



# 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](mailto:info@bunakenoasis.com)  
[www.bunakenoasis.com](http://www.bunakenoasis.com)



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# Underwater Photography

A web magazine

UwP148 Jan/Feb 2026

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Underwater Photography 2001 - 2026

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[peter@uwpmag.com](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)

# Editorial

## No baiting

The decision for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition to change its rules and prohibit any form of baiting is initially understandable but has far reaching consequences, especially for underwater photography.

When I first read the news I immediately thought of all those fantastic gannet shots and have always thought it a bit extreme to head out with crates of mackerel - more unnatural feeding than baiting. But also the word has an aggressive tone linked to bears, snares, poison, capture and possibly death. 'Feeding' might be a better term but that throws the net even wider.

Either way, the problem with rules is that they are rarely black and white and this is certainly the case and especially for underwater images.

Think about it; if it were applied to underwater photography competitions, there would certainly be no shots of gannets, sharks are virtually impossible to see without chum, crocodiles (photographed after being fed (post-baiting?)) and then there's the use of lights at night to

attract the prey of whalesharks, manta rays etc. The list could go on.

Take it further and it would deny the conservationists a valuable source of inspirational images, so essential to raising awareness of endangered species.

The result would be a much less exciting set of images so I would argue that the rule would be detrimental to underwater images where the environment dictates that encouraging baiting is the only way to capture some of these subjects.

Fortunately the politicians would argue in favour of allowing baiting images because it would save jobs but the other problem with rules is that they provide the woke brigade with ammunition to spread the net even wider and include most tourist activities such as Basking Sharks, seals and on and on.

So, having thought about it, I would not vote for such a rule to be applied to underwater images however well meaning the intention.

Also, as this only applies to underwater photography competitions, it wouldn't put a stop to

these activities because they are not illegal.

So for Competitions, allow baiting and leave it up to the Competition judges to decide.

Is that a big enough clue?

## Final call for UPY 2026 entries

The closing date for this important competition is 23:59 hrs GMT, 4 January 2026, and I'm sure you have sent yours in by now but, judging by how many come in at up to literally the last minute, one final reminder is always worth it.

Why, I am sure you are asking, does a bi-monthly magazine include details of such an imminent closing date? Well the answer is, such is the interest in each new issue of UWP that the large majority of downloads take place in the first three days of publication - thousands of them - so a reminder of such an imminent closing date is read by the majority and must help swell those last minute entries.

As a UPY judge, this is a very

exciting time of year for me as, in less than a week's time, I will meet up with fellow judges, Alex Mustard and Tobias Friedrich together with Dan Bolt, the all important IT organiser, to view this year's crop of images.

I cannot emphasise enough what a privilege it is to be entrusted with the task of choosing the winning images. It is an inspirational, exhilarating experience and, rest assured, every single one of the images entered is considered and discussed. There is no unqualified culling beforehand to lighten the judges' load and we all meet face to face for nearly three days to give the images the time and consideration they deserve.

There is no other underwater photography competition which operates at such a respectful level of professionalism and that is why it is held in such regard.

I look forward to seeing your images.

**Peter Rowlands**  
[peter@uwpmag.com](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)

# News, Travel & Events

## Bunaken Oasis Dive Resort & Spa Named “World’s Leading Dive Resort” at the 2025 World Travel Awards



At a gala dinner in Bahrain on 6th December, Bunaken Oasis Dive Resort & Spa was named “World’s Leading Dive Resort” at the 2025 World Travel Awards, the travel industry’s most prestigious global honours programme. This award recognises the resort’s exceptional commitment to luxury, sustainability, and marine conservation in one of the world’s most biodiverse underwater environments.

Located within Indonesia’s renowned Bunaken National Marine Park, Bunaken Oasis has become synonymous with five-star diving experiences that balance indulgence and environmental responsibility. The resort offers guests a bespoke

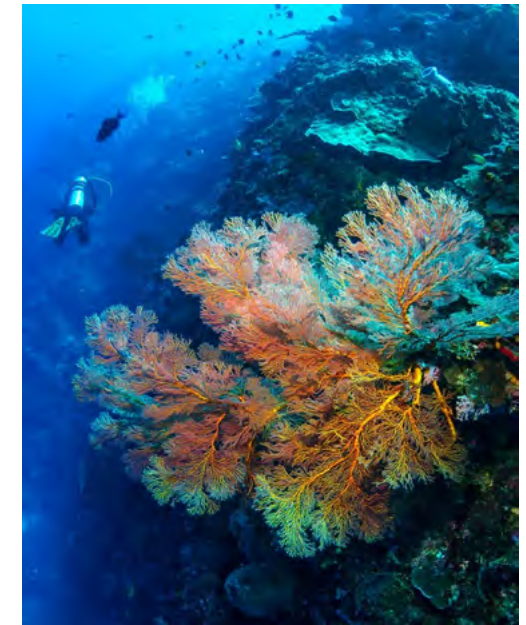
diving experience — combining state-of-the-art facilities, personalised service, and access to over 90 world-class dive sites, while non-divers, who account for about a third of guest numbers, are offered a captivating choice of land-based activities.

“We are truly honoured to be recognized as the World’s Leading Dive Resort,” said Elaine Wallace, British owner of Bunaken Oasis. “It’s a testament to our incredible team, our loyal guests, and our mission to provide luxury with a conscience — combining five-star comfort with a genuine commitment to protecting Bunaken’s extraordinary underwater world.”



Nestled on the tranquil southern shore of Bunaken Island, the boutique resort offers just 12 luxurious cottages overlooking the sea, a state-of-the-art dive centre, and a custom-built dive fleet designed to ensure the highest levels of safety, comfort, and environmental responsibility. The resort is also celebrated for its sustainability initiatives, including on-site water purification and blackwater waste management.

The World Travel Awards, established in 1993, recognise excellence across all key sectors of



the travel, tourism, and hospitality industries. Winners are chosen through votes cast by travel professionals and the public worldwide.

[www.bunakenoasis.com](http://www.bunakenoasis.com)



## ***Immerse Yourself in the World of Underwater Imaging***

### **NEWS**

Keep up to date with everything that matters to underwater photographers, from the latest gear and gadgets to the newest developments in marine research

### **TECHNIQUES**

Learn the fundamentals of underwater photography and progress to the latest, most innovative techniques taught by the top pros in the industry

### **ARTICLES**

Discover the world of underwater imaging through compelling features from photographers, filmmakers, ocean scientists, industry experts, and more

### **TRAVEL**

Read about the experiences of accomplished shooters as they visit the world's most iconic dive spots, and get inside tips on maximizing your dive vacation

### **EQUIPMENT**

Use our comprehensive underwater photography and videography gear guide to find the best camera, lenses, housing, lighting, and accessories for you

### **CONTESTS**

Submit your best underwater images and short films to our annual contests, including the prestigious DPG Masters Underwater Imaging Competition

**DIVE PHOTO GUIDE**

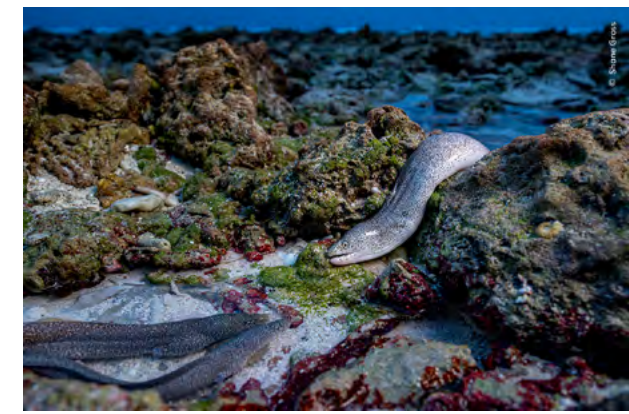
[www.divephotoguide.com](http://www.divephotoguide.com) · [contact@divephotoguide.com](mailto:contact@divephotoguide.com)

## **Wildlife Photographer of the Year launches 62nd competition with stellar new jury panel and rule change**

Wildlife Photographer of the Year has launched its 62nd competition, calling for entries from photographers of all nationalities, backgrounds and experience levels. The esteemed, international expert judging panel for this year's competition is also announced today, including two-time Wildlife Photographer of the Year Grand Title winner, Laurent Ballesta.

This year, the competition has updated its rule on baiting, owing to its enduring commitment to ethical wildlife practice above all else. From this competition onwards, any form of baiting will be prohibited, except where the photograph is the result of legitimate scientific research, which must be clearly stated in the image caption when submitted.

Previously, the competition's rules stated that the jury would strongly favour non-baited photographs, with live baiting or any means of baiting that may put an animal in danger, or adversely affect its behaviour, having been banned for many years. The change to a complete ban reflects the competition's



continued focus on championing images that celebrate the natural world with respect and integrity.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year is also committed to increasing female and non-binary representation and actively connects with female and non-binary photographers to encourage entry to its competitions. This includes an offer of a discounted entry fee to organisations that support diversity in wildlife photography.

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[www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy/competition](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/wpy/competition)

[www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)

# Capturing Critters In Lembeh Workshop

Jan 8-21, 2027

Join Backscatter's own James Emery and acclaimed photo pro Marty Snyderman for the 2027 Capturing Critters in Lembeh photo workshop – the longest running underwater photography workshop in Indonesia.

James was the in-house photo pro at Lembeh resort for years and has returned numerous times to lead photography workshops.

Together with the expert dive guides and the Lembeh Resort Photo Center team, they'll provide you with unparalleled knowledge, personalized coaching, and all the tools you need to take your underwater photography or videography to the next level.

Why Join CCiL 2027?

- Daily seminars with the Pros covering advanced techniques, post-processing, and creative storytelling
- "Workshop Member Time": one-on-one guidance tailored to your goals and gear setup
- Incredible critter-rich diving across Lembeh's world-famous muck sites and reefs
- A supportive environment for photographers of all levels — from



compact shooters to DSLR and mirrorless pros

Whether you're joining us with your first compact camera, a brand-new mirrorless rig, or years of DSLR experience, Capturing Critters in Lembeh 2027 promises to be a truly transformative experience — both underwater and behind the lens.

[www.backscatter.com](http://www.backscatter.com)

# CITES upgrade whale sharks and all mobulid rays (inc manta rays) from Appendix II to Appendix I

We have some excellent news to share! The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species – CITES – has voted to upgrade whale sharks and all mobulid rays (including manta rays) from Appendix II to Appendix I, the highest level of protection from international trade.

Appendix I is the top tier: it's reserved for species at serious risk of extinction. International commercial trade in their parts is banned, and governments are legally obliged to prevent that trade and enforce the rules. It's very hard to get a species onto Appendix I, which is why this decision to list whale sharks and manta rays is such a significant step forward. In practice, it means any shipment of their products should immediately raise a red flag with customs and enforcement agencies.

The Marine Megafauna Foundation team has been closely involved in the process. Dr Andrea Marshall led the global conservation assessment of giant oceanic manta rays, reef manta rays, and several of their mobula cousins, highlighting the threat to these species from fisheries. I led the new global assessment



of whale shark conservation status, formally published this year. These assessments brought together monitoring data and threat information from research teams around the world, and they were central evidence for both CITES and other international policy processes.

[www.marinemegafauna.org](http://www.marinemegafauna.org)

## Bluefin Tuna & Blue Sharks - Best of Cornwall

Sep 2026



The SW coast of Britain is visited by two iconic marine species: bluefin tuna and blue sharks. In this unique adventure we will try to find both.

The return of Atlantic bluefin tuna to British waters after an absence of 60 years is one of the great marine comeback stories of recent times. These are the biggest tuna species, capable of growing larger than a polar bear and swimming faster than a great white shark. The bluefin can be seen leaping from the water as they pursue prey, and the holy grail would be to see them underwater on a baitball (word of warning: this is very difficult to achieve, but not impossible).

Blue sharks feed off the Cornish coast, and we can reliably find them by chumming the water to unlock exhilarating underwater encounters and photos.

Using an offshore safari model, we will set out each day in pursuit of elusive but worthwhile marine encounters. The timing of our visit is designed to maximise our chances when these waters are rich in life.

This is a brand new itinerary in my home waters.

[www.henleypiers.com](http://www.henleypiers.com)

[Request Brochure](#)

## Tubbataha Reefs, Philippines with Nigel Marsh

22 - 31 May, 2026

Join Nigel Marsh for an incredible liveaboard dive trip to explore the legendary Tubbataha Reefs, Philippines. Declared a World Heritage site in 1993, the Tubbataha Reefs are located in the middle of the Sulu Sea, and fully protected they are overload with marine life. Only accessible for a few months of the year, the Tubbataha Reefs are made up of two large atoll reefs and a small coral reef.

Protected from fishing these reefs abound with reef sharks, schools of pelagic fishes, turtles, manta rays and a great variety of reef fishes and invertebrates. However, these reefs are also a good spot to see whale sharks, hammerheads and also dolphins and whales. Tubbataha Reefs are a wonderful spot for underwater photographers.

Our package includes:  
Return Economy flights from Sydney, and domestic flights from Manilla to Puerto Princesa.  
One night accommodation at Puerto Princesa (twin share)  
8 nights aboard the luxurious Atlantic Inifiniti (twin share either Deluxe or Premium Cabin)  
Up to 4 dives per day on full dive days  
Tanks, weights, weight belts



All meals, tea and coffee  
Airport transfers  
Excluded payable locally: bar bill, gear hire, personal purchases, tipping, Nitrox (USD178), Marine Park fee (USD120) and Fuel Surcharge (USD120).

All bookings through Diveplanit, email: [claire@diveplanit.com](mailto:claire@diveplanit.com) for details or booking or click on the link below.

[Trip Link](#)

[claire@diveplanit.com](mailto:claire@diveplanit.com)

[www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)



## The Masters Class Series of Workshops for 2026

All workshops are fully inclusive of all meals, group ground transport, nitrox, guide, boat, diving fees  
2 daily seminars, coaching and more!

**Critterfest- January 27-FEB 6 + The Blackwater Edition FEB 6-Feb. 14**  
Bruce Shafer, Mike Bartick and Walter Marti-Photo, Editing and Video

**Insider Divers-Simon Lprenz and Tobias Friedrich Feb 16-24th**  
Macro + Blackwater, Photo and Editing

**Backscatter Macro Intensive + Blackwater March 8-18/18-22**  
Mike Bartick- Photo, Editing, Coaching



**Bluewater Photo and Travel 2 sessions, April 16-26 | April 26-May 3**  
Photo, Editing, Coaching

**Stephen Frink - Limited- May 9-16**  
Macro and Blackwater, Digital Darkroom

**May 18-28 + The Blackwater Edition May 28-June 5th**  
Bruce Shafer, Mike Bartick, Walter Marti

Contact Mike Bartick for more details or questions- Groups are welcome

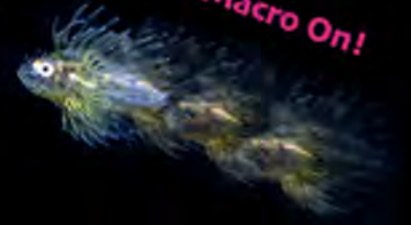
[mike@DiveCBR.com](mailto:mike@DiveCBR.com) or [saltwaterphoto@live.com](mailto:saltwaterphoto@live.com)

# Crystal Blue Resort, Anilao

[www.DiveCBR.com](http://www.DiveCBR.com)

[mike@DiveCBR.com](mailto:mike@DiveCBR.com)   [saltwaterphoto@live.com](mailto:saltwaterphoto@live.com)

Get Your Macro On!



## Alam Batu, Bali with Reef Photo

Jul 10-19, 2027



Dive, shoot, relax and learn alongside our Photo Pros in Indonesia's best destinations. Elevate your imaging with hands-on guidance at these expert-led workshops. Whether you just got your first system, recently upgraded or are an experienced shooter, our underwater workshops will improve your imaging in some of the world's best dive destinations.

We're always adding more Workshops to the list so join our newsletter to get notified when new destinations are added.

Alam Batu Beach Bungalow Resort is the go-to resort for underwater image makers looking to capture the macro critters of Bali. While dive resorts located

within Tulamben are limited to shore diving, Alam Batu is able to dive all of Tulamben's sites by boat as well as a host of other sites that are not shore accessible to other divers. With two large camera rooms and several large boats, Alam Batu will impress even the most seasoned underwater shooter.

Bali isn't just about diving and that's why they've included unlimited spa treatments and cultural tours in the package. Dive in the morning, spa in the afternoon? Tour in the morning and dive in the afternoon? Totally up to you! Join us at our favorite resort in Bali and take your macro imaging to the next level.

[www.reefphoto.com](http://www.reefphoto.com)

## Macro Mastery Workshop – Lembeh with Kate Jonker

22 May - 1 June 2026

**1 FEMALE SHARING SPOT AVAILABLE**

Ready to capture the magic of Lembeh's world-famous critters?

This 10-night macro photography workshop is your chance to transform the way you shoot underwater.

Through detailed and easy to understand lessons and group image reviews, you'll gain the skills and confidence to produce incredible macro images.

