Ikelite E330
Subal D200 test
Auto-Magic
Nexus D200
Whalesharks
Bikini Atoll
Composites
Low viz shooting
Yap Foto Fest
Book review
Parting shot

Underwater Photography

a web magazine Issue 32 Sept/Oct 2006

Show Your STUFF!

Canon
EOS 5D
EOS 10D
EOS 20D
EOS 300D
EOS 350D, Rebel XT
Nikon
D-200
D-70, 70s
D-50
Olympus
E-330
E-300
E-500

photos by David B Fleetham

SLR-DC Housings

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. Most Ikelite SLR-DC Housings for Canon, Nikon and Olympus includes conversion circuitry that provides TTL compatibility with all Ikelite DS Substrobes. 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. All exposure compensation is done with 2 buttons on the back of the housing, no accessing complicated camera menus.

NEW 8" Dome Port

All new dome port system utilizing a new 4" radius dome and interchangeable mounting Body lengths. Larger radius dome is better for over-under photos.

- #5510.81 Dome Port is ideal for the new zoom lenses like 12-24mm Nikon and 10-22mm Canon.
- #5510.82 Super Wide Port is for very wide lenses like the 10.5mm Nikon and 15mm Sigma fisheye.
- #5510.83 Extended Dome is 3/4" longer than the #5510.81 for longer zoom lenses.

NEW DS-200 Substrobe

Take the venerable Substrobe 200, add the newest IC chips and IGBT circuitry and you get the new DS-200 Substrobe. This ultra wide and ultra powerful strobe is compatible with current digital cameras and any TTL circuitry included in our housings. State-of-the-art electronics provide a blazing 200 watt seconds of power recycling in an incredible 1.6 seconds.

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

www.ikelite.com

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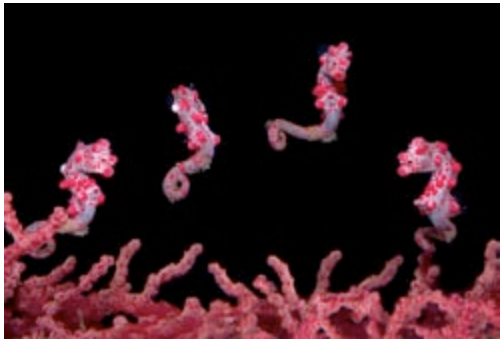

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www.pr-productions.co.uk

Cover shot by Martin Spragg

Readers Lives

A model's woe

Hi Patrice, (to protect your name!)

I would have 'bitch' slapped her, and then forcefully hit her with your hand (kit) bag! "But officer, I don't normally carry an underwater camera in my hand bag. I don't know how it got there!"

Anyway it serves 'Alexis' right for going out with that bitch dressed in her skin-tight 'slutty' yellow leotard with matching heels!

Patrice, you deserve better. Keep what dignity you have left and move on!

Regards,

Bruce (to protect my name).

bterrill@ncable.net.au (anagram)

Dear sub Editor,

I would like to comment on "A model's woe", written by your editor in UwP 31.

I too have witnessed the appalling behaviour by "has been" models who don't seem to understand that their ancient and faded diving equipment can no longer be displayed in quality magazines such as UwP.

On a recent Red Sea trip, I too came across Denise and Petra, still arguing over THAT cover shot. Fortunately, a passing diver managed to resolve the situation "diplomatically", before the incident escalated into a world cup final-type headbutt.

As the main culprit seems to be your own editor, I would be grateful if you could have a word with Mr Rowlands to make sure that this situation does not happen again.

Yours Sincerely

A French witness

Editor's note to new readers

If you have just discovered the joys of UwP, the above frivolity will mean absolutely nothing to you.

You need to download UwP31 and read 'A model's woe' to appreciate the sad decline of a once feted underwater model.

Something bugging you?

Get it off your chest and e mail it to

readerslives@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Eco Divers' dive guides

Black and orange is the new look for the 2006 / 2007 season - and any self-respecting diver will be sporting this chic new colour scheme. Which is why all the Eco Divers' dive guides in both Kungkungan Bay Resort and Tasik Ria Resort will be wearing that very colour combination on their wetsuits.

Each will be personalised with the name of your guide printed across the chest as well as on the mask strap, so you'll always know who's who!

www.eco-divers.com

Dominica hyperbaric chamber

The long awaited hyperbaric chamber is now installed, tested, and operational at the Princess Margaret Hospital, Roseau. A staff comprising of emergency nurses, hospital technicians, and Dive Instructors have been trained by the manufacturer to operate and man it. The chamber has been needed for a long time, and through the Ministry of Tourisms, Ecoutourism Development Program, funded by the European Union, one was sourced and brought to the island.

The chamber is a Haux Starcom 1500, able to take 4 seated or 2 seated and one lying patient.

www.dominicamarinereserves.com

Upcoming International Photo & Video Competitions

DivePhotoGuide.com

Sept 1

XARIFA Festival (Germany)
www.uwfv.de/xarifa/html/frameset.htm

Sept 7

Vodan 2006 (Slovania)
www.uwfv.de/xarifa/html/frameset.htm

Sept 15

33rd World Festival of Underwater Pictures (France)
www.underwater-festival.com/en

Sept 22

2006 LAUPS Competition (USA)
www.laups.org/intl_comp/index.php

Oct 1

SEAS Expo 2006 (USA)
www.seas-expo.com/PhotoContest.htm

Oct 13

Sea 2006 Competition (USA)
www.ncups.org/sea.html

Oct 27

18th Annual NELOS International Festival (Belgium)
www.nelosfilmfestival.be

Oct 31

Kelp Krawlers Dive Club (USA)
www.kelpkrawlers.org

www.divephotoguide.com

Explore Cuba with Gavin Parsons

Reefs, wrecks, Bull Sharks and salsa

Saturday 11th - 26th November 2006

Gavin has a love of travel and meeting people. He is an accomplished travel photographer as well an underwater photographer and is happy to pass on his knowledge to anyone. He loves the Cuban people and has written several articles about the island. He is not one for package holidays and loves the freedom that travelling gives, especially in a place like Cuba, which has a plethora of wonders spread across it. The only way to experience them is to explore the island. On land Gavin is keen to photograph the local environment and the local people whenever possible. He is happy for you to join him. A spirit of adventure is called for in those who accompany Gavin to Cuba. Prepare yourself for being half-submerged in a mangrove forest, talking in pigeon Spanish to a local farmer or staying very still so as not to disturb the local wildlife.If you are looking for a trip that takes in the best of Cuban diving and gives you the chance to see a great deal of the island then you have found it.

Due the nature of this tour, dive sites are chosen depending on the weather, sea conditions and marine life. The Bull Sharks are present for most of the year but do, from time to time, fail to show at the feeding station. The sea condition can also affect some sites such as the wreck of the Cristobal Colon and other offshore sites. Alternative sites will be chosen if this is the case.

This trip is designed to provide some of the best diving available in Cuba and therefore the itinerary could be subject to changes before or even during the tour, should new sites become available or existing sites change due to local conditions. It is, therefore, important for those joining this tour to have a spirit of adventure, to be flexible and to be able to cope both with the travelling and any last minute changes. All the accommodation is in comfortable hotels with good facilities and diving is run by reputable dive centres with fully qualified staff.

www.divequest.co.uk

Want to get the skinny on the newest housing, or find out what others think of that wide angle lens you are about to buy? Underwater photographer Jonathan Bird is pleased to announce the introduction of the newest resource for underwater photographers on the internet. Underwater Photography Chat (www.uwphotochat.com) is a site where underwater photographers and videographers can meet, swap ideas, discuss gear and locations, as well as post pictures. Events planned for the next year are photo contests, photo galleries and discussions with world-renown underwater photographers. Membership is free. Members can post images, utilize the built-in messaging systems, create personal profiles and create avatars. Sign up by visiting www.uwphotochat.com and join the discussion!

www.uwphotochat.com

www.MarineBio.org

To learn more about the marine life they photograph, underwater photographers are invited to visit www.MarineBio.org, a US-based nonprofit whose mission is to share the wonders of the ocean realm to inspire education, research, and a sea ethic. The site's founder, David Campbell, launched MarineBio in 1998 to connect and educate people worldwide by providing an exciting place to learn about marine life. The site serves more than 4 million visitors yearly and is staffed by volunteers including marine biologists, marine life photographers, students, professors, and conservation advocates.

MarineBio.org welcomes underwater photographers to contribute their work in support of the site's mission. In exchange, photographers are listed and linked on the site, and all inquiries for stock photography are referred to the contributors.

www.MarineBio.org

International UNDERWATER FILM Festival BEOGRAD

We are very pleased to announce the 10 th International Underwater Film Festival in Belgrade, Serbia . This event will be held, like every year, during the beginning of December, from 8th to 11th.

Films for the contest would have to be 2005. or 2006. production, with at least 30% underwater shots and formats are BETA SP, DV Cam or MiniDV (PAL)

The subject is free. Competition admission is free.

We are hoping that you will find our festival interesting enough to support our desire to make it an important event and gathering point for divers and all people who enjoy watching and being in the underwater world.

Please, do not hesitate to contact us for any additional information.

www.kpa.co.yu

Diving 4 images

We are proud to announce a very long awaited partnership. We are now joining forces with a fantastic, very slick new live aboard dive boat here in Indonesia. I have been waiting about 4 years for a boat like this to come along and now we have a boat we can work with as if it were our own. Not just being able to find a good boat, good owners with a proud and well trained crew as well. The owners have been such a pleasure for us to work with. Our check out cruise went great, a few more changes are now being made to make life even easier for those who join us. The boat is called Seahorse and for more detailed she can be viewed at:

www.diving4images.com/seahorse_diving.html

Beneath the Sea, America's largest consumer ocean adventure, scuba diving, and travel exposition, once again will gather together over 300 exhibitors and other respected professionals from all walks of the scuba diving, oceans environmental and exploring communities for a weekend of excitement, special events, parties, and a celebration of the underwater arts.

Beneath the Sea 2006 is pleased to invite Photographers and Videographers to enter its annual Worldwide Underwater Photo/video competition.

Underwater photographers will compete for the coveted David Doubilet award for excellence in underwater photography and a ten day trip for one on the M.V. Telita in Papua New Guinea

Underwater Videographers will compete for the distinguished Stan Waterman award for excellence in underwater video and a one week trip for two aboard the Caribbean Explorer II

Underwater Photographic Artists compete for the celebrated Jim Church award for excellence in creative underwater photography and a trip for one aboard the S.M.Y Ondina in Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Wherever you live in this wide world, submit your underwater photographic entry to the Beneath the Sea 2007 Worldwide Photo/Video Competition. The contest deadline is December 31st, 2006.

www.beneaththesea.org

BSoUP member Linda Pitkin's Exhibition of prints has moved to London Zoo Aquarium.

The exhibition runs from 19 July to 3 November and features a selection of her stunning images of marine animals and scenes from tropical and temperate waters around the world.

London Zoo is open every day except Christmas from 10.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. until 23 October and to 4.00 p.m. there after. There is a charge for admission unless you are 3 or under!

www.lindapitkin.net

Graham Hawkes NCUPS presentation

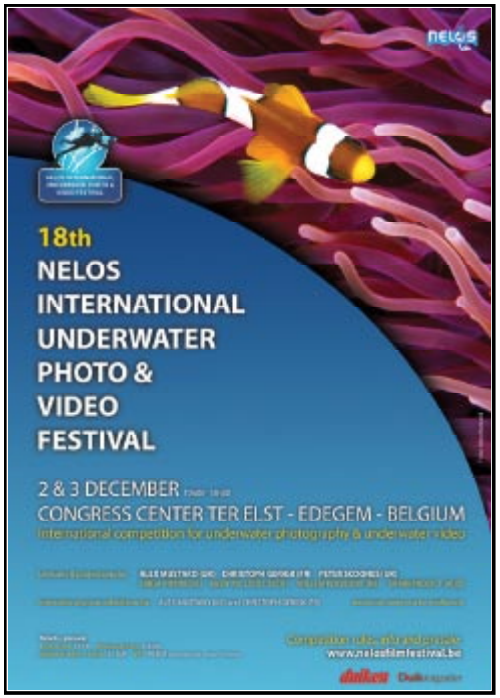
8th September 2006

The Northern California Underwater Photographic Society (NCUPS.org) proudly presents a very special speaking engagement by Graham Hawkes, Friday, September 8, 2006. Graham Hawkes is an internationally renowned ocean engineer/inventor who has been responsible for the design of a significant percentage of all manned (and more than 300 remote) underwater vehicles built for research or industry worldwide.

