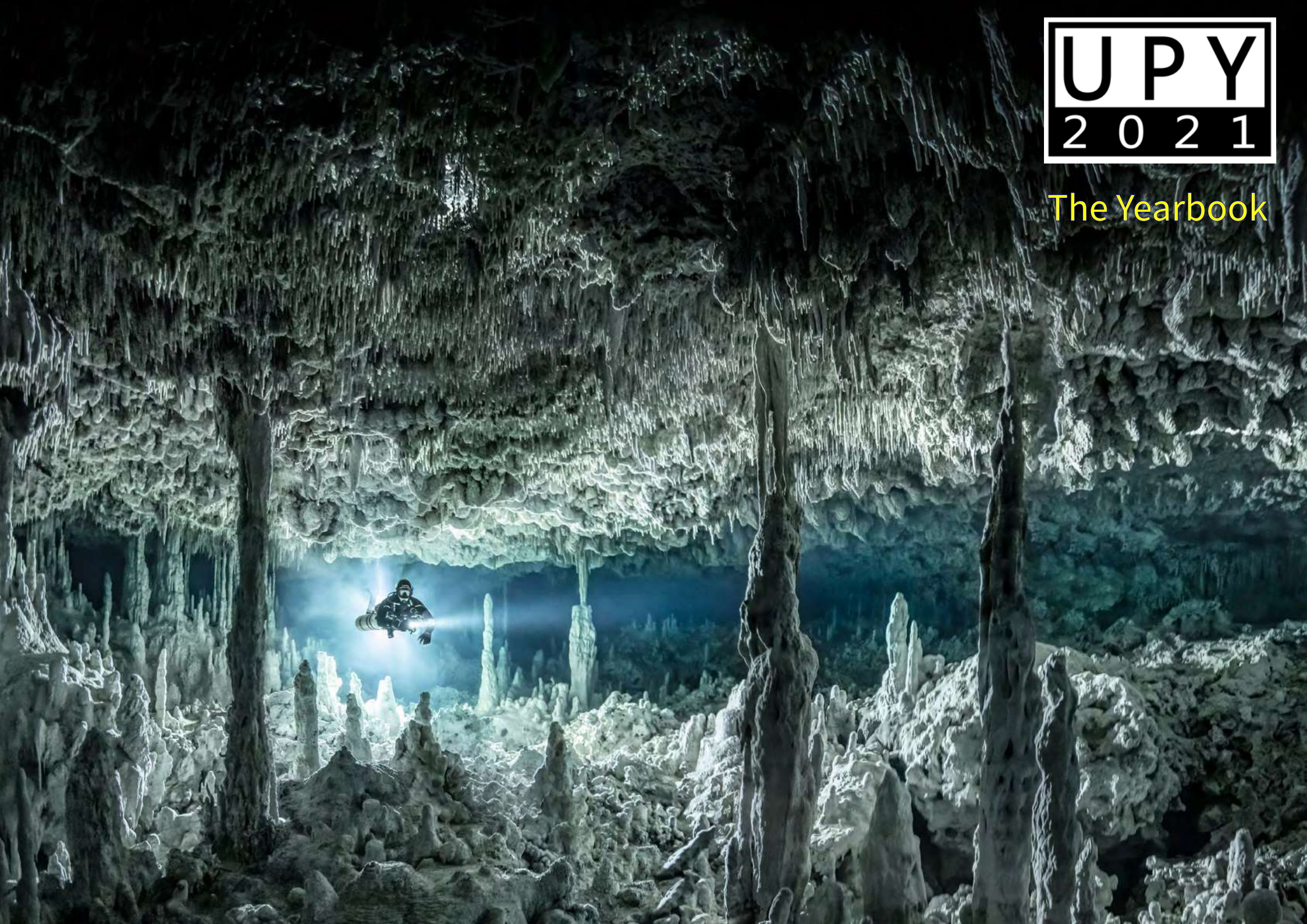
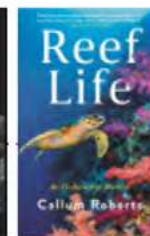
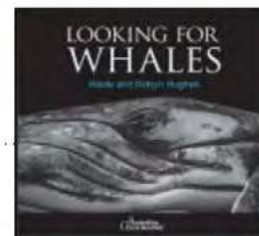


UPY
2021

The Yearbook



UPY has been generously sponsored by



Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021 Yearbook

4. Foreword by Lewis Pugh
5. Chairman's address by Alex Mustard
6. Team comments from Martin Edge, Peter Rowlands, Dan Bolt & Saeed Rashid
7. Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021
8. Up and Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021 & Most Promising British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021
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Guest Foreword

Lewis Pugh is a British-South African endurance swimmer and ocean advocate.

He was the first person to complete a long-distance swim in every ocean of the world and he frequently swims in vulnerable ecosystems to draw attention to their plight.

Technology makes us amphibious. It allows us to enter an element that seems alien, but without which all life on Earth would perish.

Many of the images collected here play on the meniscus between two worlds: the one above and the one below the surface. Some bring you face to face with astonishing creatures; others lend us a fish-eyed view of their world, and make us feel part of something vast and mysterious. The most magical are the ones that capture a rare moment of recognition, when the subject looks deep into the lens and we feel seen by creatures we could hardly have imagined, in environments most of us will never have the privilege of visiting ourselves.

These intrepid photographers have spent countless hours underwater waiting for just the right conditions. Many have risked more than frozen toes or waterlogged equipment in their quest for perfection.

They not only show us hidden worlds, they remind us that we are part of something extraordinary, something miraculous – and something that is, tragically, threatened.

Always just out of frame – and rarely right there in it – are signs of human impact. The wrecks, now colonised by corals, the

ocean debris and the ubiquitous plastic pollution, remind us of the resilience of marine life, and of its vulnerability.

This is ever more important as the world's wild spaces become more rare, and our oceans are increasingly threatened by the triple threats of global warming, plastic pollution and industrial overfishing.

We cannot protect what we do not love. It is clear that these photographers love what they do, and where they do it. They play a vital role in bringing these worlds to us, so that we can care about the creatures impacted by our actions.

As UN Patron of the Oceans, I am tasked with speaking up for those who cannot speak for themselves, from fish and birds to marine mammals and all the marvellous creatures of the oceans.

These pictures convey their astonishing beauty and fragility better than I ever could.

**Lewis Pugh, OIG
UN Patron of the Oceans**

www.lewispugh.com



Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021

Chairman's Welcome

Welcome to this year's sumptuous UPY collection.

The last 12 months have been challenging for everyone, so I hope that your time spent browsing the fabulous underwater photographs contained in these pages provides a welcome escape to another world. You are in for some treats!

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on many aspects of our lives, including the realm of underwater photography. For most of the last 12 months, international travel has been restricted and many of the diving resorts and liveaboards we love have been unable to accept guests, and sadly, lots of people have been forced out of work across the industry. Winning prizes is a major motivation for entering photographic competitions and we are really proud that UPY has given out so many prizes down the years – in 2020, for example, we handed out prizes to 49 different photographers, kindly donated by the best brands in diving. But UPY has always been built on community, so given the challenges facing the diving industry we decided to make UPY prize-free in 2021 and asked the entering photographers to participate knowing they were competing only for kudos. We'd like to thank every single photographer who was part of this stance of solidarity

by entering this year's contest. We hope to be back to a full prize roster in 2022.

While the pandemic has restricted travel opportunities, it reminded many of the photographic opportunities close to home. We introduced a special My Backyard Award to highlight local images and encourage this. Underwater photographers are spread throughout the world and many are fortunate to have celebrated subjects on their doorstep, while others have produced world class images in much less obvious locations. All MBY images have **(MBY)** after their location in this Yearbook.

The lack of travel also led to particularly strong entry in the British Waters categories this year, and I'd encourage everyone to 'take a shufti' even if you are never likely to dive in the UK. For those unable to get underwater in the last year we relaxed our time limit on images, to allow entrants to dive into their archives in search of winners. As it turns out, most of our category toppers have been taken since last year's contest.

COVID rules also impacted how UPY is judged. Face to face judging has been central to UPY's way of operating and we know that entrants greatly appreciate the time and effort we put into selecting our winners. Current UK restrictions stopped the judges meeting in person this year and forced us into marathon

Skype meetings. Working online meant judging took more than twice as long as previously, but entrants can rest assured that your pictures were scrutinised as carefully as always, and that every single photo entered received detailed feedback of its progress via our custom and highly popular results system.

For understandable reasons, UPY entries dropped a little from the record-breaking numbers of last year: 4500 photos were entered by 403 entrants. Although these are numbers UPY hadn't exceeded until as recently as 2017.

Despite all the COVID impacts, my standout memory from the 2021 contest is undoubtedly our first female Underwater Photographer of the Year, won by Renee Capozzola from the USA, for her image Sharks' Skylight, taken in August in French Polynesia. Also, for the second year in a row, our two rising star awards were won by women, although this year, both went to the same person, SJ Alice Bennett. Furthermore, last year's star newcomers, Anita Kainrath and Nur Tucker, both stepped up picking up awards in the open International categories. The nationality mix of winners also shifted a little, with less dominance from southern Europe and more winners from the USA, Russia and Japan, than previously. Although 2018 Underwater Photographer of the Year, Tobias Friedrich



won the Wreck photography category yet again! Every image presented here is worth your time, I hope you enjoy marvelling at them all.

Finally, I would like to thank the entire UPY team for their tireless work in these challenging times. To Martin and Peter, my fellow judges, thank you for your talent, wisdom and fairmindedness. And to Dan, Peter and Saeed, thank you for your Herculean effort behind the scenes, the detailed work that makes UPY so special and so valued by our community.

Stay safe, stay healthy and the whole UPY Team wishes you the very best for the coming year and with luck, lots of time underwater.

Dr Alex Mustard MBE
www.amustard.com



Martin Edge

I may have said this many times before that no one will ever take the (underwater photo teacher and judge) out of me. So, this year I decided to critique a random number of unknown entrants that made it to the last twenty in each category. This year (just the same as other years) I couldn't resist going through all the successful images again and again in order to analyze how and why they had fared.

Being one of the judges we all have to 'keep or discard'. Myself and the other judges fight our own corner as to what stays and what gets eliminated.

Images can develop to the eye then hours later suddenly diminish and fade away. We give and take, but at the same time we are looking to 'champion' those images which we believe must feature among the winners.

There are so many great images, which are flawed because a fish eye is looking the wrong way or rock is obscuring a key feature. It may be a hint of blur where it shouldn't belong or an unwanted diver's fin which you know will be difficult to clone.

Make sure you share your selects with a well informed and a knowledgeable friend. Make sure that you trust their judgement. If not then be your own judge. Look at things as they are but above all be honest to your self.



Peter Rowlands

With the world seemingly falling apart, we decided to keep a sense of normality by not changing the UPY categories with the one exception being a new award, rather than a Category, My Backyard.

It's aim is simple; highlight the exciting images which can be taken on your doorstep with minimal travel and energy consumption.

The entry numbers were very healthy and 46 out of the 130 images in this Yearbook were from My Backyard and this included no less than five category winners and four Award winners.

In addition I got a sense that entrants really embraced it as a way of showing how proud they are of the images they achieve so close to home.

Many have also said that, being limited, gave them more time to study and observe their local marine life and to get to know it in more detail than ever before.

Who knows? Maybe our backyards will be all that we can savour for some time to come.

www.uwpmag.com



Dan Bolt

So another year done, and another year without any catastrophic issues on the website, I'd call that a success. Given that we had at least 3 attempts to hack the site via various methods (why would you bother?) I think I'm justified in my sleepless nights while our competitors are registering and uploading images.

This year I'd like to shout out to all the UK-based underwater photographers who entered. 2020 was a tough year for everyone on the planet, and here in the United Kingdom we were under strict lockdown rules or travel restrictions for the entire year. And so we had a wealth of talented, internationally renowned photographers all testing their skills in the changeable, temperate and unforgiving waters around our stunning coastline.

With that in mind, I am really, really happy to see that there are so many different photographers doing well in all the UK categories this year. We have a mix of: acclaimed professionals, old fogeys (like me), promising shooters rising up through the ranks, and new-comers to the competition, all featuring in the 2021 winners' parade. And that makes me immensely proud, and very hopeful and excited for the future of underwater photography in the UK. Well done to you all!

www.underwaterpics.co.uk



Saeed Rashid

How often are you going to hear the phrase "well what a year that was or unprecedented" but it really was. Now a year on from when the world was turned upside down, we can at least take solace and some of these amazing images from the natural world, they have definitely lifted my spirits and will hopefully do the same for you.

My job has always been liaising with sponsors and arranging prizes, but very early on in the planning for this year's competition we decided that it was very important for us to support our own industry, that like many others, has been hit very hard by the pandemic and we would have our very first prize free year.

Many of our super sponsors have been with us from the start and we value each and every one of them. As a little thank you to them, we have included their logos throughout the web site and hopefully we will be back to offering prizes in next year's competition.

Hopefully we will get to see each other underwater very soon, until then stay safe.

www.focusvisuals.com

Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021



WINNER Wide angle

'Sharks' Skylight'

Renee Capozzola (United States)

This image was taken in French Polynesia, which happens to be one of my very favorite places to photograph sharks. Here, there are strong legal protections in place for sharks, allowing them to thrive and help balance the marine ecosystem. During this visit to Moorea, French Polynesia, I spent several evenings in the shallows at sunset, hoping to capture something unique. Instead of focusing on split-level images as I often like to do, I decided to try something different. I envisioned and aimed to capture the sharks underwater with the sunset seen through Snell's window. It took many attempts, but on this one particular evening, the water was calm, the sunset was vibrant, and I got extremely lucky with the composition as well. Since many shark species are threatened with extinction throughout the world, it is my hope that images of these beautiful animals will help promote their conservation.

Moorea, French Polynesia

Canon, 5D Mark III, Nauticam, Canon 11-24mm f/4, iso 400, f20, 1/200, Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2's

Judges comments:

A sunset ballet of reef sharks and sea birds in a tranquil corner of the Pacific Ocean is a richly deserved winner of the Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021. This is an image of hope; a glimpse of how the ocean can be when we give it a chance, thriving with spectacular life both below and above the surface.

Alex Mustard

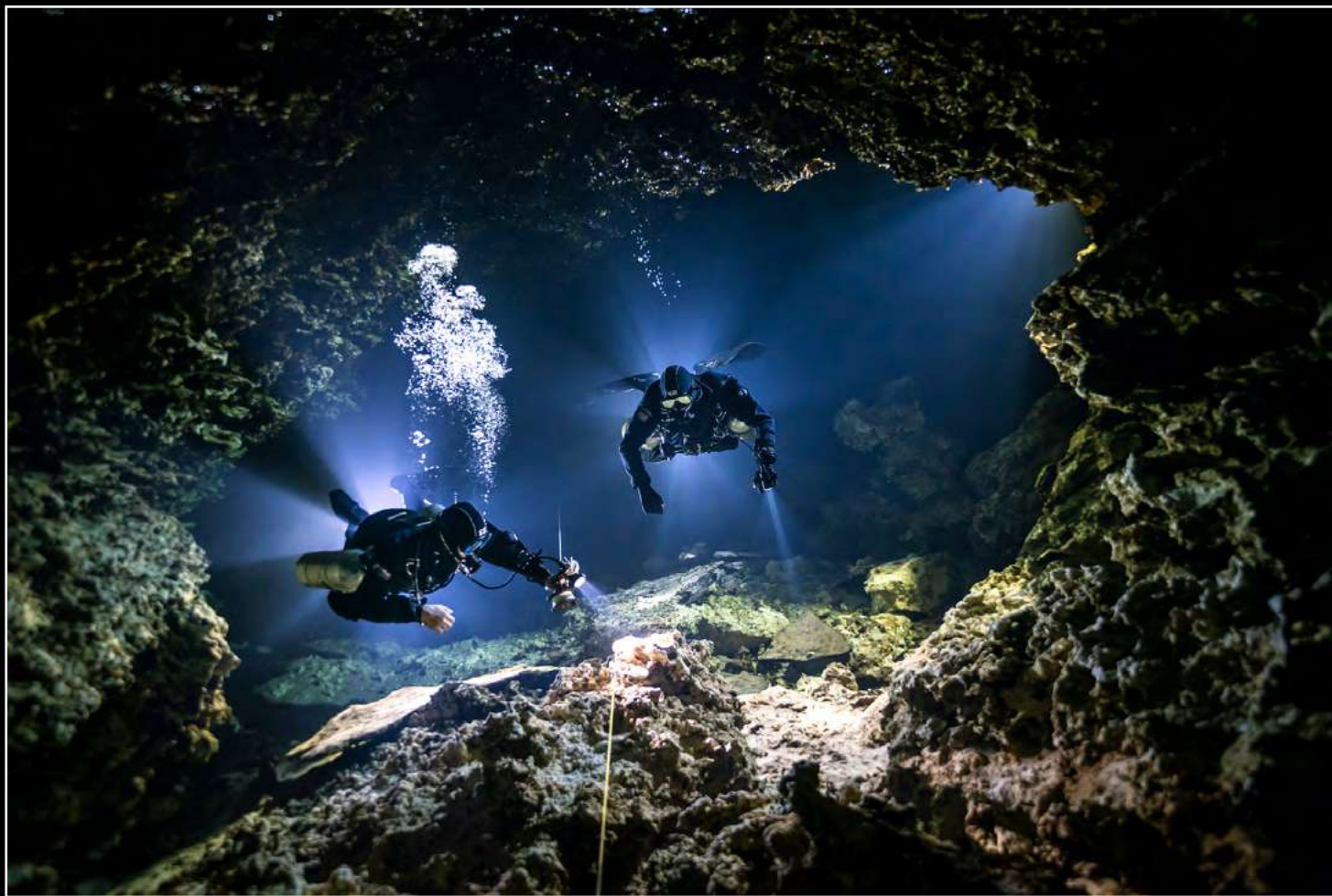
There was little doubt with the judges that this image was, by some distance, the deserved winner. Absolutely everything in this image is right; composition, light, colour and contrast. Pretty much perfect.

Peter Rowlands

The first time I set eyes on this image I was nothing short of mesmerised. The palette of colours first attracted me. The stark bellies of the sharks create a kind of union with each other just above their reflections. The birds above are particularly dominant in the sunset night sky and it looks like they are queuing to take their turn to feast. Mind-blowing underwater imagery.

Martin Edge

Up and coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021 & Most Promising British Underwater Photographer 2021



WINNER, Up & Coming

'Tying In'

SJ Alice Bennett (Mexico)

As this shot was taken during cave training, we had a pretty intricate plan in place, which is not usually how I run caves shoots. However, the plan failed miserably as the cave student, Max, had multiple equipment failures before even making it past the cavern zone. Plans are important, but when they fail you need to adapt quickly and deal with a new situation. After fixing all the issues on the surface and changing our plan to accommodate our now fairly depleted gas supplies, we descended again. I swam ahead and waited just beyond the beginning of the permanent mainline watching the team swim towards me, followed closely by the lighting assistants creating those beautiful halo effects. Suddenly everything just lined up perfectly, so I pressed the shutter just as Max turned to tie into the mainline.

Cenote Mayan Blue, Sistema Ox Bel Ha, Tulum, Mexico **(MBY)**

Sony, a7S II, Nauticam NA-A7II , Sony FE 24-70mm f/2.8 GM, iso 2500, f/2.8, 1/125, Big Blue Video Lights, 30k, 2 x 15k, 2 x 4k lumen

Judges comment:

We always value fresh vision in the Up & Coming category and the combination of incredible lighting and shallow depth of field empower this image with originality and truly capture the spirit of adventure that the photographer was striving for.

Alex Mustard

This strong image brought two words to mind - confidence and talent. Confident enough to pull off such an ambitious image and talented to visualise such good composition and control complicated lighting.

Peter Rowlands

This image leapt out from all the other entries in this category because it is so complete in terms of composition and lighting.

Martin Edge

British Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021 & My Backyard Award 2021



WINNER

British Waters Wide Angle

'While You Sleep'

Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom)

Malls Mire - small woodland in Glasgow, between a housing estate, supermarket and factory - is an unlikely haven for wildlife. As winter thaws, for a few nights each year one of its small muddy ponds comes alive with Common Frogs. I first photographed them here in 2018 and since that day I've had this image in my head. It took another two years before I captured the little wonders that stir in the cold nights while the city sleeps. Using a temperamental remote shutter while combining long-exposure, backlighting, close-focus wide angle and split photography meant I had to abandon any frustrations and try (and inevitably fail) for the hundredth time to get it right. This final shot is a culmination 25 hours over 4 nights of lying in darkness, covered in mud, waiting on nature's unpredictable elements to align. Time well spent? Absolutely.

Malls Mire, Glasgow, Scotland (MBY)

Olympus , OMD Em5 MKii, Olympus PT-EP13, Panasonic 8mm Fisheye, iso 1000, f16, 20s, 2x Sea and Sea YS-110a

Judges comment:

I honestly think that the appearance of this image will go down in the history of underwater photography as a defining moment. Perfect yet flawed, natural in urban. I think it is a masterpiece. Savour it.

Peter Rowlands

You have followed your dream for some time and all your hard work and cold nights have paid off. A nighttime city suburb with high rise flats, add to the mix a Common Frog. Perfectly illuminated not withstanding the light, the cold and most of all, creating a split image.

Martin Edge

A most fitting winner of our new My Backyard Award, introduced to show that underwater photography can still thrive when many photographers are forced to stay close to home. Even in the centre of the city of Glasgow, frogs and world class underwater photography can thrive.

Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year 2021



WINNER

'Aerial view of a crowded island in Guna Yala'

Karim Iliya (United States)

A tightly inhabited village off the coast of Panama in Guna Yala region serves as a microcosm reminder of how humans across the planet are consuming land and space at a rapid rate. Most of the Guna people live on these densely populated islands, catching fish and farming coconuts on nearby islands. The importance of human's relationship with nature and the need to protect it becomes very apparent when you look at our species from a bird's eye perspective and see how much space we take up. I had come to this region of Panama to photographing the art of making mola, the traditional clothing that the Guna people wear. While waiting on a boat I flew my drone over this island to get this aerial perspective and give more impact to the image than I could have shooting at sea level or from underwater.

Guna Yala, Panama

DJI Phantom 4 Pro, DJI Phantom 4 Pro, none, 20.7mm, iso 100, f/2.8, 1/500, none

Judges comment:

A stark visual reminder of how we humans over populate and totally develop land, then overfish the surrounding delicate environment. This image captures that unnatural and unsustainable imbalance perfectly.

Peter Rowlands

1) Wide angle

for wide angle images shot anywhere
in the world.
Open to all.

1) Wide angle



WINNER

'Sharks' Skylight'

Renee Capozzola (United States)

This image was taken in French Polynesia, which happens to be one of my very favorite places to photograph sharks. Here, there are strong legal protections in place for sharks, allowing them to thrive and help balance the marine ecosystem. During this visit to Moorea, French Polynesia, I spent several evenings in the shallows at sunset, hoping to capture something unique. Instead of focusing on split-level images as I often like to do, I decided to try something different. I envisioned and aimed to capture the sharks underwater with the sunset seen through Snell's window. It took many attempts, but on this one particular evening, the water was calm, the sunset was vibrant, and I got extremely lucky with the composition as well. Since many shark species are threatened with extinction throughout the world, it is my hope that images of these beautiful animals will help promote their conservation.

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A sunset ballet of reef sharks and sea birds in a tranquil corner of the Pacific Ocean is a richly deserved winner of the Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021. This is an image of hope, a glimpse of how the ocean can be when we give it a chance, thriving with spectacular life both below and above the surface.

Alex Mustard

1) Wide angle



RUNNER UP

'Gothic Chamber'

Martin Broen (United States)

The Riviera Maya in Mexico hosts the world's largest underground river systems filled with clear water, never-ending tunnels and amazing halls with decoration that can compete with the best gothic cathedrals of the world.

The challenge of capturing this beautiful hall in cenote Monkey Dust was not only the huge dimensions but the fact that it is pitch black.

This photo is a x6 shot horizontal panorama stitching captured at 1/15 sec handheld at the usable limit of the camera ISO and diaphragm wide open to create an 86mpx panorama. My aim was to capture the scale, the tridimensionality of it, the richness of the formations and their incredible textures.

Cenote Monkey Dust, Mexico

Sony, A7RIII, Nauticam NA-A7RIII, Canon 8-15mm at 15mm, iso 6400, f/4.5, 1/15, Big Blue 15000 lumen

Judges comment:

The very best cenote images often catch the judges' eyes in UPY but Martin's picture raises the bar significantly both in terms of jaw dropping beauty and for its technical achievement. This is a place few humans are capable of even reaching, so to get there and then produce a such a demanding piece of photography while in the darkness, deep underground and underwater is a stunning achievement.

Alex Mustard

1) Wide angle



THIRD

‘Jellyfish galore’

Oleg Gaponyuk (Russian Federation)

In March 2020, I flew to Palau for two weeks of diving. When I was there, the borders closed because of Covid-19, so I was able to fly back only after 3 months.

