

Parting Shot

Weedy Sea Dragons (Phyllopteryx taeirolatus) are relatively uncommon in most of their habitat range, but occasionally more than one can be found around Bowen Island, Jervis Bay Australia.

Unlike their relatives the Leafy Sea Dragon, these dragons are a lot easier to find and tend to just hang about even if they are bathed in 5,000 lumen video lights.

The water temperature was 16oC and a recent southern upwelling had filled the bay with a thick layer of nutrients driving the visibility to about 4m. Not the best conditions for photography or in fact diving for that matter, but the motivation were the dragons, the males bearing their cache of eggs bobbing about in the surge at 24m. We found four dragons on this dive, all were males, but only one carried eggs. He was about 38cm long, one of the biggest I had seen and clearly was not perturbed by my size or the amount of lighting I was directing toward him.

After shooting for about 40 minutes, the area began to fill with a lot of local onlookers anxious to see what was going on. It became quite difficult to continue shooting because fish were literally up against the housing port and one big Blue Grouper became so inquisitive, that it blocked every new angle I managed to set up with the dragon. It got to the stage where I just gave up and hoped I got the primary images I was after. As a parting shot I got one more off without the grouper or parts of him in shot, and surfaced.



Nikon D800, Nikkor Macro 60mm f22 @ 250th, ISO 500, Nauticam housing, 2x Inon Z240 Strobes, 1x Intovetec 2,500 Lm light

Not until I started sorting the images did I see that the parting shot was indeed just that, two fish appearing to be parting with an affectionate peck while the dragon looked on.

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**Do you have a shot which has a story within a story?
If so e mail it with up to 500 words of text and yours could be the next Parting Shot.**

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