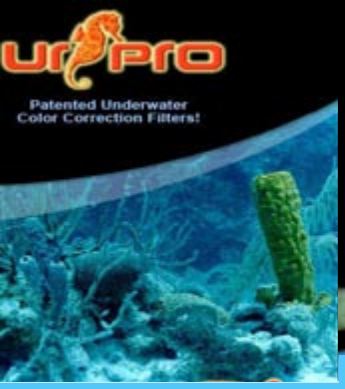
Underwater Photography

a web magazine Issue 33 Nov/Dec 2006



May 5, 2006
COLORFUL tidings
volume 2 Issue 1

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

Underwater Photography

A web magazine

Nov/Dec 2006

Contents

Cover shot by Steve Bloom

Underwater Photography magazine

www.pr-productions.co.uk

Editorial

Cover shot

I'd like to think that, if nothing else, UwP has been quite consistently good in the Front Cover Department. In fact such has been the consistency over the years that one out of our 13,386 registered readers actually wrote in to say so!

This Issue's front cover, to my mind, is no exception and it illustrates several salient points about photography and the world wide web.

Firstly the image itself is extraordinary. I shouldn't need to have to tell you that. The subject is highly unusual and the composition is spot on (especially for a horizontal cover) providing space at the top for the UwP title and in front of the elephant to list the content in this Issue. So why didn't I use it filling the page? The answer illustrates at the same time all that is both good and bad about the world wide web.

Steve Bloom is a professional nature photographer with several books and calendars to his credit. He has a natural eye and empathy for his subjects. He invests a huge amount of time, expense and effort to achieve his images and they are worth a great deal. But when he needs to publicise his excellent new book "Elephant!" he has a dilemma. He has to show extract images from his book in order to encourage readers to buy it yet not show them large enough, on the web at least, so that unscrupulous viewers could copy them and pass them off as their own.

As a result his web images are no larger than 480 pixels wide at 72dpi i.e. large enough to create an impression but not so large as to be worth copying. True, I would have liked to use the cover image full page and to use more images, larger to illustrate the article but I am happy to work within the requirements because they are extraordinary and I'm delighted to be able to use them in UwP.

The solution to all this is simple. Enjoy the images as they are in this Issue and if you want to see them in all their glory, buy the book!

Underwater photography competitions

I don't know whether it's just me but there seems to more underwater photography competitions than ever before. The advent of the world wide web has made organising such events and handling entries much easier.

However there must come a point when, if there are too many, it dilutes their effect in terms of entries and also the cudos of winning, not to mention the ability of the organisers to attract prizes.

In terms of wildlife photography, the Shell BBC competition must rate as the one with the most international renown. However this is a general wildlife photography competition in which underwater photographs, fortunately, have played an important part in recent years.

'Antibes', in France, is a long established competition but tends to be 'EuroCentric' but there is no doubt it is a great social event to attend.

Wouldn't it be great if we could have an underwater photography competition like the Shell BBC combined with the social side of Antibes?

Diver survey

Love them or hate them, surveys seems to be an important part of life these days. I feel that the survey on the right could be especially useful and I encourage you to participate.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

Diver survey

This diver survey is being administered collaboratively by some of your favourite diving related websites, to help us better understand your needs and to better serve you.

You are not required to provide any personally identifiable information, however, to enter into the drawing for the prize, you must provide your email address.

By taking the survey you are not giving the prize sponsor nor participating sites any permission to contact you. We respect your privacy.

www.divephotoguide.com/survey2.php

News, Travel & Events

British Underwater Image Festival 2007

March 16-18th 2007

Following the enormous success of the first ever British Underwater Image Festival (BUIF) in 2006, images are now being accepted for the 2007 event which promises to be even bigger and better. BUIF is to be held on the 16-18 March next year at the Birmingham NEC as part of the Go Diving! show.

The competition has been designed to apply across a range of abilities, from professional television documentary makers to first-time photographers. Finalists will be exhibited and shown at the NEC during the Outdoors Show in an event that will mirror the much-celebrated Antibes underwater imaging festival held in the South of France.

Thousands of pounds worth of prizes are on offer to the winners, and will be announced in the coming months. The best 50 prints from the Open Category, ten from the Portfolio Category and ten from the Digital Compact Category will be displayed on the walls outside the DIVE theatre, while six finalists in the film categories will be shown throughout the show on Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

'Last year's inaugural BUIF showed just how much talent there is out there and this year we want to uncover even more so we've raised the stakes,' said DIVE editor Simon Rogerson. 'It will be another magnificent showcase of new and existing talent in underwater imaging.'

www.divemagazine.co.uk

Upcoming International Photo & Video Competitions

DivePhotoGuide.com

November and December international photo competition deadlines, brought to you by DivePhotoGuide.com. Some competitions are open to all photographers, while others are only open to amateurs. Remember, always make sure that you note the specific usage rights secured by the competition before submitting any images or videos.

Good luck!

Nov 15
International Underwater Film Festival Belgrade (Serbia)
http://www.kpa.co.yu

Nov 30
Nikon Photo Contest International (USA)
http://nikonimaging.com/global/activity/npci/npci2006-2007/overview.htm

Dec 10
Moscow International Diving Festival "Golden Dolphin" (Russia)
http://english.mosfest.ru/cgi-bin/show_photo.pl?lang=eng

Dec 31
Beneath The Sea 2007 (USA)
www.beneaththesea.org

Dec 31
Photoshop User Awards (USA)
https://www.photoshopuserawards.com/index.php

www.divephotoguide.com

The 2nd Annual Wetpixel.com and DivePhotoGuide.com International Photo & Video Competition

... in association with Our World-Underwater

Wetpixel.com and DivePhotoGuide.com have teamed up again in association with Our World Underwater to celebrate the beauty and delicacy of the marine environment with the 2nd annual international underwater photography and video competition.

Photographers will compete in six still image categories plus one video category, to win more than $35,000 in prizes, including premium dive travel, underwater photography equipment, and more! Dive packages include trips to some of the top photo destinations in the world: South Africa, Socoros Islands, Raja Empat, Komodo, Grand Cayman, the Galapagos Islands, Bora Bora, the Solomon Islands, Manado, Lembeh Strait, Yap, Cocos (Keeling) Island and the Bahamas! Other prizes include camera housings, strobes, lighting systems, and other valuable items.

The competition includes a category for images that focus on conservation and the marine environment, and one specifically for entries taken by compact digital cameras. All compact category entrants will receive one free online lesson from TheUnderwaterPhotographer.com

Our panel of celebrity judges will select winners after the 11:59PM (Pacific Time), Jan 7, 2007 deadline. Winners will be announced on stage at the 2007 Our World-Underwater film festival in Chicago, Illinois (February 9-11, 2007), and will be published by our supporting media partners worldwide

www.underwatercompetition.com

Galapagos with Mauricio Handler

11 - 28 June 2007

The Galapagos Islands continue to be the holy grail for the land and underwater adventurer and at some point in once life a journey there is a must.

Mauricio will be leading this 10 day Photo Expedition to once again explore this land of close wildlife encounters. Known for the approachability of all its land animals including Sea Lions, Boobie Colonies, Albatros Colonies, Land and Marine Iguanas to name just a few. Galapagos is as exciting on land as it is underwater were we will be searching for Penguins, Schooling Hammerhead Sharks, Sea Lions, Turtles, Golden Sting Ray encounters and a myriad of unique marine life some found only there. We will be onboard the state of the art air conditioned 100 foot Peter Hughes "Sky Dancer" . We will be diving most of the Islands including Darwin and Wolfe.

Having been there before for a total of 10 weeks including a 6 week expedition with National Geographic, Mauricio will offer his technical and creative advise and photography expertise on how to get the most out of this expedition.

Space is open to all underwater photographers including non-photographer divers.

For complete details and to answer any questions you may have on this expedition, please contact Mauricio Directly.

www.handlerphoto.com

Images from the Sea
by Rodger Klein

Rodger Klein has a new book 'Images from the Sea' available through www.mypublisher.com

This is a fascinating new service made possible by the world wide web and digital printers. It enables underwater photographers to present their work in bound form without having to commit to thousands of copies.

Prices per copy vary depending on the number of pages and the finish

www.rhkuw.com
www.mypublisher.com

Cool Waters, Emerald Seas
by John Collins

It is a common misconception to think that the cool waters between the tropics and polar regions are barren and forbidding.

John Collins takes us on a marine adventure within the oceans that lap many of our most populated shores, from the north Atlantic around western Europe, to the chilly Pacific of North America and South Africa.

His portrait of a little explored part of our ocean world is the culmination of twenty years of diving the seas around Ireland, Scotland, Canada, South Africa and Tasmania.

From his voyages he brings us 120 photographs illustrating the colourful and bizarre life below while also conveying the mood of exploration.

Cool Waters, Emerald Seas: Diving Temperate Waters (ISBN 095353538X, Hardback, 250 x 250mm 200 pp, €29.95, £19.95).

www.corkuniversitypress.com

Beneath North SulaweSea
by Michael Aw

This book encapsulates the splendour and richness of Nature's richest realm - North Sulawesi. The region is the most diverse marine ecological empire of our ocean planet. Though the imagery is not shot over the course of a 24 hours period, they are however captured at the time of the day indicated. The pictorial documentary reveals the behavior and nuances of life in a day 'Beneath North SulaweSea'. The moving pictures DVD edition is compose of 698 still images and video scenes artistically weave into a special presentation with original music score specially written by award winning music of the sea composer Eric Bettens.

'Beneath North SulaweSea' is the long overdue update to "Beneath Bunaken (1993)", the award winning almanac that was selected as the Presidential Gift for the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation conference in 1994. Its true intent, 'Beneath North Sulawesi' is to evolve as an accolade for the luxuriant marine biodiversity of North Sulawesi found no where else in the world.

www.michaelaw.com

Japan's Killing Fleet

Photo Mark Votier

In December 2006 & January 2007, the Japanese whaling fleet will begin to illegally kill 1,000 whales in the Antarctic Whale Sanctuary. Fifty of these whales will be endangered humpbacks and another fifty will be endangered fin whales. Although the Japanese claim research as their motivation, the only research they are undertaking is product development and marketing of whale meat – to turn their illicit whale flesh into dog food, cosmetics, and sushi dishes for profit.

The killing of these whales is a gross violation of numerous international treaties and regulations including the U.N. World Charter for Nature and the Antarctic Territorial Treaty – commercial whaling is outlawed and it is illegal to hunt endangered species in an international whale sanctuary.

It is more important than ever that we act now.

Operation Leviathan: The Plan for 2006

Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has embarked on Operation Leviathan: a campaign to raise funds for a new vessel to return to Antarctica in December to defend the whales. In order for us to be effective, we must have a ship that can match the speed of the Japanese whaling fleet and enforce international conservation law.

Our goal for this effort is $3 million to be raised in cash and pledges so that we can purchase a ship similar to the one pictured above. This is a huge undertaking for us considering our annual budget ($1.4M) and our time constraints - but one that will meet with great success if we all participate.

We are more determined than ever to defend these whales which deserve to live their lives wild and free. We believe that the heritage of future generations should include the magnificent and intelligent whales and that the delicately balanced ecosystems that we enjoy are preserved for future generations.

