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# Field Work



Text and photos  
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Now, we have our camera and all of its ancillary added on bits. We have checked that everything works. We have our chosen format decided. We have our laptop and portable hard drive all packed up and ready to go on location, but where are we going and why go there in the first place?

## Research

Getting to know your subject is perhaps easier than you think, however, we really do not have a whole lot of spare time underwater collecting knowledge on our subject matter. Rather, we read up everything that we can about any behavioural oddities; we talk to other photographers who have been to the location we have chosen; and we research as much as possible, quite a lot of which can be found readily available on the Web.

Timing isn't everything, so they say, but in underwater photography, timing is everything, whether it is the time of day, month, season or year. There are climatic changes annually as well as water temperature fluctuations. Some of the best diving to be done in the Caribbean, for instance, is in August and September, but it is blistering hot on shore, and there



is a fair chance that you may get caught up in one of the periodic hurricanes, which can sweep through the entire area. Typically, hurricane season is from 1 June to 30 November.

There are similar seasonal activities destined to spoil your photography in virtually every location on the planet. Plan any trip well in advance and you will not be disappointed.

More often than not, it is pot luck at the end of the day and your own conviction that you can get good photographs from every dive. If the viz is bad, take close-ups. If daytime conditions are terrible, dive at night.

One time, in the Red Sea, there were a simply staggering amount of jellyfish. They covered the entire surface of the sea and filled the water column for two days. Many people complained, but I concentrated on jellyfish photographs!

Pelagic fish and mammals also have seasonal migration routes. One can photograph humpback whales in Rurutu in French Polynesia in October, or whalesharks in the Seychelles in November, or leafy sea dragons in southeast Australia in February, or basking sharks in June in the Irish Sea and the Sardine Run off

Juvenile Queen Angelfish (*Holacanthus ciliaris*), Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands —105mm lens, ISO 100, Sea & Sea YS180 flash, 1/125th second at F16





# photo & video

Christmas Tree Worm (*Spirobranchus giganteus*), Cayman Brac, Cayman Islands—60mm lens, ISO 200, Sea & Sea YS180 flash, 1/125th second at F16

BELOW: Divers at sandbar off Grand Cayman

South Africa in February—the list goes on. The point is that whatever your desire, someone will more than likely have been there before you, taken photographs there, or even written a book.

I once spent over 50 minutes in seven metres of water inside the crumbling remains of a small shipwreck on the northwest shore of Cayman Brac, in the Cayman Islands. The wreck was a former inter-island landing craft by the name of the *Barbara Ann*. Inside the stern section about three metres square, I found a juvenile queen angelfish (*Holocanthus ciliaris*). It was around 3cm from head to

tail outfitted with outlandish, incredibly vivid colours.

As you can imagine, such a small colourful fish was also very timid. But after watching the fish and creeping closer, armed with my trusty Nikon and 105mm lens, I was able to ascertain its swim pattern where it would perform a figure eight and hide behind part of the old ship's interior mid journey.

I took a photograph, it darted for cover, but then started its normal route, so I took another photograph. It swam for cover. But after a few more photographs, it got used to me. I could soon anticipate its route and managed to take three or four absolutely great photographs of this shy and elusive fish.

Having such a nice and cooperative subject allowed me the time to choose my backgrounds as I took the photographs. Choosing the almost black background allowed me to select the fish and isolate it from the background in post production on the computer. This clean image could now be superimposed on another photograph for instance or used as a graphic representation in a feature article.

### Empathy

No matter how we try to be invisible to our photographic subject, inevitably we are just those big ugly, ungainly creatures that blunder around without too much

thought, sometimes getting too close to subjects and at other times not seeing the big picture. You can only start to become more familiar with your subject matter if you can have some empathy and understanding of the intrusion into their personal space.

Humans are just the same in this respect. If a stranger gets uncomfortably close, then we automatically back off or turn and be prepared to fight. Our adrenalin peaks, and it is the primeval fight or flight reflex. Well, apply this sentiment to the underwater world when approaching a new subject for the first time.

The creature may be light or pressure sensitive, such as Christmas tree worms (*Spirobranchus giganteus*), and you may only get one chance at the photograph. If you encounter this subject in calm water with perhaps overcast skies, then when your flash fires, the worm instantly disappears into its tube home in the coral. Similarly, if you find these normally shy animals in well lit turbulent waters with perhaps some surge, you can

usually take two or three photographs at different angles before the creature eventually withdraws, if at all.

Christmas tree worms are both light and pressure sensitive and so must be approached slowly and with empathy, as there may be only the one chance of taking the photograph before they retreat.

