

UPY
2017

Underwater
Photographer
of the Year

The Yearbook



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Designed by
Peter Rowlands

Edited by
Alexander Mustard
Martin Edge
Peter Rowlands
Dan Bolt

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Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Foreword by Sandy Luk, Chief Executive, Marine Conservation Society

A Pale Blue Dot...

It is a real honour to be asked to write a foreword to this fantastic collection of photographs. As the new CEO of the Marine Conservation Society, it has, again, been a great honour to join a team working on behalf of such a misunderstood, unknown and yet elementally important realm as the sea.

2016 was a year of political upheaval – will European laws brought in to safeguard areas of our seas be upheld by UK government? Will a very different voice in US politics look to row back on environmental protection signed into being by an outgoing regime? Will conservation organisations be able to present to the world a compelling case for the protection of our natural world?

As 2016 closed many of us sat down to watch the stunning Planet Earth II – the old idiom of a picture telling a thousand words came to brilliant light through the various lenses of skilled and dedicated photographers. Of huge interest to me was the widely reported phenomenon of more 15 year olds watching the final instalment of the series than the final of X-Factor. Looking at the very many young people that join MCS on its beach cleans or as members of its superb volunteer Sea Champions team this comes as no surprise, but I am very happy to see this fact reported in the mainstream press.

As the BBC flagship came to its conclusion, Sir David Attenborough left us in little doubt about the fragility of much of what we had seen. It is with this message in mind that the skills so beautifully and powerfully demonstrated by UPY participants take on even greater importance. If I can borrow from the description of last year's winning image 'Gold' – blue surrounds the entire four corners of our planet

– and getting us all to view, to focus more on this environment is crucial to its wellbeing.

There have been important wins in 2016 for the safeguarding of our seas – supermarkets are increasingly looking to stock sustainably sourced fish and other seafood as consumers vote with their wallets; microbeads are being phased out and there are less plastic bags on our beaches, because, again, as consumers we increasingly make more conservation minded choices. Scotland and England have introduced new measures to better manage fishing in marine protected areas. MCS has been deeply involved in all of these with a number of different partners, including regulators and coastal communities, and, of course, our amazing volunteers. We have also recently launched our Ocean Devotion campaign to push for more marine protected areas around the UK's coast and to make sure we really do protect the 'protected' areas we have.

However, problems remain: marine conservation shines a light on not just those issues which are clearly visible, but those which cannot clearly be seen. Our seas are warming and becoming more acidic (through absorption of our carbon emissions), fundamentally changing our oceans and life within, and we continue to emit plastic and other pollutants directly into the ocean. Many fish stocks are being fished at the limit of or beyond sustainable levels. Shining a light on these dangers has never been more vital, because we know that people can make changes happen, from making more sustainable fish choices, to helping petition for a microbead ban.

With more and more pressure being placed on the world's resources, more pressure is placed



on those taking on the job of trying to explain those very resources' importance and finite nature. To back up the diligent work of scientists and researchers and the support staff of all conservation organisations around our planet arresting, alluring, sometimes unsettling images are needed to help get this message across to more and more people – some of whom occupy high political office or are in a position to legally safeguard environmentally beneficial laws and to bring in further laws to help look after our one and only pale blue dot.

Congratulations on another fine collection – keep up the good, and crucial, work.



Sandy Luk

**Chief Executive
Marine Conservation Society**

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Chairman's Report

First of all let me reassure you that I have not organised a coup among the judges and ousted Alex from the Chair but rather recognised that, with the birth of his daughter, Isabella, in June last year, his organisational time would be limited for a while and he should be allowed more time to savour this new chapter in his life.

Now to 2017 and what can I say? With over 4,500 images, we are 35% up and with entrants from 67 countries, that is a 25% increase. The most pleasing increase, for me, came from the number of entries in the Compact category and especially the British Compact category. Both of these are aimed at encouraging those users to feel included and given their space away from SLR users. Take a detailed look at the winners in both of these categories and you will see that their results are equally as impressive as the others.

But these are just statistics. What is not possible to quantify statistically is the standard of entries this year and these have definitely gone up another gear. You have surpassed last years extremely high standards and taken UPY 2017 to a

new level of excellence which I hope you will appreciate in this 2017 Yearbook.

From my own point of view, I have been captivated not only by the winning images but also by the stories behind how those images were achieved. The conception, the planning and the physical effort to achieve a successful result; it is those efforts that we, as judges, pay our respects to by taking out two days to meet up, sit together and look in detail at all the images. It is a mammoth task but one that we all agree is a privilege to be part of.

Just as UPY has expanded so too has the organising team. This year we have embraced Dan Bolt's IT skills to rebuild our online entry system to make it more efficient and his work in the 'background' is much appreciated. Secondly Saeed Rashid accepted our invitation to join us to pump up the sponsors prize list and he has done great work in getting major sponsors from both inside and outside of our world.

Both Dan and Saeed really fit in to "The UPY Philosophy" which Alex started and which Martin and I are card carrying founder members

and that is we are organising this Competition for you to showcase your work and show it to a far wider world.

This year, once the results have been revealed, I have volunteered to be in charge of 'Press liaison' which last year involved being contacted by over 100 major press outlets who wanted to feature and promote your work. The level of cover this generates cannot be underestimated but, save it to say, it sets up UPY as an important promoter of our specialised world into another much, much wider world. The possibilites this can create are almost unique.

For the first time, this issue of the Yearbook includes 'Judges notes' on each and every one of the 100 winning images; personal feedback to the entrant about why their image was placed; suggestions how they could have been higher placed and feedback on how much we admired their shots. This is what sets UPY apart because we want to interact with you to create a more constructive atmosphere rather than the 'win at all costs' attitude which competitions in general, land and underwater, tend to encourage.



Finally, this and every issue of the Yearbook provides you with the perfect reference work to study what works and is successful in our competition so that you can go out over the next year to embrace your underwater photography and come up with more groundbreaking images that will inspire us, the judges, and you, the entrants, in 2018.

I'm looking forward to next year already.

Peter Rowlands
Chairman of the Judges 2017

Judge's comments

Over the years I've become the 'Go to Judge' for those of you who seek feedback and solace with your image entries. This year is no different and I'll do everything I can to help you so here goes!

Peter, Alex and myself judge UPY in a particular style. We judge your entries over a period of two days, not weeks. With so many quality images to look at in a comparatively limited period, time is of the essence for both the judges and your images. The judges must make fast decisions about which images go through and the images must impress instantly to get through to the finalists. So I hope you will understand that it's essential that your image entries have immediate appeal aka 'The Wow Factor'. When one or more of us calls out 'keep' the image is then flagged and put to one side. UPY is not a competition where we sit at our leisure and savour the best, that comes later on in the process.

Your entries have to be immediately eye catching. They have to have the 'Wow Factor'. In the 1st round of judging, throughout all the categories there were too many cluttered backgrounds. You have to pay attention to the backgrounds of your image and in particular, what is behind your main subject and try to avoid elements which merge into each other. We don't go looking for compositional flaws, they stand out like a sore thumb. In all art work, distractions close to the edge of the frame attract the viewer and so often lead the eye out of the frame. We move onto the next images and seldom look back.

Eyes have to be in focus. If one eye is visible, it has to be in focus. Two eyes visible, then both have to be in focus. If you have a great shot but in your heart you know that one eye is a tad soft then put it to one side, it's not going to progress any further.

Aspect Ratio! You are allowed to crop your images however you like but before you enter, think about the aspect ratio to adopt. I was of the opinion that some entrants were leaving too much empty space around the subject. Remember that you do not have to be a slave to these ratio's. Other successful images were cropped into a variety of shapes which accentuated the strength of the composition. Remember, it's all about the image so my advice is to use the best crop for your best composition.

Last but not least, read the rules and guidelines carefully so that you are in adherence with the competition and most important that you enter your work in the appropriate category. I wish you luck for UPY 2018.

Martin Edge



A big competition, like UPY, is like a crystal ball, allowing us to gaze into the future and identify the forthcoming trends in subjects, destinations and most of all techniques. As judges we get the panoramic view. This year we sat down and enjoyed over 4500 underwater photographs, the very best shots from photographers from at least 67 countries. This is more than a snapshot, it is close to a compendium from the frontiers of photography.

Our role, of course, is to refine these thousands down to the 100 pictures you'll find here. And it is this curated collection of the very best that will go forward to influence our community.

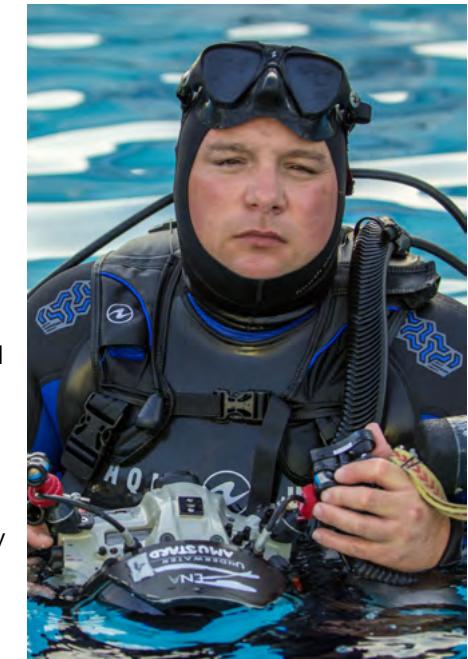
Judging brings a lot of pressure, both to find the truly outstanding images and to avoid awarding the wrong types. Since the rebirth of UPY we've been keen to not encourage subject manipulation in macro photography and it was really heartening to see a very substantial drop in these types of images in the entry.

A good recipe for winning is to show us something brilliant and new. While we'll continue to award excellence in classic images, competitions should always celebrate the pushing back of boundaries in our discipline. But we're not looking for who has the best box of tricks, the winning shots use techniques that are appropriate for the photo. A quote I regularly use when teaching comes from creative nature photographer Sandra Bartocha "a technique should not be used just for the sake of being different, it should suit the subject and idea".

When you see thousands of entries the new fads are obvious. A worrying trend in the macro entries was the large increase in use of artificial backgrounds. This is a complex issue because it was clear that many entrants were using these in a responsible way and we were happy to award the best of them. But more than a handful of others were so keen to get their artificial backgrounds into shot that they didn't care what they had to push it into, or that their subject had to be coerced into position in front of it. For example, one photographer had even broken open a coral to shove the background into place.

This places the judges in a difficult position. It is unfair to penalise those who have used artificial backgrounds with clear sensitivity to the subject and environment. But by awarding these shots we don't want to encourage the mass-adoption of a potentially damaging technique to win, because it is clear that many are not using backgrounds with care.

My hope is that the situation will self govern. Now that pictures have been awarded they will not be regarded as novel and they will stop winning and fewer will attempt to emulate them. A similar fashion appeared in flower photography about 5 years ago, where photographers would place reflective, water filled trays behind subject to create backdrops. They were popular for a while and then photographers began to question their use, the impact of squashing life around the subject and the message that the natural world was not attractive enough alone. Soon photographers gave up on this short-cut and returned to creating beautiful backgrounds from natural surroundings.



Alex Mustard



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Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Judges notes:

Both balletic and malevolent, this image shows that the octopus means business as it hunts in a shallow lagoon. The way it moves is so different from any predator on land, this truly could be an alien from another world. A truly memorable creature, beautifully photographed.

Alex Mustard

Judges notes:

Vibrant, contrasting colours, detailed delicate textures and a perfect pose. Add the right choice of lens for the situation and they all combine to produce a Champion.

Peter Rowlands

Judges notes:

I cannot praise this photograph enough. As soon as I first set eyes on it as we worked our way through the Wide Angle Category, I knew it was destined for a huge success. One amazing image!

Martin Edge

Winner

'Dancing Octopus'

Gabriel Barathieu (France)

In the lagoon of Mayotte, during spring low tides, there is very little water on the flats. Only 30 cm in fact. That's when I took this picture. I had to get as close as possible to the dome to create this effect. The 14 mm is an ultra wide angle lens with very good close focus which gives this effect of great size. The octopus appears larger, and the height of water also. Also, I didn't need flash because I had lots of natural light.

Lagoon of Mayotte, Mayotte Island, Indian Ocean

Canon 5ds, Subal housing, Canon 14 mm f2.8 II, iso 100, f/16, 1/125, Natural light

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Judges notes:

What I really like about this image is the enclosure of the light within the Cenote. The author has contained all the sunlight so the eye of the viewer cannot escape. The lone diver is positioned within the beams and I do believe that the author meant for this to happen. Stunning natural light wide-angle!

Martin Edge

Winner
'Out of the Blue'
Nick Blake (UK)

Kukulkan Cenote on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula forms part of the Chac Mool system and is noted for the spectacular light effects as the sun penetrates the darkness. I left my strobes behind for the natural light shot I wanted and positioned myself in the shadows of the cavern. Moving my eye around the viewfinder, I could see that the rock outline of the cavern around me made for a pleasing symmetry and I adjusted my position to balance the frame. The light show flickered on and off as the sun was periodically covered by cloud and as it reappeared, I beckoned to my buddy and dive guide, Andrea Costanza of ProDive, to edge into the illumination of some of the stronger beams, completing the composition. My journey from diver to underwater photographer has brought many amazing photographic opportunities and I feel humbled and privileged that this image has achieved such recognition.

Kukulkan Cenote, Yucatan, Mexico
Nikon D810, Sea & Sea MDX
housing, Sigma 15mm Fisheye, iso 400,
f/6.3, 1/60, Natural light

Up and coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Winner
'Oceanic in the Sky'
Horacio Martinez (Argentina)

This was my first Red Sea experience, and my first liveaboard-based photo workshop, so everything was interesting... but arduous. We were on the last dive of the day and I ventured a tad deeper to get closer portraits of the Oceanic White Tips, when I noticed this shark patrolling in the distance. I took a few shots to expose for the sun beams and the surface, and was pleased by the dreamlike effect. Oceanics are great subjects for close ups as they are anything but shy. Yet, every now and then it is great to try and capture their apparent loneliness, their wandering, and their independence in the big blue.

The Brothers, Egypt
Nikon D810, Nauticam housing,
Nikon 14-24 @24mm, iso 400, f/14, 1/200,
S&S YSD1

Judges notes:
There was a lot of competitive images in this category, as you would expect, but this one was a serious contender right from the start. The photographer has 'seen' the light and realised its dramatic effect extremely well and used it to contrast the small shark in a big, blue, lonely world. Very evocative indeed.

Peter Rowlands

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Winner
‘Orca Pod’
Nicholai Georgiou (UK)

Orcas are easily the most beautiful, intelligent and confident animals I've ever had the honor of spending time with. This photo was taken during an amazing week freediving with wild Orca in Norway. The days are quite short in winter and the water was around 5 degrees but we wore a thick wetsuit and of course with Orca around, the cold was quickly forgotten. The light had a really nice colour from the setting sun as this graceful pod of Orca swam by nice and close. It was a moment which will be hard to top and I'm glad to have this image to share it.

Tromso, Norway
Nikon D750, Ikelite housing, Sigma 15mm 2.8 Fisheye, iso 1600, f/4.5, 1/160,
Natural Light

Judges notes:

Most underwater photographers would be happy to get a shot of a single killer whale in its environment but Nicholai had the composure not to panic and time the shot perfectly as a pod of killer whales passed by heading into the setting sun. I'm jealous.

Peter Rowlands

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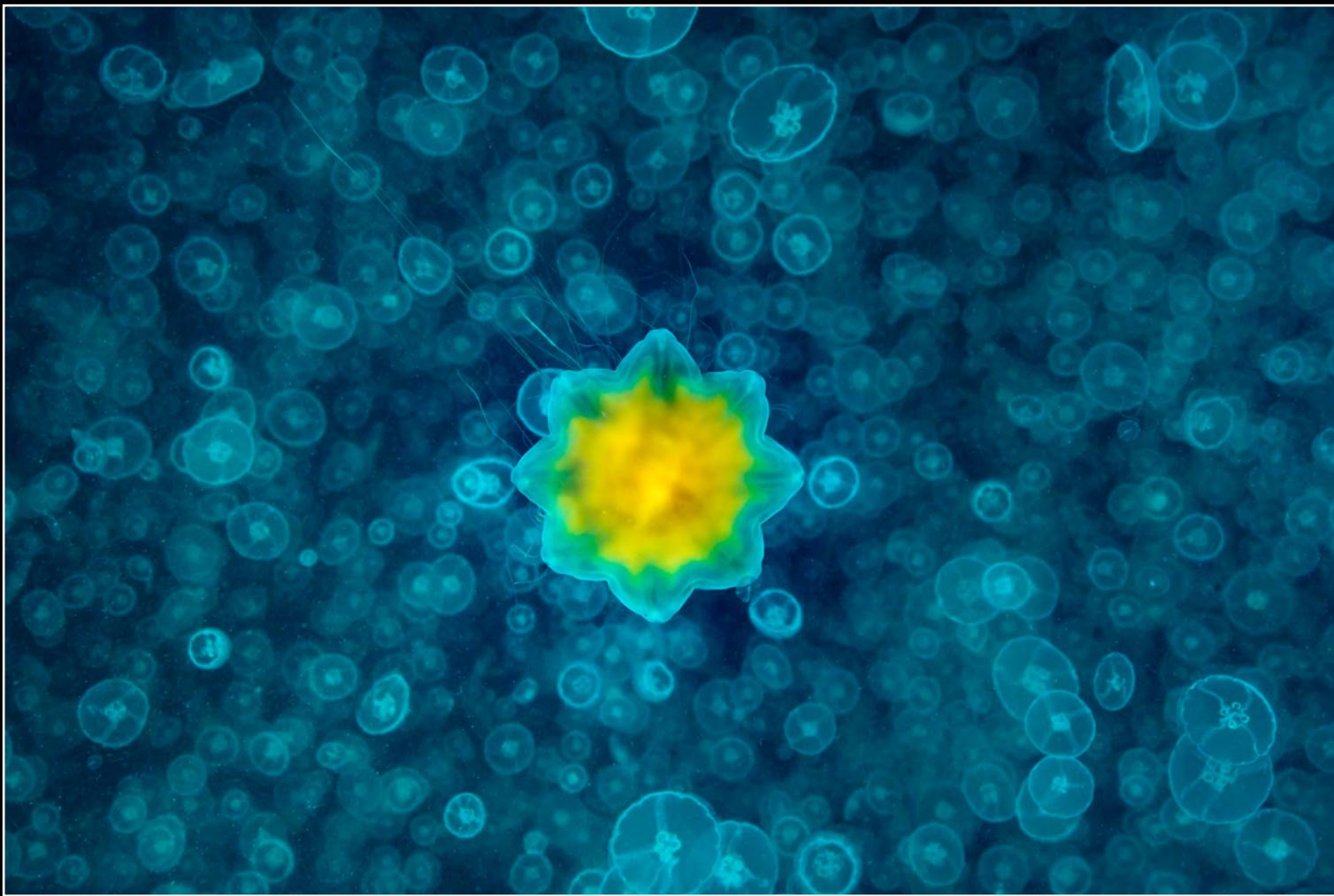
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i) Wide Angle

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I) Wide Angle

Winner
'One in a Million'
Ron Watkins (USA)

Last summer I headed to Alaska in search of salmon sharks. We cruised in the boat looking for their dorsal fins for hours and that is when we came across an enormous moon jellyfish bloom that stretched several 100 meters long. The dense bloom of jellyfish ranged in depth from the 2 meters to over 20 meters and we spent a lot of time in the bloom. It was surreal and more dense than anything I had ever experienced including Jellyfish Lake in Palau. I came across this Lion's Mane Jellyfish rising from the bloom towards the surface and positioned myself directly over it to capture this image.

