

Photo 1. Spinner dolphin and calf, Egyptian Red Sea. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-5.6 IS STM lens at 18mm, Ikelite housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 800, f/20, 1/200s.

Text and photos by Anita George-Ares, PhD, and John A. Ares

There are many intriguing subjects to photograph in the water column. Underwater photographers Anita George-Ares and John A. Ares share their favorite blue-water photos as well as the thoughts behind each shot.

One never knows what one might find in blue water: dolphins, sea turtles, sharks, seals or invertebrates. For Anita, when shooting marine life in blue water, the subjects are the center of attention, not their surroundings. Blue water illuminates the translucence, textures or contrasting patterns of a marine animal, especially if strobes or video lights are used.

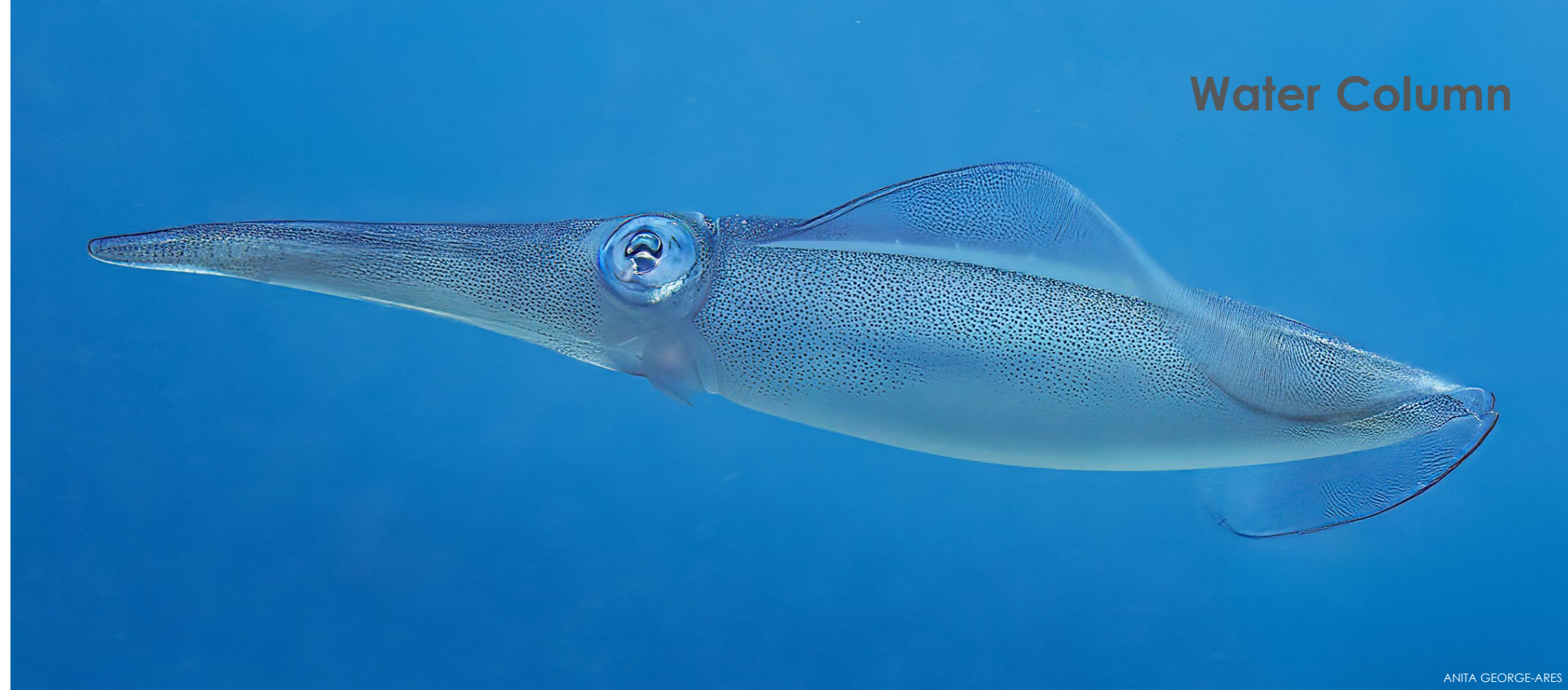
In Photo 2, the translucence and variable textures of the spotted jel-



Blue-Water Images

Photographing Subjects in the Water Column

Photo 3. Squid, Dumaguete, Philippines. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 60mm f/2.8 Macro USM lens, Ikelite housing, Ikelite DS161 strobe and Bigblue VL4200P video light. Exposure: ISO 200, f/11, 1/160s.