The whales are counting on us for protection . . . We are counting on you to get us there.

www.seashepherd.org

Iceland Murders Its First Endangered Whale

"I view the taking of a whale's life in the same manner I would view the taking of a human life. It is murder, and it is a crime to slaughter such socially complex intelligent and sensitive sentient beings. The method of killing is torturous and grossly inhumane. We would never tolerate a domestic animal to suffer such a long and painful death. Every person who regards themselves as civilized must express their disgust and their revulsion against the whale killing atrocities of Iceland, Norway, the Faeroes, and Japan. These people who practice this horrific serial killing of whales are the most barbarous representatives of humanity upon this planet and cast shame upon their nations."

Captain Paul Watson
Founder and
President of Sea Shepherd

Iceland killed an endangered fin whale yesterday. This is the first illegal murder of a whale since Iceland announced their intention to violate the global moratorium on commercial whaling.

The whale was swimming happily along some two hundred miles off the coast of Iceland when some Nordic nimrod cowardly slammed an exploding harpoon into its backside.

The whale struggled in incredible pain for a long time before losing strength and finally drowned after an agonizing period when it lungs ruptured and its heart burst from the strain of oxygen deprivation.

There are some who will take offense at our use of the word "murder." We make no apologies.

Whales are highly intelligent, long lived, socially complex, sensitive sentient beings. It is a crime against nature and humanity to cruelly snuff out the life of even one of these great creatures.

What Iceland did is unforgivable and tragic, and leaves us with a deep resentment and anger towards Iceland.

Sea Shepherd is calling for a total boycott of all Icelandic products and tourism to Iceland and the Society is already planning a campaign to confront Icelandic whale killers in Icelandic waters in 2007.

"We are recruiting crew and we are organizing a plan to go to Iceland and it will be a priority following our campaign beginning December 1st to oppose the illegal whaling activities of the Japanese whaling fleet in the Antarctic Whale Sanctuary.

www.seashepherd.org

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

New products

Ikelite Nikon D-80 housing

This heavy duty thick wall dSLR housing is molded of corrosion free clear polycarbonate, features full capabilities, and operates safely to 200 feet.

The housing includes iTTL conversion circuitry that provides four 1/3 f/stop increments over or under flash compensation that is added to or subtracted from any compensation entered into the camera, or seven manual power settings in half-stop increments. All choices are obtained by simply rotating a knob on the housing back.

All ports from our SLR systems can be utilized, allowing use of most macro, wide angle, and zoom lenses. This system allows you to see that the port is sealed.

The Release Handles allow easy

attachment and removal of SubStrobe mounting arms at the touch of a button. Two screws remove the handle and tray assembly for traveling.

Controls for all camera functions are provided except lock switch. AE/AF lock button can be activated with your thumb while holding the handle. The AF "on" is controlled by push button.

Camera Flash Compensation button can be activated by your index finger while your hand remains on the handle. A control for Lens Release is also included.

Focus-mode (C/S/M) selector can be changed with a little finesse.

The camera tray is notched, allowing battery and card replacement without removing the camera from the tray.

The housing 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.

www.ikelite.com

PT-E03 underwater housing for the Olympus E-400

The PT-E03 underwater case has been specially customised for the Olympus E-400 and is waterproof up to a water pressure equivalent to a depth of 40 metres. With its durable, high quality polycarbonate construction, it protects the camera from water while also cushioning it from knocks and bumps on land.

The TTL flash connector allows optional use of the Olympus FL-36 TTL flash with the PFL-01 & PFL-E01 flash housing. Five interchangeable lens ports allow the optional use of the Olympus 14-45mm, 14-42mm, 11-22mm or 14-54mm, 7-14mm, 8mm Fisheye and the 35mm as well as the 50mm Macro lens.

www.olympus.co.uk

EWA Marine U-XBP and U-XBP100

Do you own a large D-SLR? A Nikon D2X or Canon Eos 1DS MkII for example? Do you need to use it somewhere hazardous or even take it underwater? Your worries are over. Cameras Underwater, the sole distributors of Ewa-Marine products in the UK and Ireland, is pleased to announce the long awaited arrival of their U-XBP and U-XBP100 products. These flexible yet durable housings enable photographers to take their cameras into otherwise camera hostile environments. Whether you are working in a pool, on the beach, in the surf or diving (up to 50m), you can rely on Ewa's housings to protect your equipment.

The U-XBP will take a large DSLR with a lens diameter up to 72mm; for larger lenses up to 82mm, the U-XBP100 is required. Both housings will accommodate a large, hot-shoe mounted flashgun.

These two new models mean that there is a Ewa housing available for virtually all SLRs, digital or 35mm.

The U-XBP costs £224.95 and the U-XBP100 £249.95, both prices include VAT.

www.camerasunderwater.co.uk

Tokina 10-17mm F3.5-4.5 fisheye zoom

This interesting lens from Tokina is now available in Nikon D and Canon EOS mounts.

It gives a coverage of 100-180° and has a minimum focus of just 14cm (5.5")

In SLR film days Pentax used to offer a similar lens which was very useful underwater.

www.dalephotographic.co.uk

Aquatica Canon EOS 30D housing

Aquatica is pleased to introduce the Aquatica 30D housing for the Canon 30D DSLR camera. This new housing combines a new ergonomic design and the latest control technologies to deliver a high performance, user-friendly experience for the underwater photographer.

Developed based on our tested and proven port system, the rugged yet compact Aquatica 30D is

compatible with all of our bayonet ports and accessories, The100 meters (over 300 feet) pressure certification is sure to please the technical diver.

The housing is equipped with two universally accepted Nikonos-type strobe connectors, giving the user a wide array of underwater strobes to choose from and the flexibility to mix brands and models of strobes as desired.

Aquatica 30D: Major Features

New ergonomically positioned main dial and quick access dial controls.

Improved placement of the shutter release lever.

The Aquatica 30D housing is 100 meters depth rated, has standard Nikonos-type dual strobe connector and a versatile port system to accommodate most lenses used for underwater photography.

www.aquatica.ca

Sea & Sea Nikon D80 housing

www.seaandsea.com

Nexus Nikon D80 housing

News has just come in about the Nexus housing for the Nikon D80

It will be the same size as the D70 and all the controls are available.

There will be dual sync ports and it will come with a standard finder, but optional 45degree finder will be available.

Dry Weight: 4.75 lbs

Dimensions: 8.5x6.75x5.25 inches

www.marinecamera.com

DIGIDEEP

Fashion for underwater photographers

Some of you might have already seen them on boats while diving and asked yourselves: Where can I get these cool Shirts with the “digital snapper” or “strobe power” design? Lars and Andi (of DIGIDEEP.com) have created two comic slogans. As winter is coming and most people do not like to run around with a skinny t-shirt in the cold, they have produced a huge variety of different clothing for women and men. You can select from a Hooded Sweater, Polo-Shirt and various t-shirt styles – including stretch wear for women. Prices vary from 15 to 39 Euros excluding shipping.

www.digideep.com

Nikon 105mm VR lens

Alex Mustard

Over the last couple of year's Nikon has introduced plenty of new glass to excite photographers with fresh possibilities and new solutions. But we photographers of the wet variety can feel a little hard done by because of the 10 or so new lenses released since the 12-24mm, none have really been ideal for underwater use. All that changed in February when Nikon announced a new 105mm macro lens: the micro-nikkor 105mm f2.8 AF-S VR to give it its full name.

Macro is a big part of underwater photography and perennially the favourite lenses for Nikon shooters are the 60mm and 105mm. The 60mm is the favoured option in low viz and with larger subjects. While the 105mm is better for shyer subjects and for high magnification reproduction. This is because the longer camera to subject distance (for the same reproduction size) facilitates lighting subjects with our strobes. Few land photographers own more than one macro lens, but underwater with the inherent restrictions on camera to subject distances many underwater photographers routinely choose both macro optics in their lens bags. For the sake of this review I will concentrate on evaluating the new 105mm VR against the old 105mm for underwater photography.

To cut to the chase, the main upgrade features of the new 105mm are:

1) VR or Vibration Reduction gyroscopic image stabilisation
2) AF-S or in lens Silent Wave Motor driven autofocus
3) New higher quality glass lens elements
4) 9 curved blade aperture diaphragm
5) Internal focusing of the lens – i.e. the lens does not change length.

All that probably sounds a bit dull. But I now want to go through each of these (in reverse order) explaining their impact on using the lens underwater.

But before that, the first thing you will notice about this new 14 element lens is that it is noticeably fatter than the old lens. This has two consequences for us – the first is that it can cause problems fitting the lens into some housings and existing macro ports (I am using a modified port for my Subal). The second consequence is that the lens has a larger (62mm vs 52mm) diameter front filter than the old 105mm, so

This cropped image demonstrates the impressive sharpness and detail recorded by the 105mm VR, as one goby eats another. Nikon D2X + 105mm VR. Subal Housing. Subtronic Strobes. 1/125th @ F14.

The new Nikon 105mm VR macro lens. The lens incorporates 14 optical elements, a nine blade aperture, AF-S autofocus and gyroscopically controlled VRII vibration reduction.

close-up filters that you had (such as the 3T and 4T) will not fit on the new lens. Nikon also state that the new lens will not auto-focus with their AF-S teleconverters, although it will auto-focus with my own third party (non-AF-S) teleconverter.

Internal focusing in a macro lens

is a new development for Nikon, but not for other manufacturers. It is useful for underwater shooting because it makes port design and optimisation much easier, although it should be noted that the close-up dioptres for the 105mm VR are quite big and your port should leave 2cm of clearance in front of the lens if you want to use a dioptre.

The purpose of the 9 bladed aperture diaphragm is to improve the smoothness of the *bokeh*. Don't worry if that makes no sense – I'll explain. *Bokeh* (is an Anglicised Japanese word) that describes the aesthetic qualities of out-of-focus areas in an image – or the smoothness of the blur. Simply, the more circular the shape of the aperture (and less hexagonal) the smoother and more pleasing the out of focus areas of the picture will appear. Macro photography is characterised by shallow depth of field and lots of out of focus areas, which is why all this effort has been put into the aperture.

So does this make a noticeable difference underwater? Yes. In fact before I read anything about the aperture of this new lens I had commented to several people that the lens produced much smoother backgrounds than the old one.

The main effect of the new glass is unsurprisingly to produce sharper results. The old 105mm was a sharp lens, but most people felt that it was not as pin-sharp as the 60mm. The new 105mm is clearly sharper and in my opinion is as good if not better than my 60mm. Also of benefit are the incorporation of two special optical elements, one with ED or Extra-low Dispersion glass that reduces chromatic aberrations (CA) and one with Nikon's Nano Crystal coat that minimises internal lens reflections. CA is amplified by close-up dioptres so again this seems a useful addition in a macro lens.

The aperture is made with 9 curved blades which greatly improves the smoothness of blurred backgrounds, even at small apertures (note - the smoothness of the background here is rather undermined by JPG compress artefacts for reproduction online). Nikon D2X + 105mm VR. 5T close-up lens. Subal Housing. Subtronic Strobes. 1/250th @ F22.

In dark conditions the AF will hunt like the old lens – and you should consider using a focusing light. A focus light is not essential and I took this image of a Blenny under and overhang without one. Nikon D2X + 105mm VR. 5T close-up lens. Subal Housing. Subtronic Strobes. 1/250th @ F20.

This picture is not remarkable in itself, but the fact that I was able to take 8 similar frames in a row, and all were sharp, is. The VR or Vibration Reduction of the new lens really works underwater making it much easier to use long exposures to produce blue backgrounds and sharp foregrounds in macro photos. Nikon D2X + 105mm VR. 5T close-up lens. Subal Housing. Subtronic Strobes. 1/20th @ F16.

