
Water Column

FEBRUARY 2023 ISSUE 20

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

**Manado &
Lembeh**

Anilao

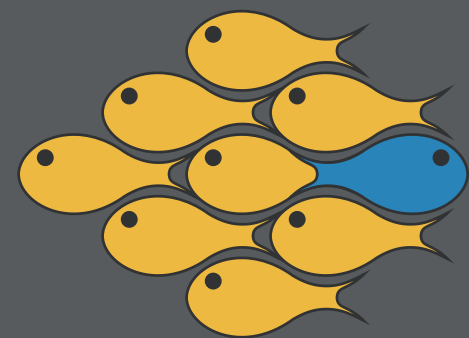
Bali



**Creature feature:
Marine reptiles**



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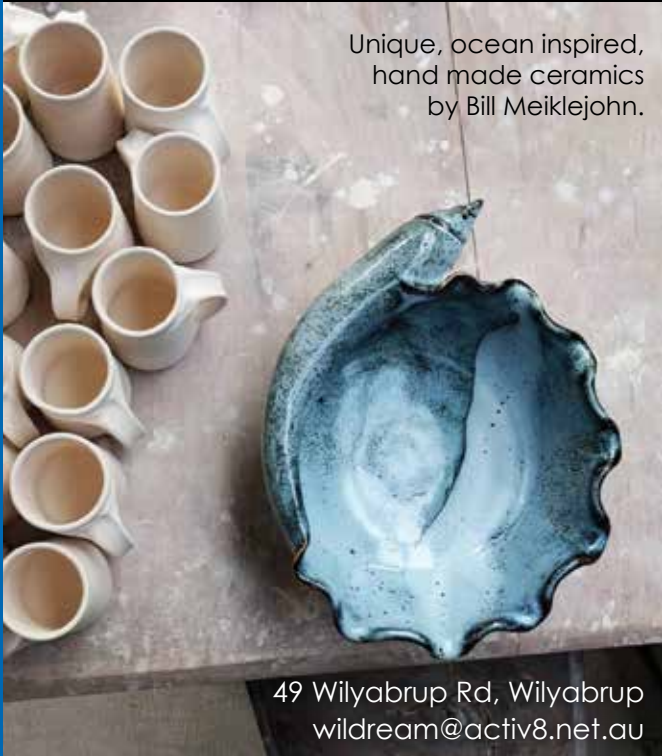
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Cover, juvenile batfish in Lembah Strait, by Gary Browne

Editor and Layout design **Tammy Gibbs** | Printing **UniPrint**

Hi everyone

I can't believe this is our 20th Water Column magazine! We started the magazine ten years ago so we could showcase the images and stories of our members in a printed hard copy that you could actually hold and flick through. There's something special about seeing your images printed onto paper, it almost immortalises them and gives you something to share with family and friends. We've had some really great articles over the decade - from fascinating creature features, to local and international dive locations, to technical articles to help us all learn something new. Thanks to everyone who has contributed, we couldn't do it without you! If you have an image to share or a story to tell, please get in touch as we'd love to feature more of our members in future editions.

I don't know about you, but I really lost my diving and photography mojo in the past six months. I don't tend to dive much in the winter months and then life got busy (very busy!) and I suddenly found I hadn't been diving for months. My camera also sat idle, I just wasn't inspired to get out and take photos. Have you found yourself in a bit of a photo or diving slump? How did you get out of the rut and get back into it? For me, I used the two-week Christmas break from work as an opportunity to sort out my dive gear, find my camera bits and bobs, and get back underwater.

The Busselton jetty was the perfect spot to rediscover my diving and underwater photography mojo and I did quite a few dives exploring the jetty. I relished that amazing feeling of dipping below the surface, feeling the cool water trickle down the back of your wetsuit and taking that first breath underwater. Everything came rushing back in a matter of seconds, it really is just like riding a bike! I even enjoyed the long walks out and back lugging a trolley full of heavy gear.

