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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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Contents

4 Editorial

Lens nirvana, Hybrid history,
Concentration & Blackwater business

5 News, Travel & Events



12 New Products



24 Angled Relay for Nauticam EMWL



by Nicolas Remy

Cover shot by
Tanya G. Burnett

30 Backscatter Hybrid Flash

by Jim Decker



36 AOI GoPro lenses

by Peter Rowlands



38 Laowa 10mm lens

by Phil Rudin



Underwater Photography

A web magazine

UwP138 May/ Jun 2024

43 Philippines

by Michel Braunstein



48 Mermaid Championship

by Nicholas Kouvaras



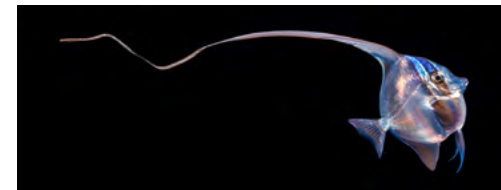
51 Photographing Humpbacks

by Tanya G. Burnett & Kevin Palmer



56 Blackwater photography

by David Fleetham



59 Andrey Ryanskiy

by Colin Marshall



64 Marshall's Mysteries 15

by Colin Marshall

68 My Shots

by David Fleetham

69 Parting Shot

by Peter Rowlands

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

When I were a lad zoom lenses were in their infancy and didn't offer the same optical quality from either a resolution or geometry point of view but the attraction was obviously there.

Over the years optical and mechanical developments saw designs make great strides until they are now, by and large, on a par with prime lenses.

The easiest and most popular designs were in the 28-70mm range and anything substantially wider had to wait for the arrival of computer aided designing, aspheric elements and low dispersion glass. But arrive they did and I guess the nirvana was the Tokina 10-17 f/3.5-4.5 which became the go to lens for most APS-C format shooters, offering 180° to 100° coverage - perfect for underwater photography. The domes they needed for underwater correction were not perfect but needs must.

Fast forward to the present day lenses from Nauticam and the zoom part is provided by a comparatively 'cheap and cheerful' kit lens and the really clever part is provided by the Nauticam glass and designs.

Their range of lenses is ground breaking and enable us to achieve a quality hitherto impossible.

It's hard to imagine what else we'll need.

Hybrid history

The arrival of the Backscatter Hybrid flash marks a turning point in the development of such products.

Early incarnations arrived over ten years ago when technology was much more basic and far less capable and the frankenstein like combinations felt bolted together rather than designed from scratch. The result was a product which certainly pricked interest but failed to provide the necessary performance and so fell by the wayside.

Fast forward to a world with high capacity batteries and capacitors, energy efficient LED lighting and computer aided design combined with manufacturers who had gained a wealth of experience and benefited from computer controlled machinery. The time was right to visit this genre of product and the result is the Backscatter Hybrid Flash.

Judging by the demand for all things new and shiny I suspect interest and orders for them will be brisk and provide a convenient combination for all forms of underwater imaging.

Happy hybridizing.

Editorial

Concentration

I always remember the late great Peter Scoones saying that he was unable to shoot stills and video on the same day or even over a period of several days.

This was mainly due to the mindset needed to think about either style of recording. Stills needed control over all aspects to bring them together into a single final image. Video needed almost three dimensional thinking to know how each sequence was going to work before and after; able to cut and grade together to move the story forward at the right pace without visual jarring.

Such sequences might, due to circumstances, be shot days apart so required a great deal of memory, concentration, skill and planning.

Whilst I can see the attraction of hybrid products capable of lighting both stills and video, I strongly suggest focusing (pun intended) on one discipline at a time otherwise you are unlikely get the best out of either of them.

Sometimes less is more.

Blackwater business

There can be no doubt that Blackwater diving and underwater photography have become very popular with extraordinary creatures migrating at night and providing fascinating subjects which have done very well in photo competitions.

Underwater photography at night is, at best, challenging but take away the seabed and you have the ultimate buoyancy test. Despite this, the blood thirsty media haven't leapt on any fatalities but I'm sure there have been some near misses over the years.

But whilst this is all very exciting and innovative, spare a thought for the poor dive resort who has quite suddenly been asked to provide diving facilities for almost 24 hours a day. They can't ask the same day staff and dive guides to 'stay on for a bit of overtime' so a fresh set of land and boat staff and specialist guides have to be hired for the shift that starts about 10pm and finishes about 3am.

I'm sure that there are surcharges for blackwater dives but I doubt if it really covers the true costs.

So next time you go blackwater diving, spare a thought and nod your cap in thanks to the resort :-). It has increased their workload significantly.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com
www.uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Baja Mexico Sardine Run & Diving Cabo Pulmo November 2024



In November 2024 Photographer Gregory Sweeney will be leading this peak season trip to dive and snorkel in Baja, Mexico.

Port San Carlos and Magdalena Bay host the largest striped marlin migration in the world. We will be on our own boat for full days looking for sea birds who will point us to the epic hunting action going on underwater. The marlins hunt the sardines as do the sharks and seals. Under the surface will be a frenzy of action as marlin hunt in cooperation maneuvering the bait balls until one by one they attack and take their meal. We often get a static bait ball and stay in for over half an hour.

Our 2023 season surprised us with more whale encounters on Magdalena Bay and many static

schools of sardines. Under the water we were surprised by brilliant shiny gold dorado / mahi-mahi fish joining the attack on the sardines. With marlin, sea lions, dorado, a whale, and dolphins all joining the frenzy, it was a dream to photograph.

After the sardine run action, we go to Cabo Pulmo National Park where protected marine habitat and pristine coral draws an enormous amount of tropical fish, seals, turtles, and more. Large schools of jacks are an awesome sight as the formation pulses and morphs before us. Bull sharks lurk and patrol on the scattered remains of ship wrecks and abundant sea life lives on the pristine reefs of the protected area.

info@gregorysweeney.com

Bali Workshop With Alex Tattersall September 2024

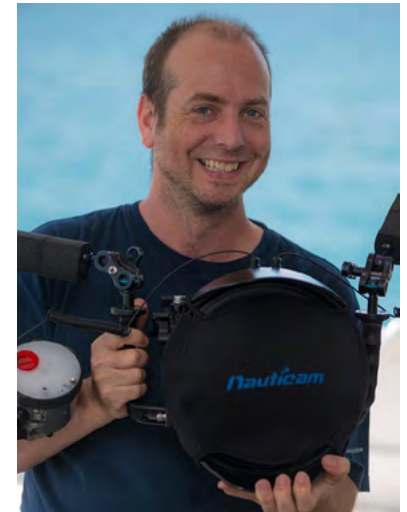


Bali, Indonesia, an exotic island of dreams which can't fail to conjure up the promise of glorious adventures and unforgettable experiences. I for one am so excited to be able to throw myself into all the wonders being offered to us. Bali is one of the epicentres of the coral triangle and as such offers a wealth of underwater opportunities to see, species endemic to the region along with more widely dispersed underwater wildlife, but with some Bali particularities (Shaun the sheep nudis here are substantially bigger than their Lembbeh cousins).

Our base will be in the town of Tulumben, continually cited as among the best and most varied diving experiences in the world. It is certainly a macro and supermacro hotspot, but is also moments away from the USS Liberty Wreck, a world class wreck site in shallow water home to more than 400 species of fish and countless other critters.

We will be accompanied by some of the areas best dive guides, who are used to photographers, to assist in you achieving photos of which you will be proud.

This will be the 12 year of running workshops for me, but I really can't wait for this one which promises to be outstanding. I do hope we can enjoy it together. Please feel free to email me about the photography side of things (info@uwvisions.com) and the amazing Lydia for all the logistic elements of the trip which will keep us as far as possible on the straight and narrow!



www.oonasdivers.com/alex-tattersall-dive-trip-bali-indonesia

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WWW.SDUFEX.COM

Bikini Atoll – Pacific Master
July 13-26, 2024



Shoot the amazing wrecks of the Ghost fleet in Bikini Atoll with Backscatter Photo Pro, technical diving and deep photography expert Ben Lair. Located in the remote Republic of the Marshall Islands near Micronesia, the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bikini Atoll is one of the most famous places in the world for wreck diving – a true bucket-list destination for any serious wreck diver.

Who could ask for more! Arguably some of the best wreck diving in the world in one of the most remote places in the world. This is an incredible opportunity to dive the nuclear ghost fleet of Bikini Atoll created by Operation Crossroads in 1946.

Nowhere else can you dive such a fantastic collection of wrecks, including battleships, submarines, destroyers, and most notably the aircraft carrier USS Saratoga. Over 60 years later, the nuclear ghost fleet (as these wrecks are known) rest in crystal blue waters that have since become home to an abundance of marine life with thriving reefs and corals. Only since 1996 has Bikini Atoll been open to diving, making this destination a one-of-a-kind combination of spectacular historic wrecks in a remote and otherwise untouched tropical paradise.

www.backscatter.com

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Tiger Shark Dive
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Magdalena Bay Sardine Run
Baja, Mexico

www.GregorySweeney.com info@GregorySweeney.com

Underwater Portrait Photography Workshop

Long Beach, California

14-16 Jun 2024 & 13-15 Sept 2024



Underwater Photography dive4photos.com NAD Lambah North Sulawesi, Indonesia

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NAD LEMBEH RESORT - SULAWESI - INDONESIA

20TH NOVEMBER TO 7TH DECEMBER 2024



18-day / 17-night / 47-dive package (including Nitrox)
full-board deluxe accommodation & dedicated camera room
3-dives per day (up to 75 mins) with 2:1 diver/guide ratio
3-blackwater dives over the trip (more can be added)

\$4,839 pp twin share in Beachfront Room
\$6,045 pp twin share in Seaview Bungalow
 (shorter stays can be arranged upon request)

For further information email: alex@dive4photos.com or visit www.dive4photos.com & www.nad-lembeh.com

Are you an underwater portrait photographer looking to hone your skills, or maybe a land photographer looking to move into underwater?

The underwater studio photography workshop will help you to learn and up-skill in this amazingly creative niche genre.

Underwater studio photography is the process of treating a swimming pool like a photography studio and creating work like you would in a dry studio, but utilising all the amazing traits that water can provide. It's an approach that creates a mindset which looks at all aspects of the

pool as potential backdrops for the photoshoot.

To make the most of your time I've broken the workshop down in to 3 Days/Sections: Underwater Photography Techniques, Studio Lighting, and Retouch/Post-production .

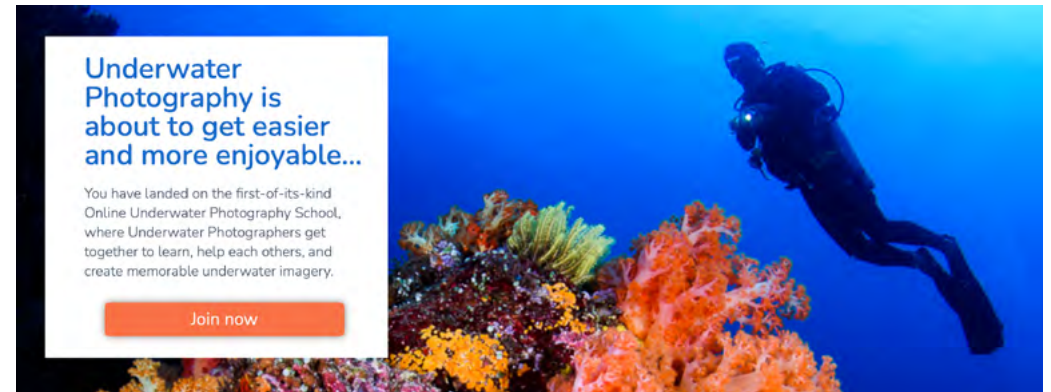
Days 1 & 2 are 10am – 6pm, with an hour lunch break, Day 3 is 10am-2pm.

Class numbers are limited to 5 people, so that everyone gets a decent amount of attention and time with the models during the workshop.

www.underwater-photographer.com



The Underwater Club Monthly Membership Plan



Sydney-based photo pro Nicolas Remy's online underwater photography school, The Underwater Club, is one year old—and to celebrate its first anniversary, it has launched a handy monthly membership plan. Previously, membership was limited to a year-long plan.

For an introductory offer price of just AU\$39 per month—which is around US\$26/EUR24/GBP21 per month (at current exchange rates)—you have access to the comprehensive self-paced underwater photography curriculum and receive a complimentary invitation to the Club's monthly webinars. The curriculum, shown above, features seven courses in 40 lessons across 16 hours of videos, as well as 46 quizzes to test your knowledge along the way.

Moreover, members have access to the Club's last 12 webinar recordings, which include masterclasses on Snoot Photography, Creative Motion Blurs, Taking Award-Winning Photos with the Olympus TG-6, and Selecting Photos for Competitions. Members also have access to their very own photo coach: Nicolas is available multiple times a week to answer any underwater photography questions and provide image feedback, via the Club's private forums.

If you subscribe before June 1st, you can lock in this awesome introductory offer before the price goes up to AU\$49. The annual membership plan is also currently on sale—AU\$399 (or about US\$263).

www.theunderwaterclub.com

Raja Ampat Underwater Photography Workshop with Tim Laman and Zafer Kizilkaya 11-21. August 2024

The workshop at Papua Explorers is built around the standard diving program of three boat dives a day, and optional additional house reef or night dives. We will make use of the afternoon break and evening times for our on-land instruction. The instructors will also go out diving and shooting with you, and while underwater instruction isn't very practical (except perhaps pointing you toward some potential subjects) we will be there on the boats and during surface interval breaks to answer questions, suggest shooting possibilities at different dive sites, and help in any way we can.

During afternoon breaks between diving and during evening sessions, your instructors will present illustrated talks on a variety of relevant topics. Since we expect our participants to have a range of experience levels, we will cover the basics but also offer insights and ideas to inspire veteran photographers.

A few examples of topics we will cover include:



Optimising exposure, including balancing ambient and strobe lighting.
Lighting techniques, strobe placement, and avoiding backscatter, for both wide angle and macro subjects.
Focus techniques for stationary and moving subjects.
Wide-angle closeups
And a lot more...

In addition to these technical aspects of underwater photography, we will also explore the artistic side. What makes an interesting composition? Should you follow rules or break them and surprise your viewer? Our goal will be to stimulate your creativity and help you take your photography to the next level.

www.papuaexplorers.com/underwater-photography-workshop/



WATERPIXELS™

Underwater Imaging Community



Dive into a world of extraordinary beauty and discover the captivating realm beneath the waves.

Waterpixels is an innovative online community designed to connect professionals, industry experts, enthusiasts, and newcomers who share a passion for underwater imaging. Waterpixels is here to provide an engaging and inclusive space where you can explore, learn, and connect with like-minded individuals from around the globe.

Join us and become part of a thriving community of underwater imaging enthusiasts. Together, let's dive into the depths, capture awe-inspiring moments, and celebrate the beauty of the underwater world.

www.waterpixels.net

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- Photo Trained Guides
- Huge Camera Room
- Very Few Stairs
- Small Resort - only 15 rooms

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New Products

Nauticam NA-S5II for Panasonic S5II



Introducing the Nauticam NA-S5II underwater housing, a robust and ergonomic solution designed to accommodate the Panasonic Lumix S5 II and S5 IIX for underwater photography and videography.

This housing provides unfettered access to all camera controls and functions, enabling users to fully utilize the camera's capabilities while diving. Its durable construction and user-friendly features make it an ideal choice for underwater storytellers seeking a dependable and efficient underwater housing.

Nauticam's tagline is "Innovation Underwater", and the company is dedicated to following through with that promise in the industry, while helping to protect customer

investments in existing Nauticam gear whenever possible. The NA-S5II/X is a prime example as this underwater housing is designed to work flawlessly with the Panasonic Lumix S5II and the S5X. This NA-S5II allows completely unrestricted access to all of the camera's controls, positioning critical controls like AF-ON directly at the photographer's finger tips.

The NA-S5II underwater housing features the rotary housing lock which is now standard on their more compact line of mirrorless camera housings. With this feature, you can easily open and close the housing with one hand.

The NA-S5II has a thumb lever on the right rear side of the housing that comfortably accesses AF-On

without ever letting go of the handle. An additional lever on the rear of the NA-S5II allows for focus mode switching between C/S/MF, while a multi-directional pad gives the ability to navigate the menu or move the focus points.

Sigma's MC-21 EF to L adapter allows for the use of Canon and Sigma EF-mount lenses to be used with the S5II/X camera.

For rapid-fire manual flash triggering, the NA-S5II is compatible with the Mini Flash Trigger (NA26305) which uses small LEDs to trigger external flashes via Nauticam Universal Fiber Optic Cables (NA26216).

www.nauticam.com

Telesin GoPro Dome Port housing for GoPro Hero 12, 11, 10 & 9



This dome port housing for the GoPro moves the waterline away from the camera lens, making it easier to capture images 50/50 above and below the water simultaneously.

The dual handle grip design allows you to maintain stability during the photo and recording process, making your work more perfect.

