

UPY
2016

Underwater
Photographer
of the Year

The Yearbook





Underwater Photographer of the Year

The Yearbook

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Designed by
Peter Rowlands

Edited by
Alexander Mustard
Martin Edge
Peter Rowlands

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

Foreword by Professor Callum Roberts

This magnificent collection of photographs celebrates life in the sea in all its diversity, splendour and sheer mind-bending oddity. It brings together many of the most arresting images of the year: the shark filled waters of Cuba and French Polynesia, an octopus suspended in the night-time mid-Pacific as delicate as a flower, or a tight knit extended family of pilot whales at home in the blue immensity of the Mediterranean. The pictures thrill, inspire, and will kindle a yearning to explore and discover even in the most armchair-bound.

A different set of pictures might have told another story. Almost everywhere we look today, we see ourselves reflected in a most unflattering mirror. If these photographers had pointed their cameras in a different direction, they might have captured evidence of the strain that humanity is placing upon the sea: drifting plastics, whales wrapped in lost fishing gear, the surface glimmer of oil sheen, or the remains of corals blasted to rubble in pursuit of dwindling fish. This is the dark side of the sea today, and one that is scarcely avoidable even in the remotest, most lovely destinations.

While scenes of damage and human thoughtlessness are almost inescapable, there is much to rejoice. The year 2015 was momentous for marine life. Nations across the planet pledged to protect an additional two and a half million square kilometres of sea, a greater area than in any previous year... ever! At last the tide seems to be turning. The United Nations Convention on Biodiversity – to which almost every nation on the planet is a signatory – has set the target to protect 10% of the oceans by 2020. It is a bold ambition and will be hard to reach given that only about 3% of the sea is protected today. But I sense a real determination to achieve this goal that is unprecedented in my 34 years studying and campaigning to protect ocean life.

Among the many eye-catching announcements of

the last twelve months are new or promised marine protected areas around Chile's Easter Island, New Zealand's Kermadec Islands and the UK's Pitcairn group in the east Pacific Ocean. When up and running, these parks will create safe havens for some of the most remarkable and endangered wildlife in the sea. The countries involved have pledged to give them the highest level of protection, which means no fishing of any kind. Early this year the UK government also announced the creation of 23 new Marine Conservation Zones in English waters, bringing the total to 50 covering 20,200sq kms, or 10% of English seas. You could be forgiven for thinking, as many do, that we are doing a grand job, hitting the UN target four years early. If only it were so.

Politics is often called the art of compromise, but some compromises are not worth having. In meeting demands from conservation groups and international bodies to protect more ocean, politicians face strong opposition from vested interests like the fishing industry. The answer, in England and many other countries, has been to create marine protected areas but to allow fishing to carry on within them. Such a compromise will surely make everyone happy? Not when that means using methods like bottom trawling and dredging that plough up and sweep away seabed habitats and legions of non-target fish. One has to ask, what is the point of a marine protected area that grants no new protection? In fact, such areas are worse than useless, because the protection they give is an illusion, and that illusion can postpone effective action to stem declines of species and habitats. Marine protected areas fail for many reasons – lack of support, funds, enforcement, poor design – but to fail right from the beginning for lack of ambition is a dreadful place to find ourselves.

As underwater photographers you are fortunate to place yourselves in the thick of the action in some of the most extraordinary places in the sea.



You are the window through which others can view worlds that are otherwise hidden. But with privilege comes responsibility. That other story – the one about people and the sea – needs to be told too. For some species, like leatherback turtles, oceanic whitetip sharks, bluefin tuna (the list is long), those of us alive today may be the last generations who can save them. So while we should celebrate the creation of vast new ocean protected areas that rival the wonders of the Yellowstone or Serengeti, there is much still to do. We must not be fobbed off with wishy-washy, fake, do-nothing protected areas wherever vested interests oppose them. There is abundant scientific evidence that the benefits of protected areas increase with the amount of protection given. The most effective are those that exclude all fishing and other extractive activities. In conservation, as in other walks of life, there is no free lunch.

Callum Roberts

Callum Roberts is Professor of Marine Conservation at the University of York in the UK where he helps deliver a Master's degree in Marine Environmental Management, training new generations of custodians for Planet Ocean. He is author of *Ocean of Life: How our Seas are Changing* (Penguin) and *The Unnatural History of the Sea* (Island Press).

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

Chairman's Report

I hope you enjoy this inspiring feast of imagery as much as we did during the judging. It is a pleasure and a privilege to sit down with Peter and Martin and spend two days devouring, digesting and cogitating on the entries. We all have different tastes, which means that UPY will always represent most genres of underwater photography, but we are united by an insatiable enthusiasm for great underwater imagery and respectful of each other's opinions.

Selecting the winners is enjoyable, but also pressured. We're all well aware that nobody's work is judged as meticulously as the judges! A thorough judging process will always be a central part of UPY's DNA. Key is bringing all the judges together in one room, all looking at and discussing the images face to face over two days. Body language, arm waving, facial expressions and grunts often tell you as much what another judge really thinks of an image, than their descriptions! Not that any of us are shy about verbalising our praise, and we hope that you find the judges' commentary on the images in this Yearbook valuable feedback on what allowed these stunning shots to rise to the top of a very strong field.

The Underwater Photographer of the Year came out of a desire to create the contest that underwater photographers really deserve. Our ethos

encompasses proper judging, fair entry prices and international publicity for our winners. 2016 saw the number of entries in the competition rise from 2500 to 3500, as photographers from 54 different countries submitted their best images hoping for success. I have been asked to judge most of the major contests in underwater photography and know how significant these numbers are. We take this rise in entries as a vote of confidence, but UPY is far from the finished article. For our third year we hope to evolve the competition. And since this is a contest for you, please get in touch if you have ideas and suggestions for the future

info@upylondon.com

although please try and think more broadly than a category that is tailored so only you can win it!

Which brings me to the question I am asked the most about: "how can I win?". I could fill many pages on the subject, but it boils down to a simple do and don't. Do enter images that impress and surprise the judges. Outstanding images need to stand out from a very strong field. Don't enter images that we'll reject. Almost all underwater photography competitions do not want to promote hands on subject manipulation.

Common examples are photos of creatures clearly placed on unnatural backgrounds or benthic creatures lifted



into the water column. Underwater photography has the power to make the public care about the aquatic side of our planet, but this can only happen when the right type of images are held up as the best of our world.

Alexander Mustard
Chair of the Jury
February 2016



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Judge's comments

My primary role in the world of underwater photography, first and foremost, is that of an educator and if I look back to my early years in the late 70s, I realise it always has been. So when I'm asked for a second time to become involved with an underwater photographic competition as prestigious as UPY and on 'home soil' I am both honored, delighted and a little edgy (No pun intended). Then comes the judging procedure where I sit down between my mentor in my early days, Peter Rowlands and my good friend and world-class photographer Alex Mustard. I know I will have to 'fight my corner', I know I must be able to justify every opinion (and I have many) that comes out of my mouth.

We begin the judging procedure, we agree, we disagree, we concede, we compromise, we change our minds, we change them back, we sleep on our decisions and next morning we start all over again. I find so often that an image I consider average has somehow grown wings and improved over night. Another I was mad about yesterday has somehow declined. We all have different and varied opinions on what works and what doesn't but somehow, towards the latter stages of judging our 'love's' and 'likes' coincide and we begin to concur. Now it's all a matter of placing. 1st, 2nd 3rd, with Highly Commended. By this time in the judging process we have long left behind obvious photo faults such as over processing, cluttered backgrounds, weak compositions, flash faults etc.

I always look for that 'wow factor' feeling still being in there after many hours of judging, and you know what? It often is! Truly great images last a long time and your eye, heart and mind are drawn to them long after the show is over.

Finally, my advice is to study the comments from all the winners and H/C's. Notice the technical details such as aperture, shutter speed, ISO and lens choice. Envisage how many frames you would have taken to get that particular image. Last but not least, study the 'judges comments' in this UPY Yearbook and learn from the images you see before you.



Martin Edge

In the music business the second album is always seen as the most important in a band's career. The overwhelming success of their groundbreaking debut album has to be followed with something equally amazing. I am really delighted to report that 'your' second year UPY entries have more than surpassed last year both in numerical and consistent quality terms. You blew us away last year and this year you blew our visual minds.

If ever there was a testament as to the healthy state of underwater photography worldwide, this 2016 Yearbook is the showcase and, for me, the most exciting part is that I suspect the majority of the images in here, and the thousands of entries, were taken in the last 12 months. If this trend continues we will all be part of an annual 'state of the nation' event.

Judging such a prestigious competition is both an honour and a responsibility in equal measure. We three judges have far too many years of uw photography experience between us; years which have moulded our visual tastes without introducing inflexibility for the latest equipment and techniques; years which, despite their increasing numbers, never cease to provide genuine excitement before viewing each year's UPY entries.

As a result of the above I would like to say 'Thank you' to all those who entered this year but a more focussed (pun intended) 'Thank you' to all those who entered but whose images are not in this Yearbook. The overall standard of entries this year was a big notch higher than last and the increased number of entries made it, quite literally, a fierce competition to judge but that is the very nature of a successful competition.

The other point to make to those whose images are not in this Yearbook is that images are always, and will always be, subjective. Your work was judged by just three people. Put your same work in front of another three experienced underwater photographers and there would almost certainly be a different order; that's the nature of competitions.

I hope this Yearbook will serve as a reference work and that it will inspire you to produce even greater images for next year.



Peter Rowlands

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016



Winner
'Gold'
Davide Lopresti (Italy)

Over the years seahorses have been drastically reduced in the Mediterranean sea, only in the last period was there a significant restocking thanks to an awareness campaign of the sea and its preservation, bounding off limits areas for fishing, where even more vulnerable and delicate creatures like sea horses can be free to recreate.

For this shot in particular, I used a long time exposure, to give dynamism to the image, combining the ambient light with artificial light with the aid of a snoot, freezing my main subject from the rest of the scene giving a sense of grace and strength at the same time

Sistiana Trieste, Italy
Nikon D600. Nimar housing, 105 macro
Nikkor 2.8 vr. iso200. F18 1/8 sec. Inon Z240
with Retra snoot

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

Winner
'Catshark Supernova'
Dan Bolt (UK)

Just off a headland in this beautiful bay is a reef system favoured as a laying ground for the eggs, or 'mermaids purse' of the smallspotted catshark (*Scyliorhinus canicula*).

The day I chose to visit the reef for a snorkel I came across many egg cases wrapped tightly into the weed. Positioning my strobe carefully took some time but the resulting image, with the low-visibility providing a celestial-like quality, shows the hidden beauty within this system of reproduction.

Thurlestone, Devon

Olympus E-PL5, Olympus PT-EP10 housing, Olympus 9-18mm. iso200. f/10, 1/250 sec. Sea & Sea YS-D1 & Snoot





Up and coming Underwater Photographer of the year Worldwide 2016

Winner
'Three Pillars'
Pier Mane (South Africa)

Weary of shooting sharks head-on, and keen to avoid divers bubbles in my shot, I decided to turn away from the peak action and the crowds it attracts. I wanted sun rays, dramatic foreground, background perspective, and - the cherry on top - to capture the 'master of the house' in all of its mystique.

I would like to dedicate my first winning shot to my father, for his introduction to photography, and to my mother for passing on her resilient attitude.

Olympus, EM-1 Micro 4/3 Mirrorless,
M.Zuiko Digital ED 9-18mm f4.0-5.6 @
9mm, Nauticam NA-EM1, iso 400, f/9,
1/250, 2 x YSD1

Up and coming British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

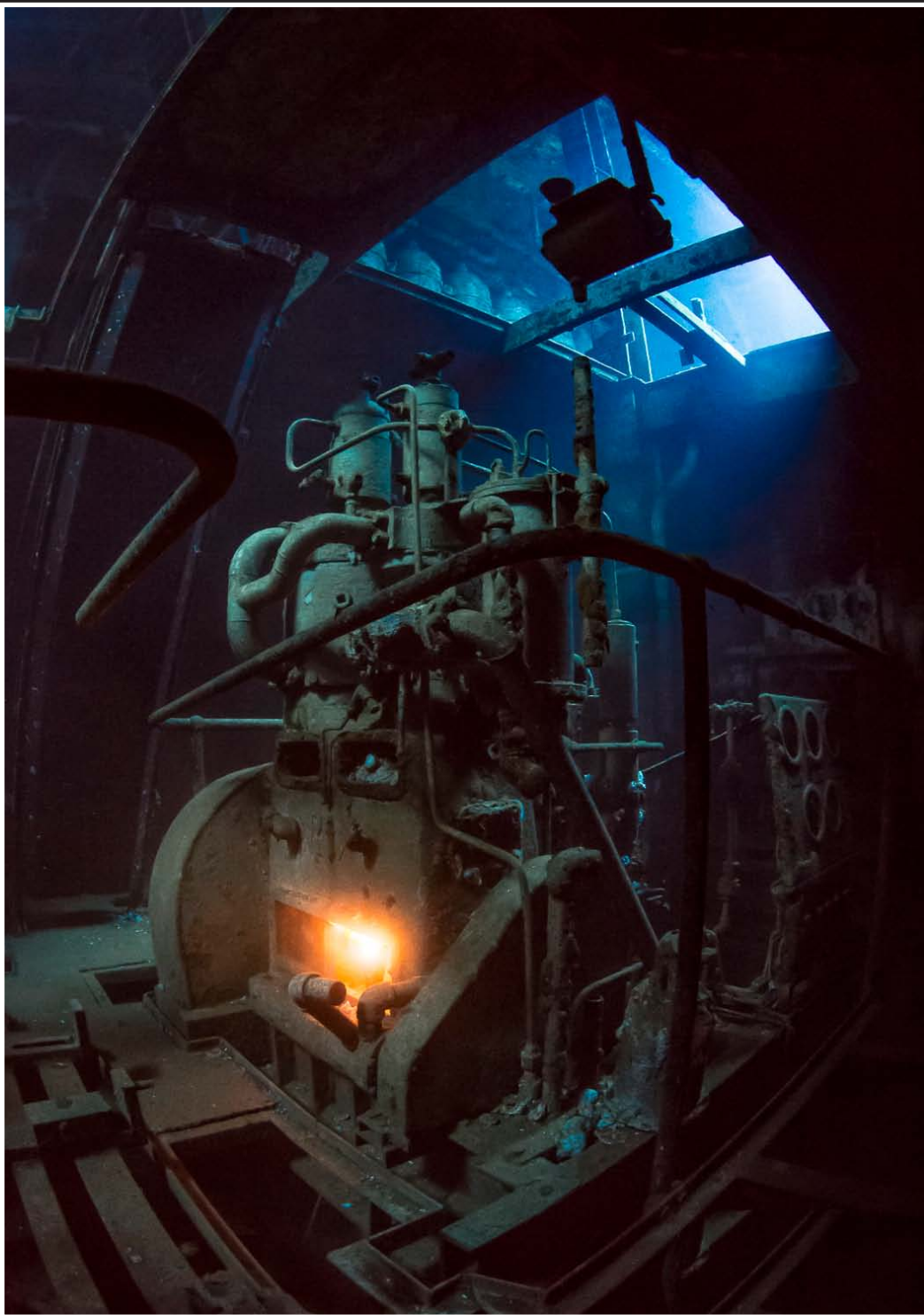
Winner

'Fired up and "almost" ready to go'
Marty Engels Dunmore (UK)

Today it isn't easy to produce a unique image of a well loved wreck like the USS Kittiwake and I had done a lot of research before I dove the wreck to see what others have photographed before. In 18m depth of water I found this wonderful old machine, in fact there are two of these engines positioned opposite to each other, I am personally fascinated by old machines, as the restoration of classic cars is my profession. The image was produced without any strobes, but with aid of my dive torch, which I positioned within the engine to give an extra focal point.

USS Kittiwake, Grand Cayman

Nikon D4s, Nauticam housing, Nikon
16mm. iso5000. f9, 1/20 sec. Natural Light.





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1) International Wide Angle

Winner

'Underwater fisherman'

Mike Korostelev (Russia)

I constructed a cage to photograph a bear from a close distance. I got into the cage in the water and waited for a bear to come close.