Now that the borders are open, more and more of our members are heading off on dive trips. Gary and Brad have recently been to different parts of Indonesia and they've written about their adventures in this edition. Ross and Mary have also been abroad, heading back to The Philippines, see their trip report on page 15.

I'm finally doing something that my hubby and I have been talking about for years - taking extended time off work for a road trip around Australia. Apart from five weeks in Tassie (which we had to commit to as we needed to book the ferry there and back), we have no plans and will see where the road takes us. The dive and camera gear is definitely coming with us and I can't wait to explore some of the east coast dive sites. Where's your next diving adventure?

Enjoy the rest of the summer and the great diving conditions we often get through autumn.

Tammy



Back to Indo: Manado & Lembah trip

by Gary Browne



After three long years of not being able to travel overseas to dive due to COVID restrictions, Vicki and I flew to Manado via Singapore on 12 September 2022.

Six days prior to departure, I managed to tear a page in my passport so had a very stressful few days waiting for a replacement which finally arrived a matter of hours before the flight departed.

It was a huge relief to board the plane and be on our way to Indonesia.

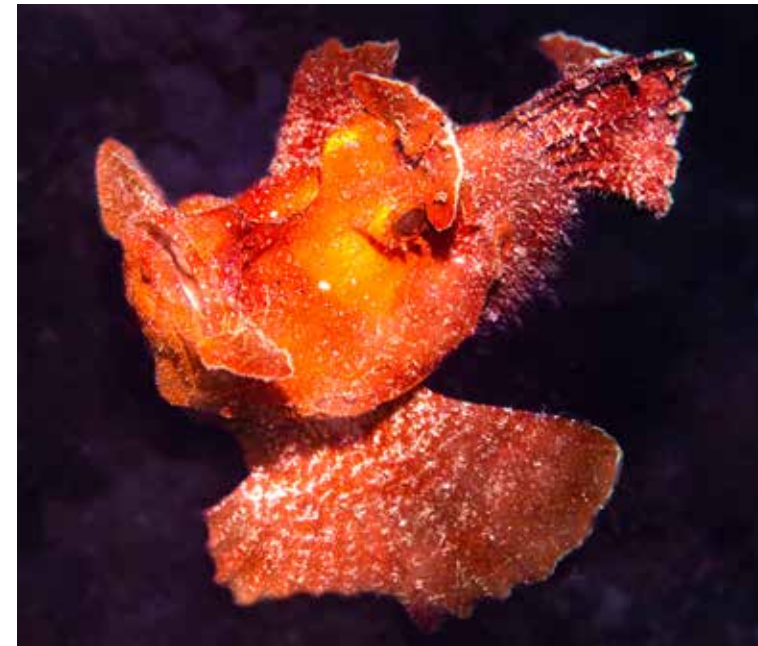
Manado

Upon arrival, we were met at the airport by staff from Murex Dive Resort and driven to the resort which is about a one and a half hour drive from the airport.

Bunaken Marine Park is about a half an hour boat ride from the resort where I spent the next six days diving on walls in crystal clear water at 30°C. There's lots of nooks and crannies to explore and a vibrant display of colourful hard and soft corals and fish life, and there were turtles everywhere, mainly Green Sea Turtles.

The dive boats leave at 8am for the first two dives then return for lunch before heading back out for an afternoon dive at 2:30pm. They operate two large timber dive boats that can accommodate at least ten divers. The dive guides did a great job of looking after the dive gear as well as spotting critters.

The resort has been hosting international guests since May 2022. During the long period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the resort underwent a full renovation. Instead of closing down, Murex Resorts chose to keep over 60 members of their staff employed and training them in building, carpentry, and a range of other skills. There are now several new out-buildings, alfresco dining areas and refurbished accommodation units. The staff were very attentive and couldn't do enough to keep guests happy. Meals were plentiful and well presented and our accommodation was a comfortable air-conditioned poolside bungalow.



