

Book Review

Beneath the Surface

by Attilo Kaszo

by Peter Rowlands

Since I started publishing the free online, downloadable magazine Underwater Photography in 2001 little did I realise at the time how perfect the timing would be; conventional film was being overtaken by digital imaging but the learning curve was quite steep and I think the magazine provided much appreciated support to readers as conventional underwater photographers came to terms with this new, but exciting technology.

But even less did I intend that fascinating people, whom I had never met, would be willing to let me publish their images and stories without financial gain; a gesture of support in return, I guess, and one which has enriched my underwater photographic life for over two decades.

I'm sure you've guessed by now that Attila was, and still is, one of those underwater photographers who contributes to the magazine and he has been easy to work with, amenable to suggestions and always provides articles which work on two levels - entertaining the eye and nudging the brain.

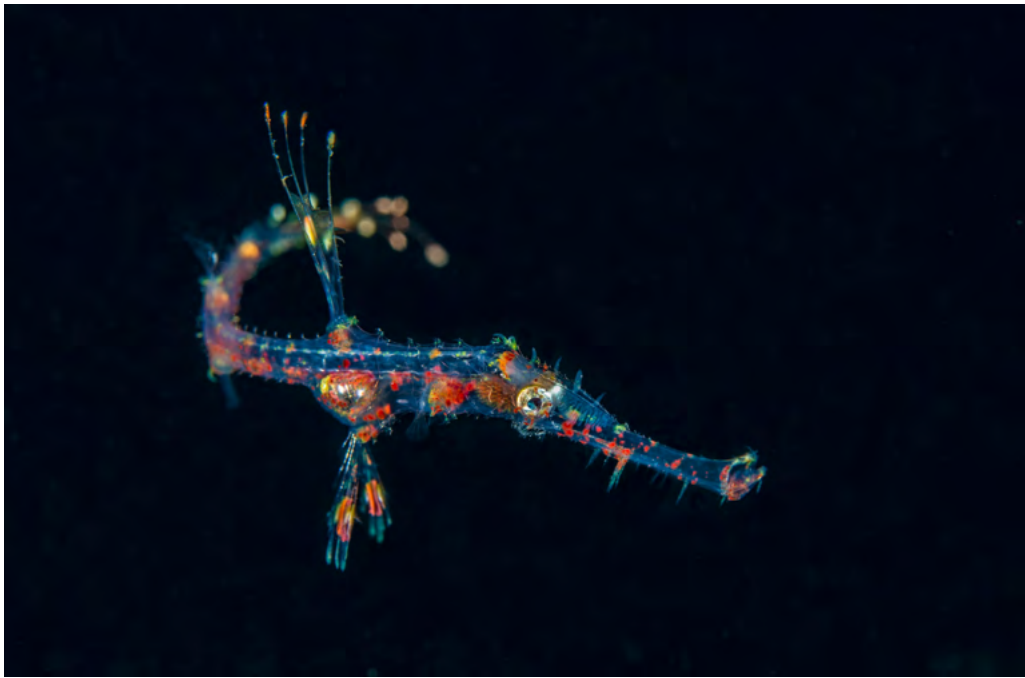
Submissions to the magazine are usually a text file with about a dozen images; that gives me enough to choose from, so over the years I've not seen that many of his images but those that I have, have always been 'a cut above'.

To receive news that Attila plans to publish four books of his career's work and that the first would contain over 160 images in true 'coffee table' style was joy to my eyes but then to be asked to write this Foreword was indeed an honour.

I referred earlier to Attila's submission images as being 'a cut above' and let me try to explain. The digital photography world gives us an almost unlimited number of shots at our disposal; no longer just 36 exposures on a roll of film. On land this wasn't really a problem;

Galapagos Shark (Carcharhinus galapagensis) swimming with the late afternoon sun behind it. This tactic gives the shark an advantage when it's hunting. Its prey has more difficulty in seeing it approach.
Lord Howe Island, NSW





A juvenile Ghost Pipefish emerges from the ocean depths during a “black water” dive off Moalboal. Black water dives are essentially night dives in deep offshore water. You never know what may appear! There is added difficulty in photographing in these conditions, mainly due to the often fleeting subjects and the quick response required to focus the camera on the target, which in most cases has an aversion to bright torch lights.

