Underwater Photography

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a web magazine Issue 27 Nov/Dec 2005

Ocean Optics

Ocean Optics and Mavericks Diving. Your One Stop London Dive Centre.

At our new central London showrooms you'll discover only the finest underwater camera equipment. As underwater photographers ourselves, we have the experience to select the products that will help you make great underwater images. And our reputation, built over a quarter of a century, means we never have to offer second best - top designers and manufacturers want us to represent them.

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www.oceanoptics.co.uk

www.mavericksdiving.co.uk

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Nov/Dec 2005

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Nikon D100,12-24mm, UR Pro CY Filter. Subal Housing. 1/40@ F4

Editorial

Fish

UwP front covers have always given me a great deal of satisfaction for I am not restricted by the newsagent's shelf formulaic layout. This issue's front cover is no exception photographically but it also helps to illustrate a message.

On a recent trip to Indonesia I became acutely aware of the lack of decent sized fish on nearly every dive. I was told that, in recent years, foreign fishing fleets had bought the rights and came through with factory ships and virtually hoovered the sea.

Coincidentally I was loaned a DVD of Cousteau's 'Silent World' and noticed how many fish there were back in the 50's. Then I got a press release about www.fish4ever.org who are campaigning to encourage sustainable fishing. Their site made me aware of the deep-sea bottom trawling concern which highlights the depths (pun intended) fishermen have to go and the indiscriminate methods they use.

Finally Alex Mustard wins a category at the BBC Wildlife Competition and sends me an illustrated article on the story behind his winning shot. In the folder was this front cover shot which sort of completed the circle.

Besides being a powerful shot it illustrates the benefits of marine parks with the shoal of fish congregating to spawn and continue their species in safety.

Then I thought back to Indonesia and imagined how a factory ship could remove this shoal right down to the last specimen.

This cover shot is not only good. It could also become rare.

peter@uwpmag.com

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News, Travel & Events

Beneath the Sea 2006

BENEATH THE SEA's 30th annual Ocean Adventure Exposition and Travel Show will convene at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey the weekend of March 24th, 25th and 26th, 2006.

Celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year, America's largest consumer ocean adventure, scuba diving, and travel exposition, Beneath the Sea will bring together over 300 exhibitors from all corners of the world for a weekend of excitement, special events, parties, and underwater arts.

Education is the most important part of Beneath the Sea's charter. In order to fulfill that obligation to the ocean's community Beneath the Sea will sponsor over 60 seminars and workshops examining life in, on and around the oceans of the world.

A Beneath the Sea weekend entertains, informs and excites the experienced diver and new diver alike, while enticing non-divers to join this fraternity of friends beneath the sea.

www.Beneaththesea.org

www.fish4ever.org

Industrial fishing is destroying entire ecosystems, killing marine wildlife, and rapidly wiping out the world's fish stocks.

Soon, many fish populations may disappear from the oceans – and our tables. Large numbers of whales, dolphins, sharks, rays, marine mammals and seabirds are also being killed as accidental 'by-catch'. Ocean habits ranging from coral reefs to deep-water sea mounts are under threat from industrial fishing and other human activities. At present, less than 1% of the world's oceans are marine protected areas.

Fish4ever is a global internet campaign calling for the urgent implementation of sustainable fisheries and the creation of a network of marine parks to safeguard the future of the world's oceans.

www.fish4ever.org

Mark Webster workshops

Oonasdivers have recently announced the schedule for Mark Webster's popular photo workshops in 2006. There will be three dates - two in the Southern Red Sea in June and October and one in Thailand/Burma in November/December.

These workshops are suitable for both digital and film users. For full details and pricing please contact Oonasdivers on +44 (0)1323 648924 or see the websites for details:

www.oonasdivers.com

www.photec.co.uk

Surface Interval

A Podcast About Scuba Diving for divers, by divers

A trio of Australian divers, Des Paroz, Andrew Bowie and Greg Blair, is launching a new podcast about scuba diving.

Surface Interval will be a fortnightly show featured on Australia's own The Podcast Network and will contain discussion of diving news and topics of interest to scuba divers.

The hosts for the show are experienced recreational divers who each bring unique experience and understanding to the show – together with their own brand of banter and scintillating repartee.

You can download the latest episode as an mp3 file, or subscribe to the Web Feed (RSS) using your preferred podcatcher, including iTunes.

http://surfaceinterval.

thepodcastnetwork.com/

Wetpixel.com and DivePhotoGuide.com International Photo Competition

... in association with Our World-Underwater
Over $25,000 in prizes!

Wetpixel.com and DivePhotoGuide.com have teamed up to celebrate the beauty and delicacy of the marine environment by developing a new, annual, international underwater photography competition.

Photographers will compete in six categories to win more than $25,000 in prizes, including premium dive travel, underwater photography equipment, and more! Dive packages in the prize list include trips to some of the top photo destinations in the world: the Solomon Islands, Lembeh Strait, Raja Ampat, Komodo, the Galapagos Islands, Papua New Guinea, The Bahamas and Palau! Other prizes include camera housings, strobes, lighting systems, and other valuable items (see website for complete prize list).

The contest includes a category for images that focus on conservation and the marine environment, and one specifically for entries taken by compact digital cameras.

All entrants will receive one free, digital issue of Dive Chronicles Magazine, and all entrants in the Compact Camera category will receive one free photo lesson from renowned underwater photographer, Marty Snyderman, via TheUnderwaterphotographer.com.

Winners will be announced on stage at the 2006 Our World-Underwater festival in Chicago, Illinois (February 24-26, 2006).

15% of entry proceeds will be donated to marine conservation efforts.

www.wetpixel.com/contest

www.divephotoguide.com/contest06

www.ourworldunderwater.com

Silverbanks Humpbacks with Mauricio Handler

1-8 April 2006

During the winter months an uncontrollable desire to migrate South overcomes the North Atlantic Humpback Whale. Why they migrate and their exact migration route is unknown, but we do know they travel to numerous mating and calving areas in the Antilles. We may never know why these mammoth mammals migrate south on a yearly basis, but one thing is for certain, females go into estrus during this time frame and the males testosterone is overflowing, creating one of natures most exciting arenas of courtship.

Join top underwater photographer Mauricio Handler on this special trip on board MV Nekton. $2,495.00 + 150.00 port fee

www.reefrainforest.com

Ikelite Digital SLR-DC Housings

OFFER TTL FLASH

CANON
EOS Digital Rebel (300D)
EOS Digital Rebel XT (350D)
EOS 10D
EOS 20D

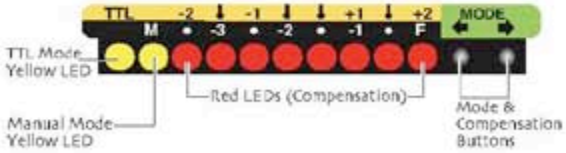
NIKON
D-50
D-70
D70s

OLYMPUS
E-1
E-300

The Ikelite SLR-DC housing takes full advantage of the digital SLR cameras innovative features. The housing is injection molded of clear, lightweight polycarbonate for strength, visual access to the camera, LCD screens and camera controls. The housing provides controls for most camera functions. The versatility of this housing shows in the interchangeable port system which allows the use of a wide variety of lenses from macro to wide-angle to zoom. The rubber handles provide excellent grip and a quick release system for multiple strobe attachments to meet the needs of the most demanding professional.

The Ikelite SLR-DC housings have Conversion Circuitry built into the camera housing. When used with an Ikelite DS Substrobe; the Conversion Circuitry provides TTL flash exposure.

The Ikelite SLR-DC housings for Canon and Nikon also include a Flash Compensation Module which provides over and under-exposure compensation in the TTL mode. At the push of a button, switch to Manual Exposure Mode which provides eight power settings in one-half stop increments. All exposure compensation is done with 2 buttons on the back of the housing, no accessing complicated camera menus.



The Ikelite SLR-DC housings for Olympus have conversion circuitry and provide real Olympus TTL when used with Ikelite DS Substrobes but do not include the Flash Compensation Module.

ikelite
Underwater Systems
50 W 33rd Street
Indianapolis, IN 46208
317-923-4523

www.ikelite.com

New products

Ikelite Canon G6 Digital housing

The #6146 housing for the Canon G6 includes special conversion circuitry to utilize the Canon eTTL system with DS-50 and DS-125 SubStrobes, providing total compatibility as the DS SubStrobes emulate a proper Canon strobe.

It includes a diffuser to allow photos to be taken with the built-in strobe of the camera.

An optional #4100.6 EV Manual Controller providing 10 power settings with the DS-50 or DS-125 digital SubStrobes can be attached with sync cord or triggered by the camera strobe. Non-Ikelite strobes can be used operating as manual strobes, but not with the EV Manual Controller.

The lens port allows attaching the Inon UWL-100 wide angle lens, Epoque DCL-20, Olympus, or the #58070 Sea & Sea digital wide conversion lens.

Every camera function except the self timer and continuous button is accessible in this very sophisticated housing installation. Complete housing and camera weighs less than 6 pounds.

The Release Handle system allows easy attachment and removal of SubStrobe mounting arms at the touch of a button. Housing measures 7" wide; 10" wide with the removable handle bar attached; 6" high, and 6" deep. It is moulded of corrosion free clear polycarbonate and operates to 200 feet.

www.ikelite.com

Gates HC1/A1U housing

The Gates HC1/A1U housing takes the Sony HC1/A1 small HD video cameras.

The handle positions are adjustable and there is an optional external monitor

There are all mechanical controls for On/Off, Zoom, Exposure On/Off, Record/Standby, Internal "Flip" Filter, Photo, White Balance, A/M Focus, Exposure Adjust and Manual Focus

The housing is 10.7" L x 6.7" H x 7.1"w (10" w/handles) or 27 cm L x 17 cm H x 18 cm W (25 cm w/ handles)

It weighs 10.1 lbs / 4.6 kg on land and is slightly negative underwater. It is rated to 450 feet / 137 meters and accepts all batteries designed for the camera.

www.gateshousings.com

Nikon D200

Rumours are getting stronger about the imminent release of Nikon's latest DSLR.

The D200 will be placed between the D70 and D2x and the specifications are thought to be 10.2 Megapixels, 5 Frames per Second, 2.5" LCD screen, DX-sized CCD sensor, 11 Area Multi-CAM AF system, 1,005 pixel 3D matrix metering II, Magnesium Alloy Body, Shutter rated for 100,000 shots, EN-EL3e battery for 1800 images per charge

There is even speculation that the price will be $1,699.95.

Do a Google search for Nikon D200 to find the latest news!

Fisheye HG20DX Light

To help your digital camera focus under low light conditions a focus light is a good idea. Many digital still cameras allow the capture of short video clips and the focus light can provide illumination for the video capture.

The light comes with accessories, such as a flashlight handle, lanyard, and o-ring maintenance kit, and battery charger, base mount is Sea& Sea style U-shaped with screw through style.

The FixLight HG20DX comes with Battery and Charger, Handgrip, Strap, Spare o-ring Set and Removal Tool

The 20 watt lamp and dimpled metal diffuser/reflector are designed to provide a bright white diffuse light with even illumination.

It's just 6 inches long and weighs 16 oz land / 2.8 oz underwater

It is made from polycarbonate plastic and depth rated to 250 feet.

www.marinecamera.com

UK-D-E300 for OLYMPUS E-300

UK Germany will soon have available an aluminium housing for the Olympus E300

Dimensions: Length (without grip): 180 mm, height: 135 mm, depth: 100 mm. Weight: approx. 1600 g without port. Max. diving depth: 80 metres.

www.uk-germany.com

Sealux HD1 video

Sealux have announced their housing for the Sony HC1 HD camera. For further details visit www.sealux.de

Heinrichsweikamp Olympus Nikonos bulkhead

German manufacturer Heinrichsweikamp now makes a replacement flash bulkhead for Olympus housings which can be user-installed within minutes so that many Nikonos compatible strobes can be used.

Supported cameras are Olympus C5060 (PT-020, PT-027) , C7070 (PT-027) and C8080 (PT-023)

Supported strobes (with full TTL) are Sea&Sea YS60/90/120/350, Inon Z220(s), Ikelite DS50/DS125, all new Subtronic and Nikon SB-105.

The new bulkhead does not require a battery and provides TTL exposures, all modes are supported: spot, multi or even “ESP”

The camera will use 67 different power levels with a YS60 instead of

5-10 settings with a manual strobe.

A big advantage is that the cameras built-in flash is not used so prolongs camera battery life.

The replacement bulkhead costs 159EUR

www.heinrichsweikamp.com

Watershot Canon 350D/Rebel housing

Watershot have announced two new housings for the Canon 350D/ Rebel XT. The first is aluminium and the second is an injection moulded front with an aluminium back.

They both have controls for Shutter Lever; Main Dial; Power Switch; Mode Dial; AE lock/FE lock button/Index/Reduce button; AF point selection/Enlarge button; Drive mode selection button; Aperture/Exposure compensation button; ISO speed set button; White balance selection button; Metering mode selection button; AF mode selection button; Cross Key Setting button; LCD panel illumination button; Erase button; Playback button; Jump button; Info/ Trimming orientation button; Menu button.

The metal version is rated to 100 metres and the plastic to 40-60 metres.

www.watershotonline.com

DEMA 2005 Wetpixel report

Couldn't make DEMA this year? Want to know all about what was on display in the underwater photography world? Fear not!

Wetpixel's Christa Loustalot has posted a comprehensive report on all that was on show with behind the scenes gossip and pictures.

http://wetpixel.com/features/dema2005/

There's also a very good review of the new range of HD cameras and housings by Drew Wong.

http://wetpixel.com/i.php/full/dema-2005-sony-hdv-camera-report/

Send your press releases about new products to

peter@uwpmag.com

Back to Aluminium

with the Aquatica Pro D2x

by Charles Hood

My first venture away from the amphibious Nikonos range of cameras led me to the high-tech industrial lands of Austria. David Nardini, a prevalent underwater snapper in the mid eighties, had discovered the small housing manufacturer, Subal. He and I had both just purchased new Nikon F801's and decided the old screw thread Subal was the perfect casing. Indeed I think we did our research well for around a year later Ocean Optics (London, UK) decided to start importing them into the UK and the rest, they say, is history!

This F801 housing served me well until, following an unfortunate capsizing incident, I was required to upgrade to a F90x in a bayonet port Subal. Several years later a competition win led me to change to a Sea & Sea housing equipped with the Nikon F100. I then had a brief flirtation with a Nikon Coolpix 5000 in a Subal which convinced me digital was the way forward. However, the pattern I was noticing here was the longevity of the camera bodies was getting shorter. As ground breaking as the D100 was when it was launched, in the back of my mind laid the thought – 2 years max before it's replaced.

Thus I decided not to spend huge amounts of cash on an aluminium housing and opted for the moulded plastic Sea & Sea DX100. My premonition proved right and this summer (after only two and a half years!) my aging D100 needed to be upgraded.

