

Pacific Northwest Diver

Publication of the Pacific Northwest Underwater Photographic Society
November, 2013



Giant Pacific Octopus Suckers by Neil McDaniel

Pacific Northwest Diver

BIMONTHLY MAGAZINE & WEB SITE PROMOTING UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY, EDUCATION, & TRAVEL IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST | NOVEMBER, 2013

THIS ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS GIANT PACIFIC OCTOPUS!

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Pacific Northwest Diver: In This Issue

In light of Washington State's new giant Pacific octopus protection legislation, this issue of Pacific Northwest Diver features this amazing creature in several videos, photos, a blog, and the book Super Suckers. Laura James shares her videos of camera techniques, newly hatched GPO's, and environmental education. Neil McDaniel was kind enough to contribute a selection of his GPO photos: several of which appear in Super Suckers, which he co-authored. Jackie Hildering contributed her blog and photos describing a recent encounter with two octopuses. Our featured operator is Mamro, based in Nanaimo, BC. Inside this issue you will also find information on how to purchase Super Suckers, Beneath the Sea Scholarships, Pacific Coast sea star die-off, and strobes/lights' impact on marine life.

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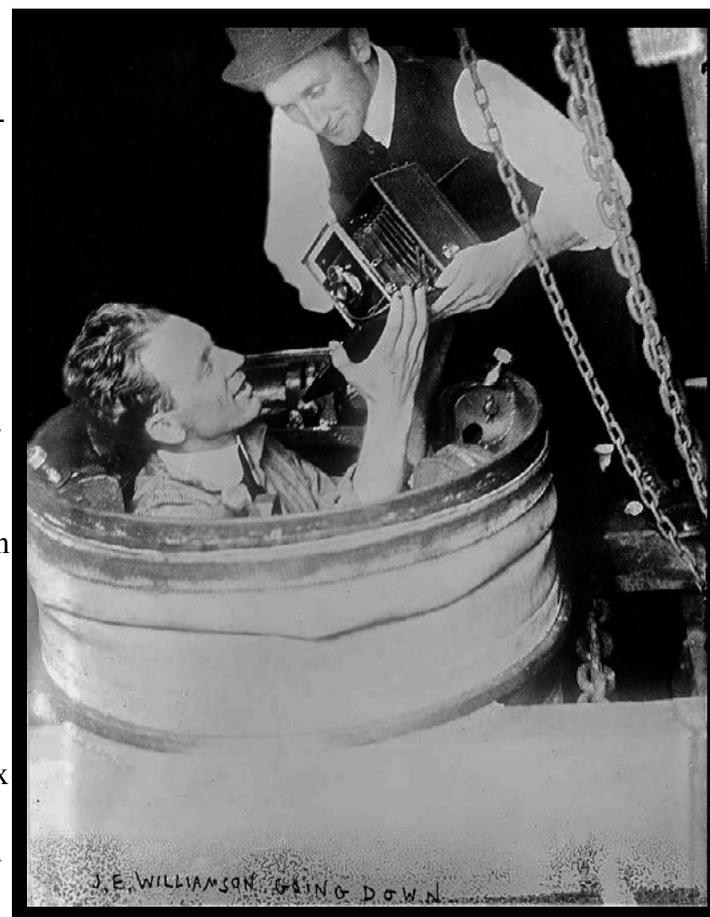
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Archives Corner: John Ernest Williamson (1881-1966)

John Ernest Williamson (1881-1966) was a pioneer in undersea motion picture photography, and was in this field for nearly fifty years.

Artificially illuminated photographs of the depths of Chesapeake Bay taken in 1913 produced such captivating results that Williamson was inspired to attempt motion pictures. With this new equipment, Williamson and his brother George set out for The Bahamas, where the sunlight can penetrate 150 feet deep in clear water, greatly enhancing photographic possibilities. In March 1914, near Nassau, Williamson shot the first-ever underwater motion pictures.

Consisting of two distinct parts, it was known as the Williamson Submarine Tube coupled with the Photosphere, which was the film platform at the end of it. In 1915, they created a movie version of Jules Verne's 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea on location in the Bahamas. After opening in 1916, it broke box office records across America, likely because it was the world's first underwater movie and included several special effects.



In 1932, a compilation called 'With Williamson Beneath the Sea' was released, revealing the scientific uses of the Photosphere, and featuring his undersea family. This film has been restored by the Library of Congress. The Williamson's went on to make more underwater movies.

Pacific Northwest Diver: News Corner

Diving with Octopuses

Legend

- New Octopus Protection Areas
- Other areas closed to harvest of giant Pacific octopus
- Conservation Area
- Marine Preserve
- Marine Area 12

1 – Deception Pass (north of Oak Harbor)
A premier site with steep, spectacular walls covered with invertebrates and home to large fish. It should only be explored by advanced divers with local knowledge, as extremely strong currents make this site dangerous.

2 – Seacrest Park Coves 1, 2 and 3 (West Seattle)
This popular urban park near Alki offers three large coves with many different dives to enjoy. There's little current and a range of depths. From its shallow, rocky breakwater to deep technical diving, with small wrecks and lots of sea life available, everyone can find a favorite dive. Good facilities, access and one of the best views of downtown Seattle make it an ideal place for all levels of divers to experience Elliott Bay.

3 – Alki Beach Junk Yard (West Seattle)
The junkyard is located at the west end of Alki Beach Park. It offers a great variety of interesting fish and invertebrates for all levels of divers to enjoy.

