

An underwater photograph showing a large number of frog tadpoles swimming in a pond. The water is green and murky, with many green lily pads floating on the surface. Tall, thin reeds or grasses are visible in the background, creating a dense, natural environment. The tadpoles are dark-colored with lighter, speckled bellies and long, thin tails. They are scattered throughout the frame, some swimming towards the camera and others away from it.

UPY
2024

Underwater Photographer of the Year
Yearbook

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Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024

Foreword – Howard Hall

I was wrong. So were many of my friends and colleagues back in the 1970s and 1980s. We were witnessing the alarming decline of wildlife populations all over the planet including within our oceans. Many of us felt an obligation to capture these animals on film in the best way possible both technically and artistically. We believed that our images would become priceless archives revealing to future generations the beauty and majesty of wilderness as it once was. In some cases, this prediction was accurate. Just try to capture images of a sunflower sea star today. But the idea that my collection of underwater images would be invaluable to future generations was almost entirely inaccurate. Yes, I have one or two photos captured on 35mm film that would be difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce today. But, for the most part, I could haul my nine file cabinets full of 35mm slides to the dump and they would not be missed, not even by me.

It is certainly true that marine wilderness and marine life populations have been in decline for decades. But this rate of decline has been exceeded by dramatic advances in underwater photographic equipment, artistic technique, and the sheer number of excellent underwater photographers that are diving today. When my increasingly ancient colleagues and I were doing our best underwater still photography, we prepped our cameras by loading them with a 36-exposure roll of 35mm film. On location, we would often dive for weeks before we had an opportunity to send our film to a lab for processing. Then we would often wait an additional week or more to see the results including all our mistakes, which were many. Sometimes the lab screwed up the processing. In 1975 I captured an amazing image of a blue shark surrounded by pilot fish. The lab put a scratch right through the center of the frame. I threw the slide in the trash. How could I have known that ten seconds in Photoshop would

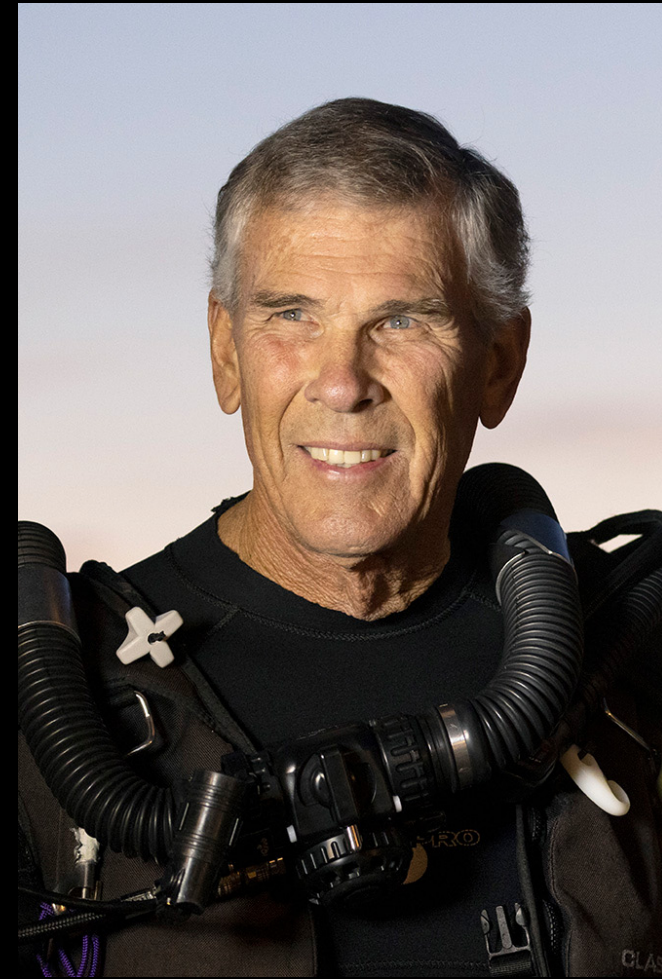
have fixed it. Photoshop didn't exist. Neither did personal computers.

Today you are diving with cameras capable of capturing thousands of images on a single dive. And you can review your technical and creative results instantly. This immediate feedback alone has had an astounding impact on creativity. Most of the time, the images you review are technically perfect. Modern camera technology almost eliminates bad exposures and poor focus. I often sorted through a box of 35mm slides without finding a single properly exposed image. In 1976 I photographed a grey whale surfacing through a kelp canopy. The image was published as a double page spread in National Geographic Magazine. I was astounded when I first looked at the slide because it was the last one in the box. The other 35 slides went straight into the trash. They were all either out of focus, exposed badly, or both. Number 36 was the product of 10% good idea and 90% pure dumb luck.

With the tools and techniques being used today, it's clear to me why underwater images of marine life are far better than anything I did 40 years ago, despite larger marine life populations and a more pristine environment. I'm not suggesting that excelling at underwater photography is easier now than it was 40 years ago. It's not. Today there are thousands of talented underwater photographers capturing images that far exceed mine technically and creatively. In the 1970's there were a few dozen divers capturing publishable underwater photographs - worldwide. The art has reached levels I never could have imagined back in my day. In all the years I worked as an underwater photojournalist, I'm not sure I ever captured an image that would rate an honorable mention in the Underwater Photographer or the Year Competition.

Despite the amazing advances in camera technology, the competition is much tougher today. With so many divers capturing increasingly

spectacular images, those that rate honors in this competition must be extraordinary, indeed. And they are. I am astounded and in awe of the images displayed on these pages. Congratulations to all those honored in this year's UPY competition.



Howard Hall

UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHER OF THE YEAR 2024

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Chairman's Welcome

And that's 10! Yes, we've clocked up 10 editions of the modern UPY. The first Underwater Photographer of the Year, Phil Smith (pictured on the right), was named in 1965, and this contest existed sporadically down the years until a decade ago, myself, Dan and Peter decided to reinvigorate and relaunch UPY as an annual contest. UPY 2015 attracted about 1500 entries, which blew us away at the time, as it was already the biggest underwater photography contest I'd ever been involved with. Most underwater contests attract fewer than 1000 entries, and rarely publish their numbers. We've always been as open with our entrants as possible and these days our biggest categories cross into four figures, and UPY 2024 was, once again, a record breaker with 6500 total images entered.

Ten years ago I wrote in the Yearbook that UPY was focused on doing things right, running the contest the way our entrants want us too. And this remains central to everything UPY does and, I believe, is why each edition of the contest keeps topping the previous year's record entry. Unlike most underwater contests, UPY judges physically gather in one room and make every single decision throughout the process. We look at the images many times, disagree, agree, argue and persuade until it is all decided. This also allows us to have a bespoke result system, that gives feedback on every single image that is entered, wherever you finish. We don't spend months procrastinating, but meet the day after the contest closes and within a week we've finalized the results and let everyone know. Once the results are announced publicly, we work hard to get your names and images seen by millions in the mainstream media. And to showcase the images we put on exhibitions in many venues around the world, and have some exciting ones planned already for UPY 2024. New for this year, is our own exclusive awards gala evening in Mayfair, London, kindly sponsored by our friends at The Crown Estate. In addition to our public presentation of the results and print exhibition at

the UK's Go Diving Show

Looking at the image at the bottom of the page, another reason for the growth in UPY is obvious. And pleasingly it comes from our increasingly diverse community now taking pictures underwater. The winning images that follow are taken by photographers from all continents. Furthermore, two of our last 4 overall winners have been women, and this year 6 out of the 12 categories were won by female photographers, as well as 3 of our 5 main awards. The photography being produced underwater has never been as impressive as it these days, and I believe this is clearly because we are now seeing the talent of a wider diversity of people. One curiosity in the UPY results is that neither the overall UPY or BUPY has had a repeat winner in the last decade, and indeed few of our categories have any repeat winners. All of which reaffirms the exceptional strength in depth in underwater photography.

Finally, I'd like to thank the UPY team for all their hard work in making the world's best underwater photography contest happen. I want to also thank our category sponsors, The Crown Estate, Marelux and the Save Our Seas Foundation (happy 20th birthday!), and all the top names in diving and underwater photography who sponsor prizes. Thank you to the legendary Howard Hall for your generous foreword to this collection – we could not have wished for anyone better to mark this anniversary collection. Thank you to everyone who supports UPY with your fantastic pictures, whether you win or not we're honoured to look at and judge them. All that remains is to invite you to dive into this amazing collection of images, I can promise that every single one is worth your time. So, marvel at the photographs and enjoy reading the photographer's stories. And don't forget that the previous 9 yearbooks are still available free on our website too.

Dr Alex Mustard MBE – Chair Of UPY Judges



Alex Mustard



Caption: 10 years on (left to right) Geoff Harwood (UPY 1966), Peter Rowlands (BUPY 1983), Tim Glover, Mike Busuttilli, Alex Mustard, Phil Smith (UPY 1965) and Colin Doeg (BUPY 1968) at UPY 2015.

The Judges

I'm partial to metaphors and jigsaws and this year I've been able to combine the two.

During the winter nights I always like to have a jigsaw 'on the go' and am lucky to have a space to keep it laid out ready to dip into whenever there's nothing on the telly, which is most nights these days. The part that is the most important initially is to empty the pieces out and turn them all over, image side up, and look out for edge pieces



to make a start on the frame. This is quite time consuming and seems tedious but it is a crucial part of the process as I start to get familiar with all of the pieces some which attract the eye with colour, some with shape, nearly all excellent and contributory.

Each time I view the pieces my eye often alights on the same image as it stands out from the hundreds, and in UPY's case, 6,500 images. The more I view the images, the more the constructive ones stand out and get chosen to go forward. It's a process of comparison initially.

The final process is rather like a chef's sauce which gets better and better as it reduces. So too with the UPY finalists as 50 images becomes 25

becomes 15 and then, after much, much discussion, comparison and reasoning, 10.

Judging is an emotive process and I have always said that on another day I might have voted for a different image order but it would still be from the same final 10. That's why to be in the top ten is a great achievement.

When I get home after the judging there is always a feeling of anti-climax that it's over again for another year. I feel like I've been round the underwater world several times without leaving my seat and in great company.

My thanks go to each and every entrant for trusting us/me with your images. It has been another privilege. *Peter Rowlands*



This year, our UPY judges have definitely levelled up

THE GOPHERS

Wait... what?! UPY is 10 years old? How, or more precisely, when did that happen? It's unbelievable that what we started a decade ago is still going strong and is being well supported by our community of photographers and the diving/underwater photography industry.

The anniversary actually snuck up on us a bit... in January 2023 while we were together for UPY2023 judging, we had to resort to counting off the years on our fingers to figure out if it was indeed the 10th year in 2024. We're a clever bunch at UPY HQ.

I've had a sneaky look at the 10-year collection Alex has put together and it is an incredible watch. Interesting too to see how some styles and techniques stand the test of time, while others come and go like the ebbing tide. I'm actually privileged to have a few images in there myself, which came as a nice surprise.

I'd like to congratulate all of our winners (and this year, our shortlisted photographers too, you did very well too), and also say thank you to all of you who replied to my many emails with positive comments about the competition and the process of entering. In the dark depths of a UK winter those words are heartwarming at a time when they are much needed. *Dan Bolt*

10 years, wow!! It's great to see the vision that Alex, Dan and Peter had a decade ago, has become this incredible part of the underwater photography calendar and is spoken about everywhere I travel. Although I have only officially been involved with UPY for a part of that time, my role has grown from prize finder and social media meddler to now include being the yearbook editor. I was honoured to take over the yearbook from Peter Rowlands, he did an incredible job for many years and I hope I can do justice to his work.

While designing the pages of this yearbook, a quote by Burk Uzzle came to mind, it goes, "Photography is my love affair with life, seasoned with years of passion". I have become incredibly intimate with the amazing images in this book and it is clear to me that many of you have an

incredible love affair with the ocean, and why not? I always feel at home when I'm close to the ocean, incredibly fortunate to see parts of it that are hidden from many, and when I'm away from the ocean, I feel that I have left a part of me behind. That sounds like love to me.

This year our little gopher family has grown, and I would like to formally welcome Shannon aboard as our main social media guru. It's great to have you along and to inject some much-needed youth and frankly, the competence I didn't have into our social media channels.

Looking back at 10 years of images, it's amazing to see the unique and varied photographs that have been captured over that time. As with the first year of the competition, I am still wowed by the images that you have all taken. It's clear now, that Underwater Photographer of the Year is here to stay, and I cannot wait to see the next 10 years' worth of images. *Saeed Rashid*

I started my underwater photography journey whilst studying Marine & Natural History Photography at Falmouth University. It was there that I first discovered the prestigious Underwater Photographer of the Year contest.

Since learning of UPY's existence in 2019, I have entered every year with mixed results; some years more successful than others. But the feedback received is like no other contest and provides great feedback for photographers who, like me, are hoping to improve their skills!

The allure of UPY lies in its ability to attract the best of the best in the underwater photography community. Imagine my surprise and delight when I was offered the chance to join the team. If someone had told me 6 years ago that I'd be an UPY gopher; I would not have believed you!

In my role as a gopher; I look after all things social media, allowing me to share the contests incredible winning images. Plus, I get to interact with all of our wonderful and supportive followers! I'm incredibly grateful to be part of the team and look forward to the future of UPY. *Shannon Moran*



Saeed Rashid



Dan Bolt



Shannon Moran

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



'WHALE BONES'

Alex Dawson, Sweden

In eastern Greenland the local hunters bring their catch and share it among each other. From a stable population of over 100,000 minke whales in the North Atlantic the hunters of Tasiilaq typically take less than a dozen. The whale is pulled up on the beach during high tide and many families gather to cut the skin, blubber and the meat off at low tide. Almost all the whale is consumed, however the skeleton is pulled back into the sea by the next high tide and the remains can be found in shallow waters where various marine invertebrates and fish pick the bones clean.

Tasiilaq, Greenland

Nikon, Z7 II, Nauticam Z7 II, Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 500, f4.5, 1/60, No lights

Judge's comments:

Photographed in the toughest conditions, a breath-hold diver descends below the Greenland ice sheet to bear witness to slaughtered whales. The masterful composition invites me to consider our impact on the great creatures of this planet. Since the rise of humans, wild animals have declined by 85%. Today, just 4% of mammals are wildlife, the remaining 96% are humans and our livestock. Our way needs to change to find a balance with nature. - Alex Mustard

The 'Save our Seas Foundation' Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year



CATEGORY WINNER

'SAVING GOLIATH'

Nuno Sá Portugal

The golden beaches of Costa da Caparica, just across the river from Lisbon were packed with sun seekers on this sunny day. And then something unusual caught their attention on the horizon. A massive sperm whale seemed to be struggling to swim as it slowly moved towards the coast. Soon its giant wounded body was passing by surfers and swimmers and reaching the shallow waters of the beach. But suddenly dozens of sun seekers start running towards the whale. Together they push and chant trying to help the giant back into the sea, as it slowly slaps its tail back and forth, and breathes heavily. Several hours later the whale takes its last breath, its body crushed by gravity as it lays on the sand. An estimated 20,000 whales are killed every year, and many more injured, after being struck by ships-and few people even realise that it happens.

Costa da Caparica - Fonte da Telha, Portugal

DJI , Phantom 4 PRO, None, 24mm, iso 400, f/11, 1/100, None

Judge's comments: This isn't supposed to be an easy Category to view but this has a pleasing element visually which created a feeling of confidence until I read the caption and found that all that hope and all that effort, from both sides, came to nought. It's sad, so sad but it works on several levels. *Peter Rowlands*

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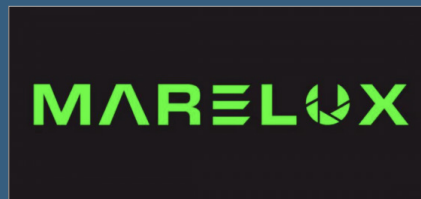
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WIDE ANGLE

Category History

2024 Alex Dawson (Sweden)
2023 Greg Sherman (USA)
2022 Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)
2021 Renee Capozzola (USA)
2020 Greg Lecoeur (France)
2019 François Baelen (Reunion Island)
2018 Greg Lecoeur (France)
2017 Ron Watkins (USA)
2016 Mike Korostelev (Russia)
2015 Raffaele Livornese (Italy)

Marelux is very honored to join UPY to sponsor the most prestigious underwater photography contest, so that we have the opportunity to recognize and reward the talented photographers who are pushing the boundaries of the art form. By sponsoring the highly popular Wide Angle category, Marelux wants to encourage more people to participate in underwater photography and inspire many more to love the beauty of ocean. Marelux believes its underwater products, with various new technologies' can make underwater photography a safer, smarter and more enjoyable experience therefore encouraging more people to take images underwater.



The wide angle category is sponsored by Marelux

WIDE ANGLE



CATEGORY WINNER

'WHALE BONES'

Alex Dawson, Sweden

In eastern Greenland the local hunters bring their catch and share it among each other. From a stable population of over 100 000 minke whales in the North Atlantic the hunters of Tasiilaq typically take less than a dozen. The whale is pulled up on the beach during high tide and many families gather to cut the skin, blubber and the meat off at low tide. Almost all the whale is consumed, however the skeleton is pulled back into the sea by the next high tide and the remains can be found in shallow waters where various marine invertebrates and fish pick the bones clean.

Tasiilaq, Greenland

Nikon, Z7 II, Nauticam Z7 II, Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 500, f4.5, 1/60, No lights

Judge's comments:

A very arresting image right from the start; for me this got bigger and better with every viewing. The diver's suit and torch give it a 'visiting alien' feel, the composition flows effortlessly and takes your eye on the right journey to tell the story. Top of the Category and now top of the tree. Congratulations and it has been a pleasure to spend time with this image. *Peter Rowlands*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'WILD AND FREE'

Remuna Beca, United States

A pod of Atlantic Spotted Dolphins swimming wild and free in the Bahamas. Interacting with these highly intelligent cetaceans in their natural environment is an unforgettable experience and over the last three years I travelled to Bimini where a resident population is known for their playfulness with freedivers. They are incredibly fast and acrobatic, making most encounters high-energy and unpredictable, which can be challenging to photograph. I wanted to create an image that captured their playful spirit and the serene beauty of seeing them in the wild—a stark contrast to those most people unfortunately only see in captivity. On this day we found a large pod of thirty individuals and as I positioned myself near the bottom, a group separated towards me in perfect symmetry with a juvenile gracefully cantered below. This image captures our moment of connection and for me symbolizes the perfect balance of nature.

Bimini, Bahamas

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Sigma 15mm Fisheye, iso 500, f9, 1/500, N/A

Judge's comments: A split second in a fast moving encounter with wild animals perfectly timed and with each dolphin contributing to the story. Quality shots like this make it look easy. *Peter Rowlands*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'TWILIGHT SMILE'

Rodolphe Guignard, France

In 2011, the Bahamas declared its waters a "shark sanctuary". Off the island of Grand Bahama, I witnessed several unforgettable encounters. At dusk, several dozen lemon sharks rise from the depths and surround the dive boat. Perched on the swim-step with my body half-submerged, I set out to take split shots. On this day the sea was rough, it was almost dark, and the sharks were lively and very curious, not hesitating to come into contact with my housing! In these light conditions, I replaced my strobes with 2 headlamps to ensure continuous light. I used the burst mode coupled with a fast shutter speed to better freeze the movement. With a lot of patience and luck, I was able to capture some very close-up shots, and highlight the magnificent colours of the sunset. A striking face-to-face encounter!

Few miles from Tiger Beach - 20km off coast of West End - Grand Bahama, The Bahamas

Nikon, Z8, Nauticam NA-Z8, Nikkor Z 14-30 mm f/4, iso 1250, F/4.0, 1/500, 2x BIGBLUE VL18000PBRC

Judge's comments: Atmospheric lighting below the surface perfectly complements a dramatic sunset in this magnificently moody lemon shark portrait. The grin and the eye contact inject a sinister undercurrent to the picture. *Alex Mustard*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'UMBRELLA'

Alvaro Herrero (Mekan), Spain

The idea for this photo popped into my mind one morning, as soon as I woke up. I had been in this location before, and the idea of the rays of light falling like a shower, made me think of using an umbrella to protect the model from the falling light. When I told my model Esther Abad about the idea, she couldn't wait to help make this image.

In truth it was very difficult to operate the umbrella underwater, since once it is open it has a huge resistance. And we needed a couple of support freedivers (Alfonso and Taz) to help Esther. I always think that the way Esther posed so naturally for this photograph, despite these challenges, is what really makes this photograph.

Tulum, Mexico

Nikon, D500, Isotta, Sigma 10-20mm f4-5.6, iso 640, f/4, 1/200, Natural Light

Judge's comments: A beautiful image that belays the challenge of producing such a composition. Kudos to the photographer for the concept and kudos to the model for making this photo possible. Fantastic team work. *Alex Mustard*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'MARCH OF THE TADPOLES'

Shane Gross, Canada

It was my partner and I's first time visiting this lake on the advice of a friend. The first few hours of snorkelling were not very exciting (but very chilly), however, the amount of western toad tadpoles migrating from the depths of the lake to the shallows slowly grew. By late afternoon there were millions of the tadpoles in the sunlit shallows feeding on algae among the lily pads. My goal was to try and tell as much of the story as possible in one frame where we see, of course, the cute little animals, but also the lily pads and the forest covered mountains in the background.

Vancouver Island, Canada

Nikon, D500, Aquatica, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 250, f/11, 1/320, Sea & Sea D3 Lightning

Judge's comments: The wriggling bodies of tadpoles gyrate across Shane's transportive composition inviting us into their world at their scale. This image is a masterclass in immersive photography. *Alex Mustard*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'LARA WRECK'

Alex Dawson, Sweden

This image was shot during my first rebreather tri-mix trip I hosted in the Red Sea in February 2022. The Wreck is called Lara and was sunk in November 1982 at Jackson Reef in the Straits of Tiran of the Red Sea. Many divers know this wreck from the parts of the wreckage are still on top of the reef but most of ship starts at 50m depth. Some parts are as deep as 80-90m. We did this dive on DPV's to handle the strong currents that can be very common in this area to assure our safety.

Jackson Reef, Egyptian Red Sea

Nikon, Z9, Nauticam Z9, Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 800, f4.5, 1/40, no lights

Judge's comments: Scale is one of the hardest visual themes to portray underwater with limited visibility and unfamiliar subject matter. This image captures the grander and the excitement of exploring a shipwreck. Very impressive to capture such an image at depth. *Alex Mustard*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Sunset on the skin'

Isaias Cruz, Spain

In my opinion, sharing the water with blue sharks is the most incredible experience, with their beautiful shapes, relaxed swimming and close, curious passes. I think they are the most graceful shark species to photograph as well. I had been dreaming about this kind of photo for a long time, a split shot with a sunset over the surface and the shark under it, but in the Bay of Biscay having the right conditions with current, wind, swell and clear sky is not a common thing. But on this day, everything finally came together.

Bermeo, Spain

Sony, a7sIII, Nauticam NA-A7SIII, canon 8-15mm, iso 1250, f/11, 1/250, Inon z330

Judge's comments: A graphically simple and unambiguous image of an iconic subject with perfect eye contact topped off by the sun's glowing rays. A powerful, perfectly executed image, it was an immediate contender for the finals.

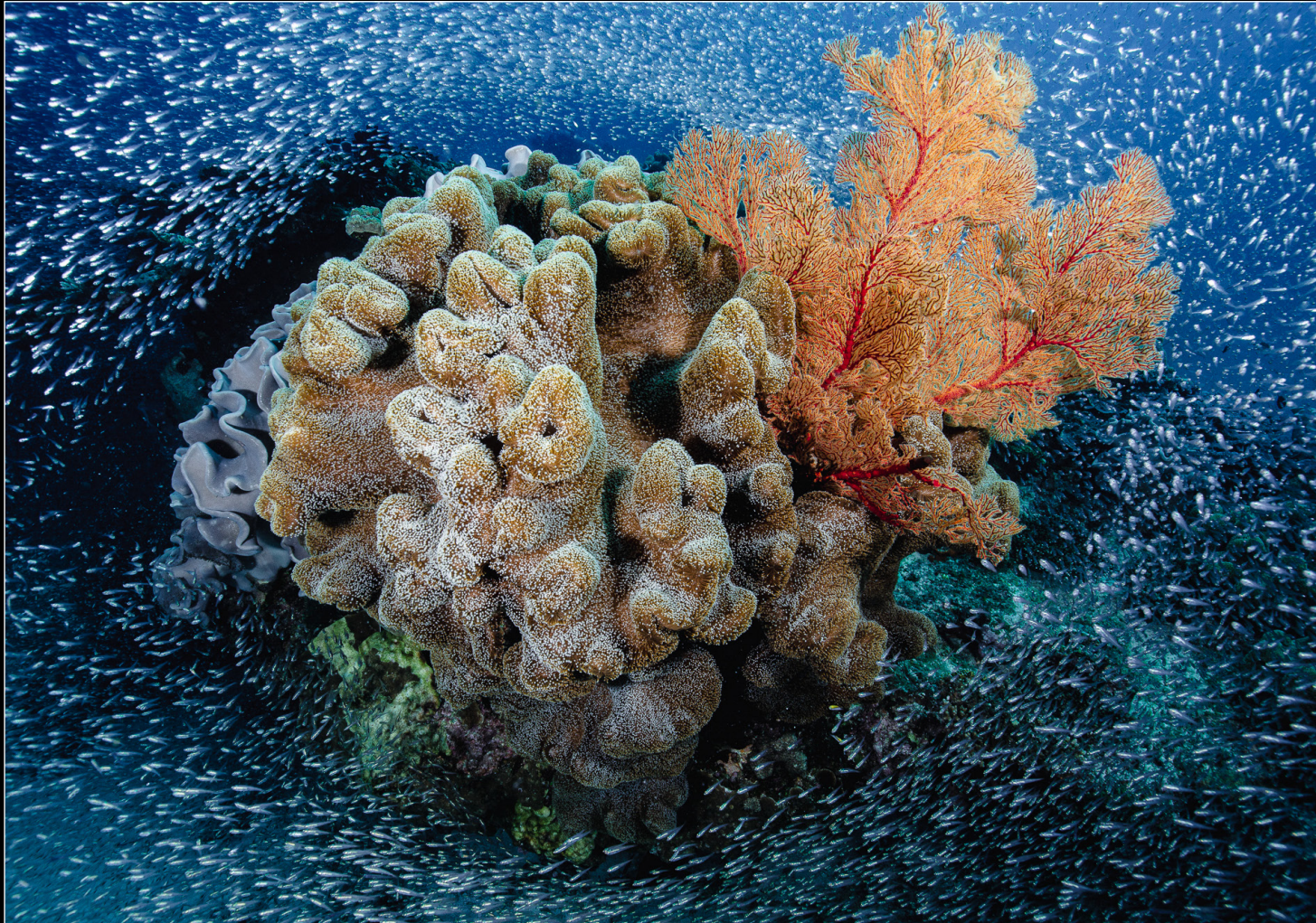
Peter Rowlands



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SPRATS CIRCLE THE SARCOPHYTON'

Peter J Mumby, Australia

Large schools of round herring sprats (baitfish) are mesmerizing and attract many predators. I usually focus on photographing the hunters, but on this occasion I considered how the sprats use the habitat of the reef as a refuge. As I got closer to the reef, sprats left the shelter of the soft corals and circled in 'organised' schools. This led me to wonder how I could use my own body to manipulate the schooling baitfish into provide appealing backdrops to coral reef animals like this soft coral and sea fan.

Lady Elliot Island, Australia

Canon, 5D mkiii, Sea & Sea MDX 5DMIII ver 2, 16-35 mm (16 mm), iso 320, f10, 1/200, Sea & Sea YS-D3

Judge's comments: There is always a sophistication in simplicity, something that is incredibly challenging to pull off when an already bustling coral reef is drowned in school baitfish. Classy work. . Alex Mustard



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'IN CELEBRATION'

Geo Cloete, South Africa

When shooting split-level photographs, underwater photographers typically want calm, flat conditions. So, I wouldn't be surprised if most photographers, even seasoned ones, would miss such an opportunity. That said, this image was very challenging to produce because of the obstacles that come with operating so close to the crashing waves. The background might look far away, but that is just the fisheye lens. Milliseconds after this shot was taken, this scene was one of rushing white water as the waves explosively came ashore. This is when constructing a perfectly straight split line becomes secondary to ensuring your survival. These treacherous shorelines provide an excellent glimpse into the life and dynamics of tidal pools, which I find interesting and love to document.

