

# skin diver

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**1<sup>ST</sup> Belize Dive Guide**

**NIKONOS V**

Cold Water Test

**NORTHEAST DIVE SPECIAL**

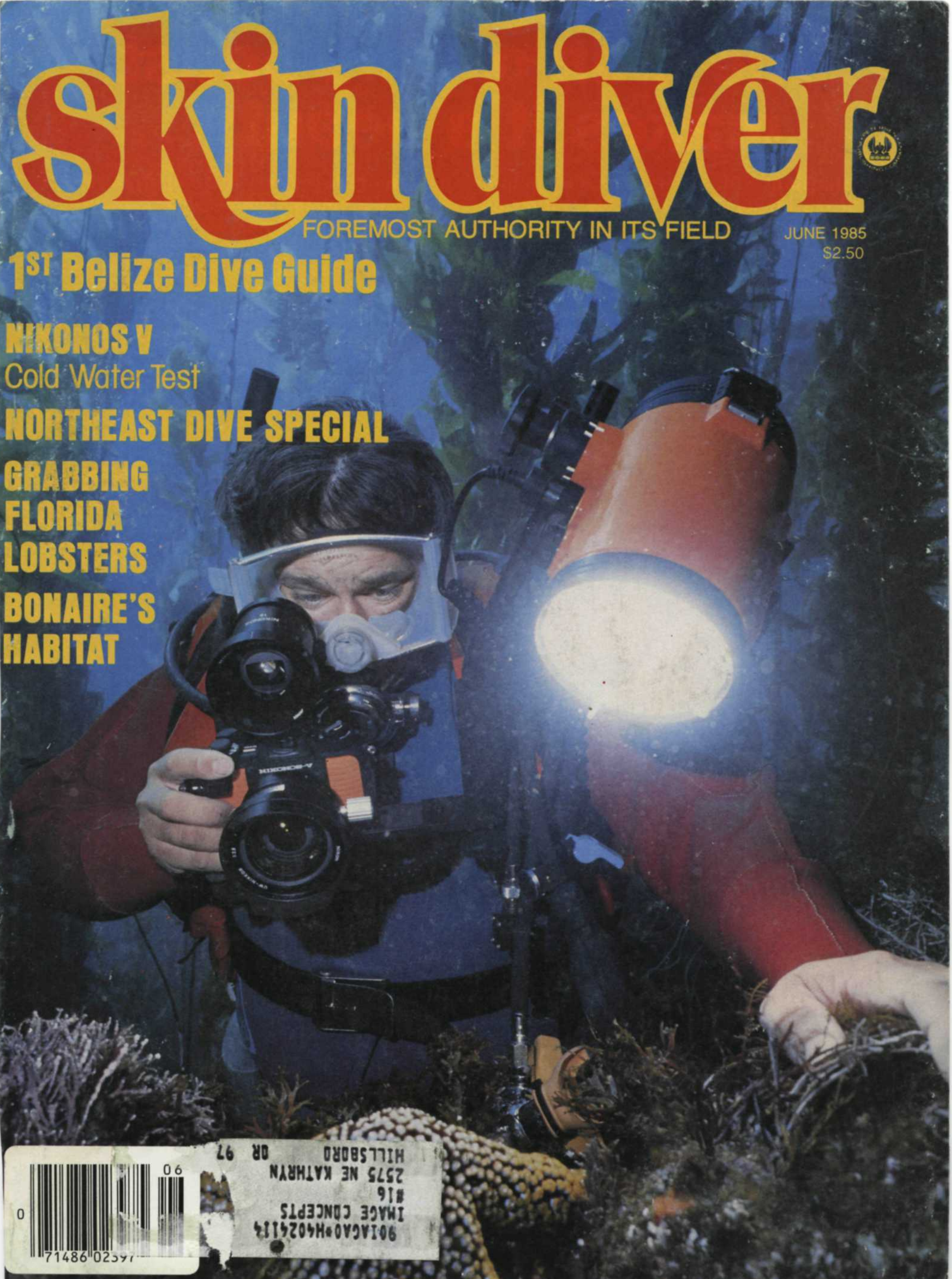
**GRABBING**

**FLORIDA**

**LOBSTERS**

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## Hands On Test:

# NIKONOS V

**W**hen SKIN DIVER asked us to review the Nikonos V, we were thrilled. Immediately our minds were filled with visions of beautiful, warm, tropical waters, where angelfish abound. But, what's that you're saying? Test the Nikonos V in *cold* water? That doesn't sound nearly as inviting. Well, pack away the bikinis and bring out the drysuits.

