I did start with a plan and managed to take a few shots that still remind me of the incredible experience, although they tend to lack the rich colour that I have managed in some other photographs. My set up was a Nikon D300 in a Subal housing (I absolutely love this camera), with a Tokina 10-17mm lens and the associated dome port. On the end of some buoyancy arms, I had a combination of Inon and Sea & Sea strobes. Manual settings all round work well for me, but it always takes some trial and error to get the lighting right. Although I try to slightly under-expose my shots as a rule, the pass distances of the fish varied enough to make many of the pictures very under-exposed. Because the fish were moving quite fast (and because I have not yet developed enough confidence to use more creative techniques), I generally used shutter speeds of 1/100 or faster and then simply varied the F-Stop and power of the strobes. I found that the D300's auto tracking modes worked extremely well and I had learned enough about them to experiment effectively. The lens provided such a good depth of field that even manual focus worked, but I found that the Nikon's 3D and Auto tracking modes were very well suited to the conditions. Although it was difficult to predict which fish would make a close pass for a good full-frame shot, by selecting a fish that was initially distant, but pure head on, and then by focusing, holding half action on the shutter and tracking it until the composition looked good, I managed to catch a few half-decent fish portraits.



The Tuna create a downward vortex as they shoal. Subal Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17 at 10mm, 1/250th @ F5.6 ISO 100

Unfortunately, because the action was continuous and shot opportunities constantly upon me, I tried to take so many that I failed to evaluate my performance properly whilst in the water. This meant that I did reasonably well with some of the compositions, but I failed to be consistent enough with the exposures – or to try out any new techniques.

What would I do next time? I would force

myself to stop every 5 shots or so, evaluate more closely how I was doing, and then adjust the parameters accordingly. I would also try rear curtain flash with some much slower shutter speeds and some without strobes, using manual white balance. I had worked out those particular opportunities before the dive, but failed to keep to that part of the plan once I became mesmerised by 1000 swirling Tuna. However, it was a memorable dive. I was pleased to learn more about the Bluefin Tuna, was very saddened by its plight, but overjoyed to see these magnificent fish in what at times felt like open water. I hope to repeat this experience, hopefully some time in 2010, but with a little more discipline and thought applied to my photography.

Finally, although slightly disappointed with the difficulty that I had experienced getting some colour into the Tuna photographs, I was very encouraged by one other unexpected opportunity in Malta. From our very first dives, we had been seeing dozens of bright yellow jellyfish. The locals told us that it was a seasonal effect in Malta. We eventually saw thousands of these creatures; there were even some inside the Tuna pen. They are known locally as fried egg jellyfish, but more correctly as *cotylorhiza tuberculata*. They were quite big (about 50cm in diameter) and, having



Hundreds of Jellyfish set against the Azure Window just off the Island of Gozo. Subal Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17 at 10mm, 1/80th @ F9 ISO 200 Magic filter

only mild venom, provided great potential to get close for photography. We saw them in open water, in most of the entry and exit points (we did a good deal of shore-based diving), and in huge concentrations around some sites, where the currents had brought them together. We even found some inside small caves. I had never photographed a Jellyfish before, but recalled Martin Edge telling me about his iconic shot of one, which had set him on the path to seriously pursuing underwater photography. He had emphasised in his book (and in his

lesson to me a couple of years ago), to look for subjects with potential. These Jellyfish screamed exactly that at me, because I had a patient dive buddy and time to think through the shots. I had also just finished reading an article about composition using opposites on the colour wheel and was struck by the opportunity to set bright yellow against deep blue. With a 10-17mm lens, no strobes (but using a Magic filter), I was able to get very close to the jellyfish and pick out the colour; it did indeed contrast well. Whither Palau with these wonderful



subjects so easily accessible in the Mediterranean?!

Paul Colley

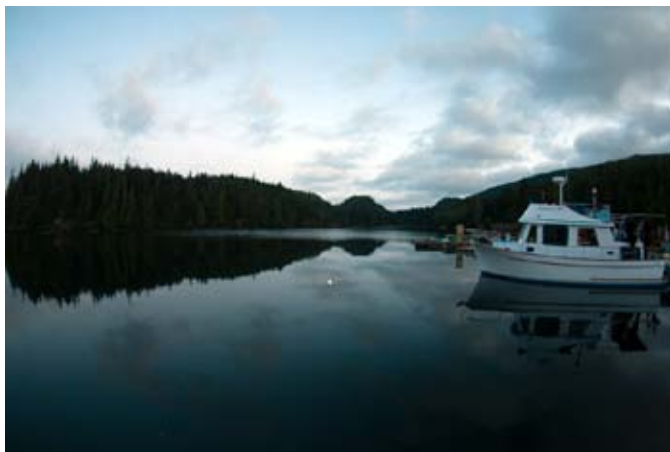


Port Hardy

by Lucas Price

Anyone who talks to cold water divers inevitably hears about Port Hardy, British Columbia. Many consider the area to be the best cold water diving in the world. After years of intending to go, I finally made the trip to the Browning Pass Hideaway in late August 2009. The Hideaway is a 60-90 minute boat ride from the town of Port Hardy. It consists of several small buildings built on rafts in Clam Cove and is just a few minutes away from world-famous dive site Browning Wall and many other equally high quality sites. Clam cove is extremely protected and almost appears to be a small mountain lake, but it is connected by a small passage to the Queen Charlotte Strait. The resort is owned and run by John DeBoeck. John has many years of experience running dive boats in the area, and that is more important here than in some other destinations. The underwater currents can be very strong and dangerous. John is very experienced at understanding exactly when slack will hit the various sites in the passage and picking sites where dangerous currents won't interrupt the dive. A few times we would pull up to a site on the boat and John would notice that the current was still running. Based on his visual observations of the first site, he could identify another nearby site that would be ready at just the right time for us.