Alaska - Out of Valdez, USA
Nikon D800, Sea & Sea housing,
Nikon 16-36 mm, iso 400, f/10, 1/250, Dual
Sea & Sea YS-250 Strobes

Judges notes:

A beautiful and original image from the ocean, a worthy winner. Its power comes from the contrast in colour, yellow versus blue, and the contrast in shape, star versus circles, between the subject from the background. Most photographers would swim up to the subject, probably shooting it from below, Ron found a far more striking composition with this top down view, making use of the moon jellies as a backdrop.

Alex Mustard

I) Wide Angle

Runner up
'Out of the Blue'
Nick Blake (UK)

Kukulkan Cenote on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula forms part of the Chac Mool system and is noted for the spectacular light effects as the sun penetrates the darkness. I left my strobes behind for the natural light shot I wanted and positioned myself in the shadows of the cavern. Moving my eye around the viewfinder, I could see that the rock outline of the cavern around me made for a pleasing symmetry and I adjusted my position to balance the frame. The light show flickered on and off as the sun was periodically covered by cloud and as it reappeared, I beckoned to my buddy and dive guide, Andrea Costanza of ProDive, to edge into the illumination of some of the stronger beams, completing the composition. My journey from diver to underwater photographer has brought many amazing photographic opportunities and I feel humbled and privileged that this image has achieved such recognition.

Kukulkan Cenote, Yucatan, Mexico
Nikon D810, Sea & Sea MDX
housing, Sigma 15mm Fisheye, iso 400,
f/6.3, 1/60, Natural light

Judges notes:

What I really like about this image is the enclosure of the light within the Cenote. The author has contained all the sunlight so the eye of the viewer cannot escape. The lone diver is positioned within the beams and I do believe that the author meant for this to happen. Stunning natural light wide-angle!

Martin Edge



I) Wide Angle

3rd place

'Interaction'

Edwar Herreño (Colombia)

I was lucky to join an expedition aboard MV ONDINA covering Raja Ampat North, Central and South. The South is one of my favourite places because only a few boats go there. We went to dive on this sea mount Karang Paradise There the biodiversity is something unique, endless coral fields, big congregations of fish and big pelagic travellers passing by. At the end of one of the dives, I found this enormous coral field full of different groups of fish. I wanted to show in my pictures the motion so I set up my camera on top of a rock (I didn't have my tripod), then after few minutes staying still, this big congregation of big eye jacks came and complete surrounded me. A magical moment!

Karang Paradise, Indonesia

Nikon D800, HugyFot housing,

Nikon 16-35 mm, iso 100, f/16, 0.4 sec, Sea & Sea YS 250 PRO

Judges notes:

The jacks surging over the corals captures the density of life on Raja Ampat's reefs. The long exposure contrasts the speed of the predators with the slow growth of the coral, which creates the ecosystem that supports them. Healthy reefs are about more than beautiful corals, they are about an abundance of fish, especially big fish.

Alex Mustard



i) Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Walking'
Eero Hälfors (Finland)

It was the first of the cold days last November and the lake had just frozen. I had a plan to do some ice diving and take nice pictures of the lake getting stronger ice cover. I didn't have much success with this plan so I started to look upwards through the ice in order to locate my fellows on the ice. Instead of them I realized that our two dogs were walking just above me with my wife. The other dogs stood still for a moment to sniff the ice - that is when I took this picture. I think it was worth dragging all the gear onto the ice in a sledge then sawing a hole in the ice and have freezing fingers after a one hour dive.

Lake Päijänne, Finland
Canon 1200D, Ikelite SLR housing,
Tokina 3.5-4.5 DX 10-17 mm Fisheye, iso
800, f/6.3, 1/80, Natural light

Judges notes:

Ice diving often yields original underwater images, especially when photographers exploit the up view through a solid surface. Although the photographer entered other images of his dogs, this one stood out to us because the fisheye distortion makes this look tantalisingly like a polar bear!

Alex Mustard

i) Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Frozen Hunting'
Fabrice Guerin (France)

The weather was cloudy and the temperature of water was 2°C. Orcas push fish towards the shore as this makes them easier to catch. Our boat captain stopped near a school of herring. When I was in the water, I saw that it was not deep, so it presented an opportunity to photograph with the light being reflected off the sand. I waited for 20 minutes in front of shoal of herring hoping to see an orca. Suddenly a humpback whale appeared. What a surprise!! It was an amazing cold water encounter!

Andenes, Norway
Canon 5D mark III, Aquatica housing,
Canon EF 16-35 mm f/4 L IS USM , iso
3200, f/4, 1/160

Judges notes:

A stunning behavioural image of a humpback in shallow water scattering herring taken in very tough conditions. The photographer did very well in very dark waters to record this breath-taking scene sharply.

Alex Mustard



i) Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Prince of the waters'
Yannick Gouguenheim (France)

The common toads start going back to the river in February in order to reproduce. The frozen waters of this small river are by then clear enough, and ideal for underwater photography. This image was taken in natural light and free diving. I chose to work with blacklight to isolate this iconic species from fresh water. The wide angle lens and close-up shot adds an interesting dynamic to the picture as well. The challenge was to compose the subject in front of the sun, while still framing the trees on the shore in a pleasing way.

Lamalou river, France
Nikon D7000, Hugyfot housing, 10/17
Tokina, iso 320, f/10, 1/320s, Natural light

Judges notes:

When you have a low sun in the sky and the ability to shoot upwards through Snell's window then all the topside influences begin to come together. Tree's, beams, blue sky etc. This image goes even further with a precise placement within the frame of the silhouetted toad in the sunbeams. Excellent arrangement of all the elements.

Martin Edge



i) Wide Angle



Highly commended
'Morning Elegance'
Damien Mauric (UK)

When I reached the seabed, I was hoping to see some of the superstructure of this shipwreck. It was impossible to identify the cargo holds, the hull, the rigging and netting of this fishing vessel because it was literally covered by thousands of fish of numerous species swimming and dancing between the rusted metal parts and sandy patches. As they kept playing nicely in front of me, I waited patiently for the current to push their beautiful dance in front of my camera. The elegance of this constantly moving form inspired this image.

Cabo Pulmo, Baja California,
Mexico

Nikon D7200, Aquatica AD7200
housing, 10.5mm, iso 200, f/13, 1/125,
Ikelite DS 160

Judges notes:

A really complete schooling image. It is a shot that gets all the details spot on. The fish form a pleasing ball formation, those at the front are pleasingly aligned and give great eye contact and there is a lovely blue background to compete the composition.

Alex Mustard

i) Wide Angle

Commended
‘Finally Whalesharks’
Patrick Neumann (Germany)

Although I have been diving for more than 30 years with over 3000 dives, I had never saw a Whaleshark before. When I was working on a liveaboard in Thailand twice the whole boat saw one but not me. Among my friends it was already a running gag. If you want to see Whalesharks don't dive with Patrick. On our latest trip through Indonesia a friend told me that recently there are some around the Gorontalo area so we changed our plans and went there to end my whaleshark dilemma. We drove out to the divesite and everything was perfect. Very good visibility, no waves and a bright sunny day. Now only the big guy had to be there to make it really happen. When we entered the water there was not one Whaleshark ... but 6 of them! You can imagine my happiness.

Gorontalo, Indonesia, Central Sulawesi

Canon 7D, Hugyfot housing, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 160, f/20, 1/250, natural light

Judges notes:

Call it either ‘The Peak of the Action’ or ‘The Decisive Moment’ It matters not because everything within this image has come together! The shape of Snells Window. The pose of the shark. The position of the sunburst and the arrangement of all the other action captured within the frame. Even the two divers, middle right of the frame are perfectly posed. I’m sure Patrick took many more shots of this encounter but sometimes it can be a challenge knowing which shot of many to enter. In my opinion, an excellent choice of submission.

Martin Edge



i) Wide Angle



Commended
'Silversides at Twilight'
Tony Myshlyaev (Canada)

After finding this location, the jetty and silversides were on my mind for a long time. And when the monsoon rains took a short break, I jumped in the water to execute this idea. The main obstacle was that the school was too evasive for a fisheye lens and the sun was falling too fast to execute the idea. I began to compromise my settings and already considered the endeavour a loss but then some trevally arrived to feed. This was perfect, the silversides forgot about me. Simultaneously a passerby arrived. He positioned himself perfectly on the jetty above. Seeing the opportunity, I told him not to move and pressed the shutter as quickly as possible. The next moment this image appeared on my screen. Moments later, with a smile on my face, I watched the last rays of light fade on the horizon.

Northern Koh Tao, Thailand
Nikon D700, Subal housing, Nikkor
16mm f/2.8, iso 800, f/13, 1/80, INON Z240

Judges notes:

This is a beautifully taken, perfectly composed shot capturing the last moments of the day. It had very strong competition from the other images which pushed it down the order. Maybe, in hindsight, the hard work visualising and getting this shot should have been rewarded more.

Peter Rowlands

i) Wide Angle

Commended
‘Sun shine after the storm’
Mario Vitalini (UK)

It was a fairly choppy week and the surface conditions were less than ideal for the classic “cathedral” sun beams. Swimming around Sha'ab Claudia cave system in Fury Shoal I noticed our dive guide, Annette, pointing her torch to the ground. Everything fell into place and this was my take on a classic shot.

Sha'ab Claudia Fury shoals, Egypt
Olympus OMD E-EM1, Nauticam
NA-EM1 housing, Olympus 12-50mm at
15mm and Nauticam WWL-1 wet lens, iso
250, f/6.3, 1/30, ambient light

Judges notes:

Dramatic use of light both from the torch of the diver and the natural sunbeams. There is so much image depth in this shot which emphasise the beams in the background and the centre of interest - the lamp of the diver.

A good choice also in removing any colour with a mono like treatment.

Martin Edge



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Indian Ocean



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Mediterranean

2) Macro

for close-up/macro images shot anywhere in the world.
Open to all.

2) Macro

Winner
‘Prey?’
So Yat Wai (Hong Kong)

This photo was shot during a blackwater dive in Anilao. Even though the larva mantis shrimp (left) is very small, it still a predator which uses its raptorial appendages to hunt. Has it spotted the prey and is ready to pounce?

Anilao, Philippine
Canon 5D MkIII, Sea & Sea housing,
100 mm, iso 400, f/20, 1/200, Inon Z240 x 2

Judges notes:

This shot works on so many levels; like a Sci Fi encounter in outer space, the fortuitous (for once) backscatter creates a perfect starry background which makes the main subject seem huge and menacing. Perfect composition leaves you in no doubt and you can only fear for the ‘little fella’ on the right.

Peter Rowlands



2) Macro



Runner up
‘Graceful ballet’
Jenny Stromvoll (Mozambique)

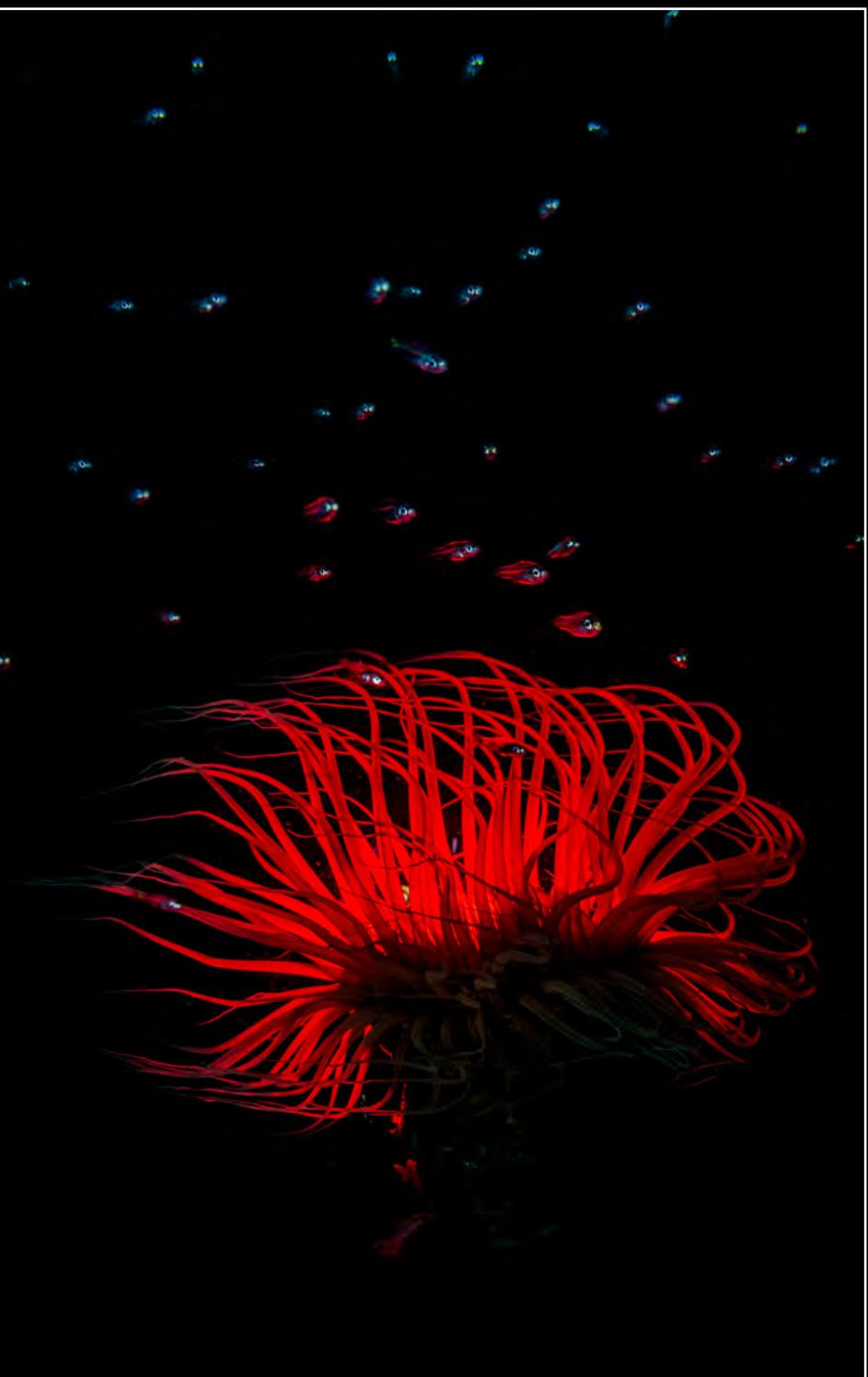
Since we found this dive site, which consists of a sea pen forest at 34m, we have discovered a new species to the area. One of my favourite subjects has been the blue sea pen which hosts different shrimps and gobies. With its flowing lines and beautiful polyps any subject inside this orange and blue sea pen is beautifully offset and lends itself to an artistic composition. Sea pens and their inhabitants are quick to retract into the sand if threatened. Coupled with this, a deep nitrox decompression dive adds to the complexity. My husband found this sea pen and even though he had a camera himself, he was kind enough to give me an opportunity to take some photos.

Stables, Mozambique
Sony Nex-5, Nauticam Nex-5, 18-55mm + Nauticam CMC-2, iso 200, f/10, 1/125, Single Inon D-2000

Judges notes:

This was a favourite with all three judges and throughout the process we admired it more and more. It's so simple in its composition and it has a softness which works so well. I suspect that many others would have gone for the pin-sharp treatment, myself included but the delicate high key lighting, the colour combinations and choice of aperture are all in play with this soft, simple and eye popping image.

Martin Edge



2) Macro

3rd place
'Fire Shelter'
Dragos Dumitrescu (Romania)

The underwater realm is stunning. But most of the time we look for the rare and unique critters while the most common subjects are set aside. This tube Anemone (which you can find almost everywhere) is a shelter to a bunch of juveniles until they will survive on their own. They have an entire universe in there with plenty of adventures taking place. My purpose was to bring out the beauty which is not regularly seen. I used the backlighting technique and also a little touch of strobe on the front to make the juveniles pop-up.

Dauin Marine Sanctuary, Philippines
Canon 6D, Nimar housing, Canon
100mm/2.8 macro, iso 50, f/16, 1/160, Inon
S2000 & Inon Z240

Judges notes:

A photo that proves that you don't need a rare critter to produce a winning image. Photographic creativity is a much rarer trait. A simple scene transformed by the mind and skills of the photographer.

Alex Mustard

2) Macro

Highly commended
'Backlight Shrimp'
Fábio Freitas (Brazil)



Shrimps are challenging subjects to photograph; we have to portray their beautiful colors and shape, and especially focus on the eyes. In the late afternoon, I was diving in my favorite dive site in Bonaire called "Something Special" when I saw this shrimp underneath the rock in a perfect position to make a backlighting technique, using continuous lighting. Immediately I turned off my strobes and asked my buddy to put the lighting behind the shrimp, he was very good putting the light exactly where I wanted it. I took only 4 pictures and the shrimp vanished. It is important to know your techniques and when to use them, it is the key to making those special pictures with something more than the norm.

Something Special, Bonaire Island
Nikon D7200, Sea&Sea MDX 7200
Housing, AF-S Micro Nikkor 60mm f/2.8G
ED, iso 200, f/7.1, 1/100, Archon W40VR
Continuous Light

Judges notes:

Such delicate lighting has resulted in a frame within a frame. Precise exposure was the key to this.

Martin Edge



2) Macro

Highly commended
“Expectant Parents”

Susannah H. Snowden-Smith
(Cayman Islands)

A pair of two claw shrimp, including one with eggs, in the bottom of a purple vase sponge. Two claw shrimp are a rare find on Grand Cayman; these are the only ones I've seen in over 300 dives on the island! When diving, I have made a habit of looking into every purple vase sponge I come across. On this particular day, my husband and I went to a secret spot on Grand Cayman. We call it “Magicland” as we always find the most amazing creatures there. I had never seen these shrimp before, two claw shrimp as I would come to find out later. I placed one strobe along the side of the sponge to provide backlighting, and another pointing into the top of the sponge to provide fill light.

“Magicland”, Cayman Islands
Canon 40D, Sea&Sea housing, 60mm,
iso 320, f/11, 1/250th, Sea&Sea YS-250 x2

Judges notes:

Shrimps inside sponges are common subjects, but this one stands out as a photograph. The framing and the focus allows the pair of shrimps to balance each other in the picture and for both to tell the story of the parents to be.

