Underwater Photography

a web magazine
Issue 43
July/Aug 2008

Ikelite SubStrobe DS-160
Sea & Sea YS-17
100,000 D2x
Akona roller bag

Canon 40D Hugyfot
Digital Doubles
Marsa Shagra
Philippines

Spotters
Reef life
Book review
Parting Shot

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Underwater Photography

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Editorial

p***s envy

The recent arrival of the Nikon D3 and especially now the D700 has sent all tecno geeks, including myself, into a state of panic. Firstly have I been so far out of the press release loop that I completely missed the D400, 500 and 600. Did these models come and go in an afternoon without me noticing? Is that how fast things are progressing now? And secondly how am I going to survive without this new camera?

Oh my god. It's better than mine. If he/she gets one, they'll be better than me. My camera's useless now. I must upgrade to keep up with the photographic Jones's. I'm nobody without that new camera and here comes the final, and all too familiar justification (which applies equally well to computers, hard drives and LCD TVs etc etc), if I get this new camera, it will do all I could ever want. It will be all I will ever need so, by buying it, I will put an end to the need to upgrade - ever again. The really sad thing is that I really believe myself - every time.

Housing design and manufacture

Fortunately I'm not old enough to remember the brass faceplate and multiple screw down bolt design of early underwater housings but I certainly was around in what I think will soon be known as the 'basic' times.

This was in the late 60's early 70's when a lathe was considered a fantasy and the norm was hand tools and perspex cement at a time when wetsuits were held together with Black Witch glue and yellow tape. This was the world of amateur underwater photography and in reality the commecrial world of underwater photography equipment was not a great deal more sophisticated because of the small demand for such specialised equipment.

The majority of professional housings in those days were cast in aluminium using hardwood moulds and sand shaped by human hands and designed to withstand the heat and belching steam from molten metal. It was a live, performance process, a culmination of centuries of apprenticeship. The resulting castings were rarely identical and many had basic flaws right from the start but at least they could be remelted and re-used.

The mould making process and the machining of the resulting castings took several months but that was OK because the camera to be housed would be current for at least 3-4 years and even then its value wouldn't collapse as soon as a replacement model became available.

Nowadays it is a completely different process designed to get housings to market as quickly as possible before the camera is superceded. It is all computer controlled from design to assembly with a degree of repeatable precision and shape making capability which was impossible with human hands. In addition these machines can work "24/7/365". The only food they need is lubricating oil and raw material.

Just as the manufacturing process has changed so too have the designers. Their nimble young minds are not constrained by traditional materials and shapes. They can call upon composites and combinations which once seemed science fiction and as a result are reshaping our equipment world and providing us with unmatched performance.

Exciting times, Archie. Exciting times indeed.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Alex Mustard's Cayman Workshop

Understanding, capturing and controlling light

17th-24th January 2009.

Join Alex Mustard's Digital Underwater Photography workshop at Ocean Frontiers, Grand Cayman in January 2009. The focus on this workshop is lighting: understanding, capturing and controlling both strobe and available light.

We'll dive on Cayman's dramatic walls, East End's atmospheric caverns, fishy shallow reefs and Stingray City. There will be the traditional dawn stingray trip, where there is the chance to photograph the unique stingray schooling behaviour in golden sunlight.

The trip is limited to just 12 people, which provides plenty of time for 1:1 image critique and also a 1:1 pool photo tune-up session. The course also includes photo lectures, interactive seminars, group image review and photographic diving.

The workshop costs $2,165 USD (excluding flights) for 7 nights accommodation at the luxurious Compass Point Resort, 6 days of diving, social evenings, rental car and high speed Wi-Fi.

www.amustard.com
alex@amustard.com

Papua New Guinea Photo Trip

2 Spots Left

September 18 - 27, 2008

Papua New Guinea is one of the most exotic places on earth! Both above the water and below you'll discover new adventures you cannot find anywhere else, making this place very popular among photographers.

Join us aboard the live-aboard Spirit of Niugini for a digital photo workshop. Your hosts will be Donna Lattin from South Pacific Island Travel and me, Bonnie Pelnar, author of "The Digital Workflow for Underwater Photographers".

This workshop is designed to show you how get the best shots when shooting underwater with a digital camera. The workshop is for all skill levels.

New Guinea offers some amazing macro opportunities and the wide angle is also spectacular. We'll show you what you need to know to get some great photos during this trip. In addition to shooting tips and techniques, you'll also learn all about how to improve the images you've captured using Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Elements.

www.theunderwaterphotographer.com

REEF PHOTO & VIDEO

Seatool Sony HDR-SR11/12

The Seatool SR11/SR12 underwater housing for the Sony HDV Handycam HDR-SR11/SR12 is one of the smallest, lightest underwater video housings ever produced.

At just 1.5kg it's small and light enough to hand carry on aircraft and because the housing body conforms so closely to the camera, the housing attains nearly neutral buoyancy (slightly negative) for effortless handling underwater.

The housing utilizes a flip out mirror & lcd reversing circuit, allowing the user to take advantage of the camera's LCD Screen for composition. Optional 3" external monitor now available.

www.reefphoto.com
www.seatoolusa.com

Beneath the Sea 2009

Beneath the Sea 2009 is pleased to invite Photographers and Videographers from around the world to enter the Beneath the Sea International Imaging competition.

In addition to a surprise of prizes, including a trip aboard the renowned liveaboard Nai'a diving the amazing reefs of Fiji, competition in each category will be for individual recognition from the Grandmaster of that field: Underwater photographers will compete for the coveted David Doubilet award for excellence in underwater photography. Underwater Videographers will compete for the distinguished Stan Waterman award for excellence in underwater video. Underwater Photographic Artists compete for the celebrated Jim Church award for excellence in creative underwater photography.

Wherever you live in this wide world, accept the challenge, and submit your underwater photographic work to the Beneath the Sea International Imaging Competition. The contest deadline is December 31st, 2008

The winners of the Beneath the Sea International Imaging Competition will be announced at the Saturday Night Film Festival the weekend of Beneath the Sea's Ocean Adventure Exposition and Dive Travel Show, March 27th, 28th, and 29th, 2009, at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey. In addition to the awards that the Grand Prize winners of each category will receive, there will be prizes for all First, Second, and Third place winners.

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www.Beneaththesea.org

Elysium 2010

A team comprising of the world's best nature conservation photographers, film makers, artists, musicians and scientists will embark on an imaging epic from the Weddell Sea of Antarctic Peninsula to South Georgia. The team will be documenting the life above and below the ice, more or less following the trail of the 1914 Endurance Expedition by Sir Ernest Shackleton and his crew of 28. It was the greatest true adventure story of the last century.

The explorers comprise of David Doubilet, Jennifer Hayes, Wyland, Amos Nachoum, Heather Angel, Leandro Blanco, Álvaro de Marichalar, Michael AW and Jamie Watt will be producing a book, a movie but most importantly to curate a visual index database for climate change references of the Antarctic Peninsula and South Georgia. This 2010 expedition is billed to be the greatest photographic epic of the 21th century. If you wish to contribute or participate in this epic of a colossal scale email

info@ElysiumEpic.org

ECO DIVERS
NORTH SULAWESI - INDONESIA

Eco Divers Digital Photo Shoot-out 2008

Kungkungan Bay Resort, North Sulawesi, is proud to have been selected by Scuba Diver Australasia Magazine as host resort for its Digital Download photo shoot-out event 2008.

The shoot-out is in a 5-night format between 26 November and 01 December. All are welcome to join irrespective of level of experience, with the emphasis firmly on having fun and learning. There is no entrance fee to pay – all you need to do to join this exciting event is make a normal booking on those dates and let Eco Divers know you would like to join the event.

Prizes will be in three categories: Macro Behaviour, Portrait and Portfolio. The first prize in each category is a Canon EOS 450D camera!

Judging the event will be three very well known personalities from the world of scuba diving and underwater photography; David Espinosa, editor of Scuba Diver Australasia, Simon Buxton and Mike Veitch.

www.eco-divers.com

Sandisk Red Sea 2008

The competition will be held this year, for the fourth time in a row, on the 10th to 15th of November, 2008 at the Isrotel Yam Suf hotel, Eilat.

This year we've several categories, such as: The best 5 Images, The best color print, Humor, Ecology& Nature care, Wrecks, Video Clip and a category for beginners.

The Eilat competition is open to all underwater photographers, amateur and professional. This year we have more than $80,000 prizes, diving trips to exotics dive sites around the world and cashmoney prizes. The first prize this year is 10,000$, and a trip for two, to Papua New Guinea.

www.sandiskredsea.com

NYUPS website

To celebrate the one year anniversary of The New York Underwater Photographic Society, the group has launched a new website.

Over 200 NYUPS participants have enjoyed some of the featured events in the last year, which have included presentations from legendary underwater photographer David Doubilet, virtuoso Howard Schatz, as well as pro photographers such as Ethan Gordon, Doug Sloss, Jason Heller, and others. NYUPS events are held in a theatre setting with open bars and networking opportunities for the dynamic growing community of underwater photographers & videographers from NY, NJ, CT, PA and beyond.

The new website, www.NYUPS.org , is built on a social network platform and provides an opportunity for those residing outside

of the local region to participate as well. Photographers & videographers are invited to create profiles and become members of NYUPS through the new website.

Membership and all NYUPS events are free of charge and supported by DivePhotoGuide and a handful of gracious sponsors such as H2O Photo Pros, Archipelago Fleet and PADI.

www.nyups.org

Div'Ocean Bonaire

On 21 May 2008, Div'Ocean, the newest dive school in Bonaire, opened its doors. Instructors Chris Verstappen en Paulien Wijnvoord teach PADI, SSI, IDD, SDI, IAHD and WOSDdive courses. Dutch, English and German are spoken. Courses in Spanish are available on request.

Boatdives, guided dives, guided night dives and East Side dives are organised. Also, rental and service of equipment are provided as well as "air (also Nitrox) and weights only".

www.divocean-bonaire.com

Marmara Festival

8th International Underwater Photo & Video Festival

18-24 August 2008
Istanbul, Turkey

The festival is being hosted by the Caddebostan Scuba Divers' Sports Club in Istanbul. It is the 8th International and 15th National Underwater Festival.

The festival consists of two different contests:

8th Underwater Photo and Videos Contest and the 15th 'The Living Marmara' Photo and Video Contest (requires on the spot dives on 23rd August 2008)

Deadline for registration and dispatch: 01st August 2008

www.marmarafestival.org

‘Getting Creative With Your Compact Camera’ Course

10th August - Oxford
17th August - Action Underwater Studios, Essex

Maria Munn of Ocean Visions is continuing her successful one day beginner’s courses for divers with compact cameras in Oxford and at Action Underwater Studios in Essex.

The new ‘Get Creative With Your Compact Camera Course’ focuses on how to make the most of a digital compact camera which has control of Aperture Priority as well as Shutter Speed. The day is spent trying out different effects with both Macro and Wide-Angle Lenses as well as the opportunity to try out underwater flashguns. All of the demo equipment provided is made by Inon, renowned for its ability to make your compact camera take award-winning shots which are indistinguishable from the same subject taken with an SLR camera. Composition skills are closely developed before an extensive pool session to fine-tune newly learnt skills.

Magic Filters and a range of both Epoque and Inon Accessories are available for guests to try out.

www.oceanvisions.co.uk

Puri Jati Retreat

A private oceanfront villa perfectly situated on the north coast of Bali, with vineyards & mountains on one side and the beach & Bali Sea on the other.

The main villa has 2 levels, can accommodate 6 people and boasts ocean views from every room. It is arranged around an 11 meter (36 ft) private pool. The villa also has maid service and 24-hour security.

Breakfast is included in the nightly price, lunch & dinner can be provided at the villa for an additional charge or guests can dine in one of Lovina's restaurants. A selection of soft drinks, beer & wine is available at the villa at reasonable prices.

Diving: we are only a couple of miles from Bali's latest hotspot for muck diving: Puri Jati (PJ's), an hour to Bali's only national park & Menjangan Island and 1.5 hours to Tulamben. Karl & Linda are both PADI instructors and offer a number of one-on-one courses, including underwater photography with digital camera rental.

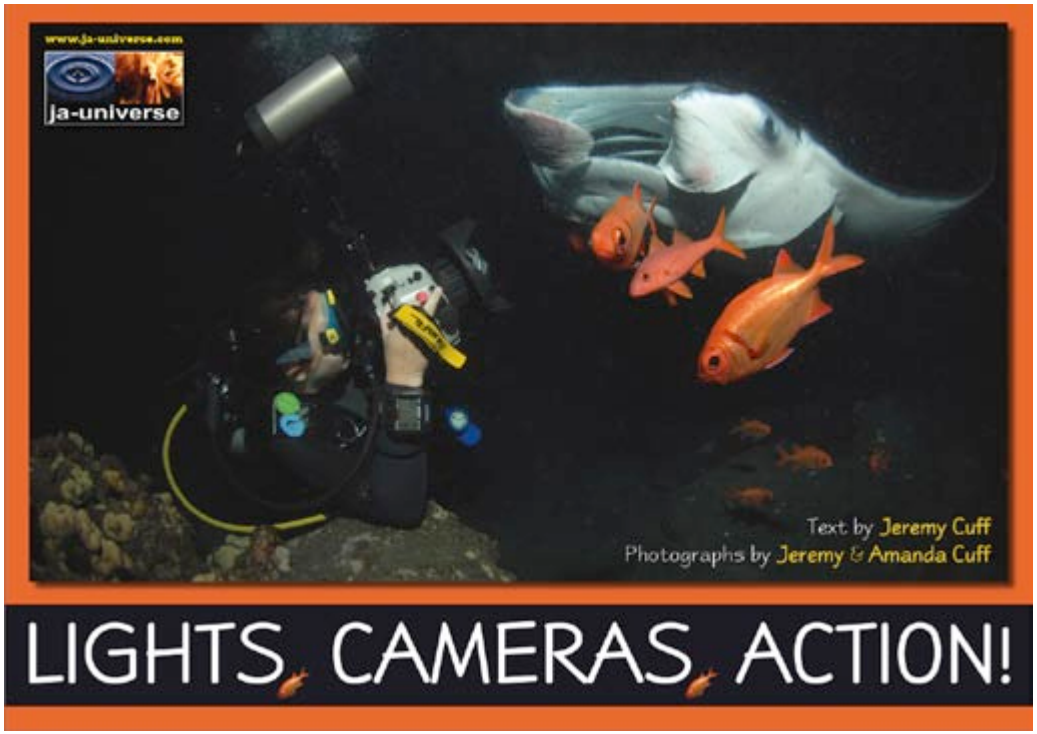
Other activities can be arranged, such as horseback riding & bird watching in the national park, your own private mineral pool & massage at the hot springs, tours to Bali's mountains & lakes, waterfalls, botanical gardens and local markets.

