

in focus

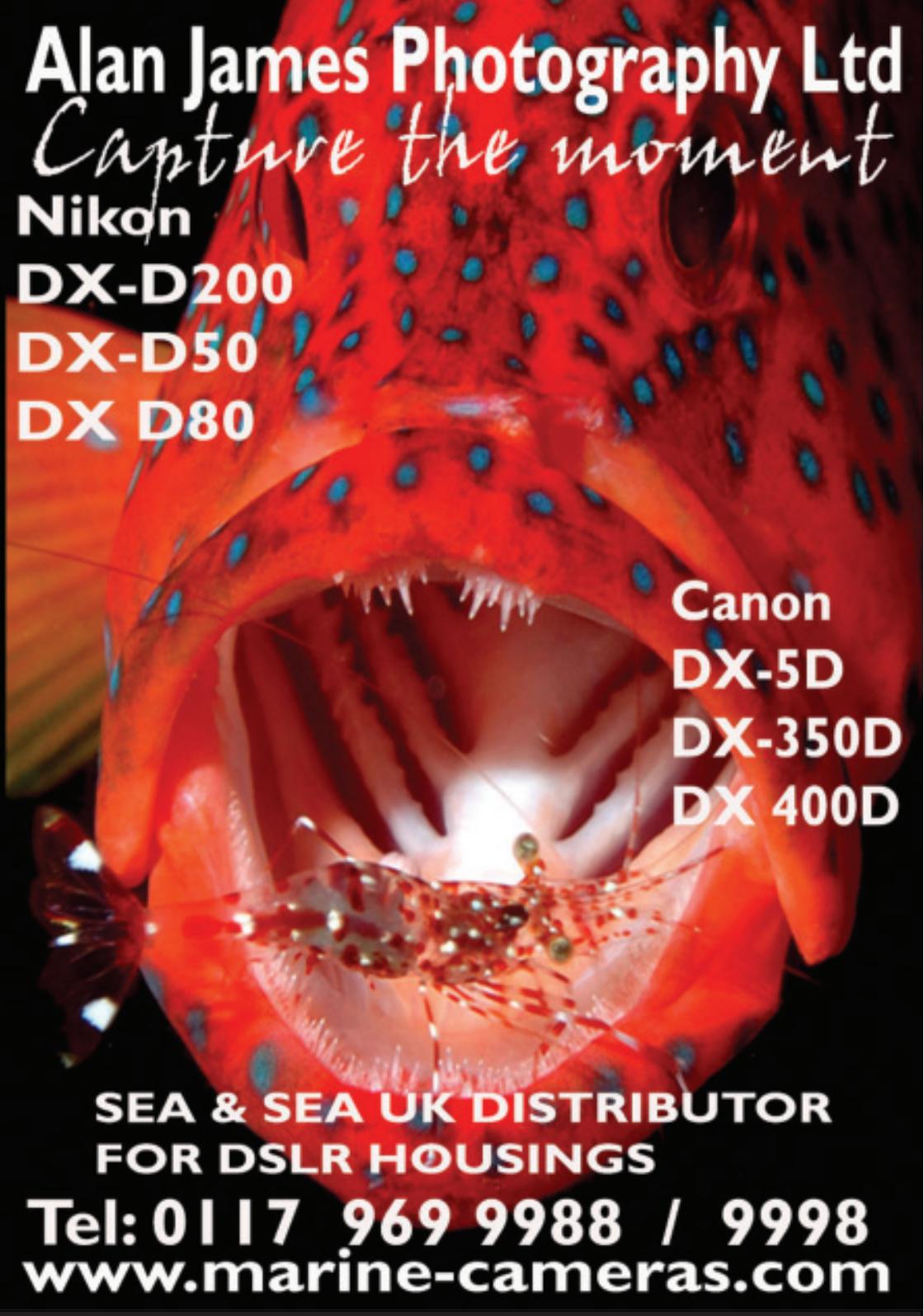
Autumn 2007

no. 88



The British Society of
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in focus - Autumn 2007

General editor: Gill McDonald

Tel: 07855 759946 email: bsoup@catalyst5.freemove.co.uk

Production editor: Anthony Holley

Tel: 020 8949 7568 email: bsoup@holleyuwphoto.com

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Cover shot: winner international 'focus on' in August, by Francesco Visintin of Italy

www.bsoup.org

Editorial

For decades now BSoUP members and friends have meandered down the M4, M5 and A38 to Devon in early July for the hugely enjoyable 'on the day' splash-in and print competition. This annual exodus actually spawned the format of the present day CMAS competitions. In recent years we have stepped up the ante with bigger prizes and more sponsorship from some excellent partners and this year we were thrilled to be hosted by the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth, who also part-sponsored the event. We also received coverage from local newspapers thus further raising our profile in these media-driven days. The fantastic winning shots are on display in this issue, together with some candid land shots by Anthony Holley and write up by our chair, Martha Tressler.

From Plymouth to the Great Barrier Reef via Spain and Thailand with a little dose of 'mal de mer' along the way, that's what is in store in this issue. First off Alex Mustard provides more essential gems of wisdom, this time with an insight into the pros and cons of the 'Photoshop Cycle'. Jeremy Cuff concludes his excellent series on building a photography website by examining what to do with your site once you have put all the hard work in creating it.

Sam Bean, award winning member and LRPS, set off with her partner Tony Stannard to Gran Canaria to take part in the annual 'Fotosub' competition, another splash-in resembling our own. She describes the stress and fun of the competition and shows some of her lovely photographs. Joss Woolf sets off on an adventure to discover the beauty of Koh Chang in Thailand. Following Martha's splash-in piece Mike Russell offers a humorous yet very useful guide to avoiding sea-sickness.

A richly packed issue. Quick plea as usual, if anyone wants to write an article for the magazine please contact me, details on the back inside page. I am always very happy to receive new material from any member on any relevant topic so get involved and submit an article now.

Many thanks and best wishes to all,



The 'Photoshop Cycle' by Alex Mustard

www.amustard.com

Photoshop. A single word that strikes terror into the hearts and minds of photography purists everywhere. Adobe's industry standard box of tricks is usually the biggest objection that traditionalists have to digital imaging and the P-word has been the subject of much debate at BSoUP meetings.

The reality of the situation is Photoshop is here to stay, and has been around for a lot longer than many of its recent critics realise. For more than a decade almost every underwater photographic book and dive magazine has been laid out on computers and even when we photographers were submitting slides, our images would be spruced up by designers and art editors to make sure "they printed correctly". Under the guise of the CMYK conversion, contrast and colours are tweaked, and backscatter or an overexposed fish is swept away.

