

Parting Shots 1



The cyclone season in the South Pacific may not be considered the best time for diving and underwater photography. Volatile weather conditions and bad visibility not to mention the sticky heat are not everyone's bilu (half coconut shell) of kava (dishwater).

But it seems there is a different cast of actors populating the waters at this time of the year. For example, there are more small baitfish around and all kinds of reef fish in early juvenile state. So I sometimes have the more surprising wildlife encounters in the summer.

This is one such example when, after I just sucked a tank dry to improve on a very ordinary subject, I found a mantis shrimp drifting motionless past the boat on the surface. I thought it was dead or an empty carapace, but I jumped in to check anyway.

At the sight of me the lobster size animal (I think they eat them here) became quite animated and started heading for the sandy bottom ten meters below, where it promptly started to behave in prescribed mantis shrimp fashion and proceeded to dig itself in, stirring up a great big cloud

of sediment.

What made the animal abandon its safety in the sand in the first place? The only explanation I can think of is, that this may be its way to abandon a poor fishing spot and migrate greater distances without effort. Boredom and the resulting wanderlust are surely human luxuries, aren't they?

Tobi Bernhard

Subal Nikon ND800 housing, 14mm f2.5 lens behind a 6" FE dome with a 20mm extension. The lens close-focuses right on the dome. Flashguns of choice are two SB910 in Subal strobecases. 1/13th sec @F22 ISO 100

Do you have an image which has a 'story within a story'? If so we'd love to hear from you.

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Parting Shot 2

A few months ago I decided to upgrade my strobes to a pair of Sea & Sea's YS-D1 units. Some initial reviews had given good feedback and being a cold-water diver I already knew the layout of Sea & Sea strobes worked well with thick gloves or even mitts.

Most of the time when strobes are compared on a like-for-like basis, it tends to be the maximum power output as expressed by a Guide Number that makes the headlines. But sometimes it is the ability of the strobe to deliver low power light that can bring some of the biggest benefits to your photography.

Take this photo for example. On a sunless mid January day in Plymouth, UK, my buddy and I dived a fantastic wall-dive just off the shore at Eastern Kings. It's a great place for nudibranchs due to the high water-flows which encourage a wealth of hydroids and sponges for them to feed on. This early in the season though there were unlikely to be great numbers of slugs around and I was tempted by the (relatively) good vis, around 4m, to put my fisheye on - a first for me at this particular site.

This wall drops down to over 40m, but as I wanted to include the surface in my shots the lack of daylight here limited my dive to just 24m. Even this shallow the camera was working hard to let in any ambient light; wide open at f/3.5 using iso640 only gave a 1/40th second exposure. Couple that with it being a 'close focus wide angle' shot with the orange sponges only a matter of inches from my dome, meant that I really did need very little light indeed to fill in the foreground and the diver.

To give you an idea of just how little light was needed, my SOLA600 spotting torch on its lowest setting of 125 lumens was creating a blown-out hotspot in the image so it had to be turned off (and to my joy and amazement the E-PL5 I was using just kept on focusing). This is where the low-power setting of the YS-D1 really struck me as being useful. To be able to balance very low ambient light levels with fill-in flash is an amazing new tool in my photographic armoury.

My buddy later told me that he could barely see the flashes going off just a few feet in front of him - a pleasant change from being temporarily blinded by them! I used the 100-degree diffuser for this image, but if I thought I needed even less power I could switch to the 120-degree diffuser which would knock the power down even less. It just goes to show that sometimes less really is more.

