



The Yearbook



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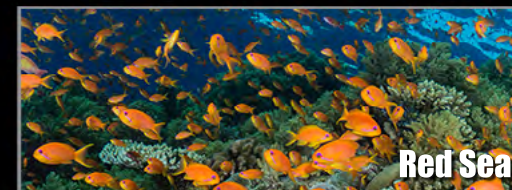
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UPY 2022

Foreword by Martin Edge

What with all the comings and goings of the worldwide pandemic, I salute every one of you underwater photographers who have taken to the water, whenever and wherever you have been able to shoot images. Your passion is an inspiration. The strength of this year's entries proves that beyond a shadow of doubt. Congratulations to you all.

Over the years at UPY, I have become the 'go to judge' for those keen underwater photographers who seek feedback and solace with their image entries. I expect that this coming year will be no exception and I do believe that over the years of judging UPY, I have picked up plenty of insight into what it takes to successfully navigate the rounds, and why some fabulous pictures fall short. So whether you are a winner or not, or merely a prospective entrant for next year, I hope this insight is valuable. At UPY we want to award the very best images and we've always tried to be honest, open and encouraging about the process to help you pick the right ones from your collection.

While all photo contests want to award eye-catching photos, each has its own judging process and you should consider it when entering. We always try and judge UPY as soon after the entry closes as possible and tell the entrants how they have done straight away. We know you appreciate that. The other distinctive feature of UPY judging is that your three judges see all the entries, make every decision. And since we know in detail how good last year's winners were and we know

our minds, the early rounds can be intense, the phrase 'fast and furious' springs to mind!

Judging usually takes 2 to 3 days, we work long hours, look at the pictures multiple times, but we go from 5000 entries down to these winners in a period of 24 to 36 hours in front of the screen. I will reiterate! Your images are judged over a period of 24 to 36 hours.

We always view the images once before making any decisions, but on that second viewing, once we have a feel for the standard, it is cut-throat! We cull some images after they have been on screen for just two to three seconds. We move onto the next image and seldom look back. Many that fall are good images, but images that all three judges almost instantly agree aren't up to the standard of contenders. I share this scary story, in the hope you will understand that it's essential that your image entries have immediate appeal.

When one or more judge calls out 'yes' or 'keep' the image is through to be seen again, studied in detail and discussed. The winners will be viewed more than a dozen times before the results are decided. UPY attracts such a sizeable entry, and our focus is always on finding the winners. We want to keep as much time as possible for that stage of the process.

So how do you make your entries immediately eye catching? Avoid those simple mistakes. Try to pay attention to the backgrounds of your image. UPY attracts the best images from the best photographers, so you can expect that everyone will have

a good subject. So make sure you consider the rest of the frame, in particular try to avoid elements that merge into each other. In all art work, distractions close to the edge of the frame attract the viewer and so often lead the eye out of the frame. We don't go looking for compositional flaws, they usually stand out like a sore thumb, and I think if you sat in with us, you'd agree with almost every decision we make when it comes to what progresses and what drops out.

Eyes have to be in focus. If just one eye is visible, it has to be in focus. Two eyes visible, then both have to be in focus. No excuses. If you have a great shot but in your heart you know that it is a tad soft then try it somewhere less exacting than UPY.

You are allowed to crop your images, however before you enter, think about the aspect ratio to adopt. Remember that you do not have to be a slave to any set ratio, we don't have rulers, we just want great images. There are many successful shots that have been cropped into a variety of shapes that accentuated the strength of the composition.

Last, but not least, read the rules and guidelines carefully so that you are in adherence with them and most important that you enter your work in the appropriate



category. In UPY we don't move images to the 'correct' category, we judge them where you choose to place them. So, think carefully.

I hope you enjoy and are inspired by the 2022 collection. With all that said I wish you all good luck for 2023.

Martin Edge

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2022

Chairman's Welcome

UPY 2022 attracted exactly 4200 entries, and these pages contain the very best. Enjoy! They were savoured and dissected over three full judging days, separated by a weekend for reflection, by the judging panel of Peter Rowlands, Tobias Friedrich and myself to select this collection.

You'll all immediately notice that the UPY cornerstone, Martin Edge isn't part of the judging team, for the first time this year. Last year Martin told us that he wanted to retire as a UPY judge and we miss him.

Martin has contributed so much to making UPY the success it has become not only in selecting brilliant images, but also in teaching all of us so much about assessing and appreciating underwater photographs. His sharp photographic eye and investigating mind not only unwaveringly spotted the big winners, but also unearthed the truly original and outstanding work that helped make all the previous collections must-see. I hope we can continue that tradition in celebrating underwater photography in all its genres and bringing you fresh and spectacular images in our collection of winners. I know it meant so much to our winners to get Martin's stamp of approval, and even more when he wrote the judge's comment for their shot.

Personally, I'll always treasure the quality time we spent together, discussing pictures, dissecting techniques and thrilling in wonderful imagery. The judging room with Martin was an education, a privilege and never a chore. And I'll always remember listening to the fabulous stories he and Peter told over a beer at the end of long judging days. Martin's impeccable photographic reputation and the huge regard that this true gentleman is held by our community lent UPY such credibility when we started and definitely fast-tracked the way this contest has been embraced as THE one to be in by underwater photographers.

There is only one Martin Edge and while we had to refill our judging panel, we knew that he could never be replaced. The man himself approved Tobias Friedrich as his successor. Tobias

was the first name on our list and the only person we asked.

Tobias's credentials go beyond being Underwater Photographer of the Year 2018 and being one of our contest's most awarded photographers. He teaches and writes on the subject and walks the walk as a fulltime professional. And you've all had his whale photo on your computer as the startup image of the previous version of Lightroom! Tobias' celebrated portfolio contains it all from ground-breaking wreck photography to miniature blackwater marvels. He shoots beneath polar icebergs and in popular tropical tourist spots.

He's one of the world's most travelled shooters and it is this breadth of knowledge that makes him so well qualified to accurately assess the very diverse types of images that UPY receives. He is also one of the good guys. A good contest judge needs both to know their own mind, but also to know when to change it. In a world of swirling photographic egos, the latter is a much rarer talent amongst the most celebrated shooters.

We were keen to diversify our judging panel, while maintaining its quality and most importantly the rigour of all-judges-do-everything-together judging process. In the majority of contests, most images are culled by nameless 'organisers' leaving the big-name judges to only choose from a small subset. At UPY we've always believed that all the judges should see all the images, and do so at the same time. So that all decisions are agreed together and each judge's voice can be heard at any time. We don't always agree, but we always have time to examine and debate every decision. This also allows us to give every entrant, whether a winner or not, feedback on how each of their images progressed through the contest, in the knowledge that it was the judges who decided it. We put the hours in, but we schedule the judging directly after the contest closes and let all entrants know how they got on within a week from the closing date.

This year the Omicron COVID variant

scuppered our plans for usual face to face judging, but we did convene for three, at times gruelling, full days of webcam to webcam judging. The only casualty of our inability to meet was that we could not affectively judge the Book Of The Year award and have decided that the entries will be carried forward to next year's competition.

The ongoing restrictions on travel continue to impact on underwater photography, although I accept you could be misled looking at these tremendous images. Our entry numbers only dropped 5% since last year, despite us tightening up the time-window for eligible images to just the last three years, but we're down about 1000 images on pre-COVID levels.

Many of the images awarded this year come from home countries, swimming pools or from destinations like the Maldives and Mexico, for example, that have largely remained open to diving tourism. South East Asian based photographers and destinations are facing some of the tightest restrictions currently and this clearly limits the hotbed of macro photography, which certainly accounted for an unusually low number of entries in our Macro category (which is often the most popular category). Conversely, our British Waters categories saw record numbers and standards in Compacts, Living Together and Macro. British Waters Macro was by far and a way the most impressive entry ever in that category, I reckon there were more than 30 images entered that would have won awards in any previous year of UPY.

We're continuing to celebrate images taken close to home in the My Backyard award, but we're also aware that not everyone lives conveniently close to photogenic waters. Our winning photographers remain highly international this year, coming from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Croatia, Denmark, France,



Finland, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Caledonia, Oman, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turks and Caicos, USA, United Kingdom and Vietnam. We are thrilled that UPY awards such a global mix and that our judging process rewards such diverse styles, influences and genres of underwater photography.

Most of all we remain hugely grateful for everyone who supports UPY with their entries and on your behalf and from me, I want to say a huge thanks to the UPY team that makes it happen – thank you Peter, Dan, Tobias and Saeed for everything they do that makes UPY so special. Thank you for writing the foreword Martin, we miss you, and will always send you the winner for your approval, before anyone else sees them.

Alex Mustard
www.amustard.com



Thank you once again for your support of UPY 2022. It is the highlight of my year to be trusted to view your images and, despite continuing restrictions, you have done yourselves proud.

It is in the difficult times that loyalty is tested and this two way relationship seems stronger than ever and long may it continue.

The other vital support comes from our Category sponsors. The Crown Estate continues to be our bedrock in this third year of our work together and this year we are delighted to be working with the 'Save Our Seas Foundation' Marine Conservation Category.

Since 2003, the Save Our Seas Foundation has been dedicated to protecting life in our oceans, especially sharks and rays. They support passionate and innovative researchers, conservationists and educators around the globe by funding their projects and helping them to tell important scientific and environmental stories. Their centres in South Africa, Seychelles and the USA are dedicated to learning about sharks and rays and sharing that knowledge.

Every year sees UPY advancing with these additional relationships; making the foundations broader and stronger for a positive future in which we can all take pride.

Finally I'm delighted to see the My Backyard entries featuring well in the Awards and Category winners. Long may it continue.

Peter Rowlands
www.uwpmag.com



When I saw Alex's e-mail I was just stunned. It was not the first competition I have judged in the past years but UPY is clearly the most prestigious one where the best photographers in the world participate year after year.

But the invitation also came with a sad note that Martin Edge was retiring from being a judge. Reading his book when I was becoming an underwater photographer helped me a lot to improve my skills and so he became one of my idols and I truly miss his absence in being a judge.

From the first moment being a judge in the UPY competition I could see that the process of judging is different to all other competitions that I was part of as a judge. The accuracy and passion that goes into judging the right images and selecting the winners is far from standard.

We looked at all 4200 images not just once, but several times, sometimes for minutes or even hours before we decided to choose one above the other. It was truly remarkable to work with Alex and Peter together and not only to see their passion for underwater photography but also their knowledge and level of expertise being a judge for so many years.

Every judge had his favorite images and opinions about good or bad images. In some we agreed, in some not. It is hard if not impossible to replace Martin in his role and knowledge, so I'm not trying it at all. I tried to express my own style and taste into the judging, which might lead to the fact that more seal images occur to the winner than usual!

Last but not least I want to thank all participants for the great variety and quality of images that had been sent in this year, especially

under these ongoing difficult times for underwater photographers. I was very impressed by the creativity of the backyard and pool photography, but also by some postproduction effects.

Thanks a lot as well to Dan and Saeed for working hard in the background and providing us with excellent working conditions, as well as of course to Alex and Peter for making the judging so much fun and almost effortless. I hope in the future we could do this again in person and reflect on the images with a beer in the evening...or two.

Tobias Friedrich
www.below-surface.com



Sadly, this year we had to judge remotely again which means it not only takes a lot longer, but removes the fun-factor from running this competition. You can't beat camaraderie and banter to help you get through those 10 hour days, and you only really get that when you're in the room working as part of a team. Hopefully next year we'll be back to in-person judging. We all missed Martin this year too, but his legacy in the UPY pantheon is assured.

It was great to have Tobias on-board with us this year, and I hope he's found being the "new boy" in the established UPY team a welcoming experience. Certainly the 2022 collection of winning images goes to prove that he has fitted right in to the judging ethos of our competition.

Its pleasing to note that this was a record year for UK entries, and I'd like to congratulate all of the winners in such a competitive year.

Dan Bolt
www.underwaterpics.co.uk



This time two years ago I was sat on a beautiful tropical island in Indonesia planning my return a few months later, who would ever thought that the world would've been turned upside down in that short period.

As I'm sure you already know last year we took the unprecedented stand to have a prize free competition as we felt we needed to support our colleagues in the dive industry around the world that were hit hard by the pandemic.

Many resorts and businesses have not seen any divers for the best part of 2 years but the world is opening up and we are all starting to dive and travel again. Meaning this year our sponsors were more than happy to supply you all with some stunning prizes, we even welcome a few new sponsors into our little family. Together with our previous sponsors I truly believe we have a wonderful portfolio of prizes for you. Although last year's competition which was stronger than ever showed that it is not all about the prizes you can win.

One positive that I will take away from the last few years is the fact that I have dived more in "my backyard" than ever before bringing more importance to that new category in UPY but that said I'm very much looking forward to being able to visit our friends all over the world especially Asia again very soon.

Whether it's closer to home or on a remote part of the world I wish you all a amazing year of diving and maybe we will bump into each other somewhere soon.

Saeed Rashid
www.focusvisuals.com



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Special Offer for Photographer groups & UPY members

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2022



WINNER Wide angle

'Dancing with the giants of the night'

Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

In the ocean magic can always happen. But when magic happens all together, you only can think you're dreaming. This was the case of that night in Maldives.

At the beginning of the night one whale shark came to the light of our boat BlueForce One, we jumped in the water and then another whale shark came. We were so happy when, a couple of hours later, out of the blue, madness happened and whale sharks started to come in big numbers. I was together with Gador Muntaner, a shark researcher, who couldn't believe what we were seeing. We counted at the same time 11 whale sharks surrounding us. It was a unique moment that no one there had thought it could even be possible.

Magic happens in the ocean every day, but if we don't protect the oceans and sharks, these moments will soon be a thing of the past.

Ari Atoll, Maldives

Nikon, z7 II, Isotta Z7II/Z6II, Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 5000, f/4.2, 1/80, One OrcaTorch D950V

Judges comments:

It is said Jacques Cousteau only saw three whale sharks in his whole life so a photo of five together is something special. But this stunning image is about far more than numbers, although it required precision timing to find a moment that they would all fit in frame and with all their faces visible. In the dead of night, the biggest migration of life occurs when billions on plankton rise from the depths and aggregate in the golden lights of a boat providing a feast fit for giants. Darkness was the opportunity, but also the photographic challenge for Rafael to see and successfully photograph such a grand scene in the inky sea. What a spectacle, a frame with more life than water.

Alex Mustard

This image took my breath away from the first viewing and I never tired coming back to it. Scale, light and the sheer numbers of big subjects, it was quite obvious from an early stage that this was, by some distance, our winning image.

Peter Rowlands

From the start it was clear to me that this image would be at least a category winner and even Underwater Photographer of the Year. To capture five whale sharks in one frame is already lucky but to get them at night is just incredible. The photographer did an amazing job to capture the five animals, but also to get them in a very nice formation with some excellent light on them. Very well done and a truly deserved winner for this year.

Tobias Friedrich



Up and coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2022

WINNER - Up and Coming

'Supernova in paradise'

Quico Abadal (Spain)

I first met Jeniya having breakfast at Zest, one of my favourite food spots of Koh Tao. We talked for long and we clicked quite well. A couple of days later we recorded a very cool video together. I knew I wanted to shoot more with her, she moved quite poetically underwater. So after a couple of months we met at the end of Sairee beach. She was wearing a stunning long white dress and we just planned to shoot mostly split shots with the sunset. I'd use the strobes to illuminate the underwater scene and the sun would do the rest. It was a pretty challenging shot, since I didn't have any fins or wetsuit, so I would easily sink. Also it was tricky to gain focus properly on the subject. What I like about this photograph is the imperfection of backscatter, recreating space and making it perfect to me.

Sairee beach Koh Tao, Thailand

Olympus, EM-1 mark ii, Olympus, 8mm PRO f/1.8, iso 200, f/5, 1/160, Olympus UFL-3

Judges comment:

In this category we are always looking for exciting new talent bringing fresh visions to underwater photography. This image is a fabulous example. Simple subject matter, elevated into an artistic vision by the imagination, ideas and talent of the photographer and model.

Alex Mustard

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2022



RUNNER UP - Portrait category

'A 3.5m great white curiously approaches my lens'

Matty Smith (Australia)

I had wanted to shoot a charismatic over/under portrait of a great white shark for a couple of years. Some techniques I had previously tried failed terribly, so this time I designed and constructed my own carbon pole and remote trigger. This enabled me to safely lower my camera and housing into the water with my own 12" split shot dome port attached. Surprisingly the sharks were instantly attracted to the camera with no extra bait needed, in fact it was a battle to stop them biting the dome port! We had wonderfully calm seas and nice evening side lighting for this naturally lit image.

North Neptune Islands, Australia

Nikon, Z6II, Aquatica Digital, Nikkor 14-24mm F2.8 S Series, iso 2800, F8, 1/1000, None, natural light

Judges comment:

This split shot of a Great White Shark truly has some character. Excellent work by the photographer by trying out different techniques until he got the result he wanted. A truly deserved 'Runner Up' in this category.

Tobias Friedrich

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2022



THIRD - British Macro

'Diamonds and Rust'

Paul Pettitt (United Kingdom)

This picture was taken on a bright afternoon when I knew the sun would be on the west side of the Pier. The Sea Gooseberries had been around for a while and on this particular day the water was like glass. I floated in the spot I wanted and waited for them to slowly drift by. The background colours represent the rust and weed growth on a metal cross beam.

Swanage Pier, England **MBY**

Nikon, D500, Nauticam, 60mm, iso 250, f22, 1/200, 1x inon 240

Judges comment:

Images like this leap out despite being subtle. The colours are celebratory and the subject perfectly placed to produce a stand out image in this category.

Peter Rowlands

My Backyard Award 2022



WINNER - Behaviour category

'All You Need Is Love'

Pekka Tuuri (Finland)

All you need is love! This love pond is in my backyard, a 20 minute drive from home. And it has rewarded me plentifully over the past ten years. It is full of love in late April. The common frogs come first, then toads and finally newts. I spent four days and four night time sessions in it in 2021. I wore a drysuit with argon, lots of undergarments and a heated vest to survive in the five degree water. I floated and stayed put among the frogs and quite soon they accepted me and my camera as a part of the scenery. The frogs climb on top of my camera, make grunting sounds in my ears and squeeze between my face and the backplate of the camera. The active spawning time lasts about two days and nights. What an experience with lots of photo ops!

City of Vantaa, Finland **MBY**

Canon, 5D Mark III, Subal 5DIII, EF8-15 mm F4 + Kenko 1.4 teleconverter @15mm, iso 640, 11, 1/30, Ambient

Judges comment:

This image truly made me laugh, when I saw it first time. What an iconic moment and excellent reaction by the remarkable Pekka Tuuri. He is truly one of the underwater photographers in the world who always came up with different ideas and outstanding, different images from places just around his corner in Finland. Excellent composition and light, very well done.

Tobias Friedrich

The 'Save Our Seas Foundation' Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2022



WINNER

'Season of anchovy fishery'

Thien Nguyen Ngoc (Viet Nam)

An aerial perspective of busy anchovy fishing activities off the coast of Hon Yen, Phu Yen province, Vietnam, many local fisherman families along the coastline will follow the near-shore currents to catch the anchovy during peak season. Salted anchovy is the most important raw material to create traditional Vietnamese fish sauce but anchovies are a little fish with a big impact. When they are overfished, the whales, tunas, sea birds... and other marine predators that rely on them as a dietary staple face starvation and population decline critically. And so far Vietnam is also facing this anchovy overfishing situation, according to the survey results of the Institute of Seafood Research, the reserves and catches of anchovies in the waters of Vietnam have decreased by 20-30% in the past 10 years.

Hon Yen, Phu Yen province, Vietnam

Hasselblad, DJI Mavic Pro 2, none, 28mm
f/2.8, iso 100, f/2.8, 1/60, none

Judges comment:

A stark visual reminder of man's reach and control over the surrounding habitat and its devastating effect on the natural balance.

Peter Rowlands

A detailed view of a Nauticam underwater camera system, including a large lens housing, a camera body, and a diver's hand in a black glove holding the device. The background is a cloudy sky.

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1) Wide angle

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1) Wide angle

WINNER

“Dancing with the giants of the night”
Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

At the beginning of the night one whale shark came to the light of our boat BlueForce One, we jumped in the water and then another whale shark came. We were so happy when, a couple of hours later, out of the blue, madness happened and whale sharks started to come in big numbers. I was together with Gador Muntaner, a shark researcher, who couldn't believe what we were seeing. We counted at the same time 11 whale sharks surrounding us. It was a unique moment that no one there had thought it could even be possible.

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Alex Mustard



1) Wide angle

RUNNER UP

‘Sunset Ray’

Andy Schmid (Switzerland)

I had heard and seen so many good things about the “Tuna Factory” dive site close to Male in the Maldives and was looking forward to diving this site hoping to see Guitar Rays or big sharks like Bull or Tiger Sharks that are regularly seen there. Because it was the last dive on a liveaboard trip before I flew out early the next day however I had to stay shallow. So while everybody else went deep looking for bigger fish I stayed up in the shallows and played around with what the site had to offer: schooling Bannerfishes, Stingrays and Moray Eels that are looking for tuna skins, bones and heads that are dumped into the ocean by the tuna factory. I quickly found a great spot where I could shoot against the setting sun, framing the schooling Bannerfishes and the Pink Whiprays that were constantly circling the area.

Tuna Factory, Maldives

Canon, EOS 5D Mark IV, Nauticam NA-5DMKIV, Canon EF 8-15mm f/4L Fisheye USM, iso 100, f/10, 1/125, Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judges comment:

Bannerfish swirl around a large stingray, in this perfectly timed photo, while sunlight dances behind. At the right time, in the right place, the ocean can be alive with life, with movement and with light. This photo takes us there.

Alex Mustard



1) Wide angle



THIRD

'Against All Odds'

Hannah Le Leu (Australia)

At Heron Island, Australia, a Green Sea Turtle hatchling cautiously surfaces for air to a sky full of hungry birds. Against all odds, this hatchling must battle through the conditions of a raging storm whilst evading a myriad of predators. Not only has the tropical storm brought out thousands of circling birds, but there are also patrolling sharks and large schools of fish on the hunt for baby turtles. Only 1 in 1000 of these hatchlings will survive; will this one survive against all odds?

Heron Island, Australia

Nikon, D850, Aquatica Digital, AF-S Fisheye
Nikkor 8-15mm, iso 1600, f/20, 1/250, Inon Z330

Judges comment:

One of my very favorite images of the competition. Very nice composition and excellent technique to capture this magnificent moment. For me, the story of this image, with the birds in the sky, really drags me into it and makes it better every time I see it. It's rare that underwater images tell a story this dramatic. Well done.

