Water Column

FEBRUARY 2020 ISSUE 14

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

CREATURE FEATURE: Decorator crabs

Night diving

Cave diving

BHP Jetty

Canadian bears

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Cover by Mary Gudgeon, taken at Nudi Falls, Lembeh Strait, Indonesia. Gold PIXEL Award in 2019.

Publishing credits: Editor **Viv Matson-Larkin** Associate editors **Sue Morrison and Daniel Barker**
Layout **Tammy Gibbs** Printing **Uni Print**

EDITOR'S BUBBLES

Howdy Members,

The club saw out the last month of 2019 with the annual Christmas dive, this time under the Ammunition Jetty, followed by a wonderful spread to feed you all. Thank you very much to the lovely ladies on the committee who beaver away behind the scenes to ensure you are well fed after every dive.

The 'Meet the Member' mini talks have been a great way to get to know our members. I love hearing how someone got into diving, the gear everyone started out with when they branched out into underwater photography. Things have certainly evolved from the early days when Patrick Baker, one of WAUPS founding members, used a broom handle to hold his strobe up high enough to spread the light while documenting, for the museum, a wreck in its entirety.

The East vs West Underwater Shoot-out is happening again with WAUPS going up against the Snappers Underwater Photography Group from Newcastle. WAUPS won overall last year, with Brad Pryde our highest scoring winner. We now have a sponsor with Olympus donating an Olympus TG6 camera and housing that will be awarded to the highest scoring photographer.

Congratulations to the winners of our latest competitions. The Novice Portfolio won by Tony Bensted. Our PIXELS 2019 overall winner was Mary Gudgeon. The Golden Snapper Award went to Danny Messom. The support from all our sponsors is very much appreciated. We sincerely thank Perth Scuba, Dive Tub, Willyabrup Dreaming Pottery, and Bluefish Photo.

I encourage all our new members to enter in the competitions - Novice and Open Portfolios, PIXELS, Image of the Year, competitions run by the WAPF, and the Wayne Storrie Humour Award. It is a great way to improve on your photographic skills. You never know, your participation in those competitions, attending club meetings and other activities organised by WAUPS (like helping man the display table during Dolphin Scuba Diving's 'We Love Diving Day') could see you win the Golden Snapper Award.

Keep blowin' bubbles

Viv

2019 Novice Portfolio winner Tony Bensted and Runner-up Janet O'Brien collecting their prizes from competition sponsor Perth Scuba.

Pixels 2019

Congratulations to our Gold award winners for the second half of 2019. And a very big congratulations to Mary Gudgeon, the overall PIXELS winner for 2019. Throughout the year, Mary's images were awarded four gold awards, one silver and one bronze. There was a three-way tie for second between Amanda Blanksby, Shannon Earnshaw and Marjon Phur, and in third place was Ross Gudgeon. Well done to everyone who submitted images to PIXELS.


Mary Gudgeon


Shannon Earnshaw


Mary Gudgeon


Amanda Blanksby


Amanda Blanksby


Amanda Blanksby


Jason Milligan


Ross Gudgeon


Marjon Phur


Tony Bensted

Spring weekender

by Leanne Thompson

The WAUPS annual "maybe-we-should-shoot-that-dry-stuff" weekender this year was in the chilly but beautiful location of Dwellingup. Airbnb delivered us a great homestay just outside of town; a great big shed with lots of space and some rather photogenic alpacas.

Saturday saw us up in the pre-dawn hours for sunrise photography before deciding on the day's plan. Thanks to Amanda's forethought, we had some local walking books to help with the task. After a few navigation failures, we finally made our way to the Marrinup Falls, a short little walk with lots of flowing water photo opportunities for us all. The Navigation Master award goes to Yuri, who was the only one of us who actually managed to find the creek crossing and complete the walk.

A spring weekender is of course never complete without a random wander through the bush looking for wildflowers and insects. Picnic lunch and a visit to the dam completed, some erstwhile spotters hung their heads out the car windows looking for a promising patch of vegetation. They did a great job, finding us a range of both orchids to shoot and mosquitoes to slap. Thanks Danny, Marion, Tammy, Sue, Amanda, Yuri, Rusty and Isla for a great weekend.

