

I really had thought that rights grab competitions - where the organisers can use the entries for whatever purpose they see fit for an infinite period of time - had been flushed out but unfortunately not.

'Guylian Seahorses of the World' is a Belgian underwater photo competition and the deadline for entries is November 11th 2014. Hopefully you are reading this after November 11th and did not enter the competition. If, unfortunately, you did you have just given the organisers carte blanche to do with your images as they please for as long as they want.

The press release they send out is friendly enough and there's even €750 of dive gear to be won but if you go into a little bit more detail it starts to get photographically sinister.

To be fair the organisers are reasonably open about their intentions. They say "The contest helps with our seahorse research by encouraging divers to look for seahorses, and spreading the word about seahorse conservation. The contest also gives us access to more photos to add to our data base for research. In turn, this research helps better protect seahorses and their habitats around the world."

Now that, at first, sounds fair enough. It's a testament to people power which the media tap into

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incessantly to help us make their programmes for them by tweeting and twittering our input. Delve a little deeper into the 6 pages of competition rules and way down on page 4 you are greeted with the plain legal facts as to the organisers intentions and I quote:

"8.2. The primary objective of the Photo Competition 'Guylian Seahorses of the World' is the acquisition of high-quality photographs of seahorses in their natural habitat, photographs that Project Seahorse and Chocolaterie Guylian NV can use for both their educational outreach efforts and for scientific study. Also NELOS and their 'Audiovisuele Commissie' and their 'magazine Hippocampus' may use the pictures. **Therefore, entrants grant the Organizers the full and royalty-free right to print, publish and use worldwide in whatever format all submitted photographs over an undefined period of time.** Entrants also agree that their submitted photographs can be reproduced royalty-free by the Organizers over an undefined period of time for commercial reasons in PR related documents, packaging, folders, catalogues and similar objects."

I'll leave you to make your own minds up.

UPY London

I'm excited to promote and to have been involved in this new competition which takes place in London next year. It makes the bold claim that it aims to find the Underwater Photographer of the Year (UPY) and I have been honoured to have been asked to be a judge along with Martin Edge and Alex Mustard.

Alex, in particular, has been involved since the very start of this project and his experience in entering, doing consistently well and judging major underwater photography competitions, has helped shape a contest that truly is for photographers.

Alex is too young to have been around when Diver magazine, here in the UK, used to organise The Brighton Underwater Film Festival. It was an event which attracted entries from all over the world when the postal system was the only delivery method!

Despite such a tedious method of entry it attracted world class images from around the world when overseas travel was nowhere near as available and the results were announced at a festival weekend in Brighton with major speakers from all four corners and trade stands from diving businesses large and small. It was a very exciting event.

The Brighton Film Festival morphed into "Image" and was followed by the British Underwater Image Festival organised by Dive Magazine and then it petered out as the digital world evolved with online entries and judging.

The result has had a diluting effect both in terms of numbers and prizes but UPY wants to get some of the more traditional values reinstated such as prizes available and judging methods.

In terms of prizes UPY London has 'complete' prizes i.e. an overseas trip which includes the flight and the judging will be done 'live' rather than remotely online.

Two days have been set aside for Alex, myself and Martin to meet up and have the entries projected for judging. Time will be taken to view and discuss the images and the final winners will not be decided upon until the next day when we have had time to let the images settle in. It's surprising how some images have instant appeal yet fail to sparkle a second and third time around and some others just get better with viewing.

I'm excited about UPY London. I think it's the underwater photo competition you deserve.

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