4 – Three Tree Point (Burien)
This site contains an intriguing diversity of various man-made structures, small boat wrecks and urban remains. The artificial reefs run parallel to shore at various depths. Shallow eel grass grows near the shore. Currents are moderate and tend to run southward. The area can be dived at times other than slack and is a good destination when south winds are blowing.

5 – Redondo Beach (Des Moines)
This improved site offers a variety of options for all divers. Access is easy down the stairs to the beach on either side of the wharf that houses Highline College's Aquarium. Swim out and submerge from the ladder on the west end and go down the slope to find small boat wrecks and other man-made reefs, where octopus, sculpins and other fish can be found. The sandy slopes are a good place to spot large skates and dogfish.

6 – Les Davis (Tacoma)
Les Davis has been improved and developed for divers in a convenient, urban location along Tacoma's Commencement Bay. The site consists of large slabs of hollowed concrete roadway gathered in large piles at various depths. Do not swim eastward past the tire reef by the fishing pier.

7 – Days Island (Tacoma)
A fantastic wall dive that features a variety of marine species, including giant Pacific octopus, wolf eels, dogfish and sea stars. The wall runs parallel to the shore at depths ranging from 25 to 100 feet. Divers should explore the site during a slack tide because of the area's strong currents at tidal exchange.

More information is available on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's website at wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/octopus/

Photos by Janna Nichols

Octopus Protection Legislation

Olympia: Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

New rules that provides additional protection for giant Pacific octopuses in Puget Sound took effect Oct. 6, when the recreational harvest of the species will be prohibited at seven popular scuba diving sites in Puget Sound. The dive sites include:

- Deception Pass north of Oak Harbor
- Seacrest Park Coves 1, 2 and 3 near Alki Point in West Seattle
- Alki Beach Junk Yard in West Seattle
- Three Tree Point in Burien
- Redondo Beach in Des Moines
- Les Davis Marine Park in Tacoma
- Days Island Wall in Tacoma

The Commission and Department recognized that Puget Sound and Hood Canal offers some of the most outstanding diving in North America, and GPO's are one of the major draws.

More information about the sites where octopuses are protected is available on WDFW's website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/viewing/octopus/>.

The new rule takes effect nearly a year after a scuba diver provoked a public outcry after legally harvesting a giant Pacific octopus at Seacrest Cove 2 in West Seattle. The strong, negative reaction from the public and the dive community prompted WDFW to explore regulatory options for banning the harvest of giant Pacific octopuses.

After working with a 12-member citizen advisory committee that included members of the sportfishing and diving communities, WDFW developed options earlier this year to provide a greater degree of protection for octopuses in Puget Sound.

In August, the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission considered the options and voted to prohibit recreational harvest of the species at the seven dive sites.

Pacific Northwest Diver: News Corner

[Beneath the Sea Scholarship](#)

(Application Deadline December 31, 2013)



Are you between the ages of 12 and 30 years of age? Are you trying to decide what your career aspirations are?

Have you considered a marine related career – such as, ocean engineer, marine scientist, underwater photographer, whale or shark specialist, marine technologist, hyperbaric medicine specialist, underwater archaeologist, etc.?

If so, then one of the Beneath the Sea scholarships/grants could help you explore the wonderful world of marine careers. If you are a teacher, parent, or a friend of a young person, please share this information with them. Help them explore their opportunities for the future!

There are eight scholarships available, and they cover a wide variety of topics, including underwater photography, archaeology (with Mozambique and South Africa travel), marine study, hyperbaric medicine.

If this looks interesting, either for yourself or a friend, follow the link below to the [Beneath the Sea scholarship page](#). You will find a brief description of each scholarship, along with links to individual application forms.

[BENEATH THE SEA - MARINE CAREERS SCHOLARSHIPS LINK](#)

[Major Sea Star Die-Off](#)

(Impacts from Alaska to California)

Marine scientists are finding a large number of dead starfish along the West Coast stricken with a disease that causes the creatures to lose their arms and disintegrate. The disease usually affects one species, *Pisaster ochraceus*.

The starfish are dying from “sea star wasting disease,” an affliction that causes white lesions to develop, which can spread and turn the animals into “goo.” The disease has killed up to 95 percent of a particular species of sea star in some populations.



“They essentially melt in front of you,” Pete Raimondi, chairman of the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at University of California, Santa Cruz’s Long Marine Lab, told The Santa Rosa Press Democrat (<http://bit.ly/HvjuYi>).

Sampling has found the disease in starfish from Alaska to Southern California, according to a map (<http://bit.ly/1e7Xl0c>) on the marine lab’s website.