Water Column

ANITA GEORGE-ARES

Photo 4. Green sea turtle, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 IS STM lens at 29mm, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, 1/200s.



ANITA GEORGE-ARES



ANITA GEORGE-ARES

Photo 2. Spotted jellyfish, Dumaguete, Philippines. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 60mm f/2.8 Macro USM lens, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/160s.

lyfish are highlighted by the dark blue water. Blue water illuminates the translucence and texture of the squid in Photo 3. The contrasting patterns on the sea turtle's head and flippers are accentuated in Photo 4.

When strobes are used, backscatter (spots in an image) may appear in blue-water images. Backscatter results from light being reflected by particles in the water column. Adjusting the strobe position will help reduce backscatter. The Remove tool in Adobe Photoshop is also useful for quickly removing large areas of backscatter.

Photo 5. Oceanic whitetip shark, Egyptian Red Sea. Gear: Canon EOS Rebel SL1 camera, Canon EF-S 10-18mm f/4.5-5.6 IS STM lens at 18mm, Ikelite housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 200, f/7.1, 1/200s.



Photo 7. Crescent-tail bigeyes, Maldives. Gear: Canon Rebel SL1 camera, Canon 10-17mm lens at 10mm, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/13, 1/80s.

Distant subjects

Sometimes the photographer cannot get close enough to the subject, especially when the subject is swimming away. Strobes and video lights are inadequate when the subject is too far away.

The images of the dolphins and the shark were taken with available light, then later cropped (Photos 1 and 5). It is a thrill to capture images of a critically endangered oceanic whitetip shark, in addition to a spinner dolphin with her calf. It is worth trying to capture an image even if conditions are not optimal.

Three-dimensionality

For John, one of the best aspects of blue-water diving is becoming three-dimensional. This lets one see creatures during the descent and ascent and allows for stops to admire the marine life.

The sea lions of Los Islotes, off La Paz, Mexico, live to play and spend a lot of time in mid-water, waiting to

