Underwater Photography

a web magazine
Issue 41
Mar/Apr 2008

Discover UNDERWATER Photography

SLR-DC Housings

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

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

Fuji
S-5 Pro

Nikon
D40, D40X
D50
D70, 70s
D80
D200
D300

Olympus
E-330
E-410
E-500
E-510
E-3

Sony
A100
A700

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

www.ikelite.com

Ikelite Compact Digital Still Housings for

Canon • Fuji • Nikon • Olympus • Sony

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

Ikelite AF35 AutoFlash Kit

Fits most compact digital camera housings.

Ikelite • Canon • Olympus • Sony

The AF35 AutoFlash replicates your camera's flash for automatic exposure in any situation. You only have to know how to point.

The AF35 AutoFlash kit is an effortless and affordable way to add an external flash to your point-and-shoot camera system. Everything you need to get started is in the box - just attach it to the bottom of your housing and start taking pictures!

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UwP41
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Cover shot
by Peter Rowlands

Underwater Photography

Publisher/Editor Peter Rowlands
www.pr-productions.co.uk
peter@uwpmag.com

Editorial

Questionnaire

When you've got a spare minute could you do me a favour and complete the very short questionnaire by following this link:

www.pr-productions.co.uk/questionnaire

It's intention is to find out what you think about UwP and the articles you would like to see in the future.

It shouldn't take much more than a minute to complete and there's even a chance for you to "have your say"!

I will now put my tin helmet on and, hopefully, await your responses...

A Big Issue

Whenever I've banged on about how UwP is unplanned and how each issue uses up virtually all of the submissions I was really trying to prepare you for the time when submissions were scarce and resulted in a much smaller issue than normal.

I'm delighted to say that this issue has gone the other way and is bursting at the seems with content and I hope you enjoy it.

For me one particularly nice aspect about UwP is dealing with contributors for whom English is not their first language. The purist snobs would say "Only use what is grammatically correct" but I think UwP is richer for its diversity of prose and captures the wide ranging spirit of its contributors.

Contributions thank you

For most of last year I encouraged you to make donations to UwPs contributors who provide their time, knowledge and talent without charge. Without them UwP would have to charge you to read it or, worse still, would have to shut down.

I am delighted to report that £642 was donated by 59 UwP readers during 2007 and this was distributed in January on a page pro rata basis. What was also most gratifying was the reaction from all of the contributors who expressed genuine surprise and deep gratitude that their contributions had been appreciated so much. They would like to thank all the contributors in return.

The campaign to raise donations for contributors will continue because, as I always say when I e mail them to thank them after each Issue of UwP is completed, without UwP contributors, there would be no UwP.

Thanks again and please consider your support during 2008.

www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

Sharks bite back

Sometimes it takes two events to polarise yet focus a situation.

On almost the same day in the UK recently, the cinema release of 'Sharkwater' coincided with the tragic death of a diver during a shark feeding trip in the Bahamas.

'Sharkwater' is a personal crusade of a film to highlight the needless slaughter of millions of sharks each year yet its message has been nullified so negatively by the loss of one human's life in what many people have refered to as a 'tragic accident'. Tragic, most certainly, accident, most certainly not.

The dictionary definition of an accident is 'an event without apparent cause'. The tragic irony in this case is that the cause was baited water used to attract sharks for thrill. Used to enable us to get close enough to them to take their photograph and return home like a digital trophy hunter. Not for research or to observe them performing naturally in their habitat but to perform for our shallow gratification. And when they behave 'accidentally' it becomes 'tragic'. Tragic, most certainly, and especially for this particular family, but a million times more so for the sharks. The media will spit the hard fought message of 'Sharkwater' in our faces and perpetuate the myth because we, the diving and underwater photography community, have provided them with the perfect fodder. Proof that they are mindless killers and as such they only deserve to be killed.

I have been on a trip with the operater involved and can wholly endorse his knowledge, preparation and safety procedures. Nothing more could have been done to ensure our safety underwater. The problem is that we were dealing with an unnatural situation in which wild animals were being encouraged to act both naturally and unnaturally and as such we have to accept the consequences. Those consequences rarely ever happen but when they do, we have to accept that by being there and doing what we did we are responsible for affecting the way the general public perceive sharks.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Wetpixel LLC is proud to announce the immediate availability of issue #2 of Wetpixel Quarterly magazine. In its trademark landscape-oriented, high-resolution format, issue #2 celebrates the lifelong work of James D. Watt, one of the pioneers of modern underwater photography. Jim will always be remembered for his boundless energy and generosity as a photographer, educator, and friend.

Wetpixel Quarterly #2 also features the work of the talented staff behind the scenes at the magazine and at its electronic sister publication, Wetpixel.com. Featured staff photographers include Alex Mustard, Eric Cheng, Mike Veitch, Luiz Rocha, Cor Bosman, Julie Edwards, Herb Ko, James Wiseman, Todd Mintz, Matt Segal, Elijah Woolery, William Heaton, and Leslie Harris.

Wetpixel Quarterly #2 has shipped to subscribers worldwide, who can expect to receive their issues in 1-3 weeks. Individual copies are available at

www.wetpixelquarterly.com

The British Society of Underwater Photographers

BSoUP Splash In July 12, 2008

Are you the UK's top underwater photographer?

The quest is on to find the UK's top underwater photographer. The title will be decided at the second annual British Splash-In championships being staged at Plymouth on Saturday, July 12, 2008 by the British Society of Underwater Photographers (BSoUP) in association with the National Marine Aquarium.

The winner of the title - chosen by an independent panel of judges - will be jetting off to the Red Sea to enjoy a fabulous one-week liveaboard trip donated by Tony Backhurst Scuba Travel.

Running alongside the championships is a print competition that will be judged by the thousands of visitors flocking to the Aquarium from June 21. An independent panel of judges will also award the top prize of a Red Sea Eco Village diving holiday donated by Oonasdivers. The home waters section of the print competition is being run in conjunction with The Wildlife Trusts, who are seeking images of colourful and exotic-looking marine wildlife with a theme of "I can't believe it's the UK."

Said BSoUP chairman J.P. Trenque: "The event is open to any qualified diver or snorkeller and we hope that users of compact cameras as well as those with more advanced equipment will test their skills in this unique way. The winners of the one-day shootouts staged by the various local underwater photographic groups in the UK are also invited to take part.

"All facing the same conditions underwater and working within a specific timeframe in the vicinity of Plymouth on that particular day, the battle is to produce the one image that is judged to be the best and worthy of the title."

In addition to the two major prizes, other generous sponsorship for the Splash-In and the print competition is being provided by Ocean Optics, Cameras Underwater, Mike's Dive Stores, AP Valves, Ocean Visions and the National Marine Aquarium.

Full details of both events can be found on BSoUP's web site:

www.bsoup.org

Whales Revenge

To any of you that are against the slaughter of whales by the Japanese in the name of research, here is a link to a petition that will be handed to the International Whaling Commission. The target is 1 million signatures, when I signed there were 966,978 so its not very far off.

It only takes a few seconds, so if you care - please go to the link and add your name.

Please also forward this link to you anyone else you know who cares for whales.

www.whalesrevenge.com

THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS

I work with Pew Environment Group on ocean and fish conservation campaigns. In our publications and public outreach we are in great need of photos of fish that occur in US federal waters, and of commercial fishing technology in action. For example, we'd love a great photograph of a red snapper swimming in their habitat, or longlines being set or pulled in with catch and bycatch. Can you point us in the right direction of photographers who might have such photos?

For us, the goal is to bring the fish and the overfishing to life.

Thanks and best wishes,
Joseph Gordon

www.pewtrusts.org

DYNAMIC DIVE EXHIBITION
Italy
9-10-11
MAY 2008

www.ddexhibition.org

EMPEROR divers.com

oceanvisions

Shore-based Underwater Photography Workshops for Beginners with Maria Munn

14th September 2008

Maria Munn of Ocean Visions is no stranger to taking underwater photography workshops with Emperor Divers. This latest workshop is unique in being a hands-on learning experience at a fun and friendly pace giving great results fast to complete beginners. Being shore-based means that guests get to really concentrate on particular dive sites and 'marine models' instead of travelling to new sites each day on a liveaboard.

Maria will help to develop your photography skills by working with your own equipment as well as exploring extra creative ideas.

Based at Emperor's established centre in Nuweiba - renowned for its canvass of spectacular photographic models - this course is sure to give you the confidence to go for better shots. You will benefit from the comfort of familiar dives and from the friendly support and encouragement from Maria, Emperor Divers' staff and a small group of like-minded photographers.

During the trip Maria will hold regular debriefs to discuss the diving and photography as well as fun, informal presentations where you get involved in enhancing your photography.

External flashguns and different lenses are available to hire so you can see what suits you before splashing out on expensive equipment. There will be slideshows in the evenings showing the days events and all photographs will be judged at the end of the week with lots of prizes to be won.

www.emperordivers.com

DivePhotoGuide.com

Upcoming International Photo & Video Competitions

March is a pretty big month for underwater competition deadlines, followed by a quiet April. Good luck to all!

March 1st

Underwater Images 2008

www.uwimages.org

March 10th

4th Eastern Mediterranean Underwater Photography and Film Festival

www.emu.edu.tr/underwater/festival.htm

March 15th

2008 Scuba Diving Magazine Photo Contest

www.scubadiving.com/photo_video

March 31st

Wildlife Photographer of the Year Competition

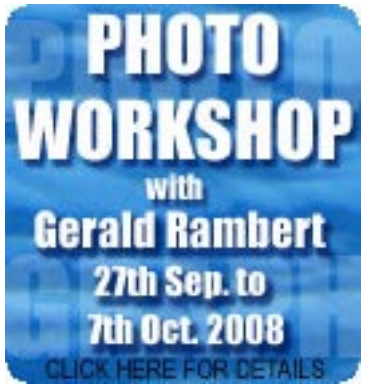
www.nhm.ac.uk

DivePhotoGuide.com

Komodo Photo Workshop

MV Siren

27th September - 7th October 2008



We have a very special photography workshop with multiple award winning underwater photographer, Gerald Rambert.

With numbers reduced to just 14, every attention to detail will be given to improving your photography. We also have a professional underwater model for you to work with. Finally Kitty Jempson, herself a successful underwater photographer and scuba instructor will be on hand to improve your techniques whilst shooting. This trip is also open to videographers. £1,450.00 excluding flights. You will also have a chance to win a FREE trip!

www.worldwidediveandsail.com

Have Maluku Divers found a "new" frogfish?

The team at Maluku Divers recently rediscovered a very interesting frogfish in Ambon Bay.

During a dive on Laha which is just fifteen minutes from the dive facility and newly refurbished en-suite resort accommodation on the southern coast of Ambon, in the village of Latuhalat, divemaster Toby Fadirsyair and owner

Buck Randolph were incredibly excited to spot this little specimen. Toby has been diving this region for over 18 years and after surfacing, said he had only seen this species once before and that was 15 years ago. The decision was quickly made for Buck to get a camera while Toby descended to keep an eye on his find.

Afterwards, they realised that they couldn't identify exactly what type of frogfish Maluku Divers contacted authors Beth and Shaun Tierney who visited Ambon in 2007. They were equally excited but despite a lot of searching could only suggest it was a variation of a striped frogfish and recommended we look towards some real scientists. Since then we have contacted several top fish identification experts to see if they can establish the scientific details of the specimen.

The frogfish is one of a pair and is about 10cm long. Anyone with suggestions as to the scientific name of the specimen, please email

info@divingmaluku.com

FOTOSUBMEX

FotoSubmex and Original Extreme Experience are organizing the first international event of underwater photography in Mexico.

This year, Mexican coasts will be ready for this first edition of fotosubmex 2008. This championship will allow photographers the opportunity to take pictures in two completely different marine ecosystems and to discover the secrets under the beautiful Mexican coasts. In each site, photographers will do four dives to take the best pictures.

FotoSubmex 2008 will take place in two Protected Natural Areas , starting June 1st en Veracruz, in the Gulf of Mexico, and continuing June 4th in La Paz, in the Sea of Cortez.

June 7th we will travel to Mexico City and next day we will assist to the prizes presentation.

www.original-extreme.com

Underwater Photo Workshops

with Mauricio Handler

Statia, N. A. May 10-17, 2008
Sipadan Water Village, Borneo
Nov 1-8, 2008

For this years Caribbean Workshop, I have chosen the beautiful, quaint and unique Island of St. Eustatius (Statia).

Statia's Marine Park was just awarded the status of National Marine Park. This in itself will give even further protection and credibility to this very successful underwater park.

The workshop will cover wide-angle natural and mixed-lighting, macro and extreme macro, composition and telling a story as well as Digital workflow. In addition I will cover all aspects of Maintenence.

Subject matter include: 300 foot Charlie B wreck, cannons, old Anchors, volcanic sand (unique macro) with Flying Gurnards and Pipe Fin Blennies. I will be offering one on one advice and guidance.

This workshop will take your photography level to new heights and is open to all skill levels.

This years Pacific Underwater workshop will take place on Sipadan Water Village Resort on the island of Mabul. Built on wooden stilts over

the Celebes Sea, SWV is simply breathtaking. Mabul and Kapalai Islands are probably the most exciting places in the world for macro, while Sipadan Island is world-famous for its biodiversity and marine life abundance. These three Islands will be our photographic canvas's during this week of learning and photography skill building.

For those wishing to extend their stay, Sipadan Water Village's 2008 Photo week will follow this workshop. Join Mauricio Handler and Marty Snyderman in this week of informal lectures and presentations as well as a photo competition.

This international event is in its 4rth year and is a great place to network and expand your skills after the workshop.

www.handlerphoto.com

GDT European Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2008

The "Gesellschaft Deutscher Tierfotografen" (GDT) invites all amateur and professional photographers from all over Europe to participate in this contest. The main object of the contest is to illustrate the high quality and the specific style of European wildlife photography by excellent pictures from Europe and all over the world and to promote general awareness for nature conservation through the means of photography.

Photographs can be entered in 8 different categories (Birds, Mammals, Other Animals, Plants + Fungi, Landscapes, The Underwater World, Man and Nature, Nature's Studio) as digital photos or as slides.

Closing date for both awards is Thursday, 26th June 2008.

www.gdtfoto.de

Understanding Sharks with Grant Bates

Tuesday March 11th 2008
Ocean Optics, London

We're delighted that our good friend Grant Bates has agreed to make a special presentation for Ocean Optics - Mavericks Diving about sharks and the Shark Trust.

Grant is a Shark Trust trustee and a shark expert who has dived with them around the world. He will provide you with an intriguing insight into shark biology that will really increase your understanding of sharks and enrich your next diving experience with them. Grant will also explain about his work with the Shark Trust and expand on how, as individual divers, we can each contribute to their protection.

The Shark Trust is an organisation that Ocean Optics - Mavericks Diving supports. With Grant's help we launched Shark Day at London Aquarium last year.

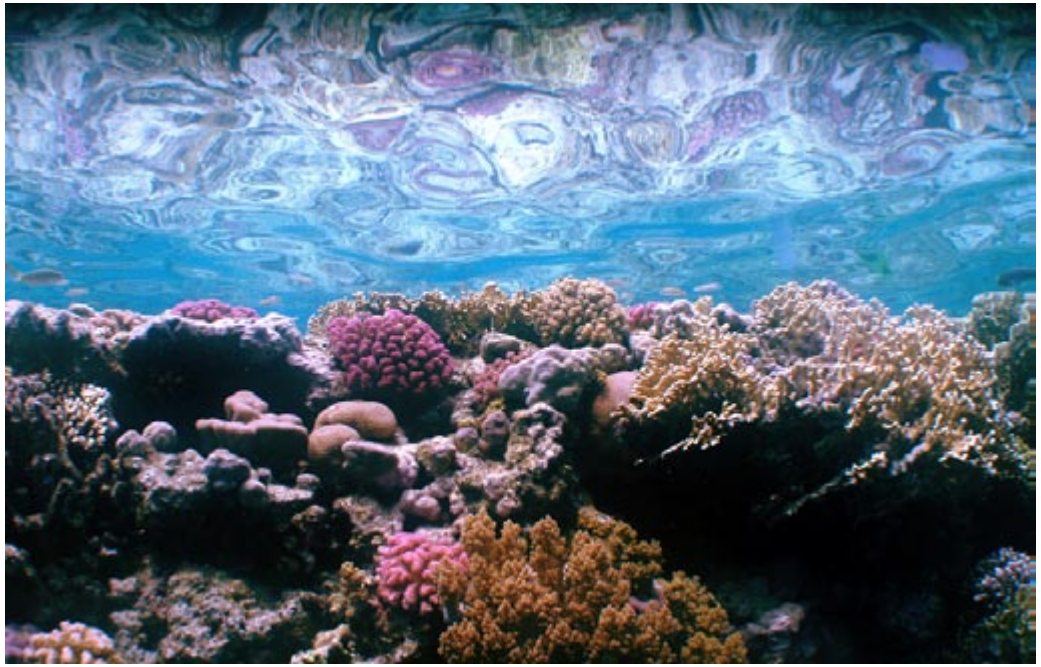
If you are as addicted to sharks as we are, you won't want to miss Grant's presentation.

£5.00 per head, all proceeds to the Shark Trust

www.oceanoptics.co.uk

‘Fragile Existence’

March 15th -27th 2008, Brixton, London



Tin Fish is a group of four individual artists including Carina Hall, Marie Hart, Danielle Ward and Becky Metcalfe. ‘Fragile Existence’ is Tin Fish’s first collaborating exhibition whose aim is to share their diverse styles and ideas with the public in an exhilarating way.

The group produces their work in a variety of different mediums and between them they have backgrounds in Fine Art, Textiles, Photography and Sculpture. They produce Art that is pure, subtle and focuses on their own deceptions of the surrounding environment.

Carina Hall documents fragile moments found in nature where she illustrates the effects that reflections, light, movement and water have on landscapes and underwater scenes. This heightens the surreal feel she likes to portray in her images. Carina enjoys discovering patterns created under the surface of the water; the way in which sunlight, clouds and colours of the underwater landscape move and are reflected back onto the water.

www.redgategallery.co.uk

Celebrate the Sea

Manila Ocean Park

Philippines

13-15 June 2008

Following the success of the 2007 festival OceanNEnvironment Australia is pleased to announce in collaboration with the Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Philippines Commission on Sports Scuba Diving (PCSSD), to present the 7th 'Celebrate the Sea Marine Imagery Festival Philippines 2008'.

Celebrate the Sea is the biggest underwater pictures festival outside of Europe where the 'World Festival of Underwater Pictures' (Festival Mondial de l'Image Sous Marine) is staged annually in Antibes, France, now in its 35th year. Celebrate the Sea festival is seen as the dominant platform to promote conservation providing education and entertainment to create greater awareness of our ocean environment. The world's best marine images and films have a powerful effect on both the diving and non-diving community.

The 2008 festival will comprise of imagery presentations and seminars by a panel of world renowned image makers and marine scientists such Peter Scoones, cinematographer of the BBC Blue Planet series, Dr Phil Nyutten, David Doubilet, Jennifer Hayes and Emory Kristof of National Geographic, Dr Carden Wallace, coral scientist, Fred Buyle – four times world free diving champion, Scott Tuason, author and underwater photographer and Daniel Mercier – founder World Underwater Picture Festival will be on site to officiate the festival.

Photographers and films makers, send in your entries now to compete in Asia Pacific's most prestigious international underwater imagery competition where the premier prize is the conferred title of 'President, Grand Award of Highest Achievement 2008' with US$2000 as prize money.

www.CelebratetheSea.com

Orca Divers Underwater Photography Competition 2007

Orca Divers, a PADI 5* IDC Scuba Diving School based in Chorlton, Manchester recently held their annual underwater photography exhibition and competition. The prizes for this annual event, totaling over £2000, included an Inon Fish-Eye Lens, a diving holiday for 2 people with Emperor Divers, Photography Equipment and Courses from Orca Divers, a Mares Airtrim Origin Sport BCD; TUSA mask, fins and snorkel of choice and an Atomic Mask.

31 entries were displayed under 2 categories: Warm Water and UK Waters. The judges, Kirk Mottershead and Bec Garland, two professional photographers from Manchester, chose an overall best in show, and then winners and runners-up in each category. There were also prizes for the top 2 photographs as chosen by the Orca Divers Club members who attended the event.

Ben Downes, from Antrobus, won the top prize of the Overall Best in Show with his superb wreck shot taken on an Orca Divers trip to Egypt and he also took the prize for the Best Underwater Photograph taken in UK waters with a Blenny taken on a trip to North Wales.

