Underwater Photography

a web magazine
Issue 45
Nov/Dec 2008

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School's out
Coding a vessel
Parting Shots

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 50D
EOS 350D, Rebel XT
EOS 400D, Rebel XTi
EOS 450D, Rebel XSi
EOS 1000D Rebel XS

Nikon
D40, D40x
D50
D60
D70, 70s
D80
D90
D200
D300
D700

Olympus
E3
E330
E-400, E410
E420
E510, E520

Sony
A-100
A-200
A-300
A-350
A-700

Substrobe DS160

From its first introduction in 2001, the Substrobe DS125 became the overwhelming choice of professionals and discerning photographers the world-over. Now the best is even better. Introducing the new and improved Substrobe DS160.

The Substrobe DS160 is compatible with all Ikelite TTL systems and current digital cameras, as well as all older TTL film cameras including the Nikonos system. A variety of sync cords, sensors, and TTL adapters are available to connect to almost any camera system currently on the market.

Compact Digital 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 photographic community. Ikelite's Compact and ULTRAcompact 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 USA
Underwater Systems • 50 W. 33rd. Street • Indianapolis, IN • 46208 • **317-923-4523** **www.ikelite.com**

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A web magazine UwP45 Nov/Dec 2008

Cover photo by Alex Tyrrel

Editorial

DEMA and Antibes

Apologies for the late arrival of UwP45 but I've just got back from exhibiting at DEMA in Las Vegas and Antibes in the south of France. Both were very pleasant events but rather than include details of them in this issue I'd like to point you to some excellent coverage at

www.wetpixel.com

and

www.divephotoguide.com

Digital capability

The old chestnut used to be "Will digital ever be as good as film?" but now, with the advent of cameras such as the Nikon D3 and D700, we have a situation where digital cameras are easily outperforming film, certainly in terms of high ISO capability. This, in turn, should release a whole new set of images, never practically possible before, of , for instance, deeper wrecks in sharper detail. I say wrecks because they are of particular interest to me but what is so exciting about underwater photography at present is how these new capabilities are being embraced and will be used to produce a whole new genre.

Is enough enough?

An interesting situation was brought home to me recently when I tried to burn an HD footage video about Shooting Magic Filters onto DVD. Imagine my surprise when I found out that I had to compress/ downgrade the image quality slightly in order for it to fit onto a conventional DVD. I say conventional referring to the universally popular single sided DVDs rather than the double sided or Blu-Ray discs with their increased capacity because the latter two, whilst capable of storing much more information, are not at all popular. It seems that the general public can see no reason to upgrade their DVD players and computer manufacturers have not fully embraced Blu-Ray.

In the old days there was a distinct advantage with DVDs over VHS tapes. The quality was visually much better, the size smaller and the loss-less copying capability quite groundbreaking so there was an almost universal takeup.

Now it seems that the general public are staying put for the time being and I suspect that the preferred method of video delivery in the future will be online rather than on disc.

Please contribute to the contributors

At the risk of sounding repetitive, UwP can only be downloaded for free because the contributors don't ask for any payment.

If you feel you have benefited from or simply enjoyed the contents of UwP why not make a donation which will be divided pro rata amongst the contributors. Last year they were very grateful for your generousity and any donations this year which are received before Dec 31st 2008 will be divided up amongst this years contributors.

You can donate by PayPal or credit card at

www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

News, Travel & Events

Sea Shepherd Operation Musashi

The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has announced its fifth Antarctic Whale Defense Campaign to the Southern Oceans to defend whales from the Japanese whaling fleet. This year's campaign has been named Operation Musashi in reference to the legendary Japanese strategist, Miyamoto Musashi (1584-1645) known as a great samurai warrior, strategist and tactician and a personal role model and hero to Captain Paul Watson, Founder and President of Sea Shepherd.

"We intend to sink the Japanese fleet economically," said Captain Paul Watson. "Our strategy is to prevent whales from being killed, to force the Japanese whalers to spend money on fuel without killing whales. We will once again intervene against illegal Japanese whaling and once again we intend to save the lives of as many whales as we can with the resources available to us. We have been the cause of the Japanese whaling fleet losing profits for three years in a row. We intend to make it a fourth year of red ink for the whaler's books."

The Japanese whaling fleet will depart from Japan next month. The Sea Shepherd ship Steve Irwin will also depart at the end of November from Brisbane, Australia. The Japanese fleet and the Steve Irwin should arrive in the Southern Ocean Whale Sanctuary around the same time. Sea Shepherd will not depend on the government of Australia to help the whales.

www.seashepherd.org

Greenpeace Surrenders to the Japanese Whaling Fleet

Greenpeace has officially announced that they will not be sending a ship to the Southern Oceans to oppose whaling by the Japanese Whaling fleet. This means that Sea Shepherd will be alone in our high seas opposition to illegal Japanese whaling operations when the whaling season opens in a month.

"As a Greenpeace co-founder, I am deeply offended that Greenpeace has been raising millions of dollars in the name of defending whales all year and now two weeks before the Japanese whaling fleet is scheduled to depart, they announce they will not be going," said Captain Paul Watson. "In my opinion they collected funds under false pretenses and now they have abandoned the whales. Shame on them."

www.greenpeace.org

Alex Mustard U/w Photography Workshop

Red Sea. 27th June to 4th July 2009.

Join underwater photographer Alex Mustard for his 2009 workshop in the northern Red Sea. As in previous years, this workshop is scheduled specifically to coincide with the aggregations of snappers, emperors, trevallies, batfish, barracuda and unicornfish at Ras Mohammed. But we will also dedicate time to photographing the photogenic wrecks and reefs that characterise this region.

The workshop is aimed at DSLR photographers and is designed to help you progress from taking images that come out to photos that stand out. The workshop will also focus on various wide angle techniques such as strobe positioning, working with models and filter photography. The workshop will also cover fish portraiture and photographing marine life behaviour.

MV Whirlwind has been especially chosen for this trip because of her underwater photographer-friendly design, great hospitality and the diving freedom essential for producing stunning images. The cost is £1050. London to London – full package price.

For more details please contact Alex at

alex@amustard.com

DivePhotoGuide Awarded Best Website At Antibes

Popular underwater photography & video portal DivePhotoGuide has been presented with the best website award at the 35th Annual World Festival of Underwater Images, one of the most prestigious underwater photo & film festival in the world, held annually in Antibes, France.

Founder and Publisher Jason Heller said: “We are honored to receive this recognition from such a prestigious competition and I want to take this opportunity to thank all of our readers from around the world as well as our exceptional team - Wendy Heller, Matt Weiss, Gyula Somogyi, Richard Morris, Andrea & Antonella Ferrari, Keri Wilk and Miguel Novey. I’m honored to have such an amazing bunch of people on our team who share an intense passion for underwater imagery and the ocean.”

www.divephotoguide.com

Seatool Sony HDR-SR11/12

The Seatool SR11/SR12 underwater housing for the Sony HDV Handycam HDR-SR11/SR12 is one of the smallest, lightest underwater video housings ever produced.

At just 1.5kg it’s small and light enough to hand carry on aircraft and because the housing body conforms so closely to the camera, the housing attains nearly neutral buoyancy (slightly negative) for effortless handling underwater.

The housing utilizes a flip out mirror & lcd reversing circuit, allowing the user to take advantage of the camera’s LCD Screen for composition. Optional 3” external monitor now available.

www.reefphoto.com
www.seatoolusa.com

12th International Underwater Film Festival in Belgrade, Serbia

December 12th to 16th 2008

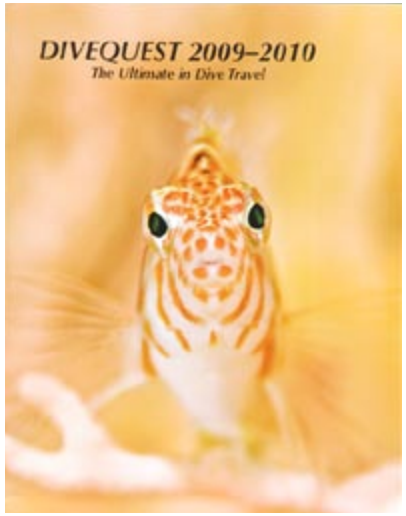
We are very pleased to announce the 12th International Underwater Film Festival in Belgrade, Serbia . This event will be held, like every year, during the beginning of December, from 12th to 16th 2008.

Films for the contest would have to be 2007. or 2008. production, with at least 30% underwater shots and formats are BETA SP, DV Cam or MiniDV (PAL)

The subject is free. Competition admission is free. Deadline is November15th, 2008.

www.kpa.co.yu

Divequest 2009-2010 catalogue



Divequest arranges professionally organized, dedicated diving holidays of the highest quality to the finest dive destinations in the world.

Our aim is to make your holiday a rich and unforgettable experience. Dive in warm, crystal-clear waters. Float effortlessly through underwater forests and gardens of coral surrounded by rainbow-coloured reef fish. Enjoy the thrill of an encounter with a swirling school of barracuda, an elegant White-tipped Reef Shark gliding by or a breathtaking meeting with Manta Rays. Divequest makes it possible for peopDivequest caters for individuals, couples, families or small groups of friends and larger groups originating from dive centres, dive shops, clubs or societies groups of 10 or more often qualify for special rates. We also arrange our own group dive adventures, including photographic expeditions and courses, that are guided by skilled and experienced leaders.

Wonderful diving, efficient travel arrangements, high quality dive operations and mostly superior accommodation combine to make Divequest holidays rather special. We select our dive centres with great care, looking for attention to quality, safety and a friendly and personal approach rather than budget prices. Wherever possible our accommodations are chosen because they conform with the Divequest philosophy of high quality combined with the personal touch.

We provide all our clients with comprehensive pre-departure information, including a detailed description of each holiday in our brochure, and all relevant information about such matters as visas, customs, currency, health, flight details, luggage allowances, transfer arrangements, travel insurance, clothing, equipment and guide books. All our information is computerized and is constantly being updated.

www.divequest.co.uk

Oxygène Indonesia

ECO DIVERS
NORTH SULAWESI - INDONESIA

Eco Divers teams up with Oxygène Diving

From October 2008, Eco Divers is teaming up with Oxygène Diving. With its roots in Scandinavia, Oxygène is an international network of dive retail stores, dive resorts and liveaboards in Sweden, Finland, England, Malta, Egypt, Philippines, Pemba, Croatia, Estonia, Canada and Tenerife. The Oxygène Diving core values are: Caring, Competent, and Fun.

Oxygène was looking to expand its dive centre chain to North Sulawesi, in order to offers its client-base more destination choice and saw Eco Divers as the most suited dive centre for their high standards, so the marketing cooperation was formed.

"We are delighted to be working with Eco Divers," says Henrik Almers, CEO of Oxygène International. Eco Divers' Managing Director, Jim Yanny, added, "We have always aimed high to provide excellent service levels and products. We immediately recognized a high level of affinity with the core values of the Oxygène group and believe that this cooperation will bring benefits to our business and, more importantly, to our customers."

www.oxygenediving.com
www.eco-divers.com

DIVEQUEST

presents

Explore the Caribbean's barrier reef

Sam Bean is an up and coming talent in underwater photography. Her focus and determination enable her to capture and present award winning images.
This trip to Roatan is a fantastic opportunity to learn how to achieve your photographic best whilst diving on some of the Caribbean's most stunning barrier reef sites.
Sam will be there to support and help you to develop your existing photographic expertise, to work with the strengths of your own photographic system and to explore your creative ideas.
For further details, contact Divequest.

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Photographers of all levels will help celebrate the beauty and delicacy of the marine environment as the 4th annual international underwater photography and video competition series hosted by UnderwaterCompetition.com kicks off this week.

The competition has become the "Superbowl" of international underwater imagery competitions, with over $75,000 of world-class prizes, major industry involvement, and the opportunity to have your images showcased to the world as some of the best. Esteemed judges include leading professional underwater photographers, cinematographers and magazine editors from around the world.

The unique competition series was founded by professional underwater photographers Jason Heller & Eric Cheng and hosted by popular websites DivePhotoGuide.com and Wetpixel.com. The series is held in association with two leading scuba diving expos on opposite sides of the world, simultaneously - Our World Underwater, now in its 39th year and one of the largest consumer scuba diving expos in the US, and DEEP Indonesia, the first and only scuba diving and watersports expo in Indonesia.

New this year is a novice category in the Our World Underwater competition, which opens up the competition to a far greater number of scuba divers who are casual underwater photographers.

Deadline for submissions Jan 15, 2009

Winners for each respective competition will be announced live on stage at either the Our World Underwater film festival in Chicago (February 20-22, 2009), or at DEEP Indonesia in Jakarta (March 27 – 29, 2009)

www.underwatercompetition.com

As with all UnderwaterCompetition.com events, 15% of entry proceeds will be donated to marine conservation efforts.

Lembeh Straits Photo Workshop with Mark Webster

31 Oct to 7 Nov 2009

Lembeh Straits is now known to most underwater photographers as the muck diving capital of the world. Almost every weird critter you can imagine is found in Lembeh Straits – from mimic and 'wonderpus' octopus, Rhinopias scorpion fish, hairy frog fish to the diminutive pigmy seahorses and a host of other colourful and astonishing subjects in between.

Mark's workshop will combine this with the luxurious accommodations of the Lembeh Resort on the shores of Lembeh Island, just minutes away from more than 40 dive sites. If you need the variety then Lembeh also has some excellent reef diving on offer and even some shipwrecks. The dive centre has remarkable guides that know all the secrets of Lembeh and will even help you search for a specific critter to complete your portfolio.

The workshop will be suitable for both DSLR and compact users. Mark will be on hand to help and advise on the best techniques and solutions whatever equipment you choose to use and make a number of themed presentations on techniques to ensure successful results. The week closes with a competition to find the best image taken during the workshop.

The cost of the workshop with will be $1625.

www.photec.co.uk

Medex 2009, Istanbul

March 18th -22nd

The 2nd Medex 2009 which is the biggest fair of Mediterranean Basin shall be held in İstanbul Fuar Merkezi (İstanbul Fair Center) on March 18-22, 2009.

Within the scope of Medex Istanbul, which is the biggest underwater and nature sports fair of our country and the Mediterranean Basin, local and foreign diving and nature tours, diving centers, diving schools and sportive fishing shall be introduced. Furthermore, The 2nd Free Diving and Underwater Hunting Symposium and Participant Training and Publicity Seminar to which national and international speakers are going to attend with different subjects shall take place.

Beside the fact that Medex 2009 is a commercial platform, it has undertaken a significant task in the publicity of international underwater and nature sports tourism. Our fair, which is a meeting point for professionals in different sectors that are in connection with the subject such as tourism offices, travel agencies and facilities, has a broad repercussion in visual and written media in respect to the significance and vulnerability of the subject. Underwater and nature sports activity center which has a demonstration pool, pressure chamber and a climbing wall shall have the characteristic of an information and entertainment center.

Moreover, International Underwater Photography Contest whose sponsor is Marine Photo Magazine shall be organized for the first time and traditionalized. The prize-worthy photographs shall be rewarded with Medex International Underwater Photography Award. The opening ceremony and cocktail shall be held on March 18, 2009 with the participation of VIP guests; various shows and demonstrations shall take place.

www.medexistanbul.com

Raja Ampat Tourism Entry Tag Contest

After three weeks of public voting, Marcio Lisa won first place in the 2009 Raja Ampat Tourism Entry Tag Contest with his dramatic silhouette of a manta ray.

He will receive an 11-day, all-inclusive diving package at Papua Diving's Kri Resort in Raja Ampat. The two runners up will each receive a copy of the fabulous, soon-to-be-released book, "Raja Ampat through the lens of ...", which includes contributions from 10 of the world's leading underwater photographers.

All contributors and supporters of the 2009 Raja Ampat entrance tag design contest are commended for their support and submissions.

www.wetpixel.com/raja

Seayoo.com

Seayoo, which appeared for the first time this month, is the first geographically-aware web site of its kind, enabling its members to meet other divers and find relevant content close to their homes or diving locations. Members are invited to share information about new diving locations, post photos, list equipment for sale and much more.

A social network with user-generated content, Seayoo allows divers to keep in touch with each other and to meet new diving partners, while providing an exchange of information about dive sites, facilities and suppliers to help members with their travel plans and to provide a free place to publish diving articles, photos and videos.

Seayoo was conceived by Michel Braunstein, a passionate diver and underwater photographer, after his own personal website, www.braunstein.co.il, was chosen as the best promotion diving website at the Antibes 34th World Festival of Underwater Pictures in 2007. David Pilosof, the famous veteran underwater photographer and creator of renowned photo album "Samantha", joined Seayoo as a partner.

www.seayoo.com

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300 ft depth rating (upgradable to 450 ft).
Sturdy aluminum construction.
Modular port system.
Dual strobe connectors.
Cable release ready.

www.aquatica.ca

New Products

Aquatica Nikon D700

Aquatica is proud to announce its latest addition, the new look Aquatica Digital Pro housing for Nikon's new reference camera the D700, with 12.1 mega pixels and a setting a new bench mark in low light capability this camera/housing combination will open up new frontiers to today's underwater photographer. The new Aquatica D700 features a bold new design machined from solid aluminum, it is treated and anodized to military specification, then painted with a robust weather and wear resistant finish; this new housing joins the rank of our already wide selection of housings, as with his other siblings, the Aquatica housing for the D700 benefits from the same 300 ft. depth rating that set us apart from our competitors.

This Aquatica Digital Pro housing incorporate the same mounting bayonet as all our current housings, meaning that it will accept our existing ports and extensions, including our tack sharp Megadome. As expected, our line of standard accessories such as the Aqua View finder, remote control cord, and TLC line of strobe arms are also fully compatible with it, this integration into the industry's most complete underwater photography system puts the D700 housing in a position to face every aspect of this ever so demanding field of activity and reward its user with the best result that technology can offer.

www.aquatica.ca

FIX LED1000DX

Fresh from the DEMA show in Las Vegas is the new Fisheye FIX LED1000DX focus light. This light combines the best of the popular LED48DX and the incredible HG20DX halogen light in one amazing light.

Featuring a whopping 1000 lumens of output from 9 LED bulbs powered by a rechargeable LiOn battery, this is the light of the future! This light will be available for Christmas, so if you're making a list, either for your favorite photographer or for yourself, this one should be at the top of the list!