The obvious choice had to be the D2x – with so many f2.8 lenses I couldn't justify considering another manufacturer. Besides, all indications told me the D2x is a stunning machine.

As Mauricio Handler, the UK sales manager for Aquatica, is a close working colleague of mine the choice of Aquatica was also a bit of a no brainer. The point of the above story is that I'm back with an aluminium housing - and it's rather nice.

While I'm not knocking plastic, my Sea & Sea served me very well but the robustness of metal just provides that little bit more feeling of confidence. After just one week of ownership here are my initial thoughts.

The Aquatica Pro D2x housing certainly appears to be well machined, at first glance you'd have thought they had poached Subal's chief design engineer. Internally the similarities to a Subal abound with the cantilevering spring-loaded controls being almost identical. The camera also sits on a similar tray and is locked securely in place with a rotating metal disc.

Externally all the controls are logical and clearly labelled. Controls at a glance are:

On/off/light, Front wheel (normally aperture/sub command), Rear wheel (normally shutter speed and function changes), AF/AE lock, Metering system, Exposure compensation, Light meter area, Bracketing, Command lock, Flash mode, Manual

focus/zoom, Focus mode, Lens release, Playback, Delete, Menu, Thumbnail, Image file protection, Enter/playback zoom, ISO, File quality/size, White balance, Four multi select buttons, Auto focus style/ predictive focus.

The retaining clips require quite a force to close but secure the backplate firmly against a juicy o ring. Control wise they all seem intuitive and the main adjustment wheels and shutter release are suitably large for use with gloved hands – particularly important for us UK divers.

The on/off and focus area select levers are a dream to use having the smoothness akin to a rare malt whisky. The spring resistance on all the push buttons is what I would call over-positive requiring a firm action. This confirms this housing can probably withstand its claimed 90 meter depth rating, although it may be a while before I test this in the field!

One amazing attention to detail on the push buttons is that the housing has been drilled to make a tiny drain for any water trapped around the 'o' rings. This is to help prevent salt build-up and aid rinsing with fresh water. Another feature that also confirms how well the engineers have designed this housing is three small sacrificial anodes that are screwed into the base of the housing. These, being manufactured from zinc, are designed to protect the aluminium against corrosion.

The generous screen size of the D2x is accommodated well using a clear port at the rear of the housing. I chose to have the optional leak detector fitted which comes in the form of an LED in this window. It's a pity the LED is a bit on the average side of brightness and I think one of these super bright LEDs could have been fitted.

Another niggle is that the housing was not supplied with any flash arm shoes. Furthermore the standard fitting is designed to take the outdated Oceanic mount. Very kindly Peter Rowlands (UwP's very own) came to the rescue and machined my old Ultralight shoes to fit.

I've only had time to use the housing in the pool, however, this usually gives a fairly good indication on how it will perform in open water. Being half term I had two willing volunteers to help me. This at the very least provided something interesting to shoot. Kids are also a good subliminal test. They get bored quickly. So in order for me to get images I had to get to grips with the set-up quickly. This I did achieve and I have to report the housing is a delight to use. I would say it is by far the most intuitive housing I've ever come across. And being DIVE magazine's equipment tester I've reviewed quite a few.

It does suffer from the ever-so-common 'the-dome-is-light-and-rotates-the-housing-dome-upwards' syndrome. Why don't these superb housing designers dive? They would then design a port that doesn't do this! I have subsequently ordered a port shade which, like my previous Sea & Sea port shade, I'm sure will have to be modified to take a counter-balancing weight.

That all said this is a superb housing of high build quality. Furthermore for under £2,000 including the eight inch (20cm) dome port it provides excellent value for money. The Aquatica Pro digital housing for Nikon D2x costs $2,999 (around £1,700) plus VAT and duty. An 8 inch (20cm) dome port is $395 (around £225) plus VAT and duty

Charles Hood
charles@dive.uk.com

Nexus Nikon D70 housing

Nexus Nikon D2x housing

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Nexus housings for Nikon's D70 and D2 series cameras are your entry into one of the world's most extensive underwater imaging systems.

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Diving the Nexus Nikon D2x

by Ken Knezick

In these nascent years of digital SLR photography, many Nikon underwater photography stalwarts have felt compelled to forsake their time-honored brand, switching to Canon, and even Fuji, in favor of those innovative and rapidly advancing lines of digital SLR cameras. Nikon gained back some ground with the D-100 and D-70 camera bodies, but Canon always seemed to be one step ahead in bringing new, higher resolution, systems to market and the housing manufacturers quickly adapted to serve them up for us. But the digital race is far from over, and the Nikon marketing juggernaut is just gaining traction. This latest offering from Nikon, the equally impressive and pricey D2x digital SLR, may serve to stem that tide of desertions, at least for the high-end side of the market. From my initial experiences with this camera, those who waited will be very glad they did.

Depending upon one's chosen perspective, the D2x is either ridiculously expensive or immensely functional, probably both at once. Weighing in with 12 mega pixels of resolution and a host of updated features, the D2x is, for the digital moment, Nikon's top of the line camera. After a good deal of investigation, procrastination, and pinching of pennies, the D2x is what finally got me back into a single lens reflex for my underwater photography. This report is the result of my first outing with

the D2x, very securely ensconced in a Nexus submersible housing. Ten days of diving at stellar Wakatobi Resort in Sulawesi, Indonesia gave me ample opportunity to put this system to the test as a serious tool for underwater photography.

Above water, my first impressions of the D2x focused on its size and heft. It is a good bit more consequential than my previous Nikon N-90 film SLR's, or my wife's neat D-70 digital. But once buckled into the Nexus housing, the D2x system seems compact and efficient. In the water, with

All underwater photos were taken with the Nikon D2x in a Nexus housing, a single Ikelite DS-125 strobe and a Sigma 28-80 macro zoom lens.

a single strobe and my legacy Ocean Brite strobe arms affixed, the rig is only minutely negatively buoyant, weighing but a few ounces. As with my previous Nexus housings, the grips are well balanced and comfortable for my relatively large

hands. When the left hand was needed to steady myself, keeping my body off the reef, I was easily able to shoot single-handed.

The Nexus housing presents the user with an impressive, and initially baffling, array of buttons and controls, many of which have little or no practical application for underwater work. But the important controls, aperture, shutter speed, focus or zoom, and shutter release, were comfortably presented and operated very smoothly. The one additional control I would have liked to access is the focus lock, which on the D2x is a button on the back of the camera. In this housing configuration, the button's position rendered the control unreachable while operating the shutter. Fortunately, the D2x's excellent auto-focus capability, even in low light situations, kept this lack of control access from being a major drawback.

The viewfinder on the D2x is appreciably larger than that of the D-100, a critical point of sale for me and my "old eyes." The diopter vision compensation adjustment on the eyepiece is also very helpful in this regard. It enables the shooter to select from –3 to +2 diopter settings, focusing the viewfinder to personal preference. In practice on the reef, I experienced no difficulty in seeing and composing images with this well-designed camera and housing combination.

Another advantage of the D2x is its larger image display screen, which is thoroughly viewable through the Nexus housing's spacious back window. This big, bright display enables the photographer to immediately assess the previous shots for exposure, focus, and issues of composition. With the rapid write speed of the D2x and an 80-x Compact Flash memory card, I found I had virtually instant access to the image on my display screen when shooting either the highest resolution Jpeg files or the big Raw files. Ultimately, this instant feedback functionality is digital photography's ace in the hole.

Though this issue is much bandied-about on the message boards, with such a rich view instantly at hand, the availability of TTL flash metering is a non-issue for my purposes. As the sophisticated program modes are designed for

topside lighting and colors, underwater I am shooting this D2x system in full manual control. My default settings upon entering the water were 1/125 of a second and an initial aperture of f-11, with my strobe(s) dialed back to ¼ power output. In many eventualities, this would result in a satisfactory exposure for mid-range subjects such as reef fishes. But whenever possible, I would fire one or a series of test shots on the way in to stalking an animal, refining my settings as needed before approaching more closely. Prior to moving in for a macro shot, I would begin with f-22, and again use the image display to tailor the exposure. As my ten days of shooting progressed, I also experimented with larger apertures, striving to put blue water backgrounds into my macro shots.

Back in the halcyon days of film, professional underwater photographer James Watt used to wrestle with a concept he called "fire control." As we cannot change film underwater, Jim was torn between taking the next shot, and reserving a few frames at the end of the 36-exposure roll for the whale shark, or mating nudibranchs, that we hoped were just around the next coral head. With this D2x system, we need no longer worry. Shooting the highest resolution JPG file, writing to a 2-gigabyte memory card, I had capacity for 400 images. Even shooting Raw files, I have room for 100-120 shots on that 2 gig card. Such welcome capacity leaves room for plenty of bracketing and creative experimentation.

Nor do related technical issues necessarily limit the firepower. The D2x is powered by a proprietary lithium ion rechargeable battery pack. With a prodigious capacity of 1,000 or more shots per fill, I was able to go two or three days between charges. At the end of a day's shooting, which often entailed 200 to 300 exposures, I had only to download the memory card, and put the strobes on charge, to be ready for the next day. Sadly though, rather than spending all my leisure time savoring a drink and watching sunsets from Wakatobi's glorious oceanfront patio, the remains of my day were filled with culling and editing images on the laptop. The positive side of this, or course, is that at the end of a dive trip I head home with finished products rather than a lead bag full of undeveloped films.

At the outset of this report, I have acknowledged that the D2x is an expensive habit to cultivate. Be forewarned that the considerable cost of this camera, media cards, housing, ports and gears is not the end of it. Moving to a high resolution digital camera, and shooting hefty Raw files, may well also entail purchase of a faster home computer with extra RAM and a giant hard drive, a similarly tricked-out laptop for the road trips, the latest image manipulation software from Adobe, supplemental storage drives, new "digital" lenses, and possibly marriage counseling as well.

Nor will a D2x, or any other of the fine new digital systems, instantly make you a better underwater shooter. The camera is but a tool in the hands of the photographer, weighty with both assets and impediments. You must still train to be a safe competent diver, master the array of camera

controls at your disposal, continually practice and refine composition issues, and most importantly learn how to carefully approach these skittish marine animal photo subjects on their own terms. Only then will your sophisticated underwater camera system become a tool of creativity rather than a very pricey and frustrating weight belt. Becoming a competent underwater photographer requires practice, resolve, and good tools. This D2x and Nexus housing is as fine a photography system as I could have hoped for, well exceeding my considerable expectations. Now it is for me to turn all this potential into intriguing underwater images. Which means it is time to stop writing…and go back to diving the D2x.

Ken Knezick
www.divetrip.com

A dedicated dive traveler with nearly 3,000 logged dives, Ken Knezick is owner of Island Dreams Travel in Houston, Texas.

He has been shooting underwater photography for 25 years, starting with a Nikonos II with a sticking shutter plane and eventually progressing to a pair of housed Nikon N-90 systems.

In the late 1990's, James Watt introduced Ken to digital u/w photography with an Olympus 3040 point and shoot camera. Ken soon after sold his N-90's in anticipation of a digital SLR and had been making good use of an Olympus 4040 in a Light & Motion housing while awaiting the right camera and housing combination.

All underwater photos were taken with the Nikon D2x in a Nexus housing, a single Ikelite DS-125 strobe and a Sigma 28-80 macro zoom lens.

For their professional assistance, friendship and excellent advise along the way, Ken wishes to offer his thanks to James D. Watt of Wattstock.com, Burt Jones and Maurine Shimlock of Secret Sea Visions, Fred Dion of Underwater Photo Tech, and Woody Mayhew of Nexus America.

Wildlife Photographer of The Year 2005

Alex Mustard

In October I was lucky enough to pick up a category win and a runner up in the 2005 Wildlife Photographer Of The Year Competition. I say lucky, not through feigned modesty, but because any sane photographer knows that success in any competition requires more than a slice of fortune. Of course you need decent images to be in with a chance, but the difference between getting the winning nod or not even a placing is small and determined subjectively, not by fact. That said I am very pleased with the success. I had not entered this competition since I started shooting digital in 2002, but was encouraged to do so after Doug Perrine proved last year that there was no anti-digital bias in the judging!

Anyway, instead of repeating the standard sound bites that go out with the images, Peter asked me to write an article for UWP with a bit more background to the two images and what went into producing them. This is the point where wildlife photographers talk of the hardships of life in the field and endless patience to get the shot. I'm afraid I can't. These images were both taken at popular divesites, during normal one or two week vacation diving, from standard dive boats. OK, in both cases I had organized my diving so that I was free to explore underwater without the restrictions of follow my leader group diving. And of course the timing of both trips and the dives was carefully targeted at the biology.

The first shot is *Bohar Snapper Portrait*, which won the "Animal Portraits" category. It was taken in 2004 at Shark Reef, Ras Mohammed in Egypt using a Nikon D100 + 105mm lens in a Subal Housing with Subtronic Strobes. Each year, in late June, Bohar snappers travel many miles to aggregate at Ras Mohammed, one of their traditional spawning sites in the Red Sea. Unfortunately, fishermen target many spawning aggregations around the world because the concentrations of fish provide rich pickings. The obvious consequence is that often

Winner of Animal Portraits. Nikon D100 + 105mm lens. Subal housing. 2 x Subtronic Alpha flashes.1/45th @ f13. Peter Rowlands calls this fish Travis, after Robert DeNiro's character in Taxi Driver!

Snappers school and diver. This picture gives a good impression of what the school of Bohar Snappers is like. Nikon D100 + 16mm. Subal Housing. 2 x Subtronic Alpha flashes. 1/60th @ F6.7

fish are harvested (just) before they have had the chance to spawn, with serious repercussions for the continuation of the population. Thankfully Ras Mohammed is a Marine Park, which limits fishing, and protects spawning aggregations of Bigeye Jacks, Unicornfish, Emperors and several species of Snappers.

The schools make a stunning spectacle. Each snapper is about 70cm long and the whole population is often packed together as a single massive school, easily the size of a house. Each year I go to the Red Sea at this time (the reason why the UWP Digital Techniques Workshop is also in June 2006) and I have shot the school of snappers many times. But while my more usual wide angle shots capture the grandeur of the scene they fail to get to personality of the fish.

So in 2004, I decided to try some longer lenses on them: first the 28-70mm and for this picture the 105mm, using the telephoto technique I was developing at the time. Shooting a fish that is over two feet long with a 105mm lens (equivalent on the D100 to 160mm on a 35mm camera) does not sound like a sensible underwater photographic technique. But I considered the technique carefully and knew I could make it work with appropriate and highly unusual strobe placing (on long arms out way in front of the camera). I was also armed with the knowledge of what was possible in RAW conversion. This is a shot that I believe would have been impossible for me to have produced on slide film, unless Fuji were prepared to make film emulsions exactly to my specifications of colour temperature and contrast! But this is not a manipulated image, as the rules of competition do not allow them.