You'll also receive a 1-on-1 Zoom coaching call with Kate before the trip so you can arrive feeling confident and camera-ready.

We'll explore one key technique every two days so you can properly absorb, apply, and refine each new skill with real underwater practice.

This workshop is structured to give you practical skills you'll use for life. By the end, you'll know how to:

- Set up your camera for razor-sharp macro images
- Use a diopter to fill the frame with small subjects
- Control your strobe positioning for even, creative lighting
- Master your snoot or snoot torch for dramatic lighting
- Capture dreamy bokeh and create artistic compositions



- Experiment with creative lighting tools like torches and accessories
- Build your own signature shooting style

[www.katejonker.com](http://www.katejonker.com)



**FREE UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY COURSE CH 3 FISH PHOTOGRAPHY**  
 MIKE SCOTLAND  
**SPOTLIGHT BY**  
 KEVIN DEACON  
**FIJI DIVING LIFE**  
 ALISON SMITH  
**HERON ISLAND DIVE FESTIVAL**  
 ORGANISED BY DIVE LOG AUSTRALASIA  
**KICKER ROCK, GALAPAGOS**  
 KEN HOPPEN

## Lisbon Underwater Film Festival Publishes Official Selection of Films, February 13th-15th, 2026

The Lisbon Underwater Film Festival (LUFF) announced today the publication of its official list of selected films, in accordance with the dates established in the Festival Rules & Terms.

The 2026 selection features an outstanding and diverse programme of underwater cinema, bringing together internationally acclaimed filmmakers and emerging voices from around the world. Among the selected titles are Deeper by Jen Peedom, Dive Into the Darkness by Nays Baghai, Sequoias of the Sea by Natasha Benjamin and Ana Blanco, and The Island of the Shark Guardians of Malpelo by Annie Crawley.

The official selection also highlights new talent, including the documentary 23 Miles by promising young Portuguese director Vasco Coelho, alongside many other compelling works.

In total, the Lisbon Underwater Film Festival will screen 48 films across three competitive categories — Short Film, Documentary, and Ocean Conservation — for more than 20 hours of ocean-themed screenings.

The festival will take place from



February 13 to 15, 2026, at the iconic Cinema São Jorge, in the heart of Lisbon, Portugal.



# WATERPIXELS™

Underwater Imaging Community



Setup in late 2023, Waterpixels is a thriving online community for underwater image makers.

With over a 1000 members, the forum is run by a small, dedicated team of individuals who share a passion for underwater photography and who want to support the underwater imaging community.

Our objective is to provide members with a free community website and share advice, experience, knowledge and ideas that can enhance skills and creativity.

To support our commitment to keeping Waterpixels accessible to everyone, there is no charge for membership. We aim to cover running costs through sales of Waterpixels merchandise, donations from our community members, and, perhaps in time to come, carefully selected advertising partnerships. We do not sell or pass on data.

By joining Waterpixels, you become part of a vibrant community that is driven by a common love for underwater imaging. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just starting your journey, whether you use a large mirrorless or DSLR system, a GoPro or a compact, we welcome you to explore our platform, engage with fellow members, and take advantage of the wealth of resources available to you.

# www.waterpixels.net

## Mike & Mike Photography School



*Celebrating*  
22 YEARS

Join world-renowned underwater photographers Mike Haber and Mike Mesgleski for an immersive learning experience designed to take your underwater photography skills to the next level. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned pro, this hands-on workshop will provide expert guidance, stunning dive locations, and personalized feedback to help you master the art of underwater photography.

For over thirty seven years, Aggressor Adventures® has been the exclusive home of the Mike & Mike Photography School. This partnership has trained hundreds of photographers while diving in some

of the most beautiful destinations worldwide.

Whether you're a beginner or advanced photographer, Mike & Mike will help you quickly improve your underwater photography skills.

Through these immersive photography courses, Mike & Mike have helped their students create thousands of beautiful images. And with the skills they've learned from Mike & Mike, those students continue to create even more unique and captivating images long after they have left their workshops.

**Mike & Mike**

[www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)



### Antarctica's Whales Under Threat

Dear Peter,

The Southern Ocean is one of the most remote places on Earth, yet the pressure on it has never been greater.

Every year, fleets of massive industrial trawlers descend on Antarctic waters and haul in staggering amounts of krill, billions of these tiny crustaceans that whales, penguins, seals, and seabirds depend on for survival. In fact, this year's haul was one of the largest ever recorded.



*Krill are the foundation of the Antarctic food web. Remove them, and entire ecosystems collapse. For whales in particular, krill mean life itself.*

## Underwater Stories from the Red Sea

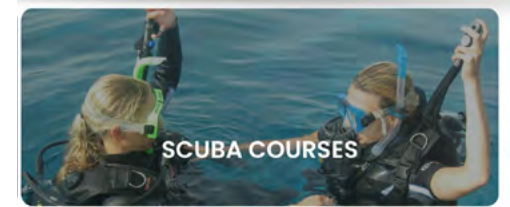
Camel Dive Club & Boutique Hotel in Sharm El Sheikh — one of the Red Sea's pioneering diving centres, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

To mark the occasion, we're launching a special initiative: Underwater Stories from the Red Sea — a creative contest dedicated to authentic underwater storytelling through photography and video.

The idea is to celebrate emotion and narrative, not just technical excellence — inviting divers, photographers, and ocean lovers to capture the spirit, atmosphere, and connection of the Red Sea.

The contest runs until February 1st 2026, with the winner receiving a diving holiday for two at Camel Dive Club, including one week's accommodation and five days of diving on a private boat alongside the jury and their partners — during our 40th Anniversary Week in December 2026 in Sharm El Sheikh.

The jury includes Alex Mustard, Pietro Formis, Alexander Kassler, Frederico Serra, and Vasco Pinhol, each bringing a unique voice in underwater photography and visual storytelling.



# New Products

## Backscatter Octo 3500 Wide Video Light



The Backscatter Octo 3500 Wide Video Light is the perfect go-to travel friendly light for action cameras and compact camera rigs. With a powerful 3500-lumen, 100° beam, it delivers bright, even coverage that brings out rich color and fine detail in your footage.

A perfect pairing for wide angle action cameras and compact systems, the Backscatter Octo 3500 adds professional-level lighting without adding bulk. It's just as capable on bigger camera rigs, either working as a low-profile focus light or for creative lighting when paired with accessories

like color or the fluorescence Backscatter Video Light Excitation Filter.

With Backscatter's signature octopus tentacle print, the Octo 3500 doesn't just perform well—it looks awesome while doing it.

The small size of the Backscatter Octo 3500 Wide Video Light makes it perfect for travel and action camera rigs, while the simple single-button control makes it easy to learn and use.

[www.backscatter.com](http://www.backscatter.com)

## Nauticam NA-R6III Housing for Canon EOS R6III

The Canon R6 Mark III is a powerful hybrid camera that seamlessly integrates impressive photo speeds (up to 40fps burst), Pre-Continuous Shooting, and robust video capabilities such as 7K RAW recording.

It also features dual card slots and a full-size HDMI output. These features are housed in a familiar, weather-sealed body that retains the top-tier autofocus inherited from Cinema EOS.

When combined with the Nauticam NA-R6III housing, this camera becomes an exceptional tool for underwater image creators.

The N120 port system accommodates both Canon RF and EF mount lenses. Nauticam's extensive range of ports and in-house corrective optics complement the NA-R6III's capabilities.

When equipped with an accessory vacuum valve, the integrated vacuum check and leak detection system provides continuous updates on the housing's watertight integrity. A vacuum system reset switch, situated beneath the tray, eliminates the need to open the back



of the housing during lens or port changes.

The NA-R6III is prepared for customization to meet your specific shooting requirements, featuring optional Full Frame viewfinders for enhanced viewing, optical and electronic strobe triggering, and support for HDMI 2.0 and 1.4 monitors.

332mm(W) x 189mm(H) x 141mm(D)

[www.nauticam.com](http://www.nauticam.com)

## BACKSCATTER MINI FLASH 2



THE  
PERFECT  
MACRO  
STROBE  
FOR  
ANY  
CAMERA



## Carbonarm Diveshot - universal housing for smartphones



Diveshot is the new Universal Housing for all iOS and Android Smartphones. With Bluetooth on you can use all the functions, even the advanced ones, of the camera of your Smartphone.

Download the application for free and enable the Bluetooth connection... in this way you can use all the functions, even the advanced ones, of the camera of your Smartphone. And if you change your phone? All you have to do is download the app on the new device and start using it in the housing.

- Compatible with All iOS and Android Smartphones.
- The Smartphone communicates with the Housing via a Bluetooth connection. All you need is the Diveshot Application downloadable on Apple Store or Google Store.
- Inside the housing there is a clamp support that allows for locking different smartphone with different sizes.
- Ability to use the full potential of the phone camera (time adjustment, ISO,

HDR, White Balance, Auto or Manual Fire).

- Ability to Switch from Photo Mode to Video Mode simply by pressing a button.
- "Selfie" function, allows you to use the front camera of the Smartphone. Finally you can take fantastic photos in the foreground, looking directly into the display, or record a video in which the user becomes the protagonist.
- The ultra-high-definition display and the considerable size of the new Smartphones allow incredible control of the shot during underwater diving.
- Made from a full block of aluminum.
- Compatible with the Vacuum System and Hydrophone.

[www.uwcamerastore.com](http://www.uwcamerastore.com)

# UW CAMERA STORE.COM



## BACKSCATTER ATOM FLASH

F28, 110° BEAM  
MANUAL &  
TTL (SONY, OLYMPUS &  
OM-SYSTEM)  
1000 LUMEN FOCUS LIGHT  
COMPACT SIZE



AVAILABLE WITH  
OPTICAL SNOOT FOR AF-1  
SOLD SEPARATELY

LET'S MAKE STORIES TOGETHER!

[www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)

**Nauticam**  
innovation underwater

Masterpieces designed  
for precise, creative underwater  
photography, featuring a unique  
visual language.

Each lens is designed with a specific goal, shaped by the vision of its  
creators and the passion of those who work with it.

## Backscatter Hybrid Optical Snoot OS-3



At Backscatter, we know snoots. After the success of the Mini Flash series with its compact, easy-to-aim Optical Snoot OS-1, and the Atom Flash with its custom Optical Snoot OS-2, we set out to push the envelope further with our flashship strobe and video light combo Hybrid Flash.

The Optical Snoot OS-3 transforms the Hybrid Flash's powerful wide-angle beam into a precise, highly flexible lighting tool. Whether you're shooting tiny critters or dramatic larger subjects, the Optical Snoot OS-3 unlocks unmatched versatility, making the Hybrid Flash a true do-it-all strobe for any underwater scenario.

The Optical Snoot OS-3 is also incredibly convenient, featuring quick-swap, single-touch rotating aperture discs and a built-in color filter slot compatible with the Backscatter Color Filter System, unlocking endless creative lighting possibilities.



While Optical Snoot OS-3 is feature rich, it's also extremely easy to use. Aiming is effortless, thanks to the Hybrid Flash's powerful 1500-lumen white or red target light, delivering true "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" performance in any conditions.

The Optical Snoot OS-3 uses the same bayonet mounting system as the Hybrid Flash diffusers. Snap it on to instantly convert your wide-angle lighting powerhouse into a precision macro-lighting machine.

\$299.00

[www.backscatter.com](http://www.backscatter.com)

[www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)

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## Nauticam NA-A7RV Housing for Sony a7R V

With each new generation of camera, Sony continues to make giant strides in the way images are taken and processed. The Sony a7R V shares the same 61MP sensor as the previous a7R IV, however it has made huge advancements in processing capacity which brings improvements across the board. With a newly developed AI processing unit, the Sony a7R V brings an all new autofocus system which builds upon more intelligent subject tracking and recognition. The a7R V features 8 stops of image stabilization and an impressive array of video capabilities including 8K 10-Bit internal recording and 16-Bit RAW external recording over HDMI which are sure to make this a popular choice among underwater shooters.

The NA-A7RV underwater housing provides fingertip access to all key camera controls in a rugged and reliable aluminum underwater housing. Ergonomic camera control access is one of the defining strengths of a Nauticam housing, and the NA-A7RV continues this tradition. Essential camera parameter changes



are made from the handles, without awkward reaches.

The NA-A7RV housing inherits the core design elements from the Nauticam pro DSLR range, and bundles them in a more compact package. A patented port locking lever allows lens changes to be made in seconds. Opening the housing for quick battery and media changes is fast and easy with the locking housing latches. All aspects of the system are a seamless extension of the camera.

[www.nauticam.com](http://www.nauticam.com)

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Issue 148/17

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OLYMPUS E-M10 IV

## Backscatter Atom Flash



Introducing the Backscatter Atom Flash — a small flash with BIG power. Underwater photographers can now capture pro-level lighting in a compact, travel-friendly package. With an underwater guide number of  $f28$ , the Atom Flash packs serious flash power for its size, lighting everything from the biggest wide-angle scenes to tiny macro subjects. Its  $110^\circ$  flash beam delivers smooth, even, round coverage, while flat or dome diffusers expand and soften the beam further. Snap on the Optical Snoot OS-2, using built-in 1,000-lumen white and red focus lights make pinpoint macro lighting effortless.

The Atom Flash shares the same advanced flash modes as the bigger Hybrid Flash, plus some new tricks of its own. Enjoy 11 manual power levels, Smart Control TTL for Sony, Olympus, and OM System cameras, wireless remote triggering, high-speed sync, and a low-power mode with 10

extra steps of fine adjustment—perfect for dialing in subtle light balance.

A super-bright auto-rotating LCD clearly displays flash settings, shots remaining, and battery life. With over 600 full-power flashes on a single charge, the Atom Flash keeps shooting as long as you do.

Compact, powerful, and travel-ready with an introductory price of \$749, the Backscatter Atom Flash delivers professional performance in a rugged, portable design—making it the ultimate strobe for photographers who demand maximum power in minimal size.

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Manual/TTL/RC/HSS modes  
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## Backscatter Mini Flash 3



The Backscatter Mini Flash 3 is the latest evolution in Backscatter's ground-breaking Mini Flash series of macro-focused underwater strobes. The Mini Flash 3 boasts the same incredible macro shooting capabilities of the Mini Flash 2, but now with Sony TTL and the ability to disable learning mode for easier manual flash triggering.

The Mini Flash 3 is feature-packed, including Olympus/OM System and Sony TTL, remote strobe control, high-speed sync, test mode, emergency signaling capability, fast recycle times, and LED lights that are twice as bright as the Mini Flash 1. The Mini Flash 3 also uses the exact same suite of creative lighting accessories used by the original Mini Flash strobes.

The Mini Flash 3 is the latest, lightweight macro lighting system that is the easiest to use strobe and snoot combination on the market.

Building on the same core features of the Mini Flash 2, the



Mini Flash 3 introduces Sony TTL compatibility and has the option to skip the learning mode step at startup for an even more seamless manual shooting experience.

Regular Price: \$599.00  
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## Ikelite Manual Focus Gear for Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM



This gear supports manual focus of the Sony FE 100mm F2.8 Macro GM Lens when used in a 200DL Underwater Housing. This gear cannot be used in a 200DLM housing.

This gear is not compatible with all housings. Refer to the appropriate lens port chart to select the correct gear for your lens.

Sale price \$ 85.00

[www.ikelite.com](http://www.ikelite.com)

## INON housing for Canon EOS R6 Mark III



INON have announced that their latest housing for Canon EOSR6 Mark III is to be released in January 2026.

The EOS R6 Mark III upgrades the Mark II with a higher-res 32.5MP sensor, vastly better video features, a CFexpress slot, improved IBIS, longer battery life, and enhanced autofocus.

The housing comes with standard highly accurate TTL converter and vacuum leak sensor (PAT.P).

As same legend X-2 housings, made from carefully designed aluminum alloy providing compact, light weight yet durable and offering intuitive controls including INON unique MRS system to control camera lens controls by magnet attraction.

[www.inon.jp](http://www.inon.jp)



## Nauticam NA-Z8 for Nikon Z8



**“Z9 Performance in a Z7 Body”**

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

The Z8 is that camera and more.

46MP/30FPS/

4K 120P/8K 60P/N-RAW 12-Bit/  
ProRes RAW 12-Bit.

Lightning fast customizable AF for stills & best ever Live AF. Nauticam has met the challenge by crafting a new level of its legendary ergonomics into the NA-Z8 housing.

Nauticam and Nikon; bringing underwater imaging to a new standard.

[www.reefphoto.com](http://www.reefphoto.com)

# BACKSCATTER HYBRID FLASH



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AND  
**5000**  
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VIDEO LIGHT



## Diveeveryday actioncam UW kit



The component of the UW Kit is pre-assembled except the lens adapter, this is a great choice of gift options for surprising your addicted-to-dive friends or enthusiast buddies.

Optional lens adapter choice from GoPro, DJI OSMO Action 5 Pro, Insta360 Ace Pro and Ace Pro 2.

Camera tray kit with handle bar kit, include adjustable shutter trigger mechanism, suitable for all action cameras.

