

# Underwater Photography

a web magazine

Issue 26

Sept/Oct 2005



Zena Holloway  
Nexus D2x  
Magic filters  
Digital virgin

Minke whales  
Dive Svalbard  
Tigers of Africa  
Digital liveaboard

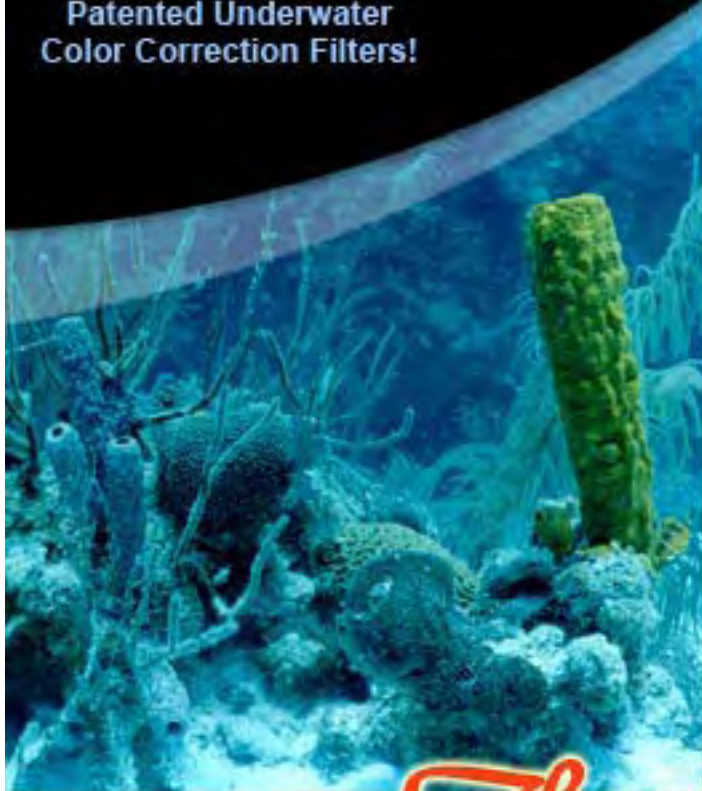
Yap Critter hunt  
Book review  
Classifieds  
Parting shot







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

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# Readers Lives

## Dome reflections

Hi Peter, don't know if this is of interest to the readers?

Anyone using the Nikkor 10.5mm will probably experience some internal lens reflection from the dome port - not the actual lens. This



is due to the shiny surface of the lens body and the gold writing. A simple solution is to make a thin neoprene sleeve to fit over the lens see pic. I've lowered the contrast as black on black loses detail!

Charles Hood  
charles@dive.uk.com

## Mustard slur

Peter, In these days where the advances in underwater photography are coming thick and fast I always look forward to reading what Alex Mustard is up to. What a truly wonderful photographer he is. Imagine my surprise, shock and disgust then when I saw what he wrote about you !!



“Obscuring the sun behind a large object like Peter Rowlands can help with over exposure” Shocking to have such a personal attack sneakily hidden in what was otherwise a fascinating article. My heart goes out to you.

On a personal note - have you tried the Atkins and colonic irrigation combo? - I'm told the pounds just fall off!

Nigel.  
nigelmotyer@eircom.net

*I think you're forgetting that everything looks a third bigger underwater... Regards Ed*

## Condensation follow up

Great publication.

I had internal condensation with a Canon s-50 in the Canon housing, and gel alone did not solve it below 60 feet. The solution that has worked is to hit the open housing, with camera in it, with a hair dryer for about 20-30 seconds. I keep my fingers in front of the blower air to regulate temps, make sure the camera is on, and then close the housing and keep it closed. I also pre-stuff in a silica gel for measure, but have found it is not essential. This was the end of condensation problems, even when I have taken the housing to +110 feet. At these depths the housing will leak a tiny bit if the buttons are not pressed “straight on”, but will remain condensation free. I use 1gig cards and higher capacity aftermarket batteries to allow 2 dives, but on several occasions have changed batteries and cards on the boat. I do this as quick as possible and no condensation problems have occurred. Those dives are not as deep, and the silica may help, having had a chance to work during the first dive(s).

As a minimum precaution

against condensation I always make sure I use a fresh, dry sachet of silica gel dessicant.

Again, great publication.

Glenn  
MOABER@aol.com

*Contributors to Readers Lives please note - Letters beginning and ending like this will always get published.*

## Something bugging you?

## Tell us about it in Readers Lives

## E mail

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



# Take Better Digital Pictures

## Visions in the Sea 2005

**9th Annual  
Underwater Photography  
Conference**

**London, October 22nd 2005**

**Alex Mustard - All about filters**  
**Martin Edge - Breaking the rules**  
**Charles Hood - JPG is best!**  
**Peter Rowlands - Digital compacts**  
(more speakers to be added)

**An Evening with Tom Peschak (£15)**

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# News, Travel & Events

## AquaMarine Bali Prizes at Dive 2005 Birmingham Oct 29/30th 2005

AquaMarine Diving are at Booth 316 Asia-Pacific Pavilion for Dive 2005.

For those visiting the stand they have 3 prize draws.

Prize Draw One: 5days/4nights Diving/Accommodation Package: Value for one person is US\$853

Prize Draw Two: "2 Faces of Bali" 2person package from Alila Hotels. Value US\$580 + 21% tax/service charge

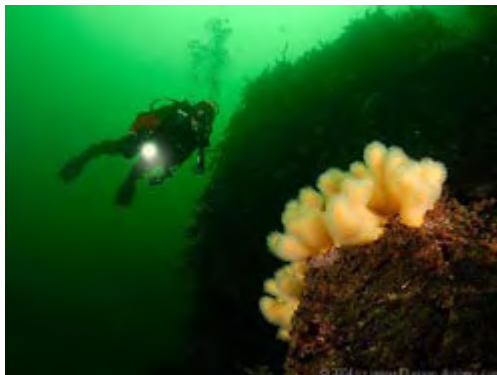
Prize Draw Three: A wide variety of products featured on www.AquaStuff.net

In addition if you book at DIVE 2005 to do the PADI Open Water, Advanced or Rescue course - receive a FREE PADI Specialty OR EFR course!

Finally visitors to AquaMarine Diving – Bali's booth 316 in the Asia-Pacific Pavilion - are eligible for a 10% DISCOUNT on trips booked by 30.06.06

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

## Swedish shootout 22-25th Sept 2005



Digideep.com, the largest online directory for underwater imaging invites all European underwater photographers for the first digital & analogue shootout held in Sweden. The Weather Islands in the Skaggerak Sea have their peek season during September with water temperatures ranging from 17 to 23 degree Celsius and more than 20 metres visibility.

Your hosts and contest jurors will be Alex Dawson, Lars Kirkegard, Tom Leys, Ingvar Eliasson, Lars Kirchhoff (Administrator & Co-founder of digideep.com) and Andreas Voeltz (Chief Editor & Co-founder of digideep.com).

For joining this event or more questions please email:

[trips@digideep.com](mailto:trips@digideep.com)

## Save \$975. Be quick!! Great White Shark trip to Guadalupe, Sept 9-13th 05



This trip, led by Mauricio Handler, leaves San Diego on Sept 9-13 to join MV Searcher a 92 footer.

There are two cages (4 people per cage) and a third cage (20 feet under the boat) two divers only- 20 minute shifts.

You are guaranteed 4-5 hours underwater action per day.

The regular price is \$2475 USD but the last two spaces are available for \$1500 USD per person.

He obviously needs to know immediately if there is anyone interested.

Please note his free phone number for the UK below.

Mauricio Handler

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

UK 08000970918 Toll free

US 18669784511 Toll free

## NCUPS Competition

The Northern California Underwater Photographic Society announces the 41st Annual International Underwater Photographic Competition.

SEA 2005 is a "mail-in" competition open to amateur photographers and videographers around the world. This year's competition features Novice and Open skill levels, competing in Macro, Wide Angle, and Underwater California categories. Entrants may enter up to 5 images in each of the categories in each media; 35 mm Slides, Digital Still, Prints and Creative Prints. The videography competition features Novice and Open skill levels competing with short underwater videos.

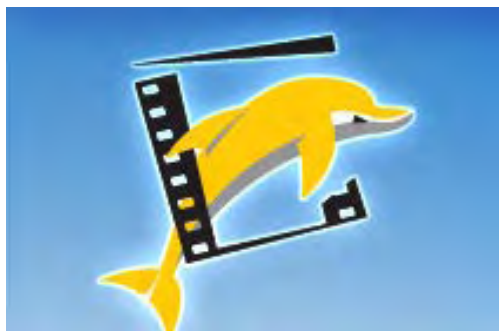
Entries must be postmarked or received through email by October 7, 2005 or may be hand carried to the NCUPS Membership Meeting on October 14, 2005, in Millbrae, California. Winning entries and prizes will be announced on the NCUPS website in November.

For more detail visit

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



## Golden Dolphin Competition, Moscow



The V Moscow International Diving Festival “Golden Dolphin” will take place in February 2006.

We invite you to participate in the festival which gathers the best films and photos every year. The festival is a place where famous filmmakers, photographers, journalists, sportsmen and everybody who likes diving can meet each other. It's a place where people get new ideas and share their latest experience. During the festival there are always exhibitions of diving equipment and everything for sport life.

The prize fund of the festival is \$10.000 with \$500 for 2nd & 3rd. The contest is open to all participants. No registration Fee! Deadline for registration and dispatch: 25 December 2005.

For further details visit

[www.mosfest.ru](http://www.mosfest.ru)

## Fotosub Isla de El Hierro



The 9th underwater photography competition “Open International Fotosub Isla de El Hierro” takes place on October 11-16th 2005.

This is an international open competition that celebrates the Marine Park located in the small island of El Hierro (Canary Islands), one of the most appreciated diving zones for European divers.

The “Open International Fotosub Isla de El Hierro” consists of two days of competition, with a total of 4 dives in the best dive sites. A collection of six slides (freely selected by the participant, without any obligatory categories) is presented by each participant. A Jury composed by prestigious and experienced underwater photographers gives the results on the last day. There are big prizes for the best collections and also other special prizes to spectacular images representatives of

the uniqueness of the El Hierro waters and marine life. This year there will be a total of 18000 Euros (more than 22000 USD) of cash prizes.

The number of participants is limited to 28.

For further details visit

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

## Beneath the Sea 2006

Wherever you live in this wide world, submit your underwater photographic entry to the Beneath the Sea 2006 Worldwide Photo/Video Competition. The contest deadline is December 31st, 2005.

The winners of the Beneath the Sea 2006 Worldwide Photo/Video Competition will be announced at the Saturday Film Festival the weekend of Beneath the Sea's Dive and Travel Exposition, March 24th, 25th, and 26th, 2006, at the Meadowlands Exposition Center in Secaucus, New Jersey. In addition to the awards that the Grand Prize winners of each category will receive, there will be prizes for all First, Second and Third place winners.

For more information about Beneath the Sea visit

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

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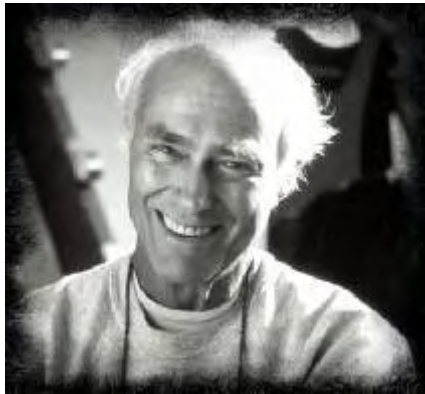
[www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)

or e mail

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

## Bilikiki trip with Stan Waterman

29 Jun - 11 Jul 2006



Join Stan Waterman for a trip aboard the M.V. Bilikiki. Hone your shutterbug skills with a legend in underwater photography.

All of this and Stan Waterman's nightly Bijou entertainment, too! Stan Waterman has been at the forefront of scuba diving since its inception as a recreational sport both in this country and throughout the world.

Bilikiki, sister ship to Spirit of Solomons, is 125-foot long, 24-foot wide stable luxury vessel with ten double and twin fully air-conditioned staterooms each with its own private bathroom. Taking twenty passengers, Bilikiki pioneered liveboard diving in the Solomon Islands and has a reputation as being among the best in the world.

Bilikiki is a fully-equipped deluxe dive boat with E-6 processing,



a separate photo room, a multi-format video system, and unparalleled space and comfort in the lounge and on the sun decks with plenty of covering for shade.

There is ample opportunity to see sharks, mantas, dolphins, turtles and barracudas in deep water, and cuttlefish, octopus, lionfish, anemones, and colorful corals in shallow water. Exciting wreck and night dives and village visits complete a trip to this fascinating scuba diving destination.

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

## Jan Back at Yap Divers!!

Divers repeating a trip to Yap or those who are world travelers will recognize a familiar face greeting them at



the Yap Divers door. Jan Sledsens and his partner Melo Verbeurgt are back in Yap at the Manta Ray Bay Hotel/Yap Divers for a new stint as shop manager and divemaster at Yap Divers.

Big changes at the dive shop physically and organizationally have lured Jan back. He was in Yap in 2002 and 2003. He took a job in the wild of Kenya last year but the Pacific called and he has returned.

Jan can certify students from basic open water all the way up to divemaster rating. He is also a PADI Nitrox instructor. This is fortuitous because Yap Divers now has a new, state-of-the-art NRC Nitrox Membrane filling station that offers free Nitrox to all guests.

Jan is an avid athlete who enjoys a run or bike in the mornings before work. And, he is fluent in many languages including French, Dutch, German, English and even speaks some Swahili and Divehi.

But the main language he talks is diving. Come around to the Yap Divers new dive shop and say hi to Jan and let him tell you about the waters of Yap.

For more information contact

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

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## Bahamas Shark Expedition Digital Photo Seminar

May 2006



Join Berkley White and Jim Watt on an incredible shark adventure aboard the M/V Shear Water and dive the shark thick waters of Bahamas Banks. In 2004 the expert crew put us in feeding Caribbean Reefs , Bulls, Lemons and or favourite.... the Tiger Shark.

We've reduced the group size to maximize your bottom time and boat comfort. We feel it's well worth it... max 6 guests per trip!

