

# feature

All photos were taken with a Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing and Inon Z-330 strobes.

Photo 1. (right) Lionfish on reef, Saba. A beginner's mistake: no clear and defined subject, and poor lighting. Exposure: ISO 100, f/8, 1/100s, FL 17



Photo 2. (left) Coral head in shallow water, Bahamas. The coral head, with its brilliant color, is the subject. Exposure: ISO 200, f/14, 1/125s, FL 10

Photo 3. (below) Hanging elkhorn coral, Bahamas. The elkhorn coral is sharply focused, and the diver is in focus, giving the viewer a sense of floating on the wall. Exposure: ISO 200, f/18, 1/160s, FL 17

## Define Your Subject

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

Many first-time and beginner underwater photographers shoot their initial photographs of “all-encompassing” seascapes. They then progress to taking photos of individual fish. With a little time, they learn that the deeper they go, there is an inverse proportion to the amount of sunlight that penetrates to the depths with an accompanying loss of the warm colors—yellow, orange and red. It is at about this time in their photographic skills development, that they learn to focus on, highlight and define the subject(s) being photographed.

Photo 1 is an example of a poorly planned seascape with a lionfish. My intention was to capture the subject (the lionfish) in its habitat. However, the lighting highlighted an excessive amount of the surrounding coral, which distracts from the subject. Then, the viewer's eye is strongly drawn to the towering sponges in the background. The lionfish is lost in all of the surrounding clutter. It would have been much more effective to capture the lionfish from the side, creating negative space behind it, which would then have separated it from all of the surrounding jumble and distractors.