Alex Mustard

2) Macro

Highly commended
‘Fishing fish’
Dragos Dumitrescu (Romania)

Frogfish are some of the most photogenic subjects in macro areas. But apart from their yawning and weird looking shape, their most prominent action is “fishing for fish”. This picture was about capturing the hypnotic movement of the frogfish’s luring. Fascinated by these weird looking anglerfish, with their lures and baits, I was trying to transfer the “magic” that attracts their unsuspecting prey into a still image.

Using a slow shutter speed my goal was to capture in one shot the whole process of luring while, at the same time, emphasizing the special texture of the hairy frogfish. It took a while, observing the behavior and few shots to get the right settings, but in the end I captured the shot I wanted.

Dauin Marine Sanctuary, Philippines
*Canon 6D, Nimar housing, 100mm macro,
iso 50, F/16, 1/5, Inon S2000 & Inon Z240*

Judges notes:

A macro photograph that is truly macro art. A long exposure that doesn’t just capture the fishing behaviour, but also gives the surroundings a painterly feeling, without outcompeting the main subject.

Alex Mustard



2) Macro

Highly commended
‘Paddle Flap Rhinopias’
John Parker (UK)

The back lit Paddle Flap Rhinopias was taken near Scuba Seraya, Tulamben, Bali. I spent almost the whole dive with dive guide “Paing” (who kindly aimed my snoot for me) trying to get a decent back lit shot of the Rhinopias. I took 30 to 40 frames to get the lighting right and get a black background which was difficult as it was daylight and at only 12 metres. I used 2 Inon Z240 strobes to light the fish. One strobe was fitted with a Retra LSD Snoot and was hand held; the second strobe was very low power to provide a bit of front fill light. I was pleased to get a good Rhinopias shot having failed the day before trying to photograph a Lacy Purple Rhinopias at 33 metres running out of deco time.

Seraya Secrets, Bali Indonesia
Nikon D7200, Aquatica AD7200
housing, Nikon 60mm Macro, iso 100, F/16,
1/320th, Inon Z240 and 1 Retra LSD Snoot

Judges notes:

Backlighting is hardly a new technique underwater but, when the subject is right, the technique never fails to appeal. A kiss of front lighting was a great decision.

Peter Rowlands

2) Macro

Commended
'Larval Lionfish'
Steven Kovacs (USA)



This image was taken on a black water drift dive in Palm Beach, Florida to look for alien looking pelagic animals, plankton and the larval stages of many creatures that drift out in the open ocean in their early stages of development. Many of the animals seen during black water dives are very small and can move quickly when illuminated by powerful dive lights, so getting a nice image is, not only challenging but, very rewarding as well. On one particular dive I was very fortunate to come across this rare tiny Lionfish in its early larval stage and was fortunate to get a photograph of it just as it flared its beautiful fins for the camera.

Palm Beach, Florida, USA.
Nikon D7000, Ikelite, 60mm
macro, iso 250, f/29, 1/250, 2 x Ikelite
DS160 strobes

Judges notes:

Judging is a very subjective process and as I write this caption some two weeks after the judging I can't help but feel that I should have fought more for this exquisite image to be pushed a little higher up the order.

Peter Rowlands

2) Macro



Commended
‘Clowning around’
Luc Rooman (Belgium)

Towards the end of the dive I suddenly saw a nice Anemone with clownfish. I focused on the clownfish and had to take several pictures through the aluminum tube that mounted on my port was so that I have obtained a round mirror effect.

Lembeh, Indonesia
Nikon D810, Hugyfot D810 housing,
60 mm macro, iso 125, f/14, 1/125, 2x
Subtronic pro 160

Judges notes:

Creative techniques have always been a part of photographic competitions. The key to winning is to be original and use the technique well, with a subject it suits. The colours of the anemone fish make this swirl stand out.

Alex Mustard

2) Macro

Commended
'Nudi Art'
Katherine Lu (Singapore)

I shot this photo in the local waters of Singapore where the visibility is 3m on average. Scuba divers I know are always surprised that I dive there and most don't even know there is great macro right off our shores. I wanted to do something different and turn a nudibranch commonly found in our waters into a piece of art. I have always been fascinated by bubbles and the inspiration for this photo came about when I was reading about aquatic plants that produce oxygen bubbles from photosynthesis. The images of the bubbles sticking to the green leaves had an abstract quality and hence came the idea to create Nudi Art.

Semakau, Singapore
Olympus TG4, PT-056 housing, iso 100, f/10, 1/60, Internal flash

Judges notes:

A very memorable image, taking a common subject and transforming it into something truly original through the photographer's ingenuity. Shows that common subjects and challenging local conditions can produce wonderful pictures.

Alex Mustard

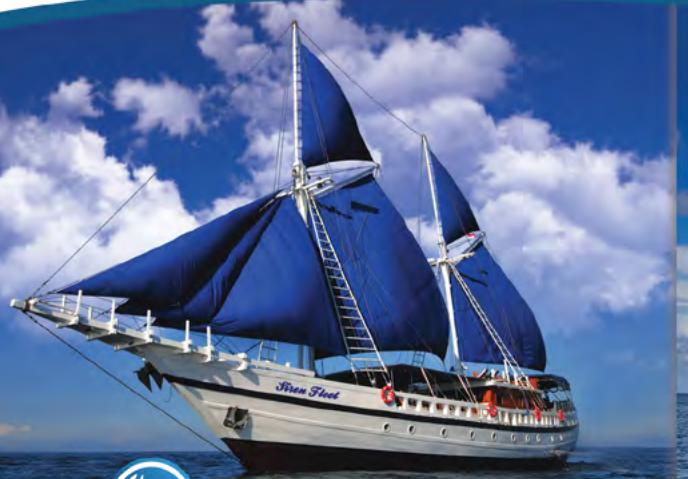
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3) Wrecks

for wide angle to macro images shot on wrecks.

The wreck can be the main subject, or simply the setting for a marine life, macro or diver photograph. Photos can be taken anywhere in the world. Open to all.

3) Wrecks

Winner

'The wreck of the Louilla at sunset'
Csaba Tökölyi (Hungary)

This is the wreck of the Louilla resting on top of Gordon reef in the Straits of Tiran. Beneath her lies a pile of her anchor chains, giving the form of a whale. Wrecks become part of the eco-system in no time. Soft corals develop very soon and they can become shelter for schools of juvenile fish. But also, they can have a devastating effect on their surroundings. This wreck sits on top of Gordon reef, battered by the waves and is slowly deteriorating. Last summer, part of the superstructure collapsed, and the wreck lost its epic, cinematic look. In a few decades, the reef should be free again from the remains of this once huge freighter.

Gordon Reef, Straits of Tiran, Egypt
Nikon D7100, Subal housing, Tokina
10-17mm @10mm, iso 200, f/9, 1/350

Judges notes:

This image immediately caught my eye in the first round of judging 'Wrecks'. An ideal subject for a split shot, superb and subtle use of light with the low sun in the far background. The compositional weight of the foreground, both under & over is also very well balanced. I've seen quite a few attempts at this wreck before but never as well executed as this.

Martin Edge

3) Wrecks

Runner up
'Precontinental dreams'
Andrey Narchuk (Russia)

'Precontinental' is not just a wreck. It was dream of Jacques-Yves Cousteau and humanity about life in the Ocean. 50 years ago, we were closer to that dream than now. Now the only fish live in this residential unit.

Precontinental, Sudan
Canon 5Dmk2, Nexus housing,
Canon 15mm fisheye, iso 100, f/13, 1 sec, no
flash

Judges notes:

The wreck category is not just for pictures of ships, but for any image taken on a wreck. This photo perfectly captures the feeling of glass fish sweeping from side to side inside a ship. A creative technique that feels appropriate to the subject and story.

Alex Mustard



3) Wrecks

3rd Place

'Rising Sun - Nippo Maru'
Kieran Hatton (UK)

Engine rooms in Truk Lagoon are popular places; I'd made a plan with the group that they would head there at the beginning of the dive and I'd venture in at the end. I've taken an image similar to this before but had never played with remote lighting prior to this trip. Entering through the blast hole at 45m it took about 30 minutes to position the lights, get set up and wait for the silt to settle; being on a rebreather really helps with the rust percolation. I hoped to share the detail and scale with this picture. Gauges with the faces still in, light streaming through from above and the video lights illuminating the walk ways to give a sense of scale. The light bursting through the gantry like the 'rising sun' seemed fitting.

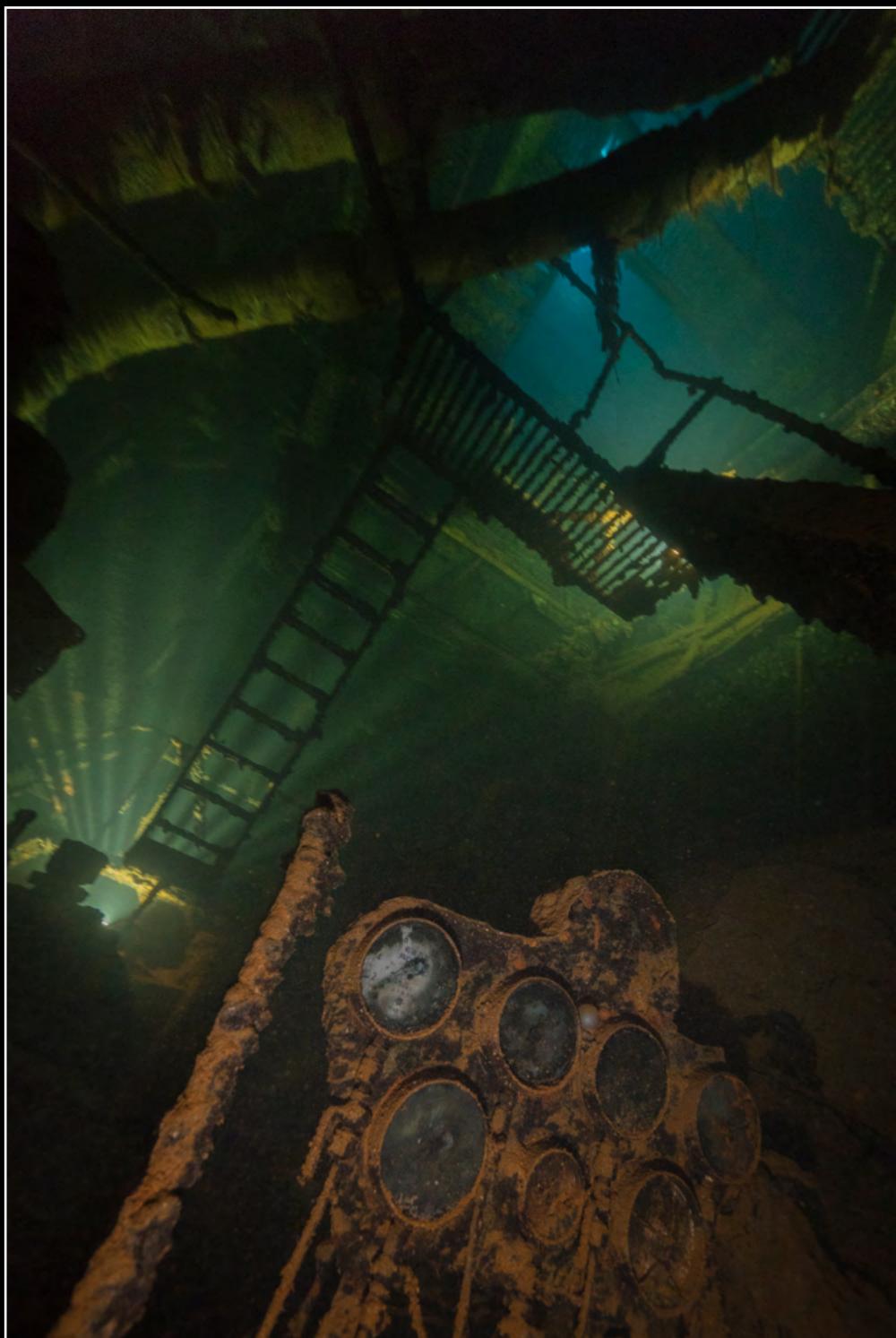
Nippo Maru, Chuuk State, Micronesia
(Truk Lagoon)

Sony A7RII, Nauticam housing, 10-18
@ 14, iso 4000, f/8, 1/8, 2 x Inon z240 + 2 x
Keldans

Judges notes:

As a keen wreck photographer the subtlety of this shot really appealed to me. Everything had been carefully chosen. Camera position, time of day and additional lighting. When we judged this image we had no idea or inclination how deep it was. 45 metres. Wow!

Peter Rowlands



3) Wrecks

Highly Commended
‘The Haunted Room’
Nadya Kulagina (Kazakhstan)

On my way back from the dive, I noticed this room flooded with light. The rays of light streaming down through portholes were lined up so nicely creating a mysterious look of what this room might have looked like when the Umbria was still intact and plying the seas. The wreck lies on its side which is very confusing to the human eye. I flipped the camera vertically to take this shot. Using a slow shutter speed to expose for the sun beams and still be able see the far back of the room, I had to rest the housing on the side of the opening and hold my breath in order not to blur the image.

Umbria wreck, Sudan
Nikon D800, Anthis Nexus D800
housing, Nikkor FE 16mm, iso 320, f/11, 1/4

Judges notes:

The Wreck Category was strong this year and this image grabbed our attention. The position of the sunbeams pouring onto the decking is particularly eye-catching and the author has exposed for both midtones and highlights. The composition leads the eye back and forth through the wreck and towards a door in the distance. The depth perspective of this image and its view is most eye catching.

Martin Edge

3) Wrecks

Highly Commended
‘Propeller of the “Michelle”’
Gianni Pecchiar (Italy)

The wreck of the Michelle lies upright in 10 metres of water. The wreck points South West, so the stern is almost always in shadow. My idea was to backlight the darkness of the propeller and the rudder and also a part of the stern. To do this I had to use 4 flashes connected together, positioned on homemade stands, hidden behind each propeller blade, remotely triggered with a 15 meter cable to the camera. Very exhausting but I did it.

Island of Dugi Otok, Croatia
Nikon D7200, Seacam prelude Nikon D7200 housing + Superdome, Nikon fisheye AF 10,5 mm F2,8, iso 125, f/11, 1/125, Remoted 2x Seacam Seaflash 150 + 2x Seaflash 250

Judges notes:

As Gianni's caption reveals, a lot of work was put into achieving this shot but it was certainly worth it. Converting the image to black and white creates mood and the backlighting is very effective. Also the position of the diver is perfect. All in all, this is a very well executed shot.

Peter Rowlands



3) Wrecks

Highly commended

'The operation was successful'
Torbjörn Gylleus (Sweden)

I was returning to Truk Lagoon after ten years with a list of photo subjects that I wanted to focus on. The operating table in the sick bay of the Shinkoku Maru was one of those subjects, and we did three dives on that wreck. My brother hovered close to the ceiling with two light sources, used in combination with my camera strobes. I also wanted to capture the faint natural light in the background to create some mood and depth in the image by using a slow shutter speed. One of the challenges here was to prepare and shoot quickly before the rust flakes started falling down from above causing backscatter, but the image came out as I wanted.

The wreck of Shinkoku Maru, Truk Lagoon, Federated States of Micronesia

Sony A7RII, Nauticam NA-A7II housing, Sigma 15mm f/2.8 DG EX, iso 1250, f/14, 1/15, Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges notes:

A still life image that communicates perfectly the mood of a wreck, of a ship and the sick bay stopped in time. The lack of fish and a diver increases the somber, reflective mood. The carefully controlled foreground lighting and the depth created by the distant background combine to complete a subtly brilliant picture.

Alex Mustard

3) Wrecks

Highly commended
'Capturing History'
Tanya Houppermans (USA)

An underwater photographer lines up a shot of the conning tower of the wreck of the U-352 off the coast of North Carolina, USA. In May 1942 the U-352 fired upon the USCGC Icarus but missed. The Icarus retaliated, and sunk the U-352 in 120ft of water 26 miles southeast of Beaufort Inlet. During this particular dive the visibility was especially good, so my goal was to capture wide angle images with as much of the wreck in the frame as I could get. As I was lining up the shot, a fellow photographer was focusing on the conning tower, so I decided to include him in the image to give a sense of scale to the wreck.

Wreck of the U-352, North Carolina, United States

Olympus OM-D E-M1, Nauticam NA-EM1 housing, Olympus 8mm f/1.8 Fisheye, iso 400, f/2.5, 1/125, Natural Light

Judges notes:

I can well imagine the excitement of descending to a familiar wreck and finding that the visibility is way above average; the opportunity to capture a large section for the first time but then another underwater photographer starts to spoil the shot until you realise that he is actually contributing a great sense of scale and definitely adding to the composition.

Peter Rowlands



3) Wrecks



Commended
'Jill Bomber'
Marcus Blatchford (UK)

I visited Truk Lagoon to dive the infamous "Ghost Fleet". After a week this was a bit of a curved ball compared to the rest of the huge, amazing shipwrecks we dived and simply just a plane. To be more exact a Nakajima B6N "Jill" Bomber. The resort we stayed in 'Blue Lagoon', in WW2 was a Japanese airfield. The Jill is around 200m from the bar. My tactics changed for the plane, up until this point I had been aiming for simple photographs but for the Jill I decided to try to map the area using 3d photogrammetry. I captured 408 photos of the aircraft which when fed into some very clever whizzbangery resulted in a complete orbital 3d model.

Truk Lagoon (Chuuk), Federated States of Micronesia

Canon EOS 5d mk III, Nauticam housing, Canon 8-15 mm f4 Fisheye, iso 800, f/14, 1/250th, twin Inon z240

Judges notes:

This shot really jumped out at me. I'm sure it was the way in which the author choose to cut around the plane and leave the surrounding background a striking jet black. Composition is strong and the more I saw it the more I liked it. Do take the time to read the caption; I think his account of how that shot was taken will be of great interest to you all.

Martin Edge

3) Wrecks

Commended
‘Three Warriors’
Nadya Kulagina (Kazakhstan)

Having seen hundreds of images of these three beautiful Fiats that rest in one of the holds of the Umbria wreck, I decided to take an image that would stand out from the others. The idea was to use off-camera strobes to light up the cabins of the three cars. Unfortunately, one of the strobes was too far and refused to fire. The hold with the cars is relatively small and very dark, so I had to be very careful not to kick up silt and rust. And I was very limited on time as the rest of the group was already breathing down my neck. To me, these three cars stand tall as the famous three warriors by a Russian artist Victor Vasnetsov, hence the title.

Umbria wreck, Sudan
Nikon D800, Anthis Nexus D800 housing, Nikkor FE 16mm, iso 400, f/13, 1/30, Ikelite DS160x2, Inon Z240x3

Judges notes:

A pleasing composition and a strong idea, that would surely have finished even higher with a more reliable strobe!

Alex Mustard



3) Wrecks

Commended
'Last Flight'
Steve Jones (UK)

This USAAF B-17G Flying Fortress crash landed on approach to the island of Vis, Croatia after being hit by anti-aircraft fire during a bombing raid over Europe in 1944. This spectacular wreck is in remarkable condition and lies at 72 metres. I only had one dive on the wreck and the depth gave me very limited time in which to work so good communication between myself and my buddy, Andi Marovic was essential: I thoroughly briefed him on what I was trying to achieve before the dive so he could also visualise the image I was aiming for. I wanted to capture an image that showed the true scale of the aircraft so I shot with natural light and colour balanced the image during post processing.