Tobias Friedrich

1) Wide angle



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Shapes of life'

Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

We are unique individuals and different from the rest, however, when we are together we create forms that from a distance can be seen as a single individual.

When you swim among a dense school of fish and enter into it, you can appreciate all those phases that show how the whole without the parts is nothing and how each part is essential to the whole. We are part of the ocean as the ocean is part of us. Flowing with their forms and being part of them is only a graphic representation of the reality to which we belong.

For me this moment with Gador Muntaner swimming among this school of fishes represented all these. It was a very special moment to play with a group of fishes like this.

Magdalena Bay, BCS, Mexico

Nikon, Z7 II, Isotta Z7II/Z6II, Nikon 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED FISHEYE NIKKOR AF-S, iso 1000, f/7.1, 1/320, None

Judges comment:

A strong visual composition with great depth and lighting will always catch the eye.

Peter Rowlands

1) Wide angle

HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Bear Bridge’

Alex Dawson (Sweden)

Bear Bridge had been on our minds since we started diving in Långban mine. But it was never accessible to us until we got our full cave and at least normoxic trimix certificates due to depth (55m). We also needed to have enough hours in the mine’s shallower levels to qualify for the deeper ones. This was our first attempt to visit the bridge and we did not know what to expect. We had lots of experience from the mines at the 30-40m levels so we kind of knew what to do when it came to setting the scene. We spent about 15 minutes there the first time and this was the favorite image that came out of that photo session. We will come back for more as the shaft under the bridge continues much deeper.

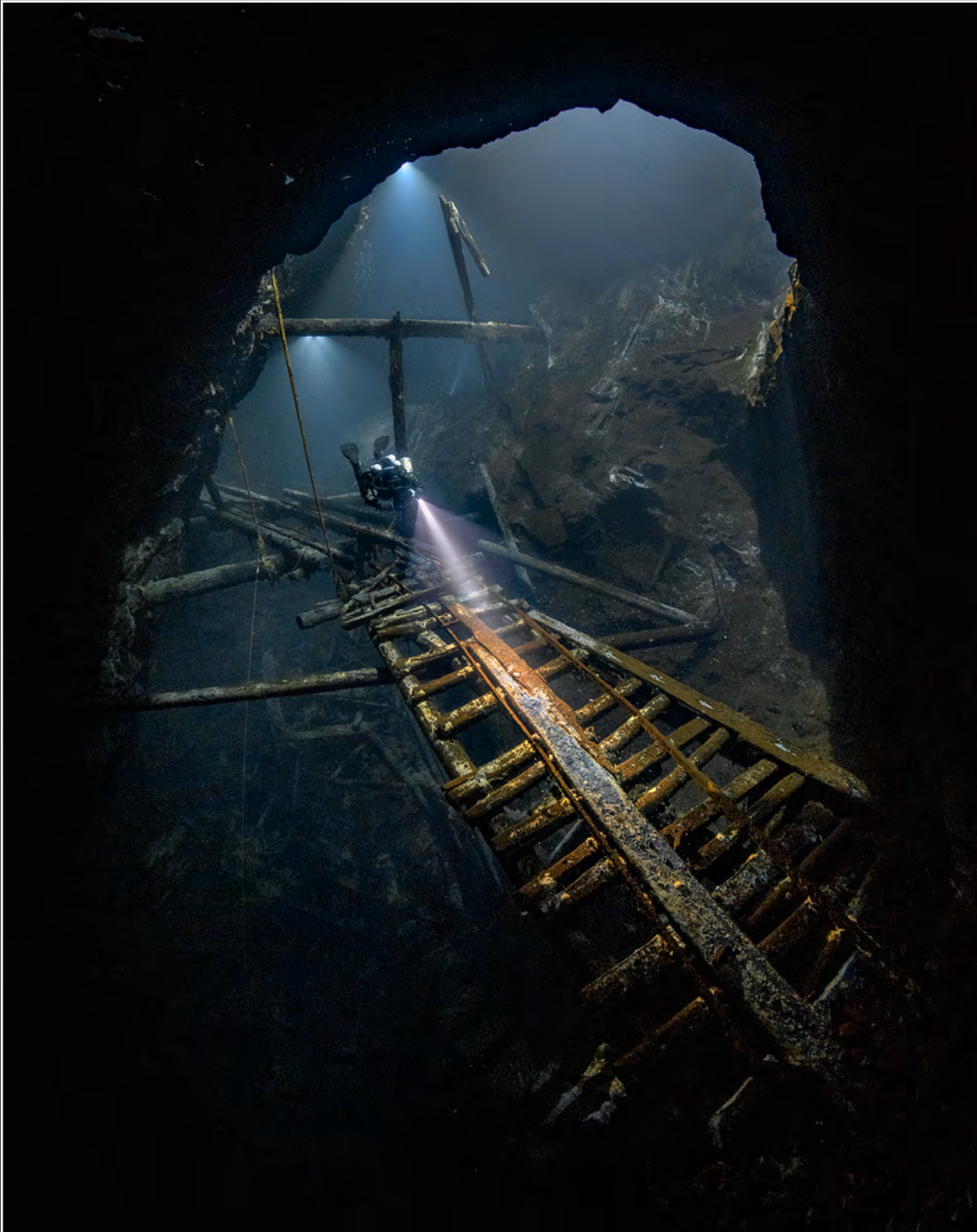
Långban mine, Sweden

Nikon, D850, Sea&Sea MDX-D850, Nikkor 8-15mm fisheye, iso 2000, F5, 1/25, 1x ERA light and 3x Bigblue Dive lights

Judges comment:

Excellent composition and not too overloaded with just one diver showing the pathway with their light. The cave works really well as a frame and drags the viewer even more into the image. Very good!

Tobias Friedrich



1) Wide angle



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘The great mother’

Daisuke Kurashima (Japan)

From December to March, humpback whales appear near Okinawa. We saw the same mother and calf whales many times that day and I could see a male whale escorting them from below.

This mother whale hardly responded to the male’s escort and swam as if she was protecting her calf. I decided to use this mother and calf to show that mothers are great beings and I pressed the shutter just as she opened her fins wide.

I felt something divine about her as the sunlight reflected off the white of her fins and made them glow.

I felt the majesty of this mother whale. Mothers are strong regardless of their species.

Okinawa, Japan

Nikon, D850, Anthis Nexus D850, SIGMA 15mm F2.8 EX DG DIAGONAL FISHEYE, iso 500, f / 8, 1/400, Available light.

Judge’s comment:

Big open ocean subjects such as whales always impress me. Filling this frame has captured this mother, calf and escort so well. Big scale but still tender.

Peter Rowlands

1) Wide angle

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Impressions of Antoni Gaudi'

Jingle Guo (China)

When I was a student, seeing the work of architect Antoni Gaudi in art history books was deeply imprinted in my mind. In particular, his masterpieces CASA BATLLO and CASA MILA. He uses soft, undulating lines to create a hill-like interior and exterior that gives a unique visual effect. Without a deliberate frame structure, the stones are naturally stacked on top of each other.

June 29th 2021 was the first time I visited Chuanlord Tourism & Leisure EXPO Park. I brought my students to Fundive there. In that moment when I looked up from underwater to the surface, WOW. It so amazing! The building in front of me resembles the style of my favorite architect Gaudi! The design of the mid-mountain semi-wooden structure cascading, combined with the underwater coral bonsai. What a dreamy scene! A beautiful encounter.

Chuanlord Tourism & Leisure EXPO Park,
China

Sony ILCE-1, mirrorless camera, Nauticam A1,
FE 2.8/16-35 GM, iso 400, F/9.0, 1/200, SUPE
v7K pro

Judges comment:

Underwater photography is far more diverse than simply capturing the wonders of the oceans as Jingle Guo's image demonstrates. A perfect pose in a captivating scene.

Alex Mustard



1) Wide angle

COMMENDED

‘Devil’s Ear’

Fan Ping (China)

When the annual rainy season comes in North Florida, the water level in the rivers rises and the brownish tannic water meets the clear spring water where the cave starts. It paints the surface with an ever-changing color. This is a diver hovering at the Devil’s Ear Spring in the Devil’s underwater cave system and I used 2 video lights to recover some details at the bottom of the log.

Ginnie Springs, Florida, USA **(MBY)**

Canon, 5DSr, Sea&Sea for 5D Mark III, Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8 L II USM, iso 1600, f/5.0, 1/80, DivePro VisionPro+ video lights

Judge’s comment:

Dramatic in several ways - a strong diagonal with contrasting water colour and a well chosen silhouette. This is an image you can’t ignore.

Peter Rowlands



1) Wide angle



COMMENDED

'Hunting sea lions'

Nicolai Posininsky (Germany)

This picture was taken in Bahia Magdalena in Mexico. It is known for numerous encounters with big fish. Snorkeling there with schools of fish is the most unbelievable thing I have experienced in many years as a diver/underwater photographer. There were many beautiful moments with goosebumps.

Bahia Magdalena, Mexico

Canon, 1DX MK II, Seacam, canon fisheye zoom lens ef 8-15mm, iso 1600, 7,1, 1/400, ambient light

Judges comment:

Fast moving baitballs are dramatic but very challenging subjects to find and frame. The balanced composition between the dynamic predators and prey is the result of a split second exposure.

Alex Mustard

1) Wide angle



COMMENDED

‘Under the sunset’

David Gallardo (Turks and Caicos)

During 2020 the Turks & Caicos Islands had a very strict lockdown; for a few months no one was allowed to travel into or out of the islands. We had empty tropical beaches and no one snorkeling on the island coral reefs, that is when I decided to spend a lot of my time photographing this quietness. During this time I spent a lot of time photographing a very friendly Green Sea turtle, I spent so many hours with this turtle that I was able to get her trust and capture some pretty cool split photos. One afternoon when the water was flat calm I decided to try to get a sunset split photo with this turtle and that is when I captured this beautiful image.

Coral Gardens Reef, Grace Bay , Turks & Caicos Islands

Sony, A7 RIV, Nauticam NA-A7RIV, Canon 8-15mm, iso 160, F/8, 1/160, One Inon Z-240

Judges comment:

Superb split shot with a fantastic sunset in the background! The photographer got the exact moment of the breathing turtle and very nice light. Very well done.

Tobias Friedrich



Barefoot Luxury in the Heart of Indonesia **Bunaken National Marine Park**





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2) Macro

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2) Macro



WINNER & My Backyard RUNNER UP 'Mimicry' Javier Murcia (Spain)

This image is the result of many hours working with the species that live in the seagrass meadows. Both species, both the pipefish (Syngnathus abaster) and the green prawn (Hippolyte sp.) live on the leaves of seagrasses. It is not the first time that I have seen this curious behavior; I have been able to observe it on 4 or 5 occasions but I had never been able to take a good photo of it (after many hours and days looking for the moment). Sometimes the shrimp would move and other times the pipefish would quickly hide in my presence. The pipefish looks like a seagrass leaf and for this reason some prawns merge with its body thinking that they are leaves that move. Both are mimetic species.

La Azohia (Cartagena), España **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Isotta D850, Nikon AF Micro-NIKKOR 60mm f/2.8D Lens, iso 200, f/8, 1/250, Inon z330

Judges comment:

A natural history story concentrated and distilled by the photographer's composition into a graphically powerful and minimalist photo. This is a special moment, capturing the meeting of the seagrass shrimp and the seagrass pipefish, both in perfect focus.

Alex Mustard



RUNNER UP

'City of Angels'

David Alpert (United Kingdom)

Just hours before they are due to hatch, these anemone fish embryos stare out into the world beyond. Their large eyes give a sense of foreboding for what lies beyond. Around spring tide, with water volumes at their greatest, a couple hours after dusk, for maximum protection from predators, they will be cast adrift onto the ocean currents to try to navigate their way through to adulthood.

All are male. They will hope to establish themselves with an anemone to form a symbiotic relationship. Only the dominant male will breed with the single female, the largest in the group. When she dies, he will alter his sex to become the next breeding female. And so the cycle is complete - in balance - but first they must hatch - getting close now - will it be tonight? Yes - the day after I took this picture they were gone.

Misool, Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Canon, 5D MK III, Nauticam, Canon 100mm Macro and Nauticam SMC1 Diopter, iso 320, F/16, 1/200, Inon Z240 (remote on tripod) with snoot.

Judges comment:

Very nice composition of this difficult subject and excellent technique used. It's super sharp and I love how the photographer used the background as a bokeh.

Tobias Friedrich

2) Macro

THIRD

'Green Fire'

Hannes Klostermann (Mexico)

I took this image on a dive off the dock of the dive centre I work at in La Paz, Mexico. This is not actually a dive site, as there's really not much to see, but I sometimes go anyway to look for macro subjects and play with different techniques. On this particular dive I was lucky to come across this signal blenny, my favourite macro subject of the area. As its home was surrounded by pretty unattractive looking algae I decided to use a slow shutter speed and snoot to blur out the background, which resulted in this image. For me it just goes to show that you don't always have to go to the best dive sites to get good images. You just need to be in the water somewhere.

La Paz, Mexico

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA-D500, Nikon 105mm VR, iso 50, f/32, 1/5, Backscatter Mini Flash + Snoot

Judges comment:

An increasingly common technique, but used here particularly well to allow the long exposure to capture the rhythms of the sea around the blenny.

Alex Mustard



2) Macro

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Goby on a Sea Pen'

Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

For this picture of a goby on a sea pen I was using two Backscatter Miniflashes. One with the original Optical Snoot from above to light up the Goby and the Sea Pen and the other with a DIY fiber optic snoot with a blue colored gel.

The position of the fiber optic snoot was coming from the left side and the challenge here was to get the right angle.

Anilao, Philippines

Sony , RX100vi, Fantasea, Nauticam CMC-1, iso 125, f/11, 1/500, 2xBackscatter Miniflash

Judges comment:

This was a particular favourite of mine with delicate lighting and colours. There is good eye contact and a contrasting but still complimentary background.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Sharpear Enope Squid in a defensive pose’

Andre Johnson (United States)



During a blackwater dive, drifting miles offshore Palm Beach, Florida in over 700 ft of water, towards the end of my nearly 2 hour long dive I encountered this rather large Sharpear Enope Squid about 2 inches in size. It came up out of nowhere but immediately paused in front of my lights and camera. Normally with cephalopods I will turn my focus lights to red mode (so as to not disturb them) but this particular one seemed to be attracted to my lights. For only seconds at a time, this species of squid will hold a defensive pose that they are known for when feeling threatened. This particular one however did not pose much as it seemed very comfortable in my presence, even using me and my lights as cover to hunt. I took this photo in the first few minutes of the encounter before it got comfortable with me.

Palm Beach, Florida, United States **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, 60 mm, iso 250, f/20, 1/200, Ikelite DS 161

Judges comment:

Blackwater images have to have that extra something which this symmetry provides but a tighter crop might have seen it placed higher.

Peter Rowlands

2) Macro



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Bubble Trouble’

Nur Tucker (United Kingdom)

Anthias are ubiquitous in the Red Sea, and often overlooked. However, enchanted by their exquisite features and dazzling colours, I worked day after day to secure a great portrait. On this particular dive, homing in on a beautiful male specimen, I was initially dismayed as my dive buddy peppered the scene with air bubbles. Quick to see the potential upside beyond the initial frustration, I moved swiftly to capture a compelling background image with a strong bokeh. Having quickly opened up the aperture, my twin Retra Pro strobes enabled a high shutter speed and what, overall, emerged as a very pleasing result.

Thomas Reef, Red Sea, Egypt

Nikon, D500, SUBALD500, Nikon AFS Micro-Nikkor 105mm f2:8G, iso 125, f4.5, 1/640th, 2 X Retra Pros

Judges comment:

A pleasing double exposure framing a handsome male anthias against an attractive background bokeh shot with a vintage lens.

Alex Mustard

2) Macro



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Banded Coral Shrimp Gladiator'
Ron Watkins (United States)

While diving in Bonaire, I found this shy common banded coral shrimp hiding in a coral head and noticed a brilliant yellow background which created an interesting contrast to the magnified gladiator looking shrimp.

Carib Inn, Bonaire

Nikon, D850, Nauticam , Nikor 105mm, iso 200, f/18, 1/100, Two Backscatter MF-1 Strobe

Judges comment:

The stunning sharpness of this image is clearly what comes to your mind first, when you see the image on a big screen. Paired with a good composition and a nice background, which makes the image stand out even more, completed the look and deserved the high ranking.

Tobias Friedrich

2) Macro

COMMENDED

'Goosefish'

Steven Kovacs (United States)

The thrill of blackwater diving, drifting out in the open ocean at night over very deep water, is the hunt for something strange and unusual coming up from the depths or drifting by. Something that has possibly never been seen before. On one such night I couldn't believe my eyes when my efforts paid off and I was lucky to spot this strange little fish off the coast of Florida. I immediately knew it was a larval Goosefish, Lophoides species, as I had previously seen 2 different species, but none with such incredible color and such a comical appearance. Very small with a body size of just over 1cm, the challenge was to try and capture an image as it twisted and turned in every direction, trying its best not to look like a fish. Fortunately on this night I was able to produce a decent result.

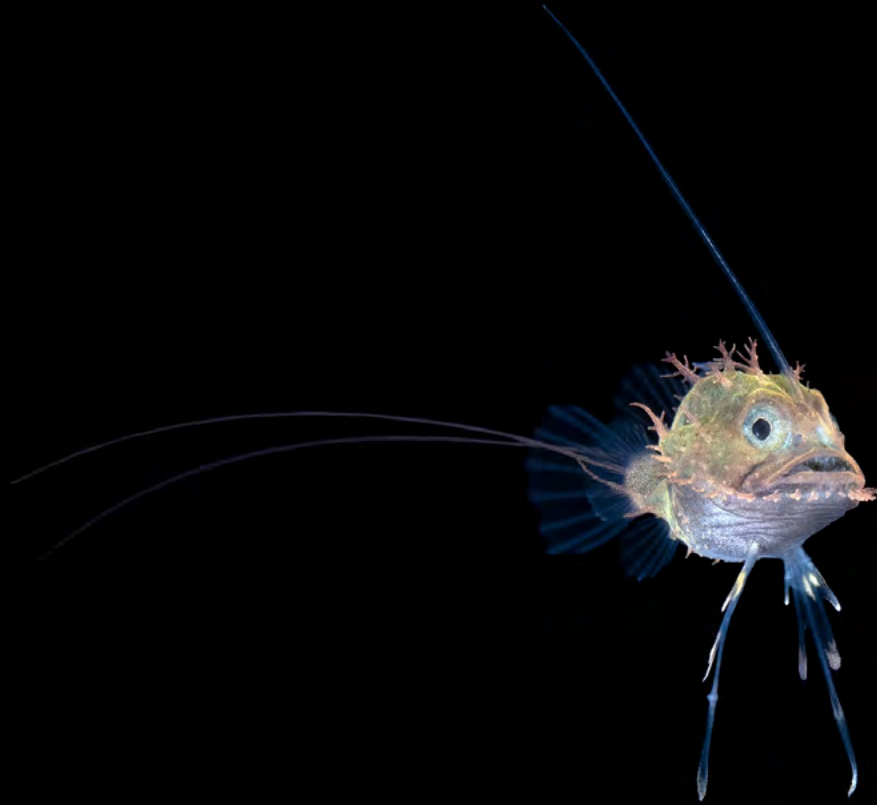
Palm Beach, Florida, United States

Nikon, D500, Ikelite, 60mm macro, iso 320, f/25, 1/250, two Ikelite DS160 Strobes

Judges comment:

First of all you think that the image is just another blackwater shot. But having a closer look led us all to the conclusion that this little, cute critter deserves more! For me it totally looks like Minion, the small fish in the movie 'Megamind'.

Tobias Friedrich



2) Macro



COMMENDED

'HALLOWEEN'

Ipah Uid Lynn (Malaysia)

I've always loved Hairy Frogfish but this was the first time I had seen one that was extremely hairy! My first thought was it would be fantastic if I made it's mouth glow and it worked as I snooted from a different angle and using 2 snoots; one for the whole body and another one directly into his mouth. Then I thought why not have a little fun and edit it using the spectral art filter which works well when there is a lot of hair! The end result looked like a horror monster from a halloween movie. This was my first time using a DSLR so I was very happy with the result.

Lembeh Straits, Indonesia

Canon , Canon 7DMii, SEACAM prelude CANON EOS7D MKII, EF100mm f/2.8L Macro IS USM, iso 160, 6, 1/250s, Minigear Snoot

Judges comment:

This is a good choice of a subject and a special effect which combine to create an eye catching but not gratuitous image.

Peter Rowlands

2) Macro



COMMENDED

‘Banded Coral Shrimp’

Richard Condlyffe (United States)

This image of a Banded Coral Shrimp, common to the Caribbean, was taken at West Caicos, one of the Turks and Caicos Islands. During a wall dive, I found this one hiding within the recesses of a sponge and was drawn to this composition by the smooth shades of red, pink and white. Often the Banded Coral Shrimp has a habit of moving away from the lens, but fortunately, this one posed compliantly for long enough to get a sharp image of it, with the shades of pink and red rolling into the depths of the sponge. Important to this image was an aperture setting that captured the depths of the sponge and sufficiently in focus. I enjoy the challenge of creating appealing images of common subjects, so this one was very satisfying.

West Caicos, Turks and Caicos Islands

Sony, a7rIV, Nauticam NA A7RIV, Sony 90mm Macro G OSS, iso 100, f/13, 1/250, 2 x Sea and Sea YS-D3

Judges comment:

A very well composed and thought of image. It's not easy to find these small critters and be able to light them well, but Richard did all of that and deserved the top 10 in the macro category.

Tobias Friedrich

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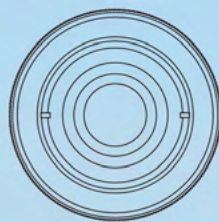
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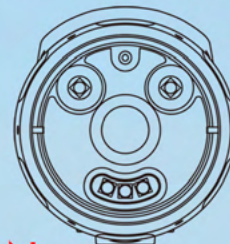
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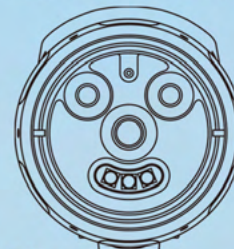


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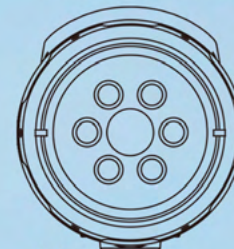
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3) Wrecks

for wide angle to macro images shot on wrecks. The wreck can be the main subject, or simply the setting for a marine life, macro or diver photograph. Photos can be taken anywhere in the world.

