

Parting Shot 1

Slovene part of the Adriatic has only 2 or 3 diving spots on its 42km shoreline. In Fiesa bay there is a small reef from 5 to 10m depth in its length approx 700m. Beside that only a flat seabed of sand and mud descending slowly to max 20m.

A group of divers decided to enrich a bit this kind of environment. First we placed some concrete cubes on the seabed and they were populated immediately. Encouraged by this experience we started to plan further developments. One of the friends succeeded to put hands on a 7m sailboat which laid abandoned in a local marina and its managers wanted to get rid of the boat. There was an intention to obtain all the approvals needed to sink the boat as an artificial reef in the Fiesa bay, but it became evident that this procedure would



Photo by Boris Vuga

last virtually forever. The best thing to do was to act an accidental sinking of the boat being on tug just on the right position at the right time. Naturally we cleaned the boat of all pollutants and environmentally dangerous materials as seen on much bigger ships like Spiegel grove or Oriskany.

Soon the news spread both above and under the water. The wreck attracted several regular inhabitants with a lobster (homarus gammarus) and a conger among them. The divers were coming and they found new

motivation in visiting the cubes and the boat's wreck. In that area several courses for new divers are held and therefore for many divers that was a first encounter with a wreck. After 3 years under water, the propeller was well covered with encrustations but surprisingly still could be easily rotated.

At the season's opening in April we went to Fiesa for one of the season's first dives. At the cubes there were plenty of nudis egg ribbons on the weed, some aplusia punctata mating, an octopus hiding underneath etc. Just



seemed quite enough for a nice interesting spring dive. When I approached the wreck from its stern my regulator almost fell out of my mouth from the surprise. There was a propeller shaft ending with a shiny surface showing still fresh saw's trails. And no propeller!

A fellow diver took the souvenir just a day or two before. Needless to say that the propeller had no special material or historical or whatever values except for the joy it was bringing to the visiting beginner divers.

For some people it is

hard to understand that there is always someone who is affected by their irresponsible behaviour. The story is quite similar on larger wrecks and in that case it is our sons generation affected. If we all won't behave and we continue taking souvenirs, they might be able to visit just some sheet metal plates reminding slightly the ship's original form.

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Parting Shot 2

One of my favourite dive sites for photography is Curtin Artificial Reef, which is near my home in Brisbane, Australia. This site is great for either macro or wide angle, with prolific sub-tropical marine life and dozens of shipwrecks to explore.

Curtin Artificial Reef is one of the oldest purposely created artificial reefs in the world. The first ship was sunk here by the Queensland Underwater Research Group in 1968, and since then they have added over twenty ships, plus trams, tyres, pipes and other objects to what was once a barren sandy bottom.

Visibility on the wrecks can vary dramatically. Located in Moreton Bay the artificial reef is washed by currents, you can have 15m plus visibility on the high tide and several hours later only 5m visibility on the low tide.

On a recent dive on the wrecks we arrived at low tide, so a 60mm lens was my weapon of choice for all the invertebrates and reef fish that shelter on the wrecks.

Upon entering the greenish water the visibility was pushing 5m, so my buddy, Lisa, and I decided to concentrate on the critters on just one wreck.

After finding octopus, butterflyfish, hawkfish and crabs, I was busy framing a goby when I heard a cry from Lisa. I looked up to see her pointing at a common lionfish. Nothing to get excited about as they are pretty common on the wrecks I thought, until I saw it had a banded cleaner shrimp in its mouth.

However, this cleaner shrimp wasn't doing any cleaning; it was struggling as the lionfish was trying to swallow it!



Nikon D50, Ikelite housing, 60mm lens, 1/80, f25, ISO 200, single Inon Z240 strobe

Now I thought cleaner shrimps and cleaner fish had a sort of diplomatic immunity, with the unwritten law being 'DON'T EAT THE CLEANER'. This rule is followed by most fish, but not this lionfish.

I fired off several photos as the shrimp struggle to get free. Not much chance of that. At first it had both claws and half its body out of the lionfish's mouth. But a couple of quick gulps and there was

only the claws, antenna and a few legs showing.

A few more photos and few more gulps and just one claw and the antenna remained. I captured this parting shot just before the claw disappeared, it opened and closed one last time in defiance and was gone.

Parting Shot 3

It was a cold January evening in Florida and with the light almost gone we had given up photography for the day at Crystal River. We were finning home when suddenly we had the impression we were not alone. A female manatee was cruising along with us. We stopped to give her a scratch.

While this is not a remarkably beautiful photograph of a manatee encounter, I thought I'd submit it for Parting Shot for two reasons. First it features UWP's editor on his (and my) first snorkel with manatees. I was pleased to have a small object, such as Peter, to help make the main subject, the sea cow, look as large and impressive as possible. Diminutive models are always a bonus in underwater photography for this reason. But the real interest factor in this image relates to shooting in low light.

Despite the near total darkness and the murky water outside the springs I decided to turn on my camera and take a few snaps. Had I been shooting Nikon's new flagship DSLR the D3 I may have wound up the ISO setting to 6400 and snapped away. When I shot a pre-prod D3 back in October I was amazed by ISO 3200 and 6400 on this camera - quite the

equal of ISO 400 on my D2X. Apparently the production cameras are better still. I have yet to try one.

Anyway I had the D2X and was too lazy to move the camera away from ISO 100! So I just slowed and slowed the shutter speed until I got a decent green. In the end I was shooting at a shutter speed of 1/2 second. That is click...click.

And the pictures looked great and were blur free. There is slight movement blur on Peter's hand, but other than that they look great. High ISO performance is arguably the favourite feature of the measurebator (a person far more interested in camera specs than photographs). It is something that can be quite accurately quantified and then argued about on internet forums. An ideal statistic! It is perhaps the most often quoted statistic when debating which camera is best.

Anyway before you all rush out and buy a Nikon D3 or a Canon 1D Mk3 or 5D (the acknowledged high ISO kings) I think that this picture makes the point that there is more than one way to take a photo in low light. If we are using strobes and a wide angle lens it is worth remembering that instead of increasing the ISO we can always adopt the old school technique of extending the shutter



Manatee Encounter. UWP Editor, Peter Rowlands (right) is befriended by a female manatee at dusk. Nikon D2X + Tokina 10-17mm @ 12mm. ISO 100. F7.1. Half second exposure. 2 x Inon 240 strobes.

speeds out beyond 1/60th. Strobes will freeze the foreground and we can rely on the stability provided by the water, also known as nature's tripod, to ensure our backgrounds are acceptably sharp.

Of course, a high ISO king camera might be better still, but for those trying to resist the expenditure of an upgrade, good technique can save you dropping your current camera in the skip just yet. Risky methods may not always work, but if

we are prepared to push the limits we might be surprised what is actually possible.

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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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