False Bay, South Africa

Nikon, D300, Seatool ND300, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 200, f/13, 1/400, Inon Z240

Judge's comments: This split level image is not only achingly beautiful, but timed with precision to catch the explosion of a powerful wave in front of radiating whisks of clouds. A slightly longer exposure to open up the details in the sky would have made this image irresistible. *Alex Mustard*



MARELUX

WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'WONDERFUL WALRUSES'

Celia Kujala, United States

I have travelled to Svalbard three times to photograph walrus, returning with the goal of capturing images of them underwater. On my most recent expedition, we encountered rain, hail, snow, fog and wind. I had only one chance to put my new pole-cam, and everything I had learned the previous year, to the test. Watching the walrus was magical. I loved observing their curiosity and I felt an inexplicable special connection with them. I think split shots are a nice representation of walrus since they are dependent on both the world above water and underwater. In this image I tried to capture their unique look and beauty along with showing their dependence on both worlds.

Svalbard, Norway

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA-D500, Tokina 10-17mm Fisheye, iso 2000, f/16, 1/250, natural light

Judge's comments: These are special subjects and this is a really special image with great initial eye contact which flows to the tusks and then peaks with the perfectly posing walrus in the background. And all with a great diagonal split. *Peter Rowlands*



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TRUK LAGOON

MACRO

Category History

2024 Talia Greis (Australia)
2023 Shane Gross (Canada)
2022 Javier Murcia (Spain)
2021 Galice Hoarau (Norway)
2020 Hannes Klostermann (Germany)
2019 Fabio Iardino (Italy)
2018 Shane Gross (Canada)
2017 So Yat Wai (Hong Kong)
2016 Davide Lopresti (Italy)
2015 Nuno Sa (Portugal)

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'AN ABSTRACT PORTRAIT OF A POTBELLY SEAHORSE'

Talia Greis, Australia

I was drawn to this particular seahorse because it had especially distinguished markings around the eye, and the jaw-dropping colour palette made a striking contrast with the surrounding coral. Whilst seahorses are not rare on Sydney dive sites, photographing one that can really stand out has always been a dream for me. I chose to open the aperture all the way down to f/3.5 which transformed the coral into an out of focus cloud-like effect, but also embraced the ominous green waters of Sydney summer diving. To me the seahorse's striking red eye, and posture conveys power and strength, arising from the smoky underbelly of the ocean.

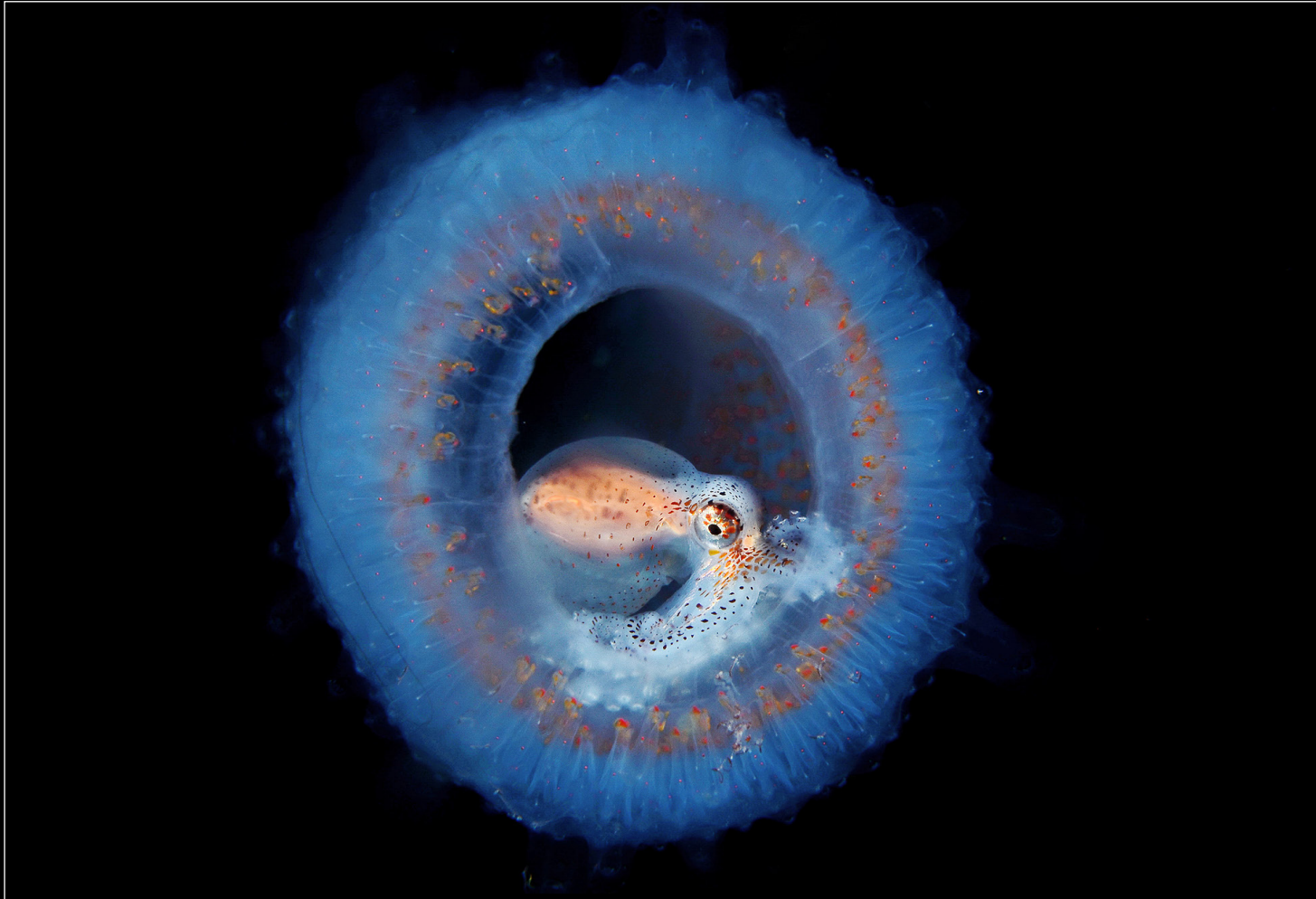
Bare Island, Australia

Sony, A1, Isotta A1, Nikon 60mm Macro with Monster Adapter, iso 200, f3.5, 1/200, Single Inon Strobe with backscatter snoot

Judge's comments: We love how the photographer captured the character of both the secretive seahorse and the murky waters of Sydney in this picture with excellent use of light, a striking colour contrast and an inventive composition. Beautiful.
Alex Mustard

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'LONESOME DRIFTER'

Dennis Corpuz, Philippines

We frequently witness the vertical migration of small creatures that travel and feed on highly attractive lights in water that is approximately 200+ meters deep in blackwater. While I was exploring the area, I came across a pyrosome (an unusual tubular planktonic animal) that was 10cm (4 inches) long. As I examined it carefully, I discovered that an animal was hiding inside it. The creature was floating in mid-water and moving randomly. Luckily, I managed to capture a few shots of it before it drifted away into deeper waters.

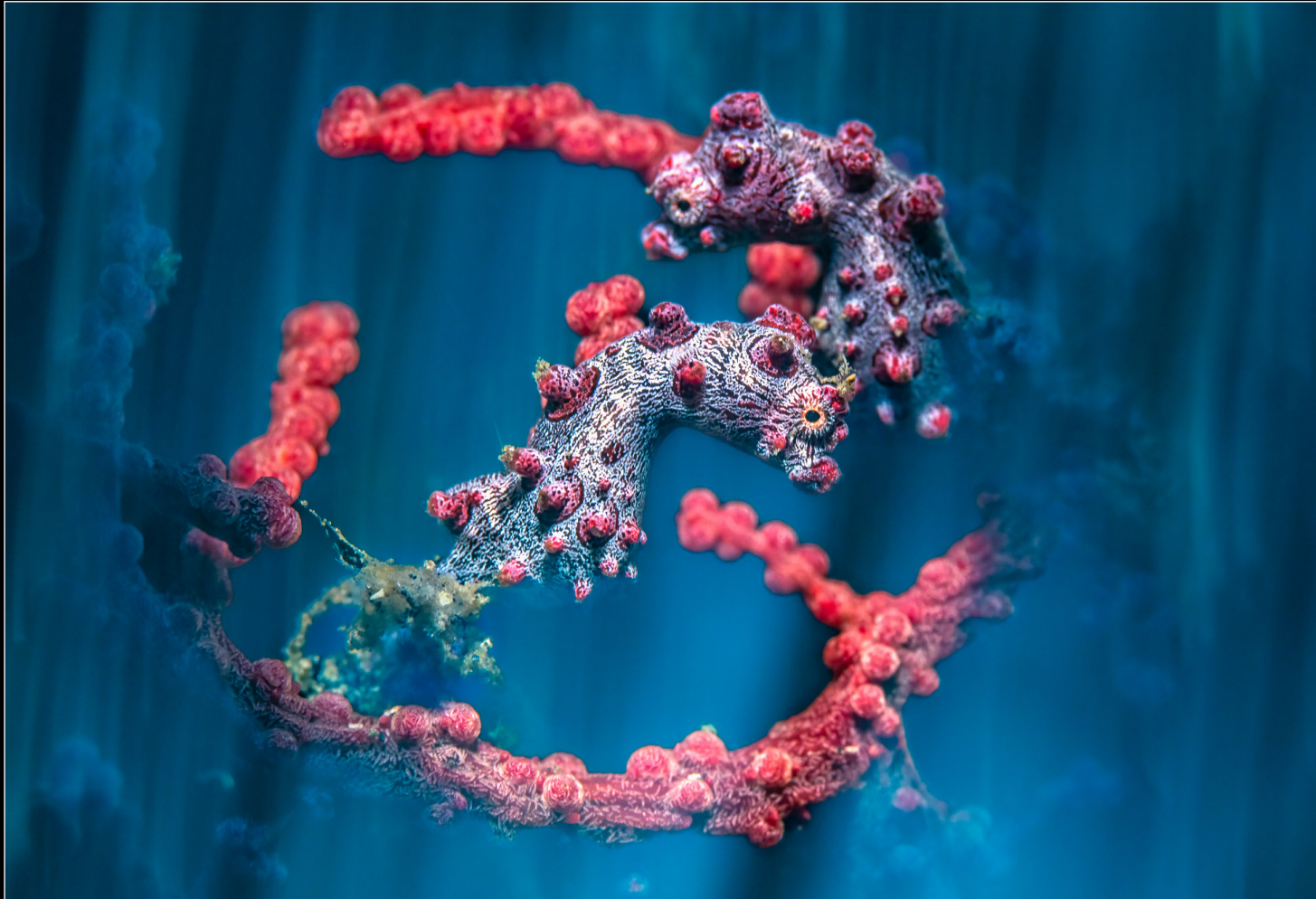
Anilao Janao Bay, Philippines

Nikon , D7000, Sea and sea MDX D7000, 60mm Macro, iso 250, f/20, 1/250, Dual Backscatter mini flash 2

Judge's comments: Framed within the pyrosome, this tiny octopus looks like its snugly wrapped in a cosy sleeping bag. The sympathetic lighting and pastel colours turn this frame into a delicate work of art. *Alex Mustard*

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'DOUBLE PYGMY'

Byron Conroy, Iceland

I always like when a common subject that has been photographed a lot is shot in a different way, I decided to dedicate a number of dives to shooting Pygmy seahorses for this reason. After exploring all the sites in Lembeh we found one fan that had 14 of them on, I decided to shoot it with a snoot, manual focus, a long exposure and a lot of Intentional camera movement with the aim being able to light and freeze the seahorses and blur the environment around them, with the bonus of being able to create a rich blue background as opposed to the normal black backgrounds.

Nudi Retreat, Lembeh , Indoneisa

Canon 5D Mk4, 5D Mk4, Nauticam NA5d , Canon 100mm , iso 800, f11, 0.3s, Retra Pro LSD snoot and Retra Pro

Judge's comments: Commonly photographed subjects have to be captured in a new way to catch the judges' eye and this is a perfect example. Excellent use of lighting and movement to create a stand out image with a dream like quality. Highly original. *Peter Rowlands*

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'MAGIC LIONFISH'

Sergey Shanin, Russian Federation

The Helios 44M lens with an inverted lens and extension rings creates an interesting creative effect. Depending on the rotation of the front or rear lens, various effects can be achieved. Bokeh is obtained with beautiful circles. I was specifically looking for a very small object and met this tiny lionfish. To achieve sharpness, I had to take about 50 frames with manual focus during burst shooting. I took photos with a torch without flashes in aperture priority mode to create this shot.

Lighthouse, Dahab, Red Sea, Egypt

Olympus, OM-D E-M1 MarkII, Nauticam NA-EM1II,
Modified Helios 44M lens, iso 800, f/8, 1/640,
Colored torch

Judge's comments: A stunningly beautiful and strikingly original macro image that utilises the distinctive look of a vintage lens perfectly. One of the standout photos of UPY 2024. *Alex Mustard*

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'GREEN & RED'

Sunbong Jung, Republic of Korea

I feel really great pleasure when I focus on tiny eyes, dots and antennas through the viewfinder. On this dive I spent several minutes following this juvenile puffer filefish and waiting for it to come into my frame. It was a challenge to shoot the perfect moment with a perfect sideview of the fish and the red curtain fully spread on my frame. I almost deleted this shot because I thought the white backscatter right in front of the fish's mouth ruined the entire photo. Luckily, my lovely wife, Jussica, insisted that I must enter this photo. That's why I'm here!

Anilao, Philippines

Canon, EOS 5D Mark IV, Sea & Sea, EF 100mm F2.8L MACRO, iso 400, f9, 1/80, Retra Flash

Judge's comments: A pop art palette of prime colours make this frame impossible to ignore. But it is the tiny white dot, the object of the filefish's attention that fills this careful composition with purpose. *Alex Mustard*

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SEAHORSE SILHOUETTE'

Patrick Neumann, Germany

I had this kind of silhouette shot in my mind for a while. I tried it on different critters like ghost pipefish, hairy frogfish and more, but none of them turned out like the picture I had in my mind. Finally, this seahorse was the perfect critter for that silhouette shot. Special thanks goes out to my dive guide Hiros Tempone. Without his help that shot wouldn't have been possible. To achieve the shot we placed a leaf (that we found underwater) in front of the seahorse and put a minigear snoot light behind the seahorse. That way the light of the minigear created a "light circle" on the leaf and the shadow of the seahorse in the middle of it. Once again big thanks to Hiros for holding the leaf and placing the minigear torch.

Lembeh Strait, Indonesia

Canon, 5DMK4, Nauticam NA 5DMKIV, 100mm
Canon Macro, iso 1000, f 13, 1/200, minigear snoot
torch ms-03

Judge's comments: Graphically powerful and amusingly different. It is a fun shot that just works and the green colour is eye catching while the natural degradation of the leaf adds attractive texture to the shot. Always heartening to read a photographer sharing the credit for an image with their dive guide. *Alex Mustard*



MARELUX

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'RED SEA'

Ben Oakes, United Kingdom

One of the most recognisable animals in the sea is the clownfish, and this fish is a Red Sea clownfish. Whilst visiting Egypt I learnt that an incredibly popular clownfish dive, Nemo City had been decimated in recent years due to increased poaching for the aquarium trade. But this resilient individual had made its home in the sheltered waters of Marsa Shagra's house reef. To capture this shot, I timed my dive to take advantage of the stirred-up particulate from diver training! With this opportunity, I positioned a red colour-filtered Backscatter mini-flash, behind the fish, to create a vibrant red glow. Meanwhile, my other Backscatter mini-flash, attached to the housing, illuminated the details of the clownfish. By chance, as I pressed the trigger, the fish caught a shell out of the water.

Marsa Shagra, Egypt

Nikon, D810, Nauticam DA800, 60mm f/2.8, iso 160, f/14, 1/160, 2 x Backscatter mini-flash with Bold colour filter

Judge's comments: Red Sea clownfish are probably the most attractive and ideal subjects for practice. Rarely stationery, they exercise shutter finger reflexes but for competitions they need to stand out and this one certainly did with the well observed and imaginatively lit background topped by the tiny shell. *Peter Rowlands*

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'RAZOR GANG'

Nicholas More, United Kingdom

Razor fish are characterful protagonists, that unusually swim nose down to the sand, hunting for small crustaceans. They are one of the less glamorous inhabitants of the Lembeh Strait, but a firm favourite of mine. I used a slow shutter and a downwards panning motion, to imply movement of the school, but also to 'blur away' the ugly & distracting background. A tight aperture controls the flash and provides plenty of depth of field to give detail and good eye contact from each individual. It was a close shave and very pleasing to get a clean-cut image of these razor fish and I'm thankful to the UPY judges that it made the winners circle in this cut-throat competition.

Lembeh Strait, Indonesia

Nikon, D850, NA-D850, Nikon 60mm, ISO 80, f/18, 1/8th, Inon Z330 with Jon Barron Beam Restrictors

Judge's comments: A truly satisfying composition of a subject that many photographers would overlook. The combination of pin-sharp details set against blurred textures makes for a most memorable image. *Alex Mustard*

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL'

Ludovic Galko-Rundgren, France

Diving Tulamben with my guide Ajiex, we like to do photo dives on a predefined theme. The theme was slow shutter/mixed lighting : slow shutter is often used for moving fish, we thought we could adapt the technique to macro even supermacro critters, to twist the genre. The idea is to freeze the subject with my snooted Retra flash while lighting a colourful environment with small torchlights, I would swing the camera set at low speed so it gives a blurred effect. Ajiex often brings 3 torchlights with him, we had then plenty of lighting options. This small frogfish on a red sponge was a great subject. I regularly use a slow shutter in between 1/4 and 1/6 with a f/16 aperture matching the torchlight brightness. The sponge came out spectacularly at first try, like burning flames framing that devilish looking Froggie, reminding me immediately of a Rolling Stones anthem.

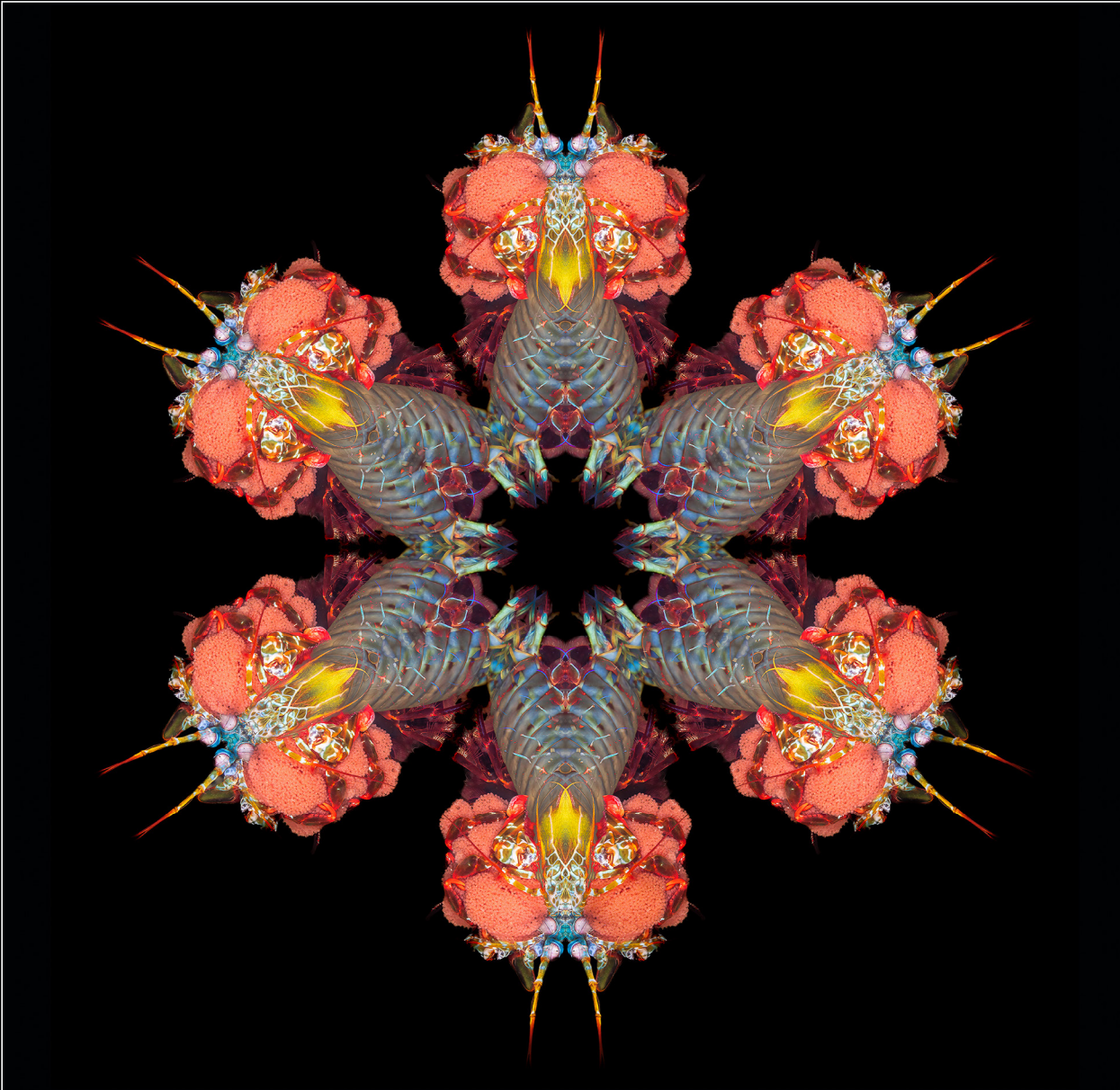
Bali - Tulamben, Indonesia

Canon, Canon R7, Nauticam NA-R7, RF100/2.8 L Macro IS , iso 200, f/16, 0.4s, Retra strobe with snoot + 2 minigear torchlights

Judge's comments: I love the sponge on fire effect that the photography has created in this shot, and how it contrasts with the cool ambient light behind the frogfish. The fish itself beautifully frame and packed with detail illuminated by a snooted strobe.
Alex Mustard

MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'THE EGGHEADS'

Jenny Stock, United Kingdom

This kaleidoscopic crustacean creation began with an image I took in Lembeh of a peacock mantis shrimp carrying her eggs. By mirroring and layering this with Photoshop I pieced together a mantis mandala. When manipulating photographs into imaginative creations it helps to have a well executed natural history shot to begin with. Some of my photographic outputs have a meandering journey. Whilst sitting at the computer with Lightroom and Photoshop I'm never quite sure where my RAW files are going to take me. The incredible thing about the animals we take pictures of, is that they are so graphic and eye-catching that they don't need manipulation, HOWEVER, it is so much fun to play to see what creations appear.

Lembeh, Indonesia

Canon 5D, IV, Nauticam, 100mm, iso 125, f25, 1/200, Retra

Judge's comments: A mantis shrimp with eggs, mirrored in the computer into a piece of photographic art. UPY outlaws content created with AI software, but will still accept creative processing, where the photographer is at the controls and there is no intention to deceive the audience with their art. *Alex Mustard*





85204
WACP-2



85205
WACP-C



85206
WACP-1B



85207
FCP-1

NA-A9III

For **SONY A9III** Camera **PN#17437**



NA-TG7(BM/M52)

For **Olympus TG7 / TG8** Camera **PN#17820/17821**



81301
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WRECKS

Category History

2024 Martin Broen (United States)
2023 Brett Eldridge (USA)
2022 Alex Dawson (Sweden)
2021 Tobias Friedrich (Germany)
2020 Tobias Friedrich (Germany)
2019 René B. Andersen (Denmark)
2018 Tobias Friedrich (Germany)
2017 Csaba Tokolyi (Hungary)
2016 Thomas Heckmann (Germany)
2015 Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'CHIEFTAIN TANKS'

Martin Broen, United States

Together with an amazing group of photographers I had the honor to be invited to compete in the 1st Aqaba underwater photo competition in Jordan, where a highlight is the underwater military museum. An unusual sight of war machines sunk in 15 to 28 meters of water and stationed along the reefs in tactical battle formation.

I wanted to capture the symmetry of the Chieftain Tanks and strong presence of their 120mm guns, but the position where I could shoot that image with my fish-eye lens was occupied by a military ambulance. Therefore, I experimented with a 6 shot panorama from a point between the guns, which allowed me to recreate the virtual position further back, and achieve and elegant symmetry of the tanks, supported by the central focal point of my dive buddy in the back.

Military Museum, Aqaba, Jordan

Sony, a1, Nauticam a1, Canon 8-15mm, iso 1600, f/9.0, 1/100, x2 BigBlue 33000 lumen

Judge's comments: This worked for me in a big way and still does very much. The panorama choice - position and lens - emphasises the barrels and the twin torch model could be a support helicopter. The skill with panoramas is envisaging the end result. This powerful image works on several levels and was my clear favourite in this category and overall. In today's troubled times, it is uplifting to see the apparatus of war put to peaceful use. *Peter Rowlands*

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'ILLUMINATING THE PAST'

Becky Kagan Schott , United States

This is an image I've been trying to perfect for almost 6 years. I've had various conditions on the wreck of the Kyle Spangler over the years and tried to get this shot several times. Once there was too much ambient light so the lights didn't punch through the water as much and it looked dull and other times the visibility wasn't good or the thermocline came down too far which cut the top of the 30 meter tall mast off. The wreck sits in about 60 meters of cold water in the Great Lakes so there is little time down there to shoot. This past summer we had stellar conditions and I'm grateful to Jesper Rydstron and Fredrik Christiansson for modeling. It was dark enough that the lights really created a ghostly image of this wooden schooner that sank in 1860.

Lake Huron : Kyle Spangler , United States

Nikon , D850, Aquatica Digital , 16mm, iso 2000, F6.3, 1/25, Light & Motion and Keldan

Judge's comments: Congratulations on persevering to get this shot. Just the right amount of well placed live and static lighting and the mast plays an important part to create visual scale and image depth. A great achievement.

Peter Rowlands



WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'SET SAIL'

Fabi Fregonesi, Brazil

This wreck is called Virgo and is located in Recife in Brazil. It was sunk in 2017 to be a dive site and is 25 meters from another wreck called the Taurus. On this day, I started diving the Taurus and when I arrived at the Virgo, I saw this huge school of fish, which instantly reminded me of the shape of a boat sail. The feeling I had at the time was that the ship was ready to set sail, beginning its journey towards an unknown adventure (even though the original boat was not a sailing boat). I only had time to quickly imagine the photo I wanted, position myself and capture this moment. Seconds after that the fish formation changed. Wreck photos are beautiful, mysterious and generally make me feel nostalgic. For this one, I wanted it to give the feeling of happiness, movement and life!

Virgo wreck (City: Recife), Brazil

Canon, 5D Mark IV, Nauticam, 8-15 mm, iso 250, f/8.0, 1/100, Sea & Sea YS D2

Judge's comments: A school of fish dancing above a wreck momentarily create the perfect shape of a gib sail, as if ready too power the wreck across the seabed. When it comes to great photography, timing is everything. *Alex Mustard*

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'INSIDE THE SS THISTLEGORM WRECK'

Alex Dawson, Sweden

This image was shot on my first Rebreather Tri-Mix trip that I was hosting in the Red Sea in February 2022. This was taken during a night dive on the SS Thistlegorm, when we were alone on the wreck and there were no bubbles! The depth is around 30m but with the rebreather you get very spoiled with time at these depths due to optimised PPO2 and almost no decompression. This image was shot on the fly as I like to do but with a fairly well-planned briefing before the dive. The trucks are in great condition considering they have been over 80 years in high salinity water and on the back of them there are motorcycles stacked in rows.

SS Thistlegorm wreck site, Egyptian Red Sea

Nikon, Z7 II, Nauticam Z7 II, Nikon 8-15mm
Fisheye, iso 400, f4.5, 1/20, BigBlue dive lights.
VL33000 x2 VL15000 x2

Judge's comments: A very clean image both visually and viz wise thanks to rebreathers providing a new take on an oft photographed subject. A shot "on the fly" might have produced a snapshot but this is perfectly timed and composed image with just the right amount of additional lighting. Well observed. *Peter Rowlands*



WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'TAKEOFF'

Christian Horras, Germany

This picture of a Lockheed L-1011 TriStar was taken in Aqaba, Jordan. The plane was scuttled in 2019 and now rests at a depth of 15-28 meters. It is truly no ordinary wreck dive, as you don't often see entire passenger planes on the bottom of the ocean! The wreck offers endless possibilities for underwater photography, especially on the inside where you can access the cabin and cockpit. I chose to get a shot of the outside and placed a powerful light on a small tripod in the jet engine to create the effect of a powered engine. With the sun at a right angle illuminating the wreck and not overpowering my 'engine'.

