

My Shot

by David Fleetham

In 2011, my goddaughter, Margaux Nelson, and I kayaked out to the wreck of the Carthaginian II—a beloved Lahaina landmark intentionally sunk by the Atlantis Submarine Company in December 2005 to serve as an artificial reef off the coast of Maui, Hawaii.

As is customary during submarine dives, a surface support vessel was present. On this particular day, it happened to be crewed by a friend of mine, who generously offered us the use of the company mooring for our kayaks. He also coordinated with the submarine's captain to ensure we could be underwater at the perfect moment to photograph the sub passing by the wreck.

Margaux, daughter of renowned marine artist Robert Lyn Nelson (robertlynnelson.com), is a frequent dive model of mine. You can hear the sub's electric motors humming through the water well before it comes into view. As it approached, she swam the length of the wreck, adding a human element to the striking scene as the submarine circled us, a dramatic contrast of diver and machine in the depths of the Pacific.

Through the wide dome viewing ports, passengers pressed their faces

against the glass, wide-eyed and waving with delight. Conditions were ideal—mild currents and excellent visibility. However, I've experienced strong currents here on previous dives, which brings in rich planktonic morsels that attract the abundance of marine life found around the wreck. The ship's central hold often hosts several resting whitetip reef sharks (*Triaenodon obesus*). The sound of our bubbles sends them out of the wreck to circle the ship awaiting our inevitable ascent.

Each year, an estimated 10,000 to 12,000 humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) migrate to the Hawaiian Islands during the winter months, typically from December through April. These whales travel from feeding grounds in Alaska to the warm, sheltered waters of Hawaii, where they breed, give birth, and nurse their calves.

During this time you will hear their haunting songs echo through the water. On occasion, divers have even encountered the whales passing by the wreck—an unforgettable moment for any dive log. Hawaii is one of the most important breeding grounds for the North Pacific population of humpbacks, and the waters around



Canon 5D Mark II housed in an Ikelite system, paired with a Sigma 15mm full-frame fisheye lens. Settings were 1/100 sec at f/8, ISO 320, with two Ikelite DS161 strobes firing on TTL for even, natural lighting.

Maui—particularly the 'Au'au Channel between Maui, Lāna'i, and Moloka'i—are considered some of the best places in the world to observe them.

The Carthaginian II remains one of the few historic sites to survive the devastating Lahaina wildfire of 2023.

Tragically, the Atlantis submarine was lost, and Lahaina Harbor has yet to reopen to the public.

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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.)