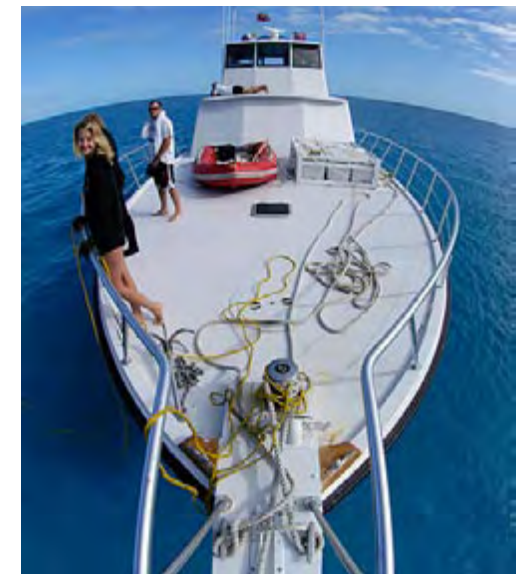
Domestic departure is from West Palm Beach which is easy to get to and only a short 5 hour run out to the islands. Our schedule easily allows you to fly in and out without the need for a overnight stay on land. Guests staying on for the second round will have one overnight stay on land between trips.

May 13-19, 2006

May 20-26, 2006

Sign-up for one or both trips.

Each trip will focus on sharks, but we will certainly make time for friendly dolphins if they pass our course.



Berkley and Jim will present lectures or critique group shows each evening. Each trip offers five days of diving and all the shark bait you can eat.

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

## MOZAMBIQUE

### Whale Sharks and Manta Rays dreams

15-28th Jan 2005

This trip is ideal for the experienced diver who has the spirit of adventure with a heart felt desire and passion to swim and dive with big animals.

Our base will be Tofu, a small coastal village about 20 mins drive from Inhambane airport. All the diving will be done from an 8-metre RIB, which we will all help launch from the shore. A moderate level of agility is required to hoist oneself into the boat and the ride over the surf zone can be bumpy. Once through the waves and out into the open ocean our search begins and we will travel to one of the 9 main dive sites. The morning dives will usually be a 2-tank dive, on air, using the surface interval time between the dives to eat lunch and cruise the channel looking for Whale Sharks on the surface. After returning to shore we will have a single tank dive in the afternoon.

The water temperature is usually 24-28°C so a 5 mm wet suit is recommended. Visibility will be between 10 to 15 metres as the water is nutrient rich, and consequently the Whale Sharks and Manta Rays are here. Our aim is to have as many long lasting encounters and dives

with Whale Sharks and Manta Rays as possible so we have structured the trip to have a degree of flexibility, and we will use the local knowledge of our excellent guides to give us the best chance of fulfilling our aim. This Big Fish Extravaganza offers you the chance to experience the ultimate in diving with these extraordinary animals!

### Cuba Bull Sharks, wrecks and salsa

11 - 26 November 2006

with Gavin Parsons

This will be a full 2 weeks all inclusive trip and should be very good value at around £1800 with some great wrecks, good reefs and Bull Sharks. The trip will tour the entire island and includes a lot of travel but also 2 dives per day and optional night diving at additional cost on most days.

For details of both trips visit

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

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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

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# Ikelite Digital SLR-DC Housings

## OFFER TTL FLASH

### CANON

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

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

### NIKON

D-50  
D-70  
D70s

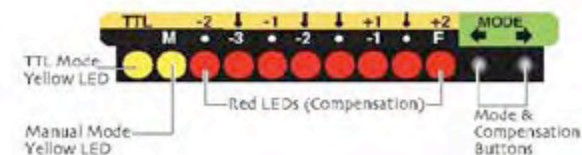
### OLYMPUS

E-1  
E-300

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

The Ikelite SLR-DC housings for Canon and Nikon also include a Flash Compensation Module which provides over and under-exposure compensation in the TTL mode.

At the push of a button, switch to Manual Exposure Mode which provides eight power settings in one-half stop increments. All exposure compensation is done with 2 buttons on the back of the housing, no accessing complicated camera menus.



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



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Indianapolis, IN 46208  
317-923-4523

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



# New products

## Ikelite Olympus E-300 DSLR housing with TTL auto exposure



The Ikelite housing for the Olympus E300 DSLR is moulded from corrosion-free clear polycarbonate and is rated to 200 feet. The housing includes special conversion circuitry to utilize the outstanding Olympus TTL system. This is real Olympus TTL control with a sync cord, allowing optional Ikelite DS-50 and DS-125 SubStrobes to provide actual Olympus TTL automatic exposure dictated by the camera when attached with a single #4103.51 or #4103.52 dual sync cord.

Other strobes can be used, but will only operate in manual mode.

All ports from our SLR systems can be utilized, allowing use of most macro, wide angle, and zoom lenses.

This compact dSLR housing system is very realistically priced and control for all camera functions is

provided.

The housing size and weight provides neutral buoyancy and superb handling underwater. Camera installation is quick and simple. The reliable controls are conveniently placed at your fingertips, and kept water tight with Ikelite's pioneered Quad-Ring seal glands proven to be the most reliable method for sealing controls.

The Ikelite Super-Eye magnifier provided with the housing offers enhanced viewing while wearing a diving mask.

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

## Aquatica D2x housing



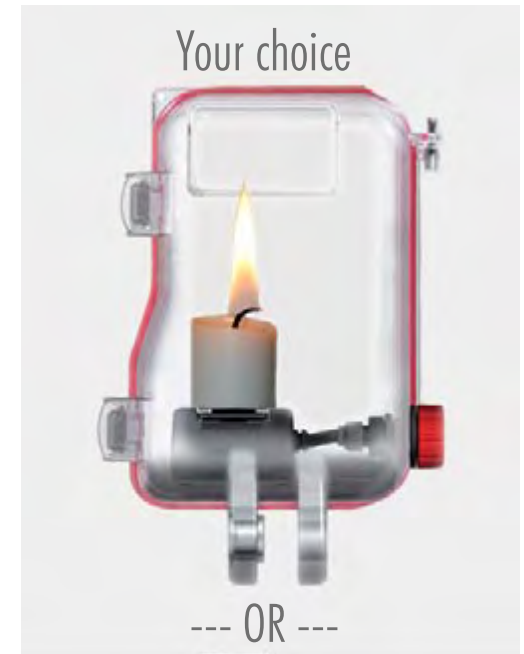
Aquatica have announced their new Nikon D2x housing. The aluminum housing is machined out of a solid block making it a solid and stylish. Well positioned buttons and levers allow full access to all of the D2x features. The buttons on the joystick section are spread out for ease of use even with gloves.

The body slides in and out easily with no misalignment. All commands are spring loaded and all controls are identified with pad printing marking. The improved finder allows for almost 100% viewing.

This unit is well balanced, rated to 300 feet (100m) and all shafts are double o-ringed.

The housing comes standard with dual Nikonos bulkhead and moisture alarm for under £2000 (VAT included) and is rated to 300ft (100m). Available Mid September.

Contact  
mauricio@handlerphoto.com  
Aquatica's technical Field Advisor  
for specs, sales and support.



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



## Patima/Epoque Olympus 7070 housing

Patima / Epoque has developed the 7070 customized housing for Olympus C-7070 WZ cameras. All the functions of the C-7070 WZ are controlled.

The housings is machined from a solid block of aluminium and is rated to 80 metres

The Patima 7070 housing is compatible with Epoque wide or macro lenses which are wet-changeable. The shutter lever is very sensitive which is useful at lower shutter speeds.

The threaded front port is 67mm diameter for mounting supplementary



lenses and colour correcting filters.

Size: 170 x 150 x 160mm

Weight: 2,180 grams on surface (including handles).

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

## Nexus D70 Digital

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- 2 Extra external glands
- Adjustable handles

Visit [www.usanexus.com](http://www.usanexus.com)

See all the features for the Nikon D70 that Nexus has to offer.



858-455-0873 USA Nexus

## Patima 35W HID light

A 35w HID light is the equivalent output of a 150w halogen lamp. This Patima 35w HID light is machined from aluminium and is available with a 4.5 amp battery pack.

The burn time is between 70 and 140 minutes and it is rated to 100 metres. The battery pack measures 175 x 100 x 60mm and weighs 1.5kg



including the bracket.

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

## Bluefin HC1

Light & Motion have announced their housing for the Sony HD video camera.

The Bluefin HC1 is designed with an integrated system of housing, lights, monitor, and optics.

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



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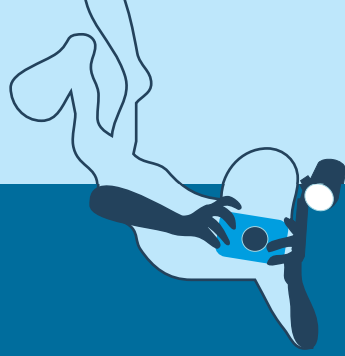
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Macro Lens

.54x Wide Lens



Fantasea Line Introduces:

## FD-70 Housing For the Nikon D-70 Camera

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For more information: [info@fantasea.com](mailto:info@fantasea.com)

## Fantasea housings for Nikon 8700, 5700 and 8800

The CP-8 underwater housing is purpose designed for the Nikon Coolpix 8700 and 5700 digital cameras. The CP-8N is for the Nikon Coolpix 8800 digital camera.

The Fantasea CP-8 and CP-8N housings are designed with a unique air lock system for sealing the camera and allowing the water to exert an even pressure on the O-ring, thus increasing the reliability of the watertight seal.

The Fantasea CP-8 and CP-8N housings are rated to a maximum working depth of 90m/300 ft.



The suggested retail price of the CP-8 and CP-8N: US \$800, includes pre-paid flood insurance policy from D.E.P.P. for one year.

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

## Ultralight strobe arms on Ikelite housings



Popular Ultralight strobe light arms can be used on Ikelite housings.

Ikelite's push button handle will accept Ultralights BA-IK adaptor or the older style handle will accept the Ultralight AD-316 base adaptor.

Most Ultralight products are machined from solid aircraft grade aluminum, polished and then hard anodized to government specifications. All other parts are stainless steel and nylon.

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



## Canon EOS 5D full frame DSLR



Canon's press material for the EOS 5D states that it 'defines (a) new D-SLR category'.

While we're not typically too concerned with marketing talk this particular statement is clearly pretty accurate.

The EOS 5D is unlike any previous digital SLR in that it combines a full-frame (35 mm sized) high resolution sensor (12.8 megapixels) with a relatively compact body (slightly larger than the EOS 20D, although in your hand it feels noticeably 'chunkier'). The EOS 5D is aimed to slot in between the EOS 20D and the EOS-1D professional

digital SLR's, an important difference when compared to the later is that the EOS 5D doesn't have any environmental seals.

While Canon don't specifically refer to the EOS 5D as a 'professional' digital SLR it will have obvious appeal to professionals who want a high quality digital SLR in a body lighter than the EOS-1D. It will also no doubt appeal to current EOS 20D owners (although lets hope they've not bought too many EF-S lenses...)

Read a full review at

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

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

# ULTRALIGHT

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# Nexus Nikon D2x housing

By Peter Rowlands

Nexus is a well established Japanese housing manufacturer and their latest Nikon D2x housing continues their cast aluminium approach whilst nearly all the other manufacturers are moving to solid block machining. Similarly the Nexus D2x housing follows their traditional mechanical design in a form-fitting hull.

The casting is really fine and intricate and Nexus must have burnt some midnight oil to get a cast housing to market so quickly.

The front and rear housing sections are secured by five overcentre catches and are best opened with the housing in the upright position rather than face down. I've never been a fan of Nexus overcentre catches as they are very close to the handles and prone to trapping your fingers but I guess I could get used to them in time.

Installing the camera is a breeze and very positive but the camera's eyepiece cover must be removed and replaced with an element which forms part of the viewfinder optics.

The image through the viewfinder is good but if there is any surface action happening you'd have to remove the element and refit the Nikon cover. Minor detail I know but when that Great White is breaching...

The camera is mounted onto a saddle with a tripod socket screw and the only alignment needed is the MSC switch on the left. That said it is possible to load the camera with the shutter release



*The Nexus Nikon D2x housing is cast aluminium with 26 function controls. The notched adaptor ring allows Nexus F90 ports to be fitted. Without the ring, Nexus F4 ports can be fitted.*

lever pressed down which could be a pain if you don't check it and then get into the water in a hurry! It would be possible to fit a small return spring which would solve this possibility.

There are push button or rotary controls for 26 camera functions and whilst most can be seen on the camera through the large rear Perspex port the ones through the aluminium hull could really do with stickers to say what they are for to avoid any confusion when things are happening fast. The large Perspex port top right gives a good view of the camera's LCD screen.

The rotary controls for the two main command dials are particularly effective, well placed and positive. These are probably two of the most used







*The large rear perspex viewing port is good for viewing the camera's controls but I wonder whether in bright sunlight the LCD screen could do with some sort of shade.*

controls.

The Nexus D2x comes in two versions to accommodate Nexus's Nikon F4 ports or F90 ones which are a different thread size. The housing I reviewed was for the F4 ports but an adaptor was provided to take F90 ports. To my liking the handles are too close to the housing especially when wearing gloves but I understand extenders are available to create a more comfortable spacing.

All of the controls line up nicely except the dynamic focusing lever.

This a friction/turn control which would be better as a claw lever design. I don't use a Nikon D2x but I am reliably informed by UwP major contributor Alex Mustard that this is a function he uses a lot.

With such an expensive camera installed I would have liked to have seen a leak detector fitted but the large rear Perspex screen should let you see any water ingress.

The housing body weighs 2.75kg which is similar to the Subal D2x and it comes with two Nikonos style



*The camera mounts onto a saddle with a tripod socket screw and is very positively positioned. The housing form follows the camera closely.*

sync sockets. The right hand socket is placed so that there is no room for a metering mode switch control so if you like to switch from matrix to spot metering on a regular basis you will be disappointed.

In terms of price (which varies from country to country) the Nexus is dearer than an Aquatica but cheaper than a Subal.

For those who already use a Nexus housing it makes sense to stick with them and use your existing ports. You will already be used to working

with the Nexus design.

For those D2x users buying a housing for the first time I would take time to look at other housings because this is an important investment and what may suit me may not necessarily be your cup of tea.

One thing's for sure the demand for D2x housings is outstripping supply so you may need to wait to get your delivery.



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# Zena Holloway

by Peter Rowlands

Believe it or not, Zena Holloway is only in her early 30's and yet in a short space of time she has established herself as the most creative advertising photographer underwater based in the UK. She works for international clients keen to have her unique images representing their companies and products.

Originally intending to study architecture after school she went on a diving holiday in Egypt and, you've guessed it, she got 'the bug'. She became a dive instructor there followed by a stint in the Caribbean during which time she used her Sea & Sea MX10 with mixed results but she knew she wanted to make her way in the underwater film world.

Returning to the UK three years later she wasn't sure whether to go the wildlife route which is the norm for many photographers. She sought advice from as many experienced people as possible but in the end it was more circumstance which helped mould her direction.

Thinking that working as a diver in the film industry would provide valuable experience Zena got a job with Andrew Schaale at Extreme Facilities, an underwater film rental company in Battersea, Southwest

London. The experience proved invaluable and she came into contact with a new world a far cry away from those early days in Egypt. It was exactly the environment in which Zena could immerse herself and learn from all those around her.