Bears fish in the river. They sit down, put their head under water and pause, looking for fish. Once the fish starts to ignore them and come close, they make a crucial lunge and catch the fish with their paws, or teeth.

This bear put his head under the water for about 20 seconds before he attacked the fish. Then he repeated the action.

This bear came to this place in the river several times a day. Each time he caught about 5 fish and then went for a rest on the nearby beach.

Kuril Lake (Kamchatka), Russia

Canon 5D Mark II. Ikelite housing,
Canon 8-15. iso500. f/7.1, 1/800 sec.

Judges notes:

This unforgettable image is far more than an amazing portrait of a wild brown bear underwater. It is a precisely timed behavioural portrait, capturing the peak of the action as the bear leaps for a meal and swishes his claw through the stones to snag his food. It is a great composition, taken in a split second in frigid waters of Kamchatka.

Alex Mustard



Judges notes:

This image was an immediate winner for me as soon as I saw it. An outstanding example of wide-angle macro photography that I have seen for some time. The author's perspective composition of all elements are so well thought out. Notice how the curve of Snell's Window wraps around the nudibranch which emphasises the curve of 'snell' at the bottom of the frame. The tree leads the eye through the surface and up towards the sky. We have golden tones of sunset towards the bottom which the author had the foresight to use to his advantage. The trees add their own depth to the image but in no way obstruct the perceived use of depth perspective from middle right of the frame, diagonally through Snell towards the colourful blue sky at top left. One of my favourites from the entire competition.

1) International Wide Angle

Runner up

'Mangrove sunset'

Fabio Galbiati (Italy)

In early August 2015 I was in Bangka island, Sulawesi. The first days the weather was bad and prevented us from going out with the boat to dive.

The situation was really boring and we wanted to go into the water, why not take advantage of the pristine mangrove nearby? We decided to spend some hours in these murky waters.

It was a big surprise, many subjects everywhere and the light effects produced by the sun and mangroves were very special.

I decided to make a shot at sunset, so we went there in the afternoon and after a long search in the outermost part I found the right root with this nudibranch (*Jorunna funebris*) intent to feed.

Did some tests in framing and attempts to restrict the backscatter of these murky waters and I only had to wait until the sun did his duty and.... press the shutter!

Bangka island, North Sulawesi

Olympus OMD-EM5 MK1. Nauticam NA-EM5 + Nauticam 3.5 minidome port, Panasonic 8mm f3.5 fisheye. iso200. f8.0, 1/80 sec. Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2

Martin Edge

1) International Wide Angle

3rd place
'Lagoon'
Greg Lecoeur (France)

French Polynesia is an amazing place for lovers of Nature. In the lagoon of Moorea, I was snorkeling with many marine life especially the black tip sharks and the topography of the mountain inspired me to realize this half and half photo.

Moorea, French Polynesia
Nikon D7200, Nauticam NA-D7200.
Tokina 10-17mm. iso100. f/13, 1/250 sec. 2x
Ikelite DS160 strobes.



Judge's notes:

If ever there was an image that captured 'excitement' it is this perfect combination of frozen movement, split level scene setting and great composition. The reflected surface lighting on the sharks and the sand lifts it to another level.

Peter Rowlands



1) International Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Green Turtle with remora fish'
Gabriel Barathieu (France)

Green turtles on the reef flat to the beach N'Gouja spend much of their time feeding because this food is very energising. They need a large quantity to meet their needs.

Mayotte Island , French island, Indian Ocean.

Canon 5DS. Subal housing, Canon 14 mm, f2,8 II. iso200. f9, 1/200 sec Two strobe subtronic nova

Special judges comments:

I love this image. It's all about shape and colour for me. Shape comes in the form circles within circles within circles. Notice the curve of Snell towards the bottom of the frame and the contrast between the black and blue circles of colour. Look through the window at the circle of fluffy white clouds. Now go to the turtle and the circular shapes. The middle placement of the turtle is so balanced within the frame and to top it off the exposure on the turtles underbelly is perfect. Great image.

Martin Edge



1) International Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Pilot whales'
Greg Lecoeur (France)

During a day sailing in the Mediterranean sea, I was very lucky to find a big pod of Pilot whales that tolerated me in the blue water. They were turning around me, it was an amazing experience and a great opportunity to photograph them.

Nikon D7000. Nauticam NA-D7000.
Tokina 10-17mm. iso320. f/9, 1/160 sec.
Natural light

Judge's special comment:

Greg's 'back-story' of this image is short and to the point but I'd like to highlight this shot as a personal favourite because it is a perfectly timed portrait of this pod and, almost without exception, there is significant eye contact. The watched watching the watcher; wary inquisitiveness and they couldn't have arranged themselves more perfectly. I'd love to have experienced the encounter live but this shot is the next best thing. That's what a good image can do.

Peter Rowlands



1) International Wide Angle

Highly commended

'Swim'

Davide Lopresti (Italy)

I took this picture during the Swim the island, a competition of swimming in the sea, where contestants compete over a distance of 6 kilometers, making a circle around the island of Bergeggi in Liguria

The photo was taken during the start, when the group is still compact and have not yet outlined the balance of the race

Bergeggi, Italy

Nikon D600, Nimar housing, Sigma 15 mm fish eye. iso200. F5, 1/250 sec. Inon Z240 strobe

Judge's special comment:

There is tremendous energy in this image. The white water generated by the swimmers looks like a breaking wave giving power to the composition. The toned processing enhances the atmosphere and the composition captures the perfect moment from a potentially chaotic scene.

Alex Mustard



1) International Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Beach guardians'
Alejandro Prieto (Mexico)

Returning from a dive with bull sharks I saw a beautiful flock of seagulls flying very low over a crowded beach. These white creatures are comfortable with human presence, they usually fly low and gently over the people, looking for food; this behavior allowed me to try to shoot them from beneath the water. I took me many times visiting the area and thousands of photos before getting it. With this photograph I want to show that ordinary subjects can become extraordinary depending on the perspective you see them.

Playa Del Carmen, Mexico
Canon 5D MK II, Subal housing,
Sigma 15 MM. iso400. f13, 1/500. Sea & Sea
YS D1

Judge's special comment:

One of the great advantages of shooting up through the surface of water is that it can transform the everyday into an abstract and impressionistic vision. Alejandro had the presence of mind to not chase the standard image, but to produce a much more beautiful and artistic image.

Alex Mustard



1) International Wide Angle

Commended

'Seven'

Mathieu Foulquié (France)

I'm often asked if it is just a photomontage ... Nothing easier with today's photo editing tools but there were really 7 Caribbean reef sharks in the same frame, this day in January, 2014

In the marine sanctuary of Gardens of the Queen in Cuba, sharks follow the divers for the whole dive and up to surface where they swim in large numbers under the boat

I moved away just slightly, to keep divers out of the frame and only have sharks swimming in open water. Rays of light and clear water did the rest.

Gardens of the Queen , Cuba

Nikon D3X, Seacam silver D3,
10.5mm. iso320. f/11, 1/100. Seacam 150D
strobe

Judge's special comment:

With shark populations under pressure or wiped out in so many places, a photo showing one shark in beautiful beams of light would be a treasure. Seven is simply remarkable, especially when there is almost no overlap in the composition. A celebration of composition and our seas the way that they should be.

Alex Mustard



1) International Wide Angle

Commended

'Blue ballet'

Damien Mauric (UK)

I like to create images showing marine life in motion and Raja Ampat is probably the best place on earth for creating this type of image. Every reef, every wall, every piece of rock is carpeted of an abundance of marine life while there is always something happening in the blue. .

While I was exploring one of the underwater garden of Pulau Wayilbatan, I noticed this large and beautiful fiery-red gorgonian. Coming out of nowhere a huge school silversides started a beautiful choreography in front of my camera..

What a perfect moment for the passionate diver that I am to witness this dance orchestrated by larger pelagic fishes hunting in the background. I couldn't miss the opportunity to capture the elegance of this underwater ballet.

Secret Garden, Pulau Wayilbatan.

Nikon D7200. Aquatica AD7200

housing, Nikon 10.5mm. iso200. F9, 1/160.2 x Ikelite DS 160. Housing.

Judge's Special Comment:

This is such a simple image of complementary colours and anchovy action. The processing is superb and a clever compositional crop balances all the elements

Martin Edge



1) International Wide Angle

Commended

'Icebreaker'

Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

We planned to dive in April in Greenland to specifically photograph icebergs. In the spring visibility is very good because there is less melt water out at sea and the algal bloom starts a few weeks later. The tip of the 90% of the iceberg, which is underwater, could already be seen from the surface. The water is about -2° Celsius, but at the sight of the ice during the dive, the icy temperature was quickly forgotten. The structure of this giant shimmers blue-greenish in the strong sunlight. In this fantastic visibility a safety line is no longer necessary, because at any time the boat can be seen from the depths, which follows the divers between the ice floes on the surface.

Tasiilaq, East Greenland.

Canon 5D Mark II. SEACAM silver housing. Lens: Canon 8-15mm Fisheye.ISO: iso250.F8.1/100.Lighting used: 2x SEACAM Seaflash 150D.

Judge's special comment:

Most under ice images show a thin surface layer of ice, not a mighty iceberg. Tobias shows us what lies beneath, revealing the scale of the submerged part of the berg. The detail of the textures on the iceberg and the placement of the diver complete an enticing composition.

Alex Mustard

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2) International Macro

Winner

'Gold'

Davide Lopresti (Italy)

Over the years seahorses have been drastically reduced in the Mediterranean sea, only in the last period was there a significant restocking thanks to an awareness campaign of the sea and its preservation, bounding off limits areas for fishing, where even more vulnerable and delicate creatures like sea horses can be free to recreate.

For this shot in particular, I used a long time exposure, to give dynamism to the image, combining the ambient light with artificial light with the aid of a snoot, freezing my main subject from the rest of the scene giving a sense of grace and strength at the same time

Sistiana Trieste, Italy

Nikon D600. Nimar housing, 105 macro Nikkor 2.8 vr. iso200. F18 1/8 sec. Inon Z240 with Retra snoot



Judges notes:

Another one of my favourites from the entire competition. I see many motion blur images but this one has been shot to perfection. A simple composition with a balanced amputation of muted colour at bottom right of the frame. Blue surrounds the entire four corners which helps to keep the eye of the viewer firmly focused on the detail of the seahorse. The eye cannot escape the frame, it continues to rotate in circles. Complementary colours of blue and yellow are entirely responsible for the 'wow factor' which this image had on me when I first viewed it.

Martin Edge

2) International Macro

Runner up

'Pelagic Octopus at Night'

Helen Brierley (USA)

Suspended in the inky blackness of the open ocean where the water is thousands of feet deep, a myriad of weird and wonderful creatures came into view in the narrow focus light beam. They were making their nightly journey towards the surface to feed, before heading back down to the depths in time to escape the light of another day. Using our lights to help locate their prey, we were truly in another world, and we did not want to ever leave. I was able to take several shots of this tiny octopus as he drifted by, but he disappeared again into the darkness all too soon.

Kona, offshore Hawaii

Nikon D800, Nauticam housing,

Sigma 70mm. iso320. f/11, 1/125. Dual Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges notes:

Helen definitely took on one of macro photography's big challenges to produce this eye-catching image. It is not easy to shoot macro portraits of tiny, semi-transparent critters while suspended in the darkness of inner-space: an open ocean black water dive. Capturing such a pleasing composition of such an attractive species in these conditions is a great achievement. -

Alex Mustard



2) International Macro

3rd place
'The passenger'
Gianni Colucci (Italy)

During a night dive at around midnight with a full moon, I found this pair of sea horses (*Hippocampus guttulatus*), who swam in the shallows holding each other by the tail. The scene that I photographed was something majestic, a magic only enhanced by the beauty of the site and the evening's full moon.

Taranto - Ionian sea, Italy
Nikon D800e, Subal housing, 105
Nikon. two Ikelite DS 160 strobes. 1/125 @
f/22. ISO 100



Judges notes:

Individual seahorses already have a mythical visual appeal. Cute, vulnerable and delicate, they have grace and weirdness in equal measures. Capture two entwined, simply lit on a beautifully black, eye concentrating background and you have a shot that went straight to the winners enclosure.

Peter Rowlands



2) International Macro

Highly commended

‘Timeless Moment’

Behnaz Afsahi (Canada)

Jellyfish Lake was one of the highlights of my trip to Palau. SCUBA diving is not allowed in this lake, so I was free diving when I took this photo. The thousands of jellyfish in this lake are simply breathtaking to behold, but made it challenging to find one in isolation. With the sunlight above me I finally managed to capture this single jellyfish, while the rays of light passing down through the water illuminated the multitude of its brethren, creating the backdrop I was trying to achieve.

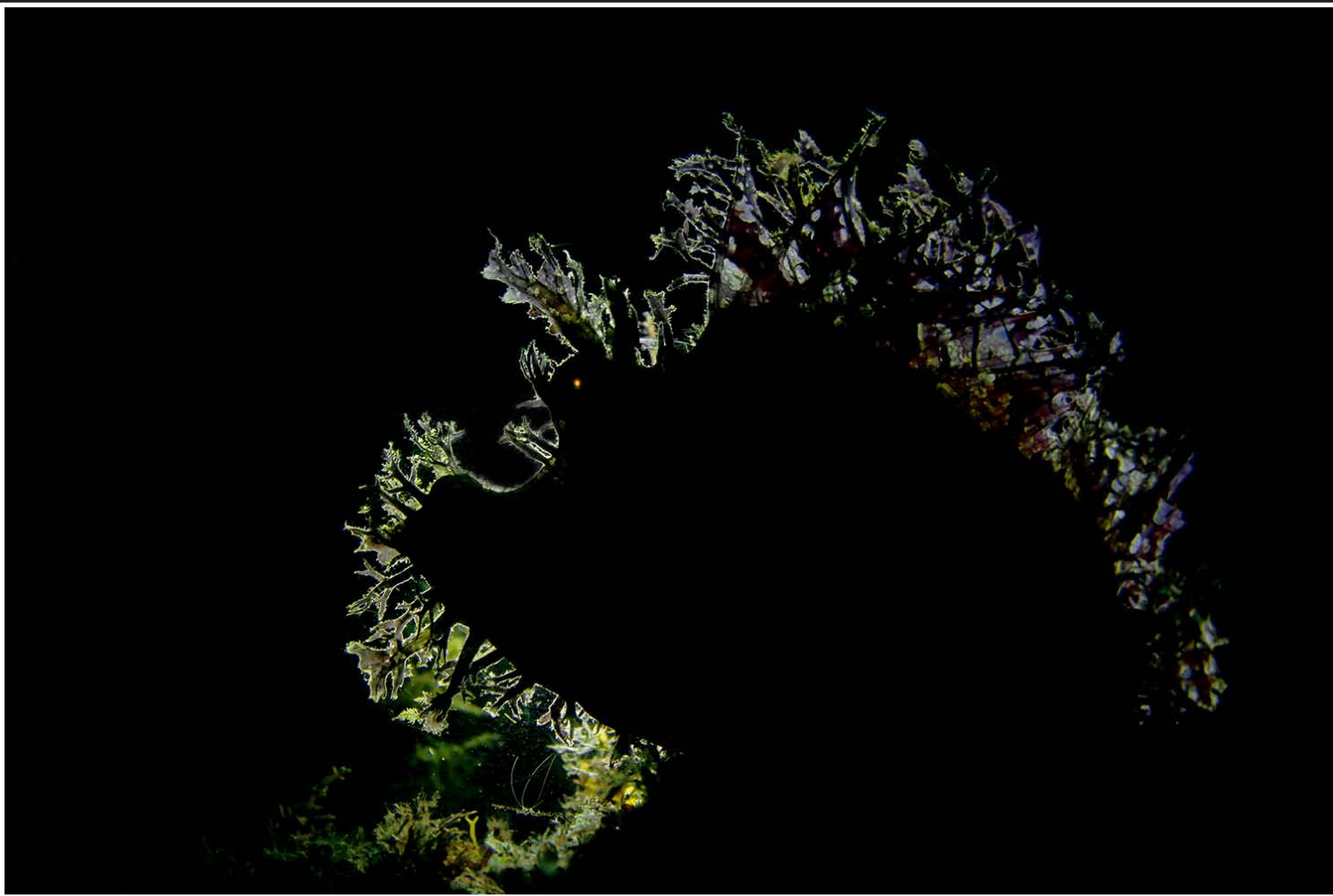
Jellyfish Lake, Palau

Canon G15, Canon WP-DC48 housing, Integrated Lens, iso 80, f/1.8, 1/250, Natural light

Judge’s special comment:

At first glance a simple image, taken with very simple photographic equipment. But it is a photo that proves that the photographer’s eye is always the most essential piece of equipment. Behnaz’s close up photo demonstrates how the best underwater photos are about subject and background.