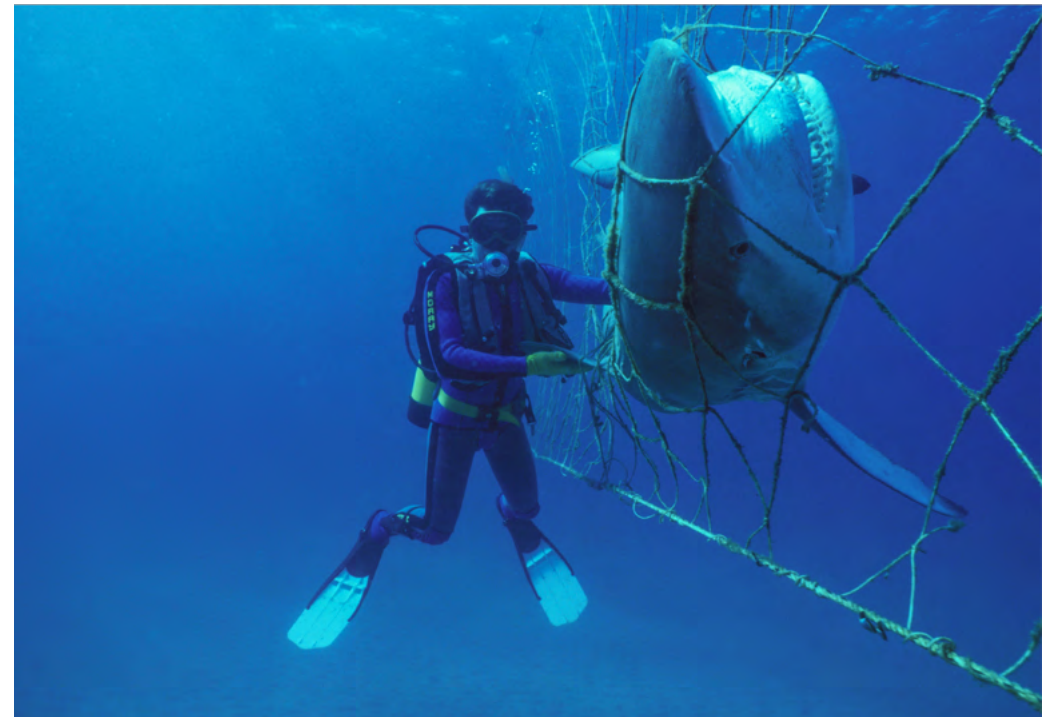
Moalboal, Philippines

Humpback Whales with calfs take refuge around South Pacific Islands on their way north to warmer tropical waters to avoid the harsh Antarctic winter.!

Foa Is. Ha’apai, Tonga

Life and death for any creature caught in a shark net. These indiscriminate killers are responsible for killing Turtles, Dolphins, Whale calves and many other marine animals that have the misfortune of encountering them. In this case it was a 3.6 metre Bull shark. There is NO scientific evidence to support the theory that shark nets prevent shark attacks!

Kirra Beach, Kirra, Qld





Marine worms coming to the surface to mate, during a “black water” dive. At first glance it appears that it’s one creature reflected, but in fact it’s a pair mating. Santander, Philippines

simply rewind the exposed film and load another 36 and off you go, but underwater, where your time is very limited and there’s no way to change rolls, the freedom of unlimited exposures combined with the instant view of those images on the camera’s LCD screen created nothing less than a revolution in terms of both quantity and quality.

What I think sets Attila’s images apart is not immediately visible but I think it is steeped in his photographic history, having been an

early underwater adopter and problem solver in the 1970s. Back then each image was a step forward; housings, flashbulbs, wider lenses, optics and split levels to name but a few. Then there were the subjects themselves whose locations had to be found, habitats and biology learned and predicted before a successful image could be achieved.

To think of these image developments as a genuine apprenticeship goes some way to explain the ‘cut above’ status of



Coral Reef profiles often include what is called a dropoff. The reef slope can extend hundreds of meters downward like a cliff edge. While light intensity decreases, reduced wave action allows greater numbers of coral species to develop. Sponges, sea whips, sea fans become abundant replacing the hard stony corals in deeper less lit water. Bligh Waters, Volivoli, Fiji

Attila’s images because in every image there is an attention to detail; it’s as if he only had 35 exposures left if he took this one even though he has limitless digital images at his disposal. This mindset makes sure everything is in place: subject, lighting, exposure, behaviour and above all composition before the frame is captured and, once the finished image is revealed to the viewer, they have no doubt where their eye has to go. The result is subtly

powerful and it generates a timeless quality that still works so effectively.

They say every picture tells a story and Attila’s images take you straight to Chapter One.

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