

Parting Shot 1

Sometimes “lady luck” is on your side when you are taking underwater photographs; this was definitely the case for me, when I was diving at a site called “Trail Blazer” from the Wakatobi Dive Resort on 21st November 2016.

As I approached a ridge, I noticed a very nice pink fan coral, so I attached my Inon wet wide-angle lens and moved in to take the shot.

As I was about to take the photo, 2 divers came over a ridge from the opposite direction and appeared to be looking at the fan coral in the foreground, “excellent” I thought, that will further enhance the photo.

As I moved in for the final composition, I suddenly became aware of the end of the tail of a blue spotted stingray zooming past my left fist and into the picture at high speed from over the ridge also (top left to bottom right) just as I took the photo.

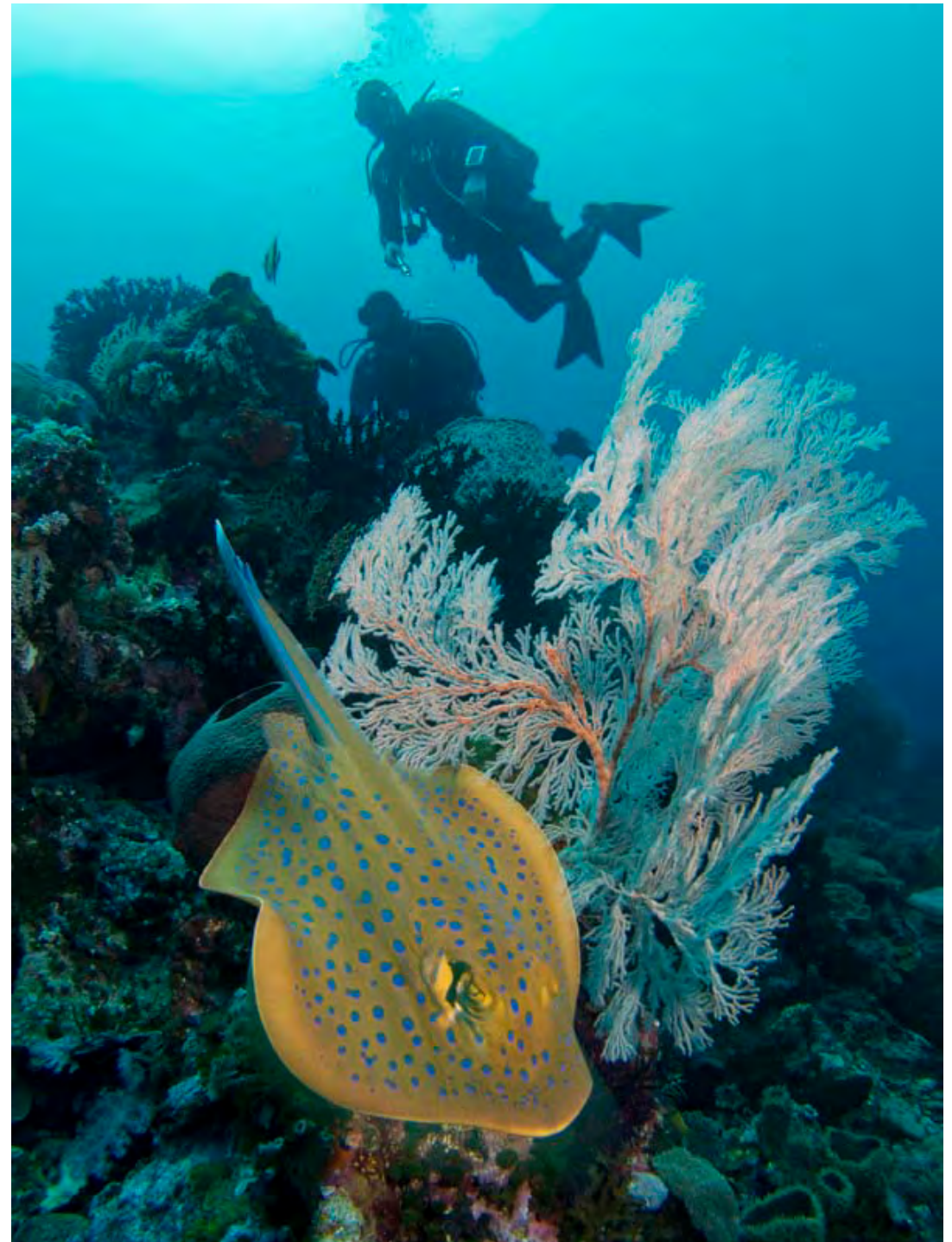
When I reviewed the shot on the back of my camera, I couldn’t believe what I saw; I had captured the Stingray “plumb centre” of the foreground of the photo and perfectly exposed.

