



pack.

I gradually increased my limits, and the coldest dive so far was 1.5C underwater and -4C outside. You have to know when to get out of the water to have a warm brew. Making the most of your gear is mandatory, and flushing the suit with warm water is a must. At the moment, I'm diving with a two piece 7mm wetsuit, 3mm hood, 5mm boots and gloves. For the photo gear, a Nikon D800, my trusty pair of SB-105, 15mm f2.8 fisheye, 20-35mm f.28 and a macro 105mm f2.8. For outside, I'm also using a 24-105 f4.

My first dive was at the end of September 2016. Not sure about what people would think of me diving in

their small neighborhood creek, I decided to start in the early morning, before sunrise.

I learnt a lot; I was using the wrong gear, got frozen hands and I learnt later that the friendly family of racoons should not be played with. So far I have been to half of the rivers and hope I can make better use of the next run in September 2017.

Getting to know the salmonids is also very important. Each species has its own limits, and if you respect them, they let you take your shots. Sometimes fish stay in the same place for days, and get used to you, letting you almost touch them.

I usually do some scouting

before actually going for a dive. It's important to know where you want to go and be prepared. I try to visit at least once the spot I want to go, and spend some time paying attention to the waters, looking for fish and best lighting. Apps that help you calculating where the sun is going to hit an area are very useful too.

Last year, there was a big presence of Chum and Coho salmon, but I also had short encounters with Cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii*), Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Dolly Vardens (*Salvelinus malma*). I hope that in the spring, I'll be able to shoot some more species like the

iconic Steelhead and the endangered Nooksack Dace (*Rhinichthys cataractae*), which is only found in 4 creeks in BC.

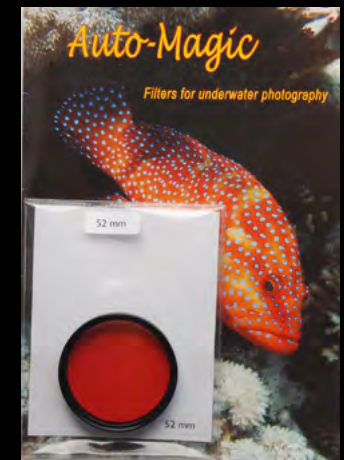
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Fernando Lessa (1984, Brazilian) is professional photographer and has nature in his heart. With a degree in biology and a masters in photography, he has been working in search unique images that portray the beauty and complexity of nature.

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Farne Islands, UK

by Jean Michel Machefert

Once upon a time there was a French diver who wanted to dive with mammals without going too far from France at a reasonable budget...So what to do?

In France and continental Europe if you are very lucky there are many places where diving with mammals such as dolphins, seals and some varieties of whales is possible but everywhere the opportunity of a mammal approach is quite small. Moreover there are also some places which have rules restricting the contact between divers and mammals.

After Googling a little bit, the UK appears to be a unique place with more than 40% of the world population of grey seals (*Halichoerus grypus*) one of the rarest seals in the world. The others are in north America and that is a little bit far for 1 week of holidays!. There are about 80,000 to 115,000 grey seals in UK and about 6,000 to 9,000 in the Farnes islands with about 2,000 pups each year. The Farnes islands are in Northumberland and here it seems quite easy to dive with them thanks to well organized dive boats allowing you to go close to the rocks where they live.

So decision was made, the French diver with his wife and some friends will go to the Farne islands. Moreover the distance between Paris and Seahouses (sea port just in front of the Farnes islands with all the diving boats and accommodation) is 900 km, what is great since this is the same distance as from Paris to the Mediterranean sea!



When to dive with the seals? The seals are in the Farne islands all year long but in order to have the chance to get close to them the best period is after mid-September when the pups (yearling and sub-adults) are well acclimatised to fishing and swimming and also big and confident enough to play between them (or with divers!) by running one after the others gently biting their fins and the kelp.

The yearlings in eastern England are born between November to mid December the year before and then their lives were not easy for them. Their mother gave birth to a single white pup which





Nikon D2x, housing Aquatica, Tokina 10 - 17mm at 10mm, 1/ 100, f9 , ISO 200 , 2 strobes Nikon Sb 910, Patima housings, ½ and ¼ power.

she suckles for around 3 weeks and then as soon as the pup weighs around 40kg, the mother goes back to the sea for foraging (she did not eat anything for the suckling period) leaving them to live on their fat reserve for 2 or 3 weeks.

This lasts until hunger drives the pups to the sea where they learn fishing and surviving by themselves without parental care. Almost 50% of the pups will die before reaching 1 year old. The real life of seals is not the wonderful world of Disney even if the pups are cute as shlush!

The colonies of seals are located on the shores of the islands on the outer Farnes and time to time they move around the islands according to the winds and the weather; spending their time between sleeping on rocks, basking in the sun and feeding periods from a few days up to 1 month; they forage up to 100km from their colony at depths down to 200m for more than 5 minutes at a time.

They need about 5kg of food every day, mainly eels, cod, flatfish but also octopus, squids and some crustaceans and mollusks. The bulls



Nikon D2x, housing Aquatica, Nikon 10.5mm, 1/ 100, f10 , ISO 400 , 2 strobes Nikon Sb 910, Patima housings, ½ and ¼ power.

can weigh as much as 300 kg for a length of 3m and a female about 150 kg for 1.8m long. Even if they are big seals are not dangerous but of course if a diver places his hand or finger in a seal's mouth or if a diver blocks the way of a seal to go out of a cave then they can bite. In this case the only one to blame is the diver and not the seal!

After a quick and efficient organization the team was ready to dive on Monday the first week of October on one of the boats of Sovereign diving. The weather is beautiful with a clear blue sky, no

wind and it was more or less the same for the entire week with some swell in the middle of the week and only one or 2 hours of fine rain.

The water is not fully transparent with some grey-blue- green milky aspect at some places but near the surface this is fully acceptable for luminous pictures and dark backgrounds closer to the kelp.

45 minutes later, the first seals are here and for sure they are really everywhere. As soon as the boat arrives near a colony you are observed by hundreds of pair of eyes, and quite