It's also a great place to relax: read a book in the Bale and listen to the ocean or walk on the beach and meet the locals. Have a swim in the pool or enjoy a massage and experience the quieter side of Bali. Sunrises and sunsets are exceptional here, not to mention the starry nights.

We are a 3 hour drive from the airport, half of it through some of Bali's most stunning rice terraces and authentic villages, 1 hour from Bedugal and 15 minutes from Lovina.

Our focus is on customized trips & personal service. We will only accept one booking at a time, based on a minimum of 2 people.

For further information contact **lindadiverjohnston@hotmail.com**



Hawaii's Kona Coast

Photographers and photojournalists Jeremy and Amanda Cuff have published a new PDF feature about Hawaii's Kona Coast which describes in words and images the experiences of diving this unique coastline.

Jeremy said, "We had a really good time diving Hawaii's Kona Coast, and we've enjoyed putting together this feature as a comprehensive overview of the trip. There's really nothing better than the incredible manta ray night dives. "

The Hawaii Kona Coast feature can be viewed/downloaded from Jeremy and Amanda's website. Go to the "text" section, choose "Hawaii" and then scroll to the bottom of the page to find the link.

The website features a wide selection of photography and articles with particular emphasis on scuba diving and travel, although other topics such as abstracts and black and white photography are also included.

www.ja-universe.com

Discover UNDERWATER Photography

SLR-DC Housings

The Ikelite SLR-DC housing takes full advantage of the digital SLR camera's 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. Most Ikelite SLR-DC housings include conversion circuitry that provide TTL compatibility with the latest Ikelite DS Substrobes. Many housings also include a Flash Compensation Module which provides over and under-exposure compensation in the TTL mode and easily allow you to switch to Manual Exposure Mode which provides eight power settings. All exposure compensation is done on the back of the housing. There is no need to access complicated camera menus.

Canon
EOS 5D
EOS 20D
EOS 30D
EOS 40D
EOS 350D, Rebel XT
EOS 400D, Rebel XTi
EOS 450D, Rebel XSi

Fuji
S-5 Pro

Nikon
D40, D40x
D50
D60
D70, 70s
D80
D200
D300

Olympus
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E-410
E-500
E-510
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www.ikelite.com

Ikelite Compact Digital Still Housings for

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Ikelite offers housings for more than fifty different digital still camera models to meet the diverse demands of the underwater photographer community. Ikelite's Compact Digital Still Housings are molded of clear polycarvbonate. Dive while knowing your system is safe and have complete visual access to the camera, LCD, monitor and control functions. Most housings are rated to 60m (200').

Ikelite AF35 AutoFlash Kit

Fits most compact digital camera housings.

Ikelite • Canon • Olympus • Sony

The AF35 AutoFlash replicates your camera's flash for automatic exposure in any situation. You only have to know how to point.
The AF35 AutoFlash kit is an effortless and affordable way to add an external flash to your point-and-shoot camera system. Everything you need to get started is in the box - just attach it to the bottom of your housing and start taking pictures!

New Products

Ikelite SubStrobe DS-160

The SubStrobe DS-160 is compatible with all Ikelite TTL systems and current digital cameras, as well as all older TTL film cameras including the Nikonos system. A variety of sync cords, sensors, and TTL adapters are available to connect to almost any camera system currently on the market.

The SubStrobe DS-160 recycles virtually instantaneously when fired at a fractional power -- whether in TTL or manual mode -- and still in a quick 1.5 sec from full discharge. Use a compatible TTL system and enjoy perfect automatic exposure and an increased number of flashes per full charge. When used in manual settings, the DS-160 offers 10

powers in half-stop increments for precise control over your exposure.

A super-bright built-in 5-watt LED modeling light is perfect for focusing or night diving-- all with minimal drain on the strobe's battery. The beam is even, concentrated, and automatically turns off and on when the strobe fires.

The #4060 DS-160 includes interchangeable rechargeable NiMH battery pack, flash diffuser, and standard mount with through-bolt. The NiMH battery pack requires #4066.1 Smart Charger, not included. An optional #9571.4 mount with 1" (2.5cm) diameter ball allows you to build a custom arm or attach the strobe to TLC or Ultralight arm systems.

Energy Rating 160 wat-sec
Recycle Time 1.5 sec
Angle of Coverage 90 degrees/100 degrees with diffuser
Guide # (ISO 100) feet 76 surface 38 underwater
Guide # meters 24 surface 12 underwater
Color Temperature 4800 degrees K
Full Power Flashes 225 flashes per full charge
Firing Modes TTL, Full, 9 fractional powers
Modeling Light 5-watt LED
Battery Pack NiMH module
Weight 1.3 kg (2.75 lb)
Size 9.6 cm dia x 17.9 cm (3.75" x 7")

www.ikelite.com

SEALUX - HSD9 housing for Panasonic HDC-SD9 EG

The SEALUX HSD9 housing offers the compact high-definition SD camcorder from Panasonic a safe and special-designed housing up to 90 m depth. There are no moveable parts, neither in the camcorder nor in the housing making it especially suitable for the tough underwater video use.

www.sealux.de

Amphibico Phenom Z7LE for the Sony HVR-Z7U

Amphibico is proud to announce the new and upcoming Phenom Z7LE for the Sony HVR-Z7U HDV camcorder. The stand alone housing with no port will be introduced at the incredible low price of $4795CAN.

The “NEW” Phenom Z7LE for the Sony HVR-Z7U is an electronic and mechanical combined housing which gives a complete control of your camcorder while filming your underwater scenes.

www.amphibico.com

Sea & Sea YS-17

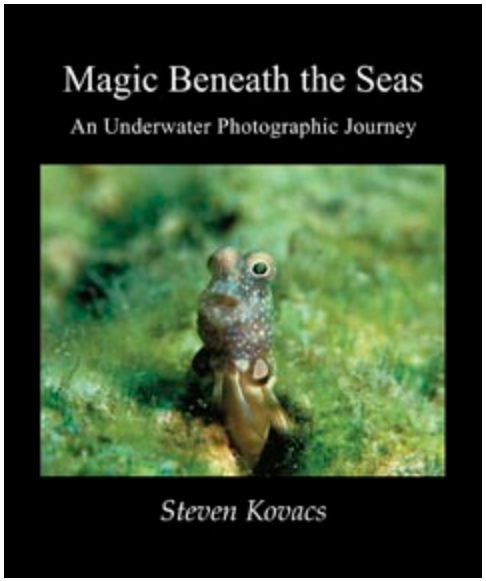
The YS-17 strobe is the smallest of the YS-series of strobes, dimensions and weight are 90x110x140mm / 3.6x4.4x5.6inch (WxHxD) and 425g / 14.9oz respectively.

With the unique TTL circuitry, you can shoot TTL images without complicate operations. In addition, the strobe can be switched from TTL to manual modes (full/half) and vice versa. The guide number is 14 (ISO 100/m on land). The strobe can reproduce the natural colors of the subject where this would not be possible using the built in camera flash alone because of the distance to the subject.

www.seaandsea.com

Magic Beneath the Seas

An underwater photographic journey



NGFL Publishing, Inc. is pleased to announce that the new coffee table book Magic Beneath the Seas by Steven Kovacs is now available.

This full color, hardcover book contains over 300 beautiful images, from the tiny Pygmy Seahorse to the large predatory Great White Shark. The author endeavors to share with the reader the unbelievable range of life and seldom seen behaviors that occur beneath the surface of the world's oceans as seen through the lens of a camera.

This incredible set of images will hopefully allow people to witness something few are privy to and make them think twice about the environment.

Steven Kovacs has been a certified diver since 1987 and an avid underwater photographer since 2001. His passion is close-up photography, especially animal behavior, for which he has placed in numerous international underwater photographic competitions.

Price: $44.95 U.S.

www.underwaterbliss.com

Specialist equipment for scuba diving, snorkelling, surfing, skiing, water sports, hiking and all wet and demanding conditions

www.camerasunderwater.co.uk

UK'S NO.1 UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY SPECIALIST






Photos: Paul Duxfield

CANON CAMERA PACKAGES

Canon IXUS 75 +
WP-DC14 40m housing
- 7.1 Mp camera
- Manual white balance
- Huge 3" LCD
- Wide angle lenses available

£289.99 inc. 1GB card

CANON CAMERA PACKAGES

Canon IXUS 960 IS +
WP-DC19 40m housing
- 12.1 Mp camera
- Manual white balance
- 2.5" LCD
- Wide angle lenses available

£399.99

UNDERWATER STROBE SYSTEMS

Epoque ES-230 DS Auto strobe package
- Guide number 21
- Coverage 85 x 110°
- Depth rated to 45m
- Fiber-optic cable included

From £300.00

WIDE ANGLE LENSES

Inon UWL-105 AD underwater wide angle lens
- 105 degrees angle
- "wet" interchangeable design
- Fits to most housings
- Bayonet adapter not included

£225.00

SLR STROBE SYSTEMS

Ikelite digital strobe packages
- Fits almost all SLR housings
- Full TTL with Ikelite housings
- Depth rated to 90m
- Various arm systems available

From £320.00

WATERPROOF VIDEO SOLUTIONS

Ewa-Marine Flexible housings for camcorders
- Fits almost all camcorders
- Durable PVC material
- Optical glass front
- Depth rated to 10m

From £199.00

SLR HOUSING SYSTEMS

Ikelite housings for SLRs
- Polycarbonate body
- TTL-control for Ikelite flash
- Depth rated to 60m
- Ports not included

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WATERPROOF VIDEO SOLUTIONS

Gates aluminium video housings
- Fits range of camcorders
- Extremely robust const.
- Broadcast quality ports
- Depth rated to 137m

From £1460.00

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Phone: 01404 812277
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LONDON
WC2N 5AQ

Phone: 020 7839 1991
london@camerasunderwater.co.uk

Around the clock with a D2x

by Alexander Mustard

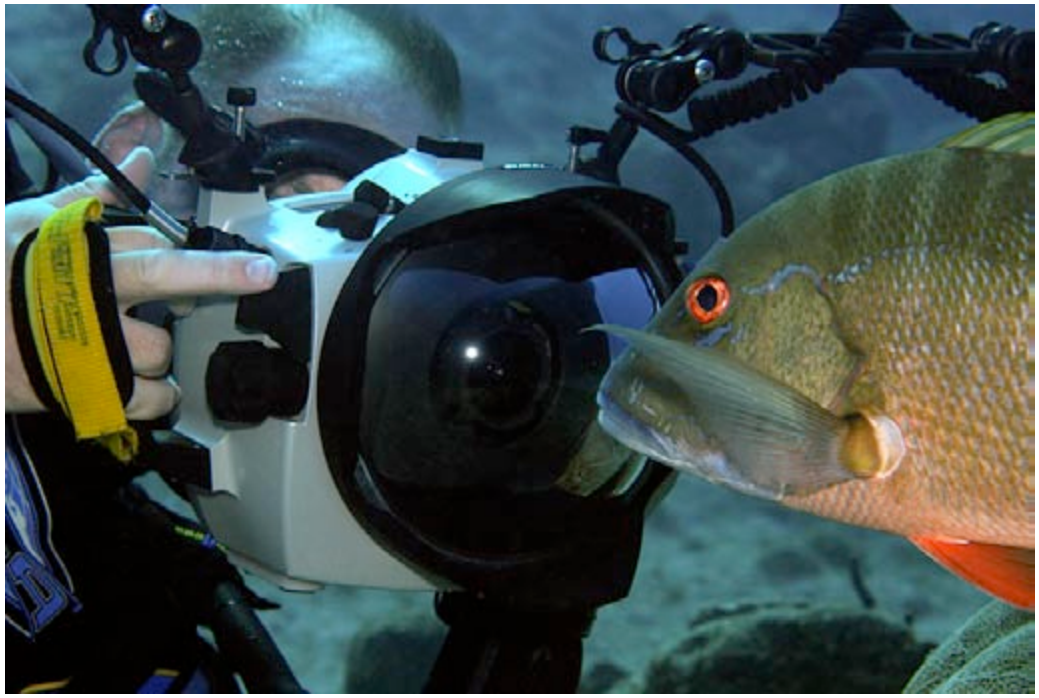
When I bought my Nikon D2X and Subal housing I wrote a review here in the pages of UWP (Issue 23, March 2005). Since then, I have taken over 100,000 underwater photos with my camera and reaching this milestone, last week in the Red Sea, got me thinking. Most camera reviews are first impressions and all housings look great in the showroom. Here I want to share the experiences of life with an underwater camera system. What breaks and how easily problems were fixed, what wears out, what needs replacing and perhaps most important, what does not.

I do not expect many readers will have the time to clock up this amount of use with their camera, but I hope that my experience provides a useful bench mark for judging the lifetime of elements of your own system. They say that hindsight is 20/20 and I am also curious to see how my opinions have changed since that first review. I'd also like to compare how the old dog stacks up against current cameras. The answers will explain why I have not yet traded in. It is a timely moment to comment because it is suspected that Nikon will be announcing some juicy new machines in early July, just after this issue of UWP is released.

I never expected to keep a digital camera this long. I had my D100 from 2002 to 2004 and when buying my D2X on the 25th February 2005 (the day it went on sale) my accountant agreed that it should be written off by the business over a similar two year life-span. Three and a half years in and it is still going strong. I wrote in my original D2X review that it was a very overdue camera for Nikon, but at least they had taken the time to get the product right. And so it has proved with its reliability and longevity of image quality.