The big change in our community's conscience came when the reigns of Photoshop were handed over from the industry professionals to the photographers. Suddenly it was up to the individual to decide where the limits were. Worse still, just like a kid with a new toy, each photographer starts by playing with every function and pushing controls to their breaking point. Most, in the end learn some restraint, but it seems we must all go through the same learning process. I call it the Photoshop Cycle.

The Photoshop Cycle starts in earnest for our typical digital photographer once they have got to grips with the major Photoshop and Raw Converter functions and can perform most of the adjustments they want. This is the dangerous time. Just because they can do something doesn't mean that they should. Just a bit more... a bit more... is their mantra. Sliders are pushed to extremes. Saturation is jacked up and contrast is boosted. Every last speck of backscatter air-brushed away until backgrounds are pure black perfection. Colours are pushed and pulled to try and save shots that should have been binned. Such over-adjustment is known as nuking your images.

Slowly our photographer learns. Getting things right in camera means far less Photoshop and a better quality end result. Perhaps the saving grace is that Photoshop is damn time consuming. Maybe every new photographer must painstakingly clean the backscatter from an image before having their first lesson on strobe positioning!

With a bit more experience our photographer also realises they like things to look more natural. The underwater world is a bit murky - why try and hide that key characteristic. Soon our snapper is adopting the 'less is more' approach to Photoshop and raw converters. Clean up the distracting blob of backscatter, but leave the other specks in. The real world has rough edges.

The final stage of the Cycle is when our photographer starts showing off images as 'uncropped and unadjusted' to prove to their peers that they got it right in camera. This is the point of enlightenment. After learning all those Photoshop skills they actually realise that most of the time they don't need them. When you get it right in camera, an image has that certain something that just can't be replicated in Photoshop.

It is a common belief by many new underwater photographers that Photoshop has had a big hand in all the stunning underwater images they see. The truth, as most experienced BsoUPers know, is almost exactly the opposite. Every time I am lucky enough to dive with really talented underwater photographers I see this for myself. I was recently diving with Tony Wu and Eric Cheng in the Bahamas, and their images look the same on their camera's LCD screen as you see them on their websites and in books and magazines. Ironically, other photographers on the boat would spend hours on their computers trying, and often failing, to get the same 'right look' in the balance of colour, contrast and impact.

I guess the take home message from the Photoshop Cycle is that a photographer who relies on Photoshop will never push to develop their in-water techniques adequately to regularly produce stunners. Photoshop is a powerful tool and ally, but if you believe it is an essential ingredient of underwater photography then you are holding your images back.

Building a photography website by Jeremy Cuff

Part 4 - making the most of it www.ja-universe.com

In the first three articles of this series, published in previous editions of 'in focus', we looked at the internet as a media, the trials and tribulations of conceiving and creating a website, and the subsequent management of site content. Now, in the last of the series, we look at making the most of what has been created.

These days, being found on the internet isn't easy. The sheer number of websites out there means that techniques must be employed to ensure that interested parties are able to find your website with ease. This is generally known as web optimisation.

Within the online community, web optimisation is mostly concerned with websites being found in search engines such as Google and Yahoo and is sometimes referred to as search engine optimisation. But, being found on the internet needn't begin and end there. To make the most of your website, I think it is important to embrace a wider thought process that encompasses other forms of marketing. Firstly, let's start with search engines.

Search engines are often the first port of call for a web surfer wishing to find out something about a given subject. Searching is a simple procedure and is therefore widely used. Well known search engines have become very powerful as a result, and often form the foundations of the marketing strategies for many businesses and organisations.

They are, however, difficult for the layman to fathom, with perceived value difficult to establish, and much suspicion persisting about their effectiveness and overall integrity. That said, they will play an ever more important role in the future, as general understanding improves, internet use grows, and search technology is refined to produce better and more relevant sets of results.

As mentioned in previous articles in this series, the internet (and search engines) inhabit 'real-time', constantly changing and improving on a minute by minute, hour by hour basis. It is therefore quite unlike, say, a telephone directory which is 'fixed' at the time of publishing. As a result, phone books are much easier to understand and comprehend - you sign up to be included in the section of your choice for a contracted period of time and that's it - simple.

However, on the web, a search conducted in the morning may yield different results from the same search conducted in the afternoon. It's a constantly changing picture, like shifting sands.

So, what is the best way to navigate the ever changing 'real time' scenery of search engines and the internet?

I once had search engine optimisation described to me by a colleague as *"...a black art. It's one of the most difficult areas to understand. Search engines are constantly being refined and improved, as there's no point in a search that can't find what the surfer is looking for. The big areas of importance are website construction and keywords."*

These days, most new websites are text based. This doesn't mean that they contain only text, rather that the text is not contained within graphics and can thus be detected by search engines. In contrast, graphic based sites suffer badly in modern day searches. The reason is that much text is contained within the graphics and thus cannot be detected in a search. It's therefore important that your designer understands and considers search engine optimisation as an important part of the overall site concept and construction.

Keywords are essential to being found on the web. Many domain registration and web hosting companies offer their clients the ability to submit keywords to major search engines as part of a package which is quite useful. If not, you can submit them yourself. But, choose your keywords carefully.

The ideal scenario is for a website to be found on the first two pages of a search result. This is easier to achieve if the search criteria is obscure. Searching for 'Jeremy Cuff' on BT Yahoo (at the time of writing) I found my site on the first page of results. When I searched for 'Underwater Photography', my site performed less well, not being found until page seven. The reasons (although probably very complicated to describe technically) can be simply put: that more websites have 'Underwater Photography' as part of their keywords than 'Jeremy Cuff'.

Some specialist companies offer web optimisation services but it's a very hit and miss field. There are a lot of dubious individuals out there with the sole intent of getting their hands on your money, so you should proceed with caution.

It's important to work with a reputable company and make sure that you understand exactly what you're going to get and how much it costs. If you're paying for a service, check it regularly yourself and make sure it's working.

Ask your web designer for a recommendation, as good web design companies often form alliances with good web optimisation companies. Also, beware of signing up to those 'spam' type emails that promise to generate huge amounts of web traffic to your site. Site traffic isn't just about quantity. Of what use is a florist in London for Valentines Day in Australia?

For a fee, you can pay search engines such as Google to become a sponsored link based on certain keyword and search criteria. If your search criteria are widely used, like 'House Insurance', expect to pay more to appear at the top than if using something less mainstream, as you'll be competing with others trying to attract the same people or customers to their websites.

Now, let's consider some other marketing ideas that can work in conjunction with search engine optimisation.

In terms of the wider world of marketing, there is a lot that can be done. The key is to work smart and not spend huge amounts of money unless, of course, it can be justified. Try to display your web address at all opportunities. Here are a few thoughts to get things going.