Lembeh

After seven nights in Manado shooting wide angle, we moved across to Black Sands Dive Retreat in Lembeh Strait for some macro photography, our second visit to this resort.

Diving was from fibreglass boats that could carry four divers each. Most of the dive sites were no more than a ten minute boat ride from the resort including Nudi Falls, Nudi Retreat, Hairball and Magic Crack to name a few.

Vicki's not a diver but she enjoyed snorkelling at Nudi Falls and Nudi Retreat. I had an eagle-eyed dive guide who spotted critters that I would never have seen myself. There were the usual frogfish, coconut octopus, pipefish, pygmy seahorses, etc and on night dives there were a host of other critters including bobbit worms, squid, flounder and Rhinopia.

The bobbit worm buries its body into the black sand where it lays in wait for prey. Armed with sharp teeth, it is known to attack with such speed and ferocity that its prey is sometimes sliced in half! Also on a night dive, a new one for me was a Moon Headed Sidegill slug (*Euselenops luniceps*).

During the COVID pandemic, the resort closed down and some of the staff managed to scrape a living by working on fishing boats. All are happy to be back doing what they love as dive guides.

Our accommodation was in a comfortable hill-side cottage overlooking Lembeh Strait and the kitchen staff did a great job serving up a good variety of meals.

While it was great to be travelling internationally again, I did come home with an unwanted souvenir in that I later tested positive for COVID. At least I got crook after the dive trip and not before!



Marine Reptiles

Above: Marine iguana. Below: Green turtle

Some of the first vertebrates to adapt to life on land were reptiles. They were able to do this because they laid eggs with substantial shells that did not need water for survival. Several million years after they appeared on land, some reptiles returned to the sea, evolving the ability to swim.

The class 'reptiles' includes turtles, crocodiles, snakes and lizards. Unlike other vertebrates, most lay eggs rather than give birth to live young. Their skin is embedded with either scales (as in snakes and lizards) or with scutes (as in crocodiles and turtles). They all breathe air.

They cannot regulate their body temperature by internal means, but instead depend on the external environment. As you can imagine, temperature regulation is especially difficult in the sea, as water absorbs heat four times as quickly as the air. Hence most marine reptiles live in warmer waters, inhabiting warm currents, basking at the sea surface or hauling out onto sunny beaches. They may also migrate seasonally following the warmer waters.

Another challenge for marine reptiles is the regulation of salt, since they ingest significant quantities when feeding in seawater. All reptiles have some form of salt gland that pumps out excess salt which is then expelled from the body. Sea turtles have a gland behind the eye and salt is secreted in thick mucus 'tears'. Sea snakes



and crocodiles have glands in the tongue that secrete salt into the mouth. Marine iguanas have salt glands in the nostrils and expel salt by prolific sneezing once back on land!

Sea Turtles

There are seven species of sea turtle: the Green (*Chelonia mydas*), Loggerhead, (*Caretta caretta*), Hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Flatback (*Natator depressus*), Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Olive Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) and Kemp's Ridley Turtle (*Lepidochelys kempii*). All except Kemp's Ridley Turtle are found in Australian waters.

Below: Green turtle, two scales between the eyes.
Hawksbill turtle, four scales between the eyes



Most turtles inhabit tropical and temperate waters over 20°C. Below 10°C turtles are likely to have difficulty keeping warm and may eventually die of hypothermia. Loggerhead turtles, however, can maintain their body temperature well above surrounding sea temperatures and can therefore survive in higher latitudes.

Sea turtles have sturdy flippers (as opposed to the webbed feet of freshwater species) and a protective carapace above and plastron underneath. The large eyes enable them to see in the darker depths. Nostrils are located high on the beak allowing turtles to take quick breaths at the surface.

One of the most physically challenging times for turtles, however, is the need to come onshore for laying eggs. The sight of female turtles laboriously working their way up sandy beaches, then digging a hole and laying eggs is impressive. They look totally exhausted by the time they get back to the water. The eggs need the warmth on land to develop. Those on the edge of the nest are cooler and tend to be male and the warmer ones in the centre are female. Generally a temperature around 28.5°C results in a good balance of sexes.

