

My Favorite

Wide-Angle Dive

— *Contributors' Picks from Around the World*

Text and photos
by Scott Bennett,
Andrey Bizyukin,
Larry Cohen,
Brent Durand,
Jennifer Idol, Kate
Jonker, Matthew
Meier, Brandi Mueller,
Don Silcock, Olga
Torrey and Beth Watson

We asked our contributors what their favorite wide-angle dive was and they came back with stories and photos from some of the most unique and exhilarating dive sites on earth, many of them relaying interactions with large marine life from Steller sea lions in Kamchatka and giant manta rays in Komodo to tiger sharks in the Bahamas and humpback whales in the Dominican Republic. *X-Ray Mag* contributors reveal the beauty of the underwater world—from the topical paradise of Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the Philippines to the subtropical seas at Mexico's Socorro Islands and the temperate waters off California and South Africa—where they captured their favorite shots and experiences.



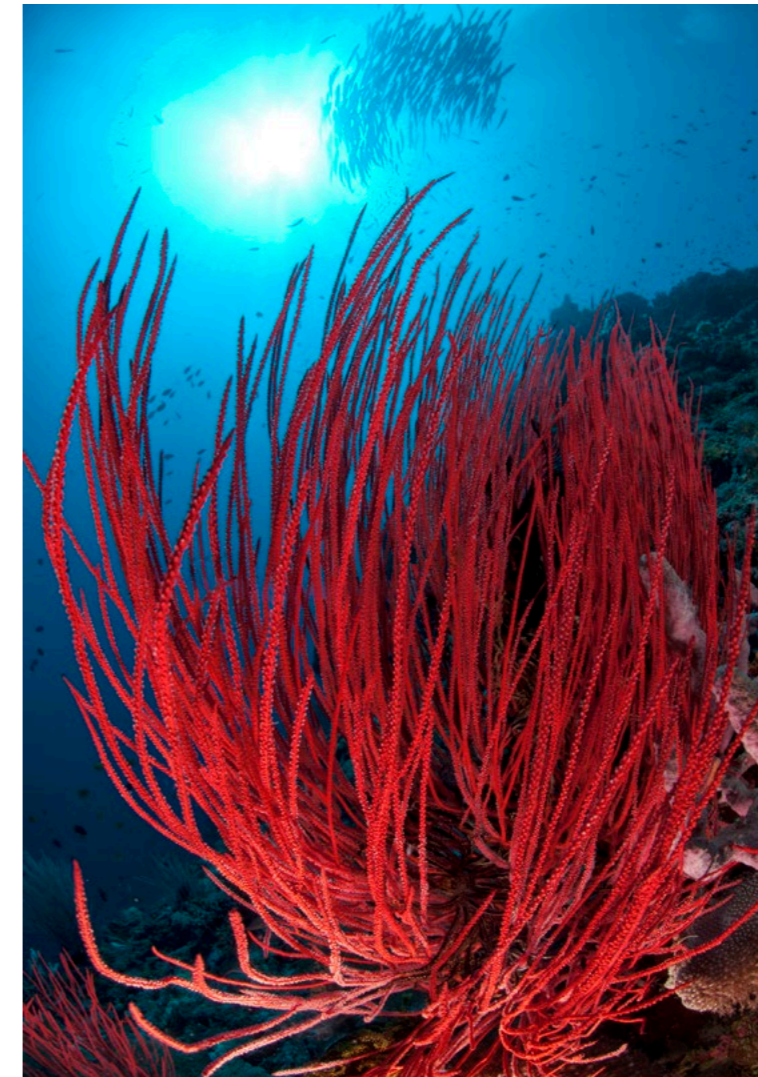
Jayne's Gully, Fathers Reefs, Papua New Guinea

Text and photos by Scott Bennett

When it comes to wide-angle photography, there is no better destination than Papua New Guinea. Its offshore reefs are magnets for marine life and the Fathers Reefs, situated off the coast of New Britain, are no exception. Accessible only by liveaboard, the area features numerous seamounts, with sheer walls



School of big-eye jacks. Exposure: ISO 125, f/8, 1/100s (left); Gorgonian and jacks. Exposure: ISO 125, f/10, 1/100s (far left); Hawksbill sea turtle. Exposure: ISO 125, F11 at 1/100s (bottom); Whip corals and barracudas. Exposure: ISO 125, f/11 1/80s (below). Gear used in all images: Nikon D200 camera, 10.5mm Nikon lens, Hugyfot housing, two Ikelite D160 strobes



jam-packed with colourful sponges, whip and soft corals, and gorgonians. Due to their remote location, visibility is superb and often exceeds 30m. I visited during a 10-day liveaboard on the FeBrina, and one of my favourite sites was Jayne's Gully. We did two dives here, each providing a wealth of wide-angle opportunities. Fish life abounded, with schools of barracuda, big-eye trevally and batfish, mingling with a plethora of reef fish darting amongst the coral. There are wonderful opportunities for close-up wide-angle images, with the barracuda and jacks swimming above the corals. A highlight was a pair of friendly hawksbill sea turtles. Small yet utterly fearless, they allowed a remarkably close approach. As one descended after a gulp of air, I was able to capture a frame-filling image with a sunburst behind. The only thing missing: hordes of other divers. Please visit: xray-mag.com/contributors/ScottBennett

