



photo &  
video

Edited by  
Peter Symes  
& Scott Bennett

Backlight  
reveals the  
beautiful  
translucent  
quality of  
soft coral

# Backlight

Text and photos by Kurt Amsler  
Translation by Peter Symes

**Impressive backlit images do not necessarily require the use of a flash. Just aim towards the surface and use the sun. Often, that is all there is to it. If you understand how to get the exposure right, that is.**

Under most circumstances, underwater photographers balance light from flash with ambient light to create a certain ambiance by adding illumination to the front, above, below or the sides of the subject. But there are a range of subjects that only work if they are taken against the light.

## Sunlight

From macro to wide-angle photography, there are plenty of subjects that can be taken against the sun. If the subject covers at least two thirds of the sun, it will stand out as a silhouette. Where the sun is beside and not behind the motif, we speak of backlit subjects. In both cases, since the sun is included in the picture, the photographer must correct the exposure by three to four stops.

Imagine that you have the sun not

in front of you but behind you. In this case, your metering may, for example, show that you should expose the image with an aperture of f:5.6 and shutter speed of 1/30 second. But if you turn around and include the sun in the frame, the built-in meter may now show a suggested exposure of aperture f:5.6 and a shutter speed of 1/250 second. In the latter case, you should therefore know how to subtract the effect of the sun shining directly into your camera in order to get the exposure of the foreground right.

In the case of silhouettes (where the subject covers substantial parts of the sun), you would usually have to subtract one or two f-stops. An easy way to get the exposure right is simply to point the camera in the opposite direction, measure the light there, and lock the settings before pointing the camera back

towards the subject. Many cameras allow the user to lock the exposure setting—consult with your manual—by holding down a button or switch.

You can also use manual mode and use the readings from the camera as a guide to set the aperture and exposure. In this case, take a reading in another direction away from direct sunlight and set the exposure correspondingly. With this setting, you can now point your

camera back towards the subject and make a first shot. In order to make sure it is absolutely right, use *bracketing*—that is, make some additional shots with the exposure set both over and under the first image. In this day and age where memory cards are cheap, taking these extra images shouldn't be an issue of having enough storage.

Most backlit images are taken without flash. Most of the subjects (such as divers,

manta rays or sharks) often work better in high-contrast, black or dark blue silhouette, without additional flashlight.

Using the camera in automatic mode and leaving the calculating of the exposure to the electronic circuits, or an elaborate light meter, is the easiest way, and the result is often okay. The problem is that this approach only works when the sun is behind you and not in front of you.

The automatic system usually bases its





## photo & video

These jellyfish are literally illuminated by the sun. Therefore, not only outline and colour, but also their inner workings are visible

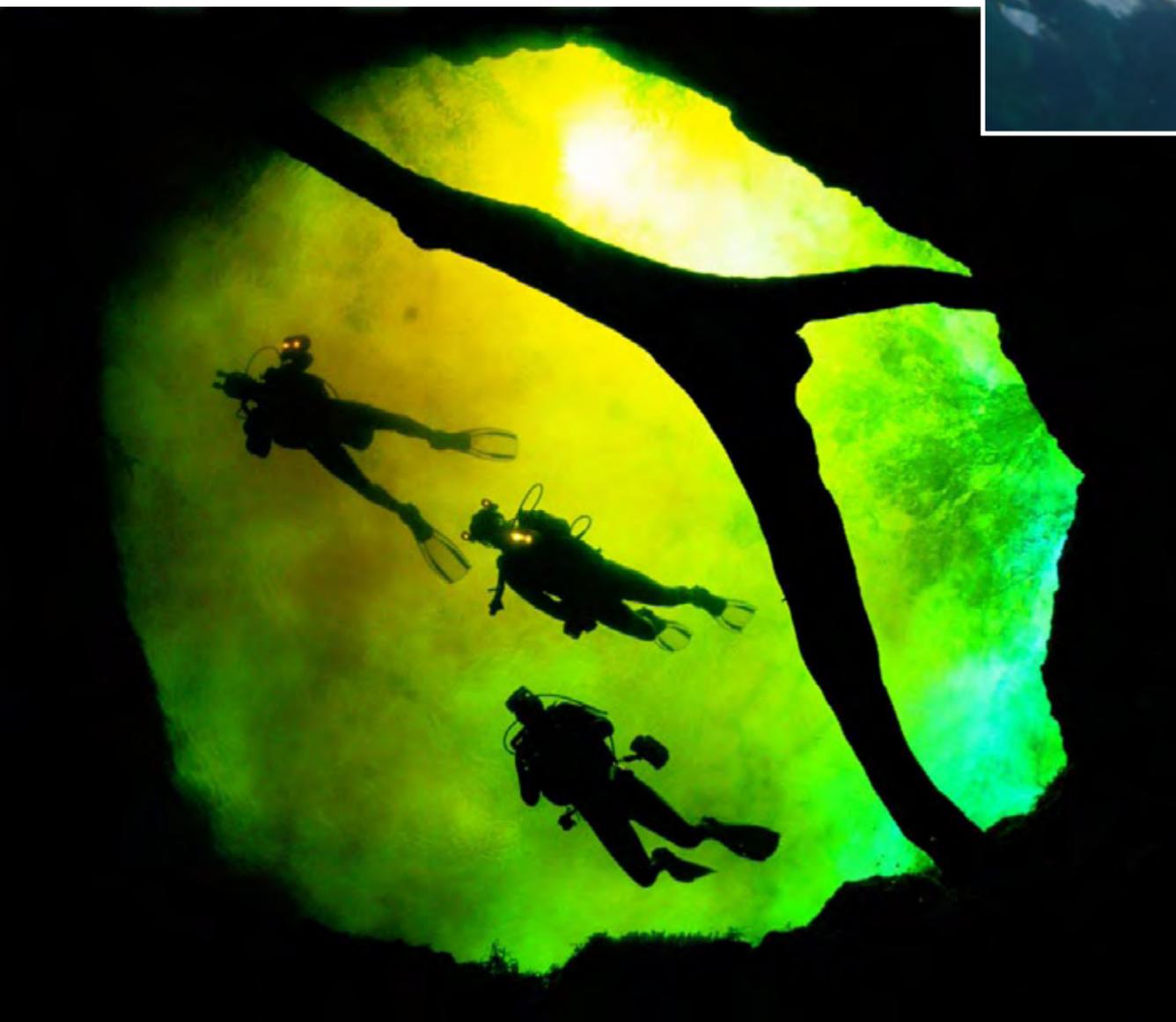


calculations on the brightest areas of the image leaving all the shadows and darker areas hopelessly underexposed as result.

