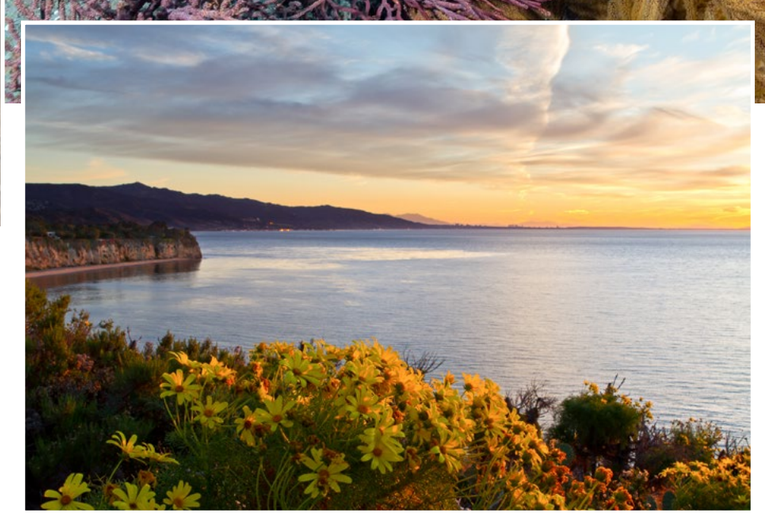
My Favorite Shore Dive

Contributors' Picks from Around the World

Text and photos by Larry Cohen, Brent Durand, Frankie Grant, Jennifer Idol, Kate Jonker, Matthew Meier, Brandi Mueller, Don Silcock, Olga Torrey, Claudia Weber-Gebert

We asked our contributors what their favorite shore or shallow dive was and they came back with stories and images of a diverse range of dives from around the world with easy to not-so-easy access off rocky to sandy shores as well as shallow dives under piers. *X-Ray Mag* contributors reveal intriguing underwater life and landscapes—from a freshwater lake in Yellowstone to the topical waters of Bonaire and Fiji, to the subtropical waters of the Mediterranean, Florida, Southern California and South Australia, to the temperate waters off Cape Town in South Africa—where they captured their favorite images.

BRENT DURAND



Point Dume, Malibu, California, USA

Text and photos by Brent Durand

California is home to some of the best shore diving in the world. As an avid beach diver, virtually all of my dives require walking… or leaping… or jumping… or rolling into the ocean from our beaches.