Peter Rowlands calls this fish Travis, after Robert DeNiro's character in Taxi Driver! For me the image is successful partly because of the Travis expression on the snapper, but also because the gang lurking behind. The long lens was crucial in generating this completely different perspective in this shot. Basically it enables me to isolate the main subject, by throwing the background out of focus, while at the same time pulling that background forward, towards the subject, so despite being out of focus it is still part of the story of the image. I couldn't have asked for a better vindication of this new technique than winning in this competition. I am always trying new ways of shooting underwater. Many end in failure, most produce images I could have got far more easily using standard techniques and even less end up producing strong images. I am very pleased that my telephoto technique has ended up being more than just an esoteric exercise and I

Runner Up in the Animal Behaviour (all other animals). Nikon D100 + 28-70mm lens. Subal Housing. 2 x Subtronic Alpha flashes. 1/180th @ F16

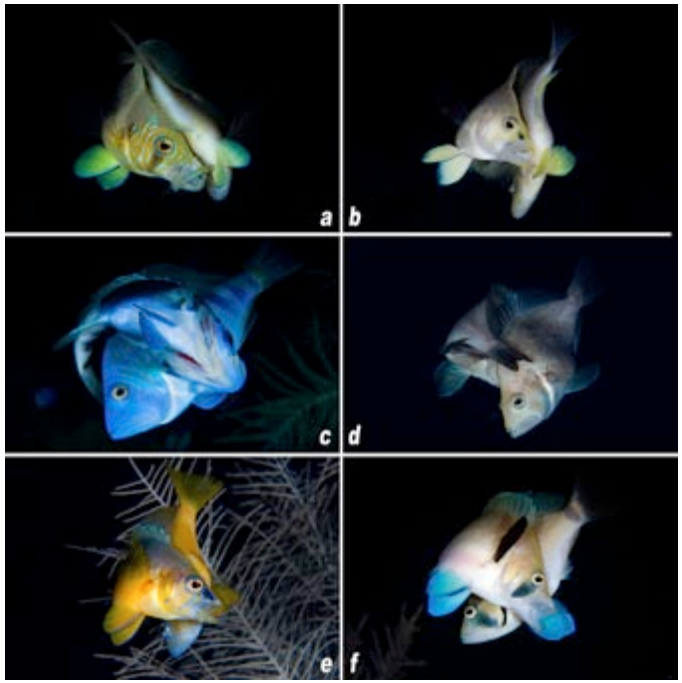
This shot taken minutes later shows the same pair spawning again, but this time the fish have reversed sexual roles (you can differentiate them by their slightly different blue markings on their faces). Nikon D100 + 28-70mm lens. Subal Housing. 2 x Subtronic Alpha flashes. 1/180th @ F16

proud that this image will now be seen round the world.

The second image of *Shy Hamlets Spawning* was Runner-Up in the awkwardly titled "Animal Behaviour (other animals)" category, and was taken a couple of months earlier in April 2004 near the Wreck of the Oro Verde in Grand Cayman. I again used a Nikon D100 in a Subal Housing with a Sigma 28-70mm lens and Subtronic Strobes. This image also gives me a lot of satisfaction because the hamlet spawning behaviour was not a behaviour I was shown, I had to go out and learn to find it on my own. The effort involved amuses me now considering I find hamlet spawning every time I look these days! For clarity I should add that I didn't discover this behaviour, it has been well documented by scientists, most notably in the PhD Thesis of Fischer in the 1970s, and these days is a text-book example of hermaphroditism for biology undergraduates. But seeing it in the wild has been the privilege of few.

Hamlets are certainly a weird group. Found solely in the Caribbean, these diminutive relatives of groupers are one of the few vertebrates that are true hermaphrodites. Sure, many fish change sex during their lives, but hamlets are both male and female at the same time, and each day will mate several times in each sexual role, swapping over within just a couple of minutes. Furthermore, it is hard to be certain whether the different colour varieties of hamlets are separate species or not because there are no morphological differences between them (apart from strikingly different colours) and even genetic techniques fail to differentiate them. Most scientists agree that they are a separate species, as the different colour types are fairly stable and rarely interbred, and the lack of genetic differences is attributed to them being so recently differentiated from a common ancestor. In other words hamlets are right in the grip of evolution and don't fit neatly into what we like to think of as a species!

As soon as I had found and photographed my first pair of



Just to prove it wasn't a fluke! Here are shots of the other hamlet species spawning: a) Barred Hamlet, b) Butter Hamlet, c) Indigo Hamlet, d) Black Hamlet, e) Yellowbelly Hamlet and f) Masked Hamlet. All Nikon D2X + 105mm. Subal Housing. 2 x Subtronic Alpha flashes. All 1/250th @ F13 or F14

This image of a diver watching the spawning hamlets was certainly one of the hardest I have taken. Nikon D2X + 28-70mm @ 46mm. Subal Housing. 2 x Subtronic Alpha flashes. 1/80th @ F5

hamlets in the ocean I had this picture in mind. As a photographer I naturally wanted to target the prettiest hamlet species, which in my opinion is the Shy Hamlet. I also wanted to focus the camera on the male fish, which shows much more emotion and personality during spawning. The acting female, by comparison, looks pretty vacant throughout! It is something that I have learned in shooting a lot of fish behaviour is that my most popular images always have a strong element of emotion or personality. Even if is not really there – I try and imply it by how I light and frame the subject.

Since taking this image, I have started to share the details of hamlet spawning more widely among my friends on Grand Cayman. So I guess I am happy to have received this award this year, before hamlet-spawning photos are as common as ones of Mandarinfish! At first I was a bit nervous about showing other photographers how to find the hamlets, but it has really paid off. This September when I went back to Cayman I was able to benefit from the knowledge that my friends have build up in my absence and able to shoot several hamlet species I had not see mating before (thanks to Patrick, Giles and John).

Actually the four of us have a little hamlet diving sub-culture going on at our favourite divesite on Cayman. Even without planning we often end up meeting up there because the timing of our dives has to be so precise. I have even developed an embarrassing reputation at the local bar for being teetotal, as we usually stop in for an evening drink before getting in the water!

As a final comment, I am pleased that these images reveal both the personality and complex behaviour of marine life. The ocean's wildlife is ravaged by over-fishing, and it is my hope that my images show that there is more to fish that tartar sauce!

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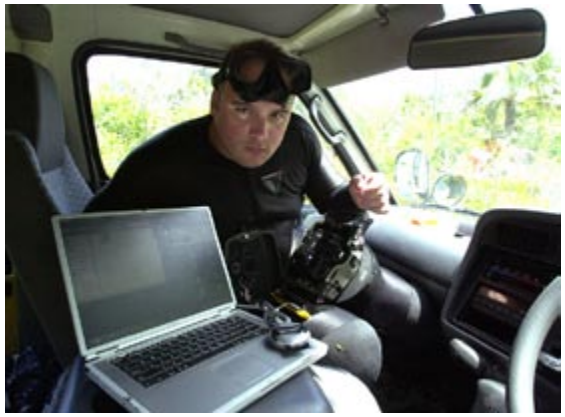

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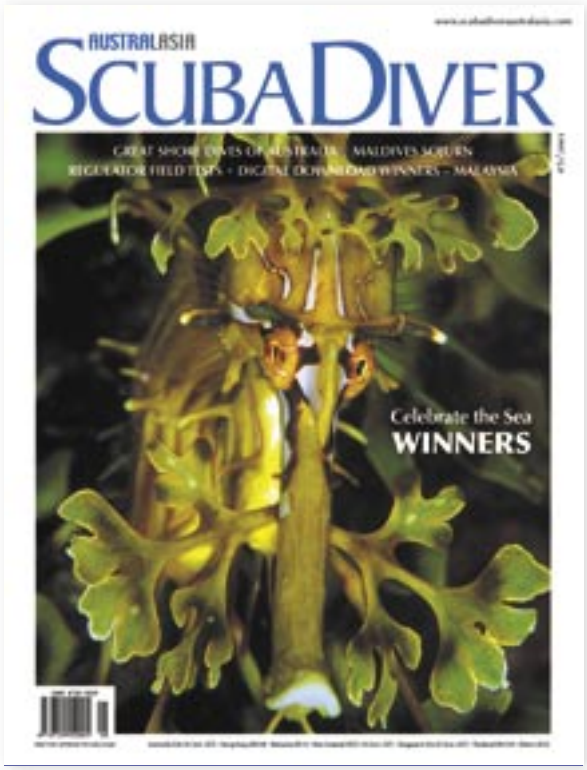

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Upgrading to DSLR

by Aengus Moran

What motivated the upgrade to dSLR?

A photo dive to the wreck of the USS Aaron Ward in mid 2004 had highlighted the limitations of the Compact camera to me. The Ward sits at 60 metres and I was shooting wide angle with natural light. Post dive I really noticed the poor performance of the Compact at increased ISO and the lack of detail on the wider angle shots.

My Nikon Coolpix 5000 had served me well for 2 years but I felt a Digital SLR with its larger sensor, better quality lenses, and ability to write raw files fast, was my answer.

Which camera?

My price point was entry level. The popular 6MP Nikon D70 and newer 8MP Canon EOS 350D Digital Rebel XT were principal candidates - In late April I bought the 350D.

I knew mega pixels weren't everything, yet the higher pixel count of the 350D would give me better crop options.

Initial reviews also reported better performance at increased ISO for the 350D, although either would have been an improvement on the compact camera. ISO sets the sensitivity of the "film" to light, so higher ISO performance would be great for natural light shots, especially at depth, but increased ISO does result in increased graininess.

The small body size of 350D also appealed for topside photography.

Many people would say, hey, you should just pay the extra few dollars (relatively) and get the Canon 20D, sturdier and plenty of housings available. A valid point, but I suspect, like many, I will shortly get a second backup body, so it may be price difference x 2, money I would prefer to invest in a lens or quality travel case.

Lens and Housing choice

I decided on an initial set of 2 lenses for underwater use, a wide zoom and a macro, and I hoped it would be some time before I needed to add a third.

The wide zoom choice was easy and I purchased the Canon EF-S 10-22mm. This is an expensive lens but I felt for a wide zoom it was important not to compromise on quality.

While I was seeing some awesome photography from 100mm macro lens, I choose the Sigma 50mm EX DG. The 50mm was a better choice for a dSLR newbie like me, its more flexible, gets me nice and close for subjects such as Nudibranch's but also is a good fish portrait lens.

Hanging Out - Rocky island, Red Sea. 1/80 sec F/5.6 Taken with the Canon 10-22mm lens

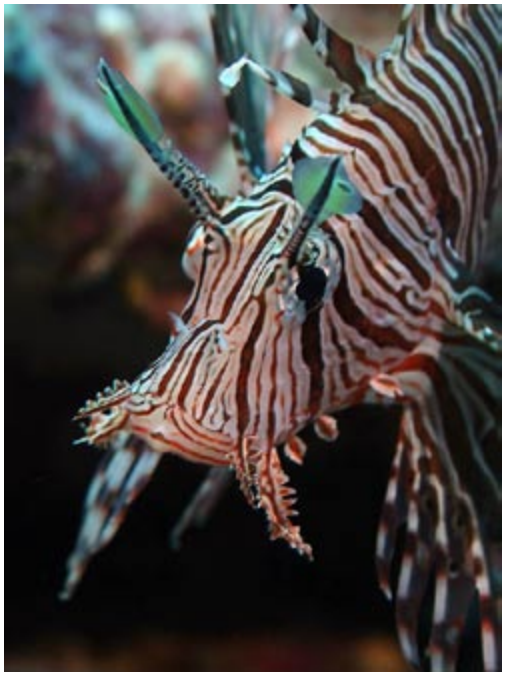
As my Coolpix Ikelite housing had served me well, Ikelite was my first choice for the 350D. Port choice to suit the lenses was pretty straight

St Johns Cave Reef OnTour. June 2005, Red Sea. 1/125 sec F/3.5. Canon EF-S 10-22mm

forward as there is a good chart on Ikelite's website. The Ikelite housing also appealed because I have two Ikelite DS-125 strobes and the new 350D housing has the Ikelite eTTL2 circuitry that would assist with automated strobe use.

New things to learn?

Like most compact digital users I was using the LCD screen for shot composition, but the eyepiece is used on a dSLR with the LCD monitor displaying the results. The transition to using the magnified eyepiece on the



Elphinstone Reef LionHead. June 2005, Red Sea. 1/50 sec F/6.3. Sigma EX DG 50mm Macro

housing was seamless, and indeed I felt an immediate improvement to my composition.

The camera's settings LCD panel is positioned above the monitor LCD, and its slightly obscured by the housings eyepiece. Surprisingly this didn't present me with any issues. I simply tilted the camera forward if I needed to see the panel.

The 350D's eyepiece is apparently small, but it certainly didn't feel it to me and I had no problems. The eyepiece view does only cover 80% of the shot, but

Chief the Red Indian Fish. June 2004, Jervis Bay, NSW, Australia. 1/2000 sec F/8. Nikon Coolpix 5000

you quickly learn to compensate. Apparently most dSLR viewfinders don't provide 100% coverage.

Nikon's Coolpix 5000 had an awesome lens which would focus on a tiny Nudibranch at 4cm and in the same dive could get a wide angle of a wrecks bow.

Unfortunately that lens flexibility isn't available with a dSLR and an appropriate lens must be chosen before each dive. The trade off is greater image quality and I am hoping the lens restriction might even help me concentrate better on subjects within the range of the lens chosen.

The Compact Digital's have automated zoom and auto focus, and some also have manual focus via push

Zabargad Island Squid. June 2005, Red Sea. 1/200 sec F/11 Canon EOS 350D. Sigma EX DG 50mm Macro

buttons. Manual focus is of benefit in low light when the auto can't focus. This routinely happens with macro.

The dSLR's have auto focus, manual focus, manual zoom yet no auto zoom, that I know of.

They are just like film SLR's, the manual zoom or focus is done by turning a grip on the lens. On my Ikelite housing, I have one zoom/focus control, ie it connects a "ring" to either the lens focus or zoom grip.

There is no question with my 10-22mm, the zoom goes on and the focus is auto.

There is no zoom on my Sigma macro lens, so I need to choose whether I go manual or auto focus before I house the camera. I can't switch focus mode mid dive with this lens because under auto focus, the zoom grip moves, and if the housing focus ring was connected, it would be a strain on the lens motor.

To date I've had no issues with the zoom/focus control, and I find the dial type control easier than the Coolpix 5000's push buttons.

My first dive with the rig was in the Red Sea. I did 20 dives on that trip and ended up with just over 5Gb of data. My average raw file size was 7mb. I could easily get 3 dives on my 1GB flash card and after the third dive used to change lens, battery and offload the card. It's great not to have to open the housing after every dive, as I used to do with the Coolpix.

The strobe sync cord on the Ikelite is located on the back plate below the viewfinder.

I thought this might affect my access to the viewfinder but it didn't, although I did have the cords aligned to the arms. The cord location is not good in terms of deckhands putting the housing down on the cord but Ikelite have addressed this and a new L shaped connector is now available.

