

Readers Lives

Documentaries

You are spot on with your observations and comments about the state of not only the UK but the planets TV docu-drama industry. I cannot stand seeing second rate productions anymore- hence I don't.

I hope you sent a copy of your editorial to the producers of Britain's Secret Seas....

They need to know at the very least that those that know, are not impressed. Tabloid documentary at best.

Mauricio Handler

Solo diving

Thank you for publishing the articles and comments on solo diving. Here in the Netherlands solo diving was not an issue until about 5 years ago but since then it has grown in popularity and naturally initiated heated debate between the soloists and the buddy divers. Perhaps the discussion is stronger here because until recently diving was more considered a safety hazard than a fun sport. My practical training in the early nineties emphasized heavily

on saving yourself and your buddy (always connected with a buddy line). Subjects such as buoyancy or the underwater environment were only marginally important. Diving without a buddy was considered extremely dangerous and as far as I know nobody dared to venture under water without one.

Then came digital underwater photography and I became an enthusiastic amateur underwater photographer. I soon discovered however that my buddy was becoming an artistic hazard. She/he pulled at the buddy line just when you wanted to take that magnificent shot or waved an arm or fin over that perfect clear scene clogging it with silt (or worse). I did my first solo dive when my buddy appeared at the dive site without his BCD. Going back to pick it up was not an option (more than an hours drive) as tide waits for no man so I decided to go in alone. The weather was good. The sea was calm and visibility looked perfect. I expected to feel nervous under water but actually I felt very relaxed. I was able to spend 15 minutes to get that perfect shot of a little goby which would have been impossible with an impatient (not a photographer) buddy at my side.

Since then I have made many

solo dives but I have set a few rules for myself. 1. I always dive at a known location. 2. I never go deeper than 10 meters (so I should be able to save myself in case of equipment failure). 3. I have my equipment checked and serviced once a year. 4. I stay fit.

The last rule perhaps looks odd but I can safely say that 90% of the dive accidents in the Netherlands are related to medical problems e.g. heart failure due to stress and/or physical exertion.

Leendert Smit

Pygmy seahorses

Thank you for taking a stand for pygmy seahorses. I too have watched with dismay at the total disregard some photographers have for these tiny, tiny critters. I hope you are going to pass out the "photography courtesy cards" at DEMA. Actually the courtesies also extend to taking photos of other critters. I cringe at the many times I have seen photographers disregarding marine life just to get the photo.

Bonnie McKenna

More Pygmy seahorses

Have just read the latest edition of UWP & thought I'd let you know that I agree with your stance on pygmy seahorse photos.

When photos of these creatures were appearing a few years ago, I was amazed. Then, in 2008 I visited Sulawesi and saw the seahorses myself. I was shocked to see dive guides manipulating the seahorses and the gorgonians so photographers could get their shot. I did take a few "grab" shots but nothing close to the classic pygmy seahorse photos that have been published. I admit I'm a novice when it comes to tropical diving photography and have little experience of the behaviour of these seahorses. However, I did notice that their first reaction when approached by a diver was to turn away!

Hopefully these guidelines will make people think, but I have my doubts.

Also, really enjoyed the article on solo diving in previous issue - since I dive a lot on my own in UK & Ireland it gave me food for thought!

Mark Thomas