It was a good time. Dive sites where you could previously meet 50 people, I visited alone.

I have been to the jellyfish lake 4 times. Usually, a snorkeling session lasts 45 minutes due to the large number of tourists. But as I was alone, I could swim for 3-4 hours.

Before the first dive, the guide told me: swim to the center of the lake, there you will see jellyfish. In the center, I found only a dozen jellyfish and was upset.

The second time I took a drone with me and quickly flew around the entire lake. 2 million jellyfish, about which I read in Wikipedia, gathered in a small group near the shore at the far end of the lake, which was about 500 meters away.

I took the camera and swam. I had to work with fins for 20 minutes until I ended up in real jellyfish soup. That's where I shot this panorama.

Jellyfish Lake, Palau

Canon, EOS 5D Mk 1V, Nauticam, Canon EF 8-15mm, iso 800, f16, 1/125, 8 shot panorama

Judges comment:

A positive story to come out of the pandemic has produced a very well composed split level panorama.

Peter Rowlands

1) Wide angle



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Honu Sunburst'

Renee Capozzola (United States)

This image of three green sea turtles circling beneath the sun was captured in Maui, Hawaii near a known cleaning station where these turtles often congregate. On this particular morning, the water was clear and the sun's rays were perfect at a shallow depth, so I set my camera to a low ISO, high shutter speed, and small aperture, wanting to obtain a nice sunburst shot of a turtle. During this dive, I uncharacteristically only took a total of a dozen images or so, spending the majority of my time just watching the resident turtles nearby, not wanting to disturb them and hoping they would get into a nice formation or display an uncommon behavior. When I saw these three turtles starting to come together, I slowly approached them underneath making sure to not exhale any bubbles and waited for the exact moment to capture this unique composition.

Maui, Hawaii, United States

Canon, 5D Mark III, Nauticam, Sigma 15mm fisheye, iso 100, f14, 1/250, Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2's

Judges comment:

Such a beautiful image. It's the precise position of each individual turtle which grabs my attention. Each turtle is in such a position to bring about superb eye contact. The sun burst is bright but not over exposed in any way. One of my favourites.

Martin Edge

1) Wide angle

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'RED DOT'

Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

This Lion's mane jellyfish swam by an iceberg during a dive and I took the chance to integrate the jelly fish into the image to get a good contrast between the ice and the colorful animal.

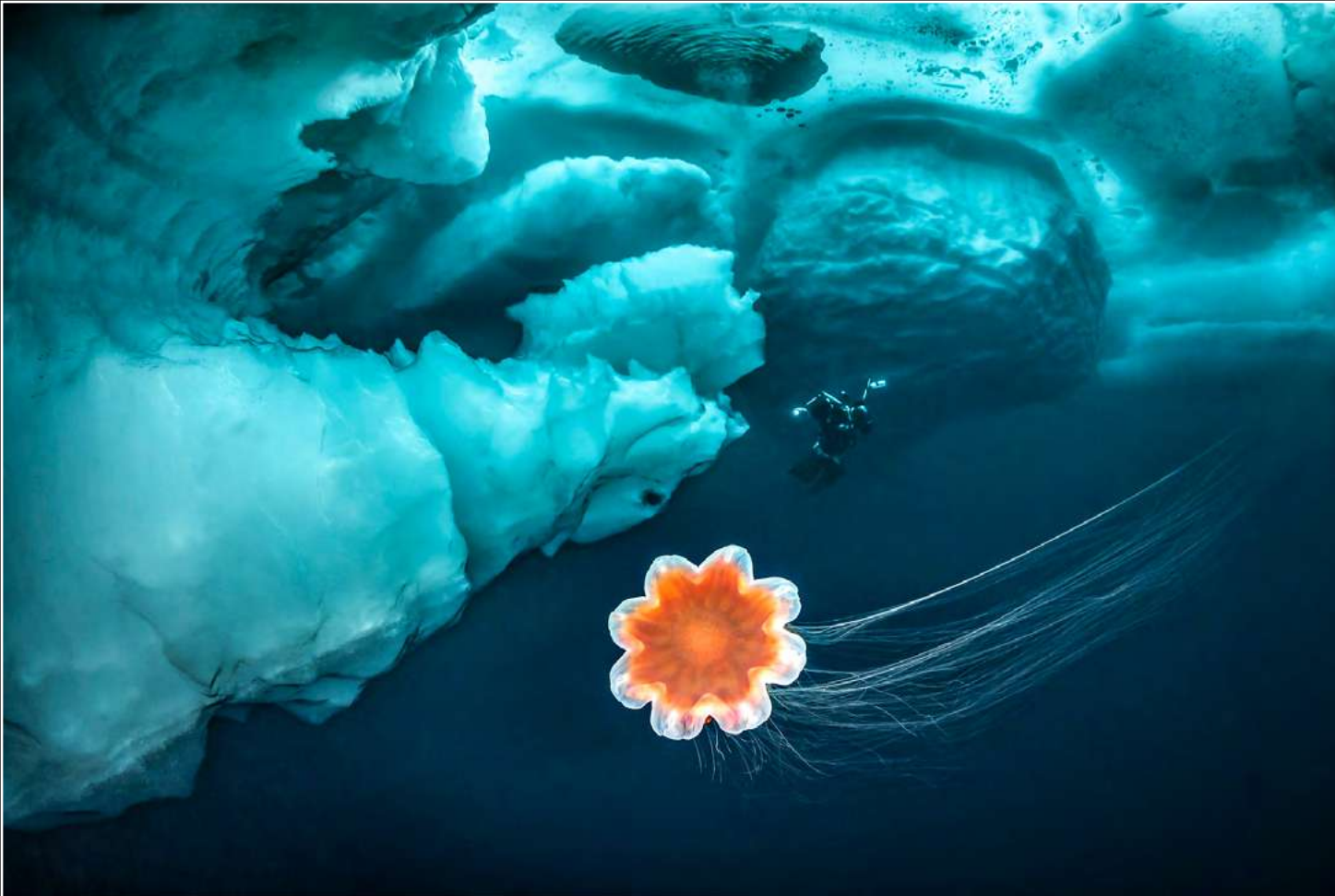
Tasiilaq Fjord, Greenland

Canon, EOS 1DX Mark II, SEACAM Silver, Canon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 250, 6.3, 1/80, SEACAM Seaflash 150D

Judges comment:

An otherworldly creature, completes this perfect composition of icebergs and diver. An incredible world that few people will ever see, captured in spectacular beauty and detail. The diver importantly adds depth to the image and also helps us get our bearings in this alien scene.

Alex Mustard



1) Wide angle

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Two Worlds'

Viktor Lyagushkin (Russian Federation)

A scuba diver descends on top of the Beluga Whale Rock covered with the seaweed.

White sea, Russia **(MBY)**

Nikon, D750, Subal, Nikkor 8-15/3,5-4,5 ED Fishye, iso 200, 9, 100, Big Blue Light

Judges comment:

I like the depth perspective in this image. The topside guy above, the diver beneath the ice and the kelp in the near foreground.

Martin Edge



1) Wide angle



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Descending from Above’

Celia Kujala (United States)

Juvenile Steller sea lions are curious and playful. When I was diving at Norris Rocks in British Columbia, I watched large groups of them appear seemingly out of nowhere. They are good at holding their breath but still need to breathe air and would often go to the surface for a breath as a group before descending again. One day I was observing the behavior of a group in the water and I realized I might have the opportunity to capture an image that I had dreamed of. In this moment, everything came together. I took this photo directly upward as they were descending toward me and was able to capture the group inside of Snell's window showcasing their curiosity and energy. Steller sea lions are listed as Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List. I hope this image inspires people to want to protect them.

Norris Rocks, Canada

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA-D500 , Tokina 10-17mm Fisheye Lens , iso 500, f/11, 1/250, Sea & Sea YS-D2J

Judges comment:

Curious, mischevious, boisterous; all at once. This was a unique image this year and I never tired of looking at it. A perfectly timed image which shouts ‘The boys are back in town!’

Peter Rowlands

1) Wide angle



COMMENDED

‘Beneath the Canopy’

Jon Anderson (United States)

Blue rockfish and giant kelp are two species more or less guaranteed at this particular shore dive in Monterey, that is if the conditions allow you to dive the site. The orientation of the beach exposes the site to incoming swells from the open ocean, often making it difficult or impossible to dive safely. Days when it is safe to dive, thick coastal fog often blocks out the sun almost entirely and nutrient rich upwellings reduce visibility casting a green haze into the water. On rare occasions, the stars align providing calm seas, outstanding visibility, and brilliant 3-dimensional sun beams that pierce the kelp canopy. These days the kelp forest becomes one of the most magical underwater environments on Earth. Focused on capturing the dramatic ambience of the stellar conditions, I forced myself to shut off the new strobes attached to my camera.

Monterey, California, USA **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA-D850, Nikon 16-35mm f/4.0, iso 800, f/11, 1/30, Natural light

Judges comment:

When the natural elements combine to our advantage we are treated to scenes of inspirational power. Nothing we could add in terms of additional light would help and the photographer wisely turned his strobes off. Sometimes less is more when you've got so much to begin with.

Peter Rowlands

1) Wide angle



COMMENDED & Third in My Backyard

‘Pink salmon make their way up river to spawn.’

Shane Gross (Canada)

I had an abstract “fill the frame with fish faces” image in mind. I sat in one spot in the chilly, flowing river waiting for the fish to change their opinion of me from bear to rock. It actually didn’t take that long. Then I kept waiting for the sun to go behind a cloud so it was dark enough to use a really slow shutter speed and wiggle the camera around until something looked pleasing. It was a ton of fun and hopefully if the salmon come back next year I can get an even better frame!

Vancouver Island, Canada **(MBY)**

Nikon, D500, Aquatica AD500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 50, 16, .8 sec, Sea&Sea YS-250

Judges comment:

UPY always gets a lot of salmon photos and many photographers experiment with long exposures in these dark waters. However, few shots create such a ghostly atmosphere of these fish swimming themselves upstream and to the point of exhaustion, before ending their lives spawning. Its an image that draws you in - the longer you look, the more you see.

Alex Mustard

1) Wide angle

COMMENDED

'Upside down'

Alvaro Herrero (Spain)

Sharing moments in the water with these giant beings is perhaps the most beautiful experience I have ever had. After spending 4 months in French Polynesia with these animals, I have learned a lot about the behaviour and biology of these beings, but what I have really learned from them is to be more humble. I wanted to convey in an image something that came to mind over and over again. The humanized idea that we have created of our world, being us the protagonists, but I really don't think that is the case. I wanted to turn everything around, take the lead from humanity and give it to nature. Another point of view in which our world is not the most important, but theirs.

I really believe that if we want to conserve nature we must change our selfish point of view, and change our way of thinking.

Mo'orea, French Polynesia

Nikon, D500, Isotta D500, Sigma 10-20 f4.5.6, iso 250, 14, 1/320, natural light

Judges comment:

I really like this image very much because I had the time to look and savour it. However, be aware that if it was projected in a slide show for example, it may not resonate as much as it does now.

Martin Edge



2) Macro

for close-up/macro images shot
anywhere in the world.
Open to all.

2) Macro

WINNER

'Pontohi pigmy seahorse'
Galice Hoarau (Norway)

Pontohi pygmy seahorse (Hippocampus pontohi) is one of the smallest and most recently discovered seahorses. They usually live on reef walls and can be hard to find. We had found two during the morning dive so I decided to dedicate the afternoon to getting a backlit photo. We were lucky to find this particular individual hanging out from the wall, allowing the use of a snoot to backlight it with the help of Rando, my dive guide. After setting up the camera and strobe we had to wait for it to get used to us and finally turn toward the camera for a brief moment.

Siladen, Indonesia

Olympus , E-M1 II, Nauticam, 60mm macro, iso 200, f22, 1/160, Backscatter mini flash + snoot

Judges comment:

This backlight image of a very small pygmy sea horse is superb. The composition is so strong, just a hint of the branch and nothing more. Snooting this particular image is ideal. It's bright within the pygmy itself but low key and subtle. The stark black background makes this image sing so loudly. Deserved winner of the macro category.

Martin Edge



2) Macro

RUNNER UP

'Larval Lionfish'

Steven Kovacs (United States)

Drifting near the surface at night in over 700 feet of water, I came across this one inch larval Lionfish off the coast of Florida during a blackwater dive. In the Atlantic Ocean, Lionfish are an invasive species and, unfortunately, finding the pelagic larvae is an all too common occurrence during these dives. This individual was exhibiting more beautiful coloration than usual and so I set out to try and capture its fins in full display. It's a challenging task, not only because they shun bright lights and usually try to flee, but also because they fully flare their fins in a defensive posture very sporadically and only for brief moments of time. I was very fortunate to be able to capture this particular individual in all its glory.

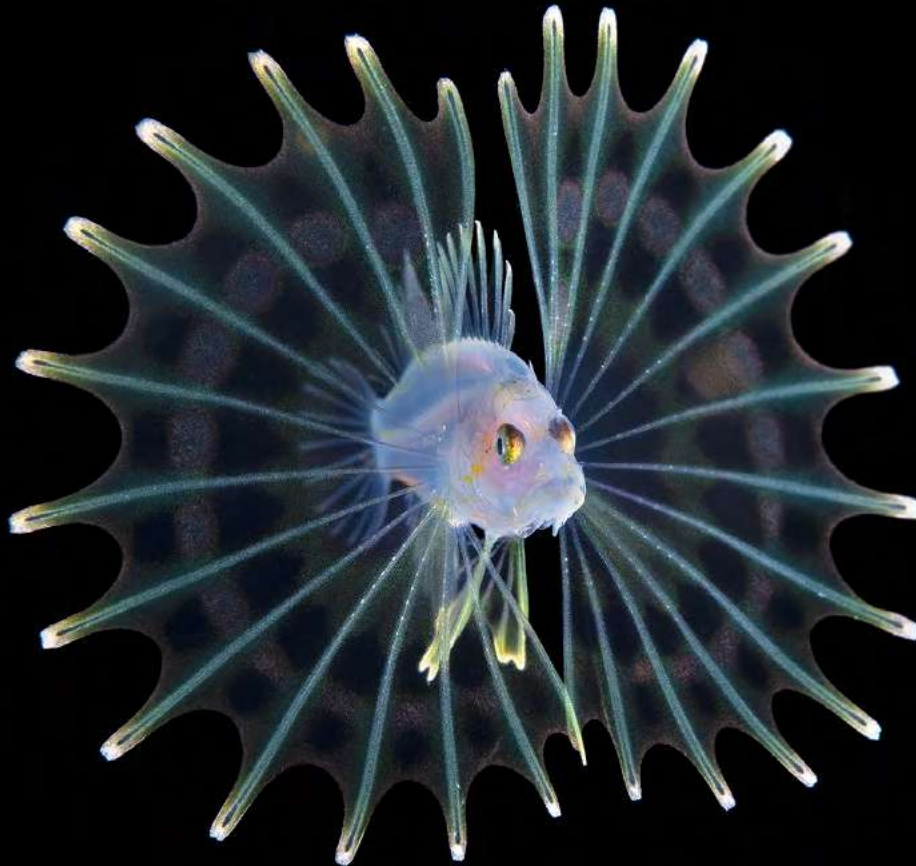
Palm Beach, Florida, United States

Nikon, D500, Ikelite, 60mm macro, iso 250, f/25, 1/350, dual Ikelite DS160 strobes

Judges comment:

They may be an invasive species in the Atlantic Ocean but they do make for arresting images and very strong contenders in competitions.

Peter Rowlands



2) Macro

THIRD

'Dream ship'
chien-ting hou (China)

When I dived at night and saw this jellyfish it looked very cute. It looked like an alien creature had appeared in front of me. It has a lot of tentacles so sometimes looks very messy. But I really wanted to take a picture of his tentacles that are vertical, so I waited for a while and finally took the picture, but when I replayed the picture, I found two bugs on it's body. They were like taking a spaceship to go traveling in space.

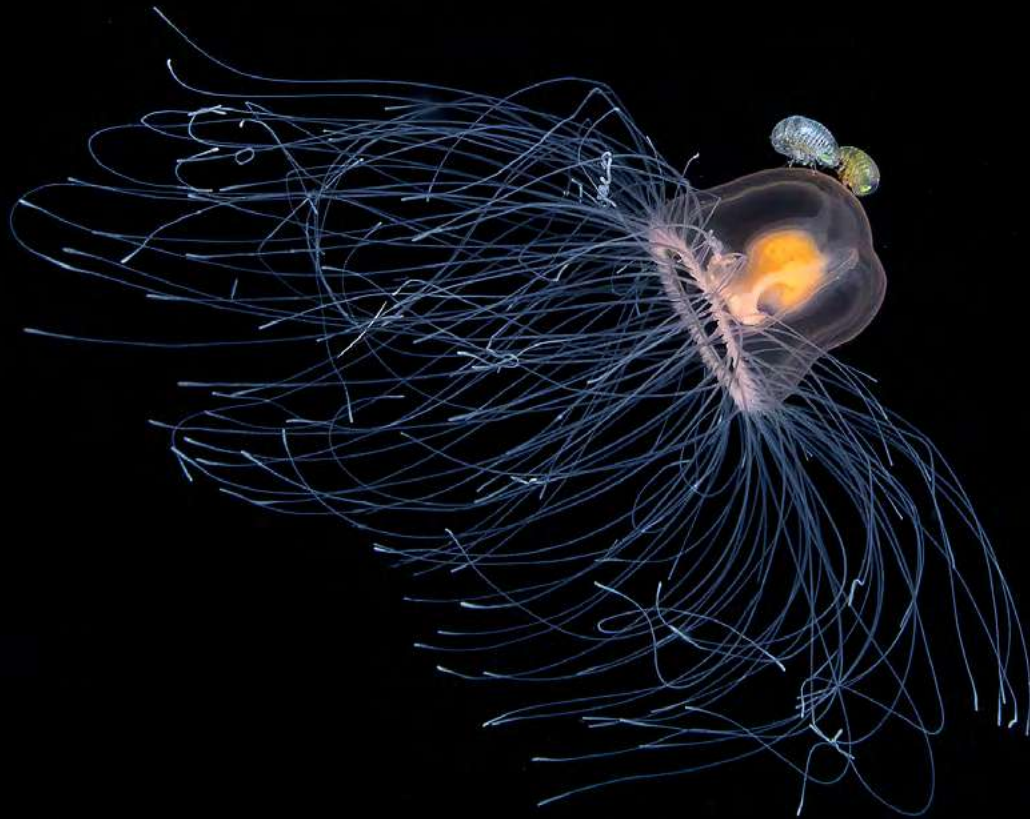
Anilao, Philippines

Canon , 5D Mark IV, Nauticam NA 5DIV, SIGMA MACRO 50mm, iso 400, f/25, 1/200, INON Z-240

Judges comment:

Blackwater images abound and for all the right reasons but in competitions we are always looking for that something extra. This image, with it's two 'hitchikers,' fitted the bill perfectly.

Peter Rowlands



2) Macro



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Xenia pipehorse’

Dr Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)

Discovered by Simon Buxton and the amazing guides of NAD Lembeh, this tiny piece of spaghetti with eyes was moving around the patch of Xenia coral heads. I followed him around for half an hour, watching his moves until he was relaxed with my presence and let me take this photo. I was hoping to isolate him away from the coral outcrops and then get some nice eye contact to try to bring out the personality of the lovely, cute little critter.

Opposite NAD resort , Indonesia

Nikon, D500, Nauticam, 105mm and Nauticam SMC-1, iso 400, F29, 1/200, Retra Flash

Judges comment:

Too many macro photographers obsess about the magnification, trying to reproduce the subject as large as possible in the frame. This photo exceeds them, with an elegant composition, with the timid, but curious character of pipefish balanced against the specialist habitat of coral polyps.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Friend of a feather’

James Emery (Indonesia)

Whilst on assignment in November 2020 I was blessed with the opportunity to return to Lembah, Indonesia testing out the Sony a7siii and the new Backscatter colour filter system. I was looking for suitable subjects I could add a splash of colour to whilst at the same time trying to be subtle in my approach. For days I had this vision emphasizing the natural colours of a Sea pen using the soft pink colour filter on the Backscatter MF-1. I expected to shoot a Porcelain Crab or a Shrimp but was surprised by this cute juvenile File Fish taking shelter. I took advantage of the opportunity and used another MF-1 with the optical snoot to expose the File Fish so that it retained its natural colours, whilst leaving the Sea pen in pink.

Lembah Strait, Indonesia **(MBY)**

Sony, a7siii, Nauticam NA A7Siii, Sony 90mm, iso 500, f10, 1/250, Backscatter MF-1 with optical snoot, colour filter

Judges comment:

Subtle, unusual lighting will always catch our eye especially when both subjects work well together. For once, subtle is the name of the game.

Peter Rowlands

2) Macro

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Rainbow Angel'

Viktor Lyagushkin (Russian Federation)

Sea Angel (Clione limacina) swims near the surface of the water on the white sea. The rays of the setting sun refracting in the waves of the White Sea paint the translucent body of the mollusk in the colors of the spectrum.

White sea, Russia **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Subal, Nikkor 8-15/3,5-4,5 ED
Fishye, iso 200, 16, 800, Big Blue Light

Judges comment:

A beautiful creature photographed up close with an artists delicate touch. Most would have filled the subject with flash, but Viktor allowed the ambient light to dominate and captured the mesmerising refracted light patterns dancing through the angel's body.

Alex Mustard



2) Macro



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Swell Shark Embryo’

Joel Wilson (United States)

The Swell Shark is oviparous, so it lays eggs as part of its reproduction process. These eggs are nearly translucent when they are laid and then become more opaque throughout the gestation process. In order to get this shot I had to backlight the egg just the right amount so as to show the embryo while trying not to brighten the egg case it was encapsulated in. It took a while as my focus constantly picked up light from the egg case, blurring the embryo. Patience and steady hands paid off and I was rewarded with this remarkable shot.

Catalina Island, USA **(MBY)**

Panasonic, GH5, Nauticam NA GH5, Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 60mm f/2.8 Macro Lens, iso 400, f/5, 1/250, Light and Motion Sola Dive 1200

Judges comment:

An unborn shark is the star of this picture, fabulously and creatively revealed by Joel, to create a real stand out image in this competitive category.

Alex Mustard

2) Macro



COMMENDED

'Pineapplefish vision'

Nicolas Remy (Australia)

The rare pineapplefish has a vibrant yellow colour and a distinctive 'armour' making it a popular sight for underwater nature lovers. Because it lives under rock ledges, the pineapplefish is mostly photographed on a black background. I thought a colourful background would better complement its golden robe, with some texture to resonate with its very graphic scales. I knew this could be achieved with a slow shutter speed, creating 'waves' by moving the camera, and using a snoot to colour-paint the fish. We located an approachable pineapplefish on one of Sydney's shore dive sites and I just had to wait for the right weather - a rainy, dark day that would make long-exposures more feasible. What I didn't plan was the neighboring urchin, which produced these pleasing lines on the left!

Clifton Gardens, Sydney, Australia **(MBY)**

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA-D500, Nikon 60mm AF-S micro, iso 100, f/11, 0.8sec, One Backscatter MF1 flash & snoot

Judges comment:

Artistic vision, detailed planning, the right fish, ideal weather, perfect photographic execution and a stroke of luck. The simple recipe for producing a UPY winner and a stunning underwater photograph!

Alex Mustard

2) Macro



COMMEDED

'Hide'

yung-sen wu (Taiwan)

I have always been interested in clean images so, when opportunities arise, you have to grasp them. After another 2 days of observation, I decided to start taking pictures of this hiding and peeking, anemonefish. It's a very shy fish. It's difficult to shoot. You must grasp the best time, wait patiently, and with luck, I think this is the reason I got this photo.

Lanyu, Taiwan **(MBY)**

SONY , ILCE-7RM4, Seacam silver Sony A7r mark IV, FE 90mm F2.8 Macro G, iso 100, F13, 1/100, Seacam 160Dx2

Judges comment:

I really like the soft tones of the Nemo but I would have liked to have seen a small crop on the left hand side of the image in order to bring the shape of the frame into a vertical instead of a square. In this way the nemo would have been more prominent in the image.

Martin Edge

2) Macro

COMMEDED

‘The Fastest Nudy’

Fabio Lardino (Italy)

Thanks to the restrictions of the Covid emergency, I was able to very well explore a dive site that many have underestimated. It is actually very interesting for underwater photography. One of the most common subjects is Felimida luteorosea. As a fan of the use of the snoot, I wanted to photograph it in a different way than usual. Using the slow sync technique, I enjoyed making a very slow animal look fast.

Sistiana (Trieste Gulf), Italy **(MBY)**

Nikon, D 850, Hugyfot HFN-D850, Micro Nikkor AFS 40mm f.2.8 + TC Kenko 1,4x, iso 200, f.29, 1/13, OneUW 160x and

Judges comment:

I was drawn to this image immediately and it never faded with repeat viewing. It's a great and very effective use of a technique to make 'a tortoise seem more like a hare!' I thought of a Formula One car when I first saw it :-)

Peter Rowlands



3) Wrecks

for wide angle to macro images shot on wrecks. The wreck can be the main subject, or simply the setting for a marine life, macro or diver photograph. Photos can be taken anywhere in the world. Open to all.

