

Nikon1 J2 and Housing

By Steve Brown

My name is Steve Brown, I've been a keen photographer since I was a boy so when I became interested in diving it seemed only natural to take pictures of the underwater environment too!

I first was bitten by the 'diving bug' in 2003 when I did a try dive whilst on holiday in Kuredu Maldives and the rest is history! Since qualifying as a PADI open water diver I've always had a camera as part of my diving kit, and I'm now a PADI Underwater Digital Photography Speciality Instructor.

I started out with an Olympus Mju 700 compact camera & housing, which actually produced some great results, to a bridge camera, and then an SLR with strobes plus a bit of underwater movie, and most recently the Nikon 1 J2 with the new housing. Sounds like a lot of equipment, but I do have the advantage of owning a Photographic & Hifi business with my wife Amanda, on the Isle of Wight. We've got 2 shops on the Island & have been in the trade for 29 years selling cameras and all things related to photography.

The digital era has brought about many changes and advantages to the world of underwater photography as

well as to that on land.

When Nikon offered to loan me the J2 for my holiday in Cuba this year, I jumped at the chance to use one of these highly regarded cameras to see for myself if really could live up to the reviews!

For those not familiar with the camera, it's Nikon's second generation of compact system camera with a range of interchangeable lenses. It has been advertised on TV extensively, in various colours, you'd have been unlucky to have missed it! As with the J1, its predecessor, the J2 has a 10 million Pixel CMOS sensor which is designed to always be one step ahead of the action, whilst being simple to operate. The camera has an auto scene selection, programmed auto with flexible program, shutter & aperture priority auto and of course, full manual control.

The shutter speeds range from 1/16,000 to 30sec & bulb. The metering methods are matrix Centre-weighted or Spot and for quick exposure adjustments there is a generous -3 - +3 exposure compensation in increments of 1/3 EV. Images are stored to SD, SDHC & SDXC cards in jpeg or RAW formats for still images & MPEG-4



for video (1080p HD)

The built in flash enables the use of external strobe lights via an optical lead, and has a selection of modes for on land use. When shooting without flash (particularly underwater) the manual white balance mode is

very useful, as is the ISO override of 100-3200. To date this camera has collected a number of good reviews and the J1 was Europe's best selling system compact camera in 2012. To find out more & get the full specification go to Nikon's website.



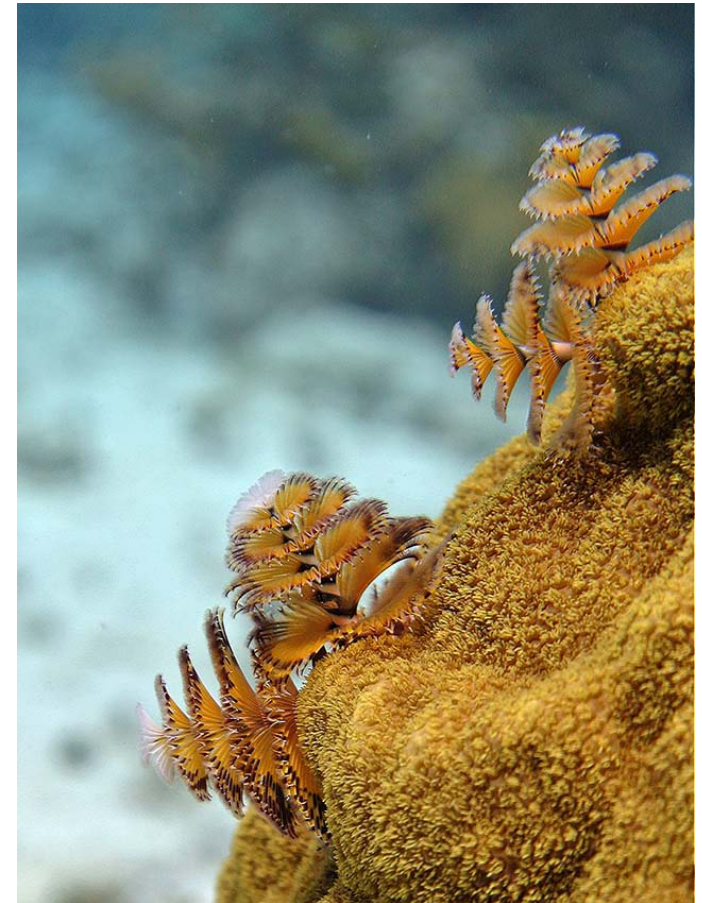
French Angelfish, 1/640, F4.5, ISO400, 10mm Focal Length, Program.

When the kit arrived my first impression was how neat the housing is compared to the SLR housing I've been used to. Its smart white finish with smoked plastic back not only looks good but feels like a quality product too. It is designed to accommodate the Nikon 1 J1 or J2 with the 10-30mm lens and will go to a maximum depth of 40m. There is a flat side O ring system and a secure clasp to ensure the camera stays dry. I was able to attach my wide angle lens via the 67mm thread on the front and as I previously mentioned, the strobe with an optical cable. There are two optical outputs for multi strobe use.