LOTUS BUNGALOWS
CANDIDASA - BALI
Blue Horizons Far From The Maddening Crowds

www.lotusbungalows.com

PREVIOUS PAGE: *Levitation—Divers in the Sky*, by Andrey Bizyukin. "Lake Baikal is a famous pearl of a dive location in Russia," he said, "but it is often hard to find really clear water here, depending on the winds, currents and seasons. So, I had to visit many times before I found the right place and the right season, which took place very briefly in June at the bay of Big Cat. My fellow divers were experienced rebreather divers. With no bubbles disturbing the water's surface, it was much easier to get a clear shot. The water temperature was +4°C and visibility ranged up to 30m. I saw the divers silhouetted against the blue sky above me, and because I used a new TTL-converter by UW Technology, it was easy to get a correct exposure for this funny image with just a push of a button." Exposure: ISO 800, f/11, 1/200s. Gear: Canon 5D Mark 3 camera, Canon 15mm fisheye lens, Subal housing, Inon Z240 strobes, UW Technics TTL-converter.



males kept circling around us at the surface, playfully looking to continue the fun game.

It was one of the most exciting dives of my life, because it was such a rare opportunity to dive with these large and very curious creatures. In the past, I had attempted to photograph Steller sea lions in Alaska too, but the conditions were not as favorable as those I found on the Russian shore.

Another unique dive on the Russian Pacific Coast is found at Rudnaya Bay, 600km north of Vladivostok. It is known to be a favorite habitat of giant Pacific octopuses. Typically, the octopuses hide in holes under stones, shying away from divers. But sometimes, when they grow very large in size, they feel powerful enough to actively defend their hunting grounds. They may display their considerable size, taking menacing poses and releasing ink. It was this rare moment that I was lucky enough to photo-

graph (taken at a depth of around 17m), many thanks to local divers for helping with the dive and sharing their great octopus experience.



Cape Kekurny & Rudnaya Bay, Russia

Text and photos by Andrey Bizyukin

Invited to visit Kamchatka, located at the easternmost tip of Eurasia, by my good friends Anna and Sergey Butkovsky, we headed out on their private boat to the Pacific Ocean from the port of Petropavlovsk Kamchatsky. After a few hours sailing southward, we arrived at Cape Kekurny, located at the entrance to Russian Bay, where a large rookery of Steller sea lions can be found. Here, scientists observe and research these animals, and Anna had come up with a technique for diving and observing their behavior in natural conditions underwater. For this reason, she asked me to take underwater photographs to document the dive. We anchored about 200m from the coast at a place where the depth was about 10m. After entering the water, which was +4°C (39°F), we waited in a tight group on the flat sea floor for the magic to begin.

One huge alpha male and many female sea lions lived at the rookery. Being very curious

creatures, the females were the first to rush in our direction and all together began to study us divers underwater. They looked into our masks, blew bubbles (copying our noisy breathing), and tried to bite our fins. It was like a game to them.

After ten minutes of this playful display, all the females disappeared and one huge male—which dominated the territory of the bay—appeared, like the “Boss of the Sea.” His size and appearance were so impressive that we immediately realized the seriousness of his intentions. If he decided we were a threat to his dominance and harem of females, then we would definitely be in beaten.

According to safety instructions, the dive time was limited to around ten minutes. Apparently, at the start of these dives, sea lions would play carefully around the divers, but later in the dive, if you gave them free rein, they would begin to bite divers and pull regulators out of their mouths. For this reason, we quickly finished our photo session and moved in a tight group up to the surface. The boat crew was already in a hurry to pick us up, but about ten curious fe-