Graham Hawkes' speaking engagement is at 8:00 p.m. Location: New Vision United Methodist Church, 450 Chadbourne Avenue, Millbrae, CA 94030. Cost for first-time visitors is FREE.

www.ncups.org

NELOS INTERNATIONAL UNDERWATER PHOTO & VIDEO FESTIVAL



NELOS Festival

2nd/3rd December 2006

The festival will be opened officially on Saturday December 2nd by its Patrons Axel Daeseleire and Tine Van den Brande (both famous actors in Belgium). This is followed by the projection and the judging of the slide shows and the digital presentations.

In the meantime the visitors can follow the first presentations of the guest speakers Christoph Gerigk, Alex Mustard, Brian & Linda Pitkin, Peter Scoones, Willem Kolvoort and Andy McLeod.

Also on Sunday presentations and projections of the international guests will be held and the winning slide shows, digital presentations and video productions will be projected. It will be two busy days for all with passion for underwater.

Obviously our international competition for underwater photography and videos will also be held. This competition is open to all federations and nationalities. Some of the rules have been subject to important changes. The participants should download the complete regulation and the subscription form from the website. The works can be entered until October 27th 2006.

www.nelosfilmfestival.be

Fotosub
Isla de El Hierro
3rd - 10th October 2006

Next 3rd – 8th October it will be celebrated the 10th edition of the underwater photography competition "Open Internacional Fotosub Isla de El Hierro".

This is an international open competition that celebrates since 1996 in the Marine Park located in the small island of El Hierro (Canary Islands), one of the most appreciated diving zones for European divers.

It is organised by the Tourist Board of El Hierro Island and Carlos Minguell (twice World Champion of Underwater Photography) is in charge of the Technical Direction since 1998. 2006 will be the first edition in digital format.

The "Open Internacional Fotosub Isla de El Hierro" consists of two days of competition, with a total of 4 dives in the best diving points. A collection of six digital images (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 of cash prizes.

The number of participants is limited to 28. The information about the 10th Open Internacional Fotosub Isla de El Hierro is available at

www.openfotosub.com

OCEANS EXPO 2006
"A world to discover"

In its second edition, Oceans Expo will present what is probably one of the most amazing photographic journeys through the oceans.

Oceans Expo 2006 seeks to reflect the grandiosity, beauty and immensity of the oceans and its inhabitants. In order to achieve this ambitious and somewhat utopist objective, fourteen of the most renowned and experienced underwater photographers has been asked to share their spectacular images, the history behind each one and their particular point of view regarding the significance and importance of discovering the oceans.

The lenses of David Doubilet, Doug Perrine, Brian Skerry, Amos Nachoum, Stephen Frink, Bernardo Sambra, Rod Klein, Stuart and Michele Westmorland, Takako Uno, Mauricio Handler, Bill Curtsinger, Stephen Wong, Mirko Zanni have been conjugated in one amazing exhibition.

More than 150 large format images will act as an open invitation to all of those who are interested in knowing the more wild, spectacular and magical side of our planet. Discovering without destroying is the challenge for all of those who accept this invitation.

As part of Oceans Expo, a book called Oceans will be released. With a foreword by David Doubilet, this very limited edition coffee table book will be unveiled on the opening date of the exhibition.

Oceans Expo opening will be in November 15th, at the ICPNA Gallery in Lima, Peru. The expo will also be presented in Chile and USA in 2007. Dates to be announced.

www.thelivingoceans.com

Visions in the Sea 2006

November 4/5th, London

The Tenth annual Visions in the Sea Underwater Photography Festival takes place on November 4th and 5th, 2006. The event is unique in the northern hemisphere and promises underwater photographers a winning combination of presentations that will showcase awesome underwater pictures from around the globe, together with talks designed to help them get their own stunning images.

Visions 2006 has attracted speakers from Australia, Italy, Greece and Ireland as well as the UK.

Michael Aw

Michael is the author photographer of "Beneath Bunaken", "Dreams from a Rainbowed Sea", "Underwater Jungles" and "Richest Reefs - Indonesia". His "Essential Guide to Digital Underwater Photography" is a deserved best seller.

Andrea and Antonella Ferrari

Andrea and Antonella Ferrari are the co -authors of "Reef Life" and an array of superbly illustrated dive guides and "Ocean Serengeti" which won the World Grand Prize at the Antibes Festival in 2004.

Constantinos Petrinos

Constantinos Petrinos is the man responsible for the definitive guide to the Lembeh Straits - "Realm of the Pygmy Seahorse" - and the main photographer behind "Nudibranch Behaviour". He is celebrated for his stunning behavioural images.

Peter Rowlands

Peter Rowlands, the publisher and editor of UWP, the online underwater photography magazine that attracts a worldwide audience, is a pioneer British underwater photographer with a reputation as one of the best wreck photographers around.

Charles Hood

Charles Hood is Dive magazine's Senior Correspondent. A highly accomplished and versatile photographer, he is known for detailed presentations that show you how shoot your own top images.

Alex Mustard

Alex Mustard is an established force in professional underwater photography. The photographer for the critically acclaimed "Art of Diving' and a widely published photo- journalist, he is also an innovator. Alex's Magic Filters are rewriting the possible in available light photography.

Martin Edge

Martin Edge needs little introduction to underwater photographers around the world. He is the photography educator who many top photographers credit with their success. Now in it's third edition, "The Underwater Photographer" has become the classic text for the underwater image maker, beginner and expert alike.

John Collins

John Collins is an expert is low visibility photography and has just published his first book - "Cool Waters, Emarald Seas". John's accomplishments should encourage other photographers to look anew at the wealth of subjects in Northern waters.

Pheobe Rudimino-Dusiacke

Pheobe Rudimino-Dusiacke shoots rare subjects in a unique environment. Movie stars underwater on the Pinewood lot. Her portfolio includes "Basic Instinct2" and the latest Bond - "Casino Royale".

According to organisers Ocean Optics/ Mavericks Diving's Steve Warren, these are only the speakers so far confirmed. More are expected.

Visions 2006 presenters will be taking time out to offer one-to-one coaching for delegates who bring their own images on laptops to the festival. This "image clinic" has long been an invaluable benefit of attending the show. There will also be an extensive display of equipment from Ocean Optics, including Subal, Nexus and Inon products.

www.oceanoptics.co.uk

Toyota sponsors Tommi Knutssson and the Blue Army in Iceland

For the next 3 years my community and Toyota in Iceland will sponsor the Blue army.

Tthe agenda is to visit all 6-9 year old children in all schools in Iceland, show them some seacritters which I dive for and bring along for each school, give them coloring book and talk about environmental issues for their understanding, also to encourage school principals and community leaders to get involved with cleanup projects such as the one I have been so active wit in my community.

To date total handpicked debris of the Blue army is now over 100 tons and scrapmetal collected in various cleanup projects taking place in my penisula exceeds 5000 tons.

www.dive.is

New products

Ikelite Olympus E-330 housing

The Olympus E-330 is the world's first digital SLR to offer "Live" viewing through its 2.5" color LCD screen. The housing's clear back provides a full view of the screen making it easier to compose and capture the perfect shot.

For traditional viewing of the subject thru the camera's eyepiece, the Ikelite Super-Eye magnifier provided with the housing offers enhanced viewing while wearing a diving mask.

The housing comes standard with conversion circuitry that provides Olympus TTL compatibility with all Ikelite DS Substrobes, a Flash Compensation Module allows the TTL circuitry to provide two f-stops of over and under exposure compensation in half-stop increments for added control over TTL exposures. It's easily to switch from TTL to the Manual Exposure Mode, which provides eight power settings. All exposure compensation is done on the back of the housing - which means no more messing with complicated camera menus.

A wide selection of interchangeable ports allow the use of most macro, wide-angle, and zoom lenses. The port system's locking mechanism presents easy port installation and removal, plus visual assurance the port is secure and properly sealed. The housing's size and weight provides neutral buoyancy and superb handling underwater. Camera installation is quick and simple. The dependable controls are conveniently placed at your fingertips, and kept water tight with Ikelite pioneered Quad-Ring® seal glands, proven to be the most reliable method for sealing controls. The housing's main back o-ring seal is a masterpiece in fail-safe simplicity. When closing the latches, you can see that the o-ring is sealed and the locking latches prevent accidental opening of the housing.

www.ikelite.com

Light & Motion Titan D200 housing coming soon!

Light & Motion have introduced the Titan D200 Digital SLR Photo Housing. Titan is a professional grade housing that pushes underwater digital photography to the next level. The Titan D200 builds upon the ROC empowered D100 housing with USB enabled finger tip controls.

www.uwimaging.com

Gates Canon XL H1 housing

The Gates Canon XL H1 housing comes with a 2.5" colour monitor as standard which can be upgraded to 4.1".

Bayonet ports allow quick changes from flat to dome to super wide and the handle positions are adjustable.

www.gateshousings.com

Nikon D80 DSLR

The D80 slots nicely between the entry-level D50 and the semi-professional / professional D200.

It is clearly based on the D70 design but is different enough to be seen as a completely new model. It features a ten megapixel DX format CCD, the metering sensor from the D50 and numerous other items taken or modified from the D200.

The maximum auto ISO can be preset and there is a mechanical shutter which limits flash sync to 1/200th sec. The LCD screen is now 2.5" and the D80 now takes SD-HC memory cards.

The body only costs £699.99 in the UK.

www.nikon.com

Nexus Nikon D200 housing

Japanese underwater housing manufacturer Nexus have just released a photo of their new housing for the Nikon D200.

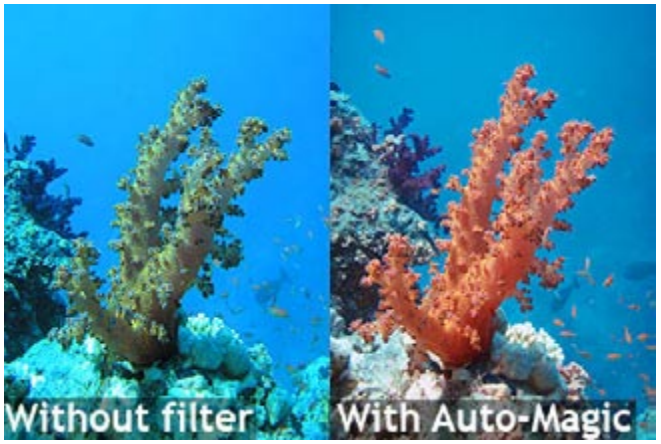
At the time of going to press no firm details were available but from the photo it looks as if it follows the Nexus tried and tested design for the D70 in a cast aluminium shell with screw thread front ports and a rear perspex panel incorporating most of the push button controls.

www.anthis.co.jp

New Auto-Magic filter

Magic Filters are pleased to announce the launch of a new filter - the Auto-Magic, which is made specifically for digital compact cameras. This filter works with the camera's automatic settings, so all you need to do is to turn off your flash and point and shoot for vibrant and colorful images.

The filter is designed to make the great colors of Magic filter images simple for everybody to produce.



Unlike the camera's white balance feature - which alters the mix of light already collected by the sensor - the Magic Filter alters the mix of light before it enters the lens. Since reds and oranges disappear from the underwater spectrum quickly, the Magic Filter provides a better mix of light for the camera's white balance function to utilize.

With an Auto-Magic filter, it's 'point and shoot' simple.

For more details and sample photos visit

www.magic-filters.com

Technical Lighting Control

Technical Lighting Control strobe arms are manufactured to precision specifications to satisfy the needs of the most demanding underwater photographers and film makers. Constructed from light weight, high grade aircraft aluminum, each piece is treated with black teflon impregnated anodization process which allows smooth, accurate strobe positioning under the most adverse conditions.