We live in an age of branding, and regardless of whether you're an underwater photojournalist or multi-national corporation, the same basic rules apply. It's all about a coherent approach built around the 'open 24/7' hub of a website. It's important to ensure that your website is continuous in terms of design style with your other presentational materials such as business cards, invoices, letterheads, compliments slips and leaflets.

I'm a great believer in lots of little things adding up to bigger things, and by achieving progress in small increments - 'the man who moved the mountain began by carrying away small stones' is a good adage to remember. I take business cards carrying my name, address and website details on dive trips, so that I can give them to anyone I meet that might be interested. If people like your site, they might go back regularly to see what you've been up to, and show their family and friends, thus spreading the word.

If you win an award or a competition, issue a press release. The term 'press release' is somewhat misleading in today's multi-media age in that you have a lot more choices than your local newspaper as a means of publicising your good news. Whilst it's a good idea to start with your local and regional newspaper titles, you can also send your release to generalist or specialist magazines (diving, photography, travel etc), your camera club or photographic society, news websites, online forums and other social networking sites. An inclusion of your website address in the release details may result in the address being published with the story, leading to more potential site visitors.

Building a database of email addresses can allow you to send regular bulletins to interested individuals. For example, if you've published some new galleries from a recent dive trip, an email update can direct people to your website where the new work is displayed.

Even when emailing friends and family, always remember to put in your web link, so that they've always got the option to go straight to your site. But don't forget, in this age of data protection, it's a good idea to make sure that you're only sending emails to those who want to receive them.

Getting linked to other sites is another good idea to increase web traffic. The BSoUP website is a great place to be linked to, as it's visited by people interested in underwater photography. Trading reciprocal links, particularly with non competing sites is also worth pursuing where appropriate. Linking also has the added bonus of helping to improve search results in some instances.

Lastly, you might consider placing your website on an online directory, of which there are many, but they can be expensive and not necessarily useful. For example, a web link from Yell.com (the online version of Yellow Pages) might be fruitful if you're a wedding or portrait photographer, but would anyone be looking for an underwater photographer? Apply the common sense test before parting with lots of hard earned cash.

To sum up all four published articles, the internet is a huge subject and we've only scratched the surface. It seems apt to return to the opening statement in part one of this series:

“The internet is vast. So much is already there. Much more is yet to come. We depend on it, shop on it, run our businesses on it, seek entertainment from it and do our research on it.”

And it is here to stay.

Jeremy Cuff is an underwater photographer and photojournalist based at Warminster in Wiltshire. He is the recent winner of Sport Diver's Underwater Photographer of the Year Award 2007 with an image of his wife Amanda and a giant Potato Cod taken at Cod Hole on the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. Latest work includes the southern Red Sea, eastern Australia and the Kona Coast of Hawaii. To see some of his work, and that of his wife Amanda, please visit www.ja-universe.com

Gran Canaria Fotosub 2007 at Costa Mogán by Sam Bean www.sambeanimages.com

Blue sky, flat seas and a local black cat gave us good vibes for the start of the 3rd annual Fotosub Championship at Costa Mogán in beautiful Gran Canaria. The event attracted big names from Spain, France, Portugal, Italy, Germany, Norway and England. We became very nervous when we realised the distinguished list included the current world champion, Carlos Minguell. Twelve teams were invited to participate and our team set a precedent previously unknown at the event - it was the first time the photographer was female and the model male.

Four dive sites had been selected for the competition; two wrecks and an artificial and natural reef. Everything was taken very seriously with the two practice dives on the reef sites, designed to prepare you for the real thing. After everyone entered the water and all teams were ready, the dive signal was given. Good weighting was critical. There was no leeway for floundering at the surface, you had to be on your way to the sea bed like an express elevator.

Tensions ran high as we descended on our first dive to the artificial reef. Plans of the site showed many different shaped concrete structures on a flat, sandy bottom. The drop to the sand at about 20m seemed to take forever, my camera was ready and my model prepared for action with torch clasped. The other teams seemed to instinctively know where to go. I felt a slight wave of panic as I wondered which concrete block to choose.

At first glance everything looked quite empty, then I spotted a large shoal of roncadores and a huge sting ray, making the decision for me. I nervously approached the massive creature (reminding myself not to spook it and end up like poor Steve Irwin). It seemed more nervous than me and kept swimming into one of the concrete blocks, hiding its face, leaving the dangerous tail protruding. Out of the corner of my eye I saw an angel shark zoom past, it wasn't hanging around though. With time slipping away I gave up on the uncooperative ray and moved to the shoal of roncadores.

Suddenly I became more aware of subjects that at first were invisible, such as moray eels and interesting little critters like hermit crabs, small fish, arrow crabs and fireworms.

The second practice dive was on the beautiful Pasito Blanco reef. We had been briefed, but it looked very unfamiliar and dull when we descended and after a few minutes of swimming we realised we were clearly going in the wrong direction. A rapid about turn took us to the correct area where two cuttlefish were courting, a fish was enjoying a good clean and an octopus was sleeping in a rocky lair. Things were looking up. Unfortunately our dive time had just run out.

There was no opportunity to dive the Cermona II or Mogán wrecks before the competition day, but we took a trip on the yellow submarine to check them out. From here I took as many shots as possible to allow us to plan areas to photograph.

The first day of the competition began with near perfect weather conditions and the black cat strolled past us again. Nervous energy washed over us as we tried to keep it together. There were so many rules to remember. First, the memory card had to be formatted in front of an official then a control photograph taken. The camera systems were then kept isolated on two alarmingly wobbly looking folding tables until dive time. Cameras could not be removed from their housings during the day. Lens changes had to be done from the front of the housing and only one competitor on the boat could do this at a time as the change had to be supervised.

Other rules included a maximum of 150 photos to be taken per day, no images to be deleted and a maximum dive time of 45 minutes to include all stops. A late return to the surface or missing any decompression stops were punishable offences, and the rules were vigorously enforced!

Descending from the boat to the Cermona II wreck things were looking good, but at the bottom the wreck didn't look at all like it had from the submarine.

Fotosub Gran Canaria



Model Tony Stannard
on Mogán wreck



Propeller of
Cermona II wreck



Sleepy octopus on
Pasito Blanco reef

by **Sam Bean**



Blenny on Pasito Blanco reef

**Read about Sam
& Tony's Gran
Canaria
experience on
page 12**



Winner 'best submarine image'



Shrimp on Pasito Blanco reef

Locating a really nice spot on the unfamiliar wreck not already occupied by another team was tricky. Also, using wide-angle lenses meant avoiding extraneous fins and divers. Finding colour on the wreck was the next problem, at 18-20m colour doesn't just jump out at you, so we frantically swam around with a torch trying to light anything interesting. We found some good subjects, particularly the propeller, but again time was against us and we soon had to ascend.

