

Parting Shots 1

I am Tony Neal aka Tony “Goose” Neal to my friends and when my trip to Shetland with the Digigreen Group was planned two years ago little did I know that I would shoot a mating pair of Catfish Sharks and learn quite quickly all about deco and what it involves. I was aboard the MV-Valkyire and already had got four dives under my belt, any cold water diving is very hard and tires you out very quickly.

The planned dive was known as “Dog Fish Alley” a 24m to the bottom depth quite straight forward. At the start of the dive it was announced that there was thick fog and a possibility of a current we were instructed to deploy our smb’s as soon as we hit the sea bed.

On hitting the sea bed and deploying my smb it was immediately apparent that there was one of those annoying currents which are not so strong that you give into them and drift, but slight enough to be able to try and hold position to take some shots.

Shortly after beginning the dive I had never seen before it soon became apparent that the site was very aptly named for there were dog fish a plenty and I was not struggling for subject matter. All of a sudden I came across a sight I had not seen before - a pair of Cat Sharks entwined, the sudden realisation of what I was seeing was extremely exciting. Here were two Cat Sharks mating.!!!

The competitive element kicked in and the pressure built within me to capture what would be a first for me, and I was already starting to wonder if this had been photographed before. Unfortunately the current had started pick up and my smb



provided an unpredictable and increasingly strong tugging motion.

Fortunately I was able to hold my ground and counteract the tugging smb and managed to fire off four or five frames before being reluctantly pulled away.

My frustration was short lived when I reviewed my shots as the seabed drifted past, I had nailed it despite the physical hardship, sometimes a picture doesn't tell all of the story.

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

E mail us and yours could be
the next “Parting shot”.

Tony “Goose” Neal

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Parting Shots 2

I was a bit obsessed with taking photos of eels during my early days of underwater photography. A friend of mine mentioned that there were different species of small eels such as Napoleon Eel, which live in the sand of a local dive site called Maagiri. During a course dive with an Open Water group, we spotted some of them. I returned the following week, during yet another course, and jumped in to take some photos between dives.

I was shooting with a Canon Powershot G9 back then. After finding some Napoleon Eels and having taken some photos I moved around to find what else were there. I spotted quite a peculiar Eel coming out of the sand. It was rather shy, and I only managed to take a few shots, which were not so good. It seemed that the Eel had 4 eyes. There were 2 real ones and 2 false. I had to end the dive quickly and get back up, to do the second dive with the course group. Back at base, I combed through all the fish Identification books which I could get my hands on, but had no luck. So I sent the pictures to a few friends who were studying Marine Science abroad, but they too had no luck. One of my friends joked saying that it is probably a new species and that I should name it Azimas. It was ironical as “mas”



means fish in our local language, Dhivehi.

I knew the chance of discovering a new fish in shallow waters and that too in a popular reef was quite slim. Not being satisfied with not knowing what it was, I sent it off to Tim Godfrey, (Author of Dive Maldives) and the late great Neville Coleman. Neville Coleman replied saying he was not sure what it was but he sent it to Rudie Kuiter (Author of the book Photo Guide to Fishes of the Maldives). Rudie Kuiter identified it to be a Barred Sand Conger

(Ariosoma fasciatum). Some of my colleagues and friends in the Marine Research Centre here in Maldives, also found it on the fish base website. Honestly speaking, I was a bit disappointed that it was not a new discovery; but I was happy that finally I got a positive ID. Now I make it a point to show out the Eel whenever I make a dive there, followed by the story of how I thought I would get an Eel named after me.

Azim Musthag



Nikon D90, Aquatica Housing, Ikelite DS-161 Strobe, Nikkon 105mm, F22, 1/250s, ISO200

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Parting Shots 3

Over the years there are many, many images that I never captured. Some of them were definitely competition-winners, of course.

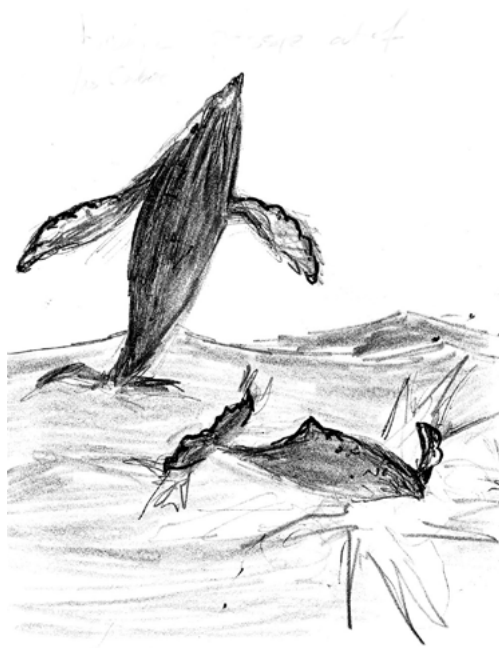
People that have dived with me, some of them well-known to UwP's readers, have noticed me, pencil in hand, scribbling into a little black "Moleskine" book after washing my camera and putting all those batteries into their charger. What am I doing? I'm creating all those wonderful photographs that never saw the light of day (or strobe)...