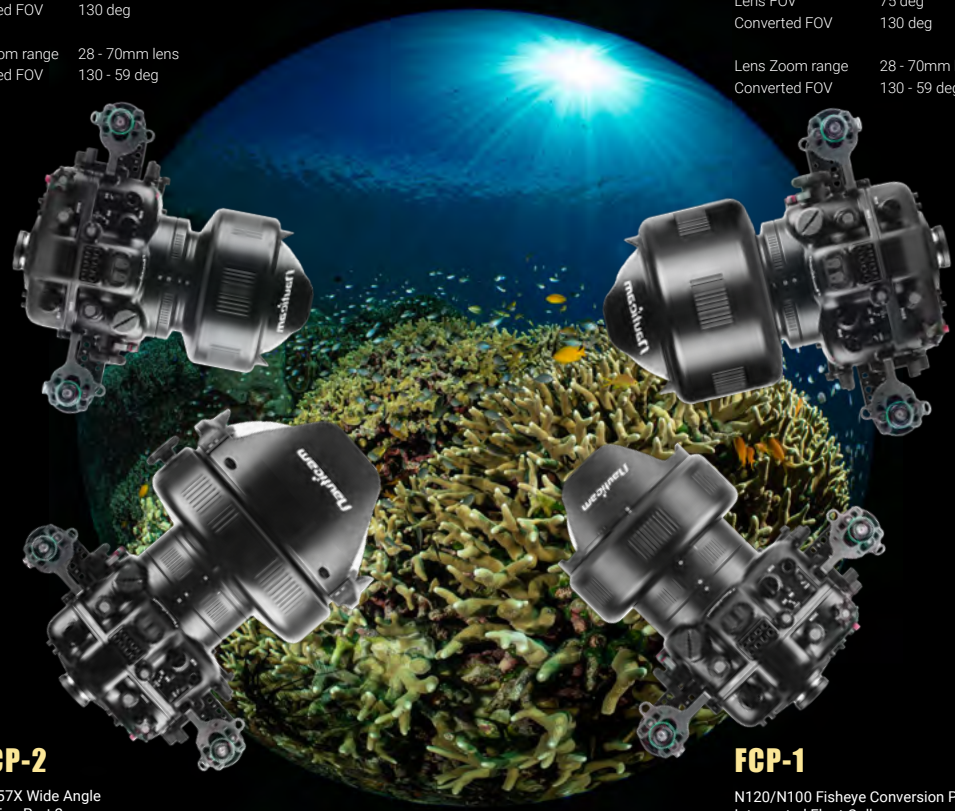
www.amazon.co.uk

WACP-C

N100 0.36X Compact Wide Angle Conversion Port

@ 28mm full frame equivalent focal length
Lens FOV 75 deg
Converted FOV 130 deg

Lens Zoom range 28 - 70mm lens
Converted FOV 130 - 59 deg



WACP-1B

N120/N100 0.36X Wide Angle Conversion Port with Integrated Float Collar and Interchangeable Port Mounting Ring

@ 28mm full frame equivalent focal length
Lens FOV 75 deg
Converted FOV 130 deg

Lens Zoom range 28 - 70mm lens
Converted FOV 130 - 59 deg

WACP-2

N120 0.57X Wide Angle Conversion Port 2

@ 14mm full frame equivalent focal length
Lens FOV 114 deg
Converted FOV 140 deg

Lens Zoom range 14 - 35mm lens
Converted FOV 140 - 72 deg

FCP-1

N120/N100 Fisheye Conversion Port with Integrated Float Collar

@ 28mm full frame equivalent focal length
Lens FOV 75 deg
Converted FOV 170 deg

Lens Zoom range 28 - 70mm lens
Converted FOV 170 - 62 deg



NA-TG7

For Olympus TG7 / TG6 / TG5 Camera

PN#17820/17821

NA-A9III

For SONY A9III Camera

PN#17437

NA-GFX100II

For Fujifilm GFX100II Camera

PN#17160



www.nauticam.com

Hands On With Reef: Nauticam NA-Z8 & Nikon Z8



The Z8 is arguably the most hotly anticipated full-frame mirrorless camera from Nikon and the first to feature the '8' series badging. Featuring a high-resolution 45.7MP sensor that will also capture 8K/60p N-RAW video while delivering incredible autofocus and dynamic range. The Z8's 3690k-dot OLED EVF packs a fast refresh rate for blackout free shooting thanks to the camera's electronic shutter. The Nauticam NA-Z8 is the latest release in the world's finest line of underwater camera housings and builds on the field-proven housings for other Nikon 'Z-series' cameras. Nauticam is the market leader in ergonomics, build

quality, and reliability that are built on a foundation of innovative product design and modern manufacturing technology. The NA-Z8 is the ultimate accessory for the powerful Nikon Z8. This camera and housing combo is an absolute powerhouse for underwater imaging that's loaded with a whole variety of features to enhance any underwater shooters experience. This comprehensive video will cover all of those features and demonstrate some of the benefits for shooting with this equipment underwater.

www.reefphoto.com

www.uwpmag.com



Isotta Z8 housing for Nikon Z8



The Isotta Z8 housing comes with all the key features Isotta is famous for, like the one-handed opening, double O-ring seals for greater safety, high-quality materials and Italian craftsmanship. The housing was created to follow the lines of the camera, resulting in a small and manageable body while ensuring complete control of camera functions and expandability.

All buttons are conveniently reachable from the handles with minimum effort. The rear housing window offers a full view of the camera screen for live-view shooting. The included viewfinder allows you to shoot in a classic way. The Isotta EOS R5 comes supplied with 2 fibre optic ports for flash triggering and M16 and M24 bulkheads for extra accessories and leak check valves. There is an M8 thread on the top of the housing for

- accessory mounting.
- Tray with lock for the easy insertion of the camera
- Single-hand closing knob for the back of the housing
- Aluminum buttons and dials with engraved symbols identical to camera controls
- Double O-ring seals on all buttons and removable parts
- Moisture sensor with LED indicator (replaceable battery)
- Ports security latch to prevent accidental opening
- External viewfinders can be mounted, INON X-2 compatible
- Depth rated to 100 metres
- Size: (LxHxP): 310x205x140mm

www.backscatter.com
www.uwcamerastore.com

www.uwpmag.com

CUSTOM COLORS

Black Silver Grey

Olive Green Yale Blue Burgundy

MODELS

MX-R5	MX-R5C	MX-R6	MX-R6II
MX-R7	MX-A7RIII	MX-A7RIV	MX-A7IV
MX-A7RV	MX-A7SIII	MX-A1	MX-FX3
MX-Z6II/Z7II	MX-Z8	MX-Z9	
MX-TG6.7	MX-RX100M7		

Best-in-class design, Compact and lightweight. Made by uniquely anodized aluminum, Superb scratch resistance with multiple color options.



MX Strobes

Apollo 5 Apollo III Apollo Nano

Marelux developed three innovative strobes, world's first TTL HSS RC compatible UW strobe, with wireless trigger, patented design including wireless signal transfer.

MX Wet Lens

Aquista 90 Wide Angle Aquista 120 Wide Angle
Aquista 100/67 wide Angle Aquista 100/52 wide Angle

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NEW

BACKSCATTER HYBRID FLASH HF-1 PHOTO & VIDEO

The Backscatter Hybrid Flash HF-1 lets you capture stunning underwater stills and video. With an **underwater guide number of f40** and a **5000-lumen** video lamp with **90°** angle of view, the Hybrid Flash is the most powerful combination of flash and video light ever made.

In addition, the Backscatter Hybrid Flash includes a **spot light** of 1500 lumens, a **red light mode** and the flash supports Smart Control TTL. The HF-1 provides a superwide coverage of **120°** and is even further expandable to 160° with optional diffusers.



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Insta360 X4 Invisible Dive Case



Our signature invisible design is back in action. Get complete 360° shots with zero obstructions!

A unique design that's easy to operate. Simply snap X4 in, dive in, and unlock insane shots underwater!

Shoot as deep as 164ft (50m), thanks to the secure housing of the Dive Case. It's even IPX8 waterproof.

Protection for your X4 in the depths guaranteed. Insta360's strict testing guarantees a secure case for your camera underwater.

Complete invisible design, allowing for complete 360° shots underwater.

Seamless underwater stitching.

Waterproof to 164ft (50m).

Crystal clear 360° video.

Use with the Invisible Selfie Stick for awesome third-person views.

www.ista360.com

Weefine WFH-TG6 PRO housing



The Weefine WFH-TG6 PRO housing for the OM System TG-7 / Olympus Tough TG5/ TG6 camera supports all functional buttons of the camera and has excellent fit and finish, aluminum rugged construction, and meticulous attention to detail, all in a user friendly sized package. Ergonomic command dials make this housing a joy to use. Equipped with a vacuum system for an even safer feeling during use to depths of no less than 80 meters.

www.uwcamerastore.com

www.uwpmag.com

BACKSCATTER MINI FLASH 2



THE
PERFECT
MACRO
STROBE
FOR
ANY
CAMERA



Nauticam viewfinders



One of the best ways to improve your photography is the ability to see a bright and detailed image in the viewfinder. This allows you to make composition decisions in camera resulting in less cropping in post. It also allows you to see critical focus before ever pressing the shutter. Enhanced viewfinders can be used on any Nauticam camera system with an EVF or optical viewfinder. With EVFs on mirrorless cameras you can review images and even shoot video using the enhanced viewfinder. This is great for working fast or in bright conditions that make viewing the LCD screen difficult.

In addition to focusing and

composition benefits, enhanced viewfinders are more comfortable to shoot with. They offer more clearance for your regulator and allow you to get your mask right up to the eyepiece. Nauticam produces both straight and angled viewfinders. Many photographers find the angled viewfinders to have a more comfortable viewing angle especially when shooting macro close to the bottom. Angled finders rotate in any direction so you can go from shooting horizontals to verticals with a simple twist of the viewfinder.

www.nauticam.com

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UNDERWATER GOPRO FILTERS

NO FILTER



WITH FLIP



BACKSCATTER

THE BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK



OLYMPUS E-M10 IV

SeaLife ultra-wide angle dome lens



Underwater photography specialist SeaLife has introduced a new ultra-wide angle dome lens for its Micro-series and ReefMaster RM-4K underwater cameras. The new lens increases the cameras' field of view by almost 50 per cent, allowing photographers to get three times closer to the subject.

The lens fits all SeaLife Micro-series cameras (Micro HD, HD+, Micro 2.0, Micro 3.0) and works with the SeaLife ReefMaster RM-4K, increasing the tiny camera's shooting angle to a massive 196°.

The new lens is a 'wet lens' and easily attaches and removes underwater. A locking ring prevents the lens from accidentally detaching when bumped or in rougher water conditions. The wide-angle dome lens design uses high grade optical glass components arranged in a

4-element/4-group array that delivers crisp edge-to-edge sharpness. All optical elements are fully multi-coated to prevent internal glare and maximize light transmission. The lens has a 13.3mm film-equivalent effective focal length when used with the SeaLife Micro 3.0 and is waterproof to 60m.

www.sealife-cameras.com

SEA&SEA
THE UNDERWATER IMAGING COMPANY

BRAND NEW D3.



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- 2) High precision DS-TTL dimming.
- 3) Various custom functions for all cameras.

www.seaandsea.jp

www.uwpmag.com

EUROPE'S NR. 1
UNDERWATER CAMERA STORE



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AOI UH-GPX



ALUMINIUM HOUSING
BAYONET SYSTEM FOR WET LENSES
5" MONITOR
EXTENDED BATTERY LIFE



WE ARE UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHERS... JUST LIKE YOU.

Seacam Z8 housing



Following the success of the Nikon Z9, we now present the Seacam silver Nikon Z8 underwater housing. Discover the underwater world with all the features of this new powerful full-frame camera - incredible speed and sharpness in a compact size, to be used with or without the FTZ adapter.

www.seacam.com

Sea Frogs A7SIII Salted Line



The Sea Frogs A7SIII Salted Line series camera housing in black is waterproof up to 40 meters (130 feet) and specifically crafted for the Sony A7S III. Please be aware that the lens port is not included in this kit.

SeaFrogs Salted Line A7S III housing lets you control all camera functions (except the joystick) underwater up to 40 meters (130 feet). The standard bayonet with a 90mm diameter allows for using any Sea Frogs dry flat and dome ports, except ports designed explicitly for A6xxx and RX1xx camera housings.

www.saltedlineurope.com

BACKSCATTER **HYBRID FLASH**



GUIDE NO.
F40
AND
5000
LUMEN
VIDEO LIGHT



EUROPE'S NR. 1
UNDERWATER CAMERA STORE



**GATES UNDERWATER
CINEMA HOUSINGS!**



Bulletproof housings for:

RED KOMODO-X RAPTOR-X
ARRI ALEXA 35 ALEXA MINI / LF
SONY PXW-Z90 FDR-AX700



WE ARE UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHERS... JUST LIKE YOU.

Kraken KR-S160 Flash



Meet our new model strobe, the KS160! Featuring 160Ws at the highest power, a dedicated USB-C charged battery pack, a round flash tube, and a tank like aluminum body, the KS160 can handle whatever subject matter or conditions the underwater realm throws at it.

A significant improvement in all aspects from our previous KS02 Strobe. Featuring 160Ws at the highest power, a dedicated USB-C charged battery pack, a round flash tube, and a tank like aluminum body, the KS160 can handle whatever subject matter or conditions the underwater realm throws at it.

From crystal clear springs in Florida, to murky seagrass beds in South Australia, the KS160 has you covered. The circular flash tube allows for fantastic, even lighting across the widest of scenes, even



without a diffuser. Accessories like snoots, reduction rings, and different temperature diffusers make the KS160 a versatile flash no matter the subject or shooting situation.

Weight 2 kg
Depth Rating 330ft/100m
Color Temperature 5500K
Beam Angle 120 Degrees Without Diffuser
Dimensions 84mm x 100mm x 194mm
Weight 1210g on land, 300g underwater
Lumens 500 Lumen Focus Light
Power 160ws
of Flashes Approx: 400 @full power, thousands @ half power or less
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housing for Canon R5 C



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You get Canon best-in-class white balance and AF and simply stunning image quality. Nauticam rose to the challenge with exceptionally elegant engineering incorporating full cinema zoom and focus in a compact form factor that inspires confidence from the very first use. Underwater cinema work has never been this easy.

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SeaLife SportDiver Ultra Housing for Smartphones

SeaLife Cameras has unveiled the SportDiver Ultra, an upgraded version of their hugely popular smartphone housing, which was introduced in 2020. Improving on the original model in key areas, the new housing is longer to accommodate the latest and biggest smartphone models such as the Samsung Galaxy Ultra series.

The housing's rectangular port remains the same—ensuring compatibility with essential accessories such as their six-inch Wide Angle Dome Lens and 52mm Wide-Angle Dome Lens (via their 67mm-52mm Lens Adapter)—but it has been cleverly rotated 90 degrees to accommodate the camera arrays of the largest smartphones (see side-by-side comparison at bottom).

Another enhancement is the new Leak Avoidance System, which features a pre-dive pressure test to ensure the housing is properly sealed before entering the water. Should your waterproof seal be compromised, the system also includes a moisture sensor that sounds a five-second alarm as well as flashing an on-screen warning. In addition, the interior of



the housing has been redesigned to better protect sensitive electronic components should water drops inadvertently enter the housing when opening the housing door.

Other features of the SportDiver Ultra are shared with the original model: 130-foot depth rating, tough polycarbonate build, robust cam-lock sealing latch, aluminum port with optical-grade glass, free accompanying SportDiver iOS/Android camera app with power-save mode, power supplied by two AAA batteries, and included Moisture Muncher capsule, which prevents fogging and internal condensation. The housing ships with a red color-correction filter, which can be attached or removed underwater.

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PHOTO & VIDEO

Nauticam NA-A1 housing for Sony a1



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Sony has reconceived what a pro camera should look and feel like with the Sony a1.

Sony maintained the form factor of the A7 series, but loaded it with state-of-the-art technology that provides superior stills and video performance. 4K 120p, 8K Video, 50MP @ 30FPS, 9M dot EVF and more breaks new ground in this class. If you can dream it, the a1 can do it.

Married to the Nauticam NA-a1 housing with its superior ergonomics, the underwater possibilities are near limitless.

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Ikelite housing for Sony ZV-1 II



A full featured and durable underwater housing for Sony ZV-1 Mark II Digital Camera. Suitable for scuba, snorkel, surf, pool, and any application in or around the water.

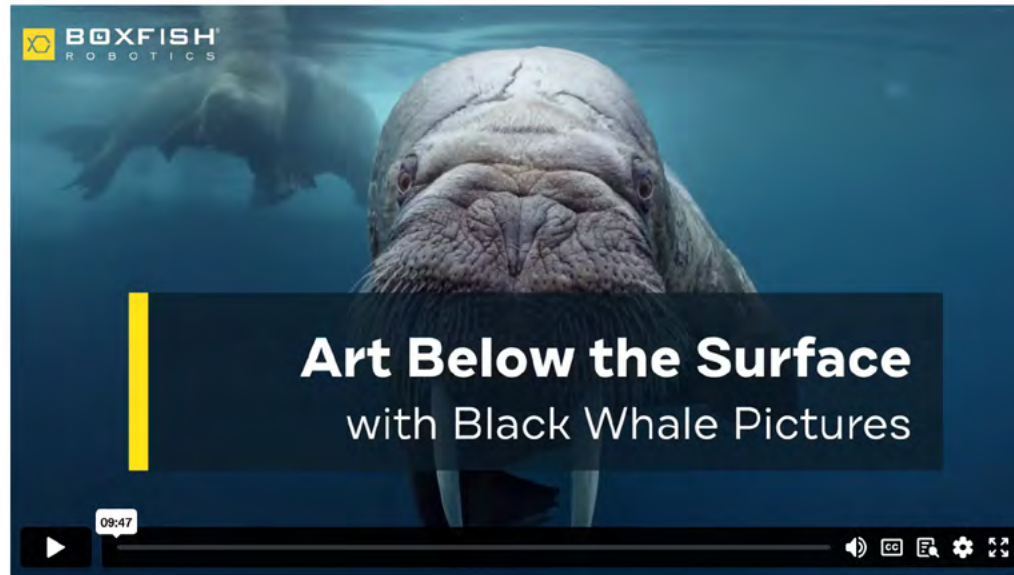
Our specially formulated ABS-PC blend housing is highly durable yet lightweight for travel. The light color keeps your camera cooler when shooting in warm, sunny environments.

The ZV-1 camera does not feature a built-in flash. External strobes from most manufacturers may be connected via optional C1 Hotshoe # 46071, B1A Bulkhead # 46002, and a compatible sync cord.

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Boxfish Luna ROV



In the vast expanse of the ocean lies a realm of mystery and beauty waiting to be discovered. Black Whale Pictures, a pioneering filmmaking company, brings innovative underwater cinematography to life using cutting-edge technology to capture the enigmatic world beneath the waves.

At the heart of the French production company Black Whale Pictures lies a profound connection with the ocean. The company's founder, Antoine Drancey, who has experience as a camera operator, director, and crew member on notable maritime expeditions such as 1Ocean with UNESCO, Barba, and Energy Observer, has combined a passion for biodiversity and the sea with technical

acumen and established Black Whale Pictures in 2017.

A pivotal asset in their technological arsenal since 2022 is the Boxfish Luna, an innovative underwater drone by the New Zealand manufacturer of professional ROVs and AUVs, Boxfish Robotics. This drone has transformed how Black Whale Pictures approaches underwater cinematography. With the Luna, filmmakers can dive into the ocean's depths without leaving the deck, controlling the camera remotely to capture the elusive beauty of marine life. This ensures their safety and allows them to focus solely on capturing the perfect shot.

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Nauticam NA-Z8 for Nikon Z8



"Z9 Performance in a Z7 Body"

Every few years Nikon manages to hit a home run with a camera that just does everything better than seems possible.

The Z8 is that camera and more.

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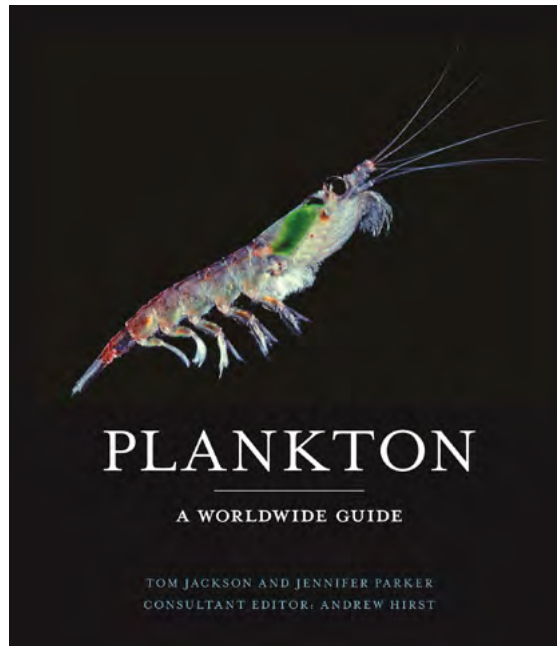
Plankton: A Worldwide Guide

Tom Jackson and Jennifer Parker

A richly illustrated guide to the marvelously diverse plankton of the world and their fundamental role in planetary food webs.