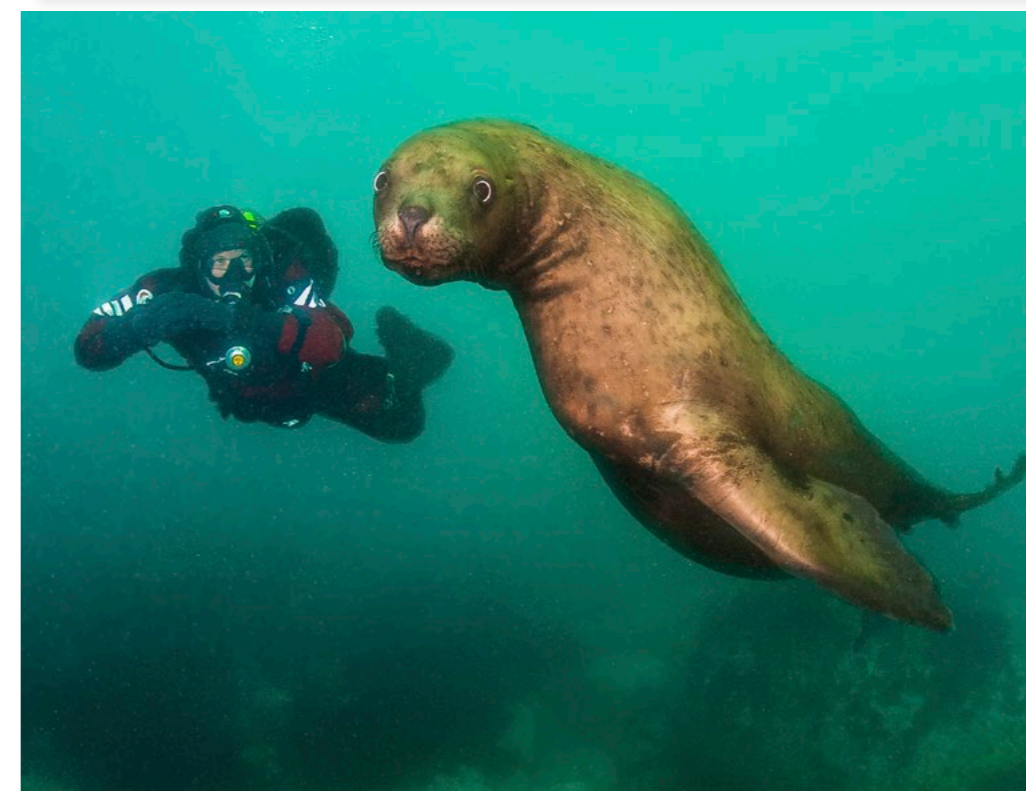
BAIKAL

START YOUR ICE ADVENTURE



Functions: hours, minutes, seconds, date
Stainless steel case 46 mm
Miyota 8215 auto-winding movement
Sapphire crystal glass
Silicone strap
Limited edition 500 pcs
WR 200 m

www.molnija.shop



Divers with Steller sea lions at Cape Kekurny in Kamchatka, Russia (above and top left). Exposure: ISO 800, f/ 9, 1/80s; Diver with giant Pacific octopus in Rudnaya Bay, north of Vladivostok (left). Exposure: ISO 640, f/8, 1/80s. Camera gear for all images: Canon 5D Mark 3 camera, Canon 15mm fish-eye lens, Subal housing, Inon Z-240 strobes. Please visit: xray-mag.com/contributors/AndreyBizyukin

Tips for shooting wide-angle

Text by Larry Cohen

When shooting wide-angle images underwater, it is important to control the ambient and strobe light. Changing the shutter speed will affect the ambient light exposure but will have little effect on the strobe exposure. The aperture will affect both the strobe exposure and the ambient light exposure. For this reason, it is a good idea to rarely change the aperture. One can change the shutter speed to produce a light or dark background. It is best to use strobes with a continuous power dial. This way, one can adjust the strobe power to get the correct exposure on the subject and foreground. In most cases, you do want the strobe light to blend with the ambient light for a more natural look. Nearby objects will look larger than they really are when using wide-angle and fisheye lenses. The objects will also look farther apart from each other. It is important to consider this optical effect when using these lenses. One can use this as part of the design element of the image. ■