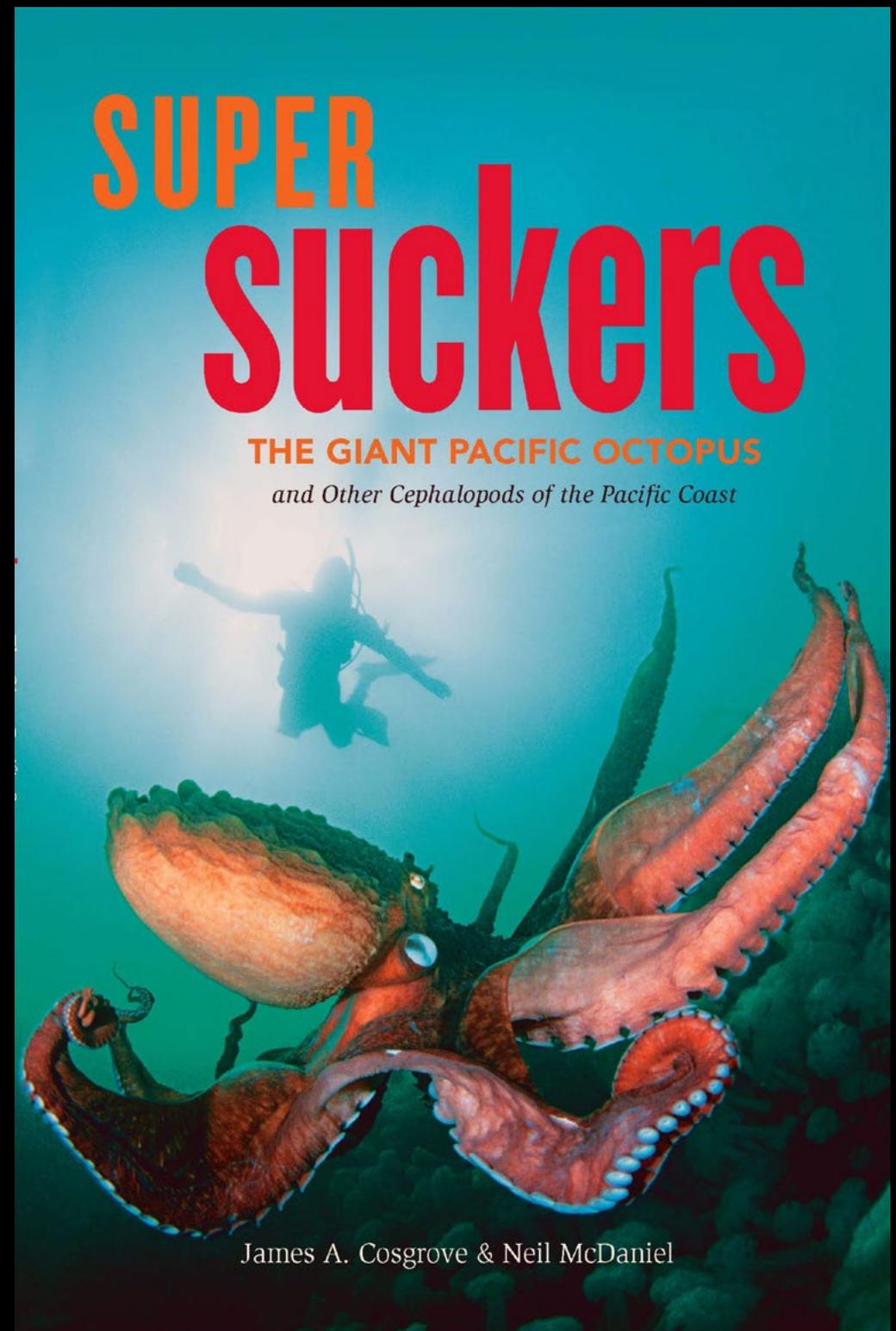
In the Pacific Northwest several groups are studying this issue. Orcas Island based SeaDoc Society has teamed up with REEF, and just completed a 120 dive survey in the San Juan Islands.

The Vancouver Aquarium has been taking a lead role in our area, and You can help monitor this outbreak, and is collecting reports of sick and healthy sea stars throughout the Salish Sea. Report your observations at <http://www.vanaqua.org/act/research/sea-stars>.

SUPER SUCKERS: THE GPO

What better way to learn about the Giant Pacific Octopus: its biology, reproduction, den, and life than reading *Super Suckers*, by James Cosgrove and Neil McDaniel. Neil's GPO photography is featured on this issue's cover and after Laura James' write-up.

You can order *Super Suckers* from Amazon by clicking on the [order book link](#).



Pacific Northwest Diver: Laura James

Laura James



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Webs: <http://www.diverlaura.com/public/Welcome.html>

<http://www.tox-ick.org/>

<http://www.pugetsoundkeeper.org/>

<http://www.pugetsoundstartshere.org/>

Filmmaker and underwater explorer Laura James made her first “wreck dive” on a snowy Sunday morning in December, 1990, at the Edmonds UW Park during her scuba certification course, and has been sharing the underwater world ever since.

Her early work helped pave the way for historical shipwrecks such as the “AJ Fuller” to be eligible for addition to the state register of historical places. More recently she harnesses the power of film & journalism to educate the public about the problems surrounding pollution and other environmental factors impacting Puget Sound.

James is a passionate advocate for educating people about the underwater world. In addition to working as a freelance videographer and environmental journalist (her work has been aired on stations like PBS, KCTS9, The Military Channel, BBC, Discovery Channel, local/national news and even Albert Hall with some of her footage featured in Love the Earth, a film by Imogen Heap).

James also works as Communications Coordinator for Puget Soundkeeper Alliance (a local environmental non-profit), Co-Directs the Tox-Ick.org program (7 simple solutions to help reduce the flow of polluted runoff into Puget Sound), and works with Pacific Marine Research’s Marine Science Afloat program, where she teaches school children about Puget Sound marine ecology.

She also serves as Director of sales and marketing for She-P North America which produces a revolutionary p-valve condom catheter for woman divers.