The surrounding landscape is rugged and beautiful. The area is teeming with wildlife both above and below water. At this time of year, black bears can be seen plucking salmon out of the river

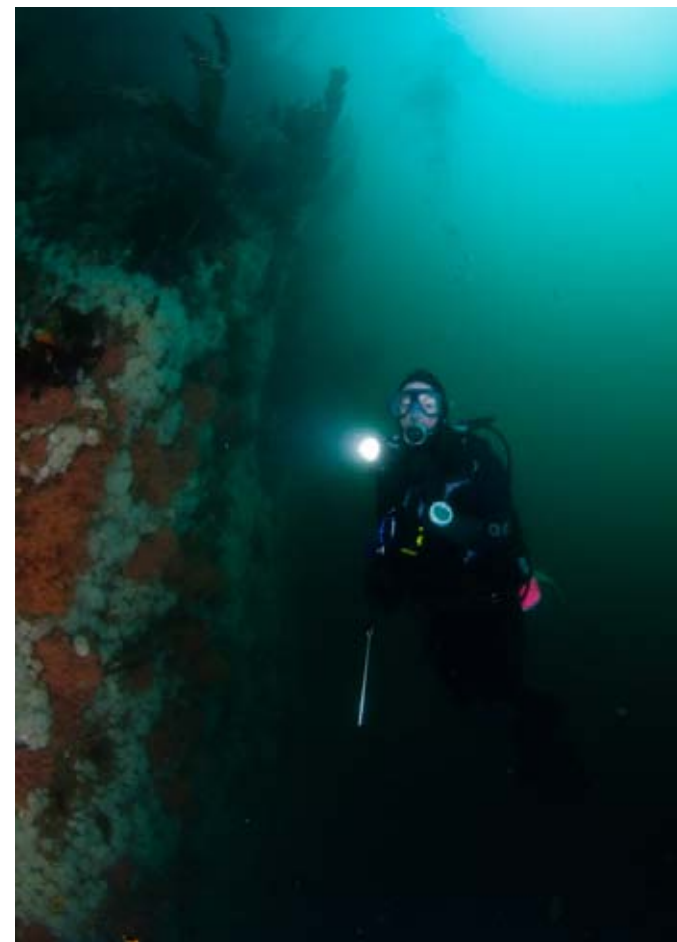


(Top right) The giant plumose anemone (50cm tall) is easy to spot among a seemingly endless carpet of life. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 1/8, f7.1, Tokina 10-17FE@10mm, 2 Ikelite ds-160 strobes

(Right) Browning Pass Wall is a 60m vertical drop full of critter hiding spots that is best explored with a light. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 1/8, f8, Tokina 10-17FE@10mm, 2 Ikelite ds-160 strobes

just a few minutes outside of Port Hardy. On the boat ride out of Port Hardy to the Hideaway, we spent several minutes watching a breaching humpback whale and saw several stellar sea lions. Bald eagles can be spotted from the dock of the resort and on virtually every boat ride. Another topside highlight was watching a school of dahl's porpoises swimming alongside the boat as we returned to the resort after a dive.

Underwater is equally exciting. Like other parts of Vancouver Island, giant pacific octopuses, wolf eels, and sea lions are among the highlights; but what sets this area apart is the density of life.



The walls are completely covered with plumose anemones, and other invertebrates are interspersed among the walls of white.

When I arrived, it had been over a year since I had been diving in my drysuit. And more importantly I had never dove in my drysuit with my DSLR camera setup. I remember the first time I dove with a DSLR in the tropics, and in a certain way it was like learning to dive all over again. On the first dive I felt very clumsy, and learning to do everything with only one free hand took a few dives. By the third dive I was completely comfortable doing everything one-handed, and having my camera felt like second nature. Now I feel like I am missing something anytime I dive without it. Adding a drysuit to that equation was like starting all over again. In a 3mm wetsuit, I dive with very little weight, 4 lbs is usually more than enough for me. In my drysuit, with all my warm clothes underneath, I need about 35 lbs. Needless to say, buoyancy control takes some practice. Tuning the buoyancy to stay still while shooting macro subjects was the biggest issue, but something I did work out over the first few dives. Using thick gloves with my Sea&Sea housing took a little bit of practice also, but they really didn't create any problems. I had the hang of it within 15 minutes. I also find that my air consumption is faster in colder waters. When in tropical waters, I love the relaxing 70 minute plus dives. But in Port Hardy both my faster air consumption and the cold water made it so that I was usually ready to get back on the boat after about 50 minutes. As John DeBoeck reminded us, the conditions in Browning Pass are more conducive to doing a lot of dives rather than long dives.