Vibration Reduction will reduce the risk of camera shake blurring an image during a long-ish exposure. But of course it can do nothing about subject movement. VR has ensured that the body of this Striped Sweetlips is captured sharply, but the fins show a bit of movement blur on the edges. Nikon D2X + 105mm VR. Subal Housing. Subtronic Strobes. 1/25th @ F7.1.

So can you see a difference? If I look at the details in my images at 100% in Photoshop I can see a difference in sharpness and CA, most noticeable towards the corners of the frame. That said, if I hadn't looked for the difference I probably would never have noticed it.

So far the new lens is impressing, if not exactly wiping the floor with the old one. The AF-S is where things start to get more interesting. Try the lens out on land and the speed and accuracy of the AF-S driven focusing is astonishing (particularly on my D2X) and in a different league to the old 105mm.

But the picture is very different in the low light, low contrast, monochrome world beneath the waves. In these conditions auto-focus tends to hunt. When the old 105mm hunted the focus racks through its range relatively slowly and it was possible to take your finger off and on the shutter release to stop it close to the point of focus to help it on its way- a little bit of manual over-ride as it were. This technique is not possible when the new lens is hunting because it zips through the focus range so quickly. The new lens does not hunt anymore than the old one – it is just the speed at which it zips through the focus range is makes you feel more of a passenger and less in control.

This problem does not exist in bright conditions or if you use a good focusing torch, and after a dive or two I found I had quickly adjusted to the focusing characteristics. Some might say that you can always use the lens in manual focus, which is true. But the AF-S is one of the main selling points of this lens, and to say that you can always turn it off rather undermines the case for buying this lens.

I have canvassed the opinions of

In bright conditions the AF is excellent and a big improvement over the old lens. It is easily capable of tracking the eye of a moving fish – here a Bluestriped Grunt. Nikon D2X + 105mm VR. Subal Housing. Subtronic Strobes. 1/50th @ F8.

several other photographers on this subject and views vary. Some feel that the new lens has "clearly superior" autofocus, while others say that they do sometimes miss the slower focus racking of the old lens, but they prefer the new one. And on reflection I think I fall into the latter category. Despite dedicating four paragraphs to auto-focus, perhaps I say a lot more when I tell you that since I got the 105mm VR, I have shot in Indonesia, Cayman and Sardinia and I haven't even put the old lens on my camera.

Finally and probably most interesting is the VR or Vibration Reduction image stabilisation because this is the first time that this feature has been available in a popular focal length underwater lens and also in any macro lens. Firstly, I should make it clear that the advantage of image stabilisation is to reduce or eliminate camera shake or blurring during long-ish exposures. This lens features Nikon's VRII, the second generation design, which they claim gives "the equivalent stability of a shutter speed that is 4 stops faster when compared with a conventional lens".

If you only shoot short exposure macro shots (i.e. with black backgrounds) VR will not be a significant feature. Its main use underwater is to help us produce blue backgrounds and high depth of field in macro photos by shooting long exposures. And if you like these types of images - it really works.

I have shot Whip Gobies many times and I always prefer these images on blue backgrounds as I feel the water colour really compliments the orange or red of the sea whip. To get a pleasing depth of field I usually keep my aperture on F16 and have to slow my shutter speed down (to say 1/20th) to get the blue. Now I (and many others) have been taking such images for years without VR. With the old 105mm I would usually take about 8-10 frames of a goby at 1/20th to be sure of a sharp one or two. In Bali, during my first dive with the 105mm VR I happened across some whip gobies and thought they'd make the perfect test. As usual I shot 8 frames and to my astonishment every single one of them was sharp. I was sold. Vibration Reduction really does work underwater and has a clear benefit for taking this type of shot.

So should you rush out and buy this lens? Well, first make sure it fits in your housing and ports. It is certainly sharper than the old one, although only if you really, really look. Also the *bokeh* is noticeably more pleasing that the old lens. But both are minor points, really. The AF-S is faster in bright conditions, but the same speed makes it less user friendly when hunting in low light. And the VR really works, but is only useful if you want to shoot balanced light macro shots.

To come to a conclusion you must factor in your own situation. If you are looking to upgrade the advantages are small and the price is quite big (especially as it might mean buying new ports and dioptres). If you don't already have a 105mm, then this new lens looks tempting, but then again there are some fantastic second hand deals on the old lens at the moment.

I guess it comes down to whether you are a macro-fanatic, in which case this lens has quality that will pay you back in each image you take. But if 105mm macro is only a minor part of your underwater photography the old 105mm will almost certainly continue take every image you could want.

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com

OLYMPUS

NELOS

NELOS INTERNATIONAL UNDERWATER PHOTO & VIDEO FESTIVAL

18th NELOS INTERNATIONAL UNDERWATER PHOTO & VIDEO FESTIVAL

Lectures & projections by:

ALEX MUSTARD (UK)

CHRISTOPH GERIGK (FR)

PETER SCOONES (UK)

LINDA PITKIN (UK)

WILLEM KOLVOORT (NL)

SHARKPROJECT (AUS)

ANDY MC LEOD (SCOT)

And more names to be confirmed...

Closing date for competition entries:
27th of October 2006

Contest rules, subscribe form, tickets & info:
www.nelosfilmfestival.be

OLYMPUS

duiken SCACAM subtronic

www.underwater-festival.com

Duikmagazine

Member of:

EUROPEAN UNDERWATER IMAGES FESTIVALS ASSOCIATION

2 & 3 DECEMBER 2006 10h00 - 18h00

CONGRESS CENTRE TER ELST - EDEGEM - BELGIUM

International competition for underwater photo & underwater video

Picture by: Alex Mustard

GreenWater Magic

By Peter Rowlands

Before we start, let's get one thing out of the way and into the open. If you didn't already know, I am one half of Magic filters and a complete part of Underwater Photography magazine. The latter gives me control of what appears in the Magazine while the former has allowed me to play my part in producing filters which give exciting results in blue water. That's right, I'm biased but, I'd like to believe, honest so if you choose to believe that the following is propaganda, stop here and save your time.

If, however, you are interested in hearing about how green water photography underwater is about to get an amazing new tool to produce a completely different set of results and, to a certain extent, re-write the rule book, read on.

Having moved down to Devon in the southwest of England last March I dusted off my drysuit and had my tanks re-tested in readiness for a season of diving in the colder, greener waters we have around the UK coast. As a long time fan of filter photography in blue water with UR Pro and Magic filters I was curious to see if there was a way to apply the same successful formula to achieve similar results in green water.

Traditional filter theory based on film emulsion dictates that a magenta filter can be used to counteract the green colour, magenta being the opposite colour to green. The strength of that filter would depend on the total light path from the surface down to the camera plus the camera to subject distance. Any filter will reduce the amount of light reaching the camera and add to this the low light levels so you already have a photographic challenge.

Fortunately film has been replaced with image sensors backed up by clever electronics and this combination is helping to improve the shots we can take underwater. The most important function is to be able to adjust the 'white balance'. This means fine tuning the colour of pictures to remove any strong cast such as the redness of a setting sun on land or the naturally strong cyan colour of clear water. Such control requires the digital camera to be able to 'manually white balance' (MWB) i.e. take a test shot of a scene which the camera then interprets how to restore to 'white light' rather than with a colour cast.

As a long time video shooter

(Above) Filters affect colour throughout the frame and create more even lighting and an improved perception of clarity.
Subal Nikon D70, 10.5 lens, available light, 400asa, 1/10th @ F2.8. Depth 23 metres

(Right) The top shot is taken with a Magic filter and Auto White Balance and the bottom one with a filter and Manual White Blaance. I know which one I prefer!
Subal Nikon D70, 10.5 lens, available light, 800asa, 1/25th @ F2.8. Depth 12 metres

underwater I was already aware of the capability of electronics to manually white balance and I eagerly awaited the arrival of digital stills cameras with the same function. Indeed if you check the back issues of UwP you will find that in UwP8, as far back as Aug/Sept 2002 I was extolling the virtues of this new found function.

So back in the UK I pestered Alex Mustard's younger and more flexible brain to come up with a green water version of his already successful blue water magic filter formula. A day or two later I received a clandestine call enquiring if I was alone and had I swept the room for bugs? Having reassured him on both counts he whispered "Try XXX with a bit YYY and a dash of ZZZ" and then he hung up. It was only then that I realised Alex had never volunteered to test the formula with me. Apparently he can only take photographs in water warmer than 25°C otherwise his trigger finger gets a teeney bit cold…

And so it was that I have spent the last six months testing several combinations in order to get what we feel is the right formula for the situation and I have to say that they have been probably the most exciting months of my underwater photography career ever.

Right from the start it was obvious that light levels would be low. This necessitated using maximum aperture (F2.8) all the time. Secondly visibility would be limited and the only lens to use would be the 10.5mm full frame fisheye on my Nikon D70 in a Subal housing. Thirdly such low light levels, even at F2.8, resulted in slow shutter speeds which rarely went above 1/30th and were usually 1/15th or slower. Finally the depth of field at F2.8 is very limited so concentrating on subjects over a metre away would be beneficial. Fortunately we are not short of a wreck or two in Plymouth waters and these proved the ideal subjects as, as far as I am aware, they don't move much and usually have strategically placed wreckage to lean the camera on to steady it during a long exposure.

The early results were impressive and the immediacy of seeing the digital image was extremely exciting. I was like a Ferrari test driver. I thought I had the best day job in the world and the reactions of my fellow divers was 'Wow" whenever I showed them the results.

One particular dive did it for me. It was a flat calm morning in May when we rendezvoused at Sound Diving in Plymouth to get our tanks filled. It was 8am and owner Steve Carpenter was twiddling knobs and venting hoses. Suddenly he looked at a chart on his wall and then at his watch. "Hand Deeps" he said and went back to his tanks. Being new to the area I assumed this was some sort of veterinary term but it turns out

At 23 metres the subtle colour changes of these jewell anemonies together with background light would not have been as succesful if lit by strobes. Subal Nikon D70, 10.5 lens, available light, 400asa, 1/10th @ F2.8

there is a reef close to the Eddystone lighthouse by the same name. 20 minutes later we were there in Peter Mitchell's superb Boston Whaler 22' Outrage. Peter is the author of several books on wrecks in the Southwest and an inspirational diving enthusiast.

We dropped down to 23 metres – the deepest I had ever taken a GreenWater Magic filter. Despite the flat sea and bright sun, light levels were low but the water clarity was reasonable. I took a test shot for Manual White Balance (MWB) thinking it would be pointless - at this depth there was hardly any colour at all to the naked eye. However I was pleasantly surprised when the camera replied "Good". This meant that it would be able to adjust the colours even at that depth.

The next 20 minutes remain etched in my photo brain. Hand Deeps is a series of gullies and drop offs with walls of jewel anemones in a variety of colours. The traditional method to photograph them would be with electronic flash (strobe) to capture their colour and detail yet here I was armed with just a thin piece of

Wrecks are the ideal subject as they don't move about a lot. Subal Nikon D70, 10.5 lens, available light, 400asa, 1/30th @ F2.8. Depth 19 metres

Dive models need to keep still for sharp results at slow shutter speeds. Subal Nikon D70, 10.5 lens, available light, 400asa, 1/15th @ F2.8. Depth 18 metres

(Above) Magic filters also work well with compact cameras which have a Manual White Balance setting. Panasonic FX01, 200asa, 1/20th@ F2.8. 8 metres.
Right) Magic filters enhance the natural fluorescence of some subjects. Subal Nikon D70, 10.5 lens, available light, 400asa, 1/15th @ F2.8. Depth 23 metres.

polyester behind the lens and a camera saying "Good". The light meter said 1/15th sec so I had to hold the camera steady. Fortunately with such a wide angle coverage of the 10.5mm it is not too difficult to get sharp results at this speed and slightly slower.

