
Water Column

SEPTEMBER 2016 ISSUE 7

Western Australian Underwater Photographic Society's Bi-annual Underwater Journal

**Spice Islands and
Raja Ampat**

Bremer Bay

Anilao



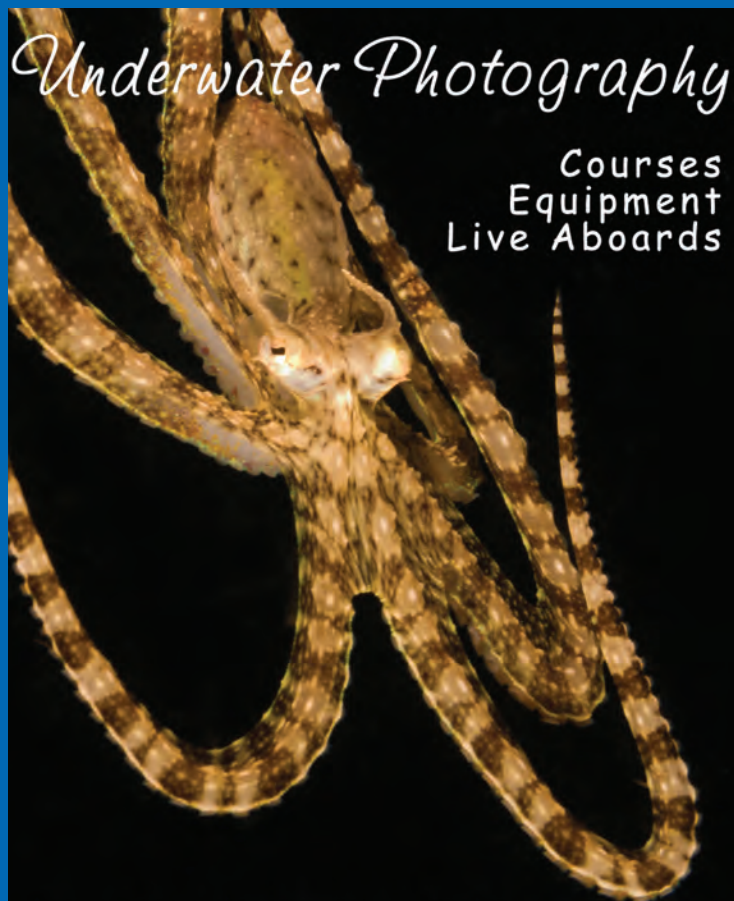
Snoots

**Creature feature:
Orcas**

**2015 PIXELS and
MEGAPIXELS winners**



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WaterColumn

September 2016 ISSUE 7



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Cover by Brad Pryde - Fireworks - 2015-2016 Image of the Year

EDITOR'S BUBBLES

The AGM this year was well attended. Thank you to those who made it such a fun night. We welcome aboard some new committee members, and sincerely thank those who have stepped down. We have had some very informative presentations during the year and appreciate the time and effort the guest speakers and club members have put in for our learning and entertainment.

We recently issued an e-survey to club members and received good feedback. The committee is currently preparing a few events for the future, based on this feedback. A friendly reminder - it is membership renewal time. Please ensure your contact details are current so that we have an up-to-date register of members on file, a requirement of our Constitution.

On the photography side there have been some great competitions for WAUPS members to participate in. The image on the front cover of this issue won our 2016 Image of the Year Award. Congratulations Brad Pryde, it reminds me of fireworks.

The winning image in the Animal Portrait category of the 2016 ANZANG Nature Photographer of the Year was of a trumpet fish in a whip coral. The top images will soon be up for viewing on www.anzang-samuseum.sa.gov.au. In previous years some WAUPS members have been shortlisted, a few winning their specific category in this very tough competition.

Many of you entered the WAPF UnderWater Photography Competition making the 'top-20'. The winners to be announced at the WAPF Inter-Club Event in Busselton at the end of September. In the Click West Competition our very own club president, Amanda Blanksby, was a finalist in the Close-up Category. The Inter-Club competitions in particular, are a great way to broaden the photography skills.

With great composition and strong colour this year's Open Portfolio Competition was won by Chandy de Wit. Many thanks to Scuba Imports for their ongoing support of that competition.

