

My Shot

by David Fleetham

It is a treat to see a triton trumpet shell, *Charonia tritonis*, on the reef. They have become uncommon to rare in some locations. For thousands of years the Polynesians valued the Triton trumpet shell both for its beauty and its practical uses. They often hollowed out the tip of the shell to create a blowing horn, used for signaling between canoes or across villages, its deep, resonant tone carrying long distances over land and sea. In some island cultures, the triton shell served ceremonial and spiritual purposes, believed to summon protective ocean spirits or announce important gatherings and rituals.

Modern shell collectors also highly value the triton trumpet shell for its impressive size, beauty, and rarity. These shells can grow over 50 centimeters (about 20 inches) in length. For collectors the value goes up with the size of the shell.

The crown-of-thorns starfish, *Acanthaster planci*, is well-defended by an array of sharp, venomous spines that cover its entire upper surface. These long, toxic spines can easily penetrate skin or the mouths of predators, causing intense pain, swelling, and even nausea in larger animals or humans.

When a triton trumpet attacks and consumes a crown-of-thorns starfish, it does so with deliberate precision and patience. The triton locates its prey by scent, detecting chemical cues released by the starfish as it moves across the coral. Once within reach, the triton extends its large, muscular foot to hold the starfish in place, while its proboscis emerges from the shell's opening. Using its radula, a ribbon-like tongue lined with tiny, rasping teeth, the triton drills through the starfish's tough outer skin between the spines. It then injects paralyzing digestive enzymes and saliva, which begin to break down the starfish's tissue, effectively immobilizing it. Arm by arm the triton vacuums the insides of the starfish leaving a deflated version of its former self.



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Shot back in 2005 with a Canon 20D with a Canon 100mm macro in an Ikelite housing, 1/125, f/14, ISO200 and twin Ikelite 125 strobes.

Do you have a favourite shot or an image/s which made a dive special?

**E mail yours with some text to
peter@uwpmag.com**

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.)