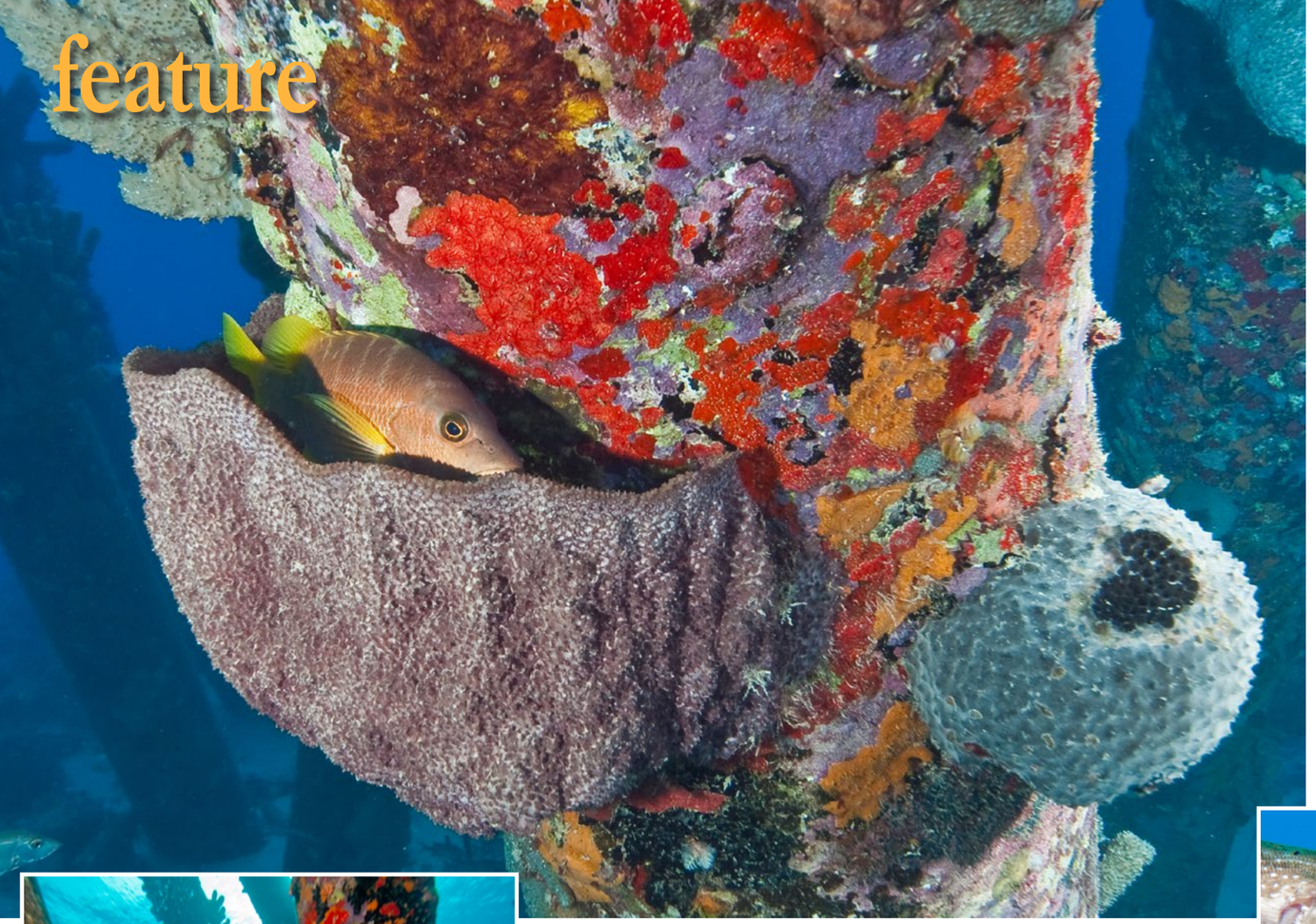
Point Dume State Marine Reserve in Malibu, California is one of my favorite (published) shore dive sites. Designated a marine reserve in 2012, Point Dume has an abundance of fish life compared to neighboring reefs, subject to boat, kayak and other fishing pressure.

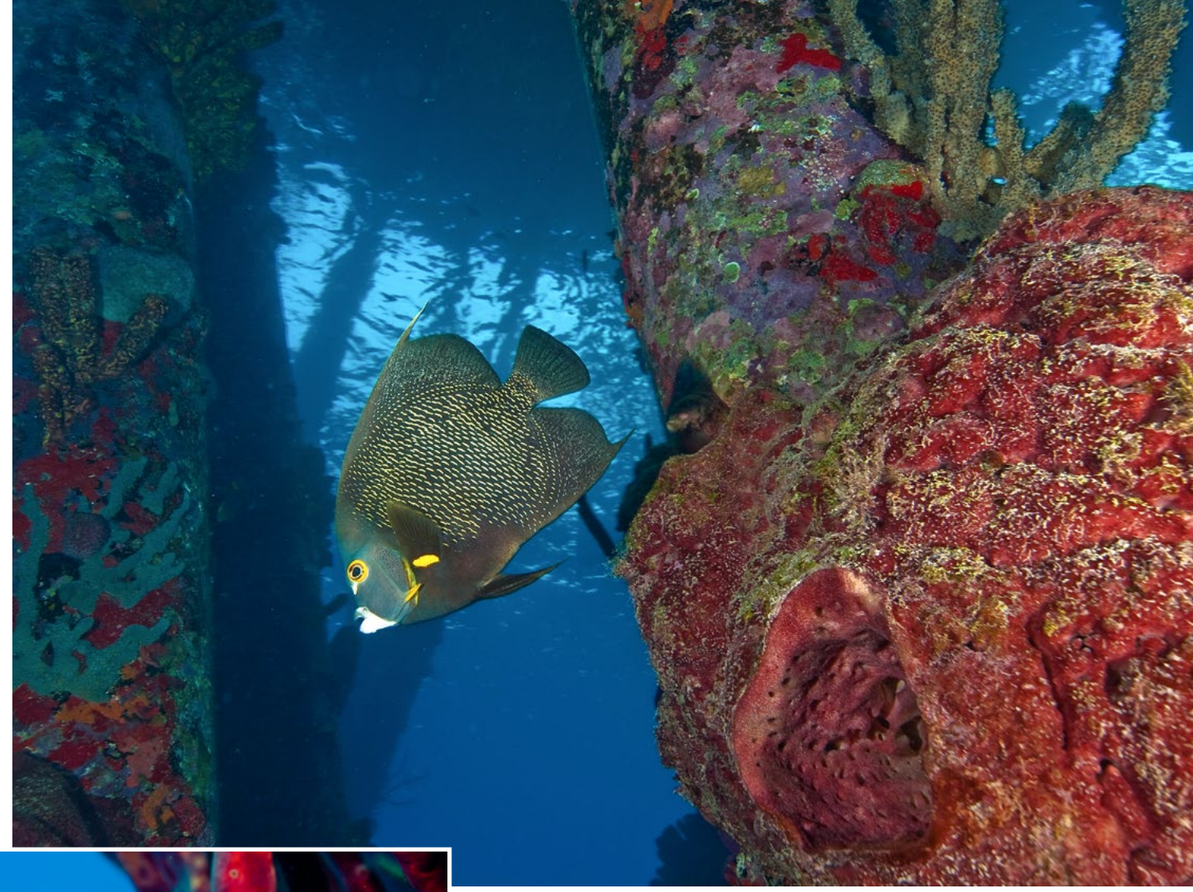
For daylight diving, divers can park in a public parking lot, which has restrooms and showers. After a surf entry and a 150m surface swim, which may involve current, divers descend on a large pinnacle structure, which is visible from the surface at all tide levels. Features include a wall, kelp garden, large boulders and a few secret ones, which are a lot of fun to find! Maximum depth is about 55ft (16.7m).

