

Nudibranch Photo Competition 2014

11th April 2014. NPC, Devon, UK.

Today, the winners of the inaugural Nudibranch Photo Competition, sponsored by Nauticam UK, have been announced.

The competition is the first entirely dedicated to these tiny sea slugs, whose variety and beautiful colouration enchants divers around the world. Despite its apparently narrow focus, the competition attracted close to 1000 entries from underwater photographers in 33 different countries. The competition was judged by Alex Mustard, Constantinos Petrinos and Bernard Picton.

The British category was won by Mark Webster from Cornwall, with a photo taken in Falmouth Bay. The World category was won by Italian Adriano Morettin, with a photo taken near Sorrento, Italy. Each category winner will receive Nauticam's innovative new Super Macro Converter lens, worth £400.

Mark Webster was also the runner up in the British category with another photo from his native Cornwall, while Norwegian Christian Skauge was runner up in the World

category with a photo taken at the Gulen Dive Resort in Norway. They both win a copy of the new iBook "Nudibranchs of South West England".

After such a successful first edition, the competition will take place again next year.

Britain's leading nudibranch expert and curator of marine invertebrates at the National Museums Northern Ireland, Bernard Picton, said "Underwater photography is an invaluable tool in studying nudibranchs, just amongst the finalists of this competition there are four species, which may not even have scientific names yet."

British underwater photographer and marine biologist, Alex Mustard said "everyone has heard of sharks, whales and dolphins, but the Nudibranch Photo Competition was started to celebrate ocean biodiversity. Nudibranchs are found around the world, from the poles to the tropics, they come in all shapes and colours and are a great advert for the richness of life in the seas."

www.nudibranchphotocomp.com



© NPC2014 / Mark Webster, UK. www.photec.co.uk

UK First Place

Mark Webster

Species: Favorinus branchialis with eggs.

Location: St Anthony's Head, Falmouth Bay, Cornwall, UK.

Technical Details: Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 105mm micro, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 100 f25 1/60

Photographer's Notes:

There are numerous shallow fringing reefs around Falmouth Bay with undercut or overhanging faces which seem to attract nudibranchs in the spring season. The location of

this reef is within a stone's throw of St. Anthony's light house and proved a very productive site during 2013 which was an unusually good year for nudibranchs in Cornish waters. Although I had seen this species before this was the first time I had seen it within the egg mass of the more common sea lemons and in fact there were several more on this large spiral of eggs which are out of shot. The reef is only 5-6m deep at high tide and there are often gentle swells here as it is right on the edge of Carrick Roads and the mouth of the Fal river and entrance to Falmouth harbor. The tidal movement in the

estuary provides nutrients for healthy sponge and hydroid colonies which in turn support the nudibranchs. The challenge here was to keep steady enough to focus in the swell whilst holding my breath as I shot up towards the subject and adjust the exposure to keep the detail in the white egg mass. There were four or five nudibranchs within the eggs but this one offered the best angle and a pleasing composition with the curve of the eggs framing the subject.

Judge's Notes:

A fascinating behaviour image of this nudibranch laying its eggs within the egg mass of a larger species. According to judge Bernard Picton, this colouration is very unusual for this species in the British Isles, being more typical of the Mediterranean, and this photo may be evidence of this colour variety starting to extend its distribution more northwards.

Mark will receive Nauticam's innovative new Super Macro Converter lens, worth £400 donated by Underwater Visions

www.uwvisions.com

UK Runner Up

Mark Webster

Species: Polycera quadrilineata.

Location: Minack Reef, Porthcurno Bay, Cornwall, UK.

Technical Details: Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom with 2X teleconverter, Subtronic Mini flash guns, ISO 200 f18 1/60.

Photographer's Notes:

The location of this shot is very close to Land's End on a small reef below the cliff top Minack theatre. The water depth is 8-10m at high tide so the reef top is completely covered by dense kelp forest. The kelp fronds support healthy colonies of bryozoan sea mats which are a favourite food of this species of nudibranch. This species both feeds and breeds on the kelp and I had often photographed the pairs of nudibranchs mating and individuals laying their eggs on this site. Occasionally we see these aggregations of nudibranchs on individual kelp fronds with a good cover of sea mat, but this particular season there seemed to have been a population explosion and I wanted to use a technique that would capture the numbers and show the density of the gathering. Using a 10-17mm fish eye zoom and 2X teleconverter creates a wide macro lens that will focus right down to a subject touching the



dome port when set at the 17mm end. All I then needed a calm sunny day and hopefully a large group feeding together for the composition I had imagined. Both kelp and photographer will move in even a slight swell and this will result in the lens constantly hunting in auto focus, so it is best to preset focus and then shoot as soon as your subject comes into focus whilst the increased depth of field of this lens combination will also assist in capturing a sharp image. I took many (possibly hundreds!) shots on different kelp fronds but this was the most pleasing composition which came closest to the image I had planned.