Extreme Facilities were used by many of the crew who were working with Mike Portelly. For those who don't know Mike, he, more than anyone else in the UK, put underwater based commercials on the map. His pioneering imagery which began in the early Eighties has been used extensively ever since.

Zena, however, did not work directly with Mike but she got work with some of his crew and she must have done a good job because they kept re-hiring her when ever they were shooting!

At about the same time she started to shoot her own images, mainly in swimming pools, but with advertising firmly in her sights. This was very much a hand to mouth time and she was helped by many people in the industry who gave their enthusiasm and time for free.

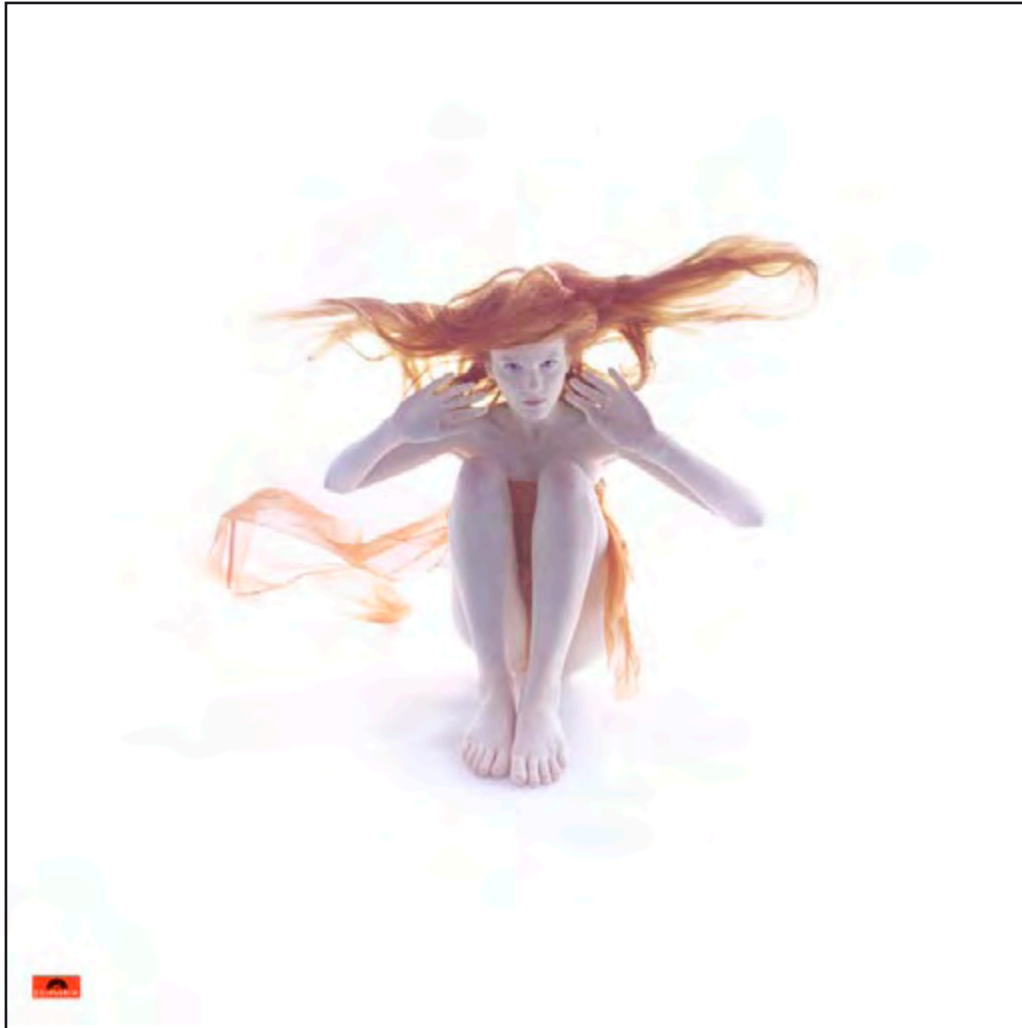
Zena's first major commission came from her first agent who got her an assignment shooting for Faberge,



*This was a major shoot earlier this year in Grand Turk with a team of twelve in Zena's group together with six clients from the commissioning agency and the client so no pressure there then! The big problem was the weather which was awful for most of the trip producing water 4°C colder than normal (important if all you are wearing is a latex mermaid suit!), strong currents and poor viz.*

*Zena had four models- 2 female, 1 male and a child – and the amazing suits were made by Thomas Shouse aka “The Tail Man” in the movie world. The suits were a tight fit, beautifully hand coloured but had no relief zip (if you get my drift). To give you an idea of scale, the tail was about 1 metre (3ft) across.*

*Zena used an Aquatica Mamiya RZ67 housing modified to take a Phase 1 digital back which gave her unlimited exposures and the ability to view the results straight away back on the surface. It was shot with available light with a little bit of digital enhancement.*



*This was a shot taken in 2003 for Polydor Records as an album cover for the band Love Field but Zena is not sure if it was ever used as the band were having some problems.*

*Taken in a private swimming pool in Weybridge with a white drape background, the model was a Canadian girl who Zena screen tested underwater and knew immediately she was ideal for the job.*

*The shot was lit with soft lights 'all over the place' and captured with an Aquatica Nikon F5 and Provia 400 film.*



*Taken in 2001 this was Zena's early personal shoot of the mermaid's tail idea. The tank was draped in black and long shutter speeds created a dream-like effect. She worked with four freedivers over a period of three days in the Oceanic tank in Devon and made the costumes herself from pale and silver neoprene. Once again she used an Aquatica Nikon F5 housing with Provia 400 with single top lighting.*





*This was a billboard advert for Greenpeace commissioned by Saatchi in 2004. It was shot in Cyprus in one long day with the specially made cage and three freedivers. The shark was a bought in shot and added digitally.*

*Zena used an Aquatica Nikon F5 housing and the shot is taken with available light with Provia 400 film.*



*Zena has a three year old daughter, Brooke, who quite naturally is already a star underwater and they live with her partner Patrick in West London.*

the men's perfume giant. From there her confidence and scale of operation grew exponentially.

She had a fairly loose arrangement with her first agent but it was when she switched to The Peter Bailey Company in London's West

End that things really started to take off. She has since worked with Steffi Graf, Travis. Placebo and pop promoting Chris Cunningham to name drop but a few and despite thinking she would always be a stills photographer is now in demand directing commercials.

She operates very much in the agency world where multinational clients will only work through accredited agents and advertising agencies but, if it all sounds ideal, there is a great deal of frustration as favoured projects can take months to materialise and almost two in three jobs quoted for never go ahead.

Despite all this Zena is positive about the future and her main ambition is to direct a car commercial underwater!

In photographic terms Zena is the first to admit that she knows only what she needs to. She uses photographic equipment to capture the images she wants rather than get bogged down with all the photographic intricacies. She is however a true devotee of the digital age and has always been very computer literate. She now uses almost

exclusively a Canon MK2 1DS in a Seacam housing.

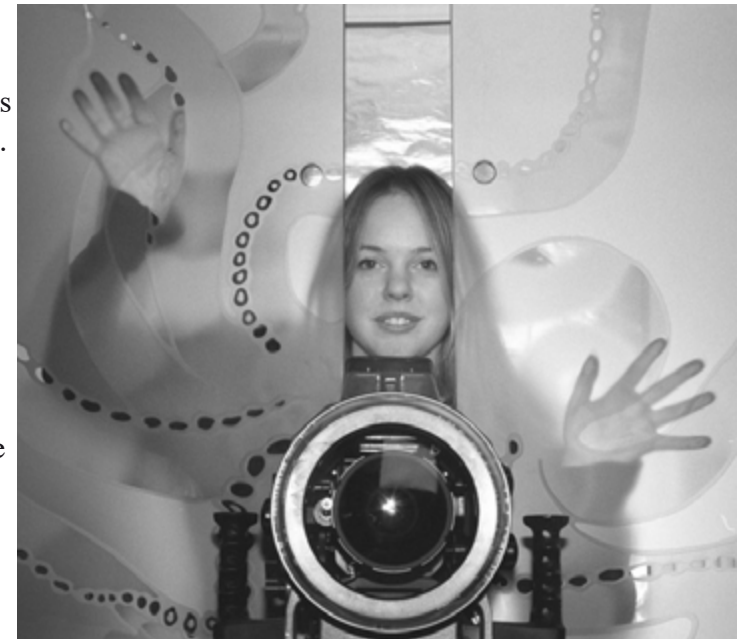
UwP first featured Zena in UwP12 in April 2003 and I'm sure we'll be featuring her special images in future issues of UwP.

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

**Limited edition prints of Zena's work are available at**

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# Behind The Magic

By Alexander Mustard

Just over a week ago, Peter Rowlands and I sold our first Magic filter! Magic is a new type of filter we have developed for producing digital colour images using only ambient light underwater! In this article I want to share with you my experience of how a private project turned, as a result of beer-fuelled banter, into a product we could potentially sell to a digital SLR photographer anywhere in the world!

I don't want this article to read like a press release or a sales pitch, instead I hope it provides some insight into the process of what goes into producing a new piece of kit. Visit the website if you want to read the sales pitch at [www.magic-filters.com](http://www.magic-filters.com) although you still won't find the hard sell. We are just enthusiasts trying to help out others like us, who are addicted to taking images underwater.

To start at the beginning, my interest in filters really began in the Red Sea in 1998. Peter Scoones had chartered the liveaboard *Coral Queen* to film for the BBC series *Blue Planet*, and a group of underwater photographers were invited along to fill the other cabins. During that trip I was bowled over by the amazing colours of the moving images that Scoones was capturing with just available light, a filter and his Digital Betacam. Peter Rowlands was also on that charter and was kind enough to share his knowledge of shooting underwater stills with filters (his 1983 book, *The Underwater Photographer's Handbook*, remains a classic reference on the subject). And since that trip I have been a filter addict!

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*Can you see the magic? These two images of the Giannis D wreck were taken at about 15m in the Red Sea. Both are taken only with available light. The image on the left was taken on slide film in 2001 and the image on the right with digital camera and a Magic Filter in 2005, both by Alex Mustard.*

*Left: Nikon F100 + 16mm lens, Provia 100. Right: Nikon D2x + 10.5mm + Magic Filter.*



That said, I found that filters rarely produced pleasing images on slide film. It was just too difficult to get the right colours. Just being a foot (30cm) too deep or shallow would make the difference between producing a satisfying image and a duffer! What I needed was a still camera like Scoones' digital video, which would enable me to fine-tune the colour balance of my shots. That camera became a reality for me in 2002 when I got a Nikon D100 and Subal housing, which being a digital camera had the adjustable white balance I had desired for so long. I was so keen to test this new capability that my first pool shots with the D100 were white balance tests rather than experiments with any other feature of the

camera (those images actually appeared in UWP 11 in February 2003)!

Thankfully the technique worked and ever since I have been shooting digital with filters and available light at every suitable opportunity. I don't think filters are for every dive; they work best in a shallow (<15m) blue water, in conditions where there is lots of light. A sunny day in the tropics is a good place to start. Darker, temperate green waters tend to be less suited to filter photography. The technique is pretty simple, but allow a couple of dives to get on top to them. Once you are familiar, filter photography is point-and-shoot simple (note that many of the images accompanying this article





*Here, viewed on a lightbox, are just a few of the filters that I have used for underwater photography, including some finished Magic filters. (The pink filters are various CC Reds that look this colour when backlit by a lightbox).*

are shot in auto exposure).

I have used many filters over the last few years and firm favourites have been Kodak's Wratten CC (Colour Compensation) Red series and UR Pro's CY and SWCY filters. Both have strengths but neither was the perfect solution for me and this is what started me on the path to Magic.

The main limitation of CC Red filters is that only work in very narrow depth range, for example I have found that the CC40R only produces pleasing images between 2 and 6 metres, even with adjustable white balance). This makes them impractical unless we know the exact depth of the subject before we dive. UR Pro's filters are designed specifically to counteract the filtering effect of seawater and work very well. They are an excellent choice



*The Magic Filter was designed as a gel so that it is compatible with the popular lenses for underwater photography. It just slots into the rear filter holders on many popular wide angle lenses.*

for videographers and work over a wider depth range (I find the CY works best on stills between 4 and 12 metres). Frustratingly, for the still photographer UR Pro filters are only available as glass or thick optical plastic, which means that they cannot be physically fitted on the most popular SLR wide angle lenses such as fisheyes (which can only take gel filters).

So my two main design criteria were first that the filter could be used with my favourite wide angle lenses and second it would work over a wide depth range. To maximise lens compatibility the obvious solution was an optical quality gel filter, which can be cut to fit pretty much any lens, and crucially is the only type that fits in the rear filter holders on many Nikon, Sigma and Canon wide angles.



*I designed the Magic Filter to work over as wide a depth range as possible. The Magic filter differs from other UW filters as it is not designed to perfectly counteract the filtering effect of seawater because this is highly variable. Instead it adjusts colours to produce a colour balance that is easily corrected by the camera's white balance. The Magic Filter produces pleasing colours from the surface down to 15m in clear, brightly lit, blue water.*

*Top photo by Peter Rowlands at 1m. Nikon D70, 16mm, Magic Filter, aperture priority, 1/30<sup>th</sup> @ F8.*

*Right photo by Alex Mustard at 15m. Nikon D2x, 16mm, Magic Filter, shutter priority, 1/50<sup>th</sup> @ F4.2.*







*This snapshot was taken at about 15-17m and shows that the Magic Filter still produces useful results below its quoted depth range. Note the colours on the divers. Nikon D2x + 10.5mm + Magic Filter. 1/50th @ F7.1.*

To make the filter work over a wide depth range was more tricky. The Magic differs from other filters because it is not designed to perfectly counteract the filtering effect of seawater because this is highly variable (e.g. with depth). Instead it adjusts colours reaching the sensor to produce a colour balance that is easily corrected by the camera's white balance. This is a new approach for underwater filtration, one that takes full advantage of the new technology of DSLR cameras. This enables the

Magic filter to work from the surface to 15m (and produce reasonable results slightly deeper). As a consequence the Magic filter will not work at any depth with daylight balanced slide film.

To say that I arrived at the recipe purely with brainpower would be a big lie! I took 6 different filters to the Red Sea in June to try and the one I thought would work best didn't. It was actually the one that I had initially palmed off to Peter Rowlands to test, that worked best and ended up as The Magic Filter.



*The filter means that once you have set your white balance great colours just come straight out of the camera, as if by magic. Photo by Peter Rowlands, Nikon D70 + 16mm + Magic Filter (no flash), Aperture priority, 1/60th @ F5.6 at 6m depth.*

By the end of the week there were 6 DSLR shooters on our boat testing the limits of my favoured filtration cocktail!