3) Wrecks

WINNER

‘BOWLANDER’

Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

Due to bad weather at Tiger Beach and in Bimini we had to look for shelter near Nassau in the Bahamas and do some regular dives. This wreck was totally new to me and a big surprise when we descended as the bow is hanging almost completely over a sandy overhang.

Nassau, Bahamas

Canon, EOS 1DX Mark II, SEACAM Silver, Canon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 200, 7.1, 1/160, SEACAM Seaflash 150D

Judges comment:

Images leap out for several reasons; David and Goliath scale, magnitude and unambiguity to name three and this image has all of those and more. If you want to know the secret formula for a classic wreck shot, look no further.

Peter Rowlands



3) Wrecks

RUNNER UP

'Reclaimed by the Ocean'

Grant Thomas (United Kingdom)

It was late in the day and the sun was setting over the arid landscape of Jordan's southern most city, Aqaba. Myself and a group of underwater photographers were all waiting eagerly for night time to come so that we could enter the water and begin to explore the huge array of military hardware which has been purposely sunk for divers to enjoy. We decided to use a combination of powerful off-camera lights to 'spot light' the tank (M42 duster) and back light a diver, which helped eliminate any distracting elements in the background. Creating this image was a team effort and I have to say a huge thank you to the entire Diverse Divers team for making it happen.

Aqaba, Jordan

Canon, 5d mkiv, Ikelite housing, Canon 8 - 15mm fisheye , iso 2000, f/8.0, 1/30, Combination of different video lights

Judges comment:

This is one of my most favourite photographs of the entire competition. As soon as I saw this shot I was mesmerised by the complexity of the lighting, the staging and just about everything else. To be able to set this up late in the day is nothing short of amazing.

Martin Edge



3) Wrecks

THIRD

'Golden Hour at the Georgios'
Renee Capozzola (United States)

This split shot of the Georgios shipwreck was taken in Neom, Saudi Arabia along the Gulf of Aqaba in the Red Sea. In 1978, this large cargo ship originally from England became stranded on a shallow coral reef at night and then suffered from a large fire. Now serving as an artificial reef for many marine organisms, this wreck sits halfway out of the water on the bow side and in roughly 80 feet of water on the stern side. Some locals refer to this site as the "Saudi Titanic." To achieve this photo, I used a very small aperture, an extremely wide rectilinear lens at 12mm, a lower ISO, and strobes to light the coral underwater.

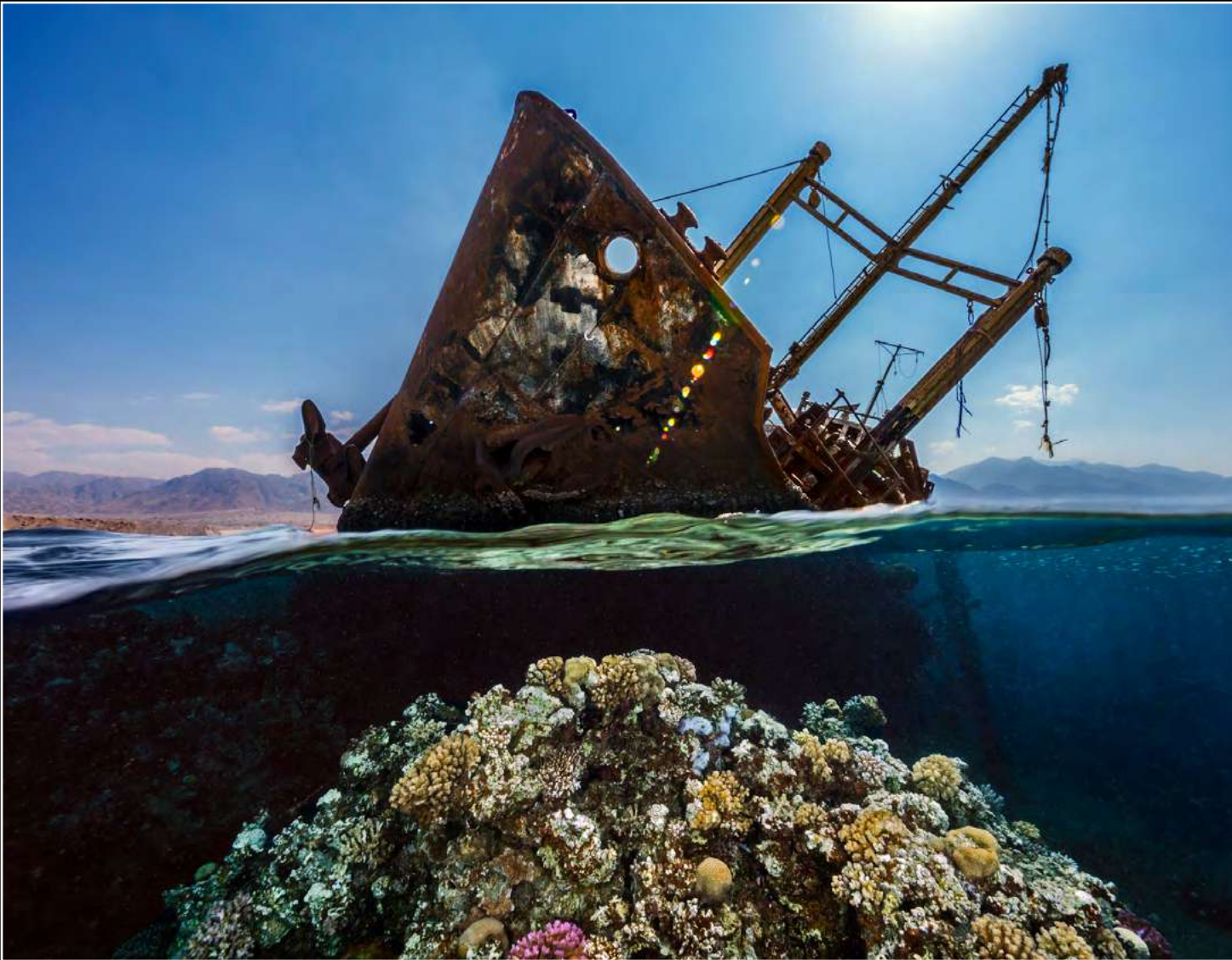
Neom, Saudi Arabia

Canon, 5D Mark III, Nauticam, Canon 11-24mm, iso 200, f20, 1/160, Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2's

Judges comment:

The angular nature of the semi-silhouetted wreck contrasts brilliantly with curve of the colourful coral reef that claimed it. A split level image that is not only technically perfect, but really tells a story through both halves of the frame.

Alex Mustard



3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘VERTIGO’

Tobias Friedrich (Germany)

This is a vertical panoramic shot of the engine room of the Ghiannis D at Abu Nuhas in Egypt. I was trying around with different angles on panoramic shots inside this wreck and the vertical was the best to show the huge chimney looking area.

Ghiannis D., Abu Nuhas, Egypt

Canon, EOS 1DX Mark II, SEACAM Silver, Canon 8-15mm Fisheye, iso 2000, 4, 1/80, SEACAM Seaflash, KELDAN & SeaDragon Videolights

Judges comment:

It was the tight composition of this image which drew me to it in the very first round of judging. It's moody, forboding with just a hint of blue water at the top of the frame.

Martin Edge

3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Very Wrecked’

Pekka Tuuri (Finland)

In the murky waters of Finland it is really a struggle to find clear water to shoot wide angle. In Kaatiala Mine in wintertime, under the ice cover one can find such water. I had photographed this car wreck several times before. It is very unimpressive! I got an idea to photograph the car as if it were on fire. Lots of light and preferably lots of divers, too. I recruited volunteers and everybody said yes. We planned the photo at the surface and photographed the plan. Everybody did their part. With the help of my can-do friends an unimpressive car wreck turned into a rather impressive photo! And I will go back there. I already have a couple of new ideas....

Kaatiala Mine, Finland

Canon, 5D M3, Subal, 15 mm, iso 1000, 2.8, 1/50, Ambient

Judges comment:

This was a particularly stand out image for me and more so each time it came on the screen. The lighting idea is different, graphically simple and visually direct. It makes a very ordinary subject extraordinary.

Peter Rowlands

3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘World War One Submarine U89’

Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom)

This image is a 4 shot panorama. I was lucky enough to dive this wreck in summer 2018, conditions were very good with great visibility. After spending time around the wreck I went off onto the 60m sea bed at some way from the submarine to execute a panorama hoping it would stitch together. I was delighted when I found that the process worked. U89 was sunk when it was rammed by HMS Roxburgh on 12th February 1918, all lives were lost on the submarine. It is always sobering to dive a wreck such as this where the crew remain entombed to this day.

24miles North of Malin Head, Donegal, Ireland, Ireland

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm @ 10mm, iso 8000, f9, 1/40, none

Judges comment:

Deep wreck photography is a hugely challenging branch of underwater photography, and a few years ago any images from these pristine sites was celebrated. Now photographers are visiting these depths with lofty photographic ambitions and the results, like this, are jaw-dropping.

Alex Mustard

3) Wrecks



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Stern of HMS Audacious’

Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom)

This is a view of the stern of the Dreadnought Battleship HMS Audacious. She was lost on 27th October 1914 to a mine laid by the SS Berlin. No lives were lost during the sinking and it took many hours for the 182.2 m (597 ft 9 in) long ship to finally slip beneath the waves. When she did she capsized and now lies upside down at a depth of 64m(210ft), her two impressive rudders can be seen above the hull. There were a number of photographers on this dive and videolights were placed in several locations lighting up the wreck to give is a more defined view. I was fortunate to capture this scene as divers were scooting around the wreck, helping to give scale to the view.

Wreck of HMS Audacious, 17miles NE of Tory Island off the Donegal coast, Ireland

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA D500, Nikon 10.5mm, iso 5000, f7.1, 1/40, Off board video lights, no strobes.

Judges comment:

Transformed by the additional lighting and complimented by three perfectly placed divers, this would have been difficult to co-ordinate at 20 metres, let alone 64. Big achievement, big wreck, big image.

Peter Rowlands

3) Wrecks



COMMENDED

'D/S Tyrifjord'
Pekka Tuuri (Finland)

There are many world class wrecks in Gulen, Norway. One of the best ones is D/S Tyrifjord. It went down in an Allied bombing raid in 1944. I had seen pictures taken on the wreck and I was fascinated by the wheel which has a lot of growth on it. My group was able to dive just once on the wreck. We concentrated only on the wheel and came back with a few nice pictures. Once again the approach, plan the photograph beforehand and photograph the plan, bore fruit. I was in the middle of the project ("13 Wheels Lost at Sea") during which I photographed 20 wrecks with wheels at different depths. I was very happy to be able to include D/S Tyrifjord among the 13 wheels.

Gulen, Norway

Canon, 5D M3, Subal, 15 mm, iso 320, 6.3, 1/50, Ambient, torches

Judges comment:

The foreground lighting and composition contribute so much to the effect of this image without distracting the eye from the backlit wheel. This image has tremendous atmosphere, subtlety and clarity of purpose.

Peter Rowlands

3) Wrecks



COMMENDED

'Lift off'

Grant Thomas (United Kingdom)

The underwater military museum in Aqaba, Jordan, provides an array of large military hardware for divers to explore. Myself and a group of underwater photographers set out to create a unique collection of images to show off this fascinating new concept. In this particular shot we decided to use an off camera video light to illuminate the cockpit of the Cobra helicopter and add an extra dimension to the image. The addition of talented freediver, Lluís Masuet, gives the viewer a sense of scale and also a relatable human element. Creating this image was a team effort and I have to say a huge thank you to the entire Diverse Divers team for making it possible.

Aqaba, Jordan

Canon, 5d mkiv, Ikelite housing, Canon 8 - 15mm fisheye , iso 400, f/13, 1/125, Single Keldan video light for off camera lighting

Judges comment:

The composition of this sunken cobra helicopter is perfect. It helps the eye of the viewer to easily recognise the features. The off camera video light within the cockpit also works well. Not too bright that it is over exposed but just enough to pull the viewer back to the cockpit. The free diver adds to a sense of scale which draws you to a hint of the surface above. The only distraction to my eye is the small rock at bottom left. I think that could have been removed.

Martin Edge

3) Wrecks



COMMENDED

'On the starting grid'

Fabrice Dudenhofer (France)

I had in mind this photo of three Fiat 1100 Lunga cars lined up on the starting grid in mind long before I landed in Sudan. Inspired by the work of great photographers on the SS Thistlegorm I really wanted to do something similar with Umbria to mark the 80th anniversary of the wreck celebrated in 2020.

I used video lights to illuminate the interior of cars and my strobes for the hoods. Setting up the lights took a bit of time because the boat lies on its side which does not facilitate movements in the hold and although Umbria is less dived than SS Thistlegorm, I waited to be alone.

Umbria wreck, Sudan

Olympus, OM-D E-M1 Mark II, Isotta EM1-MII, Olympus M.Zuiko Digital ED 8mm f1.8 Fisheye Pro , iso 640, f/2.8, 1/25, Retra strobes and Orion videolights

Judges comment:

Your lighting is just superb from both inside and outside of the wreck. I like the way you have left just enough dead space across the bottom of the frame and also the stanchion on the left hand side of the frame. The illumination inside the interior is also consistent. Very well done.

Martin Edge

4) Behaviour

for wide angle to close-up and macro images showing interesting natural behaviour of underwater life. These images can be shot anywhere in the world. Open to all

4) Behaviour



WINNER

‘A striped marlin in a high speed hunt in Mexico’

Karim Iliya (United States)

This is a terrifying scene for the small fish, fleeing for their lives as a striped marlin hunts them. The slightest mistake means life or death. There are often birds hunting from above and sometimes a dozen other marlin and sea lions attacking from all sides. Marlin are one of the fastest fish in the sea, a terrifying predator for a small fish in the great blue desert. I went to Mexico to document these feeding frenzies but was not expecting such a fast paced hunt, almost too fast for my brain to process. For a brief moment, this scene unfolded before me and I had to rely on all my instincts and practice underwater to take this photo. I used natural light and stayed on the periphery of the bait-ball so as to try and minimize disturbance. Watching wild animals hunt is one of the greatest spectacles in nature.

San Carlos, Baja, California, Mexico

Canon, 1D X Mark II, Nauticam, 16-35mm f2.8L, iso 1250, f/5, 1/800, None

Judges comment:

Most bait ball images are taken from further back but this one, bang in the middle and in your face, is amazing and strikingly different. The fish's eyes seem even wider open than normal. No wonder!

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



RUNNER UP

‘Face to face’

JingGong Zhang (China)

This is a picture of blenny in a fight. It is a species of chaenopsid blenny found around Japan and South Korea. Its most distinctive feature is its very cool hairstyle, which is often referred to as Punk Blenny or Mohican Blenny. In fact, this kind of Blenny fight scene is very rare because they usually just stay in their lair and don't interact with other individuals. But during the breeding season, if an area is too densely populated, the blenny will engage in fierce fights for a mate, and these fights are often quickly settled.

Blenny is one of my favorite projects. From getting information to the long waiting and searching, it took me about three years intermittently to shoot this scene. I would like to thank my Japanese friends who have helped me in this process. At the same time, I am very honored to share this charming moment.

Minabe, Wakayama, Japan

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 105mm macro, iso 320, f/22, 1/250, Retra Flash PRO with Retra LSD

Judges comment:

The dedication you put into this project is commendable. The composition of the two blenny and the peak of the action are amazing. The black background sets off the drama, it would never have worked if it was any other back ground colour.

Martin Edge

4) Behaviour

THIRD

'Milk feeding'

Mike Korostelev (Russian Federation)

On this day a family of 13 Sperm Whales allowed me to stay with them the whole day. It is a big honour for this human to be with whales in their habitat in the ocean. These whales probably remember whaling years ago but they forgive us. At the end of the day one mother starts to feed her calf just meters from me. I froze and didn't move. It was incredible to see such a private moment.

Indian Ocean, Indian Ocean

Canon , 5D Mark IV, SeaCam, canon 8-15mm 4f l fisheye, iso 1000, f/4, 1/640, No

Judges comment:

An image can take you there visually but it's difficult to convey the physical emotions which the underwater photographer must have felt. All I can say is that I wished I could have been there to experience it too :-)

Peter Rowlands



4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'The Last Waltz'

Ralph Pace (United States)

Market squid (Loligo doryteuthis) mate and lay eggs before dying in Monterey, California. As we swam out to our dive site, comet Neowise danced brilliantly to the west, the Milky Way illuminated the east and the water flashed electric blue with bioluminescence. The connection to the cosmos was strong but the alien like squid of the deep, in their last dance before dying and joining the heavens, was what we were chasing.

Squid runs can often feel chaotic and rhythmic at the same time as thousands of squid dart around looking for mates and laying eggs. With everything revolving around the egg mats they make, you can easily be engulfed in a highway of these alien-like creatures. Using a slower shutter speed, I was hoping to convey the energy felt while diving with these remarkable animals.

Squid runs always feel foreign to me as a highway of squid zip dance.

Monastery Beach, Monterey, CA. , USA **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, 28-70, iso 125, f/16, .6 sec, Sea and Sea YS-250

Judges comment:

Action, drama, behaviour! This huge spawning aggregation of squid is a riot of writhing bodies and arms. The long exposure, balanced against the underwater lights adds texture and energy to the image, taking us to the heart of the action.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Wolfish nest'

Galice Hoarau (Norway)

Parelius, the wolfish dad is guarding his eggs. The male wolfish guards the nest during the whole winter. Eggs were laid mid November and should hatch by the end of April. Parelius is one of the four wolfish we found with eggs at our house reef, Saltbrygga in Saltstraumen. All carry names from local characters. Parelius' nest is the deepest, at 40m but also the most accessible to photographers. We have been visiting regularly and the wolfish are now used to the divers coming to check on the next generation.

Saltstraumen , Norway **(MBY)**

olympus , e-M1 II, Nauticam, 30mm macro + MWL, iso 200, f22, 1/200, 2 Inon Z330

Judges comment:

Great behaviour, even better photograph. People don't expect to see tender parental care from fish, especially ugly beasts like the wolfish. A fantastic glimpse into life in the ocean.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Barrel sponge spawning beneath mangroves’

Alex Lindbloom (Indonesia)

Having spent years diving this famous mangrove site as the liveaboard photographer, on this particular day I took a little detour from the normal route in search of something new. As this network of mangroves is quite large it didn't take long to find an area free from the dive groups and a nice coral arrangement backlit with the celestial lighting. As I was getting my settings dialed in this sponge suddenly started to spawn. I sort of panicked as I knew this was a unique encounter and I had no idea how to light this unusual scene with the 'smoke' and the dramatic lighting coming from behind, but as it turns out that by just having both strobes placed on either side of the camera it worked just fine. I only managed to get a few good frames from this encounter before the spawning stopped entirely.

Mangrove Ridge, Indonesia

Canon , 7D, Nauticam NA7D, Tokina 10-17mm Fisheye, iso 320, 10, 1/125, Inon Z-220 x2

Judges comment:

Combining peak of the action behaviour with a joyous sunburst lifted this image and proves that even comparatively inanimate subjects can behave impressively.

Peter Rowlands

4) Behaviour



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Embrace’

João Rodrigues (Portugal)

In the gloomy waters of a peculiar valley, a couple of Iberian ribbed newt (Pleurodeles waltl) swim among the vegetation in post mating embrace. I had waited 5 years to dive in the Sea of Minde, which only floods like this after extreme rains cause the underground rivers of the Aire and Candeeiros mountains to flood. Only then could I swim through the forest. This photograph was taken in a moment of pure chance. While documenting the submerged trees, I was surprised when this couple of animals emerged from a tangle of branches where it was camouflaged, to give me the opportunity to quickly adjust my settings and press my shutter button twice, until they disappeared in the shadows of dense vegetation. This photo was captured during an assignment for National Geographic Portugal.

Minde, Portugal

Canon, Canon EOS 5D Mark IV, Aquatica A5DIV, Tokina AT-X 107 AF DX NH Fisheye 10-17mm f/3.5-4.5, iso 320, f/13, 1/200, 2 x Inon Z-330

Judges comment:

One of my favourite images from the contest. The atmosphere and light feel like a winter evening walk through the forest, but only when you notice the mating newts do you realise that the entire scene is underwater.

Alex Mustard

4) Behaviour



COMMENDED

‘Mating at the Cleaning Station’
Renee Capozzola (United States)

In Hawaii, sea turtles are legally protected so they thrive in the marine environment. These turtles can also be regularly found at known underwater cleaning stations where yellow or black tang fish remove parasites from their shells or skin. On this particular morning, I was photographing a green sea turtle getting groomed by a number of black tangs when all of a sudden, another turtle landed on its back and they started to mate. To my amusement, one of the black tangs didn't seem to notice or care, continuing to clean the turtle during this act while the rest of the tangs swam away!

Maui, Hawaii, USA

Canon, 5D Mark III, Nauticam, Sigma 15mm fisheye, iso 200, f11, 1/200, Dual Sea & Sea YS-D2's

Judges comment:

Wonderful behaviour, excellent exposure with a blue water background to match. It's a very tight fit but the author has made full use of the space.

Martin Edge

4) Behaviour

COMMENDED

'Orcas predating a thresher shark'
Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

We were looking for cetaceans and pelagic life in the Cortez Sea, close to Cerralvo island (la ventana), when we spotted a group of Orcas, when we jumped with them we saw that they were predating on a thresher shark, something that hasn't been seen much, indeed an interesting behaviour to see. After a few minutes with them they left with their prey. It was a crazy experience.

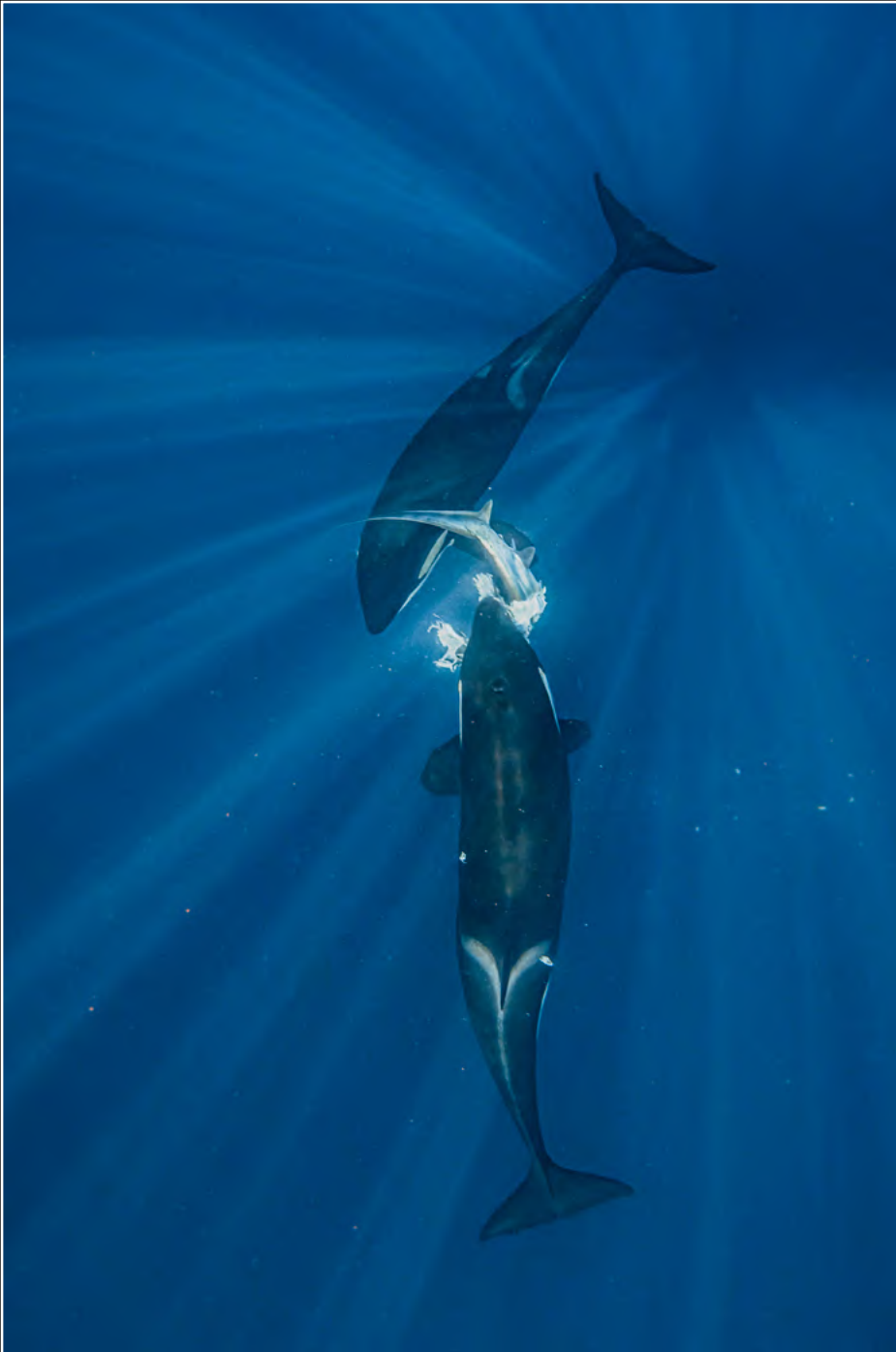
La Paz, Mexico, Spain

Nikon, d850, Isotta D850, 8-15 mm nikon, iso 250, F/8, 1/200, None

Judges comment:

What makes this so dynamic for me is the sun shafts which have a sense of illuminating the stage. It's a particular moody and sad image all at the same time.

