

My Shots

by David Fleetham

I recently spent several weeks off Timor-Leste, which is situated at the top of the Timor Sea between Indonesia and West Papua, above Australia.

A good amount of my time was spent offshore in search of marine mammals and we regularly ran into locally made FADs (fish aggregating devices). These were anchored in the open ocean in at least 1000 feet of water and often much deeper. Several villages would pool their resources to fund the expense of deploying an anchor system which consisted of a significant length of line along with some sort of weight.

On the surface was one or more plastic 55 gallon drums along with a bamboo platform tethered to the floats and occasionally a series of palm fronds trailing underwater to increase the attraction for juvenile fish and large pelagics.

Fishing has wiped out any significant shark populations in the area, but occasionally we would encounter an understandably timid example of a questionable species, although likely galapagos or silky sharks.

When we first approached these in our boat we would find several

species of sea birds, often in numbers that appeared to test the buoyancy capability of the bamboo structure.

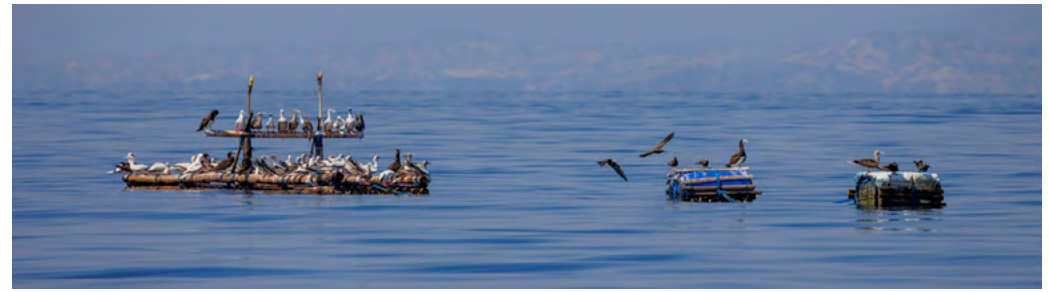
Our arrival was always met with the entire flock taking to the air while we jumped in to see if there was anything of interest to photograph beneath.

On one occasion we spotted a raft and noticed that there were no birds to be seen. Not one. This was a first.

As I grabbed my mask and fins the captain suggested I grab a land camera instead of my housing as there was a good sized saltwater crocodile, *Crocodylus porosus*, sunning itself on the platform.

From this day forward if we found a FAD with no bird life we would check first for crocs before jumping in.

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

E mail yours with some text to

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and yours could be the next My Shot/s

(It's very easy. Images can be any size bigger than 20cm (horizontal or vertical) @ 150dpi saved as jpeg format and about 500 - 750 words would be fine.)