

Editorial

Digital dilemma

You'd have to have just got back from a trip to Mars to not notice how digital cameras are affecting the popularity and quality of underwater photography.

The capability of both the entry level and digital SLR cameras is groundbreaking but they are creating major problems for underwater housing manufacturers.

Perhaps the announcement of the new Nikon 10.5 digital fisheye lens and D2H camera will explain the situation. Details of these two new products were released in mid July but they would not be readily available until October.

This delay means that potential customers, particularly for cameras, are faced with the dilemma of whether to wait for the new camera or bite the bullet and purchase the current model which they know is about to be discontinued.

I suspect most technophiles would decide to wait but they then have another wait until the underwater housing manufacturers can buy the new camera in October and then begin their design and production process. This can take many months.

Digital cameras are coming

to the market so regularly that, by the time a manufacturer has a housing ready there will almost certainly be rumours of the next camera in the pipeline and this definitely affects sales.

The solution is for camera and housing manufacturers to work more closely and we can see the results of this with Olympus in Japan. I understand that they work with a specialist polycarbonate moulder who is privy to the development department's plans. This crucial privilege gives them several months in which to design and produce the housing.

The result is that an Olympus underwater housing arrives on the market at the same time as the camera. This maximises the potential sales of housings and customers are reassured that their camera is the latest model.

Wouldn't it be nice if the success of this co-operation was noticed by Nikon and Canon? If they joined forces with a quality housing manufacturer they would make life very difficult for other manufacturers and we would get a housing as soon as the camera arrived.

Am I asking too much to hope this will happen before the Nikon D200 is available?

AF DX Fisheye Nikkor 10.5mm f/2.8G ED

The announcement of a direct replacement for the 16mm full frame fisheye must be welcome news from two standpoints.

Firstly it completes the capabilities of digital SLRs such as the Nikon D100 and secondly it confirms Nikon's commitment to a smaller chip size.

Full frame 35mm chip cameras are available but at a high price and nearly all manufacturers have had real problems getting them perfected. In addition most of them have hedged their bets and also produced smaller chip cameras which have proved much more popular due to a greatly reduced price.

The resolution of the smaller chips is still amazing and the images they capture have been used in magazines at up to A3 size so I would suggest that this capability is more than most underwater photographers really need.

So maybe underwater photography has truly turned the corner into a digital age and one thing's for certain - there's no looking back.

Underwater Photography

is published by

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