

8th Anilao Underwater Shootout

by Sabrina (& Franco) Banfi

Take a look and prepare to be amazed by the view of the images awarded during the 8th Anilao Underwater Shootout (AUS2023), which took place from 22 to 26 May in the warm water of Mabini, in Batangas province of the Philippines.

The awarded pictures highlighted the area's rich biological treasures and captured teeming marine biodiversity, the beauty that lies beneath the surface and the hidden creatures.

Geographically located between Maricaban and Mindoro Straits, called the Verde Island Passage, Anilao is

a place of extraordinary marine life, acclaimed as the planet's second top macro diving destination, sometimes called the "Centre of the Centre of Marine Biodiversity" and a Marine Protected Sanctuary.

Competitor Eric Javier, who won the DOT Photographer Year title in the Compact class with the picture of Radial Filefish, said that "Anilao is an underwater photographers' perfect playground, a piece of paradise under the sea ... Every time I dive with my camera gears, I am like a kid full of excitement, eagerly anticipating what type of underwear critters, reefs and



Kim KyungShin won the Open Macro/Supermacro category and became the DOT Photographer of the Year title with this picture of a Ocellated Tozeuma Shrimp



*Left: OPEN-category
MARINE BEHAVIOR-
1ST place-
DENNIS CORPUZ*

*Right: COMPACT-
category MARINE
BEHAVIOR-1ST place-
REGIE CASIA*





*COMPACT-category FISH PORTRAIT-1ST place-
ERIC JAVIER*

seascapes I will come across. And to be able to showcase all of these through my camera lens will be my greatest fulfillment”.

While Kim KyungShin, who took the DOT Photographer of the Year title in the Open class with the picture of a Ocellated Tozeuma Shrimp, said about his winning picture “After a full day’s diving in Anilao, I enjoy my time just gazing at the horizon for the sunset while having a beer in my hand ... I have always wanted to capture that Anilao sunset while diving there. However, recreating that sunset with macro photography has never quite come



*COMPACT-category NUDIBRANCH-1ST place-
JAYSON CEDRICK APOSTOL*

out the way I felt it ... I wanted to brighten up the background and asked my guide Obet for some backlighting. The results of that shoot startled me quite a bit”.

Last May, 153 participants from 14 countries challenged themselves and entered this unique event sponsored by the Department of Tourism (DOT) of the Philippines. A few mesmerizing shots stood out against the all entries, which overall captured the attention of the jury.



*OPEN-category FISH PORTRAIT-1ST place-DENIZ
MUZAFFER GÖKMEN*

Fascinated by the amazing array of critters living in depths and sea conditions accessible also by beginner recreational divers, competitors were surely eager to magnify the details through the cameras lenses and to show the vibrant colours, patterns, behaviours, translucence that usually go unnoticed to common diver until a skilled guide

point out them. And let's say that, during this kind of competition, the talent of the guides certainly equals the skill of the underwater photographers.

During the four days of the event, the five judges - experienced and award-winning underwater photographers Aaron Wong, Brook Peterson, Rafael Fernandez Caballero, Scott Gutsy Tuason and Franco Banfi- plus assistants and media partners were divided into two teams and went diving in the same spots with the best guides, so that they could check, first-hand and lenses, critters and conditions. Nothing was left to chance by an impeccable and generous organization in partnership with Mabini Tourism, Department of Tourism region 4 A Calabarzon #DiscoverCalabarzon, Solitude Acacia Resort, Aiyandar Beach and Dive Resort, and Lakan.

Even if this wonderful competition has strongly suffered (like others) from the more than two years pandemic ban (the 6th AUS in 2018 counted 241 contestants from 23 countries), it is clearly on the way



OPEN-category NUDIBRANCH-1ST place-DENNIS CORPUZ

to growing exponentially in the next years, since the number of entries raised 22,41% and participants increased by 27,5% compared to the 7th AUS (in 2021).

During the award ceremony, Tourism Secretary Ms Christina Garcia-Frasco said the event strengthens the Philippines' position as the world's leading dive destination. Through the competition, the Department of Tourism seeks to grow the country's dive market with programs that not only promote the area's marine biodiversity but also actively advocate for its protection and preservation.

*COMPACT-caterogy
MACRO-1ST place-
REGIE CASIA*



"The department is dedicated to ensuring that the Philippines maintains its standing as the world's leading dive destination through a coordinated, focused, and fully supported approach to the further development of our dive products across the country," Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco said.

"The presence of international participants at the Anilao Underwater Shootout is a big boost to the

promotion of dive tourism in the Philippines, and also to the rebooting of the travel and tourism industry. We are thrilled that the passion for diving and underwater photography has brought everyone to Anilao as this year's edition welcomes international participants for the very first time since the pandemic," the Secretary added.



Here are the winners of this year's Anilao Underwater Shootout.

Open Class

In the Macro/Supramacro category, winners are Kim Kyung Shin, 1st place; PJ Aristorenas, 2nd place; Yat Kuen Eric Fung, 3rd place.

In the Marine Behavior category, winners are Dennis Corpuz, 1st place; Patricia Santos, 2nd place; Yat Kuen Eric Fung, 3rd place.

In the Nudibranch category, winners are Dennis Corpuz, 1st place; Mark Chang, 2nd place; PJ Aristorenas, 3rd place.

In the Fish Portrait category, winners are Deniz Muzaffer Gökmen,

1st place; Patricia Santos, 2nd place; Mark Chang, 3rd place.

Compact Class

In the Macro/Supramacro category, winners are Regie Casia, 1st place; Luzelle Artillero, 2nd place; Teresa Sy Ortin, 3rd place.

In the Marine Behavior category, winners are Regie Casia, 1st place; Eric Javier, 2nd place; Neil Anthony Torres, 3rd place.

In the Nudibranch category, winners are Jayson Cedrick Apostol, 1st place; Ronilo Corpuz, 2nd place; Jose Antonio Caluag, 3rd place.

In the Fish Portrait category, winners are Eric Javier, 1st place;

Jayson Cedrick Apostol, 2nd place; Oscar Rey Maranan, 3rd place.

Special prizes were awarded to Dennis Corpuz in the Blackwater/Bonfire category and Mark Chang in the Wide-Angle category.

Guide Louie Casapao and guide

Roberto Corpuz were named DOT Photographers of the Year Dive Guide for the Compact and Open classes respectively.

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https://beta.tourism.gov.ph/news_and_updates/the-countrys-colorful-marine-life-takes-the-spotlight-in-dots-anilao-underwater-shootout/

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF6uyziBXyg>

<https://www.facebook.com/anilaoshootout>

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