So what has gone wrong with the camera? Simply, nothing that has ever stopped me shooting. 100,000 underwater photos with no serious problems is a fact that both Nikon and Subal deserve the utmost credit for. Particularly as I continue to make many of my trips without a backup.

Generally, I travel with the camera inside the housing in my hand luggage, along with lenses and laptop. Strobes, ports etc go in the hold, in a hard Samsonite suitcase. I do not use hard "Pelican" style cases because they weight too much and attract the attention of customs officials and thieves (reading Tim Rock's experiences in Bali these can often be the same person).



The D2X in action. Despite the workload the system has been very reliable and shows little signs of wear. Only the faded camera strap gives away the workload. Photo by Eleonora Manca.

The camera still looks brand new, primarily because it has lived a charmed life sheltered within my Subal. I have not used it much above the surface because I am a poor land photographer. The only time that the camera has been back to Nikon is when I had an issue with the autofocus in South Australia. I jokingly called this "Stephen Frink Syndrome" as the autofocus stopped working with macro lenses (the gag being that Steve shoots pictures that sell, so doesn't do macro). The camera continued to work with wide angle lenses and I went on to shoot the sealion image in this article, before returning home to get it fixed. Nikon UK identified the

problem as “corrosion on AF CCD and bayonet” a replacement costing £255, which suggests life in an around the ocean took its toll.

Within the last month, while in Lembeh, the push-button latch on the flashcard door has begun to stick. Again I think that this is caused by salty fingers. I must dry my hands before I impatiently harass the camera to download my photos. I tend to download after each dive, and usually check the main o-ring and any others that I disturb (e.g. ports). I won’t always re-grease them, but I will wipe the sand off.

I still have the original battery, although I actually bought a spare in 2006, which has become my main one. For the first three years, I had only ever used one memory card with the camera. In February I upgraded from 4GB to 8GB because I went to shoot manatees, and knew I’d been spending hours in the water without a chance to download. A 4GB card has space for 199 RAW shots and a 8GB 398. Since then I have only used the 8GB. After each dive I reformat in the camera and have never had a card go down or lost any images.

Subal’s ND2H, mine is one of the pre-ND2 housings, has been fantastic. The controls feel as accurate now as when I bought it from Ocean Optics in London. I never soak the housing in fresh water, preferring just a quick dip in the sweet-stuff after dives. This is not an ideal strategy and is based on my personal paranoia , which comes from seeing too many cameras flood in the rinse tank.. However, there is no corrosion on the housing. I have seen much newer housings from other brands look much older. I am still using the original o-rings in the housing and on all the ports. The faded strap on the handle is the main give-away to the workload. The

Image 9315. I have used the D2X to shoot three books, Reefs Revealed (2007), The Art Of Diving (2006) and Dive Red Sea (2007) and have been lucky enough to pick up quite a few awards. These snappers won in Shell Wildlife Photographer Of The Year 2006. Nikon D2X + 17-35mm. Subal housing. Subtronic Alphas. 1/100th @ F6.3. ISO 100.

Image 78281. This image was taken while my autofocus refused to work with macro lenses. It continued to work perfectly with wide angle lenses even when the subject was strongly backlit. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm. Subal housing. Inon Z240s. 1/250th @ F8. ISO 100.

Image 37764. UWP Editor Peter Rowlands came with me on my first trip with the D2X to the Red Sea and has been a regular buddy to me and my camera. Here Peter (top) poses with the Carnatic wreck (bottom). Nikon D2X + 10.5mm. Subal housing. Subtronic Alphas. 1/30th @ F7.1.ISO 100.

Image 81289. Photographing manatees meant changing memory cards for the first time in three years. 4GB was replaced by 8GB. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm. Subal housing. Subtronic Alpha Pros. 1/125th @ F8. ISO 100.

base of the housing is a bit scratched and the rubber feet are a little worn down, mainly from dragging the housing into the water when shore diving.

The only adjustment I have made to the housing was to the flash circuitry, when I first got the housing. The original problem was very strange and only occurred with certain strobes (e.g. Subtronics, Sea & Sea YS350), which for some reason caused a feedback that meant some images would not write to the card. I fixed the problem by simply disconnecting the ready light wire, so that only the ground and trigger were connected. I published the solution on Wetpixel. It was a confusing problem and National Geographic photographer Brian Skerry wrote to me to say it had been confounding him, the Nikon reps, his housing dealer and the Nat Geo camera techs. Surprisingly other Nikon's do not have this problem. Most manufacturers now supply their D2X housings wired accordingly, so most users were not exposed to the issue.

The only repair required for the housing was my fault. While on a liveaboard in Thailand this April, I dropped the rear of the housing, which struck my strobe at precisely the angle to snap the internal shaft of the Delete push-button control. The whole button fell out. It is disconcerting being able to look through a hole in your housing in the middle of a trip. My friends were full of helpful suggestions. David Barrio proposed that I should drill another hole in the bottom of the housing to let the water back out. Others pointed out that I had taken too many bad pictures and I had weakened the delete push button through excessive use. It's true that not all of the 100,000 would impress the judges at Antibes. I was able to fix the control in the field simply, replacing the broken shaft with a washer to hold the button in place, kindly donated by Anthony Holley. The delete control was out of action for the rest of the trip, not a big concern with a 8GB card. Subal sent me a replacement part, free of charge, on my return and it took about one minute to fix.

I have had drops of water in the housing a couple of times and one almost catastrophic flood. All result from the same issue: me using non-Subal ports. Subal provide ports to fit a multitude of lenses, but I am always try to push my photography forward regularly trying unusual lens combos and this inevitably means port solutions that are not "off the shelf". I have done 100s of dives with non-standard Subal ports and have only had a couple of problems. They are odds I am prepared to play. The only near catastrophic flood occurred this year in Thailand, when I was using a special fisheye port designed and built by Peter Scoones. However, I was using the port with a plastic extension ring (not how Peter intended it to

be used) and with the expansion of the plastic in the hot Thai temps, gush, immediately as I descended the water flooded in. I am glad my Scubapro Twin-Jet fins are powerful! It is not just great white sharks that can breach. Thankfully weather sealing on the camera meant it survived these handful of indiscretions. I still have not had a flood with any Subal while using proper Subal ports!

I have suffered a bit more with the reliability of accessories. Most lenses have been fine. My Sigma 28-70mm F2.8 died in Bali last summer: the aperture would no longer stop down. The quoted repair cost justified buying a Sigma 17-70mm, instead. Result! The biggest problem I have had with the system have been my Subtronic strobes, which have broken-down regularly, loosing their manual powers and reverting to full power. They rarely last more than 5000 shots before they have to go back to Germany. I am actually not as fussed by them breaking as the time it has taken for them to be serviced (four months is the record). I am using old Subtronics (Alphas and Alpha Pros) designed for film use and I do accept that they are now being asked to work much harder than intended. Curiously, the problem only affects one strobe of each pair and it is always the same one (irrespective of which synch cords I use or which side of the housing I attach it to). The two good strobes, sadly not a matched pair, have never gone wrong. My feeling is that it is the replacement part that keeps failing. My Inon Z240 strobes have never gone wrong. Strong like bull.

Looking back at the original review a few things stand out. I think my expectations of high ISO performance have increased and I am less impressed with the D2X than I was in 2005. Cameras like Canon's 5D and Nikon's D3 have obliterated the point of reference I had three and half years ago. I only ever shoot the D2X at ISO 100 to 200. Even at 400 noticeable noise is creeping in. Most underwater photography is base ISO, so this isn't really an issue. I also note that I promised myself Subal's GS viewfinder in the original review. I never got round to buying that! I am happy with the standard view.

The D2X LCD screen is still good, but it's definitely inferior to the latest cameras like the D3 and D300. I should state for those reading this in the future that the D3 and D300 are, at the time of writing, the current Nikon Pro bodies. I still find the D2X autofocus cutting edge. Every single image I have taken with the D2X has been on autofocus. I have never even used the AF lock lever on my Subal. One of my disappointments with the D3 and D300 has been a lack of the grouped AF mode,

After more than 90,000 images my Subal needed a repair, but only because I dropped the back of the housing. I was able to hold the snapped button on with a homemade washer and continued diving.

Image 38518. I used the D2X to develop the Magic filter, which has enabled me to take some of my most original underwater photos. Nikon D2X + 12-24mm. Subal housing. Magic Filter. 1/80th @ F5.6. ISO 200.

which I use for almost all my photographs. For those who want to get technical I primarily use continuous autofocus in group dynamic, pattern 1 with closest subject priority. This mode works very well with the D2X's AF, but does not work well on the D200, with its less powerful AF system. I switch to other AF modes when subjects require them.

So how does the D2X stack up against Nikon's current cameras. Personally I don't see much merit in the D3 for my underwater photography. It is a phenomenal land camera, but its strengths seem less suited to underwater use. It seems worse for wide angle and macro than a DX camera like the D2X or D300. There is no fisheye zoom, most users are finding that wide angle rectilinear lenses are suffering with blurred corners behind dome ports (particularly the 14-24mm, which is fabulous on land) and macro lenses have less depth of field for the same subject size in the 12 megapixel frame. At base ISO the image quality is no better than the D2X or D300. The 14 bit A/D conversion is a step forward, but its contribution is not easily spotted in real world images. The D3's phenomenal high ISO performance is valuable to photographers who shoot available light images in dark waters, such a deep or temperate water wrecks. I don't do a lot of that.

Ever since Nikon has introduced the D3, there has been surprising amount of honesty in photographic discussions about the merits of full frame sensors underwater. When only Canon had full frame digital, Canon users would only ever say how much better full frame is compared with APS-C sensors. Now Nikon has full frame too, it is no longer a Canon versus Nikon issue and discussions seem to be more objective. Here are a couple of recent quotes from Wetpixel's forums: Walt Sterns: "when I was shooting the 5D, I was not able to find

Image 4288. The D2X autofocus speed and modes really improved my fish photography, this was taken on my second trip with the camera. Nikon D2X + 105mm. Subal housing. Subtronic Alphas. ISO 100.

Image 89232. I am always trying new lenses in an attempt to find fresh images of common subjects. However, non-standard ports have been the only cause of water in my Subal. Nikon D2X + Sigma 150mm + Canon 500D. Subal housing. Subtronic Alphas. 1/200th @ F14. ISO 100.

Image 100594. 100000 on and still going strong! A large female crocodile fish is accompanied by two male suitors. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm. Subal housing. Inon Z240s. 1/160th @ F9. ISO 100.

Image 67392. Under the right conditions the D2X has proved excellent at capturing sunbursts. 14 bit A/D conversion in newer cameras promises to be even better. I am waiting to see some convincing results. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm. Subal housing. Subtronic Alpha Pros. 1/40th @ F10. ISO 100.

a suitable wide angle, other than full frame fisheye, everything else (24mm, 20mm, 17-40mm) at or below F8 gave corners softer than… well you know"; and Eric Cheng "full frame does not seem to be any better for wide-angle, unless you're shooting low light and need the cleaner picture. You have to deal with shallower depth of field for the same field of view and funky edge and dome performance… it doesn't seem to be better for macro, either."

The D300, reviewed my Martin Edge, Dave Harasti and Colin Gans in recent issues of UWP, is a better underwater camera than the D2X and has none of the full frame disadvantages of the D3. It is smaller, has a better LCD and better image quality at high ISO, if required. But for me the gains are not big enough to justify the expenditure of changing. Starting from scratch I would choose the D300 over the D2X, every time.

All that said, full frame will be in my future, but only when a Nikon camera comes to market that give a substantial image quality and resolution increase at base ISO. Canon users already have these cameras in the 1Ds Mk2 & 3. I see no advantage in full frame, for its own sake, but the larger sensor is the only sensible way to resolution of 18+ megapixels without sacrificing quality. There will be compromises in other areas and I'll sure miss the Tokina fisheye zoom.

I have no doubt that the resolving power of 18+ megapixels will be very unforgiving. In my original D2X review I wrote "while it captures images with vivid detail, it also captures your mistakes with the same clarity. Its rather like shooting medium format, if you are sloppy with your photography the D2x will expose you." To some degree I think I was wrong about the D2X, I hadn't factored in the saving graces of the DX format. But I will be heeding that advice when my D2X is finally put out to pasture.

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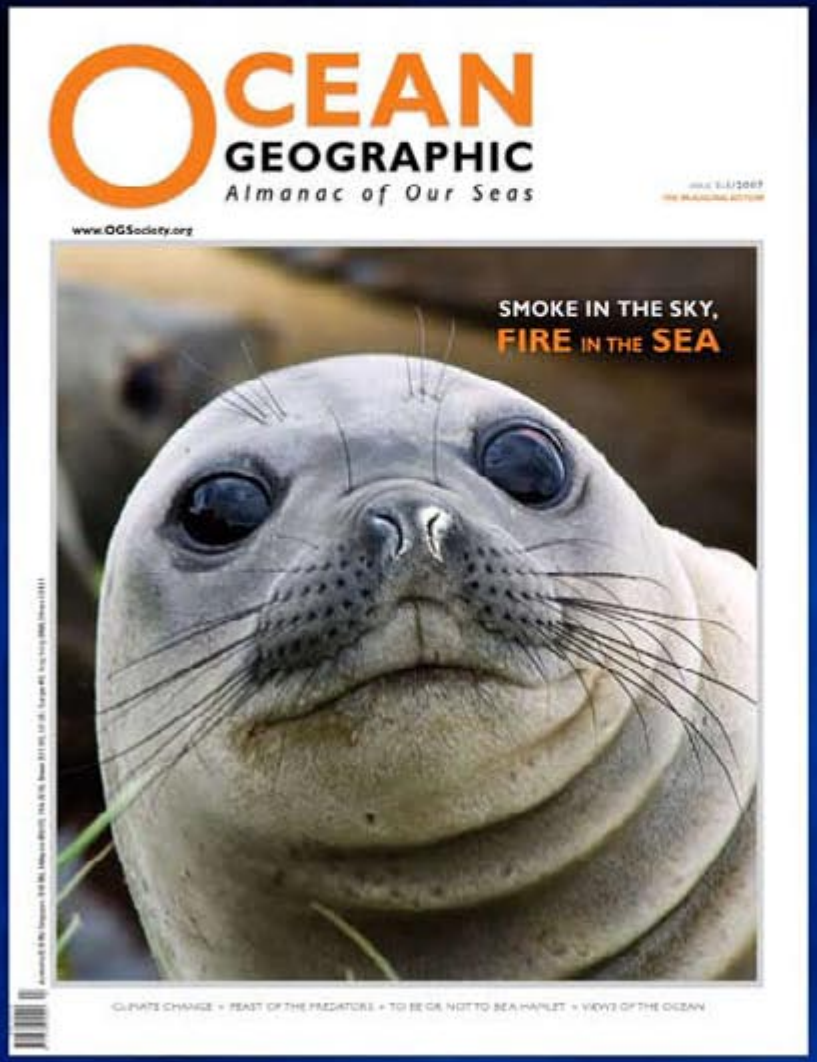

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Akona Computer Pro roller bag

By Michael Wicks

If you're like me, you probably have about a dozen travel bags. I have the 29", 22" and 19" Pullman bags with wheels, 3 duffel bags including one with wheels and one that is large enough for me to fit inside. But for my cameras I have a few more. I have 2 Lowepro's, (waist and backpack), a Northface backpack which I outfitted with custom foam inserts and even a Storm case for my housings. But none of these bags or cases have been able to fulfill all my needs.