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3) Wrecks

WINNER

'At 40 meters the wreck of Tyrifjord, RIP'

Alex Dawson (Sweden)

The wreck of Tyrifjord is one of the favorite wrecks in the Gulen dive resort area of Norway. She sits in approximately 40 metres and is very sheltered from most winds. This is one of the dives we always try to do on our wreck safari that we try to do almost every year. We are a mixed group of Norwegians, Swedish, Danish and Dutch that usually meet up. The highlight of the wreck is always the huge extra steering wheel in the aft. You can see the 50+ foot dive boat up on the surface from 40 meters depth at the top.

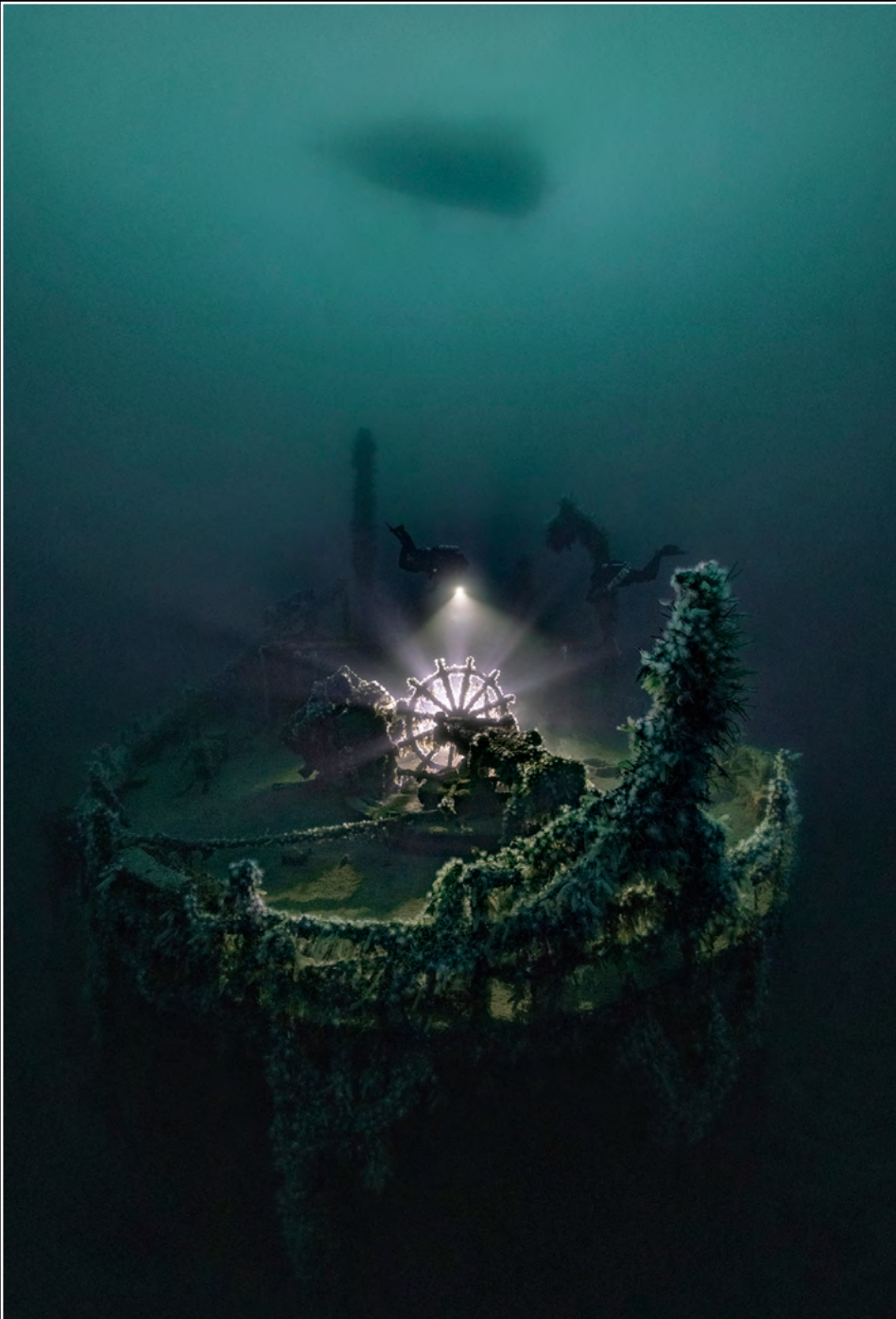
Tyrifjord wreck, Norway

Nikon, D850, Sea&Sea MDX-D850, Nikkor 8-15mm fisheye, iso 500, F4.5, 1/50, 1x Bigblue light

Judges comment:

Excellent composed image of a truly not easy subject. With poor visibility and lighting conditions, wrecks in those depths are not easy to photograph. Alex did a great job by a minimalistic, but also intense and dramatic lighting of the steering wheel, maybe one of the most recognizable part of a ship, which drags the viewer straight into it. I knew immediately when I saw the image for the first time that it would go far in the competition.

Tobias Friedrich



3) Wrecks



RUNNER UP

'Glassfish Synchronicity'

Catherine Holmes (United Kingdom)

Wrecks around the world are the ideal habitat for new coral growth, and safe haven for many fish. At last returning to the Red Sea, Egypt in November, I was entranced by the synchronisation of the glassfish circling under the wreck structures that abound there.

One late afternoon we dived the Dunraven wreck, sunk in 1876 on the Southern edge of Sha'ab Mahmoud. At thirty metres and completely upside down, it has broken into two sections creating swim throughs where large numbers of glassfish congregate. I spent a considerable time watching their movements, inspired by their constant swirling into large circular clouds that engulfed fish and divers.

To portray the energy and atmosphere inside the wreck in my image, I decided to move the camera in the same circular motion as the fish were travelling, in addition to slowing the shutter speed down to capture the movement.

SS Dunraven wreck. Red Sea, Egypt

Nikon , D500, Nauticam, Nikon fisheye 8-15mm f3.5-4.5 (@15mm), iso 80, f10, 1/4, Retra Pro X strobes x 2

Judges comment:

The wreck category has always encouraged marine life images taken on wrecks, but few have succeeded. The movement, textures and colour contrast of this glassfish school against the wreck and water create a stunning frame with more visual treasure to discover each time you view it.

Alex Mustard

3) Wrecks



THIRD

‘Coral on the Kittiwake’
Karlo Macas (Croatia)

This image was taken on the Kittiwake wreck in Grand Cayman where I worked as a dive instructor. It was actually taken a couple of days after Covid19 closed the island. My boss Jason asked me to join him on a trip because there was no work. Coral, the model, is a talented freediver and Jason's model which I had the pleasure of photographing that day. As I was diving on the wreck at least once a week, I knew the composition I wanted to take and after Coral's couple of dives, this image was taken.

Wreck Kittiwake, Cayman Islands

Nikon, D7000, Nauticam NA-D7000V, Tokina Fisheye 10-17 F3.5-4.5 DX, iso 200, f/10, 1/125, Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

A classic composition with detailed yet graphic simplicity will always have a visual appeal which does not diminish with repeated viewing.

Peter Rowlands

3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘The chimney of MT Haven is almost 30m high’

Alex Dawson (Sweden)

MT Haven is the largest wreck that has ever sunk in Europe with its 233,690 Dead Weight Tonnage. She caught fire after an explosion when she was pumping oil from the side holds to the center hold. The flames reached over 100m high and there was a devastating oil leak from the hull. To minimize the area of damage they towed the ship closer to shore and the bow came off at 450m depth. The rest of the ship was burning for 3 full days before she sunk at the depth of 80m. Deep enough to have clearance for other cargo ships with 25m draft to enter the Genoa harbor. The wreck starts at 30m and the deck starts around 55-60m and the propeller is at around 75-80m depth. She was 53m wide and 335m long before the bow came off. Can you spot the diver?

MT Haven wreck, Italy

Nikon, Z7 II, Nauticam NA-Z7II, Nikkor 8-15mm fisheye, iso 64, F5,6, 1/50, No lights

Judges comment:

A striking and huge composition that just gets better and better the bigger you view it. The feeling of exploration is palpable, a real favourite of mine in the category.

Alex Mustard

3) Wrecks

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'The Gunboat Uller'

René B. Andersen (Denmark)

The wreck is lying at 60-meter depth and was built in 1876. It went down during WW2. The amazing part of the wreck is the oversized bow gun which makes for a great motif. I used my 6-meter tripod so I can shoot with long exposure to get more details in. I placed several lights and used the tripod as a light pole so I could get the right light on the bow, so the rust, crustaceans and green background would fit together to get this dramatic effect.

Creating this image was a solo effort - that is me on the image. Sometimes this is easier than having to communicate with a buddy to get the diver in the right position in the image, Even though it can take more time swimming back and forth to check the camera until I am satisfied with the result.

Sognefjord, North of Bergen , Norway

Nikon , D-850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 8-15mm fisheye, iso 500, f22, 2 sec, 4 Big Blue video light 15.000 lumens

Judges comment:

A very subtle and effectively lit, clean composition captures the mood so well with perfect backlighting rays.

Peter Rowlands



3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Exploring under the bow’

Alex Dawson (Sweden)

This shot was taken in Aqaba during one of my many trips there. The image is shot at the bow of the wreck Cedar Pride depth 25m. The wreck is easily accessible from the shore and a great dive for both beginners and more experienced wreck divers. The ship was sunk to become an artificial reef for marine life in the '90s by King Abdullah who also is a scuba diver.

Cedar Pride wreck, Aqaba, Jordan

Nikon, D850, Sea&Sea MDX-D850, Nikkor 8-15mm fisheye, iso 200, F6.3, 1/50, No lights

Judges comment:

I love the position of the divers in this frame, and how the mast leads the eye to them. The second diver's torch, perfectly reveals the main diver in the shot.

Alex Mustard

3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Front of the Wreck’

Lorincz Ferenc Lorinc (Hungary)

I took this photo on October 3, 2021 at the 18th CMAS Diving Photo World Championships on the day of training, in front of the wreck of General Pereira D'Eça. We later became CMAS world champions in the Wide Angle category, with a similar picture of my buddy and diving model Takár Yvet, who can be seen in the picture.

Porto Santo island, Madeira, Portugal

Nikon, D800, Subal ND 800, Nikkor AF-S 2,8 8-15 mm Fisheye , iso 400, 11, 1/250, Ikelite DS160x2 with Trt-Electronic Flash trigger

Judges comment:

Very nice situation of this curious grouper and very well executed by the photographer. Placing the model at the same time at the wreck completed the shot and deserves a highly commended for sure.

Tobias Friedrich

3) Wrecks



COMMENDED

'Salem Express'

Christian Horras (Germany)

The wreck of the "Salem Express" is no ordinary dive. Many lives were lost when the passenger ship sank in 1991. It was my first dive there and it made me shiver when I saw the wreck and the lifeboats on the bottom of the Red Sea. It had a special atmosphere to it, a graveyard, sad and oppressive, but also (with no other groups of divers around) kind of peaceful and quiet.

I tried to recreate this atmosphere in the picture and chose an upward composition with the sun backlighting the wreck. A single diver completed the composition giving a sense of scale and adding some "human touch".

After the dive all of us felt saddened and we all agreed that this wreck should be treated with the utmost respect.

Safaga, Egypt

Nikon, D810, Isotta D810, Sigma 15mm
Fisheye, iso 320, f/8, 1/40

Judges comment:

A well chosen angle and silhouette to capture the sombre solitude which fatal shipwrecks create. A very respectful image.

Peter Rowlands

3) Wrecks

COMMENDED

‘The Captain Dan at night’

Jack Israel (United States)

During much our lockdown, I photographed our Florida wrecks at night. I went back to shoot this one, the Captain Dan, last year because of the amazing soft corals on this rusty wreck. My friends and I lit up the inside with flashlights, and we used our strobes and video lights to light up the outside of the wheelhouse. It was spooky diving at 27 meters at night, but I wanted to show off the beauty of South Florida wrecks.

Pompano, Florida , United States(MBY)

Nikon , D850, Ikelite, Nikkor f8-15, iso 2000, f4.5, 1/80, 2 Inon Z330

Judges comment:

Very well lit image and good idea to place a diver inside the bridge as well. With a little better composition, or backing off a bit more to see more of the wreck, the image could have been placed even higher.

Tobias Friedrich



3) Wrecks



COMMENDED

'Fortunal'

Damir Zurub (Croatia)

I used to work seasons in a diving center (DC Manta) on the island of Vis in Croatia so I had the opportunity to visit this wreck quite often. I took this photo on a day off, since I never took my camera with me while guiding. That made photo opportunities rare but very enjoyable.

The story told about the ship "Fortunal" is as follows: On April 10, 1997, the ship Fortunal was coming back from fishing to the port of Vis. The tired crew fell asleep, and the ship was run by the autopilot. Suddenly and unexpectedly the ship, at full speed, hit the island of Vis near the village of Okljucna and sank immediately.

Fortunal lies on a sandy bottom at the maximum depth of about 52 m. This relatively young wreck is slightly skewed to the left side, and the highest point is at a depth of 37 m.

Island of Vis, Croatia

Nikon, D850, Subal N850, Nikkor 8-15mm, iso 320, f/5.6, 1/100, Inon Z330

Judges comment:

Sometimes less is more. Let the subject do the work but lift it with a delicate touch of fill light.

Peter Rowlands

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4) Behaviour

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4) Behaviour



WINNER & My Backyard WINNER

'All You Need Is Love'

Pekka Tuuri (Finland)

All you need is love! This love pond is in my backyard, a 20 minute drive from home. And it has rewarded me plentifully over the past ten years. It is full of love in late April. The common frogs come first, then toads and finally newts. I spent four days and four night time sessions in it in 2021. I wore a drysuit with argon, lots of undergarments and a heated vest to survive in the five degree water. I floated and stayed put among the frogs and quite soon they accepted me and my camera as a part of the scenery. The frogs climb on top of my camera, make grunting sounds in my ears and squeeze between my face and the backplate of the camera. The active spawning time lasts about two days and nights. What an experience with lots of photo ops!

City of Vantaa, Finland (MBY)

Canon, 5D Mark III, Subal 5DIII, EF8-15 mm F4 + Kenko 1.4 teleconverter @15mm, iso 640, 11, 1/30, Ambient

Judges comment:

This image truly made me laugh, when I saw it first time. What an iconic moment and excellent reaction by the remarkable Pekka Tuuri. He is truly one of the underwater photographers in the world who always came up with different ideas and outstanding, different images from places just around his corner in Finland. Excellent composition and light, very well done.

Tobias Friedrich

4) Behaviour



RUNNER UP

‘The circle of life’

Javier Murcia (Spain)

This image is the result of many years working on animal behavior. A diseased species is usually easy prey for a predator since it uses little energy. In this case, a Mediterranean predatory fish (Serranus scriba) has hunted a green fish (Labrus viridis), an endemic species to the Mediterranean and abundant in the Posidonia oceanica meadows. The moment was unique, the green wrasse swam slowly and roughly, it was probably sick, and a few meters away I could see the sawing hiding among the dense posidonia meadow to hunt it down. It was a matter of being patient and in the blink of an eye I caught it. It was so interested in swallowing it that I was able to get within a few inches without flinching. And so is the cycle of life

La Azohia (Cartagena), España **(MBY)**

Nikon, D810, Isotta D810, Nikon 10.5 mm f/2.8G ED Fisheye AF , iso 250, f/9, 1/320, Inon z330

Judges comment:

Boom! Great moment of the painted seabass engulfing the green wrasse, which is particularly involving as it has been photographed with a wide angle, making the behaviour pop out of the image, and the seagrass background and beams from the sun creating an ideal stage for the drama to play out.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



THIRD

‘Hunting’

Damir Zurub (Croatia)

A striped marlin in the middle of hunting a bait-ball in Mexico. The captured scene is an action shot of a striped marlin mid-hunt.

I travelled to Puerto San Carlos with the plan to photograph marlins, mobulas, and whales. The idea behind the photo was to try and recreate the sense of thrill when sharing the ocean with a predator who is in the middle of catching its prey. The photograph was quite difficult to catch considering the constant movement of the bait ball and the school of marlins, requiring constant adjustment mid-water. Being able to share the ocean with the marlins during this moment was breathtaking and memorable.

San Carlos, Magdalena Bay, Mexico

Nikon, D850, Subal N850, Nikkor 16-35mm, iso 800, f/6.3, 1/640, Inon Z330

Judges comment:

A perfectly timed, peak of the action image made this an obvious contender.

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Galaxy’

JingGong Zhang (China)

This is a photo of Japanese angelfish mating with slender sprats in the background taken in Kashiwajima, Japan. Kashiwajima is one of my favorite places to take photos, coincidentally these two fish are also two of the most iconic Kashiwajima species. Japanese angelfish mate in summer and fall, around 15 minutes before and after sunset. When shooting behavior, I usually try my best to keep everything under control but what's dramatic is that this photo was taken by accident.

The reef where Japanese angelfish mate usually doesn't have a lot of slender sprats passing by and I never thought I could combine the two in one photo. But while taking this picture, waiting for the Angelfish to fertilize the eggs, I saw the slender sprats swimming from behind in the viewfinder. It was just a moment, but luckily I caught the image. Maybe uncertainty is part of the fun of underwater photography.

Kashiwajima, Kochi, Japan

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 60mm f/2.8 AF-S Micro-Nikkor, iso 500, f/18, 1/250, SUPE D-Max

Judges comment:

Spawning fish are rarely seen and even more rarely photographed. To catch these angelfish in their spawning rise, both fully in focus, eyes in view and with the male nuzzling the female, and to do so against a curtain of baitfish is remarkable.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Pike fight’

Luc Rومان (Belgium)

The photo was taken during a night dive in domain Muisbroek (Antwerp) where I unexpectedly encountered these two fighting pike where I was lucky enough to take a whole series of photos in very clear water.

Domein Muisbroek Antwerp, Belgium **(MBY)**

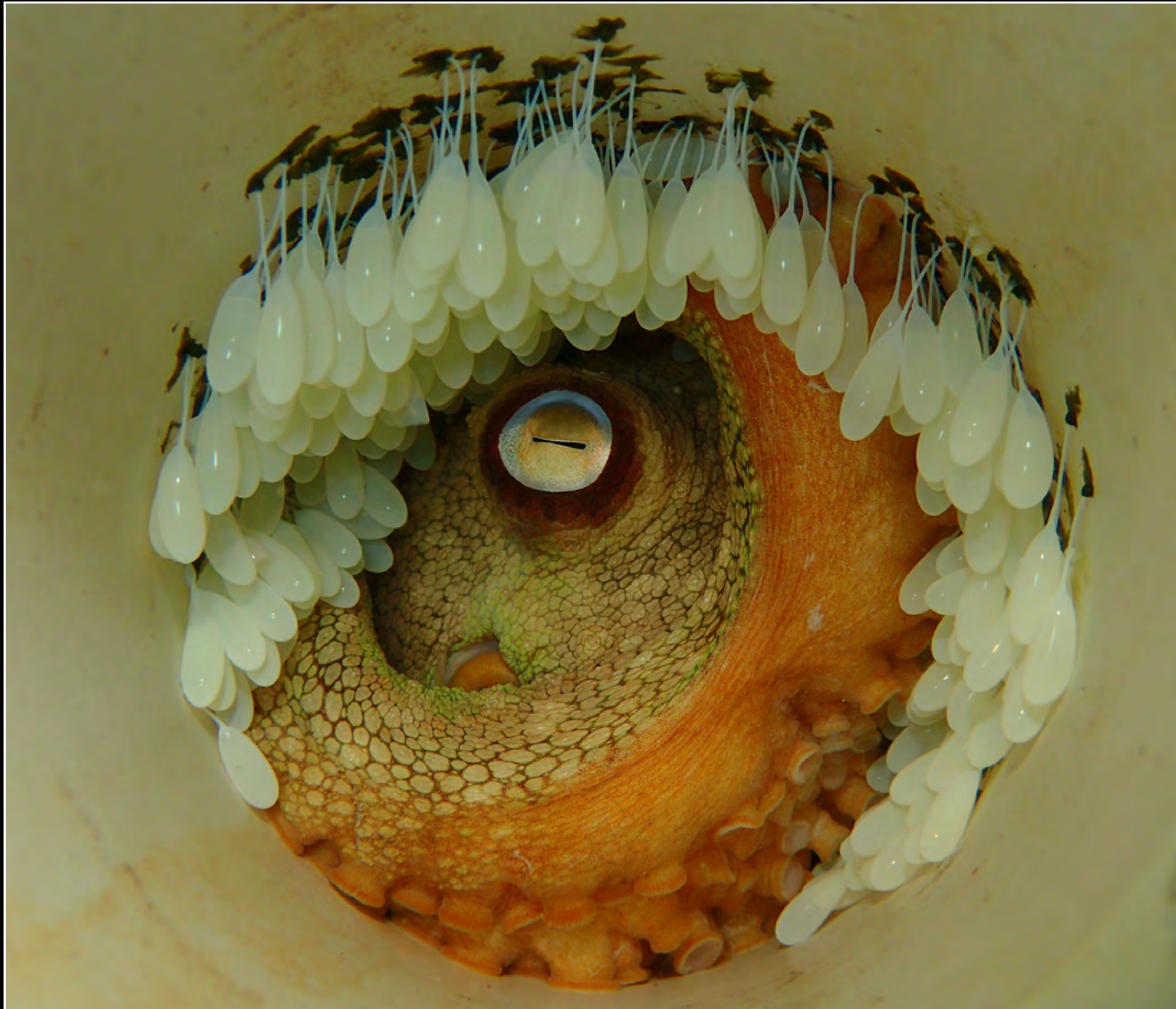
Nikon, D810, Hugyfot, Nikon 60 mm, iso 200, F14, 125, subtronic

Judges comment:

A pair of, I think, young pike settling a dispute and caught at precisely at the peak of their debate. Quality work.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Circle of Life’

Jules Casey (Australia)

An image that simultaneously provokes joy and sadness; the beginning of many lives and the end of one.

A small artificial reef was being developed in Port Phillip Bay on the Mornington Peninsula. It was especially designed to provide a safe environment for octopuses to lay their eggs. Several pipes were installed and the next day this Pale Octopus moved in. It wasn't long before she had individually hung up all her eggs inside the pipe. I observed her over several days as she moved about carefully tending to her eggs before I captured this shot.

This was a tight spot to get my camera into so without disturbing her I used a low beam hand held torch and internal flash to capture this octopus proudly displaying all her eggs perfectly.