Innovative design and rugged one piece construction eliminates O-rings and pins providing years of dependable use. Our strobe arms and accessories are designed to fit most major brands of underwater lighting systems.

www.aquatica.ca

URPRO green water filter

The URPRO GR filter is the world's only scientifically designed underwater color-correcting filter created specifically to correct colors in green salt and fresh waters. With sunlight and the URPRO GR filter, you capture the natural colors of ocean corals, fish and aquatic life in lakes, streams and rivers.

The URPRO GR filter "neutralizes" the underwater green colors so that the true colors which already exist can be recorded on film or video. This filter is based upon proven patented technology for its ability to correct colors underwater.

Use the URPRO GR filter with available light and/or electronic flash in green algae fresh and salt water. Ideal for ALL video, digital, still, and cine camera systems. This filter is available in optical glass and optical plastic in most standard sizes.

www.urprofilters.com

Olympus PT-034 housing

The PT-034 underwater case has been specially customised for the μ 740 / μ 750 camera and is waterproof up to a water pressure equivalent to a depth of 40 metres.

www.olympus.co.uk

Epoque EHS-510H housing

Epoque from Japan have announced their new housing for the Sanyo VPC-HD1 Hi-def digital video camera.

The front body is ABS plastic and the rear is polycarbonate. The housing is operable to 45 metres (150 feet) and it has a screw thread front port to take accessory lenses.

The housing weighs just 660gms on land and underwater it is very slightly (100gms) negative.

www.epoque-japan.com

DIGIDEEP.com

the online directory for digital underwater-imaging equipment

Reviews Retailer Addresses Seminars Sample Images

Most popular cameras

Welcome to a feature provided by DIGIDEEP.com underwater housing database

Canon 350D

Still on top of the list is the Canon 350D featuring eight megapixels. It maintains its status as one of the most popular entry DSLR cameras worldwide. This price worthy peek-performance has also led to a huge variety of underwater housings. Potential buyers should compare the different implementations of +/- EV button control and check for standardized strobe connections to maximize their personal underwater experience with this gadget.

No. of housings available: 11. Price range 1,000 USD - 1,990 EUR

Nikon D200

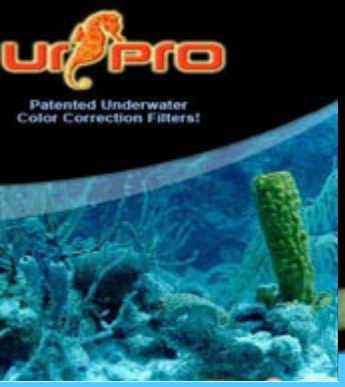
If you can get your hands on a Nikon D200 right now you should not wait to order your underwater housing for it. Priced a little bit higher than the Canon digital Rebel XT but coming up with much higher performance Nikon managed to create a product that is almost as popular among underwater photographers as the Canon 350D, even though the price difference is around 1000 EUR/USD between these two models. You will find D200 owner with a big smile on their face at the higher horse power seems to have a fair price if you can afford it.

No. of housings available: 7. Price range 1,500 USD - 3,270 EUR

Casio EXILIM Zoom EX-Z750 (orphan of the month)

A very popular point and shoot camera for the future digital underwater photographer it seems. A large screen and easily accessible controls make this an attractive product on the first glimpse. A more in depth-review reveals the very important manual white balance feature required for (magic) filter photography and taught during the new PADI digital underwater photography course. Unfortunately no housing manufacturer has paid attention to the underwater demand for this camera. So who is going to help more than 500 registered owners to find a solution apart from ewa-marine bags?

www.digideep.com



URPRO continues to be honored by many professional and amateur photographers from all corners of the globe who use our underwater correction filters to capture the full spectrum of color on their pictures. Many are just discovering the magic of underwater photography while others are veterans who have transitioned through film, video, and cine, and who are now avid digital enthusiasts.

Recently, we received a series of vibrant images along with a letter from Paul LeBourgeois, MD who has used the URPRO filters for many years. His enthusiasm for scuba diving and underwater photography is contagious. With his permission, we'd like to share part of the letter and some of his copyrighted images.

April, 2006
Dear URPRO

…..I was introduced to diving by my father in l960. At this time the basic equipment was mask, snorkel, fins, and a hard plastic back-pack to which an enormously heavy tank was attached. It had the life-saving 'J-valve' which warned when the air was almost gone. I think my Dad and I had the first single-hose regulators made. At this time, there were no pressure gauges, no depth gauges, and no weights…..and we had absolutely no idea that "dive tables" existed. We relied solely on the notion that if we didn't ascend faster than our bubbles, we'd be OK….oh how times have changed!

In 1986 my wife and I took a trip to Bonaire where she rented a VHS underwater camera and housing. Initially, I thought that there would be no better way to waste time underwater than fooling around with this "gadget." Half-way through the dive, my wife handed me the camera to take some footage of her. Upon our return home, I became "motion-sick" sitting on the couch as I watched the footage captured by my unsteady camera movements. But it was too late—I was and still remain enamored at capturing underwater pictures…….

My profession as a pathologist allows me to travel the world and to pursue my passion of underwater photography. Recent travel destinations are focused on Indonesia and Papua New Guinea where I record the variety of colorful species found near the 'Wallace Line.' Through the years, I have used almost every video camera and housing that was labeled as "this year's sensation."

…My first URPRO filter was purchased in about 1990 for the Sony MPK-TRS which was the first housing I could get my hands on that shot 8mm video. Since that time I've tried almost every brand and variation of housing and camera, but I always purchased the URPRO filter because it was the only one that really worked. If I purchased a system with a pre-supplied filter that looked like a washed out jelly-bean, I would immediately replace it with URPRO filter. I don't know how many custom URPRO filters I've had made for my systems, but the most recent is a huge filter that fits over the front of my HD FX1 housing so I can use the internal flip-in device for a diopter to get good macro.

I am humbled, gratified, and proud to experience the magic of the underwater world, and without URPRO filters on my cameras, I would probably have quit long ago, because for me, the devil is in the details, and color is king.

Signed,
Paul LeBourgeois
24 April 2006

Click on images to view Paul LeBourgeois Copyright Movie Clips

www.urprofilters.com

Nikon D200 and Subal ND20 Field Report

By Mark Webster

The last couple of months has seen the long anticipated arrival of Nikon D200 housings from several manufacturers. Some of us have already upgraded and many more are contemplating the change from a first generation DSLR, making the jump from compact camera to DSLR or entering the digital market for the first time. As I have now had my Subal ND20 for a little while and had the opportunity to test it in temperate and tropical conditions I thought readers may be interested in how the package handles in the field.

The housing follows the now 'standard' Subal design - a deep front section that accommodates most of the camera (see observations below) and is very compact, perhaps a little smaller than the ND10 for the D100. Loading the camera and tray is easy, you just need to remember to turn on the camera and align the on/off switch and retract the CSM switch (note the setting on the camera to engage this once installed). You also need to align the focus mode selector on the back plate with the camera setting and then you are ready to go.

Buoyancy - dependant on your lens and port selection the housing is slightly negative in the water - long ports and heavy flash guns will make the rig negatively buoyant. The same applies with the glass FE dome - if you are using heavy strobes like Subtronics then you may want to add some buoyancy to trim the rig. Try the UCLS buoyancy arms or making a cork overcoat for your flash gun (from a table mat), which can be slid under the neoprene cover works, very well. I still use my 'home engineered' perspex fish eye domes (these pre-date the first Subal FE dome) which for me work as just as well as the bigger glass domes I have tried but have none of the bulk and weight. With these and a Magic Filter for natural light photography the housing is all but weightless and a dream to use.

Ergonomics - the major controls are on the right hand side of the housing and are easily accessed if your hands are not too small or too large. I find that the shutter release falls more naturally under my second finger with the main command dial under the ring finger and the sub

The camera is virtually flush with the front half of the housing and so you need to remove the camera to change memory cards, battery or plug into the USB port.

command under the thumb. Even with gloves on for our cold British waters these controls have a good positive feel, however, I still miss the Miniflex design which had no handles as standard, but I digress. Unless you have very long thumbs you have to move your hand to reach the four 'toggle' buttons but this is a feature of all the current crop of housings - you may recall that the old F5 housing had a rotating geared control that could be reached with your thumb, but this was not a great success.

All the push button controls have a good feel to them and operate the camera positively. There are controls for almost everything, and you will soon find those that you need most and develop a routine for changing settings and reviewing etc. As has been mentioned in Peter Rowland's previous review, the one major omission is the flash mode control - however, I have simply set my camera to rear curtain synch' and this operates just fine with flash guns connected on the three pin 'manual' hot shoe option. Your shutter speed needs to be significantly slower than 1/30 for rear curtain synch to have an impact (just like shooting on film).

Viewfinder - I elected to choose the standard viewfinder optic. The D200 camera viewfinder is a big improvement over the D100 and so the image is bright and easy to compose through the standard optic. The GS viewfinder is excellent, although in my own experience with it I found it to be sensitive to the viewing angle, and it is a matter of personal choice and bank balance whether you choose this option. I have put the cost saving towards a second D200 body which soothes my paranoia regarding floods when I am on a trip. With the standard viewfinder I find that I occasionally knock the focus area mode selector switch with my regulator (which is very light to operate), this most likely would not

The standard viewfinder is excellent. The focus area selector switch can be easily moved by your regulator though.

be a problem with the GS finder.

Flash synchronisation - I had read with some trepidation that D2X users had been experiencing image write problems (i.e. to the CF card) when particular flash guns are connected with the standard three wire 'manual' hot shoe connection. In this case users have had to disconnect the third wire by removing the hot shoe contact or cutting the wire. The D200 does not appear to suffer from this problem, at least with the flash guns that I own and have tested: Inon Quad flash; Subtronic Mini TTL; Sea & Sea YS30, YS50, YS120; Isotecnic 33TTL. All of these work just fine on the manual settings.

D200 Performance - The camera itself is everything I expected it to be and I am now pleased that I resisted the temptation to upgrade to the D2X, which is a fantastic camera, but a much larger (and of course more expensive) package. I normally shoot in manual mode with centre weighted or spot metering. However, I have also experimented with aperture priority and matrix metering for

A tampon in the base of the housing is a good additional insurance just in case of a partial flood - talk to your wife or girlfriend for this unless you are brave enough to purchase your own!

natural light photography (with and without filters) and found the exposures to be very accurate - for example the camera performed very well in this mode shooting basking sharks in very variable lighting conditions.

Focusing - if you are coming from the D100 or D70 you will find the focus speed and accuracy far superior. The CAM1000 AF module is not the same as the D2X, but for most of us it will be more than adequate. Using a macro lens it will handle low contrast situations very well, but at high magnifications you will still want to use a focus light. There is a host of focus modes to choose from and it is a matter of personal choice which suits you best. Too much choice and too many buttons can be distracting however and it is easy to get carried away playing with your buttons when you could be taking pictures.

Images - I shoot mostly in RAW format for the flexibility it offers in post processing. You can also

Diver with blue spotted ray, Red Sea, Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 10.5mm FE, Magic filter, ISO 100, f11 @ 1/100th

Basking shark, UK, Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm, ISO 100, f10 @ 1/50th

Tompot blenny, UK, Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm, Inon Quad Flash, ISO 100, f18 @ 1/100th

shoot in JPEG or combine JPEG with a raw file, the option of TIFF files offered on the D100 has now gone and was one I never used. The metering system is so good that you should be able to get perfect exposures almost every time when using natural light. Using flash in manual mode is really very easy with the instant review and the large screen is a joy to use. There are some digital TTL flash guns beginning to appear and you can also request a Heinrich Weikamp TTL converter be installed by Subal when you order the housing - this allows you to use standard Nikonos protocol TTL guns with the D200 - but really TTL is a luxury you probably do not need.

Image quality has been very pleasing so far and I find that I have to do less in the way of post processing than with the D100. The camera will produce very natural looking colours, although my preference is the use the vivid colour setting which mimics the saturation we used to have with Velvia film quite well. The enlarged viewing screen is bliss and you can quickly see how your exposure is and zoom in to check focus if you enjoy fiddling with buttons during the dive. Maybe it is my failing eyesight or just that the D100 screen was so much smaller, but I find underwater that you can easily be fooled into thinking that the colours are off or muddy on the screen. You would of course expect some colour absorption even though the screen is back lit, but the D100 screen perhaps looked brighter and punchier - on the surface they look fine of course.