*Lawson was raised in the Scottish east coast fishing town of Eyemouth and spent his youth exploring the rock pools and shallow seas before learning to scuba dive at the tender age of 11. Now over 44 years later, Lawson has been fortunate to make his passion his career and has authored and co-authored over 45 books mainly on our underwater world. Lawson is a founding member of the Marine Conservation Society; founder of the first Marine Reserve at St. Abbs in Scotland and made photographic history by becoming the first person to be a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society and Fellow of the British Institute of Professional Photographers solely for underwater photography. ■*



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photo &  
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## 10 Bar releases housing for Sony NEX-5

10 Bar has released a housing for the Sony NEX-5 camera. Supplied with a standard dome port and lens ring, the housing sports an aluminum front, acrylic back, and is rated to a depth of 60m. Suitable for the Sony NEX 18-55mm lens, it features mechanical controls for all functions and will allow for TTL strobe exposure via fiber optic cables.

[www.10bar.com](http://www.10bar.com)



## Fantasea FP7000 Housing for New Nikon Coolpix P7000!

Fantasea Line has announced its new housing for the Nikon's new Coolpix P7000 digital camera. Rated to a depth of 60m/200 feet, the FP7000 housing is manufactured to the highest professional standards of function, style and durability and is ideal for snorkellers and divers alike. Designed to be compatible with a complete Accessory System, all controls are easily accessible and labelled for comfortable operation.

Also included is a special mount for lighting accessories, double O-ring seal, removable double fiber optic cable connection and removable flash diffuser. The robust construction is shock resistant and protects the camera from water, sand, dust, frost and other damaging elements.

The expected release date is set for early 2011. Pricing has not yet been made available but other housings are in the US\$100-\$130 price range.



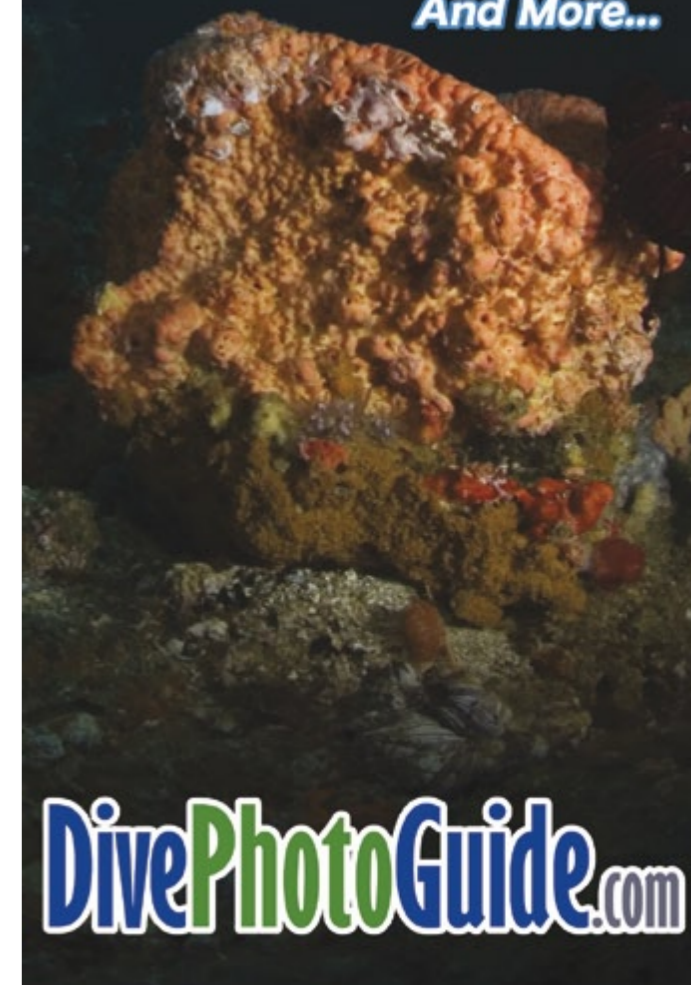
## Sanyo Announces Full HD Dual Xacti Underwater Camcorder

The new Dual Camera Xacti is a full HD (1,920 x 1,080) camcorder that records MPEG4 video at depths of up to ten feet underwater. Weighing in at a mere five and a half ounces with dimensions of 3.37 by 1.47 by 4.34 inches, its compact size is a definite travel plus. It can record over 480 minutes of video in addition to 14-megapixel still photos. Other features include a CMOS sensor (14.4 megapixels), wide angle lens and a 5X optical zoom. The Xacti also offers a couple of proprietary features: a "double-range zoom," which enables the use of a 12X zoom for wide angle to telephoto recording, as well as High-Speed Sequential Shooting, for up to 22 photos at seven frames per second. It is compatible with SD, SDHC and SDXC cards. List price: US\$349.99 [www.us.sanyo.com](http://www.us.sanyo.com)

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## Inon X-2 Housing for Panasonic Lumix GF1

