

# Underwater Photography

a web magazine

Oct/Nov  
2002



Nikon D100 housings  
Fuji S2 housing  
Sony F707 housing  
Kodak DCS Pro 14n  
Sperm whale  
Nai'a liveaboard  
U/w photojournalist -  
Jack Jackson  
Henry the seadragon  
Scilly Seals  
Lights & divers  
Easy macro  
British fish  
Underwater tripod  
Visions 2002

# What links these sites?



Turn to  
page 7  
to find out...

# Underwater Photography

a web magazine

Oct/Nov 2002

e mail [uwp@uwpmag.co.uk](mailto:uwp@uwpmag.co.uk)

## Contents

**4 Travel & events**

**8 New products**

**14 Sperm whale**



with Tony Wu

**19 Nai'a  
liveaboard**



by Pete Atkinson

**25 U/w  
photojournalist**



by Jack Jackson

**30 Meet Henry**



by Andy & Angela Heath

**35 Scilly Seals**



with Will & Demelza  
Posslethwaite

**35 Lights & divers**



by Martin Edge

**Cover photo by  
Tony Wu**

**43 Easy macro**



with Ee wan Khoo

**47 British fish**



by Mark Webster

**54 Size matters**

by Jukka Nurminen &  
Alex Mustard



**58 Visions 2002**

# Travel & events

## Jim Breakell Tahiti talk at Dive Show, Oct 12/13 2002

In September Jim Breakell of Scuba Safaris went on a fact finding trip to the Pacific.

First off he went to Ryrutu for for a few days humpback whale watching, then a week on the inaugural trip of the Tahiti Aggressor and then on to Bora Bora (what a hard life he has!)

He will be giving an illustrated talk about his trip at the Dive Show in Birmingham on October 12/13th 2002.

For more information contact Scuba Safaris, PO Box 8, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 7ZS. Tel 01342 851196.

[www.scuba-safaris.com](http://www.scuba-safaris.com)



## John Boyle video trip May 2003

John Boyle will be hosting a video diving trip from Bali to Komodo on Kararu next year. The dates are May 12-19 and May 21-June 1 2003.

The first is a 7 night and the second an eleven night package

Apart from being an intriguing area to dive, John will be giving illustrated talks and film shows in the evenings, and will also be offering help and advice either in workshops or informally to anyone else who is working with underwater video.

There is an extra bonus as the boat has just installed a new computer with video editing functions, an 80gb hard-drive, 1.7mhz processor, cd, burner etc that will be available to anyone who wants to do some on-board editing.

The boat is gorgeous, the diving should be great, the entertainment should be good! - and there are of course the dragons!

**For further information contact John at**  
**[www.sharkbayfilms.com](http://www.sharkbayfilms.com)**  
**or travel agents Divequest at**  
**[www.divequest.co.uk](http://www.divequest.co.uk)**

## **INVITATION**

*Visit Divequest at the  
Antibes Film Festival  
and get a free glass of  
wine!*

*Divequest, the UK specialist dive travel  
agents, are exhibiting at the Antibes Film  
Festival from 30th October until 3rd  
November and they will have full details of  
all the exciting destinations they offer.*

*Visit their stand and say you saw the  
invitation in UwP and you will get a free  
glass of wine!*

*Offer limited to one glass per person and  
you must bring a print of this invitation.*

## Beneath the Sea 2003

Beneath the Sea 2003 proudly announces its 27th Annual photo/video competition. Win the coveted David Doubilet award for excellence in underwater photography, or the equally distinguished Stan Waterman award for excellence in underwater video.

In addition to the David Doubilet Award for excellence in underwater photography, the winning photographer will also win a week of living and diving for one aboard Peter Hughes' Star Dancer in Palau, Micronesia.

The winning underwater videographer will win, in addition to the Stan Waterman Award for excellence in underwater videography, a week of diving for two aboard the Nimrod Explorer in the Great Barrier Reef in Australia.

Come one . Come all . to the Beneath the Sea 2003 Photo/Video Competition. The contest deadline is December 31st, 2002. For contest rules and entry blank visit Beneath the Sea at their Internet site: <http://www.BeneaththeSea.org/> There you can see the images of previous winners, get a set of rule and regulations, and download an application form.

The winners of the photo/video contest will be announced at Beneath The Sea's Film Festival , March 28, 29, 30, 2003, at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey.

There is a contest hotline: (718) 409-0240

<http://www.BeneaththeSea.org>



## Blue Dolphin Of Malta Is Back !

After an absence of six years, the prestigious Blue Dolphin of Malta International underwater photographic competition is back with a splash. This 10th Edition of Blue Dolphin is being held from the 12th to 17th November 2002.

Competitors and their models, judges and journalists from various countries, are meeting to respectively share and exchange, the pleasures and knowledge of capturing the beauty and wonders of the Mediterranean Sea. In addition this year, for the beginners in this speciality there will be a Disposable Camera Underwater Photographic competition.

The Blue Dolphin of Malta first made its appearance during the CMAS General Assembly in November 1987. In this first edition, the top awards were won by photographers of international fame in the world of underwater photography. Mr John C Fine obtained first place, and was followed by Mr M Sato (Japan). Third place was won by Mr B Hewitt (UK). During the nine previous editions various diving personalities of the likes of Peter Scoones, Mark Webster, Frederic Di Meglio, the late Jacques Mayol and many others attended this photographic competition.

The 10th Blue Dolphin Of Malta is being organised by FUAM in collaboration with Malta Tourism Authority, our official carrier Air Malta and the Malta Maritime Authority.

**Email: [fuam@digigate.net](mailto:fuam@digigate.net)**

**Website: [www.fuam.org](http://www.fuam.org)**

## Coral Reef Alliance 2004 Calendar Photo contest

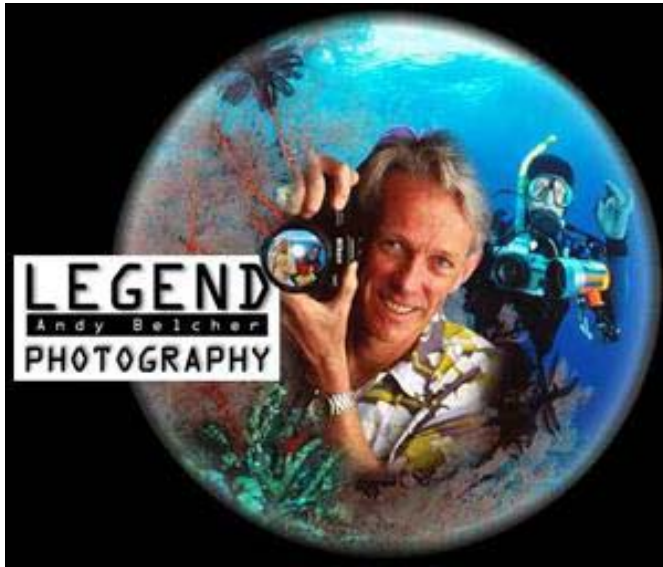
The Coral Reef Alliance (CORAL) announces its 2004 Calendar Photo Contest.

The deadline for entries is November 15, 2002. Why so soon? CORAL plans to market and distribute the 2004 calendar to a very wide audience including bookstores. Production dates have been moved up so that the marketing timetable can be met. For contest rules and entry instructions, contact:  
The Coral Reef Alliance, Branch Office  
1708 Catalpa Rd. Carlsbad, CA 92009  
email [MDawson@coral.org](mailto:MDawson@coral.org)

<http://www.coral.org/>

## Andy Belcher workshop

Poor Knights, New Zealand  
May 2003



Andy Belcher, award winning underwater photographer, has agreed to run an underwater photography workshop for First Light Travel in May 2003. You'll spend six full days with Andy diving and photographing the cliffs, archways, pinnacles and drop-offs surrounding the beautiful Poor Knights Islands, Northland, New Zealand

The 7-day programme includes daily diving with Andy and a team of instructors on a purpose built dive boat to practice what you've learned.

And to ensure you get the most from your diving group size will be limited to no more than five divers. Through a combination of land-based workshops and a scheduled diving program there will be plenty of opportunities to perfect your new skills.

Read more about Andy's amazing photography, career and numerous awards on his website - [www.andybelcher.com](http://www.andybelcher.com). And booking details [www.firstlighttravel.com](http://www.firstlighttravel.com)

## Wrecks On Line Photo Competition

The second edition of Wrecks On Line, the only Underwater Photo Digital Contest is "on air".

Everyone can participate and send digital underwater pictures to our photo contest. Since we are wreck divers, subject has to be a wreck.

Entry is free, the judging panel will be international as in the first edition and your pictures will be seen all over the world.

You can send up to 20 pictures but only the best overall 50 will go for the final.

Go to

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

for more information.

# ANDY COBB

## ECO DIVING

- Adventure scuba diving tours
- Wildlife safaris

PO Box 386 Winklespruit 4145Kwa  
Zulu Natal South Africa  
Tel/Fax+27 31 916 4239  
email: [andycobb@iafrica.com](mailto:andycobb@iafrica.com)  
[www.adventurescuba.co.za](http://www.adventurescuba.co.za)

# What links these sites?



London's premier watersports centre

11 - 14 Northumberland Avenue

London, WC2N 5AQ

Tel: 020 7930 5050

Fax: 020 7930 3032

email: [info@oceanleisure.co.uk](mailto:info@oceanleisure.co.uk)

# New products

## Subal D10 housing for Nikon D100 DSLR

Subal have announced their latest housing for the Nikon D100 digital SLR camera.

Deliveries should be available by the end of the year and there will be controls for shutter release, front control dial, on/off, exposure compensation, flash sync, display light, mode dial, M/S/C, manual focus, zoom, lens release, AF lock, meter switch, focus area selector, delete, flash power compensation, menu and enter/OK.

The housing will be similar to the Nikon F80 and will have an optical viewfinder as well as the LCD monitor port. The camera is mounted on a sprung loaded baseplate and the housing is secured with Subal's QuickLoc levers.



The D10 will have the standard Subal bayonet port system, two flash sync sockets and a top mounted accessory shoe.

The D10 weighs approx 1.9kg and for further details go to [www.subal.com](http://www.subal.com) or Ocean Optics Tel 020 7930 8408 [www.oceanoptics.co.uk](http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk)

## Subal wide angle port for CP5 Coolpix 5000 housing



The Subal wide angle port for the CP5 Nikon Coolpix 5000 housing is now available and it incorporates a unique sensor for use with TTL flash.

The port can be used with either of the two wide angle lenses WC-E68 and FC-E8 and the dome is made from optical glass.

This port completes the CP5 system making it the most versatile midrange digital stills camera outfit on the market today.

For further details go to [www.subal.com](http://www.subal.com) or Ocean Optics Tel 020 7930 8408 [www.oceanoptics.co.uk](http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk)



## Kodak DCS Pro 14n “full frame” Digital 35mm SLR

Kodak has announced the new 14 megapixel DCS-14n. The magnesium-alloy body is built around a Nikon F100/F80, has a built-in portrait grip and is notably smaller than any previous Kodak DCS D-SLR. The camera is powered by a Lithium-Ion battery, takes Compact Flash (Type I/II) and SD/MMC storage, supports JPEG-ERI (higher dynamic range JPEG) and also features an orientation sensor. The camera should be available in December with an expected street price of US\$4,000.

The DCS Pro 14n is Kodak's sixth-generation professional digital camera and is primarily designed for professional and commercial photographers, but will likely be popular with advanced amateurs as well. Built on a Nikon lens mount, it adds speed, as well as quality, to the photographers' workflow through FireWire connectivity at a 12 MB per second transfer rate.

"This is the camera that portrait, wedding and event photographers have been waiting for," said Jay Kelbley, DCS Product Manager, Kodak Professional. "In addition to its highly competitive price point and phenomenal 13.89 million total pixels, the DCS Pro 14n is loaded with features and, thanks to Kodak Professional firmware, its overall image path enhancements make it the most upgradeable camera on the market."

The camera is equipped with a 4536 x 3024 pixel (effective), 12-bit CMOS imager, covering the full 24mm by



36mm image area of 35mm film, allowing photographers to regain the benefits of true wide-angle lenses and use their Nikon SLR lenses as they have used them with 35mm film. With the DCS Pro 14n photographers have the freedom to select the image size (full 14MP, 6MP, and 3MP) that suits the shooting environment.

The camera captures images at about two frames per second. Images can be saved as DCR raw files or Kodak Professional Extended Range Imaging (ERI) JPEG files. Kodak ERI-JPEG files serve as another form of picture protection for photographers, especially in situations where re-shooting is inconvenient. Kodak ERI-JPEGs are created by and stored in-camera on removable media for later color correction or manipulation, and provide two-stops of exposure latitude and extended color space within a JPEG workflow, a benefit no other competitor offers. The ERI-JPEG format provides professional photographers ease-of-use of JPEG files with the image quality and color/exposure control of Kodak's highly regarded DCR format raw

camera files, to create the best quality images.

The Kodak Professional DCS Pro 14n Digital Camera is leveraged from a Nikon lens mount and the magnesium body is more durable and robust than plastic digital cameras based on similar camera platforms. The DCS Pro 14n uses cast magnesium encasements for a solid, rugged camera body instead of the plastic encasements commonly used by other manufacturers. The robust body includes a vertical trigger that works in conjunction with the camera's auto orientation sensor. The sensor detects the camera's orientation +/- 90 degrees from the horizontal position. This enables automatic rotation of the image as it moves to a computer for manipulation, saving photographers time and improving workflow, hallmarks of Kodak Professional's efforts to make digital easier for customers.

These details were announced at Photokina 2002.

## Gates Sony F707 housing

Rich with features found only on higher-end systems, the F707 housing from Gates is designed for both the professional and recreational underwater photographer. Professional-level controls, a dedicated external strobe, and the Gates Multi Port lens system make the F707 from Gates a highly flexible, yet user friendly digital still housing.

### Features

**Control Access** - The professional will appreciate access to all key camera functions including manual focus, white balance, auto exposure lock, and complete exposure control in shutter priority, aperture priority and manual modes. Of course, full auto operation is available for the recreational diver seeking superb digital images.

**Dedicated Strobe** - Forget about manually dialing in strobe settings, fiber optic slave connections, or other mismatched components! The Gates F707 uses a dedicated external strobe linked directly to the camera. When not in use, the F707 strobe enters a sleep mode to conserve battery life.

**Multi Port** - The F707 is available with the Gates Multi Port system, providing dynamic lens changes



underwater, on the same dive! Only Gates engineering can grant this flexibility to the F707 with no vignetting — a challenge unmatched by other housings

**For Videographers** - Already have a video system? Underwater videographers will find the F707 an easy transition to digital stills. Controls like zoom, white balance, exposure control, and auto/manual focus will be familiar territory. And Gates video lighting is 100% transportable to the F707 for night and close-up photography.

<http://www.gateshousings.com>

## Aquatica A5000 for Coolpix

The Aquatica A5000 is a very compact housing that allows easy access to all of the key camera controls. Users are able to view their pictures instantly through the lcd screen and the shade dramatically improves viewing under difficult conditions.

The A5000 housing has a foam grip handle for easy portability. It comes equipped with one Nikonos-style bulkhead, with the option of using a second. The housing is fully anodized in black and coated with a polyurethane powder paint and a clear coat.

Retail price: \$1,049 US

[www.aquatica.ca](http://www.aquatica.ca)



## Sea & Sea housings for Nikon D100 and Canon D60/D30

Sea & Sea have announced the imminent arrival of their housings for the Nikon D100 and Canon D60/D30.

The fronts are ABS resin and the rears are polycarbonate

They weight: 5.5 kg with a maximum depth: 60m / 200 ft

The will be compatible with NX-ports and a shutter activated focus light will be available

Optional accessories will include:

Sea & Sea Strobes

LX-25/55 Light

Sea Arm VI / Flexible Light Arm

Shutter Activated Focus Light

<http://www.seaandsea.com>



## Ikelite Fuji S2 housing

The Fuji S2 Pro is based on a Nikon F80 / N80 camera body, utilizes Nikkor lenses, and provides TTL capability with all of our TTL SubStrobes for a complete system of proven components.

The following controls are provided:

Shutter button, Power switch, Exposure +/- button

Flash +/- button, Lens release button

Main command dial, Sub-command dial

Exposure mode dial, Play button

Auto exposure bracketing button, Synchro mode button, Zoom.

