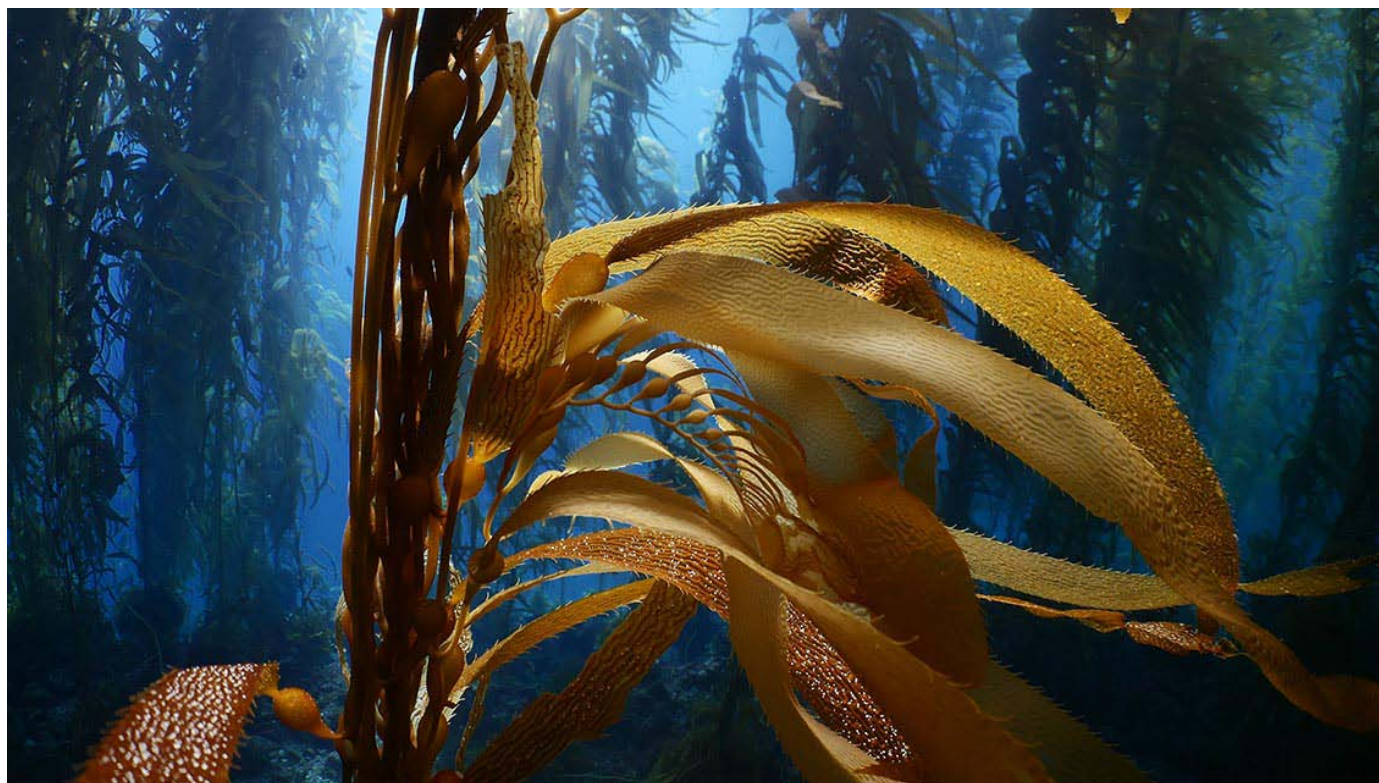


Nauticam WWL-1 lens review

by Peter Rowlands



The Nauticam WWL-1 supplementary wide angle lens is designed to increase the angle of coverage of a 28mm lens to 130° with excellent resolution, corner sharpness without exaggerated barrel distortion of a full frame fisheye lens.

Unless you are just out from a 6 stretch or have just got back from Mars you will know that Nauticam have revolutionised the production and design of underwater housings beyond all measure. Their speed to market and eye for innovative design has been keeping up with the camera world's ability to come up with newer models designed to tempt our wallets.