A recreational and technical mixed-gas diving instructor, James is a certified rebreather diver and has conducted more than 5000 dives. She was also responsible for opening Adventure Diving Inc., the first technical diving facility in Washington, with business partner Capt. Steve Pearson.

Laura shoots with a Canon 5DMK2 in a Subal Housing with 16-35mm f/2.8L II, 20mm 2.8, and 100mm Macro lenses. For lighting, her kit includes a variety of Halcyon and Light in Motion products. As shown in her productions, she also uses a GoPro Hero for a Point of View video. Post processing takes place on a Mac Pro Desktop using Final Cut Pro, Adobe Premier Pro, and Adobe After Effects.

As part of this giant Pacific octopus issue, we are featuring Laura’s video of newly hatched octos, along with other videos that showcase her concern for the Puget Sound and adjacent environments.

Monolith Octo Hatch, 9/11/13 (just after midnight)



Some 240-270 days after these eggs were laid, hatching occurs. The hatch normally takes place at night, and for the next 10 months they will swim on the ocean's surface as part of the plankton layer.

- [Super Suckers](#), pp 83-87

Puget Sound Starts Here

- Matthew J Clark



In this video, film maker Matthew J Clark Interviews Laura about underwater videography, Puget Sound critters, and how underwater photographers can deliver messages of concern about our marine environment.

Together We Can Stop This!



In a collaborative education effort, Laura and Lamont shoot a large stormwater drain off Alki Beach in West Seattle to show how our rains carry pollutants into Puget Sound. Note the use of a GoPro on tripod for some of the time lapse imagery.

Nature Recovers



In this river snorkeling outing on the north fork of the Skykomish River near the washout on Index-Galena Road, Laura records Nature recovering, as pink salmon return to spawn.

Pacific Northwest Diver: Neil McDaniel

Neil McDaniel



Neil started diving in 1969 while completing a degree in Marine Zoology at the University of British Columbia. He soon lost interest in spearfishing hapless lingcod and decided he would rather take pictures of them.

His initial underwater rig was a Nikonos II with a flash-bulb gun, and he was quickly hooked on underwater photography. Over the years Neil says he has used all manner of cameras and housings, and currently shoots with a Nikon D100 in a Subal housing. He still uses his 30-year-old Ikelite 150 strobes, and says “they may be dinosaurs but they work flawlessly and provide excellent lighting for wide-angle lenses with their circular flash tubes.”

He began underwater filming with 16 mm equipment in the early 70s. His first film camera was a spring-wound Bolex with the excellent 10 mm Switar lens in a Hugyphot housing. Over the years he used various 16 mm, 35 mm and IMAX film cameras as well as many different types of video cameras.

He currently shoots video with a Sony EX1R HD camera in a Gates housing. New advances in LED lighting now allow him to use daylight-balanced, compact underwater lights without cumbersome battery packs, cables and sealed light-bulbs (that occasionally imploded!).

Neil says that as a marine naturalist, his main goal in underwater photography and video is to document habitats and the behaviour of marine creatures. “I’ve always been fascinated by the diversity of our prolific life here in the PNW and photography is the perfect tool to record and catalogue all of these colourful and interesting plants and animals.”

Shooting digital still images today is quite liberating at many levels. In the “old” days of film shooters had only

“a roll of 36” Kodachrome to work with, so each image had to be composed and the exposure estimated carefully before pulling the trigger. With Kodachrome there wasn’t a lot of exposure latitude; a stop either side of the correct exposure and the image was pretty much useless.

Neil notes that he often “rationed” the film in the old days: half a roll was shot on the first dive and the balance on the second. And then there was the interminable wait while that precious roll of “chrome” went off for processing. A week or two later later you finally got to see your images... unimaginable in today’s “right here, right now” world.

With digital camera in hand, Neil can shoot as many frames as needed on a dive, and view them instantly. Within a few hours they can be reviewed on his home computer where a few post processing tweaks improve the images. He says “I find most underwater images as shot lack contrast, so I usually add a bit of that and a touch of ‘unsharp mask.’ I shoot in RAW so that I can always have a “digital negative” to work with if need be.”

He and Jim Cosgrove are long-time friends and have dived together at many sites over the years. Neil states he was always amazed at Jim’s knowledge of the giant Pacific octopus and they subsequently collaborated on several documentary shoots about GPOs and other cephalopods.

When Jim retired from the Royal BC Museum Neil encouraged him to write a book about GPOs. They pitched the idea to Harbour Publishing, who was very supportive, so he and Jim agreed to take on the challenge. Writing a book took months of painstaking work, but in the end they were very pleased with the positive response Super Suckers received.

