

News, Travel & Events

Henley Spiers wins the HIPA Award



The underwater photographer Henley Spiers, also well-known in Germany, has won the internationally renowned Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum International Photography Award (HIPA). The Brit prevailed over around 500,000 photographers from all over the world. He was awarded \$120,000 in prize money for his painting “Gannet Storm”.

Henley Spiers says of his winning photo: “A gannet swims in an elaborate hail of air bubbles created by diving seabirds. The stately

gannets lead a double life. In the nest, their newborn is carefully raised and a pair’s bond is strengthened as they stretch their sharp beaks skyward while tenderly stroking their white necks together. In flight, they adopt hunting mode, and piercing yellow eyes bordered by blue circles scan the sea for prey.

Their large wingspan and streamlined body make flying seem effortless, gliding along with only the occasional flap of their wings. When spotting a fish, gannets fly into the

wind and spread their wings as brakes to precisely adjust their position in relation to their prey. These incredible birds hit the freezing water faster than an Olympic diver and have evolved air sacs in their heads and chests to survive those repeated heavy impacts. Underwater the sound was thunderous as the streamlined white torpedoes pierced the surface.

I wanted to take a new picture of these stately seabirds and decided to capture their movements with a long exposure. The speed of the gannets resulted in countless misses, but in this image eye contact with the gannet is maintained, even though the scene has been artistically softened.”

The embodiment of Arab creativity photographers Kuwaiti photographer Majid Sultan Al Zaabi won the Photographic Content Creators Award, and the Qatari photographer Ali Seif Al-Din won first place in the “Portrait”, and the Egyptian photographer “Ahmed Mahmoud Abdel Azim Abdel Razek” won third place in “Portrait” as well.

www.hipa.ae

www.henleyspiers.com

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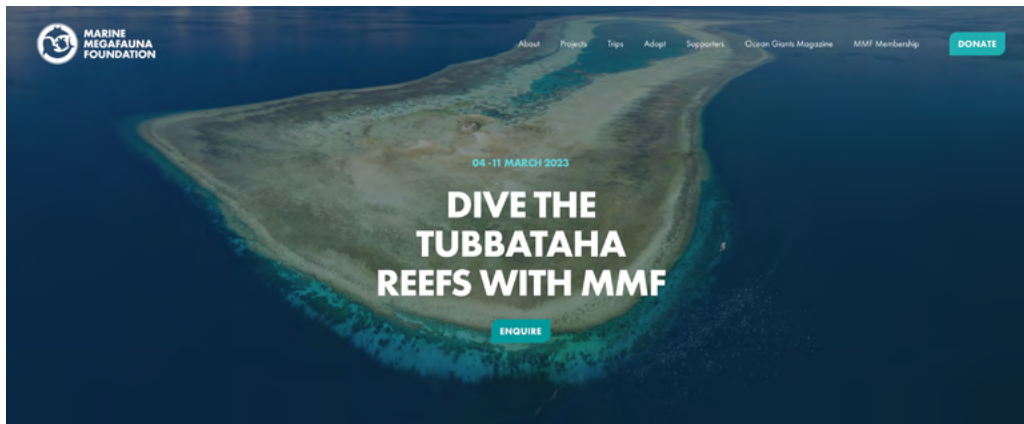
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Issue 128/5

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Dive the Tubbataha Reefs with MMF's Founders and Principal Scientists Dr. Andrea Marshall and Dr. Simon Pierce 4th - 11th March 2023

Dive into one of the world's most remote and vibrant coral reef ecosystems with MMF's Founders and Principal Scientists Dr. Andrea Marshall and Dr. Simon Pierce. This expedition can take a maximum of 14 guests. All prices are in USD per guest and based on double occupancy.

Tubbataha - meaning a long reef exposed at low tide - is what the indigenous Samal people called this area. Critical to the world's marine biodiversity, Tubbataha hosts the majority of the coral species and seeds much of the surrounding Philippines with coral and fish spawn and larvae.

Considered as the Crown Jewel of the Philippines' underwater heritage, this magnificent slice of paradise is maintained in its pristine



state by visitor funding ranger patrols. The Tubbataha UNESCO World Heritage site is 97,000 hectares of remote vibrant coral atolls, abundant schooling fish, seabirds, and megafauna, including whale sharks, manta rays, sea turtles, and dolphins.

The 32.5m P/Y Atlantis Azores is the Philippines premier liveaboard. Dive amenities include a spacious dive deck, three-tier camera setup table, personal storage area, Nitrox, 2 tenders and hot water showers. Topside, Atlantis Azores features seven staterooms with private



bathroom and shower, each with its own climate control. One luxury suite is available with a private bathroom, desk, window and ample storage. Guests can enjoy a wide selection of movies on a flatscreen TV, or relax with a book from the library. There is also a partially shaded sundeck, complete wet bar and hot tub for further relaxation.

Carrying only 16 passengers, a highly attentive crew of 10 is on hand to ensure guest comfort and satisfaction.

