Underwater Photography

Nov/Dec 2010

AQUATICA™

Digital

Coming soon!

Exquisitely compact and delightfully easy to use!

The awesome AN-5 housing for the Sony Nex-5 camera with a brand new line of ports and accessories.

300 ft depth rating (upgradable to 450 ft).
Sturdy aluminum construction.
Modular port system.
Optical strobe connectors or Classic wired connectors.

Deep down, you want Aquatica

www.aquatica.ca

Contents

Cover shot by
Jordi Chias Pujol

Underwater Photography

A web magazine UwP57 Nov/Dec 2010

Underwater Photography

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

Editorial

No cover limitations here

This issue's front cover by Jordi Chias Pujol continues the long line of consistently great cover images and I am very greatful to him for allowing us to use it. It won the One Earth category in the recent Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010 but it is not really front cover material in the traditional sense.

Printed magazines on shelves need their front cover to say "Buy me". A colourfully clad, well lit diver watching a cuddly clownfish usually does the trick or sadly any image of a shark, for some reason. But put a struggling turtle, terminally entangled in a discarded fishing net, and the reader will feel uncomfortable and move on to pastures prettier.

I went along to the press launch of the Veolia Competition and had the opportunity to meet and chat with Jordi about this image and his recent work. He spends a great deal of time on the water between Barcelona and the Balearic Islands in the Mediterranean and finding such as turtle stranded in fishing nets is far from uncommon. In fact the majority of inspections of discarded fishing nets on the surface reveal stranded or dying species of one kind or another. He revealed that the majority of his underwater images nowadays were of the destructive nature of man's waste rather than the beauty of the underwater world.

His portfolio of such shots has built up so much over the recent years that he thought he might try and get a book of them published. My initial reaction was to say what a good idea it was but then it dawned on me that no publisher would commit capital to such a project. Sales of coffee table books are precarious enough without choosing a subject which portrays such negativity. And then it dawned on me very quickly that the way in which UwP is produced would be the ideal way to enable such a book to come to fruition.

The beauty (and some would say genius...) of the idea behind UwP is that it costs only time to produce and virtually nothing to distribute worldwide so it can be free to download. A book of images and text showing the stark reality of some underwater life could be produced in such a way and in doing so could be made available to anyone who wanted to download it. As a result the stark message could be transmitted worldwide and, who knows, the media world may even pick up on it and publicise it to give it an even greater effect. After all, bad news makes good news, as they say.

If there is one thing which has changed the world in the late 20th, early 21st century, it is the power of the people. The power through the internet, free downloads and video clips to educate and inform the general public - in this case to the real dangers faced by the underwater world. A world which remains hidden to the vast majority and which is so easily ignored. A world normally portrayed by pretty colourful pictures (which sell books) published by companies with both eyes on the balance sheet.

Now *we* can self produce the pdf books which will show parts of our world in a newer, more truthful light. They can still be technically excellent, as Jordi's most certainly is, but maybe, just maybe, they will help to draw the general public's attention away from 'Nemo' and its saccharine reassurance to the plight of the real world.

Home grown goodness

Tim Priest's thought provoking article (see page 43) on the ethics of underwater photography made very interesting reading for me, and I hope it will for you also.

As travelling underwater photographers we face the dilemma of increasing the weight of our baggage with tons of carbon emitted by air travel. His observation that some competition winners are looking closer to home for their images (urban foxes in London and Paris by one and raccoon dogs and badgers near one photographers home in Finland) made me all the more pleased when I received articles for this issue from Sue Daly and Charles Hood.

Sue covers her local diving on the island of Sark in the Channel Islands just north of France while Charles extols the virtue of photographing the second largest fish in the sea - the basking shark - in his native Cornish waters. They are both great photographic examples that we do not have to fly thousands of miles to encounter excellent diving and world class subjects; more often than not they are on our doorstep.

Sue's images were, in particular for me, a breath of fresh air for if you were to look at images in UK diving magazines taken around our coast you would be forgiven for thinking that all backgrounds are black with little or no available light or alternatively they need to blasted with flashlight to illuminate the foreground because it is so dark.

It isn't like that and Sue's images prove it.

Peter Rowlands
peter@uwpmag.com

News, Travel & Events

Hasselblad and Custom Photo Images workshop

January 22-29, 2011

Cobalt Coast Dive Resort Grand Cayman

Hasselblad and Custom Photo Images invites scuba divers to a fabulous photography workshop January 22-29, 2011 at the Cobalt Coast Dive Resort on Grand Cayman Island. What makes this a unique opportunity is we supply H4D Hasselblad digital cameras and the housing for the cameras. Each attendee will work with experienced underwater photographers, and once topside with experienced Hasselblad Phocus software and Photoshop users. In addition to the cameras and software, we are including:

-Roundtrip airfare from Miami International Airport to Grand Cayman Island
-7 nights lodging at Cobalt Coast Dive Resort, room tax and service charges
-Daily breakfast, lunch and 3 course dinner
-6 days of 2 tank boat dives with underwater photography instructors
-Free use of dive computer
-Underwater Nitrox
-Stingray City underwater dive
-Kittawake afternoon dive
-Guided night dive
-West Bay National Park tour
-Mangrove tour
-Photo clinics with Peter Lorber and Courtenay Gilbert

The workshop is limited to 12 participants maximum.

For reservations or further information, please contact us at 561-361-0031, or e-mail peter@peterlorber.com , or addielorber@gmail.com

www.peterlorber.com

Eco Divers Scubazoo Digital Photo Centre in North Sulawesi

Eco Divers' is delighted to announce the appointment of Scubazoo to manage The Digital Centre, the only dedicated photo and video centre in North Sulawesi at Kima Bajo Resort & Spa and Lembeh Cottages, from 1 October 2010.

The Digital Centre will be managed by Christian Loader, a very talented underwater photographer who has been with Scubazoo for more than four years. Christian's growing passion for underwater photography has seen him score several online awards as well as the cover of Asian Diver magazine.

The Centres are fully equipped with state-of-the-art hardware and software, providing an enormous range of photo, video, editing & printing .

www.digitalcentreindonesia.com

2011 Underwater Competition launching Soon

underwater competition.com

One of the largest, most prestigious and unique series of international underwater photo & video competitions kicks off its 6th anniversary this year with over $110,000 in world class prizes.

Often referred to as the "Super Bowl" of underwater imagery events, the Our World Underwater and DEEP Indonesia competitions truly showcase the art of underwater imagery from across the globe while celebrating the beauty, mystery and delicacy of the oceans.

Stay tuned - the official call for entries is right around the corner!

www.underwatercompetition.com

2011 Beneath the Sea International Imaging Competition

December 31st deadline

Beneath the Sea is pleased to give all underwater photographers and videographers a chance to show off their images.

Best-In-Show Prize (Video): The Stan Waterman Award for Excellence in Underwater Videography.

Best-In-Show Prize (Photo): The David Doubilet Award for Excellence in Underwater Photography.

Best In Show Prize (Creative): The Jim Church Award for Excellence in Underwater Creative Imaging.

And many other prizes, including travel and equipment from premier manufacturers.

So start looking through your images and videos to find your best work to enter. But don't wait too long—the deadline of December 31, 2010 is closer than you think!

The BTS International Imaging Competition is open to underwater photographers and videographers throughout the world. Beneath The Sea, Inc. is a federally tax-exempt (501©(3)) organization incorporated as not-forprofit in the State of New York and all proceeds from the Imaging Competition go to further BTS's goals of (1) providing continuing education to the recreational diver community, (2) educating the public to the benefits of protecting the ocean environment and (3) supporting oceanic and environmental related projects and charities.

The 35th Annual Beneath The Sea Dive Exposition will take place March 25, 26 and 27, 2011 at the Meadowlands Exposition Center, Secaucus, New Jersey –10 minutes from Manhattan.

www.beneathsea.org

Divequest, Birdquest and Wild Images

Triple Travel company opens in Austin, Texas on Sept 7th

From September 7th a new dive travel company based in Austin, Texas will be available to US & Canadian customers offering not just diving trips but also birdwatching and wildlife photography trips.

Divequest is the diving branch and they have been organising quality trips for divers and especially underwater photographers for nearly 20 years while based in the UK. Alex Mustard, Martin Edge and Graham Abbott all lead regular trips for them, as well as Charles Hood and Shannon Conway.

Divequest cater for the discerning diver by choosing destinations and organising trips which have the individual in mind. Their choice of locations and resorts are extremely well chosen and researched to make sure that they offer a very high standard of service.

Flights from the US and Canada will ensure you have a total package with peace of mind.

Birdquest tours are exciting, friendly, small-group birding holidays designed and guided by a team of leaders and office staff whose professionalism, experience and knowledge are unsurpassed. Quality is Birdquest's watchword and profoundly influences everything that they do. Our guiding philosophy at Birdquest is quite simple: it is to give you, our clients and friends, the very best, most rewarding and most enjoyable birding holidays possible: in other words, 'The Ultimate in Bird Tours'.

Wild Images Photographic Tours specializes in holidays that offer incredible photographic opportunities, with an emphasis on wildlife as well as some dramatic scenery. Their Wild Images photo tours are unique as they offer an opportunity

to visit some wonderful locations along with a group of like-minded photographers whilst being accompanied by one of our internationally respected naturalist guides, who are not only experts at getting you to the very best places for wildlife at the best season and the best time of day for the best shots, but also expert organizers able to competently help with the day to day running of the tour, and experienced photographers who are happy to offer photographic advice too.

For more information about any of these 3 exciting services follow these links.

www.divequest-travel.com
www.birdquest-tours.com
www.wildimages-phototours.com

New Products

Aquatica AT2i housing for the Canon T2i/550

Announced this past July, the super light and compact Aquatica AT2i housing for the Canon T2i/550 has undergone its complete field testing cycle and has now started shipping.

Among modifications made from the preproduction prototype is a new retractable focus/zoom gear rack and lens release lever, pulling out these controls clears the path for installing and removing the camera/lens assembly, replacing the battery, card or lens now becomes a simple task to do. The controls layout has been ergonomically positioned with vital functions (for both still and video) all being accessible at the tip of your fingers.

The Aquatica AT2i housing is manufactured from the best quality aluminum and high grade stainless steel components. The housing shell is treated to a military specification anodizing process and covered with a protective layer of baked powder coating. The Aquatica AT2i is designed and destined to give years of loyal services to its owners.

www.aquatica.ca

Gates' new housings for Sony XR550 and CX550 in stock

Once again redefining 'fingertip mechanical controls', the Gates XR550 underwater housing elegantly unites 'bulletproof' design and ease of use. A generously sized camera LCD viewfinder window makes framing and focus a breeze. White balance and Tele-macro controls are standard. Precision Ports offer the clearest, sharpest HD images possible.

These amazing housings are now available from stock.

www.camerasunderwater.co.uk

UN universal red filter and LCD magnifier for Olympus E-PL1 housing

The UN universal red filter is designed for use with the Olympus E-PL1 housing but can also be used with any 4-5" flat or dome ports via velcro attachment. It works with the latest 4" mini domes from Subal, Seacam, Nauticam, Aquatica,etc.

The UN LCD magnifier attaches to the rear of the housing for improved viewing.

www.scubasymphony.com

Klearport Protection System

Underwater photography is a challenging area of photography and it is important that your equipment is kept in tip-top condition to ensure that you take the best underwater pictures possible.

This is where Klearport Protection System plays an important role. Klearport Protection System is a thin clear coat designed as a finished coat with excellent adhesion to glass, polycarbonate, metal and many other substrates. Based on Nano technology, the protective coat or treatment protects surface substrates against permanent staining and discoloration and provides a clearer view. It makes the surface look like new and easier to maintain. Klearport Protection System also does not react with the plastic parts of your housing and ports.

www.scubasymphony.com

Ikelite Canon G12 Compatibile with their housing for Canon G11.

The #6146.11 housing for the Canon G11 is fully operational with all aspects of the Canon G12 camera except for the Front Dial control on the camera's handgrip. Existing #6146.11 housings may be returned to Ikelite for the addition of this dial control. Cost of the upgrade is $75 plus return freight. An estimate for service will be provided upon evaluation and may be more than $75 if other non-warranty repairs are required.

www.ikelite.com

Nauticam USA

Nauticam NA-NEX5 Sony NEX-5 housing

"Back to the future"

The Sony NEX-5 provides DSLR image quality with the full HD video of a camcorder in a compact size.

The Nauticam NA-NEX5 extends that capability with a form fitting aluminium housing and a full range of ports from fisheye to macro.

But the most innovative twist is a port adaptor to use Nikonos lenses from the pin sharp 15mm UW Nikkor to the super macro combination of 35mm and extension tubes.

For decades the Nikonos range of lenses were world leaders but the advent of digital saw them put on the shelf. Now we can use them all over again to benefit from the past with a camera for the future.

www.nauticamusa.com

Nauticam NA-NEX5 Housing for Sony NEX-5

Nauticam proudly announces the NA-NEX5 Housing for the Sony NEX-5. This camera and housing package offers image quality traditionally only available from much larger SLR systems and ease of use previously found only in compact systems.

Nauticam engineers started with a clean slate for their first compact camera housing. The result is an amazingly compact housing, with all of the NEX-5 camera controls available from the ergonomic grip sculpted into the side of the housing.

A wide variety of lenses are available to the NEX shooter, including the ultra wide fisheye perspective from Sony E 16mm /2.8 + VCL-ECF1 Fisheye Converter, the versatile E 18-55 Zoom .

The large 3" NEX-5 Display can be angled up at approximately 15 degrees allowing easier composition and more comfortable diving posture.

One of the options is an adapter for the heralded Nikonos U/W Nikkor water contact range finder lenses. While the Sony E- mount lenses offer excellent optics and autofocus performance, the Nikonos lenses yield incredibly sharp images.

Depth Rating: 100m (E18-55 Port 75m) Dimensions: 164mm x 118 x 83mm

www.nauticamusa.com

Fantasea Nikon Coolpix P7000 housing

Fantasea Line proudly announces a new housing design, specifically created for the new Nikon Coolpix P7000 digital camera.

The FP7000 Housing is manufactured to the highest professional standards of function, style and durability. It is depth rated to 60m/200 feet and is fully functional with ergonomically designed and labeled controls. The Fantasea FP7000 is the ultimate waterproof home for the Nikon Coolpix P7000.

The FP7000 Housing was designed to be compatible with a complete Accessory System, enabling photographers to enhance the quality of their images.

www.fantasea.com

Light & Motion Fathom Wetmate 65 lens

Light & Motion is pleased to announce the shipping release of the new Fathom Wetmate 65 degree wide angle lens; designed to fit all 2010 Sony Light & Motion underwater video housings. Using a robust press-fit system with the flat-port, the Fathom Wetmate 65 can be instantly mounted and removed underwater for optimum "one dive" shooting versatility. You can now shoot seahorses and turtles in the same dive! Designed by the industry leader in lens fabrication, this Fathom engineered Wetmate 65 degree lens is made with the highest quality glass found on the market in order to achieve an outstandingly low distortion rate of only 1.40% and a 50% zoom thru rate.

www.uwimaging.com

Ultralight
Pan and tilt tripod
with extendable legs

The Ultralight Pan and tilt tripod has a tilt mechanism which can be operated one handed and it is lockable.

There is a large knob for tightening the legs which are extendable from 11-18" with non-slip sharp ends for use on rock, and snap-on balls for use in sandy muck diving situations

The Ultralight Pan and tilt tripod will be on display at DEMA, booth # 3637 in the Image Resource Center

MSRP: $454.95.

The tripod head and clamp can be purchased separately. MSRP $184.95 or the head with regular legs of 5", 8", or 12" MSRP $328.80

All of their products are made with 6061 aluminum that is machined and then hard anodized, to withstand the harshest treatment. In addition to this tripod, they offer a full line of trays, pivots, adapters for all strobes, and video applications, along with numerous accessories.

www.ulcs.com
www.camerasunderwater.co.uk

Nauticam NA-645DF Housing for PhaseOne 645DF

Nauticam proudly announces the NA-645DF Housing for the PhaseOne & Mamiya 645DF cameras with Phase One P+ Digital Backs. This camera and housing package redefines professional underwater imaging, setting new standards for the highest resolution, fastest flash sync speed, and greatest dynamic range available in any underwater camera system.

The Nauticam NA-645DF Housing is designed with the photographer's in water experience in mind. Careful design attention results in intuitive, convenient access to key controls (shutter release, f-stop, shutter speed, AE-L, and four digital back push buttons) from the housing handles.

The housing back is oversized to yield near neutral buoyancy and excellent front-back balance. Configured for the Phase One 28mm wide angle lens with a 9" glass dome port, the housing is perfectly balanced, and .7kg negatively buoyant. When set up with a flat port system and Phase One 120mm macro, the entire system is .15kg negatively buoyant.

Four mounting points are available for accessory strobes and lights. Two Nikonos, Ikelite, or S6 Flash connectors are included as standard equipment.

www.nauticamusa.com

Sea&Sea VF45
45 degree Viewfinder

Designed for the MDX housing range, the VF45 45 degree angled prism viewfinder replaces the one supplied with the housing and offers superior vision and the ability to frame shots in a more comfortable position.

Covering the entire visual field, the VF45 enhances magnification by x1.2 and enables subtle framing and focusing of subjects. The eyepiece rotates 360 degrees in increments of 90 degrees, clicking firmly into place at each stop, and provides ideal camera position for either landscape or portrait shots.

The VF45 viewfinder can be installed by the user and an attachment tool is included.

The VF45 depth rating is 100m its size is (WxHxD): 57.5 x 98.7 x 96mm and it weighs 390g

The SRP is £876.95

Compatible Housings: MDX-7D, MDX-D300s, MDX-PRO D700, MDX-PRO 5D Mark II (*1), MDX-PRO D3 (*2), MDX-D300 (*2), MDX-40D (*2)

*1 Accessory spacer is required to install the viewfinder to the MDX-5D MkII housing

*2 Dealer modification is required to install the viewfinder to these housings. The LCD window must be replaced for one with locator holes for the pins on the viewfinder.

The viewfinder is not compatible with RDX or older DX series housings.

www.sea-sea.net

Aquatica
Nikon D3/D3s/D3x housing

Aquatica is proud to announce that it is now shipping its newly redesigned housing for the Nikon D3 generation of cameras, long a standard with our professional underwater photographer.

The D3 Nikon and its housing could only accept the newer D3s with limited capabilities, this newer housing version of the Nikon's D3 battleship line of cameras will now accept all of the versions (D3s/D3x/D3), aside from relocating some controls for better ergonomics and accessing the video feature, the housing has gone on a diet and has lost a substantial amount of weight. This is due to our new computer assisted 5 axis machine, that technology gives us unprecedented control over the machining process and the result is a much improved placement of the strategic material needed in the construction of the housing and precise removal of the excess one. A 20% weight reduction of the housing shell was possible, and this without sacrificing the robustness or depth rating that our housing are famous for.

Dimension and weight without grips attached:

Width: 10.5"/ 26.5cm X Height: 8.75"/ 22.2cm X Depth: 6.25" / 15.75cm

Weight: 7.3lbs / 3.25kg

MSRP: 3989.00 USD with standard viewfinder, grips, moisture alarm and dual Nikonos type bulkheads

www.aquatica.ca

Sea&Sea DX-GE5 Compact Camera Set

The DX-GE5 camera is waterproof without its housing to depths up to 5m, allowing it to be used in all kinds of general outdoor situations, from marine sports to snow settings. Of course, the housing is built to withstand pressure at water depths up to 55m, enabling it to handle full-range diving as well.

Features:

12.2 effective megapixels and 4x optical zoom lens (38–152mm equiv.).

Underwater photo and video modes perfect for use underwater.

2.7-inch LCD monitor (with an automatic brightness adjustment function). Automatically adjusts the brightness of the LCD screen to match the amount of ambient light in the area.

Equipped with a High Dynamic Range (HDR) function that corrects for blown out highlights and blocked up shadows in high contrast scenes to give a more natural image.

Compatible with highly sensitive ISO 1600 photography.

Removable macro diffuser function. Adjusts light from the internal flash to make it uniform during macro shooting.

Retractable fibre optic cable

socket, can be extended to align with the built-in flash and hold fibre optic cable in correct position.

Price: £484.95

www.sea-sea.net

Aquatica AN-5 housing for the Sony NEX-5 camera

The Aquatica Team is proud to announce the release of the Aquatica AN-5 housing for the Sony NEX-5 camera.

The housing shell is anodized and powder coated with a 300ft/90 meter depth rating.

A very innovative approach was taken to secure and release the ports and lenses, all based on a multi function mechanism, rotate clockwise to position 1 to release the port, continue rotating to the end for disengaging the gear rack mechanism and allow the user to pull out easily the tray mounted camera and lens with the Focus/Zoom gear attached to it or simply push on the lever to remove the lens without having to remove the camera.

The LCD screen is tilted to 15 degrees to give the user a much more comfortable position for viewing underwater.