Liam Byres, from West Didsbury, won the top prize for a photograph taken in warmer water and also won the Orca Divers Club Member's choice with photos taken in Hamata. The runners-up in each category were: Lyndon Saunders, David Pilgrim and Doug Robertson.

The standard of competition was superb. Nick Robertson-Brown, owner of Orca Divers, who teaches underwater photography courses said "We are already looking forward to next year's competition. We had some great entries and the judges found it really difficult to pick out the best photographs. We had photos taken from all around the world, from Egypt, the Caribbean, Indonesia and of course from our UK waters as well."

Orca Divers would like to thank Ocean Optics, Emperor Divers, Mares, CPS Partnership and Typhoon International for the generous donation of prizes for this competition.

www.orcadivers.com

Ben Downes, from Antrobus, won the top prize of the Overall Best in Show

Doug Robertson

Ben Downes

3rd Annual Wetpixel and DivePhotoGuide International Underwater Photography & Video Competition Winners

IN ASSOCIATION WITH OUR WORLD UNDERWATER

Wetpixel.com, DivePhotoGuide.com and Our World Underwater are proud to announce the winners of the 3rd annual international underwater photography & video competition. Winners were announced during the Friday & Saturday night film festivals and exhibited all weekend to a packed crowd at Our World Underwater in Chicago.

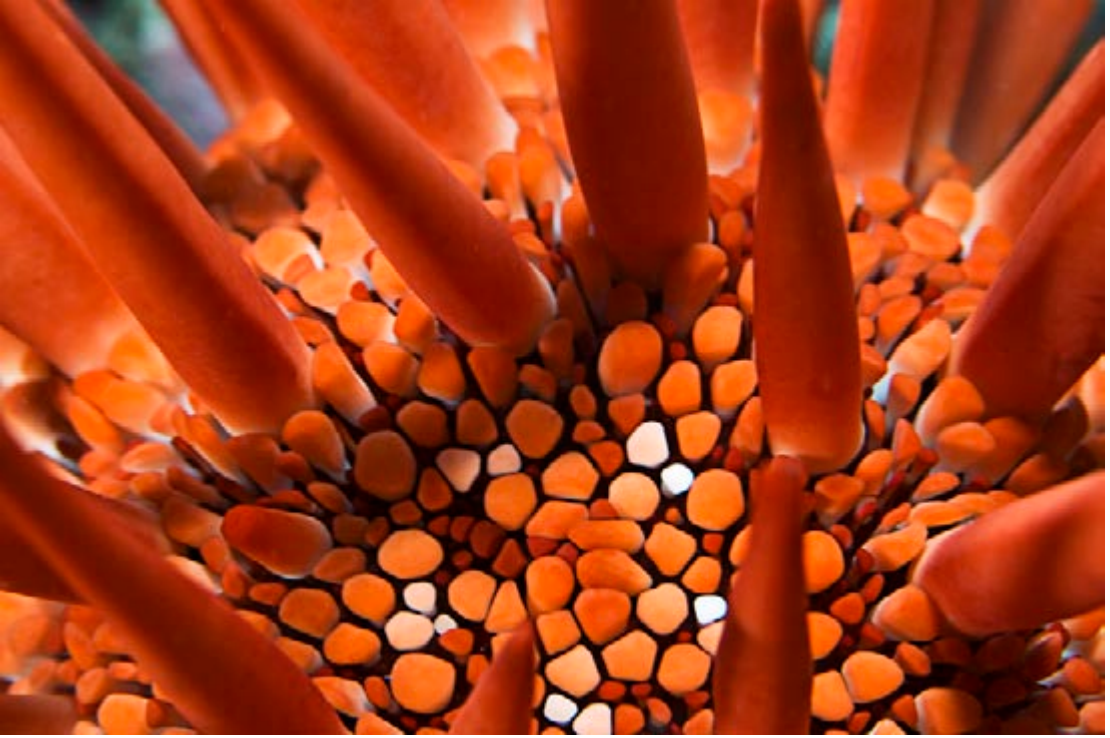
Best of Show & Environment/Conservation. Borut Furlan (Slovenia) "Shark & Diver"

Wide Angle Unrestricted . Gold: Dale Sanders (USA) "Salmon"

Premier video sponsor

AMPHIBICO

Underwater Imaging Equipment..... Diver Designed!

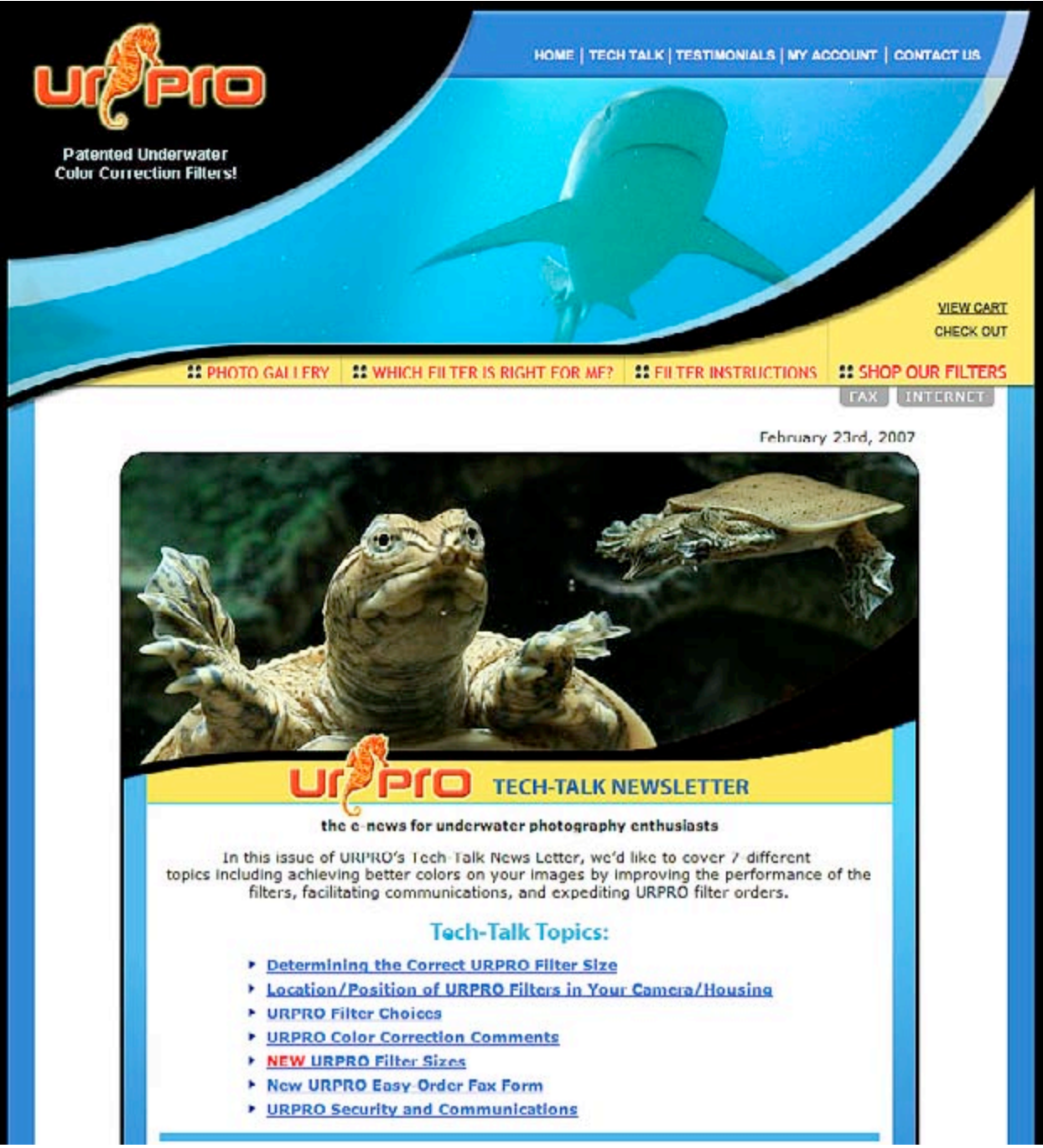


Macro Traditional Gold: Mike Roberts (USA) "Urchin Abstract

Compact Camera Gold: Julie Lucas (USA) "Boobie"

Macro Unrestricted. Gold: Andres Salesjo (Sweden) "Shark Egg"

Wide Angle Traditional . Gold: Douglas Hofman (USA) "B+W Whale"



Click on the link below to go to the Tech-Talk Newsletter

www.urprofilters.com

New Products

Ikelite Olympus E3 housing due in March

Introducing a full-featured yet affordable underwater housing for the Olympus E-3 Digital SLR Camera. The compact, clear polycarbonate case provides visibility of its o-ring seals and corrosion-free performance up to a depth of 200ft (60m). Controls are provided for most camera functions and kept water-tight with Ikelite pioneered Quad-Ring seal glands--proven to be the most reliable method of sealing controls.

A full range of dome and flat ports accommodate most macro, wide-angle and zoom lenses. Port attachment is quick and easy with a simple locking system and clear view of the port o-ring seal. Lens port not included. A large zoom control knob can be comfortably reached without removing your hand from the handle.

The housing includes TTL conversion circuitry that operates perfectly with current model Ikelite DS SubStrobes. See strobe requirements by serial number. Two pushbuttons on the back of the housing put precise exposure control right at your fingertips.

While in TTL mode the circuitry provides four 1/2 f/stop increments over or under flash compensation that is added to or subtracted from any compensation entered into the camera. Manual mode provides eight manual power settings in half-stop increments.

Other manufacturers' strobes can be used, but they cannot provide iTTL exposure or be adjusted manually through the housing. Sync cords for the attachment of Nikonos, Inon, or Sea & Sea strobes are available.

The proven reliable Ikelite bulkhead allows for fail-safe connection of external strobes. Right-angle positioning relieves stress on the sync cord even when the housing is laid on its back.

Controls are provided for every camera function except the flash up button and light button for the top LCD window. Camera settings can be viewed in the rear LCD screen on night dives. The AEL/AEL button can be activated with your thumb while holding the handle.

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.

www.ikelite.com

Sealux CC40 Canon EOS 40D housing

The CC40 is machined from solid aluminium and has standard controls for Power ON-OFF, release knob, main dial, mode selection, ISO and flash +/- adjustment, operating switch, White-Balance, LCD illumination, keys for AF-ON, AE storage and AF-measuring field selection, multi-controller key, Quick dialer with adjustment key, keys for menu, replay, delete, jump, INFO, picture style, zoom, lens release.

Flash sockets: You have the choice. For a reliable eTTL control with Canon system flashguns you need the S6 socket. For flashguns of the manufacturer Sea&Sea, Ikelite we recommend the five-pole flash socket with flexible contacts. For Subtronic analogue flashguns the five-pole flash socket with fixed contacts is probably the best choice.

www.sealux.de

Seatool XTi housing

Canon has again revolutionized the photographic landscape with the latest incarnation of their Digital Rebel line, the Canon Digital Rebel XTi (aka EOS 400D or Kiss 400D depending on your location). The 400D is a very compact, yet full featured Digital SLR camera with an affordable price tag.

But perhaps the most compelling feature of this new camera is its small size, only 127x94x65mm (5x3.7x2.6in) and weight, only 556 g (19.6 oz). This makes the Rebel XTi the perfect choice for the compact digital user who is wanting to move up to a SLR camera, but has been reluctrant to do so due to the size and weight of traditional SLR cameras.

In keeping with the compact form of this exceptional camera, Seatool is proud to offer yet another

www.uwpmag.com

revolutionary housing that brings underwater SLR performance to divers worldwide with the most compact SLR housing ever offered.

www.seatoolusa.com


AQUATICA™
Digital
300 ft depth rating.
Sturdy aluminum construction.
Modular port system.
Dual strobe connectors.
Deep down,
you want Aquatica.
Aqua View
AQUATICA
ON
OFF
www.aquatica.ca

45 degree finder

Fiber optic sync

D70

D2x

D200

D80

1Ds MarkII

5D

Seacam Seaflash 250

The Seaflash is a new generation for submersible strobe, complete with a sturdy aluminum cast housing enclosing sophisticated electronics supplied by Subtronic, one of Europe's leading electronics innovators. Power comes from Nicad batteries. Charging is accomplished in two -hours or less, and a battery capacity display with LEDs lets the photographer know how much power remains. An undervoltage circuit breaker prevents total discharge, eliminating potential damage to the Nicad power source.

There are 3 performance classes of the Seacam Seaflash, but common features on each strobe include TTL exposure, textured reflector, a glass dome, slave and signal flash function, automatic charger. A pilot (model) light that may be dimmed by 60% is available. When working with shy, reclusive fish, this combination auto-focus assist and aiming light may be the only way to get the shot.

There are 2 operating modes to assure precise exposure in both TTL automatic and manual settings. Ergonomic rotary switches are illuminated to provide correct operation even in the dark. In manual there are 7 power levels in steps of one aperture each, and in TTL up to 3 different TTL systems with automatic

recognition systems may be built-in. A ready light is visible through the camera viewfinder, and with a quick 2.5-second recycle time, photo-ops will not be lost due to slow recycle.

Temperature: The combination of a tinted, color corrected flashtube, textured reflector, and dome glass create natural colors in the underwater environment. There is even an innovative color temperature control controller as an option, allowing any color temperature between 4300 degrees K and 5200 degrees K to be selected. Shooting a peacock flounder on white sand from 6 inches away, dial in a cool color temperature. Shooting a fair skinned model with wide-angle 3 feet away, work at the warm end of the spectrum. A simple yet invaluable concept, executed with elegance and creativity.

www.seacamusa.com

Aquatica Nikon D3 housing

The new State of the Art Aquatica D3 housing for the Nikon D3 full frame camera comes loaded with features making this housing the ideal system for demanding professionals and discerning amateurs alike.

A saddle mounting/ locking system allows for easy sliding of the D3 body on two solid rods and there are spring loaded contacts with the Aperture and Speed dials making for flawless and smooth changes to these settings.

All D3 housings come standard with dual bulkhead connectors and moisture alarm. Aquatica D3 ports, extensions and lens gears are compatible with all other bayonet mount Aquatica housing.

Features include: Bayonet Port: Positive bayonet mounting leaves no doubt that your ports are secure in place and water tight. The bayonet system offers the fastest access to lenses for rapid changing without having to remove the SLR from the housing. Allows use of lenses from a 10.5mm ultra wide to a 200mm macro. Tele-converter port extensions are also available.

Port locking mechanism (NEW): a new port locking mechanism is integrated in the Aquatica D3 housing; this lock is accessible from the exterior of the housing making port changing a breeze.

Fingertip access to all camera menu controls include On-Off, Mode, bracket, Meter position, MSC focus control and AE/AF lock as well as AF preferences. Access to all menu features include review, enlarge and delete, histogram and internal SLR preferences.

There is a lens release lever for easy lens changing through the front port with camera installed.

The Aquatica D3 uses a viewfinder that derives the biggest and the brightest image possible in full frame viewing to your eye. For an even greater viewing experience the acclaimed Aqua View can be mounted in minutes and will not block the rear LCD view.

Live View (NEW): The Aquatica D3 housing give the user access to the Live View feature of the Nikon D3 camera.

Depth rating: 300 feet/90 meters
Size: 91/2 x 8 1/2 x 5 3/4 / 241mm x 216mm x 146 mm
Weight: 8 lb / 3.628 kg

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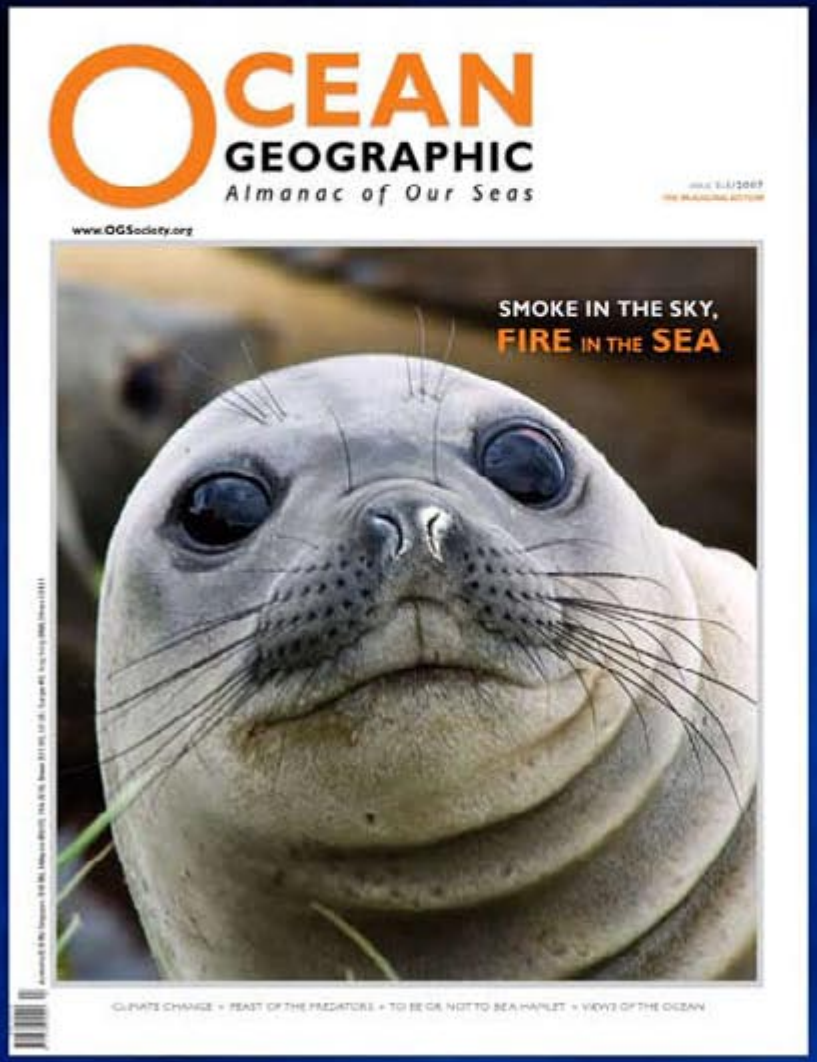

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Olympus E-410 and PT-E03 housing

by Rob Spray

As you look around a diveboat these days it's hard to avoid the feeling that every diver has a camera. I blame Olympus who helped create this niche by making dive housings for most of their output since the late nineties - ever since the PT-003 for the C-900. Now there's a great choice of excellent small cameras from numerous manufacturers. While low end competition is cutthroat Olympus are still ahead in the breadth of models they house, from point and shoot up through their range to the SLRs. Having seeded the market it may now be the top end which they will bring within easier reach. To see if their new kid is out of its depth we took it on a fun November weekend in Plymouth with the last of the good(ish) weather.

A housing comparison, the PT-E03 against the PT-E02. Its much smaller but the lens ports will be the same size. The port for the 14-42mm kit lens has a larger port than ideal but might even be useful for under/over shooting - compared to the Olympus dome port on the 02. The E-410 and kit lens weigh 2.5kg housed where the E-330 in equivalent trim is nearing 3.5kg. Once the E-410 was paired with a smaller strobe such as the UFL1 the difference could exceed 2kg.

The camera

One promise of Olympus' chosen 4/3 sensor system was that smaller cameras would be possible. This has been an empty threat as the first four E-Series cameras were no smaller than average but at last that has changed. The E-410 is the smallest digital SLR available. Handling one will bring back happy memories for those with a film history. It's not quite a wafer thin, retro OM clone but feels dense and well built though even including the kit lens it's lighter than an OM-1 body. It's definitely not the bulky plastic monster that seems to be today's 'small' SLR. The E-410 is such a rapid update to the physically identical E-400, that it is clearly the model that was originally intended.

The major change is the switch from a Kodak to a Panasonic sensor – still 10 Megapixel– which allows Liveview and other refinements. It still has two card slots, one each for Compactflash and xD memory, and can fill both or copy between the two.

The phrase 'kit lens' doesn't normally set pulses racing but the standard zoom is a tiny 14-42mm unit (28-84mm in 35mm film terms) which is sharp, light and focuses down to 24cm from the sensor. It's a great general purpose lens and a cracking starting point for use underwater. Most kit lenses are makeweights, but this one is worth its weight in gold - although not very much – it only weighs 190 grams.

The rear LCD is 2.5" but doesn't look gross since the sparse buttons leave space for a decent layout and comfortable grip. Of course the screen can show the Liveview but also does excellent service on playback, with the first use I've seen of the orientation sensor for review. As well as tagging images portrait or landscape at capture it uses the same sensor so that portrait pictures show full screen if you stand the camera up on end. I'm sure there are other cameras which do this but it's a nice touch for an 'entry level' SLR. It doesn't feel cheap and you don't pay a premium for compactness. Although nominally the entry level Olympus it's better built than equivalent competitors and without having its functionality crippled like some.