Aqaba, Jordan

Nikon, D850, Seacam, Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 100, f/9, 1/100, Keldan

Judge's comments: A well chosen angle and composition of this very different "wreck" with a perfectly placed and contributing model and a clever decision to light the exhaust exit as if were the original super heated gasses. A stand out image. *Peter Rowlands*

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'BREAKING POINT'

Becky Kagan Schott , United States

The S.S. Norman is a Great Lakes shipwreck I dive often, so I'm constantly pushing myself to capture new images that help tell it's story. It sank in a collision on a foggy morning in 1895. It was hit so hard it cut the freighter in half sending it into the depths and taking the lives of three crew members. In this photograph technical divers are illuminating the massive break that goes all the way through the ship as they swim through it. I stayed off the wreck to try and capture a wide perspective which is challenging because it's very low light conditions even though the water is clear. I used a very slow shutter speed to allow more ambient light in and capture the entire stern section along with several cargo holds.

Lake Huron , United States

Nikon , D850, Aquatica Digital AD850, 16mm, iso 1600, f6.3, 1/25, Light&Motion Sola Pros 15,000

Judge's comments: The best wreck images are built on atmosphere and this stunning image definitely delivers. The composition perfectly highlights exactly why this ship became a wreck.
Alex Mustard



WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'LOCKHEED TRISTAR L-1011'

Alvaro Herrero (Mekan), Spain

In truth, taking photos inside a submerged plane is truly impressive. I wanted to show the depth and size of this large aircraft, while still communicating that it is underwater. To achieve this result, I decided to use one of the cave photography techniques, known amongst photographers as the "The Butt Light" to show the silhouette of the diver (Taz), and the perspective with the seats and windows. This is one of the wreck photographs that I had the most fun taking.
Red Sea, Jordan

Nikon , z7II, Isotta, Nikkor z 14-24mm 2.8 s, iso 1250, f/5.6, 1/80, BigBlue COB 30.000 PII

Judge's comments: A graphically symmetrical composition that is highly pleasing with all the leading lines in the scene bringing us to the silhouetted diver. The expert control over light and exposure really allows all the details of this frame to contribute. *Alex Mustard*

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SIMPLY AUDACIOUS!'

Kieran Hatton, United Kingdom

HMS Audacious lays in 60m, the victim of a WW1 mine and the first British Battleship casualty of the war. Audacious is always an a-list target on my annual trips to the wrecks of NW Donegal, the 13.5 inch guns one of the signature sights. It is not uncommon to find divers loitering near you if you are in the vicinity of the guns with the camera. On this occasion though I spotted Susan swimming back to the shotline, I passed her the Kinsman Pro and asked her to swim down the barrels once I was in position. I managed 3 pics, this was the best, it felt 'balanced', I was pleased enough to show Susan straight away! The visibility off Donegal is legendary but the depth always adds a challenge with light and the time available to take a picture.

HMS Audacious, Ireland

Sony, A7r2, Nauticam, 12-24 F4, iso 3200, f9, 1/8, 2 x Inon z240, 1 x Kinsman Pro

Judge's comments: A very powerful subject well captured with symmetry and effective use of well balanced on and off camera lighting.

Peter Rowlands

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'BELL AH-1F COBRA'

Alvaro Herrero (Mekan), Spain

This photograph was one of the most challenging I have taken. Not only did we have just 20 minutes to create it without going into decompression, (we were with a single tank), but I had to illuminate the windows of the helicopter and coordinate with the model (Taz) to obtain the reflection in the mask, while maintaining the position and the trim on point. The truth is that an image like this is always a great team effort.

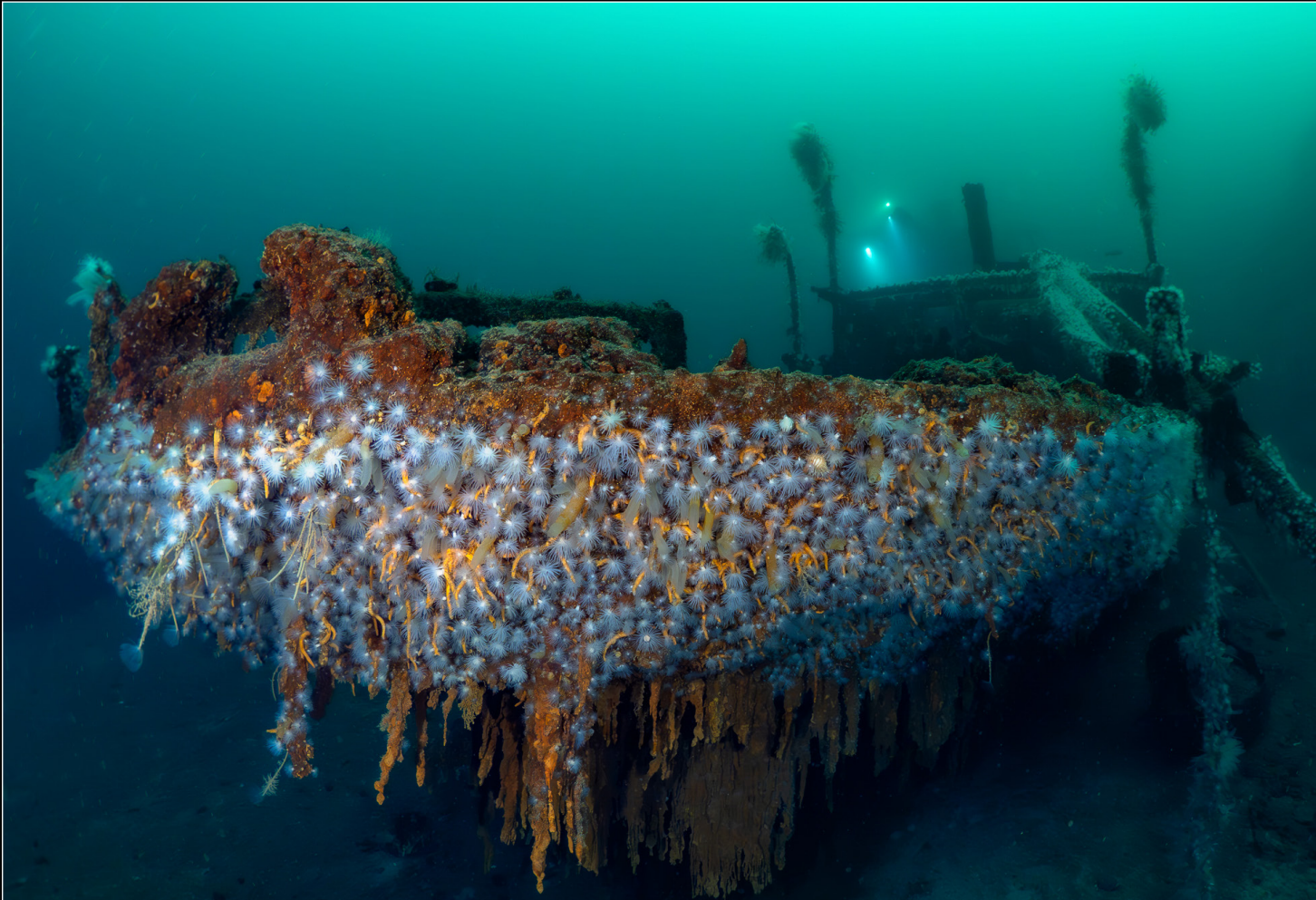
Red Sea, Jordan

Nikon , z7II, Isotta, Nikkor z 14-24mm 2.8 s, iso 400, f/10, 1/200, BigBlue COB 30.000 PII

Judge's comments: A fascinating subject photographed and lit with real mastery of technique. To learn that it was all pulled off against a tight deadline is really impressive. *Alex Mustard*

WRECKS

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'The Parat'

Guilhem Duprat, United Kingdom

The Parat is a relatively small wreck. A victim of an air raid in 1944 which now lies in 60 meters of water in a very scenic Norwegian fjord. The dive site looks very barren initially, no corals, no fish, no crustaceans and very few shellfish. The rock cliff which you can just about make out to the right of the photo is just raw rock, the sea bed is a total desert. But the wreck has become an oasis for these wonderful white anemones and orange worms, which against the brown red of the rusted hull and the clear blue green of the fjord water makes for a spectacular sight. But with a temperature of 8°C even at the height of summer, it is a very cold place.

Krakhella, Norway

OM System, OM1, Nauticam NA-OM1, M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm F1.8 Fisheye PRO, iso 2,500, f/3.5, 1/25, Inon Z-330

Judge's comments: Wreck photographers are so often only enamoured by the man made structures that they encounter, that the beautiful life support by wrecks is often overlooked. This picture perfectly celebrates the whole story.

Alex Mustard



Coral Eye
Marine Outpost
coral-eye.com



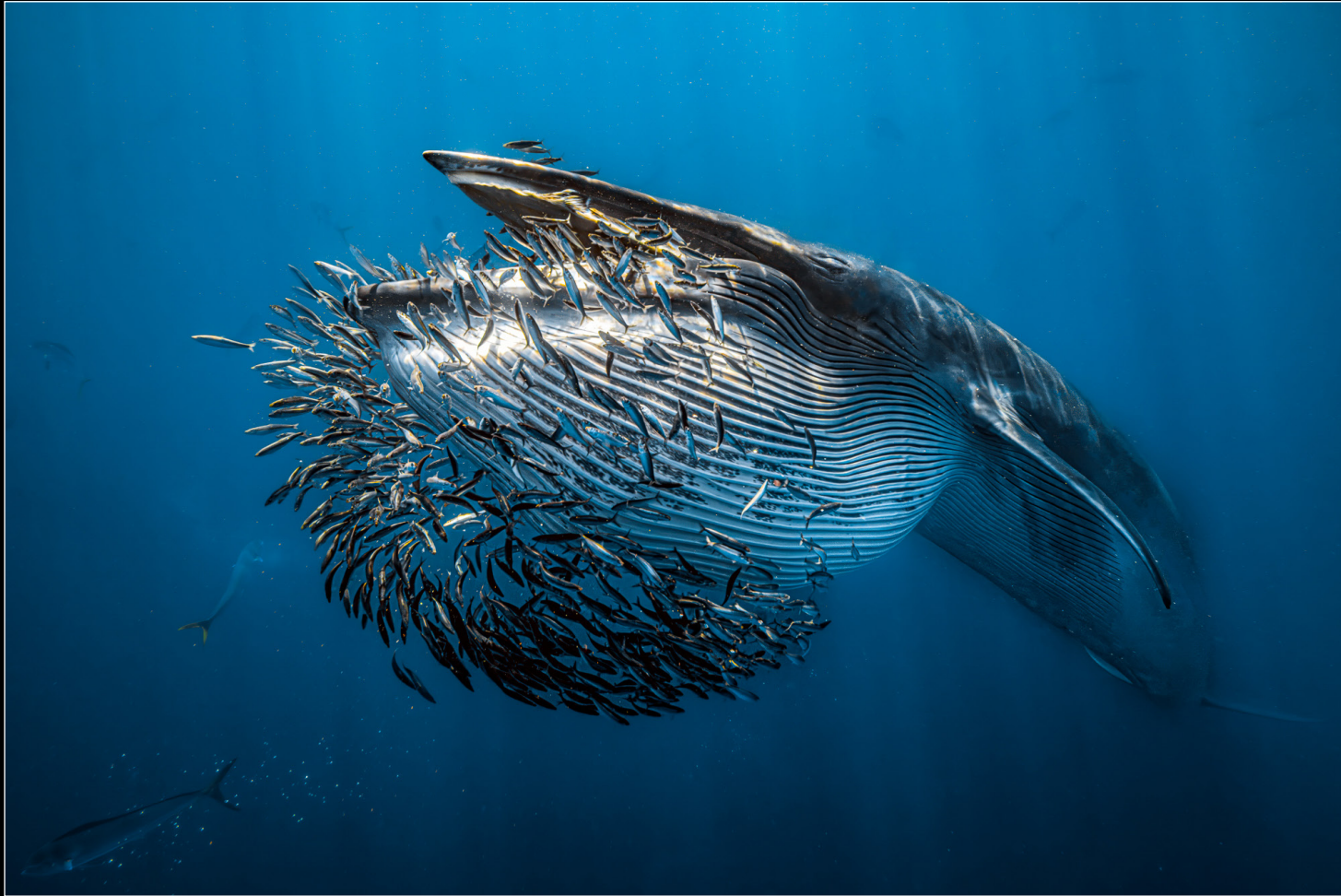
BEHAVIOUR

Category History

2024 Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)
2023 Yury Ivanov (Indonesia)
2022 Pekka Tuuri (Finland)
2021 Karim Iliya (USA)
2020 Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)
2019 Richard Barnden (UK)
2018 Filippo Borghi (Italy)
2017 Qing Lin (Canada)
2016 Richard Carey (Thailand)
2015 Montse Grillo (Spain)

BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'THE LAST BITE OF A WHALE'

Rafael Fernandez Caballero, Spain

I was fortunate enough to experience this unique spectacle in the open Pacific waters in Magdalena Bay at the end of 2023. Due to the warmer water this year caused by the climate phenomenon "El Niño", more species than ever joined this hunt. Bait balls of sardines attracted a variety of predators, but the main stars of the show, visiting Baja in perhaps larger numbers than ever, were the Bryde's whales. They patrolled the waters, searching for bait balls to get their bellies full of hundreds of kilograms of fish. This photo shows the very moment of attack, with the whale's ventral pleats wide open and filtering the prey from the water using their baleens after engulfing hundreds of kilograms of sardines in one bite - simply unforgettable.

La Paz, Baja California Sur

Nikon, Z9, Isotta Z9, NIKKOR Z 14-30mm f/4
S-Line, iso 640, f10, 1/400, None

Judge's comments: Absolutely jaw dropping (pun intended). Perfectly posed and composed at the peak of the action with sunshine highlights. This image leapt out and we never tired of admiring it. Big subject, big image, big winner. *Peter Rowlands*



BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'MOUTH TO MOUTH'

JingGong Zhang, China

This is a photo of two female Zoarchias major eelpouts in a fight. During the breeding season, in order to fight for a suitable spawning nest, not only the males will fight each other, but also the females, and inexplicably, even the males and females will sometimes fight each other. Usually, they can only be found in very few places of southern Japan. I thought long and hard before shooting, how to perfectly present their two biggest characteristics in the shot: their unique spotted pattern inside the mouth and that the mouth that can open up to 180 degrees! My choice was to shoot the fight in its most intense moment, using a snooted strobe to create the black background. I'm very honoured to share this charming moment.

Oda, Shimane, Japan

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, AF-S Micro NIKKOR 60mm f/2.8G ED , iso 400, f/20, 1/250, SUPE D-Max with MARELUX SOFT PRO X

Judge's comments: An image that epitomises the decisive moment and a hormone fuelled dispute is settled. Like with many arguments between people, this one will likely be settled in favour of the individual with the biggest mouth! Alex Mustard

BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THRID

**'A TIGER SHARK FEEDS ON A
HUMPBACKWHALE CARCASS.'**

Brooke Pyke, Australia

When a whale falls to the ocean floor, nothing goes to waste. A young humpback whale's carcass lay slumped on the sand, and within a few days, the bones had already been stripped. This lone tiger shark remained at the scene cleaning every scrap it can scavenge. The meat from this death will have fed countless sharks of all types, fish and sea birds. This huge transfer of energy travelled all the way from Antarctica to arrive on the Ningaloo. It is as if this section of the reef has won the lottery. This is one of the most moving scenes I have ever photographed, I was both emotional and yet mesmerised by the pure, raw beauty it.

Coral Bay, Ningaloo Reef, Australia

Canon , EOS R6, Nauticam NA R6, canon EFD
8-15mm Fisheye Lens, iso 400, f8, 1/320, Natural
Light

Judge's comments: Natural recycling perfectly captured and composed with the lighting on the sand providing the visual icing. This is a great reportage image which imparts both the sad and the positive sides. *Peter Rowlands*



BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'THE BIRTHDAY'

Kenji Sato, Japan

The male black cardinalfish is a mouth brooder. I have been able to observe the parents' diligent care and growth of the eggs, so I was eager to see the moment they would hatch. At first, I did not know when the eggs would hatch, but through observation I came to know when and how it would occur. At the moment of hatching, the father swims upward and spits out his many babies in an instant. It happens quickly and it has taken me several years to get this image. I was moved to see the father guarding the eggs and the moment of hatching. I hope that many babies will grow, and survive.

Jogashima island, Miura City, Kanagawa Prefecture, Japan

Canon, EOS7D, Zillion ZAP-7D, Canon EF-S 60mm f/2.8 Macro USM, iso ISO320, f13, 1/250, INON Z-240

Judge's comments: *Cardinalfish are mouthbrooders and this image shows the moment the baby fish are released. There seem far more babies than could fit in the mouth, it is hard to believe so many can come from one fish! Alex Mustard*

BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'CARP LOVE'

Lorincz Ferenc Lorinc, Hungary

The animal kiss. A mirror carp and a scaly carp kissing in the lake. The picture was taken in Slovakia in Lake Cierna Voda and required good diving skills not to stir up the sediments when shooting this action. For me the scene reminds me of the kiss between a man and a woman.

Cierna Voda lake, Slovakia

Nikon D850, SUBAL ND850, Nikkor Fisheye 8.0-15.0 mm f/3.5-4.5, iso 200, f/29, 1/250, Ikelite DS160x2

Judge's comments: A perfect moment. UPY always launches in Valentine's week and this photo is most appropriate. *Alex Mustard*

BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'MAHI MAHI MADNESS'

Wojciech Dopierala, Spain

The Mexican Sardine Run is a very exciting event. This year due to high water temperature it was dominated by furious Mahi Mahi hunting sardines in very frantic and brutal way. After some nice wide angle images I was trying to get a more detailed shot. I saw this big bull striking towards the bait ball I anticipated his trajectory, got myself in place with very quick dive and hoped for the best. And it was my lucky day!

Baja California Sur, Mexico

Sony, A1, SeaFrogs, Sony GM 16-35 f2.8, iso 160, f/2.8, 1/500

Judge's comments: Often the best images of an event are not the most obvious. Despite being surrounded by action the decision here to single out on individual has produced a stand out photograph. We love the action, but equally the background of silhouetted mahi mahi lined up to be the next predator ratchets up the drama.

Alex Mustard



BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'THE GREAT SARDINE CAPER'

Giacomo Antonio Rossi, Mexico

A side-splitting scene unfolds as a pelican, jaws agape, zeroes in on a scrumptious anchovy. Little does it know, a determined puffer fish, puffing with ambition, is eyeing the same prize. In this tight comedic clash, anticipation hangs in the air? and the water. With a lightning-fast move, the pelican nabs the anchovy, but the plot takes an unexpected turn. In a comedic twist, the pelican engulfs the puffer fish in its voracious appetite, leaving both in a surprising gastronomic triumph. This shot captures the essence of nature's whimsy, transforming a simple snack into a tale of feathers, fins, and a shared anchovy surprise!

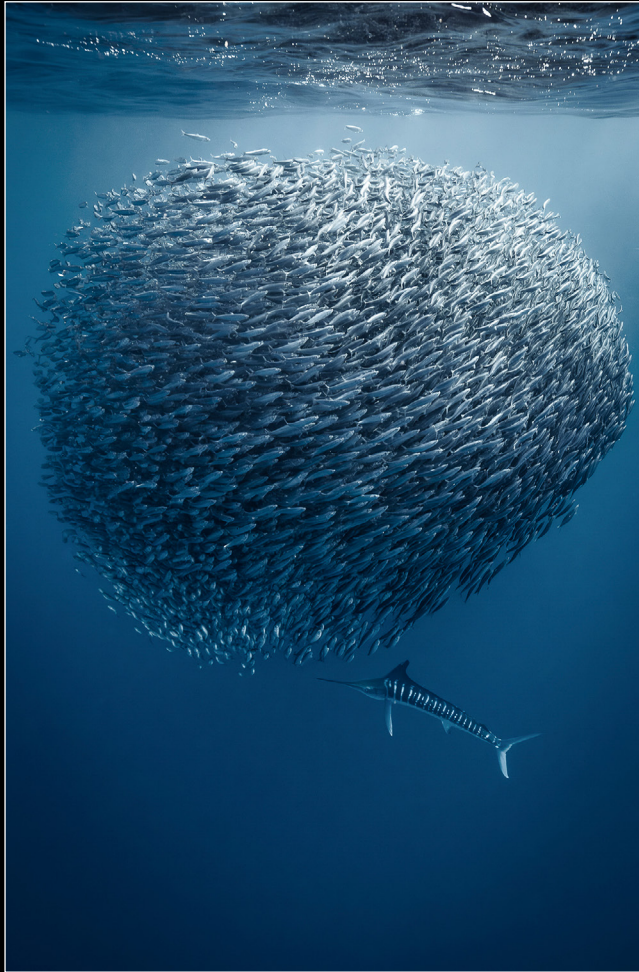
La Ventana, Mexico

Sony, A7IV, Marelux MXA7IV, 28-60 @28mm + Nauticam WACP-C, iso 160, f/8, 1/400, Ambien Light

Judge's comments: A free meal brings enemies together. Pelicans each fish, but these well defended porcupine fish feel safe enough to get in on the action, grabbing their share of the freebies.
Alex Mustard

BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'THE BAIT'

Manuel Castellanos Raboso, United States

A bait ball is a fascinating display of rhythm, lightning reflexes and collaboration. It will herd tightly to minimize volume, then open up around you as predators charge in from the other side. This was a stormy day at sea; the swell made everyone sick, but Mother Nature gifted us with the beautiful encounter I was looking for. After a few challenging hours, a sizeable semi-dynamic bait ball surrounded by stripped marlin appeared. This unique moment allowed me to get close and capture the essence of the hunt. It was like an orchestra, and its conductor, pictured here in the brief pause before the next explosive movement.

Magdalena Bay, Mexico

Canon, 5D Mk IV, Ikelite 200DL, EF16-35mm
f/4L IS USM, iso 640, f/6.3, 1/250, Natural Light

Judge's comments: We are never short of bait ball, marlin images but this one has graphic simplicity, lovely lighting on the bait ball with the perfectly placed marlin topped off with complimentary surface textures. *Peter Rowlands*



BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'RAJA AMPAT'

E.Acevedo, Spain

In November and December 2022 thousands of these stinging jellyfish invaded the southern area of Raja Ampat. They provided lots of photographic opportunities and also becoming also food for turtle and many fish, like these rabbitfish.

Missol, Raja Ampat

Canon 5D, Mark IV, Seacam, Canon 15mm, iso 160, F/11, 1/125, 2 x Inon 240

Judge's comments:

Here it is the composition, with the rabbitfish radiating around the jellyfish that they are feasting on that makes this a winning behaviour shot.

Alex Mustard

BEHAVIOUR

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'WHATS FOR DINNER?'

Saeed Rashid, United Kingdom


I was in the 'zone' photographing a clingfish in an urchin, when out of the corner of my eye there was a big kerfuffle. I looked around and saw a lizard fish dart away with something bright in its mouth. I knew exactly what had happened, the lizard fish had caught its supper. I have seen many photographs of this but never witnessed it myself. I managed to capture a series of six images of the side of the poor sweetlips fish being eaten alive. When all of a sudden the lizard fish turned to face me and I managed to catch up two more images, luckily one of them had both the predator and prays eyes pin sharp. It took only a few moments for the lizard fish to completely swallow its dinner and then the reef went back to normal, just like nothing had ever happened.

Hairball, Lembeh Strait, Indonesia

Canon, 7D mk2, Nauticam, Canon 60mm, iso 200, f11, 1/160, Inon z330

Judge's comments: Rarely seen, and even more rarely photographed with such precision. The moment of the hunt is captured perfectly and the judges all loved the colour contrast between the camouflaged predator and colourful prey. The gaping mouth of the sweetlips communicates its desperate situation. *Alex Mustard*



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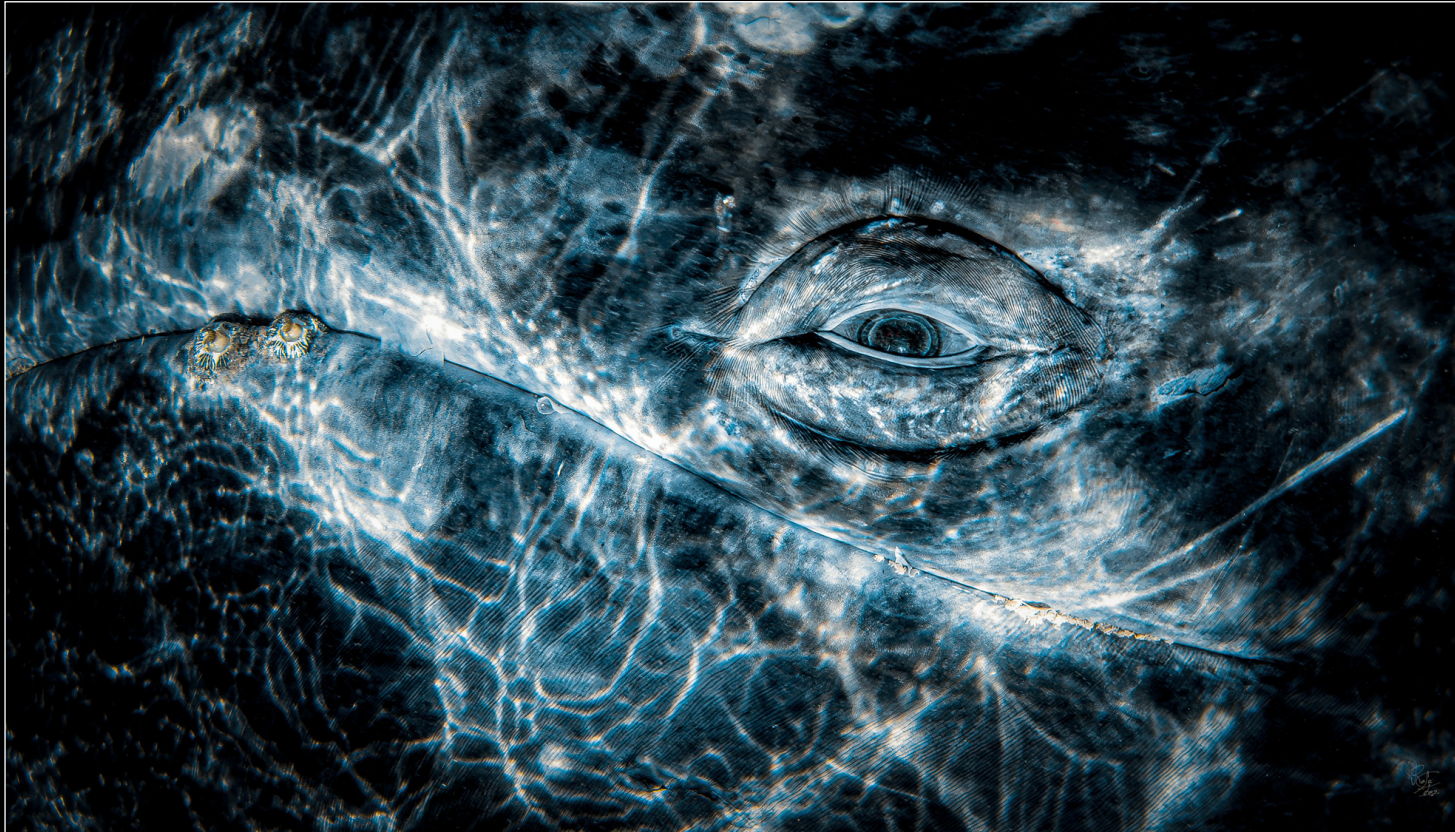
PORTRAIT

Category History

- 2024 Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)
- 2023 Suliman Alatiqi (Kuwait)
- 2022 Thomas Heckmann (Germany)
- 2021 Ryohei Ito (Japan)
- 2020 Lilian Koh (Singapore)
- 2019 Nicholas Samaras (Greece)
- 2018 Tanya Houppermans (USA)
- 2017 Lorincz Ferenc (Hungary)

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'THE HUMAN LOOK OF A GREY WHALE'

Rafael Fernandez Caballero, Spain

Encounters with gray whales in Pacific saltwater lagoons are extremely special. Known for their friendly and curious nature, gray whales often approach boats, allowing observers to witness distinctive behaviours like spy-hopping. This photo was taken from the boat, where the whale displayed a friendly gaze toward my camera, resembling a human look of curiosity and innocence. During their migration from the Bering Sea to Baja California, these lagoons serve as crucial havens and winter maternity wards. With only around 1300 gray whales left, responsible practices of ecotourism are key to protect these giants. These special moments highlight the beauty and intelligence of the whales, creating enduring memories for both observers and, surely, the curious whales themselves.