Below: Yellow-lipped sea krait



Sea Snakes

Sea snakes are highly venomous, but generally not at all aggressive so you would be very unlikely to be bitten unless you provoked one. They have large, fixed front fangs and can open their mouths very wide to swallow prey. *It is a myth that the fangs are small and at the rear of the mouth.*

Around 60 species of sea snake inhabit the Indo-Pacific region. Most live in coastal areas, but the Yellow-bellied Sea Snake (*Pelamis platurus*) can live in the open sea. Two groups have evolved independently – the true sea snakes (Hydrophiinae) that are related to the terrestrial Australian elapids, and the sea kraits (Laticaudinae) that are related to Asian cobras.

The 54 species of Hydrophiinae have a flattened body with an oar-like tail, nostrils with valves on top of the snout, lungs that extend the whole length of the body and very small scales (including those on the belly) making them excellent swimmers, but unable to crawl on land. Most species feed on fishes, including eels and some feed exclusively on fish eggs. Most dive for around 30 minutes, but some species can remain submerged for up to 8 hours, due to their ability to breathe through their skin. They give birth to an average of 2-9 live young.



The 6 species of sea kraits (*Laticauda*) are not quite so well adapted for life in the sea. The body is cylindrical and nostrils are on the side of the head. Most species have black and pale rings along the body. They retained large belly scales, so are able to crawl on land (where they lay their eggs). They mainly feed on eels.

Saltwater Crocodiles

The two saltwater crocodile species (Indo-Pacific, *Crocodylus porosus*, 'Salties' and American, *Crocodylus acutus*) are two of the largest reptiles in the world (Nile Crocodiles are the second largest). Male Salties grow to an average of 5 metres and over 450 kg, while females are much smaller only reaching around 3 metres and 150 kg. The Indo-Pacific crocodile has a wide range between Northern Australia and SE Asia. They are well established in brackish and estuarine environments, besides ranging well out to sea. Smaller individuals consume crustaceans, insects and the occasional mammal. Larger crocodiles have a more varied diet including fish, birds, turtles, flying foxes and other terrestrial mammals. Although well-adapted for life in the sea, crocodiles depend on land for laying and hatching their eggs. Like turtles, egg incubation temperature determines the sex of the young. Females develop at 31-33°C, and males above and below this temperature.

Marine Iguanas

The marine iguana, *Amblyrhynchus cristatus*, is only found in the Galapagos Islands of South America. It lives in an extremely harsh environment and consequently has developed an unusual lifestyle. It feeds exclusively on Galapagos marine algae that is found in shallow,

but cold (for a reptile) water. Consequently it needs to spend a significant amount of time basking on the rocks to warm up before it goes to feed underwater. Iguanas can be seen sun-baking on the dark volcanic rocks in the early morning and they're often not warm enough until around mid-morning to take a dip. They nest in sand and lay 1-4 eggs. These may be guarded for a few days, but are then left alone until the young hatch about three months later.

Conservation

Most species of marine reptiles are considered endangered to some degree. The major threats being habitat loss and illegal harvesting of both eggs and adults.



Clockwise from top:
Saltwater crocodile; Olive-headed sea snake; Marine file snake; Marine iguana;

PIXELS 2022

Congratulations to the overall winner of PIXELS 2022 - Ross Gudgeon! Ross entered all six of the PIXELS themes over the year, scoring two gold, two silver and two bronze awards. The rest of the top five were - Amanda Blanksby (second), Leanne Thompson and Mary Gudgeon (equal third) and Brad Pryde (fifth). Throughout 2022, 22 members participated in PIXELS and 65 images were judged. Well done to everyone who took part and was awarded a gold, silver or bronze.