The first few shots were, quite frankly, amazing. I had never seen anything like it. Whole walls of anemones were captured not only showing the subtle change of colour but also the background water as well. Traditional strobe lighting would have produced the colour but made the background dark or even black.

Back on land I emailed Peter Scoones, my mentor from way back, a few low res examples. Almost immediately my phone rang. "Where, what, why, how?" was the gist of our conversation. As far as I was concerned that was the final proof that we were onto something significant.

For the next few months I would email low res shots to all involved to gauge their reaction and, to a man, there was amazement.

From a photographic point of view the GreenWater Magic filter has revealed some interesting anomalies. The first, and one of the reasons the anemone shots are so colourful, is that fluorescence plays a significant

part, even in green waters. According to Dr Alex M (aka The Wimp, don't forget), filter photography highlights the natural fluorescence of marinelife. Technically speaking, fluorescence occurs when a subject emits light at a different wavelength to the light shining on it. Underwater green and blue light excites fluorescence in a variety of marine life from corals to algae, which emit orange, yellow, green and red light. Normally this light is hard to see because the fluorescence is swamped by the ambient light reflected by the subject. However, filters act as a barrier to the ambient light revealing this natural fluorescence. Practically speaking in green waters you may see algae appearing red and cup corals/ anemones fluorescing many colours.

The second anomaly is that there can be a difference between a RAW picture and a JPG of the same scene taken simultaneously so the camera is doing a significant amount of processing. Surprisingly we have not been able to exactly match the look of the JPG files using Adobe Camera Raw to adjust the RAW files. We attribute this difference to additional processing applied to the JPG files in the camera. We can match them using the fine control in Photoshop, and we expect that we could in the manufacturer's RAW converters and that all takes time so I always shoot RAW + JPG with the GreenWater.

In terms of the depth range of the filter I would say that anything between 5 and 25 metres should be OK with a DSLR in reasonable light levels. I haven't had enough time to shoot much with a compact camera but, on the couple of dives I have, I got good results down to 15 metres. I would imagine that these ranges may vary from camera manufacturer.

My work with GreenWater Magic filters is very much a work in progress. Not in terms of finalising the formula for that is now in production but in terms of the type of shots it can produce.

One of the pleasing aspects of being involved with Magic filters has been seeing the results others produce with them and I feel sure that the GreenWater Magic will, I hope, be no exception.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

Photo By Alex Mustard

The Elephant Man

By Peter Rowlands

There are some things most ordinary people don't do straight after they've had a few rudimentary lessons on scuba diving. Underwater photography, for a start, is best left til you've mastered the subtle art of buoyancy and, for sure, getting in the water to photograph a 5 ton male elephant should be put off until you've at least completed the PADI "Photographing 5 ton elephants" speciality course. But then Steve Bloom could never be ordinary and his first real foray into underwater photography has produced some absolutely extraordinary images.

UwP was delighted to catch up with him during the launch of his new book "Elephant!" to find out more about the man and hear how he got on with his first underwater shoot.

I first interviewed Steve back in 1996 when his image retouching business had just gone digital. A couple of years earlier he had had his film images scanned following a two week trip to the Kruger National Park and was embracing the new technology to produce a new genre of natural history image.

Steve started work on his latest book Elephant! about 12 years ago and when he heard that some elephants actually enjoy swimming he decided that he had to have some images for the book. It took two years of research and organisation to accomplish but he is reticent to reveal the location as he nor the local people want to be swamped by divers. All he is prepared to say is that the elephant was the same age as him, 53, and was a retired log mover living with his handler on a remote island. The elephant in question is a large 5 ton male but Steve is not sure how tall he is. All he can say is that when he rode on his back on land, he got vertigo!

A large part of Steve's success is his understanding of his subject and his thorough preparation. Never having taken a serious photograph underwater he contacted Ocean Optics in London and the owner, Steve Warren, took him through the options for housing his Canon EOS 1DS Mk11. He even arranged pool sessions for Steve to get used to his new Subal housing. Warren observed that Steve was not particularly co-ordinated underwater but that, as soon as he put his eye to the viewfinder, everything changed and he watched him concentrating totally and being in full control of the camera. This is something that others have observed and Steve (Bloom) confirms that using a camera makes him become a different person. His concentration is so intense that there is no sense of time.

Bloom was quick to say that he could not underestimate the professional and thorough support which Steve Warren and Ocean Optics provided and felt that without their input he doubted whether he would have achieved such successful images.

Once on location two local divers were hired to look after Steve in the water leaving him to concentrate on the photography. Several sessions were planned at varying times of the day but

they were always dictated by the elephant's demeanour so that he was acting naturally and not being corralled.

Steve's lens of choice was the Canon 15mm F2.8 full frame fisheye but he also used the 14mm and the 16-35mm for tighter shots. He shot RAW and JPG with his 8gig card and on most dives, which could last up to 2 hours, it was full with over 200 images. The JPGs were for viewing on his PC laptop after the dive and the RAW images were, in Steve's words, 'My digital negative". Just as with conventional film photography, the printing of a negative is as much a part of the finishing process and RAW images allow this to continue with digital photography. He nearly always used aperture priority with auto white balance and available light only, taking single shots rather than using the motor-drive setting.

Prior to his first dive Steve was, understandable, extremely nervous to the point of being terrified but when he saw the elephants ballet-like movements underwater and his pure exuberance the two years of preparation fell into place and the anxiety melted away as the team went into action. Steve is keen to emphasise the importance of teamwork from Ocean Optics back in London to all those on site who combined to give Steve the space to concentrate on the images.

The visibility varied from good to murky but then you'd expect that with an elephant close to the sandy bottom! Steve was immediately aware of how surprisingly fast the elephant moved underwater and even more aware of his large tusks. The old adage with underwater of "Get close and then get closer" wasn't written with elephant tusks in mind.

After each session there was a feeling of elation mixed with relief that the session had ended safely. The elephant had genuinely enjoyed himself and Steve's 8gig card was ready to download another set of extraordinary images.

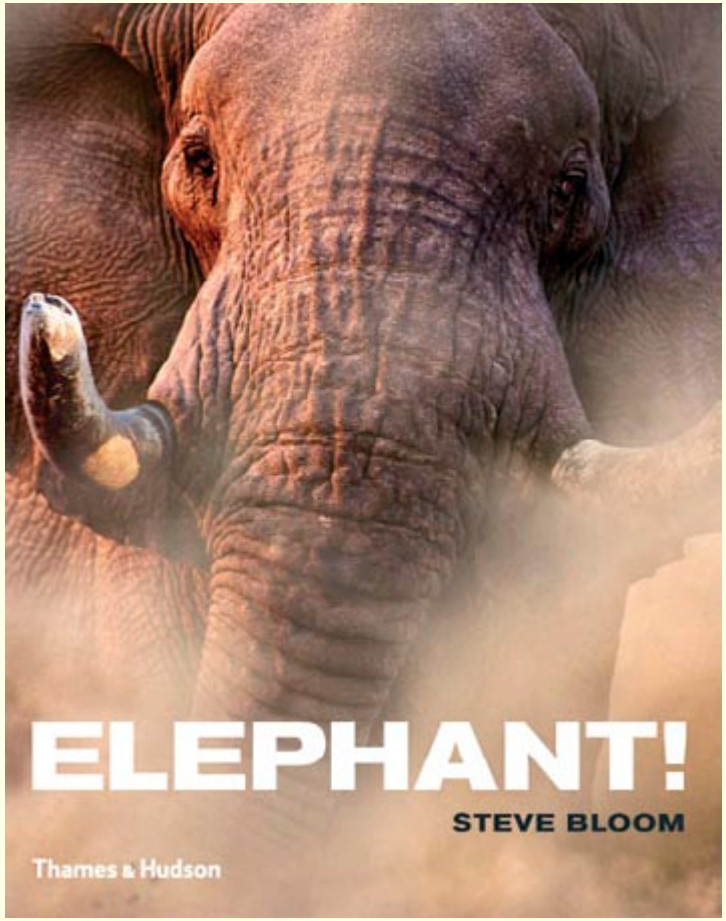
It is very difficult to view Steve's images both on land and underwater without getting either emotional or clichéd but I don't care. They move me deeply and fill me with awe, humility, guilt and elation all at the same time.

I just hope he finds another underwater subject to photograph in his unique style.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

www.stevebloom.com

Special offer



Elephant! is published by Thames & Hudson (RRP £24.95) and is available at the special price of £22.50 including postage & packaging in the UK only (all overseas rates quoted on request.)

Please telephone 08450 585878 quoting “Underwater Diving offer” with credit card details. Offer ends 28th February 2007 and is subject to availability. Please allow up to 14 days for delivery

Blue Water Pacific

by Tim Rock

The beauty of the coral reefs is one of the major attractions in the Pacific's travel industry. Snorkelers, divers and sun worshippers flock to locales with healthy and diverse reefs to explore the amazing world of the coral kingdom. But more people are looking beyond the reef. This blue water region is the realm of ocean's large inhabitants. Whales, dolphins, manta rays, sharks, ocean sunfish and other pelagics are becoming more and more sought by traveling naturalists and adventurers. Some are fish and some are water-borne mammals. People want to see them, track their movements, photograph them and understand how they live in the open sea. They do this through land-based excursions out to sea and also through extended live aboard trips ranging in price from US$2,000 to US$20,000 per trip.

Getting to know the world of the deep blue is a complex task. Guides must understand things like migration patterns, deep undersea terrain, currents, food supplies, moon phases and myriad more factors. These all combine to allow people to be able to observe creatures rarely seen in the wild, but an important part of the chain of the sea. This is an important industry that generates new revenues for island people. But, it pits fishing and whaling interests against those of environmental tourism. This has escalated with advances in consumer technology. What was once the realm of science is now the realm of hi tech fishing and top-flight tourism.

A mola-mola gets cleaned by a variety of fish off Nusa Penida in Indonesia. Nikon D100 in Aquatica housing, 10.5mm lens, Ikelite DS125 strobes.

The warm waters of the Pacific make observation easier in that people can spend longer time on and in the water and heighten the chance of seeing a blue water creature. Tonga and Hawaii are gaining great fame as a place to observe humpback whales when they come to certain "grounds" to have their young and mate.

Humpback whales are known for their complex vocalizations that sound like singing and for their acrobatic breaching. This can be spectacular as they lift nearly their entire bodies out of the water and crash back down to the sea. A breach can be many things. A warning. A way to attract a female. Play. It is incredible to see.

Before 1900, an estimated 15,000 humpbacks lived in the North Pacific, but the population was severely reduced by commercial whaling. In the 20th century, their estimated numbers reportedly

Whales at play include a breach shot with a Canon 20D and Sigma 80-400VR zoom, male whale and family unit both shot natural light using a Canon 20D in Aquatica housing, 10-22mm lens.

dwindled to fewer than 1,000. An international ban on commercial whaling was instituted in 1964, but humpbacks are still endangered. Between 5,000 and 7,500 humpbacks are left in the world's oceans, and many of those survivors migrate to Hawaii and Tonga, where commercial boats do day trips to see these amazing big mammals.

