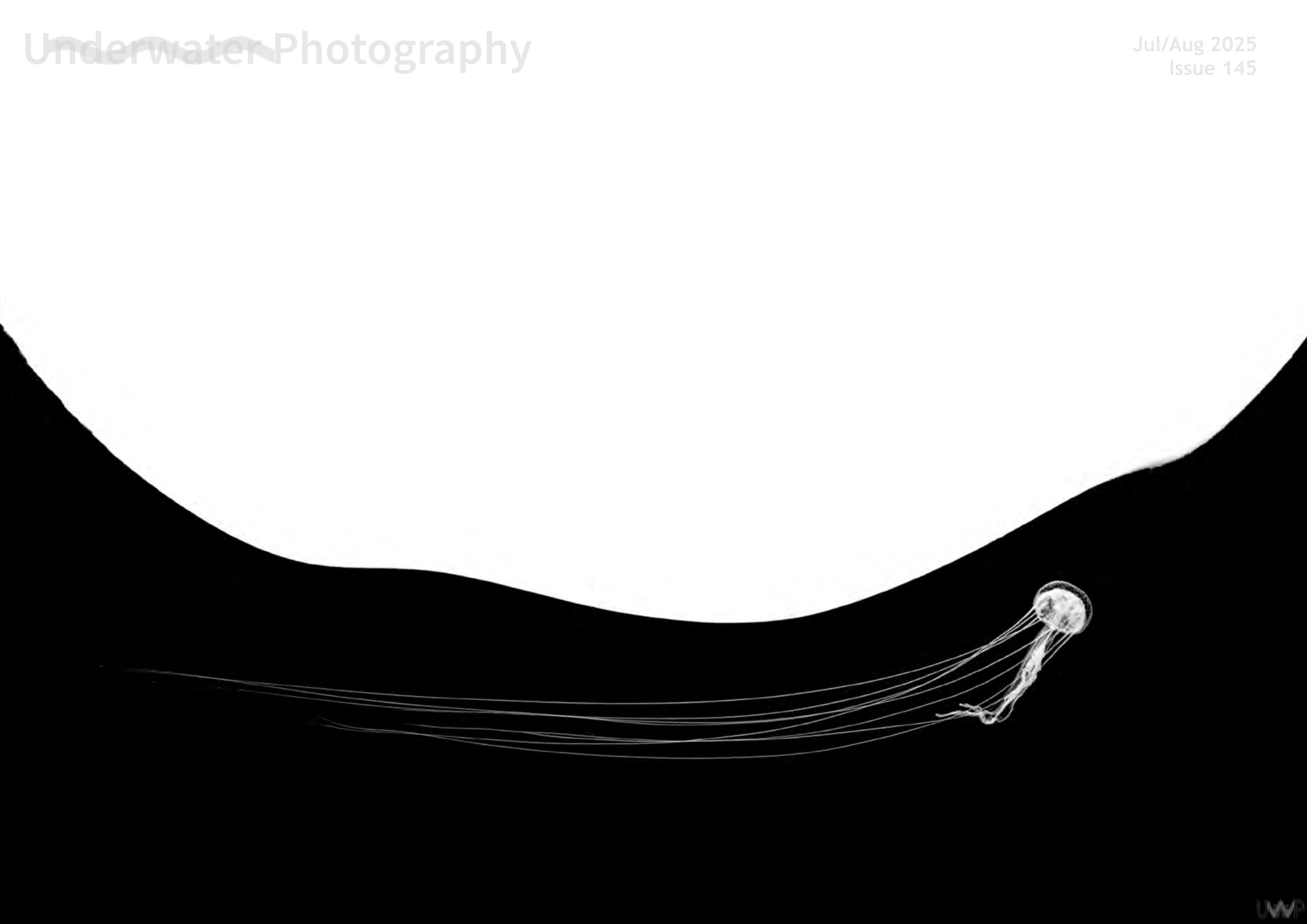
Underwater Photography

Jul/Aug 2025
Issue 145



Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort

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

info@bunakenoasis.com

www.bunakenoasis.com

WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS WINNER 2021 Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort

WORLD TRAVEL AWARDS WINNER 2022 Indonesia's Leading Dive Resort

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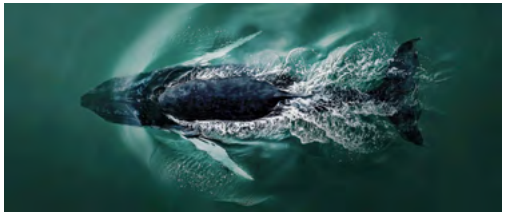
A web magazine
UwP145 Jul/Aug 2025



Cover shot by
Henley Spiers

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

Editorial

Fancy background macro

Underwater photography has always had trends or styles, some are one trick ponies but others, like creative backgrounds macro, have become very popular indeed. There's no doubt they were very eye catching in the early days and they certainly stood out in, and started winning competitions immediately.

Roll forward a few years and I'm wondering that, however well produced, their effect lessens but, more importantly, I worry about the physical process of achieving such images.

Macro photography, especially when working with high magnification lenses, requires immaculate buoyancy control if the environment is to remain pristine. It's difficult enough with a neutrally buoyant rig and both hands on the housing but try holding a reflective background behind the subject and it must upset one's balance. Working in such close proximity to very small subjects means the slightest wrong movement could cause damage. Add in the competitive mind set to achieve at all costs and you have a very precarious situation developing.

I don't want to sound like a killjoy, and to some, I most obviously already am but all I ask is to consider the situation.

Thankfully Nauticam has recently made some less powerful macro lenses which increases the camera to subject distance so much that it would be impossible to handhold a reflective background!

Finally, and who knows, just as trends and styles come and go, this one might fade away especially, heavens forbid, if they start to lose their appeal with competition judges.

Time, as always, will tell.

Ocean

David Attenborough's Ocean, produced by Silverback Films in Bristol, is a cinema release, natural history documentary with a distinct twist and I highly recommend it for two reasons.

Firstly the footage quality and story telling raise the already high bar and secondly, this just might be the one that changes the direction of marine conservation.

The big problem we face is that the general public can't see what we can. They look at the sea from the promenade and think it's lovely. Even the brightly coloured fishing boats passing slowly from left to right and then back again for hours are iconic; but underneath is a whole different story. Hopefully the bottom trawling footage in Ocean will be enough to create public outrage and increase the number protected areas significantly.

The film's release was timed to coincide with the UN Ocean conference in Nice, France. The key aim was to get the High Seas Treaty ratified by 60 countries to bring it into force. The agreement was signed two years ago to put 30% of the ocean into protected areas. Fifty countries had ratified by Friday, but dozens more promised to ratify by the end of the year.

The power of the underwater image is the only way the authorities can communicate the seriousness of the situation; without it, there are just words.

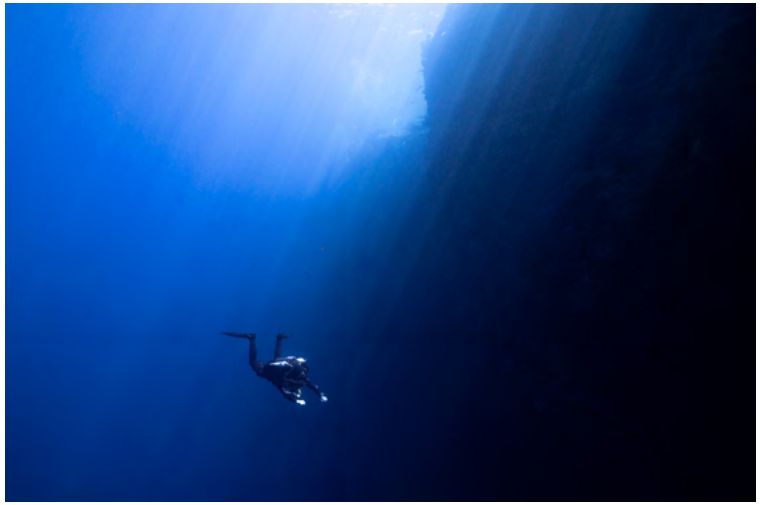
The final message from Ocean is that the sea can recover if left to its own devices and then we'll have even more and even more spectacular subjects to photograph.

Win, win.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Bunaken National Park



Bunaken National Park, located in the heart of the Coral Triangle just off the coast of North Sulawesi, is a dream destination for underwater photographers. Famed for its vibrant marine life, dramatic walls, and frequent turtle encounters, it's a location that deserves a spot on every shooter's bucket list.

The park is made up of several islands, including a dormant volcano, and offers a variety of environments—sandbars, mangroves, lagoons, shallow coral gardens, muck slopes, and vertical drop-offs. This diversity makes it an ideal setting for capturing a wide range of underwater scenes.

The park's signature wall dives are a wide-angle dream. These vertical cliffs plunge into the deep, covered in vibrant sponges, sea fans, and soft corals. Sunlight pierces through clear water, revealing texture, depth, and motion—ideal conditions for dramatic compositions. With visibility often between 20 to 30 meters, natural light photography thrives here.

One of the biggest photographic draws is the abundance of sea turtles, both green and hawksbill. It's not uncommon to lose count on how many you see on a dive here in the national park. Many are camera-friendly and will rest calmly on ledges, giving photographers ample time to frame and capture their shot.

Calm seas and warm water year-round (27–30°C) make for comfortable shooting conditions. Mild currents and short boat rides to dive sites allow for flexible schedules and easy access for lens or battery changes and with some resorts such as Bunaken Oasis offering world class camera rooms, keeping your equipment in the best condition and ready to dive is easier than ever. The still, shallow reeftops also present a great opportunity to experiment with over-under (split shot) photography. The sun sets in a direction that allows a lot of the island of bunaken reefs to be a great location to experiment with this type of photography.

While Bunaken is renowned for its wide-angle potential, the macro scene is not to be overlooked. Local guides are highly skilled at spotting critters such as the Pontohi pygmy seahorse, nudibranchs, flamboyant cuttlefish, and frogfish of all sizes. Nearby sandy slopes offer even more macro opportunities - just a short boat ride away.

For photographers wanting to maximize their trip, Bunaken's close proximity to the world-famous Lembeh Strait makes it easy to combine both destinations. Lembeh offers some of the best muck diving in the world, making it possible to shoot both world-class wide-angle and macro in a single trip.

Whether you're chasing turtles along towering walls or hunting tiny seahorses, Bunaken National Park offers an extraordinary canvas for underwater photographers of all levels.

www.jacobguymedia.com

www.bunakenoasis.com

Scuba Diving Magazine Now Accepting Entries For 2025 'Through Your Lens' Photo Contest

Photographers will be able to submit to five different categories: wide angle, macro, split shot, amateur and cold water.

Scuba Diving has confirmed the return of highly esteemed underwater photographers Brandon Cole, Kate Jonker, Suzan Meldonian and Alex Mustard to assist as guest judges.

Entry is free, and photographers can submit up to five entries per category.

The grand prize winner will receive a US$1,000/~€875 cash prize and a weeklong liveaboard trip aboard the Komodo Aggressor. First-place winners for each specified category will receive an Aggressor Adventures liveaboard trip; second-place winners will receive a Scubapro regulator; and third-place winners will receive a SeaLife SportDiver S smartphone housing.

Two winners in the Amateur category will receive a liveaboard trip from All Star Liveaboards. Select winners will also be given the opportunity to have their photos featured on PADI certification cards.

All winners and honorable mentions will be published in the September/October 2025 Photo Issue of Scuba Diving Magazine, with the cover featuring one of the contest entries. Entries are open now until July 7, 2025.

www.scubadiving.com/photocontest

Japan with Nigel Marsh 20 - 28 September 2026

Join Nigel Marsh for an incredible week of diving the subtropical reefs of Japan. The area we are exploring is south of Tokyo around Chiba and the Izu Peninsula, as this is the best area to see a large variety of marine life that is endemic to Japan and seen nowhere else. Over seven days we will be doing shore dives at Ozezaki and the Izu Ocean Park, and seeing many unique sharks, rays, morays, fishes, nudibranchs and invertebrates.

We finish the trip with two days of boat diving off Chiba and doing the Shark Scramble, an amazing site where hundreds of Banded Hound Sharks and Red Stingrays swarm around divers as they are hand fed. This is one of the most exciting shark feeds in world, and while the sharks are not dangerous, there are so many that you will be surrounded by them. This is also a good spot to see another marine life like Japanese Hornsharks, morays eels and many wonderful fishes. As with all photo group trips Nigel is on hand to improve your photos with daily tips, feedback and presentations.

www.nigelmarshphotography.com/trips

2nd Underwater Awards Australasia Imaging Competition

The Underwater Awards Australasia 2025 opens on June 1st. The premier underwater imaging competition focused on the Australasian region is a three-way collaboration between the long-established Underwater Australasia, leading underwater photography and videography resource DivePhotoGuide, and underwater imaging equipment and dive gear distributor UW Images.

The competition will culminate in an exhibition at Go Diving Show ANZ in September 2025 —the second Australian edition of the hugely successful Go Diving Show in the UK.

The prestigious judging panel comprises photo judges Tobias Friedrich, Jayne Jenkins, Matty Smith, Tanya Houppermans, Scott Portelli and William Tan; and video judges Philip Hamilton and Ross Long.

The prizes, worth more than A$70,000 in total, include dive trips with the world's top resorts and liveaboards, as well as the latest underwater photo and video gear—even an underwater photography drone and an underwater scooter with photographic platform.

Entrants compete for prizes in 9 categories, including the unique "Reels Showcase" video category. The top image or video among the category winners receives the distinction of "Best of Show."

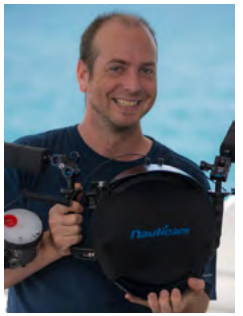
The competition calls for passionate underwater shooters from around the world to submit their most captivating and compelling images and videos from the Australasian region.

Shooters are invited to immerse themselves in the challenge of capturing the essence of this extraordinary realm, where every frame tells a story of the delicate balance and breathtaking beauty that characterises our oceans.

Winners will be revealed on UnderwaterCompetition.com and published by supporting media partners worldwide shortly thereafter. The entry fees are US$10 per image or video entered.

www.underwatercompetition.com

Bunaken Oasis 2025 Photography Workshop with Alex Tattersall



Dive into an underwater photography paradise with Alex Tattersall at Bunaken Oasis!

We are thrilled to announce our 2025 Photography Workshop, a unique opportunity for enthusiasts to elevate their skills amidst the stunning marine landscapes of Bunaken, Indonesia.

Departing the UK on 23rd September 2025, this 9-night adventure includes 8 days of diving, featuring 23 Nitrox dives and 2-night dives.

At Bunaken Oasis Dive Resort and Spa, you will receive expert instruction from Alex Tattersall, renowned for his passion and expertise in underwater photography. Immerse yourself in crystal-clear waters teeming with vibrant coral reefs and diverse marine life, while enjoying the luxury and serenity of Bunaken Oasis.

Don't miss out on this unforgettable journey for more information or call us at 01323 648924 to secure your spot today.

Join us for the ultimate underwater photography adventure and capture the ocean's beauty like never before!

www.bunakenoasis.com

I am Shen Collazo, the Owner/Technician of Ocean Inventions, Underwater Camera Housings Maintenance and Repair. We are located in Southeast Florida.

I have been working on underwater photo and video camera housings for almost 20 years. For most of those years I worked as the only full-time specialist/technician at Reef Photo & Video, repairing and overhauling camera housings and related equipment.

This experience provided my expertise at making adjustments, repairs, overhauls, and solutions to issues with underwater camera housings and associated underwater photo equipment.

I am an avid diver and underwater photographer myself, so can relate to my clients! I also work with lathe machines and personally produce my own parts when they are not available, often achieving a quality superior to the original components. I specialize in brands such as Nauticam, Subal, Sea&Sea, Ikelite, and essentially any other brand, from simple GoPro models to complex antiques.

I am extremely methodical and meticulous, with a strong focus on honesty, reliability, and high customer satisfaction.

You can contact Shen at: (754) 207-4768

Or by email at:

seashen@mac.com

www.oceaninventions.com

Fatboys Resort Debuts New Dive Centre In Solomon Islands

One of the best-known names on the Solomon Islands tourism scene for many years, the improbably-named Fatboys Resort on Mbabanga Island near Gizo has now joined the ranks of the highly qualified dive outfits operating in the destination.

The resort's location in Gizo in the destination's Western Province is perfect, the area renowned for some of the most diverse and exciting diving to be found anywhere in the world.

From World War II wrecks to numerous offshore reefs, spectacular coral formations, plummeting walls, manta rays and abundant marine life, SCUBA enthusiasts are beyond spoilt for choice and divers can choose from a plethora of amazing locations.

'Grand Central Station' boasts the highest fish count in the world with more than 275 species recorded in its teeming waters, 'Joe's Wall' offers a spectacular wall dive starting in the sandy shallows of a small bay and continuing as a steep wall with depths over 60 metres.

WWII wreck enthusiasts too are more than catered for with a 440-foot Japanese freighter, the Toa Maru, a US Corsair fighter aircraft and almost fully-intact US Hellcat fighter aircraft lying in very shallow waters a short boat ride away.

Fatboys can cater to all types of divers – from beginners and experts and groups of all sizes and on -divers too with a variety of snorkelling tours easily arranged. A fully certified SSI Training Facility, the new Fatboys Dive Centre is operated by a crew of six including an SSI Divemaster.