UwP has been loaned 2 units for testing and their performance as both focus assist lights as well as video lights will be reviewed in the Jan/Feb issue of UwP.

www.reefphoto.com

Balanzza Digital Luggage Scale

Save those overweight airline fees, weigh your luggage at home, at the airport, or in your hotel. Easy to pack in an ouside pocket, so it is always available, (weighs less than 8 oz). Weighs in pounds or kilograms.(comes with 2 AAA batteries). $24.95

www.ulcs.com

Subal ND700 for Nikon D700

The ND700 is the latest in a long line of Nikon housings from Austrian manufacturer Subal. The camera is mounted on a saddle for precise positioning inside the housing. Ergonomic placement of all important controls provides convenient and comfortable handling of the camera functions.

A 4 mm main-O-ring and the SUBAL QuickLock latching system make it virtually impossible to close the lid if the O-ring is not lying correctly in its groove. Threaded holes on the base and in the top shoe allows mounting of trays, aiming lights or other accessories. Generous shading of the LCD-monitor provides a bright and clear image. The housing incorporates an excellent viewfinder optic for full frame viewing and there are 180 and 45° options.

Alex Mustard will review the ND700 in the next issue of UwP.

www.subal.com

Ultralight tripod

Based around the AC-TRI tripod clamp the Ultralight underwater tripod can be custom designed to suit your needs by incorporating any one of a number of combinations of leg length and adjustability.

The result is a versatile and adaptable system which can be expanded as your requirements progress.

Being Ultralite, all of their products are made with 6061 aluminum that is machined and then hard anodized, to withstand the harshest treatment.

www.ulcs.com

INON macro fisheye lens

Photos by
Kanako Nagashima

Macro lenses for underwater photography are usually 50mm or 100mm focal length to shoot small subjects whereas a fisheye lens is used to shoot large subjects such as schools of fish, coral reefs or a wreck.

The INON Ultra compact semi fish-eye relay system lens is a tiny

semi-fisheye lens for close up photography. While its front lens element is relatively small (24mm in diameter), the lens has pretty unique characteristics including

130 degree view angle underwater and minimum focus of 0cm!

Unlike the combination of a land lens behind a port, this lens is specifically designed for underwater use to benefit with less aberration , wide view angle and depth of field tiny subjects can be photographed in detail together with background.The image with this lens is just like fish's way of looking at things underwater so this is a real "fisheye lens"!

This lens will explore new underwater image expression totally different from existing fisheye lens or macro lenses.

www.inon.co.jp

Ultralite 2” buoyancy arms

Most DSLR housing manufacturers take great care to produce housings which are neutrally buoyant but they cannot take the lens and port choice into consideration. Add a couple of lumpy strobes and you have a rig which will cause wrist strain after even the shortest dive.

Ultralight’s large Buoyancy double ball arm segments were designed for the heavy Digital SLR rigs and video housings.

They are 2” in diameter and constructed the same as the regular buoyancy arms.

They range in size from 8” to 16” in 2” increments to be able to add just the amount of buoyancy you need to offset the weight of the housing and strobes or lights.

2 x 10” arms would give 7oz (200gms) of lift while 2 x 16” would give 23oz (650gms). The new style clamp (AC-CSB) is needed to put between the two new arms if you want the arms to come together. This clamp weighs 1.3 oz more than the regular clamp.

Salt water is approximately 1.026

The new style clamp (AC-CSB) is needed to put between the two new arms if you want the arms to come together.

X more dense than fresh water. All these tests were done in fresh water.

www.ulcs.com

Nekton housings for RED cameras

Peter Scoones has announced that his Nekton broadcast video housings will shortly be available with RED capability. They will be available for rental from Jan 2009 through TopTeks.

The RED camera is a multi format animal, At 4K the format is broadly similar to DX format digital stills cameras. aimed at cinema production. It comes with a PL mount for cinema lenses which are mostly primes and very expensive. Zooms are even more expensive and big.

RED is offering a restricted range of primes and short zooms but not really wide enough for underwater . indeed in the cinema lens world there are few lenses around that are ideal for UW. The housings will provide controls for Cooke and Zeiss primes first and these lenses will be marketed by Top Teks in the new year.

Leaving aside the 3K option for RED, the 2K format is close to Super 16 and 2/3in broadcast format we are using at the moment. Nekton housings and lens control systems are already set up for these. The RED fits existing Nekton housings with space for battery and hard drives etc and

RED with CANON 18-35 fitted

RED in NEKTON Mk6 Housing - RED DRIVE fits over camera

operating the RED will be no different so anyone familiar with Nekton housing handling will hardly notice any difference.

There are 4 housings that will be RED capable from January 2009. They will be for Hire as with the current Broadcast housings available from Top Teks. These are for the Sony 759,790 and 900. and Panasonic 900 and Varicam.

www.top-teks.co.uk

EasyDive Leo USB control

The Leo housing from EasyDive is designed to be compatible with every digital reflex camera available on the market. In Europe Easydive designed, produced and patented USB FotoControl, an electronic push-button panel that brings about a revolution in the idea of underwater photography. This panel can remotely select all reflex camera controls. This feature makes Leo housing universal and unparalleled.

The standard version designed by Easydive includes a LEO housing equipped with USB FotoControl push-button panel to select the following controls: time + / - , diaphragm + / -, preliminary shutter release, shutter release, Iso + / -, mode switch, exposure meter. Furthermore an additional push-button panel with customized programs can be installed on request.

Leo is the most versatile and reliable housing for reflex cameras available on the market because it comes supplied with an inner slide specifically designed, special bayonet fitting rings compatible with a very large number of spherical optical window types that are already available on the market and manufactured for previous Reflex cameras, and top safety standards (double o-ring for every water inlet).

The Leo is compatible with Canon EOS, Nikon, Pentax, Sony, Fuji and many more cameras.

www.easydive.eu

The Ships of Darkness DVD

Helioxfilm have published the multiple award short film by Gyula Somogyi on DVD.

'The ships of darkness' DVD has several unique features which offer a complex experience: They include two underwater short films – award-winning artistic "The ships of darkness" and recently published documentary-style "One of us" take the audience for mysterious voyages in history, descending from the light into darkness in order to visit the twilight zone, where the remains of wood, steel and flesh serve as a basis for the lively creatures ofthe underwater world. Flooded chambers, broken masts, exploded walls and windows hardened into stones make up the surroundings of a wreck-dive. (Filmed at the Red Sea, nearby North-Hurgada and South-Sinai.)

The third film is an original Solaris video clip about the group. The "Book of Prophecies" brings back the viewers to the present time and reveals the musicians behind the scenes. The films are based on the famous Solaris-album: Nostradamus – Book of Prophecies, which was published by Periferic Records.

An additional unique feature will enable the viewers to look behind the scenes: a task-based After Dive Tutorial® explains the post-production techniques used in these films and will escort users to re-create them in their projects. The 57 minutes tutorial teaches how to use Apple Final Cut Pro® 6, Apple Motion® 3 and Apple Shake® for specific tasks, such as secondary color corrections, image stabilization, optical flow retiming, nested sequences and retouching the moving picture.

The DVD is also equipped with a 16 pages color booklet about the shipwrecks. It contains factual information regarding the wrecks' GPS position, basic data, and a short history so it can be used for dive-trip planning.

www.helioxfilm.com

Shooting Magic DVD

A photo-pro in your laptop

Magic Filters are excited to announce the instructional DVD Shooting Magic: a guide to filter photography underwater. It will be released on 17th November 2008.

Join underwater photographer Alex Mustard, in the Red Sea, as he personally guides you through the techniques of filter photography underwater, with both digital SLR and compact cameras.

This innovative DVD takes you underwater with Alex letting you watch him photograph both reefs and wrecks, while he describes and demonstrates the techniques he is using and the considerations, both technical and artistic that go into producing stunning available light photographs. The DVD covers white balancing, subject selection, approach, exposure, composition, why you need a filter, and much more.

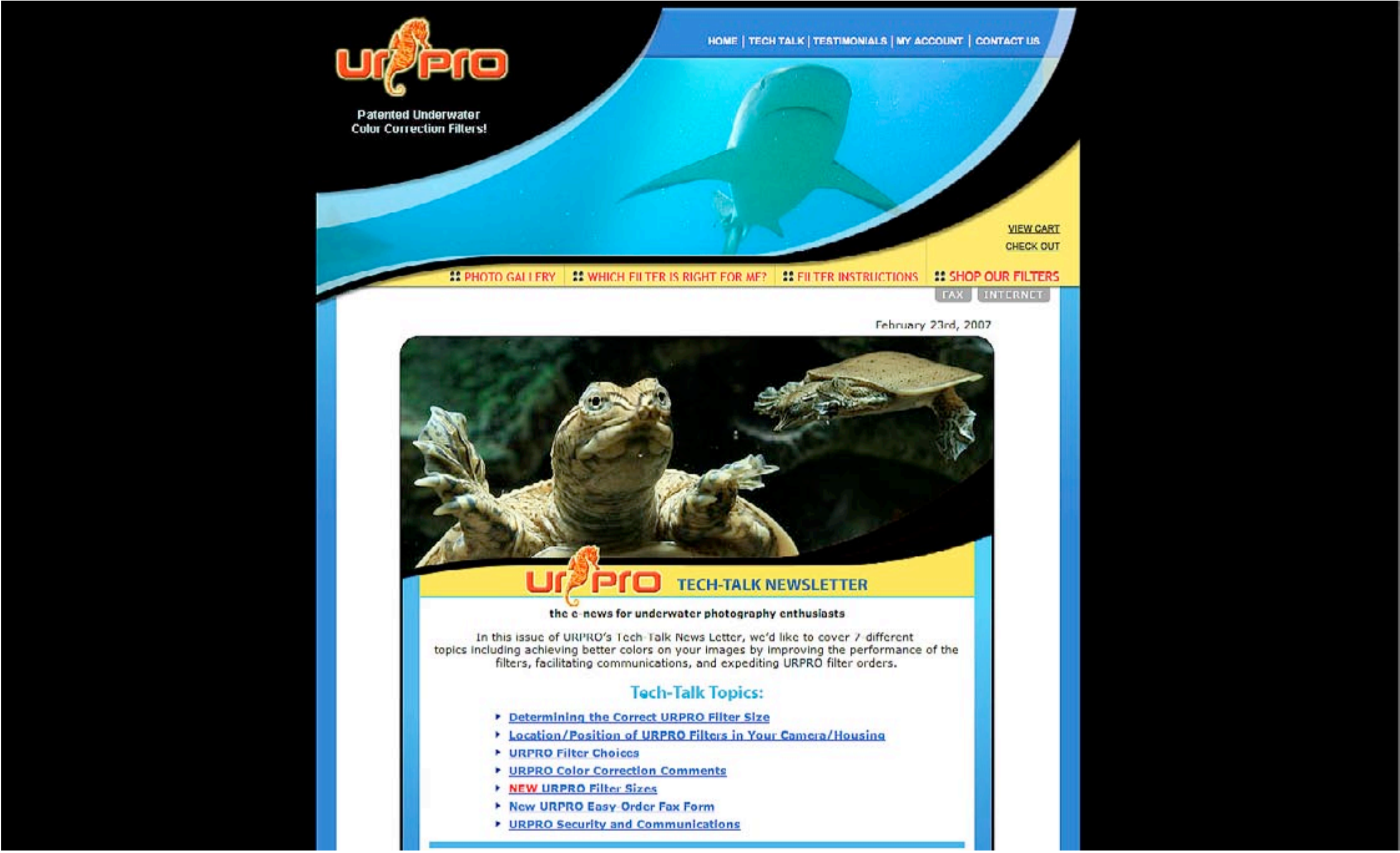
An important feature of this DVD is that after each of the six dives, Alex gives you a one to one review of all his shots and discusses in detail why some have worked and others have not. You will see them unadjusted straight from the camera. These live discussions are filled with general tips and tricks for all techniques in underwater photography.

This chaptered DVD is packed with extra features such as a demonstration of the benefits of filters, fitting filters to both compacts and DSLRs, FAQs and Alex discussing some of his favourite filter images.

The format is ideal as a refresher before a trip, or to travel with you as a lightweight reference source in your laptop or to watch on the TV onboard a liveaboard or at a resort.

Total running time: 90 minutes. Available in PAL and NTSC formats (most laptops will play both). To be released 17th November 2008.

www.magic-filters.com



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

www.urprofilters.com

Olympus Mju 770SW

by Rob Spray

A year or so ago I rushed to buy an Olympus Mju720SW when it was released as it seemed the perfect tough cookie camera to pick up all those deck shots which my big, heavy housed diving camera was now just too bulky to catch. The camera was robust, it could be dropped from 1.5m, and waterproof, it could be taken to 3m without a case but despite its credentials I never dropped it and didn't take it unhoused into the water - those levels of indestructibility weren't quite enough to feel comfortable abusing it. It seems I was unjustified in my squeamishness.

The third generation 7series SW model has just landed and now it's grown up, it has a 10m underwater rating and adds 100kg crush resistance to shrugging off falls from the same height as before. The surprise is that you'd be hard pushed to see where the construction has changed. It looks as though the original ratings were conservative.

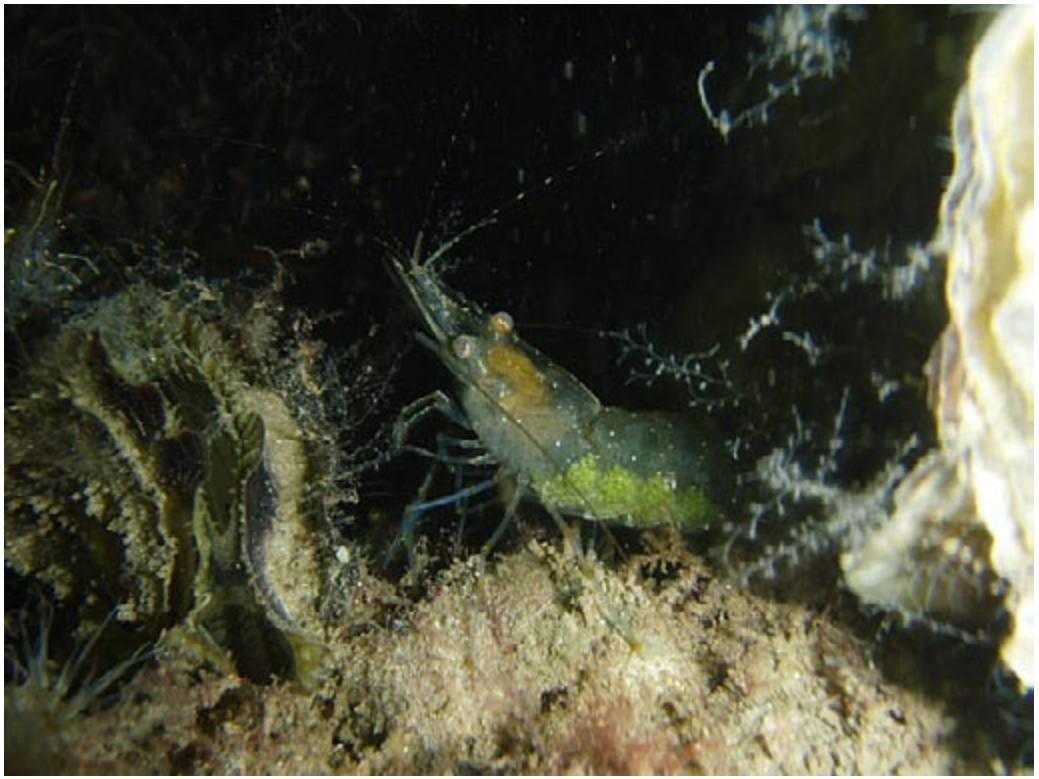
Like the 720 it's a gorgeous thing to hold; exuding a solid, big watch feeling rather than the flexible, creaky feeling that other wispy cameras have.

There is a raised grip on the front face to make life a little easier. However dressed in gloves for cold water the camera is hard to hold onto and it is very tricky to pick out the tiny buttons. With bare hands this isn't such a problem and I suppose that would probably put a limit of around 14degrees C on its use – though dry gloves would perhaps retain enough precision. The camera itself isn't bothered by the cold and is ok down to minus 10degrees C, by which time diving is pretty tough! The matching PT-035 dive case allows the camera to be used down to 40m and moves it up by a size or two – making the buttons larger and adding a threaded port for additional lenses and filters, a top cold shoe for lights or strobes and a tripod plate (which the camera also has). If you just want to keep scratches at bay there's some silicone skins on the way to protect the finish on the metalwork.

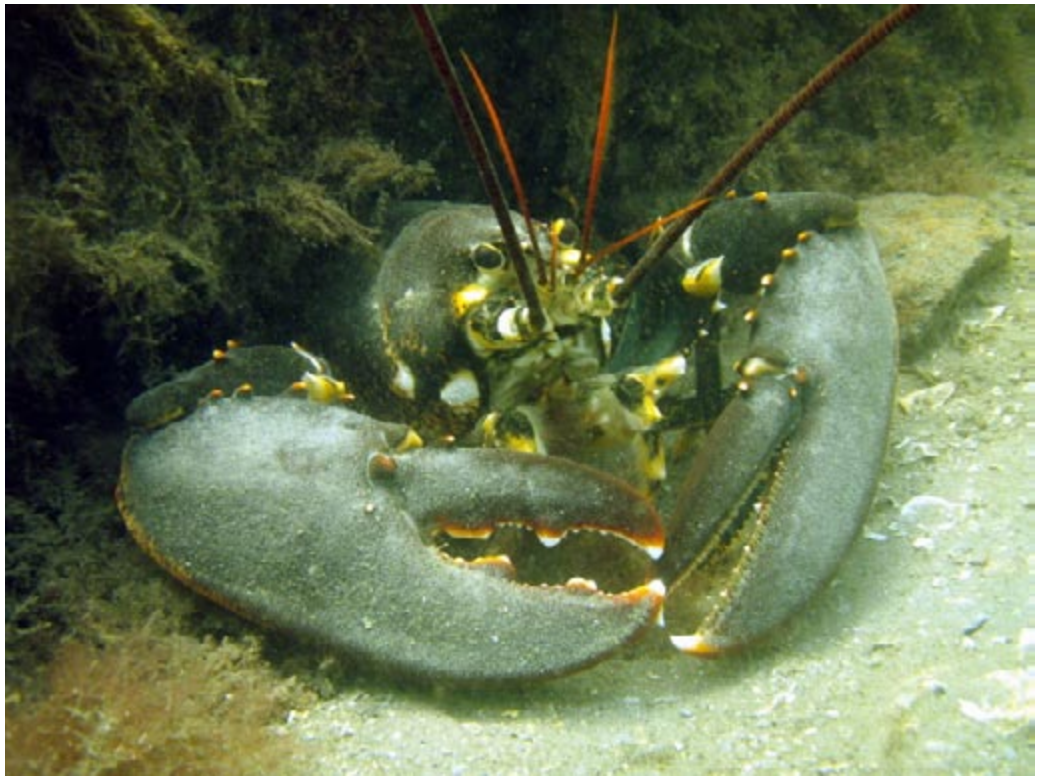
The external casing is entirely metal, a matt cast frame with brushed, bolted on panels and a 2.5" LCD on the back. All the buttons are metal too. It isn't rubbery and toy-like - which is the normal design shorthand for waterproof, it feels machined. You could suggest that it's a little 'bling' but even that's been toned down to a sheen from the chromed 720.