Rye, Mornington Peninsula , Australia **(MBY)**

Olympus , TG4 , Olympus PT-056, 7.86mm, iso 100, F4, 1/400, Internal flash & Bigblue torch

Judges comment:

Such a strong image visually perfected by the sparkles of light on each leading egg. Strong yet delicate.

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Two courting eastern kelpfish’

Matty Smith (Australia)

It was a remarkable day for a dive at The Solitary Islands when this picture was made. The ocean was flat, the sun warm and the water incredibly clear. The Solitaries are a biodiverse area where one can photograph tropical and temperate water species in a single dive. During this dive I had spent most of my time photographing green and hawksbill turtles that were grazing on the algae in the shallow water surrounding the island. Suddenly I noticed these two Eastern Kelpfish behaving quite oddly. Sensing something was about to happen I made my way over and as I did they began to chase each other up into the water column in a beautiful, dance like mating ritual. This they repeated several times and seemed totally oblivious to my presence. I managed to make several nice images before running low on air and had to return to our boat.

South Solitary Island, Australia **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Aquatica Digital AD850, Nikkor 14-24mm F2.8 ED, iso 400, F18, 1/250, 2 x Sea & Sea YS-D3

Judges comment:

Shallow waters have the richest plant growth and during judging I suspected that the cause of this behaviour was a disagreement between these kelpfish, with one asserting its authority, set against the territory there are disputing. But I learn from the photographer it is in fact a love story, set in a romantic pink and blue landscape! A great moment, either way.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour

COMMENDED

'Hitchhiker'

Steven Kovacs (United States)

One of the great joys of blackwater diving is the privilege of seeing uncommon subjects that very few divers get to experience. One of these special subjects is the Paper Nautilus, Argonauta species. Argonautidae are a group of pelagic octopuses where only the female secretes a paper-thin egg case which she uses to reside in and shelter her eggs. The females with their shells are fairly rare to find off the coast of Florida where they are occasionally found free-swimming or hiding in Sargassum. Even rarer is to find one, like the one pictured, riding on a Jellyfish. Thus I was absolutely thrilled to come across this tiny 1 inch female that decided to attach itself to a much larger Jellyfish, probably for protection and to conserve energy. The contrast between the octopus and the Jelly didn't provide for much camouflage but, fortunately, did allow for a nice portrait.

Palm Beach, Florida, United States

Nikon, D500, Ikelite, 60mm macro, iso 320, f/25, 1/250, two Ikelite DS160 Strobes

Judges comment:

Although the image show less behaviour than other images in this category, for me it had to be placed at least as a 'Commended' as the composition is very good and the visual impact just stunning.

Tobias Friedrich



4) Behaviour



COMMENDED

‘Love Bite’

Jake Wilton (Australia)

Being underwater with sea lions is one of the best wildlife experiences you can have in the ocean. These guys are so playful it is often you who leaves the water before they do. I had been visiting this site for 4 years and had captured their playfulness with people often, but capturing it together between themselves was proving trickier than I had anticipated. I had noticed a young male play fighting with every other sea lion it could find so I decided to wait near one that had yet to be discovered by him and wait. It wasn't long after that the play fight erupted in front of me and I was lucky enough to capture this image just before the chaos that followed. Shooting with natural light I had to use fast shutter speeds to capture the erratic movements of the sea lions.

Jurien Bay Marine Park, Australia

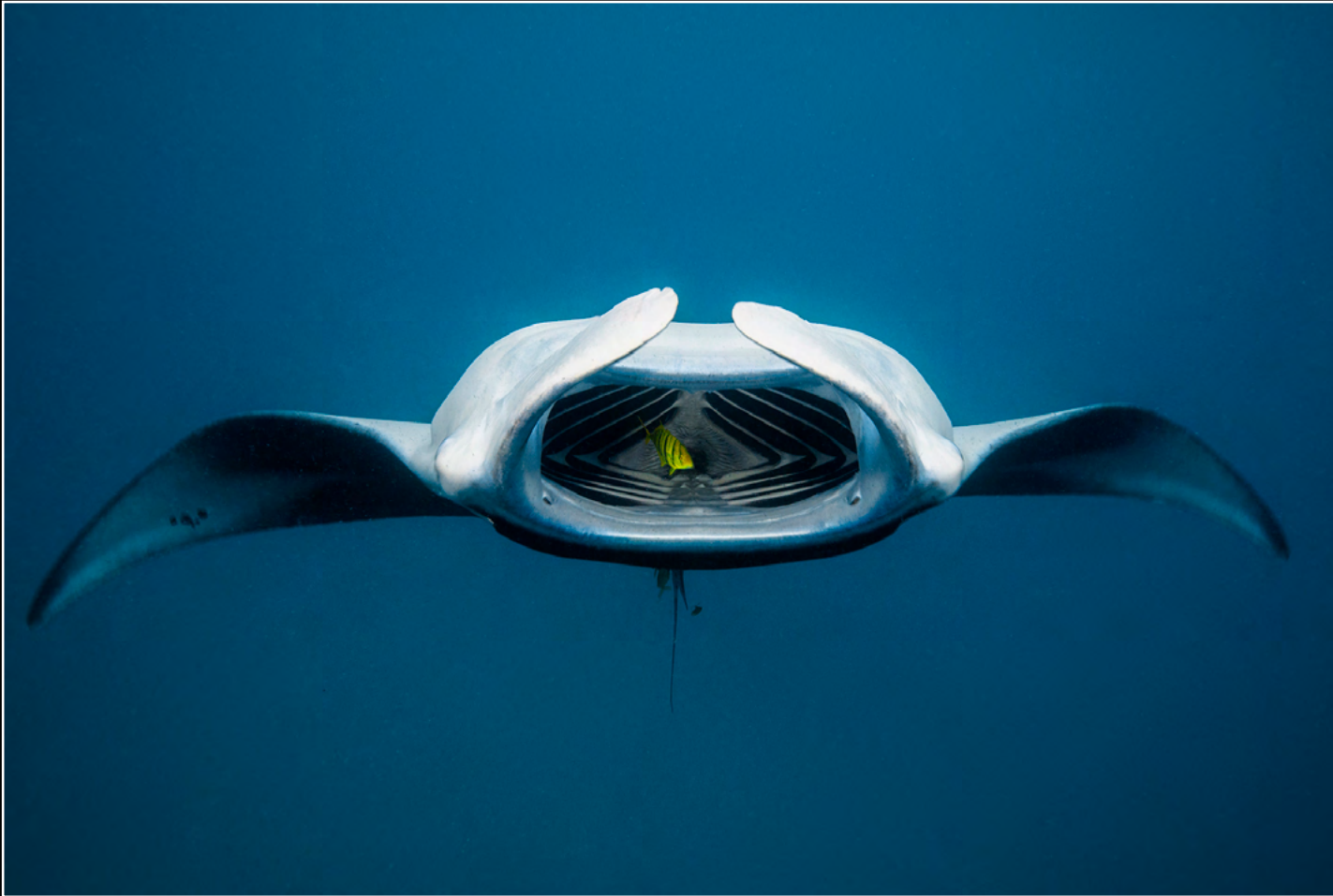
Nikon, D810, Aquatech , Sigma 15mm f2.8
Fish Eye, iso 250, f/9, 1/800s, Natural Light

Judges comment:

Sea lions just seem to have fun and this playful image captures the interaction very well.

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



COMMENDED

'Take Cover'

Luke Gordon (United Kingdom)

This particular reef manta is affectionately known as 'Coco' to researchers in the area and she is always accompanied by Golden Trevally. One particular day I was lucky enough to be alone with 3 or 4 mantas somersault feeding, Coco was one, as I began to take some shots, I could see that one particular golden trevally would take cover in Coco's huge mouth every time she somersaulted towards me. Coco would spit the fish out at the bottom of every turn but as she got back to the top again the fish would be back inside her mouth. The timing was key to this image, I had to time the free dive down and position myself correctly without spooking Coco or the trevally, luckily for me Coco somersaulted once more right in front of me, allowing me to frame this image.

Yaukuve Levu Island, Fiji Islands, Fiji Islands

Canon, 5D Mark IV, Nauticam NA-5DIV, Canon EF 16-35mm f/4L, iso 500, f/10, 1/60, Inon Z240 x2

Judges comment:

This amazing behaviour shot might be overseen easily, but if you see the image on a big screen, it reveals it's uniqueness. Very nice minimalistic shot with a colorful 'dot on the i'.

Tobias Friedrich



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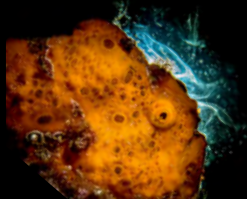
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5) Portraits

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5) Portraits

WINNER

‘Rapunzel on Fire’

Thomas Heckmann (Germany)

Our image idea was to create a completely black silhouette in the foreground, but at the same time make eye contact with the viewer. To make the hair glow, the camera settings were for the silhouette and three powerful strobes were needed hidden in the background. These background strobes were triggered by long cables and an additional RSU. For the face I used a combination of video light/strobe (Subtronic Fusion) with Retra LSD snoot for the front.

Own underwater studio , Deutschland (**MBY**)

Nikon, D800E, Seacam, Nikkor 16-35 mm @ 20mm, iso 100, 13, 1/200, Subtronic Mega, Nova, pro160, Fusion, Retra Snoot

Judges comment:

This highly unusual image using strong colours and contrasts had a winning appeal which endured every time..

Peter Rowlands



5) Portraits



RUNNER UP

‘A 3.5m great white curiously approaches my lens’

Matty Smith (Australia)

I had wanted to shoot a charismatic over/under portrait of a great white shark for a couple of years. Some techniques I had previously tried failed terribly, so this time I designed and constructed my own carbon pole and remote trigger. This enabled me to safely lower my camera and housing into the water with my own 12" split shot dome port attached. Surprisingly the sharks were instantly attracted to the camera with no extra bait needed, in fact it was a battle to stop them biting the dome port! We had wonderfully calm seas and nice evening side lighting for this naturally lit image.

North Neptune Islands, Australia

Nikon, Z6II, Aquatica Digital, Nikkor 14-24mm F2.8 S Series, iso 2800, F8, 1/1000, None, natural light

Judges comment:

This split shot of a Great White Shark truly has some character. Excellent work by the photographer by trying out different techniques until he got the result he wanted. A truly deserved ‘Runner Up’ in this category.

Tobias Friedrich

5) Portraits



THIRD

‘Longevity Meditation’

Daniele Comin (Italy)

I was in a naturalistic day trip in San Cristobal, Galapagos. I didn't expect to get many underwater opportunities but I almost always carry a camera with me. Late in the afternoon we stopped at the famous Leon Dormido Dive Site so I took my camera and I went to do some freediving. Conditions were very bad: no light and dark green water. It wasn't easy to set the camera for a good shot. The purpose of this part of the trip was to find hammerheads underwater. However, instead of hammerheads, I saw a group of Green Turtles. I decided to observe them a little bit. One Green Turtle was "meditating" so I gently approached, trying not to disturb her. I took 3 shots before she seemed to notice my presence and so I went away. She stayed in the same position for another 10 minutes.

Leon Dormido (Kicker Rock), Galapagos

Sony, A7 r3, Nauticam NA-A7R3, sony 28mm f2 , iso 400, f/3.5, 1/80, Available light

Judges comment:

This portrait captures personality perfectly and I suspect a tighter composition would have made it irresistible.

Peter Rowlands

5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Eternally Grumpy’

Matthew Sullivan (United States)

It doesn't matter how many times you dive a site, there is always the chance for something new. At the end of an extremely slow dive during which I hadn't shot a single frame, I finally turned up this fantastic Longnose Batfish, my first time seeing this species. Batfish are notorious for turning their backs on you when you try to photograph them so I set up my lighting using a nearby rock and then got off exactly one head on frame, the fish looking like a weird alien stealth bomber, before the back turning began.

West Palm Beach, Florida, USA **(MBY)**

Nikon, D700, Nauticam NA-D700, Nikon 60mm Macro, iso 100, f/11, 1/250, 2x Retra Original Flashes, 1x Retra Snoot

Judges comment:

A fabulous denizen of the shallows. The batfish's unusual shape is revealed perfectly in this symmetric composition, and accentuated by expertly judged lighting. Very rare I say this, but a tighter crop would have seen it finish higher.

Alex Mustard

5) Portraits

HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Sea Soul’

Fabio iardino (Italy)

This image was taken during a competition day of the Italian Championship Underwater Photography on Isola D’elba. It is an image-overlay of two shots both taken underwater: the first is the model’s profile (using 60mm lens), and the second is the marine environment using 60mm + Nauticam MWL1. It is a picture that was thought and tested some time before. My model and I did some tests to prepare the shot to perform in the competition.

This type of effect is very common in portrait photography, and I wanted to try to recreate the same effect completely underwater.

Isola d’Elba, Italy

Nikon, D850, Hugyfot HFN-D850, Micro Nikkor AFS 60mm + Nauticam MWL1, iso 400, f/20, 1/60, OneUW 160x

Judges comment:

A beautiful, artistic image. The positioning of the underwater elements within the face of the model are so well judged. Would have finished much higher if we’d not had a similar image in a previous edition.

Alex Mustard



5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Waiting Game'

Prelevic Milos (Serbia)

As I dived in the shallows of this gorgeous lake that used to be a mine, I noticed the dark cave formed by the tangled lake weed. The darkness didn't look welcoming, but I went into it, the dark turned into light, and a whole new world opened up. In it, this gorgeous pike was very well camouflaged under the branches and plants waiting for prey. As I noticed her, I put one strobe above the port because the other strobe wasn't working and began photographing. That one strobe was perfect for emphasizing the pike in its eerie ambiance.

Fortunately, this lake has been very well looked out for by the local divers, and thus, the fish numbers remain healthy.

Šicki Kop Lake, Bosnia And Herzegovina

Canon, 5D Mark III, Subal CD5s, Tokina AT-X 107 DX Fisheye (10-17mm f/3.5-4.5), iso 400, F/5.6, 1/160, 1 x Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judges comment:

One of my favorite images from the competition as I think that a portrait shot can also show the environment of a fish where it's living in. Very good composition and nice, undramatic saturation gives a mystic atmosphere to this great shot.

Tobias Friedrich

5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘White house’

Reiko Takahashi (Japan)

I took this photo in the summer on Ishigaki Island, Japan. The seawater temperature of Ishigaki Island in the summer exceeds about 30 degrees Celsius, and zooxanthellae escaped from the body of the sea anemone, and their bodies lost their original color and faded to white. It's very beautiful, but it's one of the problems of global warming.

Ishigaki, Okinawa, Japan

Nikon, D850, anthis NexusD850, Nikkor105mm, iso 250, f/13, 1/125, Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judges comment:

Sometimes very simple subjects are not easy to photograph, like clownfish. The photographer did an excellent job with a great composition and the patience to wait for the perfect moment. The colors round off this image.

Tobias Friedrich

5) Portraits

COMMENDED

‘Planktonic Observer’

Mark Tilley (United Kingdom)

This image came about as much by luck as judgment. We set up a washing line style cross beam from two marker buoys and then dropped the sola 2000 light down on another line from that to create what looked like a spotlight on a stage on a sandy bottom in approximately 11m of water. Windy conditions topside meant the light was gently swinging so we had to time the shots to the arc of the light. I also only shoot whilst freediving so we had our breathe ups and synchronising dives to contend with. This shot happened toward the end of the session when the zooplankton was present in large numbers and created a beautiful effect with the light beam and the reflective mask that Jordan Charles was wearing.

A crazy idea that for once worked !

Eden Rock, Cayman Islands **(MBY)**

Sony, A7 III, Nauticam NA A7RIII, Zeiss Batis 18mm 2.8, iso 1000, 4.0, 1/400, Single suspended Light & Motion Sola 2000

Judges comment:

The unusual will always stand out and this well lit, strongly composed portrait stood out even further.

Peter Rowlands



5) Portraits



COMMENDED

‘Hippo portrait’

Mike Korostelev (Russian Federation)

For this photo I used an underwater drone. Several years ago I find salt water lake in South Africa with crystal clear water and with several families of hippos there. After 3-4 years I returned there for underwater photography.

Kosy Bay, South Africa

Chasing 2 ROV, iso 155, 1/750sec

Judges comment:

Hippos have threatening charisma combined with a great physical presence and this has been well captured here.

Peter Rowlands

5) Portraits

COMMENDED

'Magical Fairy Wisps'

Jenny Stock (United Kingdom)

Whilst diving in Cuba I caught some captivating images of vivid fairy basslet. The complementary colours of these fish lent themselves to artistic creation. Through the use of masks and filters in post processing, I crafted the basslet bodies to disperse into wisps of colourful smokey clouds against a jet black background.

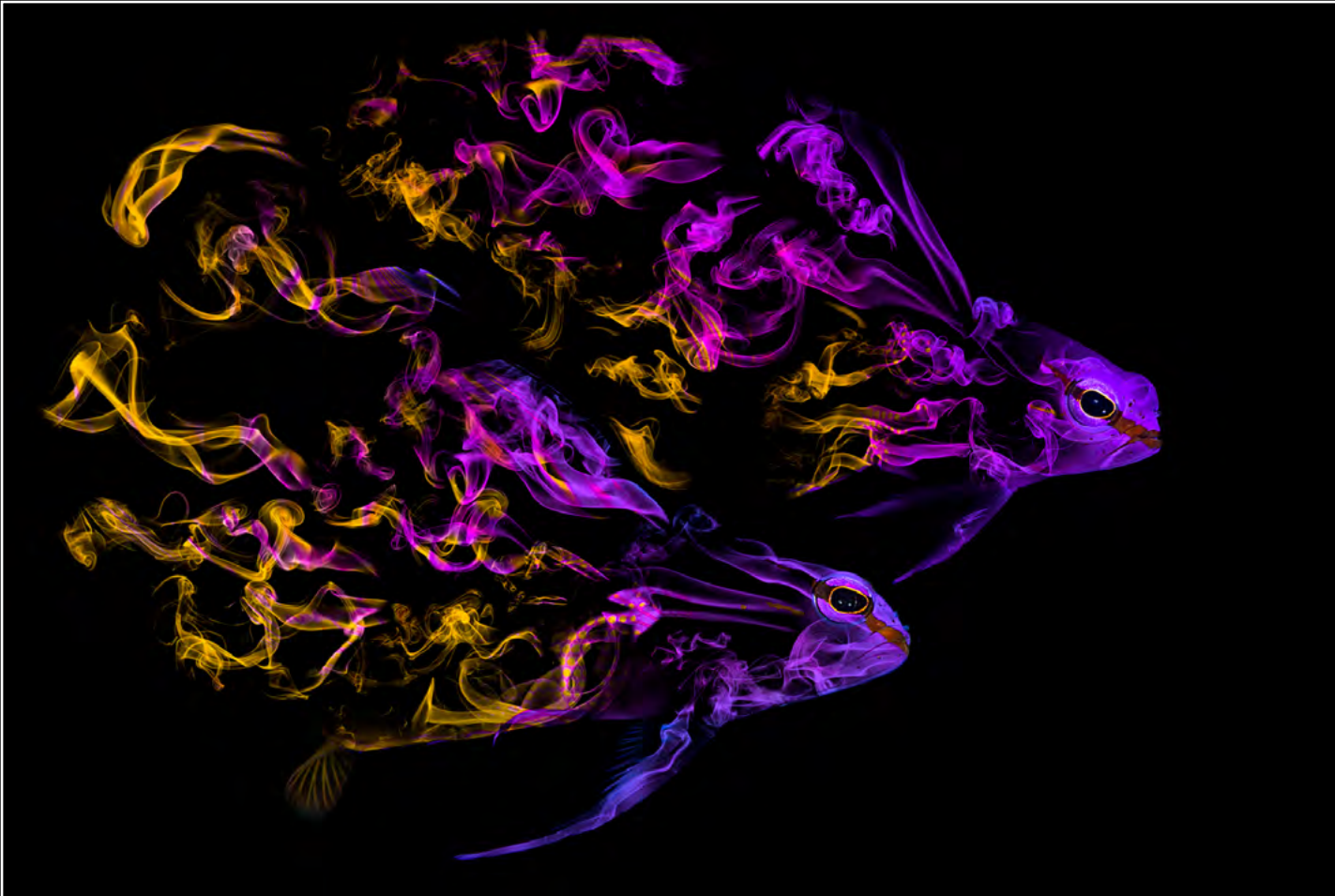
Jardines de la Reina, Cuba

Canon, 5D Mark IV, Nauticam, 100mm, iso 500, 25, 100, Inon

Judges comment:

Gorgeous and memorable. UPY is not a Photoshop contest and we very rarely award post-processing creations. But felt the originality and beauty of this frame deserved to be seen.

Alex Mustard





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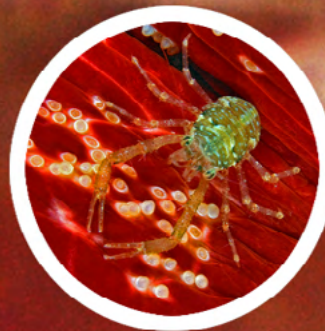
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6) Black & White

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6) Black & White



WINNER

'Sarah's Underwater World'
Kerrie Burow (Australia)

This shot was taken a year into the Coronavirus pandemic; my 7-year-old niece Sarah stares with wonder into my housing dome while on one breath underwater.

The scene portrays the therapeutic power of water which so many of us experienced during the pandemic. The underwater world offered peace, comfort and hope - for the anxious, the depressed and the grieving. It gave us a chance to feel joy and adventure again as well as freedom from the heavy weight of the pandemic - even if just for a moment while on one breath.

The portrait was taken using an unobtrusive photojournalist technique. I minimised my presence, gave no instructions to Sarah and, instead, allowed the scene to evolve naturally.

Central Queensland, Australia

Canon, EOS 5D Mark IV, Isotta, EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM, iso 200, f/9.0, 1/250, Inon Z-330

Judges comment:

Haunting yet compelling, this very striking portrait uses the simplicity of black and white to great effect. Colour would have been so distracting.

Peter Rowlands

6) Black & White



RUNNER UP

‘Evening with sharks and birds’

Borut Furlan (Slovenia)

I was in Moorea with my daughter in September 2021, in the middle of complete lock-down. All dive shops and boat rentals were closed and tourists were not allowed to move out from their hotels (except 1km for recreation...). Fortunately our apartment was quite close to the famous spot in the lagoon with sharks and rays and the owner of apartment arranged us two kayaks for “recreation”. So we put our snorkelling equipment and my housing on kayaks and paddled to the spot. We were three days completely alone there with all the shark, rays and birds just for us. In three days I took more than 5000 images, I kept about 200 and I was satisfied with about 10 of them. The image above is one of my best ones.

