Underwater Photography

Sept/Oct 2023
Issue 134

UWP

Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort

Bunaken Oasis offers world-class luxury accommodation with world renowned scuba diving sites in the heart of Indonesia, Bunaken National Park in North Sulawesi. Five-time winner of Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort at the World Travel Awards

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www.bunakenoasis.com

WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS WINNER 2021 Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort

WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS WINNER 2022 Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort

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Publisher/Editor Peter Rowlands
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Editorial

The grass is always greener eventually

John Horn's excellent account of his upgarding from an Olympus TG-6 to a Canon R7 makes informative reading for those in a similar quandry but it also highlights some aspects which are often overlooked.

As with all increases in both size, weight and performance, it takes time to get used to a new housing layout. The subtle ergonomics are not always obvious until you use the gear underwater and the increased bulk can make some subjects harder to approach. In addition, until you get familiar with a new camera's capabilities and how to maximise its potential there will inevitably be times when you miss a shot making fine adjustments to the camera settings.

Fortunately time and experience will render the new system much more intuitive so that, after the initial frustrations, your upgrade decision will be worthwhile and productive just, as John found.

Don't expect to be able to jump in and start nailing images, but in a short while the capabilities and quality of image that the Canon R7, for example, promises will start to show on the LCD screen.

Strobes

I think I can safely say that the single most effective accessory for any underwater camera is a strobe/flashgun.

The light they provide restores natural colours and the almost instant pulse of light freezes the subject in minute, pin sharp detail.

Two strobes are now 'de rigeur' for even, yet variable, lighting which is also good news for manufacturers and retailers.

For many years the strobe market has been fairly static but in 2023, and possibly as a result of the manufacturing limitations of the past Covid times, we have new strobes arriving like proverbial buses.

This can only be good news for end users; giving them more choice and keener prices. So the future has never, and I apologise for the awful pun, has never been so bright :-)

Sync cords

The news that the new Marelux Apollo strobes have wireless triggering and data transmitting systems is both really exciting and groundbreaking.

The achilles heel of all underwater camera systems has always been the sync cord; even going back to my day when there were only two contacts/wires.

With the advent of TTL exposure control where more signals were needed between camera and strobe resulting in five core cable sync cords, the number of potential problems from any slight corosion went up exponentially. Great when everything is dry but consumer demand for unpluggable sync cords meant that, and I once counted them, there are no fewer than THIRTY FIVE connections from the camera to the inside of the housing, outside the housing to the beginning of the sync cord and the same going into the strobe. Any slight corosion on any of those THIRTY FIVE connections could result in not triggering or incorrect exposure.

So now do you see why I am so excited about wireless triggering ?!

Smartphones and housings

Here he goes again, I hear your say, and you're right but I think it's an area of photography which is being developed like no other and will become a very attractive route for beginners and advanced alike.

The development of compact cameras, which Smartphones compete with, has remained static for many years but with each new Smartphone rollout it is the camera performance which the marketing dept latch onto.

They are getting more and more quality out of tiny imaging sensors and, with the advent of AI and algorythms, they are already breaking the boundaries of conventional photographic physics.

It's no surprise then that the New Products Section in UwP features more housings in every new issue and their designs are almost all 'universal' so they fit a wide range of Smartphones. And not just that, they will be able to accept new models with their ever improving camera performance as they become available.

Exciting times ahead.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Brian Skerry: The Sentient Sea

Museum of Natural History, Siena, Italy

"The Sentient Sea" is a visual story that presents Brian Skerry's photographs from decades of exploring Earth's oceans.

This exhibition showcases a selection of photographs to tell stories of the ocean and portray it as a place of beauty and mystery, a place in trouble, and ultimately, a place of hope.

"Over the course of my 40-year career, I have learned that everything is connected in nature and that animals and ecosystems are more complex than we have ever known."

Brian spends eight months per year working in the field, at dive locations, ranging from tropical coral reefs to beneath the polar ice.

The innumerable animals exhibited range from giant whales to the tiniest fish, each with a wonderful story to tell.

"I am certain that animals at every level have 'personality' and that all creatures perceive and feel. And that all creatures need others."

Brian Skerry is a photojournalist and film producer specializing in marine wildlife and underwater environments. Since 1998 he has been a contract photographer for National Geographic Magazine covering stories on every continent and in nearly every ocean habitat. For NGM, Brian has covered a wide range of stories, from the harp seal's struggle to survive in frozen waters to the alarming decrease in the world's fisheries, to dolphin intelligence. During his coverage of a story entitled Saving Our Oceans, Brian produced the first images of a sitting US President underwater.

He is the author of 12 books including the acclaimed monographs Ocean Soul and Shark. His latest book, Secrets of the Whales was released in April, 2021 by National Geographic as part of a multi-platform project he created that includes a cover story in National Geographic magazine and a 4-part documentary film series, streaming on Disney+.

Brian frequently lectures on ocean exploration, storytelling and conservation, having presented at venues such as The United Nations General Assembly, The World Economic Forum in Davos (Switzerland), and the Sydney Opera House in Australia.

Period: September 30th – November 19th

Opening Time:

Friday: 03:00 pm-07:00 pm

Saturday-Sunday: 10:00 am-07:00 pm

Holidays: 10:00 am-07:00 pm

https://festival.sienawards.com/en/brian-skerry-2/

Sperm whales, Dominica

March 2024

In Dominica, island paradise and congregations of sperm whales combine to thrill underwater photographers. Not well known, this small Caribbean rainforest paradise is home to a population of sperm whales all year around.

The jungle covered volcanic peaks plunge thousands of meters down into the ocean making just the conditions sperm whales love. The rich nutrient run off from the island provides a food chain to support the whales and their stable diet of deep-water squid as well as good conditions for many other marine species. The beauty of this island alone is reason enough to visit. Island treasures greet the visitor in the form of bird life, hikes to hot pools and waterfalls, gorgeous views of sunsets over the ocean, while staying among friendly hosts.

In March of 2024 Gregory Sweeney Photography has two back-to-back permits in place for in water encounters with sperm whales in Dominica. Guests will enjoy 5 full days on the water and accommodations on the water in Roseau. Our outfitters are among the most experienced in Dominica. The island values its

terrestrial and marine wildlife. Rules of encounters, permit processes, and involvement of local communities are all informed by international standards and strictly enforced. Permits are written for a maximum of 6 guests per boat giving guests ample time in the water and space on the boat.

The resident sperm whales are mostly females in extended families of grandmothers, mothers and daughters all working together to protect and raise their young. We encounter them at the surface where they are resting and often napping between their deep dives to get squid meals.

When encountered, they are near the surface moving slowly and resting in groups. The water is warm so only light wetsuits are necessary and most use either close heel fins or longer freediving fins for the snorkel.

The weather in Dominica in early March is mild and this season is within the months with the highest recorded sperm whale populations. Visitors are encouraged to stay after the whale adventure to take in the beauty of the hiking trails and the trail up to the natural hot pools.

www.gregorysweeney.com

JOIN MMF IN SOCORRO

DIVING

& research trip

JANUARY 19–27 2024 • LIMITED SPACES
EXPERIENCE OUR RESEARCH IN ACTION

AN EXCLUSIVE
DIVE & RESEARCH TRIP
with Simon & Andrea

The Marine Megafauna Foundation (MMF) has partnered with Pelagios Kakunjá for an unprecedented expedition and research trip to the extraordinary dive sites of Socorro, San Benidicto, and Roca Partida. The journey commences on January 19–27, 2024.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **Led by world-renowned marine researchers**, and MMF co-founders, Dr. Andrea Marshall and Dr. Simon Pierce.
- Joining the trip will be Pelagios Kakunjá researcher, Madalena Cabral, who will be **deploying satellite tags on giant manta rays** for her doctoral research.
- The opportunity to **experience extraordinary encounters with marine megafauna** like giant manta rays, dolphins, schooling sharks, and migrating whales in their natural habitat.
- Travelling aboard The Nautilus UnderSea, a **legendary exploration vessel** that has been hosting scientific and filming expeditions since 1968.
- ***100% of profit from the trip supports MMF's marine research.***

LEARN MORE

MARINEMEGAFAUNA.ORG/SOCORRO

Underwater Video Academy with Matthias Lebo

I'm very proud and happy to present to you the Underwater Video Academy, the first app-based tool to help you improve your underwater video skills.

Download my new mobile App Underwater Video Academy for free:

For IOS: Link

For Android: Link

Want to improve your underwater video skills at your own pace?

Check out my online course about underwater videography (also available inside the app):

https://courses.matthiaslebo.com/s/matthiaslebo/learn-to-film-underwater

Underwater Photography Workshop
Little Cayman Beach Resort

March 2-9 & 9-16, 2024

Improve your underwater photography skills with the Backscatter photo pros at the Little Cayman Beach Resort.

With its healthy reefs and incredible diversity of marine life, Little Cayman has some of the best underwater photo opportunities in the Caribbean. Friendly groupers, turtles, and stingrays are favorite subjects for wide angle shooters. Macro shooters will find tons of blennies, gobies, nudibranchs, and crabs. Crystal-clear water with little to no current makes Little Cayman a perfect place to work on your underwater photography skills.

Beginner and intermediate underwater photographers that are looking to improve their UW images. If you have a new camera or are just starting out, this course will cover all the basics. If you have been shooting for a while but aren't happy with the results, we can help. Do you struggle with focus or exposure? Composition? Strobe position? Isolating your subject from the background? Then this is the course for you.

The best way to learn is by shooting and our photo pros will be on location with you to help improve your technique and to correct mistakes. Daily seminars throughout the trip will cover wide angle and macro shooting techniques

This course is limited to 12 guests to maximize your one-on-one time with our instructors. Before you arrive, we'll have scouted out the best dive sites in advance. You'll start seeing results right away as you apply your newfound knowledge on some of Little Cayman's most beautiful dive sites.

Space is limited so sign up now!

www.backscatter.com

Don't settle for 2nd best

Film - No Filter No White Balance

Digital - No Filter Manual White Balance

Magic Filter Manual White Balance

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards. These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

www.magic-filters.com

New Products

Marelux Apollo strobes

With over a year of dedicated development, Marelux proudly announces three highly anticipated underwater strobes.

The Apollo series, comprising of the Apollo 28, 33, and 44 models, is now in production and scheduled for market availability in the coming months.

- They are the world's first underwater strobes to support TTL, RC, and HSS simultaneously.
- Marelux has patented an underwater wireless triggering and data transmitting system exclusively for the Apollo strobes.
- Multiple (MTL) flashes, enabling fast and continuous flashes at a staggering rate of up to 10 times per second.
- Record-breaking brightness, with the Apollo 44 model reaching a remarkable GN44. Apollo 33 GN33.
- Coverage angle 110 ° (underwater Temp 6200k
- With dome diffuser, coverage angle 140 °, Temp 5500k
- Full power recycle time 0.6 second
- Full power flash: around 1000 times
- Waterproof battery chamber
- With 2 aiming light colors: 250 lumen on white, 300 lumen on red
- Max diameter 90mm, length of main body 150mm, full length including knobs 177mm
- Weight on land 950 grams (without battery, with ball mount), 1085 grams (with 3x18650 batteries and ball mount).
- Weight in water 115 grams (with 3x18650 batteries and a ball mount)

Not only do the Apollo series strobes excel in performance, but they also exhibit innovative designs, with the Apollo 33 model featuring three straight bulbs arranged in a triangle formation, producing a perfectly circular flash shape. Moreover, it includes a versatile two-color aiming light in the center, allowing users to switch between red and white as needed.

To ensure durability and longevity, the Apollo strobes are constructed using robust and waterproof materials, guaranteeing their reliability even in the harshest underwater conditions. The user-friendly interface of these strobes facilitates easy adjustment of settings and modes, making them suitable for photographers of all skill levels.

The Apollo 28 is aimed at the macro photographer and is still under development so more detailed data will come out soon in early September and shipment will start in early Q4 2023.

www.marelux.co

AOI 8 inch acrylic dome

This dome is specifically designed for Olympus OM-D underwater housings. (with exeption of the PT-EP13 housing) The dome is compatible with a wide range of Olympus M.Zuiko lenses.

The dome is compatible with the following Olympus M.Zuiko lenses:
Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 12mm F2.0
Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 14-42mm F3.5-5.6 II R
Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 17mm F1.8
Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 17mm F2.8
Olympus M.Zuiko Digital 25mm F1.8
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 7-14mm F2.8 Pro
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 8mm F1.8 Pro
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 9-18mm F4.0-5.6

Olympus M. Zuiko ED 12-40mm F2.8 Pro
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 12-50mm F3.5-6.3 EZ
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 14-42 F3.5-5.6 EZ
Olympus M.Zuiko ED 60mm F2.8 Macro

www.uwcamerastore.com

Isotta Canon EOS R6 Underwater Housing

Designed to follow the contours of the camera, this housing is small and easy to handle, while ensuring optimal control of the camera functions and absolute freedom in the use and choice of accessories.
Isotta B120 & Sea & Sea MDX Port Size
M24 Monitor Bulkhead Option
Three M16 Bulkhead Option
Vacuum System Ready
Depth Rating: 100 meters / 330ft

www.backscatter.com

Sea & Sea YS-D3 DUO

The YS-D3 DUO is a high-specification underwater strobe with three shooting modes: DS-TTL, RC mode, and manual.

The YS-D3 DUO delivers even and uniform light distribution with a large light output of GN33.

Custom settings allow the strobe to be used with high precision with a variety of cameras and shooting styles.

The mode switch allows one-touch switching between "DS-TTL," "RC mode," and "Manual" modes.

The letters on the switch and light level control dial emit light in a predetermined color for each mode.

DS-TTL dimming accuracy has been greatly improved by adopting a newly designed light receiving sensor.

By applying detailed custom settings, it can be used with high accuracy with a wide variety of cameras of multiple brands.

In manual mode, light intensity can be adjusted in 11 steps.

Accessories include a Snoot and Optical diffuser.

www.seaandsea.jp

Ikelite 200DL Housing for Fujifilm X-T5

A full featured and durable waterproof housing for Fujifilm X-T5 mirrorless digital cameras. Suitable for scuba, snorkel, surf, pool, and any application in or around the water.

Controls are provided for everything except Fn2, Touch screen, Focus mode selector, Focus stick tilt, or Diopter adjustment knob; Front and rear dials may be rotated but not pressed

Depth Rating
200 feet (60 meters)
Weight
4.9 lb
Dimensions
9.2 x 7.375 x 6.75" (234 x 187 x 171 mm)

$ 2,095.00

www.ikelite.com

360 Observe

The 360 Observe is a small convex mirror worn around the wrist or hand, enabling divers to effortlessly maintain eye contact with other divers, their equipment and surroundings.

Uses for the 360 Observe:
Dive guides to keep an eye on a group
Instructor to watch a student
Bubble-check valves or rebreathers for leaks or faults
See in confined spaces and overhead environments – wrecks and caves
Looking at wildlife, eg underneath wreckage or on a reef
As a signal mirror on the surface
When swimming backwards, for example towards a boat.

www.divingdirect.co.uk

Sea&Sea Sony Alpha Universal Housing Compatible with a7R Mark V

Sea&Sea has now added the Sony a7R Mark V to the list of cameras compatible with its universal housing, unveiled in July 2022. The MDX-αU already supported the "entry-level" a7 Mark IV, "video-centric" a7S Mark III, "pro sports" a9 Mark II, "8K-capable" a1, and the high-resolution predecessor, the a7R Mark IV. As a result of the "universal" design, initial mounting of the camera is a little more involved, there are some functional limitations that require workarounds, and an optional additional kit is needed.

The universal housing features a large acrylic back panel, which reduces weight and aims to provide better visibility of the LCD. There's a fiber-optic cable cover, which is designed to protect the connectors and prevent them from falling out. A leak alarm unit is included as standard equipment. The housing is available in a silver finish as well as the tradtional black.

The MDX-αU supports fiber-optic connectivity with compatible Sea&Sea YS strobes in TTL or manual modes via the optional Optical YS Converter S2 or Manual Flash Trigger, respectively. If you trigger your YS strobes via sync cords, you also have the option of an electrical connection.

Available from retailers, the MDX-αU is priced at $4,400.

www.seaandsea.jp

BACKSCATTER

THE BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

OLYMPUS E-M10 IV

Inon S-220 strobe

Inon have just released their new S-220 strobe.

• Compact body yet delivers GN22

• Equipped with a fly-eye dome lens enabling super wide underwater beam angle of horizontal 140°×vertical 100°

• Reliable and proven “S-TTL Auto” and 12-step “Manual Flash

• Large wheel dial for dramatically improved operability. A phosphorescent panel for easy readability

• Double O-rings greatly reduce the risk of flooding

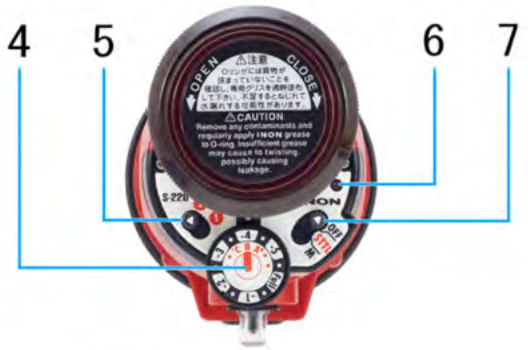
• Front positioned base contributes more flexible lighting

• Operates on four AA batteries, readily available and reasonably priced

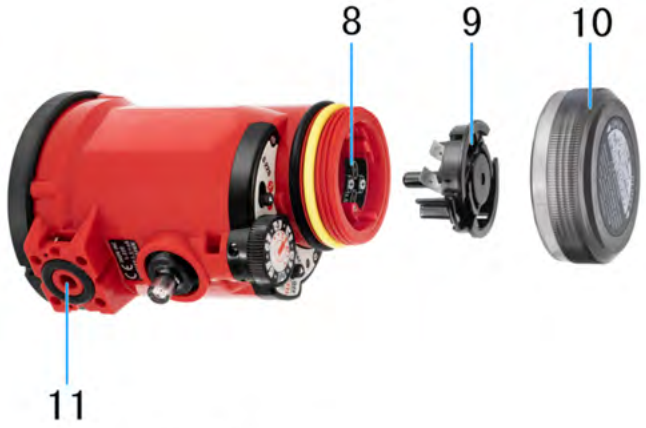
• Compatible with various strobe dome filters

• Supports “Quick Holder” for easy one-touch attachment/detachment

www.inon.jp



4) Control Dial
5) Advanced Cancel Circuit Switch
6) Strobe Ready Lamp
7) Main Mode Switch



8) Battery Box
9) Battery Box Inner Lid
10) Battery Box Outer Cap
11) Adapter/Joint Base(M6)

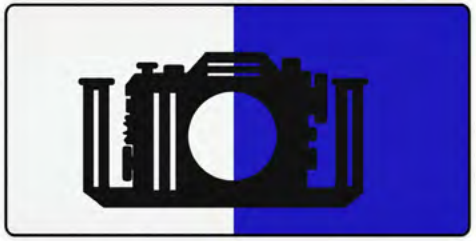
The Camera Mat

The idea of The Camera Mat came from trying to find a place to safely assemble my underwater camera gear on a clean area, without the danger of random debris sticking to the O-rings or lenses, which could cause an adherence to the lens, or a catastrophic flood. A towel is okay to dry your housing but carries a risk of transferring hair or fluff if used to change lenses and clean O-rings.

The Camera Mat is made of 100% Polyester and with a non- slip natural rubber base. The durable surface makes it easy to wipe down after use, leaving it dust-free and clean. The mat can be rolled up or folded and takes up little space. When rolled into your kit bag, it can add extra protection for your expensive camera equipment.

