

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Winner
'Dancing Octopus'
Gabriel Barathieu (France)

In the lagoon of Mayotte, during spring low tides, there is very little water on the flats. Only 30 cm in fact. That's when I took this picture. I had to get as close as possible to the dome to create this effect. The 14 mm is an ultra wide angle lens with very good close focus which gives this effect of great size. The octopus appears larger, and the height of water also. Also, I didn't need flash because I had lots of natural light.

Lagoon of Mayotte, Mayotte Island,
Indian Ocean

Canon 5ds, Subal housing, Canon
14 mm f2.8 II, iso 100, f/16, 1/125,
Natural light

Judges notes:

Both balletic and malevolent, this image shows that the octopus means business as it hunts in a shallow lagoon. The way it moves is so different from any predator on land, this truly could be an alien from another world. A truly memorable creature, beautifully photographed.

Alex Mustard

Judges notes:

Vibrant, contrasting colours, detailed delicate textures and a perfect pose. Add the right choice of lens for the situation and they all combine to produce a Champion.

Peter Rowlands

Judges notes:

I cannot praise this photograph enough. As soon as I first set eyes on it as we worked our way through the Wide Angle Category, I knew it was destined for a huge success. One amazing image!

Martin Edge

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Winner
'Out of the Blue'
Nick Blake (UK)

Kukulcan Cenote on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula forms part of the Chac Mool system and is noted for the spectacular light effects as the sun penetrates the darkness. I left my strobes behind for the natural light shot I wanted and positioned myself in the shadows of the cavern. Moving my eye around the viewfinder, I could see that the rock outline of the cavern around me made for a pleasing symmetry and I adjusted my position to balance the frame. The light show flickered on and off as the sun was periodically covered by cloud and as it reappeared, I beckoned to my buddy and dive guide, Andrea Costanza of ProDive, to edge into the illumination of some of the stronger beams, completing the composition. My journey from diver to underwater photographer has brought many amazing photographic opportunities and I feel humbled and privileged that this image has achieved such recognition.

Kukulcan Cenote, Yucatan, Mexico
Nikon D810, Sea & Sea MDX
housing, Sigma 15mm Fisheye, iso 400,
f/6.3, 1/60, Natural light

Judges notes:

What I really like about this image is the enclosure of the light within the Cenote. The author has contained all the sunlight so the eye of the viewer cannot escape. The lone diver is positioned within the beams and I do believe that the author meant for this to happen. Stunning natural light wide-angle!

Martin Edge



Up and coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017

Winner

‘Oceanic in the Sky’

Horacio Martinez (Argentina)

This was my first Red Sea experience, and my first liveaboard-based photo workshop, so everything was interesting... but arduous. We were on the last dive of the day and I ventured a tad deeper to get closer portraits of the Oceanic White Tips, when I noticed this shark patrolling in the distance. I took a few shots to expose for the sun beams and the surface, and was pleased by the dreamlike effect. Oceanics are great subjects for close ups as they are anything but shy. Yet, every now and then it is great to try and capture their apparent loneliness, their wandering, and their independence in the big blue.

The Brothers, Egypt

Nikon D810, Nauticam housing,

Nikon 14-24 @24mm, iso 400, f/14, 1/200,
S&S YSD1

Judges notes:

There was a lot of competitive images in this category, as you would expect, but this one was a serious contender right from the start. The photographer has ‘seen’ the light and realised its dramatic effect extremely well and used it to contrast the small shark in a big, blue, lonely world. Very evocative indeed.

Peter Rowlands

Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2017



Winner

‘Orca Pod’

Nicholai Georgiou (UK)

Orcas are easily the most beautiful, intelligent and confident animals I've ever had the honor of spending time with. This photo was taken during an amazing week freediving with wild Orca in Norway. The days are quite short in winter and the water was around 5 degrees but we wore a thick wetsuit and of course with Orca around, the cold was quickly forgotten. The light had a really nice colour from the setting sun as this graceful pod of Orca swam by nice and close. It was a moment which will be hard to top and I'm glad to have this image to share it.

Tromso, Norway

Nikon D750, Ikelite housing, Sigma 15mm 2.8 Fisheye, iso 1600, f/4.5, 1/160, Natural Light

Judges notes:

Most underwater photographers would be happy to get a shot of a single killer whale in its environment but Nicholai had the composure not to panic and time the shot perfectly as a pod of killer whales passed by heading into the setting sun. I'm jealous.