What's really cool?

One of the first things I did when I got the 350D was to put the camera in to Continuous shooting mode and then I went crazy like a kid in a candy store. After using Compact camera for some time, the instant shutter of the dSLR was fantastic.

Digital SLR's have large memory buffers and can write RAW files at great speed. At last, shooting all shots in raw viable. The RAW format gives you several more options in the digital darkroom.

The focus speed is significantly faster on dSLR's, although this varies with lens.

The 350D has focus points just like the Coolpix 5000. That's points across the screen which you can select for the auto focus to centre on. This feature is much easier to operate on a dSLR and on my first trip it made the difference to several shots.

The Ikelite housing comes with eTTL2 circuitry. TTL is Through The Lens, and a casual description is that it is light metering and in manual mode it adjusts the power settings of the strobes.

There is a control panel for the strobes on the rear of the housing and it allows compensation when in TTL mode, for example, I could turn the strobe down a stop when shooting a macro subject on a reflective surface like sand. There is also the ability to easily switch out of TTL mode to manual and use eight half stop settings.

The result is that I have moved from using two Ikelite DS-125 strobes, one with a sync cord and one with an Ikelite EV (manual) controller, to a much simpler setup of a dual sync cord direct to both strobes.

Conclusion

I'm delighted I have moved up to a Digital SLR. I feel I have completed my internship with the compact cameras and I think that internship was probably necessary for me. It is a big step to move up and I hope my experience reassures some of you readers that maybe in a similar situation.

I'm looking forward to getting back to the Solomon's and the USS Aaron Ward.

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How far can you go?

by Beth and Shaun Tierney

It's always there isn't it? That craving, the hunger for different and better diving, with more opportunities to capture the experience on film. And without the trials and tribulations of dives inundated with people, where the majority of anything you see is fins. But how far can you go to chase that elusive dream?

We're not really sure what first attracted us to Christmas Island and Cocos Keeling, two isolated Australian outposts in the Indian Ocean. But it was amusing that once we'd found them, no one else knew where they were - Christmas Island being confused with Kiribati and Cocos with, yes, Cocos. This seemed like a good sign - surely these destinations wouldn't be crowded? Our plan was to spend a week in each place.

Cocos Keeling has that familiar Indian Ocean look: a horseshoe shaped lagoon is a bright turquoise and ringed by spits of land covered with a deep green shroud of coconut trees. There isn't much of a population, just about 600 localised Malays and peace-seeking ex-pat Aussies. Our dive hosts, Dieter and Karen, were looking forward to introducing us to their marine realm. The sub-aqua reputation is for big stuff - being in the middle of nowhere, the atoll attracts pelagics who feed on smaller species that inhabit the reefs. There are two styles of diving, sites inside the atoll and those around the rim.

We were delighted to discover we were the only divers that week (the following was fully booked) and a little surprised by our first lagoon

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dives. Affectionately known as 'diving the desert' the seabed is sculpted by currents and tidal surges. However, the fish life is strangely prolific with substantial schools of yellow snapper, rainbow runners and pyramid butterflies.

At The Cannons, there were three wary whitetip sharks resting on a sandy slope and as we finned towards them a manta flew past! We fired off a few shots, with no one in the way, but she faded swiftly into the blue. Later we came across three cannons dumped onto the sea floor. Their history is unknown but they sit close to the coral-encrusted, WWII telecommunications cables that stretch across the seabed. Nearby, was a great little wreck sitting upright on the sand, the remains of a fibreglass refugee boat. The engines and some of the structure is till intact, but the hull is slowly disintegrating. Grouper, sweetlips and rabbitfish take the opportunity to shelter from predators.

The underwater scenery changes dramatically once you head outside the lagoon. The atoll's outer walls are densely coated in hard corals and interspersed with sandy shelves. At Lane Cove, beds of garden eels poke up from the sand and

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we could see several wary barracuda hanging off the wall. They followed us for the entire dive but kept their distance. There is a constant array of big animals - turtles, tuna and sharks - yet they didn't always come that close except on one occasion. We had dropped to the base of the wall to see Karen's favourite peach coloured fans and had only been there moments when we heard her squawking through her regulator. We looked up to see her laughing so hard her mask was flooding.

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Behind us were two young whitetip sharks. They'd been sniffing our fins - literally - when one of us had given a solid kick and frightened them off.

Photographically, Cocos was a straightforward destination. The beautiful white sand reflects lots of sun light so even when a storm blows in like it did during our visit, visibility remains pretty good. One housing was set up with a 17-35 zoom lens which covered almost very option, while the 60mm macro got dunked once or twice for a change of pace. However, our most educational photo moment came along right at the end when Dieter met a pod of bottlenose dolphins. He chucked us into the water, then took the boat off to play with them, spinning it - and the dolphins - around us. There is nothing in the world like looking a truly wild dolphin in the eye and having him smile right back. Plus we discovered that our tiny Nikon 5200 digital camera really came into it's own. For a spontaneous moment like this, it's size and manoeuvrability were perfect. OK, you can't really see what you're doing as you fin madly after a bottlenose who's laughing at you, but click away and the results are great!

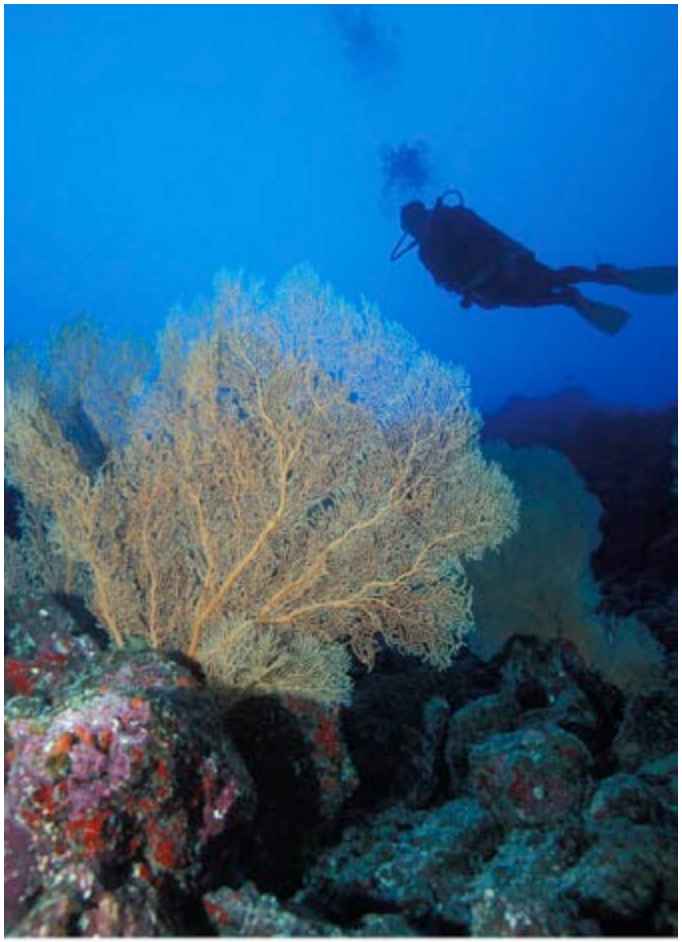
Cocos had lived up to it's promise of uncrowded diving and with only one dive centre and only ever one boat the only thing likely to get in your way is a school of fish. The solitude had been blissful so we wondered what Christmas Island would bring.

A day later we flew there and found a totally different island. Christmas is covered in a rainforest that houses almost as many endemic species as in the Galapagos. Rare birds, unique bats and Christmas's biggest claim to fame, the red crab migration. For that, you have to be there when the weather patterns are just right, and we weren't, but underwater, we discovered just how exceptional the island is.

Our first day was full of good omens. Just a few minutes from the dock our boat was surrounded by an enormous pod of Spinner dolphins. We slipped into the water with our snorkelling kit to see what seemed like hundreds. We watched a group of males try to mate with a female, another female suckling her babe and a young male play catch with a plastic bag. The bag wasn't so hot but watching him toss it from his nose to his tail with such glee seemed to mitigate it's presence. Thirty seven frames were wound through the housing, then the digital took a bashing - between us we managed to fill a whole card.

Once we donned tanks we discovered that the underwater scenery was a complete contrast to Cocos. This island is mostly limestone so there is little sand. Steep walls drop way off into the abyss. Giant fans grow in parallel rows to catch the light like solar panels and as you fin along you encounter a wide variety of colourful soft corals that hang out into the blue. The walls are patrolled by reef sharks, schools of jacks and midnight snapper and it was here that we realised that every camera has it's place. The fisheye lens on the housing was the perfect tool for capturing such incredible vistas.

One of the most captivating dives we have ever done was Thundercliff - a dive, a swim and a walk. We descended over a shallow section of reef and swam under an overhang and into a wide mouthed cave. A rock jutting up to the surface was mobbed by several hundred silver snapper. Our guide, Marcus, then led us into a a dark cavern where we surfaced to admire impressive stalactite formations before descending again into a narrow passage. This led to a second, much larger cave with cathedral like limestone structures. We ascended and climbed onto some rocks, then dekitted. Our next treat was a walk through the cave to a small pool of brackish water. Inside the pool



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is a rare red shrimp that was attracted to our torch beams. Photographically, this triple-dive was quite a challenge. We suspected that the results would be hit a and miss on film, so used the digital to give an indication of how to approach the shots. However, it's little housing kept fogging in the continually changing temperatures.

Critter life appears less evident around Christmas, mostly because we were too busy admiring the amazing geography to nose around

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for small stuff. However, a shore dive in Flying Fish cove, is a chance to slide on a macro lens and capture octopus, leaffish, puffers and strange jellyfish. Kelana's Mooring, a bit further out in the bay, is the time and place to see the endemic dragon moray. At about 25 metres, there's a bommie that just rages with morays. There are at least five different types tucked down inside along with some Debelius shrimp. The rare dragon moray can be spotted by those in the know, and divemaster, Claire found one in hiding. This is one very impressive creature but very shy of the lens.

Again on our last day, we had a final treat. Returning to dock we encountered some bronze whalers. We peered at them from the boat until Marcus asked why we weren't in the water, so we grabbed masks and snorkels, slipping in to find three inquisitive sharks. They swam right up to our faces, almost bumping into us, but we were assured by Marcus that they were simply curious.

Christmas had definitely lived up to the standards set by Cocos. Our hosts were immensely

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professional and although we did have to share our boat a few times with other divers, we really enjoyed the almost private diving. Both islands had been a welcome return to a more interactive style, one where you join in every aspect of your dive day from launching the boat to setting up a picnic lunch. Facilities at both destinations are limited, but for divers and photographers who want something that bit different, this may well be it. Well, it was for us.

For Cocos contact Cocos Dive, www.cocosdive.com and Christmas. the Indian Ocean Diving Academy, www.ioda.cx. Both companies can help with accomodation and flight bookings. Flights with National Jet Systems are from Perth, www.nationaljet.com.au, plus there is currently a weekly flight from Bali with AustAsia,

www.austasiaairlines.com

Beth and Shaun Tierney are the authors of forthcoming Footprint guide, Diving the World. www.seafocus.com/DivingTheWorld.html

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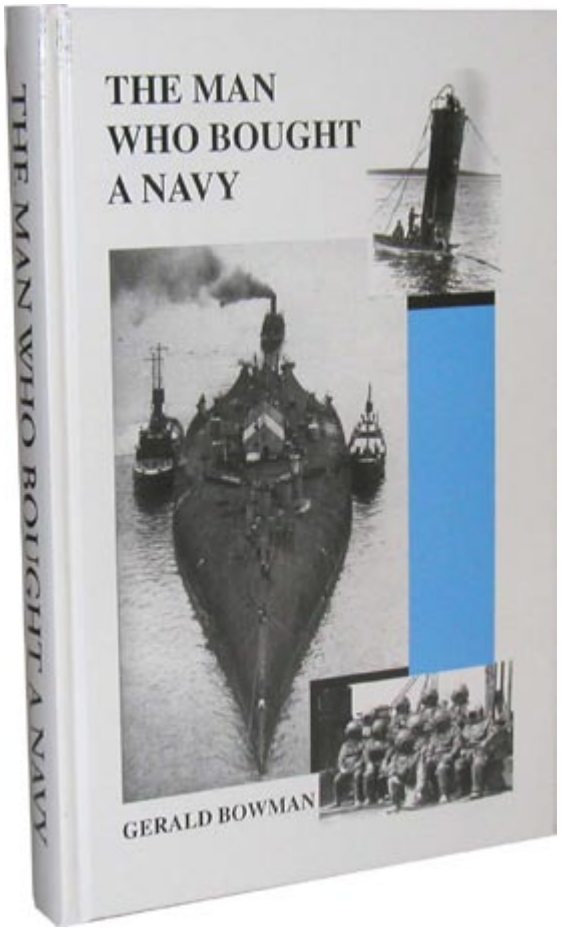
The Man who bought a Navy



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The Sea Lions of Green Head

by Jeremy Cuff

All photos are by Jeremy Cuff using Nikon F100/Subal Housing & 16mm Fisheye Lens. Camera set to 1/160th shutter priority. Film Sensia 100 ASA except Black and White Image which is Ilford Delta 100.

Western Australia isn't short of superb underwater experiences. Swimming with the sea lions of Green Head is certainly one of the most incredible and presents a unique opportunity for underwater photographers to get up close with these graceful, inquisitive and rare marine mammals. And the conditions are easy and safe too…

In October 2003, I attended the annual Visions of the Sea underwater photography and film event in London. As well as exposing delegates to the work of many excellent underwater photographers, "Visions" can also act as a source of inspiration about the places visited by underwater photographers. One of the guest speakers described his time in Western Australia – it sounded interesting and varied. So much so that it inspired us to go there. It took until April 2005 to make the journey…

Although Ningaloo Reef was an obvious attraction, we were also taken by the idea of the sea lion interaction encounters at Green Head, a tiny settlement of 300 people (when everyone's in town) about 250km north of Perth.

We couldn't find much information about the trip in any guidebook or on the internet, so we planned a two-night stop at Green Head en route north to Ningaloo, taking a chance on turning up and hoping that the trip would be running. Once in Australia, we were able to contact Sea Lion Charters and make a booking. Also, we changed our itinerary slightly giving us two visits to the sea lions, instead of the single trip we'd expected.

For us, Green Head seemed like one of the mellowest places on earth, helped by a windless blue sky, calm seas, pleasantly hot temperatures and a relaxed pace of life. First, we found Macca's Mooring, our excellent Australian-style bed and breakfast accommodation and then headed for Sea Lion Charters, a stone's throw down the road.

Sea Lion Charters is run by Rod and Ronnie Wilson, a friendly and helpful couple who started the trips 7 years ago, having visited the area for many years previously, mainly for fishing and recreation.

