Photo 1. (top left) A seaweed blenny displays a beautiful crown and luminous color. Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Nikkor 85mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z-330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/22, 1/125s, FL 85.

Photo 2. (above) This seahorse extravagantly displays a crown and body adornments. Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Nikkor 85mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z-330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/22, 1/125s, FL 85.

Photo 3. (left) Close encounter with a great white shark. She proudly displays her battle wounds, which sparkle in the bright morning light. Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z-330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 200, f/9, 1/125s, FL 17. Photo 4. (above) A rare very closeup encounter with a gray whale. Her eye in the center is festooned with barnacle scars and dappled light. Gear: Nikon D500 camera, Tokina 10-17mm lens, Nauticam housing, Inon Z-330 strobes. Exposure: ISO 100, f/8, 1/160s, FL 17.

Crowns and Rostrums

Text and photos by Gary Rose, MD

When I go diving, I almost always have an objective. Sometimes, I dive to catch a few live lobsters or spear a fish for dinner. On other days, I dive to penetrate one of the hundreds of shipwrecks off the Florida coast. My greatest diving pleasure comes when I bring my camera in search of large oceanic wildlife. It is a great challenge to be able to catch the mood of these majestic oceanic creatures, as well as translate my feelings and what I was thinking when I "captured the moment." I also greatly enjoy slowing down, really slowing down, to photograph small oceanic creatures with my macro lens. Over the decades of my diving experience, I have noticed that a great number of the denizens of "the deep," large and small, like to show off and stand out with all sorts of ornaments—genetic or "earned."

In Photo 1, this beautiful seaweed blenny was poking its head out of a small hole in the coral. By concentrating my camera's focus on the eyes, head filaments, and the bokeh effect (out-of-focus) of the remainder of the photo, the viewer cannot help but appreciate the beauty and elegance of this tiny, 2-inch (5cm) sea dweller.

Similarly, in Photo 2, by focusing on the eye and snout of the seahorse and deliberately blurring the rest of the image (with a bokeh effect), the beautiful coronet (crown) is more clearly displayed. I greatly appreciate the beauty and detail of the branching coronal filaments that extend along the entire dorsum (top) of the body. Viewers drawn to detail cannot help but love the highlighted luminous and sparkling markings on the snout around the eye and on the tail.

I particularly enjoy photographing large ocean animals. One of my favorites to photographically capture is the great white shark. I was completely fascinated by the beautiful 15ft (4.5m) female in Photo 3 as she approached me directly head-on. What particularly grabbed my attention was the elaborate network of battle scars on the frontal tip (rostrum) and the top of her snout, where the sunlight danced and twirled, creating the appearance of a golden jeweled crown.

The other large ocean animals that I love to photograph are whales. Photo 4 involved a particularly close encounter with a large female gray whale. I was completely mesmerized by her eye as she studied me. The play of light on her rostrum (head region) highlighted her barnacle scars. The beautifully patterned light appeared to disappear into and be absorbed by the irregular line of her mouth that visibly extends forward from her eye (downward in this photo). I have often wondered what she was thinking as she gazed upon me.

Whether tiny, small, large or gargantuan, oceanic creatures display many varieties of ornamental beauty. It requires observational skills and great patience to photographically "capture the moment" and optimally display such natural wonders in all their magnificence. Visit: **garyrosephotos.com**