For example:

My greatest phantom photographs were taken after losing my rig, dropped from a RIB floating next to the sheerest of underwater walls at Logan Reef in the Red Sea so... Scalloped hammerhead sharks, Habili Ghadban, Sudan. Nikon D300: lost overboard...

My greatest wildlife non-picture is of the humpback whale that breached 50 yards from "Solmar V" en route to the Revillagigedos Islands. Standing at the rail, I was stunned (and soaked) by the exuberant life and power of this overwhelming animal so Humpback whale, Mexico. My Nikon D200 was in my cabin!

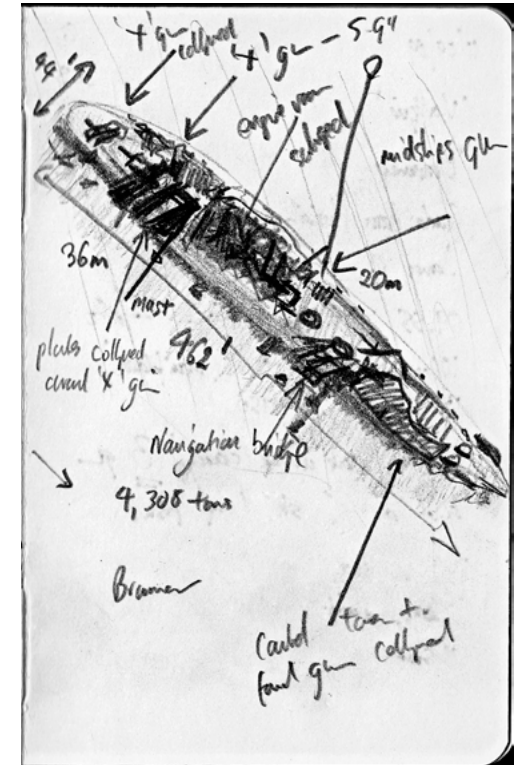
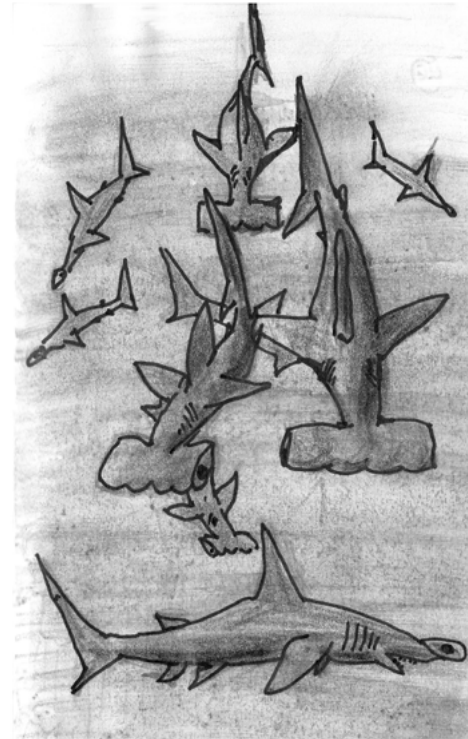
There are rare times that I'm not recording the elusive (always



wonderful) image in my head: I find that trying to make sense of shipwrecks shrouded by the green plankton fog of British waters calls for a sketch rather than an artfully constructed panorama.

I guess that I need my photographic skills to catch up with my vision...