At the beginning of my stay, the visibility



*Humpback Whales are commonplace on the boat ride from Port Hardy to the Hideaway.
Nikon d300, ISO 200, 1/1600, f4.5, 17-70 @ 70mm*



Decorated Warbonnets are one of the many interesting macro lens subjects. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 105mm macro, 1/200, f11 Ikelite ds-160 strobes



(Above) Varied terrain gives many opportunities for wide angle photography, but proper technique is needed for the sometimes poor viz and light. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 1/8, f8, Tokina 10-17FE@10mm, 2 Ikelite ds-160 strobes



The small red dots on this jellyfish are light sensors that it uses to orientate itself in the water column. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 105mm macro, 1/100, f13, 2 Ikelite ds-160 strobes

was very poor averaging 2-3 meters. As the full moon got closer, the visibility opened up a bit particularly at the high tide slack. Because of the poor visibility I decided to start off shooting macro subjects. Many people see the green waters of the Pacific Northwest and assume that underwater will be drab and boring. A few photos of macro subjects easily dispel that notion. Colorful anemones and shooting backgrounds abound. Macro life was so dense that

I found it best to look for things that would provide colorful backgrounds, and subjects could nearly always be found on the backgrounds. Shrimp, nudibranchs, crabs, mosshead warbonnets, gunnels, sea cucumbers, irish lords, and jellyfish are just a few animals that make great subjects with a macro lens.

In some ways, shooting macro is about the same whether in cold green water or warm blue water, but there are a few important differences.



Black sea bass shot at a slow shutter speed gives a deep green background and some motion blur. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 1/8, f6.3, Tokina 10-17FE@17mm, 2 Ikelite ds-160 strobes

Using a focusing light is always helpful, but in dark conditions with poor visibility using a focusing light is crucial. It is also helpful to turn the strobe power down a bit and use a diffuser to create softer lighting—and hopefully reduce backscatter. On Ikelite ds-160 strobes, between -2 and -3 is a good starting point. This requires opening up the aperture a bit. F13 creates a good starting point for close up macro with these strobe settings, but be ready to adjust

from there. On a Nikon d300 with the Nikkor 105mm lens, the depth of field is quite shallow at these settings. This is pleasing in many photos, but it does require precise focusing. Some subjects may require a greater depth of field. Making the aperture smaller typically requires turning up the strobe power. This combined with poor visibility makes strobe positioning very important. When shooting macro, strobes pointed straight ahead—at a slight angle



The visibility remained very poor in less than 30 feet of depth, but it opened up quite a bit below that. Sea&Sea MDX-D300 Nikon d300, ISO 200, 1/8, f8, Tokina 10-17FE@10mm, 2 Ikelite ds-160 strobes

to the subject—is a good starting point, but if that creates backscatter then pointing them a little bit further away from the subject helps. Most underwater strobes have a wide angle of coverage and don't need to be pointed directly at the subject. Strobes create a cone of light, the width of which increases and the intensity decreases as it moves away from the source. You typically want your subject to be towards the softer edge of the cone rather than in the

harsh middle. When close to the subject, putting the strobes close to the camera is not a problem. The farther away the subject is, the more it is necessary to move the strobes away from the camera to get the water column out of the harshest light.

As the week went on, the full moon was approaching which meant larger tidal exchanges. This helped photographic conditions, but it still didn't lead to the 80-100 foot visibility that Port Hardy is known

for. Nonetheless, I didn't want to go home without some wide angle photos. A few of the many wide angle subjects include huge walls completely covered in white plumose anemones and orange sea cucumbers, giant pacific octopi, wolf eels feeding on sea urchins with china rockfish trying to pick up the scraps, black sea bass swimming in kelp forests, and mating Dungeness crab. The visibility remained very poor in less than 30 feet of depth, but it opened up quite a bit below that. This, along with skies that were frequently overcast, lead to conditions where getting wide angle photos without backscatter was possible, but there was very little available light. In such conditions, black backgrounds are very easy to capture; but the deep green backgrounds that are unique to cold water diving require slow shutter speeds. Some don't like their greens to be too deep and strong. I prefer strong greens and this led me to shutter speeds as slow as 1/8s. Even at these slow speeds, blur is rarely a problem when using a strobe. It does occur at times, but it often enhances the photos.

Photography in cold waters is challenging and rewarding in ways that are just a little bit different than tropical waters. It is often said that underwater photography is done at the extremes, either extreme wide

angle for the large subject or extreme macro for the small subjects. Cold water makes that even truer. Finding ways to manage the different lighting conditions and variable visibility inherent in cold water diving will add some proverbial tricks to your bag. The gained knowledge and experience will pay off in both future warm and cold water trips. For those who want to get better at underwater photography, the cold waters are worth it for that reason alone. But, beyond that, the diving and animal life is spectacular and Port Hardy, BC is certainly worth the trip.

