

Underwater Photography, Part III

by Steve Fisher, APSA

When it is time to book that dream dive vacation, to really concentrate on your underwater photography and get the best possible diving opportunities, pay the extra dollars for a live-aboard boat. A live-aboard will travel the longest distances at night and visit the pristine reefs untouchable to shore-based boats. There is no need to make the daily trek with all your heavy dive and photo equipment down to the dock only to visit crowded nearby, gas saving dive sites.



Having a photo guide capable of locating unique critters and suggesting the photo outfit most beneficial for a particular site and water conditions would be a big plus. A boat with fewer numbers of divers (say 10-12 or less) is a desirable feature.

A good travel agent can supply references of past clientele to contact about the crew's safety reputation, the freedom afforded to the more competent divers, number of dives per day, etc. Ask about "photo" accommodations, e.g. a bench and/or stowage for underwater camera equipment. Also, most important, is a freshwater dunk container available – exclusively for photo equipment.

An added bonus would be E-6 processing found on a few well-equipped live-aboards which can verify if your equipment is functioning satisfactorily. What better way to confirm if the flash is synched with camera or water hasn't seeped into the electronics! These are just a few items to consider for that precious dive/photo vacation.

Recollections



My Bald Spot: On the comfortable yacht "Clavella" exploring outer Vancouver Island, B.C., one of our dives included an underwater encounter with a resident Stellar sea lion colony. It was suggested to lie in a prone position on the bottom in a non-threatening attitude to maximize the animal interaction. Gradually the females and adolescents approached each of us and began to nuzzle our equipment, elbows and our neoprene hoods – just like curious puppy dogs. One ornery 300 lb. youngster found my dive hood irresistible and at one point would have yanked it off if it weren't

for my regulator, firmly clamped between my teeth. After re-boarding the boat and removing my hood I



discovered a huge wad of hair on the inside of my hood. In the excitement of the moment and cold waters, I hadn't even felt the loss; however "the bald spot" gets more evident every year.

On the subject of hair: While doing an underwater model shoot (for a world competition in South Korea) my newly-wed model who sported a lovely crop of long brown hair discovered the disadvantage of free flowing hair and scuba gear. Her hair was so tangled in the 1st stage regulator that it forced her head back while boarding the support boat's ladder. Fortunately her

husband and another deck hand were able to assist her aboard and free her by cutting a sizeable portion of that beautiful hair with scissors – instead of a dive knife.

Inside passage of Vancouver Island on yacht Clavella: The exhilaration of a night dive is hard to contain and my enthusiasm infected one attractive young lady who had never made a night dive before. She decided to give it a try if I would accompany her. She had a big dive light I had my small lights already mounted on my camera's strobes. So my planned photo dive was not to be. Instead I would be the tour guide! Her light sputtered quickly after entry and knowing she may abort her prime experience I reassured her we could safely continue to view the inspiring sights (within the inky darkness) as I had more back-up lights in my BC pockets. She clung tightly to my free hand with her defunct dive light in her other. With my light I pointed out lots of neat nocturnal critters scurrying around – seldom seen in daylight hours. I took great delight in demonstrating the effects of turbulence as it stimulated phosphorescence in the water column. Then with lights turned off I gently stroked a huge sea pen and viewed its greenish electrical type pulsations emanate up and down and radiate to the outermost polyps. I was quite proud of my guidance abilities. While rinsing our gear I asked her how she felt about witnessing these new discoveries. She exclaimed that shortly after submerging, water got in her mask and she kept her eyes tightly closed until we resurfaced!



Scuba diving can be a very addictive sport and when combined with underwater photography it can be even more rewarding and shared with others. Enjoy!