Lens holder is convenient for carrying or switching lens and filter underwater.

The kit is designed to be capable of attaching additional underwater accessories such as wet lenses, float arms, clamps and video lights. Compact, lightweight and easy to use, perfect for underwater videographers.



Note : The UW Kit Gift Box does not include camera, waterproof housing, and other accessories.

[www.diveeveryday.com](http://www.diveeveryday.com)



## Nauticam NA-R5C housing for Canon R5 C



### “Cinema Mastery”

The excellent Canon R5 has lots of fans, but serious video shooters sometimes felt a bit throttled by the built-in limitations of that camera. Canon’s answer is the R5C. All that was great about the R5 has been fully unleashed.

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

[www.reefphoto.com](http://www.reefphoto.com)

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UNDERWATER STROBE SYSTEM

Circular tube  
130 watt-seconds  
Equipped with Li-Ion Battery  
Clear LCD display  
Manual/TTL/RC/HSS modes  
Custom setting



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THE UNDERWATER IMAGING COMPANY

<https://www.seaandsea.jp>

## Marelux MX-A7V Housing for Sony Alpha 7 V



Marelux housing is built using uniquely anodized aluminum alloy which provides superb scratch resistance, sea water erosion durability as well as the attractive options of various surface colors. The housings maintain a perfect balance between sturdy body and lightweight. It has the best-in-class ergonomics with all the camera controls readily available at your fingertips including AF-ON and Q Menu.

With 125mm port diameter, the biggest in the market, users can easily install and uninstall cameras with large lens through the housing.

Marelux housing can be connected to other innovative products made by Marelux, such as 180 degree Smart Viewfinder etc., making diving and underwater photography easier, safer and more enjoyable.

[www.marelux.co](http://www.marelux.co)

## Deepshots Experimental Trioplan 100 Nauticam Gear



This experimental Nauticam focus gear is for The Meyer-Optik Görlitz Trioplan 100 f2.8, sometimes called soap bubble lens. It's based on an old 1920 design and produced an extremely soft and pleasing image with special out of focus (Bokeh) areas. The original Meyer-Optik company has been closed for years now but their Trioplan lens design has been resurrected via successful Kickstarter campaign and is available once again.

The gear is compatible with Nauticam housings for Nikon and Canon DSLR cameras (N120 port system). Please allow 3-4 days for processing and production.

£150.00

[www.deepshots.co.uk](http://www.deepshots.co.uk)



## Nauticam NA-A1 housing for Sony a1



### "Do-Everything Powerhouse"

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

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

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

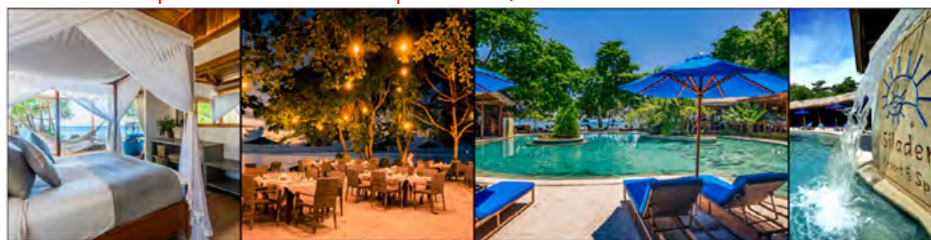
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# WORKSHOPS

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Dive, shoot, relax and learn alongside our Photo Pros in three of Indonesia's best destinations. Elevate your imaging with hands-on guidance at these expert-led workshops.

Whether you just got your first system, recently upgraded or are an experienced shooter, our underwater workshops are the best way to improve your imaging in some of the world's best dive destinations.

We're always adding more Workshops to the list so join our newsletter to get notified when new destinations are added.

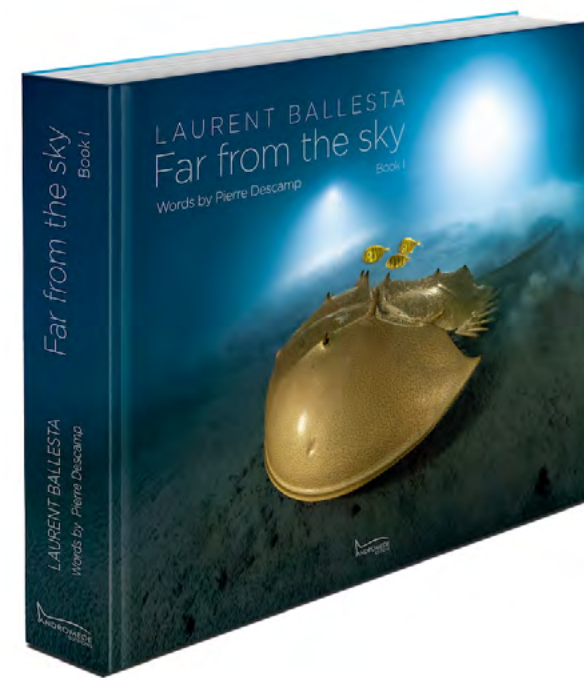


## “Far from the Sky” by Laurent Ballesta

Laurent Ballesta has released a new book “Far from the Sky” (“Loin du Ciel” in French), bringing together photographs from more than 15 years of trailblazing deep-sea expeditions. Spanning 296 pages, the large-format volume (11.8 × 9.6 in, 30 × 24.5 cm) features images from Ballesta’s many daring dives and discoveries.

Published by Andromède Éditions, the book is structured around reflections with Pierre Descamp, his longtime diving partner. With their dialogue weaving science, emotion, and technical challenge, Descamp helps Ballesta revisit their dives and frame the stories behind the images.

Through his photos, Ballesta guides readers into rarely seen marine realms—twilight zones, deep coral ecosystems, enigmatic species—all rendered with both scientific rigor and poetic vision. It’s a celebration of the ocean’s beauty and fragility, a reminder of how much remains to be discovered beneath the waves.



[www.laurentballesta.com](http://www.laurentballesta.com)

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# Nikon Z50

by Tony Land

By now, it is pretty clear that mirrorless cameras are the future of imaging. There are numerous advantages to the format, not least of which is a more compact form factor relative to sensor size. There have also been traditional shortcomings; particularly in the arena of battery life, autofocus and the electronic viewfinder (EVF) performance as compared to an optical viewfinder. But as technological development has minimized these drawbacks, it is pretty clear where things are going.

The Nikon Z 50 is Nikon's first serious effort for a mirrorless APS-C camera and by all accounts they are offering a lot to like at a remarkable price point. This camera is similar to and in some ways exceeds the specs on Nikon's well respected enthusiast DSLR the D7500.

The Z 50 also borrows much that has been successful on the Nikon full frame FX Z series cameras. It shares the same lens mount and is capable of 11 frames per second continuous shooting: Better than a D500 or D850 and into D5 territory (at less than 20% of the price)! How things have changed in a few short years and our expectations have changed to match.



What Nikon has clearly aimed to do with this mirrorless is to provide a very approachable, affordable camera with best-in-class image quality (20.9 MP), excellent video capability and with build quality and feel not usually found below a \$1000 price point.

Having dual command dials is rare in this price category and a pleasure to find here. Strobe sync speed is higher than on a Sony a6600 for instance and video quality is a notch better than the traditionally strong Canon M6 II entry. 4K footage utilizes the whole sensor. Battery life seems exceptional for a small mirrorless camera.

For underwater photographers, low light auto-focus capability is hugely important and a weak spot on many traditional mirrorless cameras. The Z 50 started out with great specs on paper: Hybrid Phase/Contrast Detect AF with 209 PDAF points. There are also lots of selective focus options. The autofocus has indeed



*The Nikkor Z 16-50 is also perfectly compatible with Nauticam's superb CMC 1 & CMC 2 so when utilizing Nauticam's quick-release bayonet mounting system, a true "do-everything" camera configuration is well within every user's grasp.*

proved solid, and a firmware update for 2020 has improved it further. The Nikon Z 50 also has the lowest light AF capability of any camera in the field - another plus for underwater shooting.

While the APS-C Z Mount lens selection is not huge yet, the optional FTZ adapter for F mount lenses provide extensive possibilities and Nikon has the best macro lens selection of any manufacturer by a fair margin. We can't wait to try out

the fast focusing Nikon 85mm Micro-Nikkor on an FTZ adapter with the Z 50 underwater.

Fortunately, one of the Z Lenses that is readily available happens to be ideal for underwater use. The Nikkor Z DX 16-50mm f/3.5-6.3 VR is Nikon's smallest DX lens ever and is the perfect compliment lens to the Z 50 when shooting in a housing. Buying this lens with the camera still keeps the whole package under \$1000.



*The WWL-C works well for models and provides sharp corners*

Thanks to some excellent optical engineering from Nikon and Nauticam, this set up is able to maximize the benefit of using Nauticam's new WWL-C: A water contact wide angle conversion lens designed for lenses with a 24mm full frame equivalent such as the new 16-50 lens.

With a stunning 130 degree angle of coverage, no vignetting at 16mm and full zoom through, this arrangement should likely be a starting point for anyone taking the Z 50 underwater.

There are some other 24mm

compatible wet lenses, but none use all glass elements at this time and image quality tends to be lower than the nauticam. Ikelite has released a 200DL housing for the Z 50, but we have not tested wet lens compatibility yet.

### **Nauticam's NA-Z50 Housing**

The first housing we have tried with the Nikon Z 50 is from Nauticam. The NA-Z50 places ergonomics and functionality foremost. This is obvious the minute you start accessing controls underwater. The same at-

your-fingertips feel for the shutter release, menu, info, command dials and thumb focus are all right right where you need them. The playback lever is poised by the left thumb. The patented Nauticam Multi-Controller Pad mimics Nikon's camera control nicely and allows for easy focus point adjustment which we put to good use for macro with the CMC.

Nauticam compatibility has been maintained with the N100 port mount (as found on Nauticam's Sony A7/A9 series housings) which allows a nicely compact form factor that is noticeably smaller than any of the Nikon DSLR

housings.

The port for the 16-50 lens is equally diminutive and should make this rig a pleasure to travel with. The full set up was easy to get on and off the boat with or clip off on a BC. It is worth noting that smaller housings mean less air space which equals less buoyancy, so we feel some flotation would be recommended.

We found either the Nauticam 90mmX170mm Carbon Fiber Float Arms or 70mmX250mm seem like a good match for this set up with strobes. Another quality and economical option would be the Inon Mega Float S.



*Using selective focus with the CMC-1 on this blenny while viewing through the high resolution EVF produces impressive results.*

The NA-Z50 comes set up to utilize the built in flash on the Z 50 which is a great convenience and offers the option of S-TTL functionality with many fiber optic compatible strobes. Inon, Retra and Sea & Sea all offer very good S-TTL Compatibility. You can see strobe options in our article on current strobes here. If left in this mode, we did experience noticeable flash recycle delays after repeated firings, so, depending on your shooting style, this might be a consideration for more action oriented subjects.

Fortunately, Nauticam's optional

TTL Converter for Nikon (26308) fits this housing (as well as a manual optical trigger) providing longer camera battery life and zero recycle time on the camera. For many of us, this really enhances the shooting experience.

### **First Impressions of the WWL-C with 16-50mm Nikkor**

We have a lot of experience using Nauticam's groundbreaking WWL-1 water contact lens with underwater housings and have come to expect



exceptional image quality, zoom through flexibility and focus down to glass performance. All that was promised with the new WWL-C and while we expected no less, it was hard to believe this much more compact and lighter wet lens could deliver the goods on an APS-C zoom lens.

We needn't have worried. The lens was easy to mount and remove underwater, while the built in aluminum float collar is much more friendly than the foam WWL-1 collar and offers a good gripping surface. Most importantly, image quality was all we could hope for. With no vignetting to worry about, we could slam the zoom wide and

start shooting the moment the action changed.

Angle of coverage is the same as the WWL-1: a full 130 degrees, but distortion seems even better controlled. Sun ball flare was also well controlled and it was easy to get close enough to divers to light pleasingly without worrying about stretching legs or arms unflatteringly as a fisheye lens would do.

If moving from a DSLR, the Z 50 AF takes some tweaking to behave more like the way you might be accustomed to. It is plenty fast, but some of the intelligent AF settings can be confused in an underwater environment, though occasionally



*Utilizing AF-ON and EVF playback allows the opportunity for multiple exposures and compositions of a subject without ever looking at the LCD.*

helpful with special circumstances like fast moving nearby subjects. Using a movable group focus works well for general shooting with the WWL-C whether shooting traditional wide angle or close-focus wide angle zoom-to-frame shooting where the WWL-C also excels. The results with this wide angle set up were consistently in focus and tack-sharp.

Utilizing a Nauticam Bayonet Lens Holder on a Nauticam float arm, it was easy to switch out the WWL-C for a CMC-1 close up lens. By zooming to a 50mm focal length, the macro wet lens offers impressive magnification, but of course a bit more challenging focus. Fortunately, it is easy to adjust the focus point location while viewing through the electronic viewfinder that is a quite sharp 2.36M-dot OLED display.

The EVF makes it well worth investing in a



*Looking at the detail provided by the using the Nikon 16-50 lens with the CMC-1 shows just how edge-to-edge sharp this combination really is.*

Nauticam 45 or 180 Enhanced Viewfinder for easier, higher resolution viewing than the rear LCD screen can provide.

As we got comfortable with the CMC and its very shallow range of focus capability, we developed a combination of AF and “lock and rock” aided by the AF-ON lever strategically placed by the right thumb, it was simple to activate and lock focus as needed for these trickier shots and adjust the

camera housing.

One of the nicest things I found with the Z 50 EVF was the ability to check my image without removing my eye from the viewfinder after my shot. I found this particularly useful for macro photography - something you just can't do on a traditional SLR. Normally after a few shots, you need to look at your LCD screen to make sure nothing weird is happening with your strobe placement or power



*Utilizing AF-ON and EVF playback allows the opportunity for multiple exposures and compositions of a subject without ever looking at the LCD.*

settings, and just to get an idea of how your shot is coming out. With the electronic viewfinder, you don't even need to move.

The image will appear automatically or on demand without you ever needing to take your eye away, frightening the subject or moving your composition and focus.

It is also worth noting that the if your close up vision isn't great (welcome to the club), you will get a far greater critical detail by reviewing images in the EVF than on the LCD - no close up vision required.

With only a handful of dives with

the Nikon Z 50, it is clear we haven't explored all the camera and housing are capable of yet. What is clear is what an enjoyable, compact and rewarding system this is. Someone could easily spend years just relishing the versatility of the 16-50 lens and these key supporting wet lenses. Both the camera and the housing perform well beyond what their respective price points suggest we should expect. That makes this a system that is extremely appealing for someone graduating from a compact or older mirrorless camera or a Nikon shooter interested in downsizing, but



*The WWL-C works well for models and provides sharp corners*

maintaining some lens compatibility.

We look forward to playing with some other lens options - perhaps full macro (40mm, 60mm, 85mm and 105mm could all be fun options), perhaps a fisheye, but literally everything else one could ask for has been optimized with the lens configuration we used. It is nice to have another worthy competitor in the very hotly contested mirrorless market for underwater image makers.



**Tony Land**  
Facebook

# Sea and Sea YSD130R strobe

by Mike Bartick

Sea and Sea introduced their new flagship strobe at the DEMA-2025 show, the YS-D130R Pro. Built on decades of experience, the YS-D130R Pro offers customizable options that are innovative in both design and function for the Sea and Sea lineup, providing more tools for the shooting experience.

The design improvements over their predecessors are immediately noticeable when inspecting the strobes, with key enhancements that distinguish them from the previous lineup.

Sea and Sea strobe users will be pleased to learn that the engineers have been listening and have addressed key components to ensure high performance throughout its lifespan while keeping a manageable size and weight for travel.

## At first glance:

The YS-D130R Pro is a mid-sized strobe, slightly larger than the YS D3 Lightning and Duo series. Optional mounts are standard and let the user attach YS or ball mounts to either the top or bottom of the strobes.

The strobes are lightweight, weighing 760 grams when empty and 1100 grams with the L-ion battery (according to my gram scale), and only 30 grams submerged (as specified).

The YS-D130R Pro features a straightforward user interface on the back of the strobe, with dual knobs and a color-coded digital display that indicates four different flash modes. These modes are Manual, RC, HSS, and TTL, each highlighted with intuitive color indicators. The digital display also shows battery level and exposure values, which can be customized in various ways. For example, power settings can be adjusted in 0.3 EV, 0.5 EV, or 1.0 EV stop increments with each click.