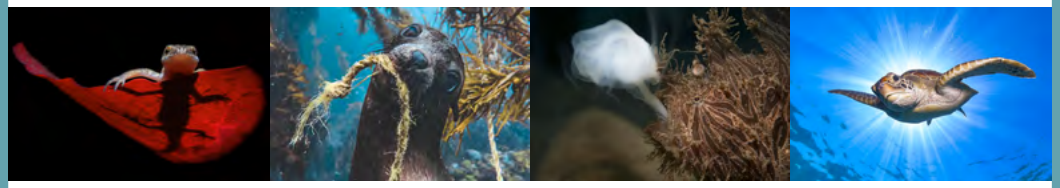
www.fatboysresort.com

WWW.UNDERWATERAWARDS.COM

SUBMERGE · CAPTURE · AMAZE · REPEAT

UNDERWATER AWARDS

AUSTRALASIA 2025



PRIZES WORTH
MORE THAN A$70,000

NINE EXCITING PHOTO
AND VIDEO CATEGORIES

WINNERS PRESENTED AT
GO DIVING SHOW ANZ

JUDGING PANEL

- Tobias Friedrich
- Jayne Jenkins
- Matty Smith
- Tanya Houppermans
- Scott Portelli
- William Tan
- Philip Hamilton
- Ross Long

SUBMISSIONS
JUNE 1 – JULY 20, 2025

underwater www.underwater.com.au dive in. explore. discover.

UW Images www.uwimages.com.au

DIVE PHOTO GUIDE www.divephotoguide.com

ORGANISERS

Monterey Shootout
August 1st - 3rd 2025

The Monterey Shootout is an underwater photo event focused on fun, education, and the goal is to inspire new image-makers.

Come meet a supportive group of die-hard Monterey divers, learn new shooting techniques in our shooting seminars, and maybe even discover a new dive site. Our friendly competition not only rewards advanced shooters with amazing prizes but also the newest shooters in the ranks. Join us for a weekend diving and seminars!

Registration Only $35. One low price gets you into the Competition, cocktail party, and all Seminars

Expanded contest hours - Fri 7AM to Sat 7PM. Backscatter party on Saturday night at 6PM

First time shooters will enjoy our introductory seminars held on Friday. All skill levels will get inspired with our more advanced seminars held on Sunday. Come meet fellow enthusiasts and learn from our professional presenters.

You don't need to be a pro to have fun and win big in our friendly competition. You just need to get in the water this weekend. Our 32 hour photo and video competition has categories for beginner, intermediate, and advanced shooters with great prizes from our sponsors. All competition entrants must register for a full weekend pass to enter.

Monterey diving is second to none when the conditions are right. We can't control the weather, but we can help you find good dive boats, great dives, and places to stay during your visit.

www.montereyshootout.com

Expeditions with Henley Spiers

Mobula Aggregation, Mexico
May & June 2026. Snorkelling & Freediving

Join me in Mexico's Baja peninsula for one of the greatest natural spectacles on earth: the mobula ray aggregation. This seasonal event brings together thousands of Munk's devil rays for the largest known assembly of sharks or rays on the planet.

The waters of the Sea of Cortez are rich in plankton at this time of year and this is part of what attracts the mobulas to the area. The rays are reason enough for any ocean lover to visit, but we also have a chance of seeing other star attractions of the marine world such as great whales, sea lions, whale sharks, dolphins, and blue dragons.

This is an open ocean safari with no guarantees of wildlife sightings, but we will be there at the right time, with the best guides in the region, the best boats, and the best resources, including a spotter plane every day to help us find life.

REQUEST BROCHURE

Baja Monster, Mexico
Oct & Nov 2025. Scuba Diving, Snorkelling & Freediving

Visiting Mexico's Baja peninsula 7 years ago was a turning point in both my career and my experience of the ocean. Nothing had prepared me for the intimate encounters with charismatic big animals and astonishing displays of natural behaviour. Every time I go back I see something new, and it keeps on delivering for me and others with both life-affirming moments and award-winning pictures. Every image you see in this brochure was captured in Baja during the fall.

This itinerary brings together my dream expedition to the region. Prepare yourself for playful sea lions, mobula rays swooping past at night, seabirds exploding down into the sea, and striped marlin united in pursuit of sardine baitballs…and that's just the things we can almost guarantee.

No one else offers this itinerary delivered in this manner. It is a 2 week extravaganza of an expedition in search of the best and purest encounters.

REQUEST BROCHURE

www.henleyspiers.com

New Products

Nauticam housing for the Canon PowerShot V1

Nauticam has unveiled its latest housing, the NA-CV1, designed to accommodate Canon's new point-and-shoot, the PowerShot V1

For the NA-CV1, Nauticam has opted to use their N50 port system but ship the housing with the N50 3.5-inch acrylic dome port, which allows the full 16–50mm zoom range out of the box.

Switching to their N50 Short Port 25 gives users the opportunity to mount various Nauticam water-contact optics, such as the WWL-C (FOV: 130°–71°), WWL-1B (FOV: 130–80°) and SMC/CMC (via Nauticam's bayonet mount adaptor).

Like Nauticam's other housings for compact cameras, users have the option of adding a tray and handles, an LCD magnifier, and a vacuum valve (via the housing's M16 port)—the vacuum monitoring and leak detection system is pre-installed.

Expert product design, modern manufacturing techniques, top quality materials backed by a two-year warranty, and a critical focus on the user experience combine to produce the premier system for Canon Powershot V1.

The NA-CV1 housing is priced at $2,000

www.nauticam.com

Insta 360 X5 60m housing

The Insta 360 housing is completely invisible when shooting 360° video and provides seamless underwater stitching and is waterproof down to 60m (197ft).

Capture crystal-clear 360° video with zero distortion or use with the Invisible Selfie Stick for epic third-person views. The new quick-dry Storage Bag is usable both on land and underwater, protects your Dive Case and can be attached to a BCD.

www.insta360.com

Nauticam NA-C400 for Canon EOS C400 Cinema Camera

Canon's EOS C-series Cinema Cameras have long been among the most versatile cinema cameras for underwater filmmakers and the C400 is no exception. Built around a 6K BSI full-frame sensor and the large RF-mount, the C-400 also features mechanical ND filters.

The Nauticam NA-C400 is a professional aluminum housing that builds on Nauticam's extensive cinema housing lineup. The NA-C400 features the large N120 port opening shared with other Canon RF and EF-mount cameras such as the R5II and R5C. This allows for the use of identical lens and port combinations when using a combination of RF-mount Canon cameras on a project with Nauticam housings.

In addition to mechanical controls for Power, Zoom, Focus and Lens Release, the NA-C400 features electronic controls at the rear, and both sides of the housing through the camera's remote functionality. The left handle adjacent controls are for 'Up', 'Down', 'ISO+', and 'ISO-'. Right handle adjacent controls are for 'Rec', 'Fn3', 'Fn4', 'IRIS+' and 'IRIS-'. The main control board accesses 'Left', 'Right', 'Up', 'Down', 'Set', '1', '2', 'Set', 'MENU/ REC Review'.

The C400 features a detachable LCD screen that can be easily integrated into the NA-C400. The LCD monitor is supported inside the housing and is mounted at the rear of the camera with a supplied bracket that allows it to be easily viewed underwater through the shaded rear window.

www.nauticam.com

Aquatica housing for Canon EOS R5 Mark II

Aquatica has announced its housing for the Canon EOS R5 Mark II. Machined from aluminum, anodized and baked with tough powder coat paint, Aquatica's housing features integrated handles, stainless steel push buttons, and compatibility with both native RF and legacy EF lenses (using a mount adapter and extension ring). The housing has a large-bore M24 port supporting HDMI 2.0 output to a recorder/monitor like the Atomos Ninja V+.

The housing can be ordered in four configurations: (i) with dual Nikonos bulkheads, (ii) with dual optical bulkheads and an LED trigger, (iii) with a single Ikelite bulkhead, and (iv) with Ikelite TTL capability. All versions include Aquatica's Surveyor vacuum circuitry (pump, valve and sensor) as standard.

The housing is available for pre-order at $3,400.

www.backscatter.com

Marelux housing for the Canon EOS R5 Mark II

Marelux has released its underwater housing for the new Canon EOS R5 Mark II.

Aiming to take full advantage of the R5II's capabilities, Marelux's anodized aluminum alloy housing features an ergonomic design with controls arranged around the built-in handles. A quick-release baseplate allows the camera to be easily inserted with precision and removed again.

Dual locking levers ensure the housing is safely closed, while ports and extension rings are secured in place using another locking lever. The housing ships with a vacuum detection and moisture alarm system.

The MX-R5II housing has an MSRP of $3,398

www.marelux.co

BACKSCATTER

THE BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

OLYMPUS E-M10 IV

Free Optical TTL converter with every Sea & Sea MDX-R5II housing

Strobe users typically choose one of the following three sync systems as an optional item: Electrical Manual, Optical Manual or Optical TTL

Sea & Sea MDX-R5II housings for the Canon R5 now include a free Optical TTL converter with the purchase of the housing. This optional converter has a retail value of $300.

This converter allows strobes like the YS-D3 MKII, YS-D3, YS-D2, and YS-D1 to fire quicker based on their recycle time. It converts the camera's strobe light signal to LED light and synchronizes it with YS strobe. This high-performance converter is also capable of TTL auto exposure.

www.seaandsea.jp

Retra Flash Pro Max II

The Retra Flash Pro Max II is our fifth-generation professional underwater strobe, engineered to push the boundaries of lighting performance.

Delivering 65% more light output, 25% faster recycle times, and a 120% brighter pilot LED, it sets a new standard for power and reliability—all within the same compact form factor as the previous Pro Max generation.

The Retra Flash Pro Max II is our most advanced professional strobe yet, engineered for photographers who demand the highest performance, reliability, and flexibility on every dive.

$1,899.00 USD

www.retra-uwt.com

Touchscreen Smartphone Universal 10m Housing

Enjoy seamless touchscreen functionality with our waterproof phone case, perfect for capturing photos and videos while diving or snorkeling. Easily swipe, shoot, and control your phone underwater—even at a depth of 33ft(10 m)

Engineered with an oil-filled touchscreen layer, this advanced underwater phone case delivers ultra-responsive control even in deep water. Effortlessly switch between photo and video modes while you're exploring underwater worlds

Capture your underwater adventures and share it the moment you're back on land. Perfect for beach trips, snorkeling tours, and diving excursions, this waterproof phone case ensures your memories are always ready to post

No tools or complicated steps—just snap your phone in! Our quick-lock design ensures secure sealing in seconds. Dive-ready in moments, making underwater photography accessible anytime, anywhere

Compatible with most phones under 6.9 inches, including iPhone 16/15/14/13/12/11 Pro Max, Samsung Galaxy S25/S24/S23/S22 Plus/ Ultra and more. One case, endless possibilities—great for families or groups with different devices

We're committed to your satisfaction! Watch our detailed setup videos and FAQs, or contact us via Amazon for quick assistance. Whether you're prepping for a dive trip or a beach vacation, we're here to support your underwater photography every step of the way.

£49.99

Amazon

Sealife Smartphone housing

The SportDiver S is easy to hold and use and offers a large shutter lever and rear control buttons for easy operation, even with dive gloves. Snorkelers and Divers can get more creative with their photos or video shot by using advanced camera settings*. Adjust Zoom, Exposure (EV), Auto/Manual Focus, White Balance, Tint, Lens selection, RAW+JPEG mode, and video stabilization (on available phone models)*. The SportDiver S housing includes the free SportDiver app, unlike other smartphone housing apps, there are no annoying in-app purchases or ads. You can easily switch between photo and video mode. The SportDiver App uses your phone's camera technology native to each phone model*. The app supports the present and previous versions of the OS, the app is updated according to new versions of the OS.

www.sealife-cameras.com

Salty Surf Canon C70/ C80 Housing

Introducing our new SIREN housing for Canon C70 & C80

SIREN is our new housing line aimed to fill the gap between a surf housing and a dive housing.

Lightweight enough to use as a surf housing, but with a 40m depth rating, allowing for free divers and recreational divers alike to get their camera in the water.

DEPTH RATING: 40m/130ft with dome ports (flat ports are 20m depth rated). $5,500

www.saltysurfhousings.com

Ikelite Ecko

In spite of its small size, the Ecko boasts 50 watt-seconds of flash energy and up to 140 degrees beam angle with the included diffuser attached. The 5700K color temperature beam is ideal for macro photography and warm enough for wide angle.

The included dome diffuser is custom blended for high transmissivity and perfectly smooth coverage in wide angle photography. An included lanyard prevents accidental loss and includes a quick release lock.

Ecko strobes were designed with the traveling underwater photographer in mind. The strobe size, power, and coverage makes it ideal for both compact point-and-shoot and mirrorless systems. Focus on close-up photography with a single Ecko, or balance your system out with dual strobes to take on anything you come across.

www.ikelite.com

Marelux Apollo Y strobe

The Apollo Y strobe is compatible with all Marelux underwater housings and integrates seamlessly with the Marelux Apollo III, Marelux Apollo S, and Marelux Soft Pro systems, offering a flexible lighting solution for a variety of underwater shooting scenarios. The strobe's new design features a specially crafted removable battery chamber that sets it apart from other models, while its user-friendly interface ensures that both novice and expert underwater photographers can benefit from its robust functionality.

www.marelux.co

Isotta RED64 Strobe

With an anodized aluminum body the RED64 features a circular flash tube, promising a smooth, even light beam. The strobe has a guide number of 22 and a color temperature of 5,300°K. Flash power can be manually adjusted in 10 increments, from GN 22 to GN 1.

At GN 8, the strobe can keep up with burst shooting at 6fps, and when fully charged, the strobe achieves 300 flashes at full power. The company says the strobe offers high-speed sync (HSS) compatibility with Sony, Canon and Nikon cameras.

Powered by eight rechargeable AA batteries, the strobe can be triggered fiber-optically or electrically via its S6 bulkhead.

$1,500.

www.backscatter.com

MonsterAdapter LA-FZ1 lens adapter

MonsterAdapter has unveiled the brand new LA-FZ1 lens adapter. This advanced adapter enables the use of Nikon F-mount lenses on Z-mount mirrorless cameras, allowing photographers to seamlessly integrate their existing lens collection into modern camera systems.

Particularly noteworthy is the integrated focus drive motor, which was specially developed for Nikon AF lenses. This means that older AF-D lenses with mechanical focus drive can also be used fully and precisely. Ingma Pictures GmbH is the official distributor of the LA-FZ1 for the European market. The adapter is expected to be available in summer 2025.

www.ingma.pictures/en/

Kraken underwater camera bag (rinse bag)

This rinse bag for underwater photographers is the perfect solution for safely transporting and rinsing your camera gear. With its durable, waterproof design and functional features, this bag ensures your equipment stays protected in any environment.

Key Features:

Waterproof Construction: Built to withstand wet conditions, the bag's waterproof materials keep your gear safe from moisture and splashes on the outside or can be filled with freshwater to rinse your camera gear

Removable Strap: Easily adjust the carrying comfort with a removable shoulder strap for hands-free convenience.

Waterproof Zipped Pockets: Secure your accessories with waterproof, zippered pockets to protect from water and moisture. **The pocket material is waterproof, the zippers themselves are not.

Side Pockets for Bottles and Accessories: Convenient side pockets designed to hold water bottles or small accessories, keeping everything organized and within easy reach.

www.uwcamerastore.com

MiniGear Snoot Light MS-2000

The new MiniGear Snoot Light MS-2000 has been available since February - a compact, powerful snoot light that opens up many creative possibilities for underwater photographers. As a further development of the successful MS-03, it combines proven precision with even more power, flexibility and creative control.

The MS-2000 is particularly aimed at macro photographers who want to use targeted lighting as a creative tool. With its precise snoot optics, the light can be directed exactly onto small subjects and the background completely darkened - for impressive contrasts and dramatic image effects. A new feature is the powerful burst mode, which briefly emits a “flash” that is 30% brighter than the set brightness level. This means that even shy or moving creatures can be perfectly illuminated at the decisive moment.In addition to its impressive light output, the MS-2000 is easy to operate and offers various brightness levels for creative freedom. The precise snoot optics allow the light to be directed with pinpoint accuracy, allowing subjects to be specifically highlighted and artistically staged.

The new MS-2000 is further proof of MiniGear’s innovative strength in the field of underwater lighting. It is aimed at discerning photographers who value reliable technology, high-quality workmanship and maximum control over their light.

www.ingma.pictures/en/

SeeDeep Diving Optics
Underwater Reading Glasses for Scuba Divers

Removable reading glasses for divers that provide more control. Use the reading glasses only when you need them;

Choose the best position on your diving mask; Remove them to use the full capacity of your mask again The SeeDeep reading glasses: Offer a sharp vision of even the tiniest details;

Fits any diving mask type, model or size; Includes a Neoprene BCD pouch

www.see-deep.com

Gates ML-105 Housing

The new ML-105 is an ultra low-light underwater imaging system, capable of operating in environments nearly absent of light. Gates ML-105 Housing is designed to push the boundaries of underwater motion imaging. Such breakthrough imaging is enabled by the Canon ML-105 camera, capable of incredible low light performance over 4 million ISO.