Plankton are the unsung heroes of planet Earth. Passive drifters through the world's seas, oceans, and freshwater environments, most are invisible or very small, but some are longer than a whale. They are the global ocean's foundation food, supporting almost all oceanic life, and they are also vitally important for land-based plants, animals, and other organisms. Plankton provides an incomparable look at these remarkable creatures, opening a window on the elegance and grace of microscopic marine life.

This engaging book reveals the amazing diversity of plankton, how they belong to a wide range of living groups, and how their ecology, lifestyles, and adaptations have evolved to suit an enormous range of conditions. It looks at plankton life cycles, the different ways plankton feed and grow, and the vast range of strategies they use for reproduction. It tracks where, how, and why plankton drift through the water;



shares perspectives on migrations and population explosions or “blooms” and why they happen; and discusses the life-sustaining role of plankton in numerous intertwined food webs throughout the world.

Beautifully illustrated, Plankton sheds critical light on how global warming, pollution, diminishing resources, and overexploitation will adversely impact planktonic life, and how these effects will reverberate to every corner of our planet.

Princeton University Press

Field Guide to Sharks, Rays and Chimaeras of the East Coast of North America

David A. Ebert and Marc Dando

The waters off the East Coast of North America are home to an amazing variety of sharks, rays and chimaeras. This groundbreaking, comprehensive and easy-to-use field guide covers all 173 species found along the eastern seaboard of the United States and Canada, including Bermuda and the Bahamas, and extending into the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan Peninsula. These are all the species that are encountered in the shallow waters of estuaries and coasts and in the open ocean, including rarely seen deepsea species.

Lavishly illustrated throughout, this must-have guide includes detailed species accounts describing key identification features, habitat, biology and status. It also features illustrated key guides that enable users to accurately identify species, comparison plates of similar species, dentition plates and illustrations of egg cases, where known. This an essential guide for fisheries management, trade regulation and shark conservation.

FIELD GUIDE TO

SHARKS, RAYS & CHIMAERAS of the East Coast of North America



David A. Ebert and Marc Dando

- The first field guide to cover all 173 species
- Features hundreds of color illustrations and photos
- Describes key features, habitat, biology and status
- Includes depth guides, at-a-glance icons and distribution maps
- Offers illustrated key guides, species comparisons and dentition plates

Princeton University Press

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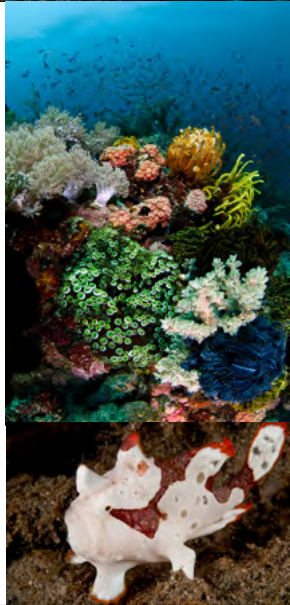
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DIVE PHOTO GUIDE

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Angled relay for Nauticam EMWL

by Nicolas Remy

I am a big fan of the Nauticam EMWL underwater “bug-eye” system, for it enables the most extreme, eye-catching sort of CFWA (Close-Focus Wide-Angle) imagery.

A fisheye lens – mounted behind a mini-dome – has long been the go-to setup for CFWA, but the EMWL offers higher magnification ratios and the ability to get much closer to critters, due to its pointy & tiny front optics. In short, the EMWL produces the unique perspective you’d have if you & your fisheye setup shrank by 5 times! This is why you hear EMWL users say they are “re-discovering” their favorite dive sites, when using that system.

A couple of years after the EMWL came out, Nauticam announced an accessory which picked my curiosity: an angled relay lens, which can be used as a replacement for the original straight 150mm/6in relay. At first I couldn’t quite grasp the reasoning behind this new product: in two years of shooting the EMWL, I didn’t see why I wouldn’t want to use the straight relay, what was the problem being solved?

I parked that thought until I visited the Nauticam booth at ADEX

Singapore a few months ago, where Peter Mooney (Nauticam Australia) showed me around the latest innovations. The use-case for that particular product? Frame your subject against a blue water background... even when it’s crawling on the sand!

That’s it I was hooked, and I want to thank Nauticam for providing me with an angled relay, for the purpose of experimenting and writing this review. The timing worked really well: I received the lens just before flying to North Sulawesi, for 6 days of diving at Lembeh Resort, followed by a few days at Murex Manado and Murex Bangka resorts.

It became obvious when Peter articulated it: although the assembled EMWL system is quite thin, since it is centered on your camera’s optical axis, you’re bound to shoot at a slightly downwards angle if your subject is on the sand. Same goes when using a mini-dome and it’s simply a fact we’ve learnt to accept: you can get some blue water in the photo, but the critter is going to have sand/muck behind it. So it goes.

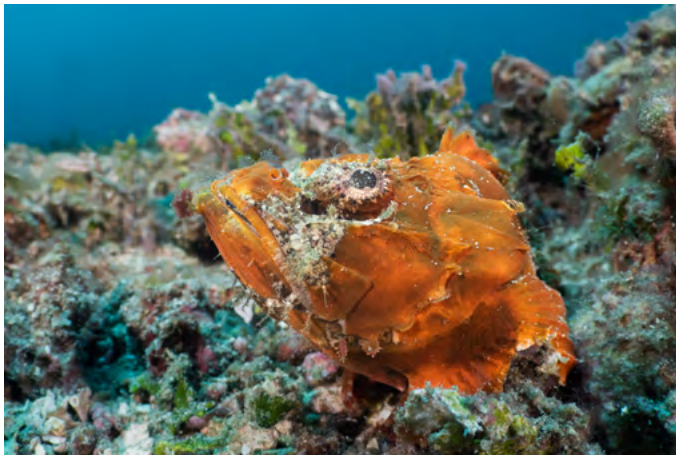


My EMWL setup ready to shoot the Lembeh strait. I attached the E-Oceans floats I normally use with the straight relay. E-Oceans are prototyping floats designed for the angled relay, which I will be trying soon.

Photo credit: Jacob Guy.



The angled relay setup, on display at ADEX Singapore 2023



Humpback scorpionfish shot with the straight relay and 100° objective lens. Nikon D810, Nikon F 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 100°, 1/50, F/18, ISO 640



The same species, shot with the angled relay and 160° objective lens. I think this doesn't need extra comments! Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/160, F/18, ISO 800



This is what the whole system looks like, when the angled relay is used instead of the straight relay. Image courtesy of Nauticam.



The angled relay (right) is longer and heavier than the straight relay (left). Image courtesy of Nauticam.

The solution

Enter the angled relay lens, another Nauticam engineering feat which turns a straight optical system into a bent one with two “turns”, resulting in an upwards 45° angle, over the optical axis.

As part of my introduction to underwater photography course (now available as a gift), beginners learn that wide-angle photos generally look better when framed upwards. This produces a more flattering perspective with most subjects and including a water background contributes to the story-telling, especially when the surface is visible. The angled relay enables that while shooting small critters on the sand, with a bugeye twist!

Field observations

When I first started shooting the EMWL system, it took me a couple dives to get fully acquainted. Moving to the angled relay lens required some adjustment too, though not as much.

Subject on the sand

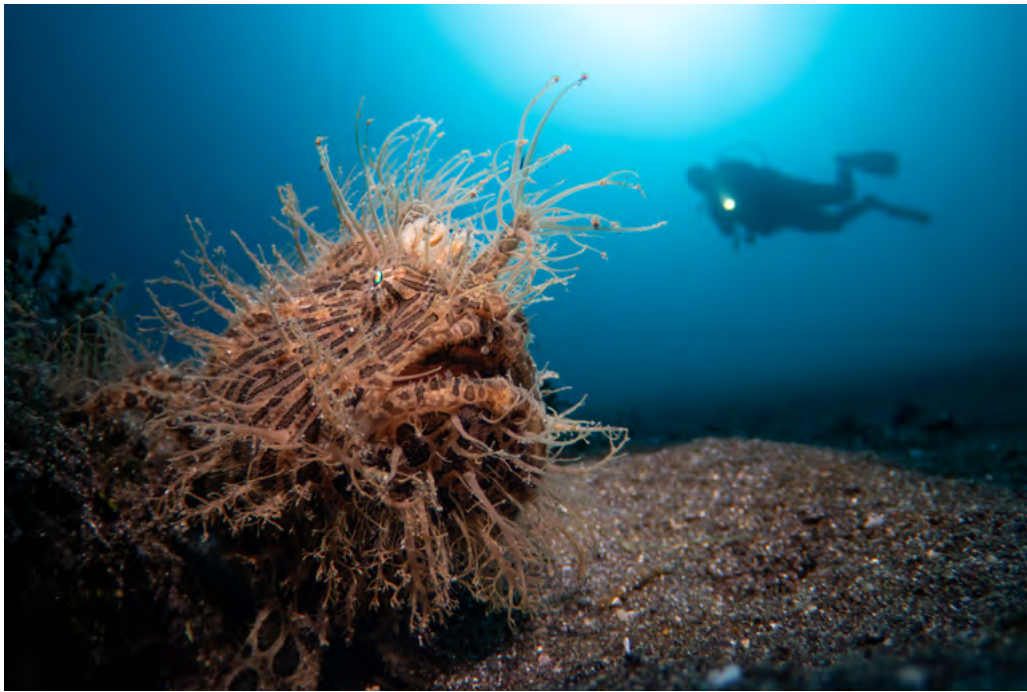
Indeed, I found myself hovering over the sandy bottom of the Lembah Strait, aiming down the EMWL system, so that the pointy end (the 160° objective lens) would lie nearly flat in front of the subject, with a slightly upwards angle.

Holding a muck stick with my left hand helped steadying myself up and this was the only contact I had with the seafloor. Shooting this way creates challenges with motion blur (the EMWL cuts down a lot of light), which saw me using higher ISO settings to increase my shutter speed. Also, the angled relay is around 170g/0.37lb more negative than the 150mm relay, so be prepared to add extra floats.

Yet, from the first dive with the new relay I took images that I really liked, which would have been impossible to produce with any other equipment. As a bonus, framing subject with the housing away from the bottom meant that size didn't matter anymore! One short-coming of using a full-sized pro



I photographed this nudibranch during my first dive with the angled relay. While it was crawling on the sand, I was able to include the sunball in the background. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/125, F/18, ISO 500.



This hairy frogfish was also sitting on the sand, but being about 8cm/3in in size, it stood out from the seafloor, making it an easier shot to compose, compared to the above nudibranch. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/100, F/18, ISO 500.

camera like my Nikon Z9 is that I can't get as low when shooting subjects on the sand, but this becomes a non-issue with the angled relay.

Subject above the bottom

Besides animals on sand, the angled relay is beneficial for the many scenarios where a subject is swimming over the bottom, or positioned low on a reef.

With the standard relay, the EMWL protrudes as far as 39cm/11in in front of the housing, making it

difficult or impossible to aim with that upward angle. The angled relay solves that problem and is much easier to use in such a scenario, where you play around with the system's 45° angle. Indeed, you can point the housing slightly down, say at 15° down, and the front lens still has a comfortable 30° upwards angle (45° minus 15°).

On that note, the 160° front lens was my favorite optic to use with the angled relay, since name of the game was to include as much water background as possible in the frame.



During a dive at Lembeh's famous "Nudi Falls" dive site, my guide showed me this nudibranch which was less-than-ideally positioned, in the middle of the reef. I decided to attempt the shot anyways, and I was surprised I could squeeze the EMWL close enough to achieve this composition. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/40, F/18, ISO 800.

Do you still need an external viewfinder?

It's a question I asked myself when I first heard about the angled relay. I normally use an external 45° viewfinder, because it makes framing upwards easier, amongst other things. With the angled relay though, the housing is pointed down and looking through my external viewfinder wasn't always as comfortable.

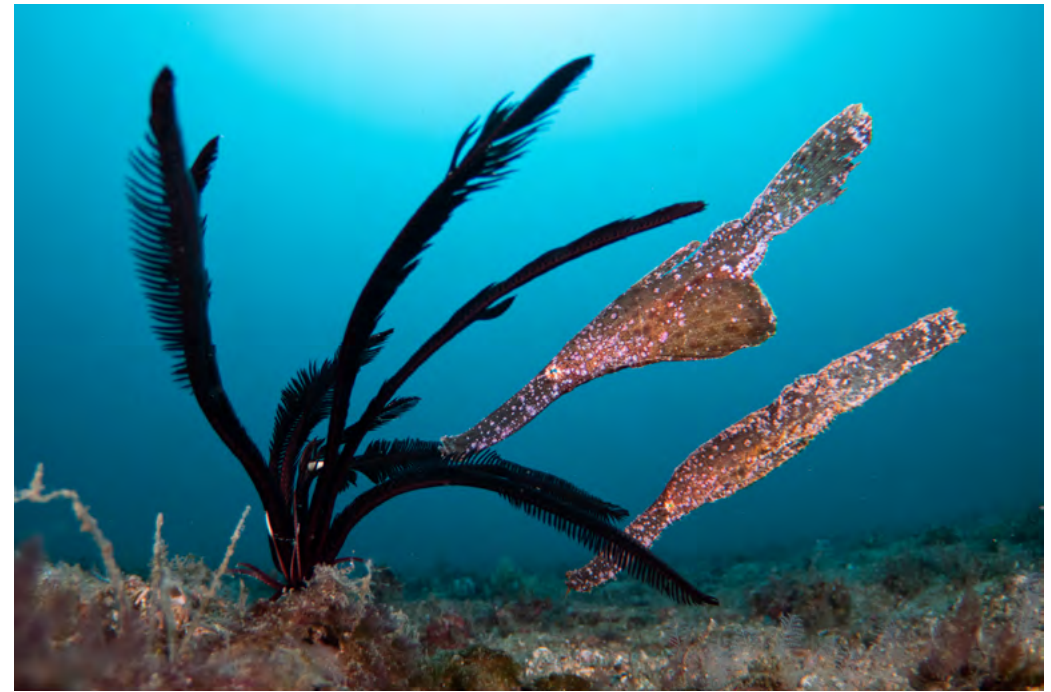
All-in-all, if the subject is on

the sand and I want the front optic really flat on the ground, then I would sometimes switch to the rear LCD screen and frame my photo from a distance.

Most of the time though, I preferred framing through the Nauticam 40° 0.8:1 viewfinder for extra stability. This is one scenario where a straight external viewfinder would be the most comfortable option.



Two robust ghost pipefish photographed last year in Lembeh, with the straight relay. Despite my efforts, I couldn't frame them against a water background. Nikon D810, Nikon F 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 100°, 1/40, F/13, ISO 640.



This year with the angled relay, the majority of my pipefish photos are framed against blue water. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/50, F/20, ISO 800.

Optical quality

I found the optical quality to be excellent, especially when using the 160° front lens. The good news is: I didn't notice any loss in sharpness nor color contrast when swapping the straight 150mm relay for the angled relay.

When the standard straight relay is better

Think about all these good-looking subjects that you would have to pass on, because they are

positioned too low? The angled relay lets you shoot them from below, possibly including the surface, a model, the sun, or all of the above in the background. Great. Now think about a frogfish that is ideally positioned to shoot with a normal EMWL setup, or even a traditional CFWA setup (fisheye/minidome). It is sitting above the seafloor so you have space to bring your housing close, and it is looking slightly up, enabling a strong eye contact, what a perfect photo opportunity! Well, if you are

shooting the angled relay, that subject isn't that productive anymore. Quite the contrary: unless you think the bottom jaw of said frogfish is great subject on its own, you're going to have to wiggle in mid water, upside down, trying to achieve a pleasing composition.

You get the idea: use the right tool for the right job. There will be subjects where the angled relay is unsuitable and you would be better-off with the straight relay. If your camera supports flipping the screen/

EVF, then once solution is to take-off the angled relay when you encounter such a subject and flip the screen (the EMWL's image is otherwise upside-down, without a relay lens).

The feature I missed

Verticals tend to produce the most dramatic CFWA imagery. Indeed, you get more space to spread out visually-distinct foregrounds, middle-grounds and backgrounds, resulting in images with more "depth". You can also include more water and sunlight



This scorpionfish sitting inside a barrel sponge was highly photogenic, but a nightmare to compose with the angled relay, even though I had switched to the rear LCD screen. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/200, F/20, ISO 500.



Instead, the angled relay let me frame up and get more water than muck in the frame. The final touch was the torch of my dive guide Fandy, who is also a very talented model. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/60, F/18, ISO 800.



During a night dive, this Napoleon snake eel came out of its den and bumped on the front optic of my EMWL, filling the frame. Thanks to the angle relay, I could frame it against some black background. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/200, F/22, ISO 640.

in the photo. The angled relay is a fantastic CFWA accessory, because it makes it so easy to include the surface/model/sun in your shot... but it cannot be rotated: it is usable in landscape orientation only.

Fortunately, Nauticam does listen to user feedback, and have enhanced the design since this review was first published, allowing the relay to rotate for verticals! Existing units can be upgraded, get in touch with your Nauticam dealer for more details.

Wrap-up

The angled relay is the most exciting piece of underwater photography gear that I have tried in a while, well, since I started using the EMWL two years ago really. Nothing excites me more than a product that lets me create previously-impossible images, and this is exactly what this lens does. I can think



I wish I had the straight relay lens for this shot, as framing slightly downwards would have showed more of the coconut octopus' body and tentacles. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/50, F/20, ISO 640.



A typical scenario where I wish I could have rotated the angled relay, and included more of the sunball in the frame. Fortunately V2 of the EMWL can be rotated and V1 can be upgraded. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/160, F/18, ISO 500

A classic turtle shot from Bunaken. Would you have guessed that it was taken with the EMWL? I am quite satisfied with the sharpness and the appearance of the Snell's window. Nikon Z9, Modified Nikon Z 105mm, Nauticam EMWL 160°, 1/125, F/18, ISO 640.



of so many dive sites, subjects and scenarios where it would produce "never-seen-before" images...

However there is no doubt the angled relay is a specialist tool. Whilst the recent addition of a vertical shooting mode makes it even more attractive, it won't suit all subjects, depending on how they are positioned.

Assuming you've already bought into the EMWL system, should you add this accessory to your arsenal?

Remember the fun you had when discovering the new 'bugeye' perspective offered by your shiny new EMWL? The angled viewfinder is an invitation to take it one step further, continuing that discovery of previously unseen perspectives. Whether or not this is worth the hefty price tag (USD 3,866/AUD 5,340, at time of writing), only you can decide, and I hope this review helped doing that.