Lucas Price

www.uwencounters.com



Mucky Thoughts from Lembeh

By Mark Webster

Tropical reef diving is wonderful and perhaps offers the most appealing conditions for underwater photography with often crystal clear waters and an abundance of colourful subjects. In fact many divers, and some photographers, do not dive under any other conditions and regard temperate or turbid waters as strictly off limits. If you live in the UK or another temperate location then you will know all about photography in challenging conditions, although we are occasionally blessed with good visibility. Diving in these conditions hones your photographic skills and prepares us for unexpected poor visibility when travelling to more exotic destinations.

However, we do sometimes expose ourselves to turbid conditions in warm waters quite deliberately. If you have been to the Lembeh Strait, or any other classic muck diving location, you will know that the experience is somewhat addictive simply because of the fantastic diversity of subjects this location offers. Having just returned from my fourth visit to Lembeh I realise that I still yearn for more despite the sometimes difficult conditions for

photography. So what is the appeal of Lembeh and how can we overcome the problems that turbid conditions present?

The reason for the immense diversity here are the nutrient rich waters which means there are high levels of plankton year round which not only reduces visibility and light levels, but also presents the opportunity of including lots of backscatter in our images. You will also encounter sand and silt in the water column, particularly close to the seabed, which may be the result of strong currents or the activity of your fellow divers, but whatever the cause we need to try and minimise the

Cuttle fish – a cuttle fish may seem almost a mundane subject for Lembeh, but they can be very co-operative.

This one can see its reflection in my dome port and got quite excited until it reached and touched its reflection and was left a little confused I think. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 10-17mm FE zoom + 2X teleconverter, ISO 100, f11 1/25. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 10-17mm FE zoom + 2X teleconverter, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100, f11 1/25.



Dive boats at Lembeh Resort – Nikon D200, 18-200mm zoom, Programme mode.



impact in our images. The majority of the subjects in Lembeh Strait are bottom dwelling critters which often display remarkable camouflage either for predation or defense and this can compound the problems.

Buoyancy control is critical in these sandy and muddy conditions if you wish to reduce the seabed disturbance for yourself and fellow photographers. The first requirement is to optimize your weights so that you can use your BCD effectively and then learn to use breath control and minimal fin movement to control your position when shooting close to the seabed. An invaluable tool to help you to hold position, seen throughout Indonesia but especially in Lembeh, is the pointer or prod. This is simply a piece of stainless steel rod typically 2ft/60cm in length (sometimes longer) which you can use to hold position in the sand or rubble. This enables you to keep yourself off the seabed and reduce the need to fin when there is a current as well. If you do not have one then you must buy one as soon as you arrive!

Strobe positioning is of course crucial to controlling backscatter and, whilst it is tempting to leave your strobes in a fixed position in close up and macro photography, it is wise to consider the lighting angle with each new subject. This is sometimes a challenge as the guides are often

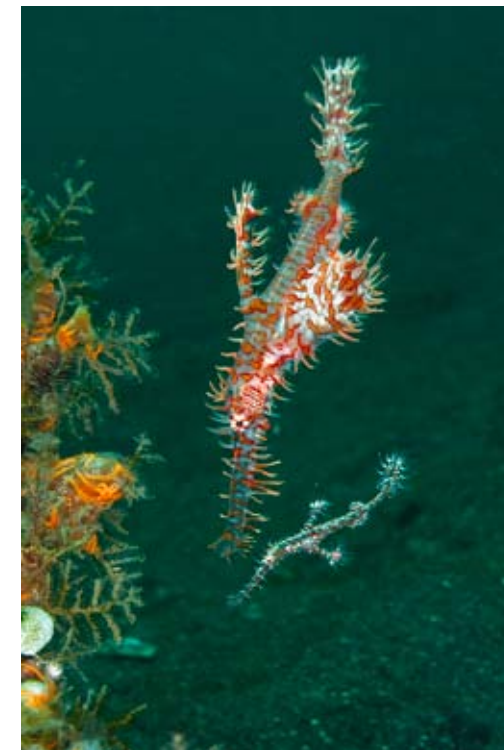
finding a new subject every few minutes and if it is your first visit here then you will want to try and record them all. These subjects range in size from true macro (say 1"/24mm in length) to larger fish like scorpion fish, frog fish and ghost pipe fish. So the distance to your subject is also changing with each new subject which will impact strobe positioning.

If you have only one strobe then the classic angle of 45 deg from the side of the camera towards the subject works well for stand off distances of 1-2ft (30-60cm). We are trying to position the cone of light from the strobe so that the edge of it illuminates the subject and not the water and suspended particles between the lens and subject. As you get closer to the subject you will need to move the strobe closer to the camera and try to envisage the cone of light. You may find that you end up pointing the strobe directly ahead or even a little away from the subject in order to use the edge of the beam. When the distance to the subject is only a couple of inches or a few centimetres then you may have to point the strobe directly at the subject, perhaps from above, in order to illuminate it effectively, but at these distances backscatter should be less of an issue.

With dual strobes the same procedure applies, but now you need



Hairy squat lobsters – some macro subjects like these squat lobsters are found elevated from the seabed, in this case on a barrel sponge. Backscatter from disturbed sediment is less of a problem which allows you to concentrate on the best way to light the subject without casting shadows. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 60mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f16 1/125.