At this stage my motivation was only to develop a filter that I could use to produce types of shots that other underwater photographers could not. But as the week went on everyone who tried the filter made me promise to share them. And after a few beers I agreed. Peter Rowlands also convinced me that we should get some made commercially

so we could supply them to digital photographers around the world who want filters for their DSLRs. Peter is an avid supporter of filters for digital photography and is always keen to increase their popularity. He practises what he preaches too - I have been to the Red Sea with Peter twice this year and have yet to see him use a strobe (I have yet to see him night dive either!).

So it was decided. When we got back to the UK we set out to find out what

was involved in making the Magic. Peter contacted filter manufacturers, while I tried to gauge the potential interest, as I didn't want to end up with sheets of unwanted filter stacked up beneath my bed! Optical quality was absolutely essential so we decided to get the filters made to by one of the world's leading filter companies and cut to fit the popular SLR lenses for underwater shooting. We also specified polyester optical gels, rather than traditional gelatine so they would be waterproof and more durable.

The next obstacle was making the packaging, which was no small challenge on our shoe-string budget. We felt it was essential to provide details on setting white balance and shooting with filters to help people get the best results since we had both seen many people give up on filters in the past. Although simple, the techniques of filters do take some getting used to. We also had to choose our Magic signature image and in the end I chose one of Peter's shots, to appear on the packaging and website, as it was my favourite that





*The really exciting aspects of filters is that they allow us to shoot larger areas (that we could light with flash) in colour and that we are still learning so much about what it is possible to do with them. Nikon D2x + 10.5mm + Magic Filter. 1/40th @ F7.1.*

It is our hope that the Magic Filter will introduce many to the simple delights of shooting in available light underwater. I've definitely found it tougher than I thought to persuade other photographers to leave behind the security blanket of their strobes and experiment with filters. But we hope that the inexpensive Magic will convince you to try, and once you have we hope you will experiment with other filters too. Filter photography is a new technique for stills and there is still a lot to learn from each other. From our first conversation both Peter and I wanted to price the Magic so all DSLR shooters would have no excuse not to buy one! We know once you try it, you'll be a filter addict like us too!

So now the fun really begins. It is very exciting sitting here in the UK, sending filters round the world and waiting to see the images that underwater photographers are able to create with them. There are still so many experiments to make and so much to learn. Filter photography has always been a niche technique in underwater photography, but we hope that digital cameras and products like the Magic will ensure it earns a place in the mainstream.

**Alex Mustard**

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

[www.magic-filters.com](http://www.magic-filters.com)

either of us produced in the Red Sea.

So where does the catchy Magic name come from? I'd like to claim great marketing insight, but embarrassingly it actually comes from me joking about on the boat – explaining that I had used some *Mustard Magic* when fellow photographers wanted to know the secret to my available light shots! Thankfully I was keen to drop my name from the official product and it is now the snappily titled Magic filter.



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MV Typhoon



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Alex photographing an aggregation of snappers at Ras Mohammed. This trip is timed to co-incide with the appearance of these large schools.

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# Tales of a Digital Virgin

by Mark Webster

As a year or so has now passed since I made a reluctant change to digital I thought readers may be interested how I have coped with the transition, the highs and lows and the digital do's and digital don'ts. As a confirmed Luddite I found the prospect of changing to digital quite intimidating and was prepared to delay even longer had it not been for the increase in digital users on my photo workshops. I realized it was a case of change now or get left behind...!

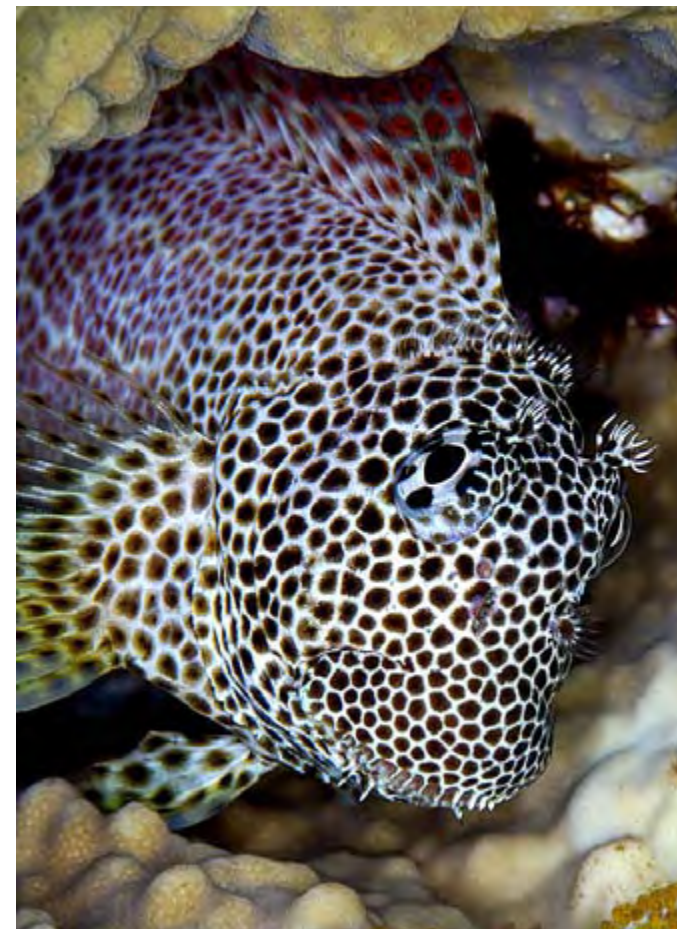
I also realized that to make the change I had to cut myself off from my addiction to film totally and so the much loved film cameras and housings were sold swiftly to prevent me turning back at any point. This is one of the first challenges you face - the change over to digital is happening so quickly that the market for second hand film equipment has shrunk rapidly and is threatening to crash. Great if you are planning to stick or start with film, but not so good if you are trying to fund your change over - so lesson number one, be prepared to spend some money on this latest affliction.

## Camera Choice

There are a baffling horde of cameras to choose from and the market is in a constant state of change. For my needs only a digital SLR would do - there are numerous compact cameras which are



*Compass jelly fish UK - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, 200 ASA, f16 @ 125th, half power.*



*Leopard Blenny Red Sea - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 105mm macro, Inon Quad flash, 200 ASA, f16 @ 125th, half power.*

useable but do have their limitations. Generally the compacts have a slower auto focus speed and also suffer from shutter delay, which means that your subject may have moved by the time the shutter

*Titan D100 housing and Inon Quad flash*





fires. If you have been shooting with a film SLR you will find this very frustrating. The price of digital SLR's has come tumbling down in the last 12 months and there are now a variety of entry level cameras which most of the housing manufacturers are catering for. I took the plunge just before this proliferation and bought the Nikon D100 which was one of the first 'prosumer' digital SLR's and, whilst there are newer cheaper models now, still performs very well and has a comparable pixel count.

## Housing Choice

Choosing a housing is almost as bewildering as choosing the camera. There are at least 12 manufacturers competing in the market and most are offering housings for the same model. If you have already owned a housing for a film SLR then your choice maybe easier as it will be more economic to retain your ports and stay with the same manufacturer. If not, then your first decision will be between an aluminium housing or an injection molded housing (lexan, poly carbonate and carbon fibre). In general the injection molded housings tend to be slightly larger than aluminium as they are mostly built to accommodate more than one camera model. However, if price is the deciding factor then they will almost certainly be cheaper and most have the advantage of being transparent which could be a benefit in the event of what we all dread most - a flood.

The aluminium housings are increasingly being milled from solid blocks although at least two manufacturers are still using casting techniques. The designs are generally for one camera model and therefore they tend to be much more compact and the controls are more ergonomic than the

cheaper options. As such they represent more of an investment, so you need to consider just how hard you are going to try and keep pace with digital SLR development and what the re-sale value might be.

My choice was the Titan housing for the D100 made by Light and Motion Industries chiefly because of the control it gives me over flash power output (through the ROC system - more of this below) and the fact that they supply an adaptor which enabled me to use all my existing Subal ports.

## Lens Problems

Because the sensor size of the majority of digital SLR's is smaller than a 35mm film image (Canon, Kodak and Contax do make 'full frame' sensors, but are pricey) the characteristics of the lenses you may use will change. The picture area produced by a standard film lens on a digital SLR will be cropped by an average of a third - this varies dependant on which camera you have selected as sensor sizes vary between models, although Nikon have so far stuck with one size throughout their range. So there is an apparent change in focal length as the picture area is reduced. For example a 60mm macro lens will now produce the equivalent picture area of a 90mm macro lens on film - the focusing range however does not change. This has advantages for macro lenses but is not so good for wide angle. Thankfully Nikon and the independent lens manufacturers have responded to this swiftly and there are now a number of wide angle zooms available and both Nikon and Olympus have produced fish eye lenses as well. However, the bottom line is that you are also going to have to upgrade your wide angle lens arsenal as well unless



*Three Spot Goby UK - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 105mm macro + Nexus wet lens, Inon Quad flash, 200 ASA, f22 @ 125th, half power.*

you choose a full frame sensor - more expense either way.

## Flash Problems

Up until very recently there has been no way of using the TTL flash exposure ability of your digital SLR without housing the matched land flash. Standard 'Nikonos protocol' TTL flash guns will operate but on manual exposure only. This has not been such a huge problem as you get to see your exposure as soon as you have taken it, so you can tune aperture, shutter speed and flash output to perfect the exposure. Flash guns with multiple power settings are best for this but the flash power can also be reduced by adding diffusers or moving them back from the subject.

One driver for my choice of housing was Light

and Motion's ROC (Remote Optical Control) system which controls the flash output from the housing in twelve power settings. The system works by mimicking a TTL quench signal for a standard 'Nikonos protocol' flash gun (you programme in your gun/s of choice) and so it does not matter if your flash gun has only one or two powers in manual. Flash power is conveniently controlled from the handles of the housing and power selected is displayed on the back of the housing - a joy to use.

Inevitably independent flash gun and housing manufacturers have been working on cracking the digital TTL protocol and some options are beginning to appear on the market. Ikelite now have a system for Canon cameras built into their housings and will soon introduce a Nikon D70 system. Aquatica are working on theirs whilst a German manufacturer (Mathias Hienric) has produced retrofit circuits for the Canon and Nikon which can be installed in your housing or in the flash gun itself by the manufacturer - Subtronic are now using this circuit. These are limited so far to certain camera models, but the number supported is set to expand. Not all flash guns are compatible with these systems as they rely on pre-flash to establish the correct exposure which from accounts so far seems to

work well in macro but not so well in wide angle.

A further alternative is to select an 'auto' flash gun or one which is triggered optically by the camera's on board flash. The latter are best suited to compact digital cameras, whilst the auto guns will work with most cameras.

## Digital Advantages

Of course the initial great advantage of digital is that you see the result of your shot immediately and to begin with you will look at every shot taken. Once you are over that seduction it is useful to check the screen every time you say change subject, orientation or move flash guns, but otherwise it is best to concentrate on taking pictures rather than reviewing them. You have many more images available to you on a dive (dependant on card size) but bottom time is still limited unless you are also into re-breathers. For those of us old enough to remember the days before reliable TTL, you know that you soon get a 'feel' for the right exposure when shooting in manual.

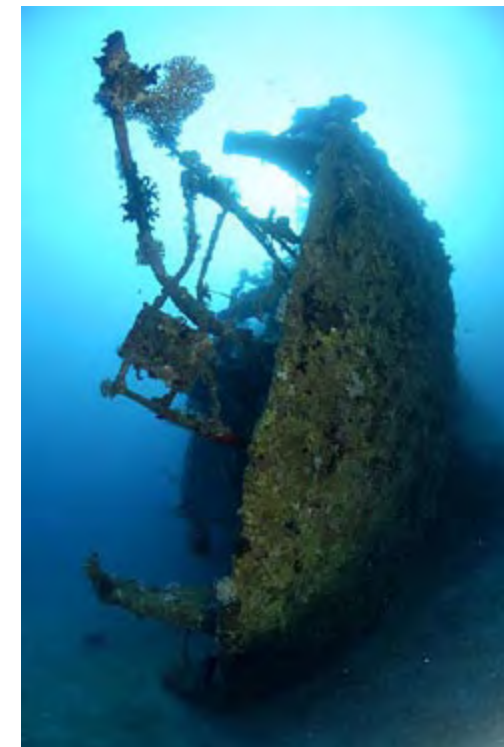
Shooting with natural light is easier with digital as well. You can adjust the white balance (colour temperature) during a dive using an 18% gray or white card and get very



*Anthias Red Sea - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, 200 ASA, f16 @ 125th, half power.*

good results. There are also a number of filters available to correct colour absorption - these have initially been developed for the digital video market but are quickly crossing over to digital stills. You can use these or standard colour correction filters, shoot in RAW and make your final white balance adjustments after the dive.

If you choose to shoot in a RAW



*Wreck, Ras Banas, Red Sea - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 10.5mm FE, Subtronic Mini flash guns, 200 ASA, f16 @ 125th, half power.*

file format then digital can be very forgiving when you get the exposure wrong - more so for under exposure. It is more like shooting on negative film which gives you at least a 1-2 stop latitude in the final printing process. However, it is always best to strive to get the exposure just right and minimize the number of adjustments you need to make.



Some see the potential for adjustment and/or manipulation of digital images as a bonus as well. It can certainly save a marginal image and gives huge flexibility for cropping and recomposing shots after the event, but this does add time to the post processing workflow. If you enjoy time in front of your computer then this is an advantage.

Waiting for film processing is now a thing of the past - now there is a mad scramble to download your images if you have had a successful dive and review them immediately on the laptop. So of course you could view the change to digital as saving you money eventually - if you make a couple of trips a year and shoot regularly in your home waters you could easily 150-200 rolls a year. When you look at the accumulative costs of film and processing you will knock a big whole in your digital budget in only a couple of years.

## Digital Disadvantages

There are of course disadvantages to digital, particularly if like me you like to limit your time in front of a computer. If you don't own a suitable computer for picture processing then this is an additional expense to face. A laptop is the best



*Nudibranch UK - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 105mm macro + Nexus wet lens, Inon Quad flash, 200 ASA, f22 @ 125th, half power.*



*Strawberry anemone UK - Nikon D100, LMI Titan Housing, 105mm macro, Inon Quad flash, 200 ASA, f22 @ 125th, half power.*

choice as it allows you to download and process your images when traveling. Look for fast processor speeds, loads of RAM (you cannot have too much) and large hard disk size, although this can be supplemented with portable hard drives. Laptop choice is just as bewildering as digital camera choice - the most likely controlling factor will be what you can afford.