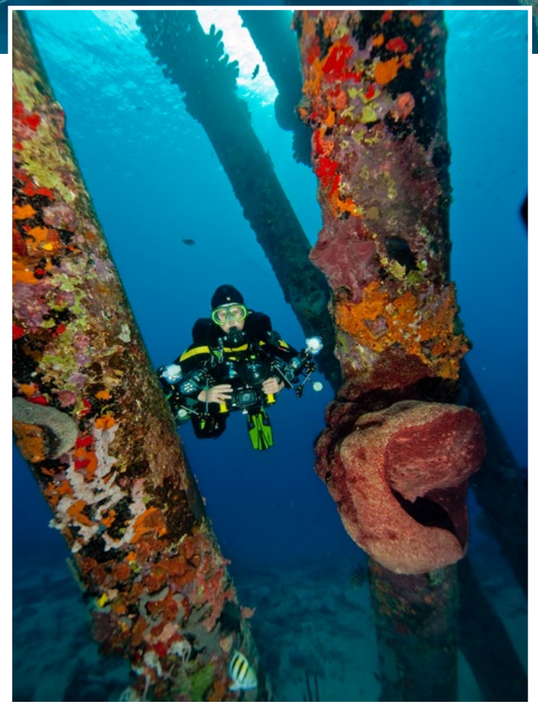
Marine life includes California sea lions (*Zalophus californianus*), garibaldi (*Hypsypops rubicundus*), California spiny lobster (*Panulirus interruptus*), bat rays (*Myliobatis californica*) and lots of classic California reef fish. You might even see dolphins or gray whales at the surface! Please visit: **tutorials.brentdurand.com**

Various settings and different camera systems were used to shoot these images. Sunflower sea star (above); Classic California reef scene at Point Dume (top left); Bright orange garibaldi fish on reef (top right); Spanish shawl nudibranch laying eggs (center left); The cliff trails above the dive site are a great place to explore, particularly in late winter as the giant coreopsis blooms (center right); PREVIOUS PAGE: A sea lion watches the author explore the dive site.

There is abundant fish life at Point Dume, thanks to its status as a California MPA.