Vis Island, Croatia
Nikon, D4 Seacam housing, Nikon 13mm RS, iso 3200, f/5, 1/80, natural light

Judges notes:

I still can't believe I had to fight the other judges to keep this shot in the top 10. OK, the standard of images in this category was extremely high but I found this to be such a powerful shot yet so simple in its execution. As is often the case where another diver is included for scale, a significant part of the credit should also go to them for their contribution to the composition.

Peter Rowlands



A large, vibrant underwater photograph serves as the background. It depicts a scuba diver in the center foreground, wearing a black wetsuit and holding a large, circular underwater camera lens towards the viewer. In the background, another diver is visible swimming away. The surrounding environment is filled with lush, colorful coral reefs and schools of small, colorful fish.

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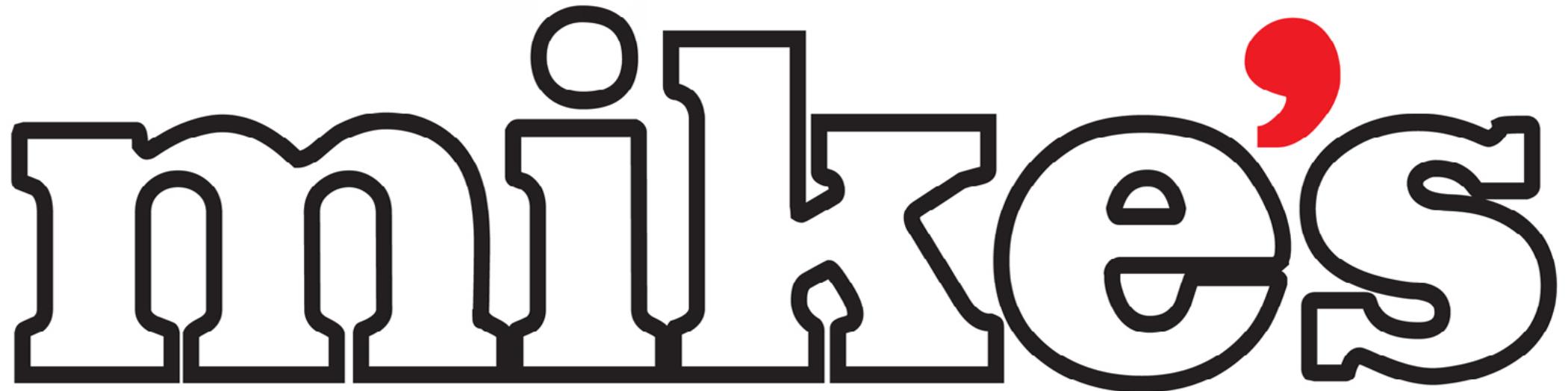
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4) Behaviour

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4) Behaviour

Winner

'Your home and my home'
Qing Lin (Canada)

Clown anemonefish and anemones enjoy a symbiotic relationship, but looking closer I noticed parasitic isopods in the mouths of anemonefish. Perhaps because of the isopods, Clown anemonefish often open their mouths. These three particular fish were very curious. As I approached, they danced about the camera lens. It took me six dives, patience and luck to capture the exact moment when all three fish opened their mouths to reveal their guests. Finally, on the last day, on the last dive, I succeeded.

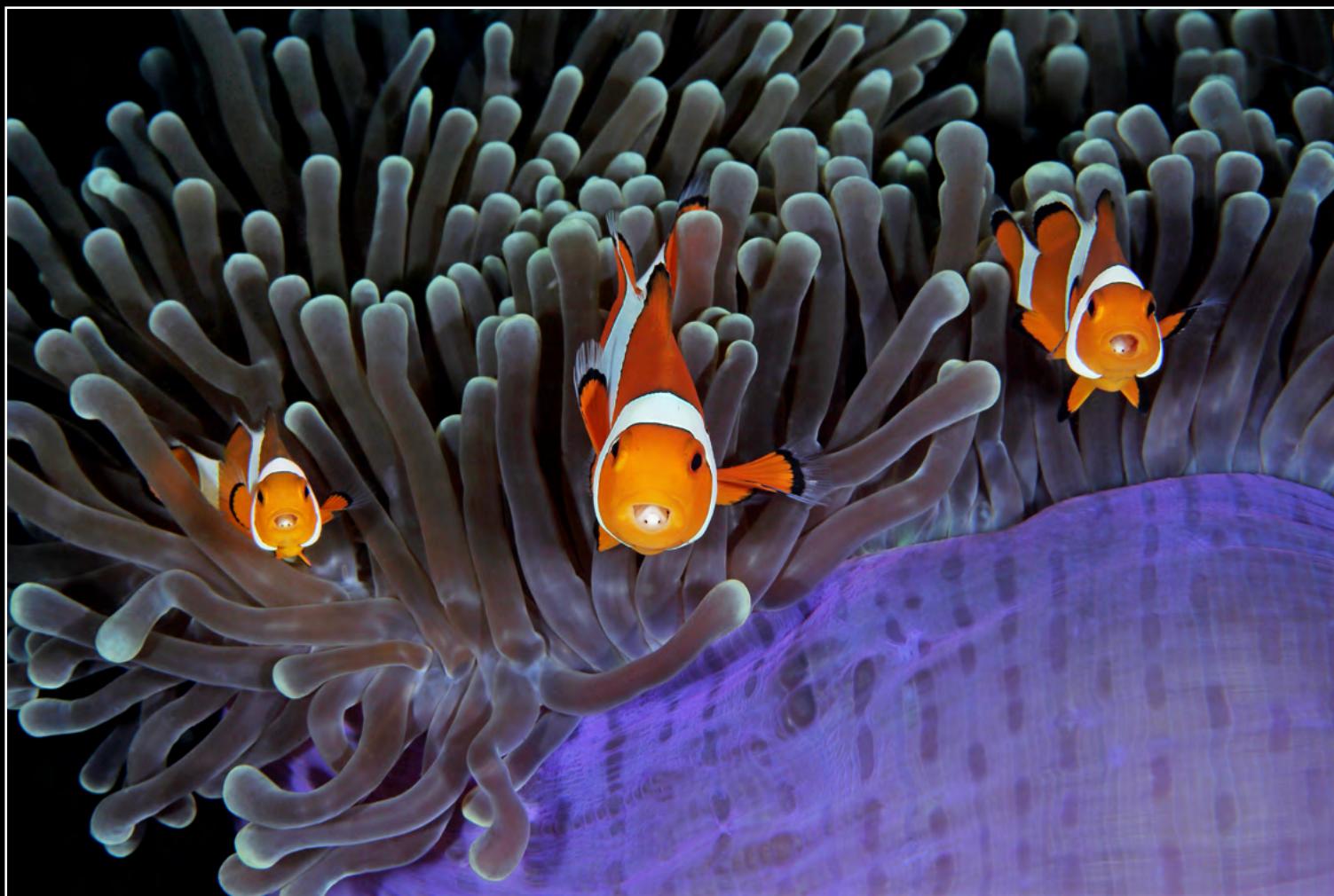
Lembeh, Indonesia

Canon 5D Mark III, Sea and Sea
MDX-5D Mark III housing, EF 100mm
Macro, iso 320, f/25, 1/200, INON Z240

Judges notes:

One of my favourite fish to photograph is the clown. In recent years we are seeing more and more parasites within the mouth of the clowns and it was this that we noticed when judging. Now, I've seen many individual clowns with this parasite but never have I seen a parasite in each of three. Add to this behaviour a colourful anemone lined up across the image. Six eyes all in pin sharp focus, looking into the lens of the author. Talk about 'Peak of the Action' This was one of my favourite shots from the entire competition.

Martin Edge



4) Behaviour

Runner up
‘Humpback whale feeding on krill’
Jean Tresfon (South Africa)

Every summer hundreds of humpback whales gather off the Cape Town coast in a massive feeding aggregation. Working as part of a film crew I was privileged to have a chance to photograph this phenomenon. Although the water visibility was really good, inside the krill patch it was much reduced. Without warning the whales appeared just metres away with their pleats distended as they surfaced with huge mouthfuls of krill. Realising that they must be feeding deeper down I descended to find the thickest concentration of krill. Suddenly a humpback appeared right in front of me, its huge mouth wide open as it sieved the water for the tiny crustaceans. I took several images before it disappeared into the gloom and then I was surrounded by a multitude of massive bodies as the rest of the pod took its turn to feed. Not a little intimidating!

A few miles offshore from Hout Bay, Cape Town., South Africa

Nikon D4, Nauticam housing, Sigma 15mm f/2.8 Fisheye, iso 800, f/8, 1/640, natural light.

Judges notes:

What an amazing shot and how must it have felt actually being there! The framing is well timed with great eye contact. All I can really add is OMG!

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



3rd Place
'Cleaner'
Liang Fu (China)

I found this cleaning station at 26 meters. On the first dive, I took a few front facing photos with cleaner shrimps in the moray eel's mouth. When I surfaced, I came up with an idea of a side-face moray eel, widely opening its mouth with the cleaner shrimp inside. So I made a second dive and produced exactly the shot I had imagined.

Tulamben, Indonesia
Canon 5DS, Nauticam NA-5DSR housing, Canon 100mm/f2.8L Macro, iso 400, f/14, 1/125, Inon z240 w. Retra LSD

Judges notes:

I'm sure that the majority (including myself) would have been more than happy to capture the cleaner shrimp within the moray eel's mouth. However Liang Fu went one step further. He came up with the idea to progress the exact same subject but to introduce some imagination and creative lighting between dives. This is creative thinking both in and out of the water at its best. A well deserved third place in a challenging category.

Martin Edge

4) Behaviour

Highly Commended
'The festive table'
Mikko Saareila (Finland)

The pike had already been partially eaten when I arrived. I stayed farther away waiting for the sunset. While twilight was descending signal crayfish crawled from their holes starting their meal. It seemed that some of them spent more time fighting over the meal than eating. I carefully began to take pictures and finally got close enough to obtain the desired images. Vuoksi, my hometown river, had given the best again.

Vuoksi river, Finland
Canon 7D, Subal housing, Tokina 10-17 fisheye, iso 160, f/14, 1/60, Inon Z-240 + SS mega snoot

Judges notes:

Creepy behaviour and an expertly crafted photograph. A very strong contender in a fiercely competitive category.

Alex Mustard





4) Behaviour

Highly commended
“Dolphins hunting”
Greg Lecoeur (France)

Over the years, sardine numbers have been declining, the victim of overfishing and climate change. They are the main food source of many species of marine life such as penguins, sea lions, sharks, dolphins and more, which are all dependent on them for their survival. During their migration along the wild coast, all the predators work together to hunt sardines but the action is more and more unpredictable. To capture this moment, I had spent several days on the ocean to have just one chance to witness this behaviour.

Port Saint Johns, South Africa
Nikon D7200, Nauticam housing,
Tokina 10-17mm, iso 200, f/9, 1/200, 2x
DS160 Ikelite Strobes

Judges notes:

Action, action, action. Dolphins with sardines spilling out of their mouths. What more can you ask for in a behaviour category.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



Highly commended
'Views at dawn'
Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)

Over the past few months, my photographic work has focused primarily on the large presence of species of jellyfish *Rhizostoma pulmo*, in the Gulf of Naples. In this picture a couple of crabs, *Liocarcinus vernalis* species, are its tenants.

When the jellyfish rub the sandy seabed, the crabs jump on it and get carried to different areas.

Miseno, Gulf of Naples, Italy
Canon 5D SR, Seacam 5d sr housing,
Canon 8/15, iso 200, f/13, 1/125, Inon z 240

Judges notes:

Such a delicate image and perfectly timed yet it still tells the story of two crabs taking a chance and seeing where their lives will take them.

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



Highly commended
'The Contenders'
Simone Caprodossi (UAE)

We went to Bahia Magdalena to photograph blue and mako sharks. We had no baiting success so on the way back we stopped by a small beach where fisherman land their catch. As we arrived we could see tens of pelicans flocking around a fishing boat for scraps from the nets. So we started throwing our leftover bait and quickly had crazy pelican action around our boat. Hanging by the side we were able to shoot them going for the fish with fully extended pouches and contending with each other. The photo opportunities were great so we decided to convert the next day of shark attempts to more pelican shooting. Building on the first day experience, the next day we oriented the boat for better light and played with split levels to try to catch the action both above and below.

Bahia Magdalena, Mexico
Canon 5D Mark III, Subal housing, Canon 8-15mm, iso 400, f/10, 1/1000, Available light

Judges notes:

Great underwater action and a worthy split level made by the pelican swallowing its catch above the surface.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour

Commended
'Planktonado'
Warren Baverstock (UAE)

On my last visit to Djibouti I suspended a large LED light from the rear of the boat to attract plankton so I could photograph night time feeding whale sharks. After three nights, a whale shark finally showed up and started to feed on the plankton. Making every attempt to enter the water quietly, the shark still became spooked and disappeared without a single photograph being taken. Moving out into the darkness away from the boat, I hung on to the anchor line and kept perfectly still in the hope that the shark would return. After an hour the shark returned and my first glimpse of it was an outline of a large mouth which appeared from depth as it fed on the tornado of plankton that swirled and constantly morphed into different shapes. I spent a further hour with this feeding shark and gained an incredible experience and some remarkable photographs including this one.

Gulf of Tadjoura, Djibouti
Nikon D800, Subal ND800, Nikon
16mm f/2.8 Fisheye, iso 2000, f/4, 1/80,
LED Spotlight
Judges notes:

An original image of a plankton feeder at work. The dark frame really highlights the action and the attractive coil of plankton seems to be being sucked down into that cavernous mouth.

Alex Mustard



4) Behaviour

Commended
'Toads mating'
Luc Rooman (Belgium)

For several years we have been following toads mating in the fresh water lake of Turnhout (Belgium) usually in the months of March or April if the weather conditions are 8°C and with humid weather. The toads are in the shallow areas of the lake where we can take photos with natural light while snorkeling.

Freshwater lake, Turnhout, Belgium
Nikon D810, Hugyfot D810 housing,
Sigma 17/70 crop mode, iso 640, f/7.1, 125,
natural light

Judges notes:

Behaviour and the results of behaviour both caught in a well balanced composition.

Peter Rowlands



4) Behaviour

Commended
‘The Game’
Edwar Herreño (Colombia)

6:30 am and a 4 metre tiger shark was about to breakfast on a hawksbill turtle next to the boat. I took my camera, jumped into one of the skiffs and went closer. That was one of the images that I had wanted to get for years (I had been working there for 11 years doing 4 dives per day). It was dark so I pumped up the ISO to 800; then when I got close, I stuck half of my body into the water; one of the skiff drivers was holding my legs. I took as many pictures as I could but they moved a lot! The Tiger was trying to bite the turtle's head off while the turtle defended herself by showing her back. It went on like that until one of them gave up.

Cocos Island, Costa Rica
Nikon D800, HugyFot housing ,
Nikon 16-35 mm, iso 800, f/4.5, 1/80, Sea &
Sea YS 250 PRO

Judges notes:

The week after judging Italian scientists discovered a fossil of a 100 million year old shark feeding on a turtle. Showing this isn't anything new in the ocean. Photos that capture the moment, certainly are something new.

Alex Mustard





Film - No Filter
No White Balance



Digital - No Filter
Manual White Balance



Magic Filter
Manual White Balance

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.

DIVE

Anilao is only 2.5 hours drive from Metro Manila and has long been a local Dive Destination in the Philippines, with its good mix of reefs, sandy slopes, caves, and piers. In recent years, Anilao has experienced a boom in UW Macro Photography tourism. There has been an influx of foreign divers visiting Anilao in order to photograph its diverse rich underwater subjects and seascapes. This led to the discovery of unique critters such as the Rhinopias and Sea Dragons, which are now regularly spotted in these waters.

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5) Portrait

for wide angle to close-up and macro images depicting a sense of character of the chosen subject. These images can be shot anywhere in the world. Open to all.

5) Portrait



Winner
‘Face to face’
Ifj Lorincz Ferenc (Hungary)

We were photographing a big school of bat fish in front of the blue background but it is extremely hard to capture a school of fish in a nice position, especially with divers swimming by all the time, so I gave up trying. Not so far from the others I noticed a crevice in a rock, which fish used as a cleaning station, and slowly, very slowly, I swam into the gap, switching places with the cleaning fish. This made it possible to photograph this bat fish front on.

Shark Reef, Ras Mohamed, Egypt
Nikon D7200, Subal housing, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 100, f/13, 1/160, 2 x Ikelite DS160

Judges notes:
One of the most useful things about UPY Yearbooks is that they are perfect reference works to see exactly what wins in this competition. Here is a great example of what really works as a portrait. The eye contact is immediate and pin sharp but it is the mouth and lips which deliver the character. The lighting and colour contrast lifts the subject from the background and the four little fish are the icing on the cake.

Peter Rowlands

5) Portrait

Runner up
‘Big Red’
Guglielmo Cicerchia (Italy)

During the dive I found a fishing net in which many fish were trapped still alive. They were struggling to get free. Using a slow shutter speed and zooming during the exposure I wanted to emphasize the attempt to break free from the fishing net.

Giannutri Island, Italy
Nikon D7100, Isotta housing , Tokina 10-17, iso 100, f/16, 1/10, Inon Z 240

Judges notes:

Portraits don't have to be cute or quirky. This one tugs the heartstrings, as the scorpionfish strains against the net. The long exposure and zoom really add to the drama of the scene.

Alex Mustard



5) Portrait

3rd Place

'Hypnotic'

Dragos Dumitrescu (Romania)

Pygmy seahorses are some of the most shy beings I've ever met. The strobes and strong light are not to their liking and most of the time they just turn away. My goal was to use as less light as possible so I've built my own snoot in order to accomplish that. It creates a "needle" of light. Not bothered by flashes or torches, this pygmy looked straight into the camera offering me one of the most rewarding hypnotic portraits I have ever shot.

Angel's Window, Lembeh, Indonesia

Canon 6D, Nimar housing, 100mm

F2.8 macro + Inon UCL-165M67, iso 125,
f/18, 1/160, Inon S2000 & Inon Z240

Judges notes:

This is one of the best pygmy shots I have judged in recent years. Simply excellent.

Martin Edge

5) Portrait

3rd Place

'Imp of darkness'

Damien Mauric (UK)

On his visit to the Galapagos islands, Charles Darwin was revolted by the animals' appearance, writing: "The black Lava rocks on the beach are frequented by large, disgusting clumsy Lizards. They are as black as the porous rocks over which they crawl & seek their prey from the Sea. I call them 'imps of darkness'. They assuredly well-become the land they inhabit." The marine iguana are all but monsters. Endemic to the Galapagos, it's a rare privilege to share a moment underwater with this animal now considered as an endangered species.