The Ikelite SLR-MD Case allows visual assurance the system is safe with a clear view of the camera information and control functions. Ikelite housings are injection molded of clear polycarbonate for its superior strength and corrosion-free properties, and operate safely to 60m (200 feet) depth.

An assortment of interchangeable lens ports allow use of most macro, wide angle, and zoom lenses. The SLR-MD Case is part of a full system of TTL

strobes, mounting systems, and accessories. The Ikelite Super-Eye magnifier provided with the housing secures to the camera eyepiece and offers enhanced viewing while wearing a diving mask.

The overall dimensions are

10.5" wide x 8" high. Front-to-back measures 6" plus port. Width is 14" with the removable handle bar attached. The housing with handle assembly and port weighs about 10 pounds.

Available during September

<http://www.ikelite.com>



## Jonah housings

A new South Korean company has begun producing housings for Nikon F100 cameras and plans housings for Canon EOS3 and Leica R6 cameras.

In addition they are working on a housing for the Nikon D100 (right) digital stills camera which should be available towards the end of the year.

There will be controls for: Power switch, Shutter release (mechanical), Main command dial, Sub-command dial, Shooting mode dial, Flash sync mode button, Exposure compensation button, LCD illuminator button, LCD panel window, Function dial, Multiselector buttons, Flash exposure compensation button, Format button, Bracketing button, AE/AF lock button,



Menu button, Thumbnail button, Protector button, Enter button, Delete button, Monitor window

Two TTL strobe bulkheads are included, an Optical viewfinder, Two grips and Two strobe arms brackets

Three ports and an extension ring are available:

8" Superwide Dome Port.  
4" Dome Port (Optical Glass).  
Flat Port (Optical Glass). 30mm Extension Ring

The housing is made from corrosion resistant aluminum alloy, The dimensions are 178x160x116 mm and the weight is approx. 1700g (w/out port and accessories)

Depth Limit: 90 m

**Jonah Housing**

**E-mail:**

**korean@postech.edu**

**<http://www.jonah.co.kr/>**

## FRENCH POLYNESIA

Scuba Safaris are pleased to announce a new dive programme to Tahiti including the new *Tahiti Aggressor*, humpback whale watching and land-based diving in Rangiroa, Tikehau, Manihi, Bora Bora, Raiatea, Taha'a and Moorea.

Tel: 01342 851 196  
info@scuba-safaris.com  
www.scuba-safaris.com



Come and see our slide presentation on Tahiti at Dive 2002, 12/13 October NEC Concourse Suite 21 2.15pm on both days

# Past Times

by Steve Warren

## Aquamatic 11

La Spirotechnique is an illustrious name. Originally set up as the diving equipment manufacturing arm of the Air L'iquide group to build and market Cousteau - Gagnan Aqualungs, the French company has many innovations to its credit.

One of Spiros most revered products was the Calypsophot developed for the Cousteau divers. Later the rights to this camera were bought by Nikon and the Nikonos line was established and passed into legend.

In the late seventies Spiro introduced another underwater camera aimed at the mass market. The Aquamatic used 126 cartridge film that yielded a square picture. Exercising extreme caution given the camera would be used by divers, they made it largely freeflooding. Only the film chamber remained dry. Even the shutter got wet, reducing the damage that would be done when the inevitable leaks occurred. Internal weights overcame the Aquamatics natural tendency to float. Two shutter



speeds and four apertures provided for exposure control. Magicube disposable bulbs permitted four flash pictures to be taken before the cube had to be replaced.

A neat touch is the choice of two close up lenses mounted in a track on the camera front. These made the camera exceptionally versatile while remaining compact and fast to shoot.

Spiro developed a line of accessories for the Aquamatic including an off camera bulb flash, additional close up lenses and a back to allow the use of 35mm film. It was depth rated to 90m.

Aquamatics sold for around £80.00. They are rarely offered on the used market.

Steve Warren

# Flash Operators

## Come out of the dark ages

Finally an underwater flash range that delivers the performance you've come to expect from professional studio lighting topside. Packed with features to compliment the most creative photographer, Subtronics also boast user friendly features for the beginner.

These high power, wide angle strobes offer tough aluminium construction, ultrafast recycling of 2 to 2.5 seconds, 7/10 watt switchable modelling lights, Nikon dedicated TTL automation, 7 manual powers, slave, test and SOS, smart chargers with 2 hour recharge and optional laser aiming and colour temperature adjustment.

We'd ask you to compare. But there's nothing to compare to. And with prices starting at just £749.00, that includes the price.

Check them out at <http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk/subtronic.htm>

**Subtronic. Simply awesome.**

**Ocean Optics**

13 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AQ  
Tel 0207 930 8408 Fax 0207 839 6148



**Web site**

<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>

# A Whale of a time

with Tony Wu

The ocean is big. Amazingly, I hadn't really felt it before. On reef dives, land is nearby, and with reasonable visibility, you can see the bottom, or at least the vertical face of the reef. Here, there was only blue - left, right, front, back, down, even the sky above. My entire field of vision, my entire existence at the moment was blue - interrupted only by an 11 metre juvenile sperm whale chewing on my fins.

It had taken fourteen months of planning to get to this place and situation. On my previous visits, I had met and become friends with Takahashi-san, the owner and captain of "Dancing Whale", the 16-metre boat he uses to take visitors on dolphin and whale watching trips.

Takahashi-san had come to the Bonin islands nearly two decades earlier, long before there were many visitors from mainland Japan. Even today, relatively few people journey to the islands due to distance. The Bonins, known as the 'Ogasawara' islands in Japanese, lie approximately 1,000 kilometres southeast of Tokyo. It takes twenty-five hours on a large (but not necessarily comfortable) ship to get out to the islands, and the ship makes the journey only a couple of times a week. In short, the Bonins lie precisely in the middle of nowhere.

Calling the Bonins 'islands' is perhaps an overly generous



*Sperm whale smiling for the camera. Sadly, there was a hook embedded in its right jaw. The trailing filament is visible.*

term. They're more a collection of volcanic outcroppings in the middle of the sea. They're small, only a few are inhabited, and they lie adjacent to deep ocean trenches, thousands of metres deep. Like similar locations around the world, the Ogasawara islands have dozens, if not hundreds of endemic species that have evolved over thousands of years.

The primary attraction for me, however, was underwater. The islands are a haven for marine life. Upwelling from deep ocean trenches attracts schools of fish that congregate to capitalise on the oasis of food. Pelagics like mantas, sailfish, mola molas, green turtles and leatherbacks are frequent visitors to Bonin waters. Large predators abound - hammerheads and tiger

sharks are common - and local fishing lore is replete with tales of monstrous beasts that defy description and belief.

My previous visits to the islands were to photograph the many species of dolphin that make the Bonins a regular stop-off, if not their home. Bottlenose (*T. truncatus*), spinners (*S. longirostris*) and pan-tropical spotted (*S. attenuata*) dolphins are quite common, with orca (*O. Orcinus*) and other larger species being sighted less frequently. The local bottlenose are particularly fond of checking out humans in the water, and the crystal clear, unspoiled blue water makes for wonderful photographs.

During those trips, I learned from Takahashi-san about the annual visit of the sperm whales, *Physeter macrocephalus*. Whales of all types pass by the islands throughout the year. Elegant humpbacks (*M. novaeangliae*) grace the islands primarily during winter, and other species, including Brydeís (*B. edeni*) and rare beaked whales also show up.

It had only been a few years since Takahashi-san first noticed a pattern in sperm whale activity though. He had found a particular spot where females and their calves appeared to congregate for several weeks each year, usually commencing in late July. Over several years, he had consistently found the whales, and on occasion, had been fortunate enough to have some approach the “Dancing Whale” for a quick look.

Captain Takahashi’s stories captured my imagination. Few people had ventured out to the area he described, as it was quite far from the island where most people lived. In fact, a mystique



**All underwater images were taken with a Nikon F90x in a Nexus housings, 20 mm lens. RDPIII. 1/320 shutter priority.**

surrounded the sperm whales. Local fishermen spoke of attacks by aggressive sperm whales, the largest of the toothed whales. Large, intimidating sperm whale teeth were on display around the islands, leftover from the days of large-scale whaling. No one on the islands really wanted to get near the whales, much less in the water with them.

Except me.

So here I was.

‘Suspended’, as it were, some 3,000 metres above the nearest land, floating in an ocean of

blue.

To get here, I had communicated often with Takahashi-san and the whale watching people for over a year. We reached an understanding that would give me the opportunity to search for the sperm whales, and get in the water for photos if the conditions were right. So I had returned to these enchanted oceanic islands when sperm whales were most likely to be around.

The juvenile sperm whale in front of me had interrupted our



lunch. We had been searching for hours without any luck. Just as we took our first bite, the curious juvenile surfaced next to the boat. We dropped our lunches, Captain Takahashi took the wheel, and the three of us grabbed our topside cameras.

The whale played around the boat, peeking above water, looking at us, spraying us with its (bad) breath. After all the months of planning and waiting, everything looked just right. Captain Takahashi gave me the nod, and I donned mask, snorkel and long fins to get in. The Captain's wife and my wife joined me as safety spotters.

When we slipped into the water, the whale was about ten metres away, resting just below the surface. I signaled that I would snorkel down for a better



look, took a deep breath, and slowly descended headfirst, my back to the whale. At about seven metres, I turned to find the whale heading straight for me. It was two metres away, and looked like a large grey submarine on a collision course.

To avoid direct contact, I kicked for the surface. The

whale followed. As I looked down, the whale opened its jaws, and started to probe me with sonar. A few clicks and clacks, grunts and squeals, then a sudden flurry of loud, rapid, painful booms and clicks that penetrated and reverberated in my body like noise at a heavy metal concert.

As I reached the surface, the



A quick glance behind me and I realised that my safety spotters had long since deserted me and were watching from the boat, which was about 15 metres away.

I tried to think clearly through my growing anxiety. “Remember, this is a baby whale”, I told myself. “Maybe it’s just curious”, I thought. I placed my hands on the whale’s forehead, and gently pushed away.

My fin left the whale’s mouth, and I floated away. I finned slowly to open the distance between us, but again, the current worked against me. The whale approached. Once again, I found myself in the same, awkward position. I pushed away again a few more times with the same result - me straddling the whale, the whale chewing my fin.

As my heart rate settled down to a calm 250 beats per minute, I realised that it had been some time since First Contact, and I was still in one piece. “The baby’s just curious - the baby’s just curious” became my mantra, and I pushed off once more. This time, I took a breath and snorkeled down. Wide angle lens ready, I framed and snapped off a few images before surfacing and ending up on the whale’s head again like a hood ornament.

The whale and I repeated this game until I finished 36 exposures. It continued to pursue my fin and nuzzle me like an overgrown aquatic puppy, but the whale’s sonar was no longer on, and in hindsight, it never made a threatening gesture.

With my film finished and my nerves steadied, I turned my back to the whale and swam for the boat. The whale submerged

first thought that came to mind was Takahashi-san’s parting advice to me. “Remember”, he said, “if the sonar goes on, it might think you’re food!”

I watched as the leviathan surfaced in front of me, less than a metre away. The sonar probing intensified, and the whale approached again. Panic set in, and I backpeddled frantically to get out of the way, but as luck would have it, the current was behind me. Trapped between the current and the whale’s advance,

I ended up spread eagle atop the approaching whale’s head.

First Contact was a bit of shock. The whale’s head felt like hard, wet rubber, similar to a very thick skinsuit. I didn’t notice the scars and ring marks left by large squid on the whale’s head until much later. My mind, understandably, was occupied processing other information, particularly as the sonar picked up again, and I looked down to see the whale take my left fin into the side of its mouth.



*We found the remnants of a mesopelagic octopus nearby, perhaps leftovers from a sperm whale meal.*

and followed directly underneath me. Our eyes met, and for the first time during the encounter, I was certain of my safety. I saw curiosity. I saw playfulness. I saw an animal that wanted to learn about me as much as I wanted to learn about it.

I stepped onto the boat, grabbed another camera and looked into the water. The whale was waiting, about five metres under the boat, head turned to

the side so its eye was looking directly up at me. I waved from the swimstep, and the whale turned to trail the boat at the surface. The moment I re-entered the water, the juvenile approached rapidly again. This time, I wasn't (as) afraid.

I spent over two hours playing with my friend, snorkeling down to swim beside it, staying still as it approached me, and letting it chew on my

fins from time to time. I discovered ring marks left by its prey, and sadly, I saw that the whale had a large fishing hook through its jaw, 30 centimetres long or more, perhaps from a longline. Filament trailed from the hook for several metres. I contemplated trying to remove the hook, but realised that my effort would be in vain, and would probably cause the whale more harm than good.

The swells were large and the water cold, so eventually I left the water from sheer exhaustion. As I dried off and relayed my experience, the whale continued to play. It surfaced next to the boat and ispy hopped to take a look, perhaps for me. It raised its tail flukes and splashed water all over us, perhaps to invite me back in. It waited behind the boat, under the swimstep, looking up, perhaps to see if I would play a little longer.

Finally, it raised its tail flukes and splashed the boat six last times, before diving down somewhere deep, perhaps to tell other whales a story like this.

**Tony Wu**

[www.silent-symphony.com](http://www.silent-symphony.com)

**Tony Wu and William Tan's book "Silent Symphony" was awarded 1st Place at the 28th World Festival of Underwater Pictures**



# Nai'a - the ultimate Live Aboard?

Pete Atkinson thinks so

I used to think Nai'a was a wonderful live-aboard dive boat. Compared with my own boat, where I have to do the cooking, washing-up, fill the tanks, the cleaning, even model for myself with a self-timer - for Christ's sakes, how pitiful is that? - anything would be an improvement. But since my last trip on Nai'a I went on another live-aboard, one of a fleet of clones, a bit like McDonald's. Unfortunately the comparison didn't end there.

So now I know that Nai'a is a wonderful dive boat. Everything about it; the management, the staff, the food, the briefings, the way the dives are organised, the air-conditioned accommodation is fabulous. And the singing; it was worth the money just to hear the crew sing the beautiful song of farewell, Isa Lei. Even this, they do better than anywhere else that I heard in Fiji. This is more than attention to detail, it's a whole philosophy. Or a compulsive obsessive disorder!

I wish I knew how they did it, because the owner and cruise director Rob Barrell, wanders around for all the world like a guest with his coffee. I have never seen him manage anything; but it all works like clockwork. I'd like to think of him yelling at the crew when all the guests have gone, but it's hardly credible, it just doesn't fit.

How Rob bought the 40m ship derelict in the Caribbean, got it to Fiji, borrowed a pile of money and converted the W. de Vries Lentsch design into Nai'a



*The 40m luxury live-aboard dive vessel, Nai'a, designed by William de Vries Lentsch and built in Holland.*

*Big-eye trevally, *Caranx sexfasciatus*, Nigali Passage. Home-made Nikon F4 housing, 28mm lens, two Nikon SB-24 flash guns, 1/8th power. f5.6, 1/125th. Provia F.*



is the kind of story that once heard needs a bucket of Valium and 24 hours sleep to recover from.

The diving is carried out from huge Naiad rigid inflatables which are fast and comfortable. You simply need to carry your camera gear from the dive deck

to the stern platform, your tank and BC and reg are where you left them in the RIB, but mysteriously full of air or nitrox again. The boat whisks you to precisely the right spot, drops you off and picks you up wherever you choose to surface, so long as you're still in the Pacific. Since



*Grey reef shark, Carcharhinus amblyrhynchos feeding. Nigali Passage. Home-made Nikon F4 housing, 24mm lens, two Nikon SB-24 flash guns, 1/8th power. f5.6, 1/125th. Provia F.*



*Sea fans, Subergorgia mollis, and red snapper, Lutjanus bohar, Nigali passage. Home-made Nikon F4 housing, 18mm lens, two Nikon SB-24 flash guns, 1/2 power. f5.6, 1/125th. Velvia.*

there are two RIBs there's no hanging around waiting for photographers; they ferry the divers back to Nai'a as they surface.