I encourage you to also check out OZTek's Underwater Photo Competition. Entries due by January 31, 2017. View all the terms and conditions on www.oztek.com.au/Photo-Comp

Sadly the diving opportunities have been few and far between in recent months due to a long, wet and windy winter. Spring and then summer will bring the warmer sea conditions, good enough to entice us out for those early morning dives on a weekend. While the underwater conditions have not been favourable it has given members the opportunity to hone their photography skills on land, a great way to learn more about your cameras capabilities. Others have headed overseas to warmer waters. Would love a trip report from you on that for the Water Column magazine. ☺

Keep blowin' bubbles

Viv

Congratulations to Chandy de Wit, winner of the 2016 Open Portfolio Competition



WAUPS PINBOARD

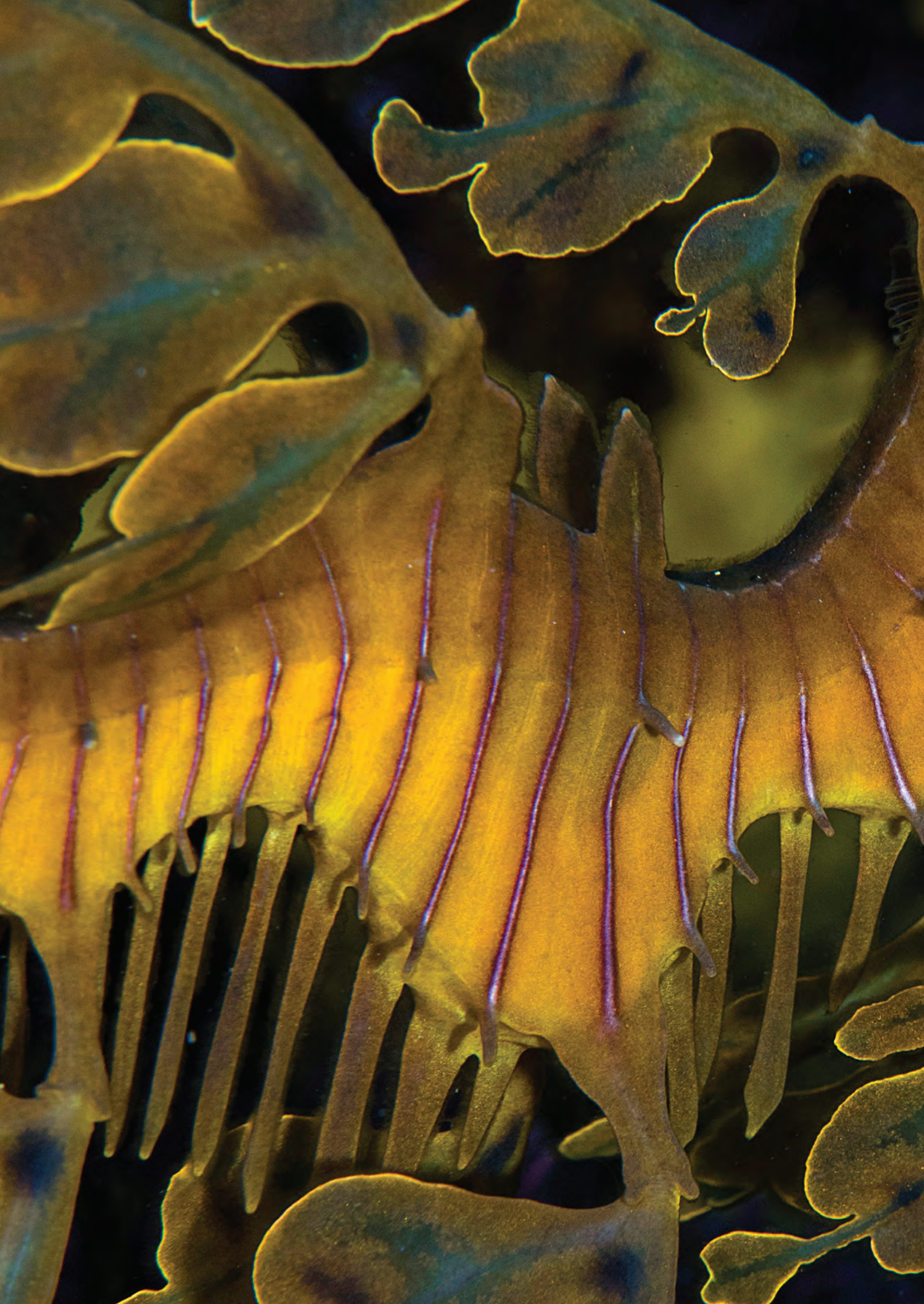
Click West

Click West is an amateur photography competition arranged by the WA Photographic Federation. There are four categories to enter images into; landscape, mono, close up/macro and environmental portrait. I entered images into three of the four categories and was chuffed to be selected as a finalist in the close up/macro category with the image below. The awards night was held at Hoyts Cinema. It's pretty cool to see all the submitted and finalist photos displayed on the big cinema screen.

Amanda Blanksby



© Amanda Blanksby





BREMER BAY

by Bori Bennett (and Isla Cath)

Since I moved to Perth from Papua New Guinea the biggest challenge I have encountered is driving (no, not diving, driving!). I am a very inexperienced driver, so when I heard that a group of WAUPS members were heading down to Bremer Bay located 550km away to see Leafy Sea Dragons I made sure I checked out that particular road map.