Photographing sea lions immediately conjures images of fleeting glimpses and deep, murky channels patrolled by hunting Great Whites. Although Great Whites (locally known as White Pointers) do indeed prey on sea lions and are known to inhabit the seas of Western Australia, certainly as far north as the Houtman Abrolhos islands further up the coast, the shallow and sheltered conditions at Green Head reduce that likelihood to a minimum. However, nothing is taken for granted, so Rod keeps a lookout for "anything that we don't want to see" although they've never seen a shark around the interaction shallows.

The boat ride to Fisherman's Island is about 20 minutes from Green Head. It's an unremarkable collection rocks with a beach on the sheltered eastern side. There are actually two Fisherman's Island's – north and south – the sea lions live on the north, whilst a battered, ostracised male named Spartacus lives alone on the beachless south island. Occasionally, fur seals visit the islands, although the sea lions won't tolerate their presence on the beach, so best place to look for them is on the rocks to the south.

We could see the sea lions hauled out on the beach as the boat approached, and a commotion of seabirds including a large number of shags and a nesting pair of sea eagles. The water was clear and calm as Rod secured the boat – the conditions were perfect.

So, what was it like? Well, I have to say, it's a fantastic experience for all enthusiasts of marine life and for underwater photographers, it's a photo opportunity "to die for."

To do it, you don't even need a tank – only mask, fins, wetsuit and camera. A weight belt is also useful if you want to get down onto the bottom with minimum effort. I used a weight belt on the second day and found it much easier for photography, concentrating on the work in hand instead of fighting the buoyancy of my wetsuit. The deepest water is little more than head height.

Sea lions are clumsy, awkward and quarrelsome creatures on land, but once in the water, they transform into graceful, playful, and inquisitive animals. It's a real privilege to be able to observe them up close in this way, and in such easy conditions. The sea is, of course, the place where they must find their food and must therefore spend the bulk of their time. They are supremely adapted for it.

Before we entered the water, Rod and Ronnie provided a briefing about what to expect, and how to behave in order to get the most out of the interaction. The approaching boat will often be enough to attract a few sea lions into the water to investigate, but it's the job of the snorkellers to keep them entertained. "The more acrobatics and somersaults you can perform, the more likely they'll stay in the water", was the advice. Rod always encourages somebody to be in the water at all times to keep them interested. His suggestion is "Blow bubbles, dive to the bottom, twist and turn, splash around a bit, and be playful." Perfect for the inner child in everyone!

He also explained which areas to avoid, in particular the "nursery", which is strictly off limits. Here, at the southern end of the beach, newborn pups are nurtured in relative safety away from the commotion of the main group. Also, any snorkeller tempted to haul out on the beach may get a completely different reaction from the sea lions in the water, so again, another area to steer well clear of. Rules laid down by CALM (the Department of Conservation and Land Management) make such an activity illegal, so as well as being attacked, you could also be prosecuted!

At the time of our visit, the breeding bulls were out at sea, but some of the non-breeding, immature bulls were there, together with the cows and youngish pups. The bulls look menacing at first owing to their physical presence, but at no point are they actually threatening. It's really up to each snorkeller to find a distance that they're comfortable with, although photographers with wide angle lenses do, of course, need to get up close for the best images.

You can expect all kinds of tomfoolery from the sea lions. Fin grabbing is a particular favourite, particularly with the pups who will often latch onto a particular snorkeller, sometimes following them to the boat and waiting for them to return to the water. I had an interesting time with one of the young bulls who must have been able to see his reflection in my dome port, swimming right up to the camera and actually putting his mouth onto the glass. He was so close, I couldn't even focus!

Using my Nikon F100/Subal housing set-up,

I decided to work with the 16mm fisheye using natural light, liberated from the clutter of cumbersome strobes and arms. My wife Amanda also has an identical Nikon F100/ Subal rig – she would work in the same way but with a 20mm wide angle. For film, we used Sensia 100 ASA slide film, although I did try a single black and white film, an Ilford Delta 100.

The excellent weather combined with our strobeless camera rigs was, I think, an ideal setup for photographing our agile subject matter, allowing for ease of movement in the water. Expect to indulge in duck diving, twisting and turning, swimming upside down and holding your breath whilst attempting to compose and lock onto the sea lions. I used shutter priority at 1/160th to freeze the movement and let the camera do the rest.

It takes a while to get over the sheer brilliance and uniqueness of the experience, and that the sea lions will stick around rather than flee at the merest hint of a human. After a while, I was able to get more into composing images rather than simply getting "record shots". I found that in order to get the best images with dappled surface water, it meant planning the approach to a sea lion. Sunbursts could also work although it could be hit and miss as to whether they would

be overexposed or not.

Serious underwater photographers could spend a week at Green Head doing nothing but this trip, aiming for that really special moment. I don't think either of us managed a really special moment but the resulting images were solid, pleasing and improving over the two days. The easy conditions and the close proximity of the subjects mean that it's possible to get a decent number of acceptable images from each film and over the course of each trip, it's likely that a photographer will use a fair number of films. I certainly felt that I improved my technique for approaching them on the second day and started to think more about the angles of approach and what I wanted to achieve, being more discerning before clicking the shutter. Initially, it's easy to be too "trigger happy".

As the sea lions cavort in the shallows and interact with the snorkellers, sand, clutter and floating pieces of seaweed can be stirred up and affect an otherwise perfect image. We certainly had our fair share of these images where the commotion had impaired the water clarity. Again, it's another issue to deal with in the quest for that "special image".

Featuring other snorkellers in the water can also make for interesting images, showing their actual interaction and close proximity with the sea lions. In order to achieve

the best results, it might be wise to "work" with a snorkeller, discussing what you want them to do, what you're going to do and hoping that a sea lion does the rest.

Schools of fish sometimes swim through the shallows, so an opportunity might exist for the fish and a sea lion to be photographed together, although for obvious reasons the fish won't hang around when a sea lion approaches. A patient (and lucky) photographer might, however, get an interesting result.

Half and half opportunities are also possible for photographers using a fish eye lens. For example, the boat could be used as a background, or perhaps the head of a snorkeller. Also, the sea lions themselves will sometimes "sky hop" just long enough for an image to be composed. Given a few more days, and with enough images already "in the bag", a photographer could also experiment with some different techniques such as blurring and panning.

Like people, the sea lions eventually get tired (or bored) and by the time 2 or 3 hours are up, most have returned to their beach. Mimicking their yelps and whoops will sometimes get them back into the water. I tried this technique and attracted the attention of one of the larger bulls. Suddenly, he rose up and lunged into the water, swimming straight towards me at considerable speed. For an instant I became concerned, although once circling me, he seemed inquisitive rather than aggressive.

Although not scientists, Rod and Ronnie have built up a considerable knowledge of the Green Head population and sea lion behaviour in general, and can assist visitors in understanding the behaviour and actions of the animals.

When asked about their most memorable experiences with the sea lions, Rod replied, "Too many to list, really. Perhaps the most memorable was when one of our clients was snorkelling around the boat looking for a sea lion when unbeknown to him, he was being followed. Suddenly, the sea lion pulled itself onto the swimmer's back and sat there for a brief moment. Unfortunately, nobody was quick enough to grab a camera!"

"Basically, the thrill Ronnie and I get from the trip is the comments of enthusiasm that our clients express when they return to the boat after their swim", he added.

You see, Western Australia isn't short of superb underwater experiences. And it isn't just about whale sharks and wobbegongs either! Add the sea lions of Green Head to its long list of attractions, preferably somewhere near the top. And it's a fantastic photo opportunity, too.

Jeremy Cuff
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Finding Macro

By Cor Bosman

I can still remember the first pygmy seahorse I was shown. The guide swam up to a fan and immediately found the rice grain sized creature. I could not fathom how she did it. It must have taken years to perfect that skill and to be able to look at just the right piece of reef. I soon realized that by following some simple guidelines and learning a bit about the underwater life, finding these and other elusive creatures wasn't as difficult as I first thought.

A great way to start developing your spotting skills is having a mentor. During a liveaboard trip my wife and I discovered we had a lot in common with the managers, including a passion for macro photography. In those 10 days they helped us on our way by teaching us many of the tricks they use to find interesting critters. One of the methods they used was to point out an area where they knew a creature was hiding and letting us find it. Knowing something is actually there makes this tedious task a bit more manageable. When you find the critter it not only gives you a sense of accomplishment, it also makes finding the same creature again a bit easier. Seeing a specific pattern for the first time is often an eye-opener. We have used this method with success to teach divers and guides alike. One guide we met had never been able to find soft coral crabs. When we showed him the signs to look for on a soft coral, he immediately picked up on it. The next time you wonder how a guide finds a specific animal, just ask them. They'll probably be more than happy to show you.

I'm a lucky guy, my wife, an underwater photographer like myself, is my buddy and a second set of eyes. We are often in search of similar creatures and dive at the same pace. When she finds an interesting subject she makes sure I get to see and photograph it too. We have become each other's mentor along the way. Matching up with a buddy that shares similar interests can be a good way to increase your chances at finding nice creatures. You can share finds, help each other out, learn new tricks and make a photography dive more rewarding. If you travel alone, try and find a buddy at your destination that matches. Sharing the passion is half the fun. Unless you like to dive alone, a well matched buddy allows you to venture out together and practice your spotting skills. When choosing a dive destination we normally pick one that allows us to dive at our own pace and time.

Guides possess a lot of knowledge about the local dive sites. They are the best way to find interesting and specific opportunities. A seasoned guide will likely have a regular handful of critters that are consistently in the same area. Before you enter the water, talk to them and explain what you are after. A keen interest and enthusiasm will go a long way to motivate a guide to go the extra mile and even swim clear across the reef to show you the one critter you were after. Remember that

Crinoid shrimp on a crinoid.
The same crinoid was home to 2 clingfish and a squat lobster. Nikon D100 + 105mm lens, F40, 1/125s, manual focus, iso 200, 2 x YS90DX strobes

This emperor shrimp lives on a Spanish dancer nudibranch. They go where the nudibranch goes. Nikon D100 + 105mm lens. F11, 1/60s, manual focus, iso 100 (slide) 2 x YS90 strobes

most people are more interested in sharks, turtles and other larger animals, so this is their chance to show you their macro spotting skills. If you find something interesting share it with the guide so they in turn can share it with others; something everybody will appreciate.

Finding macro subjects requires patience and time. Following a group of divers can therefore be frustrating at times as the rest of the group may seem to be on a world record speed diving attempt. This is not how you find macro subjects; you need to slow down, and then slow down some more or even just stop for a bit. The coral head that seemed lifeless at first glance will come to life when you stop and let your eyes pick out movement and contrasting colors. Wait even longer and a lot of small critters will feel less threatened and come out of hiding. If they don't appear, go look for them.

Hippocampus denise is almost always found on the same species of fan. Once you recognize the fan, it's a lot easier to find the small seahorse. The seahorse itself is quite hard to spot as it blends in very well. A combination of movement and slight color variations betray its presence. Taken by Julie Edwards with a Nikon F100 + 105mm lens + 2x TC.

Check in holes, crevices, under ledges, in rubble and everywhere else a small creature can hide. Learn to spot the small differences in color and inspect them up close. A small light can help bring out the color that can be lost the deeper you go.

Not all animals will be as 'easy' to find. Some animals have perfected the art of camouflage and hiding. Searching the reef will most likely not reveal them unless you know exactly where to look. This is why you need to learn about habitats. Websites and ID books are a good place to start learning about the depth and habitat you can hope to find a specific creature. Knowing where to look for a critter will significantly increase your chances to find it. The guide that showed us our first pygmy seahorse knew where to look as it is always found on a specific species of fan.

What looked immensely difficult to us wasn't all that hard once we knew the trick.

Habitats can also be another living being, often a symbiotic relationship. The most well known one is the anemone fish and the anemone. They have a mutual relationship that provides defensive protection for one species and a basic food and cleaning service for the other. The same anemone is often home to different shrimp or crabs and similar arrangements can be found in many underwater habitats. Crabs and shrimp can be found living on sea cucumbers, nudibranchs, jellyfish, soft and hard corals, crinoids, and many other marine animals. If you learn about the different relationships, finding the critters becomes almost easy. I say almost because you still have to actually find the animal, which can be a challenge. Even when you know a soft coral holds a soft coral crab, finding it needs patience and perseverance.

Animals often manipulate their environment to their benefit. These changes can reveal their presence to the trained eye. Soft coral crabs usually pull a piece of soft coral on top of them themselves as camouflage. You can spot their presence by looking for a slightly discolored and bent piece of soft coral. Many fish and shrimp dig holes in the sand to hide and in some cases even collaborate and occupy the same hole. A jaw fish hole, for instance, is quite easy to see even from a distance. All that is left to do is check if anyone is home.

You can sometimes infer the presence of a

Depth can determine what you may find. Wire corals can be a home to different critters. In shallower water you may find wire coral shrimp seen above (taken by Cor Bosman with Nikon D100 and 105mm lens) while usually around 20 meters and deeper you can find the xeno crab seen below (taken by Julie Edwards with Nikon F100 and 105mm lens)

creature by something they left behind. You may be able to find certain nudibranchs by finding theirs eggs or you can look for eggs of some creatures after finding the parents. Eggs can actually make interesting photo subjects, especially if the embryo is visible inside the egg. Next time you see anemone fish, look around the anemone and see if you can find some eggs.

When you venture into the macro world, you'll soon discover that things look completely different up close. What may appear plain from a foot away can look stunning when photographed up close. Take a look through your lens (if possible) to see what you can find. A very dull looking blenny may reveal an explosion of color when looked at closely. Some hard and soft corals make excellent subjects as they are extremely intricate and detailed. If you can't find that pygmy ornate ghost frog fish you were after, just look through your lens and see what else you can find. You can create stunning photographs of brain coral detail, clam mantles and starfish, things that are often ignored.

It may also help to increase your magnification. We regularly dive with a 105mm lens + teleconverter + close up lens, which gives us anywhere from 5:1 to 7:1. This is a very specialized dive, but can be very rewarding.

You can do a lot to increase your chances of finding some nice photo opportunities; however there is always the element of luck. Sometimes the unexpected just happens in front of your lens. A predator may catch a prey, a cleaning shrimp may be cleaning a mantis shrimp, or something you weren't even looking for just happens to catch your eye. These moments often create the most interesting images and although you can't influence when they happen, you can increase your chances by diving as often as possible. Eventually you will run into something weird or amazing.

By following some of the suggestions from this article, luck should quickly be surpassed by skill. Go slow, read about the environments the animals are found in, find a matching buddy, and befriend the guides. Inspect everything that looks out of place, focus on a small area and let your eyes pick out movement and color. Don't get discouraged if vyou don't immediately find a rare species as it takes time to develop an eye for this kind of detail. Soon enough you'll be showing others how it's done.

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Cor Bosman & Julie Edwards

What links these sites?