Clockwise from top right: picnic lunch by Sue Myburgh, beautiful Dwellingup by Daniel Messom, Scarlet robin by Daniel Messom, Marrinup Falls by Daniel Messom.

Clockwise from top left: alpaca by Sue Myburgh, group shot by Amanda Blanksby, Silky blue orchid by Sue Myburgh, shooting cockatoos by Amanda Blanksby, meeting the alpacas by Amanda Blanksby, a spider enjoying lunch by Sue Myburgh.

DECORATOR CRABS

To decorate or not to decorate, that is the question? Around 75% of spider crabs decorate themselves, which constitutes around 675 species since there are approximately 900 species of spider crab (superfamily Majoidea) in the world.

True spider crabs, also known as decorator crabs or masking crabs, make up the family Majidae. Their bodies are usually triangular and pointed at the front, often with a rostrum (two long spikes between the eyes), with long, thin legs and claws. They feed on other crustaceans, molluscs and other benthic (bottom-dwelling) organisms. The sexes are separate and their larvae have an initial planktonic stage before they settle on the seabed.

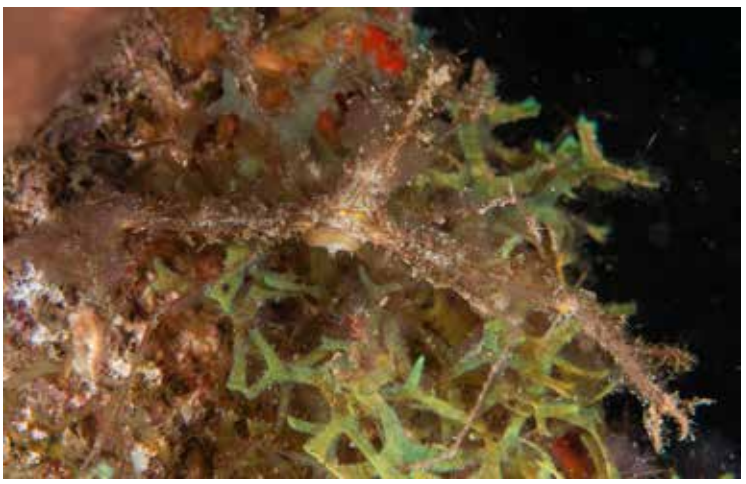
These clever crabs are masters of disguise, and are often only spotted when they move. Their carapace is covered with tiny velcro-like hooked hairs (setae), onto which they attach a whole suite of marine life, enabling them to blend in with the environment they inhabit. Once they have selected their adornment, they deftly snip off a piece with their claws. They then coat one end with a special secretion and place it on their carapace, where the secretion hardens once in contact with seawater. There is a whole range of marine life that the crabs use for their wardrobe, including algae, sea grasses, sponges, corals, anemones, hydroids, bryozoans and ascidians. This 'wardrobe' can keep growing once transplanted. Some of the smaller crab species tend to be completely covered with their disguise, but larger species such as the great spider crab are more thinly camouflaged.

Image by Ross Gudgeon.

Decorator crabs will use local materials, but some species if moved to a different habitat, have been observed to redecorate themselves overnight to remain camouflaged at the new location! When these crabs shed their shells (which allows them to grow), they often recycle much of their decoration moving it from the old carapace to the new one.

Some species are specialised in the material they select, such as sponges, noxious algae and stinging anemones. Some evidently rely on camouflage, whereas others rely on toxic or unpleasant adornments to protect themselves from predators. The latter is called 'aposematism'. Behaviour is also important for survival. Most remain fairly still during the day and freeze if predators approach, and, like most crabs, are most active at night under the cover of darkness.