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“Photo bombing” Blue Spotted String Ray, Trail Blazer, Lintea Island, Wakatobi, Olympus XZ-1, Nauticam XZ-1 Housing, Inon UWL H100 M67 wet wide-angle lens, Sea & Sea YS-D1, ISO 100, f3.5, 1/60 sec, manual

**Do you have a shot
which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500 words of text
and yours could be the next Parting Shot.**

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Parting Shot 2

Anticipations were high as we listened to our first dive briefing at Critters at Lembbeh Resort. Our dive guide asked us what we wanted to see during our week of diving at this famed muck diving capital. “It’s all good,” I said. “Whatever we see will be treat.”

Generally, I am not a big fan of looking for specific creatures. A dive should not be a scavenger hunt, I have always felt. But deep inside I had my list of critters I had not seen before. “Well, I have never seen a rhinopia,” I mustered the will to say. “So, if we happen to find one that would be great.”

Each dive checked a box for a previously unseen critter. Flamboyant cuttlefish, check. Pigmy sea dragon, check. Emperor shrimp, check. Mating Mandarin fish, check. Rare nudibranchs, check, check, check. But, after almost a week of diving, no rhinopia.

Finally, on the morning of our last day, our dive guide came to me and announced that the dive site we planned to go to was known for rhinopias. “But there is a catch,” he said. “They are deep.” How deep is deep?” I inquired with some trepidation. “About 35 meters.” My buddy and I looked at each other and grimaced. Normally, we like to stay shallow on our last day of diving.

Sensing our reluctance and disappointment, our dive guide immediately devised a plan. He said we would allow another group to go first. He would ask the other guide to let him know if and where they found a rhinopia and if so we would go down just long enough to get pictures.

About halfway through our dive we got the signal. We swam slowly but deliberately down a



Nikon D500 in Ikelite Housing. Nikon 60mm. Ikelite DS51 strobes. 1/160, f/13, ISO 200.

sandy slope to a grassy area at 35 meters. There we found three rhinopias, two orange and one purple. I worked each one of them and then zoomed in on playback to make sure I had a shot before surfacing.

“A brilliant plan beautifully executed,” I told our guide once on the surface. Rhinopia, check!