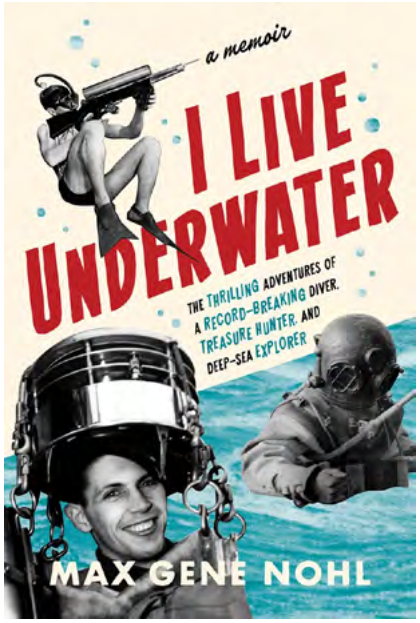
www.gateshousings.com

I Live Underwater by Max Nohl

An outdoor adventure memoir by a legendary diver and innovator who never stopped pushing the limit

I Live Underwater is the highly anticipated posthumous memoir of Max Nohl, a larger-than-life thrill seeker and treasure hunter who revolutionized deep-sea diving. Recounting harrowing experiences with tangled air-hoses, hungry sharks, untested scientific theories, and painful cases of the bends, Nohl's vivid narrative shows how his unquenchable thirst for adventure propelled him to transcend fear and become one of the field's great innovators--shattering the diving record in 1937 as the first person to dive deeper than 400 feet.

Beginning with the disquieting childhood experiences that inspired his obsession with the underwater world, Nohl goes on to discuss his innovative work on the first self-contained diving suit as a student at MIT and his risky experiments in breathing helium to achieve deeper dives. In addition to making vital contributions to the commercial diving industry, Nohl was a pioneer in underwater filming, developing equipment and techniques that were employed in many Hollywood film and television productions.



After Nohl's sudden death in 1960 in a car accident, his nearly complete memoir sat in the Milwaukee Public Library Archives--unpublished, until now. Accompanying this page-turning text is a dynamic assortment of images, including Nohl's original pen-and-ink sketches and historic photos of Nohl and his collaborators. A foreword by Wisconsin Historical Society maritime archaeologist Tamara Thomsen provides insights into Nohl's many important contributions to the diving world and to Wisconsin history and culture.

Link

United Nations World Oceans Day winners

by Ian Bongso-Seldrup

The winners of the twelfth annual Photo Competition for United Nations World Oceans Day were announced today surrounding the United Nations World Oceans Day celebration in Nice, France.

A panel of world-renowned judges selected winners from thousands of global entries made by both amateur and professional photographers. This year's competition featured the recurring categories "Big and Small Underwater Faces," "Underwater Seascapes," and "Above Water Seascapes." The category "Wonder: Sustaining What Sustains Us" was newly added in celebration of the 2025 UN World Oceans Day theme sharing the same name.

The 2025 winning photographers hail from eight different countries: Rachel Moore, Luis Arpa, Steven Lopez ("Wonder: Sustaining What Sustains Us"); Andrey Nosik, Giacomo Marchione, Lars von Ritter Zahony ("Big and Small Underwater Faces"); Dani Escayola, Gerald Rambert, Pedro Carrillo ("Underwater Seascapes"); Leander Nardin, Nur Tucker, Andrey Nosik ("Above Water Seascapes").

Historically hosted at the UN Headquarters in New York, this year's United Nations World Oceans Day celebration moved overseas, taking place ahead of the UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3), which will also be hosted in Nice, France from June 9–13.

Since its inception in 2014, the competition has been curated by underwater and wildlife photographer Ellen Cuylaerts, and judged by a world-renowned panel of judges. Judges for 2025 included: underwater photographer Ipah Uid Lynn (Malaysia), underwater photographer William Tan (Singapore), wildlife photographer Vanessa Mignon (France), and underwater photographer Marcello Di Francesco (Italy).

www.divephotoguide.com

Winner - © Rachel Moore (USA). Wonder: Sustaining What Sustains Us

This photo, taken in Mo'orea, French Polynesia in 2024, captures the eye of a humpback whale named Sweet Girl, just days before her tragic death. Four days after I captured this intimate moment, she was struck and killed by a fast-moving ship. Her death serves as a heartbreaking reminder of the 20,000 whales lost to ship strikes every year. We are using her story to advocate for stronger protections, petitioning for stricter speed laws around Tahiti and Mo'orea during whale season. I hope Sweet Girl's legacy will spark real change to protect these incredible animals and prevent further senseless loss.

© Andrey Nosik (Russia). Big and Small Underwater Faces – Winner

This photo of a Japanese warbonnet (Chirolophis japonicus) was captured in the Sea of Japan, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) southwest of Vladivostok, Russia. I found the ornate fish at a depth of about 30 meters (100 feet), under the stern of a shipwreck. This species does not appear to be afraid of divers—on the contrary, it seems to enjoy the attention—and it even tried to sit on the dome port of my camera.

© Dani Escayola (Spain). Underwater Seascapes — Winner

This year, I had the incredible opportunity to visit a jellyfish lake during a liveaboard trip around southern Raja Ampat, Indonesia. Being surrounded by millions of jellyfish, which have evolved to lose their stinging ability due to the absence of predators, was one of the most breathtaking experiences I've ever had.

© Lars von Ritter Zahony (Germany). Underwater Seascapes — Honorable Mention

With only orcas as their natural predators, leopard seals are Antarctica's most versatile hunters, preying on everything from fish and cephalopods to penguins and other seals. Gentoo penguins are a favored menu item, and leopard seals can be observed patrolling the waters around their colonies. For this shot, I used a split image to capture both worlds: the gentoo penguin colony in the background with the leopard seal on the hunt in the foreground.

© Leander Nardin (Austria). Above Water Seascapes – Winner

A serene lake cradled by arid dunes, where a gentle stream breathes life into the heart of Mother Earth's creation: Captured from an airplane, this image reveals the powerful contrasts and hidden beauty where land and ocean meet, reminding us that the ocean is the source of all life and that everything in nature is deeply connected. Shark Bay, Western Australia.

© Gerald Rambert (Mauritius). Underwater Seascapes — 2nd

This shot captures a school of rays resting at a cleaning station in Mauritius, where strong currents once attracted them regularly. Some rays grew accustomed to divers, allowing close encounters like this. Sadly, after the severe bleaching that the reefs here suffered last year, such gatherings have become rare, and I fear I may not witness this again at the same spot.

The Inaugural International Aerial Photographer of the Year 2025

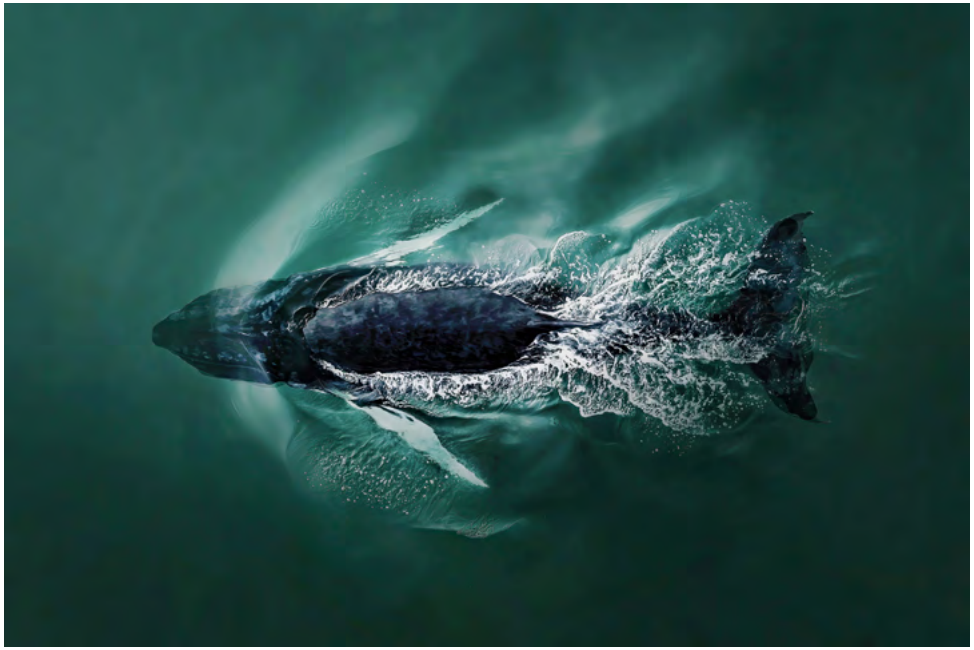
Professional and amateur photographers worldwide were invited to enter the first International Aerial Photographer of the Year competition.

From over 1500 entries from around the world, exceeding first year expectations, the winner of the Inaugural International Aerial Photographer of the Year (based on a folio submission of at least 4 images) is Joanna Steidle of the United States.

Joanna is a professional drone pilot and artist based in the Hamptons on Long Island, New York.

Joanna says, “Aerial photography offers so many possibilities not yet explored. Every day is exciting as I look for unique subjects and moments. I try to stay away from the ordinary. I live in a very flat landscape, so top-down imagery has become quite a theme in my photos which happens to work well with my love for marine life.”

www.joannasteidle.com



Diving
A humpback whale diving back under the surface of the Atlantic Ocean after taking a breath of air. This was taken within 500ft of the coast in Southampton, NY, USA

© Joanna Steidle/ International Aerial Photographer of the Year 2025

The Gateway
A spinner shark hunting in a school of menhaden bait fish in the Atlantic Ocean, Southampton, NY, USA

© Joanna Steidle/ International Aerial Photographer of the Year 2025

www.internationalaerialphotographer.com

A small fever of cownose rays stirring up sand along their travels. Taken in Southampton, NY USA, just a few hundred feet from the coast.

A fever of cownose rays approaching a school of menhaden bait fish, taken just a few hundred feet from the coast of Southampton, NY. USA.

Weefine 3000 CCW Ring Lights

by Phil Rudin

Any fan of prime time television has probably seen a ring flash in action during programs like the C.S.I. crime dramas, America's Next Top Model and other well known series.

The ring flash was originally introduced around 1952 as a dental photography tool but quickly spreed to other disciplines of photography. It has since gained popularity among nature photographers for macro/close-up use and has also become an invaluable tool for portrait and fashion photographers. The original had a circular (360 degree) flash tube which fitted around the camera lens for shooting stills.

Fast forward and today's ring lights include flash tubes, LED ring lights, fiber optic ring lights and constant source fluorescent ring lights used extensively in commercial videos like "Easy Breeze Beautiful Cover Girl" advertisements. The circular shaped specular highlights in the eyes of the models is a dead giveaway that a ring light was used.

Athena Co. made the ARF-ring flash in the film days which had a 360 degree circular flash tube. The flash threaded onto a 67mm macro port thread and was connected by a coil cord to a sending unit made by Sea & Sea. This is a product I reviewed in the Nov/Dec 2010 issue of UWPMAG.

Why use a ring Light?

Many nature and portrait photographers enjoy the diffused and shadowless lighting created by an overcast day, so what would make artificially diffused strobe lighting any different? The bulk of the lighting load in underwater macro and close-up photography is carried by one or more strobes mostly used at a distance of less than two feet (0.6 meters) from the main subject. If canvassed most macro shooters would prefer two strobes over one directed from opposite sides of the lens and main subject.

Portrait photographers often use one or more reflectors for the same purpose. In fact macro/close-up photography is portrait photography involving fish and other critters rather than people.

While having two light sources coming from different directions may seem unnatural, the reason we use the second strobe is to reduce the harsh shadows created by the key strobe (most often the left strobe). When the strobes are being fired in TTL the camera program attempts to balance the lighting on both sides of the subject making the light a bit flatter and more even across the entire frame. This is not always a good thing because it may cause the subject to lack the depth that shadows create in an image.

The ring light is a convenient way to light close subjects for several reasons. We all know that in

Banded male Jawfish with eggs, Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, WeeFine 3000 CCW, ISO 100, F/7.1, 1/125th sec. Shot in video mode full power using auto ISO

Common Octopus, Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, WeeFine 3000 CCW with fiber optic cord, ISO 200, F/13, 1/160th sec. Shot using strobe mode at full power.

any type of photography not every tool works for every situation so let's examine some of the up sides to using a ring light for macro/close-up photography.

First the reduced size and complexity of the system is one of the key advantages of the ring light. It allows you to get your camera system and light source into places larger strobes can't go.

After looking at tens of thousands of macro images in my sixty plus years of being involved with diving it has become quite evident that most macro images are shot in the landscape (horizontal) orientation. While this is not a bad thing it occurs to me that many of these subjects, like Seahorses, would have been more compositionally pleasing had they been captured in the portrait (vertical) orientation. My observations and experience with multi-strobe lighting systems is that going vertical presents problems many photographers don't wish to be bothered with.

Because the ring is so light weight and compact it can be used with a single hand and shifted from

Common Octopus eye detail, Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, Marelux MV-10 +10 C/U lens, WeeFine 3000 CCW with fiber optic cord, ISO 200, F/13, 1/160th sec. Shot using strobe mode at full power.

landscape to portrait orientation with ease. This compact size also allows you to get your macro lens low and on the same horizontal plane as your subject so that you are at eye level or below.

For shooting vertical's I have frequently removed the left grip from many housings to be able to get the housing lower in relation to the subject.

Because the ring light has a narrower beam angle than most strobes stray light is significantly reduced resulting in a reduction of backscatter. While no system can totally eliminated backscatter I find noticeably less using the ring light over dual strobes.

The ring light is most useful from 1:1/or greater out to about eighteen inches (1:1 to 45 centimeters) from the subject, beyond this distance dual strobes are much more effective because they have greater power for high F/numbers.

Weefine 3000 CCW Ring Lights

Weefine underwater photography equipment is manufactured in China and distributed world wide. Weefine produces underwater lighting, housings, lenses, cameras, accessories and more for the retail diving market. I had a meeting with some of WeeFine's staff at DEMA in late November 2024 and they temporarily provided the test equipment I used for this review.

As with all of my reviews WeeFine had no input into the review and did not see the review before publication.

The WeeFine 3000 CCW ring lights look practically identical to past 1000 and 3000 versions and uses a circular pattern of LCD lights which

Goby, Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, WeeFine 3000 CCW with fiber optic cord, ISO 200, F/10, 1/160th sec. Shot using strobe mode at full power.

surround the 67mm macro lens port. The 3000 CCW has the standard 67mm threads common with most current interchangeable macro ports and with many consumer compact housings.

The ring light simply screws onto the 67mm macro port and you are ready to go with the power source being self contained. Be aware that each macro port will line up differently with the ring light and the battery compartment may not be alined on the port the way you like it.

The threaded ring is held in place on the back of the light by six very tiny Allen screws which if removed could allow you to move the placement of the battery compartment from say the bottom of the system to the top.

In addition to the variable continuous light settings the newest 3000 CCW version has a beam angle of 90 degrees underwater. The main LED's provide 3000 lumens in the strobe mode and 1800 lumens in the video mode, a third super closeup mode is a continuous 1000 lumens at 5000K. Color temperature can be adjusted between 3500 and 8000 Kelvin in video mode.

The ring light can also fire like a strobe at 3000 lumens using a standard fiber optic cord which many may already own.

The 3000 CCW uses the 5000mAh 3.6v 18.OWh 26650 lithium battery included with the 3000 CCW which is similar to the older 3000 model. The newer battery can be charged in an approved optional battery charger but also by using the mini USB core provided with the 3000 CCW.

WeeFine also provides a tool to tighten and remove the light from the macro port, two spare O-rings and an O-ring pick along with some instruction manuals which were dated in my test unit.

The WeeFine 3000 CCW battery goes into the battery compartment with the positive end first. The battery compartment cap then screws in and has a double O-ring seal to prevent floods.

On the opposite side of the battery compartment from the cap is a push button control switch with a rotating dial and operating light. The dial below the switch increases and decrease the LED power levels and the 3500k to 8000k color temperature.

The operating light has a battery level indicator that illuminates so you can view the power level left in the battery. A blue light indicates a level of 100% to 80%, green 80% to 30%, red 30% to 10% and then a blinking red at 10% to 0%.

The burn time in video at max power is 45 minutes with a CRI rating of RA90. The 3000

Sergeant Major fish eggs, Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, Marelux MV-10 +10 C/U lens, at 2:1, WeeFine 3000 CCW, ISO 200, F/10, 1/160th sec. Shot using the Super Closeup LED, 1000 lumens, 5000K.

Juvenile Highhat (Pareques acuminatus) Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, WeeFine 3000 CCW, ISO 1000, F/8, 1/160th sec. Shot in video mode full power using auto ISO.

CCW weights-in at 470g (on land) and 245g (underwater) with the battery installed. The depth rating is 100m/330ft and the MSRP for the 3000 CCW as of this writing is $399.00 US/€399.00 with tax.

Field Testing The WeeFine 3000 CCW

To get the 3000 CCW ready for use put a fully charged battery into the battery compartment and thread the cap into place. Turn the video light mode on by depressing the on button for about one second, the light will turn on at the low power setting and a blue light indicating a full charge should appear.

To increase the power level turn the round knob under the switch clockwise and the light will become increasingly brighter, it will take about a turn and a half for max power.

Once you have selected your power level push the button again and you can select your color temperature from 3500k-8000k, no color temp readout is provided. The light has two sets of LED's one white and a smaller set of yellow LED's both on a white reflector.

In the color temp mode turning the dial up and down increases and decreases the white and yellow color levels to change the Kelvin levels. Press the on button a third time and the primary LED's turn off while a third set of LED's turns on. These are the super closeup mode LED's which point inward and are 1000 lumens max at 5000K. This setting is useful from around 1:2 or greater magnification at ISO's down to ISO100 at around F/5.6 to F/13 using full frame. Keep in mind that for those using smaller sensor cameras the ISO and F/number ranges will be more forgiving as the sensors get smaller.

Beyond the 1:1 range the ISO will need to be increased a bit for best results with full frame cameras. Also keep in mind that the ring-light (not including battery compartment) is about 23mm thick, which puts you 23mm closer to your subject.