The second wreck was very broken and even more challenging. However, our luck was in and a beautiful pair of cuttlefish slid into view. Tony did his modelling thing and enthusiastically swam behind them to give the perspective that they were really big, he looked a real pro brandishing his big new torch and making lovely eye contact with these delightful creatures. In the distance the drone of the submarine approached. Keeping a careful eye out for it we continued photographing to the last possible minute, then dashed out to shoot the sub. The plan was to get in close and photograph the passengers, but it was going a lot faster than I anticipated and there was only time to get one shot at each window before it was gone. We were really lucky though, at one of the windows was a simply gorgeous girl with long blonde hair, looking a complete natural.

After diving, a final control picture had to be taken under supervision and the memory card removed for downloading by the organisers. A tense wait of a couple of hours followed until we could collect the card for downloading and viewing.

When competition day two dawned we couldn't believe that the weather was great again. We didn't see the black cat, despite walking the block twice looking for it - a bit of extra luck never goes amiss. We were looking forward to Pasito Blanco and hoped to see the lovely cuttlefish and octopus again. We found the octopus which was still sleeping and Tony also found two really menacing looking moray eels. Unfortunately the cuttlefish had gone, but we did find a lovely stingray on a rocky ledge, a big shoal of roncadors and loads of little shrimps and critters. It was my favourite dive, very productive and enjoyable.

I was dreading the last dive on the artificial reef as I had found this one the most challenging on practice day. I decided I was going safe with my 60mm, so Tony and I set off to find some exciting macro subjects. It seemed like I had only just got settled and focused on a lovely blenny when suddenly the computer started bleeping. Aaargh! I couldn't believe it, 5 minutes of stops it was telling me. I suppose it was because I had been ferreting around on the seabed for so long that my time was now up. I took my last competition shot and dejectedly started to ascend with 7 minutes of stops. Tony looked at me confused asking "why are you ascending?". I showed him the computer, he couldn't believe it either as he still had loads of dive time left. It was really tough hanging around doing my time watching everyone else racing around photographing their last subjects!

The afternoon again went very slowly as we nervously waited to collect our memory cards. We had until 6pm to choose 6 images for our portfolio. No image manipulation whatsoever was permitted, images entered for the competition were to be direct from camera and it was the copy of the images that the organisers held that were used for judging. The only presentation choices you were allowed were the order in which the images would be viewed and whether you would like to rotate or flip any of them.

At the awards ceremony the coveted 1st prize in the portfolio category was awarded to the local team David Barrio and Luisa Quintanilla. World Champion Carlos Minguell with Catalina Perales were awarded 2nd place and Carlos Villoch with Maite Uribarri received 3rd place.

In addition to the coveted portfolio prizes there were also awards for the best ambient photograph (Thomas Lüken and Petra Piekenbroc), best macro (Gilles Suc and Cristine Casal), best fish (David Barrio and Luisa Quintanilla), best model (Carlos Villoch and Maite Uribarri) and we were absolutely thrilled to receive the award for best submarine image (Sam Bean and Tony Stannard).

(see pictures pages 14 and 15)



**Mantas on the
Australian
Great Barrier Reef**
by Pedro Vieyra
- see page 39



Scenes on Koh Chang
by Joss Woolf - see page 20



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A Journey to Koh Chang by Joss Woolf

While celebrating a major birthday in Pattaya, Thailand in October, the diving remained unfulfilled as I discovered the true meaning of a 'turbid sea'. So, when I returned at the end of April, hopefully just before the Monsoon period, it seemed a good idea to travel a little further east, towards Cambodia; an area which, the guide books say, enjoys a micro-climate all its own.

Koh Chang is often described as a destination of outstanding natural beauty and one of Thailand's top ten dive sites with stunning soft corals and myriad reef fish. One guide book declared the island so undeveloped, with neither sealed road nor compressor, that divers had to bring an adequate supply of filled cylinders from Bangkok although I suspected this information may be a little out of date.

And so it was, early one Tuesday morning on the very cusp of the rainy season, we embarked by car without reservation, either psychological or hotel, in search of this 'ultimate' dive destination.

Thailand's infrastructure is surprisingly good with excellent roads connecting all major cities and towns. You can turn left on a red light if the coast is clear, and if someone flashes their headlights it is not to let you go but to tell you that they are NOT going to let you go! But, they drive on the same side of the road as us and with good discipline.

After Rayong, a major fishing town and home to the Koh Samet ferry, carts and wagons heavily laden with rambutans, mangosteens, pineapples, longans (a type of lychee) and foul-smelling durian can be seen in ever increasing numbers. As we draw closer to Chantaburi, Thailand's orchard, the fruit-stalls which flank either side of the road also grow in number and size.

Before long, we are facing a grid of sixteen open wire chambers, four across by four down, each containing a live, face-on pig on its way to market, TV quiz-show style, its legs tucked beneath and unable to move.

Some four and a half hours later we arrive at the ferry, just in time to make the half-hour crossing together with a rolling cargo of builders' lorries and materials. Apparently the Thai government have recently given \$10,000,000 to build a sealed road on the island, at which I am delighted.

However, our very expensive hire car (old banger) has already done over 200,000 miles and really does not like the steep terrain and hair-pin bends - thank goodness for the tarmac. The brakes are down to the bare discs and the steering wheel is graunching due to lack of fluid. You can actually smell the heat.

The island is very mountainous in the centre and boasts an unspoilt rainforest, with several beautiful waterfalls, elephant trekking and a number of indigenous species including a frog. However, it is quite clear that much has happened since the guide books were written and the entire western coast has already been developed with many Irish pubs, massage parlours and hotels. It seems that most of Thailand's islands also have their very own 'Whitesand Beach'.

We arrive at Bang Bao mid-afternoon. A Vietnamese pot-bellied pig grazes on the upturned contents of a rubbish bin and we still have nowhere to stay. An interesting sign to the 'Nirvana' has lodged in my mind, however, and hot and smelly, we finally park up in the centre of town.

Bang Bao Resort is basically built on stilts, either side of a pier, over the tidal sea. A stroll to the end is a truly sensory experience; with the foul stench of rotting fish or the ever-delightful aroma of fresh Thai cooking. Right: first things first - important to get the diving booked; then we can sort out some beds. As we stroll past gift-shops, restaurants and dwellings, I recognise the names of some of the dive operators from my internet searches. I venture into 'Ploy Divers' but their English is not good and they ask me to come back in an hours time when the divers return so they can show me their accommodation, which they are clearly more concerned with selling.