The dollar value of a whale cannot be estimated, but they are known to return annually to breeding grounds and some seem to actually enjoy entertaining tourists with their aquabatics. While hunting now would seem out of the question, there are those who want to resume whaling even though it has been proven whales are more profitable alive than dead. Supporters say "whales should be seen, not hurt". The 65-day period in the Dominican Republic when the whales pass through, brings in more than US$15 million in direct and indirect revenue annually. The economic bonanza happens in places like Kona and Maui in the Pacific's Hawaii.

The International Whaling Commission has been established to watch the populations of whales worldwide (and also dolphins) and declare bans and quotas on marine mammals. Pro-whaling countries like Japan and Iceland support a pro-whaling agenda that threaten some whale species. But they are meeting with more and more international resistance as more sustainable uses for whales are being discovered. The pro-whaling nations need a 75% majority at the IWC to formally scrap the current worldwide moratorium and resume commercial whaling. Still they persevere, sometimes through threats of economic boycott to smaller Pacific countries. The list of countries voting in favour of overturning the moratorium makes for interesting reading as many of them are small African, Caribbean and Pacific nations with minimal whaling interests.

Observers note that Japan has spent millions in grant aid for fisheries development in some Pacific countries, implying that votes are being bought.

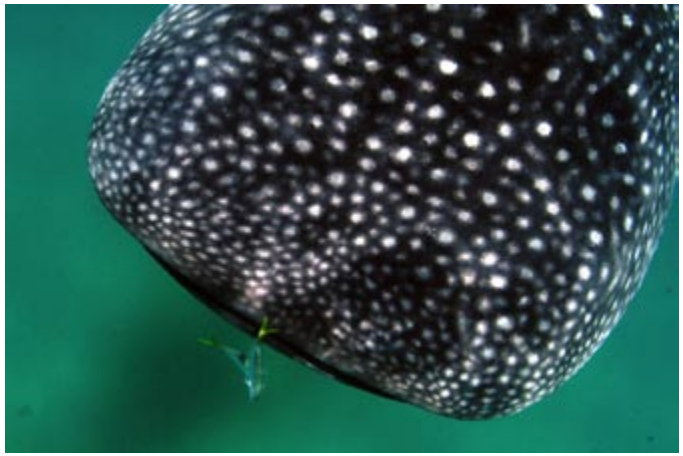
This allegation is strongly denied by the Japanese who point to their desire to see managed whaling based on scientific knowledge. Yet, Japanese funding certainly seems to be at the heart of the matter in the Pacific. Countries voting in favour of the most recent proposal to resume whale hunting include Japan, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Countries voting against the declaration include Australia, New Zealand and the USA. For now, it appears whales shall remain safe from whaling interests, but the tallies are still close.

Manta ray and diver in Yap's Gofnuw Channel shots with Canon 20D in Aquatica housing, 8mm Sigma AF lens, Ikelite DS125 strobes. Palau manta at Devilray City shot with Nikon D100 in Aquatica housing, 10.5mm lens, Ikelite DS125 Strobes.

Some places in Micronesia like Yap, Palau and Pohnpei have become famous for having sites that feature superb viewing venues for manta rays. Yap has a series of cleaning stations and channels that mantas like to frequent. Adjacent to the open sea, these rays sometimes come in to the channels in large groups, allowing divers and ever snorkelers a chance to see a big ray really up close and personal. The Big Island of Hawaii also has a site off Kona where mantas come in to feed on plankton drawn by shore-based lights. Divers watch this amazing feed on a nightly basis.

Another plankton eater is the whale shark, which is also seen in Hawaiian and Micronesian waters. The largest of the shark family, these big fish are harmless and can be enjoyed by snorkelers. But the Pacific hasn't developed a consistent site to view these fish. Because they are harmless, and often curious and friendly towards swimmers, major tourism industries have developed around snorkeling and diving with these sharks in places like Exmouth in Western Australia where they come seasonally.

Fisheries in many countries have decimated populations of both mantas and whale sharks, yet few scientific studies have examined these threatened species. The Manta Ray and Whale



Whale sharks off the Mozambique Coast. Whale shark and snorkeler shot with Nikonos V and 15mm lens with Velvia film. Pilotfish on whale shark's nose shot with Canon 20D in Aquatica housing, 8mm Sigma AF lens and natural light. Far right: Galapagos sharks off Oahu shot with Canon 20D in Aquatica housing, 10-22mm Canon lens at 10mm and natural light.

Shark Trust is now conducting world-leading research on the ecology and conservation of mantas and whale sharks. Its scientific program examines issues directly related to both the continued survival of these species and the promotion of a sustainable tourism industry. As human pressures increase worldwide manta ray populations have declined in many areas where they were once common. There is a notable contrast between the few protected populations, such as in Yap and the Hawaiian Islands, where economically valuable ecotourism and dive operations exist and mantas seem to thrive.

This is not true out of the Pacific. Populations in areas where fisheries target the species, such as along the coast of Africa, South East Asia, and in Mexico. Mantas are highly vulnerable to over-fishing, and there looms a genuine threat of localized extinction of certain populations. The whale shark is also at risk. Even though tourism attached to these fish can be worth upwards of US$47.5 million annually within developing countries, fisheries still target whale sharks and mantas (sold as scallops) in several regions. This leads to fears about both the future of tourism and the species itself.

As manta rays and whale sharks are both large charismatic fish there has been extensive media interest, but nothing compares to the thrill of seeing big sharks in the wild.

Palau's Blue Corner, Yap's Vertigo Wall and Oahu's North Shore are all sites where shark diving has become an international attraction. On Oahu, the ships go far offshore, three miles to the "shark grounds", where the crystal clear water is 400 feet deep. Acclimatised by baiting, sharks arrive in response to the sound of the boat engine. A sturdy cage is lowered and people don snorkels and clamber in. It's quite a scene as big, curious gray fishes with toothy smiles can come in real close. The cage bars are close together and large, Plexiglas windows are nearly transparent and a full quarter-inch thick so people can safely and easily see some amazing gatherings of sharks. Hard to see creatures like the 10-14 foot long Galapagos shark press against the glass. There are also smaller sandbar sharks, and on rare occasions, tiger sharks, grey reef sharks and hammerheads. Occasionally,

- Galapagos sharks off Oahu shot with Canon 20D in Aquatica housing, 10-22mm Canon lens at 10mm and natural light.

dolphins escort the boat out to the shark grounds and back. During the winter the massive Pacific humpback whales are often seen. Seeing the sharks is like living in the Discovery Channel. It is a popular attraction that wows almost everyone that gives it a try. So much so that a couple of North Shore operators run several trips daily and cater to ages 7 to 70. They say everyone from housewives to Hollywood actors have been guests.

In the dive areas like Palau and Yap, the sharks have become somewhat accustomed to divers and grey reef sharks patrol their natural hunting grounds, often swimming close to see what divers are up to. They are generally afraid of divers, who blow scuba bubbles and make noise. But they come close enough to thrill those who don't know the sharks are afraid.

But it may be the shark's image as a fearless predator that hurts it as much as helps. In reality, humans kill an estimated 100 millions sharks per year. In the same year sharks kill only seven humans. At this rate, sharks cannot reproduce fast enough to keep up with their slaughter. Fins taken for the high-demand shark fin soup in Asia come from a huge amount of sharks, mostly through illegal worldwide fisheries. Many nations, like Indonesia and The Philippines, are already considered fished (sharked) out.

In Micronesia, there are licensed fishing vessels but also much offshore unloading of catch to mother ships. Thus, the very few officials charged with regulating the catch have virtually no power or resources to oversee the catch, even of licensed vessels.

Unregulated fishing for fins is a cartel business generating millions of dollars. In 2005, Australia alone confiscated 216 ships and stripped another 242 of equipment and catch. The demand for fins is so great worldwide that the need to protect tourism dollars may not be reason enough to deflate this rogue industry. But tiny Palau is trying.

As Palau's major claim to fame is its amazing sheer underwater dropoffs and schooling sharks in the south that attract scuba buffs from all over the world, Palau's President Tommy Remengesau has spearheaded a movement to ban shark fishing throughout the Indo-Pacific. He has confiscated finning boats and set fire to pyres of shark fins, vowing that no one shall profit from the exploitation and taking from Palau waters of these valuable food chain members. He has encouraged other nations in the Pacific and Asia to follow suit. For these efforts, Palau was recognized as Shark Guardian of the Year in 2004.

Yet, political forces have undermined efforts here as well. The nation has created powerful laws. They call for fines of up to $250,000 per incident, per day, when "any part of any shark, turtle or ray" is found on any foreign fishing vessel. In one incident, that would have meant fines for one vessel of US$24 million. Yet, while confiscations do take place, these fines have never been levied. Those familiar with the cases say political favors interfere with the cases and they never appear in court or just get a slap instead of the intended wallop the law intends.

The world of the blue water, the open sea, is one that is still barely understood. The science of how its residents live and what they need to survive is in its infancy and may be playing catch-up to insulated fishing interests. The future of whales, many shark species, big rays and other amazing blue water creatures may well hinge on the money the eco-tourist's generate to observe them alive in the blue Pacific.

Tips for big blue photos:

Whales:

Breaching and playing whales require a good camera that can shoot a lot of photos quickly in one burst and write them to cache. While I used a Canon 20D with power grip and 80-400 Sigma Optical Stabilizer zoom for these photos at 3.5 frames per second, the same lens on a Canon EOS 1D Mark II would have yielded me 8 frames per second and 8 MB files at that. An investment in a good, fast body is essential in getting good results if you are going to do this kind of photography a lot. The same goes for leaping dolphins and other aerial marine displays, like those of mobula.

Mantas:

Find the right place where they come to feed, clean or mate. A 10-22 or 12-24 lens is magic. Just be very patient and they will come close. Don't chase them. It may be the last you see of them. Use strobes to fill so the white of the ray's belly is evenly lit. I use Ikelte DS125 strobes for this kind of shooting at quarter to half power.

Sharks:

Many shark feeds take place close to the surface. While it may appear a strobe isn't necessary, a small pair of DS50s or similar strobe certainly help with minor fill. It can be tricky to place the strobe just right so that scatter from the bait doesn't snow up the photo. Those feeds that occur deeper require DS125s or similar strobe. A 17-35 lens or even a 50mm work well for sharks unless they are right up on your dome. Many pros rig up a "pole cam", which is a contraption that allows you to save your fingers by dipping your camera into the fray of sharks and remotely trigger it.

Molas:

South Africa's west coast, the California coast and Lembongan Island near Bali are prime mola spot when they migrate. A 10-22 or 12-24 is fine here. These are skittish fish so approach slowly. They also don't like strobes much, so use very low power and set your aperature accordingly or it is easy to scare them.

Tim Rock
www.doubleblue.com

Hunky Dory

by Mark Webster

One spin off from the seemingly constant treadmill of digital upgrades is the need to return to familiar subjects to shoot them again at a higher resolution. For me this is driven mostly by the desire to sell images through picture libraries or publishers who are often redefining their file size requirements to keep pace with the latest developments and additions to the DSLR market. Some may see this as a burden but it is also a spur to get into the water and try and improve on previous images, which has always been a good reason to take more photographs after all. Having recently upgraded to the D200 I am going through this process again both at home and overseas.

Diving in British waters is demanding at any time of year but does get easier as the summer months approach which is also the time when a number of the more unusual and sometimes challenging species begin to appear in our waters. I have always enjoyed the 'hunting' element of underwater photography, particularly trying to find those species that are well camouflaged or are wary of us as we make our clumsy approach. One such species is the John Dory (Zeus faber) or the St. Peter fish, which is common in the Atlantic further south from the UK and in the Mediterranean, but is mostly only seen in British waters in the late spring and summer when the water temperature rises.