The town looked like a 'small pinch' away till I realised that 'small pinch' was actually a 6-7 hour drive! An important reminder just how big Australia is. I hesitated in my decision but eventually I decided to join the group. Excited and nervous at the same time, as diving with Leafy Sea Dragons was one of my things to do on my Australian 'bucket list'... my dream was about to come true.

Loading the dive gear, underwater camera and lots of beers into my tiny car I drove for 7 hours to Bremer Bay, a coastal town situated on the south coast of Western Australia. I arrived to a welcome refreshing cool change from the hot 40 ° C+ temperatures Perth was having in February.

Bremer Bay is known for its beautiful beaches and most importantly the opportunity to see Leafy Sea Dragons in their natural habitat. Due to a change in circumstances with other divers present, the WAUPS group was split into two groups, with a morning and afternoon departure. Although this wasn't ideal (as we would have preferred to dive as one group), this did enable a decent surface interval and the opportunity to change camera gear. The lugging around of equipment between dives was also a disadvantage, so if you are planning on doing multiple dives in a day and want to stay as one group perhaps a quieter time of the year may be your preference.

After the first dive of the day we warmed

up with coffee and soup kindly provided to us, before preparing for the second dive. Craig Lebens from Bremer Bay Dive & Sports lead our team. Craig has an incredible amount of knowledge on the Leafy Sea Dragons whereabouts. Leaving the boat harbour it was only a 10 minute journey to Black Point. Now it was time for my Leafy Sea Dragon experience!

To my amazement during the 2 days of 4 dives I saw 2 pairs of the Leafy Sea Dragon on all 3 dives at Black Point .. success! On the fourth dive at Fish Eyes we looked for Weedy Sea Dragons to no avail. The granite rocks and coral surrounds with large schools of fish was a delight though, offering a different diving experience from Perth's local waters.

On checking the photographs I had taken during the dives, it was only then that I discovered the Sea Dragon I



Orcas!

After 2 wonderful days diving with Leafy Sea Dragons, another marine creature came to my attention after I heard about a particular trip from other WAUPS members. They had been on a day trip to see wild Orcas! I could see their excitement as they talked about seeing wild Orcas and watching their playful behaviour. Even though they looked so tired from the 8 hour boat trip I could not resist. Then and there I decided that I could not leave before seeing the wild Orcas that inhabit the Southern Ocean.

I extended my trip for one more day so I could go with the Orca Bremer Bay Naturaliste Charters who are exclusively aligned with the Bremer Canyon Killer Whale Expeditions. It's an incredible opportunity to share this natural wonder and any photographs you take contribute towards its research and preservation. Their friendly, professional and informative crews have marine science backgrounds to ensure you also learn during your unforgettable experience. I was very impressed.

When I went on the Orca trip it was beautiful weather with calm conditions, however the boat crew did advise us that the Orcas are more playful in rougher weather. This became apparent when comparing my experience to the other WAUPS members who had gone on a different day, but at least nobody experienced any seasickness on this day.

We encountered other marine life during the Orca trip including a Blue Shark, Sunfish, Sea Lions and Birds.

This was my first road trip in Australia and I really enjoyed the beautiful scenery. I look forward to experiencing more of what Western Australia has to offer.



saw on the first dive had egg marks all along the tail! I had been too mesmerised by Bremer Bay's beauty to notice these fascinating egg marks during the actual dive.

The water temperature was around 21 °C so some of the divers wore dry suits. I wore a 7mm wetsuit with 2 Sharkskin layers but still felt pretty cold in the water. I would recommend a dry suit if you don't want to be bothered by the cold while diving.

The camera equipment I used was Nikon D810 DSLR. The Leafy Sea Dragons I saw were approximately 30cm in length, which made it a little hard to capture the Sea Dragons in full with my fixed 105mm lens.

Bremer Bay Dive & Sports is the only dive shop at Bremer Bay and open from September to April. The shop owner Craig Lebens is also a dive guide. The Little Boat Harbour where beach diving is available is very popular, from open water to advanced diver, and suitable for snorkeling and night diving.



FLIP SNOOTS

by Brad Pryde

An Evolution from Plumbing to 3D Printing...