Martin Edge





COMMENDED

'The next generation'

Tammy Gibbs (Australia)

*This summer, I resurrected my obsession from a few years ago of capturing our endemic seahorses (West Australian Seahorse, *Hippocampus subelongatus*) giving birth at night. My local jetty is a 'sure bet' to find seahorses and during the summer they pair up to breed, not moving too far from their chosen territory. Over several weeks, I headed down to the jetty after work to see if I could again witness this remarkable event. I was super lucky, scoring births three dives in a row! For this shot, I angled myself to the side of the dad seahorse so I could photograph the unfurling babies in the clear black water. I feel so privileged to be able to witness the amazement of nature in my own backyard.*

Cockburn Sound, Perth, Australia **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam NA D850, 60mm macro, iso 320, f/13, 1/250, Inon Z240 x2

Judges comment:

Well framed with perfect eye contact and a complimentary background; all of the correct decisions about angle, lighting and timing make for a perfect behaviour shot.

Peter Rowlands

5) Portraits

for wide angle to close-up and macro images depicting a sense of character of the chosen subject. These images can be shot anywhere in the world. Open to all.

5) Portraits

WINNER

'Keeper Of The Seven Keys'
Ryohei Ito (Japan)

As the Asian sheepshead wrasse grows older, it changes sex from female to male and at the same time it develops a large lump on its head. I thought about the lighting and composition so that the image of the bump and the powerful face could be conveyed, and challenged many times. He lives in a shrine under the water and looks just like a guardian deity.

I would like to thank my teacher, Keigo Kawamura, for teaching me how to take underwater pictures, and Hiroyuki Arakawa who guided me.

Tateyama , Chiba Prefecture, Japan **(MBY)**

Canon, 5D Mark4, SEA & SEA MDX-5D MARK 4,
EF8-15mm F4L fisheye USM, iso 200, f22, 1/200,
RETRA FLASH PRO x2

Judges comment:

A subject may have natural visual character, like a caricature, but it is not enough for a competition winner. The lighting and composition lifted this portrait up and up the ranking each time we viewed it. A worthy winner.

Peter Rowlands



5) Portraits

RUNNER UP

'Japanese manefish'

Keigo Kawamura (Japan)

Japanese manefish is not a fish that can be found by looking for it. It can only be encountered by diving when a perfect tide brings them close to shore. I have dived for 20 years and I took this picture when we met for the first time. Japanese manefish juveniles have mirror-like skin and have a glassy, crystal clear body, so I chose to light it from the back to reveal these characteristics.

Ose, Japan

Canon, 5DsR, Zillion ZAP-5DsR, EF24-70mm F4L IS USM, iso 400, f/22, 1/200, Sea&Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

An extraordinary fish, a rarely seen character of the deep, exquisitely photographed for our eyes to feast on. A beautiful picture.

Alex Mustard



5) Portraits

THIRD

'French Angel'

Michael Gallagher (United Kingdom)

I took this portrait of a gorgeous French Angelfish whilst scuba diving at the legendary Salt Pier in Bonaire in the Caribbean. Luckily for me, two key elements combined together so that I could snap this intimate portrait of one of my favourite fish - firstly, my subject was somewhat familiar with divers already and not afraid to face the camera, and secondly, I was able to exploit the shadows under the pier itself to create a dark background which helped highlight the exceptional beauty of this particular fish.

Salt Pier, Bonaire

Canon, 5D3, Hugyfot, Canon 2.8f IS 100mm Macro Lens, iso 400, f16, 1/200s, 2 x Inon Z240 strobes

Judges comment:

Superb facial contact with excellent portrait eyes. Notice the two yellow fins just behind and either side of each other. Perfect placement in every way.

Martin Edge



5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Suprised’

Filip Staes (Belgium)

I spent several hours photographing these funny looking shannies, also known as smooth blennies or common blennies during the Open Belgian Championship of underwater photography last september. This species can stay out of water sheltering under rocks or seaweeds so we have to dive at high tide to find them in shallow water. They are very curious but also move very quickly so you need a lot of patience to get them right in your frame. The photo is an in-camera double exposure camera. The shanny photographed with a 60mm macro lens and a Backscatter strobe with snoot while the background was taken with a Tokina 10-17mm and natural light in the same waters.

Oosterschelde, Zeeland, Netherlands (MBY)

Nikon, D7100, Hugyfot, Nikkor 60mm macro and Tokina 10-17mm fisheye, iso 200, f/13, 1/125, Backscatter strobe with snoot

Judges comment:

The decision to use the double exposure technique helped this image stand out above the head on, plainer portraits but I can't help but feel that it would have been higher placed as a tighter vertical crop.

Peter Rowlands

5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Hypno-Campus’

Nur Tucker (United Kingdom)

I had this idea on my mind to create a very strong visual impact with a strong eye contact, but I also wanted to employ a new technique in underwater photography for the first time. None of the techniques I used before such as creating bokeh in the back-ground using manual lenses, or working with special backgrounds satisfied me. I then thought about light painting underwater. It took a long time to execute it as electricity and water don't go well together. I experimented with different materials, wires, cables, colours. I spent many evenings experimenting at shallow depths totally in the dark with the housing on a tripod trying to create the dramatic lighting effect I was searching for. For this image I employed the double exposure technique: I took various portrait shots of a thorny sea horse and then I combined the light painting shot in camera.

Dumaguette, Philippines

Nikon , D500, Subal for ND500, Nikon 60mm, iso 80, f11, 1/250, Inon Z240s

Judges comment:

A powerful portrait, given a really fresh twist with a double exposure. When judging we'd guessed, incorrectly, that the light painting had been done out of the water as part of this double exposure. Kudos indeed to complete this beneath the surface, too.

Alex Mustard

5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Apsu’

Claudia Legge (United Kingdom)

I wanted to create an image to represent the myth of Apsu; ancient god of water. I find the reflections created by shooting upwards in the water so inspiring, I love what happens to colours and forms underwater and the way the surface becomes a mirror. It took a very long time getting the image I was after; something serene and abstract yet potent with femininity. I made this picture to encapsulate a sense of nothing, emerging into something. The world, absent of form, space and sound but for the waters, calm and serene. The myth evokes the thrill of water in its purest form, obviating all around it, encapsulating the body and calming the mind.

East Anglia, UK **(MBY)**

Canon, 5d Mark iii, Nauticam , 35mm L series
Canon, iso 125, f/6.3, 1/200, Sunlight

Judges comment:

The colours, textures and composition of this image draw you in, captivating you further on each viewing. The mouth and chin anchor the composition freeing us to explore the rest of this dream-like frame.

Alex Mustard

5) Portraits



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Eye contact with humpback whale’
Mike Korostelev (Russian Federation)

Sometimes animals are very curious. In that day I met 2 adult males humpbacks who were super curious. They came up and tried to look inside the boat when I was in the boat. In the water they looked to me, touched me, tried to play with me. It was funny that when I decide to return back to the boat they tried to stop me

Ha’apai, Tonga

Canon , 5D Mark IV, SeaCam, canon 8-15mm
4f l fisheye, iso 800, f/18, 1/400, No

Judges comment:

I’m aware of this type of behaviour particularly with big animals, however, notwithstanding how close the humpback was to you, you were set up with camera in hand waiting for that decisive moment. A most deserved highly commended in the category.

Martin Edge

5) Portraits

COMMENDED

'Yellow Dragon'

Csaba Tokolyi (Hungary)

I have a sweet spot for these yellow seahorses... Last summer, when travel bans were lifted I visited Croatia again. Just by the coast of Razanj, it took my buddy and me the length of two dives until we got lucky and found our model. The depth was very shallow, maybe 5 meters or so and the seabed had patches of sand so I could create a really bright and light-colored, shallow DOF-ed portrait of the Yellow Dragon of the Adriatic.

The Adriatic, by the shores of Razanj., Croatia

Nikon, D7200, Subal ND7200, Nikkor AF-S 105/2.8G VR Macro, iso 100, f/5.6, 1/100, Inon 240Z

Judges comment:

Beautiful yellow seahorse with excellent eye contact. The sandy colour of water is a pleasant background against the shallows.

Martin Edge



5) Portraits



COMMENDED

‘Critically endangered Cuban crocodile in a cenote’

Anita Kainrath (Austria)

We went to Cuba specifically to meet this wild, critically endangered Cuban crocodile living in one of the cenotes in the Zapata National Park. This small crocodile was shy at first, but after a couple days, began to trust us. The water was very murky and after observing him (and having Shane Gross go in first to see if it was safe - thanks Shane for being my guinea pig) I stepped into knee deep water to get a few pictures (seems to be my most productive way to get images?).

I never thought I would be in water with a wild crocodile, especially not a critically endangered one (there are fewer than 4000 left). My heart was beating fast. This image shows his personality very well I think. Curious, confident and unique. A few weeks after I took this picture huge rains flooded the cenote and he wasn't seen again.

Zapata National Park, Cuba

Nikon, NikonD300s, Nauticam, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 640, f/16, 1/40, Sea&Sea YS-D2

Judges comment:

I really like this crocodile portrait. What draws me to it most are the myriad of colours. It reminds me of a painting, using all the subtleties possible.

Martin Edge

5) Portraits

COMMENDED

'Snooty the lemon shark'
Galice Hoarau (Norway)

Snooty is a large female lemon shark inhabiting the wrecks in front of Jupiter FL. Her smile and her ease around divers have made her a local celebrity. She always one of the first sharks to come on greet you when diving the Bonaire and she stays close by until the end of the dive. She is particularly interested in photographers and will come very close to check the camera. Taking advantage of this, I spent the dive focused on her, trying to capture her "smile", enjoying her willingness to play along.

Jupiter, Florida, USA

Olympus , E-M1 II, Nauticam, 8mm FE, iso 200, f13, 1/320, 2 Inon Z330

Judges comment:

Excellent shark portrait. The image frame as been dictated by the author and not the other way round. It's a tight crop which works particularly well. This shot in my opinion is all about the lighting of the mouth/teeth. Notice the shadows of the strobe within the mouth. It's brightness inside that makes the teeth stand so strongly.

Martin Edge



6) Black & White

for black & white images of any underwater subject (macro or wide angle) shot anywhere in the world. Toning and tinting is permitted. Open to all.

6) Black & White



WINNER

'The Cut'

Diana Fernie (Australia)

This photograph was taken at Leru Cut in the Solomon Islands. I was lucky enough to have won a 10-day trip on the Solomons PNG Master liveaboard and was very excited to have the opportunity to visit this site again. Having dived these waters on two previous occasions I knew what to expect. However, I needed an elegant model as an essential element for this composition and my immediate companions could not be classified in any way as elegant! Fortunately, there was another photographer in my dingy group whose beautiful model wife was the perfect subject. Somewhat cheekily I managed to capture a few shots of her as she posed for her husband!!!

Leru Cut, Solomon Islands

Nikon, D850, Isotta D850, Nikkor 8-15mm, iso 1250, f/4.5, 1/125, Inon Z330 X 2

Judges comment:

Great use of all the tones from rich black right through to clean white. The composition is classic and the decision to convert to black and white was a winning choice.

Peter Rowlands

6) Black & White



RUNNER UP

‘Time Travel’

Martin Broen (United States)

Imagine yourself in an underwater cave in Mexico, hours away from the exit to surface, diving through a never ending labyrinth covered with prehistoric formations, seeing charcoal in the ground from the fires of an ancient culture, finding bones of animal species extinct 8000 years ago, and everything around you is preserved as it was back in the time those caves flooded. It's a visceral feeling of going back in time to a different age

This image is trying to capture that. The rugged texture of those prehistoric overhead environments with pristine formations framing the diver in darkness. The depth of the never-ending tunnels and the feeling of the travel in time given by the zooming movement into the light and model. And the processing in black and white to simplify the image

A claustrophobic feeling for some and of discovery and adventure for others

Cenote Chan Hol (Litte Hole), Mexico

Sony, A7RIII, Nauticam NA-A7III, Canon 8-15mm at 15, iso 5000, f/5.0, 1/10 sec, Big Blue 33000 lumen

Judges comment:

Wow, The judge is speechless! Such beautiful words indeed.

Martin Edge

6) Black & White



THIRD

‘Double turtle’

Renata Romeo (Italy)

During the long months of the pandemic I had to revise, like everyone else, my usual way of life and had to replace the usual diving with snorkeling and this activity surprisingly gave me new time and space, interesting perspectives and different points of view. It gave birth to my life in a time of shadows. This summer, snorkeling very early in the morning in Marsa Eglia, I often met the smaller and friendly hawksbill turtle of the bay. Enchanted by its elegant movements, I watched it for hours eating and breathing.

I noticed that particular conditions of light and sea made perfect the reflection of its being on the surface. For days I have been waiting patiently for that favorable situation and that its figure could be captured in a photo as I imagined it: a perfect moment of freeze its geometries in the light reflected on the surface.

Marsa Eglia, Marsa Alam, Egypt **(MBY)**

Canon , 90D, Easydive Leo3, Tokina 10-17, iso 160, 8, 250, natural light

Judges comment:

Lovely tones and perfect reflections. The imperfection in Snell's Window especially highlighted with the turtle, seeming to be looking at it, sealed the deal.

Peter Rowlands

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Hunting Sea Lion’

Nick Polanszky (Australia)

Sardines swarm the small volcanic rock island of Los Islotes in Espiritu Santo Marine Park, but catching one is not an easy task for the Sea Lion residents. Inside an archway through the island, This lone Sea Lion was swooping in trying to separate an individual Sardine from the protection of their group. In this moment, through the lens, I envisioned a monochrome conversion to highlight the distant silhouette of the Sea Lion, the sheer number of Sardines, separation of subjects and the lighting within the arch

Los Islotes, Mexico

Canon, 5DIII, Aquatica A5D MKIII, Sigma 15mm, iso 640, f/6.3, 1/125, Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judges comment:

A striking composition, full of energy and action with dynamic fish and perfectly posed sea lion. It is a fantastic picture, one the judges felt would be equally successful in colour.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Body of Water’

James Rokop (United States)

I was introduced to synchronized swimming by my two daughters and eventually took on the voluntary duties as parent team photographer. Over time, I grew to appreciate and admire the athletes for their dedication, grace, and athleticism and I began to explore different ways to photograph them during practices. The photographs of the athletes under water were so intriguing and artistic and I saw the potential to create beautiful art from this wonderful sport. I have now been photographing the sport for close to 10 years. This shot was taken in close proximity to the athletes near the surface of the water using a 6” water housing dome taken on a sunny day. My focus that day was to capture intriguing shapes underwater formed by the swimmers legs.

Arroyo Pool, Davis, California, U.S.A. **(MBY)**

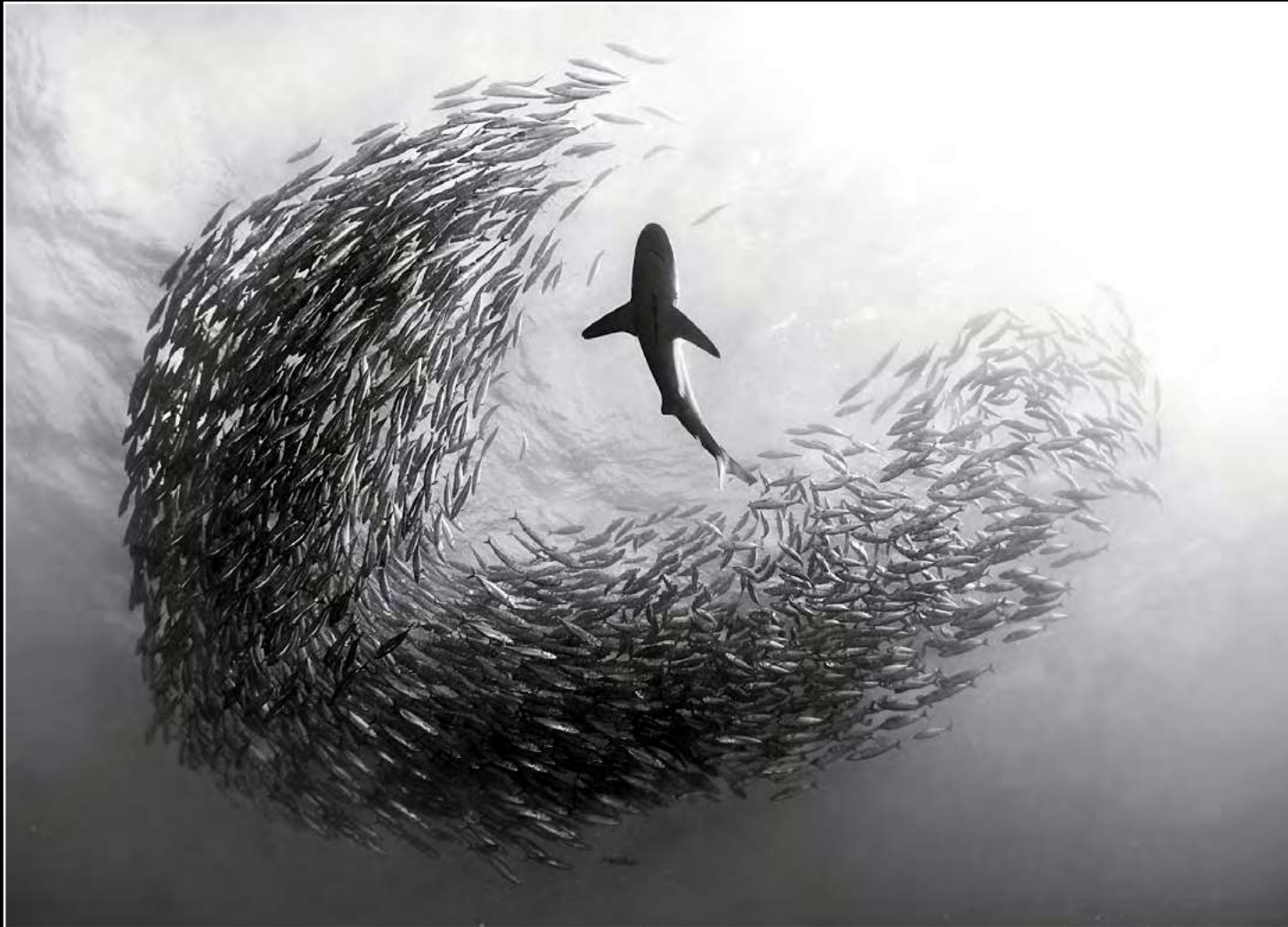
Sony RX 100 , M VI, Ikelite 6116.18, Zeiss 24-200, iso 400, 4, 1/1000th, None

Judges comment:

Another favourite of mine from the competition, made by an original composition that is so well suited to black and white. I would encourage the photographer to revisit this idea, with the athletes in the matching performance costumes.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Prey or Predator?’

Wayne Lai (China)

On the third day of our sardine run trip near Port St. John's, South Africa, we saw a big baitball of mackerel being attacked by copper sharks, blacktip sharks, common dolphins, cormorants and cape gannets. The predators worked together to keep the baitball to the surface. The mackerel tried to stay tight as a group, rushing around to escape the attack. When a copper shark came to attack the baitball, the mackerel rushed around and happened to form a 'C' shape, like the opening mouth of a predator. In the meantime, the copper shark happened to be in the middle of the opening 'mouth' like a 'prey'. This is quite an interesting moment I have ever captured.

Port St. John's, South Africa

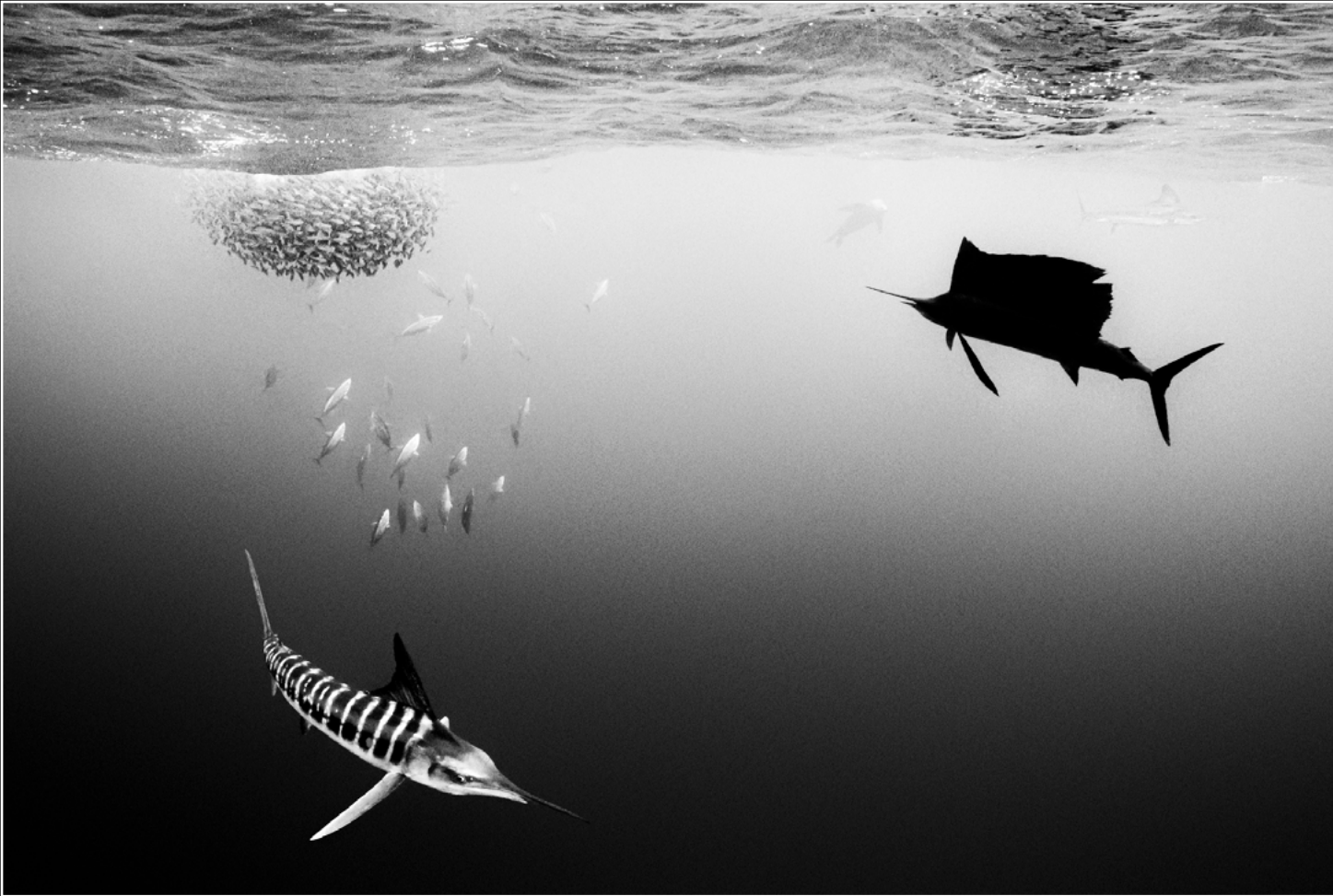
Canon, Canon 5DSR, Sea & Sea, EF 8-15mm, f/4L Fisheye, iso 320, 11, 1/160, Inon Z 240 X 2

Judges comment:

This image works so well in mono and the author has managed to keep the midday sun as far away as possible.

Martin Edge

6) Black & White



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Ying and Yang’

Hannes Klostermann (Mexico)

The annual marlin migration along the coast of the Baja California peninsula in Mexico is an amazing experience. As you head out early in the morning you can never be quite sure what you will encounter that day. I was fortunate to do two trips to see them in 2020, one with customers and one with a small group of friends. When we encountered this particular scene, my friends all decided to stay on the boat while I went in to check it out, as it didn't seem like much from the surface. As I approached the bait ball it became clear that we had hit the jackpot: A stationary sardine bait ball with marlin, tuna, sea lions and a sail fish all preying on it at the same time! I quickly shouted ‘SAIL FISH!!!’ towards the boat and began shooting. Moments later, these two magnificent predators aligned perfectly.