Launching and landing a Drone without dust or grass flying up, is another of its many uses.

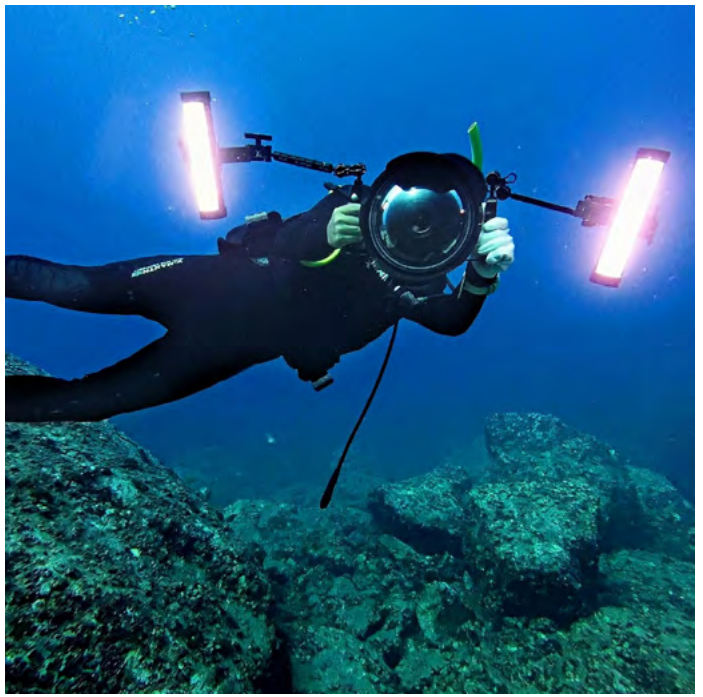
The Camera Mat measures 31.5" × 15.5" (80x40cm) comes in a variety of colors to match your camera brand or preference like Canon Red, Nikon Yellow, Sony Orange or, White Balance Grey



For underwater photographers, there are mats that display dive flags: the USA red and white flag and the Alpha flag.

www.thecameramat.com

Godox WT25R RGB Dive Tube Light



Designed to light up your underwater photo and video productions, the WT25R RGB Dive Tube Light from Godox combines consistent performance and easy handling.

This versatile 9.8" tube-shaped light has a depth rating of 131' and provides illumination from multiple angles with RBGWW capability. When submerged, the adjustable 1800-10,000K light automatically switches to higher power, outputting up to 415 lux at 3.3'. CRI/TLCI scores of 96 ensure color accuracy, and 37 preset special effects simulate a range of creative shooting scenes.

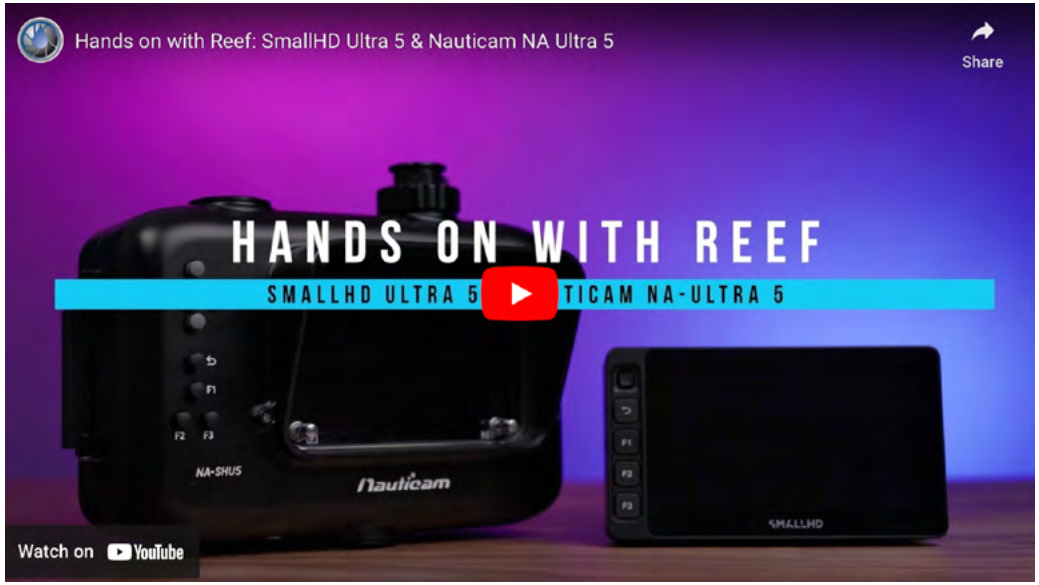
Thanks to its fluorescent buttons, the light can operate in complete darkness to reveal the wonders of sea life. A runtime of up to 1 hour assures you will have a bright, diffused, and even light throughout your dive.

A built-in OLED panel efficiently shows the light's battery level.

[Amazon US]
[Amazon UK]
www.insstromall.com

www.uwpmag.com

Hands On With Reef: SmallHD Ultra 5 & Nauticam NA-Ultra 5



SmallHD's Ultra 5 camera monitor is an ultra-bright 3000nit 10-bit HD display that supports both HDMI and SDI input as well as cross conversion (HDMI in/SDI out). In addition to monitoring, the Ultra 5 also offers camera control for ARRI, RED and Sony cinema cameras. Powered by their PageOS 5 operating system, the Ultra 5 features exposure tools such as the new EL Zone false-color overlay that uses sensor data to display parts of the image that are above or below 18% grey. Focus assist, peaking and waveforms are also still available as with previous SmallHD monitors.

Nauticam has supported a variety of SmallHD monitors with underwater housings including support for both HDMI (1.4 and 2.0), SDI, cross-conversion even surface monitoring. The NA-Ultra5 builds on this strong platform with the addition of supporting the camera control functions of the Ultra5 through the use of the dedicated control bundles below.

In the "Hands on" episode we will cover all of those features and demonstrate some of the benefits for shooting with this equipment underwater.

www.reefphoto.com

SeaLife Color Filters for SportDiver Smartphone Housing

SeaLife, the maker of the SportDiver Underwater Smartphone Housing for iPhone and Android smartphones, has added a new Magenta color-correcting filter for green water to their SportDiver line. SeaLife already includes a red filter with the SportDiver for blue water. The filters are designed to restore and correct for color-loss underwater, especially in the red color spectrum. They're made of an optical acrylic that uses proprietary color pigments. These filters are most effective at depths of 10ft/3m to 60ft/18m and are easily attachable and removeable to the SportDiver optical lens frame while underwater. In addition to the Magenta Green Water filter, a new Yellow Filter is available for Fluoro and UV Imaging, and certain blue water applications.

The color filters may be used with or without external underwater lights, depending on the shooting distance and water conditions. The filter also serves as a protective cover for the SportDiver's optical glass port.

A lanyard is included for attaching the filter to the housing to prevent loss.

SL40007 SportDiver Red Color Filter – for Blue Water

SL40003 SportDiver Magenta Color Filter – for Green Water

SL40005 SportDiver Yellow Color Filter – for UV, Fluoro Lights

US Retail $20.00 each

www.sealife-cameras.com

https://marinemegafauna.org/magazine

Kraken Universal Smartphone Housing KRH08 V2

It's finally here…the latest version of our popular universal smart phone housing! Many small updates bring our Smart Housing V2.0 up to date to be able to fit most phones on the market, large and small. We've redesigned the electronics to better protect them from water accidentally dripping inside.

The housing is now powered by an 18650 Lithium ion battery that will ALSO charge your phone while it's in the case (small custom charging cables included).

The Smart Housing V2.0 still includes a vacuum port to ensure your device is safe inside before you get in the water and an accessory track built in for an optional sliding red filter. Depth rated to 280'.

Maximum phone dimensions for the housing are 174.40mm x 8.8mm x 81.30mm. The housing will fit:
– All currently iPhone models (including the latest iPhone 14 Pro Max)
– All Google Pixel Phones (including Pixel 7 Pro)

– All Samsung Galaxy Phones

Housing exterior dimensions: 9" x 4.5"

Weight out of water: approximately 1.9lbs.

USD 399.00

www.krakensports.ca

SUPE
scubalamp underwater photography equipment

D-PRO Strobe

Instant recharge

Recycle time:0.1-1.1s Beam angle:150°

Continuous unlimited flash sync with 10 flashs/sec at first mode

- **Battery capacity to fire up to 3000 flashes (500 flashes on full).**
- **Battery compartment sealed.**

- Guide number : 30
- Flash tube : circular flash tube
- Power : 160 Ws
- Connection : optical cable / 5 pin syn cord/flash of light
- Illumination : 150°
- Color temperature : 4800K
- Flash capacity : 500 flashes at full power, 3000 flashes at 1st mode
- Recycle time : 0.1s---1.1s
- Flash speed : continuous unlimited flash sync with 10 flashs/sec at first mode
- Focus/target light : 5W / 500 lumens (center focus)
- Waterproof depth : 100m
- Weight (underwater) : 120g
- Dimensions : 170 x 90 mm
- Weight (on land) : 1080g without battery

www.scubalamp.com

HotDive Universal Smart Phone Housing H2 Pro with Depth Sensor

The HOTDIVE H2 is compatible with most Android phones and all iPhone versions. As long as the phone size is within 168x84x10MM, and the camera view window is 50x60MM the case will be compatible with your phone.

The HOTDIVE is rated to 260 feet or 80 meters and it weighs 2.6 pounds(1.2kg). The HOTDIVE case is easy to hold. It has a large shutter lever and rear control buttons to make it easier to use.

There are also many advanced camera settings like Zoom, Lens selection, Exposure, Focus, White Balance, RAW capture, Video Record selection replay mode, and more that you might use on your phone when you shoot photos and videos.

The HOTDIVE now includes a free camera app for both Android and iOS, with the APP you can easily switch between photo and video mode.

The APP also offers a power save mode that temporarily turns off the phone's camera and dims the display to save battery, touch any button and it wakes up immediately. And the APP play/playback mode shows a full-size photo and video, all files are also saved to the phone's camera roll.

The H2 case has a built-in self-developed vacuum pump. The unique automatic vacuum system eliminates the traditional manual pump, making it user-friendly and achieving a real anti-fog effect.

The H2 Pro is equipped with a depth sensor, which accurately monitors the depth and temperature data in real-time, it can also calculate the ascent speed and send safety warnings. HOTDIVE also has the function of an underwater compass, allowing us to know our diving direction at any time, making diving a safer sport.

The HOTDIVE has a fill light - the intensity can reach 800LM.

HOTDIVE has a built-in USB-C rechargeable 3500mA lithium battery, which provides long battery life for diving photography. The fill light can continuously illuminate for 100 minutes or if only used for photography and other functions, the battery can last for 20 days.

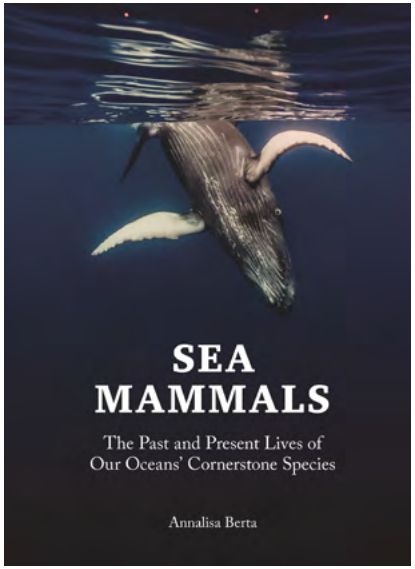
$399.

www.hotdive.cn

www.uwpmag.com

Sea Mammals:

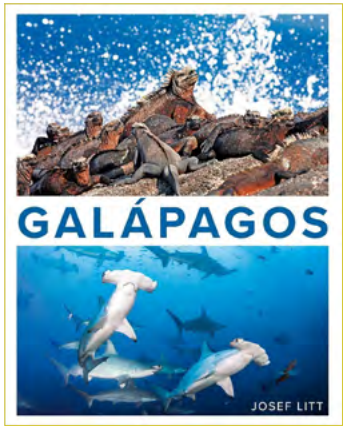
The Past and Present Lives of Our Oceans' Cornerstone Species by Annalisa Berta



Annalisa Berta presents an engaging and richly illustrated introduction to past and present species of these remarkable creatures, from the blue whale and the northern fur seal to the extinct giant sperm whale, aquatic sloth, and walking sea cow. Written by one of the leading experts on sea mammals and their evolution, this book features more than 50 individual species profiles as well as detailed accounts of these mammals' evolutionary path, anatomy, behaviour, habitats, and conservation.

Link

Last Signed Copies of GALÁPAGOS by Josef Litt



GALÁPAGOS, one of the best travel guides to the archipelago is SOLD OUT on Amazon but I still have a few copies at home and can send them to you with a signature or a dedication.

The ultimate Galapagos travel guide by Josef Litt is full of captivating information and first-hand stories. This Galapagos Islands Travel Guide offers more information and photographs than other publications, for example, Lonely Planet Galapagos. It is a comprehensive Galapagos guidebook that contains:

288 pages

Maps and original illustrations

More than 300 stunning land-based, aerial and underwater photographs

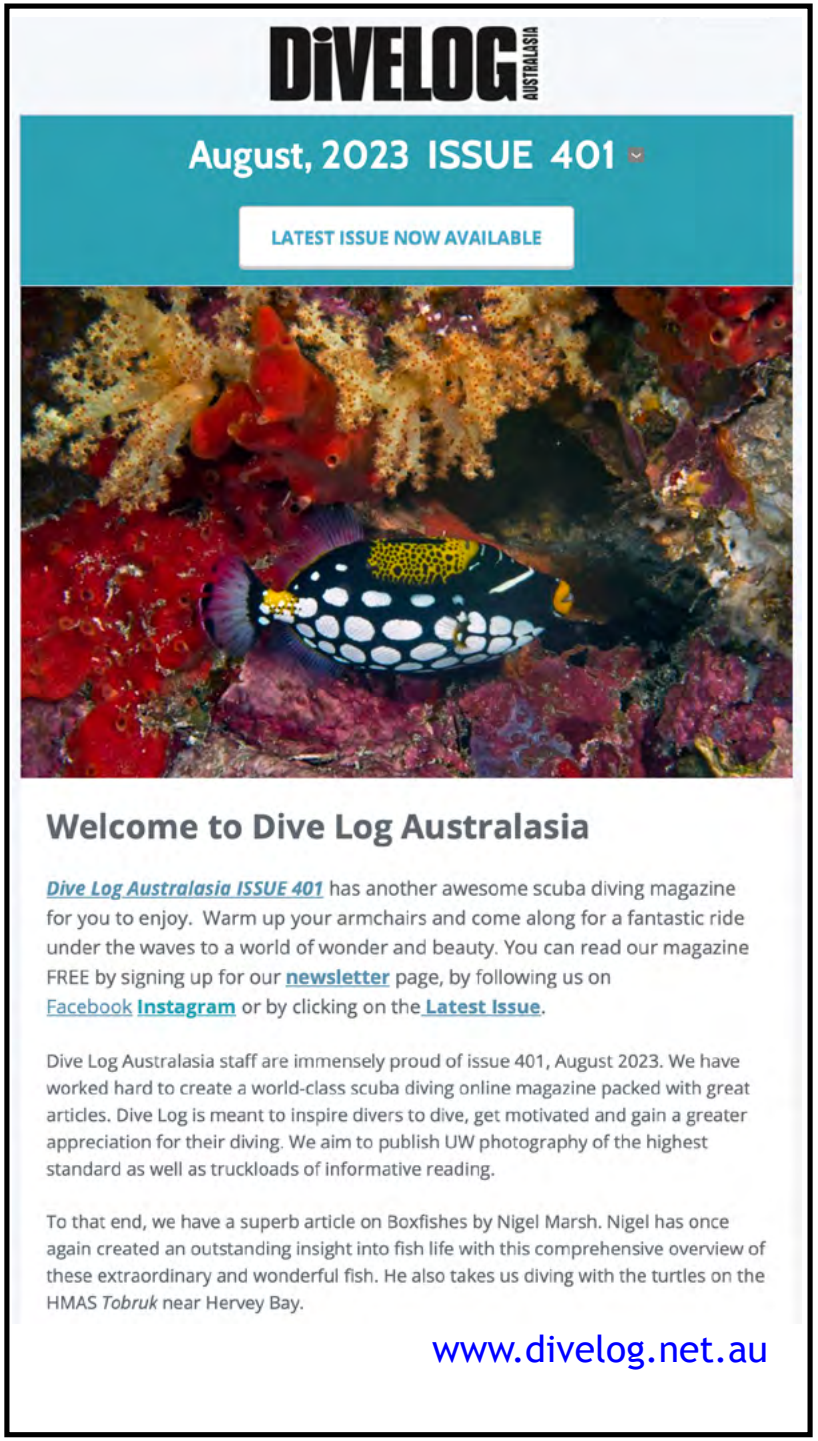
Animal descriptions and behaviours

Island walkthroughs.

£33.90

Please, contact us to have the Galapagos Islands Travel Guide signed and Josef's dedication hand-written in the book.

https://litt.cz



2023 Digital Shootout Review

by Under Exposures

This year's Digital Shootout marked the 20th anniversary of this renowned event. WOW! 20 years of dive, shoot, learn and repeat, the perfect recipe for a working vacation for the underwater image-maker looking to level up! And there was no better place to celebrate it than Little Cayman Beach Resort!

During this two week-long workshop, an international mix of 60 guests and 20 staff gathered for the sharing of photography and editing techniques, checking out the newest underwater imaging gear, exploring Little Cayman's Bloody Bay and Jackson Bight sections of the Bloody Bay Marine Park and capturing images of ocean inhabitants with like-minded dive buddies, old and new.

The two-week schedule – 3 boat dives daily, late afternoon seminars, evening image critiques or inspirational presentations by the pros – makes for a contagious learning environment for improved underwater imaging in a very short amount of time.

Manufacturers and their reps bring thousands of pounds of cameras, housings, strobes, lights and accessories to the Shootout each year for guests to try out the latest and greatest.

No other underwater imaging event in the world has the amount of demo gear that is showcased each year at the Digital Shootout. Dozens of camera systems on-offer from Nauticam, Isotta and Backscatter, as well as strobes, lights and accessories to give you the tools needed to produce quality underwater images. And Pegasus Thruster brought their very popular tank-mounted DPVs for participants to zip up and down the reef.

Not only is there demo gear to try, but the manufacturers' reps are also available to answer questions and share their expertise with attendees during meals, on the boats, in the Demo Gear room, before seminars, after seminars, over a beer at the bar. Talking tech and specs is what the manufacturers' reps love to do!Please visit our GEAR TESTS page for reviews by our on-location pros of the latest cameras, housings and accessories.

Even while learning, we like to have FUN! Check out the SHOOTOUT LIFE section to experience the diving, the learning and the camaraderie

WINNER John Obremski - WIDE ANGLE TRADITIONAL

The Jim Watt Award

Jim Watt was more than a friend to the Shootout. He was a living example of our mission statement. Jim was one of the first professional underwater photographers to adopt digital photography and was thrilled to share all his shooting secrets with first time shooters or fellow professional photographers. His passion and skill in creating new images was infectious and inspired hundreds of Digital Shootout guests over the years. Our Best of Show image is honored with the Jim Watt Award of excellence.

This year's winner was William Ewing.