Nicolas Remy
Instagram
The Underwater Club

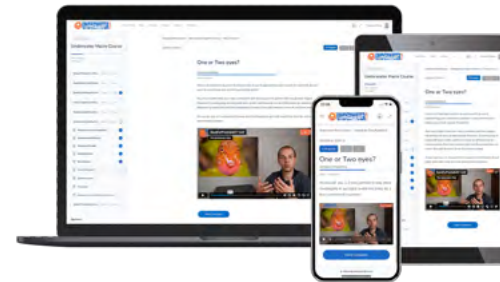
Nicolas Remy is a freelance underwater photographer based in Sydney, Australia, a Nauticam ambassador, and Founder of The Underwater Club, an online underwater photography school & community. His images have won over 40 international awards and are frequently published in print and digital media.

Nicolas would like to thank Nauticam for providing the angled relay lens used in this review.

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What our Members say

William Gladstone
2 reviews
★★★★★ 10 months ago

The course content is extensive and the modules contain clear and detailed explanations with lots of examples. The course builds from the basics to advanced techniques and Nicolas has provided the necessary theory and a range of practical applications. The forums, opportunities for feedback, info on up-and-coming competitions, and additional live webinars make this a comprehensive and very supportive learning experience. I highly recommend The Underwater Club!

Libby T
15 reviews · 1 photo
★★★★★ 3 months ago

My photography has vastly improved due to the lessons and webinars available to The UW Club members. I learn so much each time and am always impatient to get underwater and try out the techniques and ideas.

Nicolas makes the information approachable to all levels, and is comprehensive on the topics, happy to clarify details, and welcomes questions. The discussions with other club members on each others' photographs is positive and extremely valuable. Lessons cover all aspects, from techniques, equipment, gear care, and camera settings. Nicolas is an enthusiastic and encouraging teacher. A brilliant resource for any underwater photographer.

Backscatter Hybrid Flash Intro

by Jim Decker

With the introduction of the Backscatter Hybrid Flash HF-1, underwater photographers can now capture stunning stills and video with a single versatile tool. With an underwater guide number of $f40$ and a 5,000 lumen video light, the Hybrid Flash is the most powerful strobe and video light combination ever created. The Backscatter Hybrid Flash also includes a 1,500 lumen spot light and a red light mode.

The Hybrid Flash is packed with tons of features and is the first strobe to feature Smart Control Automatic TTL Flash power for Sony, Olympus, and OM System cameras. The Hybrid Flash is also HSS compatible and can be used for remote shooting alongside the Mini Flash 2.

This all comes in an easy to travel medium sized strobe package that is perfect for both wide-angle and macro shooting. The Hybrid Flash special launch price is \$899, which is an incredible value for the power and features this strobe offers.

The powerful guide number $f40$ flash beam will easily illuminate subjects in high ambient light environments. Shallow brightly lit reefs, sunballs, and big scenes are easier than ever to light. The brightness of the Hybrid Flash has plenty of reach for more distant subjects in a scene.

The Hybrid Flash features a 5,000 lumen wide beam video light that can be used to capture video footage between still shots, or use the Hybrid Flash as a dedicated video light. This makes it an



Even when shooting with a 180° fisheye lens, dome diffusers provide complete edge to edge coverage.
Sony a7R V | Canon 8-15mm Lens | 1/125 | ISO 250 | $f14$
©James Emery - Backscatter

extremely versatile underwater lighting tool.

With a guide number of $f40$ and a 5,000 lumen video light, the Backscatter Hybrid Flash is the brightest strobe and video light combination ever created.

From the center to the edge, the Hybrid Flash has even light intensity with minimal drop-off. This



Coral Reef Wide Scene
With a max guide number of $f40$, big scenes are breeze to shoot with the Hybrid Flash.
Sony a7R V | Canon 8-15mm Lens | 1/250 | ISO 100 | $f13$
©James Emery - Backscatter

will result in larger scenes being lit more evenly, with no harsh hot spots of light or major gaps. The wide angle coverage of the Hybrid Flash makes strobe positioning much simpler, due to the light's wide, even, and forgiving beam pattern.



The Hybrid Flash has plenty of options for creative lighting with flat and dome diffusers in different color temperatures and angles of coverage. The Hybrid Flash IR Filter is used in remote mode to mask the transmitting strobe from showing up in the image.

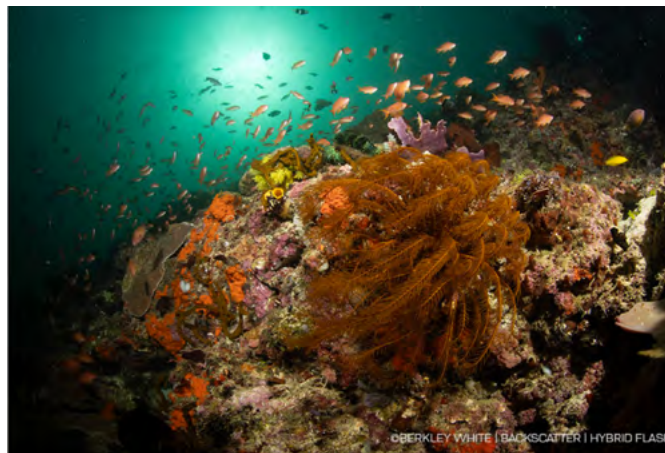
Master Creative Lighting

Dome Diffuser, Flat Diffuser - Choose Your Angle of Coverage

The Hybrid Flash is compatible with a variety of different diffusers. For brighter, more intense light, shoot the strobe without a diffuser to yield an angle of coverage of 120°. For wider, softer light, the included Hybrid Flash White 140 Flat Diffuser will expand the angle of coverage to 140° for bigger subjects and scenes. For the widest, softest, and most even lighting possible, the optional Hybrid Flash White 160 Dome Diffuser will expand angle of coverage to its maximum, at 160°.

Selectable Color Temperature – 6500K, 5500K, and 4500K

In addition to selecting the angle of coverage, the Hybrid Flash can be shot without a diffuser at 6500K, or the included flat diffuser for slightly warmer color. Optional 4500K and 5500K warming



No Diffuser

Choose the 4500K diffuser in green water to make backgrounds blue. Set your camera White Balance manually to 4500K to turn green water to blue in these sample raw images. The 4500K diffuser will correct your foreground to match the scene.

Canon EOS R3 | Canon 8-15mm Lens | 1/200 | ISO 200 | f18

filters are available in flat diffused and dome diffused filters. 4500K is perfect for adding richer, blue backgrounds at shallower depths, while the 5500K filters and diffusers will provide a more natural daylight appearance. Warming diffusers are also perfect for model shoots, providing you with warmer, more saturated skin tones for your human subjects.

Ambient Blue Filter for a More Natural Look

Traditional strobes use light that is significantly warmer than the much cooler blue light of the ocean. The Ambient Blue Filter matches the color temperature of the surrounding water, making the strobe match the color of the surrounding ambient light. When shot with the Ambient Blue Filter, the Hybrid Flash is filling shadows of the image, but not adding a different color to the scene. The Ambient Blue Filter is optimized for shooting at depths 10-35 feet.

(Top) No Strobe—Ambient Light Only (Middle) Hybrid Flash—No Filter (Below) Hybrid Flash—Ambient Blue Filter

©Jim Decker - Backscatter. Sony a1, Canon 8-15mm Lens, 1/160, ISO 200 f11



4500K diffuser



Pro Level Shooting

The Hybrid Flash is significantly brighter at maximum power than what most people are used to shooting. At guide number 40 it generates a lot of light but also generates a significant amount of heat if shot in rapid succession at that power level. The Hybrid Flash manages this with an aluminum flash head, internal heat sink, and multiple temperature sensors. These protections allow the hybrid flash to keep shooting without interruption, so you'll never miss a shot.

Full (GN $f29$) is more than enough light to tackle most situations. Boost +2 (GN $f40$) and Boost +1 (GN $f34$) are only needed for extra large scenes or shooting with diffusers to spread the light while maintaining a very bright output with plenty of reach.

We recommend starting at Full power. Boost +2 and Boost +1 are there when needed for extra punch on big wide scenes.

Shoot 30 Frames per Second with No Flash Drop Out

The Hybrid Flash has incredibly fast recycle times for a flash with its size and power and is built for rapid fire continuous shooting. The Backscatter Hybrid Flash will fire at 10 frames per second at 1/4 to 1/8 power, 20 frames at 1/8 power, and 30 frames at 1 click below 1/8 power.

Simple, Easy to Use Manual Mode

Only need manual mode? The first mode on the dial is manual mode. The Backscatter Hybrid Flash has 12 power levels in 1/2 stop increments.



For those only needing manual mode, it's conveniently located at the first position on the mode dial. Both controls have hard stops with different shapes making dial changes without looking a breeze. There are 12 power levels in 1/2 stop increments.

Fast Flash Duration to Sync with High Shutter Speeds

Flash duration is how long the flash tube is lit up when the strobe fires. This is measured in hundredths to thousandths of a second, making it relatable to the camera's shutter speed.

If the flash duration is slower than the shutter speed being used, the flash will be cut off by the shutter speed of the camera and will appear diminished in the photo.

With a fast flash duration of over 1/400th of a second at maximum power, the Hybrid Flash is faster than the flash sync speed of any SLR or mirrorless camera with a mechanical shutter available today. At power level Boost +1 (GN 34) the flash duration is over 1/900th of a second, and will increase in speed as the power level is turned down.

With such a fast flash duration, the Hybrid Flash gives the photographer with compact and global shutter cameras such as the Sony a9 III the freedom to shoot much faster shutter speeds to knock down high ambient light scenes.



For subjects that are constantly changing distances TTL is a great tool for getting a correct flash exposure on the fly.

*Sony a7RV | Canon 8-15mm Lens | 1/125 | ISO 400 | f16
©James Emery - Backscatter*

Automatic TTL Flash Exposure for Olympus, OM System, & Sony

The Hybrid Flash is the first production strobe to have Olympus, OM System, and Sony Automatic TTL Exposure using the Backscatter Smart Control System. Smart Control TTL exposure utilizes OM System RC mode and Sony's native TTL protocol, which is much more accurate than mimic TTL systems. Standard Smart Control mode is perfect for wide angle and larger subjects, while Smart Control Macro will tailor the flash output for macro shooting. The Hybrid Flash also includes an underexposure warning, which sounds when the strobe has reached maximum output. If the resulting image is too dark, get closer, increase ISO, or open up the aperture to properly expose the image. Flash EV compensation is easily handled using the camera's native menu system.

High Speed Sync (HSS) for Open Apertures and Black Backgrounds

The Hybrid Flash is also equipped with HSS mode, which allows faster shutter speeds to be used beyond the sync speed limit of the camera. HSS allows for wider open apertures while still being able to maintain a darker background than otherwise would be impossible at slower shutter speeds.

Sony Mirrorless cameras can achieve HSS using the Backscatter Sony Smart Control Trigger. Olympus and OM System mirrorless cameras can achieve HSS through RC mode with internal and clip-on flashes or with built in RC compatible flash triggers in housings such as the Backscatter E-M10 IV Octo Housing. For Nikon and Canon 3rd party flash triggers that support HSS are available such as UW Technics and the Turtle Trigger from TRT Electronics.

Using a more open aperture allows for more creative control for bokeh blur while the fast shutter speed of HSS maintains a darker background normally associated with more stopped-down apertures. This HSS picture was shot at 1/1,250 of a second for the dark background.

Backscatter Sony Smart Control Flash Trigger for TTL and HSS

The Backscatter Sony Smart Control Trigger is required for automatic Sony TTL and HSS with the Hybrid Flash. The flash trigger is placed on the hot shoe of the camera and is equipped with two LED lights to fit into a housing's optical bulkheads.

The Backscatter Sony Smart Control Trigger is universal and will fit most housings. The trigger is charged via USB-C. The Backscatter Sony Smart Control Trigger will be available later this year.



*Without HSS. Olympus E-M10 IV | OM System 90mm Lens | 1/160 | ISO 200 | f3.5
©James Emery - Backscatter*



*With HSS. Olympus E-M10 IV | OM System 90mm Lens | 1/1250 | ISO 200 | f3.5
©James Emery - Backscatter*

Wireless Off Camera Power Level Remote Control

The Backscatter Hybrid Flash features a remote transmit and receive function for both wireless remote power control and triggering off camera strobes.

A camera mounted Hybrid Flash or Mini Flash 2 can wirelessly beam over new power output levels to other remotely placed Hybrid Flash or Mini Flash 2 strobes with just a press of a button. The included Hybrid Flash Light Pipe attaches to the fiber optic mount of the remote Hybrid Flash optically receives the signal from the transmitting strobe without the need for a Fiber Optic Cable or an electronic trigger.

No cables and no swimming over to a remote strobe to change power levels means less silt from moving around or potentially freaking out the critter.



Multiple Hybrid Flashes can be used in remote control mode. Use a camera-mounted Hybrid Flash or Mini Flash 2 to wirelessly beam over new power level settings and trigger remote strobes. No need to swim over to adjust the power on your remote strobes.

Dedicated Test Button

The Hybrid Flash includes a test button that allows the strobe to be fired at any desired power level. This is great to use for light painting, as a strobe freezes motion where a video light will not. The test flash can also be used as a signaling device. The test button can be used in all modes except for SOS and Video Mode.

Wide, Spot, and Red Focus and Target Lights

The Backscatter Hybrid Flash comes equipped with several different light modes for the target light in Photo Mode. The strobe can be set to wide for use as a general focus or target light, spot for more specific macro work, or red to sneak up at critters and to avoid the swarmies at night. Red, Spot, and Wide Mode are available in M, SC, HSS, REM modes.

375 to 1000+ Flashes

With twin 21700 lithium ion batteries the Backscatter Hybrid Flash will allow for over 375 flashes on maximum power (GN40) or a full day of diving with over 1000 flashes when set to normal power. Professional photographers will be stunned by the full power brightness duration. Amateur photographers will appreciate only using one set of batteries for a full day of diving.



The controls are radically different both physically and visually so the user will never be confused on what dial does what.

Up to 90 Minutes of Video Runtime

The Hybrid Flash is designed to optimize battery consumption in Video Mode. In Video Mode, the light can run continuously for 45 minutes at 5,000 lumens. After 45 minutes, the Hybrid Flash will gradually ramp down to the next lower setting, to give a total runtime of 90 minutes. This gives the Hybrid Flash plenty of runtime for long night dives. If power consumption is managed by shutting the light off or using a lower power level between scenes, the Hybrid Flash can easily last a whole dive at 5,000 lumens.

To keep up with the high performance needs of the Backscatter Hybrid Flash, high performing 21700 batteries with a 20A continuous

discharge are required. Currently the Nitecore NL2153HP is the only 21700 battery that meets this specification. Nitecore batteries include built-in overcharge and over discharge protection circuitry safety features. Nitecore batteries are available at Backscatter Dealers and many other retail outlets worldwide.

Automatic Flash Synchronization

Setting up pre-flash cancellation is a breeze. Simply plug in a Fiber Optic Cable and take a test shot. The Backscatter Hybrid Flash will automatically detect the camera's internal flash shooting mode on the first flash after power-up and store it in memory on your first test shot. If camera or flash settings change, simply turn the Hybrid Flash off and

back on and take another test shot to update the setting. No need to worry about the wrong setting on the strobe. This feature can also be disabled if the Hybrid Flash is being triggered by a manual flash trigger or internal flash set to manual.

The Backscatter Hybrid Flash has two dials and two buttons. Mode is a black pointer style control while the flash power control is a red knurled knob. Both controls are large and raised and easily controlled with thick gloves. Each control has a different appearance and feel making both controls easy to differentiate by feel or with a quick glance. Both dials have hard stops, making finding the exact mode and full power easy and quick, without needing to look at the strobe.

The Backscatter Hybrid Flash is a medium-sized strobe and video light all in one. The size of the strobe makes



In The Box. The Hybrid Flash includes Hybrid Flash White 140 Flat Diffuser, 1-inch Ball Mount, Hybrid Flash Light Pipe, O-ring Grease, & Spare O-rings.

it easy to travel with no compromise in performance, and eliminates the need for a separate video light or strobe making packing easier. In air, the Hybrid Flash is 1.1 kg / 2.5 lbs with batteries, ball mount, and diffuser. In water, the Hybrid Flash weighs 227 grams / 0.5 lbs with batteries, ball mount, and diffuser.

The Hybrid Flash is protected by two O-rings and a sand gasket to make sure the battery compartment

remains dry. The double O-ring seal allows for two lines of defense against leak-causing debris, both of which are protected by a sand gasket, which keeps fine sand from building on the O-rings.

The Hybrid Flash has a sealed battery compartment, and in the rare event of a leak in the battery compartment water will not enter the front compartment of the strobe. The strobe also has two over-pressure relief valves, one on the strobe body, and one in the battery cap.

An integrated LED indicator shows battery level remaining in 3 levels: green, yellow, and red.

The Backscatter Hybrid Flash is available at an introductory Launch Price of \$899.00. Batteries & Fiber Optic Cable Not Included
Shipping End Of May 2024.

Jim Decker
www.backscatter.com



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AOI GoPro lenses and mount

by Peter Rowlands

I don't think I would be wrong in saying that, numerically, the GoPro is the most widely used camera underwater; extremely small and light, even in its 60 metre housing, it fits in a BC pocket and produces excellent images, both stills and video.

It appealed to a whole new market outside of the traditional underwater photographer, drawn by the simplicity of its 'point and shoot' mentality and was bought in droves by divers who, up until its arrival, hadn't been interested but all of a sudden they could record their dives albeit initially with vomit inducing unsteady, unedited playback - but they were happy and oblivious of the optical distortion behind the flat port.

Now, I suspect there are lots of housed GoPros in cupboards up and down the land with flat batteries and dusty lenses once the novelty wore off next to the bread maker and exercise bike. And, photographically, there's a logical reason for that.

On its own the GoPro is an amazing invention both photographically and physically but it's a bit of a one trick pony. Great for available light scenery and wrecks

underwater but not for close ups and variety. Add the tiny LCD screen and the insensitive buttons with slow responses and the annoying Menu system and the novelty soon wore off.

Later versions of Go Pros brought excellent image stabilisation but the real saviour underwater came in the form of accessories and advances in other technology - accessories in the form of better corrected lenses, colour correction filters and the new LED technology providing much smaller, brighter and longer lasting LED lights. Things were looking up.

I was fortunate to meet AOI founder Victor Tsui and head of promotions Nick Khoo at the Dusseldorf BOOT Show in January where I had gone to see their UH-GPX Housing for GoPro HERO11 /12 Cameras. We had a very enjoyable time discussing the past and future of underwater photography equipment.