It may sound like I'm needy but with all the new airline restrictions coming down the pike I was in search of a bag that would allow me to carry my camera gear and housings in one pack. Although I have seen some professionals describe how they travel with their cameras in the housings I have not quite made this leap of faith. My current configuration for travel is the Storm case for my housings, the lowepro AW Computrek+ for my cameras and computer, Tusa dive bag and a Pullman 22" bag for clothes and personal items. That brings the count to 4 bags; 2 carry on and 2 checked.

But as previously stated this could cost me anywhere from $25 to $50 extra in baggage fees. So obviously my goal is to cut the bag count down.

Akona must have had a crystal ball. The Computer Pro roller bag seems to be the answer to my wishes, at least from their website description. It was time to find out if it was just hype.

Akona's bag is a 22" roll-along carry on bag. Its interior is completely configurable with Velcro dividers, of which some are the most powerful Velcro I've ever come across. In fact, one of the issues I've had with my other bags is that the Velcro has given way at times and I'll find my camera or lenses in other sections. But with such strong Velcro one would wonder how long the interior would last. It would seem Akona was thinking the same thing as the liner is a zipper in zipper out lining. Thus allowing for replacement, should the lining wear out; a very nice touch. The 2 handles are nicely padded and for those rare times where there's no jetway and you have to carry the bag down stairs this is a nice option. Although I not sure why the decision was to only put a handle on

the top and only one side. This didn't hinder me or my travels at all. But it would have been a nice convenience to not have to remember on which side the handle is located.

With 2 board-reinforced long dividers and 7 flexible dividers there are plenty of options for all my gear. The bag also came with 2 corner Velcro retainer pieces to hold down smaller lenses or other equipment. Of course, with such strong Velcro comes strong resistance. Reconfiguring can be a little frustrating but I would rather be frustrated trying to move the dividers than opening my bag and seeing my equipment all over the place.

Akona has included a laptop pocket on the outer area of the bag. The pocket is set up to slide in to a slit on the backside of the bag and is secured with a snap strap. The pocket is big enough to fit my 15" laptop with the external larger battery. This makes me believe it could fit a larger screen laptop but at this writing I didn't have access to one to test. As Akona states on their website the idea behind the external laptop pocket is to give the user the ability to roll the bag on board, unhook the strap, slip out the pocket and then place the bag overhead. No excess zippers to undo and it keeps your laptop a little more protected during take offs and

landings. Again, a very nice feature.

One of the most interesting features Akona built into this new bag is the ability to unzip the outer layer of the bag, flip it around, zip it back in and convert this roll along to a backpack. I have to admit I was a bit skeptical. After all, this is a rather large bag to wear on one's bag. Was this was just a gimmick? My dive bag has the same feature, in fact I was new to diving and it's what sold me on the bag. Ask me how many times I've used is as a backpack. I was also concerned with regards to the fact that Akona only put shoulder straps. No waist or chest strap was included. I was surprised, however, to find that Akona lined this piece with an immense amount of padding. All in seemingly the right places as well. With all my gear in the bag I hefted it on my back and cinched it down. I was pleasantly surprised to find the padding well constructed and the bag didn't seem to pull me backwards; at least not more than my smaller LowePro backpack. I didn't get a chance to test this, however, on the plane trip. One of my theories to test in the future is to see if I can pass this off as a personal bag and still roll on another garment bag. With all the changes in the airline industry and added charges for each bag the more we can consolidate the better off we'll be. I may test this on my next trip.

Ok, so now for the $64,000 question. How does the bag perform during travel?

I was asked to fly out of state to attend and shoot a friend's wedding. The gear for this trip included the following:

Canon Rebel xTi, 100mm macro lens, 70-200mm telephoto lens, vivitar 285 flash,

Mamiya C3 Twin Lens Reflex, TLR viewfinder, 80mm TLR lens, 250mm TLR lens, electronic light meter, and TLR handle.

Total bags taken for the trip were the camera bag and a backpack.

Since this trip was to a landlocked area no dive gear was required (unfortunately). The way I configured the bag, I was able to get all my equipment secured as well as have a compartment for some of my clothes. One thing I wasn't able to get in the bag was my travel tripod. I strapped this to the outside of my backpack. I also used my Lowepro lens caddies from my waist bag to protect the lenses during transit as the 70-200 was too long to fit upright.

As with all flights, I was a little concerned with boarding and being able to secure adequate overhead space. With all my planning the last thing I wanted was to have gate check this bag. In the end this was a non issue as there was plenty of space on the plane. As planned I was able to detach the laptop pocket with ease, "toss" it on my seat and place the bag overhead.

Once seated, I was able to slide the laptop pocket upright under the seat (window seat needed for this move of course). But if you don't have a bulky laptop you can just as easily place the laptop pouch in the seat pocket.

Deplaning was just as easy. The bag is the perfect width for rolling along the aisles. Once I arrived at my destination I opened the bag and all my equipment was in the correct and assigned locations. No damage, no movement.

I have also configured this bag to fit my Canon DSLR, 2 lenses, Ikelite housing, 2 DS51 strobes, Ultralight Arms, focus light. The one thing I was not able to fit in easily was the custom bracket for the Ikelite housing. After viewing the pictures on line of the bag's configuration I see that Akona has the bracket attached to the housing. Since my custom bracket extends higher than the 2 handle Ikelite this did not work for me. The 2 options I had were to lay the bracket over the top of all the equipment (wrapped in some type of cloth) or slide it in between the outer pocket that unzips to make the backpack.

Overall I give the new Akona Computer Pro a 10 out of 10 on design and a 9 out of 10 on functionality. There are only a few things I would recommend as far as

accessories or changes for the future versions of this bag.

1. It would be nice to have some sort of Velcro adjustable or elastic straps to assist in securing lenses. Had I not has the lens caddies I would have been a little more concerned with my larger lenses staying in place.

2. Although there are elastic straps on the outside edge of the bag they were not big enough to strap in a tripod. It would be nice to be able to accommodate a tripod in the future on the outside of the bag.

3. A complaint I have with many roll on bags is that the handle placement is set so that you can't really pull the bag behind you without periodically catching your leg or heel. I've seen some bags that have an extended T so that you can adjust your walking with the bag. Again this is a complaint I have of almost all roll along bags.

4. A third handle on the opposite side of the bag would be nice.

Not withstanding these requests I think the Akona Camera Pro bag is the perfect in between bag for those 3-5 day dive or travel trips where you want to cut down on the number and size of bags. I would recommend to anyone that travels with their camera and dive gear on short trips that this bag would be an excellent solution to your needs. Akona's MSRP is $250.

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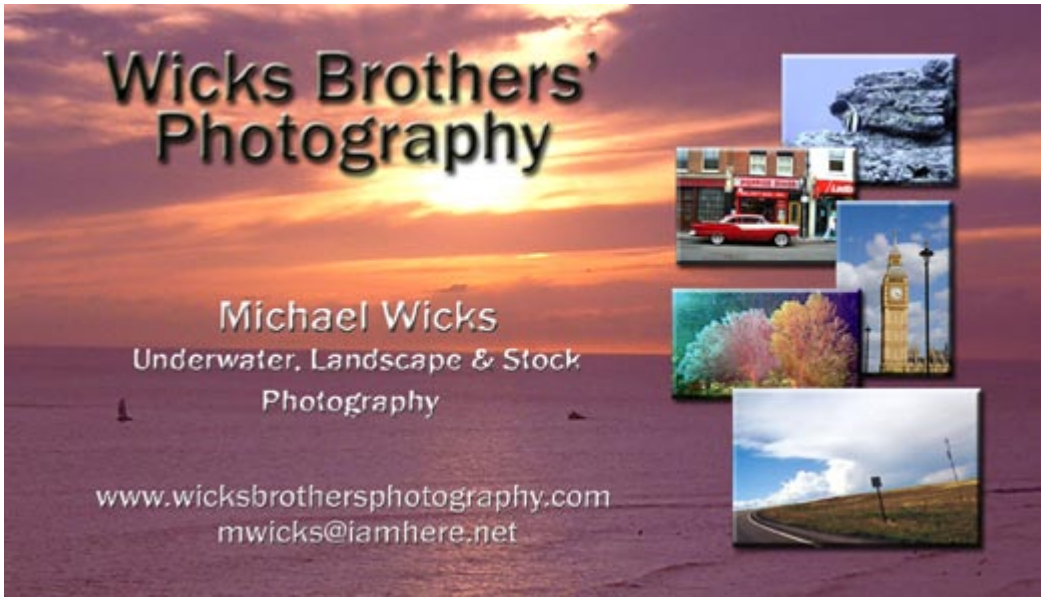


Canon 40D and Hugyfot HFC 40D

by Karin Brussaard

The Canon 40D is the successor to the 30D. A striking feature of the Canon EOS 40D compared with its predecessor is the introduction of Live View. Also almost inevitably is the increase of pixels to 10.5 million; its older brother has to settle for 8.2. A more important difference is the faster processor (DIGIC III) enabling work with 14 bytes. It delivers improved dynamic range and thus nicer pictures. The LCD monitor has increased from 2.5 inch to 3 inch. The amount of pixels on the LCD monitor however remained the same, 230,000. And although Live View could offer a solution for underwater photography, so far its use is still rather limited. You can use the auto focus when you use the AF-ON button. Unfortunately the monitor turns black when pressing the AF-ON button, (since the mirror needs folding up in order to focus) which makes it difficult to decide your composition.

The good thing about the Canon EOS 40D is its fast start-up time. After activating the camera, the filter in front of the sensor vibrates to get rid of dust. It takes not even a second and it didn't give me the feeling I missed a shooting moment. If you do get that feeling however, then it is good to know that the cleansing gets skipped the moment you press the shutter release; this button holds a priority position. And finally the camera is well-sealed and protected against water and dust. The seals have been vastly improved compared to the 30D and you don't have to hide the 40D from a rain shower. It is a welcoming feature in the wet environment of a boat, a place I often find myself in as a diver.

The underwater housing that will take the Canon EOS 40D is the Hugyfot HFC 40D. Hugyfot started building underwater housings in 1953. The latest underwater housing, the Hugyfot HFC 40D appears on the market 55 years later. One can state for sure that Hugyfot has a lot of experience in developing underwater housings and they have been manufactured by Green Force since 2004.

Characteristics of the Hugyfot housings are their round curves. It has a nice round shape and the housing looks more than sophisticated. The matte black combines extremely well with the red colour of the shutter release button. Besides that the housing is astonishingly small. It fits the camera like a glove.

The HFC 40D is milled out of a solid block of aluminum with the aid of a 5-axis CNC milling machine and computer aided design (CAD). It weighs 2649 grams (without camera or port) and has been tested to 300 feet. This is deeper than most other brands. Ain addition, because the housing is made of aluminum, less condensation will appear inside than in a plastic housing. During our dives we encountered large temperature changes - 33 degrees Celsius on the surface and sometimes only 16 degrees on depth - and I was very happy with the latter feature. My housing never suffered from condensation, not once, while my buddy's plastic

underwater housing became completely steamy at times.

Hugyfot offers three ports: a macro port, a wide angle port and a fisheye port. In combination with a port adapter of different lengths many lenses can be used underwater: Canon (100 and 60 mm macro, 10-22, 16-35, 18-55 en 17-40), Sigma (50, 70 en 105 mm macro, 10-20, 12-24 and 17-70) and Tokina (100 mm macro, 10-17 fisheye and 12-24). For other lenses you can contact Hugyfot and they can advise you as to which port and adapter you should use. The ports connect to the underwater housing through a bayonet mount. This system works excellently. The ports are so firm that I was never scared I'd loosen one accidentally. Furthermore zoom rings and focus rings are available to enable using the zoom function of the lenses or to manually focus underwater.

I used the EOS 40D with the Tokina10-17 3.5-4.5 AT-X DX fisheye lens in combination with the fisheye port. This lens is the first fisheye with zoom function. The crop factor of 1.6 makes the lens a classic 16 mm fisheye lens on 10 mm. While increasing the zoom, the angle of view gets smaller and the deviation characteristics of a fisheye lens disappear. The 17 mm equals a 27 mm lens. The fisheye port is suitable for this fisheye lens without adapter. The top and bottom contain a lens hood. Not only very convenient for blocking the reflection of sunlight in the port but also to place the housing upside down on a surface. Thanks to the extended sun hood the round port is well-protected. The port is made of acrylic. Acrylic is just a tad more scratch-prone than glass but it's easy to wipe off the scratches. The fisheye port works excellently with this fisheye lens and does not suffer from any distortion in the corners.