The housing

It's all very well making a cute camera but no benefit underwater if you're forced to buy an expensive, bulky case. Every style has its place but a compact, cost effective option is a great way to bring people into the hobby. Olympus' previous SLR housings were heavy duty beauties, rated to 60m and built to fight on equal terms with the big names in the field. Now the little E-410 has earned a neat 40m case which provides all the protection a normal diver will need, the polycarbonate is thick and rigid. The PT-E03 is closer to its SLR brothers than its compact cousins but saves half a kilo and is considerably smaller.

The case closely follows the body but includes a power bulge so that the flash can be raised. The port thread is the same as the other PT-Es but the housing aperture tapers and has been reduced in bulk as far as possible. A (relatively) mass produced case allows the creation of these specialised parts where they are needed, so the drive to reduce bulk and cost can be done with a conscience. The catches are smaller than on other PT-Es but well proven and protected from accidental release. The rigidity of the case ensures the seals stay in even contact and keeping the case small helps keep it stiff. Like

The new baby, the E-410 in its PT-E03 housing with the housed FL-36 flash on a Fantasea tray and flexarm.

smaller Olympus cases the PT-E03 is rounded rather than rectangular – to reduce stress and distortion. Double 'o'-rings seal the rear door, the hinge taking the place of two catches on other PT-E cases. After greasing, the 'o' rings need a while to relax into the detour over the flash but some time spent shut fixes that.

Two camera controls aren't brought out, they're caught between the pop-up flash inside and the strobe bulkhead on the case and so can't be reached with reasonably simple buttons. One is the release for the

Neither housing is smothered with buttons but the loss of the E-330's extra liveview modes sheds 3 controls. The power bulge for the flash disguises adds to the height of the otherwise well tailored case.

flash and the other the drive mode button. Both are redundant and can be accomplished by other means. Drive is one of the top level parameters - along with ISO, white balance, flash mode, metering, focus mode, card, compression and colour rendition - which can be accessed through the rear panel status display. Just press OK and the cursor keys select the parameter you can change with the dial. The E-410 is the base model in the range and whilst it doesn't lack for facilities or image quality beside its larger range mates the lack of real estate does mean less buttons - so users need to be familiar with the back panel control options. Some reviewers have missed this parallel control path, perhaps it's not so critical on the surface but underwater this simple aggregation is very useful under duress.

With the PT-E02 for the E-330 I complained that the bulkhead connector was vulnerable – it sprouted from the corner of the case. On the PT-E03 it's tucked in beside the flash bulge. Used with the right angled Olympus plugs this minimises the chance of snagging. It's a much better arrangement, hopefully the cases for the FL-20 and FL-36 with be revised to follow suit.

Underwater

On the surface the camera and its cute kit lens are great to use; fast and light - ideal as a holiday SLR. Underwater this translates into a body which occupies little more space than a large compact - such as a C-7070. The port is a different matter but the kit unit is as short as possible, though flared to eliminate vignetting at the wide end of the lens. It's not a compact but quite clearly a size down

from ‘full size’ SLRs like the E-330. Underwater the 410 was good company and as the housing is rated to 40m the buttons are less stiffly sprung than 60m housings.

I added a Fantasea tray and arm to support my housed FL-36 and the combination worked very well. The 18” offset of the flexarm gave good scatter free lighting even in Plymouth’s 5-6m November vis.

The wide end of the kit lens is the equivalent of 28mm (75 degrees) and useful for scenery and larger animals - including buddies! The minimum focus distance might seem large to compact users but remember it is quoted from the plane of the sensor. Although specified as 24cm I measured 20cm – which equates to only around 7cm from the end of the lens when zoomed in. The telephoto end is equivalent to 84mm and gives reasonable near macro performance for smallish animals.

Unlike the E-330 the E-410 offers only mirror lock up liveview, it doesn’t have the extra sensor to implement fulltime viewfinder type liveview. Lock up liveview can’t use the SLR’s normal AF without ‘flapping’ the mirror up and down, which takes a little time. It’s in good company, every new top end SLR has followed this trend, big Canons and Nikons included. Underwater this liveview works for wide views - albeit with shutter lag - but isn’t really suitable for macro subjects. This is the reverse of the situation on land, we can’t always wait still enough to use the liveview for macro. The option to compose wideangle scenes is welcome as it’s sometimes easier to see the 2.5” display at arms length than to contort for the viewfinder. I found the E-330’s liveview more universally useful but this version is cheaper and more compact so it has compensations. Much to my surprise I was able to catch some quite small, mobile fish with the kit lens. I thought it might be slow to focus at the tele end of its range but it did a good job and I wish I’d tried harder after a few experimental shots turned out surprisingly well. The kit lens is a great start, very few of the lenses boxed with SLRs are worth the space they occupy but the 14-42mm is compact and sharp which suits the E-410 perfectly. It offers similar (but wider angle) optical functionality to a compact’s 3x zoom but has SLR focus speed and quality – it’s surprising what a different that will make even to mundane scenes.

Accessories

The flash can be raised but it wouldn’t clear most ports, the intended use is to trigger slave strobes. A lightweight set up would require something smaller than the FL-36 I dived with, though it was an excellent match. The housed flashes are conspicuously bulky beside the PT-E03. With this in mind Olympus now have the small UFL1 slave strobe on their books, clearly a Sea and Sea unit which demonstrates good sense as they know a thing or two about strobes. I hope the partnership bears more fruit as it would be good to have more alternatives to the housed land flashes. Slave strobes are limited to ‘normal’ flash sync speed (<1/180th) whereas the cabled Olympus FL-36 works right up to 1/4000th second.

We were tempted to add a macro upgrade and Olympus make a very light and inexpensive F3.5 35mm macro which will enlarge up to 1:1 and fit the kit lens port. This is little brother to the very nice Olympus F2 50mm macro which is much brighter but costs 3x as much. Underwater, where greater depth of field is usually desirable, the main loss is

The kit lens isn’t intended for macro but works well on small-ish animals. This 2cm cushion star is about the limit though

It’s a shame the flash housing sync socket stuck out to the side.

some brightness at the viewfinder. Less light should slow focus but the extra depth of field seems to outweigh the loss and puts the next subject within easier reach. It doesn't extend as much as the 50mm so it's quicker to rack through its range. This crisp lens needs to be used close up to exploit its potential magnification – better for slugs than fish.

Practicalities

The smaller body means a smaller battery than other Olympus SLRs, but we never ran flat on a dive. Improvements in efficiency must have been made and my gut feeling is that it has the same life as my E-330, which uses the larger battery. On our 2 dive UK day trips we had no battery warnings but I'd expect to change batteries once or twice a day on a liveaboard. Of course using liveview and the flash to trigger a slave would both eat into the battery life.

My girlfriend found the compact E-410 easier to handle underwater than the E-330. The converse may be true for those with big hands, but the weight saving is worthwhile. The E-410 and kit lens weigh 2.5kg housed where the E-330 in equivalent trim is nearing 3.5kg. Once the E-410 was paired with a smaller strobe such as the UFL1 the difference could exceed 2kg. That's a big difference if you have to hike to a shore dive or pass it one handed into a boat from a heavy sea. Men may not want to undermine their boat cred with a tiny SLR but my girlfriend says that women are less vulnerable and can see the advantages. A smaller rig is easier to manage and position underwater, causes less drag and hogs less luggage space.

We both felt that the optical viewfinder seemed smaller than on the E-330. On the surface they were the same so I think it was just a side effect of the dark days in Devon. The results straight out of the camera were strikingly sharp, really popping off the laptop back at base. We took online advice and turned off the default noise reduction at low ISO, there's no need for it.

Another interesting feature, new to me, is lossless RAW compression. It's often assumed that all compression is bad but there are two kinds; lossy methods, like JPEG which sacrifice information and lossless techniques which don't. Since maths allows perfect compression there's no reason not to use it. As a result while E-330 RAW files are 13MB the E-410 saves another 2.5 Megapixels in 9-11MB. That's a worthwhile saving, I can fit at least 1000 extra pictures on my 80GB holiday hard disk. At long last the on board USB is real 'Hi speed' which means what it says, rather than the euphemistic 'Full speed' on earlier Olympus models which was olde worlde slow. It's not as fast as a card reader but works in storage mode so the camera acts as a drive on any Mac or PC without software.

Dawn waiting for the boat to pick us up on a dark November afternoon in Plymouth Sound. The flash is firing through the water.

Conclusion

It's usually agreed that the quality defining element of a camera system is the lens, although bodies can have more or less features they can only exploit the light collected for them. Choice of lens is the basic strength of an SLR system and the E-410 has access some excellent lenses, that the kit lens is worth having is a pleasant bonus too. Until now SLRs have been a Visa bill too far for all but the keenest underwater amateurs. The E-410 and PT-E03 don't make an SLR a cheap option but do trim a good 20% slice off the top.

'Liveview' has been watered down since the E-330 but remains a

Dawn lurking in the kelp, the kit lens is just right for buddy shots.

useful option. As before the optical viewfinder is the best bet for macro but the screen can be great for wide angle. A generation on from the E-330 which provided too much, too soon to an SLR market which couldn't grasp it all the E-410 offers real-time exposure and white balance preview during live view. The new sensor has better high ISO noise performance too. I very rarely use anything other than 100 but once in a blue moon it may come in handy – my attempts at night dive group shots have foundered in the past, maybe now I have the camera to do it?

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Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ3 Review

by Karin Brussaard

The Panasonic Lumix TZ3 with 7.2 million pixels is such a camera. This camera is also called a Traveler Zoom camera. The Lumix TZ3 features 10x optical zoom and offers a 28mm wide angle. Often cameras with large zoom ranges such as the one on the Lumix TZ3 are also of a large size but Panasonic succeeded in keeping the camera quite small. Therefore it is a perfect camera for underwater shooting. And the good thing about the 28mm wide angle is that you don't have to carry along a wide angle lens in your usually already overweight luggage.

The underwater housing, the DMW-MCTZ3 has been made of polycarbonate and is waterproof until a depth of 40 meters. Nearly all the functions can be operated underwater. The camera slides into the underwater housing with ease and opening the housing is also effortless. Even when there is pressure on the housing you don't have to force anything. The underwater housing is identical to that of the DMC-TZ2, which makes swapping from the TZ2 to the TZ3 very easy. And as mentioned before, the camera offers a 28-280 zoom range.

Unfortunately the camera's lens is not that bright (f/3.3-f/4.9) but that does not diminish the quality of the lens. It is a Leica DC Vario Elmar lens delivering needle-sharp pictures. The camera features a 3-inch LCD monitor on the back offering 230,000 pixels of resolution. An additional function is the so-called High-Angle mode. This mode enables checking your composition on the monitor from an extreme angle. And that will come in extremely handy when you are trying to capture that one stubborn shrimp that just won't stay on the spot you had in mind for him.

An additional nice function on the camera is the image stabilization system. It enables shooting with slow shutter speeds. You do have to activate this function beforehand, which I find a pity because once the camera is inside the underwater housing the function is not accessible anymore. The camera has a limited amount of setting possibilities, such as setting shutter time and aperture. Therefore it might be less suitable for the demanding photographer requiring more advanced settings. For those who like convenience this camera is ideal. There is a considerable amount of scene modes available to choose from.

Every picture I made during testing was taken in "Simple Mode". And I find it striking how well exposed the pictures come out in this mode. A diffuser is delivered with the underwater housing to spread the light

of the flash. This makes the dirt in the water less visible on pictures; a great advantage. One disadvantage however is the fact that the left bottom of the pictures is not exposed well when only using the internal flash.

The camera is delivered including a Lithium-Ion battery. Unfortunately this battery got empty after one hour of diving thus requiring a recharge before every next dive. It means that when you go for more than one dive during a day, you have to remove the camera from the underwater housing in between scuba diving. On a boat trip this is not the nicest of jobs and mistakes can be made easily.

All in all I am very pleased with the Panasonic Lumix DMC-TZ3 and the DMW-MCTZ3 underwater housing. Biggest plus of this camera is the large zoom range of 28-280mm that makes the camera perfect for using underwater as well as on land. The weekend that I was testing the camera a young seal appeared on the dike unexpectedly. It only took seconds to take the camera out of the housing and thanks to the extreme zoom function and image stabilization I was able to capture this beautiful creature. The camera takes needle-sharp pictures underwater as well as on land and it is an easy to operate camera. One disadvantage I came across is the battery's lack of stamina. Taking a second battery with you might be a solution.

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First Impressions

Nikon D300 and Ikelite Housing

By Dave Harasti

I have been using a Nikon D80 for the past 12 months and have been really happy with it. The results from the camera were more than satisfying and I couldn't complain… the D80 is a great camera.

But then Nikon went and announced the new D300 and with it they mentioned the new 'Liveview' feature – being the ability to take a photo using the LCD screen. Wow! No more searching for pygmy seahorses through the small viewfinder and developing neck arthritis as I'd contort my neck to look through the viewfinder. It would be just like using my old Coolpix 5000 again!

Finally I would be able to frame my shots using the rear LCD display. Like an excited schoolboy off to the lolly shop I knew that I had to own one; as Gollum said in Lord of the Rings 'My precious, it must be mine!"

D300 benefits

Thanks to Yuzo at uwdigitalcamera.com in Japan I was able to beat the waiting list in Australia for the D300 and had one just in time to play with for Christmas.

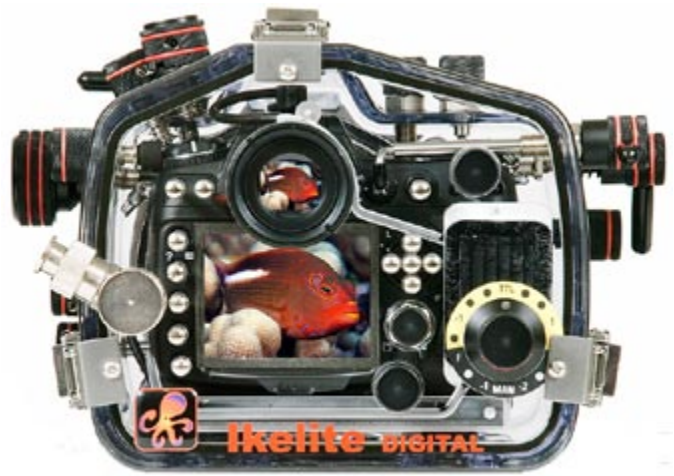
Some of the initial benefits that I have found of the D300 over the D80 include:

- D300 mp @ 12.3 compared to 10.1mp on the D80. Whilst its not much of a difference it will allow the images to be printed slightly larger

- Increase number of focus points. You can use 51 focus points on the D300 if you really want to however in the camera menu I have changed it to just the 11 focus points – much easier to control underwater!
- The larger rear LCD display screen on the D300 (3 inch) is a huge improvement on the D80's LCD (2.5 inch). Reviewing the images underwater on this screen is fantastic and the size of this screen is a major positive.
- Battery life. I've read reviews saying you can take up to 1000 pics with a fully charged battery in the D300… I can't say that I have tested that but so far charging batteries for the D300 has not been necessary – it lasts for ever!
- The D300 takes compact flash card compared to the SD cards in the D80. Whilst the SD cards were handy as they fitted straight into my laptop I am forever losing them because of there small size. My dog even ate one once!

Its not often that you find a juvenile White's seahorse (Hippocampus whitei) and its even rarer to find one curled around an adult!

Ikelite housing



Ikelite as usual were one of the first manufacturers to have a housing available for the D300. I received my new housing just after Christmas and it's pretty much identical to the D80 housing. The Ikelite housing allows control of all the camera functions except with the exception of the 'metering selector' that surrounds the AE/AF button on the back of the housing (which isn't necessary underwater anyway). Similar to the D80 housing, it has the superb Ikelite iTTL conversion circuitry that operates with the Ikelite DS SubStrobes.

The large dial on the back of the housing makes is ever so easy to adjust the strobe flash output either through TTL or in seven manual power settings. The iTTL strobe control on the back is one of the reasons why I love the Ikelite housings, and the obvious fact that you can see into the housing to make sure its not flooding!

At this stage, I've only had a chance to test the system out underwater using the Nikon 60mm lens

This orange anglerfish (note: they should be called anglerfish, not frogfish) is using his fishing rod and lure to capture a prey.

and have taken it for 3 dives at my local divesite, the Pipeline in Nelson Bay – NSW – Australia). During these dives I have experimented with the new 'Liveview' function, which unfortunately does not to appear to be as useful as I thought it would be.

Liveview

I was an avid supporter of the Coolpix 5000 and 8400 and I swore I'd never buy a DSLR because I liked being able to use the rear display for framing images. However, after spending the past 2 years shooting a D70s and a D80 I've realised it's not all that difficult to use a viewfinder underwater. When the D300 was launched with liveview I thought it would be like shooting with my Coolpix all over again, hence I chose to upgrade from the D80.

The eastern gobbleguts is a member of the Cardinalfish family which are unique in that the male broods the eggs in his mouth… this fish had a decent mouthful!

To activate liveview you turn the mode dial to 'Lv'. When you press the shutter button, the mirror raises and the view through the lens will be displayed in the camera monitor instead of the viewfinder. To auto focus, you half depress the shutter and then the mirror will drop and the display screen goes blank, therefore you can't see the camera actual focusing on the subject. Live view is restored when the shutter is released and the subject should 'hopefully' be in focus. Finally, to finish the process press the shutter button completely down to task the shot.

My initial impressions of using liveview underwater is that it doesn't work that well and is a cery slow painful process. When you are focusing on the subject the screen goes blank to focus, unfortunately you have no idea if the fish is still in the frame or if your subject has turned

Given that anglerfish like to feed on seahorses, these two (look closely!) babies are playing Russian Roulette!

the other way. Most of my seahorse pics with liveview had the nose out of focus or the eye looking the other way! It is the equivalent to basically having a long shutter lag on a dSLR, this is obviously not a good thing! Some of the shots that I have taken with Liveview (such as Mr No Nose Seahorse) have turned out okay but lots of the others have been out of focus. Maybe with more practise I'll get better but at this stage using liveview underwater gets the thumbs down.

One feature that I don't like of the D300 is that it doesn't display the current focus point position in the top LCD panel. On the D80 you could just look on top of the camera to see the current position of the focus point; it appears the D300 does not have this function unless there is a magical button in the menu system that I have overlooked!

I'm off to Sulawesi for 2 weeks in mid March where I will really test the D300 out through a full range of lenses. I'm looking forward to finding a pygmy seahorse so I can really test the Liveview on the rear LCD and see if it's suitable for these tiny animals. Even if it's not successful I'll still be happy to look through the small viewfinder, I've been managing to cope okay with it for the past 2 years!

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Sea & Sea MDX-D300

By Berkley White

The Sea & Sea MDX-D300 has a very solid feel in the hand and its in water weight seems lighter than the Sea & Sea DX-D200 housing. Unlike the previous cast model, the MDX-D300 is milled from a solid block of aluminum and thus has a more rugged finish. It survived 2 weeks of very poor maintenance (fresh water rinses out of a gas can) and cleaned up easily with no signs of corrosion or fatigue. The quick lock camera tray makes camera installation easy, but when using a zoom lens, it's best to wiggle the zoom knob prior to locking down the tray to ensure a precise install.

MDX-D300 housing viewfinder options

Personally I find all stock viewfinders on underwater housings to be difficult if not impossible to use for accurate composition and focus verification. The stock viewfinder on the Sea & Sea MDX-D300 is no exception. I received the housing hours before departure and was unable to install the new Inon Straight (180) viewfinder and chose to use the Inon 45 viewfinder instead. The Inon 45 offers a bright crisp image with the largest angle of acceptance, but I found the 45 degree angle (head down) view to be difficult for the fast action of sailfish and dolphin. I brought the stock viewfinder along, but determined I'd rather have the large view of the Inon 45. I was able to adapt my technique over the period of a few days and would now like to travel with both the 45 and 180 viewfinders and swap based on my subjects.

