



If I don't get bored after 436 dives this place has to be good, right?

So if you dive in the Caribbean and you fancy a change from Bonaire, check out Sint Maarten. Pack your camera, charge your GoPro, pack your snoot. You won't regret it.

I can recommend diving with Ocean Explorers (info@stmaartendiving.com) run by a super Brazilian couple, Lu and Jef. Jef knows the reefs there like the back of his hand and he and Lu have been running Ocean Explorers for decades.

Tim Gurney
www.waterpixels.net

hunting. Very little, if any, schooling fish.

Yes, I know it usually wins all the prizes for diving in the Caribbean. But, frankly, I had to admit to myself I was getting bored diving there.

By the happiest turn of fates my partner, bless her, was seconded to a job in Sint Maarten and I felt obliged to join her (NB: British irony). Almost three very happy years followed and 436 dives.

Sint Maarten is another of those curious Dutch outposts in the Caribbean. Although not part of the Netherlands (Bonaire is actually a city in the Netherlands), Sint Maarten (or SXM as it's known) is in the Kingdom of the Netherlands so similar in status

to, say, Jersey or Bermuda. It has a significant international airport and is a stone's throw from the British hold-out of Anguilla. I read that Anguilla to Sint Maarten is the world's shortest international flight.

In addition, the northern part of the island is actually an area of metropolitan France and as such part of the EU. One island, two cultures. Best part: two cuisines – the Dutch part slightly more American plus Heineken; the French part, oh la la, French. Think top quality pain au raisin or croissant for breakfast, patisserie for afternoon tea. Excellent inexpensive wines, good restaurants, great supermarkets and entrecôte.....

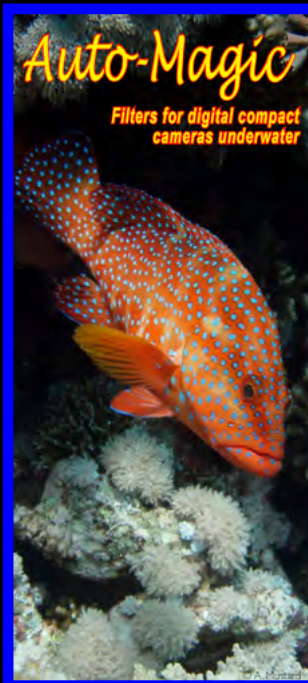
Unlike Bonaire, Sint Maarten is

hardly known as a dive destination. But if you are into macro, there are all sorts of shrimps; you can trip over arrowcrabs; lots of reef sharks, turtles, gobies looking out of crevices, loads of morays, SCHOOLS and I mean serious schools of grunts, blackbar soldierfish, snappers.... I was teaching the West Atlantic REEF fish identification course there and the place is a Caribbean fish spotter's dream. Plenty of wrecks covered in marine life and schools of fish..... and some intriguing coral mazes which are playgrounds for divers.

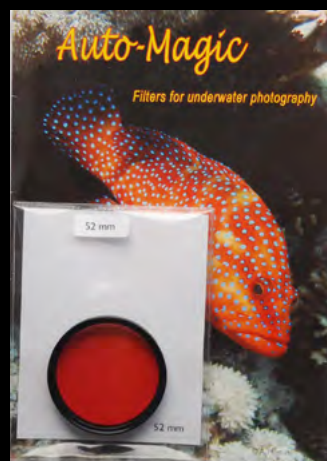
Yes, you must boat dive which means, probably, a max of 3 dives a day. Shore diving is, sadly, minimal verging on the negligible.



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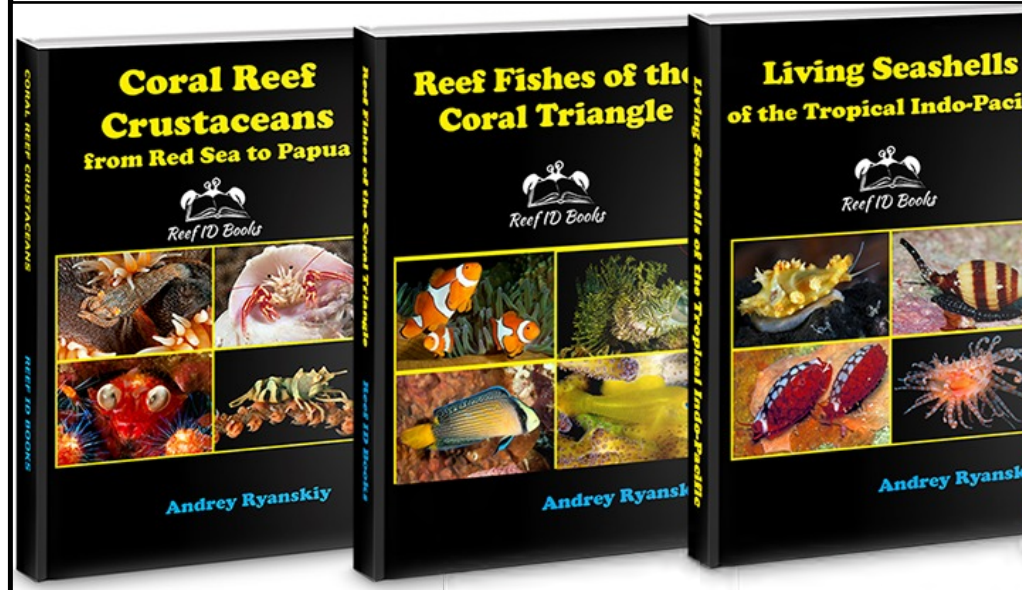