### Fill

Using fill flash is often a balancing act and a compromise between background and foreground. The high brightness will often require very fast shutter speeds and small

apertures. For example, consider a case where we have a diver appearing next to the sun disc. In this case, the metering system may call for an aperture of f:16 and of 1/60 second shutter speed combination. But the part of the diver facing the photographer won't be lit, so how do we handle this? If the diver is, say, about two meters away, the flash would not often be



able to create sufficient output if the aperture setting is f:16.

Since the duration of the flash output is a fixed entity, the answer lies in changing the exposure combination to one with a more open aperture and faster shutter speed. As we open the aperture, the shutter speed must be reduced correspondingly to maintain the same overall exposure.

Note, however, that at shutter speeds faster than 1/125 second, many cameras—especially older ones—will no longer be capable of staying synchronized with the flash. In this regard, digital photographers—who can also enjoy a more direct control and instant feedback—have a distinct advantage over the now diminishing breed of film photographers. Photographers who capture their images on film, should always make use of bracketing.

### Subjects

The easiest—and, especially at the beginning, most appropriate—subject

is the dive buddy. He or she can be positioned without haste to ensure that you get the composition just as you want it. In this regard, make sure that your model's equipment such as pressure gauge, console or belts and hoses are tucked in and worn close to the body. Having them dangling in all directions as many divers do does not look attractive on images.

If you have a little patience, you will often get into situations where the diver starts interacting with approaching wildlife. In these cases, the main challenge is for the photographer to find the right position in relation to the sun. But with some patience, you will succeed not only in getting great shots of jellyfish (see photo above), but also turtles, manta rays, and even sharks and mackerel.

### Tips

- As we get used to constantly using flash, we tend to forget about making the best use of ambient light. Keep an eye out for the effect of sunlight!

In murky water, backlit photography is often the only way to get the shot desired

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## Backlight

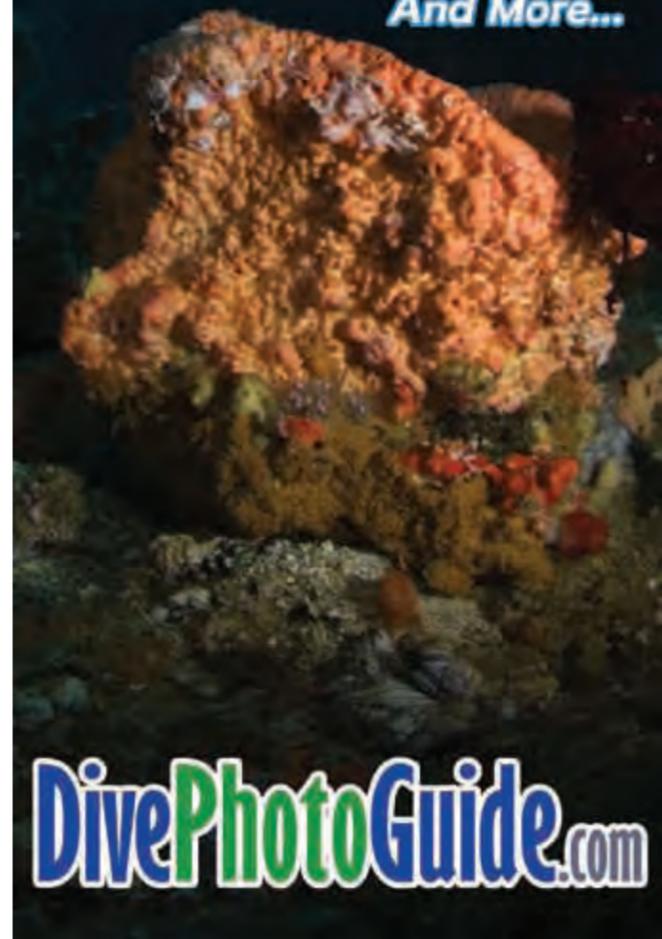
- Approximately 80 percent of backlit subjects are photographed without a flash. This has the advantage of a wider choice of aperture-shutter speed combinations, and you won't be bothered by backscatter.
- When photographing without a flash, resist the temptation of just setting the camera to automatic exposure mode. The automatic system exposes according to the brightest

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: If a synchronized fill flash is used correctly, one sees not only the skyline, but also details. In order to create such a halo around the divers at least two thirds of the sun need be obscured; To bring out the inner structures of this coral, the flash was positioned behind the subject (below); Ambience: A diver in the light of the sun (bottom left)

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Cave entrances (above) are ideal for backlit pictures when the sun is directly above

The main challenge is for the photographer to find the right position in relation to the sun. But with some patience, you will succeed in getting great shots of marine life such as this shark (right)

The U-boat *Rubis* in front of St. Tropez looks great against backlight (far right)



## Backlight

parts of the image and tends to leave the rest too dark.

- The positioning of the model in relation to the sun is very important, so it is of great importance that placement and roles are discussed between the photographer and model before the dive.
- Silhouettes of divers are easy to photograph. The model must cover at least two-thirds of the sun disc.
- For the sun to be properly obscured by the subject, the image should not be taken from too great a distance. The closer the image to the camera moves, the more the sun is covered.
- To capture marine life against the sun, the photographer must act fast. In addition, because the photographer is positioned directly beneath the creatures, they must avoid exhaling prior to the shot, as rising air bubbles don't look good in the

image and often cause fish to change direction.