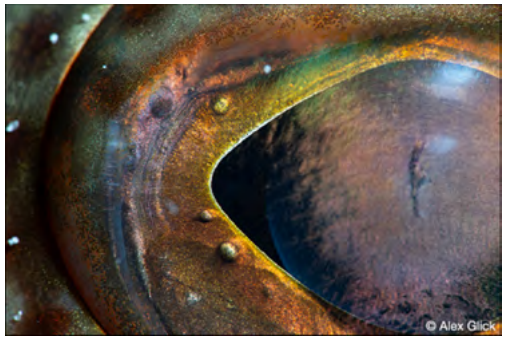
WINNER Chris Nonell - POINT & SHOOT

shared by this amazing group of passionate image-makers.

Scuba divers, certified and active, comprise about 1% of the world's population. Underwater photographers are an even rarer breed. We all have family and friends who are not scuba divers or even snorkelers; they have no idea what's in the ocean, what we see and experience and how cool it is. Sharing our underwater experiences with the other 99% can inspire action to protect our natural world for future generations.

So, how do you make the leap from scuba diver to underwater photographer? The Digital Shootout is the fast track to learning the fundamentals of underwater photography, underwater videography, post processing and much more. A fun-filled, learning-rich, two-week workshop can take anyone

WINNER Alex Glick - MACRO TRADITIONAL



from zero to hero.

A typical day at the Shootout starts with an early breakfast, boats departing at 7:30 for two tanks of diving either the Bloody Bay wall or Jackson Bight section of the marine park. Return for a semi-leisurely lunch then a one tank dive for more of Little Cayman's underwater awesomeness. Daily afternoon seminars covering photography topics or editing techniques run 5:00-6:30. A sumptuous buffet dinner provides a break from the learning, followed by either a participants' photos critique or inspirational presentation by one of the pros. Here lies the conundrum of a working vacation. Nothing is compulsory, everything is optional. Take the fast lane, the slow lane or the middle lane, your vacation, your choice. No judgement. The only requirement is to have fun!

While it's called the Digital Shootout, the focus of this event is learning. Our participants range from beginner to veteran shutterbug, and regardless of skill level, everyone goes home having learned something new. Year after year, the organizers – Backscatter Underwater Video & Photo and Under Exposures – collect some amazing prizes to award at the event's end when even the burgeoning beginner has gained skill and confidence to enter into our friendly competition. Our Share the Wealth policy dictates no matter how many wins, places, or shows a participant receives, only the one favorite prize goes home with him/her. Year after year, many guests jest that they are just there for the raffle! You'll find beautiful imagery in photos and videos that depict the wonders of the ocean in the CONTEST RESULTS section.

JOIN US in 2024 for another fun-filled, two week workshop of dive, shoot, learn and repeat, again held in Little Cayman at the Little Cayman Beach Resort! Whether new to the Shootout or a long-time friend, the camaraderie amongst like-minded individuals is unmatched! See you in Little Cayman!

www.thedigitalshootout.com

TG-6 to R7

by John Horn

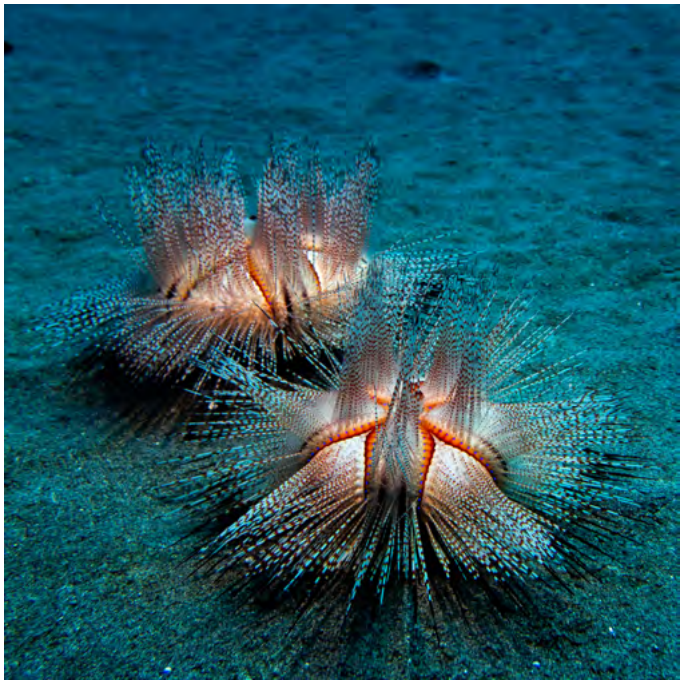
The Olympus TG-6 housing is a lot smaller and lighter than the Marelux Canon R7 housing but by the time you add lighting the volume equals out.

Having only gotten into photography about 18 months ago, I initially did what most people would do and started with a 'budget' setup to make sure it was something I would enjoy. I only got into it initially because I wanted to be able to identify the creatures I found underwater later and I had the hardest time remembering exactly how something looked…especially small things like nudibranchs. Turns out I actually love underwater photography so the ID purposes are only a byproduct at this point. All of my diving is in Hawaii and most of it is on Kauai where we have poor visibility and lots of surge. Because of the poor visibility, I prefer to only focus on macro and fish portraits with macro being at the top of the list. After picking the brain of a good friend and fellow photography mentor Jaycee Butler, I ended up getting an Olympus TG-6 with Olympus housing and a DS-51 strobe with RC1 adapter so I could use TTL.

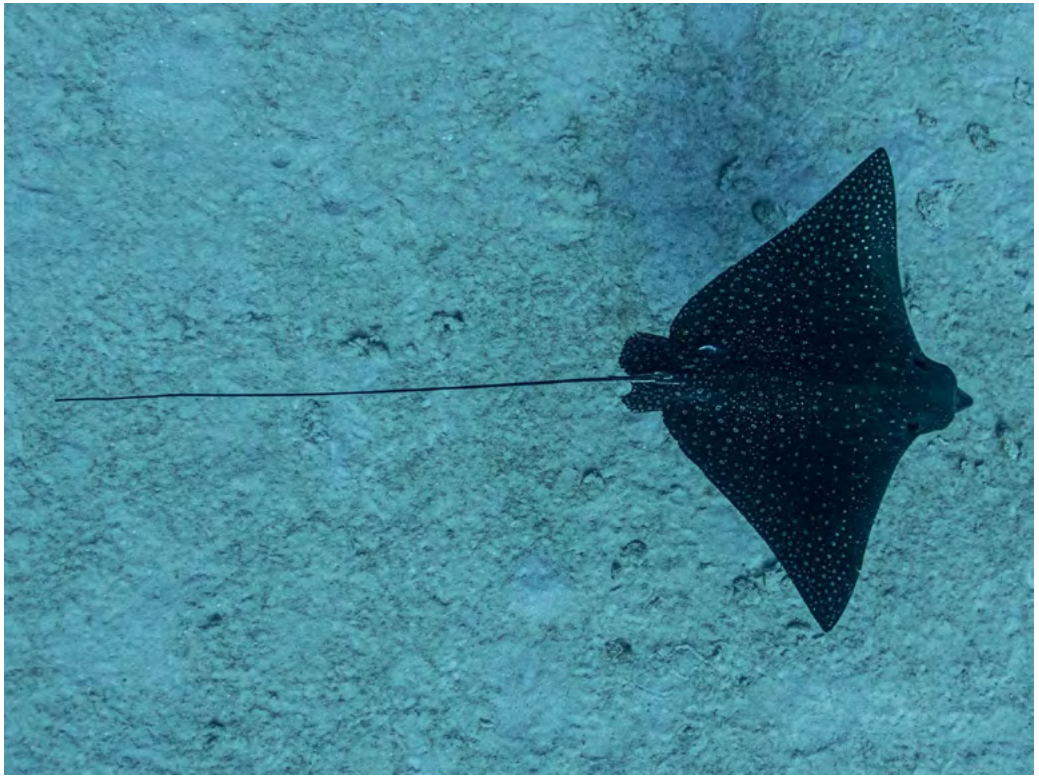
I'm generally a budget shopper so I scoured classifieds to find a used setup and when I finally found one, I paid for it and awaited the shipment from Canada. I didn't know a shipment from Canada could take so long, but for some reason my package went to Guam, then got lost for a couple weeks before finally making its way to me over a month after ordering it. Needless to say, the anticipation about killed me. What this extra time did for me was give me all the time in the world to research what I was getting into.

I knew nothing about underwater photography at the time, I actually didn't know anything about out-of-the-water photography for that matter, but this waiting time gave me all the hours I needed to gain a basic knowledge to get started. When I get into a new hobby, I generally go all in, thinking about it 24 hours a day and researching until there is no more research to be done. I found the Backscatter setup videos extremely helpful and I currently have the TG set up using their recommended settings.

After finally receiving the package, I spent the next couple days setting up the camera and getting everything dialed in on land. I was finally ready for my first underwater foray in photography. I started with a couple dives where my photos had poor exposure due to strobe placement, but once I got that sorted out I was blown away by the pictures I was getting with my TG. It was pretty crazy that a person who knew nothing about taking pictures could watch some videos about camera settings and strobe position, then go underwater and get some pretty decent shots. Not to say they were award winning shots, but I liked some of them



Mating Blue Spotted Urchins
Olympus TG-6, Olympus housing, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe, ISO 100, f/8, 1/125



Eagle Ray
Olympus TG-6, Olympus housing, Ambient Light, ISO 100, f/3.2, 1/100

enough to hang on my wall.

After a short period of time I really wanted a snoot, so I upgraded to the Backscatter MF-1 and Snoot combo, parting with my DS-51. This opened another world of fun for me where I could be even more creative with my lighting. Because the MF-1 didn't have TTL, I got to learn about setting my own strobe power, but again Backscatter had some awesome videos that taught me what I needed to know to get going and it worked out perfectly.

After about a year of using the TG very regularly, I felt like I wanted more. I was loving my pictures, but I wanted more image quality, more ability to take pictures of smaller things, the ability to crop more, and more control of the overall frame and outlook of the picture. This led me to start having some serious camera conversations with my friend Jaycee again. Being as knowledgeable as he is about everything underwater photography related, I thought for sure he would be able to tell me what camera I 'needed'.

Hawaiian Lionfish Head
Olympus TG-6, Olympus housing, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe, ISO 100, f/18, 1/100

He gave me a few camera/housing/lens combinations I should look into and after some of my own research as well, I settled on the Canon R7, Canon RF 100mm f2.5 Macro IS USM Lens and Marelux housing. I would continue using my Backscatter Mini Flash and snoot (or so I thought).

The ordering process this time was much easier and quicker than my experience with the TG. Since the camera, lens and housing I wanted were relatively new I didn't have an option to buy used so I bit the bullet

Financially both the Canon R7 and a quality housing are considerably more expensive than the Olympus TG-6 in their polycarbonate housing.

Juvenile Harlequin Shrimp
Canon EOS R7, Marelux housing, RF100mm F2.8 L MACRO IS USM, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe, ISO 100, f/22, 1/320

and made it happen, buying it all brand new.

Getting new camera equipment is like Christmas morning, all the excitement and nerves are firing on all cylinders! Because I had found the Backscatter videos so helpful in my initial setup with the TG, I really wanted to buy a camera they had a bunch of informational videos about, but none of the cameras on my list existed in their playlist so I had to resort to other avenues this time around. I spent a few days consulting Jaycee on best settings and again, watching some videos and reading articles before taking her out for the first swim.

Let's just say the first dive was a wake up call. Everything that was easy with the TG was no longer easy with this new fancy setup! I had previously thought I was good at underwater photography for being such a beginner, but after my first go with a 'real' camera I was struggling! Let's look at some of the things that have been a challenge.

Size: While the R7 with the Marelux housing is small compared to what a lot of people dive with, it is huge compared to the TG. This really isn't that big of a deal, but has taken some getting used to. Fish appear to be more scared of the big setup compared to the small setup. Because I am diving in mostly off-the-beaten-path locations, the entries and exits are challenging and this made the larger camera difficult to handle at times. I have only traveled with the R7 once, but I was surprised at how much more luggage space and weight were needed.

Focus Distance: I've always been told that in underwater photography you should get as close to the subject as you can so you are shooting through less water. This was easy with the TG because I could get as close to the subject as I wanted and the camera could still focus. With the new setup, I can only be as close to my subject as a few inches from the end of the lens(about 10" from the camera itself). This may not seem like a big deal, but I dive in very surgey areas where keeping the camera focused on a small subject at a certain distance is very challenging! If I move as close as I can focus to my subject, but then cross the threshhold, the camera goes

Tinker on a Mission.
Canon EOS R7, Marelux housing, RF100mm F2.8 L MACRO IS USM, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe, ISO 5000, f/11, 1/250

Leaf Scorpionfish
Olympus TG-6, Olympus housing, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe and snoot, ISO 100, f/18, 1/100

out of focus. I have since been trying out a diopter which allows me to get close to the subject, but at the same time this really tightens my depth of field, which adds another challenge in surge. These are things I knew before getting into the R7, but didn't realize how big of a difference they would make on my ability to take macro photos. When taking fish portraits this focus distance is actually a benefit because I can still get great pictures of fish and be far enough away to keep them happy.

Auto Focus: While overall the autofocus on the R7 works wonderfully, especially for fish portraits, it can be challenging for macro. Because of the surge, things like sand, hydroids, plants, etc will move into my frame at a moment's notice and confuse the autofocus. I've set up backbutton focus to help with this, but I think it will always be hard to take a picture of something the size of a grain of rice and not have the camera be confused as to what it should focus on. While the overall focusing of the TG worked well, I wasn't always happy with the final shot because I would think I had one thing in focus, but it ended up being something else. It's hard to tell for sure underwater using the TG screen. Because of this, I always took multiple shots to have a better chance of having the right thing in focus. With the R7, because I am using the EVF I generally know when I got 'the shot'. This makes my post processing faster because I have fewer pictures to go through. Yay!

Snoot: This is another aspect I didn't really consider

White Bump Nudibranch
Canon EOS R7, Marelux housing, RF100mm F2.8 L MACRO IS USM, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe, ISO 200, f/22, 1/250

Fireworm on Fried Egg Nudibranch
Olympus TG-6, Olympus housing, Backscatter MF-1 Strobe, ISO 100, f/18, 1/100

when making the switch. Using the snoot with the TG was no problem and quite easy most of the time. I was able to rest my hand on the Olympus camera housing while pointing the snoot where I wanted it to go while looking at the screen to get the exact shot I wanted. It may sound complicated, but it is actually pretty easy because I could get my subject very close to the camera. Because the minimum focus distance is so much further on the R7, I cannot rest my hand and snoot on the housing to keep it stable. I have yet to find a good solution for using the snoot with the new camera. I have seen people mount the snoot in the center of the camera, and point it right where their focus distance is, but I really like to be able to get creative and not just shoot overhead shots with the snoot. Once I get this sorted out, I will report back.

Setting up the Shot: The TG is simple, you approach your subject, get as close as you would like, frame how you prefer, possibly adjust your strobe depending on where you had it last and then take your picture. Easy. It takes me at least three times as long, if not longer to get setup with the R7. Dealing with the bigger size of the setup, finding the subject, framing it, making sure strobes are where I want them, bringing my eye to the EVF and focusing (if I have not already lost the subject before I get it to my eye), then taking the shot. Sometimes I have to bring the camera to my eye multiple times to reset and find my subject again. All of these challenges are due to diving in surge. If you have nice conditions, I imagine it is much easier!

Overall Thoughts: While the new camera is more challenging, I am enjoying it and getting some great shots with each dive. I was getting more "keeper" shots with the TG each time I went out, but I know this will continue to change as I get more accustomed to the new camera. I'm loving the overall quality of the shots I do get with the R7 and I love the ability to use the diopter to take pictures of things even smaller! I don't mind a challenge and I know after a

Schooling Hellers
Olympus TG-6, Olympus housing, Ambient Light, ISO 100, f/2.8, 1/160

Schooling
Canon EOS R7, Marelux housing, RF100mm F2.8 L MACRO IS USM, Ambient Light, ISO 500, f/10, 1/250

few months pass, using the R7 will feel like second nature.

Would I recommend upgrading from a TG for all people who are thinking about it? The answer is no.

If you only get to dive on occasion, dive in surgey conditions or just want to go out and take pictures and have it be easy, then the TG is a great camera that is simple and carefree to use.

If you are wanting to focus on fish portraits, the R7 blows the TG out of the water as far as ease and quality of shots.

If you only shoot macro, you really could go either way and be very happy. Just know that it will be easier with the TG, but you can get better image quality and the ability to shoot smaller subjects with the R7.

If you want to set up the camera settings initially and forget about them and just go take pictures, the TG is definitely for you.

I have since passed the TG along to my lady friend and she is having a blast with it. She is getting killer shots and happy to be shooting underwater. Occasionally she will show me a picture underwater and ask how I can help with strobe placement and it's fun to be able to help. I'll even borrow the camera from her on occasion if I need to shoot something quick that I wouldn't be able to setup on the R7.

I love taking underwater pictures and whether I am using the TG or the R7, I'm having a blast! If you are having fun taking pictures with the setup you have, then I would say you are doing the right thing. Keep it up!

John Horn

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Nikon Z8 for underwater

by Jim Decker and Robin Dodd

In this article, we'll provide an in-depth review of the highly anticipated Nikon Z8 for underwater photography from our first-hand perspective. We're going to explore and discuss the key aspects, such as image quality, autofocus, the differences from previous Nikon mirrorless and SLR cameras, and the major video improvements it offers - plus a whole lot more.

Mini Z9 or Mirrorless D850?

One burning question we had was where the Nikon Z8 fits in the Nikon lineup. Is it a mirrorless version of the Nikon D850 or a mini Nikon Z9? Well, it turns out that it's a bit of both. While the Nikon Z9 is a larger camera, the Nikon Z8 shares many similarities in terms of performance, autofocus, shooting speed, and image quality. The main difference lies in the battery life and the physical size. Underwater photographers will need to decide whether they'll prioritize a bigger battery or a smaller camera body.

Comparing the Nikon Z8 to the Nikon D850, the most noticeable difference is the viewfinder. The Nikon Z8 features an electronic viewfinder, while the Nikon D850 has an optical one. However, the Nikon Z8 offers a significant upgrade with its 20 frames per second burst shooting and improved autofocus speed and tracking. We were particularly impressed with the 3D autofocus tracking, which worked flawlessly and exceeded our expectations.

In terms of other Nikon full-frame mirrorless cameras, the Nikon Z8 surpasses the Z7 series by a wide margin. We found the Nikon Z7 II to be a significant downgrade compared to the Nikon D850, because of the slower focus speed, slower subject acquisition, and lack of 3D autofocus tracking, but the Nikon Z8 represents a definite upgrade. It offers the same beloved 3D autofocus tracking, outstanding image quality, and superb dynamic range detail, making it a worthy successor to the Nikon D850.

When it comes to image quality, the Nikon Z8 doesn't disappoint. It shares the same sensor as the Nikon D850 and the Nikon Z9, so you can expect the same outstanding image quality. The camera produces sharp, detailed, and vibrant images, making it a reliable choice for underwater photographers who prioritize top-tier photo quality.

Nikon Z8 Camera Camera Lineup - Nikon D850 | Nikon Z7 II | Nikon Z8 | Nikon Z9

Watch our comprehensive video review for the Nikon Z8 camera, starring Backscatter CEO Jim Decker and Producer Robin Dodd.

The same image quality that we've come to love from Nikon flagship cameras is present on the Nikon Z8 - vibrant colors, wide dynamic range, and super sharp detail.

What sets the Nikon Z8 apart?

