

Editorial

Marine life behaviour

Nigel Motyer's excellent account of Basking Shark aggregations off Malin Head in Northern Ireland are another example of how underwater photography has helped to change perceptions about marine life behaviour.

My earliest recollection was when Peter Scoones shot video footage of Orcas in Norway stunning herring with a slap of their tail.

Fast forward to Nigel's images and we certainly have unusual behaviour and the speculation is that they are aggregating prior to mating.

The final proof will be when there is an underwater image or, better still, footage of mating taking place.

Coming back full circle to Peter Scoones, I always remember him saying that, as a wildlife cameraman/person, underwater or on land, the main subjects were always sex and death.

Not much changes.

UPY Smartphone category

I'm delighted to see that UPY has a Smartphone category this year and look forward to seeing that images that it attracts.

I have been a great believer in the capabilities of these small chip 'cameras', which, I think it is fair to say, have stunted the development of compact cameras but they do have one significant drawback - ergonomics.

In a lot of cases a small camera is actually easier to handle when in a housing. The enlarged controls/buttons and spacing make it much more logical and efficient to operate.

The problem with smartphones is that, ergonomically, they were designed as a phone first and camera second and this continues in most housings underwater. The result is point and shoot at arms length.

The first improvement, which most housings already have available, is a base tray and stabilising handles.

The second improvement, which a lot of housings already have, is a shutter release lever. This makes picture taking/filming ergonomically ideal.

The final improvement is physiological. The more capable your camera spec, the more empowered you feel. That's why most people use cameras which are far more capable than they are. A smartphone is seen as less capable but, in the right hands and shot to their strengths, will produce excellent images underwater.

Roll on January.

Flashes becoming strobes

Going back as far as I do, I pre-date electronic flashguns. We used disposable flashbulbs (NOTE flashbulbs not strobebulbs).

The advent of electronic flashguns was a godsend, especially underwater and certainly environmentally. Also the technical quality of underwater images improved dramatically.

Whether you call them flashes (correct) or strobes (incorrect) matters not; as long as you understand how they can improve your images.

So?

Well, things are almost going full circle because most modern strobes/ flashes are designed to keep up with the fast frame rates of electronic cameras so that means they really are, technically speaking, not flashguns but strobes :-).

And.....relax.