You will need to develop an image processing workflow that suits your needs and patience. There are any number of post processing software packages to choose from, but most will regard Photoshop as the best option. Most images will benefit from some tweaking, although as sensors

and on board processing improve images straight out of the camera will become more immediately acceptable. Even if you limit yourself to basic adjustments of levels, contrast and sharpening - which make a huge difference particularly to raw files - processing each shot can be very time consuming. It is important to regard your digital images much as you did you film ones - just because you shot 100 pictures on a dive doesn't mean that you should keep or process them all. Be prepared to throw some away just as you would on the initial review of a roll of film - this reduces the processing time, makes you more selective and consequently improves your results. If you

have a series of pictures with similar exposure characteristics then you can always batch process them which can save significant time and effort.

One thing you must consider, particularly when you are shooting large numbers of images on a trip, is back up. A computer crash or corrupt CF card can result in the loss of all images. Have one or two spare compact flash cards and back up your images regularly to CD, DVD or a separate drive. Portable drives with up to 100gb and more are very small and getting cheaper all the time. This caution applies at home as well and if you are shooting RAW then you will want to retain these files as well for future use. As you accumulate images you will regularly run out of space on your computer and separate hard drives - just as you did with your files for transparencies.

You need to also develop a filing system which allows you to find and retrieve images easily. There are of course software packages which help you do this but it does need some thought before you start, so that you can find that picture of the lesser spotted goby when National Geographic call and ask for it.....

Most of us own a slide projector which will now become almost redundant together with the film cameras. In order to view your images or slide shows on the big

screen means another investment. Digital projectors are another item that is steadily reducing in cost and increasing in specification as the market expands - these units can also be used for home cinema with your DVD player so the market for couch potatoes is growing all the time. However, they are still a significant investment on top of everything else, so you might consider sharing one with a fellow photographer or group.

Just like computers and video cameras, there will always be a better specified camera about to appear when you decide to go digital. It is very easy to get caught up in the pursuit of more resolution or the next sensor development and some photographers will be constantly selling equipment and moving to the next upgrade. To avoid this you have to examine what you are going to do with your images - if you don't make monster prints or sell your images for bill board posters then you most likely don't need an expensive professional level camera, unless money is no object and you must have the best.

### **Don't Look Back**

When you make the move to digital you will most likely tell yourself that you will use your existing film kit occasionally, particularly if you have difficulty

selling it. This thought might make you feel more comfortable, but you will be kidding yourself, I still have a shelf full of film equipment gathering dust. Once you have experienced the convenience of the immediacy and the flexibility of digital processing you will not look back. There will be some film diehards and digital perfectionists that will point out there are still drawbacks in quality compared to film, or for example that digital doesn't cope with sun bursts so well, and this is true, but for most of us the images produced by say a 6-10 mega pixel DSLR will be adequate. If you can avoid, or don't need to, getting caught up with the need to chase ever

more mega pixels or the latest sensor then your choice of camera will give you several years service.

Film is not dead yet, but already the choice is narrowing and there are fewer companies offering processing. There will never be a perfect time to make the leap as there will always be the prospect of a better specified camera on the horizon, but once you make the move you are unlikely to regret it. This advice comes from a reformed Luddite!

**Mark Webster**

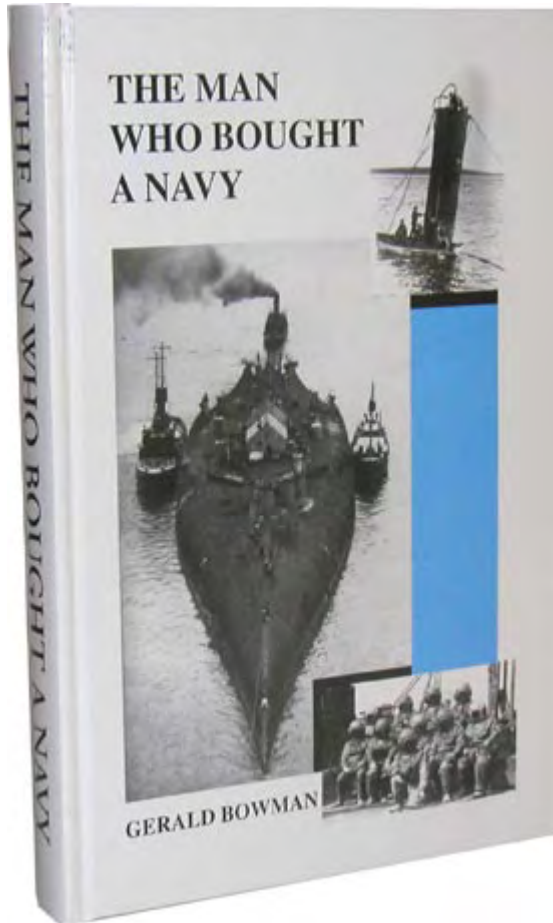
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**Mark Webster is the author of the Art and Technique of Underwater Photography and hosts regular live aboard workshops. See websites for details:**  
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# Search for the Dwarf Minke Whale

by Rod Klein

While many countries have banned programs where visitors can swim with whales, a very organized (and unpublicized even in Australia) swim with whales industry has developed in waters off the northern Great Barrier Reef based on the voluntary approaches of Dwarf Minke whales. In addition, an official research program is focused on learning more about Dwarf Minke whales and their interactions with divers and snorkelers. The goal is to learn more about this little known species and, most importantly, to ensure the encounters have minimal impact on the whales.

Starting out in L.A, I first flew to Sydney, Australia and then connected on to Cairns, where I was to board the Nimrod Explorer. Having traveled to Australia before, I made sure to have a couple of days in Cairns just to make sure that any jetlag was history and I was fresh and ready to go when it was time to get on the boat.

## Anything Minke

Once on board I immersed myself in anything “Dwarf Minke” since I was a total “newbie” to this experience and it didn’t take me long to realize that I had come to the right place.

The Nimrod has an excellent Dwarf Minke whale educational program with lectures, videos, and briefings to insure that all guests are properly informed about both whale behavior and proper etiquette while in the water with the whales. In



*The Nimrod has an excellent Dwarf Minke whale educational program  
All underwater images shot with Nikon D2X in a Subal Housing*

addition, all on board have the opportunity to participate in the research program that was started by the CRC Research Center and James Cook University. After each day’s encounter guests are asked to complete a brief questionnaire designed to assess both whale behavior and their responses to the direct contact with humans.

What is important to understand is it is the whales that initiate the contact. The local dive operators, including the Nimrod Explorer, do not go out to blue water areas in order to seek out the whales, but go to the normal divesites that they frequent year round. During the May-July season, for a reason still a mystery, the Dwarf Minkes are attracted to both the diveboats AND divers and once on a mooring, the whales may stay around all day. It is also not uncommon for the whales to actually follow the boat for some distance once it is underway, and we could see whale breaching behavior frequently from the divedeck.







## Minke Whales

Until recently, it was thought that there was a single, variable species of Minke whale throughout the world's oceans. The 'true' Minke whale, *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*, is known only from the Northern Hemisphere. There is also the Southern Minke or Antarctic Minke whale, which is found mostly in the Southern Hemisphere. Although the smallest of the great whales, the normal Minke may still reach 33 feet (with females tending to be larger than males) and exceed 10 tons. Minkes are distinguished by their very pointed heads.

Minke whales are the most abundant baleen (filter feeding) whales and it is estimated that there are about 800,000 Minke whales worldwide. Some countries that still hunt whales, including Japan, have indicated that they will continue hunting Antarctic Minkes. Since it is believed that Australia's Dwarf Minke population spends some time in that region, it remains to be seen how this hunting will affect the encounters on the Great Barrier Reef.

## Dwarf Minke Whales

It was originally thought that there were only the 2 species of Minke

whale but in the mid 1980s Dwarf Minke whales were first recognized as a distinct form and although they are known to be only from the Southern Hemisphere there is, otherwise, very little known about them. They have attracted great attention in northern Great Barrier Reef waters because they regularly approached close to boats and swimmers, and, of course, this is why I was there. The Dwarf Minke whale is identified by its white shoulder and flipper base, with a dark gray tip on the flipper. Unlike the Antarctic Minke whale, it has a large dark patch extending onto the throat. Female Dwarf Minkes are on average about 6 feet shorter than

Antarctic Minkes (in baleen whales, the female is larger than the male). The largest Dwarf Minke whale that was accurately measured was over 25 feet long and weighed 5-6 tons, with the average being 15-18 feet.

Dwarf Minkes are highly maneuverable and can jump from the water like a dolphin. They can swim in bursts of 12 knots but cannot maintain this speed. They have been seen repeatedly circling a vessel that was cruising at 8.5 knots. Like all whales, Minke whales are air-breathing mammals and their paired nostrils (blowholes) are on the top of the head and they will surface to breathe every 1-12 minutes.



Very little is known of the life history of Minke whales. Females are thought to give birth to one calf at a time every 1-2 years. Mother-calf pairs are rarely observed, although in the past several years researchers have started to see what is thought to be independent calves (based on their size) with a probable mother staying in the general vicinity, but not directly with the youngster. The calf will spend 10 months in the womb and up to six months nursing. The young Minke whale will mature sexually after six to eight years and might live up to 40 or 50 years, but its true lifespan is not known for certain.

### Diving with Dwarf Minke Whales

It is important to note that the swim with whales program is quite organized and all liveboards (the location of the northern ribbon reefs is too far for local day dive boats, although there have been reports by day boats of encounters on the southern reefs) follow a strict set of guidelines to allow researchers to gather consistent data. When we would moor up at a divesite the captain and crew would keep a keen lookout for any sign of the Minkes. If it was determined that one or more

were in the area, 2 long 30-meter drift lines would be set out off the rear swimstep. With mask and snorkel, swimmers would quietly slip into the water and take a position on one of the lines and allow the Minkes to approach at their leisure. Once the whales began interacting, with time they would gain more confidence and begin what can only be described as “close encounters of the third kind”. Once started, these encounters typically lasted as long as we stayed at the divesite and during my time on the boat 5-6 hour encounters were not unusual.

Of course, Minke whales are wild animals and did not always show

up exactly on cue. When that was the case, we would simply do our normal reef dive as planned. It was on these occasions where my most thrilling encounters took place.

Divesites like Pixie Pinnacle or Lighthouse Bommie are small, intimate areas where the reef top extends to within 1 meter of the surface. The moorings are directly adjacent to the divesite and the dive area of the Nimrod was no more than 20-30 meters away. The combination of the dive boat, the reef site and the divers are like a siren call to the whales and normally by the end of our first dive at any site frequented by the Minkes, I could usually see at least 2





*All images shot with Nikon D2X in a Subal Housing*

large whales cruising the reef.

It was an amazing feeling to sense the presence of a large Minke, see the shadow of its body cross over mine, and look up and only 20 feet away was this magnificent creature. As part of the research, I was allowed to go in the water of scuba to photograph the whales. Although we were told that the whales were most likely sensitive to divers bubbles, my experience while on scuba was that there was little change in their behavior as long as I was calm in the water, kept perfect buoyancy, and did not directly approach the whales. I

could hang on the edge of the reef, observe the whales, and hope for that close encounter.

In several very special encounters, as I was swimming slowly back to the hangbar on the

Nimrod, the five whales that had been with us during the dive followed me back seemingly as curious about me and I was about them. As I hovered in the water at about 30 feet the whales made pass after pass around me and I was able to see their large, intelligent eyes assessing me. I wondered what they were thinking.

## What the Future Holds

This trip was great adventure and wonderful education and my thoughts, even now, are with the Dwarf Minke whales. Even though Minkes are not endangered and are now the most abundant of the great whales, their populations have been depleted by whaling in the North Atlantic and the western North Pacific, as well as in some parts of the Southern Ocean. At one time it was thought that Minkes might increase in numbers in the Southern Hemisphere because they had increased amounts of food available after the decimation of the larger baleen whales, but there is no evidence that they have increased.

Dwarf Minke whales were

taken during commercial whaling in until this ceased in 1975. Sixteen Dwarf Minke whales were taken in the Japanese research whaling program but since 1993, no takes have been reported to the International Whaling Commission. There is talk that commercial whaling might resume in the Southern Hemisphere and it would target Antarctic Minke whales. It is possible that some Dwarf Minke whales would also be taken incidentally which would have a direct impact on the incredible encounters that we experienced here in the north barrier reef of Australia.

**Rod Klein**

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# Svalbard

## A cold but impressive expedition

Photography: André Crone

Text: Eveline Crone-de Brabander

The arctic is not the first destination you will think about when planning a dive trip. Many divers from all over the world choose (sub)tropical destinations because of it's colourfull flora and fauna. The adventurer who dares to go to the most northern part of the world will encounter a unique aquatic world.

The trip to the islands of Svalbard will go through Norway. There are regular flights to Svalbard starting in Oslo or Tromsø. The best time to travel to Svalbard is june – august. Besides these months the climate is extremely cold and dark.

During the summer the sun stays up 24 hours a day. The sun just makes circles above you but will not drop. The average temperature during the summer time is 6 degrees Celsius. Not really comparable with the climate on a tropical island, but it's not too bad with a warm shirt and a pair of gloves.

A visit to Svalbard will start with one or more days in Longyearbuyen. This is only a small village although this is the capital of Svalbard.

There are 4 hotels/pensions, some restaurants and cafe's and a small

shopping centre were you can get almost everything you need.

The buildings are mostly build from wood and painted in beautifull, typically Norwegian, colours. Svalbard is covered with a thick pack of snow almost all year around. This makes that almost all houses are build high above the ground. The ground is always frozen. This is why electricity and water lines are built above the ground. On first sight this looks strange; but the harsh climate during winter time leaves no other way..

It's best to book a trip on the "Professor Molchanov" when you want to go diving at the Arctic. The Professor Molchanov is a modern and comfortable oceanographic research vessel. The vessel was build in Finland in 1983. The vessel is operated by an enthusiast Russian crew, all highly experienced in ice navigation. It is charterd by the dutch company "Ocean Wide Expeditions".

This vessel is used to make (diving) tours to the arctic and antarctic. The "Professor Molchanov" is an ice-strengthend vessel. This means that it's not really an ice-



*The "Professor Molchanov" is an ice-strengthend vessel.*

*Two Zodiacs are available to bring the divers to the dive sites.*





breaker but capable of sailing through a meter of ice. The size of the vessel and its ice capabilities make it possible to enter the fjords of Svalbard very deeply. The tours to the arctic on the vessel last one week. Diving is only offered two weeks a year. The vessel has room for 52 guests, only 16 of them can be divers. This gives a mixture of naturalists, bird watchers and divers on board.

The international expedition leaders and guides are highly knowledgeable, helpful and dedicated to the protection of the environment.

Diving trips around Svalbard are true expeditions. A plan of the tour is made in advance. But divers and

other passengers have to be flexible since ice and weather conditions influence the route the vessel will sail. The actual program of the expedition will vary to take the best advantage of local conditions, spontaneous opportunities and wildlife.