Judge's Notes:

An image that captures a fantastic event, an explosion of numbers of this species, with far too many individuals to count within the frame, more than we've ever seen before in a shot! We particularly like how the photographer has composed the image with the line of feasting nudis on a diagonal and the ungrazed seamat above them and the stripped leaf below. Shows how great nudibranch diving can be in the UK.

Mark wins a copy of the new iBook "Nudibranchs of South West England".

www.southwestnudis.co.uk

UK Highly Commended

Len Deeley

Species: Flabellina pedata

Location: St Abbs, Scotland, UK

Technical details: Nikon F90X, Aquatica housing, 105mm lens, Inon Z220 strobes. Film Fuji. ISO and aperture not recorded

Photographer's Notes:

St Abbs has been a favourite dive location for many years and I have in the past gone up regularly for the Splash in. This image was taken in 1999 when I was still using a film camera. The image was taken at the Horn Dive site at St Abbs. The Horn is about 200 yards out from the harbour wall with an average depth of 20m. Currents can be variable to strong and it is quite exposed and best dived on a flood tide during fairly calm conditions. It consists of rock walls which are quite steep with numerous fissures. There is an abundance of life, including plumose anemones, dahlia anemones, dead men's fingers, etc. Surrounding it are rocks and boulders of various sizes and gravel. You can also find angler fish, wolf fish, scorpion fishes and more as well as schooling species.

Judge's Notes:

A beautiful portrait with pin point focus, made particularly special by the background green shining through in the image (presumably the result of the photographer taking a long-ish exposure). The emerald green not only clearly says British Seas, but is also a pleasing complementary colour to the nudibranch's pink and purple hues, making the photo particularly eye catching.



© NPC2014 / Len Deeley, UK



© NPC 2014, Adriano Morettin, Italy

World First Place

Adriano Morettin

Species: Janolus cristatus

Location: Puolo Bay near Sorrento, Naples, South Tirrenian Sea, Italy.

Technical Details: Nikon D3X and Nikon 105 micro in Seacam housing, 1 flash Seacam 150 with Retra LSD snoot. 1/250 sec; f/22; ISO 100

Photographer's Notes:

The Janolus cristatus is one of the most beautiful nudibranchs of the Mediterranean Sea and I met this one in the Bay of Puolo in the Gulf of Naples, thanks to the help of the friends of Punta Campanella Diving Center of Massa Lubrense.

Fortunately I had my Retra LSD snoot that allowed me to take this picture which I had had in mind for a long time.

This photo is in fact a double exposure done in camera directly without switching off the camera and using the same lens.

This is the only way to get a RAW file from two or more consecutive shots.

The first shot of the nudibranch is made with the snoot Retra LSD applied to the flash Seacam 150 in order to isolate the subject with the background perfectly black.

The second exposure is made pointing up to the surface where it is

sunny and changing the exposure and time of shooting.

The main difficulty is to run the two shots without the images overlapping and use the right shutter speed and aperture in both shots.

Judge's Notes:

A beautiful image of this nudibranch in a pleasing pose with its distinctive caruncle clearly visible too. But like so many great macro images, it is not just about the subject, but about turning the negative space in the frame into a positive feature. The out of focus sunburst in the background of this picture is beautiful and evokes a strong feeling of being underwater.

Adriano will receive Nauticam's innovative new Super Macro Converter lens, worth £400 donated by Underwater Visions

www.uwvisions.com

World Runner Up

Christian Skauge

Species: Cumanotus beaumonti

Location: Gulen Dive Resort north of Bergen on the Norwegian west coast

Technical Details: Nikon D300s in Nauticam

housing, 2x Inon Z-240 strobes, Nikkor 105 mm macro + 1.4x Kenko TC @ f/32, 1/100 sec, ISO 200

Photographers Notes:

The *Cumanotus beaumonti* is considered a very rare species, not just in Norway but throughout its distribution area. This is partly due to the very specific feeding habits of this nudibranch – it feeds exclusively on the *Corymorpha nutans* hydroid.