You will probably have heard of AOI but only comparatively recently I suspect but their history in underwater photography products goes back to the early days of digital as they manufactured the majority of the OEM moulded polycarbonate



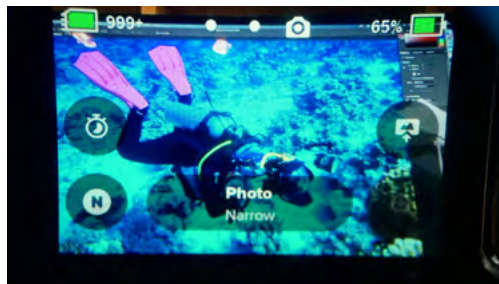
housings for major brand compact cameras which helped get digital underwater off to a very positive start. The quality, design and value for money of their products made them unsung heroes in the early days.

In 2014, in addition to their housing range, they decided to develop a series of Underwater Conversion Lenses and Lens Port Systems for underwater housings and market them under the AOI brand name. Enter the AOI UWL-03-BLK wide and AOI UCL-03 close up lenses for the Go Pro.

GoPro Hero cameras can have a super wide angle view in normal use, but once inside the housing underwater, the coverage narrows from approximately 150 to 95 degrees and it also introduces geometric



distortion. The AOI UWL-03 lens restores the angle to around 140 degrees. The UWL-03 also allows close-focus wide-angle footage by bringing the minimum focus distance



(Top) The view through the Magnifier is much bigger and easier to compose with.

*(Top left) The grey knurled button is well placed to release the lens with a 90° turn
(Left) The two handed handling produced steady footage*



to about 7cm. Normally, with the latest GoPro 10/11/12 cameras, the closest in-focus point is 60cm.

Both lenses have a special bayonet fitting, and an AOI lens mount is required. The QRS-02-MB1P lens mount fits on the GoPro Housing and allows easy lens attachment and removal. The lens can be attached both on land and underwater.

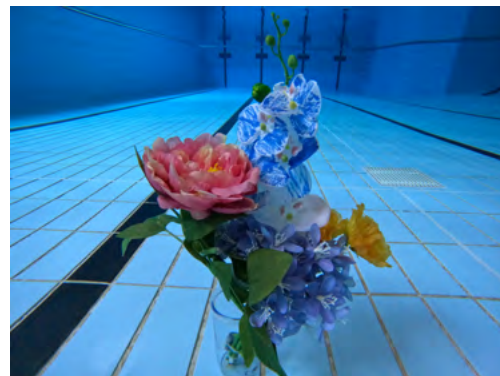
Handling the set up can either

be with the Pistol Grip AOI PGP-02 (my choice) or the traditional basetray and handles.

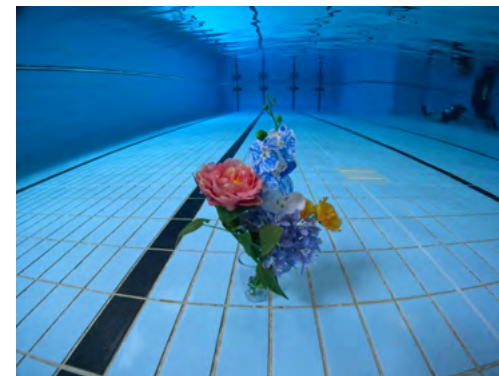
An optional accessory I was keen to try was the UMG-01 LCD Magnifier. This needs the GoPro housing rear door to be replaced with the RK-GP11-BD rear door which has rails to hold the Magnifier. Whilst the small LCD screen on the GoPro is better than nothing (the early GoPro models didn't have a screen at all) the ability to see the screen bigger sounded like a major benefit to me.

And so it was that a few weeks later, UPS delivered all of the above and I am very grateful to AOI for facilitating this.

Now March in the UK is not the ideal time to be testing underwater photo equipment, especially when it



The increase in angle is impressive and will be especially useful in limited visibility.



has been one of the wettest on record so my initial use was in a shallow pool which gave me a good feel for the ergonomics and optics.

Optically the AOI UWL-03 is a 0.73x wet lens converter which restores the underwater angle to 140° and the sharpness and resolution are very impressive. The coverage has an element of fisheye distortion which is common in most wet lenses including the WWL-1 for example.

Ergonomically I was using the AOI UWL-03, UMG-01 LCD Magnifier and Pistol Grip AOI PGP-02. This is a compact package which reminded me of early 'run and gun' video cameras and the handling was surprisingly good, if slightly top heavy. With your left hand on the pistol grip, mask leaning on the Magnifier and right hand holding the right hand side with index finger well placed for the shutter release/stop/Start button on the top of the housing, the handling was good

and any slight wobble from a small rig was taken out by the excellent image stabilisation in camera.

I am naturally right eyed and the large, dioptre corrected, rear view port of the Magnifier was comfortable to view yet still allowed my left eye to survey the external scene and try to anticipate any activity.

I got on very well with this setup and look forward to immersing it in the saltwater world and going into more detail in the next issue of UwP.

Peter Rowlands
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Laowa 10mm Lens

by Phil Rudin

Venus Optics manufactures premium lenses for both still and cinema cameras under the Laowa Lens brand. Since 2013 Laowa with headquarters in China have produced a verity of unique and affordable lenses from small fisheye lenses to mirrorless macro lenses with up to twice life size (2:1) magnification.

Laowa lenses also cover formats from Micro 4/3 to the world's widest native lens for medium format and every thing in-between. Laowa lenses are produced for SLR, DSLR and mirrorless systems with unique lenses like the 24mm probe lenses, 2.5 to 5 X ultra macro, Anamorphic cine lenses and adapters plus much much more.

The Laowa 10mm Lens

To celebrate Laowa's tenth anniversary they have introduced their first auto focus lens, the 10mm F/2.8 Zero-D full frame lens with a remarkable ultra-wide 130.4 degree rectilinear angle of view. In addition this lens has a minimum focus distance of just 12cm (4.72 inches) while maintaining a weight of only 420g (0.925 pounds).

The lens can be used with 77mm

thread-on filters and is available in auto focus for Nikon Z and Sony FE using a five-blade aperture.

The lens also comes in manual focus for Canon RF and L-mount cameras in five-blade and fourteen-blade variant. In addition to being light weight the lens is also small at only 82 X 72.8mm (3.23 X 2.97 inches) and comes for the first time in an attractive purple/blue flat gunmetal finish with a dark blue accent band near the front of the lens.

The lens also includes a very small removable sunshade, a wide gnarled focus ring that is focus by wire, turns very smoothly and includes an AF/MF switch. The lens does not include image stabilization which is handled in camera via IBIS.

Lens construction is metal with a substantial metal mount that includes a weather sealing gasket. All metadata carries over from the lens in my Lightroom program and my production lens showed the lens as a 10mm not an 11mm which had been reported with some early 10mm lens model tests.

Prior to Laowa's 10mm auto focus lens to achieve a 130 degree AOV most underwater photographers



were using water contact optics with a maximum 28mm land lens to get the same 130 AOV. The WCL lenses are fisheye not rectilinear and are not well suited for split images because most are designed as water contact optics only.

The Laowa 10mm because of

its very short 12cm minimum focus distance from the camera sensor can be used in many port sizes from 140mm to 230mm and beyond. At the 12cm minimum focus distance the lens has a 1:4 reproduction ratio and

with a maximum aperture of F/22 this lens is ideal for shooting splits with minimal distortion.

Unlike most fixed lenses in the 14mm range or zooms like Canon RF 10-20 F/4 or Sony FE 12-24 the Laowa 10mm allows you to use thin 77mm graduated natural density filters for splits to make the transition from water to air more evenly exposed.

The Canon RF 10-20mm F/4 would be the closest AF lens with the 130 degree AOV, the downsides with the Canon lens is that it has a minimum focus distance of only 25cm more than twice the Laowa 10mm, it has no filter thread but accepts rear filter gels and it retails for \$2299.00 versus \$799.00 in the US for the Laowa.

The lens ships in an attractive storage box and includes a very small lens manual with extremely small print. An on line PDF manual for the lens would be appreciated.

The Laowa 10mm F/2.8 Zero-D is engineered with exceptional optics, featuring 15 elements in 9 groups, including 2 aspherical glass and 3 ED glass elements alone with a Frog-Eye coating on the front element. This results in outstanding image quality capturing excellent detail even when paired with a high megapixel camera like my Sony A7R V which was used exclusively for this review.

The Zero-D badge refers to lack of distortion both in the center of the frame and in the corners making a significant leap in sharpness over the admired Laowa 12mm F/2.8 Zero-D manual focus lens. As we are all aware in underwater photography port selection and extension lengths dictate the ability of any rectilinear to preform at its best underwater. It is simply not physically possible to achieve the same standards of performance from a lens underwater as it is above water so different



ports and extensions present different compromises to overall IQ across the frame. I will get into my port and extension selections later in the article.

Because the Laowa 10mm auto focus lens has a five-blade aperture it produces a ten-point sunstar effect unlike any I have seen in other underwater ultra wide lens. This was particularly noticeable when I enlarged a photo where I had small micro bubbles all over my face mask and several of the small strobe lit bubbles had perfect ten point stars.



(Above) Because the Laowa 10mm auto focus lens has a five-blade aperture it produces a ten-point sunstar effect unlike any I have seen in other underwater ultra wide lens. This was particularly noticeable when I enlarged a photo where I had small micro bubbles all over my face mask and several of the small strobe lit bubbles had perfect ten point stars.

Nicole, Devil's Ear Spring Florida, Sony A7R V, Laowa 10mm F/2.8, Marelux housing, 230mm port with 20mm extension, two Marelux Apollo III strobes. ISO 640, F/13, 1/100th sec.

This is an effect I hope to be able to reproduce in other situations using ambient and strobe lighting.

Field Testing The Laowa 10mm

During my review I shot the lens with the Sony A7R V at up to six frames a second. While this is not high speed by today's camera standards it is about as fast as I want to shot for over 99% of my underwater work.

With the Sony A7R V camera the auto focus was very accurate. The AF performance with focus-tracking was seamless and extremely quick locking onto eyes and faces even at a distance. Laowa describes auto-focus as “nothing short of superb” in the venuslens.net lens description.

I shot the lens in low ambient light with moving subjects and I would agree that Auto focus is every bit as good as the top Sony FE GM lenses I own. Laowa describes the 10mm’s versatility as very well suited to architectural, astro, landscape and ultra-wide portrait photography. I would suggest that Laowa add underwater photography to the list because this lens is a blast to use for a verity of U/W imaging situations.

The look from this lens is unique in the sense that it adds a new perspective to ultra-wide imaging that had only been achieved with fisheye lenses in the past.

Every ultra-wide lens both fisheye and rectilinear allow you to create forced perspective views that manipulate human perceptions to make objects appear larger, smaller, farther away or closer than they



actually are.

With fisheye lenses of the same 130 degree AOV more barrel distortion occurs than with rectilinear lenses causing subjects in the center of the frame to bulge outward and straight lines to curve wildly. This is not necessarily a bad thing it is just what makes the two lenses differ when shooting the same subject from the same distance.

While field testing the Laowa



(Left) Caitlyn, Ginnie Springs Florida, Sony A7R V, Laowa 10mm F/2.8, Marelux housing, 230mm port with 20mm extension, two Marelux Apollo III strobes. ISO 100, F/22, 1/200th sec.

(Above) Caitlyn, Ginnie Springs Ballroom Florida, Sony A7R V, Laowa 10mm F/2.8, Marelux housing, 230mm port with 20mm extension, two Marelux Apollo III strobes. ISO 400, F/9, 1/250th sec.

10mm I exclusively used the Sony Alpha A7R V camera. This is a 60 mega-pixel camera that exposes flaws in many lenses with inferior image quality. I also used the Marelux MX-A7RV housing with a verity of Marelux ports and extensions. At this time I want to remind everyone that I am part of the Marelux management team and a Marelux Product Specialist. This review is about the quality of the Laowa lens being reviewed and not

the additional tools I used to test this lens.

I used three different ports for this review - a 140mm with the sunshade removed, 180mm with the sunshade removed and a 230mm all with a verity of extensions. With the 140mm dome I settled on 35mm’s of extension while the shade was removed. Without removing the shades on the 140 and 180mm domes vignetting occurs way before the port

is extended far enough to get any sharpness beyond the center of the frame.

My 140mm port has a bayonet sunshade while the 180mm requires you to remove way to many Allen screws to be practical. I also didn't see any difference between 140 and 180 in fact the 140 because it is a fisheye design worked better than the 180 which I soon eliminated from the testing.

With the 230mm port I was getting slight vignetting with 30mm's of extension so I ended up using a 20mm extension. I would have tested a 25mm extension but Marelux does not offer that size at this time. My other option would have been to remove the top and bottom blades that make up the 230 ports sunshade and use a longer extension. This is something I will try at some point in my swimming pool but unlike the 140mm dome the chance for damaging the 230 port would be much greater.

As I remarked above I found the auto focus using tracking to be spot on with excellent eye sharpness for both humans and animals. I used the tracking with the small focus spot for both AF-C and multi shots up to ten frames. In darker environments like the attached backlighted diver descending into the cave system the AF didn't miss a shot. The fill flash was

with two Marelux Apollo III strobes where the modeling lights were not used for focus assist.

The prevailing wisdom when using rectilinear lenses in a dome ports for full frame is to shoot at a minimum of F/13 to around F/16 and at F/22 for splits. You will see that among the attached photos most are in the F/13 to F/8/9 range. If you have no tolerance for soft corners in your images this may not be the lens for you. It is hard to get sharp corners with lenses in the 16/17mm range although many work well in a 180mm dome if they have a minimum focus distance in the 19cm or less range. The truth be told I don't see huge differences in corner sharpness at like F/numbers between water contact lenses at 130 degrees, fisheye lenses and the Laowa all things being equal.

If you are photographing pool tiles and flat pool surfaces you may manage to find differences but in the real world the differences are limited by other factors in many cases. While shooting with the twin Apollo III strobes I used the same strobe placement I would with fisheye and WCL lenses keeping the strobes well behind the port to prevent any flare from the strobes into the port.

The Laowa lens has fairly bold white lettering on the face of the lens. With some wide lens systems I have used the white lettering reflects from



Jessie, Ginnie Springs Florida, Sony A7R V, Laowa 10mm F/2.8, Marelux housing, 230mm port with 20mm extension, two Marelux Apollo III strobes. ISO 400, F/10, 1/250th sec.

the port into the lens resulting in white letters and numbers across the image. I have found this to be most prevalent near or at the surface and when using acrylic ports. The dome glass coating for all three of the ports I used prevented this from being a problem.

I used two eight inch arms for each strobe and no arms for some of my pool tests with the 140mm dome port. Omitting arms is a technique I started using more than a decade ago shooting fisheye lenses with small

domes and small systems like the M43 cameras. It will work equally well with the Sony camera housings however for general use on larger subjects like people I like the versatile of arms. I am in the camp of U/W photographers that like to limit arm lengths as much as I can. Others will prefer much longer arms and both systems can be made to work well with this lens.

In post processing any 130 degree lens in combination with a 60MP camera can give great leeway for making crops to element soft corners.

Nicole, Devil's Ear Spring Florida, Sony A7R V, Laowa 10mm F/2.8, Marelux housing, 230mm port with 20mm extension, two Marelux Apollo III strobes. ISO 640, F/13, 1/100th sec.

My preferred LightRoom program does not include lens profiles for the Laowa 10mm at this time so some improvement to corners could come with a lens profile update.

This Laowa 10mm has not been added to any housing manufacturers port charts that I can find so as with many new lenses that I have tested the port sizes and extension sizes have been solely selected by me and may be subject to tweaking at some point.

I purchased my Laowa 10mm direct from venuslens.net and was not given any discount or test lens for review. I have in the past been loaned equipment for review but in this case I was quite eager to own the lens because I believed it would add a new perspective to my work.

I have not been at all disappointed with the lens so far. Checkout the venuslens.net website and if Venus/Laowa are reading this review we underwater photographers would love to see auto focus versions of your excellent Marco lenses and fisheye lenses.

Phil Rudin
Instagram



Don't settle for 2nd best



Film - No Filter;
No White Balance



Digital - No Filter;
Manual White Balance



Digital - 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.

Simple and inexpensive, yet so effective.

www.magic-filters.com

The Philippines

by Michel Braunstein

The Philippines is an archipelago situated in the Pacific Ocean, north of Indonesia, with a rich history. It is part of the coral triangle, along with Papua New Guinea and Indonesia.

This region is renowned for its abundant variety of fish and corals, with species reproducing at a faster rate than anywhere else in the world. In certain dive spots, scientists have identified over 70 different coral species, comparable to the total number found across the Caribbean. This uniqueness makes the Philippines a must-visit destination for divers. However, it's not just divers who would appreciate the country; it is also known for its natural beauty, hospitable people, and diverse activities beyond diving.

When discussing the Philippines with divers, the focus often centers on its rich macro life and vibrant nudibranchs, which is indeed noteworthy. However, there is much more to explore.

The Philippines boasts some of the most remarkable underwater macro life, alongside stunning reefs teeming with a wide array of fish species, from the tiniest to the largest, including whale sharks.

Wreck enthusiasts will discover some remarkable shipwrecks from the dark history of World War II. In 1944, the Japanese Navy stationed a large fleet in Coron Bay to evade American planes. However, they were eventually discovered and bombed. Some of these sunken ships have since become habitats for coral and marine life.

During my visit to the Philippines, I had the opportunity to explore only a fraction of its diverse and pristine dive sites. Here are some highlights from my journey:

Malapascua

Located in the northern part of Cebu, Malapascua Island offers incredible macro subjects, but its standout feature is the graceful thresher shark. These elegant creatures ascend from the depths to cleaning stations near the island every day. With their long tails and graceful movements, watching them feels like observing a dancer.

(Top) Diving the amazing Apo Island's reefs.

(Right) Thresher shark at Malapascua. Nikon D850 Nauticam Housing. Nikon 8-15Lens at 15mm – F9 1/125 ISO 800





Mating Mandarin fish, Malapascua - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 105mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F22 1/125 ISO 125

Maintaining proper buoyancy is crucial when diving at Kimud Shoal to avoid damaging the reef. Photographers refrain from using flashes to prevent startling the sharks and making them go away.

Thresher sharks are not easy to approach closely. You must be patient and remain quiet. Eventually, they become more confident, and they may come quite near. Suddenly, you might observe their long tails swaying above your head.

The reef around Malapascua also boasts an impressive mandarin fish habitat. These colorful creatures

emerge from their hiding spots at night to mate, requiring patience and the use of red light for photography. White light would prevent them from going out.