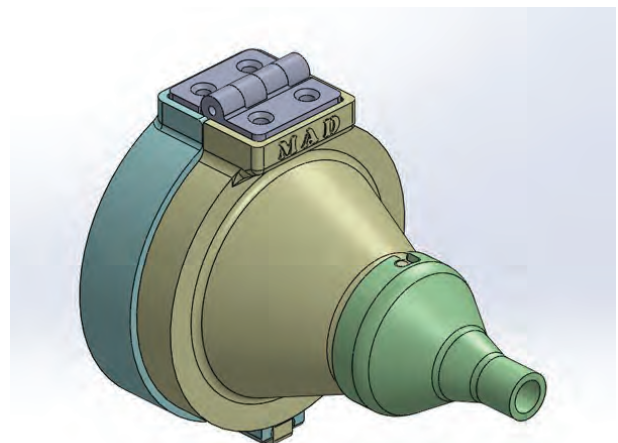
The first snoot I tried was a piece of plumbing gear from Bunnings. As I trialled a few versions to see what worked, many trips were made. Don't think I'm the only one in the club that has been wandering around the plumbing section with a tape measure checking what would fit over the strobe end. Tried reticulation bits and even small dip kit connectors to make micro snoots. (Ref Fig-1) It was a bit of an adventure but one thing that really stuck out was that once the snoot was attached, you were stuck with it for the whole dive. Got me thinking after seeing a friends flip diopter holder, could I do the same with a snoot.

Fig-1



Again Bunnings and a few other supply stores were rummaged for options to trial. Eventually had a prototype version of a flip option going, but it wasn't quite the result I was looking for. Then 3D printing became local and I could get my own designs made and test things out. I have the advantage of having experience in 3D design and using CAD systems. I modelled up my designs from sketch to working component. (Ref Fig-2.) It was quite a challenge trying different designs and working out the limits with the process and what could be done.

Fig-2



It was about a year before I had what I'd call a working prototype that would handle diving and underwater photographic activity. I took them out on many dives, and also got interest from some of my local dive buddies (now my development teamTM) to try them out. This was great as I found out some flaws, one being the clip-

locking system and began working on a better hinge solution.

Snoot development all changed when I bought my own 3D printer mid-2015. (Ref Fig -3) The printers had come down significantly in price and desktop units could now produce very accurate and relatively cheap components. I could now draw new ideas, print models and test them immediately. I focused on a new clip-locking system and how to get it to work more reliably (or idiot-proof it).

Fig-3



Things all came together and I began selling units, and not just to dive buddies. Most recently some to South Africa and another to a diver in Italy. Not being one to sit around idle I moved on to snoot lighting itself and what I could do with it. Went two ways trialling micro snoots with small outputs down to 8mm. The other was to get the right light output and reading about the technical side of snoots, lighting and angles of refraction. This lead onto Winston light tubes and using parabolic curves. A bit of maths and 3D drawing came up with a prototype to trial to see if the theory worked in practice. The latest version has this new snoot end section that gives a nice clean edge to separate the light and shadow. Plus a few trial and error attempts later I also have a much better locking system now (Ref Fig-4 and Fig-5).

Fig-4



Fig-5



Snoots aren't for everyone, they are quite a challenge for the first few dives (or ten). For me it all came about from diving our local sites often and wanting to switch it up a bit. I enjoy the challenge, and the results can sometimes be amazing. Is it worth the effort? For me the answer is yes, but feel free to ask if you'd like to have a go and see for yourself. Maybe you'll be heading to your local plumbing store soon to have a go at making your own version.



A snooted image from Brad Pryde, using two snoots on a cuttlefish.



Tracey Harris

Anilao Underwater Macro Photographers dive trip

by Tracey Harris

We left Perth on 21st May 2015 heading to Manila. From there after a good night's sleep we were picked up and driven by air-conditioned bus to Anilao. Two and a half hours later arriving at our lodgings in Balayan Bay.

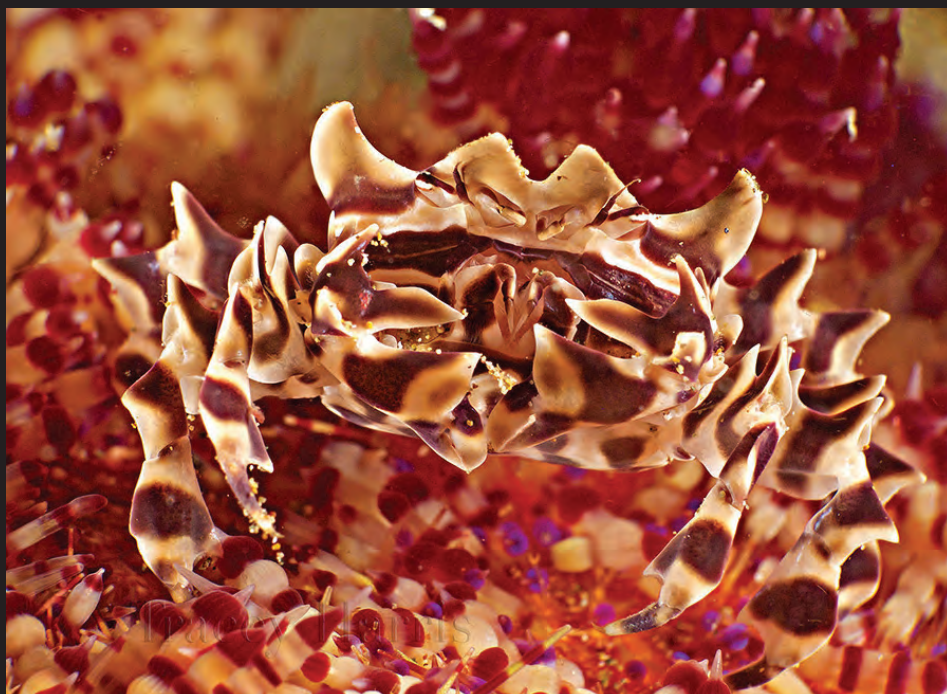
Overlooking the ocean the Crystal Blue Resort is a well-designed, beautiful complex with fantastic accommodation and great food. The resort manager, Mike Bartik, a world-renowned photographer, runs a purpose-designed setup that suits divers and underwater photographers. We had our own camera stations in a purpose built and temperature controlled room.