The sensor seems to cope with highlights much better than the D100. With caution you can shoot straight into the sun and produce reasonable sun bursts, but of course it is still not the equal of film in this respect.

Observations: Some constructive criticism I hope - as a long committed Subal fan I have returned to the fold after a brief and passionate affair with a Light and Motion housing for the D100, which I have to say I will sorely miss for its ergonomics and ease of use. The Subal is a great housing, but there are minor observations which would improve the handling:

* Camera tray - the design of the housing is such that the camera is enclosed in the front half of the housing. Unlike the D100, the D200 compact flash door is on the side of the camera and so the camera must be removed or at least retracted from

Plenty of space to put a spring between the camera base plate and the front of the housing - perhaps a retrofit from Subal?

Home engineered perspex dome port selection - all these ports are 'tight' in the housing, whilst my Subal ports are 'slack'.

ND20 with Inon Quad ring flash.

The plastic accessory shoe on the top of the housing is a weak point - I replaced mine with an aluminium block.

the housing to access this. The same applies to the USB port. It would be nice if the camera tray was sprung so that when unlocked it would pop up and allow access to this - the F5 housing and I believe the F100 had a sprung tray which was very useful for rewinding film after a dive. Housings from competing manufacturers have a shallower front half which enable access, but for me were not so attractive ergonomically.

* Hot shoe - this point is related to the first. The length of the hot shoe cable (at least on my housing) is only just long enough to disconnect it when the camera and tray is partly slid out to grip it. It can be awkward to partly slide the camera out, hold it and disconnect the hot shoe without jarring the cable, which may eventually lead to a conductor failure. Practice will make this easier, but a little more length and a sprung tray would make this a breeze.

* Remember to swing the lens release button out of the way when installing the camera and lens with a zoom/focus gear on - the gear will foul on this control and you will wonder why the camera will not seat.

* The accessory shoe on top of the camera is a potential weak point - it has a threaded insert embedded in a plastic base plate. My insert began to work loose the first time I attached my focus light arm base connector. I have replaced this now with an aluminium block. Focus lights are getting bigger and heavier (and more expensive if you go for the fancy versions - e.g. Fish Eye, Light and Motion) and they require a solid mounting. As an aside, I have found that an Ikelite PCm or PCa light is an excellent compact, bright and cheap focusing light.

* Ports - this is my sixth Subal housing (seven if I include the port adaptor on the Titan housing) and all of them had a really firm fit with all the ports I own. My Subal ports are all first generation bayonet fittings with the thinner, harder 'O' rings. I have found that some, not all, of my ports are 'slack' in the new housing which has the new style port bayonet insert. The ports seal OK but are very easy to turn, which is a little worrying particularly with the big heavy glass

domes or if you have an attachment to the port (in my case a ring flash). I have noticed that this topic (which includes the latest generation of ports and "O" rings) has appeared in the Wetpixel.com forums and in one or two cases has led to flooding when ports are inadvertently turned when entering the water. Subal tell me that nothing has changed but I feel that here must be a small difference in tolerances between some housings. A port locking system would be the preferred fix, but until then I am using a piece of Duck/gaffer tape to ensure the ports do not turn - a popular fix amongst us photographers with a vivid imagination.

* Leak detector - works well but if you activate it with a drop of salt water you may need to clean the contacts and remove the battery to clear the flooded 'signal' in the circuit. I also add a tampon in the base of the housing just in case.....

Despite these observations I am very pleased with the housing which I hope will give me long service - no doubt a vain hope in this digital world of constant upgrades. Perhaps we should start lobbying Nikon now for a D300 with the same body shell and control layout as the D200!

Mark Webster

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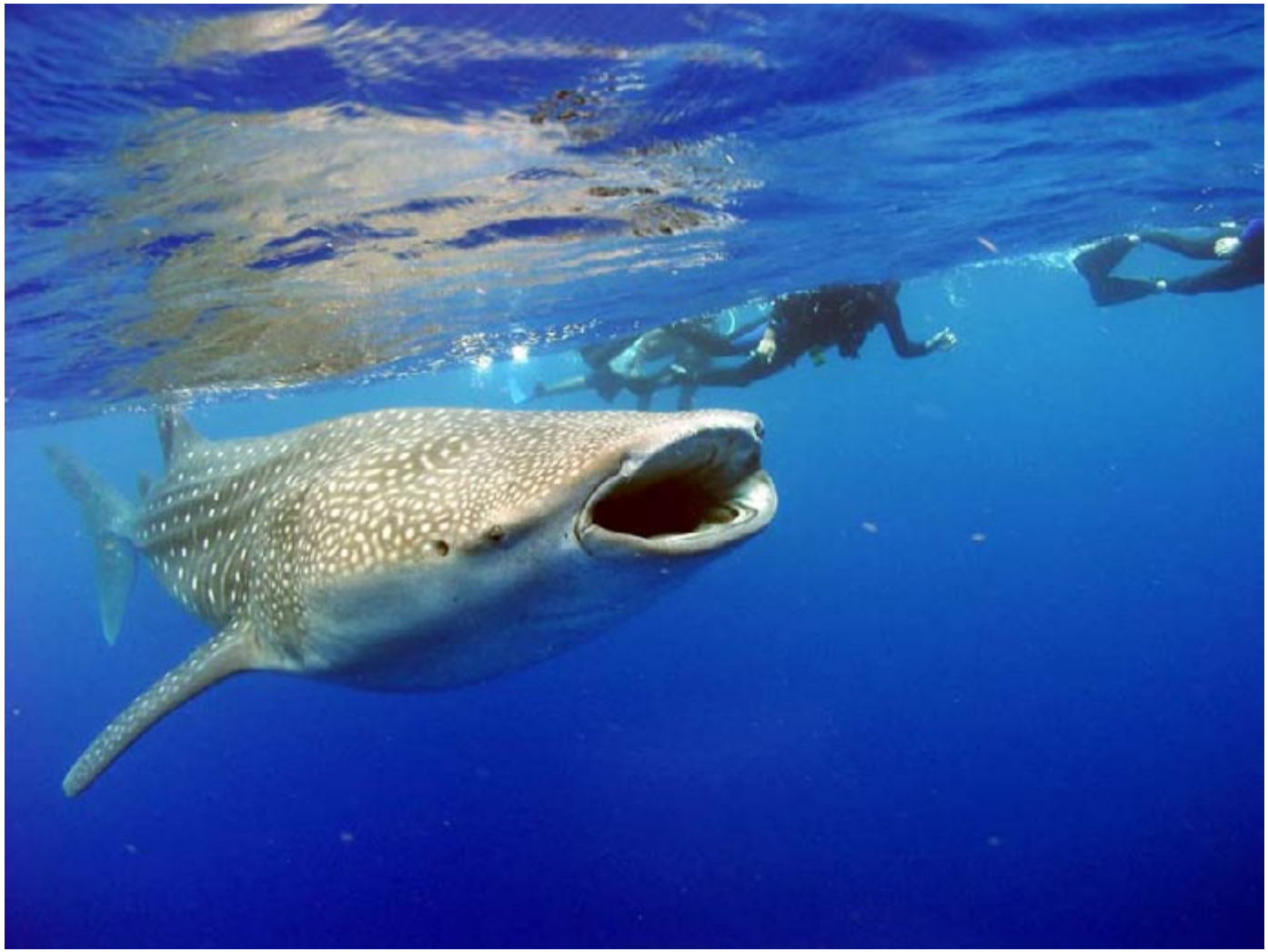
Whale Shark Diving in Belize

with Martin Spragg



Whale sharks, the biggest fish in the sea, we all want to see one! In recent years many diving destinations have started to promote whale shark diving and Belize is one of them.

Belize is a small country on The Caribbean coast of Central American bounded by Mexico and Guatemala. It has more than 180 miles of barrier reef and three of the four atolls of The Caribbean Sea. Whale sharks are present in Belizean waters all year around but during the months of March, April, May and June they travel to Gladden Spit on the Belize Barrier Reef.

History

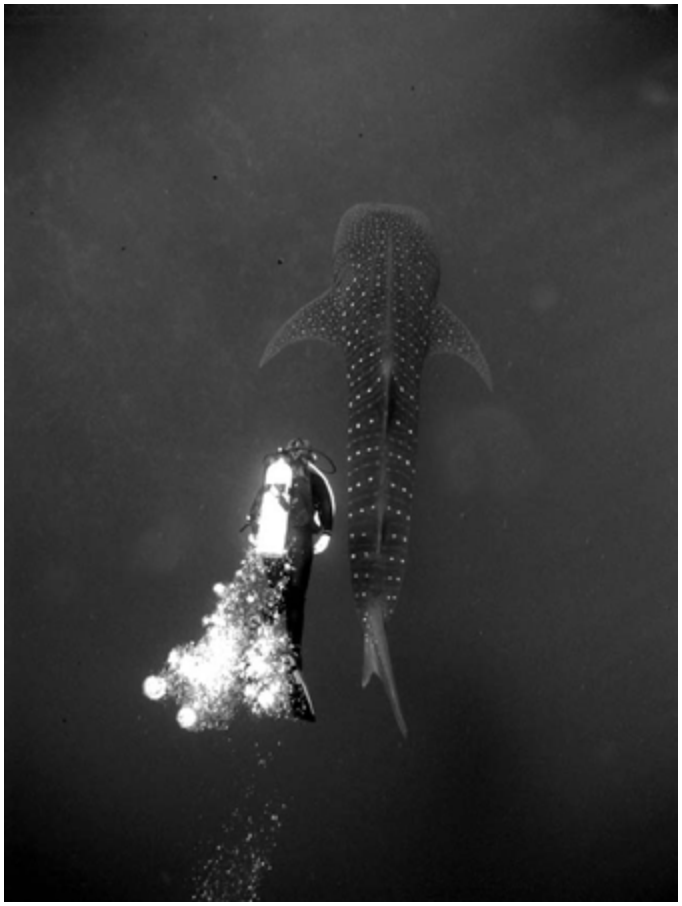
Gladden Spit is in the southern section of The Belize Barrier Reef and during the Spring full moons several species of snapper aggregate there to spawn. Fishermen have known about this event for centuries. Occasionally the fishermen would encounter a whale shark swimming along the surface. The first sighting was more than 100 years ago by a fisherman from The Sapodilla Cays called Tom Owen which led to the creole name for them, "Sapodilla Tom".