Ornate ghost pipe fish – these spectacular looking fish are normally found with crinoids or gorgonians and are very patient subjects. If you want to capture the whole critter in the frame then their really is only one composition as they normally hang vertically like this. Using a slow shutter speed will include some natural light or you could make tighter compositions of perhaps just the head and vary the orientation. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 60mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f16 1/125.



Star gazer – this is one subject you will shoot down on as they live buried in the sand and are normally only seen emerging at night. But if you ask your guide for one then they can easily find you one in a seemingly barren patch of seabed. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 60mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f11 1/60.

to try and envisage the two cones of light and the way they will intersect on the subject. The objective is again to try and avoid illuminating the water and particles between the subject and lens. Small strobes are ideal for the close up and short stand off distances in Lembeh, but you can also use larger wide angle strobes effectively as well. Bringing your strobes in close to either side of the port/camera and pointing them straight ahead will work well, but again you must be

aware of the change in distance and subject size. You may find it necessary to diverge the strobes or point them a little away from the subject in order to use the two beam edges. Ring flash uses this same beam edge principal, although the light surrounds the lens, and works well at stand offs of up to 1-2ft/30-60cm although much will depend on the design of your particular unit.

Because many so many of the critters are on the seabed the



Giant frog fish – this mated pair were sitting on the seabed close to a pile of junk. Apparently they are long term residents at this site, although there were no yellow sponges close by to mimic. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 10-17mm FE zoom + 2X teleconverter, ISO 100, f11 1/25. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 10-17mm FE zoom + 2X teleconverter, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100, f11 1/25.

temptation is perhaps to shoot down on the subject which will often demonstrate the efficacy of the camouflage but may not produce a powerful or descriptive image of the subject. The real challenge is to try and get some separation between the subject and its habitat so that a viewer can see the detail of the strange critter. We can sometimes achieve this by looking for subjects which may have contrasting surroundings but

this is rare here, so the best solution is getting as low as possible with the camera to try and exclude the majority of the background or position the subject against open water. This may be difficult to achieve in some circumstances if there is other marine life around your subject and you also need to be aware of other critters that may give you a nasty surprise when you settle onto the seabed – look out for Inimicus scorpion fish in particular



Striated or Hairy frog fish – this is perhaps the most spectacular species of frog fish which can be quite difficult to photograph well particularly when they are very hairy to match the surrounding collections of weed like this example. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 10-17mm FE zoom + 2X teleconverter, ISO 100, f11 1/25. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 10-17mm FE zoom + 2X teleconverter, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100, f11 1/25.



Bargibanti pygmy seahorse – these cute little seahorses are still a must have image for most photographs and, like clown fish, are hard to resist no matter how many images you have of them. They are challenging as they are so small, requiring extra magnification, and can be difficult to light well. Nikon D300, Subal ND2, 105mm micro, Inon wet lens, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f16 1/125.

which are plentiful here and, whilst they are a great subject themselves, you do not want to make contact with them! Sometimes it is necessary to shoot the subject ‘blind’ if you cannot get your eye low enough to see through the viewfinder or screen, which can work quite well with a little practice. Having a 45 degree viewfinder can be a bonus in these situations.

If it is not possible to get low enough for effective subject separation then try playing with the angle at which you light the subject in order to create some stronger shadows. This will define the subject more effectively but of course this may also increase the amount of backscatter recorded. You can also soften and blur the background by opening up the aperture to reduce the depth of field. This will require good control of the flash power and if your guns do not have sufficient settings then either pull them back further from the subject or reduce the power with diffusers.

Of course not every subject is bottom dwelling and critters like ghost pipe fish (often in crinoids and sea fans), pygmy seahorses and a number of free swimming fish do make life a little bit easier. Shooting larger subjects clear of the seabed still presents the same backscatter issues but you should not need to deal with

disturbed sand and sediment so much. There are also small subjects like whip coral gobies and shrimps and the hairy squat lobsters found on barrel sponges which are elevated from the seabed.

Tiny subjects like pygmy seahorses and crinoid squat lobsters and shrimps offer a different challenge. You will need additional magnification for these subjects, perhaps 2:1, which requires additional wet or dry diopters or perhaps a teleconverter if you are using a DSLR. As you are so close to these subjects backscatter will be less of an issue, but you will still need to concentrate on your lighting angles to avoid casting shadows on the subject from crinoid arms or sea fan branches.

It is worth bringing your wide angle lens or mid range zoom here as well to shoot some of the larger subjects in their habitat. Combining a fish eye with a teleconverter is a popular technique for getting very close but you will also need a smaller dome to do this effectively. Lighting these wider images can be even more challenging and you are almost certainly going to have to spend some time removing at least some backscatter in post processing.

Although conditions are challenging here and at other true muck locations all this is forgotten when you are presented with such an

amazing selection of subjects. The other big plus is of course that the majority of them are sessile and will completely ignore your intrusion, probably assuming that you cannot really see them. So your subject is not likely to move off which gives you the opportunity to explore the various lighting techniques, angles and exposure for each.