The logic behind cold water testing of the amphibious Nikonos V was that if it was able to perform in 40°F water with surge, sand and mud, then diving with it at sunny resorts should be a photographer's dream.

The Nikonos V is more than an improved version of the previous mod-

els, it is a whole new way of thinking. Although it is amphibious, most divers used its predecessors only underwater. But the V, with Through-The-Lens (TTL) metering, works as well on land as underwater.

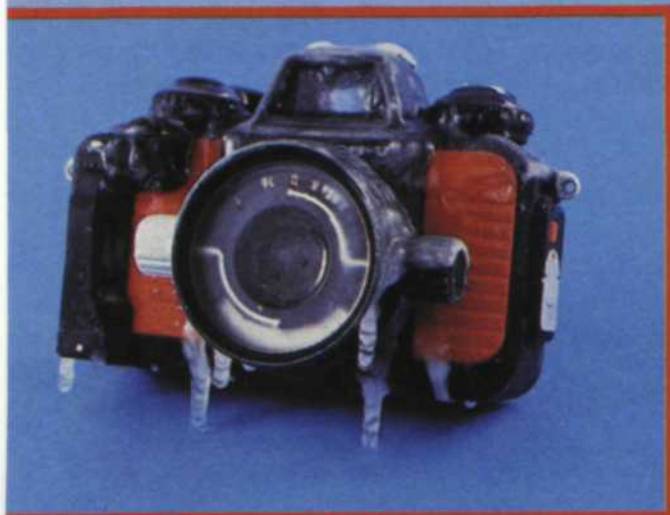
One look at the Nikonos V and you'll find beauty and ruggedness in one, small package. The bright orange panels give the camera a new, sleek look and are functional as well. The diver can see the shutter release and focus control knobs better because they stand out against the orange background. In low light it was sometimes difficult to locate these knobs on the all black models.

The anatomical grip and shutter

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



# The Camera That Endures All Conditions



The camera worked while encased in ice.



The photographs above were taken with the Nikonos V in cold, surgy ocean water.

release conform to a diver's hand, even when wearing three fingered mitts. Looking at the top of the camera, the film-speed dial is highly visible on the left-hand side. The ISO range is from 25-1600, allowing photographers versatility in the dim light often encountered in colder waters. To change the ISO setting, simply lift the knurled knob slightly, turn and release. This is easy, even when wearing gloves.

On the top right-hand side of the camera, you will find the shutter speed dial. This has R, B, M90 and A on it. The manual, quartz controlled shutter speeds range from 1/1000 to 1/30 second.

When the control is set in the R position, film can be rewound by lifting the rewind control on the left and turning it clockwise. If the photographer forgets to change this control back to a normal shutter speed, the camera will not function, indicating something is wrong.

The B setting is for long exposures. It can also be used to confirm the film has been completely rewound. When you remove the lens and depress B you can see the film plane. If it is black, the film is rewound; if you see film, close the shutter and continue rewinding—you will have lost only one frame, instead of possibly the whole roll.

M90 is a mechanical shutter speed designed to save the day when batteries



Neither ocean waves and sand nor construction site mud could stop the Nikonos V.

fail. It is also the sync speed for non-TTL strobes made by other manufacturers.

The A setting is for auto exposure with available light and TTL flash. This function is controlled by two SPD (Silicon Photo Diode) sensors inside the camera. The center weighted upper sensor is for available light and reads off the gray card in the back of the camera. The lower sensor is for the TTL flash and reads directly off the film. When loading, the camera ignores the auto mode and fires at 1/1500

second until it reaches the first frame. This prevents any damage to the camera when the photographer quickly advances the film to the first frame.

The mechanical shutter speeds from 1/1000 to 1/30 second allow the more advanced photographer that creative edge. The camera does flash sync with TTL flashes at 1/30 and 1/60 seconds. In cold water this allows more available light to enter the lens when taking flash pictures, giving a better ratio between

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## NIKONOS V

flash and background.

To the right of the shutter speed dial is the exposure counter. This dial is easy to read, even in low light. The # 1 exposure is marked in red.

The base of the camera has a standard tripod socket, a battery compartment and flash connector port. This latter has been through some major changes. First, the bottom of the port is recessed slightly to prevent any excess corrosion between various camera brackets and the base of the camera. Second, there are five pins in the port instead of three. These are necessary for the new TTL flash systems. For photographers with older flashes, two of the five pins are spring loaded and move out of the way when III or IV connectors are used.