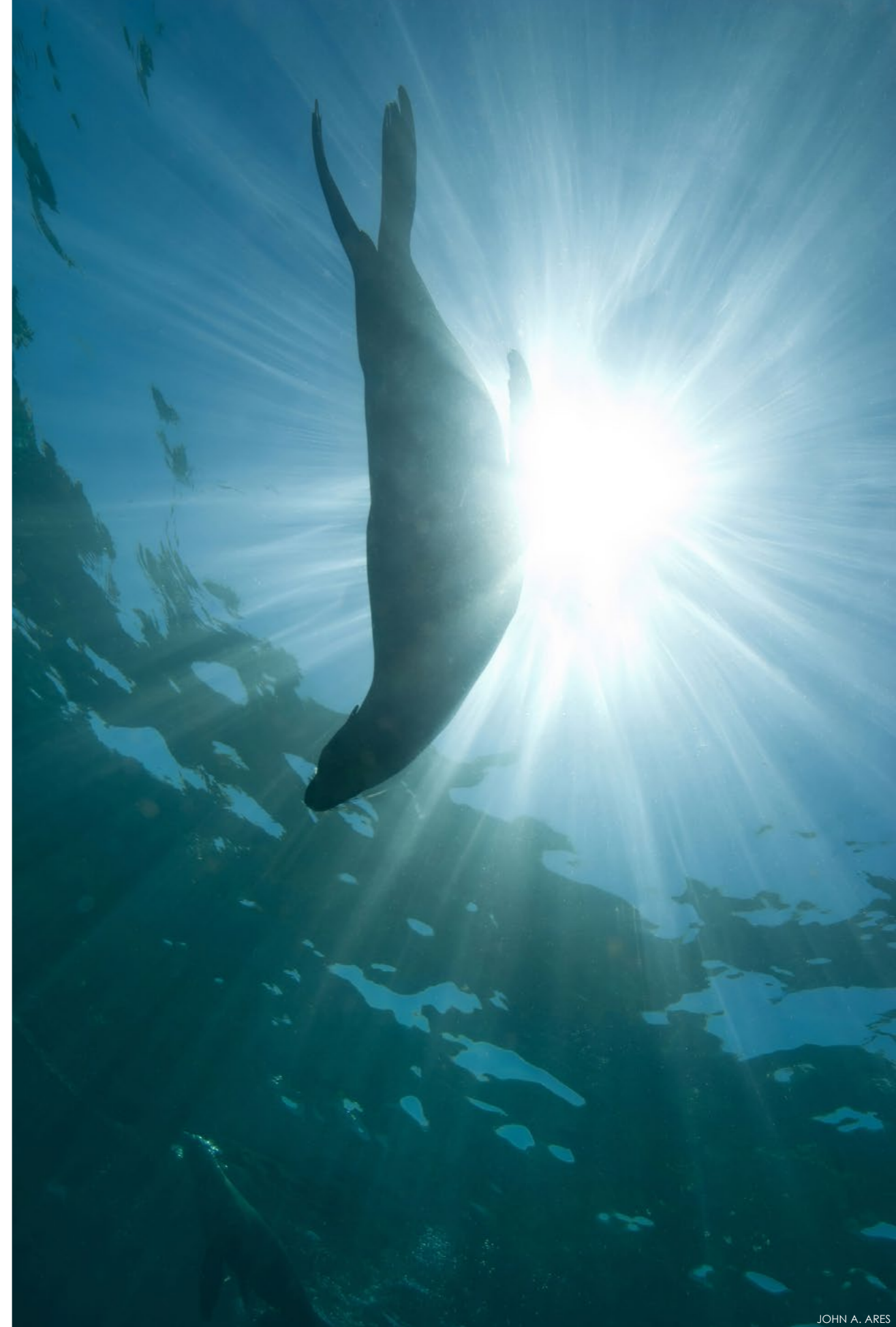


Photo 6. Sea lion, La Paz, Mexico. Gear: Canon Rebel SL1 camera, Canon 11-18mm lens at 18 mm, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/18, 1/80s.



JOHN A. ARES

grab a diver's fin. The sea lion in Photo 6 was highlighted by the sun as it descended toward John.

While John and Anita were diving in the Maldives, the formation of the crescent-tail bigeyes kept changing (Photo 7). The fish formed a line, or split into two, and everything in between.

Photographing divers

In addition to marine life,

John likes to photograph divers. The three divers in Photo 8 create a strange, magical feeling, knowing that you will be ascending to the surface near the line.

In Photo 9, John shot through a torpedo hole inside the inverted *Hoyo Maru* wreck in Truk Lagoon. Anita and the dive guide in the background were suspended perfectly in mid-water, outside the wreck.

John was photographing the bigeyes when he realized that Anita was nearby, so he included her in the shot (Photo 10). He had to spread the strobes away from the center of the school, so the light did not bounce directly back into the camera, over-exposing the image.

Conclusion

While reef photography can create wonderful images,

Photo 8. (right) Diver and crescent-tail bigeyes, Maldives. Gear: Canon Rebel SL1 camera, Canon 10-17mm lens at 17mm, Ikelite housing, two Ikelite DS161 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/11, 1/200s.

Photo 9. (above) Divers on the *Hoyo Maru* wreck, Truk Lagoon. Gear: Canon Rebel 10D camera, Canon 50mm lens, Ikelite housing, available light. Exposure: ISO 200, f/7.1, 1/160s.



JOHN A. ARES



Photo 10. Three divers, Saba. Gear: Nikonos 5 camera, Nikonos 20mm lens, available light. Exposure: ISO 400, f/11, 1/125s.

blue water photography has the advantage of providing a simple background that highlights the marine

life or the diver that is being photographed. The choice depends on the photographer's objective. ■

To see more of the photographers' images, please visit Anita George-Ares' Facebook page at

facebook.com/profile.php?id=100016947967639 and John A. Ares' website at JohnAres.com.



MALAYSIA'S ANNUAL UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

MALAYSIA'S PREMIER UNDERWATER PHOTOGRAPHY SHOWDOWN LENS BEYOND OCEAN -

15TH
ANNIVERSARY EDITION
2026



Register Now:
<https://lensbeyondocean.mide.com.my>

Deadline for Entries:
5 MAY 2026
PARTICIPATE NOW!

15 Years of Capturing the Deep!

Join us in celebrating 15 years of underwater artistry and ocean storytelling. Showcase your best shots — from vibrant marine life to mesmerizing seascapes — and be part of Malaysia's most prestigious underwater photography competition.

Prizes Worth Making a Splash for!

Win dream dive trips to top Asian destinations, cutting-edge dive gear, and the latest gadgets for ocean explorers.

