

# Parting Shot 1

At the beginning of March this year I was out with my other half walking the stunning Coastal Footpath around the South West of the UK. We stopped at one particular cove to watch a couple of seals bobbing up and down and playing with each other in the water. Seeing these beautiful mammals always puts a smile on my face and an ache in my heart to jump in and join them!

And here was my opportunity: two seals in a quiet cove away from local boat traffic, it was too good to pass up. So the next day hoping above hope that they were still there, in heavy rain and Force 7 winds I donned my wetsuit and snorkelling gear and with camera in hand entered the water to see what I could see. Which initially, with 3m vis, was not a lot.

The possible photographic opportunities were racing through my mind along with F-stops, exposure settings, shutter speeds, ISO values and a burning desire to get some decent photos! In fact I was so carried away with preparing for my first encounter that when it came I nearly needed another wetsuit, but you don't need to know about that.

The two big, beautiful female Grey Seals had crept up on me and

surfaced a mere 2 meters from where I was bobbing on the surface. After my heart had come back down to a more normal rate I was very pleased that they had made the first move and seemed to be happy to investigate my fins and allow me to get fairly close.

Over the next 30 minutes or so I was lucky to be allowed to play with these stunning creatures - but I can hardly remember any of it. I was so desperately trying (and failing) to get a perfect image that I actually had lost sight of the amazing experience I was having there!

I mentally slapped myself about the face and realised that I was being afforded a great privilege and I wasn't truly appreciating it. So I clipped the camera onto my SMB and started to play with these ladies - and what a treat! For another 30 mins they allowed me to become an honorary (but admittedly rubbish) seal. Obviously I lost all the games we played; like who can swim the fastest, who can hold their breath the longest and who looks cutest while hanging head down in the water amongst the kelp. But it was just me and them, free to interact and enjoy being under the



*Canon Ixus 980is, Inon UFL-165AD Fisheye, camera on full auto, natural light. Post processing to tweak white balance.*

waves.

When I did reach for my camera again I stuck it on full 'auto' mode and simply held the shutter button down. I didn't even bother framing the shots with the LCD screen - here was a moment too special to waste fiddling with endless settings. Ok, so the photos that came out will never be published nor win any awards; but the ones I took shooting from the hip

are a more realistic recording of the encounter and conditions, and I think have captured more of the essence of the time I spent with the seals.

**Dan Bolt**

[www.underwaterpics.co.uk](http://www.underwaterpics.co.uk)

## Parting Shot 2

I was delighted to receive Issue 45 last November, having just returned from Palau a month earlier. You guys have done a great job with the magazine and I enjoy each one cover to cover. My first reaction to the Jellyfish shot on the cover was that the photographer had just been to Jellyfish Lake in Palau. When I finally got to page 45, I learned that the cover shot was actually Jellyfish Lake in Kakaban, Indonesia, although the resemblance to my experience in Palau was remarkable.

I spent a week in Palau last October with a couple of my dive buddies, after a business trip to Asia. We applied the diver's version of the old adage "Las Vegas is always on the way home", met in Guam on a Friday Night and then on to Palau for several days of great diving. We stayed at the Palau Pacific Resort (PPR) which was a great home base, but honestly we didn't spend much time at the resort, as this was a guys trip consumed by diving.

We dove with Sams the entire week. I am usually reluctant to use the largest outfit on any island, but Sams came recommended by a combination of friends, dive buddies and dive shops. While I am sure there are other great dive shops on Palau, our

experience with Sams was great. They picked us up by boat each morning. The first morning, I was still in a NYC state of mind, so when the boat didn't come exactly on time, I was nervous. After that, I quickly adjusted to Island time. They never forgot to pick us up.

Jellyfish lake was a worthwhile visit. Kind of like Stingray City on Grand Cayman, you should do it once in your life, maybe twice, if you get the opportunity to go back to take friends or family. I had been coached to make sure I took a lot of pictures by diving down to 10-15 feet (you snorkel only-no tanks) and shooting up at the sun through the many Jellies. You have undoubtedly seen many such pictures. I did a few of those, but suffered from some buoyancy issues--I left my 3 Mil on and I carry about 20 lbs of extra natural buoyancy around the waist (carefully sculpted from too much fermented barley and hops-more on that later), so after trying to stuff a few rocks in my pockets, I abandoned that effort and concentrated on taking pictures with my strobe extended out over the Jellies. This was pretty successful--although you be the judge.

After diving at Sams is also a good time. I am usually one who gets off the boat, packed up and back to the Hotel in pretty short order to



*This picture was taken with an Olympus 5060 in a Light and Motion Tetra housing at ISO 100, F 3.5 at 1/640, with the strobe extended out over and pointed straight down on the Jelly.*

get showered. Hanging at the bar at Sams provides the opportunity to enjoy fresh Tuna Sashimi and freshly brewed Red Rooster Beer (brewed locally in Palau - helps maintain that natural buoyancy), and of course swap dive stories. You needn't worry about being on the last boat back to the resort, because they will take you back whenever you are ready, by either car or boat.

