

I think it's fair to say that underwater photography equipment accessories start out as an attempt to sell us more 'gear'; something to help us take different images that will stand out from the crowd in competitions but discarded when too many similar shots kept popping up.

A good example is the Magic Tube whose images initially caught the eye but then became tedious as it was extremely hard to find a subject that suited the technique. And yet the lack of success in competitions didn't seem to deter entrants.

The snoot, on the other hand, hit the scene with a bang with a shot from Keri Wilk entitled 'Stargazer Eyes' and after an early dodgy period when people just shot the wrong subjects, the technique lasted as more and more photographers chose the right subjects and different angles.

The result is that nearly all flashguns/strobes are available with a snoot accessory and some have been cleverly developed with different shaped masks, variable snoot angles as well as flip designs.

I'm primarily a video shooter so snoots don't really apply but I happily accept that they have cemented their place in the creative world and that they are still an effective choice for a lot of macro subjects.

Close ups

Traditionally, when you wanted your lens to focus closer, you added a + dioptr lens. The standard strengths were +1, +2 and +4; +3 was achieved by using the +1 and +2 together.

Underwater, in a housing behind a flat port, they worked well but you were committed to them for the dive. Enter the Wet Close Up Lens; initially designed to go over the Nikonos 35mm lens but it could be removed and fitted underwater.

Land camera manufacturers then designed Macro lenses for reflex cameras that could focus from infinity down to life size (the same size as the film frame or image sensor). These were ideal for underwater photography but, like so many things, we wanted to get closer and closer until we had to invent a new category - 'SuperMacro' - achieved by stacking close up lenses.

Then came Nauticam with their SMC range, capable of magnifications which made it possible to fill the frame with subjects just millimeters across - physically demanding but the resulting images were truly ground breaking both photographically and marine biologically.

Editorial

Just as we pushed the photographic boundaries so too did our/your imagination to come up with beautiful bokeh backgrounds of complimentary colours, leading to introduced backgrounds using artificial aids such as reflectors, glitter and even the ubiquitous metal scouring pad. The potential seeming limitless and the effect, when well done, quite beautiful.

There are those whose passion is SuperMacro - glued to the viewfinder dive after dive, hour after hour - producing images of subjects only just apparent to the naked eye. There are websites dedicated to the artform and its discussions and even SuperMacro only competitions.

So we've come a long way from the humble close up lens and the images have been inspirational along the way but, for simple me, I can't envisage this branch of underwater photography developing any further because I can't see any further for it to go.

Go on then. Surprise me. Prove me wrong and I'll eat my (liquorice) hat.

Sat nav domes

Sat nav domes? What's he on about now? Well indulge me.

I suspect Pete Atkinson's excellent article on domes and split level shots will be glossed over by the majority of UwP readers because all the science has been understood and all the problems solved. All you have to do is earn enough spare cash to 'invest' in one or more of the excellent water contact lenses produced almost entirely by Nauticam and the amazing Edward Lai.

Make no mistake, the image of the underwater world is all the better because of him, his Company and their lenses but, just as with Macro developments, simple me can't see there being any other lenses we'll need but I am always prepared to eat my (still liquorice) hat.

So where does the Sat nav domes come in? Well, just as we don't have to know about domes to get excellent underwater images, so too the London cabbie doesn't need to learn 'The Knowledge' - all the streets/roads in London and the routes to go from one to the other. All they need is a Sat Nav in their cab.

Get it now?

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