



The mako circles the cage then comes close to investigate a few of the floats
Nikon D300 with a 12.0 – 24.0 mm f4.0 lens ISO400 1/125sec at f/13

people in the cage. This allows monitoring of the air supply and leaves more room in the cage for the guests.

Using a tether, the cage is floated 2m away from boat so the shark can do a complete 360° around the cage.

In the cage I am able to see the makos up close and swimming very calm and curious right in front of me. They come to the bait floating nearby first to investigate then to strike. They even investigate the cage on a few passes. As the large eye connects with me I feel secure in this strong cage.

The makos will stay with the boat and cage for extended periods. Some encounters have been 3 hours long with the same shark staying with the boat feeding and circling. Our mako stayed for almost an hour doing many passes by the cage and boat. I am able to get great shots of the full shark passing by either the side or the front of the cage. As the mako comes close to check out the cage I get some close up and front opportunities. Later back on the boat it is still circling and I get some topside shots of attacks on the bait to add to my breaching shot. Capt Anthony has seen guests achieve great images with everything from professional cameras and video rigs to GoPros on a stick.

Hunting for and photographing shortfin mako was a fun and productive day. I returned with great underwater images from the cage and spectacular breaching shots from the boat. The cage experience is exciting: the sharks come close and stay close

to wind, current and the boat is constantly drifting. Using the cage eliminates the worry that guests will drift too far from the boat or let go of the line drifting quickly out of sight of the boat and crew. Without the worry of where the guests are, the crew can concentrate on keeping the makos close to the boat and interested; coaxing them into the best position for observation and photos.

Engineered to be similar to the cages used in South Africa for great white shark encounters, this one has room enough for 2 people. It sports bars of

stainless steel and aluminum with a solid floor and a top protected with bars. The cage floats a bit above the surface of the water to enable communication with the boat if needed. At eye level on the sides and front are clear panels made of Lexan polycarbonate sheet. The front has two open ports for cameras.

Captain Mendillo has experimented with different ways to rig the air supply to the cage: They tried bottles in the cage, but now opt to leave the bottles in the boat and run hookah lines to the

making many passes and allowing time to get a variety of images and angles. The encounters are very engaging and guests can get a great experience even if they stay in the boat and forego the cage. It is a good feeling to know that a sustainable tourism activity is being built around this vulnerable sport fish. Since the season overlaps with sailfish season it is possible to get both of these exciting large fish on the same holiday using the same crew. It is thrilling enough to appeal to both photographers and fishermen.



Gregory Sweeney
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ADAM HANLON

SouthWest Ramblings 16

by Mark Webster

I have mentioned in a previous ramble that this year has certainly been the year of the jelly fish and the most recent personal jelly fish event for me has been a Highly Commended placing in the British Wildlife Photography Awards with an image of a barrel jellyfish. So I thought it is a good time to reflect on this subject and how to take advantage of this abundance photographically and produce some satisfying images.

Historically the first jelly fish begin to appear in late spring (May/ June) as the water temperature rises and the first plankton blooms arrive to spoil the visibility! But this year we have seen unusually high concentrations which began to appear in early March, when the water temperature was still very low, and they have remained with us throughout summer and into September.

Despite the green water and backscatter issues the arrival plankton is actually good news as it is the harbinger of a new marine season and will soon be followed by increased fish activity, the prospect of basking sharks and of course the Cnidarians and Ctenophores. But this year they

(Top) A classic composition with the large Rhyzostoma jellyfish is to place it directly in front of the sun and use your flash on high power to balance the light. A fast shutter speed will freeze the sun's rays. Nikon D7100, Subal ND7100, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f14 1/160.

(Right) In their adult stage compass jellyfish are quite spectacular with four long arms in addition to the stinging tentacles. Shooting them in slightly deeper water allows more even lighting with flash and it is easier to control your buoyancy as you move around the subject. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f10 1/250.



have appeared

During the season we normally see four species of jellyfish – *Rhizostoma pulmo* (barrel jellyfish), *Chrysaora hysoscella* (compass jellyfish), *Aurelia aurita* (moon jellyfish), *Cyanea capillata* (lions mane jellyfish) – and also numerous Ctenophores (comb jellies or sea gooseberries) which come in various shapes and sizes.

This year there have been fewer lions mane jellyfish seen and the most abundant species has been the *Rhizostoma*, which is also the largest with some examples reaching a meter in diameter across the bell.

All species generally drift with the tide although they also swim whilst drifting and can move surprisingly quickly. So you may see large concentrations of a species on a flood tide at a certain location and none at all on the ebb and vice versa. The tides will also carry the jellyfish into coves and gullies where they may become trapped temporarily until the reverse flow commences, or permanently until they expire.

The trick of course is working out where the hot spots will be and what period of the tidal flow you should target for the best chance of good encounters.

Some may say there are only so many ways that you can photograph a jellyfish and, whilst that may be so,

the ever changing conditions in the water column and changes in depth and light do offer a variety of options to keep us engaged.

Occasionally a jellyfish will present itself in a more unusual location or negative space offering the opportunity to be a little more creative. Jellyfish appear in various sizes of course, but unless you are chasing comb jellies specifically then a wide angle zoom or a fish eye zoom will be the most flexible lens choice.

