

My Shot

by Shane Wasik

For the last 18 months we've been experimenting with pelagic black water diving.

Essentially this is night diving above incredibly deep water using big lights to attract potential abyssal plankton or larger nocturnal feeding species as subjects! My understanding is that this type of diving and underwater photography started, or perhaps is best known in Hawaii out in the Pacific.

We started our own methods using 25000 lumen British made Orcalight technology, where we hang this light source from the boat in the deep trenches off the Scottish west coast.

The hydrography here is perfect with the plummeting seabed carved out from glacier action and the nearby Atlantic powering a vast food web. This ranges from tiny plankton to pelagic fish and megafauna such as whales and sharks. So we have a potentially wide ranging target list including the possibilities of attracting some interesting stuff out of the inky depths!

Diving whilst tethered to the boat and drifting in the blackness isn't for the faint hearted, we all know that there are very few marine predators here but it doesn't stop your mind racing about what lies out in the darkness. Although we have been hoping for larger creatures, it's been mainly plankton that has been the main target so far. However like everything else, we're always limited by the amount time and opportunity to spend on these projects!

My image was taken on one such scouting evening when conditions were really great, a cool and crisp evening with very little wind which makes

rigging up the tethers much easier. There was a decent amount of tide so we could cover a bit of ground and the water was warming up for the spring plankton bloom.

Focussing in on subjects is much harder than traditional photography diving as you have very little scope for reference such as the bottom, so you are just hanging there trying to keep buoyancy as best as possible. Using a focus light on wide angle beam I could headlight into the distance scanning for subjects then once closer I could move with the camera.

This particular subject which is a juvenile langoustine was probably around a finger nail in size. However it was moving around and along with it's iridescent reflective carapace made it an easier subject to 'spot'. Using fairly standard macro kit and settings, I had to work hard with the subject moving around, the drag of the tether and little visual reference for buoyancy. I was able to shoot for around a minute or so and I managed to capture one that was relatively sharp with a pleasing composition facing the lens.

Although this type of diving is well known in the tropics, we have equally as good opportunities on our own doorstep in the UK/Europe. It just takes



Nikon D7100 Aquatica Housing , 2 x Sea&Sea DS1 Strobes. 60mm Nikkor Lens. f/14, 1/125 ISO400.

some thinking outside the box and some motivation to try different thing!

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"My Shot" can be a particular favourite of yours or one which brings back special memories and deserves to be appreciated by a wider audience.

Images need to be 150dpi, longest length (horizontal or vertical) 20cm saved as medium compression jpeg format. and sent with around 300 words of explanation together with camera details and settings.

E mail them and you could be in the next issue of UWP.

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