Just 165mm /6.5" wide, 141mm /5.5" high(including optical bulkhead) and 84mm/3.3" thick, the production model should tip the scale without the camera at less than 1Kg/2.2lbs.,

Priced at just 1,349.00 USD Retail,it will be unveiled at the DEMA show (November 17-20)

www.aquatica.ca

Underwater Photography A FREE web based magazine

Classified Adverts

For Sale

Aquatica S2 Pro/D100 Housing with twin Nikonos 5-pin connectors. 2 x FUJI S2 Pro bodies (similar to D100)
8" dome port – no scratches
8" dome shade for fisheyes
Neoprene cover for 8" dome port
Neoprene cover protection for 8" dome port with shade
Extension Ring For Nikon 18mm, 12-24mm, Sigma 10-20mm
Zoom ring for Sigma 10-20mm f4.5-5.6 EX
Lens – NIKON AF NIKKOR 28–80mm
1xbody O-ring
2xport O-rings

The Fuji S2s are in very good condition.Both have had the sensor replaced by Fuji (issue of sensors losing allpower). The Dome is in excellent condition, the housing has some minorpaint peelings (known problem with the Aquatica S2 Housing) and the shadehas some scratches on the outside.
Total Cost for quick sale £750 if bought before end Oct, else £1000.

Contact Brian or Paul at Aquanauts on 01752 228825
info@aquanauts.co.uk

Ref c108

For Sale

Ikelite Housing for Canon 550D
Ikelite dome port 5503.50
Ikelite flat port 5502
Ikelite housing to 2 sea &sea strobes
Ikelite stem mounts with ball for flexi arms
Will come with receipt and remander of warranty to 12 /04/11 came from Camerasunderwater
Will sell for £1200.00 ono

Contact terrygriffiths900@hotmail.com
Tel 0754100188 Torquay area

Ref C107

For Sale

SUBAL FS2 HOUSING PLUS PORTS AND FUJI FINEPIX S2 PRO CAMERA BODY

The housing has an O-ring and is in very good condition. It has 2 flash sync outlets and a leak detector. I am including TWO Subal ports: a wide angle dome port (complete with Ken Sullivan protective cover) and a macro port.
The Fuji Finepix S2 Pro camera body is in excellent condition and everything is in good working order.
I am upgrading to a new Nikon system, hence the sale. Any inspection of the housing plus camera is most welcome. This is an excellent set up and is a very cost effective entry to DSLR underwater photography with access to a Subal housing and two genuine Subal ports at a reasonable price.
I am looking for £1500 for the package. You can phone me on 01524 276563 or contact me on e-mail : ramsaydavid@me.com

Ref C106

~~For Sale~~ SOLD

~~Ikelite System for Canon EOS 5D Mark II~~

~~6871.02 5D Mark II Housing~~
~~Just back from Ikelite maintenance and all available upgrades~~
~~5506.45 Macro Port with cover~~
~~(fits EF 100mm macro lens)~~
~~5610.45 8" Dome with #4103.51Port Body~~
~~(fits EF 17-40 or 16-35 lenses)~~
~~Includes dome shade and neoprene cover~~
~~4103.51 x 2 single DS Strobe sync cords~~
~~4103.52 dual DS Strobe sync cord~~

~~Small scratch on macro port that does not affect image quality. Otherwise,this system is in perfect condition. Less than one year old and just returned from Ikelite factory service and upgrades. US$ 2000 plus shipping from USA (was over $3000 new)~~

~~Contact hughross@mac.com~~

~~For Sale~~ SOLD

~~Original FE (Fisheye) Subal Glass Port Fits MK3 Subal Housings It is in In Mint + condition.~~

~~Not been in use for some years so make me an Offer.~~

~~Contact Paul Ives~~
~~paul@palives-photographer.com~~

For Sale

SUBAL ND2 HOUSING BODY AND NIKON D2X CAMERA BODY

The housing which comes with a O ring and a synch cord has 2 flash synch outlets and a leak detector, it also has a standard finder. It has been used on no more than 60 dives and is in excellent condition as well as a dream to use.

The D2X camera body has some minor signs of wear on the rear rubber grip but otherwise is in perfect working order. The camera has 3 spare batteries as well as a charger and the owner's manual.

Any inspection is welcome. I am upgrading to a D700, hence the reason for sale of the housing and camera.

The cost of the camera is £1000 and the housing is £1250. I am willing to sell separately.

More...

You can phone Ian on 01665 606966 or my email is: photosbyian@me.com

Ref c105

For Sale

Lightly used Canon S90 with Canon housing. Both are in like new condition. I also have two fiber optic cables with attachments to housing. They will connect to Sea and Sea strobes.

$400 for the set

contact Jon at
churchill68_2000@yahoo.com

ref c103

For Sale

Ikelite Video Housing 6039.07 and Sony HDR-HC9Ecamcorder with External UR/Pro colour filter, Internal lens shield, silicone lubricant, a Hardigg Storm case iM2400 in black with interior foam. The equipment is just over 12 months old (May 2009) and has been used on only about 10 dives. All in excellent condition.For full specifications & more photos please contact me.
£1850 for package. (Carriage extra)
Judith

Flitwick55@aol.com

ref c104

UwP Photo Classifieds

Advertise your equipment for sale and be seen by thousands of underwater photographers. Placing a Classified advert on the UwP website is instant - no printing delays - and for the buyer it is also instant - no 10 day auctions - if you see what you like, buy it today! If you want to sell something you could well sell it today!

Classified Lite

A Classified Lite includes a photo up to 240 pixels wide (send any size image and we'll resize it for you).
You can have as many words as you like but please bear in mind the more words there are, the smaller they will be! As a guideline 50 words is about the right combo of words and size.

A Classified will run until you sell the equipment!

This costs just £5

Classified Extra

If you want a bigger display with more images, why not book a Classified Extra?. and you can have up to 4 x 240 pixels wide photos and a whole page (725 x 625 pixels) to yourself

A Classified Extra will run until you sell the equipment!

This costs just £10 and includes your Classified Lite

www.uwpmag.com/Classifieds.html

Nauticam NA-NEX5 housing for Sony NEX-5

by Phil Rudin

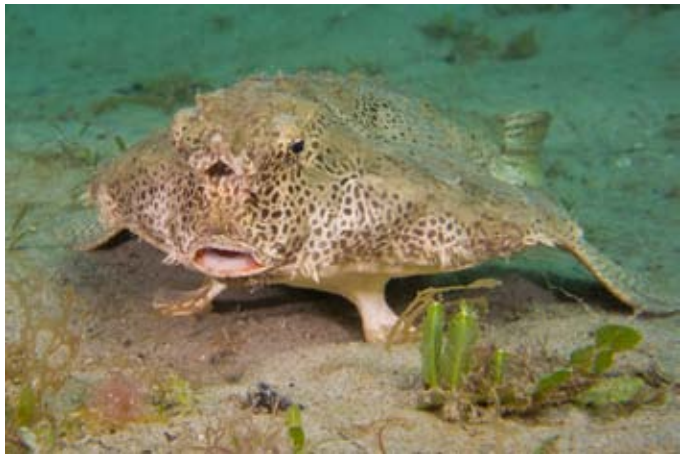
Nauticam officially released their NA-NEX5 underwater housing during the September 2010 Photokina exhibition in Colon Germany creating quite a buzz in the underwater photo community. The NA-NEX5 housing is made for the Sony NEX-5 camera and with the optional Nikonos U/W Nikkor lens adapter can be used with the classic Nikonos manual focus lenses.

Sony NEX-5 camera

The Sony NEX-5 is built around the 23.4 X 15.6 mm APS HD CMOS sensor used in many of todays high-end DSLR cameras that are often twice the price, size and weight of the Sony. The 14.2 megapixel camera has a suggested MSRP of $699.99/€649.95 with the 18-55 mm f/3.5-5.6 “kit” zoom or the 16 mm f/2.8 pancake lens. The NEX-5 has a magnesium alloy body, records full HD Video at 1080/60i with on demand auto focus. Sony has also introduced the VCL-ECF1 Fisheye equivalent adapter at ($149.99) which attaches to the bayonet mount on the 16 mm F2.8 (a 24 mm equivalent lens) and the VCL-ECU1 which is a 20 mm equivalent wide angle adapter at ($114.95). The monitor is a three inch, 920,000 pixel LCD screen which can tilt 80 degrees up and 45 degrees down to improve the viewing position. The APS-C sensor is about the same size as the one used in the new Nikon D-7000 and has about nine times the surface area of the sensors used in consumer cameras like the Canon G-11. The larger sensor produces greatly improved image quality over current compacts and has image quality equal to many current DSLR’s.

Nauticam NA-NEX5 housing

The NA-NEX5 is Nauticam’s first housing for a non-DSLR, EVIL (Electronic Viewfinder Interchangeable Lens) type of camera and a brilliant fusion of advanced engineering, innovation, style, ergonomics and compactness. Nautican’s patented port locking system has been designed into the left side of the housing complete with Nikonos V style push and twist release. The locking clasp for this clam-shell style housing is a push button rotary buckle incorporated into the ergonomic right-hand grip complete with mounting points for an adjustable wrist support strap. When using the right-hand grip all of the controls are within easy reach of the thumb and index finger. The left-hand can easily control the zoom/focus dial and the useful up/down control for the cameras pop-up flash. The top of the housing has a cold shoe and standard mounting ball for modeling lights, video lights and other accessories. The rear of the housing has an anti-reflective, scratch resistant LCD window, controls for all push buttons, a command dial, a rocker switch for image review and one touch video, plus a moisture alarm display window and the pop-up flash up/down control. Inside the housing is a camera tray which mounts via tripod screw to the bottom of the NEX-5 and slides neatly into a simple locking device at the base of the housing. The rear door of the housing leaves room for the large LCD display to be angled fifteen degree up. During my field tests I found this angled LCD viewing position was much more comfortable compared to a flat screen for shooting in both portrait and landscape. The moisture alarm is located under the camera tray and is powered by a small replaceable battery. This attention to small details is what has attracted so many buyers to the Nauticam brand since its introduction at the



Sony 18-55 zoom at 33 mm, ISO-200, 1/125th, f/13, twin Inon Z-240 strobes.

November 2009 DEMA show in Orlando, Florida. Nauticam uses state of the art manufacturing equipment, machining housings from a solid block of aircraft grade aluminum. The housings then go through a hard anodizing process which makes then impervious to salt water. Marine grade stainless steel is used for all fasteners and the end result is a housing with a depth rating of 100 meters (328ft.) well beyond the limits of recreational divers. My housing was equipped with the optional dual grip tray which I used for much of my field testing. The tray handles are laterally adjustable to allow greatest comfort with or without gloves of all sizes and are threaded to attach strobe arm mounting balls. Two optical flash connectors for the Inon S-TTL and Sea & Sea DS-TTL strobes are located above the port opening and provided reliable automatic flash exposure using S-TTL with my Inon Z-240 and S-2000 strobes.

Nauticam ports and lenses

Nauticam has introduced two optional ports with optically coated glass and an acrylic dome port. The flat port and zoom gear for the 18-55 mm f/3.5-5.6 zoom which has an angle of view of 76 to 29 degrees and focuses to 0.25m (9.8”). A flat port for the 16 mm f/2.8 pancake which has an 83 degree angle of view, focuses to 0.24m (9.4”) and is quite small. The third optional port is the 110 mm (4.33”) optical grade acrylic dome for the 16 mm pancake lens used with fisheye attachment lens. All three optics provided quick auto focus performance and excellent image quality for the entry level cost of the lenses. The ports locked securely into place and were extremely easy to change. The lens release on the camera body can be accessed from the front with the port removed to allow lens changes without removing the camera from the housing. A 67 mm adapter is also offered to mount items like the Inon UCL165M67 close-up lens.

Sony 16 mm with Fisheye conversion lens, ISO-200, 1/160th, f/7.1, twin Inon Z-240 strobes.

Nikonos lenses

A unique feature of the EVIL cameras is that just about any lens can be mounted to an adapter and placed on front of the camera. This feature made it possible for Nauticam to design an optional lens adapter which mounts to the patented port

locking system and sits over the cameras sensor allowing the entire line of bayonet mounted Nikonos manual lenses to be used with the Sony NEX-5. The Nikonos lenses were the gold standard for many amateur and professional underwater film photographers for decades offering superb optical performance for both macro and wide angle. I located an old set of Nikonos extension tubes I had stuck in a drawer years ago and stacked two tubes together with the Nikonos 35 mm lens for a test of the systems macro ability. I then headed to the Blue Heron Boulevard Bridge in Palm Beach County, Florida for a nostalgic flash-back to 1968 when I bought my first Nikonos II with a 28 mm lens. By the end of the dive I had reacquainted myself with all the ups and downs of shooting with extension tubes. Like most manual lenses I ended up with more softly focused images than I would have gotten with an auto focus lenses but the well focus images were razor sharp and a testament to the quality of the Nikonos lenses. The Nauticam housing system is so small it reminded me of shooting with a Nikonos RS but without all the extra weight of the Nikonos RS system.

Nikonos 35 mm+ extension tubes,ISO-200,1/160th,f/22, twin Inon Z-240 strobes.

Conclusion

Without question the Nauticam NA-NEX-5 housing is a professional quality system with many advanced features. The Nikonos lenses adapter is more than just a test of Nauticam's design ability and should prove very useful. We should keep in mind that the Nikonos lenses were designed for the 35 mm film format and as such will have a crop factor with the NEX-5's APS-C size sensor. The outstanding Nikonos 15 mm (94 degree AOV) will have an angle of view equal to about 72 degrees. If you are shooting subjects like sharks that fit into that AOV range of the lens results will be outstanding. The Nikonos 28 mm lens and 2:1 extension tube will produce a 3:1 image without need for tele converters, extension tubes or magnifiers and should surpass any like DSLR macro system for image quality. Sony's E-mount 18-55 mm and 16 mm lenses along with the 20 mm and fisheye adapters provide a wide range of shooting possibilities in a very compact and high quality system. With the acrylic dome port and fisheye adapter I was able to focus within inches of my subject allowing great opportunities for close-focus wide angle. Because of the unique design of the EVIL cameras the possibility for additional lens and dome port combinations is almost endless. The Nauticam NA-NEX-5 housing has an MSRP of $1550.00/€1140.00 which well exceeds the cost of the Olympus polycarbonate PT-EP01 housing system I reported on in the last issue of Underwater Photography Magazine. I believe that the Nauticam NA-NEX-5 is well worth the price and more than competitive with the other all aluminum housings built for the Panasonic and Olympus M4/3 cameras.

Phil Rudin

Phil Rudin is Senior Photographer for Dive Chronicles Magazine/US Dive Shows and a full-time freelance writer/photographer located in West Palm Beach, Florida, USA. He will be teaching (two) three hour underwater photography workshops during the Florida Dive Show, December 3&4, 2010 in West Palm Beach, Florida. Phil will also be teaching during the one week Hasselblad Underwater Photography Workshop at Cobalt Coast Dive Resort in Grand Cayman January 22-29, 2011.

philrudin@me.com
or
tropicalone@bellsouth.net

Cameras UNDERWATER

50 years ago underwater photography was something of a dark art practised by a handful of pioneers. Fast forward to today and thankfully things have changed. Now you can capture your adventures in vivid colour with a compact and easy to use outfit that won't cost you a kidney. Where can I get such a wonder? Cameras Underwater of course, we'll even show you how to get the best out of it.

TODAY... ANYONE CAN DO IT

Underwater cameras

Lighting systems

Underwater video

CRIKEY! ONLY 12 SHOTS

See us at DIVE 2010
NEC, Birmingham
30/31 October

Thank you: The Underwater Studio and Steve Warren

Cameras Underwater Ltd. Specialist equipment for scuba diving, snorkelling, surfing, skiing, water sports, hiking and all wet and demanding conditions.
www.camerasunderwater.co.uk. Phone: 01404 812277 / 020 7839 1991. Email: sales@camerasunderwater.co.uk

Seahorn Snoot review

by Kay-Burn Lim

I have always been interested in snoot photography underwater but never had the chance to try one out. There are not many commercial units available out there, and with my time underwater being very precious to me, I never actually got around to trying to make and test one. You can imagine my delight when I heard that the Seahorn Snoot was available to buy and custom fit for various strobes. As one of the lucky few photographers that was accepted for the Timor Leste shootout, I was intent on trying something different and thought a snoot would do the trick. I was very pleasantly surprised.

What's a snoot you ask? Well, it's basically a funnel to channel light from a strobe into a narrow beam. This allows for very dramatic lighting, black backgrounds, gorgeous shadows, emphasis on a subject and less backscatter in crappy visibility. The possibilities are many and although tricky to use, produces wonderful results with a little patience and some thought spent before the shot (or dive). I had no experience whatsoever in using a snoot prior to this competition and it took me just a couple of dives to figure out a few techniques to use it.

The Seahorn Snoot is well built and comes with an array of add-on attachments. These are used to produce a circular spot of light in various diameters. The main snoot/funnel attaches via 2 (or 3) velcro straps. Velcro stickers are included to place on your strobe. The hood itself also has a neoprene lining that allows for a snug fit. I have suggested that perhaps a bungee cord should be included. This was used in their prototypes but some complained about how it interfered with the strobe's control knobs. After using the snoot extensively over the 4 days of the competition, I must say that fiddling with velcro straps underwater isn't the most convenient thing to do, especially when wrestling with strobe arms. Scuba Symphony has assured me that they are looking into it for their next version. However, it was a very simple matter for me to fashion a bungee from zip ties and an elastic band. After a few minutes of crafting, I was good to go for the rest of the 3 days!

I must say that the Seahorn is a complete snooting system and much thought has gone into the

design of it. The various attachments included a cone to bring the size of the illuminated area to that of a small coin, an extension tube and finally a cap with a 1/2cm sized hole for really small subjects. There was also a honeycomb insert (for a much more defined spot as opposed to slightly diffused edges) and also some color filters included. Although my snoot had an aluminum carabineer to clip on your BC, all the other attachments came in a nice gift bag. A small mesh bag will probably be needed to carry these bits in a convenient manner while diving. I used a mesh bag that came with my dive gloves to carry all these parts with me during the

competition.

Using a snoot means having to handle a fair amount of gear during a dive. It helps to have your buddy double as an assistant to help hold on to attachments as necessary. I found myself constantly changing attachments between subjects. It can be easy to become so engrossed in wrestling with your strobes that you forget your surroundings. Unless your buoyancy skills are excellent, make sure you are aware of your surroundings and try not to damage coral beneath you or forget to monitor your depth as you focus on your gear. After I found a subject, I would hover at a respectable depth or find a clear patch somewhere to make my strobe adjustments before approaching.

I really love the lighting effects a snoot can give. A little creative lighting can go a long way in turning a common subject into a work of art. Imagine a spotlight on your subject and the shadows it will cast before choosing your strobe angle. There is no fear of backscatter as you only light your subject. It truly is like having a modeling studio underwater! Certain shots I might not have considered with longer macro lenses in silty water were saved by using the snoot. During the photo competition, the two dives which I did using a 105mm macro lens on a Nikon D300 were the only times I came across Rhinopias (lacy and paddleflap species). With the water all silted up by other divers, I was hesitant to even bother with a shot as I needed to back away by almost a meter to take a photo. I removed the strobe and arm with the snoot attached, extended it out and held it over the Rhinopias to take my photos. Just like magic, no backscatter, a clear defined image, beautiful shadows and a wonderfully clean black background! I included both Rhinopia shots in my portfolio which managed to make first place in the competition. In fact, 5 of the 7 shots I submitted for the portfolio category were shot using the Seahorn snoot.

Overall, I was very pleased with the performance of the Seahorn. The various attachments included in the package allowed for a complete range of subjects to be covered. I highly recommend the Seahorn to anyone looking for a complete snooting system.

Pros: Custom fit for your strobe model, complete system

Cons/suggestions: Better attachment method required, inclusion of a simple mesh bag would be nice

Kay-Burn Lim

Light & Motion SOLA600

Focus and video light

By Alex Mustard

When I review products, I try and cast a critical eye over them. Despite the high quality of most gear these days, I don't see the benefit of writing reviews that say every product is wonderful. I adopt a similar approach with my photos, always looking for areas for improvement. So, with this in mind, it might be a surprise to hear straight off that the Light and Motion SOLA600 focus and video light is my standout underwater photography accessory of 2010. I'll explain.

The importance of a focus light for underwater photography is entirely dependant on what you shoot. If you favour shooting large pelagics in the open ocean or wide angle scenics on a shallow Red Sea reef, they are thoroughly unnecessary. But if you like macro, murky water or night diving then a good focus light will make the fundamental difference between getting and shot and not. Norwegian underwater photographer Christian Skauge tells me that in his home waters, he always encourages new shooters to purchase a decent focus light for their compact cameras, before even buying a strobe. There is no point taking photos if the camera cannot focus!

Standard diving torches can be used for focusing, but with narrow beams we find we spend as much dive time adjusting their aim as concentrating on our photography. Also with a focussed bright spot of light, we are more likely to spook critters as they are suddenly exposed to the full glare on our approach. Another common solution is using the aiming lights from your strobe, however this relies on having to aim the centre of your strobe beam directly at the subject, which is not always ideal for lighting. It also requires constant fiddling with your strobe positions making it an inefficient use of dive time.

