

My (last?) Shot

I started scuba-diving three years ago in my late 40's, mostly not to lag behind the kids but I really enjoy it now.

Photography has been my hobby for a long time, so I soon started fussing around with cheap action-cams – not a very satisfying experience. I needed a real camera and LIGHT.

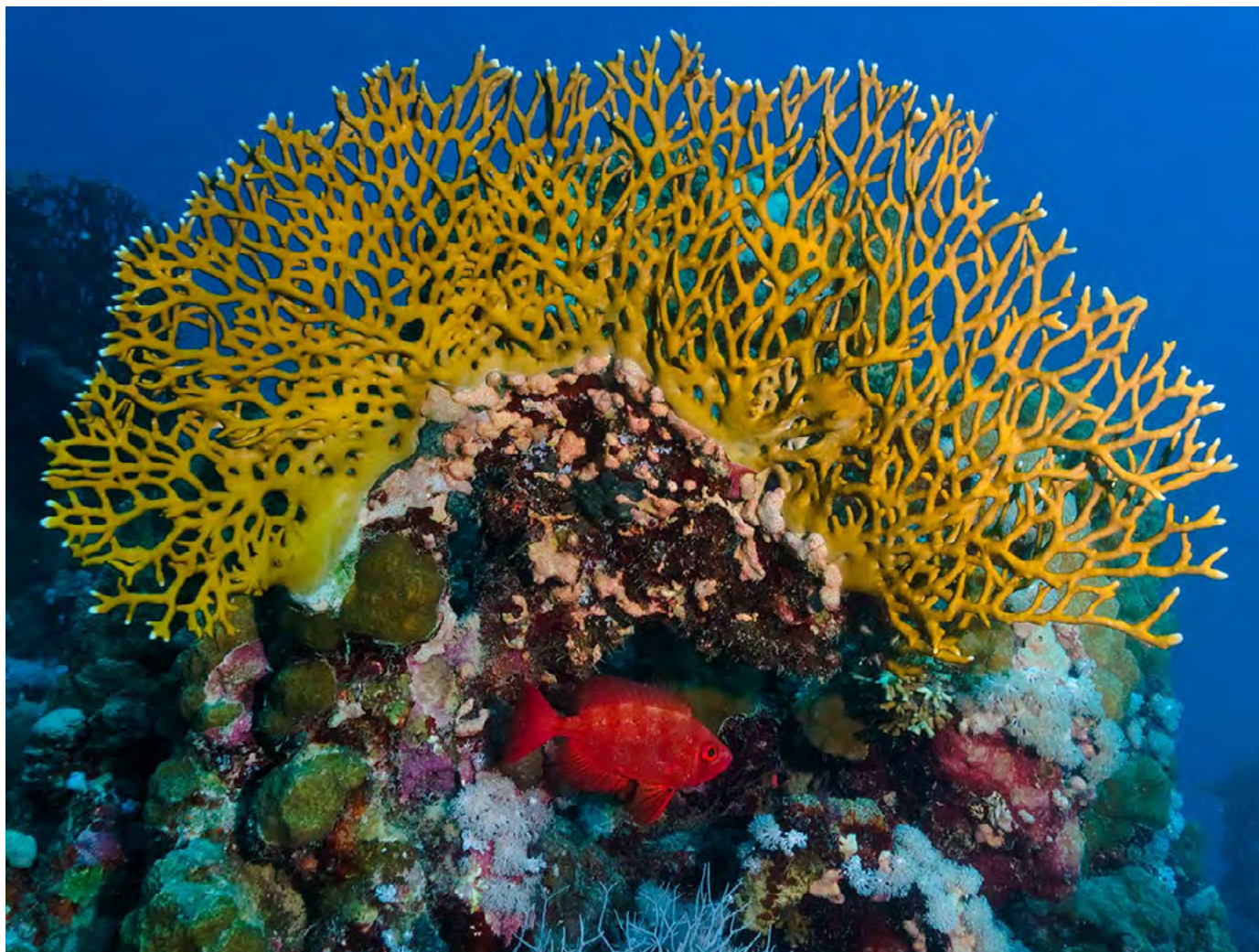
My wife suggested last fall “Why don’t you get yourself a nice setup for Christmas?”. Despite her kind suggestion, I didn’t want to spend the entire family’s annual diving budget on this purchase... I looked for advice on the web and stumbled upon UWP, read most of the back issues and realized that at this point good advice on how to take good photographs below surface was probably worth more than the latest equipment.

So I got Alex Mustard’s book, an Olympus EPL-3 with the 14-42 kit lens and housing and two strobes (YS-120 and YS-27) for relatively little money after diving into the classifieds for a couple of months.

I tried everything out on two or three test dives in a cold quarry, then we left for a family dive trip to the Red Sea (Marsa Alam region).

Most of our dives were shore-dives and that was a good thing because I needed to get used to gearing up the camera in addition to myself; this is easier on the beach than in a zodiac. And by the second day that I had learned that in the sweltering desert heat it’s getting the camera ready first and slipping the diving suit on after that.

Handling the gear and settings while diving can be complicated but I remembered at least some of the basic advice from the book. I took this picture



Olympus E-PL3 with 14-42 f3.5-5.6 IIR lens @ 14mm in the Olympus PT-EP05L housing, H2O-tools 0.72x wetlens, one Sea&Sea YS-120 and probably another Sea&Sea YS-27 strobe, both with diffusers, ISO 400, f11, 1/60 sec. exposure

I processed the raw image first by conversion to DNG and then with Raw Therapee to jpg, followed by some further editing with Photoshop to clear backscatter from the blue parts. I am not sure if the Exif data came along all the way.

[The reason for this somewhat odd approach is that I set the camera to 2:3 format when shooting to get a larger view on the screen, but the Adobe Camera Raw software does not allow me to reverse the crop and get the full 4:3 dimension recorded in the raw.]

on my first salt-water dive with the strobes at the Gabal el Rosas dive site. We were already on our way back when I saw the coral fan with a red fish about 3-4 meters below us. I swam down, framed and could take one shot before the fish dashed away. The guide wasn't too happy with my initiative ("This was after half tank!!!") but I think in the end the shot was worth it.

The next morning I changed the batteries on my strobes but the YS-27 wouldn't power up. I tried three sets of batteries, no power – then I realized there was a "swooshing" noise when I moved the strobe.

A quick look and a horrifying sight: A puddle of water right in the reflector. The battery compartment is sealed in those strobes, and sure enough the batteries had stayed perfectly dry – but for the rest of that strobe this was the end of it all.

The test-dives in the quarry had been shallow but the dive from this shot was close to the 30 meter limit – one of the gaskets must have leaked a bit and the strobe stopped working towards the end of the dive. For the

image data, I am thus not sure whether I should mark one or two strobes, but it looks to me like this might have been the last sigh of my YS-27 (left side, one click down from a previous vertical shot). Anyhow, I consider this the last shot of a brave, old strobe... Farewell!

Klaus Foerstemann



Do you have a favourite shot or an image/s which made a dive special.

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and yours could be the next My Shot/s



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