Using my Marelux MV-10 C/U lens (with 2X magnification) placed between the macro port and 3000 CCW ring-light I only had about

Reticulated Brittle Star on Cushion Sea Star underside, Sony A7CR, Tamron 90mm macro, Marleux MX-A7CR housing, Marelux MV-10 +10 C/U lens, WeeFine 3000 CCW with fiber optic cord, ISO 200, F/14, 1/160th sec. Shot using strobe mode at full power.

4-8mm's between the light and a relatively flat subject at the closes magnification. Something small like a single octocorallian polyp could be captured slightly inside the ring-light without damage by a skilled shooter at 2:1 or perhaps 2.5:1.

To trigger the strobe mode you need to insert a fiber optic cable into the mounting point on the ring-light and the opposite end into the mounting point on the housing. Press once to turn on the video light then press and hold until the ready light starts to blink. The ready light will continue blinking slowly as long as the light is in strobe mode. Once in strobe mode you can turn the light dial clockwise to full power and when you trigger the flash you will get a full 3000 lumen power dump. Once the strobe mode is triggered the light will stay-on but at the lowest power setting for use as a focusing light.

Remember that the housing will need an internal flash trigger just like any conventional strobe and the ring-light will not work in TTL mode. To turn the light off just hold down the switch until the light goes out. The light also has a flashing SOS setting.

Shooting stills in the strobe mode with macro lenses like the Tamron 90mm and Sigma 105mm for Sony full frame my settings were ISO 100 to 400 from F/5.6 to F14 for both lenses I rarely shoot macro above ISO-400 with conventional strobes and found the ring-light strobe mode worked well in this range but with a little more open apertures for darker subjects.

In strobe mode the power level is highest at 3000 lumens and the battery lasts longer in the other constant light modes like video. As with any single battery strobe the charge did not last as long as it would using a strobe with multiple batteries. My experience was around 200 images in strobe mode on a single dive. Numbers will vary depending on several factors including but not limited to battery age, power level being used, ISO, F/numbers subject darkness and more. Because smaller sensor cameras have greater depth of field at lower F/numbers and ISO requiring less light battery life may also increase with these smaller cameras.

Because strobe mode reverts to the lowest power setting after each flash battery life is extended over using video or super closeup mode. The alternative with those modes is to turn off the light completely between each subject which will result in missed opportunities. Set to low power in video mode the 3000 CCW also makes a fine focusing light paired with strobes for situations like blackwater dives.

Many U/W photographers travel with multiple strobes, some for different situations like macro and wide angle or just as backups. The Weefine 3000 CCW ring light is small enough and light enough to carry in a jacket pocket. The robust construction allows them to be packed in just about anything.

As a backup or prime macro ring-light the 3000 CCW is an excellent travel choice. The 3000 CCW should be a backup on an extended trip if macro is your primary focus. As always remove the Weefine battery from the 3000 CCW and pack it in your carry-on before travel.

The WeeFine 3000 CCW is an inexpensive alternative to most strobes and is well worth the cost.

I would once again like to thank WeeFine.com for providing the equipment and technical support for this review. The web site offers three different ring lights in the $249.00 to $399.00 price range.

Phil Rudin
Instagram

Phil Rudin Is Senior Advisor on the Marelux Management Team

Lighten Up

by Kevin Palmer

Underwater imaging gear should be comfortable, right?

20 years ago, most of us never used float arms. Underwater housings were bigger and "floatier". Dome ports were usually acrylic and frankly we just thought struggling was part of the underwater photography ethos. Fast forward to today, with modern compact housings, glass domes, heavy water contact optics and one of the most common questions we get at Reef is how can I make my rig lighter in the water?

Enter floats and float arms. A brief mention to those who are of a do-it-yourself nature: It can seem reasonable to tie-wrap pool noodles or PVC pipe with endcaps to your aluminum arms, but we can assure you this is not a very effective idea and will be regretted soon after.

So, what is a good idea to try? First, start with finding out how negative your equipment is in water.

How To Determine Your System's In-Water Weight

In the age of modern underwater photography we are often asked, "how much does my system weigh underwater?" or "Which float arms do I need?"

Unfortunately, these questions don't have straight-forward answers due to different ports, lights, and mounting systems having different buoyancies underwater. Fortunately, we have found a wonderful solution to this dilemma...

Sounds easy enough right? And it is! All you need is water deep enough to submerge your entire system and a fish/luggage scale.

You can use any water for this, it does not need to be saltwater or fresh because the difference in salt densities differ across the seven seas anyways, so we're just looking for a ballpark here.

If you are lucky enough to live near a body of water that you feel comfortable submerging your underwater system in then you can simply use that, and if not then you can create your own. We use a large garbage; it works great as it is deep enough to fully submerge the system but also narrow enough to not use too much water.

Because each item has a different weight in the water, it is best to assemble your system fully minus the arms that you plan to replace with float arms. This will give you the most accurate weight of your system.

If you are simply looking to determine your system's in water weight without any plans to purchase float arms then you can weigh your system fully assembled.

It is also important to remember that if you dive with different ports or configurations it is necessary to weigh your system with each port intact. So if you sometimes dive with a macro port and an external wet lens and sometimes dive without a wet lens, then you should weigh your system each way- the same goes for domes and other accessories.

Make sure you have the ability to keep the scale above water while keeping the rest of the housing, arms, clamps, and lights underwater. We will usually attach it to a clamp, arm, or part of a tray. You can also tie a piece of fishing line from the housing to the scale if you need more space.

In submerging the system

it is important to make sure that everything is underwater and not touching the sides or bottom of the tub. Hold the luggage scale right above the water, only allowing the hook to get wet and no other parts of the scale if it is not waterproof.

If it is under a pound negative, a good place to start is adding Stix Floats to your aluminum arms. For most people the “Large” are not very useful as they offer limited flotation. Nine times out of ten, “Jumbo” floats are a better way to go.

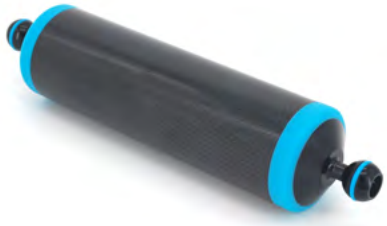
If you use shorter 5” arms, there is not a lot of room for these floats. But you can cut them in half with a serrated kitchen knife to get more on there. These are made from foam that is much harder and better at resisting pressure than a pool noodle. But they will lose a little flotation over time.

If you need more than 1 pound of compensation it is time to start looking at float arms. Why? Because they are generally more efficient than foam floats and offer more options for creating a profile that fits your style of use. There are many, many styles of float arms from many manufacturers. Be a bit cautious of brands you have never heard of. They may be very effective initially, but we have seen more than a few fall apart over the long haul.

Ultralight has been around almost as long as there have been underwater housings. They make a 1” and 2” diameter float arm in many lengths. While they are fine durable arms, they do not have a lot of “float” in spite of the name. Basically, these will float the weight of the arm and that is about it. So, not really appropriate for over a pound of compensation. If you have the 1” ULCS float arms it is possible to force the Stix Floats on to them and makes them more effective.

Kraken makes a unique and innovative float arm that is adjustable in the amount of flotation they offer making them somewhat customizable. On the surface this sounds great and while it may make a good solution for some people who have changing needs, there are some caveats. The first is that these are a bit heavier and less efficient as they are little more complicated and have more parts. The second thing to understand is that the way these adjust is by flooding part of them with water. That is fine when underwater, but out of the water, they are going to get noticeably heavier with the seawater inside of them. An example is here.

Inon was one of the first manufacturers of float arms for underwater use and they are still one of the best. Their fiber reinforced construction is extremely durable, and in fact, we have never seen one fail. They also have a variety of shapes and sizes and are fairly efficient. Not quite as efficient as the best carbon fiber arms, but pretty good. Add in that they are an extremely affordable price and you have a lot of bang for the buck with these arms.



Nauticam perfected their carbon fiber arms over many years and several generations. They offer the highest flotation efficiency of any arm with a multitude diameters and lengths to choose from. Not the least expensive, but highly effective and should offer many years of use. Important to know is that Nauticam wet lens holders are only designed to fit Nauticam float arm diameters. The extensive collection is here.

Short & Chubby, Longer & Narrower, How to Decide?

The first step is to find out how much flotation you need using the technique described in the article linked above. Once you know how negative you are in water, you can start your calculations.

Most people will still want to have their rig slightly negative so it can be placed safely on the bottom, and you are not fighting it. When you have it right, you should be able to take a picture with one hand or balance your whole rig with lighting on one finger underwater without any struggle. So somewhere between 100gm and 150gm negative is a good place to start.

We can say from experience

that a lot of people look at the chubbier arms and go “no”. We get it. Somehow it seems awkward to have large float arms. But it is important to understand that you get a lot more efficiency from diameter than length. Sometimes shorter chubbier arms are easier to deal with than longer skinnier arms. Nauticam 90 X 170 and Inon Small Mega Arms are great solutions when wanting to keep your arms short and manageable.

A good example of when long arms are not ideal is someone who primarily shoots still photography and likes to shoot a lot of macro. Longer float arms means the flotation is higher above the housing. This can make it difficult to rotate the housing downward at an angle to shoot a small subject. It can feel like you are fighting the housing wanting to rotate level.

Conversely, video shooters who primarily want to keep their housing pretty level will often do just fine with longer float arms. So 250mm or 300mm arms can work well for this.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but we would suggest keeping an open mind about sizing when analyzing your needs. When looking at the different sizes, almost all manufacturers offer some flotation guidance in grams. Just remember that if you are removing standard aluminum arms and replacing them

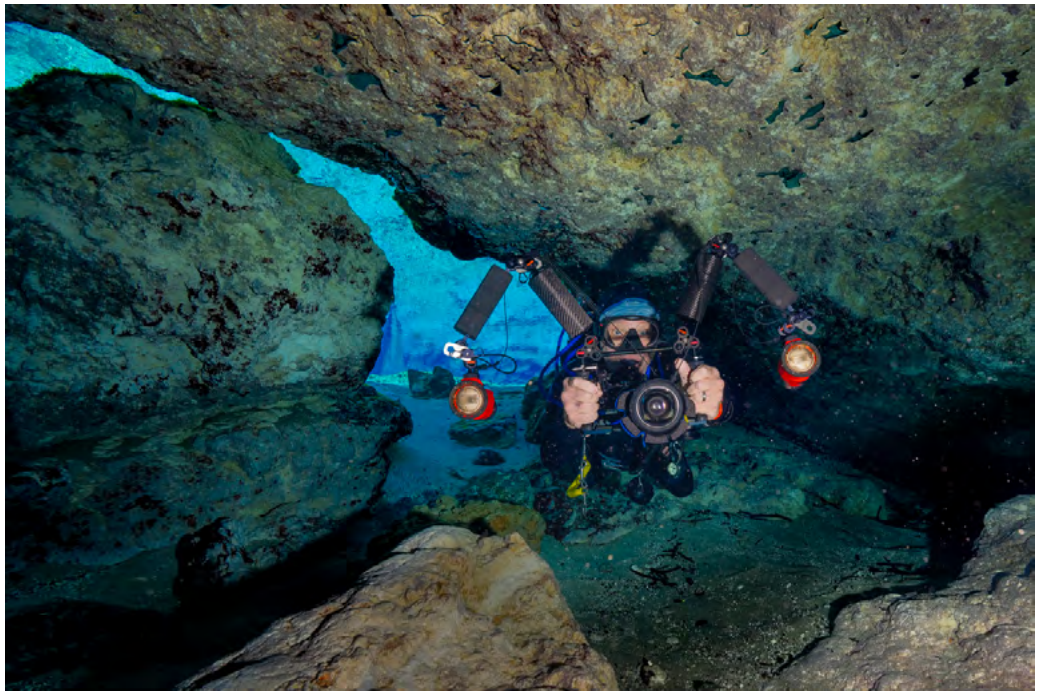
with float arms, you are gaining both the flotation of the new arm plus the in-water weight of the old arm you are removing. Of course, we are here to help walk through the pros and cons of how to make your rig more comfortable. We ALL use float arms on our imaging rigs.

A final note: When you start adding floats or float arms to your set up, most of your existing clamps will work, but we recommend replacing the standard clamp at the “elbow” of your arms with a long clamp so your larger arms can still fold parallel to each other. Your wrists and arms will thank you when you get your system perfect!

Kevin Palmer
www.reefphoto.com

Sony's FE 16-25 mm F/2.8 G Lens

by Phil Rudin



Photographer Greg entering Ginnie Springs ballroom, Florida USA. Sony A1, Sony FE 16-25mm, at 16mm, Marelux MX-A1 housing, Marelux 180mm dome port with 55mm extension, two Marelux Apollo S strobes, ISO 640, F/8, 1/125th sec.

Sony's new compact F/2.8 wide-angle rectilinear zoom lens has what can only be described as GM like image quality at about half the price of Sony's FE 16-35mm F/2.8 GM II at $2298.00 US (€2699.00). The Sony FE 16-25mm F/2.8 G retails for $1198.00 US (€1139.00) which makes it a bit of a bargain for an F/2.8.

I would argue that the 16-25 F/2.8 is a better underwater lens than any of the 16-35mm G or GM lenses simply because it's smaller, lighter, very fast focusing up to 120 FPS with the Sony A9 III camera and has a much closer minimum focus distance.

All of the Sony and Sony compatible 16-35mm F/2.8 and F/4 lenses have minimum focus distances that are in the over 20cm to 28cm range while the Sony FE 16-25mm F/2.8 focuses all the way to 18cm (7.1 inches). At an up to 10cm difference most of the 16-35's are more well suited to 230mm dome ports than to a 180mm port. For the purposes of this review I shot all of the attached photos with a 180mm dome port which is much more suitable for travel and usability.

The Sony 16-25mm F/2.8 weights 409 grams (14.4 oz) and is 74.8 X 91.4mm (2.9X3.6 inches). By comparison the Sony FE 16-35mm F/2.8 GM II lens weights a hefty 547grams and is 87.8X 111.5mm this is down from the original FE 16 to 35mm F/2.8 GM's weight of 680 grams. The 16-25mm is an F/2.8 to F/22 lens with a 107 to 82 degree zoom range and magnification of up to 1:5.

The lens is made up of 16 elements in 13 groups with 11 rounded aperture blades. The lens has two high speed AF motors for excellent speed and accuracy. The lens is moisture sealed and dust proof with a customizable focus hold button above the AF/MF switch.

The lens also has a D-clickable aperture switch and an "A" position for controlling aperture changes from the camera controls via the housing. This lens also uses the very common 67mm filter threads and ships with a hood and lens caps.

Field Testing The Sony FE 16-25mm F/2.8 lens

Because this lens arrived prior to being supported by any housing manufacturers I had Shen Collazo www.oceaninventions.com make a custom gear for the lens. Shen used the metal gear ring from my Marelux Sony 12-24mm F/2.8 zoom gear and then machined a new nylon insert for the lens focus ring.

Once the zoom gear was

Florida Pan Fish, Ginnie Springs run, Florida, Sony A1, Sony FE 16-25mm, at 25mm, Marelux MX-A1 housing, Marelux 180mm dome port with 55mm extension, two Marelux Apollo S strobes, ISO 640, F/9, 1/125th sec

Photographer David, Devil Springs run, Florida. Sony A1, Sony FE 16-25mm, at 16mm, Marelux MX-A1 housing, Marelux 180mm dome port with 55mm extension, two Marelux Apollo S strobes, ISO 400, F/16, 1/250th sec.

mounted on the lens the manual aperture ring is completely covered so it can't be knocked off the "A" setting. Shen's work is always excellent and now I can use the same focus ring (part with the teeth) on several lenses with different nylon inserts.

The first obvious question I think most would ask is how much did I miss the difference between the extra amount of zoom of the 16-35 verses 16-25mm or 63 degrees at 35mm V. 82 degrees at 25mm. To answer that question I went through photos from past 16-35mm outings and found that with the exception of testing the long end of those lenses for reviews I hardly ever zoomed much beyond 25mm.

Most zoom lenses in the 16-35mm range perform much better at the wider end than they do at the longer end, I also have much better lenses like the Sony FE 20-70mm F/4 reviewed in UWPMAG issue #132 if I want the opportunities afforded by a longer zoom lens beyond 25mm.

For this review I used the FE 16-25mm with Sony's 50MP A-1 camera, a Marelux MX-A1 housing, 180mm MX optical glass dome port and a 55mm's of MX port extensions.

Lighting was with two Marelux Apollo S strobes. With full frame cameras like the Sony A1 the common rule of thumb is to shoot wide rectilinear lens at F/13 or higher for best corner sharpness. How sharp corners need to be is subjective and may vary from image to image.

I have been looking at/and judging photo contest results at all levels for several decades. What has remained clear to me during that time is that outstanding images rise to the top of the heap regardless of how the corners look in 99% of cases. Many winners are shot in blue water where corners are much less obvious or in black water and so on. I can't say that I recall ever seeing an image removed from competition solely because of poor corner sharpness rather than the overall image quality.

This is a subject that has been argued about ad nauseam on forums like Waterpixels.net and others for more than a decade with no clear consensus by any metric of how sharp corners need to be.

Florida Red-Bellied Cooter. Devil Springs run, Florida USA. Sony A1, Sony FE 16-25mm, at 20mm, Marelux MX-A1 housing, Marelux 180mm dome port with 55mm extension, two Marelux Apollo S strobes, ISO 400, F/8, 1/250th sec

Little Devil spring, Florida UAS. Sony A1, Sony FE 16-25mm, at 17mm, Marelux MX-A1 housing, Marelux 180mm dome port with 55mm extension, two Marelux Apollo S strobes, ISO 400, F/10, 1/400th sec

In the water I found the zoom range more than handled my needs with a quick shift from 16mm to 25mm in less than a quarter turn of the focus gear.