Other live-aboards make a big fuss about putting eco-friendly moorings on the dive site reefs. But reefs change, so what was good last year may not be this year. And on this McBoat as we'll call it, you dived directly from the boat "to save messing around in inflatables". Which means by the time you have hauled yourself the length of the boat against the current, across the reef without touching anything (there was 80%

corallimorpharian cover to encourage this) to the G-spot of the reef, you barely had half your air left, and were completely knackered if you're as fit as me.

Diving on Nai'a starts at 0730 (far more civilised than 0630 on some boats). After the substantial breakfast there is more diving before lunch. At some sites you can simply come and go as you please, changing tanks and cameras at will. Rob is realistic about solo diving. Their guests are competent and it is not a problem to dive alone, without a BC if you wish. Coming back is a condition of this freedom though. Same as going up the

mast; fine, but falling off is discouraged.

The meals are fantastic with complimentary wine with no decline in fresh salads late in the trip. How they maintain the same standard with different chefs I have no idea; it's not as though I have ever seen Rob in the galley.

We started the trip in Lautoka, half an hour from Nadi international airport. The first dive that afternoon was on Samu Reef just to get our bearings and cobwebs out of the camera gear. This is macro territory, not Fiji's best diving since it is influenced by the turbid Nadi Bay water.

Overnight we motored to



*Sea whips, Ctenocella sp. and black snapper, Macolor niger. Nigali passage. Home-made Nikon F4 housing, 18mm lens. two Nikon SB-24 flash guns, 1/2 power. f8/11, 1/125th. Velvia.*



*Long-jawed squirrelfish, Sargocentron spiniferum. Subeye reflex, 105mm micro. Two housed Nikon SB-24 flash guns. f16, 1/125th Velvia*

Mount Mutiny, a stunning sea-mount in Bligh Water between the big islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. It got its name when Rob tried to do a single dive there and the guests had other ideas. And although there are 12 crew, there can be 18 guests! So this was democracy at work.

Although this trip was in summer the water was oceanic blue with 50m visibility. The walls drop way away and you wish for a moment you were wearing a rebreather to go and look at clouds of scalloped hammerheads of which only a few outriders make it up to the

warmer shallower levels. Mount Mutiny is remarkable for the Chironophthya soft corals which adorn the cliffs, like weeping willows on LSD. And there's lots of Dendronephthya soft corals too.

From there we motored to E-6, another sea-mount in the funnel of reefs in Bligh Water. Both Mount Mutiny and E-6 have moorings on them and the trade wind is the only thing that keeps Nai'a off the reef. We stayed after dark to do a night dive, but at 45 minutes it seemed too short to me, but then it wasn't my boat within spitting distance of the reef.

Dawn saw Nai'a entering the Vanua Levu reef system at South Save-a-Tack passage, so called because sailing vessels would use this and North Save-a-Tack passage to save some distance on the long slog against the trade wind to Savu Savu.

We dived first at UndeNai'able which had good hard coral on top, then at Cat's Meow, named after Cat Holloway, Rob's partner and former editor of Scuba Diver Australia. Though the visibility was poor (poor in Fiji is 20m) because of the ripping current, the action was great. Another huge disadvantage of diving

from a McBoat style live-aboard is that drift dives are difficult and seldom done. And you can be hanging around on the surface for a considerable time while the big boat manoeuvres around the reef to pick up the divers. And you have to swim well away from the reef carrying two cameras before they'll come and pick you up. At the base of one of these pinnacles at Cat's Meow was a large area of big mushroom corals, like someone had just emptied their pockets of change.

The last dive here was at Humann Nature, named after Paul Humann the photographer where there was an obliging lionfish hovering over the sea whips.

North Save-a-Tack is perhaps the second best dive I have done in Fiji. Where the pass opens to the sea there is a lip like the edge of a bath, from 30m to very deep. Here cameraman Howard Hall and fish biologist Richard Pyle saw processi sharks, schools of barracuda, big-eye jacks and dog-tooth tuna. One thing I hadn't seen before was the orange and white banded splendid garden eel. Just try getting near them though!

The incoming current at North Save-a-Tack sends you through a huge natural archway like a gateway to an ancient city. With judicious use of a compass and a lot of luck you can swim across the current and end up at Kansas, a huge coral-head with the top completely covered with wafting fields of *Sinularia* leather corals. There's a piece of railway track sticking out of the reef from an old marker if you need a support for slow shutter speed shots. On the sides of the coral head there are sea fans, soft corals, sea whips - the usual



*Rob Barrell with dental hygienist shrimp, *Lysmata amboinensis*. Tetons dive site. Subeye reflex, 28 mm lens. Two Ikelite Substrobe 200 flash guns. 1/4 power. f8, 1/125th Velvia*

*Xenocarcinus sp. on wire coral Cirripathes sp. Subeye reflex, 105mm micro. Two housed Nikon SB-24 flash guns. f16/22, 1/125th Velvia*



stuff! The two Save-a-Tacks are tide dependent so we returned to the south-west side of the reef to dive Tetons and Twin Thumbs which used to have a less polite name. We also dived Fantasea, another current dive. I was interested to see the changes to a coral archway which I had photographed years before. There was quite a change in the

reef but still the fish life and action were breathtaking and the vertical wall clotted with soft-corals. I hung back as the other divers were blasted away by the current so I could savour the spectacle on my own. Fijians can spot marijuana in a plantation of cassava, so finding a lone diver when they pop up is no problem at all.



*Decorator crab, Naxoides sp. Rostrum decorated with hydroids. On soft coral Dendronephthya sp. Subeye reflex, 105mm micro. Two housed Nikon SB-24 flash guns. f16, 1/125th Velvia*

Sometimes Nai'a will go to Wakaya from here which has hammerheads and a manta cleaning station, but on this trip we headed overnight to the island of Gau (which is pronounced like "now" with a really bad cold) which has my favourite dive in all the Pacific at Nigali Passage.

First we dived at Jim's Alley (named after photographer Jim Church) but the tops of the pinnacles have really suffered from coral bleaching, being a poor shadow of their former glory. I thought they weren't worth diving with Nigali passage so near.

Nigali is best dived on the ebb when the clear ocean water is coming in the pass. Weird huh! When you dive there with an outgoing current, then known as the Ilagin Flush, the less clear lagoon water upsets the generally crystal clear water. But it still a great dive in those conditions.

One of my most memorable dives ever was on my own in Nigali, when my sailing companion/underwater model dropped me at the entrance to the pass very early in the morn-

ing. The sun had just risen over the rolling green hills of Gau, backlighting the fans, soft corals and huge shoals of black snapper, barracuda and big-eye jacks. It was as close as atheists get to a religious experience.

There are moves afoot to make Nigali a marine park and I can't think of a more deserving place, although I guess that means I won't be able to feed the huge brown-marbled grouper any more. A small price to pay.

Nai'a do a small shark feed at Nigali if the guests want to (and many don't - what's wrong with them?!) with a bunch of tuna heads which get shredded by the red snappers and grey reef sharks. I always feel sorry for the sharks since the heads are mostly bone and they get little sustenance from them; which is the idea. After the Aquatrek 3D shark feed near Beqa with half a tonne of real food, this seems a bit mean!

But it's a great opportunity for photography. This was our last dive and overnight Nai'a motored to Suva, the rainy capital, for the bus-ride to Nadi. The convenient thing about this arrangement is that it's easy to

stop at the Centra Hotel at Pacific Harbour to do the Aquatrek 3D shark feed the next day, probably the best no-cage feed in the world.

So if you have to suffer the indignity of four or more dives a day in a great location, and want great service in every respect, try Nai'a in Fiji.

Formulas and franchises may work for fast food, but my experience of a dive boat clone was less than ecstatic.

Take a look at [www.naia.com.fj](http://www.naia.com.fj) to see what else Nai'a has to offer; humpback whales in Tonga, expeditions to the remote Phoenix Islands in Kiribati etc.

**Pete Atkinson**



Bahamas  
Turks & Caicos  
Tobago, Dominica  
Bonaire, Venezuela  
Little Cayman, Cozumel, Belize  
Honduras, South Africa & Mozambique  
Thailand, Sipadan, Mabul  
Layang Layang  
Derawan & Sangalaki  
Bali, Komodo, Wakatobi,  
Manado, Kungkungan Bay  
Palau, Yap, Truk  
Bikini Atoll  
Australia's Coral Sea  
Papua New Guinea, Solomons  
French Polynesia  
Fiji, Hawaii, Sea of Cortez  
Revillagigedo Islands  
Cocos & Malpelo Islands, The Galapagos  
Wrecks of Palau



Plus Underwater Photography Group Trips and Courses with leading photographers:  
Martin Edge, Linda Dunk, Malcolm Hey, Charles Hood, Gavin Anderson

**DIVEQUEST** *The Ultimate in Underwater Photography Adventures* ATOL Protected 2937  
Telephone: 01254-826322 or e-mail [divers@divequest.co.uk](mailto:divers@divequest.co.uk) website: [www.divequest.co.uk](http://www.divequest.co.uk)

## The System That Fits in Your Pocket. Not empties it.



Digital photography is a breakthrough for underwater photographers. With user friendly automatic features not found on underwater film cameras like autofocus and autoexposure, they are incredibly easy to shoot. LCD monitor screens let you see the image as it really is without the parallax problems associated with budget underwater cameras. Zoom optics that focus down to a few centimetres let you dispense with the hassles and costs of additional supplementary lenses. Instant playback helps you learn as you go and you'll never even have to pay for another roll of film!

Now you can choose from no fewer than 13 different Olympus digital cameras to take underwater.

**You can be up and running with a camera and housing for under £410.**



The future of underwater imaging is here. Where it's always been. At Ocean Optics.

**Ocean Optics**

13 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AQ  
Tel 0207 930 8408 Fax 0207 839 6148

<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>

# Trials and tribulations of an underwater photojournalist

by Jack Jackson

Underwater photographers are predominantly subject to Murphy's (Sod's) Law - What can go wrong will go wrong; this is bad enough over a two-week trip but when you take several weeks away from a repair-facility things inevitably get worse.

The only way around this is multiple redundancy (backup). I set off on most of my trips with three Nikon land cameras; two Nikonos underwater cameras; two Subal aluminium underwater housings; three Sea & Sea and one Subtronic underwater flash guns, two Nikon land flash guns and a Subal aluminium housing for taking these underwater. Add a laptop computer, various lenses, base plates, strobe arms, spare synchronization cables, chargers, batteries and battery packs to cover regular power failures, underwater torches, film and diving equipment and I have to arrange for extra checked baggage plus over 20 kilograms of hand baggage with an airline.

Some underwater photojournalists only carry their camera equipment and hire diving equipment locally but being over 6ft tall it is difficult to find diving equipment that fits me, some of the areas that I dive do not have any diving equipment available anyway. I also like to dive alone and with two or three cameras and that means that both hands are always full so I prefer to dive with equipment that I trust and am familiar with to be sure that I can locate the correct control in



*Dolphin and diver, Nikonos V, 15mm lens 1/90 at F5.6.*



*Scalloped Hammerhead Shark, Nikonos V, 28mm lens 1/90 at F8.*

an emergency. For the same reason I always dive with two different dive computers, one of which has user replaceable batteries.

I have only found two countries where local law prohibits me from diving alone - Aruba and Israel. The tourist

board supplied me with a buddy in Aruba and the operators in Israel, they must have been bored but at least they were useful for carrying extra cameras. Muck diving is a different situation where I am grateful for a dive guide's local knowledge saving me time by

knowing where the tiny critters can be found.

In rare cases, whoever commissions the trip cannot organize a suitable arrangement with their usual airline to cover journalists' baggage. In these instances I may have to find a more accommodating airline or if the destination can be reached via the United States of America I will go that way with an American airline as these treat checked baggage by size rather than weight.

Carrying all of this equipment can also be a problem, on land I sometimes have to engage porters and once had to resort to a wheelbarrow to travel several miles along a beach.

I always keep the film separate so that it is never left in the sun. I have had slow film ruined by airport X-rays and on a longer trip my film can pass through 20--30 X-ray machines so I ask for hand searches wherever possible.

Lead-lined bags are no longer a good protection, once when I passed through Sharm el Sheikh airport with film in lead-lined bags, the machine operator just turned up the scanning strength and we could clearly see every film on the monitor.

Where possible I get local agents and operators to work ahead of time on organization and communication so that I can spend the maximum time on diving research and photography and the minimum time on administration and travel, that way I hit the ground running. Instances of this include small islands off the coasts of Peninsular Malaysia and the Philippines where I had to take a compressor and diving cylinders from the mainland as there were



*Gorgonian Sea Fan, Nikon F90x, 14mm Sigma rectilinear lens, 1/125 at F5.6.*



*Sleeping Bumphead Parrotfish at night, Nikon F90, 14mm Sigma rectilinear lens, 1/125 at F5.6*

none on the islands and several cases where I had to arrange refills of diving cylinders en route or carry a compressor on small boats.

Local customs and politics are not always straightforward. I do not bother with photographic-carnets but do have to carry a customs list with values.

Quite often, although a country has a thriving diving

industry, if you arrive through a capital city that is well-away from the diving areas, they may ask for a monetary-bond. My diving off the islands around the Sulu Archipelago's Jolo Group started with a bang as we ran into a heavy thunderstorm and the boat was struck by lightning. However, as well as having a military escort we required several different



*Grey Reef Shark against sun, Nikonos V, 15mm lens 1/90 at F8.*



*Yellowbar Angelfish, Nikon F801s, 55mm Micro-Nikkor lens, 1/125 at F8.*

interpreters, as we had to ask for separate permission to dive from the headman on each of the islands. Each island often had a distinct tribal-group and language and some had not seen foreigners since the Japanese occupation during World War II.

We found a number of good dives and a recently salvaged Chinese junk with Ming Porcelain but all of my research came to nothing when the Sipadan hostages were held at the main Island of Jolo two weeks later.

As with Indonesia's

Sangalaki, to reach the Philippines' Club Noah Isabelle via a flight to Sandoval, I had to reduce my equipment to one housed camera, one Nikonos, a wetsuit and mask for the 10kg aircraft baggage limit. However Club Noah Isabelle's main clients are small Asians not large Caucasians; they had a problem finding fins to fit my feet. The Taytay Bay area may not be in the mainstream of Philippine diving but due to fishing restrictions and some careful fish-feeding, it has many impressively large Napoleon

Wrasse, groupers and trevallies.

On the downside, when it came to departure time, I was the only client to leave so I had a wet journey in a small open speedboat across Taytay Bay to the mainland, not a good way to travel when you have to catch a plane to Manila and an onward connecting flight. Fortunately I was the only passenger on the 19-seat aircraft to Manila so my being wet did not annoy anyone else.

On a repeat visit to Coron, I had a pleasant time diving on the wrecks and we spent one night bivouacking on a tiny island where the weather looked a bit dodgy. Expecting possible weather problems, I took all my cameras ashore including two housed cameras that were already connected with synchronization cables to flash guns. On the first dive the next day one of my flash guns began firing off continuously like a strobe light. I struggled with this unit for several days, double checking all connections and fitting the housing with twin-flash, it worked fine in air but every time I took it into the water it malfunctioned.

Eventually I spotted the tiny impression of a rat's teeth on the synchronization cable, £70 of synchronization cable and several dives destroyed by a hungry rodent! Animals often take a liking to the odour of silicone rubber, on a Malaysian island I once found squirrels eating my guide's silicone rubber mask.

From Coron the weather prevented us from getting north to Club Paradise on Dimakya Island by banca (Small outrigger boat) so we returned to Coron and travelled overland to Maricaban Bay. Arriving there at

nightfall we managed to get a local banca to Maricaban Bay Resort but it was closed with generator problems. Fortunately one of the directors of Club Paradise passed by with a larger banca heading for Dimakya Island so we jumped aboard. The crossing to Club Paradise was very rough, the coxswain only understood two speeds - full speed ahead and stop; he did not understand how a boat should be manoeuvred to comfortably ride high waves. The result of crashing and banging over the waves was wet passengers and one of my battery chargers broken. Dimakya Island does not have sheltered anchorage and for ecological reasons Club Paradise do not wish to build one. The weather had been rough for several days and when we arrived, the banca hove to about 50m offshore while we transferred our equipment and ourselves from a bouncing banca to an even more bouncing small open speedboat in a 2-metre swell. Disorientated in the dark I was certain that we would end up with a capsized speedboat when crossing the surf but the staff at Club Paradise had obviously encountered this situation before. The coxswain gunned the outboard motor and drove the speedboat full-speed at the beach where, as we hit the beach, 30 or more male figures appeared all around us, physically lifted the boat and carried it up the beach, what a welcome! When we came to leave Dimakya Island we had a tricky time boarding the banca by its gangplank in the swell and the light-aircraft that we were booked on from Busuanga had crashed with no survivors so we had to find another. When we did find another aircraft, the airline took advantage of situation and charged the earth for my excess baggage.