*Frogfish-Dual strobes with domed diffusers @ -3.5EV & -4.5EV*

*Nikon Z8, Nikonos RS-13mm*

*ISO320, f/9 @ 1/100*

*WAM shots are super simple with these strobes and easy to adjust power levels allow for creating textures with shadow and light.*





*Blue Ribbon Eel - Single strobe with snoot - Full, to -2.0EV. Nikon Z8, Z105mm. ISO 160. f/11 @ 1/160 Safety stop depth with the sun above us. In this condition, shooting this transitioning Ribbon Eel was challenging at the higher power ranges (Full to -2.0EV). I'm using the AA Eneloop Pros and did notice a difference in recycling times compared to the L-ion battery. I pushed the strobe to full, trying to bring out the blacks and subtle colors while trying to beat the intensity of the sun.*

A built-in focus light defaults to 30%, but it can be adjusted up to 100%, with a maximum output of 300 lumens. The focus light is centered on the strobe head, making it highly effective for targeting your strobe flash or for use with a snoot.

The new dual-battery system changes how the strobe stores power while preventing water intrusion. The design also adds flexibility by

*Sunball and Anenome fish - Single strobe, Dome Diffuser -1.5 EV  
Nikon Z8, f/105 + EMWL  
160°  
ISO 250  
f/11 @1/200  
Shooting portrait, using focus tracking and frame bursts, I was able to capture the Anenomefish as it passed through the sun overhead. With very little editing, this image nearly looks oversaturated.*



allowing the user to choose the best power source: a proprietary Lithium-ion battery or four AA batteries loaded into their battery caddy. The batteries click and lock into place to ensure a secure connection and prevent contact issues on the battery door. The battery door design is also new to the YS D130, which pushes down over the back and locks into place to keep water out, representing an improved and practical design.

The most notable design change, and the one that caught my attention at the DEMA show, is the use of a circular flash tube instead of a straight one. Yes, they finally brought it back! Reminiscent of the past, the circular flash tube creates a pleasing pattern at a warm, sunlike Kelvin temperature of 5600K. After seeing that at the booth, I really wanted to get them in the water and start shooting with them immediately.

### **Shooting experience:**

One of the first things you'll notice is how bright the strobes are, true to form. The second is the beam angle and coverage. According to the specs, the flash cone is approximately 80-82° without diffusers and 102x102° with the included flat diffuser. The optional dome diffusers further expand the angle to about 120° or more, making it perfect for reef scenes, everyday shooting, or single-



*Mauled by a Mototi - Single strobe, Dome Diffuser -3.5 EV. Nikon Z8, f/105 + EMWL 160°. ISO 250. f/13 @1/50*

*A photogenic Mototi octopus mauls my lens. I held the shutter down and captured a series of evenly exposed images. I'm shooting 5 frames per second, using the Li-ion battery pack, and the strobe performed well. Frame after frame, the foreground and background show nice colors and a natural gradient all the way to the furthest edge of the beam throw.*



*Hunting Sea Snake-Dual strobes with domed diffusers @ -3.5EV, burst at 5 frames per second . Nikon Z8, Nikonos RS-13mm. ISO 320, f/7.1 @ 1/160*

*A large Sea Snake emerged from the coral head with a buddy close behind. Moving quickly and hunting downslope, I adjusted to 5 frames per second and confidently held the shutter.*

*A Male Argonaut. Nikon D850, 60mm. ISO 400, f/14 @ 1/250*

*Male Argonauts often occur in salp chains and mimic the perfectly cloned salps. A close look will reveal the eye and the occy, riding in safety through the dark.*

strobe use.

One thing I came to respect when shooting is the decision and design of the strobes electronics that prevents circuit damage from overheating. A design that further draws from Sea and Sea's vast experience, aimed at protecting the consumer's investment.



*Batfish Blur -Single strobe w/domed diffuser @ -2.5EV. Nikon Z8, F105 + MFO-3. ISO 100. f/6.3 @ 1/13*

*Capturing the motion of a frantic batfish that panicked when I started flashing. I liked the water color and natural hue of the fish, even at slow shutter speeds.*

### Recycle speeds:

This is always a controversial topic because various factors can affect performance. Nearly any strobe can be used at high speed on a workbench. The real test is how reliably the strobes perform underwater.

I used both the L-ion battery and the AA-Eneloop Pro while shooting to compare the power source and performance. Even though the strobes did well with the Eneloop

Pros, I prefer the quick-charging L-ion battery over the AA batteries for higher performance and longer battery life. I went six dives without any problems. This means spending less time fiddling with your strobes and batteries when traveling.

Note: Battery life and performance are also affected when using the target light.



*Settling Wunderpus Dual strobes, Domed diffusers, -3.5EV. Nikon D850, 60mm. ISO-400. f/14 @ 1/250*

*An Anilao icon, the settling phase of the Wunderpus photogenicus is remarkable. Transparent with flecks of colored pigmentation and a large, bulbous head, this common octopus looks like a character from the movie Mars Attacks. I use a domed diffuser to prevent burning out the reflective details when shooting blackwater. I also prefer a lightweight strobe for quick movement when needed and for trimming out in the water column.*

### Pro Tip:

For optimal performance of this strobe, I preferred the 5-frame shooting rate and used the L-ion battery at -2.5 EV or -3.0 EV.

When shooting at -3.0 EV, I kept the shutter steady and didn't miss any frames in each 10-frame burst. This

shows I can confidently photograph a yawning frogfish or a brooding cardinalfish, knowing the exposures will be precise.

Note: The flash trigger used is the Nauticam manual flash trigger. I did not test TTL or HSS recycle speeds.



*Leaf fish-Single strobe, with snoot -1.5EV. Nikon Z8, Z105. ISO-160. f/13 @ 1/160 I created a makeshift snoot to test the target light and hard flashing. The strobe held up with single flashes fired according to the specs at about 1.5-2 seconds apart as the fish prepared to move. I'm using the L-ion battery pack, and the strobe performed as expected.*

### Post:

Color temps: If you have ever used a Sea and Sea strobe in the past, then you will know how accurate the kelvin temperatures are. The light produced by these strobes is superb. They have a bright, warm feel that holds its values in single frames or rapid bursts of frames.

Ultimately, the YS-D130R Pro is a well-engineered and durable strobe. It's travel-friendly, powerful, and provides sunlike color temperatures, a wide beam flash, and 130 watts of output. The strobes proved versatile for reef photography, macro shots, blackwater dives, and CFWA shooting. Compact and Olympus users will



*Nembrotha- Single strobe w/domed diffuser @ -2.5EV. Nikon Z8, F105, ISO 320, f/14 at 1/40.*

*Keeping the water blue with a slow shutter and the warm kelvin temps are a snap. Vibrant colors, great single strobe coverage, smooth contrast and gradient.*

appreciate the TTL and RC modes, while HSS can also be used in shallow, sunny environments or when shooting into the sun.

I hope Sea and Sea further develops a quality snoot and restrictors for this strobe as it's easy and enjoyable to use.

More info can be found on the Sea and Sea website:

[www.seaandsea.jp](http://www.seaandsea.jp)

### Test disclaimer and methods:

I'm not a scientist, nor am I shooting in a controlled environment. The report here reflects how they performed during a series of everyday shoots. I'm not being paid for this review, but I did receive a pair of the strobes to test and keep.

**Mike Bartick**  
[www.DiveCBR.com](http://www.DiveCBR.com)

# Backscatter Optical Snoot OS-3

by The Backscatter Team

At Backscatter, we know snoots. After the success of the Mini Flash series with its compact, easy-to-aim Optical Snoot OS-1, and the Atom Flash with its custom Optical Snoot OS-2, we set out to push the envelope further with our flagship strobe and video light combo Hybrid Flash.

The new Optical Snoot OS-3 takes full advantage of the Hybrid Flash's bright flash output, super fast recycle time, and long battery life, now expanding snoot photography from just macro, to fish portraits and even wide-angle snooted scenes.

The Optical Snoot OS-3 transforms the Hybrid Flash's powerful wide-angle beam into a precise, highly flexible lighting tool. Whether you're shooting tiny critters or dramatic larger subjects, the Optical Snoot OS-3 unlocks unmatched versatility, making the Hybrid Flash a true do-it-all strobe for any underwater scenario.

While Optical Snoot OS-3 is feature rich, it's also extremely easy to use. Aiming is effortless, thanks to the Hybrid Flash's powerful 1500-lumen white or red target light, delivering true "what-you-see-is-what-you-get" performance in any conditions.

The Optical Snoot OS-3 uses the same bayonet mounting system as the Hybrid Flash diffusers. Snap it on to instantly convert your wide-angle lighting powerhouse into a precision macro-lighting machine.

## Why You Need A Snoot

The Hybrid Flash was engineered to be the



ultimate strobe for lighting big scenes, thanks to its powerful f40 output and super-wide, even, round beam. While you can shoot macro with the Hybrid Flash alone, its native wide coverage will often light both the subject and its surroundings.

That's where the Optical Snoot OS-3 comes in. By concentrating the Hybrid Flash's wide beam into a tight, controlled spotlight, the Optical Snoot OS-3 allows you to light only the subject—making distracting backgrounds effectively disappear. The result is a clean, dramatic, precision-lit macro image with every shot. Its advanced optics also deliver exceptionally efficient light transfer, making this our brightest and most flexible strobe-and-snoot combination to date.

Using a snoot lifts macro subjects off the background, making otherwise common or camouflaged subjects behind bland backgrounds



*The Optical Snoot OS-3 narrows the Hybrid Flash's powerful wide beam into a tight, precision spot for macro work, while being versatile enough to light larger subjects like fish and wide-angle snooted scenes.*

*Sony a9 III | Sony 90mm Lens | 1/1,000 | ISO 250 | f14*



look bold and stunning.

With three snoots now in the Backscatter lineup, each is designed for a specific type of shot. The Mini Flash 3 with the Optical Snoot OS-1 and the Atom Flash with the Optical Snoot OS-2 remain the easiest for macro and super-macro work. The



*Without Optical Snoot OS-3*

*With Optical Snoot OS-3*



*The Hybrid Flash can take advantage of both its 1500 lumen white and red aiming lights through the snoot. Wherever the aiming light points, the flash will fire in the exact same spot.*

close minimum working distance of 3.7 inches (95mm) is ideal for positioning the snoot up close on the smallest subjects.

For subjects the size of a fist or bigger the Mini Flash and Atom Flash snoots start to reach the end of their ideal usable range. That's where the Hybrid Flash Optical Snoot OS-3 comes in.

With a longer minimum working distance of 7.8 inches (200 mm) and the Hybrid Flash's powerful  $f40$  output behind it, the Optical Snoot OS-3 can light bigger subjects from

farther away, making it perfect for bigger macro subjects, fish portraits, and even wide-angle snooted scenes.

The Hybrid Flash also features a red focus light that works seamlessly through the snoot. The red beam is ideal for night dives and sensitive subjects—like seahorses—that often shy away from bright white lights. With the red light, even the most skittish subjects can be captured, opening up even more opportunities and making snooting even easier.

The Optical Snoot OS-3 includes two interchangeable rotating aperture



*The Optical Snoot OS-3 is perfect for shooting everything from small macro critters to larger subjects like fish. The Hybrid Flash's  $f40$  output and the snoot's longer working distance make it easy to light bigger subjects from farther away.*

discs—one with circular apertures and one with ovals, allowing the snoot light to be precisely customized based on the shape and size of the subject. Each disc provides six beam sizes for precise control. The Optical Snoot OS-3 can be shot without a disc for the most light coverage, perfect for bigger subjects or wide-angle snooting. Depending on distance, the beam can be razor-sharp for strong, dramatic light falloff or feathered for a softer edge and more natural look.

Each Aperture Disc locks firmly into place and can be swapped in seconds underwater. Adjusting beam





*The Backscatter Color Filter System is perfect for bold backlighting and sidelighting, and the Optical Snoot OS-3's built-in filter slot makes using them quick and effortless.*

size is as simple as rolling the disc with your thumb for quick, easy changes. And just like the Mini Flash 3 and Atom Flash Snoots, the front of the Optical Snoot OS-3 independently rotates to change the angle of the beam—ideal for aligning light on longer subjects such as nudibranchs and shrimp without needing to reposition the flash itself.

The Hybrid Flash's Remote Mode

also makes creative lighting easier than before. You can trigger a remote, off-camera Hybrid Flash and adjust power levels completely wirelessly—without reaching over your subject, stirring up sand or silt, or scaring anything away.

Whether you're shooting tiny critters or dramatic larger subjects, the Optical Snoot OS-3 unlocks unmatched versatility, making the Hybrid Flash a true do-it-all strobe for any underwater scenario.

**The Backscatter Team**  
[www.backscatter.com](http://www.backscatter.com)



# Mike Bartick interview

with Peter Rowlands

*You are currently resident photo pro at Crystal Blue Resort in Anilao, Philippines and we'll come back to that later but have you always been in the dive industry or were you following another career path beforehand?*

Actually, this is my second career. I was a trained chef working in Southern California for more than 20 years. Working in a busy kitchen forces you to be creative and find solutions quickly while keeping your cool. It was a challenging career path, but it was very rewarding and beneficial to my current career in many ways.

*Did diving and underwater photography start about the same time; was it in the film era or have you always been digital?*

I did shoot film, but I don't think that really counts. I lived near the ocean and traveled with my parents to Hawaii on family vacations. It was in those early years that I fell in love with tropical environments.

I snorkeled first and always carried my little Minolta Sport. That camera was an indestructible 110 Instamatic, perhaps even the original point-and-shoot. I learned many things with that camera, like how to shoot fish butts through a snow globe.

It wasn't until around 2004 that I got my first digital camera for underwater photography. I had been saving money to buy a complete RS system



and had a trip to Fiji approaching. I stopped by a shop to fill my tanks when I spotted a small Sony, 3-megapixel camera looking up at me. On a whim, I decided to buy it, and soon afterward, I was drifting through the SoCal kelp forest snapping photos. I got published right away, with an image of a beautiful batray drifting through the kelp forest.

*In those early years what was the appeal or reason for taking underwater images?*

Photography and diving have always been linked for me. Being underwater allows me to escape my demons and quiet the noise in my head. It gives me a sense of calm and freedom. I love exploring and experiencing the unknown. Being in nature is a part of the human experience that everyone should experience.

There is nothing like being underwater, and I want to share that experience with others.



*Stacked Argonauts. Nikon D850, 60mm. ISO 320. f/25 @ 1/200*

*Female Argonauts (Paper nautilus) stack together and form chaons during the height of the spawning season. Knowing their behavior and having extensive experience helped me figure out the best times of year to hunt for Argonauts.*



*Mototi Octopus - Anilao, Philippines. Nikon Z8, f,105, EMWL + 160° objective lense. ISO 200, f/11 @ 1/60, Sea and Sea YS-D130R*

*Knowing marine life well helps me anticipate a shot and stay prepared when the action occurs. Using innovative gear like the EMWL system gives me an intimate edge that I aim for in all my work.*

### *And how did you learn how to improve?*

I am self taught. Improvement arises through repetition, mentoring, experimenting, and learning from mistakes.

I dove two or three days a week in a local cove and taught myself how to shoot. After some small successes, I met Joe Liburdy, a professional underwater photographer, at a dive club. After his presentation, I asked if we could meet again, and soon he

became my mentor. My path suddenly changed.

We met twice a month to review images and talk shop. These meetings became a crucial step in my learning process as it taught me critical thinking and the value of being calm underwater.

Joe was an incredibly creative and generous guy. He had a way of telling me exactly what I needed to know in a brutally honest way.

He never gave me any special



*Leafy Sea Dragon, South Australia, Tumby Bay. Nikon Z8, F105mm + MFO-3. ISO 100 f/16 @ 1/200. Dual Backscatter Hybrid strobes-Inward lighting*

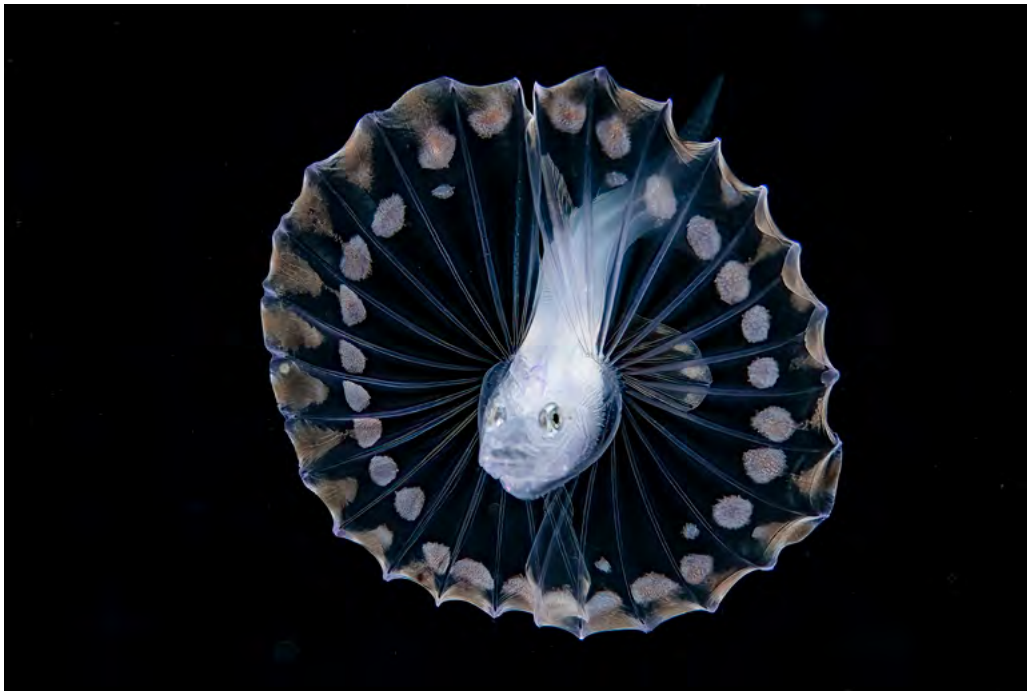
*After flying to Hong Kong with Edward Lai from Nauticam, he handed me the MFO-2 (now MFO-3) to test while I was in South Australia. The meeting on the plane was pure serendipity, as we missed each other in Anilao but ended up sitting next to each other when flying to HK later that evening.*

*Using a piece of gear that can change how you shoot or let you shoot differently is very special. I can honestly say, without the MFO, this shot might never have happened.*

settings or a secret strobe angle; he would make me think and ask questions, rather than point things out.