The big revolution in focus lights came with the introduction of Fisheye FIX light range, which was THE product that caused a mainstream switch from small diving torches to dedicated focus lights among serious shooters. The FIX lights first used standard bulbs and then, in the last 18 months or so, have switched over to excellent LED based units. These lights produce a really wide, soft beam meaning basically meaning

The SOLA 600 combined focus and video light. With an array of 6 white LEDs, producing up to 680 lumens, and four red LEDs, producing 225 lumens.

Comparison of the illumination produced by the SOLA 600 and FIX LED 500. Both produce wide soft beams of light, ideal for focusing. The SOLA is marginally wider, but both are excellent.

An attractive feature of the SOLA600 is its small size and weight, here photographed alongside my FIX LED 500 light.

there is no need to re-aim them during a dive. And, as I said above, many photographers have noted that the wide pool of light also seems to be less shocking to subjects. The FIX lights also raised the financial stakes, taking focus lights from the sub $100 USD realm to that of several 100. The current range topper, the FIX LED 1000, retails around $599 and the FIX LED 500 at £299. This is the high-end market that the SOLA600 is aimed at, retailing at $579 (source for all prices: Backscatter.com).

I own a FIX LED500 and since many underwater photographers have experience of them it seems an ideal comparison for the key features of the SOLA600. The most obvious difference is size, the SOLA600 is about half the size and light weight (.54lbs/245g), a considerable bonus for the travelling photographer. To pretty much eliminate the risk of flooding, the SOLA600 is a completely sealed unit, charged through connectors on the back and turned on and off via a lockable magnetic switch. You push it forward and release to turn on the torch, pull it back and release to switch on the red light mode (more about this below) and pull or push it to either end and hold to switch it off. This also makes it very easy to use in thick gloves.

Both lights produce excellent white light illumination, with wide soft illumination. My tests show the SOLA600 produces a marginally wider and softer beam, but this is not a deal breaking difference. In clear waters, a wide soft beam is highly desirable. It saves us having to re-aim the light constantly and is less likely to scare a critter than a narrow spot of light. However, when visibility is low you need a narrower beam. Otherwise it is like driving in the fog with your headlights on full beam. This issue becomes significant when the visibility is less than 5m/15ft.

Underwater photographer Neil Rosewarn uses the red light mode to photograph gobies on a whip coral in the Maldives. The red light mode clearly reduces how much critters are spooked by the illumination required to help focusing.

I would like to see focus light manufacturers providing beam-restricting snoots with their lights for low viz diving. The SOLA600 and FIX lights would benefit in this regard.

The FIX LED lights have a dial to vary the power output, while the SOLA600 has just three set powers for the white light, and a single power for the red light. The battery will last for several dives. A typical 60-70 minute night dive would drain it to only 50-70% on the built in battery monitor. A recharge from this point takes about an hour. So it is easily topped up between dives, if needed.

It is hard to talk about focus lights and not mention reliability. At the price, one could expect the top models to be bullet proof, but in the past, they have certainly not all been. A quick search of the internet forums will flesh out the facts. It is always tough to assess reliability during the short review period. Being such a fan of the SOLA,

Invertebrates seem the most unable to see the red light, allowing a close approach without disturbing them. Nikon D700 + 105mm VR + 1.4x teleconverter and 5T dioptre. Subal housing, twin Subtronic Alpha strobes and SOLA 600 focus light. 1/320th @ f/25.

I have been stretching out this review period to extend its stay with me! I have tested it in the Maldives, Florida, Bahamas, UK and Holland, a thorough test schedule motivated by me not wanting to have to return it. It has worked faultlessly, throughout. I have even lent it out to five other photographers, without problems.

I have a couple of reliability concerns in the design. I should restate, I have had no problems during my tests, but I feel it is worth mentioning them as areas to watch. I feel that there is a potential for the magnetic gliding switch to get clogged by sand or salt if not washed out regularly, particularly in a black sand location, like Lembeh. Light and Motion tell me that it has been designed with an extra wide tolerance to aid flushing of any debris. I also feel there is a potential problem with corrosion and wear on the exposed charging contacts, if a

lazy user regularly didn't wash and dry away salt water before charging. Again, on my test unit, they still look like new. Given the price most of us will be expecting a long life of active service. Nothing I saw made me doubt that the SOLA600 will oblige.

Perhaps the most exciting feature of the SOLA600 is the red light mode. It is often quoted that using a red light for focusing is beneficial because many species of marine life cannot see it. So you don't scare your subject in the process of focusing on it. The SOLA really works in this regard, but using it also really taught me that not all red lights are created equal. I have often added red filters to my diving lights, but have failed to notice any real advantage. This is because many red filters, while turning the light red, let through other colours too, which marine life can see. The SOLA600's red LEDs produce a very narrow spectrum of red light. You can see the difference by shining it on the cover of a magazine, a poorly filtered light will allow you to differentiate far more colours then the very pure red LEDs. These other colours will remain visible to critters, even if they cannot see the red.

The SOLA600 is the first red light that I have used that you can clearly see works in not spooking many marine species. I found the red light was most effective on

(Right) Not all dives need a focus light, but at night they are essential for ease of photography. Nikon D700 + 105mm VR and 5T dioptre. Subal housing, single Inon Z240 strobe with snoot. SOLA 600 focus light. 1/320th @ f/14.

(Far right) The red light mode allows us to stalk animals more easily, such as this sleeping parrotfish. That said fish will still react to your movements or any other disturbances. Nikon D700 + 105mm VR. Subal housing, twin Subtronic Alpha strobes and SOLA 600 focus light. 1/320th @ f/29.

invertebrates: molluscs, crustaceans, coral polyps, echinoderms etc. Many shallow water fish are clearly able to see red light, but when asleep (on night dives) it didn't wake them. It is also worth noting that while the light may be hard for critters to see, they will still detect an ungainly approach. It is not a licence to race or trash around. All of the photographers who tried this also commented positively on this aspect. In the Netherlands, one shooter even told me that they thought it even seemed to attract lobsters to the camera. Perhaps the lobsters were confused about the meaning of a red light in Holland?!

The other important advantage of the red light mode of the SOLA600, over using a filter, is that it allows you

easily to switch modes. The red light mode provides enough light to dive comfortably, but one disadvantage of staying red is that you don't see the colour of subjects. Many of the best macro photos celebrate the beauty of a fabulous creature on a beautiful background. Like the majority of photographers, I don't believe in moving subjects for the sake of my photos (and as a biologist nothing is more annoying than seeing a critter on a background it would actively avoid in the wild). To find these natural compositions, we need to be searching in full colour. It is important that the SOLA600 lets us switch instantly back to white.

Many focus lights are now made powerful enough and white enough to be used for video. Both the SOLA600 and FIX LED lights are designed to also function as video lights for vid-SLRs. I can confirm that both are bright, soft and white. But I am I am not a videoist, so I won't comment in detail about their suitability for this function.

So to conclude, I have been really impressed with the SOLA600.

Good illumination from a focus light allows us to accurately focus on tiny subjects, such as this gorgonian shrimp. Nikon D700 + 105mm VR + 1.4x teleconverter and 5T dioptre. Subal housing, twin Subtronic Alpha strobes and SOLA 600 focus light. 1/320th @ f/32.

It is an expensive piece of kit (at just under $600 USD,) but is an excellent performer. It produces a wide, soft pool of light, ideal for helping us focus, without having to constantly re-aim our torch. It has been a pleasure to use. The small size is a big plus for travel and for mounting on my housing. The red light mode has undoubtedly enabled me to get close encounters with marine wildlife that I have previously struggled with, ultimately helping me bag shots I hadn't been able to before. If you already own a high quality LED focus light, it is hard to justify a purchase. But if you are a serious macro and night dive shooter then Light and Motion's SOLA600 should be high on your wish list. All the photographers who tried the one I had have already bought one or are planning to soon. Me included. It is the best focus light I have used and my standout underwater photography accessory of the last 12 months.

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com

Athena ARF Ring Flash

by Phil Rudin

If you are a fan of prime time TV programming then you have probably seen a ring flash in action during the C.S.I. crime dramas, America's Next Top Model episodes and other less well known series. The ring flash was originally introduced in 1952 for use as a dental photography tool and has a circular (360 degree) flash tube which fits around the camera lens. The ring flash has gained popularity among nature photographers for macro/close-up use and has become an invaluable tool for portrait and fashion photographers shooting stills or using fluorescent "ring lights" for video. While only a few underwater equipment manufactures like Athena, Inon (quad-flash) and UK-Germany have released a ring flash they remain an extremely useful tool for underwater macro and close-up photography.

Why use a ring flash?

Most nature and portrait photographers enjoy the diffused and shadowless lighting created by an overcast day, so what would make artificially diffused strobe lighting any different? The bulk of the lighting load in underwater macro and close-up is carried by one or more strobes used at a distance of less than two feet (0.6 meters) from the main subject. If canvassed most shooters would prefer two strobes over one, coming from opposite directions in relation to the lens and main subject. Light coming from two different directions is unnatural be it produced by a ring flash or multi-flash-heads. I frequently use my ring flash with an additional fill strobe/strobes or white plastic slates to reflect light much like bounce light reflectors used by portrait photographers. In fact macro/close-up photography is portrait photography involving fish/critters rather than people. The main reason we use that second strobe is to reduce the harsh shadows created by the first strobe and when the strobes are being fired in TTL, as many are the lighting becomes quite balanced on both sides

(Right) Olympus E-3, Olympus 50 mm macro+ 2X tele converter, ISO-100, 1/250th, f/16.

of the subject. The ring flash is a convenient way to light close subjects for several reasons. First we all know that in any type of photography not every tool works for every situation, so lets examine some of the up sides to using a ring flash for macro/close-up photography. The reduced size and complexity of the system is one of the key advantages of the ring flash. It allows you to get your camera system and light source into places larger strobes can't go. After looking at tens of thousands of macro images in my forty-seven plus years of being involved with diving it has become quite evident that most macro images are shot in the landscape (horizontal) orientation. While this is not a bad thing it occurs to me that many of these subjects would have been more compositionally pleasing had they been captured in the portrait (vertical) orientation. My observations and experience with multi-strobe lighting systems is that going vertical presents problems many photographers don't wish to be bothered with. Because the ring flash is so light weight and compact it can be used with a single hand and shifted from landscape to portrait orientation with easy. This compact size also allows you to get your macro lens low and on the same horizontal plane as your subject so that you are at eye level or below. Because the ring flash has a narrower beam angle than most strobes stray light is significantly reduced resulting in a reduction of backscatter. The ring flash creates a circle of light with a dark doughnut cone in the center. As long as your subject is beyond the doughnut hole (80 mm/ 3 inches or so) it is exposed to a softer and more controllable light source than a conventional twin strobe systems. The doughnut hole in front of the lens is what helps to reduce backscatter in front of your subject. While no system can totally eliminated backscatter I find

Olympus E-3, Olympus 50 mm macro+ 2X tele converter, ISO-100, 1/250th, f/29.

noticeably less with the ring flash over dual strobes when used within three to fifteen inches (8 to 38 centimeters) of the subject. The ring flash can also create a luminance within opaque subjects not found with dual strobes.

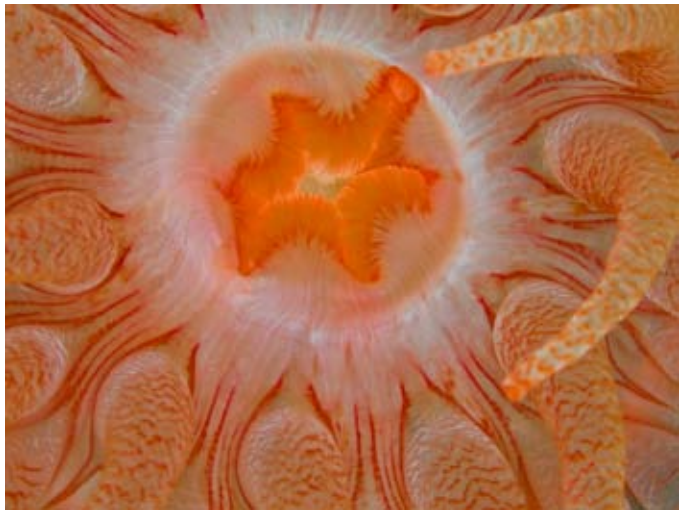
The Athena ARF Ring Flash System

Athena Co.Ltd,Japan recently introduced its third generation ring flash the ARF-ring & micro flash system to replace their six year old Athena ARF-10 ring flash unit. The Athena ring flash, can only be fired fiber optically, has an 80 degree beam angle, 5,500K color temperature, ten power settings in manual, is depth rated to 75m (246 ft) and contains a target light. The ring flash has three components, the power unit, the ring flash head and the fiber optic sync cord. The ARF-01 power unit is a rebranded Sea & Sea YS-01 DS-TTL strobe head, the flash tube has been replaced with a five

pin Nikonos style female bulkhead. Power comes from four AA batteries contained in a water tight compartment on the rear of the power unit. The O-ring sealed battery cap unlocks with a counter-clockwise turn to replace the batteries. A verity of batteries can be used but I prefer the nickel-metal hydride type for fastest recycle times and easy of use world wide. Below the battery compartment is a mode switch and the light level control dial. The mode switch turns clockwise and has four settings, on/off, manual digital pre-flash, manual non pre-flash and DS-TTL. In the center of the no/off switch is the target light switch which is pushed in for on and off use. The power dial works in manual mode to increase or reduce power and in DS-TTL like a +/- EV controller. On the bottom of the power unit is a ready confirmation lamp which shows red for ready and green to confirm that DS-TTL has been achieved. Under the ready lamp is a stainless steel reinforced mounting point with a standard Sea & Sea fixing bolt to secure the power unit to a verity of accessory balls. On front of the power unit under the Nikonos bulkhead is the fiber optic cable socket

Olympus E-3, Olympus 50 mm macro+ 2X tele converter, ISO-200, 1/250th, f/29.

(slave sensor), the LED target light and a fiber optic cable socket for adding additional strobes. The flash head is a doughnut shaped marine grade aluminum unit containing a 360 degree flash tube with a 67 mm threaded light diffusing element on the front. The ring flash head is connected to the power unit with a coiled cord mounted in the side of the flash



Olympus E-330, Olympus 50 mm macro, ISO-100, 1/160th, f/18.

head. This cord has the five pin Nikonos male bulkhead connector which is O-ring sealed when mounted to the power unit. The new unit allows the ring flash head to be interchanged with one or two small macro flash heads that use a straight flash tube and mount to the sides of the macro port. The ring flash head has a 67 mm screw plate on the rear that can be threaded into many macro ports and adapters with the 67 mm thread. Athena also offers port caps with a 67 mm thread center which secure to the front of a verity of macro ports and come in standard sizes from 94 to 104 mm in diameter to fit many port styles. Once mounted to the macro port the ring flash head allows macro lenses with the 35 mm equivalent of about a 70 mm lens or longer. Lenses that sit to far back in the port or are to wide will vignette when shot through the center 67 mm ring flash head. Close-up lenses like the Inon UCL-165 M67 can be mounted to the front of the ring flash head to increased magnification. Sea & Sea type fiber-optic cables are used to connect the power head to the housing. Recycle times are quick and a fresh set of batteries will out last the camera's battery in most cases. The unit has more than enough power for exposures in the F/32 range and has an MSRP of around $1389.00/€1010.00.

Conclusion

As a macro/close-up tool the Athena ring flash is a powerful addition for any serious underwater photographer. The lighting is soft and quite natural looking making colors pop and allowing the subject to be isolated from its background. The entire flash system takes up very little space when traveling and I often carry it in addition two my twin lighting system. This system allows you to explore new lighting techniques not possible with larger twin lighting systems. Like all strobes the Athena ring flash can produce specular highlights (catch-light) most often seen on very shiny objects and in the eyes of animals and people. These rounded highlights can be reduced or avoided by moving around your subject so that out going light is not reflected directly back into the lens.

Phil Rudin
philrudin@me.com
tropicalone@bellsouth.net

www.athena-opt.com /english.htm

Have you learnt something valuable by reading this issue of UwP?
Have you saved a lot of time benefitting from the experience of UwP contributors?
They give you their time and talent for free
so, please, donate to the UwP contributors and help keep UwP free to download.

You may not know this but none of the UwP contributors get paid. They provide their articles and photo talent in support of the cause of UwP which aims to keep the magazine free for anyone to download.

Donations are all handled in total security through PayPal and you can also pay securely by credit card using the PayPal links.

Your donations will be distributed to the contributors of each issue on a pro rata basis i.e. the more pages they contribute, the more their percentage.

When deciding how much you want to donate please bear in mind that PayPal's charge for amounts smaller than £3 or $6 can be as high as 24%!! Whilst I accept that PayPal is absolutely brilliant and safe, I don't want this to become a 'Donate a lot to PayPal"!!

You can make a donation in either US $ dollars, UK £ sterling or € Euros by following this link

Donate here

PayPal DONATE

www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

Creativity in the Canaries

by Dr Alex Tattersall

When Kat (my wife) and I received an invitation to come to Mogán, Gran Canaria to participate in the 6th International Fotosub UW photography competition, we began frantically searching for willing volunteers to babysit our rather challenging toddler. It was an opportunity to meet with, and be inspired by, some of the top talents in UW photography and one that I really could not miss (and Kat was immediately onboard with the idea of a free holiday J).

Every year, twelve UW photographers, six Spanish and six from other European countries come to Mogán to compete for some very significant prizes. And so far, every year the Spanish competitors have enjoyed wiping the floor with the 'very well looked after' foreign visitors. Although us foreign invitees were all guilty of complaining about the lack of a level playing field, indeed many of the Spanish competitors are residents of the islands, have the opportunity to practice shots for months before the competition and know exactly where all the interesting fauna resides, none of us could take away from the fact that we were witnessing some extraordinary talent, absolute masters at the Fotosub competition game.