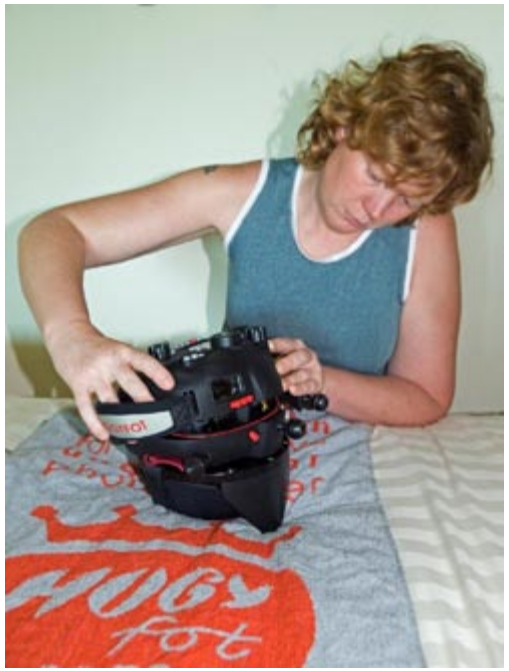
In order to capture the small species I took the Canon EF 100 2.8 USM macro lens and the macro port with me. The minimum focal distance of this lens is 31 cm. Compared with the 60 mm macro lens, you can capture a shrimp in a 1:1 ratio from a larger distance. Normally I would keep the distance between the lens and my object as small as possible because colours underwater fade fast when the distance increases. When trying to capture shy animals a larger distance is an advantage. In that case the flash has to work a bit harder. The combination of the Canon 40D with the 100 mm macro lens delivers a quite fast auto focus.

The HFC 40D is standard equipped with two Nikonos flash connections. Operating the two Sea & Sea YS 110 flashes worked out fine. I used these flashes manually. A TTL converter can be installed in the housing. The built-in leak detector is super sensitive. When it detects the smallest bit of damp it starts beeping. In a country like Panama, with a high humidity rate, this sensitivity may be annoying. For example, once when I was changing the batteries and the memory card, the leak detector started to beep. It surely startled me as I was certain I dried the camera thoroughly before opening it in my hotel room.

The underwater housing incorporates a grip on its left side. On top of the grip the connection for two flash arms is positioned. The second connection is on top of the housing, in the centre. To the right there is a hand strap made of neoprene for your hand. This strap is adjustable and fits large as well

as small hands offering a good hold of the housing. It also facilitates diving with thicker or thinner gloves. You can also swap this strap for a normal grip with flash connection. That way you can use flash arms of equal lengths to operate two flash units at the same distance and the same angle from your object. I had to use a longer flash arm for the right flash unit to manoeuvre the flash in the same position as the left flash unit.

The underwater housing closes with two Allen screws. The manual states you have to tighten the Allen screws normally and not too tight with the included Allen wrench. I am a bit scared; how do I know they are tightened enough? And if I don't do it correctly the underwater housing might get flooded. Pascal Eeckhout of Hugyfot told me just before my departure that I would feel it when the Allen screws are correctly tightened. Somewhat tensed I try to tighten the Allen screws for the first time and I soon discover what Pascal had already told me, that it is easy enough. At one stage both sides of the underwater housing are perfectly fitting together and you can feel that. Testing the now closed underwater housing in the hotel room's washbasin comes out positive I guess; the leak detector does not beep. Now that I can feel it in my fingertips, I am brave enough to open



and close the underwater housing daily and to take it underwater. Closed definitely means closed here.

The standard viewfinder is clear and offers an almost 100% coverage. Hugyfot has developed an optional angle viewfinder that enlarges the image and enables viewing through the lens at an angle of 45 degrees. All camera functions are operable from outside. And what's even more convenient, the functions are also described in miniature on the underwater housing. This is a handy reminder when you don't know the camera inside out yet. Despite the housing being very compact for a DSLR, it is built for big hands. The zoom dial for example has been placed a tad too far away from the hand grip for my female hand to operate it with ease. And that is also the case with the aperture dial on the right side. I just can't reach far enough to operate this dial with my hand caught in the neoprene strap. I literally have to take my hand out of the strap before I am able to change aperture. For people in the possession of bigger hands it won't be a problem. A nice function is the button to detach the lens from the camera. You don't have to open the housing's back but you just have to change the port. And the front of the underwater housing then lets you change the lens. However if you want to change the battery of the camera, you have to take the camera out of the housing completely. It will not suffice to just open and remove the back of the housing.

The combination of the Canon 40D and the Hugyfot HFC 40D is a good one. The underwater housing fits the camera like a glove and is very compact and waterproof to a depth of 300 feet. Its round curves and matte black colour make this housing look beautiful. Unfortunately it is somewhat difficult to operate the underwater housing for people with

small hands. The fisheye port has no obvious distortion and the housing does not suffer from steaming up at all, not even at huge temperature changes. One point of interest is the fact that the camera has to be taken completely out of the underwater housing when its battery needs changing. And the leak detector works too well at times. Live View still needs to be further developed to be of use for underwater photography.

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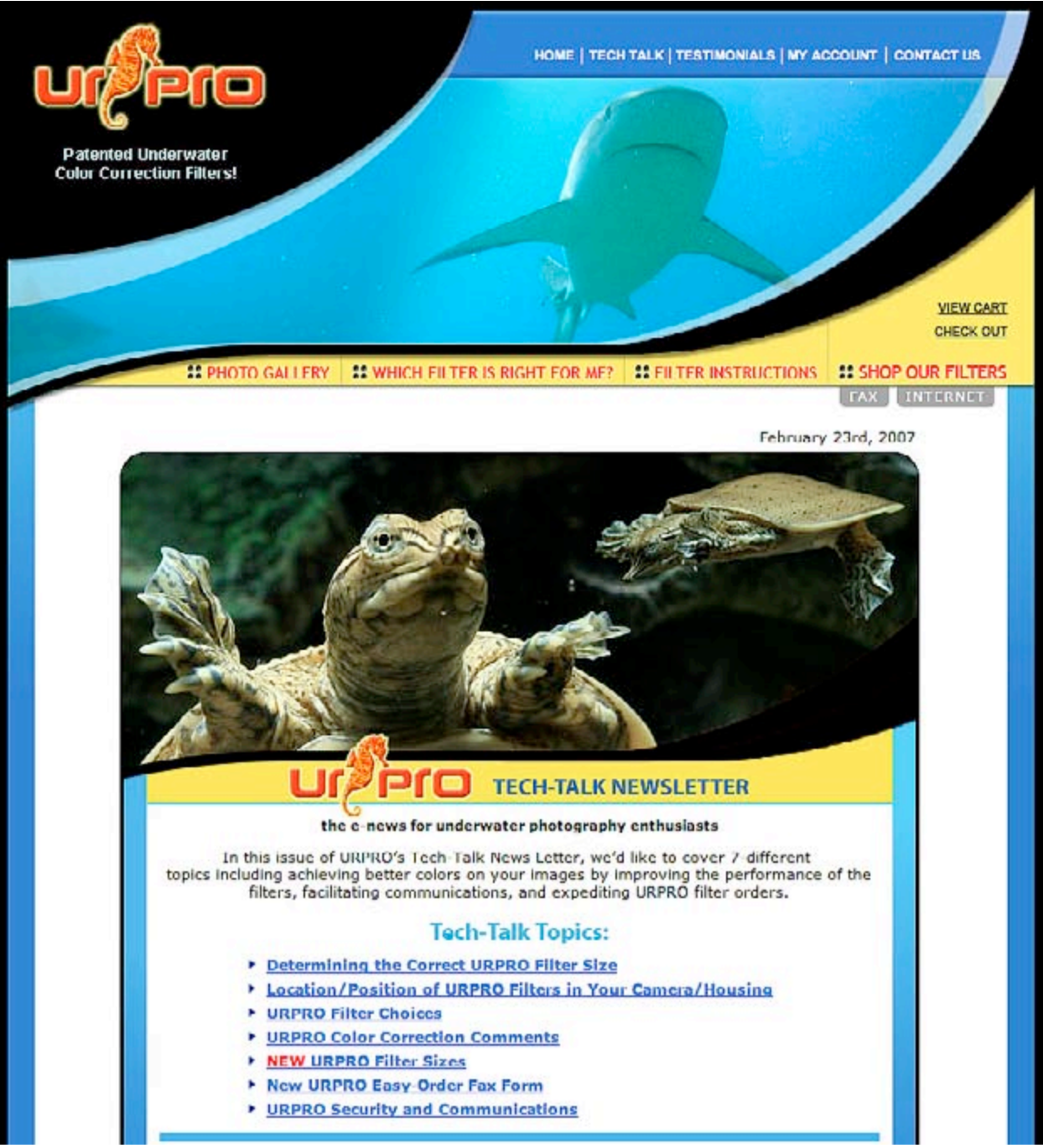

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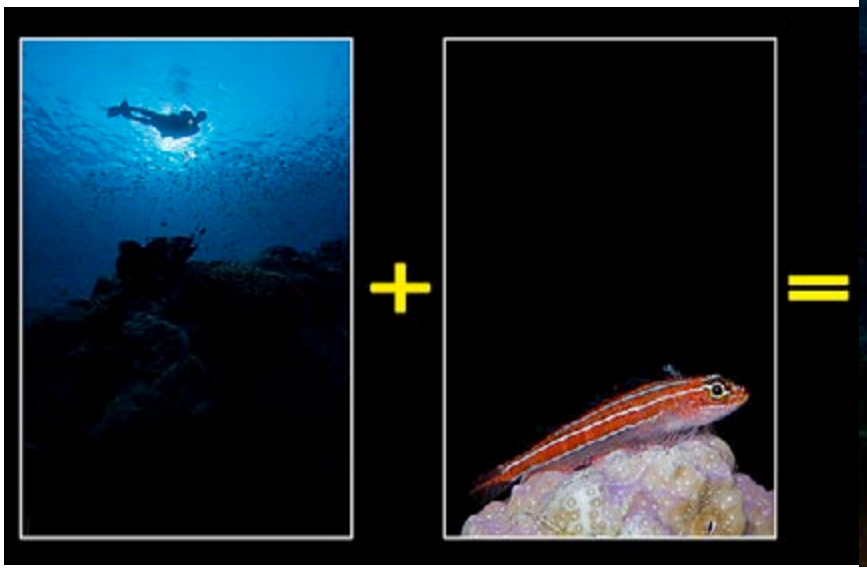
Digital Double Exposures

By Alex Mustard

Double exposures are photographs where we expose the same frame twice, overlaying two separate scenes to create a cohesive and dramatic final image. The technique was popular special effect when film dominated beneath the waves. Peter Rowlands' editorial in the first issue of the original printed Underwater Photography Magazine (from 1987) stated "multiple imaging is the most significant technique to affect underwater photography for a long time".

In 2003, Mark Webster wrote in UWP Issue 14 that he feared Photoshop would spell the end for the technique? He was proved right. Photoshop allows us to combine any images we wish, with precision and control that an in-camera double exposer could only dream of. Surely there is no point in resurrecting such an outdated technique with digital cameras? I decided to find out.

How it was done. The first stage was shooting the background, metering on the blue water and thus rendering the reef at the bottom of the frame in silhouette. Then I shot the triplefin with a macro lens and single strobe. I searched for several minutes before finding one of these common little fish in a suitable pose against open water. A fast shutter speed and small aperture meant the open water was recorded as black. The two frames were then combined in camera using the Image Overlay function. The resulting image is a RAW file, with all the adjustability associated with that format. Nikon D2X + Subal Housing. Frame 1: Tokina 10-17mm, available light, 1/125th @ F11. Frame 2: Nikon 105mm VR, Subtronic Alpha Pro, 1/250th @ F20.



Is it worth it? Double exposures provide a way of creating dramatic forced perspective and limitless depth of field in-camera. But today, with Photoshop manipulation just a few mouse clicks away, is there any benefit in resurrecting this classic in-camera

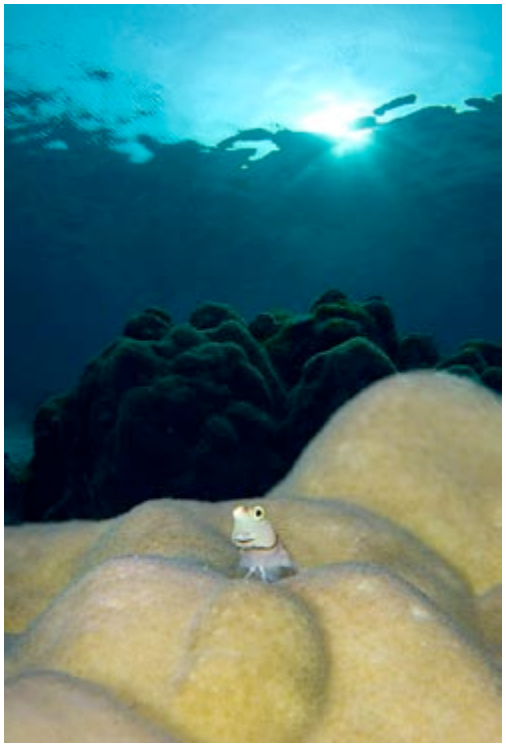
One of the biggest challenges as an underwater photographer is trying something new. It surely comes from our limited time in our chosen realm. Each dive is precious, we had better stick to the tried and tested. I have always believed that creative and innovative underwater photography can only happen when we dive in the right way. Free your diving and your photography will follow… or something like that.

Trying double exposures on digital has been on my mind for ages, but it wasn't until I immersed myself in total diving freedom that I got round to it. I am writing this article from a liveaboard charter in Thailand, with the Bafta and Emmy winning cameraman Peter Scoones. For the benefit of Peter's sequence building we are diving the same dive sites repeatedly. Not just two or three times, but 10 or 20 times. Buddy diving is tolerated, but not encouraged. The pool is open all day. The boat does not move we just go in and out when we choose. Exactly the type of diving required for experimenting.