Meanwhile we decide to seek our 'Nirvana' and though the approach is not promising, a mile-long dirt track past ever-worsening cheap holiday shacks on stilts, we are eventually rewarded with a most beautiful hotel, completely empty and, above all, affordable. The hotel recommends the Padi-run 'Dive Adventure' so once we have settled into our authentically furnished, air-conditioned, sea view room right on the beach I set off to make my enquiries.

A gorgeous young, blonde German inspects my credentials and I am informed that I will be diving with two Belgian journalists the following morning at 9.00 am. And so it came to be that I met Jan and Jos - always a first time for everything - never met another Joss before - who have been diving for more than 30 years and write regularly for their diving magazine, Hippocampus; otherwise, how else would Belgians possibly know where to dive?

The sea around Koh Chang has been designated a National Marine Park so we were optimistic. Much of the diving is relatively shallow, between 6 and 12 metres, but although there were only four of us, due to the poor visibility I soon became separated and, to the great delight of the dive-guide who patted his heart on seeing me, we regrouped after about half an hour diving with rather fishless, rather dull coral. To be fair, there were probably more clown-fish anemones in one spot than I have ever seen and the barrel sponges and stag-horn corals were both numerous and pristine, as were the harp gorgonians and other whip corals which abounded. I was to learn though, sadly, that the almost total absence of any other fish was entirely due to the continued practice of dynamite fishing, albeit in a marine reserve, because nobody was ever punished or prevented. By the end of the day, the idea that I had lugged this very heavy camera equipment half-way round the planet, to take a couple of shots of a few bits of stag-horn was disappointing to say the least.

Back on land, well, in the bar, as we dangled our legs through the cut-out in the wooden floor of the Buddha View Restaurant over the incoming tide, sipping cool glasses of beer, we reflected on the rather disappointing day and I resolved to give it one more go.

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The British Splash-in



Winner 'on the day' grand prize voted by panel of judges
and Winner 'wide-angle' category
Arthur Kingdon



Runner up 'on the day' voted by panel of judges
and Winner 'close-up' category
Alan James

Championship 2007



Winner 'fish' category
Alan James



Runner up 'fish' category
Cathy Lewis



Highly commended by panel of judges
and Runner up 'wide-angle' category
Jan Davis



Runner up 'close-up' category
Alan James

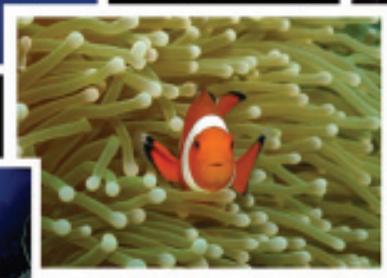


Winner 'humorous/creative' category
Martin Davies



Launch site - Mount Batten Centre
by Anthony Holley

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Tony Backhurst

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My Belgian friends felt so sorry for me that they telephoned the Belgian owner of the operation, who was out of the country, to see if things couldn't be improved.

Next morning in stark contrast to the day before there were 19 people on board. An hour and a half out to sea, we three were allowed off by ourselves to dive Blue Berry Hill. Again, not a deep dive, mostly around 6 or 7 metres, but wonderful though not colourful coral. Even shoals of grunts and barracuda appeared, ready to pose for the camera. Again, numerous clown-fish anemonies cascaded over the rocks and I began to wonder if I would have enough film. Harp coral, mantis shrimp, table corals and blue-tipped stag-horn were everywhere, each competing for space. We were happy bunnies.

My Belgian companions were keen to get back to their Thai friends so we only had a quick drink back at the Buddha View Restaurant. By coincidence, however, we were to eat there later that evening with some delightful fellow hotel guests from Switzerland; a highly intellectual and very amusing couple with an unfortunate name. In America recently awaiting their table at a restaurant, a loudspeaker announced that the table for two "Kuntz", was now ready.

While we checked out of the hotel next day a young Thai man asked if he could practise his English. When asked if we had enjoyed our stay, I explained that having come there especially to dive I had been disappointed that there were no longer any fish in the sea. This prompted the reply that only four days ago, having fallen in love with a young Canadian girl who had taught him both to kiss and make love, she had then broken his heart because her boyfriend had returned and she had, quite understandably, gone back to him. He said, philosophically and with good use of language that, as sad as he was, he believed that there were indeed plenty more fish in the sea.

The British Splash-in Championship - 2007

by Martha Tressler

The British Splash-in Championship - 2007 took place on 7 July at the Mount Batten Centre and the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth, Devon.

For the second year the print competition was on display at the National Marine Aquarium for three weeks prior to the event in the fabulous Waterfront Gallery for voting by the public visiting the Aquarium. There were three categories this year and we had 27 British & Irish entries, 47 Overseas and 38 Advanced (of which 12 were taken in British waters). We were delighted that the Plymouth Evening Herald covered the opening of the exhibition.

As usual, we all met up in the Mount Batten Centre bar on the Friday night for registration and a few warm up drinks. Next morning we were treated to blue sky and sunshine, although the visibility underwater had been stirred up nicely by storms the previous fortnight making photography a challenge! However, the entrants were all in the same boat (metaphorically speaking) and up to the challenge. A total of 39 underwater photographers grabbed their cameras and headed out bringing back a total of 129 images to enter into four categories.

The big change this year was that the Saturday night event was held at the National Marine Aquarium. The evening started with competitors arriving by water taxi to submit their digital entries and to stroll round and vote in the print competition (not on display at the Mount Batten Centre this time). This was followed by a barbeque in the grounds of the Aquarium overlooking beautiful Plymouth Sound, the culinary offering being of a somewhat different and vastly improved nature to that of the last year or two.

But the highlight of the evening was the projection of entries against the awesome backdrop of the Atlantic Reef tank - the only problem being the distraction afforded by the huge fish swimming by behind the screen!

After viewing the images, the judges retired to deliberate and teams of vote counters went off to count, while the rest of the audience was treated to a fascinating talk from Keith Hiscock: Keeping marine life around Britain great: ecology and conservation.

Peter Rowlands, editor of the web-based Underwater Photography Magazine (UWP) led the band of judges, ably assisted by John McIntyre, award-winning underwater film-maker and BBC journalist, and Kelvin Boot, Director of the National Marine Aquarium. Images by Dave Peake, Jan Davies, Alan James and Arthur Kingdon were shortlisted. After some discussion, Arthur Kingdon's wide-angle image taken half-in and half-out of the water depicting a diver with a surface marker buoy with the Mew Stone in the background won the overall fantastic grand prize of a week's Red Sea liveaboard holiday donated by Tony Backhurst Scuba.

MC Brian Pitkin performed his usual magic and presented trophies and prizes for this and all of the category winners voted on by the audience. This year we also presented the 'best beginner' in each category with a trophy and a prize and Jim Tyrwhitt-Drake was the proud recipient of our overall best beginner award.