The Mju770SW is tiny! It appears almost comically small beside other housed cameras (an Olympus C7070WZ here)

Our underwater trial was undertaken during a trip to Zeeland, Holland, where many of the dives were to less than 10m making it a suitable venue to carry it as a matter of course. We were impressed by the true



Spot metering has taken care of the prawn



The 770's small size is less imposing to animals than a housed camera. This lobster has no reservations.

to life colours and found it responsive and fun. Using it casually doesn't lend itself to quality photography but we were surprised by the ratio of scrap to keepers (which is always tough underwater). We're used to pixel peeping to assess pictures for huge enlargements or publication but a normal user would get excellent standard prints and enlargements. Getting a bit more nerdy; steadying, concentrating and framing will yield better results.

It's worth noting that unhoused the camera doesn't suffer the 1-2 stop loss of light due to a case's flash diffuser. This helps the range of the little flash, but does nothing for backscatter. What you miss from the case is a sunshade to shield the screen from the sun in shallow water. With the sun behind you it can be hard to see the picture – at least you have a free hand to use as a shade!

The often sub 5m vis in Holland didn't really allow distant shots, which are generally more predictable in any case, so we majored on macro use. We both noticed how easy it was to hold the camera at arms length whilst tracking the subject and watching the framing down holes and under rocks which just isn't possible with big housed, strobed cameras. Anyone can take a bad picture with cameras like this but when you play to their strengths you realise that any diver could quickly learn to get a library of decent pictures from a trip. After years of big, heavy, bulky cameras it was fun to have such a tiny camera and to enjoy snapping away. The 770 uses the same matchbook sized Li-ion battery as the 720 and we were struck by how much better the battery life was. Little batteries get a real workout in digital cameras and rarely last long but during a frenzied hour I managed more than 200 pictures. A 1GB xD will hold around 300 pictures in SHQ mode or double that in HQ (The SHQ jpeg file size is

This smiling oyster's orange neighbours are bright and true to life.

around 3.5MB).

Like all these 'flat' cameras the 770 uses a folded optical path, which means there is no external lens movement as you operate the zoom aside from a metal cover over the lens window which is treated to dispel water droplets after you surface. The lens itself is a 3x zoom, with the 38-114mm equivalent range typical of most compact cameras. There's a 'plain' macro mode which works down to 20cm as well as two super macro modes which can get you to 7cm. These aren't ground breaking macro distances but you win another 25% magnification underwater which means it will be light rather than proximity that will be the problem. The standard macro mode retains full use of the flash and zoom which makes it a good fish, crab or urchin setting for subjects a few inches across from 1-2 feet away.

Super macro fixes zoom mid way and disables the flash so if you have light you can get close but is less use when it's dark. There is a second super macro mode which uses a white LED as a focus aid and torch and helps a bit but the camera still has to elevate the ISO (film speed) to keep the shutter speed useable. At super macro distances focus is super critical and the depth of field is limited so taking extra effort to steady yourself will aid success.

As an unexpected bonus the camera even has an onboard pressure meter (manometer) which means it records the depth (or altitude) of every shot and will start to warn you as you approach its 10m limit. Depths beyond that limit are recorded as 10m but the camera continues working - we took it as far as 16m with no sign of any problem. At less than 10m this has the handy side effect of profiling your dive and keeping your depth in view. When Dawn's computer failed on our last dive it was a pleasant surprise to have another backup depth gauge. Above water the gauge reads pressure and approximate altitude which means you can check on aeroplane cabin pressure (820hPa, 1800m – on Virgin Atlantic).

All in all, the 'indestructible' camera has come of age. It's not quite a dedicated diving camera, but it maybe as much as some people would need underwater. On top it has real all round ability for arduous adventure sports such as rafting, skiing, hiking and climbing without having to worry about getting a record. Ever been on a trek where your camera had to be safely packed, tucked out of the rain or kept away from the snow? Not anymore!

Only a fool would expect a tiny camera to rival larger and more flexible models but the 770SW just doesn't have to stop when the going gets tough. Understand this is a point and shoot rather than some gross uber camera and it'll reward you with fine, first hand records of your adventures which no other unhoused digital camera can match.

Rob Spray
www.1townhouses.co.uk

See us at DIVE 2008
NEC, Birmingham
1/2 November

Photo: Simon Rogerson

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Pole-Cam On The Cheap

By Alexander Mustard

What do you get it you cross a broom with a bicycle? This short article is about my attempt to make a pole-cam for my stills rig on a very tight budget. I am going to tell you how it worked and some of the design lessons I learned along the way.

I have just returned home from DEMA and the Antibes festival and once again I came away full of admiration for the housing manufacturers, who are continuing to bring new products to the market to allow their photographers to produce new types of images. In the last issue of UWP, Tim Rock reported on Aquatica's waterproof remote release. While Seacam, in particular, deserve special praise for their pole-cam system, which not only has electronic shutter release, but also options for remote viewfinder and even VR glasses to see what your camera is seeing. The only downside is the price. And if you have to ask…

I am not a Seacam user and I don't have much money to throw around, so I decided to try and make my own pole-cam system. OK, so it lacks the sophistication and engineering excellence of the Austrian kit, but if you can take the teasing on the dive boat it is certainly capable of producing stunning images. The whole lot cost me less than 20 Euros and it is totally waterproof!

The broom/cycle cam only cost 20 Euros to make. It is important to have the shutter release mounted on the pole, because all pole-cams will require two hands to manoeuvre.

Reef shark split level. The buoyancy on the base of the housings makes it easy to shoot split levels and makes the pole-cam much less tiring to use. Here I shot on manual focus, locked 30cm from the camera, set underwater. And manual exposure, metered on the sunset. I relied on strobes for flash fill in the dark water. Nikon D2X + 10-17mm @ 10mm. Subal Housing. Subtronic strobes. F13 @ 1/50th. Pole-cam.

I am not much of an engineer, but I do have a talent for the lateral thinking required for a good bodge. So a quick trip to the local hardware shop and I had my essentials: a metal broom for the pole, a gardener's kneeling pad for floatation and a bicycle brake lever and cable to fire the shutter.

The bicycle brake cable is ideal for firing the shutter because the outer sheath of the cable can be secured to the pole and the camera, while the cable inside can move freely to pull the shutter lever back and take the shot, without jerking the housing. The brake lever is also advantageous for the system. Not only does the long pull of the lever provide an ideal mechanism for feeling

Reef shark dreams. Here I experimented with aperture priority (with –1.3 stops of under exposure) to burn in the water colour with a long exposure. Movement of the camera has created a ghostly, dream-like effect, which I rather like. Nikon D2X + 10-17mm @ 11.5mm. Subal Housing. Subtronic strobes. F13 @ 0.8 second. Pole-cam.

The shutter is fired using the brake cable. The sheath surrounding the cable is secured to the handle of the housing with cable-ties. The cable can then move freely and passes through a small hole I drilled in the shutter release to fire the camera. The firing mechanism is 100% reliable and waterproof.

I bolted buoyancy to the base of the camera, to make the system easier to handle. The buoyancy causes the camera to float close the correct height for a split-level photo. It is easy to push gentle down on the pole to shoot completely submerged images. The broom is bolted to a section of Ultralight arm, which then mounts to the standard strobe mouting balls. When I use strobes I must use three-way clamps. Note I used a fisheye dome for all the photos, the small dome it only used here for demonstration purposes.

the shutter focus and fire, but the lever itself is already designed for mounting onto a pole, bicycle handlebars, after all, are a similar diameter. This is a very important point because photographers often forget that they will need two hands to guide the pole and there won't have a spare hand for pressing a separate remote release.

The next job is attaching the pole to the camera. First, I gave my new broom a haircut and then drilled two holes through the base and bolted it to a long section of Ultralight arm. This meant I could then mount between the normal mounting balls on top of my housing. If I want to use strobes then I must use Ultralight three way clamps. I found this method much more advantageous than mounting the pole to a single ball on top of the housing because the two mounting points stop it rotating on the end of the pole making aiming a much less infuriating process. With a single mounting ball a housing will rotate easily because of the drag on it caused by panning it through water. The downside of my mounting method is that it is only suitable for horizontal framing.

The only permanent modification required for the system was to drill a 1mm hole through the plastic shutter lever on my housing. This allowed me to pass the brake cable through the lever and securing it on the other side, so that when the cable is pulled the shutter moves immediately. The spring in the brake lever returns the mechanism, ready for the next shot.

The other factor that is often overlooked in pole-camming is buoyancy. I quickly found it was much more preferable to have a buoyant system because during photographic sessions, the action is always interspersed with long periods of inactivity. During these periods it is much more pleasant to have a rig supporting itself on the surface. Furthermore, should you accidentally drop the pole the camera won't sink to the bottom of the ocean. I had actually intended to use a simple swimming

The brake lever mounts onto the broom handle and is easily pulled while using two hands to guide the pole. The long pull actually gives decent feel of the autofocus point and shutter firing.

float for buoyancy, but they are difficult to find and, in any case, the foam kneeling-pad for gardening costs less than a Euro and provides similar buoyancy. I just bolted it to the base of my housing, using the existing bolt holes. I have also found the buoyancy mat very useful for shooting split-levels, when I am in the water, making it much less tiring to hold the camera half out of the water.

The mat is so light it can come on any trip. Which is something than I cannot say about my broom. The downside of the broom is that its shape means it cannot travel easily. Although a replacement can often be found in some cleaner destinations! The final problem is salt accumulation between the brake cable and its sheath, which means that the cable must to be replaced after each trip. The cost is about two Euros.

The one area of my system I could not emulate the Seacam kit with was remote, electronic viewfinder. The Seacam one is so cool and I applaud them heartily for developing such a piece of kit for underwater photographers. Inevitably, my approach has adopted more of a spray and pray technique! But aiming is actually pretty easy and with a wide lens I get an acceptably high hit rate.

The photographic techniques of pole-camming do depend a great deal on what you are photographing. I have used both auto-focus and locked off manual focus, and both auto exposure and manual exposure, and strobes and available light only, for the various shots I have tried to create. In short it is a lot of fun and a great way to pass surface intervals, if you have marine life crowding the boat. It also provides a chance to photograph creatures or environments that are too shy, dangerous, inhospitable or smelly for in water photography. I have just started with my pole-cam and I hope to report back in a future issue on how I get on.

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The Patima Canon G9

(Plus, first impressions on the New Canon G10)

by John Cesere

The smell of diesel fuel swirls lightly through the cabin and settles in the forward areas where I have chosen to sit and write so that I might spare my laptop from the ocean's early morning greeting of splash and salty mist. My brother Dan stands close by with his dive group as he begins an energetic briefing about diving around the lava formations off the island of Lanai near Maui. It's been a while since I sat close enough to listen and feel the excitement in his voice as he stirs the interest in yet another group of divers. When he begins to explain some of the techniques of how to capture the light in First Cathedral I look up to see his group of photographers hanging on his every word excited to get going on another diving adventure.

As I look around the table, I realize that half of our students are diving with the Canon G9, and most of them are diving with the new Patima housing. As if our "job" of teaching and sharing our passion for the ocean through diving and photography isn't fun enough, we also get the opportunity to help our friends pick and choose their photography equipment, which makes it feel like it's Christmas everyday.

Continuing to scan the table and equipment we helped select for each diver, it seems as though my brothers and I have been subconsciously steering all of our friends and dive buddies towards this exciting new Patima housing, I guess it's time to explain why; let's start with why we chose Canon's G9.

For a long time now we've been teaching underwater photography classes with the Canon G series cameras. We have always been impressed with the way the G series cameras can provide the tools of a much larger SLR camera in half the size. The Canon G9 can be used as a simple "point and shoot," but as a diver studies and learns about the tools of true photography, the G9 can transform into an amazingly powerful, fully functioning, manually controlled, mini-SLR. All of the "big four" manual functions that are crucial to underwater photography are easily accessible: Shutter Speed, Aperture, ISO and White Balance. ISO is probably the easiest function to change on the G9 and the high-powered CCD sensor is capable of providing clean/noiseless photos up to ISO 400, which is incredibly handy to an underwater photographer constantly dealing with ever changing lighting conditions. Shutter Speed

can be adjusted with the spin of the dial and after a press of a button the Aperture setting can be changed just as easily. Manually adjusting White Balance requires a few more steps but it is no more difficult than a normal SLR. To be honest, the White Balancing system on the G9 is the easiest and best Canon system I've used yet. What is even more impressive is that the G9's sensor does a really good job of setting the auto white balance, making it relatively easy for beginning underwater photographers to achieve professional looking results.

Probably the most amazing feature of the Canon G9 is that it has the capability to shoot RAW files, which store more than double the amount of information from a single photo than a traditional JPEG. Those digital shooters that are handy with Photoshop or similar editing programs will greatly appreciate the enormous amount of information provided by a RAW file. Don't be fooled however, even huge files and hours of editing won't fix a poorly composed/exposed photo, do your best to take the shot right the first time.

Another great feature of the Canon G9 is it's short shutter lag time (0.5 sec, in normal conditions) in comparison to other point and shoots on the market. Not only is the shutter lag manageable, (for a point and shoot) but also it's DIGIC III processor is fast, even when shooting in RAW you can shoot up to 1.7 fps!

For a long time, my brothers and I would recommend the underwater housing made by Canon as the best option for bringing the high powered Canon G9 underwater because the price point was hundreds of dollars cheaper than any other competitor and a bigger, boxier housing didn't seem to make sense on such a small camera. Plus, we have been such a fan of the fiber optic cable driven strobes on older point and shoot models that we thought that the decision to save hundreds and stick with the Canon housing was a no brainer.

It wasn't until we came across the new Patima housing that we began switching our opinion on which housing would be the one of choice to house the G9.

I guarantee that you will be sold on the Patima Housing from your first sight of it; the sleek, fully machined metal, solid silver look is pretty awesome. When I first saw it I had the same feeling I had when I saw my first $10,000 video housing, the Patima screams professional, durable and intimidating; which are qualities every diver wants in his or her equipment. Did I mention that the depth rating is said to be 400 feet?

As soon as I unlatched the housing to put my camera inside I received my first surprise. Hanging inside I found a neoprene cover for the hot shoe connector to keep the connection itself safe and the cover helped keep the connector from damaging anything else inside the housing, just a very nice touch.

The Patima also comes with two different port options. Both ports have a 67mm threaded end, which is great for attaching special wet mount lenses. I had a lot of fun with my old wide-angle wet mount lens on the Patima wide-angle port. I was again impressed with Patima when I did switch ports to the wide-angle setup because of the thought they put into the small details. The wide-angle port is tight to the G9's lens, which makes zooming impossible without an error and camera shut off, but the close port is necessary for nice wide-angle photography especially with a wet mount wide angle lens attachment. In order to keep the user from zooming with the wide angle setup attached Patima created the option for a pin that fits in place externally to keep the user from being able to use the zoom function, another great user-friendly idea.

When the Patima is in your hand it is a bit heavy but being heavy also makes it feel completely indestructible. All of the features

of the G9 work exactly as they do outside the housing, which is convenient and easy. The big four manual settings are just as easy to use underwater as they are on the surface. After only shooting a few times with the new housing, I was able to get acceptable color and exposure without any frustration from button pushing or dial spinning.

I was impressed with the Patima tray and handle setup because of the ability to adjust the amount of distance between the handles and the housing. Plus, with a variety of different arm-mounting options you can use most popular arm systems with the Patima tray and handle setup.

While diving with the Patima I found that I didn't use the handles to hold the setup while I was shooting; I ended up holding on to the housing itself, with my thumb wrapped around a conveniently placed metal protrusion which must have been designed as a hand hold. To be honest, I actually ended up taking off the supplied hand strap because I found it to be in the way most of the time.

The only real negative that I found with the housing so far is the latch system used for securing the system closed and water tight. The latches are set so tight that they pop free quickly on opening, and they can catch your finger if you're not paying close attention.

In one day of shooting with this set up, I feel even more confident that my brothers and I have been making the right recommendations to our friends and dive buddies. We will continue to recommend the Patima Housing for the Canon G9 to anyone looking for an amazing underwater point and shoot setup that has all the features and functionality of an SLR in a stylish professional package.

This just in! Canon started shipping its Canon G10, and I got to play with one! I've already spoken with Patima, and they are working on a housing too! I'm getting the feeling that Patima is saving the unveiling of the new G10 housing for DEMA.

The major upgrades from the G9 are that the G10 boasts an impressive 14.7 megapixels and a wide-angle lens, (the G9 was about a 35mm and

the new G10 is about 28mm.) The camera is a bit larger and seems to fit in your hand more like an SLR. Another major plus for underwater shooters is the addition of an exposure compensation dial. Canon added another dial by simply moving the ISO dial underneath the mode dial, it seems to work quite nicely, we'll see how it functions in a housing? All in all the G10 isn't a huge upgrade from the G9, but the wide-angle lens and the Exposure Compensation dial are nice new features.

You might think that the price for the very popular G9 would drop with the introduction of the Canon G10? You would be wrong. In fact, the G9 was such a popular camera that most distributors couldn't keep them on the shelves, and Canon actually cancelled orders and stopped making the G9 when they were about to introduce the G10. So now the price of the remaining G9's are going up. This is a good situation for us consumers, it makes the decision to go for the G10 easy, or if you already have the G9 your happy because it's an awesome camera or you could sell the G9 and buy a G10 and have money left over for a Patima Housing.

John Cesere
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Sony Alpha 350 and BS Kinetics housing

by Karin Brussaard

The Sony Alpha 350 is a digital reflex camera for the advanced photographer. Professionals will probably find the speed of 2.5 frames per second too slow. However, underwater photography does not require extreme speed since you nearly always make use of flashes and you also have to wait for the flash batteries to recharge before the next shot is enabled.