Magdalena Bay, Mexico **(MBY)**

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA-D500, Nikon 10-24mm, iso 1400, f/8, 1/320, natural light

Judges comment:

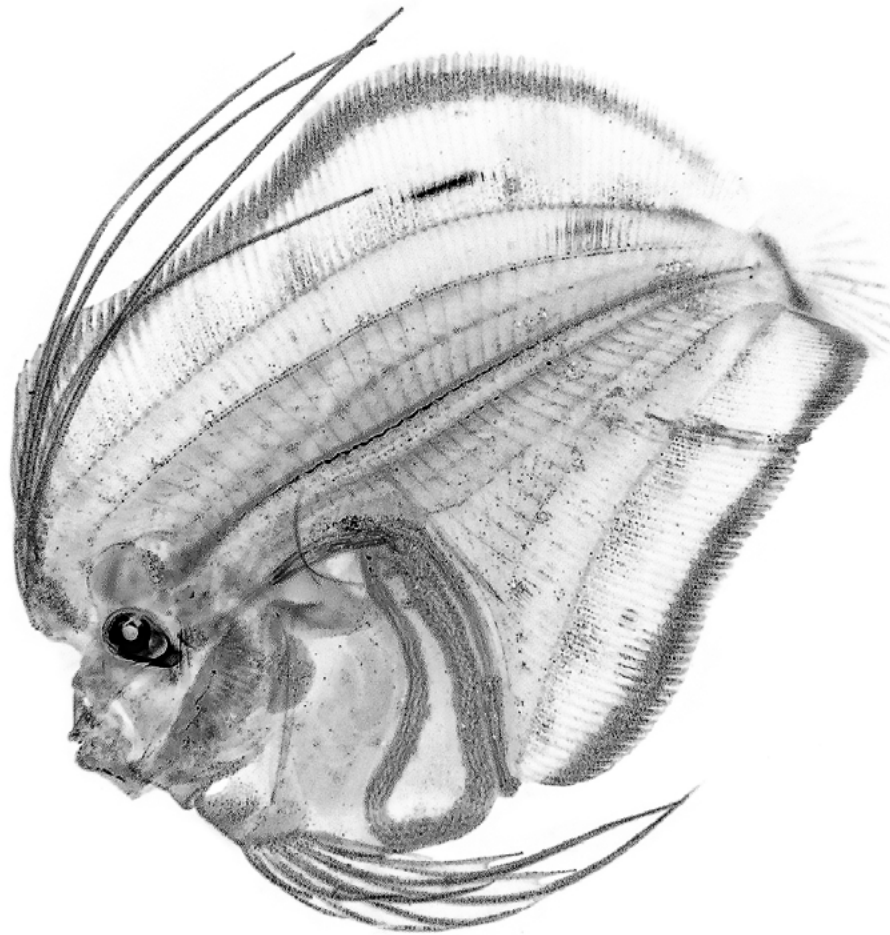
I like the symmetry between the elements in this image. The small bait ball in the background. The dramatic feel of the sail fish as it moves closer to the bait ball.

Martin Edge

COMMENDED

'Flatfish Junior'

Mark Drayton (United Kingdom)



Capturing blackwater photographs of the strange and wonderful creatures that each night emerge from the safety of the ocean depths to feed closer to the surface has become popular in recent years. The images can be both graphically strong and interesting, and their acquisition challenges diving and photographic skills. However, the shots can feel repetitive and may tend towards record photography, offering few obvious opportunities for image-making creativity. This small and translucent larval flatfish was in its pelagic phase before settling on the seabed and strobe lighting revealed its beautiful internal anatomy almost like an x-ray. I chose a monochrome conversion to emphasise the body texture and structure and then reversed the tone curve to produce a high-key negative image on a pure white background. This was inspired by exquisite 19th century pencil drawings illustrating biologic scientific texts and offers an alternative presentation style to conventional blackwater images.

Anilao, Philippines

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, 60mm Micro Nikkor, iso 400, f/22.0, 1/250, 2 x Retra Original

Judges comment:

Inverting images is a known method of differentiating blackwater images, but Mark's stunning shot goes way beyond the visual trick, encouraging the viewer to focus on the exquisite internal structure of this tiny, translucent flatfish.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White



COMMENDED

'Alien world'

Martin Broen (United States)

This photo was taken at Cenote Zapote, a cavern shaped like an hourglass in which after passing by the small restriction you find yourself in a chamber filled with unique Bell-Shaped formations illuminated only by the light you bring with you. The shape of those 'Hell-bells' is unique and are surrounded with crystal clear water and a hydrogen sulfide cloud beneath. All this makes you feel like you are floating in space exploring an alien world. The shot was taken using the illumination from the main diver and second diver behind him, which creates the glow on the main model and helps show the unique shapes and textures of those formations.

Cenote Zapote, Mexico

Sony, A7RIII, Nauticam NA-A7RIII, Sony 28mm f/2 + Nauticam WWL-1, iso 1600, f/4.5, 1/40 sec, Various video lights like Sola 3800

Judges comment:

A striking and other-worldly composition expertly shot and composed. The shapes and shadows are so powerful in black and white. I might have preferred the frame without the diver's bubbles to extend the extra-terrestrial metaphor.

Alex Mustard

6) Black & White



COMMENDED

‘Follow my leader’

Martyn Guess (United Kingdom)

At dusk I slipped into the deep Atlantic waters between the islands of Faial and Pico in the Azores. It wasn't long before the most beautiful member of the Shark family, a large female Blue shark came to look at me. The view of the Pico volcano above the water was amazing, but the scene below the water took my breath away. I had planned to get the rays from the setting sun into my shot to give some added impact. I angled myself to get the ball of the sun just out of the shot and slightly below the shark to get the best view. I was very lucky as the cortege of pilot fish looked in the same direction for a brief moment. I love the way the black and white conversion adds to the image's impact and brings out the skin textures of the shark.

Faial, The Azores Portugal

Nikon, D5, Nauticam, Sigma 15mm Fisheye, iso 640, F14, 1/100, @ x Subtronic 270's

Judges comment:

Black and white simplifies and concentrates all of the elements in this classic image of an iconic creature.

Peter Rowlands

7) Compacts

for wide angle or close-up/macro images shot anywhere in the world (including the UK) with a compact camera (includes stills from GoPro and other action cameras, does not include interchangeable lens mirrorless cameras). Open to all. Entrants to this category will only be accepted from photographers who's only underwater camera is of a 'compact' type.

7) Compacts



WINNER

“Doule near the surface”

Jack Berthomier (New Caledonia)

I used to go fishing in the river to take some shots a few days after big rains which make the riverbed go higher and make some big floods. The current is strong but still practicable for freediving with dislodged plants, leaves and branches.

They bring a lot of color which showcase this plain New Caledonian carp (Kuhlia rupestris) which are common in our rivers.

Ouenghi River, New Caledonia

SONY, RX100, ISOTA, Wide angle INON UW-H100, iso 200, 5.6, 1/800, Internal flash

Judges comment:

Such a much deserved winner of this compact category. The author has made the carp stand out against a colourful background of yellow, greens reds and blues. The hint of colour in the sky sets this image off to perfection.

Martin Edge

7) Compacts



RUNNER UP

'Rainbow Goby'
ManBd (Malaysia)

When I was underwater with this Hairy Panda Goby, he was very shy so it took a long time for it to be comfortable before it popped it's head out. While waiting, I set up my coloured torches and align them to illuminate the coral, but not the goby. Then to produce a sharp picture of the goby I had to use another snoot with white light, so that it is recorded correctly and surrounded by all the colours.

Lembeh, Indonesia

Olympus, TG4, Olympus PT-056, Inon, iso 200, f/5.6, 1/200, Big Blue Torch

Judges comment:

A fantastic and challenging subject, expertly photographed with the innovation you'd expect from a former winner of UPY's Up & Coming Award.

Alex Mustard

7) Compacts

THIRD

‘Pelagic stingray (Pteroplatytrygon violacea)’

Isaías Cruz (Spain)

This image was taken in summer, offshore from Bermeo, while doing a shark dive. Being surrounded by 3 blue sharks, this pelagic ray appeared to check the bait. It was a very rare encounter, this animal was not been sighted before in this waters, and I too had never seen this animal before. It was going in and out from the bait, so I tried to get close to it calmly, then it come right to my dome and I took the photo.

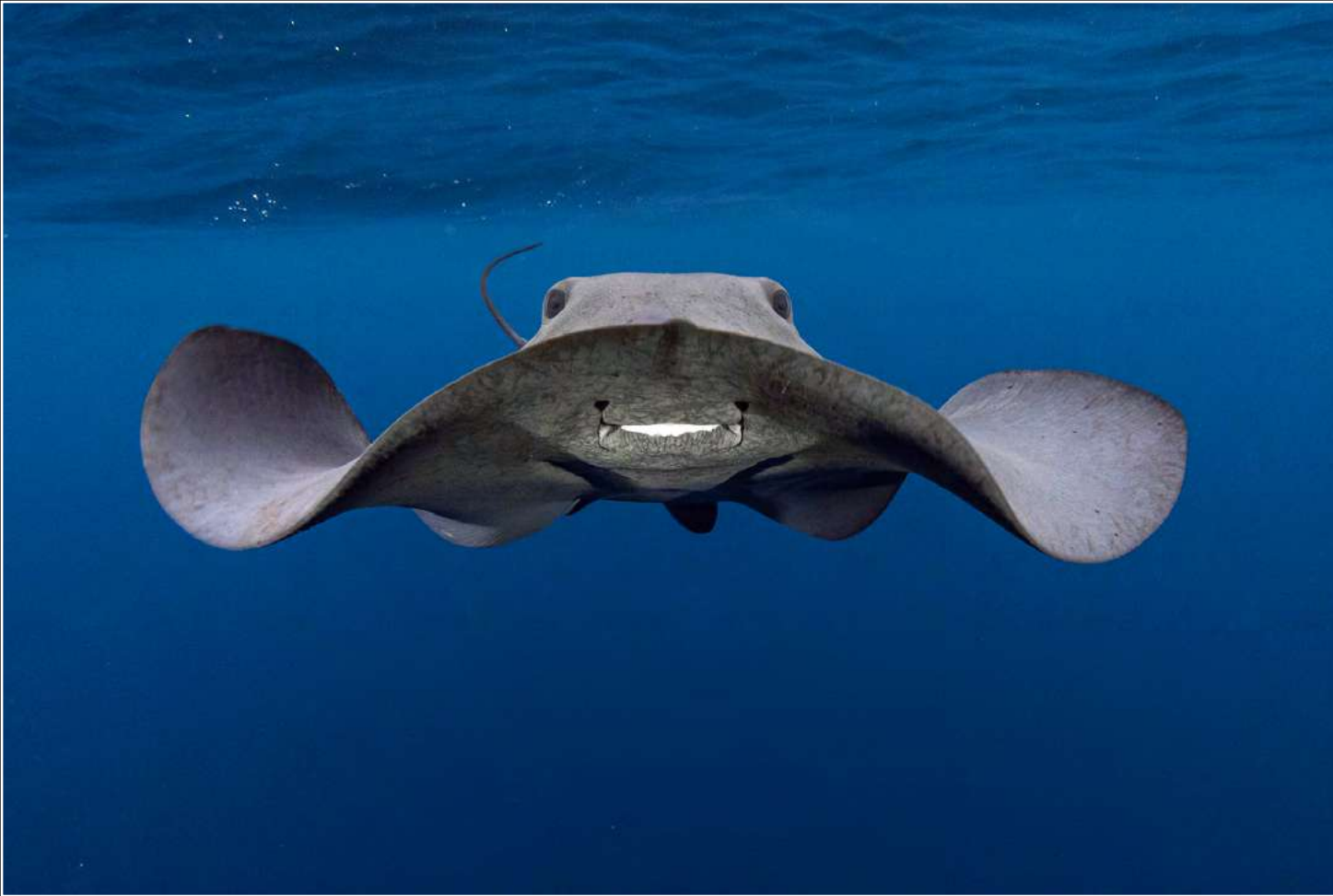
Basque Country, Spain **(MBY)**

Sony, RX 100 V, Nauticam NA-RX100V, Inon UWL-H100 + dome, iso 500, f/5, 1/160, x2 glowdive max lights

Judges comment:

Beautifully timed symmetry with subtle non distracting surface reflections. A big shot from a small camera.

Peter Rowlands



7) Compacts



HIGHLY COMMENDED & My Backyard Runner up

‘Pink and Golden’

Steve Miller (United States)

Fisheye lenses with circular frames have always fascinated me, and when Olympus made a small one for the TG-6, I was anxious to test it. This image was actually part of the research and development of a dome port constructed to make shooting over/unders easier. The port is made from a 6 inch dome that allows you to see the water line more precisely, and the image I created was to be a still life that could be reproduced consistently with any camera and lens combination for comparison. I floated in a belly boat that anglers use so that I could sight over the housing to see where the water line was. ‘Butters’ the Golden Retriever is always happy to photo bomb any image in the pool.

Backyard Natural Pool, USA (MBY)

Olympus , TG-6, Ikelite compact housing with 6 inch dome, FCON lens with 6 inch dome, iso 100, F-9, 1/100th , Natural light

Judges comment:

Excellent split shot with a circular six inch dome. The flower in the foreground is very close up and boosts the colours. Butters the retriever is the strength of this image, providing the depth perspective which results in the topside interest.

Martin Edge

7) Compacts



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Toad tadpole on water lily leaf’

Andrea Falcomatà (Italy)

I did this dive because I wanted to photograph the growing toad tadpoles in shallow water at about 2 meters. I saw this new red water lily leaf with this tadpole on it, I liked the situation and the chromatism so I took this shot.

Monticolo Lake - Appiano sulla Strada del Vino, ITALY

Sony, DSC-RX100 MV, Isotecnic - Isotta RX100 Mark V, Nauticam CMC-1, iso 80, F/11, 1/125, 02 Sea&Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

This was a particular favourite of mine. An individual shot of an individual tadpole with contracting colours. A fresh image always appeals.

Peter Rowlands

7) Compacts



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Enter the Dragon’

Ipah Uid (Malaysia)

I have always been fascinated by crustaceans. The first time I saw a picture of a dragon shrimp, my mind was saying this looks like a dragon ! I wanted the picture to be different so I opted by using a blank CD-rom with a lot of my kids toy bedazzled sequence glued on to it. I made sure the CD was far enough so I could get a nice bokeh effect making sure I kept my aperture low and my hands extremely steady. I had another torch on low light but close to the cd so the colours would pop out. It took me about 20 minutes to achieve what I'd envisioned and I'm glad it turned out well.

Lembeh straits, Indonesia

Canon , Canon PowerShot G15, Canon WP-DC48 Waterproof Case for PowerShot G15, INON UCL-67 M67 / UCL-165M67 CLOSE Close-up Lens, iso ISO80, 1/200s, f/4.0, Inon Z-240 Underwater Strobe

Judges comment:

The author has created a superb background in which to place a pedestal for the dragon shrimp to settle. The funky colours complement the foreground. Who would have thought to use a discarded CD-rom as a background? Excellent image.

Martin Edge

7) Compacts

HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘The Orchid ‘

ManBd (Malaysia)

This juvenile Cyrece bourbanica is the most difficult subject for me to shoot because at a first glance the nudibranch looks transparent. To get something transparent to pop out I had to make sure the light source is close to the subject so the details are revealed. The best time to shoot is sunset when it's slightly darker. Then all the colours at the tip of the wings will stand out.

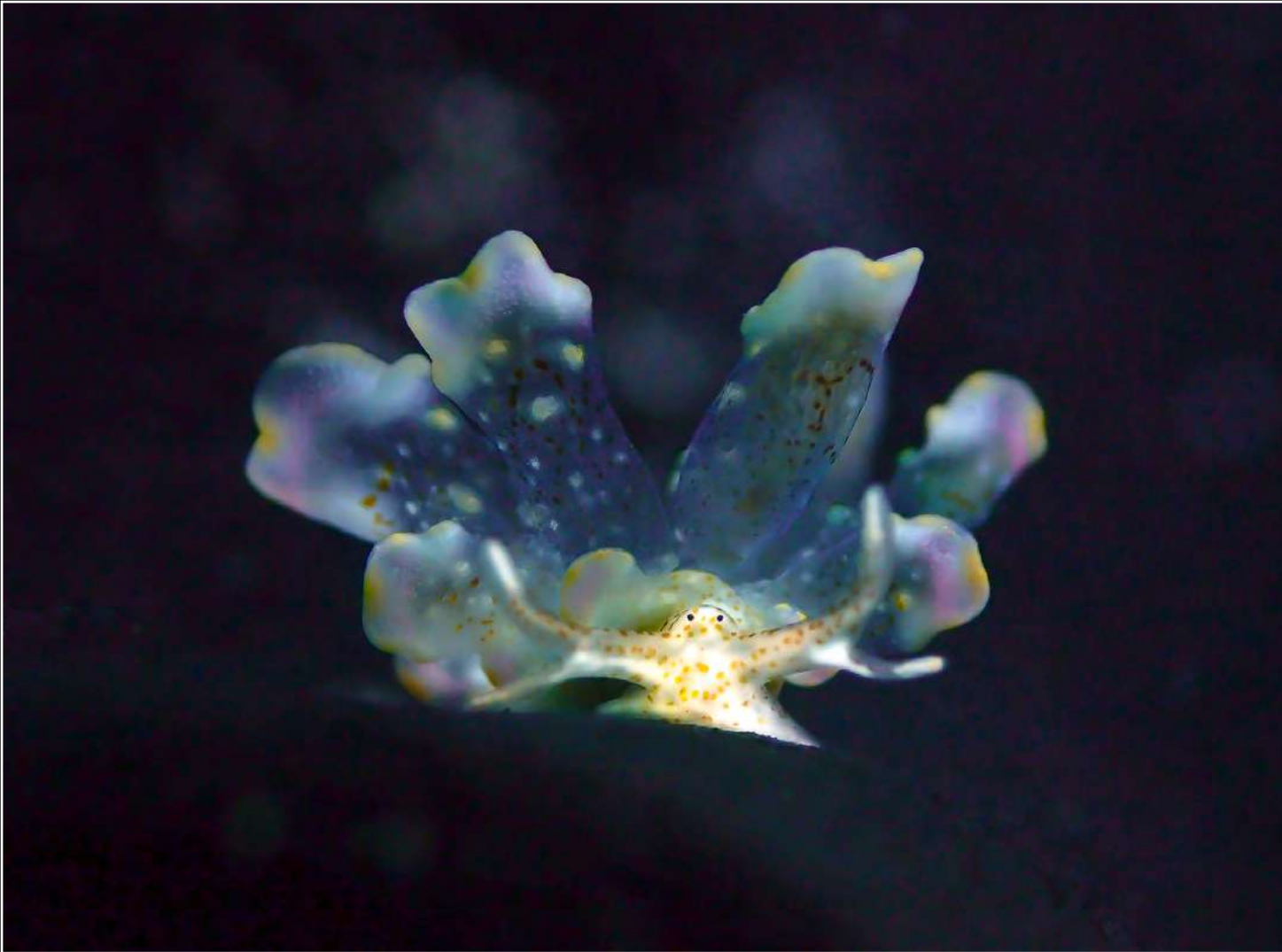
Romblon, Philippines

Olympus, TG4, Olympus PT-056, Inon, iso 500, f/6.3, 1/200, Big Blue torch

Judges comment:

A tiny and difficult subject captured in minute detail with a mastery of technique, allowing us to enjoying seeing this rare creature in all its splendour.

Alex Mustard



7) Compacts



COMMENDED

'Two In a home'

Ipah Uid (Malaysia)

The Coleman shrimp is everyone's favourite shrimp. When I shot this photo I wanted a portrait photo of one close up. It took me a few tries since with a compact camera it was slightly harder. I wanted the subject to stand out so I used a special type of Cokin filter. Since it can be screwed on easily to the housing it gave a bolder and different type of effect. In order to get the blurred sides I had to make sure my aperture was really low and the light bright enough so it can focus on the eye.

Anilao, Philippines

Canon , Canon PowerShot G15, Canon WP-DC48 Waterproof Case for PowerShot G15, Inon UCL-67 M67 Underwater Close-up Macro Lens, iso Iso80, f/3.5, 1/160s, Inon Z-240 Underwater Strobe

Judges comment:

The author has worked hard to create this image and used a Cokin filter to bokeh the portrait everywhere else than the two eyes. Very well executed indeed.

Martin Edge

7) Compacts

COMMENDED

'Life drop'

Chiara Scrigner (Italy)

Finding this subject was a real challenge.

During several dives I noticed that there were a lot of cuttlefish eggs. Some were transparent, but unfortunately without animal.

After about a month of searching I had lost hope. At the end of a dive, returning to shore, I noticed it: clean, transparent and with the little cuttlefish inside!

I decided to place my snoot behind it to maximize the transparency and fragility of the egg.

Sistiana, Trieste, Italy **(MBY)**

Canon, S100 Powershot, Isotta, Inon UCL65, iso 80, 8, 2000, Inon Z240

Judges comment:

An unborn squid is revealed inside its eggs by expertly controlled lighting, making it appear as a little jewel. Impressive photography.

Alex Mustard



7) Compacts

COMMENDED

'Backswimmer in a reflection'
Jack BERTHOMIER (New Caledonia)

These insects which live in clear stagnant waters have the peculiarity of walking upside down under the surface of the water which gives them their name of backswimmers. This shot has been taken in a sinkhole. These insects feed on aquatic larvae from other insects.

Measuring between 1 and 1.5 cms they are hard to photograph with a macro lens because they are always in motion.

I got lucky after a few minutes to capture this shot of the reflection of this insect.

Sinkhole, New Caledonia

SONY, RX100, ISOTA, CMC 1 Nauticam (macro lens), iso 400, F5, 1/250, Internal flash

Judges comment:

A particularly delicate shot with symmetry, subtle tones and a complimentary background. Unusual and effective.

Peter Rowlands



8) Up & Coming

for wide angle or close-up/macro images shot anywhere in the world (including the UK). Open only to underwater photographers who have not previously been awarded in an underwater photography competition or been published.

8) Up & Coming



WINNER, Up & Coming Underwater Photographer of the Year 2021. Most Promising British Underwater Photographer 2021

‘Tying in’
SJ Alice Bennett (Mexico)

As this shot was taken during cave training, we had a pretty intricate plan in place, which is not usually how I run cave shoots. However, the plan failed miserably as the cave student, Max, had multiple equipment failures. Plans are important, but when they fail you need to adapt quickly and deal with a new situation. After fixing all the issues on the surface and changing our plan to accommodate our now fairly depleted gas supplies, we descended again. I swam ahead and waited just beyond the beginning of the permanent mainline watching the team swim towards me, followed closely by the lighting assistants creating those beautiful halo effects. Suddenly everything just lined up perfectly, so I pressed the shutter just as Max turned to tie into the mainline.

Cenote Mayan Blue, Sistema Ox Bel Ha, Tulum, Mexico **(MBY)**

Sony, a7S II, Nauticam NA-A7II, Sony FE 24-70mm f/2.8 GM, iso 2500, f/2.8, 1/125, Big Blue Video Lights, 30k, 2 x 15k, 2 x 4k lumen

Judges comment:

We always value fresh vision in the Up & Coming category and the combination of incredible lighting and shallow depth of field empower this image with originality and truly capture the spirit of adventure that the photographer was striving for.

Alex Mustard

8) Up & Coming

RUNNER UP

'Toward Shining Light'

Ryohei Ito (Japan)

As we were mooring the safari boat in the lagoon at night, Manta rays came behind the boat to eat the plankton that gathered in the light of the boat so I put on my snorkel and fins and went into the sea with my camera.

This Manta ray, which preys on plankton, repeatedly flipped in front of me and went deep into the water. The appearance of the giant dancing in front of me was a masterpiece. Watching the situation up close, I was absorbed in releasing the shutter. This photo was taken aiming at Mantaray rising from the depths toward the light on the surface of the water.

Maaya Lagoon , North Ari Atoll, Maldives

Canon, 5D Mark4, SEA & SEA MDX-5D MARK 4, EF8-15mm F4L fisheye USM, iso 400, f16, 1/200, RETRA FLASH PRO x2

Judges comment:

Impressive enough a composition with just the subject alone contrasted on a dark background but the simple surface light lifted this image above the pack.

Peter Rowlands



8) Up & Coming



THIRD

‘Resplendence - Black browed Albatross ‘

Danny Lee , Tasmania (Australia)

Whenever I see an Albatross I get excited! Their sheer size and beautiful features make them a joy to photograph. I have been working on a series of split shots of the various species of Albatross that visit Tasmanian waters for a few years now. Getting good eye contact as well as good feet symmetry is a challenge as they are generally quite shy Birds. I use a very simple inexpensive compact camera and do not use a wide angle dome or wet lens when taking these photos. The small 6cm flat Port on my housing may be small but works a treat in calm conditions. Getting the exposure settings right is the important part because the Albatross' feathers are so brilliantly white, and yet it can be reasonably dark underwater.

Bay of Fires, Tasmania. , Australia **(MBY)**

Canon, G7x mark II, Meikon Canon G7x, N/A, iso 160, f/8.0, 1/125, Natural light only

Judges comment:

I really liked this image from the outset. A split image of an Albatross is one thing but this author has gone on to include great light, superb eye contact and a glint of both feet. Superb imagery.