I spent over 70 minutes stuck in the same spot, waiting to observe and photograph these fish. What an enjoyable experience it was to see them emerge for a few seconds and strive to capture the perfect shot. It was truly exciting. However, enduring the freezing temperatures without moving for such a long time was quite challenging. Returning to the dive center and warming up under a



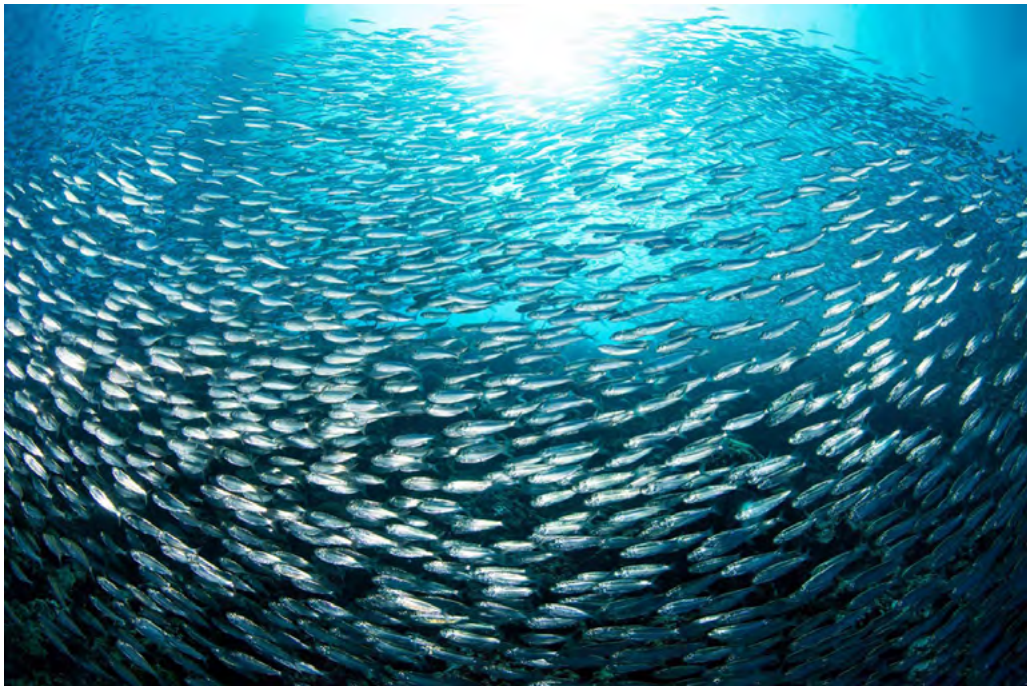
Crabs hug, Malapascua Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 105mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F22 1/125 ISO 125

refreshing shower was no less enjoyable.

The reefs around Malapascua Island are teeming with various types of marine life. Among them, the seahorses stand out with all kinds of vibrant colors. Additionally, I witnessed a touching scene of a crab embracing its offspring. Both creatures gazed at me, the small one nestled in the embrace of the larger one.

I had the chance to dive there together with Evolution Resort.





Sardine run, Moalboal – Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon Fisheye Lens 8-15 at 15mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F9 1/200 ISO 200

Moalboal

Another gem in Cebu, Moalboal, located at 5-6 hours drive from Malapascua, is home to a permanent shoal of sardines, offering a breathtaking sight as they move together in unison. Some days, a few jacks invite themselves to feed on that attractive food reserve.

Sardine runs are well-known in Eastern South Africa and in Baja, Mexico. The sardine run in the Philippines is less renowned than those, but no less impressive! Imagine being surrounded by a massive cloud of sardines... it's truly awe-inspiring!

While striving to capture the perfect shot, I found myself following the shoal up and down. My dive profile serves as a cautionary example for young divers, illustrating what not to do. Therefore, if you're a photographer, prioritize safety and be vigilant about monitoring your depth gauge.

Nearby Moalboal, Pescador Island features vibrant reefs teeming with marine life, including an awe-inspiring cave formation that resembles a face when viewed from within.

Furthermore, the Kawasan



Pescador Island's cave– Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon Fisheye Lens 8-15 at 15mm – F9 1/125 ISO 1000

Waterfalls, easily accessible from Moalboal with tricycles (local taxis), provide exhilarating opportunities for canyoneering. Highly recommended! I visited there with my two sons for a trek through the mountains and water, engaging in jumps from various heights into the water (sometimes quite high!). It was incredibly enjoyable! Undoubtedly, it became my sons' most cherished experience!



Oslob's gentle whale shark - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 8-15 Lens at 15mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F9 1/125 ISO 320

Oslob

Known for its whale sharks, Oslob in Cebu provides an unforgettable encounter with these gentle giants. Unlike anywhere else I've dived, Oslob boasts a congregation of nearly 20 whale sharks, creating an incredibly immersive experience. Whether snorkeling or scuba diving, being in such close proximity to these majestic creatures is an unparalleled adventure.



Oslob's whale sharks - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon Fisheye Lens 8-15 at 15mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F8 1/125 ISO 320



Coleman Shrimps, Dumaguette - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 105mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F22 1/100 ISO 100

I've had the opportunity to dive with whale sharks in numerous locations around the world, including the Red Sea, the Maldives, and the Galapagos Islands. However, I had never before encountered such a large number of them in one place. It was incredibly thrilling to be surrounded by dozens of these magnificent creatures, ranging from large adults to small juveniles.

Throughout my dives in Malapascua, Moalboal, and Oslob, the experienced guides from Kasai Village ensured a safe and memorable experience.

Dumaguete

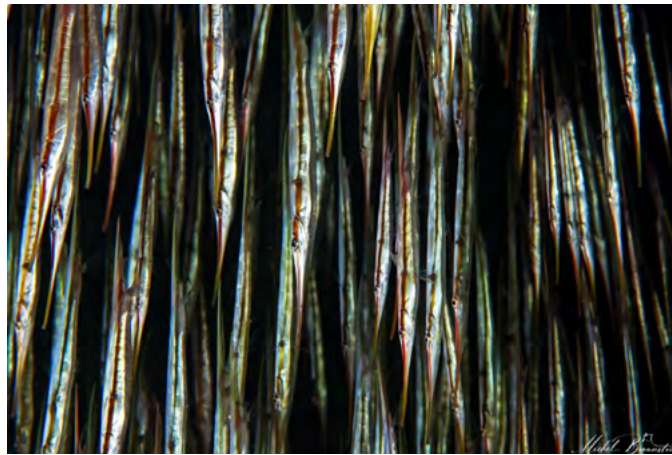
Our last destination was this pristine, world-class diving location known for its macro muck diving. Here, you can encounter nearly anything you've ever dreamed of seeing in macro marine life. While not everything, you'll find a plethora of tiny living creatures such as shrimps, slugs, seahorses, nudibranchs, and many more.

The Coleman shrimp, nestled on starfish, is truly remarkable. Its appearance resembles that of a painting and is perhaps the most colorful among all the creatures in that area.

For the first time ever, in Dumaguette I could experience a blackwater dive. The Philippines is renowned for such dives. We ventured far from the shore aboard a boat, where our divemaster positioned a buoy on the sea surface with a long cord descending into the depths. Several torches were attached to the cord to



Anemone fish and eggs, Dumaguette - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 105mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F22 1/125 ISO 100



(Left) Blackwater dive in Dumaguette - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 105mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F18 1/125 ISO 100

(Above) These razor fish didn't want to leave me during my last dive in Dumaguete. They were hovering above my head (I felt them picking with their needle nose) and even between my face and the camera. They seemed to adopt me, sticking close until I exited the water - Nikon D850 – Nauticam Housing – Nikon 105mm – 1 Ikelite Strobe DS230 + 1 Ikelite DS125 – F22 1/100 ISO 100

(Above right) Locals get to our boats with canoes to sell some nice T-shirts and scarfs in Apo Island

attract fish. As we descended into the darkness, we encountered a myriad of creatures that are rarely seen. It felt like encountering denizens of the deep sea. However, focusing on them proved challenging due to their swift movements.

Additionally, just an hour's boat ride away from Dumaguete lies Apo Island, renowned for its rich reef teeming with diverse hard and soft corals, along with an abundance of marine life including

various fish species, turtles, and sea snakes. Locals get to our boats with canoes to sell some nice T-shirts and scarfs. A visit to Apo Island is a must!

During my last night dive in Dumaguete, I encountered a shoal of razorfish. After capturing some images of them, I continued my dive. Throughout the dive, I felt the razorfish swimming around me, they were hovering above my head (I felt them picking with their needle nose) and even

between my face and the camera. They seemed to adopt me, sticking close until I exited the water.

The super pros Atlantis Dumaguette have organized all the amazing dives we did in the region.

Good to know

The Philippines is a welcoming country where people are exceptionally kind and helpful. Diving conditions are favorable almost year-round. Shorty or 3mm wetsuit is perfect in most of the regions.

The primary language spoken is Tagalog, a blend of the local language, Spanish, and some English. English is widely understood, making communication easy for travelers. The influence of Spanish colonization since 1521 is evident in the local language, including the adoption of Spanish words and even the currency, the "peso."

If you haven't dived in the Philippines yet, add it to your bucket list! Even if you're not a diver, consider adding this amazing country to your bucket list. You won't be disappointed!

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The First Indonesian Mermaid Championship

in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of five-star Hotel Borobudur Jakarta

by Nicholas Kouvaras

The First Indonesian Mermaid Championship in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of five-star Hotel Borobudur Jakarta was held in March 2024.

DiveArts Academy & Hotel Borobudur Jakarta joined forces to present the inaugural "INDONESIA MERMAID CHAMPIONSHIP." A celebration for the mesmerising art of mermaiding, where passion meets creativity.

On the 2nd of March in the pool area of the Classic 5* Hotel Mermaids and Underwater performers gathered from all over the world to showcase their artistic skills. The event started in the morning and continued until 22:00 in the evening.

The main event was the Competition but many happenings were going on during the day. Mermaid Bazaars, Workshops, Photoshoots, Trial classes, Tail trials and many more. The closing performance was an underwater fashion show. Almost 40 performers of

all ages dived in the beautiful pool of the Borobudur Hotel.

Hotel Borobudur is a five star hotel and serviced apartment located in Central Jakarta, Indonesia. Conceived in the 1960s by President Sukarno, it was meant to be the second international-standard hotel to be built in the newly independent country (the first was Hotel Indonesia). The hotel is located near Lapangan Banteng, which during the colonial times was the centre of what was the military-European colonial neighbourhood of Weltevreden. At its opening in 1974, as the Hotel Borobudur Inter-Continental, it was the largest hotel in Jakarta. The hotel is named after Borobudur temple, the famous 9th-century Buddhist monument located in Central Java. The pool was the ideal venue for the event. 50 metres of clear well treated water. Underwater lights at night and a very photogenic mosaic in the middle. The deep part of the pool was 3.8 metres that allowed performers to



Between the competitors more mermaids showcased their skills. 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. f/2, 1/80 sec, ISO2000, P Mode



Every Performance started by the side of the pool. Sony ILCE-7RM2 with Sony FE 85mm F1.8 Lens. f/2.8, 1/125 sec, ISO800, P Mode



Mermaid Nami won the award for the best costume. 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. f/2.8, 1/160 sec, ISO2000, P Mode



The curtain for the UW fashion show. It was messy in a beautiful way. 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. f/2, 1/80 sec, ISO2000, P Mode

move freely. The depth in the middle was 2.0 metres and the shallow part was 1.2 for the classes and the trials.

The whole event was not just a championship. It was more like a community-driven platform where mermaid enthusiasts could showcase

their skills, connect with like-minded individuals, and explore the vibrant world of mermaiding.

It was not just the mermaid community, the freedivers also embraced the event. Most of the schools in Jakarta were represented

either in the media team or the safety team. John Henriano was leading the media team and his R5 was sending a live feed topside for the live stream, and for the big screen.

The international panel of the judges had a clear view



Neysa trying her new silicone tail. 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. f/8, 1/1600 sec , ISO400, A Mode

of the performances along with the multitude of spectators. I was in charge of safety and was taking pictures.

I had the luck to shoot mermaids many times and the truth is that it can be stressful sometimes. A skillful mermaid will transition from pose to pose gracefully embracing the fact that everything underwater happens in slow motion. In such a case taking pictures is so comfortable. If on the other hand the mermaid is new or stressed or not so



Jhon with his R5 sending the stream topside. 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. f/8, 1/160 sec , ISO400, A Mode

comfortable in the water the movements are erratic and rushed. The window to capture the moment is so small. The problem is that you have to have nice pictures of all the contestants and that makes the job stressful. The other problems are time, battery life and white balance. The media team had to stay in the water for more than 8 hours and change batteries 2 times for me and many times on the big setup of the R5. The event started after lunch under a bright sun, continued as clouds covered the sky, under rain, as the sun was setting and into the night. Every time the light changed we had to set the white balance again. Especially for the video it was very important for all the cameras to be set in the same way. For the pictures, post editing could smooth things out.

A very powerful fresnel light from the outside was the main source of light. John with the R5 had also a big led light on the camera. Me and the other

photographer didn't use any strobes or lights so we would not interfere with the image of the live feed.

The next day when I found the courage to start editing, I was surprised by the volume of pictures that I shot and choosing the best was not an easy task. Until next year.

Many thanks to Dive Arts Academy, to Hotel Borobudur, to Ryan Ricardian for the topside pictures and to Freedive Hive for all the support and the hard work.

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Photographing humpbacks: A Personal Perspective

By Tanya G. Burnett and Kevin Palmer

Few experiences can rival the ineffable impact of being in the water with an air breathing creature that is about 500 times your size and weight. A cetacean that can look you in the eye and choose to either hang out or glide away has a lasting effect on many people. But where is the best place to go and what is the gear you really need to capture that moment?

In the last several years, many traveling photographers have flocked to the famous locations where humpbacks congregate to mate and calf. People naturally want the latest and greatest places that allow an in-water experience with these mammals, often exotic locales like northern Tonga and the island of Moorea in French Polynesia.

The siren's call of 130' visibility and a verdant South Pacific backdrop is certainly understandable! But after experiencing many locations around the world and how they operate, we have concluded that the location in our North Atlantic backyard on the Silver Bank, Dominican Republic, probably offers the best humpback

whale encounters for most people, most of the time.

The problem with many in-water whale encounter locations is a lack of regulation that leads to an excessive number of boats and people pursuing a limited number of whales. This often generates disappointing encounters as you and forty of your not-so-close friends swim like mad before the whale decides they have had enough.

The other factor in these South Pacific locations is just how often the weather is quite snotty during the South Pacific winter which is when the humpbacks show up. These locations can get quite rough and in an effort for boats to find calmer conditions, it usually means giving up that nice visibility.

The Silver Bank on the other hand, tends to be pretty consistent in condition and in the number of people that visit. It is an open ocean environment that can make for a

Nikon D500, Nauticam housing, 8-15mm lens at 15. 1/200th@F8. 320 ISO. Available light



Nikon D7000, 28-300mm lens at 85mm. 1/250th @ F6.3. ISO 500





Nikon D300, 70-200mm lens at 120mm. 1/500th@F7.1. ISO 200

potentially rough crossing to get there, but with a fairly protected anchorage once on the bank and some additional reef barrier to mitigate swells when the wind picks up.

Most importantly, the thing that sets the Silver Bank apart is that the Dominican government has restricted access to only 3 permits. That means there are a maximum of three liveboards on the Bank at any given time with hundreds, and at times thousands, of humpbacks coming and going in this quite expansive sanctuary. It is considered the largest aggregation of whales in the world.

Regardless of which location you may choose, what are the most

important things we can do for greater success with our video and photography when swimming with whales?

The thing that most people underestimate in importance is the quality and experience of the guide on your tender. One of the greatest improvements in experiencing humpback whales in the water over the last 30 plus years, is the fact that high-quality guides have learned a huge amount about “reading” whale behaviors and personality.

When we first went on a humpback whale trip in the mid-1990s, the guide’s experience was iffy at best. Most of our encounters



Nikon D7200, 28-300mm lens at 108mm. 1/400th @ F6.3. 640 ISO

involved leaping in front of oncoming whales in the hopes of getting a passing glimpse of humpbacks lasting mere seconds. This amounted to just a handful of lucky shots after a week of trying.

Today, experienced guides know just the kind of whale behavior that might provide a good encounter and when the opportunity arises, encounters can run from a minute or two up to an hour or longer with a very calm whale. Now a trip can produce dozens, or even hundreds of interesting whale photographs for your efforts.

Obviously, equipment plays an

important role in an image maker’s success rate, but that does not mean whale photography or video is particularly difficult. Actually, it is just the opposite.

Since it is mostly ambient light imaging near the surface, whale photography is some of the easiest nature photography there is – even for beginners. We have seen guests shooting their smart phone in a \$200 waterproof housing produce some awesome whale footage. Olympus TG-6 shooters with a wide angle wet lens shooting in program mode can do pretty great (a little negative exposure compensation helps). And of



Nikon D800, Nauticam housing, Tokina 10-17mm at 16mm. 1/200th @ F6.3. 250 ISO. Available light.

course, modern DSLR and mirrorless cameras, when set up correctly, can produce the kind of spectacular results we expect of them.

For those looking for the best lens for their interchangeable lens camera, we usually find this will be somewhat dependent on the type of person and swimmer you are. If you tend to hang back a little and are a bit uncomfortable getting too close, you might want a lens that has about 95-to-105-degree angle of coverage. This would be about a 16-18mm lens on a full frame camera, or about 10-

12mm lens on an APS-C camera. That should give you some reach to frame a very large subject.

If you tend to be a little closer to the action, the newer range of water contact optics that have come out in recent years that can offer up to 130 or 140 degrees of coverage are a great solution and one of our favorite options for whales. Less water between you and the subject makes for sharper results if the whale is very cooperative.

Some of these optics also have some distortion correction built in. Some shooters have great



Nikon D500, 28-300mm lens at 200mm. 1/250th @ F6.3. 200 ISO

success with fisheye lenses (up to 180-degree diagonal FOV), but the biggest concern with shooting these is the amount of distortion right at the surface of the water which tends to make the ocean's surface appear quite curved. One trick to help with this is to learn to shoot the fisheye while holding the camera down near your waist which can reduce the surface distortion a bit.

Another option is to wear a weight belt balanced so that while floating at the surface, one can exhale and just sink a foot or two below sea-level to reduce the distortion while still looking through the viewfinder or monitor. Both techniques are good habits when seas get a bit choppy as well to avoid micro-bubbles near the surface that can reduce visibility.

The biggest challenges are often the ones that can't generally be controlled. Of course, first on that list are the whales themselves. That is where the guides come in and can hopefully find the cooperative and relaxed ones over the course of the day. Secondly is the understanding that swimmers

are generally dropped down-wind of the whale. This is so snorkelers on the surface will not be inadvertently blown into the whale – which would possibly be a bad situation. But that also means that you can't always control which direction the sun is shining in relationship to the whale. So, you may well have to shoot towards the sun sometimes, which is less than ideal. Your best hope in that situation is trying to make the most of a somewhat silhouetted whale, perhaps shooting high shutter speeds to capture some crispy sun rays while waiting for a better position.

Just because you are on a quest to find personable whales on the daily tender expeditions, it doesn't mean there is not plenty of activity going on at the surface. On the Silver Banks, lots of impressive breaching, tail lobbs, and "spy-hops" are commonly seen – often at a distance, but occasional breaches very close to the vessel are breathtaking in their power and mass.