There are a number of explanations for why this fish was christened "John Dory". The most popular is that it is a derivative of one of St. Peter's many titles in the Bible as the Janitore, or

(Above) Rocky foreshore at Pendennis Point, Falmouth Bay - shallow protected gullies are the best hunting ground for the underwater photographer. Nikon D200, 18-200mm zoom.
(Right) A classic John Dory pose is possible once you have the confidence of the fish. . Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/60th.

Doorkeeper, of the Kingdom of Heaven. Another is that it is an English corruption of the French name "jaune adorÈe" which translates as "the adorable or sacred yellow fish". However, according to legend, this is the fish that St. Peter caught when Christ told him to "go thou to the sea, and cast in a hook; and that fish which shall first come up, take: and when thou hast opened its mouth, thou shalt find a stater (silver coin) - take that and give it" to the Temple tax collectors (Mt. 17:26).

The John Dory has a large dark spot on each side of its body below the dorsal fin said to have been left by St. Peter when he held the fish to extract the coin from its mouth. Other legends claim that these are the marks of a coin. However, regardless of which story appeals to you they are more likely to be 'false eyes' to distract potential predators.

The distribution of this fish is fairly wide and it has been seen in depths of 300m or more, but the habitat that we find them in is more likely to be the shallow coastal waters where the reefs and seabed are decorated with numerous varieties of sea weed. It is here that the John Dory can demonstrate the purpose of what seems to be a strange body design and colouring - it is in fact perfect camouflage for

Bootlace seaweed is a favourite hunting ground for the John Dory. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/40th.

this environment hiding the hunter from its prey but also hiding it from the underwater photographer who is so keen to capture its image!

I am fortunate enough to live near to the sea and can find a great variety of marine life close to the shore in only a few metres of water. The coastline is quite rugged and the foreshore comprises cliffs and rock outcrops that run straight into the sea forming numerous gullies with a variety of habitats. The experience of many years of diving here has revealed to me which areas are most likely to host particular species and I have found that in high summer that two gullies in particular are more likely to be home to the elusive John Dory.

These gullies are shallow running to no more than 10m (33ft) depth with the tops of the rock buttresses at 1m or 2m (3-6ft) depth. The bottom comprises heavy shingle or gravel with rock outcrops which as the summer progresses become increasingly covered in various species of seaweed.

Every John Dory has these distinctive dark spots on its flanks, said to be the finger prints of St. Peter. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/60th.

In the centre of the gullies there are normally thick stands of bootlace seaweed, which as its name suggests is thin and stringy and reaches towards the surface. The rocky gully sides are covered with thick kelp - this combination is ideal for the John Dory to blend with.

Summer also brings many juvenile species that spend their formative months sheltering in the weed or close to the top of the reef. In particular there are small schools of two spot gobies which congregate over the kelp fronds or close to the bottom - a tasty

When the John Dory is viewed head on you can see how its very thin dimensions enables it to 'disappear' and also see the distinctive line over the 'nose' of the fish which blends so well with the bootlace weed. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic

snack for the John Dory and always a good place to start the search.

I have found that the most productive time

Once you can get close enough remember to vary the composition and caprure the character of the fish. . Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/60th.

Two spot goby, a tasty snack for a John Dory - Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, f20 @ 1/125

Goldsinney wrasse cleaning a ballan wrasse - cleaning occurs most frequently in early morning - fish wanting to be cleaned hang vertically at the cleaning station. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/60th.

to search for these fish is early in the morning when the reef is beginning to come to life. There is all sorts of fish activity going on from feeding to cleaning - yes we have cleaning stations in UK waters as well, particularly for the larger species like Ballan wrasse, and the cleaners tend to be the smaller wrasse species such as the Goldsinney. So it is easy to get distracted, but to track down the John Dory's you have to be focussed on the task. I normally begin by looking for a small congregation of the three spot gobies near a thick stand of kelp or bootlace weed and then settle in and wait. The gobies soon accept you and will even get quite inquisitive and come very close - but you have to concentrate on the weed and look for signs of movement, particularly close to the sea bed. It never ceases to amaze me that I can have spent fifteen or twenty minutes scanning an area of weed seeing nothing and then suddenly there is a John Dory right in front of me! No doubt he has been close all the time, but it is just the slight change of position or a strike at the hapless gobies that gives him away.

Now the game begins. Mostly the John Dory will start by hanging motionless watching you to see if he has been noticed - your first movement of course is to lift the camera, and then he is sure that he has been seen! Occasionally you will encounter a bold fish that will just hold its ground, but more

often he will move away slowly to see how interested you are. Now you have to exercise great patience and concentration. Keep pace with the fish perhaps 2m behind, but don't chase hard, and try and keep your eyes pinned on him. They swim very slowly and will weave in and out of the weed occasionally stopping dead still to blend in to their surroundings to see if they can lose you.

Often the pursuit will take me up the side of the gulley and over the kelp line into 1m or 2m water depth and over the rock buttress into the neighbouring gulley. When this happens I can normally expect the fish to make a burst of speed as he descends into the next gulley - speed for a John Dory is not very fast and they tire quickly, however you have to watch carefully as this manoeuvre is generally followed by a final duck into the weed.

If you get this far the John Dory will normally remain motionless for a few minutes in the weed and I take the opportunity of taking a few shots just to get him used to the flash and check exposure. If you are lucky the fish will now accept you and after a while will begin to move off to recommence his hunt. At this stage I normally find that I can now move ahead of the John Dory and begin to compose shots more carefully and he will actually swim towards me and show some interest, particularly as you will find that small fish are also being inquisitive and the John Dory realises there is some synergy in the hunt.

The strands of bootlace weed seems to be a favourite hunting ground and you have to be certain that you keep your eye on the fish all the time as just a quick movement or change of orientation can make him

Various types of seaweed either grow or collect in the bottom of the gullies - often John Dories can be found right on the weed where they blend perfectly. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/40th.

I am often asked (this time by the editor!) about the equipment and technique used for capturing a particular shot or series. Most of the shots of the John Dory are taken with a Nikon 18-35mm zoom which with the DX crop gives you an equivalent 'film' picture area of a 27-52mm - this is behind a Subal 20mm dome with a +2 diopter for correction. The range of this lens is ideal for fish portraiture and enables you to capture some of the habitat at the wide end as well. For lighting I use a pair of Subtronic Mini TTL flash guns in manual mode generally at ? or ? power at ISO100. These guns have quite a broad beam spread and with the turbid conditions we have in the UK
it is best to use a 'flat lighting' technique which lights the subject with the edge of the beam from both guns. As you get closer to the subject you may need to turn the guns a little away from the subject to maintain this effect. This avoids illuminating any suspended matter between the lens and the subject and minimises the dreaded backscatter. Arms are twin 8" Ultralight sections, with a buoyant section on each side to balance the rig in the water whilst retaining a slight negative buoyancy.

Occasionally the pursuit will take me from one gully to the next - watch out for a turn of speed and a quick dart into the weed as the John Dory tries to lose his 'predator'. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 18-35mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/60th.

The top of the kelp growth is a congregation point for many small species of fish, including the goldsinney wrasse cleaners and the three spot gobies. John Dory's feed constantly on the smaller gobies but have been known to take fish almost as large as themselves. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Minis, ISO 100, f8 1/40th.

all but invisible to you. If you look closely at the markings of the John Dory you will see a distinct dark line running down the face of the fish over his 'nose' which is perfectly matched to the colour and width of bootlace seaweed. When he faces you head on you will realise why their bodies are designed wafer thin as they are able to almost disappear in front of your eyes!

Although the fish move and stalk prey very slowly they are able to strike at amazing speed with a protrusible (extendable) mouth which is very similar to that of a frogfish. I have occasionally seen yawning or stretch their mouths just as frog fish and wrasse/groupers do and often seen them strike, but sadly never been quick enough myself to capture that image!

I have dived my 'favourite' gulley several times this summer and am convinced that I am meeting the same John Dory regularly within a few metres of our first encounter. So I am assuming that they are territorial to a degree and this fish began to accept me more quickly with each encounter.

The size of these fish varies from 15-20cm in length up to 30-40cm - they are voracious feeders and grow quickly apparently and my particular friend got visibly larger over a few weeks. The ideal lens for this subject is an 18-35mm zoom which enable both tight portraits of the fish and slightly wider compositions to include the habitat. By late summer the sightings of these fish become less frequent and with the first detectable drop in water temperature they obviously head south again.

The John Dory is one of the more spectacular fish in British waters with terrific camouflage and is a real challenge to find and photograph. If you are like me and enjoy the hunt then I can thoroughly recommend the challenge, but be prepared to exercise bucket loads of patience to find them and get close enough for a good portrait.

Mark Webster
www.photec.co.uk

Nexus.

The Best Value Aluminium Housing For Your D200

* Professional level specification

*Alloy for durability

* Lightweight for travelling

* Includes genuine viewfinder magnifier

* Two strobe outlets

* Specialist split level and super macro ports available

Introductory price £1699.00

OCEAN OPTICS

7 Bush House Arcade, Bush House
Strand, London, WC2B 4PA
Tel 020 7240 8193 Fax 020 7240 7938

www.oceanoptics.co.uk
optics@oceanoptics.co.uk

A DEAD Photographic Mission in North Sulawesi

Difficult, Expensive, Arduous, Demanding

By Michael Aw

I am a sucker for tight, most often impossible deadlines. It is not that I like to procrastinate to the last hour only to scramble to get the job done but it just seems to happen that way each time. Even with projects that I have diligently premeditated with a 12 month lead time, I will somehow end up rushing to complete in the last possible minutes. It may be that I am taking on too much, or there should be 36 hours in a day or just that I love the challenge, a kind of adrenaline fix I relish from my previous career in main stream advertising. I was once called upon to work on an airline campaign in 3 weeks – ie from strategies, conceptualization, and production to launch! But then I had a team of 20 with couple of hundred thousand dollars as production budget; we ended up making a three destination shoot for the TV commercial … well, free travel, why not?

In my current profession as an underwater photographer, it is quite often I find myself writing and culling images to meet editorial deadline only the day before it was due; I enjoy the rush and perform better under pressure though my cardiologist has warned me that intense deadlines radically boost my risk of having a heart attack. Well, I have to live with it as there are a few clients who really love me to death; they seem to have the aptitude to send urgent request for a long wish list of images or editorial the night before I depart for an extended expedition. I have yet to learn to say no.

A current project that is putting me back into

a panic mode is one that is long overdue. My first book of the sea "Beneath Bunaken" has been out of print since 1997. There had been plans to do a third reprint but preference has always been to do a new book extending the coverage to Banka Islands, Lembeh Strait and the Sangie Talaud Islands, north of Manado. Diligently in May of this year, I sat down to work on an agenda for the rest of 2006 and plan ahead for 2007. I finally penciled in to complete shooting and writing for a new North Sulawesi book this November for a 2007 April book launch. Well that was the perfect plan that all seems fine and doable with plenty of time to shoot, write and design.

Then on 1st of July, in the midst of the South

Africa Sardine Run expedition, I received an email for an order of 1000 copies but the catch is that the book must be ready by October 2006 for a DEMA launch in November. Red alert … panic station! The new deadline dictates that the book must go to print in September, image selection, culling,

writing, design, editing in August which leaves me the rest of July to shoot … but I am already committed to lead a leatherback turtle expedition to West Papua from 22 July. I really need fresh images … unpublished pictures, images of the 'Big Five' of North Sulawesi in this new book. It is not just a wish list; it is a 'Must Include' list of seascapes images of underwater Banka Island, Bunaken, Napoleon wrasse, large green sea turtles, Rhinopias, mimic octopus and Pontohi pygmy seahorse. Between the safari in Africa and the start of the West Papua expedition, I have exactly a nine-day window and that includes traveling time. In reality, I have only five shooting days. I prayed for good weather and co-operative subjects.