We were delighted that the Western Morning News covered the event with a double-page centre spread the following week, printing some of the winning images and including interviews. The (non-diving) journalist did a fairly good job with the story – no oxygen tanks or flippers in sight - until she described the 'puppy-like expression' of Alan James's flatworm. Hmmm.

Many thanks to our hard working judges and generous sponsors namely Tony Backhurst Scuba, the National Marine Aquarium, Olympus Cameras, Ocean Optics, Cameras Underwater, Edge Underwater Photography, A.P Valves, Ultimate Sports and Ocean Visions.

BSoUP is also grateful to all those members and their guests who helped to make the event such a success. Martha Tressler, Anthony Holley and JP Trenque (who spent most of the weekend in front of a computer screen!) all abandoned diving this year and were assisted significantly on Saturday by Maria Munn and Sally Sharrock.

HIDDEN DEPTHS

DIVE TOURS

IT'S TIME TO EXPLORE



Underwater Photography Trips

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15 Nov 08	Sipadan liveaboard (workshop with Jane & JP)	£1,639



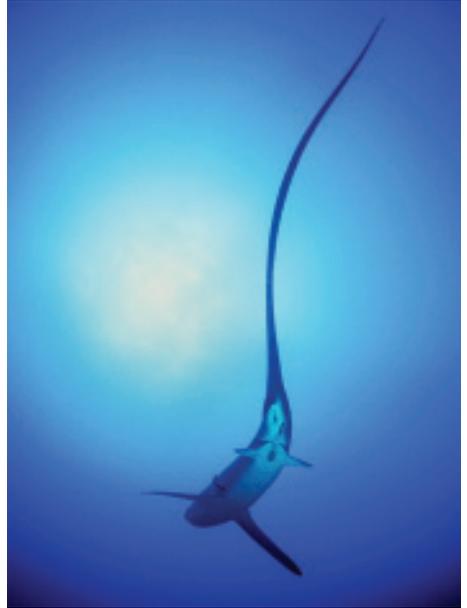
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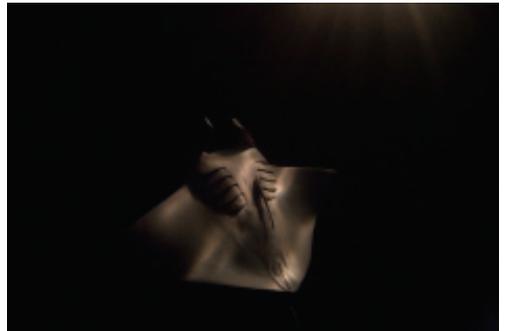
Winner Francesco Visintin
Italy



Runner up John van Lent
Netherlands



Third equal Alex Mustard
UK



Third equal Ethan Daniels
USA

A number of other members gave their assistance on Saturday night after exiting the water including Pete Ladell, Gill McDonald, Lesley Maw, Jan Maloney, Martin Davies, Alison Major, Mike Russell, Pedro Vieyra and of course our MC Brian Pitkin. Before the event Mike Russell organised the print entries, Muna Muammar helped with the publicity, Jane Morgan sourced prizes and Dave Peake helped Anthony and Martha to set up the print exhibition (and took it all down afterwards).

It was a spectacular weekend and we are really thrilled that the Aquarium has invited us back. Plans for next year include giving everyone more of a chance to take advantage of the Aquarium venue and its exhibits, as we can never see enough of the underwater world. So, pen the weekend of 12 July 2008 firmly in your diaries and start planning!

Mike's A-Z of sea-sickness by Mike Russell

Mike Russell, our excellent Membership Secretary and veteran boat traveller provides some essential pointers on how to avoid and/or cope with sea sickness. Mike declares it is “from one who’s been there, done it and carried off the ‘Happy Honker Dippy Diver Trophy’, awarded by my dive club, on more than one occasion”. This article is primarily aimed at RIB diving although most items are also applicable to a hard boat.

a) it’s a sad start but one key factor in avoiding the dreaded ‘mal de mer’ is being hydrated, so lay off the booze the night before

b) take Stugerons or your preferred medication with breakfast or sufficiently early to be effective i.e. read the instructions - n.b. neither Nelson homeopathy tablets nor wrist bands helped me

c) ginger with breakfast helps settle the stomach; I frequently take diced stem ginger, in sugar syrup, with my cereal

d) get as much of your kit prepared wearing civvies not your suit - you’re likely to be more constricted by either a dry suit or a semi-dry

e) work out which side of the boat to sit on so you can see land on both the outbound and inbound journeys - do not be afraid to ask to swap with a ruffty tuffty diver on the other side

f) endeavour to sit where you can hold onto something substantial, any fixed frame is a good place to hold

g) standing up is another option but space may be limited by kit

h) keep both feet firmly placed on the floor, do not get shuffled to where kit inhibits this - this helps ride out the bumps in a choppy sea - also learn to anticipate when the bumps are going to happen, a good cox'n will throttle back to avoid making the jumps too hard, or zig zag if the sea is really turbulent

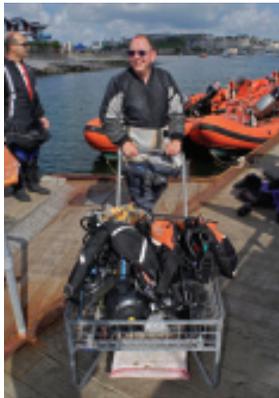
i) do not look down at the floor, keep your head up and try and look into the distance, some say keep your eyes on the horizon but I'm not convinced of that

j) keep warm and wear a woolly hat, well my special hat is 100% acrylic and it keeps my head warm even when it's wet - avoid a peaked cap as it will fly off unless you grip it firmly throughout the trip, that adds stress and detracts from being able to hold on or scan into the distance

k) if possible keep occupied - difficult when on the move but on site help others get kitted or with tidying the boat, ask if you can drive the boat while waiting your turn to dive or after you've dived, always avoid looking down

l) if you wear glasses try and take a spare pair in a dry bag, or put in the dry box so that you can switch to a clean pair when the boat arrives at dive site - not being able to see properly is disconcerting and cleaning salt spray off lenses can be awkward unless you have a dedicated dry cloth, alternatively keep your specs off whilst in transit