Just to complicate matters, crabs in several other families also carry or adorn themselves with marine life. These include the sponge crabs (family Dromiidae) that use their rear legs to hold a piece of sponge over their body, the sumo crabs (family Dorippidae) that hold various items over their body including upside-down jellyfish *Cassiopeia andromeda*, the soft coral crabs (family Epialtidae) that adorn themselves with small pieces of their host, and some hermit crabs (superfamily Paguroidea) that often attach anemones to the mollusc shell they inhabit.



Clockwise from top left: hermit crab, sponge crab, sumo crab, soft coral crab, decorator crab, decorator crab. Images by Sue Morrison.

CAVE DIVING
ON THE NULLARBOR

by Jenny Ough

I was told several times that nothing prepares you for a cave diving trip to the Nullarbor, like going on one. They were right!! A packing list for a dive trip is always pretty comprehensive, by the time you add in all the charger units, cords, as well as all the camera gear and dive gear. Then when you add a full camping packing list as well, it becomes rather a big exercise. This is camping in the bush – no power, no water, no bathroom, no shop – all that is there is what you take with you. So if you think you'll need it, pack it!

Once you're all packed up, it is a very long drive with lots of wildlife to keep you on your toes. The kangaroos get decidedly worse after Caiguna.

Weebubbie Cave is around 16km from Eucla, so it is closer to Adelaide than Perth.

Murra El Elevyn is just 5km before the Cocklebiddy Roadhouse, and about 1km off the Eyre Highway. Tommy Grahams is 16km down a bush track from Cocklebiddy Roadhouse.

Permits are required for all cave diving on the Nullarbor. On my first trip in 2017, we also required a permit to 'set fire to the bush'! My most recent trip did not require a fire permit – if you're going, check what the requirements are at the time. It is advisable to take your own firewood, as campers over the years have cleared a lot of the dead wood from near the camp site.

ABOVE: Entrance to Tommy Grahams; the Birth Canal at Tommy's – cannot stand up in this chamber, then need to crawl through the triangular hole.

So once camp is set up, it is time to set up the gear to haul into the cave. An A-frame and flying fox can be used at both Weebubbie and Murra, and ladders are required to get down into the cave. Tommy's is purely a physical haul – and a back breaking one at that, as you can't always stand up straight in parts that you need to pass gear through.

Compressor line is also walked down into the cave, along a path normally away from where divers will walk in/out each day. This saves having to haul the tanks out each night, and back in the next morning – the last divers out of the water

fill the tanks down at the waters edge, while others up top start and monitor the compressor.

The water is generally 90m vertically below the surface, and in most of the caves, it is about a 250 to 300m traverse to get down to the water level. A lot of that trip is in darkness, so helmets and head lamps are a necessity. You become very fit on these trips, effectively climbing a 30 storey building morning and night. Not to mention hauling all the gear beyond the flying fox.

Haul in can take half a day to a whole day, depending on the number of divers – more makes it easier/quicker.

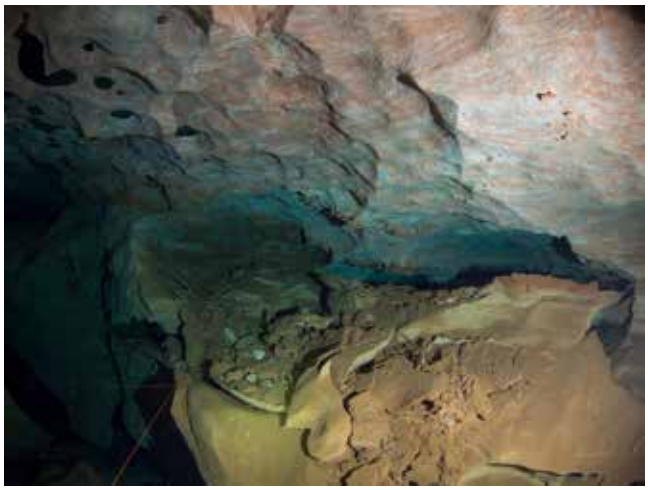
Once that is all done, you are ready to go diving!!! The water is cold at 18 degrees for most sites, strangely Tommy's is 23 degrees. It is crystal clear, divers look like they are suspended in space – until they exhale. Your torch beam (most carry canister lights) darts off into the distance and fades – parts of some of the cave seem endless. The three Nullarbor caves I have dived all have air domes, and the air in them was safe to breathe in two caves, Weebubbie and Murra. The air in Tommy's has about 4.5% CO2 so is not safe to breathe. There is a rockpile at 'the Inner Sanctum' in Tommy's, where you can get out of the water and walk around a huge ceiling collapse, to dive a sump the other side, but with twin tanks, and having to breathe from your regulator on the walk around – and back! Only a few did this, and one later commented it was no different to the side of the cave we were diving, and that the effort was not something he would repeat!