So I have just five days to shoot for a book that must in the end be superior to all my previous work. It will be upon this book my credibility and skills be judged. Its predecessor "Beneath Bunaken" I completed in 1993 was selected as Indonesia's official gift of state for the 1994 APEC. The pressure is on for 'Beneath North SulaweSea' to surpass. The images must be new, fresh and different. Adapting the words of David Doubilet, I have to make pictures of underwater North Sulawesi that no one has ever seen before or, to make pictures that is different of underwater North Sulawesi that everybody has seen before. It is a very DEAD ((Difficult, Expensive, Arduous, Demanding) task I have imposed on myself.

Banka is easy… there are not many published pictures of the island, but Bunaken … the small critters, especially those of Lembeh Strait are getting very tiresome appearing on every dive magazines in the region every second month. Between swimming with the dolphins, sharks and sardines in Africa, I came up with a plan … I need to commandeer my own live-aboard, one that will go where I want to go, when I want to go and as many times I wish to go … I need to charter a boat to do a North Sulawesi safari shoot. Well I did accomplished the shoot in five days, captured some new images and if all goes well, 'Beneath North SulaweSea' will be out in October. It is not rocket science; here is how I did it.

The Dive Platform: I was fortunate to have the service of MV Sabina, a brand new purposed

built 19m length mono hull vessel own by Odyssea Divers in Manado. With an average cruising speed of 12 knots I was able to run back and forth between Banka, the Bunaken Islands and Lembeh Strait several times over six days. The generator runs for 24 hours, air conditioned cabins with state of the art navigation set up. Though I am equipped with an Iridium Satellite phone, we have GSM coverage in most areas of Bunaken and Lembeh Strait. In the evening I will bring the vessel back to the home bay of Sabina or to Murex Resort where wireless network from shores allowed me to check emails and research scientific names from the web. The vessel served brilliantly as my floating office and dive platform. The cost of chartering the Sabina is USD 600 per day which comes with a crew of four, unlimited diving and all meals included. For live-aboard charter, the boat allows for six people, but to be comfortable, four is a good number. Since I am the only photographer with two guides the vessel is seemingly palatial for the purpose.

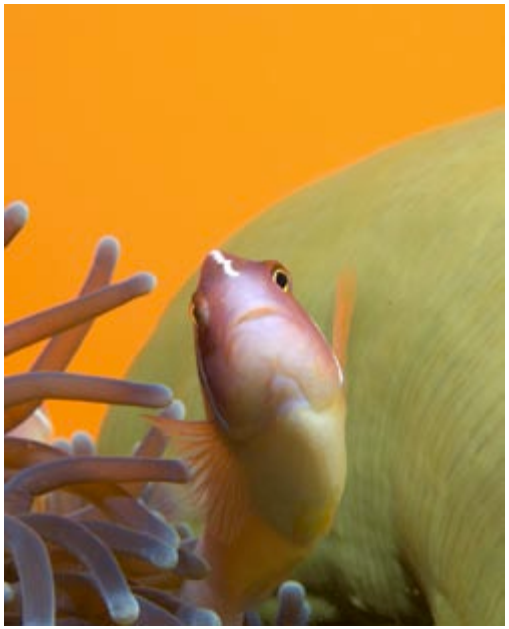
Day One & Two – Banka and Talise Islands area; as I do not have many good images from these islands, the two days here are exceptionally crucial. Though coral is less varied than Bunaken, the highlights of the area are the sea mounts and pinnacles. Several of them are completely occupied with soft corals, sponges, fans in colour of rainbow these rock formations are visited frequently by bigger animals such as dugongs, marlin, barracudas, trevallies, Black-tip sharks and Dog-tooth tunas. However diving the pinnacles can be tricky; the current is strong and unpredictable. As time is of the essence, I can't really afford any errors or unproductive dives. Diving at the 'right time' and the best spot of each site is an absolute essential.

Though not necessarily the most colourful, Sahaung is the most well known group of pinnacles at Banka. On the first dive of the first morning, I was dropped down current from the best of the three pinnacles. Though I managed a couple of good scenes, I could have done better. Upon surfacing I made a call to Paul, the son of Dr Hanny Batuna the pioneer of diving in North Sulawesi to join me for the safari. As Paul now runs the family resort property in Banka, he would know the area best. Two hours later, we rendezvoused at Paradise jetty, and he selected for me the crème de la crème of the 40 sites that I must cover over the two days. I shot the best of the pinnacles, a couple of Hippocampus Pontohi (this scientific name is still unofficial for this pygmy first sighted in Bunaken)

Day Three – Bunaken, Manado Tua Marine Park; I chose to dive Tanjong Kopi and Mandolin for the school of jacks, barracudas, wall of soft corals and the ethereal lobster cave. However the few important

subjects in my 'must shoot' list are white tip sharks, large Green sea turtles and Napoleon wrasse. The first two are relatively easy to find. Since the formation of the North Sulawesi Watersports Association and initiation of vigilant monitoring program, the population of white-tips and sea turtles are noticeably on the increase. I got the shot of the shark at Johnson Wall and a one metre sized Green turtle at Lekuan One. The Napoleon wrasse seems to be elusive. The friendly one we know of at Fukui was sadly speared by a recalcitrant fisherman last year. I called Danny Charlton, the proprietor of Murex Diving at Lembeh Resort for assistance. He then broadcast a SMS to all the dive operators in the area for recent sightings of big Napoleon wrasse in the marine parks. I received a SMS report in 15 minutes and successfully captured a good picture of a Chelinus undulatus one hour later!

Day Four – this is Lembeh Strait day. Danny Charlton graciously loaned me Ronald, his best guide for Lembeh Strait. The yellow and purple Rhinopias eschmeyeri and frondosa were easily found and I even managed to shoot some Banggai Cardinalfish living among the Skunk anemonefish. As my repertoire of Mandarinfish mating are mostly from Palau, Ronald and I worked on getting some new images from the house reef of Lembeh Resort. This again was accomplished at about 1800hr … well it was hard work but it was the first time I seen a young male masturbating! The challenge for the day was to get feeding shot of Bobbit worms (Eunice aphroditois). This proved to be a challenge for both of us to earn our manhood! Well, we worked into the night and did we get the surprise? It all shall be revealed in October 2006.



Day Five – the final day was supposed to be an easy one. The morning was spent procuring those large fish eye images of coral meadows from various angles, large giant clams and some over and under seascapes. I needed a parting shot for the book. As the underlying message of the project is to inspire the local to preserve the natural heritage of North Sulawesi for their children, I required a child to serve as the icon for the image. Once again I call for assistance, this time to Angelique Batuna at WWF Manado. Alexandra her five-year old daughter would be finished school at 1300 hrs and she will bring her to meet us at Fukui at 1500hrs. Easily done … a piece of cake I told my guides. Well that is until I told the little princess that she had to put her head into the water hanging out from a wobbly dug out canoe … all I got was her shaking her head candidly … NO! NO! NO! Okay, lets try another scene … since she swims like a fish, I asked her to just simply swim underwater to point at a sea star... NO! NO! NO! An hour or so later with lots of cajoling and demonstration from three adults, I finally got my shot.

In a nutshell, for more than 10 years I have planned to shoot for this book but about 50% of the images selected are shot in the last five shooting days. As Beneath North SulaweSea is to be complimented with a DVD, I have to rope in additional video imagery from Stuart Ireland and pressed award winning composer Eric Bettens from Belgium to write original theme music for the production. Urgent and due yesterday of course! So with good friends and associates, I have the opportunity and with a bit of luck, every thing seems to fall into place at the right time … at the most critical time. By the way I am writing this story in the midst of culling images for Beneath North SulaweSea.

Michael Aw
www.oneocean.com

Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2006

by Alex Mustard

The Shell Wildlife Photographer of the Year is probably the most prestigious photographic competition for underwater photographer, a fact backed up by the calibre of names that have won awards in the past and those that continue to enter each year. Each year the competition attracts around 20,000 entries from professional and amateur photographers from about 60 countries, which are whittled down to about 90 winning and commended images spread across 16 categories.

Underwater images did particularly well in this year's competition, placing first in four of the twelve adult categories, and winning awards or commendations in a further four categories. Moreover, the overall winner of the competition was Goran Ehlme's photo of a Walrus feeding in the sediment. Similar to last year's overall winner by Manuel Presti, it is certainly an image that polarises opinion, but both are incredibly original wildlife shots, and certainly images that the audience has never seen the like of before.

Michael Aw won the Underwater World category with a fantastic shot of a mimic octopus swimming straight at the camera, taken in the Sulawesi with a Nikon D2X, 12-24mm lens and Seacam housing. Tibor Dombovari won the Animal Portraits category with a characterful Barracuda portrait taken in Papua New Guinea with a Nikon D70s, 12-24mm lens and Subal housing. Andre Seale won the Behaviour, All Other Animals category with a simple and strong image of a green turtle being cleaned by surgeonfish in Hawaii, taken

Michael AW- The Underwater World - Winner - The great mimic
Diving off Banka Island, in Indonesia, Michael spotted a strange eel moving along a sandy slope. For the next hour he swam with it as it hunted over the sand, watching it assume the movement and shape of various marine creatures, including a sole, a ray and even a sea snake. What he'd met was the master of disguises, the Indo-Malayan mimic octopus – here sporting its 'normal' brown-and-white striped coat. This animal takes intelligence to a new level. It can discern which dangerous sea creature to imitate to present the greatest threat to any predator it's confronted with. Only discovered in 1998, the mimic's repertoire of hunting or hiding disguises includes hermit crabs, sand anemones, crinoids, jellyfish, sea cucumbers, blennies, jawfish and lionfish. Already a fan of octopuses, Michael has 'long since given up eating them'.
Nikon D2X with 12-24mm lens; 1/100 sec at f14; 160 ISO; Seacam housing, single S200 Ikelite strobe.

Göran Ehlmé - Wildlife Photographer of the Year - Overall Winner - Beast of the Sediment
Like most bottom-feeders, the walrus has messy table manners. Gorging on bivalve shells, it first uses its facial bristles to brush away the sediment. Then it roots, pig-like, with its snout or beats a flipper, to whip up the sediment. That's what is happening here. Swimming with this huge beast off northeast Greenland, Göran took more than 400 images with his new digital camera. This meant he wasn't limited to 36 before needing to surface to change film. The walrus, though, had to surface for air every four or five minutes. Hours later, after shooting from every angle, 'the moment came', says Göran. 'The walrus looked round, and we made eye contact.' It took Göran years of studying walrus behaviour to consider diving with them. 'At first I was very nervous,' he says, 'but now I know how to approach them safely and respectfully'.
Nikon D2x with 12-24mm lens; 1/50 sec at f4; 400 ISO; Seacam housing with wide-angle port.

Tibor Dombovari (Hungary) won the Animal Portraits, the largest category in the competition with his portrait of a barracuda. Taken with a Nikon D70s and 12-24mm lens in a Subal Housing. 1/200th @ F7.1.