The dive sites that will be visited are not all exactly known in advance. This gives way to very explorative diving on sites where no one has ever dived before.

The very experienced expedition leader has the goal to show you as many different animals that live around the snowy islands as possible. Chances are that he will show you polar bears, walruses, seals, whales



and belugas. We have seen all of these animals. Sometimes not very near, but we have seen them; so don't forget your binoculars.

An average day on board of the "Professor Molchanov" is quite busy. Breakfast is being served around eight in the morning. A minimum of two tours a day will be organized by the expedition leader. These can either be a land based tour or a dive trip for the divers that are on board. For the divers it's always hard to make a choice, go diving or make a land tour. Both are very beautiful.

The north pole doesn't consist of land as opposed to the antarctic. The Arctic is a huge area. There is

no clear agreement on its extent, no simple geographical or even political definition of its territory.

Fact is that the most northern part of the world is covered with ice. This ice will melt during the summer and will freeze up during the winter.

In August it's possible to circumvent the islands of Svalbard, in early summer this is not possible. One of the goals in sailing the "Professor Molchanov" is to get as northern as possible. We reached the pack ice at around 80 degrees. From there on it was impossible to sail further north bound.





## Diving at the Arctic, Svalbard

Diving at the arctic is an impressive experience. Because the dangers of moving ice, diving at the arctic is only possible for a few months per year. Every day two different dives sites are picked by the expedition leader and the dive guides. These sites are not known in advance, as the exact route of the vessel is not known in advance. Sometimes you dive at sites where no one ever dived before. For a couple of dives the sites are just picked on good luck and depths of the sea floor. There is always an element of the unexpected.

Two Zodiacs will bring the divers to the dive sites. You don't have to carry your gear around, just put it in the zodiacs which are located on the big deck. The zodiacs are then hoisted into the water.

Only experienced dry suit divers, with at least 20 logged dry suit dives, can join the tour. Your gear will be checked by the dive guides. You will at least need two regulators, consisting of a first and second stage. A maximum number of five hoses is allowed. The first dive is the traditional check-up dive. This will be at an easy place where all

equipment is tested for the rest of the week. The water temperature is around 0 degrees Celsius. Therefore good preparation of your gear and warm undergarment is needed here.

The underwater world of the Arctic is very varied. Most of the the dive sites feature enormous kelp plants. Between the kelp a lot of critters can be found, which can be: small fish, amphipods, small swimming nudibranchs, sea-slugs, nudibranchs, sea urchins, hermit-crabs, starfish, spidercrabs and a lot more. Other dive sites show a different sight. A rocky sea bed, which at first seems desolated, forms the basis of this part the northern ice sea. On these rocky surfaces a lot of colourfull anemones and sea dahlia's can be found.

Be prepared, on many of the dive sites you will experience enormous swells. These swells are noticeable on to about 10 meters below the surface. The swells combined with diving through the kelp-forests makes the dives very special. At the end of the dive you will wonder: "was it the kelp or the sea floor that was moving?"

You will sail through the ice all week. Big icebergs will float by. An ice dive along one of these

enormous blocks of ice must be part of the tour. The crew will search for an iceberg that has landed on the sea floor. This way you are sure the ice will not tilt while the divers are underwater. The iceberg also has to be reasonable free of other blocks of ice. Moving ice can close the open water making your ascent impossible.

A bit of sun light will make the underwater scenery even more beautiful. Some icebergs are almost jade coloured, making you forget the coldness of the water.

Close encounters with seals are possible for snorklers. During our tour a group of seals was located northern of Prince Karls Forlandet. They were living at a place where the water was only 1,5 metre deep. Some of them were lying on the rock's, others were playing around in the water. The animals are not shy at all and you can approach them very closely. Now you can take pictures of them using a wide angle lens. Shots that are impossible for the photographers on land who were following us with their big tele lenses.

The best dive site is called "Saga-Reef". This is one of the sites that are more or less guaranteed to



be visited during the tour. This dive will be the last dive of the trip and will be made during the way back to Longyearbyen.

Saga-reef is a very complete reference of all there is to see while diving at the arctic. The first 8 meters are covered with enormous kelp forests. From 8 meters down you can find a wall that leads you into deeper waters. Across this wall you can find a lot of marine life: anemones, sea dalia's in different colours make you think you're in the tropics. Each kelp plant houses a spider crab, which are very abundant at this site. Saga reef proves that diving at the arctic can be as impressive as diving in the tropics.

## Land based tours

It's sometimes hard to decide whether to go on a land tour or to go diving when you are at Svalbard. A walk across the tundra is definitely worth while. In spring and early summer the tundra's flora is starting to develop. Grasses are starting to grow and flowers start to blossom. The fresh grass makes the



reindeer wander across the tundra.

The main reason for going to the arctic is the search for animals that are unique for this part of the world. Every day is spent searching for polar bears, walruses, seals, beluga's etc. During one of our searches for a polar bear we were surprised by a group of White Beluga's.

The scenery at the arctic is overwhelming. You will see lots of stunning landscapes, icebergs and big glaciers. The guides will always carry guns during diving and land tours. Polar bears are quite abundant and you don't want a very close encounter with them. The guns will only be used for protection. As the Polar Bear is a protected animal, active hunting is forbidden.

We have seen some polar bears, unfortunately not close by. The expedition leader told us that the bears sometimes come so close that they are leaning against the vessel.

The island of Moffen is very famous for its population of walruses. The animals at Moffen are protected and you are not allowed to come closer than 300 meters. But with a little bit of luck another group of these animals is found outside

this area. You'll be surprised by the size of these animals. When approaching a group of walruses carefullness is required. The water is a safe haven for the animals. This means that you should never be between the walruses and the open water. The animals are not really afraid and seem quite tame. It's key that you don't make any unexpected movements. The captain was even able to manoeuvre the vessel against some floating pieces of ice with sleeping walruses on them.

Some places on Svalbard remind us of the long history of the islands. Examples of these places are Smeerenburg with the remnants of a dutch whaling station and Danskoya an old danish whaling station. These two deserted whaling stations are very close to the area from which adventurers tried to reach the North Pole for the first time. The foundations of the barracks of one of these expeditions can still be found.

Barentsburg, which is the only remaining Russian city on Svalbard will be visited at the last day of the tour. The people in this city live from the last remaining mines on the island. After this visit the boat is going back to Longyearbyen. For some this is the time to leave Svalbard. But if you want you can stay a few days more to enjoy the flowers, plants and birds of the main island.

**Eveline and André Crone**

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# The Tigers of Africa

by Tobi Bernhard

Big five, big fish, big adventure.

South Africa should by now be well and truly established as the shark capital of the world. The breaching Great whites of the cape region have been well documented and photographed. The Dusky sharks and Bronze whalers feeding frantically in the annual sardine run have been elevated to immortality by Doug Perrine's award winning images. Toothy Sand tigers or Raggies (odontaspis taurus), as the locals call them affectionally, have been a staple on subtropical dives. Their ability to hover motionless in the water has taken them into the heart of photographers.

And since the dive industry has established itself in Mozambique good sighting reports of whale sharks are coming in on a regular basis. Over the top on the adrenalin scale however must be the tiger shark diving at the Aliwal shoal South of Durban. No cage, no bottom, no fear (my foot).

From the small town of Umkomaas Walter Bernardis at

African Watersports has taken adrenalin junkies, shark lovers, photographers and the chronically curious out for five years now to dive with these spectacular creatures.

Tiger sharks appear on the Aliwal shoal seasonally around May. No one knows much about their migration pattern the rest of the year or why they come to the shoal. The tiger encounters have evolved from a more cautious approach of feeding them on the reef, carrying defensive weapons to the current mid-water drift encounters (where no one carries so much as a dive knife).

Walter redefines nonchalance when it comes to, what I had to date considered beyond the limit of the safely possible.

His fearlessness stems from an intimate knowledge of tiger shark behavior gained by experience. I think, Divers who are accustomed to have their safety taken care of in a PADI sort of way should realize that they are the only one responsible for their safety on this dive and have to base their decision to participate on that, rather than succumbing to peer pressure. But with a healthy respect for the animals, close attention to the sharks behavior and common sense, it



*Tiger shark motion portrait/ Nikon F90, 18mm, Subal housing, Velvia 50, f11, 8th/sec, 2 x Nikon SB 105, full power*

is possible to meet these magnificent creatures close up. It's your wit vs. the sharks and the opportunity to photograph one of the most beautiful predators of the sea, makes this dive easily the most exciting wildlife encounter I had in 20 years.

Any apprehension I might have had about jumping in the water with a bunch of big tiger sharks was displaced momentarily by a look at the sizable surf the inflatable

have to cross to get to sea from the beach. There are no sheltered bays or harbours on the KwaZulu/Natal coast and all diving is done from trailered RIBs. Reassuring to know that Walter and his son Mark are surfies and know how to read a set. >From my own open ocean shark feeding experience here in New Zealand with maco and blue sharks, I expected a long wait. But it never took more than 20 min. before the first tiger showed up. Their





*Tiger shark portrait/ Nikon F4, 16mm fisheye, Subal housing, Velvia 100, f11, 125th/sec, single YS300 Sea&Sea strobe 1/2 power*

strong tiger-like markings, boxy snout and fold on the corner of their mouth make them instantly recognizable.

Walter uses a stainless washing machine drum on a steel cable as chum bucket, because the plastic containers got chewed up every time. The bucket drifts five meters down on a float with the current i.e. you drift in mid-water with the sharks circling the bait. The fact that people encounter tiger sharks in this way now, questions seriously the scary myths surrounding this species. I have no problem to admit that this was right at the edge of

my comfort zone though. Especially when the viz got below 5 meters. The tigers cruise sluggishly for the most part, but they do try it on as they gain confidence the longer you spend with them in the water.

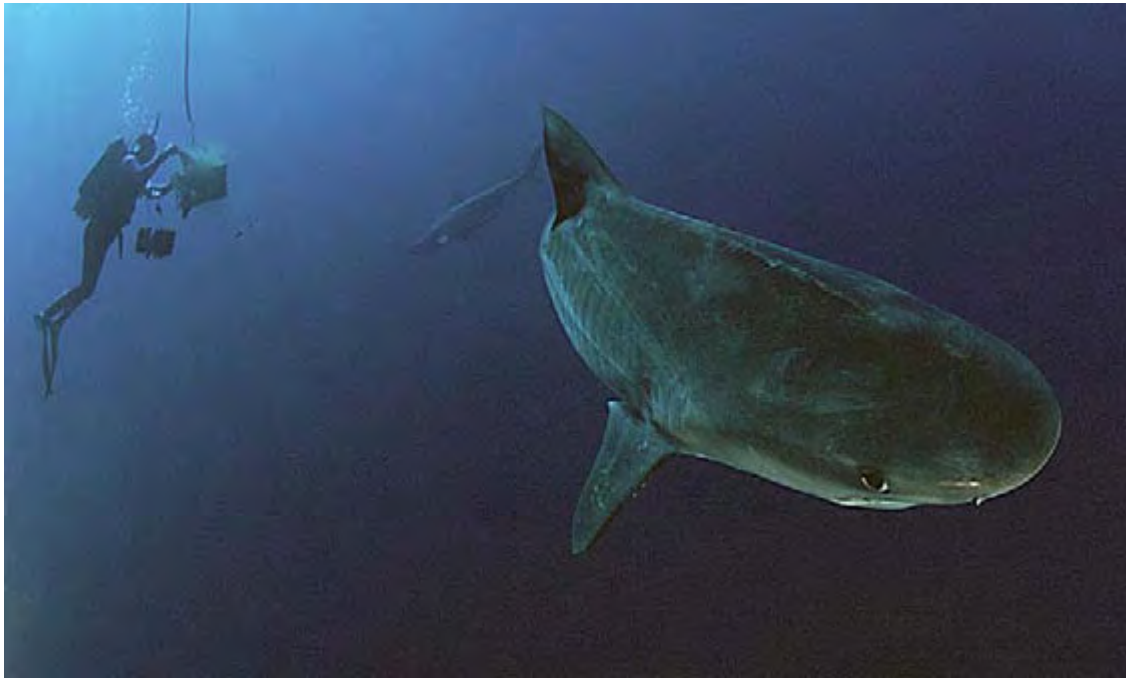
Constantly torn between curiosity about your edibility and fear of injury or wasting precious energy, they sneak up from behind or underneath you and only turn away when you face them and exhale. The Latin name "galeocerdo(cuvieri)" translates to weasel not because they are small and furry. So long as there



*Tiger shark, bait bucket and divers/ Nikon F4, 16mm, Subal housing, Velvia 100, f8, 125th/s, single YS 300 Sea&Sea strobe, 1/2 power -1 diffuser*

are no more than three sharks and at least two divers in the water it feels reasonably controlled. Divers don't behave like pray i.e. swim away, don't smell like pray and send weird signals like bubble noises to confuse the sharks instincts. What the sharks can't know is that we are actually bad shark nutrition. Too many bones, too little oil, too many indigestibles like rubber and steel. They might also think we are just another animal feeding on the same bait. Their eyes are very lively and move constantly compared

to other sharks which makes them appear more calculating. On the whole they do not seem to behave much differently from other sharks I have encountered. When you see every-one's camera intently pointed your way don't flatter yourself, turn around and look down. With five sharks competing for handouts it did get a little hectic. Another similarity to most sharks I dived with is that size and confidence seem to be directly proportional in tiger sharks, but behavior varies individually



*Nikon F4, 16mm, Subal housing, Velvia 100, f8, 125th/s, single YS 300 Sea&Sea strobe, 1/2 power -1 diffuser*

too, given equality in size. They nibble cameras occasionally, but surprisingly don't apply pressure and let go again quickly. Easier on the gear and their teeth. I felt a bit sorry for the guys hiding behind matchbox-size digital cameras (until I remembered the \$ 600.- excess luggage bill from Quantas) and I did wish for my Mamiya 6x7 housing at times for added comfort. Any contrast, like colorful dive gear or aluminum wings on video cameras seemed to attract their particular attention. I never understood why underwater camera housing manufacturers aren't

painting their products black for stealth and non-reflectiveness like land cameras. On several occasions a small pointy nosed whaler shark (poss. carcharhinus brevipinnas) swam between the tigers at apparent ease. The Shark Board tags are a bit annoying for the pedantic photographer and probably the shark as well. This organisation has taken it upon itself to net the swimming beaches of Natal.

Life sharks caught in the nets are tagged and released. More often the sharks drown before the nets are checked and the dead sharks are

dissected for scientific research. The lab is open for visitors with a stomach for a shark stomach. Things like dietary habits and reproduction cycles can be learned from dissection, but I think you learn infinitely more about this fish getting intimate with it in its own element. Over several days I could recognize some of the same sharks and their individual behaviour towards the divers.