While landing at the marine reserve of Apo Island in the Philippines, I stepped off the banca into the water in my usual bare feet and trod on some broken glass - resulting in a deep 5-inch cut across the sole of my foot. Nasty cuts never heal unless you spend several days out of the water but photojournalist have a job to do and limited time to do it in, I had to continue diving with it for the next two weeks. I once had a similar problem when diving off a fishing boat in the Sudanese Red Sea where I shredded my hand on the barnacles covering its bottom. This time I was able to continue diving by wearing a rubber glove full of Dettol disinfectant while in the water.

Between dives at Southern Leyte my dive guides wanted to take me ashore at San Bernardo on Limasawa Island to visit the village and shrine to the Philippines' first catholic mass. One dive



*Soft Tree Coral against sun, Nikon F90x, 14mm Sigma rectilinear lens, 1/125 at F11.*

guide had remarked that the new bamboo jetty that had recently been constructed for visiting politicians would not last long but never expected that we would be the ones to prove him right, it collapsed as we crossed onto land and we had to swim back to the banca - in my case, holding a land camera and film above my head to keep it dry.

I once travelled back from Leyte to Cebu on a modern SuperCat catamaran ferry through a storm that made most of the passengers seasick and sank another ferry with great loss of life in the same area. I immediately transferred to Manila, Singapore and London but rough weather followed me home. London was suffering such a bad storm that the plane had trouble landing but it was the taxi driver who had the last laugh, being late on Christmas Eve he was legally able to charge me four times the normal rate!

Shark feeding is another matter. Situated next to the bait in a melee of more than 50 sharks during a frantic feeding-frenzy is interesting to say the least. Varying in size from one-metre Whitetip Reef Sharks and two-metre Grey Reef Sharks to



*Babs Jackson on the Umbria, Nikonos V, 15mm lens 1/90 at F5.6.*

three-metre plus Silky and Silvertip sharks, there is always the chance that one of them will have a sore head on the day. In the Sudan one of my worst experiences was when a large battle-scarred male Silky shark attacked every one of us, we decided that discretion was better than valour and got out of the water. Hammerhead Sharks do not respond to feeding but some do venture fairly close anyway.

Throughout the 70s and 80s, large shoals of Scalloped Hammerheads were common at Sanganeb and I was pleased to find that squadrons of over 100 of them were back in July 2002. The depth is such that still pictures are only shadows but the video people get great footage. Light-coloured fins are a problem, larger fish think that they are separate, edible-sized small fish, I have had such fins nibbled by both sharks and large groupers.

For many months, the aftermath of September 11, 2001 was horrendous. Airlines, hotels and resorts ceased trading, many airlines would not carry electrical goods and some airlines would not accept any hand baggage in the cabin, even film; I had to cancel several trips.

Diving photojournalism sounds glamorous but is not always so; You get to stay at the best resorts and hotels but more often than not you arrive late at night and depart early in the morning so you rarely have time to sample what is on offer other than the diving. Most hotels and all live-aboard boats have dim lighting that make it difficult to put intricate underwater camera equipment together and to write up the dives; often the bathroom is the only place that is reasonably lit so I spend a lot of time in there.

Non-standard electricity supplies, power failures and resorts or live-aboard boats with erratic generators, often produce power surges, which despite special voltage regulators, blow battery chargers and other electrical equipment. Bad weather or malfunctioning equipment is no excuse for not producing suitable photographs, I had seven weeks of rain in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao but I am paid to return with results.

Despite all these problems, I do it because I enjoy it and fully appreciate the help I get from local people.

Nowadays I use Fuji Provia 100 or Velvia and always use manual mode at 1/125 or 1/250 of a second with centre-weighted metering on housed cameras and 1/90 of a second with the Nikonos V. I use single flash for wide-angle shots but twin-flash for macro. When using twin-flash, one flash is at least twice as powerful as the other to give modelling-light, this avoids flat pictures. Most problems can be foreseen but not all. The moral is to cut out the water column, use 1/125 or 1/250-second at F5.6 or f4 and above all, be there.

**All pictures here are taken with flash, Fuji Provia film and centre weighted metering, the cameras are on manual. All housed land cameras are in two separate Subal housings, these were initially for Nikon F801s cameras but now are for Nikon F90/F90x cameras.**

**Jack Jackson FRPS, FRGS**

**e-mail: [jack.jackson@dial.pipex.com](mailto:jack.jackson@dial.pipex.com)  
[jack@jackjackson.co.uk](mailto:jack@jackjackson.co.uk)**

**web site: <http://www.jackjackson.co.uk>**

**tel: 01483 723900 / fax: 01483 771048**

# Everybody, Please meet Henry.....

by Andy & Angela Heath

Henry, a rather handsome *Phycodorus eques*, or leafy seadragon to you and me, lives around the wreckage of a collapsed ladder under Rapid bay jetty in South Australia.

Recognised by his unique facial markings, he can normally be found in the same vicinity, doing what leafy seadragons do best. That is, trying to blend in with the surrounding seaweed, feeding, and probably doing his darnedest to avoid the attentions of underwater photographers like myself.

We're not sure if Henry realised it, but it was him and his sort that had brought Angela and myself here from Melbourne. After living there for the past six months we'd seen the local weedy seadragons around Port Phillip bay as well as in Sydney. But leafys only occur over a narrow range, from Portland in the west of Victoria to Lancelin in West Australia. Smack in between lies South Australia and a famous dive site known as Rapid bay jetty. Always enjoying a good pier or jetty dive, the fact that there's a healthy population of leafy seadragons there was all the extra incentive we needed.

So, with a long weekend off during late March, we found ourselves driving the 1000 km's or so from Melbourne to Adelaide, on our way to meet Carey Harmer of Sea Optics, Adelaide. We'd arranged to meet up with him our first morning after he'd offered to join us on our first few dives on the jetty. Carey had lost count on just how many dives he had done on the



*This is Henry, one of approximately 30 leafy seadragons known to reside in Rapid bay. Nikon F90X in Nexus housing, 60mm, twin YS30 strobes on TTL, Velvia. Manual mode, 1/250th @ f16.*

jetty. With the seadragon database he had contributed to over the last ten years or so, he was familiar with many of the leafys, hence how we would soon find ourselves introduced to his old mate, Henry.

Post a hearty breakfast we picked up four tanks and followed Carey up the road to the bay. Pulling into a very dusty carpark we proceeded to gear up under a now fierce morning sun, the temperature already creeping



*Ceratosoma brevicaudatum*. These are the most common nudibranchs around the jetty and get pretty big. This individual was around 10cm long. Nikon F90X in Nexus housing, 60mm, twin YS30 strobes on TTL, Velvia. Manual mode, 1/250th @ f32.



Small scale bullseyes congregated in small groups like this around the jetty pylons, occasionally joining a large school beneath the centre of the jetty. Nikon F90X in Nexus housing, 16mm fisheye, twin YS120 strobes on TTL, -1.5EV, Provia. Manual mode, 1/60th @ f11.

toward the mid thirties. We had come prepared though (thanks to some prior correspondence on the internet) - two hats, a trolley, rope and padlock and chain. Not clear? .....read on....

Rapid bay jetty is well over 400 meters long. Dependent on how far away you've parked, you're in for at least a 500 meter hike each way. Aha, enlightened? Hats to wear for the walk out there, a trolley to transport the gear on, padlock and chain to affix the trolley to the jetty whilst diving and the rope? OK, so there's no easy access to the water - rope to dutifully lower

cameras into the water. Of course!

By now we were suited up, gear lashed to trolley, hats on, and boy, were we sweating! Unfortunately our borrowed trolley soon died - something to do with the width of the wheels being narrower than the gaps between the planks on the jetty! Doh! - back to plan B for today at least, the manual method. Taking us twice as long, and twice as many trips, to reach the end, we had at least twice as many inane comments from all the 'fishos' lining the top of the jetty, along the lines of "going

diving mate?", "whaddya see down there?" were countered by "caught anything yet mate?"

Thankful we had thought to lug two litres of water with us, we rested at the end, replacing some much needed fluids. During which time we considered our method of entry. Both high-level entries, the choice was between a 15ft giant stride from the top of the pier, or a 7ft one from a recently added platform. We wisely chose the latter while Carey tied on the ropes ready to lower the cameras down. Once in the 19 degree water it didn't take too long to

cool down. We gathered the cameras, a quick leak check, then headed down to meet on the bottom, some 30 ft below.

The substrate was made up of coarse sand, small rocks and rubble with larger debris directly beneath the jetty. Looking toward shore we could see an expanse of seagrass ended somewhat abruptly near the edge of the jetty. The wreckage of a large 'A frame' was situated below the entry platform, topping out at around 15ft. Due to a recent storm the water had been a little churned up and visibility hovered around 30ft or so. Not as much as we'd hoped for, but due to the sediment from the quarry and often variable conditions, it was apparently never entirely predictable. Still, with a 60mm lens on for this dive, it didn't prove to be problem.

Once we became accustomed to the conditions we started to investigate the seaweed covered 'A frame'. We'd been told leafys sometimes hang out there but although we couldn't find any, around the base and the nearby seagrass were an abundance of weedy seadragons. We'd seen weedys before but never quite so many in one place. Interestingly they all appeared smaller than those we had seen in Victoria and New South Wales. We later found out that cold-water specimens often grow larger than their warm water counterparts. Of course, they were no easier to shoot, keeping a respectable distance between any diver and a tendency to stay sideways on - but there were plenty of opportunities to try different approaches.

Moving on under the jetty we came across more fish hiding



*Rapid bay jetty is well over 400 meters long*



*Nikon F90X in Nexus housing, 60mm, twin YS30 strobes on TTL, Velvia. Manual mode, 1/250th @ f16.*

amongst the seaweed encrusted pylons and patchy covering of seagrass. Boarfish, old wives, yellowtails, perch, leatherjackets, puffers, cowfish and a variety of wrasse used the profuse kelp cover to their advantage.

Looking closer we found beautiful sponges, ascidian colonies and patches of bryozoans, crabs scuttled out of the way and a variety of nudibranchs, well, didn't. For nudi lovers, a number of species were prevalent and considered common here. Huge *Ceratasoma*

*brevicaudatum*, *Chromodoris tinctoria* and *Flabellina* species were easy to find. On the starfish peppered bottom a multitude of goatfish and Magpie perch cleared the way for us as we kept our eyes peeled for flatheads and harder to spot stargazers that are known to reside there. Before we found any of those however, we came across Henry!

Our first leafy seadragon! Fantastic. We spent ten enjoyable minutes watching and 'shooting' Henry. Before the dive, Carey



*This is one of a pair of cuttlefish, possibly broadclub cuttlefish, that we would find every day either sheltering or laying in wait in the exact same place and almost perfectly camouflaged. Nikon F90X in Nexus housing, 60mm, twin YS30 strobes on TTL, Velvia. Manual mode, 1/125th @ f11.*

had informed us as to how delicate leafys are. If they get too stressed out they may suddenly die. Also, if they are made to change even moderate depths quickly, their swim bladder can rupture. We had heard and read horror stories attesting to this.

Photographers who had 'held on' to the tails of a seadragon to get a shot, only to see them keel over afterward. Snorkelers who would dive down and bring live seadragons

up to the surface to show others. Other photographers who would shepherd the seadragons into suitable positions for a shot. Needless to say, we had already decided to take only a handful of shots of any single subject that we found so as hopefully not to cause too much trauma.

In the end, we found that as long as we were patient, slow and moved carefully around the environment, we could get suitably close to Henry for full

body shots and close-up's.

Leafys can't move too quickly and seem to prefer to depend on their camouflage, tending to stand their ground until you get unreasonably close. Which proved to be close enough for 20, 60 & 105mm lenses.

However, they also tend to stay sideways on to any 'threat' making head-on shots harder with shorter focal length lenses. To be honest though, they are a gift to photographers. With a striking green to yellow (variable dependent on location) and white colouration, they look great if shooting for black or blue negative space. The typical leafy 'movement' also makes them perfect candidates for slow speed sync. shots.

In fact it was all this that kept us coming back to the jetty for the next three days. Our intention had been to spend the time exploring the surrounding shore dive sites as well as the jetty, but the jetty was just too good. Even then we didn't get to explore all of the areas! What we did get to do though was to shoot our gamut of lenses, 105, 60, 20 & 16 fisheye on an equally diverse set of subjects - mostly centered around the leafys of course. Over those three days we discovered and identified at least eight different individual leafy seadragons, finding them each to react quite differently to the camera. But it was Henry that we would find and visit at least once on each of those dives. Other highlights for us were the schools of old wives and bullseyes resident beneath the 'T-section'. A pair of cuttlefish always to be found in the same recesses, appearing to lay in ambush. Blue ring octopus under the debris beneath the entry

platform (found when I had the fisheye on!), a large southern fortescue, small school of squid and huge flatheads. We also saw a large fiddler ray, unfortunately it was on the other end of a fishing line. Which leads to our other 'findings' - that of a new fishing reel, multiple squid jigs and lures, and a nice blue hat. We left everything but took the hat as a momento! In a similar vein we 'rescued' a goatfish and wrasse that were both hooked on a broken trace - shears are more than handy when diving here!

Our only regret was not doing a night dive. The near two-hour bottom times and two or three tank a day dives combined with the walk to and from the car meant that a beer and meal at the pub always won out! Still, gives us something to return for doesn't it? And to see how Henry's getting on eh?

## Useful information

Rapid bay is about 100km and a few hours drive south of Adelaide. Apart from a campsite there is little other accommodation near the jetty. We stayed at Dolphin dive in nearby Normanville. Simple but comfortable accommodation above the dive shop made it easy to pick up tanks and fills etc. They also hire out wetsuits and the range of gear at reasonable prices. Dolphin dive went out of their way to ensure we had a good time (including lending us their trolley when ours died).

Normanville also has a few nearby B&B's, a small motel and numerous café's as well as a pub for food.

Dolphin dive can be found at [www.oitafe.com.au/Dolphin\\_Dive/](http://www.oitafe.com.au/Dolphin_Dive/).



*Nikon F90X in Nexus housing, 20mm, twin YS120 strobes on TTL, -1.5EV, Provia. Manual mode, 1/15th @ f11. Rear curtain sync and slow shutter speed.*

The bay can be dived year round. Best conditions are found when winds are from the east or southeast. Northerly winds can cause a lot of swell and reduce visibility to near zero. Water temp. peaks in summer at around 21 degrees, dropping to around 12 degrees in winter. Diving is also highly rated around Kangaroo island and the York peninsular so you can easily base a dive holiday in the region.

The jetty becomes busy at weekends and there are queues at the platform as well as around anything interesting (including leafys) underwater. We suggest you plan to dive weekdays if at all possible. The shore, and the approach, is quite rocky with a shallow gradient. Shore entries and exits are possible but could be very difficult if carrying equipment.

Be prepared to share the jetty with the 'fishos' or fishermen. Be careful of the lines, take a pair of shears and pick up any rubbish you find.

The most memorable thing, apart from the diving, tends to be

the amount of dust generated by the active limestone quarry (which the jetty used to serve for loading/unloading).

After three days diving we had dust virtually everywhere, including coating the inside of the camera and housing so prepare for that.

You can check out [www.seadragon.org.au](http://www.seadragon.org.au) for a guide on seadragons as well as a code of conduct when diving with them.

For information on diving Southeast Asia, underwater photography & the Motormarine IIEX:- Just add warm water to A & A instant divers!!!

<http://freespace.virgin.net/andy.aj/index.html>

## Andy & Angela Heath



# Shooting Scilly Seals

By Demelza and Will Postlethwaite

There can be few experiences to match an interaction between man and another mammal. When the experience takes place in an element which differs to our own and with creatures of rivalling intelligence it can become almost life changing in its effect.

Atlantic Grey Seals exist in a few colonies off the British coast but there is just one place, to our knowledge, which provides the photographer with almost guaranteed opportunities to capture this creature on film underwater and in clear water.