I recently went back to Bali, and Tulamben in particular, to visit old friends and dive back into the warm waters and hopefully some great vis. It wasn't the usual trip up as with COVID, many things had changed in Tulamben, and anyone who has travelled there a lot will recognise the changes. As heartbreaking as it was to see the many resorts and dive businesses closed or abandoned, it was the local people who made up for it. The smiles and happy greetings everywhere made me glad to be back. It was fantastic to catch up with many old friends, lots of new babies, marriages and like everyone, all trying to get back to the 'new normal'.

Well, as expected the diving was great. Rumours of Rhinopias being spotted about proved to be true and I managed to see five across two dive sites. As is typical for Tulamben, we had amazing macro and with great guides like Tama and Gede, there was always something new to try and photograph. After quite a few macro dives over a few days, it was time to switch it up and get into some wide angle.

It seems strange to admit it, and I think I'm not alone with this one, but I hadn't dived the Liberty wreck for years. In Tulamben, the Liberty is one of the main

reasons a lot of us started diving there. In pre-COVID days, it was always a busy dive site with day-trippers and many of the local resorts hitting it early at dawn to see the Bump Head Wrasse. Rumours are they are no longer on the wreck but I wasn't getting up before the roosters to find out. So not having been there for a while, it was time to see what had changed.

I really enjoyed being back on the wreck with the deep clear water and we had it pretty much to ourselves most of the dive. Some areas had changed a bit and there was a lot of new growth with some lower hold sections breaking away and moving down the slope. There's lots of nice hard and soft coral growth through the engine and boiler area, a turtle up on the bow near the foredeck gun apparently a resident now, and it's also a great site for Pink Eyed Goby.

I had swum the whole wreck end-to-end and on the return leg back to the hold section, I noticed something that was one of those double take moments. Looking into the inner hold, I swore I could see a woman in a dress just floating there - weird, I couldn't be that



narked! As I penetrated the swim-through into the hold, a diver/model was there but with a safety diver sharing air with an occy. As she donned and cleared her mask, another diver/photographer swam over and they appeared to review something on a dive slate. I thought to myself, what great timing to get to watch on, and maybe sneak a few shots of the shoot in progress.

There were about eight divers with cameras lined up along one side of the hold area, with the model at the back of the hold area which was now an impromptu underwater studio. The safety diver swam away from the model taking the mask, and with an OK signal she got into pose. While observing this. I thought about the confidence she showed underwater, no air other than that last breath and showing a lot of trust in the safety diver. That all went up a notch when I noticed a weighted bag on the floor, and a tether going up to her leg holding her in position, a bit like a floating human balloon. Maybe not the best analogy but best described what it looked like.

Well I made a mistake of shooting with strobes on (and full power). After the first couple of shots, I had the dive 'boss' swim over waving frantically indicating not to use strobes. His unique hand signals were not hard to misinterpret, understood. I also thought it was a good time to up the ISO with it being a bit deep and dark. I got a few more images until the next breather break for the model. It was also getting toward the end of the dive and air was getting a bit into the red, so unusual to not surface with 50 bar left. So up for a safety stop and the ending to an unexpected and amazing dive.

On my last day, getting a surface interval in before flying home, I took the camera down to the wreck set-up area to get some land shots to balance out the holiday images for my non-diving friends. I was pleasantly surprised to run into the model and dive group again preparing for another underwater model shoot. A quick g'day as you do on these trips to fellow divers and a yarn. They were doing an underwater model workshop - note to self; will have to join one of these workshops one trip. It wasn't long before they were all ready and headed into the water. I managed a few shots as they made their way over the dodgy rock entry here and away they went. Again, I was impressed with how calm the model was in the water with her safety diver as they had a bit of a chat and a laugh before heading underwater and on their way. I thought, it really is just a matter of trust...