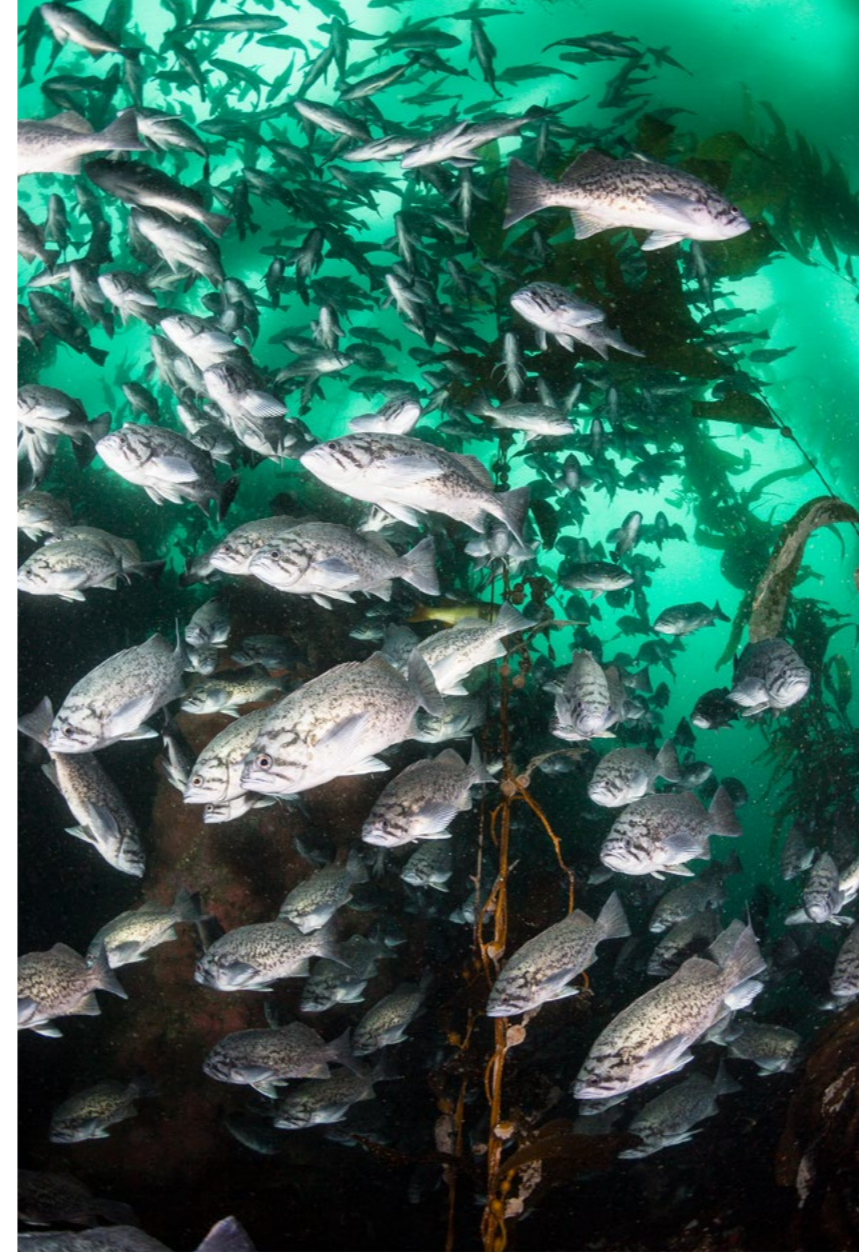
Giant pacific manta. Exposure: ISO 400, f/7.1, 1/200s (above); Juvenile whitetip shark and moray eel. Exposure: ISO 400, f/11.0, 1/200s (left); Yellowtail fusilier. Exposure: ISO 400, f/9.0, 1/250s (right)

Roca Partida, Socorro Islands, Mexico

Text and photos by Larry Cohen

The Revillagigedo Archipelago, known as the Socorro Islands, is a great place for wide-angle photography. They are 390km (240m) off the coast of Cabo San Lucas in Mexico. Wide-angle or fisheye lenses are needed to capture the large marine life in this area. Roca Partida is a very special wall dive, with many ledges, in this area. Facing the wall, one can photograph groups of whitetip reef sharks resting on top of each other. I was lucky to see a juvenile whitetip, using a huge moray eel as a pillow. When you glance into the blue, it is not unusual to see giant pacific manta rays for which the area is famous. You may also spot a light-colored yellowtail fusilier in front of a school of dark-colored fish. All images were captured with an Olympus OM-D E-M1 camera and Olympus M.Zuiko ED 9-18mm f/4-5.6 lens. The camera was in the Aquatica AE-M1 housing with the 8-inch dome port. For lighting, I used two Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes. Visit: liquidimagesuw.com





It's more fun in the Philippines

MAGIC RESORTS PHILIPPINES
 info@magicresorts.online
 www.magicresorts.online

MAGIC ISLAND
 Moalboal, Cebu

MAGIC OCEANS
 Anda, Bohol

Tyler Bight, San Miguel, Channel Islands, California, United States

Text and photos by Brent Durand

My favorite dives tend to be those that cannot be planned and those that require careful planning to line up with favorable conditions. My first dive at San Miguel Island in California's Channel Islands was both. The northernmost island, San Miguel, is subject to open ocean swell and trade winds, making it a tough destination to reach on a charter dive boat. The fog broke that morning in July 2015 and the captain confirmed we would indeed be diving San Miguel. We anchored near Tyler Bight, I patiently helped our guests, and then took a giant stride into the sea. I descended to find rock ledges, an expansive kelp forest, and my favorite—a massive school of blue rockfish. This dive felt just as wild as I always hoped San Miguel would be. Visit: tutorials.brentdurand.com



THIS PAGE: Blue rockfish (*Sebastes mystinus*). Exposure: ISO 500, f/11, 1/100s. Gear: Canon 5D Mk III camera, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens, Aquatica housing, dual Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes.