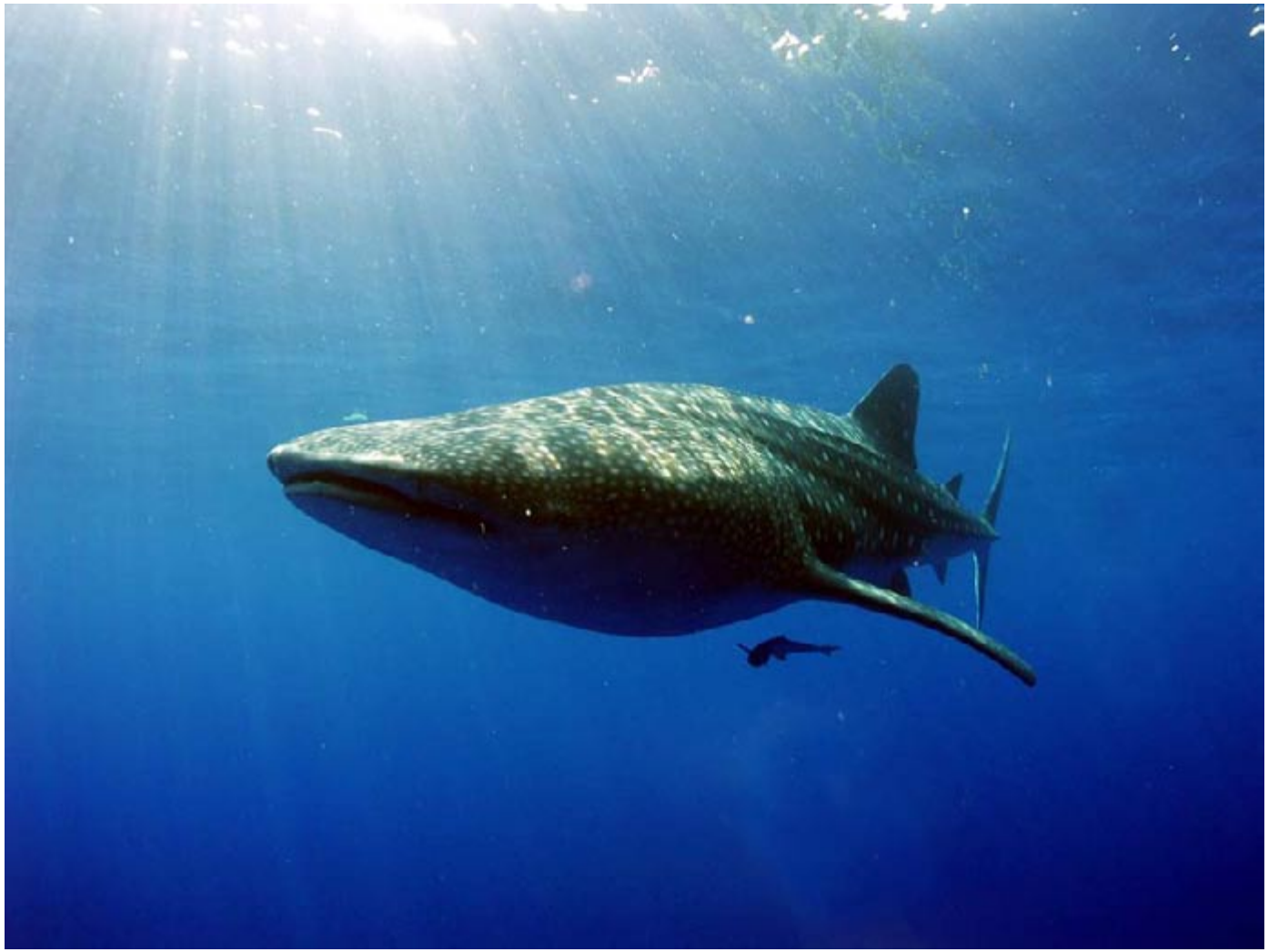
Until recently the fishermen feared the whale sharks and they would cut their lines rather than stay fishing when they sighted one. They later discovered that the whale sharks were harmless and were visiting the area to feed in the milky, spawn filled waters. Local dive guides started taking divers to the area in the late 1990's and as interest grew it became apparent that the area required some management.

An organization called Friends of Nature was formed to work with Belize Fisheries Department. Friends of Nature provides training, education, research and monitoring of the whale sharks and other sensitive areas of the reef. Their head office is in Placencia Village which is a small fishing village in southern Belize and they have several research stations on the cays.

Dive Site

The reef at Gladden spit is a sloping bank rather than the steep walls that characterize this





area. During most of the day the snappers stay down deep but later in the day they start to form larger and larger schools often numbering in the thousands. These schools rise to shallower water and spawn as the sun starts to set.

Diving

Friends of Nature have a set of guidelines for visiting the zone and to avoid interfering with the snapper schools they restrict the dives to a max depth of 80ft (24m). All dives are drift dives and most of the time is spent floating in mid water looking hopefully into the blue.

The dives are outside the reef but visibility is influenced by a large break in the reef at Gladden Spit. Generally expect 60ft (18m) but in the evening when the sun is low in the sky the visibility is less.

The local guides have developed a technique whereby all the divers link arms and make a large plume of bubbles. These bubbles simulate a ball of snapper rising up and spawning. I have never seen this attract a whale shark but once we did have a juvenile which repeatedly swam through our exhaust bubbles.

Location

Placencia or Hopkins are the departure points for whale shark diving. Both destinations are about the same distance from Gladden Spit (approximately 22nm) and the boat journey generally takes about 60 to 90 minutes.

The best time to dive is at the sunset but only four dive boats are allowed in the zone at a time and it is closed at 5pm. In the interest of fair play there is a roster system whereby all operators get at least one chance each month when they can dive the zone late in the day.

Many operators only visit in the afternoon, this year we made several early morning trips to avoid the crowds. On these occasions we were usually the only boat there and we had a reasonable success rate sighting whale sharks on six out of nine visits. On one other occasion we encountered six or seven silky sharks in a tuna school which was very high energy. Dolphins, turtles and large schools of jacks are also often seen at this dive site.

Equipment

To photograph Whale sharks keep two things in mind:

1) Despite the appearance of lazily flapping its tail a whale shark is usually moving much faster than you can swim.

2) There is no way a strobe is going to light up a whole whale shark, not even a small one!

With this in mind I prefer a small maneuverable set up. I use an Olympus C5050 in the PT 015 housing with a wide angle adapter. I disable the flash to eliminate the chance of back scatter and I set the ISO to 64 or 100.

A Magic Filter would bring back the color on the deeper shots and might be worth trying. But on several occasions I was taking pictures just below the surface and the Magic Filter would have given the shots a magenta cast, so it is a tough choice to make.

The slow write time of my set up is a handicap especially as I am shooting in raw format. My technique is to shoot and then move whilst the camera is busy. Once the camera is

ready, you should be in position for the next shot. Physically this can be very demanding, be prepared to barrel roll, dive and swim backwards in order to get in position. I usually end up with more than one cramped leg muscle.

From a lighting perspective the surface shots are best. We have had several close encounters with the whale sharks on the surface. Once whilst I was on my own in the boat a whale shark rubbed up against it and gave me a shock, my first reaction was “What the <expletive deleted> is that!!”.

Trying to get other divers in the picture can also be challenging. Some times they are in front of the whale shark and give the wrong perspective, the shot can look like a mini whale shark meets the giant diver. There is no time to direct people you just have to keep your eyes open and try to anticipate where the best angle will be.

We have found the whale sharks to be inquisitive and will generally hang around for a few minutes or longer if you are lucky. It is forbidden to touch or ride the sharks and it is frowned upon to chase them.

Conclusion

The snapper spawning lasts about 10 days, the closer you are to the full moon day the better your chances are of sighting one. The best month is not predictable, for example last year May was best month but this year it was June.

The tedium of hanging in the blue for up to two hours is more than made up for by the thrill of a whale shark encounter. Make sure your batteries are charged in both your camera and your legs, once one is sighted you have to grab as many shots as you can. Good luck, I hope you enjoy my pictures.

Martin Spragg

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Bikini Atoll

With Tim Priest

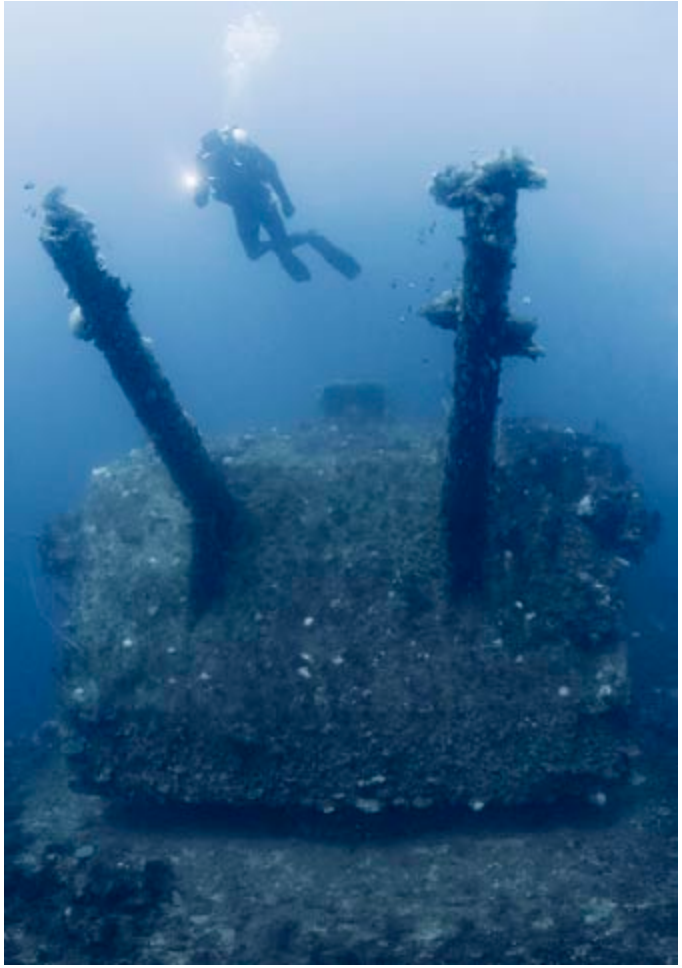
60 years ago the wreckage of three wars was smashed onto the bottom of Bikini Atoll: tired ships from the first World War, proud veterans and ruined casualties of the second World War and the utilitarian concrete of the Cold War. Even now fewer than 2000 divers have visited them. The lagoon is a treasure house of 20th century military history.

Bikini is a long way from the USA, and further from Europe. Travel is best organised by an agent who has learned the ropes, as there are three or four flights to catch, with obscure connections and stopovers. A day in Hawaii broke our travel, and let us do some historical research on the ships of Pearl Harbor. Civilisation, in the form of 24 hour water and power, was left behind when we arrived at Majuro in the Marshall Islands. We then discovered that it was not going to be easy to get to Bikini, as the small Dornier aircraft that does the flight most of the time cannot divers and their gear together if they include rebreather divers and video equipment. Everything is staged through the US base at Kwajalein, which further complicates matters. Kwajalein is also home to the remains of the Prinz Eugen, but that's another dive… After negotiation, Marshall Islands Aviation conjured up a second flight to bring our kit. The Bikini Atoll Nuclear Fleet Dive Team managed to rustle up a

The aircraft can cope with about 24kg a person, with 12 divers flying out to Bikini.

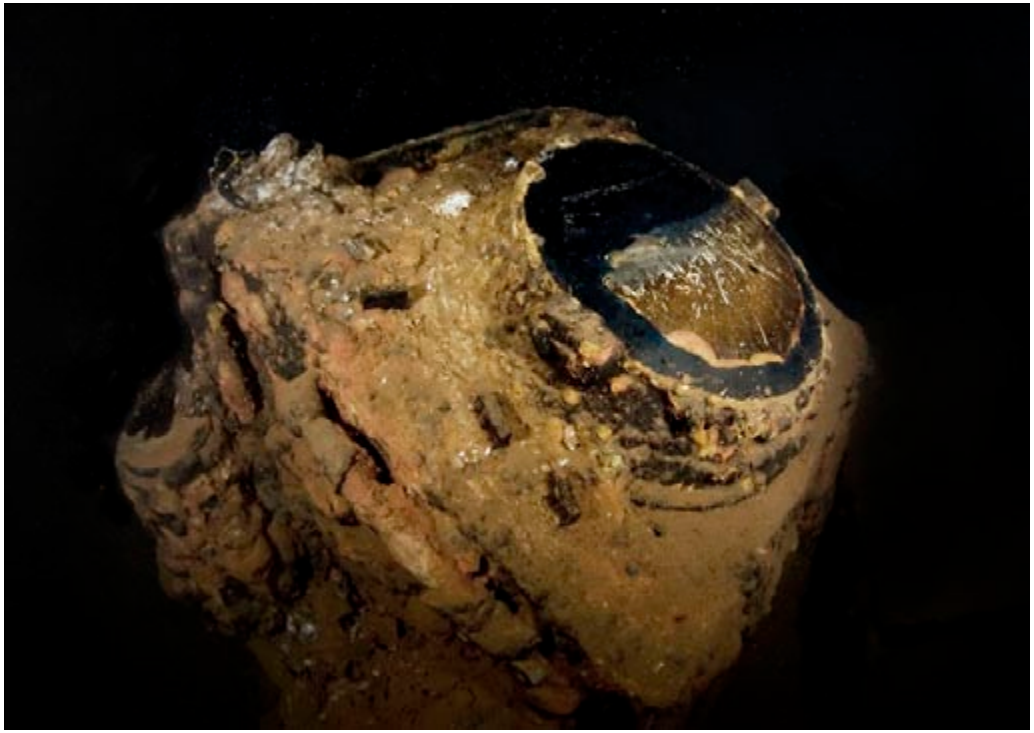
complete set of dive gear and a wetsuit until one bag finally arrived almost a week later. I had 26kg in two bags: the aircraft can cope with about 24kg a person, with 12 divers flying out to Bikini. There is a bigger aircraft, but it spends a lot of time waiting for repairs at Majuro.