Sony uses Carl Zeiss lenses for the Sony Alpha 350. The camera is light with its 582 grams, as well as compact and has a pleasant hand-fit. The CCD sensor offers 14.2 effective megapixels. Pictures can be stored in RAW, JPEG as well as RAW + JPEG. The Alpha 350 supports various storage memory cards. Not only the Sony types (Memory Stick Duo, MS Pro Duo and MS Pro HG) are supported, also CF cards type I and II. To tackle the dust problem of dust sticking to the sensor, the Alpha 350 has been equipped with a dual anti-dust system. The sensor has an anti-static coating and a shake mechanism. This mechanism is activated automatically after changing the lens, giving dust no chance to stick to the sensor. The tilting LCD of 2.7 inch can be folded out to 90 degrees upwards and tilted downwards at 45 degrees. It facilitates using the Live view. The Live view function of the Sony DSLR-A350 not only works at manual focus, also at auto focus. Focussing in Live View is carried out even faster than using the optical viewfinder!

BS Kinetics is a German company manufacturing underwater housings for photo cameras and video cameras. In addition, BS Kinetics also produce video lamps. The housing for the Sony Alpha 350 belongs to the Gibson models. This series of underwater housings of BS Kinetics is made in particular for digital reflex cameras that fit in the dimensions of this series (180 x 190 x 130 mm). Other series of underwater housings are available for larger reflex cameras and compact cameras. The underwater housing is compact and the small size of the Sony Alpha 350 benefits from this. The set as a whole remains pleasantly portable. BS Kinetics is one of few manufacturers that uses carbon fibre for their housings. This fibre is light and solid at the same time. Despite this, the underwater housing weighs 1900 grams. This slightly surprised me, since I really expected a carbon fibre housing to be much lighter. However, this weight can easily be explained; the underwater housing has been tested to a depth of 80 meters. The pressure at a depth like that is of such height (9 bar) that a thicker layer of carbon fibre is required to withstand the pressure.

Obviously BS Kinetics deliver a large amount of ports for wide angle as well as standard and macro lenses. The ports feature bayonet mounts.

The low water temperature and the use of dry-gloves are the most extreme test conditions for an underwater housing. The BS Kinetics passes with flying colours. The handgrips look a bit silly at first glance, however, they are extremely pleasant to hold. The distance between the right handgrip and the shutter

release button seemed to have been hand-made for my hand! A flash arm can be attached to the outside of every handgrip which works perfectly. The buttons to operate the camera with are sufficiently large to press or turn with dry-gloves on. The underwater housing is made of (dark) carbon. This means that the camera itself is not visible once inside. To have a clue what you are doing, the buttons contain stickers as for what function they serve. Nearly all functions can be operated by the buttons of the underwater housing. One unpleasant factor is the on/off button that cannot be operated. I think that is a real miss. If you forget to turn on the camera before closing the underwater housing, you will have a dive without pictures. This is even more applicable to Spitsbergen where you cannot just take the camera out of the housing and in order to turn it on belatedly.

Underwater I concentrate on taking pictures with an overview. The ice floes and underwater landscapes are that fascinating and colourful, I find it a pity to take macro shots. It's the 11-18 mm wide angle lens of Sony that I use. The dome port of the BS Kinetics closes by means of a bayonet mount on the underwater housing. Turning it a quarter to the right suffices to attach the port to the housing. The dome port is extremely compact. This is pleasant while travelling as well as underwater. The bigger the dome port, the more resistance while swimming. The combination of the underwater housing with the dome port and two Sea & Sea YS 110 flashes is almost neutral. Personally, I like the set to be somewhat negative. It is easier having to hold the camera up underwater than having to pull it down. Although a heavy negative would not be that pleasant either: it would soon turn into a game of weightlifting. At 11 mm the dome port shows some

distortion, however, this decreases when zooming in.

One morning I am quietly chatting away to the captain as a sudden noise surrounds us. There seem to be walruses on the ice. From where I stand, I can only see a brown blob on the ice, nothing that looks like a walrus. The captain skilfully manoeuvres the big vessel closer to the blob and slowly but surely the contours of the brown blob becomes visible. The walruses are nicely nestled against each other and seem to have just woken up from a deep sleep. They peer around curiously and question is: who is watching who? Finally, we are close enough to take some pictures. And close enough means, close enough for a telephoto lens. These colossal giants can weigh up to an incredible 1400 kilos; you definitely don't want to disturb them and experience their rage. The 70-200mm lens focuses fast, very fast, even at 200mm. The lens offering a bright of f/2.8 throughout the entire zoom range is clearly noticeable. And the super sonic wave motor inside the lens performs greatly. Although the body of the Alpha 350 is not that big, the combination of housing and telephoto lens of 1340 grams is

pleasant to hold. I took pictures without making use of a tripod which is very well possible since the Sony Alpha features an integrated stabilizer (SuperSteady Shot). Shooting in ice and snow conditions is usually awkward and it is difficult to get a correct exposure. The Sony Alpha A350 seems to be prepared since the camera responds strongly to the light areas in the picture. Pictures with snow in the background tended to be underexposed. Obviously Sony is trying to prevent light areas to be

bleached at all cost. And to be honest, I appreciated this feature because it is easier to correct an underexposed picture than a picture with bleached areas.

The Live View of the Sony Alpha 350 is the fastest I have ever seen on a digital reflex camera, and can certainly be used underwater. I do regret the monitor not offering a 100% view. The dual anti-dust system is well thought-through because the shake mechanism is activated after every change of lens. And that is exactly when the highest risk of getting dust occurs. The underwater housing is extremely pleasant to hold and operate, even with large dry-gloves but, regrettably, it does not offer an on/off button.

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The expedition to Spitsbergen was organized by Waterproof Expeditions This company organizes expeditions to the Arctic as well as the Antarctic area.

www.waterproof-expeditions.com

Wetpixel and Wetpixel Quarterly: A Review

by Douglas David Seifert

The exponential expansion of content on the Internet and the ready acceptance of it as a delivery medium across all demographics (without language, geographic or cultural boundaries) has caused a revolution in publishing.

No longer is the consumer forced to pay for annual subscriptions or wait in terminal periods of time for the postal service to delivery periodicals. There is an alternative. Indeed, the success of UWP and other online magazines is testament to this new direction in reader tastes and the relative ease with which a virtual magazine can be produced.

The phenomena is so pervasive, in the interest of clarity a new descriptive vocabulary is needed: online publishing is self describing and needs no elucidation, but magazine publishing itself - the production and distribution of a tangible product, a product well established and taken for granted that has been around more than one hundred and fifty years - should now be referred to as hard copy publishing.

The difference between the two beyond the obvious circumstance of what can be held in the hands without needing a machine is educational. Unlike hard copy, tangible publishing, the online publisher is exposed to little risk financially. Most, if not all of the content is donated free of charge and/or is self-generated by the publisher .and a few associates. The writers of features and photographers whose works are presented are for the most part not compensated financially or otherwise.

This curious circumstance occurred long before the birth of the internet, however, with the hard copy publishing of what were aptly called “fanzines”. The appeal of Fan magazines has always necessarily been limited to specialist niche groups. They last for a time due to the financial resources (aka deep pockets) of their publishers who produce something that can showcase the work of their friends (who can be cajoled into donating free content) and to shine some of that glory back upon the publisher him or herself.

One can recognize these efforts from a lack of content balance due to the presence of the editor/publisher beyond the editorial and into many a chummy feature glorifying personal experiences of dubious veracity with images that add nothing to the text. On occasion, the fanzine mentality has crept into mainstream publishing, usually when the parent company is a large corporation not particularly interested in the content of what is published, just the advertising revenue. This was the death sentence for the 30 year life of Skin Diver magazine when it went to being just another acquisition by a consortium and was run into the ground by arrogant, egocentric hacks without talent or imagination.

Interestingly for the would-be professional photographer to know about is the related scenario where the editor/publisher appropriates interior image space and even the cover photo itself. (In the industry, this is known as “The Hornsby Syndrome” after an editor infamous for putting his own images on the cover in spite of having questionable photographic credentials at best and no imaging career track record beyond what his position in publishing with that particular publication could force onto the public. (and the practice still shamelessly continues today with certain US-based editors with out sized egos and deplorable ethics who

shall remain nameless..)

Over the years, The diving world has seen its share of these fanzines come and go, the quality ones among them, from Hong Kong, Alfred Li's Sportdivers Journal; from the US, Bret Gilliam and Fred Garth's Fathoms and most memorably, the evil ladies from Texas' Ocean Realm. Others have popped up and gone away, their names forgotten and more startups and failures are certain to be on the horizon..

The difference between hard copy, tangible publishing and internet publishing is that the internet publisher is absolved of virtually all financial risk. In addition to not paying their contributors, they do not have to bear the production costs of office rental, an art editor, layout designer, editor, news editor and sub-editor, office manager, advertising department, etc. AND paying for the physical costs of producing a hard copy, tangible magazine: the printer and his staff's time and materials: color separations, proofs, ink, paper, delivery, distribution, postage, etc. Those big economic factors ultimately bring down the fanzines publishing hard copy. Where are Sportdivers Journal, Fathoms, and Ocean Realm now?

The sad reality is in regards to a readership of people interested in diving and the ocean and underwater photography, there simply has not been a large enough audience - at least so far - willing to support a quality publication long term by paying a relatively expensive annual subscription in order for the fanzine to break even (break even! Forget profitability) on the hard publishing costs.

And readership is the operative word. Magazines and journals are places where thought is the commodity on equal footing with the imagery. So far, no one has made a success of a hard copy publication of words without images or of all images without words.

The best of online publishing and the best of hard copy publishing combine beautiful or interesting imagery with stories, features, reviews and other food for thought. This is where UWP and Wetpixel.com succeed as online publishers; where Dive and Fins succeed as hard copy publishers and why US dive magazines such as Scuba Diving and Sport Diver are so poorly-regarded (for the most part, their articles are fluff, devoid of factual information, educated opinion or conveyed experience, simply a record of advertorial agendas masquerading as journalism).

Anyone reading this online publication certainly knows of Wetpixel.com. Since it first went online eight years ago, Wetpixel has been the place for underwater photography enthusiasts to go to for up to the minute news, industry gossip, product announcements and reviews. It provides forums for aspiring underwater photographers to connect with each other on virtually every conceivable aspect of photography, diving, destinations, techniques, queries, tips and opinions and more.

Best of all, it is free of charge.

Wetpixel.com's appeal is irresistible and the work put in by owner/founder/creator Eric Cheng has rightly made it the cyber epicenter of underwater imaging. Although it has only 10,000 registered members, Wetpixel reaches 100,000 unique visitors per month, many of them repeat viewers.

Wetpixel.com partners with other online sites and with photo contests to promote and distribute underwater imagery that sadly might never have seen wide distribution in the light of day before the miracle of the internet. Wetpixel's tireless collection and distribution of these images has done a profound service to the field of underwater photography.

Scores of photographers have been encouraged, inspired and energized by seeing a new world of creativity and artistic techniques. As a result, there are a lot more divers with cameras taking better quality pictures than ever before.

Now, Wetpixel.com has branched out from

its benevolent domination of all things underwater photographic with a foray into the world of hard copy publishing, the result being Wetpixel Quarterly.

Before we scratch our heads and ask why, let us consider the magazine itself.

Issue One set the tone thus far: an 8.5 x 11 inch horizontal format just perfect for presenting a single image per page. The cover stock and paper are high quality and the green pedigree of the paper and inks are detailed for eco purists.

The first issue's cover of a small oceanic whitetip shark enveloped by a shoal of pilot fish has the one true attribute that defines greatness: peer envy.. seasoned underwater photographers looked at it and responded: "wish I'd taken that photo.". No truer praise is forthcoming from a discriminating group that flips rapidly through any collection of underwater photography comparing what has been published by others - usually unfavorably - with their own efforts. (A chilling spectacle to observe.)

There is a very nice portfolio and Q and A with imaging innovator and long time professional Norbert Wu and lots of pages of pictures. Lots and lots of pictures. The magazine is 82 pages long and feels complete without being padded, content-wise. Another bonus is the minimal reliance on advertising pages. It is a refreshing luxury to enjoy art for arts sake without being sold a good or service every other page.

The second issue showed improved printing and paper stock and was mainly focused on Wetpixel.com's "staff" of regular contributors and their best images. Lots and lots of pictures.

The third issue dedicates a quarter of its pages to excerpting Alex Kilbride's new book American Waters and there is a brief article (three pages) on green sea turtles off San Diego. The extant pages are images from Our World Underwater and Deep Indonesia photo contests.

It appears after three issues (the fourth has not been released at this writing) that the formula Wetpixel Quarterly has chosen to follow is pure portfolio. Imagery without a text context. A picture book. A soft cover coffee table book. Arguably, for a generation notorious for having a short attention span, this is an ideal format. The magazine certainly is beautiful, has a clean, well-designed layout and some of the images are breathtaking.

But the question of why then publish hard copies of portfolios at all? Isn't it just as efficient to have full screen web galleries? (And without the financial burden on Wetpixel LLC or the subscriber and to the environment.)

Do images without any other information satisfy the needs of underwater imaging enthusiasts? Do images made in exotic destinations offer a sense of what the experience of encountering the subject is like and how it was achieved and what does it mean - or are these questions that even matter to the viewer ship (without text, how can one really say readership?)?

The sayings "a picture is worth a thousand words" or "the picture tells the story" really are true only in very rare instances and to be honest, many of those stories are only slightly interesting. After all, we live in an information age, not a culture of ideograms.

Ultimately, regardless of point of view whether the addition of text would add significant value to Wetpixel Quarterly, the magazine stands as it is an object of beauty and undeniably has a feel good value to all the photographers whose images are printed within. After all, is it not the dream of every purchaser of an underwater camera system to have their work published? And why not?

Wetpixel Quarterly should be supported by anyone with an interest in the underwater world in general and underwater photography in particular..

Eric cheng's vision and dedication should be applauded and supported financially; it would be most desirable for Wetpixel Quarterly to have a long and successful run.

Subscribe now; it would be a tragedy if this venture does not survive and thrive. Regardless of any mixed feelings Wetpixel Quarterly would be missed if it was gone..

Wetpixel Quarterly Credits: Eric Cheng, Editor and Publisher; and Elijah Woolery, Editor and Creative Director. A quarterly publication for a cost of $45.00 per year.

Douglas David Seifert

Douglas David Seifert is the former Editor-in-Chief of Oceans Illustrated and is currently World Editor of Dive Magazine.

www.wetpixelquarterly.com

www.uwpmag.com

Cornwall's King of Prussia

by Mark Webster

To most divers, using a hard boat or RIB as your diving platform is synonymous with moving further offshore normally in search of deeper reefs or wrecks. The suggestion that the boat should be used to reach shoreline sites inaccessible via beach diving might seem a waste to many but for a photographer this prospect has many attractions. The coast of Cornwall is blessed with countless sites which can be spotted temptingly from the top of cliff paths, or perhaps require a long backbreaking trek with heavy kit from a distant car park, many of which offer stunning diving in the right conditions. One of my favourite sites which fits this description is called Prussia Cove, which is nestled on the Eastern edge of Mounts Bay behind Cudden Point in the far west of Cornwall. It is perhaps better known locally and to visiting tourists for its murky past as the centre for the smuggling activities the notorious John Carter known as the "King of Prussia". Legend has it that many of the fine houses in this vicinity were built on the proceeds of smuggled contraband from Europe.

Although this cove does support a small community, the only access from the cliff top is via a private road which offers only foot access to non residents. There is a small car park at the cliff top but basing yourself here involves a walk of half to three quarters of a mile and then a climb down the rocks to the cove itself. Coming here by boat from nearby Penzance is much the best option! Prussia Cove faces almost due south and is therefore exposed to almost all but westerly and north westerly winds. So this is usually a summer site when the weather is settled and there is no significant swell from the Atlantic. As you approach the cove from the sea you soon realise why this became a favourite landing point for smugglers as the high land surrounding the small beach protects it from the view of all but the most determined Excise man.

Although I would consider this a reef dive as such there are some remains here to interest a hardened wreck aficionado as well. Some UK divers may recognise the name of HMS Warspite, a Dreadnought class battleship built in 1913 which served in both World Wars. In 1947, having been declared redundant, she was under tow to the breakers when she broke away from her tugs in a storm and was driven ashore to be stranded in the shallows off Prussia cove.

HMS Warspite in her glory days when she served during both world wars.

HMS Warspite stranded in the shallow waters of Prussia Cove where she was partially salvaged in order to re-float her.

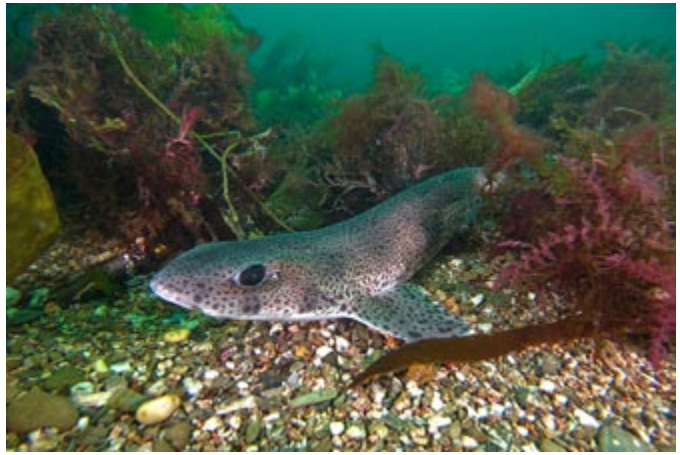
Some salvage work was undertaken here before she was refloated and towed further west to St. Michael's Mount where she was eventually

On a calm summer's day Prussia Cove is an idyllic setting and tempting dive location.

The deeper gullies are kelp topped and harbour a wide ranges of marine life. Nikon D100, Light & Motion Titan, 10.5mm FE, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 200 f8 1/60.

Leopard spotted blennies can be a little camera shy and are best approached with a 105mm macro lens. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100 f11 1/125.

Late summer is also time to find sleepy dog fish resting on the seabed. They will hold their ground as long as you make a gentle approach. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 12-24mm zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f8 1/30.



broken up over a number of years. Evidence of the salvage work can still be seen on the cliff edge on the western side of the cove where various items of equipment were mounted. Underwater there is a surprising amount to be found from hundreds of ceramic tiles from the galley to pumps, hoses and assorted parts of wreckage. Over the years some interesting finds have turned up including maker's plates and at least one instance of a "man" sized porthole, which used to be on show at the local Penzance BSAC clubhouse. The bulk of this wreckage lies toward the centre of the cove approximately 100m offshore and in 10-12m of water.