If you have not been to Lembeh Strait yet then you should put it high on your must visit list. It is now getting busier with a number of new resorts opening in the last couple of years but there are, at least for now, more than enough dive sites and critters to keep everyone happy.

Trying to perfect your lighting when you capture the image is what we all strive for, but don't let it dampen the pleasure of the moment as there is always Photoshop and Lightroom to help you save the day!

Mark Webster
www.photec.co.uk



Underwater Photography Workshops with Mark Webster 2010



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***Bikini Atoll is now closed once again. But you can take
a dive trip for just \$4.95 and see the majesty of the
"Nuclear Fleet!"***

GHOST FLEET



An eBook by Joseph C. Dovala

of BIKINI ATOLL

Expanded Version!

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 \$4.95 (US) each emailed. Please visit www.jcdovala.com for details.

Book Review

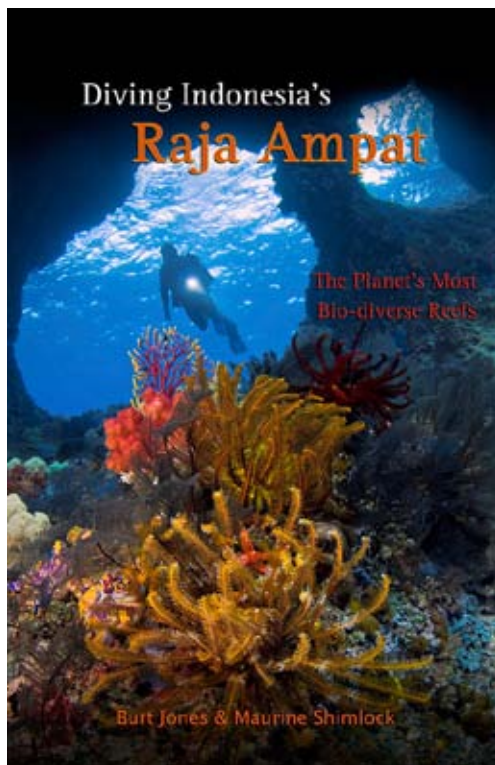
Book Review: Diving Indonesia's Raja Ampat

by Jones and Shimlock

By Alex Mustard

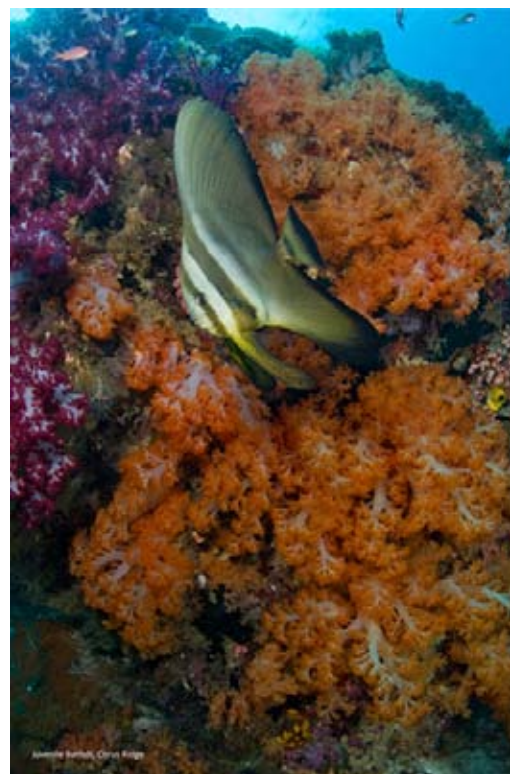
Over the last decade Raja Ampat has become, deservedly, one of the most desirable diving destinations in the world. The region is home to more than 1000 species of fish and over 70% of the world's hard coral species, and perhaps of even more interest to the diving experience, some of the most breathtaking underwater scenes imaginable. When UWP Editor, Peter Rowlands, and I, first visited we spent the most of the first week coming out of the water continually pronouncing "No, that was my best coral reef dive ever!"

The excellent, new 146 page **Diving Indonesia's Raja Ampat** by Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock is, to date, the only diving guidebook published about the archipelago. It is an honest, respectful, engaging and sumptuously illustrated description of the diving opportunities in this unique and important region. Its packed with information naturally.



The book has been produced in cooperation with Conservation International and starts with detailed explanations of the unique biodiversity and the reasons for it. It also introduces the holistic and considered conservation strategy for the region and its links with the local community. The majority of the pages are dedicated to the diving, sensibly dividing the archipelago into bite-sized morsels, giving a general introduction to the area's dives before detailed site descriptions.

The book contains more than 130 dive site descriptions complete



with GPS coordinates and diving directions. Dive sites are listed with both Indonesian island names and English names. It reviews all the famous sites, but Jones and Shimlock are keen to encourage us to dive the less celebrated sites as well, to fully appreciate Raja Ampat's defining characteristic – diversity.

