



Photo 3. Diver and giant manta (left). Exposure: ISO 320, f/8, fl 10mm, 1/100s; Photo 4. Giant manta and diver (above). Exposure: ISO 100, f/14, fl 10mm, 1/125s



Photo 1. Great white shark (above). Exposure: ISO 320, f/8, fl 16mm, 1/125s; Photo 2. On the wall—a whitetip shark (right). Exposure: ISO 200, f/8, fl 12mm, 1/100s. All images were taken with a Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z330 strobes.



Scale Matters

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

When I give my “Shark Behavior and Identification” lecture, it does not matter where in the world, or to which group I am giving it to, someone in the audience will shout, “That great white shark is huge!” or “I have never seen one so big!” In Photo 1, you can clearly see why.

This beautiful great white shark truly looks gargantuan and of epic proportion. The divers in the cage are dwarfed. And that is exactly the point. If you want to emphasize size, you need to include a size reference in the photo. It is also fun to play with the size reference to create an effect like this.

In this photo, the divers in the cage are 30ft behind the sharply focused and light-bathed great white shark. Let’s look at a few more examples.

In Photo 2, the whitetip reef shark looks large, but not of epic proportion. I was originally taking this photo of the diver to show the steep and deep drop-off of the wall at Roca Partida, when this whitetip reef shark photobombed the photo. It clearly added to the beauty of the scene and emphasized the grandeur of the wall, as well as supplied an element of 3D to the photo. It does look larger than its 6ft length, swimming 10ft closer to me, and becomes part of the photo—not “the photo,” as we saw with the great white shark.

Shooting up from below, with the

diver reaching up, almost as if she is touching this beautiful giant manta ray, diminishes the actual size and importance of the manta in Photo 3. The giant manta appears to have a four-foot wingspan, compared to the size of the diver, and appears to be casually passing above the diver. This would be considered a dramatic photo if it was about the diver and not the manta.

In Photo 4, again shooting up, the diver is viewed immediately beneath a giant manta ray. The proximity of the diver and the ray places the scale in proper perspective, allowing the viewer to appreciate the majesty of this giant manta with its 18ft wingspan. This proximity permits the viewer to properly judge scale by properly using the

diver as a size reference. This photo emphasizes the very real connection between the diver and the giant manta ray.

“Scale matters.” To prove this point, let’s look at Photos 3 and 4. The viewer might assume that these are two different giant manta rays, one being relatively small, and the other a more typical giant. Look again. Now, observe the identifying markings on the underside of the manta in each image. The ventral markings are identical. It is the same magnificent giant manta ray in each photo.

Supplying the scale in these examples, with a diver and positioning, allowed me to completely alter the

viewer’s interpretation and enjoyment of each of these photos. Visit: garyrosephotos.com