Alex Mustard



2) International Macro

Highly commended
'Lace Model'
Qing Lin (Canada)

This weedy scorpion fish was surrounded by many photographers. When it was my turn, I only had 4 minutes left before needing to ascend, so I took several shots in a hurry. I was disappointed and kept thinking about how beautiful it looked so I decided to go back the next day. The characteristic of this fish is her beautiful lace so I thought backlighting would emphasize its details.

I placed a light on the right behind the fish, facing left front and took several shots. While I was adjusting the settings on the camera, she suddenly turned about 80 degrees as can be seen in the picture. The angle, light and position were perfect. Click! What a smart fish, she definitely knows how to strike a pose.

Canon, EOS 5D MarkII, Sea And Sea MDX-housing, EF 100mm Macro/F2.8, iso 200, F16, 1/125, RGBBlue BM6200G

Judge's special comment:

The modest photographer credits the fish with creating this photo! Most great photos are the result of good planning, preparation and a slice of luck. As golfer Gary Player is credited with saying "the more I practice, the luckier I get".

Alex Mustard

2) International Macro

Highly commended

'Black water'

Greg Lecoœur (France)

I captured this image during a night dive in black water. 5 miles off shore of Big island, I was drifting in the current to witness the biggest migration in the world. Every night, the zooplankton migrates from the deep water to the surface to feed. Among the creatures of darkness, this larva lobster is dragging pelagic jellyfish to eat them and to use their protection.

Kona, Hawaii

Nikon D7000, Nikon 60mm,

Nauticam NA-D7000, iso 100, f/11, 1/250, 2x
Ikelite DS160

Judge's special comment:

Almost every marine species spends the first part of its life adrift in the plankton. Black water diving is starting to reveal these secret lives in spell-bindingly beautiful images, like Greg's photo here.

Alex Mustard





2) International Macro

Highly commended

'Lightning'

Adriano Morettin (Italy)

This photo was made with the technique of double exposure performed directly in the camera without changing the lens and making two consecutive shots. The first shot is done on the main subject with the help of a snoot applied on the flash to isolate the subject against a dark background and the second shot is made to the sun taken from below the surface.

The difficulty lies in mixing the two shots to make it appear that it is a single shot, without superimposing the two images and creating a pleasant scene and realistic.

The Mediterranean shrimp *Periclimenes amethysteus* is one of my favorite subjects for the magnificent colors of his livery and so it is very suitable for pictures taken with the double exposure.

Among the thousands of shots I've done of this kind of shrimp I think this is one of those most successful for the particular form of the sun in the background that looks like a flash of lightning.

Gulf of Rijeka, Northern Adriatic Sea
Nikon D800E, Nikon 105 micro,
Seacam, iso 100, f/22, 1/250, Seacam 150 with
Retra LSD snoot



2) International Macro

Commended
'Barbie Nemo'
Marc Casanovas Felix (Spain)

Sometimes there are animals that transmit their appearance or something that humanizes their character

The head of this Starry Weever (*Trachinus Radiatus*), with his mouth and his eyes conveys an appearance of seriousness, of the aggressiveness of a predator waiting, patiently for prey to approach.

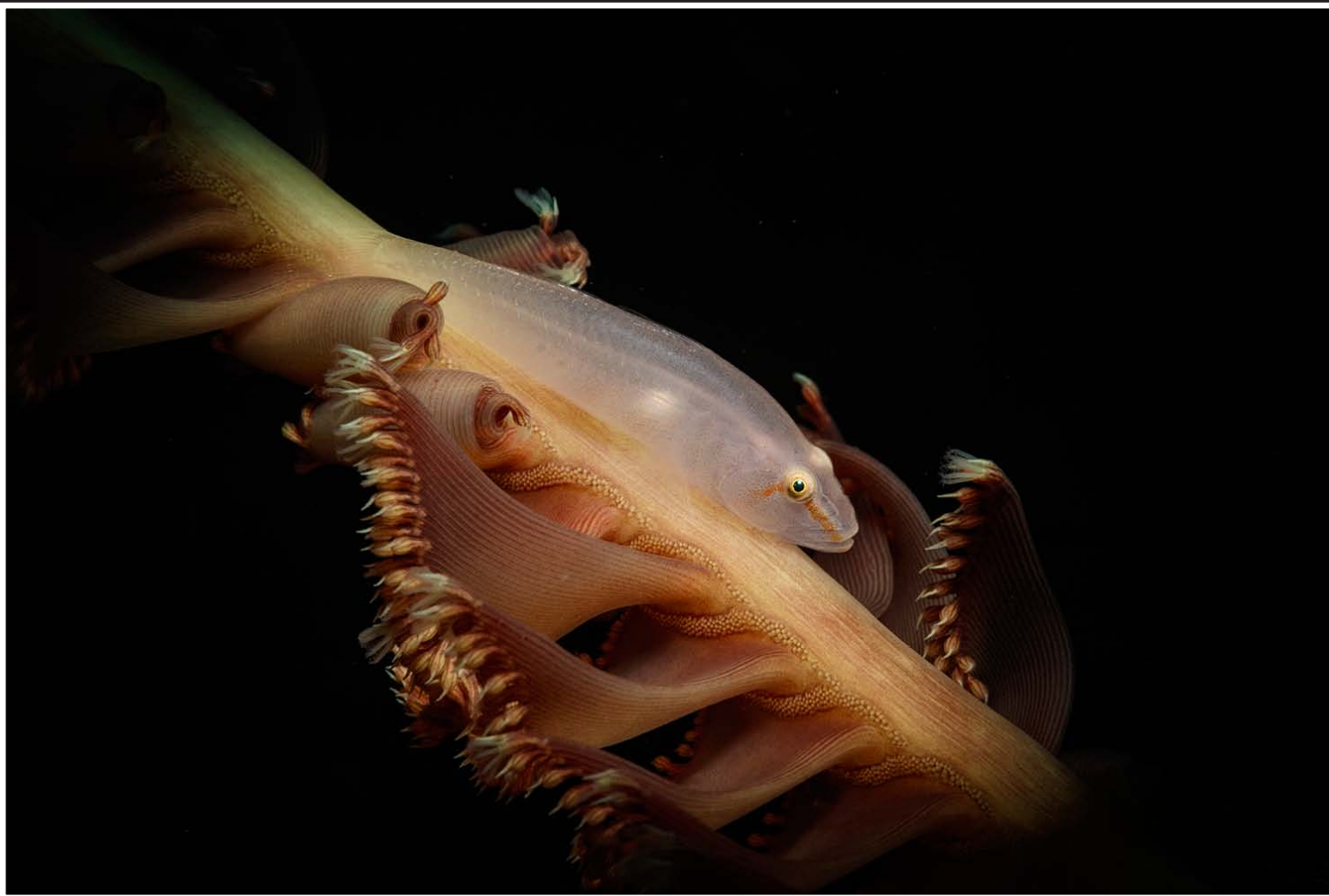
This was a photograph that I had in my head and after several attempts I got the shot I wanted.

Tossa de Mar , Spain
Nikon D7100, Nikon 105mm 2.8 VR,
Nauticam NA-D7100, iso 100, f/18, 1/320,
Sea & Sea YS-D1 and snoot

Judge's special comment:

I remember this shot having an immediate appeal. It's a powerful portrait of a striking animal aided by selective lighting and perfect symmetry. The problem is that, when judging competitions, you look at the same image several times and the next time I saw it, it impressed less and so on. That doesn't make it a poor shot. Far from it. It's just that to be in the top three your shot must have that little (or large) something which improves with viewing and has the judge wanting to see it again.

Peter Rowlands



2) International Macro

Commended

'Goby on a Sea Pen'

Ross Gudgeon (Australia)

Gobies on sea pens and whip corals are a very common subject for macro photography and I'm always trying to come up with a new way of shooting them. I have had many attempts to get a shot like this with the snooted strobe either mounted on camera or off camera on a tripod but could never get the positioning of the narrow beam just right while trying to manage the camera as well. I was finally able to get the shot I wanted by using our dive guide to position the snoot where I wanted it leaving me free to concentrate on getting the shot.

Anilao, Philippines

Canon, 7D MkII, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 Macro USM, Nauticam NA-7DMKII, iso 200, f/16, 1/250, Single Inon Z240 with Snoot (Retra Pro LSD)

Judge's special comment

This image is an excellent example of subtle snoot lighting. So often with a snoot the result can be harsh and contrasty but this image is so delicate and it's not easy to see the 'hand of the snoot' which is how it should be. It's gradual and delicate and fades away softly which again, is how it should be. This example inspires me to take more time and care with my own attempts.

Martin Edge



2) International Macro

Commended

'Spotlight'

Matteo Visconti (Italy)

Harlequin Shrimp (*Hymenocera picta*) are one of my favourite critters to shoot because their color and shape. They are quite common in Seraya Secret; often in pairs eating starfish. Seraya Secret is, in my humble experience, one of the three best muck dive sites along with Anilao (Philippines) and Lembeh (Indonesia).

I wanted to shoot this shrimp in a different way. I love the snoot effect and most of my macro pictures are taken with it so I tried a different point of view shooting it from its side and using a snoot allowed me to set it apart from the background.

Seraya Secret, Indonesia

Canon, 5D mkII, Canon 100 macro
f/2.8, Isotta housing, iso 320, f/29, 1/80,
sea&sea i10 alpha

Judge's special comment:

I was in the minority with this one but I'm going to use my privilege to highlight it! I will admit I find these creatures beautifully fascinating so they hit my soft spot, especially when they are well lit with an isolating snoot. Most photographers try and shoot them as they dine on a contrastingly red starfish which is fine but this shot captures how exquisite and delicate they are on their own. Sometimes other judges don't see it my way!

Peter Rowlands

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3) International Wrecks

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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) International Wrecks

Winner

'A Family Affair'

Thomas Heckmann (Germany)

I was unable to descend because I had to take care of Maja, my five year old daughter who is unable to snorkel by herself. The only possibility was a shot from the surface under these circumstances. It was too rough for a normal over/under shot. I decided to try a wave & wreck shot with the island of Curacao in the background while swimming together with my daughter. I needed several tries to compose the wreck, the wave and the island in one shot. But at the end I got this real over/under shot with a total other view of the famous wreck.

Tugboat, Curacao

Nikon, D800E, Sigma fisheye 15 mm
2,8, Seacam Silver D800, iso 400, f/16, 1/160

Judges notes:

Shots like this don't just happen. They are the result of planning peppered with good luck. That it was achieved whilst snorkeling is very impressive and the choice of the curved split level rather than the traditional horizontal creates a very dynamic image which leaves the viewer in no doubt. Winning images must have everything right and then an ace up their sleeve to make them rise above the competition. This, to my mind, is a perfect example.

Peter Rowlands





3) International Wrecks

Runner up
'Truck Parking'
Anders Nyberg (Sweden)

I really like the SS Thistlegorm and can not get enough of this beautiful wreck. What makes the wreck so unique is the great opportunity to create stunning wreck images, especially if you add one or more off camera strobes to create more depth in the image. For lighting, my buddy and I placed the 3 off camera strobes, one strobe in each truck and a torch in the engine compartment in the first truck. I can easily spend the entire dive inside the wreck, important to remember when shooting in wrecks is to move carefully so you don't silt up the area when you are placing the off camera strobes thus ruining the image.

Egyptian Red Sea
Nikon, D800, Tokina 10-17mm at
17mm, Hugyfot D800, iso 320, f/10, 1/25,
Inon Z240 and 3 off camera strobes, Inon
and Ikelite

Judges notes:

This picture sparked an interesting debate in the judging room: can a photographer 'show off' too much in a competition?! These Ford trucks inside the Thistlegorm wreck are in almost total darkness as 25 metres of water. This is not an easy place to produce an image that uses four separate off-camera light sources. More importantly Anders has produced a striking and well crafted composition with the row of repeating windows, the sprinkling of fish and the blue opening in the background providing depth and a feeling of place.

Alex Mustard



3) International Wrecks

3rd Place
'Beaufighter'
Steve Jones (UK)

This is the wreck of an RAF Beaufighter, a heavily armed attack aircraft used extensively in World War 2. The wreckage lies upside down on bright white sand at 38 meters. I wanted to get an image of the whole wreck that was different from what I'd seen before and as my buddy moved near the undercarriage I realised that the best angle was from directly above. Our use of rebreathers made the task much easier, as I didn't have to worry about any annoying bubbles!

St Julians, Malta.

Nikon, D4, Nikon RS R-UW 13mm F2.8 (Seacam conversion), Seacam D4, iso 320, F11, 1/100, Ambient lighting only

Judge's notes:

It's easy to see an image like this and think it was a fresh and different image of an often photographed 'wreck' but it is your job as an underwater photographer to come up with that angle before anyone else and that is what will make you stand out in competitions. Steve did just that and has produced a fresh and appealing image. Never underestimate the effect that the corners of a frame can have. The lighter blue frame edges really lift this image and give it great depth. The diver adds scale and interest without detracting from the main focal point.

Peter Rowlands

3) International Wrecks

Highly Commended
'Need to change a tyre'
Anders Nyberg (Sweden)

SS Thistlegorm is one big playground for underwater photographers to create good images. In the lower holds that contain several different truck models, you can find this Albion AM468 aircraft fueling truck, it is one of six. With its characteristic box-shaped cabin, it is a beautiful object to photograph. To balance the natural light, I have chosen a slow shutter speed to take in as much of the natural background light as possible. I have two strobes on camera and has also placed an off camera strobe in the cabin to give the picture an extra dimension. I can easily spend the entire dive inside the wreck, important to remember when shooting in wrecks is to move carefully so you don't silt up the area when you are placing the off camera strobes

Egyptian Red Sea

Nikon, D800, Tokina 10-17mm at 16mm, Hugyfot D800, iso 400, f/8.0, 1/13, 2 Inon Z240 and 1 Inon Z240 off camera strobes





3) International Wrecks

Highly Commended
'The tank'
Saeed Rashid (UK)

The Tank as it's called is in fact an anti-aircraft US-built M42 Duster. Sunk in the 1980s by the now King of Jordan as an artificial reef. This unusual wreck sits in about 7m making it perfect for snorkeling and is often visited at the end or beginning of reef dives and easily accessed from the beach. Although small it teems with life making it a great place for both wide angle and macro photography. This image was shot bobbing up and down on the surface.

Canon , 7D mk2, Sigma 15, Nauticam ,
iso 320, 14, 160, Natural light

Judge's Special Comment:

It's the colour tones which first attracted me to this image and the use of natural light. It's a perfect example of a 'shooting down' exception. There is so much detail within the shape of the tank, it drags the viewer closer to explore the layers. The diver adds human interest and is ideally placed within the frame to give a sense of scale. Notice the compositional position of the diver - composed in between the edge of the tank and the top of the picture frame. Such a tight slice of blue. Luck or intended?

Martin Edge



3) International Wrecks

Highly commended
'USS Kittiwake and diver'
Christian Vizl (Mexico)

This image was taken during a workshop given by David Doubilet and Jennifer Hayes at Cayman Islands. I attended the workshop and we visited many sites during our dives, including two dives at the USS Kittiwake. The diver in the picture is David Doubilet who very kindly offered himself as a model to his students!

Canon, 5D mark II, Canon EF 16-35 mm at 16mm, Aquatica 5d mark II, iso 400, 13, 1/160 Nikon D200, 10.5mm fisheye. Aquatica housing, 2 x Inon Z240 strobes. 1/125th @ f8, ISO 100

Judge's special comment:

Simplicity is often a photographer's best friend when it comes to producing powerful pictures in the busy underwater world. This approach has certainly helped Christian create a memorable photograph. His other best friend here is his model. All photographers know the value a well-posed diver to an image, and the conscientious know the value of giving up a bit of their dive time for someone else's picture.

