

My Shot

by David Fleetham

The green bubble algae, *Valonia ventricosa*—also called sailor's eyeball or sea pearl—is a common sight on South Pacific reefs. The smooth green spheres sit on reef flats and rubble zones like lost marbles, out of place among coral and broken stone. They look strange. Almost too perfect. Most divers touch one the first time they see it, just to be sure it's alive and not something dropped there by mistake.

What seems like a curiosity turns out to be something more. *Valonia ventricosa* is one of the largest single-celled organisms known. Each bubble is one cell, held firm by pressure and fixed lightly to the reef. It is simple and complete. For underwater photographers, it is a reminder that the ocean often hides its best stories in plain sight, waiting for those who slow down enough to see them.

Look closer and the story deepens. The algae is home to a small nudibranch, *Ercolania endophytophaga*. The slug uses the bubble as shelter and as a place to lay its eggs. The eggs sit inside the algae, safe and unseen. The bright green orb becomes a nursery. It is a quiet arrangement, easy to miss unless you know it exists—or unless your camera shows it to you later.

I have photographed these algae many times. I liked the shape. I liked the color. I did not know about the nudibranchs. I did not see them when I took the picture. It was only later, after reading about the relationship and seeing another photograph, that I looked again at my own image. That is when I saw what had been there all along.

For underwater photographers, this kind of discovery comes with time. It humbles you. It also keeps you going. Photography is not only about what you see in the water. It is about what you find later, on a screen, with patience and attention. This was not the first time an image revealed more than I knew when I made it, and it will not be the last. The ocean gives its lessons quietly. You just have to be willing to look again.



Canon EOS R5 mirrorless in an Ikelite dry-lock housing with a Canon RF 100mm macro lens, 1/125 sec, F20, ISO 200, with two very powerful Ikelite 230 strobes on TTL.

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.)

David Fleetham
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My Shot

by George Day

Having dived Indonesia on several occasions my wife and I have both seen a lot except for the famous muck diving at Lembeh. So 2 weeks were duly booked at the White Sands Resort so we could really get into it and see as much as possible. We weren't disappointed.

Forsaking my 9" dome of many years, which had developed a small leak anyway, I had purposely armed myself for this trip with a couple of additions to my arsenal in the shape of the Nauticam SMC- 3 and MFO- 3 plus the double flip holder for attaching them to my trusty Nauticam NA D800 housing and port for the Nikkor 105mm f2.8G. This proved to be a great decision as at no time did I feel the need to use the dome since the MFO-3 did exactly what I needed, plus I saved on excess baggage! which my wife appreciated as she has all the bragging rights on light weight camera housings since she only uses her iPhone 15 in a DiveVolk housing!

My keeper rate of shots has never been higher than it is with the MFO-3 since the flexibility it gives with the flip holder between it and the normal lens is fantastic. I particularly loved how close you can get to the subject with it which also increases clarity and reduces backscatter and yet still have a wide angle shot. It does mean however you have to be careful with the strobes positions, I don't think I have ever adjusted the two Inon Z-330's as much before.

My favourite shot is of these two Mandarin fish mating as they darted out of the coral and I managed to get her eggs just appearing from under them both before he fertilised them. It was looking like they and their co-habitants were not going to perform but after about 40mins they did so and our shallow 5 metre dive was all worth while, 10 minutes later it was fully dark as dusk gave way to nightfall and with an unlucky group of divers arriving too late we left for a short night dive a little deeper to finish off the dive.

We largely had good weather for our stay only rain for a few days but not for long and only really windy for one day but not sufficient to prevent diving.

We may well be back!



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