WOODMAN POINT

by Leanne Thompson

Woodman Point is a little gem of a dive site, a rock groyne south of the ammo jetty and near the main boat ramp. For the adventurous you can enter the site over the rocks, but I like to take the easier beach entry, following the rock wall out and then around the other side. It's a particular favourite site of mine for shooting blennies, with it being one of the best sites for Manyspot blenny and Germain's blenny. What is also interesting about this site is the hard coral, which is not particularly common on our shore dives. Off the wall are areas of sargassum and weed, which sometimes yield surprising finds, like the tiny fish with a mouthful of eggs. A few members have even taken wide angle lens down, shooting the school of batfish that can sometimes be found at the point. I've even been known to take the odd slug photo there as well.



Anilao Trip Report

by Ross & Mary Gudgeon

In November 2022, we finally got to take our trip to Anilao in the Philippines that had been originally planned for April 2020 but cancelled five days before departure due to COVID lockdowns. This was our fourth dive trip in Anilao.

Anilao is only a two to three hour drive south of Manila on the island of Luzon, in the Batangas province of the Philippines. It is one of the world's best macro photography destinations offering dives on beautiful and healthy coral sites to barren sand flats, all with incredible biodiversity.

Getting to Anilao is easy, just fly into Manila and then grab a car to your resort. Manila is serviced by many airlines so there are a lot of options available for flying there. On previous trips, we flew directly from Australia to Manila using Philippine Airlines. Unfortunately, direct flights between Australian cities and Manila had been cancelled due to COVID at the time of our trip so we flew via Singapore on Scoot/Singapore Airlines. Direct flights on Philippine Airlines will resume three times a week in March 2023 and we will be using this service for our next trip to Anilao later this year. For all our trips to Anilao, we organised our car from Manila to the resort through the resort we were staying when booking.

There are many resorts in Anilao from the most basic accommodation to five-star luxury resorts. All resorts are built on the side of the steep slopes and there can be a lot of stairs to negotiate moving around the resort depending on where the accommodation is in relation to the dining room,





bar and dive operation. Having stayed at Solitude Acacia Resort on a previous trip, we chose it again for this trip because compared to other resorts we have stayed at in Anilao:

- The accommodation, food and dive operation were the best we have experienced in Anilao; and
- It was the easiest to move around with the least stairs to be negotiated between our room, the dining room, bar and dive operation.

While you can dive anytime throughout the year there are times to visit when conditions for diving are better than others. There are two seasons in the Philippines - Dry Season (November to April) and Wet Season (May to October).

Typhoons happen all year round in the Philippines but peak season is July through October when 70% of typhoons develop.

Water temperature varies throughout the year ranging between 25°C and 31°C. From December to March the water can be as low as 25°C. On all our trips we have been when the water temperature has been 28°C or more and have been comfortable in a 3mm wet suit.

Generally, the best time to dive is November to May as it will be dry season and the possibility of typhoons is low. If you feel the cold and wish to avoid the cooler water temperatures from December to March, we advise visiting in April/May or November.



We booked and paid for this trip in late 2019 so the costs we paid are out of date for anyone planning a trip soon. We have already booked to go back to Anilao and stay at Solitude Acacia resort later this year and these costs are:

- Economy class direct flights Perth/Manila and return with 30kg luggage allowance - AU\$805 each
- 11 Days/10 Nights at Solitude Acacia Resort in Sea View Deluxe room – US\$2,815 each. This includes 27 Nitrox dives and private dive guide for the two of us, and full board
- Car and driver Manila/Anilao and return – US\$250 per car.

There are more expensive and cheaper options than we chose for our trip. Check out the resort's website for more details on room rates, dive packages, etc:

WEB: solitude.world/about-solitude-acacia



PhotoWest 2022

by Daniel Messom

The WA Photographic Federation's PhotoWest 2022 was held in the Midwest coastal town of Jurien Bay from September 16 to 18. One hundred and thirty tickets were on sale for the event, and as has been the norm for the last few years, the tickets sold out quite quickly.

