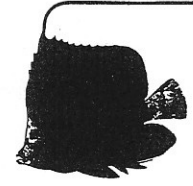


ISLAND DREAMS TRAVEL



Tips to Improve your U/W Photography

by Ken Knezick

“The task of an underwater photographer is to reduce the swirling infinity of life to a few thousand digital pixels. The camera is a tool of creativity. Use it to capture your own vision.” *Burt Jones – Secret Sea Vision*

- 1) **Diver First** – Before worrying about u/w photography, learn to be a safe, competent diver.
- 2) **Know your Camera System** – The camera is simply a capture device. You must learn how to work it, but do not limit your thinking only to the technical issues. Strive to use the tools at your disposal to create art and convey emotion, not just to document an animal’s existence. Advance preparation of the system is critical to shooting success. Don’t jump around. Concentrate on one set-up and stick with it.
- 3) **Lighting** – Learn to account for both natural and artificial light. Balance for blue water. Use strobe lighting to highlight, not overpower, your subject. Two strobes can be better than one. Properly oriented, they may be used to eliminate harsh shadows, and minimize backscatter. Do not light the water in front of your subject. Aim your strobes to just cover the subject.
- 4) **TTL vs. TTB** – Learn how to shoot in full manual control. What you see, and what the camera sees are two different things. TTL is a computer program designed to work on the surface with blue sky and white faces; it is about averages, and typical situations. Underwater, you are better off with what pro James Watt called TTB, through the brain metering.
- 5) **Selecting the Correct Exposure** – Choose the exposure that will best show off your primary subject. Consider depth of field, reflectivity of the background, motion in the primary subject, etc.
- 6) **Shoot Faster!** – Understand that shutter speed has an immense impact on the sharpness of your images.
- 7) **Focus for Quality** – Consider where to focus on various subjects, what parts of the image **MUST** be in sharpest possible focus, and how to attain that. If nothing else, the animal’s eye should be in focus.
- 8) **Understand your Subjects** – Learn about the marine life you wish to photograph. Each has its own habitat and comfort zone. Approach animals slowly and obliquely. Gain their confidence and respect their space. Above all, never damage the reef or stress the marine life.
- 9) **Composition & Negative Space** – Avoid placing your primary subject smack in the middle of the frame. Effective framing of your subject should create and allow a sense of movement in the image. Get down to eye level with your subjects, or better yet shoot up at them, visually enhancing the stature of even a diminutive subject. Leave space in the frame for your subject to move. Often the difference between a good photo, and a great one, is the use of negative space. Consider what is behind your subject, and how it will appear in your photo. Adjust your shooting position for pleasing negative space, and elimination of distractions.
- 10) **Practice for Success. Make your own luck by following good shooting habits**
 - 1) Find and carefully approach your subject
 - 2) Consider foreground, subject, and negative space
 - 3) Position your camera, carefully aim your lighting, set aperture and exposure duration
 - 4) Think...then shoot.
 - 5) Adjust and repeat as necessary.

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