Lemon sharks (*Negaprion brevirostris*) are curious and respond to the splashing of dive gear at dawn. Exposure: ISO 160, 14mm, f/5.6. Gear used in all images: Nikon D5 camera, Nikkor 14-24mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z240 strobes

Tiger shark (*Galeocerdo cuvier*)—jumping first in the water brought curious tiger sharks close to me. Exposure: ISO 160, f/6.3, 24mm (above); Caribbean reef shark (*Carcharhinus perezii*)—hiding behind the corals allows a view of cruising Caribbean reef sharks. Exposure: ISO 160, f/9, 14mm (right)

Tiger Beach, Bahamas

Text and photos
by Jennifer Idol

Tiger Beach in the Bahamas is a photographer's dream and a must-see destination that is also my favorite wide-angle opportunity, especially as a trip leader. Six shark species frequent these shallow waters: tiger sharks, Caribbean reef sharks, lemon sharks, great hammerheads, nurse sharks and bull sharks. Nothing quite beats the girth of a tiger shark or colorful lemon sharks. The aggregation of sharks un-

afraid of divers is the most thrilling sight above and below water. Depth and warm water allowed for a long dive that began at sunrise. I wanted to photograph free-swimming sharks, not just the feedings that bring tiger sharks here, so I kept to the periphery to

enjoy private encounters. To be first in and last out, I was ready and calm, which was hard to do with these beautiful and exciting animals surrounding our boat. It is a destination I look forward to returning to next year. Please visit: uwDesigner.com

Up close and personal

THE BAHAMAS

Call us today to book
your next adventure.

wwdas.com | blueotwo.com





A school of strepies (*Sarpa salpa*) swirl above a huge orange wall sponge on the deeper edge of the reef (above)—absolutely beautiful contrast between silver, blue and orange. Exposure: ISO 320, f/9, 1/160s. Camera gear: Canon 7D Mkii camera, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens, Sea&Sea MDX 7D-Markii housing, two Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes; Beautiful kelp forest at Percy's Reef (left) with yellow sponges and orange sinuous and palmate sea fans adding a vibrant splash of colour—so typical of the kelp forests of the eastern side of False Bay. Exposure: ISO 160, f/13, 1/80s. Camera gear: Sony A6400 camera, Tokina 10-17mm fisheye lens with Metabones adaptor, Fantasea FA6400 housing, two Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes.

Percy's Reef, Rooi Els, Gordon's Bay, eastern False Bay, South Africa

Text and photos by Kate Jonker

Craggy, sheer cliffs plunge beneath the water's edge into an enchanted kelp forest. This beautiful dive site starts shallow, with the rays of the sun glittering through the softly swaying kelp. A kaleidoscope of marine life, including anemones, sea urchins, sea fans and sponges, clings to the reef's huge rounded boulders and ridges. Schools of

small fish flit amongst the kelp stipes. Huge orange wall sponges provide shelter for smaller fish, and West Coast rock lobster lurk in crevices as their constantly moving feelers test the surrounding waters for predators. Juvenile Cape fur seals zoom overhead, and, if you are lucky, you might even encounter an inquisitive short-tailed stingray or broadnose sevengill cow shark. It's an absolutely magical reef that I love to explore, as every dive is different and equally exciting. Please visit: katejonker.com