Peter Rowlands



1) Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Frozen Hunting'
Fabrice Guerin (France)

The weather was cloudy and the temperature of water was 2°C. Orcas push fish towards the shore as this makes them easier to catch. Our boat captain stopped near a school of herring. When I was in the water, I saw that it was not deep, so it presented an opportunity to photograph with the light being reflected off the sand. I waited for 20 minutes in front of shoal of herring hoping to see an orca. Suddenly a humpback whale appeared. What a surprise!! It was an amazing cold water encounter!

Andenes, Norway

Canon 5D mark III, Aquatica housing,
Canon EF 16-35 mm f/4 L IS USM , iso
3200, f/4, 1/160

Judges notes:

A stunning behavioural image of a humpback in shallow water scattering herring taken in very tough conditions. The photographer did very well in very dark waters to record this breath-taking scene sharply.

Alex Mustard



2) Macro

Winner

'Prey?'

So Yat Wai (Hong Kong)

This photo was shot during a blackwater dive in Anilao. Even though the larvae mantis shrimp (left) is very small, it still a predator which uses its raptorial appendages to hunt. Has it spotted the prey and is ready to pounce?

Anilao, Philippine

Canon 5D MkIII, Sea & Sea housing,
100 mm, iso 400, f//20, 1/200, Inon Z240 x 2

Judges notes:

This shot works on so many levels; like a Sci Fi encounter in outer space, the fortuitous (for once) backscatter creates a perfect starry background which makes the main subject seem huge and menacing. Perfect composition leaves you in no doubt and you can only fear for the 'little fella' on the right.

Peter Rowlands

2) Macro

Commended
'Larval Lionfish'
Steven Kovacs (USA)



This image was taken on a black water drift dive in Palm Beach, Florida to look for alien looking pelagic animals, plankton and the larval stages of many creatures that drift out in the open ocean in their early stages of development. Many of the animals seen during black water dives are very small and can move quickly when illuminated by powerful dive lights, so getting a nice image is, not only challenging but, very rewarding as well. On one particular dive I was very fortunate to come across this rare tiny Lionfish in its early larval stage and was fortunate to get a photograph of it just as it flared it's beautiful fins for the camera.

Palm Beach, Florida, USA.

Nikon D7000, Ikelite, 60mm macro, iso 250, f/29, 1/250, 2 x Ikelite DS160 strobes

Judges notes:

Judging is a very subjective process and as I write this caption some two weeks after the judging I can't help but feel that I should have fought more for this exquisite image to be pushed a little higher up the order.

Peter Rowlands

3) Wrecks

Commended
'Last Flight'
Steve Jones (UK)

This USAAF B-17G Flying Fortress crash landed on approach to the island of Vis, Croatia after being hit by anti-aircraft fire during a bombing raid over Europe in 1944. This spectacular wreck is in remarkable condition and lies at 72 metres. I only had one dive on the wreck and the depth gave me very limited time in which to work so good communication between myself and my buddy, Andi Marovic was essential: I thoroughly briefed him on what I was trying to achieve before the dive so he could also visualise the image I was aiming for. I wanted to capture an image that showed the true scale of the aircraft so I shot with natural light and colour balanced the image during post processing.