The most attractive area for me is on the eastern side of the cove where the rocky foreshore plunges into the sea. This area is riddled with deep gullies, swim throughs and some spectacular tunnels all brim full of life where many happy hours can be spent without referring to your computer. The southerly running spurs seen on the foreshore are reflected in the underwater topography as you progress offshore. This productive area extends around the eastern arm of the cove towards a rock "island" with average depths of 6-12m and is totally sheltered from tidal streams. There are occasionally seals here and on the western side of this island there is a spectacular tunnel some 25-30m in length which runs through the corner of the island. As you enter you cannot quite see the exit due to a dog leg but after 10m or so the light from the end appears. This is a large tunnel wide enough for two divers and the occasional seal! The roof is carpeted with red and orange sea squirts and a variety of colourful anemones so take a torch. The tunnel is safe in calm conditions but should be avoided if a swell prevails as depths are only 6-10m and the surge can be quite remarkable.

Being a shallow coastal site there is kelp here,

Even the bladder wrack weed is quite colourful here and can make an attractive composition with a dash of Snell's window. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f11 1/80.

One of my favourite fish, the Tompot blennie, is found throughout the reef system in the cove. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100 f11 1/125.

Another fine macro subject found in the reef fissure is the common prawn which is sometimes found in their dozens packed into a small space. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Quad flash, ISO 100 f11 1/125.

but because of the depth and undercut nature of the majority of the gullies it is restricted to the very tops of the rocks. So don't be put off by the site of kelp from the surface, especially at low water, because once you are through the canopy your progress will be largely unhindered. The shelter provided here is ideal for breeding for many species and during the spring and early summer you will encounter furious activity and juveniles of all sorts. In the kelp canopy watch out for John Dory's and the fifteen spined stickleback mimicking the fronds, scorpion fish of all hues and in February and March the occasional lump sucker jealously guarding its eggs. April and May are good months for invertebrates and it is difficult to move without encountering hosts of nudibranchs, sea hares and flatworms all weaving their exotic patterns with their eggs. May and June sees the turn of many fish species and the wrasse in particular are very approachable as they seem more concerned with nest building or resting than by this strange creature approaching with a camera. Throughout the summer months there are also good opportunities to encounter groups of cuttle fish coming together to breed who will allow a touch if you are very patient.

The rock faces of the gullies are carpeted with life some of which is quite unusual or rare. Sponges of all sorts compete for space with sea squirts, both the attractive light bulb variety and the carpeting

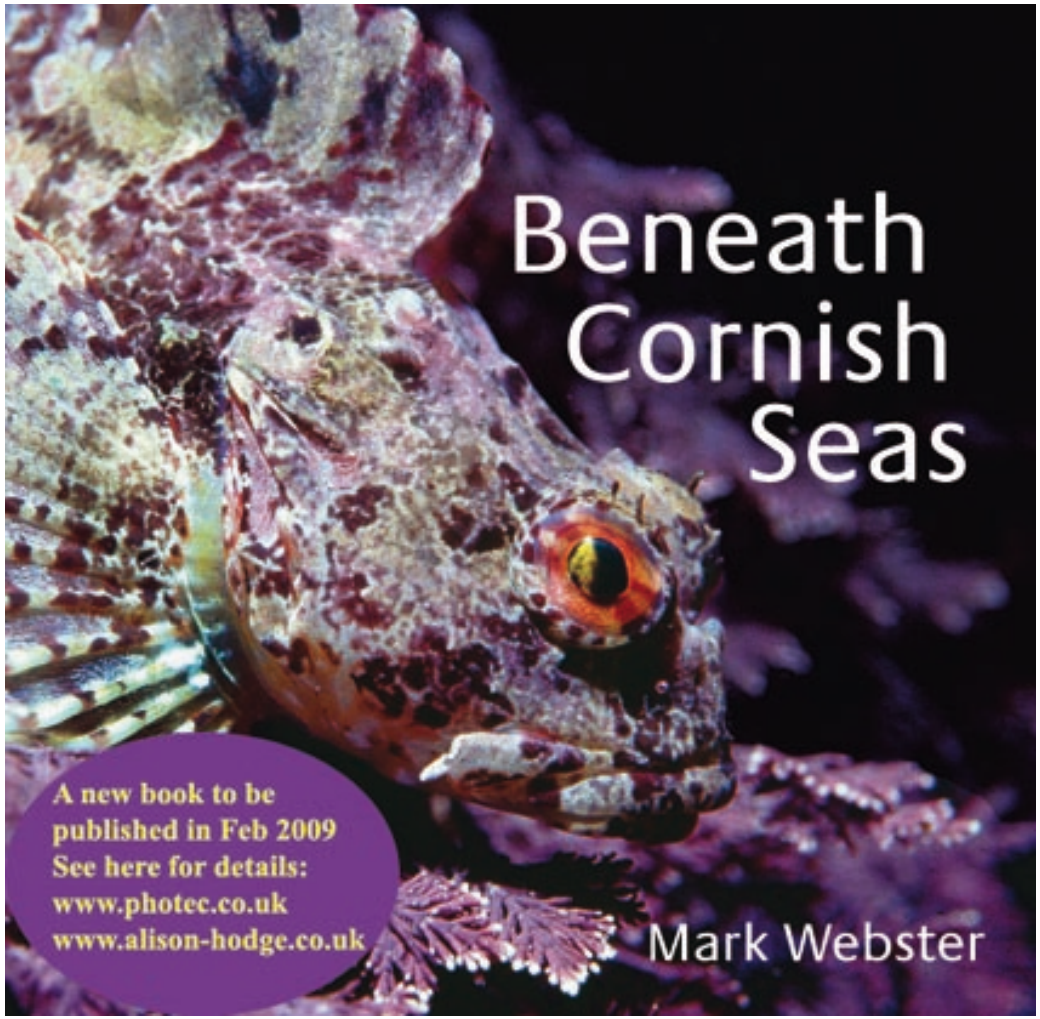
In high summer some of the gullies are carpeted in several different colourful species of seaweed which hide pipefish, cuttlefish and scorpionfish. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, GW Magic Filter, ISO 200 f8 1/60.

strawberry tunicate, which together with colonies of colourful anemones add so much colour that when the water is clear you find yourself comparing it to the tropics. Jewel, daisy, dahlia, strawberry, beadlet, snakelock and probably one or two species of anemones I can't identify decorate this underwater garden in neat flowerbed arrangements. Where they border cracks and ledges you will find all sorts of crustaceans and sedentary fish life who seem to peer hopefully out at you. If you search diligently you should find examples of the rare red Mediterranean cup coral Balanophyllia regia (the gold star coral) which are very striking when compared to their Devonshire relatives, or the diminutive Cornish sucker fish.

In the open waters just out of the gullies you will find shoals of sand eels, juvenile mackerel, mullet and packs of hunting pollack. In July and August when plankton can be heavier and glassy calm days are more frequent, it is not unknown to see basking sharks taking a turn through the cove scooping the microscopic food down their cavernous throats. A perhaps rarer visitor at this time of year is the Atlantic trigger fish, which is seen all along this coast as far as Plymouth, and can be quite a surprise when found firmly standing its ground at the end of a gulley. These fish are becoming quite common in the nets of commercial fisherman as is the occasional unfortunate entrapment of large leatherback turtles which find their way here from the Atlantic. I have even seen a small electric ray here on the sand, so who knows what you might encounter on a good day?!

This is a marvellous site for photographers, naturalists, or those divers who just love shallow easy diving amongst an abundance of marine life. It is also an ideal location for a shallow second or third dive of the day for those who have been visiting the deeper offshore wrecks such as the Hellopes, J.A.Park or the Alice Marie. Whatever your preference there is something of interest here and it is just one of the many "shore sites" along this stretch of coastline which are so often bypassed in the rush offshore.

Mark Webster
www.photec.co.uk



Great White Shark

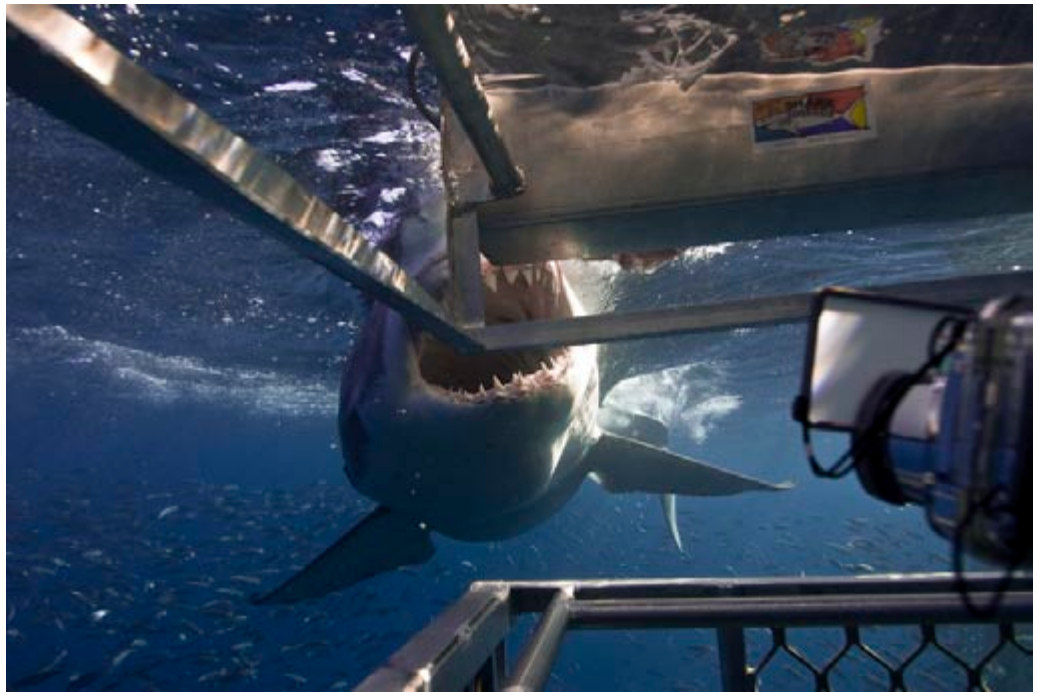
by Julian Cohen

"Shark coming up on the bait fast from the right hand side" is the cry from Moth who is standing next to me and staring at the sea surface. He is pointing across me and I follow the line of his arm to see the huge dark shadow appear from the blue. Nothing can quite prepare you for your first sight of a Great White Shark. You may have seen photos, watched movies or National Geographic documentaries, but the first glimpse of this enormous animal in it's natural element, on a clear, calm sea with the sun shining above you, just makes your breath catch in your throat. It is just so much bigger than you ever thought it could be; and fast.

Along with three friends I am on The Princess II, a liveaboard in The Neptune Islands off the southern coast of Australia. The boat is run by Andrew Fox, the son of Rodney Fox, probably one of the most famous shark attack victims ever. He was attacked while spear fishing in his youth and miraculously survived. To hear him tell the story leaves me a little disturbed. The image he describes of seeing the teeth of the shark as it was coming up at him through a pool of his own blood will never leave me. Incredibly he went on to become one of the shark's greatest protectors and many of the films and documentaries you may have seen have been made with his help. He is also an incredibly nice bloke. Andrew is the only operator in the world who runs a cage at the bottom as well as at the surface. Seeing these animals at a depth of twenty metres of water you feel that you have entered their habitat and it is a totally different experience to seeing them at the surface.

The shark appears to languidly move towards the bait, the head of a one and a half metre tuna tied to a rope that is being dangled from a small buoy off the back of the boat. It passes under the bait and then with one barely perceptible move of its tail it has done a complete one-eighty and suddenly all I can see is teeth. Johnsie, on the other end of the rope, pulls the bait in just at the

1/125 at f4. 12-24mm at 24mm. ISO 320. Nikon D200



1/160 at f6.3. 12-24mm at 17mm. ISO 160. Nikon D200

1/100 at f4. 12-24mm at 20mm. ISO 200. Nikon D200

right moment, and the shark bites air. It keeps biting, pursuing the bait as Johnsie pulls it smoothly towards the stern of the boat. The trick is not to feed the sharks, but to encourage them closer to the cage that is tied to the stern. Some of the sharks swim around the boat in large circles, passing tantalisingly close to the bait and appearing to ignore it completely. Then suddenly they will turn and try to grab it. Others, especially the smaller younger ones, and when I say small I am talking about three and a half metres, lunge and snap at the bait constantly. Johnsie has to stay alert to

1/125 at f4. 12-24mm at 24mm. ISO 320. Nikon D200

1/100 at f6.3. 12-24mm at 12mm. ISO 200. Nikon D200

avoid having to reload the line.

Time to get in the cage. Four divers jump in and stay as long as they can stand the cold. That can actually be quite a long time as when the sharks are active it is difficult to tear yourself away, no matter how numb you feel. I dropped into the water and after the initial gasp of breath as the cold hit me, I remembered to breathe and took my place in the cage and started to look around.

1/100 at f5. 12-24mm at 12mm. ISO 200. Nikon D200

About fifteen metres from me was a four and a half metre shark swimming slowly past the cage. Even though I had my camera rig in my hand I just stood and stared. I think the thing that surprised me most was how wide it was. Later I found out this shark was Curly, a male that is the shark equivalent of short and stout. He seemed to me to be at least a metre and a half in diameter at his widest part. As he opened his mouth to take the bait, one of the times Johnsie was caught napping, he just got wider and wider. I could easily have fit into his mouth and down his throat without touching the sides.

I got myself together and started to think about taking photos. I was shooting with ambient light only, no strobes, as there was plenty of light,

Rodney Fox

the cage was at the surface and I also wanted to make sure I wasn't taking too much gear into a small space to get banged around as the boat gently rocked in the bay. I worked on ISO 400 so that I could get the shutter speed to freeze the action. I was alone in the cage at this point as the other divers were doing a shift change. A very aggressive shark suddenly turned up. Rusty was over four metres long but not as wide as Curly. She had brown streak marks on her jaws from trying to thrust her head through the steel nets that the local fishermen use to hold the tuna. Tuna fishing and harvesting is the primary source of income in Port Lincoln, the nearest town. She came up from the deep in a classic Great White ambush attack, fast and nearly vertical. At the last moment Johnsie saw her coming and pulled the bait out of her reach. She nearly breached as she missed the bait and then turned to chase it. I was standing at the corner of the cage with both arms out holding the camera. Johnsie was pulling the bait towards the cage and the shark was following the bait. I started to pull my arms in as Johnsie pulled the bait clear of the water and Rusty slammed into the side of the cage. Fifteen hundred kilos of shark was snapping at empty water about half a metre from my face. She clamped down on the edge of the cage where five seconds ago my camera had been and I stumbled backwards across the cage. Everything seemed to go into slow motion. I remember thinking to myself "Am I scared? No. Amazing! I'm not scared. Get the shot! Get the shot!" As I fell backwards I fired off three shots. Later I looked at my computer screen and saw the teeth that Rodney had seen. However in my case there was a steel cage between the teeth and me. I still don't know how Rodney can sleep at night.

Over the thirty five years that Andrew has been coming to The Neptune Islands, he and his father have been tagging and trying to identify the sharks to study their behaviour. Many sharks come back again and again to the Islands, often at the same time of the year. The favourite time is seal calving time when the Australian Fur Seal pups are learning to swim and have to do it in a sea that is literally packed with Great White sharks. We saw eleven different sharks on our four day trip, and we didn't move out of the bay, but stayed moored up the whole time.

Julian Cohen

www.rodneyfox.com.au

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards.

These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

www.magic-filters.com

Chalkidiki

The Diving paradise in Northern Greece

By Nicholas Samaras & Rabea Iatridou

Chalkidiki, the famous three-pronged peninsula in Northern Greece lies near the city of Thessaloniki (only 60 minutes away from the international airport of Thessaloniki), the second largest city in Greece.

This region is a resort area serviced by most international tour operators. Everyone knows Chalkidiki as a great holidays destination with magnificent white sanded beaches (most of them awarded with E.E.C. blue flags), landscapes fully surrounded by forests of all kinds of trees and of course the bluest of the unique Aegean Sea.

What most people don't know is that Chalkidiki is not only a place to relax on holidays, get a perfect tan and enjoy night life but is regarded as the Diving paradise of Greece, for divers and underwater photographers. The same place gives you different dive depending on the time of the year. This is magical. The diving location transforms during the year and gives multiple colour combinations and lighting.

As a diving destination, Chalkidiki has to offer many great diving spots with perfect conditions for scuba diving, and digital underwater photography: excellent visibility, a few wrecks, some beautiful tunnels and caves with exciting lighting effects and rocks with soft and hard corals and fascinating marine life.

Water temperature during winter drops to 12-14 and during summer rise up to 26-28 oC. So the diving season runs from the beginning of April until the end of October and for braver divers with the appropriate equipment (dry or semi-dry suits) it lasts all year.

Chalkidiki has three large peninsulas: Cassandra, Sithonia and Mount Athos, but diving is allowed only in the first two. In both peninsulas there are many diving centres with modern facilities, up-to-date equipment and highly trained and experienced staff and most of them are located at the best beaches, big hotel units and camping areas, very close to diving spots and offer not only diving equipment for rental

Aegean scene with Gorgonian & Anthias. Canon 5D, Canon 15mm Fish Eye, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f10 @ 1/125

Orange Mediterranean Sponge & Diver. Canon 5D, Canon 15mm Fish Eye, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f9 @ 1/60

Nudibranch Cratena Peregrina. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-110 flash, ISO 250, f8 @ 1/100

but also daily diving cruises and group diving from boat at specific destinations.