On the camera front, I have had great experiences with my Olympus 5060 in a L&M Tetra housing for the past 5 years. I will likely get serious and move up to a DSLR, probably a Nikon D700 in a Subal at some point in my future.

**Ryan Burdeno**

# Parting Shot 3

It was another wonderful clear morning under the Thai sun and I was about to take one diver out to the marine park of the Phi Phi Islands. The boat brought us out to the Bida Islands, 8km south of Phi Phi Don Island in the Andaman Sea. It was unusual, as I took my camera with me and a diving customer. Normally I don't like to do that as I figured that my pictures weren't really great when I had someone with me to look for and also my divers didn't get the attention they deserved when I was distracted by my precious gear. But my buddy from Switzerland was like a fish in the water and he was very happy to get some shots of himself diving so I decided to take my camera and try out my new wide angle lens for the first time. I didn't even have the full zoom gear yet, but I was really curious to see the potential of this expensive piece of Japanese optics.

We decided that the captain would drop us on the steep 'Low season' side of Bida Nai. After a dive to 30 metres we moved into shallower water and I suddenly heard a wild clanking that wouldn't stop. To find its origin I turned myself around and around and then suddenly right above

us, there he was, this massive bus of a fish. A whale shark. On his side, banging his guts out was our skinny French videographer, appearing really small beside the huge fish and you could see his excitement from far away. I was stunned for some seconds but then checked for my buddy and we ascended further to around 15m to follow the whale shark side by side. He moved in slow motion but it was fast for us.

I realized what luck I had, to have for the first time my wide angle with me and encounter the perfect subject for it. So I started to shoot and swim to bring him in a good position, breathing heavily after a while.

But suddenly my camera jammed! It wasn't focusing anymore and I couldn't release the shutter. What? Why exactly now? I couldn't explain this problem. I turned the camera off and on and it worked again but just for one shot. Off and on, looking through the viewfinder, shot. At least I could take around 30 shots like that in total.

The shark had deep cuts on his back, two deep fresh wounds parting his dorsal fin. It must have been hit by a twin engine boat close to the



*Canon EOS 350d with Canon 10-22mm, Sea & Sea housing, one YS-90auto, 1/160, f5, ISO100*

surface. On my shots later I could see his red flesh.

Back on land I tried to find the reason for my camera being jammed, but I could find no explanation. As soon as I took my camera out of its housing the problem didn't persist. The following shoot outs it only happened occasionally again until one time I heard the shutter button clicking. Once I took the camera out of the housing it was clear to me - the button just got stuck. I finally solved

the problem by putting a rubber band around the release lever that changed the angle of contact with the button.

Our whale shark is now registered with [www.whaleshark.org](http://www.whaleshark.org) as T-023, and one of my images was used in a promotional brochure for the organization.

**Tobias Reitmayr**  
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## Parting Shot 4

Just outside of Carmel Bay in Monterey CA, a mile off the 18th green of the Pebble Beach Golf Course, lie three submerged rocky peaks known as the Monterey Pinnacles. Jutting to within 15 feet of the surface they are exposed to the full effects of deep ocean swells and currents. Thick stands of kelp often form an umbrella over the profusion of life below. Many cuts and crevices provide vertical relief for a plethora of invertebrate life with barely an open square inch of real estate to be had. Hydrocoral, anemones, bryozoans, sponges, nudibranchs, and sea stars are jammed packed in a rainbow of colors. Ling cod, sculpin, gobies, and rockfish share the crowded bottom living conditions and most cracks in the rock are likely to be somebody's home. A whole dive could easily be spent exploring just one of these crevice walls.

Nutrient rich waters allow the whole food chain to thrive. Dolphins, sharks, seals and sea lions have been seen with some regularity. Visibility

ranges from around 20 – 80ft plus and is usually better than beach sites because of its off shore location and the near constant flow of currents. The close proximity of the Monterey Submarine Canyon can help serve up quite a menu of gelatinous critters; jellies, ctenophores, salps, and other plankton glide by in countless numbers. During a safety stop one of these open ocean drifters, aptly named an egg yolk jelly, made a lone flyby adding a vibrant splash of color to the last minutes of a truly magnificent immersion. My dive buddy had just put up his SMB and happened to be in the right location. I only had time for one image before the jelly and my buddy were out of position.

*Nikon D2x, Subal ND2 housing,  
Nikkor 10.5mm FE, 1/125 sec, f10, ISO  
200, Twin Sea&Sea YS-120 strobes on  
1/2 power.*

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**Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?**

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