The dives were all boat dives with no more than six people on each boat. With so many sites to go to we rarely saw other boats or other divers. Nitrox was available at a small price if wanted. The dive sites are macro and muck diving at their best.

We would dive all day, sometimes do a night dive then meet after a wonderful dinner for workshops and critique. I found this especially good with so many really great photographers to talk to and listen to talks where they shared their experiences and knowledge.

Our first dive was at Secret Garden, muck diving at its best. We saw so many critters on this dive, and this was only the warm up... Jaw Fish, Decorator Crabs, Blue Ringed Occy, Squat Lobsters and Halimeda Ghost Pipefish to name a few. After 24 dives I had ticked many critters off my bucket list.

I have been back to Anilao since and I highly recommend that you pay Mike a visit at Crystal Blue Resort – you will not be disappointed. This was my first trip with the Underwater Macro Group and I have learnt so much that I am joining them again this year.





The Killer Whale

Orcinus orca

What is a Killer Whale?

Ancient sailors called them 'whale killers' which was turned around to 'killer whales', resulting in the latin name *Orcinus* meaning 'kingdom of the dead' and *orca* meaning 'a kind of whale'.

Surprisingly killer whales, or orcas, are members of the dolphin family, a toothed whale. They are the largest in the family and infamous predators on other marine mammals, including sea lions, seals and even other whales larger than themselves, as well as birds, fish and squid.

They are easily recognised by their distinctive colour pattern, which is jet black above, sharply delineated from the white chin and belly with a white process on the side, and a white spot above and behind the eye. There is also a pale grey saddle behind the dorsal fin. The dorsal fin can be incredibly tall in adult males, up to almost 2 metres high. Even females have longer dorsal fins than any other whales.

Male orcas range from 6-8 metres long, whilst females are slightly smaller at 5-7 metres long. Calves are born at around

2 to 2.4 metres in length. Males can be up to 5,400 kilograms in weight. They live for an average of 29 years for males and 50 years for females.

Females mature around 10 years of age and often breed until they are 40. Males mature at 15 years, but do not usually reproduce until they are 21. The breeding cycle is slow with gestation taking 15-18 months, and females giving birth about once every five years. Both males and females are very protective of their young. Adolescent females often help with the care of the young. During the first seven months of life, however, 37-50% of calves die. The global population is estimated to be at least 50,000.

Distribution

Killer whales are found in all oceans, and are possibly the most widely distributed mammal after humans and rats! They are more common in colder temperate waters in coastal areas (where the waters have highly productive cold-water upwellings) but sometimes range into tropical waters. Various orca populations are recognised around the world that do not

Image by Tammy Gibbs





interact with each other. These groups are known as distinct 'ecotypes' and display differences in appearance, behaviour, acoustics, diet and genetics, and consequently they may turn out to be separate subspecies or species, with around 7 currently recognised worldwide.

Feeding

These highly intelligent whales are renowned for hunting their prey in packs (or pods) of up to 40 individuals. They all cooperate in the hunt and use echolocation to communicate with each other. Each pod makes unique sounds that members recognise. Besides excellent hearing they also have good eyesight both above and below water and a good sense of touch. Being able to swim at speeds of over 56 km/hour, make it one of the fastest marine mammals. All these factors enable it to be a very successful predator.

Some pods remain in one area, while others travel further afield. Different pods may hunt on different prey animals, depending on what is available in their home range. For example, in the North West Pacific the coastal pods eat fish, transients prefer mammals and offshore pods eat schooling fish, but also possibly sharks and mammals.

Specialised hunting methods have developed, for example, in South America some temporarily beach themselves to capture sea lions and elephant seals in shallow water. In polar regions they 'spy hop' to spot seals on ice floes, then swim around in a group to create waves that wash the prey off the ice into the water where they kill it.