Dan Bolt

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*Olympus E-PL5, 8mm fisheye, 2xYS-D1,
iso640, f/3.5, 1/40th*



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Parting Shots 3



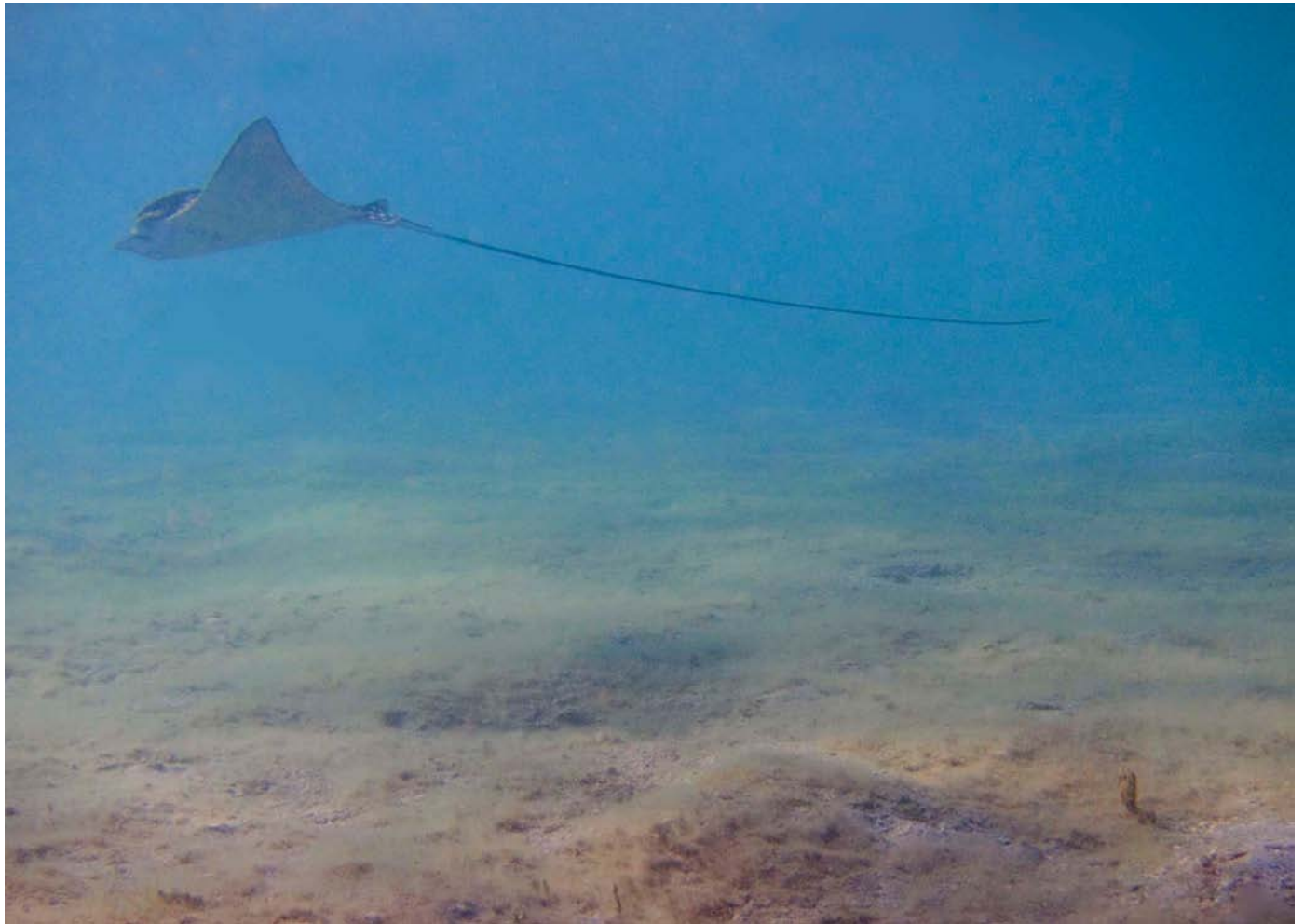
Nearing the end of another fascinating shore dive around the Blue Heron Bridge (Palm Beach County, Florida) ,I came upon an ornate Seahorse moving across the flats just off the swim beach.

After spending a few minutes taking some nice close up shots in macro mode with my Canon S90, I saw a Spotted Eagle Ray out of the corner of my eye.

I quickly switched to normal mode on my camera and swam towards the Ray. I was able to take a few nice shots of the Ray pretty close up because this one was not too “skittish.”

I went back to the Seahorse for a couple more shots and the Ray circled back around, almost as to see what I was photographing (the seahorse).

