

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2013

Behaviour: Cold-Blooded Animals Winner

Luis Javier Sandoval (Mexico)

The beaches of the Yucatan Peninsula, Mexico, near Cancún are traditional nesting sites for the endangered green turtle. But as Cancún has also grown as a holiday and dive resort, development has reduced the area available to turtles.

Today, though, many nest sites are protected, there are turtle hatcheries to help numbers increase, and there is publicity to help local people and resort owners value the natural riches of the region.

Luis earns enough from tourism photography to allow him time to document his beloved wildlife. 'The turtles are so used to seeing people in the water that they think we're just part of the environment,' says Luis, which means he has been able to get to know individuals, recognising them from the markings on their faces.

'This metre-long female, grazing on seagrass, took no notice of me, apart from glancing up briefly.'



Recently, Luis has noticed what he suspects may be a new threat: at certain times of the year, a yellowish alga covers some of the seagrass. The suspicion is that the algal growth is the result of sewage from the resort,

which has already affected the coral. What is clear is that the turtles avoid eating it.

Nikon D7000 + 10-17mm Tokina fisheye lens at 17mm; 1/125 sec at f10; ISO 100; Sea & Sea YS-120 DUO strobes; Aquatica housing + TLC Arm Set.

Underwater Worlds Winner

Brian Skerry (USA)

It looks like some kind of inflatable pool toy, but what this turtle is munching on is, in fact, a pyrosome: a free-floating colony of hundreds of thousands of tiny tunicates (filter-feeding zooids) wrapped in a gelatinous 'tunic'. This alone is surprising – leatherbacks tend to dine on jellyfish – but what is more surprising is seeing a leatherback feeding at all. 'Usually, you only see them swimming away,' says Brian. He spotted this individual, nearly two metres long, near the surface in calm water off the island of Pico, in the Azores, Portugal, some distance from where he was snorkelling. As he finned closer, he fully expected the turtle to swim off into the clear blue sea. But it was so engrossed in its meal that he had time to compose a picture. 'The light was tricky,' says Brian. 'I wanted to use ambient light, but because of the position of the sun, it was a delicate dance of slow and gentle movements, trying to position myself to avoid shadows without disturbing the turtle.' Seeing such an elusive creature doing something so rarely witnessed was, he says,



'magical'. Brian continually strives to 'find new ways of creating images and stories that both celebrate the sea and highlight the environmental issues'. He sees this picture as a rare portrait of an incredible survivor – it has a lineage that pre-dates the dinosaurs – now facing a battery of threats,

including the warming of the seas as well as fishing, egg-harvesting and coastal development of its nesting areas.

*Nikon D3s + 17-35mm lens at 35mm;
1/250 sec at f13; ISO 1600; Subal
underwater housing.*



World in Our Hands - Winner

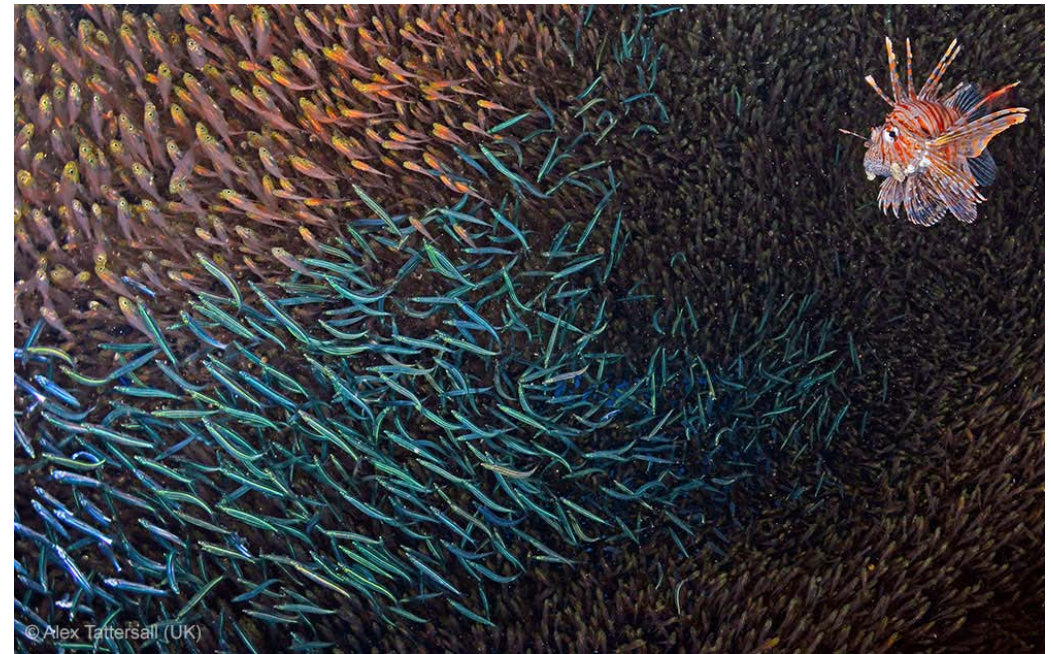
Mike Veitch (Canada)