Magdalena Bay, Baja California Sur

Nikon, Z7 ii, Isotta Z7 II, Nikon 8-15mm, iso 360, f11, 1/250,

Judge's comments: Few people have ever gazed into the eye of a whale, but through this remarkable image many will be able to catch a glimpse of this intelligent soul. A ground-breaking underwater portrait. *Alex Mustard*



PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'ATTACK FROM ABOVE'

Jon Anderson, United States

Even more surprising than encountering a bird underwater is having the bird try to attack your camera while hunting for small fish in the kelp forest! Last summer at a popular Monterey dive site, the cormorants seemed to be more active and curious than usual. Knowing this, I planned a dive on a sunny afternoon hoping to catch a cormorant beneath the kelp forest pierced by the afternoon sun. I had numerous cormorants approach me, peck at my head and tank, follow me around, and try to eat my camera. This one paused for a moment, perhaps after seeing its self-reflection in my dome port, allowing me to capture a head on portrait. Countless species including these cormorants depend on healthy kelp forests to thrive. Unfortunately, local kelp forests have declined by over 80% in size in the last decade due to warmer waters and unchecked predation by urchins.

Monterey, California, United States

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA-D850, Nikon 8-15mm, iso 640, f/14, 1/125, 2x Retra Pro strobes

Judge's comments: Jon's shot was a favourite of mine in the contest - those eyes are just so sharp. As is the beak! What a character, what a moment, what light. Unforgettable image, surely a UPY classic for years to come. Alex Mustard



PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THRID

'AQUATIC PRIMATE'

Suliman Alatiqi, Kuwait

During fieldwork at Phi Phi Islands, Thailand, spanning several weeks, I focused my efforts on documenting the behaviour of the crab-eating macaques, in particular their water forages. The macaques have adapted very well to living around the sea and will venture into the water for various reasons including transportation, scavenging, cooling down and playing. Highly efficient swimmers, they can dive for up to half a minute and can cover short distances faster than most humans. This photo offers a rare glimpse of the swimming movement of a male macaque.

Phi Phi Islands, Thailand

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, AF-S FISHEYE NIKKOR 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED, iso 640, f/18, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D2J

Judge's comments:

An unusual subject will always stand out but, once the visual novelty has worn off, the image must work if it is to progress. Here the eye contact is immediate and the look of concentration compelling. *Peter Rowlands*

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'ZOMBIE'

Matthew Perez, United States

I initially went to this site to photograph fall-run Chinook salmon spawning behaviour. I had to abandon that plan because the spawning fish were in deep, fast-moving water, and my weight belt wasn't heavy enough for me to safely photograph them. Instead, I turned my attention to the fish on the outskirts in calmer water. I slowly approached this male and first tried to make images conveying his movements. However, as I spent more time looking at him through my viewfinder, I became enthralled by his appearance. Beyond his morbid exterior, there was something captivating about him. His eyes had so much life in them; they defied his physical condition. I wanted to capture his confidence in the face of death.

Northern California, United States

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Sigma 15, iso 50, f13, 1/40, Retra Flash Pro X Strobes

Judge's comments: This zombie salmon looks so menacing crammed into the framing. The unbalanced composition works so well with this unsettling subject. Salmon die after spawning and the fish are often literally falling apart by the end, as all their energy goes into the next generation. Although this fish will die, its body will seed the streams with nutrients ensuring an excellent start to life for its offspring. *Alex Mustard*

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'DOLPHINS PORTRAIT'

Tetsuji Akimoto, Japan

I took this photo while swimming with friendly dolphins for more than 10 minutes in Toshima island, Japan. This pair came close to me several times for trying to get my attention, clearly wanting to interact. It is the one of most interesting behaviours I have captured during my observation of dolphins for over 10 years.

Toshima island, tokyo, japan

sony, a9, seafrogs a9, tamron 17-28mm f2.8, iso 1600, f8, 1/500, none

Judge's comments: What a joyful dolphin portrait. I love the interaction between the pair and how the main dolphin is swimming around its friend to smile and blow bubbles for the camera. *Alex Mustard*



PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'OL' BLUE EYES'

Nicholas More, United Kingdom

"The eyes are the windows to the soul, and in your blue eyes, I see a world of wonder and beauty. Your looks are laughable. Unphotographable. Yet you're my favourite work of art."

The amazing guides of Lembah Resort found Frank, a hermit crab living in a discarded tube worm casing, at the very end of a dive, in very shallow water. I spent my safety stop with a very floaty, empty tank dialling in the perfect aperture to have enough depth of field to give detail on the animal but to also render the background, nicely out of focus. Why do we always find these amazing critters at the very end of dives?..... That's Life!

Kareka Besar, Lembah Strait., Indonesia

Nikon , D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 105VR + IYKYK & SMC-1 Diopters, iso 31, f/8, 1/200, Inon Z330 with Jon Barron Beam Restrictors.

Judge's comments: A very productive use of your safety stop to create a delicate image. It captures the subject's character with perfect focus, choice of depth of field and a symmetrical composition on a sublime pastel background. Frankly lovely :-)
Peter Rowlands

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'THE BIRTH OF A MERMAID'

Thomas Heckmann, Germany

We built a cocoon out of tulle fabric and exposed it from behind, below and above using several flashes with a green filter to create this image.

Pool - Western part of Germany, Germany

Nikon , D800E, Seacam Silver, Nikkor 16-35 mm @ 20 mm, iso 160, f/16, 1/200, 6 strobes - Subtronic

Judge's comments: A stunning concept and a beautiful result. Inspiration in showing what can be produced underwater with imagination and skill. Wonderful work. *Alex Mustard*

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'OPEN WIDE'

Filippo Borghi, Italy

Leopard seals are major predators in the Antarctic and grow to nearly 4 metres in length and are active predators of penguins and other seals and sea lions at the ice edge. However their varied teeth also allow them to feed on small prey, like krill. Occasionally they have killed people, making a close encounter like this, particularly exciting.

Antarctica

Nikon, D850, Isotta , Sigma 15mm fisheye, iso 1000, f/11, 1/180th, ONE UW Flashes

Judge's comments: Leopard seals are one of the most fearsome predators in the ocean and this portrait captures the business end. This is presumably a playful pose, but there is no escaping the power of these cavernous jaws. *Alex Mustard*

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'FRIENDLY ORCA'

Andy Schmid, Switzerland

An adult male orca pausing for a second on its way past me to have a close look, then continuing on, following its pod, looking for herring in the fjords of Northern Norway. Every winter enormous schools of herring migrate from the open ocean into these fjords which attracts large numbers of big predators such as orcas and humpback whales.

Skjervøy, Norway

Canon, EOS 5D Mark IV, Nauticam NA-5DMKIV, Canon EF 15mm f/2.8 Fisheye, iso 320, f/2.8, 1/160, none

Judge's comments: Not that long ago any shot of a Killer whale underwater would have stood a chance but now it has to be full frame "who are you looking at"? eye contact, crisp colours and a washing machine surface topped with golden sunlight. The bar is now even higher.
Peter Rowlands

PORTRAIT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'EYE TO EYE'

João Rodrigues, Portugal

While documenting the iconic fauna of the Côa River in Sabugal, Portugal, as part of the artistic residency for the Naturc'a Nature Image Festival, I came across an Iberian frog floating in the cold waters of this mountain river, far from the banks. Indifferent to my presence and curious about its reflection in my dome port, it allowed me to approach so closely that the photograph was taken with the animal touching the dome, thus allowing for an intimate portrait, "eye to eye."

Côa river, Sabugal, Portugal

Canon, 5D MKIV, Aquatica A5DIV, Tokina AT-X 107 AF DX NH Fisheye 10-17mm , iso 160, f/18, 1/200, 2 x INON Z-330

Judge's comments:

What an endearing image captured with great comic timing. You can't help yourself smiling.
Alex Mustard

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BLACK & WHITE

Category History

2024 Jasmine Skye Smith (Australia)
2023 Don Silcock (Australia)
2022 Kerrie Burow (Australia)
2021 Daisy Fernie (Australia)
2020 Mok Wai Hoe (Singapore)
2019 Henley Spiers (UK)
2018 Borut Furlan (Slovenia)

BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'WATER DANCERS'

Jasmine Skye Smith, Australia

This image was from a creative shoot from my first underwater portrait exhibition "Underneath" (held in August 2023). I challenged myself to be outside of my comfort zone and push myself creatively. I approached some girls from the synchronised swimming team to do a shoot and I booked the heated dive pool as it was our winter. I was expecting to be using the 3m depth side but at last minute they said we would be using the 5m end which was amazing to play with in such a controlled environment- but also came with the challenge of a slanted edge down the bottom which proved very difficult to keep my black backdrop in place with my usual weights. The two 6x3m backdrops only held in place for a few minutes before coming apart -and this was one of the magical captures in that short window.

Dive pool in Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Canon , R6, Aquatech, RF 15-35, iso 2000, f3.2, 1/320, Natural light (roof had LED lights)

Judge's comments: Black and white! A minimalist composition that invites us to compare and contrast the two halves of this intriguing frame. Fantastic teamwork between the photographer and the two elegant models. *Alex Mustard*



BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'TWO GREAT WHITE SHARKS CRUISING OVER SEAGRASS BEDS'

Matty Smith, Australia

The conditions were perfect on this day at South Neptune Island. We had a dozen sharks swimming under the MV Rodney Fox and visibility of 30m+. The weather was calm, sunny and the ocean was mirror like. Using a slow shutter, full power strobes and a panning technique, I was able to freeze the movement of the closest shark whilst portraying the gentle movement and atmosphere of the scene in the seagrass.

South Neptune Island, South Australia, Australia

Nikon, D850, Aquatica Digital AD850, Nikkor 16mm F2.8D Fisheye, iso ISO160, F11, 1/30, 2 x Sea & Sea YS-D3

Judge's comments: We're used to seeing great white shark coming in close for bait. Yet this image is so different, so natural, of not just one, but two sharks cruising through their natural habitat.
Alex Mustard

BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'TURSIOP DOLPHINS AT THE SURFACE OF MAYOTTE LAGOON'

Serge Melesan, France

I have been a scuba diver for a long time, but since living in Mayotte I like to swim at the surface and see this incredible life, like these bottlenose dolphins. The dolphins here are shy and you can't approach them or use flash. My goal was to a family image to show that they are hierarchical animals, and to include the surface in the picture to show that these animals are there just below the surface of the sea. To be honest, the lines of light on the dolphins was a lucky strike, but when I came back home and saw this image I thought it could be a UPY finalist. Sometimes to be there you need to be a bit lucky.

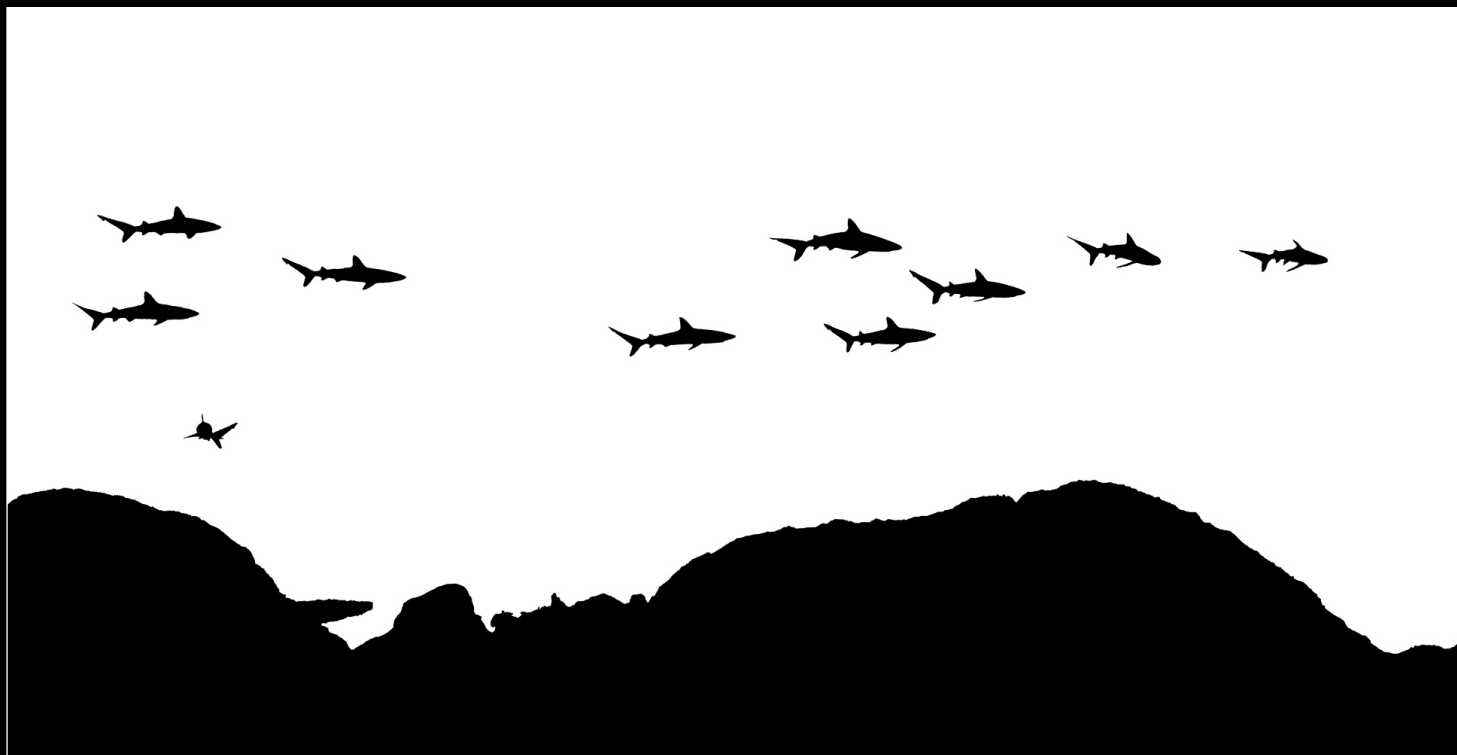
North passage of Mtsamboro, Mayotte

Panasonic, Lumix S1, Nauticam SR1, 16-35mm, iso 640, F10, f320, No flash No light

Judge's comments: An instant hit with all of the judges for the intelligent choice of black and white, perfect composition with beautiful surface reflections and textures on the dolphins. Got better with each viewing. *Peter Rowlands*

BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SQUADRON FORMATION'

Richard Condlyffe, United States

This image was taken at the mouth of the Ulong Channel dive site in Palau. I spent some time watching this shiver of juvenile Grey Reef Sharks swimming together. After minutes of nothing but random movements, the sharks started to swim with more purpose and this straight line quickly formed. It lasted just long enough to get this shot, before disorder took over again! But I had my photo.

The mouth of the channel has little by way of coral or other interesting foreground features, which led me to attempt this silhouette composition, with baron rock in the bottom of the frame and the sharks above. Two additional elements that I feel add to the image are the small detail of one last shark still turning into the formation; also, cropping the image into panoramic dimensions to emphasize the line of sharks.

Ulong Channel, Palau

Sony, a7rIV, Nauticam NA-A7RIV, Sony FE 28-70mm F3.5-5.6 OSS with Nauticam WACP-1, iso 250, f/5.6, 1/250, Ambient light

Judge's comments: The photographer's back story was very reassuring because this is such a simple image to create that we couldn't help but wonder. Trust prevailed and the image progressed because it was the most pared back image - black and white, literally. An excellent panorama crop sealed the deal. *Peter Rowlands*



BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SYNCHRONIZED'

Merche Llobera, Spain

Last February in Costa Rica, I embarked on daily adventures out to sea, capturing the diverse scenes of nature that unfolded. One day, we stumbled upon a fascinating scene: a baitball of lanternfish with Chilean devil rays hunting them. The image wasn't planned, but it exceeded my dreams of witnessing devil rays in action. In reality, with perfect conditions - clear visibility, sunbeams and synchronized devil ray hunting, it outshone my imagination. Watching their dance was enthralling. Patience was critical in waiting for the right moments and occasionally free-diving to anticipate action. Opting for black and white enhanced the image, delineating the small lanternfish lost in the blue backdrop and accentuating the sun's rays.

Pacific ocean, Costa Rica

Sony, A7 III, Isotta, 16-35 F4, iso 800, f6.3, 1/500, natural light

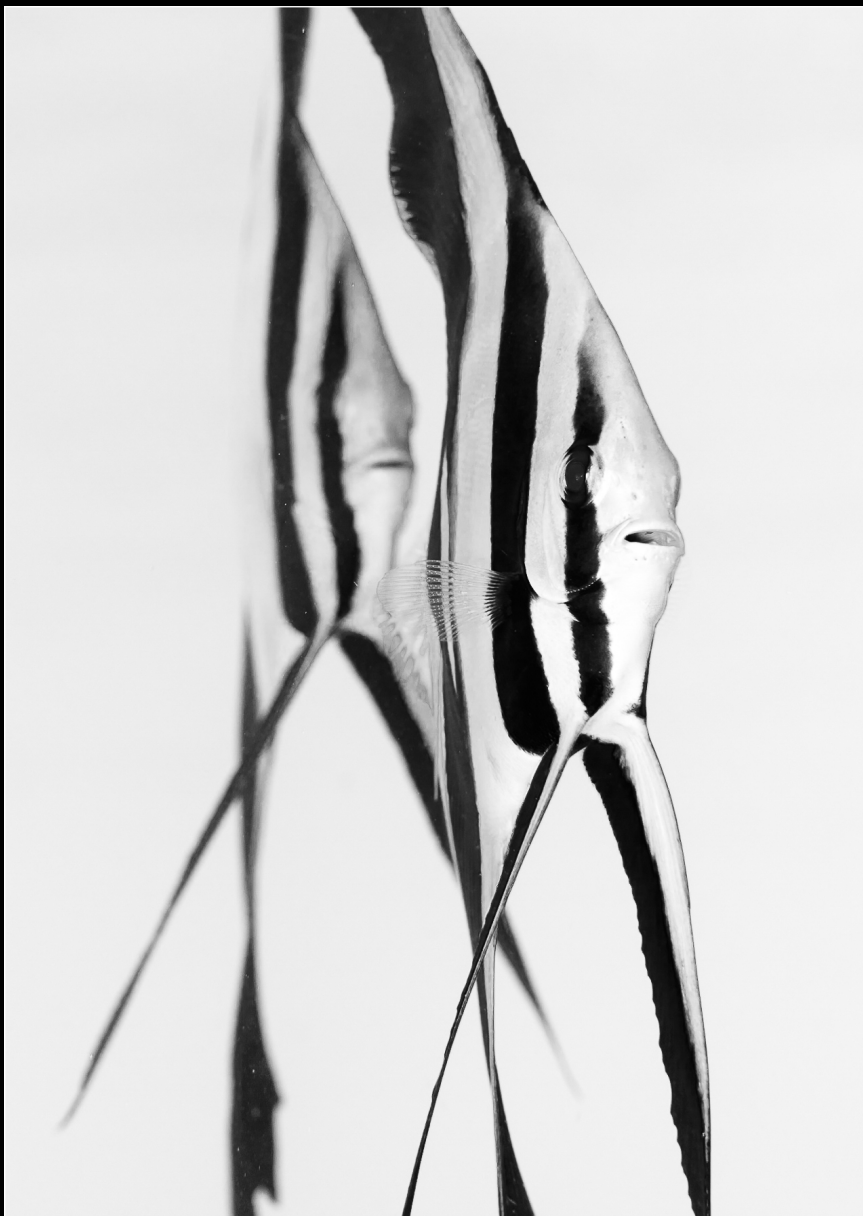
Judge's comments:

A pair of rays charge a bait ball, enclosed by curtains of sun beams. I love the mixture of shapes in this composition, with the round ball, the straight beams and the graphic outline of rays.

Alex Mustard

BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SYNCHRONISED BATFISH'

Jade Hoksbergen, United Kingdom

Almost like each other's shadow, in a synchronised underwater dance. They are a beautiful fish, with juveniles sporting disproportionately long fins and bold vertical bands of black. However, their striking appearance is accompanied by a shy wariness, and they have become famous for giving divers the side-eye. With hours dedicated to gentle acquaintance, they eventually grew comfortable in my presence, even curious. Once "the ice was broken", so to speak, they were happy to face me, which allowed me to create this portrait of the duo. I must say I was relieved to no longer be at the receiving end of a side-eye (or two)!

COMO Maalifushi House Reef, Thaa Atoll, Maldives

Sony, A7RV, Nauticam, Sony 90mm, iso 640, f/8, 1/200, Retra Pro x 2

Judge's comments: A simple composition that is transformed into a fabulous composition by conversion into monochrome, which is exactly what this category is all about. Great image.

Alex Mustard



BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'PLAYTIME'

Shane Gross, Canada

I entered the water with the intention of photographing rockfish, but these steller sea lions were impossible to ignore. They were incredibly playful with me and with each other. I wanted to capture that social, playful energy which, meant capturing them while they are together in physical contact (which is clearly important to them) and with a slow shutter speed to subtly show some movement. I converted it to black and white to recall an old family photo, full of nostalgia, like siblings of a different era playing outside.

Vancouver Island, Canada

Nikon, D500, Aquatica, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 125, f/8, 1/20, Sea & Sea D3 Lightning

Judge's comments:

The reduction to black and white invites us to explore the shapes, textures and the touchy relationships between these mighty sea lions. The eyes just pop out of the picture pulling us in to this family. *Alex Mustard*



BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'METAMORPHOSIS'

Jasmine Skye Smith, Australia

This image was shot in early 2023 for my recent "Underneath" underwater portrait exhibition. I was exploring themes of growth, femininity and vulnerability. I feel like the water, material and muse (Sylph Sia) came together perfectly in this image and, for me, symbolises the transition into becoming the best version of ourselves.

Backyard Pool, Brisbane QLD, Australia

Canon R6, Aquatech, RF 15-35, iso 100, f6.3, 1/200, Natural light (roof had LED lights)

Judge's comments: This is a fabulous photograph that works wonderfully in monochrome, highlighting the body shape of the model against the dreamy surroundings. There is real energy in the composition. *Alex Mustard*



BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'DIVING ON THE TRACK'

Frank Aron, Germany

Diving flooded mines means overhead diving with artifacts from the past. The layered slate walls and the industrial residuals give a unique impression of this mine. My goal was to emphasize these structures. Two strong video lights were placed behind the crossroad and my dive buddy on the opposite side. The result was that the slate walls, the tracks and the floor structures were highlighted by the shadows created. My buddy as a silhouette seems to fly in the air due to the crystal clear water. The structures all appear much stronger in black and white.

Christine Slate Mine, Willingen, Germany

Sony, A7c, Nauticam NA-A7c, SEL 28F20, Nauticam WWL-1, iso 20000, f/8, 1/50, Bigblue VL65000P, custom made video lamp 30000 lm

Judge's comments:

It is hard to imagine a photo with more visual depth. This shot is a feast of leading lines, the tracks, pipes and rocks all create a powerful perspective. The silhouetted diver adds impact, but I feel a little detail showing through around the face would have seen this one finish even higher.

Alex Mustard

BLACK & WHITE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'THRESHER SHARK PORTRAIT'

Gillian Marsh, United Kingdom

I had long wanted to see thresher sharks up close, my only previous sighting being around 50m below me in clear deep water near Ras Mohammed. A trip to Malapascua Island in June 2023, with the promise of dives on Monad Shoal, offered that opportunity. Monad was known as a reliable location for sightings, as the deep water thresher sharks migrated to shallower water every morning for cleaning. On arrival, we heard some tiger sharks had recently moved in around Monad and the threshers had consequently moved to nearby Kimud Shoal. The move appeared to have also changed their behaviour, as they were much less cautious of divers, came shallower and stayed later in the day, than I had been led to expect. With the use of flash not allowed, these changes greatly improved the photographic potential. This particular individual, with its distinctive black nose, made several close passes.

Kimud Shoal off Malapascua Island, The Philippines

Canon, EOS R7, Nauticam NA-R7, RF-S 18-45mm @ 45mm + WWL-1B wet lens, iso 640, f9, 1/60, natural light

Judge's comments:

I loved this image but I was on my own so had to emphasise the lovely black and white tones especially on the skin, perfect composition and engaging eye contact. The criticised background was in positive contrast to my eye. I'm glad I stuck it out. *Peter Rowlands*



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COMPACT

Category History

2024 Enrico Somogyi (Germany)
2023 Enrico Somogyi (Germany)
2022 Enrico Somogyi (Germany)
2021 Jack Berthomier (New Caledonia)
2020 Man BD (Malaysia)
2019 Enrico Somogyi (Germany)
2018 Simone Matucci (New Zealand)
2017 Jenny Stromvoll (Mozambique)

COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024

CATEGORY WINNER

'NUDI ON FIRE'

Enrico Somogyi, Germany

This picture of a nudibranch (*Hypsolodoris apolegma*) with a emperor shrimp on the head was taken in Tulamben. To create the fire-like background I built a special tool which took me a long time to get it to work. But in the end I got the picture I was looking for.

Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia

Sony, Rx100vii, modified Fantasea Housing,
Nauticam Emwl 100, iso 125, f 11, 1/2000,
2xBackscatter MF1

Judge's comments:

This shot seems to have it all. A nudibranch on eggs, with a commensal shrimp on the nudibranch, all set against a golden explosion of light. Enrico once again shows that having a compact camera at the heart of his system is no limitation to producing stunning underwater images. *Alex Mustard*



COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'OCTOPUS ATTACK'

Enrico Somogyi, Germany

This shot was taken in Lembeh. The coconut octopus was sitting in a small hollow in the sand. In the background there is a shell where another coconut octopus was living. After I took some pictures, the octopus started to touch my lens. So, I was able to get this shoot with the important focus on the eye.

Lembeh, Indonesia

Sony , Rx100vii, modified Fantasea Housing,
Nauticam Emwl 160, iso 125, F10, 1/40, 2x
Backscatter MF2

Judge's comments: A portrait that takes us right into this octopus's world, connecting us with the subject from beneath its suckers. The framing invites us to meet the octopus and see the second in the shell behind – a wonderful composition.
Alex Mustard

COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN IN THE LAGOON'

Ilaria Mariagiulia Rizzuto, Italy

I have always dreamed of seeing dolphins in the wild and being able to photograph them. During a diving trip in the Red Sea my dream came true. At the end of the day we headed to a shallow lagoon where dolphins can be found. Once we arrived on site we waited to see some fins. Finally, on the horizon, the first fin appeared and then moments later everyone was in the water surrounded by about thirty bottlenose dolphins who interacted curiously without fear.

The subject portrayed in the photo was particularly collaborative and sociable. As it moved in a circle it got closer and closer. I was a bit afraid because it was always a wild animal of almost three meters. I really loved the great and intense visual contact I had with this specific specimen

Gubal strait Red Sea, Egypt

Sony , RX100 M7, Isotta Rx100 m7, Inon ZM80,
iso 800, f/5, 1/1000

Judge's comments: A beautifully composed and pin sharp where it matters image which would have stood up well even in the 'bigger' categories. A great example of shooting to a camer's strengths.

Peter Rowlands



COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'LORD OF SNOW'

Andrea Michelutti, Italy

When I spotted this white shrimp, I thought it was the ideal subject to portray with a white background. So I placed my diffuser at a suitable distance, taking care not to touch the subject, and illuminated it with one of my strobes. At the same time, I illuminated the subject with a snoot to prevent it from being in shadow. A fortunate movement of the crinoid created this arc around the shrimp, allowing me to capture this particular environmental portrait.