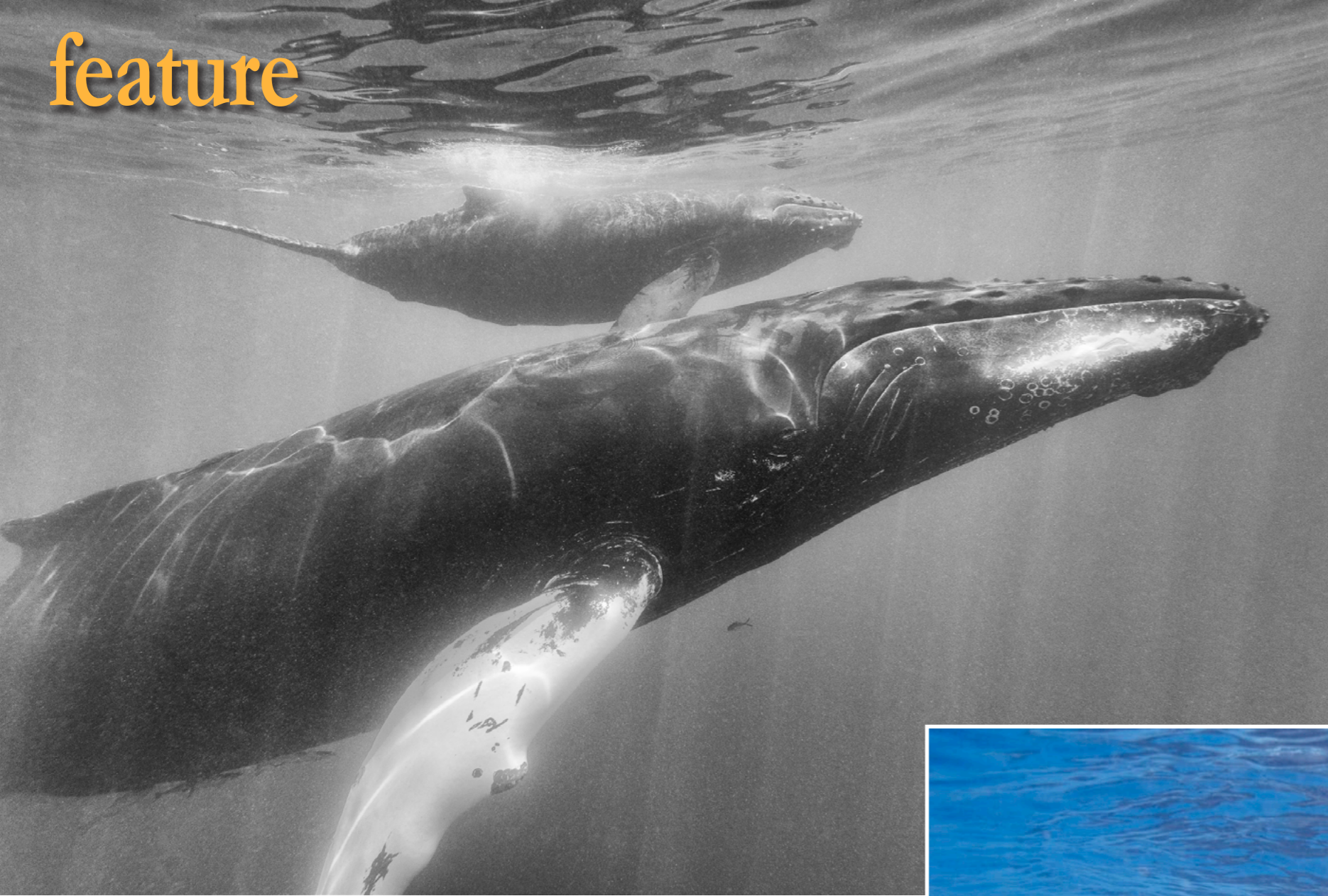




micro 3.0™

-  16MP Resolution
-  Flood Proof
-  4K Ultra HD Video
-  RAW Image Capture
-  WiFi Share
-  3 Dive Modes
-  100° Wide Angle Lens
-  Hi Res Display

 SeaLifeCameras  SeaLifeCameras
www.SeaLife-Cameras.com



THIS PAGE: The underwater photos were shot with a Nikon D810 camera in a Subal housing and a Nikon 16-35mm lens, using available light. The lone juvenile in the color photo (below) was shot at 23mm, f/8, 1/500s, ISO 800. The black and white photo of the mother and calf (left) was shot at 16mm, f/8, 1/640s, ISO 800. The topside photo of a juvenile breaching (above) was shot using a Sigma 50-500mm lens at 340mm, f/8, 1/2500s, ISO 800.

Silver Bank, Dominican Republic

Text and photos by Matthew Meier

My most recent favorite wide-angle dive was not a dive at all. It was a snorkeling trip to swim with North Atlantic humpback whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) at the Silver Bank off the coast of the Dominican Republic with Conscious Breath Adventures (consciousbreathadventures.com). Fellow snorkelers and I spent a week on the liveaboard M/V *Sea Hunter*, out on the water in search

of whales, photographing both topside and underwater behaviors. The most spectacular experience for me was coming face-to-face with a curious juvenile humpback whale as it came up for a breath of air and lingered to inspect the odd collection of us humans floating on the surface. Words cannot express the feelings that swept over me while gazing into the eye of that whale. It is a moment I will cherish and one I hope to repeat time and again. Visit: MatthewMeierPhoto.com



SOLITUDE
liveaboards • resorts

SOLITUDE ADVENTURER
Liveaboard Diving in Indonesia

SOLITUDE LEMBEH RESORT
Boutique Dive Resort in Lembah Straits

SOLITUDE ACACIA RESORT
Boutique Dive Resort in Aniao, Philippines

Visit our website
for our post-pandemic
specials!

www.solitude.world ♦ email@solitude.world

SOLITUDE ONE
Liveaboard Diving in Palau & Philippines





Manta ray (left). Exposure: ISO 1250, f/11, 1/160s. Camera gear: Nikon D500 camera, Ikelite housing and dual Ikelite strobes; Manta ray (right). Exposure: ISO 1250, f/9, 1/100s. Camera gear: Nikon D500 camera, Ikelite housing and dual Ikelite strobes; Topside rocky landscape at Manta Alley dive site in Komodo National Park (below). Exposure: ISO 800, f/20, 1/250s. Camera gear: Nikon D500, Ikelite housing, no strobes