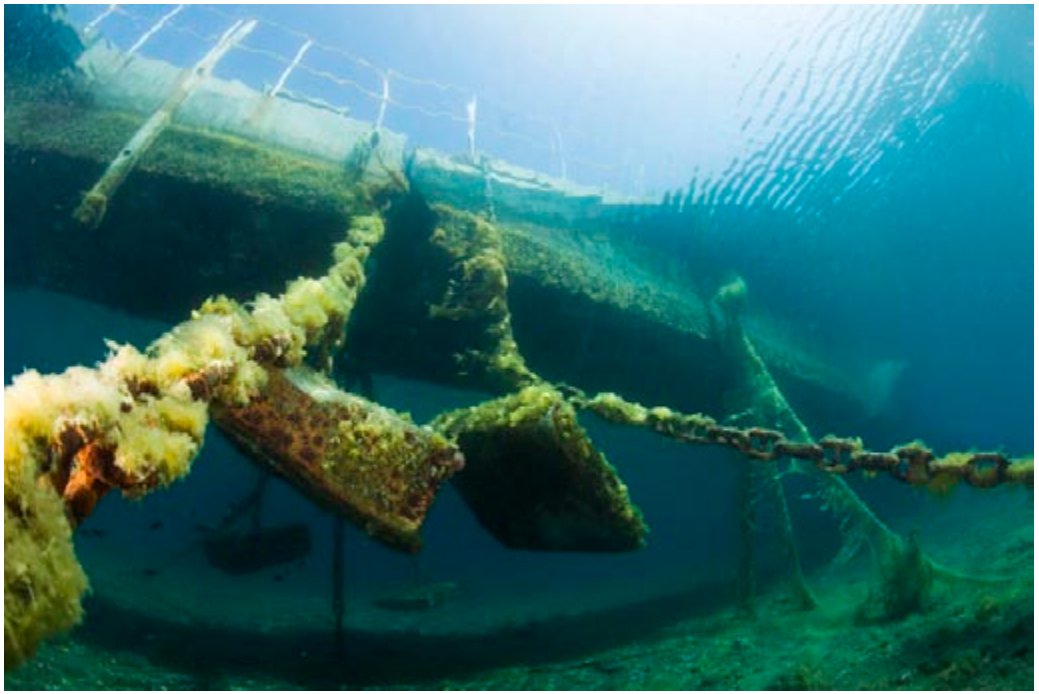
The bright Greek sun is your best friend here because you can take great shots of sunballs and sunbursts all day long and shoot wrecks and reefs with natural light with no strobes used.

Depending on how long your vacation is, you can arrange your dives in both peninsulas. If your staying is sort, it is better to choose one of the two peninsulas and enjoy your staying there. Also it is recommended that you keep away from moving to places during weekendís hot hours (Saturday morning and Sunday evening). Chalkidiki is the weekend vacation resort for citizens of Thessaloniki and the traffic is absurd.

Peninsula Cassandra is the most popular holidays & travel destination in Chalkidiki and has to give high quality travel & tourism services for accommodation, rentals, cruises, ect at affordable prices. Most of diving spots there are accessible from shore and some others require boat.

Most known diving spot in Cassandra is the wreck of boat Mitilini North-West of bight named Kipsa. Ship lies at 20m and if the visibility is good, this wreck cannot fail to impress you. It is great for wide angle and fish eye shots early in the morning before groups from local diving centres make their morning dive. The wreck is decorated with shells, corals, anemones and coils and it constitutes a shelter for groupers, morays, scorpionfishes and big blacks. To dive to Mitilini wreck a boat is required, so if you want to plan a dive there the easiest way is to contact the diving center in Sani. In the afternoon, after the ìbusy hoursî when the visibility is poorer itís the time for macro shooting

Koursaros (dokos) bay is an impressive shore dive at south ñeast of peninsula Cassandra. The road



Under the platform. Canon 5D, Canon 15mm Fish Eye, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f7,1 @ 1/250

Blenny. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f18 @ 1/125

Lophius Piscatorius. Canon 5D, Canon 17-40mm, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 200, f18 @ 1/160

ends at marina and you can leave your car there and get ready for your dive. The dive starts about 100 meters from shore at the end of right hand side of bay, so you have to swim a little. If you look down you will see in your left hand an underwater entrance between two big rocks! Itís magnificent! You will be thrilled. Rich marine life, plenty of colours and shapes.

In the other side of bay is Alonaki and you start your dive by reaching the shore passing from old camping facilities of EOT. Very nice dive with underwater walls and big single rocks here and there. Big anemones and coils will give impressive colours to your pictures.

Porto Valitsa bay is one more excellent shore dive spot, very close to Koursaros. If the sea is wavy in one bay, diving can be done in the other as the two bays are opposite oriented. In Porto Valitsa there is a mini marina for your water entry but if you donít have a 4X4 car, you have to carry your equipment down to the marina (30m) on foot. You can do 2 dives in this bay: one left and one at the right and is magnificent for night dive also. Both sides have straight vertical and horizontal underwater walls full of holes where you can find Lobsters, Octopus, Shrimps, Cuttlefish, Damselfish and Mediterranean eels with the right hand dive going deeper.

Avlaki is a small bay near Paliouri village. The road to get there is bad full of gravels and potholes so you have to be extra careful when driving. When you get there you will see straight in front of you a small breakwater wall. You will start your dive at the left hand side and follow the left turn underwater for 20 minutes approximately. Max depth 40-45m with great sea scenery everywhere! Big fishes come and go but they keep their distance.

At peninsulas end are marked some very good dives but require a boat so you have to visit one of diving centres in area and plan your dives. You mustn’t miss dive spot ‘faros’ (lighthouse) which is one of the favourite dive spots there.

Peninsula Sithonia is considered to be a peaceful travel destination, where you can relax and enjoy the

natural and desolate white sandy beaches. The coast line is outstanding by making all kind of turns and shapes, creating small gulfs and bays. There are so many trees everywhere so the green mixes with the sea blue, and creates magic contrast!

In Sithonia there are numerous mapped diving spots, most of them boat dives. If you choose to dive to Sithonia it is suggested to book a hotel room, or select an organized camping as south as you can, because all diving spots are down there (east and west side). Most of diving spots are mapped at Kelifos Island and at Kalamitsi bay.

4 miles from Porto Koufo is an underwater cave named Erica's cave from a girl drowned there some years before. Underwater entrance for cave is at 12m and the cave is not covered all over with water but it has a natural imposing dome in top, with fresh air and of course the possibility to swim in it. Underwater the cave goes in for 60 meters and it has about 10 meters width. As a cave it doesn't have something unique to see, except that it is a place for reproduction of crabs, lobsters and shrimps Also some divers met there, at some point in a dive, a female Mediterranean seal monachous - monachous. The real advantage of Erica's cave and the reason to dive it is the spectacular exit, especially in middle of the day in a sunny day. Between the rocks the most loved blues, turquoise, dark blue and in top a brilliant big sunball and sunbeams entering in water! Excellent spot for wide angle and fish eye photoshooting.

Wreck of a Turkish commercial ship 7miles north ñ east of Porto Koufo that is located at east side of Sithonia peninsula. The wreck is cracked in two pieces the front and the back almost in the middle in depth of 17 to 40 meters. This wreck is excellent for wide angle shooting but also for macro as it has been transformed to an artificial reef, a home to many little sea creatures, fishes and colourful corals, many morays and Mediterranean eels. This is a boat dive so you have to contact a local diving centre.

A dive suitable for macro photography is in Kriaritsi diving spot. You can get there only with boat and be sure that you meet a plethora of nudibranches and sea slugs of all kinds and colours! You can meet mini flabelina trees, little sea plants with so many flabelinas climbed on (if you are lucky with their eggs also) that it looks like Christmas trees decorated in pink and purple!!

If you arrange Kelifos Island, your staying must be arranged near the village of Marmaras. There are plenty of hotels (simple, luxury and personal villas with pools and all comforts) and rooms to let everywhere. Avoid visiting Marmaras between the 1st and 15th of August because it is full tourist season and it is hard to find a place to stay. Diving in this area are mapped around a small island called Kelifos (means shell because of it shape that seems like a turtle shell). The island is located between the two peninsulas

Scorpaena Scrofa. Canon 5D, Canon 17-40mm, &S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f13 @ 1/60

Tylodina Perversa. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f22 @ 1/125

Hermit Crab. Canon 5D, Canon 100mm Macro, S&S YS-250PRO flash, ISO 100, f16 @ 1/125

3 miles from Marmaras and it is very interesting to dive to because it has more than 10 diving spots the one better than the other! All over big rocks fully covered with corals, sea plants, small and big holes shelters for all kinds of fishes and sea slugs, precipices and abrupt stone walls decorated with colours. The visibility at this spot is excellent and gives you the opportunity to see bottom characteristics from the surface when snorkelling even in depth of 25m. Don't miss the opportunity to dive in Kelifos. Local diving centres organize daily trips with 2-3 dives mostly at the east side which is the more interesting for divers.

Kalogrias beach is located in the south ñ west side of Sithonia. A great spot for vacation and all day activities. It has everything: sandy beach, crystal clear water, beach bar and restaurant and of course a very good diving spot. At the middle of the bay there is a tiny rock island with rich marine life, a good variety of fish and nidibranch, occasional octopus, and hundreds of shell crabs, funny decorated for camouflage, with everything you can imagine: seaweed, corals, even anemones and other sea plants It is an easy shore dive around the rock tiny island and perfect choice for night dive also.

Armenistis Rock is an other shore dive in the left hand end of Armenistis Camping in south & east side of peninsula Sithonia. The beach in Armenistis is a dream. The sand is so white and the water there makes you think you are not in Greece but in a tropical paradise. For the dive you have to get ready on the beach and swim a little till you reach the rock. Then you descent from one side and swim around with max depth for the dive 47 meters and many morays and sea eels to see. Unfortunately it is difficult to meet big fishes because of the spear fishing with tanks at night, witch is illegal in Greece. It is a beautiful spot and it can give you many good scenes to shoot underwater.

Peninsula of Mount Athos (Agio Oros) is a place that can captivate the soul of any visitor. Mount Athos is the land of the Greek Orthodox monasteries, where entry is not allowed to women. Diving is forbidden near Mount Athos but there is in Ouranoupoli a diving center that can provide boat dives in beautiful diving locations just in the border line with Mount Athos. There you can meet flocks of big fishes and if you take the daily cruise around Mount Athos dolphins will follow your boat and swim around you playing and jumping of the water!

There are many more diving spots in Cassandra and Sithonia not mentioned here, but it will be uninteresting and boring to describe it all (Elina, Kerato, Stires ect). The best for you if you decide to visit Chalkidiki (something I recommend unconditionally) is to contact one of the many diving centres near the place you stay and plan a number of dives in both peninsulas.

Nicholas Samaras & Rabea Iatridou
www.underwater-photography.gr

Bimini Magic

A Frolic with Wild Dolphins

by Tim Rock and Yoko Higashide

I was hanging in the Bimini blue. I could see the sandy bottom and I could hear the calls of the wild ocean. I turned and there they were. Oblivious to my mere floating presence, they were calling, swimming and slapping one another in a wild frenzy. It was a group of spotted dolphins. And they were going crazy in a mad ball of pre-sexual foreplay. I had never seen anything like this in the sea and I may never see it again.

It's a little place with a big name. Made famous in the '30s by rum swilling fishermen and angler-author Ernest Hemingway, it was the place where facts became fables. But that was then and this is now.

Fishing and revelry now share the stage with skin diving and dolphins. Ringed in sandy shorelines of snow-white powder fine beaches, its blue and gin clear waters are just eye-popping. Its quintessential Bahamas. Just a half hour flight from Florida's Fort Lauderdale, it's a world away in terms of lifestyle.

The yards are flush with flora, dotted in chartreuse bougainvillea and other tropical flowers. People ride bikes, roll by in golf carts and there's even a car or two. Many people just walk.

If you're lucky, a junkanoo band will parade down the street playing music that makes everyone want to dance. Restaurants boast fare like conch salad and lobster fritters. Liquor stores still have cheap rum and Bahamian beer.

Al Sweeting Jr. has lived amidst this tropical splendor all of his life. His heritage in these islands dates back more than seven generations He grew up here and learned to love the Bimini seas and to free dive its many reefs. He's explored the infamous Bimini Road, fought giant marlin and learned as his ocean-loving father and uncle passed on the secrets of the sea. He was raised on a beach and cut his teeth on boatsSˇ all sorts of boats. He left Bimini to become a banker but that didn't last long. He returned to his true passion of free diving and started an adventure company that now specializes in finding wild dolphins in

Camera data: I used Nikon D200 cameras in Aquatica housings with 8" dome and Ikelite DS125 strobes at 1/8 power for fill when the sun was starting to set. All underwater images were made with the Tokina 10-17mm lens. Land images were mainly made with the Sigma 10-200MM OS lens and circular polarizer.

the Northwest Providence Channel.

Bimini actually has lots to offer in terms of marine life. Sitting at the edge of the shallow Bahamas Banks on one side and the very deep Straits of Florida on the other, the entire area is a fertile breeding and nursery area for much of the Caribbean. At horseshoe-shaped Honeymoon Harbour Bay, you can snorkel with southern stingrays a la Grand Cayman's famed Stingray City. You can also have a frolic with Caribbean reef sharks just south of Bimini over a shallow, sandy trench at Triangle Rocks. At The Concrete Ship, whose name says it all, you can wander over the watery inner holds of a 1929 shipwreck whose fate was sealed by a hurricane.

But with all that Bimini has to offer, Al's passion can be found ten or more miles out to sea in the shallow northern banks that run through much of the Bahamas. About the time Bimini starts to get pretty small on the horizon, Al's pals show up. He likes to find, swim with and photograph wild spotted dolphins (Stenella frontalis). He works closely with Kelly Melillo of the Dolphin Communication Project (DCP). She's a dedicated marine scientist who specializes in nothing but observing this Bimini family of perhaps 100 dolphins that live in the banks north of the island.

Al spots them from four stories up in a high tower that sways above his comfy Hatteras cruiser. He watches to see their demeanor. If they look curious or inquisitive, he will tell folks to don their fins and mask. The boat slows to a stop and people slide into the water.

Then all Hell breaks loose.

Crazed and seemingly frenzied, the dolphins will swim among the snorkelers, sating their curiosity. A domed camera housing seems to always attract attention. Sometimes the younger ones swim right up to the front port. They also like to play so good free divers dip down and mimic the dolphins. This sometimes drives them nuts and even more play ensues. This diver to dolphin interaction is totally up to the dolphins. It can last 30 seconds or it can go on for hours. If the dolphins are curious and engaged, its never-ending fun. Usually it's the snorkelers who surrender first, elated and exhausted.

On one of our last days at sea, we encountered something that Al says is pretty rare. It was a mating congregation. Actually, it was more of a huge group foreplay gathering and it was wild. Dolphins apparently like it rough. They were swimming in a large group of maybe 30 dolphins. The older ones were really getting into it. We could look down and see them swimming single file almost like a

bracelet. Then they would group together in a big ball near the surface. They would start slapping, biting, chirping and chattering. Al told me to not get into the middle of this as a powerful "love slap" from a dolphin can knock your mask off. And if you're in the middle of this, you're fair game.

So we would dive down on the periphery and watch in amazement. Once they had enough the dolphins would dive down and swim off again only to surface perhaps 100 yards later and do the same thing. They was no pattern to this. At times they would swim far away from us. Other times they would come back and be right in our midst.

The younger ones would play with my lens or follow my snorkel model Yoko as she dipped down and twirled around. But the older ones were totally enthralled with this foreplay.

Actual dolphin mating takes less than a minute on the average. But the foreplay goes on for a long time. We left this unpredictable but fascinating group to look for some others. But they had been doing the mating dance for over an hour that we saw and showed no sign of stopping.

Bimini is a fascinating little place for the ocean lover. Aside from dolphins, sharks, wrecks and rays there is a marine lab there that specializes in sharks and the extensive mangroves hold an amazing array of Caribbean juveniles. Free diving in the open ocean with curious dolphins is a dream for many. On Bimini, the dream can come true.

Tim Rock

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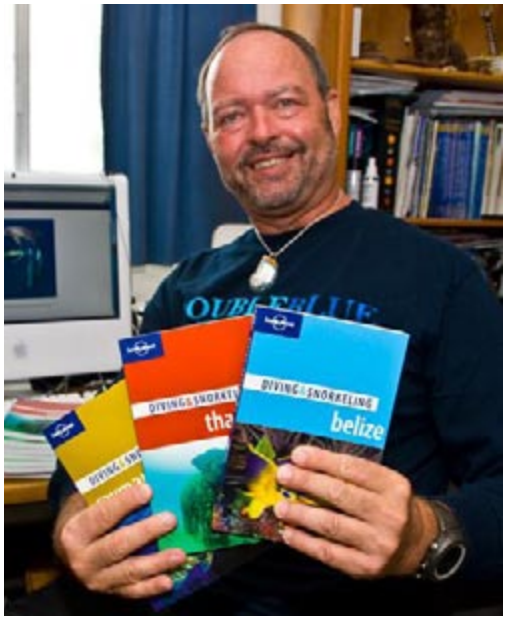

East Kalimantan

By Alex Tyrrell

At the beginning of June 2008 I was leaving Thailand on my way to Jakarta, and after an overnight stop, boarded my early morning flight to Tarakan via Balikpapan both in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo. This was the beginning of a four month diving adventure starting a new job as Trip Manager on the live-aboard boat Panunee Seamaster which would be cruising the Sulu Sea and visiting the islands of Derawan, Sangalaki, Kakaban and Maratua.

Panunee is normally based in Phuket from November to May plying the waters of the Similan and Surin Islands, plus regular trips into Myanmar (Burma) during January to April when the conditions are at their best. When the monsoon wind and rains come, Panunee leaves the Anderman Sea and heads down to Indonesia for calmer waters and this time had a change from Lembeh Straights, which it visited in previous years.

Panunee is a 32m steel hulled vessel that comfortably carries up to 20 divers and has Nitrox available at a reasonable cost. She has a crew of eight, plus 4 Divemasters, that are very helpful and the boat is accustomed to catering for photographers. They even have two cabins specifically designed with photographers/ videographers in mind with well lit set-up benches and blow guns located under your bunk. It helps that the owner of the boat, Jakrin Kittisarn, is fanatical about underwater photography, so has designed the boat and planned it's itineraries with this in mind. Panunee is the only live-aboard boat in the area, so

solitude underwater is guaranteed in this virgin area – we rarely saw other divers underwater.

There are small dive centers on Derawan (Derawan Dive Resort), Sangalaki (Sangalaki Dive Lodge) and two on Maratua (Maratua Paradise and Nabucco Dive Resort) where local diving and trips to the other islands can be arranged using small speedboats. However, the ease and comfort of live-aboard diving makes this option my preferred choice, especially for photographers who will want to change their lens set-ups for the different dive sites in air conditioned comfort instead of rocking and rolling on a small boat with sea spray getting onto the camera sensor!

THE DIVING

The boats itinerary varies slightly on each trip taking into account tides and currents to ensure that the sites are dived at the most productive time. We ran a 5 day 6 night cruise leaving Tarakan on a Friday night, having 5 full days of diving (4 dives per day) returning to Tarakan on a Thursday

morning. Dive times are normally around the one hour mark, but not limited, so for those good on air 1 _ hours is feasible and even longer on the shallow jetty dives of Derawan. This means an un-hurried dive, allowing photographers to take their time and concentrate on the getting 'the shot'. Below are my favorite Dive Sites at each of the islands, but there are many others especially around Maratua, the largest of the four islands.