Moorea, French Polynesia

Nikon, D850, Seacam, Nikkon Fisheye 8-15mm/
f3.5-4.5, iso 400, f/18, 1/40, Seacam 150D

Judges comment:

Excellent action between the upper world and below the surface. This could have worked very well as a color image as well, but the photographer did make a good choice to convert it to black & white!

Tobias Friedrich

6) Black & White



THIRD

‘Water Dimension’

James Rokop (United States)

Moments like these are simple but magical. An artistic swimmer on a break playing on the bottom of the pool. Me, the father of two swimmers, spending countless hours photographing my daughter's team learning and experimenting with how to capture every angle of the sport during moments of action and seeming inaction. Using only a compact camera in natural light, in this photo it is my hope to show that a simple pool can offer countless surprises underwater, both in its properties of light and in its physical attributes, i.e., the leading lines on the bottom and the crosses on the sides. I have only learned this through experience and patience but yet I am not so naive to think that any of this would be possible without the wonderfully athletic and playful swimmers like young Issie depicted in this photo.

Davis, California , USA (MBY)

Sony , DSC-RX100 M7, Ikelite , 24-200 mm f/2.8-4.5, iso 100, f/4.5, 1/1000, Natural light

Judges comment:

A simple scene, but the precision of the composition makes this photo one that captivates you with details. The contrast between the lines of the pool and the scribbles on the light, and the position of the swimmer, show it is not what you shoot, but how you shoot it.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Waking from a dream’

Martyn Guess (United Kingdom)

From previous dives on this site I knew that there were quite a few pink skunk anemone fish. I wanted to take an image with my manual focus Trioplan lens (not very easy to use at the best of times -let alone underwater) in order to create the beautiful soft blurred bokeh. The image was taken with an open aperture of F2.8 and the light from the strobes reduced to the absolute minimum with the use of opaque filters. With a moving subject and a manual focus lens I set the camera to 3 frames per second and simply held the shutter down and pushed the camera towards the subject to attain focus whilst shooting. The depth of field with this lens is minute and most of the images taken were deleted for being too out of focus. I think the B&W conversion works well with the soft tones.

Tulamben -Seraya Secrets, Bali

Nikon , D5, Nauticam NAD5, 100mm Trioplan manual lens, iso 125, F2.8, 1/320th, 2 x Inon 240z strobes with opaque condensers

Judges comment:

Black and white is traditionally used by underwater photographers for wide angle photos. But this image confirms how the textures of a macro image are equally suited to the genre.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Honeycomb Moray eel moment'

Yazid El Shaari (Oman)

I was telling my friends at the dive center about this idea I had for a black & white image of a honeycomb moray eel and hoping to find one that day so I could try to make it happen. It was my lucky day, this beautiful creature was so cooperative and we got to spend the whole dive together just having fun making wonderful image memories.

Mermaid Cove dive site, Bandar Khiran, Sea of Oman, Muscat, Oman **(MBY)**

Nikon , D-850, Nauticam NA-D850, 105 mm, iso 200, 22, 1/200, Retra Pro

Judges comment:

This stood out immediately and the format choice and composition added to the strength of appeal. Unique and mesmerising.

Peter Rowlands

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Speedy Seal’

Saeed Rashid (United Kingdom)

Straight after our first lockdown here in the UK I headed out to Lundy Island to be one of the first people back to Dive with the seals and they didn't disappoint. I'm not sure if it was the fact that they hadn't seen anyone for a whole season but they're more playful and boisterous than I have ever seen them a perfect antidote for being locked at home for all of that time. This was one of the many seals that spent its time desperately trying to make me dizzy by constantly swimming around me at speed but it did give me chance to play with my exposure allowing for this slow shutter motion blur image.

Lundy Island, England

Canon, 7d mkII, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17, iso 100, f14, 1/15, Inon z330

Judges comment:

Fantastic panning shot of a seal. I really loved this image from the beginning due to it's very good composition! The decision to convert it to black & white was absolutely right, nevertheless with a little bit more contrast it might have placed even better.

Tobias Friedrich

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Floating Mountains’

Martin Broen (United States)

This shot was taken inside an underwater chamber with an air dome. It takes advantage of the lack of light above the still water surface which creates a mirror effect that makes the stalactites coming from the ceiling feel like suspended in mid-air, and acts as multiplier of the 3 light sources in the pitch-black environment, creating an alien-like landscape.

Cenote TakBilum, Mexico

Sony, A7RIII, Nauticam NA-A7III, Canon 8-15, iso 6400, f/8, 1/60, Big Blue 33000 and 15000

Judges comment:

Craggy speleothems silhouetted by backlighting define this frame and work brilliantly in monochrome. The diver provides a focal point in the composition, leading the eye through the frame.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White

COMMENDED

‘The curves of a leopard shark’

Matty Smith (Australia)

A leopard shark turns into the sunlight to reveal its whip-like tail and bold skin pattern to the camera. To me, the leopard shark is all about its markings and long ribbon tail, so I set out to capture an image to emphasise these distinguishing characteristics.

Julian Rocks, Byron Bay, Australia

Nikon, Z7II, Aquatica Digital ADZ6/7, Nikkor 14-24mm F2.8 S Series, iso 200, F11, 1/80, 2 x INON Z240

Judges comment:

This was an intelligent decision to highlight the markings complimented by an eye catching composition. A class image.

Peter Rowlands



6) Black & White



COMMENDED

'Savage Jaw'

Jenny Stock (United Kingdom)

Crocodile! I was terrified of them for years, then, like the flick of a switch, I longed to snorkel with one. This particular croc was poised in the cover of a mangrove bank in Cuba. I slipped into the water and approached it cautiously. Suddenly it took off into the open water, advancing towards me with such power and speed that we almost collided. The croc looked directly into my lens, then began to descend rapidly under my body. Photographically this was awesome as its passage between me and the sun allowed sunbeams to backlight the crocodile's savage jaw. As it launched itself from the mangrove roots, it dislodged a large amount of sediment. These blurred waterborne particles add momentum to the image. For once - no need for backscatter removal!

Jardines de la Reina, Cuba

Canon, 5D Mark IV, Nauticam, 16-35mm, iso 800, 18, 125, natural

Judges comment:

I really like this unusual portrait of a crocodile reduced to the most stunning part of it: the teeth. Along with the slow shutter speed and backscatter it creates a very artistic shot. In my opinion this image could also have placed higher. :-)

Tobias Friedrich

6) Black & White



COMMENDED

'Freedom'

Nicolas Hahn (Argentina)

For most of the past year I was fortunate enough to live in a small sea-side town in Baja California Sur. During this time Orcas had often been sighted in the bay but predicting which route they took after receiving the report was not easy and they eluded me through most of the year. One morning, a friend called me to go in search of them and with some indication from a yacht captain who had a sighting that same morning, we learned of their general direction. After spotting a blow in the distance, the excitement was very real. Sharing the space with this clever, powerful and sophisticated species was humbling and awe inspiring. During one of the encounters I found myself shooting against the light but with a capable camera I was able to preserve detail and the sun rays pierced through the water in a beautiful way.

Baja California Sur, Mexico **(MBY)**

Sony, A7RIV, Nauticam NA-A2020, sony 28-60mm with nauticam WWL-1 , iso 250, 7.1, 1/400, -

Judges comment:

I was slightly alone in my liking of this image but the other judges respected my choice and I think the top ten would have been poorer without it.

Peter Rowlands

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7) Compacts

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Open to all.

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

7) Compacts

WINNER

'Peace'

Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

Once a year at the end of March it is mating time for the toads. It last only few days and only at this time is it possible to get very close to them. Normaly they are very shy. I was trying to get a split shot with this toad, when he started to crawl on my small domeport. I got some pictures from this action and this was my favorite pic.

Pond in Leipzig, Germany (MBY)

Sony , RX100vii, Fantasea, Fantasea UWL-09, iso 160, f/8, 1/2000, 3x Backscatter Miniflash

Judges comment:

The Compact Category is subjectless which makes it hard to shoot for and even harder to judge but this well lit, unambiguous image created an appeal that was unanimous with the judges.

Peter Rowlands



7) Compacts



RUNNER UP

'Headspace'

James Rokop (United States)

My daughter Madi is a favorite subject. I have been photographing her for years on her artistic swimming team in Davis, California (Aquastarz). I have spent countless hours at the pool with fins, goggles, and a compact camera in a water housing. I shoot aerial, land, and underwater but the magic really happens in the latter. Shooting in natural sunlight in an outdoor pool is simply the best venue for capturing all the unusual light patterns and underwater physical features. In this photo, Madi is performing a "barracuda" maneuver, one of the many compulsory figures that are required in competition and to advance in the sport. The move requires Madi to "scull" with her hands to stay vertical and then to lift herself above the water line as high as she can. In this shot, the angle, the lighting, and shape were compelling and even more so when inverted.

Davis, California , USA **(MBY)**

Sony , DSC-RX100M7 , Ikelite , 24-200 f/2.8-4.5, iso 100, f/4.0, 1/1000, Natural Light

Judges comment:

Straightforward elements combined to create an eye-catching frame. A picture that demonstrates that the most essential piece of gear for compelling imagery is the eye of the photographer.

Alex Mustard

THIRD

‘Colors of a Quarry’

Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

There is a quarry near my hometown called Westbruch. Koi carp live in this area, along with many other types of fish. For this pic I was using a Raynox Circular Fisheye Lens behind a 4inch Dome which I adapted to a Fantasea Housing.

The colorful reflection comes from a reflection tube which I placed inside the Raynox Circular Fisheylens. The green, red and orange colors together with the reflections gives a dreamy look which I like a lot.

Quarry-Westbruch, Germany **(MBY)**

Sony , RX100vi, Fantasea, Raynox Circular Fisheye Lens, iso 200, f/5,6, 1/100, 2x Retra Flash Pro

Judges comment:

Excellent shot of a subject which is not easy to photograph, also in a very nice and photogenic environment. Usually circular fisheye shots don't excite me much any more, but this use of it truly deserved the third place in this category. Very well done!

Tobias Friedrich





HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Ad Astra'

Andrea Michelutti (Italy)

It was a cloudy day, what in Italy we call 'cielo a pecorelle'. I was shooting macro but when I saw the rays of light, I converted the setup to wide angle, because there was a lot of barrel jellyfish in the water and it was really wonderful.

I was shallow, around 3 meters deep, and began to play with the sun and the jellyfish until I found the desired composition, with the crag on the right and the clouds on the left, I was lucky because the jellyfish was perfectly positioned in front of the sun like a starship going 'Ad Astra'.

Sistiana, Trieste, Italy **(MBY)**

Sony, RX 100 M7, Seafrogs, INON ZM80 Wide Angle Lens, iso 80, f/11, 1/1000, Dual Inon Z330 Strobe

Judges comment:

The photographer made a very good call to change the lens and the dive due to the opportunities. The jellyfish along with the sky almost looks like a painting with the sun just above it. Perfect composition and very well executed.

Tobias Friedrich

7) Compacts



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Carp in the river after a flood’
Jack Berthomier (New Caledonia)

Every year, during the heavy rain season, the rivers of New Caledonia overflow and their level exceeds 3 to 4 metres. The very strong current tears trees along the banks and drags them for several kilometres. A few days after a flood even if the current remains strong I will spend several days with friends who live on the banks of the Ouenghi river in search of green waste, leaves, branches etc. in which are hung the edges. New Caledonian carp, the most common fish in our rivers, are looking for insects that have remained stuck in this waste and it is common to see them come and swallow something on the surface. You have to stay on the lookout in the same place sometimes several hours to capture this precise moment. This image is the perfect example of this behavior which requires patience and a little luck to be successful.

Ouenghi river, New Caledonia

SONY, RX 100-2, ISOTA RX 100-2, W-A INON UW-H100, iso 400, F5, 1/1250, Internal flash

Judges comment:

This is a beautiful image, without a doubt. But was too similar to our category winner from last year, by the same photographer to place higher this time.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Paradox'

Rodolphe Guignard (France)

This picture was taken in northern Zanzibar, Tanzania, close to Mnemba atoll. During a snorkeling session, I had noticed this traditional fisherman watching me for a while from his dhow. These small and rudimentary vessels are perfectly adapted to the sometimes rough sea conditions experienced by these windswept distant lands. His silhouette immediately inspired me and I wanted to stage him in an original composition.

In this very poor region of the globe, the ocean's resources account for the near-totality of the population's meager income. Thus in this image, the fisherman appears to carefully watch over his treasure. A paradoxical scene, in which the bountiful richness of marine life seems in direct contrast to the precarity and solitude of human beings.

Mnemba Atoll, Zanzibar Island - Tanzania

GoPro, Hero 5, GoPro housing + 6" Shoot Dome Port, Integrated, iso 100, f/2,8, 1/1600s, Ambient light

Judges comment:

A perfect example of the capability of compact cameras when played to their strengths. An SLR shooter would have been more than happy with this and I doubt if they could have bettered it.

Peter Rowlands

7) Compacts

HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Fish and Sky’

Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

Near my home there is a small pond with a lot of small fishes. For this picture I was using a Raynox Circular Fisheye Lens behind a 13,5 inch Dome which I adapted to fit a cheap Meikon Housing. I had to destroy the front port of the housing for my project. To get this picture I had to use the very big dome, because I shoot nearly vertically. With a smaller dome you cannot get this angle with enough space for the fishes underwater.

With a lot of patience I got the shoot I was looking for.

Small Pond in Leipzig, Germany

Panasonic, LX100ii, Meikon, Raynox Circular Fisheye Lens, iso 250, f/8, 1/320, 2x Retra Flash Pro

Judges comment:

Such a striking image with circles within circles creating an almost unique image perfected by the bird in the sky.

Peter Rowlands



7) Compacts



COMMENDED

'Alone in the reef'

Todor Dimitrov (Bulgaria)

During the warm months, incredibly beautiful places are formed in the bays along the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. Reefs and shoals, resembling underwater meadows dotted with colorful and soft algae. One of these beautiful places is the Bird Island. The surface water level is almost flat on one side of the island and is very suitable for split level shot. I saw this jellyfish move slowly and gracefully among rocks and algae. The result is a great composition of one over-under shot, capturing this enchanting jellyfish, contrasting with a background of carpet with colorful algae and rocks.

Black Sea, Bulgaria

Sony Cyber-shot , Sony Cyber-shot DSC-RX100 II, Nauticam NA-RX100II , no, iso 100, f/7.1, 1/50, Inon S2000

Judges comment:

Very nice split shot and excellent executed. The composition with the island in the background is very good as well and rounds up with the color contrast of the jellyfish.

Tobias Friedrich

7) Compacts



COMMENDED

'Moving'

Andrea Falcomatà (Italy)

A pike posed on the backdrop near the wall of algae. I used a long exposure to give dynamism to the subject and consequently enhance the scene

Great Lake of Monticolo - Alto Adige, Italy

SONY, RX100M5, Isotecnic Isotta RX100M5, The optic of the camera with Fantasea UWL-400F, iso 200, F/11, 1/8 s., Sea&Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

Effects, photographic or Photoshop, can sometimes grate but this is well chosen and adds drama to what otherwise would have been a perfectly good but plain image.

Peter Rowlands

7) Compacts

COMMENDED

‘Cardinalfish and Bubbles’

Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

For this Cardinal fish i was using an Inon Z240 with an optical Snoot (make by Fabio iardino) to get a dark background. The Bubble Effect I created by a low F-Number with something glittering in front of the Lens. This glittering material I light up with a DIY purple colored fiberoptic Snoot on a Retra Flash.

The challenge was to get close enough to the cardinal fish with the optical Snoot to light them up.

For this pic I needed the whole dive.

Anilao, Philippines

Panasonic, LX 100, Nauticam Na-LX100, Inon Ucl 167 +6, iso 200, f/5, 1/1000, 1xRetra Flash, 1x Inon Z240

Judges comment:

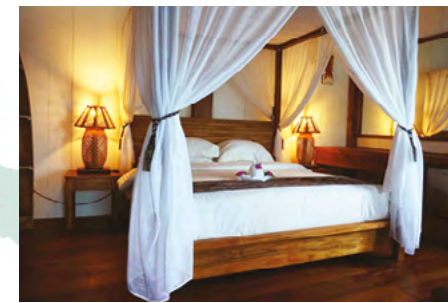
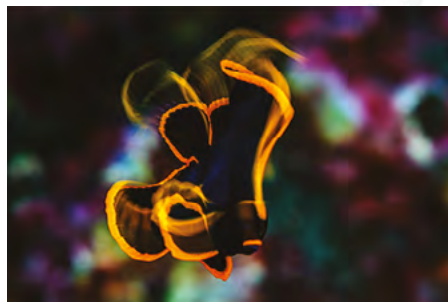
A quality portrait elevated with the double exposure. Kudos to Enrico for sharing all the details of how it was done.

Tobias Friedrich





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8) Up & Coming

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8) Up & Coming

WINNER,
'Supernova in paradise'
Quico Abadal (Spain)

I first met Jeniya having breakfast at Zest, one of my favourite food spots of Koh Tao. We talked for long and we clicked quite well. A couple of days later we recorded a very cool video together. I knew I wanted to shoot more with her, she moved quite poetically underwater. So after a couple of months we met at the end of Sairee beach. She was wearing a stunning long white dress and we just planned to shoot mostly split shots with the sunset. I'd use the strobes to illuminate the underwater scene and the sun would do the rest. It was a pretty challenging shot, since I didn't have any fins or wetsuit, so I would easily sink. Also it was tricky to gain focus properly on the subject. What I like about this photograph is the imperfection of backscatter, recreating space and making it perfect to me.

Sairee beach Koh Tao, Thailand

Olympus, EM-1 mark ii, Olympus, 8mm PRO
f/1.8, iso 200, f/5, 1/160, Olympus UFL-3

Judges comment:

In this category we are always looking for exciting new talent bringing fresh visions to underwater photography. This image is a fabulous example. Simple subject matter, elevated into an artistic vision by the imagination, ideas and talent of the photographer and model.

Alex Mustard



8) Up & Coming

RUNNER UP & My Backyard HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Beauty on a red anemone skirt'
Yazid El Shaari (Oman)

I had just travelled back home from a very exciting underwater photography workshop and if I had learned any thing from this experience it was to find an attractive background and then look for a subject to complement the scene. I caught a glimpse of a red anemone skirt in between the rocks and I have never seen this color in our area before, so I started to play with the lighting to get the right exposure, when suddenly I can detect some kind of movement in the view finder only to find this beautiful goby, very uncommon to our dive sites, but a very pleasant surprise.

Westside dive site, Fahal Island, sea of Oman,
Muscat, Oman **(MBY)**

Nikon, D-850, Nauticam NA-D850, 60mm, iso
100, 25, 250, Retra Pro

Judges comment:

Beautiful and rarely photographed subject, on a stunning background. The result leaps out and to the top of the rankings.

Alex Mustard



THIRD

'The adventures of Captain Lisa'
Quico Abadal (Spain)

Diving has always felt like a science-fiction adventure to me, especially when wearing scuba-equipment it makes me feel like a spaceman. I have been lucky enough to encounter the most alien looking species such as cuttlefish, or dive in lunar landscapes like La Palma. For a long time I daydreamed about creating an underwater series of science fiction photographs. When I first visited Deep Spot in Poland I was convinced my series had to begin there, the place that most resembled a space base. After a couple of months I went back with some costumes. In this image Lisa isn't wearing any mask under the helmet, nor is she breathing through a regulator. The most challenging part was to manipulate the angle, making the viewer believe Lisa is jumping forward, when in reality is an over-head shot, and at the same time she had to maintain her buoyancy and avoid bubbles. Thanks Lisa!

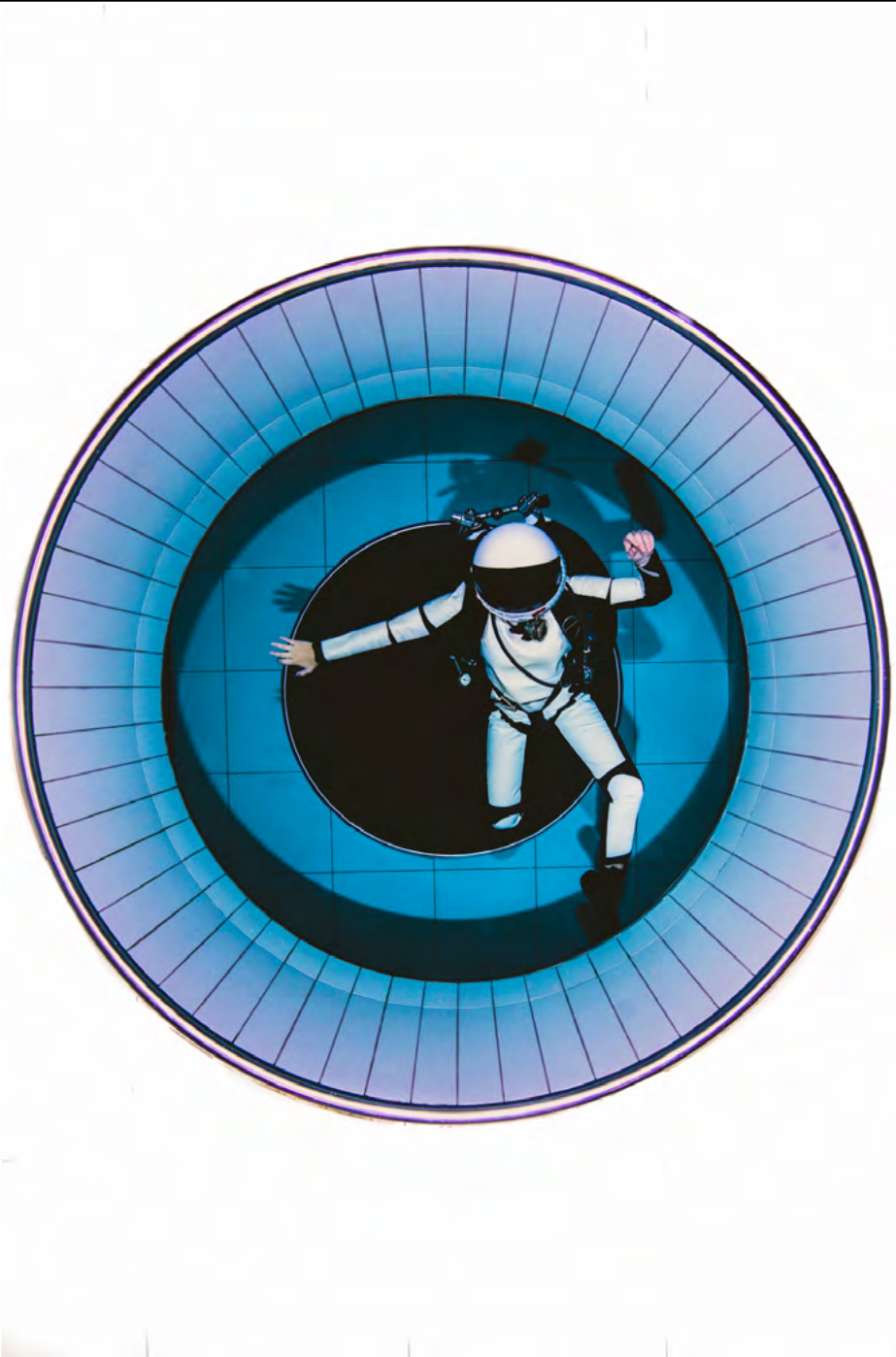
Deep Spot, Poland

Nikon, D850, Isotta, at 17mm (17-35mm f/2.8),
iso 800, f/9, 1/125, Inon Z-330

Judges comment:

When I saw the thumbnail of this image first, I thought this is not an underwater image. But seeing it bigger makes you realize what an effort and brilliant image idea the photographer had. Excellent work and one of my favorite and new images from the competition.