During our shoot, we couldn't help but marvel at its speed and responsiveness. The camera boasts an impressive 20 frames per second burst shooting capability, an essentially bottomless buffer, and lightning-fast autofocus and tracking. But what's

©Jim Decker - large sponge
Nikon Z8 | Nikon 8-15mm | 1/100 | ISO 200 | ƒ13

©Jim Decker - red barrel sponge
Nikon Z8 | Nikon 8-15mm | 1/125 | ISO 200 | ƒ11

©Jim Decker - Under ledge coral
The 1/200 flash sync speed limit could make it tough to pull down the background exposure on some shots.
Nikon Z8 | Nikon 8-15mm | 1/200 | ISO 320 | ƒ11

even more remarkable is that the Nikon Z8 features a purely electronic shutter, eliminating any lag and blackout in the viewfinder. It truly revolutionizes the shooting experience.

While the lack of a mechanical shutter has its advantages, it does come with some limitations. For instance, the flash sync speed is limited to 1/200th of a second, slightly slower than the Nikon D850's 1/250th of a second. All Nikon full frame mirrorless cameras share this 1/200 sync speed, along with most Canon full frame mirrorless cameras, though Sony can go up to 1/400 on their flagship A1 camera.

Electronic Viewfinder Benefits

The Nikon Z8's electronic viewfinder (EVF) offers several benefits, such as a wider view thanks to the 0.8x magnification power, focus peaking, and the ability to review images without taking your eye away from the viewfinder. For macro photography, the EVF makes an excellent tool for precise composition and focus. However, in terms of high dynamic range wide-angle shots such as sunballs, the EVF performance is less impressive compared to some higher-resolution EVF Sony cameras. We were impressed with the Shadow Boost setting in the menu that brought up the visible detail level of darker areas, but the EVF still struggled to show anything other than a completely blown out surface when looking up towards a sunball.

The electronic viewfinder works well but still struggles to display detail in highly backlit scenes

such as when shooting a sunball.

3D Autofocus Tracking Only Gets Better

The Nikon Z8's 3D autofocus tracking maintains its position among the best of all current autofocus tracking systems. It locks onto subjects with remarkable accuracy and smoothly tracks their movement across the frame. Whether you're shooting wide-angle or macro, the autofocus

©Jim Decker - Nikon Z8 Underwater Camera Review - Barracuda
The wider 0.8x view of the viewfinder makes composing scenes and checking corners much easier.
Nikon Z8 | Nikon 8-15mm | 1/1,000 | ISO 1,000 | ƒ11

©Robin Dodd- Engine
Nikon Z8 | Nikon 14-30mm | Nauticam WACP-2 | 1/30 | ISO 64 | ƒ16

performs exceptionally well, even with micro-movements in macro photography. The camera's autofocus system is a definite highlight, making it a fantastic tool for capturing fast-paced underwater action.

The 3D autofocus tracking never let us down, whether locking onto eyes big or small.

A Great Camera Rig For Macro

When it comes to shooting macro with the Nikon Z8, we were blown away by its capabilities. The camera's high-resolution sensor, coupled with the Nikon Z 105mm macro lens, allowed us

©Jim Decker - Nikon Z8 Underwater Camera Review - Pipe Gobe
Nikon Z8 | Nikon Z 105mm | 1/200 | ISO 40 | ƒ36

to capture incredibly detailed and sharp images. Further enhancing our macro shots was the Nikon Z8's ability to achieve extremely dark ambient lighting. The camera can get do an a low extension of ISO 32, while the Nikon Z 105mm macro lens can get down to f/51 when set to its minimum focus distance. We were able to create stunning black backgrounds even in the brightest conditions, setting the Nikon Z8 apart as an exceptional macro rig.

Video Performance

The Nikon Z8 camera brings some serious firepower to the table, matching the Nikon Z9 in its overall specs. Its ability to shoot 8K 60fps in Nikon RAW and 4K 120fps with some cropping is simply mind-blowing. These specifications put the Nikon Z8 on par with top-tier video cameras. However, it's important to mention a couple of drawbacks. Firstly,

See the ambient light white balance capabilities of the Nikon Z8 in action with our underwater sample footage video.

the Nikon Z8 features only one CFexpress Type B card slot, so shooting 8K RAW will consume card space quickly. Secondly, shooting high-resolution video can lead to heat build-up, especially in demanding conditions. While we didn't encounter any issues during our shoot, it's worth considering extra batteries and monitoring heat warnings during extended video recording.

Color accuracy is crucial in underwater videography, and the Nikon Z8 delivers impressive results. However, it falls short when it comes to ambient light white balance beyond 40 feet. The camera struggles to achieve accurate white balance in deeper waters. In our testing it was unable to execute white balance at depths over 50 feet. Nevertheless, if you're shooting at shallower depths or with video lights, the Nikon Z8 performs admirably, producing vibrant and well-balanced colors.

One aspect we want to address is the absence of an on-screen meter for video mode. Nikon cameras, including the Nikon Z8, lack a built-in meter, making exposure evaluation a workaround

process. To ensure optimal exposure, we recommend shooting in manual mode, adjusting shutter speed based to be double the frame rate, selecting an aperture between ƒ8 and ƒ11, and using auto ISO with -0.7 exposure compensation. We always aim to underexpose video by two thirds of a stop because most modern TVs tend to over-sharpen and over-contrast footage, so we slightly underexpose to preserve color saturation and avoid things looking washed out or overexposed. Additionally, using the exposure lock button for smooth panning shots is highly beneficial.

The Nikon Z8's in-body stabilization system provides up to six stops of stabilization, making handheld shooting significantly easier. When shooting videos the image stabilization enhances

©Jim Decker - Nikon Z8 Underwater Camera Review - Gobe Snooted
The Nikon Z8 is a powerful tool for underwater photography, excelling in image quality, autofocus performance, and overall speed.
Nikon Z8 | Nikon Z 105mm | 1/200 | ISO 100 | ƒ36

At the time of this review, only Ikelite, and Nauticam have been officially released, but we anticipate that all major underwater housing manufacturers will support the Nikon Z8.

overall smoothness, and while shooting photos it can help reduce motion blur.

Who Is The Nikon Z8 For?

The Nikon Z8 caters to a wide range of photographers, but mostly to those who are seeking an ideal balance between ultra-fast performance and top-tier photo results. It brings the power of the Z9 into a body that is significantly smaller.

If you're a current Nikon D850 user, the Nikon Z8 offers a massively faster upgrade in terms of overall shooting, along with the all-time-best 3D autofocus tracking, and the same great image quality that we have loved for years. The camera's continuous 20 frames per second RAW speed and seemingly-instant responsiveness make it an excellent choice for underwater action and topside sports photography. This camera kills any sense of

lag between the shutter button and the image being captured.

Macro enthusiasts will appreciate the exceptionally fast autofocus performance and ability to knock out virtually all ambient light when paired with the Nikon Z 105mm macro lens.

While the 8K 60p, 4K 120p, and NRAW video capabilities are impressive, videographers should be aware of certain limitations with regard to the relatively shallow 50 foot ambient light white balance limit.

The electronic viewfinder may not be the best available in terms of dynamic range detail, but the 0.8x magnification offered a wider view than we are used to making it easier to check corners, and the focus peaking came in handy when shooting super tight macro. We could even review images in the viewfinder without pulling our eye away or losing the shot.

We wish that we could get a little faster than 1/200 flash sync speed, but that seems to be about on par for most full frame mirrorless cameras.

The camera did tend to generate Hot Card warnings quickly when used in a housing but it never actually prevented us from recording videos or taking photos.

In conclusion, the Nikon Z8 is a blazing-fast camera that excels in image quality, autofocus performance, and overall speed. It's an excellent tool for underwater photography. Whether you're a professional or an enthusiastic hobbyist, the Nikon Z8 delivers exceptional results.

Pros

- Excellent image quality with a high-resolution sensor, producing sharp, detailed, and vibrant underwater photos.
- Impressive speed and responsiveness with 20 frames per second burst shooting capability, a bottomless buffer, lightning-fast autofocus and tracking, and no shutter lag.
- Advanced 3D autofocus tracking system that locks onto subjects with remarkable accuracy, making it great for capturing fast-paced underwater action.
- Exceptional macro capabilities, delivering incredibly detailed and sharp images, especially when paired with the Nikon Z 105mm macro lens.
- Powerful video performance, including the ability to shoot 8K 60fps in Nikon RAW and 4K 120fps with some cropping, rivaling top-tier video cameras.
- In-body image stabilization system provides up to six stops of stabilization, reducing motion blur in both photos and videos.

Cons

- Limited flash sync speed of 1/200th of a second, slightly slower than some other cameras.
- Quick heat build-up during high-end spec video recording.
- Ambient light white balance struggles beyond 40 feet, making it challenging to achieve accurate white balance in deeper waters.
- Absence of an on-screen meter for video mode, requiring manual adjustments and exposure evaluation workarounds.
- Only one CFexpress Type B card slot, limiting storage capacity when shooting 8K RAW video.

Jim Decker and Robin Dodd
www.backscatter.com

Scubalamp D-Pro Strobe

by Phil Rudin

Scubalamp Underwater Photography Equipment or SUPE headquarters and factory are located in Guangdong, China. SUPE also has offices in Singapore and Taiwan with distribution throughout most of Europe, Asia, Australia and the Americas.

SUPE specializes in the design and manufacturing of underwater lighting equipment for video, stills, creative lighting, optical shaping devices, dive torches and more.

I first met the SUPE team at DEMA in 2018 and in UWP issue #108 I reviewed the SUPE MS20 four color snoot. SUPE's goal is to develop safe and user friendly professional products for underwater photographers around the world.

All of SUPE's lineup of products are extensively tested and all are depth rated up to 100 meters.

Since first meeting the SUPE team the line of products has expended greatly with a complete line of camera trays, arms, float arms, a verity of ball-heads, optical cords, flip adapters, video filters, battery packs and much more.

SUPE currently supplies six different dive torches and fifteen different video lights all at a wide verity of price points to fit anyones budget.

D-Pro Strobe

The subject of this review is the newly released D-Pro strobe which replaces the dated and more expensive D-Max strobe. This is a very competitively priced strobe at $758.00 USD and is a manual only strobe which does not include TTL or HSS but is well worth considering.

The D-Pro is a completely new design featuring a robust aluminum body and simple design for ease of use. The D-Pro is powered by a proprietary battery pack that holds three 18650 lithium batteries with an efficiency of 37.8wh.

SUPE rates the output from the circular flash tube at 160 watt seconds with a guide number of 30 at ISO100. I tested the power with two different flash meters against the Inon Z-330 and Ikelite DS-161 and they were all within a tenth of a stop +/- to each other. All three were measured in air at one meter at ISO-100. Ikelite specs also list 160 watts with the proprietary battery, I could not find a WS listing for Inon probably because they use rechargeable AA batteries which can very greatly.

The D-Pro has the widest beam angle listed at 150 degrees, in my tests with the wide angle and macro diffusers (sold separately) the beam angle remained the same with only a softening of the light output.

The D-Pro has nine power level settings with listed recycle times of 0.1 to 1.1 seconds using a fully charged battery pack. SUPE also lists flash bursts up to ten flashes per second at power level one.

In my tests I was able to shoot at three and five FPS up to power level three. When I make these tests with equipment provided for testing by the manufacture I remain a bit conservative because testing at too high a frame rate and power level can blow out the flash tube.

I recommend that these tests be done in the water as the flash tube will heat up much more quickly out of the water. If you need 10 FPS I recommend not going above the lowest #1 power setting. SUPE also states that a full battery pack will provide from 500 flashes at full power #9 to 3000 flashes at power level #1.

The D-Pro has support for fiber optic cords or the five pin Nikonos type cords. A cap to hold the fiber optic cord threads over the top of the optical sensor and when removed the strobe will fire as a slave sensing surround flash bursts.

Caribbean Spiny Lobster, Blue Heron Bridge, Florida, Sony A7R V, Sony 28-60mm F/4-F/5.6 at 36mm with Nauticam WACP-C, ISO100, F/16, 1/20th sec, two D-Pro strobes, Marelux MX-A7RV housing

I used fiber cords with my test strobes which flashed consistently at all power levels.

The rear of the strobe has a round battery compartment cap which is sealed by two O-rings and two large control switches. The first control switch has three settings, off, on and on with focusing/target light which is 500 lumens and does not adjust. The focus light is in the center of the chrome reflector for the ring flash.

The second control switch is for the nine power levels when the strobe is turned on and you switch from power level eight to nine the strobe will test fire. Between the two control switches is a small LCD panel which displays the power level numbers from 1-9 and a battery power level which shows up to five white bars with a fully charged battery.

Directly under the power level control switch is a red LED which glow red when the strobe is ready to fire and blinks red after firing until the it is ready to fire again.

At power level #1 the strobe will fire at 10 FPS. At power level 9 it takes two or three quick red flashes before the strobe is ready to fire again. As the battery power drops the recycle times may be a bit longer than at full battery capacity. This is common for all strobes and the lithium batteries seem to out preform rechargeable AA type batteries for recycle times.

SUPE rates the circular flash tube at a color temperature of 4800K and they does not list a color temperature change for the wide angle and macro diffusers on the web site or in the manual.

The D-Pro is 170 X 90mm, has an on land weight of 1080g without battery and a U/W weight of 120g. D-Pro is depth rated to 100 meters and includes the battery, battery charger, a one inch ball mount and the user manual. The D-Pro is nicely packaged and is available in silver or black for $758.00 USD.

Accessories include the W/A and macro diffusers for $19.80 USD each. The D-Pro has a small grove near the front of the strobe which holds a thin red O-ring. The diffusers mount by pushing them over the O-ring and while I had no issues in the field the diffuser and O-ring did fall off in my pool during testing. I suggest using a bit of line to secure the diffuser or better yet tape it to the flash so it won't be lost.

Both diffusers have a handy fiber optic cord mount so that you can

trigger other strobes from a single D-Pro strobe.

Protective neoprene covers for the body of the flash and the front glass are also optional for $19.80 and $16.80 respectively. A spare battery pack is $118.00 USD.

OSD-Snoot

SUPE also offers the OSD-Optical Shaping Device for $268.00 USD. The OSD is a snoot with adjustable aperture that has eight different settings from wide to a small circle of light.

The OSD uses the 500 lumen focus light on the D-Pro strobe to assist with aiming and the best working distance is between 150mm to 200mm (5.9 to 7.89 inches). The

OSD is 114mm X 117mm total and weights 522g.

SUPE sells the OSD with docks for Scubalamp D-Max, D-Pro, Seacam 150D, Ikelite DS-161/160, Sea&Sea YS-D2/YS-D3, Retra and Inon Z330/Z240.

The OSD dock for the D-Pro slips over the front of the strobe after the O-ring is removed and uses the O-ring grove to ground the dock. A clamp is then tightened around the plastic dock to secure it in place.

Once the dock is mounted to the D-Pro the OSD can be bayonet mounted onto the dock and is held in place by a spring lock which makes it easy to remove and reinstall underwater. SUPE does not sell a color filter kit for the OSD at this time but it would be easy to cut color gels to fit between the OSD and the D-Pro if you want to add colors to back lighting or side lighting with off camera flash.

Field Testing the D-Pro Strobe and OSD

For my field tests I used the following equipment, Sony A7R V, Marelux MX-A7RV housing, Sony 90mm F/2.8 macro and IRIX 150mm F/2.8 Dragonfly macro lens (for Sony), Marelux MV-15 closeup lens, Four 200mm double ball arms, for buoyancy I used two 800ml flexibuoy's and two of the Black D-Pro flashes plus the OSD snoot in some cases.

I normally use two smaller strobes for macro work which are a bit lighter than the D-Pros but once in the water the weight and size did not interfere with my workflow.

The Flexibuoy's offset the slight extra weight and I found no difference in my ability to use the system with one hand.

When using the Sony A7RV I have an assigned control on the right side of the housing that allows

Seaweed Blenny, Blue Heron Bridge, Florida, Sony A7R V, IRIX 150mm F/2.8 macro with Marelux MX-15 C/U lens, ISO100, F/16, 1/250th sec, two D-Pro strobes, OSD snoot at #2 setting, Marelux MX-A7RV housing

me to toggle between full frame (61mp) and APS-C (26mp) this is very useful for putting an additional bit of distance between the subject and lens. With the 90mm macro it acts like a 135mm and the 150mm it is like a 225mm. I am well aware that this can also be done by cropping images in post

Hogfish, Blue Heron Bridge, Florida, Sony A7R V, Sony 28-60mm F/4-F/5.6 at 36mm with Nauticam WACP-C, ISO100, F/11, 1/60th sec, two D-Pro strobes, Marelux MX-A7RV housing

but I prefer to see how they will look in APS-C with greater DOF.

With the 90mm I shoot in the F/14 to F/22 range at ISO100 if I can and with the IRIX I use F/16 to F/32 at ISO100. With the strobes properly placed the D-Pro strobes had no problem with proper

exposures at power levels from #4 to #7. If I was getting over exposures I lowered the ISO to 50 and with under exposures I went to power level #8/9.

The IRIX 150mm macro is a manual focus lens and most useful in the 1:1 to 1:4 range. The lens is also able to record metadata to the images which showed up in my Lightroom program. I am still working on getting a custom focus gear and for this review I set the lens at 1:1 and left it there using focus peaking to for control sharpness. Getting sharp images at 1:1 even with the +15 closeup lens was easer than you might think.

I found the results using the Scubalamp D-Pro strobes to be well worth the price and then some. With the Macro diffusers installed I had more than ample power for all of my macro needs. The images are well illuminated with no hot areas and the color is very accurate when photographing warm colors.

I tested the strobes in my pool with lenses as wide as 130 degrees and the coverage was the same at over one meter with total coverage into the corners and well controlled from any hot spots with both W/A and macro diffusers. The cooler blues on the pool walls and tile were also well rendered and required no adjustments in post.

If you can live without TTL and/or HSS the D-Pro strobes preform exceptionally well for the price and I would recommend them for both macro and wide angle use. Well done Scubalamp.

I would once again like to thank the great staff at Scubalamp for loaning me the strobes for this review I am not eager to return them. For further support and distribution in your area of the world go to the scuba lamp.com web page.

Speed boat, Blue Heron Bridge, Florida, Sony A7R V, Sony 28-60mm F/4-F/5.6 at 28mm with Nauticam WACP-C, ISO100, F/5.6, 1/100th sec, two D-Pro strobes, Marelux MX-A7RV housing

Phil Rudin
Instagram

Nauticam NA-Z8 housing for the Nikon Z8

by Kevin Palmer

The Z8 is arguably the most hotly anticipated full-frame mirrorless camera from Nikon and the first to feature the '8' series badging.

For many still photographers, the Nikon D850 has represented the nicest all-around DSLR for underwater photography ever made. And while the Nikon Z6, Z7 and the mark II versions are certainly nice mirrorless cameras, they were not really nice enough to inspire an upgrade from a D850 for most shooters.

The D850 was introduced back in 2017. Many shooters have been waiting for Nikon to release a mirrorless version comparable to the D850. The Z9 certainly fitted that bill but the full size pro body and higher price tag were not for everyone. The Z8 gives us pretty much everything the Z9 has in a smaller body and beats most of the D850 specs! So is the Z8 your new mirrorless camera?

When rumors started circling that the Z8 would deliver most, if not all, of the Z9s impressive performance spec, it was easy to be a bit skeptical. But Nikon did not hold back and most of what makes the Z9 special has somehow been stuffed into camera body that is smaller and lighter than a D850. That is especially good news for us underwater photographers who have been waiting for a reason to move to a mirrorless interchangeable lens format that is clearly the future of cameras in general.