Most of my images in the review were shot from F/5.6 to F/14 with some split shots at F/22 for maximum DOF above and below the surface. With the camera set to AF-C auto focus performance using focus-tracking medium spot was seamless and extremely quick locking onto eyes and faces even at a distance.

I shot the lens in low ambient light with moving subjects inside a dark cavern and I would say that Auto focus is every bit as good as the top Sony FE GM lenses I have owned.

Sony describes the FE 16-25mm f/2.8 G Lens as an “excellent on-the-go lens that specializes in landscape, travel, and close-up photography”. I would strongly suggest that Sony add underwater photography to the list because this lens is a blast to use for a verity of U/W imaging situations.

Wide lenses both fisheye and rectilinear allow you to create forced perspective a view that can manipulate human perceptions of objects making them appear larger, smaller, farther away or closer than they actually are. With fisheye lenses more barrel distortion occurs than with rectilinear lenses causing subjects in the center of the frame to bulge outward and straight lines to curve. 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.

At the time of writing this review no manufacturer has yet listed the 16-25mm on their port charts. I did my own port extension tests with the Marelux 180 dome port and settled on a 55mm port extension (40+15) for the MX-A1 housing.

A note on port extensions, as a reviewer I like to stick to the manufacturer’s recommended port lengths because this is what consumers of these products will likely do. By using recommended port extensions readers will get the best idea of likely results with like or similar manufacturers extension recommendations. While I have on several occasions deviated from the

Photographer David, North Florida cavern dive. Sony A1, Sony FE 16-25mm, at 16mm, Marelux MX-A1 housing, Marelux 180mm dome port with 55mm extension, two Marelux Apollo S strobes, ISO 640, F/5.6, 1/125th sec. Shot is full frame to access corners at F/5.6 and focus sharpness in low light

port charts by adding or reducing extension lengths in 5mm increments for the most part the charts from all manufactures have been pretty accurate for the majority of lenses I have used. Tweaks in chart extension lengths may lead to slightly better corner sharpness but not by much and at the expense of having to buy an extension in an odd number like 15mm or 25mm's.

If you already own an odd numbered extension it is always fun to try it in the pool but I would not waste my time if I am already at an exotic dive location where I want to make the most of my trip. Unless you have serious issues with the recommended extension length you may want to just stick with manufacturer's recommendations.

I chose the north Florida springs for this lens test because of its abundance of subjects both large and small. Upfront I will say that this lens did not disappoint even in the smaller 180mm dome port. The small system was easy to swim with and checked all of the boxes for portability and performance.

The 16-25mm lens has white lettering around the front element which has caused issues for me with some systems I have reviewed in the past. The white lettering reflects off the dome and back onto the image sensor producing an image with a white ghosting of the letters. This is an issue I have noticed most when using acrylic ports but also occurs with optical glass ports most often when shooting at or close to the surface.

To resolve this issue I recommend the assortment of Ikelite antireflective lens rings which cover the letters with a flat black tape or threaded black ring. They work great and can be removed easily.

Also notice in the split images taken with the Marelux 180mm dome that water drops on the top half of the images were not a problem because of the Marelux coating that repels most water droplets while shooting splits.

I found that for most of my needs the 180mm port hit the sweet spot between image quality and system size. As a portrait lens shooting at F/2.8/4 subject separation was excellent with smooth foregrounds and backgrounds. On the wide end of the lens everything from about f/8 onward could be used without a noticeable erosion of image quality.

If optimal corner sharpness is required for your shooting situation my recommendation would be a 230mm dome and perhaps the Sea & Sea correction lens if you already own one. I did not test the S&S correction lens for this review so results are unknown.

The Sony FE 16-25mm F/2.8 is an ideal travel lens for general photography, by that I mean not a macro intensive muck diving location where macro lenses and accessories are the norm and not a dedicated wreck diving location where ultra wide and fisheye lenses are the norm.

This is a lens that will also cover most of your land photography needs while traveling. I would also recommend this lens for someone starting to build a Sony full frame system that wants wide coverage at a reasonable price.

Phil Rudin

Instagram

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Henley Spiers

with Peter Rowlands

Like so many in our industry, your career started as a dive instructor. Did that put you in contact with serious underwater photographers or did you have a lightbulb moment when underwater photography became an obvious choice for you to progress your career and communicate with the wider world?

Until my mid to late twenties, I had shown practically zero interest in photography, either on land or underwater. In my time as a diving instructor, most of my customers were either trainee divers, Divemasters-in-the-making, or tourist divers. Almost none carried a camera or had a focus on photography. I think that was probably the last of an era in a way because almost everyone carries some form of camera down these days, mostly of the action cam variety. I guess it's an extension of the smartphones we all now carry - everyone is a photographer.

I have a clear memory of a 'serious' underwater photographer visiting our dive centre in Bali and spending several days with his guide purely on one site in search of an octopus…it seemed comical at the time, and yet today I have the utmost empathy for that kind of behaviour!

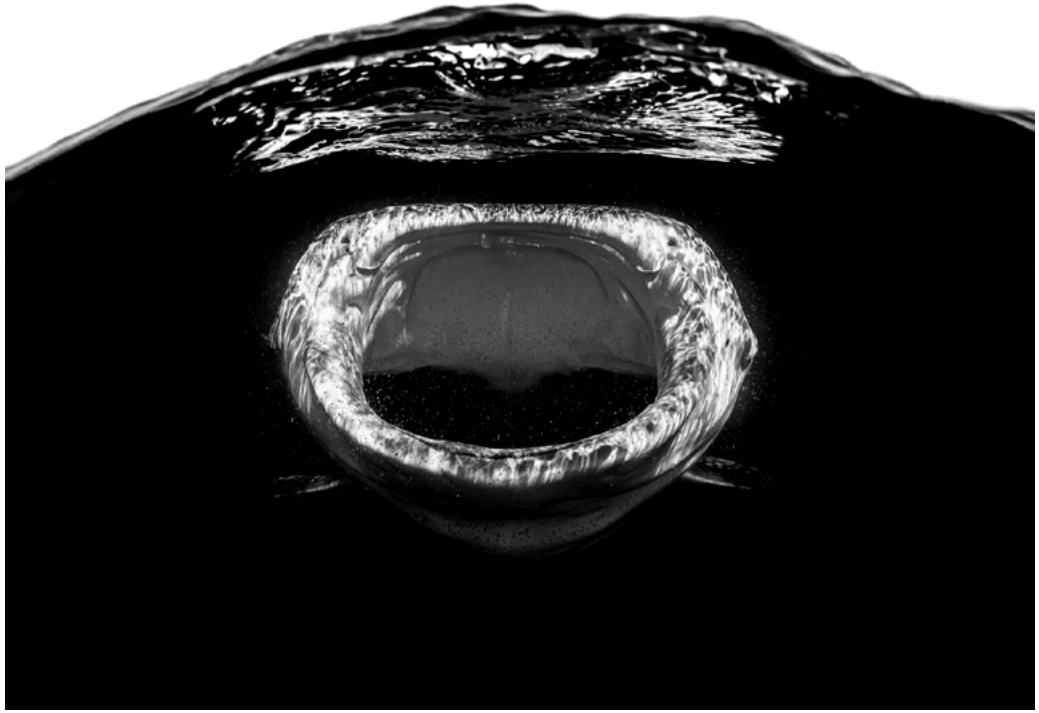
At some point when working as a dive pro in Indonesia, I started using a compact camera to document dives and divers. I was the internship manager at a PADI Career Development Centre and in charge of anywhere between 10 and 30 interns at a time. It was a dream job and I would bring the camera along to occasionally take some pictures when professional responsibilities allowed for it.

I was (and am) dive mad so would spend any holidays or time off underwater…On one occasion, I visited Lembeh, with my little compact set-up (no strobes or anything on it), and was suddenly surrounded by a different breed of diver: 90% of the Lembeh divers carried big underwater camera housings with lights and flashes mounted to arms. I grew increasingly intrigued and ended up renting a housed Olympus EM5 with one strobe from the dive centre. I received a quick orientation and off I went…

The buzz from those first images was immense. The colour!

Diver observes great white shark from cage. Guadalupe Island, Mexico. Nikon D850, Nikon 28-70mm @28mm, Nauticam WACP-1, Nauticam housing. F/8, 1/400, ISO 500

Marine iguana in the surge. Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. Nikon D850, Nikonos 13mm, Nauticam housing, Retra Pro X strobes. F/22, 1/15, ISO 64



Whale shark split level as it feeds. Sea of Cortez, Baja California Sur, Mexico. Nikon D850, Nikon 8-15mm @15mm, Nauticam housing. F/14, 1/500, ISO 640

The sharpness! The thrill of the photographic hunt! That was the first big seed for what would later grow into a full-time career…but that was still a few years away.

I explored a few different professional routes which would keep me in the ocean: working towards certification as a technical diving instructor (before a typhoon laid waste to that plan) and gaining my Yachtmaster Offshore license with a view to combining dive instruction with skippering.

In the end, I ended up taking a new post in Saint Lucia as the dive manager for an exciting, start-up dive centre being opened by a friend and former student. Before travelling to the new gig, I invested in my first 'proper' camera rig: the same Olympus EM5 with a single strobe I had used in Lembeh. I had an 8mm fisheye lens and a 60mm macro.

Whilst we mapped dive sites for the new dive centre, I started to practice with that underwater camera set-up. The initial results were mediocre, but I was relishing the experience…

I think at that time I might have been the only underwater photographer on Saint Lucia…so there was no peer group or mentors to learn from. I absorbed as much as I could from Martin Edge and Alex Mustard's photography books, and kept learning through painful trial and error.

After about two years of working in Saint Lucia, the photo bug had bitten very hard. I no longer dreamed of being a dive pro, I wanted to be a professional underwater photographer. It was an ambition which would raise even more eyebrows then when I quit a promising corporate career to become a dive instructor!

Your early years as a dive instructor were in the Philippines, Indonesia and Saint Lucia. Is that where you started to get serious to learn about your underwater photography and how did your early forays into British waters go? Also is there a different mindset shooting in the differing environments? Do your artistic horizons get limited by the vizibility?

Whilst my first scuba dive occurred at 12 years old, my first dive in British waters came when I was 31 years old. I'd spent my whole life until then enjoying tropical waters and putting off that cold, brown water back home! The funny thing was, I'd been shooting avidly underwater in Saint Lucia, Grand Cayman, Egypt, Indonesia, Philippines but no one else seemed to be as excited as me about the pictures created…the public response was tepid.

On my first ever snorkel trip in British waters, I witnessed a baitball with bluefin tuna hunting down sand eels - a once in a lifetime kind of moment from a species which had once disappeared entirely from our seas. Then on my first scuba dive in the UK, at Swanage Pier, I witnessed two tompot blennies fighting and captured what was by far my strongest and most celebrated picture to date. That shot won a category in UPY and was printed in the Sunday Times. It remains one of my favourite ever shots. I guess the universe was trying to tell me something, and ever since I have looked at British waters as being a place with great creative possibilities (despite the iffy visibility).

As photographers and people, we crave comfort, and there is nothing more appealing than jumping with minimal gear into a warm ocean which is brimming with life. The problem is, everyone feels the same and we now have several decades of underwater photographers focussing on those places. I love coral reefs but I think it is very difficult to create an original underwater photograph on them today. The image library is saturated. Because of the inherent difficulties with temperate

Duelling tompot blennies. Dorset, UK. Nikon D850, Nikon 60mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z240 strobes. F/4.5, 1/125, ISO 100

Yellowhead jawfish with mouth full of eggs. Saint Lucia. Nikon D7200, Nikon 105mm, Nauticam housing, Sea & Sea YS-D2. F/13, 1/320, ISO 100

water exploration, there is more opportunity for new pictures.

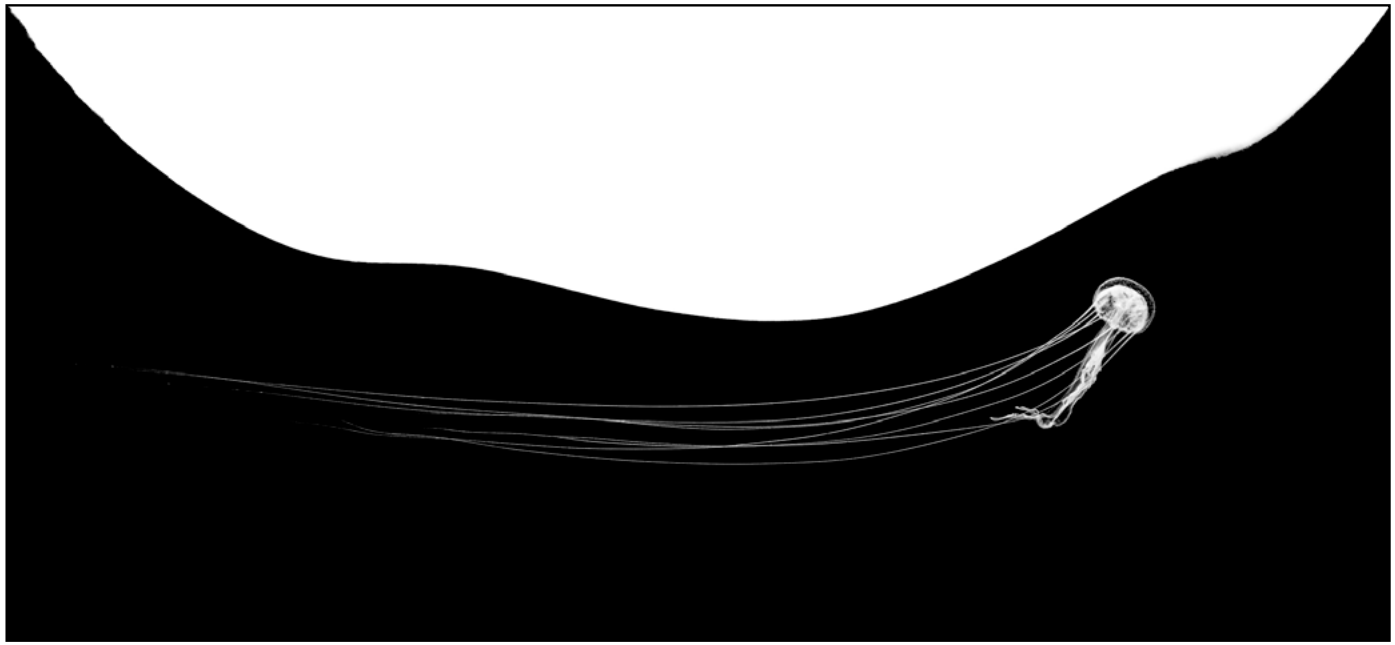
In your formative years were you drawn to wide angle or close ups? Is the percentage still the same now or does it depend on the job in hand?

In the early days I think people would have described me as more of a macro shooter, whereas today a far greater percentage of my images are wide-angle. I think in part that was because of the places I was shooting. Saint Lucia is not blessed with many big marine animals so focussing on things like brooding jawfish was more rewarding.

In the Philippines and Indonesia, I spent a lot of time at muck diving sites. I think as well as locations, I also found the results of macro photography more rewarding. I felt more in control of the frame and exposure, and was getting more inspiration from it then wide angle.

Over time, I spent more time in different locations, places with a whole different type of marine ecosystem and animals. They inspired more wide angle imagery and I learnt to love the craft behind it. The challenge of crafting a compelling composition from a wide scene, with a balance of natural and artificial light, really drives these days. I've realised that even when it comes to my macro these days, I prefer to capture it within a wider scene if possible.

Competitions seem more popular than ever and you achieved a high degree of success almost immediately. Did you shoot specifically for them and treat them as a stepping stone in your career? If so did your successes lead to commissions and a change of your career direction and finally what is your attitude to them nowadays?