Some of my favorite responses during these sessions still ring in my head when the pressure is on. On more than one occasion he exclaimed I missed another chance

of a lifetime. Then he'd follow up with 'think, think, think, slow down and think!' Another really good one was, "ahuh, interesting" or even better, "Where's the story in that". I still hear his voice in my head today, and I love that man for not sugar-coating anything. He pushed me to look harder to be a quick study, to never



*Tripod fish, Cozumel Mexico. Nikon D850, 60mm. ISO 400, f/18 @ 1/250*  
*The Tripod fish lives well below recreational dive depths, around 5 to 6,000 meters. However, the larval form can be seen feeding near the surface. They are striking, hunt vertically, and resemble a balarena in a tutu.*

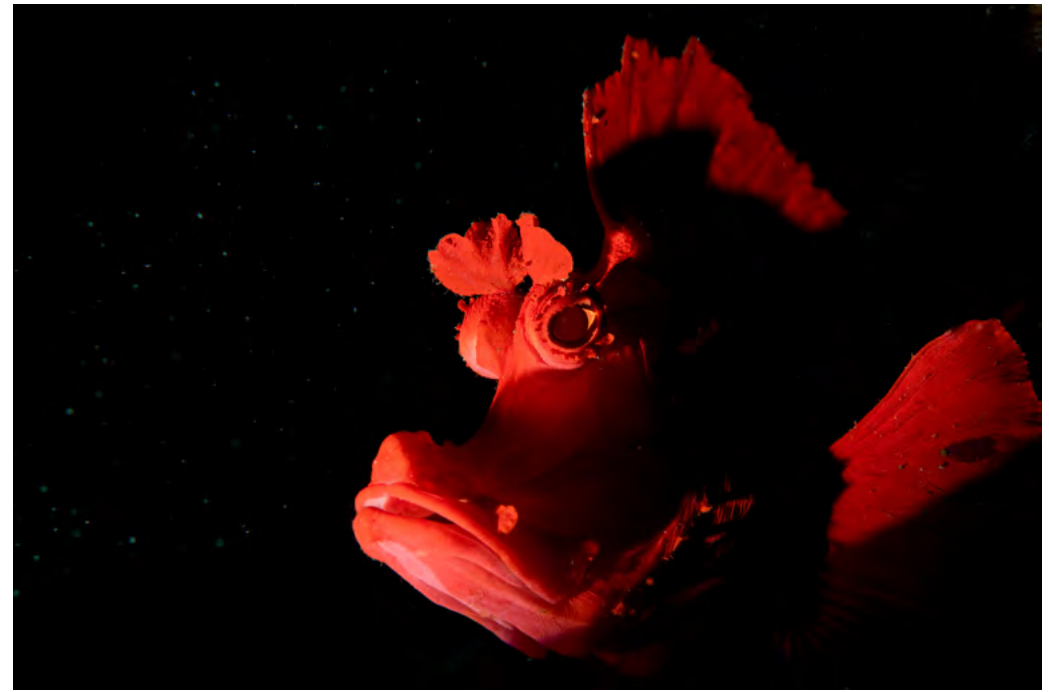
give up, and always to bring it back.

One day, when I angered Joe during a photo review, he told me to “Keep my day job.” Then he cited the guys he also mentored as an example, Stuart Westmoreland being one of them. He told me Stuart quit his day job, and now look at him. Of course, this was a really bad example because “Stuey” was one of the biggest names at the time. I cannot tell you what a gift it is to be mentored and humbled by someone with such deep

knowledge and loving power. Today, I try to follow his positive examples by mentoring others and passing along anything I can.

***Was there a distinct cut off time when you went full time?***

The “Cut Off” took time to prepare for, but the right moment to make the move arrived when I was ready. This might sound contrived, but I’ve always looked for open doors in life. I trust the universe and have



*Red Rhinopias. Nikon D850, F105mm, f/11 @ 1/200. Dual Backscatter miniflash and snoot*

*Inward texture lighting helped create a beautiful portrayal of this bright scarlet-red Rhinopias found on our house reef. Lighting is everything. Understanding different styles and techniques allows me to switch between a commercial approach for publication or shooting for fun.*

always done so. Things tend to work out if you can step aside and let them. It doesn’t always go as planned or as you want, but that’s part of the beauty.

Due to circumstances I don’t wish to discuss, I suddenly found myself in a position to make major life decisions. The magic happened when I stumbled into Crystal Blue while searching for a place to host workshops and teach natural history. I wanted to create a place that offered

people a life experience. It was a dive center then, mainly a weekend getaway for locals.

I spent the first day diving, and later that night, I braved a nasty typhoon with the staff. I later learned that the owner lived near my mother in LA. I flew back, we met, and the rest is history. The first few years to get the photo center off the ground were tough, but we managed to keep going. Year after year, we continued



to grow and reinvest in the property. I guess my “cut-off” time was more of a gradual transition as I kept my company in the US operating until 2013.

Now, we have a nice little resort focused on underwater photography and natural history, with a staff that is my family.

*You're very knowledgeable about marine creature identification. Did you receive formal training, or are you self-taught?*

I appreciate the kind comment. I don't see myself as an expert in IDs, but I am a quick learner when it comes to behavior. I never forget

behavior. I have never been able to find conclusive answers to the endless questions my brain generates. So, I ask a lot of questions, read books, and research topics that truly interest me. I learned early on that divers who understand the environment and habitats know how to find the coolest things. Diving with expert guides and scientists also helps me gain a better understanding. I also enjoy studying ecology, currents, tides, and substrate, knowing that everything works together, starting on shore.

*Wunderpus photogenicus- Anilao, Philippines. Nikon D850, 60mm, ISO 320. f/18 @ 1/250*

*The Wunderpus is now an iconoc subject for Anilao blackwater divers. They are transparent with colorful pigments and an oversized siphon that resembles the head of an alien creature*

*You've settled in Anilao but were there other locations you considered and if so what was it about Anilao that tipped the balance.*

I arrived in Anilao after taking a winding route through Lembeh. One morning in the camera room at the old Kasawari resort, I met a guy who told me about Anilao. I did my research, booked a ticket, and that was it.

The two locations complement

each other in many ways. Lembeh is calm and mysterious, while Anilao is rugged and wild. There's no better choice, just different. When I arrived in Anilao, there were no resorts dedicated to underwater photography, unlike Lembeh. I saw a spot that was a diamond in the rough. Anilao was an unknown destination; sure, a few pictures appeared here and there, but nobody really knew about it. I felt like this was a place I could call my own and to build



*Melibe colemani*- Anilao, Philippines. Nikon Z8, 105mm. ISO 100, f/20 @ 1/200. Backscatter Miniflash and snoot, purple color gel for background lighting  
I enjoy creating various types of creative macro images. I prefer to keep things simple and don't carry much with me when I go diving. I rarely get a one-on-one opportunity with a guide and could never imagine involving anyone else in my creative process. However, I do rely on guides to help hunt and track subjects like this exquisite slug. Special subjects deserve special lighting.



*Coconut Occy, Anilao, Philippines. Nikon Z8, 60mm, f/13 @ 1/4*

*Buried backlight to highlight the worms*

*I enjoy having fun while shooting. Thinking quickly and preparing for a shot are everything. Visualizing is a tool I used heavily as a chef—breaking things down into steps systematically helps me improve a shot as I create the image. On this night dive, the worms were out in force, which I actually enjoy. All of those squiggly things moving through the water can be fun to exploit in photos.*

something significant. The entire area has become like my little cove and as much as I know the substrate, the guides always know it better.

*Also, how has Anilao changed or developed over the years you've been there?*

So much has changed, both underwater and on land. Anilao is

now quite popular for several reasons, including the discovery of new critters. But we also have stunning reefs, pinnacles, coral gardens, and incredible Blackwater diving. These beautiful resources have attracted more tourism and created more jobs within the community.

*You have become synonymous with blackwater diving, perhaps even the*



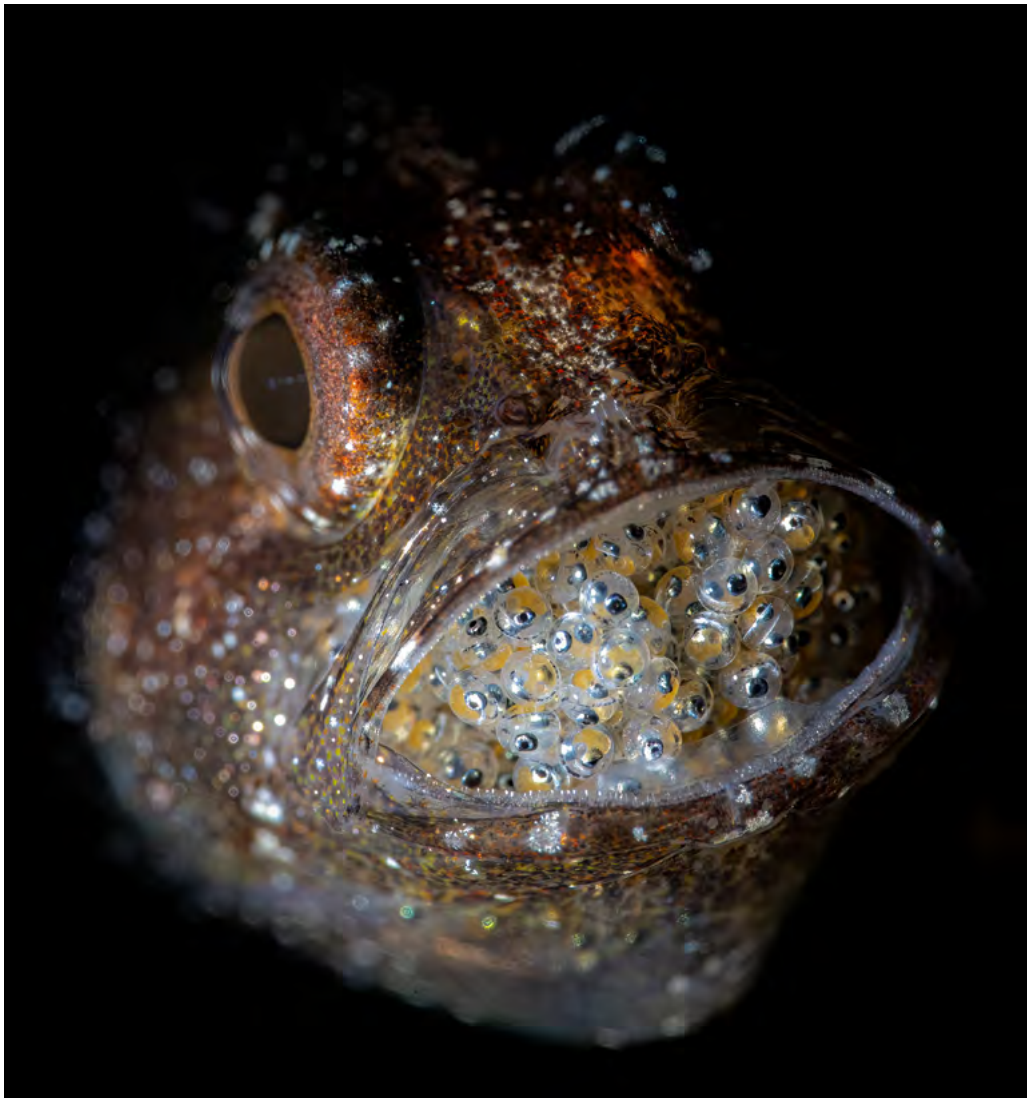
*Diamond Squid, Anilao, Philippines. Nikon D850, 60mm. ISO 320, f/18 @ 1/250*

*D-backs are a highly sought-after target on blackwater dives. Knowing how to shoot them helps bring out the best in the subject. I enjoy collaborating with guests to help them shoot differently and achieve better images. Seeing that spark in their eyes is extremely rewarding for me.*

*founder, where, when and why did you get into it?*

I am not the original founder of Blackwater Diving. I think Chris Newbert was the first person to swim away from the rope in Kona years ago. However, I created the environment in which Blackwater Diving and photography now thrives: The Blackwater Photogroup.

I also developed a safe method for BW diving that is now widely used across Asia, the Caribbean, Indo, and other parts of the Pacific and Indian ocean. I've traveled extensively, teaching dive centers, training their staff, and taking dive center and live-aboard operators out diving to demonstrate how it's done. It's fair to say that I helped popularize it worldwide by sharing knowledge,



*Cardinalfish mouthbrooding. Nikon Z8, Z105mm+ MFO-3. ISO 100, f/22 @ 1/200. Kraken S-40 strobe and snoot.*

*My guide found this thumbnail-sized male Cardinalfish. Using my snoot to angle the light from the side so it traveled through the eggs was my entire goal. I focused solely on that, and this was the result. I don't know if a photographer is ever truly happy with their work. For me, I think it's a matter of accepting what I captured as the best I could do within that moment.*

experience, images, and video footage.

For me, everything began when I started diving in the open ocean with my friends in Southern California circa 2007. My memory is a bit fuzzy. We would anchor ourselves to my buddy's boat and drift along, photographing plankton, and we saw some truly incredible things. Later, when I saw these highly exotic subjects being photographed the same way but at night, I thought it was the next logical step. What could possibly go wrong?

A few years later, we built our first free-drifting pumpkin and started exploring the Anilao area with it. What we discovered put Anilao on the map for blackwater (BW) diving. We encountered Argonauts, Blanket Octopus with eggs, Diamond Squid, Long-Armed Octopus, Ribbon Fish, and my all-time favorite, the "Settling Wunderpus," which we actually found in 2012.

The Wunderpus is now an icon of Anilao so we always target that first for new BW divers. We also introduced BW diving to guests as part of our regular dive programs. Over time, this evolved into offering workshops to teach the natural history and techniques, over a week dedicated solely to this style of diving. I suppose the whole BW thing has been another step in our ongoing evolution.

*What percentage of your diving is blackwater nowadays?*

Its easy to say, 50% of my diving is BW, depending on the day and season. In recent years, I shifted from still photos to video to better document the density and diversity of zooplankton near the surface at night. I usually drive myself and dive team to the edge of exhaustion when we go on these runs that can last up to 20+ nights. A typical night puts us back on the dive deck prior to midnight, sleep never comes easy after a good dive.

*Do you have contacts in the academic world of marine biology and are they as excited about the revelations from blackwater images?*

Absolutely, The FB group helped bridge a gap between divers and scientists. There are very few dedicated professionals that deal with planktonic life. Describing and cataloging animals isnt easy, and much of the knowledge is going to the grave with the luminaries in this niche profession.

Imagine being a scientist, spending a career of counting fin rays of dyed specimens. Then one day, you see an image of that same specimen in all of its glory. Colorful, ornate, and aloft on the current.

This is exactly what the

*Blanket Octopus reflection. Nikon D850, 60mm. ISO 320, f/16 @ 1/200. Flip down wide angle converter  
The Queen of Chaos, a Female Blanket Octopus (T.gracillis).*

*A large female blanket octopus glides overhead, skimming the surface. I'm capturing 5 frames per second and using 3D tracking on this shot, and I was quite pleased with my luck when I reviewed the images in post. Technology today has enhanced our underwater capabilities, opening doors I never imagined possible.*

Blackwater Photo Group has given the academic world, and in return, they generously educate us. Larval animals are the most challenging subjects to correctly identify, as they look so much different than their adult selves.

*It would be remiss of me not to ask about the camera equipment you use/used both now and historically. Do you like to be up to date or have you got to a level of equipment which is sufficient for your needs.*

Camera equipment- Apparently, there is no such thing as enough or sufficient. I'm currently shooting a Nikon Z8, but I have a cabinet full of old bodies. My first DSLR was a Canon. I switched to Nikon after a few years and have been very happy with that decision. I use two main cameras, primarily my Nikon Z8 for photo and video and my D850 for photos.