Isla Fernandina, Islas Galápagos,
Ecuador

Nikon D7200, Aquatica AD7200,
10.5mm, iso 200, f/10, 1/250, Ikelite DS 160

Judges notes:

Prehistoric, this iguana looks like an ancient sea monster. A fantastic animal portrait.
Alex Mustard

5) Portrait

Highly Commended
‘Thanatos’
Liang Fu (China)

I always like shooting skeleton shrimps. I had imagined a skeleton shrimp as Thanatos, the Greek god of death, holding his divine swords. I found this skeleton shrimp on the top of its habitat. I placed my torch behind to create full moon beams. When it straightened up its body, it was right in the beaming circle. Then all I had to do was press the shutter.

Tulamben, Indonesia
Canon 5DS, Nauticam NA-5DSR
housing, 100mm/F2.8L Macro w. Nauticam
SMC-1, iso 125, f/14, 1/125, D.I.Y. snoot with
Handheld torch

Judges notes:

Simple yet so effective. Backlighting has almost x-rayed the shrimp and the pose captures the character. That's a portrait.

Peter Rowlands





5) Portrait

Highly Commended
‘Kiss me!’
David Barrio (Spain)

El Bajón is an impressive dive located at El Hierro Island marine reserve and, due to its non fishing status in the area, some dusky groupers (*Epinephelus marginatus*) have been able to grow and reach large sizes (the species is classified as endangered in the IUCN Red List). It is interesting that these large specimens have grown accustomed to divers and, sometimes, they let photographers get close, or very close, like in this picture (other times they just ignore all divers). It is a pleasure just being able to dive with these giants and it is even better when they collaborate and stand looking at their reflection on the dome port for some minutes, letting the photographer experiment with light and composition.

El Hierro, Canary Islands, Spain
Nikon D300, Hugyfot D300 housing,
Tokina 10-17, iso 400, f/16, 1/60, 2 x
Subtronic Nova

Judges notes:

It's the precise balance of all the facial features which attracted me to this image during our first round of judging. Eyes - Mouth - Eyes - Mouth! The balance of the composition is so exact that all these qualities stand out. Then we embark on yet another look inside the mouth, just in case we have missed something.

Martin Edge

5) Portrait

Highly commended
'*Lophiodes fimbriatus*'
Jeff Milisen (USA)

Blackwater diving, defined as drifting through the open ocean at night over thousands of feet of water, is all about seeing life that you have never witnessed before. One night, my buddy pointed out what looked like an egg-yolk jelly, which aren't commonly found in the shallows around Hawaii. But as I looked closer, fins and eyes started to appear and I realized this wasn't a jelly at all, but an anglerfish! The 3 cm long fish with 6cm long tendrils was wonderfully camouflaged to look like a stinging, inedible jelly. You won't find *Lophiodes fimbriatus* in any book on Hawaii's fishes-this is the first time it has been observed this far east, and possibly the third time it has ever been seen at all!

Blackwater dive/Kona, USA
Canon T1i, Ikelite housing, 60mm
Macro, iso 100, f/6.3, 1/200, dual Ikelite DS-51

Judges notes:

What a fantastic character, it is hard to imagine a fish so bizarre can really exist.

Alex Mustard



5) Portrait



Commended
'Green Turtles in the rays'
Greg Lecoeur (France)

During a diving trip to Tenerife, I came across these green turtles. It was early morning and the sunbeams pierced the surface. I adjusted the setting of my camera and I waited for the turtles to come close enough to trigger my camera. After a little while, the turtles were circling around us and it was a great opportunity to photograph them.

Tenerife, Spain
Nikon D7200, Nauticam housing,
Tokina 10-17mm, iso 100, f/9, 1/250, 2 x
DS160 Ikelite Strobe

Judges notes:

A perfectly judged composition balancing the three elements - two turtles and the sun at dawn. Greg has timed the image to perfection to capture perfect symmetry in the turtle's poses.

Alex Mustard

5) Portrait

Commended

'Sealion playing with Starfish'
Francis Pérez (Spain)

In Los Islotes there is one of the most important Sealion kindergardens in Mexico. I went there looking for pictures of sea lions eating on the big sardine banks. I was not lucky, because there were no sardines, but I found many interesting things, such as the one I show in this photo, a juvenile sea lion playing with starfish. I was surprised to see the stars passing each other or even as they approached the camera with them in the mouth, to leave them and then to catch them again.

My intention was to capture the moment when sea lions caught a star with their mouths, to capture a dynamic image. I spent about four hours in the water, I came and went to the area where there were more juveniles, until finally getting closer and little by little and with respect I was able to capture this photo.

Los Islotes. Espiritu Santo. Baja California, Mexico

Canon 5D MkIII, Seacam MkIII housing, Canon 15 mm. f/2.8. Fisheye, iso 250, f8, 1/200, 2 strobes Ikelite DS160

Judges notes:

Fun and comedic character, revealing natural play behaviour, so important in the development of intelligent sea lions.

Alex Mustard



5) Portrait



Commended

'*Hippocampus guttulatus double exposure*'
Adriano Morettin (Italy)

I tried photographing this seahorse for several months because I wanted to do exactly this type of photography with double exposure made directly underwater without changing the lens and performing two consecutive shots. When I finally found him I felt that this was the chance of a lifetime. And I'm proud to say that these are amongst the most satisfying images that I have produced during in my long career as an underwater photographer.

Gulf of Rijeka, Northern Adriatic Sea,
Croatia

Nikon D800E, Seacam housing,
Nikon 60 micro, iso 100, f/22, 1/250, One
flash Seacam 150 with Retra UWT snoot

Judges notes:

A stunning shot and another favourite of mine. The balance of the composition and the weight between seahorse and sunbeams is perfect. The colour combinations between the two also work so well together.

Martin Edge



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6) Compact

for wide angle or close-up/macro images shot anywhere in the world (including the UK) with a compact camera (includes stills from GoPro and other action cameras, does not include interchangeable lens mirrorless cameras).

Open to all. Entrants to this category will only be accepted from photographers who's only underwater camera is of a 'compact' type.

6) Compact

Winner

'I've got my eye on you!'

Jenny Strømvoll (Mozambique)

I have shot many whip gobies but this particular shot was taken with the Inon compact bug-eye lens which added a lot of character to the goby's eye. The trick was to get close enough without the goby moving away. I was fortunate enough to find a very forgiving goby who allowed me into his private space. I knew I had to get down low and shoot up to include the surface of the water. I shot this scene many times before getting the image I was after.

Frekkie, Mozambique

Canon S95, Recsea S95 housing, 5.2-
26mm + Inon Underwater Micro Fisheye
Lens UFL-M150 ZM80, iso 320, f/8, 1/400,
Single Inon D-2000

Judges notes:

For me this was an instant first place.

The compact bug-eye lens is not easy to use but Jenny got the better of this tool. I think it was important to create some depth within the image and this has been done so well by opening-up the background water column. Try to imagine this image with a black background! There would have been such little depth, it would have been all about the goby and nothing else. Instead, the blue water background situated towards top left of the frame allows the eye of the viewer to wander back and forth again and again.

Martin Edge

6) Compact



Runner up
'John-Dory free swimming'
Fabio Russo (Italy)

John-Dory (*Zeus faber*) normally live very deep. However, at night, in winter, they may climb up in to shallower water to feed. I was very thrilled to find one at less than 10 metres which was very unusual in my country.

Sant'Agnello, Italy
Sony RX 100, Nauticam housing,
internal strobe, iso 80, f/7.1, 1/250, 2x
INON S2000

Judges notes:

Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication
wrote Leonardo da Vinci. Great job.

Alex Mustard

6) Compact

3rd Place
'Orca'
David Alpert (UK)

In January 2016, I travelled 350km inside the Arctic Circle to dive with Orcas having trained for over 6 months to improve fitness levels and get used to the specialised freediving equipment and 4-degree water. On our last attempt to dive with them a large male with a dorsal fin about 6ft tall turned and then as if to bid us farewell swam calmly past us. In January the sun never rises much above the horizon and it was in the last few moments before sunset that I took this photo.

Husøy, Fjordgård, Norway
Canon S120 Powershot, Canon
housing, Inon Fisheye wet Lens, iso 1250,
F1.8, 1/50 sec, Natural light

Judges notes:

An image doesn't have to be pinsharp to produce an effect and this shot, taken on a compact camera just before sunset with just natural light, is a prime example of getting the composition right and just take the photograph. I think it is a remarkable testament to both the photographer and the camera in such testing conditions.

Peter Rowlands



6) Compact



Highly Commended
'Mediterranean sea Regalecus glesne'
Nicolas Cimiterra (France)

With my friends, we planned to dive in April, the best moment to observe this extraordinary fish, just after the phytoplankton bloom. During the day the water was very clear but it gradually becomes loaded with macroplankton (jellyfish, ctenophores, etc.). The first observation of the oarfish occurred at dusk. It probably followed the vertical migration of plankton. This image was taken at night. Going up from the depths parallel to the chain of the buoy (anchored on a bottom of 2300 m), this individual was observed several times for a few seconds or tens of seconds, moving away or disappearing in the depths to reappear a few meters further away. I was able to take several shots of this beautiful and exceptional fish, but he disappeared again into the darkness all too soon. It was an amazing human and naturalist experience.

Off the coast of Antibes, France
Canon G15, WP-DC48 housing, 6 mm, iso 100, F/1.8, 1/250, Inon D2000

Judges notes:

A very rare creature, but also a hauntingly beautiful picture. Stunning.

Alex Mustard

6) Compact

Highly Commended
'Coral safehaven'
Jenny Stromvoll (Mozambique)

While searching for soft coral cowries inside the thistle corals, I came across this goby. For me the colour of the Dendronephtha flesh and the goby's very translucent body and striking green eyes, would make a very delicate and soft photo. I wanted to get a photograph with a lot of depth to it, which was achieved by framing the goby with the soft coral branches. Personally this is one of my favourite photos as it has such a feminine touch to it.

3 Sisters, Mozambique
Canon S110, Nauticam S110 housing,
5.2-26mm + Double stacked Inon UCL-
165M67, iso 160, f/8, 1/250, Single Inon
D-2000

Judges notes:

Such good use of the out of focus foreground to draw the viewers eye in and the pastel colours are just gorgeous.

Peter Rowlands



6) Compact



Highly commended
‘Hunter of the Night’
Lorincz Ferenc (Hungary)

The carnivorous lion fish often comes close when seeing a flashlight during a night dive, since illuminated smaller fish are an easy prey. On this particular dive, they came annoyingly close and even swam into the domeport of my camera again and again. That is how I took the picture, the lion fish literally hit my camera; leaving me only one choice: to illuminate him from the sides.

Shaab Mahmoud, Beacon Rock, Red Sea, Egypt

Nikon Coolpix P7000, Fantasea FP7000, fixed lens, iso 100, f/5.6, 1/250, 2 x Intova IS4000

Judges notes:

A stunning image, kept down the order only by the similar image of the John Dory. That's the nature of competitions, someone else's photo can determine where you place.

Alex Mustard

6) Compact

Highly commended
‘Hanging Around’
Alexander Franz (Germany)

Gili Raja Wreck is only for experienced divers. Deep down at 50m the atmosphere is gloomy, you see bullet holes and remains of the ships load, colours disappear. The pink shining frogfish, hanging in the ropes immediately caught my attention - but when diving with guests I usually don't bring my camera. Impatient I waited for the decompression time and the surface interval to end, I grabbed my camera and my buddy and I went down again and luckily found the frogfish, still hanging in the same position.

Wreck of “Gili Raja”, Indonesia
Nikon Coolpix P7100, Fantasea FP7100 housing, iso 200, f/2,8, 1/30, Ikelite DS 51

Judges notes:

The simple power of pinky-red on cyan blue makes this a very compelling frogfish portrait. It reveals the extraordinary places that these fish set their ambushes.

Alex Mustard



6) Compact

Commended
‘Hello World!’
Jenny Strömvoll (Mozambique)

I found this cluster of Cuttlefish eggs on a reef called Doodles in Ponta do Ouro. All the eggs looked dark to start with, however, as I looked closer, I noticed one slightly more opaque than the rest. This one was getting ready to hatch! In order to ready himself for defensive manoeuvres in the outside world, he absorbed the last drops of ink which his mother had infused into the egg sac. This is when I pressed the shutter button. Moments later the tiny creature set off to start his new life in the big blue.

Doodles, Mozambique
Canon S110, Nauticam S110 housing,
5.2-26mm + Double stacked Inon UCL-
165M67, iso 250, f/8, 1/250, Single Inon
D-2000

Judges notes:

Perfect timing to capture the start of a life. Well lit and composed. A credit to the capabilities of compact cameras.

Peter Rowlands



6) Compact

Commended

'Welcome To The Jungle.....'
Linda McKean (USA)

Diving with Blue Iguana Charters and all the shark action at Tiger Beach, the Bahamas was one of the most exciting UWP opportunities of my life. I really wasn't sure what it would be like but the best way I can describe it is that we were surrounded by sharks. The most numerous were the Caribbean Reef and Lemon Sharks, but the stars of the show were clearly the magnificent female Tiger Sharks. Their beauty, size and graceful movement captivated me as they slowly cruised the area and I wanted to capture that feeling in my photographs. I was about two meters off the bottom when I took this face-on shot of one of the Tiger Sharks the dive crew called "Smiley" due to the little crooked smile she always seems to have on her face,

Tiger Beach, Bahamas
Canon G16, Fantasea FG 16, Opteka
0.4X Fisheye Lens, iso 80, f/4, 1/200,
Natural Light

Judges notes:

A simple yet captivating portrait which captures everything that is charismatic about these apex predators.

Peter Rowlands



6) Compact

Commended
'Negative pole'
Fabio Russo (Italy)

The ventral side of an ocellate torpedo, or eyed electric ray (*Torpedo torpedo*) is not easy to photograph I took advantage of a free swimming one and quickly descended to the seabed to shoot its underside. For attack and defense, the torpedo can deliver a strong electric shock of up to 200 volts, so it's not a good idea to touch it.

Sant'Agnello (NA), Italy
Sony RX 100, Nauticam NA-RX100
housing, iso 80, f/9, 1/200, 2x INON S2000

Judges notes:

Perfectly composed and lit this shot provides an unusual view of a Torpedo Ray.

Peter Rowlands





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7) Up & Coming

for wide angle or close-up/macro images shot anywhere in the world (including the UK). Open only to underwater photographers who have not previously been awarded in an underwater photography competition or been published.

7) Up & Coming



Winner
'Oceanic in the Sky'
Horacio Martinez (Argentina)

This was my first Red Sea experience, and my first liveaboard-based photo workshop, so everything was interesting... but arduous. We were on the last dive of the day and I ventured a tad deeper to get closer portraits of the Oceanic White Tips, when I noticed this shark patrolling in the distance. I took a few shots to expose for the sun beams and the surface, and was pleased by the dreamlike effect. Oceanics are great subjects for close ups as they are anything but shy. Yet, every now and then it is great to try and capture their apparent loneliness, their wandering, and their independence in the big blue.

The Brothers, Egypt
Nikon D810, Nauticam housing,
Nikon 14-24 @24mm, iso 400, f/14, 1/200,
S&S YSDI

Judges notes:

There was a lot of competitive images in this category, as you would expect but this one was a serious contender right from the start. The photographer has 'seen' the light and realised its dramatic effect extremely well and used it to contrast the small shark in a big, blue, lonely world. Very evocative indeed.

Peter Rowlands

7) Up & Coming



Runner up

'A migratory alewife swims through turbulent flow.'

Sean Landsman (Canada)

This image is part of a project to document the anadromous (adult growth in saltwater, birth/spawning in freshwater) fishes of eastern North America. It depicts a migratory alewife barreling through the turbulent flow at the base of a fish ladder. This location has a dam that impedes access to the spawning habitat. Alewife need slow-moving pond or lake environments to spawn in and can only access them with fish ladders or similar structures if a dam is present. Anadromous fishes like alewife transport high-quality marine-derived nutrients into freshwater ecosystems, providing food for all sorts of aquatic organisms. It was very difficult to see the fish moving through the bubbly water, much less time my trigger finger with their movements correctly. It took dozens of frames to get this one image, but all it takes is one!

Winter River, Suffolk, Prince Edward Island, Canada

Nikon D7000, Ikelite housing, Tokina 10-17 fisheye, iso 400, f/10, 1/250, Single Inon Z240

Judges notes:

An eyecatching and novel image of an every day fish, shows persistence, knowledge and creativity from the photographer.

Alex Mustard

7) Up & Coming

3rd Place

“Under My Umbrella”

Catalin Craciun (Romania)

The idea for this photo came from the need to show people that freediving is not ONLY about going down and up on a line but rather exploring, dreaming and applying it for having fun and to explore. This photo was taken at Freediving Coron in the Philippines where we teach freediving courses all year round in the famous Barracuda Lake which offers us perfect water and surrounding conditions: warm (and hot deeper than 14m) water, good visibility, no waves, no current; a dream for anyone who wishes to learn to freedive. The freediver is Mary Jane Paula Jumuad, Apnea Total Freediving Instructor and the deepest Filipina freediver. This photo was taken using only natural light at around 9m depth and freediving as well.

Barracuda Lake, Philippines
Nikon D300, Ikelite housing, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 200, f5.6, 1/250, natural light

Judges notes:

A delightful composition and an original concept make this shot truly memorable.

Alex Mustard



7) Up & Coming

Highly Commended
'Orca Pod'
Nicholai Georgiou (UK)

Orcas are easily the most beautiful, intelligent and confident animals I've ever had the honor of spending time with. This photo was taken during an amazing week freediving with wild Orca in Norway. The days are quite short in winter and the water was around 5 degrees but we wore a thick wetsuit and of course with Orca around, the cold was quickly forgotten. The light had a really nice colour from the setting sun as this graceful pod of Orca swam by nice and close. It was a moment which will be hard to top and I'm glad to have this image to share it.

Tromso, Norway
Nikon D750, Ikelite housing, Sigma 15mm 2.8 Fisheye, iso 1600, f/4.5, 1/160,
Natural Light

Judges notes:

Most underwater photographers would be happy to get a shot of a single killer whale in its environment but Nicholai had the composure not to panic and time the shot perfectly as a pod of killer whales passed by heading into the setting sun. I'm jealous.

Peter Rowlands



7) Up & Coming

Highly Commended
'Purple shelter'
Simon Staiger (Germany)



It was the last dive of our holiday and I knew that these amphipods were living in the purple tunics, that were common on the dive site. So I decided to dedicate this dive to this little critter. After a while I found a tunicate with its inhabitant. It was fascinating to see this tiny creature, hiding in his beautiful purple home, almost only visible through the viewfinder. To capture this image, I adjusted the lens on its minimum focus distance to achieve the largest magnification and aimed the strobes with full power from either side of the tunica to proper light the the small guy inside its shelter.

Prince John Dive Resort, Sulawesi
Olympus OM-D E-M1 , Nauticam
NA-EM1 housing, M.ZUIKO 60mm Macro
+ Nauticam CMC, iso 200, f/14, 1/320, Sea
& Sea YS-D2

Judges notes:

An enticing composition, with the purple swirls of the sea squirt framing the crustacean against the black background.