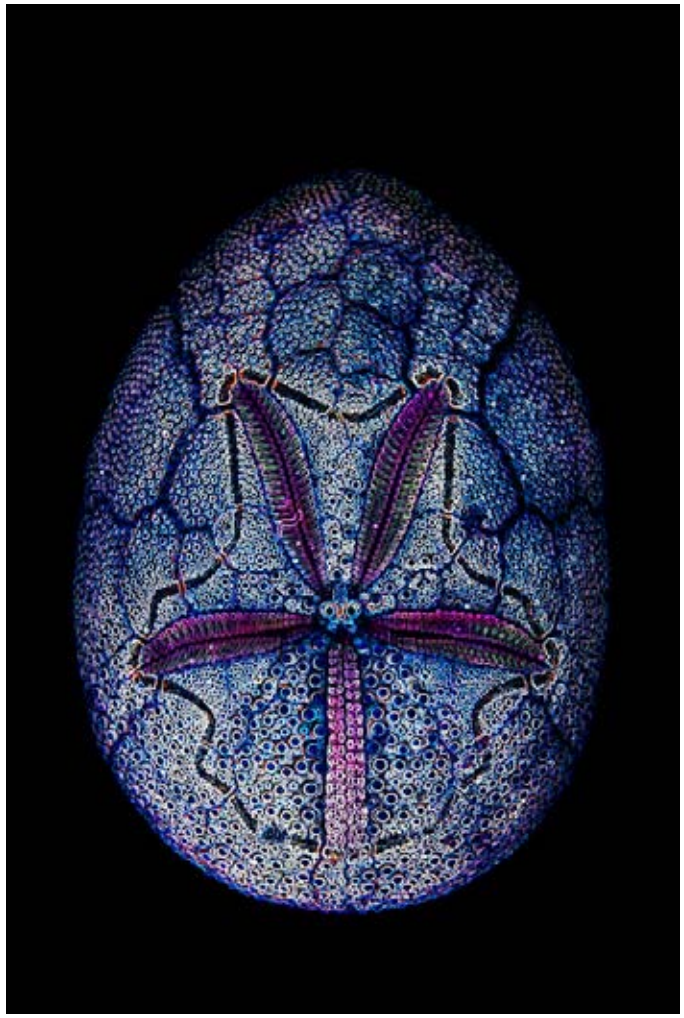
Carlos Villoch, previous competition winner and owner of www.glowdive.com (filters for underwater luminescence), was in charge of the programme and had pushed to redesign the

The winning portfolio was from local residents Carmelo Andrades and model Warkydea Vega. The following photo won the category for best model photo, regarded as the most prestigious of categories for the Spanish contenders. Bear in mind that this photo was taken at 20 meters in water that was only 23 degrees Centigrade; you have got to admire the dedication of the models to the cause.
(Nikon D300, Tokina 10-17 @ 11mm, 1/10, F7.1 ISO 500)

In second place was Arturo Telle who had the good fortune to happen across a frogfish on a site called 'Pasito Blanco'. Such good fortune did not seem to bestow itself upon us foreign guests.
(Canon 5D MK 2, 100mm macro, F25, 1/125, ISO 200)

Third place was Esteban Toré who demonstrated some excellent macro skills. This first shot is certainly one of my favourites of the competition
(Nikon D300s, Nauticam NA-D300s, 105mm VR macro, F36, 1/320, ISO 200)

This second shot from Esteban won the most creative macro, it was taken using Cokin creative filters to create the radial blur and, considering this comes straight from the camera, it is to my mind one of the star creative shots of the competition.
(Nikon D300s, Nauticam NA-D300s, 105mm VR macro, F29, 1/125, ISO 200)

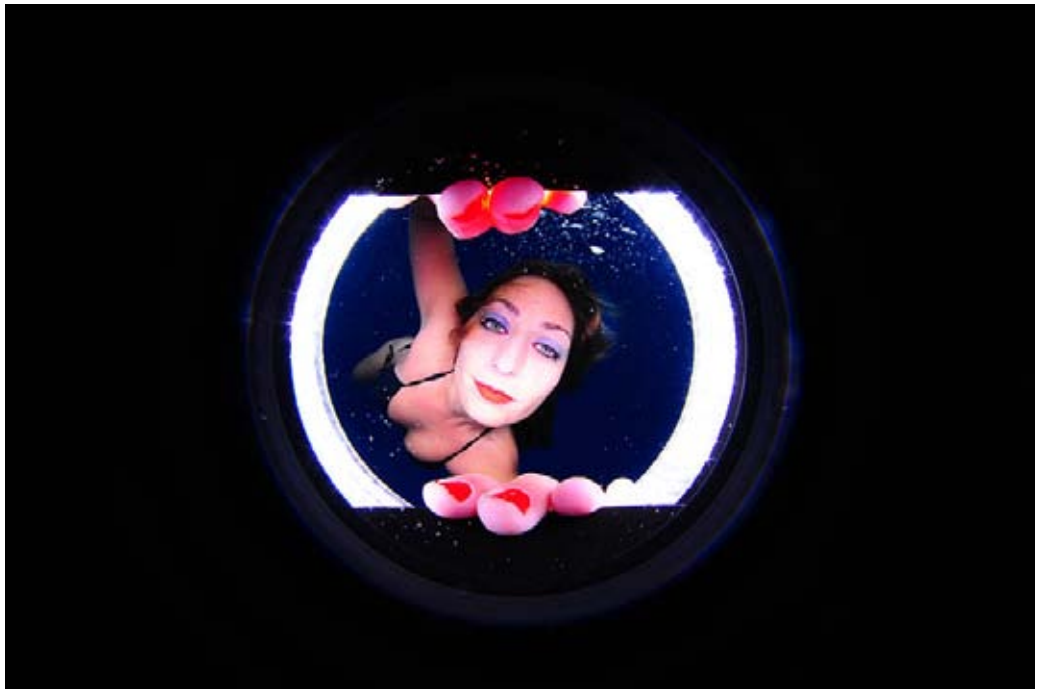


Fifth portfolio was that of Pedro Carrillo who, despite being disqualified from one dive for being 23 seconds over the allocated time limit, managed to product winning shots in two categories. The following image of an urchin shell took a well-deserved gold in the processed image category:
(Nikon D300, Seacam housing, F38, 1/250, ISO 200)

(Above) David Barrio came in fourth. Among his shots was this fireworm taken with Carlos Villoch's glowdive filters (www.glowdive.com) in order to highlight the luminescence of the worm.
(Nikon D300, Hugefot housing, 105mm VR macro, F16, 1/160, ISO 400)

(Top right) Team Norway, Lill Haugen and Helge Veum clearly had a lot of fun with their underwater homage to their countryman, symbolist painter Edvard Munch
(Nikon D300, Nikon 10.5 Fisheye, Nexus housing, INON Z240x2, F5.6, 1/100, ISO 400)

(Right) This is probably my favourite image of the competition, again from Pedro Carrillo, making use of the visible lens hood on a circular fisheye lens.
(Nikon D300, Seacam housing, F16, 1/250, ISO 400)



And if I have to add one of my own photos to this collection, it has to be this backlit shot of my amazingly hardworking model, Kat, through a small hole in the wreckage.
(Canon 7D, Nauticam NA-7D, Tokina 10-17mm at 11mm, 1.4 teleconvertor, Zen 100mm minidome, INON Z240x2, F13, 1/30, ISO 640)

12 photographers and 12 models ready themselves for the days ahead

Competition winner, Carmelo Andrades (second from left), celebrates his victory with runner up Arturo Telle (left), 4th place David Barrio (third from left) and myself (right)

competition into one focusing on creativity. The event was organised by Daniel Rodríguez (http://www.hotelpuertodemogan.com) and was judged by a panel of international judges including the legendary Spanish UW videographer/singer/composer/airplane pilot, Leandro Blanco.

What follows are, to me, some of the most impressive, most creative shots of the competition. The rules are simple. Photographers have four (very stressful) 50 minute dives in which to collect a portfolio of eight images. 400 shots can be taken in total, no post processing is allowed, and all shots come directly from the camera (except one category which allowed post processing). I am so used to using Photoshop to clean up/colour manage/add contrast/adjust composition with my images that I was in trouble from the outset. Indeed, it was only on day two that I realised I could preset my 7D to take black and white photos in camera. In camera white balance…. Huh?

To see the entire portfolios, follow the link http://grancanariafotosub.com/.

All in all then, I think readers will agree that given the conditions of this competition, some excellent shots were taken. It is also welcome to see how a creative push in this competition has resulted in shots less typical of this style of competitive genre. I'm hoping now to raise the funding to bring the competitors and their red-dress sporting models over to balmy UK waters. However to match the warm welcome and the generous hospitality of our Spanish hosts would certainly take some doing.

Oh, and our new friends David Barrio and Arturo Telle have offered to help us next year by taking my camera with them for half an hour each!

Dr Alex Tattersall
www.nauticamuk.com

PAINTING with LIGHT

DS161
Movie Substrobe

For over 30 years Ikelite has been the leader of innovation of underwater strobe lighting. We are proud to introduce the first strobe that meets the challenge presented by today's sophisticated "hybrid" cameras.

The DS161 Movie Substrobe combines all of the functionality of our renowned DS160 with a powerful 500 lumen LED video light. This strobe is everything you need for stunning photos and video from the newest ViDSLR cameras.

Specifications

Battery Pack	NiMH module
Weight	1.3 kg (2.75 lb)
Size	9.6 cm dia x 17.9 cm 3.75" dia x 7"
Depth Rating	90m - 300 feet

Strobe

Energy Rating	160 watt-sec
Recycle Time	1.5 sec
Angle of Coverage	90 degrees 100 degrees with diffuser
Guide # (ISO 100) feet	76 surface - 38 underwater
Guide # meters	24 surface - 12 underwater
Color Temperature	4800 degrees Kelvin
Full Power Flashes	225 flashes per full charge
Firing Modes	TTL, Full, 9 fractional powers

Movie

Movie Light	15-watt LED
Angle of Coverage	45 degrees
Brightness	500 lumens
Color Temperature	5000-5500K
Burn Time	5 hours at max intensity
Power Settings	Full, 9 fractional powers, SOS

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

Winners of Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year announced

After months of anticipation, the winners of Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010 were announced on October 22nd at a gala awards ceremony held at the Natural History Museum, London.

Selected from tens of thousands of entries from across the globe, the images were judged to be the best of all those entered in the 2010 competition by a judging panel that included some of the world's most respected nature photographers and wildlife experts.

These images will join more than 100 other prize-winning photographs from the competition's 18 categories in a visually stunning and inspiring exhibition that debuts at the Natural History Museum on 22 October 2010. It will then tour nationally and internationally after its launch in the capital.

A commemorative book, Wildlife Photographer of the Year Portfolio 20, edited by Rosamund Kidman Cox and published by the Natural History Museum, will be available from 21 October 2010, priced £25.

The book contains all winning and commended images from this year's competition.

Photographers can enter next year's competition online between12 January and18 March 2011.

For further details about the competition and its various categories, or to enter online, visit

Now in its 46th year, the competition is owned by the Natural History Museum and BBC Wildlife Magazine and is sponsored by Veolia Environnement. It is an international leader in the artistic representation of the natural world and a competition that photographers worldwide aspire to win.

www.nhm.ac.uk/wildphoto

One Earth Award - Winner

Turtle in trouble by Jordi Chias Pujol from Spain

This image communicates in one emotive hit the damage being done to the world's oceans. Jordi came across this desperate scene when sailing between Barcelona and the Balearic Islands, hoping to photograph dolphins. 'I spotted the abandoned net drifting along the surface,' says Jordi. As he dived down to investigate, he could see the loggerhead turtle tangled up in the netting. 'The poor creature must have been trapped for some days, it was so badly knotted up.' Though it could just reach the surface to breathe by extending its neck, it was still sentenced to a long, cruel death. 'I felt as though it were looking at me for help as it tried to bite through the netting.' Jordi released it, allowing one individual a second chance.

Nikon D300 + Tokina Fisheye 10-17mm f3.5-4.5 DX lens; 1/160 sec at f14; ISO 200; housing; Inon strobes.

© Jordi Chias Pujol / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010

Behaviour: All Other Animals - Winner

March of the crabs by Pascal Kobeh from France

Each year, thousands of deep-sea Australian majid spider crabs set off to walk over the seabed to shallow waters off South Australia. In their drive to migrate, they climb over each other, sometimes forming great piles. 'They walked like an army on the march,' says Pascal. 'If I lay on the bottom, they would just clamber over me as though I was a lump of rock or coral.' Once in shallow water, many of them moult out of their exoskeletons (shells), emerging with soft new ones. It takes a while for the new, expanded shell to harden - a very vulnerable time for a crab. And this may be one reason for the great congregation: there is safety in numbers from predators such as rays.

Canon EOS-1Ds Mark II + 15mm lens; 1/60 sec at f9; ISO 400; Seacam housing.

© Pascal Kobeh / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010

Underwater World -Winner

The big four by Tony Wu from the USA

Tony spent an unforgettable morning snorkelling above a large group of sperm whales off the Caribbean island of Dominica. 'They spent much of their time at the surface, rubbing up against each other, vocalizing and gathering in raft formations - often appearing as if they were playing,' says Tony. When he took this photograph, four were swimming directly up towards him. They paused 10 metres (33 feet) below the surface, and as Tony dived down, he could feel their clicking sonar resonating through his body as they checked him out. Then suddenly they surfaced, and Tony found himself in the middle of the four enormous animals. 'As I swam along with them and we made eye contact, it seemed as if, however briefly, they were socializing with me.'

Canon EOS 5D Mark II + 15mm f2.8 fisheye lens; 1/400 sec at f4.5; ISO 200; Zillion housing.

© Tony Wu / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010

ULTRALIGHT
CONTROL SYSTEMS

Want to upgrade to First Class?

It's almost free with Ultralight.

Upgrading from a compact camera to a DSLR system is a big move financially but it does open up a whole new potential for you. Fortunately if you chose Ultralight for your compact strobe mounting arm system, it will cost very little (or even nothing) to upgrade. The same arms and arm clamps will perform seamlessly and you'll be upgraded to First Class in no time at almost no cost.

Made in the USA

www.ulcs.com

"Often copied, never equaled"

Ethics in wildlife photography

by Tim Priest

Wildscreen is a charity working around the world to promote nature conservation through wildlife photography. Their fifth WildPhotos meeting was held at the Royal Geographical Society in London to coincide with the announcement of the Veolia Environment Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2010 in October. Several successful photographers, including Hungarian Bence Máté, the overall winner, joined some of the world's best to share their expertise and celebrate keynote speaker David Doubilet. His images still astound professional photographers who work above the water.

Beautiful, sometimes challenging, images made WildPhotos a rewarding experience. The most beautiful, perhaps, Tim Laman's from Papua New Guinea where he is pursuing the almost unbelievable courtship displays of male birds of paradise, with a little time left over for the reefs of Raja Ampat. The most challenging, David Doubilet's images of the dolphin slaughter in Taiji.

Three themes occupied the speakers: conservation, ethics and technique. The scandal over Jose Luis Rodriguez's wolf in last year's Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition and images of big cats, taken in a Montana game farm but presented (in the Daily Telegraph, amongst other newspapers) as coming from the wild, have brought into sharp focus a pressing question: how far can you trust an image? What lengths can you go to, to get an image? What does this mean for underwater photographers?

The audience at WildPhotos included a wide range, from seasoned (and famous) professionals to photo-club amateurs. A survey of the opinions of some 500 photographers was interesting, perhaps even enlightening:

95% would put out food to attract birds, and 70% would put out bait for predatory animals… but only 20% would consider live bait.

90% would photograph a tame animal, but only 70% would go to a zoo, and a mere 10% would shoot images in a game farm. 90% said that such images would have to include a caption making it explicit that they were not taken in the wild.

80% would remove elements such as distracting stalks of grass when editing an image, but only 5% would add visual elements. Most revealing, only 30% felt that this should be revealed to the viewer.

Caribbean reef shark, scent bait, Little Bahama Bank. Nikon D200, 17-55mm, Anthis/Nexus housing, 1/250, f5.6, ISO 200

Mark Carwardine, zoologist, author, TV presenter (Last Chance to See) and Chairman of the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition, identified three areas of controversy: the use of live bait, the use of animals that have become used to humans, and the digital manipulation of images.

Live bait: a lively debate. No-one was terribly concerned about mealworms being used to attract birds, but mice to attract owls was a species too far (for Europeans, at least). There was more concern about the impact of feeding on the behaviour of individual animals and on the ecosystem around them, potentially disrupting the food web and making top predators dependent on naturalists' hand-outs. This lead to thinking

about the way in which animals can get used to humans, habituated to human presence by frequent contact, becoming in turn easier to photograph but no longer representative of the wild species.

Terrestrial wildlife photographers, in the main, see the impact of feeding and human interaction as bad things. Klaus Nigge, an eminent German photographer, artist and biologist, has a philosophy of "slow photography", where prolonged research and familiarity with his target species combines with the use of technology and creative camouflage (he used a pelican-shaped tent in the Florida wetlands) to approach undisturbed animals after months or even years of preparation. Terrestrial photographers typically use hides (blinds in the USA) and telephoto lenses, options that are difficult in the underwater environment. We use natural cover, but nevertheless have to approach our subjects quite closely; the natural sensitivity of marine creatures to vibration and noise suggests the use of rebreathers as a kind of auditory camouflage, but it's not yet widespread. Worst of all, we don't have the time underwater to practice slow photography; even with repeated dives there is an opportunistic side to underwater photography, a moment when the image is in front of the lens, a moment that may not come again during the dive and perhaps not on repeated dives.

Preparing bait, Catalina. Nikon Coolpix 5000 compact camera.

Nassau grouper and yellowtail snappers attracted to scent bait, Little Bahama Bank. Nikon D200, 10.5mm + Kenko x1.4 TC, Anthis/Nexus housing, 1/200, f8, ISO200, two Inon Z-240 strobes.

Shark feeding has much in common with game farming: the natural behaviour of the sharks is changed by human design, creating a group of sharks that can be relied on to perform in front of tourist divers. Shark baiting, using a scent trail, has been suggested as way of preserving normal behaviour, but it's pretty clear that the sharks' behaviour is changed, if only insofar as they become more willing to approach divers. Are they still truly "wild"? The sharks' interaction with divers is much less predictable, their curiosity natural to a predator, but the encounter is still, in a sense, artificial.

If images of sharks promote shark conservation, do they need to be taken in truly wild circumstances? Conservation photographers such as Florian Schulz, who recently found huge numbers of devil rays congregating in Baja California when studying animal migrations, and Italian Stefano Unterthiner, who revealed his professional secrets to WildPhotos (his "Plan B": his wife takes charge!), show that they can work with minimal behavioral, environmental and ecological impact. Can that practice be emulated

The tiger shark poses for a different photographer. Nikon D200, 10.5mm + Kenko x1.4 TC, Anthis/Nexus housing, 1/160, f4.5, ISO200, Inon Z-240 strobe on the left.

Feeding fish to Southern Stingrays, Stingray City, Grand Cayman. Nikon D200, Tokina 10-17mm, Anthis/Nexus housing, 1/200, f10, ISO100, two Inon Z-240 strobes.

A lemon shark with scar tissue around an embedded fish-hook, Little Bahama Bank. Nikon D200, 10.5mm + Kenko x1.4 TC, Anthis/Nexus housing, 1/160, f5.6, ISO200, two Inon Z-240 strobes.

underwater? A code of conduct, as proposed by Martin Edge in The Underwater Photographer, is a start. Does the end justify misrepresenting the means? A consensus was that it doesn't. A further question: should we document the plastic rubbish and filth that intrudes into the water? Dead and dying animals? Does conservation photography have a duty to record the downside as well as the beauty and terror of the natural world?

Dutch photographer and publisher Danny Ellinger was amongst the first to use digital cameras in natural history photography when he took an expedition to the remote island of Aldabra, home of giant tortoises. He believes that the essence of photography is communication, not documentation. He was echoed by Joe Cornish, based in Yorkshire and devoted to the coastlines and mountains of Britain. Although he has used large format digital capture, his love is an Ebony 5x4in field camera which, he says, is easier to use than digital (well, he is used to seeing the world upside down!). Joe describes landscape photography as a transcription of the landscape, not a description: it is an artist's interpretation. The theme of photography as transformation was taken further by Karen Glaser, an American who accepts the limitations of ambient light photography with Nikonos V cameras in deep water and in the murky water of the Everglades National Park and has exaggerated those limitations in her prints, mysteriously turning what many of us would throw away into evocative images of sharks in Cocos and swamps in Florida. Sandra Bartocha, a respected German photographer, has adopted an even more abstract style, rendering leaves and flowers as stripes and spots of glowing colour and leaving little or none of each image in focus. If this degree of abstraction works, and it does, why is "reality" still a touchstone of natural history photography? We know that images are altered, even distorted, by the choice of lens, by film or by white balance, by exposure and by the optics of being underwater. Why, then, has digital manipulation been "outlawed" in a way that making prints from negatives and transparencies never was?

Photojournalist Nick Cobbing has been documenting research into global warming in the Arctic, his prize-winning images presented as a high-fidelity record of the melting Arctic ice and of scientists at work. Nevertheless, his images are highly selective and he stresses the importance of the photographer working to the direction of his editor. It is worth noting that Kathy Moran, the senior editor for natural history projects at National Geographic magazine, made a slightly confusing contribution to the discussion at WildPhotos. She expressed a strong preference for images created in the camera, without further digital manipulation,

Tiger shark, attracted by scent bait, a frequent visitor to divers from M/V Shearwater, Little Bahama Bank, backscatter removed from image by digital post-processing in Adobe Photoshop CS4. Nikon D200, 10.5mm, Anthis/Nexus housing, 1/160, f5.6, ISO 200, Inon Z240 strobe to the left of the image.

Sign, Ocean Frontiers dive center, Grand Cayman. Nikon D200, 70-210mm, 1/250, f11, ISO100.

whilst also supporting roles for both artistic interpretation and photojournalism or photorealism. Perhaps more important was her insistence on real behaviour and on a record of the context in which a photograph was taken.

Mark Carwardine presented four principles as guidance:

The welfare of animals and plants and the care of the environment override any photographic aim.

Live bait and any bait that changes the behaviour of animals is not to be used.

Photographers must be honest in declaring the situation in which a photograph is taken.

Photographs should never be manipulated to misrepresent the behaviour and ecology of the subject.

Scientists can't publish if they don't demonstrate that they have followed ethical research practices. What would happen if photographs were only published if photographers could show that they have followed these guidelines? How much distortion of the image, how much manipulation remains honest?

Almost everyone at Wildphotos had traveled a lot, seeking out rare or special things to photograph. A lot of them were worried about the environmental impact of traveling around the world, about CO2 and energy. Planes and boats and jeeps criss-cross continents carrying photographers and their excess baggage. There is a common mistrust of carbon offsetting schemes. Should we be traveling so much?

French photographer Laurent Geslin has worked with refugees in Senegal, but more recently has been working with foxes and urban wildlife nearer home, in London and Paris. Kai Fagerström is a prize-winner in the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition with images of raccoon dogs, badgers and the other animals that occupy abandoned buildings at home in Finland. Should we devote more effort to our native marine life? What kind of a mark should we make?

Having written that, I should report that David Doubilet is still traveling the world in search of new images and inventing new techniques. He made exquisite images of nudibranchs, recently, by placing them in an opaque acrylic "studio" that was taken on the dive, later returning them to their original habitat. Pascal Kobeh, another winner from the Wildlife Photographer of the Year, has been traveling the world shooting stills as part of Disney's Oceans feature… and Mark Carwardine still travels to Baja California and the Sea of Cortez, and still finds himself able to charter light aircraft in search of Blue Whales. These photographers have all made a mark with their images, but are still affecting the sea by pursuing their passion for wildlife. What kind of a mark should we make?

Wildscreen are seeking films and photos representing the world's most endangered species, hoping to promote nature conservation through presenting the best images available.

www.arkive.org/get-involved

Tim Priest

UwP is free to download because the contributors give their time, talent and knowledge for free.

Please, make a donation to the UwP contributors and help keep UwP free to download.