The Scilly Isles, 28 miles off the coast of Lands End in Cornwall, are a sub tropical idyll for wildlife and people alike.

Life long Scillonian, Mark Groves, sets out almost daily with his RIB full of visitors to the Isles hoping to snorkel with a colony of seals around the jagged uninhabited Eastern Rocks. Occasionally the snorkelers are joined by divers but more often it is film crews. A pioneer of underwater photography himself, Mark has been visiting the seals for many years so they have no fear as the boat approaches and, when in the water, some even greet him as a friend.

While we chose to use scuba units Mark prefers to snorkel with his customers and



*Silvery sea - No strobes, ambient light, aperture priority, f8. Nikon F90X in a Subal Miniflex housing. Nikon 20mm AFD lens. Fuji Provia 100 F*

take his photographs on duck dives. Our subjects, the seals, were in less than three metres of water and, although clear for most of the year, our visit coincided with an unseasonable plankton bloom. In our favour the Cornish sun was shining and the sea was flat so our enemy was to be backscatter. There were several options to overcome this. The use of ambient light and avoiding strobes altogether, twin strobes swept well back on long arms, shooting up or down and aperture priority with fill-in TTL flash.

The beauty of ambient light photography is that backscatter is eliminated and you can concentrate on your composition. However, you have to shoot

close to the surface and close to your subject as light, and especially colours, are lost very quickly through water tending to reduce contrast and making pictures look washed out.

As you can see from “Silvery sea” the water’s surface makes an excellent backdrop but the underside of the seal is in shadow. At 3 metres with only brown kelp to reflect the sun the light levels were such that in order to get the seals interacting with us on film we needed to add light.

In “Melz with seal” you can see the image is lit by strobes on either side aimed slightly away from the direction of view such that the angle of the beam lights up the diver and the seal but not the centre of the frame and



*White baby - 2 Sea&sea YS120 strobes on TTL, aperture priority, f8. Nikon F90X in a Subal Miniflex housing. Nikon 20mm AFD lens. Fuji Provia 100 F*

therefore the water column. This strategy works well but, again, you need to be close and to fill the areas of the frame illuminated by the strobes. You can get interesting effects with this method by switching off one strobe and lighting just from the underside as can be seen in “Upside down”. It takes a couple of looks to see what is going on!

By filling the background of the picture either with the kelp by shooting down or with the water surface by shooting up you can help to avoid the backscatter showing up on your shot. With “Face in the kelp” a very obliging seal spent some minutes with only his head poking out of the kelp. This gave us the chance to shoot from slightly further away and any light from the strobes that reflected back to the lens is lost in the brown kelp backdrop.

Any horizontal shots would have shown how much material was in the water. In “White baby” the camera’s metering was switched from matrix or full frame to spot. This allowed us to have the strobes set to TTL without having to fill the frame with subjects in a single plane. Exposing with



*Face in kelp - 2 Sea&sea Ys120 strobes on full, 1/60, f5.6. Nikon 20mm AFD lens. Fuji Provia 100 F*

*Melz with seal - 2 Sea&sea YS120 strobes on full, 1/60, f8. Nikon F90X in a Subal Miniflex housing. Nikon 20mm AFD lens. Fuji Provia 100 F*



*Upside down - 1 Sea&sea YS120 strobe on full, 1/60, f11. Nikon 20mm AFD lens. Fuji Provia 100 F*



*Scillonian-style dive centre*

aperture priority meant that even as the seal moved in the water column with more or less sunshine in the shot the exposure remained good.

You can see that the whiteness of the seal's fur has lead to the spot metering to slightly underexpose the background water surface. Not only was the experience of interacting closely with these wild animals so amazing but the fact that they stayed with us for such a long time allowed us to

experiment with various techniques and get shots for quite a varied portfolio.

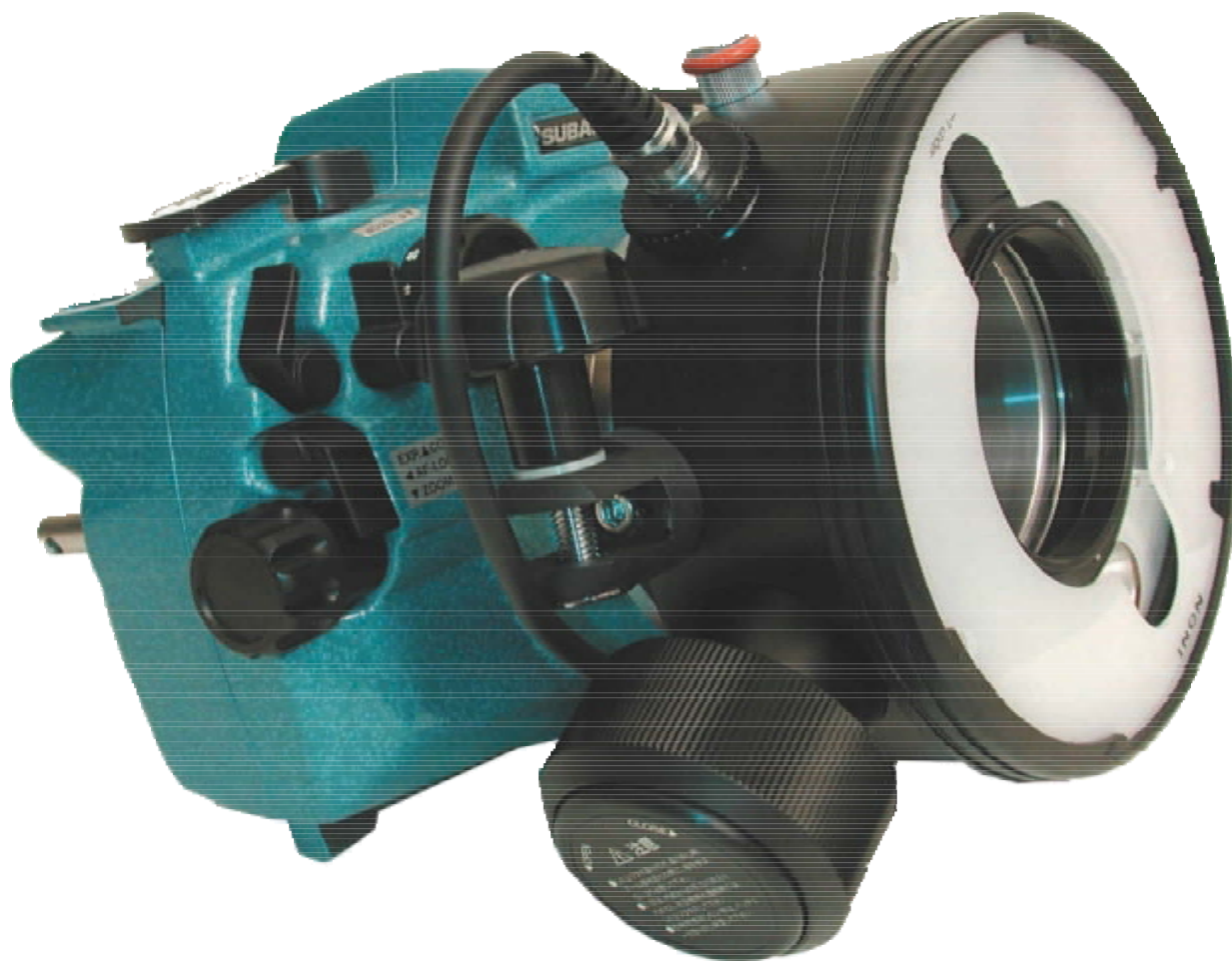
Our thanks go to Mark Groves for this opportunity, truly a man of the sea. Mark offers trips to see the seals and dive trips. He is based on St Marys and can be contacted on 01720 422732.

**By Demelza and Will Postlethwaite**

poslethwaites@btinternet.com



# Ring of Bright Water



**Inon's Quad Flash is one of the most innovative tools ever made available to underwater photographers. The four reflectors provide shadowless lighting with an ethereal quality all of its own. The compact size is less intrusive than conventional strobes and makes animals much more approachable.**

**The Quad is packed with useful features such as an automatically activated modeling light to assist autofocus and Nikon compatible TTL. To get creative there are three manual powers and a built in shade lets you block off two of the reflectors.**

**Available with ports to suit both Subal and Sea and Sea SLR housings. Quad from £995.00. Ports from £299.00. For a full review by award winning photographer, author and underwater photography coach Mark Webster see UwP Issue 2 at <http://www.uwpmag.co.uk>**

## **Ocean Optics**

**13 Northumberland Ave, London WC2N 5AQ  
Tel 020 7930 8408 Fax 020 7839 6148  
<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>**

# Lights and divers

by Martin Edge

An incident at Heathrow Airport earlier this year was my inspiration for this article. I had a choice to make at the check in counter. My hand luggage was a tad too heavy and I was forced to leave something behind. What would it be? I had time on my side so I set about repacking my underwater photography carry-on bag.

Underwater tripod systems, back up flashguns just in case a spare of a spare of a spare failed to arrive in time, flash arms and other bits and bobs. Everything in the bag came under scrutiny of its worth on the trip. What could I afford to leave behind? What was essential? At the very top of the list of essential optional extras were my powerful Kowalski dive torches, two of them to be precise. I had never fully appreciated until then just how important to me divers with lights were.

The inclusion of a diver in any sense is not mandatory. Chris Newbert, author of 'Within a Rainbow Sea' and 'In a Sea of Dreams' stated in a magazine interview that diver pictures were the most boring and redundant photographs on the face of the earth. In complete contrast American Skindiver magazine publishes numerous pictures of bikini-clad models, just posing for the underwater camera. The impression of an underwater beauty pageant or fashion parade cannot easily be avoided. These are two extremes of opinion, neither right nor wrong. My own opinions and views on this subject are just



*Both divers are using video lights as opposed to a dive torch. I have learnt that apertures of at least F5.6/F4 at 60th sec with ISO 100 film are necessary to bring out the full beam of even the brightest light. Using these apertures it is possible, as in this example, to illuminate a secondary point of interest. The sponges on the pillar are lit by the beam of the torch. Remember to direct the beam towards the subject. The photographer needs to see the beam being emitted. This takes fine-tuning of the beam direction and communication between photographer and model is crucial. Both divers were positioned with a variety of hand signals.*

*Notice how the first diver looks posed and contrived whilst in the background the more experienced model looks natural in her exploration of Town Pier in Bonaire. I took an entire roll of film on this idea and only achieved about 8 shots, which I considered were acceptable to me. Nikon 16mm lens, F4 @ 30th second, Elite 200*



*The model in this image is about 20 feet away. I used the technique has above, by drumming my fingers on the dome in order to get the torch dead centre. I would have preferred the beam to be slightly offset as in 'PNG Barrel Sponge' but I pressed the shutter when the Kowalski was aiming directly into the lens. In several other shots of this set the light beam was better but the position of the diver was awkward and unbalanced. Using apertures of F4 or F5.6 (as was the case in this shot) can often make the dive light too bright. Nikon 17mm - 35mm zoom lens set to 17mm end. Two Sea & Sea YS 120 flashguns set to manual half power with Elite 100 ISO.*



*This image represents what I am trying to achieve in my underwater photography. It matters not who may like or dislike it. The inclusion of the diver in the background, the size and scale of his presence, his body position, in my opinion speaks a thousand words. The addition of the dive light increases the impact even more so. The model is Ronnie, a dive guide from Sipadan Dive Center. Whenever an opportunity arose he would place himself about 20 to 30 feet behind the subject. I learnt to control the natural light exposure of both the blue mid water background and the dive light. A Sea & Sea YS 120 flash on manual full power provided the fill to paint in the shadows on the turtle. Nikon 16mm fisheye lens F8 @ 125th sec. Elite 100.*

that, opinions! Readers must come to their own conclusions; however, my approach in various situations may be of interest to you.

In my own wide-angle underwater photography I like to include divers/models for a number of reasons.

- \* Provide the viewer with a 'sense of being there'. The addition of a diver can bring the awe and wonder of the underwater world into someone's front room. It's something divers and non-divers alike can relate to. Dive magazines, equipment manufacturers, scuba travel agents exploit this enormously.

- \* To provide a sense of scale in a wide-angle seascape or close focus wide angle shot. Nothing dramatises a wreck shot better than a diver with a light

- \* To fill 'dead space' in an area of the picture that perhaps has just too much blue water.

- \* To create a feeling of depth through the image. I small diver in the background conjures up a feeling of being distant and automatically provides depth perspective so essential for successful wide-angle work.

- \* To reinforce a subject by directing the eye of the viewer. This maintains the interest of the viewer and continually leads the eye back to the focal point.

## But Why The Light?

A dive light is an optional extra, an added bonus but no, it is not essential. Consider this! Whilst the diver provides the sense of scale, the depth and the feeling of 'being there'. A powerful dive light reinforces

*The diver is reinforcing the main theme of the image being the shape and colour of the huge PNG barrel sponge. Notice how your eye is drawn back and forth between the diver and sponge. No matter where you look around the frame it is these two elements of the image, which attract your attention. The use of the light in this is completely different than the Bonaire Pier shot. My flashgun has lit the sponge not the dive-light. By using hand signal I have directed the diver to point the light directly into my dome port. I do this by drumming the fingers of my free left hand on the glass. The diver will see the reflection of the light on the dome. As soon as this effect looks pleasing I show an enthusiastic OK sign. The model then knows to slightly incline the flash towards the main subject. This adjustment is so slight, just enough to offset the beam slightly. Unlike the Pier shot you have to take care not to overexpose the dive-light. I have learnt that F11 or F16 is usually the most favourable aperture. When shooting up towards the surface it is common to achieve F11 or F16 apertures from the exposure of the blue water, which makes this technique easier to master. 16mm fisheye lens, dual Sea & Sea YS 120 flashguns set to full power. F11 @ 60th second with Elite 100 ISO.*



*An early attempt at using a model with a video light. I took a series of shots of my wife Sylvia exploring a swim-thru on one of the wrecks at Gubal. I tilted the camera angle to provide a more dynamic diagonal to the composition. I placed the light on the 'thirds' intersection to aid composition. The bubbles were luck but once again I think a subtle enhancement. I took about 6 shots of this idea. Nikonos III & 15mm lens. 60th sec at F4. Oceanic 2003 on half power.*

these aspects considerably. As we are on the subject have a glance at the picture illustrations above, screw your eyes up and visualise the shot without the light! Better or worst?

## Size of the Diver

Another consideration is the size of the diver/model in the frame. This relates to how close they are to the photographer. How many of you think of this when you are shooting film? The closer they are the more their pose is critical to the success of the image, gangling arms and legs is a certain no no. At these close distances the eyes of the model come into the scenario.

I say model because at this distance you are arranging a model as opposed to just a diver. If the viewer can see the eyes, they should look happy, enquiring and interested. More of this perhaps in a later issue!

Let me discuss the practicalities of all this in the extended captions of examples.



*I have taken very few shots in recent years where the features of the models are visible. This portrait was a request by the couple to have their pictures taken underwater. I selected a photogenic archway in Macro City, Sipadan. The foreground model has been briefed to explore the roof of the cave with her eyes and to reinforce her gaze at all times with the dive light (an ancient subatec video light). Her partner was briefed to direct his light towards her beam. You can see him looking towards me for directions. Again I pressed the shutter a fraction of a second early and to me the result looks contrived. When the features of models are plainly visible it becomes much harder to achieve the desired within the image. Boredom, uncertainty, stress, whatever the eyes of the models portray is obvious to all! Debbie (in the foreground) was a super model, with excellent buoyancy control and poise. She was able create so much enthusiasm and interest by her eye movements alone. Nikon F801s in Subal housing. A Sea & Sea YS50 on TTL filled in the features of the models. F11, 30th second.*

Remember! It is not mandatory to fill space with a diver if the shot stands up for itself. Always consider that the use of such could ruin a shot entirely. I always keep the opening words of Chris Newbert in the back of my mind when choosing to include a diver with or without a light. His wide angles are outstanding and there is not a bubble in sight. We can all learn from his approach by studying his two coffee table books. ‘Within a Rainbow Sea’ and ‘In a Sea of Dreams’.