Inon has released its X-2 housing for the Panasonic Lumix GF1. The corrosion-resistant body design is constructed from lightweight aluminum alloy. Featuring multi-coated lens port compatibility, the housing features controls for almost every feature on the GF1, plus fiber optic bulkheads for external strobe sync. INON plans to support INON 45mm macro, 14-45mm, 7-14mm and 8mm fisheye lenses. An optional leak sensor is also available. [www.inon.jp](http://www.inon.jp)



## Light & Motion Releases the Fathom Wetmate 65 Degree Wet Lens

Light & Motion has announced the shipping release of the new Fathom Wetmate 65 degree wide angle lens. Utilizing a robust press-fit system with the flat-port, the Fathom Wetmate 65 is designed to fit all 2010 Sony Light & Motion underwater video housings. Engineered with the highest quality glass on the market and boasting a low distortion rate of only 1.40 percent and a 50 percent zoom through rate, it can be instantly mounted and removed underwater for optimum "one dive" shooting versatility. Price: US\$579.00 [www.uwimaging.com](http://www.uwimaging.com)



## Full High-Definition Underwater Camera

Ocean Presence Technologies has announced the latest addition to its line-up of high-definition underwater cameras: the AquariCam® OPT-12HD. This new Full HD fixed lens camera comes with a 120x optical/digital zoom and provides the highest resolution available with a wide fixed lens. Designed for public aquariums, especially for use in small tanks, it enables visitors to simultaneously view the full high-definition live video stream. The AquariCam-HD can cover a wide 50 degrees of monitoring area with great efficiency and features a 10x optical with an additional 12x digital zoom.

High-definition image sensors now make digital zooming practical without significant image quality loss. Cameras are connected using a single hPoE (High-Power-over-Ethernet, IEEE802.3at compliant) marine-rated cable. Underwater lighting, floating battery packs and wave generator power systems are also available. For more information on this and other HD-IP cameras, visit: [www.oceanpresence.com](http://www.oceanpresence.com)



## Nikon 24-70mm Coffee Mug Arrives

For those Nikon users who just can't get enough of their lenses, Canon Mug has added a Nikon version to their popular line of mugs and thermoses. The Nikon AF-S 24-70mm 2.8 features a stainless steel interior and features a fully zoomable lens barrel. The black thermos coffee cup comes complete with a gold box and a drawstring bag to carry it around in. A one-piece lens mug/barrel combination sets of two, four are also available. Just keep your real lenses to avoid unpleasant accidents. [www.canon-mugs.com](http://www.canon-mugs.com)





## Dry shooting in wet places

The newest underwater photo kit from Sea & Sea is almost like two products. First, there's the DC-GE5 12.5 megapixel digi-camera that is waterproof to 16 feet without the housing. Yet, the company is marketing it with a polycarbonate housing that allows full access to the camera's controls to a depth of 180 feet. Since it is waterproof, there is little worry about condensation or minor flooding killing the camera in the



housing. Outside of the housing, it withstands rain or sea spray while pursuing outdoor activities. The camera features a 2.7-

inch liquid crystal diode display screen, four-power optical zoom and a lens that zooms from 38 to 152 millimeters. In macro mode, it focuses to a mere 2.3 inches. Sensitivity can be set from ISO 64-3,200, and the shutter speeds range from 1/2000<sup>th</sup> of a second to 30 seconds. It can be used to shoot 30-frame-per-second movies and has built-in effects including panoramas. Automatic face detection and image stabilization ease snapping shots on the go. It has 16 megabytes of internal memory and accepts SD/SDHC memory cards of up to 16 gigabytes. A lithium-ion battery and charger is packed with the camera along with a USB cable and Arcsoft editing software. The housing weighs less than 14 ounces on land, but only 1.05 ounces underwater. An optional accessory lens can be affixed while underwater to shoot wide-angle images. Grips were positioned on the housing to ease holding the unit and gaining access to the controls.

[www.seaandsea.com](http://www.seaandsea.com)

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## Focus on sharpness

Autofocus does fairly well for shooting on the fly, but to really get things just right there is nothing like manually focusing the single-lens-reflex-style cameras in a housing. Sea & Sea has a new accessory to help discriminating photogs fine-tune their images. The VF45 prismatic viewfinder replaces the original housing viewfinder. It eases focusing by providing 1.2 power magnification of the entire viewfinder area. The angled eyepiece rotates 360 degrees in 90-degree increments to it can be positioned in the most comfortable position whether being used to shoot portrait or landscape images. The VF45 is made of an aluminum alloy that has been anodized for corrosion resistance. At 2.3 by 3.9 inches and weighing less than 14 ounces, it slips easily into the gadget bag.

The VF45 is currently compatible with the MDX series housings including the MDX-7D, 5DMKII, D300s, D700, D300\*, 40D\*, PRO D3\*. \*Requires LCD window be replaced, please contact your retailer for parts information and availability. A release date is set for the end of September with an MSRP of \$1,075.00. [www.seaandsea.com](http://www.seaandsea.com)



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