- Backlit shots tend to bring out scratches and dirt in the front glass on the port, especially with dome ports. In these cases cleaning is paramount.
- Balancing backlit images with flashlight requires certain combinations of shutter speeds and aperture settings. There are two factors you need to consider: First, is the flash powerful enough to illuminate the subject at the desired distance to the subject? Secondly, will the camera and flash be synchronized at the chosen shutter speed?
- The method of measuring for exposure in the direct opposite direction but at the same angle to the surface, has proved to be very successful. To make sure that you get a precisely exposed image, use bracketing. ■



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## Ikelite Housing for Nikon D-3000 Digital SLR Camera

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## Keldan LUNA 8 LA-V

Lightweight and powerful, Kelvan's LUNA 8 LA-V uses a rechargeable Li-Ion battery pack. Offering a much higher power density and less weight than NiMH batteries, the Li-Ion battery pack also offers better performance in cold water conditions. The unique optical design with diffuser and dome lens results in a very soft and wide beam of 90° on land as well as in water. There is no need for special mountings for the battery canister. The included bracket allows easy mounting on standard arm systems like the Ultra Light arms. The wall adapter accepts 110V to 240V AC. Exchangeable adapter plugs allow worldwide use. [www.keldan.ch](http://www.keldan.ch)

## MINI C-MARK

Back by popular demand, Ikelite has re-released The Mini C-Mark. Emitting brilliant flashes of light visible for several miles at the surface, it's an ideal location marker or emergency beacon for night and limited visibility use. Utilizing a pair of C-Cell alkaline batteries (not included), the adjustable flash rate runs eight to 20 continuous hours, depending on the flash rate selected. The bright yellow body provides visibility even in poor conditions and features a unique folding switch to assure against accidentally being turned-on. The lens is secured by a screw-on cap that is guaranteed unbreakable. The Mini C-Mark can be converted to their famous Mini-C flashlight by purchasing the #9073.1 module with bulb. [www.ikelite.com](http://www.ikelite.com)



## Sony announces DSLR-a450

The newest addition to Sony's ever-increasing stable of DSLR's, the new Alpha 450 is a versatile choice for photographers eager to take their craft to the next level. Powerful yet easy to use, the DSLR-A450, boasts a high-resolution 14.2 megapixel sensor delivering highly detailed, ultra-low noise images. Sensitivity extends right up to ISO 12800, allowing the capture of handheld images in low light without flash. Creative options are enhanced with Auto HDR mode that accommodates bright highlights and dark shadow details in a single frame. Two successive frames shot handheld at different exposure values are merged automatically by the camera, resulting in a detail-packed High Dynamic Range image without image editor software. Slots for Memory Stick PRO-HG Duo and SD/SDHC memory cards are offered to suit users' personal shooting preferences. When using the optical viewfinder, the high-capacity battery allows up to 1,050 shots between charges. The a450 will be available from the beginning of February 2010. [www.presscentre.sony.eu](http://www.presscentre.sony.eu)



## Here We Go Again

We all knew it would happen again sooner or later. The Christmas Day terrorist attempt on a Detroit-bound Northwest flight was enough to put government officials on full-fledged panic mode, imposing strict new security measures on US-bound flights. Unfortunately, these kind of restrictions will simply not fade away. What's a travelling dive photographer to do?

As in most situations however, there is always a solution. Try to pack as much into one bag as possible. On a recent trip, I left my somewhat bulky computer bag at home and packed my laptop and accessories into the pouch on my Lowepro camera bag.

Another option is to purchase a photo vest. All of those pockets can hold a number of items, from hard drives, cell phones and iPods to reading material and snacks (providing the latter are still allowed at the time of writing). Careful packing of those in-flight essentials will allow more space in your carry-on for that all-essential photo gear. ■



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video

## Nauticam, D90 D700 and D7

Text by DigitalDiving

— *An Introduction to Nauticam*  
Like many users of housings we come to a point when we want to upgrade our system. The usual route is to move to the latest camera housing by our current manufacturer to utilise the investment we have previously made in port and lighting systems.

We wanted to upgrade our two Nikon D200 system to D300. The search was on for the best deals available on both cameras and housings through our network of underwater photographers around the globe.

Our conversations led us to Hong Kong where our friends, Stephen and Takako,

considered that we may be interested in talking to Edward Lai, owner of the newly formed Nauticam company, who was completing the final pre-production housings for the Nikon D90 and D300/300s models. Edward and his team have been in the precision mould manufacturing industry for more than 20 years, and now focusing on development and production of underwater photographic equipment.

The introductions were made and after many e-mails over a couple of weeks, Edward kindly sent us a Nikon D90 and Nauticam Housing for us to use on our trip to the Philippines. Such joy and excitement it was to have a generous offer made, and we had nervous anticipation to be experimenting with a new camera model and a new housing—a daunting prospect.

Upon arrival, the quality of the finish and the precision of the engineering was most eye catching. Underwater, the system was

very simple to operate and had much easier access to the operating features than we were used to. Additional levers replaced some of the traditional push in rods making

regular operations much easier and at one's fingertips. We were able to connect our Inon strobes via optical cables that enabled use without electrical sync cords (a potential point of weakness), and for those that like to use TTL, the need for additional converters is not necessary.

The bonus was that we could use our existing Sea & Sea ports by simply removing the existing locating plates and replacing them with a simple Nauticam bayonet ring—a one-off operation for continued use on the Nauticam housings. The fitting of the ports is simplicity itself through the unique lever/locking feature on the front of the housing—open lever, push in port, close lever!

Existing Zoom Gears—no problem. A well-engineered adapter allows all existing Zoom Lens Gears to be used.

During our trip, we used the system on 50+ dives and only had two minor faults, one of which was due to camera failure and the other, a fixing point which has since been rectified for the production units.

The Enhanced Optical 180° Viewfinder is supplied as an optional extra but has such excellent qualities that once tried would be difficult to return to the standard.

We have now been introduced to a well-engineered housing system that provides easier usage,



advanced operating features, lighter weight and is able to use our existing ports and strobes—all for the total expense of purchasing two optical cables.

We will soon take delivery of a Nikon D300 and D300s Nauticam Housing and suggest to anyone interested in a change for the better to look at the Nauticam range as extensions are planned in the near future (including Canon models) before making a final decision. Prices are realistic and extremely competitively priced, which is surprising for such a quality item.

### Features and Benefits

- The port mount mechanism provides quick and easy exchange of ports via release/locking lever on the housing.

- Allows use of Sea & Sea ports by replacing rear-locking plates with Nauticam bayonet ring by a simple one-off application to existing ports. Nauticam also produces adapters for Nexus, Aquatica, Subal, Ikelite, etc.

- Provides dual strobe connection via dual optical sensor bulkheads using the cameras built-in flash enabling strobes to be used in TTL

or manual mode or through an optional single Nikonos five-pin bulkhead.

