



# Photo & Videography

Edited by Peter Symes



Schools of fishes are not easy subjects! To compose such a number of animals in the frame is rather difficult, because they should have a collective position, movement or eye look.

They are two nice ways to have a school of fish on the picture: Static and in action. The techniques are more or less the same. Search for schools in strong currents. Here, they stay close together like walls facing against the

current. By approaching them from the front and by shooting as fast as you can, the static image will change in a view second to an action image. A strobe with a fast reload cycle makes it more easy.

Text and photos by Kurt Amsler

# Fish Photography

**Shooting fish with a camera isn't easy! Unlike people they are perfectly adapted to the aquatic environment, hydro-dynamically shaped and in all their colourful splendour, they are completely ignorant of any directions given by the photographer's end. So, to get that perfect shot, we need a strategy—and the right equipment.**

Eye contact is a must in fish photography. Not only does it give a good expression to the viewer, but also, if you approach a fish from the front, it will remain longer at its position, because it wants to see what is going on





## Photo & Videography

This picture was exposed with f:8 / 1/15 of a second shutter speed and the strobe on TTL. The camera was set on the second shutter curtain to have the strobe fired at the beginning of the exposure time. The most important to get a proper blur effect is to swing the camera in the same speed the subjects move! To avoid overexposed background always choose place with low ambient light

*Shoot first, think later!*

need the right flash. TTL- metered strobes are ideal for the subject distances usually seen in fish photography, because at a set "working" f-stop, a wide range of distances are covered, and our usually fast moving subjects will be perfectly exposed anywhere within that range.

Bigger fish require a change of strategy, both for lens and lighting. Once you graduate to larger than diver size, say a whale shark, we once more have to resort to the super-wide angle lenses to improve contrast and definition. In this case, we switch the strobe to "manual", because no TTL-program can correctly compensate for that half of the flash light that just vanishes into the deep blue water instead of being bounced back off a subject.

For any size of scaly subjects, auto focus lenses are an advantage, especially cameras with focus tracking. With focus and lighting being taken care of by technology, the photographer can fully concentrate on fish behaviour and com-

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### Hardware

Caution is a useful behavioural trait for many inhabitants on a tropical reef. It can be a matter of survival. Trying to capture a full format image of sardine with an ultra wide-angle lens is therefore better left to the experts. The creatures you meet underwater also have a comfort zone which you cannot penetrate—you need to keep a certain minimum distance. This is typically in the range of 0.7 to 1m. This makes the 28mm, 35mm and 50mm focal length lenses the best choice for pictures of fish that are 0.2 to 0.5m long fish.

Getting close enough requires a lot of experience unless you are diving in a much visited spot where fish have become accustomed to divers. And speaking of which, I would like to warn against resorting to feeding to attract them; by doing so, you

would be changing their natural behaviour, and your newly won scaly friend may soon enough be facing the business end of a spear gun or a hook before too long. That is, if he survives that bad case of indigestion your breakfast scraps gave him.