Anilao, Mabini, Batangas (Luzon), Philippines

Sony, RX100 M7, Isotta, Integrated lens and +5 macro Lens, iso 100, f/11.0, 1/1000, Inon Z330 + Inon Z330 with Snooty snoot adapter

Judge's comments: It's the details that mark out this image. First, converting a colourful macro critter into monochrome really made it stand out, especially so with the white background. And the secondly, we loved the crinoid arm arching over the frame, completing the composition. *Alex Mustard*

COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'CIRCLE OF LIFE'

Andrea Michelutti, Italy

Favorinus tsuruganus and its eggs on a Spanish dancer's egg ribbon (*Hexabranchius sanguineus*). This image captures a stark contrast between nature's beauty and its harsh realities. The bright colours and intricate designs of the nudibranchs are captivating, but they hide a brutal reality. The nudibranch in the foreground feeds on the eggs of the Spanish dancer, and it has also laid its own white eggs on top as well. This scene illustrates a type of cannibalism predation: a phenomenon where one nudibranch specialises on feeding on another, albeit at its egg stage. Shooting this image required a great deal of patience, as the constant movement of the purple eggs, caused by the current, continually obscured the nudibranch and its eggs. But finally I succeeded in capturing this portrayal of the "circle of life".

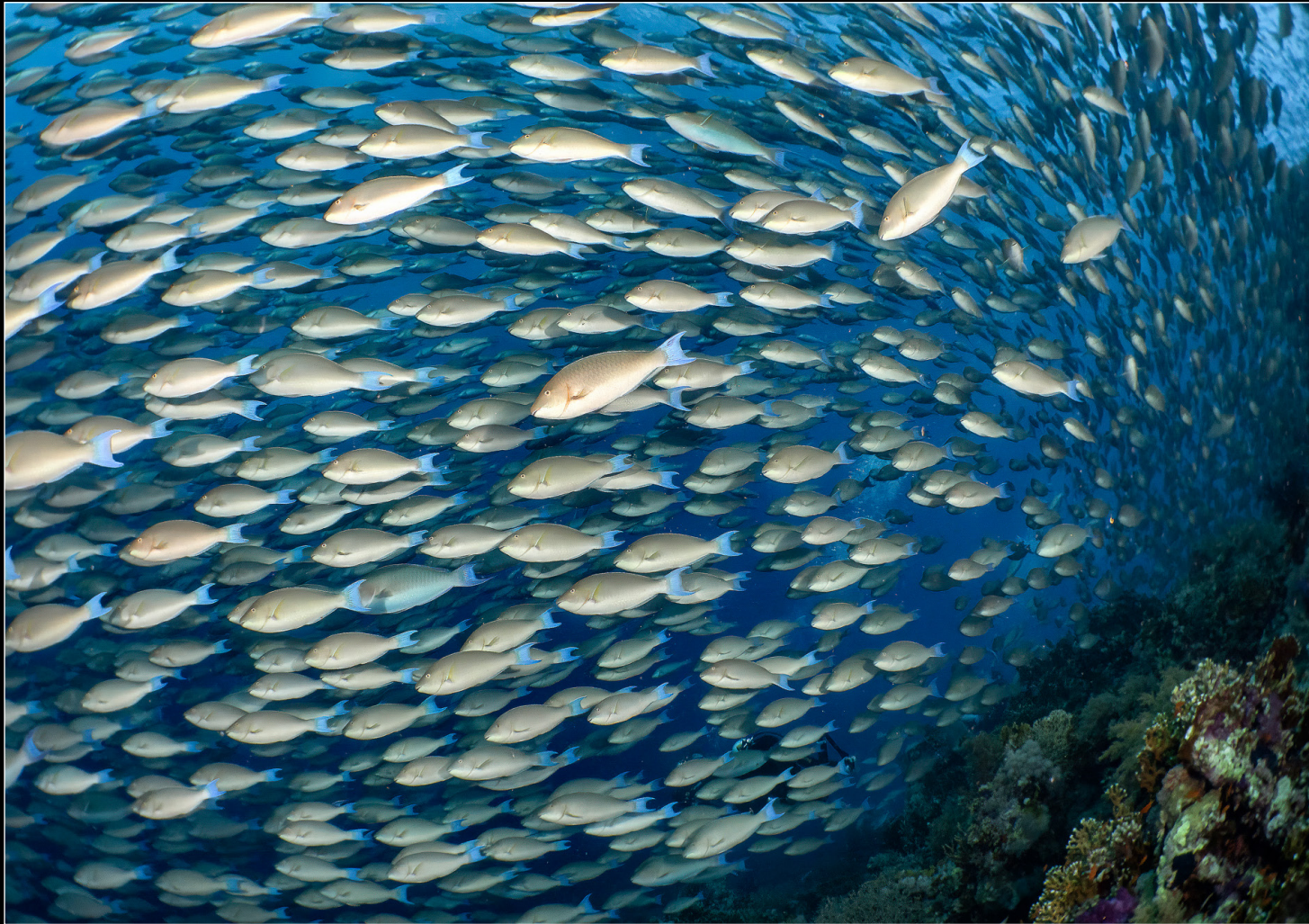
Anilao, Mabini, Batangas (Luzon), Philippines

Sony, RX100 M7, Isotta, Integrated lens and Inon UCL-67, iso 100, f/11.0, 1/1000, Inon Z330 with Snooty snoot adapter

Judge's comments: Just the right amount of shadow and depth of field draws the eye easily and the contrasting colours and shapes capture the natural beauty even if the reality is predatory. Beauty and the beast. *Peter Rowlands*

COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SCHOOL OF JUVENILE PARROT FISH'

Ilaria Mariagiulia Rizzuto, Italy

During a beautiful dive in Ras Mohammed, I was taking photos of a soft coral on the wall and I saw this enormous school of juvenile parrotfish coming towards me. I decided to go deeper to intercept them and was rewarded being surrounded by this wall of fish and the wall of the reef.

Shark Reef, Ras Mohammed National Park, Egypt

Sony, Rx100 M7, Isotta, INON ZM80, iso 500, f/10, 1/160, Inon 330 x 2

Judge's comments: Rush hour. The perspective of this image draws you in, as these parrotfish stream down the reef. These fish usually live alone, but for a few days each year gather into these impressive and fast moving schools for spawning. This is an excellent shot of a rare opportunity.

Alex Mustard

COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'A DIFFERENT CRIB'

Andrea Michelutti, Italy

This small tube sponge crab was hiding inside the sponge to safeguard itself and its precious cargo of orange eggs. I opted to light the scene with both flashes, to include the background in the composition. After a long wait, my patience was rewarded by this endearing pose of the creature. The direct gaze, strategic placement atop the sponge, and the eggs nestled within the claws, all add depth to this environmental portrait.

Anilao, Mabini, Batangas (Luzon), Philippines

Sony, RX100 M7, Isotta, Integrated lens and Inon UCL-67, iso 100, f/11.0, 1/1000, 2x Inon Z330

Judge's comments: The judges loved the pose of this secretive crab emerging from the sponge, and then in this monochromatic frame you realise why it is shy. It is carrying bright orange eggs. The off centre composition works perfectly to reinforce the feeling of a secret critter being revealed.

Alex Mustard



COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'KISS ME'

Andrea Michelutti, Italy

There are two fishes in the photo, it's not a double exposure! Such proximity is not a common behavior for these fishes, which is why I approached them carefully so that I could get this image of them in this formation. The photo was obtained by backlighting the two subjects with a snoot held in the correct position. The elliptical light, passing through the bodies of the subjects, gave exactly the atmosphere I was looking for. Their seemingly affectionate behavior gives the photo a unique feeling.

Puerto Galera (Mindoro), Philippines

Sony, RX100 M7, Isotta, Integrated lens and +5 Macro Lens, iso 100, f/11.0, 1/1000, Inon Z330 with Snooty snoot?adapter

Judge's comments: We loved the X-ray feel of this image and also seeing the pair of leaf scorpionfish seemingly kissing. Original and powerful.
Alex Mustard

COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SUBASS IN THE SUN'

Enrico Somogyi, Germany

Each year, in spring, sun bass mate and at this time they can be approached closely. Normally they are shy and move away as you approach. For this shot I was using a wide angle macro wetlens (the Nauticam EMWL 160 degree optic), which I adapted for my compact camera. It works great and I am very happy to see this freshwater image awarded.

Quarry Westbruch, Germany

Sony, Rx100vii, modified Fantasea Housing,
Nauticam Emwl 160, iso 200, f 7.1, 1/400, 2x
Backscatter MF2

Judge's comments: We just couldn't ignore this chap. A very strong symmetrical composition with the column like reeds towering to the surface topped off by its 'in your face' attitude. Did I mention it was also very well lit? *Peter Rowlands*



COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SEXY DANCER ON SPOT'

Ben Sarinda, Indonesia

Lembeh Strait has always been an impressive place to capture underwater photos. On this day I was interested in trying using backlight on a sexy shrimp, a particularly challenging subject because they always jumping from one place to another. Usually before taking a picture I always explore what is around my subject, to create a more interesting picture. I used snoot with a mix of pink and positioned it towards the camera. I decided to compose the silhouette of the anemone behind the sexy shrimp, I angled the camera in a diagonal position to placed the shrimp in the middle of the light to get this bright backlight effect. I am happy that the shrimp is on the perfect position.

Lembeh strait, Indonesia

Sony, RX100 M5A, NA RX100 VA, Nauticam CMC 1, iso 200, f/5.6, 1/640s, fotocore ST-01 (continuous light)

Judge's comments: Graphically powerful and visually intriguing. The silhouetted shrimp grabs your attention and then you eye explores the more subtle elements in the frame, like the anemone tentacles and the delicate appendages of the shrimp. *Alex Mustard*

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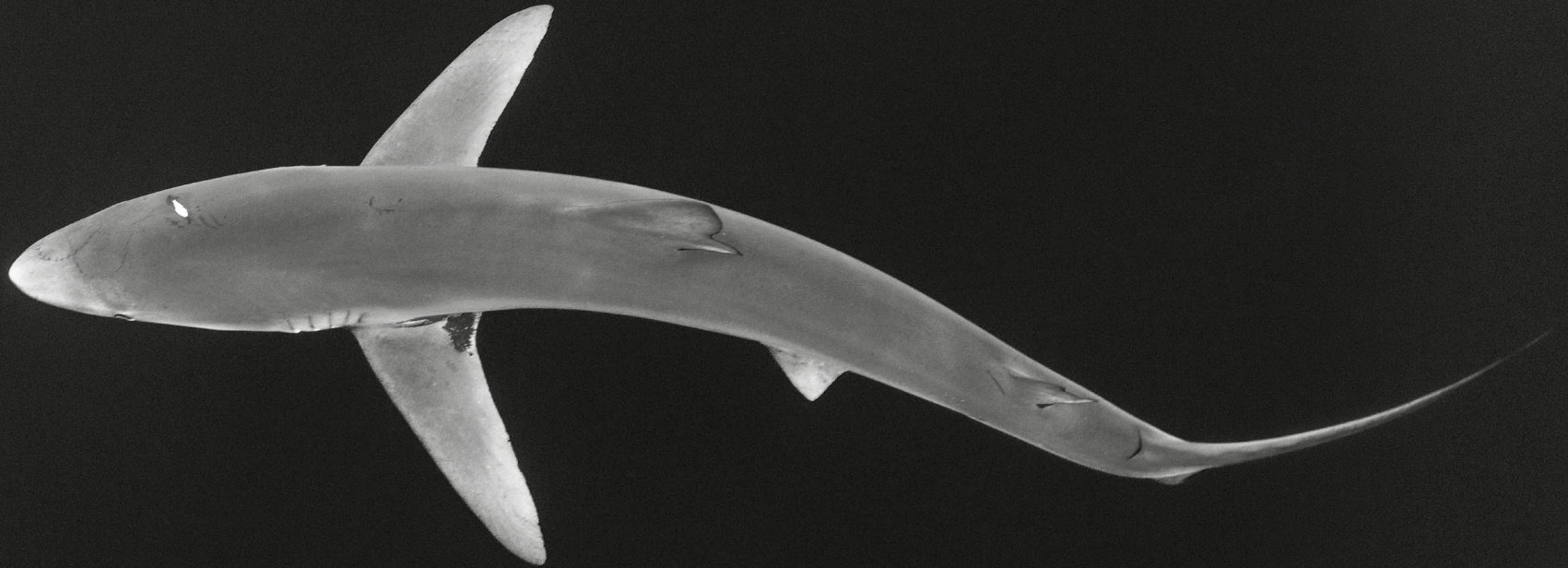


Photo by: Simon Hilborne | Save Our Seas Foundation



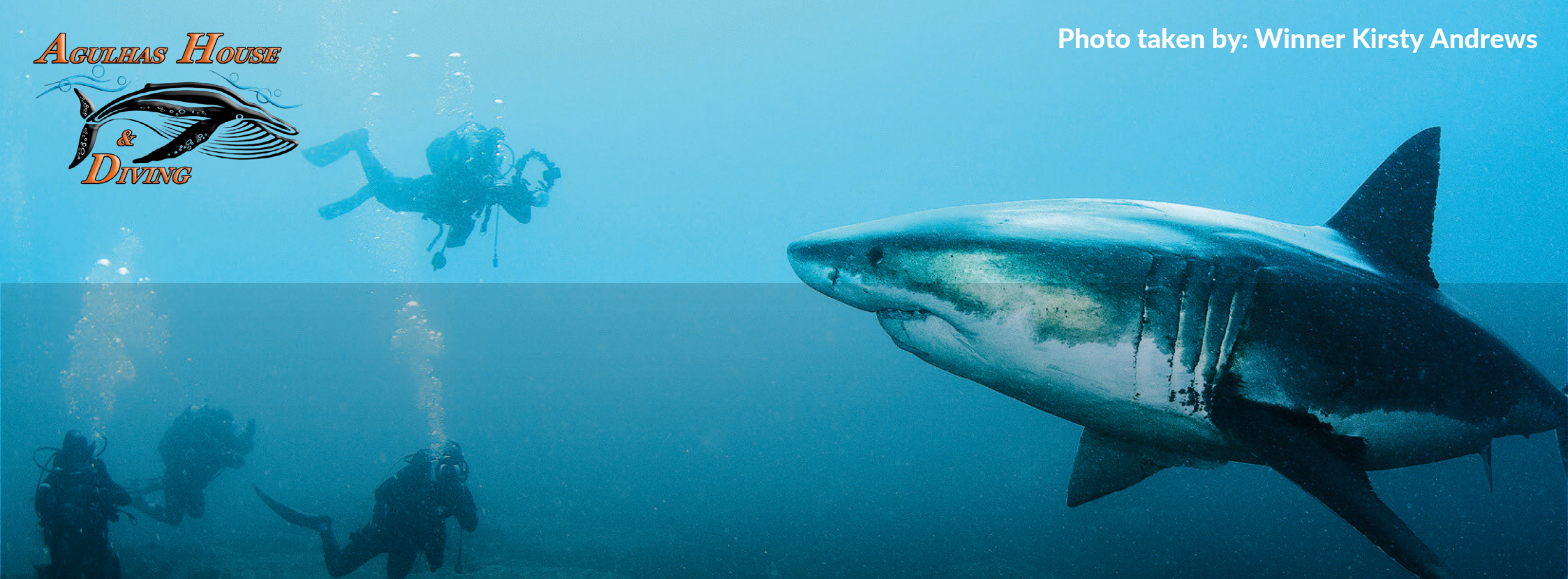
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UP & COMING

Category History

2024 Lisa Stengel (USA)
2023 Kat Zhou (USA)
2022 Quico Abadal (Spain)
2021 SJ Alice Bennett (Mexico)
2020 Anita Kainrath (Austria)
2019 Taeyup Kim (Korea)
2018 Man BD (Malaysia)
2017 Horacio Martinez (Argentina)
2016 Pier Mane (South Africa)
2015 Fabrice Guerin (France)

UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY'

Lisa Stengel, United States

The moment of ambush amidst a blur of evasion! This photo captures the instant of the attack. We spent an exciting week looking for bait balls, which provided many opportunities. The season's unique water temperatures kept the marlin farther from reach, but brought an interesting phenomenon: an unprecedented amount of mahi mahi. I chose not to wear a hood and noticed a distinct noise from the bait ball every time the mahi would attempt to hit a target. If you listen closely, there's an enormous amount of sound in the ocean, especially surrounding bait balls. I honed in on the sound of mahi attacks and followed this unmistakable sound with my camera. This technique, coupled with serendipitous conditions gave me the window of opportunity to capture this special moment.

Magdalena Bay , Mexico

Sony , a7iii, Nauticam NA A7RIII, FE 16-35mm F2.8 GM, iso 1000, f/6.3, 1/3200, Natural Sunlight

Judge's comments: WHAT A MOMENT. This is a phenomenal action photo, capturing high speed hunting at the decisive moment. Definitely one of the most remarkable images in the contest and we love how Lisa used all her senses to capture this amazing photo. *Alex Mustard*



UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'ENCIRCLED'

Sarah O'Gorman, Egypt

Summer 2023 brought the usual small groups of baby barracudas to each coral pinnacle on the house reef at Marsa Shagra, but for the first time in the 11 years I have lived there, they all gradually came together as one giant bait ball in the entrance of the bay, giving divers no choice but to pass through them at the start and end of their dive. Snorkelers spent hours every day floating above them, mesmerised by their movements.

One particularly clear and quiet morning, I was able to witness and photograph this free diver as she played amongst them, influencing their formation for as long as her breath would last. As autumn passed, the juveniles grew and the bait ball attracted hunters such as snappers, jacks and bigger barracudas who feasted for several months, and by winter it was if it had never existed.

Marsa Shagra, Egypt

Olympus, EM10 mkiii, Nauticam NA-EM10III,
Olympus 8mm f1.8 fisheye, iso 200, f/7.1, 1/160,
Natural Light

Judge's comments: This was a particular favourite of mine for its graphic simplicity, compositional symmetry and perfect timing. The lighting/exposure is spot on and the distortion of the lens creates a form of Snell's Window like icing on a cake. *Peter Rowlands*



UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'LION'S LAIR'

Bryan H. Blauvelt, United States

Raja Ampat, Indonesia is a destination that finds its way to the top of many divers' bucket lists, and for good reason. The incredible diversity and density of marine life in this region can often verge on sensory overload as you swim and scan the reefscape trying to compose an image in the camera's viewfinder. My goal on my first visit to this magical destination was to create a photograph that captured the explosion of life, colour and texture that comes to mind when thinking about the "Classic Raja Ampat" marine environment. This lionfish nestled up to a black crinoid feather star and framed by hundreds of tiny glass fish caught my attention and became a favourite image from the year of shooting. A fisheye lens and mini dome allowed me to approach within inches of the subject, filling the frame with the scene.

Nudi Rock, Misool, Indonesia

Sony, A1, Nauticam NA-A1, Canon 8-15mm Fisheye w/ Sigma MC-11, iso 320, f/16, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judge's comments: The lionfish provides a captivating focal point in this dynamic reef scene, filled with colourful corals and a rain of tiny glassfish. A picture of what divers' dreams are made of. *Alex Mustard*

UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'WHERE THE LIGHT DOESN'T REACH'

Luke Coley, Mexico

I have been living and working in Mexico's Rivera Maya for several years, where we are blessed with a huge variety of underwater shooting opportunities. My attention has been primarily captured by the area's cenotes; flooded sink holes that often lead to vast cave systems, with perfect water clarity that allows for incredible light effects. This particular cenote is far off the beaten path, and I wanted to capture the feeling of exploration; of descending into the unknown. All the elements had to align; the exact time of day to get the strongest and most direct sunbeam, the perfect buoyancy and breath control of the model for minimal bubbles, and us both with the right positioning and depth. My goal was to freeze a moment in time within an environment frozen in time, leaving room for discovery within the darkness where the light doesn't reach.

Cenote in Yucatan peninsula , Mexico

Sony , a1, Nauticam NA-a1, 16-35 F4, iso 4000, f/4, 1/40, No additional lighting used

Judge's comments: Looking almost like a sci-fi effect, this is actually a totally natural scene of a stunning shaft of light burning down into the clear waters of huge cenote. The diver perfects the composition, revealing the scale and providing a narrative. *Alex Mustard*



UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'THE HARLEQUIN BAR'

Kim Briers, Thailand

Having a good time underwater is what underwater photography is all about, so why not having a party underwater? I like to use creative lighting techniques and mix different colour torches to create a warm atmosphere underwater. The harlequin shrimp is one of the most colourful shrimps on the coral reef and a clever worker too. Using its strong beacon pincers to cut off an arm from a starfish. The arm that was cut off continues to live for several more days securing fresh food on the menu.

Batu Niti - Tulamben, Bali, Indonesia

Canon, R5, Marelux MX-R5, Canon RF100mm 2.8 L Macro IS USM, iso 100, f8, 1/100, 2x Retra Pro X, Minigear MS-03

Judge's comments: A beautiful subject photographed against an expertly crafted and attractive backdrop. Excellent control of light.
Alex Mustard

UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'THE PARENT TRAP'

Andrew Zimmerman, United States

When someone sees these fish for the first time, they are often reminded of discus, a beautiful and popular aquarium fish from the Amazon River basin. However, these are longear sunfish, a freshwater fish native to the United States and Mexico. In this image, two males are staking out nesting territory. Males will aggressively defend nests from neighbouring males and other intruders. After spawning, males will continue to guard their eggs and larvae for several weeks until the offspring are self-sufficient. These two males are getting off on the wrong foot, they picked out a nest site in front of a loaded 330 Conibear beaver trap! It's not the safest nursery to start a family but, a wonderful backdrop and frame to photograph these two future fathers. Every year I look forward to spending time laying in a cool and clear stream on hot summer days, photographing these gorgeous fish.

Duck River Drainage in Middle Tennessee, United States of America

Sony, A7RIV, Nauticam NA-A7RIV, Sony FE 28mm F2 with Nauticam WWL-1, iso 640, f/8, 1/200, Inon Z-240

Judge's comments: You just know there's tension in the water here. A perfectly timed image reminiscent of a Cartier-Bresson street image with subtle lighting to highlight the subject colours without over lighting the overall scene. Highly engaging. *Peter Rowlands*

UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

**'RIVER DOLPHIN SURFACES IN AMAZON'S
MYSTIC DEPTHS.'**

Olivier Clement, Canada

In the depths of the mysterious Amazonian river, a Boto emerges like a fleeting note in the dark, composing a visual symphony amidst the flooded forest. Crafting a composition in the depths, I navigated the challenges of the darkness, capturing the essence of the rainy season's majesty. Through the veil of the waters, the graceful form of the pink river dolphin becomes a harmonious focal point, a testament to the delicate dance between the seasonal rhythms and the mystical allure of Amazon's aquatic wilderness. This image is a testament to both patience and respect for nature; no bait was used to capture this photo, and no strobes were employed to ensure minimal disturbance to the captivating creature in its natural habitat.

Manaus area, Brazil

Canon, 5D MARK IV, Nauticam NA-5DMKIV,
8-15mm , iso 1000, f/16, 1/100, No strobes

Judge's comments: This dolphin seems to be dreaming of another world. I love the expression on this dolphins face, to me it seems to be looking up through the tannin filled waters, pondering what life must be like in above the surface. An evocative portrait. *Alex Mustard*



UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'DARK PARADISE'

John Pfisterer, United States

As a cave diver, I am enthralled by the magnificent textures, shapes, and details of the surreal landscape and overall grandeur of the cenotes. In the radiant sun, we delicately transported our heavy equipment from the pickup truck, through the jungle, to, penultimately, a rickety ladder that led to the cool, welcoming waters of Nohoch Nah Chich. In addition to all the side-mounted configured life support gear, seven continuous lights that together produced over 100,000 lumens and weighed 4lbs each were brought in. This level of lighting is required to illuminate all the hidden facets of a chamber of this magnitude. Diver Natalie Gibb's presence between the columns accentuated the vastness and scale of this submerged sanctuary. I feel privileged to visit and document these locations, and to arrange lighting to reveal the story of these ancient stones.

Cenote Nohoch Nah Chich , Mexico

Sony , A1, Nauticam Sony A1, 28-60mm, with WWL, iso 12,800, F8, 1/25, 4 Keldan lights and 3 Kraken

Judge's comments: A magnificent grand scene and well planned composition. We felt a more panoramic crop would have enhanced the image and would have seen it finish even higher.

Alex Mustard



UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'DENTAL CHECK TODAY?'

Yinan Liu, China

It was the last day of the trip, the weather condition was perfect, after plenty of searching, the whale guide spotted a blow. As we approached, I noticed this sperm whale was bigger than anyone I have ever seen, I was struck by the size of this giant creature when I got into the water, this male sperm whale is more than 15 meters long, swimming leisurely with its mouth wide open, scanning me with a bell-like sound. When I looked into its eyes I knew I had been waiting for this moment the whole trip. I feel very lucky that I got this opportunity on the last day and I captured this beautiful moment.

West coast of Mauritius, Mauritius

Canon, 5DSR, Nauticam NA 5DSR, 8-15mm F4 Fisheye Lens, iso 160, F/6.3, 1/200, No strobe
Nature light

Judge's comments: The longer you keep trying, the luckier you might get may sound obvious but, the truth is, you still need the talent to capture the shot and this is a perfect example of an iconic subject with it's hard life history etched on his huge echoing domed head. A real 'wish I was there too' image. *Peter Rowlands*



UP & COMING

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'GOLDEN SURFACE BREAK'

Tim Glaeser, Germany

I've had this image in my head for a long time. I've long wished to take a split shot of a sea turtle at the sunset and create a beautiful play of colours between blue and orange. While I was diving and freediving in Indonesia for a few weeks, the conditions were often not perfect for this kind of shot. When my time on the Gili Islands was coming to an end, I almost gave up; at least I had a lot of other beautiful photos in my luggage. On the last evening, I went to the beach to enjoy the beautiful sunset with some freediving. And suddenly everything was right. The light was perfect, the clouds had a nice structure, the turtle was really relaxed. Now I was able to take the target photo and I'm very happy with image and the contrasting colours in this picture.