Wide-Angle Dives



HOTEL & SCUBA DIVING

PADI 5 STAR

Frogfish

Reef

Hotel DDK

Padi IDC

Padar

Daily Dive

KOMODO, Indonesia

www.dragondivekomodo.com



Manta Alley, Komodo, Indonesia

Text and photos by Brandi Mueller

Manta Alley, in Komodo National Park, is a great dive site to see mantas. Above water, the area is surrounded by brown, barren, but strangely beautiful rocks in

contrast to the deep blue water. Underwater, it feels like a manta playground, with different manta activities happening around the dive site. Most dives start at the cleaning station where mantas come close to the reef to have their parasites removed and be cleaned by bannerfish and other butterflyfish. Moving into an area between two rocks, which looks just like an alley,

mantas can be seen hardly moving in the current—just flapping their wings like it is a treadmill and they are getting their morning exercise. (It is hard for divers to keep up in the current though, and we get blown by them with the water movement.) The coral is healthy in this area too, with turtles, bumphead parrotfish and swarms of anthias. Visit: brandiunderwater.com



School of jacks circling at Arborek Jetty. Exposure: ISO 400, f/13 1/250s. Camera gear: Nikon D700 camera, 16mm lens, Subal housing and dual Ikelite DS160 strobes

Arborek Jetty, Dampier Strait, Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Text and photos by Don Silcock

"What's your favourite wide-angle dive?" That is a really tough question, as wide-angle photography is very much my preferred genre and picking a favourite location is hard—there are so many candidates! After a lot of mulling and pondering, I decided on Arborek Jetty at the western end of the Dampier Strait in Indonesia's Raja Ampat. It was at Arborek (aka Airborei) where I first really nailed the "triangulation" of correct foreground and background exposures with a

strong composition. That was back in 2012, and the image is still on the wall of my study. I have dived the jetty many times since, and it is always a great and dynamic dive, courtesy of the rich currents that sweep past it. The 2012 image used the huge school of jacks as the main subject, with the jetty as the background, and it was a special moment when they started circling. Sadly, when I was at Arborek last year, the jacks were nowhere to be seen—but the school of batfish were still in residence. Again, I balanced the foreground and background exposures and triangulated the composition. Please visit: indopacificimages.com

Batfish at Arborek Jetty. Exposure: ISO 400, f/11, 1/320s. Camera gear: Nikon D500 camera, 8-15mm lens, Nauticam housing and dual Ikelite DS160 strobes

TERIC
The watch that transforms you.

COLOUR YOUR DIVE
#diveshearwater
www.shearwater.com/teric

Scan to find a dealer near you.

SHEARWATER
Powerful • Simple • Reliable



Diver with mushroom leather coral on wall. Exposure: ISO 320, f/9, 1/125s (left); School of slender Pinjalo snappers. Exposure: ISO 320, f/8, 1/125s (bottom left). Diver with granular seastar on wall. Exposure: ISO 320, f/10, 1/125s (bottom right); Camera gear used for all three shots: Olympus OMD E-M5 camera, Panasonic fisheye 8mm lens; Nauticam NA-EM5 housing with 4-inch dome, two Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes.

positioned my dive guide farther back so he would be a silhouette. The interesting shape of the school of slender Pinjalo snappers was enhanced by the fish-eye lens' distortion. Since fisheye lenses produce a curved image, I used a 4-inch dome and still got sharp edges. For lighting, I used two Sea&Sea YS-D1 strobes. Please visit: fitimage.nyc

Buddy Dive Bonaire

2ND DIVER DIVES FOR FREE

40 years Buddy Dive Bonaire

Your Buddies Bonaire Madness

Just before the start of the holidays, enjoy a week of sun, fun and madness with crazy incentives! Visit our website for more information.