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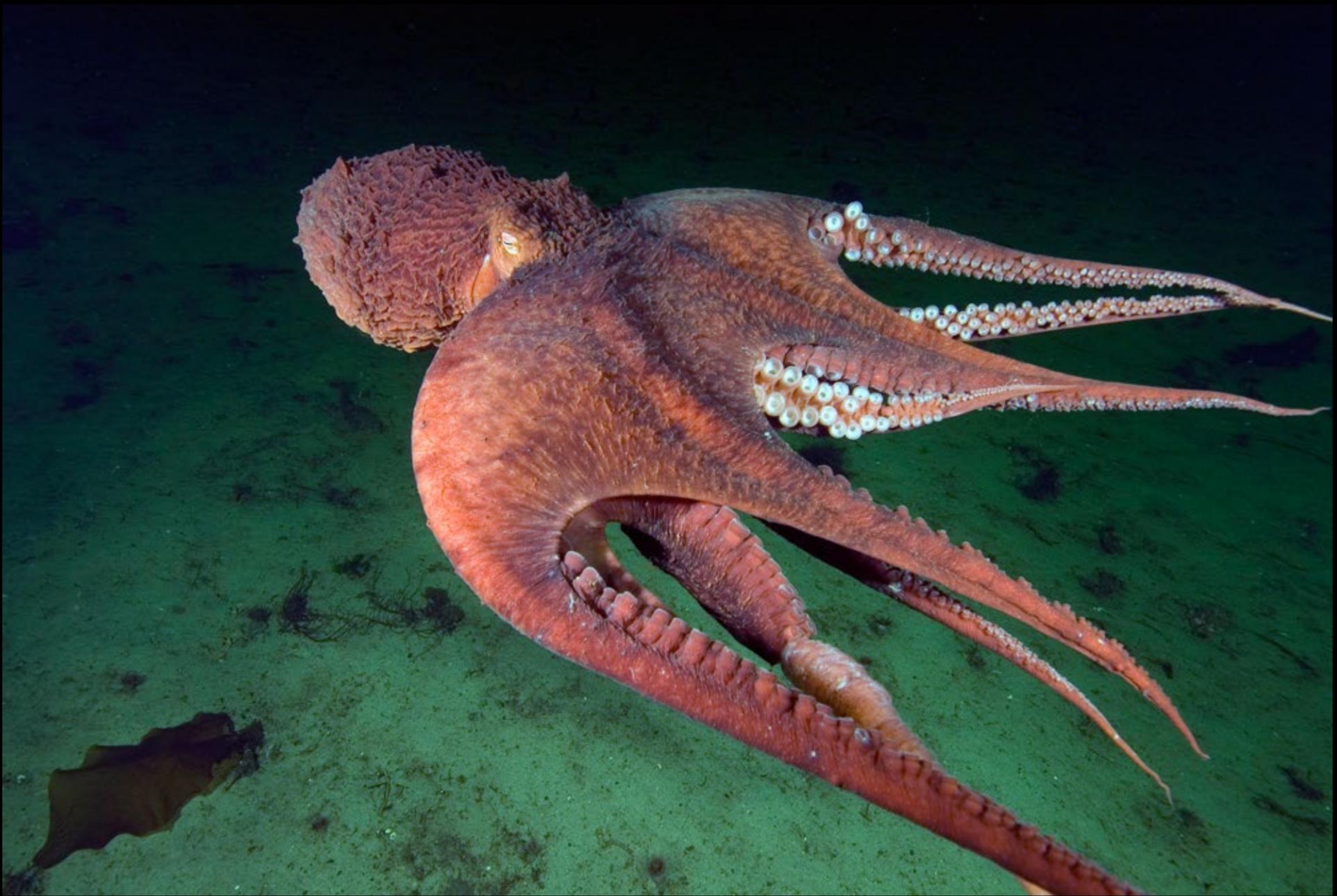
Web: <http://www.neilmcdaniel.com/>



Giant Pacific Octopus on the Bottom by Neil McDaniel



Giant Pacific Octopus Grooming Eggs by Neil McDaniel
(See Super Suckers, page 80)



Giant Pacific Octopus in "Flight" by Neil McDaniel
(See Super Suckers, pages 124-125)

Pacific Northwest Diver: Jackie Hilderling

Jackie Hilderling



Blog: <http://themarinedetective.com/>
e-Mail: earthlingenterprises@telus.net

Jackie's work was featured in the July, 2012 issue of Pacific Northwest Diver. On her [Marine Detective Blog](#) (which is very well done and worth subscribing to), she recently described an exceptional encounter with two giant Pacific octopuses. Here is Jackie's "Octopused!" blog along with her photos of the encounter.

I am typing with salt still encrusted to my face and hair. I really should warm up from my dive and wash off the NE Pacific before sharing this with you but this is the kind of story you want to shout from the seamount tops. However, be warned, there is a bit of a dark side to the story too.

Today, while doing a shore dive in Port Hardy with the intention of surveying the health of sea stars, I had the most wondrous experience I have ever had with not one, but two giant Pacific octopuses.



While photographing a sea star I must have disturbed the first octopus because when I looked down, wondering what had caused a massive

disruption of hooded nudibranchs from the kelp, there she/he was in full glory - posturing to show me his/her impressive size, hooded nudibranchs undulating all around.

I even ended up with a hooded nudibranch stuck to my mask, which I gently shook off as I am a poor surrogate for kelp!



After I recovered from the shock of this all and mumbled an apology in the guilt of triggering the chaos, I looked at the octopus for a bit . . . and she/he looked at me. We both settled down, apparent in the case of the octopus in that he/she was no longer posturing and turned back to camouflage colours rather than alarm vibrance.

After some minutes, the assessment appeared to be made by this sentient being that I was not a risk; and that there was no need to hide (nor ink!). As a result, for half an hour I was able to (respectfully) follow along as the octopus hunted.

I was allowed to learn about hunting strategy and see how the colour and texture changed as it moved and how the mantle would flash white as

Pacific Northwest Diver: Jackie Hildering

it pounced upon prey.

The only thing that stopped this deeply awe-inspiring experience was that dive buddy, Alex Spicer, found a second octopus in the open! This much smaller octopus was using giant kelp like a hammock.