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Magic Filter test

by Mike Veitch

When Alex Mustard first announced the Magic Filter I was pretty excited as I was in the market for a red filter for my newly purchased 10.5mm wide angle lens. I was interested in a red filter because I wanted to experiment with the manual White Balance option that a digital SLR offers. As a full time underwater image maker, a lot of my work involves video and in the realm of underwater video, the red filter is king. When shooting video without lights and manually white balancing off a slightly off white slate, rich saturated colour can be captured from further away than what can be obtained using strobes on a still camera.

I was interested in putting the Magic to the test and seeing what it could do when used in situations that it wasn't necessarily designed for. A few of the ideas I wanted to test were: shooting into the sun, shooting on the surface (split shots), and shooting with strobes. Strobes?!? I am sure this statement makes a few people cringe in disgust as who wants a red photo?!

I ventured out to clear water on a shallow reef to put the filter through the paces in a situation it was designed for. With clear water and bright sun, I was able to catch a few interesting images. 20ft, f4.5, 1/80. Nikon D70 with 10.5mm and Aquatica housing

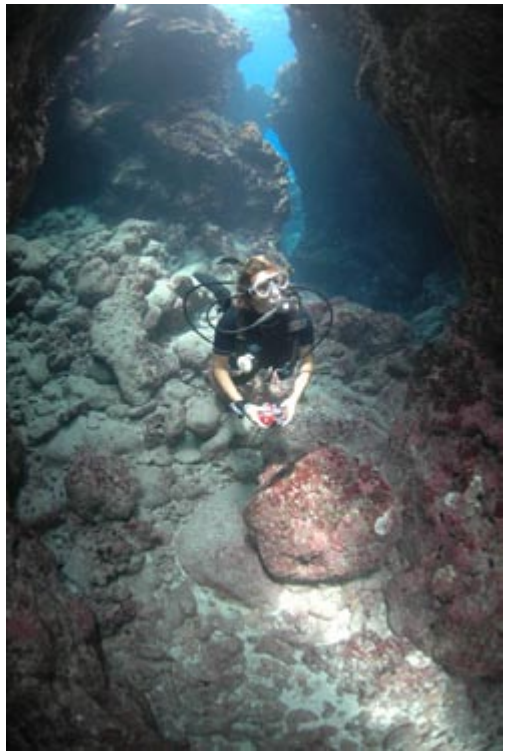
When shooting video, a very common practice is to leave the red filter on during night dives and WBing on a slate using the lights to illuminate it. This creates a very pleasing warming result and is my preferred method. My theory was the camera would work exactly like video and therefore strobes would work no problem…IF…the WB was done whilst setting off the strobes at the same time. My main inquiry into this was the fact the filter cannot be taken on and off during a dive and therefore I would imagine people will leave the strobes on the boat when using the filter. Of course, when this happens the clouds will roll in and rain will appear and create dark conditions not suitable for filter photos and leading many a photographer to lament the fact the strobes are not attached to the camera. Although I wasn't planning on experimenting with this on the first day, I lost the plug for my synch connector and was forced to keep my strobes attached.

One more pic straight Magic Filter, although not the best example, it gives me reason to believe that splits in shallow water will be fantastic. Nikon D70 with 10.5mm and Aquatica housing

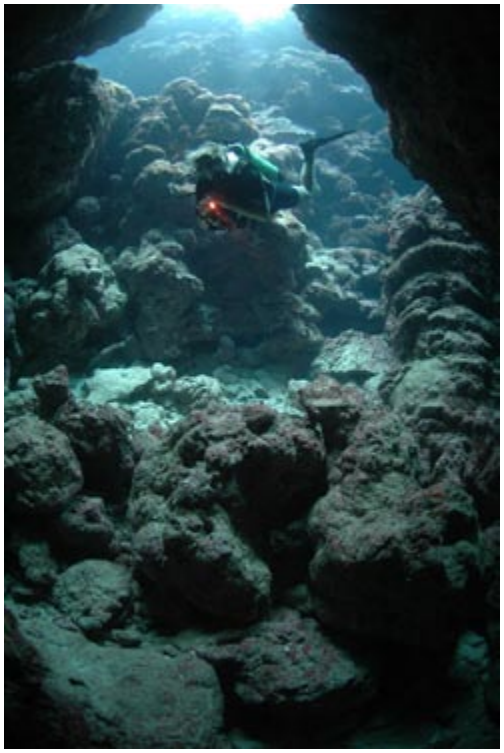
The first test was to attach the filter and try it on land. I used a white wall to calibrate and then took a photo of the same wall after. I discovered the WB on my camera was working properly as the wall came out white, just as it should. This should be everyone's first test as it will alleviate anxiety about whether the WB of the camera is functioning properly.

The plan for my first dive was to jump into a clear, bright, incoming tide with the chance to shoot mantas feeding in shallow water. Alas, this turned out not to be the case as the tide was running out much earlier than scheduled, mother nature at her best! Instead, I stationed myself at around 50ft of depth and shoot up at the mantas on the cleaning station in relatively murky, green water. Although it was not what I envisioned for my first "Magic" experience, it was an ideal situation to test the abilities of manual WB with a digital SLR.

(Left) As stated in the "Magic" instructions, and also what holds true for video, the key to proper WB is to set the WB at the depth you will be shooting. What the instructions don't mention is that the WB should also be set in the direction of shooting. In other words, best results will not be achieved if the camera is pointed down at the reef for WB and then turned up to shoot a photo. This is where my experience shooting video came in handy. Unfortunately, I did not bring my WB slate with me for this dive and I had nothing to WB on when shooting up at a manta, therefore I set the WB by pointing the camera directly at the sun, something I often do with video when I am having trouble setting the WB. I then concentrated on trying to capture a silhouette of a manta. Although this is certainly not what the Magic Filter was designed for, I wanted to know if I could still take that sort of shot without a red tinge as I had to deal with the cards I had been dealt. What resulted from this experiment was a clean image with no red streaks but of course some ugly green water. (Right) Well, what if I tricked the WB into giving me a cooler colour cast instead? How? By turning on my strobes and WBing into a rock. I then turned the strobes off again and tried another shot, the result was a pretty decent blue that was in fact better than the conditions at hand.



This was another area I felt the Magic Filter would earn its keep if it performed well. Sure enough, it did! The fact it could bring out a touch of red in the wall at least 20 feet away was a big surprise to me, as I thought there was no way it could push through that much water, I was wrong but happy. 20 ft, f2.8, 1/25

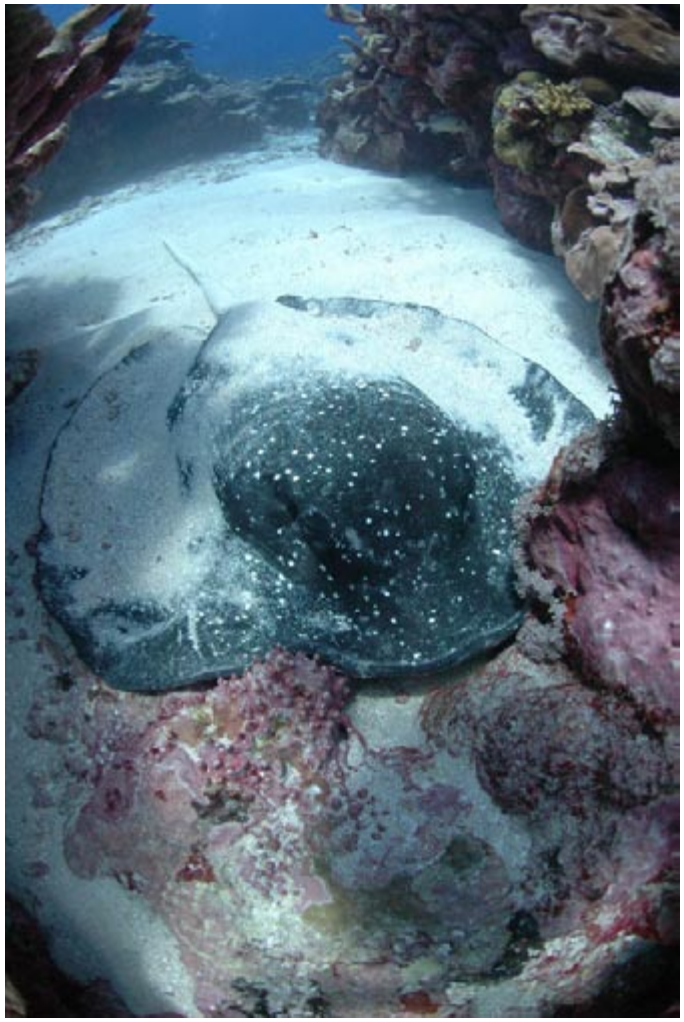


This was a difficult one to balance. I was in a cave and shooting toward the light. I used ISO 400, f 2.8, and 1/15 to get the exposure correct in the foreground. I expected a fairly green/blue image but the filter again introduced some nice colours on the rocks, a bit of a surprise there. However, introducing a modeling light did create what I thought would happen. I WB'd and then had my model swim into the photo pointing a light toward me, as I thought, it came out red. Introducing lights after WBing will always create this effect, fortunately we only had a small light so it doesn't distract too much from the photo.

One of the problems with model photography is it is difficult to properly expose both the main subject and the model when using strobes. This is due to composition and strobe to subject distance when the two subjects are often at different distances from the camera. This is where I hoped the Magic Filter would really come in handy. And sure enough, it performed as advertised! I was able to capture even lighting and rich saturation of both my model and the coral without difficulty. 20 ft f5.6, 1/80

A pet peeve of mine has been trying to achieve even lighting on large objects such as Lettuce Coral. Strobes just don't throw enough light to expose coral 15 feet away from the camera and photos of such subjects with strobe can only light up the first 6 or 7 feet creating a strange blue shadow across the far edges. Trying to capture a pleasing photo of this subject was one of the main reasons for purchasing the Magic Filter. Once again, the Magic Filter came through flawlessly and produced rich colour from front to back of this subject in 45 feet of water.

What happens when you come upon an interesting subject that is not in good light or when the rain comes tumbling down? I decided to turn on my strobes and hit the WB. The camera gave me a reading of "good" and I decided to try my luck with close focus of an anemone. The results I must say were rather outstanding. I was afraid that perhaps the image would come out with a red cast but the camera's WB feature was more than up to the task. 35 ft, f14, 1/40 Nikon D70 with 10.5mm and Aquatica



With clear water and bright sun, I was able to catch a few interesting images. 20ft, f4.5, 1/80. Nikon D70 with 10.5mm and Aquatica housing

Conclusion

All of the photos used in this article are straight jpegs from the camera and 200 ISO except where noted. No enhancements, colour correction, or exposure compensation has been introduced. I felt this would be the fairest way of showing how the Magic Filter performs. Obviously, a few tweaks can be made to the photos to bring out the best but I thought that would be misleading information to those who are interested in what benefits the Magic Filter can do for natural light photography.

I am extremely pleased with the performance and versatility of this new tool and quite pleased with my cameras manual WB ability. My main worry of using the Magic Filter was that I would put it on my camera and then be stuck using it on dives where the conditions weren't ideal. Well, I don't have that worry anymore as I was able to overcome that through WB with the strobes and getting great results.

Although I did have a few problems getting the WB to take on several occasions, this was due to lack of light at depth of 70 feet when the sun went behind the clouds. This can be overcome by WBing with the strobes and then concentrating on taking close focus type photos with the strobes turned on. As long as the exposure is correct and the WB is performed in the proper direction, I believe most photographers will be very happy with the results of the Magic Filter. I know I will not hesitate to attach it to my camera but am a little disappointed for not giving myself the opportunity to dive sans strobes….

Mike Veitch
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Digital workflow

by Peter Rowlands

I thought it would be interesting to learn how some leading underwater photographers handle their digital images once they have been shot.

I apologise for the lack of illustrations!

Paul Kay

I always shoot raw files (often with jpegs if the camera allows (my Canon 1DS does, my 1D does not). I transfer them using a firewire reader onto an Apple 12" Powerbook hard-drive, immediately copy the transferred files folder onto a small portable bus powered La-Cie hard drive, and then seperate the jpegs and raw files into two folders.

I then use the browser in Photoshop CS to view the files (after allowing it time to generate thumbnails, etc.). When this has been done I rename the files so that they fit into my file sequence. (I rename both raw and jpegs and then store the renamed files on a larger desktop hard-drive - and burn 2 x DVDs as sufficient images are taken). Only then will I open a file. To do soI use a second Apple display (which I callibrate) running from my Powerbook (set-up so that all tools are on the 12" screen and the picture fills the larger display).

I open files in Photoshop after having flagged those of greatest interest. I use the raw adjustment to optimise the file, extrapolate it and generate a 16-bit psd file of around 100Mb. I work on this psd file cleaning, adjusting, editing and optimising the image before saving it. I then save as a 50Mb 8-bit rgb file (with an Adobe 98 profile).

These 50Mb 8-bit rgb files are the ones used to send out to clients.

www.marinewildlife.co.uk

Alex Mustard

I just use Nikon View to download. It runs pretty efficiently on my Powerbook Mac if you keep it up to date, and will happily download and rename files from the Nikon, Canon and Olympus cameras I have used. Although it won't display RAW files from other camera brands. This way all my images from a trip are numbered sequentially and divided into separate folders for each dive. I keep a basic paper divelog as well which allows me to cross reference any image with the dive site (with the date and time). That said I can always remember when and where I took certain pictures - it is just friends' birthdays I forget (I guess I need to rearrange my priorities).

All images are downloaded into my laptop and the totally useless and obviously duplicated ones are deleted. I often do this on the camera on the safety stop or on the boat ride after diving. I know my camera's LCD screen well enough to trust my judgement when reviewing image on it. I always shoot in RAW.

Once downloaded I also make daily backups from my laptop to a Lacie Pocketdrive - that is powered from my laptop down the Firewire connection. I also run a separate favourites folder on both that I try and keep to about 4GB - which I back up at the end of the trip to my iPod. On the D2X this is about my best 200 shots. So I am travelling home with 3 copies of my best images and two copies of all the keepers. When I get home I burn a DVD of the favourites selection. And backup the main image folders to my main computer and hard drives at home (PowerMac G5 and Lacie 500GB and older 200GB external hard drives). I also keep an offline backup of my more important files on an older 60GB Harddrive.

I store my files as NEFs (Nikon's RAW format) and convert them to TIFF or JPG output files only when required for outputs. Once convertered I also store the finished files in a separate "Finished Tiffs folder".

My filing is done by divesite and location. I know what I shot where and never struggle to find images. I prefer to use Adobe's Camera Raw for almost all my RAW conversions as setting and adjusting the White Balance is very easy.

Most of what I do works well for me. But I wouldn't say I have an optimum system.