Schoolmaster snapper makes a home in a sponge (above); Dive partner Olga Torrey explores Salt Pier (left); Trumpetfish, photographed with 50mm f/2 macro lens at Salt Pier (right)

Salt Pier, Kralendijk, Bonaire

Text and photos by Larry Cohen

When asked, "What is my favorite shore dive?" my first thought was, "Off a boat!" To quote one of my dive buddies: "When you shore dive, you get sand in places you did not know you had!" Then I recalled my trip to Bonaire. The shore diving in Bonaire is worth dealing with the sand. Since my dive buddy, Olga Torrey, and I wanted to dive doubles and do long dives, we just did shore dives on this trip. We found Salt Pier to be one of the island's most unique locations.

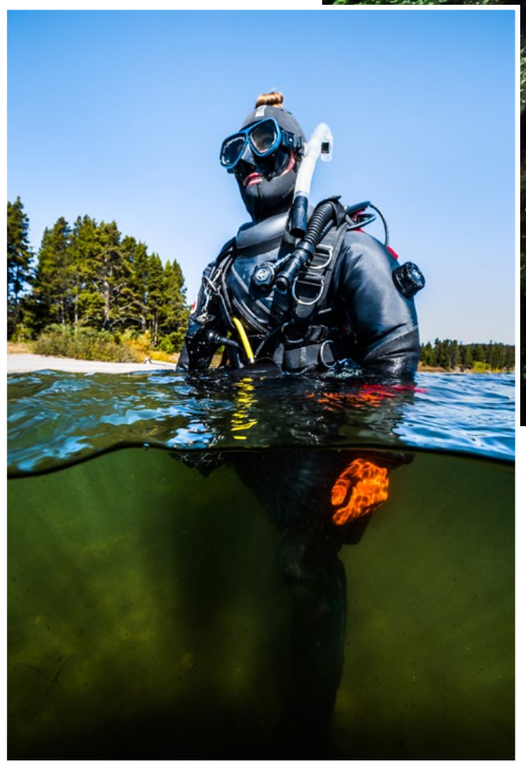
Besides diving and tourism, Bonaire is home to the Solar Salt Works of Bonaire. They produce salt for the entire world. Salt Pier is where ocean-going ships dock to transport the salt (Cargill.com). This practical and industrial location is a place of beauty beneath the crystal-clear blue water.

The shore entry is easy, and diving around the sponge- and coral-encrusted pillars is breathtaking. The site is shallow, ranging from five to 15m (16-50ft). Salt Pier is teeming with marine life, including a variety of angelfish. We observed trumpetfish, frogfish, snapper and barracuda at this location.

On one of our dives, we entered the water in the afternoon and stayed until evening. We ended up doing a day and evening dive without surfacing. As photographers, it was exciting to work with different lighting conditions on one dive.

I photographed all images with the Olympus Evolt E-620 camera in the Olympus PT-E06 housing. Both the Olympus Zuiko 7-14mm f/4.0 lens and the 50mm f/2 macro lenses were used. For lighting, I used dual Sea&Sea strobes. Please visit: **liquidimagesuw.com**

Olga Torrey, assessing the dive site before getting ready to dive (above); French angelfish, framed between the pillars (top right)



Alex Rose prepares for a dive at the edge of Lake Yellowstone (above). Exposure: ISO 400, 14mm, f/13, 1/200s; A large spire rises from the bottom of the lake (left). Exposure: ISO 1250, 14mm, f/7.1, 1/60s. Camera gear for all images: Nikon D5 camera, Nikkor 14-24mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z240 strobes

Sponges and tunicates grow on the spires (above). Exposure: ISO 1250, 14mm, f/14, 1/100s; The dive entry is beautiful and calm at dawn (top left). Exposure: ISO 400, 24mm, f/10, 1/100s

Lake Yellowstone, Wyoming, USA

Text and photos by Jennifer Idol

Benefits of shore diving include easy entry and simple dives, but my favorite shore dive is neither of these. Lake Yellowstone challenges and excites me both above and below the water's surface.

It is an altitude dive that requires technical expertise and navigational skills in cold water around 4°C (40°F), with limited visibility. However, this lake contains a rich macro world and bizarre hydrothermal features.

Commanding siliceous spires rise up to 7m (23ft) from the sandy bottom of the lake. They captured my imagination so thoroughly that I produced a film with Alex Rose to share this strange world with others. In the film, we illuminate the whole ecosystem down to the amphipods that inhabit the spires. We plan to continue documenting more of this strange world next year.