The divers among you know what a rare gift it is to find one, let alone two, (unhabituated) octopuses out of their dens, certainly during daytime.

The underwater photographers and videographers among you would be twitching all the more, knowing what an incredible opportunity this offers to capture the beauty of these giant wonders.

Here's the dark side. Thankfully it is a literal dark side. My strobes (flashes) didn't work properly and it was my own doing. It's been a crazy week of work and, in the flurry resulting from wanting to fit in a dive, I forgot the cables that hook the strobes to the camera.

Yes, I was given what may be the opportunity of a lifetime but failed to fully capture the beauty of it, leaving you with only these grainy images. However, I got to fully live the experience and had anything changed in the course of events that led to today's dive, likely I wouldn't have been octopused at all.

I hope the images are still enough to illuminate the joy and wonder I felt.



Subscribe to Jackie's Marine Detective Blog & Facebook Pages:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/the.marine.detective>

Marine Detective Blog: <http://themarinedetective.com/>



GPO Gliding Along the Bottom by Jackie Hilderling
(Note that Jackie's strobes were not working: Ambient Light)



c. Jackie Hildering

Small GPO with Hooded Nudibranchs by Jackie Hildering
(Note that Jackie's strobes were not working: Ambient Light)

Pacific Northwest Diver: News Corner- Salish Sea Celebration

Get your cameras out and start working on entries for the Pacific Northwest underwater photo and video festival called the Salish Sea Celebration!

It will be a photo and video competition featuring Northwest subjects. That's correct: only photos and videos taken in the temperate waters of Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon.

There are two main goals for the Salish Sea Celebration. The first is to provide a venue where Pacific Northwest underwater photographers and videographers can share their work.

The second is to help educate and inspire the non-diving public with the beauty and diversity below our waterlines. The event is being modeled after similar contests in San Diego and Monterey.

As part of showcasing our amazing marine environment, we also plan on honoring our First Nations people for whom the Salish Sea was named. Their language and traditions will be incorporated into the Celebration.

More contest and event information will be available this Fall, but the culminating event, presentation of photos and videos, is set for Saturday, October 4, 2014, at [Town Hall](#) in downtown Seattle.



Kwakwaka'wakw Sisiutl Orca Mask, Oscar Matilpi

Salish Sea Celebration

łʷjuʔiltxʷ čəxʷ ti ʃʷəlččəl

Pacific Northwest Underwater Photo and Video Contest
October 4, 2014 | Town Hall | Seattle, Washington



Contest & Event Details Available Fall, 2013

Showcase | Educate | Inspire

Pacific Northwest Diver: Mamro



-Dan Ferris

Mamro is a 52-foot converted fishing boat that provides simple but satisfactory accommodations for six divers and two crewmembers. Primary dive sites include Nanaimo, Gulf Islands, Port Hardy, Sunshine Coast, Hornby Island, Nakwakto Rapids.

Their dive area is the full eastern side of Vancouver Island. Based in Nanaimo January and February, Pender Harbour and Port McNeill the first part of March, then Port Hardy From mid-March through October, Port McNeill and Pender in November, with the year finishing up back in Nanaimo.

The Mamro employs a large diving skiff with plenty of room for up to 10 divers. Gear is set up on the skiff for the duration of the trip. Divers suite-up on board the Mamro where it is warm and comfortable, then transfer to the skiff: putting on the rest of their gear during the short ride to the dive site.

A wide-rung ladder ensures divers are able to return to the skiff's deck with as little effort as possible. Tanks are refilled on the skiff leaving gear set-ups undisturbed. For photographers and videographers the live-aboard/skiff arrangement is quite nice. With dive gear and associated water left on the skiff, Mamro offers a clean and dry environment to work on cameras, housings, and post processing.

Mamro Adventures is owned and operated by Dan Ferris. He has been boating in the Nanaimo area since his early childhood. Dan, who is Captain of the MV Mamro, provides expert site orientations before every dive. Customers repeatedly comment on how good the food is, and the size of the cinnamon rolls will provide ample carbs for a day's cold water diving!

e-Mail: adventures@mamro.com

Web: <http://www.mamro.com/index.html>





Clear water off Port Hardy



Gully gee!