Tobias Friedrich





HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Tail'

Erika Miura (Japan)

In the winter, humpback whales come to Japan to raise their young. It is not easy to swim with the whales and it took me many days to finally make it happen. The baby whale swam around curiously, while the mother whale stood proudly and gently beside her child. I photographed their tails to capture the striking image of mother and child.

Okinawa, Japan

OLYMPUS, OM-D E-M1, OLYMPUS PT-EP14, Lumix G Fisheye 8mm f/3.5 Lens, iso 250, f/4, 1/250, Natural light

Judges comment:

Breaking the rules is encouraged and even though appearing to swim away and therefore be a 'no no', this image stands out as a good example of Don't be dominated by rules.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Back from the light chamber'

Sebastien Delautier (France)

Running in the South West of France, Marchepied Spring is a small yet beautiful system where every turn provides new photographic opportunities. Valentin and I were the very first team to enter the cave on that summer day and I had many shooting plans in mind for just the first 300m of gallery. Going through the entrance restriction before the crowd, we were rewarded with two hours of crystal clear waters inside the winding canyons and cliffs. Coming back towards the exit turned out to be more difficult with the increasing number of divers. We came across friends, starting improvised shootings on the way, but when we arrived at the restriction we got stuck by divers not giving the right of way to exiting divers. Fortunately our dive plan considered this risk and we were able to wait until the passage was clear again.

Marchepied Spring, France **(MBY)**

Nikon, D7200, Nauticam NA D7100, Tokina 10-17mm & Zen dome, iso 800, 7.1, 1/40, 2x Inon Z330, BigBlue lights 2xCB30000 & 1xCB9000

Judges comment:

Up and Coming rewards those who show competence through confidence. This simple image is technically excellent and needs no more embellishment.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'I'm the fastest!'

Giacomo Rossi (Mexico)

During the annual Mexican sardine run, the main attraction is the striped marlin. But the marlin and sailfish are not the only predators for the sardines. The super agile and fast sealion is no doubt a serious competitor for them. Sometimes you can even see the sealion chase the marlin in order to get the best position for the hunt. It's incredible see how the sealion can twist, spin and accelerate. His super speed doesn't give many chances for the sardines to survive. In the Ocean only the fastest will survive.

Off the coast of Bahia Magdalena, Pacific Ocean
- Magdalena Bay BCS Mexico

Sony, A6300, Nauticam NA6300, Sonu
20mm+fisheye adapter, iso 800, f/8, 1/500, none

Judges comment:

Knowing when to press the shutter is hard to teach and learn. Sometimes it's easier to learn by example and this is a good example.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Saupe and Seagrass’

Alexander Venn (France)

I often encounter schools of saupe in the bay of Eze, South of France, where this photo was taken. Last spring, I tried to capture motion blur shots of these fish swimming over the swaying seagrass meadows they inhabit. Freediving in shallow water, I made numerous attempts at panning the camera with long exposures using a neutral-density filter, trying to stay in the shade of tall pine trees to reduce light levels. Even in the failed attempts, I noticed how their yellow eyes and stripes really stood out against the muted greens of the background. Eventually, I got lucky with this shot: a patch of sunlight caught the eyes and stripes, and the fish seemed to move in unison with the undulating seagrass. As an afterthought, a blurred shot is quite a fitting way to represent saupe, as apparently, they can be hallucinogenic if eaten.

Eze, France (MBY)

Olympus, OMD EM5, Nauticam NA EM5,
Olympus M.Zuiko 25 mm f/1.8, iso 200, f/5.6,
1/4, Available light

Judges comment:

Everyday fish photographed with fabulous vision. We see lots of panning photos, but the blur in this image gives a wonderful sense of the beating of the sea breams' tails. The peaceful, limited colour palette creates a restful feeling, like a long, relaxing snorkel in the shallows.

Alex Mustard

8) Up & Coming



COMMENDED

'Barbadian splendid Long spine Squirrelfish'

Simon Heron (United Kingdom)

Finally a COVID travel window opened allowing me access to the beautiful waters of Barbados but after so long with hardly any diving I was feeling pretty rusty. This was graphically brought home to me when I had a serious equipment failure not helped by me also pushing my oxygen reserve trying to get the perfect shot. It was so serious that I had to get to another diver and share his tank to get to the surface. So for my second dive I was feeling pretty shaky, which is never a great starting place for photography but the vibrant beauty of this much shallower reef soon got me to relax and that's where I spotted and shot this splendid Long spine Squirrelfish perfectly matched to his colourful surroundings.

Carlisle Bay, Bridgetown, Barbados, Barbados - West Indies

Canon , 5D Mk4, Aquatica A5Dsr, Canon 17-40 (at 36mm), iso 640, F16, 1/10, Inon Z-240 Type4

Judges comment:

One of my favorite images from the competition as this slow shutter speed image almost looks like a painting. Very good idea and clever to use this technique in a pretty standard subject. This takes the image from being normal to excellent.

Tobias Friedrich



COMMENDED

‘Sunlit Sea Lion’

David Slater (United States)

A combination of sunshine, clear cold water, sea lions, and a towering kelp forest creates the perfect dive in my home waters of Monterey, California. I love to spend my free time in the shallows of this kelp forest and watch as sunbeams pierce the canopy, creating my own personal stained glass cathedral. I saw this beautiful sea lion slowly swim towards me, I set up my composition, adjusted my strobes, and captured the moment just as she drifted right before me. I'm very fortunate to dive these waters as often as I do, and in sharing my photos I hope to inspire others to cherish the wonders of the ocean. At night when I sleep with my windows open I can hear the sea lions barking from their rookery, leaving me to dream of the next time I will be lucky enough to dive with them.

Monterey, USA (**MBY**)

Nikon, D810, Ikelite, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 200, f/11, 1/80, Ikelite DS160 x 2

Judges comment:

I really love seals, so this image attracted me from the first time I saw it. But having a second look makes you realize that so many things in the image are really good, like the environment, the sunburst from the top and the look of the seal. Very well done. :-)

Tobias Friedrich

8) Up & Coming



COMMENDED

'Cargo Deck'

Christian Horras (Germany)

This picture was taken in one of the cargo rooms of the "SS Thistlegorm", a British armed Merchant Navy ship that was sunk by German bombers in 1941. The wreck has a lot to discover and provides endless photographic possibilities!

This particular picture however was only possible with the cooperation of several underwater photographers! After having discussed what we wanted to do, we all took some lights with us and placed them in the cargo deck. The idea was to light up the dim room, showing the interesting cargo (trucks, motorbikes) and creating depth to the image. It took some time and efforts of all of the group to set up the lights. I don't remember the exact amount of lights placed but there must have been at least ten!

SS Thistlegorm, Egypt

Nikon, D810, Isotta D810, Sigma 15mm Fisheye, iso 1600, f/8, 1/20, Sea&Sea YS-D2 and various lights

Judges comment:

The artifacts in the Thistlegorm wreck are well suited to off camera lighting. But the amount and variety of light in this image really opens up the space in the dark holds of this wreck.

Alex Mustard



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WINNER

‘Gannet Storm’

Henley Spiers (United Kingdom)

A northern gannet swims in an artistic hail of bubbles created by diving seabirds. 40,000 gannets visit the nearby cliffs annually to lay and care for a single egg, fishing for food nearby. Hitting the frigid water faster than an Olympic diver, these incredible birds have evolved airsacs in the head and chest to survive these repeated heavy impacts. From underwater, the sound was thunderous as streamlined, white torpedos pierced the surface. I wanted to create a novel image of these handsome seabirds and resolved to try and capture their movement through a slow exposure. The speed of the gannets led to innumerable failures but in this frame we retain strong eye contact with the gannet, even as the scene is artistically softened. With great thanks to Richard Shucksmith, without whom this encounter with the gannets would not have been possible.

Shetland, Scotland, UK

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 28-70mm @ 35mm with Nauticam WACP-1, iso 125, f/22, 1/8, 2 x Inon Z240

Judges comment:

That eye and this moment. A powerful picture. Diving gannets have won this category before, but we've never had a portrait like this, that reveals both the personality of this predator and the energy of the action.

Alex Mustard



RUNNER UP

‘Grayling in summer sunlight’

Paul Colley (United Kingdom)

I've been photographing Grayling for some years now and my intent is always to create memorable images of UK river life to support the conservation of wildlife and habitat. Both are under threat from over-abstraction of water, unsustainable land development and sewage dumping. The combination of a cooperative fish and strong natural light is often elusive, but on this day it clicked. I usually use remote control cameras, but this was a traditional approach, getting into the river with waders and waiting patiently for the fish to approach. To help composition, I used a remote screen above water to relay a live feed from a GoPro mounted above my main camera.

River Anton, Goodworth Clatford, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA D500, Nikkor 10.5mm, iso 500, 7.1, 1/250, Single INON Z240

Judges comment:

Freshwater subjects and their environments are often perceived as less attractive than their marine counterparts but when shot like this they excel.

Peter Rowlands



THIRD

‘Yawn’

Henley Spiers (United Kingdom)

A grey seal pup stretches and performs an exaggerated yawn as it awakens from a snooze in the kelp. I find it hard not to smile when looking at this image and hope it has the same effect on others. There is a kinship one feels when sharing the water with marine mammals and these seals are amongst the best underwater companions. With enviable aquatic grace, seal pups have an irresistible zest for life, exhibiting curiosity, playfulness and affection. Just weeks after birth, pups are abandoned to fend for themselves, but they exhibit no anxiety at the world which awaits, exploring it with insatiable energy and joyfulness. The pups actively seek out divers and snorkelers, leading to wildlife encounters in which everyone wins. Best of all, with one of the largest grey seal populations in the world, British waters are the perfect place to visit these charismatic pinnipeds.

Lundy Island, UK

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 8-15mm @15mm, iso 400, F/13, 1/250, 2 x Inon Z330

Judges comment:

This image makes me laugh every time I see it. It truly deserves a third place, even though in my opinion it could have placed even higher! Very well executed and perfect light in the right moment.

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Below the blue line’

Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom)

Since 1974 the wreck of the SS Kaffir has lay hidden behind the old docks of Ayr harbour. Despite being just a few hundred meters from Ayr beach the location keeps it a secret from the masses who descend every summer to enjoy ice creams and sandcastles, and endure gauntlets of hungry seagulls. This shot was taken on a late summer evening in 2021, where in the quiet bay away from the noise I was joined by a solitary barrel jellyfish. It made the perfect foreground subject to the ever-changing sky. This was just my second encounter with this species and I just couldn't believe my luck when I came across it just minutes into my snorkel. I calmly followed as it pulsed through the scene in front of me, carefully positioning my 4 inch dome port to capture the jelly, wreck and glorious sky in a single image.

Ayr, Scotland (MBY)

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NAD500, Tokina 10-17 @10mm, iso 320, f18, 1/250, YS-D1 + YS-D2J

Judges comment:

This image is getting better the longer you look at it. First you think that this is a split shot of a jelly fish, but there are more and more elements getting together like the beautiful sky, the wreck in the background and last but not least the sunrays in the very distance. Excellent image!

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘The little monsters’

Paul Colley (United Kingdom)

Whilst working on a river conservation project, this raft of young mallard ducklings realised that I was good for some free food. I was busy with other underwater work, but the ducklings were persistent and flocked to me everywhere I went. The little monsters would even climb all over my camera and peck at my hands and head while I was trying to focus on the fish underwater. Sometimes you just have to go with the flow. I dried the water off my dome port, set the camera to high speed continuous shooting and let them play around the camera for a while, when I got this shot. At the end of the day, they diligently followed me to the car park!

River Anton, Goodworth Clatford, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA D500, Nikkor 10.5mm, iso 400, f8, 1/500, Single INON Z240

Judges comment:

Very well executed split shot of the ducks and also a good making-of story! It could have placed even higher if the ducks would have been in a better composition, but this is not always easy to achieve. :-)

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Coldwater garden’

Leena Roy (United Kingdom)

The Cairns of Coll are rocky outcrops at the north end of the Island of Coll in the Inner Hebrides, Scotland. It was my first snorkel and I was stunned by the clarity of the water and the superb light. It was like being in an underwater garden with long bunches of thongweed reaching for the surface and pom pom like algae hanging onto them like decorations. Kelp covered the seafloor. I tried to look for a pleasing composition and thought the curve of the thongweed acted as frame for the photo.

Coll, Scotland

Nikon , D500, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17, iso 400, 13, 100, Natural light

Judges comment:

A celebration of a shallow water British environment with delicate and contrasting colours topped by a perfect composition. World class.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Blue Shark Portrait’

Nicholas More (United Kingdom)

The Blue Shark is one of the most beautiful and elegant sharks. We, in the UK are very lucky that these amazing beasts frequent our shores every summer. I used a slow-shutter speed to capture the movement and grace of these sublime predators.

The Blue Shark is assessed as near threatened and there are currently no catch limits. Please support the Shark trust to safeguard a future for sharks, skates and rays through positive change. We achieve this through science, education, influence and action.

#saveoursharks

Penzance, Cornwall, UK

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm f3.5-4.5 AT-X DX, iso 100, f/16, 1/8th, Inon Z240

Judges comment:

A classic and high quality portrait. Hard to fault in any way. Would surely have finished higher, except for the previous successes that the photographer's own similar images have had in this category.

Alex Mustard

9) British Waters Wide Angle

COMMENDED

'Chopper'

Marcus Blatchford (United Kingdom)

A rare occasion when both time-off work and childcare aligned, my partner & I were able to go for a dive together. Vobster Quay is my local dive site. At 22m is this Westland WS-61 Sea King helicopter - registration number ZA299. She saw active service in The Falklands conflict, the former Yugoslavia & Afghanistan.

Vobster Quay, England **(MBY)**

Canon, R5, Nauticam, EF 14mm f/2.8 L USM, iso 1600, 6.3, 1/250th, 2 x DivePro G18Plus offboard

Judges comment:

An imaginative use of additional backlighting lifted this image immediately and the glow never faded.

Peter Rowlands





COMMENDED

‘Anglerfish on the James Eagan Layne’

Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

I had heard of anglerfish being spotted on the wreck affectionately called the ‘JEL’, but had not got lucky spotting one myself until this year, despite diving the site regularly. This was a truly majestic fish, an ambush predator about 5 foot long (about 1.5m) and it seemed unbothered by my presence. I wanted to take a photo that captured its character as well as how it had placed itself among the iconic hold structures of this famous Liberty Ship, which has been sitting upright in Whitsand Bay since 1945. I had a mini dome port on my fisheye lens so got as close as possible to light up the anglerfish, allowing natural light to show the wreck’s structure.

Wreck of the SS James Eagan Layne,
Whitsand Bay, Cornwall, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina
10-17mm, iso 800, f16, 1/50, 2x Retra Prime
strobes

Judges comment:

A beastly predator is revealed amongst the angles of a wreck. The central area of the frame contributes less than the top and bottom.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

‘Hiding lobster’

Saeed Rashid (United Kingdom)

I found this lobster in the shallows at Kimmeridge Bay which is one of my local and favourite dive spots. I was actually photographing the boot lace weed when I noticed an inquisitive lobster popping out of this hole to see what all of the commotion was. He stayed just long enough for me to be able to capture him. If you look carefully you'll see a couple common prawns that flittered around the lobster like attentive servants making sure their master was clean and presentable for the photoshoot. This remains one of my favourite UK wide images.

Kimmeridge bay , England **(MBY)**

Canon, 7d mkII, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17, iso 250, f10, 1/160, Inon z330

Judges comment:

Viewed small this image would struggle to compete but, viewed large, it reveals so much to look at and admire. Good balanced light and a sympathetic composition completes a serene moment.

Peter Rowlands



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10) British Waters Macro

for close-up/macro images shot
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WINNER

'Best Buddies'

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

2021 was the 10 year anniversary of my first trip to the beautiful Loch Carron, and in all that time it has never failed to produce stunning underwater images with its diverse array of marine inhabitants. My buddies know that I'm not very good at finding Yarrels blennies, and it was no exception on this dive either. We were diving on an area of reef I'd not previously explored, and after an excited squeal and waving of a torch in my direction I dropped down to see that my buddy had found not one, but two beautiful little blennies holed up in a crack in the rock.

Having my long macro lens on was an advantage as I could stand-off from the reef enough to get some light into their home so we could all see their some-what bemused little faces. Best buddies for sure!

Loch Carron, Scotland, UK

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica A-EM1, Olympus 60mm macro, iso 500, f/8, 1/250, 2x Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

The eyes have it and the tentacles seal it. Framed well and lit beautifully, it's a classic.

Peter Rowlands



**RUNNER UP
& My Backyard THIRD**

‘Hello!’

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

The low-lying reef on this site is home to as many as a dozen of these beautiful male Corkwing wrasse busily building their nests in the spring and early summer. They will spend weeks building the nest by cropping nearby seaweeds and placing them in a rocky crevis with their mouths. If they are lucky enough to attract a female, for a few weeks after mating they will defend the nest and keep the eggs clean and fresh by blowing and wafting water over them constantly.

This individual was happy to ignore me after a careful approach, and spent over an hour just sitting and observing his behaviour. This allowed me to get very close to him indeed without being a disturbance, such a privilege!

Beacon Cove, south Devon, UK **(MBY)**

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 14-42mm + Nauticam WWL-1, iso
400, f/9, 1/250, 2x Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

This image is getting better and better the longer you look at it. It's not just the colors, but also the eye contact of the fish and the excellent composition that really drags you into it. Kudus to the photographer who spent such a long time waiting for the animal and finally getting the shot. Patience pays off! :-)

Tobias Friedrich



**THIRD &
Most Promising British
Underwater Photographer of
the Year**

'Diamonds and Rust'

Paul Pettitt (United Kingdom)

This picture was taken on a bright afternoon when I knew the sun would be on the west side of the Pier. The Sea Gooseberries had been around for a while and on this particular day the water was like glass. I floated in the spot I wanted and waited for them to slowly drift by. The background colours represent the rust and weed growth on a metal cross beam.

Swanage Pier, England **(MBY)**

Nikon, D500, Nauticam, 60mm, iso 250, f22, 1/200, 1x inon 240

Judges comment:

Images like this leap out despite being subtle. The colours are celebratory and the subject perfectly placed to produce a stand out image in this category.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Paternal care’

Cathy Lewis (United Kingdom)

The wreck of the James Eagan Layne provides numerous hidey-holes for Tompot blennies. The males entice the females into their nests and then fertilise and guard the eggs until they hatch. A stack of pipes proved a particularly popular nesting site, forming a Tompot condominium. I spent a number of dives photographing these fish using a variety of lenses, but it was the 105mm macro lens that enabled me to get up close and personal with this paternal male, tenderly guarding the next generation of these characterful and engaging fish.

The wreck of the James Eagan Layne,
Whitsand Bay, Cornwall, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, 105mm, iso
250, f/20, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

One of my favourite shots in the competition. The clear, strong connection between parent and babies challenges our preconceptions of fish as lesser creatures, in a composition that is totally fat-free!

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Goby at the window’

Simon Temple (United Kingdom)

In Spring it's not uncommon to find a painted goby occupying an urchin shell; the smooth interior makes it an ideal location to lay eggs. If you are patient, you will see a repeating cycle of behaviour that includes tending eggs and keeping watch for possible dangers. This regular cycle allows a photographer a shot of the goby every minute or so and providing you don't get too close, the cycle continues, uninterrupted, again and again (although, I guess they must have a break at some point!).

What made this urchin/goby combination so eye catching was the newness of the shell. It was spotless and must have been no more than a day or so old, so often they are encrusted with algal growth. I couldn't overlook the opportunity to shoot a goby with such a 'clean' background and over three dives I captured this colourful image.

Lochcarron, Scotland

Nikon, D500, Aquatica AD500, 60mm, iso 160, f/18, 1/250, inon z240

Judges comment:

This category was the strongest it has ever been this year. This faultless composition would surely have been a category winner in many previous years.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Shrimp in green’

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

*A rare sighting in the UK, the Feather Star Shrimp (*Hippolyte prideauxiana*) is found on the crinoid *Antedon bifida*. Loch Duich has many varied dive sites, and this particular one has a few small rocks upon which a dozen or so feather stars were perched to try to snare some food. It was at this spot that I had the joy of finding my first Hippolyte. The crinoid in question was very easy to locate, and over the next few days I dived the spot 5 times.*

On this dive I arrived at the feather star to find its arms outstretched and the shrimp half way along one of them. I was able to shoot a few images before the shrimp headed back to the centre of the crinoid, to be able to make use of the beautiful green water as a backdrop was a real bonus.