Few divers visit this remote dive site for which all gear must be brought to the site. Access is limited to approximately three months of the summer because this glacially fed lake freezes most of the year.

Despite these limitations, this is an ecologically significant resource. The Yellowstone Lake trout, which are endemic to the lake, are a keystone species that support wildlife such as bears and bald eagles.

Please visit: **uwDesigner.com**. To see the film about the siliceous spires of Yellowstone Lake, go to: **youtube.com/watch?v=GryugboA9LE**

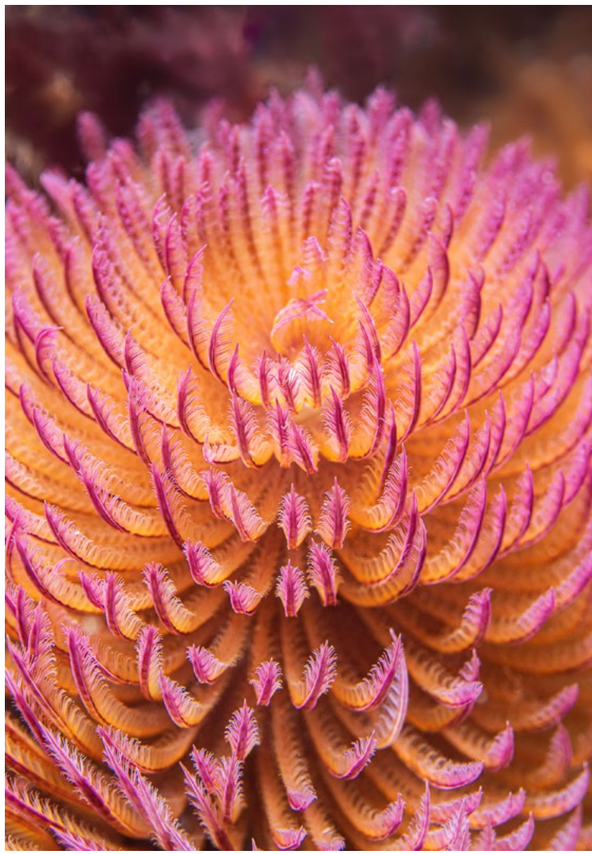
The entry point at Coral Gardens dive site in Rooi Els (above); Super klipfish hiding amongst elegant feather stars (top left). Exposure: ISO 160, f/18, 1/160s; Black nudibranch, *Tambja capensis*, eating its favourite food of bryozoans (bottom left). Exposure: ISO 160, f/18, 1/250s; Camera gear used for all images: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Sea&Sea housing, Canon 60mm macro lens, two Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes

Coral Gardens, Rooi Els, Cape Town, South Africa

Text and photos by Kate Jonker

Living in Gordon's Bay just outside Cape Town, most of our shore dives require clambering down sheer cliff faces with the dexterity of a mountain goat and undignified exits akin to those of a lumbering seal. Just 25km south of Gordon's Bay is the small holiday village of Rooi Els, where the rugged cliffs flatten out to form a tiny peninsula and shore dives become less challenging. Here, you will find Coral Gardens, one of the most exciting and beautiful dive sites along this stretch of coastline. Exciting because the entry is quite precarious and involves crab-crawling a 45-degree rock face followed by a well-timed giant stride from a small ledge into a steep-sided channel.

Once in the channel, one enters a fairy-tale kelp-forest wonderland of colourful soft corals, sponges, feather stars and swaying sea fans. The lush reef forms a haven for fish as well as West Coast rock lobster, crabs and invertebrates. This dive site is named for the large numbers of vibrant soft and hard corals that can be found here. One can happily spend over an hour scouring the nooks and crannies for spider crabs and a vast variety of nudibranchs, blennies and cheeky klipfish, whilst remembering to keep an eye out for a passing gully shark, pyjama shark or playful seal. After 20 years of diving here, Coral Gardens continues to enthrall me—and not even the sometimes-ungainly exits will deter me from exploring this reef again and again! Visit: **katejonker.com**



Feather duster or fan worm. Exposure: ISO 160, f/8, 1/250s

A broadnose sevengill shark, *Notorynchus cepedianus*, swimming through a shallow kelp forest (above). Exposure: f/5.6, 1/80s. Camera gear: Nikon D810 camera, Nikon 16-35mm lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes; Green sea turtle feeding on red algae (right). Exposure: f/6.3, 1/125s. Camera gear: Nikon D810 camera, Nikon 17-35mm lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes

Pacific seahorse in sea grass (above). Exposure: f/20, 1/125s. Camera gear: Nikon D3 camera, Nikon 105mm macro lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes; A large school of mating common market squid, *Loligo opalescens* (top left). Exposure: f/9, 1/125s. Camera gear: Nikon D3 camera, Nikon 24-85mm lens, Subal housing, two Sea&Sea YS-250 strobes

La Jolla Shores, La Jolla, California, USA

Text and photos by Matthew Meier

The La Jolla Shores dive site has an easy beach entry, transitioning to a gently sloping sandy bottom, which eventually drops off to a deep canyon once you reach about 50ft (15m). At first glance, there is not much to see, but once you slow down and look around, there is a great diversity of life hiding in the sand, tucked into the walls and swimming among the patches of sea grass and kelp. There is a massive sand dollar bed in the shallows, which supports a multitude of crabs, shrimp, snails, octopuses, nudibranchs and other invertebrates.

Turning south, the sand eventually gives way to patches of rocky reef, sea grass and kelp. Here, you can find a handful of resident green sea turtles, various reef fish, spiny lobsters, large sheep crabs, the occasional harbor seal or sea lion, plus leopard sharks, horn sharks, soupfin (tope) sharks, and if you are lucky during the springtime, broadnose sevengill sharks. Hiding in the sand are several species of stingrays, bat rays, skates, halibut and other flatfish, along with the random angel shark. The wall supports a different collection of fish life, various crabs, lobster, octopus and more.

Seasonal visitors can include large schools of mating squid, which lay egg casings in the sand that can resemble snow on a good year. There are also new species (like the Pacific seahorse) showing up from time to time with the warming waters brought about by climate change. There is always something new to experience, waiting just offshore. Visit: **MatthewMeierPhoto.com**

A green sea turtle, *Chelonia mydas*, swims in the shallows of the Matlahuayl State Marine Reserve in La Jolla, California, USA. Exposure: ISO 640, f/20, 1/250s. Camera gear: Canon EOS 7D Mark II camera, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens, Sea&Sea housing, dual YS-D2 strobes

Marine Room, La Jolla, California, USA

Text and photo by Frankie Grant

Another site at La Jolla, is one known simply as Marine Room. With its location close to a local La Jolla eatery, it has been one of the most hit-or-miss dive sites in the area. On the days when it is calm and the tide is high, it becomes a shallow sea paradise filled with every local fish imaginable, feeding and swimming as the sun's rays shine down. A short walk down a narrow corridor puts you out onto the beach where you can choose your journey. Right will take you to the sandy flats where leopard sharks are sometimes spotted. Left will lead you through the rocky reef structure where turtles, schooling fish and sometimes even sevengill sharks will stop by to say hey. The path is yours to choose, the only thing left is donning your gear! Visit: **frankiegrant.com**

Tunicates (above). Exposure: ISO 250, f/6.3, 1/250s. Camera gear: Nikon D850 camera, 105mm lens, Ikelite housing, dual DS161 strobes; Juvenile semicircle angelfish (left). Exposure: ISO 250, f/9, 1/125s. Camera gear: Nikon D850 camera, 105mm lens, Ikelite housing, dual DS161 strobes; Pair of Shawn the Sheep nudibranchs, *Costasiella sp.* (bottom left). Exposure: ISO 250, f/25, 1/250s. Camera gear: Nikon D850 camera, 105mm lens, +10 diopter, Ikelite housing, dual DS161 strobes

Rainbow over the house reef at Volivoli Beach Resort in Fiji (above)

House Reef, Volivoli Beach Resort, Fiji

Text and photos by Brandi Mueller

I often turn up my nose to shore dives; it is so much work to gear up and lug all that heavy stuff, walking into the surf, and the sand—it just gets everywhere! But once I convince myself to stop complaining and just go, I always enjoy shallow shore dives. One of my favorites is the house reef at Volivoli Beach Resort. Right out in front of the dive shop is an excellent reef and sea grass bed with all sorts of things to see (and it really is not too much of a walk). Once you get in the water, it starts out as a massive sea grass bed with many juvenile fish, garden eels, and once I even found several Shaun the sheep nudibranchs on algae growing in the sand! Continuing past the sea grass, there is a reef with gobies and blennies, colorful tunicates, anemones with clownfish, and sometimes there are even unique juveniles like the semicircle angelfish. With depths from about three feet to around 40ft, I love being able to spend a long time exploring and going slowly, searching for critters and working on creative photography techniques. It is a great night dive too! Visit: **brandiunderwater.com**