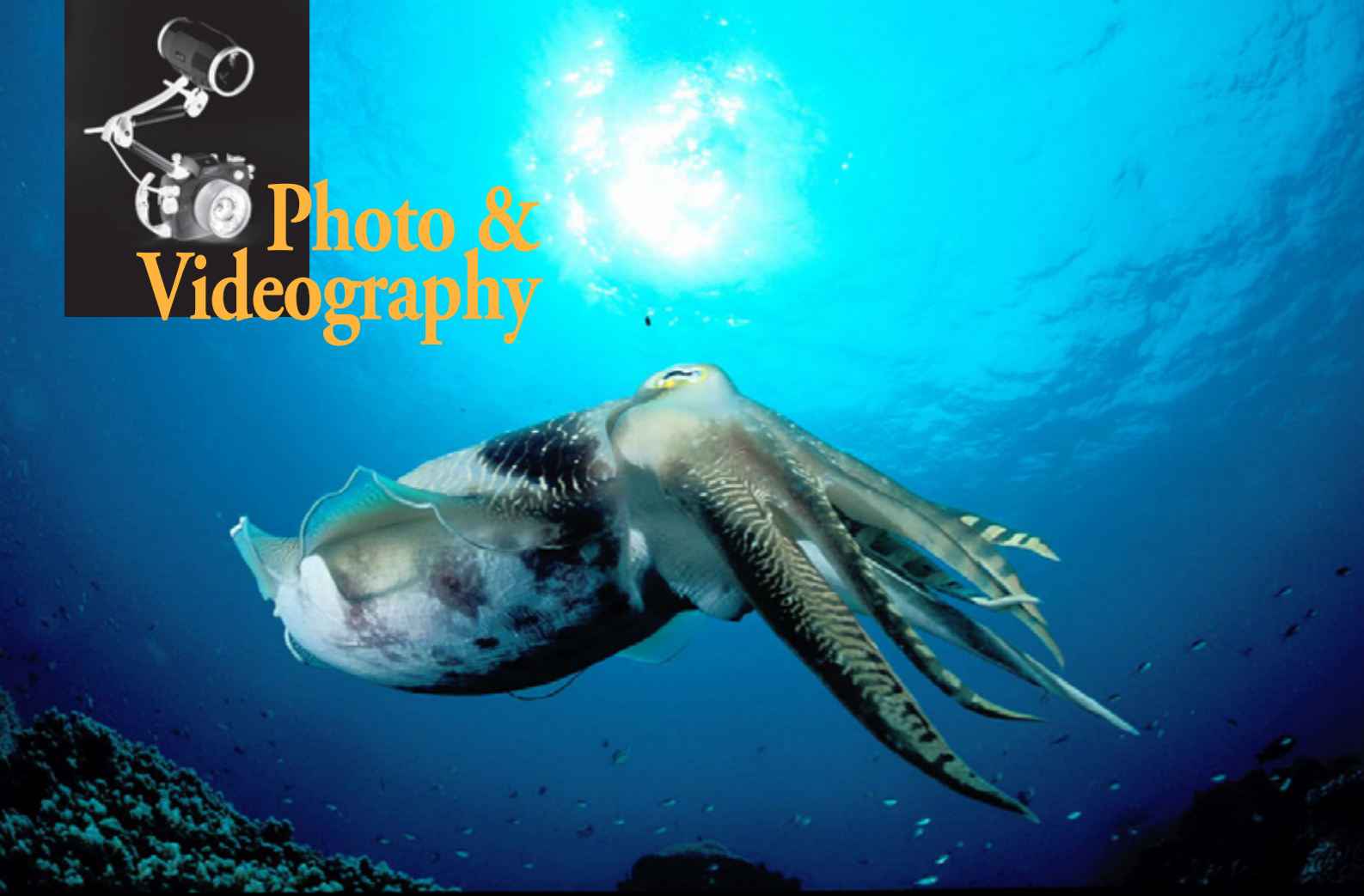
Apart from the right lens you

Most the time fish photography is fast and furious. This makes it just impossible to create effects with additional strobes. Stationary subjects as this Leaf fish makes it possible to place a small slave strobe on the side or even beyond. TTL-Mode is of course the best setting for such close ups. If you use a regular slave strobe make sure it is always weaker than your main strobe. SEA&SEA makes the famous YS-30 strobe which is only 12X7cm and works as slave strobe in TTL, without cable!





# Photo & Videography



*if you're ploughing through the coral like the proverbial bull in a china shop, even snails will resort to a hasty retreat*

posing the image.

### Software

The ground rule for successful fish photography is: shoot first, think later! In real terms, this means your camera has to be set up before you approach your unsuspecting subject. Once within range, there won't be any time to select programs, focus or set f-stops. And the flash better point in the right direction, too!

With practise and experience, the photographer soon learns what subject distance is right to perfectly frame a fish of a certain size. The camera is then preset for that range, the flash adjusted. The rest is up to the individual's diving skill, and—as always, when shooting wild animals, a good portion of luck.

**Example:** At a distance of about 80cm, a 50cm long grouper will be reproduced in full frame using a lens with a picture angle of approximately 45 degrees. The photographer then has

to sets the camera and flash to that distance before slowly approaching the subject, without rapid movements. "Bubble fright" can be minimised by exhaling through the mask rather than the regulator. This strategy may seem clumsy and wasteful of precious dive time, but ultimately it is the most successful.

But these are only generalisations. To become an outstanding wildlife photographer, it takes more than stealth and preparation. It also requires an understanding of the animal's behaviour and its interactions with its environment.

### Etiquette in the reef

The more knowledge the photographer brings to the job, the better he or she will be able to adapt to the situation and predict what the fish will do next. All of which will dramatically increase the odds of excelling. But if you're ploughing through the coral like the proverbial bull in a china shop, even snails will resort to a hasty retreat.

Good diving skills, therefore, are of the essence. You are much more likely to successfully sneak up on some subject when you are neutrally buoyant, breathing controlled and moving slowly.

As with land animals, approach from the front, keeping eye contact at all times. This is less likely to trigger flight reflex as the animal sees what's happening, and curiosity may get the better of it. If the fish moves, you freeze. In most cases, it will come back if not pursued, and it is always better to remain patient (and motionless) than give chase. Just wait and keep that camera ready.

### Please, show some respect.

Chasing puffer fish through the reef until they pump up with water is as unacceptable as is poking animals out of their crevasse homes with your snorkel, taming moray eels by feeding so you can touch them, or riding turtles or manta rays.