MDX-D300 housing control ergonomics

The Sea & Sea DX-D300 housing features oversized knobs and buttons that are easily controlled with even gloved hands. Essential controls (shutter release, aperture, shutterspeed, and focus lock) are easily reached with a large hand, but small handed users will likely find essential controls more difficult with only one hand supporting the housing. The round and non-indexed knobs for MSC and AF-area Mode require practice to accurately adjust on the fly, but unlike myself, most users don't regularly access these controls. The unique barrel style control for the Sub Command Dial (aperture) is very convenient, but is half occluded by the Fisheye Dome Port when not using an extension ring. While I'm quite fond of the smoother controls and ergonomics of the Subal line of underwater housings, I was able to operate all controls on the MDX-D300 quickly within 15

minutes of the first dive. The last Sea & Sea housing I personally shot was their Nikon F5 underwater housing and it was a personal favorite. This new line of MDX housings is a great step back to their previous attention to detail. Hat's off to the new design team at Sea & Sea!

New custom settings in the Nikon D3 and D300 allow the user to program the AE-L/AF-L button to the same custom offerings as the Function button. The Function button is located on the front of the camera body (near the lens mount) and is difficult if not impossible to include in a housing design. The AE-L/AF-L and AF-ON buttons are conveniently located on the back of the camera. The MDX-D300 housing offers access to either these buttons with a very cool pull and lock lever that allows the user to switch from one to another control while underwater. Unfortunately, the MDX-D300 (and other housings) do not allow simultaneous access to both buttons.

As underwater photographers we would really like access to both AE-L/AF-L and AF-ON buttons. The AF-ON button could be used to activate focus and operate similar to what Canon shooters call back focus. Press AF-ON to focus, let go and the focus is locked. With simultaneous access to the AE-L/AF-L button, we could use the custom options to program this button for Flash Off (or numerous other options). With Flash Off we could temporarily disable strobes for silhouette shots when the subject is too far away for a good flash fill.

Summary

In my humble opinion, the Nikon D300 offers the most significant advance in underwater digital photography since the Nikon D100. It's beyond instant digital feedback and produces images on par and argubably better than results I've ever achieved with 35mm film. When considered at ISO 400, the results are clearly better than scanned slide film. The Sea & Sea MDX-D300 housing might not be perfected in highend ergonomics, but it is clearly a professional level housing at a great price. If Sea & Sea continues on this MDX design and invests a little more in tactile smoothness, they could easily position themselves as the best housing / best price on the world market.

Berkley White
www.backscatter.com

American Waters

By Alex Kirkbride

In July 1997 Aqua magazine commissioned a Diving Across America story. My assistant Sebastian, the writer Jim, and I travelled 4000 miles in nine days in a motor home from Long Island, New York to Los Angeles, California. It was a gloriously mad, intense shoot and I've never been more exhausted after a job. For example, in one day I photographed the Sheriff of Santa Rosa, New Mexico, went diving in the nearby Blue Hole and adjacent creek, and then drove 900 miles to Las Vegas, Nevada. We arrived in Vegas at 1am and were up and moving by 6am. Then we drove to the Colorado River, went diving in an 8-10 knot current, and afterward flogged on all the way to Santa Barbara, California. I feel tired just thinking about it. The results demonstrated how extraordinarily diverse underwater images could be. There was an impressionistic image of a cottonwood tree from New Mexico, an antique dentist's chair from Indiana, and an ore cart from a flooded mine in Missouri. I began to think about what else I might find on a lengthy trip around the country and how it might make a unique collection of images - a portrait of America from a fish's point of view, or a crocodile's, or a turtle's eye in a desert spring. It would be an enormous challenge to capture images expressive of American waters from coast to coast - a feat no one had ever attempted before.

Ideally, there would have been a crew of three: Hazel, my producer and girlfriend (now my wife); myself, and a full-time assistant. However, with inadequate sponsorship funds, I had to give up on

(Above) Diving at Lake McDonald, Montana
(Top left) Workmen's tools, Lake McDonald, Glacier National Park, Montana
(Right) Blue Hole Creek, Blue Hole Cienega, Santa Rosa, New Mexico

the idea of that handy third person, who was also going to be the main driver. I honestly did not know if Hazel and I would be able to keep up with the daunting schedule, but we had no choice, and so went for it. Hazel took on the job of my assistant, among many other duties, and I picked up the slack in the driving department. The combination of constantly moving, driving an average of 3,300 miles a month, diving, and only having one day off a month took its toll. Exhausting? Absolutely! But I was living my dream three ways at once-as a photographer, as a diver, and as a traveler-with my loved one at my side. Despite lapses into insanity, one of us could always be counted on to remind the other how extremely fortunate we were to be enjoying the freedom of the road and the surprises of each new day.

Adapting to living in an Airstream motor

(Above) Chatting with Jesse at Sunset Lake, Indiana
(Top right) Snorkelling a cranberry bog, Massachusetts
(Right) Cranberries, Edaville Bogs, Carver, Massachusetts

home, with its fully equipped kitchen, shower, air-conditioning and propane heating system, was relatively easy once the art of hooking and unhooking the SUV had been mastered. Learning to drive the monster rig took a little longer. Initially, the most demanding part of manipulating the 55-feet-long machine was backing up into a campground site. At first we were all over the place, especially after a six-hour journey. Without a doubt, the worst arguments between couples on the road stem from trying to park their homes successfully. We realized it was a classic marital flashpoint when a campground manager in Maine helped us back in to a very tight spot with the words, “I’ve saved a lot of marriages helping couples back in”!

Since I gave myself a time frame of 36 months, from September 2002 to September 2005, to cover all 50 states and complete the project, I had to be very precise with the planning of when and where to go. Even though I would have liked to have gone to every state twice at different times

of the year, I was only going to be able to visit most states once, and for no more than two and a half weeks. This was really pushing the laws of Nature, because many of the days were consumed be traveling, but my gut feeling was that it could be done – just. However, every time I examined a large map of America, I felt completely overwhelmed.

It was a planner's dream, or nightmare, depending on how you feel about planning a thousand details. We would have to be in each state when a variety of underwater sites were at their clearest, and when the weather was right, and when certain indigenous creatures were active. Not only that: dive boats in certain parts of the country were only operational at particular times of the year. Also, the tight schedule meant I couldn't afford to get caught or stranded in an early snowstorm, or be delayed too long by bad weather or any mechanical failures.

In 2001, while I began pre-production and tried to figure out how to make the project happen, I made a jump-start on the photography. Previous magazine shoots had yielded a few images, and by grabbing a few more in the northeast before

(Top left) Undisturbed algae, Blueheart Springs, Snake River, Idaho
(Centre) Maple Leaf, Little Wappinger Creek, Salt Point, New York
(Top right) The Lily Pad Room, Onondaga Cave State Park, Leasburg, Missouri
(Right) American Lobsters, Iron Bound Island, Frenchmen's Bay, Maine

the main part of the journey, I was able to make inroads on the task that lay ahead of me. I hired a researcher, Madeline, for two months; her tasks included picking as many as six dive shops from different areas of each state, and finding an experienced diver who had been exploring their local water areas for years and was willing to chat. Divers around the country were incredibly helpful, and Madeline's detailed notes, along with my initial ideas, provided a first-draft road map.

Once I knew where we needed to be at certain times of the year - and which images simply had to be in this collection, such as the humpback whale – I plotted these destinations on the map and filled in the gaps. And by leaving a few days' leeway at

Black Angus, Circle S Ranch, Kansas

Bubba, Greg and Julie's pool, Crystal River, Florida

each location for weather and other opportunities that unexpectedly arose, I was able to fit in most of my image ideas into the schedule.

Research, of course, remained an ongoing, evolving process. As we traveled and talked to other campers, divers, and fishermen – and looked through local tourist brochures – we discovered many potential images along the way. Other ideas simply presented themselves. For example, I met Barbara one night at dinner in New York City. We began to talk about my upcoming project, and she mentioned that she could find ancient shark's teeth in the Potomac River near her house in Virginia. We stopped by to investigate the teeth, which we found with the help of Barbara and Charles, but the water was too murky for photography. However, just down the road from our new friend's house lived a man who fished for blue crabs, which, serendipitously, led to the blue crab molting image I was eager to find.

Even with all the research, there were still times when we felt stumped in particular states. When this happened, we literally drove around a potentially promising water area to see what we could find. But this was what this project was all about: stretching myself creatively to see if I could make something happen.

Any body of water was fair game, so the quest for images led to diving and snorkeling in the most bizarre places, especially when it came to fresh water. Rivers, creeks, streams, lakes, springs, marshlands, caves, swamps, and wetlands were all explored.

The expedition went to the source of the Mississippi River in Minnesota, and I even lay in a puddle in New York City. In Massachusetts at harvest time, I jumped into a flooded cranberry bog - cranberries being one of the few truly native fruits in the USA - to the great bewilderment of the farmers. For Kansas, when the time came to photograph cattle in some aquatic situation, I spoke to my friend Rob, the only person I knew from the Heartland State, the geographical centre of the contiguous United States. Rob's father put me in contact with a rancher, whose foreman didn't think my notion too far-fetched - until I asked to jump into the cows' water tank.

In the vast swamplands of the

1940's Georgia Firetruck, Blue Springs, Pelham, Alabama

south, I slipped into murky waters knowing there were alligators around and imagining them whenever my leg brushed up against a submerged tree trunk. But you force yourself to control those thoughts; you have to, in order to concentrate on the task at hand. Somewhere in the Atchafalaya National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, I broke this mental barrier, and sharing the water with lurking near-relatives of the dinosaurs became less of an anxious experience and more of an exhilarating one.

From the beginning of the journey, one of the greatest challenges was what could be created in Nevada, the driest state in the union. Research had turned up Stillwater Marsh, where you can see the occasional sand dune from the water's edge. However, a five-year drought had all but dried out the shallow marshland. Instead, we found copious amounts of buffalo carp bones lying where those fish had gasped their last breaths. We spent the entire morning driving around in search of an acceptable body of water and almost ran out of gas - a near-disaster that made us think again about those fish bones. By that point, Pyramid Lake in the Paiute Tribe Reservation seemed my best chance, and the most I expected was a split-level image of Pyramid Rock. Instead, a fortuitous meeting with a fisherman led us to some dramatic underwater tufa formations, and four days later we left the desert with Nevada in the bag, much to my surprise and delight.

In Florida, there are many cave systems, but they have been well-documented. So I chose to look elsewhere, beginning in Arkansas, where we visited a couple of huge caverns. Spectacular, indeed, but not quite right for my purpose. As we left Arkansas's Hurricane River Cave, where Jesse James supposedly hid from the law, I came across a pamphlet for the National Cave Association showing the Lily Pad Room in the Onondaga Cave, Missouri. The Lily Pad Room turned out to be simply remarkable for photography.

After all that time underground, our thoughts turned to those peculiar waters that fly into the sky - the geysers of Yellowstone, and the superheated pools that launch them. Perhaps some of the most unique water in America can be found in Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, founded in 1872. Yellowstone is home to some 10,000 hot springs and geysers, including Old Faithful, possibly the most famous fountain in the world. Now you can't just jump into these areas-you aren't allowed-and even if you were, you'd find yourself being boiled by the world's biggest Bunsen burner, the Yellowstone Caldera, the giant volcano that lurks beneath the parkland. There was another option, however, and one that was both very cold and very hot: Yellowstone Lake. Protected from the snow-melt chill by a drysuit, you can dive down to bubbling geothermal vents where there are also clusters of spires, and some very odd growths of green algae the size of 1960s beanbags.

My dives in the high-altitude lake, where I felt the Earth shake with subterranean thunder, were unforgettable, and humbling. To dive in such unusual places, where few if any had been before, was one of the greatest joys of the journey.

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Sweet, Button-eyed Creatures

My Love Affair with the Florida Manatee

By Carol Grant

"Sweet Button-eyed Creatures", that was my husband's remark after he had his first up close encounter with our beloved Florida manatees. It has now been a growing passion of mine for over ten years to communicate the details of their fascinating lives and my heartfelt desire to help protect manatees so their future survival and quality of life is assured.

My "quest" to tell the manatee's story and convey my deep affection for them took a huge step forward when I procured my first underwater DSLR setup in 2006. Actually, I got some quite acceptable manatee photographs before with a digital point and shoot Sony P-10, then a Fuji F-810 in manual mode with Inon wide 105AD lens. But most important - I learned "how to" find, photograph and act around the manatee gradually, first with a small photographic setup and then with a little larger one, so that when I initially took down the Nikon d200/Nikon 16mm FE f2.8 lens/Subal Housing, I was quite delighted at the quality of my manatee photographs. As they say "I was hooked!"

Photographers have asked me lots of questions about photographing manatee and here are some of my successful actions. First off I'm in the water a lot, observing manatee, time in the water is key as "manatee time" runs at a very different pace than what we are generally used to. Also I've learned to watch the dramatic and ever-changing weather fronts, tides and wind patterns during the winter in Florida and make some sense of them to help find water clear enough to adequately portray the manatee's delightful features and behaviors. Additionally, I've studied underwater photography techniques to ensure I'm technically capable of capturing a special "manatee moment" when it happens. And I also make sure that I'm adequately warm enough to spend long stretches in the 72-degree (22 Celsius) spring water, even while staying quite still for long periods of time. Plus I go mid-week when things are much quieter and fewer boats are on the water. But most important, far and above all else, the reason I tend to be successful at capturing the essence of the manatee is I really, really like them! I mean I have such strong affinity for the manatee that I just feel it in the pit of my stomach

"Timeless" Manatee
This manatee seemed "suspended in time" - manatee time is certainly different from human time. Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Nikon 16mm lens, Sea & Sea 110s, ISO 400, 1/60 @ f8

and I'm swept away and enveloped with kind feelings for them. I can't explain it any better than that, the Florida manatees are sweet, graceful, intelligent and mesmerizing creatures and I love them!

In my experience noticing how manatee have approached (and surprised) me in various habitats all over the state, while I was swimming, snorkeling or scuba diving, it is my observation that they probably have never really had an innate "natural fear" of humans at all thus some can be very curious and "interested" photographic subjects. The springs at Crystal River is where I like to photograph manatee best and at times the clarity of the water is amazing as is the quality of the strong Florida sunlight from different angles, filtered through the trees. My "love affair" with the manatee is just as much a "love affair" with the enchanting Florida springs and dancing rainbow light rays. But be forewarned that

In Front of Three Sisters Spring
Manatee sanctuary is to the left, channel in the center, private land to the right. Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Tokina 10-17 @ 10mm, available light, ISO 100, 1/60 @ f13

Mom & "Sparky"
Every time this manatee mom would try to take a nap or even take a breath her precocious "Sparky" would take off like a rocket to go explore! This was taken in my favorite fall sunlight and good news is little Sparky is still at the springs right now and boy is he getting FAT!
Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Nikon 16mm lens, Sea & Sea 110s, ISO 400, 1/60 @ 7.1

those same "crystal clear" springs can turn murky very easily with strong weather fronts and are also influenced by sea states in the Gulf of Mexico as Crystal River is fresh water but is connected to the Gulf seven miles away. Also the clearest water is becoming increasingly hard to encounter as development, fertilizer runoff, pollution, invasive algae and changing environmental factors are affecting the delicate balance of the entire Florida aquifer. But fortunately for us photographers all is not lost as we can still locate, politely observe and document manatee in their traditional freshwater winter refuge at the Homosassa and Crystal Rivers. Do take note though that laws and protocol designed to protect the manatee must be observed and it is best to educate yourself in advance. The best times to observe manatee is from late fall to early spring depending on weather conditions. As soon as the Gulf of Mexico water warms up in early spring, hungry manatee tend to depart the springs quickly for warmer waters with more abundant food.

This brings up a vital point, how do manatee learn where to go at various times of the year, what and how much to eat at those same times and the routes to take and not end up lost? Manatees learn from mom of course, for more than two years. For me that is the touching and endearing nucleus of the manatee community and one of the things I'm most interested in documenting – the essence of the strong mother/calf relationship. I must say a photographic image of a mother

Synchronized Manatees
This was one of my first images with the Tokina 10-17 lens and I certainly am pleased with that lens! Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Tokina 10-17 @ 10mm, Sea & Sea 110s, ISO 250, 1/50 @ 7.1

Manatee Mother and Small Calf
Despite this mother's boat and propeller injury scars she still patiently guides around and cares for her very young calf. You can see their tender bond. But what will the future hold for her little one? Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Sea & Sea 110s, ISO 320, Nikon 16mm lens, 1/60 @ 7.1.

manatee with a little calf is one of the most touching images you can capture underwater and one of the most compelling for change, especially when it speaks volumes as in horrible boat scars on mom while she still patiently cares for the little one – we wonder what the little calf's future will bring? And it would take quite a hardened heart not to see that every little manatee's future is up to us, who so directly affect his or her safety and environment.

Photographically with the manatee it is all about being there, respecting and observing manatee behavior, assessing the direction, strength and filtering of the ambient sunlight, adding fill light when necessary and patience, patience, patience! As far as my equipment - from 2006 to

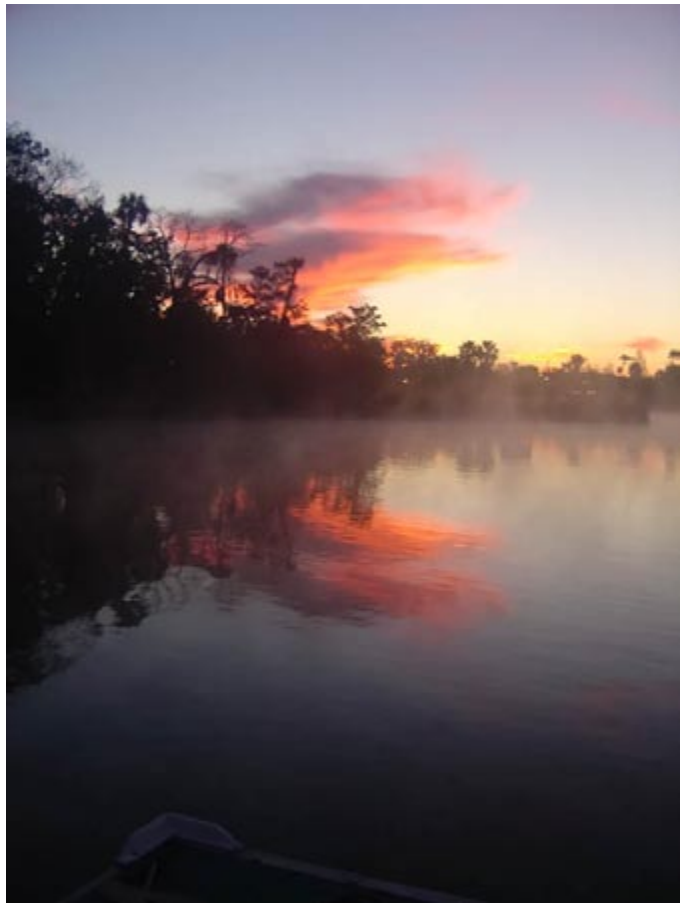
Mother/Calf, Reflections, Sky
A peaceful bucolic scene. We are lucky the manatee can still enjoy places where it is safe. Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Tokina 10-17 lens @ 10mm, available light, ISO 320, 1/80 @ f10

Bob Bonde Conducting Manatee Research
Bob is the best friend the manatees have ever had. He studies and looks after the manatees at Crystal River regularly, as he has done for over 25 years. Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Tokina 10-17 lens @ 11mm, Sea & Sea 110s, ISO 200, 1/80 @ f6.3

early January 2008 the only wide-angle lens I've used with my Nikon d200 on the manatee was the Nikon 16mm FE f2.8. Yes this was because my budget was somewhat limited, but also because I really liked the results I got photographing manatee with that lens. On the 1.5X cropped sensor Nikon d200 Digital SLR, the 16mm is not very wide but still allowed me to focus on endearing manatee expressions and behaviors plus the amazing light in the springs that I wanted to showcase. The Nikon 16mm is such a sharp lens with few defects and I've used it happily photographing many, many manatees. But early last year I heard from Ryan Canon of Reef Photo & Video, that he used the Tokina 10-17 f3.5-4.5 FE on the manatee and it was "awesome". I finally broke down and got the Tokina recently, knowing too that Alex Mustard and Peter Rowlands were coming to photograph manatee with me and I could ask Alex questions about the lens. Alex said, "The Tokina 10-17 is the perfect manatee lens." I admit I must agree the Tokina is really suited for manatee photography, with a few "quirks" though of course. While I've noticed the Tokina 10-17 f3.5-4.5 certainly doesn't seem to auto-focus any slower than the Nikon 16mm f2.8, auto-focusing can still be a big problem in the low-light areas of the springs. With the Nikon 16mm in the lower light I always focused on my hand in front of the dome or focused on my fin (depending on if I wanted to achieve close focus wide angle or standard wide angle), locked the auto-focus, flipped to manual focus and used apertures f8 or above. This worked like a charm and I used this technique successfully on lots of manatee photographs. But with the Tokina it is a little different. With different zoom settings it changes a bit and I'm still discovering the best settings for when I auto-focus and "lock it off" in lower-

Carol at the Three Sister's Spring, Photo by Alex Mustard

Sparky Explores! Some little manatee are quiet and shy, some are loving and some are bold and born to take on the underwater world! Nikon d200, Subal Housing, Nikon 16mm lens, Sea & Sea 110s, ISO 400, f7.1 @ 1/60



Sunrise at Crystal River - Motoring out to the springs/ steam on the water. Sony P-10, 7.9mm, ISO 100, 1/50 @2.8

light fisheye photography. The Tokina lens really shines though in its ability to zoom from 10mm to 17mm and seeing that the manatee can be from 3 feet long (1 Meter) as a baby to over 10 feet long (3.3 Meters +) as adults that versatility cannot be overstated, plus it focuses truly close, much closer than the Nikon 16mm, right on the dome in fact! The Tokina 10-17 is indeed a marvelous lens for photographing the manatee.