Walter Bernardis's fearlessness and love for these sharks is an inspiration and instrumental to introducing divers to this unforgettable

underwater wildlife encounter .

And there is no better place like Africa to meet a tiger.

**Tobias Bernhard**

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



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# Digital liveboard diving

by Rod Klein

When diving most areas of the world, if I have a choice to either take a quality liveboard or stay at a land based resort, I will always take the liveboard. As a matter of fact, taking a liveboard charter not only offers the best diving experience with its ability to visit dive sites that a land based operation simply can't reach, it is also certainly one of the most relaxing dive vacations one can imagine. No phones, no TV, just great company, great food, and great diving.

Once aboard you never have to move your gear, be late and miss the boat for the morning dives, try and figure out when or where to eat (whiney voice: Honnney, where do you want to eat tonight!?), and endure all the other inconveniences of most land based diving. Your gear is set up once, with tanks filled at their stations, and you can't be late because "you're already there".

You can always sleep in and still get up for breakfast and start your dive day on the 2nd dive, and with up to 5 dives per day, missing that first



*The Kararu Liveboard where I spent 11 days diving in Indonesia. Kodak SLR/n 24-120 VR Zoom*

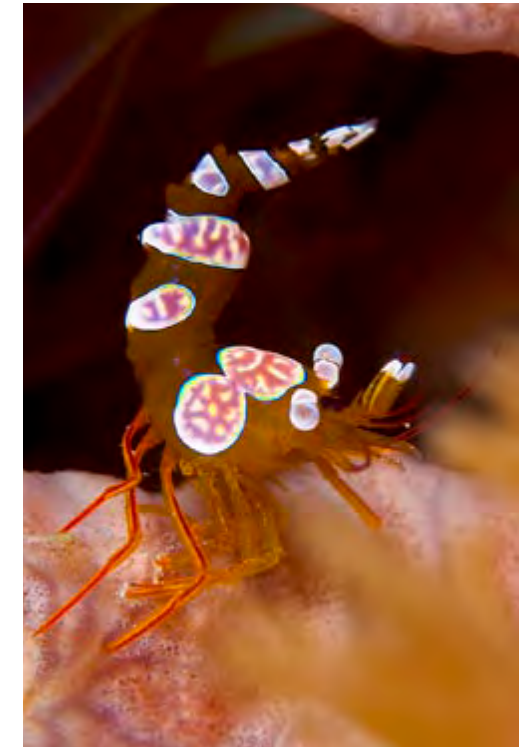
dive just may not be such a big deal. Excellent meals are served on board so going hungry is just not an option.

A Kararu guest takes time out for a good book and some sun. Not only great for the underwater photographer, it's just a great dive vacation.

As one liveboard guest once told me, "Where can you take a vacation and take your shoes off at the beginning of the week and not put them on again until you leave at the end of the week?"



*Both wide angle and macro opportunities abound offering great opportunities for the digital shooter. Nikon D100 / L&M Titan / Inon Strobes. (Left) 10.5mm fisheye / 125sec / f/16 (Right) 60 mm Macro / 125sec / f/32*



## Stay Organized

While I have done liveboards in the Caribbean, Fiji, Tahiti, Australia, Hawaii, and Micronesia, I had never done a liveboard charter in Indonesia. As a photographer committed 100% to shooting digital, I wanted make my 11-day, 650-mile charter an opportunity to push the envelope of my digital skills.

Once on board the Kararu, my first task was to unpack and setup my

photo gear. (I personally do this even before I move into my room or set up my dive gear) I try and make this task as easy as possible by organizing everything when I pack before the trip. Even before I put my gear into my travel cases, everything goes in to individual soft protective cases, labeled individually so I can put each item back into the same place at the end of the trip. I have found inexpensive beer or food coolers, normally used for camping, to be





*A dedicated camera preparation area*

perfect for housing, port, and strobe storage.

Make sure to carry extra tools, o-ring grease, and other necessary spare parts. Labeling your small items is key to staying organized.

My goal when setting up my photo gear is to be as organized as possible so having my tools in a dedicated tool bag, parts and accessories in their own bag, strobe arms in their own bag, etc, just helps this process. As any quality liveaboard should, the Kararu had a large, dedicated camera area with individual storage space so I could keep my lenses, ports, and other accessories off the actual camera workspace. Keeping all accessories dry and separate from dive gear is a big liveaboard advantage.

One of the most important things I do is to place several silica (drying gel) packs inside the various bags as well as the inside the housing itself. Considering the sensitive electronics of digital cameras, this provides an extra margin of safety for keeping everything dry in the wet and normally humid environment of a diveboat.



*A full charging station. Both 110v & 220v power is available on the Kararu but you should have extrapower adapters and plugs whenever you travel abroad.*

## Battery Charging

Part of my setup process is to locate and organize the battery charging area. Some boats will have the charging stations directly on the camera table, normally on one of the lower shelves. Others will have a separate, enclosed area right off the dive deck. The Kararu had theirs located inside the main salon area. Conveniently, they had both 110v and 220v power strips connected to a large multi-output surge protector, so both laptop computers and chargers were safe from any unexpected surges from the boat's generator.

Most current model battery chargers will accept either 110v or 220v power but you should check yours to make sure. Some older models will only accept one or the other, depending on its country of origin. Having a small power converter and various plug adapters is always a good idea when traveling internationally.



*Wide Angle View at Gili Lawa Laut. Nikon D100 / L&M Titan / Inon Strobes 10.5 mm lens 125 sec f16*

Since I travel with so many digital accessories, I always bring my own power strip. I purchased one that can take either 110v or 220v input, so it will work anywhere. Unable to buy this type of power strip at my local hardware store, I found a specialized source on the Internet and it is one of the best \$50 investments that I have made.



(Do an Internet search for “power converters”).

## Label It or Lose It!

One other thing: I put my name on EVERYTHING. Many divers have similar items and this is especially true with photographic stuff. Battery chargers and other small items all look alike. On a liveboard, it’s easy for someone to unknowingly pick up one of your items thinking it was theirs. (I do this with most of my dive equipment too!)

I use an inexpensive Brother tape label machine, available at any major stationery store, to make my name labels. These labels are actually so waterproof that I use can use them on my underwater photo gear and they will usually last a number of trips before I have to make new labels.

Once the housing is setup, I do a thorough camera and strobe check. Again, I have given everything a complete “twice over” before I even packed for the trip, but “sh\_t happens” so I want to make sure I don’t have a surprise when I make my first dive.

I charge all my nickel metal hydride strobe batteries, my camera batteries, and my pointer light battery. I make sure my 2 gig compact flash cards have been reformatted, just to make sure that they are empty, and I make some test exposures as a double

check of the camera, strobe, and memory cards.

Because of the large, dedicated camera and battery charging space, this whole setup process went by without a hitch.

## A Place To Work After The Dive

So how does working from a liveboard differ when shooting digital vs. film? Well in general there isn’t much difference. The convenience factor is still there for both. Since many film shooters don’t even process most of their film on board, their task is over once their dive ends. But with possibility of many hundreds of image files during a weeklong liveboard, the digital workflow does get more demanding if you want to work with your image files while on board.

A large common area salon makes working with your digital images convenient and fun. Sometimes you get lucky. I had my own desk that I set up as an on-board office so I would work to my heart’s content.

A laptop computer which gives you the ability to really get a good feel for your images AND to be able to start editing, is a key element in your digital process. For me, the single most important amenity offered

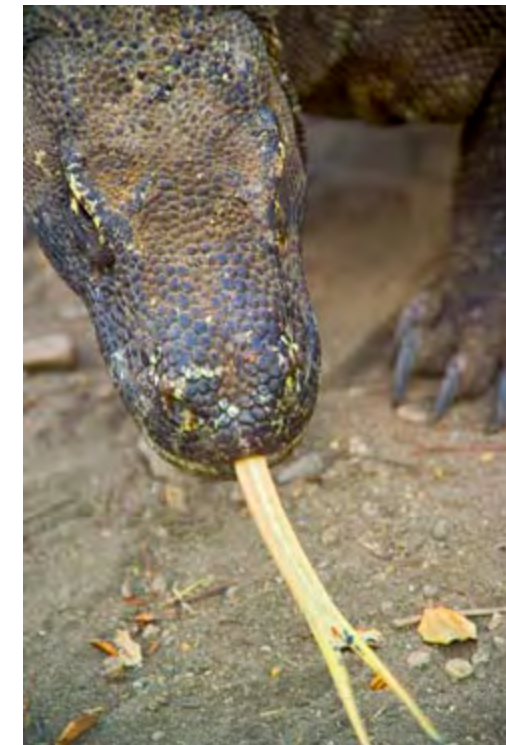


*A laptop computer is invaluable for viewing images and sharing them with others.*

*Freshwater camera-only rinse tanks are essential on a liveboard*



*The famed Komodo Dragon. Morning light on Komodo Island*



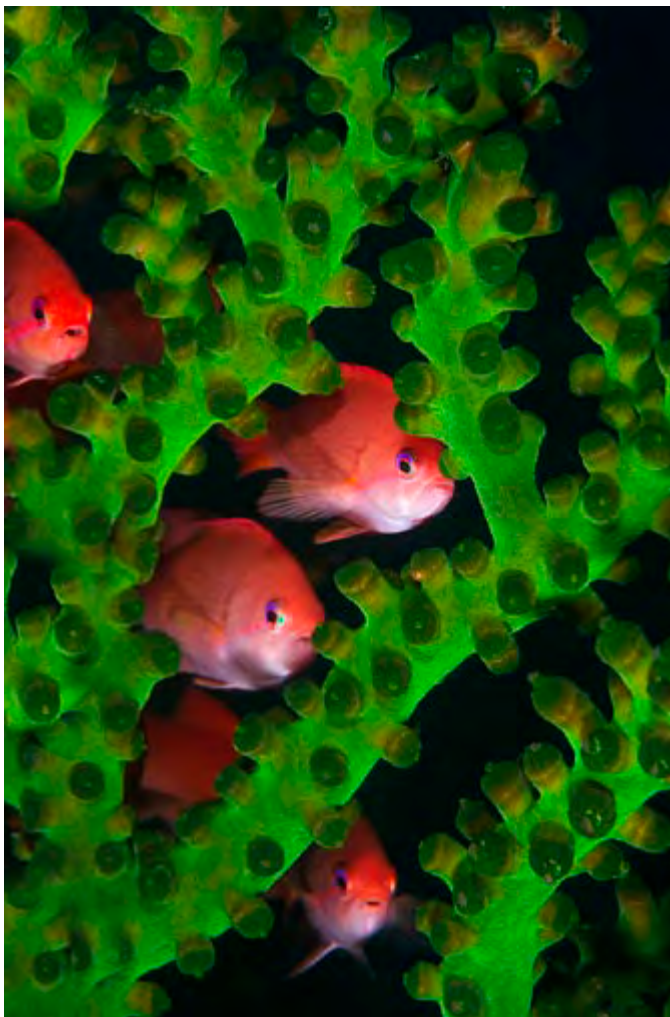


by liveboard diving is having immediate access to my computer. While some digital shooters wait until they get home to organize and / or edit their images, my laptop and Photoshop are almost as important as my digital SLR and Light & Motion Titan housing. A large liveboard, like the Kararu, is the ideal place for organizing and post editing your images.

Before arriving in Bali, I expected to find a large salon area with plenty of table space and power outlets to make my computer life easy, but I was really happy to find that my stateroom had a table area and lots of extra space so I could set up a little office right in my own room. This gave me the flexibility to keep my computer set up and my external USB 2 devices (Sony GigaVault hard drive and compact flash card reader) always plugged in and ready to go.

I asked the Kararu's cruise directors, Linda and Karl, if they have seen an increase in digital shooters over the past few years and their answer was an unequivocal "yes!" and while I was onboard there were a number of digital shooters and only one photographer using a film camera. Of the digital shooters, several were new to their camera and housing systems as well as image editing software. The large comfortable salon provided the perfect community workspace for both new and experienced to share their images and seek out advice.

One item that was available on the Kararu (and which I expect will soon be as standard as the old reliable slide projector) was a digital projector that could be easily attached to any computer so anyone could present a digital slideshow of their work direct from their computer.



## A Sensual Visual Experience Above and Below

A typical Caribbean liveboard offers 7-day dive charters with 5 or 6 diving days. When you head out to areas such as Indonesia it is likely that liveboard operators will offer longer charters, some up to 14 days. These longer charters offer not only more extensive underwater itineraries, but offer the



*Always a fun find, Jawfish with Eggs. Being able to review my images and check my exposure on board gave me the opportunity to confirm my images. Nikon D100 / L&M Titan / Inon Strobes 105mm lens 125 sec f/18*

opportunity for some interesting land excursions.

During the 11-day charter I kept 330 underwater images and almost 200 topside images (this does not include the images I deleted) so I had lots of images that needed organizing and that I wanted to check out while on board. In addition to the fabulous diving, the Kararu offered a land walk on Komodo Island, which included close sightings of the famous Komodo Dragons, as well as local island and beach visits. Needless to say, both the underwater and topside photo ops were incredible,

and being able to view and organize my images right away while on board was, to say the least, extremely convenient.

Using the Photoshop CS Image Browser I was able to view, rename, and organize all of my images. I was able to select and edit my “keepers”, and using the file browser “automate” function, prepare a web gallery that I posted on my website once I got home and I used Ulead DVD Picture Show to create a fun slideshow that I presented at the end of the charter (although I could have used the Photoshop “PDF Presentation” function as well).

I had a fantastic 11-day trip on the Kararu, met some really nice people, had great diving and best of

all got some great images.

For more information on the Kararu, visit their website: [www.kararu.com](http://www.kararu.com)

**Rod Klein**

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A promotional graphic for Rhkuw Productions &amp; Design. The main text reads "RHKUW PRODUCTIONS &amp; DESIGN" and "uw photo web design multi-media". Below this, it says "Digital Workshops with Rod Klein" and "Scuba Club Cozumel Nov 14-18". The graphic features several images: a scuba diver's hand holding a camera, a diver in a wetsuit, a tropical resort building, and underwater coral reef scenes. The "Scuba Club Cozumel" logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the graphic.



# Catching the Rays (revisited) by Alex Mustard



*Two sunbursts. Which one is digital? They both are! Nikon D2X, Subal Housing, 10.5mm. Both shot on F8, Aperture Priority with -0.7 exposure compensation.*

After the last issue of UWP came out I have received a few emails asking my opinion on how far away digital really is from slide film when it comes to capturing sunbursts. My answer is not much, particularly when the transparency must be scanned before it can be used (does anybody still print without scanning?). Many people seem very happy to pass on the message that you can't do sunbursts on digital, and this is a misleading message I strongly disagree with.