After a checkout dive to a mere 35m on a 35,000 tonne ship most of the diving is to between 40m and 55m. The dive guides say that any competent diver with a reasonable amount of experience could do the diving, and that is true, but adding a camera is certainly adding risk to a deep air dive. I organised a technical diving course last year, and felt that smooth the way for concentrating on my photography. I noticed that the rebreather divers did not do any serious photography: maybe that reflects the enormous commitment needed to master both skills. The Bikini Atoll Nuclear Fleet Dive Team supply air in twin 13 litre steel cylinders with isolation manifolds, so that two regulators and



BCs or wings that can support twin cylinders are needed. The island can supply tools and expertise, but spares must come with you on the small aircraft. Luckily it is very warm on the atoll, because there is not much space left for clothes. The water is about 28_C, but can feel cold during decompression and some people bring 5mm suits and hoods.

My dive bag was pretty full before I even thought about my camera. I took two Nikon D70



bodies and a Nexus housing with two Inon Z-220 strobes on two segment arms. I took Nikon 16mm and 10.5mm lenses but, despite what has been written about Bikini in the past, regretted not having a 60mm and a flat port. I used the 10.5mm lens on most dives, but the 16mm performed well, too. I used the Nexus FP 120-7 glass dome, which never ceases to impress me with its optical quality and remarkably small size. I had enough batteries to keep one set on charge all the time, and two hard drives to back up four 1Gb SanDisk Ultra III CF cards. The generator on Bikini Island is very reliable, but noisy at night.

Many divers plan a week on Bikini, some after a week on Chuuk. The guides spend a week showing off the wrecks, with limited penetration into safe spaces. Six wrecks, the Saratoga, Arkansas, Apogon, Anderson, Lamson and Nagato are usually dived. The Carlisle, Pilotfish and Sakawa are said not be as impressive. Only the Apogon, an American Balao-class submarine, and the destroyers Anderson and Lamson can be seen in a single dive. The scope for planned photography in a week's diving is limited: because of the depths reached there are only two dives a day, and because of the sharks

there are no night dives. Diving the famed Shark Pass, thirty miles away from Bikini Island, takes divers away from the wrecks for a day. Staying for a second week allowed us to revisit our favourite dives, to negotiate different routes, to split into small groups for more adventurous penetrations into the Saratoga, and to abandon group diving in favour of photography on the Saratoga. This huge aircraft carrier, commissioned in 1927, was once the queen of the US Navy, and she is more fascinating with each dive, revealing every side of navy life, from the officers' dining ware to bombs, torpedoes and aircraft. The military side of the Lamson is more immediately obvious, but the "Sara" has treasures that reward a little effort.

It is almost impossible to use filters, because of the depths reached. The time pressure that accompanies a thirty-minute bottom time, added to the unavoidable narcosis, could easily push the photographer into snapshot mode. I tried to avoid this by planning each dive with the guides, concentrating on two or three major targets, presetting camera and strobes as far as possible, but working with manual exposures and forcing myself to think through the settings

underwater. I shoot RAW, exclusively, plan for 0.5-1.0 stops underexposure and stay on 200 ASA equivalent. I correct exposure in Photoshop CS-2, and have begun to use the NoiseNinja plug-in to remove much of the noise that sometimes results. The slow shutter speeds needed to reveal the ambient light at depth, particularly beneath the battleships Arkansas and Nagato, make strobe lighting necessary to freeze detail onto the image. This became a problem during our second week when an unseasonal plankton bloom obscured the deeper wrecks, visibility declining to 3m at 50m depth. I concentrated on getting close with my 10.5mm full-frame fisheye lens and using two strobes on 18-inch arms, angled slightly outwards from the camera, and held at the same level as the lens' optical axis.

The undisturbed wrecks support an ecosystem from algae and whip coral to silvertip sharks and mantas. I had not expected the opportunities for photography that this presents, and was not prepared. A Nikon 60mm macro lens would have dramatically extended my Bikini portfolio, although I expect that it would have been a difficult decision to leave wide-angle lenses behind on any dive. Many of the Saratoga's treasures are also too small for wide-angle lenses.

The best information on Bikini Atoll diving is definitely on the web. Jonathan Weisgall's book "Operation Crossroads" is interesting historically, but says nothing about the diving; James Delgardo's "Ghost Fleet" is long out of print, and based on too few dives to be truly informative. Dive guides to Micronesia only spend a page or two in Bikini. Sadly, there is nothing comparable to Dan Bailey's "WW II Wrecks of Truk Lagoon".

The diving is magnificent. I described the experience to British friends as "Scapa Flow on steroids and speed, in warm water and you can (usually) SEE!".

Tim Priest
mothyman@blueyonder.co.uk

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Composites

A different way to capture movement

by Alexander Mustard

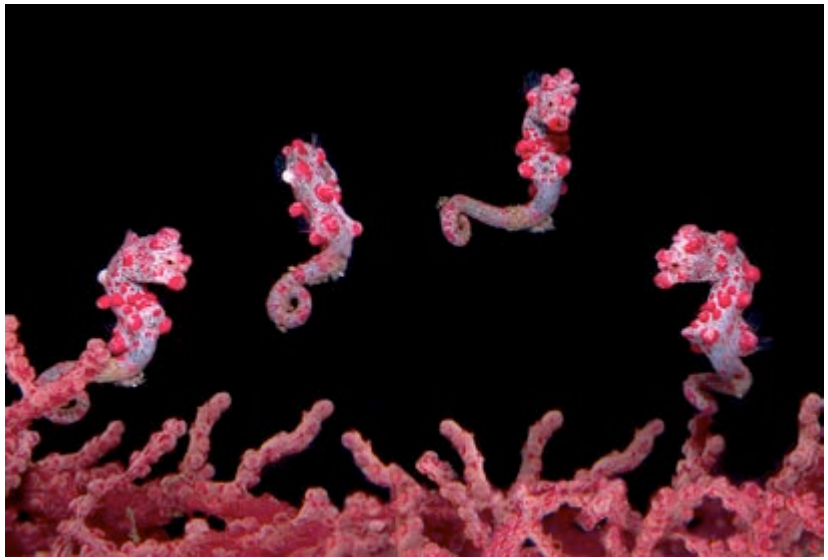
Movement is an evocative and challenging subject for photographers. Our medium is the still image, yet the world we record is constantly on the move and as a result we have developed a wide range of techniques to capture and communicate movement.

Sometimes we express movement in our images by freezing a clearly fast moving subject, capturing the moment in razor sharp stillness. Composition is also important here, for example giving a subject space into which to move in the frame lends balanced dynamism to the image. On other occasions we communicate movement by allowing the subject to blur across our frame (something I wrote about doing with sharks in UWP 30).

In this short article I want to talk about

This composite is composed of three frames. I actually shot 10 frames of the diver rolling into the water (within seconds) and selected the most appropriate ones for the final images.
Below left is one of the middle images in the composite catching the diver at the point of impact with the water. Below right is the final frame in the sequence. As a standalone image it is not good – with water splashed by the diver covering the port. However I used this frame in the composite because the section of frame I needed is good. Nikon D2X + 10.5mm FE. Subal Housing. F6.3 @ 1/400th.

This composite image is the combination of four frames taken of a girl diving from a yacht. I actually panned the camera slightly during this sequence which has led to a slightly panoramic image. Nikon D2X + 10.5mm FE. Subal Housing. F9 @ 1/160th.



This is my only successful composite image of a natural history subject. This image combines four frames showing a pygmy seahorse swimming from one point on a seafan to another. I didn't use a focus light for this shot because I find it tends to make pygmy seahorses turn away. Nikon D100 + 105mm & +4 dioptre. Subal Housing. F38 @ 1/180th.

my experiences with another method for communicating movement – digital compositing.

Digital compositing is a troublesome area for pure photography because by including elements from several images we are not creating an image that is an accurate record of a moment in time. For this reason I always limit my digital composites to images containing elements shot at the same time, with the same lens, to provide a strong link with the reality. Furthermore, I think that these images are obviously manipulated and the viewer understands this. I don't believe that anyone looks at composite images like these and thinks that I have photographed identical and synchronised sextuplets jumping off a boat!

The aim when capturing movement with digital compositing is to show the subject travelling across the frame. The technique is fairly similar to creating panoramic images, but instead of moving the camera between a series of shots, we keep the camera still and combine the frames together – showing the main subject several times in different positions, moving across the frame.

The final image starts even before we get in the water. It is very much a technique that we have to decide on before shooting rather than being something that is built in the computer after a trip from the images we happen to have taken.

The first step is to think carefully about the composition of the final frame before we start shooting. Ideally we want the subject starting on one side and travelling to the other. Wide-angle lenses are most suited to this technique because they provide lots of space for this subject movement.

I usually use this technique with human subjects because I can direct their movement (relatively easily) and therefore achieve the desired composition. We can make things even easier by choosing a situation where the subject has little choice but to move over a predetermined path. For example, it was very easy for me to predict the path of the diver rolling off the side of the dive boat.

This was one of the first composites I tried, and combines five frames of one of the crew doing a somersault from the back of a liveaboard. I took several more frames during this sequence, but I tried not to use too many so that there were only small overlaps between the different positions of the model. Nikon D2X + 10.5mm FE. Subal Housing. F4.5 @ 1/640th.

Generally, I have tended to use this technique in conjunction with split-level images. I find that this helps because human movement in air is influenced by gravity so the model's path through the frame looks realistic. When I have tried shooting composites underwater they tend to look faked, because the movement of the diver appears unnatural because they are neutrally buoyant. I don't see this as a hard and fast rule and I will keep trying to produce a pleasing underwater composite of a diver!

I strongly recommend using manual exposure (both for the camera and your strobes) when shooting for composites because this insures that the exposure of the subject and background remains the same throughout. If we shoot RAW it is also important to use the same settings in the RAW Converter for all the images, and to also make any exposure or colour corrections after we have built the composite in Photoshop.

I would also encourage you to shoot lots of frames of the action, so that you can choose the ones that have the subject in the correct position to produce an ideal composition in the finished frame. For example, I took 10 images (in two seconds) of the setup for the composite image of the diver backward-rolling off the boat, choosing only the best three for the finished image.

When shooting like this it is important to select a fast shutter speed – this not only to freezes the action but also enables a high frame rate. One other potential problem is strobe recycle time, which varies between models and brand of strobes. Generally for fast moving subjects, such as people jumping or diving into the water, I shoot in available light only. But where this is not possible it is important to think about strobe recycle time when planning your frame rate.

The next step is to download the images and choose which ones to use for the final composite. Often the most suitable images are not the best individual ones, but instead frames that contain the subject in exactly the right pose and position. Ideally we want start and end point images and then one or two intermediate positions. Invariably I select either the start point or the end point image

as the main image background and cut the subject from the other frames and drop them in. It is nice when the subject does not overlap with the previous position, although this is not always possible.

There are lots of ways to cut out images in Photoshop, and the method you choose will depend on the subject and the background it is on. You can either mask and cut the subject out exactly or cut it out with part of the background included – and feather the edge of the selection so it blends with the existing background. Once the new elements are imported as new layers you can arrange the elements into a pleasing and natural looking composition.

Of course there are always images that break these rules. Probably my favourite composite image goes against nearly all the advice I have listed above. The "Dancing Pygmy" photo was taken with a macro lens, features an unpredictable natural subject and was illuminated by flash. It had been my intention to shoot a composite before this dive, but I never dreamed of such a fortunate composition. I had actually planned to shoot several different pygmy seahorses and then to join them together to create a pygmy infested seafan, but when this individual jumped up, looked at the camera and resettled on the fan I knew I had a better image.

