

Underwater Awards Australasia 2025 winners

by Ian Bongso Seldrup

The organizers of the Underwater Awards Australasia 2025—DPG, Underwater Australasia, and UW Images—are proud to announce the winners of the 2nd edition of the underwater imaging competition focused on the Australasian region. The winning entries were revealed on September 6th, 2025, at Go Diving Show ANZ in Sydney, Australia.

The competition called for passionate underwater shooters from around the world to submit their most captivating and compelling images and videos from the Australasian region. Shooters were invited to immerse themselves in the challenge of capturing the essence of this extraordinary realm, where every frame tells a story of the delicate balance and breathtaking beauty that characterises our oceans.

Entrants competed in nine categories for prizes worth more than A\$70,000 in total, including dive trips with the world's top resorts and liveaboards, as well as the latest underwater photo and video gear. The prestigious judging panel comprised photo judges Tobias Friedrich,

Jayne Jenkins, Matty Smith, Tanya Houppermans, Scott Portelli and William Tan; and video judges Philip Hamilton and Ross Long.

The overall winner of the competition—the “Best of Show”—is James Ferrara, whose stunning leopard seal takes the top spot in the International Waters category. The other category winners are Vadim Belakhov (Sharks), Neil Vincent (Conservation), Talia Greis (Sydney), Marcia Riederer (Australian), Jake Wilton (Portfolio), Luciano Morales Corinaldesi (Smartphone/Action Cam), Imogen Manins (Tough TG), and Laura Gourgass (Reels Showcase).

The organizers would like to extend their congratulations to all the winners, runners-up and honorable mentions, as well as their thanks to everyone that entered the competition. The organizers would also like to express their immense gratitude to the contest's esteemed judges and generous sponsors, without whom the competition would not have been possible.

www.theunderwatercompetition.com



Best of Show: International Waters – Gold “Wide Open” by James Ferrara (USA)

Shooting Location: Antarctica

Equipment and Settings: Sony a7R Mark V, Nauticam housing, 2x ONEUW ONE 160X Mark II strobes (f/5.6, 1/250s, ISO 800)

Photographer's Comment: “When it comes to photographic subjects in Antarctica, the leopard seal sits at the top of my list. Known for their mix of curiosity and aggression, they're a dream subject for any underwater photographer. While these powerful predators often rest on ice floes to conserve energy after a big meal, I was fortunate enough to spend time in the water with this one. At first, it was standoffish, keeping its distance, but as the encounter progressed, it became increasingly curious. By the end, it was opening its mouth and flashing its teeth—a clear display of dominance, a reminder of who's in charge! Though I felt a jolt of nerves, the thrill of experiencing my dream scenario kept me focused, present, and absolutely in awe.”

Australian – Gold

“Minke Elegance” by Marcia Riederer (Australia)



Shooting Location: Ribbon Reefs, Great Barrier Reef, QLD, Australia

Equipment and Settings: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, Nauticam housing (f/7.1, 1/200s, ISO 500)

Photographer's Comment: “The sea is calm, I cling to the mermaid line trailing behind the boat. Then, from the blue, a shadow begins to form. It grows larger, clearer—sleek gray skin, a white blaze on the side—and suddenly I’m staring into the eye of a dwarf minke Whale. It doesn’t rush. Instead, it glides in a slow, deliberate arc, as if weighing me up. I stay still. The whale draws closer, its presence filling the water around me. For a moment, I wonder, am I observing it, or is it studying me? Scientists still don’t know why minkes approach humans, but it feels like we are both simply curious about each other. It’s a rare and humbling privilege to share space with such a remarkable creature, a reminder that the ocean is full of wonders and we should take better care of it.”

Conservation – Gold

“Crocodile and Plastic Bottle” by Neil Vincent (Australia)



Shooting Location: Kakadu National Park, NT, Australia

Equipment and Settings: Nikon D850 (f/8, 1/2000s, ISO 560)

Photographer's Comment: “While watching the crocodiles catch diamond backed mullet at Cahill Crossing, Arnhem Land, NT, a tourist on the bank threw a water bottle into the water near a crocodile. Reflexively, it snapped at the bottle, crushed it a couple of times, and then swallowed it. In the heat of the hunt, crocodiles don’t understand plastic water bottles. I still don’t understand why people use plastic water bottles—and I certainly don’t understand the stupidity of people!”

For full details of all the winning images

www.underwatercompetition.com