

My Shot

by Alex Tyrell

Blackwater diving started in Hawaii, diving at night in thousands of feet of water in the hope of seeing the weird and wonderful creatures that make the vertical migration from the abyss.

Ever since seeing Joshua Lambus' incredible blackwater shots from the waters off Kona, I had wanted to try this style of diving. However, where I live, on an island in the Gulf of Thailand, we do not get deep water that is the typical environment for blackwater diving.

Instead of adopting the normal method of drifting in open water, I tested things out by swimming off the standard dives sites, settled in 18-20m of water and used a high-powered 10,000 Lumen Weefine Solar Flare light to attract the critters. This worked, with me encountering many different creatures - new species of shrimps, larval Mantis Shrimps, juvenile fish, brightly coloured squid and strange jellyfish all made an appearance, making for some great images. But even after shooting underwater for many years, this involved a learning curve.

Seeing the semi-transparent creatures is one thing, shooting them

is another! Finding the subject in the viewfinder and then focusing is the first hurdle, and even with the excellent AF of my D500, I still got many out of focus images. The next issue is keeping track of your subject while shooting and reviewing shots, as on numerous occasions they have done a 'David Blain' on me and magically disappeared!

In February I was in Lembeh with the Underwater Macro Photographers Group and had a few extra days at the resort so we arranged a couple of blackwater dives with the luxury of our own personal dive guides. This increased the hit rate massively, with me being able to focus on shooting so now, if I lost the subject in the viewfinder, I simply looked over the camera and my guide Amba had it pinpointed in his torch beam.

The first night out I was treated to numerous shrimp and squid, juvenile fishes, but the highlight was a larval Moray Eel, though it was swimming quickly making it hard to shoot even with my personal guide. The second time out was much of the same, with subject after subject to shoot, but towards the end of the dive Amba called me over with erratic waving of his dive light and pointed out a post-larval flounder around 3-4cm long.

What is very cool about flatfish,



Nikon D500, Subal ND500 with i-TURTLE XS strobe trigger. 2 Inon Z240 strobes, 60mm F2.8, 1/250th @ F22. 500 ISO

is they start out life with eyes on either side of their head, just like a normal fish, until just prior to commencing the benthic stage of their lifecycle, whereby the eye migrates around to one side or the other, depending on whether they are a flounder (right side) or sole (left side). Even though this fish was small, it was very mobile and it wasn't long before it had taken Amba and I out of sight of the powerful lights hanging under the boat, and the following dive profile would not have of received the DAN seal of approval!

With flatfish being very thin,

plus the post-larval stage being semi-transparent, it very much limited the shooting angles that worked. Plenty of images ended up in the trash, as you couldn't really tell what the subject actually was. But I ended up with two shots that I really like, including this one that has an X-Ray style to it, letting you see the skeleton of the fish, as well the colouration on the skin.

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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 high.

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.