

Parting Shot 1

A compulsive desire to shoot some pictures after six months indolence in the flesh-pots of Whangarei, New Zealand, drove me north to Tutukaka with a couple of girls on board Vigia. Photographer Tobi Bernhard was up there on Nexus, working hard, diving at the Poor Knights as often as conditions would allow. Sometimes it's better to be lucky than to work hard.

Nearing Tutukaka as the light was fading, Anna Cherry spotted a commotion in the water. Dolphins or a sunfish I thought. We closed in and could see it was a 7m whale shark feeding in a huge windrow of zooplankton. I had never heard of whale sharks in New Zealand waters, nor seen one in 20 years in the Pacific. It was curious about Vigia and came right alongside so we could shoot some pictures, but at 7pm it was too dark to try to do anything in the water.

Fortunately, having some low res digital pictures was enough to convince Tobi about what we had seen.

We motored offshore the following day looking for more whale sharks, but saw nothing apart from makos, a hammerhead and common dolphins until almost home. About three miles off Tutukaka were the same undulating fields of plankton with a whale shark and a Bryde's whale making hay with the last of the sun.

The girls dropped me off and I snorkelled over with a Nikonos 3, 15mm lens and light meter, but there was very little light. I shot some pictures at my default f5.6 at 1/125th, and then measured the light. With the lens fully open, a shutter speed I thought



Nikonos 3, 15mm lens. f5.6, 1/125th second, Velvia 100 pushed two stops. Scanned and lightened two stops by Tobi Bernhard.

might just hold things (1/60th) the lab would have to push the Velvia 100 two stops. I did what I could, the visibility varied from a metre in the plankton to 15m outside. The female whale shark was oblivious, simply intent on ingesting as much plankton as possible, only objecting with a shudder when I hung onto its dorsal briefly. As we left this animal, we saw a second whale shark as we neared the coast.

Tobi scanned the underexposed first frames,

boosted the exposure and the first of these ran on the cover of the local newspaper, page two of the NZ Herald, and on a TV3 news segment. Of all the 36 sightings recorded in the previous 20 years in New Zealand, none had been photographed underwater.

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Parting Shot 2

Brighton, on the south coast of England, has a famous history in underwater photography, but it is not a location where you expect to find a tropical shark dive! My friends Rob and Jonny, who run the Brighton Shark Dive invited me along to meet their buddies at the Brighton Sealife Centre, the oldest working aquarium in the world. By the way, their buddies include a large nurse shark, sandbar sharks, black-tip reef sharks, a leopard shark, a green turtle and pictured here a loggerhead turtle.

I am happy to admit that I underestimated the photographic challenge involved. My idea that it would be as easy as shooting fish in a barrel was quickly proved wrong. First, in the limited space the subjects are not always that cooperative. They are very sensitive to your movements and it is best to stay as still as possible.

But the big challenge is that the Sealife centres in the UK have a no-flash policy. This didn't bother me initially as I knew it would be shallow, however, I had not realised how dark a large indoor aquarium is. When you go there and look through the glass, and your eyes are used to the dark, you see fine. But point a camera and you get a shock. Mine reported that at F8 and ISO 100 I would need a 1 second exposure. Houston we have a problem!

Flash would easily overcome all these problems and I would have tried to talk the aquarium round if it was a pro-shoot for them. But I was just here for fun. I had to work within the rules. So I used my FIX LED 500 as an on camera light source, which worked surprisingly well. However it is still important to keep shutter speeds as high as

possible, because with continuous lighting moving subjects will easily blur. It is better to open the aperture up a bit, although this means you have to make sure the focus is spot on.

My favourite images were ones with people looking in through the windows. These required quite a bit of luck, because I was relying on kids passing by to be interested enough to hang around until a critter came close, which didn't happen much!

But it was a fun morning. Encouraged by the shots I want to go back. I have learned a lot about such an unusual lighting challenge, and think I should be able to get something even stronger. Key will be a slighting better on camera lighting set up and some dedicated friends to pose behind the glass!

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Nikon D700 + 17-35mm @ 17mm (with +3 dioptr). Subal housing. ISO 1600, 1/80th @ f/5. No flash! Light on turtle from FIX LED500 torch. Light on kids from lamps inside the tunnel.



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

**If so e mail us
and yours could be the next "Parting shot".
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