There are only 8 of us on board and fuelled with a few glasses of wine, after dinner conversation has been fast paced and opinionated. One evening I brought up the subject of trying double exposures on digital and Peter explained how they really became popular underwater when the Pentax LX came out in the early 1980s. This camera allowed you to accurately reload the film so that the images from the second dive exactly overlaid those from the first dive. Scoones is an ideal source for info on double exposures; 21 years ago he wrote the article on the technique that appeared in that first issue of the printed UP Magazine.

From the late 1980s and on into the 1990s double exposing was common, allowing photographers to combine macro foregrounds with wide angle backgrounds to create infinite depth of field images with dramatically forced perspective. Images that were impossible to take in a single shot. Perhaps the most elaborate extrapolation of the technique was in Fotosubs (on-the-day underwater photography competitions) where photographers would use elaborate masks to build contrived prize-winning pictures from three, four, five or more exposures.

Double exposures may have fallen by the wayside in these days of Photoshop, but they are also much less of a fuss with a digital camera than they were on film. There is no need to rewind, mark and reload the film. There is also no need to keep note of which subject we shot on which frame. Nikon digital SLRs have Image Overlay function which enables



Controlling focus. In this image of the blenny I have included too much foreground and the coral behind the fish is out of focus. However the background is in focus, resulting it two points of focus within the frame and a confusing perspective. Simple, single plane foregrounds tend to work best in double exposures. Nikon D2X + Subal Housing. Frame 1: Tokina 10-17mm, available light, 1/100th @ F8. Frame 2: Nikon 105mm VR, Subtronic Alpha Pro, 1/250th @ F16.

Plan, plan and plan. Perhaps the biggest challenge with double exposures is the need to visualise the final image before collecting the constituent parts. In this case a yellow, orange or red Christmas tree worm would have looked much nicer against the blue background. When shooting the foreground section of the images, the blue Christmas tree worm looked great. Nikon D2X + Subal Housing. Frame 1: Tokina 10-17mm, available light, 1/125th @ F11. Frame 2: Sigma 150mm + Canon 500D dioptre, Subtronic Alpha Pro, 1/250th @ F14.

us to browse then combine any two frames on the memory card to create a new RAW file (I am not sure if Canon cameras have this feature). The LCD screen displays the result immediately, allowing us to re-shoot if required. The camera will also allow us to adjust the gain between the two images, to vary their contribution to the final frame. The main thing to watch is that the digital images cannot be rotated, so you must keep your camera in the same orientation.

It is also possible to make double exposures using the Multiple Exposure function, as it was with film cameras, but this is not that useful underwater because, obviously, we cannot change lenses between consecutive shots.

The key to good double exposures has always been planning - to ensure that your two halves combine to a pleasing whole. It can be quite a brain-drain. As Peter Scoones wrote in his original article "Life is not made any easier by trying to produce results this way. Instead of having to frame and compose one subject correctly there are now two to cope with."

When taking double exposures the black areas of the images are the parts that become transparent when images are combined. So it is crucial to make sure that we control the black areas of the frame exactly to avoid ghosting over the details we want to show. The simplest approach is to divide the frame in half and to shoot two images with the black areas filling opposite halves of the frame.

The technique is most easily followed by going through an example. My intention was to recreate the classic double exposure look of macro foreground with a wide angle background in a vertical image. Dive one was for backgrounds and

(Left) Image Overlay. This is Nikon's in camera software for combining images. It allows you to select which foreground you want to combine with which background and to adjust the gain of each. You can even zoom in to check the details of the double exposure before saving it. The main restriction is that you cannot rotate images. This is much more user friendly than using multiple exposure.

(Right) Model on demand. This is a double exposure of two wide angle shots, which is more challenging because of the difficult of getting a black background when shooting a wide angle foreground; I had to stop down to F25. I did not have a model with me when shooting the backlit crinoid, however I was able to add one in-camera using a double exposure. This is a shot that I could have created in a single shot, but instead used my new in-camera model facility! Nikon D2X + Subal Housing. Frame 1: Tokina 10-17mm, available light, 1/100th @ F8. Frame 2: Tokina 10-17mm, 3x Subtronic Alpha Pro, 1/250th @ F25.

I used the Tokina 10-17mm fisheye and persuaded our dive guide, John, to pose for me. Shooting without strobes it only took five minutes and had a variety of silhouetted backgrounds, with black shadows in the lower half of the frame ready for my macro subjects. I took the photos in the late afternoon, when the sun was streaming down the reef,. I exposed for the open water and the reef in the lower half of the frame was in dark silhouette.

Subtle combinations. This image is a crop of the double exposure of the triplefin. Note the details of the background visible through the dorsal fins of the fish. The subtle and natural combining of some images as a result of double exposures would be challenging and time consuming to reproduce in Photoshop. Nikon D2X + Subal Housing. Frame 1: Tokina 10-17mm, available light, 1/125th @ F11. Frame 2: Nikon 105mm VR, Subtronic Alpha Pro, 1/250th @ F20.

Then on the next dive I jumped in to shoot the macro foregrounds, I used the Nikon 105mm VR and searched for subjects that I could place low in the frame and isolate against open water to leave the top half of the frame black. It is best to plan around common subjects, as finding one that can be photographed from the right angle is essential for success. I also used a fast shutter speed and careful aiming of a single strobe to avoid lighting anything else in the frame. Many photographers favoured snoots for exact control of the lighting of the macro shots in double exposures, which seems like good advice. Unfortunately I don't have one with me in Thailand.

As I began to shoot macro foregrounds I started trying the overlays. It only takes a couple of seconds to process the image – and if one background does not work you can just try another! It is well worth trying a few overlays while underwater as it quickly teaches you the types of images that work best. After trying a few I decided to re-shoot my foregrounds trying to avoid any out of focus areas behind the main subject, to maintain the limitless depth of field look I was after. The images look a bit weird where the foreground is in focus, the middle ground is blurred and the background is sharp again!

The technique is easy to implement and came in useful later in the trip when I was in need of a model. I have also been experimenting with backlighting crinoids and soft corals and while the images were fine technically I felt that they looked unfinished as photographs. One of the downsides of solo diving is that there is nobody around to persuade to pose when you need them, but luckily I still had those backgrounds with John still on my camera. So I stopped down, increased my shutter speed and photographed the backlit crinoids with black backgrounds in the middle of the day. Then added the backgrounds in camera. It took a few attempts to get the compositions correct, it would have been much easier if I had had someone to pose, but using the image overlay function I was able to get the shots I wanted there and then.

So, in conclusion I would say that the technique works well on digital and is much more user friendly than on film. To my eyes the resulting forced perspective images do look contrived and a little dated, given their popularity 10-20 years ago. But everyone on board seems to really like their dramatic perspective and the opportunity to see shots like these again. In addition, the images have been an interesting challenge and great fun to take.

But the big question remains is there any point in doing them when the shot could so easily be reproduced in Photoshop? Most of the time, probably not, but there are a couple of exceptions. It is certainly a useful technique for On-The-Day or other competitions that do not allow image manipulation in Photoshop. Perhaps more interesting is that when I looked in detail at a couple of the images I noticed that the subtleties of the overlay could not be achieved easily in Photoshop. Have a look at the crop of the triplefin photograph and note the detail of the overlay where the background details of the reef are still visible through the semi-transparent dorsal fins of the fish. OK, so most viewers would never notice this, but this natural look would be very time consuming and much less fun to do in Photoshop. Maybe there is some use in reviving this old technique after all?

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Marsa Shagra

Best kept secret in Egypt

By Austen Bannister

I have been diving in Egypt for sixteen years now and must admit to being a dyed in the wool safari boatman. So it was a big change in tradition when we decided to try Marha Shagra, admittedly with slight trepidation. Marsa Shagra is a twenty-minute mini bus ride from Marsa Alam airport, a vast improvement to the two-hour plus bus trips that had to be endured to meet up with a dive boat a few years ago.

The first impression of the Red Sea Safari dive centre is one of space and quiet order, all the amenities are there but not on top of each other. There is a warm welcome at reception where you are separated from your luggage and your passport; the first is off to your accommodation and the second into the safe. You then follow your luggage.

The accommodation is in four formats, the tents, the larger royal tents, the Mandarah huts and the larger Madyafa chalets, if like us your interest is underwater photography and you bring everything and the kitchen sink, your best choice is the chalet. The facilities are simple, clean, spacious and modern.

My buddy Ralph Mortimore and I arrived in the evening so were able to unpack at our leisure and then wander down to the restaurant. This is large and airy with a sizable patio facing the sea, a great place to sit and enjoy a beer at the end of your diving day. The food is good, wholesome and caters for all tastes.

Next morning once you have arranged your kit in the dive hut, you receive a detailed briefing on how the dive centre is run; this includes the layout of the surrounding reefs. There is a shallow slopping beach that runs out to the boat pontoon where the ribs are moored, the channel then runs straight out for two hundred meters to the main fringing reef. So you have six dive options, first you can rib out to the main reef and then be collected and rib back, next you can rib out to the main reef and swim back, finally you can swim out and back and of course this covers both North and South reefs.

So you have collected your weights, tank and set up your kit, you are ready for the shake down dive,

which if you are experienced enough is an unguided sixty minute dive, swimming out and back, if you wish you can have a dive guide. The last thing to do is write your name, dive plan and the time you intend to spend underwater on the big whiteboard in the dive hut. The system seems relaxed, but if you over run the dive time you put on the board by ten minutes, they will and do come looking for you.

The rest is up to you, when it says unlimited diving that is what you get, you can dive as many times as you wish and for as long as you like, lie in or start early, your choice. As photographers our dive profiles were long and shallow, so when we announced that we were diving for two hours we got some funny looks but were left to get on with it. Absolute photographic heaven, you can stay in the same spot if you wish for two hours and if your not happy with the result go back to the same spot next day and do it again, try that on a safari boat.

There are also trips organised to different sites like Elpinstone, a twenty minute rib ride away, or you can go by truck to reefs or lagoons further north or south. We decided to try a trip to a new unknown wreck two hours south. It was a very pleasant experience, everything is arranged for

your comfort, there is shade on the beach for you to kit up in, the dive guide leads you to the wreck and then leaves you to get on with it, ours lay on his back and blew perfect bubble rings. Then it's back to the beach to change tanks and have a rest, ready for the second dive, after which a packed lunch is served before the trip back to Marsa. The wreck is a must; it is at a depth of eighteen meters, with fantastic visibility, no current and is covered in the most beautiful soft corals, a photographers dream.

Marsa Shagra caters for nearly all diving needs, whether it is training or the offshore reefs for the more adventurous, we spent most of our dives on the outside reefs that offered wall dives, hard coral gardens, caves and sandy gullies and plains. The incredible thing is you can visit the same site any number of times and it is different each time. And yes you do see sharks, we saw two, one white tip reef shark came and had a look at what we were so interested in photographing, sadly not him though, wrong lens!

At the end of the day you can sit in the beach side hut they call the Shade or on the restaurant patio over looking the sea and enjoy the view. Further down the beach is a café bar where you can sample authentic Bedouin coffee heated with ginger in an earthen wear jar on charcoal. A great taste but don't expect to sleep that night. The café also boast two little regulars, Pop and Corn, two of the smallest mice I have ever seen.

So would we go back again? Most definitely yes, the diving is very good, the accommodation is very comfortable and the Red Sea Safari team are hard working, experienced and very friendly. We also got some good photos, well, I think so.

Land based or Live aboard? Well, what ever floats your boat, but we shall be going back, it is good to try something new once in a while and even better when the result is good.

Austen Bannister

Dumaguete Delights

by Mark Webster

The number of divers visiting the Far East has gradually increased over recent years as they seek a new experience or have a desire to see the amazing marine diversity that the area has to offer. The big name destinations of Komodo, Raja Ampat or PNG often grab the headlines but there are hundreds of other locations boasting excellent diving and marine life. One of the alternative destinations now building a name for itself in Europe is the Philippines, which covers a vast area and offers substantial variety both under the water and topside throughout its more than 7000 islands. I have long planned to visit the Philippines and the opportunity arose at last early this year to sample the diving – so this short piece will hopefully whet the appetite of anyone considering this destination.

From Europe the journey is long but relatively painless and there are a number of air lines that fly directly to Manila from European hub airports. Dumaguete on Negros Island was our final destination and is reached by a further one hour flight from the domestic terminal.

Most of the resorts and dive centres are a short trip from the airport, through the outskirts of Dumaguete city and along the coast, on good roads through lush tropical vegetation. Many of them are totally secluded with their own beach front – we had chosen the Atalantis resort which was no exception and a world away from our daily hurly burly

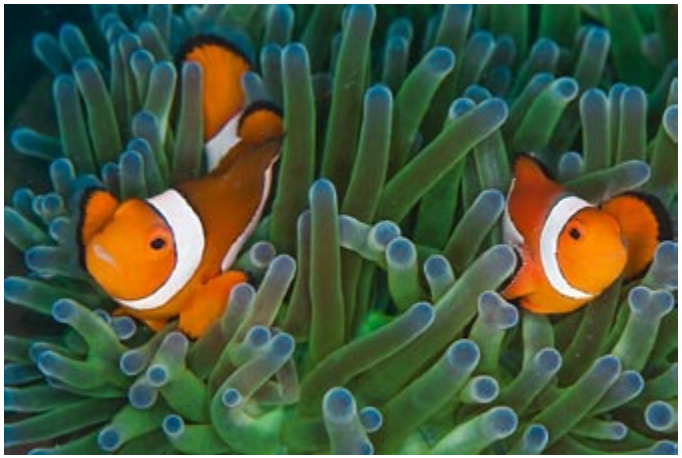
The rooms at the Atlantis resort are on two levels and designed to match the local building techniques and architecture. Inside they have all modern conveniences we have come to expect. Nikon D200, 18-200mm zoom, programme mode.

existence in the UK. This is a 'full service resort' which provides a complete full board package with diving and so you can indulge yourself totally diving every day or (as many do) make occasional excursions to Dumaguete city or take scheduled tours and activities in the local area.

Negros is one of the largest islands in the Philippines group and Dumaguete is a small university city situated on the south eastern tip – there are in fact seven universities and colleges are situated here. Negros is a beautifully lush and tropical island and is well known for its sugar cane production in the north and the coconut plantations in the south.