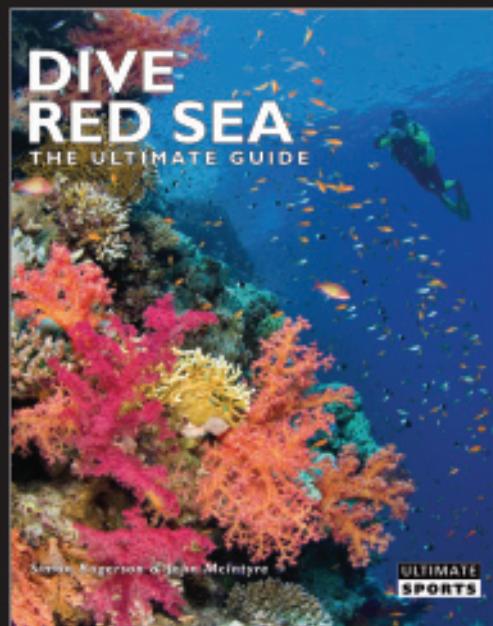
m) if you are likely to be sick then let the cox'n/crew know, they should act accordingly and hopefully slow down a tad



Some Splash-in moments
Plymouth, 2007



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Michael Pitts, Emmy award-winning underwater cameraman BBC TV 'The Blue Planet'

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n) on site if you're feeling a little unsteady ask to dive first - getting underwater generally relieves all symptoms, however if you're really feeling rough then time can be a great healer and often you can recover and still get a dive

o) try not to be sick under water, that can lead one rapidly into the incident pit - if you are sick underwater immediately abort your dive

p) drink water reasonably frequently but in small quantities - a number of divers take strongly diluted cordials, I personally find that Lucozade Energy, lemon flavour, suits me, although some pundits say you should avoid fizzy drinks when diving - well perhaps you might recall when diving was considered to be dangerous and sex was safe

q) do not wear anything which is tight or restrictive; particularly be aware of the first time use of a replacement neck seal or wrist seals on dry suits - these usually need to be trimmed to meet your body shape - also semi-dry suits have a characteristic which causes them to shrink over a period of time, generally this happens over Christmas

r) avoid inhaling any smoke fumes from either the engines or someone's cigarette - if there are smokers on board encourage them to move up into the bow or out of close proximity

s) when it's your turn to dive get your fins on first and then you'll not need to look down with heavy kit on your back which can be both awkward and cramp your stomach muscles

t) consider purchasing a weight belt harness as you do not tighten these across your stomach, your shoulders take the weight

u) try breathing through your nose if you feel a bit queasy, it seems to help me and I focus on thoughts away from the state of the sea

v) some divers enjoy a rough trip but suffer when the boat is on station from the sea swell, this can happen whilst the cox'n is searching for a wreck or other divers are getting kitted - standing up can help but if the worst comes to the worst get your head over the side, projectiles inside the boat are most unwelcome

w) after your dive, get your hood off and relieve as much pressure from your neck and stomach as possible

x) if you are sick take a few sips of water and keep warm - do not feel ashamed, surprisingly there are just a few divers who can claim not to have suffered at some stage

y) don't worry about your kit, there will be plenty of others willing to sort that out for you - just concentrate on keeping warm

z) if you have been badly sick then sit out the rest of the day - sea sickness can be very debilitating and you may not be sufficiently recovered to be a safe diver, take rehydration salts, Dioralyte is a typical example

So you've survived the day and are proud not to have joined the ranks of those who've suffered. Now remember that wearing a dry suit or semi-dry will have made you sweat, so you may not immediately recognise the fact but you will now be dehydrated. Two options, firstly if you're diving tomorrow get hydrated and keep the booze down to a modest level and secondly if you're not diving tomorrow, I guess I can safely leave that to your imagination.

Bon voyage and happy diving.

Photoshop tips

by Anthony Holley and Martha Tressler - June 20

Viewing your images on screen - PC keyboard shortcuts in Photoshop by Anthony Holley

- 'Tab' toggles the tools and palettes off and on
- 'Shift + tab' toggles the palettes only, leaving the tools
- 'F' toggles the screen view from the standard screen to full screen with the upper menu bar and a grey background
 - 'Shift + F' removes the menu bar, to full screen with a black background (and nothing else)
- 'Ctrl + +' zooms in
- 'Ctrl + -' zooms out
- 'Ctrl + 0' fits to screen
- 'Space bar + mouse' - moves the picture about on the screen

Using the raw converter by Martha Tressler

- more effective than within Photoshop, not destructive
- changes saved in small sidecar xmp file
- ensure auto adjustments is turned off!
- overexposure - tick 'Highlights' box at top and click on 'Exposure' tab to have raw converter tell you what is over exposed
- underexposure - when increasing exposure also tweak shadows slider to give punch
- white balance tool (eyedropper at top) - click in 'neutral' area, towards the top of the frame if possible, and see what happens
- vignetting correction - open 'Lens' tab under 'Histogram' on right side and use slider

And more - have a play!

n.b. be careful with Contrast/Saturation adjustments (and with overdoing Exposure corrections)

Research projects on the Great Barrier Reef

Field notes *by Pedro Vieyra* - July 18

The Australian Great Barrier Reef (GBR) is the largest in the world, seconded by the Belize Barrier Reef in the Caribbean. It is 2,000km long with 2,800 reefs, 1,500 fish species, 300 hard corals, 4,000 molluscs and 400 different sponges.

There follow some field notes of Pedro's amazing trip there last year to undertake some fascinating research and important observation projects.

Osprey Reef

95 miles east of the GBR, 13 miles long with mega fauna including hammerheads, sperm whales, beaked whales, bottle-nosed dolphins, pilot whales, whale sharks, manta rays, marlin and sailfish. It is also a humpback whale breeding area

Raine Island

Green and Loggerhead turtles - up to 80,000 Green turtles return to Raine to lay eggs covering a distance of up to 2,600km. They can lay up to five clutches of over 100 eggs per season at approximately 14 day intervals. They can also store sperm.

Birds

Include reef herons, ospreys, frigates, pelicans, sea eagles and shearwaters - 52 species in all.

Sharks

A huge number including tiger, silvertip, grey reef, whitetip reef, nurse, wobbegong, epaulette, carpet, bronze whaler and leopard.

Research Projects

Reef check - monitoring reefs in over 80 countries, post-dive data collection, indicator species survey, transects and changes over time
Tiling - baseline measurement of coral growth.

Fluorescent coral - investigating post-stress (elevated temperature, high light, UV) on cellular microstructure, physiology and reproduction of fluorescent corals compared to non-fluorescent corals of the same species. This will enable predictions to be made whether there are large populations of stress-resistant corals, which can withstand global climate change.

Coral spawning.

Crown of thorns.

Reef Shark behaviour - 28 implanted with microchip id - intermittent pulse transmitter (pinger) - receivers placed around reefs to log movements. UE lobbying for protection of Osprey reef.

Manta behaviour - remote video camera on reef to record interactions with cleaner fish.

Tiger shark tagging - satellite transmitters attached to dorsal fin - transmits when at surface. Pingers for daily movements. Aimed at protection of home ranges and migratory routes. Six tigers tagged so far. Migrate to higher latitudes during hot months. Seasonal migration to feeding areas 2,000km.