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Marshall's Mysteries 16

Do you know what these animals are, or what they are doing? Have a guess – answers on page 68

A

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Cendrawasih, Indonesia

image about 20 cm across

B

© Colin Marshall / Ardea



Lembeh, Sulawesi, Indonesia

image about 2 cm across

C

© Colin Marshall / Ardea



Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Animal about 4 cm across

D

© Colin Marshall / Alamy



Ambon, Indonesia

Animal about 12 cm across

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Marshall's Mysteries 16 - Answers

A



Firstly, this is a close up of a Whale Shark, *Rhincodon typus*. But the more testing question is – *what is the cause of the white circular markings?* Possible suspects are :

- Remora / Sharksucker suction cups – not aware of them leaving these kind of scars
- Giant Squid or Octopuses – unlikely
- Barnacles – tend to be found on some slow-moving whales, not on constantly-moving animals like Whale Sharks
- Cookiecutter Shark - Photo-naturalist Tony Wu ([https:// www.tony-wu.com](https://www.tony-wu.com)) suggests this may be the culprit as the marks are the same pattern & size, similar to Cookiecutter marks seen on some cetaceans
- Manmade – Coral Reef Ecologist Mark Erdmann suggests the marks could be attempts by a researcher to take a biopsy sample or perhaps a bagan fisherman used a pole to try to usher the shark out of a net.

© Colin Marshall / FLPA / Minden



B



Ramose Sea Hare (aka Baba's Sea Hare, *Petalifera ramosa*) is a relatively rare and newly described species (1959).

It is found amongst sea grass, where it grazes on the macroalgae *Padina* sp.

Although this animal has a cartoon-like appearance, it is also regarded as a “jewel of the sea”, especially as it is adorned with exotic tubercles (some with distinctive branched papillae) and ocelli.

© Colin Marshall / FLPA / Minden



If any readers have any ideas as to what likely caused these marks, please pass them through to colinrmarshall@yahoo.com.

More detail on the Whale Shark can be found on pages 52-53 of Volume 1 of “Reef Fishes of the East Indies” by Gerry Allen and Mark Erdmann.

C



James Bond-esque Cryptic Flatworm, *Pseudobiceros kryptos*, producing chemical repellent to protect against predators.

This was on a night dive, so it is very likely that the flatworm was dispensing its precious chemicals to evade the clumsy photographer...

© Colin Marshall



© Colin Marshall



D



Juvenile Cushion Star, *Culcita novaeguineae*.

However, the unusual aspect of this starfish is its square shape, ie that it has only 4 arms. “Normal” 5-armed Cushion Stars are shown on the left (top & underside views).

Reasons why some Cushion Stars could have only 4 (or 6) arms could include :

- Sublethal physical injury when the starfish is in an early larval stage
- Developmental anomaly due to random genetic flaws
- Disease or pollution effects that are established after settlement on the seafloor by the starfish

This anomaly does not get corrected later - whatever the Cushion Star has when they settle is what they have for the rest of their life.

Molecular data suggests there are multiple species within *Culcita novaeguineae*, but these have not yet been described.

If you think any of the identifications or information above is wrong, please let me know at colinrmarshall@yahoo.com. Feel free to send me any images of anything you’d like some help in identifying – any particularly interesting mysteries may be included in future Underwater Photography issues.

Guidelines for contributors

The response to UwP has been nothing short of fantastic. We are looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography. We are looking for work from existing names but would also like to discover some of the new talent out there and that could be you! UwP is the perfect publication for you to increase your profile in the underwater photography community.

The type of articles we're looking for fall into five main categories:

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc

Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards,

Subjects -, Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

**If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
E mail peter@uwpmag.com**

How to submit articles

To keep UwP simple and financially viable, we can only accept submissions by e mail and they need to be done in the following way:

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 150dpi

Size - Maximum length 20cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 20 cm wide and verticals would be 20cm high.

File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality. This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

3. Captions - **Each and every image MUST have full photographic details** including camera, housing, lens, lighting, film, aperture, shutter speed and exposure mode. These must also be copied and pasted into the body of the e mail.