Instead, join the ranks of the true wildlife photographers, who enjoy the challenge of improving their knowledge and techniques to come up with an even better shot, one that shows natural behaviour in all its natural glory. ■

Many photographers never use super-wide-angle lenses for medium or even smaller fishes. Such pictures are spectacular because they show next to the main subject a wide view and great depth of field. The difficulty is just to get close enough!!

Next to good diving skills and camera handling, the knowledge about fish behaviour is—as already mentioned—very important. The picture of this, only 40 cm long, cuttlefish was taken with the 10.5mm NIKKOR fisheye lens



### Wetpixel Quarterly

What is Wetpixel Quarterly? It's a quarterly printed magazine devoted to high-quality underwater photography. Each issue of Wetpixel Quarterly features interviews, short articles, open photography contests, and, most importantly, pages upon pages of spectacular imagery from waters around the globe. Wetpixel Quarterly also hopes to foster environmental stewardship by highlighting conservation concerns in each theme-based issue.

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



For most of our underwater images, especially with super-wide angle lenses, we should make the most of the sunlight. In contrast to macro, for example, creativity in fish photography is more limited. A way to get some unusual pictures with a strong expression, is to use the ambient light. This picture was taken short before sunset. This time a day, you'll get a nice reflection on the surface and warm soft light



**OUR WORLD UNDERWATER 2008**  
3rd Annual Wetpixel and DivePhotoGuide International Photo & Video Competition

Popular websites [Wetpixel.com](http://Wetpixel.com) and [DivePhotoGuide.com](http://DivePhotoGuide.com) have teamed up again in association with Our World Underwater to celebrate the beauty and delicacy of the marine environment with the announcement of the 3rd annual international underwater photography and video competition. The competition has become the "Superbowl" of international underwater imagery competitions, with world-class prizes, celebrity judges, and the opportunity to have your images showcased to the world as some of the planet's best.

Over \$50,000 in prizes!

**MORE INFO**

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



## Ocean Optics Open Day with Mark Webster

– London, UK, 12 January 2008

Well known photographer and workshop host Mark Webster will be hosting a second open day with Ocean Optics in London on Saturday 12 January 2008.

Mark will make two technique-based presentations during the day with plenty of opportunity to ask questions and get advice on your equipment and technical problems. There will also be a short image critique session for specific issues.

The Ocean Optics day is free, but it is necessary to book your place in advance. If you wish to bring images for critique, please let us know when you book. Time for this session is limited and will be booked on a first come, first serve, basis.

Contact Ocean Optics for full details and to book your place: [optics@oceanoptics.co.uk](mailto:optics@oceanoptics.co.uk) Tel. (+44) 020 7240 8193 ■



## Hugyfot D300

Hugyfot, manufacturer of housings with exquisite shape, has a new underwater housing for the Nikon D300 digital SLR camera. The first real housing is expected to be available on October 20th, 2007, and will be on display during the annual Festival Mondial de l'Image Sous Marine in Antibes, France, from 24 - 28 October 2007.

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



## Universal Housing UM190

for the new Sony Camcorder Generation. SEALUX Universal housing will fit more than 100 camcorder models and comes with integrated high-resolving 16:9 color monitor. Depth to 90m depth. All Sony camcorders, which are equipped with a LANC-socket for remote control, can be used if they are maximum 190mm long, 132mm wide and 116mm tall. The result is a solid and reliable universal housing with the highest flexibility and easy handling. With minimal dimensions and the lightest weight, it fulfills the topical requirements. All Sony camcorders equipped with a LANC-socket for remote control can be used with this housing. They must not be larger than 190 mm, wider than 132 mm or higher than 116mm.

[www.sealux.de](http://www.sealux.de)



## α700 released

Sony isn't a camera name you hear tossed about by avid underwater photographers—but that could change when Sony's new 12.2MP Alpha 700 DSLR shows up on the docks. New Sony DSLR aims high and should have deep appeal writes Michael J. McNamara reviewing the camera on [DivePhotoGuide](http://DivePhotoGuide)

## ULTRALIGHT CONTROL SYSTEMS



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### Very affordable

Sealife has begun shipping its new Mini Wide Angle lens. The Mini Wide Angle Lens is specially designed to fit the ReefMaster Mini and ECOshot camera lines. The Mini Wide Angle lens increases the camera's viewing angle by 43 percent. It also allows close-up pictures from 12 inches to infinity. The lens also completes the expandable system for the mini series of cameras. With a retail value of only US\$79.95, the lens will make the ReefMaster and ECOshot on of the most affordable 6mp Dive camera systems.



