

Learn to Shoot Macro Photography

With the Right Tools It's Fun!

By Jack and Sue Drafaahl

Some of the most interesting marine critters are very small. Tiny animals, however, cannot be photographed with a normal lens. For great photographs of these animals you need a macro lens. Easy to use, macro lenses make it possible to achieve great images right from the start.

Sea & Sea makes two macro lenses for the Motor Marine II-EX underwater camera system. The Macro Lens 2T produces photos of animals that are one-half life size; those taken with the Macro Lens 3T are one-third life size. The lenses attach to the front of the built-in lens and can be taken off or put on U/W. This allows you to take a picture of your buddy one minute; quickly add a framer and photograph a nudibranch the next.

The macro lenses have upright bars to help define the image area and focus point. The Macro 3T guide rods detach and are stored under the baseplate; the 2T guide rods fold down for easy storage.

Even though a macro lens is easy to use, a few simple tips can help ensure high quality images. In order to obtain good lighting, you will need a strobe. Since the subject is very close to the camera, the strobe can be small. In our tests we found both the Sea & Sea YS-30 and YS-60 worked extremely well. There are several different positions for the strobe, but we like to place it directly over the camera. This can be accomplished by attaching the strobe to the Sea & Sea Sea Arm V or the Hot Shoe Arm. Take care to position the light so it shines in the center of the framer. This way the shadows created by the strobe will fall behind the subject and be minimized.

You can also position the strobe to the right or left of the camera on the Sea Arm V. Be sure to remove or fold down the upright guide bar in the direct path of the strobe light. If you don't, the strobe will create a shadow that falls on your subject. When your subject fills the framer area, TTL flash provides very accurate exposures.

Although the built-in strobe is designed mainly for topside photography, it can be used with the macro lenses. This internal

strobe has only one power setting, so the exposure is controlled with the f/stop. Test this setup ahead of time to ensure good exposures on your dive trip.

You will want to fill most of the framer area with your subject. Leave a little space around it because the actual image area is slightly smaller than the inside the framer uprights. A good rule of thumb is to keep the subject two widths of the uprights away from the edge.

Since the focus is fixed on the front of the framers, exact subject placement is critical. Instead of looking through a viewfinder, check the framer area from at least a 45 degree angle to the side of the camera. When the subject is fairly flat, a starfish for example, use parallel focusing; keep your framer parallel to the subject. Position subjects with greater depth at the front edge of the framer. Use small apertures such as f/16 or f/22 to achieve the greatest depth of field (area in focus).

Macro framers are best suited for photographing slow moving or stationary subjects. The better way to capture faster moving creatures is with a housed camera with autofocus capabilities. Sea & Sea features several models you might consider.

The film you use should have an ISO of 50 to 100. They have very small grain, great color saturation, and excellent sharpness. Colorful subjects captured with framers on these films can easily be made into large prints of 16 to 20 inches or more. If you intend to create slide shows, then slide film should be your choice. If you want color prints to decorate your walls and put in scrapbooks, choose color negative (print) film.

When you have mastered the basics of framer photography, it's time to experiment. Toplighting requires placing the strobe a few inches over the top edge of the framer. You can also use the same procedure to backlight subjects, but be sure you keep the strobe out of the picture area.

Advanced techniques can also be accomplished with the camera's internal flash and the YS-30 strobe. Set the internal strobe to the correct f/stop and the YS-30, used without its sync cord, to slave on. When the internal flash fires, the YS-30 will also fire. This enables you to hold the YS-30 in any position without the sync cord getting in the way.

The Macro 2T and 3T Lenses for the Motor Marine II-EX enable you to record tiny reef inhabitants in living color. Take the time to practice these simple tips and before long you will be shooting like the pros.

For more information on the Sea & Sea Motor Marine II-EX, contact Sea & Sea Underwater Photography, USA, 1938 Kellogg Avenue, Carlsbad, CA 92008; (760) 929-1909 or fax (760) 929-0098.