

Southern Colours

by Attila Kaszo

Much has been and still is written about our tropical seas and the spectrum of biodiversity and colour that is found there.

Unlike the tropics however, colourful patches are usually limited to areas that are more protected from strong ocean conditions. Artificial structures tend to be the preferred locations for sessile groups. Pylons, jetty's and old wooden structures tend to be very popular.

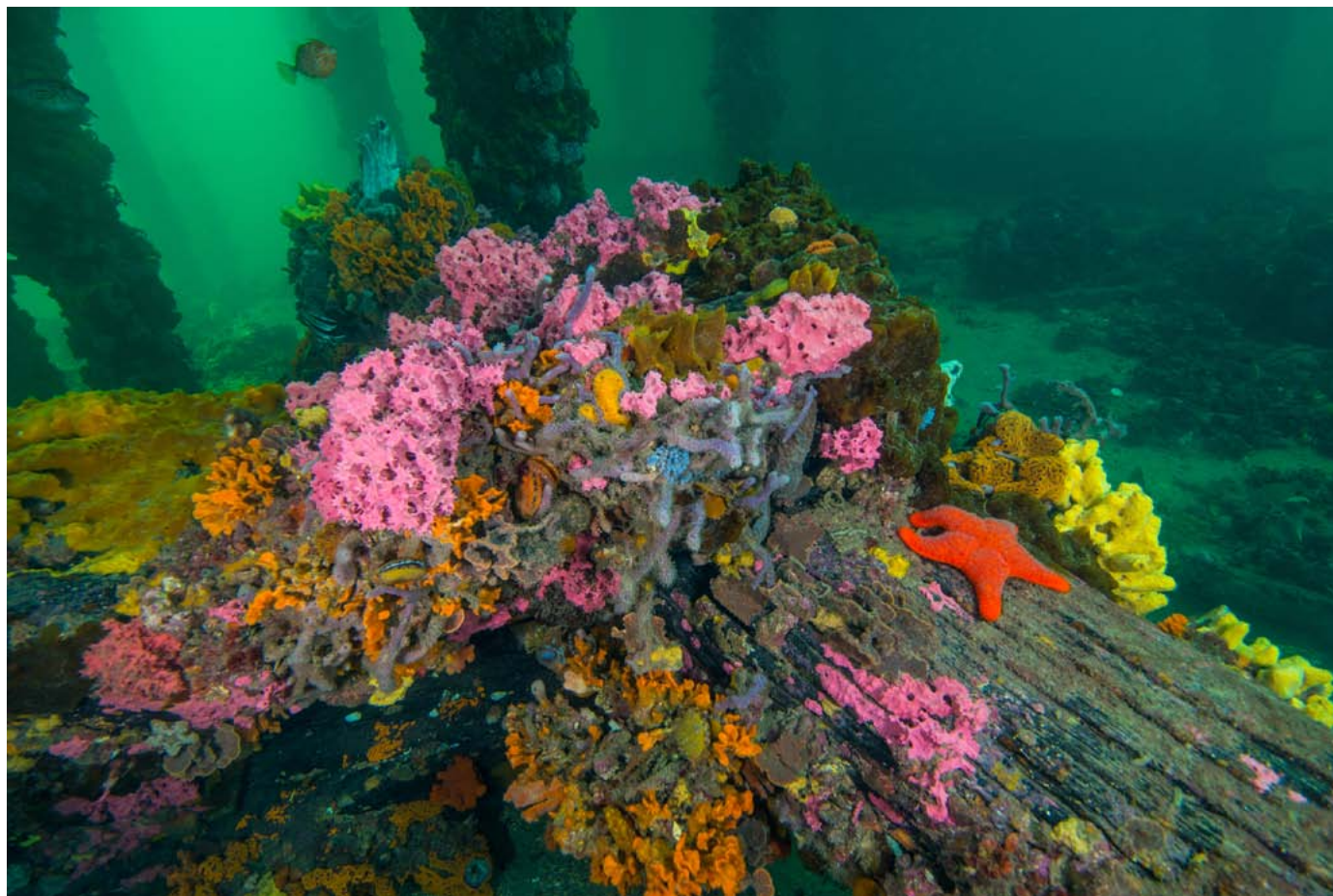
Many divers seem to naturally gravitate toward the warmer waters with good reason, but colder water can bring some outstanding photo opportunities, which can rival the best tropical patch of reef.

I am fortunate to live in a country that offers both tropical and temperate diving; the choice of where to dive becomes a subjective one.

I decided to "re discover" some of the past diving haunts, which years ago were the mainstay of SCUBA diving for most enthusiasts living in temperate regions of the country.

The southern part of Australia offers some really outstanding dive locations with a spectrum of colour that is just awe-inspiring. Without concentrating on one particular location, it's fair to say that each area has its own uniqueness and biodiversity suitably saturated in a kaleidoscope of colour, and like tropical locations you won't find everything in the one spot, which can make the adventure even more exciting.

Probably the greatest disadvantage of diving in cooler water (12-16°C) is the gear you need to wear



Nikon D800, Nikkor 16-28mm f2.8 @ 1/60th @ f8, 16mm, ISO 400 – 2x Inon Z240, 2x L&M 2000

to keep warm. Most of my friends use Dry Suits or Semi Dry, well worth the investment if your diving is mainly in these sorts of conditions. However if you're like me, occasionally visiting the colder areas then a good quality Wet Suit will do just fine.

Most of my dives were over one hour and one occasion I stayed in for two hours fifteen minutes. I'll admit on that occasion I was a bit cold. But overall, most of the diving can be done with relative comfort in a wet suit.