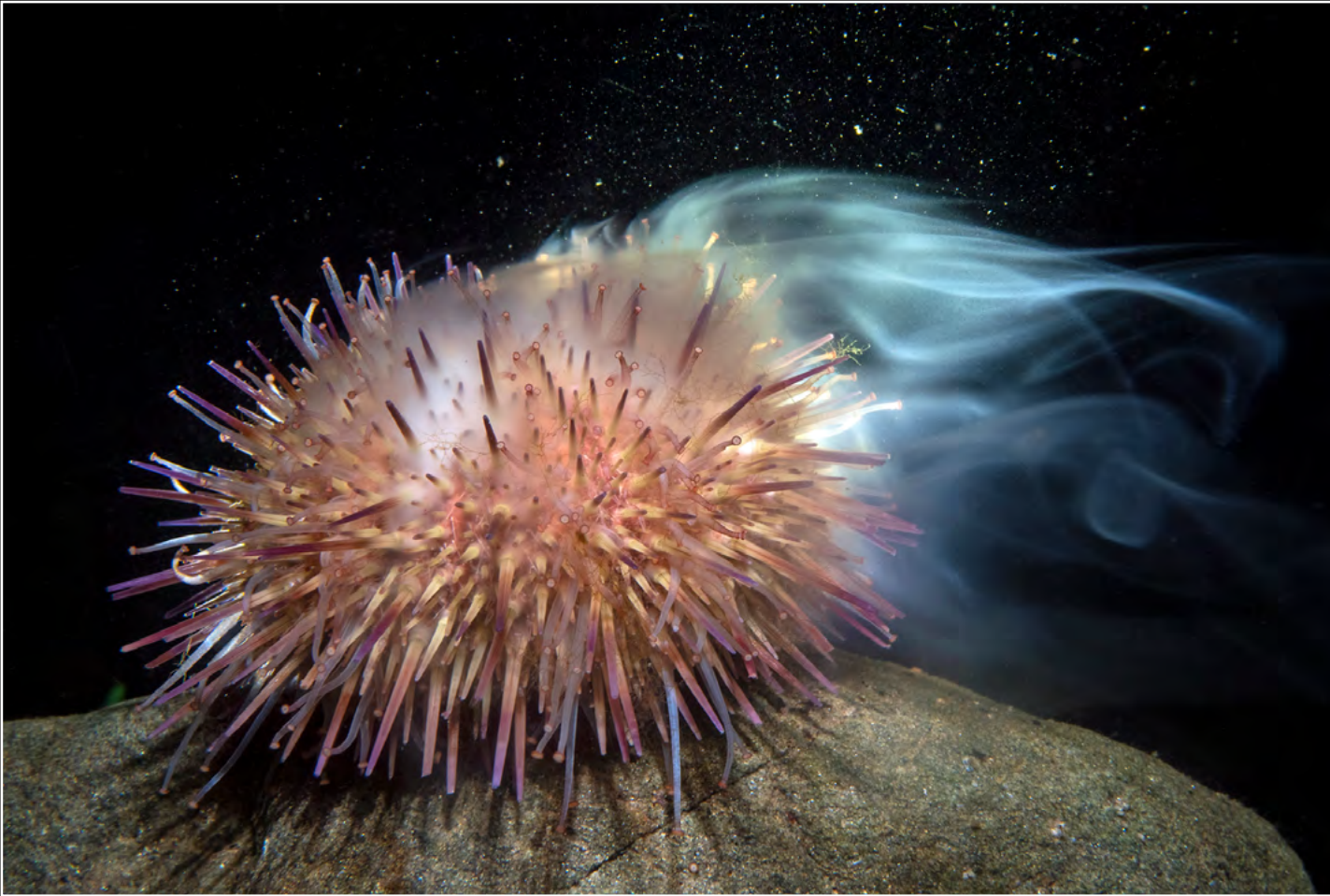
Loch Duich, western Scotland, UK

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 60mm macro, iso 1250, f/5.6, 1/30,
Sea & Sea YS-D1 with snoot

Judges comment:

The complimentary colours and a strong diagonal line leapt from the preliminary screening and continued to do so into the winning enclosure. Deserved.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Spawning sea urchin’

Trevor Rees (United Kingdom)

I'd been after a shot of a spawning sea urchin for a while.

*I was up in Scotland during summer, shore diving at loch Linnhe and noticed a number of these small green urchins (*Psammechinus miliaris*) on top of the kelp at high water. A few of them were spawning, with the white smoke like spawn drifting gently away in to the water. At low water the urchins had moved lower down and no spawning was taking place.*

I found an active one in a suitable location and after numerous unsuccessful attempts to light the subject it was only when I backlit the subject with a small torch that I got the required drama captured.

Loch Linnhe, Scotland, United Kingdom

Olympus, OMD E-M10 mk1V, Nauticam NA EM10mk1V, Panasonic 45 mm macro, iso 320, f 16, 1/250, Inon S2000 and backlighting from a small torch

Judges comment:

A photo that reveals natural behaviour by both a precisely timed exposure and inventive use of lighting.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

'Tompot Blues'

James Emery (United Kingdom)

Tompot Blennies are common and often a favourite subject to photograph across the south coast of the UK. I wanted to use the same techniques that I like to experiment with in Lembeh, using slow shutter snooted whip pans. This technique usually allows the ambient light to form a blurred pattern, but in the green waters of the UK it is not always aesthetically pleasing. By adding the Backscatter MW4300 video light with a blue coloured filter to light the surrounding background, I created a more pleasing colour contrast to make the subject pop.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Sony, A7iii, Nauticam NA A7iii, Sony 90mm, iso 400, f18, 1/4, Backscatter MF-1 snoot, Backscatter MW4300

Judges comment:

Very well done image, especially in times when you can't travel much, to try techniques in different waters. This is one of the very few excellent slow shutter speed and colored macro images.

Tobias Friedrich



COMMENDED

'The Boatman'

Paul Colley (United Kingdom)

I've been trying for many years to photograph small river creatures with variable and largely inconsistent results. The trick has been to find the right environment, which is still and shallow water. On rivers, natural backwashes filled with gravel and weed work well. But you also need a subject that sits still long enough to focus on it. The normally-frenetic water boatman will keep rock steady for up to a minute after charging his air sacs, when it's possible to get two or three shots and create an image with sufficient depth of field using manual focus stacking. A specialist self-build camera housing supports slave flash guns to achieve strong backlighting.

River Anton, Goodworth Clatford, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D500, Home-built housing and support frame, Nikkor 105mm f2.8, iso 160, f36, 1/125, Twin Nikon Speedlights (one master, one slave)

Judges comment:

Stunning and absolutely sharp image of an unusual subject in difficult waters. Not many photographer do make this big effort, so it's a well deserved placement in the top 10.

Tobias Friedrich



COMMENDED

‘Out of the gloom’

Martyn Guess (United Kingdom)

I dived a lot under Swanage Pier last summer and when the sun emerges in the early evening there are often some fantastic sunbeams on display, breaking around the Pier legs and deck. The darker shadowy areas under the Pier are home to some wonderful critters including the Common Prawn. (Palaemon serratus) I wanted to create an image of the Prawn with some real impact and set about an image overlay in camera with 2 images. The background with sun rays was shot with my RS 13mm lens at 1/1000th Sec and this was overlaid with a macro image of the Prawn taken earlier in the day and stored on the same card. I am really pleased with the result as the shadowy areas show off the habitat and the rays give the image real impact and in truth more of what you would see with the naked eye.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon, D5, NAD5, RS 13mm/105mm Macro, iso 200, F22, 320th, 2 x Retra Pro X

Judges comment:

An excellent use of a double exposure to show the creature and where it lives in a single image.

Alex Mustard

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THE CROWN ESTATE

11) British Waters Living Together

This category is sponsored by The Crown Estate.

The Crown Estate play a role in managing activities on the seabed around England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and wanted to create a category that showcases the co-existence of nature and human activities on the UK seabed.

We were happy for photographers to interpret the Living Together theme in a broad fashion in the first year of this new category.

We were looking for strong, striking images (both macro and wide angle) that show the value of natural and/or man-made habitats in British Seas, particularly offshore renewables. Open to all.



WINNER

‘A peaceful coexistence’

Lewis Michael Jefferies (United Kingdom)

In the summer months Jelly fish frequent the British isles in larger numbers, thought to be attracted by the warmer waters. The summer of 2021 was no exception and there were huge numbers of these Compass jellyfish in Falmouth Bay. It was a perfect summers evening - clear and calm with hardly a breath of wind. We grabbed the paddle board and camera and headed to the beach in search of jellyfish. I had a sunset shot like this - loosely - in mind and fortunately all the elements lined up to create something quite memorable.

I hope my image can inspire others to explore and appreciate the wonders that are found right in our backyard, in British waters.

Falmouth, Cornwall , England **(MBY)**

Sony , A7iii, Nauticam A7riii, Sony 16-35 , iso 320, f22, 1/250, 2x Inon Z240

Judges comment:

This image truly reflects the spirit of this category. It's also perfectly executed with the right moment when the lens beam is just behind the SUP paddler. Very well done and for me from the beginning I saw this image as the favorite winner for this category.

Tobias Friedrich



RUNNER UP

‘SS Persier’

Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

The Persier is a crowd pleaser of a wreck. The usual dive plan involves descending on to the boilers and following the prop shaft to the stern. Wreck appreciators can see the various parts of the vessel laid out before them, history buffs will be aware of the wreck's story as a casualty of the Second World War. To me, the main draw is the wildlife: there are always shoaling bib and patrolling spider crabs as you can see in the picture, but also fields of pink sea fans, and potentially conger eels, anglerfish and thornback rays, to name but a few.

Wreck of the SS Persier, near Plymouth, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 640, f11, 1/20, 2x Retra Prime strobes

Judges comment:

A visually unambiguous message of life living together regardless. Well lit, well composed and, well, everything, really.

Peter Rowlands



THIRD

‘Snug in my pipe’

Alison Pettitt (United Kingdom)

I am lucky to be able to dive Swanage Pier a lot, and its always nice to see where the Tompot Blenney choose to make their homes. This one was very happy in his old rusty pipe and posed for me nicely.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D500, Nauticam D500, 60mm, iso 500, f/14, 1/125, Backscatter Torch

Judges comment:

An excellent choice to enter this image into this category. It really reflects how ‘living together’ is adapted by the creatures of the sea. Very good light as well and good composition, even though I wish the fish was a bit more in the golden ratio and I could see more of the hole it is living in.

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Inquisitive cuttlefish’

Saeed Rashid (United Kingdom)

Cuttlefish are amazing subjects to find and you can often see them trying to work out what you are; this guy was no different when I came upon him under Swanage Pier. I spent the best part of 30 minutes with him while he swam around me and I swam around him both trying to figure out each other. I didn't actually take many images it was just a pleasure to be with what you can tell is an incredibly intelligent creature.

Swanage Pier, England **(MBY)**

Canon, 7d mkII, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17, iso 320, f10, 1/100, Inon z330

Judges comment:

A striking portrait of a fabulous creature. With a stronger human element it would surely have finished even higher in the category.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘A pleasant day’

Tony Reed (United Kingdom)

I had been planning to try and get a shot like this for a while but I hadn't had the right subjects or weather. Fortunately after a rather low viz murky dive in Scapa I was sat at the surface watching the MV Huskylan go by and thought that would make a nice photo. At this time I was too late as my camera was clipped up but then it turned around and came back so I unclipped and took a couple of shots with the wide lens on. The plumose anemones were taken 10 minutes before on the McGrath wreck I think which then gave me 2 shots from the one dive to merge together.

Scapa flow , Orkney, Scotland

Olympus, Tg4, Olympus PT-056, Weefine wfl02, iso 100, F/2.8, 1/1,250, Light & motion gobe 850 wide

Judges comment:

Visually attractive and well combined photographically but the two elements were too separate to be fully ‘on message.’

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Freediving freedom'

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

On a trip to the island of Coll to try to see Basking sharks, we spent an afternoon snorkelling in the caves of Staffa island. Most famous for Fingals Cave, this shot is actually taken in the entrance to another cave just a couple of hundred metres away. The sunlight and gentle waves were creating some amazing underwater lighting, and the light/dark walls of the cave entrance gave me the perfect frame in which to put the colourful kelp and obliging freediver.

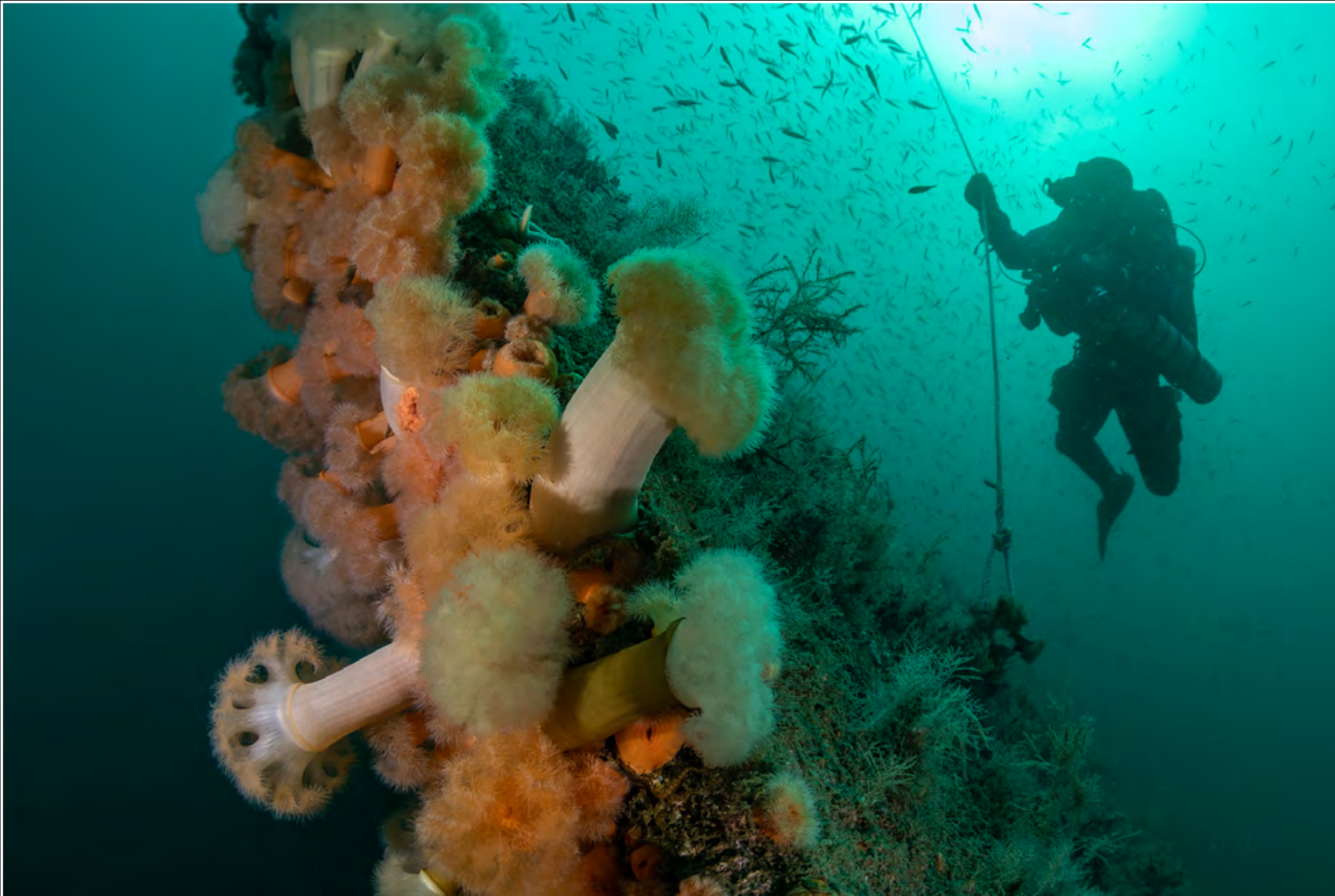
Staffa, western Scotland, UK

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 14-14mm with Nauticam WWL-1,
iso 640, f/5.6, 1/160, None

Judges comment:

Very nice atmosphere of this kelp forest, along with the sun rays and the diver. It could have been placed even higher if the free diver would have been more in a frame as well as in a better pose. Nevertheless it deserves to be awarded for sure. :-)

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Time to leave'

Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom)

I had just had a fantastic dive on the wreck of German Cruiser SMS Dresden, she had been scuttled at Scapa Flow in 1919. Returning to the bow shot line, I found the whole area was covered with colourful plumose anemones, I was able to light these up and catch my buddy who was starting their ascent to the surface in the background.

Scapa Flow, wreck of SMS Dresden, UK

Nikon , Z6, Nauticam NA Z7, Nikon 8-15 @ 15mm, iso 320, f/6.3, 1/60, 2 video lights

Judges comment:

A good example, I suspect, of a shot taken for one reason becoming suited for another and that's fine as long as it gets the message across which this does. Photographically it works too.

Peter Rowlands



COMMENDED

'Among the pier legs'

Alison Pettitt (United Kingdom)

During the last summer we had some exceptionally good visibility under Swanage Pier. I am lucky to be able to dive this site often, and love how many creatures choose to make this place their home. On this dive I found a beautiful Leach's spider crab in his anemone home. I chose the camera angle to show him in the context of the pier and highlight the clarity of the water.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D7100, Nauticam NA-D7100, Tokina 10-17mm & 1.4 teleconverter, iso 320, 14, 1\60, Inon 330 Strobes

Judges comment:

Fantastic details on the spider crab and its host anemone, it's a perfectly timed shot with the crab exposed and the tentacles fanned out.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

'Coll pier'

Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

I was drawn to the juxtaposition in this scene of the metal ladder and the colourful collection of anemones, sponges and other wildlife growing on the pier leg. Piers are often fascinating to dive, creating a man-made reef and a haven for local wildlife.

Coll pier, Isle of Coll, Scotland, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm @13mm, iso 640, f11, 1/100, 2x Retra Prime strobes

Judges comment:

A well balanced composition that reveals the richness of life that flourishes on hard structures in British Seas.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

'Swanage Pier Swarm'

Paul Pettitt (United Kingdom)

From experience I know that this bait ball of Smelt arrive at Swanage pier in exactly the same week every year. If you are lucky and get there the first day you will be rewarded with the scene in this picture. As the week goes on the number of fish gets smaller and smaller as they are eaten by bigger predators.

Swanage Pier, England (MBY)

Nikon, D500, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17, iso 640, f14, 1/160, Inons

Judges comment:

A fantastic composition, full of life. Would surely have finished much higher without the oil-filter effect used to blur out the backscatter and all the other fine detail.

Alex Mustard



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12) British Waters Compacts

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.



WINNER & My Backyard HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Rock pool star'

Martin Stevens (United Kingdom)

Living from shallow down to deep water and reaching impressive sizes, spiny starfish are abundant in Cornwall. I've often taken photos of them underwater, but on a low tide they can be found in the exposed rock pools. Last year we had very low spring tides, and I wanted to attempt some split shots of a starfish in the pools. So, I attached a fisheye wet lens and was lucky with bright conditions, and after a while came across a large starfish in a gully flanked by exposed kelp. The water was clear and calm, and given that starfish aren't the quickest of creatures I could compose some photos with the gully and kelp behind and a little of the starfish showing through the water from above. At the same time, seaweed is most vibrant in the spring, which added a splash of red colour to the scene.

Cornwall (Falmouth), UK **(MBY)**

Canon, G9X MKII, Fantasea FG9X, Weefine WFL-02 Fisheye, iso 160, f/11, 1/60, Natural light

Judges comment:

Excellent example of what can be done in your backyard with least effort. Very nice composition and good catch to see the opportunity in this situation. Even though I wish it would have been cropped a little bit more to straighten the horizon.

Tobias Friedrich

RUNNER UP

'Fluorescent Fireworks'

James Lynott (United Kingdom)

I don't think I will ever tire of viewing and capturing images of fireworks anemones fluorescing under blue light, there is so much variation in the fluorescence patterns between individuals as well as the shapes created by the position of the tentacles in the water. This shot was taken in Loch Long during a night dive in October 2021 and it is one of my favourites so far. I was quite lucky with this one that the main tentacles just curled up slightly while leaving the brightly fluorescing inner tentacles in full view. I used a FireDiveGear excitation filter over my strobe to provide the blue light together with the FireDiveGear barrier filter in front of my camera lens to block excess reflected blue light.

Loch Long, Scotland **(MBY)**

Canon, G7XII, Fantasea FG7XII, N/A, iso 125, f2.8, 1/80, Sea&Sea YS01 Solis, FireDiveGear excitation filter

Judges comment:

An eye-catching symmetrical composition and a fluorescence lighting setup reveal the detail of a deep-water fireworks anemone, in fabulous fluorescent colours.

Alex Mustard





THIRD

‘The Dragonets lair’

Tony Reed (United Kingdom)

I had been trying to get a front facing Dragonet for some time as they are always quite skittish and usually manoeuvre so they face away ready for a quick exit. After a couple of slow attempts to get around the front of this one it sat there with an almost bewildered look on its face as to what I was doing. After it let me take a couple of shots it shot off into the dark! I love the colours and the patterns on dragonets and feel they are over looked somewhat as I don't see many photos of them.