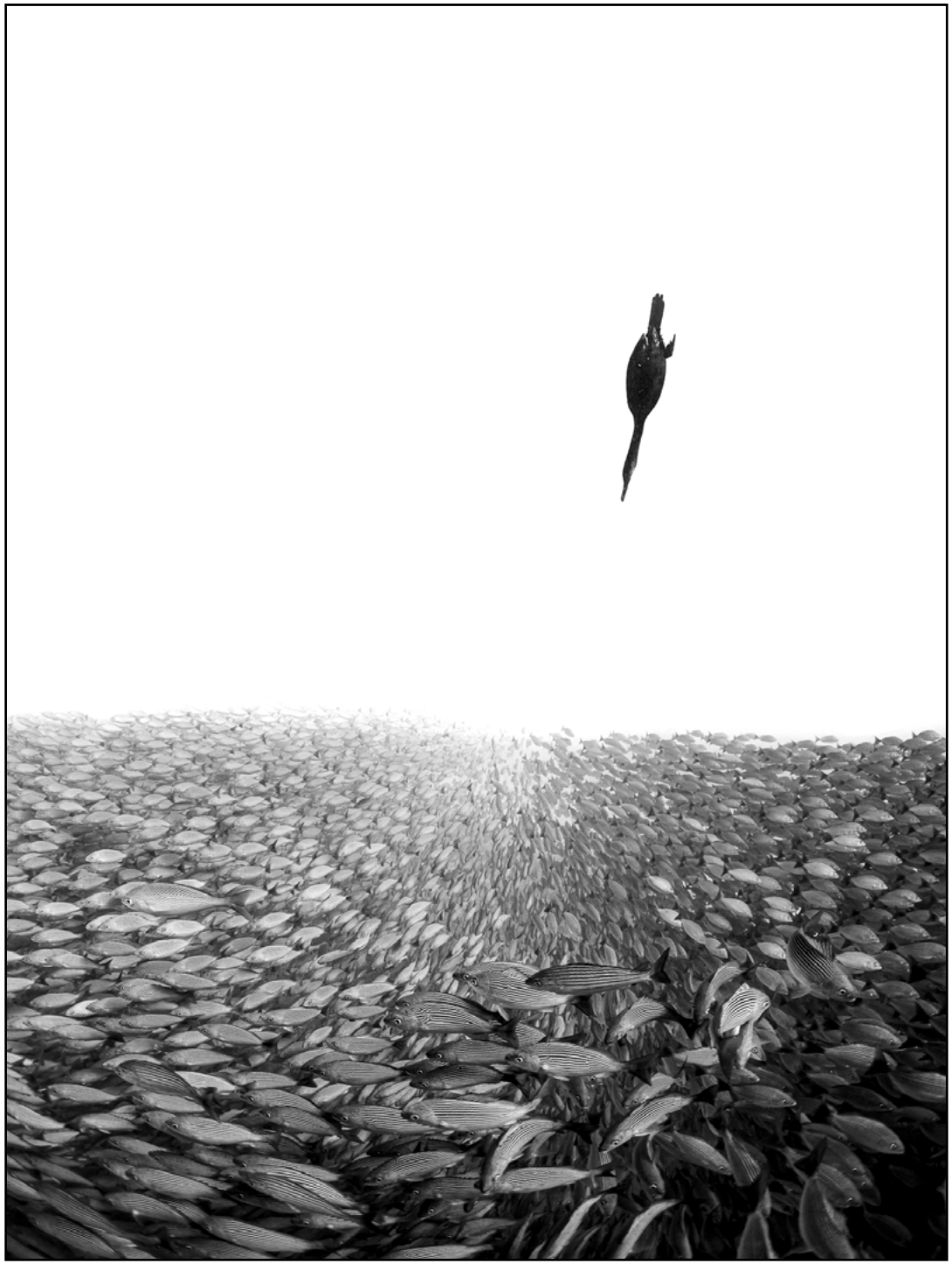


Jellyfish trails beneath the surface. Cebu, Philippines. Nikon D850, Nikon 28-70mm @28mm, Nauticam WACP-1, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. F/14, 1/100, ISO 100

I grew up in a highly competitive household and played a lot of sports. As such, the idea of performance measurement had become pretty normalised and I tend to enjoy that competitive challenge. Even if it is deeply and fundamentally flawed to bring score-keeping to an artistic field such as photography, I was still drawn to competitions from an early stage (and let me reassure you, the success was certainly not immediate!). I also recognised that with no formal qualifications or established career path in underwater photography, competitions could help to establish a reputation which would enable this most unconventional of careers.

Whilst they are an emotional rollercoaster, and should be taken with a heavy pinch of salt, I have found photographic competitions to be an essential part of my career. I think the drive to create pictures which wow continues to inspire and motivate me. That doesn't mean they will all be awarded images…but if the goal is to create pictures with such power that they can stop people in their tracks (and maybe win a competition) then I think it's a very worthy mindset to have.

Beyond reputation, competitions have also sustained me financially. I was on my knees professionally during the pandemic, but winning the HIPA Grand Title and the $120,000 USD prize was the financial injection which got my career back on track.



Small spotted cat shark over horse mussel beds. Shetland, UK. Nikon D850, Nikon 28-70mm @28mm, Nauticam WACP-1, Nauticam housing, Retra Pro X strobes. F/16, 1/15, ISO 800

Constellation of eagle rays. South Male Atoll, Maldives. Nikon D850, Nikon 28-70mm @28mm, Nauticam WACP-1, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. F/6.3, 1/60, ISO 800

To me personally, your competition images have a distinctive degree of graphic simplicity combined with peak of the action timing and unambiguous composition. Is this intuitive, premeditated, planned and hard fought and/or just good use of a high frame rate, being in the right place and sensing that the opportunity is right?

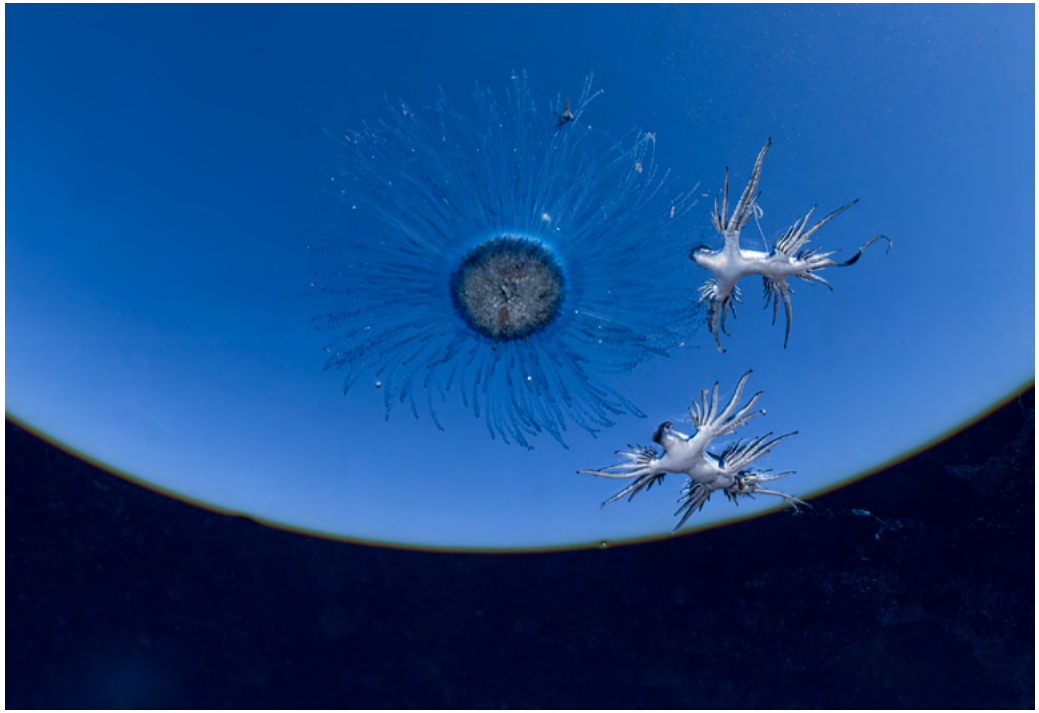
That's a very gratifying description - thank you! I would say there is enormous planning which goes into being on-site and in the water at a particular location. The truth is I spend the majority of my time in the office, so much time goes into planning and organising those brief but magical moments in the ocean.

However, once in the sea, I am a very instinctive shooter. I like to react to the moment. I will pursue what inspires me most, whether it be a cooperative animal, wonderful light, or unusual behaviour (or ideally all 3 of those things). The compositions are instinctive, I read and react to the moment and what I see on the camera playback. I am certainly not in the mould of someone like Thomas Peschak, who I hear will sketch out specific pictures ahead of time.

I particularly enjoy your Black and White images. Do you think about it when you shoot and shoot accordingly or are the decisions to convert made on 'the lightbox'? Whichever, do you have any tips you are prepared to divulge about the techniques used processing to black and white?

Thank you! There was a moment in time, soon after meeting Christian Vizl and starting to explore Mexico underwater, that I was extremely driven by the pursuit of black and white imagery. Today, more of my work remains in colour, and I will only release an image in black and white when I really believe that the monochrome elevates it to a new level.

I wouldn't say that I shoot for b&w whilst in the water, but there will be certain scenes where a lightbulb



Split level view of northern gannets. Shetland, UK. Nikon D850, Nikon 8-15mm @15mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z240 strobes. F/22, 1/250, ISO 800

Bull shark surrounded by bigeye trevally. Cabo Pulmo, Baja California, Mexico. Nikon D850, Nikon 8-15mm @15mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z240 strobes. F/11, 1/125, ISO 400

goes off and I think to myself that this is especially promising in terms of monochrome processing. That lightbulb is informed by my preference for graphic, minimalist b&w compositions, and the editing style I use. There certainly is a skillset to editing for black and white which goes beyond merely clicking the conversion button. It would be a bit too long to go into here but is the kind of topic I might cover in my underwater photography column for Oceanographic Magazine or when conducting coaching on my trips.

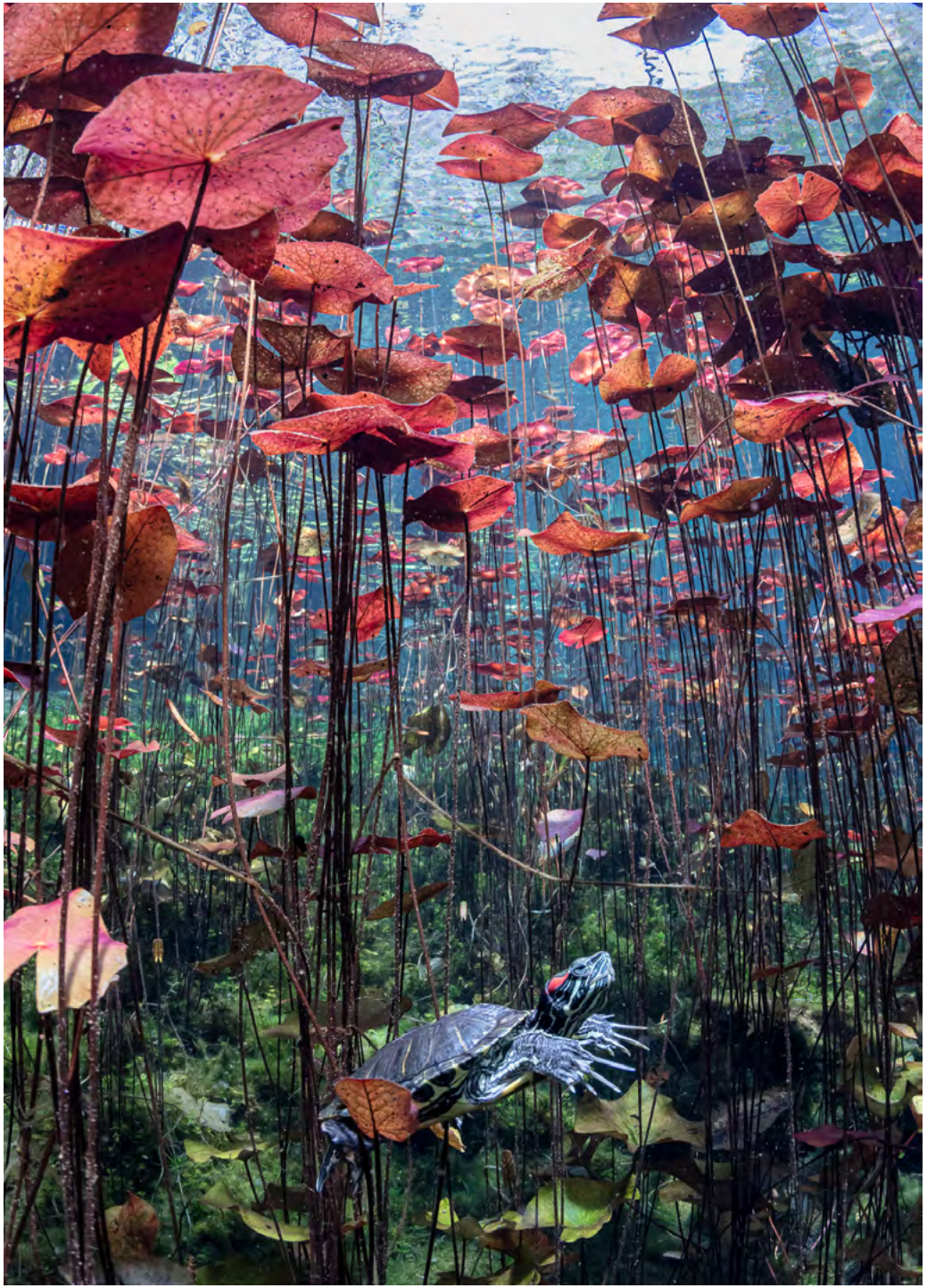
Being chosen as the first ever for Story Teller in Residence Oceanographic Magazine in 2023 must have been a huge opportunity. How did this come about and what was the remit?

It was a total game-changer to be selected as the first ever storyteller in residence for Oceanographic Magazine. For the first time, with the £45,000 grant provided, I could pursue stories more purely with fewer worries of how to finance the fieldwork.

There was an intensive application form to be filled, in which you needed to describe in detail both the stories you wished to pursue and why you had the skillset to do so. I was over the moon when selected and would spend the next 12 months pursuing five feature stories, three of which ended up as cover stories.

I started in Scotland, covering three different locations and modes of marine protection. Next up was a story on the wonder and threats face by Mexico's sea lions. Then it was off to the Galapagos to share more about its extraordinary marine life and conservation success story. From there it was back to Mexico, working side-by-side with cetacean scientists to attach the first ever CATS tags to humpback whales in the Baja Sur region. That would form part of a wider story on cetaceans in Mexico.

Finally, I shared a story on the elusive marine life of the open ocean, and the first ever chance we have to protect international waters effectively through the High Seas Treaty.



Invasive red-eared slider turtle amongst lily pads. Yucatan, Mexico. Nikon D850, Nikon 8-15mm @15mm, Nauticam housing, Inon Z240 strobes. F/10, 1/160, ISO 640

What lasting effect did the Story Teller in Residence experience have upon you? Did big stories and extended trips on your own bring pressure or did it inspire the workload?

It was transformational. It totally shifted my outlook from single images to creating sets of pictures to tell a story. It is a different, and higher pressure environment to pursue that kind of photo-journalism, but I loved it…The picture and story rights remain with me, so I can also continue to leverage that content. Some of those stories and images have recently been published in the likes of Terre Sauvage and BBC Wildlife Magazine.

The role is designed to be temporary with a new storyteller appointed each year, but I miss it and would highly recommend applying! The problem for me now is how to continue storytelling. There are very few grants out there and most magazines do not have the budget to fund fieldwork. How can you build a business model designed around ocean storytelling in today's market?

You combine engaging text with great images. Do you think there is a market for an up and coming underwater photographer to go the illustrated articles route which quality circulation magazines would pay sensible money for and which might lead to commissioned work?

Thanks again! Being able to write and photograph is a much more valuable skillset than only having pictures to offer. In fact, you should really strive to be able to deliver a full package in today's market: stills both above and below the water, drone work, words, social media clips, video…the more you have, the more work you can access.

I have not had the honour of working for National Geographic Magazine, who may be the exception.. but in my experience, it is not feasible to build a full-time career around writing / shooting stories for magazines related to diving or nature.

Commissions are few and far between, there are some but they are unpredictable. I think it is worthwhile as an income stream (with added benefits in terms of self publicity) but let's be honest: don't quit your day job in the hope of becoming a

full-time assignment underwater photographer.

Your wife Jade Hoksbergen, and you don't have to answer this, is an accomplished underwater photographer in her own right. Is there collaboration, competition or inspirational camaraderie?

My start in photography perfectly coincides with the start of our relationship and I give Jade a lot of the credit in terms of reawakening my artistic sensibility. She is the first person I show a picture to and I think she has an extraordinary, instinctive sense of what works and what doesn't in an image. I think we have really helped each other in this journey through underwater photography, first as a passion, then as a profession. It doesn't feel competitive to me, in fact, I think I might be even happier for her success than my own.

With two young daughters, we don't get to work together as much as we'd like to these days, but it is a beautiful thing to share this love of the ocean and photography.

You lead Expeditions and offer Bespoke Diving & Photography Trips. Are they aimed at those of a high level wishing to get even better or will anyone benefit, regardless of their level?

My expeditions welcome all levels of photographer, from newbies to the highly experienced. Coaching someone from scratch can be really rewarding as I feel like they can have this steep learning curve within one expedition and walk away from it with powerful pictures.

With experienced shooters, I am happy to offer as much or as little coaching as they wish. At the very least, I would aim to put them in the best position to succeed in terms of place, time and advice on how to enter the water. I'm an open book on the expeditions, happy to discuss the story behind any one of my shots or experiences, and also happy to conduct portfolio reviews, even for images shot elsewhere.

I think half of the battle with photography is this art of selecting the right images after capture, and then editing them to ensure they reach their full potential. Every evening on my expeditions is spent side-by-side with participants, suggesting which frames are worth working on, and then refining their post-processing. I only realised how much I enjoy teaching when I became a dive instructor, and that's something I've been able to continue now with photography.

Reef covered by an enormous ghost net. Cebu, Philippines. Nikon D850, Nikon 28-70mm @28mm, Nauticam WACP-1, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes. F/11, 1/60, ISO 800

It would be remiss of me not to ask about the equipment you use. How and why did your camera choice develop from the early days until now and are you a slave to them or are they just tools of the trade?

I do care about the gear, and try to stay abreast of developments in that world, but it's important to tread the line between the technical and the artistry.

I started with that Olympus EM5, then changed it for a Nikon D7200. I then invested in a Nikon D850 in 2018 which I still love and shoot with today. At present, and in shared ownership with Jade, we have two housed Nikon D850s and a Sony A7RV. I am not yet convinced that the Nikon D850 has been bettered by mirrorless cameras for underwater stills.

I'm a big fan of water contact optics and am very fond of my Nauticam WACP-1 and Nikonos 13mm.

Finally you work on and produce a lot of images with a conservation theme. Do you think underwater photographs are used to enough effect or are there ways to shoot which could increase their effectiveness? Are we, as underwater photographers, guilty of only showing the good side rather than the real one?