Weebubbie is white, long and deep. The deepest sections are 45m. It has a lake in the main chamber that is around 150m long – we would always swim this on our backs to conserve air at the start of the dive. There is one passage in this cave called the railway tunnel – seriously I think you'd fit three or four trains through it side by side – it is enormous! Operating on the rule of thirds, it was hard to get to some of the deeper sections of this cave. A rebreather and scooter would be great for this site.

Murra is red, shallow and one of the less complex caves. It has a section called the Low Flattener that you go through each dive to get to the other areas. It is a very pretty cave, with lots of beautiful rock formations and water erosion marks. It has some very large chambers, some you can't see across as your light gets consumed by the darkness.

Tommy's is somewhere in the middle of the other two, in terms of colour. It is a very complex cave with loads of nooks and crannies one can explore. On sidemount, you need to swim sideways to get through the keyhole – a passage about 30m long shaped like a keyhole. There are a lot of other passages that are only navigable on sidemount – they are quite narrow, so backmounted twins would not fit through. It seemed with Tommy's that you were never done exploring – there were so many other passages that appeared worthy of a look, that you simply didn't get time to visit.

Cave diving is totally different to ocean or freshwater diving, and not for the faint-hearted. It is very hard work on the Nullarbor, but very rewarding, despite both the physical and mental challenges!



ABOVE: In Murra, underwater; the lake in Weebubbie cave; in Murra, underwater; "ET" and diver in Murra El Elevyn cave.

BHP JETTY

by Tammy Gibbs

The BHP Jetty, or bulk jetty, is often the forgotten cousin to the other jetty more regularly dived in Cockburn Sound, the Kwinana Grain Terminal. However, BHP Jetty has a lot to offer with many cool marine creatures calling it home.

You can find the BHP Jetty on Riseley Road off Beard Street, off Rockingham Road. It is a popular horse exercise beach so make sure your car doesn't block the beach access for the horses. Park and gear up in the dirt carpark and walk down to the jetty along the fenceline.

While the BHP Jetty is no longer a working jetty, others nearby are so it's worth checking out the Fremantle Ports website for shipping movements as active ships in the area do affect visibility.

The best photo opportunities are directly under the jetty and you can follow the pylons all the way to the end if you like. Look out for seahorses, blennies, nudibranchs and the mouth-brooding cardinalfish and gobble guts. If you have a keen eye, convict gobies can be spotted on the pylons, they tend to favour the U-shaped pylons where they can hide in the shadows.

While the jetty is predominantly a macro dive, when the vis is good, you can get some great wide angle images, particularly at the end where the sunbeams penetrate through the broken-up jetty creating interesting light and shadows. A few years ago, a small school of batfish were hanging out at the end over the summer months.

Maximum depth is around 8m at the end under the jetty. Don't forgot your dive flag!









NIGHT DIVING

by Daniel Barker

Like on the land, marine life behaves quite differently at night. Fish that are active during the day can become very docile and even appear to sleep. Others that are docile during the day can become quite active, so a familiar seascape can seem very different when explored in the pool of light from a torch!