The event was well-hosted by the Jurien Bay Camera Club, not a bad achievement for a club that only had five members at the time of nomination. It was held in the local sports and recreation centre with a couple of other venues used for other presentations. The weekend ran to the normal PhotoWest schedule on Friday evening with registration and meet and greet, a light finger food supper, welcome speeches and a presentation by Beth Baker on *"The wonders of wild flower photography"*. The evening finished with an astrophotography outing to the sand dunes to the south of Cervantes for those wishing to attend.

Saturday morning's events included a wildlife presentation by Dianne Anderson, a wildflower walk with Beth Baker and a photo walk with Seng Mah. Lunch and a presentation *"Chasing Colours"* by Steve Frazer saw us into the afternoon and more presentations and photo walks in surrounding parks, Jurien Bay township and of course the beach for a sunset shoot. Dinner was a three-course dinner where the PrintWest results were announced.

How PrintWest works. Each WAPF member club may submit 30 photographs to the competition - 15 colour and 15 mono - with a limit of three photographs from each individual club member. The submitted photographs are judged by a panel of three judges with points awarded to each photograph. The top fifty photographs from the colour and the top fifty photographs from the mono sections are printed for exhibit at PhotoWest. The scores from each of the individual photographs are tallied to get the overall results.

WAUPS won the mono section with a score of 83.74 points and came third overall with 164.75 points, just beaten by the Workshop Camera club (first) on 166.70 points and the Gem Camera Club (second) on 165.34 points.

Sunday mornings proceedings started with a presentation by keynote speaker Steve Frazer on *"How a photo changed a life"* (*The power of story telling in a photograph*). This was closely followed by the PhotoWest 2022 wrap-up and the announcement of PhotoWest 2023 which will be hosted by the Northern Exposure Photographers Group and will be held in the South Perth area in August 2023. Hope to see you there!



Matt Smith



Tammy Gibbs



Gary Browne

PRINTWEST FINALIST IMAGES



Kathleen Wilton



Ross Gudgeon



Amanda Blanksby



Gary Meredith



Gary Browne



Matt Smith



Ross Gudgeon

Novice Portfolio

Congratulations to Anthony Fortina, winner of the 2022 Novice Portfolio competition. Check out his winning portfolio on page 22.



TROPICAL TO TEMPERATE

Our exhibition of the waters of WA is currently on display at the WA Shipwrecks Museum in Fremantle. It looks amazing!

The images from our members take you on a journey from the clear warm tropics in the north, to the cool temperate reefs in the south.

Check it out until Sunday 26 March 2023.

Sponsored by Ilford Imaging Australia and Team Digital. Thanks to Ross and Mary from Bluefish Photo for printing and mounting all the images.



WE LOVE DIVING DAY

Team WAUPS at the Dolphin Scuba We love Diving Day in October. It's always great to talk to people about underwater photography. Thanks to Jenny, Chris, Danny and Amanda for volunteering at our stand.



Golden Snapper Award

This award is all about club participation – attending meetings and monthly dives, volunteering at events, entering competitions, giving club presentations, writing magazine articles, and so on.

For the third time, the winner of the Golden Snapper Award is Danny Messom! Congratulations Danny for being a great club contributor!



2022 Open Portfolio winner *Ross Gudgeon*



2022 Open Novice winner *Anthony Fortina*



 *PARTING SHOT*



Happy jawfish by Mary Gudgeon

Jawfishes (family opistognathidae) are a slender marine fish with large, bulbous heads. They have a single long-based dorsal fin, large upper jaws, huge mouths and prominent eyes. They usually lack scales. They are burrow dwellers with each fish using its mouth to excavate and maintain its burrow. Jawfish are oral egg brooders, and males incubate and hatch the developing eggs inside their large mouths. To aerate their eggs, they will occasionally partially spit out the eggs and quickly suck them back in, a behaviour known as churning. Taken in Lembeh Strait.

Canon EOS 7D in a Nauticam housing, Canon EF 100mm f/2.8 USM Macro lens, 2 Inon strobes
f11, 1/250 sec, ISO200








WESTERN AUSTRALIA UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

waupsnews@gmail.com

The Western Australia 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