Alex Mustard

7) Up & Coming

Highly commended
‘Medusa Blenny on the Lookout’
Jade Hoksbergen (UK)

My fascination with blennies started in early 2016 when I was living in Saint Lucia and got my hands on an underwater camera for the first time. Having lived in the Philippines previously, tube blennies were a novelty to me despite their widespread presence in Saint Lucia. I thought they also made extremely interesting subjects due the range in their facial expression, sometimes akin to the grimaces one would associate with gargoyles. For this shot, I wanted illustrate the intricate detail of this blenny whilst showing how its colour and texture blends seamlessly with its environment.

Pigeon Island, Saint Lucia
Sony, A7RII, Nauticam housing,
Sony 90mm, iso 100, f/10, 1/320, Inon Z240
strobes

Judges notes:

Delicate pastel colours and soft textures frame this pin-sharp and characterful portrait.

Alex Mustard

7) Up & Coming

Highly commended
‘Tiger Beach’
Dave Baker (UK)

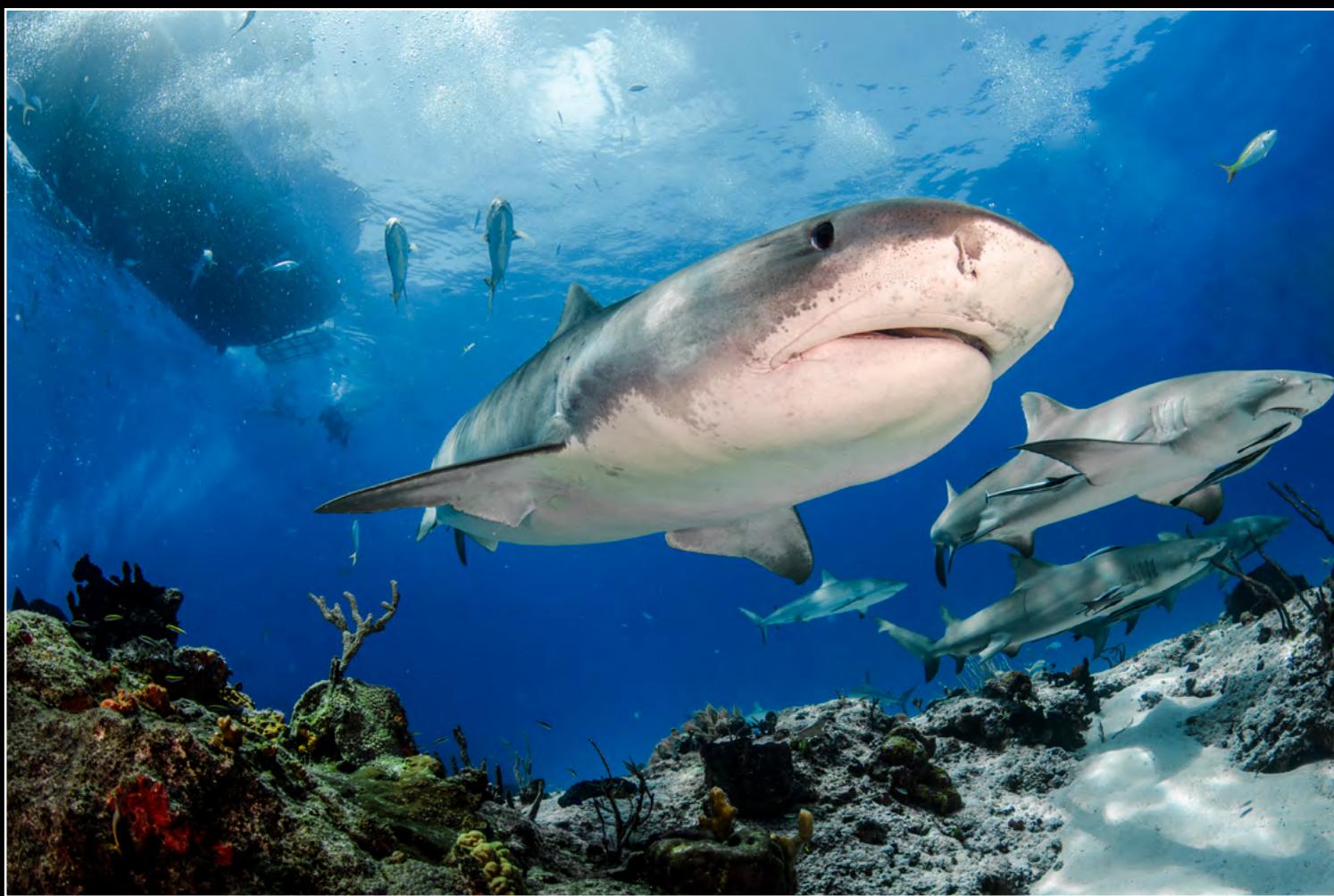
Fed up with getting fleeting glances of sharks and then seeing them disappear into the depths I decided to take a trip to Tiger beach in order to get up close to these magnificent creatures. I wasn't disappointed . I tried to capture as much of the experience as I could in one shot so positioned myself behind some coral with the boat on the surface. It was then a case of waiting for the Sharks to swim over with the added bonus of a diver descending from the boat as well

Tiger Beach, Bahamas
Nikon D7000, Sea and Sea housing,
Tokina 10-17, iso 100, f/9, 1/125, 2 x Inon z240

Judges notes:

With three species of sharks, including a huge tiger shark, all in formation, this is an easy shot to appreciate.

Alex Mustard



7) Up & Coming

Commended

'Through the coral window'
Léna Remy (France)

Looking at this beautiful frame of flower coral, on Tulamben USS liberty wreck, I noticed this yellow fish turning quickly around the coral. I positioned myself to have blue water background surrounded by red coral. I waited for the fish to take this posture in the middle of the coral window. I was happy to capture the short moment the fish looked at the camera, exactly in the middle of the blue.

USS liberty wreck - Tulamben, Bali
Olympus OMD EM5, Nauticam NA-
EM5 housing, 60mm Macro 2.8 Olympus,
iso 250, f/10, 1/250, Inon Z240 Type 4 x2

Judges notes:

What a pretty image. The red gorgonian and the yellow damselfish contrast beautifully with the blue water. A perfectly timed capture.

Alex Mustard



7) Up & Coming

Commended
'Sunset'
Patryk Pinski (UK)

This photo was taken at the sunset during a St John's safari in Egypt, last March. Almost at the end of the dive we came across a smack of jelly fish swimming close to the surface. I could not resist photographing of this beautiful creature with the sunset in the background. After a few shoots using strobes to enhance a shape of jelly fish I got the photo I was satisfied with.

St Johns, Egypt
Canon 5D MarkIII, Ikelite, Canon 8-15mm, iso 100, f/8, 1/200, 2x Ikelite DS 161

Judges notes:

A delicately lit shot which slipped down the order because we felt the composition was a little unbalanced.

Peter Rowlands



7) Up & Coming

Commended
'Whale calf posing'
Christophe Lapeze (France)

I travelled to French Polynesia for a once in a life moment of playing with a whale calf and I decided to devote a whole week to this. One morning, the magic happened. A mother and a calf were sleeping quietly at 15 meters. When they feel safe and unafraid, they can really come close to you. And this six tonne 6 meter calf was amazingly playful. Strobes were not allowed but you don't need them. The contrast of the deep blue and the sunlight were enough. The difficulty was to be at the right place according to the sunlight and to get a gracious pose from the calf: another photographer on the other side, the whale posing, a few bubbles out of his blow-hole, a short eye contact, Click! Fixed in my memory forever.

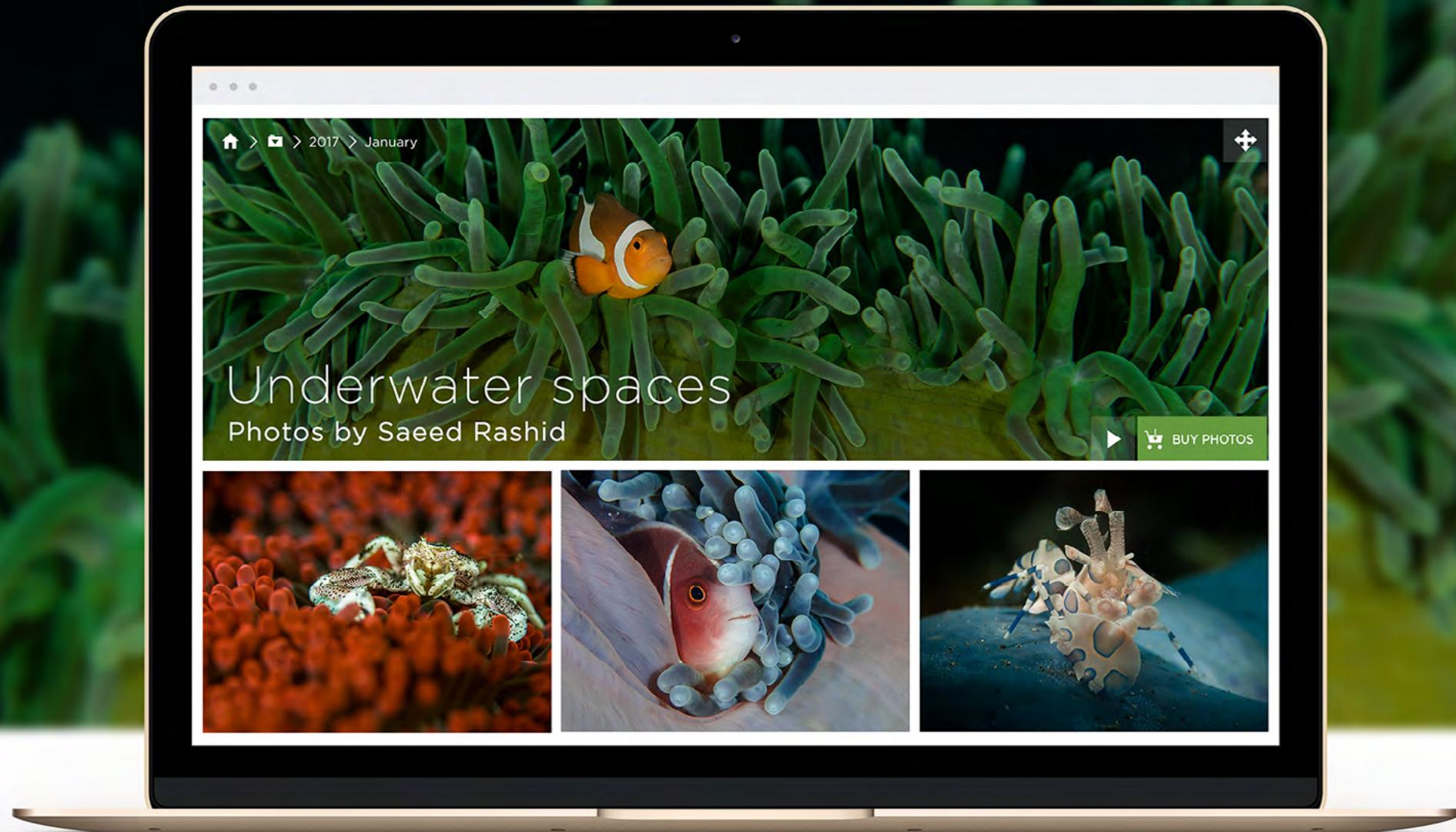
Tahiti, French Polynesia
Canon, 5D mark III, Isotta housing,
Canon 16/35 F4 IS, iso 100, f/7.1, 1/160

Judges notes:
I'm naturally drawn to these shots and these subjects. I fully accept that as an image in the Up and Coming Category it has much stronger competition but this has captured the 'This is what it's like 'being there' factor'.

Peter Rowlands



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8) British Waters Wide Angle

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8) British Waters Wide Angle



Winner

'Eye to eye'

Melvin Redeker (Netherlands)

In 2011 I saw my first orcas in the North Sea. It was the inspiration for our Dutch photo project 'In the North Sea'. We needed the iconic killer whales to raise attention that the North Sea has many fantastic ecosystems and habitats. But first I needed to learn diving and handle an underwater camera. We had studied the behavior of the Mousa pod over a few weeks and decided the best opportunity would come if I hid on the seabed just below the coastal rocks while the orcas are hunting seals. So I was dropped by Fiona (my wife) from our RIB in an area where we anticipated them to come for seal hunting. Staring in a wall of water, suddenly the pod appeared. Totally silent. Eye to eye with these mighty apex predators, my heart skipped a few beats.

North Sea, on the east coast of Yell Shetland, UK

Nikon D800E, Nauticam housing, Nikon 16.0-35.0 mm f/4.0 at 16mm, iso 1600, f11, 1/125, Natural light

Judges notes:

My heart skips a beat just looking at this image! The eye contact and the close proximity together with the silence. This is a groundbreaking shot for British waters.

Peter Rowlands

8) British Waters Wide Angle

Runner up
‘Competition’
Richard Shucksmith (UK)

I was out off the coast making images for Scotland: The Big Picture - a project about rewilding that produces images to amplify the case for a wilder Scotland. Hundreds of gannets were circling the boat looking for the fish that were being thrown over the side. Suddenly a single bird dives and the others seeing it as an indicator and 20, 30, 40 birds are diving at once. Because of this behaviour competition between gannets is always going occur creating several gannets diving for the same fish. I could hear the birds as they hit the water right above my head just before they appeared in front of the camera. A great experience.

Shetland Isles, UK
Nikon D4, Nauticam housing, Sigma 15mm fisheye, iso 1250, f13, 1/1000, Natural light.

Judges notes:

Superb capture by the author. The power of the gannets is so very well emphasised in this particular frame. In the post process it must have been a challenge which specific image to enter into this competition. The author choose well. We all loved this shot!

Martin Edge

8) British Waters Wide Angle



3rd Place

'Under the old packhorse bridge'
Trevor Rees (UK)

For this photo I travelled to the Lake District for a dive in the River Duddon. An old stone packhorse bridge, called Birks Bridge, crosses over a small but deep gorge in the rock and there is just enough depth for a dive. For most of the year the water flow is too fast and frantic for taking pictures but I waited for a period of suitable dry weather to get the shot I wanted. My wife, who I am trying to entice back in to diving with some gentle sites, patiently modelled for me. It was fun working together to create this image.

Birks Bridge, River Duddon, Lake District, UK

Nikon D600, Sea & Sea MDX-D600 housing, Sigma 15mm, iso 640, f/10, 1/160, Dual Sea & Sea YS110a

Judges notes:

A classy image that shows something fresh for UK underwater photographers. Great team work by Mr and Mrs Rees, photographer and model.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Wide Angle

Highly Commended
'Amphibious helicopter'
Steve Jones (UK)

This Wessex Naval helicopter was purposely sunk at the National Diving and Activity Centre in Chepstow and being such a photogenic wreck it is an excellent location to practice photography and lighting skills. Remote strobe was used for this shot, with my own strobe triggering one attached to the diver via a remote sensor. The important thing was to get the angle of the beam correct and my buddy, Terry Ayling's arm helps diffuse the strobe beam preventing it from overpowering the image. The wreck lies at 25 metres.

National Diving and Activity Centre,
Chepstow, UK

Nikon D700, Seacam housing, 16mm,
iso 1600, F8, 1/50th, Inon Z220 (1 trigger, 1
remote). Triggerfish

Judges notes:

The composition produces a dynamic image and the off-camera strobe draws you in. Fine work.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Wide Angle



Highly Commended
'Three's a Crowd'
Spencer Burrows (UK)

Having tried and failed for the past 5 years to see Pike behaviour during the breeding season, my luck eventually changed. Males entice females to release their eggs by nudging the females' abdomens with their tails. The males release clouds of seminal fluid called milt all around the females, increasing chances of fertilisation. Pike can lay between 25,000 to 225,000 eggs. I took shots of 2 - 6 pike breeding; I settled on this image for submission as I felt the image had more character and pleasing a photographic standpoint.

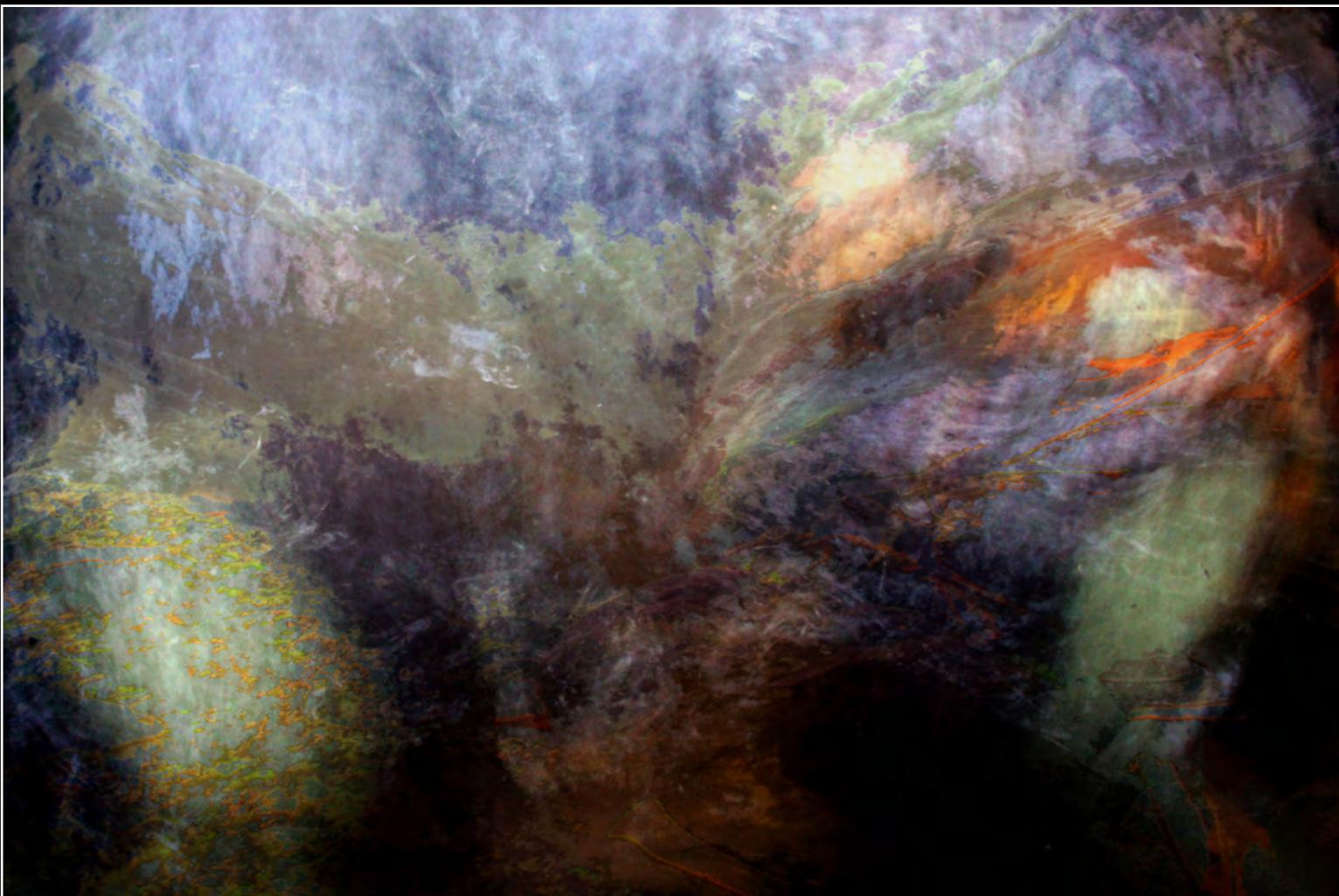
Stoney Cove, Leicestershire, UK
Nikon D800, Nauticam housing,
Sigma 15mm + Kenko 1.4 TC, iso 250, F10,
1/80, 2 x Sea and Sea YSD1

Judges notes:

Excellent eye contact, character and composition saw this image triumph over many with similar subject matter.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Wide Angle



Highly commended
'Tumbling Autumn Leaves'
Dave Peake (UK)

This image was taken in Dartmoor National Park, UK with the aim of capturing some underwater movement. Autumn in the rivers and streams can be very colourful with fallen leaves tumbling along. Depending on the speed of the flow I have experimented with various apertures and shutter speeds and each image can be totally different. The colours and artistic shapes have inspired me and they appear at times to be like an oil painting or better still a 'Water Colour'. The camera can be on a small tripod or held as still as possible just under the interface of water and air and a slow shutter speed used. I am fortunate to live near the National Park and when sea conditions are not good this is where I retreat and experiment.

