



Photo & Videography

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Doing it right: Holding eye-contact with the subject, maintaining perfect buoyancy, and finning carefully is precisely how the photographer gets his or her camera into the perfect shooting position



A matter of balance

It is sad, but true—underwater photographers do not have a good track record or reputation for behaving well in nature. But being environmentally aware and conscientious about conservation issues should be as much part of the preparations as loading the camera with a memory card and fresh batteries.

Text and photos by Kurt Amsler

Environmental Awareness

For Underwater Photographers



photography

It just seems that quite a lot of divers do not remember, or worse still, were never taught properly how to be in control of their buoyancy

The underlying fundamentals for underwater photography is mastering the basics of diving. In order to obtain good photographs, it is paramount to be able to control buoyancy.

Mastering hovering is, essentially, down to what we were taught in our first diving course. It just seems that quite a lot of divers do not remember, or worse still, were never taught properly how to be in control their buoyancy. So, let's start with a short recap. If you are fully equipped with an empty jacket, drifting vertically in the water, the water surface should be, while normally breathing, at the level of your mouth. Once you exhale deeply, you should slowly begin to sink.

Trim

To find the perfect pose underwater for photography, it is of the utmost importance that two criteria are met: 1) Your weights must be distributed correctly, and 2) your jacket must fit snugly. It may sound silly, but if your jacket is just a little bit too big, it will move around and make it quite difficult to obtain and maintain neutral buoyancy.

For underwater photographers, wing jackets with integrated weights seem to be the most suitable buoyancy system. Their lifting



In order to obtain good photographs, you must be in complete control of your buoyancy

The complete rig should have less than 250 grams of negative or positive buoyancy

body surrounds the tank at the back of the diver. That creates a constant and firm dive position. Also, the depth gauges and hoses should be tucked in and fixed close to the body, so that they will not dangle and damage the reef. What is of importance to divers in general also applies to those handling camera-equipment. Experience shows that the complete photographic equipment system should not have more than 250 grams of negative or positive buoyancy.

Procedures

Most of us have witnessed the following scenario: An underwater photographer has made his shot, and then, with two or three sudden fin kicks, turns around hunting for the next subject. Unfortunately, in doing so, he also manages to kick up a lot of sand and sediment and chase away the fish, leaving nothing to be seen for other members of the dive group! It's necessary to show consideration towards both the

environment and your fellow divers, not just be fixated during those important moments on getting close to the subject. It is of equal importance to think about how to get away in an orderly and smooth manner once the shot is taken.

In this regard, wide angle photography is easier to deal with. It is more of a challenge for macro photographers, who need to remain steady on the reef to avoid camera shake. To avoid damaging the reef, the photographer should take a lot of care in regards to where and how to touch the reef. To obtain the smallest possible contact with the reef, the photographer should use the so-called "finger grip" (images next page) to stabilize his position. After the shot, it is easy to push oneself back into the free water without using the fins. Another way to leave the subject is to use lift. Just take a deep breath or inflate your jacket, remain still and be happy about your shot while you drift clear of the reef.



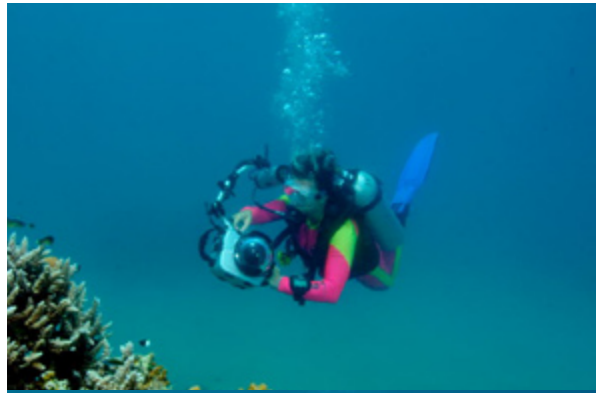
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photography



First you adjust the camera and flash



Then move in closer to the subject



Pause for the right moment for the shot



And then slowly slide away from the subject

Applying positive buoyancy by inhaling or inflating your vest can gently lift you clear of the reef



Side kick: Move the fin blades sideways in a horizontal sweeping motion. Try to angle the blade against the motion



The duck kick employs a gentle circular motion, a bit like a propeller

How to use the fins

It is sometimes just the way you use your equipment that makes for perfect results. The technique of using fins is much more complicated than commonly thought. Using the right finning technique helps to preserve the environment and makes working with photography much more comfortable. What I refer to is the "flutter", "sidekick" and "duck kick". If you are diving just above bottom, the flutter kick with wide angled knees is best and keeps sand and sediment where it belongs.