Should the photographer use strobes or no strobes? First of all as far as the manatee – do you notice in some of my photographs the strong Florida sunlight illuminating the shallow water? These rays penetrate the manatee's eyes repeatedly many times during the day so I haven't noticed that properly positioned and diffused strobes produce any negative reaction from the manatee. That said, I would still use strobes only when necessary and turn them off when not needed. Without strobes you will miss many early morning moments plus miss photographing other fascinating characters of the springs including diving cormorant and anhinga feeding among the dark tree roots and possibly even the rare appearance of a cool Florida snapping turtle, which almost never appears in good light! Plus I like the look of certain manatee photographs with the "fill light" of strobes (I use Sea and Sea 110s w/diffusers) and scatter is of course kept to a minimum with proper positioning. But if you care to skip bringing strobes there are advantages as that setup is less cumbersome, split-levels are much easier and it is simpler to manipulate two cameras. So beforehand think about what you are trying to achieve and plan accordingly to use a strobe or no strobes.

In closing, manatee photography is a powerful tool for conservation and change so we as underwater photographers have an opportunity to set a good example and use our images to help impact the future for the better. The Florida manatee recently scored a victory at state level by not being removed from its endangered species status, but this is only a start. Manatee are still in constant danger from speeding boats in shallow waters and as anyone who has seen these

Carol Being Welcomed By Two Female Manatees. Photo by Alex Mustard

magnificent creatures knows boat injury scars are on nearly 90% of adult manatee. Plus development in their prime areas, pollution, sea grass beds being eliminated, etc., are all issues that we have direct impact and ultimately control over. I encourage everyone to purchase and read a fascinating book 'The Florida Manatee Biology and Conservation' by Robert K. "Bob" Bonde and Roger L. Reep. It will familiarize you with the manatee and their plight. And when visiting the manatee at Crystal River I tell people to go out with Bird's Underwater as I feel they really do the best job educating people on the correct way to observe and interact with the manatees and they have been of enormous help to me personally over the years. Of course you can rent your own boat but since there are probably too many boats already on Crystal River my suggestion is to either go out with Bird's or rent a kayak, as the stable sit-on-top or newer inflatable ones are very steady with room for cameras. Then you can go see the manatee at your own pace with the added benefit of being able to gaze quietly at Florida's magnificent array of bird life along the way!

And just maybe you will one day gaze into some "Sweet Button-eyes" and begin your own "love affair" and form a strong desire to help our marvelous Florida manatee.

Carol Grant
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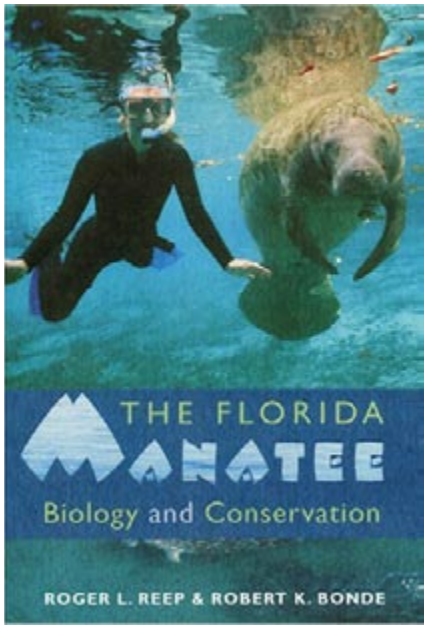

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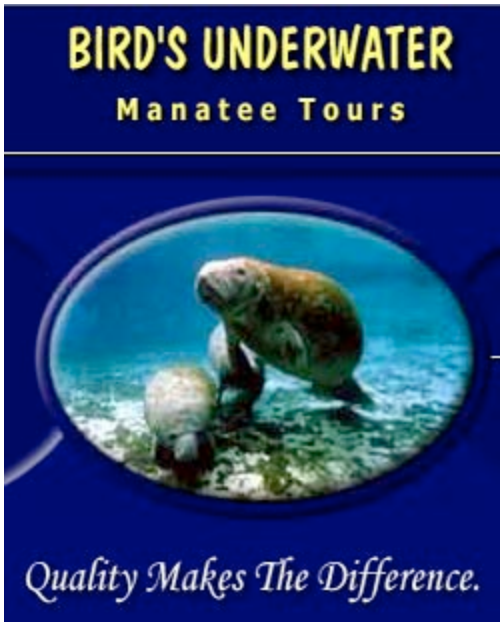

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Cuba Diving - The West Side

By Felix Rodriguez

In these days, there are a few places less controversial than the socialist republic of Cuba. Constitutionally defined as a "socialist state guided by the principles of José Martí, and the political ideas of Marx, Engels and Lenin", this island, and archipelago comprising the mainland, the "Isla de la Juventud" (Island of Youth) and other smaller islands and keys, had kept theirs reefs barely toched by the hand of man and the progress itself, maybe due to the fact that only a few bunch of cubans have the privilege to use (not even own) a boat (let´s remember everything here belongs to the goverment), the almost inexistent local divers as diving industry is for turists mostly, or the protection of the government and fishing regulations, the Cuban reefs, are ones of the most preserved over time in the Caribbean.

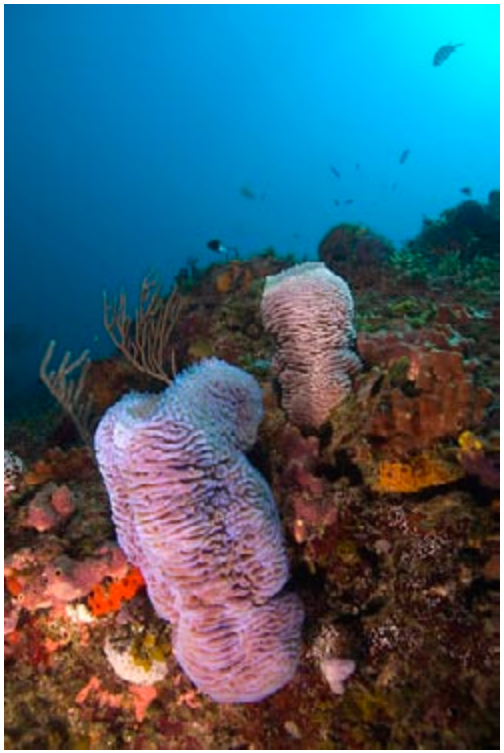
The east side of the island is famous for the archipelago "Jardines de la Reina" (Queen's Gardens) on the south and the shark diving over "Santa Lucia" (Saint Lucy) on the north, but this time we decided to pay a visit to the west side.

Once we arrive to the island capital "La Habana", we start to realize that diving there wasn´t going to be as easy as we though, since most dive operator was shutted down by goverment decision and find information over the internet was pretty much difficult. Gladly our hotel had a tourism bureau, and they point us to the only dive operator

active in La Habana over the "Marina Hemingway", where dive certification was less important than the Passport, due to the fact that the boat must go for a passenger count made by the National Coast Guard, when going out and when returning from diving as well. Another impressive thing is that they check the fuel level on the boat, witch it need to be almost the exact meassure to go out, dive and came back, no less, no more.

Diving La Habana reef was pretty much a nice dive with Caribbean warm waters, great reef scenics, full of color and marine life, and you can

(Top left) Image of Ernesto "Ché" Guevara on the Interior Ministry Building, Nikon D50, Sigma 17-70mm @ 40mm, 1/160, f/6.3, ISO 200.
(Left) American Car: American Cars on Old Havana near "Malecón", Nikon D50, Sigma 17-70mm @ 17, 1/10, f/2.8, ISO 200.
(Above) School of grunts over "Cayo Piedra", Nikon D50 on Ikelite, 2x DS-125 at _ power, 1/500, f /6.3, Tokina 10-17mm @ 17 under 8" dome, ISO 200.
(Below) Gun: Port gun of the Russian Destroyer, Nikon D50 on Ikelite, 2x DS-125 at full power, 1/160, f /6.3, Tokina 10-17mm @ 10mm under 8" dome, ISO 200.



Soft Corals: Soft sponges over Havana reef, Nikon D50 on Ikelite, 2x DS-125 at _ power, 1/125, f /7.1, Sigma 17-70mm @ 17 under 8" dome, ISO 200.

Stairs: Starboard stairs of the Russian Destroyer, Nikon D50 on Ikelite, 2x DS-125 at _ power, 1/160, f /6.3, Tokina 10-17mm @ 10 under 8" dome, ISO 200.

Bow Gun of the Russian Destroyer, Nikon D50 on Ikelite, 2x DS-125 at full power, 1/125, f /6.3, Tokina 10-17mm @ 10 under 8" dome, ISO 200.

see here the conservation of coral due to the size they growth, the abbundace of species and the lack of broken and death corals arround. This is the typical Caribbean wall with schools of grunts, surgeons and damselfish, an occasional basslet wrasse hiding here and there, some medium size groupers on cleaning stations or a trumpet fish trying to hide behind something. I actually got impressed when I downloaded my photos on the laptop and realize how many colors were pop up by the light of my strobes. Those walls provide a great opportunity for WA, CFWA and macro work.

Once we go back, we found a fresh water tank to rinse the camera and a couple of showers. Dive here was close to 90$, on a two dives package basis.

Next thing we did was take an interstate bus for a 3 hours ride (actually they were really nice, and so much better than we expect, including Air Conditioning and new buses) witch price was close to 12$ p/pax, to arrive the peninsula of "Varadero", the most turistical place over the west side of the island after Havana.

Varadero is a resort town in the province of Matanzas, with waters of the clearest shades of blue and full of night life. Once there, we approach one of the bigger dive operators in Cuba, called "Barracuda Diving Center" to reserve our dives for the rest of the week.

Diving Varadero have a main attractive that no one can miss, a "Russian Destroyer" with 100m long and 14m wide, called "The Patrol Boat", same class of the one sunked by the goverment of Cayman Island in Cayman Brac the "Russian Destroyer 356", purchased to the Cuban Goverment. The main difference between both is that the Cuban one presents no mayor deterioration on the estructure, almost anything was intact, even the weapons and ammunitions. This ship was strategically positioned on Cuba during the Cold War among another ships, and left in abandom after.

This wreck is so big and covered with so many corals, that photography get really benefit with a fisheye lens like Tokina 10-17mm, Nikkor 10.5mm, or a 15mm / 16mm on a FF camera.

Other nice dives around Varadero, take place over "Cayo Piedra" (Stone Key), where you can spot lots of stingrays resting on the sand, waiting for some naive prey to pass by, some schools of grunts, large seafans covered with flamingo tongues and some occasional barracuda and pelagic fauna passing

Group of street Cubans musicians on "El Patio" Old Havana, Nikon D50, Sigma 17-70mm @ 29 + Kenko 2X TC, 1/160, /6.3, ISO 200.

by.

The Diving in Varadero was 100$ every two dives. The Dive operator is well equipped, nitrox available and the boat was a common dive boat for 20 people or so. Neither Havana nor Varadero do night dives. Some days on the week, the dive operator goes to "Bahía de Cochinos" (Pig's Bay) and "Playa Girón", basically a couples of dives with a two hours ride from there, provided by them. If you have the time, include on your trip some days on "María La Gorda" (Fat Mary), one of the most isolated and great places on the West Side for diving.

Once in La Habana, one must visit "La Vieja Habana" (Old Havana) where you can zip some "mojitos" (pronounced moh-heee-toh) witch is the National Cuban cocktail made from rum, lemon, sugar, club soda and mint leaves, eat some Cuban style pork with rice and black beans, visit some tobacco factories and some historical places rich in color and music. As for Varadero, just pick one of the many "all-inclusive" resorts, enjoy the more than 20kms. of beautiful sandy beaches, and relax!

Felix Rodriguez
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Pacific Highway Treasure

by Aengus Moran

Most weekends as I dive in Sydney Australia, I am amazed at how many quality dive sites I have to choose from right on the doorstep of a city of 4 million. A short drive away it gets even better!

Highway 1 covers most of Australia's East coast and the 1025 km Sydney - Brisbane leg is known as the Pacific Highway. Several scuba diving delights are within easy reach of the visitor who has 4 or 5 days to spare.

When I need a wide angle fix I head up the Pacific Highway to the sleepy town of South West Rocks, launch pad for a fantastic dive location called Fish Rock.

South West Rocks is a 5 hour drive from Sydney, 6 from Brisbane and outside holiday time it's not a difficult drive as most of the route is multi-lane freeway. With a spare driver and several refresher breaks the time passes quickly.

Fish Rock and nearby Green Island are critical habitat areas for the placid Grey Nurse shark (Raggy Tooth / Sand Tiger – Carcharias taurus), which live there in large numbers nearly all year round, but the small island of Fish Rock has an additional attraction, a cave of more than 100 metres long (300ft) that runs right through the islands centre!

From the deeper entrance at 24 metres, the Cray and Lobster filled cave runs to a shallower end at 12 metres. Shots of silhouetted Grey Nurse

Staying low and to the side and the Grey Nurse Shark (Carcharias taurus) will come to you. 22mm, 1/60th sec @ F/6.3 . Canon 350D, EF-S 10.22mm, Ikelite housing / 8 inch dome / 2 x DS-125's

(Right) Black Cod (Epinephelus daemelii) silouetted against the shallow entrance to the cave at Fish Rock. 10mm, 1/60th sec @ F/3.5. Canon 350D, EF-S 10.22mm, Ikelite housing / 8 inch dome / 2 x DS-125's

sharks framed by the cave walls at the shallow end are well known to most Aussie divers but the prized shot is to light a Grey Nurse inside the shallow end of the cave.

The resident Grey Nurse and Wobbegongs are accustomed to divers so relaxed breathing, staying low and to the side generally results in a close encounter. That said, care needs to be taken when entering at the deep end as a 2 metre Wobbegong and a similar sized Bull Ray like to interchange as the gatekeepers and can be found sitting still and silent on the bottom of the rocky entrance.

Fish Rock is located just over a kilometre off Hat Head and with deep waters on either side

(frequently busy with migrating Whales), the island is a magnet for fish life. When the sharks aren't at the shallow end, the thousands of eastern Pomfret can be used as a frame for a diver or if you're lucky, one of the many but shy Black Cod.

My best buddy at this site is my EF-S 10-22 and on several occasions, curious sharks have come so close I can't fit them in at 10mm's. The wide lens is also needed for the resident Loggerhead Turtle that will swim past within arms reach totally ignoring you.

The Grey Nurse Shark is protected in New South Wales, yet fishing is still allowed at the aggregation sites. 10mm, 1/200th sec @ f/6.3 . Canon 350D, EF-S 10.22mm, Ikelite housing / 8 inch dome / 2 x DS-125's

Like many rocky Islands, Fish Rock is surrounded by long gutters and steep walls that help to funnel the action towards the photographer, large Bull Rays routinely cruise the gutters and one should occasionally look up in case a school of White Spotted Eagle Rays or a Manta Ray come by.

While the Grey Nurse Shark is protected in the Australian state of New South Wales and Fish Rock is identified as an Aggregation site for the species, recreational fishing is allowed around the island and unfortunately it is common to see sharks with hooks and trace attached.

So now I've let you in on one of our treasures, next time you visit Sydney for business, or maybe transit Brisbane on your way to PNG or the Solomons, maybe think about a road trip for a Wide Angle fix to Fish Rock!

There are a number of other notable dive locations along the Pacific Highway. Nelson Bay, a couple of hours north of Sydney

Fish Rock is home to 10's of thousands of Eastern Pomfret (Schuettea scalaripinnis). 22mm, 1/125th sec @ F/4.5. Canon 350D, EF-S 10.22mm, Ikelite housing / 8 inch dome / 2 x DS-125's

provides some of the best macro opportunities in New South Wales. It is practically impossible to dive the Pipeline dive site without seeing Whites Seahorses and Tiger Pipefish and all of the area's dive sites (mostly shore dives) are renowned for their large variety of nudibranch.

Coming South from Brisbane and 2 hours short of South West Rocks, The Solitary Islands National Park provides arguably the best all-round diving in New South Wales. North Solitary Island is the pick of the islands and a location where I struggle with lens choice. Subject matter here varies greatly dependant on the seasons and ranges from Manta Rays to Manta Shrimp and thousands of Anemone fish.

For more information, visit South West Rocks Dive Centre,

www.southwestrocksdive.com.au

Dave Harasti's website

www.daveharasti.com/nelsonbay

Quest Diving,

www.divequest.com.au

or the forums at DiveOz,

www.diveoz.com.au

Aengus Moran

www.aengusm.com

Macro photography

By Don Silcock

I need to start this article off by telling you a short story – please bear with me as it is in context, well kind of….

When I was a teenager growing up in the northwest of England, every Saturday night my mates and I used to go to a local disco with the principal objectives of consuming as much beer as possible and then somehow ending up with a female partner at the end of the night. The fundamental technique involved in this complex process was something called "dancing", which I have to admit, was always something of a black art to me.

With the wisdom of hindsight, it's now perfectly obvious to me that I simply could never judge the correct amount of beer required to get me out on to the dance floor and deliver my carefully rehearsed pick-up lines. I always seemed to over-estimate the amount of required, usually to the point where my ability to dance & speak at the same time was greatly impaired.

I am sharing this sad tale with you because my efforts on the dance floor often come to mind when I am engaged in the equally black art of underwater macro photography.

On land macro is close-up photography that uses special lenses which can focus sharply on a subject the same size as the film plane or digital sensor. Underwater, macro photography has a much broader meaning and typically refers to photographing small to medium size creatures such as fish, or small critters like shrimps & pygmy sea horses.

Specialized lenses & ports are also required and the most common question heard from photographers on a liveaboard "is this a wide-angle or macro site?" so they can prepare their equipment for the next dive.

It is often said that underwater photography is a journey, not a destination, and like most people I started mine by attempting to photograph fish. I had seen the fish portraits taken by the leading photographers at the time, and figured it should be fairly easy to get similar results if I used one of the new state of the art Nikonos 5's.

I soon realized that there was a lot more to it than just buying equipment and started acquiring "how to" books to try & develop my technique. I still have most of the books on my shelf – including that

"Coleman Shrimps" - Nikon D200 & Subal housing, 70-180 Nikon, 2 Inon 240's, f29 @ 1/125

long forgotten classic The Underwater Photographer's Handbook by a certain Peter Rowlands….

Over time the basic problem became obvious to me - viewed from the fish's perspective the approach of a very large creature, emitting copious amounts of noisy bubbles & poking a shiny device with bright lights at you, is quite intimidating and highly unlikely to make it want to relax & pose for it's photograph to be taken.

All of the underwater photography books offer advice on how to approach fish and it's usually all very relevant, however I think the real issue is that the fish have not read the books and are just not aware that all we want to do is take their photograph…

Critter photography on the other hand is relatively much easier because the subject matter tends to be static, or slow moving, and is usually convinced that its superb camouflage makes it invisible. Therefore critters are typically much easier to photograph – once you have actually found them that is!

My hobby is writing articles about the places I visit, which I then use to populate my website (www.

indopacificimages.com) and magazine editors demand a varied selection of good images before they will consider publishing anything.

I love wide-angle photography and on a typical liveaboard trip I have to force myself to switch to a macro set-up and usually return from the dive frustrated and deep in thought about Saturday nights & discos in the north-west of England. So in late 2007 I decided that it was time I left the dome port at home and really got my arms around macro photography by doing a dedicated muck/critter trip.

After considering various locations I settled on the north coast of Bali as I knew some of the sites from previous trips and had heard good things about newer ones like Puri Jati. Plus being land based it meant that my long suffering, non-diving & boat averse wife could travel with me!