Dwarf Minke whale - Hundreds of hours observation since 1995, individual ids, resightings, first recording of vocalisation, movement, behaviour and size observations

Cephalopods - Nautilus at Osprey, estimated 7,500 animals related to Ammonites, ruled the oceans 240 - 65 million years ago, the only cephalopod with external shell, deep water 100 - 400m, average 14 animals per trapping, no larval dispersal, isolated population, over 1000 tagged, search for juvenile nautilus habitat

Water quality - biggest issue to health of GBR, poor water quality and fresh water to algal blooms. Coral skeletons weakened by nutrients, increased algal blooms to increased Crown of Thorns.

Competition results

August 15 - third annual international 'focus on'

BSoUP's third International 'focus on' competition was judged at the Society's August meeting. It was really impressive and not a little exciting to see entries from a grand total of 18 different countries namely Australia, Belize, Bulgaria, Cayman Islands, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, UK and the USA.

JP Trenque presented the images in a powerpoint presentation, which was shown twice, the second time a little quicker than the first. The 70 strong audience then voted for their favourite first, second and third image.

The winner, with 50 points, was Francesco Visintin from Italy who beat the big animal entries with a stunning image of a nudibranch. Second place went to John van Lent from the Netherlands who scored 23 points for his retreating Thresher shark. Ethan Daniels (USA) and Alex Mustard (UK) tied in third place with images of a Manta Ray and Shark respectively.

BSoUP extends its congratulations to the winners and thanks all who participated. Turn to page 31 to see the winning shots.

Full results:

- 1st - Francesco Visintin (Italy) - nudibranch climbing spiral tubeworm
- 2nd - John van Lent (Netherlands) - retreating thresher shark
- 3rd= - Ethan Daniels (USA) - night time manta ray
- 3rd= - Alex Mustard (UK) - split shot of lemon shark
- 5th= - Frits Meyst (Netherlands)
- 5th= - Martin Spragg (Belize)
- 7th - Timo Weber (Germany)
- 8th - Jonathan Dietz (Cayman Islands)

June 20 - 'Focus on' - Creative

Huge congratulations to Graham Eaton who scooped both the first and second places at this month's 'focus on' competition. Both Graham's images go forward to the final in November.

1 st - Graham Eaton - 35 pts	5 th - Pedro Vieyra - 25 pts
2 nd - Graham Eaton - 30 pts	6 th - Trevor Rees - 19 pts
3 rd = - Len Deeley - 26 pts	
3 rd = - JP Trenque - 26 pts	

July 18 - 'Focus on' - Temperate green waters

Congratulations to Tony Baskeyfield and Bob Anthony whose images came first and second respectively in this month's 'focus on' competition - temperate green waters. Their images go forward to the final in November.

1 st - Tony Baskeyfield - 47 pts	4 th - Martha Tressler - 23 pts
2 nd - Bob Anthony - 33 pts	5 th - Ken Sullivan - 19 pts
3 rd - Rob Bailey - 26 pts	6 th - Trevor Rees - 17 pts

Advertising rates

To advertise in 'in focus' please contact the editor Gill McDonald on bsoup@catalyst5.freemove.co.uk or call 07855 759946.

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Forward planning

Visions in the Sea 2007

The 11th Digital Underwater Photography Festival is taking place on 20th & 21st October 2007 at Kings College London. A winning combination of presentations and talks given by some of the best underwater photographers in the world is planned together with a print competition with fantastic prizes. An event not to be missed. For a booking form go to www.oceanoptics.co.uk

South Africa and Mozambique: October 14 - 28 2007

14-day 'shark, whale shark & manta ray expedition' with optional extensions for great white shark cage diving and/or big-5 game safari - Kruger National Park. There are excellent facilities for non-divers and the group so far consists of both. The trip will particularly cater for underwater photographers.

Len Deeley www.imagine-photography.co.uk

BSoUP 40th anniversary party

The usual Christmas party will also be our 40th anniversary party so put 19 December in your diaries for the social event of the season!

Beqa Lagoon, Fiji: February/ March 2008

Rob Allen (see article 'Photographing big sharks in Fiji', page 13 of issue 87) is hosting a shark photography field trip in February and March 2008. The daily shark dive will be followed by afternoon analysis workshops and presentations. For more information, please contact Rob at rob@sharksafaris.com

British Splash-in Championship 2008 - July 12

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Peter Ladell

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BSoUP officers 2007

President/ Webmaster:

Tel: 020 8668 8168

Brian Pitkin

email: brian.pitkin@virgin.net

Chair:

Tel: 07764 603657

Martha Tressler

email: martha@mtressler.com

Honorary Secretary

Tel: 07710 943411

Joss Woolf

email: josswoolf@hotmail.com

Honorary Treasurer/

'in focus' production editor:

Tel: 020 8949 7568

Anthony Holley

email: bsoup@holleyuwphoto.com

Membership secretary:

Tel: 01707 655944

Mike Russell

email: mjrussell@onetel.com

Meetings secretary:

Tel: 07887 558832

Jane Morgan

email: jane@dive.uk.com

Publicity officer/

Digital competitions officer:

Tel: 07767 874046

Jean Phillipe (JP) Trenque

email: jp@jptrenque.com

Film competitions officer:

Tel: 020 8567 4464

John Langford

email: john.r.langford@lineone.net

Digital officer:

Tel: 07876 523110

Alexander Mustard

email: alex@amustard.com

'in focus' editor:

Tel: 07855 759946

Gill McDonald

email: bsoup@catalyst5.freereserve.co.uk

Committee Members:

Martin Davies 07957 267391

martin@martindavies.org.uk

Colin Doeg 020 7622 8147

cdoeg35108@aol.com

Peter Ladell 01582 419603

bsoup@fullimmersionphoto.com

Muna Muammar 07958 658221

dr_muna@btinternet.com

Pedro Vieyra 07790 816887

pedro.vieyra@chelwest.nhs.uk

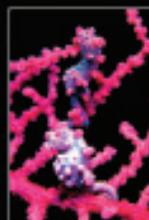
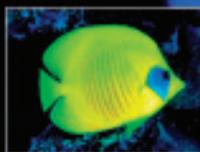
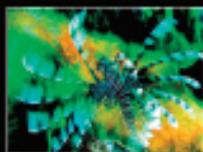
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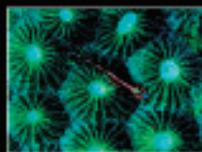
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DIVEQUEST

An underwater photograph showing two divers in silhouette against a bright blue background. A rope extends from the top left towards the divers. In the lower right, the dark, rectangular structure of a boat is visible, partially submerged. The water surface is visible at the top, with light rays filtering through.

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