A quick Z8 specs review:

46MP – Just about perfect for underwater resolution and a subjectively beautiful file

30 FPS – More than any of us really need

8K 60P & 4K 120P Recorded internally in N-RAW or ProRes RAW. Nikon finally takes video seriously!

CF Express B for enough speed to handle the serious video capability.

UHSII for the second slot

Max sync speed 1/200 unless shooting HSS

EVF 3,686,400 pixels

Same EN-EL15C battery as in D850/ D500

Even in tricky constantly moving environments, rapid adjustments with the Nauticam housings come naturally. Even when holding one's breath.

Z-24-50 with WWL-C. Even with only 1/200 sync, you can still get nice sun rays

No mechanical shutter
Much expanded AF menu of capabilities

Switching to a Mirrorless

Like most things that are new to us there is a bit of an adjustment period and learning curve when switching to a mirrorless from a DSLR.

One of the biggest learning curves for many people is going from an optical VF to Electronic VF. EVFs do not perform well when shooting strong backlit scenes like sunballs. This is getting better as new cameras are released but for now when shooting into the sun and if you have something like a boat or diver silhouetted in the background you will probably not see the detail in the EVF. In these circumstances I suggest shoot, review, and make adjustments. This can all happen very fast because you can review your images right on the EVF without ever removing your eye.

Focusing head-on to a low contrast subject, in vertical, with a busy background will baffle many modern mirrorless cameras. Z8 nails it

Once you get comfortable with reviewing your images through the EVF display, you will never want to go back. I like to turn off auto review and use the playback lever that is conveniently accessed with your left thumb. EVFs also allow you to preview exposure simulation. As you make adjustments to

Fish portraits like this young hamlet with the Z8 are probably the most fun I have ever had doing it

The Z8 and Z 105 make a wonderfully versatile portrait combination, and it is a lot of fun to experiment with. Here providing a very detailed reef shark face portrait

ISO, shutter and aperture you will see the image getting darker or lighter. This can be useful in wide angle but in macro where images are generally 100% strobe lit you will want to turn this off. This feature is turned off automatically if the camera recognizes that a strobe is attached but many of the manual triggers that we use underwater are not recognized by the camera.

Another note on manual triggers, if the camera does not recognized there is a strobe attached, you can set the shutter faster than the max sync speed of 1/200. In this case the strobe will not sync correctly and you will get incorrect exposures.

Nikon's popularity in stellar photography inspired them to offer a "Starlight View". This is a very useful tool for night dives and especially for blackwater dives. This lowers the AF sensitivity to about -8.5EV which is an amazing accomplishment and makes it easier to view tough subjects.

The data displays also turns red to help preserve your night vision. There is already talk that the Z8 will be "THE" blackwater camera and feedback from the field looks good.

Considering all the benefits of utilizing the viewfinder, I think every Z8 owner shooting primarily stills should consider one of Nauticam's new Full Frame Enhanced Viewfinders.

These new viewfinders were designed in response to the ever-increasing size of the EVFs coming out that demanded a whole new optic design. Even on traditional DSLRs, using the new FF viewfinders show just how much sharper and defined the optics are.

AF and 3D tracking

I have always found Nikon

cameras to generally be better auto focusing still cameras than most. This is particularly true when it comes to low light and challenging macro fish portrait photography. The Z8 lives up to that tradition and then some. But

Zooming to about 35mm with the WWL-C is perfect for a grouper getting cleaned. Image quality only gets sharper as you zoom in

getting the most out of the camera does require some experimenting to find what works best for each individual's style.

There are a lot of AF options including different shapes and sizes of AF area and various tracking and animal recognition features. It pays not to just pick the same old focus size you have always used in the past, but rather take advantage of the new menu of tools at your disposal. The 3D tracking works particularly well and I believe one of the highlight of this camera.

Battery Life

The good news is that the Z8 uses the tried-and-true EN-EL15 battery (in updated form) that many Nikon shooters already have in their kit from many previous camera iterations.

The downside is the Z8 and all mirrorless cameras are much more power-hungry than traditional DSLRs. The real world results are that if you are shooting a modest amount of still photos, you can likely get through two dives without issue. If you are shooting a lot of stills or shooting video, you may want to change

batteries for each dive.

With the Nauticam housing, the whole process only takes a couple of minutes including pulling a vacuum. If you prefer not to open the housing you can add the new USB-C bulkhead allowing battery charging between dives with an external USB-C battery. Make sure to turn off features that you will not be using underwater, like wifi, to preserve battery.

Nauticam NA-Z8 Housing

The NA-Z8 offers everything we have come to expect along with some nice new features that are very useful.

When looking at the back of the Z8 camera, it is easy to see that all the controls the DSLR shooters have grown used to finding on the rear left side of the camera are no longer there. But thanks to some beautiful internal engineering, our left hands have still been given plenty to do when operating the housing.

Our left thumb now controls switching the EVF and LCD monitor displays, operating the Playback and

the Display function which I find of great use in both the EVF and LCD, rather than my right hand having to find the button.

Also on the left-hand side is the very useful Focus Mode lever and a dual lever for Function Buttons 1 & 2 which are physically located on the front right-hand side of the camera. Of course, the Zoom/Focus knob is also on the left. I really appreciated being able to spread the workload out a bit between left and right hands, an idea long overdue.

Whether using Z-lenses or the FTZ adapter, loading the camera, changing lenses and swapping batteries and media is pretty effortless in typical Nauticam tradition. As with

Zoom all the way to 50mm and the framing is perfect for an immature queen angel

the Z7 housings, the lens release functions with F and Z lenses and all existing port and gear configurations for F-Mount lenses will function on the NA-Z8 exactly as they worked on the Nauticam DSLR housings.

For those wanting to load up their housing with extra lights, monitors and GoPros, the top of the housing is now capable of supporting a total of six ball mounts without any extensive modifications – another nice improvement for gear intensive folks.

NIKKOR Z 24-50MM F/4-6.3

Part of what makes the current Nikon Z cameras awesome for underwater is the unfolding new lens line-up. In particular, the Nikkor Z 24-50MM F/4-6.3. This little walk around lens should be in all Z8 owner's camera bag for wide angle and blue water pelagic shooting thanks to what a powerful small package it creates when mated with Nauticam's WWL-C water contact optic on an extremely tiny flat port. It can also be used in the WACP-1 and WACP-C with some vignetting at 24-25mm.

Shutter Sync Speed

Some may find the 1/200 synch speed a little disappointing – but so far it has not seemed too limiting. For those wanting a higher sync speed, there are HSS compatible TTL converters and strobes available to make that possible.

CF Express B Cards and Video

For shooting stills, most name brand cards will function fine. When it comes to video, the Z8 is capable of generating very data intensive high bit-rate files. It has become pretty clear that certain manufacturer's cards will overheat quite quickly. Sandisk and Lexar seem especially prone to this. Delkin cards seem to perform much better and some other brands seem to be surfacing that also work well. This will no doubt be a moving target and needs to be assessed at the time of purchase based on the latest findings. Nikon's "approved media" list does NOT mean it will successfully record all video formats.

Final Thoughts on shooting the Z8

As most photographers realize, there is no perfect camera made today, but they are getting closer all the time.

As a long time DSLR shooter, the Z8 joins just one or two other mirrorless cameras that I find really fun to shoot the way I like to use a camera underwater. And as a long time Nikon shooter, I was pleased with how much seemed familiar, but also how much better this camera performed in several categories than its DSLR predecessors.

It's few weak spots (like battery life and sync speed) are really not deal breakers and both issues have solutions.

If you are a Nikon shooter who enjoys shooting video or wants to learn video, it is a no-brainer. This camera will blow away any Nikon you have ever shot video on and is worth taking advantage of.

Kevin Palmer
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A chat with Raymond Wennekes

by Peter Rowlands

I read about you in Dive Magazine and was particularly struck by how your images stood out from the certainly hundreds, possibly thousands of images I look at for each issue of UwP so I thought I'd get in touch and see if you would be willing to divulge your techniques and tips.
But before that let's start with the usual. When, why and where?

I have not had or done any training as a (underwater) photographer. I graduated from the College of Architecture and wanted to become an architect. Unfortunately, that didn't work out because the financial crisis started in 2008 in the Netherlands when I had just left school and the jobs as architectural engineer were not up for grabs. As a result, I ended up in the Sales-sector and had several positions in it. Until I joined Onderwaterhuis.NL in 2012 to work as a sales associate for almost 8 years.

Although I have been diving since 2000, at that time I had no experience with underwater photography. Because of my job at Onderwaterhuis.NL, I had been busy with underwater photography every day all this time. During working hours I learned about underwater photography and talked to clients about underwater photography and in my free time I was underwater a lot.

All beginnings are difficult and especially in the beginning when I came back to the surface with not so nice pictures and then discussed them with colleagues among ourselves. If a picture did not turn out well, but I showed it with an explanation of why

'Typical Dutch Scenery'
Diving in the murky waters of the Netherlands often means poor visibility. To take great pictures, you have to look creatively for subjects like these lilies and the typical Dutch windmills.
Shot with a SONY A7R IV with a SONY FE 28mm F2 lens + Fisheye Converter in Sea&Sea housing and two Sea&Sea YS-D3II strobes; f16 – 1/125 – ISO500

'The wheel of fortune'
I recently had the unique opportunity to dive in an old quarry in Belgium. This quarry has been submerged over the years, which makes for wonderful diving. The quarry is still filled with old items such as this winch, a rail and trays. Shot with a SONY A7R IV with a SONY FE 28mm F2 lens + Fisheye Converter in Sea&Sea housing and two Sea&Sea YS-D3II strobes; f18 – 1/80 – ISO1250

The Owl
Only on one particular wreck in the North Sea can the twin fan worm or spiral fan worm (Bispira volutacornis) be found. When diving on this wreck with the 'Duik de Noordzee Schoon' Foundation, I was asked to make a creative picture of this critter since only photographs had been taken that were biological in nature. With a special lighting technique, I created this amazing picture, which looks like an owl. Shot with a SONY A7R IV with a Sony 50mm macrolens in Sea&Sea housing and single Sea&Sea YS-D3II strobe with snoot; f16 – 1/250 – ISO100

it was not good (e.g. hard currents or bad visibility), they often said, "I don't need to hear the story behind the bad picture." This statement has always stayed with me and caused me to set the bar extremely high for myself. Because a picture can be really unique, but if the lighting or composition is not good, it is not a good photo.

In 2015, the CMAS World Underwater Photography Championship was in the Netherlands and there it was announced that the next CMAS World Championship would be held in Mexico in 2017. I then set myself a goal that I wanted to go there.

To get there, I had to become Dutch Champion in 2016. I then made around 200 dives in one year in the Netherlands. All with a camera and all with a goal to get better at underwater photography so that I would become Dutch Champion. And I succeeded. In 2016 I became NL Champion for the first time and a year later, in 2017, I prolonged this title.

Of course, I gained a lot of knowledge and experience from my job at Onderwaterhuis.NL, but for the most part I learned by doing it myself.

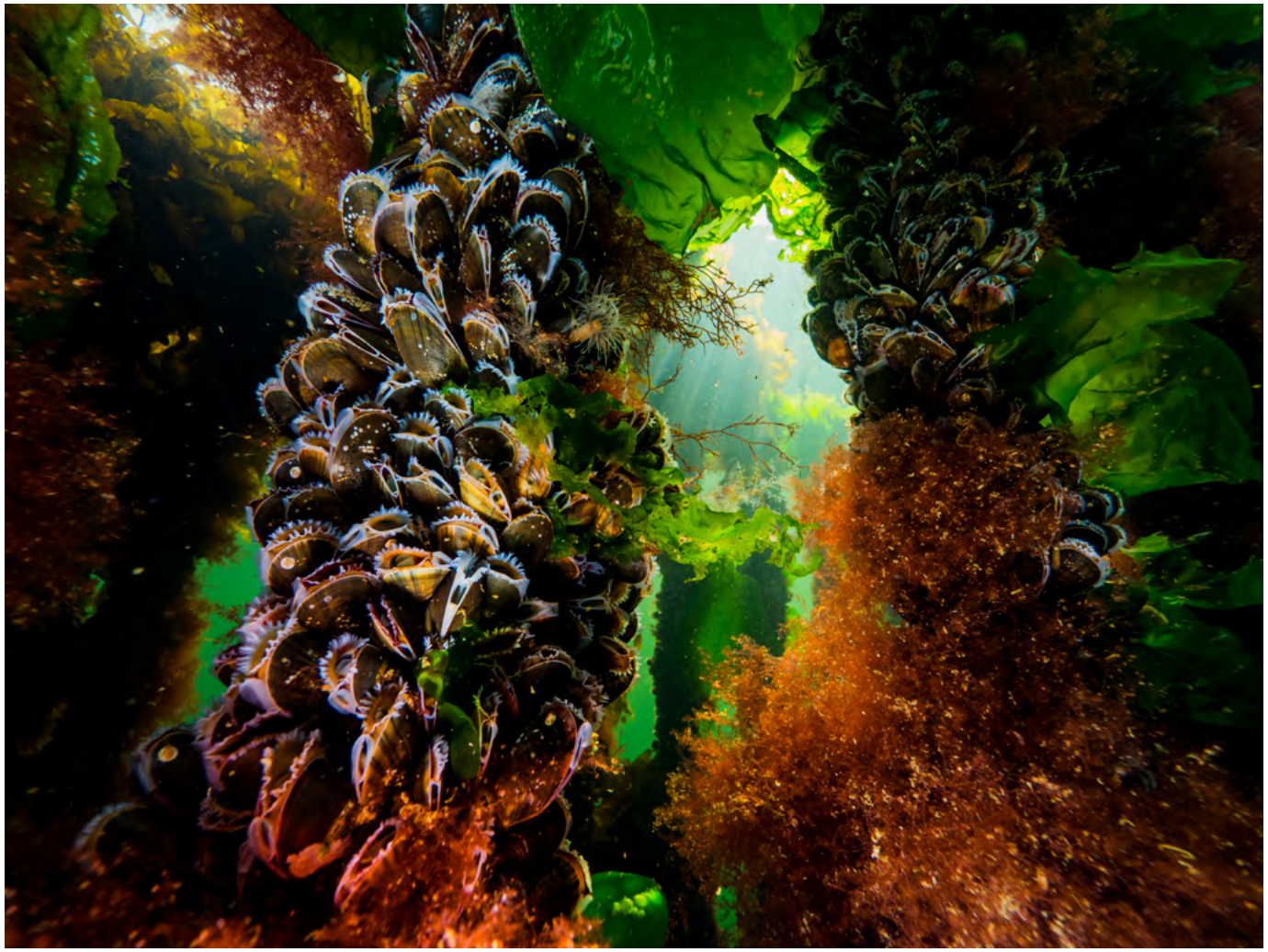
For 3 or 4 years I put everything into underwater photography. Also by talking a lot with other people about it and by going to lectures about underwater photography. I looked at a lot of other people's pictures in magazines and on social media and asked myself how they were made. Then I would "dissect" a photo; Is the photo taken with e.g. a macro lens or something else? Was the photo taken with one flash or two flashes, etc? And then I tried to recreate the photo in Dutch waters and give it my own twist. That's also how I created a bit of my own style.

Since I am a perfectionist by nature, I always want to come up with the best picture. A 2-hour dive for one perfect photo definitely happens to me. And if the conditions are not right, I go back another time to try again.

And still a large part of my life/freetime is dedicated to underwater photography. I make about 100-120 dives in the year now and all with a camera and still trying new techniques and going up my learning curve.

Because I was so focused on competition photography in the beginning, I got my technique super well underwater. At this competition you are also not allowed to post-process and because of that, I now have little to no need to edit my photos.

That is not to say that I never post-process or that I am against it... definitely not! I believe that post-processing is a part of photography and thus also of underwater photography. Only I try to do it underwater as well as possible, so that in post-processing as little as possible is needed.



Mussel farm
One of the most beautiful places in the Netherlands for scuba diving is the mussel farms in the province of Zeeland. It is not always allowed, because they are mainly privately owned plots. But when you have permission and at the right time of the year before they harvest the mussels, you can see the most beautiful colours.
Shot with an Olympus OM-D E-M10 MKII with a Panasonic 7-14mm wide angle lens in Nauticam housing and two Sea&Sea YS-D2 strobes; f7,1 – 1/160 – ISO640

Tompot Blenny
One of the permanent residents on a wreck in the North Sea is a Tompot Blenny. When they are guarding a nest with eggs, it is easier to photograph them. Their curiosity keeps them coming back.
Shot with a SONY A7R IV with a SONY 50mm macro lens in Sea&Sea housing and single Sea&Sea YS-D3II strobe with snoot; f13 – 1/250 – ISO250

Furthermore, underwater photography is a (out of control) hobby for me and I do not earn my monthly salary from it. I have another full time job as Sales Manager at a shipyard in the Netherlands where I earn my money and do underwater photography on the side as a hobby.

I have always felt that learning to get quality images in temperate waters such as the Netherlands and the UK is a strong foundation for when you go into bluer, warmer, clearer tropical waters.
What camera set up did you start out with, do you still use it and do you do most of your dives solo so you can concentrate on your images?

My first underwater camera was the Olympus PEN E-PL3 with Olympus housing with one INON D-2000 strobe. It was only a couple of months later that I bought a second strobe. And due to the often murky waters in the Netherlands the strobe position together with the amount of flash exposure is really important to minimise the backscatter in the images.

For macro shots I quickly started working with snoots. After three years I bought my second set, an Olympus OM-D E-M10 MKII in a Nauticam housing and changed my strobes to the Sea&Sea YS-D2 models.I really liked this set, because it was compact and lightweight and had amazing capabilities for such a small camera. In 2020 I bought my current set, the SONY A7R IV full-frame camera in a Sea&Sea housing. That camera is a pure beast, with 61 megapixel and the dynamic range.

Yes, all my dives are intentionally solo dives. I always meet up with another underwater photographer to go diving, but that's more for fun above water. Underwater, we each go our own way.

Barrel Jellyfish
Summertime is the season of the Barrel Jellyfish (Rhizostoma pulmo) in Dutch coastal waters. Where most underwater photographers try to make beautiful underwater shots of the jellyfish with the sun in the background, I tried a different approach with the famous Dutch dike in the background.
Shot with an Olympus OM-D E-M10 MKII with a Panasonic 8mm fisheye lens in Nauticam housing and two INON D-2000 strobes; f22 – 1/250 – ISO400

Peacock worm
For the Dutch Championship of Underwater Photography I took this photo of a Peacock worm (Sabella pavonina) – and it took me 108 minutes to make it like this. The constant current and the way of lighting made it really difficult. But in the end I succeed. The picture was awarded with a silver medal.
Shot with an Olympus OM-D E-M10 MKII with a Panasonic 45mm macro lens in Nauticam housing and single Sea&Sea YS-D2 strobe with snoot; f14 – 1/250 – ISO640

This allows me to concentrate fully on what I want to photograph and I can stay with the subject for as long as I want or need until it's perfect.

For the safety of solo diving, I have obviously taken the necessary training and tuned my equipment accordingly. Aside from the great stability, redundancy is one of the reasons I also dive with a sidemount setup.

Additional lighting obviously plays a great part in helping your images stand out. Even if the subjects are familiar you seem to find a way to show them slightly differently. What additional lighting do you use and do you go down with pre conceived ideas or do you act instinctively and see how it looks on the LCD screen?

I don't use any additional lighting other than one or two underwater strobes. But on those strobes I do use snoots as an accessory to have full control over the light on the subject. And most of the times I have pre conceived ideas of what kind of picture I want to make with a certain subject, especially when I am preparing for a competition. But I also can have dives where I find a subject and then by exposing the subject in a different way, I try to see if something beautiful appears in my viewfinder.

