

Parting Shot 1

I live in Sweden and dive in cold water all year round, preferably along the Swedish west coast or the Norwegian coast. In January 2010 I experienced one of the most spectacular dives that I have ever done during a visit to Gulen, just north of Bergen in Norway. The dive centre Gulen Dykkesenter and the Norwegian UW-photographer Christian Skauge arranges dive-safaris each year to Lurefjorden, to watch and photograph the deep-sea jellyfish *Periphylla periphylla* (helmet jelly). This magical creature is present in seas all over the world but it is very rarely seen by divers because they are few and far between and usually live at depths impossible for divers to visit. In some Norwegian fjords however, the helmet jelly occurs in permanent and extremely large numbers and during the night they perform a vertical migration sometimes all the way up to the surface.

On this particular night the air temperature was well below freezing and the snow was glistening in the light from a full moon. After a 45 minutes boat ride in the dark we were in the middle of Lurefjorden. The instruments on the boat told us that the

depth was 370 m. Our only reference point for the dive was thrown into the water, a buoy with a white line with flashing lights at 15 and 30 m. In the cold water the visibility was fantastic and we were surrounded by large orange-red jelly-fish. I quickly became completely absorbed by the creatures gracefully moving around us. The jelly fish were able to sense our lights and moved with surprising speed when disturbed. After a while I realised how easy it was to follow one with the camera, deeper and deeper down into the black water. My faithful buddy got my attention and pointed at the 30 m light. I also noticed that the other divers were well above us. When we finally surfaced my face was stiff with cold but I could not help smiling like a kid. Meetings like this are what makes cold water diving so fantastic and make it worth carrying every extra kilo of equipment, even through snow.

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*Canon 400D, Ikelite housing, Tokina
10-17 mm lens at 17 mm, 1/100, f 5.6,
ISO 200.*



Parting Shot 2

Every year when the water reaches 12 degrees Celsius, several cephalopod species start to arrive in the shallow waters of the Oosterschelde (Eastern Scheldt), an estuary in the south of the Netherlands: the reproductive season has arrived. Especially the mating and egg-laying of the Common cuttlefish *Sepia officinalis* is, by all accounts, a spectacular event to witness.

And so, during the last weekend of May, my buddy and I set out on the 250 kilometre journey from my home to the Oosterschelde, to try and see this extraordinary display for the first time. Alas, when we arrived there was a strong wind, and the conditions did not look good. We waited for slack water and then walked the excruciating 500 meters from the car to the dive site in full gear, but only five minutes underwater were enough to call it a day. My buddy and I couldn't see each other, even though we were holding each other by the arms.

Of course, the next day, back home, the weather was

absolutely splendid. As I was making a stroll through the garden, I noticed the newts in the small pond, bathing in the afternoon sunlight. I rushed back inside for my camera, still in its housing as it was resting in the bathtub, and lowered it into the pond.

This image of a female Smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* is the result. It didn't take a 250 kilometre drive, and back, nor did it take hours of waiting for slack water and hauling dive equipment. It took just 30 minutes of patience.

Sometimes the best images are just waiting to happen in the backyard.

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Canon EOS 5D, Subal CD5 housing with dome port, Sigma 15mm fish-eye, 1/160 sec at f/10, ISO 320, available light.

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with a short story behind it?
If so e mail us and yours could be
the next "Parting shot".
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