Buddy Dive Bonaire **Caribbean Club Bonaire** **BELMAR Bonaire**

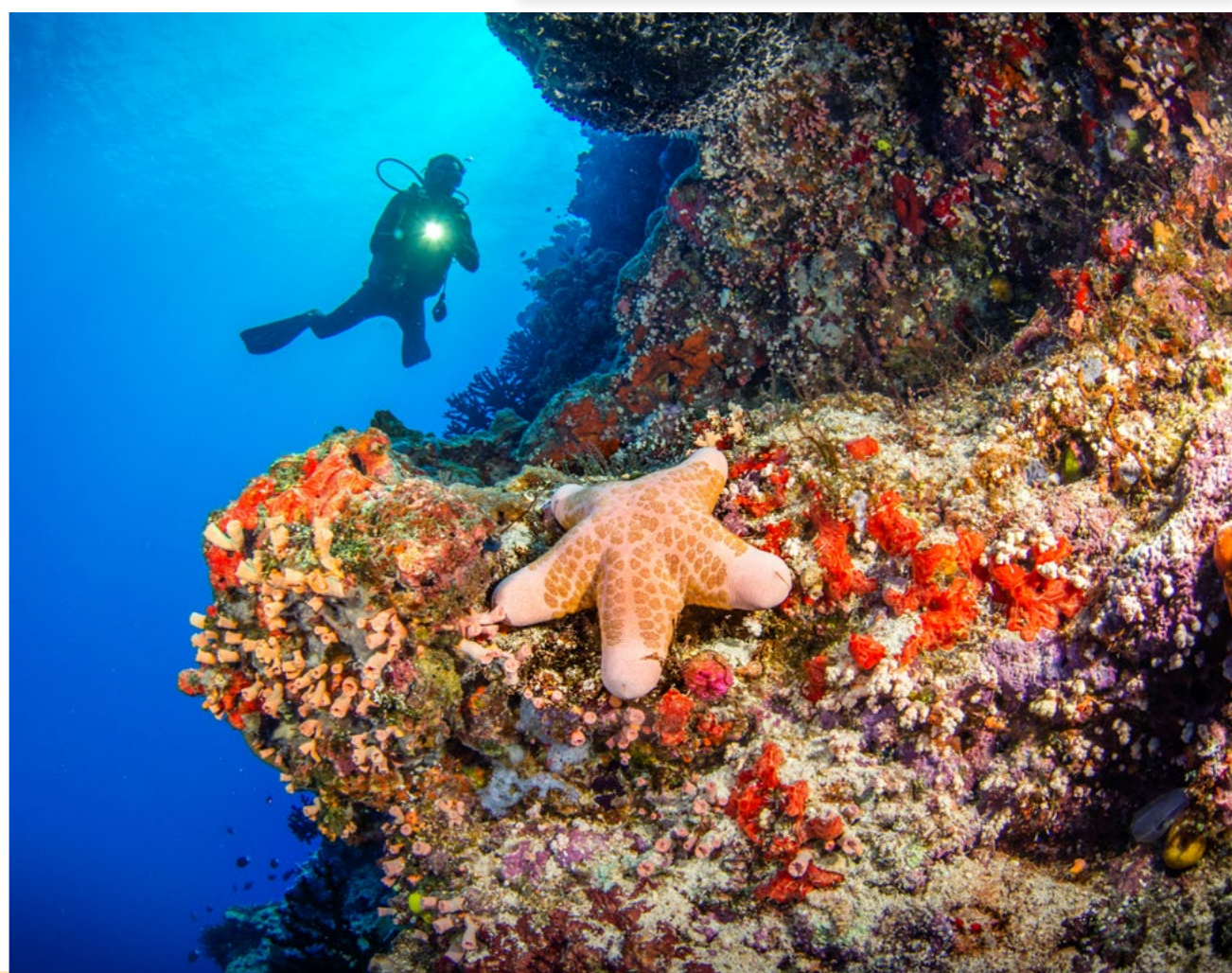
International Reservations: +599 717 5080
Call Toll Free US/Canada: 1-866-GO-BUDDY
WWW.BUDDYDIVE.COM/SPECIALS



Gabriella's Fish Point, Oro, Papua New Guinea

Text and photos by Olga Torrey

Gabriella's Fish Point off Tufi Resort in the Oro Province of Papua New Guinea is a great location to shoot wide-angle images. This reef was named after one of Tufi's previous managers. The majestic wall is covered with growth and is teeming with life. I decided to use the Panasonic fisheye 8mm lens on my Olympus OMD E-M5 camera in a Nauticam NA-EM5 housing. This lens has a 180-degree angle of view and does cause some distortion. I used the distortion to enhance the beauty of the wall and mushroom leather coral. I positioned my model so my strobes would light him and the wall. The same lens was used for the image of the granular seastar. I moved in close to use the forced perspective of the fisheye lens. In this image, I





Pink anemonefish and anemone at The Drop-Off, Verde Island, the Philippines. Exposure: ISO 160, f/10, 1/125s. Camera gear used for all three images: Canon 5D Mk IV, Canon 8-15 mm fisheye lens, Nauticam housing, Ikelite DS 160 strobes

The Drop-Off, Verde Island, Philippines

Text and photos by Beth Watson

The Drop-Off dive site is a rocky pinnacle that rises 200ft to the surface of the water. Below lies a plethora of marine life and rainbow of colors. It is known to be a hot spot and epicenter for marine life biodiversity on the planet. Currents can be strong, which makes for an exhilarating dive. These currents bring in nutrient-rich clear water, creating excellent visibility. Pelagic species can be seen out in the blue. Keep your eyes open—you never know what will pass by. Schooling trevallies, jacks, butterflyfish and surgeonfish can be seen on every dive. The cliff face and the sloping wall are adorned with black coral bushes, beautiful gorgonians, sea whips and large barrel sponges. Thousands of brilliantly colored basslets and anthias cover the reef. It is a wonderful dive with outstanding wide-angle opportunities. It is truly mesmerizing and takes my breath away time after time. Visit: BethWatsonImages.com



The walls are adorned with beautiful soft corals and covered with reef fish (*Anthiadae*). Exposure: ISO 160, f/13, 1/60s



Brightly colored anthias (*Anthiadae*) swarm the reef. Exposure: ISO 160, f/10, 1/160s