Sometimes as underwater photographers our vision is grander than what we can practically achieve with our camera. Sometimes we are constrained by the limitations of the physics of light in the ocean. At other times it is the restrictions of how long or deep we can dive, or the financial constraints of how long we can afford to spend in the field in the pursuit of images. While on other occasions the images we wish to create are just impossible. Digital compositing allows us to break free from some of these constraints and to show movement in a different way, it is not a technique to be over used, but it can certainly add some unusual images to a portfolio.

Alex Mustard

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Shooting in Low Visibility

By Mathieu Meur

Not all underwater photographers are lucky enough to be diving all year round in gin-clear waters. In fact, a large proportion of photographers commonly dive in areas where visibility is rather limited, and only get to dive clearer waters a few times a year at best. If you are one of the lucky few others, read on anyway; the advice given here works in clear water too!

Numerous divers are discouraged by the prospect of diving in low visibility, let alone taking pictures in these conditions. Leaving your camera behind would be a shame given the amazing wealth of shooting opportunities that can be found in areas where visibility commonly is limited.

One of the keys to success when shooting in low visibility is to know what to expect during the dive. If you are not familiar with the area you are diving, you should discuss with dive professionals to find out the types of subjects available. This will assist you in selecting the most suitable setup for the dive, and even more importantly alert you to the presence of particular photo opportunities.

While knowing the area goes a long way to improving your chances of getting some good shots, going slow and opening your eyes wide certainly helps much too. If you are on the lookout for macro subjects, going slow will reduce the likelihood of passing by a prized critter. If you are leaning towards wide angle photography on another dive, it is less likely that you will scare away a potential subject if you are moving at a deliberately unhurried pace.

Assuming that you find subjects that you would like to shoot, avoiding backscatter, the bane of underwater photographers, will be your next challenge. You'll find advice on avoiding or limiting backscatter in every book on underwater photography: place your strobes to the sides of the camera and angle them inwards to minimise the number of particles that bounce light straight back to the camera. While it's easy to get complacent about strobe positioning in clear waters, strobe positioning can irreversibly damage a picture when shooting in adverse conditions.

When shooting macro subjects in poor visibility, bring your strobes forward as far as you can to minimise the column of water lit by the strobes. If you are after wide-angle shots, make sure to position the strobes far to the sides of the camera, and light your subject with the edge of the beam. Do check the LCD review screen once in a while to make sure that the results are in accordance with what you expected.

A side benefit of angling the strobes towards the subject, and brushing the latter with the edge of the beam is that built-in modelling lights will not illuminate suspended particles

A diver visits accessible areas of the Seven Skies Wreck. A very wide angle lens lets you get close but still cover a large area. (3m visibility) (Nikon D1X, Nikkor 10.5mm, F4.0, 1/60s, 2xInon strobes)

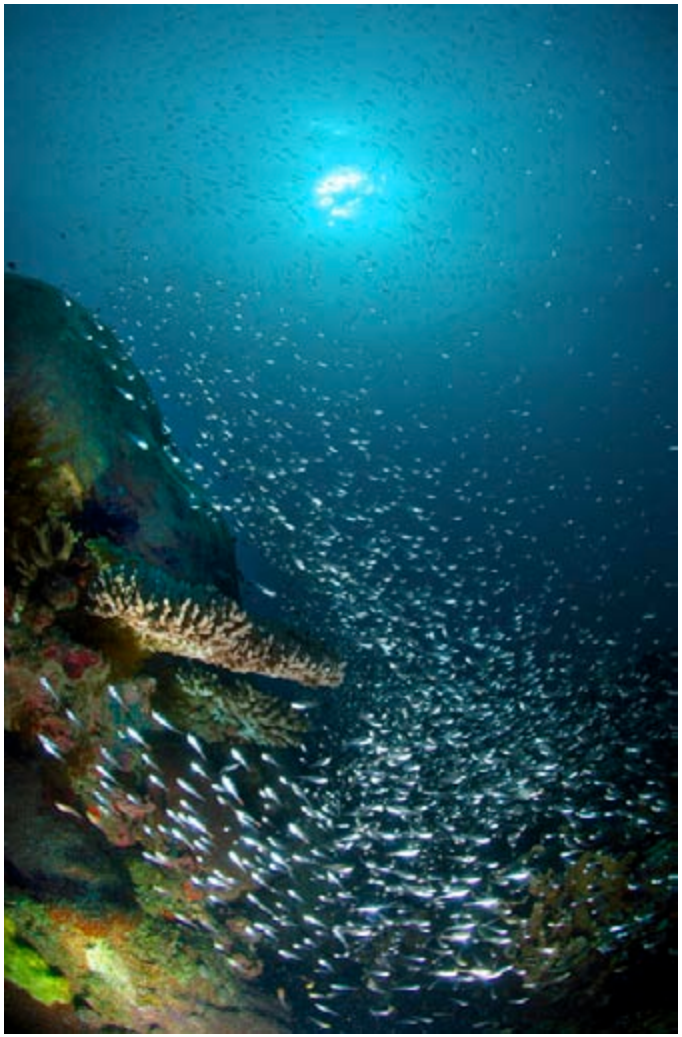
Poor strobe placement leads to severe backscatter (2m visibility).

located between the camera and the subject. If lights used for focus assistance are aimed directly at the subject from the top of the housing, this can fool the autofocus system (provided you are shooting in autofocus mode) into focusing on suspended particles, and the pictures generally end up out of focus.

The motto of underwater photographers becomes of paramount when shooting in low visibility: get close! On any dive, this entails exercising good control over your buoyancy. In adverse visibility, it becomes even more important. Less than perfect buoyancy or an instant on inattention could land you in a sticky situation... quite literally. My left knee still remembers its encounter with a crown-of-thorns!

A corollary to getting close is that you should get a lens that focuses close. For macro shots, select a relatively short telephoto lens (say 50mm or 60mm) with a short focusing distance. For wide angle work, go for as wide a lens as you can (ultra-wide or fisheye lens). These lenses not only focus close, but also distort the perspective to give the illusion of better water conditions. Properly lighting such lenses can be quite tricky and does require a fair bit of practice, but the results can be rather surprising, and are certainly worth it.

To balance foreground and background lighting, it is often necessary to adopt large apertures when shooting wide angle in poor



(Above) Using the vertical water column can give the illusion of better water conditions (about 3m horizontal visibility) (Nikon D1X, Nikkor 10.5mm, F10, 1/500s, 2xInon strobes)

(Above) Very slow shutter speeds can help balance foreground and background light nicely. Colourful subjects in the foreground improve shots overall. (3m visibility) (Nikon D100, Nikkor 12-24mm, F11, 1/20s, 2xIkelite strobes)

visibility. Another advantage of very wide lenses then becomes apparent: these lenses afford a very large depth-of-field, such that if you focus on the closest subject, the rest of the frame should also be in focus, regardless of the large aperture adopted.

Another benefit of using large apertures is that it further reduce potential backscatter. Since the amount of strobe power required to light the foreground is guided by the aperture and distance to the subject, for a given distance a larger aperture will require less strobe power. In turn, less strobe power means potentially less backscatter.

Should using a large aperture be insufficient to balance foreground and background lighting, u/w photographers can go for relatively low shutter speeds. An experienced diver with a good control over his buoyancy should be able to shoot at 1/15s or even slower while hand-holding the camera with little or no noticeable shake. Our movements are generally slower underwater. Therefore, it is possible to successfully adopt much slower shutter speeds than would be considered feasible on land. One key thing is to ensure that fast moving subjects are within the range of the strobes, so as to freeze the action. Otherwise, large sweeping trails could ensue.

In extreme conditions, where even while using very large apertures, the lack of available light would require adopting prohibitively low shutter speeds, a solution of last resort consists in boosting the ISO setting on the camera. Most housings allow access to this function underwater, so it should be possible to adjust this setting on the fly if conditions warrant it.

An interesting phenomenon that is commonly encountered by divers, albeit often without them being conscious of it, is that the vertical visibility is better than lateral visibility. This means that if you look up or down, you should generally be able to see further than if you look left and right. This is emphasized at mid-day, between 10am and 2pm.

With this in mind, photographers can make use of the vertical water column to increase the amount of available light coming into the camera. This helps balance foreground and background lighting with greater ease, and can also give the illusion of better water conditions.

One appealing alternative when shooting in shallow waters (less than 10-15m) with relatively poor visibility consists in doing away with strobes altogether, and utilising natural light only. This de facto eliminates the biggest potential problem associated with strobe lighting: backscatter.

Using filters and natural light offer real advantages in challenging conditions (about 5m visibility) (Nikon D100, Nikkor 10.5mm, F3.5, 1/45s, Magic Filter)

Unfortunately, using natural light alone generally yields flat, colourless images, with some exceptions. By adopting filters adapted to the dive environment, one can create stunning pictures in the seemingly most adverse conditions. Shooting with filters requires special techniques beyond the scope of this article, but for a start, red filters, or the popular Magic Filter, are highly successful at restoring natural colours in tropical (blue) waters, while in temperate (green) waters, magenta filters will fare better. Making use of the custom white balance function offered by most digital cameras will further enhance the beneficial effects of filters, generating what I would term as large 'colour depth' in pictures.

One obvious and easy way to

Using the right lens to get as close as possible to your subject will minimise chances of backscatter. (2m visibility) (Nikon D100, Nikkor 60mm,

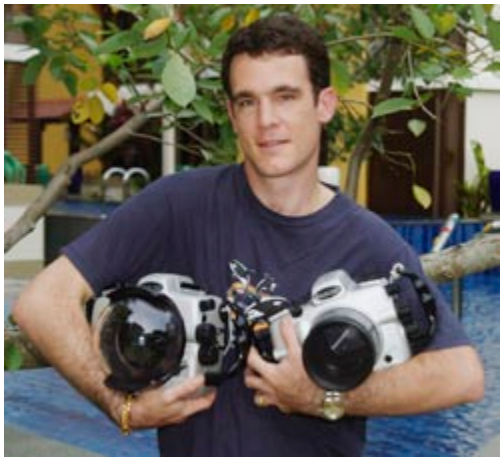
improve the outlook of pictures taken in low visibility consists in identifying a colourful subject and placing it near the foreground. Although this may prove a challenge in temperate waters, knowing the local environment, or discussing with people who do, should help. Carrying a torch or using the modelling light on your strobes also help reveal the presence of attractive subjects in adverse conditions. The presence of a colourful subject in the foreground helps focus the attention of the viewer on this rather than other less-than-perfect aspects of the shot.

We all strive (or should!) to achieve the perfect picture straight out of the camera. Some call it Murphy's law, but as chance would have it, if you are going to have backscatter or other problem on only one shot, it is quite likely to be on the photo of that one subject that you'd never seen before, and will probably never see again.

It is relatively easy to remove some obvious spots of backscatter from a shot in Photoshop using the Clone Stamp Tool, or the more recently introduced Healing Brush Tool. The latter is a better choice in most cases, as it preserves colour tonality, while applying the required texture. This results in more natural fixes. Describing the actual procedure is once again beyond the scope of the article, but it is good to at least know which tools are available to do the job.

Finally, it is also possible to use the Levels or Curves tools to balance foreground and background in case of gross exposure differences. While these tools are available in Photoshop, it is actually best to fix this particular problem directly within the RAW converter if you are shooting in RAW format. Most RAW converters also offer the Levels and Curves tool, and it is generally less detrimental to the picture to do such adjustments within these programs. If you are shooting in JPEG, then it is fine to use Photoshop for this task.

Hopefully with these few words of advice, you not only will not pass an opportunity to dive and shoot in low visibility, but will actually see the quality of your shots improve despite the conditions!