And sometimes the subject also has to cooperate, like when photographing moving subjects like nudibranchs. Then I have an idea in my head, but it may be more luck than wisdom if it actually works out.

Your shots show that you certainly achieved a very high standard in home waters but did you eventually feel restricted by the local conditions and yearn for the photo opportunities of overseas locations? If so, did it/they live up to your expectations?

Diving in the Netherlands can be really beautiful and I still enjoy doing it. But for example to make stunning wide angle photos all elements need to be right. You need to have sun and the visibility needs to be good. And both can change within hours in the Netherlands, so therefore diving in the Dutch waters is mainly macro

'Pure Serenity'
In October 2022 I hosted an underwater photography workshop in the Maldives. One of the highlights was the opportunity to snorkel with a whale shark for hours behind the boat. I wanted to capture this pure serenity of only the rays of ambient light and the whale shark feeding on small fish and krill.
Shot with a SONY A7R IV with a SONY FE 28mm F2 lens + Fisheye Converter in Sea&Sea housing. No strobes, only ambient light; f8 – 1/80 – ISO2500

'The eye is a window to the soul'
I took this picture in Bunaken National Park in North Sulawesi. A place which is also known for its abundance of sea turtles.
Shot with a SONY A7R IV with a SONY 90mm macro lens in Sea&Sea housing and single Sea&Sea YS-D3II strobe with snoot; f14 – 1/250 – ISO500

photography. You can actually do macro photography anytime, even with particularly poor visibility of just a few inches.

So to dive in the clear tropical waters around the world is like a breath of fresh air for me and it absolutely did live up to my expectations. I love to travel around the world, to new or familiar places, and experience the world underwater and capture it with my camera.

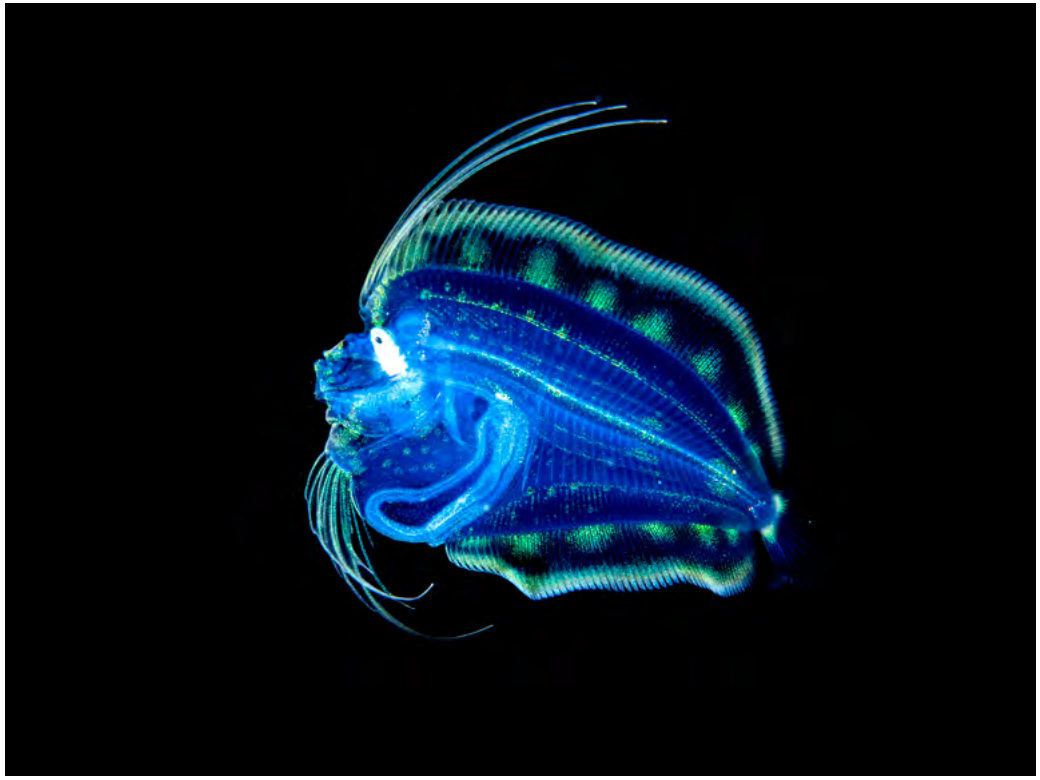
The more I dive in tropical blue water, the less attractive Dutch waters become.

But then once I do dive back into Dutch waters, it works as therapy and I love being underwater.

Competitions seem to have played a big part in your development and impetus. Are they a prime motivation or just the icing on the cake (if you win them!)?

Competing in competitions such as the Open Dutch Championship has certainly been my motivation in the beginning.

During the World Underwater Photography Championship held in the Netherlands in 2015, they announced that the next edition was in La Paz Mexico in 2017.



Juvenile flounder
One of the coolest things to do in underwater photography is a blackwater dive. This is a dive after sunset in at least 200m deep water. After sunset the largest vertical migration in the world happens – and it happens every night. A lot of critters come to the surface to feed, breathe and mate. It is like diving in outer space, with critters like this juvenile wunderpus and juvenile flounder.
Shot with an Olympus OM-D E-M10 MKII with a Panasonic 45mm macrolens in Nauticam housing and two Sea&Sea YS-D2 strobes; f10- 1/250 – ISO500

I set myself the goal that I wanted to go there. To get there, I had to become Dutch Champion in 2016. In that year, I made about 200 dives in the Netherlands, all with the camera. That did cause me to have a different approach to underwater photography

instead of just diving and waiting to see what I find.

In addition to competitions, for 8 years I had a job as a sales associate at one of the largest underwater photography stores in Europe, based in the Netherlands. So that too caused my knowledge to grow rapidly. But I always compare it to a cooking store - Working in a cooking store does not automatically make you a good cook. You have to gain experience and find out what works and what doesn't and to develop your own 'signature'.

For at least 3 or 4 years I spent almost all my free time in underwater photography to get to the level where I am now.

I see that you offer underwater photography courses. Do you have a pre arranged itinerary of talks, diving and image reviewing or are they tailor made for each individual or group?

That's right!

I teach different types of courses and workshops. For in Dutch waters, I give 1:1 workshops, which are specifically aimed at what the other underwater photographer wants to learn. For example, specifically taking one specific photo or learning the flash technique to reduce backscatter.

I also organize underwater photography trips abroad. Earlier this year I went to North Sulawesi with 14 other underwater photographers and in October this year I will go with a group on a liveaboard to the Maldives.

An underwater photography trip to Anilao, in the Philippines is planned for November 2024.

During these group trips, I teach courses and workshops centrally as much as possible. But I will also approach everyone individually to give as much personal guidance as possible.

The best thing about these courses and workshops is when you give people the knowledge that makes them take a stunning picture and they say that they would not have succeeded without my guidance.

Finally do you have future plans or a wish list of new subjects or locations?

Of course everybody has a wish list. And mine is getting longer rather than shorter. For example, I really like Blackwater Diving. The kind of critters and juvenile species you see in the water during the blackwater dives are amazing. I will always recommend anyone who gets the opportunity to make such dives to do it.

But on top of my wish list is the opportunity to snorkel with orcas or with whales one day. Or to dive in the cold water of the arctic. With al the ice structures and animals. That seems fantastic.

Underwaterdog
After every summer season the local swimming pool opens its doors for the dogs to play in the pools. After I saw the pictures of Seth Casteel of the underwaterdogs, I wanted to try it myself. It's not easy but it's worth the effort to see the enthusiastic response of the dogs and jumping into the water.
Shot with a SONY A7R IV with Sony FE 28mm F2 lens + Fisheye Converter in Sea&Sea housing and two Sea&Sea YS-D3II strobes; f16 – 1/200 – ISO640.

But besides the underwater photography trip planned for November 2024 to Anilao, I have no other concrete plans for trips in the near future.

Most enlightening, Raymond, and many thanks for your time.

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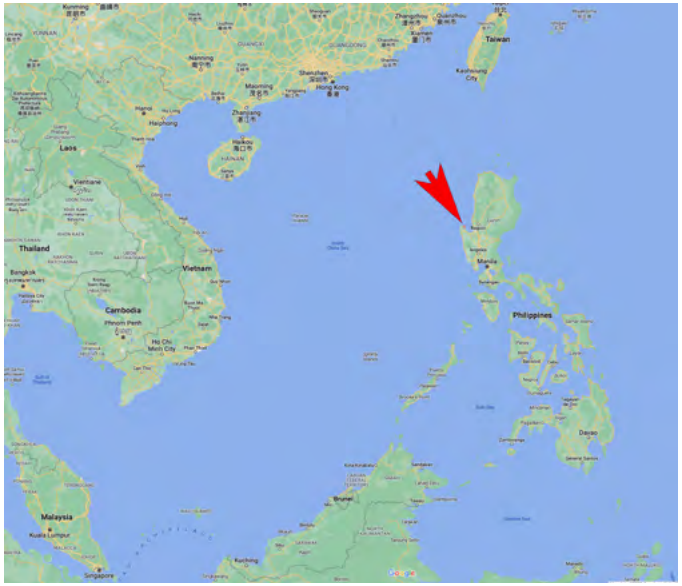
Different In Anda

by Nigel Marsh

Anda is a new destination in the Philippines that few divers have heard about. Located on the east coast of Bohol, Anda has only been accessible to divers for the last few years with the building of several dive resorts in this remote area. Anda has quickly built up a reputation as a great area to see macro critters on its wonderful reef and muck sites. So, when I recently visited the area, I thought it was time to do something a little different photographically – I left the wide-angle lens and dome port at home.

For our stay we booked into the Magic Oceans Dive Resort for a five-night package. Anda is located a two-and-a-half-hour drive from the main airport on Bohol at Tagbilaran. The drive to the resort is very scenic, following the coast road through many small towns. We had heard the resort was quite remote, and the final drive down a narrow dirt track confirmed this. The nearest town with bars and restaurants is many miles away, so the resort includes all meals as part of a package.

Greeted by the very friendly staff, we had time for a quick look around the resort before getting ready for the afternoon dive. The resort has 16 bungalows set around a large pool with fabulous gardens that are home to birds, lizards and crabs. Lush jungle surrounds the resort, and the staff informed us that monkeys are sometimes spotted in the trees. At the centre of the resort is a pavilion for dining and lounging, with a day spa nearby. The well-appointed dive centre is not far from the water front, with a jetty leading to the three banka dive



Green Turtle at Turtle Point - 1/100, f8, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing with Kraken Wet Lens and Inon Z330 Strobe

Hairy Frogfish at Larry's Corner - 1/125, f22, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 Strobe

Mimic Octopus at Larry's Corner - 1/125, f13, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 Strobe

boats the crew use.

We assembled our dive gear and camera gear, then headed down to the dive shop for our first dive. Now I may have left the wide-angle lens and dome port at home, but not wanted to miss out on larger marine life I had packed a new wet lens instead – a Kraken Wide Angle Conversion Lens KRL-09S.

This amazing lens can be added in front of a 60mm macro lens, or any equivalent lens, to instantly change your macro lens to a wide-angle lens (Nauticam make a similar wet lens that is a little more expensive). The Kraken lens is a very solid build, and quite heavy, clocking in at 2kg. However, with internal buoyancy it only weights 212g underwater. Its optics include seven elements, six of which are glass, and finished with a polycarbonate resin dome (which Kraken say can be buffed or replaced if damaged). The lens has a M67 mounting thread, so can be attached to a flat port with that feature. It can be used with full frame, APSC or M4/3 cameras, with each giving a different angle of view. With a full frame camera, it changes the field of view from 39.7° of the 60mm lens to 154.8°.

I have used this wonderful Kraken lens a few times at home in Australia, and got some great results, shooting everything from small sharks to manta rays, so was keen to give it a go at Anda. My only problem with the Kraken lens is the attachment to my Isotta housing. Kraken don't make a flip for the lens, so I tried using a Saga flip which is really designed for a lighter macro lens, but found it very flimsy, even flipping down when shooting macro. So currently I have the lens screwed to a bracket on my strobe arm and screw it to the port when required. Not the best setup, but better than nothing.

For our first dive our local guide Lee Ann suggested Turtle Point, a reef dive with critters

Kraken wide-angle wet lens fitted to my Isotta Housing

Oriental Bluespotted Maskray at Lamanok Island - 1/125, f13, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing with Kraken Wet Lens and Inon Z330 Strobe

Zebra Moray on the House Reef - 1/125, f16, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 Strobe

One of the colourful nudibranchs seen at Anda - 1/125, f16, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 Strobe

and turtles, perfect for the 60mm and Kraken lens combo. This site, which is right next to the resort House Reef, is typical of the area, with coral gardens in the shallows, then a colourful wall dropping to 25m. In the coral gardens we spotted a wonderful assortment of reef fishes, plus shrimp fish and peacock mantis shrimps. The wall itself was covered in the most beautiful corals – spikey soft corals, sea whips, sponges, gorgonians and a huge variety of colourful featherstars.

I enjoy shooting fish portraits with my 60mm

Giant Frogfish at Birhen Point - 1/125, f16, ISO 400, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing with Kraken Wet Lens and Inon Z330 Strobe

Leopard Shrimp at Lamayag Point - 1/125, f20, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 Strobe

macro lens, so found no shortage of subjects with angelfish, butterflyfish, tobies, rock cods and several varieties of anemonefish. Lee Ann also pointed out nudibranchs, morays and a gorgeous warty frogfish, all great subjects for my macro lens. After drifting along the wall for forty minutes we headed into the shallows and turtle territory. We quickly encountered over a dozen turtles, both green and hawksbill. I first shot a few head shots with the macro lens, then attached the Kraken lens for some full body shots of these friendly turtles, capturing a good variety of images.

The dive crew from Magic Oceans Dive Resort have around thirty dive sites in the area. On a typical day they run a double dive in the morning and a single dive in the afternoon, and either a twilight or night dive depending on demand. With three dive boats they also keep the numbers on each boat to a manageable number, so the dive sites are never crowded. They are also a very photographer friendly resort, with a spacious area for cameras on each boat, and individual camera prep areas in the dive centre.

The next morning it was time for muck diving at J Edens Place. This sandy slope was full of great critters, so the Kraken lens didn't get a look in. For over 70 minutes Lee Ann found us critter after critter – warty frogfish, robust ghostpipefish, snake eels, shrimp gobies, scorpionfish, pipefish and morays.

After a morning tea of fresh fruits, we then dived another reef wall at Birhen Point. This was another pretty wall, but also with a sandy slope at its base where thousands of Barnes garden eels were swaying. The macro critters included a Bargibant's pygmy seahorse, nudibranchs and more morays. While I attached the Kraken lens to photograph a large giant frogfish.

Over the next few days we dived a wonderful balance of reef and muck sites, and quite a few sites had both environments. Dapdap was a great muck site where we saw cowfish, frogfish, pipefish, snake eels, oriental flying gurnards and a rare adult convict blenny. Larry's Corner was another brilliant muck site with mimic octopus, wonderpus, hairy frogfish, pipefish, cuttlefish and mantis shrimps.

The reef dives at Pygmy House and Mandarin Garden had lovely corals, more turtles, a good collection of nudibranchs and even muck critters like Pegasus sea moths and fingered dragonets. The House Reef was a great twilight dive to see the mating antics of dozens of splendid mandarinfish. However, this site was also a good spot for critters with cuttlefish, hermit crabs, flatworms, harlequin shrimps and even a zebra moray.

My favourite reef dive was at Lamayag Point, as I finally got to see a special critter I have always wanted to see and photograph, a leopard shrimp. These highly camouflaged small shrimps only live on tiger anemones, and this site has plenty attached to the sea whips. It took Lee Ann almost five minutes to locate the tiny critter, but it was worth the wait to see this spectacular and rare shrimp.

For most of these dives I was happy to concentrate on macro with the abundance of small subjects. However, the Kraken lens got its best workout at Lamanok Island. This special dive site has a little bit of everything – coral gardens, overhangs and crevices, a coral wall and lots of sand for muck critters. I had the Kraken lens on and off half a dozen times, going from flamboyant cuttlefish to oriental bluespotted maskrays, then robust ghostpipefish to giant frogfish. I also photographed spindle cowries, murex shells, nudibranchs, boxfish, morays and mantis shrimps.

I had a wonderful time at Anda with Magic Oceans Dive Resort, the diving was superb and so was the resort and its very friendly and helpful staff. I am sure more and more divers will discover Anda over the next few years, but with its remote location making it a little harder to get to, I hope it remains a little undiscovered gem.

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For more information about Magic Oceans Dive Resort visit –
www.magicoceans.online

Diving Malpelo

with Massimo Franzese

Malpelo island is a small rocky island off the coast of Colombia and is not inhabited if we exclude the thousands of birds that live on it and the few soldiers that manage the outpost.

It is situated around 500 km away from mainland and is 1.5 km long by 640 meters wide at the best. The island is volcanic in nature and despite being a Sanctuary of Flora and Fauna has no vegetation on it.

Malpelo has two weather seasons and dive conditions change considerably:

- January to April – Dry season
- May to December – Wet season

The main difference in addition to the fact that it rains is the water temperature and the depth of the thermocline.

Most people go to Malpelo to see hammerheads and as the weather gets warmer the thermocline goes deeper and so do the hammerheads.

On the other hand visibility improves during the wet season so if you are into video or photo you can get 20+ meters visibility compared to 10-15 in the dry season.

I went in June and this meant schooling hammerheads in the blue and thermocline at depth. I knew about it but other guests didn't so they were either disappointed or pushing the dive guide out into the blue to see them which frankly was not ideal.

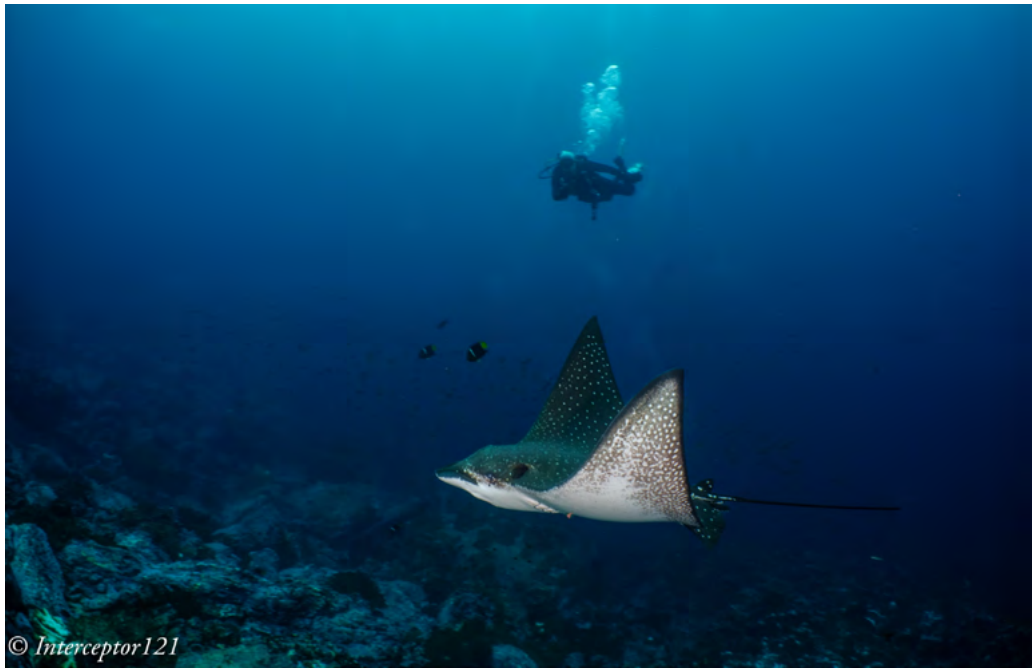
Liveaboard Options

There are only two boats that visit Malpelo regularly the MV Ferox which is what I used and the Sea Wolf. The Ferox caters to more international travellers is entirely made of steel being a former Swedish minesweeper. The Sea Wolf hull is made of aluminium it is more comfortable in terms of living area but suffers the sea conditions much more. The clientele is more local or South American. The two boats have a set number of permits and at one time there is only one boat except on arrival and departure day when you may cross the other one.