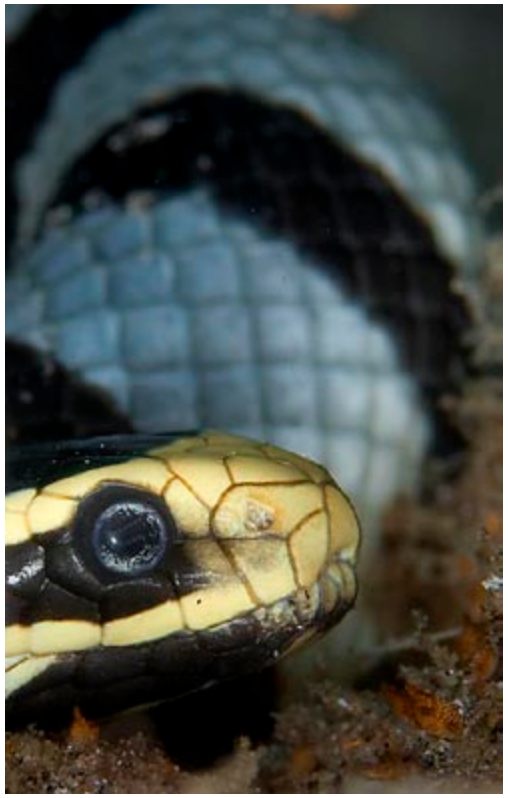
The authorities have been quick to recognize the value of the unique marine environment here and the fringing coastline has been an established marine sanctuary for several years as is nearby Apo island. This of course attracts divers and

The deck area of a typical 'banca' dive boat. Nikon D200, 18-200mm zoom, programme mode.



As you would expect there are anemones and clown fish to be seen on most dives, of at least four or five different species, which are a subject hard to resist. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 60mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f11 @ 1/60

The coral formations at Apo Island are perfect for an ultra wide or fish eye lens. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini's, ISO 100 f11 @ 1/60



Sea snakes are commonly seen on the reef dives in this area and show no fear or real interest in divers, although they do occasionally surprise you by 'snaking' between your legs when you least expect it! Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f11 @ 1/125

These triple fin blennies are one of the most common species found on coral and sponges. If you are patient enough or get lucky they will yawn like most other fish species. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon wet lens, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f16 @ 1/125

photographers, but the area also attracts many tourists seeking land based activities or just looking to kick back, relax and enjoy the slow pace of life here.

The resort itself offers very comfortable accommodation built to mimic the local style of architecture but with all the modern amenities we have come to expect. Most of the rooms are a few steps from the beach along a path that winds through lush tropical gardens which are tended and tidied throughout the day. The bar and restaurant are right on the beach adjacent to the reception and dive centre. The majority of guests come here on a full board package and will not be disappointed with the menu which is a first class mix of Asian and international cuisine.

The dive centre is well organised and managed with individual locker space for each guest, separate rinse tanks for dive gear and cameras and a dedicated camera room with 110/220v stabilized power, work benches and shelf space below. So there is no need to carry your camera gear from your room each day, just set it up the day you arrive and tend to the charging, lens and card changes between dives.

The majority of the diving is from local banca outrigger boats that arrive each morning on the beach front a few steps from the dive centre. We softies are of course not expected to carry the heavy bits of equipment – your dive gear will be rigged for

There is a resident school of bat fish at the DuCoMi pier who cruise around following the visiting divers, making them an irresistible subject. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Mini's, ISO 100 f11 @ 1/20

Often when shooting macro we do not look up into the water column until the end of a dive – I only spotted this tiny jelly fish as I began the ascent from a muck dive. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 60mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f11 @ 1/30

Even a common reef fish like this yellow chromis can make a striking image with the right negative space behind it. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f16 @ 1/125

There is a large population of frog fish at the DuCoMi pier – our guide found seven on one dive – which always make excellent macro portraits. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 60mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f16 @ 1/125

you and taken to the nominated boat and you simply follow with fins, mask and camera kit. The boat crews are very helpful and cheerful and pay particular attention to ladies in the party and will move camera gear to a safe spot away from the forward dive deck during loading. If you are going on one of the offshore trips then watch your camera kit if the weather turns windy to prevent it sliding. Each dive boat is also equipped with an open top 'thunder box' loo on the stern, which is an unusual experience but you will never get caught short!

Many of the dive sites are within 10-20 minutes of the resort along the coast. There are several marine reserve areas that are marked out by roped lines of buoys and the boats are not allowed to enter these areas. So a dive will normally start just outside a sanctuary area and then route through it to finish outside for pick up by the boat. You can follow the guide (recommended for their excellent spotting skills) or elect to dive as a buddy pair. Groups are small and the guides are both knowledgeable and patient with photographers and enjoy the challenge of finding a particular species for you. The topography consists primarily of low reefs on a gently sloping seabed reaching maximum depths of 25m or so. Adjacent to the sanctuary areas are more traditional 'muck dive' seabed conditions which are very productive, but it is best to have the help of a guide to find the elusive subjects.

I think that this yawning lion fish was objecting to his reflection in my dome port and was trying to warn off a challenger. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm zoom Subtronic Mini's, ISO 100 f16 @ 1/60

Jaw fish are commonly seen at the edges of the reefs in rubble areas and if you are lucky you may find one brooding his eggs in his mouth. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100, f11 @ 1/60

Another feature between the sanctuary areas are a number of artificial reef programmes constructed mostly from old car and truck tyres, a couple of cars and a fishing boat. This does not sound very inspiring to begin with, but I was amazed at how much marine life these structures attract, the levels of coral growth on them and the range of critters to be found and photographed.

Right in front of the resort is a 'house reef' dive which includes eel grass beds, a large coral bommie, an artificial 'tyre' reef and an adjacent sanctuary area. The last dive of the day and night dives are often made here, but it is well worth some additional dives to investigate the life here, but watch out for the healthy population of Inimicus scorpion fish.

My favourite local site also turned out to be man made. With prior booking you can dive on the Dumaguete Coconut Mill (DuCoMi) pier which is just a fifteen minute boat ride from the resort. The dive comes in two parts – a small mooring 'dolphin' and the main pier complex some 50m apart. The vertical steel legs are bathed in a gentle nutrient rich current and are a magnet for marine life. There are spectacular growths of soft corals, sea fans and sponges and numerous invertebrates species which contrive to cover every square inch of steel work. There is an amazing array of critters to be found here and on the 'muck' sand bank which leads down to the piers and the guides delight in finding a new subject every couple of minutes – we had no less than seven frog fish within half an hour on one dive. In fact I thought this site so good that we made five dives here during our stay!

If you need a fix of pristine coral and wall diving then the day trip to Apo island is well worth it. Transit time is around 45 minutes and there are generally three dives planned for the day. The lunchtime break gives

you the opportunity to wander a little onshore and explore the village and perhaps buy some gifts or a T shirt from the local ladies who will definitely see you coming. The island community here established a marine reserve in 1982 and this certainly shows in the condition of the coral reefs which are very lush in the shallows and top of the reef walls. There are the usual coral reef inhabitants and fish here, numerous sea snake sightings and turtles, but not a lot of big fish action. There is a resident school of big eye trevallies at one of the sites named Mamsa and some tuna are seen cruising by in the blue, but it is the coral formations that will impress you most.

A week of diving here passes by all too quickly but is enough time to get a flavour of the dive sites available and perhaps revisit several of them. The diversity of species is on a par with many other locations which offer a mix of coral reef and muck diving and there is more than enough subject variety to keep even the most avid photographer happy. There are countless subjects for a macro lens in the 50-100mm range but also some good wide angle opportunities particularly at Apo Island and on the DuCoMi pier. The resort and dive centre staff are very attentive and willing to put together a programme that suits your needs. If you need a break from diving there are a number of alternative tours to take or you can spend some time in the spa having the aches and pains of four dives a day eased from your body – my wife selected this option whilst leaving me to endure the diving schedule!

Mark Webster
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Not your average critter spotter

By Mike Veitch

Underwater photographers know the importance of having a great critter spotter when diving in far flung regions of the world. As one of the more popular underwater photography destinations on the planet, Indonesia is home to some of the most proficient and famous critter spotters of all. Many photographers return to locations such as Komodo, Lembeh, and Bali in order to work with the same guides time and again. However, upon returning to a resort the following year, it is not uncommon to find these great guides have moved on. Reasons for this can be attributed to "burn out" or better income potential in a different business. A third reason is a little more in depth and not often discussed. With many dive shops there is little chance of upward potential for locally trained staff beyond the divemaster level as the price of becoming an instructor is too high for the local standard of living.

Fortunately, there is a growing trend throughout South-East Asia to reverse this trend and train locals in all aspects of the dive business. Recently, I had the opportunity to attend an instructor development course in Bali, Indonesia to help prepare five local Indonesians on their path to become fully certified scuba instructors. As four of the five worked for Bali Hai Diving Academy, I asked managing partner Michael Cortenbach why he felt so strongly about training his local employees to the highest level of recreational diving and what it meant to his company and the local community:

"We are one of the few companies to pay for all training, renewals, and insurance of all of our local staff. There is both a legal and ethical requirement to train locals in all aspects of our industry. We have always supported our staff in the way of training and further education as we strongly believe in Bali as a top diving destination. In order to grow the industry to its full potential it is necessary to have a broad base of Indonesian professionals involved. This is not only in the way of certification and knowledge

development but also support and encouragement from management by providing the tools, guidance, and opportunities to further develop skills. Even if they don't stay with our company and join another or start their own business, there is a benefit to the Indonesian diving industry as a whole by increasing the talent pool that will allow them to train other Indonesians and tourists."

How does making a dive guide into an instructor benefit a visiting underwater photographer? For me, the benefits of it were easy to see. The development class lasted over four weeks with daily knowledge development, in-water work, and most importantly: working on presentations, briefings, and leadership skills. As many visitors to different regions of the world have experienced, the water skills of local guides is impeccable but often there is something lost in translation when it comes to briefing, organizing dives, and discussing what critters can be found. Much of this is due to an innate shyness when dealing with demanding photographers who want to see everything and want to see it "NOW", but it can also be attributed to a lack of proper training in organizational activities and public speaking.

One of the first things I noticed during the class was the importance of making presentations that Course Director Minni Vansgaard of Bali Crystal Divers instilled upon the participants. With daily presentations in front of their peers, the progress made in this area was stunning to watch. From first day jitters and nerves to thoughtful and confident presentations at the end of month, the skills of all involved improved dramatically as the amount of hard work each put into the class was obvious. According to Minni, "One of the biggest changes over the last few years is the desire by Indonesians to not only excel in their instructor classes but to continue on with further education when they are finished. There is a definite increase in wanting to improve their standing and you can see this by the way they commit themselves to the training."

For visiting photographers I see two positive impacts of this influx of locals participating in Instructor Development classes. The first is the above mentioned increase in self confidence. Communicating with groups and individual photographers and organizing them according to needs and wants becomes easier with further training. The second impact is the feeling of empowerment and upward mobility that becoming an instructor provides. These invaluable "eagle eyed" guides now have the ability to earn extra income through instruction and perhaps move into future management positions. This creates a sense of pride and helps provide a stronger bond between employers and the local community. Locals who are given an opportunity to improve their education, training, and skills are far more likely to remain long term employees than those who do not receive this chance. Therefore, when you return to that special resort in Bali, your favourite guide will still be working there and can show you that elusive Mimic Octopus one more time!

Mike Veitch

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Hitchhikers Guide to the Reef

By Mark Webster

If you were a fan of the 'Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy' then you will have been bewildered by the eventual answer to the secret of the universe that was '42' – that answer confused most of us but will never be forgotten. Hitchhikers in the marine world are probably not so perplexed by the notion of the meaning of life and also seem to be spoilt for choice when it comes to choosing a partner in life, whether it is static or mobile. There are numerous examples of commensalism and symbiotic relationships on the reef, many of them existing in the macro range, and they make both fascinating and challenging subjects for the avid underwater photographer. It is often beneficial to have a little knowledge of species habitat and an objective or goal when we dive with our cameras, so the purpose of this brief guide is to introduce you to a number of the likely players and suggest the best tools and techniques for capturing an image.

Clown fish or anemone fish come in several different species and are one of the most appealing and best recognized of all fish and immortalized in the Walt Disney film Finding Nemo. They do need a degree of patience to predict their movements and capture a good image though. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 60mm micro, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f11 1/125.

Bumble bee shrimp (Pliopontonia furtiva) is quite a rare species it seems – this one was found in the Lembeh Straits on the edge of a large carpet anemone. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f18 1/125

Clown crab (Lissocarcinus laevis) is often found at the base of larger carpet anemones and will often emerge waving their claws at your unwanted intrusion. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f18 1/125

Anemone Hosts

Clown fish, or more accurately anemone fish, are of course the most obvious example found on almost every reef in the Indo Pacific regions in a number of different species variants. They are an irresistible subject and no matter how determined I may be to ignore them during a trip, I will inevitably come home with a few images. Despite their attraction they are in fact quite difficult to photograph well as they are constantly on the move and often darting out of the host anemone to nip at this uninvited intruder. Consequently you can often end up with a bunch of poorly focused or partially framed shots mixed with a few keepers. For a tight portrait using a DSLR the best tool is a 50/60mm macro lens. If you use a compact you have the flexibility of a zoom lens but also the disadvantage of shutter delay to compound the problem.

Anemones play host to several species of shrimps as well, from totally transparent 'ghost shrimps' to the exotic looking eggshell and banded

shrimps. These shrimps are all keeping their anemone host clean and sharing meals whilst enjoying the protection that the host offers. Some are also cleaning species that will leave the safety of the anemone when a client approaches and displays the correct signals. In big carpet anemones there may be a dozen or more shrimps of different species.

Crabs, particularly the porcelain crab family, are another anemone dweller. Some species, like the clown or harlequin crab (Lissocarcinus laevis), like to live just under the skirt of the anemone where you will find them peeking out at the world. Others like the delicately spotted Neopetrolisthes maculates will be found boldly sitting out in the open on the anemone tentacles constantly grasping at the passing plankton on which they feed. There are often several of these species on each anemone, accompanied by shrimps and anemone fish. We even have a symbiotic dweller in the UK – the small Leach's spider crab lives in the arms a around the skirt of the snakelocks anemone. They are most prolific in spring and early summer and are often found in pairs on the larger anemones.