Trip Highlights

- Dive Tubbataha Reef on Atlantis - the Premier Philippines Liveaboard, and Trip Advisor Hall of Fame recipient.
- Hosted by the MMF co-founders – 'Queen of Mantas' Dr. Andrea Marshall, and world-renown whale shark biologist, Dr. Simon J Pierce.
- Get to know MMF's marine conservation efforts.
- Expert underwater photography guidance and dedicated camera table.

<https://marinemegafauna.org/trips-all/tubbataha>

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Sir David Attenborough has helped save the Flinders Pier

The heritage-listed wooden structure was facing the prospect of being completely demolished after Parks Victoria, Australia did not commit to fixing it.

But a grassroots campaign quickly kicked off, with nearly 45,000 people throwing their support behind saving the pier.

The government committed \$1.5 million to undertake “critical works” on the pier that was first built in 1864.

“Everyone down here is absolutely over the moon,” Charles Reis, chair of the Save The Flinders Pier campaign.

Sir David Attenborough became involved after it was revealed there was a significant Weedy Sea Dragon population at the pier.

Mr Ries said there was no doubt that helped. “We call it the Attenborough effect,” he said. “In many ways, that certainly influenced public sentiment because it provided us a vehicle to draw attention to the habitat of the Weedy Sea Dragon.

“This is one of the best places in the world to put on a pair of goggles and a snorkel and come down and have a look at the Weedy Sea Dragon



in its natural habitat and the pier provides that accessibility.

“I think the other thing is that is it’s very popular with fishing people, so families come down and fish off the pier, people love to walk along the pier and so many people have told me stories that they learned to jump off the pier.”

<https://createsend.com/t/r-4EA7C7D5D9FC1D712540EF23F30FEDED>

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A life changing experience



Jacques de Vos is an award winning underwater photographer and cameraman whose work has won numerous prestigious international UW photography awards. His photography has been published worldwide in several books and hundreds of publications and as a camera operator he has worked on projects for companies like the BBC, Epic TV and Red Bull and his footage has also been televised throughout the world.

In addition to his media work, Jacques is also the founder and co-owner of Arctic Freediving which offers quests joining their expeditions the opportunity to experience orca and humpback whales underwater in their natural environment and also assisting with research projects centered around these animals.

What makes his work even more unique is that most of it is done while freediving (on a single breath).

This is not unexpected as Jacques is also a Freediving Instructor Trainer with the world renowned Freedive International.

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A new study published in the scientific journal *Endangered Species* reports that more vaquitas remain alive than population projections initially indicated. This is incredibly good news for the crews, volunteers, and supporters of Operation Milagro, the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society campaign that has worked to protect the vaquita since 2015.

The investigation, carried out by Dr. Lorenzo Rojas-Bracho and colleagues, finds that the remaining animals are in good health, breeding, and surviving and may have learned to avoid the gillnets responsible for the decline of the species.

The study is based on research carried out between 2019-2021 in the Vaquita Refuge – a small region in Mexico’s Upper Gulf of California where the remaining vaquita population is localized. According

to the authors, more vaquitas were sighted than predicted by previous population projection estimates. Scientists observed 7-15 vaquitas in 2019 and 5-13 in 2021. In both seasons, calves were sighted among the adults, proving that the population is breeding. Scientists speculate that the surviving animals may have learned to avoid entanglement in gillnets, which are responsible for the species’ decline.

Dave Hance, the Campaign Director for Operation Milagro, referred to this encouraging news by saying “This report gives hope for the vaquita, but also demonstrates that even greater efforts are needed to protect this species. Sea Shepherd is committed to working even harder with the Mexican Navy and we will be announcing the next steps in our enhanced partnership as we prepare



to continue our years-long effort to ensure the long-term survival of this critically endangered species.”

<https://www.int-res.com/abstracts/esr/v48/p225-234/>

The vaquita is a small species of porpoise endemic to the Upper Gulf of California. Entanglement in fishing gear, primarily gillnets, is responsible for the decline of the species. Sea Shepherd Conservation Society has been working with Mexican authorities since 2015 to remove illegal fishing gear from the vaquita’s habitat, giving the species a fighting chance at survival. To date, these efforts have resulted in the removal of over 1000 pieces of fishing gear from the Vaquita Refuge. This UNESCO-recognized region is home to the remaining vaquita population.

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Whether a total beginner or an advanced photographer looking to learn new techniques, Lisa will help you get the best out of your photography. Customer service and satisfaction are very important to her and she endeavours to go the extra mile to make every client's experience the best it possibly can be.

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- 3 Scenery
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- 1 Open (Adult and under)
- 2 Under 18 years
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Prizes: First and Runner-up in each Category

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(Rules available on request)



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dive centre on the island, or via Zoom if you would like to do the class before your arrival. This is followed by a shore dive at one of the many dive sites on the island and a review afterwards. If you prefer not to do a dive, Lisa can offer just the classroom work for you.

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