I think, and it's only natural, that most underwater images are captured in the pursuit of beauty. Most of the underwater photographers out there have invested precious time and money to go and see something wonderful. As such, it's normal that the results mostly convey the wonder of aquatic life. Even within conservation themes, many of the pictures we see come through (including many of my own) are incidental. We went looking for something beautiful, then happened to find something troubling, so we captured an image of it.

The truth is, the worst side of human impact and behaviour in the ocean is not happening around beauty spots with regular tourism. We are blind to it. We are not on commercial fishing vessels when they harvest egregiously from the sea. We are not there when vessels use the sea as a dumping ground. We are not there when fishing observers disappear or when fishing crews are abused.

It is hard to access and it is hard to see these things. And it is not fun. In that sense, I have utmost respect for the likes of Ian Urbina, Aaron Gekoski, Britta Jaschinski and Shin Sirachai Arunrugstichai who consciously turn their back on the quest for beauty and seek out the darkness instead.

Are you a focussed planner or go with the flow? Either way would you reveal your up and coming projects?

A mix really, I try to have some concrete plans in place for the sake of stability whilst also leaving room for an unpredictable assignment call.

In August, Jade and I will undertake a photographic residency at Six Senses Kanahura in the Maldives. In October, I will be in Mexico for an epic expedition with clients, covering everything from sea lions, to mobula rays and marlin.

For anyone interested in joining one of my expeditions, please do reach out.

Henley Spiers
www.henleyspiers.com

Henley, thank you for taking the time to provide such open and informative answers and I wish you continued success.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

Macro in Port Vila, Vanuatu

by Nigel Marsh

Most divers are drawn to Vanuatu to explore one of the largest shipwrecks in the world, the colossal *SS President Coolidge*. However, there is much more to this lovely Melanesian nation than this amazing World War II shipwreck, with Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu, blessed with reefs, wrecks and some wonderful macro subjects.

Located between the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia, Vanuatu is made up of 83 islands spread over 1300km. Located on the ring of fire, these islands were created by volcanic activity, and the nation still has many active volcanoes above and below the water line. All of these islands are fringed by coral reefs and the blue waters of the South Pacific Ocean.

I first visited Port Vila in 1989 and had always planned to go back, but with too many other dive destinations to explore I never got around to organising a return. However, over the last few years I have been leading regular underwater photography group trips for people to explore interesting dive destinations and improve their photography skills, and Port Vila was the perfect fit for one of these trips, offering a range of subjects, both big and small.

The trip was originally planned for May 2024, but only two weeks before departure Air Vanuatu, the nation's airline, collapsed and we had to reschedule the trip to May 2025. Then in December 2024, Port Vila was rocked by a massive earthquake, which destroyed countless buildings, including the motel we were booked into.

Finally arriving in May 2025, we found parts of the city were still in ruins, and the rebuilding process is going to take many years. Fortunately, our new motel, the Ramada, was designed to withstand earthquakes and showed no signs of damage. This was very reassuring, as during our stay there were still daily aftershocks, fortunately they barely rocked the bed!

With five days of diving booked with Big Blue Vanuatu, I had planned to balance the trip with alternate days of wide-angle subjects and macro subjects. Big Blue Vanuatu have around 20 dive sites they regularly

Lemonpeel Angelfish- 1/125, f13, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

Heading out on Mele Bay for a dive. Samsung mobile phone.

visit in Mele Bay, with the most distance dive sites around 40 minutes from the harbour, where their shop is located. The dive sites are grouped into two areas, in the north are the prettiest reef sites, while in the south, closer to the harbour, are the wrecks, limestones reefs and a very impressive cave. Each day we had three dives booked, a double dive in the morning, then lunch back at the café next to the dive shop, followed by a single afternoon dive.

Day one we planned to dive in the north, with Joshua Ernst, the owner of Big Blue Vanuatu, recommending macro for the smaller reef fish and invertebrates found in this area. Half the group had compact cameras, so they were ready for anything, but the rest of us were using mirrorless and DSLRs. I had on my trusty Nikkor 60mm on my D500, as I still love this camera and find this combination is perfect for my

Whitemouth Moray. 1/125, f10, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

Mating Willan's Chromodoris Nudibranchs. 1/125, f25, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

favourite photography – fish portraits.

Our first dive site was Kathleen Reef, a pretty coral ridge rising from 30m to 12m. With 15m visibility we slowly explore this reef finding a good variety of subjects – broadclub cuttlefish, nudibranchs, sea stars, anemonefish, butterflyfish, Moorish idols, hawkfish, rock cods, damsels, wrasses and parrotfish. There were a few larger fish, including trevally and barracuda, but it was the small reef fishes, in abundant numbers, that kept my camera busy.

I was particularly impressed by the number and variety of pygmy angelfish, they were everywhere. There were lemonpeel, pearlscale, keyhole, bi-color, coral beauty and even rare midnight angelfish. And as these species interbreed, there were also a few hybrids with a mix of colours from their parents. There was also a surprising number of juvenile mimic surgeonfish, that have colour patterns that copy several of these angelfish when they are young. Why they do this is unknown, as most mimics copy venomous fishes, and pygmy angelfish are not venomous, but being skittish they are difficult prey to catch.

Palespotted Combtooth Blenny. 1/125, f18, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

There was a slightly bigger angelfish species that I was hoping to see in this area, the rare Watanabe angelfish. A type of swallowtail angelfish, this species has different colour patterns for the male and female and also feeds on plankton. I had told the group to keep an eye out for this fish, and to my great surprise we found a male and two females on this first dive. They could have been easily overlooked, as they mingle with similar sized and coloured damselfish feeding in the water column.

We ended up doing four dives in the area, exploring lovely coral gardens at Westside, Anchor Reef and a return to Kathleen Reef. While we could have done wide-angle photography with the schools of fish and the pretty hard corals, the macro subjects were much more captivating and rewarding. These including lovely little harlequin filefish, nudibranchs, combtooth blennies, a whitemouth moray and many colourful

Konanda Wreck in less-than-ideal visibility - 1/100, f9, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with Tokina 10-17mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

Mimic Surgeonfish copying a Lemonpeel Angelfish. 1/125, f11, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

Coral Hermit Crab. 1/125, f29, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

Harlequin Filefish. 1/125, f11, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

wrasses.

On day two we opted for wide-angle to explore the reefs and wrecks in the south. Unfortunately, the visibility in the south, especially close to the harbour, was a bit poor due to recent dredging. The Konanda is one of several scuttled ships in this area, with this 45m long island trading vessel sunk in 1987. Resting in 28m, the wreck is a fun dive, with an open hull, cabins, masts and winch gear to investigate, but not much fun for photography with only 6m visibility.

The visibility was a lot better at Yankee Juliette, a limestone reef with the scattered remains of a plane wreck. While there was not much coral to see, we did find a crocodilefish, octopus, garden eels, nudibranchs and lots of reeftop pipefish. Some of the limestone reefs we dived in the south had cracks from the earthquake, but many showed more impacted from a cyclone that hit the area in 2023 and smashed the hard corals.

With the poor visibility near the harbour, where the other wrecks rest, we decided to pass on any more wreck dives and stick to macro as we dived the reefs of the southern area. At Konanda Reef we explored bommies, ledges and gutters that were overflowing with reef fish and invertebrates. We photographed giant morays, fusiliers, angelfish, reeftop pipefish, butterflyfish, wrasse and parrotfish.

A special macro find for me at this site was a group of coral hermit crabs. These little crabs are hard to find, and I always seem to notice them only when I have on a wide-angle lens. But not this time. These tiny crabs live in the old holes of tube worms, and even a large one is only 5mm wide. They have colourful claws and capture plankton with two small net-like arms.

At Pillar 25 we found ledges and caves overflowing with cardinalfish and sweepers. In these caves were also shrimps, lionfish, soapfish, rock cods, squirrelfish, soldierfish and a leaf scorpionfish. Kate's Corner is a scattered reef with many sandy gutters. Here we photographed nudibranchs, broadclub cuttlefish, dartfish, shrimpgobies, blennies, hermit crabs and tiny commensal shrimps on pincushion stars. Before our dive at this site a dugong swam by the boat, only 30m away. Dugongs often frequent this part of the bay and our guide told us that only the week

Naia Pipefish male with eggs. 1/125, f16, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe

before they had one doing somersaults in front of them!

Twin Bommies is one of the most popular of the southern dive sites, with the site dominated by two large coral heads that swarm with fish. These bommies are riddled with ledges and decorated by small gorgonians and soft corals. Sweetlips, coral cod, squirrelfish, soldierfish, snappers, fusiliers and basslets made for some interesting photography subjects. At this site we also found a sleeping whitetip reef shark, several shy barred angelfish, strange arrowhead soapfish and a reclusive lavender dottyback.

The Cathedral is the premier dive site off Port Vila and for good reason. Located at the south-west end of Mele Bay, and facing the open ocean, this site features an enormous cave cutting into the reef wall. While a great spot for wide-angle photography, especially with the 30m visibility we enjoyed on two dives here, I still went with macro as there were just too many interesting small critters in the cave.

Rare Possum Wrasse. 1/125, f13, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.

The cave has a maximum depth of 22m and is wide enough to dive a double-decker bus through it. Sponges and hydrocorals decorate its walls, which are pockmarked by numerous ledges. Nudibranchs, saron shrimps, hermit crabs, cowries, boxer shrimps, cardinalfish, squirrelfish, soldierfish, lionfish and angelfish were all common in the cave. However, I was most exciting to find two rare fish, Naia pipefish and possum wrasse.

There were a surprising number of Naia pipefish is the cracks and crevices. They look similar to several other banded pipefish, but with a different tail pattern. Shy of the light, they were not easy to photograph as they weaved in and out of the cracks. I even found a male with eggs attached to his belly.

The possum wrasse was an even bigger surprise, though wide-spread throughout the Indo-Pacific region they are rarely seen as they like to hide in caves like this. This was the first

time I had ever seen or photographed this species, and being a fish nerd, I was very excited. There was a group of three darting in and out of the ledges and I was very happy to nail a few sharp images with the always reliable D500 auto-focus system.

Our group had a wonderful time in Port Vila. The wide-angle photography didn't deliver on this trip, but the brilliant variety of macro subjects sure made up for it. And it was good to know that we were contributing to the local economy that was been struggling to get back on its feet after the terrible earthquake in December.

More information:

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Nigel Marsh

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Macro Magic at Alam Batu

by David Fleetham and Jennifer Ross

Bali, Indonesia, is no stranger to the diving world, but for underwater photographers, Tulamben is a macro-rich paradise that deserves more than a cursory glance. My partner Jennifer Ross and I recently spent two weeks at Alam Batu Beach Resort, located on the northeast coast of the island. For fourteen days, we dove four times daily, one of those being a night dive each evening.

Alam Batu sits on a rugged stretch of coast framed by black volcanic sand beaches, lava rock, and dense jungle. Above water, the backdrop of Mount Agung looms large. Below, the reefscape is a patchwork of coral gardens, black sand valleys, and vertical walls teeming with rare and bizarre marine life. The resort's dive site menu includes names like Dreamland, Adventure, Baywatch, and the ever-iconic Liberty Wreck, alongside sites with local names such as Ketut, Jukung, Batu Niti, and Pasir Ilmuh. You never had to repeat a dive unless you requested it—and we did just that on more than one occasion.

Each morning started in the open-air restaurant with a cup of coffee and a spectacular sunrise over the Bali Sea. The dive team had our gear all set up for us to inspect and analyze our nitrox. As we pull on wetsuits the gear and our cameras are carried to the boat and we grab our mask and fins and follow. Within minutes, we were underway to sites that were just five to fifteen minutes away. The dives were private affairs, each group had their own guide and boat drop, so that you rarely saw another diver underwater.

Dive guides at Alam Batu are equal parts safety officers and treasure hunters. Our guide for the entire two weeks, Nengah, knew the reef like his living room, and his ability to spot camouflaged critters bordered on supernatural. Every one-hour dive flew by in a flurry of macro subjects. No sooner had you framed one than our guide was waving us over to the next gem.

Our sightings read like a who's who of macro treasures: yawning paddle-flap scorpionfish (Rhinopias eschmeyeri), mimic octopus, Thaumoctopus mimicus, and many fish and crustaceans guarding or holding egg masses. We photographed elusive subjects like the Zanzibar whip coral shrimp (Dasycaris

A striking lionfish, Pterois volitans, glides gracefully beside a colony of brightly colored alcyonarian soft coral.
Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon 8-15mm at 15mm, 1/100 sec, F11, ISO 640, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

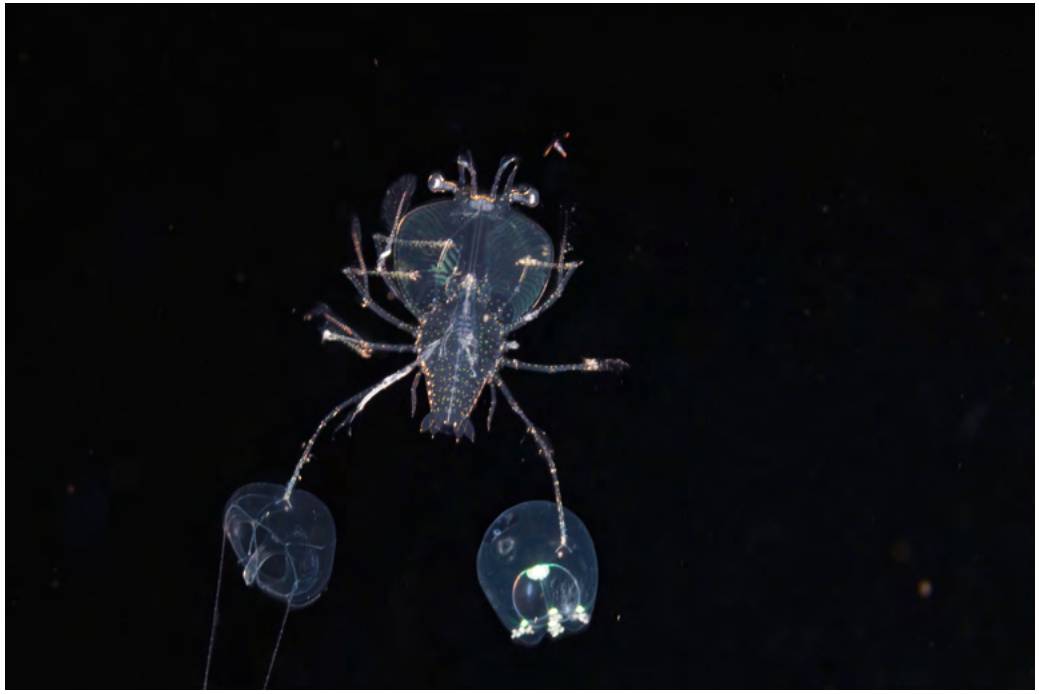
This leaf scorpionfish,Taenianotus triacanthus, an ambush predator, is perched on the tip of the coral in hopes one of the fish in the background will approach close enough for it to strike. Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 100mm macro lens, 1/160 sec, F32, ISO 100, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

A yellow thorny seahorse, Hippocampus histrix. Known for their bony armor and prehensile tails, thorny seahorses thrive in the Indo-Pacific's diverse reef environments. Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 100mm macro lens, 1/160 sec, F32, ISO 100, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

zanzibarica), leopard crinoid shrimp (Laomenes pardus), and the intricately adorned spiny tiger shrimp (Phyllognathia ceratophthalma). On one dive, a pygmy seahorse (Hippocampus bargibanti) nearly escaped our notice until our guide pointed it out, smaller than a grain of rice, camouflaged to perfection on its gorgonian host.

Between dives, the resort hums with a quiet energy. We peel out of our wetsuits and hang them at our numbered gear station. Rinse tanks are clearly labeled: one for cameras only, and others for regulators, another for dive gear and a fourth with a mild detergent for wetsuits. The camera rooms are equipped with power strips and workspaces to prep for the next dive and your guide will even dry your setup with compressed air and place it at

The coral-encrusted Liberty Wreck in Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia, where vibrant soft coral trees, Dendronephthya sp., drape from a collapsed section of the ship. The site is a magnet for macro and wide-angle photographers alike, offering rich marine biodiversity and stunning coral growth set against black sand and steel skeletons. Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon 8-15mm at 15mm, 1/100 sec, F11, ISO 640, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.



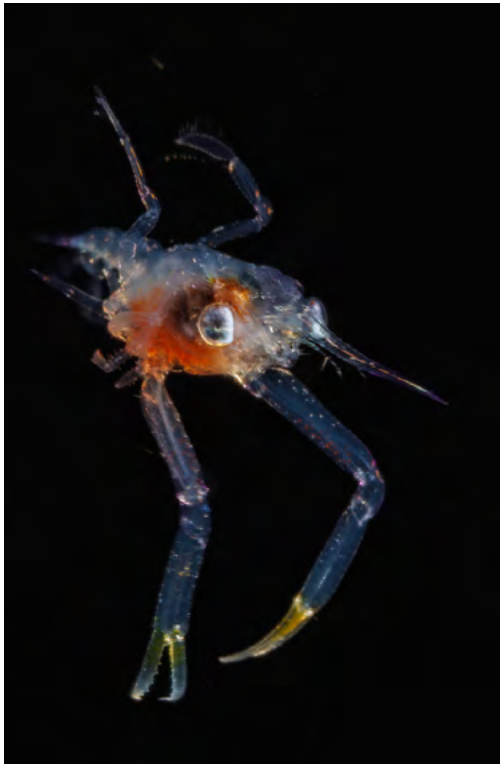
This image was captured a half mile offshore on a blackwater night dive with the bottom 1500+ feet below. The crab has captured two jellyfish which it will use as protection from predators. The body of the crab is less than one inch in length in this larval stage. Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 50mm macro lens, 1/160 sec, F22, ISO 100, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

your station. Breakfasts included fruit, warm bread, and made-to-order eggs that fuelled our long dive days. After a thorough camera check, we were back in our wetsuits and off again.