I think a common mistake is to assume that all sunbursts shot on film are perfect - they aren't. Many slide images actually have poor sunbursts, especially when judged by the rather harsh criteria that digital images seem to be examined with these days. What has always been key to good sunbursts are the right environmental conditions. When these are conducive, both digital and slide, when exposed [www.uwpmag.com](http://www.uwpmag.com)

correctly, do a fine job. I would say that digital probably struggles more than slide when the conditions are not ideal, but this is hard to prove.

I would also add that the newer digital cameras do offer a substantial improvement over older models because their image processing is more adept at maintaining highlight detail. It seems that these days digital cameras are only judged on their pixel count, but there is much more to choosing the right camera than

Megapixels.

So in conclusion I would say that it is not, as is often quoted, impossible to shoot sunbursts on digital. Rather that both digital and slide will do the job well, when the conditions are ideal.

**Alex Mustard**  
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# 2005 Yap Critter hunt

by James Michael

Again this year, the “Great Yap Critter Hunt” expanded the impressive list of exotic and rarely seen marine life that exists on the reefs and dropoff walls of Yap Island. For a full month, divers followed creature and muck diving guru Larry Smith to the famous and not-so-famous sites to look for the odd, unusual and colorful creatures of the Western Pacific. He was accompanied by Manta Ray Bay Hotel owner Bill Acker, Yap’s diving pioneer. Acker is largely responsible for finding all of Yap’s unique dive sites. Together, this team found some great marine life deep and shallow.

Critter Hunt is in its second year and is the brainchild of Acker who reasoned that Yap’s proximity to the highly diverse marine areas like Papua New Guinea and the Philippines was a real plus. He asked Smith to visit Yap and help his staff identify habitat where the odd and colorful might reside. The result has broadened the horizons of Yap diving.

This year participants in the Critter Hunt were not only fish and invertebrate buffs but also photography enthusiasts. The pros who showed up included Micronesia’s Tim Rock and his lovely model, Kumiko Furukawa. The duo produced some stunning digital images. Former Cousteau team member Bill MacDonald and wife Suzie were in full-force from LA with their video gear to capture moving pictures of the event and a DVD. Fish expert Max Gibbs from Oxford dropped in as part of his continuous dive quest around the world. Max provided detailed and articulate explanations of



©Tim Rock

what was being found.

But it was Russell Stoddard from Guam, an avid amateur shooter armed with his housed Canon 20D, who, along with Smith, experienced the hottest observation and photo op of the entire month! At Rainbow Reef, the mandarinfish haven just minutes from the Yap Divers dock, they observed a magnificent specimen of a male mandarinfish. It danced with five females during a dusk courtship and eventually, in a time-span of no more than seven minutes, completed the mating dance and mated with four of the females!

Of the hundreds of mandarinfish dives Smith has led, he was duly impressed. “I have lead and participated in so many of these dives but this was the single most sensational observation I have ever had the pleasure to witness,” Smith exclaimed.

At one point, the male had three of the females rising with him in the water column, cheek-to-cheeks (or is it gills-to-gills?). This was one of numerous false starts only inches away from their masks and cameras.

McDonald was excited about the red spotted



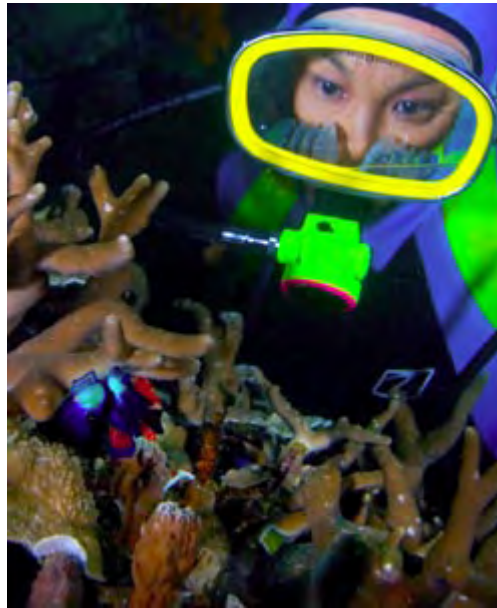
Canon 20D, Ikelite Housing, Canon 100mm Macro lens, Twin Ikelite DS125 strobes.

©Russ Stoddard

blennies. Not that common, they were found in more than one locale and made for colorful video. Along the tops of Yap’s walls and drop-offs, Macdonald filmed a variety of sizes of this “critter”. Many were conveniently located at safety stops. Mike Veitch, the talented & dedicated photo pro at Yap divers, also captured his first ever images of this colorful fish. This stunning little fish is particularly popular with the Japanese macro photographers.

Juveniles are out in force this time of year and there were many rarely observed wrasses. Smith’s favorite was the juvenile clown Coris. A difficult fish to photograph, they were seen no less than a half-dozen singularly foraging along the reefs at a depth of between 30 to 120 feet. Veitch effectively bounced some strobe off one of them at Macro II, a





*©Tim Rock. Nikon D100 / L&M Titan / Inon Strobes*

popular dive site in the main channel leading in to the Manta Ray Bay Hotel.

Rock's favorite find was also at Macro II with a new cleaning station found 90 foot down. This coral head was dubbed Magic Rock and is home to four kinds of shrimp including the brilliantly red hinge beak shrimp. They live in a hole with a resident moray. Other small creatures can be found in and around the area.

The big critters didn't disappoint either. Big white-tailed marble rays were seen at Gofnuw Channel, Aliko Reef and Macro II. The mantas were

cleaning in Gofnuw Channel on a regular basis and also making a pass or two in Miil Channel. And a great shark feed took place at Vertigo Reef. Led by owner Bill Acker, more than a dozen folks got to see up close and personal grey reef sharks devour a bait ball suspended above the reef. Blacktips, whitetips, rainbow runners and hungry snapper also showed up. A week earlier a hammerhead and silvertip also came for the show.

Searches for the pygmy seahorse H. denise turned up good habitat but no residents during the hunt. "But I

still think they're here", says Smith. He and Acker made some dedicated deep dives to find the tiny "plucked chicken" seahorse and hope to continue the search in 2006.

All in all it was a great celebration of Yap marine creatures great and small. This proved once again that Yap is the place - an extremely productive destination for the serious marine life observer and underwater photographer.

To see images of these, and many more of the results of this year's Critter Hunt, go to [www.mantaray.com](http://www.mantaray.com)

On the web site, you will see photos by Mike Veitch, Tim Rock,

Max Gibbs, and Russell Stoddard. Bill and Susie Macdonald are producing a video summary of "The Great Critter Hunt ~ Yap 2005" that will be available at DEMA Las Vegas this year. If you would like a copy of the DVD, let Manta Ray Bay Hotel know. Check it out and you will agree that there is FAR more to Yap's diverse marine life than the truly magnificent mantas and sensational sharks.

**James Michael**

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# Book & DVD reviews

## Sea Salt

Memories & Essays

By Stan Waterman

I have never met Stan Waterman personally other than to attend a couple of his amazing illustrated talks but, having got through most of this book I feel as if I know him. That is the mark of a good autobiography.

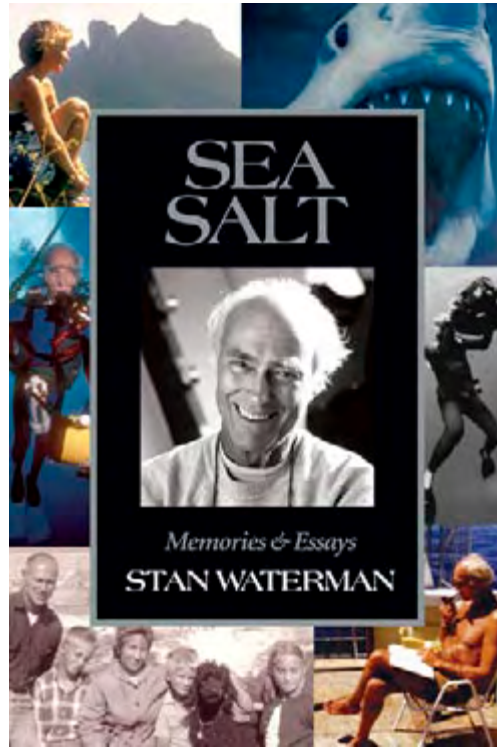
Stan writes as eloquently as he speaks. Beautiful image laden prose laced with dry humour recounting his many experiences over the years.

Stan has spent most of his life on or under the sea accompanied by either his family or the top professionals in the underwater filming world. As a result he has been to places and seen things most of us would sell our Grandmothers for. Mine sadly passed on many years ago before I could realise her true value.

Sea Salt is effectively a selection of short essays making it the perfect book to pick up every now and again to sample a new delight but beware. Stan has the ability to keep you turning the page and a casual pick up might end in an after midnight lights out.

Sea Salt is a 286 page 6" x 9" book with a centre section of photos of Stan over the years with some of

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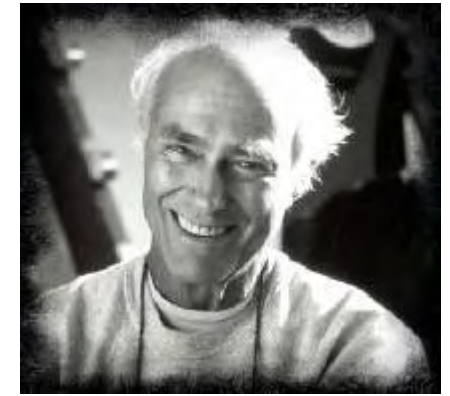
the amazing people he has hung out with. The photo section is almost a family album dividing two blocks of riveting text.

Illuminating as the photos undoubtedly are, the publishers could have saved themselves some printing costs because, with image laden prose like Stan's, who need photos?

Sea Salt costs \$30 and is published by New World Publications Inc

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

Born in 1923, Stan was a blueberry farmer in Maine for a while, then in the 1950's he converted a fishing trawler into a charter dive boat and angled the bow toward the Bahamas. For a decade he eked out a living traveling the back roads of America showing his hand-spliced films. In 1965 Stan took his family to live and play in Tahiti. Success was launched when National Geographic purchased rights to their tropical odyssey. Later he directed underwater photography for the film version of The Deep, followed by ten years of production work with friend Peter



Benchley for ABC - in the process he garnered five Emmys.

To find out more about Stan Waterman go to:

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

## For sale



Sea & Sea DX100 housing (twin flash sockets) (brand new back) £760. Nikon D100 body cards & box £450. Large 8" fisheye dome port incl balancing weight £300. Compact 5" dome port £240. Standard flat port as new boxed £140 or the lot £1800

[Tel: 07712622440](http://www.fishid.com) [charleshood@mac.com](mailto:charleshood@mac.com)

# Guidelines for contributors

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

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

**Uw photo techniques** - Balanced light, composition, etc

**Locations** - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards

**Subjects** - Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

**Equipment reviews** - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

**Personalities** - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

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

**[E mail peter@uwpmag.com](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)**

## **How to submit articles**

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

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

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 144dpi

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

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

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



# Classifieds

**For sale**



Subal F100 Housing £1000. F100 body £350. 16mm Fish eye £450. 18-35mm wide ED £200. 60 mm fixed £200. 70-180mm Macro ED £650. Dome port £450. 70-180 & 60mm port £250. Subal Alpha Pro, Cables & Ultralite arms £450  
Will take £3850 for total Package which is 2 years old. Cost over £8000 new!! Contact phil.parry@zen.co.uk or call 07841 262575

**For sale**



Subal D10 System 50, 105 and Dome Ports. Flash Housing, Nikon D100 1GB card, 60, 105 and 12-24 Nikkor lenses. Battery Charger and AC Adapter Focussing Gears, Spare O Rings.  
Excellent condition £3,200  
Tel 01443 209157 or 07702 549671 paul.parker@tesco.net

**For sale**



Mamya RB67, 37mm, 90mm, Ocean optics housing, Ivanoff port, Seacam superdome incl. flight case. Good condition. Offers please to wildimages@hotmail.com

**For sale**



Subal F90 housing, late version w. 2x synch socket & Nikon F90x body. Good condition.  
Offers please to wildimages@hotmail.com

**For sale**



Nikonos III, 15mm + view finder, 28mm, Seconic meter, close up kit and extension tubes, full kit incl. pelican case. Good condition. Offers please to wildimages@hotmail.com

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# Parting shot

Late spring and early summer brings the first plankton bloom around the coast of Cornwall, the UK's south west peninsula. This first plankton bloom heralds the arrival of basking sharks around this coastline and many enthusiastic (some may say obsessive!) underwater photographers eagerly await reports of the first sightings in the hope of getting close to these denizens. This year they seemed to appear only briefly during a calm spell in May and then reports dried up and I thought I had missed my chance for another twelve months.

Fast forward to late July when I had joined a group from the local Wildlife Trust who were conducting an eel grass survey in the shallow waters of Mounts Bay. These beds are full of life and are a great place to find juvenile species and I was concentrating on hunting small cuttle fish with some success. This objective changed dramatically when one of the divers surfaced to report finding a basking shark tangled in a gill net just 150m or so from the shore in 8m depth.

We dived again in the belief that the shark was dead and we would only be recording the sad result of this form of indiscriminate fishing. It was a shocking image to find this noble beast wrapped tightly in the net following her struggles to escape - this was a female shark perhaps 12ft/4m in length - and we began to record this with stills and video. Suddenly our excitement rose as we realised that there was movement in her eye and that she was struggling to open her mouth against the constraint of the net - handling her caused her to thrash about, a disaster for photography but a delight for the prospect of releasing her.

We quickly set about cutting the net along the length of the shark - fortunately some of the knives were up to the job, most are not! Eventually we were able to roll the shark out of the remains of the net where she lay on her back motionless. We exchanged worried looks and I am sure we all thought initially we had been too late but agreed by signals to roll her over onto her belly. This thankfully was the catalyst for her to make some efforts to move and she struggled to make some forward motion whilst repeatedly nose diving into the sand. Eventually she began to gain some lift and with much thrashing began to move forward quickly gaining more speed and lift. We struggled now to keep up and for a few exasperating moments we watched her begin to make a turn in the gloom back towards the net! Thoughts of how you persuade a determined basking shark to change course flashed through my mind but luckily some sixth sense must have kicked in and she veered off towards open water. We exchanged looks of universal glee, shook hands, collected the cameras and headed, elated, for the surface.

The event and the shark acquired much local celebrity, with coverage on the local TV channel and regional papers. This was a most amazing and gratifying experience and who knows, maybe she will return to Cornwall next year and I will have the chance to photograph her again feeding in open water!



Picture details: Nikon D100, LMI Titan housing, Tokina 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Mini TTL's, f8 @ 1/40

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

**Mark Webster**

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

Mark Webster is the author of 'The Art and Technique of Underwater Photography' and hosts regular live aboard workshops.

**Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?  
If so e mail me and yours could be the next "Parting shot".**  
[peter@uwpmag.com](mailto:peter@uwpmag.com)