Although I own a couple of wide angle zooms I find that I rarely use them in preference to my 10-17mm fish eye zoom as the minimum focus distance of the wide zooms just cannot compete. Even with a smallish subject the fish eye zoom at 17mm can focus almost onto the dome and so you can generally fill most of the frame. You might consider a 60mm macro lens for comb jellies, jellyfish detail or perhaps the juvenile fish which are sometimes seen within the canopy of the larger jellyfish.

You need very calm conditions for reflection shots and some good buoyancy control. Positioning the flash guns correctly takes a little trial and error but the results can be very pleasing. Nikon D7100, Subal ND7100, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f20 1/200.



Flash lighting will be used in most cases either to illuminate the subject fully or in balance with the ambient light, but we should also look for opportunities to backlight the subject with the sun when close to the surface or try full silhouette lighting with the sun behind.

Some jellyfish are almost totally translucent whilst others are opaque or partly translucent so putting the sun directly behind the subject and switching off your flash guns need not result in a dark subject but can produce some very pleasing images. If you are using your fish eye lens close to the surface then also look for opportunities to place your subject with a partial (or full if you are lucky) Snell's window effect.

We have a spot close to a headland in Falmouth Bay where we often anchor between dives for a lunch break. Our anchorage is just out of the tidal flow through the bay, protected by the headland. When the tide is ebbing the numerous jelly fish (this year literally hundreds on some days) are carried north and as the tides strikes the headland those on the edge of the flow are shed by the vortex effect into the sheltered anchorage below the cliffs. So on some days we have been able to peer over the side of the boat and watch a seemingly constant march of huge Rhyzostoma jellyfish swimming somewhat

aimlessly as they wait for the tide to turn again. In my idle lunchtime moments

I had been conjuring up an image of one of these large jellyfish right on the surface with the cliffs and blue sky visible directly above it with a touch of sunburst and Snell's window for good measure. In order to achieve this image I needed the UWP gods to align by providing perfect weather and bringing a suitable jellyfish subject to the perfect spot below the cliffs, right on the surface and to remain there long enough for me to get in the water and capture the moment! I had seen this occur many times but had not reached the spot in time before the jellyfish sounded again.

Waiting at the spot for a passing jellyfish just wasn't going to work unless I was incredibly lucky. However, many false starts were finally rewarded when I at last

Most of the UK jellyfish species do not have a significant sting, but the lion's mane can be quite unpleasant. It is very easy to become absorbed in the task looking through the viewfinder and then get too close to receive a nesting sting on the lips or cheek! Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f16 1/250.





When working with natural light exposures don't forget to look down on your subject with the sun behind you for a quite different lighting effect with the sun's rays piercing down and giving an impression of depth. Nikon D7100, Subal ND7100, 10-17mm FE zoom, ISO 200 f9 1/160.

managed to time my pre-dive preparations with the arrival of two or three likely subjects heading for the shallows below the cliffs.

Staying just below the surface and controlling your buoyancy in a dry suit is a real challenge and you are also constantly trying to control your exhalations as the bubbles will disturb the subject just above you and will also take time to clear on

the surface.....so you hold your breath whilst waiting for this and of course become buoyant and need to exhale again.....and so the cycle starts again!

My technique which sometimes helps is to take a few shots from below to get the focus range and orientation of camera and subject somewhere in the ball park, then lock the focus in manual mode



Comb jellies or sea gooseberries (Ctenophores) are generally quite small (2-4cm), found close to the surface and are mostly translucent making them difficult to photograph. This particular species has a little more substance to reflect the light from a flash gun. Nikon D300, Subal ND20, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f20 1/250.

and position myself beside the jellyfish with arms extended and camera roughly positioned for the shot. Now I can exhale and as I begin to sink move in gently towards the subject, make final adjustment to camera position and begin shooting whilst also

making slight changes to camera orientation to vary the composition. This way the jellyfish and surface are not disturbed by exhaled bubbles and with the joy of digital review you can refine the composition and exposure whilst you catch your breath.

Not every shot will work of course, but with a little practice you can improve your success rate significantly and produce some good images. For some shots you really need to be able to view the subject through the viewfinder and have to make the best of the buoyancy restrictions or, as I could at this location use one hand to grip a handy piece of kelp and hold myself in position during the buoyant phases. Some of the images worked reasonably well, although I found it difficult to capture the relative height of the cliffs in the background, but on reflection worth the effort.

Other opportunities may be less planned but can also offer a different or unusual negative space. On another dive at a shallow anchorage, which had not been very fulfilling photographically, I was returning to the anchor line when I spotted a couple of *Rhyzostoma* jellyfish approaching just below the surface. I could see that they would pass below the boat and realized this could produce a pleasing image to save the dive, particularly if I could also capture the boat superstructure through the surface.

