

Parting Shot 1

By Nigel Marsh

The Giant Guitarfish (*Glaucostegus typus*) is found in the tropical waters of northern Australia, but is a species that is rarely seen. One place they are found is Heron Island, at the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef. Groups of these elusive rays, which grow to 2.7m long, are seen on the reef flats at Heron Island and also in the man-made harbour.

I have seen several Giant Guitarfish on my trips to Heron Island, but have never managed to photograph one. So on my most recent trip I was determined to finally get a photo. I snorkelled the harbour, but couldn't find one. I also surveyed the reef flats without success. My final option was a shallow bay at the far end of the island on the rising tide, as many rays gather at this site. The only problem was the high tide was in the middle of the day, and the bay is only 1m deep!

I slipped into the water and it didn't take long to find a large Giant Guitarfish resting on the sand. The ray seemed relaxed to have me swim around it, so finally I could get some images. Unfortunately, the conditions were terrible for photography! Bright sunshine, a white sandy bottom,

a light-coloured subject and the visibility was only 3m.

I shoot manual, so had a guess at the best settings, so tried 1/200, f16 and ISO 200. I could barely see anything looking through the viewfinder, it was simply too bright. I shot a few images and then found reviewing the images next to impossible. They looked over-exposed, but to do a proper review I got out of the water and under the nearby trees, only to find the images were completely over-exposed.

What to do? I then thought it best to abandon the manual settings and let the camera do the work. So I set the camera to Aperture, the f-stop to f20 and let the camera set the shutter speed. As I find the camera tends to over-expose, I also changed the exposure to -2. Finally, I wanted a little fill flash, so set the strobe to half power.

Back in the water I quickly found the Giant Guitarfish and shot some more images. Out of the water again I reviewed the images and found I had hit the jackpot, the exposure was surprisingly perfect.

I then enjoyed another hour in the water photographing several Giant



Nikon D7200, Ikelite housing, Tokina 10-17mm lens at 10mm, 1/400, f20, ISO 200, single Inon Z240 strobe.

Guitarfish, along with dozens of Broad Cowtail Stingrays and Pink Whiprays. I also managed to find a rare Porcupine Ray and had a close encounter with a large Sicklefin Lemon Shark.

I exited the water happy to

finally have nailed some images of the elusive Giant Guitarfish, with this image being my favourite.

Nigel Marsh

www.nigelmarshphotography.com

**Do you have a shot
which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500
words of text
and yours could be the next
Parting Shot.**

peter@uwpmag.com

Parting Shot 2

By Colin Marshall

Probably my favourite dive destination in Indonesia is Banda Neira, south-east of Ambon. Amazing combination of blue water high visibility dives, lava flows with recently established new corals, hammerheads, large caves and swim-throughs.

Even the easy-to-dive site in front of the Maulana Hotel (famously visited by Mick Jagger and Lady Diana Spencer) is a unique muck dive as it has excellent macro, mating Mandarinfish, and an added bonus of possibly finding treasures (at least crockery) from the Dutch East India Company period buried in the sand.

This image from the Batu Kapal site in Banda Neira (taken in 2007) shows the fish all huddled together on the opposite side of the pinnacle to the oncoming diver onslaught. This demonstrates all too well how wildlife sensibly avoids us whenever possible. Fish seem to realize intuitively that clumsy underwater primates are unnatural and best avoided, especially when armed with noisy bubble-making gear and blinding strobes.

This experience inspired me to pursue “iconoclastic diving” – go where others are not and look in the

opposite direction to where others are looking! This philosophy has led to many memorable underwater experiences, and even more lectures from my long-suffering and often solitary dive buddy (aka my wife)...

Similarly, I recommend avoiding “must-see” sites when they are busy. Many sites are not really that different to other nearby “unknown” sites. The famous sites are the equivalent of queuing to see the highly over-rated Mona Lisa, which is 5 meters behind a cordon, in a room tightly packed with hordes of selfie-taking tourists, and guards pushing the masses through as quickly as possible.

I have often been on a famous site and another dive boat has ignored protocols and deposited a huge number of (often inept) divers onto the site, diminishing the experience for those already in the water. If possible, I will swim away from the site (after telling the guide!), and go to a nearby reef to get away from the invaders. If we were due to dive a high-profile site which had a risk

of another boat dropping in divers, I would prefer to be given the option to dive on a nearby “unknown” reef, but this is rarely offered as most clients (not unreasonably) want to see the promised famous sites, like tourists on a tour bus expecting to see the Mona Lisa...



Nikon D70 camera, Nikkor 10.5 mm lens, Subal Housing. f/2.8@1/80. ISO 320.

Colin Marshall
colintrmarshall@yahoo.com

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