They started as a one product (white balance dome port) company in the underwater world and have gone on to produce housings for most of the popular cameras but a couple of

years ago they introduced the SMC and then the CMC supplementary close up lenses. As a result they had entered the "optical" game. A logical progression would then be to produce a wide angle supplementary lens to complete the set and so the WWL-1 came to be.

Wide angle optics underwater is a complicated business and the wider you try to go the more

compromises must be accepted in terms of overall resolution, edge sharpness and flare. Nauticam have taken wide angle correction as far as is possible without accepting significant compromises and so the WWL-1 was designed for use with 28mm camera lenses to increase their angle of coverage to 130° and still produce high resolution images with tight corner sharpness even at wide apertures. There are other supplementary wide angle lenses on

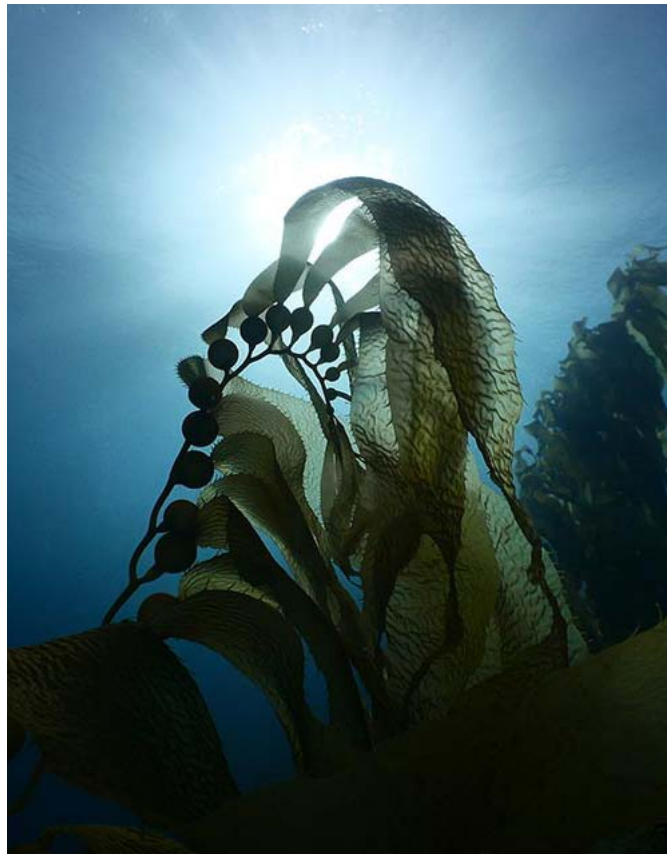


the market which offer a wider angle of coverage but at the expense of edge sharpness and overall resolution.

The WWL-1, consisting of an aluminium housing and glass optics is a chunky lens but at 1.5kg it is no heavier than the established INON UWL-100 with the optional low profile dome but is slightly smaller. It is available in 67mm screw thread or bayonet mount fitting and unless you already have a screw thread I would recommend the bayonet mount which is much easier to fit and remove underwater - you should always do this to dislodge any small air bubbles which might cling to the glass surfaces on water entry.

I was using the WWL-1 with the Panasonic 14-42 (28-84)mm 4/3rds lens and Nauticam have produced a matched flat port which keeps the WWL-1 perfectly positioned for optimum optical performance.

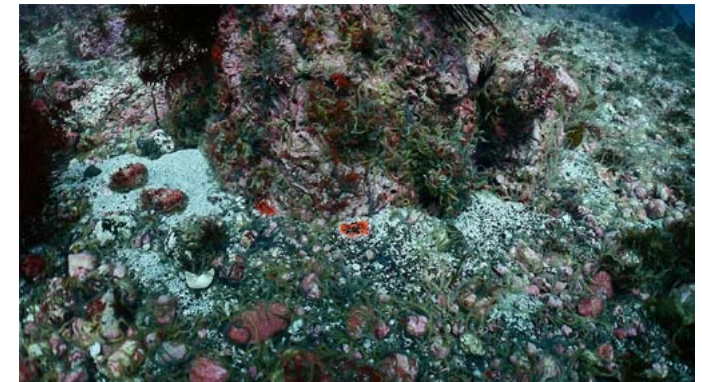
The other benefit which the WWL-1 offers is much improved close focus capability. With my