Current every day gear: Nikon Z8. Nauticam Housing and Optics. Backscatter Hybrid flash. Backscatter Miniflash and snoot. Kraken S40 flash/ snoot. Favorite lens- Nikon f, 105mm

For BW video: Nikon Z8- 8K Raw . 105+MFO-3. 60mm + MFO-1. 24-50mm w/WACP-1. Kraken 18K



with remote

I do like to stay ahead of the curve if possible. Technology is rapidly evolving on many fronts for us, so I like to have experience and honest feedback whenever I'm asked.

*You have several collaborations with manufacturers. How did this come about and have the relationships produced improved equipment?*

It's true, I am fortunate to work and collaborate with several companies, especially Nauticam. It's a

genuine honor to be part of a team that shares the same passion for creating innovative gear, as I have for my work. I am also grateful to Kraken Sports, as Doug supported my reckless idea of drifting through the open ocean at night, when no one else would. While others looked at me in horror, Doug said, tell me what you need.

It's not about influencing sales for me or getting free stuff; it's more about testing and being a proving ground for concepts. I enjoy the idea of using a piece of gear that could change the way I shoot. The way we see the ocean is like speaking a



### *Zu Cristatus Ribbon Fish*

*The ornate Ribbonfish are generally found at the very end of the night, when you're tired and about to pack it in, when all of a sudden, this guy shows up. Swimming parallel to the surface and heading straight for your lights, the Ribbonfish are exquisite.*

*John Cleese said it best during a Ted Talk: The creative process is not exclusive to geniuses or those who are smarter than others. It's about letting go of ego long enough to become a child again.*

*Lucky me, I never grew up*

### *What does a photo pro actually do?*

Being a photo pro for me means many things, one of which is staying ahead so I can provide the best service to clients and guests. Exploring or developing new techniques, and pushing myself and my camera gear to create something truly special—whether it's shooting interesting behavior, a natural setting, or unhinged macro work.

It's also about coaching patiently, with experienced insight, to help other shooters problem-solve and find their own way—not by setting up a shot, but by teaching others how to set up for a shot.

I dive and shoot nearly every day, logging more than 700 dives a year, with about 500+ in Anilao. I produce material for publication, research, workshops, and marketing. I write about destinations, marine life stories, camera gear, and more. Through it all, I'm able to have the finest human experience that I could ever imagine,

connecting people with our ocean. One thing is for certain: it takes a team of people to keep me running at top speed, and I'm grateful to have a support team of reliable professionals who share my work ethic.

In the end, I am just a guy with a camera, fortunate enough to do what I love every day.

Do it for the love and not the likes!

*Many thanks, Mike, for taking the time to provide such detailed and informative responses.*

Thanks Peter.

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**Mike Bartick**  
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new language. Each new device has a personality that needs to be unlocked and tapped into before it can really shine. I work hard at figuring that out, but it isn't always easy.

I shoot the gear that serves me best so if you want to know what works, simply look at me camera anytime.

*Do you foresee a life after Anilao and are there other ambitions still to achieve?*

Well, when I retire, I plan to move to the Philippines and go diving every

day.

My goals are to experience the ocean as it truly is and to share that experience. I've always approached it with a journalistic mindset and hope to connect with and positively influence others in the same way. I love diving, photography, and meeting people from all over the world. I'm in the perfect place for me right now and hope to ride this wave all the way to the shore.



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# National Park De Oosterschelde

by Patrick Kranenbroek

In the province of Zeeland, in the southwest of the Netherlands, lies National Park De Oosterschelde. The Oosterschelde is a popular diving area, but it has a turbulent history. In 1953, a large part of Zeeland was flooded during the North Sea flood disaster. Many people lost their homes and some villages almost completely disappeared. After the disaster, the Netherlands built the Delta Works, a system of dams and storm surge barriers, to protect the area from the sea. The storm surge barrier in the Oosterschelde was constructed so that the ebb and flow of the tides would be preserved, but it can be completely closed during expected storms. Thanks to these measures, the Oosterschelde remains a unique area, where tides still flow freely and rich underwater life can be observed. For divers, it is a place full of adventure, history, and stunning underwater life.

I am a diver and underwater photographer and an editor for the Dutch diving magazine “Duiken” and frequently dive in the Oosterschelde. I always take my camera underwater during my dives.

The camera is an Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing. “The

Oosterschelde is truly beautiful, and there’s so much to see.” Seahorses, many species of nudibranchs and fish, numerous sessile animals, and various mussel farms can be found in the Oosterschelde. The mussels are cultivated on long ropes that together form “walls” hundreds of meters long. Among these mussels, you can find small crabs, sea squirts, skeleton shrimps, and more. Both wide-angle and macro photography can keep divers occupied for hours. The dive sites are not deep, allowing for long dives.

National Park “De Oosterschelde” is a popular diving area in the Netherlands due to its salt water and rich marine life. Visibility usually ranges between 2 and 10 meters, with the best conditions around slack tide.

The tides have a major influence: dives are almost always planned at high or low water to avoid strong currents.

Access is well organized, with dikes, parking areas, and specially designed dive stairways.

Many dive sites are easily accessible from the shore.

In total, there are over 40 well-known dive sites spread throughout



*When a storm comes, all the gates are closed*





*Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing, 8mm F1.8 lens, Sea and Sea YS 3D Duo strobes, 1/30th @ F5.6. ISO400*

the Oosterschelde. Around the dive-sites there are several locations to fill your tanks. It works with coins or digital with a QR code. In the province of Zeeland there are also several dive-shops.

### Cuttlefish

Every spring, when the water temperature reaches about 13°C, cuttlefish swim from the Atlantic Ocean through the North Sea into the Oosterschelde. They instinctively follow the tidal currents to lay their eggs. In the past, they often laid their eggs on lobster traps, so divers have set up many cuttlefish tents. These

are wigwams made of bamboo poles that divers place in the water for the cuttlefish to lay their eggs on. For divers, this is a remarkable spectacle: female cuttlefish attach their eggs to the poles while males stand guard. If rival males approach, the male defends his partner. This often leads to fights, which are fascinating to watch. When the eggs hatch in summer, juvenile cuttlefish are countless at the dive sites.

### Seahorses

From May/June onwards, seahorses arrive from deeper waters and also visit the cuttlefish tents.



*Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing, 8mm F1.8 lens, Sea and Sea YS 3D Duo strobes, 1/400th @ F22. ISO200*

Finding them is an art, as they are masters of camouflage. If you look closely for their tails wrapped around the poles, you can spot them. Once found, they usually stay nearby all summer, showing strong site fidelity.

Seahorses usually live in pairs, with both male and female together. The male carries the brood pouch, meaning he carries the offspring.

The downside is that the presence of seahorses attracts many



*Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing, 8mm F1.8 lens, Sea and Sea YS 3D Duo strobes, 1/60th @ F8. ISO200*

divers. Because Zeeland is close to the Belgian border, divers come from both the Netherlands and Belgium.

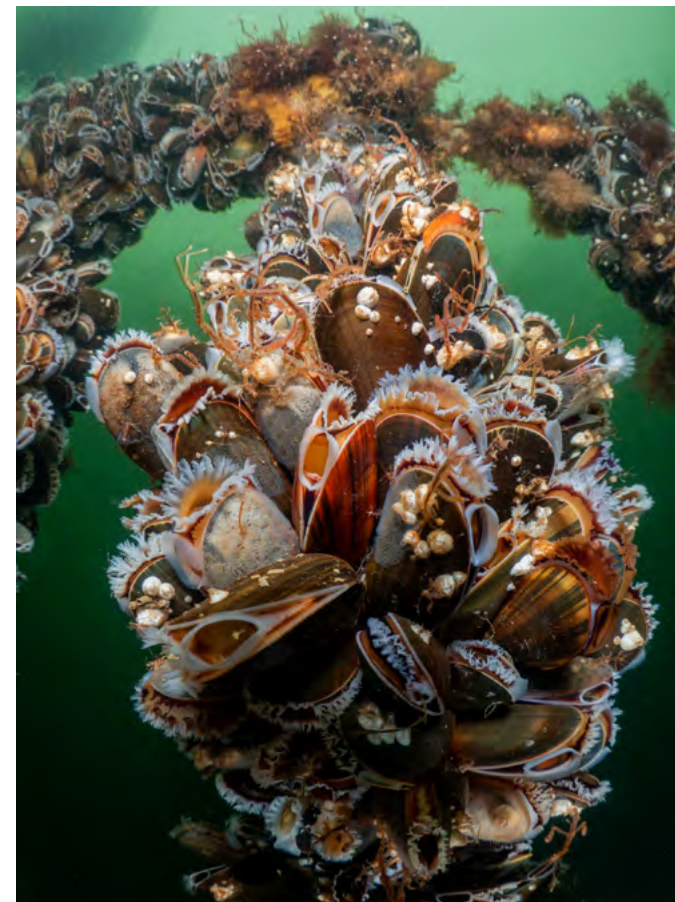
### Lumpsucker

In the Oosterschelde, you can also encounter the lumpsucker. This often well-camouflaged fish is most visible in winter when it spawns. The male plays a prominent role: after the female lays



*Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing, 30mm macro lens, Sea and Sea YS 3D Duo strobes, 1/60th @ F8. ISO200*

the eggs, he fully takes over the care of the nest. He guards and tends the eggs until they hatch, while the female swims elsewhere. For divers, it is fascinating to watch this caring father protect his eggs, a rare example of parental involvement among fish, even in colder months. Once the eggs hatch, juvenile lumpsuckers are often found among the seaweeds in shallower areas.



*Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing, 8mm F1.8 lens, Sea and Sea YS 3D Duo strobes, 1/60th @ F8. ISO200*

### Marine life

Between the basalt boulders of the submerged dikes, large American lobsters and thousands of crabs hide. Gobies have found their homes among the huge rocks, which are exposed at low tide. Pipefish, various nudibranchs, starfish, and thousands of gobies can be found among the oyster beds. As the sun sets, the chances of encountering cuttlefish and eels increase.



*Also above the surface Zeeland is beautiful*



*Olympus E-M5 MKII in a Nauticam Housing, 8mm F1.8 lens, strobes, 1/250th @ F11. ISO200*

*Zeeland has also beautiful windmills. This is the wind mill in St Philipsland*

### Above the surface

Above water, Zeeland is also stunning. The expansive North Sea beaches, beautiful flower fields in spring, and numerous windmills are a feast for the eyes. Don't forget the picturesque village of Veere. Yerseke is famous for its oyster farms. Also visit the Watersnoodmuseum in Ouwerkerk, which tells the story of the great 1953 flood, which led to the construction of the Delta Works. Cities like Rotterdam, The Hague, and Antwerp are all within an hour's drive.

The Oosterschelde is therefore more than just a diving spot: it is a living story of history, nature, culture

and unique underwater creatures waiting to be discovered.

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# The Macro Side Of Palau

by Nigel Marsh

Palau is one of the most outstanding all round dive destinations in the world. The island nation has wonderful reefs, amazing ocean caves, healthy shark numbers, impressive schools of pelagic fishes and an incredible collection of World War II wrecks to explore. It is a brilliant location for wide-angle photography; but is it equally great for those that love macro photography?

The Republic of Palau is a small island nation in Micronesia, located north of Papua New Guinea and east of the Philippines. It is the fourth smallest country in the world, made up of 340 islands and home to some of the richest coral reefs on the planet. I first visited Palau in 1990 and was stunned by the beauty of the place, above and below the water line. On that trip, with my trusty old Nikonos V and 15mm lens, I concentrated on the endless wide-angle opportunities, and I only swapped to the macro lens on a handful of dives.

Since my first visit to Palau a great deal has changed. Palau became an independent nation in 1994, it also protected most of its reefs, as well as its fishes and turtles. And in 2009 the nation declared



its waters the world's first shark sanctuary.

Keen to return, especially with direct flights now available from Australia, I organised to take a photography group on the liveaboard Ocean Hunter III in September. It proved to be a wonderful choice,

*Trevally and grey reef shark at Ulong Sand Bar - 1/125, f8, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with Tokina 10-17mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*



*Paddlefin cardinalfish - 1/125, f18, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*





*Harlequin filefish - 1/125, f14, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

with this spacious vessel accommodating 16 guests in eight very comfortable ensuite cabins. Ocean Hunter III is a brilliantly configured liveaboard with a large camera setup area, a sundeck with two spas and a well laid-out lounge and dining area. The meals were a treat that never left you wanting more, and the crew were excellent, looking after our every need on the boat and underwater.

For our first dives at Ulong Sand Bar, Ulong Wall and Siales Corner, I was happy to take the wide-angle lens for the schools of fish, reef sharks and pretty corals. Then with

a return to Ulong Wall in the afternoon it was time to get the 60mm macro lens out. Slowly drifting along this wall, I found numerous pretty reef fishes and invertebrates to photograph.

I found the best macro subjects in the coral garden at the top of the wall, including a pair of lovely harlequin filefish as they weaved among the coral branches. With so many healthy hard corals in this area, I also had a look for coral crabs and was hoping to see a few coral gobies. These tiny fish are extremely shy and always a challenge to photograph and I was



*Tomato coral goby - 1/125, f14, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

*Spotted garden eel - 1/125, f13, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

rewarded with a small group of tomato coral gobies; the first time I had seen this species.

The next morning, we headed out to Palau's most famous dive site Blue Corner. Having done this site numerous times, and getting wonderful wide-angle images of the sharks, schooling fishes and corals, I thought it was a perfect time for something different with the macro lens. While the others hooked in and watched the sharks, I explored the reef top. This

area, with its many coral heads, was overloaded with reef fish, including pygmy angelfish, giant morays, wrasses, parrotfishes, butterflyfishes and coral snappers.

I was looking for something special and found it in a sandy gully - hundreds of spotted garden eels. Usually, garden eels are very hard to get close too; however, this colony appeared to be used to divers or maybe they just liked me, as many allowed me to get



very close for photos. I then topped this by getting some good photos of another usually shy fish, the zebra-barred dart gobies. These fish are rarely seen, and when you do find some they are very elusive. Lucky for me, the ones at Blue Corner were bold and very photogenic.

Enjoying all the macro subjects, I kept the 60mm lens on for the rest of the day. At Blue Holes I by passed the incredible vistas to explore the nooks and crannies, photographing



*Reef manta ray feeding at the back of Ocean Hunter III - 1/30, f3.5, ISO 2200, Nikon D500 with 18-300mm lens.*

banded pipefish, triggerfish, angelfish, nudibranchs and a disco clam. At New Dropoff I photographed hawkfish, rabbitfish, surgeonfish and turtle faces. While at Big Dropoff I pointed my camera at corals, crabs, cleaner shrimps, sea whip shrimps and a juvenile yellow boxfish.

Between dives, when not eating and relaxing, we were constantly entertained by the dozens of blacktip reef sharks that swam around the boat at our mooring in the lagoon. At times they were joined by schools of trevally, numerous free-swimming remoras and a few pink whiprays on the sand below. At night the lights at the back of the boat attracted plankton, small fish and many larger fish feeding on this bonanza of food. We were also lucky enough to have two reef manta rays join in the fray, doing somersaults at the duckboard as they gobbled up plankton.

For our visit to the reefs off Peleliu I switched back to wide-angle to photograph the sharks, turtles and schools of fish at Peleliu Express and Peleliu Wall. I also kept the wide-angle on for the



*Cocos-Keeling angelfish - 1/125, f11, ISO 200, Nikon D500, 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

reef manta rays at German Channel. In the late afternoon I was glad to return to macro for a dive at Turtle Cove. With dark and gloomy conditions, it was almost a night dive as we explored the wall and its many caves. I photographed longnose hawkfish, a slipper lobster, morays, basslets and hinge-beak shrimps. My best find was in the back of a cave when I stumbled on a very strange looking fish I had never seen before. Transparent, with a large head and eyes, it looked like a cross between a jawfish and cardinalfish. I finally identified it as a glassy cardinalfish.

I found another strange cardinalfish the next morning on a dive at Virgin Blue Hole. This spectacular L-shaped cave is made for wide-angle photography, but once more I had on the 60mm lens and photographed dart gobies, angelfish, tilefish, rock cods and wrasse. Exploring a side passage, I was very excited to find a small group of paddlefin cardinalfish, another rarely seen fish.

Buoyed by this find, I kept the macro lens on for the rest of the day. At Dexter Wall I photographed



*Glassy cardinalfish - 1/125, f25, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

mouth mackerel, boxfish and clown triggerfish. At German Channel it was shrimp gobies, rock cods, glider gobies and grubfish. While a return to Blue Corner had me snapping photos of blue tangs, fusiliers, morays and more spotted garden eels.

One of the largest ocean caves in Palau, Siaes Tunnel has a rubble and sandy floor which is a great spot for nudibranchs, shrimp gobies and dart gobies. With assistance from dive guide Ace, we quickly found flagtail shrimp gobies, red dart gobies and purple dart gobies. Unfortunately, the fish I most wanted to see, the rare Helfrich's dart goby, eluded me. I then moved onto the walls of this cavern to look for the rarely seen Cocos-Keeling angelfish and was lucky enough to see two of these small fish.