DERAWAN

Tuturuga is a sloping patchy reef which levels off to sand at around 20-22m on the southern side of Derawan. Descend up-current along the coastline down to the sand then follow the reef along until you come to a large purple Sea Fan that has a family of Pygmy Seahorses living in it. Then gradually work along the reef coming shallower finishing the dive around one of the two jetties. Many exotic and different macro subjects can be found here.

Coral Garden is another sloping reef that levels off to sand at around 12-15m on the eastern side of Derawan. Start the dive at the reef top descending down to 10m working your way east to a coral bommey where you can see Purple Hairy Squat Lobsters in a Barrel Sponge, Whip Coral Shrimps, juvenile Frogfish, Leaf Scorpionfish and a Honeycombe Moray adorned with cleaner shrimps. As you go a little deeper you can find Flying Gurnard and various species of Goby in the sand, including Black Sailfin and Rayed Shrimp Gobies. Working a little shallower you come to a broken coral and weedy bottom that is great for various species of Nudibranchs and Flatworms, plus a group of resident Flasher Wrasse are here where you can witness the males putting on a very colourful courtship display to the females, chasing them around 'flashing' their brightly patterned dorsal and anal fins. Finishing the dive you can see Jawfish in their burrows, Cuttlefish, Green Turtles and a myriad of different reef fishes as you ascend to the reef top at 5m for your safety stop.

Beach Cafe Jetty is a sunset/night dive not to be missed in shallow water enabling long leisurely dives. Start in 8m at sunset to watch the mating ritual of the colourful Mandarinfish – wait besides

their Staghorn Coral home for the males to flirt with the females before a pair slowly rise up above the coral together, release their gametes and disappear back into their branching coral abode. You may be lucky and get them in a good mode and see them mate 10 times or more. When the action is over you can hunt for critters both around and underneath the jetty. A great macro dive for photographers – I regularly spent 2 hours underwater here searching the debris for the weird and wonderful!

Derawan has a large population of the mouth brooding Jawfish and approximately 7-8 days after the full moon the eggs hatch. Just as the sun is rising between 5.30 and 6.00 am, the Jawfish spit out their hatchlings into the current to be swept away and begin life. An early start is obviously required, so hitting the water at 5.00 am is the norm to locate the markers the guides placed the previous day. Get yourself settled by the hole of the Jawfish, position your strobes and focus light (not too bright as it can stop the hatching) and wait for the action to start.

If you're lucky, you will witness what few people have and see the birth of these few millimeter long hatchlings!

SANGALAKI

Manta Parade, as the name suggests this is a great site for Manta Rays, but also there is a high chance of encountering Leopard Sharks, Green Turtles and Marble Rays, together with the huge variety of Reef Fishes that live amongst the abundance of hard corals. Start the dive in the sandy channel in 17m with the current pulling you east to a shallower sandy area, checking out the various cleaning stations as you drift along. On a good day the Manta's queue up at the stations politely taking their turn to be cleaned. When a Manta is seen stay low slowly working towards it to witness the Blue-Streaked Cleaner Wrasse going about their business on these huge fish - an unforgettable sight. Also, keep looking up towards the surface, as they are

regularly seen lined up feeding on plankton.

Manta Cleaning Station is similar to Manta Parade but a little bit further north from Sangalaki so a slightly deeper average depth to the dive. Again drift east with the current checking out the various cleaning stations looking for the Manta's, plus also a chance of encountering Eagle Rays, White-Tip and Black-Tip Reef Sharks and maybe even mating Green Turtles. Watch as two of three of these giant turtles are stacked on top of each other with numerous suitors waiting around the edge of the action.

Manta Run is a great drift dive on the west side of Sangalaki heading south with the current that sometimes can be quite strong. Start in 8m maybe seeing Leopard or White-Tip Reef Sharks resting on the bottom, then let the current pull you along for 15-20 minutes until the topography changes from various species of hard corals to sand and gets a little deeper. This is the area for the cleaning stations and best chance of seeing Manta's on the upcoming tide in the afternoon. Keeping low on the bottom and wait by the cleaning stations for the Manta's to appear from down-current, effortlessly

swimming towards you on its way to the cleaning station for its daily service. A good dive here can produce numerous sightings and is an awesome experience not to be missed!

MARATUA

Mid Reef is on the western side of Maratua which is a great drift dive and you have the possibility of seeing Thresher Sharks. The sloping wall goes down to 45-50m before it levels off to a sand/rubble bottom. Drop down to about 30-35m and let the current pull you along while keeping your eye out below for these majestic elasmobranches. After 10 minutes of staying deep, once you have passed the cleaning station, move shallower and back closer to the wall before the current picks up and pulls you off the site. Now turn your attention to the smaller critters that live here, as you can find three different species of Pygmy Seahorses (Bargibanti, Denise and Pontohi) together with many different Nudibranchs, Flatworms, Leaf Scorpionfish, Porcelain Crabs, Flasher Wrasse and much more. You can also see groups of Bumphead Parrotfish and loads of Turtles, both Green and Hawksbill. Finish your dive at 5m on the reef top and you may see schooling Big-Eye Trevally. A great site for both wide angle and macro photography, posing a dilemma in how to set up your camera!

The Channel is an awesome drift on the eastern side of Maratua going into the lagoon formed by the island itself and the coral reef system. Start the dive on the wall up-current from the channel opening; a negative entry and quick descent is needed to stop you getting swept over the reef flats! Level off at 25m and let the current pull you towards the channel opening and, as you approach, get ready to hold on or attach your reef hook. Look out into the blue for the chance of seeing pelagic life on an early morning dive. Move along the channel entrance to find the Blackfin Barracuda, where they school in there thousands, forming amazing shapes and formations in the current. Occasionally joined by large schools of Big-Eye Trevally and Midnight Snapper the school can be so dense that it blocks out the sunlight. If the current eases off they may move into the channel entrance at around 15-18m and form a 'tornado' making the perfect photograph. You either spend all your dive here and then do you safety stop drifting back into the lagoon at a rate of knots or if you have air remaining stay at

17m and head into the lagoon to a trench where it is common to see Eagle Rays, sometimes in schools of 10 or more. End the dive with an adrenalin filled ride on the safety stop as the current increases in the shallows as you get further into the lagoon, but watch out for the whirlpools that are formed by the strong currents that have the tenders spinning on the surface as they pick you up! An unforgettable dive that you will definitely want to do more than once!

Lighthouse is on the northern tip of Maratua. This site can be prone to currents, so is normally dived on the slack water letting you have a relaxing dive hunting for macro subjects. The sloping reef drops down to 45-50m and is dotted with Sea Fans where you can regularly find Denise Pygmy Seahorses. On the wall it is possible to see the rarer Pontohi Pygmy Seahorse, together with many different Nudibranchs, Longnose Hawkfish, Fire and Decorated Dartfish, plus sometimes Dogtooth Tuna, Blackfin Barracuda and Spanish Mackerel in the blue. As you end the dive in the shallows you can regularly see juvenile Rockmover Wrasse, Leaf Scorpionfish and Ribbon Eels.

Lumantan and Macronesia are two great wall dives which are next to each other on the eastern side of Maratua a few Kilometres down the coast from Lighthouse. The wall drops well out of diving range and are covered in Sea Fans where Denise Pygmy Seahorses are commonly sighted. Also many different Nudibranch species can be found together with Sailfin and Tangaroa Shrimpgoby's, Fire and Decorated Dartfish, Leaf Scorpionfish, as well as Porcelain and Orang-utan Crabs in Anemones. There are occasional sightings of Reef and Leopard Sharks, Marble Rays, Dogtooth Tuna and Spanish Mackerel if you take your eye off the wall and look into the blue every now and then.

KAKABAN

Corner Wall is a great wall dive offering lots of macro subjects. Start deep at around 30m to see the Decorated Dartfish (Purple Fire Goby) which are plentiful here, then ascend a bit to see if you can find any Denise Pygmy Seahorses in the numerous Sea Fans that adorn the wall. Look for the many species of Nudibranchs, Orang-utan Crabs, Longnose Hawkfish, Fire Dartfish, Square Spot Anthias and Flasher Wrasse. Maybe see a cruising Leopard Shark, Dogtooth Tuna or Spanish Mackerel in the blue. Finish your dive coming into the shallows where you can see Spine Cheek Aneomefish, Moray Eels, Leaf Scorpionfish and Ribbon Eels amongst the expanse of hard corals at the reef top.

Gorgonian Forest is on the other side of Kakaban and is a nice wall dive where you drift

slowly along with the mild current admiring the expanse of Gorgonian Sea Fans that adorn the wall which drops into the depths below. There is a good chance of finding Denise Pygmy Seahorses, as well as many other macro subjects. The slightly colder water at Kakaban means there is always the chance of Scalloped Hammerheads coming up from the deep, so keep one eye on the blue!

Kakaban is most famous for the isolated marine lake in its interior and is a similar environment to Palau, however all of our guests that had been to both rated Kakaban well ahead of Palau. Commonly known as Jellyfish Lake, thousands of years ago the island was naturally uplifted which isolated the marine ecosystem from the surrounding sea allowing this marine lake to become very unique and endemic creatures such as four species of non-stinging jellyfishes and non-stinging anemones to evolve. Marine biologists have also found a number of unknown species of anemones, tunicates, flatworms and crustaceans in the lake. There are also Gobies, Cardinalfish, Needlefish and sometimes Sea Snakes in the lake. The shoreline is fringed with a tangle of mangroves and their roots are carpeted with sponges, seaweeds and tunicates. Visibility is around 10-12 meters (unless the silty bottom is disturbed) and at its deepest point the lake is around 18 meters with tidal variation of about 0.2m, which is a result of a network of underground fissures that connect to the ocean. This truly is a biological paradise where everything can easily be seen on snorkel.

To sum up, this area is a very pristine environment having only a limited number of divers and offers a great mix of both macro subjects and wide angle options. From the minute Bumble-Bee Shrimps and Pygmy Seahorses to the majestic Manta's of Sangalaki and the thousand plus school of Barracuda at The Channel you will be spoilt for choice and come home with a hard drive packed full of memorable images. For more information on prices, dates, etc., for the 2009 season, plus how to get there, visit www.panunee.com.

Alex Tyrrell

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School's out

by Mark Webster

One of the most exciting experiences for any diver is to get close to large numbers of schooling fish, swim with them and perhaps even enter the shoal and become a part of it for a few moments. This experience is perhaps even more exciting for a photographer as it enables you to get very close to your subject and perhaps fill the frame entirely with fish. Many schooling fish are normally wary of letting a diver get too close, so we should make the most of the opportunity when it arises and adopt the best techniques to ensure that the images we capture are a success. It also helps to understand a little about schooling fish behaviour which can help you make the best approach when you encounter a shoal.

So, exactly why do fish school together and how do they achieve the incredible discipline and communication required to behave as a single entity? Research has shown that approximately one quarter of all fish school throughout their lives and that at least half of all species shoal together for part of their existence. The reasons for this are numerous - to grow, travel, feed, rest, spawn and mostly of course to avoid predators. Although it is mostly fish of the same species and same size that you will find schooling together, you will occasionally find a rogue species within a shoal using them as protection.

The most amazing skill that schooling fish possess is the ability to move in a totally coordinated fashion always seeming to maintain the same distance from the other fish in the shoal. They apparently accomplish this using a technique defined as the 'optomotor response' which is the simultaneous use of eyes, nerves and muscles to communicate and sense movement between the individual fish. Often fish will feature a dark stripe or spot in their livery which enables each fish in the shoal to zero in on the movements of its neighbour and thus achieve the astonishing chain reaction of movement shoals produce. So there is no 'leader of the pack' as such, each fish is reacting to those around it.

Confusing potential predators is the single most important activity for the school. Most predators will intend to home in on an individual fish, which display the shape and behaviour of prey

Shooting head on to the shoal is another way of avoiding reflection and glare. The fish swimming towards the camera here look quite 'flat' with little reflected light. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10 to 17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f11 1/60.

Many reef fish that are normally seen singly or in pairs congregate in schools to breed in the summer. These masked butterfly fish in the Red Sea are a good example. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10 to 17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f11 1/125.

Anthias are perhaps the most common schooling fish in the Red Sea and are a good subject to practice with. They are very sensitive to noise and you can make the shoal converge at the right moment by blowing air out of your regulator. Nikon D100, Light & Motion Titan housing, 10.5mm FE, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO200 f11 1/60.

from previous encounters. So the objective of the school is to confuse this identification process and prevent the predator from singling out an individual. As a predator approaches a school the typical behaviour pattern is for the shape of the shoal to contract and present a tighter smaller volume and perhaps a different shape. This will be followed by quick changes in direction and speed to confuse the enemy. These movements will also alter the colouration of the school - one moment dark and then the next bright and silvery as the light is reflected from their scales. This whole activity masks the shape of the individual fish presenting only a mass of glimmering silver making it extremely difficult for the predator to decide where to attack. Not every fish in the shoal can keep up with this and often single fish or small groups will get left behind, which may have fatal consequences. However, there seems to be a game plan for this as well and you will often observe schools splitting into two to further confuse the predator whilst one part sweeps back to pick up the stragglers.

Fish which do not normally school together will often shoal when the breeding season starts in order to increase the chances of successful fertilisation. The shear number and proximity of males and females is a boost, although some species do break away temporarily from the school in mating pairs when the moment to spawn arrives. Encountering normally solitary reef fish in big concentrations can be quite spectacular and for me the most striking include the bright yellow masked butterfly fish and those cute looking masked puffer fish which swim up and down the reef which such purpose when they shoal.

Choosing the right lens for schooling fish is always going to be a compromise, unless you are confident that your fish are waiting for you and you know the size of the school. Short range zooms are perhaps the best choice – the 10-17mm or 12-24mm on a DX format and perhaps the 17/18-35mm range on an FX format

although a true fish eye on either format works well if you can get close enough. These lenses should be able to let you capture a reasonably large school from medium distances, whist the longer end of the lens is great for smaller groups of fish. For tighter group shots a 60mm or equivalent is a good choice on either format to enable you to concentrate on perhaps two or three fish in a shoal with more fish in the background to fill the negative space.

Flash exposure and silvery reflective fish scales is a real challenge. Unless you are shooting a school head on there is always going to be the chance of light being reflected from the scales of the fish causing hotspots and over exposure. You may find that you want to deliberately underexpose to avoid this and try and correct the exposure in post processing, or alternatively experiment with practical techniques. Shooting straight towards the flanks of the fish poses the biggest chance of reflection and may be improved by getting a more oblique angle on the subject, perhaps by shooting a little below them or slightly from the side with the intention that reflected light will not come straight back at the lens. Scales are fickle though and fish are always on the move in a shoal.

If you are close enough perhaps try divergent lighting with twin flash guns, again with the intention of directing reflected light away from the lens. In many instances we just have to accept that some of our subjects within the shoal are going to be 'hot' or slightly over exposed which might even convey a sense of movement. The great advantage we now have with digital is immediate feed back and the ability to highlight hotspots – although I find the histogram can be misleading with these subjects.

Schooling cat fish are another very approachable subject, but they are always on the move feeding on a sandy bottom. Keeping ahead of the fish and not stirring up the visibility is a challenge. Nikon D200, Subal ND20, 10 to 17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f11 1/60.

There are of course species that are not quite so reflective, for example anthias, goat fish, big eye squirrel fish etc. which are easier to practice with.

Don't forget natural light as well, with or without filters, particularly for large schools in shallow water. Taking a white balance reading off an un-gloved hand works well and you may want to try shutter priority or manual mode if the shoal is fast moving.

There is no magic formula for approaching schooling fish, although in some circumstances they seem to be less concerned by your approach. Shoals that have gathered to spawn only have one thing on their minds and are normally very tolerant of a close approach and may even ignore you entering the shoal. Knowing where and when to go will increase your chances of experiencing this – for example April/May at Gladden Spit in Belize for Cobora snapper (and Mantas and whale sharks) and June/July at Ras Mohammed for red

Not all schooling fish are silver of course. These big eye squirrel fish present far fewer problems for obtaining a correct exposure. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10 to 17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f11 1/125.

A classic school of small scad balling as a defence against an approaching predator. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10 to 17mm FE zoom, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 100 f11 1/125.

snapper, unicorn surgeon fish, bat fish and barracuda.

On exposed reefs you will often find schools of fish on promontories where there is significant current. Approaching them can be hard work but they are often more tolerant if you are holding station with them. On the reef itself there are species like goat fish, black spot snapper and sweetlips which are very territorial and will co-operate if you make a slow approach.

Wrecks are a favourite haunt for some species either because they offer protection from strong currents. Species like bat fish are often found schooling on wrecks and of course you will almost certainly find glassy sweepers in the darker recesses.

On popular reefs you may often find that fish begin to school beneath day boats or live aboard boats almost as soon as they moor or anchor. This can provide an opportunity to get close but of course the fish are often in shadow, so tighter composition may produce the best results.

It is a sad fact that in many areas of the world the very schooling behaviour which protects fish so well from their natural predators has been the downfall of many species which are targeted by the most efficient predator of all, man. Modern oceanographic and fisheries technology means that determined fleets can track a species from its spawning and breeding grounds to feeding grounds where the target fish can be scooped from the sea with frightening efficacy. Although many countries now have large no take areas or protected zones, illegal fishing is still a big problem and one that is very difficult to police particularly for poorer nations. Some tropical regions have not yet been subjected to this technological assault and so we can still witness the amazing site of schooling fish. One can only hope that these areas will persist until the fishing industry has developed better fish farming methods or stock management techniques which allow species to regenerate in step with the hunter's demands. Until then enjoy the spectacle and experience whenever you encounter it.

Mark Webster
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Getting a vessel coded

by Charles Hood

The rules (law) state that any vessel (in the UK) being used in a commercial capacity must be 'Coded', i.e. inspected by a MCA (marine coastguard agency) approved authority to comply with SOLAS (safety of life at sea) regulations. Further that the skipper must be suitably qualified in seamanship to a standard for the conditions that the vessel will operate in. At this point it may be worth defining commercial. Commercial in this context is any work carried out on or using the vessel for monetary gain. Dividing up the direct fuel cost on a club trip does not fall into this category but there cannot be any other form of payment for example maintenance costs or wages of any kind. So what happens if you don't comply with the rules? Quite simply you open yourself up to possible litigation, a bit like if you were to operate a taxi service with a privately owned car, which is not duly insured and licensed with the local council. How will anyone find out? The charter business at sea is a highly competitive business and rival skippers miss nothing in the harbours that they operate in – say no more!