This publication is well timed. Until recently Raja Ampat was not well explored. Many cruise directors had their favourite route and many had not dived that widely in the islands. As recently as 2006, one "expert" advised me that my planned

Pulau Yanggelo 4 & 5

Cinrus Ridge
GPS: S 00.30.646 E 130.27.348
Gam Ridge
GPS: S 00.30.577 E 130.27.296
Location: Channel between Pulau Yanggelo and Gam
Photography: Wide angle and macro
Best depth: 3 – 30 meters

Cinrus Ridge is one of Raja Ampat's most stunning sites. The sloping sides of the ridge are so covered with life that most divers compare the dive to swimming through a well-stocked aquarium. The shallower bommies on north (local) side have some of the most spectacular soft corals in northern Raja Ampat. In a current, vast stretches of spectacular orange corals open and feed while Barracuda, Batfish, and Surgefinfish swirl overhead. Pairs of Imperial and Blue Angelfish circle the bommies, and Lionfish usually hover close to the reef while hunting among glimmering schools of batfish. Cinrus Ridge can be dived either from the inside of the channel to the outside or in the opposite direction depending on the current. Our favorite profile is to start at the deeper southern end and swim north, exploring both sides as well as the crest of the ridge.

Gam Ridge is on the Gam side of the channel and runs north of west into the ocean. This is a wide expanse of coral that begins at the surface and drops off into deeper water. Lovely soft corals and small sea fans highlight this reef, which also can be full of fish. This side of the channel also makes a great night dive. The best day dive takes place around 20 meters and is a current-dependent drift that focuses on watching Fusiliers and Surgefinfish school around this ridge's colorful bommies.

Pulau Yanggelo 6, 7, 8

Mangrove Ridge
GPS: S 00.30.780 E 130.27.589
Mangroves and Slope
GPS: S 00.30.824 E 130.27.714
Ga's Fleck
GPS: S 00.30.701 E 130.27.309
Location: Mangrove channel between Gam and Yanggelo
Photography: Wide angle and macro
Best depth: Surface to 30 meters

These three sites are located in the mangrove channel that separates Yanggelo



trip to SE Misool was a waste of time!

The last few seasons have seen a change in attitude, cruise directors have pooled their knowledge and itineraries are much more diverse. Also more boats have meant more divers and more exploration. **Diving Indonesia's Raja Ampat** completes this process, accruing this knowledge.

That said it is important to stress that Raja Ampat covers a massive area and will never be fully explored underwater. No book could cover it comprehensively. Sensibly, the authors encourage readers on several occasions to keep exploring.

I have never met the authors, but I feel they would make excellent liveaboard companions. They balance the need to provide authoritative information with a humility in their writing that gives the text a most engaging tone. They deal with the recent crocodile attack in the Nampale mangroves sensibly and sensitively.

I particularly enjoyed how quotes from famous explorers are woven into the narrative, especially where quotes are linked to places you will actually visit. Reading the one hundred and fifty year old words of British naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace about the famous Passage dive site was a real thrill. What a great way to whet the appetite for a dive there.

Photographically the book has some excellent images, particularly wide angle, which would look even better in a larger format. However, the small size and light weight make this book a highly suitable travel companion. The wide angle photos are of a good standard and will provide some inspiration for photographers on their travels. The fish photographs are not as standout, which I believe reflects the fact that despite being home to 1320 species of our finned friends, Raja Ampat is not the best location for fish photography. The fish there just sometimes seem a bit wild! That said the selection of images gives an excellent impression of the

diversity of life and scenery.

Negatives are hard to find in a book that so accurately fulfils its brief. It would be nice if the dive sites were labelled on the maps with names, rather than just location flags. Diving depths are listed only in metres, which means a bit of mathematics for those who don't dive metric. And it seems strange that diagrams have been included for just a handful of sites. But I am nit-picking here.

In summary, this is an ideal book whether you are curious about Raja Ampat, considering it serious or have already been. Even R4 veterans will learn something and enjoy reliving old memories. The book is the perfect size to travel with and costs a very reasonable \$25 USD. But the price tag should come with a warning: reading it is highly likely to cost you much more. As I turned the pages I found that the words and pictures of Jones and Shimlock left me desperate to be back amongst the wonders of Raja Ampat.

Highly recommended. Achieves everything it sets out to, for a competitive price.

Alex Mustard
alex@amustard.com

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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

After seeing the photos of the Snake Eel in the Nov/Dec issue. I was reminded of a similar experience I had whilst diving with my buddies earlier this year and thought you might be interested to use the story.

These photos were taken in the North East of Scotland on an evening dive at Rosehearty, one of the best sites in the area with a wide variety of marine life and normally good visibility. It's usually on chance encounters like this that you are left thinking I wish I had brought my camera (a Fuji F50fd) but on this occasion thankfully I had.

Normally these scorpion fish are just lying there trying to hide and be as inconspicuous as possible using their colours to blend into the back ground but on this dive we were just returning to the entry site when I noticed a flash of silver out of the corner of my eye. When I stopped to investigate I couldn't believe that a fish the size of the scorpion thought it could swallow a sand eel that size. We watched for a short time and it became obvious that this greedy scorpion had other ideas.

As you can see from the photos it had caught the eel by the tail and eventually manoeuvred it round for

supper. After the last photo we left it in peace so we don't know the eventual fate of the sand eel but things weren't looking good.