Having a surface camera or the ability to shoot your housed camera topside is a must for these daily adventures.

Another often spectacular behavior to witness is a whale "heat run". This is when anywhere from a few males to over a dozen are in pursuit of a single female who may or may not have an escort. These can be quite aggressive (towards each other,



Nikon D850. Nauticam housing. 28-70mm lens with Nauticam WACP. 1/20th @ F7.1. 260 ISO. Available light.

not towards the boats) and involve the wild activity of males trying to outdo each other; frequently launching out of the water. You definitely do not want to be in the water with this fast-moving crowd of rowdies, but depending on your tender, you can sometimes hold your camera over

the side and beneath the water as the tender runs beside the group to capture what can be many whales in a single shot.

Serious photographers would do well to consider bringing a pole cam for such a purpose as holding a rig beneath the surface with a rapidly

moving tender will make you feel like you just spent a few hours at the gym! A lighter weight option for video in this situation is a GoPro or similar action camera on an adjustable pole mount. In the often-bright conditions, even these small sensor cameras can perform quite well.



Nikon D7200, Nauticam housing, 8-16mm lens at 8mm. 1/60th @ F8. 400 ISO. Available light.

Snorkeling with these magnificent whales is understandably on many folks' bucket list – whether acted upon or not. And doing it more than once always brings new surprises and experiences.

After 30 years of photographing humpbacks, it has stayed just as exciting as the first time, but the overall quality of the experience has improved immensely. Not to mention, if you share your photos with the right research groups, you can contribute to the greater body of knowledge about some amazing

creatures we share our planet with. Not a bad win-win scenario.

Getting to the Silver Bank

All access to the Silver Bank is from the Dominican Republic and the easiest entry is the Puerto Plata Airport, (POP airport code). There are many international flights available. There is one other DR gateway in Santiago (STI) but this requires a 2.5 - 3 hour drive to where the boats depart from.



Nikon D7200. 150-600mm lens at 525mm. 1/3200th @ F14. 200 ISO

From the Puerto Plata airport it is roughly a 30-40 minute road transfer, depending on the time of day, to Cofresi which is a small coastal village in the northern DR. Within Cofresi, you will find the Ocean World Marina where all three liveaboards depart from. There are local hotels, restaurants and all inclusive resorts.

Embarkation on the liveaboards usually begins around 5pm. Generally, all vessels depart and cruise during the evening hours for calmer winds and to arrive by daylight on the Bank. Each of the three liveaboards has a mooring ball set up behind a prominent coral reef and remains on mooring until the last day departure back to the Ocean World Marina.

Tanya G. Burnett and Kevin Palmer

www.islandexposure.us

Blackwater Photography

by David Fleetham

There are few challenges in underwater photography that come close to the demands of shooting semi-transparent apparitions at night, a few miles out to sea with the bottom several thousand feet below your flailing fins. I spent two weeks off the island of Yap in Micronesia doing exactly this every night. The boat would depart the dock around 7 PM and I was lucky if my head got to the pillow before 3AM after shooting for two dives.

I am not a novice to blackwater diving and had participated in this activity many times around Hawaii, where the idea of open ocean night diving really took hold and began to spread throughout the world. On my previous trip to Yap as a presenter for their MantaFest photo week, I introduced blackwater diving to the Manta Ray Bay Resort. The dive guides had never heard of, or ever dreamed of this experience and although I had frequented the resort for a few decades and was good friends with the owner/operator Bill Acker, several of them, including Bill, questioned my sanity when I first proposed how this would work.

This last 2023 Mantafest

was followed by two weeks of BlackwaterFest and as a bonus, I was on the boat with Mike Bartick, who literally wrote the book on Blackwater diving (available on Amazon) and was our fearless leader for Yap's first BlackwaterFest. Mike tweaked our set up of a float with a light and a line down to 65 feet that included several sets of lights at various depths to attract creatures and give our boat captain a reference for keeping track of everyone.

I was shooting with a Canon R5 mirrorless camera in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a pair of DS230 strobes. I alternated between the Canon 100mm macro and a Sigma 70mm macro. Both lenses were very close in performance with a few very slight differences. The 70mm was a bit better for larger subjects, while the 100mm excelled with the most tiny of the drifting entities.

Some of the subjects are extremely challenging to focus on. I

Both images: Canon R5, Ikelite dry-lock housing, 2 x Ikelite DS230 strobes. Sigma 70mm macro lens. 1/160th @ F14. ISO 320.





Canon R5, Ikelite dry-lock housing, 2 x Ikelite DS230 strobes. Sigma 70mm macro lens. 1/200th @ F18. ISO 320.

have used the R5 extensively on reef subjects and found the autofocus to be the best I have ever shot with. That said, on some blackwater creatures I found the system searching for a lock on the more transparent organisms.

Often when subjects are illuminated with your focusing light, especially larval fish and mollusks, they will tend to begin their migration back to the depths and one finds oneself with a dive profile that resembles the graph of a heartbeat monitor that



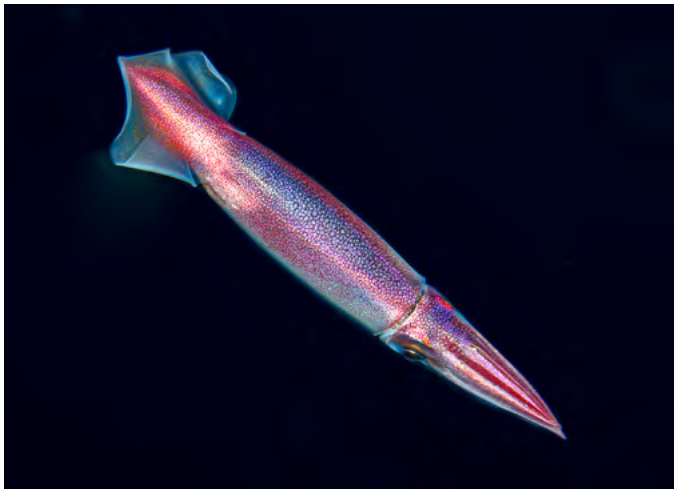
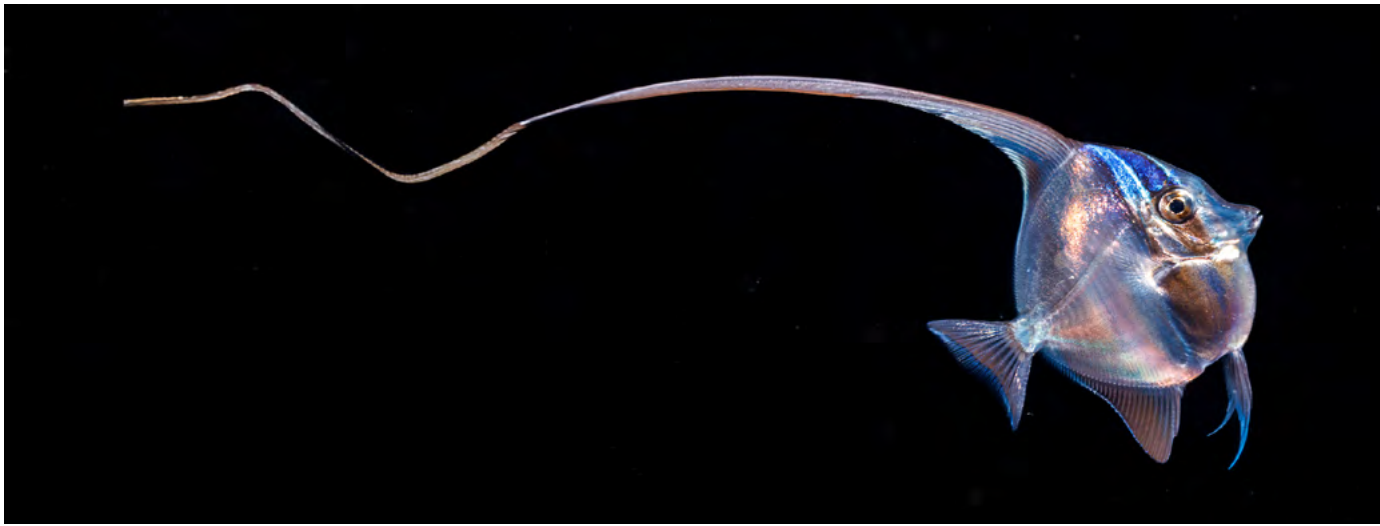
Canon R5, Ikelite dry-lock housing, 2 x Ikelite DS230 strobes. Sigma 70mm macro lens. 1/200th @ F13. ISO 320.

would leave your PADI instructor with thoughts of revoking your dive certification.

On the third evening I tried to stay fairly shallow in order to gain some bottom time (well not really the actual bottom) and shoot for well over an hour. The down side to all this extra time working the focus motor on my macro lenses was my camera battery would be expended in the middle of the next dive. Luckily for me I had just installed the new USB charging & data transfer bulkhead in my Ikelite

housing. On all the rest of the nights I brought along a small rechargeable battery bank that is typically used to charge your iPhone. After the first dive I popped off the o-ring sealed bulkhead to access the USB-C outlet and charged my camera battery without ever opening the housing, something I adamantly avoid on a small rocking vessel several miles out into open ocean.

We had a few nights with strong winds and pouring rain. On these occasions I sacrificed my dry



(Top left) Canon R5, Ikelite dry-lock housing, 2 x Ikelite DS230 strobes. Sigma 70mm macro lens. 1/160th @ F22. ISO 320.

(Far left) Canon R5, Ikelite dry-lock housing, 2 x Ikelite DS230 strobes. Canon 100mm macro lens. 1/160th @ F9. ISO 160

(Left) Left to right: Mike Bartick, Bruce Shafer, Marty Snyderman and David Fleetham.

towel to cover the housing and external battery. It is worth noting that the USB-C outlet is not water or air tight and while charging I would lose the vacuum I had pulled out of the housing. I was not too concerned as I had previously checked the vacuum and the housing had just been in the water for a successful hour and a half. Just to be on the safe side I did bring the vacuum pump with me on subsequent outings and pulled the vacuum after

the battery had done its job and my camera was good to go for another hour and a half of focusing calisthenics.

I have also utilized the USB-C connection to download the images from my camera to my MacBook Pro without removing it from the housing, then charging the battery and been ready to go for the next dive. This is not done on the boat, but when I am back at the resort in more controlled

surroundings. It is a mute point if I am going to remove the camera from the housing to change lenses, which was frequently the case for the next day of reef diving. I do look forward to using this unique device more on my next live-aboard dive trip.

David Fleetham
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Interview :

Andrey Ryanskiy

by Colin Marshall

Andrey Ryanskiy is an observing naturalist and expert underwater photographer. He has the highest possible diver's certification levels (Divemaster, Adv Trimix, Full Cave) and has logged over 5,000 dives. He has written a large number of marine identification books – see advertisement on page XX. Underwater photography for him is an instrument to promote the education and care of the oceans and its inhabitants.

“20 Questions” interview by Colin Marshall (author of UWP’s “Marshall’s Mysteries”).

1. *You have written many books for many regions (Red Sea, Indonesia, Coral Triangle, Philippines) and also superb books on Nudibranch, Seashells, Crustaceans, Flatworms and even, my favourite, Starfish and Other Echinoderms, which hold hundreds of images of species that certainly I have never seen recorded before in ID books. What are the main platforms for your books?*

My books are sold on three major marketplaces - Amazon, Apple Books and Gumroad. You can order printed books on Amazon. Apple Books are great at working with photos that can be displayed on the full screen of the iPad. Those who buy books on Gumroad receive the opportunity to update for free. This is especially important with nudibranchs as my book on them has been updated at the end of 2023. Here is a link to my ReefID page -

<https://reefidbooks.com/about-the-author/>



2. *You recently posted on Facebook about your “Maldivian Fish Guide” App, to complement your Maldivian book guide. Do you have apps for any of your other books?*

Apps for me are, first of all, a beautiful product with instant update features. It only takes a few minutes to add a new species or change the name. No need to reformat a chapter. I’m just starting the game here.

In the future, there will be an option to select regions, an educational game, and the ability to classify and upload your own photos.

3. *Most of the images in your books are taken by yourself, but you do not call yourself an Underwater Photographer, and you don’t submit images for*

Life on the Reef: Corals, Sea Squirts, Sponges, Bryozoa, Comb Jellies, Marine Plants

Indo-Pacific Field Guide



Andrey Ryanskiy

competitions these days – why is that?

I just found other ways to share the unbearable beauty of the underwater world. Besides, I basically don’t compete with anyone. There are no losers and no winners in my endless game of learning ocean animals. Underwater photography for me is a tool, not a goal.

4. *What are your “top three” favourite dive sites or general locations, and why?*

- Sangeang Volcano north of Komodo National Park, Indonesia
- Alotau, Papua New Guinea
- Anilao, Philippines

They are beautiful under and above water. Colorful biodiversity exceeds the perception limit.

5. What image of yours are you most proud of and why?

I was lucky to be the first to photograph dozens of species of fish, nudibranchs, etc, in their natural environment. But for some reason *Amblygobius sewardii*, Seward's Goby, immediately comes to mind. Relatively large, with beautiful coloring. Described in 1867. And so secretive that it was first photographed underwater only two years ago, when I was working on a book about the Red Sea. It took me a lot of time and luck to take this photo in Wadi Lahami, near the border of Egypt and Sudan.



Amblygobius sewardii, Seward's Goby

6. You live in Sharm El Sheikh on the Red Sea in Egypt. Why Egypt, and not, say, Indonesia?

Excellent climate. We live without air conditioning for half of the year. It is impossible anywhere in Asia. Well-developed infrastructure and availability of quality Western-style housing. Nice people around. The underwater world is not as diverse as in the Coral Triangle but also much less studied, as strange as it may sound.

7. What is your most "life-threatening" experience you have had underwater?

Shark attack. Four silky sharks in Sudan. Everything ended well, but it was an unforgettable 40 minutes.

8. Do you do most of your diving solo, to avoid others disturbing whatever you are investigating or photographing? Or are you a strict "buddy" diver?

In recent years I have been diving mostly with my wife or alone. It's luck when you can dive with

people of the same interests. If they are critter-spotters, double luck.

9. I know you have many contacts in the academic world, i.e. highly qualified scientists such as marine biologists. Can you explain, for the layman, which specialists are involved in the process for getting animals scientifically described and classified?

I have been fortunate to work in the laboratory and underwater on expeditions with many outstanding marine biologists. Take for example Arthur Anker, an expert on crustaceans. He can find and catch a tiny and very fast shrimp on the reef, take magnificent photographs, study it under a microscope, find specimens of related species in museums and compare with them, fix the specimen and analyse molecular genetic data. And also prepare and publish a description of the new species. This is a one-man band. But more often different people do this. Not all marine biologists dive. Not everyone takes good photographs.

10. Whilst on the subject of the academic side of the underwater world, why and how do some animals occasionally get re-classified, i.e. a change of scientific names and even families? And why are there so many animals, some fairly common, that have not yet been fully classified?

Changes in taxonomy indicate that this branch of marine biology is alive. It's worse when nothing changes there for decades. The fact that hundreds of common species are not described is easily explained. This is not the case among fish, for example. Because fish are a subject of human interest. Nudibranchs or tunicates are not consumed by humans. This is where funding is cut. All scientists complain about this. But they do nothing to popularise science and explain its significance. They live in an ivory tower and publish in non-public journals.

11. I believe you call yourself a "marine life encyclopedist", i.e. someone who has photographed and identified different underwater species without being a highly qualified academic biologist? What recommendations can you give to someone who wants to follow a similar calling?

If you use the word Encyclopedist to mean "Try to learn something about everything" then this is about me. When I swim underwater, I can quickly understand that I am seeing something rare or even new. This applies to fish, nudibranchs, and crustaceans. I am gradually gaining competence in corals as well.

This is easy to achieve. You just need to identify what you see underwater. And collect your own collection, nudibranchs for example. If you have a hundred species in it, for example, then you are a first-year student. If five hundred - you are a



Halgerda iota

graduate! There are more than a thousand species in my nudibranch collection. I am well acquainted with more experienced specialists in this field, so I do not consider myself a “professor”.

12. I get the impression you are more interested in rare creatures, rather than the standard “big and dangerous” animals that attract others. What is the rarest animal you have seen underwater?

I don't have a size preference. Sharks are no less beautiful than nudibranchs to me. But I don't overestimate the chances of finding something new among the “big and dangerous”

The rarest animal? Hard to choose. For example, nudibranch – *Halgerda iota*. Try Google to find a photo. Oops. But I have quite a few such “first and only” photographs. And I remembered this *Halgerda* only because it was a very memorable dive in the Maldives which ended with a rapid flight in the “washing machine” along a kilometer-long *candu*. The transparency of the water was



Hypselodoris peri

incredible, and you could admire hundreds of sharks while “swinging” at depths from 9 to 19 meters.

On the other hand, *Hypselodoris peri* and *Tylodina sp.* are no less rare and beautiful - just a few people saw them before me.

Also included here are the rare nudibranchs *Armina variolosa* and *Kaloplocamus sp.*, and the Harp Comb Jelly, *Lyrocteis imperatoris*.

13. I believe you still enjoy snorkelling as well as diving. Do you find interesting animals for your books “just” while snorkelling?

Yes, I do. But I'm learning even more about behaviour, about seasonality. Or just admiring it. I snorkel every day except diving days.

14. Many divers start focusing more on behaviour as they become more familiar with the underwater world. What is the most memorable behaviour that you have witnessed?

I once watched a two-meter shark bang its back against a reef, trying to get rid of a sticky



Tylodina sp.



Armina variolosa



Kaloplocamus sp.

fish. This happened a couple of meters from my wife, who at that time was enthusiastically photographing a tiny nudibranch.

15. I know you have trimix qualifications – what is the deepest you have dived?

I was a photographer for the Ras Mohammed Nature Reserve's deep cave exploration project. I then limited myself to a depth of 120 meters with a bottom time of 15 minutes, for reasons of camera safety.

16. I feel that if one was willing to go deeper and deeper, one would find more new or at least unusual species, but do you have a depth limit beyond which you don't explore for animals to include in your books, on the basis that most people would never go that deep?

In my books you will not find photographs taken at a depth of more than 65 meters. Long-term operation at great depths is only possible with the help of closed-cycle rebreathers. Luis Rocha's team is a perfect example. They find on average one new species per dive, working at depths of up to 130-140 meters. My friend Sameh Sokar told me about nudibranchs at a depth of 100 meters in Dahab and I'm thinking about refreshing my tech diver skills.

17. What is your biggest "lesson learnt" about diving or photography that you would pass on to others?

"Úrbi et órbi"? (CM – I had to look this up, and apparently this is a Latin blessing given by the Pope in Papal addresses which means "to the city of Rome and to the world", ie a message for everyone). I am a learner, not a teacher. I learn on every dive and always find something new. This requires the most basic knowledge of the underwater world.