You may not know this but none of the UwP contributors get paid. They provide their articles and photo talent in support of the cause of UwP which aims to keep the magazine free for anyone to download.

Donations are all handled in total security through PayPal and you can also pay securely by credit card using the PayPal links.

Your donations will be distributed to the contributors of each issue on a pro rata basis i.e. the more pages they contribute, the more their percentage.

When deciding how much you want to donate please bear in mind that PayPal's charge for amounts smaller than £3 or $6 can be as high as 24%!! Whilst I accept that PayPal is absolutely brilliant and safe, I don't want this to become a 'Donate a lot to PayPal"!!

You can make a donation in either US $ dollars, UK £ sterling or € Euros by following this link



Donate here

PayPal DONATE

www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

Strobe Positioning

The Rabbit Ears Technique

by Julian Cohen

Strobe positioning is one area of underwater photography that is rarely touched upon in manuals on tutorials. To me it is just as important as the camera and strobe power settings. The direction of the light allows the emotional content to be expressed in the photo. As photographers we are capturing the light, and as underwater photographers we are often creating that light, so knowledge of how to place your strobes is essential. For this article I would like to illustrate one technique that I use quite regularly that works in difficult lighting situations. I can't claim the technique as mine, it was taught to me by Alex Mustard on a Red Sea workshop last year, but I will claim the name: even Alex calls it the "rabbit ears".

The technique is best used in dark areas where you want to cast light over a distance, deep into the frame, and yet stop the strobes from burning out the foreground. It is especially useful on the inside of wrecks, such as the Thistlegorm in the Red Sea.

I took the shot on the right last year just after Alex had shown us the technique. The strobes are high above the camera and facing slightly downwards (hence the name rabbit ears) which allows a pool of light to fall onto the bonnet and the cab of the truck.

It also stops the flash from blasting onto the windows and reflecting back into the image. I like to place some blue water in these types of shots to create some depth and to direct the viewer's eyes around the scene. Apart from the presence of the fish, it also helps to define it as an underwater photo.

The photo on the bottom right demonstrates the strobe positioning for the "rabbit ears". Quite simple really, just raise the strobe arms vertically and aim the strobes forwards and if needed, slightly downwards.

(Top Right) 1/5th sec at f 13 Nikon 16 mm ISO 250 NIKON D3 Spot-Meter Mode Subal Housing 2x INON z240 (Right) 1/125 sec at f 13 with the same rig.

1/10th sec at f 9 Nikon 16 mm ISO 1250 NIKON D3 Spot-Meter Mode Subal Housing 2x INON z240

1/5th sec at f 13 Nikon 16 mm ISO 640 NIKON D3 Spot-Meter Mode Subal Housing 2x INON z240

1/200 sec at f 8 Nikon 16 mm ISO 200 NIKON D3 Spot-Meter Mode Subal Housing 2x INON z240

The above shot is on the wreck of the Giannis D in the Red Sea. Inside the engine room at about 18m there is no natural light when you look straight in front of you. In fact there is no light at all!

There is some ambient light from above, so I have included this in the shot. Strobes up above the camera in the "rabbit ears" technique but this time I have angled one along the engine block and aimed the other one at the school of glass fish. I adjusted the strobe power constantly referring to the LCD screen on the back of the camera to make sure that I had the look I was after.

The top centre photo is inside the wreck of the Thistlegorm in the Red Sea. There are the remnants of trucks carrying motorbikes, guns and ammo, and supplies like this boot. This time I have put a snoot on the left strobe and aimed it down to cast a small pool of light onto the boot, that sits there on the broken back of the truck, as it has done for over fifty years. The right strobe is dialed down to its lowest level in order to provide a kiss of fill light so that the whole scene is not too black. I believe that these types of photos, in a chiaroscuro style, suffer if the dark areas are totally black.

The principle behind chiaroscuro is to leave the light parts as they are so that they can be seen clearly and to darken the "obscure" parts (defined as the parts the photographer deems less important) so that they will not distract the viewer. Since we are creating the light in these situations, we can effectively reverse this principle, and leave the darks as they are, and lighten the parts we want to highlight.

There is another area where the "rabbit ears" technique works beautifully and that is when you are shooting a subject on the sea floor, and want to cast a soft pool of light outwards and downwards.

The photo of a stingray (top right) shows how the "rabbit ears" technique has allowed me to catch the ray with the edge light of the strobes which imparts a soft even light that really makes the blue spots glow and doesn't burn out the underneath of the ray around the mouth.

I hope you can find a use for this technique and please write to me to let me know if you find any other areas or situations that you have used it in with success.

Julian Cohen
cohen.julian@gmail.com

Seahorn Snoot Award Winning Images!
by
Kay Burn Lim
1st Prize in Portfolio Category
Timor Leste Dive Photo Contest 2010

Type to enter text

Scuba Symphony- Your Ultimate One-Stop Diving and Underwater Imaging Solution!
S103A Centrepoint Bandar Utama
47800 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia
Tel: +603077107197 Fax: +603-77251197
Email: scubasymphony@gmail.com
Online Shop: www.scubasymphony.com

Seahorn Snoot are now available from:
Reefphoto & Video,USA: http://www.reefphoto.com
Fotosub, Italy: http://www.fotosub-shop.it
Onderwaterhuis, Netherlands: http://www.onderwaterhuis.nl
Scuba Supply Sweden: http://www.scubasupply.se
Digital Dive, Germany: http://www.digital-dive.de
Underwater Visions,UK: http://www.uwvisions.com
Cameras Underwater, UK: http://www.camerasunderwater.co.uk
Splash Underwater Imaging, Philippines: http://www.splashuwimaging.com
Oceanic Focus, Singapore: http://www.oceanicfocus.com
Diver Channel, China: http://www.diverchannel.com

Off-Camera Strobes

By Alex Mustard

"Today creative daring is no longer an act of courage but a basic requirement if you want your work to be noticed and your stories heard." These are not my words, but come from nature photographer, Niall Benvie's excellent new book Outdoor Photography Masterclass. There is not a single word on underwater photography in it, but if you want your creative juices stimulated, it is a highly recommended read. Niall's observation is that with the world awash with quality images, a great subject and technical excellence is no longer enough to be outstanding. Creativity in photography is more important than ever.

Off-camera strobes are not new in underwater photography, but their use has generally been kept out of the mainstream, and they offer significant potential for injecting our pictures with some of that illusive creative flare. The main use of off-camera strobes is in cave photography and one of the undoubted masters was Wes Skiles, who sadly died in July. His article on the caves of the Bahamas in National Geographic earlier this year is a must see source of inspiration.

But while this technique is widespread in cave photography it is not widely used in normal underwater photography. You would be hard pressed to find information on how to do it in any books, magazines or websites. The aim of this article is to describe the whys, wheres, hows and kit for off-camera strobe photography underwater.

Why? Off-camera strobes certainly endow our photos with an innovative sparkle, creating lighting effects that just can't be replicated with Photoshop skills. But more importantly they provide several useful lighting solutions. In low visibility conditions, off-camera strobes can provide illumination free from backscatter, since the overlap between the strobe and lens is very small. The technique can also boost contrast, particularly for more distant subjects in the frame. Although David Doubilet has tended to use powerful HID continuous light sources, rather than strobes, many of his celebrated images are perfect examples of how off camera lighting can help more distant subjects contribute to an image, creating depth in the picture.

But perhaps the greatest benefit of off-camera strobes is the mood

(Above) Off-camera strobes can add great depth to images. Nikon D700 + Nikon 16mm FE. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 1/15th @ f/9. ISO 800. Single Subtronic Alpha on camera (minimum power), off-camera Subtronic Alpha on stairs on right (high power).
(Right) This is my typical strobe set up for off-camera strobe photos. I actually have two identical set ups because, when possible, I like to use two off camera strobes. The strobe is mounted on gorillapod so it can be positioned and aimed precisely. It is triggered with the negatively buoyant slave sensor at the end of non-coiled cable. A snoot is fitted here, but I wouldn't usually use one.

that this style of lighting gives to images. Most underwater images require strobes and these inevitably light the front of the image. When we get the strobes away from the camera, suddenly we are able to add light in different ways, for example placing the subject in the middle-ground of the image, framed with a dark foreground. I have found this lighting style is particularly suitable for capturing the atmosphere of wreck interiors and reef caverns.

Kit? There are several solutions for firing off-camera strobes, but first we need to accurately position the strobes. I have found Gorillapods ideal. These plastic, flexible tripods make it much more straightforward to position and aim the strobes. They are more stable if a small diving weight is hung between the legs. I screw an Ultra Light ball to the top, so I can mount the strobe with a standard clamp. At a push you can try off camera strobes by just resting your strobe on the ground, but this is very limiting.

An alternative, which is commonly used in cave diving, is to mount the strobe on the far side of the model, attached to their cylinder, so that the light shines on whatever they are swimming in front of, leaving them as a silhouette against it. This can be particularly effective in large enclosed areas, such as the hold of a wreck or a cavern.

This is my slave sensor. The key design features are unaffected by ambient light, negative buoyancy, uncoiled cable and synch socket for plugging strobe cable.

There are several ways to fire an off-camera strobe. Long synch cables (electrical or optical) are the most reliable, but can be very troublesome to manage underwater. There are certain underwater forums where you are chastised for even having the snag hazard of an un-needed D-ring on your BC, they'd go apoplectic if you mentioned penetrating wrecks with 20 m of coiled cables clipped to you! It is also almost impossible to keep them hidden in the shots, so you will have to Photoshop them away.

The alternative is using a slave sensor. Most strobes have built in slave sensors, which trigger your strobe when they detect another strobe flashing. However, underwater this means that the off-camera strobe needs to be in line of sight (there are no handy white walls to bounce light off). This can be OK for backlighting,

Off-camera strobes are very useful for lighting wide angle shots in low visibility conditions. Note that the diver's fins are disappearing into the murk, yet there is no backscatter. Nikon D700 + Nikon 16mm FE. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 1/25th @ f/13. ISO 800. Single Inon Z240 on camera (minimum power), 2 x Subtronic Alphas on left, behind partition (high power).

but in most instances we want to hide the off-camera light, so that the source of the light is not revealed and there is no hotspot in the image competing with the main subject for attention.

The solution is an independent slave sensor, which can be placed away from the strobe, so that the strobe can be hidden from view. Ideally we want to attach it to the strobe with an uncoiled synch cable because coiled synch cables are very short, when unsecured at one end! A couple of commercial sensors exist. Ikelite make the EV Controller, which is excellent, but it is only compatible with their strobes. Heinrichs-Weikamp make the RSU, which works very well in dark caves, but I found was very unreliable for triggering in normal underwater light conditions unless additional shading was added around the sensor. This led me to design my own unit, shown in the pictures. The key design features are a slave sensor that works in bright daylight, housed in a negatively buoyant case, with a straight cable, with a Nikonos plug at the end (to plug into the strobes synch cord). A few friends of mine have this too now, but for the record I have no plans to make this commercially available.

It is also worth mentioning that infrared strobe triggers, which are widely used on land, will not work underwater, because infrared light is absorbed very quickly underwater.

How? Setting up off-camera strobe shots is time and attention consuming. It is best to attempt them for the first time in shallow, benign conditions on a dive site you know well. On land, if you wanted to place a strobe behind the chair opposite you, you would get up, walk round the chair, place the strobe and walk back. If you think about it, underwater, this becomes a much lengthier operation. And that is before you have to return to the strobe because the tripod has fallen over, or the strobe power is wrong or the light needs re-aiming. Or all three. Before waiting for the dust to settle.

A more subtle use of off-camera strobes, illuminating the cab of this truck inside the Thistlegorm wreck, balanced with front lighting. Nikon D700 + Nikon 16mm FE. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 6/10th @ f/13. ISO 400. Single Subtronic Alpha on camera (medium power), off-camera Subtronic Alpha at bottom of the frame (medium power).

Off-camera strobes create a unique lighting ambience in photos, well suited to caverns, gullies, walls and wreck interiors. Nikon D700 + Sigma 15mm FE. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 1/30th @ f/13. ISO 400. Single Subtronic Alpha on camera (minimum power), off-camera Subtronic Alpha behind rock in foreground (high power).

A straight strobe can be used for some off-camera strobe shots, but building the right kit will make all the difference for most images. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 1/90th @ f/11. ISO 100. Single Subtronic Alpha on camera (minimum power), off-camera Subtronic Alpha behind crinoid (high power).

Most of my off-camera strobe images follow this format. The dark foreground creates atmosphere around the pillar drill inside the wreck. A large object (Peter Rowlands) balances the composition on the right. Nikon D700 + Nikon 16mm FE. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 1/8th @ f/10. ISO 400. Single Subtronic Alpha on camera (minimum power), off-camera Subtronic Alpha at bottom of the frame (high power).

Off-camera strobe shots generally require manual exposures, because of the complex lighting set up. If we are using slave sensors, we typically want the on camera strobe (the trigger) on minimum power and the off-camera strobe (or strobes) on high power. This difference in strobe power ensures we do not see the trigger strobe's light in the image. We then expose for the off camera strobe (with the aperture) and the ambient light (with the shutter speed). We can then turn up the power of the trigger strobe, if desired, to provide foreground lighting.

It may sound complex, but once dialled in, the exposures are consistent. During my photo workshop in the Cayman Islands, back in January, I set up off camera strobe shots for the group to shoot, with one of the dive staff modelling. I set the shot up in a coral cavern on one dive and left the strobes down until the next dive, set up for an exposure of f/8 at ISO 100 or f/11 at ISO 200.

What? Perhaps the biggest challenge with off-camera strobes is recognising what will make a suitable shot. Only certain subjects tend to be suitable and I have found caverns and wreck interiors work best. Trying to force these techniques onto the wrong subject matter is a lesson in frustration. Most of the images fall into three categories: 1) backlighting, 2) front lighting the subject, with a dark foreground, 3) selective lighting a feature.

Backlighting is effective on subjects that are fibrous, hairy or translucent, such as soft corals, crinoids, sea fans etc. The technique can transform the ordinary into an extraordinary image. The key is to make certain that the strobe is entirely hidden behind the subject. Any direct light spilling past the subject will dominate the image, overpowering the subject. Backlighting can be particularly effective in low visibility conditions, and can help a background subject stand out in the murk. In these conditions we may also get pleasing light rays appearing around the subject. Also remember to turn the strobe down to a lower power for this type of shot. Because it is firing directly at the lens, you don't need lots of light. Backlighting can produce striking images, but it should not be overused, as these images quickly become samey.

Most of my off–camera strobe work involves lighting a subject inside a wreck or cave, with a dark foreground. These images have fantastic atmosphere. The trick is to find an interesting subject, in which, between you and it, is somewhere to hide the off-camera strobe or strobes. Generally, we will take these images with fisheye lenses, and this means that the strobe will only cover a small portion of the frame because it is much closer to the subject than the camera. Therefore we should always use the widest flash we have as the off-camera strobe. This is also why it is important to be able to accurately aim our strobe from a stable tripod. In addition, we have to think carefully about the composition, with only a small part of the frame lit. Ideally, we want some ambient light somewhere in the background too, to give the image depth, even if we need a long exposure to get it.

The third type of image is where the off-camera lighting is highlighting a feature in the frame, giving the image an additional focal point and more depth. The illuminated car interiors are this type of image. The foreground may be lit with strobe,

Off-camera strobes can be used to illuminate features of interest in an image. Nikon D700 + Sigma 15mm FE. Subal housing, Subal FE2 dome. 1/13th @ f/16. ISO 400. Single Inon Z240 on camera (minimum power), 2 x Subtronic Alphas inside beetle (high power).

or exposed for the ambient light to reveal detail. These images tend to be quite contrived, unless the effect is used subtly, and again should not be overused.

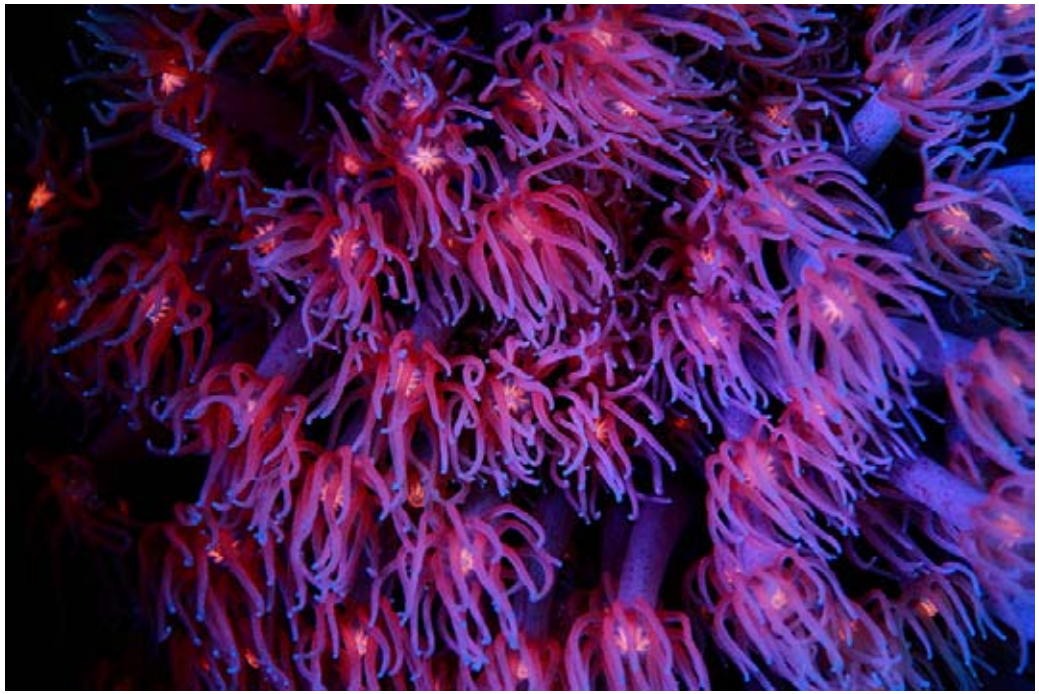
In summary, off-camera lighting is more of a challenge than standard techniques, but this means that if we can make it work, our images will stand out from the crowd. As is often the case with creativity driven by technical innovation, when we first experiment with a technique we want to produce images that show off the technique, while over time we start to use the technique more subtly.

I feel that I am still very much on the learning curve with these images, but that is what makes it such an exciting technique.

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com

Ultraviolet photography

by Matej Simonic



My interest in ultraviolet (UV) spectrum began to develop more than ten years ago, when I found some underwater UV photos on the net and they looked very interesting. I immediately decided that I had to see it with my own eyes. At that time it was not possible to buy an underwater ultraviolet light so I decided to build one myself.

I took small black fluorescent tube (similar to the ones used in night clubs), made some electronics to drive it from a pack of batteries and sealed everything together in the transparent acrylic. I had no clue about needing a filter on my mask. I took it to Egypt, eager to experience UV fluorescence myself. On the night we arrived I went straight to the jetty, turned it on and it worked very well on the surface even though it was not very powerful. When I dove into the water, it leaked and I drowned my dreams for a long time …

Certain corals and animals emit fluorescent light, when lit by ultraviolet light. With the use of proper equipment they 'glow' in the dark which is very spectacular. Luminous energy at short wavelengths is absorbed by light-sensitive proteins and re-emitted at longer wavelengths. Some animals also see in the UV spectrum and so are able to find otherwise transparent pray, to find a mating partner easier and fluorescence probably plays a role in other processes. It was very surprising to me that some cave creatures are fluorescent since it would make no sense to me from a biological point of view, but they are. Biologists are slowly revealing the role of UV pigments in different species, however there are still more questions than answers on this field.

Ultraviolet (UV) photography has so far mostly been in domain of professional photographers. Probably the most influential was National Geographic article by David Doubilet, "A New Light in the Sea", published in August 1997. Stunning photographs were taken in the sea with a powerful HMI (mercury-halide) ultraviolet lamp powered by a generator on the surface. Unfortunately, the coral polyps retracted under strong irradiation. Slowly UV photography is also entering the domain of amateurs, since modern SLR cameras are equipped with very sensitive sensors that enable us to take photos at higher ISO settings.

To take a UV photo you need a source of UV light which has to be very powerful. This is usually done either by a powerful array of UV LED diodes (mostly for video) or by use of a high-pass filter, also known as excitation filter, that are put on the source of light (HID light, LED light or flash). These filters excite the fluorescence by removing wavelengths longer than blue. If we directly look at a scene lit by such a source everything looks violet or dark blue in color, therefore in order to better see the fluorescence we need additional low-pass filter which is placed on the camera and/or on the mask which blocks the excitation light but allows us to observe or photograph the longer wavelength fluorescence.

The best results are achieved in the dark nights (when there is not much light from the moon), and also any other unfiltered light must be turned off, since it is very distracting and prevents the fluorescence being seen. On the other hand a normal light should always be at hand in case of emergency.