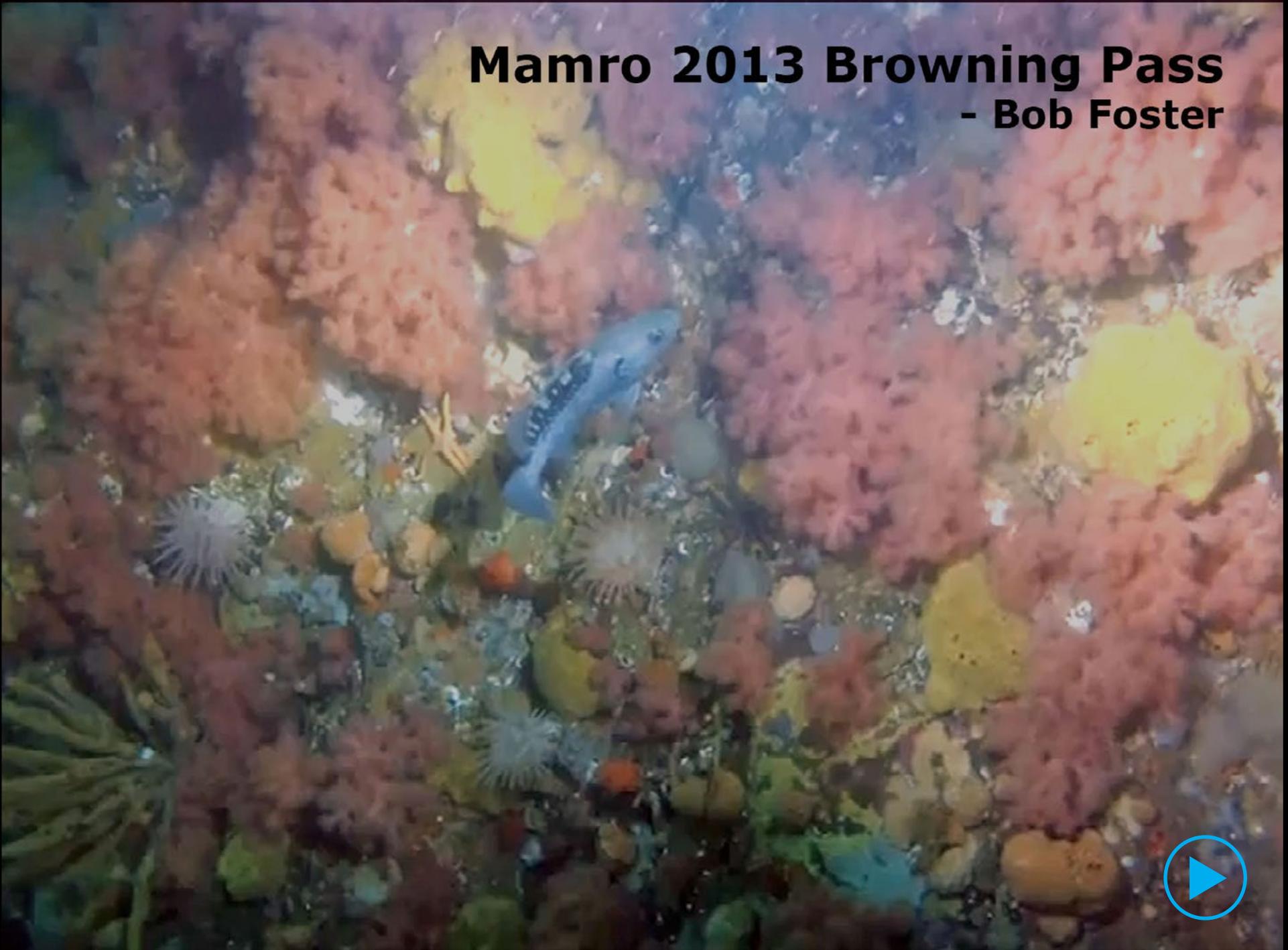
Browning Wall beauty



Spectacular scenery

Mamro 2013 Browning Pass

- Bob Foster



Pacific Northwest Diver: Travel Corner



[GREY WHALE MOMS & BABIES](#) | February/March, 2014 | Trip estimate is \$1,500

For the past three years we have spent time on Baja's west coast viewing mother and baby grey whales before they migrate north. Viewing will be from boats, but we have applied for permits from the Mexican government to snorkel with the whales as part of an article on their migration. This would be a seven day trip, and would include room, lodging, and transportation round trip from La Paz.

Objectives: Grey whales, mothers "nursing" babies.



[FIJI WITH NATURALIST ANDY LAMB](#) | March 14 - 31, 2014 | Trip estimate \$5,500

Seven nights at Lalati Resort and Spa (Beqa Lagoon), followed by another seven nights at Volivoli Resort (Bligh Waters). Round trip air from LAX (fly to Fiji together but flexible return possible), accommodation (double occupancy), meals, transfers, ten days diving or resort credits for activities including snorkeling, tours and spas.

For more information contact Andy or Virginia Lamb at 250.246.9770 or via e-mail at andylamb@telus.net.



[MONTEREY/PT LOBOS KELP FOREST](#) | May 11 - 16, 2014 | Trip estimate \$800

Join the annual trip south to dive the kelp forests in Pt Lobos and Monterey. This year we are planning a meet-up and boat dive with the Northern California Underwater Photographic Society. Costs include Pt Lobos fees, lodging, and at least one day of boat diving. Remainder of dives will be shore based.

Objectives: Harbor seals, sea otter, sea lion, rock fish, macro subjects.



[LA PAZ WHALE SHARKS, SEA LIONS, & MARINE LIFE](#) | October 25 - November 1, 2014 | Trip estimate is \$1,100

We head back to La Paz, Baja California to snorkel with whale sharks, dive with sea lion, and check out eel, blennies, jaw fish, and the other marine life the area has to offer. Lodging will be with Posada Luna Sol, diving with Club Cortez, and whale shark outings with Mar y Aventuras. Price includes lodging, park permits, 2 tank dives on SCUBA days, lunch on diving days, and snorkeling with whale sharks to 1:00 PM on whale shark days. Does not include transportation to La Paz.

Objectives: Whale sharks, sea lion, blennies, eel, jaw fish.



[RAJA AMPAT ON THE DAMAI II](#) | January 11 - 22, 2015 | Trip estimate \$6,600-7,100

Join [Optical Ocean's](#) Jack Connick and Martin Heyn for 11 days as we dive and sail beautiful Indonesian waters onboard the Damai II liveaboard, one of the most luxurious liveaboards catering to diving photographers. Either click on the link, or call the shop at 800.359.1295.

