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Readers Lives

More enough

I really got a kick out of the editorial/article enough is enough in issue 61. I am also a Olympus e-pl1 owner. I agree with your friend. I am not looking to upgrade because it does everything I have wanted it to do and its compact. For most of us who do not make a living with our camera's it needs to be about the dive and the ability to record and share with friends. It is about the memories. Here are two really good examples of fun with cameras.

The first one Cleaning Station was done with my Canon A95 point and shoot (no strobe just on board flash). The second was with my pen a ys-01 strobe and an old sea life 960 (first generation). Both make me happy and my friends think they are cool. Point is it should never be about buying the next cool gadget. It should be about enjoying the one you have. When it breaks upgrade!



Although I should point out that I don't think I will go past the PEN.... like your friend it does what I want for the price I like.

AJ Genova

Solo thoughts

Thought the latest edition of the mag was terrific. The SDI (Solo Diving) piece (although padded with too much personal waffle for my own taste), was a brilliant expose.

Along with your own editorial regarding the puppet tv presenters, the SDI piece reflects, unfortunately, the way of the world. There's a cause here that UWP and thinking subscribers might want to take up: an inventory of personal diving incidents to put diving safety in perspective and to challenge some of the group think that you refer to in your editorial.

For example; Since my first scuba dive in 1962, I have had two equipment failures, neither of them while using scuba, both while using hookah, and both while in the water with another diver, who was unable to come to assist, and had no need to anyway.

Of all the divers I have known in that same period, none of them have had any scuba equipment failures. Three are dead from diving related misadventure (one shark attack while spearfishing, one shallow water blackout while spearfishing in deep water-both had partners with them; one drowned in a cave after going in without a line - but with four buddies, three of which drowned with him).

More of my friends are dead from motor vehicle accidents. And

on that point, why this obsession with preventing solo diving which, in the statistically unlikely event of catastrophe will result in loss of single soul, when every day and night, solo drivers of all ages and experience levels driving vehicles from motorcycles to juggernauts roam our streets, and solo pilots fly over densely populated cities and suburban areas? Rockclimbers happily solo, surfers happily solo, skiers happily solo. Why not divers??? Definitely food for thought.

Anyway, enough rant.

Wade Hughes FRGS

Having received the above letter, UwP contacted Bob Halstead for his comments. Whether he likes it or not, Bob qualifies for 'legend' status. In the early 1980's he built a 20 metre live-aboard dive boat, the Telita, to enable diving adventurers from around the world to join him in PNG. They were able to cruise to the most remote of Papua New Guinea's islands and reefs. In 1996 he sold the company, including MV Telita, and now, from his base in Cairns, he leads adventure dive tours to PNG and the Coral Sea in association with friends Craig de Wit on board MV Golden Dawn, and Alan Raabe on FeBrina. He also offers guiding services to private Super Yachts.

Bob Halstead's thoughts

Authorities just love divers to make "risk assessments" before any dive. I suggest that the "Dive Buddy" should be a part of that assessment. A survey I did years ago that revealed that more advanced (my definition = 100 dives +) divers were getting into trouble BECAUSE of their buddies, than were rescued by them. In other words the Buddy had INCREASED the risk of the dive for the experienced divers.

Any thinking person will realise that the really important Buddy is the one in the Dive tender on the surface looking out and able to rescue you if you surface away from the boat.

Unfortunately certifying agencies have been stuck with the Buddy System - and "no-decompression diving" (A really stupid concept for sport divers who should treat every dive as a decompression dive) that they inherited from Navy diving manuals. Now they are reluctant to change "established practice". However in the wilds of PNG I can tell you that solo diving for anyone who is self-sufficient and wants to - photographer or not - is alive and well. We do allow buddy diving but prefer ALL our divers to be self-sufficient, and absolutely not

dependant on a buddy even if they choose to share a dive with one.

My current thinking goes along the lines that in my life I am sick and tired of people in authority telling me what to do with my life (The Nanny State). I like being alone underwater and "One with Nature". I wear a completely redundant pony bottle system, have never had a diving emergency except when I ran out of film with my old camera (I too now have a digital camera about to get wet for the first time) and I don't tell other people how they should dive.

I still LOVE Diving. Just had a wonderful 4 week cruise with Captain Craig de Wit on MV Golden Dawn which included a dive on a Bristol Beaufighter wreck at 62m, a drift dive at 4 knots, a solo drop off in the Coral Sea well away from other divers followed by a swim through a pass in the reef, exploring new dive sites and, inadvertently, a swim with a large crocodile that nearly bumped into Julian Cohen (who was diving by himself). If I had to give it all up I'm sure I would become a menace to society, which is food for thought after the British riots.

Bob Halstead

www.halsteaddiving.com

Diving with Pygmy Seahorses

Pygmy seahorses are a group of very small fish, between 1.4 and 2.7 cm in length. Two of these, Bargibant's and Denise's pygmy seahorses, live exclusively on the surface of gorgonian seafans. The seahorse's very small size, fragility and the delicate nature of their gorgonian home puts them and their seafans at risk from damage caused by divers. The Code of Conduct presented here aim to reduce the negative impact that divers have on these rare animals.



Bargibant's pygmy seahorse
(*Hippocampus bargibanti*)

Host

Gorgonian seafans of the genus *Muricella*

Identification

- Maximum length 2.7 cm
- Short pug-like snout
- Pronounced bumps over body
- Colours include pink, red and yellow with darker bumps



Denise's pygmy seahorse
(*Hippocampus denise*)

Hosts

Seven gorgonian and a whip coral species are known hosts

Identification

- Maximum length 2.4 cm
- Longer, slender snout
- Body can be smooth or bumpy
- Colour very variable, including pink, red, white and yellow

Gorgonian seafans

- Bargibant's and Denise's pygmy seahorses spend their entire adult life on a single gorgonian seafan, often inhabiting an area the size of a dinner plate, so the survival of their seafan home is vital for the seahorse.
- Seafans grow very slowly, reaching 100 years of age and several metres wide.
- Seafans are extremely delicate and easily damaged if touched.

Threats

- Pygmy seahorses have the smallest populations of any known seahorse.
- Their biggest threats are habitat destruction and impacts from divers.

Code of Conduct

This code of conduct was created from hundreds of hours of behavioural scientific research, observing the impacts of diver interactions on pygmy seahorses.

CODE OF CONDUCT GUIDELINES



Do not touch or manipulate pygmy seahorses in any way, as this can easily damage or even kill them



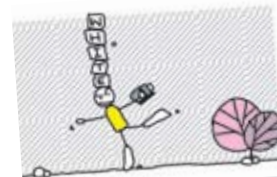
Do not touch the gorgonian home of the seahorse (they are extremely slow growing and delicate), take particular care of camera position and exhalent bubbles



Do not use a torch/flashlight or camera focus light to highlight a pygmy seahorse, this disorientates and stresses them



Five photo limit per diver using flash photography, as more can stress the animal



Use white balanced natural light rather than artificial light for video capture to reduce disturbance from bright lights



No night diving with pygmy seahorses - they sleep at night and lights disturb them



Be aware of the surrounding environment, pay close attention to fin positioning, so not to damage other corals

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