There are multiple problems in the UV photography. When you place filters over your normal light and mask, very little light remains, so awareness of your surroundings

becomes very important, much more so than during a normal night dive since the visibility becomes very limited. In order to avoid damage to surroundings a very good buddy is recommended (with his own light and filters). A dive site should also be adjusted to avoid fragile areas. This is especially true if you try to take UV photos in overhead environments such as caves. Taking normal photographs in the caves is a high risk activity but taking UV photos is even more so. Buddy awareness, surrounding awareness and navigation are all difficult, therefore good training and diving skills (trim, buoyancy) are necessary. Luckily SPG and compasses are fluorescent so you can use them, however it is much harder to see the data such as dive time and depth on your bottom timer/computer. You can use one with larger numbers and an internal light or just use normal light to read them.

If a very powerful UV light is used (LED, HMI), some animals run away and coral polyps retract. Therefore you have to be very fast when taking photos of these subjects. On the other hand you will not have these problems when taking photos of hard corals so you can afford much longer times and even use of tripod if your source of UV light is too week.

Since the filters take most of the light away, the biggest problem is lack of light. We have to fight this problem with all known weapons. We mostly take photos of small macro subjects. You need to have a very sensitive camera which is good for taking pictures at high ISO settings and noise reduction turned on (in the camera or in post production). Many times you have to use a very wide aperture so good quality lenses are necessary that enable taking photos in low light conditions.

This of course means shallow depth of field therefore appropriate objects have to be selected. The use of 2 strobes as powerful as possible is recommended and it is better if you use the ones that have higher color temperature (as many Kelvins as possible). Usually autofocus is problematic, due to lack of light so either manual focusing or additional powerful focusing light shall be used.

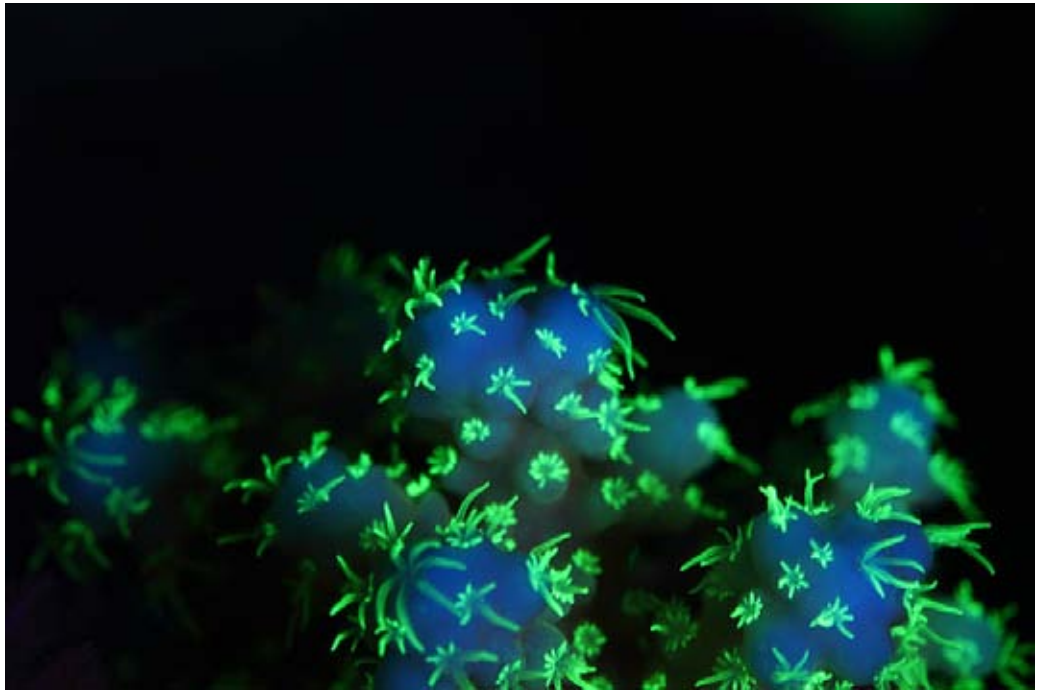
I will describe the equipment I have and the way I did it, just as an example. So far I have not done many UV dives but I have dived in Sudan, Egypt, Adriatic Sea and in Slovenian cave. That is not much, but enough to see what results can be obtained with this set up. The equipment I have can also be seen on enclosed photo. I should emphasize that I used the existing equipment that I already had. If I started buying equipment only for UV photography some choices (strobes) might have been different.

I use a Canon 7D camera and EF 100mm f/2.8 USM and EF-S 60mm f/2.8 USM macro lenses. I often shoot at ISO 1600 with noise reduction in the camera turned on. The results would probably be better if I used external noise reduction filters in Photoshop or similar noise reduction filters. The housing I use is from Sealux in Germany . It has three attachment points, two for strobes and one directly above the lens for a focus light which is in my case Halcyon HID 18 light. This light is very powerful and its main advantage over LED lights is that it is focusable. I keep it focused all the time to get enough light to enable normal operation of autofocus. I use Ikelite strobes DS161 without diffusers and with video lights turned on. This video lights, despite being 2 x 10W LED, are by themselves not enough powerful enough for the autofocus to work even with your strobes very close to the subject. They are intended for normal video work (non UV) but since they are dedicated video lights they are diffused and so are too weak.

I use Ikelite manual controllers, most of the time set to full power. I made the arms myself so that it was possible to adjust positions quickly and to mount the manual controllers close to the housing handles. The arms are very convenient and are made from Loc-line segments.

The filters used on the lens port, 2 HID lights, 2 strobes and masks have been supplied

by Nightsea. There was plenty of Do It Yourself work involved. I manufactured, arms and flanges for the lens filter, light filters and strobe filters and an adjustable mount for the HID light on top of the camera housing. Since I have all necessary tools available at my work (turning and milling machine) it was not a problem for me. Nightsea can manufacture filters of different dimensions and flanges that can fit on your ports and strobes. I manufactured all filters so that their flanges are equipped with elastic cords that enable them to be positioned or removed underwater from the lens port, strobes, light and mask. This gives me flexibility to decide during the dive if I want to take ultraviolet or normal photos and also to take photos of the same subject with and without filters to demonstrate the difference between normal and ultraviolet underwater photography. The other advantage is that in case of an emergency I can convert my HID focusing light into my primary diving light by removing it from camera housing, which is especially important for cave diving. The downside is that the low-pass filter can get damaged easily, but since they are not very expensive, they can be replaced. The other option would be to put the low-pass filter into the housing. You lose



versatility but it is more protected.

Ultraviolet photography opened a completely new world for me. Diving with only UV lights is very special. You have a very strange feeling that is hard to describe. You feel like you are in another world, like in space perhaps. This feeling is especially present on very shallow dives where you can relax (unlike in a cave, where you have to be focused on diving and caving all the time). You feel different, like a bit high, in a secret world. You see things that other people cannot see so it is probably similar to some drug induced state. The effect of a UV dive does not end with the end of the dive. My very good friend described it some time after the first UV photo dive in Sudan by the following words "I feel like a UV filter". He also said: "It is fantastic. It is like doing my first dive over again". And also for me it was like that. It is very nice that after so many years of scuba diving I could experience that feeling again. The world you see is very contrasty: it is either dark or it is glowing therefore pictures are somehow strongly burned into the memory. And sometimes when you close your eyes they come back, they return more often and more strong than normal pictures. Of course this is a very subjective effect which fades after a couple of days but I have experienced it and some of my buddies have also. It was also a very humbling experience for me. I asked myself: "This is just one layer of biology that we now see but do not understand yet due to our sensory and other limitations. Some animals see UV light with their eyes. How many layers are there? Will we ever be able to detect or even understand them?"

It is a beautiful and surprising world and I hope you will experience it.

Matej Simonic

My name is Matej Simonic, I live in Ljubljana/Slovenia/Europe. I dive for 15 years at a constant rate of 100 dives per year. I dive everywhere where water is. Tropical and Mediteranian sea, rivers, lakes, caves, wrecks. I am GUE Tech 2 and Cave 2 certified, and I also made a course of Underwater Cave photography held by JP Bresser this year in France. I take a camera in my hads for one or two dive trips per year, for the last 4 years.

Stroboscopic

by Glenn Lawyer

Tired of taking sharp, well-lit shots, I decided to move into new territory. Buried in a sub-menu on my Canon 7D was the option to set the on-board flash to "multi-flash," an option which optic cables would eagerly pass on to my Inons. Stroboscopic!

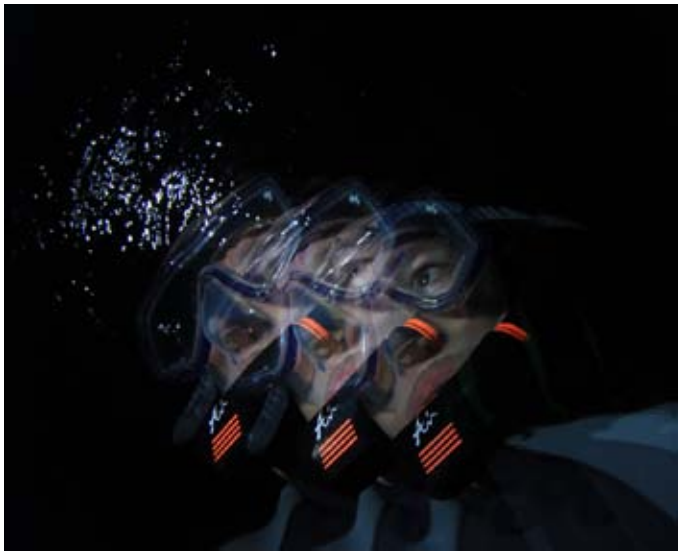
Some thought and a quick experiment in the kitchen taught me the first step of this new-to-me technique. Long exposure (0.5-1 second) with (almost) all of the light in the exposure provided by the strobes. The strobes themselves had to recycle 3-5 flashes in under a second without overheating. This meant low power; throughout my experiments I kept the right had knob between 2.8 and 4 (call it 1/4 power).

Time to take it to the pool. Wide angle lens, medium aperture. For a subject, I used a convenient twig to moor a plastic squirt gun to the bottom.

My technique was simple. Strobes in close to the dome. Subject-to-camera distance such that the subject fills only part of the frame, say 7-8 inches. Place the subject at the edge of the frame. Pull the shutter release while panning the camera. The goal is to have each flash expose the subject onto a different part of the camera's sensor. Flash frequency in the 8-10 Hz range gave the best results, with exposure times of half a second. Focus was problematic with a moving camera and a drifting subject, but in ten minutes I had several acceptable images.

Convinced that glory lay just around the corner I booked tickets to Bonaire. We arrived just in time to help Captain Don celebrate his 85th birthday.

Squirt gun in the pool.
Exposure Time: 1/4 sec, Lens Aperture: f/11.3, ISO Speed: 100, Focal Length: 13.00 mm, Tokina 10-17mm, Canon 7D in Aquatica housing. Twin Inon z-240s set to 1/4 power.



My second pool experiment
Exposure Time: 1/4 sec, Lens Aperture: f/11.3, ISO Speed: 100, Focal Length: 13.00 mm, Tokina 10-17mm, Canon 7D in Aquatica housing. Twin Inon z-240s set to 1/4 power.

Low ambient light photography translates "night dive." It was not until the next evening that I was able to try my technique in real conditions. It soon became obvious that whatever corner glory was laying around must have been on another island. The first lesson I had forgot to learn from my pool experience was the importance of having the subject against open water. Any sort of background reflected too much light. When luck was with me, this could produce ghostly images of fish against a marbled background. Lucky images were the rare exception. Washed out over exposed blurs were the norm.

My first challenge, then, was finding suitable subjects. Fist-sized or larger fish who preferred to stray away from the reef and which would allow a close approach. Not likely, not with four hungry circling tarpon drawn by my torch. I did find one or two volunteers on the sands. But I was slower to set up and approach than the tarpon, with things generally ending badly for the intended subject.

The biggest problem can, in fact, be one's salvation. If it was to be tarpon, then they could be the subject. In fact, their highly reflective scales made them somewhat ideal, as they reflected almost all of the weak light from my strobes. If you have ever done a night dive in Bonaire, you know that getting tarpon to swim close to you is not really a problem. But I didn't want tail or side-view shots. With patience I learned that if I lit the sand far away from me, and slowly moved the circle of light towards me, I could lure them into a head-on

With luck, the tarpon can be lured into a close head-on approach
Exposure Time: 0.7 sec, Lens Aperture: f/11.3, ISO Speed: 400, Focal Length: 17.00 mm, Tokina 10-17mm, Canon 7D in Aquatica housing. Twin Inon z-240s set to 1/4 power.

It is easy to overexpose the background, while the fish itself appears translucent.
Exposure Time: 0.7 sec, Lens Aperture: f/11.3, ISO Speed: 400, Focal Length: 17.00 mm, Tokina 10-17mm, Canon 7D in Aquatica housing. Twin Inon z-240s set to 1/4 power.

Right. Baby drum. Exposure Time: 0.3 sec, Lens Aperture: f/9.5, ISO Speed: 200, 100mm macro, Canon 7D in Aquatica housing. Twin Inon z-240s set to 1/4 power.

approach. Sometimes.

As the fish made its final approach, I would lift the camera, frame the tarpon, and let loose the lightning. Pre-focus was essential-- if I turned my torch on the tarpon so the camera could auto-focus, the fish would break off its approach. I never did figure out the best balance of aperture and ISO speed given the low power of the strobes and the changing distance to subject, so exposure was mostly due to luck. Next time I will boost the ISO and tighten up the lens.

The bigger challenge is coordinating the framing and panning with the flash speed and fish's movement. The panning needs to place the subject on a different part of the sensor for each flash. If the fish is swimming, this means panning either faster or slower than the fish, depending on which way it is swimming. Here I cheated. 18 megapixels gives you lots of cropping opportunities, unless you are planning on turning out posters.

After three nights it was time to try something else. Macro. I was sceptical for two reasons. Depth of field is reduced compared to WA, and my 100mm devours light. Light is in short supply with strobes at 1/4 power. On the other hand, my subjects wouldn't be tarpon bait, and I could set up and take the shot with my eye on the viewfinder.

Macro made it easier in other ways also. The lens's appetite for light re-defined "against an open-water background." I only needed 20-40 cm of water behind the fish. The amount of panning was also drastically reduced. A few centimeters did the trick. This took some learning, and I had many shots where the fish was well off the frame for the final 2-3 flashes.

The trip ended long before mastery was achieved. I have again been reminded of the importance of knowing my subjects, so I can better

Exposure Time: 0.3 sec, Lens Aperture: f/9.5, ISO Speed: 200, 100mm macro, Canon 7D in Aquatica housing. Twin Inon z-240s set to 1/4 power.

plan the image. Coordinating flash speed, fish speed, and panning speed remains a challenge. Exposure is difficult. I have not yet mentioned backscatter. Suffice it to say that I made generous use of the Gimp's despeckle filter and heal/clone tool in producing the final images shown here.

I would like to promise another article soon which shows what can be done after mastering this technique. It is unlikely to come from me, however, since I don't see the opportunity to try again any time soon. But perhaps you will write it?

Glenn Lawyer

UwP is free to download because the contributors give their time, talent and knowledge for free.

Please, make a donation to the UwP contributors and help keep UwP free to download.

You may not know this but none of the UwP contributors get paid. They provide their articles and photo talent in support of the cause of UwP which aims to keep the magazine free for anyone to download.

Donations are all handled in total security through PayPal and you can also pay securely by credit card using the PayPal links.

Your donations will be distributed to the contributors of each issue on a pro rata basis i.e. the more pages they contribute, the more their percentage.

When deciding how much you want to donate please bear in mind that PayPal's charge for amounts smaller than £3 or $6 can be as high as 24%!! Whilst I accept that PayPal is absolutely brilliant and safe, I don't want this to become a 'Donate a lot to PayPal"!!

You can make a donation in either US $ dollars, UK £ sterling or € Euros by following this link

Donate here

PayPal DONATE

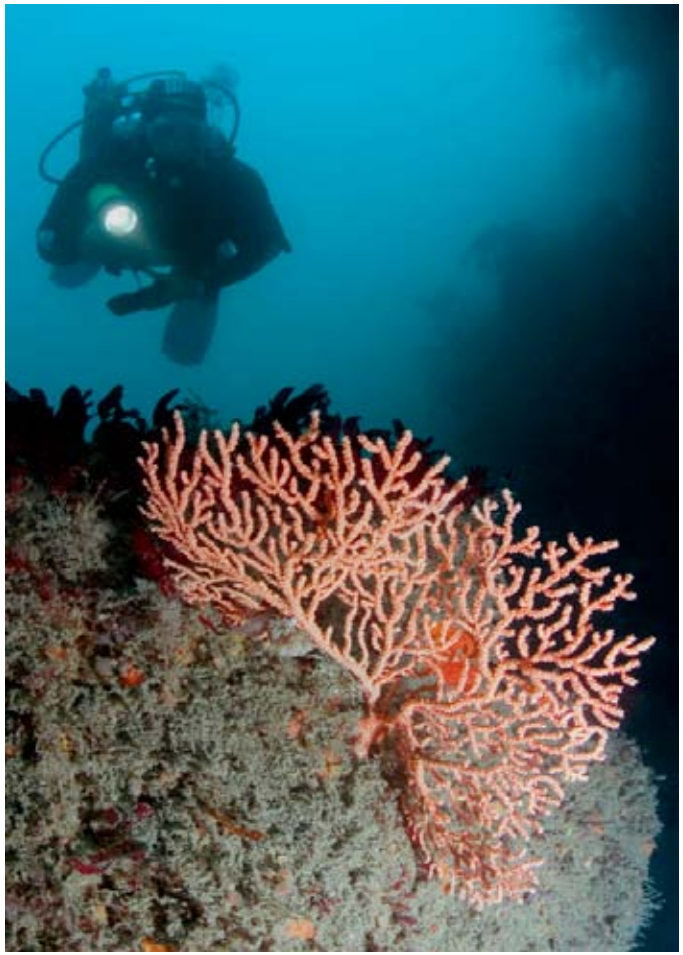
www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

Diving in Sark

with Sue Daly

There can be few environments as challenging for a photographer than being underwater. Lighting and simply staying still are difficult, let alone the time constraints imposed by air supply and nitrogen levels. Add to that the complications of keeping electronics dry in a thoroughly wet atmosphere and every successful underwater image becomes a small miracle. When it comes to diving in the British Isles the challenge is greater with cold seas, turbid waters and often less than benign weather. With the right British location though I think the rewards are worthy of the challenge. Good images from our home waters have the added element of surprise, revealing the colour, beauty and diversity of British marine life.

The tiny Channel Island of Sark is one of those locations and lying some eighty miles south of the mainland offers a few 'exotic' southern species to a long list of marine life which make excellent subjects. Add good visibility, interesting topography and an excellent, underwater-photographer-friendly dive boat and you have the perfect ingredients for a great British dive destination. Diving here is mainly a mixture of submerged reefs and granite islets. The largest of the latter is L'Étac, an islet to the south of Sark. The triangular pinnacle continues underwater to over fifty metres in a series of walls, gullies and boulder slopes. Below the kelp forest Fan Corals and Red Fingers Soft Coral grace the walls providing the perfect focal points for wide angle shots while a multitude of sponges and anemones add yet more colour. This is also one of the areas where you'll find the stunning yellow



(Above) Red Fingers Soft Coral
Canon EOS 40D in Sea & Sea housing with two Sea & Sea strobes, YS90 & YS110
Sigma 10-20mm lens at 16mm, f11, 1/80, ISO200

(Left) Diver & Fan Coral
Canon EOS 10D in Sea & Sea housing with Sea & Sea strobe YS90 , Sigma 15mm lens, f5.6, 1/60, ISO100

Sunset Cup Coral, a southern species recorded at just a handful of sites on the mainland and a superb close up subject. To the north-east lies the Vingt Clos, a submerged reef with walls so sheer that you feel as if you're swimming along side a huge wreck. The corals and superabundance of Jewel Anemones make it another great spot for wide angle work with Conger Eels, Lobsters and Cuttlefish for closer shots.