The trip starts from the Intercontinental hotel in Cali and you get to Buenaventura after a 3+ hours coach ride in extremely bendy roads with many tunnels. You embark the MV Ferox ribs directly from the touristic port of Buenaventura. Due to the level of crime in this location you stay there the absolute minimum

Boarding MV Ferox

Eagle and Riccardo. Sony A1, Nauticam housing, Sony 28mm +WWL-1. f/11, 1/60, 500 ISO



Getting closer.
Sony A1, Nauticam housing, Canon 8-15mm+TC. f/8, 1/30, 500 ISO

amount of time. The destination was not flagged as safe by my travel insurance as of June 2023.

The Ferox leaves after dinner on day 1 and then travels non stop until arrival. Conditions were pretty calm during my crossing and the boat arrived in Malpelo at night.

Once arrived the boat stayed on a mooring point on the north east of the island in front of “la cara del fantasma” dive site and close to the military outpost.

If you are prone to sea sickness please note that the boat is only attached to a single mooring point and therefore will move with the wind and the waves. In addition the generator providing light is quite noisy and goes on non stop. My earplugs were not good enough for a quiet night, I recommend you invest in heavy duty ones for shooting.

Dive Operation

The dive operation is absolutely superb in terms of logistics and organisation.

The two RIBS travel on the deck of the boat during the crossing and are dropped in using cranes upon arrival. The scuba gear that was set up during the crossing is loaded on the RIB by the crew and stays there for the duration of the trip until unloaded and

Sony A1, Nauticam housing, Sony 28-60mm + WWL-1. f/11. 1/200. 500 ISO

Sony A1, Nauticam housing, Sony 28mm +WWL-1. f/8. 1/60. 500 ISO

then the RIB are lifted back on board.

Tanks are filled directly on the RIB, this set up is fantastic as you only have to make it to the boat while your camera gets passed to you.

Special mention to the dive guides of the Ferox, I was with a spanish speaking group with Richi Valens who did an awesome job. The other guide Sten is also very well known and long time guide in Malpelo having worked with previous operator departing from Panama.

The whole boat crew were very helpful and the food was light for once: not the usual fatty foods that you experience on some other liveaboards. Beers were $2 per can but a whole bucket was served free after the last dive.

The skippers of the two RIBS are just incredible for the mix of agility, seamanship, strength pulling up BCD with one hand from the tank neck.

While there we met Camilo Abella a park ranger with a degree in biology.

A catamaran from Biodiversity Colombia patrols the island at all times to stop illegal fishing oh sharks. They stay on the boats in 3 months shifts to keep things as they are.

I left a donation when I was there and I hope you will do the same after reading this article.

I was expecting absolutely barren rocks with no coral after reading several sources however this proved to be wrong. There are hard and soft corals, not as you would expect in Egypt, but plenty to have macro life which of course was not the main objective of anyone on the trip.

One of the most attractive features of Malpelo in the wet season are the huge aggregations of fish. And here comes the elephant in the room. Did we see hammerheads? Yes however the largest school was circa 12 and far away in the blue. Other subjects that are easier to capture are eagle rays saw up to six together. By no means a large aggregation but quite easy to track.

White tip sharks were quite common as well. We also saw tiger sharks which is one of the reason we did not see many silky sharks (they can eat them) on the same sites. Humpback whale were seen in the distance and a whale shark came under our rib after a dive at El Monstruo.

Malpelo is not the easiest destination for underwater photography due to the diving and surface conditions and the unpredictable weather that can make certain dives pretty dark. As you are trying to squeeze any juice left out of your camera it becomes apparent that larger sensors are a benefit in Malpelo as certain shots (schools in the blue for example) are only allowed without strobes.

I had examined several videos of Malpelo at various times of the year and after experiencing myself I have to say that I was a bit misguided however I did have all the equipment required with me but in some cases I did not have the opportunity to repeat a dive as I was also taking video or simply the situation has changed.

I used a Sony A1 in Nauticam housing and two Sea and Sea YS-D2J strobes, with which I am fully satisfied, with 8" and 12" segments for every dive. I brought with me a Canon 8-15mm fisheye with a metabones adapter for e-mount and also a Kenko 1.4 HDX Pro teleconverter as the widest lens option and the Sony 28-60mm and 28mm prime to use with the Nauticam WWL-1.

Due to strong current an rough surface conditions I recommend using the lightest optics you can in Malpelo. During the trip I realised that smaller domes are really to be preferred I had a difference of 20 bars air consumption when switching from WWL-1 with its 5.5" dome to a larger 180mm wide angle port. Super heavy rigs are not ideal for the rollback negative entries required on each site. Going in and waiting for the skipper to pass the camera is not a good idea either as the group could have drifted.

Guides discourage using strobes or video lights when those point to the blue (why would you do that anyway?) but it is ok to beam the sharks with light when you shoot against the reef.

I shot my Canon 8-15mm with TC predominantly at f/8, the Sony 28mm with WWL-1 between f/8 and f.11 and the 28-60mm with WWL-1 mostly at f/11 to achieve a good compromise between depth of field and sharpness. In dark conditions my shutter speed went all the way down to 1/30, I relied on my strobes to freeze subject motion. The Sony A1 has a max sync speed of 1/200 with electronic shutter and 1/400 with mechanical shutter. For this trip I shot only electronic shutter. This had the extra benefit of not producing a shutter sound. Sharks tend to turn back as they hear your shutter or your strobes fire hence the reason some of those in the images look like turning back on themselves.

Zoom lenses are ideal for sharks that tend not to come close however

The school. Sony A1, Nauticam housing, Sony 28mm +WWL-1. f/14. 1/200. 500 ISO

I found the field of view of my WWL-1 to be insufficient for the fish schools in some of the sites. Based on my experience in Egypt the WWL-1 or the WACP variations are ideal for fish schools so this was one of the reasons for my choice. The fish schools in Malpelo however are on another level in terms of size, so I found myself having to step back in order to cover the school and also part of the reef behind. Shooting strobes at full power I managed to get decent colours in the images thanks to the dual gain sensor of the A1 allowing me to shoot at higher ISO while preserving dynamic range and colour depth. As you would expect, while I had a lens too narrow when I went for the fish schools, the closest shark encounters happened when I had the fisheye lens, thankfully I had the teleconverter on so I zoomed in full to fill the frame as much as possible. Due to the always changing dive plan it was not possible to plan carefully the right lens for each day or dive, so it is ideal to have options that allow a certain flexibility.

The level of diving skill required to pull the shots in Malpelo is quite high as the guides do not allow any contact with the reef and there is

current and surge together with rough surface conditions.

Final Thoughts

I guess many people will be thinking is Malpelo for me or not? And the answer does change a lot depending on your preferences and priorities.

If you need a luxury liveaboard and mind rough surface conditions Malpelo is generally not for you. I would also add that for photographers wanting to take pictures of hammerhead sharks there are places where this is considerably easier. Cocos Island where you can sit on the bottom waiting for sharks is definitely a safer option than Malpelo where contact with the bottom is broadly not allowed unless with a few fingers if there is ripping current.

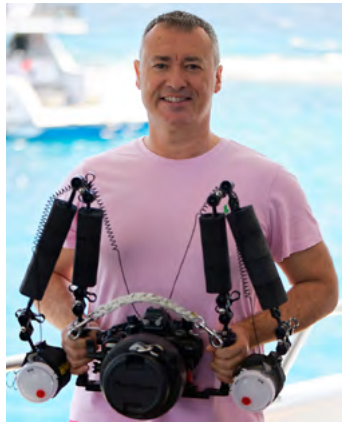
Even Galapagos, despite the reputation, has considerably easier diving conditions. To understand how tough it is in Malpelo you need to look at the entry and exit on the tenders. In Galapagos you will still get in and out the tender with your gear in Malpelo that is very risky business. Many dives require short crossings from one pinnacle to another with strong currents and most people are forced to dive with 15 litres tank. If your air consumption is too bad and you are on 12 litres your are told you need to change by the guides to avoid cutting it short for the group. You are also asked to go higher and dive with the bubble of the group if you are running low but this is not a great idea.

In terms of safety you need a surface marker buoy, a flashlight; a beacon to find you in case you are lost is provided. I also carried a knife and a reel which I had to use in one occasion.

Would I go back? Immediately and next time in the dry season.

This article is a condensed version of my travel blog to Malpelo if you wish to read more details and watch the video I took both underwater and topside click on this link that will direct you to my blog.

Massimo Franzese
www.interceptor121.com



https://interceptor121.com/2023/07/30/diving-malpelo-sanctuary-of-flora-and-fauna/

Freediving Moalboal

by Nicholas Kouvaras

Moalboal is a peninsula on the south-western tip of Cebu, bordered to the west by the Tañon Strait. From its shore you can clearly see Negros Island across the strait. Pescador Island, a popular tourist attraction, is also part of the municipality.

Since the 70s Moalboal has developed a tourism industry based on diving and the beaches that look into the sunset.

To reach Moalboal you will first have to go to Cebu City. It is one of the biggest cities in the Philippines and it has a big international airport. From there you can take the bus or hire a car for the 3 hour drive to Moalboal. The buses leave from the South Bus Terminal and prices are around 200 PHP. If you decide to take a taxi or hire a private car it is highly recommended to negotiate the price first.

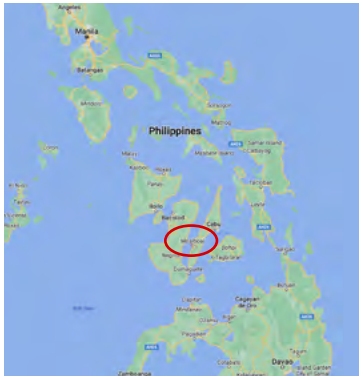
The high season is considered to be from November to April. It is the busiest time for the small coastal town. Between May and October is the rainy season but it is still good for diving. Actually the best conditions that I experienced were during May and June. In 2021 a typhoon hit Moalboal and destroyed a big part of the waterfront and seriously damaged the reef, which is still recovering. All around the area there are walls and big depths are just a few metres from the shore.

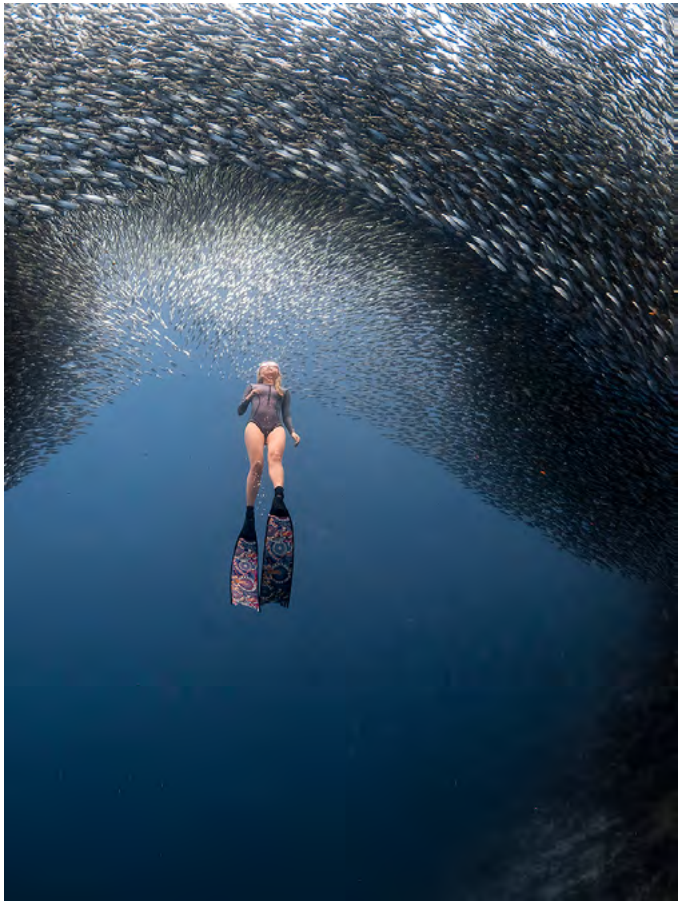
There are plenty of accommodations close to the beach and a big variety of restaurants for all tastes and cuisines. The nightlife, like all touristy beach towns, is very lively.

The main attraction in Moalboal are the sardines in Panagsama beach. Big schools of

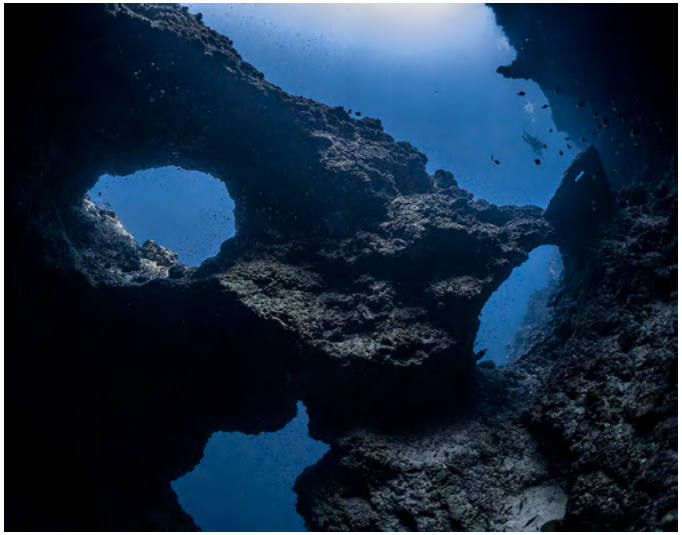
I have to admit that I got lucky with this shot. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/160 sec , ISO640, A Mode

To reach Moalboal you will first have to go to Cebu City. It is one of the biggest cities in the Philippines and it has a big international airport. From there you can take the bus or hire a car for the 3 hour drive to Moalboal.





My model that day knew only 2 words in English. Photo and Video. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/160 sec , ISO800, A Mode



It really looks like a skull. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/3.5, 1/250 sec , ISO1600, P Mode

Two freedivers chilling @33m, lucky me. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/2, 1/80 sec , ISO800, P Mode

In the morning the sun is at the back of the mermaid. You have to make sure your subject is not covered by the shadows. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/800 sec , ISO800, A Mode

sardines are for some reason always there. The spot is easily accessible from the beach and 100s (literally) people visit everyday. Snorkelers, people with life vests, freedivers and scuba divers all mingle with the schools of sardines that create a very photogenic environment. Sometimes small trevally try to chase the sardines. If you are very lucky you might even see a thresher shark joining the party.

With a little bit of practice you can learn to manipulate the sardines and make them open up in a perfect circle around your subject. Swimming just under the school is usually the best way to get really close to them.

A bit further north, there are also some underwater statues. A mermaid around 7 metres deep and the Moai statue in a small cave @33 metres. Turtles are also very common here and they are comfortable with the divers. If you like macro and black water photography the walls offer lots of opportunities. But most photographers that visit Moalboal focus on the sardines and the caves.

Me and my friend the turtle. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/1600 sec , ISO1600, A Mode

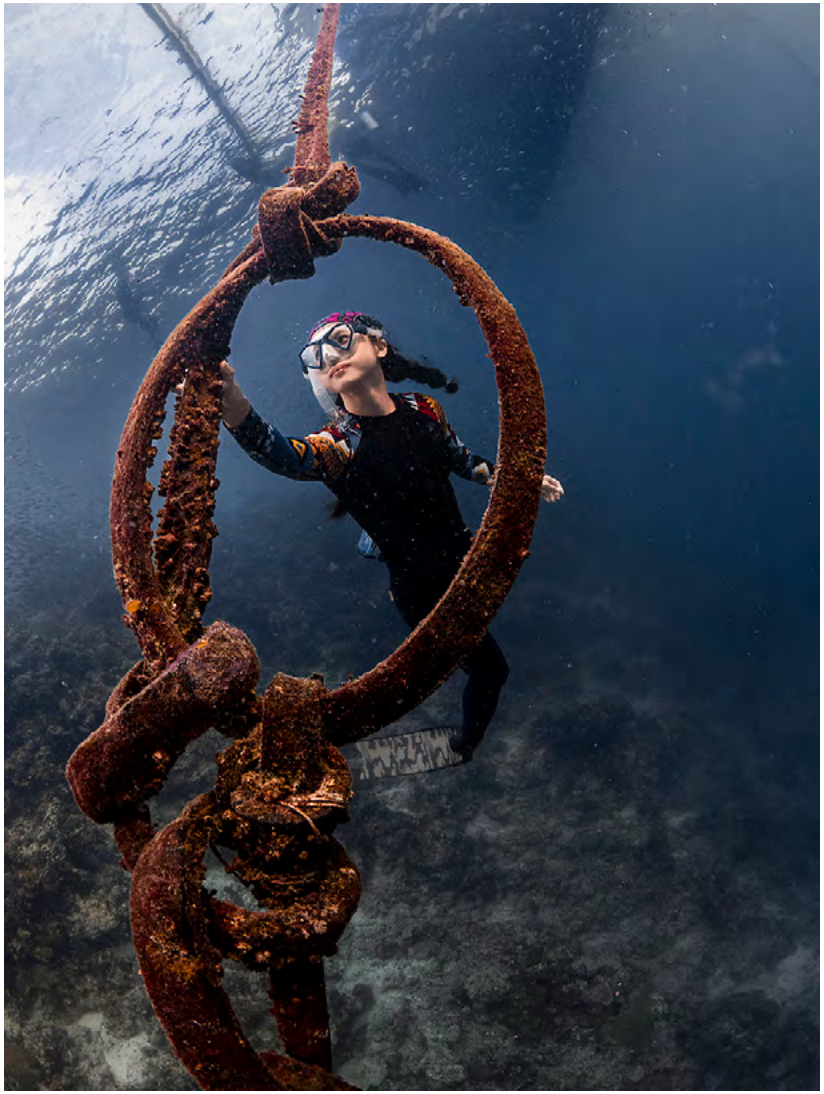
Meeting a whale shark in the open water feels different. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/400 sec , ISO800, A Mode

Pescador island with the skull cave is the other famous diving attraction in Moalboal. The island is just 10 minutes away by boat and offers nice walls and a spectacular open cave dive.

During the morning many diving boats arrive at the small island and fill the cave with divers. The afternoon is always quieter. The skull cave also is also named the cathedral and it is open at the top. It is also a bit demanding in terms of depth. The entrance is @18m and it goes down to 40m. At around 25m there are 2 windows and @30m one big opening that from an angle creates the shape of a skull. What I like the most about the cave is that it is open to the top. It makes taking pictures inside the cave so much easier. You have the walls of the cave and the windows to frame a nice picture and at the same time plenty of sunlight. The downside is that you might have to wait your turn if it is a busy day.

There are also waterfalls in the area. The most famous are the Kawasan Falls, 20 kilometres away from Moalboal. The White beach is also one of the main non diving attractions in the area. A 2 kilometre beach that offers a beautiful sunset view.