After a fast-paced drift dive at Ulong Channel, which didn't offer too many macro subjects, I was happy that the afternoon dive was at Siaes Corner. This is the best spot in Palau to see gorgeous flame angelfish, and it didn't disappoint. I also found tiny coral hermit crabs, morays, goatfish, hogfish



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



*Flame angelfish - 1/125, f11, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*



*Coral crab - 1/125, f14, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with 60mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

and yellowhead dwarf gobies. While on our safety stop, I looked among the branches of the hard corals for more coral gobies when I spotted something even rarer, a spotted croucher.

I have always wanted to photograph this rare member of the scorpionfish family that hides in hard corals, and before me were at least three of them. The only problem was they were deep in the coral and never stopped moving around. After shooting several dozen images, most

out of focus or only capturing part of a fin or tail, I finally nailed one head portrait of these strange little fish.

After four dives each day I was generally happy to rest after the sunset and miss the night dives. However, I finally found some extra energy for a night dive at Ulong Reef. While not a pretty spot, being inside the lagoon, there was a great range of macro subjects for my camera. There were lots of prawns out crawling over the coral or swimming in the water column, plus a good variety of



*Pale-spotted combtooth blenny - 1/125, f18, 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.*



*Teshio Maru shipwreck - 1/125, f8, ISO 200, Nikon D500 with Tokina 10-17mm lens, Isotta Housing and Inon Z330 strobe.*

shrimps, crabs, cardinalfish, lionfish and sea stars.

The next morning was our last day of diving, so it was time to explore the Japanese shipwrecks from World War II. Our first dive was the famous Iro, a 140m long navy fleet oiler. I have dived this ship several times with the wide-angle lens, so thought it would be a nice change to see what macro-options it offered. Being a fish nerd, I found no shortage of subjects, with a wonderful range of damsels, butterflyfishes, fusiliers, rockcods, wrasses, rabbitfishes, triggerfishes and parrotfishes.

I stuck with macro for the next wreck dive on the Teshio Maru, a 100m long cargo ship. This ship had even more macro subjects, including nudibranchs and a good variety of blennies. We also found several sea whip shrimps and a delicate sawblade shrimp.

The wide-angle lens went back on for the final dive at Chandelier Cave. This cave never fails to impress with its stalactites and four air pockets. I am sure there are a few macro critters hidden in its

recesses, but these will have to wait for another trip.

Returning to port after a brilliant week of diving in Palau, I was more than happy with my decision to concentrate on macro in one of the best wide-angle destinations in the world.

**Nigel Marsh**

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*Each year Nigel Marsh leads special photography group trips to dive destinations across the globe. On these trips Nigel is on hand to help improve your underwater photography and does regular talks on photography and marine life. Visit his website for details.*



# Atlantis Dumaguete

by Byron Conroy

I have always heard great things about diving in the Philippines, and I was finally ready to experience it for myself. It was time for me to book my resort, and as an underwater photographer who likes to work deliberately, there was only one option that kept coming up time and time again that fit my needs: Atlantis Dive Resort Dumaguete.

Atlantis Dive Resort Dumaguete is designed for the underwater photographer, allowing you to be a photographer rather than a pack mule. The resort is centered around diving, but it has the amenities and logistics that let you focus on getting the best shots on your dive.

If you have a full camera system - housing, strobes, multiple lenses, and accessories, then the resort's dedicated camera room, ample rinse and drying areas, comfortable accommodations, and personal dive operations mean that you can spend more time looking for the image and less time worrying about the little things, like where to charge your battery or dry your dome port.

After checking in, we had a few hours to relax in the afternoon and prepare our dive equipment for the

following day. The diving area was a mere 30 feet from the room and had everything you could need and more. Inside, there were multiple rinse tanks and freshwater showers, meaning you could rinse your camera in a dedicated camera tank and take a freshwater shower post-dive, before entering the camera room which was right across the way.

To me, all of these details are small but cumulative for an underwater photographer, as I found it to change the rhythm of the workflow from a scrambled one to a seamless one. Everything is also so close together, so if you forget something, it is not a hassle to go back and grab it, and the atmosphere was nice, quiet, and calm. I have been to other resorts where service was great, but staff felt a bit stiff and awkward, so for me, to see staff do everything with a smile on their face and full of enthusiasm was a game-changer and made my stay more enjoyable.

If Atlantis Dumaguete has one defining feature for shooters, it is the camera room. This is not an add-on. The resort offers a large, air-conditioned camera room that was designed to be practical and



*Healthy coral reefs at Apo Island, Sony A7RV, Nikonos 13mm, F13, ISO 500, 1/80*



functional. Each shooter can have their own individual spot, which is equipped with an under-the-counter cubby for storing your camera bag or luggage.

Once unpacked, you can use the special towels provided by the resort and start utilizing your bench space for setup. There are plenty of power outlets in 110 and 220 volts for making your own charging station, an individual reading light to inspect seals and O-rings, an air gun to blast salt from those nooks and crannies, and a shelf to store all of your extras like lenses, batteries, memory cards, and accessories.

The convenient setup removes many issues often faced at other resorts, such as having to carry your rig back and forth to the room after every dive. While top-tier photography resorts share this feature, Atlantis executes it seamlessly. This leaves you more time to clean a lens, charge a battery, or swap strobes in between dives, allowing you more time to relax in between dives and enjoy a clutter-free room.

Dumaguete is famous for macro, and as you may know, macro is my bread and butter. I can spend weeks diving only using a macro lens, but one of the main appeals of Dumaguete is that it offers wide-angle opportunities. There is reef diving at Apo Island and the opportunity to shoot whale sharks at Oslob, a place where an encounter is guaranteed. What other resort offers three distinct photographic opportunities all within such a close distance?

A standard dive package at Atlantis includes an incredible five dives per day: two morning dives, two afternoon dives, and one night dive. We chose to do four day dives per day and take the evening to prepare cameras, download images, and process things for the next day. Our guide, Daryl, was super flexible and accommodating with this, allowing us to make the decisions that gave us the best photo chances.

Dumaguete is actually the city of your arrival airport, but all of the diving and resorts are located 40 minutes



*A painted frogfish lying in wait, Sony A7RV, Retra pro max with restrictors. Nauticam MF03 – F4.0, ISO 80, 1/20*

away in Dauin. For macro shooters, Dauin has become a legend, and for good reason.

The black sand slopes just outside the resort are packed with tiny, well-camouflaged subjects: frogfish, juvenile fish, a dazzling array of nudibranchs, rare ghost pipefish, and a high number of cephalopods. For me, the stars of Dauin

were the cephalopods, like the rare mototi octopus. In fact, in many years of going to Lembeh, I have only seen them a handful of times and have not really had any great photo opportunities.

However, after my 10-day trip to Atlantis, I have had more shots of them doing pretty much anything they can do, such as standing,

curling arms, changing colors, or being in a bottle; these are examples of the type of encounters I had, and more than I can even process.

We also had great success with flamboyant cuttlefish. The sightings were consistent and reliable, and we even had a pair of them together for one whole dive.

Not only does



*Atlantis turned out to be the dream cephalopod destination. Sony A7RV, Retra pro max with restrictors. Nauticam MF03 – F4.0, ISO 80, 1/20*

Dauin have the subjects, but as a photographer, it is easy to repeat a site where you know the action is happening. During our stay, the dive site “Punta” was pumping for cephalopods, and during our nine days of diving, we repeated the site six times as it was so rewarding. What you learn with macro photography is that dive sites go through seasons, hot and cold patches, and when the action is on at one site, it is best to dive it repeatedly. Atlantis knows this and makes it happen for all guests.

Apo Island is best known for its pristine marine sanctuary and

exceptional coral reef, and it is only a short boat ride away from the resort. If you are eager to shoot large reef scenes, schooling fish, or sea turtles against a blue backdrop, Apo is the place to go. It offers a range of dive sites, from gentle sloping reefs to dramatic walls, and the visibility is often excellent. Depending on conditions, photographers can expect turtles, reef sharks, large schools of fusiliers and snappers, and sea snakes.

We chose to only dive the shallow top of the reef where we knew the best corals would be. Shooting



*Atlantis Restaurant on the beach*

against the sun in the shallow, crystal-clear water was a welcome change from the muck slopes of the mainland. If you are looking for a day off from macro, then this day trip is for you, and despite being such a popular island, we did not encounter any other divers from the other resorts.

A day trip from the resort includes three dives at Apo Island and a buffet lunch served onboard the boat. Atlantis even sends a chef over on the boat with you who fires up the BBQ during your second dive and prepares lunch for the group during your final surface interval. There is also the opportunity to buy souvenirs like t-shirts and sarongs, so make sure to bring a little extra cash.

Oslob in Cebu has become synonymous with whale shark interactions. Hesitant about going, we discussed the way the tour worked with the resort, and the candid honesty that Gordon, the owner, gave us was why we decided to go. He



*The rooms located on the beach*

informed us that there would be a lot of snorkelers and boats in the water and did not paint us a picture of a peaceful solo encounter.

Since it was also our last day at the resort and we could not dive due to flying restrictions, we decided to let our equipment dry and check it out. From a logistical standpoint, Oslob is offered as a long day trip from Dumaguete with a transfer via ferry followed by a van ride. We arrived on location around 10 a.m., ready for our snorkeling session to begin.

With Atlantis, you are taken through a private dive resort and given a quick briefing, and then taken to a private area where you can change and prepare for your snorkel. Remember, this tour is offered to average tourists to check off their bucket list, and many of them struggle to swim and have never seen an animal like a whale shark.

The challenge for photographers is to get away from the crowd in a



*Whale shark at Oslob. You can get clean shots if you work hard, even better with a co-operative model. Sony A7RV, Nikonos 13mm, ambient light, F8, ISO1000, 1/800*

restricted area, which is not hard to do if you are a good swimmer and are able to predict the pattern the whale shark will move. It is important to know that the whale sharks in Oslob are not held captive. They have the ability to swim in and out of the area as they please; however, they are being fed, and that is what draws them to the area. You can get good photos if you work hard at it, but go into the situation with realistic expectations and just enjoy the special interaction. If you think you are going to have a private encounter, you will be disappointed.

The central Philippines has a tropical climate, and seasonal changes in visibility and sea state affect what you can shoot and when. Generally, the months from November through May are regarded as the most favorable for both visibility and calm seas, while the monsoon season brings more rain and choppier conditions that can limit surface access and reduce visibility. That said, many photographers travel outside of peak months specifically to catch different animal behaviors or to avoid crowds. Black sand shooting around Dauin can be productive year-round,



*A pink anemone fish, Sony A7RV, Retra Pro Max with restrictors, ND4 Filter, Nauticam MFO-1, Vortex filter, F3.5, ISO 100, 1/4*

though larval blooms and plankton seasons will alter visibility and subject presence. Apo Island's sanctuary is relatively consistent and can be dived equally all year around.

If you want a mix of macro and wide angle in a single trip, plan for a week or longer. Macro shooting is a cumulative experience, and by that, I mean it adds up over time, where maybe you see two cool creatures per dive.

Do ten dives and you may feel a bit light from a trip, as perhaps you only get twenty great opportunities; do twenty dives and you will probably

have forty or more great shooting chances. For me, this is a place where you want to go for between ten and twelve days.

Reaching Dumaguete from America or Europe is straightforward but will always require at least two flights. There are no direct intercontinental flights into Dumaguete. The usual approach is to fly into one of the Philippine international gateways, Manila or Cebu, and then take a domestic flight to Dumaguete's Sibulan Airport.

Manila and Cebu both have multiple daily connections to



*A pair of mating flamboyant cuttlefish, Sony A7RV, Retra pro max with restrictors, Nauticam MFO-3 F7.1, ISO80, 1/30*

Dumaguete, with carriers such as Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific running regular services. From the United States, the most common routing is to fly into Manila via one of the major carriers with a single stop, or into Cebu via Singapore, Hong Kong, or a direct long haul, depending on the season and routes. From Europe, the usual path is to fly via a hub in the Middle East or Southeast Asia, such as Doha, Dubai, Singapore, or Hong Kong, and then pick up a domestic connection.

Domestic flights from Manila to Dumaguete are short, typically

around one hour and a half, and are affordable if booked in advance. The overweight luggage fees are minimal on these local domestic flights; I paid twenty dollars for my additional weight.

The Philippines hosts a lot of photographers, and dive traffic can be busy at popular sites, so good etiquette matters. Keep a low dive profile, follow guide instructions, and maintain distances that do not stress the animals. For macro dives, never shuffle across the substrate or rest a knee on living coral. In wide-angle shooting, be careful of the reef;



*A rare flasher wrasse on one of the coral sites. Sony A7RV, Retra Pro Max, F5, ISO160, 0.4 seconds*

with a high number of divers in Apo Island, it is important divers treat it with respect. Gloves are not allowed during diving, so maintaining good buoyancy and spatial recognition is very important. Some areas have been shut down temporarily to reduce diver stress and allow them to recover.

One of the underrated advantages of a resort like Atlantis is the ability to use downtime productively. The camera room becomes a hub for review, critique, and post-processing. Many visiting photographers make a habit of reviewing and processing a

selection of images each afternoon, comparing notes with other shooters, and planning the following day's dives with guides based on what was seen. Atlantis supports this workflow with comfortable seating, a reliable internet connection, and an atmosphere where other shooters are doing the same thing. That communal aspect is invaluable. You learn tips about local sites, you discover new compositions, and you leave with both better images and a network of contacts for future trips. If you are traveling with a non-diver or want to take a break from the workflow, the



*Divers escorted back to shore after a great macro dive*

resort offers a variety of spa services which can be booked anytime during your stay.

If you are a photographer who values a mix of macro, healthy reef wide angle, and the possibility of pelagic encounters, Atlantis Dive Resort Dumaguete is worth your attention. The resort's camera facilities and operational flow allow you to treat a trip as a working photographic assignment.

Dauin is an exceptional macro playground, Apo Island gives you clean water, wide-angle shots and coral reef shots, and the proximity to Oslob makes a whale shark day trip a viable addition to any itinerary.

Expect efficient operations, a camera-friendly environment, and local guides who are experienced at finding and handling photo subjects with care. To get the best from a trip, plan for at least a week, pack for

macro and wide angle, and coordinate with the resort about your specific photographic goals before you arrive so they can tailor dive schedules accordingly.

Some dive resorts do not feel like a holiday; they make things hard. Atlantis makes things easy for you, allowing you to focus on your shooting and relaxing on vacation.

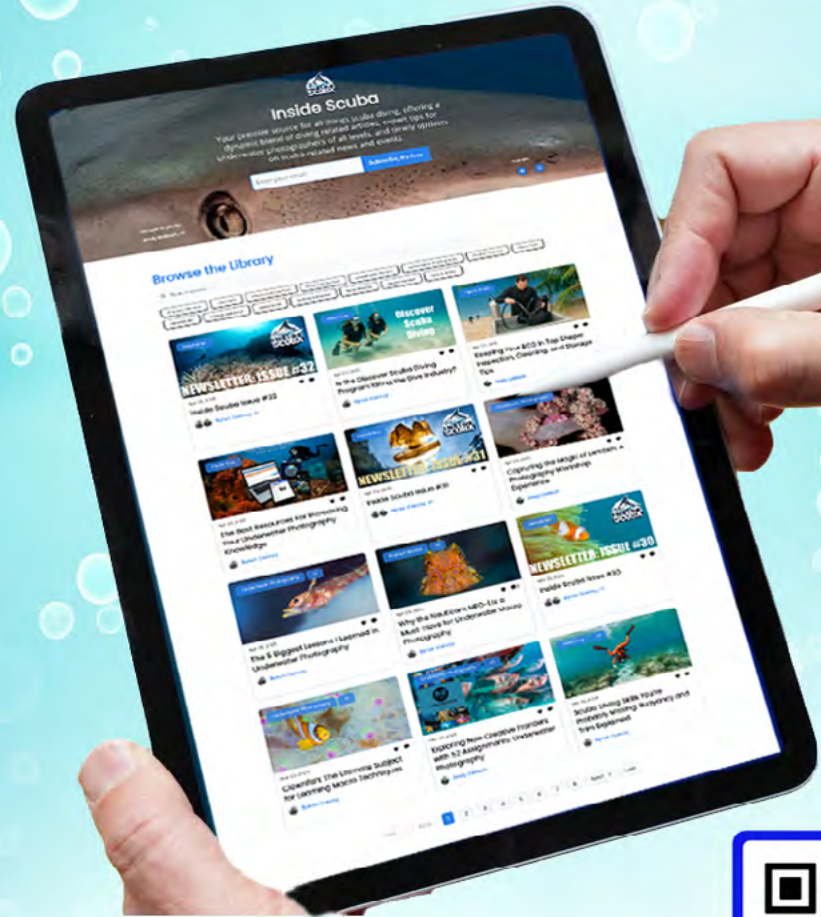
In short, for underwater photographers who want a single base that offers a wide range of photographic subjects, reliable camera facilities, and a professional operation, Atlantis Dive Resort Dumaguete presents a compelling option.