Peter Rowlands

8) Up & Coming

HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘*Lophius piscatorius*’

Jose L Alemán (Honduras) (Spain)

*A photo that took a long time make. I was keen to capture this species (*Lophius piscatorius*) in one of the few places in Spain where it can be seen diving from the shore. This picture was made using the double exposure technique within the camera settings, first I photographed the fish with a snoot, fortunately capturing it yawning, and then completed my image at the end of the dive by shooting a split level picture of the scenery.*

Tossa de Mar, Girona, España

Nikon, D7100, sea & sea D7100, fisheye nikkor 8-15 mm, iso 100, f/13, 1/320 s, sea & sea S-250 pro

Judges comment:

Double exposures were widespread in this year's UPY entry and we were particularly impressed by Jose's use of this technique in the Up & Coming category and the balance of his composition.

Alex Mustard





HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Ethereal Submersion ‘

Charyse Reinfelder (United States)

One day as we explored late into the day, the sunlight started to light up parts of the cave that I had never seen. I swam back into the darkness, wondering what I would find. I sat back in this dark space as a whole new world entranced my eyes. Beautiful vertical pillars lit up as the light beams danced upon their rough exterior. The undersurface of the water rippling, and reflecting like mercury. As my eyes were delighted in watching the movement there, it was as if you could pass through it and be transported into another world. A world where you can fly around and gravity has little effect on your body. A place that only some can enter into and fewer take the time to appreciate. It was a whole new perspective on a familiar place.

Swallows Cave, Tonga

Sony, A7RIII, SeaFrogs, Zeiss 16-35mm, iso 10,000, 7.1, 1/400, none/natural

Judges comment:

An image with a dream-like quality; only lit where needed and perfectly composed. Very atmospheric, well observed and executed.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Spins and stripes’

Nicolas Hahn (Argentina)

The schooling sweetlips of Sawandarek, in Raja Ampat, are some of the most tolerant and curious fish I've seen. They lie on top of a patch of cabbage coral alongside humpback and bluestripe snappers and don't seem too bothered by divers. I had photographed them before, but after doing some reading on slow shutter techniques, I wanted to make the most out of their curious behaviour. Approaching carefully and getting up close with a slow shutter speed, I started rotating my camera and pushed the trigger as I had practiced on sponges and other subjects before. I took a handful of images, but the one I liked the most was this one where the turning trails were where satisfying and a lone diagonal banded sweetlips turned to give the camera a look.

Raja Ampat, Indonesia

Sony, A7Riii, Nauticam, Canon 8-15 with metabones adapter, iso 80, f/22, 1/5, Sea & Sea YS-D1 and Sea & Sea YS-D2

Judges comment:

The textures created by the intentional camera movement, add an additional visual treat to this 'wall of content' composition, where the frame is filled with perfectly stacked eyes and stripes. A winner packed with energy and excellent execution.

Alex Mustard

8) Up & Coming



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Cova Blava’

Wojciech Dopierala (Poland)

Over & Under photos are one of my favourite ways of showing the underwater world. This summer during a sailing trip around Balearic Islands, I found the perfect scenery to apply it; Mediterranean Sea landscape bathed in warm evening light, our sailing boat waiting in the background and the cave's ceiling creating a natural frame. Below the surface spectacular blue water with beams of light entering to the underwater part of the cave. I asked my friend Elyoenai to swim by just below the surface. Some damselfish decided to join him, adding more value to the final image.

The whole trip gave us many great photos, but this one is definitely among the best I took in the entire 2020. Huge thanks for Marta and Elyoenai my underwater models and source of the inspiration, Cressi España for their support and of course UPY team for organizing this fantastic contest!

Isla La Cabrera, Spain

Sony, A7 III, SeaFrogs A7R III V.2, Samyang AF 14mm f/2.8 FE, iso 125, f/14, 1/200, Ambient light

Judges comment:

Tranquil yet strong, everything is in the right place for a clean composition. This is a good example of emerging talent.

Peter Rowlands

8) Up & Coming

COMMENDED

'Pygmy Seahorse at the Disco'
Patricia Dusman (United States)

One of my goals for my 2019 Lembeh trip was getting good pygmy seahorse, Hippocampus bargibanti, photos for my portfolio. The pygmy seahorse is less than 2cm in height and lives well camouflaged on large sea fans. They are difficult to photograph and have eluded me in the past. I charged my guide, Opo Kecil at Lembeh Resort, to look for them whenever possible. After getting the classic shots we played around with introducing some fun backgrounds that I had brought to experiment with. I was incredibly pleased with how it came together.

Lembeh, Indonesia

Canon, 5D Mark IV, Nauticam NA-5DMKIV, 100mm, iso 320, f/11, 1/200, Sea & Seas YS-D2

Judges comment:

Capturing a pleasing pygmy portrait is a rite of passage for many aspiring photographers. Very few manage to produce such a precisely framed and focused portrait with the added sparkle of background interest.

Alex Mustard



8) Up & Coming

COMMENDED

'Majestic dance'

Severin Pöhlmann (Germany)

I was on my honeymoon with my beautiful wife Sonja. We had traveled to the other side of the globe to get the chance to snorkel with the whales. We were unlucky for the first days. On the third day there were two whales resting at a depth of 30 meters. We waited at the surface for around half an hour. Suddenly the whales came up right next to us and I am very happy for this "lucky shot" and to get it in frame before the whales disappeared into the deep blue. The scene took just a few seconds but it felt like half a lifetime. It was a long time dream and a great honour to see these majestic animals that close.

Moorea, French Polynesia

Olympus, OMD-EM5, Nauticam EM5, Olympus 7-14mm Pro, iso 200, f/2.8, 1/125, none

Judges comment:

Whilst judging images such as these it is the sheer splendour of imagery that shines out so brightly.

Martin Edge



8) Up & Coming

COMMENDED

'Pit stop'

Irene Orozco (Mexico)

This image shows a behaviour I have seen many times in the open ocean, boobies standing on turtles at the surface. I had jumped in the water several times at different locations before, but they always seemed to be difficult to photograph as almost any movement would either scare the bird or the turtle.

On this particular day, as we were looking for bait balls offshore off Baja's Pacific Coast, we came across this very calm turtle and bird who didn't seem to be bothered with my presence. The sea was flat calm and visibility was great; things had finally aligned.

Baja, Mexico

Sony, A7R III, , 12-24mm, iso 1000, f/22, 1/800th,

Judges comment:

This is a wow factor if ever I have seen one. I like the slight ripple which breaks up the surface. Being able to catch both the bird and the turtle in a split is excellent.

Martin Edge



9) British Waters Wide Angle

for images shot anywhere in UK waters.
Open to all.

9) British Waters Wide Angle



WINNER

'While You Sleep'

Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom)

Malls Mire - small woodland in Glasgow, between a housing estate, supermarket and factory - is an unlikely haven for wildlife. As winter thaws, for a few nights each year one of its small muddy ponds comes alive with Common Frogs. I first photographed them here in 2018 and since that day I've had this image in my head. It took another two years before I captured the little wonders that stir in the cold nights while the city sleeps. Using a temperamental remote shutter while combining long-exposure, backlighting, close-focus wide angle and split photography meant I had to abandon any frustrations and try (and inevitably fail) for the hundredth time to get it right. This final shot is a culmination 25 hours over 4 nights of lying in darkness, covered in mud, waiting on nature's unpredictable elements to align. Time well spent? Absolutely.

Malls Mire, Glasgow, Scotland **(MBY)**

Olympus , OMD Em5 MKii, Olympus PT-EP13, Panasonic 8mm Fisheye, iso 1000, f16, 20s, 2x Sea and Sea YS-110a

Judges comment:

Technically assured, artistically innovative and revealing an original and valuable view of the life of frogs. Every aspect contributes to the story, spawn shouts what's happening, bare trees show season, the sky demonstrates time of day, tower blocks reveal location, even the droplets on the dome look like stars!

Alex Mustard



RUNNER UP

‘The Great Migration’

Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom)

It's the microscopic plankton which draws the massive Basking Shark up the west coast of Britain and into the narrow channel between the Isles of Coll and Tiree. While their migration is predictable, to share the water with them still requires that element of luck and to spend a late summer evening with them (in 2020 of all years) was a dream. I've photographed Basking Sharks before and never managed that classic 'head-on' shot, so decided to try for something completely different instead. With challenging lighting conditions and plankton rich waters, I wasn't sure if it could be done but after two years of planning, an experimental 19-inch dome (frame made by my brother - thanks Paul), trial and error with lenses and ND filters, and of course - the arrival of Sharks - I finally had the chance to find out.

Isle of Coll, Inner Hebrides, Scotland

Olympus, OMD Em5 MKii, Olympus PT-EP13, Olympus 9-18mm , iso 1600, f6.3, 1/200, Natural

Judges comment:

This image raises the bar for Basking Shark shots. There is so much that has to come right to get a shot like this that it might seem impossible but we now have proof. It is possible and it's absolutely awesome!

Peter Rowlands

9) British Waters Wide Angle



THIRD

'Grey seal gully'

Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

Grey seals are wonderful to photograph but I particularly like this shot because of the background. My buddy showed me this pretty gully full of dead man's fingers and light coming down through kelp. I waited there for a little while, hoping a seal would turn up. In the end I only had one quick pass from one shy seal, but I was able to take this pleasing portrait.

Farne Islands, Northumberland, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 200, f11, 1/160, 2x Retra pro strobes

Judges comment:

Seals are one of the UK's most charismatic marine species and I love seeing this individual immersed in its habitat in the colourful underwater world of British Seas. It is a fresh take on a subject usually photographed near the surface or amongst sea weeds.

Alex Mustard

9) British Waters Wide Angle



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Blur and motion’

Atanas Petrov (United Kingdom)

*The SS Rosalie is an inshore wreck off the coast of Weybourne in England. It is one of my favourite dive locations in the area, suitable for wide-angle and macro photography. On this particular evening dive, I used my fisheye lens as I expected the bib fish (*Trisopterus luscus*), inhabiting the wreck, to aggregate together in large numbers. I wanted to capture their abundance and also to evoke a sense of movement. To achieve this, I used a slow shutter speed to blur the background and my two flashguns helped to keep the foreground swimming fish sharp at the same time.*

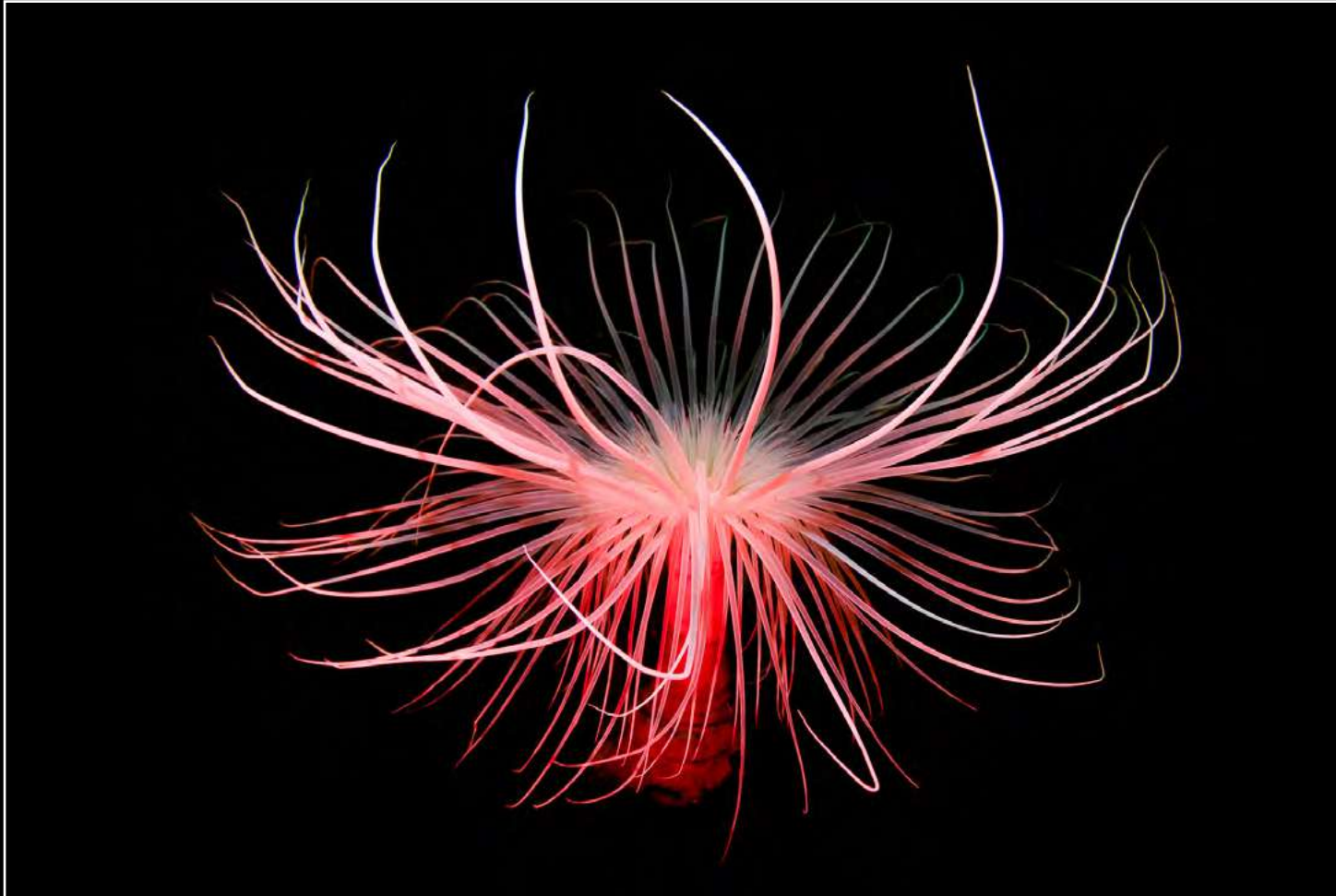
SS Rosalie, Weybourne, England **(MBY)**

Nikon , D7200, Subal ND7100, Tokina fisheye lens 10-17mm, iso 100, f/7.1, 1/8, Dual Inon Z-240

Judges comment:

A transportive image, rich with feeling that uses a long exposure as a starting point and captures the feeling of being underwater through the swirling textures of fish.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Firework Anemone’

Terry Griffiths (United Kingdom)

I'd long planned a red light image of a firework anemone, but for this photo from Loch Duich the result came in part by accident as I left my red light source on when changing back over to strobes. Anyway, the result looked good so I made sure I nailed the shot. Loch Duich is a very silty site and rewards good diving skills for anyone wanting backscatter free images!

Loch Duich Scottish Highlands , United Kingdom

Nikon, D500, Nauticam D500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 800, f/7.1, 1/50, Inon Z240 X2 and red light

Judges comment:

A stunning and innovative take on one of the UK's most beautiful sessile species. The mixed lighting is not just attractive, but reveals the three dimensional nature of this reasonably uncommon subject.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Drifting through the moons’

Richard Shucksmith (United Kingdom)

We had been diving for a week out to Sula Sgeir/North Rona North West coast of Scotland with Bob Anderson on the MV Halton. On our way back we dove some sites along the north coast of Scotland, particularly inside Loch Eriboll. Dropping in, we followed a wall for a while before coming up into the shallows where we encountered the dense swarm of moon jellyfish (Aurelia aurita). I do love being amongst a swarm of jellyfish; it is a worldly experience.

North Coast of Scotland, Loch Eriboll,
Scotland

Nikon, Nikon D4, Nauticam D4, Nikkor 16-35mm F4, iso 100, f8, 1/125, 2 x Inon Z240

Judges comment:

Delicate shades and delicate subjects caught in a perfect composition with an obvious main subject supported by an impressive array of shapes and sizes.

Peter Rowlands

9) British Waters Wide Angle



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Blues Brothers’

Nicholas More (United Kingdom)

Blue Sharks are amongst my favourite species to photograph and I try to get offshore every summer to target them. These are feisty characters that readily interact with divers when there is rubby dubby (chum!) in the water. I have been taking motion blur shots of the blues for some time now but a well balanced frame featuring multiple sharks has until now, eluded me. The conditions on this day in early autumn were cold, windy and choppy but we were blessed with abundant sharks, as many as 10 around the boat and I firmly believe the addition of my vomit into the chum slick contributed to our success. I had a few photographic aspirations that day, this being one of them. The others I didn't achieve...I will try again next year.

Penzance, Cornwall, UK

Nikon , D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm f3.5-4.5 AT-X DX, iso 100, f/18, 1/8th, Inon Z330

Judges comment:

Excellent motion blur and a moody background canvas to show them off.

Martin Edge



COMMENDED

'The tree of diving life'

Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom)

This was taken on a post lockdown dive at Vobster Quay Inland dive centre. A group of three of us were using scooters, enabling us to explore the whole of the site. One of the lesser visited parts of the quarry is its far west side where there is a flooded forest. A few of the trees remain standing in the fresh water, often looking eerie, skeletal and ghost-like. On this occasion I was lower than my buddies and I looked up to see them doing circuits around this lone tree and was able to capture this scene. You can almost feel the enjoyment coming off this image which I feel captures the essence of fun that can be had when diving, especially so because it was taken during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Vobster Quay, Somerset, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , Z6, Nauticam NA Z7, Nikon 8-15 @ 15mm, iso 900, f6.3, 1/40, none

Judges comment:

I really like the frame of this image. The two divers who appear in a picture perfect poise together within the surroundings of Vobster Quay. One diver going in one direction and the other in the opposite way. The dead tree splits the two divers. Excellent composition.

Martin Edge

9) British Waters Wide Angle



COMMENDED

'The gannet and the mackerel'
Richard Shucksmith (United Kingdom)

Over the years, the northern gannets have tracked and followed fishing vessels feeding on the discarded fish. I used this information and mackerel to create my boat discarding fish. Using a 45cm dome port especially made for the split level shots by Peter Ladell, my good friend Phil Harris and I went out and simulated a fishing vessel discarding fish. Phil dropped mackerel in front of the dome, once the gannets were diving. I never intended to have a fish in the image, but one of the mackerel purely by luck landed the right way up. We all need a little bit of luck sometimes. It is exciting working with the gannets, they are a fantastic seabird and to see them close up diving into the water is a great experience.

Shetland Isles, Scotland **(MBY)**

Nikon , Nikon D4, Nauticam D4, Sigma 15mm fisheye, iso 800, f11, 1/320, 2 x Inon Z240

Judges comment:

I really liked this image from the outset. There is so much to observe. Goodness knows how much work went into getting the action with both the mackerel and the gannets.

Martin Edge



COMMENDED

‘Seal pups’

Grant Thomas (United Kingdom)

The Farne islands in the UK are one of the best places in the world to dive with Grey seals and this is largely due to the fact that they are protected under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970. This has allowed the seal population to grow enormously and it's now estimated that there are more than 120,000 grey seals in Britain, representing 40% of the world's population. Being very interacted and playful, they are a photographers dream animal. In this particular instance we were about to surface and finish our dive when i noticed two young seals rolling around, playing near the surface. As I brought my camera up to to my eye, the late afternoon sun burst through the clouds, creating a wonderful display of golden light beams. All I had to do was wait for that perfect moment as their eyes met mine.

Farne Islands, United Kingdom **(MBY)**

Canon, 5d mkiv, Ikelite housing, Canon 8 - 15mm fisheye , iso 400, f/13, 1/200, 2 x Ikelite DS 161's

Judges comment:

Seal shots are common in UPY, but this picture is a real standout capturing the playful character of a pair of youngsters, framed against an attractive, and well controlled sunburst.

Alex Mustard

10) British Waters Macro

for close-up/macro images shot
anywhere in UK waters. Open to all.

WINNER

‘Portrait of a variable blenny’
Malcolm Nimmo (United Kingdom)

*The variable blenny (*Parablennius pilicornis*) is a relatively new arrival to UK coastal waters, with its origins from more southerly waters (it has been recorded throughout the Mediterranean Sea). This species may appear in a number of different colour forms. The current image is of a male and was taken in Plymouth Sound, July 2020. This particular blenny was standing out proud on a reef ledge, making it an ideal subject. The image was captured using snooted lighting to emphasise only the face of the blenny, with the snooted light being positioned from above the head enhancing the facial features.*

Plymouth Sound, United Kingdom **(MBY)**

Nikon, D7200, Nauticam, Nikon 60mm , iso 200, f/13, 1/80, Inon 240 strobe with a Flip snoot pro

Judges comment:

A beautiful UK fish portrait. Everything about this image is perfect. The composition of the two eyes in relation to the height gives us the stark black background which is framed along all three side. Both eyes are on the law of thirds and the mouth below has also been framed on the lower law of thirds. All these elements provide us with a beautiful all round framed underwater photograph. Congratulations to the winner of the British Waters Macro.

Martin Edge





RUNNER UP

'Stalkie on Bootlace weed'

Dr Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)

A beautiful summer morning in mid-July, we left the beach and swam through beautiful clumps of bootlace weed in the high tide. Looking closer, we could see snails, shells, anemones and stalked jellyfish making their temporary homes among the weeds. Very peaceful moments.

Kimmeridge Bay, , UK **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam, 105mm, iso 400, F11, 1/60, 2X Retra Flash Pro with beam restrictors

Judges comment:

One of my favourites in the contest, a stunning composition that feels totally original despite the familiar subject matter. Fabulous photography.

Alex Mustard



THIRD

'Nest buddies'

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

The corkwing wrasse you can see in the background was actually busy building a nest under the pier. This means he was very distracted by his duties and would regularly come back to the same spot to add more gathered pieces of seaweed.

The nudibranch had been making its way along a near-by piece of kelp, and I only had to wait for a minute or two before it made its way up a seaweed stump enabling me to grab a few shots just at the moment when wrasse and nudibranch were both in frame.

Swanage pier, UK

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 60mm macro, iso 320, f/14, 1/250, 2
Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

When I first saw this image I thought it was lucky to have the wrasse appear in the background but, having read the photographer's back story, I did him a disservice :-). The image was intentional, well planned, timed and positioned which makes it even more impressive.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Squidge and Rust. Candystripe worm ‘

Dr Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)

One of the UK's cutest flatworms, the candy stripe worm. This guy was crawling across some old rusty pylons in search of more fertile grounds.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam (of course), 105 and Nauticam SMC-1, iso 400, F29, 1/200, Retra Flash Pro x2

Judges comment:

An eye catching composition which leads the eye through the frame.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Three little bugs’

Trevor Rees (United Kingdom)

These tiny crustaceans are great fun to photograph. These are the amphipod Imphimedia obesa and are about the size of a pea. I've had success photographing a single individual before by winning the British macro category in this competition a few years ago. I love the striking markings, the insect like compound eyes and challenge of using a macro lens fitted with a close up diopter to capture the fine detail. After realising it has become a popular subject I needed a different take. This time I've created an image with three together, all perched on top of an orange dead man's finger.

Loch Carron, Scotland, UK

Nikon , D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikkor 105 f2.8 micro VR + Nauticam SMC, iso 200, f/32, 1/200, Sea & Sea YS110a with home made bottle snoot

Judges comment:

This image leaps off the screen and I can't help smiling at these cute critters posed on a soft coral. During judging we were aware that this is one individual (with the same markings) photographed three times.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Sea hare stare’

Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

Sea hares can look brown, unappealing and sluggish until you look closely and notice the delicate patterns and touches of colour. They feed on seaweed which makes a distracting background, so I used a snoot for an isolated portrait effect. There was a little swell so this sea hare was wafting to and fro on its piece of weed. I set up my lighting from above and waited for the swell to move the sea hare into my pool of light. I like the way the snoot really highlights the head tentacles, which resemble a hare’s ears, giving this animal its common name.