Harp Comb Jelly, Lyrocteis imperatoris

18. We often hear depressing stories about how dive sites are getting more damaged year on year as hordes of tourists damage coral, touch everything, chase turtles and manta rays, etc. More optimistically, what areas have you been most impressed by in terms of minimizing environmental damage?

This is an important issue. But the task of preserving the ocean will not be solved by restrictions on tourists alone. It's a two way street. I've read pseudoscientific articles about how the whale shark show in Oslob, Philippines is harming the local coral reef. But I saw the remains of this reef and knew for sure that it had been destroyed long ago by dynamite fishing, not feeding whale sharks. Divers hear about the "no gloves policy", pay marine park fees, dive and see huge nets with dead fish and corals killed by dynamite and cyanide.

This is why the best pristine places are those with the lowest population density. Raja Ampat, Komodo Islands, Brothers Islands and Daedalus Reef in Egypt are just examples.

19. What do you think are underrated destinations for underwater photographers?

Underrated destinations? There are many. Just a few examples.

- Gorontalo is a small town in the Gulf of Tomini, Sulawesi. Magnificent drop offs, full of life, charming bays. Everything from resident whale sharks to macro life can be found here.
- Mactan, Philippines, is well known as a popular diving tourism destination. Less known is the fact that this is a great place for macro and super macro photography underwater.
- The Red Sea also has many very interesting places. Dahab, Abu Dabab. During the workshop in Wadi Lahami, on our first dive we spotted four different species of Costasiella, Leaf Sheep.

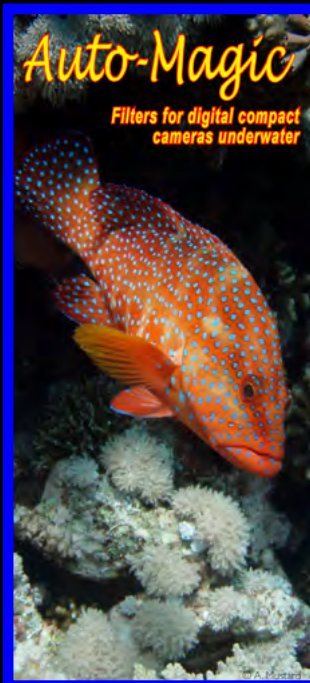
20. What does the future hold, i.e. what project(s) are you planning?

I'm full of ideas, I don't have enough time for everything. This book will be published in March: "Life on the Reef: Corals, Sea Squirts, Sponges, Bryozoa, Comb Jellies, Marine Plants". This will be the final book with 1,400 species in a series of guides to marine animals of the tropical Indo-Pacific. Then I will continue working on educational programs and Apps.

Many thanks, Andrey

Colin Marshall
colintrmarshall@yahoo.com

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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.

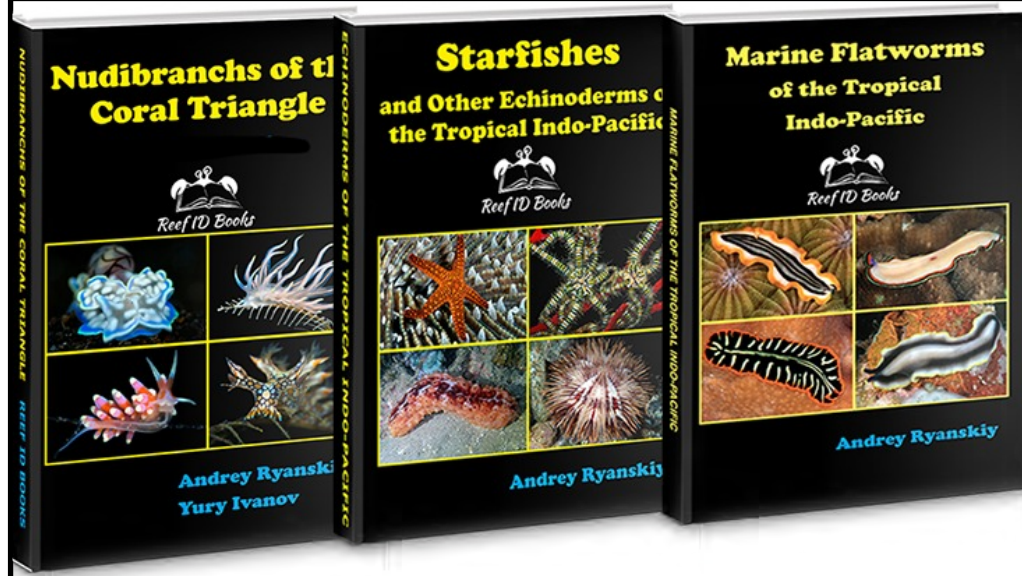
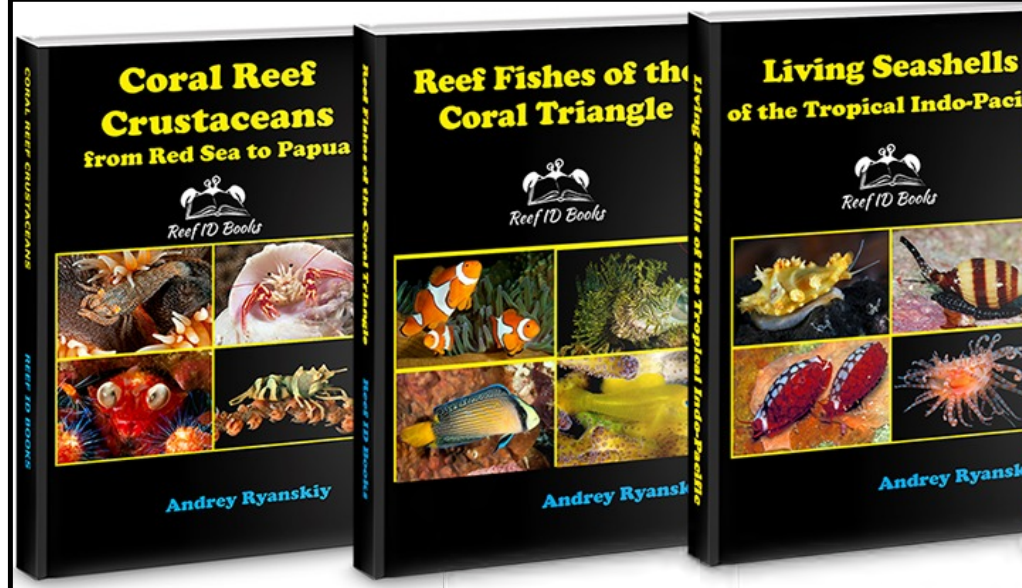


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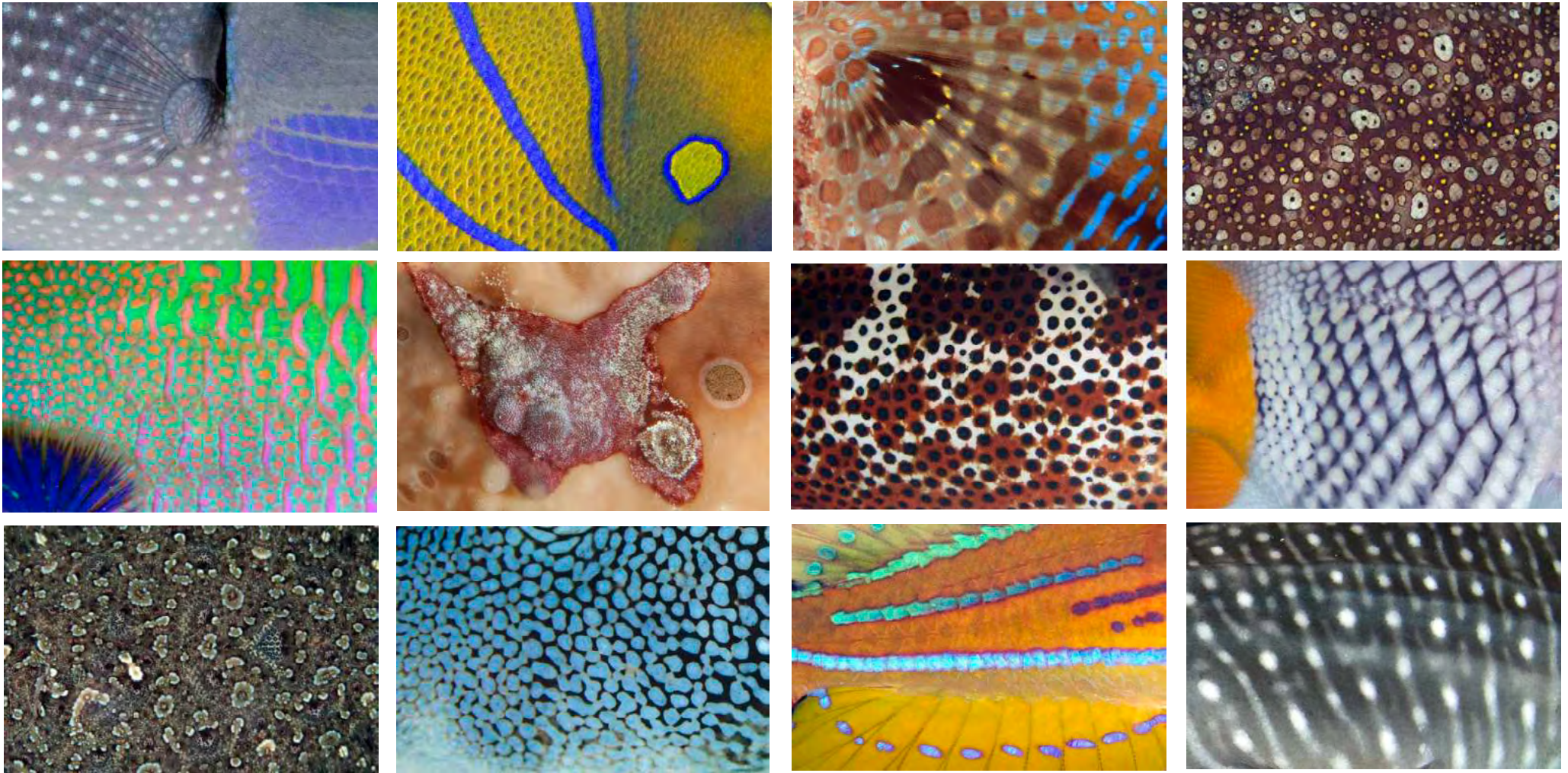
Marshall's Mysteries 15

Answers on page 66

In memoriam of Paul Humann (1937-2024). Without his ID books, I suspect I would not have been such an enthusiastic diver. I only met Paul once, on a trip to Lembah. On a boat going to a site, I was preparing for the dive, putting on my gear, checking and (pointlessly) re-checking my camera & regulators, going through my embarrassingly lengthy mask de-fogging ritual, etc. Sweating in my wetsuit, I noticed that Paul was sitting in his shorts, just gazing at the scenery. As we pulled up to the site, it seemed to me that Paul just casually pulled out what looked like a cheap airplane life jacket, blew into it a couple of times, and slipped into the water, before I had even got my fins on. Very cool.

The underwater world is beautiful even when just viewed through a blurry mask and moderate visibility water, but in close-up, fish patterns are intricate, mesmerizing masterpieces. Can you identify the fish below? If you can get the common name of the family (eg "Damselfish") for more than half, you're doing well.

All images ©
Colin Marshall



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.

Kit for sale

If you're looking for a specific piece of kit, enter a keyword (e.g. flash, housing, Ikelite, etc.) to show only the adverts you want.

Search UWP adverts



FOR SALE – SET of Sea & Sea YS 250 PRO

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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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 >](#)



FOR SALE – Nauticam flat ports and lenses Sony 28mm and 90mm

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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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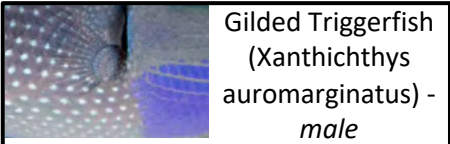
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Marshall's Mysteries 15 - Answers

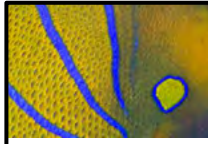
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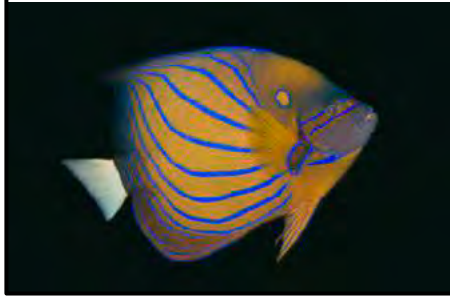
Gilded Triggerfish
(*Xanthichthys
auromarginatus*) -
male



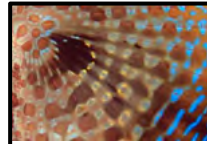
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Blue-ringed
Angelfish
(*Pomacanthus
annularis*)



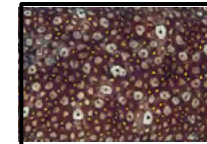
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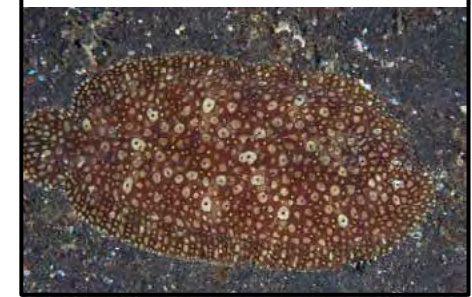
Flying Gurnard
(*Dactyloptena
orientalis*)



© Colin Marshall / Ardea



Peacock Sole
(*Pardachirus
pavoninus*)



© Colin Marshall / biosphoto



Spotted Parrotfish
(*Cetoscarus
ocellatus*) - *male*



© Colin Marshall



Warty Frogfish
(*Antennarius
maculatus*)



© Colin Marshall



Brown-Marbled
Grouper
(*Epinephelus
fuscoguttatus*)



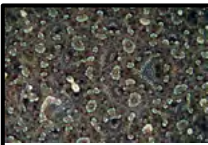
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Crosshatch
Butterflyfish
(*Chaetodon
xanthurus*)



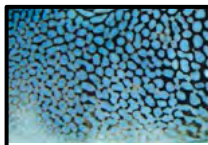
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Panther Flounder
(*Bothus
pantherinus*)



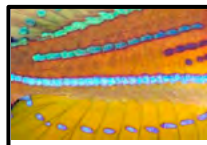
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Blue-spotted Puffer
(*Arothron
caeruleopunctatus*)



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Yellowfin
Flasherwrasse
(*Paracheilinus
flavianalis*) - *male*



© Colin Marshall



Whale Shark
(*Rhincodon typus*)



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.

My Shots

by David Fleetham

I recently spent several weeks off Timor-Leste, which is situated at the top of the Timor Sea between Indonesia and West Papua, above Australia.

A good amount of my time was spent offshore in search of marine mammals and we regularly ran into locally made FADs (fish aggregating devices). These were anchored in the open ocean in at least 1000 feet of water and often much deeper. Several villages would pool their resources to fund the expense of deploying an anchor system which consisted of a significant length of line along with some sort of weight.

On the surface was one or more plastic 55 gallon drums along with a bamboo platform tethered to the floats and occasionally a series of palm fronds trailing underwater to increase the attraction for juvenile fish and large pelagics.

Fishing has wiped out any significant shark populations in the area, but occasionally we would encounter an understandably timid example of a questionable species, although likely galapagos or silky sharks.

When we first approached these in our boat we would find several

species of sea birds, often in numbers that appeared to test the buoyancy capability of the bamboo structure.

Our arrival was always met with the entire flock taking to the air while we jumped in to see if there was anything of interest to photograph beneath.

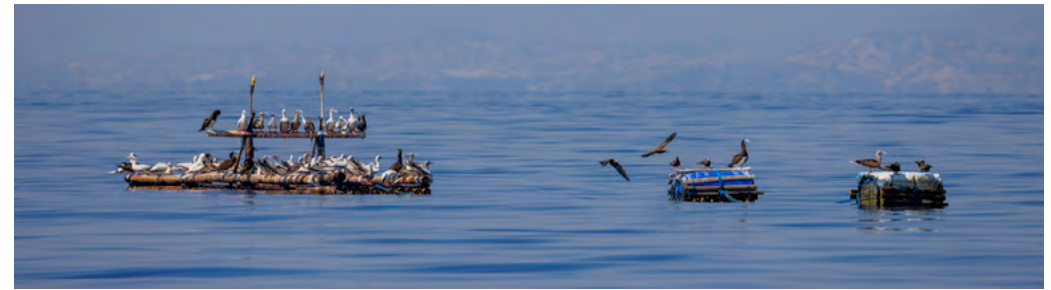
On one occasion we spotted a raft and noticed that there were no birds to be seen. Not one. This was a first.

As I grabbed my mask and fins the captain suggested I grab a land camera instead of my housing as there was a good sized saltwater crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus*, sunning itself on the platform.

From this day forward if we found a FAD with no bird life we would check first for crocs before jumping in.

David Fleetham

www.davidfleetham.com



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

(It's very easy. Images can be any size bigger than 20cm (horizontal or vertical) @

150dpi saved as jpeg format and about 500 - 750 words would be fine.)

Parting Shot

by Peter Rowlands

Since none of you have submitted any Parting Shots for this issue, it falls on me to fill this space from UwP91.

This shot was taken in the early 1980s in the waters around Plymouth, Devon, England. I'd had this idea to backlight macro subjects with a variety of coloured filters over the second strobe (we called them flashguns in those days) with the main strobe providing front lighting. I attached a Cokin filter holder to the front of the backlighting strobe so that I could slot in and remove squares of coloured Perspex (alright Plexiglas if you must). This strobe was out on an extended articulated arm so that it could point back directly into the lens. Then the trick was to find a macro subject such as this white anemone on a clean edge where I could get the rig over the subject and get the shot.

Hilsea Point near Plymouth has particularly craggy terrain and after a while I found this suitable subject protruding from the top of a sharp rock formation with room behind and in front of it to lower the rig over it.

There are times when all the thought, planning and preparation come together and make the shoot simple and this was just such a time. This was in the days of totally manual exposures so I knew exactly what the right settings would be for this fixed setup. All I had to do was slide the first piece of coloured Perspex into the Cokin holder and gently lower the rig over the subject and then take the shot. The next step was to lift the rig out of the way, remove the filter and replace it with another coloured one.

The colours I had decided on were, this one, blue, which created a tropical background, a green one to simulate British waters and then I got carried away and had a red one to simulate the Red Sea and a black one for the Black Sea!

Happy days.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com



Pentax LX camera with a 50mm macro lens in a Hugyfot housing with a Subatec S100 front strobe and an Ikelite Substrobe 50 as a backlight with a Cokin filter holder. Kodak Ektachrome 64 film, home processed when I got back from work on Monday evening. 1/60th @ F22, full power on both strobes (who needs metadata!).

**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**

(It's very easy. Images can be any size bigger than 20cm (horizontal or vertical) @ 150dpi saved as jpeg format and about 500 - 750 words would be fine.)