### TTL Converter III for Nikon

This converter is equipped with a built-in TTL PCB that connects a Nikon digital SLR with SEA&SEA YS-Series strobes and uses the camera's TTL flash adjustment to control the amount of light put out by the strobe. The converter allows quick switching underwater between TTL mode and manual mode from outside the camera. You can use the TTL correction dial after checking the results of a shot in the LCD monitor to adjust the amount of strobe light for the next shot. Because the converter comes with two separate strobe connectors, you can use advanced automatic TTL flash adjustment with two strobes. [www.ikelite.com](http://www.ikelite.com)



### Built for the Global Traveler

The Gates FX7/V1 Housing is packed with pro features for the discerning underwater enthusiast like iris, focus, ND filter and white balance controls, adjustable handle grips, optional EM43 high resolution color monitor and Gates premium ports for the sharpest, clearest HD images. Yet, the FX7/V1 with SP44 port and 1620 Pelican rolling case weighs in under the 50lb/23kg airline baggage limit. The FX7/V1 comes with a two year renewable warranty. [gateshousings.com](http://gateshousings.com)

Based on methods employed by professional underwater photographers, the *ADVANCED Guide for Digital Underwater Photography* is packaged with practical techniques and useful information. Whether you are a novice or a serious shooter, this state-of-the-art guide will take your digital imaging proficiency to the next level.

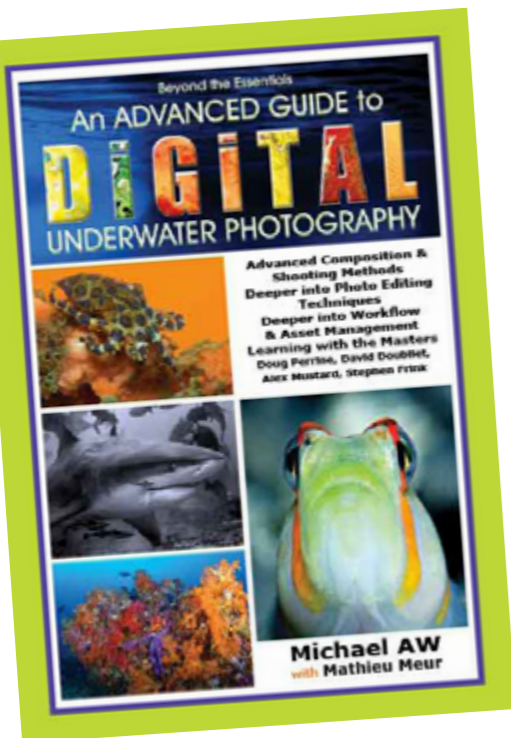
Expanding beyond the basic and essential aspects of digital underwater photography, the content is organised into five modules encapsulating advanced digital imaging knowledge, photographic skills, asset management, and

workflow to post production. For the photographer who wishes to appreciate and embrace the art of underwater imagery, techniques for successful pictures are revealed in detail. The structured modules give comprehensive descriptions about the composition and methods for ambient light photography, macro and super macro, wide-angle imagery with and without a model to shooting with filters, over and under images to shooting with HID lights.

Advance yourself with tutorials for the digital darkroom—photo editing, colour and exposure correction. This guide also includes information on digital asset management systems adopted by

professional photographers. A generous number of images are used to illustrate the varied form of underwater imaging. A special section features images and secrets from some of the world's top underwater photographers—David Doubilet, Doug Perrine, Alex Mustard and Stephen Frink. This is the most definitive advanced guide available for digital underwater photography—a must have essential for any aspiring digital photographer. ■

US\$26 or US\$30 postage included anywhere in the world—AU\$25 or Singapore S\$30. 132 pages, 210mm x 150mm



### The ADVANCED guide for Digital Underwater Photography

Michael AW with Mathieu Meur



### Aquatica D40X Housing

Part of new line of products aimed at recreational divers, the underwater camera housings are designed and built for newer, smaller and less expensive digital SLR cameras, making high quality underwater photography more affordable for the recreational diver.

Made of anodized aluminum and built around Aquatica's well established bayonet port system, these new Aquatica housings will accommodate all current ports, extensions and gears. As well Aquatica is reintroducing its 6" dome port and has created a newer and more compact macro port for both this new housing and its current line of well established housings.

[www.aquatica.ca](http://www.aquatica.ca)



### Airline Carry-on Camera case with padded dividers

Protect your expensive photo equipment from airline damage or theft by rolling and carrying it on board. The 1510 is airline overhead bin compliant. The 17" retracting extension handle and polyurethane wheels will keep you moving between gates.

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



### 39 Megapixel

Hasselblad—the Rolls Royce of cameras that went with the Apollo mission to the moon and back and the choice of many fashion photographers. As a medium-format camera there haven't exactly been many housings around for this top-end brand, but credible sources in the camera housing industry have hinted that housings for the Hasselblads are under consideration. Talk about upping the ante! The new Hasselblad HD3 boasts a whopping 39 megapixels!

[Hasselblad.com](http://Hasselblad.com)

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