

Editorial

Photo trips

Bear with me again.

A long time ago there used to be a 'Splash In' in the UK where we all met up on the southwest coast in Plymouth for a day's diving and then had a competition in the evening to vote for the best image 'On the Day'.

It was a great day when we all got together with friendly banter hiding the competitive spirit but once all the images had been revealed it was a great opportunity to collar those whose images had impressed and talk about how they did it, where they went etc etc.

Most were flattered and more than prepared to divulge details for such were those days; we were all trying to improve. Not trampling over others backs to get to the top but working together yet individually to take images a step further forward.

The Splash In has sadly fallen by the wayside, expanded into a national On the Day competition (www.biupc.org) which has merits of its own but it lacks that gathering in one place of comradeship both photographic and social.

As I've said before underwater photography can be a solitary pursuit so any opportunity to meet and actually dive with other underwater photographers must be a good idea. And that's where I think photo trips come in.

I'm not talking about workshops where a known name imparts his or her knowledge but rather a group of like minded enthusiasts who just want to meet up, dive and take pictures together. Just

watching how someone else sets up their camera gear, conducts themselves underwater, the gear they use and the images they produce can provide a unique learning curve without the intimidation of structured talks, slide clinics and end of week competitions.

Such trips do tend to be organised by uw photo retailers who obviously want them to generate sales but it gives you the opportunity to perhaps try some new gear they have brought along without obligation but with their guiding hand and knowledge available. Either way it's win, win.

For the majority of underwater photographers a photo trip comes out of their annual holiday allowance and must more than likely be justified or bartered against a family trip so it's all the more important that a photo trip should be as enjoyably productive as possible.

I tend to keep in touch with the Uwphoto trade and try to publicise their trips wherever possible but if you know of, or are organising, such a trip, I would be happy to publicise it for you.

Sound advice

The plastic in the ocean campaign is gaining momentum impressively and is actually a credit to us as a Race that we are still capable of combining forces to bring about change for good. The downside is that it has to become dangerously bad for us to get mobilised and it's usually only encouraged by the media who aren't exactly believable or trustworthy in their motives a lot of the time.

Never the less our invisible world is being put under the spotlight which can be no bad thing. Hopefully it will also illuminate unsustainable fishing practices, polluted river run off and probably the least reported - sonar pollution. Just as with plastic, the latter is not a new problem but it suffers even worse from being invisible in an invisible world.

The human race only tends to believe what it can see and sonar pollution can only be heard.

Recent work is showing that fish as well as mammals are affected by sounds but we could have told them that a long time ago.

Rebreather users have always been able to observe and get closer to fish because of their lack of bubbles but we divers are, for once, not the main culprits in terms of scope and magnitude.

In addition to the military sonar which claims to be able to pick up and identify the echo and signature from a ship leaving New York from anywhere in the Atlantic there are the thousands of cargo ships worldwide whose propellers and sonar signature must be creating a cacophony of sound down there. Now I understand that a lot can be done to improve their soundproofing but unfortunately it doesn't have the added benefit of increasing a vessel's speed so I doubt if there will be much urgency there.

So much for the Silent World :-)

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