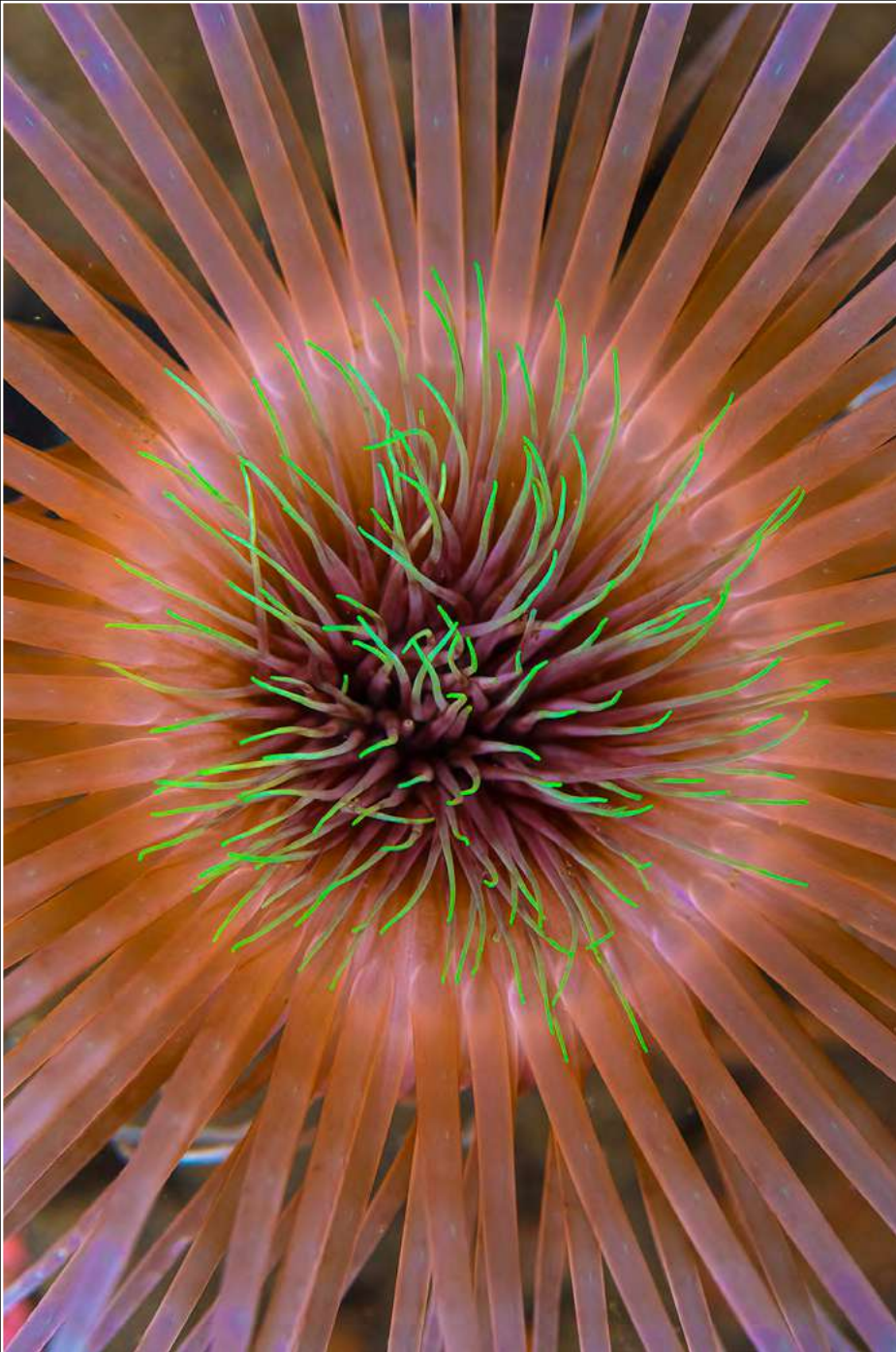
Swanage pier, Dorset, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, 60mm, iso 320, f16, 1/250, Backscatter Mini Flash and Snoot

Judges comment:

This is a gorgeous shot in every way. It takes a potentially bland subject, isolates it with light and highlights it’s prominent features (eyes and ‘ears’) with shallow focus. A class act.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Firework Explodes’

Simon Temple (United Kingdom)

Anyone familiar with diving the sea lochs of Scotland will have encountered the Firework Anemone. Over the last few years I've tried numerous techniques to capture their image often in dark silty environments. This individual was one of only two in an area we dived repeatedly for three days. After exhausting all the wider angle options in days one and two I had started to work with other subjects and formats in the area. On the final day I was returning from shooting macro further down the loch when I paused by this anemone and wondered if it was possible to take an interesting shot of this relatively large subject with a macro lens. I doubted it was worth it but took a single top down shot anyway. I'm really glad I did.

Loch Duich, western Scotland, United Kingdom

Nikon, D500, Aquatica AD500, 85mm, iso 200, f/11, 1/250, Inon z240

Judges comment:

Such a pretty picture and one I feel is going to make Simon's unconventional lens choice one many photographers will emulate when diving for this subject.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

‘The jester within’

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

This is more than just a nice photo for me, it's also a reminder of a wonderful experience. Having spotted this individual starting to make a new burrow under a large boulder, I thought I'd see if, because it was so busy, it would let me get close enough to take this sort of portrait shot.

After a careful approach, and letting it check out my camera with its feelers, it was quite content to carry on mobbing sand and stones around, happy that I was not threat. Being able to get so close and observe the stunning detail, colour and form of its body was a real treat. And happily, a nice image was available too.

Torbay, South Devon, UK **(MBY)**

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 60mm macro, iso 500, f/9, 1/320, Sea
& Sea YS-D1, custom snoot

Judges comment:

After reading the ‘back story’ I can begin to realise the dedication and commitment which went into this image. The two eyes in particular and even the catch light within the eye are also symmetrical. A portrait at it's best.

Martin Edge

COMMENDED

'Scillonian Angel'

Malcolm Nimmo (United Kingdom)

Sea Angels are tiny free-swimming gastropods which move through the water by majestically rowing their 'wings'. I was very fortunate to encounter these wonderful little creatures, for the first time, whilst snorkelling in the waters around St Martins, Isles of Scilly.

During August 2020, the waters of St Martins experienced a period of patchy planktonic enriched water containing these curious creatures, as well as a plethora of other fascinating species. The sea angels were challenging to photograph, given their size (<1 cm) and their continual motion (so plenty of out of focus or partial subject shots were acquired !). This photograph was taken whilst night snorkelling.

St Martins, Isles of Scilly, United Kingdom

Nikon, D7200, Nauticam, Nikon 60mm with CMC-2, iso 400, F/16, 1/100, INON 240 X 2

Judges comment:

You have taken a tiny Sea Angel and made it look superb. Very well done indeed.

Martin Edge





COMMENDED

‘Inquisitive shanny’

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Shannies are such characterful little fish, and they seem to be fascinated by divers. Quite often they'll approach very closely and watch with an inquisitive look on their face. This makes them easy to photograph, but I was lucky that this particular individual settled on a rock above me. This allowed for a slightly upward angle and the introduction of natural light into the shot.

Torbay, south Devon, UK **(MBY)**

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica A-EM1,
Olympus 60mm macro, iso 320, f/10, 1/50, 2x
Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

It's never easy to get on the substrate with an upward angle, but you have achieved much more than that by introducing the green water together with the hint of a black background combined. The black and green go together so well.

Martin Edge

THE CROWN ESTATE

11) British Waters Living Together

This category is sponsored by The Crown Estate.

The Crown Estate play a role in managing activities on the seabed around England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and wanted to create a category that showcases the co-existence of nature and human activities on the UK seabed.

We were happy for photographers to interpret the Living Together theme in a broad fashion in the first year of this new category.

We were looking for strong, striking images (both macro and wide angle) that show the value of natural and/or man-made habitats in British Seas, particularly offshore renewables. Open to all.

11) British Waters Living Together



WINNER

'SS Hispania'

Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

The UK in my view has some of the finest wreck diving in the world, and the SS Hispania in the Sound of Mull is one of my favourites. This wreck truly has become an artificial reef: the wreck attracts the wildlife and both wreck and wildlife attract the divers. Every inch of metal is covered in anemones, seaweeds or sponges, orange and white. My buddy was investigating the superstructure above a row of portholes and I moved back, shooting as wide as I could to try to give a sense of scale within this colourful scene.

Sound of Mull, Scotland, UK

Nikon, D500, Nauticam NA D500, Tokina 10-17mm, iso 800, f11, 1/80, Sea & Sea YS-110a x 2

Judges comment:

A deserved winner which combines a strong image visually with a very positive message.

Peter Rowlands



RUNNER UP

‘Crab affairs’

Atanas Petrov (United Kingdom)

During a dive on the SS Rosalie, a wreck off the coast of Weybourne in England, I noticed these two brown crabs (Cancer pagurus) occupying a groove in one of the supporting elements of the propeller shaft. They have probably completed an important part of their life cycle - the mating, and the male on the top was protecting the female underneath until her exoskeleton hardens. I was pleased to witness and capture this special behaviour using my wide-angle lens, which allowed me to include part of the surrounding environment as well.

SS Rosalie, Weybourne, England, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D300, Subal ND7100, Tokina fisheye lens 10-17mm, iso 200, f/13, 1/25, Dual Inon Z-240

Judges comment:

Symmetrical scenes are rare underwater and mirrored composition really makes this precisely composed shot standout, revealing how this seabed structure is helping these Cromer crabs live their lives.

Alex Mustard



THIRD

‘Pontoon island’

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Anchored in a sheltered inlet on Loch Carron, western Scotland, this floating pontoon is used by local fishermen to stow their gear when not being used. It's been there for some years and is now a floating island of life.

The anchor lines are a vertical forest of seaweeds, ascidians and fan worms, while the underside is covered with anemones and sponges.

This was a very lucky shot, as it was taken during the only 15 minute period when the sun came out on a 7 day trip!

Loch Carron, UK

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 14-42mm with Nauticam WWL-1,
iso 640, f/16, 1/320, 2 Sea & Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

You got lucky with the sun breaking through. It's the silhouette of the sunburst illuminating the distant diver which really sets this image off. The surface is bright but the anchor line tones it down somewhat. Lovely image indeed.

Martin Edge



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Pier Jelly’

Dr Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)

A rare good viz and nice sun day under Swanage Pier.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam, 28-70 and Nauticam WACP-1, iso 400, F11, 1/80, 2x Retra Flash Pro

Judges comment:

Great atmosphere and impact but there were more images with a stronger Living Together visual.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Snakelocks in the Sun’

Dr Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)

A lovely snakelocks anemone in the sun. People are regularly surprised by the beauty and colours of life and light in British waters.

Swanage Pier, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon, D850, Nauticam, 28-70 and Nauticam WACP-1, iso 200, F11, 1/100, Retra Flash Pro x2

Judges comment:

Whilst the highly colourful snake lock takes centre stage it's the two tone sunbeam shafts of colour that resonate with me. The shafts split each other, light blue at bottom, dark blue at the top with a hint of pink in between.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Bib on wreck'

Trevor Rees (United Kingdom)

The idea of a shoal of fish on a wreck was my interpretation of the 'Living together' category. These fish are common bib and are easily found on this popular south coast wreck of the James Egan Layne. The wreck has become an artificial reef on what is otherwise just a sandy sea bed. My shot is from the forward hold section of the wreck and was an easy enough shot to take. My hardest challenge was just coping with mediocre visibility but getting close with a wide angle lens got the job done.

Wreck of the James Egan Layne, Whitsand Bay, Plymouth, UK

Nikon , D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikkor 28-70 f3.5-4.5 D + Nauticam WACP1, iso 1600, f/10, 1/80, Dual Inon S2000

Judges comment:

A school of bib find an old wreck an ideal sanctuary for them to prosper in British Waters.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Torch reef'

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

No matter how much mis-treatment our marine-life takes, it always has a way of making the most of a bad situation. Here an old divers torch has become home to many different species and is becoming part of the environment itself.

Loch Duich, UK

Olympus, OM-D E-M1, Aquatica AE-M1,
Olympus 14-42mm, iso 640, f/8, 1/50, 2 Sea &
Sea YD-D1

Judges comment:

A great shot showing how resilient nature is finding a new use for a discarded item.

Peter Rowlands



COMMENDED

'Pier bait ball'

Alison Pettitt (United Kingdom)

During the summer lockdown in 2020, life under Swanage Pier blossomed, possibly due to less human activity in the region. I was lucky enough to be diving on a clear summers day when large bait balls congregated underneath the pier. The image was lit with just one strobe positioned to the right of the photograph, which captured the shape of the bait ball and the pier structure in the background. This was a lucky fluke, as I was shooting with 2 strobes, but during multiple shots, the left one didn't recharge as quickly. I like the effect of the fish swimming through the shot into the shade of the pier.

Swanage Pier, England **(MBY)**

Nikon , D7100, Nauticam NA-D7100, Tokina 10-17mm, iso ISO320, f13, 1/100, 1 x Inon 330 strobe

Judges comment:

This a beautiful composition that is perhaps my favourite in the category. It captures the richness of life in British Seas and how seabed structures help them thrive. If it were as well processed as others in this category it might have finished right at the top.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

'Southampton Water Starfish'

Andy Pearson (United Kingdom)

The Solent and Southampton Water has become colonised by beds of non-native Pacific oysters. These beds can provide a habitat for the common starfish which can sometimes be seen during low tide periods. The settled summer sea conditions provided better than normal underwater visibility for the Solent area! The orange starfish with the sunset glow contrasted well with the grey colour of the oysters for a split level photo with the port in the background.

Southampton Water, Hampshire, UK **(MBY)**

Nikon , D7100, Ikelite 200FL, Tokina 10-17mm lens @10mm, iso 400, f/16, 1/60, Ikelite DS51

Judges comment:

A well timed and executed image with complimentary colours but the city skyline was a bit too distant to go any higher.

Peter Rowlands



COMMENDED

'Who Gobies there?'

Billy Arthur (United Kingdom)

Whilst on a nudibranch hunt in Cunningsburgh, Shetland Islands I came across some old glass bottles which I had never noticed before. On closer inspection I could see something moving inside one of the bottles. After patiently waiting for a few minutes this little Two spotted goby poked its head out for a look at me. It didn't seem to be put off by what it saw and hung around long enough for me to compose the shot. I wanted to illuminate the glass slightly to show its green hue in contrast to the orange of the Goby. It's always a lovely encounter when you feel a connection to the animal, who's world you are briefly sharing.

Cunningsburgh, Shetland Islands, Scotland
(MBY)

Sony, a6500, Nauticam NA-A6500, Sony 16-50mm f3.5-5.6 + Nauticam CMC, iso 640, f16, 1/60, Sea&Sea YS-D1

Judges comment:

A lovely insight using just enough light to achieve the visual effect and the overall message.

Martin Edge

12) British Waters Compacts

for wide angle or close-up/macro images shot in British waters with a compact camera (includes stills from GoPro and other action cameras, does not include interchangeable lens mirrorless cameras). Open to all.



WINNER

'Sunrise Mute Swan Feeding Underwater'

Ian Wade (United Kingdom)

I had been watching a couple of Mute Swans at my local lake. They seemed to be following people around looking for food.

I decided to attach a small weight to the back of my GoPro and threw it into the lake a short distance from me. The small weight would mean the GoPro always fell on its back, so I could shoot at an almost vertical angle. I have connected the GoPro to my Phone so I could remotely fire off images.

The GoPro hitting the water had attached the swan's interest and they swam over. I waited until one of the swans was in the correct position and with its head underwater and shot a high-speed burst of images enabling me to capture this picture.

St Georges Park - Bristol, United Kingdom
(MBY)

GoPro , HERO3+ Black Edition, f/2.8, iso 100, f2.8, 1/433, Natural lighting

Judges comment:

This was a unanimous choice from the judges. Although the face of the swan is in shade it's all of the other elements which were so strong. Snells window in particular, with the low light and the branches of the trees. Beautiful image.

Martin Edge



RUNNER UP

'Hold Tight'

Sandra Stalker (United Kingdom)

Within my underwater photography I am always excited by the tiny and overlooked, mostly focusing on macro and getting as close as I can to my subject. On this day last Summer the conditions were perfect, calm sea, clear viz and fantastic underwater scenery meant it was like diving through a spectacular underwater meadow. There were so many tiny Stalked Jellyfish clinging to the bootlace weed. The ambient light was stunning, sunshine beaming through the long strands of bootlace. For this shot I went much wider than normal and used the ambient light to almost silhouette the tiny Stalked Jellyfish, emphasizing its tiny shape against the naturally lit background.

Kimmeridge bay, Dorset, England **(MBY)**

Canon, G7Xii, Ikelite, non, iso 125, F10, 1/200, backscatter miniflash

Judges comment:

Sandra's beautiful image is a wonderful and unintentional homage of famous 1960s shot taken by the great Colin Doeg, BUPY in 1968 and founder of BSoUP, at the same location. Colin's shot 'Rays Of The Spectrum' was celebrated for decades yet is topped by 'Hold Tight' with the inclusion of a stalked jellyfish.

Alex Mustard



THIRD

‘Pinky’

Sandra Stalker (United Kingdom)

I absolutely adore these little Gobies and their grumpy faces. I often watch them when I dive as they have such an inquisitive nature and often challenge me to a staring contest in which they win. They tend to blend in with their background on the sand and I wanted to make the Goby stand out so for this shot I lit it with both a coloured filter behind and a snooted strobe in front to bring out the face and draw attention to an overlooked little fish. I was excited by the contrast of the vibrant pink to the glumness of the face.

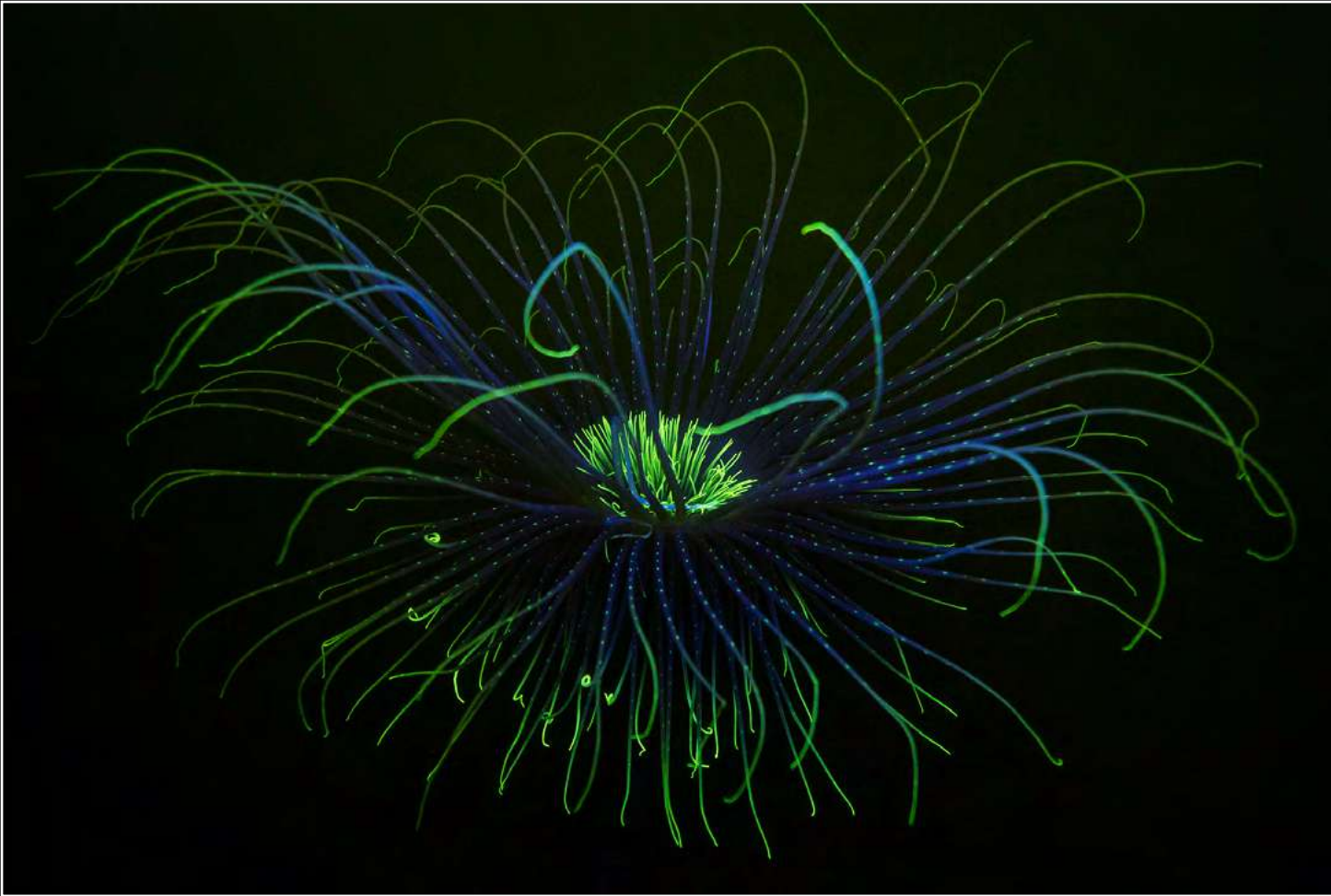
Portland harbour, Dorset, England **(MBY)**

Canon, G7Xii, Ikelite, CMC1, iso 250, f/8, 1/125, Backscatter mini flash with snoot x 2

Judges comment:

A delicate use, and choice, of light and colour made this image standout for all three judges. It's great to see such images which celebrate UK marine life and the capability of compact cameras.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Fluorescent wonder’

James Lynott (United Kingdom)

After spending the day diving at the Garvellachs, Mark Kirkland and I had decided to make the most of the day and stop at Loch Fyne for an evening dive on the way home. The site we decided on was at Inveraray slip which is fantastic for fireworks anemones. My aim was to get more images of the fireworks anemones fluorescing under blue light. I have captured a lot of images and video of these anemones fluorescing and, while I’m always looking for new subjects, I will never get bored of observing the way they fluoresce so brightly and show many different patterns. This was a particularly large individual was a favourite of mine from this dive as I was able to capture the whole anemone with its long tentacles stretched out within frame.

Loch Fyne, Scotland

Canon, G7X MkII, Fantasea FG7XII, N/A, iso 640, f2, 1/80, 2 x FireDiveGear/Riff TL Azur

Judges comment:

A jaw-dropping subject captured using the challenging techniques of fluorescence photography underwater - a celebration of colour and shapes.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Friend or Foe?’

Georgie Bull (United Kingdom)

I visited Porthkerris for the first time in the summer of 2020. I had high expectations, but I certainly wasn't expecting to see cuttlefish in such abundance. During a surface interval, I imagined a shot with a cuttlefish close to my lens and the beautiful forest of bootlace weed in the background. I arranged with my dive buddy and fellow marine biology coursemate, Sally, to join me in the shallows as I waited for a willing subject. By complete chance, a ballan wrasse swam through my shot as a cuttlefish approached. It really couldn't have been timed better! It's great to see two iconic British marine species in one shot, especially when I didn't expect to see the second!

Porthkerris, Helston, Cornwall, England, England

Canon , G9x MKii, Fantasea for Canon G9x, INON UWL-H100, iso 600, 10, 1/250, Ambient

Judges comment:

Beautiful natural colours throughout with the iconic cuttlefish joined by the equally iconic wrasse to produce a celebratory scene.

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Hiding in yellow'

James Lynott (United Kingdom)

A favourite shore dive of mine is the Falls of Lora, situated at the narrow entrance to Loch Etive, near Oban. Small neap tides allowed us to plan three dives over one weekend in August last year. The hope was to spot and photograph spurdog sharks, they are known to inhabit Loch Etive and have been seen at this site during summer months. Unfortunately, we didn't see a single spurdog but that didn't detract from the dives, there is such amazing underwater topography and proliferation of life at this site there was plenty to admire and photograph. While swimming along one of the gullies this edible crab caught my eye as a nice photo opportunity as it seemed to be comfortably nestled into the yellow breadcrumb sponge and hydroids surrounding it.

Falls of Lora, Loch Etive, Scotland

Canon, G7X MkII, Fantasea FG7XII, N/A, iso 125, f4, 200, 2 x SUPE PV22

Judges comment:

Life upon life, upon life. A frame that explodes with colour and showcases the richness of the underwater world.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Summer Stalk'

Ryan Stalker (United Kingdom)

In this image is one of my favourite underwater creatures, the Stalked Jellyfish. Each summer I make the extra effort to find them with varied success. On this occasion I tried a new location on the South Coast of Dorset and found them to be in large numbers. Each firmly attached to boot lace weed, which I had not seen before. This particular Stalked Jellyfish was in the ideal position and after a few test shots I was happy with the results. The water visibility was great and being surrounded by these amazing creatures made it a perfect day.

Dorset, Kimmeridge, UK **(MBY)**

Canon, Powershot G7 X Mark II, Ikelite, Nauticam CMC-1, iso 250, f11, 1/640, 2 off Inon S2000

Judges comment:

Pin sharp and detailed, the diagonal weed and radial jellyfish make contrasting and eye catching shapes.

Peter Rowlands



COMMENDED

‘A Miserable Plaice to Be’

Georgie Bull (United Kingdom)

I came across this happy-looking fellow on a night dive in January 2019. I had not long started using my own camera underwater and had just invested in a couple of unbranded budget video lights. I was desperate to capture some of the animals that live in the sand in a way that would excite people. I love diving in sandy habitats, particularly at night, when the sand ripples look similar to a moonscape, and the cephalopods come out to play. Flatfish are also fairly common and are one of my favourite subjects to photograph. Their comical expression never fails to bring a smile to my face.

Newton's Cove, Weymouth, Dorset, England

Canon , G9x MKii, Fantasea for Canon G9x, None, iso 125, 2.8, 1/30, Unbranded Budget Video Light

Judges comment:

A well chosen angle for this shot with the light fading away and out of focus into the night. A very effective shot.

Peter Rowlands



(MBY)

COMMENDED

'Frog's eye view of Autumn'
Ian Wade (United Kingdom)

This image is part of a 12-month ongoing underwater project. I am photographing a woodland tree canopy from a split level vertical perspective. This image was taken during November so the canopy is full of beautiful Autumnal colours. As projects go this is the hardest I've undertaken!