Getting nocturnal

In the South West of WA, the Kwinana Grain Terminal in Rockingham and Busselton Jetty share a couple of qualities that make them excellent places to get used to night diving. Firstly, both are in shallow water with steadily sloping sea floors in protected bays that make their conditions, on the whole, predictable. They are both north/south-orientated structures with permanent lighting that can be seen from underwater. This makes navigation, even with a camera, much easier. I say 'even with a camera' as I often find myself circling a subject to choose a perspective. I become engrossed in taking the shot, but then find myself unsure of the direction from which I came. Under a jetty with good visibility I can quickly determine which way the pylons run and that gives me the north/south line. If I can't determine the north from the south from the movement of any surge (which is worth noting before you descend) or the slope of the sea floor, my compass usually sets me straight. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, both are homes to a wonderful array of creatures.

TURTLE - This image was taken at night during a drift dive along a steep wall off Bunaken Island, North Sulawesi. The current took our small group along quite swiftly and having this magnificent turtle casually drift off the wall and swim right towards me in the inky blackness was a fantastic moment.

Going overboard

Diving out of a boat at night is different to shore night diving and there are quite a few more things to consider to make it a safe, enjoyable experience. If you're not both an experienced boatie and diver, I'd recommend joining a group on a charter boat for your first few boat night dives and check out how they organise things. The things I noted in particular were:

- Surface lighting – the lights on the boat serve as a primary beacon and it is very reassuring to be able to see the boat from a reasonable distance both under the water and from the surface.
- The conditions – calm waters make locating and collecting divers in the darkness much easier.
- The geography, underwater topography and features – bays often create natural perimeters and can shield waters from the currents that often pass points, peninsulas and straight stretches of coast. In my experience, for most 'standard' night dives, operators tend to choose protected bays, and the sea floor was relatively uniform. (Drifting along walls in current at night is very exciting and I imagine wreck and cave diving at night would also be a real thrill, but I'd only recommend these types of dives in the company of experienced divers!)
- The dive briefing – most briefings not only forecasted the direction of the dive, but also included discussions about how to communicate the amount of air left in tanks and how to signal the need to commence safety stops in darkness. Camera-mounted lighting may require you to use different signalling and it's important to have your communications worked out before you descend.
- Identifiers – It's important to note any unique features of your dive buddy, and coloured glow sticks tied to tanks can be really useful here. Cameras and their lights can serve as good identifiers but it is important to note your buddy's particular setup. Briefings will often draw your attention to landmarks you need to be aware of, and of course, things like mooring lines or anchor ropes should be noted as you descend.

Equipment

What equipment you need will vary a little depending on where you are diving.

Lights

I have a handy waterproof floating light that I attach to the drop line that I use to lower my camera into the water off Busselton Jetty. It serves both as a light that helps me to see what I'm doing when I'm setting up my gear, and then as a beacon I can see from underwater, so I can locate my exit point easily.

To see where I'm going, I use a reasonably powerful wide-beamed focus light. It is a no-brand, that has 2400 Lumen white light, has two Red, (620nm), 2 x Purple, (410nm) and 2x true UV (365nm) LEDs.

Up until recently, I've tended to use one strobe and mounted the light on an arm mounted on my other handle. I have tended to get in close to my subjects and I hadn't felt the need to use my second strobe. Mounting my light on an arm enables me to point it at my gauges and computer without having to turn my entire camera around and this can be convenient.

In recent times, I've been trying dual INON Z240 strobes at night. The Z240's have their own narrow beamed focus lights that, while excellent for accurate directing of the strobe, are less effective for exploring and I have tended to mount my focus light on a cold shoe that is in the centre of my macro port. The wide spread of my focus light throws comforting light and is good for searching for subjects, but lights up particulates in the water much more readily than the much more focussed beams of the Z240s, and at the moment, I am finding myself alternating between my bright, wide angle focus light and the strobes' target lights.

In fact, during a recent night dive, I found myself getting quite tangled up alternating between the two. Even using a 35mm macro (on an APS-C sensor), I was getting hotspots if I didn't set my strobes quite specifically, and the target lights would disappear if I turned on my wider focus light meaning sometimes my strobes were not set correctly. The narrower beam of the strobe's focus

light made backscatter less distracting but will take some getting used-to while exploring if I do not use the wide beamed focus light.