Killer Whales at Bremer Bay canyon

In 2005 Dave Riggs first observed an 'unusual amount of activity' of marine life, including abundant killer whales, at the Bremer Bay canyon. This canyon is only 70 km south of Bremer Bay on the south coast of Western Australia, 180 km west of Albany. This exciting discovery turned out to be the result of a seasonal summer upwelling into the canyon of a cold, salty Antarctic current loaded with hydrocarbons from deep water fossil fuels. The hydrocarbon (methane hydrate) supports a food web that involves crustaceans which release billions of eggs into the water column. This nutrient-rich current consequently attracts a great diversity of marine life including killer whales, dolphins, sperm whales, large sharks and giant squid, as well as many species of fishes and invertebrates. In fact this is one of the largest known seasonal populations of killer whales in the southern hemisphere!

Last February several WAUPS members went on a charter boat to see the Bremer Bay killer whales. The group saw several different orca family groups at the Bremer 'hot spot' which included large but shy males and females showing off their calves. A sub-adult spent 30 minutes around the boat, eye-balling the humans, zooming under the boat and jumping the waves. Scientists on-board the research vessel recorded orca vocalisation underwater as well as Go-Pro footage of them swimming under the boat. We also saw dolphins, a blue shark and sunfish on the surface.



The Spice Islands & Raja Ampat

by Viv Matson-Larkin

Flying into Biak from Darwin we did a town tour and checked out a Japanese WWII cave system. Once aboard the Coral Discoverer we unpacked as she cruised towards Cenderawasih Marine Park.

The daily routine for this 12 night trip was as all liveaboards tend to be - Breakfast, activity, Morning tea, activity, Lunch, activity, Afternoon tea, activity, Pre-dinner drinks, Dinner (3 course), presentation, usually a documentary or an activity.

The next morning we woke up in Cenderawasih Bay and the flag was up! A hearty breakfast then snorkel with the whale sharks near the bagans. After morning tea the guest lecturer gave a presentation on whale sharks. Lunch over, we boarded the zodiacs heading to Kwatisore Village where the Papuan villagers entertained us with a log game, and held a local market. After afternoon tea we boarded the Xplorer for a snorkel. Joined the Captain for welcome aboard drinks before dinner.

On Day 3, as we were at sea cruising around the Bird's Head Peninsula, it was filled with presentations on our journey through West Papua and the Spice Islands, about Papuan cultures and the Indonesian geology of these areas. The scuba divers completed some paperwork and got their kit ready. That evening's documentary was about the Equator.

Day 4 we split into groups cruising in various directions within Wayag Lagoon, before a swim. After lunch snorkel/kayak off another beach or a glass bottom boat



tour. The walkers did a steep climb up the highest peak, Mt Pinado. Back aboard by 4pm we cruised on towards Kawe, had a presentation on Fish I.D., dinner, then it was games night.

Day 5, the keen ones were ready at 5:30am for a zodiac ride to visit the Indonesian equator memorial but due to a torrential downpour the skippers could not see the landing area so all missed the opportunity to photograph/video their crossing of the equator. After breakfast, some snorkeled/dived at Aljui Bay while others took to a kayak. During lunch the liveaboard moved on to Penemu. Another snorkel while the walkers went for a hike 320 steps up to a lookout.

Cruising overnight we woke up in Kaibui Bay. Splitting into groups, we went out into the famous channel separating Waigeo and Gam which Alfred Wallace traversed in 1860 during his travels of this area. After the snorkel we had a presentation about the Wallace Line. After lunch a snorkel in the Wallace Passage while the divers headed to a strong current area for a ripper of a dive.

Overnight moved on to Yenswai. Rising early boarded the zodiacs weaving through mangroves then a walk through the rainforest to a waterfall known as Widows Water. While eating lunch we moved on to Yenwapnour Village at Gam Island greeted there by the villagers with a welcome dance and pipeband.

At 5:15am on Day 8 the keen birders headed ashore for a 40 min steep uphill walk to see red birds of paradise. I opted for the early snorkel within the Dampier Strait and saw quite a bit of fish and lush coral. Moving on by late afternoon we went through the Mesemta Channel to anchor in a hidden lagoon for the night.

Day 9 had an exploratory cruise around numerous small islands, past a pearl farm chancing across dolphins on





the return for morning tea. We then had the choice of a snorkel, dive, kayak or glass bottom boat tour. The liveaboard then cruised on to Wagmab for another snorkel, dive or glass bottom tour.