Whale sharks are the largest fish in the sea, but they are filter-feeders eating mostly plankton and small fish and, according to received wisdom, rarely interact with humans. So when whale sharks were filmed vacuuming up bits of fish from nets in Indonesia, it caused an internet sensation. But it seems that this behaviour is hardly new.

‘The fishermen around the islands have known about this for ages,’ says Mike. Their nets hang from fishing platforms on their boats, and the night lights set to attract silverside baitfish to them also attract whale sharks, which have learned to suck up the fish from the drop-nets.

The fishermen don’t begrudge them, regarding them as good luck. Now they really have brought luck. Divers and snorkellers are travelling here specifically to interact with the sharks, and dive companies, fishermen and local villages are recognising the economic potential. Mike took this image of a sub-adult (about six metres long) in Cenderawasih Bay, Papua, Indonesia.

Nikon D90 + Tokina 10-17mm lens at 14mm; 1/80 sec at f7.1; ISO 200; Aquatica housing.



Underwater Worlds - Runner-up

Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)

The wreck of the SS Thistlegorm has lain in the Red Sea at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula since 1941. She now attracts many thousands of divers each year, and a host of fishes.

In one of the huge holds, Alex discovered more than 20 common lionfish, attracted by a copious supply of prey. He returned over a number of dives, determined to capture as much of the action as possible. Here a lionfish is attacking a huge shoal of silversides and cardinalfish swirling in a huge baitball. ‘The synchrony was mesmerising, but the scene was a real challenge to photograph,’ says Alex. ‘I had to make sure that I didn’t overexpose the shiny, silver scales or create “noise” by highlighting particles in the water, while all the time being aware of the site’s strong currents.’ His determination paid off. He captured an intimate view of the agitated, swirling baitball, with the dazzling predator poised stage right.

Nikon D7000 + Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens + 1.4x teleconverter; 1/100 sec at f11; ISO 320; two INON z-240 strobes; Nauticam housing; Zen 100mm mini-dome.



Behaviour: Cold-Blooded Animals - Runner-up Julian Cohen (United Kingdom / Australia)

Julian is drawn to the striking patterns formed when animals group together, whether birds, mammals or, in this case, fish – a giant school of them. Here the silversides swirl as one to escape the potential (human) predator, on the basis that when each individual is part of a huge, flashing, moving group, it has less chance of being caught, both statistically and because of the confusion effect.

Julian was watching them five metres down underneath a wharf on the island of Samarai in Milne Bay, Papua New Guinea.

To stop his air bubbles from invading the scene, he had to hold his breath while ascending slowly, something that if done without caution can cause a pulmonary embolism. 'I just let the fish do their own thing and photographed them as they formed this gloriously abstract pattern above me.'

Nikon D7000 + Tokina 10-17mm f3.5-4.5 lens; 1/200 sec at f8; ISO 100; two INON strobes; Seacam Prelude housing.