The movement of the fins is not up and down but goes in a semi-circle done by the knees. If you need more power and speed, you can use the duck kick: Knees are bent while the fins are being flipped up and down through ankle movements. These techniques are mostly used by cavern divers where avoiding stirring up sediments is a priority.

Another finning technique is the side kick. With this technique, the fins are not moved up and down but sideways in a swaying or fanning movement. The result-

ing wave is then also directed sideways rather than down where it would disturb sand and sediments.

These techniques can be learned and practiced by any diver, especially by those who are beginners or have less experience. The time invested in training these buoyancy and finning techniques will benefit any diver but in particular underwater-photographers!

Why? Because a perfect buoyancy and optimal use of fins will make it easier and more enjoy-

able to dive, and make the hunt for the perfect shot more effective and comfortable. And, by the way, if you consider yourself to be engaged in environmental protection issues and a careful diver, you will be respected and welcomed at any dive center in the world. Certainly, only this kind of underwater photographer will be introduced to the hidden secrets and secret dive spots of the diving center—spots that a photo-rogue will never be offered the chance to encounter. ■



Macro-photos require a steady hand and a calm situation around the subject. Look for a dead spot of the reef and use the "fingergrip" to steady yourself



Once you have your shot, gently push yourself backwards



Fit a Nikon lens onto a Canon body

16:9, known for their tests and reviews of lenses by a variety of manufacturers, has introduced an adapter that allows Nikon G-type lenses to fit Canon EF-lens compatible cameras. 16:9 states the motivation was to enable the use of Nikon's "new 14-24mm f2.8, which provides the sweetest ultrawide solution for the 22MP 1Ds Mark III."

The adapter includes an AF-confirmation chip and maintains infinity focus, but disables VR, auto-focus, and auto-aperture functions. At £79, only the lever-free version (where the lens is stopped open or stopped down by rotating the lens in the mount) is currently available with a 35-day turnaround, but a lever-operated version is also planned. www.16-9.net (VIA MATT SEGAL, WETPIXEL.COM)



Sealux CX580II housing for Canon Speedlite 580EXII flashgun



SEALUX housing for Nikon D300

The Compact and lightweight CD300 is made out of one block of aluminium, which is then hard-anodised and specially sealed. The memory card can be replaced while the camera is mounted. Get the full list of features on www.sealux.de



Berkley White runs D300 through the paces

His conclusion: "Nikon D300 offers the most significant advance in underwater digital photography since the Nikon D100. It's beyond instant digital feedback and produces images on par and arguably better than results I've ever achieved with 35mm film. When considered at ISO 400, the results are clearly better than scanned slide film. The Sea & Sea MDX-D300 housing might not be perfected in high end ergonomics, but it is clearly a professional level housing at a great price. If Sea & Sea continues on this MDX design and invests a little more in tactile smoothness, they could easily position themselves as the best housing / best price on the world market." **Read the full review here**



Floats

The best ideas are often the simplest ones. German photo-accessory specialist, Michael Finger, exhibited all kinds of interesting little gizmos at the recent BOOT Expo. Here, we found these floats that can add the necessary buoyancy to a heavy lamp or housing. Just strap them on and you are all set. www.mike-dive.de

Sony unveils 25 megapixel full frame chip

The increasing user requirement to shoot from the same focal length and angle as 35mm film cameras using interchangeable lenses has led to significant interest in the development of 35mm, full size CMOS image sensors.

Enter Sony who has just announced the development of a 35mm full size CMOS Image Sensor with 24.81 Effective Mega pixel resolution and extremely high signal conversion speed for use in Digital SLR Cameras. Who said the megapixel race was over?