Edithburgh Jetty (above). Exposure ISO 100, f/2.2, 1/500s. Camera gear: Mavic Pro; Edithburgh Jetty pylons (top left). Exposure: ISO500, f/10, 1/60s; Leafy seadragon (top right). Exposure: ISO500, f/11, 1/160s; Octopus under the jetty (bottom right). Exposure: ISO500, f/8, 1/25s. Camera gear for all underwater images: Nikon D500 camera, 8-15mm lens, Nauticam housing, dual OneUW strobes

Edithburgh Jetty, South Australia

Text and photos by Don Silcock

Located on the southeastern tip of the Yorke Peninsula and looking out over the Gulf St Vincent is the small South Australian town of Edithburgh and its incredible jetty. The jetty is generally considered to be one of the best macro photography sites in Australia and is certainly one of my favorite shore dives in South Australia.

First opened in 1873 to facilitate exports of grain (and later salt, lime and gypsum), by the 1920s, Edithburgh was one of the busiest ports on the Yorke Peninsula. In 1973, the port closed, and the jetty has evolved to become a major tourist attraction for both divers and fishers.

The location of the 170m-long jetty means that it is protected from the prevailing southwesterly winds, which has allowed it to bloom and become a veritable kaleidoscope of the incredibly rich and colorful temperate marine life of South Australia!

Its many pylons are densely coated with beautiful sponges, bryozoans and ascidians, which in turn provide both habitat and protection for an intense plethora of sea stars, crabs, feather duster worms, nudibranchs and seahorses. Around the pylons in the midwater are large schools of temperate-water fish like old wives, bullseyes, mullet and yellow tail. While amid the rich sea grass around the jetty are numerous spider crabs, cuttlefish, seahorses and pipefish, plus the incredibly photogenic but very elusive leafy seadragon!

The jetty is an easy dive and is very popular with local divers from Adelaide, with a night dive there considered to be one of the best underwater experiences in South Australia. Visit: **indopacificimages.com**

According to marine biologist Anita George-Ares, this small fish (left) is a lantern bass, which can reach a maximum length of 2.5 inches; Seaweed blenny (top far left); Bearded fireworm (center inset); Red-lipped batfish (bottom right). Camera gear used for all images: Olympus OM-D E-M5 camera, Olympus 12-50mm f/3.5-6.3 lens, Nauticam housing, dual Sea&Sea strobes