Urchin Hosts

There are numerous species of urchin which most commonly play host to species of shrimp and crabs. Amongst the most colourful are the Coleman shrimps and Zebra crabs which can grouped together as they are often found on the same host, the fire urchin (Asthenosoma varium), sometimes even sharing an urchin. The zebra crab (Zebrida adamsii) is found on other species of urchin, but the fire urchin is by far the most colourful host and provides a great contrast with the black and white

Coleman shrimps (Periclimenes colemani) are also found on fire urchins in male/female pairs often at the crown of the urchin where they have picked an area clean of spines. Nikon D100, L&M Titan, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, Inon wet lens, ISO200 f22 1/125

The zebra crab (Zebrida adamsii) is most often found on the fire urchin, but occasionally you will find it on other urchins hosts, in this case one with complimentary colouring. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f16 1/125

detail of both the Coleman shrimps (Periclimenes colemani) and the zebra crab. The Coleman shrimps are found in pairs normally close to the crown or top of the urchin, where they have picked out the spines to make some living space. The larger of the pair is the female and they show no concern at all at a close approach, safe in the knowledge that the urchin delivers a very unpleasant sting. The zebra crab by contrast will initially be seen close to the base of the urchin, sometimes in pairs, and being of a more nervous disposition will constantly march about the urchin to avoid your attentions. The vivid colours of the fire urchin make for a startling contrast the monochrome livery of these two species, although I often find that colour is reflected back from the urchin bathing the subject in a warm or pinkish glow. The zebra crab can be shot at 1:1 successfully but often the Coleman shrimps are very small and need additional magnification.

Sea Whip Hosts

If you are like me you will not be able to pass a sea whip on the reef without stopping to inspect it for tiny well camouflaged tenants. The most common finds are the coral gobies, which are also found on soft corals, which often appear to be almost translucent and have an irritating habit of skittering out of view just as you have composed a sharp image. Under flash light they reveal rich iridescent colouring which may match the host perfectly. Sometimes there are two or more of these little fish which may come together every now and then, but usually all too briefly!

More unusual or prized finds on sea whips

Sea whip gobies are the most commonly found species on a variety of sea whip hosts. Sometimes there is only one to be seen, whilst other hosts may have four or five. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f16 1/25

The whip coral shrimp (Dasycaris zanzibarica) is frequently seen on sea whips throughout the Indo Pacific seas, but is quite difficult to spot due to its small size and excellent camouflage. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon wet lens, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f16 1/25

Crinoid squat lobsters (Allogalathea elegans) are found in the arms of crinoids or feather stars and generally have a livery that matches the host perfectly so can be very hard to spot until they move. Nikon D100, L&M Titan, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, Inon wet lens, ISO200 f22 1/125

include several species of shrimps and the ostentatiously named and strange looking Zeno crab (Xenocarcinus sp). These critters are more of a challenge to find as they match their hosts almost perfectly and don't move about like the whip gobies. They are however aware of your attentions and will often slowly spiral around the whip just as you prepare for that killer shot.

With all these species one of the biggest challenges is focusing – their size means that you really need more magnification than 1:1 (2:1 is best) which means depth of field is tiny. A wet diopter may be the best choice to boost magnification as you have the option to remove it during the dive – other options include a dry diopter on the lens or a teleconverter, but both require you to commit to very small subjects throughout the dive.

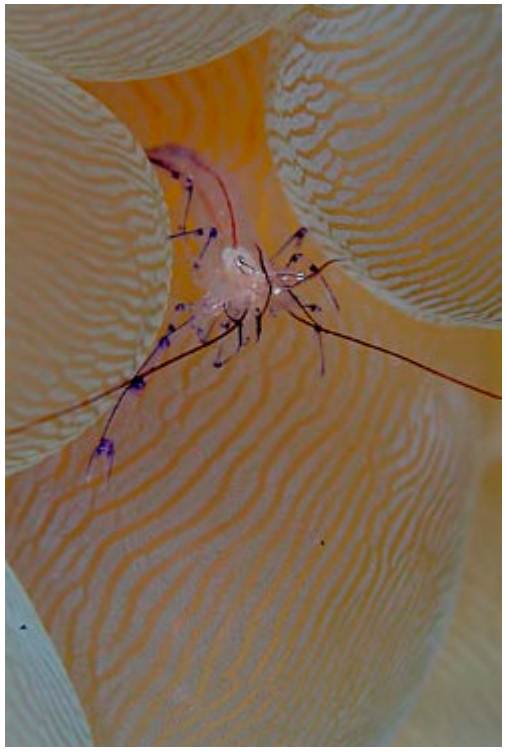
Given that most sea whips reach out into the current you will also have to cope with a quivering or swaying sea whip to make life even more difficult. Most DSLR's will allow you to lock the focus or use manual focus which avoids the constant lens hunting and makes life a little easier – you can either try and follow the movement of the sea whip or more simply wait for your subject to move through the plane of focus and trigger the shutter. Sometimes you can position yourself on the up current side and shelter your subject from movement, but whatever method you adopt these are sometimes challenging subjects and it is satisfying to produce a sharp and well composed shot.

Crinoid Hosts

Crinoids are abundant on the reef during daytime in certain areas such as Indonesia and the Philippines, whilst in others like the Red Sea they only appear at night. Many but not all are also home to diminutive shrimps, squat lobsters, crabs and cling fish all of which adopt a pattern which matches the crinoid perfectly. They are very difficult to spot and normally it is a dive guide that points them out initially. They tend to live towards the centre of the crinoid which can make them difficult to see, although most guides have a technique of tickling the base of the crinoid between its legs with a chop stick which makes them open up for a few minutes and allows you to get a shot. I am

The ornate Ghost pipefish (Solenostomus paradoxus) have fantastic camouflage when close to the crinoid host, but they are quite easy to photograph once spotted as they are convinced you cannot see them! Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, ISO100 f16 1/60

Pygmy seahorses (Hippocampus bargibanti) are a must have subject for many photographers. They are found on specific species of sea fan (Muricella sp.) and are exceedingly small and well camouflaged. Nikon D100, L&M Titan, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, Inon wet lens, ISO200 f22 1/125



This small shrimp (Vir philippinensis) is frequently found on grape or bubble corals and is almost completely transparent with fine purple markings. Nikon D100, L&M Titan, 105mm micro, Inon quad flash, Inon wet lens, ISO200 f22 1/125

not certain if this is harmful to the crinoid, but it is done gently and does not appear to be. By contrast in the Red Sea where the crinoids commonly appear at night and climb to the top of the reef you will most often find the little squat lobsters and armoured crabs on the legs of the crinoid where they cling to the reef, which makes them easier to see and photograph.

Again these critters are very small and really need 2:1 magnification and manual or locked focus techniques and also careful flash positioning so as not to cast a shadow from the extended arms of the crinoid.

Another larger but equally well camouflaged species frequently encountered with crinoids are ghost pipefish, most likely the ornate and harlequin. These can range in size from only a couple of centimeters long to up ten or twelve centimeters. This is a gorgeous looking subject and quite easy to photograph once spotted as they are convinced you cannot see them and they often hover just above or to the side of the host making them very approachable. They are often in pairs and again the female is the larger of the two and range in size from 3cm to 10cm and so are a good size for a 50/60mm macro lens and for a compact zoom.

Coral Hosts

Interesting subjects can also be found on corals as well, particularly soft corals. Translucent ghost shrimps with delicate purple claws are often found nestled in the folds of bubble corals along with small gobies. The weird looking and hairy Orang-utan crab (Achaeus japonicus) is also found on bubble corals and soft corals, but can be difficult to spot. Decorator and armoured crabs are frequently seen on Dendronephthya branching soft corals, particulary at night. Another close relative of soft corals and octo corals is the sea pen, which often only appears at night to sift nutrients from the current. Larger sea pens frequently have a selection of tenants including small pastel coloured porcelain crabs, shrimps, squat lobsters and gobies – I have often wondered what these critters do when the sea pen retracts in to the seabed during the day?

Sea fans and branching

gorgonian corals are home to another classic super macro subject which has become a 'must have' image for many underwater photographers. This of course is the pygmy seahorse which can be found two or three different species dependant on the gorgonian. These critters are truly tiny and are incredibly difficult to find without the help of a guide. Once found they are a real technical challenge to focus on as they will require 2:1 or greater magnification to fill the frame. The depth of field at this ratio is very narrow and you subject will have the irritating habit of twisting and turning constantly whilst you try and achieve sharp focus. But they are so cute looking that you will be delighted with a successful shot.

You will also find ghost pipe fish hiding around gorgonian corals, particularly the thinner harlequin species, sometimes in pairs and in small groups.

Best Locations for the Hunt

You can find examples of commensalism and symbiotic relationships in many locations, including temperate seas, but undoubtedly there are hot spots which will leave you spoilt for choice. For the most reliable and varied selections try Lembeh Straits, Bali, Ambon, Irian Jaya (West Papua), Phillipines and Papua New Guinea – all these regions generally have skilled guides who specialise in spotting the unusual for photographers. The Red Sea also has plenty of opportunities, but the guiding style is a little less focused on critter spotting so finding these creatures is more up to the photographer's own spotting skills. A little research before you leave on a trip and a good species identification book will help a great deal once on location. These are great subjects for a macro lens and also provide immense satisfaction in having spotted a likely host and tracking down the tenants.

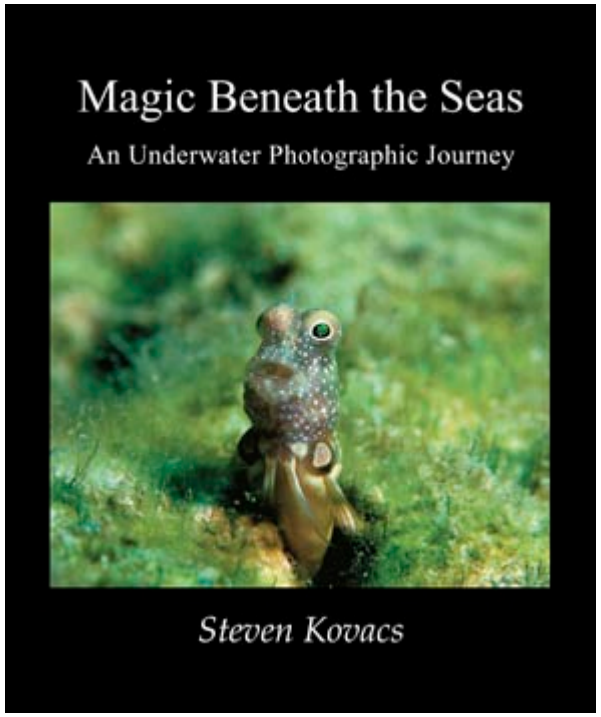
Mark Webster
www.photec.co.uk

Book Review

Magic Beneath the Seas

An underwater photographic journey

By Steven Kovacs



Steven became an avid underwater photographer in 2001 and since then has taken the 317 images which make up this coffee table book. Magic Beneath the Seas is a testament to his talent and is a remarkable achievement bearing in mind that he is not a professional and is in fact a dental surgeon by trade.

To achieve such consistent image quality in such a comparatively short period of time is very impressive and in the majority of portrait shots there is an eye to eye contact which is quite arresting giving me the feeling that I, the alien intruder, am being observed rather than the other way round.

As the title implies this is a photographic rather than a written journey, a visual feast rather than a tome which is good but there were times when I would have prefered to sacrifice the space devoted to splendid images and have them replaced with some textual meat. Some more subject or photographic background to enhance the already plentiful, visual feast. That would help me take my mind off how photographically jealous this book makes me.

Price: $44.95 U.S.
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317 photographs
10 x 12 hardcover
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www.underwaterbliss.com

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

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc
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If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
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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.

Parting Shot

Our particular trip to Grand Cayman, hosted by Dive Tech and Cobalt Coast Resort during Tek Week, included a visit to Stingray City. There was more than a little eye rolling among the tech divers of the group when our divemaster asked how many wanted to go. Two of us decided to say yes and make the forty minute boat ride to North Sound and check it out. Stingray City probably sees more visitors than any other place in the Caribbean, so I just planned on using the 12 foot max depth dive as an extra "safety stop" and not expect too much.

As we pulled up to the sandbar there were at least a dozen boats already there. OK, I thought, just smile and get suited up. Our guide finned us over to a nice clear patch of sand and we settled down. It couldn't have been but a minute or two and all of a sudden a whole squadron of winged southern stingrays descended on us. After another couple of minutes there was nothing but flashes of grey, white, and an occasional swim fin protruding out of the suspended sand ball like a cartoon fight seen. When the large green moray with cataracts showed up it went into high gear.

People started paying less attention to the rays and started focusing on our big toothed friend. I imagine more than a few folks would have liked to know before the dive that Mr. Green was hard-of-seeing! He (I assume he was male by how he acted) had no problem winding his way sinuously around whomever he felt might have a treat for him.

One of the human guests - who it turns out, loves morays - decided to touch and pet him. Before long they winded their way around the sand bottom in a dance that wasn't to unlike a tango. By this point most of the goodies the dive guide brought down were gone and only a few rays were left buzzing the perimeter. Those of us who followed the action were amazed at how little trepidation our diver had in handling this wild animal. As the moray's partner got bolder, I couldn't help think that he was going to signal that he had had enough in a very moray like way. After a few more minutes the eel decided there just wasn't anymore food around and took off for his next encounter. We could hear a slew of anchors dropping in so it wouldn't be long. I'm just glad ol' Mr. Green was in a good mood for the duration of our visit. As to whether or not the sojourn to Stingray City was worth it; well, I shot over 150 photos in less than twenty minutes and had a ball.

Nikon D2x, Subal ND2 Housing, 10.5mm FE lens, f13 @ 1/160sec, Dual Ikelite DS-125's set at 1/2 power

Joseph C. Dovala
www.jcdovala.com

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