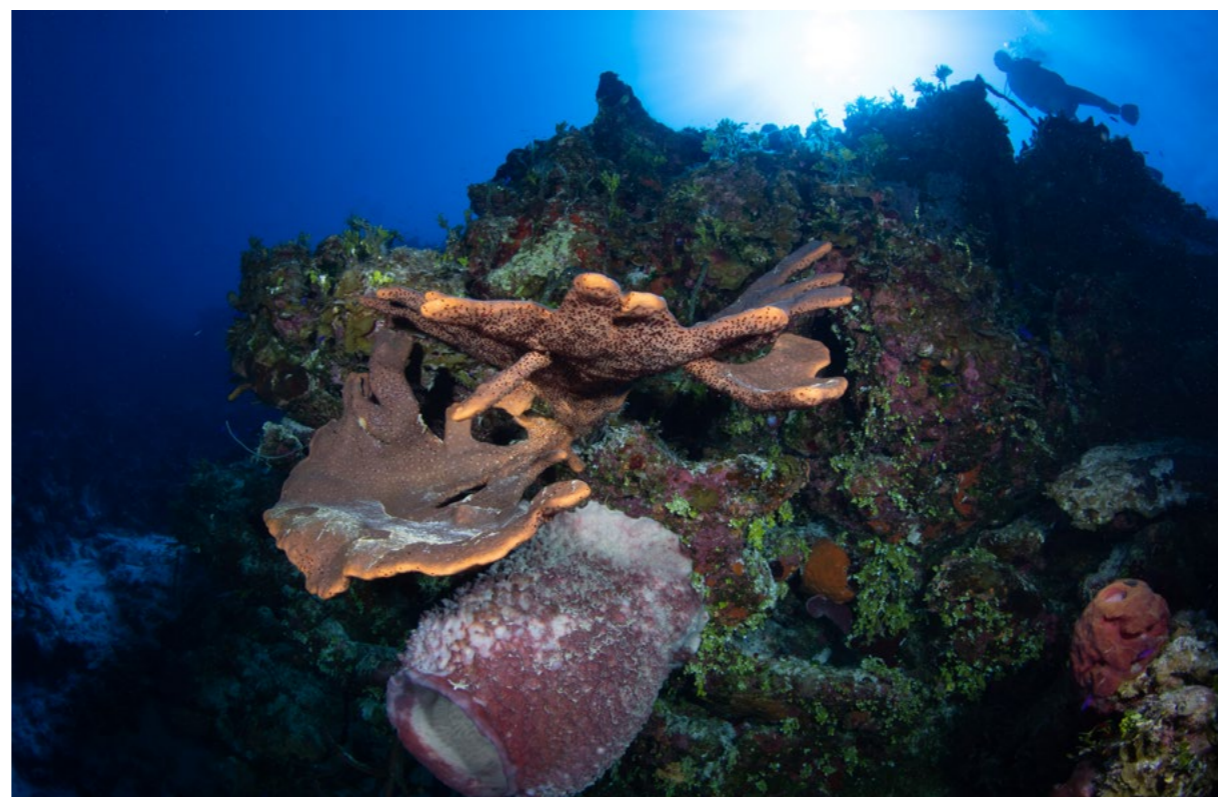
At first glance, the multiple hues

Photo 4. (right) Elkhorn coral and barrel sponge, Bahamas. The elkhorn coral is in high resolution, as the rest fades with distance, giving a startling 3D appearance. Exposure: ISO 200, f/18, 1/160s, FL 10

of the tropical blue sea in Photo 2 create a beautiful negative background space, which highlights the alluring colors and topography of this gorgeous coral formation. The entire coral head is in sharp focus. The muted focus of the background corals emphasizes the texture and tranquil colors of the coral head. I often include a diver (lower left background) in my photos to create depth of field and human interest.

The very large elkhorn coral, which is the featured subject of Photo 3, is suspended from a hanging ledge on a very deep wall. This creates suspense, adds drama, and with the addition of the diver, the dark blues and plunging wall in the background, the viewer is given the feeling of being suspended in the water, floating within the current as it sweeps by the wall.

On the other hand, the very sharp resolution of the elkhorn coral in Photo 4, the adjoining and muted

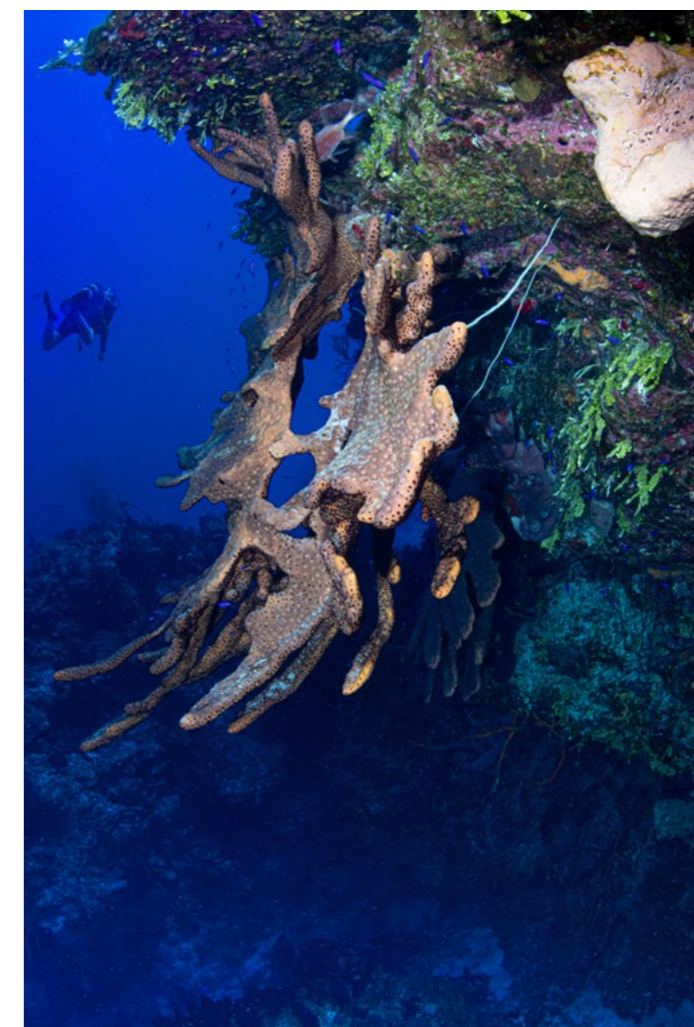


giant barrel sponge, the wall soaring up and extending to the diver (upper right corner), and the very bright sunburst, all work together to create a very startling 3D effect. This is especially apparent when this photo is viewed on a wall in a gallery, from a few feet away.

Photos 3 and 4 were shot within a few minutes of each other, at dif-

ferent angles, at the same location, on a deep descending wall. Most of the same elements are included in both compositions and are wonderful examples that enable a comparison of how different viewing perspectives can completely change the flavor of a photograph.

It is imperative that underwater photographers always think about



and define what it is that they are shooting. Once the subject is determined, then the creativity and art begin. Visit: [garyrosephotos.com](http://garyrosephotos.com)