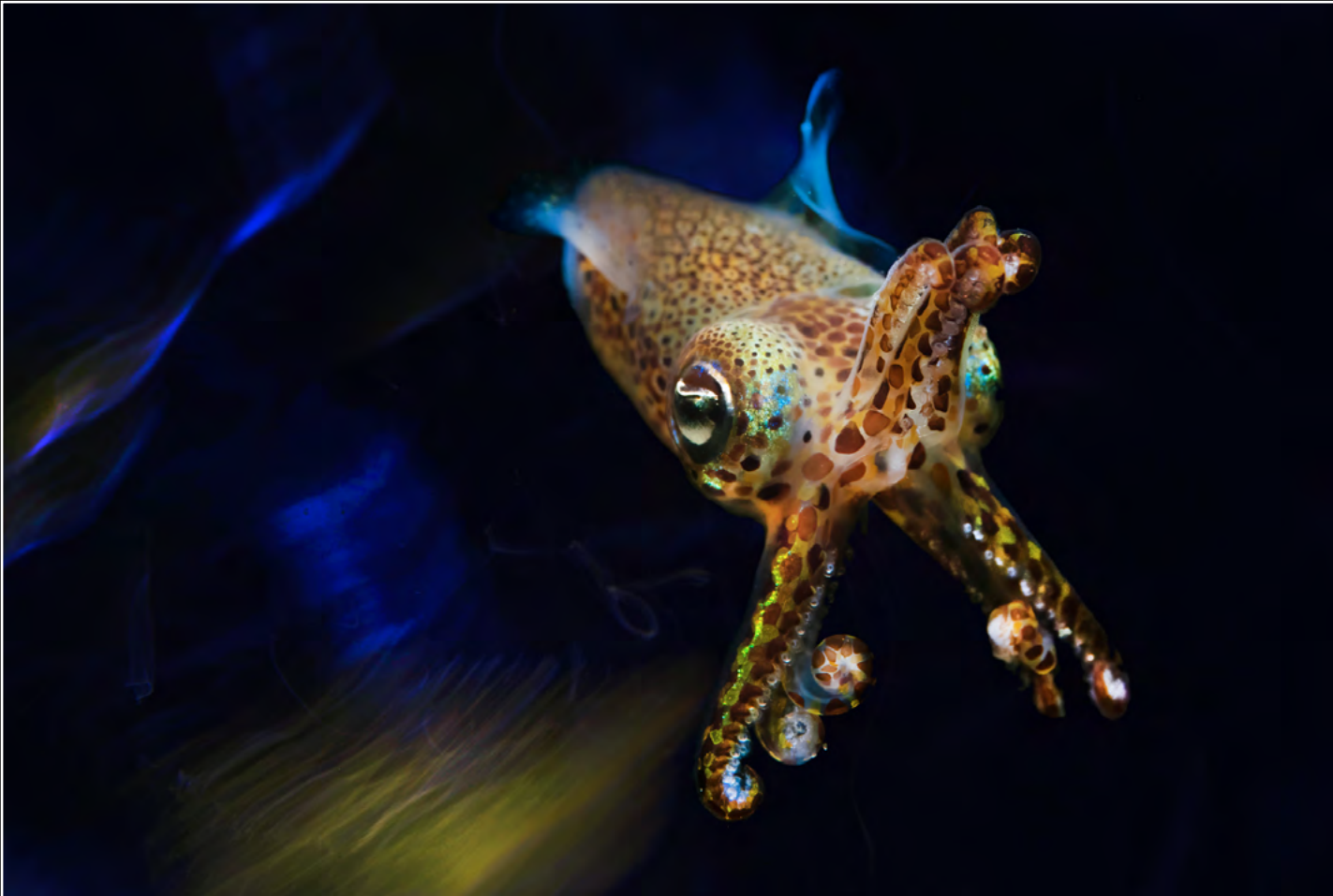
Swanage, England

Olympus, Tg4, Olympus PT-056, Weefine wfl02, iso 200, f/2.6, 1/125, Light and motion gobe 850 wide

Judges comment:

A good visual depiction of a small life habitat side by side with a much larger man made structure.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Space invader’

Sandra Stalker (United Kingdom)

I'm a little bit in love with the tiny bobtail squid at our local dive sites. For something so tiny, the size of my fingernail they are pretty feisty if you invade their space. I wanted to try and portray their darting movement so in addition to the snooted bobtail I used a colour filter on my second strobe, slow shutter speed and waved a scourer around to create the sense of movement and flying through space.

Newtons cove, Dorset, England **(MBY)**

Canon , G7xii, Ikelite, Subsee +10 wet lens, iso 400, 11, 1/4, Backscatter mini flash and snoot

Judges comment:

An excellent photo. This category was its strongest ever this year and this photo was one of my favourites ever entered in it. Razor sharp focus, a personality filled pose and a long exposure livening up the background with attractive colours.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Boop!’

Georgie Bull (United Kingdom)

Before 2021, my only interaction with a grey seal involved being caught off guard by the infamous bull in Brixham Harbour. I should add that this was at night in poor visibility. I love seals, but such scenarios don't lend themselves to appreciating their beauty! In May 2021, I visited Lundy with a group of friends to finally dive with seals on purpose. May bloom was in full swing; the water column was full of Ctenophores and other small planktonic organisms. I really struggled to get any images that weren't clouded by the visibility. This image was the only one I managed, thanks to one very inquisitive individual that found my dome port rather fascinating. If I had a face like that, I'd never get sick of my own reflection either.

Lundy, England

Canon, G9x MKii, Fantasea for Canon G9x, INON UWL-H100 with Dome , iso 200, f9, 1/400, INON S2000

Judges comment:

Very good achievement of this very fast moving animal with only a compact camera. The quality of the image is just excellent and the composition also very good.

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Early morning jellyfish'

Martin Stevens (United Kingdom)

Jellyfish season has to be my favourite time of year, and there are few UK jellyfish as impressive and beautiful as a fully grown compass. These mysterious animals appear for a few summer months, and in a good year (perhaps not for swimmers!) some really big ones visit, trailing their long tentacles behind. I'd been waiting for that time and set out early one morning as the sun was rising to capture some shots, and was soon met with the first giants of the year. The low morning sun rays were piercing the water allowing me to capture one of these magnificent creatures moving towards the light.

Cornwall (Falmouth), UK **(MBY)**

Canon, G9x MKII, Fantasea FG9X, Weefine WFL-02 Fisheye, iso 400, f/8, 1/160, One Sea and Sea YS-01 Solis

Judges comment:

Super nice atmosphere and sun ray beams right towards the jellyfish. I really like the minimalistic composition along with the fantastic colors in this great image.

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Shooting Octopus’

Paula Bentley (United Kingdom)

Having not visited St Abbs for 2 years I was absolutely delighted on my first dive there this year with Divestay to drop down, and my first spot was this lovely octopus ! I was able to get a lovely series of pictures showing different poses until at this point he decided to move off. An octopus makes any dive , but this was truly spectacular British dive , full of colour and life to match any tropical dive. I also have gone back to basics, this is taken on a secondhand 9 year old CanonS100 with just the on board flash.

St Abbs, United Kingdom

Canon, S 100, Recsea, On board 5.2, iso 100, F/5.0, 1/60, On board flash

Judges comment:

A great moment, perfectly capturing this sought-after subject in attractive setting. The sort of image that motivates other people to want to take a camera on their dives!

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

'Rise Up'

Ian Wade (United Kingdom)

Each spring I head to this location to photograph frogs above and below the surface. On this occasion, I got to the location late in the spawning season and almost all the amphibians had disappeared. I searched the ponds and spotted this lone frog just under the surface. My technique is to slowly lower my hand into the water and move it toward the frogs hoping it will stay in the same location! The frog stayed long enough for me to take a few pictures before it disappeared into the weeds.

Brandon Hill Nature Reserve, UK **(MBY)**

Fuji , Fujifilm Finepix Xp50 , Fuji, Fuji, iso 400, f/3.9 , 1/60 , Natural Light

Judges comment:

A majestic pose from an iconic inhabitant. Well framed in it's natural habitat.

Peter Rowlands



(MBY)

COMMENDED

‘Sparring spider crabs’

Martin Stevens (United Kingdom)

Spider crabs can be one of the most impressive beasts we get in UK waters. I wasn't really expecting to see any so early in the spring, but after a short while spotted two relatively small crabs on a collision course moving along a gully between the kelp. Expecting them to pass each other it was a surprise when they instead launched into battle. I quickly dived down to try and capture the action and got few shots before one crab submitted and scurried off. I was really pleased to get the photo here - I was doing my amateurish version of freediving, but was underweighted, and didn't yet own a strobe to freeze the action. So, after fighting the buoyancy of my wetsuit while trying to hold the camera steady enough in the milky waters it was a happy surprise when I later reviewed the images.

Falmouth, Cornwall, UK **(MBY)**

Canon, G9X MKII, Fantasea FG9X, Weefine WFL-02 Fisheye, iso 400, f/7.1, 1/60, Natural light

Judges comment:

We kept coming back to this image and chuckling. This scene from ‘Underwater Strictly’, as well as being good technically, provided welcome levity.

Peter Rowlands



COMMENDED

‘Fluo rockpool’

James Lynott (United Kingdom)

I had the idea of taking a split-level shot with fluorescing snakelocks anemones back in 2020 when friend and dive buddy Alasdair O'dell showed me a rockpool that was full of snakelocks, and just so happened to be in a great location. It wasn't until some time later that I was able to finally try and capture the image I had in mind. Careful planning, and a bit of luck, was needed in order to get the optimum conditions needed! I usually use blue light for underwater fluorescence, but a UV light was perfect for this as it allowed me to capture these images without the need for a yellow filter which would impact the above water view.

Using a tripod setup allowed me to position my camera and take images with a smaller aperture and slower shutter, while aiming the UV torch by hand.

Ganavan, Oban, Scotland **(MBY)**

Canon, G7XII, Fantasea FG7XII, Weefine WFL-01 wet lens, iso 125, f11, 1/6, UV

Judges comment:

An inventive and fantastic image. An idea worth refining. A more attractive sky could see this type of image at the top of the tree.

Alex Mustard

SHARKS NEED OUR HELP.



Photo by: James Lea | Save Our Seas Foundation

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year is open to both underwater and “above water” photos. Open to all photographers (even those who are not underwater photographers).

This category has a separate entry system. This is a single image category and photographers may enter up to 5 images. Photos can be taken underwater or above the water but must highlight a marine conservation story (both positive and negative stories are eligible). Freshwater themed images are not allowed.

Images will be judged without captions (but entrants can assume that the judges will be aware of most major marine conservation topics). The winning images will, however, be displayed with a full caption.



WINNER

'Season of anchovy fishery'
Thien Nguyen Ngoc (Viet Nam)

An aerial perspective of busy anchovy fishing activities off the coast of Hon Yen , Phu Yen province , Vietnam, many local fisherman families along the coastline will follow the near-shore currents to catch the anchovy during peak season. Salted anchovy is the most important raw material to create traditional Vietnamese fish sauce but anchovies are a little fish with a big impact. When they are overfished, the whales, tunas, sea birds... and other marine predators that rely on them as a dietary staple face starvation and population decline critically. And so far Vietnam is also facing this anchovy overfishing situation, according to the survey results of the Institute of Seafood Research, the reserves and catches of anchovies in the waters of Vietnam have decreased by 20-30% in the past 10 years.

Hon Yen, Phu Yen province, Vietnam

Hasselblad, DJI Mavic Pro 2, none, 28mm
f/2.8, iso 100, f/2.8, 1/60, none

Judges comment:

A stark visual reminder of man's reach and control over the surrounding habitat and its devastating effect on the natural balance.

Peter Rowlands



RUNNER UP

'Fishermen camp'

Fabrice Dudenhofer (France)

During a recent trip to Mexico, in Baja California Sur, I had the opportunity to visit a shark fishing camp located on Magdalena Island. After asking permission from the fishermen, I was able to photograph them when they returned from fishing. I wanted to make a split shot to show both the fishermen next to their 'pangas' and the remains of the Mako they had just cut up. In Mexico, shark fishing is absolutely legal but there are fewer and fewer of them to be observed in their natural environment and many species are on the verge of extinction. More than ever it is essential to protect them.

Isla Magdalena, Mexico

Olympus, OM-D E-M1 Mark II, Isotta EM1-MII, Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f1.8 Fisheye Pro, iso 250, f/5.6, 1/160, Natural light

Judges comment:

This image was an early favourite when we looked through this category. It really reflects the spirit of the conservation topic and shows the cruelty of mankind. I hope we can stop slaughtering sharks with the help of images like this for the future.

Tobias Friedrich



THIRD

'In the net'

Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)

During a dive, where I wanted to document fishing with nets, near the coast of the Tyrrhenian Sea. While climbing the nets to retrieve the caught fish, I noticed the strength and tenacity of some tuna in trying to free themselves from it, unfortunately very difficult.

Gulf of Naples, Italy

Canon , Canon 5d sr, Seacam Canon 5D sr, 8-15 mm Canon, iso 400, f16, 1/100, seacam 160D

Judges comment:

A powerful composition, showing us the everyday of food production. Similar to our winner from two years ago, which stopped this stunning image finishing higher.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Microplastic sent to the stomach'
Sebnem Coskun (Hindi)

According to the research conducted by the Turkey Plaston research team, plastics can be consumed by these creatures by turning into microplastics that deteriorate. It has been revealed for the first time that insect-like creatures (zooplankton-kopepods), which constitute the main food of fish in the Black Sea, consume microplastics in their natural environment. Microplastics and related chemicals that enter from the lowest steps of the food chain can grow in the food chain and reach the table. As a diver, I am constantly working underwater. Especially the Mediterranean carries a heavy burden on plastics. However, recent research in the Black Sea shows that the plastic load entering the sea is very high.

It makes me very sad to encounter plastic in every dive. I want these works to attract attention and not leave a plastic legacy to our future.

Rize / Microplastics research laboratory,
Turkey **(MBY)**

Canon, 1dx Mark III, I did not use housing in this photo. , Canon 24-70 mm, iso 1000, f9, 1/60

Judges comment:

An original and undebatable photo speaking about the issues of our waste plastic in the oceans.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Deadly plastics'

Javier Murcia (Spain)

The coastal lagoon of the Mar Menor is one of the most important ecosystems in Europe. You also have a place very polluted by plastics and other garbage. The plastics in soft drinks are often a danger to marine fauna. In this case, an adult cormorant has died drowned by one of these plastics. A pity that is repeated a lot in these ecosystems.

La Manga del Mar Menor, España **(MBY)**

Nikon, D810, Isotta D810, Nikon 10.5 mm f/2.8G ED Fisheye AF , iso 125, f/9, 1/320, Inon z330

Judges comment:

A cruel image with a dramatic camera angle. Very well executed!

Tobias Friedrich



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Too Little too Late?'

Alex Lindbloom (Indonesia)

I started working in Indonesia ten years ago. Back then you might see a little plastic here and there, but mostly in the big ports. Now, specifically in the last five years, the plastic seems to be out of control. I was on a shoot in a very remote corner of Indonesia, nowhere near a large city or port, when these kilometer-long slicks of plastic bombarded us for days. Underwater the plastic was 3-5 meters thick. It's easy to blame Indonesia for this mess, but it's very important to remember that countries like the United States export hundreds of thousands of shipping containers each year full of their 'recycled' rubbish to countries like Indonesia where around 80% of their rubbish is mismanaged. Plastic ending up in nature is not a country-specific problem, it's a global problem. We are all to blame.

Halmahera, Indonesia

DJI Mavic 2 Pro/ Hasselblad, Hasselblad, Drone, Fixed lens, iso 100, 11, 1/320, Natural Light

Judges comment:

This is an image that needs no caption except perhaps beauty and the beast. Its effect is instant and its message far reaching and powerful.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Water Tree'

Shane Gross (Canada)

I was in Oyster, Virginia to document the world's largest seagrass restoration project being conducted by the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and The Nature Conservancy. While I was studying the area on Google maps I noticed these amazing patterns in a nearby salt marsh and knew it would be productive to send my drone over the area. Then the challenge became finding order in the beautiful chaos. This tree-like pattern struck me as soon as I saw it and is fitting as we give trees a lot of credit for sequestering carbon, but salt marshes, mangroves and seagrasses (collectively known as blue carbon) are disproportionately massive carbon sinks.

Virginia, USA, Canada

DJI Mavic 2 Pro, DJI Mavic 2 Pro, 28mm, iso 400, f/5, 1/60

Judges comment:

I love how the photographer saw the opportunity of this excellent drone image. This double meaning of tree and seas is just perfect and a fantastic choice to enter it into this category.

Tobias Friedrich



COMMENDED

'Deadly Appetite'

Kevin De Vree (Belgium)

Pufferfish can be seen amongst other tropical fish in an overcrowded aquarium at Tsukiji, the world's biggest fish market. They can produce toxins so deadly that they can kill if prepared improperly. Yet the delicacy is so popular that overfishing may be pushing one species of puffer to the brink of extinction. To me this photo symbolises humans deadly appetite, leading to overfishing and ultimately the destruction of our oceans.

Tsukiji fish market, Tokyo, Japan

Olympus , Olympus OM-D E-M5, /, Olympus M.Zuiko 17mm f/1.8, iso 200, f/2.5, 1/160

Judges comment:

Very good choice to enter in this image to this category. It really reflects how mankind is treating animals and doesn't care sometimes. Very powerful!

Tobias Friedrich



COMMENDED

'The defeat of the king'

Boshen Qian (China)

In Puerto San Carlos, a bay in Mexico, fishermen pack their catch ashore every day and dump their rubbish into the sea.

It was very windy today. We couldn't go out to sea to photograph Marin. After listening to the local dive guide that there is such a place, our team decided to go to this bay to see what could be photographed.

I was shocked when I saw the shoals of the sea littered with shark heads cut off by fishermen. Sharks are the top predators in the sea but under the human slaughter is so helpless.

Ocean ecosystems without sharks are unhealthy, I hope everyone can protect sharks.

Puerto San Carlos, Mexico

Canon, Canon 5d3, Sea&sea MDX-5D Mark3 V2, EF 8-15mm fisheye, iso 500, f/7.1, 1/250, Sea&Sea YSD2

Judges comment:

An effective image leaves you in no doubt about the content and the message is as stark as the image is frightening.

Peter Rowlands



COMMENDED

'Deadly reflections with a happy ending'

Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

The University of Exeter estimated that 91% of turtles entangled in discarded fishing gear died. Luckily our turtle was one of that small 9%. The number of sea turtles have decreased dramatically during the last decades. It's estimated that approximately 52% of these animals have eaten plastic.

This day we saw a net and when we were going to pick it up we realized there was a small turtle entangled. The best thing to do in this case is call emergency services to avoid hurting the animal. But in this case, we were far from land with no signal and we thought that we must try to help there.

A few friends, a knife and a long time were needed to finally release this turtle. There is always hope and even humans can help to solve the problems they created. We have just to erase the origin of these problems.

La Reina dive site (la Paz), BCS, Mexico

Nikon, Z7 II, Isotta Z7II/Z6II, Nikon 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED FISHEYE NIKKOR AF-S, iso 64, f/7.1, 1/250

Judges comment:

A very powerful image and cruel subject to photograph. The image reveals what is really happening only on a second look, which makes it even better in my eyes.

Tobias Friedrich

1) Wide Angle

Winner: Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

Runner Up: Andy Schmid (Switzerland)

Third: Hannah Le Leu (Australia)

Highly Commended:

Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain), Alex Dawson (Sweden)

Daisuke Kurashima (Japan), Jingle Guo (China)

Commended:

Fan Ping (China), Nicolai Posininsky (Germany),

David Gallardo (Turks and Caicos Islands)



6) Black & White

Winner: Kerrie Burow (Australia)

Runner Up: Borut Furlan (Slovenia)

Third: James Rokop (United States)

Highly Commended:

Martyn Guess (United Kingdom), Yazid Shaari (Oman),

Saeed Rashid (United Kingdom),

Martin Broen (United States)

Commended:

Matthew Smith (Australia),

Jennifer Stock (United Kingdom), Nicolas Hahn (Argentina)

2) Macro

Winner: Francisco Javier Murcia Requena (Spain)

Runner Up: David Alpert (United Kingdom)

Third: Hannes Klostermann (Mexico)

Highly Commended:

Enrico Somogyi (Germany), Andre Johnson (United States),

Nur Tucker (United Kingdom), Ron Watkins (United States)

Commended:

Steven Kovacs (United States), Ipah Uid (Malaysia),

Richard Condlyffe (United States)

4) Behaviour

Winner: Pekka Tuuri (Finland)

Runner Up: Francisco Javier Murcia Requena (Spain)

Third: Damir Zurub (Croatia)

Highly Commended: Jinggong Zhang (China),

Luc Rooman (Belgium), Jules Casey (Australia),

Matthew Smith (Australia)

Commended:

Steven Kovacs (United States), Jake Wilton (Australia),

Luke Gordon (United Kingdom)

7) Compact

Winner: Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

Runner Up: James Rokop (United States)

Third: Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

Highly Commended:

Andrea Michelutti (Italy), Jack Berthomier (New Caledonia),

Rodolphe Guignard (France), Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

Commended:

Todor Dimitrov (Bulgaria), Andrea Falcomata (Italy),

Enrico Somogyi (Germany)

3) Wrecks

Winner: Alex Dawson (Sweden)

Runner Up: Catherine Holmes (United Kingdom)

Third: Karlo Macas (Croatia)

Highly Commended:

Alex Dawson (Sweden), René B. Andersen (Denmark),

Alex Dawson (Sweden), Ferenc Lorincz (Hungary)

Commended:

Christian Horras (Germany), Jack Israel (United States),

Damir Zurub (Croatia)

5) Portrait

Winner: Thomas Heckmann (Germany)

Runner Up: Matthew Smith (Australia)

Third: Daniele Comin (Italy)

Highly Commended:

Matthew Sullivan (United States), Fabio iardino (Italy),

Milos Prelevic (Serbia), Reiko Takahashi (Japan)

Commended:

Mark Tilley (United Kingdom), Mike Korostev (Russia),

Jennifer Stock (United Kingdom)

8) Up & Coming

Winner: Francisco Abadal Ramon (Spain)

Runner Up: Yazid Shaari (Oman)

Third: Francisco Abadal Ramon (Spain)

Highly Commended:

Erika Miura (Japan), Sebastien Delautier (France),
Giacomo Antonio Rossi (Mexico), Alexander Venn (France)
Commended:

Simon Heron (United Kingdom),

David Slater (United States), Christian Horras (Germany)

9) British Waters Wide Angle

Winner: Henley Spiers (United Kingdom)

Runner Up: Paul Colley (United Kingdom)

Third: Henley Spiers (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom),
Paul Colley (United Kingdom), Leena Roy (United Kingdom),
Nicholas More (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Marcus Blatchford (United Kingdom), Kirsty Andrews
(United Kingdom), Saeed Rashid (United Kingdom)

10) British Waters Macro

Winner: Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Runner Up: Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Third: Paul Pettitt (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Cathy Lewis (United Kingdom),
Simon Temple (United Kingdom),
Dan Bolt (United Kingdom), Trevor Rees (United Kingdom)

Commended:

James Emery (United Kingdom), Paul Colley (United
Kingdom), Martyn Guess (United Kingdom)

11) British Waters Living Together

Winner: Lewis Jefferies (United Kingdom)

Runner Up: Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

Third: Alison Pettitt (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Saeed Rashid (United Kingdom),
Tony Reed (United Kingdom), Dan Bolt (United Kingdom),
Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Alison Pettitt (United Kingdom), Kirsty Andrews (United
Kingdom), Paul Pettitt (United Kingdom)

12) British Waters Compact

Winner: Martin Stevens (United Kingdom)

Runner Up: James Lynott (United Kingdom)

Third: Tony Reed (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Sandra Stalker (United Kingdom),
Georgie Bull (United Kingdom), Martin Stevens (United
Kingdom), Paula Bentley (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Ian Wade (United Kingdom), Martin Stevens (United
Kingdom), James Lynott (United Kingdom)

Marine Conservation

Winner: Thien Nguyen Ngoc (Viet Nam)

Runner Up: Fabrice Dudenhofer (France)

Third: Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)

Highly Commended:

Sebnem Coskun (hindi), Francisco Javier Murcia Requena
(Spain), Alex Lindbloom (Indonesia)
Shane Gross (Canada)

Commended:

Kevin De Vree (Belgium), Boshen Qian (China), Rafael
Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

With thanks to the media outlets
who showcased our 2021 winners, including:



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