Gili Islands, Indonesia

Sony, Alpha 7 IV, Aquatica A7 IV, Sony 16-35mm F2.8 GM, iso 800, f/6.3, 1/250

Judge's comments: A very effective use of several image components - space, colour contrast and perfect timing but I couldn't help but feel that more underwater and less sky would have seen this shot much higher in the rankings. *Peter Rowlands*



Triton Bay Divers

Kaimana, West Papua, Indonesia



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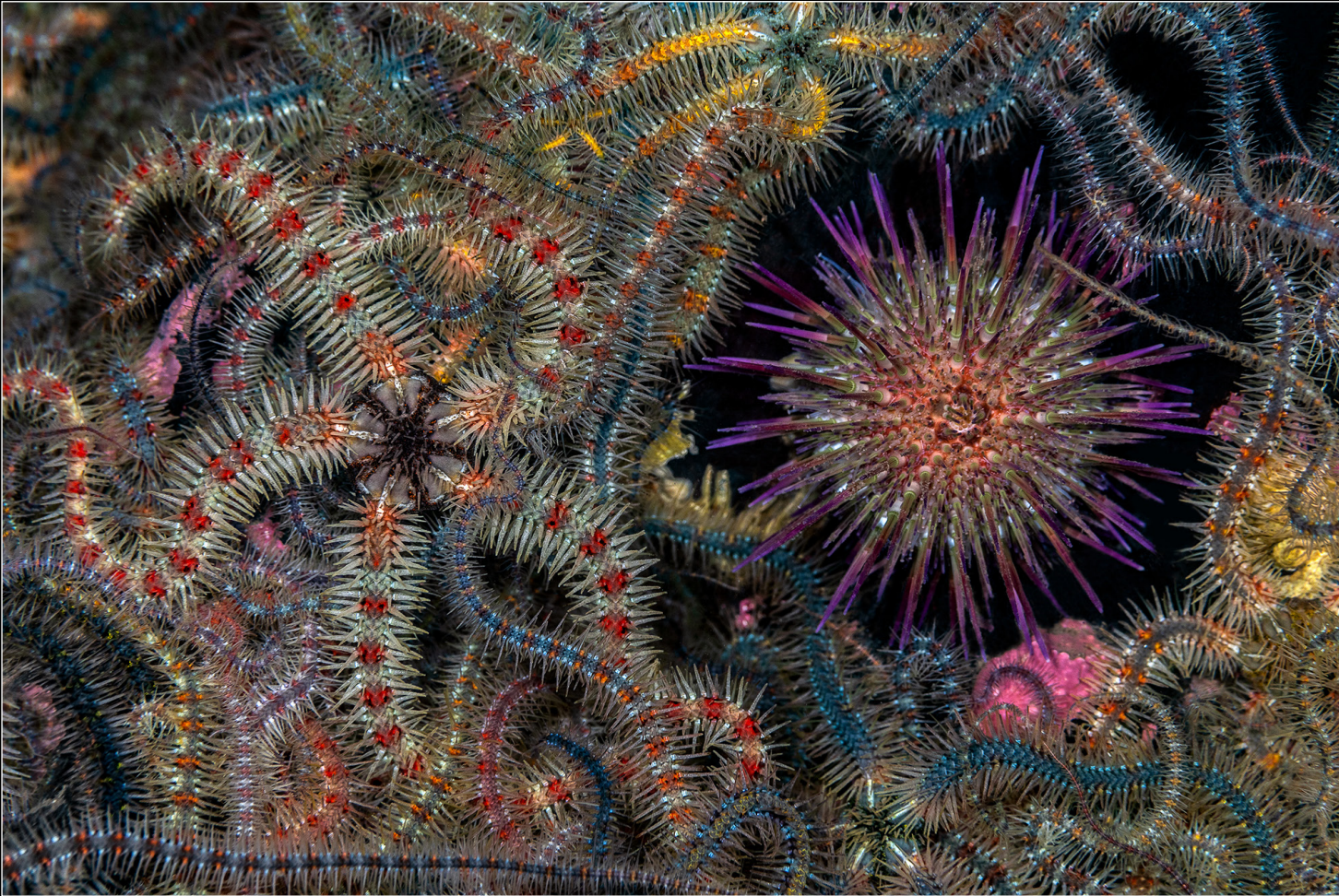
British Underwater Photographer of the Year Winners

2024 Jenny Stock
2023: Ollie Clarke
2022: Matty Smith
2021: Mark Kirkland
2020: Nick More
2019: Richard Barnden
2018: Grant Thomas
2017: Nick Blake
2016: Dan Bolt
2015: Matt Doggett
2003: Andy Heath
2001: Pete Atkinson
1999: Pete Atkinson
1983: Peter Rowlands
1979: Warren Williams
1976: Peter Scoones
1970: Peter Scoones
1968: Colin Doeg

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer Winners

2024 Sandra Stalker
2023: Theo Vickers
2022: Paul Pettitt
2021: Alice Bennett
2020: Nur Tucker
2019: Malcolm Nimmo
2018: Tony Stephenson
2017: Nicholai Georgiou
2016: Marty Engels Dunmore
2015: Mario Vitalini
2003: Andy Heath
2001: Mark Walker
1999: Jeff Collett
1987: Benny Sutton
1983: Alan Youngs
1979: Geoff Tompkinson
1976: Mike Portelly

British Underwater Photographer of the Year



WINNER

'STAR ATTRACTION'

Jenny Stock, United Kingdom

Loch Leven is a Scottish dive site near Oban that can be easily accessed via a lay-by on the A82. Once there a walk down a steep leafy track will lead you into the "refreshing" water. As I descended into the dark green depths of the sea loch, on a dusk dive, I approached an area where my torch picked out the vivid colours of a living carpet of thousands of brittlestars.

Captivated by the variety of hues and patterns each star took, I felt this was an incredible encounter with a species I'd never seen before. I was happily snapping away, when I spotted this purple sea urchin and I got really excited. A dominant star next to this graphic invertebrate created a beautifully balanced pair, perfectly surrounded by an entanglement of the background brittlestars.

Loch Leven, Scotland

Canon 5D IV, Nauticam, 100mm, iso 100, 10, 125, Retra

Judge's comments: This is a celebratory British image on many levels - a full frame carpet of vibrant, healthy marine life with complimentary colours, well composed and very original. Subtlety is a gamble in competitions but this one paid off and appealed to all the judges alike.

Peter Rowlands

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



WINNER

'MIDNIGHT RAVER'

Sandra Stalker, United Kingdom

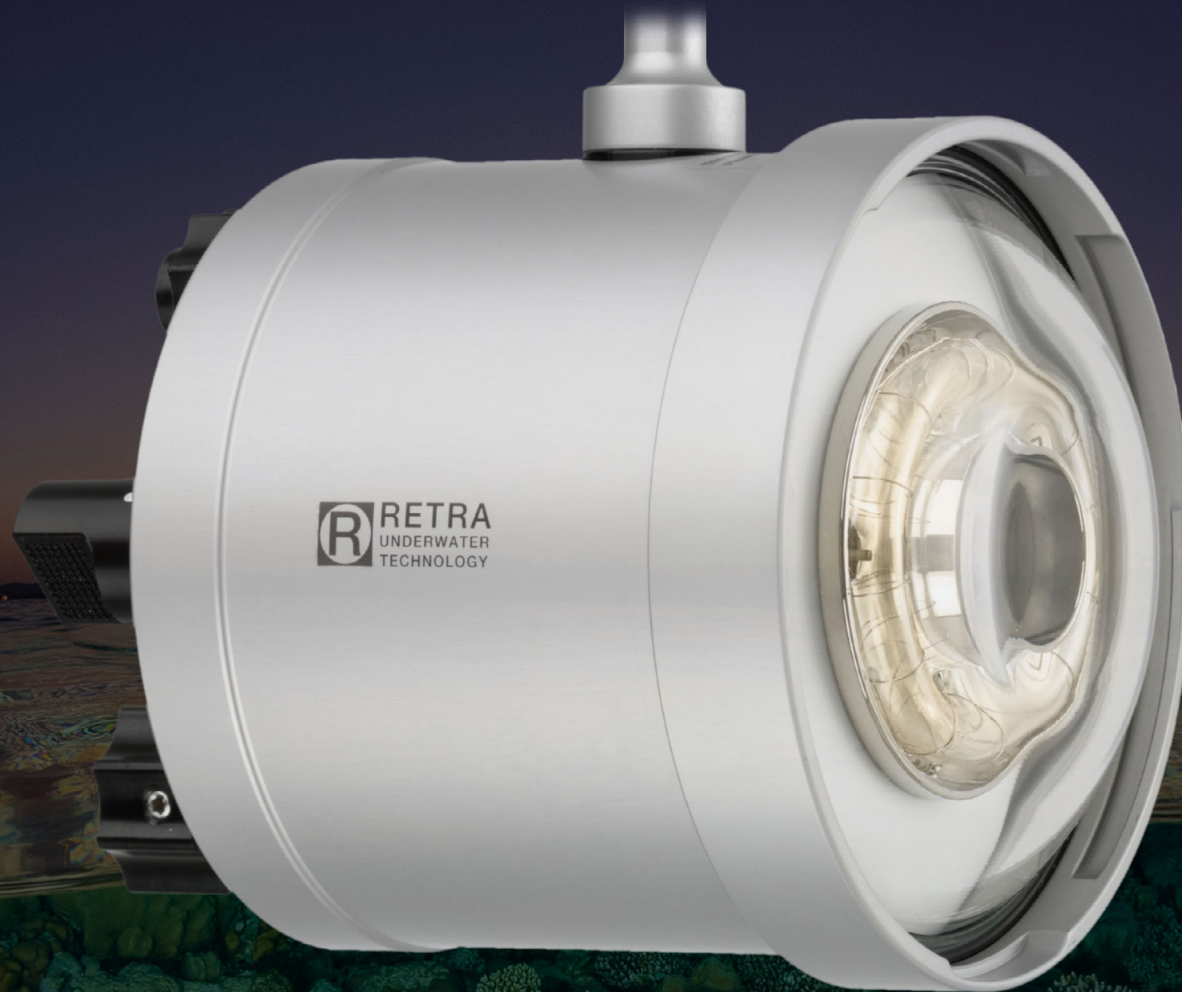
I took this shot on a night dive at my local dive site. I had previously attempted this shot on a few dives and hadn't quite achieved what I wanted until this dive. I find the crabs to have such bold and funny characters whilst running up to me and then away wildly flailing their legs like ravers and I wanted to capture this character. The crab didn't really stand out much from the sand so I used a purple light on a torch for the back ground and then I snooted the crab with white light on a strobe, tracking it as it ran across the seabed for the long exposure. This made a lovely contrast of the green of the crab against the purple with the crab looking directly at the camera.

Portland Harbour, Dorset, England

Sony , A7RIV, Nauticam, Sony FE 28-60mm F4-5.6 Lens , iso200, f/18, 1/6, Backscatter miniflash

Judge's comments: A creative photographic mind can metamorphose an everyday scene into a stunning vision. A shore crab on sand is not usually the subject matter of photographers' dreams, but with an innovative mix of snooted flash and continuous lighting it is transformed here. The crabs splash of colour stars as the long exposure injects energy into it swirling legs, and the dull sand becomes a stage of purple velvet. *Alex Mustard*





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BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Category History

2024 Kat Zhou (USA)
2023 Theo Vickers (UK)
2022 Henley Spiers (UK)
2021 Mark Kirkland (UK)
2020 Arthur Kingdon (UK)
2019 Robert Bailey (UK)
2018 Grant Thomas (UK)
2017 Melvin Redeker (Netherlands)
2016 Marcus Blatchford (UK)
2015 Matt Doggett (UK)

BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'DIVEBOMB'

Kat Zhou, United States

I took this photo during a trip to dive with Northern Gannets in Shetland. The experience of being amidst dive-bombing gannets is both chaotic and adrenaline-fueled, and it was hard to choose where to aim my camera! I tried to photograph any bird that zoomed by, and I was pleasantly surprised when I later saw how this shot was able to depict the dynamic motion of the experience.

Shetland, UK

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 8-15mm Fisheye w/ Kenko 1.4x Teleconverter, iso 400, f/11, 1/250, Inon Z330

Judge's comments: There is an amazing sense of purpose in the eyes of these gannets as the dive into the chilly waters in search of food. The judges also loved those bubble rings that show the energy the birds are exerting during this underwater hunt.
Alex Mustard



BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'BASS BASS BASS'

Kirsty Andrews, United Kingdom

I must credit my skipper Danny Daniels in part for this image: as I readied myself to jump into the water next to this offshore lighthouse, he said "Kirsty I'm about to drop you right on top of a big school of bass" - he'd seen the fish on his echo sounder. So thank you Danny! My settings weren't immediately correct - it's difficult to expose these very reflective fish in our temperate often particle-filled waters; but as the school swirled around me for brief moments, I managed to capture this shot. As always in such moments, I was feeling pure joy at being surrounded by fish, immersed in the shoal.

Near Eddystone Lighthouse, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 500, f11, 1/160, Retra Pros x 2

Judge's comments: Never thought I'd see a British picture like this. A wall of fish is a rare sight in Britain and conditions rarely allow such a shot to be taken, even if a photographer with the mastery of the skills was there at the right time. A stunning celebration of the richness of our waters.

Alex Mustard

BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'U-BOAT EXPLORATION'

Rick Ayrton, United Kingdom

This is an image of the U1021 lying in approximately 55m, sunk off North Cornwall in late 1944 or early 1945. This was one of 3 U-boats sunk by a deeply placed minefield in the Bristol Channel. The bow, unseen in this image is broken off lying on its port side. None of the crew survived and remain entombed in the wreckage making this a rather sobering dive. Apart from the broken bow the submarine is otherwise in very good condition. North Cornwall can offer some of the best visibility in the UK and so it was when taking this shot. I was lucky to have a buddy who was happy to get into a good position and light up the periscope and conning tower for me. Using only the ambient light available and allowing the ISO to go quite high enabled the capture of this image.

North Cornwall, United Kingdom

Nikon , Z9, Nauticam NAZ9, Nikon 8-15 @ 15mm, iso 7200, f8, 1/30, ambient light

Judge's comments: As judges we have no idea how deep images are taken but, looking at this diver/model, we knew we were in serious territory so to have such a clean composition and amazing detail/resolution is a compliment to all those involved - photographer, model and the high ISO camera. Really pushing the boundaries. *Peter Rowlands*



BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'LION'S MANE JELLYFISH

Lars von Ritter Zahony, Germany

As a geologist, the views into the cave with its breathtaking basalt structures are unique. As an ocean lover, I am also fascinated by the beauties of the underwater world of the Inner Hebrides. Nothing connects these two different worlds more beautifully than the recording technique of half and half photography. It is precisely at this border that both unite, because they need each other. High waves and poor visibility due to the bad weather conditions, made photography extremely difficult. In addition, I really wanted to take photos out of the cave and to do that I had to swim all the way in. Inside it was very dark. In order to best represent both worlds, I had to use one flash for underwater and aim the other at the cave ceiling. This was the only way I could get this exposure.

Isle of Staffa - Fingal's Cave, Scotland

Canon, 1DX Mark III, Seacam, Canon 8-15mm USM, iso 640, f13, 1/80, 2x Seacam Seaflash 160d

Judge's comments: Fingal's cave is very dark, and this image demonstrates a real mastery of light. I love the glow of the lion's mane jellyfish and also how the light picks out the hexagonal columns of basalt in the ceiling of the cave. *Alex Mustard*



BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'CATSHARK IN THE MORNING SUNSHINE'

Martin Stevens, United Kingdom

Small-spotted catsharks are a regular sight around Falmouth, Cornwall, commonly seen resting on the sandy patches between the kelp and rocky areas. I often see them swimming over the kelp forest too, but it can be hard to get photos of them with their unpredictable changes of direction. On this clear sunny morning in spring, I woke early and headed out to see what wildlife I could photograph, and was met with several of these sharks swimming around. Freediving is often the best way to get photos of them in motion, something I'd wanted to achieve for a while, so I anticipated where they would swim and waited down between the kelp. I was rewarded with this shark that swam right up and past me, with the sunshine in the background even casting a rainbow on the back of the animal.

Falmouth, Cornwall, UK

Olympus, EM5 Mark III, Isotta, Olympus 8 mm fisheye, iso 640, f/13, 1/200, Two Sea and Sea YS-D3 Mark II

Judge's comments: One of the most beautiful British pictures we have seen. Amazing subject, fabulous setting. clear water and sumptuous sunbeams. Totally stunning. Definitely would have won this category in others years. *Alex Mustard*



BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'WHAT THE DUCK?!'

Jenny Stock, United Kingdom

This expressive image was taken using a unique "tripod mounted camera rig", remotely controlled, on the bank of the River Test. I explored several positions until I settled on a location that had both a great backdrop and where the brown trout, rainbow trout and ducks were comfortable approaching the camera.

After a few hours, the animals were habituated and swam right up the lens. I was then able to take as many shots as I wanted. In the edit I took my favourite animal portraits and blended them together, a job which is easily done when your photos have an identical background. An advantage of this special underwater set-up is you can eat crisp sandwiches, sup tea from a flask and have lengthy conversations with your friends whilst capturing beautiful images. Such tasks are much harder to do whilst engaging in traditional diving photography...

Whitchurch Silk Mill, United Kingdom

Nikon, D4, Paul Colley Creation, 15mm, iso 4000, 13, 1/250, Nikon Speedlights SB900

Judge's comments: River photography is challenging, but fortunately Jenny didn't settle for just getting a shot. Instead she made the most of the remote camera set up to take multiple frames from the same position to blend into the perfect picture. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'CAT SHARK OVER MUSSEL BEDS'

Henley Spiers, United Kingdom

A spotted cat shark swims over horse mussel beds in Shetland, one of the richest marine ecosystems in British waters. Also known as dogfish, they are the most common shark in our waters but have long experienced a difficult relationship with humans. An early 20th century text describes them as the 'foe of fisherman' who 'wages incessant war with their nets and catches'. Beachgoers are most likely to be aware of this shark through their egg pouches which wash up on shore and are commonly known as "mermaid's purses". Despite their modest size, I find cat sharks to be amongst the most beautiful of their species, with large eyes and intricate skin patterning. To share the water with them over these horse mussel beds, an area which has been protected from dredging by the local shell fishermen, made for one of the most memorable dives of my career.

Shetland, Scotland, United Kingdom

Nikon, D850, Nauticam, Nikon 13mm, iso 400, f/22, 1/15, Retra Pro x 2

Judge's comments: Camera movement techniques must have a reason otherwise they irritate but this is a great example of a well thought out and executed idea. Beautifully lit and perfectly timed both compositionally and shutter speed wise, it was a pleasant sight for sore judges' eyes.

Peter Rowlands



BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SUNNY SUNSTAR'

Dan Bolt, United Kingdom

Having dived the Scottish highlands for over a decade its always exciting to discover new sites, and this was no exception. It offered classic cold-water reef life in abundance, with all the colours and textures I have come to love about these cooler climes. Happily the reef is on the right side of the Loch to be able to make use of the early spring sunshine by shooting up into the gorgeous, green tinged water.

Loch Leven, Scotland

Canon, EOS R7, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye, iso 1250, f/10, 1/60, 2x Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judge's comments: The beauty, colours and vitality of British Seas at their best. This composition has a fabulous sense of depth in the composition, from the tips of the starfish's arms reaching out towards the lens, to the kelp fronds in the background, it has a tremendous three dimensional feeling.
Alex Mustard

BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'Iris'

Thomas Harper, United Kingdom

I shot this image in the height of the summer. The sea clarity was incredible at this time, and I knew the sand was very visible even at 2 metre depth, as it was in this image. There were many jellyfish the day before this but the clarity wasn't quite there. So I decided to make the drive the next day. The light offshore wind gave extra clarity, however this was one of just a few jellies that remained. I really wanted to include the contours created in the sand below. The moment presented as the compass jelly and the wave synchronised, creating a brilliant split. I really love the vibrant jellyfish contrasting the awesome sea colour in this one. The jelly was on its side, which looked like an eye observing me. It really blows me away that we are able to view scenes like this in the UK.

Cornwall. Gwynver , UK

Canon , R5, Aquatech, 8-15mm fisheye, iso 800, f13, 1/2000

Judge's comments: What a celebratory image of British Seas, with such stunning colours combined with a beautiful jellyfish. The graphic lines in the sand, the diagonal slice of the water, the distant beach and the central jellyfish all combine to create a composition that intrigues and rewards each time you return to this picture. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS WIDE ANGLE

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SEA HARE'

Shannon Moran, United Kingdom

Early in the spring, just before the algae bloom, the waters in Cornwall turn an incredible shade of turquoise. I made the most of the sea conditions and aimed to capture the transition from green algae filled water to the clear blue shallow water in the background of this image. The photograph was taken at a site I frequent year-round, Silver Steps in Falmouth. 2023 was a bumper year for Sea Hares at this dive site, and for a few weeks in the spring the sea floor was absolutely covered with these large sea slugs. This hare was particularly large, at around 20cm! It had started to climb up the kelp covered reef and after a few minutes made its way all the way to the top of this golden kelp stalk, where I captured this image.

Silver Steps, Falmouth, Cornwall., United Kingdom

Olympus , EM1 mark ii, Nauticam NA-EM1ii, Lumix 8mm Fisheye , iso 320, f/6.3, 1/160, Inon Z240 (x2)

Judge's comments: A delicately timed, perfectly lit with matched balanced light image completed with complimentary kelp formations. A clean, graphically unambiguous image which deserved to be in the winners enclosure of such a strong visual category.
Peter Rowlands



D-PRO Strobe

Instant recharge

Recycle time: 0.1-1.1s

Beam angle: 150°

**Continuous unlimited
flash sync with 10
flashes/sec at first mode**

- Battery capacity to fire up to 3000 flashes (500 flashes on full).
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SUPE[®]
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- Guide number : 30
- Flash tube : circular flash tube
- Power : 160 Ws
- Connection : optical cable / 5 pin syn cord/flash of light
- Illumination : 150°
- Color temperature : 4800K
- Flash capacity : 500 flashes at full power, 3000 flashes at 1st mode
- Recycle time : 0.1s---1.1s
- Flash speed : continuous unlimited flash sync with 10 flashes/sec at first mode
- Focus/target light : 5W / 500 lumens (center focus)
- Waterproof depth : 100m
- Weight (underwater) : 120g
- Dimensions : 170 x 90 mm
- Weight (on land) : 1080g without battery

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Category History

2024 Jenny Stock (UK)
2023 Kirsty Andrews (UK)
2022 Dan Bolt (UK)
2021 Malcolm Nimmo (UK)
2020 Laura Storm (UK)
2019 Arthur Kingdon (UK)
2018 Henley Spiers (UK)
2017 Kirsty Andrews (UK)
2016 Dan Bolt (UK)
2015 Trevor Rees (UK)

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'STAR ATTRACTION'

Jenny Stock, United Kingdom

Loch Leven is a Scottish dive site near Oban that can be easily accessed via a lay-by on the A82. Once there a walk down a steep leafy track will lead you into the "refreshing" water. As I descended into the dark green depths of the sea loch, on a dusk dive, I approached an area where my torch picked out the vivid colours of a living carpet of thousands of brittlestars.

Captivated by the variety of hues and patterns each star took, I felt this was an incredible encounter with a species I'd never seen before. I was happily snapping away, when I spotted this purple sea urchin and I got really excited. A dominant star next to this graphic invertebrate created a beautifully balanced pair, perfectly surrounded by an entanglement of the background brittlestars.

Loch Leven, Scotland

Canon 5D, 5D IV, Nauticam, 100mm, iso 100, f10, 1/125, Retra

Judge's comments: This is a celebratory British image on many levels - a full frame carpet of vibrant, healthy marine life with complimentary colours, well composed and very original. Subtlety is a gamble in competitions but this one paid off and appealed to all the judges alike.

Peter Rowlands



BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'MIDNIGHT RAVER'

Sandra Stalker, United Kingdom

I took this shot on a night dive at my local dive site. I had previously attempted this shot on a few dives and hadn't quite achieved what I wanted until this dive. I find the crabs to have such bold and funny characters whilst running up to me and then away wildly flailing their legs like ravers and I wanted to capture this character. The crab didn't really stand out much from the sand so I used a purple light on a torch for the back ground and then I snooted the crab with white light on a strobe, tracking it as it ran across the seabed for the long exposure. This made a lovely contrast of the green of the crab against the purple with the crab looking directly at the camera.

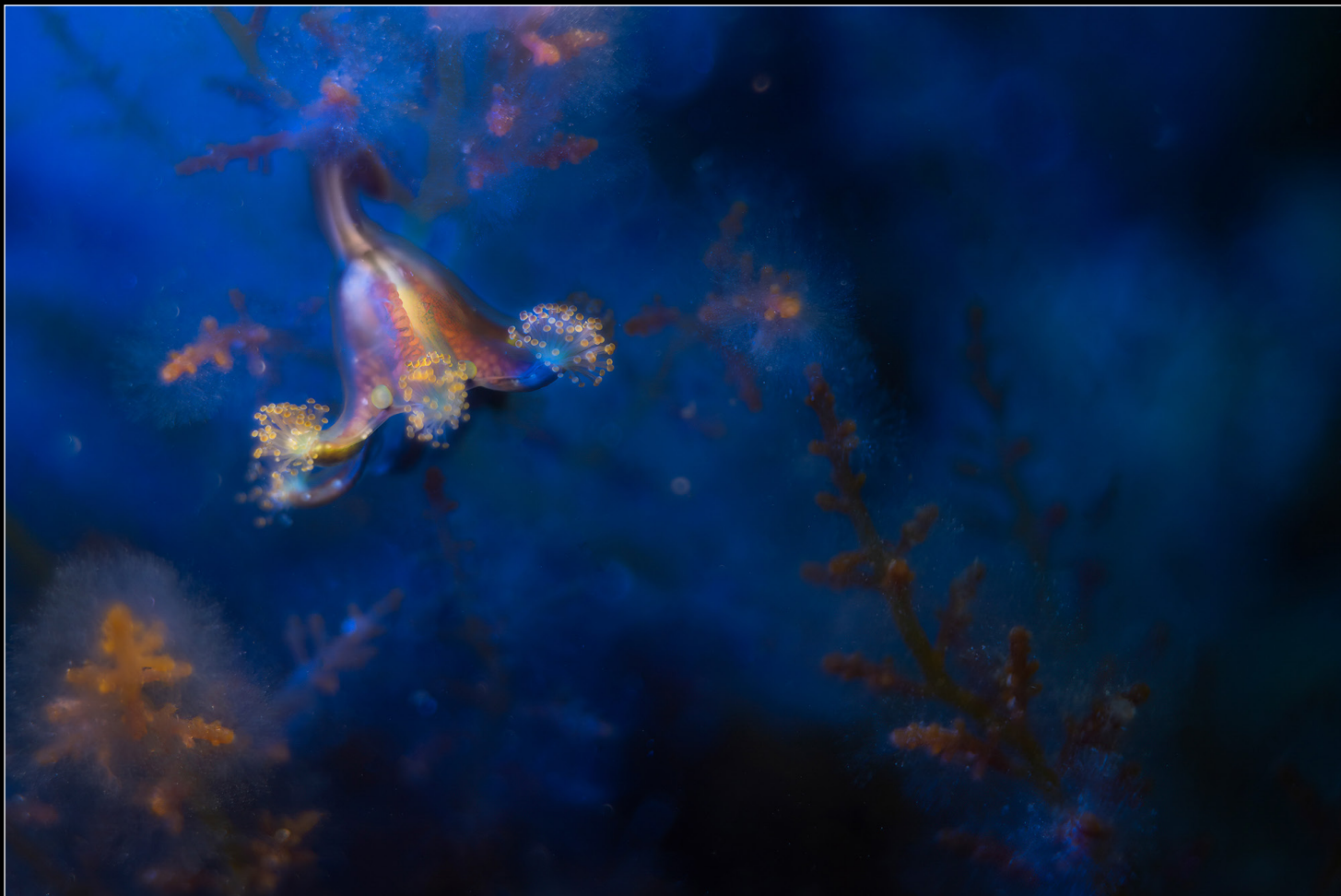
Portland Harbour, Dorset, England

Sony , A7RIV, nauticam, Sony FE 28-60mm F4-5.6 Lens, iso200, f/18, 1/6, Backscatter miniflash

Judge's comments: A creative photographic mind can metamorphose an everyday scene into a stunning vision. A shore crab on sand is not usually the subject matter of photographers' dreams, but with an innovative mix of snooted flash and continuous lighting it is transformed here. The crabs splash of colour stars as the long exposure injects energy into it swirling legs, and the dull sand becomes a stage of purple velvet. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'MOONLIGHT WONDERLAND'

Sandra Stalker, United Kingdom

I had this shot in mind when I started the dive at Kimmeridge back in the summer. I had on my home made part vintage lens and there had been plenty of stalked jellyfish around the previous week. However, as with all UK diving nothing is quite guaranteed and I didn't find a single stalky until near the end of the dive. It was also in an awkward position and the surge was starting to build meaning I had many more misses than hits with managing to light the stalked jellyfish with a tiny snoot beam on a strobe and focus whilst strobing the background blue. I chose the blue as this particular stalky was a pinky brown colour and very camouflaged against the pink weed it was on plus it gives the image another worldly effect. I like to treat my images like mini stage sets.

Kimmeridge bay, Dorset, England

Sony , A7RIV, Nauticam, home made part trioplan 50 optic, iso 50, f /2.9, 1/320, backscatter miniflash

Judge's comments: Delicate and captivating, this artistic image . It could be a golden flower embroidered onto a blue velvet cushion. A stunning photography and a real favourite of mine.
Alex Mustard

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'BRAVE BUTTERFISH'

Kirsty Andrews, United Kingdom

Butterfish patrol brittlestar beds with confidence, the masters of all they survey. Look closely at the entwining colourful arms of the brittlestars and you're bound to see one moving sinuously about. Mostly they will ignore the diving photographer but this individual was yawning towards the lens in what I took to be a powerplay, reminding me of its dominance on the reef. I used a relatively open aperture for subject separation and to emphasise the pretty eyespot patterning of the fish.

Loch Carron, Scotland, United Kingdom

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, 60mm, iso 125, f5.6, 1/250, Retra Pros x 2

Judge's comments: Butterfish are renowned for being skittish subjects. The slippery, sinuous bodies are always on the move and quality images are rare. Kirsty definitely made the most of an unusually confident individual to capture this peak portrait, with the repeating eyespots drawing our eyes through the composition. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'PONDWEED KING'

Laura Storm, United Kingdom

For the past few years, I've been working to capture artistic interpretations of our British freshwater realm. Signal crayfish are an invasive species with a bad reputation. They can be destructive, reproduce rapidly, and quickly dominate a freshwater habitat. I've grown to admire their tenacious side. They're survivors, and I felt compelled to portray them in a vintage, cinematic way.