Working anti-clockwise around the island you'll encounter the reefs of Ecrillais, Grune du Nord, Pavlaison, Guillaumesse and Boue Tirlipois, a variety of pinnacles, walls and gullies smothered in marine life and topped with a mop of kelp. It's in the deeper reaches of the kelp that the Cuckoo Wrasse live, the stars of many underwater pictures from Sark. Territorial and inquisitive, both the iridescent blue and orange males and the

(Above) Beadlet Anemones in the Gouliot Caves Canon EOS 10D in Sea & Sea housing with Sea & Sea strobe YS90 , Sigma 15mm lens, f9, 1/60, ISO100

(Left) Lobster
Canon EOS 10D in Sea & Sea housing with Sea & Sea strobe YS90 , Canon 28-80mm lens at 30mm, f5.6, 1/60, ISO100

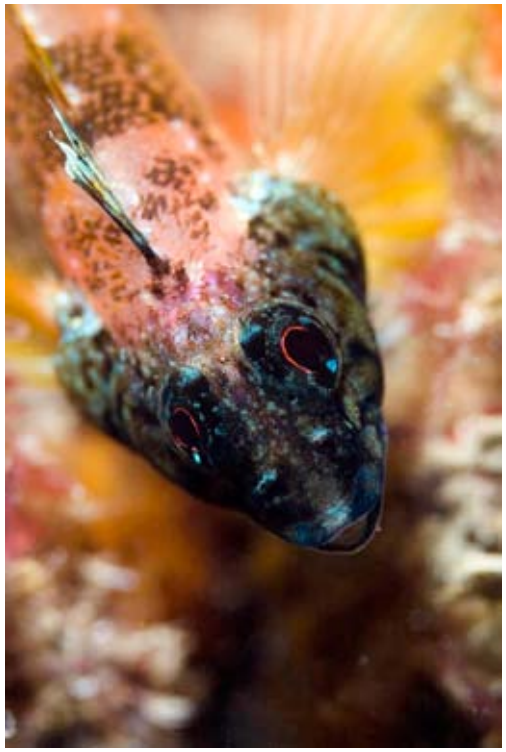
(Far left) Anemone Prawn Periclimenes sagittifer in Snakelocks Anemone
Canon EOS 40D in Sea & Sea housing with two Sea & Sea strobes, YS90 & YS110, Canon EF 100mm lens, f20, 1/80, ISO200

(Left) Jewel Anemones
Canon EOS 40D in Sea & Sea housing with two Sea & Sea strobes, YS90 & YS110, Canon EF 100mm lens, f13, 1/80, ISO200

(Above) Cuckoo Wrasse, male
Canon EOS 10D in Sea & Sea housing with Sea & Sea strobe YS90 , Canon 28-80mm lens at 38mm, f4, 1/30, ISO400

peach-coloured females have a charming habit of swimming towards divers as if inspecting our equipment. (They seem particularly interested in strobes.) They make a colourful addition to a wide angle shot and often put themselves in the frame, whether you wanted one there or not. When it comes to taking their portrait, Cuckoo Wrasse have an infuriating tendency to swim right up to the lens forcing the photographer backwards to focus. Either the Wrasse are reacting to their reflection in the lens or they're fish with a sense of humour! They appear to enjoy being centre of attention and, should your concentration shift to another subject, they will often deliver a sharp nip to remind you who's most beautiful.

As elsewhere in the British Isles, Tompot Blennies in Sark seem un-afraid of divers and keen to model for close up and even macro shots. For something a little more unusual keep a sharp eye open for Black-faced Blennies which are found at most sites, particularly on vertical walls. The female of this southern, thumb-sized species is dappled brown and easy to overlook but the male is a different matter. Orangey-brown with dark bars, in the presence of a female he changes colour in seconds to bright yellow with a dark face and bright blue fin edges. In spring and early summer



(Far left) Tompot Blenny Canon EOS 40D in Sea & Sea housing with two Sea & Sea strobes, YS90 & YS110, Canon EF 100mm lens, f18, 1/80, ISO200

(Left) Black-face Blenny, male Canon EOS 10D in Sea & Sea housing with Sea & Sea strobe YS90 Canon EF 100mm lens, f6.3, 1/60, ISO100

he dances around his mate in a figure of eight flaunting his splendid colours while the female wriggles before him. When she's ready to mate the male trembles by her side, fertilising an egg as she lays it before returning to his flamboyant display. It's a charming courtship display during which both sexes are easy to approach and photograph, even quite closely.

Blennies aren't the only good macro subjects around Sark. Studies of soft and fan coral polyps create stunning images as do Jewel and Yellow Cluster Anemones and Devonshire Cup Corals. In spring and early summer there's no shortage of nudibranchs including the well camouflaged Sea Fan Nudibranch. The flamboyant Candy-striped Flatworm is a favourite of mine, as are the Lightbulb Sea Squirts it feeds on. Top of the macro list here though must be Periclimenes sagittifer, the beautiful, purple-striped prawn which lives amongst the tentacles of the Snakelocks anemone.

While the reef diving around Sark is the main attraction, for me the most spectacular site is also the shallowest; the Gouliot Caves. Weaving through the western most headland of the island, they form a complex of tunnels from narrow slits and gullies to wider, boulder-strewn caverns. Most importantly, the caves are open to the sea on both sides of the headland so water sweeps through with the ebb and flow of the tide allowing a wealth of marine life to thrive on the rocky walls.

The dive begins on the north side of the headland a couple of hours after high water. There's nothing to see of the entrance above water but underwater a triangular opening begins a couple of metres below the surface. Ten metres or so in the ceiling lowers and the pebbly seabed rises slightly to give the impression that the way forward could be too narrow but there's plenty of room without scraping your equipment from above or below. It's here that I've often encountered a shoal of Grey Mullet startled by my sudden appearance. (It's hard to say who jumps the most!) This is the Sponge Cave, the darkest part of the dive and where you'll most need your torch. The walls are carpeted in Oaten Pipe Hydroids giving them a fluffy appearance but, as it's name suggests, the most dominant creatures here are the sponges. Further on there's a patch of peach-coloured Plumose Anemones, a common species around much of Britain but something of a rarity this far south. The cave widens now with plenty of room for two or more divers side by side and the walls are dominated by red, orange and green Beadlet Anemones in their thousands. Look closely and you'll see the string

Sunset Cup Coral
Canon EOS 40D in Sea & Sea housing with two Sea & Sea strobes, YS90 & YS110, Canon 18-55mm lens at 55mm, f13, 1/80, ISO200

of iridescent blue 'beads' just beneath their tentacles which give them their name.

Ahead there's light glowing greeny-blue around either side of a rock column reaching up to the surface. It doesn't matter which side of it you go, both ways take you into the beautifully named Jewel Cave, the highlight of the dive. The walls here are plastered in anemones in every shade possible, spot lit by sunlight shafting down from above. Pink, white and orange Elegant Anemones crowd the base of the rock along with patches of Jewel Anemones in every hue of the rainbow. Everywhere else there are yet more Beadlet Anemones and it's worth going up to the surface to see them all stuck to the walls out of water like thousands of giant fruit gums. Back underwater the tide gradually begins taking you through the Jewel Cave. Jewel Anemones take over in force now, the only place I know where you'll see them this shallow. In between are grey lobes of Elephant Hide Sponge, bright yellow masses of Boring Sponge and green sheets of Breadcrumb Sponge. By now the light and tide are getting stronger. Fluffy fingers of Soft Coral emerge from the walls which widen towards the exit and all too soon you're swept through an archway of kelp into Havre Gosselin, the bay on the south side of the headland where your boat will be waiting. If you've timed it right you'll have enjoyed at least forty minutes in the caves and your depth gauge will barely have touched five metres.

The greatest difficulty with the Gouliot Caves is deciding which lens to take. The shafts of sun highlighting the gem-like colours of the Jewel Cave makes a stunning wide angle subject, especially with a well-briefed diver adding scale. For close up and macro work the anemones and hydroids provide endless opportunities and both attract nudibranchs which feed on them. Either way, it's a challenging location with surge even on a calm day (some extra weight on your belt helps) and a short tidal window but a real Sark diving highlight.

A visit to Sark though isn't just about great diving but a chance to experience the tranquility of an un-spoilt, car-free island. Walking or cycling are the only ways to get around unless you indulge yourself and hire a horse-drawn carriage and driver. There are miles of picturesque footpath to discover along with endless wildflowers and butterflies. From the water you'll see Puffins, Guillemots, Razorbills and Fulmars and, if you're really lucky, a breath-taking display of aerobatics from the resident Peregrine Falcons. Add to this a choice of eating places offering cream teas and fresh local seafood and you can see why so many visitors return to Sark year after year. For more information visit www.sark.info

Sark Diving Services www.sarkci.com offer week long deals which include six days diving from the hard boat Starfish and accommodation in a shared, self-catering cottage. The package includes foot passenger travel from either Poole or Weymouth on the Condor high speed ferry which means no worries about trying to cram your dive gear and camera kit into a mean airline baggage allowance. Tanks, weights and air are included and nitrox is available as an add on. I run underwater photography and marine identification workshops in association with Sark Diving Services.

Sue Daly
www.suedalyproductions.com

Don't settle for 2nd best

Film - No Filter
No White Balance

Digital - No Filter
Manual WB

Magic Filter
Manual WB

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

Snorkelling with Basking Sharks

by Charles Hood

The filter feeding Cetorhinus maximus or to give it its common name the basking shark is the second largest fish in all of the worlds oceans, narrowly beaten by the whale shark Rhincodon typus. However, lengthwise there is very little in it. Apparently the largest recorded basking shark was found in a herring net in the Bay of Fundy, Canada in 1851 and measured a whopping 12.27 metres. Compare this with the largest confirmed whale shark that was caught near Baba Island, Karachi, Pakistan on November 11, 1947 which at 12.65 metres is less than half a metre longer. So to all intense and purposes they are similar in length and are both very big fish. The main difference, however, is I can relatively easily swim with basking sharks as they congregate, sometimes in vast numbers, less than 10 miles from my home in south west Cornwall, England, whereas to see a whale shark I have to travel thousands of miles.

Historically each year the first individuals start to appear off the very southwest tip of England around late April to mid May depending upon the weather conditions. Probably extremely hungry, after the winter lean period they then build in numbers urged on by the desire to gorge themselves on the spring plankton bloom. From then on they appear to choose there favourite spots to harvest the tiny critters and will often remain in the same vicinity for weeks on end until towards mid summer when they start to disperse. Some individuals make there way up the English Channel in search of the moving plankton bloom and can be seen as far eastwards as Weymouth. However, the majority tend to break up in to smaller groups and meander up the north coast of Cornwall travelling up to Lundy, the Isle of Man then appear to meet up again on the west coast of Scotland by late summer. This pattern is the norm, however, with our ever-changing climate they don't necessarily read the script.

In both 2007 and 2008 the weather in June and for most of July was some of the worst in living memory, while in late summer it was positively Caribbean like. The sharks weren't seen in reasonable numbers

in both years until August when they congregated in stupendous numbers with reports of over 400 individuals between Land's End and the Lizard peninsular. One particular day in early September 2008 I estimate we saw at least 100 and maybe more. They were all confined to within less than a square mile of the Longships lighthouse just off Land's End and were totally focussed on feeding themselves full in the plankton rich waters. As far as you could see in any direction were fins, snouts and tails breaking the surface – one of nature's true spectacles?

In 2009 and 2010 we saw the return to the usual format with mid June proving to be the sweet spot. 2009 was the first year that we operated commercially with our 7 metre RIB called Logan and we made two minutes on the BBC national news by the end of our the first week thanks to the hard work of underwater cameraman Dan Burton. John McIntyre then went on to produce a short film for BBC Worldwide news and many UK photographers that year achieved some excellent images. Building on our 2009 success we were fully booked this year and what a year it was. From memory it was the very best season to photograph basking sharks. Perhaps there weren't the huge numbers that we had in the previous seasons but the sharks we had were real players. The highlight was filming with Paul Rose for the new BBC Oceans series to be broadcast next spring. In all my time of venturing out with basking sharks I have never heard a photographer say, and I quote, ' that's it, I've got all the footage I require', which came from BBC cameraman Mike Pitts after being in the water surrounded by 7 real players for over 5 hours. Other honourable guests included, all the way from Hawaii, the internationally recognised

Photo by Alex Mustard

underwater photographer Doug Perrine who finally nailed the shot he wanted for his new book, Alex Mustard complete with the largest dome port in the world, which resulted in the most glorious of split images I think that have ever been taken of said fish, Maria Munn with a team of compact camera users who's total equipment could all fit in one Peli case, Frogfish photography who snapped some awesome close-ups of wide mouths gaping open, Divelife with simply the most stunning of kelpy shallow water shots and of course, last but by no means least, the editor of UWP, Monsieur Rowlands. Peter chose to remain topside videoing proceedings and he has the best audio sound of a breaching basking shark ever recorded, complete with expletives. No really, it is truly magnificent. The only problem was the lens was pointing in completely the opposite direction to where the breach was taking place so sadly there isn't the imagery to accompany it!

So how do you photograph England's most wonderful elasmobranch? First you have to find yourself someone who can get you in front of them. And when I mean in front of them, in front of them

in a way that will present the best opportunity for you to get the images you are after. Simply steaming up to a small group of basking sharks and leaping in will, nine times out of 10, result at best in a gloomy tail shot. Further that operator has also got to be able to find them, which despite being gigantic leviathans is not as easy as it may first appear. The signature of the basking shark is the tip of the dorsal breaking the surface in the classic Jaws-like fashion. But sometimes only the very tiniest of tip may be breaking the surface and spotting them can be a practiced art. Also with around 30 miles of coastline to search each time they can be very elusive. Thus the only reliable method is to set up a

network of spotters. These are usually a combination of local fishermen, volunteer coast guard watches, angling boats and various tourist vessels. And the information flow is a two-way affair so everyone benefits.

So once we have established where they might be what is the best photographic system to choose? Personally I prefer a fixed focal length lens on a housed dSLR. Rather than a zoom a fixed focal length lens gives you one less thing to think about, which when snapping unpredictable fish such as basking sharks is a good thing. So I usually opt for the compact Nikkor 20mm f2.8 on my Nikon D3. On a smaller chip camera something that gives you around 90 degrees would be perfect; I hear the Tokina 10-17mm is a popular choice at the 17mm end although a Nikkor 16mm would also work. Fish-eyes can be used if the water is murky but they tend to distort the animal too much for my liking. Exposure wise, I personally now set the D3 to matrix metering, in program mode and with continuous auto focus. My reasoning is that Nikon has spent a huge amount of time, money and research on these modes and I've found they all are absolutely spot on. You do, however, need to give the camera a helping hand by invoking the active D lighting so as to clip any highlights and dial in around minus 2/3 – 1 1/3 stops, as

it will tend to overexpose. I shoot at either ISO 800 or even 1600 because the D3's chip can take it and this usually gives an exposure of around 1/320s at f8. Anything below 1/125s and you will almost certainly get camera shake and anything wider than f8 on full frame and the depth of field will be limited. So now you have all the knowledge what's the best technique?

Planning is paramount. All ones gear must be assembled and ready to go before you spot the sharks, in this way getting in the right position should be the only issue on ones mind rather than assembling cameras housings or making up weight belts for instance. I always suggest observing the sharks for at least five to 10 minutes to establish if there is a pattern to their feeding. Usually they will tend to circle around a concentrated patch of plankton and this presents the best opportunity, as you will be able to predict where they will be. We then usually drop in as quietly as possible, torpedo-like 'Mustard style', works well, around 100 metres away and swim to there predicted route lining up on a sharks dorsal fin about 20 metres distant. 'Mustard style', refers to Alex's stealth like head first entry he adopted, although gently lowering yourself feet first is perfectly acceptable. The secret then is to 'make like a jellyfish' i.e. just float as motionless as possible on the surface. This way the sharks will usually ignore you and swim right passed with mouths agape. If you dangle you legs down or try and swim towards them they will usually turn away and close their mouths. Under no circumstances should you try and grab hold of them or try and snorkel down under them. Besides being possibly an illegal activity they will instantly react by swimming off at considerable speed with the possible result in you receiving a nasty tail slap, which from something weighing upwards of 10 tons would probably ruin your afternoon. If you remain

pretty much motionless the sharks will usually keep on coming around again and again until they either run out of food or get disturbed. It is worth mentioning a couple of points here. If you see one shark there are nearly always others following underneath so be prepared for them once the first has gone past, this usually catches everyone out at least once. Also, an interesting observation this year we found was that in the majority of cases the leading shark was predominantly female with males following behind in size order (no change there then!). On one occasion there were six males all of whom were not visible topside chasing one female. This gives rise to the question are they also mating as well as feeding at this time of year? As some of the individuals remained in the same locations for several days we also got to photograph them time and time again and gave some of the regulars identification names such as white fin, pink fin, notch tail and stallion (a certain male with particularly large claspers). Sadly on June 28th we saw the last one for the season. Several large sharks have been reported since but they were nearly all offshore and difficult to photograph underwater so we will have to wait again until next year.

Basking sharks are a protected species in UK waters and it is an offence to cause them harm so we always suggest one follows a set of guidelines adopted from the Shark Trust and Marine Conservation Society. The main points are stopping the boat around 100 metres away, restricting the numbers of snorkellers at any one time in the water to a maximum of four, not touching or crowding the sharks and no flash photography.

There are a small number of operators in the UK who will by prior arrangement take you out to photograph basking sharks, however, we a have arguably the best conditions with usually pretty much blue water and great visibility. If you are interested in chartering our rib please then please visit www.riblogan.com for more details.

Charles Hood
www.riblogan.com

Muck diving, French style

By Jean-Philippe Borges & Gilles Suc

When you speak about muck diving with other uw photographers, the same locations always come up : Lembeh Strait, Malaysia etc. Of course, most muck diving is done in Southeast Asia where there are more marine species than anywhere else in the world. Places like Mabul and Kapalai in Sabah, Malaysia, Lembeh Straits in Manado, Indonesia and Bali are the most popular because of the amazing creatures found in the muck. However there also good muck dives here in Europe but they are not well known. Moreover, some of the most interesting ones are kept hidden so as not to allow a lot of diver's fins to affect the area. With beautiful fauna, diversity and various type of dives, we are going today to present two of them, located in the south of France with the aim of finding two things : incredible fauna and moreover some 'Hippo' families.

There are no pygmy seahorses in European waters just two different species - the long-snouted seahorse Hippocampus guttulatus and the short-snouted Hippocampus hippocampus. Seahorses are grouped with pipefishes, pipehorses and seadragons as members of the family Syngnathidae. If you look at the morphology of those fishes, they don't seem to share anything in common but pipefishes look like seahorses that have been

Seagrass area of Zostera in Thau, during a cold period but with very clear waters in January Fuji S2 Pro,Aquatica Tokina 10-17mm fisheye at 10mm, 2 Inon Z-220, F8, 1/200 ISO 100

Spiral tube-worm on a oyster farm in Thau. Fuji S2 Pro,Aquatica, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye at 10mm, 2 Inon Z-220, F13, 1/40, ISO 100

straightened and streched until they are long and narrow. What is very well known about them is their way of reproduction (laboratory and aquarium observations). The female seahorse produces the ovums and the male the sperm. Then, the male becomes pregnant as the female deposits ovums into the male's brood pouch. Then, the ovums are fertilized and become eggs. Pregnancy can lasts

30 days (depending on the species) and, during the breeding season, males can go through more than one pregnancy. 100 to 300 young are released per pregnancy. They look like miniature adult seahorses and are fully independent after birth, receiving no further parental care (more info at Seahorse Project : http://seahorse.fisheries.ubc.ca).

In the South of France, seahorses are found in a large number of different diving sites but only 2 or 3 locations host large and abundant populations. The long-snouted can be easily seen in the laguna of Thau and the short-snouted in the channel of Hossegor in the south of France.

The Laguna of Thau

A laguna ? Yes you can find a big laguna in the South of France bordered by the Mediterranean Sea. It is around 20 km long and 5 km wide ; not unlike the more famous Laguna Vaneta in Italy. Between Beziers and Montpellier, near the unfortunately famous 'blue tuna harbour' of Sete, the Laguna of Thau is a really special marine ecosystem. Dives are not deep, with pratically no current at all. Visibility can be very good, but typically only a few meters depending on the location and surface wind.

Some families of seahorses live there and the most famous diving site is called 'Le ponton', surrounded by a decades old garbage area where it is easy to find old washing machines, TVs as well as mounds of plastic stuff. Some of this was dumped near the coast and, unfortunately for the environment, are now few feet underwater. As a result, during your dive, you'll be able to drive a 4x4, be the captain of some very old boats (now wrecks) and find some amazingly designed metal scultpures (could be good for uw modern art). But the most amazing is that the ecosystem seems to have adapted well and has actually taken advantage of all this specific environment.

Long-snouted seahorse with yellow colours and white spot. Fuji S2 Pro Aquatica Nikon 105mm AF-D macro, 2 Inon Z-220, F40, 1/125, ISO 100

Short-snouted seahorse with brown colours. Canon S1, Canon housing, Home-made +10 macro lens with +4 dioptries, Sea&Sea YS-90Auto and Inon D-2000, F8, 1/80, ISO 50

Previously, crossing the area and reaching the coast was sometimes completely impossible to do without a big 4x4 (thanks Mr Land Rover !). Now it's much easier to get to and park on the 'ponton'. This is located near the big channel of Sete, which forms a bridge between the laguna and the Mediterranean. Firstly, the channel brings salt water and marine life. Fishes, worms, crustaceans and molluscs grow because they can find interesting

(Left) Classic peacock blenny, the 'clown-fish' of the laguna of Thau. Canon S1, Canon housing, Home-made +10 macro lens with +4 dioptries, Sea&Sea YS-90Auto and Inon D-2000, F8, 1/60, ISO 100
(Above) Red-finger nudibranch. Fuji S2 Pro, Aquatica, Nikon 105mm AF-D macro, 2 Inon Z-220, F22, 1/125, ISO 100
(Top right) Common green pipefish, feeding near the mussel sand. Canon S1, Canon, Home-made +10 macro lens with +4 dioptries, Sea&Sea YS-90Auto and Inon D-2000, F8, 1/30, ISO 50
(Right)Black Polycera with yellow spots feeding on a seagrass. Fuji S2 Pro, Aquatica, Nikon 105mm AF-D macro, 2 Inon Z-220, F22, 1/250, ISO 200

hiding places underwater (thanks Ariston, Philips and one more time Mr Land Rover. Also, clear water comes from some rivers situated in the northern part of the laguna and salt/clear mixing water here make an amazing ecosystem.