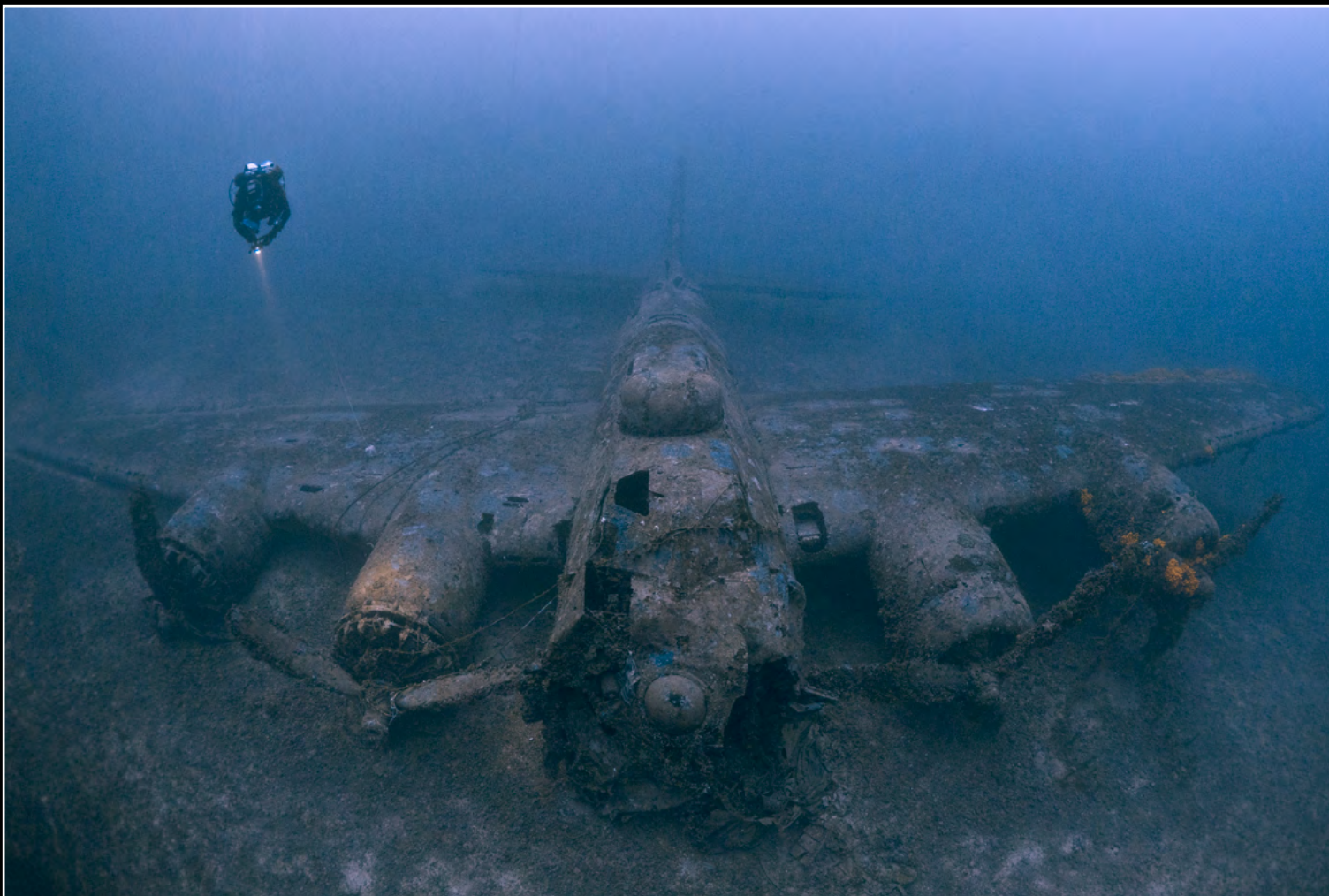
Vis Island, Croatia

Nikon, D4 Seacam housing, Nikon
13mm RS, iso 3200, f/5, 1/80, natural light

Judges notes:

I still can't believe I had to fight the other judges to keep this shot in the top 10. OK, the standard of images in this category was extremely high but I found this to be such a powerful shot yet so simple in its execution. As is often the case where another diver is included for scale, a significant part of the credit should also go to them for their contribution to the composition.

Peter Rowlands





7) Up & Coming

Highly commended
'Tiger Beach'
Dave Baker (UK)