- Operating levers are used for the OK, AF, Live View (if featured) and Review operations.

- Moulded grip handles in polycarbonate and rubber for textured, smooth grip—spacers are available to increase width from housing, if required.

- Three-point locking latch housing closure

- Lighter weight housing construction versus competitors

- Moisture audible and visual alarm sensor

- Simple installation of optional Enhanced 180° Viewfinder

For more information, visit: [www.nauticam.com](http://www.nauticam.com) or contact: [enquiry@nauticam.com](mailto:enquiry@nauticam.com)

The views and opinions in this article are solely those formed by DigitalDiving—Dive the experience with Nauticam. ■

## Nauticam's new underwater housing for Canon EOS 7D

Nauticam USA proudly announces its underwater housing for the groundbreaking 18MP Canon EOS 7D Digital SLR. Engineered from a solid block of seawater resistant aluminum alloy, Nauticam's engineers have created a compact, lightweight design that provides effortless camera control. Video enthusiasts will appreciate the video/still photo mode and video start/stop button and their convenient proximity to the right grip.

Shooters can switch from still photo to video shooting, and start recording a video clip without removing their right hand from the handle. The innovative Nauticam Multi-Selector joystick control pad enables quick changes to focus point, camera menu settings, and the quick control menu. Nauticam is pleased to offer the industry's only locking extension ring system, securely fixing large dome ports even when mounted with an extension ring. A full range of port adapters allowing existing slr housing owners to use their existing ports.

For additional information, go to [www.nauticamusa.com](http://www.nauticamusa.com) ■



Nauticam underwater housing for Canon EOS 7D



*Unique Dive Site*

# Christmas Island

Flying Fish  
Cove Beach

Text by Wandy Hochgrebe. Photos by Tim Hochgrebe  
Supplemental photos by Justin Gilligan, Linda Cash,  
Philip Cash, Glen Cowans, Des Hill, Leila Jeffreys,  
Gunter Noack, Tony Palliser, Chris Surman, Udo  
Van Dongen courtesy of Christmas Island Tourism

We waved goodbye to the crew from Cocos (Keeling) Islands until our arms hurt. We were a bit sad to leave everybody behind, but also excited about what was going to come. After only an hour the plane started to descend again and we could see Christmas Island. It was very clear straight away that Christmas Island is geologically very different from the Cocos (Keeling) Islands.



Adult Blue Ribbon Eels (*Rhinomuraena quaesita*)

Christmas Island, located 2600km Northwest of Perth and only 360km south of Jakarta, is one big rock that rises more than 300 meters above sea level. This island is almost completely covered in green, and 63 percent of the island has been declared a national park. Its tropical location and climate provides a rich and diverse habitat for flora and

fauna.

The island is surrounded by a narrow fringing reef that quite quickly and steeply drops off into an abyss.

Christmas Island is probably most famous for the annual Red Crab migration. These completely harmless, brightly coloured crabs make their way from the forest to the ocean in October-November.

During that time some of the roads are blocked, and special crab crossing grids have been put into place to make their journey less impacted on by humans.

The island's main income is currently derived from the sale of stock of the now closed phosphate mines. Most days, large ships come to the wharf to load up. Although initially this might

look a bit industrial, it does not in any way demise the incredible diving.

## Diving

After being picked up from the airport we were taken to The Sunset resort where we would stay the week. From our spacious balcony, we had a great view over the ocean and part of Flying

Fish Cove. When looking out to sea, frigate birds seemed to be everywhere. Their characteristic hooked wings stretched out, the males with a red throat pouch.

Different species of Booby birds and Bosuns could be spotted as well.

In the mornings, we would start our diving day at 8am at the dive

TIM HOCHGREBE

TIM HOCHGREBE





TIM HOCHGREBE

shop. This meant that we could do two dives and still have most of the afternoon off to explore the topside of the island. Fortunately, The Sunset is just a short stroll from the Indian Ocean Dive Academy, so we could just wander down the road, set up our kit and make our way to Flying Fish Cove where they launch the boat.

Did you say plate corals? We saw some beautiful ones on our very first dive, at 'Rhoda's Wall'. Not only were they massive (three meters in diameter), they were also pretty much intact and looked very healthy. I don't



TIM HOCHGREBE

think I have ever seen so many different, healthy plate corals of this size in one spot. We came across them at other sites too, and they did not cease to amaze me.

One of the animals that I had never seen before was the Adhesive Sea Anemone (*Cryptodendrum adhaesivum*). This anemone looks like a little round blanket, has very short tentacles and comes in a variety of colours such as yellow, brown, grey, blue, pink and green depending on the zooxanthellae it harbours. The Clarks Anemonefish is the only anemonefish that has been associated with this particular anemone.

The location of another dive site was pretty much right underneath our bedroom window! 'The Morgue', as it is called, does not lend its name to what you can find underneath, more what is located just above the water; there used to be a morgue right there at the waters edge.