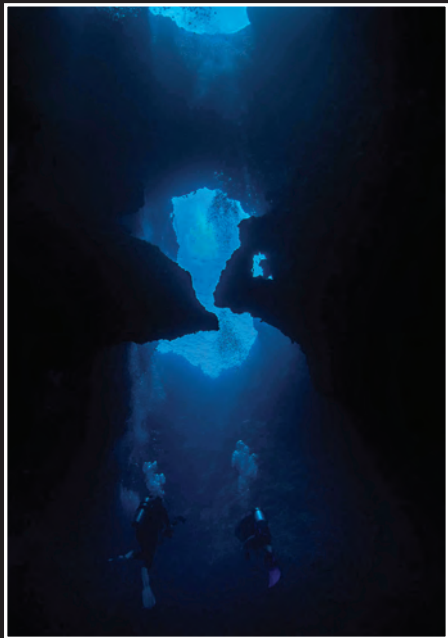
We moved on towards Banda Neira where on entering the Zonnegat Straits we were met by the local Kora Kora canoes which raced alongside as escorts. We checked out the Banda Api Volcano lava flow, our next snorkel and dive site. A group went ashore for high-tea at the Banda Mad Hatters Tea Party. Later we all hiked up to the Dutch Fort Belgica which overlooked the town for sunset drinks and entertainment. Next day visited the Museum and an old church that was built in 1611. The shopaholics went on a spice garden tour before checking out the souvenirs, antiques and pearls.

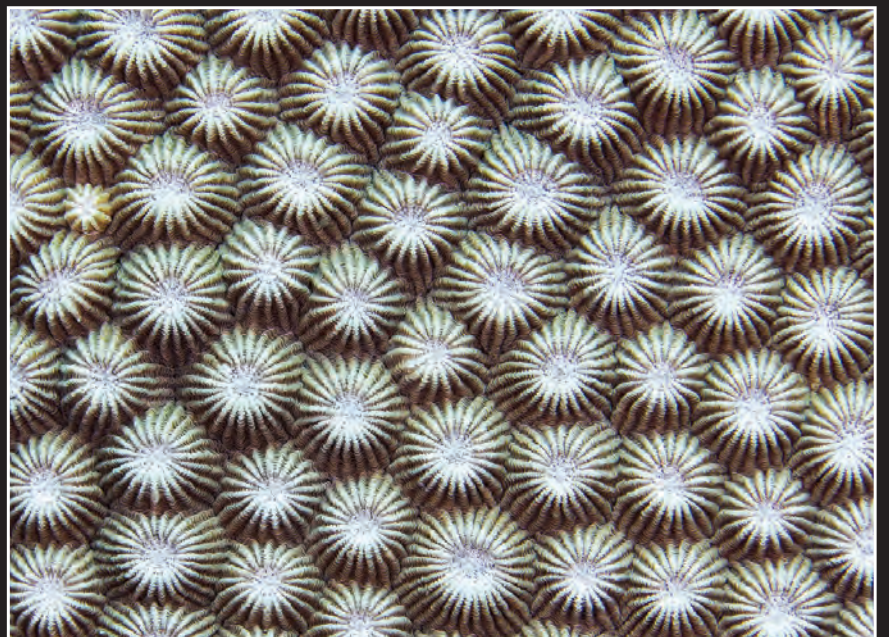
Day 12 we crossed the Timor Sea heading towards Darwin. Afternoon tea was an Ice Cream Social. Before dinner there was a grand finale recap of the trip screened in the bridge deck lounge followed by farewell drinks, then dinner. One more sleep till it is breakfast time in Darwin.



2015 PIXELS overall winner

Mark Jeffs

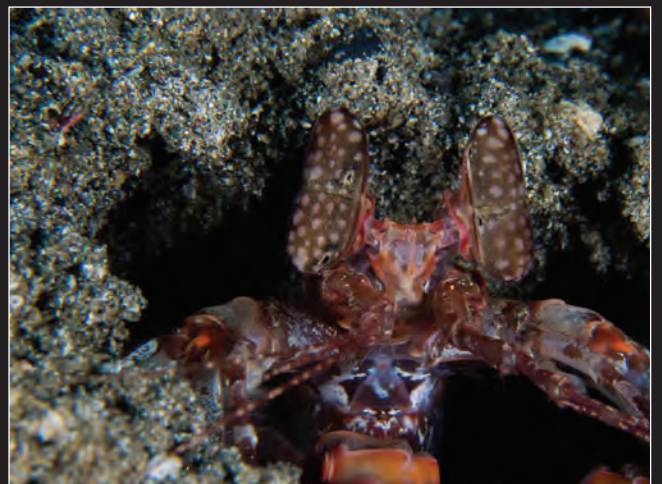




2015 MEGAPIXELS overall winner



Amanda Blanksby



WAPF UPDATE

By Gary Browne

WAPF In My View finalist image by Gary Browne

I attended the WAPF Presidents Brunch at Gosnells Golf Club in April. It was a good opportunity to catch up with members from other camera clubs and to see how they are run, and the various activities they get involved in. A majority of clubs seem to use the Gold, Silver and Bronze method for their club competitions. Also several clubs run a mentoring system where more experienced members provide assistance to new or less experienced members. It was interesting to see that WAUPS have an above average number of members compared to other metropolitan photography clubs. I gave a short presentation on the upcoming WAPF UnderWATER Photo competition. Several people from other clubs showed interest in participating in this year's event.