Although the physical distances to the various dive locations in Bali are not that great, the time it takes to navigate the narrow roads & traffic means a "safari" is required if multiple locations are intended. This either involves staying in a lot of different hotels, or doing a lot of driving, neither of which appealed to me very much.

After a lot of discussion I finally settled on a 12-day trip planned by AquaMarine Diving, who I have used on previous trips to Bali and found to be very well organized. The 12 day trip would allow me to take in the six main muck/macro/critter sites on the north coast: Secret Bay, Menjangan Island, Puri Jati (PJ), Tulamben, Seraya & Ahmed. Plus it only required three base locations & hotel changes – Pemuteran for Secret Bay & Menjangan, Lovina for Puri Jati and Tulamben for the Liberty Wreck, Seraya & Ahmed.

It also satisfied my key criteria that I would spend two days at each location so that if I had the wrong lens on the first day, I could go back the following day to try and get it right.

Equipment

I gave a great deal of thought about what equipment I should take and my first decision was not to take any wide-angle stuff at all – macro only, so I would be forced to use only what I had with me.

In the end I narrowed it down to two lenses – for general fish and medium size creatures I went with the Sigma 28-70mm 2.8 EX DG which Alex Mustard recommended to me a few years ago. It's been sitting on my shelf for the last year or so, but for what I was looking to do in Bali I figured it would be a good general purpose lens because it focuses down to about 10" and is fast & very sharp.

The second lens was my trusty Nikon 70-180 macro zoom, a lens that is often maligned as slow and not particularly good, but one that I have really come to love. It's true that it's not the fastest lens in the world and the auto-focus needs to be helped with a decent focus light in low light conditions, but once it has focused it is very sharp and capable of producing some stunning images.

"Puffer Portrait" - Nikon D200 & Subal housing, 70-180 Nikon, 2 Inon 240's, f22 @ 1/60

No longer made by Nikon, this lens is apparently much sought after second hand and prices on EBay for them have apparently risen quite dramatically in the last couple of years. Rumor has it that now Nikon has upgraded both the 105mm & 60mm macro lenses, the 70-180 will be next. I would certainly invest in one should that happen, but until then I remain deeply attached to the current version!

The really great thing about the lens is its tremendous zoom range and the flexibility if offers. You can capture relatively large "fishy" type subjects, such as the moray eel being cleaned, and tiny critters like the Coleman shrimps on the same

"Harlequin Shrimp" - Nikon D200 & Subal housing, 70-180 Nikon, Athena Ring Flash, f22 @ 1/60

"Bobbit Worm" - Nikon D200 & Subal housing, 28-70 Sigma, 2 Inon 240's, f22 @ 1/200

dive - if you are lucky enough to encounter them both as I was on my first dive of the trip at Seraya.

Lighting

Dive travel is getting harder & harder these days, so I am constantly on the lookout for equipment that will reduce my "footprint" and recently bought two of the new Inon Z240 strobes as they appeared to be a great compromise between power output and size & weight.

For the Bali trip I decided to take the Z240's and an Athena ring flash I had bought about a year ago, but had struggled with and not really used.

With the Inons I tried various position configurations but eventually settled on the set-up shown below with both strobes mounted in close to the port and either pointing straight forward or angled slightly outwards if the visibility was poor.

I came to really like this set-up as it allowed me to quickly change from a horizontal to a vertical format and I found that the strobe light hit my immediate subject rather than the whole area, creating a pleasing image. I was also very pleasantly surprised that provided I got within about 0.5m of my subject there was very little backscatter - even when the visibility was down to less than 3m at low tide in Secret Bay!

Overall I have been very pleased with the Inon 240 strobes - they are small & light but quite powerful, recycle quickly and so far have been completely reliable. Whilst lacking the sheer grunt of the Ikelite DS200's I was using previously, I found that I could still use small f stops to maximize depth of field and have enough light from the Inons.

The Athena ring flash on the other hand, was something I stumbled onto on the internet after reading Martin Edge's recommendations on the use of ring flashes in his first book The Underwater Photographer. I really wanted to try one, but needed something that was small & light and could be used with the various Subal macro ports I own – all of

"Cuttle Fish" - Nikon D200 & Subal housing, 70-180 Nikon, 2 Inon 240's, f19 @ 1/125

which have a 114mm outside diameter at the glass end of the port.

Athena (www.athena-opt.com/english.htmare) are a Japanese company located in Okazaki City, near Nagoya about 250km south-east of Tokyo, who make a variety of underwater photography products. Their ring flash uses various adaptors to attach it to different Japanese manufacturer's ports - they had never heard of Subal when I first contacted them.

After a number of emails back & to with Hideki Kida (export@athen-opt.com) photos of Subal ports and reviews of dimensions were exchanged, and a final design agreed for the adaptor. I paid the requested amount and three weeks later the ring flash arrived in Sydney.

My first attempts to use it in Sydney waters left me pretty under-whelmed and I reached the conclusion it just was not powerful enough, however after a number of emails with Martin Edge I decided that maybe it was me and I needed to try again on the Bali trip.

The basic thing about ring flashes is that they produce very even light and quite specific results, which some say makes the subject look like it has been somehow lit from inside. After forcing myself to use the Athena unit on the Bali trip, my conclusion is that for the right subject it can provide great results, but only if you are less than 12" from the subject because it just cannot produce enough light at the small f stops required to get decent depth of field.

Technique

So, back to the dance floor… Here are my basic ground rules for getting consistent results with macro photography - gleaned from reading many books, making lots of mistakes and 12 very interesting days diving the "island of the gods":

Get Close: The more water there is between your camera & the subject the less impact the finished image will have. So you have to carefully maneuver both yourself and your camera to get as close as you can without scaring away the subject. Easier said than done, but once you have spotted your potential subject, plan your approach so that you minimize your profile and your noise footprint.

Get Closer: I am not really sure why, but often when I think I have the camera close enough to the subject I realize that I could in fact get closer. This is one of the negatives of using a zoom lens, in that it appears easy to back off and use the zoom to frame the subject.

Always get as close as you can and if you have a zoom, use it to deal with the size of the subject, rather than the other way round.

Be Ready: There is no point in carefully maneuvering yourself into position and then start adjusting your camera settings because your intended subject will have fled the scene long before you are finally ready. So make any adjustments before you get into position.

If you are not sure what your settings should be, practice on something colorful & stationary like some coral or a sponge at the distance you think you will need to be from the intended subject. It should only take a couple of practice shots to get pretty close to the optimum and then you can make your actual approach with a good chance of success!

Look Up: The most common error I was making is shooting downwards, which means that the subject gets lost in the background and lacks the definition & isolation needed to produce a strong image.

The best images are almost always taken with the camera below the subject so that it is isolated against a neutral background, which frames it

nicely rather than detracting from the overall impact.

Negative Space: The part of the image that is not the main subject, which if we have shot upwards will usually mean the open water.

Another very common mistake I was making was concentrating so much on the main subject without thinking about the negative space, such as with this picture of a puffer fish. I find these creatures very difficult to photograph because it's hard to get them face on - they seem to know exactly when you are about to press the shutter and turn away milliseconds before…

The Eye: Depth of field is limited with macro lenses, so it's absolutely critical that the focal point of the image (the part of the image we tend to look at first) is sharp and completely in focus.

With fish & critters it's invariably the eye to which we are drawn. The multiple focus zones of the current DSLR cameras make it much easier to ensure that the eye is as sharp by placing one of the zones right over it and this is always the last thing I check before pressing the shutter.

Settings: To maximize the depth of field it's essential that a small f-stop such as f18 or f22 is used. However this means that a powerful strobe is required to force enough light through the small shutter opening to properly illuminate the subject.

Larger f-stops, such as f5.6 of f8 mean that the shutter opening is bigger and will allow more light through – but at the expense of reduced depth of field. This is, in my opinion, why powerful strobes need to be used for macro photography rather than the common perception that a small or medium power strobe is all that is required.

I hope this article helps you to improve your macro images and as a final parting shot I thought I should mention the fact that I have been married for 26 years and have two grown-up kids – so I must have mastered that dancing technique eventually!

Don Silcock
www.indopacificimages.com

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Wrecks to Reefs

by Mark Webster

Most divers enjoy wreck diving and we underwater photographers are no different in this respect. Wrecks by themselves can produce some stunning and very graphic images but what also attracts me to them is the manner in which they are slowly engulfed by the sea. Any piece of wreckage whether placed deliberately or through tragedy under the sea will attract marine life very quickly and over a longer period will resemble a well populated reef giving us the best of both worlds – wreck and reef.

This transformation occurs in both temperate and tropical waters, but undoubtedly for underwater photographers the best opportunities are going to be found in warmer clearer waters of the tropical seas or perhaps the Mediterranean. To capture large sections of a shipwreck we need not only the correct equipment choice in terms of lenses and flash guns or filters, but more importantly plenty of light and good water clarity.

As with all dive sites, getting to know your wreck by diving it more than once gives you the opportunity to plan your shots, particularly if they involve a diver in the shot, and discover the habitats of some of the smaller species if you want to mix your images between wide angle and macro. A wreck in open water is like a magnet to marine life and may offer a home to numerous fish species, particularly if the wreck is swept by currents. Many fish are like underwater photographers in that they don't like to work too hard in the current, so look for areas that offer shelter and you will often find fish schooling at the edge. The cracks, crevices and pipe work of a steel wreck are ideal homes for many species of blenny and crustaceans whilst the internal or darker spaces attract species like glassy sweepers or hatchet fish.

To capture large sections of a wreck you may need to shoot with natural light only and if it is shallow enough then maybe add a filter to restore some of the colours with white balance adjustment. Using a fish eye lens allows you to get much closer, but we need to accept that some distortion is inevitable where straight lines are composed near the edge of the image.

There are numerous examples of wrecks with great marine life around the globe, but here are a few examples of my favourites in locations that won't break the bank.

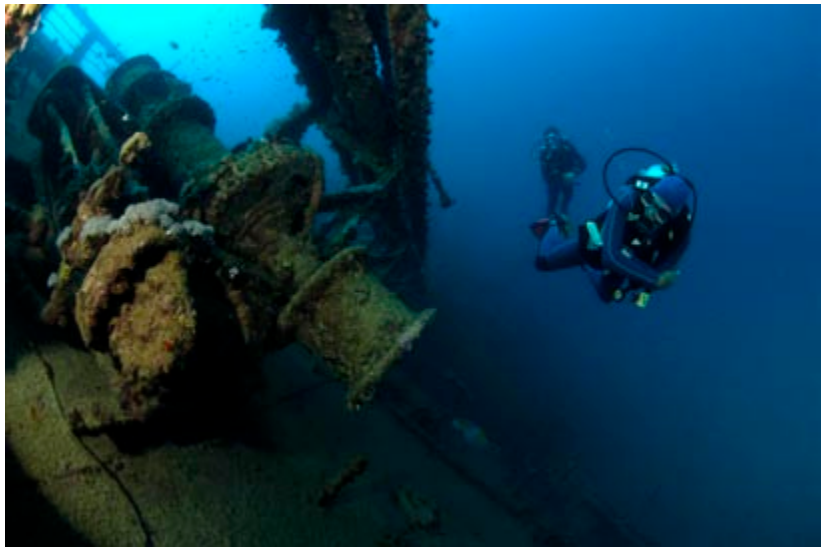
Tug Boat Tien Sien. Small wrecks like the tug boat Tien Sien are ideal for filter photography. Nikon D100, Light and Motion Titan housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Magic Filter, ISO200 f8 1/60.

Tien Sien – Fury Shoal, Red Sea, Egypt

Fury Shoal is an intricate pattern of reefs and lagoons which covers a broad area south of Marsa Alam and has provided a watery grave for several ships. The remains of an Admiralty tugboat named the Tien Sien lies on a reef known locally as Abu Galawa. And she met her fate on 26 October 1943 on passage from Suez to Massawa.

Being a tugboat she is quite a small wreck, but this is one of the attractions as her size enables you to explore the whole wreck and get to know the major features in one dive. The bows have ploughed into the reef and it must be assumed that she sunk fairly quickly as the hull, keel and superstructure are all remarkably intact and are now protected by the

Tug Boat Tien Sien. Some features of the wreck are almost totally obscured by the hard coral growth. Nikon D200, Subal ND20 housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Magic Filter, ISO100 f8 1/60.



SS Turbo 'half wreck'. Shooting down the sloping decks of this wreck gives increased perspective and depth to your shots. Nikon D100, Light and Motion Titan housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO200 f8 1/60. This wreck must have the largest population of pixie hawk fish I have encountered anywhere. On other sites you may struggle to find one, here they almost get in the way! Nikon D200, Subal ND20 housing, 105mm macro, Inon Quad flash, ISO100 f16 1/125.

surrounding reef structure. The hull rests at an angle of approximately 30 degrees listing slightly to starboard with bows awash and the stern firmly wedged into the sand at a depth of 18m. At the midships section the keel is suspended above the seabed with plenty of space to swim through

The wreck is covered with predominantly hard corals, for which Fury Shoal is so well known, which almost obscures the shape of the superstructure in places. On the main deck and stern the cover is less dense, but the reef definitely dominates the wreck. The shallow depth and often excellent visibility here makes this an ideal site for a Magic Filter and fish eye lens, as you can obtain an image of the whole wreck. Working closer reveals all the usual Red Sea suspects on the corals and closer inspection will reveal some of the less obvious residents – anemones with eggshell shrimps, lemon gobies, leopard spotted blennies, pixie hawk fish, scorpion fish and elegant shrimp goby with their blind shrimp partners. As the wreck is so shallow this is a perfect subject for filter photography and natural light only and is certainly worth several dives with different lenses and lighting techniques.

SS Turbo 'Half Wreck' – Ras Banas Red Sea, Egypt

This wreck of a fuel tanker is in fact only half of the ship which includes the stern and 'centre island' accommodation and engine room area. There was some confusion over her identity when first discovered and this wreck was assumed first to be the Atlas which had been torpedoed in 1940 off Yemen and broke her back as a result. The stern section was salvaged and under tow to Alexandria with the intention of rebuilding the Atlas when she was struck by stormy weather close to Ras Banas and broke her tow and sank (it is now known) close to Port Berenice.

The prevailing winds here also make this a difficult wreck to dive as you need very calm conditions for your live aboard to moor over her – in fact to date at least one

SS Turbo 'half wreck'. There are a number of cooperative schools of bat fish on this wreck, particularly close to the stern. Waiting for them to emerge from the hold area give you the opportunity to frame them against the silhouette of the wreck. Nikon D100, Light and Motion Titan housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO200 f8 1/60.

SS Turbo 'half wreck'. At the 'end' of the wreck where the bow section was torn away there is a community of bold lion fish who spend most of their day in the shadows of the hull. Nikon D100, Light and Motion Titan housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO200 f8 1/60.

has been washed onto the fringing reef here by trying to dive in marginal conditions.

The wreck is intact but is not quite smothered in coral due to the proximity of the lagoon behind the fringing reef which can cause the visibility to drop after windy weather. There is however significant hard coral growth particularly on the starboard side hull, hand rails and mast. The mast did jut out into open water from the deck, but has now collapsed and runs at a right angle down to the sandy seabed. If you are short of pictures of pixie hawk fish then head for this spot as there are literally dozens of them amongst the corals. The stern is very intact and is home to one or two very large groupers and a school of batfish. Close by on the sand sat a brass compass binnacle on my last visit – it may well still be there. Working your way along the walkways and around the accommodation there are all the normal reef species and many scorpion fish and lion fish. On the forward part of the wreck are winches that have provided a secure hold for large anemones and their clown fish residents – look closer for transparent cleaner shrimp and the larger eggshell shrimp species, but expect a nip or two from the clown fish. You can access the engine room quite easily, but only do this if you are experienced in wreck penetration, have an experienced guide with you and have planned the dive that way.

When you reach the forward end of the wreck you can see clearly where the tanker broke her back. There is some access here into the dark recesses of the hull and this spot is normally home to dozens of lion fish during the day and several schools of glassy sweepers. On the sand below look out for large torpedo rays and crocodile fish before moving back onto the main deck area towards the accommodation, stairways and

gangways provides good framing opportunities for diver shots. Finish your dive on the shallow starboard side of the wreck where there is lots of hard coral growth and the chance to see schools of white parrot fish and surgeon fish grazing as though this was just another reef table. As this is only 'half' of a relatively large ship it is possible to swim hard and get around her in a dive if you don't head for the sea bed for too long. But by doing this you will miss out on a lot of the detail and marine life – if conditions are calm here the wreck is certainly worth two or three dives.

Numidia – Big Brother Island Red Sea, Egypt

The Brothers Islands are one of the big name sites in the Egyptian Red Sea which are best known for the big fish action, strong currents and sometimes high seas. The larger island, Big Brother, has a lighthouse to warn shipping on this busy route to keep clear, however, this warning was not enough for two ships which are now wrecked here. The larger of the two is the Numdia on the northern end of the island where she ran onto the reef in 1901 where she remained for seven weeks whilst much of her cargo was salvaged. She eventually slipped down the reef and sank fully at an extreme angle on the north plateau.

Numidia. There can be quite strong currents on this wreck, but once you reach it the superstructure will provide shelter until you are ready to move on. Nikon D200, Subal ND20 housing, 10-17mm zoom, Subtronic Mini TTL flash guns, ISO100 f11 1/60.

The remains of the bow and several rolling stock wheels from her cargo are found in 6-10m with the bulk of the wreck commencing at 15-20m and running down to the stern at 80m, only accessible to re-breather divers.

By diving to 25-30m you will cover a large portion of the wreck which is now overrun by colourful soft coral growth which makes this one of the prettiest wrecks in the Red Sea. The wreck itself is quite open as she was heavily salvaged before sinking, so is accessible if you wish to penetrate a little way. The remains of the superstructure and gangways are now home to scores of different fish and the wreck is often visited by big schools of barracuda, jacks, Spanish mackerel and occasionally tuna. There is always the chance of seeing shark action here as well, particularly when the current is running. The prevailing current that sweeps the northern end of the reef can be quite strong, but you can get shelter from this when

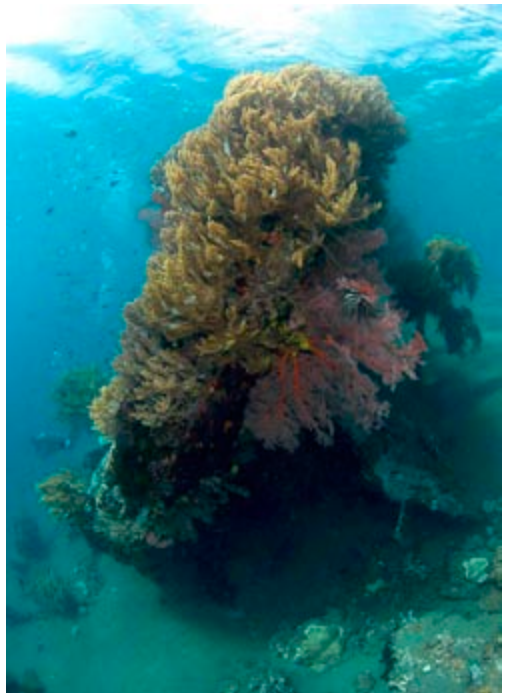
Numidia. There are a number of large inquisitive groupers that live in this wreck who will keep returning for another look at you. Nikon D200, Subal ND20 housing, 10-17mm zoom, Subtronic Mini TTL flash guns, ISO100 f8 1/30.

exploring the wreck, but be prepared to go with it as you ascend to the bow area in the shallows. If the current is gentle then take the opportunity to explore the rolling stock wheels which make interesting images on their own, but getting closer to the spokes will reveal numerous blennies, pixie hawk

fish and occasionally nudibranchs. This may tempt you to return with a macro lens for subsequent dive.

Going with the current a short distance on the western side of the reef you will pass over the remains of the second wreck, the Aida which sank in September 1957. There is some wreckage in the shallows but the bulk of the wreck lies below at a depth of 30-60m and for this reason is not so attractive to photographers, although she is also blessed with a carpet of soft corals which thrive in the strong currents.

If the weather is kind then your live aboard will probably stay at the Brothers for a couple of days at least as the diving here is spectacular. Early morning dives are quite gloomy on the Numidia so it is best to wait for the late morning or early afternoon for the best light. Most of the wreck is beyond filter depths so you will need flash with your wide angle lens unless perhaps you want to experiment with monochrome.



Japanese Wreck. The whole of this small wreck is carpeted with soft and hard corals, her almost obscuring the stern. Nikon D200, Subal ND20 housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Subtronic Mini TTL flash guns, ISO100 f8 1/60.