**Byron Conroy**

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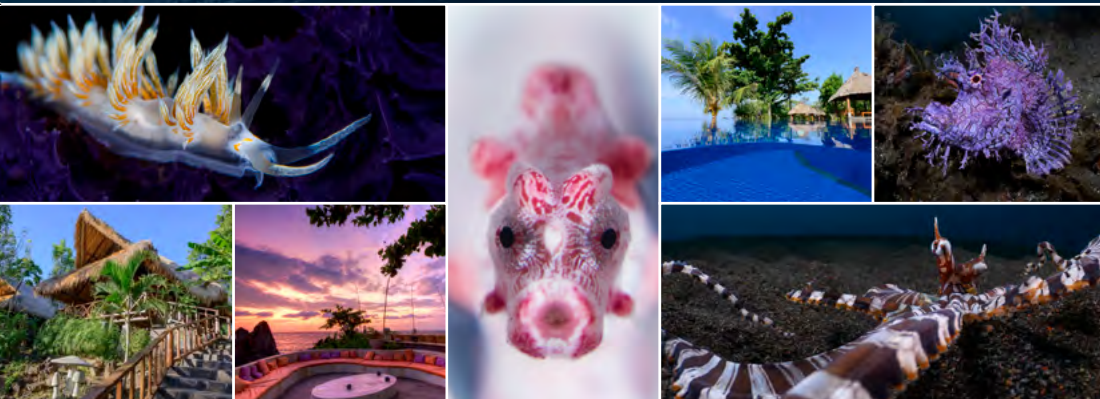
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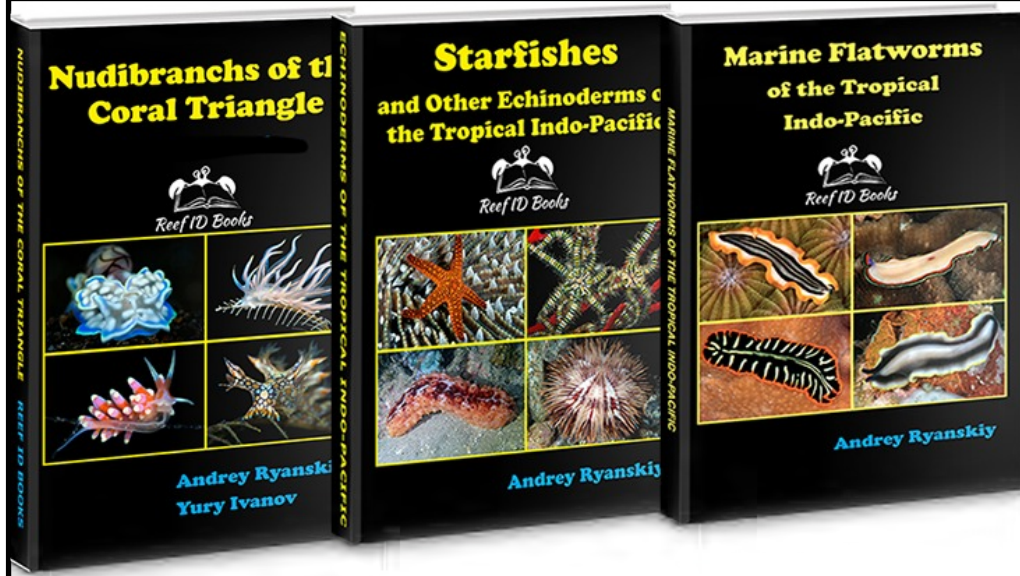
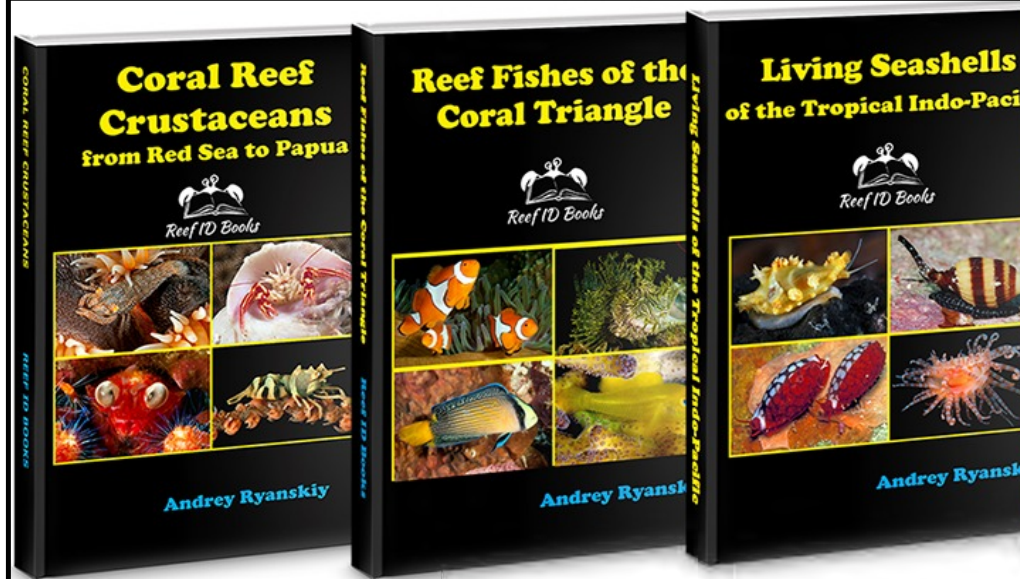


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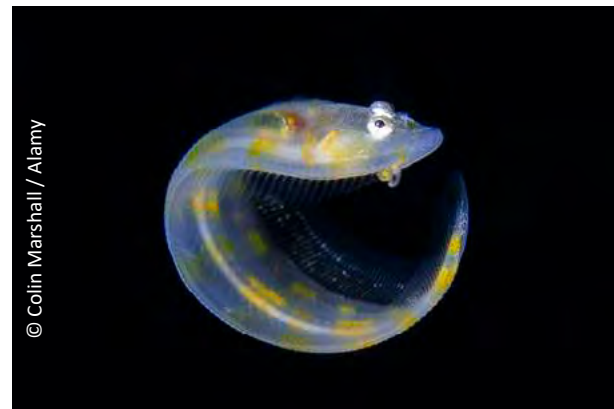
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## Marshall's Mysteries 25

Answers on page 65

**Blackwater Diving - "We're not in Kansas anymore" – Part 1 of 2 :** This type of night diving involves taking a boat further offshore than normal, in deep-ish water. A guide rope with some lights at regular depths, eg 5, 10, 15m, is lowered down. These are needed to attract animals but also, as you are drifting in currents and cannot see the seafloor, to keep you from losing your bearings - and boat - or just sink to unsafe depths! This is surprisingly easy to do when caught up trying to photograph something never-seen-before in the blue water. See if you can name the animals from this selection (all from Bali), even if just the general common name.



## Kit for sale

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

Search UWP adverts



### FOR SALE – SET of Sea & Sea YS 250 PRO

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



### FOR SALE – Sea Frogs Panasonic GH5 housing, flat and dome port

Brand new and never taken underwater, 40 metre Sea Frogs (formerly Meikon) housing for the Panasonic GH5. Flat port for macro lenses and dome port for wide angle. No zoom or manual focus controls. Prefer sale in the UK and ... [More >](#)



### FOR SALE – Aquatica Macro Port & 2 x Sea & Sea YS -120 Duo Strobes

Aquatica Macro Port (Manual & Autofocus) for any DSLR Aquatica housing with the 4 lugs bayonet fitting. £180. Sea & Sea YS -120 Duo Strobes with instructions & one Diffuser they are in good used condition and in full working ... [More >](#)



### FOR SALE – Nauticam Na-d800 Housing for Nikon D800

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



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

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



### FOR SALE – SEA & SEA MM2 U/W CAMERA WITH ACCESSORIES

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



### FOR SALE – Nikon D500 + Hugaftot D500 setup

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

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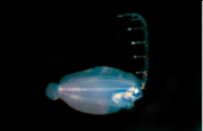
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**Sell your stuff** You'll be amazed at just how quickly your unwanted underwater photography kit could be converted into hard cash with a UWP small ad. You can have your own UWP small ad from just £7.50 and it can have one photo as well as up to 100 words.

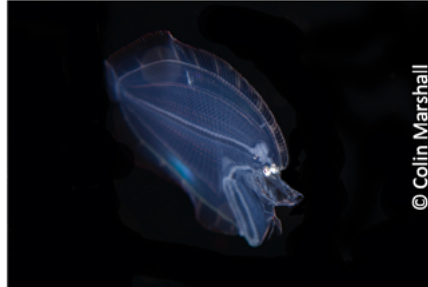
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# Marshall's Mysteries 25 – Answers

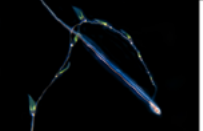


**Flounder**  
(*Bothus sp*)




© Colin Marshall

Post larval Flounder with extended fin. Image on right shows eyes on both sides of head, like most other fish. As it matures, the right eye migrates to the left side, allowing it to lie flat on seafloor, watching above for prey.

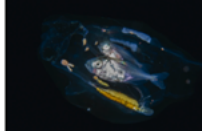


**Reef Basslet**  
(*Liopropoma sp*)




© Andrey Ryanskiv

There are at least nine *Liopropoma Basslet* species in the East Indies region. On the right is a example of a possible adult Fish, a beautiful Many-lined Basslet, *Liopropoma multilineatum*, from Papua New Guinea.




**Salp**  
(*Salpidae Family*)




© Colin Marshall / Ardea

*Salp*, a planktonic tunicate with larval fish (Jacks) and Copepod (with egg sacs). Bottom yellow is the *salp* intestine. *Salp* Chain shown on right, with orange nuclei & primitive transparent spinal cords – *Salps* are relatively closely related to vertebrates.




**Sea Butterfly**  
(*Corolla spectabilis*)




© Colin Marshall / Alamy

Free-swimming, pelagic sea snails with a thin transparent shell. The *gastropodal* foot has evolved into wing-like appendages. Generally herbivorous plankton-feeders, catching food in a mucus net as shown in this Sea Butterfly (*Cavolinia tridentata*) on right.

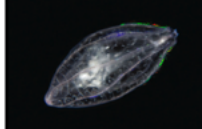


**Sea Angel**  
(*Hydromyles globulosa*)

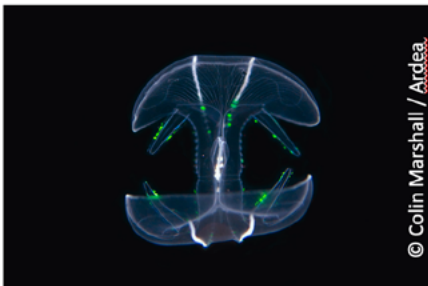


© Colin Marshall / BluePlanetArchive

Free-swimming pelagic "naked" (larva discards shell after hatching) sea slugs. The foot has again evolved into a "wing". Carnivorous, enjoys eating Sea Butterflies; Angels (advantage of no shell) swim twice as fast as Butterflies. Mating pair above.




**Comb Jelly**  
(*Cydingida Order*)

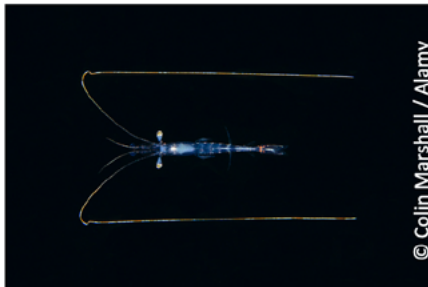


© Colin Marshall / Ardea

Also known as Ctenophores. They are the largest animals that swim using cilia. These hair-like projections scatter light, giving a rainbow effect of colours (not bioluminescence). Predators, using *colloblasts* (adhesive tentacles) to catch prey.

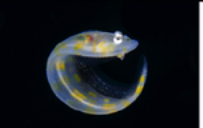


**Shrimp**  
(*Hippolytidae Family*)




© Colin Marshall / Alamy

Larval planktonic shrimp before developing into adult forms, such as the well-known Cleaner Shrimp. Long antennae to allow shrimp to find food and avoid predators. Overhead view of different species above.




**Flathead**  
(*Platycephalidae Family*)




© Colin Marshall / Alamy

Larva possibly curling up to mimic an unpalatable zooplankton, eg a *Salp* or Jellyfish. With 14 species of Flatheads in the the region, this larva could be a Crocodile Flathead (*Cymbacephalus beaufortii*); adult above.



**Leptocephalus Eel**  
(*Teleostei Order*)



© Colin Marshall

Leptocephalus Eel larva. Could be one of a multitude of different Eel species. Most Eels in the tropics take about four months to go through this flat & transparent larval stage. Close-up above shows the forward-facing sharp teeth.

# 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](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)**

## How to submit articles

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

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

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 150dpi

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

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

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

# My Shot

by David Fleetham

It is a treat to see a triton trumpet shell, *Charonia tritonis*, on the reef. They have become uncommon to rare in some locations. For thousands of years the Polynesians valued the Triton trumpet shell both for its beauty and its practical uses. They often hollowed out the tip of the shell to create a blowing horn, used for signaling between canoes or across villages, its deep, resonant tone carrying long distances over land and sea. In some island cultures, the triton shell served ceremonial and spiritual purposes, believed to summon protective ocean spirits or announce important gatherings and rituals.

Modern shell collectors also highly value the triton trumpet shell for its impressive size, beauty, and rarity. These shells can grow over 50 centimeters (about 20 inches) in length. For collectors the value goes up with the size of the shell.

The crown-of-thorns starfish, *Acanthaster planci*, is well-defended by an array of sharp, venomous spines that cover its entire upper surface. These long, toxic spines can easily penetrate skin or the mouths of predators, causing intense pain, swelling, and even nausea in larger animals or humans.

When a triton trumpet attacks and consumes a crown-of-thorns starfish, it does so with deliberate precision and patience. The triton locates its prey by scent, detecting chemical cues released by the starfish as it moves across the coral. Once within reach, the triton extends its large, muscular foot to hold the starfish in place, while its proboscis emerges from the shell's opening. Using its radula, a ribbon-like tongue lined with tiny, rasping teeth, the triton drills through the starfish's tough outer skin between the spines. It then injects paralyzing digestive enzymes and saliva, which begin to break down the starfish's tissue, effectively immobilizing it. Arm by arm the triton vacuums the insides of the starfish leaving a deflated version of its former self.



*Shot back in 2005 with a Canon 20D with a Canon 100mm macro in an Ikelite housing, 1/125, f/14, ISO200 and twin Ikelite 125 strobes.*

**Do you have a favourite shot or an image/s which made a dive special?**

**E mail yours with some text to [peter@uwpmag.com](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)**

**and yours could be the next My Shot/s**

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

**David Fleetham**  
[www.davidfleetham.com](http://www.davidfleetham.com)

# Parting Shot

by Peter Rowlands

You've got me again because, once again, there have been no Parting Shot submissions :-( Hint, hint.

Anyway, a long, long time ago, November 2002, Debbie and I went to Dominica for a holiday dive trip and had a great time. We stayed at the Castle Comfort Lodge (CCL) and dived with Dive Dominica but also met and dived with Simon Walsh of Nature Island Dive. More of him later.

The house reef at CCL was off the jetty with a sloping reef down to about 15 metres. It was a doddle and perfect for a dive in between the two boat dives a day package.

In November 2002, UwP was just over one year old and still in its vertical format. Digital photography was in its infancy and I was using a Nikon Coolpix 5000 in a Subal CP5 housing. Magic Filters hadn't been invented yet so I was using a UR Pro filter and mainly available light. The house reef was perfect as a practice ground and the instant LCD playback made the learning curve much faster. There was an abundance of colourful subjects to practice on.

Finning along the edge of the reef on one of my early dives I spotted not one but two striated frogfish

(*Antennarius striatus*) - a perfect, static subject, superbly camouflaged. Because they had been so easy to spot, I thought no more about them until underwater photographer Maria Hults and organiser of the annual Beneath the Sea Show in New Jersey, who was also at the CCL, saw my images and was amazed. She had never seen one before in all her 30 (at the time) years of travel and, it turned out, the CCL dive guide at the time said he had only ever seen one, and that (then) was over a decade ago.

The frogfish remained put for a couple of days and were photographed by all interested; and then we never saw them again. Dominica has a lot to offer visiting divers and I wrote about the trip in UwP12 Apr/May 2003.

So what?

Well fast forward to November 2025, 23 years later, and I am walking the aisles at DEMA in Orlando and who do I bump into but Simon Walsh who is on the Dominica Tourist booth. Handshakes and back slapping later, we catch up and both remember the trip warmly but then he says "Do you know, no one has ever seen a striated frogfish since yours!" Feeling suitably



*Coolpix 5000, Subal CP5 housing, standard lens, URPro filter, available light*

special I said my cheerios and blow me down, in the next aisle was Maria Hults on the Beneath the Sea booth! Talk about a small world.

It just goes to show how lucky

I was on that most enjoyable trip to Dominica.

**Peter Rowlands**  
[peter@uwpmag.com](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)

**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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