This large hydroid is found in May-July on the Norwegian west coast, on the rocky sand-covered bottom. The *Cumanotus* nudibranchs climb the stalk and attach themselves close to the tentacles of the hydroid, and can remain there for a period of time. They are very well camouflaged and may be tricky to spot.

This particular specimen had exhausted its food source and was on its way down the stalk of the hydroid towards the bottom. Luckily the hydroid was placed near the edge of a rock and I was able to shoot upwards to frame just the nudibranch and the stalk with the water in the background.

Thanks to the settings used the background turned beautifully black allowing the beauty of the nudibranch and the exquisite lines on the hydroid to become the focus of attention. By slightly tilting the camera I was also able to achieve an appealing diagonal, making the image visually more interesting too.

www.uwpmag.com



Judge's Notes:

A rare species and shown it all its beauty in this graphically simple, but powerful composition, full of impact with the strong black background. Instantly eye catching, like a flower on a stem.

Christian wins a copy of the new iBook "Nudibranchs of South West England".

www.southwestnudis.co.uk

World Commended

Bjørnar Nygård

Species: Cuthona gymnota

Location: Gulen Dive Resort

*north of Bergen on the
Norwegian west coast*

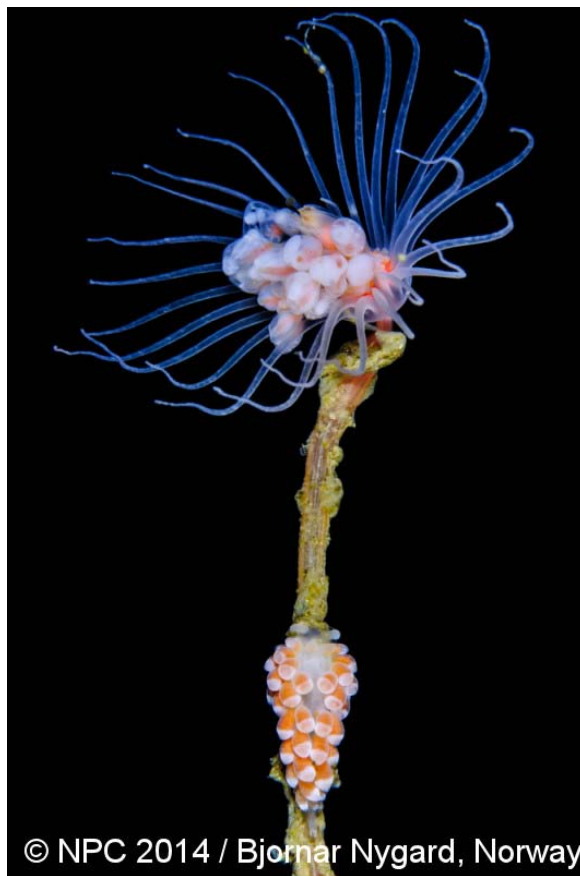
*Technical Details: Nikon D300 in
Aquatica housing, 2x Inon Z-240
strobes, Nikkor 105 mm macro @
f/29, 1/160 sec, ISO 200*

Photographers Notes:

I was doing a dive on the house reef and I went in the water with a plan to shoot the beautiful *Cuthona gymnota*. I've seen it here a couple of times before but never got the shot that I wanted.

After some searching in the place I had seen it before, I found a nice specimen climbing the stalk of a *Tubularia indivisa* hydroid. Luckily the hydroid was standing somewhat alone on the edge of a rock, giving me the opportunity to frame just the nudibranch on the stalk and the hydroid polyp with only the water as the background.

The settings used gave me a nice black background making the nudibranch and the hydroid pop out, and let them show off their beautiful colours.



© NPC 2014 / Bjørnar Nygard, Norway

Judge's Notes:

This is one of those shots that when I see it as I judge I say "Why was I not there? Why didn't I shoot that!" Well, I know why I wasn't there: too cold. But I will definitely try to "copy" this sublime composition in one of my shots. My warmest congratulations for achieving one of the more pleasing images of this competition as far as I am concerned.

www.nudibranchphotocomp.com



Issue 78/46

THE IMAGE IS EVERYTHING



WETPIXEL
WWW.WETPIXEL.COM