Japanese Wreck. Inside the wreck are the inevitable schools of glassy sweepers. Check out the ribs on the inside of the hull and you will also find leaf scorpion waiting for an opportunity to pounce. Nikon D200, Subal ND20 housing, 10.5 mm fish eye, Subtronic Mini TTL flash guns, ISO100 f8 1/60.

Japanese wreck – Amed, Bali, Indonesia

Although there are a number of good dive sites in the Amed area the 'Japanese wreck' is often overlooked or visited in passing to the adjacent reef. This is the remains of a small cargo vessel, perhaps 30m long, which lies in 6-10m of water a stones throw from the fishermen's beach at Ahmed. Possibly too small to hold the attention of many divers, it is an absolute gem for underwater photographers.

The wreck is quite intact at the stern with rudder and propeller still in place, whilst the bow section goes into burial in the sand. The remains are smothered in coral growth with some large sea fans on the stern area. This is an indication of the strong currents that periodically sweep the wreck, but if you find it strong then just come back to the beach for an hour as they normally abate quickly. The rudder and propeller are covered in tubastrea corals which must look spectacular at night, but during the day provide a habitat for gobies, blennies, pixie hawk fish and numerous invertebrates. On the rest of the wreck there are all sorts of attractive residents – a small school of batfish with a cleaning station close to the stern, glassy sweepers in side the wreck, resident leaf scorpion fish, numerous scorpion fish, and countless reef fish to keep your camera busy.

Being so shallow this is another ideal wreck for filter photography and is worth two or three dives with differing set ups for the variety of subjects. If do you run out of subjects then just a short swim away to the north, around the headland, is a spectacular reef on a steep slope with

SS Turbo 'half wreck'. The shallow elevations of the hull have the heaviest coral growth and are home to a variety of reef species. Nikon D100, Light and Motion Titan housing, 10.5mm fish eye, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO200 f8 1/60.

some excellent corals and sponges and just about every reef species you could hope for.

Of course everyone has their own vision of the perfect wreck dive and there are possibly countless examples out there. Wrecks are predominantly a wide angle dive, particularly if they are intact, as even non divers can really relate to an image of a diver exploring a wreck. But where nature has done her work wrecks are also excellent macro dives so when exploring and planning your wide angle images don't forget to take a closer look as well and you may be surprised and encouraged to return with a close up lens.

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When the Answer is Black & White

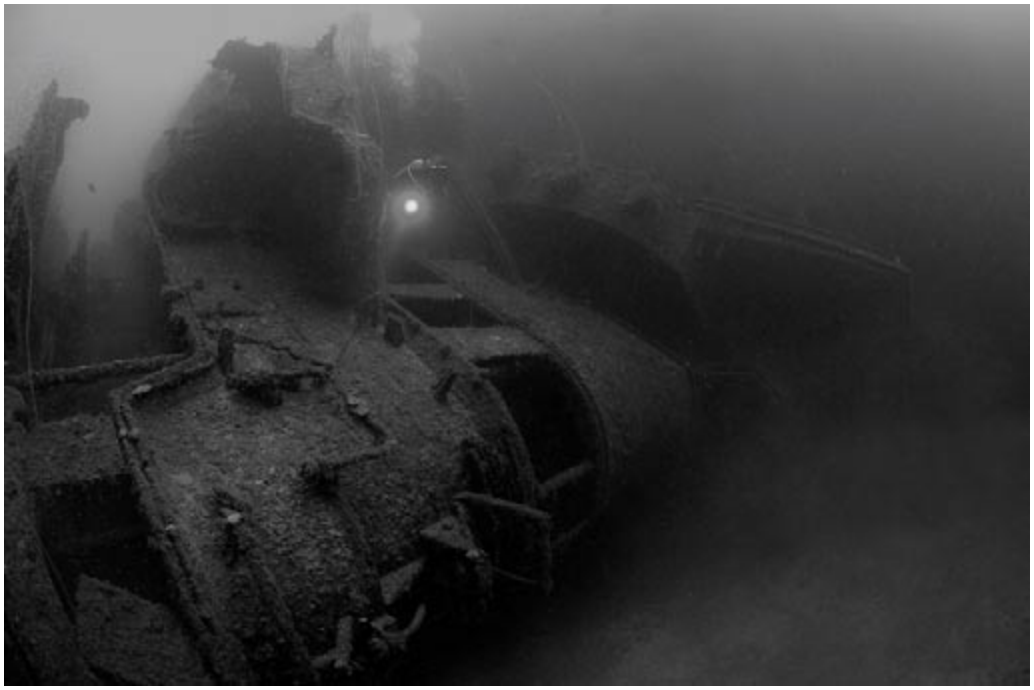
by Joseph C. Dovala

USS Apogon on the bottom of Bikini Atoll. It is a fairly long shot in an attempt to show as much of the submarine as possible while still managing some detail. The diver adds scale and depth to the many different grays throughout the image. As a color capture the lack of contrast in the dark blue lagoon just doesn't present the feel of an old WWII warrior resting under the sea. D2X, Subal ND2, Nikkor 10.5mm FE, f 7.1 @ 1/50sec, available light.

Sometimes black and white is just plain cool. Yeah, the oceans are full of color, seemingly impossibly so sometimes; but the nuances and 'simple' feel of a good B&W image is occasionally the way to go. The trick is to decide what makes a good monochrome photo. This can be highly dependant on the person creating and viewing the finished work. Of course, not everything that you point your camera at will translate to a nice B&W. A number of image basics need to be considered such as subject matter, contrast, tonality, luminosity, especially in the muted world underwater. On the other hand it isn't rocket science either (at least knowing what you like) and it's never been easier to experiment with these parameters than now in the digital age.

Before you get the heebie-jeebies worried about all the *Photoshopspeak*, rest assured there won't be any. And our goal isn't to try and make underwater versions of Ansel Adams or Edward Weston masterpieces. The focus will be on both saving a hum-drum color picture as well as converting a select favorite color viewing to an evocative B&W image.

Unlike our topside colleagues we are very limited in the big wide angle scenic department. Even color isn't going to get us very far in this endeavor and the reason is - drum roll please - we're lucky if we can see a hundred feet. The clearest water is still messing with our visual physics and suspended particles (often a lot as we all know) play further havoc with something we can collectively call contrast. Contrast, obviously, is very important to color photography too. In fact, color can actually hinder contrast when dealing with the pervasive



The very bridge where Admiral Yamamoto stood on that "Day of Infamy" and ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.
D2X, Subal ND2, Nikkor 10.5mm FE, f 4.5 @ 1/40sec, two Sea&Sea YS120 strobes _ power.

bluish-green world underwater. The lack of contrast almost always breaks the image. B&W image making has been called "a study in contrast" for the final image needs white "whites" and black "blacks." Well, what does that mean? No grays? Sometimes, but usually what it means is to have a nice gradation from the blacks through to the whites with a broad range of tonalities (grays) in between. Again, it depends on what is being conveyed in the picture. Simple compositions tend to work better with B&W. Remember, without color, the visual representation has to rely on strong form, shape, or texture.

While we don't have the big scenics, we have something else that can be very dramatic in B&W – shipwrecks! Many hulks under the sea are just begging to be captured in monochrome. They tend to be historical, have wonderful shapes and angles, and a sense of mystery. Even grain, or as we now have noise, can

This "hi-key" photo has little variation between blacks and "lights," that is, while not strictly whites the highlights are contained within just a few shades of gray. The blacks stand out dramatically against the background. The color capture was destined for the waste basket but when converted to B&W, with minimal range of gray tones, it succeeds. D100, Light & Motion housing, Nikkor 16mm, f 13 @ 1/125sec, available light.

Bow of the destroyer USS Anderson (also at Bikini Atoll) is another scene that "needs" to be viewed in B&W.
D2X, Subal ND2, Nikkor 10.5mm FE, f 5.6 @ 1/60sec, available light.

actually prove beneficial in providing a taste of "vagueness" to the final image. Just look at all those grainy black and white WWII photos and you'll see what I mean.

I shoot all my images in color up front no matter what the final rendering will be (more on this later) and in raw format. For the most post processing control it pays to use raw format during capture, that way you have all the file info to work with as you optimize for B&W. It's certainly not a deal breaker if you don't start with raw, for many fine conversions can be had from jpeg or tif originals. I primarily use Nikon Capture 4.4.2 for all my conversions with any dodging or burning done in Photoshop Elements 5.0. It doesn't really matter what software you use as long as you achieve the results you're looking for. I import the raw file into Capture and convert to B&W, setting the black and white-points using the curves adjustment (Master Lightness Channel, LCH Editor). The contrast usually needs to be boosted so I do that here too. I then move the cyan/red, magenta/green, or yellow/blue sliders as needed (Photo Effects Palette) until I achieve the best look. It's mostly a game of trial and error doing the adjustments one by one "till it's finished" and then save and export to whatever file type I need.

There are times that to finish the image I need to move the jpeg or tif file over to another program to refine the results. I usually move the photo over to Photo Shop Elements for some final adjustments. By using the Burn or Dodge Tool and altering the size of the brush (circle) I can darken or lighten select areas as needed to optimize the final picture. This certainly is not a new method as dodging and burning have been used in the darkroom for over a hundred years. In fact, there are a number of features built into 21st century software that are nothing more then electronic versions of very old practices. Excuse me while I go off topic now and rant! For all you anti-digital folks out there who claim that digital capture isn't real as opposed to film – WAKE UP! All photography from the very first image hundreds of years ago is "NOT REAL" You are taking a three dimensional view and placing it on a flat plane and unless you are shooting with only ~ 50mm lens (full frame) then you are also "lying" as humans only see roughly 45 degrees in focus. Ansel Adams, et al. to a person manipulated their

This "hi-key" photo has little variation between blacks and "lights," that is, while not strictly whites the highlights are contained within just a few shades of gray. Fig 7 D100, Light & Motion housing, Nikkor 24mm, f 7.1 @ 1/100sec, two Substrobe 200 strobes

Egg yolk jelly. The jelly is saturated with bright colors against a bright blue background and as a color image it works quite well.
If you exchange the bright hues for blacks, whites, and a few grays you become more aware of the exotic detail of the tentacles. With the water background also reduced to a few grays the flowing form is more readily apparent as well. Is the monochrome image better? I don't think so; it just provides a different take on the original photograph.
D2X, Subal ND2, Nikkor 10.5mm FE, f 10 @ 1/125sec, two Sea&Sea YS120

The diver and some of the kelp fronds had too much light spill over and looked washed out. By using the burn tool in P.S. Elements I can darken the diver and some of the kelp fronds to my liking.
D2X, Subal ND2, Nikkor 10.5mm FE, f 14 @ 1/100sec, available light.

images – to great lengths! I could go on and on, so get over it. Right. Sorry about that. We'll move on now.

OK, now about those pesky rules needing strong contrast, black blacks, and white whites. Like most photographic laws, these can be stretched or broken to maximize the aura of an image. One feature that B&W is real good at is providing mood. Look at all those Alfred Hitchcock movies. One of the most "sinister" shipwrecks in Bikini Atoll is the Japanese battleship HIJMS Nagato. She was Admiral Yamamoto's flagship and it was from this ship that he signaled for the raid to begin on Pearl Harbor, December 7th, 1941. To try and bring out the ominous sensation one gets swimming up to this structure required a more hazy approach to contrast, and creating a gray feel to the final image. Fortunately, reducing contrast and enhancing murkiness doesn't require much effort for underwater shots! Doing this with a color image would just look like a poorly exposed frame in mediocre conditions.

Black and White can be just that, or nearly so. It's called High Key. This technique is also big in color as any look through a fashion magazine will show. Basically, in the monochrome image, grays have been reduced or even removed entirely. It is more of a series of different shades of white. The look can be striking but it's easy to over do it and some folks don't like this form of image expression at all. It can be a very good way to save a photo, however. While the color version may be pretty much worthless on a particular image because of severe contrast, exposure, or color problems. And trying to "fix" it during post capture seriously degrades the image file, converting to hi-key monochrome might be the answer. The main task is to push the black and white-points as far as they can go before losing the picture and then backing off to what you like best. As a "High Key" rendition these kinds of images might still have something to say.

Not all conversions have to be done in order to save an image or make it better. On occasion you can glean a nice monochrome to strip away all the competition that color can give to other elements within a photo. One of the strong points about seeing an image in black and white is the ability to more fully appreciate form and/or texture. It can completely alter the "feel" of a picture as well as its intended message.

Many digital cameras today allow for original capture in B&W. Still, with the degree of control possible with software now it doesn't make a lot of sense to forgo initially taking the photo in color. The single biggest reason is you can always remove color from the image but you can't put back what was never there. Also, you have a better degree of control with the RGB channels in color then in grays (see sidebar). Playing with the B&W mode might be useful to get an idea what a particular view would look like but then switching back to color for the shot is a better option.

In the days of old, any serious B&W film shooter experimented and used filters on their lenses to enhance the image. Perhaps when shooting topside it might pay to play with some of these filters. Having a camera in a metal or plastic box means you'll be stuck with whatever you've placed on the lens for the dive's duration. Also, the effects will not be clear if shooting in color or accurate. It is far easier to make these kinds of adjustments on your computer.

There are no shortages of software tools to help provide a

Abstracts can me much graphically simpler when reduced to black and white. Canon F-1, Ikelite housing, 100mm macro, f-stop/shutter unknown, one Substrobe 200 strobes full power.

different look to your B&W ensemble. While Photoshop is and has been king, a plethora of plug-ins and stand alones have been developed. Color Efex Pro has several nice effects including mimicking old style B&W film stocks. The "Infrared Film" control is also very intriguing and with the right image could produce a stunning picture. Alien Skin is another plug-in with B&W capability. The list could go on but remember despite the digital tidal wave and massive computing power that a relatively few short years ago wasn't possible, it still depends on capturing an image that has something to say. It's just now we can translate it at will to deliver a different message. Have fun!

Joseph C. Dovala
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By popular demand an expanded version of the eBook, *Ghost Fleet of Bikini Atoll* by Joseph C. Dovala, is now available. With almost 4x the pages it contains nearly 100 photos and much more text. The book is in PDF file format easily read by a number of free existing software programs such as Acrobat Reader. Electronic photo books, or eBooks, are able to showcase high quality images and text in a new, exciting, and very inexpensive way. They have relatively small file sizes, usually less than 20mb. *Ghost Fleet of Bikini Atoll* (12mb, 89 pages) is only $6.95 each emailed. Please visit www.jcdovala.com for details.

Behind the shot

with Martin Edge

Butterfly fish in Dapple light Southern Red Sea 17mm-35mm lens. F5.6 at 180th sec. Nikon D200 in Subal housing. Two Inon Z220 flash guns

There is a wonderful quality of natural light present underwater, which I believe is very misunderstood. I and many other photographers refer to it as 'dapple light'. Another popular term is 'crinkles'. The name doesn't realy matter, it's how to achieve it that is the most important. Just after sunrise or towards twilight time the sunbeams, which enter the surface of the sea, are at the most acute angle by virtue of the dramatic angle of sun and surface. These sunbeams produce a golden light and this effect is amplified into strong golden shafts of light as the beams pervade the surface.

Underwater photographers have been using this quality of light as a dramatic backdrop to their images for as long as I can remember. Doubilet's wide-angle images from his coffee table books are wonderful examples. The UK godfather of underwater photography – Peter Scoones, patiently explained it to me some twenty-five years ago. Whenever I have the opportunity I enter the water at the time best suited to shoot dappled light. Live-aboard's and shore based dive resort's are ideal. To catch the light, one can often enter the water at a time to suit you. Day boat underwater photographers often miss out as the have to head back to base long before the afternoon light is at its best.

On my photo workshops I set a number of late afternoon's aside for those photographers who choose to take a guided 'light tour' with me. I have been doing this for some time in order to demonstrate some of the drawbacks. The misunderstandings are mistakes made in finding the light and knowing how to shoot it. You see, the effect is only noticeable in shallow water, in my experience between one and four meters. It's essential to ascertain as soon as you can the best depth that the beams are most dramatic. If the sea is glass calm the effect is heightened. You have to work quickly though to find a subject at the best depth to photograph against the sunlight. Remember, the sun sets rapidly in tropical locations and all too soon the effect of the sunbeams fade. The main reason why underwater photographers fail to recognize the light is because they descend past the optimal depth and the optimal depth is determined by how low the sun is to the horizon.

Last June (2007) we took a liveaboard photo workshop to the Southern Red Sea to shoot the shallow caves and grotto's in the St John's area. One afternoon I planned a guided 'dappled light' dive. I knew the best time to enter the water and with the help of the dive guide, I chose a reef with good quality hard corals and a steep drop off from 1m of water down to 10m. We had also taken into consideration the direction of the setting sun over the reef flat. In this way we could stay shallow (the optimal depth) and shoot the light towards the direction of the reef instead of looking out to sea. I was confident that good subject matter would be plentiful and brought the group together to talk specifically about dappled light techniques, depths, subjects and camera settings. The one thing I could not have accounted for was how the dive briefing from the dive guides would influence the logic of the group.

Seduction- is the only word, which comes to mind! With dry wipe

marker board in hand – complete with a sketch of the reef, the boat, the anchor, north, south, east and west points – our dive-guide began to brief my eager and enthusiastic group of photographers. It went something like this (imagine just a slight accent) – Quote

" The boat will drop us here, we'll descend to 10m and follow the reef clockwise until we come to a sharp right hand turn. There are usually blue spotted rays or the odd turtle on the sand. Take your pictures and then I'll show you where a large green moray hangs out. If any of you wish to do your own thing then no problem, we'll see you on the surface after one hour. Any Question? No, okay lets go diving"

Seduced! After experiencing literally thousands of dive briefings over the years I had never before appreciated how a group of keen underwater photographers could so easily be distracted from the task of taking pictures. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with following the dive guide, we do it all the time. But, what started as a snorkel – come - 1m to 4m 'dappled light' 'sun close to the horizon' photo shoot suddenly turned into a dive to at 10m to look for ray's and turtles on the sand.

For the first time I began to witness and appreciate how a dive briefing could divert the intentions of a group of avidly keen photographers, just as they were about to jump in and shoot subjects they had planned to shoot, perhaps from the previous afternoon dive or as in this case – a lesson all about shallow water sunlight. I was fascinated with the dynamics of this situation and I chose to let it happen and witness the outcome. I was interested in who would stay shallow and shoot the light as planned and who might momentarily forget the original idea and go diving instead.

I cannot recall how many of us entered the water that late afternoon but I do remember that for the first twenty-five minutes all bar one was at 10m looking out for anything on the sand. Myself and one other photographer were directly above them in the top three meters of water shooting the sunlight as it set towards the horizon. They had fallen for it! They'd been seduced by the briefing and they were missing the reason we had chosen that particular time of day to enter the water. The others joined us after thirty to forty minutes, taking their deco stop at 3m and shooting the light whilst hanging out.

When you go to shoot pictures you go to shoot pictures. Have a dive by all means, once, twice, three times a day but when you have a subject to shoot and you know where to go to shoot it, then think about detaching yourself from the concept of a dive and allow your mind-set to think more in terms of your photo goals.

250th sec F8 100 ISO. D200 with Nikon 10.5mm fisheye lens in Subal housing. Two Inon Z220 Flashguns

(Right) Graham Cleminson shooting towards the late afternoon light between 2m and 4m. F4.8 at 90th sec. 100 ISO. 200 Subal housing.

We captured some good shots that afternoon. The sea was flat which accentuated the sunbeams. We had the reef just breaking water and there were plenty of opportunities with both moving and static subjects. We

discussed these circumstances back on the boat and were able to show on laptop our results in the sunlight, at the time most had been on the sand. It made some members of our group realise that they had been 'snapping away whilst diving' for the majority of the time. It was a big lesson learnt.

For the remained of the workshop (and all subsequent one's) I started to conduct my own photo briefings in conjunction with the dive guides so that the group had more of a choice with their dive plan and could choose to follow if they wished. The lesson I learnt as an educator was yet another reminder on how one's mindset can be compromised when diving and why serious photographers, all to often, leave the water frustrated with their results and their ability to concentrate on the task in hand.

Martin Edge
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A Diver's Guide To The Art Of Underwater Photography

By Andrea & Antonella Ferrari

Reviewed by Alexander Mustard

Great art is not created by committees or consensus, but by passionate individuals with vision and desire. The Ferraris' Guide to the Art of Underwater Photography is as personal and as opinionated a book on the subject as you are ever likely to read. And it is all the better for it.