I came across this feisty crustacean in a favourite lake, where they've long since taken up residence. It was early summer, when the pondweed is a fresh limey green and the visibility a silty 3 metres. The pondweed - also an invasive species - couldn't have made a more perfect backdrop. My lens of choice was a reconditioned "altglas" Pentacon art lens. Shot wide open it produces this distinct bubble-bokeh effect. Using a razor-thin depth of field and the highlights in the pondweed, I finally came up with this dreamlike rendition.

Wraysbury Lake, Wraysbury Nature Reserve,
Middlesex, England

Canon, EOS 800D, Sea & Sea RDX750, Vintage
Pentacon 50mm, iso 100, f/1.8, 1/200, Twin INON
s2000

Judge's comments: An original and striking shot of an often overlooked British species. Presumably shot with a vintage lens, the distinctive bokeh captures the essence of the bright green, freshwater weeds, contrasting perfectly with the orangey hues of the crayfish's carapace.

Alex Mustard



BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'A PROTECTIVE MOTHER'

Saeed Rashid, United Kingdom

While diving the Maerl beds in Fal estuary, Cornwall I saw a goby sitting in a clamshell. Unlike a lot of fish I had photographed that day, it seemed very territorial and didn't move away when I approached. It wasn't until I looked closely I could see it had a clutch of eggs it was clearly defending in it's beautiful, clamshell nest.

Fal estuary, Cornwall, England, United Kingdom

Canon, 7D mk2, Nauticam, Canon 60mm, iso 320, f16, 1/125, Inon z330

Judge's comments: Soft, delicate lighting emphasises the exquisite detail with instant eye contact well chosen depth of focus. The eggs complete the tale. Beautifully tender.

Peter Rowlands

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'WOLF-FISH STARE'

Mark Kirkland, United Kingdom

The marine reserve of St Abbs and Eyemouth on the Berwickshire catches just enough of the cold arctic stream from the north to host a resident population of Atlantic wolf-fish, so much so that this area has become synonymous with this otherwise elusive cold-water species. Spending most of their time wedged in cracks, they can be a tricky species to photograph. I planned this shot in advance, hoping to find an individual far enough out of its den that I could use a single snooted strobe to emphasise its textured skin and those glorious teeth. I found a willing wolf, but patience was still essential, waiting for both eyes to stare directly down the lens.

St Abbs, Scotland

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NAD500, Nikon 60mm f2.8, iso 640, f20, 1/250, Retra Pro

Judge's comments: Perfectly framed and wisely lit as well as perfectly timed with both eye contact, this is a well thought out and executed image. With these subjects, like the Hunchback of Notre Dame or the Elephant Man, beauty is in the eye of the beholder. *Peter Rowlands*



BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'DISCO ON THE DANCE FLOOR'

Tony Reed, United Kingdom

I happened to stumble upon this Disco Doris at the end of my dive in 2 meters of water! Just off the shore at Drawna Rocks (Porthkerris), there are a few big rocks on the left side of the beach. My camera was already clipped up. I was messing around and I inverted myself, stuck my head on the floor to look under the over hang and spotted the little orange bundle of joy trekking across the large rock! This is the first time I had seen one moving and it was moving fast. I unclipped and just started snapping! It had moved about 2 meters in about 15 to 20 minutes and made its way across 2 lots of star ascidians which looked a really nice contrast! Difficult in the circumstances!

Porthkerris, England

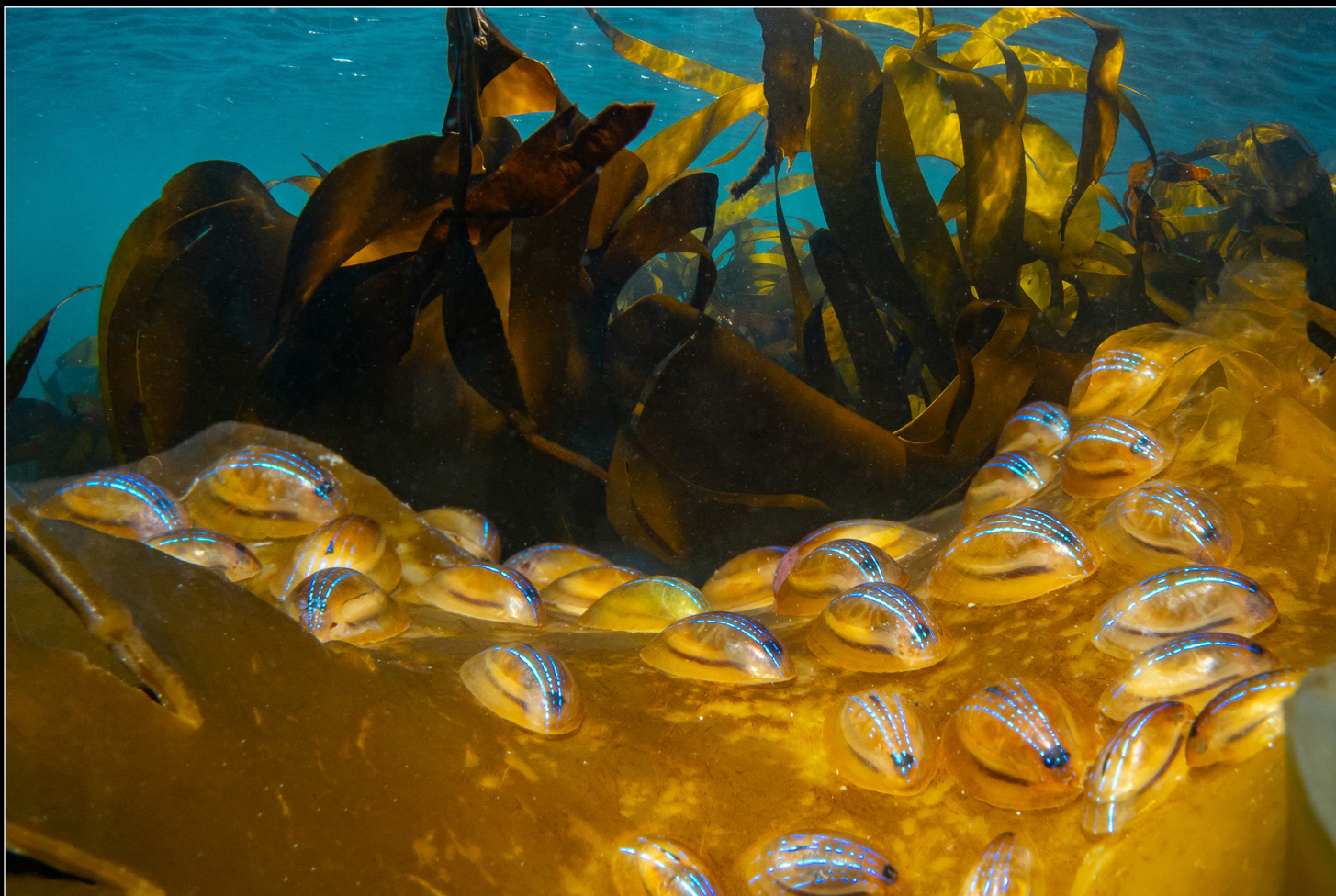
Olympus , TG4, PT-056, no lens, iso 200, f/3.5, 1/200, Light and motion gobe 850 wide

Judge's comments: What a feast of colour. This bright orange sea slug looks spectacular as it waltzes across its neon dance floor. Also great to see a compact camera shot being awarded in the open categories, showing it is not the camera, but what you do with it that matters!

Alex Mustard

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'BLUE-RAYED LIMPETS ON KELP'

Martin Stevens, United Kingdom

Blue-rayed limpets are a common site on the kelp locally, from the lower intertidal down to deeper water. They are tiny, often less than 1 cm long, and marked with spectacular bright blue stripes, of which any function remains a mystery. In the autumn and winter they cluster together on the lower parts of the kelp. I'd long had in mind a photo showing a group of limpets close up, set in the wider kelp habitat. The problem is that the limpets are too small to capture without a macro lens, which wouldn't work well for the wider scene. So, I opted for an in-camera double exposure, using a macro lens for a group of limpets lit with only a snoot to keep the rest of the scene dark, combined with a photo of the kelp in sunshine with a fisheye lens and natural light only.

Falmouth, Cornwall, UK

Olympus, EM5 Mark III, Isotta , Olympus 60 mm macro and Olympus 8 mm fisheye, iso 200, f/14, 1/250, One Sea & Sea YS-D3 MII / ambient light

Judge's comments: We loved this double exposure that creates a technically impossible image, but one that feels completely natural to anyone familiar with these tiny limpets. Such shots take real photographic precision to achieve in camera. Best of all the photo invites us to appreciate their detail and beauty, while celebrating their habitat.
Alex Mustard

BRITISH WATERS MACRO

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SCORPION EYES'

Henley Spiers, United Kingdom

Living proof that British seas are far from drab and colourless: this long-spined sea scorpion has adopted a vivid purple shade as it seeks to blend into its environment. A skilled, lie-in wait predator, the sea scorpion relies on camouflage to lure its prey into a false sense of security.

Shetland, Scotland, United Kingdom

Nikon, D850, Nauticam, Nikon 60mm, iso 400, f/16, 1/200, Inon Z330 X 2

Judge's comments: Mean and moody captures the character of this predator, while its colours simply stun us. Quality portrait. *Alex Mustard*



BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Category History

2024 Kirsty Andrews (UK)
2023 Dan Bolt (UK)
2022 Lewis Jefferies (UK)
2021 Kirsty Andrews (UK)
2020 Dan Bolt (UK)
2019 Victoria Walker (UK)

This category showcases the coexistence of nature and human activities on the UK seabed.

The Crown Estate is driving the sustainable development of the seabed around England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the benefit of the nation. Our role is central to supporting the delivery of the UK's net zero agenda, including growing offshore wind, supporting the development of carbon capture and hydrogen markets, alongside facilitating the development of other sectors involving the seabed. The demand for marine space is growing at an unprecedented rate.

We work collaboratively with others to accelerate the responsible development of the seabed, while helping the country optimise the economic, social and environmental potential of the marine environment.



The British Waters living together category is sponsored by The Crown Estate

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



WINNER

'BOTTLED BLENNY'

Kirsty Andrews, United Kingdom

Butterfly blennies naturally choose abandoned whelk shells as their home but it seems they can get creative. On the seabed of the river Fal, amongst beautiful pink maerl, many have chosen to use discarded glass bottles as a shelter. Waste not want not.

Fal River, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, 60mm, iso 200, f11, 1/250, Retra Pros x 2

Judge's comments: Characterful and cute this rare blenny is perfectly framed in its new home inside a glass bottle, with amazing eye contact that just grabs our attention. *Alex Mustard*



THE CROWN
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BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'PIER LEG LIFE'

Kirsty Andrews, United Kingdom

Piers seem a real attraction for marine wildlife, providing shelter and an artificial reef. This one was no different, covered in plumose anemones with a stand-out sea urchin. I liked the drama of the pier legs in this frame and the contrast between the man made structure and the soft animal life covering it.

Coll pier, Scotland, United Kingdom

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 640, f11, 1/30, Retra Pros x 2

Judge's comments: A perfectly shot, well chosen and bang on message image which this Category often struggles to attract so, if you need a hint for next year, look no further. A powerful well lit composition highlighting the power and ingenuity of man and the greater power of nature to colonise and adorn it naturally and beautifully.

Peter Rowlands



**THE CROWN
ESTATE**

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'BRITISH BEAUTIES'

Lewis Jefferies, United Kingdom

This image was captured during a photo commission for PADI to help promote UK and cold-water diving at Porthkerris Divers, Cornwall. Regarded as one of the UK's best shore dives, Drawna rock is a small pinnacle that drops to around 20 meters at high tide. Bursting with life, it provided an excellent location for a shoot celebrating UK diving!

Poor visibility - quite typical for UK diving - meant getting close to the subjects was key to creating vibrant images. I found a small triangular area of the reef with starfish on which I thought would look lovely in the foreground, and then directed the divers either side for some symmetry. I shot a few frames, then the large Ballan Wrasse swam into the left of the image, causing Greg - the diver on the right - to make a great surprised expression, completing the scene.

Drawna Rock, Porthkerris, Cornwall, UK, Great Britain

Sony , A7iii, Nauticam A7Riii , Sony 16-35 F4, iso 500, f/7.1, 1/250, 2x Inon Z-240

Judge's comments: We loved the genuine reaction of the diver in this shot. It is a small gesture, but it transforms the image into a winner, while showing off the simple pleasures of exploring your local underwater world. *Alex Mustard*



**THE CROWN
ESTATE**

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'CURIOUS CUTTLEFISH'

Saeed Rashid, United Kingdom

In spring and early summer, cuttlefish migrate to the warmer shallow waters around the British Isles to breed, and they often frequent visitors to my local dive site, Swanage Pier. Although they now appear in smaller numbers than they ever have done due to over-fishing pressure. This was sadly the only individual I saw that year. They are incredibly intelligent, and will often approach divers to check them out and even follow them around underwater. This individual stayed next to me for about half an hour, and seem very intrigued by both me and my camera.

Swanage Pier, Dorset, England, United Kingdom

Canon, 7D mk2, Nauticam, Canon 60mm, iso 200, f10, 1/100, Inon z330

Judge's comments: A striking portrait of one of most charismatic marine species set against the graphic lines of a pier, which both creates depth in the composition and invites us to consider how marine species can benefit from man-made structures on the seabed. *Alex Mustard*



THE CROWN
ESTATE

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'FRIEND OR FOE'

Sandra Stalker, United Kingdom

I took this shot on my second ever outing of our Nauticam EMWL lens, this was with the 160 optic. It wasn't really the best viz for it at about 3m max and a dark grey day and I had spent the dive looking for creatures to test it out on. Then we came across this lobster just wandering across the seabed under the pier, it was very unusual behaviour as they are normally hidden during the day but it seemed totally at ease by our presence and made the perfect model. I wanted a diver in the background so got my husband Ryan to model for me with his torch on as I liked the way it provided a focus for the diver, highlighting the interaction between human and marine life.

Swanage pier, England

Sony , A7RIV, Nauticam NA A7RIV, Sony FE 90mm, EMWL 160 optic, iso 500, f/14, 1/100, Backscatter miniflash x2 'Friend or foe'

Judge's comments: The camera angle and lens create a really dramatic angle in this frame. If the image, and particularly the lobster, were a little brighter this would have been challenging for the win. A fantastic composition. *Alex Mustard*



THE CROWN
ESTATE

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'FLOATING IN A STORM'

Jay Kural, United Kingdom

It is a humbling experience swimming alongside these giant jellyfish, I'm always amazed by the speed and force of their movement, especially when they swim straight into your head!

I'd been snorkelling for a couple of hours when the weather began to change just after sunset with stormy weather incoming. Photography was tricky as I was starting to feel the cold and the sea was a little choppy, but I liked the contrast between the cloudy skies and the illumination on the jellyfish. After countless failed attempts I eventually managed to capture a split-shot composition that I was happy with.

Portencross, Scotland

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon AF-S Fisheye NIKKOR 8-15mm f/3.5-4.5E ED, iso 1000, F25, 1/125, Sea & Sea YS-D2J + YS-110a

Judge's comments: Barrel jellyfish are impressive creatures and not that commonly encountered. We really liked how the photographer expertly brought the jetty into the shot with a split, despite challenging conditions. *Alex Mustard*



THE CROWN
ESTATE

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'HOME SWEET HOME'

Dan Bolt, United Kingdom

Sadly its hard to complete a dive now without seeing some evidence of man's impact on the marine environment. Happily not all of the detritus left over the years is harmful. Indeed some can become very useful to local creatures; such as this long-clawed squat lobster using an old pot for shelter.

Loch Fyne, UK

Canon, EOS R7, Nauticam, RF-S 18-45mm, iso 400, f/5, 1/100, 2x Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judge's comments: This simple and effective approach with an added background bonus make this a good working 'on message' shot.

Peter Rowlands



THE CROWN
ESTATE

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'PLYMOUTH REEF'

Dan Bolt, United Kingdom

This image is stitched from 10 individual photographs using Microsoft Image Composite Editor. In the UK we seldom see water so clear as to be able to do some of our reef systems justice, but by getting closer and using stitching software it becomes possible to see a wider view of the reef and allows one to get better lighting by being closer.

Hillsea Point, UK

Canon, EOS R7, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17mm
Fisheye, iso 800, f/8, 1/60, 2x Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judge's comments: An expansive scene invites the viewer to enjoy the underwater world of the UK. Intelligent choice of technique which cuts through the visibility, creating a stunning panorama. *Alex Mustard*



THE CROWN
 ESTATE

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'FISHY SHIP'

Rick Ayrton, United Kingdom

The 3 masted sailing ship Aracan collided with SS American 16 miles SW of Portland Bill, she sank in 40 minutes on 9th March 1874, thankfully there were no casualties. She lies in just over 50m of water and was carrying a mixed general cargo en-route to Hong Kong. I was diving this wreck in midsummer in good conditions, this image is opportunistic, capturing a group of divers as they come over the mound of cargo with a multitude of fish in the foreground. The foreground lighting is provided by my videolights which would have been on a low power setting, interestingly the iso is very high - 20000, despite this I do not believe there is much digital noise in the image and it shows what modern cameras are capable of.

Lyme Bay, Dorset, United Kingdom

Nikon, Z9, Nauticam NAZ9, Nikon 8-15 @ 15mm, iso 20000, f6.3, 1/60, 2 x Weefine Smartfocus 10000 video lights

Judge's comments: Wreckage, fish, divers and wonderful visibility. The image shows how any structure on the seabed is a mecca for marine life, shown off here in a very attractive image.
Alex Mustard



**THE CROWN
ESTATE**

BRITISH WATERS LIVING TOGETHER

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'PLUMOSE PIER'

Billy Arthur, United Kingdom

This pier is a great example of how man made structures can create a sheltered habitat for many different marine species. Situated in a high energy site there is clearly plenty food and nutrients brought in on the tides for these plumose anemones to flourish. Watching the large shoal of juvenile fish swim around the pier legs was mesmerising, they are presumably using the structure as a nursery site. The bright conditions helped me balance the lighting in the scene. It was a challenge keeping the bubbles from my regs out of shot, as I was shooting almost directly towards the surface.

Toft, Scotland

Sony , A7Riii, Nauticam, Sony FE 28-60mm f4-5.6, iso 200, f9, 1/200, 2 x Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judge's comments: The leg of a pier is entirely covered in delicate cream coloured plumose anemones. I love this image as it shows how nature makes use of every surface underwater.

Alex Mustard



THE CROWN
ESTATE

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Category History

2024 Jon Bunker (UK)
2023 Tony Reed (UK)
2022 Martin Stevens (UK)
2021 Ian Wade (UK)
2020 Colin Garrett (UK)
2019 Martin Edser (UK)
2018 Vicky Paynter (UK)
2017 Simon Yates (UK)
2016 Paul Colley (UK)
2015 Trevor Rees (UK)

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



WINNER

'CATSHARK IN BOOTLACE'

Jon Bunker, United Kingdom

The bootlace weed can sometimes completely blanket the pebbles overlooking the reef at Chesil Cove in the summer. Scores of catshark, cuttles, young conger and other night time predators patrol this seasonal "jungle" slope, happy to snack on whatever comes their way. This sleepy catshark was, as you can see, unsure what to make of me, poking its head tentatively through the weed to establish if I was either threat or food. Whilst it was considering this, I managed to play around with my strobes a little in an attempt to diffuse some of the light through the tresses of early summer algae. My subject let me to take three shots before swimming off into the night.

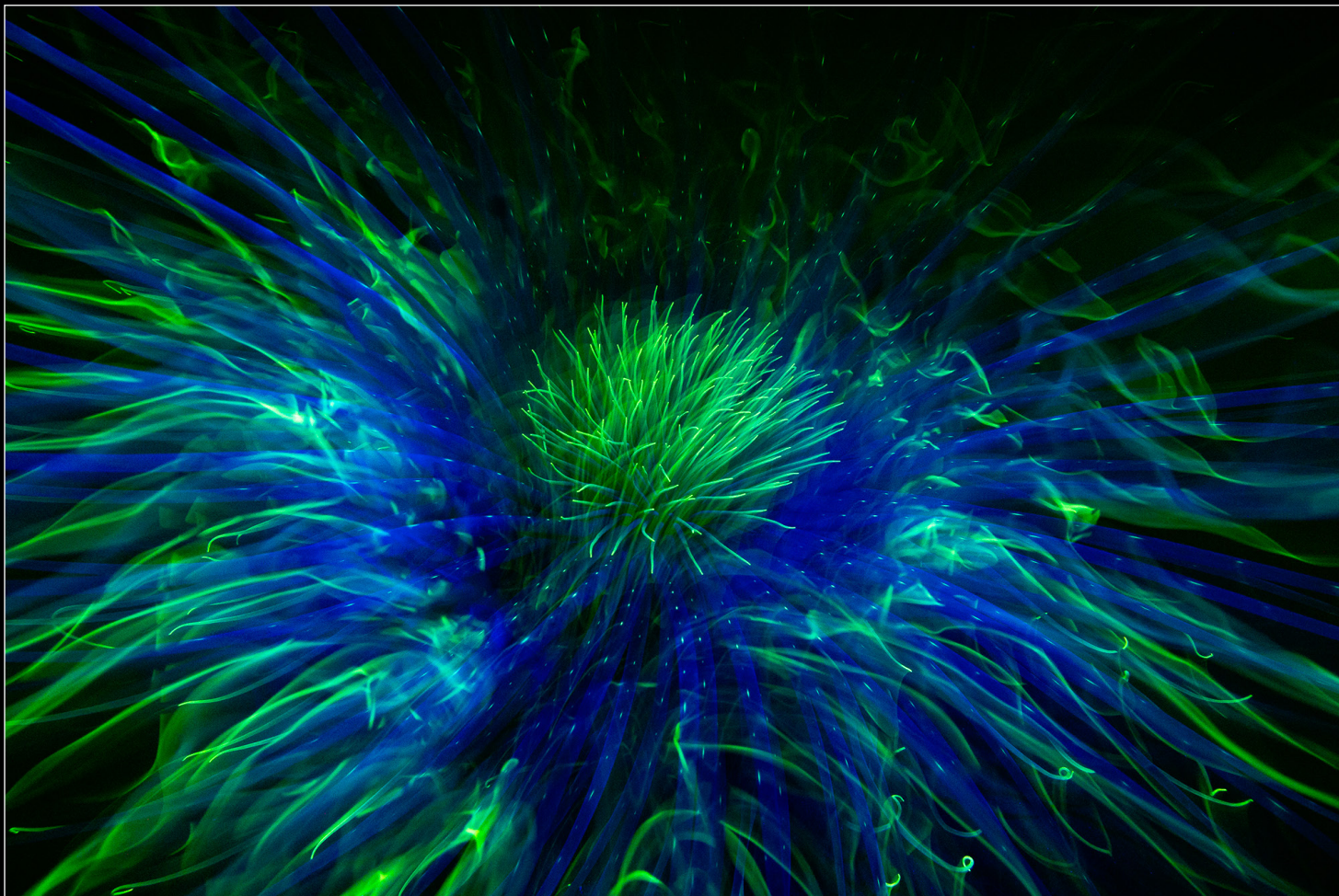
Chesil Cove, Dorset, United Kingdom

Sony, Rx100 M5A, Nauticam NA-RX100v, 19mm equivalent with Inon UWL-H100 dome, iso 100, f11, 1/60, Inon s-2000 (pair)

Judge's comments: A delightfully observed and well lit image of an iconic British subject more often photographed full bodied in the open but this has a much stronger photographic appeal and I would have re captioned this 'Food or foe'. The back story confirms it soon decided Foe. *Peter Rowlands*

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'FLUORESCENT FIRE'

James Lynott, United Kingdom

I have experimented a little with shutter drag/ motion blur photography in the past and have seen many incredible examples of this style from other underwater photographers. I had never seen this technique combined with underwater fluorescence, so this was something I was keen to start trying in 2023. I experimented with a range of subjects and soon discovered I really liked how fireworks anemones looked using this method, which was not really a surprise as they are my favourite fluoro subject! This shot was captured during a pre-sunrise dive in Loch Fyne back in October 2023, I used 2 Nightsea excitation filters on my strobes, together with FireDiveGear/Riff TL Azur blue LED lights, and a FireDiveGear barrier filter.

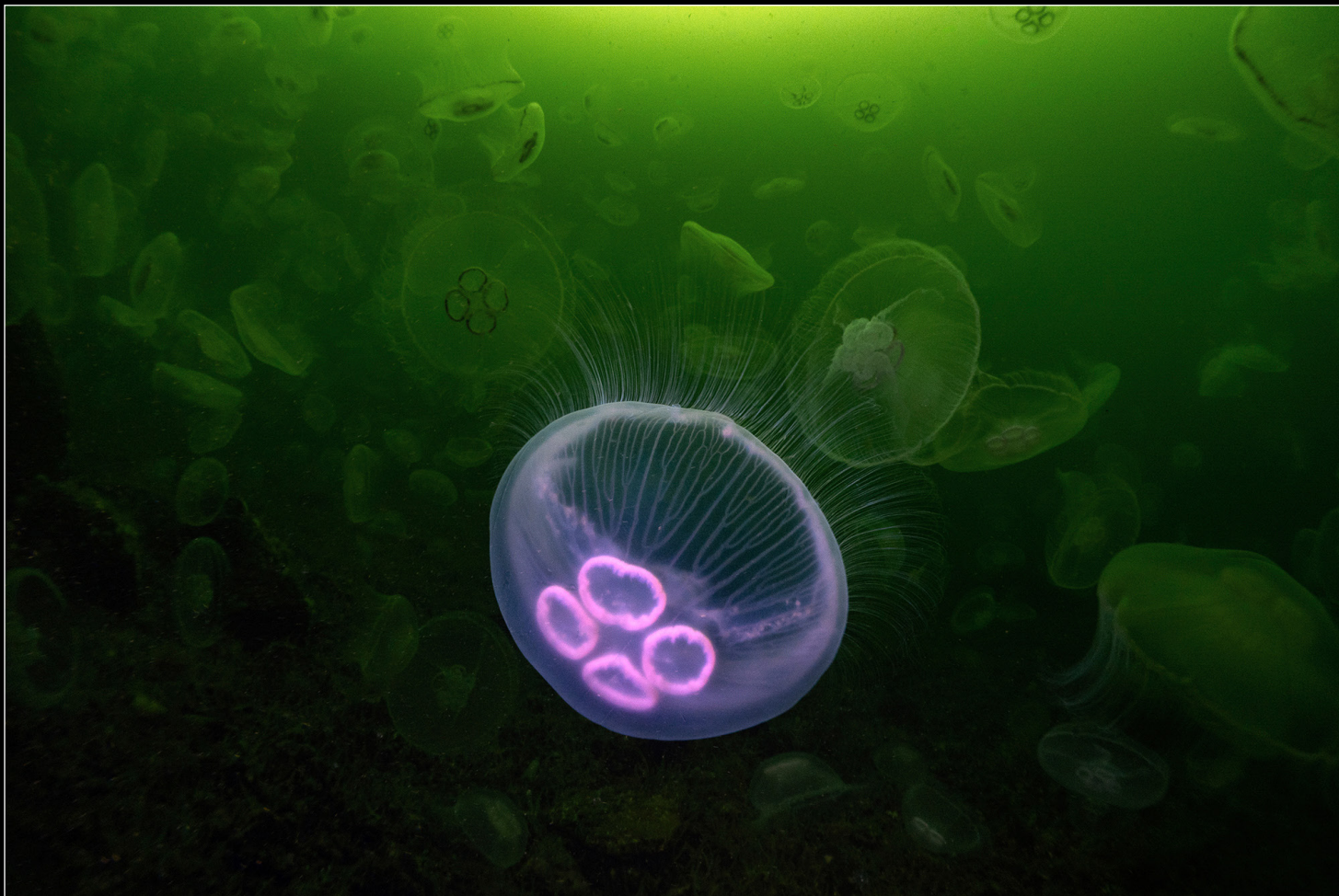
Inveraray, Loch Fyne, Scotland

Canon, G7X MarkIII, Fantasea FG7XIIIIS, n/a, iso 125, f9, 0.8sec, 2 x S&S YS01, Nightsea filters, FDG TL Azur lights

Judge's comments: This image is as visually beautiful as it is technically impressive. Not content just to capture the fluorescence of the anemone with flash, James added fluorescent continuous lights to allow him to capture motion blur in the fluorescent colours. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'SINGLED OUT'

James Lynott, United Kingdom

One of my favourite things about diving is you never know what you are going to find, even at sites you have dived multiple times. This image was captured at a site in Loch Leven which I have visited many times yet keep going back to, for that exact reason. This dive certainly did deliver a wonderful surprise, a huge smack of moon jellyfish at around 20m depth. I decided to try and illuminate a single jellyfish with my handheld light while still showing the rest under ambient light in the background and was really pleased with how it turned out.