I generally always deliver files as colour profiled RGB files (leaving CMYK conversion to the printer). Usually in Abobe 1998 RGB colour space, although I use sRGB for web and on screen applications. I also have routines written in Photoshop that generate 72dpi preview versions of the files as well as sRGB web galleries (which I often include on submission CDs for the client to be able to rapidly browse the images). I have only supplied a transparency on one occasion during 2005!

www.amustard.com

David Nardini

- all images are shot on Canon 1D / 1Ds as Canon RAW files (Seacam housing)
- all are processed with RAW Developer and output at 16bit TIF files (Adobe 1998 colour space) ready for working in Photoshop
- any noise cleaning is done with Noise Ninja (both digi or scanned images)
- all image catalogs is via iView MediaPro
- RAW, working PSDs and output TIF files storage / backing up is on mirrored Miglia drive (have not found DVD backups safe, and far too time consuming)
- All scanned material is via Epson flat bed scanner and VueScan (multipass, 16 bit output, Adobe 1998)
- Final output files are 48Mb / 8 bit images sent to stock libraries

The workflow steps are :
a) RAW processed in Raw Developer, colour balance set against standard grey card shot taken at time of shoot, and adjusted for each image being processed (for scanned material I don't have grey card references and use the image best white, grey and black points as references)
b) Optimise levels in Raw Developer
c) No sharpening applied
d) Check if de-noise is necessary (especially shadow areas), if Raw Develeper can do it ok, apply it, otherwise use Noise Ninja on the output TIF file
e) Output to 16bit TIF file
f) If file required de-noise, and step d) above was not done, open file in Noise Ninja and remove noise, and re-save TIF
g) Open in PS, check white and black point using threshold levels and set them if necessary (black point at 4 and white point at 245). Adjust midpoint as necessary; if contrast is low, use curves to spice things up. Check each channel for inconsistencies (especially for scanned images). On extreme digi wide angle work, check and correct all 'purple fringing' artefacts (CA can be a major problem, worsened by domes)
h) Work on image(s) or composite as required
i) Clean any dust marks etc on the comp
j) Strip EXIF data and update image details ready for stock agency
k) Check image size, re-size as required
l) Sharpen as required (applied by airbrushing through layer mask)
m) Save finished 'working' file as a PSD
n) Flatten and save as TIF / 8 bit / Adobe 1998.
o) Eventually (when batch of relevant images is complete, add to iView catalogs.

James Wiseman

I shoot a Canon 1DmkII with a 2 gig high-speed flash card. It will fit about 185 RAW photos per dive. I shoot RAW underwater and RAW+Jpg topside. On a really rich divesite, I'll take perhaps 100 photos, so I generally get two dives before changing my card. The same holds true for my strobe batteries, so it the system works well for me. After the dives, (perhaps at lunchtime) I'll copy the images to my laptop, using a cardbus CF adapter and Dowloader Pro software by Breeze Systems. The cardbus adapter is the fastest made, and Downloader Pro renames my images with the date, location, and leaves the image number (example 050930-bali-IMG0001.crw)

The images go into a folder called "new" and from there are moved to a folder for that day's dives.

I use BreezeBrowser to quickly look through the photos between dives and delete the obvious dogs. That evening, I might move the "keeper" images over to a "keepers" folder for later development. Every few nights, I'll make a backup copy of my images from my laptop to a portable hard drive. By the end of a divetrip, I'll have two copies of my photos, one on the laptop, and one on the portable disk. I always pack the two in different bags, in case we part ways during travel. At the end of a trip, usually at home, but sometimes on the airplane, I'll develop all of the keepers images using either Photoshop CS or Capture One Pro (C1). If I'm at home, I'll be using my calibrated CRT monitor, and on the road, a calibrated laptop LCD screen. I prefer using Photoshop for macro images, because it has great CA correction. I like C1 for wideangle photos as it has a better white balancing function. I use the RAW converter to do 90% of my image adjustment: white balance, CA correction, exposure correction, etc. I usually convert to 8-bit JPEG, unless I'm working on a specific image for a client or for a personal print, then I work in 16-bit. After developing the RAW photos, I use "actions" in Photoshop to prepare them for web presentation, digital slideshow presentation, or print. As an example, my "web action" resizes the photos to 400 x 600, shapens them, places my watermark, and converts the color

space to sRGB. I then upload my web-sized photos to my online gallery, and back everyting up to a second hard drive. All of the images come off of the laptop and onto my desktop computer at home which has an array of redundant hard disks.

So for backup, I have a copy of all the images on my drive array, and a copy on a portable hard disk. After everything "checks out" I'll erase the images from the laptop.

www.reefpix.org

Mark Webster

My approach to processing workflow has developed slowly and I realise isprobably not the most efficient. I used to import images via Nikon view(BTW I do object to paying extra for Nikon Capture!) and make basic RAWadjustments before saving as a tiff for Photoshop processing. Now I simply copy the folder to my hard drive and then open the RAW files in Rawshooter Essentials. This has a very neat slide show viewing system that enables you to prioritise and segregate the images you want to keep/work on - this is a free download programme which I find easy to use – it also handles D2X files as well.

Normally I just adjust exposure and WB in RSE and save as a tiff – although there are a host of other features available and you could do everything in RSE if you wanted. However, I find that final processing is best in Photoshop 7 which I use to make any further adjustments to levels, colour, brightness/contrast etc. and finally sharpen with unsharp mask and save as a tiff. I occasionally use a batch processing droplet if the images are very similar. I use a batch process to convert to jpeg copies.

My aim is really to minimise the amount of time I spend on the computer, and so I try to post process as little as possible. I aim to try and get the correct exposure in camera, just as you would when shooting slide film, but if anything tend to under expose slightly to get the best from shooting in RAW.

For file management I have played with a number of bits of software but not settled on anything so far. So for the present I archive manually to my own folder structure, but really need some software to assist with searches, renaming etc.

For back up I store images on portable hard drives and back up all RAW and processed images to DVD. It will be revealing to see what others are doing out there!

www.photec.co.uk

A Digital Diary - UK 2005

by Mark Webster

So just how much of a challenge is photography in British waters? I have many regular workshop clients who are not keen to find out but really they don't know what they are missing. There is no doubt that conditions can be more challenging than the tropics, and of course the water is a little colder, but now we have the instantaneous review that digital imaging offers there is no excuse for not perfecting lighting angles or removing errant backscatter if you have the patience in Photoshop.

2005 in the UK has, as always, offered a mixed bag of weather conditions, but when they have been good the diving and photographic opportunities have been great and there are many subjects to match or rival the tropical species. Macro is obviously the preferred technique when visibility is less than perfect and there have been plenty of striking subjects this year, in particular masses of different species of nudibranchs and numerous sea hares mating and laying eggs spirals. These attractive subjects are easy to photograph in classic poses but the additional imaging capacity we have with digital allows us to play with composition and light to create hopefully different images – we are no longer constrained by 36 pictures on a film and the worry of saving a few just in case something unusual turns up at the end of the dive. Now we have 100 or more frames and the option to delete those we instantly dislike to make room for more.

I thought I would describe the high points for me this year in the hope of encouraging more of you to test the chilly waters next year.

Nudibranchs – Normally we see the greatest variety in early spring, but the water remained chilly until late in May and as a consequence there were still numerous species laying eggs on the kelp and on the reef well into July and August. UK species are small but also very colourful – a 105mm macro lens in the best tool with some additional magnification (wet lens, diopter, tele-converter). Be prepared to use manual focus or lock the lens at the desired magnification and then 'rock focus' to get the subject sharp. Depth of field is minimal and AF will drive you nuts as the lens hunts back and forth. A good focus light is a must for finding the subjects and for lighting them to focus properly.

Nudibranch laying egg spiral - Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 105mm micro, Nexus wet lens, Inon Quad, f8 @40

Juvenile cuttle fish- Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 12-24mm zoom, f8 @40, twin Subtronic Mini's

Cuttlefish – I had hoped to catch the mass migration of cuttlefish into shallow water to mate and lay eggs, but work commitments and weather conspired against me and whilst I found many on the few dives I made, none were courting. Later in the summer we were able to return to the eel grass beds, where thousands of eggs had been laid, to hunt for the juvenile cuttlefish and were not disappointed. Cuttlefish appear as miniature versions of the adults and grow extremely quickly – they are initially nervous but soon become extremely inquisitive and will even sit in your hand if you are patient – this makes for excellent picture opportunities. The best tool for these opportunities is a zoom lens, in my case a 12-24mm or 18-35mm for tighter shots. At the wide end you can include some of the environment and some balanced light techniques.

Thornback ray- Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 12-24mm zoom, f8 @40, twin Subtronic Mini's

Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 12-24mm zoom, f8 @40, twin Subtronic Mini's

Free swimming conger eel- Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 12-24mm zoom, f16 @40, twin Subtronic Mini's

Rays – many years ago thornback and blond rays in particular could be seen on almost any dive on a sand and gravel seabed, particularly close to estuaries. As with many commercial targeted species, encountering these graceful swimmers is becoming increasingly rare. That of course does not stop me looking and although many dives go unrewarded occasionally you will come across a ray resting or absorbed with feeding that allows you to get close enough for good images. Again a wide angle zoom is the best tool for this and I had invested in a Tokina 12-24mm zoom this year which was perfect when luck and patience paid off. This is a great lens, a cheaper alternative to the Nikorr, which I use behind a small Subal 20mm dome with a 40mm extension ring and +2 diopter. This may not be the optimal combination if you run the maths and optical equations but is extremely compact and I have found plenty sharp enough.

Bass – These fish are another species that are targeted relentlessly by both sports and commercial fishermen. They can also be very shy and difficult to approach for a good photograph. There are one or two reefs in my local shallow waters which seem to attract them and if you are prepared to wait long periods sitting in the kelp waiting you will eventually be rewarded with fish passing close enough to photograph. Mid to late summer seems to be best and they do like a bit of current to and the plankton it brings to feed in. Patience and a 60mm macro lens for portraits or the wide zoom to capture the small shoals of these attractive fish.

Conger Eels – This species are most often associated with wrecks, particularly by sports fishermen. However, they are also quite common on shallow water reefs and some large specimens can be found if you check all the holes in the reef carefully. I had quite a shock one day whilst waiting in the weed for bass to pass by when a large and an inquisitive conger started to weave between my legs. Having got over the surprise I found that it was fascinated by my dome port, presumably because it could see a reflection, and so I was able to work very close to the beast whilst it came in and out of its hole in the reef. Firing the flash had no impact, but when I signaled to my buddy to take a look with his video camera he retreated as soon as the video light was turned on.

Fish portraits can be a challenge in any sea – fish are often nervous when we first approach the reef and it is only patience and application of suitable technique that will capture successful images. Again the advantage of digital is obvious – we can shoot three or four frames and then back off to review, delete and make adjustments to exposure and lighting before making another attempt. UK reefs abound with interesting and sometimes colourful fish which make excellent frame filling portraits or can be shot to show their environment or ability to camouflage. Small fish reef fish abound – three spot gobies, tom pot blennies, sand gobies,

Jewel anemones- Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 105mm micro, Nexus wet lens, Inon Quad, f16 @125

Ballan wrasse - Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 60mm micro, Inon Quad, f16 @125, twin Subtronic Mini's

Compass jelly fish – Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 18-35mm zoom, f8 @125, twin Subtronic Mini's

Diver with lobster- Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 12-24mm zoom, f8 @40, twin Subtronic Mini's

black gobies, scorpion fish etc. – and a 60mm or 105mm will get you frame filling portraits if you have the patience. Wear a good thermal under-suit to keep you warm whilst you wait!

Jelly fish are abundant some years and not the next despite heavy plankton blooms. This year the dominant species was the compass jelly fish although we saw the occasional lion's mane. In previous years the much larger Rhyzostoma's have been abundant but whichever species you encounter they make great wide angle subjects, particularly if the sun is out.

Basking sharks – These glorious beasts show up with the first plankton blooms in May and June but you have to combine the right conditions with the right location and a dose of good luck to get close to them! I thought I had missed my opportunity in early summer until a more unusual encounter became perhaps the highlight of my year. I was diving with the local branch of the Wildlife Trust recording species in areas of eel grass close to Newlyn and Penzance. We came across a monofilament net strung over the seabed, most likely set to catch bass that feed in these shallow coastal waters. Quite by chance we found something far larger – a female basking shark that had totally trapped herself having swum into the net and then spun several times in her effort to escape. Initially we were convinced that she was dead, but eye movement and then some tired body movement gave us hope of rescuing her. Having cut her free and then gently guided her for a few metres across the seabed she suddenly revived and swum off gracefully (and hopefully gratefully) into open water. A soft sandy seabed ensured that pictures taken were not perfect nor were they artistically composed, but they were good enough for the local paper and a very satisfying environmental tale.

Topknot flat fish- Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, 105mm micro, Inon Quad, f16 @125

Mark's Ten Temperate Top Tips:

***** Get as close as possible to your subject – visibility is rarely stunning in the UK. Macro and extreme wide angle lenses allow you to reduce the water column between camera and subject.

***** Think small – many UK species are as colourful as their tropical cousins but a lot smaller, particularly the colourful nudibranchs. You may need to use increased magnification with a wet lens, diopters or telephoto converters to fill the frame.

***** Move slowly – don't try to cover huge areas in a dive. Settle in one spot, look carefully and wait for the fish population to accept you. Patience will pay off.

***** Get to know your patch – make multiple dives at the same location at different times of year. Sometimes the changes between seasons are dramatic and you will get to know where to find the critters you wan to photograph.

***** Stay warm – we are all prepared to spend a small fortune on our camera kit and lenses, but it is worth investing in a good dry suit and high quality under suit with perhaps additional layers to stay warm. Find good quality gloves that fit well – titanium lined ones are much warmer.

***** Stay shallow – our green and often turbid waters soak up and scatter the available light – limit your depth to say 10m to make the most of it. Remember some interesting species are found just below the surface - e.g. those basking sharks and jelly fish.

***** Balance your light sources when shooting wide angle – use manual settings and get to know how to use the light meter in your camera – spot metering is often best if you have it. Remember that backscatter will be less obvious against a pale background than a dark one shot at smaller apertures.

***** Don't forget to try silhouettes – if the sun is out but the vis is bad even kelp can produce a good image when shot against the sun.

***** Watch the weather forecasts on the internet and get familiar with wind directions and tide times etc. for your favoured spot – when conditions look right then go for it – our weather is fickle and the following week-end is never as good!

***** Don't lose heart – diving in the UK and getting good images is not simple and is something that you have to work at. Remember if you can improve the quality of your photography at home then it will be a breeze when you spend hard earned cash on an expensive trip overseas.

Mark Webster
www.photec.co.uk

Mark is the author of 'The Art and Technique of Underwater Photography' (Fountain Press) and 'Diving and Snorkeling Belize' (Lonely Planet) and hosts regular U/W photography workshops.