Flamingo Tongue Cowrie, 1/640, F5.6, ISO400, 30mm Focal Length, Aperture Priority, -1 exposure compensation.

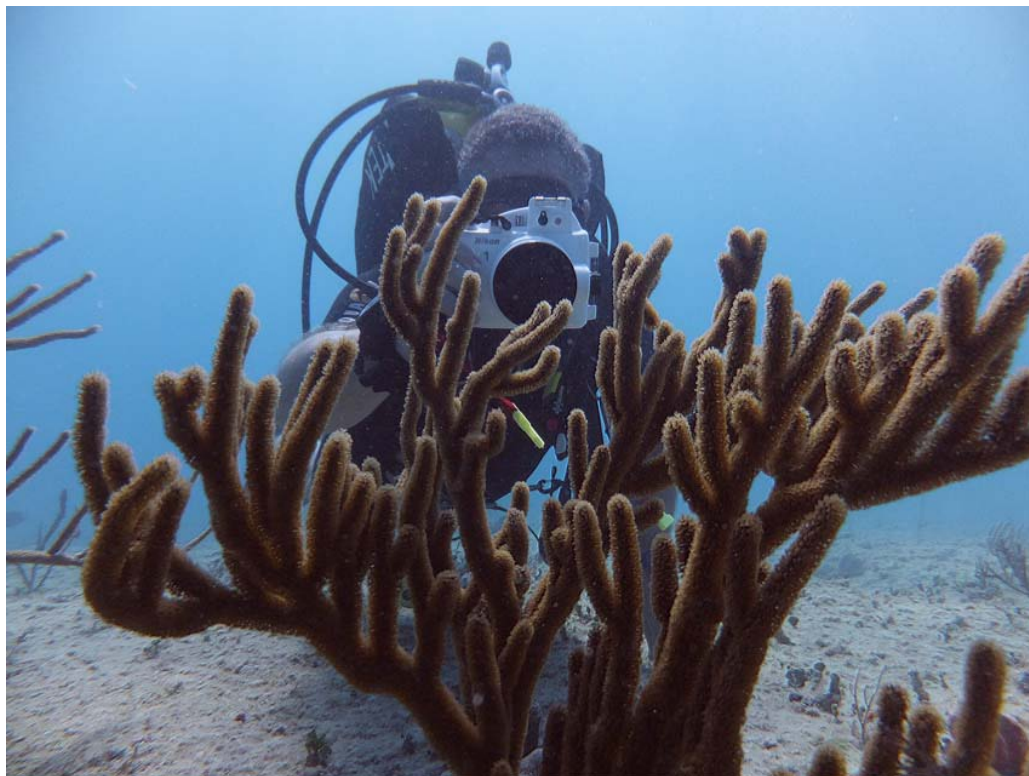
Once in the water I found the shutter release was easily located and the focusing was as quick and accurate as it is on land, even in lower light situations. The zoom, if required, is controlled smoothly courtesy of the positive control on the outside, and the rubber grip ring around the lens inside. The 10-30mm lens (35 mm equivalent: 27-81 mm) has 20cm close focus which adds to its versatility and there's even a black accessory ring



Christmas Tree Worm, 1/640, F5.6, ISO400, 30mm Focal Length, Aperture Priority.

supplied to fit to the front of the lens, to minimize any reflection from information printed on the surround.

Navigating the menu was a piece of cake too, the screen display is perfect for comfortable viewing through the mask and the white buttons are clearly marked with black letters so no guess work was required! I found it really easy to find the exact mode especially things like the white balance,



Steve Brown with Nikon1, taken with a Fuji F500.

which I use frequently, and screen brightness. I found the grid screen option really useful for framing the shots underwater too.

The apertures (when in aperture priority) are changed by an 'up/down' switch within thumb's reach and movie start/stop has a large button marked with a red spot in the vicinity of the shutter release. Although I didn't use the HD movie mode a great deal, the short clips I did take were every bit as good as a dedicated HD movie camera.

Throughout all this vigorous testing the lithium-ion rechargeable battery held up well lasting two 1 hour dives (with playback of course on the boat trip back) and still didn't fail, I think if I'd used movie more maybe it would have used more power, never the less, I had ample battery life for my needs.

So far so good, however there were a few niggles most of which I was able to resolve one way or another. The first of which was manual exposure this was inaccessible

when in the housing, so I made good use of the exposure compensation function. The other limitation was the flash, although the strobe was controlled faultlessly, once the flash is popped up inside the housing, (which you need to do before closing it up) there is no way of switching it off, so unfortunately all of the pictures for that particular dive had to be with flash. The way round that? Well, there is a 'snap shot' option in video mode which does not fire the flash, but this automatically sets the picture format to 16:9. To be honest this didn't really present any problems for me in Cuba, as the conditions were very good and most of my pictures were taken using

natural lighting with manual white balance.

So to summarize, I found the Nikon really easy & enjoyable to use and would most definitely recommend it to my customers & students. The results are impressive both in and out of the water making this the ideal camera for holidays and at home, not just because of the size & weight but it's a fraction of the price of the DSLR equivalent & so it keeps the whole family happy!

Steve Brown

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