World in Our Hands - Commended Douglas Seifert (USA)

Douglas encountered this dugong in a sheltered, shallow bay on the Egyptian coast. It was eating seagrass, its principal food, moving itself along on its flippers rather than its whale-like tail, which it uses for swimming. Every few minutes, after two metres or so of grazing, it would swim to the surface, open its nostrils and take several deep breaths. 'I approached him very slowly to gain his trust,' says Douglas, who took his portrait by lying flat on the sea floor. What struck him was the power of the dugong's muscular snout. It was obvious why the local dive operators had christened this particular individual Dyson: as it cropped the seagrass, it looked as if it was sucking it up with industrial power.

Nikon D800 + 15mm fisheye f2.8 lens; 1/320 sec at f16; ISO 640; Nauticam housing; two INON z-220 strobes.

Nature in Black and White - Commended Alexander Mustard (United Kingdom)

Alex took this shot in open water in the Caribbean Sea, off Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, while swimming among a huge aggregation of whale sharks.

The sharks were feasting on millions of tuna eggs. One picture he had decided on was a backlit silhouette that would show the bow waves generated by these enormous animals – the world's biggest fish – as they push through the water, scooping up food in their giant mouths.

When he spotted the fin of an approaching shark with the sun behind it, he dived down, held his breath and waited for the eight-metre animal to pass overhead so he could shoot it backlit, with the sunbeams spearing into the water along its flanks.

'As serene as the moment looks,' says Alex, 'I was bursting for air. The combination of excitement and awe didn't help, or the fact that I had five metres of water and a shark between me and the surface. But the result was definitely worth it.' The tourism that has developed around the feeding aggregation is also worthwhile. It's put a value on keeping the sharks alive rather than as fodder for the shark-fin industry (a whale shark fin can fetch between \$10,000 and \$20,000), giving the sharks in Mexican waters a brighter future.

Olympus OM-D E-M5 + Panasonic 8mm fisheye lens; 1/250 sec at f8; ISO 200; Nauticam housing.



Wildlife Photographer of the Year harnesses the power of photography to promote the discovery, understanding, and responsible enjoyment of the natural world.

Now in its 49th year, the Wildlife Photographer of the Year competition provides a global showcase of the very best nature photography. The competition is co-owned by two UK institutions that pride themselves on revealing and championing the diversity of life on Earth - the Natural History Museum and BBC Worldwide.

Being shortlisted in this competition is something to which photographers across the world aspire. Every year emerging talents compete with established names for a chance to be hailed Wildlife Photographer of the Year.

Each of the thousands of annual entries is evaluated individually by an international jury of photography experts, before being awarded a place in the top 100 images of the year.

Exhibition and tickets

Wildlife Photographer of the Year 2013 exhibition
Natural History Museum
London

18 October 2013 - 23 March 2014

10.00-17.50 (last admission 17.15)
Open late the last Friday of every month

The world-renowned annual exhibition opened at the Museum on 18 October 2013. It shines a spotlight on the rarely seen wonders of the natural world.

100 images have been selected from tens of thousands of international entries and are displayed in the exhibition gallery to dramatic effect on sleek backlit installations.

Nearest tube is South Kensington

www.nhm.ac.uk

Don't settle for 2nd best



Film - No Filter
No White Balance



Digital - No Filter
Manual WB



Magic Filter
Manual WB

Digital cameras have opened up new possibilities to underwater photographers. For available light photography manual white balance is an invaluable tool for restoring colours. But when you use it without a filter you are not making the most of the technique. You're doing all the hard work without reaping the full rewards.

These three photos are all taken of the same wreck in the Red Sea. The left hand image was taken on slide film, which rendered the scene completely blue. The middle image is taken with a digital SLR without a filter, using manual white balance. The white balance has brought out some of the colour of the wreck, but it has also sucked all the blue out of the water behind the wreck, making it almost grey. The right hand image is taken with the same digital camera and lens, but this time using an original Magic Filter. The filter attenuates blue light meaning that the colours of the wreck are brought out and it stands out from the background water, which is recorded as an accurate blue.

www.magic-filters.com