And finally a note about the equipment. Whilst there are numerous dive/video lights/torches on the market, I use Kowalski torches, both the 620 and 1250 model. My reasons are due to the brightness of the beam, the two power settings 50% and 100%, duration of burn time and most importantly the charging implications. Kowalski lights can now be re-charged without hesitation even if they are not entirely discharged. At last the notorious ‘memory effect’ of the battery pack has no impact. The full charge time is about two hours and is achieved without opening any part of the casing thereby eliminating the risk of a flood.

**Martin Edge**

## Revolutionary Cameras without the aristocratic price tag

Digital is the way to go for easy underwater shooting with maximum versatility.



Remarkably compact cameras don't detract from your diving fun. Close focusing zoom lenses let you shoot the small and shy creatures without clumsy and expensive accessories. Built in monitors let you compose your picture accurately and review and delete unwanted images at your convenience.

Digital is easy, fun and affordable underwater photography.

Systems cost from as little as £410.

## Ocean Optics

13 Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5AQ.

Tel: 020 7930 8408 Fax: 020 7839 6148

optics@oceanoptics.co.uk

<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>

# Macro shooting made easy

by Ee wan Khoo

At the end of the day, it's results that matters. Never mind the inconvenience of dragging a 10kg camera system against a 3kt current, never mind the countless times of strobes adjustment and certainly never mind the 40 minutes of searching for an elusive critter as long as I have RESULTS!!

But what if the results remain and all the inconvenience is reduced to a minimum? Too good to be true? Not anymore. The Subal housing and the Inon Quad flash combination is just a pure joy to operate. I first saw the system at Oceanoptics and immediately knew it's potential under water. It makes sense for one thing, when it comes to macro, you would want a system that is as compact as possible without sacrificing results. Naturally I bombarded the guys with tons of questions and finally the only left to find out, is to bring it underwater.

My opening ceremony was in the Maldives. Though not a popular site for macro shots, I brought it along for a tryout. Encased in the housing is a Nikon F100 with a Nikkor 105mm lens. The attention I got from onlookers while loading a roll of slide is simply awesome. I must admit the system is a handsomely crafted device and changing a roll of slide has never been so cool.

I shot 3 rolls of slides with the system in my 2 days of diving; would have shot more but my primary aim for the trip was wide angle photography. In a way it was really a test shot

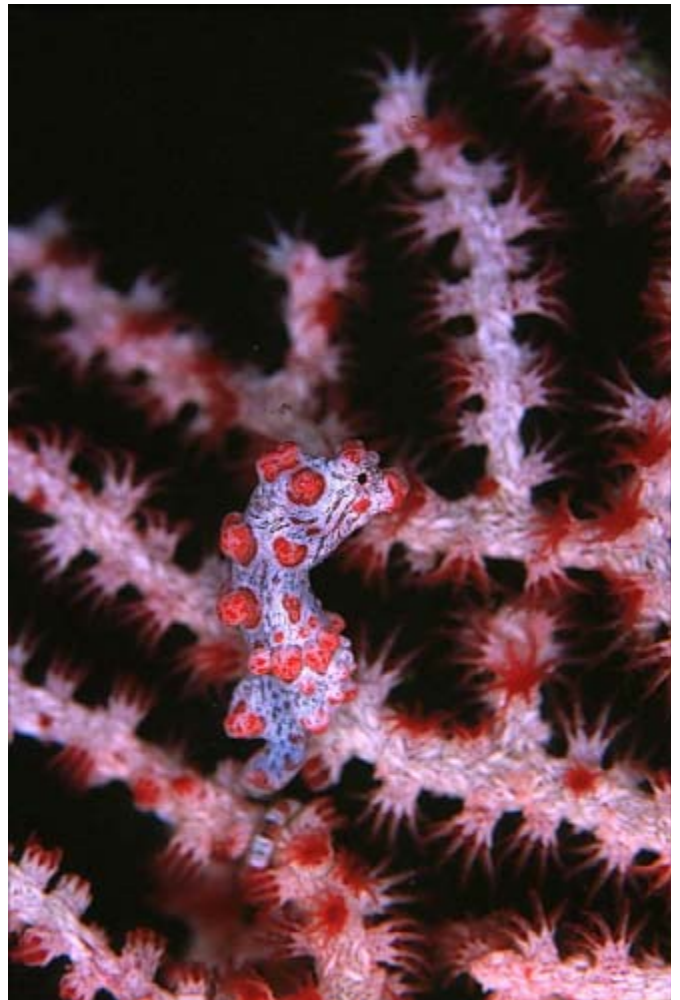


and I experimented with numerous settings. The Inon has 4 flash tubes and a sliding mask to masked away 2 tubes should you need to play a little with shadows. As I wasn't presented with much macro subjects, I decided to shoot crinoid shrimps and gobies.

On my return to Singapore, I got the slides processed and the results

confirmed my first impression. The colours were brilliant, contrast was excellent (partly due to Velvia), images were sharp. In short, I was a happy man. Armed with this knowledge and the capabilities of the system, it was only natural that I planned my next trip to critter haven – Manado!

A month later, I found myself at Bunaken marine park –



**All shots taken on: Nikon F100 in Subal housing with Inon Z-22 quad flash. Lenses used are Nikkor 60mm and 105mm, with 2x teleconverter, Films are Fujichrome Velvia and Kodachrome 100VS.**

Manado. A pygmy seahorse has recently made its' appearance nearby the dive centre and I made it my primary 'mission' to shoot it. The only thing I fear is that with a 105mm lens, I may not get sufficient magnification. All that 's left is now hoping that with the aid of the doublet with screws on the front of the Inon, will further magnify the seahorse. Pygmies have a habit of living in deep waters over 30m and with a mild to strong current flowing. This might be a problem as I needed stability when shooting at minimum focusing distant. However I found out I could operate the Subal with one hand – thanks to the ergonomic design and the strapped handle. The pygmy was in a very awkward position for photography and I needed the other hand as an

anchor while I contort myself into the best shooting position imaginable. I shot 2 rolls on it and hope for the best.

As this is macro haven, there were plenty of subjects to choose from so much so some dives were as short as 20 mins- I ran out of films! I still cannot understand why we are limited to 36 shots in a roll when over the years we have invented smaller, faster and more powerful computers.

So do I shoot 6 frames per subject on 6 subjects or 3 frames on 12? Well if there's one thing I learned about underwater photography is that you never never stint on films. The more uncommon the subject the more shots it deserves.

Shrimps and crabs seem to thrive here. I found them on fans, soft corals, hard corals, anemone and sea cucumbers. Each time I shot them I only had to worry about composition. No strobes position to worry about, aperture priority on f22 setting and strobe setting left on TTL.

The compact design of this system also enable me to get closer to shy creatures without spooking them. I guess the absence of strobe arms looked less threatening. The system also allows me



to work in confine places or when you do not have the luxury of space when shooting among sea fans. Both horizontal and vertical composition are much easier as I need not worry about breaking any corals as opposed to a housing with strobe arms sticking out.

The Inon also has a built in focus light. This light is activated when the shutter is lightly pressed. This assists in low light focusing and I found it to be extremely useful especially when shooting shrimps inside tube sponges.

The Inon also can be mounted through a conventional arm system should you want the light source from other angles. I personally have tried hand holding it from a few angles but it's mainly for experimental sake. The recycle time for each firing on TTL is very fast, making it possible to get as many shots as possible when unexpectedly the tiny shrimp poses for you. I could easily get 5 rolls of 36 frames on 4 standard alkaline batteries-size AA, though most of the time I rely on rechargeable NI-MH.

With such ease of usage, I wasn't surprised to find my stock

of Velvias diminishing. Thankfully I had a friend coming up from Singapore and he graciously brought along 20 rolls. I finished them all, he should have brought 30.

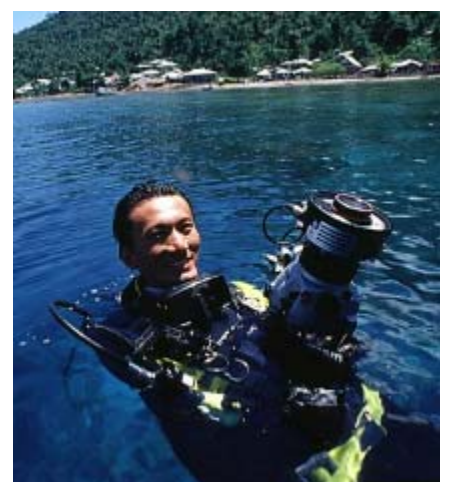
So finally the trip ends and the anxious moment begins. All the ease of usage is nothing if you don't have the results. When the slides came back, I was smiling and smiling wide. It was also a great relieve to get good shots as there were 2 other photographers with me who had doubts about the system. I showed them the results and they just stared at the slides and nodded their head in approval. The results speaks for themselves and a slide speaks a thousand words—most of it repetitive – Wow! Wow! Wow!

I have since returned to Manado for another shootout. This time I brought a long a 66mm extension ring. With the extra 'space' created, I could get a 105mm lens with a 2x teleconverter fitted. This essentially gives me a 210mm macro lens. Although the minimum focusing distant increases, it didn't hamper the situation. In fact in for certain subjects, this works very well.

I also experimented with a 60mm lens with a 2x teleconverter and found it to be extremely reliable. With this configuration, magnification improves without sacrificing working distance. Most of my shots were on aperture priority on f/16 and the strobes on TTL.

Of course this system doesn't work for every situation. It cannot get you a whale shark shot nor a manta ray. It's also not for everyone, as I do know of some people who strongly oppose the idea of a quad-flash. However I suggest that you judge it for yourself. For me it's an excellent system for macro shooting.

## Ee wan Khoo



# Subtronic Alpha

## Overspecified and underpriced

This is the Subtronic Alpha.  
It is one of the finest underwater flash units in the world.  
Yet its costs surprisingly little.



It's equally at home in the hands of a beginner or a pro.

It provides automatic TTL exposure with the Nikonos V and RS and most housed cameras

For more creative lighting you can override the TTL anytime you like and choose from seven manual power settings for fine discrimination. It's up to you.

To ensure you don't miss shots when the action is fast and furious the Alpha recycles in under three seconds.

There's plenty of power with the Alphas high guide number of 28. And you won't need a light sapping diffuser when you shoot wide angle. All of that power is available to you with full 100

degree coverage.

The built in power pack lets you shoot five rolls per charge and recharging via the multi voltage smart charger takes just two hours.

The Alpha has an aiming light fitted in the reflector as standard. Switchable underwater between 7 and 10 watts, it's brighter than many primary dive lights and can be used for night diving. And it doesn't stop there. A safety beacon and slave are standard features on the Alpha.

The gun is hand assembled and protected by a 100 metre depth rated aluminium body.

And you won't even get nickled and dimed on accessories. The Alpha comes complete with charger and cable. **And all for just £799.00.**

## Ocean Optics

13 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AQ

Tel 0207 930 8408 Fax 0207 839 6148

<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>

# In Praise of British Fish

by Mark Webster

I may be wrong, but I suspect that many readers of UwP Magazine perhaps only practice their art of underwater photography when they depart these shores for warmer waters. I often have students on my workshops who look horrified at the suggestion they might dive in chilly British waters if only to improve their skills if not purely for pleasure! Apart from the prospect of getting cold, a common misconception is that visibility is usually close to zero and that there are no colourful subjects worth recording. Whilst I would be the first to admit that visibility is not always stunning, there are techniques which can be used to work around this and there are also a whole host of aquatic celebrities to keep a keen photographer busy for dive after dive.

With this in mind I thought I might try to encourage more photographers to sample our temperate waters by singing the praises of British fish. After all, if you can learn to produce good images under difficult conditions then it can only make the task so much easier on your next tropical trip and who knows you may even learn to enjoy it!

We have to accept that light levels will be lower and the waters often murky in the UK, which means that we must return to the first principles of underwater photography in order to enjoy anything close to success. This means reducing the amount of water between the lens and the subject by using equipment that gets us closer and when you think you are close



*Lumpsucker and diver - occasionally the opportunity arises to combine marine life with a diver and you should make the most of it. Male lumpsuckers will be found in early spring guarding their eggs and will stay on location for 3-4 weeks which means you can return and set up a shot like this one. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 20mm, Isotecnic 33TTL, Elitechrome EBX 100, f5.6 @ 1/60*

enough, then try to get even closer still! Unless you have exceptional conditions, which do occur occasionally, you must forget about stand off photography and stick with macro and close up techniques. If we are concentrating on fish photography then you are unlikely to need to use a wide angle lens, but occasions do arise when you have a co-operative subject which allows you close enough to include the habitat or the subject is so large that only a wide angle lens is suitable.

Backscatter from suspended particles is of course the biggest enemy. You can avoid this and improve the apparent clarity of the water by careful positioning of your flash guns so that reflected light goes back towards the source (i.e. the flash) and not

the lens. We should generally avoid flat lighting from the direction of the camera/lens, however the only exception to this would be macro subjects photographed with a ring flash. The preferred lens for use with a ring flash is a 105mm, or perhaps a 180/200mm, where the field of view is extremely narrow and the light source is both very close to the lens and has a narrow beam output. In this way flat lighting does work, although it flies in the face of accepted principles, but is worth trying if you are really hooked on your macro images.

There are many ways to reach your dive site but for me the most productive dives are those made from the beach onto a shallow reef where you will find plenty of species and have



*John Dory - the weird looking John Dory or St. Peter fish is actually quite common in the summer months on shallow reefs, but is very difficult to spot in the kelp due to excellent camouflage and a very thin profile when viewed head on. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, Inon Quad flash,*



*Wolf fish - the biggest blenny in our northern coastal waters is the wolf fish. Although he looks pretty fierce, they are quite docile and like their smaller tom pot cousins are happy to pose for the camera. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, YS120 & YS30, Elitechrome EBX 100, f11 @ 1/60*

as much time as you need to capture them on film. Diving from a commercial charter boat, unless it is full of photographers, is not often successful as your dive duration may be dictated by tide or the interests of your fellow divers in the group. There are many excellent beach diving opportunities around the coast starting in the borders at Eyemouth and St. Abbs, Swanage Pier, Bovisand and the South Hams, Falmouth Bay, The Lizard and Lands End to name just a handful of productive areas.

## Over the Reef

In shallow waters the reef top will generally be swathed with a variety of sea weeds normally dominated by the hardiest species, kelp. A non photographer might view a dive to reef topped with kelp as a complete waste of bottom time, however for the photographer it provides a habitat which is home to varied cast of piscine characters. In addition to the more sessile reef residents there are numerous fish species which

cruise through the kelp and along the reef edge both protecting their territory and hunting for prey.

There are several varieties of wrasse to be found in British waters, the largest being the ballan wrasse which is our equivalent of the coral trout or grouper. Ballan wrasse are very territorial and the large males can reach lengths of 60cm or more and come in a variety of colours including a striking deep red speckled pattern. The females can grow almost as large, but tend to be slightly duller in colouration ranging

from green to brown. In the spring time you will often see them in pairs with the female carrying a heavy brood of eggs which the male is anxious to fertilise during spawning. These fish are very inquisitive and will often make repeated approaches through the kelp if you are patient enough to stay in one spot for 20-30 minutes. Look out also for feeding activity on the reef edge in the sand and gravel where you will also often see them rubbing their bodies on the seabed to apparently to remove parasites. In fact you might be lucky enough to observe another species of wrasse, the rock cook, actually removing parasites from the larger fish just like a cleaning station on a tropical reef!

Two other very colourful species of wrasse are also common on shallow reefs. The male cuckoo wrasse is resplendent in a snazzy blue and orange livery and can be very persistent in his approaches when you enter his territory. They can actually become aggressive particularly when they see their reflection in a camera port and they have been known to nip at exposed skin, which can come as quite a shock when you have your eye glued to the viewfinder! The female cuckoo wrasse is much duller to look at sporting a drab brownish livery. However, when a male dies or departs a territory it is the most dominant female which begins a transition to become a male and you may encounter an odd looking fish which is only half way through the change of life. The other colourful wrasse resident is the male corkwing which has an intricate swirling pattern of blue, red and brown and is most likely to be seen building a nest amongst the kelp



*Basking sharks are our biggest fish and appear in spring time with the first plankton bloom on which they feed. Having caught up with one photography is relatively straight forward - natural light with a wide angle lens, but don't forget to expose for the shark and not the water as they are quite dark in colour. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 20mm, Elitechrome EBX 100, f5.6 @ 1/60*



*Dragonet - Sand and rubble may appear barren and lifeless to begin with, but if you settle down for a few minutes then creatures will begin to reveal themselves. There are nearly always numerous dragonets who will approach you cautiously - the male is the most colourful and if you are lucky he may display his colourful dorsal fin. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, Inon Quad flash, Elitechrome EBX 100, f11 @ 1/125*

in spring in preparation for the female to spawn. If you spot one, try to track his movements across the reef and you will soon be led to the nest site which will give you the opportunity for

some close portrait shots.