UnderWATER Competition

This competition is open to all members of WAPF affiliated camera clubs. Images must be taken with the camera submerged underwater anywhere along the WA coast within twelve months of the closing date for entries, midnight on July 17. The judge for this year's event, Melbourne-based photographer Matt Krumins, has selected the top twenty images including first, second and third places.

We have two sponsors for this year's event. The first, Team Digital, have agreed to print all twenty images and supply a store voucher of \$200 for first prize. Perth Scuba are the other sponsor with a \$150 store voucher for second prize and a \$100 store voucher as third prize. The winners will be announced at the WAPF Interclub event in Busselton where the top twenty images will be on display.

In My View

Another competition run by the WAPF with the theme 'Intimate Landscape'. There are two parts to this competition, the photographic section has now closed and the top twenty images have been selected. The second part is for writers, who are invited to write a story in prose or poetry for one or more of the photographs. The



resultant body of work, twenty photographs each with an accompanying story, will then be published as a high-quality photo-book. Each finalist will get a copy of this book as part of the prize pool. I am happy to say that one of my images was selected as one of the top twenty images and it has also been selected for the front cover of the photo-book.

Judging

WAPF is running an intensive introduction to Judging course for photographers – combining structured lecture sessions, a group project and directed outside-of-class-hours research. Additionally, there will be an optional online judging assignment after course completion for practice.

There are no prerequisites for club members but it is recommended that you have a reasonable knowledge of photography and competitions in order to gain the most from the course and not be left behind.

For information on all the above and more head to the WAPF website. There are plenty of events organised by WAPF that WAUPS members can attend and continue to further their learning of photography.



WAPF Interclub finalist image by Shannon Conway

WAPF Interclub competition

For the first time, WAUPS entered the WAPF Interclub competition this year. There are two stages to the competition - digital and print. We judged all images submitted by WAUPS members and selected 15 colour and 15 mono, as the club's entries into the digital round. Seven entries were selected to go into the final print round. Well done to Tammy Gibbs, Shannon Conway and Amanda Blanksby. The winners will be announced at the WAPF Interclub event at the end of September. We will let you know the results in the next edition of the Water Column.



PARTING SHOT

Home Duties by Tony Bensted



On a recent trip to Tulamben Bali, I dived at a site called Sandy Slope. It is located to the right of USAT Liberty Wreck, close to gutter type formations in the sand. The bottom is volcanic sand, which is quite typical of Tulamben's many shoreline dive sites.

The conditions were perfect on this day as previous days had been fairly rough so were not ideal for diving. This site is predominantly known as a muck dive area with small areas of coral and grey brown sand. The dive site drops off quite rapidly from about 10 metres.

These little cuties are fairly common in the area but I found them to be very skittish and require a fair amount of patience to photograph. I slowly crept up along the sloped bottom, using my muck stick to hold on and prevent me from slipping down the slope disturbing the ground. Trying to get as close as possible is a challenge in itself.

The Randall's Pistol Shrimp is partially blind and has a mutual relationship with the goby by keeping an antennae in contact at all times. The shrimp does all the work and the goby is his eyes. When watching these guys I picture the

shrimp like a mini bulldozer and housekeeper constantly moving dirt and rocks in and out of its hole doing its daily maintenance chores while the goby acts as a spotter lookout. Any movement they both retreat rapidly back down their hole.

I really enjoy watching these guys and the challenge in creeping up without disturbing their daily activities is loads of fun. One could easily lose track of bottom time as these guys were found in 27 metres. This site is one of my favourites and well worth a dive when visiting Tulamben, Bali.








WESTERN AUSTRALIAN UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

waupsnews@gmail.com

The Western Australian Underwater Photographic Society (WAUPS) is a non-profit organisation, which was established in January 1984.

The aims of the Society are:

-  To promote an improvement of underwater photography amongst its members.
-  To promote underwater photography in the community.
-  To encourage an understanding and preservation of the marine environment.
-  To promote an exchange of skills and ideas from within the society and from external bodies.
-  To have fun and enjoy socialising, diving and photography.

WAUPS holds monthly meetings which include guest presenters on a range of photography and diving topics along with a digital show-and-tell of images from members.

We hold regular competitions including an annual day dive shootout, annual open and novice portfolios and image of the year competition, and a range of trips and social events during the year including monthly photo dives.

WAUPS members also get membership to the WA Photographic Federation and can participate in their events and trips.

Anyone interested in underwater photography is welcome any time including all levels of experience.

**WAUPS meetings are conducted at 7:30pm
on the FOURTH TUESDAY of every month.**



Find us on Facebook

www.waups.org.au