Personally I was left thinking of a local saying "Your eye is bigger than your belly", I think the scorpion had bitten off more than it could chew and might have had to admit defeat and just spit it out!

Linda Robertson

**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**



Fuji Finepix F50fd, programme mode, built in flash, 1/60th @ F4.5 ISO200



Parting Shot 2

They came from every direction all at once. Over a hundred and fifty living torpedoes darted and zoomed passed us with incredible agility and purpose. They nipped our fins, grabbed our hoods, and tried to make off with our cameras. They stacked up five high biting at our bubbles. Soon my partner and I were separated and I became so dizzy from the pinned dance it was hard to tell which way was up. I had no idea what fate befell my dive partner, but by this time it was every Homo “aquaticus” for themselves. I was near a small crevice and briefly considered trying to stuff myself into it, but I had finally decided to buck up and take it like a man when as suddenly as they appeared - they vanished. The visibility was a good 50 feet and all I saw were a few sea lion hind flippers being swallowed up by the blue void.

Now we were sitting at 65 feet, in Great White shark country, all alone, with only some sea mammal poop floating around wondering about Nature’s “subtle” warning signs of danger. After 20 -30 seconds, which seemed much longer, the reef fishes came out from their hiding places, we regained our composure, and oceanic life returned to normalcy. Although

“Whitey” never showed (or at least we never saw him), our toothy smiles shone from behind our regulators and I was loudly humming “While walking through the park one day...” all the way back to our boat. Seal and sea lion encounters are fairly common around the Southern California off shore islands. Although in over thirty-five years of diving I’ve never experienced anything quite like this encounter.

This was one of the last images I took with film. I made the switch soon after to digital. It wasn’t an easy decision then; of course, now I couldn’t imagine going back. This particular image was taken very quickly without much thought to exposure or shutter speed. As a color image, the washed out looking E-6 slides just didn’t do it. It sat for years in my film file until I started playing with new software called Silver Efex Pro.

Naturally the 35mm slides needed to be scanned first. Once I had them on the computer I could then try and maximize their potential. It becomes quite apparent now, after working in digital for some years, how most film images just don’t stand up anymore to modern DSLR capture.



To name a few, film has grain, very little exposure latitude (especially slide film), a mere 36 exposures per roll, and quite limited ISO leeway. In addition, one of the biggest hurdles of all is you have but one original. Duplicates (or scans) never matched exactly the original image, and often you had to send the only picture you had through the mail for publishing. More than one original was either lost through transport or “misplaced” at the destination. With digital, every time you copy an image you have yet another file as good as the original.

Now that I had the sea lions “digitized” it seemed the best chance

for them to be resurrected would be as black and white images. Once I ran them through Silver Efex Pro, increased contrast, burned a few areas, and then sharpened them up a little, they were ready for viewing. And if they go astray in Peter’s office...no problem, I just email him another one.

Joseph C. Dovala
www.jcdovala.com

Parting Shot 3

It's early afternoon 3 miles off the Commonwealth of Dominica on an oil slick calm day and we're all psyched, loads of encounters with Sperm whale in the morning, however with limited in water success has got us all scanning the horizon. We are searching for Scar our Sperm Whale supermodel, rescued by a local whale watching vessel almost a decade ago as a young calf entangled in a net and emaciated, he has remained offshore with the resident females ever since. An encounter with him is usually unforgettable, from him putting his melon on the transom to say hi to "smiling for his paparazzi" in the water.

We finally get an encounter with a pod, calves, Scar and a large female, the group had him interacting for about 15 minutes when responding to clicks from below he decided to swim off, taking his possible siblings with him sensing his direction I swam on ahead and waited, eventually they caught up with and passed me, slowing down about 200m ahead. Socializing.

I managed to catch up and just hung in the water (catching my breath)... a pod to myself, this lasted only about 5 minutes before

the boat caught up with me but was worthwhile just hanging out with these amazing animals.

Realization suddenly struck that I have a 30 ton supermodel all to myself, and he doesn't take direction, the camera!!! Press the damn button... this sort of thing happens a lot when faced with the very large in the water (Peter excepted), one forgets to press the shutter as all thought disappears in that prolonged "Wow moment".

The smallest of the three in this photo is probably a month or so old, abdominal folds are still visible, the main attraction is Scar, and the part of a tail showing is one of the calves from last year. Dominica has little to no continental shelf on its Caribbean side, and there are 16 species of marine mammal documented here, Sperm and Humpbacks being the largest. It is one of the few places worldwide where there is a resident population of Sperm Whales and this group is the most widely studied of all pods, all told 235 animals have been identified.

Arun Madisetti

www.imagesdominica.com



Olympus 5050, Inon UW100 wide angle and Dome port, 250th second, -0.7 EV, Auto (200) ISO, F 3.2 This kind of interaction is permissible only with a license from the Fisheries Division, and is strictly controlled. Arun Madisetti or "Izzy" as he is more widely known is a marine biologist and a director of Images Dominica, a stock photography agency based on Dominica. They can arrange permits for legitimate photographers only.

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

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