*It is very important to closely check your flash connector to ensure it will fit in this new sync port. Some of the older flash connectors made by other manufactures will not fit into the Nikonos V without an adapter.*

The viewfinder of the Nikonos V is enlarged so the entire field of view can be seen while wearing a facemask. The bright LED at the base of the viewfinder tells the photographer if there is power, which shutter speed is correct for available light and when the flash is ready.

Loading the Nikonos V is as simple as loading any land camera. Simply press the safety button on the side of the camera, turn the release and the back of the camera pops open. The improved backplate has been reinforced and uses a standard O-ring. The pressure plate is hinged to the film plane; it may take new underwater photographers a while to get use to this. Above the film plane is a small plate held in place by four small screws. If the impossible happens and water enters the camera, these four screws can be removed and fresh water can be introduced to dilute and remove saltwater.

The 35 mm lens that comes with the camera can be used on land and underwater. The angle of view on land is 62 degrees; this is reduced to 43 degrees underwater. This is the most versatile of all the lenses as it is used for normal, close-up and macro photography. Other lenses available for the Nikonos V include the 28 and 15 mm underwater wide angle lenses, an 80 mm land and underwater lens and a new 28 mm land lens.

One very important Nikonos V accessory is the instruction manual. It is well written, easy to understand and each camera part is described and illustrated. The manual also includes a short course on underwater photography that can be very helpful.

### COLD WATER PERFORMANCE

Testing this masterpiece of technology

in several cold water locations was a real joy. Underwater tests were performed in Puget Sound and off the coast of California. Scuba diving in colder water such as in Puget Sound requires extra diving equipment. Most divers wear drysuits, which tend to restrict movement a bit, require added weight and definitely make diving a bit more complicated. Adding a bulky camera system would only complicate matters. That's where the Nikonos V comes in handy. It is light, compact and all the controls can be easily operated when wearing gloves. Should the camera be dropped in mud or sand, its orange panels would make it easy to spot. The camera's electronics allow accurate exposure control even in 40°F water.

The second test site was in the waters around the Santa Barbara Channel Islands. The water temperature was a bit warmer but here we encountered quite a bit of surge. Underwater camera housings take a real beating with the constant movement of water. But the compact Nikonos V causes no drag. Even if the photographer does get caught in a swell, this camera is tough enough to take the sand, rocks and kelp with ease. It is also small enough to get into some of those nooks and crannies where critters hide.

Available light photography in the kelp beds was a delight when working with the new 15 mm lens. It is fast, compact and has tremendous depth of field. Combine



that with the metering system of the Nikonos V and you've got it made.

Previous models of the Nikonos were considered by most photographers to be an underwater camera that could be used on land, but only in a pinch. Not so with the Nikonos V! This camera works as well out of the water as it does in. The new, improved TTL metering system and the addition of the land lens allow versatility and reliability. Now underwater photographers can leave their land camera systems safely at home when they head for distant diving locations and be assured they will bring home memories in living color!

When SKIN DIVER asked us to put the Nikonos V through its paces, we needed to think of an endurance test to beat all endurance tests. We did.

First, a bucket of mud was collected from a local construction site and the Ni-

konos V was dropped into it and stirred around until it was completely enveloped. Then the camera was cleaned off, tested and found to be totally operational.

Second, a very finely grained sand was poured over the camera until it was completely covered. The camera was then brushed off, tested and again found to be operating as usual.

Worried that the previous tests were not rugged enough, we took the Nikonos V to the beach and buried it at the surf-line. As the waves pounded on and receded from the shore, we wondered if this was really such a great idea: Just what would we tell Nikon if the camera wasn't there? After 30 minutes of this torture the camera was removed, tested and again, it worked perfectly.

Determined to find a test that might show some wear on the camera, we placed it in a freezer for eight hours. Every 15 minutes water was sprayed on the camera, so that by the end of the day it was encased in ice. Once we pried it from the freezer bottom, we chipped ice away from the shutter control and pushed our luck. The camera still worked on all settings, including auto.

We had one final test in mind that involved an elephant. Timex, however had already tried that idea, so we gave up, conceding that the Nikonos V is one tough camera: It takes a licking and keeps on clicking! 🐘

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**FROM**

*skin diver*

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