Objectives: Mantas to pygmy seahorses, and everything in between.

Pacific Northwest Diver: Strobes, Lights, & Blinding Critters

Dan Clements



While working on some of my friend Johanna Raupe's photos for an article, I noticed she was shooting at much higher ISO's than most of us. I routinely shoot at 100 or 200, for example.

When I spoke with Johanna about this, she mentioned that it was deliberate, and an attempt to avoid damaging marine critters who may be sensitive to bright lights.

As an example, she mentioned Wakatobe, where there is a suggested limit of three shots per pygmy sea horse subject. Marine biologist Dr. Richard Smith published a [code of conduct relating to pygmy seahorses](#), and makes several suggestions regarding lights.

Among them are no more than five shots using strobes, no video lights, and no other lighting.

This started me wondering if there are animals in the Salish Sea who might be harmed by strobes or video lights.

In several posts on Wet Pixel, photographers felt that intense lights/strobes had severely affected flashlight fish, pygmy sea horse, and lesser octopus (*Eledone cirrhosa*), a UK species but generally northern in distribution.

Paul Kay, a UK underwater photographer, noted the following about the impacts of strobes and video lights on lesser octopus.

"Experiments had shown that this animal was light sensitive and it reacted to light stimulus. As a guideline the suggestion was made that up to 6 flashes from a strobe would probably do no more than discomfort an individual BUT more could potentially start to cause pain, and eventually this might lead to shock (and even death!)."

However, although I now stick to this 6 shot idea/limit, I've noticed the following - these octopus do really react (substantially - movement, colour, escaping by jetting off) to a flash if they are in deeper darker water, but if, as occasionally happens, the octopus is in shallower brighter water, then the reaction is far less evident or even absent."

While the lesser, or curled, octopus does not occur in our area, its larger relative, the giant Pacific octopus does. While color blind, this species is known to have keen, polaroid vision. So are they impacted by strobes and video lights?

I posed this question to Jim Cosgrove, [Super Sucker](#) author, and here is his response: "I cannot find any scientific literature that has tested what happens to an octopus' eye when exposed to a divers strobe light.

I have consulted with 4 other colleagues, 3 of whom work with the giant Pacific octopus, and all agree that there is no data on this issue. It is our opinion that flash photography of an octopus in the wild would not cause it any lasting damage. It is recognized that the cephalopod eye is constructed differently than a vertebrate eye.

It was also noted that new cameras and strobes use far less light than in the past. If you go back 30 or 40 years to when underwater photography was done using flashbulbs that put out a significant amount of light. Photography then progressed to electronic strobes and some of them did not have variable power settings so the flash was often the full output of the strobe.

Now that digital cameras with very high ISO ratings are also using TTL strobes the amount of light is far less than what it was 10 or 20 years ago so the chances of an animal's eyes being damaged is less than what it was."

To repeat: "... very high ISO ratings also using TTL strobes ..." Most of my photographer friends shoot manual, rather than TTL, and directly adjust strobe levels. As noted earlier, most of my shooting is at a low ISO: 200. The bottom line is we simply don't know. I do know that, from here on out, I will be following Johanna's example by upping my ISO and then dropping strobe power when shooting octopus.

Pacific Northwest Diver: Our Team

The Pacific Northwest is a large, diverse region with diverse interests in underwater photography and videography. In order to make it easier for you to submit information about photographers, dive clubs, and operators/resorts in your area we have key contacts for British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. Since we are all volunteering our time and efforts, we also hope to spread the work-load so we will all have ample time for diving and photography!

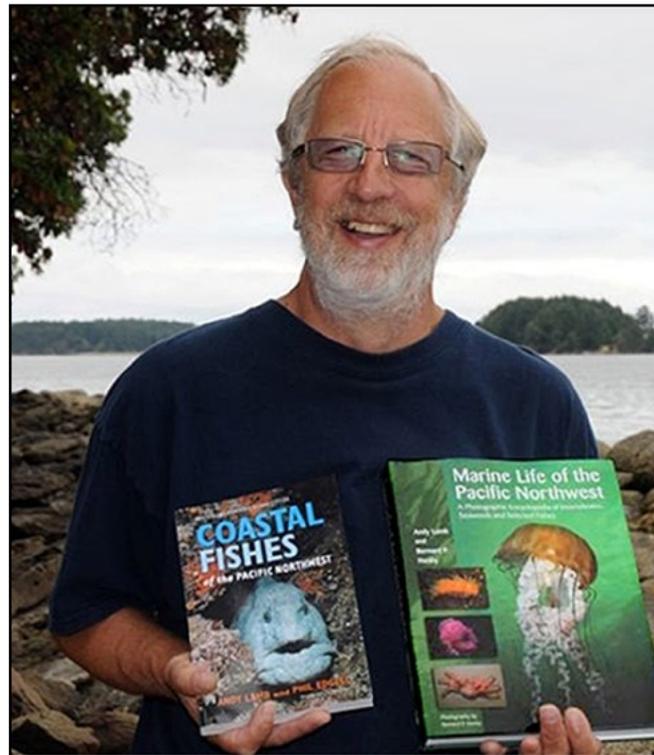
Below are our contacts, please either get in touch with one of the regional contacts listed below, or contact editor [Dan Clements](#) directly.

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