

Parting Shot

Beautiful Sydney is blessed with many dive sites, ranging from the beach headlands, locations inside Sydney Harbour, and reefs along the coast and bays. One of my regular diving buddies and I decided to explore Coogee, about 20 minutes drive south from Bondi Beach. We were curious to investigate the shark nets and I had just received one of the newly released green water Magic Filters.

So on a windy and overcast November morning, we waded through the gentle surf, swam out about 400m, then dropped down in about 10m of water and continued east to the shark net.

Shortly after we got to the net, we found a southern eagle ray tangled in it with plastic threads cutting its flesh and scraping its skin. Visibly distressed, it raised its tail in warning whenever we swam towards it. Like most rays, eagle rays have a poisonous barb on their tail, which they can use for self-defence. As we didn't have the right equipment or support to safely release it, we had to leave the ray. Further along the net, we found the skeleton of an unrecognisable fish, picked clean but still tangled and swinging in the surge.

After the dive, my buddy and I organised some PVC piping to cover the ray's barb, cutting tools and extra divers to help us if we got tangled in the net. Unfortunately, the weather deteriorated. Strong winds and big seas meant we couldn't safely dive for several days. Two days after we found the ray, another dive buddy and I snorkelled out through the surf to see if the ray was still there. Avoiding the net waving in the surge, we freedived down to the ray. It had drowned, immobilised and strangled

by the shark net.

This eagle ray was not the intended target of the net. But it was one of its victims. For every shark caught by these nets, many animals such as Whales, dolphins, and turtles are killed as "collateral damage". It should be obvious that I believe the shark nets are ineffective and should be removed.

It surprises me how little people know about the shark nets. They are only in place for 10-15 days per month. When they are there, they only reach up 5 metres from the bottom of the ocean, leaving 5-10 metres of water above them. About a hundred metres long, they're a fraction of the length of the beach. It's no surprise that close to half the sharks are caught on the beach side of the net as they're swimming away!

All the images from this first dive with the Green Magic Filter were taken with the Olympus C-5060 in PT-020 housing, camera set to Program mode (auto exposure and aperture), 400ASA, manual white balance, HQ JPEG format with no post-dive colour, contrast or exposure processing. I was very pleased with the results, especially as they were from the first time with the filter, and taken on an overcast day. The reduction in light (longer exposures therefore more blurring), and the inability to remove the filter during the dive are the main limitations I've encountered since. However these are offset by the absence of backscatter and the ease



better colour results are achieved.

What next? For my photos in green water with suspended particles, the Magic Filter is a useful alternative to a strobe. And hopefully the photos from this dive will help stop the shark nets, and help stop further damage to the underwater world we're privileged to explore.

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**Do you have a nice shot with a short story
behind it?
If so e mail me and yours could be the next
"Parting shot".**

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