As I converged with the jellyfish under the boat and began shooting in just a couple of metres depth, with my usual buoyancy struggles, the skipper could see the flash firing and knew immediately what was expected of him. So now I had three elements combined in the composition – jellyfish, boat and someone peering over the handrail looking at the jellyfish passing by. So that dive ended much better than expected and just goes to show that you should always be prepared for something to turn up



Often after a poor dive we cannot wait to get back to the boat and so turn off the camera and flash guns as we ascend. But every now and then the unexpected occurs as you come to the surface, so stay prepared until the last moment! Nikon D7100, Subal ND7100, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f13 1/100.

right until you are climbing the ladder at the end of the dive.

The abundance of jelly fish meant that we could almost guarantee seeing some during a dive and particularly during the ascent.

On very calm sunny days when the jellyfish are very close to or on the surface you can occasionally see their reflection on the surface and the immediate

appeal is to attempt to capture one with a mirror image. Having the thought is far easier than capturing the image as you face all the buoyancy and bubble issues described above, but at least you are working to the side of the subject and not directly below it. You don't often see the reflection though the viewfinder as the flash guns will provide the reflected light on the surface and hopefully



Nikon D7100, Subal ND7100, 10-17mm FE zoom, Inon Z240 flash guns, ISO 200 f20 1/160.

and time slips by, so make sure you have a flag or SBM so that your boat can find you when you finally surface.

Compass jellyfish and lions mane jellyfish can both have very long fine tentacles trailing below and behind them and it is quite easy to swim into these when your eye is glued to the viewfinder. Some people will react more to the sting from these species than others, for me it is quite mild, and it can be a bit of an unpleasant surprise to get a sting on your lips or cheek when moving in for that close focus shot!

Despite these minor hazards shooting images of jellyfish can be immensely satisfying so if you have missed them this year make sure you are prepared for the next invasion.

Mark Webster
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provide the mirror for your jellyfish subject.

Positioning the flash guns requires a little trial and error but they will need to be a little below the lens and a slight upward angle to begin with and then hone in on the best position. Not every shot will be a success as even on a flat calm day there is movement in the water surface and of course your own movement and bubbles create a disturbance. On such calm days there is often a lot debris and thicker plankton just below the surface which can cause backscatter issues with the flash light, so looking for a subject in a clearer patch of water

is optimal or be prepared for some work in post processing.

Photographing jellyfish can be very absorbing and time consuming. Very often these encounters are in open water and I frequently engage them at the end of a dive on ascent, so will either be in mid water or just below the surface. If you have been diving a reef over a slack water period the arrival of the jellyfish most likely means that the tide has begun to flow and you will drift on ascent during your imaging efforts. It is often surprising how far you can drift once you become absorbed in the task



Guidelines for contributors

The response to UwP has been nothing short of fantastic. We are looking for interesting, well illustrated articles about underwater photography. We are looking for work from existing names but would also like to discover some of the new talent out there and that could be you! UwP is the perfect publication for you to increase your profile in the underwater photography community.

The type of articles we're looking for fall into five main categories:

Uw photo techniques - Balanced light, composition, etc

Locations - Photo friendly dive sites, countries or liveaboards,

Subjects -, Anything from whale sharks to nudibranchs in full detail

Equipment reviews - Detailed appraisals of the latest equipment

Personalities - Interviews/features about leading underwater photographers

**If you have an idea for an article,
contact me first before putting pen to paper.
E mail peter@uwpmag.com**

How to submit articles

To keep UwP simple and financially viable, we can only accept submissions by e mail and they need to be done in the following way:

1. The text should be saved as a TEXT file and attached to the e mail

2. Images must be attached to the e mail and they need to be 150dpi

Size - Maximum length 20cm i.e. horizontal pictures would be 20 cm wide and verticals would be 20cm.

File type - Save your image as a JPG file and set the compression to "Medium" quality. This should result in images no larger than about 120k which can be transmitted quickly. If we want larger sizes we will contact you.

3. Captions - **Each and every image MUST have full photographic details** including camera, housing, lens, lighting, film, aperture, shutter speed and exposure mode. These must also be copied and pasted into the body of the e mail.

Parting Shot

Among the many wonderful and fascinating animals to be found in the soft bottom environment of Lembeh Strait, Sulawesi, Indonesia, the Coconut Octopus (*Amphioctopus marginatus*) always delights.

Although they are most often seen seeking shelter within the paired untenanted shells of deceased bivalves or the halves of coconut shells, as necessity dictates, other solid objects can be earmarked for shelter.

The soft-bodied octopus needs a robust shelter from would-be predators hunting along the muddy flats of the strait. For this reason, Coconut Octopus will often carry their shelter with them as they hunt or travel across the mostly barren bottom topography.

On one unforgettable night dive, this octopus was happened upon while in the process of dragging a discarded glass tankard bearing the Guinness beer logo across the seafloor. The octopus withdrew into the glass as a dive torch was shone its way. Only one seriously drinking—or an optimistic octopus—would think that hiding within a glass would render invisibility. I made the image and gave a salute to the octopus and continued on our night dive, leaving



Canon IDS Mark III, Seacam Housing, Twin Inon Z-220 Strobes 1/2 power, Canon 100mm macro lens, 1/100, f/10, ISO 400

this pub crawl to continue without further interruption under the cover of the nighttime sea...

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