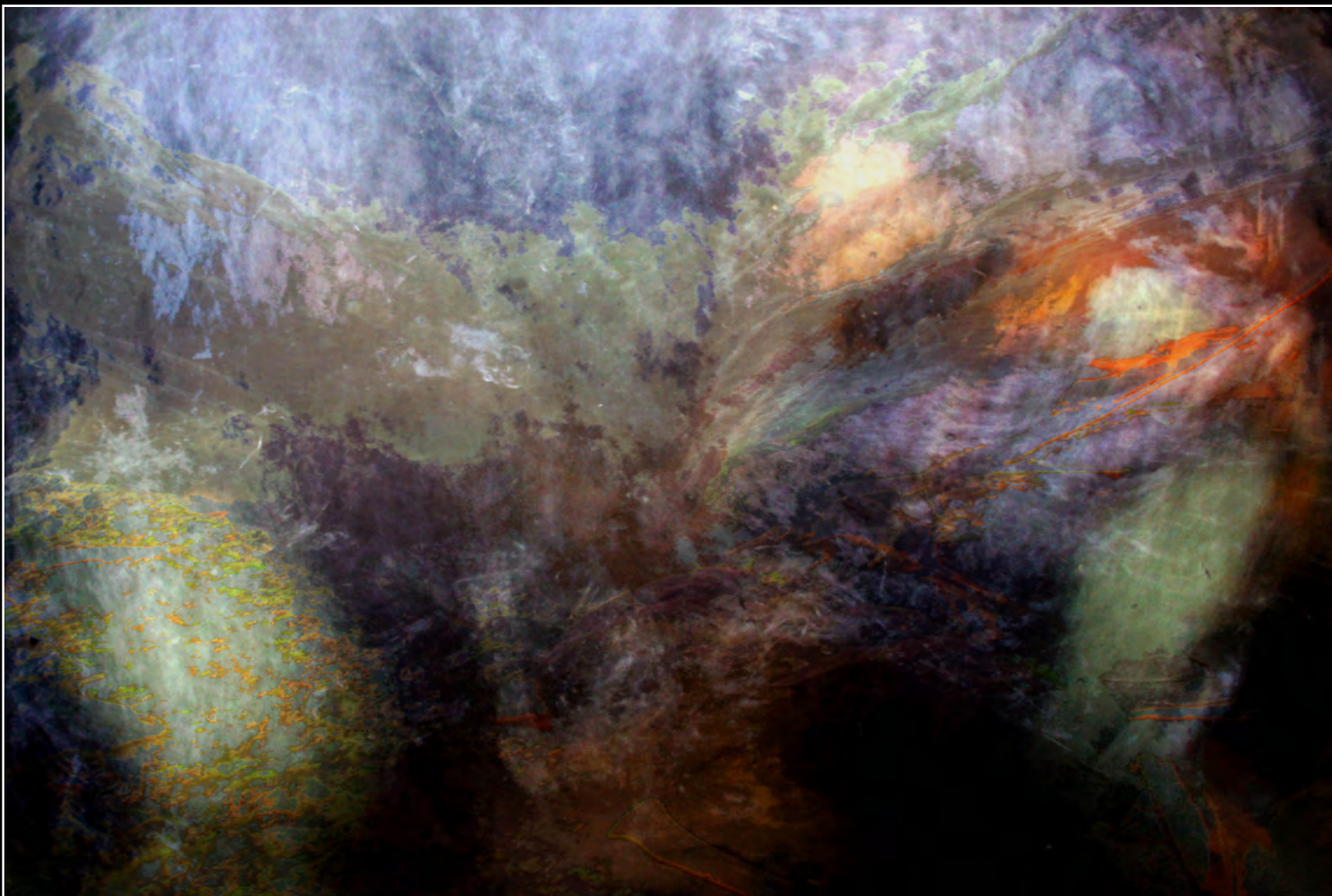
Fed up with getting fleeting glances of sharks and then seeing them disappear into the depths I decided to take a trip to Tiger beach in order to get up close to these magnificent creatures. I wasn't disappointed. I tried to capture as much of the experience as I could in one shot so positioned myself behind some coral with the boat on the surface. It was then a case of waiting for the Sharks to swim over with the added bonus of a diver descending from the boat as well

Tiger Beach, Bahamas
Nikon D7000, Sea and Sea housing,
Tokina 10-17, iso 100, f/9, 1/125, 2 x Inon 240

Judges notes:

With three species of sharks, including a huge tiger shark, all in formation, this is an easy shot to appreciate.

Alex Mustard



8) British Waters Wide Angle

Highly commended
'Tumbling Autumn Leaves'
Dave Peake (UK)

This image was taken in Dartmoor National Park, UK with the aim of capturing some underwater movement. Autumn in the rivers and streams can be very colourful with fallen leaves tumbling along. Depending on the speed of the flow I have experimented with various apertures and shutter speeds and each image can be totally different. The colours and artistic shapes have inspired me and they appear at times to be like an oil painting or better still a 'Water Colour'. The camera can be on a small tripod or held as still as possible just under the interface of water and air and a slow shutter speed used. I am fortunate to live near the National Park and when sea conditions are not good this is where I retreat and experiment.

Sheepstor Brook, Dartmoor National Park, UK

Sony NEX 5, Nauticam housing,
16mm plus fish eye attachment., iso 200,
F22, 1.6 s, Natural Light

Judges notes:

A very imaginative and beautifully balanced image. A favourite with all the judges. Groundbreaking work.

Alex Mustard