Even in extreme lighting the WWL-1 produce very little flare which was very impressive indeed.

previous INON lens I had to use a +2 dioptre close up lens to give increased close up performance but even with that it was nowhere near as good as the WWL-100. In addition the lens coatings and design have produced a lens which is flare free in all but the most extreme of lighting and the final icing on the cake is full zoom capability

I received my review lens and port just before going on a trip with Mr Mustard to California to sample kelp forest, sea lion and oil rig diving. At 1.5kg on land the WWL-1 made my Panasonic G7 Nauticam outfit very nose heavy so I had to make a



The WWL-1 behind a Panasonic 14-42mm lens has a very useful zoom range and excellent close focus capabilities.

jury rig of Stix floats to level the balance and make the lens only very slightly negative underwater. This is important, especially when shooting video. Nauticam have told me that they are working on a buoyancy collar which, to my mind, will be a must have accessory.

Speaking of accessories I have for a long time had a gripe with almost all glass dome port manufacturers in that they go to the ends of the optical earth to produce amazing coated curves and surfaces and then think that a cheap stretchy neoprene cover is sufficient to protect the front dome port. I agree it provides protection from all but the roughest of handling but taking them on and off underwater usually requires the arms of an octopus. No - I think a lens of this quality deserves better protection which a solid lens cover would provide. Sure it can be an expensive optional extra but I think it would be worth it.

With these slight, rectifiable, niggles aside I can tell you that this is an excellent 'piece of glass'.



The straight legs of an oil rig platform show that the WWL-1 doesn't produce the exaggerated barrel distortion normally associated with full frame fisheye lenses.

A lens is a very personal piece of equipment - it is the eye in front of the camera's mechanical engine and as such there is a much more human relationship between it and the photographer. I can't say that it is either a male or female relationship but just one of admiration which creates a desire to show it the best possible lighting and location and let it do its magic for the sensor to capture. I got on very well with this lens and the results are better than I have been used to all this time. The differences are subtle in terms of resolution

but there is a crispness and improved contrast that I have not seen before and then when I look at the corner sharpness of my results it just makes me feel good.

I shoot video almost exclusively and this lens is perfect for me. 130° wide without exaggerated barrel distortion, full zoom and excellent close focus make this the perfect all rounder which could only be beaten in angle by a dedicated fisheye lens or in close up by a dedicated macro lens, both of which you need to commit to before the dive. I put the



(Top) Nauticam Panasonic GX7 housing, 14-42mm lens at 14mm, Nauticam WWL-1 wide lens, available light, Original Magic filter. (Above) with the 14-42mm lens zoomed in to 42mm. This makes the housing/lens combination a very versatile set up.

WWL-1 lens on knowing that there is very little I will not be able to capture and that to me is very liberating. There is enough thinking going on without having to worry "Did

I put the right lens on"?

For stills photographers the same could well be true - this lens combo could give you the flexibility to not change lenses again and that's



This Harbor Seal was so taken by the pin sharp reflection of him in the dome of my WWL-1 lens that he kept coming back time and again for another look! Photo by Alex Mustard.

a very liberating thought.

A bit like looking at 4k footage then going back to 2k I looked at my Californian kelp forest footage and couldn't face the thought of giving up the WWL-1 lens so I bought it rather than return it and it will become the mainstay lens for me for some time to come.

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Nauticam were so pleased with my Californian footage that they produced a showreel clip at

<https://vimeo.com/144083763>

and I have added my initial videos at

https://youtu.be/hY3_CUN0bHA

<https://youtu.be/r6D2jVHRnz4>

<https://youtu.be/rLKjH3w3hz8>

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