One of the first things I noticed when I arrived in Moalboal were the local "freediving guides". They offer a "freediving experience" which translates into pushing people down for the other guide to take a picture. As a freediving instructor it kind of looks bad to me but I am guessing people are happy despite the pain in their ears. Yes they don't bother teaching them to equalise. I am not sure if I prefer going in the morning to enjoy the circus or in the afternoon when things are more calm. If you want to take pictures choose calm days when the visibility is better. When the wind picks up the waters are not so clear.



The mooring line provided an unexpected frame. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/80 sec , ISO800, A Mode

I often take my students to the sardines and the mermaid statue and both spots are great for fun diving. Sometimes we get requests from freedivers just for a photoshoot. Both spots are very easy to get nice pictures of your guests even if their diving skills are not very good. Good visibilities and small depths make it very easy and consistent. I would like to have more pictures of the Moai statue too, but… I don't easily find people who can freedive comfortably @33m.

Moalboal also offers great opportunities for training in freediving. Many people come here to either learn or train. The strait offers consistent conditions and there is plenty of depth just a short swim away from the shore. No swell and usually not strong currents.

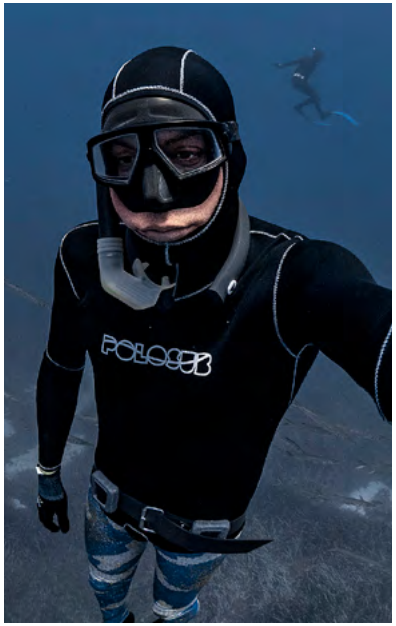
If you are lucky you can also have a whale shark pass next to your line while you are training. Sightings like this are rare but are definitely welcome. For some reason it feels special to meet a whale shark away from the commercial feeding spots.

During my stay in Moalboal I was working for Freediving Planet. One of the oldest and well known freediving schools in the Philippines. The school offered courses for all levels of freediving and of course fun dives to the nearby spots. Actually the mermaid and the Moai statue were put in the water by the school.

The Panagsama beach. Olympus OM-D E-M5 mark III with Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye PRO Lens behind a 4.33" Dome port in a Nauticam housing. ƒ/8, 1/2500 sec , ISO800, A Mode

Nicholas Kouvaras

Instagram



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Magic filters are now available in 3 options. Original Magic for use in blue water with DSLR and compact cameras with Manual White Balance, Auto-Magic for compact cameras in automatic point and shoot mode. GreenWater Magic for use in green water with DSLR and compact cameras with Manual White Balance. Prices start at just £25.

The Auto-Magic formula is now available in a Plexiglass filter that can be added or removed underwater.

www.magic-filters.com

My Shot 1

by David Fleetham

Digital cameras have changed the way I shoot and think underwater.

Back in the film days I would have passed on wasting one of my precious 36 frames on this Hawaiian swimming crab, Charybdis hawaiensis, because it only had one claw and was therefore not a desirable representation of the species. But with my Canon R5 I have thousands of frames available, so I pulled the trigger on this one clawed subject several times.

Once back on my computer I saw the tiny claw that was being regenerated that I did not notice while I was back in the darkness of a cave where the crab was scurrying away from my lights. Hawaiian swimming crabs reach 3 inches across the carapace and are also found in the Tuamotus and Society Islands.

David Fleetham
www.davidfleetham.com

Canon R5 and a Sigma 70mm f/2.8 macro, f/22, 1/125sec, ISO160, in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with twin Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

Do you have a favourite shot or an image/s
which made a dive special.
E mail yours with some text to
peter@uwpmag.com
and yours could be the next My Shot/s

My Shot 2

by Mariano Rodríguez

During a scientific diving campaign together with a team of biologists, we were taking a photographic tour in the Onashaga channel islands in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, and suddenly this cute octopus appeared in the giant kelp forest. I quickly adjusted the lights (I don't use flashes) and set up my camera and dedicated myself to photographing and filming this unusual encounter.

At only 5 meters deep, the Patagonian red octopus (Enteroctopus megalocyathus), very calm in our presence, continued with its activities hunting small crustaceans between the cracks in the rocky bottom.

In the cold waters south of Tierra del Fuego, and only 1,000 kilometers from the Antarctic Peninsula, the water temperature can reach 4°C in winter and 10°C in summer. These algae forests occupy large areas and are the main environment where octopus and other invertebrates are born, develop and feed, apart from fish, birds and marine mammals. The Macrocystis pyrifera, the species that forms these forests, can measure more than 30 meters

I took this capture with my Sony Alpha 7s2 in its Housing Nauticam.

Mariano Rodríguez
www.instagram.com/argentinasubmarina/?hl=es-la

Do you have a favourite shot or an image/s
which made a dive special.
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The Auto-Magic formula is now available in a Plexiglass filter that can be added or removed underwater.

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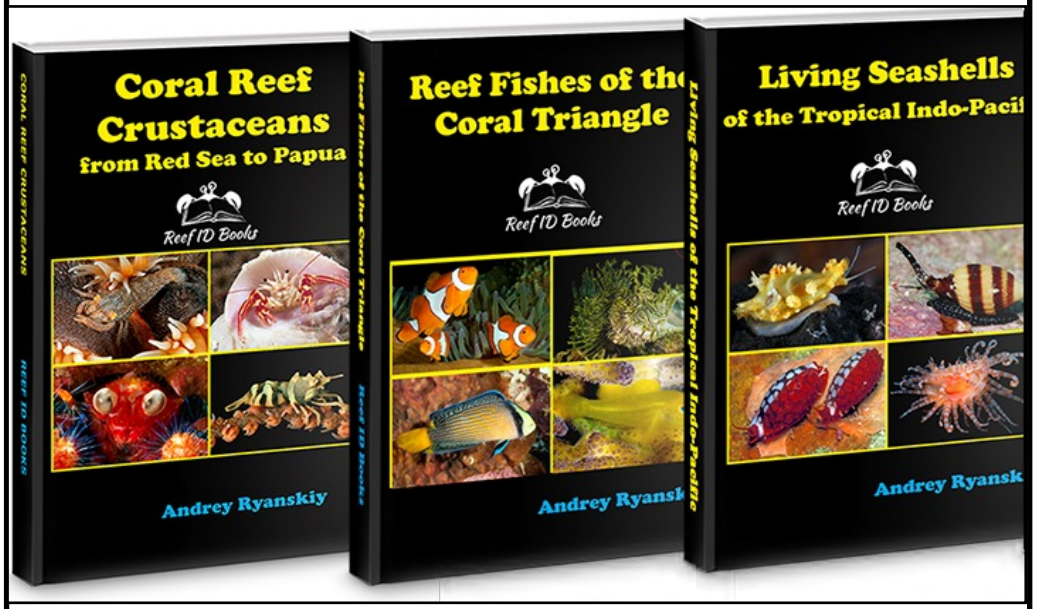

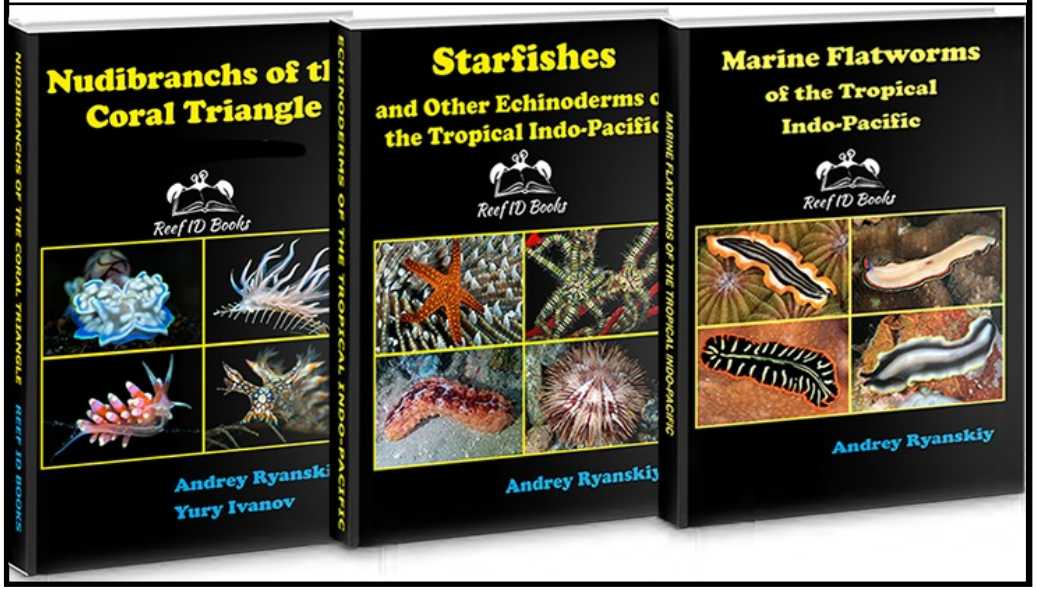

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Marshall's Mysteries 11

A

© Colin Marshall / Ardea

Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia
image about 1 cm across

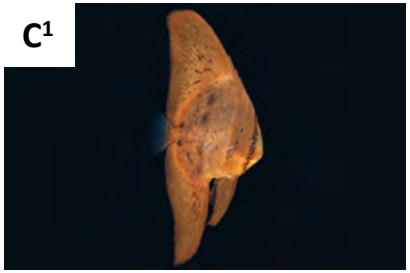
Do you know what these animals are, or what they are doing? Have a guess – answers on page 71

B

© Colin Marshall / BluePlanetArchive

Amed, Bali, Indonesia image about 10 cm across

C

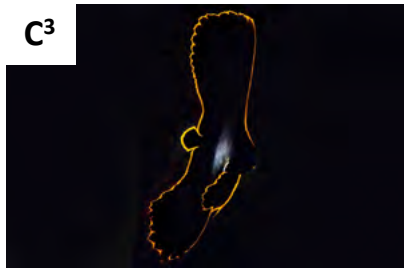


© Colin Marshall

C¹

© Colin Marshall

C²



© Colin Marshall

C³

Match the juveniles (left) with the adults (right)

© Colin Marshall

C⁴

© Colin Marshall / Alamy

C⁵

© Colin Marshall

C⁶

D

© Colin Marshall

Atauro Island, East Timor image about 1 meter across

Small Ads

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SET of Sea & Sea YS 250 PRO, incl.diffusers and TCL ball mounts, 2x batteries, 2x chargers (EU and UK). 5-pin Dual Sync cord–1pc, 5-pin Sync Cord N-2pc , 2sets - Double Ball Arm L and M, YS-TTL Converter, spare **... More >**

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FOR SALE – Nauticam Na-d800 Housing for Nikon D800
Nauticam Na-d800 Housing for Nikon D800 Excellent condition. Full overall by Nauticam in December 2017, not in the water since. Vacuum check; electronic monitoring circuit installed, no vacuum system. 2000 euros + shipping **... More >**

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Nauticam flat port for Sony 28mm + sony lens 28mm +Nauticam flat port for Sony 90mm + sony lens 90mm+Nauticam trigger flash for sony. SOLD Can be sold separately. Total price 1260£ (does not include insurance and shipping) **... More >**

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SEA & SEA MM2 U/W CAMERA WITH ACCESSORIES: - Yellow SUB 50 TTL strobe / arm extension - SEA & SEA 16mm Wide angle lens MM-2 - SEA & SEA Macro lens ML-2/3T plus attachments - Removable view finder - **... More >**

FOR SALE – Nikon D500 + Hugyfot D500 setup
This one year old set of equipment is in excellent working condition and will serve great to a new owner. The reason for sale is a switch to a new equipment. Nikon D500 (19k clicks). Sigma 10mm F2.8 Fish Eye. 128Gb XQD Lexar **... More >**

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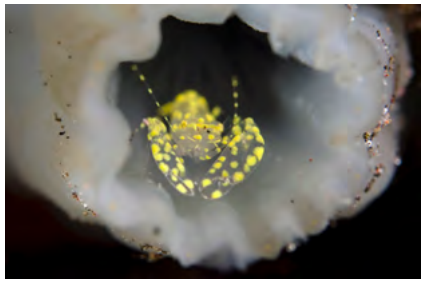
Marshall's Mysteries 11 - Answers

A

Golden-Dotted Ascidian Shrimp, Dactylonia sp, on Ascidian sea squirt, as shown below.



© Colin Marshall / Ardea

Bali, Indonesia

This commensal shrimp can be found on page 19 of "Coral Reef Crustaceans from Red Sea to Papua" by Andrey Ryanskiy.

B

Indian Halibut, Psettodes erumei, showing teeth, some of which are barbed. Fuller length of partially buried fish shown below.

© Colin Marshall

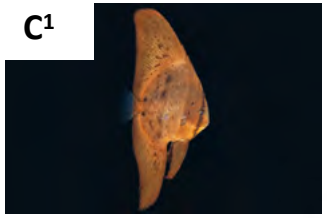
Bali, Indonesia

Very delicious, especially with a lemon butter sauce with dill…

C

These are all Batfish, aka Spadefish. The juveniles and corresponding adults are shown below, along with an intermediate subadult :

Round Batfish Platax orbicularis



C¹

Mimics leaf debris

Translucent caudal fin

© Colin Marshall / Alamy

C⁵

Blunthead Batfish Platax teira

C²

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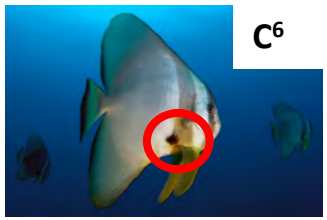


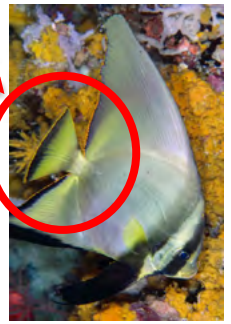
C⁶

Dark spot at base of stripe near pelvic fin

Distinctive golden margin, also in subadult

Longfin Batfish Platax pinnatus

C³



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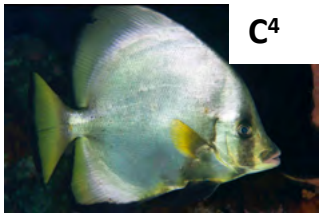
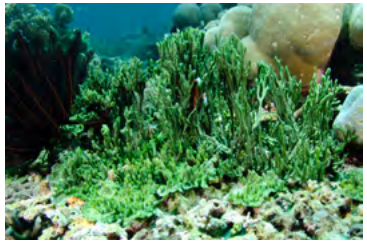


C⁴

Distinctive pouty lips of adult

More detail on these Batfish can be found on pages 1002-06 of Volume 3 of "Reef Fishes of the East Indies" by Gerry Allen and Mark Erdmann.

D



Prickly Branching Sponge (Pseudoceratina purpurea) with a symbiotic green algae.

The "purpurea" species name means purple, which is strange as they are not at all purple as seen in this image - when alive. However, a ***dead*** sponge, oxidises to a purple colour.

If you think any of the identifications or information above is wrong, please let me know at colintrmarshall@yahoo.com. Feel free to send me any images of anything you'd like some help in identifying – any particularly interesting mysteries may be included in future Underwater Photography issues.

Guidelines for contributors

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

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

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc
Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards,
Subjects -, Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail
Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment
Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
E mail peter@uwpmag.com

How to submit articles

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

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail
2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 150dpi

Size - Maximum length 20cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 20 cm wide and verticals would be 20cm high.

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 a long week of the usual grind, my lady and I went to dive a frequent to us (but not to others) dive spot on the North shore of Kauai. It starts with a sketchy hike (wearing dive gear), followed by a long walk on a soft beach, and ends with a swim out through some breakers, so it's a commitment when we decide to dive there. On entering the water, the usual surge was pushing us around, which makes taking macro shots difficult, and these are mostly what I focus on. Apart from my love of macro photography, the lack of clear water here is also a factor that makes macro so appealing.

As we were swaying with the surge, cruising along at about 20ft, we happened upon a sea star crawling faster than I ever thought possible for a creature with such small legs. Upon getting closer to the Red Velvet Star we noticed a little shrimp running up and down one of its five legs. It turned out to be a Harlequin Shrimp, which we had never seen before. Living on Kauai, we see a lot of cleaner shrimp so we thought for sure this shrimp was cleaning the sea star. The Harlequin appeared to be cracked out, on a massive cleaning spree, and ready to leave no stone left unturned. As the sea star was moving over the reef, we had as much time as we wanted to take pictures since the shrimp was very busy in his work, not paying any attention to us. We enjoyed the show for a while before moving on. Throughout the rest of the dive I couldn't help but be amazed at how diligent that shrimp was, with no care for these two big monsters hovering above with flashing lights. He was definitely on some sort of mission.

After finishing our dive I had to look up Harlequin Shrimp to learn more about them. One of the first things I read was that they feed on sea stars. Uh oh… Turns out this guy was not cleaning after all! Suddenly we knew why the star was moving so quickly; he was running for cover! Such is the circle of life.

Taking macro pictures in the surge is never easy, but at the time I was using TTL, so managing my single strobe was one less thing to worry about. I have since moved to manual strobe control which I love, but in situations like this, I do miss the TTL which can make it much easier to get the perfect shot.

Being underwater is a whole new world for some of us, with all sorts of mysteries just waiting to be discovered. I can't think of a time where I went diving and didn't come home with a new realization from this foreign world that so many take for granted.

John Horn
Instagram: johnhornphotography
johnchorn@gmail.com

Olympus TG-6, Olympus Housing, DS51 Strobe, ISO100, f18, 1/100

**Do you have a shot
which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500
words of text
and yours could be the next
Parting Shot.**
peter@uwpmag.com

Parting Shot 2

By Atilla Kaszo

The Kingdom of Tonga comprises of 176 islands which make it an ideal rest area for migrating Humpback whales, which often have new born calves with them.

The protective bays around the islands make it an ideal region for whales to look after their new born in relatively calm and shallow waters.

I have been to Tonga several times during July and August, and most of the time the weather conditions were calm with light breezes on some days and clear water. The rainfall during the winter season is also very light and sporadic so it's not something I had taken into account when planning this visit.

Three days before we arrived the region had heavy rainfall and 20-30k winds. The day we arrived no rain but windy. Each day became worse than the last with one day where the wind exceeded 50k and all activities were cancelled.

Finally we ventured out to about 30k winds aided by a 1.5m swell, and few whales.

The regulations around swimming with whales have been considerably restricted over the years, to a point where only four are allowed in the water at one time, no diving under the surface allowed and no weights permitted. Time in the water about 10 minutes before the next four get in. It's the luck of the draw as to how gets up close and personal to the whales. Not exactly ideal.

So picture the scenario, then consider what it is like to float on the surface in those conditions in a wetsuit and a reasonably large camera rig. To draw a parallel with a cork floating in a choppy sea would be an understatement, because not only was I thrown around, the whales kept moving being just ahead of us, so to stay in sight of them in milky water was very challenging. And in my case,

Nauticam NA 2020 Housing. Sony A7r iv. Sony 14mm f8 @ 1/250. Natural Light

plain tiring given that each whale excursion was six hours in an inflatable boat being covered the entire time by spray, not getting dry, and no toilet facilities.

The parting shot was literally that, a Humpback whale effortlessly cruising at the surface chased by an old cranky photojournalist.

Atilla Kaszo
www.ambvision.com

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which has a story within a story?
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