Mathieu Meur

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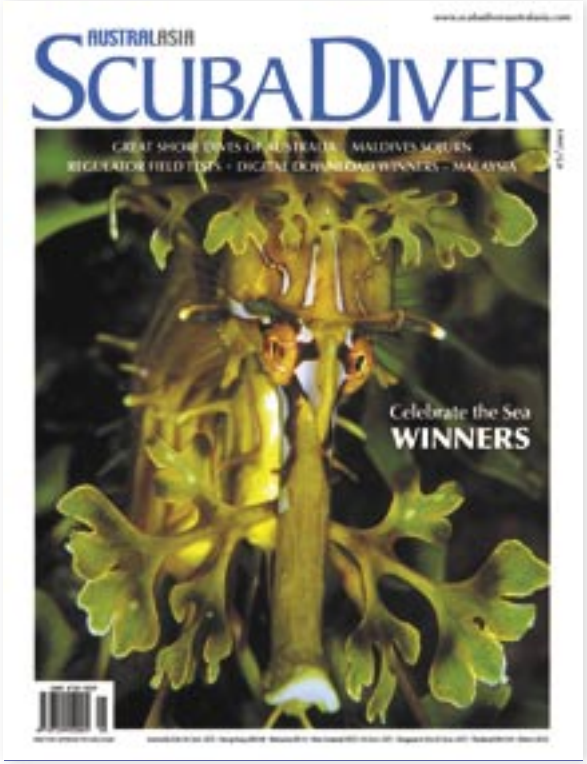

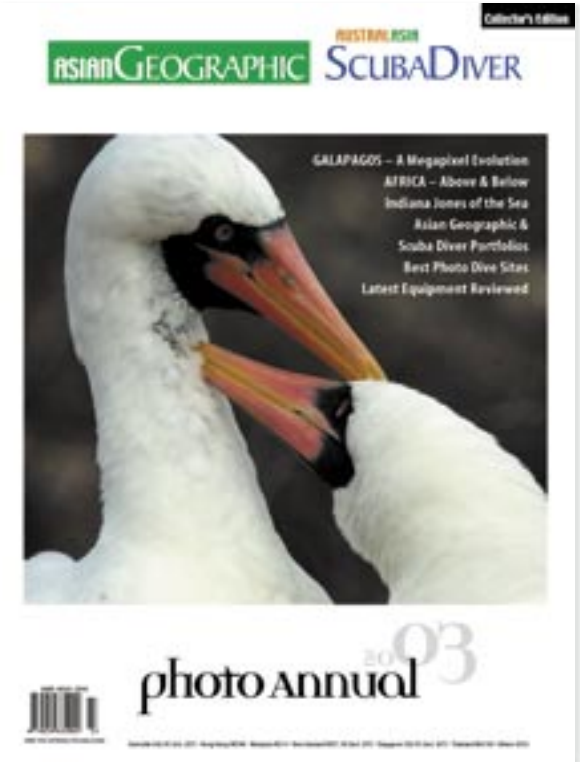

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Mantas and More at Yap Foto Fest

by James Michael

The First Annual Yap Digital Foto Fest hosted by the Manta Ray Bay Hotel has been deemed a success as students turned out some stunning shots of manta rays, mandarinfish and some special reef creatures during the week long event. Tim Rock, Lonely Planet author/photographer of many books on Micronesia, Mike Veitch, head of Manta Visions at Yap Divers, Chris Bangs, Guam-based pro and assistant to Wyland and Bill Acker, Yap's diving pioneer, were on the teaching staff. Some of Yap's best guides also joined the group to find special creatures and the best conditions.

The eager students from such locales as the US, Guam and Europe participated in a week's worth of both close-up and wide angle adventures in the channels, on the reefs and along the walls of the island. This brought divers face-to-face with a number of curious manta rays. Reef sharks, sleeping crocodilefish, schools of bigeye jacks and barracudas and plenty of small critters became the focus of the underwater shooters.

The experience level of the students ranged from several years of UW photography to "first time out of the box" with a camera and housing! There was a good range of equipment as well, from big DSLR twin strobe monstrosities to a couple of nice point-and-shoot style cameras.

The pros set up in the new Manta Ray conference room to give daily lectures about photography principles in the underwater world, workflow, use of Photoshop editing, advanced

techniques and one-on-one critiques.

The highlight of the week was the great slideshow presentation on Manta Ray's ship cum pub. In order to show off in style, the staff put up the giant video screen (16 x 10 feet) on the mast of the Mnuw ship restaurant and projected the slide show in grand fashion. People watched the results of the students in the open air theater under the stars while sipping suds from the ship brew pub.

All in all the First Annual Foto Festival was a grand success and another will be hosted next year in sunny Yap in June 2007. The Pacific pros are also traveling to Bali in October 2006 and Puerto Galera in 2007. For more details about the events please visit the Shoot Underwater website at www.shootunderwater.com.

James Michael

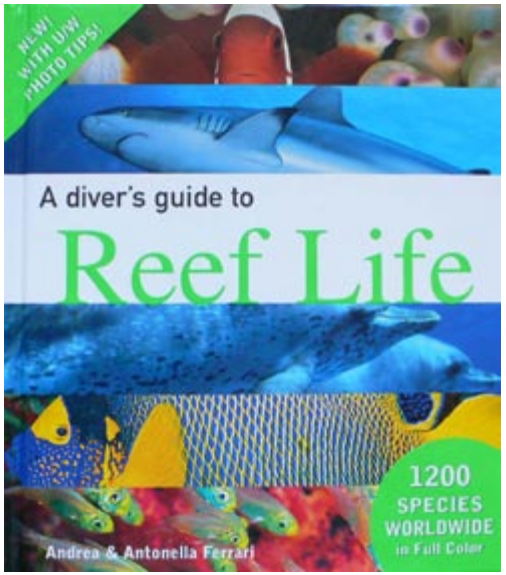
www.shootunderwater.com

Photos for this article by Shoot Underwater Yap students Ed Yoblonski, Russell Stoddard, Bill Marhoffer, Barb Anders, Melody Verbeurgt and Mark Stephenson.

Book Review

A Divers Guide to Reef Life

by Andrea and Antonella Ferrari



This 480 page 190 x 165cm book gives details of around 1200 tropical marine species from the Red Sea to the Caribbean and the Indo-Pacific.

Each description includes Distribution, Size, Habitat and Life Habits to make it a very useful, if heavy, traveling companion. In addition there are underwater photography tips for each section of subjects making this an informative u/w photo guide as well.

There have been many books covering such a wide range of subjects with factual details but I doubt if there has ever been any which have contained underwater photographs as good nor as consistent as Andrea and Antonella's. They not only identify the subject visually but also seem to freeze them in time and preserve them for us without harming them.

The printing quality does full justice to the photographs and completes a printed package which is of a very high order.

The final thing I liked was the Gallery sections littered around the book. The photos were equally impressive but contained much simpler captions refering to the description page and I got the feeling that the authors just wanted to include them because it would have been a shame to leave them out!

A Divers Guide to Reef Life is published by Nautilus Publishing in Malaysia.

I have never met them but Andrea and Antonella are obviously very nice people because they have put a link to UwP on their website

www.reefwonders.net

Guidelines for contributors

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

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

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc
Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards
Subjects - Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail
Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment
Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

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

E mail peter@uwpmag.com

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.

Parting Shot

I realise I am preaching to the converted here, but lets be honest; underwater photography is addictive, driving each of us beyond normal limits in search of the next image. But some photographic dives go beyond the insane, and I would like to confess this one!!.

Diving an intact Second World War vintage German aeroplane in excellent condition lying where it landed sixty years ago is fairly unique, so unique it counts as a personal top three dive ever. It wasnít deep, but the provenance and condition of this particular aircraft makes the dive so special. The Junkers Ju 52 didn't crash, it landed on the then frozen lake in 1940, carrying ammunition to support the German invasion of Narvik.

With insufficient fuel for the return journey the Junkers fell to the lakebed when the spring thaw thinned the ice. Lying on the lakebed with undercarriage extended the aircraft fuselage and wings still carry their original paint, protected by immersion in cold, fresh water. The only environmental damage is to the starboard wingtip sheared off by years of ice. Sadly, the rest of the damage has been caused by souvenir hunters; two of the three BMW radial engines and all three propellers have gone, as have the flight instruments. This loss of detail is disappointing, but as I write these words the hairs on my arm are tingling and I can still feel the thrill and excitement of looking up and staring at the ribbed Junkers wing and radial engine for the first time.

The madness of this dive is not the subject, it's everything before and after actually seeing the aeroplane; carrying a twinset, 12kg of lead and a camera housing for 500m thought deep snow. Breaking ice at the riverbank. Drifting downriver, feeling the thin veneer of ice at the lake edge break upon my hood. The drysuit freezing as stiff as a board during the post-dive walk back to the jeep. A freeflow on the wing inflator, forming a ball of ice as big as your fist around the first stage.

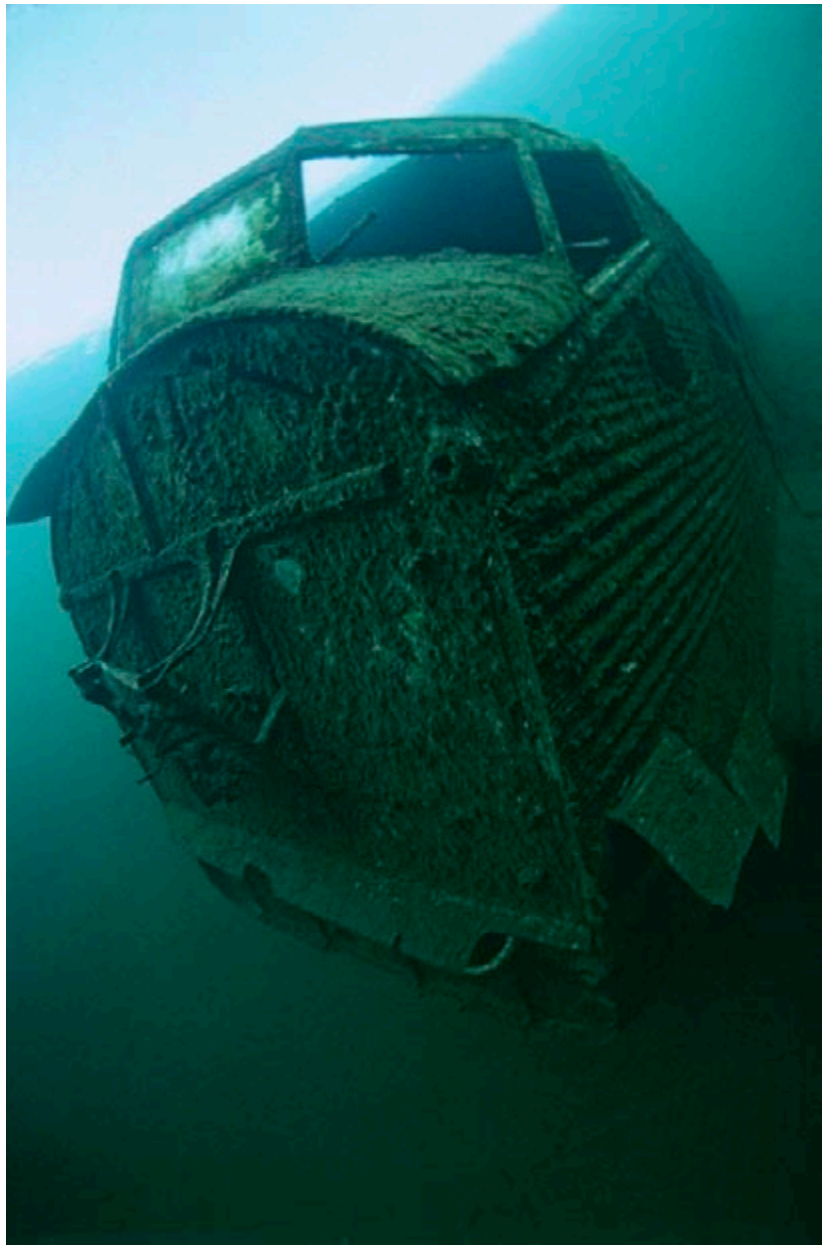
There is no defence to the charge of obsessive photo-driven diving. Guilty as charged!

Photo details:-

F90x in a Subal housing. 16mm fisheye, F4 at 1/10th. Ambient light (not much of that!). Film stock was Fuji Provia 400. Scanned on Nikon Coolscan 5000ED

Simon Brown

www.simonbrownimages.com



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

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