Alex Mustard



3) International Wrecks

Highly commended
'Exploring the Podsnap'
Spencer Burrows (UK)

Living in the midlands I am not blessed with living near the coast so often spend my weekends at local inland dive sites. I think the photographic potential is often over looked with inland sites, so I attempt to take images that showcase these sites in the best possible way. This particular wreck is a Dickens Class Harbour Minesweeper, built in 1944 specifically to clear mines in around harbour entrances during WWII. I particularly liked the angle of the wreck, and felt it could make an interesting composition as the perimeter of the wreck leads the eye in and out of the image. Using a wide angle lens I got close to enhance the size of the wreck. My dive buddy kindly offered to model for interest and scale using a dive torch. I processed the image using a monochrome finish which I feel lends itself well to the tonal range and also to add atmosphere to the image.

Capernwray Diving Centre, UK
Nikon , D800, Sigma 15mm,
Nauticam , iso 250, F/7.1, 1/125, Natural
Light



3) International Wrecks

Commended

‘The steering wheel’

Rui Guerra (Portugal)

Diving in a huge war frigate is an unforgettable experience, even if the sinking was deliberate, as is the case of “Hermenegildo Capelo”, which is part of Ocean Park Revival, in Algarve, Portugal.

For several dives, I tried to create images that “brought back to life” the four ships, using remote flashes at various points. One of the emblematic sites is the bridge, especially its steering wheel, where in the past the captain would have given orders for war, patrol or rescue missions, during the time that this ship was in the service of Portuguese Navy .

To prolong the bottom time and minimize decompression, I used a rebreather which avoided stirring up sediment.

Ocean Revival Park, Algarve

Nikon, D800, Sigma 15mm f2.8

fisheye, Subal ND800, iso 400, f/9, 1/13, 2 x

Inon Z240 + 1 remote Subtronic Alpha Pro

Judge’s special comment:

Rui’s quirky image instantly found favour with the judges, demonstrating that with the appropriate techniques memorable photographs can be produced in challenging conditions.

Alex Mustard

3) International Wrecks

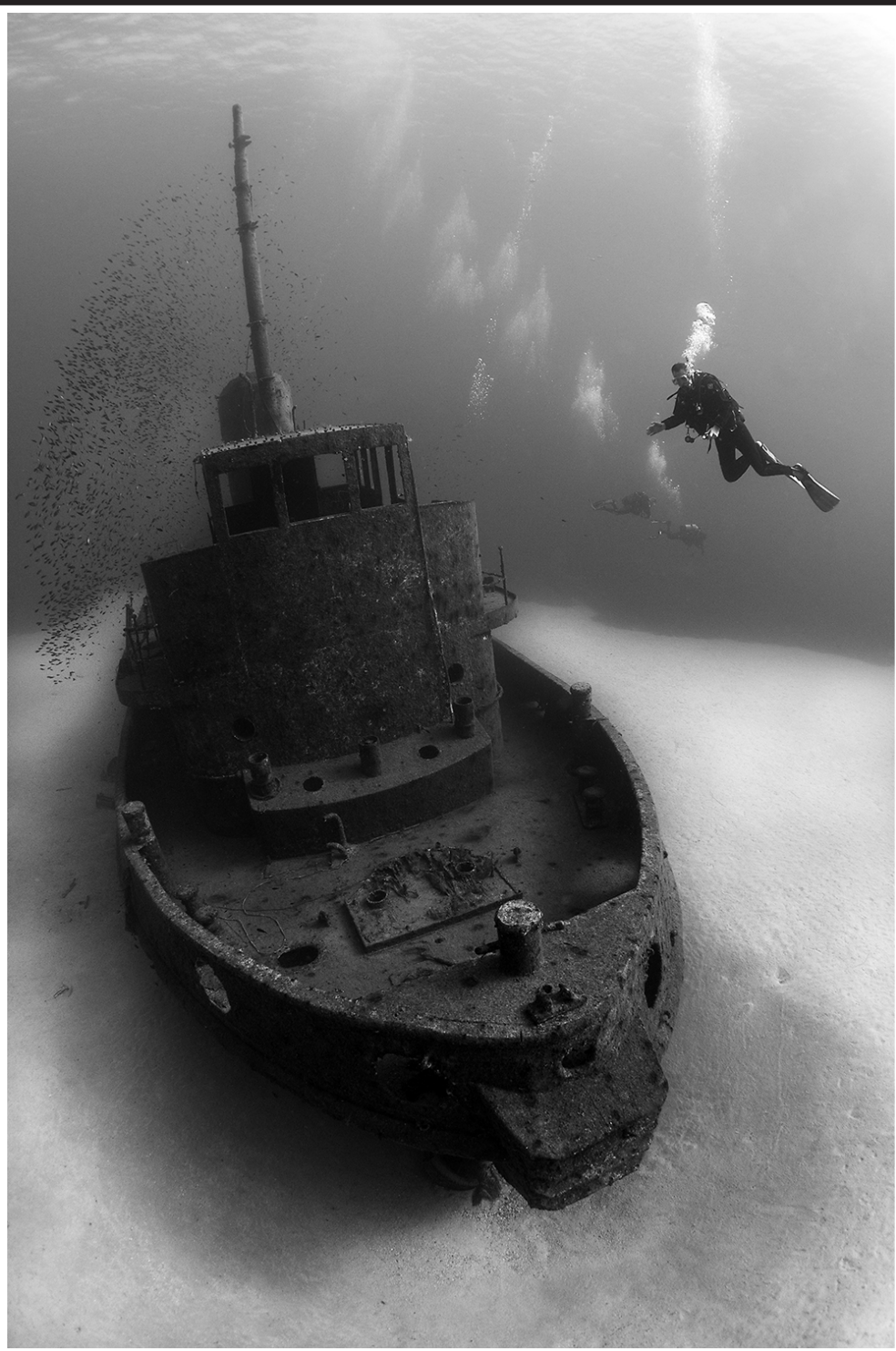
Commended
'Rozi tugboat'
Trevor Rees (UK)

The Rozi tugboat wreck at Cirkewwa in Malta lies on a sandy sea bed at a depth of 30 metres. It was a deliberately sunk wreck created as a diver attraction and as such is nicely intact boat sitting upright on the sea bed. A cooperate dive buddy has posed for me to add a bit interest and scale to the image. Visibility at the time was excellent and just available light has been used for exposure. Originally taken in colour, a monochrome conversion was made which I feel has added more drama to the shot.

Nikon , D600 + Sigma 15mm, Sea and Sea MDX-D600, iso 640, f/8, 1/125, Available light

Judge's special comment:

Minimalist compositions are easy to appreciate, but shots that harness more elements tell more involving stories. The wreck and the cloud of damselfish would have been attractive subject matter on their own, but by bringing in the other elements, Trevor's image holds our attention for much longer.





3) International Wrecks

Commended

'USS Kittiwake'

Susannah H. Snowden-Smith (Cayman)

I have taken lots of photographs of the Kittiwake. For this photo, I wanted something different; I had an image in my mind's eye and set off to capture it. I had decided to photograph the shipwreck from the side, and further away to reduce its size in the frame. The Kittiwake is a 251' long vessel and so I had to swim quite a distance away. I had noticed the school of jacks and knew I wanted to incorporate them in the photo. So composition-wise I waited for them to be in the right place. Then I wanted a diver in the image for scale and additional interest. I only clicked the shutter when the diver's fins were close together; this makes for a clean look. Black and white completed the strong graphic image I was after.

Canon, 40D, Tokina 10-17mm, Sea & Sea housing, iso 400, f/8, 1/80th, Natural light

Judge's special comment:

Three is often the magic number in compositions, and that is definitely the case in Susannah's classic photo. The combination of school of fish, wreck and diver all in alignment leaves the viewer in no doubt why this moment deserves to be recorded and seen.

Alex Mustard

model: Amanda Cotton
location: Dominica
photo: Peter Allinson



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4) International Behaviour

for wide angle to close-up and macro images showing interesting natural behaviour of underwater life. These images can be shot anywhere in the world. Open to all



4) International Behaviour

Winner

'Turtle eating Jellyfish'

Richard Carey (Thailand)

After an early morning dive in the Similan Islands, we stopped in a bay to have breakfast. A Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) surfaced near our boat. I decided to get in and snorkel with it, watching it as it searched for food. Soon it spotted a large Mosaic Jellyfish (*Thysanostoma thysanura*) swimming a couple of meters below the surface. It swam over to the jellyfish, dived down and started feeding on it. The turtle obviously wanted to keep the jelly close to the surface so every time it swam deeper the turtle would bite onto it and drag it back upwards. I spent a few minutes watching it and taking photos, and then left the turtle to finish his meal in peace.

Canon, Eos 60D, Tokina 10-17, Seacam Prelude 60D, iso 400, f10, 1/200, 2 x Ikelite DS 160strobes

Judges notes:

Such a good example of what you can make of a chance encounter. It would have been so easy to have finished breakfast and missed this shot! It captures so much and with the background story it is the pinnacle of a visual experience which must have been fascinating to watch and even more satisfying to capture with a moment in time. Simply beautiful too.

Peter Rowlands



4) International Behaviour

Runner up

'What feeds beneath'

Alejandro Prieto (Mexico)

I entered the cold November the water to photograph a pair of humpback whales which passed away very quickly, swimming back to the boat I saw a small moving object in front of me; it was a Hawaiian petrel submerging its head to feed on the tiny crustaceans. Under normal circumstances as you get close it will fly away, but surprisingly instead of this it just kept feeding in-front of me. By approaching very slowly I was able to get close from beneath, thankfully it stayed there for a few moments allowing me to capture this behaviour. The Hawaiian petrel is a species classified as endangered by the IUCN.

Canon , 5D Mark II, Sigma 15 mm,
Subal housing, iso 200, f13, 1/160, Sea & Sea

Judges notes:

It's common for sea birds to join in with the bait balls and on this occasion a beautiful portrait was created by the author. The bright tones within Snell's window give an ethereal look to this Petrel submerging to feed. The dark tones outside Snell frame the composition and keeps the eye of the viewer within the frame. The result is a beautiful image.

Martin Edge

4) International Behaviour

3rd Place
'Millions of crabs'
Rui Guerra (Portugal)

Every year, millions of crabs (*Polybius henslowii*) form large red masses in places along the coast of Portugal. This high density of swimming crabs is somewhat rare to be seen and although we saw some dispersed crabs, it took us almost an hour to spot a higher concentration. It was after another 20 minutes of blue-water diving that I noticed an immense 'red cloud' made up of maybe several thousand crabs swimming through the water.

Nikon, D800, Sigma 15mm f2.8
fisheye, Subal ND800, iso 320, f/14, 1/250, 2
x Inon Z240

Judges notes:

This is a jaw dropping scene that just gets better and better the bigger you see it and the longer you look. The behaviour is fascinating, but the photography is even better, Rui's subtle use of light and the satisfying composition transports the viewer to the heart of this natural phenomenon. I love the depth of the aggregation with the crabs disappearing into the blue, seemingly going on forever.

Alex Mustard



4) International Behaviour

Highly Commended
'Crunch'
Theresa Guise (USA)

Isla Guadalupe is well-known for the aggregation of great white sharks from August through January each year. From a surface cage on the Solmar V, I was observing five great whites feeding on tuna served up in the water when, out of the blue, a turtle entered the mix. The sharks paid little attention to the turtle until it tried to eat the tuna, at which time the sharks nudged it away from the food. The turtle kept returning to eat the tuna, only to be bumped away several times. Finally, the turtle saw a piece of tuna floating near my surface cage, and started to eat it. A great white followed, and bumped the turtle away one final time. When the turtle returned, an exasperated shark grabbed the turtle with its massive jaws and a loud "crunch" was heard as far down as the 30 foot submersible cage below. The shark then spit the turtle out, and the turtle swam away. Pre-crunch images of the turtle showed that the turtle already had a cracked shell and suggest that this turtle was no stranger to the bite of the great white shark.

Canon, 5Ds, Canon 8-15 fisheye,
Nauticam, iso 320, f/11, 1/160, Inon Z240 x 2



Judge's Special Comment:

Perfect timing and composed from such an ideal angle. The judging panel 'cringed' when this image was projected. The emotion of the shark bite being so dramatically visual will linger with the viewer for some time.

Martin Edge

4) International Behaviour

Highly Commended

'Pair of fish cleaners on parrotfish'

Paolo Bausani (Italy)

A year ago, during a trip to Indonesia, I stayed for about 10 days in Walea archipelago Togian. On the House reef I noticed a massive presence of cleaning stations. Numerous fish cleaners engaged with reef fish in a few meters depth.

The situation was fantastic. I have tried to capture everything. In turn, but also in pairs, they alternated on parrotfish, after with their powerful beak had crushed coral in search of polyps. All this lasted a few seconds but enough to make some interesting shots.

Nikon, D7100, 60 mm micro,
Nauticam D7100, iso 100, f/20, 1/250, 2X Sea
& Sea YS D1

Judge's special comment:

There was a time (a long time ago) when observing and photographing this behaviour would have been ground breaking but now it is comparatively 'old hat' so you have to come up with a new angle on an old subject and this shot does it very well. In terms of behaviour it hasn't caught the peak of the action but it is a very pleasing image full of shapes, symmetry and great eye contact. The end result has a rather ballet-like quality in that everything is just so graceful. With another set of judges it may well have been up higher but that's competitions for you!

Peter Rowlands



4) International Behaviour

Highly commended
'All-you-can-eat eggs buffet'
Vania Kam (Hong Kong)

When I found this nudibranch (*Favorinus tsuruganus*), it was lying on a rock inside the eggs. I tried a few "normal" shots and didn't like the effect. It then started crawling around the eggs and then back to the wall and then back to the eggs slowly and I knew I wanted it standing right in the middle as if it was looking out of the window so I waited and waited and it finally walked to the exact position where I wanted it to be. I then adjusted my strobes on both ends of the eggs so the thick layer of eggs would block the lights out creating this dramatic effect.

Anilao, Philippines

Nikon, D7000, AF-S VR Micro-Nikkor 105mm f/2.8G IF-ED, Nauticam, iso 100, f/16, 1/125, Inon Z240 x 2

Judge's special comment:

This species of nudibranch has a specialized diet of the eggs of other larger nudibranch species. Vania's precise composition tells this story perfectly and the simple palette of colours makes it most memorable.

Alex Mustard





4) International Behaviour

Highly commended
'Hunting Long Nosed Hawkfish'
Damien McGuirk (Ireland)

I love looking for Longnose Hawkfish. In the Maldives, they live in the bushes of Black Frondy Coral. They are very skittish subjects but this little guy didn't mind me looking at him, and only by studying him over a few minutes did I sense he was doing something unusual. Without warning, he shot off his perch to return a few seconds later with something in his mouth. I aimed my camera as best I could, and tripped the shutter. It was only later when I reviewed the image in my hotel room did I realise what I had actually captured. Magic!

Nikon, D200, Nikon 60mm Macro,
Sea and Sea DX-D200, iso 200, f/13, 1/125 ,
Sea and Sea YS-90

Judge's special comment:

Shots like this run the risk of not surviving the first round or 'culling'. This is when judges have to look at several hundred images in fairly quick succession and they have to all agree that it deserves to go through to the next round. When you're looking to cull over 1000 images down to about 50 you have to be quite ruthless, almost brutal. The subtle fish in the Hawkfish's mouth could easily have been missed in the image frenzy that is prejudging. Fortunately we all got it and the delicacy of the subject matter and the subtle behaviour meant it appealed enough to rise up into the top ten.

Peter Rowlands



4) International Behaviour

Commended
'Battle at the Nine'
Ralph Pace (USA)

Nine miles off the coast of San Diego, CA is a high spot called the Nine Mile Bank. A great area to encounter pelagic animals in blue water. With much of the bait having moved north due to the warmer water El Nino regime, The Nine has been very different this year. As we were driving along we saw birds and a commotion at the surface. We quickly realized it was a sea lion eating a mola, not a sea lion's common fare. It was an incredible scene. We watched for 45 minutes as the mola tried to evade the sea lion. The sea lion was able to finally penetrate the mola's tough skin and feed on the mola's caloric rich inners. Here, as they look eye to eye in all the chaos, the mola seems to plead for it's life.