This book gives us a rare insight into the mindset, dedication and imagination involved in creating magnificent underwater images. Although he always seems keen to modestly deny it, Andrea Ferrari is an excellent underwater photographer. While you may not always agree with his well argued opinions, all of us will benefit from reading them. I get the impression that the author does not expect us to agree with him all the time, anyway.

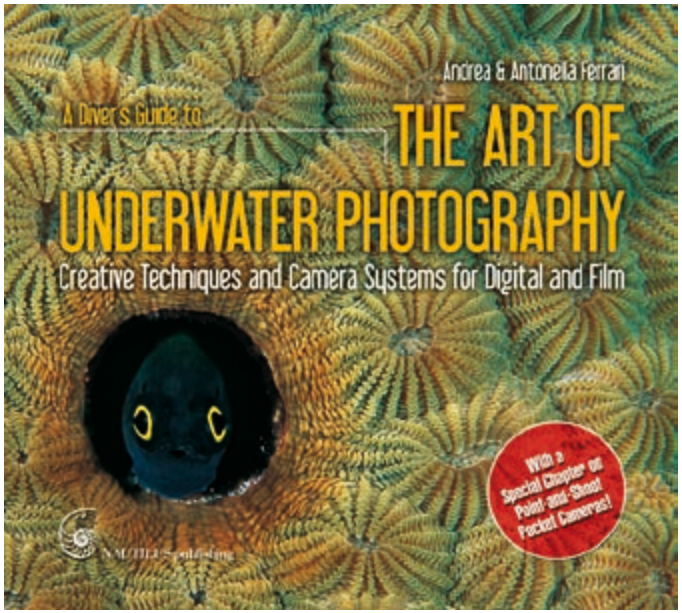
Although this book gives advice on many technical aspects of underwater photography it takes a more philosophical approach to the subject and is a motivational manual that encourages you to strive for better images. It shows you the path.

Ferrari's text, perhaps prose is a more apt word, is individual, warm and highly entertaining. I sat down and read this enjoyable book from cover to cover. The lack of techno-talk makes it a very accessible method to improve your photography. Particularly for the non-technical minded. I really enjoyed Ferrari's original take on the difficult subject of composition. By drawing comparisons between famous scenes from the silver screen and underwater photos he demonstrates how the shared compositional elements work to communicate consistent messages and emotions.

The images are some of the finest you will see in a guide to underwater photography. About half are the very best from the Ferrari's own collection, while uniquely the other half come from a cast of 21 guest photographers that includes the likes of Doug Perrine, Tony Wu, Eric Cheng, Charles Hood and Stephen Wong. Some of the guest photographers are good friends of the authors (I'd count myself in the that group) while others the authors contacted after seeing their images in books, magazines or the internet. All the images are very well reproduced, which will not come as a surprise to anyone who owns any of the other books by the authors.

The guest images almost make this two books in one. They are ordered to fit in with the themes of the chapters and interspersed with the main thesis of the book, but each is captioned as a standalone. Reading Ferrari's comments on why each is effective is fascinating stuff. I would have found the book easier to follow if the guest photographer pages were more differentiated visually in the design (perhaps with a different font or background colour) because I found it was easy to lose the main text and accidentally slip into reading about a guest image as I turned the pages.

As an underwater photographer myself, I would have liked to see more technical information about the images, at least including shutter speeds and apertures, which are fundamental tools that contribute to the artistic process of image creation. Also this is a book straddles the digital/film divide offering real world advice on how to manage the switch. The evidence I see on diveboats is that most have switched and this element of the book will be



fastest to date.

A Diver's Guide To The Art Of Underwater Photography is a large format (25x23cm) 360 page feast of fabulous images with thought provoking and enjoyable writing on how to take pictures in the ocean.

If you were only allowed one book on underwater photography, I would recommend a more technical tome than this. However, if you already have a book or two on the subject then this is the perfect accompaniment. I'd go as far as to say that whatever books you already have, then the originality of thought in this volume, allied with the photographic quality and Ferrari's engaging writing, means this one deserves its place alongside them.

www.reefwonders.net

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com

Marine Life of Bootless Bay Papua New Guinea

By Mark Baine and David Harasti

Not only is David Harasti a marine scientist, he is also a superb underwater photographer. Combine the two and you have a great recipe for a book. Dave has spent many hours co-producing this book and the results are fantastic.

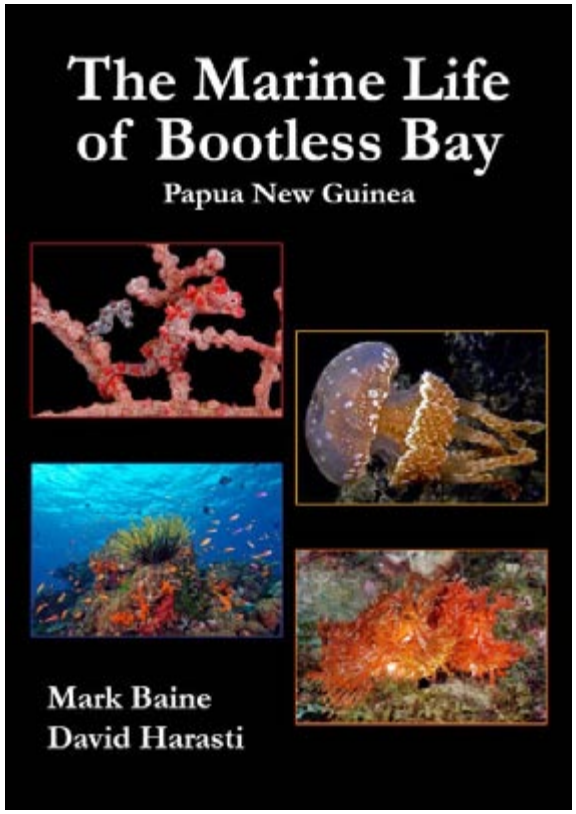
It is full of amazing images, information and a great aid to help local communities understand the ocean and its importance.

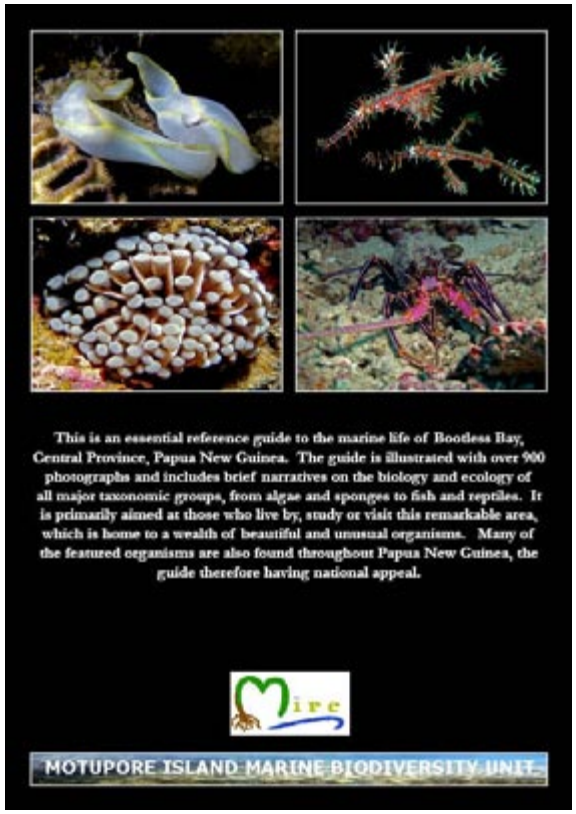
The 'Marine Life of Bootless Bay - Papua New Guinea' identification guide by Dr Mark Baine and Dave Harasti is the accumulation of 18 months work and several hundred hours spent underwater photographing and documenting the marine biodiversity of Bootless Bay, located just outside Port Moresby.

The 152page full colour book released in February 2008 contains approximately 900 images of over 850 species, accompanied by introductory information on all major marine taxa such as corals, echinoderms and fish.

The book is not just for scientists but is also a must for divers and photographers who regularly visit Loloata Island Resort, situated in Bootless Bay and world renowned for its scuba diving.

The diving throughout Bootless Bay is so diverse. Diving varies from coral reefs, shipwrecks and muck diving through the mangroves and seagrasses. One of the most fascinating sites in Bootless Bay is 'Suzie's Bommie', famous worldwide for its incredible life that varies from giant hump-headed maori wrasse to the cryptic pygmy seahorses.





An example of the diversity of the guide is that is contains images of 335 fish species (including rare species such as the lacy scorpionfish Rhinopias aphanes and halimeda ghost pipefish Solenostomus halimeda), 145 mollusc species, 88 species of echinoderms (seastars, featherstars, urchins etc) and many other critters commonly found throughout the Indo-Pacific region.

To ensure accuracy within the guide, an expert taxonomic review process took place which involved approximately 45 world renowned experts in their fields. Gerry Allen and Rudie Kuiter (fish), Chantal Conand and Anne Hoggett (echinoderms), Jere Lipps (forams), Richard Willan (molluscs), Daphne Fautin (anemones) and Peter Davie (crustaceans), all prestigious individuals, took part in the review.

The principal focus of the guide is to improve local knowledge of the importance of marine biodiversity and to instil in local communities and villages, a sense of wonder at the diversity of life present in their waters. To this end, approximately 3,000 copies are being distributed to community schools and village communities early 2008. This has been made possible with support from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Project AWARE, the Papua New Guinea Institute of Biodiversity, and the University of Papua New Guinea.

Copies of the book are available to interested parties who visit Bootless Bay. For further information visit the MIRC website

www.mirc.ac.pg

or

www.daveharasti.com

Jayne Jenkins
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Sharkwater

Reviewed by John Wallis

If you've ever rolled your eyes at yet another tabloid misrepresentation of sharks, ever shook your head in despair at phrases like 'man-eater' or 'shark infested waters' this film is for you. Finally, thankfully, long overdue, we have a film out there that begins to right some of the popular misconceptions of sharks; Sharkwater.

Sharkwater makes compelling viewing. At times funny and humorous, packed with the facts revealing the scale of the shark fining trade, and carried along by a dramatic story the film leaves you amazed that the world does not already know about the scale of the problem facing the worlds shark populations.

The story centers on Rob Stewart, a photographer and underwater filmmaker. Whist filming in the Galapagos he encountered a long-lining fishing boat and saw first hand the destruction wrought by just one boat, on one day. Where many others would have headed home after such a trip, told a few angry stories to their friends, and then gone back to work on Monday morning, Rob decided that the plight of sharks was a story the world desperately needed to hear.

You can count on the fingers of one hand the places where sharks have legal protection. Teaming up with Paul Watson of Sea Sheppard Rob travelled to Costa Rica and Galapagos to join the Sea Sheppard team monitoring fishing bans in these two important reserves.

It's here that the story starts to take a dramatic turn with run ins with the Taiwanese mafia, illegal fishing vessels, armed custom agents and, if that wasn't life threatening enough, flesh eating tropical diseases.

The style of the film might not appeal to all. Narrating the film himself and telling the plight of the worlds shark populations through his own dramatic experiences it would be tempting to conclude Stewart was more concerned with promoting himself than the sharks. Maybe. However the film industry has created little, if anything, that highlights the plight of shark populations and whilst most of the world is rightly indignant at a Japanese fleet slaughtering a thousand whales, it remains largely ignorant of the millions of sharks that are taken from the seas each year. As divers we have a natural affinity for sharks, we should not forget that the non diving population might need a slightly more dramatic yarn to get the message through. It is this wider audience that the film is clearly aimed at as any change in the way these animals are treated will depend on their awareness and involvement.

Sharks do not seem to engender sympathy in the way whales or seal cubs do. As divers we are one of the few groups on the planet that can speak first hand about how magnificent and graceful these animals are, and how important their survival is. It's the kind of film every diver should see, if only to become more acquainted with the facts surrounding shark conservation. It is also a film we should encourage our friends and family to see.

I was lucky enough to see the film's premier in London and after the viewing Rob came on stage to answer questions and talk with the audience. At the end of his impassioned talk he summed up with a simple statement, "what ever you feel about the film, what ever you feel about me, the important message concerns the Sharks and their conservation.

Please get involved, please help save these amazing animals".

www.sharkwater.com

John Wallis

www.jwphotographic.com

Guidelines for contributors

We are always looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography and would 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. As a free magazine we have no budget, just exposure!

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
Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest gear
Personalities - Features about leading underwater photographers

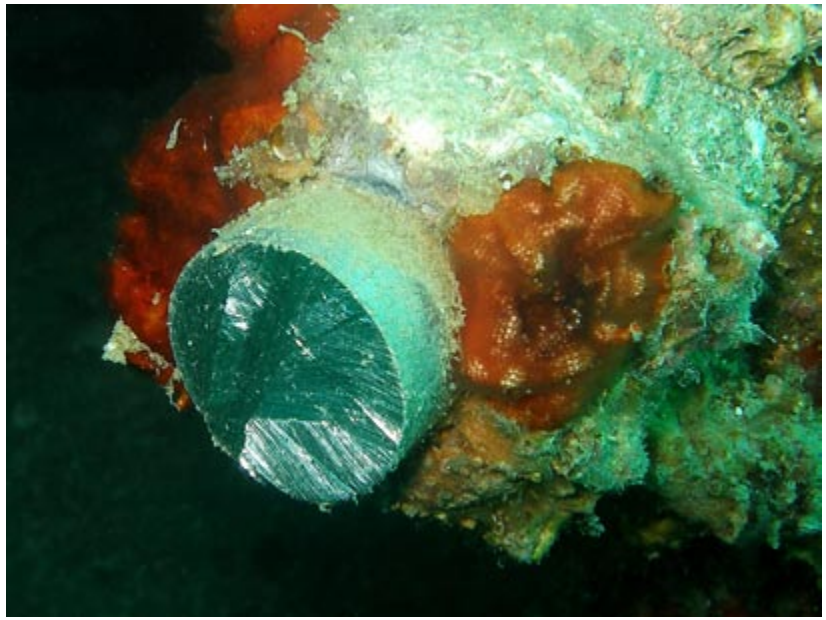
If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
E mail peter@uwpmag.com

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 1



Slovene part of the Adriatic has only 2 or 3 diving spots on its 42km shoreline. In Fiesa bay there is a small reef from 5 to 10m depth in its length approx 700m. Beside that only a flat seabed of sand and mud descending slowly to max 20m.

A group of divers decided to enrich a bit this kind of environment. First we placed some concrete cubes on the seabed and they were populated immediately. Encouraged by this experience we started to plan further developments. One of the friends succeeded to put hands on a 7m sailboat which laid abandoned in a local marina and its managers wanted to get rid of the boat. There was an intention to obtain all the approvals needed to sink the boat as an artificial reef in the Fiesa bay, but it became evident that this procedure would last virtually forever. The best thing to do was to act an accidental sinking of the boat being on tug just on the right position at the right time. Naturally we cleaned the boat of all pollutants and environmentally dangerous materials as seen on much bigger ships like Spiegel grove or Oriskany.

Soon the news spread both above and under the water. The wreck attracted several regular inhabitants with a lobster (homarus gammarus) and a conger among them. The divers were coming and they found new motivation in visiting the cubes and the boat's wreck. In that area several courses for new divers are held and therefore for many divers that was a first encounter with a wreck. After 3 years under water, the propeller was well covered with encrustations but surprisingly still could be easily rotated.

At the season's opening in April we went to Fiesa for one of the season's first dives. At the cubes there were plenty of nudi's egg ribbons on the weed, some aplysia punctata mating, an octopus hiding underneath etc. Just seemed quite enough for a nice interesting spring dive. When I approached the wreck from its stern my regulator almost fell out of my mouth from the surprise. There was a propeller shaft ending with a shiny surface showing still fresh saw's trails. And no propeller!

A fellow diver took the souvenir just a day or two before. Needless to say that the propeller had no special material or historical or whatever values except for the joy it was bringing to the visiting beginner divers.

For some people it is hard to understand that there is always someone who is affected by their irresponsible behaviour. The story is quite similar on larger wrecks and in that case it is our sons generation affected. If we all won't behave and we continue taking souvenirs, they might be able to visit just some sheet metal plates reminding slightly the ship's original form.

Dejan Mavric
Nova Gorica, Slovenia

Parting Shot 2

One of my favourite dive sites for photography is Curtin Artificial Reef, which is near my home in Brisbane, Australia. This site is great for either macro or wide angle, with prolific sub-tropical marine life and dozens of shipwrecks to explore.

Curtin Artificial Reef is one of the oldest purposely created artificial reefs in the world. The first ship was sunk here by the Queensland Underwater Research Group in 1968, and since then they have added over twenty ships, plus trams, tyres, pipes and other objects to what was once a barren sandy bottom.

Visibility on the wrecks can vary dramatically. Located in Moreton Bay the artificial reef is washed by currents, you can have 15m plus visibility on the high tide and several hours later only 5m visibility on the low tide.

On a recent dive on the wrecks we arrived at low tide, so a 60mm lens was my weapon of choice for all the invertebrates and reef fish that shelter on the wrecks.

Upon entering the greenish water the visibility was pushing 5m, so my buddy, Lisa, and I decided to concentrate on the critters on just one wreck.

After finding octopus, butterflyfish, hawkish and crabs, I was busy framing a goby when I heard a cry from Lisa. I looked up to see her pointing at a common lionfish. Nothing to get excited about as they are pretty common on the wrecks I thought, until I saw it had a banded cleaner shrimp in its mouth.

However, this cleaner shrimp wasn't doing any cleaning; it was struggling as the lionfish was trying to swallow it!

Nikon D50, Ikelite housing, 60mm lens, 1/80, f25, ISO 200, single Inon Z240 strobe

Now I thought cleaner shrimps and cleaner fish had a sort of diplomatic immunity, with the unwritten law being 'DON'T EAT THE CLEANER'. This rule is followed by most fish, but not this lionfish.

I fired off several photos as the shrimp struggle to get free. Not much chance of that. At first it had both claws and half its body out of the lionfish's mouth. But a couple of quick gulps and there was only the claws, antenna and a few legs showing.

A few more photos and few more gulps and just one claw and the antenna remained. I captured this parting shot just before the claw disappeared, it opened and closed one last time in defiance and was gone.

Nigel Marsh
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Parting Shot 3

Manatee Encounter. UWP Editor, Peter Rowlands (right) is befriended by a female manatee at dusk. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm @ 12mm. ISO 100. F7.1. Half second exposure. 2 x Inon 240 strobes.

It was a cold January evening in Florida and with the light almost gone we had given up photography for the day at Crystal River. We were finning home when suddenly we had the impression we were not alone. A female manatee was cruising along with us. We stopped to give her a scratch.

While this is not a remarkably beautiful photograph of a manatee encounter, I thought I'd submit it for Parting Shot for two reasons. First it features UWP's editor on his (and my) first snorkel with manatees. I was pleased to have a small object, such as Peter, to help make the main subject, the sea cow, look as large and impressive as possible. Diminutive models are always a bonus in underwater photography for this reason. But the real interest factor in this image relates to shooting in low light.

Despite the near total darkness and the murky water outside the springs I decided to turn on my camera and take a few snaps. Had I been shooting Nikon's new flagship DSLR the D3 I may have wound up the ISO setting to 6400 and snapped away. When I shot a pre-prod D3 back in October I was amazed by ISO 3200 and 6400 on this camera - quite the equal of ISO 400 on my D2X. Apparently the production cameras are better still. I have yet to try one.

Anyway I had the D2X and was too lazy to move the camera away from ISO 100! So I just slowed and slowed the shutter speed until I got a decent green. In the end I was shooting at a shutter speed of 1/2 second. That is click…click.

And the pictures looked great and were blur free. There is slight movement blur on Peter's hand, but other than that they look great. High ISO performance is arguably the favourite feature of the measurebator (a person far more interested in camera specs than photographs). It is something that can be quite accurately quantified and then argued about on internet forums. An ideal statistic! It is perhaps the most often quoted statistic when debating which camera is best.

Anyway before you all rush out and buy a Nikon D3 or a Canon 1D Mk3 or 5D (the acknowledged high ISO kings) I think that this picture makes the point that there is more than one way to take a photo in low light. If we are using strobes and a wide angle lens it is worth remembering that instead of increasing the ISO we can always adopt the old school technique of extending the shutter speeds out beyond 1/60th. Strobes will freeze the foreground and we can rely on the stability provided by the water, also known as nature's tripod, to ensure our backgrounds are acceptably sharp.

Of course, a high ISO king camera might be better still, but for those trying to resist the expenditure of an upgrade, good technique can save you dropping your current camera in the skip just yet. Risky methods may not always work, but if we are prepared to push the limits we might be surprised what is actually possible.

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