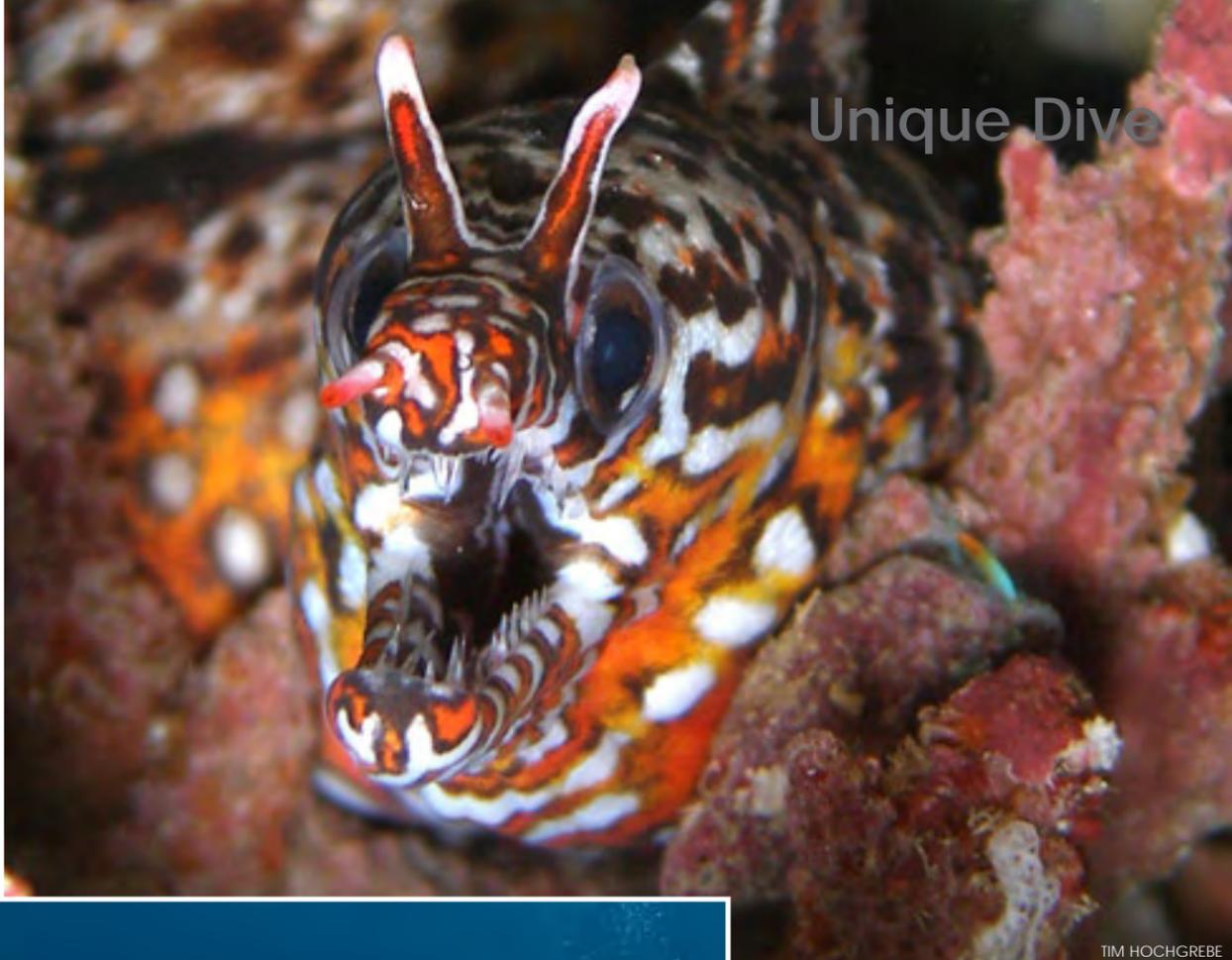
Beautiful, healthy reefs at Christmas Island (left); Dragon Eel at the Chicken Farm

Here Claire, our trusted dive guide, showed us Blue Ribbon eels (*Rhinomuraena quaesita*). There were three adults with their bright blue and yellow colouring and one juvenile, which was almost entirely black. Most of this dive site consisted of a wonderful coral garden with plenty of different reef fish.

Over the following days, we were shown some amazing walls with prolific coral growth. Imagine looking up from 25 to 30 meters, and all you can see is a wall covered with all kinds of different species of healthy coral. We saw plenty of Pink Anemonefish (*Amphiprion perideraion*) darting in and out of their anemone (*Heteractis magnifica*), all kinds of butterflyfish, surgeonfish, angelfish and anthias.

Million Dollar Bommie is one of those

## Unique Dive



TIM HOCHGREBE



UDO VAN DONGEN

dive sites you can't give a miss either. The actual bommie is located on the ridge of the abyss, which means when you swim out there is at least 3000m of nothing underneath you. An unreal feeling!

On your way to the bommie you swim over a very interesting landscape dominated by little bommies divided by sandy patches that harbour Garden eels and Rockmover wrasse. The bommie itself has plenty of nooks and crannies, which offer shelter to Leaf scorpionfish, a Starry moray (*Echidna nebulosa*) with its yellow eyes and nostrils, a Yellow-spotted scorpionfish (*Sebastapistes cyanostigma*) and a spectacular species of nudibranch (*Dermatobranchus ornatus*). Very nice!

Another dive site we really

Diver inspects table corals



JUSTIN GILLIGAN

liked was the 'Chicken Farm'. This is where we, for the first time in our lives, saw the elusive Dragon moray (*Enchelycore pardalis*)—and not just one, but three of them, hiding under a table coral! (Admittedly we did have to go back a second time, because I didn't see them the first time around, but I'll spare you the long story that

know where to look first.

## Eidsvold wreck

Although I am not a wreck diver as such, I still thought that our visit to the wreck of the *Eidsvold* was a real treat. This Norwegian phosphate freighter was used to transport phosphate until the Japanese sunk it in 1942, and it now lies

comes with it).

These rather small moray eels have an amazing colour pattern. Claire pointed out a couple of spear-feeding manta shrimps in their burrows. Again, there were so many beautiful corals, including some soft coral trees, that I didn't

on the edge of the reef, part of it has toppled down the abyss. The structure is still recognisable, but over the last 60 years, plenty of sessile life has settled, and the wreck has become completely incorporated into the striking coral reef that surrounds it.

A large number of Sergeant Majors were aggregating at the shallower end of the wreck. The swim along the wall towards the *Eidsvold* is spectacular, too, with striking fans, anemones and coral growth all the way from the top to well below where we were swimming.

Due to the conditions, we only dived the northern side of Christmas Island. We did go to the north-westerly point of the island at 'Perpendicular Wall' where we already noticed the significant chop. Fortunately, under the water, it was a very different story, and we hardly noticed anything of the rougher conditions above.

This dive started off with a small garden made up of wonderful fan corals that covered the bottom and the rock wall. There were also plenty of Black-cheek morays, which you can see at most places around the island. Half way through our dive, a manta ray cruised past. On the reef flat at



TIM HOCHGREBE

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Underwater photographer takes a shot of the magnificent fan coral on a wall dive; Swimming with a dolphin; Divers explore Thundercliff Cave; The Grotto

## Unique Dive

ten meters, we saw parrotfish, loads of anthias, Pyramid butterflyfish and a large barracuda. Again, this reef features more fantastic, pristine corals.

### Caves

Besides the reef flats and walls, one of the other diving attractions of Christmas Island are the caves.