Compass

I find a compass to be an important part of my equipment as I tend to lose my sense of direction at night. Circling creatures like squid or jellyfish in the middle of the water column or subjects on a uniform, sandy bottom can be a little disorientating and while jetty lights might give you a general location, you'd be surprised how easy it is to find yourself heading 180 degrees in the wrong direction without a compass. That being said, paying attention to slopes, landmarks and water movement is very important on night dives and of course, a compass is only effective if you know which direction you need to go.

UV

On dives rich with corals and sponges, ultraviolet light causes some corals to fluoresce bright yellow and in some places, in purples and reds. Off Bunaken, for example, the walls started to look like something you'd find in a 1990's rave and was amazing. Unfortunately my old Sony did not record images well at the high ISOs and I was unable to get good shots under UV, however, owners of full-frame cameras (or cameras with excellent high-ISO performance) can have some real psychedelic fun in the right conditions.

Bucket list

Recently I've been interested in Blackwater and Bonfire diving. The key aspect of these types of night dives is that a light is submerged to attract small creatures to photograph in the middle of the water column, usually with macro lenses. Bonfire diving is done is shallow water (presumably where the bottom is visible during the dive). I've tried this a couple of times and really enjoy it.

Blackwater diving is done out deep off boats and powerful lighting is set up to attract all sorts of unusual, usually juvenile species and the diving appears to be a little more testing. However, the images I've seen from photographers such as William Tan are utterly amazing, and I'm really looking forward to having a go in the open ocean once I have worked out the best setup to use and have my 'hovering' in the water column down pat!

Photography competitions of interest

by Viv Matson-Larkin

Australian Geographic Nature Photographer of the Year

Here's a competition that even our non-divers and other family members can participate in annually. Many of you would already have images of natural fauna, flora or land formations taken in Australia, New Zealand, Antarctica and the New Guinea region.

This year you could enter up to four images in each of nine categories – Animal Behaviour, Animal Portrait, Botanical, Landscape, Threatened Species, Monochrome, Our Impact, Animal Habitat, and Junior. Entries closed in January and those who have made it to the next round will find out some time in mid-March if they have been shortlisted.

The winner and runner-up in each category will be announced in August, with the overall winner receiving quite a substantial prize - $10,000 cash and the choice of an expedition cruise to Papua New Guinea or the Spice Islands with Coral Expeditions. Having myself been on two Coral Expeditions cruise trips, that certainly is a magnificent prize.

An added bonus to this competition is the People's Choice winner, as voted by visitors who will be able to view the finalist entries at the South Australian Museum's exhibition later on this year.

I can't wait to see if any WAUPS members make the finalist list again. In the past various well known West Australians have been finalists, or taken out the award in their category. In 2019 our very own Ross Gudgeon came first in the Animal Portrait Category with this decorator crab image.

Another photographic competition that Ross' name appears in is the Australian Photography Awards. That competition had eleven categories - Portrait, Landscape, Documentary, Travel / Street, Aerial, Wildlife, Mobile, Film / Analogue, Open / Illustrative, Student and Junior, as well as a People's Choice. Ross was a finalist in the Wildlife Category with a Red jellyfish, Angler fish and Ghost goby images.

WAPF Photographic Competitions

The WAPF holds many events and workshops that you can attend, and many competitions and exhibitions during the year that you can enter. Like ClickWest, In My View, PrintWest, and the WAMM competition.

Our land-based photographers had the opportunity to participate in the Fishing WA Competition which was sponsored by the Western Australian Maritime Museum and Nikon. The aim of that specific competition was to showcase images reflecting the diversity of fishing within our state.

Prints from the finalists were displayed at the WA Maritime Museum in Fremantle from July to August. There were two prizes awarded. A WAPF Prize for the best image selected by the WAPF Competition Committee. The other a Nikon camera and lens set awarded to the People's Choice winner.

Congratulations to Bert de Wit who was a finalist with his print titled 'Shadow Play'. Do give this competition a go this year, the theme will be 'My Country'. You have plenty of time to get out there to take images as entries open in June, close in August.