Loch Leven, Scotland

Canon, G7X MarkIII, Fantasea FG7XIIIIS, Weefine WFL01, iso 200, f6.3, 1/25, Light&Motion Sola Video 2000SF

Judge's comments: The spot lighted moon jelly looks amazing in this shot, its rich pink colours contrast perfectly with the monotone green that colours the rest of the group. Excellent use of light and colour. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'ALL THE STARS IN MOTION'

Tony Reed, United Kingdom

This is an Image I have been wanting to create for a couple of years but never really had the right conditions at the right time. I spent a little time in the shallows around Thurlestone Rock on a clear night while the sun had gone down. That along with an hour long live composite of the stars allowed me to get the desired outcome.

Thurlestone, England

Olympus, TG4, PT-056, Weefine WFL-02, iso 200, F/2.3, 1/200, Light and motion gobe 850 wide

Judge's comments: A fantastically creative image that is drop-dead stunning. If the sea weeds were in focus too, the sky is the limit for how far this shot could have gone. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SAW POINT BLUE'

Jon Bunker, United Kingdom

Swimming with our summer visitors is a privilege that is always so hard to put into words. This individual was pictured on a sunny, but lumpy day out from Penzance in Cornwall. I tried to hold off the shutter until she came as close to the dome as possible, whilst still looking to get the sweep of the tail in to suggest something of the lazy grace they possess. I'm always frustrated by my inability to catch something of the true colour of these stunning creatures: metallic blue, indigo and even gold. It is that same metallic sheen that makes them so worthy of their scientific name -*Prionace glauca*.

Channel off Penzance, Cornwall, United Kingdom

Sony, Rx100 M5A, Nauticam NA-RX100v, 12mm equivalent with Inon UWL-H100 dome, iso 125, f4, 1/250, Natural light

Judge's comments: A perfect pose and beautiful colours attracted the judges to this shot of the UK's most impressive marine species, the blue shark. The framing is really dynamic with the shark powering through the picture. *Alex Mustard*



BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'SAFE IN THE TENTACLES'

James Lynott, United Kingdom

This large lion's mane jelly was photographed during one of my most memorable dives of 2023, a fantastic summer dive in July with buddy Mark Kirkland in Loch Leven. Visibility was fantastic and the tides were perfect for exploring the large soft coral covered reef found at this site. This jellyfish drifted slowly past at about 15m depth so I positioned myself to get the sun in behind, while avoiding the long stinging tentacles. I used 2 strobes turned down to half power with dome diffusers to light up the jellyfish and avoid too much backscatter. I was lucky to also capture the juvenile fish before they hid away in amongst the tentacles.

Loch Leven, Scotland

Canon, G7X MarkIII, Fantasea FG7XIIIIS, Weefine WFL01, iso 125, f8, 1/60, 2 Sea&Sea YS01-Solis w/ dome diffusers

Judge's comments: A beautifully lit scene and an impressive and natural looking jellyfish. A slightly lower viewpoint would have better positioned the medusa in front of the sun. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'GLOWING PRAWN'

James Lynott, United Kingdom

Over recent years I have captured images of many different marine species displaying underwater fluorescence under blue/UV lights, but I am still being surprised by the different species that have this ability. I have seen fluorescence in other crustaceans before, but I had never really tried this technique with common prawns before. I think part of the reason is they are usually very skittish and don't like posing for photos. That was true on this night dive in Loch Long back in October 2023, there were plenty of large prawns around, but they were not very cooperative so it was quite tricky to capture images of them, especially using the CMC1 wet lens. I was really pleased how this one turned out with the prawn showing particularly strong fluorescence.

Loch Long, Scotland

Canon, G7X MarkIII, Fantasea FG7XIIIIS, Nauticam CMC1, iso 500, f4.5, 1/100, S&S YS01, Nightsea filters, Nightsea Sola lights

Judge's comments: What stunning colours and details in this picture, we've never seen a fluorescent prawn before. *Alex Mustard*

BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'ANGRY STRAWBERRY'

Jon Bunker, United Kingdom

I'm fortunate enough to live ten minutes away from Hive Beach, on the west Dorset coastline. Little cuttles (Sepiella atlantica) or "the angry strawberries" as I like to call them, are frequently found darting out of the sand in summer months. I find everything about them fantastically characterful: from the bravado of their sometimes quite violent territorial disputes, to the wind-screen wiper-like flick of the arms as they bury themselves in soft sand. I had obviously upset this tiny kraken, as it leapt out of the reef at me in whirl of arms! I managed to get a shot off before it disappeared in a correspondingly small puff of ink.

Hive Beach, Dorset, United Kingdom

Sony, Rx100 M5A, Nauticam NA-RX100v, 26mm equivalent, iso 100, f8, 1/80, Inon s-2000 (pair), small Archon focus light

Judge's comments: The composition for these engagingly colourful subjects is very important - close enough for exquisite detail but back enough to give it space. Very well lit with an inky black background it provides a powerful contrast of colours and a very well timed pose. *Peter Rowlands*



BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'PERFECT PROTANTHEA'

James Lynott, United Kingdom

Every time I dive in the sea lochs on the west coast of Scotland, I find myself collecting multiple images of these little anemones. They are so photogenic, whether they are covering a wall/boulder, or isolated against a black or green background, I don't think I will ever tire of photographing them. This image was taken during a night dive at a regular site in Loch Long at the end of September 2023, there was plenty of choice of anemones on the boulder reef but I really liked how this one was positioned, which was perfect to be illuminated from above with a single snooted strobe.

Loch Long, Scotland

Canon, G7X MarkIII, Fantasea FG7XIIIIS, n/a, iso 125, f11, 1/400, Snooted Sea&Sea YS01-Solis

Judge's comments: A particular favourite of mine, this well lit, beautifully delicate subject glows against the coal black background. A shining example of the capability of a compact camera in the right hands. *Peter Rowlands*



BRITISH WATERS COMPACT

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'SHEIGRA GULLEY'

Cathy Hollingdale, United Kingdom

Located in the far NW of Scotland, Kinlochbervie offers clear Atlantic water, rich marine life and dramatic scenery both above and below the water. We discovered this particular site around 4 years ago, I've since dived it around 40 times. On this dive I was with one of my regular buddies so we headed off to explore the site a little further. We'd started at the main surge gulley, located the entrance to this one and headed along, it's around 100m long and is quite stunning with some very interesting topography. It's around 8/10m deep at this point as it narrows and frames by buddy quite well with the beautiful red sea squirts, elephant and white lattice sponges.

Sheigra, Kinlochbervie, Scotland

Olympus, TG6, Olympus, I-Das UWL-04 wet lens, iso 100, f/2.7, 1/40, 1 x Inon z330

Judge's comments: In the early days of the British Society of Underwater Photographers, one of the stated goals of the society was to photograph the full length of a diver in British conditions. This image would have blown their minds. A stunning shot and amazing conditions too. *Alex Mustard*



THE 'SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION' MARINE CONSERVATION

Category History

2024 Nuno Sá (Portugal)
2023 Alvaro Herrero Lopez-Beltran (Spain)
2022 Thien Nguyen Ngoc (Vietnam)
2021 Karim Iliya (USA)
2020 Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)
2019 Eduardo Acevedo (Spain)

Images have a profound capacity to affect how people view the world, and at the Save Our Seas Foundation we are all about encouraging positive change in how people view and interact with the marine environment. We have been dedicated to protecting life in our oceans, especially sharks, for 20 years, with around 480 marine conservation projects supported in over 85 countries. As such we are delighted to partner with the Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year award, which is uniquely placed to highlight issues our oceans are facing and inspire change.

Dr James Lea, CEO of the Save Our Seas Foundation (SOSF)



The Marine Conservation category is sponsored by the Save Our Seas Foundation

THE 'SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION'

Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



CATEGORY WINNER

'SAVING GOLIATH'
Nuno Sá Portugal

The golden beaches of Costa da Caparica, just across the river from Lisbon were packed with sun seekers on this sunny day. And then something unusual caught their attention on the horizon. A massive sperm whale seemed to be struggling to swim as it slowly moved towards the coast. Soon its giant wounded body was passing by surfers and swimmers and reaching the shallow waters of the beach. But suddenly dozens of sun seekers start running towards the whale. Together they push and chant trying to help the giant back into the sea, as it slowly slaps its tail back and forth, and breathes heavily. Several hours later the whale takes its last breath, its body crushed by gravity as it lays on the sand. An estimated 20,000 whales are killed every year, and many more injured, after being struck by ships-and few people even realise that it happens.

Costa da Caparica - Fonte da Telha, Portugal

DJI , Phantom 4 PRO, None, 24mm, iso 400, f/11, 1/100, None

Judge's comments: This isn't supposed to be an easy Category to view but this has a pleasing element visually which created a feeling of confidence until I read the caption and found that all that hope and all that effort, from both sides, came to nought. It's sad, so sad but it works on several levels. *Peter Rowlands*

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



RUNNER UP

'HELPING HANDS FOR CORNWALL'S LOBSTERS'

Lewis Jefferies , United Kingdom

A technician from The National Lobster Hatchery (NLH) releases juvenile lobsters into a rockpool at St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall. The NLH in Padstow receives egg-bearing female lobsters from local fishermen, and then care for them in captivity until they release their eggs. The hatchlings are reared through their smallest, vulnerable stages before being released into the wild. A process that increased their chances of survival by up to 1,000 times! Stock enhancement initiatives like this complement fisheries management measures to help conserve and sustain exploited, commercially valuable species.

This image was the culmination of several years of voluntary work with The NLH shooting their story. I used a split shot technique to include many elements, using St. Michael's Mount to establish the location above the water line along with hands holding the lobster container, whilst showing the marine habitat below with the tiny lobsters swimming off into the rockpool.

St. Michaels Mount, Marazion, Cornwall, UK, UK

Sony, A7iii, Nauticam A7Riii , Sigma 15mm EX DG fish eye, iso 320, f/16, 1/200, 1x Inon z-240 strobe

Judge's comments: A polished photograph that tells a detailed story in an eye catching photograph. It was great to see more photographers turning their talents and their lenses towards positive conservation stories in this year's contest.

Alex Mustard

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2024



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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



THIRD

'VERY BAD LUCK'

Javier Murcia, Spain

Every year thousands of marine seabirds are caught in fishing gear from all the seas and oceans of the planet, from longlines to nets. In the coastal lagoon of the Mar Menor it occurs very often with several species of diving birds. These seabirds are divers and look for fish to feed on. During their dives they become trapped in nets that they cannot see and die because they cannot breathe: a slow and agonizing death. On many occasions these fishing gears are illegal (such as in this image) and on this occasion an adult specimen of the great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) died. It is a very sad situation.

Coastal lagoon of the Mar Menor, España

Nikon, Z7II, Marelux MX-Z7II, Nikon 8-15 mm, iso 250, f/8, 1/320, Inon Z330

Judge's comments: A powerful image, where the details truly elevate the composition. The contrast of orange on green, the closed eye of the cormorant, and of course, the fish in its mouth that surely lured it towards the net in the first place. Great photography, sad scenes. *Alex Mustard*

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'GANVIÉ'

Pavlos Evangelidis, Benin

This aerial shot shows just part of Ganvié, a floating village in Benin originally built in the 17th century by communities looking to hide from slave traders. Now counting about 30,000 inhabitants, it is probably the largest such village in the whole of Africa. The houses are built on wooden stilts and any sign of land is brought in by the individuals. Fishing here is the main economic activity for the community, all for subsistence and small-scale trade at the nearby markets. The environment is a dynamic, fragile balance between saltwater and freshwater and efforts are ongoing to conserve it and help mitigate the human impact.

Ganvié, Benin

DJI, Mavic Air 2, None, DJI 24mm f/2.8, iso 460, f/2.8, 1/13, Sunlight

Judge's comments: The key words here are subsistence and small-scale trade. 30,000 people scraping by yet having a huge impact on the local environment by both extracting the contents and then presumably depositing on them again. I can only hope the efforts to conserve yet mitigate succeed. *Peter Rowlands*

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'ARTIFICIAL HABITAT'

João Rodrigues, Portugal

Marine biologist Jorge Palma, from Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR), Algarve, tests artificial seagrass made from nylon and sisal. The aim of this project is halting the population decline of Ria Formosa seahorses, in 2021, 60 individuals bred in captivity were released in a sanctuary composed of artificial structures, which recreate their natural habitat. Their natural habitat that has been disappearing at an alarming rate due to human actions such as overfishing, illegal global trade, climate change and pollution. This photo was captured during an assignment for BBC Wildlife Magazine.

Centre of Marine Sciences (CCMAR), Algarve, Portugal, Portugal

Canon, 5D MKIV, Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8L III USM, iso 320, f/9.0, 1/200, Canon Speedlite 430EX II

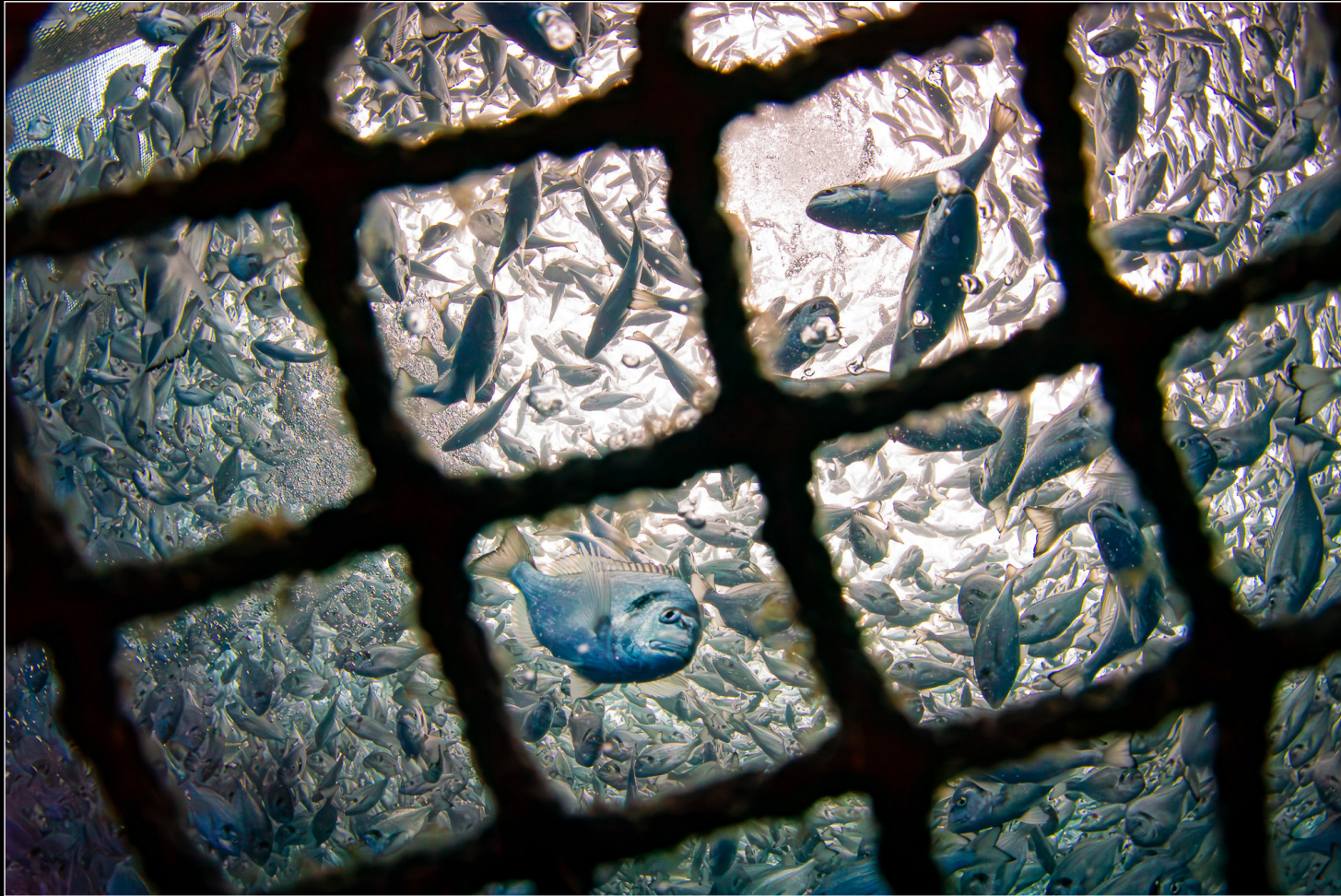
Judge's comments: A classy image, that is both visually intriguing and powerful. We loved the light and all the graphic lines in this picture that form the radiating composition. And are pleased to see more photographers keen to document the people who are making a positive difference to the oceans.
Alex Mustard

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2024

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'LESSER EVIL?'

Michal Bazala, Poland

As this aquaculture pen emerged from the misty Atlantic waters, I was astonished by the sight of giant nets holding hundreds of tons of fish. Even larger nets are employed by trawlers, harvesting the biodiversity of our oceans. With most waters already overfished and facing a global decline in biodiversity, sea farming appears to be a reasonable solution. In fact, half of our seafood now originates from aquaculture. Is it better to farm fish than to catch them? It depends on how aquaculture is organized. It may be detrimental to local waters, particularly coastal ones, while preserving other marine regions from being stripped of their biodiversity. It undoubtedly keeps fish in cramped conditions, but it does spare countless bycatch victims and protects the seabed from degradation.

Atlantic Ocean

Nikon, D7200, Nauticam NA D7200, Tokina DX AF Fish-Eye 10-17 mm f/3.5-4.5, iso 16000, f/13, 1/320, Inon Z330

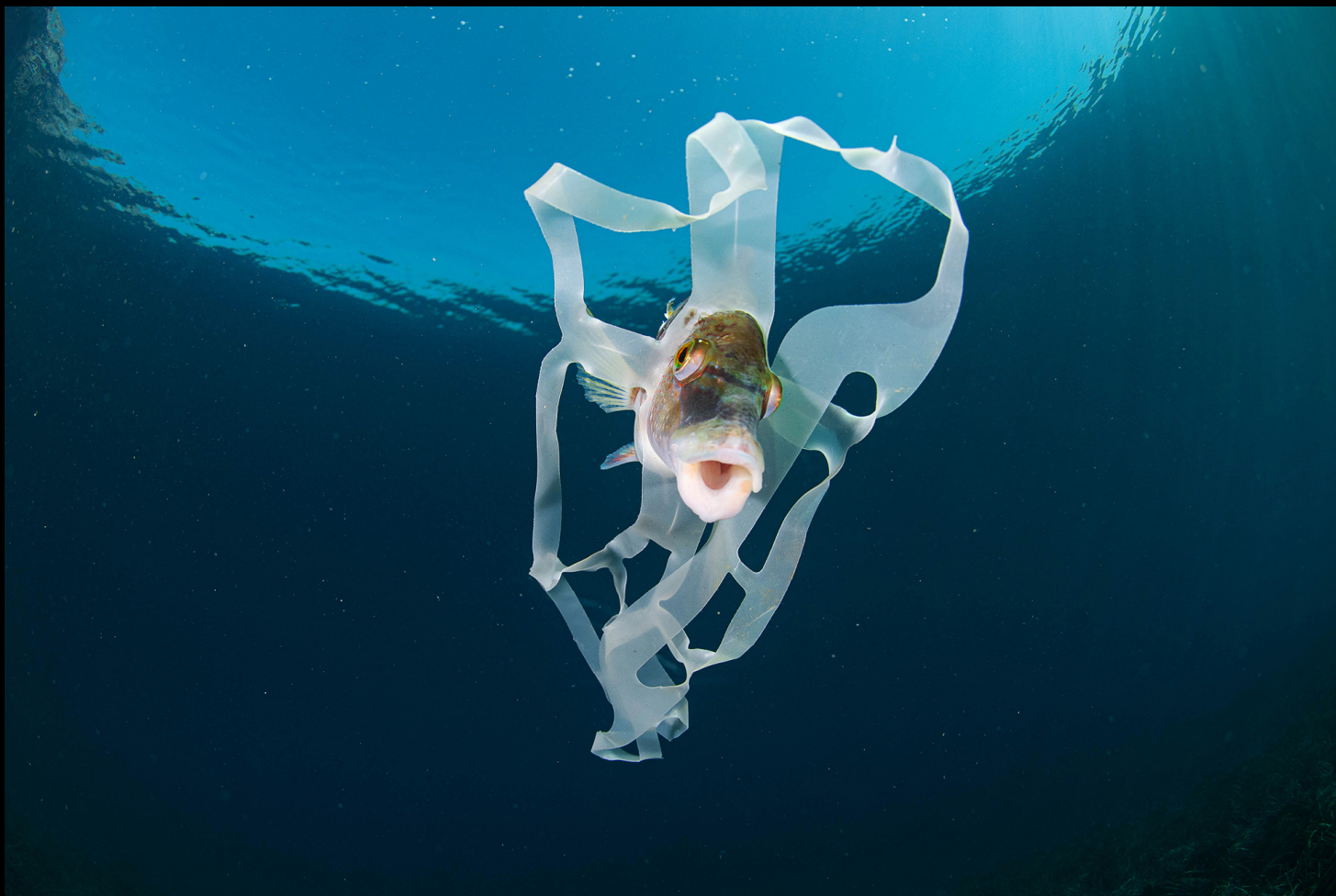
Judge's comments: A magnificent composition that is both storytelling and graphically intriguing. The shot is wonderfully times to catch the large bream through one of the holes that really anchors the entire composition. A real favourite in a very strong category. *Alex Mustard*

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'THE RINGS OF DEATH'

Javier Murcia, Spain

Plastics are a serious problem for human health and for the biodiversity of our seas and oceans. A simple piece of plastic to hold soda or beer cans can be a death trap for many marine species. From turtles and seabirds to cetaceans and fish. In this case, a large fish (*Symphodus tinca*) has been a victim of these plastics and the poor fish was very exhausted, but was swimming very slowly. For once, though, the ending is a happy one, because I was able to free him from the plastic and although he was tired he swam off towards the meadows.

La Azohía (Cartagena), España

Nikon, Z7II, Marelux MX-Z7II, Nikon 8-15 mm, iso 80, f/8, 1/250, Inon Z330

Judge's comments: This is a powerful image and an original one too about the problems of plastic pollution in the ocean. The problem plastic here is very recognisable, from a six pack of beer cans, and the emotion is charged by the desperate face of the wrasse. The spacious composition will also be well suited for this image being adopted in campaigns. *Alex Mustard*

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024

COMMENDED

'CAUGHT BY'

Klaudyna Brzostowska, Poland

This is the story of a bycatch. The trawler comes back to Port d'Andratx in the island of Mallorca after a day at sea. Bottom trawling is a fishing practice that captures the target species like shrimps, squids, and crabs by towing a net along the ocean floor. The net scoops the sea floor and takes everything on its way. Including this critically endangered school shark (*Galeorhinus galeus*). It was saddening to witness this destruction. A crowd gathered around the boat, people bargaining for fresh seafood while various shark species are being hosed down back into the sea, as there is little value in shark meat on the local market. As a European, little did I know that such practices occur legally in our backyard. Photographically I wanted to highlight the intimacy and minimalism in the frame to underline the grand issue of a bycatch.

Port d'Andratx, Spain

Sony, A7SIII, NA-A7SIII, FE 55 mm F1.8 ZA, iso 200, f/2.2, 1/1000, daylight

Judge's comments: A really powerful picture speaking the wastefulness of discarded bycatch. An eye-catching composition that is ready made for a campaign poster, backed up with details such as the gasping mouth of the dead shark and the stain down the side of the boat revealing this is anything but a one-off occurrence. *Alex Mustard*



THE 'SAVE OUR SEAS FOUNDATION'

Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'WOUNDED GIANT MANTA RAY'

Sirachai Shin Arunrugstichai, Thailand

After surfacing from a dive, I was informed that somebody found a wounded manta with a pile of nets on its body, so I swapped my tank and jumped down again to look for this ray. Shortly, the ray approached my team, where my friends helped remove most of the nets. It wasn't as difficult as I imagined as the ray circled closely around us. However, we couldn't remove all of the nets as there were some left on the ray's cephalic lobe, cutting deep into the flesh. After a while, the ray swam away, and I guess it would survive but lose the left lobe. I always look for gritty images that portray our impacts on the oceans and often travel to photograph dead things, so I was glad to find this scene, but it left a lump in my throat after I looked at the picture I shot.

Koh Bon Island, Mu Koh Similan National Park,
Phang-nga, Thailand, Thailand

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 16
Fisheye, iso 320, F/14, 1/200, Two Retra Flash Pro X

Judge's comments: A tragic image of inevitability as, despite human intervention to remove most of the nets, the remaining netting will eventually sever the left lobe and reduce its effectiveness in the feeding process. A slow painful process and so avoidable. *Peter Rowlands*

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Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2024



COMMENDED

'RAISING THE NET'

Renee Capozzola, United States

This large discarded fishing net was found laying on the reef at about 30 meters in Kona, Hawaii. Volunteers from Ocean Defenders Alliance, also known as ODA, brought up this net using lift bags, and the net was then raised onto a boat provided by Kona Honu Divers. Earlier that day ODA had also raised and extracted large volumes of fishing line (ultimately filling numerous large buckets for removal) that had been snarled upon the reef. Unfortunately, our oceans suffer from large amounts of debris, which can destroy reefs, entangle marine life, and release harmful chemicals. Many thanks to ODA for helping to clean our oceans and preserve marine ecosystems for future generations.

Kona, Hawaii, United States

Canon, 5D Mark IV, SEACAM, Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8 II, iso 320, f10, 1/160, SEACAM Seaflash 160

Judge's comments: I was on my own about this image for a while but I extolled the photographically tight composition with the genuine unposed concentration together with the positive message and squeezed this great working image into the finalists enclosure. Well worth it.

Peter Rowlands



Underwater Photographer of the Year AWARDS

2024

UPY: Alex Dawson (Sweden)
BUPY: Jenny Stock (UK)
U&C: Lisa Stengel, (USA)
MPBUPY: Sandra Stalker (UK)

2023

UPY: Kat Zhou (USA)
BUPY: Ollie Clarke (Australia)
U&C: Kat Zhou (USA)
MPBUPY: Theo Vickers (UK)

2022

UPY: Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)
BUPY: Matty Smith (UK)
U&C: Quico Abadal (Spain)
MPBUPY: Paul Pettitt (UK)

2021

UPY: Renee Capozzola (USA)
BUPY: Mark Kirkland (UK)
U&C: Alice Bennett (UK)
MPBUPY: Alice Bennett (UK)

2020

UPY: Greg Lecoeur (France)
BUPY: Nick More (UK)
U&C: Anita Kainrath (Austria)
MPBUPY: Nur Tucker (UK)

2019

UPY: Richard Barnden (UK)
BUPY: Richard Barnden (UK)
U&C: Taeyup Kim (Korea)
MPBUPY: Malcolm Nimmo (UK)

2018

UPY: Tobias Friedrich (Germany)
BUPY: Grant Thomas (UK)
U&C: Man BD (Malaysia)
MPBUPY: Tony Stephenson (UK)

2017

UPY: Gabriel Barathieu (France)
BUPY: Nick Blake (UK)
U&C: Horacio Martinez (Argentina)
MPBUPY: Nicholai Georgiou (UK)

2016

UPY: Davide Lopresti (Italy)
BUPY: Dan Bolt (UK)
U&C: Pier Mane (South Africa)
MPBUPY: Marty Engels Dunmore (UK)

2015

UPY: Nuno Sa (Portugal)
BUPY: Matt Doggett (UK)
MPBUPY: Mario Vitalini (UK)

UPY: Underwater photographer of the year
BUPY: British Underwater photographer of the year
U&C: Up and coming
MPBUPY: Most Promising British Underwater photographer of the year