Book reviews

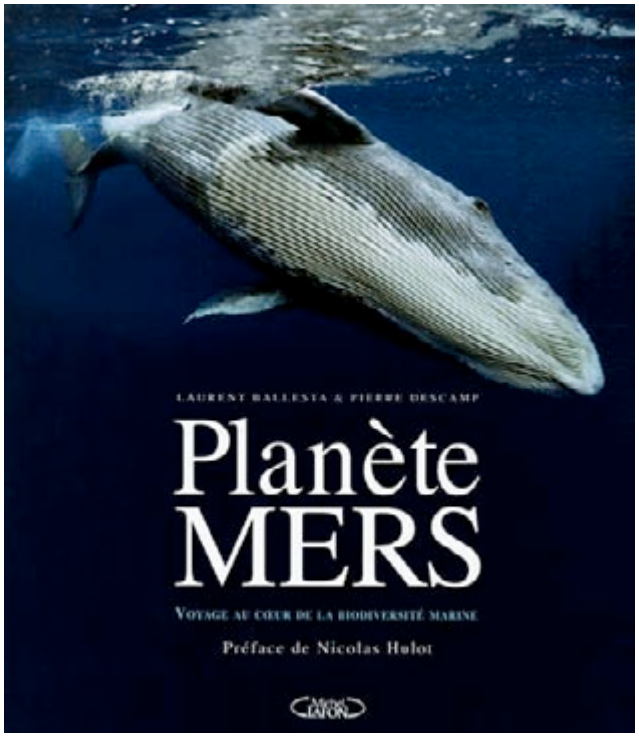
Planète MERS

Laurent Ballesta & Pierre Descamp

I must start with an apology because I am reviewing a book that I have not read! It is in French and I can't read French. But I have looked at every page of this phenomenal book and I just had to tell you about it as soon as possible!

Fans of the Antibes Festival will surely have marvelled at Laurent Ballesta's multi-award winning photography, but outside his native France he is not that well known. This is a pity because, to put it simply, I think he is currently the world's best underwater photographer. His new book, Planete MERS, a collaboration with writings from fellow biologist Pierre Descamp is a large format (330x280mm), 400 page coffee table book, featuring the best of Laurent's images. It is a triumph.

Laurent is a master of balanced light photography, mixing high impact foreground marine life with beautiful depth-giving backgrounds that immediately transport you beneath the waves. His animal portraits, of both large and small subjects, are perfectly composed and full of character. Alongside these achingly beautiful



shots are marine life images of rare and previously un-photographed species and behaviours all precisely lit, framed and exposed. But what sets Laurent apart is that not only does he seek out the ocean's most magnificent creatures he also produces captivating images from the mundane and everyday subjects, such as seagrass beds. The photographs truly come from around the world: Polar - from both the Arctic and Antarctic, Temperate – from Northern Europe (including freshwater) and North and South America, and Tropical – mainly Jordan, PNG and French Polynesia.

I am struggling to think of a negative point, but perhaps the book is about 5% too long. Such is the impact of each image, that going through it first time from cover to cover is emotionally exhausting. That said 400 pages of lavishly reproduced images seems very reasonable at 39 Euros. This is certainly a book that will continue to reward the reader time after time.

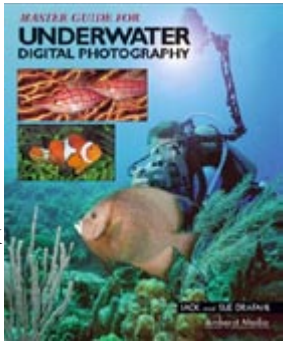
Currently this book is only available in French in France. Laurent and Pierre told me that they are hoping to get an English edition out next year (but despite not speaking French I could not resist buying it now). Since writing this review the book has gone on to win the Antibes Festival prize for the best underwater image book, which will undoubtedly help this process.

In my opinion there have been two books of underwater images that have stood head and shoulders above what has gone before when they were released: Newbert's Within A Rainbowed Sea and Doubilet's Water Light Time. Maybe we now have a third book to add to this esteemed company?

Alex Mustard

Master Guide for Underwater Photography

By Jack & Sue Drafahl



For anyone who has yet to switch to digital photography this will prove a very useful book because initially it keeps its feet in both camps – film and digital but then devotes the majority of the book to imparting digital information in a way that is both easy to read and understand.

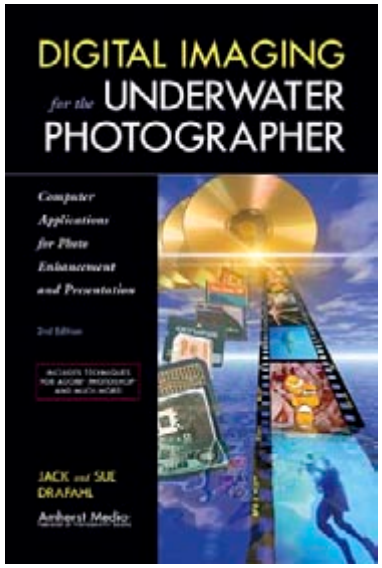
Everything you need to know is in this book to enable you to take competent underwater photos with your digital camera. It does not, however, cover the post production which is now such an important part of the final image production process. There is a good reason for this. The 2nd edition of their Digital Imaging for the Underwater Photographer is now out and is also reviewed here!

Master Guide for Underwater Photography costs $34.95 and further details are at

www.amherstmedia.com

Digital Imaging for the Underwater Photographer

By Jack & Sue Drafahl



The fast changing world of digital imaging and manipulation software has led to a 2nd updated version of this useful book.

Effectively it takes up where the Master Guide leaves off. This book is all about what you can do to the image – both film and digital – after it has been taken.

Photoshop has become the standard software in this area it is covered here in good detail. It would be very easy to make such a capable piece of software become overwhelming but the authors achieve a good balance between factual, logical information and practical tips with plenty of screen grabs and handy hints. They also cover third party plug ins which are applicable to underwater photography.

Digital Imaging for the Underwater Photographer is for those who want to take their images further and do more with them that just view them on a screen. It is comprehensive, well illustrated and easy to follow. It costs $39.95 which is par for the course and is a small price to pay for improving your shots.

www.amherstmedia.com

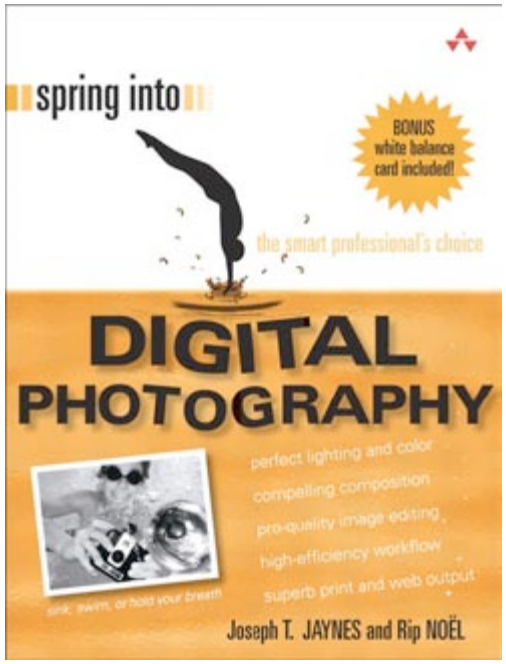
Peter Rowlands

Spring Into Digital Photography

Joseph T. Jaynes & Rip Noël

The instant feedback and the cheap running costs of digital cameras have transformed many from happy snappers into keen and accomplished photographers. This book is aimed squarely at these new enthusiasts.

The main strength of *Spring Into Digital Photography* is the holistic and realistic approach it takes to photography in 2005. Unlike other books on Photoshop techniques this book begins by teaching the basics of photography: focus, apertures,



shutter speeds, composition and most important of all lighting. The authors argue that capturing the perfect image with your camera is the key to great digital images and the first section of the book is designed to help the reader avoid the "garbage in, garbage out" condition. I couldn't agree more.

The other three sections of the book deal specifically with the digital issues of understanding and managing colour, optimising images for screen and print, and organising your workflow. Experienced digital photographers will learn little here that they did not already know, but these sections are a real treasure trove of practical solutions for experienced film photographers tackling the transition to digital. This book covers the whole process from capture to optimisation in Photoshop to output thoroughly.

The book is laid out cleanly and simply with many before and after images that clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the techniques being described. The modular structure means you can read it cover to cover or dive in at almost any point to learn a technique or solve a problem. Obviously this is a land photography book, and the only reference to underwater photography is a double page spread that only really says it is possible. However, photography is photography wherever you do and there isn't much that isn't relevant. Also with a bit of thought there are many techniques described in the book that can be easily adapted underwater with exciting results.

At $35 USD this 300 page book is perhaps slightly over priced if you are already well versed in digital, but if ones and zeros of digital leave you baffled *Spring Into Digital Photography* is a sound and useful investment.

Alex Mustard

La photo numerique sous-marine - Guide expert

By Isabelle et Amar Guillen

A few months ago, in UWP25, I shared my experience of Isabelle & Amar Guillenís practical guide to underwater photography. I had liked the book a lot, as a ‘get to grips with your underwater camera’ guide, but thought it might have been lacking a bit of in-depth knowledge.

And guess what, the ‘Guide Expert’ has now arrived! This book is full of very valuable information for both experienced underwater photographers and novices who have read the ‘Guide Pratique’.

A lot of technical data has been compiled and you will find good advice on how to choose your equipment. Although most readers will probably own their cameras and housings already, it could come-in handy when you consider upgrading your set-up and buying more toys. I particularly liked the chapter dedicated to strobe lighting, where concepts such as Guide Number and strobe angular coverage are explained in detail, although I probably won’t remember all the maths.

Other subjects covered include white-balance, the use of filters, dome ports, flat ports, teleconverters, dioptres, etc. Some concepts are not immediately useful, but will add to your general photography knowledge.

But ‘La photo numerique sous-marine - Guide Expert isn’t just a mine of technical data. It also describes various shooting techniques that can be used in situations such as wreck diving, tropical environments, low visibility green water, or even moving subjects. The authors go further than just describing how to position your camera to compose a good picture. They also talk about the diverís attitude and explain how the photographer should approach the subject.

The section dedicated to post-processing is smaller than in the previous manual. In the expert guide, it only covers RAW processing and DNG the new Adobe file format.

All this information was probably available in the myriad of books that have sprung on the anglo-saxon market, but France was somewhat lagging behind when it came to digital underwater photography manuals. This situation has now been rectified with examples of photos taken in Brittany! Like its predecessor, the book is only available in French, which might limit the number of people who could benefit from reading its pages. I am informed that the Guillens might be on the lookout for a publisher for an English version.

JP Trenque

Relevant books for review in UwP should be sent to
PR Productions
13 Langley Ave,
Surbiton
Surrey
KT6 6QN
UK

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!

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

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc

Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards

Subjects - Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

If you have an idea for an article, contact me first before putting pen to paper.

E mail **peter@uwpmag.com**

How to submit articles

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

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail
2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 144dpi

Size - Maximum length 15cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 15 cm wide and verticals would be 15cm.

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

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

Classifieds

For sale

Fuji S2 Pro and Subal housing outfit for sale. Immaculate condition. System includes Fuji S2 Pro body with original box, Subal S2 housing, Nikon 60mm macro lens and Subal autofocus port, Nikon 12 - 24mm zoom lens with Subal fisheye port (also accepts 10.5mm), Nikonos SB105 strobe (full TTL with S2) complete with ball joint arm. Also includes Nikon 28 -105mm zoom lens and additional filters. Cost nearly £7000.00. Offered at £3750.00 for quick sale. Contact Steve Lupini on 07811 733221.

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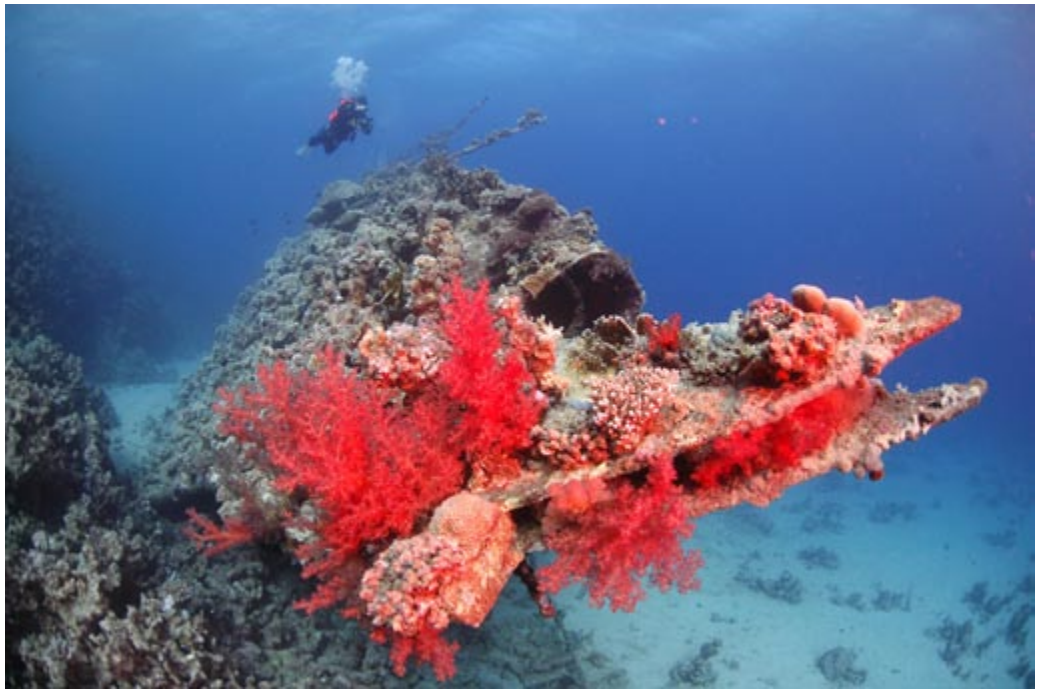

Parting shots

In June this year I was helping Alex Mustard test a variety of filter combinations for what would eventually become his Magic filters.

The beauty of these filters is that you don't use strobes so your camera outfit is small and easy to handle yet you still get very subtle, colourful results. A wreck was the ideal subject to test the filter and I using a 10.5 fisheye lens on a Nikon D70 in a Subal housing, aperture priority @ F5.6.

The bows of this wreck lie in about 15 metres and I set the manual white balance on the camera and started to take some shots. Unbeknown to me, a fellow underwater photographer, 'JP' Trenque, was just to my right.

I took the shot on the left, checked the LCD screen and was pleased with the result. I then took another shot a little bit closer and was amazed to see the shot on the right jump out of my screen. At first I couldn't understand what had happened but then I turned slightly and saw 'JP' to my right. He was using a D100 in a Sea & Sea housing with twin strobes. It was then that the penny dropped.

We had both taken a picture at exactly the same time and his strobes had lit my shot as well!

I doubt we could have ever done this again even if we'd tried and I'm not good enough at maths to work out the odds it happening.

The result, incidentally, shows why you shouldn't use strobes with a Magic filter for it has made the foreground soft corals unnaturally red.

I very nearly deleted the second shot but then I thought it would be perfect for Parting Shots!

Peter Rowlands

Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?
If so e mail me and yours could be the next "Parting shot".
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