The entrance to Thunder Dome is around the ten-meter mark, and there are two chambers. In the second one, there is an air pocket, and when you surface, you can have a look at the stalactites hanging off the ceiling. We could hear the waves pounding on the rocks above us, which was more exciting than scary.

Swimming back, the light coming in was bright neon blue and looked almost artificial. Just at the entrance, there was a huge number of stunning red fans. We finished this dive on the reef flat and were kept company by a school of about 50 Tall-fin batfish that



GLEN COWANS



LEILA JEFFREYS



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Lionfish; Frigate bird (inset); View of Flying Fish Cove from above; Underwater photographer explores reef off Christmas Island; White sandy beaches along the shores

Unique Dive

es and patiently waiting in the dark resulted in another nice surprise, but you will have to find that one out for yourself...

The air in the cave was very hot and humid, so it was quite refreshing to glide back into the water. The water inside all three chambers was very clear, and it was very safe to go inside because it didn't silt up. Silhouettes of schools of small fish could be made

comfortable 28 °C.

Most marine life action was happening on or directly around the reefs, but we did see the occasional reef shark out in the blue. We were also lucky to see a manta ray, a small White-spotted eagleray and a couple of turtles. Apparently, on the other side of Christmas Island, the pelagics are more abundant.

Both Markus and Claire are very knowledgeable and passionate about the diving around Christmas Island. It was great to see that they

were so happy to share their secrets with us and still keep some to protect this fragile environment. Their patience seemed limitless.

For people who can't get enough of the diving, there is the chance to do some shore-based diving from Flying Fish



CHRIS SURMAN



TIM HOCHGREBE



JUSTIN GILLIGAN

were amazingly curious.

Wallscene Thunder Cliff Cave was even more impressive as one actually surfaces within the cave, get out of the water, and after taking off your dive gear, you can go for a short (guided) walk. Markus explained to us the different geological formations in the cave. A closer look at a small pool of water revealed tiny little red and white shrimp swimming around. Although they are apparently almost completely blind since they spend most of their time in pitch-black conditions, using their other senses, these little shrimp noticed our presence and kept hiding as soon as we tried to have a good look at them. Switching off our torch-

out against the incoming light, but as soon as you switched your torch back on, they scattered rapidly.

Our bottom times were between 60 and 70 minutes, except for our little expedition to Thunder Cliff Cave, which lasted an hour and a half. At no time did we feel we had to hurry to keep up. There was always plenty of time to take photos and to stare at the abundance of life around us.

All week we had a minimum of 30 meters visibility, and the water temperature was a

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White beaches on Christmas Island





GUNTER NOACK

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Divers swim with a whaleshark, which usually visit the island between November and April; Red crabs rest on a rock at dawn; Baby Bosun; Booby

whole island is only 135 square kilometres and can be easily explored within a few afternoons. To really enjoy the stunning land-based nature of Christmas Island, it is necessary to have access to a car, preferably a four-wheel drive vehicle. To make sure there are no dramas, it is recommended that you arrange this before you arrive on the island.

There are plenty of tracks to do some bushwalking. There are a number of



LINDA CASH



TIM HOCHGREBE

Cove. Again, plenty of corals, an abundance of fish, and people have seen Dragon morays in the cove on many occasions.

We did our last dive at Admiral Wall, which is just inside the cove. Once more we saw more fantastic corals and anemones, Leaf scorpionfish, a White-mouth moray, Midnight snapper out in the blue and some awesome coloured crabs with yellow and black striped legs, red faces and a purple claw. Flying Fish Cove is also a great spot to do some night diving.

From November until April, Whalesharks come past Christmas Island. It is thought that they are the same ones that aggregate at Ningaloo Reef, WA. Their appearance coincides with the mass red crab spawning, as they feed on the crab larvae. During the months

of November through to January, there is also an increased chance of seeing Hammerhead sharks.

### Topside

We absolutely loved the diving, but we were very much looking forward to the surface intervals, too. It not only gave one the chance to stretch one's sea legs, but also, more importantly devour the lunches, which were arranged through the shop. Markus did an amazing job in surprising us each day by bringing something from the local Asian eateries and finishing it off with some beautiful sweets or fresh fruit. There was always plenty of water available, which is very important in such a tropical destination.

In the afternoons, we had plenty of time to explore some of the drier parts of the island. The



PHILLIP CASH

beaches that are worth a visit, and in the south, there are blowholes to check out. We also visited the island's only waterfall at Hugo's Dale.

Christmas Island boasts a number of endemic flora and

fauna species including 16 plant species and seven bird species. The endangered Abbott's Booby bird nests on