Tobias Bernhard- The Underwater World - Highly Commended- King swimmer
The king penguin colony at Sandy Bay on Maquarie Island in the sub-Antarctic is camped around a tidal pool for easy access to the tempestuous Southern Ocean. Tobias positioned himself in the water near one of their favourite launch sites to watch the busy thoroughfare of penguins rushing back and forth. Nikon D2x with 14mm f2.8 lens; f15 at 20 secs; 100 ISO; Subal housing.

with a Nikon D100, 12-24mm lens in a Nexus housing. And Goran Ehlme's Walrus also won the Animal Behaviour : Mammals category, taken in Greenland with a Nikon D2X, 12-24mm lens and a Seacam housing.

Manu San Felix was runner up in the Underwater World category, and the following photographers were highly commended for their underwater photos: Tobias Bernhard, Jordi Chias, John Johnson, Jun Kezuka, Willem Kolvoort, Magnus Lundgren, Alexander Mustard, Gavin Parsons and Carlos Villoch.

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year is looked at by many as a barometer for trends in nature and underwater photography - both aesthetic and technical. The 2006 competition was the first year that digital entries (61%) out numbered slides, with an even higher percentage amongst the actual winning images, where 86% of the adult winners were digital (100% of the winning young photographer images were digital). The most popular camera choice of the winning photographers was the Nikon D2X, although remember most of the images for this competition were taken more than a year ago, generally before newer models like the Nikon D200 and Canon 5D were widely available.

Of the underwater pictures, Nikon brand cameras dominated taking 15 of the 16 winning shots, which included 3 images taken on film. Rectilinear lenses also proved successful particularly the Nikon 12-24mm, which was used for all of the category winning underwater images. As usual charismatic underwater subjects did well – marine mammals, turtles and sharks, and possibly related to this factor a high proportion of the underwater images were taken in ambient light without strobes.

Once again the Wildlife Photographer of the Year has brought together a most staggering collection of evocative, beautiful and memorable images of our natural world. And perhaps the most clear and encouraging trend for us underwater photographers that our images are competing on a level status with terrestrial wildlife images across many categories.

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com

Festival Mondial De L'Image Sous Marine 2006

Report by Alex Mustard




Four of the ten images from the winning portfolio in the colour slides category won by Tobias Bernhard

The World Festival of Underwater Images moved this year to new premises right in the heart of Antibes, and apart from getting a little hot in the unseasonably warm afternoons, the new location was given a hearty thumbs up by all. The huge Festival marquee backed straight on to the old town of Antibes and a street packed with bars and restaurants, ideal for taking the photo chat somewhere more relaxed, which after all is the essence of the event.

The Antibes Festival is typically French, and all the better for it. The films run and the slides are projected, but for most the main reason for attending the event is the chance to chat to your peers. And unlike any other event I know, the Festival timetable and ambience is simply perfect for conversation.

Of course the serious business takes place on the Saturday night, when the Palmes for the films and the Plongeurs for the still images are awarded. The Palme D'Or for films went to Satoshi Okabe of Japan for "Equator – rivers of the sun".

The Antibes Festival is very much regarded as one of the big two in underwater still photography, alongside the Wildlife Photographer of the Year. Both competitions encourage both pros and amateurs to compete, and while they may not

Jane Morgan's winning entry in the Black and white prints category

offer the biggest prizes the prestige they carry is unrivalled. The Antibes Festival does not attract as many entrants as the Wildlife Photographer, but it does encourage entries that have won other competitions, as it wants the very best of the best images. I recognized many entries from the winners' circles of other competitions in Antibes, so you

Jane Morgan and I with our trophies

know the competition is of the very highest order.

The top still photo prize, the Plongeur D'Or for the 10 slide portfolio was most deservedly won by Tobias Bernhard. Tobias is without doubt one of the most dedicated, artistic and inventive underwater photographers in the world (as well as being a UWP contributor). His winning portfolio contains striking and beautiful images and shows great diversity in photographic technique, environment and subject matter. I particularly love how he perfectly marries photo technique to the story he tells through his subjects and compositions.

Tobias was the first photographer to be the overall winner of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year with an underwater image and is a regular award winner in that event, including a highly commended in this year's competition. For many observers Tobias's win at Antibes was long overdue. Second and third in the slide portfolios were Magnus Lundgren and Michael Aw, who like Tobias were also winners in this year's Wildlife Photographer.

Two other victories were widely applauded; first Mirko Zanni's beautiful new book "Water Vision" winning the prize for coffee table books and second Jane Morgan winning the Plongeur D'Or for black and white prints. Jane has been winning many underwater awards at a national level here in the UK, but this first victory at the highest level, surely marks her arrival on the international stage. It is also great for underwater photography to have a female photographer winning again in international competitions.

The colour prints were won by Laurent Kbaier of France, although the judges' choices of first, second and third in this category left many photographers scratching their heads. Even the judges themselves admitted the colour prints had been tough to judge.

On a personal level I was very pleased to come home with a Plongeur D'Argent for my black and white photo "Stingrays at Sunset", but equally I love visiting the Festival to chat with friends old and new, and just enjoy a few magical days on the French Riviera. I hope to see you there next year.

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com

Book Reviews

Water Vision
By Mirko Zanni

This book will be very easy to review because it has just won the top prize at the Antibes Film Festival!

Mirko's images immerse you, his scenery shots put you there, the eyes of his portraits watch you and, whether you realise it or not, his composition controls your eye. His macro shots are delicate yet detailed but his wreck section would have been better all in black and white.

We've all seen photographs of the subjects in this book but we've not seen these sort of photographs. They combine clinical excellence with warmth.

Mirko's decision to publish this book was to make use of his images rather than keep them locked in a drawer and I, for one, am glad he did.

www.mirkozanni.com

Beneath North SulaweSea
By Michael Aw

If you've read Michael's article earlier in this issue you will know that this book was produced in an almost impossible time scale yet it delivers a quality and diversity of image that most photographers would need a decade to produce.

The result is a visual celebration of this area but rather than just a coffee book it also comes with a DVD with an audio visual combining stills and video footage to Eric Bettens soundtrack. One particularly useful feature of the book is a note of the time of day the shot was taken.

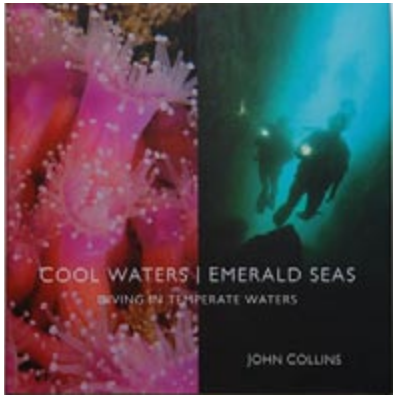
North Sulawesi is a prolific area for underwater photographers and Michael's book encapsulates all that is good in vibrant colour and detail. His shot of a mimic octopus won at the Shell BBC Wildlife Competition this year so you can expect a high standard of photography throughout.

One different section of the book is entitled 'Avant-garde' and contains some interesting images which are backlit and coloured with both daylight flash and HID lights. Nice to see such a section of visually striking and different images.

Michael Aw is renowned for the prolific quality of his output and Beneath North SulaweSea is no exception.

www.michaelaw.com

Cool Waters, Emerald Seas
By John Collins



Temperate waters cover a surprisingly large part of the globe but offer much more of a challenge to the underwater photographer than the more popular tropical seas.

This quality book contains 120 images taken over the past 20 years in seas around Ireland, Scotland, Canary Islands, Canada, South Africa and Tasmania.

Primarily a coffee table book it follows the modern trend of including quotes from prominent authors together with introductory text for each section. The photographs are both comprehensive and consistent and split into 6 main sections which have a logical flow.

Having dived in temperate waters I appreciate the effort which must have gone into producing this book. There have been some poor publications

of photographs taken in these waters but this is definitely not one of them. It is a visual celebration of a difficult environment and raises the bar for all those who may follow.

At just £19.95 it is good value.

www.corkuniversitypress.com

Terra & Agua

Fernando de Noronha

By Marcelo Krause

For the past 5 years Marcelo has been photographing this Brazilian island both above and below the water. His results will surely put it on the map internationally as a vibrant dive destination with diverse marine life and spectacular surface scenery.

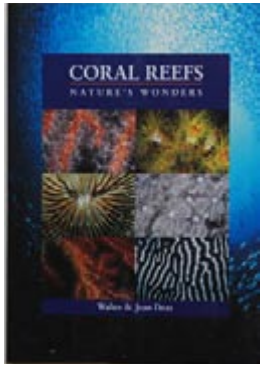
Marcelo produces good images both above and below the water and the widescreen horizontal format is easy on the eye and impressive in size.

www.underwater.com.br

Coral Reefs

Nature's wonders

By Walter and Jean Deas



There are or seem to have been more books about coral reefs than almost any other underwater subject. As a vital part in the ocean's structure they deserve such attention but it can be quite difficult to come up with a new angle for yet another book.

I'm sure the technical information on corals in this book will be informative to those studying the subject but the visuals are more scientific than artistic.

Coral Reefs has to compete with some stiff modern opposition in terms of photography content and layout and when compared side by side this one is lacklustre and a lot of the images look dated.

www.museum.wa.gov.au

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

Being a keen diver with particular love for underwater photography, I never dive without my camera. Between dives I enjoy snorkelling and of course as you might have guessed already, the camera is with me then as well.

My wife and I were having a lovely vacation on Perhentian Island, Malaysia in April 2006, me diving, she mostly relaxing on the beach, when the following occurred.

My wife is not a diver, in fact she is not that keen on snorkelling either. Mostly because she doesn't feel comfortable in the water. All marine animals and strange creatures scares her, that is evident by the frequent screams coming from her.

In any case this lovely sunny afternoon, exploring a snorkelling site I believed was called the shark point, due to the alleged frequent sightings of black tip reef sharks. I managed to convince my wife that sharks are not really dangerous, just curious.

Anyway, while snorkelling I heard her scream but didn't really react since she does that all the time. Too my big surprise, though, she was 20 meters or so away from me. A distance she reached in a few seconds only, since I knew she was at my side only moments ago. She is waiving franticly and pointing at something.

I turn around and what do I see? A huge monster coming straight towards me, my first thought was: " Oh my good it's a crocodile, a huge one"! Then I realized that I'd never heard of crocodiles in Malaysia. The monster came closer and then I saw that it was not a crocodile after all, it was something else equally frightening.

A big lizard was heading straight towards me. I quickly estimated the length to approx. 2,5 meters. Its front legs were the size of my thighs. While this enormous creature was heading towards me I noticed that it was actually not swimming straight towards me as I initially thought.

Too my great relief, the lizard passed me on a distance of approx 2 meters, swimming towards the open sea. Apparently totally oblivious of me, what a relief. While the shock by then had lost at least part of its grip on me, I suddenly remembered that I had my camera with me. I managed to squeeze off two quick shoots, no time for fiddling around with the camera settings.

As the lizard disappeared into haze, I thought for a second about trying to swim after it to get a better shot. After reasoning with my better judgment for a split second, I decided it was for the better not to try anything foolish like that.

Instead I moved to take care of my panic-stricken wife. To be honest I was a bit shaken myself about the experience.

I later checked with the locals about my encounter and I was informed that the lizard was probably a monitor lizard, apparently belonging to the same species as the infamous Comodo-Varan and that specimens up to 3 meters in length were known to exist on the island. The lizards are so called opportunist, they eat basically anything they can get. They are known to dig up human corpses, but are normally no threat to people even though they can easily run faster than a human. They are also known for their nasty bites as their mouths are so full of bacteria that a bite from them are potentially lethal.

Peter Johansson
peter.johansson@swedishclub.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".

peter@uwpmag.com