With the above knowledge on board a few years ago I purchased a seven metre RIB (rigid hull inflatable boat, sometimes known as RHIB), called Logan, along with a colleague and we decided it would be purely for pleasure use. Bizarrely in the UK there are no regulations at all with respect to the vessel's condition or competence of the coxswain if you are purely using the boat for your own use. Over a three-year period we filmed and photographed predominantly basking sharks but also other marine life and started to get a reputation for knowing where the action was. After several enquiries from various overseas shark aficionados, film companies and television stations I agreed to act as a safety boat to a commercial hard boat and to take a few divers out just for a share of the fuel. This worked extremely well, however, I couldn't be paid for a valuable service that I thought I was offering. Furthermore Logan's other owner wanted to start to offer underwater video courses that would also require a boat charter. So we decided to get her Coded and also get qualified as a commercial skipper.

The latter was the easy part. I was already a RYA (royal yachting association) Coastal Skipper and had thousands of hours at sea under my belt. Thus I simply enrolled on the RYA Powerboat part two exam and completed a Sea Survival course, sent off twenty quid to the MCA and I received my certificate a few days later. For anyone without experience the RYA offer courses designed to take the complete novice up to a commercial standard but they do require a certain amount of sea hours to be completed in between courses. The exam is fairly straightforward. It involves a reasonable understanding of charts and passage planning, meteorology, boat operations and maintenance, radio competence, knots, emergency procedures, first aid, night operations, knowledge of

GPS (global positioning system) and other electronic equipment. The day of the exam is basically in three parts. The morning is generally theory, the afternoon practical boat handling and evening is all down to night operations. The Sea Survival course is not an exam as such but you have to demonstrate a degree of competency with the knowledge they give you and be able to get you and your fellow crew into a life raft from the water, which not as easy as you may think.

Oh, you also require a medical. As I am an HSE (health and safety) commercially qualified diver the diving medal, which I already have would count, otherwise it's a visit to your GP at a cost of around £100.

So far so good. Next came what turned out to be one of the most bureaucratic and tedious processes I've ever embarked on, i.e. getting Logan coded. After I trawled the net (internet) for a few hours, which resulted in a complete lack of information I contacted the MCA direct to try and ascertain what was required to get Logan coded. This got me nowhere except I did learn that the information I required maybe gained by ploughing through vast pages of the MCA website, where I would have to decipher gobbledygook of the highest order. Also I was informed that all the stuff on the site was all about to be 'harmonised' and just for

the records this was October 2007 and to date this harmonisation has still not taken place. The issue is that RIBs are not classified separately at this higher level, they just fall into the category of a commercial vessel as would any other hard boat.

As luck would have it on my Powerboat exam I ran into a chap who codes boats and he offered to help, albeit for a sum of money that would rival the recent government bailout of the high street banks. It would appear that all coding companies keep their cards very close to their chests so one has to pay for advice before you know what your getting yourself into. So the following information is worth a huge sum of money (and a large donation to UWP contributors!) to anyone wanting to embark on a similar exercise .

In essence there are two main areas the boat has to comply with. The first is the build specification and a stability test at sea and the second is a list of safety equipment it has to carry onboard. If we address the former issue first: in theory any manufacturer building boats to CE specifications should be able to provide this information – after all they built the vessel and it has to be up to European standards. In practice it would appear that European standards and MCA requirements differ, and neither party apparently 'believes' the other is right. So although I had vast documents from the manufacturer showing what looked like to me what the MCA wanted, as it later transpired they weren't. Thus I needed to have Logan inspected at sea. This involved loading her up with vast amounts of weight and people and having an inspector take various measurements of load-line, angle of tilt and transom height when the weights and people were in various predefined positions. Then we had to completely deflate one of the stern tubes to ensure she

would still remain afloat with a punctured tube. The Inspector then went away and entered all these measurements into a number crunching machine to see if we were OK – and as it happens we were.

The second part of the exercise was then to compile an inventory of safety equipment and just by the guy's facial expression I knew it was going to be painful. First off were the fuel lines. What an earth can be wrong with our fuel lines I thought? Ours where the normal ISO 8469 approved type found on any boat anywhere in the world, but not up to specification, no. We required ISO 7840, which are fire rated to withstand 900 degrees centigrade for two minutes – on a RIB! So our existing lines had to be all replaced, however, I now have piece of mind that should Logan catch fire and be totally destroyed at least the fuel lines will remain in tact. Oh also we would have to fit fuel shut-off valves at the fuel tank end of the hoses, being able to disconnect the lines at the engine is not good enough. And just in case our fuel tank developed a leak vents had to be put into the console, originally they requested a hydrocarbon sensor fitted but as there are no waterproof ones on the market and the fuel tank is above deck height we settled for vents. Then came a list I was kind of expecting, two fire extinguishers, a first aid kit - not your normal one but a SOLAS approved one (basically similar but twice the cost), still at least I know I can supply everyone with anti-seasickness tablets for about four weeks! Next up a handheld VHF to accompany our fixed one, ten life jackets – we were only going for approval for eight people on board but apparently you need two spares, shows the confidence they have in SOLAS approved life jackets! Fog horn, torch, manual bilge pump (we already had an electronic one plus twin elephant

trucks), bailer, two foam life-rings - one with 18 metres of floating line and the another fitted with a drogue and duly marked with the vessels name and port of registration. Apparently the latter is required if it all goes tits-up. These life-rings will at least inform the coastguard of the vessel that was lost when they are washed up onshore. Oh and also they must have an additional SOLAS radar reflective patch stuck on them. Barometer – what? Yes we needed a barometer, fortunately I found a neat little gizmo on Ebay that resembled a digital watch for around £12 so not too painful.

Unfortunately we didn't fair that well in the radar reflector department. Ours was just a normal one, the criss-cross kind of device you see on your average fishing vessel up to five times Logan's size. No we required one that would give the equivalent of a 10 square metre sheet of metal – oh well its only another £400 pounds, lets keep going. Can I have a look at your anchor, was the next question? Ah ha I thought, a good solid 7 kilograms of Sheffield's finest, five metres of chucky chain you could haul the QEII out of the water with and 70 metres of warp, plus a grapnel anchor, similar chain and 50 metres of rope we used for a shot line, surely this would suffice? Wrong! We needed two (one primary and one spare) 8 kilogram anchors, with 10 metres of six millimetre chain and 30 metres of line – although in the end we did compromise that our existing anchor would suffice as a back-up. Enough warp to tow the vessel? – well yes we've got half a mile of anchor warp – point to me I think. Next up flares. Yes again, we have not only one but two RYA offshore packs – enough for a jolly good firework display in anyone's book. Not enough. We needed two more handheld flares. Fortunately we have two engines, each with their own battery so a secondary method of starting the engine was by de facto in place. Emergency steering was also fairly straightforward as we decided we could uncouple the bar that joins the engines steering mechanism and use it as a crude tiller. Oars - along side both midships tubes, navigation lights - on stern 'A' frame, a method of recovering a man overboard – ladder, port side aft, enough hand rails for all passengers to hold onto when seated – oh yes, GPS

and sounder – on console, kill cord – left of helm, spare kill cord – bugger. In case the coxswain goes overboard along with the kill cord attached to him there's no easy way of starting the engines without a spare one – OK. I concede a valid point.

Now with a shopping list approaching two grand we came to the expensive bit - the life raft. So another £1000 bought me a SOLAS, CE, RYA, ISO, DoT, HSE, etc, etc approved raft. Sorry not good enough. But it's got all the certificates! It can keep all eight of us alive in storm force gales in a sub-artic climate for twenty years. No. It needed to be SOLAS B not just SOLAS. That 'B' is very important as we would require TPAs (thermal protection aids), a first aid kit and handheld GPS. But we've already got all these – better still our TPAs are full diving style submersible ones. OK we agreed as long all divers were in drysuits and I have the first aid kit and VHF in a grab bag along with our huge collection of pyrotechnics, this would do. So now we were on the homeward straight. A waterproof pouch containing charts, life raft and lifejacket instructions, engine starting procedures, tide tables, almanac, hand bearing compass, safety manual, first aid manual, manual of manuals, VHF emergency operation details, log records and passage planning sheets completed the inventory.

So what was the final cost? The thick end of £3K - OUCH. Was it all worth it? In a nutshell yes. We can now operate commercially and further explore the stunning marine environment unique to the Cornish coast and at the same time hopefully to earn some money. Logan has been specifically designed for film and camera work. She has a large open deck area for the likes of gigantic camera housings even when carrying four twinsets or rebreathers. We have a huge experience (a combined total of over 40 years) of locating basking sharks, seals, sunfish and other marine life as well as wrecks and some of the most dramatic underwater scenery in UK. We have already had paying customers, including the French film company Galatee who successfully filmed basking sharks off Sennen with us for their forthcoming blockbuster film. What we specialise in is small groups who want to get the most from a days filming. All activities are carried in accordance with MCS (marine conservation society) guidelines with minimal disturbance to the animals. Let them come to us and don't chase them is our rule. What we don't do is everyday diving operations at a budget price that a club might expect. Although we are licensed to carry eight people including skipper and crew we generally recommend a limit of four divers/snorkellers to maximise filming opportunities.

Charles Hood
www.charleshood.com

Bikini Atoll is now closed once again! But at least you can still see some of the majesty of the "Nuclear Fleet."

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, inexpensive, and environmentally friendly way. They have relatively small file sizes, usually less than 20mb. *Ghost Fleet of Bikini Atoll* (12mb, 89 pages) is only $5.95 each emailed. Please visit www.jcdovala.com for details.

Guidelines for contributors

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

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

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

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

E mail peter@uwpmag.com

How to submit articles

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

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail
2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 144dpi

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

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

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

Parting Shots 1

Ever had a lazy dive buddy ? The sort who comes on the liveaboard with you, with full intentions to maximise his in-water time, and to be the first in and last out on every dive, but when it comes to the crunch can't get out of bed in the morning or snoozes just a bit too long in the sun after lunch and misses the afternoon dive.

One of my best friends, and the guy who got me into diving in the first place, is just that buddy. When he does get in the water, there is no-one I would rather dive with or trust more. However, on a liveaboard trip to the Southern Red Sea in July 2004, I found myself buddy-less on several mornings and had to trio-up with whoever was available. Several of these dives proved fairly memorable, such as the one with 8 or so hammerheads, or the one with the grey reef sharks. Each of these dives culminated in my ascent to the back of the dive boat and a bleery eyed "good morning" from my ex-buddy, asking what he missed, and then generally proclaiming that I was 'talking garbage'. I was fairly inexperienced in photography at the time, and most of my photos could never do justice to the tall tale of the missed dive, and so my buddy was always left doubting the integrity of my story.

On one particular early morning dive at Daedalus Reef, as per usual my buddy stayed in bed, and I buddied up with another two English guys (can't remember your names, sorry guys!). The dive was not that eventful, the normal run of spectacularly beautiful reef fish and the odd turtle. However, we did manage to be the last in the water, even the dive guide ascended and left us to our safety stop. As we were drifting back towards the boat, away from the reef and into the blue, the manta ray in the photo came towards us, made several fly-bys, including one so close that I got to touch his wing tip, and then spread his wings and hung in the blue as if in morning prayers. Once I had pinched myself and managed to remember that I had a camera (a humble Sony P7 in a Sea & Sea Housing), I fired off a few shots, on complete auto-muppet mode, and for the first time in my life I took a couple of photos that did justice to the dive experience, finally silenced my buddy and went some way towards stopping him from skipping any more early morning dives.

I have since then invested heavily in underwater camera gear in an effort to take it more seriously, but I doubt I have taken a photo that matches up to this since !

Sony P7, Camera settings not really known (other than 'Auto').

Dave Bluck
Ex-UK, now Sydney Australia

Parting Shots 2

Nikon D2x, Subal ND2 housing, Nikkor 10.5mm F.E. lens, 1/200sec @ f10, ISO 200, available afternoon light

We were thirty-six hours out of Grand Bahama Island, over the Little Bahama Bank, on the Caribbean Explorer I looking for dolphins. Even though we'll be on the boat for a week, I'm skeptical about having close encounters with marine mammals. After all these are free wild animals who can come and go as they please over hundreds of square miles of ocean. They don't have to perform for food. Getting close and being able to spend the time with them for decent photography seemed like a long shot.

After lunch we began our search for Flipper and soon most eyes were surveying the horizon for movement. I had just started getting my camera ready when the proverbial "Thar-she-blows" rang out. Finishing up quickly, I grabbed my mask, fins, and sprinted off the aft deck. When the bubbles cleared I was face to face with wild Atlantic spotted dolphins. It was like the school recess bell had rung and it was time to play. Like us, some dolphins wanted to get in close while others were happy keeping a little distance. Mom dolphin delighted in showing her youngster how to play keep-away with a piece of seaweed as they twisted, looped, and barrel rolled right next to us. The frolicking was synergistic, the more energy we showed in our actions the higher the energy of the dolphins.

One of the females became very friendly and wanted more than synchronized swimming. She picked out a couple of folks (who displayed the most energy) and began a dance that changed tempo from barely swimming to high speed passes within a couple feet of the human partners, finally adjusting her speed right next to them asking for direct contact. When the person held their hand out she arched slightly into the reach to make sure there was contact. Wow! Completely wild dolphins wanting to make a connection to a species like us. They were so close their likeness filled my fisheye lens and their energy was infectious. We danced together in the brilliant blue sea 'till sunset. It turned out that not getting close or having enough time wasn't the problem – concentrating on taking photos though, well…….

Joe Dovala
www.jcdovala.com

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

Parting Shot 3

Can you dive a site year in and year out and never get tired of it? I guess the answer lies in what it is you expect to see at the site! Julian Rocks is one of those sites that you never tire of. It is situated within the Cape Byron Marine Park in northern NSW, only 3 kms off the shore of Byron Bay on the east coast of Australia. Regarded as one of Australia's top ten dive sites, it is an aggregation site for the endangered Grey Nurse Sharks, Carcharias Taurus, who visit in winter when the water temperature drops below 22 deg.

Every year for the past 6 years, I have anxiously awaited the return of the Grey Nurse Shark into the wide, deep trenches on the north side of Julian Rocks. This year, these fabulous animals arrived early in the month of May but conditions kept visibility down to well under 10 mtrs for some weeks. In mid-July the water finally cleared up with reports that the viz was 20 mtrs or better - perfect conditions for a wide angle lens. It was time to shoot some sharks.

It was the first dive on Friday morning and at about 9.00am we backward rolled into reasonably clean, clear water. My buddy, Lynda, and I were no less than 5 minutes into the dive when we spotted the first Grey Nurse Shark of the dive. Much to our surprise, this was not the normal vision of a GNS. Initially I thought the shark was eating something, which seemed such an unusual sighting for us, but as we proceeded closer it became obvious that this shark actually had a foreign object embedded in its gullet. I was able to position myself within 2 – 3 feet of the shark to get some close up shots of the shark's ailment. We continued on with the rest of the dive and at one stage had as many as 25 Grey Nurses surrounding us – an awesome experience.

Back at the dive shop, we immediately contacted the Marine Parks Authority of NSW to advise them of our sighting. By the end of the day I had sent off an email to relevant authorities to alert them of the sharks problem - one that would

certainly lead to the early death of this beautiful 3.7 mtr female GNS.

Authorities agreed to mount a rescue attempt of the female shark and 5 days later a rescue team from Seaworld, of the Gold Coast, arrived by boat at Julian Rocks. In no time the shark was spotted, with a team of divers slipping a noose around the shark's body. It was then placed into a cradle and winched onto the boat where a Seaworld veterinarian removed a 4 ft long 'fishing gaffe' from inside the shark's gullet. The shark was then tagged and successfully returned into the ocean.

This generated one of the most positive media reports on sharks that we have seen for some time, assisting in the awareness of marine conservation and the plight of the endangered Grey Nurse Shark.

John Natoli
www.natoliunderwater.com

Parting Shot 4

It was some stormy days and the diving was not so much fun, at least on the boat being exposed to the chilly wind. The storm that moved across Utila also washed with him a lot of debris into our bay at Laguna Beach Resort including several tons of Sargassum seaweed.

We had it all up on our main beach and covering parts of the bay and the workers started to remove it. Just coincidently I was passing the guys and saw that they collected something inside a bucket with water. As I was looking curiously too see what was inside, I realized that it was a selection of different fish that they had caught accidentally while piling up the seaweed. There was a tiny puffer fish, small groupers and an interesting fish I'd never seen before with a lot of hairs and a kind of legs. I examined it more and finally found that he had a rod on his forehead! A frogfish! It was a very exciting discovery for me as frogfish were always something very rare and special to me. But how did he come here, frogfish were in my understanding sessile bottom dwellers. With these question marks in mind I went to consult the Humann, *the* book when it comes to identify Caribbean reef fish. Frogfish, frogfish.. There he was, I was pretty sure: Sargassum Frogfish, Histrio histrio, the only non sessile frogfish living inside Sargassum seaweed, occasionally washed up to the shore. Sargassum. I remember reading Columbus' logbook, describing his time in the Sargasso sea and his exciting observation of diverse life that was existing inside this floating seaweed cover on the surface.

Then it came to my mind: I need to shoot this frogfish in his habitat. I wasn't sure if I would find him easily inside the seaweed so I just went without camera first with snorkel and mask to dig in this dense layer of seaweed, branches and plastic bottles.

It took a while, but digging carefully with a stick being submerged waist deep I found some interesting pipefish and finally the frogfish himself. Okay, he is there, now I just need to get my camera and then find him again.

So I ran back to my place preparing my housing and camera with dangerously wet hands, the strobe I could forget, the batteries were not charged. My girlfriend Christine was curiously asking me what was going on, I explained it to her and asked her to join me snorkelling, I visualized already my shot with the frogfish and her in the background.

Canon EOS 350d, 18-55mm, Sea & Sea housing, natural light, ISO 100, 1/160, f7.1

So we went in again and it took an agonizingly long time until I found him. Christine posed behind him and I shot from different angles and distances. It was also easier than normal because we could talk on the surface and really find the optimum constellation. I think the workers on the shore where really wondering what these strange guys were doing all the time in the seaweed that was for them basically just garbage.

Tobias Reitmayr
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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".
peter@uwpmag.com