Canon, 5d Mark II, 15 mm, Aquatica,
iso 400, 7.1, 200, Sea and Sea YS-D1

Judge's special comment:

What amazing behaviour and what an amazing image. It is the perfect timing of Ralph's photo that makes this photograph extra special, capturing the eye contact between prey and predator. It is an image I'll long remember for this haunting gesture.

Alex Mustard

4) International Behaviour

Commended
'Bumphead Parrotfish Spawning'
Richard Barnden (Palau)

Around the New moon thousands of Bumphead Parrotfish (*Bolbometopon muricatum*) gather at a special site in Palau for a specific period of time for the sole purpose of spawning and continuing their species. To be able to witness this exact timing takes a formula of tide, moon and light. It took me about a year of trying different lens combinations to finally get something I was happy with. The fish were always aware of my presence and getting close without disturbing their natural behavior was a challenge, especially as they were moving quite fast most of the time.

On this particular dive all the factors came together and I was able to be in the right place at the right time as a spawning rush came from below straight towards me and broke apart, spawning right in front of the camera.

West side of Palau
Nikon , D800, Nikon 17-35mm @
24mm, Nauticam ND800, iso 200, 8, 1/80,
Sea & Sea YS-250

Judge's special comments:

I have watched spawning rituals several times and it has always been exciting but they were all small fish and they moved like bullets. I can imagine how excited I would have been to witness these large fish rising up very fast to time their run to perfection and then peel off into open water. This shot really captures that excitement; timed to perfection in terms of action and composition. If I'm to be critical I think it would have benefited greatly from a slight crop off the left hand side and a bigger crop off the right to end up with a square format with enhanced symmetry.

Peter Rowlands



4) International Behaviour

Commended
'Torrent'

Susannah H. Snowden-Smith (Cayman)

The silversides usually descend on Cayman once a year; it's an exciting time for us underwater photographers. They fill dark swim-throughs and caves with their reflective, wriggling bodies, and are hunted by larger fish; exciting photo opportunities! I headed to Cheeseburger Reef, where I heard they'd been sighted. Jacks and tarpon were feeding on the little silver fish, chasing them through the dark tunnels. I was making passes through the swim-through, framing and photographing when I decided to try something different. I chose a slow-exposure to show the movement of the silversides, and used my strobes to both reflect off them, and highlight some of the red sealife on the wall above. I positioned myself near the mouth of the tunnel to silhouette the larger fish as they hunted. When a jack chased silversides into the middle of this scene I had my shot.

Canon, 40D, Tokina 10-17mm, Sea & Sea, iso 400, f/8, 0.5 sec, Two Sea & Sea YS-250

Judge's special comment:

For me one of the most beautiful images in the whole competition, showing the hunting behaviour of a black jack in school of silversides. Has a wonderful painterly quality.



Don't settle for 2nd best



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.

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5) Up & Coming Worldwide

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5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Winner

‘Three Pillars’

Pier Mane (South Africa)

Weary of shooting sharks head-on, and keen to avoid divers bubbles in my shot, I decided to turn away from the peak action and the crowds it attracts. I wanted sun rays, dramatic foreground, background perspective, and - the cherry on top - to capture the ‘master of the house’ in all of its mystique.

I would like to dedicate my first winning shot to my father, for his introduction to photography, and to my mother for passing on her resilient attitude.

Olympus, EM-1 Micro 4/3 Mirrorless, M.Zuiko Digital ED 9-18mm f4.0-5.6 @ 9mm, Nauticam NA-EM1, iso 400, f/9, 1/250, 2 x YSD1

Judges notes:

Throughout the judging process, this image grew and grew on me. It got better every time I viewed it, to the point of looking forward to seeing it again in the next round. Whilst the Shark is perfectly composed within the frame I have a gut feeling that the author framed the boat and three sponges together with the light shafts at top left. This was the backdrop, the stage and it was just a matter of patience and position for the shark placement. The composition in this image is so balanced that it looks easy to simply press the shutter every time it swam into that particular space. Imagine it as a manta, turtle or hammerhead. All would have worked well. The underbelly of the shark could so easily have proved difficult with the flash illumination but the subtle tones and circles of the near-view sponges bring it all together.

Martin Edge

5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Runner up

'Fired up and "almost" ready to go '
Marty Engels Dunmore (UK)

Today it isn't easy to produce a unique image of this well loved wreck and I did a lot of research before I dived to see how others have photographed her before me. In 18m of Water I found this wonderful old machine, in fact there are two of these engines positioned opposite to each other. The Image is produced without any strobes, but with aid of my dive-torch, which I positioned within the engine to give me an extra focal point.

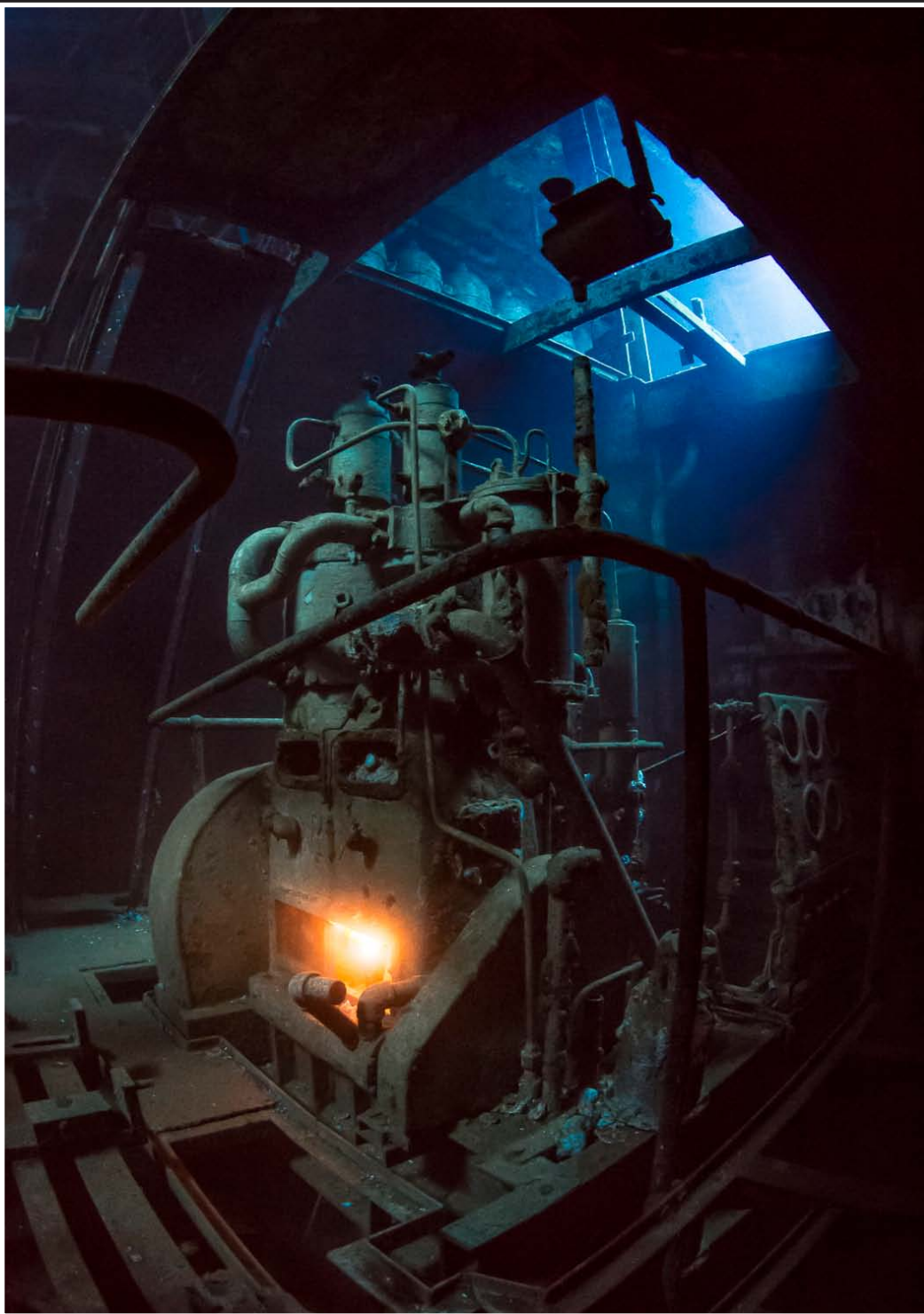
USS Kittiwake, Grand Cayman

Nikon, D4s, Nikon 16mm, Nauticam ,
iso 5000, f9, 1/20, Natural Light

Judges notes:

It takes a lot to impress an old wreck photographer lag like me but here is a quite superb example of how, with a comparatively simple touch, a straightforward technical shot has been so effectively elevated to the eye. But such a simple addition of the furnace lighting is not enough on its own. The composition, use of mixed light and graphic simplicity all contribute to a very powerful and successful image.

Peter Rowlands



5) Up & Coming Worldwide

3rd Place

'The eye of a Butterfly '

Spencer Burrows (UK)

Whilst masked butterflyfish are fairly common in the Red Sea, they are quite skittish and often swim away on approach. As I wanted to try and capture this common fish in a different way I had an abstract shot in mind and I felt the eye with its blue and yellow surroundings were key to the shot working. Having failed to get this to work with a standard macro lens, I equipped a tele-converter for additional reach which allowed me to keep my distance from the fish.

Nikon , D800, Nikon 105mm VR + Kenko 1.4 TC, Nauticam , iso 125, F11, 1/125, 2 x Sea and Sea YSD1

Judges notes:

Every photographer who has dived in the Red Sea will have photographed the common masked butterflyfish. However, none of the judging panel had ever seen this powerful composition before, captured by Spencer?s original photographic vision. Perhaps the sincerest compliments he will receive about the strength of this composition, is that it is sure to be regularly replicated. Just remember you saw it here first!

Alex Mustard



5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Highly Commended
'The Great Sea Eagle'
Pier Mane (South Africa)

Living for a while in my youth in southeast Alaska, I came to appreciate the Golden Eagle, a majestic creature oft-admired for her dazzling aeronautics and airborne confidence. Alas, I was then ill equipped to portray such splendour and supremacy of the skies.

In previous underwater forays, I had depicted turtles as peaceful, graceful 'cuties', while they are actually among the sea's most resilient creatures. Hatched into a world in which one in one thousand reach maturity, sea turtles face increasing human demand for their meat, eggs and shells, rendering most species at risk of extinction.

Inspired in this very moment by the Alaskan Golden Eagle, I seize upon this shot of the critically endangered hawksbill sea turtle. In Sodwana Bay, South Africa, under a moderate current and scarce light, the creature reveals a nature transcending mere gracefulness: confidence, born of longevity against all odds, and a seeming sense of itself as among the most magnificent denizens of the sea.

Olympus, EM-1 Micro 4/3 Mirrorless,
M.Zuiko Digital ED 9-18mm f4.0-5.6 @
13mm, Nauticam NA-EM1, iso 200, f/10,
f/320, YS-D1





5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Highly Commended
'Caribbean Reef Sharks'
Marty Engels Dunmore (UK)

Jardines de la Reina is a 120km-long mangrove-forest and coral-island system situated 80km off the south coast of Ciego de ?vila province and 120km north of the Cayman Islands. The local marine park measures 3800 sq km, with virgin territory left more or less untouched since the time of Columbus.

I simply loved being in the water with these gorgeous predators and in the Jardines de la Reina you can meet many shark species in Abundance, always a Garant for a healthy reef system, I dearly wish we would have much more of these healthy reefs around the world.

Nikon, D4s, 15mm plus 1.4TC,
Nauticam , iso 400, fio, 1/200, dual Inon
Z240

Judge's special comment:

Wow, you can't deny this is a very powerful shot. As bold as the subjects themselves and such a good decision to go black and white - the simplicity of photography's original medium. Reducing such beautiful creatures to tones detracts nothing. These guys really are 'the business' and, as far as I'm concerned, so is this shot.

Peter Rowlands

5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Highly commended
'Transparent Trick'
Lorincz Ferenc (Hungary)

I found this Moray with the cleaner shrimps on his head on a late afternoon dive with my diving buddy, . I spent a lot of time waiting for him to open his mouth wide so I could take a photo of it. This did not happen however...

Right after I let my photographer buddy use the Moray as a model, he opened his mouth. When my buddy was done taking photos, he let me get back to our model, but by that time, the Moray had his mouth closed again?

Abu Dabab , Red Sea

Nikon, Nikon D300, Nikkor 40 mm
f 2.8 G Micro ED AF-S, Subal ND30, iso
200, f/16, 250, Ikelite DS160 x 2





5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Highly commended

'Bass'

Oliver Anlauf (Germany)

In a public pool in Hamburg our bassist went underwater. The biggest challenge was bouyancy, so we fastened lead weights under her clothes and on her ankles. We drilled holes in the bass, so that it would fill with water. Her makeup consisted of special waterproof paint. In order to put her into the perfect light, we set up two Arri-18 KW-lights at the pool's edge. All procedures were closely discussed with her in advance before we went into the water accompanied by safety divers. The underwater communication was by gestures. The shoot itself had to happen very fast and to the point, but we all had great fun and the results speak for themselves.

Nikon, D300, Tokina

10-17mm@17mm, Sea & Sea MDX-300, iso 100, 6,3, 1/100, Subtronic Pro 270 Nova

Judge's special comment:

Ignore swimming pools at your peril. They can expose many photographers as lacking 'an eye' when faced with a blank canvas. This is a very deceptive yet successful shot. The lighting, the composition and the stage management are of a very high order yet the result is graphically simple with nothing wasted in the frame. Such images are the result of a team effort yet it is usually only the photographer who gets a mention. I know the effort that goes into these shots and and this team deserves the highest of praise.

Peter Rowlands

5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Commended
'White-spotted fighter'
Fabio Russo (Italy)

Callistoctopus macropus, also known as white-spotted octopus, is a species found in shallow areas of the Mediterranean Sea. This shot was taken in a little harbor near Sorrento by night. When I took this shot I was very close to the octopus and, perhaps annoyed by the strobes, it jumped to attack the camera, so I had this strange position of the octopus just before it grabbed the housing with its tentacles. I am always very fascinated by cephalopods and the way they interact with the underwater photographer.

Sony, RX100, 28 mm equivalent,
Nauticam NA-RX100, iso 80, f11, 1/100,
Inon S-2000



5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Commended
'The Majestic Purple Dame'
Pier Mane (South Africa)

The eastern South Africa coast, widely known for large predator sharks, whales, dolphins and sardine, can sometimes deliver incredibly unexpected surprises. Open-water diving at Protea Banks searching for hammerhead schools, my eyes fall upon a sizeable and animated figure. Unable to identify it from afar, I slowly approach to face the largest jelly fish I've ever seen. Her purple head and yellow fuselage were off the Lightroom saturation slider scale even before I shot! With no background objects present to provide perspective, and wishing to exalt this crown jellyfish (Cephea) in all its stunning colors, majestic size, and dancing elegance, I opted for an explosive silhouette against a mid-day winter sun.

Olympus, EM-1 Micro 4/3 Mirrorless,
M.Zuiko Digital ED 9-18mm f4.0-5.6 @
9mm, Nauticam, iso 400, f/18, 1/250, 2 x
YS-D1



5) Up & Coming Worldwide

Commended
'Lighting the Cockpit'
Spencer Burrows (UK)

Stoney Cove is a popular inland dive site that attracts thousands of divers each year, meaning it is heavily dived and photographed. I prefer to dive here over the winter when the site is less busy and improved water clarity. I wanted to capture an image that was a little different to that usually seen from this site and an original composition. I used an off camera strobe to internally light the cockpit and didn't opt for a head on composition. I opted for a side on profile at a diagonal angle as it suited lighting the internal part of the cockpit. I lined up the windows to add additional depth to the image, my buddy kindly modelled with a torch to add scale & context to complete the image.