The Liberty Wreck is the only site where we consistently saw other divers. Changes were noticeable since our last visit; a section of the wreck had collapsed, but coral growth remained healthy, and the reef seemed even more vibrant. Trees of soft coral caught the current, while reef fish sought shelter in every crevice. Cleaner shrimp danced on the faces of coral groupers (Cephalopholis miniata), and schools of anthias painted the water with color.

Each night brought its own magic. Our dusk dives often began with broadclub cuttlefish (Sepia latimanus) who, on two occasions, were working on mating rituals. The venomous demon stinger or spiny devilfish, Inimicus didactylus, well deserving of its impressively fearsome names, were found almost every night along with bobtail squid, and one unforgettable evening where dozens of cartwheeling larval mantis shrimp spiraled in our lights.

We encountered skeleton shrimp (Caprella sp.) so small they could only be noticed in post-dive reviews, and ghostgobies guarding their eggs on tunicates. Harlequin shrimp (Hymenocera elegans) feeding on sea star arms, and the tiny but mighty pom-pom crab (Lybia tesselata) paraded around with anemones in each claw. Even the eerie, prehistoric stonefish (Synanceia verrucosa) made appearances, nestled in the sand and waiting.



The body of the crab is less than one inch in length in this larval stage. Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 50mm macro lens, 1/160 sec, F22, ISO 100, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

Night diving here blurs into blackwater territory. On the two designated blackwater nights, we drifted over 1500 feet of water. It was here we spotted a larval crab wielding jellyfish like shields, larval flying fish gliding with delicate fin extensions and jellyfish, including box jellys, so we were pleased to be wearing full 3mm suits as well as a hood. Evenings ended with warm showers under the stars and delicious dinners served under bamboo poles topped with glowing tubular lanterns. The set menu changed nightly, each meal outdoing the last.

Every underwater photographer dreams of those perfect conditions—warm water, minimal currents, excellent visibility, and a never-ending parade of subjects. Alam Batu delivered all that and more. The rule was: if your hair is wet, it's time to eat; if it's dry, it's time to dive.

We left with thousands of images, new friends, and deep gratitude for the staff, guides, and incredible biodiversity of Bali's northeast coast. The photographic opportunities were endless: a harlequin ghost pipefish (Solenostomus paradoxus) hovering near soft coral, a thresher shark appearing for a split second on a deeper dive, or a juvenile orbicular batfish (Platax orbicularis) mimicking a drifting leaf.

To any underwater photographer considering a trip to Bali: dive deep, end shallow, and bring your laptop or extra memory cards. Alam Batu isn't just a resort—it's a macro photographer's muse.

David Fleetham
www.davidfleetham.com

The Importance of Focus

By Jennifer Ross

Earlier this May, my partner David Fleetham and I spent two unforgettable weeks diving in Tulamben on the island of Bali in Indonesia. As underwater photographers, we were eager to explore the famed muck diving sites around the Alam Batu Beach Bungalow Resort. We arrived on May 6th and were immediately impressed by the resort's peaceful welcoming atmosphere. The lush grounds, infinity pool, fully equipped spa, stone-crafted outdoor showers, oceanfront villas, and incredibly warm, professional staff were a delight to the senses.

The diving kicked off strong with four dives on May 7th - and the macro life was nothing short of spectacular. From rhinopias scorpionfish to pygmy seahorses and other fascinating critters, this region of Bali delivered everything a muck diver dreams of photographing.

Donald Duck Shrimp with eggs. Canon EOS R7 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 100mm macro lens, 1/125 sec, F20, ISO 400, with two Ikelite 161 strobes set on TTL.

OM Systems TG7, OM housing, 100th sec @ F14. 500 ISO. Built in flash and external video light.

But then… disaster struck.

On the first dive of the second day, I accidentally flooded my new Canon R7 mirrorless camera housing. A devastating mistake caused by a lapse in focus during setup. It didn't matter how many other empathetic photographers tried to console me with comments like, "eventually it happens to the best of us…" I was inconsolable. To say that this was inevitable was analogous to saying "crashing" was part of flying an airplane.

No!

That moment felt like the end of my trip. I was gutted—unable to eat, dive, or think straight. For any underwater photographer, losing a camera on location has to be a worst-case scenario, and in that moment, I was shattered.

But the story didn't end there. Thanks to the incredibly supportive team at Alam Batu, especially our dive concierge Susan, I was able to purchase an Olympus TG-7 locally - a simple, reliable, and very

OM Systems TG7, 100th sec @ F14. 500 ISO. Built in flash and external video light.

capable camera for capturing great macro shots. I paired it with my GoPro setup equipped with a Backscatter close-focus wide-angle lens, and by day four, I was back in the water. With the sharp eye of our guide Nengah (who could honestly find any critter we asked for, as if they were his pets), I was diving again! Over the next two weeks we had some spectacular encounters —especially at night. Octopus, sea snakes, nudibranchs of every color, snake eels, cuttlefish, and even a tiny pygmy squid that danced in the light on our final night.

Four dives per day builds up a healthy appetite and the food at Alam Batu was exceptional. They offer a varied menu featuring healthy and delicious selections that appeal to a wide variety of tastes. The other guests, who came and went from all over

OM Systems TG7, 100th sec @ F14. 500 ISO. Built in flash and external video light.

the world, were a joy to meet too —each with their own stories, and all understanding the heartbreak of a flooded rig.

This trip turned into one of the most meaningful diving experiences of our lives. Yes, there was a hard lesson learned about the importance of focus when working with professional camera gear. But more than that, it reinforced how strong our partnership is, and how every challenge underwater can lead to growth, gratitude, and creative reinvention.

We can't recommend Alam Batu highly enough—for its outstanding dive staff, comfort, and the sheer richness of life in its surrounding waters. For any underwater photographer, especially those drawn to the thrill of muck diving, this is a destination that will not disappoint.

Jennifer Ross
Facebook
Instagram

Marshall's Mysteries 22

General ID quiz. Deliberately not including exotics, eg Hairy Frogfish. Hint : try to come up with the "family", eg Cardinalfish, then look at the features to try to work out the common name. 1 point for family name, another for common name. Maximum 40 points. Above 30 is very good, less than 10 needs more diving!

Answers on page 66

1

Lembeh Straits, Sulawesi, Indonesia

2

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

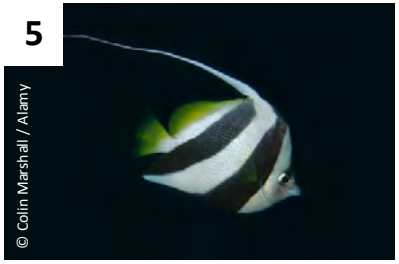
3

Bali, Indonesia

4

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

5



Raja Ampat, Indonesia

6

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

7

Bali, Indonesia

8

Bali, Indonesia

9

Bali, Indonesia

10

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

11

Sipadan Island, Sabah, Malaysia

12

Lembeh Straits, Sulawesi, Indonesia

13

Lembeh Straits, Sulawesi, Indonesia

14

Komodo, Indonesia

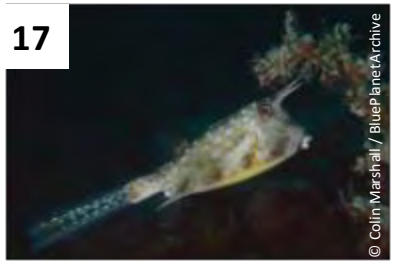
15

Bali, Indonesia

16

Bali, Indonesia

17



Bangka, Sulawesi, Indonesia

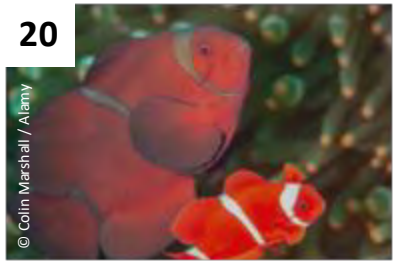
18

Dili, East Timor

19

Bali, Indonesia

20



Sipadan Island, Sabah, Malaysia

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Marshall's Mysteries 22 - Answers

Family (or Subfamily)
Common Names
Scientific Name

1

Stonefish (Synanceiinae)

Horrid Stonefish
Estuarine Stonefish
Hollow-cheek Stonefish
Warty Ghoul
True Stonefish

Synanceia horrida

With their famous venomous spines, one of the most dangerous fish – and the ugliest!

Lembeh Straits, Indonesia

2

Angelfish (Pomacanthidae)

Six Banded Angelfish
Sixbar Angelfish

Pomacanthus sexstriatus

The bright colours and grace with which Angelfish carry themselves perhaps is where they got their name. Some say the silhouette looks like an angel, which seems more likely for the freshwater variety (with their tall dorsal fins) rather than the marine Angelfish. Many common names refer to fish's stripes, lines, bands or bars.

3

Wrasse (Labridae)

Rockmover Wrasse
Dragon Wrasse
Reindeer Wrasse

Novaculichthys taeniourus

The wrasse is indeed moving a rock. The "Reindeer" name is from the juvenile's "horns", ie the two dorsal fin spines shown below.

Banda Islands, Indonesia

4

Bream (Nemipteridae)

Double Whiptail
Blue Whiptail
Purple Threadfin Bream
Whip-tailed Threadfin-bream

Pentapodus emeryii

The tail resembles a whip, hence "Whiptail", although not all Whiptails have such a whip-like tail as this species. Give yourself a bonus point if you knew a Whiptail was part of the Bream family. The "threadfin" reference is the same as the "whiptail", ie the trailing filament on the caudal (tail) fin.

5

Bannerfish (Chaetodontidae)

Schooling Bannerfish
Schooling Coachman
Pennant Butterflyfish
Poor Man's Moorish Idol

Heniochus diphreutes

Similar to the Longfin Bannerfish, Heniochus acuminatus, but this fish is found in schools, hence the name.

Lembeh Straits, Indonesia

6

Needlefish (Belonidae)

Reef Needlefish
Square-tail Alligator Gar
Driller's Long-tom

Strongylura incisa

The average diver probably has a much higher chance of being injured or even killed by a Needlefish than, say, a Shark. They stay near the surface and can swim at up to 60 km/hour, and often jump out of the water, like a javelin. Stories of people having the fish pierce their eye or heart. Especially at night, when lights confuse the fish.

7

Stargazer (Uranoscopidae)

Whitemargin Stargazer

Uranoscopus sulphureus

Sneaky question as this fish is usually seen buried, in ambush mode in the sand, looking straight up - "gazing at the stars". Unusual to see it out of the sand.

Bali, Indonesia

8

Pufferfish (Tetraodontidae)

Map Puffer
Scribbled Pufferfish
Scribbled Toadfish
Kesho-fugu (Japanese)

Arothron mappa

The Puffer's pattern resembles a map, especially that of a maze, hence the common name. The fish is a delicacy in Japan, requiring great care to ensure the meat served has no contamination of the fish's poison (tetrodotoxin found in the liver & skin of the Pufferfish to deter predators).

9

Triggerfish (Balistidae)

Redtooth Triggerfish
Redfang Triggerfish
Blue Triggerfish

Odonus niger

The red teeth are unusual and distinctive. Surprised there is no "Draculafish" common name...

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

10

Goby (Gobiidae)

Twinspot Goby
Crab-eyed Goby
Signal Goby
Four-eyed Goby

Signigobius biocellatus

An eyespot (or ocellus) confuses potential predators, possibly preventing an attack - those "eyes" look big! If the predator does attack, the spots may cause it to attack the wrong area, facilitating an escape or at least reducing injury. Spots, like stripes, are often referred to in a fish's common name.

11

Rabbitfish (Siganidae)

Masked Rabbitfish / Spinefoot
Bluelined Rabbitfish / Spinefoot

Siganus puellus

Rabbitfish, seen below at night, have venomous spines (venom similar to Stonefish), to deter predators & lock themselves in place when sleeping.

Night dive, Raja Ampat, Indonesia

12

Gurnard (Dactylopteridae)

Flying Gurnard
Helmet Gurnard
Oriental Flying Gurnard
Purple Flying Gurnard
Sea Robin

Dactyloptena orientalis

The common name "Helmet Gurnard " is considered by some to be preferable to "Flying Gurnard" as the fish obviously does not really fly. However, any photographer who has tried to take an overhead image while they "fly" about underneath understands why "flying" is in the common name!

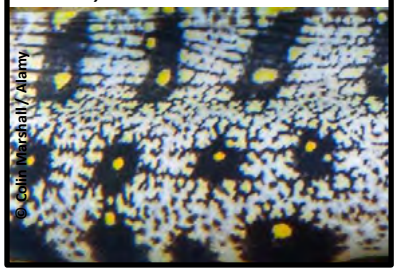
13

Moray Eel (Muraenidae)

Snowflake Moray
Clouded Moray
Floral Moray
Starry Moray

Echidna nebulosa

The pattern on this eel resembles a variety of concepts - snowflakes, clouds, flowers or stars, giving rise to many common names.



Ambon, Indonesia

14

Trevally (Carangidae)

Bluefin Trevally / Jack / Kingfish
Blue Ulua
Spotted Trevally

Caranx melampygus

The colouration on the fins is not just some touch of blue – this is a flashy electric blue, so no surprise that it appears in the common name. The Hawaiian word "Ulua" for this and some other game fish is also used for "man" as this fish was substituted for human sacrifices when people were unavailable (no volunteers?!) .

15

Unicornfish (Acanthuridae)

Bignose Unicornfish
Scribbled Unicornfish
Vlaming's Unicornfish

Naso vlamingii

This Unicornfish does <u>not</u> have the classic nasal protuberance resembling a unicorn horn, like the Palefin Unicornfish, Naso brevirostris, below.

Night dive, Raja Ampat, Indonesia

16

Goby (Gobiidae)

Fire Dartfish
Fire Goby
Magnificent Fire Fish
Red Fire Goby
Fire Fish

Nemateleotris magnifica

Most divers will recognize this Fire Dartfish - the very visible fish who endearingly flicks its long dorsal fin back and forth, signaling other Dartfish, while it hovers above its hole. Like the Whiptail, give yourself another bonus point if you knew Dartfish are in the same family as Gobies.

17

Boxfish (Ostraciidae)

Longhorn Cowfish
Horned Boxfish
Trunkfish
Cofferfish

Lactoria cornuta

The cow-like "horns" (spines) are distinctive. They ward off predators and make it difficult to be swallowed.

Night dive, Lembeh Straits, Indonesia

18

Anthias (Anthiadidae)

Squarespot Anthias
Pink Square Anthias
Squarespot Fairy Basslet
Blotched Fairy Basslet
Mirror Basslet

Pseudanthias pleurotaenia

This relatively large Anthias has this very distinctive "squarespot", which sounds like a Nonsense Word. The "Basslet" title is troublesome as Basslets are uncommon, often solitary and cryptic fish, some only found on deep dives; such are the vagaries of dealing with inconsistent & fickle common names.

19

Surgeonfish (Acanthuridae)

Regal Blue Surgeonfish / Tang
Palette Tang
Flagtail Surgeonfish
Wedgetail Tang

Paracanthurus hepatus

Called Surgeonfish as they have sharp spines by their tail, shaped like a scalpel, as used by surgeons.

Night dive, Forgotten Islands, Indonesia

20

Clownfish (Amphiprioninae)

Spine-cheek Anemonefish
Maroon Clownfish
Tomato Clownfish
Gold Stripe Clown

Amphiprion biaculeatus

This Clownfish has a symbiotic mutualistic relationship with only one species of Anemone, the Bubble-tip Anemone, Entacmaea quadricolor. The Anemone protects the Anemonefish and its nest from predators. In return, the Anemone gets protection from <u>its</u> predators, nutrients from the fish's waste, and more water circulation.

Guidelines for contributors

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

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

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

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

How to submit articles

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

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

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

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

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

Parting Shot(s)

by David Fleetham

Diving in Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia, often means navigating over expansive stretches of dark volcanic sand—a unique seascape that hosts a wealth of fascinating macro subjects. Among the most iconic are the shrimp-goby pairs: a symbiotic relationship in which a watchful goby stands guard at the entrance of a burrow that's meticulously excavated and maintained by a nearly blind snapping shrimp. These partnerships are common across the sloping black sand plains and make for classic behavior shots.

On several dives, I encountered small groups of redspot dartfish, Ptereleotris rubristigma. Typically skittish, they would scatter as I inched closer, making them a challenging subject to photograph. However, on one occasion, I followed a lone dartfish as it hovered momentarily above a shrimp-goby burrow. As I approached with my camera rig, the dartfish suddenly darted down into the shared burrow alongside the goby and shrimp, all three disappearing into the sand in a blur.

Until that moment, I had assumed these burrows were the exclusive territory of their primary tenants. But as this encounter reminded me, the underwater world is full of surprises—and sometimes, the phrase "any port in a storm" applies just as much to marine life as it does to sailors.

David Fleetham
www.davidfleetham.com

Shot with a Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 100mm macro lens, 1/160 sec, F14, ISO 1000, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes set on TTL.

Do you have a shot which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 750 words of text and yours could be the next Parting Shot.
Images can be any size bigger than 20cm (horizontal or vertical) @ 150dpi saved as jpeg format and about 500 - 750 words would be fine.)

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