Tim Priest



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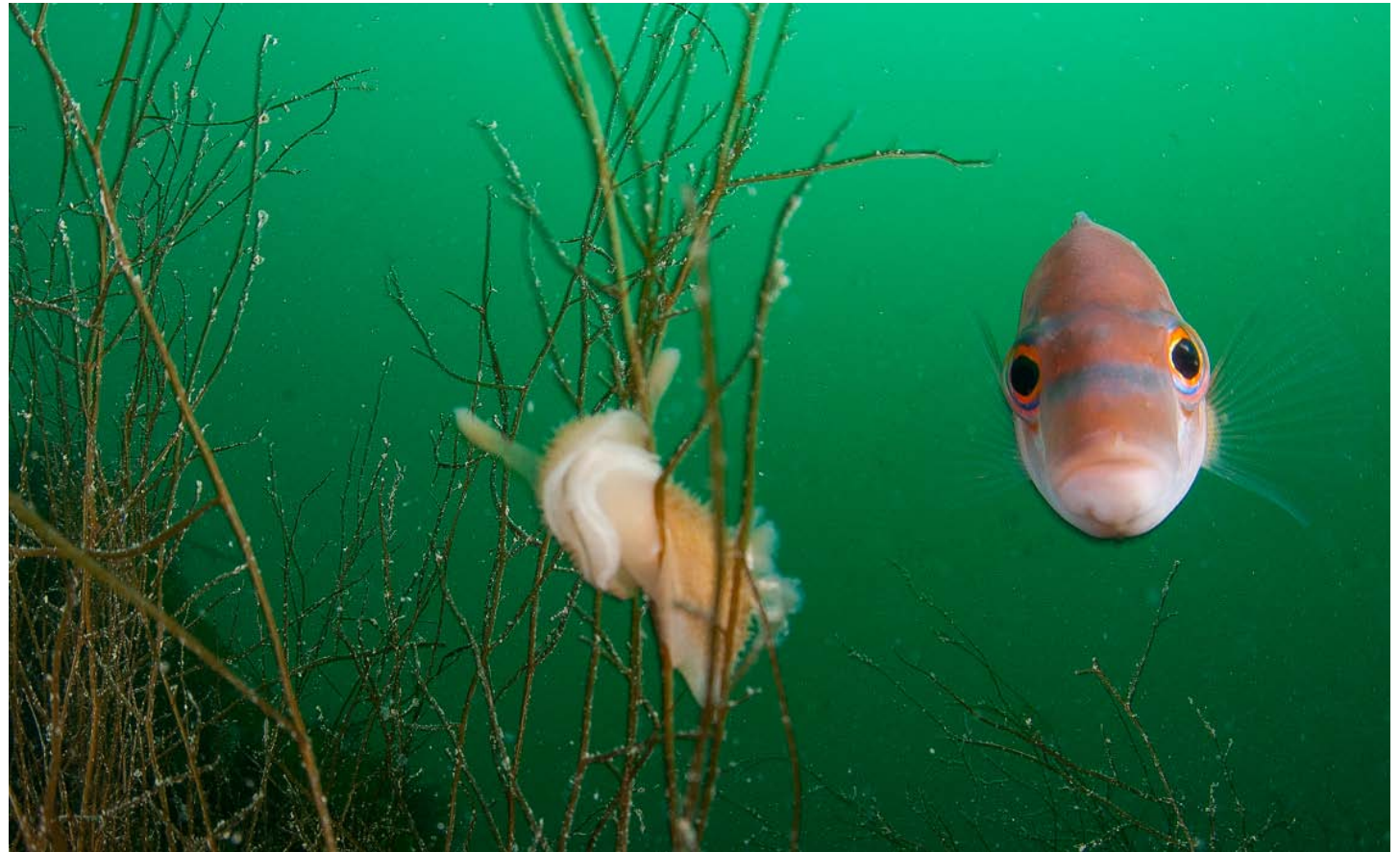
Parting Shot 4

In my last parting shot I described the antics of a persistent male cuckoo wrasse on the Hand Deeps reef which ended in a couple of gentle head butts to my dome port possibly to dispatch a potential challenger to his territory.

I am sure that other readers have experienced similar interest or irritation from cuckoo wrasse, but I thought it might be worth describing another incident involving my dome port but this time at Porthkerris on the Lizard peninsular.

On this particular dive I had found a nice example of the nudibranch *Acanthodoris pilosa* feeding on the bryozoan *Alcyonidium diaphanum*. This bryozoan grows like a bushy sea weed and so my subject was elevated from the seabed, however the lens I had was a 10-17 FE zoom. If you have a mini dome you can use the 17mm end of the lens quite successfully in wide macro mode and you can focus on a subject actually touching your dome if needed. So I was concentrating on getting as close as possible to the nudibranch and lighting it correctly when my cuckoo hassles started again.

I had been aware of being shadowed by a cuckoo wrasse that seemed to be halfway through the change between female and male. Obviously my staying still for a while was too much for this inquisitive fish and it kept approaching the dome to see what was happening. This of course played havoc with my composition and my focusing as the lens would immediately focus on the wrasse as it approached which was really beginning to irritate



Nikon D300, Subal housing, Tokina 10-17mm at 17mm, 2 x Inon strobes, 1/20th @ F14. ISO 200

me! The nudibranch was of course moving as it fed so I kept waiting for a good angle only for the moment to be spoiled by the fish again! Despite a few gentle swipes the wrasse simply could not help but return again and again, so I had to give in eventually!

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