Sheepstor Brook, Dartmoor National Park, UK

Sony NEX 5, Nauticam housing,
16mm plus fish eye attachment., iso 200,
F22, 1.6 s, Natural Light

Judges notes:

A very imaginative and beautifully balanced image. A favourite with all the judges. Groundbreaking work.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Wide Angle



Highly commended
'Blue wow factor'
Trevor Rees (UK)

This was my first attempt at photographing a blue shark, having never seen these wonderful creatures before. I had failed to get out the previous season to try and see one but a window of opportunity and a calm sunny day eventually came my way. I joined a group of friends on a fast rigid hulled inflatable out of Penzance. We waited for well over 2 hours, far out at sea before anything appeared. As promised by our skipper, the blues finally turned up. It was worth the wait. I slipped in to the water with my camera to see what I could capture.

Penzance, Cornwall, UK
Nikon D600, Sea & Sea MDX-D600
housing, Sigma 15mm, iso 1000, f/11, 1/250,
Dual Sea & Sea YS110a

Judges notes:

The number of blue shark shots this year was way up on last year and led to a certain amount of 'subject fatigue' but this classy portrait lifted our jaded eyes.

Peter Rowlands

8) British Waters Wide Angle



Commended
'Sun Nomad'
Laura Storm (England)

Perfect conditions, ripple-free sea and a rare encounter are a kind of magic. Freediving in the remote blue waters of the Scottish Atlantic we came across this strange, saucer-like shape basking at the surface. A huge Sunfish flopping lazily from side to side! Mola Mola are one of the most mysterious and shy of all pelagic nomads and in the summer months they drift into our waters on the Gulf Stream. Trying to frame these peculiar-shaped fish is something of a challenge. I approach it indirectly, finning slowly around to position the sun in just the right place which allowed this huge ocean traveller time to get used to me. Its skin was covered in parasites and I have a notion that it thought I was some kind of cleaning station, since it let me in so close.

Open ocean, off the Isle of Coll, Inner Hebrides, Scotland, UK
Canon EOS 550D, Sea and Sea RDX-550D housing, Sigma 15mm, iso 200, f/10, 1/100, Natural Light

Judges notes:

What a fantastic beast and beautifully photographed with the light perfectly illuminating it and its reflection.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Wide Angle

Commended
'Lodberry Jellyfish'
Cy Sullivan (UK)

Living in Shetland I am surrounded by fantastic dive locations. I regularly dive near Lerwick's Lodberries, taking in the fascinating history and marine life. The Lodberries are a terrace of late 18th-century buildings used in the shipping trade. They are some of Shetland's most iconic structures and I wanted to try something new and show people what lies beneath the waterline of these well-known landmarks. This Blue Jellyfish (*Cyanea lamarckii*) is exactly what I had been waiting for this past year. After many failed attempts and much patience this Jelly slowly propelled itself into my frame and directly below Murray and Macbeath's Lodberry. I really love taking these kinds of shots as it gives people an insight into the beautiful aquatic world that surrounds us.

Lerwick Harbour, Shetland, Scotland
Canon 5D Mark 3, Aquatica A5D
housing, Canon 16-35mm f4L, iso 500, f/18,
1/50, Nikonos SB102

Judges notes:

A very pleasing composition. Better weather would bring this image to life, and provide more light for a sharper image, promoting this picture to finish right at the very top.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Wide Angle



Commended
‘Can I help you?’

Ellen Cuylaerts (Cayman Islands)

Last November when we visited the largest colony of grey seals in UK, the super moon caused huge tidal changes, some nasty currents and bad visibility. But being in the water with these curious creatures is a joy even if you can only see them when you turn around at the surface and they look at you, all big eyes, before they disappear again in the cloud of murkiness. We stayed in the water as long as the tides allowed us, changed locations a few times and when we were dropped very close to some rocks without kelp beds around, the sun came out and improved the visibility greatly. As if the seals knew this would be their chance on a nice portrait, they came really close, I added some Sola light to the ambient light to be able to dial down my settings a bit and catch the low sun rays lighting the whiskers from both sides!

Farne Islands, UK
Nikon D800, Subal housing, Nikkor
16mm, iso 800, f/7.1, 1250, Sola 3000

Judges notes:

Beautiful light and a curious pose made this our stand out seal image.

Alex Mustard



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9) British Waters Macro



Winner
‘Dragon display’
Kirsty Andrews (UK)

This cuttlefish (*Sepia officinalis*) noticed me before I noticed it. As I passed, it was skulking behind a rock and wafting its tentacles in what was either a kelpy camouflage tactic or an attempt to warn me away. Cuttlefish will often make this type of threat display and only retreat once it's clear that the diving photographer or other recipient has not been appropriately cowed. Although I was not too intimidated, I do love the pose and to me, the outstretched strobe-lit tentacles against a dark background bring to mind a fearsome Chinese dragon. Cuttlefish are fascinating, beautiful creatures and I have had some wonderful experiences in British waters watching them breed, fight, feed, or just interact with divers. I find it terribly sad that in some former hotspots, increased use of cuttlefish pots, especially during the mating season, has had a devastating impact on cuttlefish numbers.

Drawna Rocks, Porthkerris, Cornwall, UK

Nikon D7200, Sea & Sea housing, Nikon 105mm, iso 200, f/11, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D1 x2

Judges notes:
A quirky pose with perfect symmetry, reveals the character of one of the UK's most charismatic macro creatures.

Alex Mustard



Runner up
'Amphipod shrimp, Iphimedia obesa'
Matt Doggett (UK)

Whilst diving in Loch Carron over the New Year we noticed that these tiny, colourful amphipod shrimps occurred in their hundreds amongst the kelp in a narrow depth band between around 5-8m. They seemed to be feeding on the bryozoan *Membranipora membranacea* (a colonial animal) which grows on the kelp fronds and provides both the foreground and background to this image. Less than 1 cm in length, the shrimps proved an irresistible challenge to photograph during decompression stops. They often buzzed around in the spotting lamp beam like a busy swarm of wasps, meaning I had to be quick to capture one if it sat still for a second.

Loch Carron, Scotland, UK
Canon 5D MkIII, Nauticam housing,
100mm and Nauticam SMC, iso 200, f/32,
1/200, Twin Inon Z220 strobes

Judges notes:

A beautiful capture with every element perfectly controlled, foreground, subject and background.

Alex Mustard

3rd Place
'River Fly Nymph'
Paul Colley (UK)

Tiny river fly nymphs are staple food for freshwater fish and were part of a story for river conservation work. It was an experimental technique with the camera inside an open-top box and me kneeling on the river bed in waders next to a weed bed. I pre-focussed the lens and searched for the subject using live view on the camera. With such a small depth of field, having found a nymph I slid the camera backwards and forwards inside the box to find the focus point. Even in calm water, small movements meant hundreds of missed shots and it took almost a month practicing the technique to eventually capture this image. I also damaged the camera when a dog jumped into the river and water flooded into the box! Shallow water, bright sun and white reflectors helped to flood light into the scene.

River Test, Whitchurch Silk Mill, UK
Nikon D750, Home made housing,
105mm with 1.4 teleconverter and +5 diopter, iso 250, f/25, 1/250, On-camera flash with white card reflectors

Judges notes:

Original subject. Both it and the weeds are rendered beautifully in the lighting. If the tail wasn't slightly clipped it could have finished even higher.

Alex Mustard





Highly Commended
'Flabellina pellucida'
Robert Bailey (UK)

These species were prolific at the time this was taken, and I wanted to create a contextual shot showing the hydroids it was feeding on.

Lochcarron, Strom Ferry , Scotland
Nikon, D300, Sea & Sea MDX-D300,
Nikon 105 mm VR , iso 200, f22, 1/320, 2
Inon Z240 Strobes

Judges notes:

There was a lot of competition from nudibranch shots but this one stood out and was helped by the foreground subject at the bottom.

Peter Rowlands

9) British Waters Macro

Highly Commended
'Squat lobster quadrille'
Becky Hitchin (UK)

Long-clawed squat lobsters (*Munida rugosa*) are a common sight in the Scottish sea lochs, usually shooting backwards at great speed into dark crevices at the first sign of a camera being raised. It became an ongoing competition with myself to take some photographs of these squat lobsters that were not the standard and obvious pose of "close up and face on, claws extended". When I took this photograph, it was the first dive I'd ever done at this particular site, and my buddy and I descended through the first few cold metres to almost immediately light up these two squat lobsters with our torches. They really did look as if they were dancing elegantly along the sea floor, lost to their own rhythm.

Loch Duich, Inverinate, UK

Olympus PEN EPL5, Nauticam NA-EPL5 housing, 60mm f2.8, iso 800, f/16, 1/125, Inon z240

Judges notes:

It's a ten from Len. Loved by all the judges. To the scientist it shows fascinating behaviour, to everyone else these two should be on Strictly Come Dancing.

Alex Mustard

9) British Waters Macro



Highly commended
‘Purple baubles in a sea of yellow’
Trevor Rees (UK)

This close up shot of jewel anemones (*Corynactis viridis*) was taken on a popular wreck dive near Plymouth on England’s south coast. The HMS Scylla wreck was scuttled only 13 years ago but is now well encrusted with marine life. Numerous large tightly packed jewel anemones can now be found on the top of the wreck and many of them are in a good position to get a pleasing composition. I shot as close as possible with my lens at minimum focus whilst trying to fill the frame with just tentacles and no background. Different coloured varieties exist but the ones with purple against yellow make a striking colour combination.

HMS Scylla wreck, Whitsand Bay, Cornwall, UK

Nikon D600, Sea & Sea MDX-D600 housing, Nikkor 60mm, iso 400, f/32, 1/250, Sea & Sea YSII0A

Judges notes:

An attractive and original photo of a commonly shot subject. Very effective.

Alex Mustard



Highly commended
‘The eyes have it’
Trevor Rees (UK)

I've tried many times to photograph these long clawed squat lobsters (*Munida rugosa*). For this individual I was diving in the Sound of Mull on Scotland's west coast. They are a common subject but finding a cooperative one was the key to this shot - so that I could inch slowly forward and get an intimate, closely framed head on composition. A tightly snooted single strobe gave the lighting I wanted to show off the striking red colour and large eyes of these attractive crustaceans.

Lochaline, Sound of Mull, UK
Nikon D600, Sea & Sea MDX-D600 housing, Nikkor 105mm, iso 400, f/22, 1/250, Sea& Sea YS110a fitted with home made snoot

Judges notes:

A very striking composition that captures the detail and colour of this subject perfectly. You really connect with those big eyes.

Alex Mustard

9) British Waters Macro

Commended
'Hippolyte varians'
Robert Bailey (UK)

I was inspired by talk of this shrimp being common, but not often photographed. After speaking with Jason Gregory, someone who possesses a commanding knowledge of marine biology in the UK, I managed to track down several of these very tiny crustaceans. Exceedingly small it was only possible to make a shot like this using a Nauticam SMC super macro lens.

Loch Fyne - Anchor Point, Scotland
Nikon D300, Sea & Sea MDX-D300 housing, Nikon 105 mm VR / Nauticam SMC, iso 400, f22, 1/320, One Inon Z240 with Snoot

Judges notes:

A rare critter well photographed with pleasing angle and symmetry in the crinoid background.

Alex Mustard



9) British Waters Macro



Commended
'Slug'
Marcus Blatchford (UK)

Having a 'Lust for Rust' I am normally seen with a dome port and fisheye lens. My prize from the previous UPY was a Nauticam SMC so with viz looking dreadful I decided to go macro. The SS Dakotian is in Milford Haven, a shallow inlet in South Wales . The wreck was covered in Jewell Anemones and Devonshire Cup Corals and I also saw maybe half a dozen of these slugs

SS Dakotian, Wales
Canon EOS 5d mk III, Nauticam housing, Canon EF 100 f2.8 L Macro with Nauticam SMC, iso 500, f/29, 1/250th, twin Inon z240

Judges notes:

A classic nudibranch portrait of a species that is less commonly photographed. We're also thrilled to see a UPY Prize put to such good use.

Alex Mustard

9) British Waters Macro



Commended
'Translucent Shrimp'
David Morgan (UK)

This little prawn or shrimp (*Palaemon elegans*) was part of a small but elusive group that I came across on a night boat dive in the Falmouth estuary. They were constantly moving around a localised part of a wreck on the seabed. I found that as I came within ideal camera range of an individual it would suddenly use its powerful tail to dart into cover, leaving an expanding cloud of silt in my viewfinder. This meant that I had to find another subject in a suitable location once again, but as you can see, my perseverance was rewarded with an 'arial' view showing the symmetry and detail of its eyes and translucent body. It is fascinating to see the smaller creatures make their appearance after dark, when the 'usual' bigger denizens have vacated the area.

East Narrows, Falmouth Estuary, UK
Nikon D800e, Nauticam housing,
Nikon 105mm AF-S Micro f2.8, iso 400, f20,
1/50th, Twin Inon Z240 strobes

Judges notes:

Tremendous detail revealed in this tiny subject. Sometimes photos can show so much more than you can see at the time.

Alex Mustard

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1st Place

'Scottish Fireworks Anemone'
Simon Yates (UK)

This was taken on my second shore diving trip to Scotland. I had seen images of fireworks anemones (*Pachycerianthus multiplicatus*) taken by other photographers previously and wanted to find and photograph them myself. Previous dives were a little frustrating as I hadn't quite realised that these are found in quite deep and dark water, with the best subjects being at 25m or more. This together with a very soft silty bottom presented quite a challenge to get a well lit image. I am particularly pleased with the "glow" at the centre on the subject. Since this trip, Scottish shore diving is now an annual event for my wife and myself, with more places on the the list to visit and dive than time allows!

Loch Duich, Scotland, UK
Canon, S90, Ikelite Ultra Compact,
6mm, iso 200, f4.0, 1/320, YS110 x2

Judges notes:

This image leapt out at us as the winner right from the start. This can sometimes be a false start as the appeal can fade with repeat viewing but this one just got better and better with all of us. Well lit and beautiful symmetrical composition. A great champion for compact photography in the UK.

Peter Rowlands



Runner up
'John Dory in the weed'
Paula Bailey (Uk)

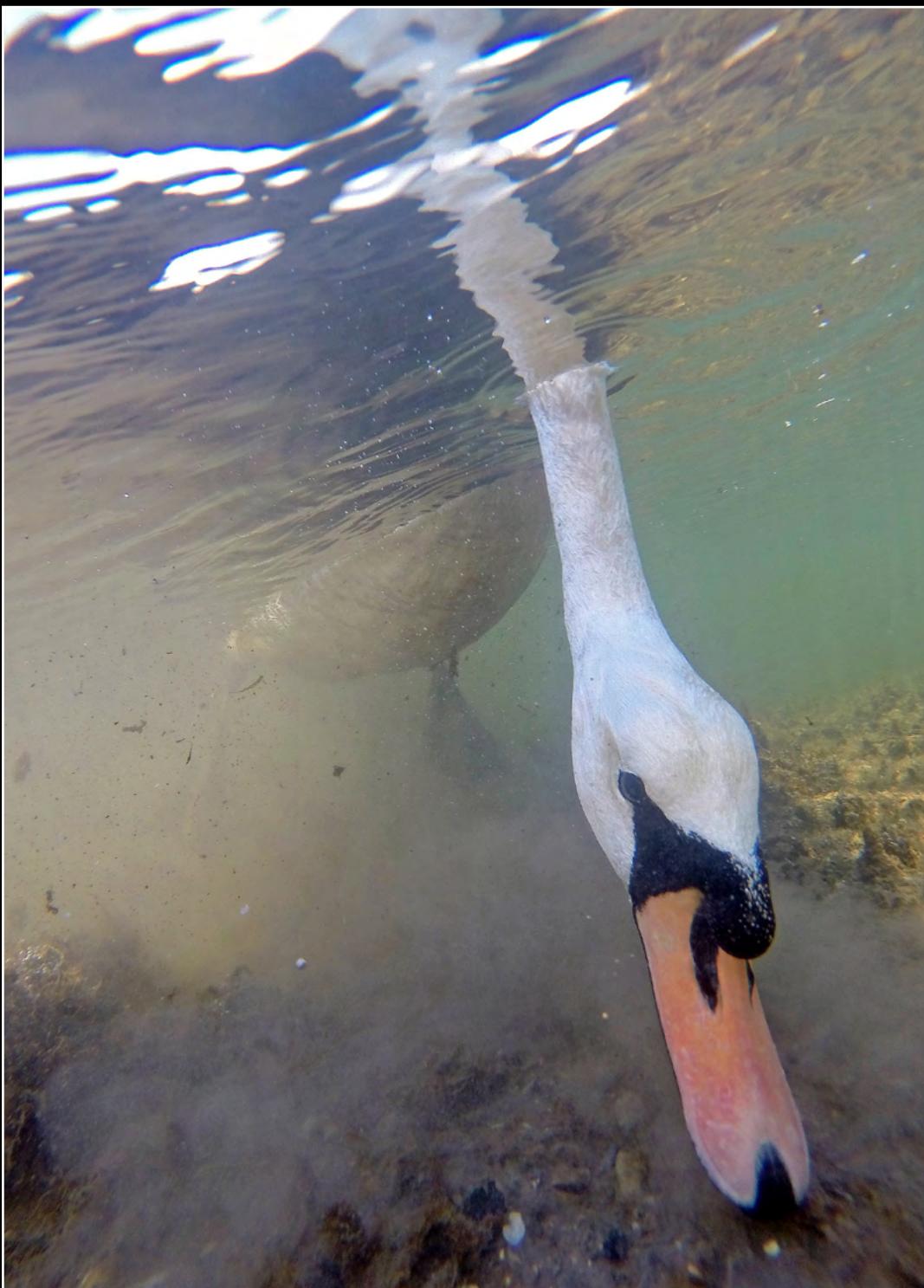
I am always trying to capture fish and with the relatively slow focusing of the S95 and no strobe it can be quite a challenge. However John Dorys move a little bit slower than some fish and this one was playing hide and seek with me for quite a while in the weed, giving me quite a few opportunities to get that elusive fish portrait . Apart from that they are such a fantastic subject with their attractive and distinctive shape, just seeing one of these amazing fish can completely make a dive.

