

Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2009

The Underwater World



Winner - Michel Loup - Pike reflection

On that summer morning in the Jura Mountains, the lake was both crystal clear and mirror smooth. Michel glided very slowly beneath the surface towards the four pike. 'I was touched by the utter serenity of the scene,' says Michel, 'and the perfect reflections of the fish, intersected by the lines of pondweed.' Trying not to make ripples or bubbles, he stopped breathing and pressed the shutter. 'The yellow pike in the foreground didn't show any sign of nervousness about how close

I was, which reassures me that my way of approaching, like a big fish, nonchalant and feigning indifference, didn't disturb him.'

The pike, too, was practising the same technique, stealthily moving closer to fish prey.

Nikon D2X + Sigma 10-20mm f4-5.6 EX DC HSM lens at 20mm; 1/80 sec at f10; ISO 400; Aquatica housing.

© Michel Loup / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2009



Runner-up- Alexander Safonov - The plunge diver

The 'sardine run' takes place every winter off the Southern Cape.

The shoals were being attacked by a congregation of predators, from sharks and dolphins to seals and birds. But what intrigued Alexander the most were the diving seabirds, in particular the Cape gannets, which were plunging into the water at speeds exceeding 60kph (37mph) to depths of 10 or so metres (33 feet) as they chased the sardines. 'I came across this scene', says Alexander, 'one beautiful morning while diving among a baitball.' To capture it, Alexander had to learn

blind-shooting techniques, as 'the viewfinder is almost useless for taking close-ups of fast-moving birds under water.' The setting for the silver 'flying' gannet – a surreal backdrop of slicing sunbeams, glistening scale particles, corkscrew dive trails and diving fish – created the unforgettable image.

Nikon D300 + Nikkor 12-24mm lens; 1/400 sec at f10; ISO 200; Sea&Sea MDX-D300 housing.

© Alexander Safonov / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2009



Highly Commended - Doug Perrine - Big-mouth

Doug was on Golden Gate Bank off the southern tip of Baja California, Mexico, to photograph striped marlin feeding on shoaling sardines. When the marlin suddenly made a sharp exit, Doug had an ominous feeling that something was up. And that 'something' was a 10-metre (33-foot) 'high-speed missile blasting through the baitball': a Bryde's whale. 'Just before reaching the sardines,' Doug says, 'the whale opened its jaws impossibly wide and the throat pleats expanded to take in water and fish.' And nearly Doug, too: he narrowly missed the open mouth, bouncing off

the whale's lower lip and the side of the throat pleats. The huge gulp complete, the whale's jaws closed and the accordion-like pleats forced the water out through the baleen hanging from the upper jaw, trapping the sardines on the inside.

Canon EOS 40D + Tokina 10-17mm lens at 10mm; 1/640 sec at f5.6; ISO 640; Subal C40 housing.

© Doug Perrine / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2009



Highly Commended - Paul Nicklen - Water baby

A young southern elephant seal pup rests in a freshwater creek in Fortuna Bay, South Georgia. His 36kg (80 pounds) birth weight had soared to about 180kg (400 pounds) in fewer than three weeks. Now weaned, he had been left to fend for himself. Constant storms meant that the seawater was too murky for underwater photography, but Paul was desperate to get images of elephant seals. He eventually found this young seal playing in a crystal-clear freshwater creek, and joined it in the water for more than two hours. 'After waiting months in vain for a picture of a polar bear in the Arctic,'

he says, 'here I was on the other side of the world, being mobbed by countless curious animals, including this plump and healthy seal. South Georgia is one of the most astonishing wildlife hotspots I have been to.'

Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III + Canon EF 16-35mm f2.8L II USM lens; 1/100 sec at f13; ISO 200; Seacam housing; dual Ikelite SS-125 strobes.

© Paul Nicklen / Veolia Environnement Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2009

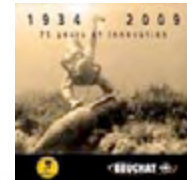


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Fisheye G10



Canon G11(WP-DC34)



Sea&Sea DX-2G



Ewa-Marine new SplashiX
Universal compact housing
Max depth 6m



Aunoc 1CR
240m depth!



FIX LED1000DX



45 degree DSLR viewfinder
removable underwater!



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New! Big Eye Dome Lens
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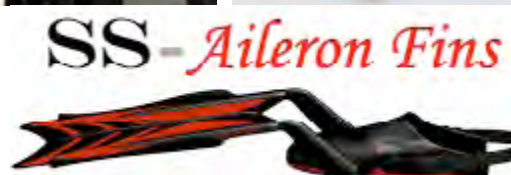
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