At this point I locked the focus on the ray and snapped. Seahorse and Spotted Eagle Ray. Lucky shot! (Look closely in the bottom right hand corner!)



Mark Sagovac

*Canon S90 FIX housing
No strobe, ISO 200, 1/400th @ F4.0*

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Parting Shot 4

Malapascua Island, off Cebu in the Philippines is an idyllic setting for a tropical paradise. But I fear it may be paradise lost, at least as far as the marine ecosystem is concerned.

There is still a concentrated effort to use dynamite explosives to fish as it yields an easy return, but with devastating consequences to the marine life. The authorities seem to turn a “blind eye” to this practice even though there is undisputed evidence of the destruction such harvesting produces.

Malapascua is not alone in practicing poor fishing ethics, but for a destination that heavily promotes tourism, the two appear on a collision course.

This region is well known for its Thresher Shark population, and it wasn't uncommon to see 30-40 divers at a time on Monad Shoal. Most divers respected the area and remained in the areas designated by the Divemasters, some didn't, and some were of such poor diving ability that they stirred up copious amounts of silt and sand off the bottom causing almost a sandstorm affect. This of course made it impossible to photograph anything in that area. I witnessed divers smashing coral with

their fins on day and night dives.

With something like 15 dive shops on Malapascua Island at present and dive tourism growing rapidly, I wonder what sort of self or imposed regulation is being applied, or will it end up like the surrounding fishing grounds – ecologically struggling?

We found a great deal of discarded household garbage floating both above and below the waterline. Lots of discarded fishing lines, some so matted that they have become an inherent danger to many marine creatures.

There was also an eeriness about the place which I couldn't at first put my finger on, then it became blatantly clear, no sea birds of any description, something I had never seen before in a tropical location.

My theory on this was the distinct lack of finfish larger than about 15cm, and certainly no schooling fish, which are almost commonplace around intermediate and shallow reef assemblages.

A shipwreck some distance from Malapascua Island would normally be a habitat haven to large schools of fish or even a few large reef fish like Grouper, yet none were sighted. What I found was a beautiful array of soft



Nauticam Nikon D800, 15mm F2.8 lens, Zen dome port, 1/250th @ F11, ISO 400, manual exposure, available light.

corals, lots of macro life forms and one very lonely Puffer fish hovering around the superstructure.

Unfortunately what we also found was carelessly discarded fishing line around the base of the Dona Marilyn, which had become a lethal trap for an unsuspecting juvenile Shark and Ray.

Fortunately the Ray had not died and we were able to untangle it and it swam away.

The shark however was not as fortunate and is a stark reminder of what does occur in heavily harvested

regions, and particularly the little regard attributed to what lies beneath the surface of our oceans.

Attila Kaszo
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Parting Shot 5

Composite compositions cause considerable consternation. Some in our community see them as artistic expression, others regard them as dastardly cheating. In fact, one friend of mine has become so well known for them that everyone's first reaction to his straight shots are that they must be composites. I suspect that there is compliment hidden somewhere in that.

Of course, they are nothing new. Producing composite images was perfectly possible in traditional underwater photography. They could either be achieved with great precision and limitless possibilities in the dark room, or via multiple exposures in the camera.

These days the tools are simply more easily available to more people. And these digital tools are not going away, and in some branches of photography they've already changed the way people shoot. On film, astro-photographers would lock their camera shutters open for an hour or

more to record the trails from stars in the night sky, caused as the Earth rotates. But now they generally prefer to shoot a long series of frames over shorter intervals (minimizing long exposure noise) and then simply adding them in photo stacking software to generate the trails. The camera still needs to stay in place for an hour or more, but instead of taking one long photo, it takes many shorter ones.

So my parting shot is indeed a composite image shot with the Nikon D800 on my recent trip to Norway for the Nudibranch Safari. In fact, it is made of 77 separate frames.

In my defense to the purists, I shot all of it while I was in the water. The nudibranch with a 105mm on Gulen Dive Resort's house reef and the star trails with a fisheye while I relaxed in their wood-fired hot tub, drinking a cold beer.

Alex Mustard
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