Photography in these conditions is really no different to the tropics. Depending on the visibility and the type of images your interested in capturing, will dictate the lens and lighting combination most suitable.

The regions I dived and the conditions lent themselves more to close up image capture and I particularly wanted to show the amazing textures and colours I saw.

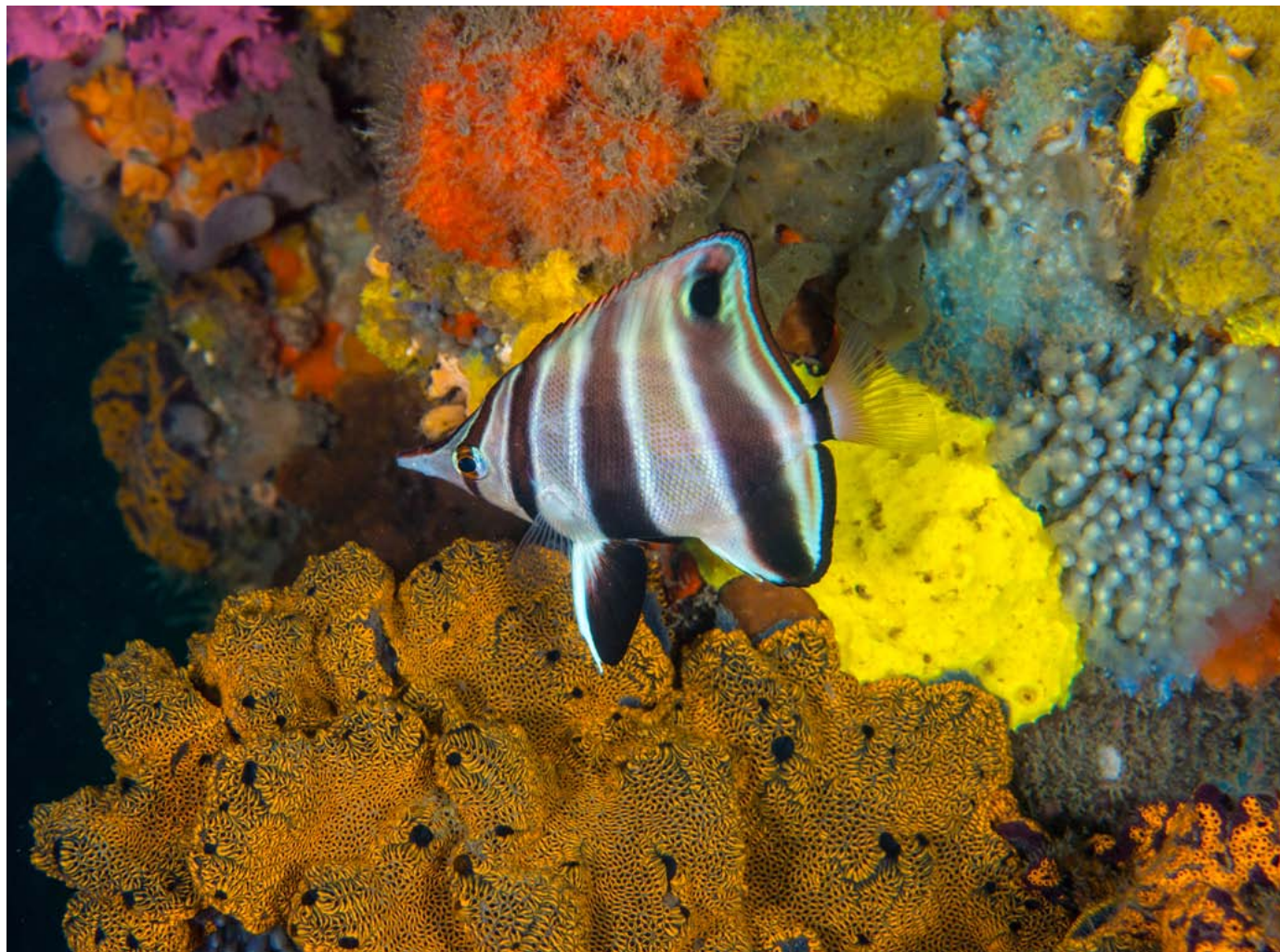
For most of my shots I used two strobes and



Nikon D800, Nikkor 60mm f2.8 @ 1/60th @ f13, ISO 200 – 2x Inon Z240, 2x L&M 2000

two video lights. The reason for the video lights is to fill some darker areas pulling back some contrast the strobes make and to give an overall softer highlight to others parts. The strobes were set to ¼ and ½ power settings while the lights were at full power at 2000 lumens each.

Photography in these areas comes down to the photographer's preference of subject and their



Nikon D800, Nikkor 60mm f2.8 @ 1/60th @ f11, ISO 200 – 2x Inon Z240, 2x L&M 2000

creative ability. The huge advantage of this sort of diving is that you tend to stay in a relatively small area because of the growth, and accordingly you use less air, so longer dives and invariably you begin to see more and more the longer you spend watching a particular patch.

This happened to me on all dives. I would find a nice patch of growth, settle down with video

lights on and just watch. After a few minutes what I thought was a raised sponge started to move and revealed itself as a Sponge Decorator Crab. Even nudibranchs 10cm long can adequately camouflage to the extent that a diver can swim over them and not see from looking. It really does pay to sit and observe rather than madly paddle about and not really see anything.



Nikon D800, Nikkor 60mm f2.8 @ 1/80th @ f8, ISO 200 – 2x Inon Z240, 2x L&M 2000

In conclusion temperate really can't be compared to tropical diving. Both offer a different spectrum of biodiversity and both can offer spectacular diving.

Great diving I believe is to experience it all and enjoy what's under there now, it may not be around for as long as you think.

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