Nikon , D800, Sigma 15mm,
Nauticam, iso 1600, f10, 1/50, 2 x Sea and
Sea YSD1 + 1 x Sea and Sea 110 off camera



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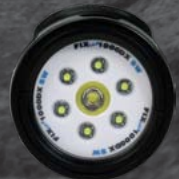
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6) British Waters Wide Angle

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6) British Waters Wide Angle

Winner

'Part of the Illusion'

Marcus Blatchford (UK)

The National Dive & Activity Centre is the deepest inland dive centre in the UK. The day the photo was taken, the dive plan was to bumble around the deep end, a dive we had done many times before but this time I dived "un-plugged" and using no artificial light.

With the exception of a variation of camera technique, there were no planned shots either my buddy or I wanted to achieve - just a fun dive with ad-hoc photos along the way. Shortly after this photo was captured, in 6 degree water and 2 hours of decompression ahead of us, we turned and started the long ascent back to the surface.

Canon, EOS 5d mark III, Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM, Hugyfot HFC-5D MKIII, iso 12800, f4, 1/60, Ambient Light

Judges notes:

Whilst this may have been an 'unplanned' photo dive, these two, the model and the photographer, knew exactly what they were doing either by instinct or design. Graphic simplicity and beautiful composition are the trademark starting points for a winning shot. Add that special light which depth produces and you have a captivating result. Shooting at such a depth "un-plugged" without artificial light has introduced some image noise but, as far as I'm concerned, this only adds to the mood. A well deserved winner.

Peter Rowlands

6) British Waters Wide Angle

Runner up
'Shocked Shark'
Will Clark (UK)

This juvenile Blue shark was the first to arrive at our boat after an hour of chumming. We were alerted to its presence by the bobbing of a small buoy which had fresh mackerel tied to it. I leaned over the side of the boat with my camera housing not quite fully submerged as the skipper tried to coax the shark nearer to the boat. He got the Blue very close to me, and then just at the last moment he whipped the bait out of the water which got a reaction from this little shark.

Canon, EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM, Nauticam, iso 400, f/13, 1/160, 2x Inon Z240

Judge's notes:

Just a couple years ago, even a grainy, soft image of a blue shark in British waters would have caused jaws to drop. But as photos have proliferated, standard portraits are now consigned to the 'seen it before' folder in competition terms. Will's perfectly timed portrait rises far above this. It is full of energy and reveals much of the character of this enigmatic shark.

Alex Mustard





6) British Waters Wide Angle

3rd Place

'Elan valley trout in winter'

Trevor Rees (UK)

This is a half and half scene taken on a snowy January morning in the Elan Valley. I have used my fisheye lens behind a large dome port for ease of creating the split image. The depth of the water is no more than 30cm and the brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) has been subsequently added to the scene in Photoshop so this is very much a composite image. The trout is actually shot at a completely different time and location. The inspiration for the image may be from images I have seen of migrating salmon struggling up a river to then be found lying exhausted in the shallows - a poor substitute I know, but I like the effect.

Nikon , D90, Nikkor 10.5mm, Sea and SeaDX-D80, iso 200, f/20, 1/200, dual Sea & Sea YS110 strobes

Judge's notes:

The layers of interest and depth perspective in this image grab the eye of the viewer instantly. Firstly, the angle of the trout and pattern of ice above. The reeds continue the pattern of viewing all the way to the hills in the distance, blue sky and fluffy white clouds. It's got it all.

Martin Edge



6) British Waters Wide Angle

Highly Commended
'Set the Ray to Jelly'
Nick Blake (UK)

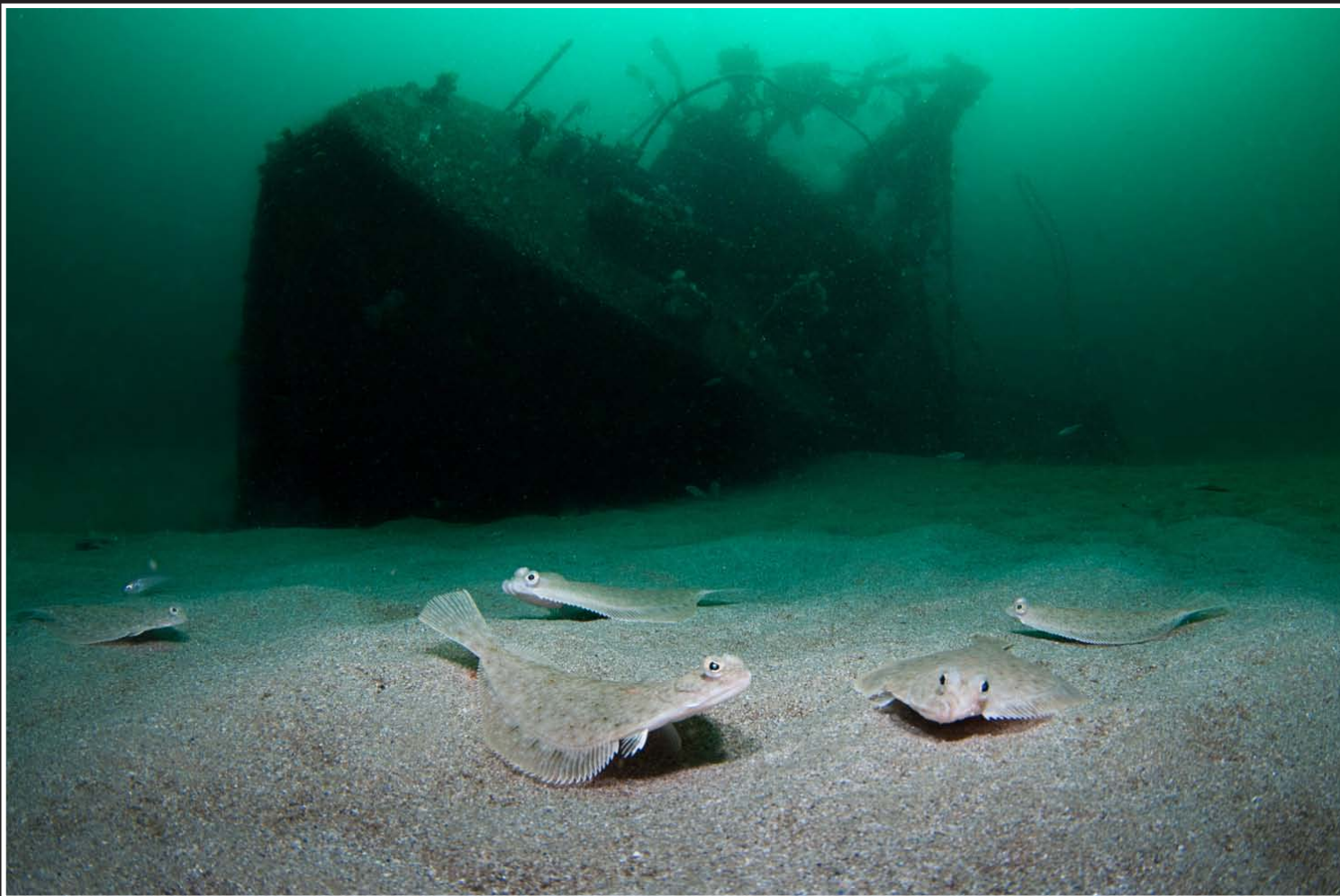
Lundy Island in the Bristol Channel is a Marine Conservation Zone and a magnet for marine life. My reason for being there was Lundy's famous Grey Seals but on my first day, surprisingly they were missing. In their absence, I noticed small Comb Jellies suspended in the water. It was now mid-afternoon and with the sun still strong through the shallow water, I began experimenting in lining up a Comb Jelly in front of the sun, curious as to whether the camera's dynamic range could hold the scene. I waited for the sun, Comb Jelly and myself to align, fascinated by the iridescent spectacle in the viewfinder. As cloud, rain and Seals returned for the second day, the opportunity was no more but I felt my time with the Comb Jellies and sunlight had been well spent.

Nikon, D810, Sigma 15mm fisheye and Kenko 1.5x Teleconverter, Sea & Sea MDX Housing and Pro One Dome Port, iso 100, f/22, 1/320, Dual Inon Z240 strobes

Judge's Special Comment:

A very simple opportunity, which many photographers would not notice. The play of light against this translucent Comb Jelly makes for such a strong and artistic image. The square crop works well with the sun burst and jelly composed on the thirds intersection.

Martin Edge



6) British Waters Wide Angle

Highly Commended

'Inquisitive flatties'

Richard Shucksmith (UK)

The seas around Shetland can offer stunning visibility with abundant marine life. I had joined a trip onboard the M/V Halton, owned and skippered by Bob Anderson. Bob had been on Shetland all summer, running week long charters out of Lerwick. As always the banter started and Bob showed me an image he had taken on the Fraoch Ban, a small fishing vessel that had sunk when it had been over-laden with sand eels. Bob's image had several flatfish in the foreground with the wreck in the background. I commented how nice the image was so Bob said he would drop me on the wreck so I could have a go. As I settled down at 30m the flatfish started to move toward me. I spent the remainder of the dive waiting for them to move into good positions to get the image I had in mind.

Nikon, D300, 10-17 Tokina fish eye, Ikelite housing, iso 500, f8, 1/80, 2 x Inon z240

Judge's special comment:

A real favourite of mine in this category, with a character filled foreground and a fantastic background, not easily produced in British conditions. It is a skillfully taken image. Richard also does himself great credit in sharing his inspiration for the image.

Alex Mustard



6) British Waters Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Tadpole shoal'
Matt Doggett (UK)

I was looking out for ways to test my new Nauticam housing early last year. One lunchtime I found a shoal of many thousands of toad tadpoles streaming along the margins of a wildlife pond near where I worked. The visibility was only around six inches but I thought it was worth a go! Over the next week I returned whenever the sun shone and experimented with different settings and lens combinations until I found something that worked. Every time I placed the camera in the water the tadpoles instantly swarmed all over it so I had to repeatedly lift it in and out the water, which in turn disturbed the nice neat shoal. It took a lot of failed efforts just to get this shot but it gives a nice idea of a tadpoles' eye view on the world.

Canon , 5D MkIII, Sigma 15mm fisheye / Kenko 1.4x teleconverter, Nauticam, iso 4000, f29, 1/160, No flash

Judge's special comment:

Finding something visually special in a muddy pond is the mark of an inventive photographer. As kids we were always fascinated to watch the arrival of frogspawn turn into wriggling tadpoles followed by the submerged camouflage of grown adults and this shot captures that excitement and energy of that evolution so well. If you want to be competitively successful don't ignore the mundane.

Peter Rowlands



6) British Waters Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Discovery'
Steve Jones (UK)

The aircraft pictured is a BAe 146 which was sunk as a diver attraction at the National Diving and Activity Centre in Chepstow, UK and lies at a depth of 27 meters. I wanted to create an image with a 'diver/discovery' type feel to it. BBC wildlife cameraman Doug Anderson, is aiming the light that's illuminating the aircraft and the late afternoon December surface light provided a nice dark grey/green ambience to surround the wreck. Doug is using 2 immensely powerful Orcalights producing a combined 44,000 lumens of light! I took several shots in the sequence, whilst Doug moved the lights back and forth so I could find the beam angle and exposure settings that worked best. We'd been in the water a long time, so the biggest challenge was fending off the cold!

Nikon, D4, Nikkor 16mm Fisheye,
Seacam, iso 3200, F10, 1/60th, Twin
Orcalight SeaWolf A-2260, handheld by
model

Judge's special comment:

The title really says it all. This powerful composition really shouts discovery with the lights picking out the details of the cockpit from the dark depths.

Alex Mustard



6) British Waters Wide Angle

Commended
'Pike in quarry'
Trevor Rees (UK)

Each winter when the water is cold, the visibility is often at its best so I always try to get out and photograph these impressive fish. Pike (*Esox lucius*) are a top freshwater predator and a popular sight at a number of UK lakes and quarries. Stoney Cove in Leicestershire in England is a reliable place to see big specimens and even on a busy Saturday morning with hoards of divers stirring up the underwater visibility I usually manage to find a quiet corner to see how close I can get to them. The background scene in these quarries is often rather unexciting but I liked the huge triangular lump of rock as a backdrop to this pike.

Nikon , D600 + Sigma 15mm + Kenko 1.5X teleconverter, Sea and Sea MDX-D600, iso 1600, f/10, 1/30, dual Sea & Sea YS110 strobes

Judge's special comment:

This is a fabulous wide angle portrait. The eye contact pulls you in and the pose and position of fish in the frame is inch perfect. The background compliments the subject, without over powering it. A classy image.

Alex Mustard



6) British Waters Wide Angle

Commended
'Blue Blur'
Will Clark (UK)

Our skipper Charles Hood had attracted five hungry Blue sharks to his boat by submerging a sack of frozen rotten fish to create a tempting downstream trail of smelly oils and particles. I'd already captured a few shots that I was happy with by leaning over the side of the boat so decided it was time to get in the water with the sharks. The dramatic atmosphere of this image was produced using a technique I learned from Dr Alex Mustard, who in turn had been inspired by an epic shark photograph by Tobi Bernhards. It involves using a relatively slow exposure with a bright flash at the beginning to capture the sharp elements then quickly panning the camera in front of the subject to create the naturally lit blur behind it. Doing this with the camera on a slight angle added another level of complexity but after many failed attempts I eventually got the shot that I'd visualised.

Canon, EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM, Nauticam, iso 100, f/22, 1/10, 2x Inon Z240

6) British Waters Wide Angle

Commended

'Early morning plumose anemonies'
Dan Bolt (UK)

Just off the beach at this popular diving spot there is some old rope that came off a crab-fishing pot some years ago. One end of the rope is wedged in the rocky seabed, the other has a float attached which keeps it upright at about 4m off the bottom. This old rope is home to a dense colony of plumose anemonies, and in the early morning light of a summers day they are a joy to photograph.

Babbacombe , Devon

Olympus, E-M1, Panasonic 8mm
fisheye, Aquatica AE-M1, iso 200, 14, 1/320, 2
YS-D1 strobes



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7) British Waters Macro

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7) British Waters Macro

Winner

'Catshark Supernova'

Dan Bolt (UK)

Just off a headland in this beautiful bay is a reef system favoured as a laying ground for the eggs, or 'mermaids purse' of the smallspotted catshark (*Scyliorhinus canicula*). The day I chose to visit the reef for a snorkel I came across many egg cases wrapped tightly into the weed. Positioning my strobe carefully took some time but the resulting image, with the low-visibility providing a celestial-like quality, shows the hidden beauty within this system of reproduction.

Thurlestone , Devon

Olympus, E-PL5, Olympus 9-18mm, Olympus PT-EP10, iso 200, f/10, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D1 & Snoot

Judge's notes:

This particular image grew on me over the judging days, and with the last category to resolve it got better and better. Day one, it was all about the silhouette of the Cat shark within the egg case. By day 2 it was the balanced shape and ethereal light of the silhouette. A master stroke to shape the backlighting with a snooted strobe in the form of wings. Outstanding simplicity.

Martin Edge



7) British Waters Macro

Runner up
'Planktonic Predator'
George Stoye (UK)

In the summer of 2015 Scottish Natural Heritage a Dive Team to conduct site monitoring of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which included North Rona which is where this image was taken. We had come to the end of a dive inside a cave, just before we reached the surface we noticed an unusual amount of zooplankton which had become trapped inside the cave entrance. We then spotted a couple of tiny, post-larval monkfish feeding on the plankton, something none of us had ever seen. Getting an in-focus shot with my macro lens was easier said than done with prevailing swell, but I managed a few before the boat came to pick us up.

Nikon, D700, 105mm Macro,
Nauticam, iso 400, f/10, 1/160, 2x Inon Z240

Judges notes:

The most remarkable looking creature I have seen photographed in British waters. This juvenile monkfish doesn't even look like it comes from our planet, let alone our shores. An amazing subject photographed flawlessly, it is definitely one of the most memorable pictures in this year's collection.

Alex Mustard



7) British Waters Macro

3rd Place
'Safe haven'
Cathy Lewis (UK)

It was our first dive of the season, on the wreck of the Scylla in Whitsand Bay near Plymouth. The water was thick with plankton and a strong current was funneling small compass jellyfish towards the starboard side of the wreck. Some of the jellyfish were host to a large number of juvenile codfish, possibly whiting, which use them for protection. The larger fry were perched on top while the smaller ones swam amongst the tentacles, somehow avoiding being stung. Photographing the highly reflective silver fry was a frustrating challenge, but I have never seen so many fish crammed into such small jellies so I knew I was witnessing something rather special.