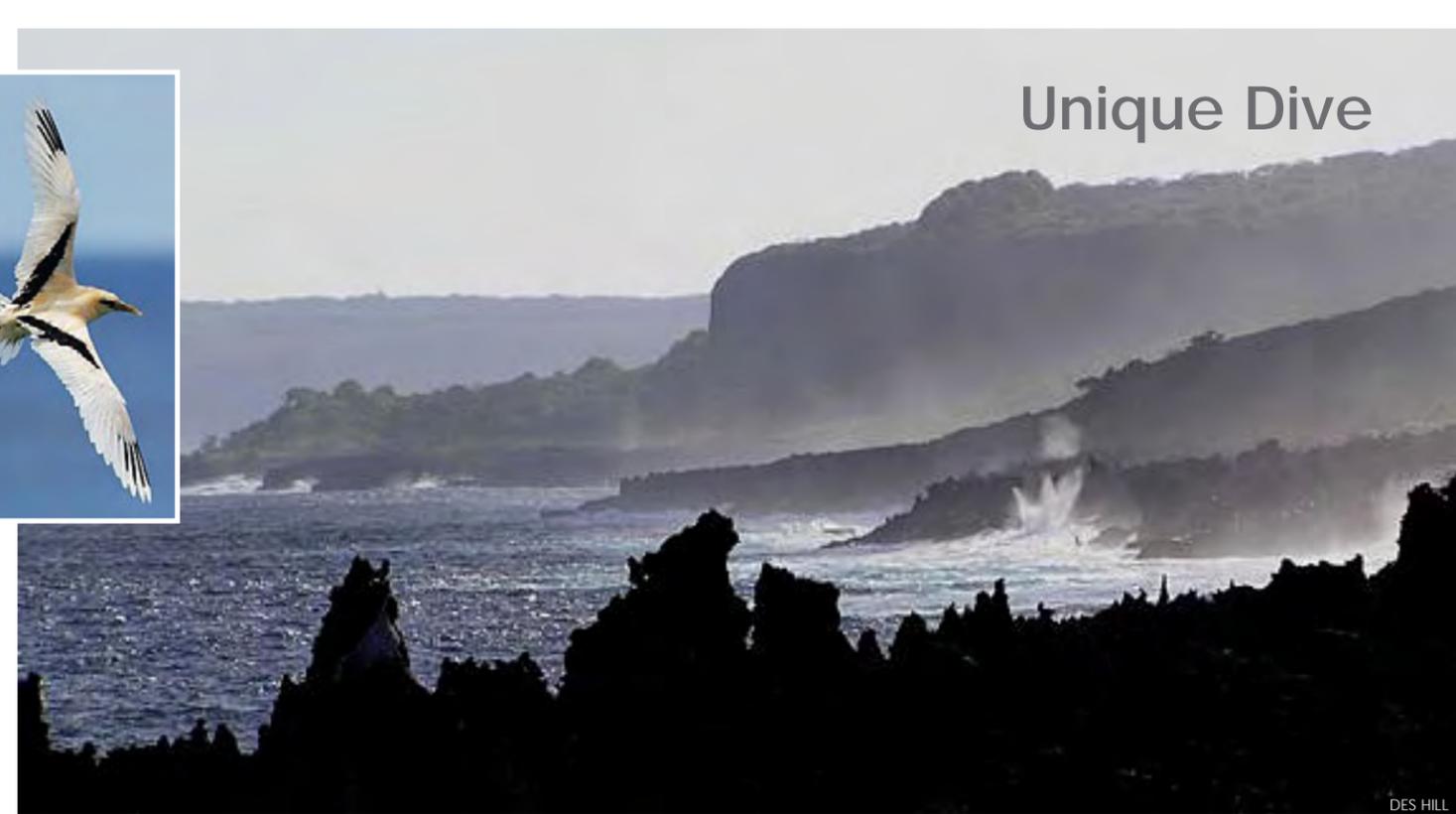
Christmas Island, the only known nesting habitat left in the world for these birds. Other birds that can be easily spotted are the endemic Christmas Island Frigate birds, Brown and Red-footed Booby birds, different species of bosuns

and doves. From Lily Beach, there is a walking trail that goes right past a Brown Booby Bird nesting site.

If you like crabs, you are definitely in the right place on Christmas Island. Besides the well-known bright Red Crabs, you will see the Blue Crabs when you go for a bushwalk. And on Dolly Beach, the humongous, colourful Robber Crabs can be spotted too.



TONY PALLISER



DES HILL

Sunrise crabs on Ethel Beach; Golden Plover (inset); Blowholes spout fountains of sea and mist; Red crab

under and over the water. sunset from another perspective, sip on a cocktail, and talk

to the very friendly locals while we were waiting for our dinner to be served. What a life! The end of our stay on Christmas Island came way too soon.

### Travel tips

National Jet flies to Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island leaving from Perth twice a week. A little tip: if you book well in advance, it is possible to use Qantas frequent flyer points, and you currently need 30,000 points for the return trip. It is possible to fly to Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Christmas Island from Denpasar, Bali. You can organise your holiday on Cocos and Christmas yourself, but it might work out cheaper when organising it through specialised travel agents.

For more information on Christmas Island, have a look at the following web sites: Christmas Tourism Association [www.christmas.net.au](http://www.christmas.net.au) The Sunset, offering comfortable rooms all with ensuite [www.thesunset.cx](http://www.thesunset.cx) Indian Ocean Dive Academy [www.ioda.cx](http://www.ioda.cx); National Jet Systems [www.nationaljet.com](http://www.nationaljet.com) ■



TIM HOCHGREBE

All up there are 20 crab species that make Christmas Island their home.

### Dining & sightseeing

Christmas Island has a good supermarket, especially when considering

the remoteness of the island, where you can buy most things. There is also a good choice of places to eat. Because of the rich cultural diversity, there are also some good quality Asian restaurants. On Wednesday night, the Sukaramai Restaurant serves a very cheap and tasty diner.

The integration of the different cultures and races on Christmas Island becomes even more obvious when you visit the different temples and cemeteries on the island. Throughout the year, there are several religious and cultural festivals.

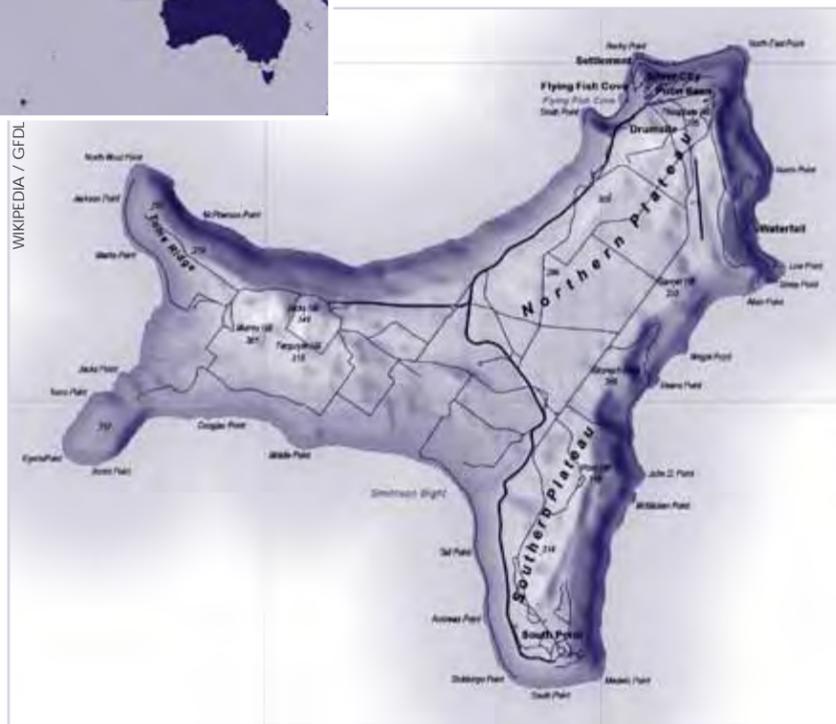
More information on walking trails, the local flora and fauna, and the island in general can be found at the Christmas Tourism Association.