Drawna Rock, Porthkerris, UK
Canon S95, Canon WP-DC38, On board, iso 80, F/4.0, 1/60, On board flash

Judges notes:

I thinks it's fair to say that the John Dory is one of the most charismatic fish in British water. Distinctly marked and shaped they make great subjects but they are usually uncooperative preferring to show their tail than their face. Using the kelp to frame this fish has really lifted it as an image and the built in flash has provided just the right amount of illumination.

Peter Rowlands



3rd Place

'Mute Swan feeding underwater.'
Ian Wade (UK)

Photographing mute swans underwater has been a ongoing project of mine which has lasted 5 years. I found a location where the swans were used to interaction with people, so getting close to them was made much easier. To get this shot I ended up getting very wet and had to swim out to the middle of the marina. I wanted to show the underwater world of a swan feeding on the bottom of a marina. After a lot of frustration, I managed to capture the moment I wanted!

Portishead Marina, Somerset
GoPro , HERO3+ Black Edition,
GoPro, 2.8 mm, iso 100, F2.8, 1/147, Natural Light

Judges notes:

Composition works well with the diagonal line of the Swan. The reflection also adds to this image. Simple yet effective.

Martin Edge



Highly Commended
'Cruising Predator'
Mark Launchbury (UK)

This image of a freshwater pike was taken at Dosthill Quarry a small flooded quarry in the West Midlands where the water is cold and visibility often very limited. I spotted this fish upon ascent after a deeper dive from the darker depths, I observed this fish as it effortlessly glided towards me, I positioned the camera for a head on shot but unfortunately it didn't oblige and it immediately turned around. I descended and finned beneath the fish to get ahead and approach from the opposite direction. Pausing briefly to take in my surroundings, I moved forwards very slowly to avoid disturbing both the fish and the silt below me to take this shot.

I'm pleased my patience paid off to capture an image of this top predator.

Dosthill Quarry, Tamworth, UK
Canon Powershot S120, Canon WP DC51, Inon wide angle wet lens, iso 200, F/2.8, 1/50 sec, Single Inon S2000

Judges notes:

This is an excellent fish portrait and also shows its habitat very well. The slight upward angle and fill in strobe lighting help isolate the pike from an otherwise cluttered background and the surface reflections create a nice sense of space.

Peter Rowlands



Highly Commended
'Spilt Level tadpoles'
Ian Wade (UK)

Photographing these toad tadpoles proved really tricky. I wanted to show life above and below the water level on a compact camera. It took a lot of near misses but finally I managed to capture this image showing a spilt-level environment. I head to this location every year to photograph the tadpoles as there are masses of them here wriggling and moving around.

Priddy Pools, Somerset, UK
Fujifilm , FinePix XP50, Fujifilm
housing, 5.0 mm, iso 100, f6.2, 1/280,
Natural light

Judges notes:

A very different photo and an inventive use of a compact camera to tell a story.

Alex Mustard



Highly commended
“Wolf Fish”
Paula Bailey (UK)

I love seeking out wolf fish, and as my husband and I dive St Abbs every year I am pretty good at it now, I recognise the cracks that are likely to inhabit. I love them as a subject because they have so much character, and similarl to the lobster they are a great size for a compact with a built-in flash, allowing them to compete with SLR pictures. If you approach slowly they are often quite stationary too. The older ones with the very uneven teeth are my favourite.

Black Carr, St Abbs, Scotland, UK
Canon S95, Canon WP-DC38, 6mm,
iso 100, f/2.0, 1/60, Built-in flash

Judges notes:

The simple secret with compact photography underwater is, as Paula says, go for subjects of a certain size at a certain distance so the flash can do its job. Here is a perfect example.

Peter Rowlands



Highly commended
'Lobster'
Paula Bailey (Uk)

We dive St Abbs every year. It is hard to beat the diving there as there is so much to see and if you are lucky, good visibility. Lobsters are easy to find and they are a great subject for a compact as they are often fairly stationary allowing the camera time to find a sharp focus, and the fact they are often in a crack means a compact can be an advantage over a bulkier SLR. They are also an ideal size for a compact using the built-in flash, I can get close enough to light them well. When I am struggling for a good subject on a dive I often seek out a lobster. I love their character, especially when they rush you!

St Abbs, Scotland, UK
Canon S95, WP-DC38, 6mm, iso 100,
f/2.0, 1/60, Built-in flash

Judges notes:

A quality portrait of one of the UK diving's quality subject. Claws, colour, eye contact, job done.

Alex Mustard



Commended
'Coryphella sea slug eating hydroid'
Kerry Lewis (UK)

I took this photograph during a trip to the Isles of Scilly. We were collecting habitat and species data for the Marine Conservation Society's Seasearch programme. Underwater images are a fantastic way of recording and reviewing important information, and for sharing the experience with others. I am a particular fan of nudibranchs - or sea slugs - and can easily spend a whole dive searching them out for photographs. I love the challenge of capturing small subjects, and took a few images of this beast - a *Coryphella lineata* - munching away on the *Tubularia* hydroid. The site was especially colourful, with walls of jewel anemones which provide the bright green and pink backgroundt.

Hard Lewis Rocks Isles of Scilly, UK
Olympus, TG-2, Olympus, , iso 100,
f/14, 1/100, Intova Galaxy Video Light

Judges notes:

Much is made in photographic circles of large image sensors being able to produce appealing shallow depth of field and this is true but it does not mean that small sensor compacts can't produce it either as this delicate portrait shows. Choosing the pastel coloured jewell anemones make a beautiful complimentary background.

Peter Rowlands



Commended
'John Dory - Zeus Faber'
Guy Mitchell (UK)

It's always a thrill to see one of these as it's my favourite UK fish. Such an unusual looking but beautiful fish, they only visit the shoreline for a few months of the year so sightings are few and far between. I was lucky to come across this one at my local dive site in Babbacombe and even luckier that it was swimming away from my buddy towards me so I ended up with some great close-up shots. It was an early morning dive so the background is dark and this seems to make the fish stand out really well. I have probably only seen around a dozen of these in ten years of UK diving but they never fail to impress and are great subjects for the underwater photographer.

Babbacombe, Devon, England
Sony DSC-RX100, Recsea WHS-RX100 housing, iso 125, 2.8, 1/80, Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges notes:

John Dory must be the most striking fish in British waters and this is a most striking portrait of one. Great eye contact and well chosen framing.

Peter Rowlands



Commended
'Dahlia anemone'
Charles Erb (UK)

The site where I took this image, West Harker near Eyemouth in Scotland, is home to many large and colourful Dahlia Anemones. I particularly liked this specimen which made a lovely contrast with the green water. I did not notice the shrimp which was hiding under the skirt of the anemone until after I had taken the image.

West Harker, Scotland
Canon G7X Mark II, Canon WP-DC55 housing, Built-in lens at 8.8mm, iso 200, f/11, 1/15, Twin Inon Z-240

Judges notes:

Complimentary colours and a good choice of angle being used to lift this shot perfectly.

Peter Rowlands

BLACKWATER OPEN BLUE



SCOTT TUASON

Winner

Blackwater Open Blue

by Scott Tuason

[Link](#)

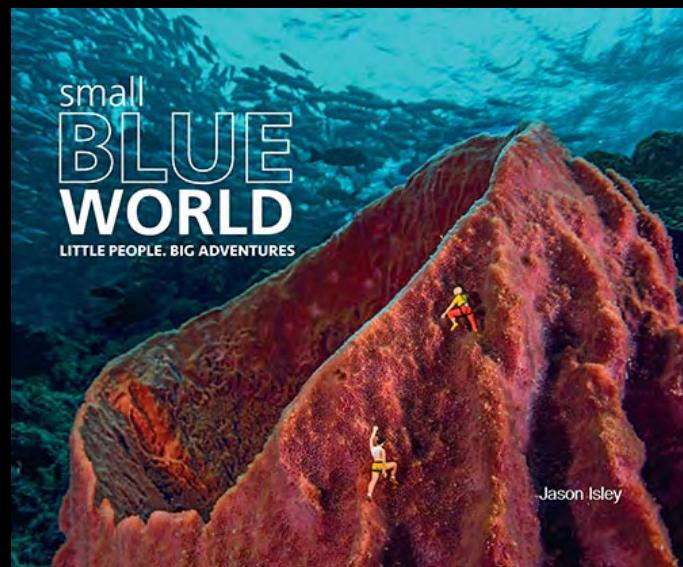
BLACKWATER OPEN BLUE pairs together a collection of photographs from open ocean diving, taken around the world either during daylight hours all the pitch black of night. From the minuscule jellyfish that drift up from the deep, to the 15 meter long humpback whale cavorting with its calf in the middle of the sea, this book captures a wide range of marine life behaviour in images that are unique fascinating and often times bizarre.

Judges Comment:

Individual blackwater images have been regularly winning macro contests for the last few years, but this is the first major collection of this exciting new branch of underwater photography. These intricate creatures, often larval stages of more familiar subjects, are delicate works of art. However, such images alone could become repetitive and a great strength of this book is that it contrasts them with daylight shots, of the great creatures of the big blue. As such it creates a comprehensive view of the open ocean - the largest ecosystem of our planet. Groundbreaking.

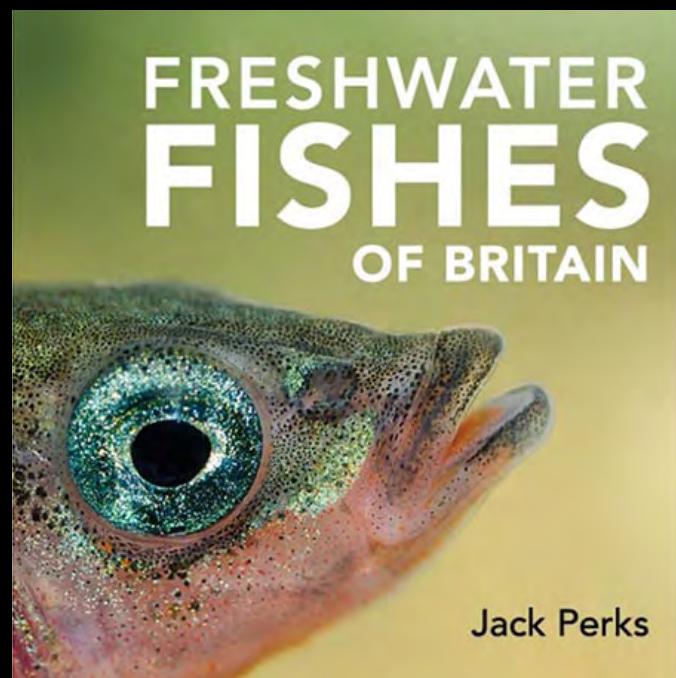
Alex Mustard

Underwater photography Book of the Year 2017



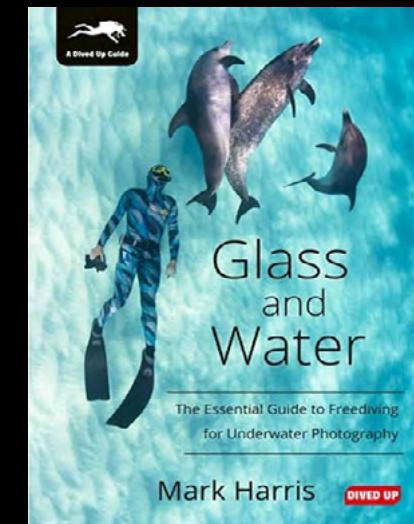
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Special mention for the most original idea.

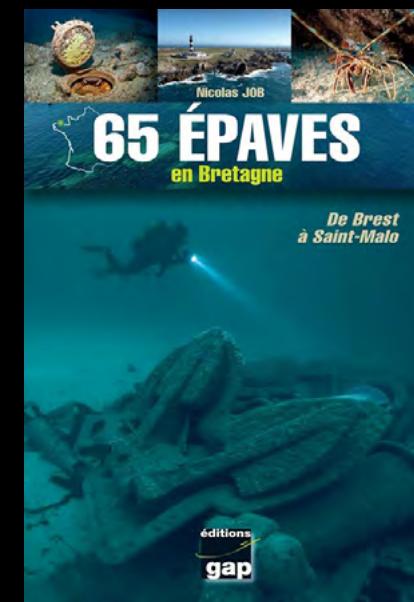


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Special mention for photographic achievement.



[Link](#)



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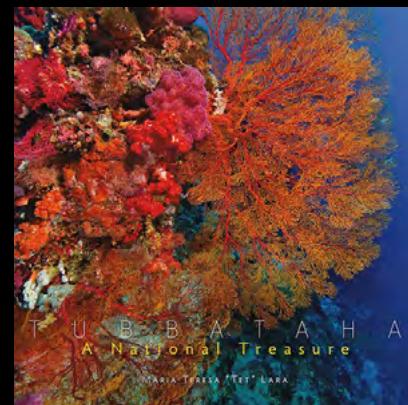


An Underwater COMPACT CAMERA Journey

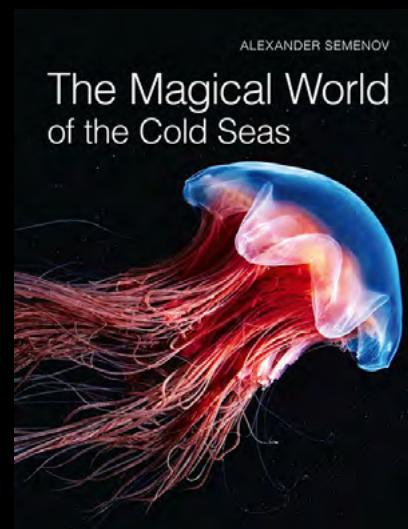
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1. Wide Angle

Winner: Ron Watkins (USA)

Runner Up: Nick Blake (UK)

Third: Edwar Herreno (Colombia)

Highly Commended: Eero Hälfors (Finland), Fabrice Guerin (France) Yannick Gouguenheim (France) Damien Mauric (UK)

Commended: Patrick Neumann (Germany), Anatoli Myshlyayev (Canada), Mario Vitalini (UK)

2. Macro

Winner: Yatwai So (Hong Kong)

Runner Up: Jenny Strömvoll (Mozambique)

Third: Dragos Dumitrescu (Romania)

Highly Commended: Fabio Freitas (Brazil), Susannah H. Snowden-Smith (Cayman Islands), Dragos Dumitrescu (Romania), John Parker (UK)

Commended: Steven Kovacs (USA), Luc Rooman (Belgium), Katherine lu (Singapore)

3. Wrecks

Winner: Csaba Tokolyi (Hungary)

Runner Up: Andrey Narchuk (Russia)

Third: Kieran Hatton (UK)

Highly Commended: Nadya Kulagina (Kazakhstan), Gianni Pecchiar (Italy), Torbjorn Gylleus (Sweden), Tanya Houppermans (USA)

Commended: Marcus Blatchford (UK), Nadya Kulagina (Kazakhstan), Steve Jones (UK)

4. Behaviour

Winner: Qing Lin (Canada)

Runner Up: Jean Tresfon (South Africa)

Third: liang fu (China)

Highly Commended: Mikko Saareila (Finland), Greg Lecoeur (France), Pasquale Vassallo (Italy), Simone Caprodossi (United Arab Emirates)

Commended: Warren Baverstock (United Arab Emirates), Luc Rooman (Belgium), Edwar Herreno (Colombia)

RESULTS: Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Gabriel Barathieu (France)

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Nick Blake (UK)

Up and Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Horacio Martinez (Argentina)

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Nicholai Georgiou (UK)

5. Portrait

Winner: Ferenc ifj. Lorincz (Hungary)

Runner Up: Guglielmo Cicerchia (Italy)

Third: Dragos Dumitrescu (Romania)

Highly Commended: Damien Mauric (UK), Liang Fu (China), David Barrio (Spain), Jeff Milisen (USA)

Commended: Greg Lecoeur (France), Francis Perez (Spain), Adriano Morettin (Italy)

6. Compact

Winner: Jenny Strömvoll (Mozambique)

Runner Up: Fabio Russo (Italy)

Third: David Alpert (UK)

Highly Commended: Nicolas Cimiterra (France), Jenny Strömvoll (Mozambique), Ferenc ifj. Lorincz (Hungary), Alexander Franz (Germany)

Commended: Jenny Strömvoll (Mozambique), Linda McKean (USA), Fabio Russo (Italy)

7. Up and Coming

Winner: Horacio Martinez (Argentina)

Runner Up: Sean Landsman (Canada)

Third: Catalin Craciun (Romania)

Highly Commended: Nicholai Georgiou (Oman), Simon Staiger (Germany), Jade Hoksbergen (UK), Dave Baker (UK)

Commended: Lena Remy (France), Patryk Pinski (UK), Christophe Lapeze (France)

8. British Waters Wide Angle

Winner: Melvin Redeker (Netherlands)

Runner Up: Richard Shucksmith (UK)

Third: Trevor Rees (UK)

Highly Commended: Steve Jones (UK), Spencer Burrows (UK), David Peake (UK), Trevor Rees (UK)

Commended: Laura Storm (UK), Cy Sullivan (UK), Ellen Cuylaerts (Cayman Islands)

9. British Waters Macro

Winner: Kirsty Andrews (UK)

Runner Up: Matt Doggett (UK)

Third: Paul Colley (UK)

Highly Commended: Robert Bailey (UK), Becky Hitchin (UK), Trevor Rees (UK), Trevor Rees (UK)

10. British Waters Compact

Winner: Simon Yates (UK)

Runner Up: Paula Bailey (UK)

Third: Ian Wade (UK)

Highly Commended: Mark Launchbury (UK), Ian Wade (UK), Paula Bailey (UK), Paula Bailey (UK)

Commended: Kerry Lewis (UK), Guy Mitchell (UK), Charles Erb (UK)

With thanks to the media outlets who showcased
our 2016 winners, including:

DIGIFOTO^{PRO} **COSMOPOLITAN** **the guardian** **Discovery CHANNEL** **The Telegraph**

Daily Mail

BBC

CNN

la Repubblica

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SRF

YAHOO!

actuphoto

GEO

The Weather Channel

ILTA-SANOMAT

DAILY EXPRESS

***The* SUNDAY POST**

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Irish Examiner

A vibrant underwater photograph of a young child swimming towards the camera. The child has dark hair and is wearing a pink and blue swimsuit. The water is a clear turquoise color, with sunlight filtering down from the surface, creating bright highlights and deep shadows. The background shows the rippling surface of the water.

Underwater Photography

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Issue 94

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