Blue Heron Bridge, Palm Beach County, Florida, USA

Text and photos by Olga Torrey

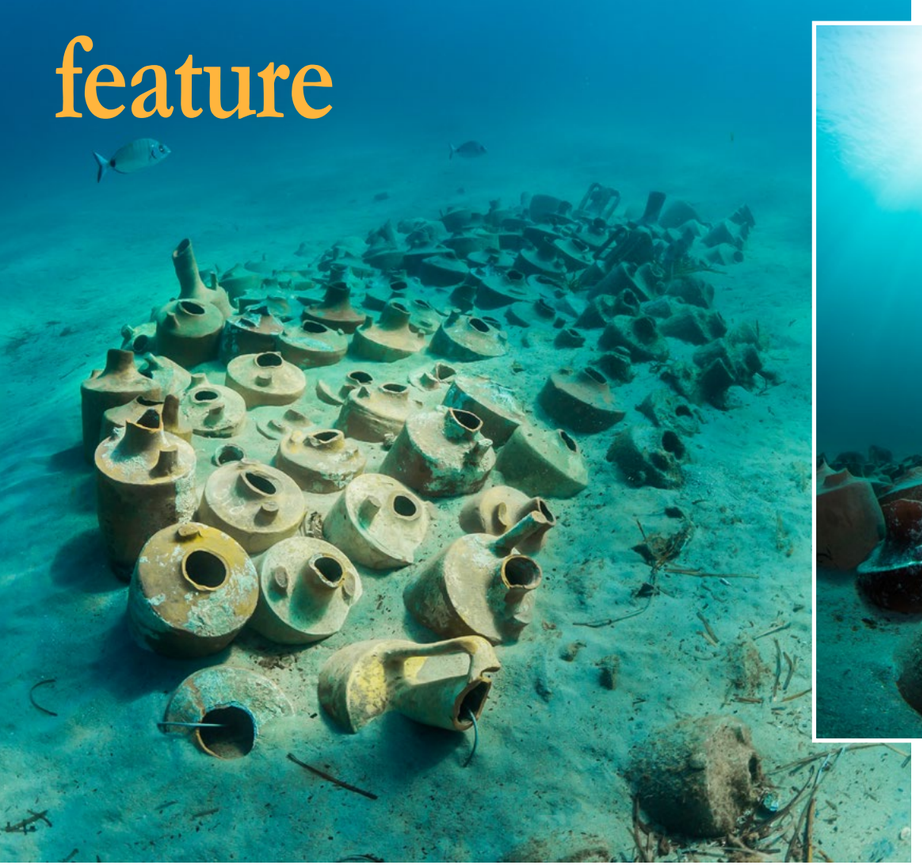
One of the United States' best shore dives is Blue Heron Bridge in Palm Beach County, Florida. This location has an easy-to-access entrance, and there is a wide variety of marine life to be found there because of how close it is to the Gulf Stream.

It is important to dive the bridge at high slack tide because of the currents. You can spend two hours underwater without decompression because this is a shallow dive. You will need a dive flag because of the boat traffic. Visibility at the bridge can be up to 100ft during high slack tide. As a muck dive, this site has a unique habitat and environment where you will find marine life living in the sediment. You will not find these critters on a reef or wreck.

The entrance to Blue Heron Bridge is at Phil Foster Park in Riviera Beach. The park is open from sunrise to sunset, except for boat launches (colemanconcierge.com).

I spent two hours taking photos and exploring this famous underwater location. I did two dives. My first dive was with a dive guide. He showed me the site and the marine life, which calls the bridge home. On the second dive, I found more marine life by myself. The two hours passed fast, and suddenly I felt the pull of a powerful tide. I was overdue to get back to the surface. I had to dig my fingers into the sand to fight the force of the water, pulling myself into the boat channel and trying not to scratch my camera. I learned my lesson on that dive!

I have not been back to the bridge in six years. In that time, my photography skills have improved. I am now ready to go back to my favorite shore dive site, which has so much to offer underwater photographers. Visit: **fitimage.nyc**



Diver explores the site of ancient amphorae at La Tour Fondue in Hyères, France

One hundred and fifty amphorae, which were recovered from a wreck that sank around 70 to 65 BC near La Madrague, have been resubmerged in the bay of La Tour Fondue.

La Tour Fondue, Hyères, France

Text and photos by Claudia Weber-Gebert

This site is part of a project with different archaeological trails on land and underwater in France in the region of Hyères along the Mediterranean Sea. The amphorae in the bay of La Tour Fondue belong to the second underwater trail. The wreck, which carried the amphorae, was discovered in the early '70s in very good condition.

The ship, which was transporting 6,000 amphorae filled with wine, was sailing from Italy and heading to Spain. It sank around 70 to 65 BC near the small village of La Madrague on the Giens Peninsula. The origin of the amphorae is known, however.

After a lot of preparation work, the over-2,000-year-old amphorae were installed in the bay by AREVPAM (Association de Recherche, Etudes et Valorisation du Patrimoine Méditerranéen—an organisation for the research, study and valorisation of Mediterranean heritage) and a lot of volunteers, in a similar fashion as they had been discovered, to give a proper impression of the archaeological find.

Since 2012, experiments with the installations have been made. In 2014, thirty amphorae were fixed to the sandy bottom in the bay, and some years later, 120 more were placed in the bay, making it a total of 150 authentic ancient artifacts.

At a depth of 6 to 7m, the site is easy to reach and open to the public. Visiting the site, divers, snorkellers and swimmers alike will feel as if they have discovered a place of antiquity. If you want to see more, go to: **youtube.com/watch?v=B03r25GAuYU&t=12s**