Parting Shots

by David Fleetham

I have seen many similar masses to the one that drifted through the beam of my light on this blackwater dive three miles off the coast of Guam. In the past I ignored them thinking they were some sort of snot from Poseidon brought up with the nightly upwelling of guests that were the target of this activity. As often occurs on blackwater dives, the last twenty minutes had been slow as far as critters went and I decided to exercise my Canon 100mm macro lens on this seemingly unattractive bundle. After several online inquiries it turns out that this bundle of sticks are actually a blue-green pelagic cyanobacteria, Trichodesmium sp., also known as cyanophyta and “sea sawdust”.

Large gas vesicles allow Trichodesmium to regulate buoyancy in the water column. These gas vesicles can withstand high pressure allowing them to move vertically through the water column harvesting nutrients. Trichodesmium is able to fix atmospheric nitrogen into ammonium, a nutrient used by other organisms. Trichodesmium is thought to fix nitrogen on such a scale that it accounts for almost half of the nitrogen fixation in marine systems globally.

The moral of this blackwater story is to shoot whatever comes by your lens and figure out what it is after you get back to your MacBook Pro.

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Shot with a Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 100mm macro lens, 1/160 sec, F20, ISO 320, with two Ikelite 230 strobes on TTL.

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.
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(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.)