Nikon, D7000, 60mm, Nauticam, iso 160, f/16, 1/80, Sea & Sea YS110

Judge's notes:

I know this wreck well and am far too familiar with the conditions described so I'm really impressed with the photographic skills pulled out to capture such a clean image. As if conditions weren't difficult enough, the lighting and exposure are spot on and the composition is dynamic without taking the eye away from the subject matter. Once settled the eye looks around and discovers the smaller fry seeking shelter. Altogether a most captivating image.

Peter Rowlands



7) British Waters Macro

Highly Commended

'Shanny'

Mark Thomas (UK)

Shanny are widespread and common fish, often seen by divers, hiding in nooks and crannies on rocks and piers. Their mottled colouring provides excellent camouflage. They are very inquisitive and when approached with care will often come out of their hiding places to investigate the strange bubble blowing creature trying to take their photo.

This nosey little shanny was one of several hiding in a small breakwater in the shallows off Criccieth beach. I spent some time at the end of a warm, summer dive watching these shanny wriggling around the barnacle covered structure. After a while they overcame their fear of me and my cumbersome equipment and I was able to take several close up photos of this charismatic little fish.

Nikon, D3, Nikon 60mm, Sea & Sea, iso 250, f29, 1/80s, twin Sea & Sea YS110

Judge's Special Comment:

An excellent fish portrait with eyes staring straight out towards the viewer and captured with the mouth slightly open. This connects the image with the viewer. The surrounding rock wall provides a frame and keeps the eye connected with the Shanny. Very good (and simple) portraiture technique.

Martin Edge





7) British Waters Macro

Highly Commended

'Slug'

Alex Tattersall (UK)

This delightful little guy was on a strand of kelp at 15 metres in a gulley of the South Coast of the UK. It was an emotional experience all round.

Nikon , D7100, 105mm VR, FIT +10
wet lens, Nauticam, iso 320, F22, 1/200,
INON Z240

Judge's Special Comment:

What first attracted me to this image in the judging room was the angle of view. 'Straight On'. The feeling of depth from front to back comes about as a result of the pin sharp foreground with the soft bokeh towards the background. Notice how the author has left just enough space at the bottom of the frame for the slug to swim into. The traditional compositional technique for this type of image is usually a slightly downward angle but this ultra eye level 'take' is something to think about the next time you are shooting a similar subject.

Martin Edge

7) British Waters Macro

Highly commended

'Angel'

Richard Shucksmith (UK)



In the summer of 2015 Scottish Natural Heritage commissioned Heriot-Watt University's Scientific Dive Team to conduct site condition monitoring of Special Areas of Conservation (SAC'S) which included sea caves around Scotland's remotest islands, St Kilda and North Rona. I was asked to join the trip as one of two photographers. The 3-week trip took us from Orkney across the north coast of Scotland, out to the Hebrides and on to St. Kilda where this image was taken. Myself and my colleague, George Stoye were swimming into an entrance of a sea cave to undertake photographic transects when I noticed several of these animals in the plankton. The impulse was to stop and photograph these wonderful creature but we had a job to do in the sea cave. After completing our tasks, we were making our way back out the cave and I was scanning the water column looking for this pteropod, known as a sea angel (*Clione limacina*) a pelagic sea slug. Right at the entrance I saw one in 5 meters of water, managed to take eight images before it was time to surface and be picked up by the boat.

Nikon, D4, 105 macro lens, Nauticam, iso 800, f20, 1/160, 2 x Inon z240

7) British Waters Macro

Highly commended
'Skeleton shrimp'
Trevor Rees (UK)

This is a skeleton shrimp (*Caprella linearis*) perched on the hydroid (*Kirchenpauria similis*). It is a small crustacean, about 2 cm tall and is very easy to swim over and never notice. This yellow coloured individual caught my eye as they are generally white in appearance where they are then far more camouflaged against their familiar hydroid habitat. They are actually very common subjects indeed but are not often photographed well in UK waters. I was pleased to get one facing me in an upright position.

Nikon , D600 + Nikkor 105mm
+ Maumi +5 dipotre, Sea and Sea
MDX-D600, iso 320, f/32, 1/250, Single
snooted Sea & Sea YS110





7) British Waters Macro

Commended
'Intruder beware'
Cathy Lewis (UK)

One of the many joys of macro photography is being able to get up close and personal with small marine critters. Painted gobies are common bottom-dwelling fish that, from a distance, look drab and unremarkable. Take a closer look however and you discover they are both colourful and characterful. They are highly territorial and deter trespassers by opening their mouths to emit a drumming sound. They are fearless, even with divers, and will come close if you are patient. I chose to photograph this feisty fellow using a narrow depth of field. This had the effect of blurring the background, making him stand out from the sand and shingle seabed.

Nikon, D7000, 60mm, Nauticam, iso 200, f/6.3, 1/80, Sea & Sea YS110

Judge's Special Comment:

It's always a bonus to capture a critter which is gaping. You need plenty of patience and concentration and sometimes (not always) you may get lucky. On this occasion the author achieved a pin sharp eye together with a gape and retained the feeling of a blurred background which keeps the eye of the viewer where the action is. It's good to practice bokeh technique and this image shows that it can be done with a 60mm macro lens. Very good technique, composition and creative thought.

Martin Edge



7) British Waters Macro

Commended
'Inquisitive Cuckoo Wrasse'
Saeed Rashid (UK)

Wrasse are amazingly inquisitive fish and Cuckoo Wrasse even more so; if you find the right individual they can stay with you for the whole dive. This guy was fascinated by something on my housing and everywhere I turned he was in front of me. This allowed me to get some portrait images of this lovely colourful fish which really stand out among other British species.

Canon , 7D, Canon 60, Nauticam , iso 160, 6.3, 250, 2 x Inon z240s

Judge's special comment:

Cuckoo wrasse are one of the most colourful and inquisitive, and therefore most photographed, British fish. As a result your shot has to stand out and this one most certainly does. The tight crop emphasises the perfectly focused eye contact and the swirling out of focus tail fin in the background creates a dynamic portrait.

Peter Rowlands

7) British Waters Macro

Commended
'Friend or Foe?'
Dan Bolt (UK)

Having found a lumpsucker (*Cyclopterus lumpus*) tending to his newly laid eggs in the early spring, I made several visits back to the site over the coming weeks to study the development of the juveniles within the eggs. On this occasion there was a long-clawed porcelain crab (*Pisidia longicornis*) seeming poised to eat some of the young.

Taking my time to observe, it turned out that the crab was actually helping to keep the eggs clean of parasites by eating them off the egg casings. A most fascinating behaviour to watch!

Olympus, E-PL5, Panasonic 45mm macro, Olympus PT-EP10, iso 200, f/14, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D1 & snoot



The British Society of Underwater Photographers



ABOUT BSoUP

BSoUP's aim is to inspire and encourage underwater photographers and to help develop underwater photography in all aspects. It strives to help its members create great underwater images and to promote excellence in underwater photography.

BSoUP provides expert advice and encouragement through a network of experienced underwater photographers who help newcomers and others to develop through monthly meetings, news and our own magazine.

We believe that good photography comes from the skill of the photographer, not from the camera. Photographic vision and technique are the most important ingredients for creating stunning underwater images.

BSoUP welcomes photographers of all skill levels and experience with any type of underwater camera system from compact camera to DSLR.

Our membership ranges from divers who have just started to take photos underwater to world-class

professionals. One of the benefits of membership is an opportunity to learn from more experienced photographers.

Our members take photographs underwater for many different reasons: some want to enter and win competitions, some want to push the boundaries of creativity, both when creating an image in camera and in post-processing. Many take photos underwater simply for their own personal enjoyment and to share with family and friends. All underwater photographers are welcome and all will benefit from joining BSoUP.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The programme of talks and events at our monthly meetings:

- inspires better photography by hearing some of the best underwater photographers talk about their images and what they are doing;
- provides practical information on techniques and equipment, as well as tips on what is new or emerging;
- informs about different dive locations around the world – both cold and warm water – and the potential that they offer for underwater photographers.

There is also a monthly competition that provides an opportunity to see how your images 'measure up' against others. The 'focus on' and three portfolio competitions are for members only. There are two prestigious annual portfolio competitions that are open to photographers throughout the world.

Most importantly there is also social time during the meetings, providing the opportunity to meet and talk to other underwater photographers and decide 'what's hot and what's not'...

Full details of the meetings and competitions programme can be found on the website. www.bsoup.org

WHERE WE MEET

We meet on the third Tuesday of the month in Meeting Room 3, Union Building, Beit Quadrangle, Prince Consort Road, Imperial College, South Kensington, London SW7 2BB.

Meetings start at 8pm and finish at around 10.30pm. New and potential members are encouraged to come along at 7.30pm, when there will be committee members on hand to welcome you. Full directions including a map are available on the BSoUP website.

Many members travel long distances to come to the monthly meetings. However, for those who are too far away, there are still many benefits to joining BSoUP, including entering the monthly competitions, reduced entry fees for events and competitions organised by BSoUP, and full access to the website and forums, where you can exchange information with other members, ask for advice and advertise equipment for sale or wanted.

'IN FOCUS' MAGAZINE

Members receive BSoUP's magazine 'in focus', which is published three times a year. It contains articles and photos on places members have been, tips and techniques, and news of events, meetings and competition winners.



8) British Waters Compact

for wide angle or close-up/
macro images shot in British
waters with a compact camera
(includes stills from GoPro and
other action cameras, does not
include interchangeable lens
mirrorless cameras). Open to all.



8) British Waters Compact

1st Place
'Hello Ducky!'
Paul Colley (UK)

Whilst trying to photograph trout during a year-long river project with a home-made pole-cam, a raft of Mallard ducks muscled in to steal food intended to entice trout to the camera. This initial nuisance became an interesting opportunity and, shooting blind with the camera on the pole, I managed to catch the trout below water with a duck swimming overhead. Snell's window was an important pre-determined part of the composition. This needed a low viewpoint, an upward camera angle and a metric tonne of patience to allow all the elements to come together and make the picture work.

Olympus, XZ-2, INON UWL100 wet lens, Olympus PT-054, iso 320, f/6.3, 1/320, Natural light

Judge's notes:

River fish are notoriously shy and difficult to photograph, which makes Paul's image all the more remarkable. Not only is it a handsome photograph of a brown trout, the perfectly framed female mallard is an exceptional secondary subject. This compact camera picture took dogged determination, a custom built pole-cam and outstanding photographic vision to conceive such original images.

Alex Mustard

8) British Waters Compact

Runner up
'Tompot looking out'
Trevor Rees (UK)

Who doesn't love the look of these charismatic fish? This Tompot blenny (*Parablennius gattorugine*) was found hiding in a hole amongst the legs of a sea pier. Some of these fish are quite shy whilst others are rather inquisitive and like to see what's going on. This one was happy to pose for as long as I needed although he/she did frequently disappear for a few minutes every so often before then popping out again. I made sure I had both the fish's eyes facing forward in the same direction and that the head tentacles were isolated against a black background. As they are very popular and very well photographed fish I opted for an off centre composition with quite a lot of negative space to perhaps give a slightly different feel to my take on this fish.

Olympus , TG-3, , Olympus PT-056,
iso 200, f/6.3, 1/200, Sea & Sea YS110 strobe

Judge's notes:

This image has all the techniques of an excellent fish portrait. As the author points out. Eye's need to be symmetrical.





8) British Waters Compact

3rd Place

'British native crayfish'

Trevor Rees (UK)

The British native crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) is a species now under threat as it struggles to compete against the larger American signal crayfish. The crayfish at this freshwater quarry are all native ones and there are a good number of them to be seen. I found the small form factor of a compact camera ideal for holding at arms length to get a low angle and to get close to an individual that was nicely out in the open. The auto exposure only nature of my camera was restricting but I was pleased to get a light green water background and be able to add a little strobe light to bring out the colour of the crustacean.

Olympus , TG-3, , Olympus PT-056,
iso 200, f3.2, 1/60sec, Sea & Sea YS110 strobe

Judge's note:

It has long been an irritation of mine that so many UK macro shots have black or murky backgrounds. Such shots have single handedly tainted UK diving with a negative impression yet the truth can be so different as this excellent shot illustrates. Balancing ambient and artificial light is a technical start then add a great composition, a powerful upward angle and a sublime emerald green background combine to produce a celebratory 'British' shot.

Peter Rowlands

8) British Waters Compact

Highly Commended

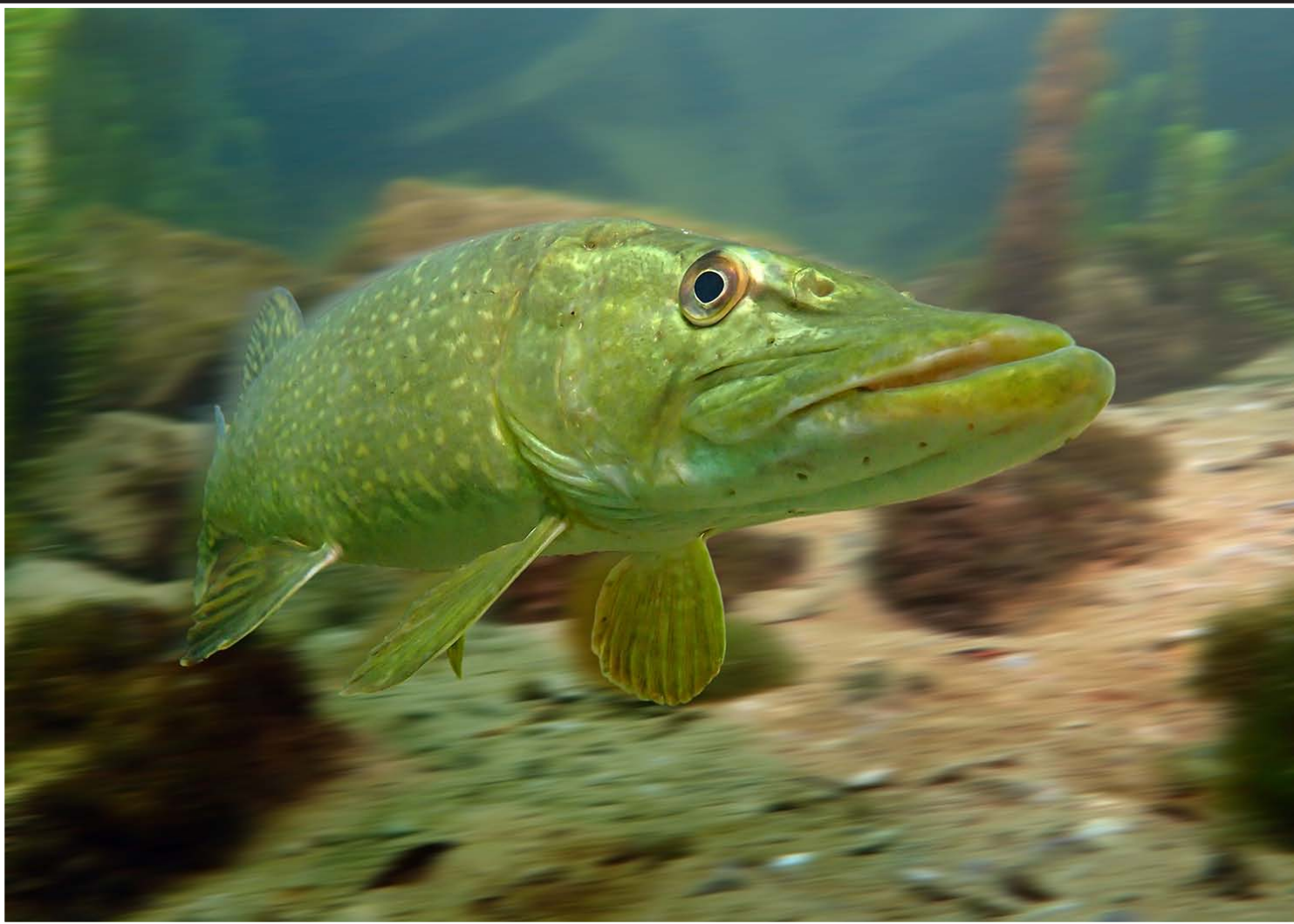
'Lobster'

Trevor Rees (UK)

This lobster (*Homarus gamarus*) was found sitting deep in a vertical rock crack. The sight of a lobster on any dive is a welcome sight and the Farne islands seems to have healthy numbers of them. After a bit of patience this lobster was inquisitive enough to move forward to allow me enough of a view to get the shot I wanted. This was an occasion where I was fortunate to be able to make use of the small form factor of the compact camera to get in close enough and to be able to shoot with the camera in the portrait orientation to get a portrait format image.