Other kelp hunters include the pollack who hangs above the weed often in small groups much like a barracuda waiting to strike. More difficult to spot are the

## On the Rocks



*Male cuckoo wrasse - all cuckoo wrasse start off as females with the most dominant in the group changing sex when the male of the territory dies or departs. Occasionally you will encounter one which is partially patterned which looks decidedly odd. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, Inon Quad flash, Elitechrome EBX 100, f11 @ 1/60*



*Leopard spotted goby - these little fish are quite common, found at the base of the reefs in little sandy overhangs. However they can be a little skittish, so a 105mm lens will be the ideal tool to fill the frame. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, Inon Quad flash, Elitechrome EBX 100, f11 @ 1/125*

john dory whose body is wafer thin when viewed head on, which coupled with flawless colouration helps him blend perfectly into the kelp. However they will often track you in the hope that you will disturb something worth eating and, if you are fortunate, you might see one strike with its amazing

extending jaw which sucks the prey back in towards the fish a lot like a frog fish on a coral reef.

The best tool for capturing an image of these fish will be a 60mm lens in a housing or perhaps the standard 35mm on a Nikonos or Motormarine.

Almost every rocky foreshore has numerous inhabitants which may not be obvious at first glance, but with a little patience you will begin to track them down. Many of the fish you will find in the cracks and crevices of the reef are territorial or semi sessile and are easily approached for frame filling close up photography. We are all familiar with the smiling features of the tom pot blenny, but there are also Montagu's and Yarrel's blenny, shannies and butterflyfish to be found in a similar habitat. A number of gobies share the reef habitat with the blennies, the most striking being leopard spotted gobies which are generally found in small sandy openings at the base of the reef. Less obvious species include scorpion fish and topknots both of which have excellent camouflage and are more challenging to hunt down, but normally equally co-operative once found. All these species can be shot successfully with a 60mm or 105mm macro lens on a housed system, but if you are using a Nikonos or Motormarine then you will have to work with a close up kit with the framer removed. You can try focussing on the subject using converging torch beams which intersect at the point of focus, although judging the picture area will take some practice. Whichever system you have, you will need to concentrate on your lighting angles, not only to elude backscatter but also to avoid casting shadows on the subject when shooting into crevices in the reef.

Larger denizens you may find amongst the rocks include



*Corkwing wrasse - Corkwing are found on the reef throughout the year but are most active in the spring when the males are building their nests. If you spot one follow him until you find the nest location and then wait patiently for your opportunity. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, YS120 & YS30, Elitechrome EBX 100, f11 @ 1/60*

lumpsuckers tending their eggs in the spring, sleepy dog fish and topes and in our northern waters the granddaddy of all blennies, the fearsome looking wolf fish. All of these are fairly docile and co-operative and when conditions are favourable you may want to try a slightly wider approach with perhaps a lens between 20-35mm which will include some of the reef habitat.

## On the Sand

Wherever we dive in the world the temptation is often to head for the reef which usually offers the greatest concentration of sea life. All too often we can ignore the sandy areas that border a reef or indeed the often large areas of sand and gravel which we cross to reach the reef. This can be a mistake as these seemingly barren areas do harbour some interesting fish life, particularly in the summer months. As the shallow waters begin to warm in the early spring, formerly lifeless areas begin to sprout new growths of seaweed beds, eel grass and stands of bootlace weeds. These are in turn populated by fry and juvenile species which in turn attract predators. The weedy areas are a great



*Pouting shoal - this is a typical small school of pouting on a shallow wreck site. Occasionally we experience good conditions with good visibility and reasonable visibility - you need to be prepared to take advantage of them! Nikon F801, Subal housing, 20mm, YS120 & YS30, Elitechrome 100, f8 @ 1/60*

place to spot species like sticklebacks and pipe fish which blend very easily as they hang motionless or move very slowly through this natural camouflage. There are two species common in our waters, the greater pipe fish, which has a head very much like a seahorse and an armoured appearance to its body, and the snake pipe fish which is altogether smoother and more colourful, often found with a series of pale bands down the length of its body. Seahorses are apparently making a comeback as well and there are increasing reports of sightings and capture of these critters in crab pots all along the south coast. They also favour the weed on the sandy areas but are incredibly well camouflaged so you will need a great deal of patience and a good chunk of luck!

The sand and gravel areas are home to a number of species that are adept at camouflage and



*Topknot - topknots are usually found in cracks and crevices in the reef. Occasionally they will be found sitting on top of a rock as here, which allows you to get a low angle of approach and include some natural light in the shot. Nikon F801, Subal housing, 60mm, YS50 & YS30, Elitechrome 100, f5.6 @ 1/30*



*Scorpion fish are amongst my favourite reef subjects as each one will have a different colour and pattern dependant on where they are perching. Once found they are normally convinced you cannot see them, so make the most of every angle and exposure. Nikon F2, Hugyfot housing, 55mm, YS50 flash, Fujichrome Velvia, f8 @ 1/60*

may not be immediately apparent. One approach is just to settle on the sand and concentrate on the area a meter or so in front of you. Often species like dragonets, gobies and dabs will eventually begin to reveal themselves with movement and will normally become increasingly inquisitive. They tend to move in small jumps and jerks so it sometimes helps to pre-focus and then track a particular subject until it settles momentarily in range which allows you to obtain one or two frames without the auto focus hunting at the last moment!

There are larger species which are more confident of their camouflage and are more likely just to sit and watch you come closer once found. The largest of these in shallow waters is likely to be the monk fish or angler fish which has amazing camouflage and is content to sit on the bottom gently waving its lure to attract unsuspecting prey. I have seen particularly large specimens which have numerous small or juvenile fish swimming amongst the lures above the fish's mouth which are ignored in the sure knowledge that they will attract a much larger meal.

Other sand hunters include plaice, turbot and thornback and blond rays which are often found close to estuaries digging for crustaceans in the silt.

Closer to the border between reef and sand you may also encounter small schools of red and grey mullet, sand eels (which attract the voracious pollack) and red gurnards, although the latter tend to appear more often at dusk or at night. So don't ignore the sandy areas as they can prove to be almost as productive as the reef itself. Bright sand can cause exposure problems with TTL systems and



*The snake pipe fish is the second most common pipe fish in our waters. It prefers shallow waters and will be found amongst sea weeds at the reef edge. Nikon F90X, Subal housing, 105mm, YS120 & YS30, Elitechrome EBX 100, f11 @ 1/60*

often you will have to rely on experience to judge this. If your flash output seems unusually low at small apertures then you should suspect that the TTL is underexposing and it is best to resort to manual exposure calculation.

## Open Waters

There are times when you will need to board a boat to go offshore as the open waters of our coastline still do harbour schools of fish despite heavy commercial fishing. However, capturing a shoal of mackerel or herring on film is probably more a matter of luck than planning in my experience. I have often leapt from the deck of a boat with enthusiasm to chase a shoal of mackerel which can not only be clearly seen on an echo sounder but are also coming up to the deck on hooks as I submerge, but when you reach your target depth you are on your own again!

Easier larger targets do appear in the spring and summer in the form of basking sharks, sun fish and jelly fish (although the latter is not strictly a fish of course). For these beasts you

will want a wide angle lens and it is best to leave your flash on deck as you will be working right on the surface. A wet suit and snorkel is most effective particularly for basking sharks as you will have to swim hard in bursts to stay with your quarry. As these sharks are plankton feeders the conditions which attract them will not include gin clear visibility. So you need to get as close to the subject as possible and it is often better to use manual focus as auto focus will often try to lock onto particles in the water just at the wrong moment. Jelly fish are of course slower moving and can look quite spectacular when captured against the sun close to the surface. Sun fish are found in the south western approaches and the Bristol Channel, although they do occasionally turn up in the North Sea during particularly warm summers. Although they laze on the surface happily alongside a boat, they will quickly sound once they become aware of your presence in the water so you have to be prepared to grab a few frames quickly. I have never had much success with them and must admit to being green with envy when watching the

sequence in Blue Planet showing seagulls pecking parasites from sunfish - a few weeks at sea is all you need!

Hopefully these few words will have converted a few of the dedicated tropical photographers out there, or at least tempted some to sample our home waters. When conditions are right we have some wonderful coastline and if you prepare yourself with the correct equipment you can remain comfortable even in the chilliest waters. Taking the plunge can only improve your photography which will boost your enthusiasm even for temperate waters - so let's hear it for British fish!

## Mark Webster

**Mark Webster hosts underwater photography workshops aboard the MY Coral Queen and in Indonesia. He is also the author of 'The Art and Technique of Underwater Photography' published by Fountain Press.**

**See Mark's website for further details:  
[www.photec.co.uk](http://www.photec.co.uk)**

# Size Matters: Photographing the Wreck of the Vrouw Maria

by Jukka Nurminen with Alexander Mustard

It is an inescapable fact that successful underwater photography is heavily dependant on technology. Not only do our cameras have to withstand and function in a hostile environment, but also many of the images we conjure up in our minds can only be captured on film with the right kit.

Quite simply, unlike many branches of photography, good equipment yields good shots. But what do we do when it just isn't possible to produce the image we want with conventional kit? We have two choices: we can either throw in the towel or we can persevere, get inventive, play and experiment. These are surely some of the most exciting times to be an underwater photographer.

Most underwater photographs are taken of small areas, in shallow, bright conditions. A pretty biased view of the oceans! This article is about redressing the balance and tells the tale of how Finnish photographer, Jukka Nurminen, went about photographing the Wreck of the Vrouw Maria (Lady Mary) in the almost pitch darkness of the Baltic Sea.

Our story begins on the 5th September, in Amsterdam. In the year 1771. The Vrouw Maria, a two mast wooden merchant ship loaded with a precious cargo including works of art belonging to Catherine the Great of Russia, sets sail for St Petersburg. A month into the voyage, close to an archipelago of islands off southwest Finland, she is caught in a vicious autumnal storm.

The storm drives the ship onto the rocky shore of Jurmo island and sinks the Vrouw Maria on the 3rd October. For 228 years no one knew the exact final resting place of the Vrouw Maria's, but that did not stop many from trying to find this "treasure ship". Success finally came in June 1999, when the wreck was located by sonar in 42m of waters.

Wooden shipwrecks are a rarity in the oceans for one main reason: they are devoured at a tremendous rate by shipworm. However, the northeast Baltic is rather a special place. The Baltic Sea is actually a very large estuary, salty at one end and fresh at the other, and by the time we get to Finland, the water is too fresh for many marine



*Jukka and the tripod at its 5m setting (without snow shoes)*

species to survive, including shipworm. This makes it the best place in all the oceans for diving on ancient wooden shipwrecks.

While the conditions off southern Finland are excellent for wood preservation, they are not ideal for photography, especially the photography of a 26m long and 7m wide shipwreck. The aim of Jukka's expedition was to take the first images that



*1. Bow of the Vrouw Maria. Nikonos RS, 13mm fisheye, tripod, 2 hand held torches, plus 2 stops, Fuji Provia F 400, f2.8*



*2. Nikonos RS, 13mm fisheye, hand held torch, plus 2 stops, Fuji*

conveyed the context and scale of the Vrouw Maria to the general public, for Finland's biggest weekly news magazine, Suomen Kuvalehti, the Finnish equivalent of Newsweek or Time.

Equally, the pictures were also required by the Maritime Museum of Finland to document the wreck.

Such images would need ambient light exposures, and excuses like "it's dark for most of the year below 40m in the

Baltic" just don't wash with magazine editors.

The first challenge was finding a suitable season when there would be light at 40m. Jukka explains: "In the winter the sun is too low and in the summer there is too much plankton in the water, leaving only two possible windows; one just after the ice has melted in the spring and one in early summer after the spring plankton bloom". Even at these times the conditions are hardly ideal: the

visibility ranges from 1 to 8m and the light levels are, at best, gloomy to dark. "Long exposures are unavoidable" he summarises. The window opened in early June, and Jukka joined the research camp of the Maritime Museum.

"The easy part was I knowing I needed a tripod to get publishable colour shots. However, after studying a scale model of the wreck it was clear I had a problem: the deck of the wreck is more than five metres above the seabed and the bow is close to six. Where could I find a tripod of these proportions? And more importantly, would it be possible to use it underwater?"

After a fruitless search it was clear that if he wanted a nine metre tall tripod he would have to have it custom built. "The finished tripod consisted of 7 pieces: a tripod (1.7-3.8m), two 2m and one 1m extension parts that could be used in any combination with a special socket, a ball head that allowed the camera orientation to be altered in seconds and a quick change plate for instant camera fastening. I also fitted snow shoes to the tripod, which it needed to stand on the soft sediment and attached a cable release to the camera to ensure stability during long exposures."

As Jukka succinctly puts it "Down below 40m there isn't time to mess about with your camera" so it was important that both he and his buddy were familiar with such ungainly kit before the rare opportunity was afforded on the wreck. "We did a test dive during which we tried to overturn the tripod and practised how to move and adjust it which was a great help for the real action!

"When taking pictures in



*The cover of the Finland's weekly news magazine. Nikonos RS, 13mm fisheye, Fuji Provia F 400*

low viz, at 40m and in cold, dark conditions you need a meticulously planned dive. Add to this mixture a 9 metre high tripod and I needed a series of meticulously planned dives to get the shots. On the first day my two dives were about preparation. On the first I checked the visibility and the light levels (with the matrix metering of my Nikonos RS) so that I could decide on film stock. I also took time to decide on the exact length of the tripod. Back on the boat we opened the tripod and lowered it into the water, where it lay on its side on the seabed. The second dive was dedicated to getting it into place, which was quite a struggle, dragging it for 15m at a depth of 42m.

“The next day I attached my camera and was delighted that the quick-change plate worked as well as it had on the pier day before! With the camera in place, I raised the tripod to 5 meters, composed in the gloom and reversing away with the remote shutter release started shooting. Long exposures can be a real revelation underwater because the camera is able to record more than our eyes can see at the time. It is a fantastic way to shoot! The remote release for the RS is an excellent accessory and is a feature not found on most housings. One solution with a housing would be to



*5. Exploring the Vrouw Maria. Nikonos RS, 13mm fisheye, 2 strobes on TTL, minus 1 stop, Fuji Provia F 400, f2.8*

set the camera's shutter on a timer so that the picture is taken, say, 5 seconds after the shutter release is pressed.

“On the next dive I shot a trial roll and on the basis of the results I overexposed subsequent rolls by two stops to record more detail in the darkness. Surprisingly, there was not that much a difference between a normal exposure and a two stops overexposure, probably because of the reaction of film is not that subtle at long exposures. My buddy used two hand-held torches to illuminate and give colour to the wreck following my hand signals. The two extra stops allowed us to use the torches from further away, producing a more even lighting and letting us illuminate a much larger portion of the wreck.

“The large tripod felt a bit cumbersome on the first few dives, but soon I was repositioning it regularly, despite its in-water weight of more than 10kg. The largest configuration I used was six metres, which was tall enough for the bow and the stern. My biggest problem was composing the



3. On the deck of the *Vrouw Maria*. Nikonos RS, 13mm fisheye, 2 torches on the rig, two strobes on TTL, minus 1 stop, Fuji Provia F 400, f2.8

shots because the features of the *Vrouw Maria* were very difficult to see in the gloom. Due to a lack of time on the wreck I was not able to take a top down view of the bow or stern, which would have required the full 9m tripod. Maybe next year!

Nevertheless, it was clear

that, as long as the current is mild, the tripod was steady enough to be used fully extended in the future.

“In conclusion, I am pleased with my results, given the level of difficulty and the degree of experimentation.” As photographers we often stick

with our well used methods to guarantee a high strike rate of good shots when we dive. However, persevering with a new technique and technology adds another weapon to our photographic armoury. “My experiences with the tripod not only got the job done for me, but also taught me a new photographic approach well suited to many subjects in Baltic.” It is technique that will serve Jukka well as he embarks on a coffee table book project of the Gulf of Finland’s most beautiful wrecks.