Diving the laguna is really well documented by sea slugs experts. As a lot of species are found only in this area in Europe, it's becoming a real big sea slugs hotspot. Also, a lot of different types of fishes can be found (depending on the season). But here, after seahorses and sea-slugs, the third member of this famous laguna is the peacock blenny Salaria pavo. Underwater, it's like a clown, allowing very funny shots during the mating seasons.

But for French uw photographers, Thau means one thing - seahorses. Some people say, before your first dive in this area « If you don't see any, it's because you dived with your eyes closed. Keep them open and you will see them». Well, of course, that's not totally true but it's also not 100% wrong and, sometimes, it's really like coming back to childhood times and having a ride on the merry-go-rounds. Each time you make a round, you find one of them. Most of the observed seahorses

Common prawn, feeding on red colonial seasquirt. Canon S1, Canon housing, Home-made +10 macro lens with +4 dioptries, Sea&Sea YS-90Auto and Inon D-2000, F8, 1/80, ISO 50

in the laguna of Thau are from the specie Hippocampus guttulatus, also called 'long-snouted seahorse'. The most abundant color is yellow, with hundreds of little and tiny white spots. Some with big long spines and others with nothing on their head. There doesn't appear to be a difference between 2 different species just different 'decoration'.

During the coldest months, when the water temperature can drop to 3 or 4 °C (with ice on the coast some years ago), it's completely impossible to find any of them. A lot are maybe in the sea close by, waiting for a warmer season. At the end of autumn, some can be found in the sand, maybe trying to find a warm place to hibernate during winter. Not much is known about them but scientists observed that, at least during the breeding season, most seahorse species studied exhibit high site-fidelity and small home ranges. It explains why they can be found in this laguna, very close to the sea.

Capbreton-Hossegor and Notre Dame bridge

The second 'Hippo' hotspot is located close to the Atlantic coast, between the Basque Country and the city of Bordeaux. Capbreton-Hossegor, well known for summer surfing festivals, is a small harbour with not a lot of dive sites. The coast is flat and sandy but some very deep dives can be had few miles off the coast. But here, as in the laguna of Thau, a peaceful and not very deep dive site is located in a small channel. This channel forms a link between the ocean and the lake of Hossegor and, as at Thau, it allows the life to grow with a permanent exchange of salt/ clear water and nutrients. Under the Notre Dame bridge, at around 7-8m deep, a very large family of seahorses and other pipefishes can be found. Less coloured than their cousins of Thau, seahorses are coloured darker (from brown to black). A few of them are yellow or orange, but only the short-snouted seahorses Hippocampus hippocampus are found in this dive site. Depending on the season, you can also find a lot of schools of various fish, like triggerfishes and seabreams.

Both of these dive sites are really full of life, and as an uw photographer, we are sure you'll enjoy your muck dives in these seahorse paradises.

Jean-Philippe Borges
& Gilles Suc

Gozo Europe's winter warmer

by Sean Arrowsmith

Situated a 25 minute ferry ride North of the Mediterranean island of Malta, Gozo enjoys a climate that varies from hot summers, to balmy winters. With easy access from Europe, crystal clear waters, and easily accessible diving; it is small wonder Gozo is so popular with divers. It might not have the coral walls of the Red Sea, but what it does have is a wonderful mix of diving and is exceptionally good value for money. How good? 12 dives, including flights from the UK, accommodation and transfers can be had for less than 400 Euros.

Getting there

Getting to Gozo is a simple affair. Air Malta has regular flights from many major and regional airports to Luqa Airport, also known as Valletta, on Malta. They offer the standard 20kg free hold baggage, but it is possible to book an additional sports bag, of up to 32kg, for the exceptionally reasonable sum of 20 Euros each way. As Malta is in the EU, there are no visa requirements for EU citizens, and given the amount of diving that takes place, there are no questions asked at customs on arrival, even when you have enough camera equipment to stock a small shop.

Any of the dive centres you choose will be able to arrange transfers for you, and these will generally occur in two stages; from the airport to the ferry, and from the ferry to the dive centre or accommodation. On the ferry crossing, there is a lockable trolley into which you can place your kit, leaving you free to have a quick wander around, or even a cheeky lager.

Climate

With a typically Mediterranean climate, expect hot summers, with mild winters with some rain over the winter months, usually overnight. Being a small island, the wind can occasionally pick up, and with it the sea too. In winter, it would generally be the Northern sites that become undiveable, and for this reason, a selection of wrecks has been placed to the South of the island. The dive staff are able to advise on likely sites if you are unfortunate enough to get some bad weather.

Diver with Seastar
Ikelite Nikon D90, 10-24mm @ 10mm, YS110 strobes, 1/125 @ f/9.5, ISO 200

Right. Typically Mediterranean architecture
Nikon D90, Sigma 17-70mm @ 29mm, 1/30 @ f/3.3, ISO 220

The Diving

The chosen dive centre had plenty of space, with facilities for washing and hanging kit, as well as being able to provide a multitude of cylinders and any gas mix you liked, from air to trimix, up to 300 bar. The camera rinse tank was a bit on the

small side for a DSLR rig, so I would just shower the rig off once back at the apartment. Helpfully, the accommodation was situated next door to the dive centre.

For the first 3 days diving we were accompanied by one of the dive centre guides who was invaluable for directing us to the dive sites and showing us the best places to enter and exit the water. He was also a rather helpful pair of spotting eyes underwater. The guide was also sympathetic to the needs of us photographers by allowing us to stay in till we got cold, or low on air.

After the guided dives we hired 4x4 pickup trucks, were given directions to the sites and let loose on the island ourselves. It's a small island so nothing is ever more than a 25 minute drive and the actual dive sites themselves are signposted, showing just how entrenched diving is on the island.

The standard of driving is pretty poor, but better than Malta and the roads are patchy. Most of the vehicles are very 'well used', but at no time did it feel unsafe, just a little bit 'adventurous'. Some of the dive sites are down some tight twisty tracks but the directions and maps from the dive centre staff were always perfect.

Shore diving is the general rule here although there are several boats available which will take you to some of the offshore sites and to the other islands. However, with depths down to 65m+ available at some of the shore sites, there is bound to be something for everyone, even for the confirmed depth junkies.

As it is mostly shore diving, and the shores are generally quite rocky, some of the entries can be a little challenging, especially if conditions are not perfect. Many of the sites however have kitting up

Diver in morning light
Ikelite Nikon D90, 10-24mm @ 10mm, YS110 strobes, 1/125 @ f/11, ISO 200

Right. Flabellina nudibranch
Ikelite Nikon D90, 105mm, YS110 strobes, 1/125 @ f/32, ISO 200

benches, steps cut into the rock to allow you to enter the water, and ladders to allow you to exit. And if it is too rough to dive a certain site, there will always be somewhere else on the island where you can get in.

Visibility is generally in the region of 20-30m with some of the shallower sites suffering from run-off if there has been a sizeable amount of rain. Temperatures range from 26-27ºC in August and September, to 16ºC in February. This may seem cold to some, but when your dive boat has been cancelled for the 4th week in a row, and the alternative is an old quarry in 4 or 5ºC, then the prospect of 16ºC in winter can seem positively tropical.

Despite limiting myself to a maximum depth of 20m, there was no limit in the choice of sites. Others in the group had no such depth limitations and were all kept happy by the sheer variety of sites, many of which you let you pick your depth and then finish in the shallows on the reef, allowing true multilevel diving.

Sample Dive Sites

Hondoq

Situated to the South, this is a very accessible site, with a cafe, toilets and easy entry to the water (small giant stride). Once underwater you follow a pipe and eventually come to a large sandy area, interspersed with eel grass beds. The maximum depth is in the region of 14m, so suitable for a really long dive. The highlight here are the Flying Gurnards, there are also baby stingrays buried in the sand and Flabellina Nudibranchs to be spotted by those with keen eyes. The exit is either via a ladder, or a slipway (with handrail). This site is also a good choice for night dives, where you will be met by hunting octopus, cuttlefish, occasional squid plus a whole host of invertebrates.

Azure Window

Being in the North West of the island, this site is a bit more weather dependent, and the entry and exit requires some concentration and fitness with a walk down steps over some slippery rocks. The entry is into a pool approx. 10m in diameter and, once submerged, it quickly becomes apparent that the wide angle rewards are worth it, swimming under an enormous natural archway then out into the open water you seem to be hovering in endless blue. Here the guide will find you tunnels, swim throughs, and impressive rockfalls. The deeper parts of the dive are inhabited by some sizeable groupers.

The exit requires a little teamwork if you are passing up cameras but natural ledges allow you to step out easily. Then a short walk back to the car park, complete will all facilities, as this is a very popular spot for tourists, not just divers.

Wrecks & Reef

Purposefully sunk off the Southern end of the island, allowing an alternative when the North is blown out, there are 3 wrecks with depths ranging from 20m on the deck to 42m on the sand. With a walk down the path then entering over the rocks and a short surface swim to just 100m offshore you descend onto the chosen wreck. As they are purposefully sunk, they are in a good condition with marine life starting to colonise.

Once finished on the wrecks, you swim back to the reef, where there is a good selection of macro life, seastars, scorpionfish, octopus and others all putting in an appearance. The reef is worthy of a dive in itself as it has a number of terraces dropping down to 25m. The morning light is well worth exploiting with a wide angle lens and model.

Tube worm abstract
Ikelite Nikon D90, 105mm, YS110 strobes, 1/250 @ f/22, ISO 200

Exit is via a ladder and you can then walk back to the car park, complete with purpose built kitting up benches.

Ras Il-Hobz

Again on the South of the Island, good conditions are necessary for this dive. The access to this site has to be the smelliest I have ever done, as you drive right past a sewage works. With a short walk to the waters edge you simply slide in over the rocks into (thankfully) clear water as the sewage outfall was relocated elsewhere some years ago. This is a steep wall, with the bottom at 35m. As you round the headland, a pinnacle looms into view, just 15-20m off the wall. This is only 10m deep on the top, but round the back of the pinnacle, it is 70m+ to the seabed, which then slopes away to even greater depths. Circling

Diver on pinnacle at Ras Il-Hobz
Ikelite Nikon D90, 10-24mm @ 10mm, YS110 strobes, 1/125 @ f/11, ISO 200

the pinnacle as you ascend, you are surrounded by shoals of Chromis (Damselfish) and smelt/sardines. Heading back over to the wall, the cracks and crevices hold morays, octopus and the ubiquitous combers. Exit is via a natural bay, with slipway

P29 Wreck and Reef

The P29 was a 51m Condor class patrol boat, scuttled in 33m of water just outside the Malta ferry

Scorpionfish resting in the seagrass Ikelite Nikon D90, 60mm, YS110 strobes, 1/60 @ f/11, ISO 200

terminal. Easily reachable by boat from Gozo, this intact wreck allows for a nice dive even when the winds are from the North West. If you start to slip into deco on the wreck, it is quite possible to swim the 100m or so to the reef where you are greeted by archways, swimthroughs, and a whole host of macro life, including morays, fireworms and octopus.

Comino Caves

These are a collection of swimthroughs and caverns and the only cave diving equipment needed is a torch. The shallow depth (14m max) and sheltered location means that this is often a second boat dive after the P29, and dive times of 80-90 minutes are quite possible. The light here can be exceptional, spilling in through cracks and over openings, so a wide angle lens is essential. There are also dense shoals of black spot bream, no doubt attracted by the many boats full of snorkelers who like to feed them.

Out of the water

Unfortunately, sometimes we have to be out of the water, especially the day we fly home. Gozo has quite a number of surface attractions to help pass the time while you are off-gassing. The island has a predominantly Catholic population, and as such there are churches everywhere, some of these are really quite spectacular, and definitely worth a visit. The citadel is situated in the centre of the island and the views commanded allow you to see 360 degrees, taking in the entire coastline, as well as learning about the history of this small island. Couple this with craft fairs and markets, as well as plentiful bars and restaurants, and you are sure not to be bored on your last day.

Conclusions

Gozo is hard to beat for value. Based on a group of 4, our bill for diving (6 guided, 6 unguided), self catering accommodation, transfers and car hire, was less than 200 Euros each. With return flights to Malta from 150 Euro, it is quite possible to get a week's blue water diving for under 400 Euros, plus food and drink (which is also very reasonable). This also puts it within reach of long weekend type trips, flying out on the Thursday, doing 3 dives a day for 3 days, and flying back on the Monday.

As a destination for European divers, it is different to the Red Sea but it is also closer and generally cheaper. It would make an ideal destination for schools to finish off their training over winter, rather than wait till the sea calms down or the quarries warm up.

This was my first time in Gozo and I was exceptionally well catered to by Gozo Aquasports, based in Marsalforn. They can supply you with accommodation, guides, hire cars, and arrange transfers for you as well. I will be going back again very soon.

Sean Arrowsmith

I would like to credit the people who have helped me with my photography/diving.

I took a Martin Edge photography course in April 2010 (the first time I used a DSLR underwater) and feel his teaching was of immeasurable benefit and he has shown me the way.
www.edgeunderwaterphotography.co.uk

Also the dive centre I used in Gozo was Gozo Aquasports
www.gozoaquasports.com

UwP is free to download because the contributors give their time, talent and knowledge for free.

Please, make a donation to the UwP contributors and help keep UwP free to download.

You may not know this but none of the UwP contributors get paid. They provide their articles and photo talent in support of the cause of UwP which aims to keep the magazine free for anyone to download.

Donations are all handled in total security through PayPal and you can also pay securely by credit card using the PayPal links.

Your donations will be distributed to the contributors of each issue on a pro rata basis i.e. the more pages they contribute, the more their percentage.

When deciding how much you want to donate please bear in mind that PayPal's charge for amounts smaller than £3 or $6 can be as high as 24%!! Whilst I accept that PayPal is absolutely brilliant and safe, I don't want this to become a 'Donate a lot to PayPal"!!

You can make a donation in either US $ dollars, UK £ sterling or € Euros by following this link

Donate here PayPal DONATE

www.uwpmag.com/donate.html

Guidelines for contributors

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

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

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

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

How to submit articles

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

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

Size - Maximum length 15cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 15 cm wide and verticals would be 15cm.
File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality. This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

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

Parting Shot 1

There are a number of animals on any diver's "wish to see" list and usually the bigger they are, the higher on the list. One that would make 99% of all divers' lists would be the whale shark, Rhincodon typus. The largest fish in the ocean these behemoths can grow up to twelve meters long and are the true gentle giants of the seas. The opportunity to see one doesn't come often, even if you visit the places where they are regularly found, The Maldives, Thailand and Ningaloo, Western Australia. There is one place however where the chances of seeing one is multiplied many many times, and you would have to be extremely unlucky not to see one. Actually I say one, but in fact there are often fifty or a hundred in one place. That place is Isla Mujeres in Mexico, where every year there is an aggregation of whale sharks around late July through August, as the sharks are feeding on the eggs of the bonito that spawn in the shallow waters around the full moon.

I visited this year with a group from Wetpixel that was split into two groups, with me in the second. The week before I read on the web every day of their successes and how they had groups of up to five hundred sharks on one day, although I don't know who counted them all. Eric Cheng wrote on his blog report that the bonito spawned a day or so before they arrived and so he expected the numbers of sharks to fall off a little as the week went on. "That would be right!" I thought…by the time I get there there'll be one shark and forty boats all crowded around it. I tend to pessimism at the best of times, although I call it realistic expectations.

Arriving in Isla Mujeres, Eric told us there were still whale sharks around, so I started to build up those realistic expectations a little. I needn't have worried. As we approached the spawning grounds I saw the flashes of light as the sun reflected off the fins of the sharks as they swam at the surface. We jumped into the water and it was whale shark soup. There were so many it was impossible to get bored. At the end of the week as I was going through my three thousand odd photos it occurred to me that I was deleting images that only a week before I would have given my arm for.

Nikon D3 in a Subal Housing. Sigma 15mm 1/160 f9 ISO 500

This shot was one of my favourites of the trip. I really wanted an over under, which was extremely tricky as there was a bit of a swell running, and I wasn't using strobes to light the "under" part and help to equalise the exposures, so I used the graduated filter in Lightroom to bring back the overexposed "over" section, and then converted to black and white as that really helped to accentuate the beautiful light reflecting off the sharks skin.

Julian Cohen

Parting Shot 2

Think Mick Jagger, Sex change, Maori Warrior or Napolean Bonaparte, and you will find one really special marine dweller with all these traits, the Maori Wrasse or the Hump head or Napolean Wrasse. I was fortunate enough to encounter more than one recently in the Red Sea and it was a real special and an emotionally uplifting experience. One that makes the sport of diving an obsessive compulsive disorder of sorts.

Armed with my new underwater camera system we all jumped in to the water with anxious feelings. The dive started mundanely till one of us spotted a really large male Maori. Bluish green and yellow with one of the largest hump I had previously seen, he looked majestic underwater. Nonchalantly and with the confidence of one who has hardly any predators or enemies underwater, just a few inches away, with nary a glance, he moved on to his business of looking for hard shelled species such as mollusks, and crustaceans which is on their regular menu, not to be seen again during our entire dive. They are one of the few species that will feed on the most destructive coral inhabitant, the crown of thorn starfish. After the initial awe and surprise I managed a few quick shots of this majestic creature, which is one of the largest reef fishes in the world. But this was not the one who would stay with us throughout the dive. It was his consort, the female Maori, with war paint more prominent and exquisite, bright orange eyes, electric iridescent colours and patterns, which we failed to even notice initially, in the shadows of the majestic male, that decided to check us out and stayed with us. Not only on that dive but also another one the next day at a different site.

She was as curious as we were and came up to one inch away from my mask, and with our eyes locked, moved alongside me, then suddenly paced ahead as if in a race, made a sudden u turn and came right back, looking deep in to my eyes. Then as if in slow motion, moved down from my face, passed the length of my body, hardly millimeters away, and swam through my legs, which I had to spread open very nervously, before continuing her escapades and checking out each diver.

Josephine, as I decided to call her, gave me ample opportunity to test my new gear and came every now and then up to two inches away from me. I had a 8mm fisheye lens, which translates into a 16mm wide

underwater, so looking at the pics one can imagine how close these encounters were. The dive ended with an initial silence from all which went into animated discussions of how each one perceived their interaction with this majestic ocean dweller. BUT it was the next day, on the second dive, which was in the same area but on another reef that Josephine decided to come back and stay with us once more in a camaraderie that made my red sea trip more than eclectic. I was in a daze and a high on the ambrosia that the ocean and its inhabitants share with us every once in a while. The entire dive she stayed, more curious about us than we could ever be. To think that these creatures are on the menu of people, especially the lips, is heart wrenching and downright disgusting. I wish these people could have a small 'Tryst with the Maori', before being served their meals. One can even see these fish in small aquariums of restaurants in Hong Kong swimming forlornly awaiting an end, which I think is far more respectful than the solitary confinement of the small glass walls.

Digant Desai(diggy)

Parting Shot(s) 3

Tropical storm Bonnie shook the boat, dumping cups, plates and lunch all over the floor and making a diet seem attractive. Several camera housings, adorned with dome ports from the minuscule to the ridiculous (Reef Photo and Video's Zen 9" dome) shuffled uneasily across the floor. The excitement of toothy lemon sharks and deceptively graceful tiger sharks sliding in from the limits of visibility had waned as Shearwater circled over the Little Bahama Bank, hunting for elusive Atlantic Spotted Dolphins. Perhaps it was Jim Abernethy's well-earned absence from his flagship, perhaps it was that the dolphins had heard of Wetpixel…

… outside, the hot summer sun roasted the deck, forcing Nikon to shelter with Canon in the freezer box once filled with fish. A sudden shout from above: dolphins! A strange and irregular feat of seamanship followed, the bow swinging from side to side to tempt haughty and maybe contemptuous cetaceans into surfing. After an hour: the next phase. Slowly and cautiously the dolphins were persuaded to move sternwards towards a motley collection of T-shirts, diveskins and wetsuits clutching their retrieved cameras until, with a flurry of waving, bubbles and splashing the guests vanished into the ocean: to see a pair of cheap fins pumping the water at great speed, but no dolphins. A certain well-known photographer, having mastered the art of cetacean hunting and having finely tuned calves, outpaced the novices and left a trail of shredded sargassum weed in his wake.

The remaining photographers waited for Shearwater to circle around, pick them up, and await round two. The waves battered them as they clung to the dive platform, waiting the chance to splash again…

… dolphins! Swim! Swim hard!! Turn and shoot! Keep shooting!! Ahhh… that's how it's done! Cutting the Mustard?

Tim Priest

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

Nikon D200, Tokina 10-17mm, Anthis/Nexus housing & FP 120-7 dome port: iso 400, shutter priority, 1/400 sec.