Editorial

People v Science

Bob Halstead's excellent article questioning the accuracy of the extent of coral bleaching on the Great Barrier Reef certainly gives food for thought and I am sure will generate a response from the scientific community.

My take on things is a scientific study may not be as accurate as data fedback from boots on the ground or, in our case, flippers underwater. I was reminded about this when I had a social conversation with a marine biologist who was banging on about how a particular piece of marine life was 'extremely rare' in the Plymouth area. I didn't have the heart to tell them that we had seen several examples of this species on our dives in a particular area and it was in a very wide area of that particular area, if you get my drift.

I am not in the scientific community and fully expect to get shot down by those who are but I suspect that this marine biologist in question was indeed right that the particular species was extremely rare but only where he had been looking.

As we all know, the sea is a vast environment and us mere mortals can only take a stab at quantifying and cataloguing it. Our results may well be accurate but only in the comparatively small area we were studying.

Video crop factor

One of the disadvantages of today's hybrid cameras which can shoot stills and video is that more often than not the angle of coverage you get when shooting video is less, and often very significantly less, than when shooting stills.

There are a few reasonable reasons for this, starting with the dimensions of the image sensor. For example 'full frame' is 36x24mm i.e. a 3/2 ratio of width to height. The 4/3rds format has already done that calculation for you and is 17.3x13mm.

The problem starts when video shooters want to shoot 'wide screen' to simulate the footage they have seen in cinemas. This is typically a 16:9 ratio which is longer and thinner than full frame or 4/3rds. The result is a 'top and bottom' crop which effectively reduces the diagonal angle of coverage.

The coverage is further reduced when image stabilisation is introduced which sounds great but is actually achieved by further cropping the image area to take up any 'wobble' in the footage.

Unfortunately, as far as I can make out, there is very little disclosure of these facts on the camera spec sheets so if you shoot a lot of wide angle video underwater, do your homework before 'upgrading'.

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