**Jukka Nurminen with  
Alexander Mustard**

**Contact Jukka at**

**[jkustoo@hotmail.com](mailto:jkustoo@hotmail.com)**

**Both authors are  
members of YUP, the Young  
Underwater Photographer’s  
group.**

**See [www.yup.org.uk](http://www.yup.org.uk) for  
more details.**

## 5 good reasons to advertise in UwP

1. On average each issue of UwP is downloaded by over 22,000 readers worldwide (and we have the statistics to prove it!).
2. UwP offers a unique readership as all our readers are underwater photographers and divers.
3. UwP has a truly worldwide circulation and we can show you the demographics.
4. The cost of an advert in UwP is a fraction of that in conventional magazines. This space could cost you as little as £150 or \$225
5. UwP does not use up valuable resources such as trees or toxic chemicals such as printing ink.

If you would like to discuss your requirements for 2003, please contact

Peter Rowlands

UwP Magazine

13 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6QN, England

Tel & Fax 44 (0)20 8399 5709

**e mail [peter@uwpmag.co.uk](mailto:peter@uwpmag.co.uk)**

# Visions in the Sea 2002

A highly talented cast of internationally renowned underwater photographers and cameramen make up the bill for the sixth annual two-day conference, Visions in the Sea at Imperial College, South London on the weekend of November 16/17.

They and their fellow speakers will be sharing the secrets of their success with the delegates at this popular and established event staged annually by Ocean Optics, the specialist suppliers of underwater photographic equipment who are based in central London.

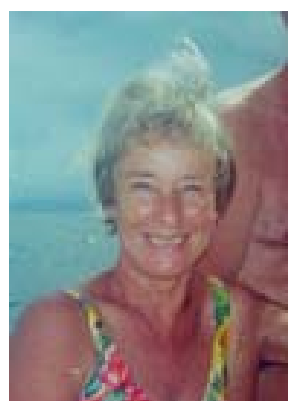
Several of the speakers first trained as professional photographers and gained experience in the photographic industry before turning their full attention to underwater photography so they have special skills and knowledge to share.

The speakers will be Kurt Amsler, Gavin Newman, Tony White, Alex Mustard, John Collins, Kevin Capon, Mark Walker and Georgette Douwma. In addition there will be short talks by Andrew Pugsley and hopefully Wild Insight.

As well as the speakers, Paul Kay and Linda Dunk will be on hand to review your slides.

The highlight of the weekend must be An evening with Peter Scoones followed by the chance to have dinner with the speakers.

Contact Ocean Optics for full details.  
Tel 020 7930 8408 or  
check out their web site  
<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>



# Visions special events

## An Evening With Peter Scoones

Last year we introduced a special “An Audience With.....” event after the main conference closed on the Saturday evening. The larger than life personality Constantinos Petrinis gave a wonderful and humorous account of the trials and tribulations of getting his first book “Realm of the Pygmy Seahorse” from concept to reality. This year we are delighted to offer an evening with Peter Scoones. Peter is undoubtedly one of the most artistic of underwater photographers.



His stellar career has included BBC Natural History classics ReefWatch, Sea Trek, Land of the Tiger, Life in the Freezer, Great White Shark and numerous Wildlife on One specials. Peter was also the man behind the lens for much of the footage screened on the groundbreaking Blue Planet series.

Peter is also co-founder, with Colin Doeg, of BSoUP, a much-published author of underwater photographer articles and the developer of some of the most specialised underwater camera equipment in the world. Peter is a superb presenter and extremely generous with his advice. This is a wonderful opportunity to be captivated by one of the world's very best underwater image makers. The event will be held at the Holland Club at Imperial College and the entrance fee will include a glass of wine.

Entrance is by pre-paid ticket only.

Contact Ocean Optics for full details. Tel 020 7930 8408 or check out their web site <http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>

## Evening Dinner with the speakers

At previous Visions conferences there has been a private dinner for speakers and their partners and the Optics crew. For the first time we're offering places at the meal to all delegates. This takes place on the Saturday after Peter Scoones' evening presentation. Seating is strictly limited - one reason that the event has had to be kept private in the past. Now that we have been able to organise more space approximately 35 - 40 places will be available. The restaurant is Italian and can cater for vegetarians. We've organised a set price to include starter, main course, desert, coffee and a bottle of wine between two. There's a cash bar for any extra drinks. Please go along with our non-smoking request.

If you really want to make a full weekend at “Visions in the Sea” think very seriously about sharing the evening with us and the presenters.

Attendance is by ticket only and we regret that we will have to enforce this rule rigidly! So if you want to come along, tick the box and get your booking form in NOW. Strictly first come, first served.

In just six years, Visions has become the premier conference in Europe for underwater photographers keen to learn how to improve their own work while mixing and talking with other enthusiasts from as far afield as Scandinavia, Italy and Greece. Be there!

Contact Ocean Optics for full details. Tel 020 7930 8408 or check out their web site <http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>

# Visions In The Sea 2002 Booking Form

Imperial College, London, on the weekend of November 16/17, 2002.

**Two day Visions conference**, including morning coffee and afternoon tea each day, as well as a lunch buffet — £99.50

**A social evening with Peter Scoones** in the Holland Club, Imperial College, from 18:30 to 20:30, after which a cash bar will remain open for delegates who wish to remain. - £15.00 includes two glasses of wine.

**Speakers' Dinner**, to include starter, main course, desert, coffee and a bottle of wine between two. — £20.00

	No of Places	
<b>Visions</b>	<input type="text"/>	@ £99.50 each.....Total £.....
<b>Peter Scoones</b>	<input type="text"/>	@ £15.00 each.....Total £.....
<b>Dinner</b>	<input type="text"/>	@ £20.00 each.....Total £.....
		Grand total £.....

Please supply name(s) of delegates, and also list any special dietary requirements:

Name of delegate(s):.....

Address:.....

.....

Daytime tel: ..... E-mail: .....

Dietry requirements.....

For payment by Visa or Mastercard (please circle as appropriate), please give the following details:

Card number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

OR Please make cheques payable to Ocean Optics

Bookings can be made by phoning the conference hotline - 020 7930 8408  
Ocean Optics, 13 Northumberland Avenue, London, WC2N 5AQ

# Underwater Photography

a web magazine

## Guidelines for contributors

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

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

### Uw photo techniques -

Balanced light, composition, wreck photography etc

### Locations -

Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards

### Subjects

Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

### Equipment reviews -

Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

### Personalities

Interviews with leading underwater photographers

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

My e mail is [peter@uwpmag.co.uk](mailto:peter@uwpmag.co.uk)

## How to submit articles

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

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

2. Images must be "attached" to the e mail and they need to be:

Resolution - 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.

We pay a flat fee of £50 (+VAT if invoiced).

I look forward to hearing from you.



# Classifieds

## Photo courses

### Underwater Photographic Courses With Martin Edge

Are you a Beginner?

Yet to fulfil your Potential?

Like to obtain better Images?

Difficulty with a particular Technique?

Planning for a Photo-Trip?

Would you like to join the Winners?

If the answer is "Yes" then give me a call. My weekend U W Photo Courses are designed and structured to suit your own individual needs.

Weekend Photo Course

19th –20th October 2002

Nikon SLR & Housing Course 2nd – 3rd November 2002

For information on courses and expeditions: Phone Martin or Sylvia on - 01202 887611

e-mail [Martin.Edge@btinternet.com](mailto:Martin.Edge@btinternet.com)

### For Sale

SeaCam Pro housing Canon EOS5, double strobe connection, moisture detector, SeaCam SeaFlash 350TTL, all connectors, gears, arm, chargers, cleaning kit, spares; 3 dome ports, carry case. SLR available if required. £2,400 ono. Contact: [julie.howell@hp.com](mailto:julie.howell@hp.com)

### For sale & wanted

Secondhand housings for sale and wanted. Secondhand AF housings bought, sold, serviced and repaired. Especially Nikon F601/801/60/70 fit and reduced function types. Photocourses in Ireland/Scotland.

For details contact Paul Kay on 01248 681361 or email [paul@marinewildlife.co.uk](mailto:paul@marinewildlife.co.uk)

### For sale

Nikkor 20-35mm £595 inc VAT

Contact Peter Rowlands

020 8399 5709 (UK) or e mail [peter@uwpmag.co.uk](mailto:peter@uwpmag.co.uk)

### For Sale



Jonah U/W housings for Nikon F100. Various ports for wide angle and macro photos.

Contact: <http://www.jonah.co.kr/>

### For sale

Nikonos V body £400. Nikon 2.8cm lens for same £225. Nikonos SB105 flash unused from new c/w arm and lead £400. Original Calypso/Nikkor Nikonos with 3.5cm Nikon lens and NO electrics c/w close up lens ect £200.

Call Ron Swinden on 01993 881116 or [ronswin@onetw1.net.uk](mailto:ronswin@onetw1.net.uk)

### For Sale

Complete UW Video system. Sony VX700 video camera, Stingray housing, dual light system, 2 ports, 2 battery chargers (video camera and light), spare batteries, Pelican hard case with foam. All elements in perfect working order. Gear purchased brand new. only used on 2 dives. 2900 GBP. postage fees included. Phone +353 41 982889

### For sale

Hasselblad SWC housing, Ivanoff glass corrector port, EO, Nik III/IV/



V flash connector. Camera with A24 and 70mm backs. £2400 OVNO. For more details contact David Nardini on

[d\\_nardini@btconnect.com](mailto:d_nardini@btconnect.com)

### For sale

Sea & Sea Fisheye lens and matching viewfinder for Nikonos, mint condition, £500.

Contact David Barker Tel:01732 883037 evngs or e-mail: [david@wealden.demon.co.uk](mailto:david@wealden.demon.co.uk)

### For sale

Subal 801s housing with Nikon 801s body, Sea & Sea baseplate and two Sea & Sea Flexi arms. £850 + postage. Contact Pete Horsley [phors@aol.com](mailto:phors@aol.com)

Newcastle Upon Tyne, England

### For sale

Nikonos V underater camera body Excellent condition, as new £425 ono Contact: 02077879396

### For Sale



Sea & Sea Motormarine 11 package consisting of: Camera, 16mm Wideangle lens, ML-11 Macro Lens with gauge plate & guide rods, Ikelite Optical Viewfinder with 15mm, 20mm, 28mm, & 35mm screens, Ikelite Substrobe A1 TTL Flash with camera plate & arms (with modeling light, very powerful) All very good condition & packed in a hard 'Flycase'. Results have been printed in Dive magazine and can be shown. Price £595.00. Phone Ron on 07769 541616 or

e-mail [ronchs8@aol.com](mailto:ronchs8@aol.com) anytime.

### **Bargain Sale!**

Sea & Sea Motormarine EX II Pack consisting of: Camera, 16mm Wide Angle Lens, ML-II Macro Lens with guide rods, Sea & Sea Optical Viewfinder with 15mm, 20mm and 35mm marks, Sea & Sea YS-60 TTL Flash with camera plate & quick release arm. All exceptional condition & packed in a "hard case". Only £600.00 for the lot! Phone Phil on 079000 83350 or e mail philparry103@yahoo.co.uk for more information.

### **For sale**

Nikonos V (full 'Ocean Optics' service August 2002), Nikonos 35mm and 80mm lenses. Sea and Sea YS50TTL strobe. Manuals, spare 'O' rings. Jessops metal carrying case. All in excellent condition. £750.00

E-Mail robcarter19@hotmail .com

### **For sale**

Nikonos 111 (just serviced) + O ring kits, 35mm Nikkor lens, 80mm Nikkor lens, 3 close-up lenses + range finder, Camera handle, extensions and connector for, Sunpak Marine 32 flash, light meter and other bits. Complete with heavy-duty case. £600

ono Tel: 01245 474351 (Essex)

email Janice.Wilson@essexcc.gov.uk

### **For Sale**

Subal 801s housing comes with Nikon 801s body, Sea and Sea base plate and two Sea and Sea Flexi arms £850-00 +postage. Contact Pete Horsley

PHORS@AOL.COM

Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

### **For sale**

NikonosV underwater camera black/orange, 35mm Nikonos lens and Sea & Sea Y50TTL Flash gun unit.

Whole set-up only used on one Red Sea trip, and just serviced. Boxed with grease and O-ring sets. Excellent condition. Must sell, too many hobbies. £500. Matlock, Derbyshire. 01773 853171 mobile 07973 389157

## **Job vacancy**

Advertising salesperson wanted to sell space in UwP

This is a part-time vacancy preferably for someone already in the business and also preferably in the diving business.

Please contact Peter Rowlands [peter@uwpmag.co.uk](mailto:peter@uwpmag.co.uk)

## **Book a classified in UwP**

Each issue of UwP is downloaded by over 22,000 readers on average worldwide. That makes it the ideal way to buy or sell your equipment.

You can sell or buy your equipment for a flat fee of just £5 (or **£10 with a coloured box surround or £15 with a picture**) payable by Visa, Mastercard or cheque.

Your advert can include up to 50 words and will be read by over 22,000 underwater photographers.

**No other magazine can offer such a concentrated circulation.**

We recommend that you use e mail as your contact address.

E mail the text of your advert to [classifieds@uwpmag.co.uk](mailto:classifieds@uwpmag.co.uk). You can include your credit card number and expiry date or fax it to 020 8399 5709 or send a cheque payable to:

**Ocean Optics Ltd**, 13 Langley Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6QN

# Improve your image

## Subal

The legendary housing of choice for many of the worlds top underwater image makers. Now available for the Nikon F100.



## Subtronic

These are the ultimate strobes. With fast 2 second recycling, optional laser aiming light and colour temperature control, prices start at just £749.



## Nexus



Offering the most versatile macro system in the world today, Nexus make possible extreme close up photography unavailable from any other housing line.

## Nikonos

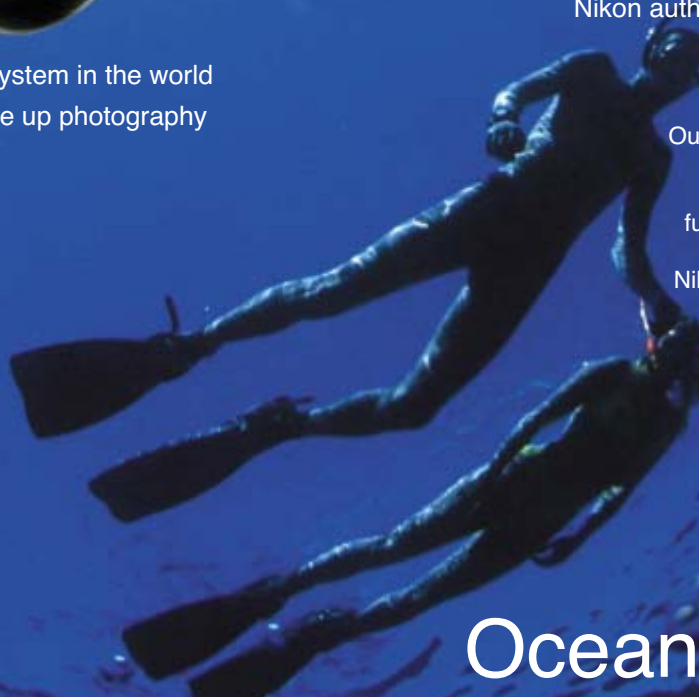


The classic underwater camera. We stock the range and have a fully Nikon authorised workshop facility.



## Bonica

The Snapper builds into a neat system capable of creative pictures down to 150 ft, even in low visibility. It's so simple to use and, with prices starting at just £129, it's stunning value for money. This really is a breakthrough in price and performance. There's no better introduction to underwater photography.



Our aim at Ocean Optics is to keep you shooting. That's why we provide a full servicing facility in our own workshops for all Nikonos, Nexus and Subal equipment we import. We even have loan equipment for those impossible deadlines! If you choose to be an Ocean Optics client, you will benefit from the best support in the business

## Ocean Optics

13 Northumberland Avenue, London WC2N 5AQ  
Tel 020 7930 8408 Fax 020 7839 6148

Visit our web site for the latest news and special deals

<http://www.oceanoptics.co.uk>