

IMAGES

Making Your **STILL, VIDEO** and **DIGITAL** Underwater Images Better

COMPOSITION

Shoot Shallow

The secret to bright, cover-type images: Turn your back on the deep

BY JACK AND SUE DRAFAHL

Have you ever wondered how professional underwater photographers get those images that grace the covers of magazines? The lighting is just right, and the subjects are so cooperative, right? Well, one answer is that they take many of their photos in shallow water. Here's how it's done.

Photos that depict the true feel of underwater require a light balance between

available light and flash on the subject. Since light falls off quickly underwater, some of your best images will be those you take in less than 20 feet of water. A sandy bottom will allow the light to bounce and help fill in the shadowy areas of your pictures. When you shoot shallow, you can even use a slower-speed film or low ISO and still obtain good depth of field with small f-stops.

When you shoot deeper, you will find that it requires a wider f-stop opening to obtain a good exposure. The larger the aperture, the less depth of field you will have, so subjects beyond the range will be out of focus. The deeper you go, the higher the ISO rating required to maintain good exposures and adequate depth of field. It's more difficult to balance the available light and flash because of the light falloff due to the depth. Your background will be dark, and anything close to the camera will be overexposed.

There are even compact point-and-shoot cameras designed for snorkelers or one-time-use cameras with a protective shell; point-and-shoot, amphibious focus-free cameras that can be reloaded with new film; and even simple-to-use digital cameras.

When you shoot shallows, be sure to aim level or slightly up to achieve maximum subject and background separation. If you shoot down toward the reef, the background blends together. Not only will you get your most balanced photos by diving shallow, you will have plenty of bottom time to enjoy the underwater world.

Photo Contest: Ready for a challenge? Send us your best image that defines the essence of a destination and win a Sea & Sea camera. Go to sportdiver.com/photocontest to enter.

What's New?

For film shooters who praised Fuji for Velvia while cursing that it only was ISO 50, there is hope on the horizon. Fuji just announced Velvia 100F will be available soon. We just tested it for Petersen Photographic magazine on land and were extremely pleased with our results. It features some new technologies that provide saturated color reproduction and improved color stability. The grain is virtually nonexistent, so it allows extreme enlargements. Of course, the one-stop increase in film speed makes it a great film choice for most situations, and you can even push it one stop further to ISO 200. We haven't had a chance to test it underwater yet, but plan to soon. Stay tuned and we will let you know the results.