BEAR COUNTRY CANADA

By Daniel Messom

For most of us, underwater photography means that we are seeking out subsea wildlife to photograph and many of us like to take that hunt with cameras to the surface. In October, Marion and I flew to Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada to do just that and we were seeking the largest land carnivore in the north Americas... bears!

Early October is the time to see these majestic creatures in the wild. It's the time when salmon are heading up their rivers of birth to spawn and in doing so, as with all animal migrations, they attract their predators and Grizzly bears are among those predators. Grizzly bears can eat up to fifty salmon a day in their attempt to fatten up for their long winter hibernation ahead.

We flew Air New Zealand from Perth to Vancouver via Auckland N.Z. just a hop, skip and a jump of a seven hour flight followed by one of thirteen hours. But well worth it. We spent our first night in British Columbia in the very plush Fairmont hotel at Vancouver airport from where we flew Pacific Air to Campbell River B.C. This was the jumping off point for our adventure in Knight Inlet. It starts with a float plane flight to the Knight Inlet Lodge where we were to stay for two nights, with boat and walking tours out into the forest and along the Glendale River to view, and in our case, photograph the Grizzly bears. And we saw lots of Grizzly bears digging for roots and plying the river for fish.

As I said, early October is the time to go because by the middle of the month the bears are heading off to the high grounds to find their lairs and by late November they are starting their hibernation. But at the same time, mid October, over at Churchill, Manitoba in central Canada, the Polar bears are starting to gather on the shores of Hudson bay to wait for the bay to freeze over so that they can head out and hunt for seals, their main source of food. Generally, Polar Bears don't eat during the summer months of the northern hemisphere, they don't hibernate as such like the Grizzly bears.

We arrived in Churchill the 17th of October and were given a tour of the quirky town that boasts, of all things, a bear jail for those wayward bears that wander into the town, a plane wreck that crashed thirty years ago and some generally nice scenery. Things to do include museums, dog sledding and of course Polar bear viewing.

To view and photograph the Polar bears, tourists travel out on to the Tundra in vehicles called tundra buggies, large four wheel drive trucks about four metres high, five metres across and at least 15 metres long, it's like an OKA on steroids! It has enough seating for forty people, our group numbered 20 so plenty of room for us. There is a viewing platform at the rear and the windows open so you are not shooting (cameras) through glass. We had two tours out to see the bears, each tour lasting about eight hours. Yes lunch is part of the deal and there is a toilet onboard. And bears we saw - when they reach the area they find a spot to rest and wait for the freeze, but that doesn't mean that they don't move around.

Just a few facts about Grizzly and Polar bears to finish. They are a related species and can produce offspring but unlike most animals related this way the offspring is not sterile. It is rare that these animals will mate as they are seldom in the same vicinity and are more likely to try to kill each other on contact. These bears live in the wild and all of their senses are sharp, it is said that they have poor eyesight... don't believe it! In some scientific circles, Polar bears are considered a marine animal due to the amount of time they spend over the ocean. A Polar bear's fur is rarely white and is more of a cream colour although some can be greyish. Grizzly bears can range in colour from dark brown to almost polar bear colour.

PIXELS 2019

Congratulations to Mary Gudgeon, the overall winner for PIXELS in 2019.

Golden Snapper Award

This award is all about club participation – attending meetings and monthly dives, volunteering, entering various photographic competitions, giving club presentations, contributing images to 'show & tell', and so on.

In 2016 our inaugural Golden Snapper Award winner was Danny Messom. Then he had to wear a sash. Well, he's done it again for 2019, and looks splendid in his golden cape.

PINBOARD

NOVICE PORTFOLIO 2019

Congratulations to Tony Bensted, the overall winner of the 2019 Novice Portfolio Competition with this spectacular collection of images. Janet O'Brien was the Runner-up, and Lauren Bensted's entry was Highly Commended by the judge.

Well done! Not only to the winners, but to everyone who entered this competition – all your portfolio images are absolutely stunning.

