

Torbay Splash-in 2023

by Tim Allen

The seventh annual Splash-in underwater photography competition run by the Torbay branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club (BSAC) took place on Saturday, 3 June. A Splash-in competition is one where the photographs must be taken on a single day, and sometimes within a certain area (in our case, Torbay). There were four categories of entry: Beginner, Compact Camera, Wide-angle, and Close-up/macro, as well as a Popular Vote prize.

Unfortunately, the weather conditions this year were challenging, so although it was warm and the sun was shining brightly, easterly winds had been blowing into Torbay for a couple of weeks, resulting in extremely poor water visibility. Consequently, the decision was made to relax the geographic location requirement and competitors were informed a couple of days before Splash-in day that they could take their photographs outside of Torbay, as long as they handed in their entries on time in Torquay. Sixteen competitors registered and submitted a total of 49 photographs. The standard of photography was again very high this year, with the judge

recognising two 'Highly Commended' entries in each category, in addition to the First and Second Prizes.

On the evening of Splash-in day, a presentation dinner was held at the Royal Torbay Yacht Club, where all the photographs were shown, and a Popular Vote held to select a 'peoples' favourite'. Judging was conducted anonymously by Peter Rowlands, the well-respected photographer and editor of Underwater Photography Magazine, who provided insightful and useful comments on all of the photographs.

This year, the competition again attracted sponsorship from some generous donors. The Beginners category was sponsored by O'Three and Alphamarine Photography, with a voucher for 50% off a new drysuit for the First Prize, and a voucher for an online underwater photography course for the Second Prize. Teign Diving Centre sponsored the first prizes in the Wide Angle and Close-up categories, and Dr Paul Naylor donated two copies of his excellent book 'Great British Marine Animals' to be awarded to the first prize winners in the Compact Camera and Popular Vote categories.



Beginner Category (Prizes sponsored by O'Three and Alphamarine Photography)

First Prize- Milayna Arthurs

Peter Rowlands: "The winner is a lovely delicate shot, different, subtly lit, it just has great appeal, and then in the bottom right-hand corner, what's called negative space where there is nothing happening, but it is contributing to the overall effect of the image, and the composition is very nice. It's just a very pleasing shot, the sort of shot you could look at and not get tired of. Great shot."

Milayna commented: "My first photo is of a nudibranch; I find them fascinating yet have such difficulty finding them usually. I used an Olympus TG5 to take the photo at F-stop 3.5 and ISO 1600."

Beginner Second Prize
Milayna Arthurs

Peter Rowlands: "This is a striking shot as soon as you see it. The only slight downside to this - it's looking slightly away from the camera. The eye is fine, but it would be much more engaging if the body position was more coming into the frame rather than exiting."



Milayna commented: "My second photo is of a blenny. They're usually very skittish, but this one was very confident in his camouflage and allowed me the opportunity to snap this photo. I used my Olympus TG5 at F-stop 3.6 and ISO 1600."

Compact Second Prize
Jo Cale

Peter Rowlands: "A lovely shot. Unusual I would have thought - are these fighting or is there some kind of argy-bargy going on or are they just hanging out? I don't know. But it's a nice composition and this is sufficiently different from the standard portrait shot, and to have two in the frame lifts it above 'highly commended'. Lovely shot."



Jo commented: "While working on taking a portrait photo of a Tompot Blenny, the second Tompot shot out from under a section of the Thurstone wreck and started what can only be described as an aggressive dance with the first larger Tompot. A moment of stillness between the moves allowed me to capture the photo! The camera used is a Canon G9X II, with an AOI UWL-400A wet lens and a single Inon S2000 strobe."



Compact Camera (First prize sponsored by OonasDivers and Dr Paul Naylor)
First Prize - Tony Reed

Peter Rowlands: "An instant winner, as soon as it was on the computer screen really - your eye goes straight to where the photograph is telling you to go to: jellyfish, nice composition diver, lovely surface detail, and rays of light as well. It's like bang, bang, bang - there's no ambiguity about it whatsoever, it just has a very instant appeal and I think it's the sort of appeal that you could look at it again and again, and appreciate it for what it is. A strong shot."

Tony commented: "The 1st place compact category shot was a decision made at the time as my buddy was photographing a jellyfish! The sun was beaming through the surface, so I moved around for the best angle, and it turned out nice. Olympus TG4 with PT-056 housing, Weefine WFL-02 wide lens, natural light. Settings: 1/500, F2.8, ISO 100."

Close-up/Macro (First prize donated by Teign Diving Centre)

First Prize - Simon Temple

Peter Rowlands: "This is a very well balanced shot – your eye goes straight in and you've got the horns, the background lovely, out of focus, distracting but still contributing. The focus point is exactly right and it's just a classically well taken macro shot."



Simon commented: "We travelled to Firestone Bay in Plymouth but with Spring Tides forecast, we had only 45min of slack water. We entered the water just as the sun came up at 5:20am. We made our way to an area we had seen *Coryphella browni* in June last year. However, all we found were the orange variant of *Coryphella lineata*. I spent some time waiting for the slug to emerge from its hydroid food source and crawl towards the lens. I used a snooted light source to isolate the subject and minimise backscatter, while using a wider aperture (for macro) allowing me to blur the background, de-cluttering the overall image. NIKON D500: f/16, 1/250, 60mm, ISO200. Single strobe with snoot."

Popular Vote (Prize sponsored by Dr Paul Naylor)

Jo Rabineau

Peter Rowlands: "My least favourite category! I was interested to see the winner because there were a lot of images that, for today's conditions, were surprisingly good."

I'm actually very pleased with this because it's a lovely shot that missed out in the macro category because it was submitted incorrectly as a small file size that lost impact on the screen."



Wide-angle (First prize donated by Teign Diving Centre)

First Prize - Simon Temple

Peter Rowlands: "Lovely shot. Very well executed, well composed, well lit, well balanced, well...everything really! It's just a shot that you look at and you know exactly what it is, where it's going. Lovely eye contact, lovely subject, and a clear winner as far as I was concerned."

Simon commented: "While diving the wreck of the Louis Shied I spotted a corkwing wrasse performing a familiar nest building behaviour inside a metal structure close to what was once the engine. The location provided me a dark backdrop for the shot with a few 'windows' into the blue beyond. I waited and watched the wrasse as it left and returned to the nesting area; over time the wrasse became less concerned with my presence, eventually allowing me to move my camera close to the nest and capture a close up! NIKON D500: f/11, 1/125, 15mm, ISO250. 2 x Inon Z240 strobes."

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