

Sea & Sea MX-10

POINT AND SHOOT SIMPLICITY;
PROFESSIONAL QUALITY PHOTOS

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL



Each year Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California, offers an advanced professional underwater photography course. Several trips aboard the school vessel *Just Love* are made to the Channel Islands. Working professional photographers are often invited to come along so the students have the opportunity to learn first-hand.

This year we were invited to join the expedition and dive San Clemente and Santa Barbara Islands. We are not sure what the students were expecting but we definitely gave them a surprise. In addition to our standard underwater photo systems, we brought aboard Sea & Sea's underwater point and shoot camera, the MX-10. Viewing our setup for the first time, the students laughed and kidded us about our little toy camera.

The MX-10 has a permanent, focus-free 32mm lens and an internal flash for topside use. This lens can also be used underwater and there are two accessory lenses; a 20mm wide angle or a macro. These can be attached to the front of the

permanent lens via a bayonet mount. You can even switch lenses underwater! A separate flash—the YS-40—is also available for underwater use.

Loading the camera is quick and easy. Simply release the latch and open the backplate. Inside is a second backplate. Open it and drop in the film cassette. (Two AA batteries next to the take-up spool power the camera.) When the internal backplate is closed, the camera automatically pulls the film onto the take-up spool. Before closing the backplate set the film speed, selecting either ISO 100 or 400. Advance the film a couple of frames by depressing the shutter release on the front of the camera.

There is a blue O-ring on the outer backplate, it should be cleaned and lightly coated with silicone grease, then replaced, before closing the backplate.

The camera has two controls on the



front, the shutter release and the aperture control. This latter has settings from f/4.5 to f/22. Two special f/stops—f/4.5 and f/11—fire the internal flash.

The cordless YS-40 flash is powered by four AA batteries. It attaches to the side of

Top: The Sea Bat and brittlestars were photographed with the MX-10 macro lens. Above: MX-10 with YS-40 flash.

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SEA & SEA MX-10

the camera via a hot shoe, much like the hot shoe found on the top of land cameras. An infrared sensor in the base of the flash mates with an identical sensor in the camera. A diffuser should be slipped over the flash head for both wide angle and macro photos.

The MX-10 camera and flash form a compact package weighing just three pounds. It is light enough to use snorkeling and easy enough for any member of the family—even a child—to operate.

MX-10 SPECIFICATIONS

MX-10 camera.....	35mm fixed focus
Lens	32mm f/4.5
Depth	150 feet
Shutter	Leaf shutter, 1/100 second
Film advance	Auto
Viewfinder	80 percent of frame
Strobe	Built-in
Low exposure	Red light indicates available light too low
Power	Two AA batteries
Dimensions	3.7 by 6.2 by 2.8 inches
Suggested retail ..	\$413.00

CAMERA ACCESSORIES

Macro lens.....	\$156.95
20mm lens	\$271.00
Close-up lens	Available soon
Lens caddy	Available soon

YS-40 FLASH

Beam angle	72 degrees
Power	Four AA batteries
Recycle time	5 w/alkalines
(seconds)	3 w/nickel-cadmiums
# of flashes	100 w/alkaline
	50 w/nickel-cadmiums
Sync	Infrared optical trigger
Depth	150 feet
Suggested retail ..	\$264.00

Our first test shots were done using the 1:4 macro lens and framer because when we descended we found the ocean floor blanketed with brittlestars. After turning the YS-40 flash on, we set the aperture control to f/16 and pressed the shutter. The flash fired and the camera automatically advanced the film. Hey, this was pretty easy!

In the middle of the dive, we decided we wanted photos of a larger area. We removed the macro lens/framer and the flash diffuser and set the aperture to f/8. We finished the roll of film by taking photos from a distance of three and a half feet.

When we got back onto the boat, we processed our film. As we looked at it on a light box with a loupe, we realized this point and shoot camera was providing professional quality photos. When the students looked at our film they laughed no longer.

After a complete testing of the normal and macro combinations, we moved on to the wide angle setup, attaching the

f/4.5 20mm lens to the front of the standard lens. After slipping a sportsfinder onto the top of the MX-10 we were ready to get wet again. Since the primary and the 20mm lenses are fixed focus, we had only to look to determine the necessary distance for the f/stop we were using. Garibaldi gliding through the kelp forests made perfect subjects for our wide angle tests.

For flash fill, lightly press the shutter release until a red light appears in the viewer. Then open the aperture until the red light goes out. You must make sure that you are the correct distance for the f/stop indicated before triggering the shutter. At



The Sea & Sea MX-10 system includes the YS-40 flash (with diffuser), macro lens with framer and the 20mm wide angle lens.

UPDATE

After our tests were complete, we learned there are three changes on the horizon for the MX-10 system. The new YS-40A flash will allow the photographer to select either manual or two automatic f/stops. ISO 100 film would dictate the use f/4.5; ISO 400 film would allow the use of f/8. The distance range for these new auto flash settings would be from .82 - 5.45 feet.

In addition to the improved YS-40A flash, a new close-up lens and a lens caddy are planned for the MX-10 system. All should be available early this year.

f/8, for instance, everything will be in sharp focus from 2.3 to 12.6 feet.

On the fifth day of our trip, Ernest H. Brooks, the president of Brooks Institute, asked to borrow the MX-10. He normally shoots black and white images with a housed Hasselblad but was impressed with our results. He found the MX-10 a great complement to his medium format system and was very excited about the photos he took with it. We think you'll be impressed, too!

For more information about the MX-10, contact your local Sea & Sea dealer or Sea & Sea Underwater Photography USA at 2105 Camino Vida Roble, Suite L, Carlsbad, CA 92009; (619) 929-1909. 🐟

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