Olympus , TG-3, Olympus PT-056,
iso 200, f/3.2, 1/60, Sea & Sea YS110 strobe





8) British Waters Compact

Highly Commended
'Pike on the move'
Trevor Rees (UK)

This pike (*Esox lucius*) was photographed in a flooded freshwater quarry on a busy Saturday morning at a site heavily used for diver training. I found an area that had reasonable visibility and had a number of large pike lurking. I did not have long to get the image before the water clarity was quickly ruined by other divers finning by and stirring up the silt which then scared the pike away. I decided to add a feeling of movement in the image by using a zoom blur filter effect with Photoshop, which has also helped to mask some of the particulate matter in the background.

Olympus , TG-3, Olympus PT-056,
iso 500, f2.8, 1/125, Sea & Sea YS110 strobe

8) British Waters Compact

Highly commended
'Pink fins taste much better'
Sara Bowring (UK)

Taking this photo made me realise that its not always what is in front of you at the time.

While I was taking a photo I felt a tug on my fins and performed a maneuver that I could never achieve on land and took this photo whilst upside down & through my legs, not expecting to get an image let alone one that sums up my whole trip to the Farne Islands and playfulness of these graceful seals.

Panasonic Lumix, DMC-TZ20, 35mm,
Panasonic DMW-MCTZ20E, iso 125, f/3.3,
1/60, Natural light





8) British Waters Compact

Highly commended
'Hello give us a kiss'
Sara Bowring (UK)

Seal's both Grey & Common have one of the largest parts of my diving heart. I am a Marine Mammal Medic with BDMLR that is a charity that rescues the young, abandoned and sick seals all over the UK. So going to the Farne Islands and interacting in their natural environment waiting and wondering if they will come close enough just to get that "real true photo" is the best feeling in the world.

Panasonic Lumix , DMC-TZ20,
35mm, Panasonic DMW-MCTZ20E, iso
200, f/3.3, 1/40, Natural light



8) British Waters Compact

Commended
'Scilly Seal!'
Nicola Faulks (UK)

The dive was a maximum of 5 metres in a sheltered bay. Some of the wreck divers stayed on board, so I took my little compact camera and jumped in to see what I could find. I finned through curtains of thong weed, which parted to reveal boulders, sand patches and colourful anemones. Towards the end of the dive, I found an open area of sand, with a couple of boulders. One seal in particular kept coming closer and closer. His acrobatics as he swam close, then flipped away, were quite an amazing sight. My patience paid off, for it was the final encounter when I managed to get this shot, following which he disappeared out of sight.

Fuji, FinePix F80EXR, Fuji housing, iso 100, f3.3, 1/160,

8) British Waters Compact

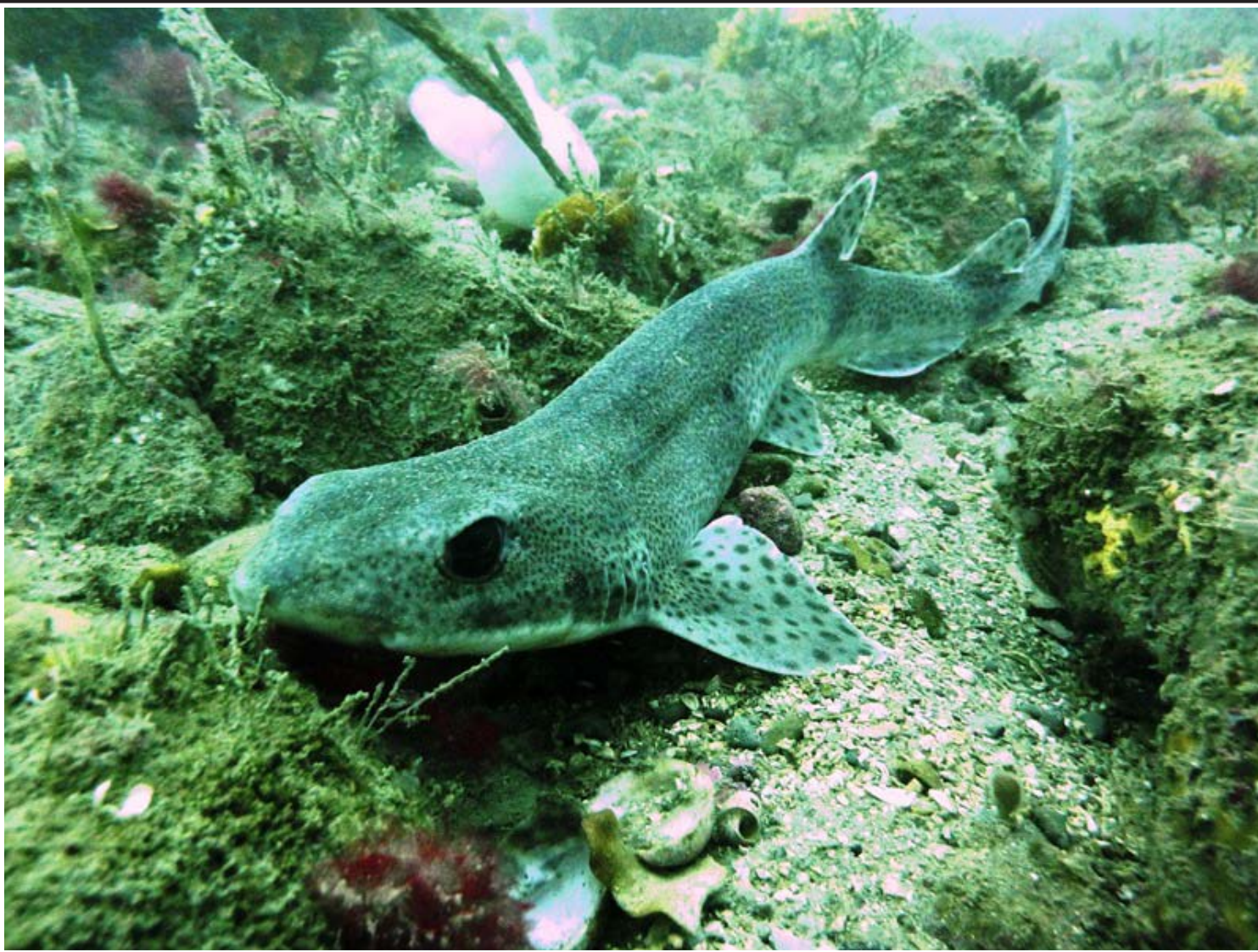
Commended
'Night Time Stroll'
Sara Bowring (UK)

During the day in the shallows of Babbacombe Bay I am positive I saw cuttlefish & this being a very small baby I was keen to try and find it again as I had never seen such a small one before. So knowing that they like to stroll around the sea bed at night to feed better I decided to drag my buddy out for a night dive. It wasn't long before we spotted this beauty in the shallows and I was so excited.

I don't have a strobe or lights but use the camera's built in flash. I line up using a torch and then turn all lights off and hope for the best as I push the button.

Panasonic Lumix, DMC-TZ20, 35mm,
Panasonic DMW-MCTZ20E, iso 160, f/3.3,
1/60, Camera's built in flash





8) British Waters Compact

Commended
'Lazy Day In The Sun'
Sara Bowring (UK)

For years these beauties have eluded me; I get in the water and they all go on holiday. So you can imagine my excitement when I was taking a photo of something else when I had the feeling I was being watched, and there it was, just next to me, It wasn't a hard one to take a photo of as seemed to just lay there and pose. It was a beach dive with calm shallow water and the sun was shining; doesn't get better than that especially in the UK.

Panasonic Lumix, DMC-TZ7, 35mm,
Panasonic DMW-MCTZ7E, iso 400, f/3.3,
1/120, Natural light

RESULTS: Underwater Photographer of the Year 2016

1. International Wide Angle

For wide angle underwater photographs taken anywhere in the world.

Winner: Mike Korostelev (Russia)
Runner Up: Fabio Galbiati (Italy)
Third: Greg Lecoeur (France)

Highly Commended: Gabriel Barathieu (France),
Greg Lecoeur (France), Davide Lopresti (Italy),
Alejandro Prieto (Mexico),

Commended: Mathieu Foulquié (France), Damien Mauric (UK)
Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

2. International Macro

For macro and close up underwater pictures taken anywhere in the world.

Winner: Davide Lopresti (Italy)
Runner Up: Helen Brierley (USA)
Third: Gianni Colucci (Italy)

Highly Commended: Behnaz Afsahi (Canada), Qing Lin (Canada),
Greg Lecouer (France), Adriano Morettin (Italy)

Commended: Marc Casanovas (Spain), Ross Gudgeon (Australia),
Matteo Visconti (Italy)

3. International Wrecks

For wide angle and macro photos taken on wrecks. The wreck can be the main subject or the setting for the photo.

Winner: Tobias Friedrich (Germany)
Runner Up: Charles Hood (UK)
Third: Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

Highly Commended: Anders Nyberg (Sweden), Saeed Rashid (UK),
Christian Vizl (Mexico), Spencer Burrows (UK)

Commended: Rui Guerra (Portugal), Trevor Rees (UK),
Susannah H. Snowden-Smith (Grand Cayman)

4. International Behaviour

For underwater photos of natural marine life behaviour, taken anywhere in the world.

Winner: Richard Carey (Thailand)
Runner Up: Alejandro Prieto (Mexico)
Third: Rui Guerra (Portugal)

Highly Commended: Theresa A. Guise (USA),
Paolo Bausani (Italy), Vania Kam (Hong Kong),
Damien McGuirk (Ireland)

Commended: Ralph Pace (USA), Richard Barnden (Palau),
Susannah H. Snowden-Smith (Grand Cayman)

5. Up and Coming Worldwide

For any type of underwater photos taken by unpublished photographers, who are yet to win a major award for their images. Photos can be taken anywhere in the world.

Winner: Pier Mane (South Africa)
Runner Up: Marty Engels Dunmore (UK)
Third: Spencer Burrows (UK)

Highly Commended: Pier Mane (South Africa),
Marty Engels Dunmore (UK) Lorincz Ferenc (Hungary),
Oliver Anlauf (Germany)

Commended: Fabio Russo (Italy), Pier Mane (South Africa),
Spencer Burrows (UK)

6. British Waters Wide Angle

For wide angle photos taken in British seas and freshwater (not including swimming pools, aquariums etc).

Winner: Marcus Blatchford (UK)
Runner Up: Will Clark (UK)
Third: Trevor Rees (UK)

Highly Commended: Nick Blake (UK), Richard Shucksmith (UK),
Matt Doggett (UK), Steve Jones (UK)

Commended: Trevor Rees (UK), Will Clark (UK), Dan Bolt (UK)

7. British Waters Macro

For macro and close-up photos taken in British seas and freshwater (not including swimming pools, aquariums etc).

Winner: Dan Bolt (UK)
Runner Up: George Stoyale (UK)
Third: Cathy Lewis (UK)

Highly Commended: Mark N Thomas (UK), Alex Tattersall (UK),
Richard Shucksmith (UK), Trevor Rees (UK)

Commended: Cathy Lewis (UK), Saeed Rashid (UK),
Dan Bolt (UK)

8. British Waters Compact

For any underwater photos taken in British seas and freshwater (not including swimming pools, aquariums etc) with compact cameras.

Winner: Paul Colley (UK)
Runner Up: Trevor Rees (UK)
Third: Trevor Rees (UK)

Highly Commended: Trevor Rees (UK), Trevor Rees (UK),
Sara Bowring (UK), Sara Bowring (UK)

Commended: Nic Faulks (UK), Sara Bowring (UK),
Sara Bowring (UK)

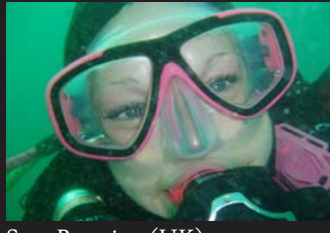
The Finalists 2016



Behnaz Afsahi (Canada)



Nick Blake (UK)



Sara Bowring (UK)



Gianni Colucci (Italy)



Mathieu Foulquié (France)



Theresa A. Guise (USA)



Oliver Anlauf (Germany)



Marcus Blatchford (UK)



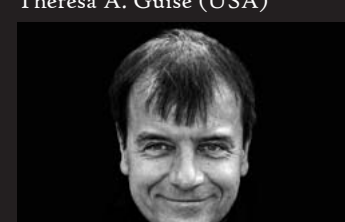
Richard Carey (Thailand)



Matt Doggett (UK)



Tobias Friedrich (Germany)



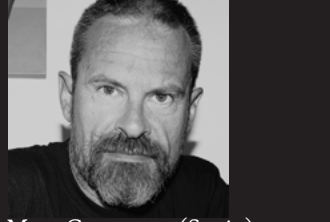
Thomas Heckmann (Germany)



Gabriel Barathieu (France)



Dan Bolt (UK)



Marc Casanovas (Spain)



Marty Engels Dunmore (UK)



Fabio Galbiati (Italy)



Steve Jones (UK)



Richard Barnden (Palau)



Helen Brierley (USA)



Will Clark (UK)



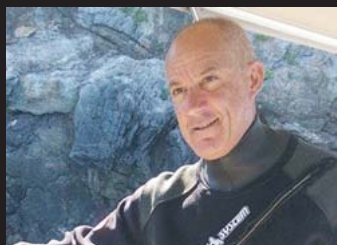
Nic Faulks (UK)



Ross Gudgeon (Australia)



Vania Kam (Hong Kong)



Paolo Bausani (Italy)



Spencer Burrows (UK)



Paul Colley (UK)



Lorincz Ferenc (Hungary)



Rui Guerra (Portugal)



Mike Korostelev (Russia)



Greg Lecoeur (France)



Damien Mauric (UK)



Alejandro Prieto (Mexico)



Susannah H. Snowden-Smith
(Grand Cayman)



Christian Vizl (Mexico)



Cathy Lewis (UK)



Damien McGuirk (Ireland)



Saeed Rashid (UK)



George Stoye (UK)



Qing Lin (Canada)



Adriano Morettin (Italy)



Trevor Rees (UK)



Alex Tattersall (UK)



Davide Lopresti (Italy)



Anders Nyberg (Sweden)



Fabio Russo (Italy)



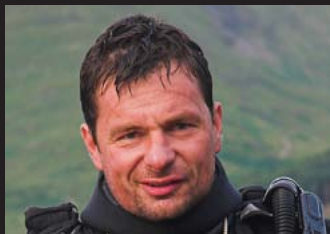
Mark Thomas (UK)



Pier Mane (South Africa)



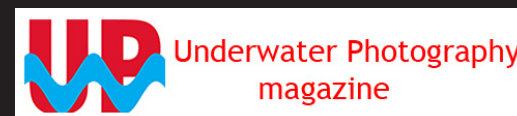
Ralph Pace (USA)



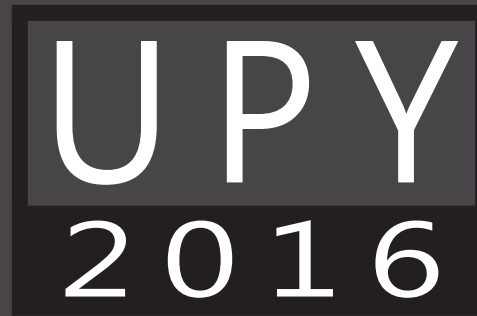
Richard Shucksmith (UK)



Matteo Visconti (Italy)







See you all
in 2017

Underwater Photography

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