Andrew Cummings

<https://pontos.smugmug.com/>

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Parting Shot 3

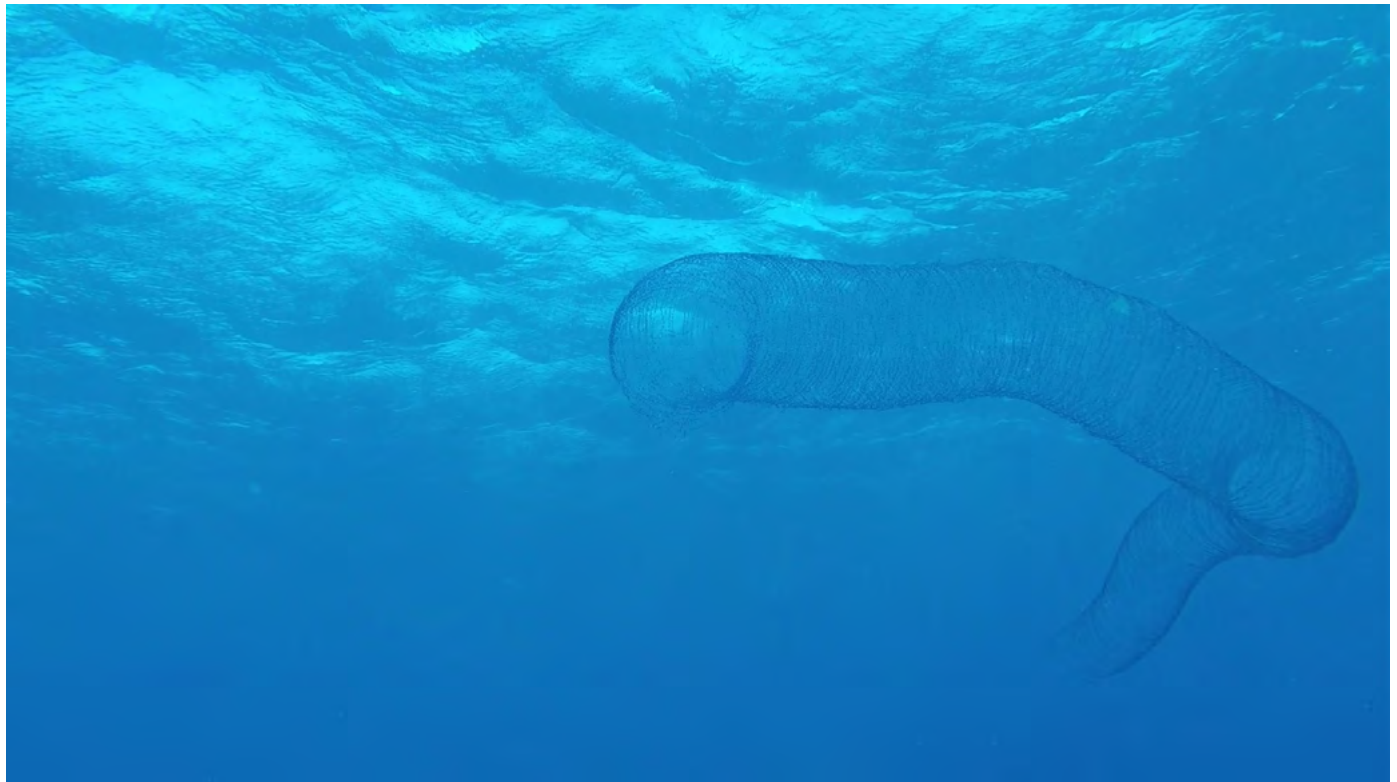
Living in The Kingdom Tonga had some benefits, especially for a diver.

I had arranged for a one-on-one dive with a local DM to Cathedral Cave on the island of 'Eua, opposite the main island of Tongatapu. The underwater entrance is on the north cliff shoreline and it emerges in a light filled cavern with surf above on the east coast. At the bottom is a long twisting lobster infested tunnel that was included as an extra.

The boat motors past the cliff, sometimes in wild seas. A quick backward roll while clutching your camera, thankfully just a GoPro5 on a stick with iTorch PRO6 at 2400 Lumen. While swimming down to the cave entrance at 20m., my DM pointed up to something indistinct. On finning closer I thought that the "Being" from the movie "Abyss" had emerged. I swam around it in about 7m. I knew I had encountered something very unusual, but what. It wasn't until I could get internet access the following day that I found out that it was a "Pyrosome".

Pyrosomes, genus *Pyrosoma*, are free-floating colonial tunicates that usually live in the upper layers of the open ocean in warm seas, although some may be found at greater depths. Pyrosomes are cylindrical or cone-shaped colonies up to 60 ft (18 m) long,[1] made up of hundreds to thousands of individuals, known as zooids. Colonies range in size from less than one centimeter to several metres in length. They are commonly called "sea pickles"

Tonga is next to the second deepest trench on the planet. The tubular being was a bout 5m. long and about 25cm in diameter. After my brief



Frame grab from the GoPro5 at 1080

70 seconds of video, I rejoined my DM for a tour of the lobster tunnel and eventually the light filled Cathedral, reminiscent of Gaudi's "Sagrada Familia". The safety stop was on the Drop Off outside the cave entrance, where large pelagic sometimes gather.

I was marooned house-husband in Nuku'alofa for 26 months and searched for wrecks, finding 2 wooden and 2 steel wrecks. I swam from the boat harbour entrance to past 'Little Italy' in my quest, plus dives off Kanokupolu in Maria Bay.

My bottle collection topped out at 17, one small china plate (Union Steam Ship Co, F Winkle and Co LTD – England) and one oblong china bowl(KT&K).

Duff Reef is a not to be missed dive, if just for the adrenalin surface action. Other not to be missed dives are on the northern islands of Vava'u (for caverns) and Ha'apai (for seamounts).

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