We would close off our days by floating in the pool at The Sunset before going for a walk to the Golden Plover, which is the pub just around the corner, or walk a bit further to Rumah Tinggi to watch the

Map and location of Christmas Island



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# Joe Peters



## P O R T F O L I O





Edited by Gunild Symes  
All art work by Joe Peters  
Photos by Victor Janczar

Master glass maker, Joe Peters of Massachusetts, USA, takes on the sea in no insignificant way. With vivid color and imagination, this artist brings life up from the depths of the ocean to your tabletop with animated, often whimsical, glass figures of colorful sea creatures. *X-RAY MAG* interviewed the artist to find out just what makes him tick.

LEFT: *Crabs*, 3x4 inches each. TOP RIGHT: *Chambered Nautilus*. PREVIOUS PAGE: *Octopi*, 6x6 inches each. All photos this and previous page are of flame work and furnace glass sculptures by Joe Peters

CLOCKWISE:

*Scuba diver*, 8x6 inches;  
*Anglerfish*, 7x8 inches; *Sea  
Turtles*, 4x6 inches. All pho-  
tos this page are of flame  
work and furnace glass  
sculptures by Joe Peters

*X-RAY MAG: What inspires you  
about the underwater world?*

JP: Color, form and a sense of  
the constant movement the  
sea and its creatures fascinates  
me.

*X-RAY MAG: Tell us how the  
sea inspires your work and why  
you use themes of the under-  
water realm.*

JP: Animals and plant life in  
general inspire me to replicate  
and stylize some of the most  
intricate details in our world,



*X-RAY MAG: Tell us how you  
became an artist and why you  
chose the medium you use. Who  
were your role models or mentors?*

JP: I have been involved in art since  
I was a child, from painting and  
clay to various other media. When I  
was an art major in college I took a  
summer intro course in glassblowing  
at a local American craft school.  
It just clicked with me and was  
by far the most exciting medium  
I have ever tried. I set up a studio  
and have been working full time in  
glass for the past five years. My role  
models are teachers I have been

fortunate to study with,  
Milon Townsend, Robert  
Mickelsen, Sally Prash,  
and Emilio Santini. Mentors  
are both artists, like Milon  
Townsend, who I had an  
opportunity to apprentice  
with, and glass collectors  
and gallery owners who  
have offered advice and  
direction.

*X-RAY MAG: What inspires  
you?*

JP: Nature and awesome  
art.



## Joe Peters

CLOCKWISE:  
*Two Jellyfish*, 6x4 inches;  
*Submarine*, 5x4 inches;  
*Wall mounts*, diameters  
vary from 8 to 14 inches  
(flame work and fur-  
nace glass sculptures  
by Joe Peters set in  
furnace worked vessels  
made by Peter Muller);  
*Hermit Crabs*, 4x6 inches.  
All photos this page  
are of flame work and  
furnace glass sculptures  
by Joe Peters

particularly underwater sea life. I feel that my opportunities to dive and see a lot of my subjects up close is a gift. I feel an urge to share what I have seen so people can enjoy the beauty of sea life outside their natural habitat and even in their own homes.

*X-RAY MAG:* Tell us about your artistic vision and artistic methods, process, techniques, materials, etc.

JP: The process of flame working glass is using a propane/oxygen torch to heat glass rods to their melting point, then manipulate the glass by stretching and twisting thin strands of hot glass together to create patterns of color which are then formed into cane and used in modeling or detailed sculptural forms.

In addition to the torch and kiln I use graphite tools to help shape and flatten the hot glass. My vision is to incorporate color and detail and personality into my work. To push the limits a little when it comes to depicting the beauty of nature and its creatures... As an artist, taking it one step beyond.

*X-RAY MAG:* Are you a scuba diver? If so, what made you become one and where





LEFT: *Lobster*, 9x6 inches, flame work and furnace glass sculpture by Joe Peters  
 ABOVE: *Purple Portal*, 20x8 inches, flame work and furnace glass sculpture by Joe Peters set in furnace worked vessel made by Peter Muller  
 RIGHT: *Shark Attack*, flame work and furnace glass sculpture by Joe Peters

*have you dived?*

JP: I followed my father's lead in learning to dive when I had an opportunity to live in Central America. I earned my open-water certification in Roatan and I spent a few months diving in the coral reefs off the coast of Belize and Honduras.

*X-RAY MAG: What are your current artistic projects?*

JP: My current artistic projects have been in collaboration with Peter Muller, a furnace glassblower. We are combining the two major processes for hot glass manipulation in creating underwater seascapes.

*X-RAY MAG: Any future projects in mind? What are they and how do they relate to the sea or ocean conservation?*

JP: My hope is to secure funding for

public installations of my work drawing attention to both the beauty and fragile nature of our seas and their creatures and plant life.

*X-RAY MAG: Why does art matter and how can art help the world?*

JP: Art is creative expression and creativity is one of our greatest gifts as human beings. Visual arts inspire us to be creative in other areas of our lives. Our world is in need of creative thinkers, and



## Joe Peters

creative ideas.

I would encourage everyone who dives to recognize not only the beauty but the fragility of sea life.

*X-RAY MAG:* How can interested buyers contact you?

JP: I live in Western Massachusetts and guests are welcome to tour my studio by appointment. A large percent of my work is commissioned. A schedule of upcoming shows is included on my website at [www.joepetersglass.com](http://www.joepetersglass.com). My e-mail address is [joe@joepetersglass.com](mailto:joe@joepetersglass.com).

For more information or to purchase art work, visit the gallery of Joe Peters Glass at [www.joepetersglass.com](http://www.joepetersglass.com) or call 413 537-2259 ■

**joepetersglass.com** or call 413 537-2259 ■

CLOCKWISE: Teal Portal, 18x14 inches (flame work and furnace glass sculptures by Joe Peters set in furnace worked vessel made by Peter Muller); Pelican, 5x3 inches; Angel and Triggerfish, 4x3 inches each. All photos this page are of flame work and furnace glass sculptures by Joe Peters

## IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

*Diving in Cozumel  
Underwater Scooters*



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