Thank you to Perth Scuba, for their ongoing sponsorship. They have been a generous supporter of this competition since its inception.

BASIC UNDERWATER VIDEO TIPS

by Viv Matson-Larkin and Rusty Geller

With the inaugural WAUPS underwater video competition kicking off later this year, here's a few tips to get you started if you're thinking of giving this competition a crack.

GET INSPIRED

Watch underwater docos and see what works, what they like (and dislike). Imitate what works well.

HOLD STILL

Avoid shaky movements. Hold the housing as close to your body as possible to help stabilise it, or use a tripod to ensure you get good, usable footage.

If you need to move around a little, pan the camera by twisting at the waist to aim the camera all the way to one side, turning back.

TRIPOD

For swelly conditions use a tripod to shoot macro and wide angle. You can also leave your tripod set up on your subject and swim away if the critter is timid. Use lead weights to hold it steady if needed.

FOLLOW THE ACTION

Keep the moving subject in frame, with plenty of negative space so your subject still has room to move. After capturing some footage hold still and let the subject swim out of view.

GET LOTS OF SHOTS

Depending on your theme you may need wide, medium, and close up shots. Also shoot from different angles. Don't forget the shots that will help tell a story - divers gearing up, entering and exiting the water. Wider shots showing the overall appearance of the dive site/wreck.

We're shooting for the editing room. Think of the individual shots and how they'll cut together.

Set the scene with a wide establishing shot showing the setting, then in individual cuts, work your way closer and closer.

Try to get a good 10 seconds: frame-up, roll the camera and count to 10. They don't have to use the whole clip, but it's good to have a little 'handle' to play with.

Shooting digital is cheap, keep rolling until the animal does something interesting, even if it's not big action, get a nice piece for the edit.

WHITE BALANCE

Get familiar with your camera's white balance functions, even when using ambient light with a red filter.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

If you have a good story and halfway-decent footage, you don't need fancy effects.

AUDIO

Search for "royalty-free" music such as royalfreemusic.com, JewelBeat, or Audio Jungle. [https://tubularinsights.com/free-royalty-free-music]

EDITING SOFTWARE

Most computers come with basic video editing software – iMovie or Windows Movie Maker to edit clips with transition effects, text, and soundtracks. GoPro Studio is free for editing and sharing underwater video.

THE EDIT

Review the footage before editing, log the shots by clip number, a brief description and rate them on how good they are. Then it will be easier to start editing.

Cut on motion, find a natural looking cut. Dissolves can blend two dissimilar cuts.

PARTING SHOT

Octopus sex by Rusty Geller

We were diving in Lottie's Lagoon south of Coral Bay last June when we came across them.

First we saw just him, an octopus sitting high on top of a metre-high coral bommie. This was unusual as most occy's like to hide under bommies. As we approached we saw a second occy sitting in a crevice lower down on the same bommie. The pair didn't seem the least bit bothered by us, they were transfixed on each other.

The one up higher displayed a chocolate, mottled colour. This was the male. He extended a skinny tentacle across to the female and was caressing her body. She was a solid, darker colour with a chalky cast. They seemed to be in some sort of reverie: octopus foreplay.

They tolerated us as we filmed and photographed for a few minutes, then left them to their passion. When we came back by them on our way to the boat they were still there, concentrating on each other.

We later learned that the male octopus has a specialized sex tentacle called a hectocotylus - that was the skinny tentacle. When he reaches sexual maturity at around 3 years of age he seeks a female in a similar condition. He displays his virility to her and if she is accepting she allows him to extend his hectocotylus to her oviduct where he fertilizes her eggs. If she isn't ready but likes him, he may detach his hectocotylus and give it to her. She will place it in her mantle for use later when her eggs are ready.

After mating the male goes off and soon dies. Meanwhile the female lays her eggs and tends them full-time, forgoing eating. Once the eggs hatch and her brood is off and away, she will die.

It's kind of sad and beautiful all at the same time. Nature has come up with interesting solutions to keeping life going. It was a treat being able to witness this.

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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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