So many factors come into play. Each month the camera has to be positioned in the same location. The lighting has to be correct with the sun not too high in the sky and each image is framed with bubbles.

The water level has to be high with water pushing through at a high rate to create the bubble effect. I made a pole out of two broom handles which have been screwed together enabling me to position the camera in the exact spot each time.

It's a different perspective of a tree canopy - The one a toad or frog might see!

Brislington Brook - Bristol, United Kingdom

GoPro , HERO3+ Black Edition, GoPro, GoPro
f/2.8, iso 100, f/2.8, 1/308 , Natural lighting

Judges comment:

I really like this square crop with the lens being pointed directly upwards into the sky. Exposure is ideal with the blues, yellows and greens.

Martin Edge



COMMENDED

‘Mini Kraken’

James Lynott (United Kingdom)

I spent quite a few evenings during September and October last year doing night dives in Lochs Long and Fyne, this was partly to capture more underwater fluorescence images but also to look for little cuttlefish after hearing about multiple sightings. These little cuttlefish have so much character and different personalities, some will happily sit still on the seabed or go about their business, while others will instantly bury themselves using their arms to move silt and debris on top of them. On this dive in Loch Fyne there were many little cuttles at around 12m depth and this one was happy for me to get close enough for a couple of macro shots. To get this image I used an Inon UCL-165M67 wet lens and 36.8mm focal length (100mm equivalent).

Loch Fyne, Scotland

Canon, G7XII, Fantasea FG7XII, INON UCL-165M67 wet lens, iso 125, f6.3, 125, 2 x SUPE PV22

Judges comment:

A beautiful cuttle fish on the sand with good negative space and great eye contact. I would just liked to have seen a hint of sand at the bottom of the image to give it a little more space.

Martin Edge

Marine Conservation Photographer of the Year is open to both underwater and “above water” photos.

Open to all photographers (even those who are not underwater photographers).

This category has a separate entry system. This is a single image category and photographers may enter up to 5 images. Photos can be taken underwater or above the water but must highlight a marine conservation story (both positive and negative stories are eligible). Freshwater themed images are not allowed.

Images will be judged without captions (but entrants can assume that the judges will be aware of most major marine conservation topics). The winning images will, however, be displayed with a full caption.



WINNER

‘Aerial view of a crowded island in Guna Yala’

Karim Iliya (United States)

A tightly inhabited village off the coast of Panama in Guna Yala region serves as a microcosm reminder of how humans across the planet are consuming land and space at a rapid rate. Most of the Guna people live on these densely populated islands, catching fish and farming coconuts on nearby islands. The importance of human's relationship with nature and the need to protect it is becomes very apparent when you look at our species from a bird's eye perspective and see how much space we take up. I had come to this region of Panama to photographing the art of making mola, the traditional clothing that the Guna people wear. While waiting on a boat I flew my drone over this island to get this aerial perspective and give more impact to the image than I could have shooting at sea level or from underwater.

Guna Yala, Panama

DJI Phantom 4 Pro, DJI Phantom 4 Pro, none, 20.7mm, iso 100, f/2.8, 1/500, none

Judges comment:

A stark visual reminder of how we humans over populate and totally develop land, then overfish the surrounding delicate environment. This image captures that unnatural and unsustainable imbalance perfectly.

Peter Rowlands



RUNNER UP

'The Yellow Candy'

Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)

*During one of my trips to the sea, I noticed a strong presence of these yellow nets closed like "candy". I could not understand their purpose. In the following days, with the help of some local fishermen, I discovered that the candy is the heart of a trap. It is filled with dead fish and inserted into another net. Thanks to the smell of the remains of dead fish, it attracts some small molluscs - to be precise *Nassarius mutabilis* - that once they enter the trap they are unable to get out. Once the contents of the trap have been recovered, the candy is often abandoned in the sea, causing plastic pollution and, as visible in the shot, a trap for other organisms.*

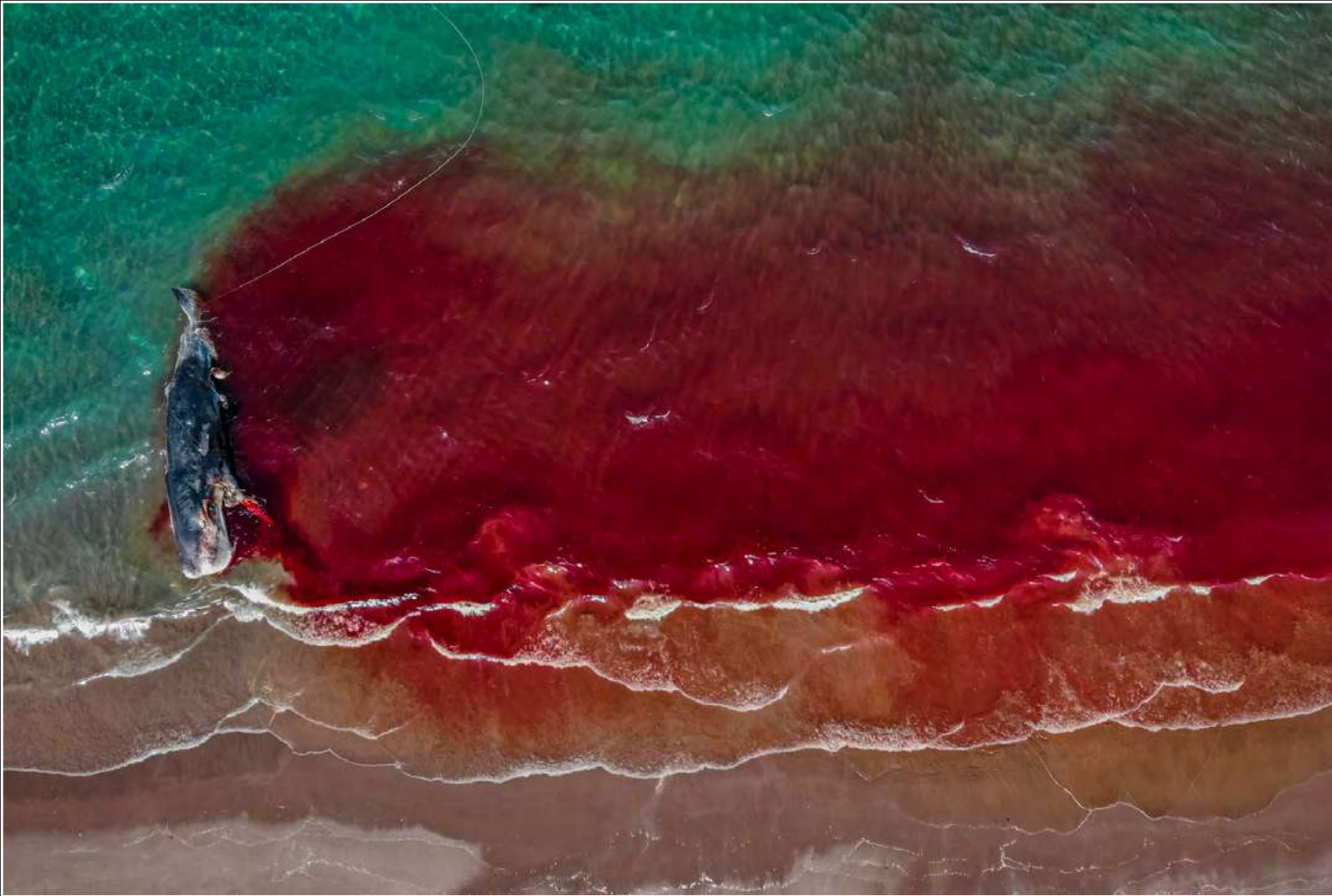
Campi Flegrei, Italy

Canon, 5D SR, SEACAM 5D, 8-15 lens, ISO 125, f/16, 1/60, ONE UW

Judges comment:

A physically small example of 'ghost fishing' where discarded plastic which takes hundreds of years to break down carries on catching and entrapping marine life.

Martin Edge



THIRD

‘River of blood from a dead sperm whale’

Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

Seeing a dead animal is always sad. But seeing a big mammal dead like this sperm whale, it is something indescribable.

From land the image was terrifying. But when I flew the drone the situation was even more shocking and dramatic. There was an incredibly large river of blood, maybe longer than a mile, coming out of the sperm whale.

Baja California Sur, Mexico, Spain

Dji, Mavic air, iso 100, f/2.8, 1/230

Judges comment:

A terribly sad scene with the ocean saturated from the death of this great creature. The aerial view tells the story perfectly, revealing the sperm whale's characteristic profile and the flood of blood on the tide.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Cleaning Up’

Rosie Leaney (Australia)

One of my favourite roles as a divemaster in Manly, was organising underwater clean-up events, and meeting passionate divers who care for our local environment. So I wanted to create an image showing the positive impact of our dive community on the marine debris problem. I decided to do this as a stitched panorama. It was an ambitious idea, and I wasn't sure if it would work. I took position underwater, with the camera on a tripod. A diver would approach me with rubbish they had found, I would take the image, then rotate the camera to the next diver. We repeated this process until I was satisfied with the images. Fortunately, with skilled divers, a plan, and some creative underwater signalling, we pulled it off in one dive!

Manly Cove, Sydney, Australia, Australia

Sony, A6000, Nauticam NA-A6000, Fisheye, iso 250, f8, 1/160, SOLA 3000 Video Light

Judges comment:

It is always heartened to have powerful images with a positive message to award in this category. Just as on land, cleaning litter can make a big different in our local seas, the panoramic image adds a creative twist to this documentary image.

Alex Mustard



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘Making a living’

Scott Tuason (Philippines)

What may seem like a grisly market scene is actually an example of sustainable fishing practices. This wet market in the coastal town of Baler, Philippines sells fish caught using the traditional hand-line method, which targets one mature tuna / Mahi-mahi at a time and minimizes bycatch.

Baler, Aurora Province, Philippines

Nikon , D800, N/A, 14mm f2.8, iso 400, f/3.5, 1/50, N/A

Judges comment:

A good example of RTBF - Read The Backstory First!

Peter Rowlands



HIGHLY COMMENDED

‘A chef in Florida prepares an invasive lionfish’

Shane Gross (Canada)

While trying to tell the story of the invasive lionfish I felt it was important to get an image that would communicate how delicious they are and that scientists recommend eating them to create a market for them to help the local reefs. This part of Florida’s Gulf of Mexico is experiencing especially high numbers of the beautiful, but harmful red lionfish. When this chef found out I would like to photograph how he prepares them, he set up a special area on the roof of the building overlooking the ocean and I knew a good image was possible. I used a technique I love to use underwater - a panning slow shutter speed with flash to freeze the important bits and give a pleasing, painterly blur to rest.

Florida, USA

Nikon, D500, No housing, Tamron 10-24mm, iso 1600, f/5.6, 1/8, Yongnuo RF-603

Judges comment:

A very effective technique with the two main subjects well highlighted.

Martin Edge

HIGHLY COMMENDED

'Estuary misery'

Martin Rejžek (Czech Republic)

With water not suitable for drinking or watering most crops, brackish estuaries in Socotra Island are commonly used as dump sites and are waiting for monsoon floods that flush the rubbish to the sea. Leaking and leaching chemicals, eutrophication from sewerage and isolation from the sea due to road construction add to the dreary state of the ecosystem. Perceived by people as having little value, these coastal bodies of water, however, have paramount importance as nursery sites for fish. Dozens of fish have been found inhabiting the estuaries. These muddy habitats have also vital importance for a large number of birds and other fauna. Let's hope better awareness will soon lead to remedial actions resulting in healthy ecosystem without desperate goats scavenging for cardboard and food leftovers.

Socotra Island, Yemen

Nikon, D5100, none, Nikon 18-105 mm, B+W Circular Polarizer, iso 160, f/9.0, 1/320, none

Judges comment:

Have we created Hell? If this image is anything to go by, I would say 'Yes' but surely this toxic waste can be removed, cleaned up and natural life regenerated? The hope is that images like this will achieve that.

Peter Rowlands





COMMENDED

'The end of a silky shark'

Rafael Fernandez Caballero (Spain)

Silky shark entangled in a ghost net in Maldives, close to Ari Atoll. We were trying to spot a whale shark in the area when we saw this ghost net, we jumped into the water to see what was inside and to try to help but unfortunately there was a dead silky shark entangled. A lot of sharks die due to the big problem of ghost nets or lost nets.

Maldives Islands, Spain

Nikon, d850, Isotta D850, 8-15 mm nikon, iso 400, f/11, 1/320, None

Judges comment:

This kind of image has to be aired to all in order to bring to the attention the huge problem of ghost nets.

Martin Edge



COMMENDED

'Little Blue'

Scott Portelli (Australia)

Little penguins are the smallest of all penguins and are highly adapted for life in the sea. Its body is streamlined, its wings are modified as flippers and its feathers are densely distributed over its body. Vulnerable to predators, pollution, habitat degradation these endangered penguins are found around the southern parts of Australia. Washed up on a local beach a little penguin lies lifeless on the textured surface of a large piece of driftwood. With no apparent injuries, the cause of death remains unknown.

Wilsons Promontory, Australia

Olympus , EM1X, NA, 12-100mm, iso 400, f11, 1/640, Natural

Judges comment:

A graphic frame that draws us in to study the details and forces us to consider this tragic death. Thousands of air breathing species from seabirds, to penguins, to dolphins and porpoises die each year as the by-catch in fisheries, cask aside and washing ashore as if messengers of what is happening beyond the horizon.

Alex Mustard



COMMENDED

‘Leatherback Toddler’

Sirachai Arunrugstichai (Thailand)

In the past, the Andaman coast of Thailand was an important nesting site of the Leatherback in the eastern Indian Ocean, but they had long disappeared. Today they rarely come up to nest, possibly due to various threats they are facing in this severely exploited water. But in the past few years, there have been new nestings, and the scientists at Phuket Marine Biological Centre take a small number of hatchlings to conduct help design a headstarting program, similarly to what had been successfully done for other turtle species, to give hatchlings better chance of survival in the wild in the hope that they may reach adulthood to replenish their population. I often collaborate with scientists here, so they invited me to observe this experiment. I did not take many shots to avoid disturbing the hatchlings, but captured this youngster being fed.

Phuket Marine Biological Center, Phuket Province, Thailand **(MBY)**

Nikon, Nikon D850, Nauticam NA D850, Nikon 16 Fisheye, iso 640, f/22, 1/160, Sea&Sea YS-D2

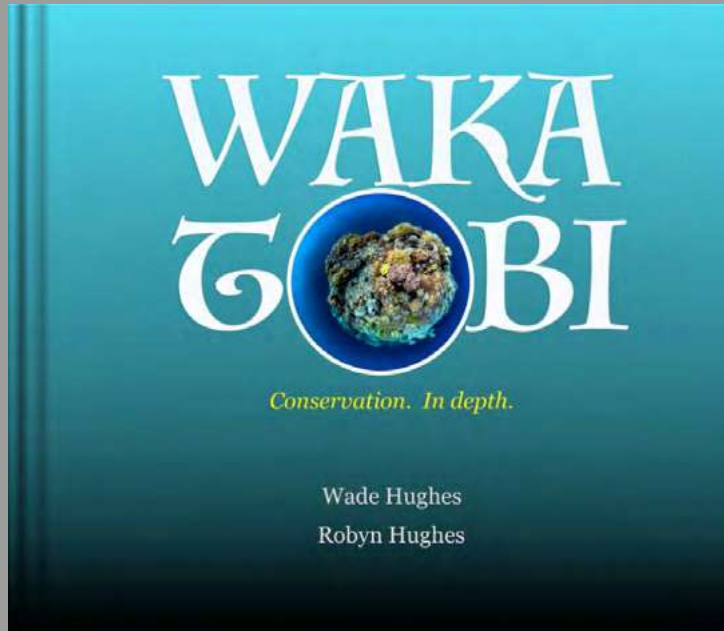
Judges comment:

A helping hand helps give this hatchling a better start, hopefully allowing to grow into a giant leatherback, the biggest turtle in the world.

Alex Mustard

Underwater photography Book of the Year 2021

WINNER



Wakatobi Conservation. In depth by Wade Hughes and Robyn Hughes

A superb photographic journey through Indonesia's Wakatobi National Park. Diving here brings more than just short-term enjoyment for visitors. It makes a significant contribution to the well-being of local communities, and helps ensure the long-term sustainable management of the globally important coral reefs within the Park's boundaries. "Wakatobi; Conservation. In depth" reveals the vision of the local communities, and illustrates the success of their approach to economically sustainable conservation with more than 200 pages of extraordinary photographs.

Wade Hughes is a Member of the Explorers Club, a Fellow of the Royal

Geographical Society, and a multi-award winning photographer. He has dived extensively round the world from the Arctic Circle and the Southern Ocean, to the equatorial tropics.

Robyn is an accomplished diver and award-winning photographer who began her international travels as a teenager. She took up writing and photography after a career in banking, and, with Wade, has since visited more than 50 countries.

Preview
www.blurb.com
Author website

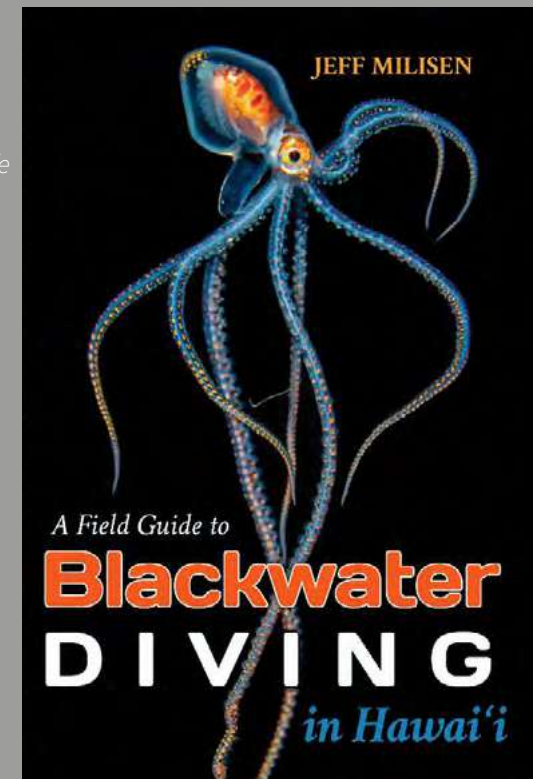
<http://www.wadeandrobynhughes.com>

A Field Guide to Blackwater Diving in Hawaii by Jeff Milisen

The world's greatest migration of animal life occurs every evening when uncountable numbers of mostly small marine organisms rise up from the dark, chilly depths of the open ocean to its surface waters.

The people who witness this nighttime migration are blackwater divers; brave divers who throw themselves off a boat in the dark of night in open ocean waters that are, for all practical purposes, bottomless. The animals that we encounter range in size from baby squids smaller than a pinky nail to forty-foot long jellyfish called siphonophores.

Kona is the birthplace and world headquarters for blackwater diving. Its proximity to deep water and favorable ocean conditions make Hawai'i the perfect place for blackwater diving. Blackwater Diving in Hawai'i is designed to satisfy the curious ocean aficionado by presenting beautiful photos and information on over 300 strange pelagic animals, most of which you won't find in a standard field guide to reef animals.



Wild and Temperate Seas: 50 Favourite UK Dives by Will Appleyard

[Link](#)



From highlands to islands, wrecks to reefs and caves, this new-style guide will whet your appetite for UK scuba diving. These are over 50 personal favourites at some of the UK's most popular underwater destinations. Dorset Dives author Will Appleyard and his team of experienced collaborators share their picks as they showcase our beautiful coastal locations. Many of the dive sites featured in this new guide already appear regularly in avid UK divers' log books. Others are visited by only those with local knowledge and some rarely see divers at all. All are special in some way to those who have contributed and evidence for those to whom the UK underwater is still a mystery that once you tame these wild and temperate seas there really are some magnificent experiences to be had.

[Link](#)

1) Wide Angle

Winner: Renee Capozzola (United States)
Runner Up: Martin Broen (United States)
Third: Oleg Gaponyuk (Russian Federation)

Highly Commended:

Renee Capozzola (United States), Tobias Friedrich (Germany), Viktor Lyagushkin (Russian Federation), Celia Kujala (United States)

Commended:

Jon Anderson (United States), Shane Gross (Canada), Alvaro Herrero Lopez Beltran (Spain), Taner Atilgan (Netherlands), Renee Capozzola (United States)

2) Macro

Winner: Galice Hoarau (Norway)
Runner Up: Steven Kovacs (United States)
Third: Chien-Ting Hou (China)

Highly Commended:

Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom), James Emery (Indonesia), Viktor Lyagushkin (Russian Federation), Joel Wilson (United States)

Commended:

Nicolas Remy (Australia), Yung-Sen Wu (Taiwan), Fabio Iardino (Italy)

3) Wrecks

Winner: Tobias Friedrich (Germany)
Runner Up: Grant Thomas (United Kingdom)
Third: Renee Capozzola (United States)

Highly Commended:

Tobias Friedrich (Germany), Pekka Tuuri (Finland), Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom), Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Pekka Tuuri (Finland), Grant Thomas (United Kingdom), Fabrice Dudenhofer (France)



4) Behaviour

Winner: Karim Iliya (United States)
Runner Up: Jingong Zhang (China)
Third: Mike Korostelev (Russian Federation)

Highly Commended:

Ralph Pace (United States), Galice Hoarau (Norway), Alex Lindbloom (Indonesia), Joao Rodrigues (Portugal)

Commended:

Renee Capozzola (United States), Rafael Fernandez (Spain), Tammy Gibbs (Australia)

5) Portrait

Winner: Ryohei Ito (Japan)
Runner Up: Keigo Kawamura (Japan)
Third: Michael Gallagher (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Filip Staes (Belgium), Nur Tucker (United Kingdom), Claudia Legge (United Kingdom), Mike Korostelev (Russia)

Commended:

Csaba Tokolyi (Hungary), Anita Kainrath (Austria), Galice Hoarau (Norway)

6) Black & White

Winner: Diana Fernie (Australia)
Runner Up: Martin Broen (United States)
Third: Renata Romeo (Italy)

Highly Commended:

Nick Polanszky (Australia), James Rokop (United States), Wayne Lai (China), Hannes Klostermann (Mexico)

Commended:

Mark Drayton (United Kingdom), Martin Broen (United States), Martyn Guess (United Kingdom)

7) Compact

Winner: Jack Berthomier (New Caledonia)
Runner Up: Man Bd (Malaysia)
Third: Isaias Cruz (Spain)

Highly Commended:

Steve Miller (United States), Andrea Falcomatà (Italy), Ipah Uid (Malaysia), Man Bd (Malaysia)

Commended:

Ipah Uid (Malaysia), Chiara Scrigner (Italy), Jack Berthomier (New Caledonia)

8) Up & Coming

Winner: S.J. Alice Bennett (Mexico)
Runner Up: Ryohei Ito (Japan)
Third: Danny Lee (Australia)

Highly Commended:

Jose Luis Alemán García (Spain), Charyse Reinfelder (United States), Nicolas Hahn (Argentina), Wojciech Dopierala (Poland)

Commended:

Patricia Dusman (United States), Severin Pöhlmann (Germany), Irene Orozco (Mexico)

9) British Waters Wide Angle

Winner: Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom)
Runner Up: Mark Kirkland (United Kingdom)
Third: Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Atanas Petrov (United Kingdom), Terry Griffiths (United Kingdom), Richard Shucksmith (United Kingdom), Nicholas More (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Rick Ayrton (United Kingdom), Richard Shucksmith (United Kingdom), Grant Thomas (United Kingdom)

10) British Waters Macro

Winner: Malcolm Nimmo (United Kingdom)
Runner Up: Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom)
Third: Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom), Trevor Rees (United Kingdom), Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom), Simon Temple (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Dan Bolt (United Kingdom), Malcolm Nimmo (United Kingdom), Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

11) British Waters Living Together

Winner: Kirsty Andrews (United Kingdom)
Runner Up: Atanas Petrov (United Kingdom)
Third: Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom), Alex Tattersall (United Kingdom), Trevor Rees (United Kingdom), Dan Bolt (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Alison Pettitt (United Kingdom), Andy Pearson (United Kingdom), Billy Arthur (United Kingdom)

12) British Waters Compact

Winner: Ian Wade (United Kingdom)
Runner Up: Sandra Stalker (United Kingdom)
Third: Sandra Stalker (United Kingdom)

Highly Commended:

James Lynott (United Kingdom), Georgie Bull (United Kingdom), James Lynott (United Kingdom), Ryan Stalker (United Kingdom)

Commended:

Georgie Bull (United Kingdom), Ian Wade (United Kingdom), James Lynott (United Kingdom)

Marine Conservation

Winner: Karim Iliya (United States)
Runner Up: Pasquale Vassallo (Italy)
Third: Rafael Fernandez (Spain)

Highly Commended:

Rosie Leaney (Australia), Scott Tuason (Philippines), Shane Gross (Canada), Martin Rejžek (Czech Republic)

Commended:

Rafael Fernandez (Spain), Scott Portelli (Australia), Sirachai Arunrugstichai (Thailand)

With thanks to the media outlets
who showcased our 2020 winners, including:

