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Golden Emperor 2



Golden Emperor 1



South Moon



Photo: Simon Rogerson

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Front cover image: Simon Rogerson



Issue 5 March - April '10



Letter from the Editor

Certain things in life will almost always come back to haunt you – it's the law of the universe. Call it karma if you like, but there is no denying its existence when it comes to particular things. Take extreme smugness for instance. If you, like some of us lucky souls, live in permanent sunshine with the tropical coral reefs of the Red Sea and breathtaking desert on your doorstep, I challenge you not to succumb to its seductive force.

I confess I have had my moments. My Facebook status updates since moving to the Red Sea have been littered with manta ray, hammerhead, sailfish, whale shark, turtle and just loving-outdoor-life smugness. Although...ah hem...I like to call it more of a celebration of life...cough, cough. I'm sure my Facebook friends, including those who have deleted me, agree.

But when I and others (yes, you know who you all are), started talking about warmth and sunshine when Europe was digging its way out of the snow, did anyone else notice that the heavens suddenly opened on the desert and we experienced the worst rainfall in 14 years?! Okay, okay, maybe it was just a coincidence...

But let's put this editor's mad theories to one side for now. When this rare flood hit, another characteristic of this community really shone through. The event showed just how much concern people living in the Red Sea have for each other and the environment around. No one had to deal with the weather destruction alone. There was always a ready and willing hand to help.

The Red Sea's watersports community has a passion for its environment, there is no doubt. Clean-ups, conservation volunteer schemes, surveys, petitions, just scan all of **BLUE's** news pages and Green Team features over the last five issues and you will see the evidence.

Let's face it. Without the protection of our environment, we would never even have the chance to be half as smug. Take a look at all the unusual big underwater animal encounters this year already (see news page 17). All the signals are pointing to this being another top year for spectacular marine life.

So, maybe the sightings are evidence of good karma? Mother nature's rewards? Well, who knows...I've probably inhaled too much nitrogen or drank too much Spanish wine at the dive show with my tapas-obsessed colleague (**BLUE's** designer).

What we do know for certain is that spring has sprung - the time of the year when nature likes to party. So why not come and join us here in the Red Sea? And I challenge you to resist being (even just a little) smug after your diving or watersports holiday.

Happy diving

Charlotte

Charlotte Boan
Editor, **BLUE**



Letter from the Chairman...

Dear readers.

CDWS has travelled to four different countries in the last few months, with dive shows held in France, Germany, Russia and now in the UK in 2010. I look forward to seeing many of you over the two-day London International Dive Show event in the Red Sea Zone, where CDWS members will be sharing their knowledge and best holiday deals centred on Red Sea diving. Don't forget to take your free copy of BLUE magazine with you.

A big topic for debate across many of these shows has been the environment and what role CDWS is playing in protecting the fragile eco-system of the Red Sea. I am pleased to announce that following a financial agreement with the Ministry of Tourism, we are in a position to recruit a division to specifically work in this area and help us to more easily identify and tackle problems.

One of the biggest environmental problems is clearly identified as illegal fishing, particularly in marine zones, which are supposed to be protected. This is an issue the CDWS continues to be heavily involved in highlighting. In December 2008 the CDWS organised the first-ever illegal fishing conference, which was also the first time we saw the Governor of South Sinai, the Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Agriculture, Egyptian Fisheries Agency, the Deputy Minister of the Environment, the head of South Sinai Parks, HEPCA, SSDM, Fisherman Association and the Oceanographic Institute together to discuss this problem and bring the facts to the table. Another conference was then held in May 2009 in Hurghada. CDWS also invited 18 Egyptian journalists to the Red Sea in an effort to raise awareness across the country.

However, there is yet to be any significant changes to the law to deal with illegal fishing. We need to keep this issue at the forefront of the government's mind, which is why we will be announcing a campaign asking for visitors to Egypt to bring to our attention any violations of the fishing laws. We want visitors to take pictures, record the time place and location and send this evidence to us. The CDWS will then send these violation reports to the relevant ministers to show this is a widespread problem and must be stopped to prevent destruction to fish stocks and coral reefs.

Once launched, we hope each and every one of you who feels as passionately about the incredible and beautiful marine environment of the Red Sea as we do, will join us in the campaign to bring illegal fishing to the attention of the political decision makers.

The CDWS and all its members continue to strive to make the watersports and diving industry in the Red Sea one of the safest and most environmentally responsible. I would like to thank all those who support these on-going efforts.

Hesham Gabr
Chairman of the Chamber of Diving and Watersports

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Tom Osborn

Underwater videographer, Tom Osborn, learned to dive in the waters of Sharm el Sheikh at the age of 16 while on a family holiday. A few years later he completed his instructor course and was teaching others in the Camel Dive Club pool, where he himself took his first scuba breaths. For the past two years, he has focused on videography; from shooting tourist videos to providing footage for media such as National Geographic Digital Motion and Night and Day Production Audiovisual. Although only 24 years of age, the British diver has dived in a range of places including Scotland, The Cayman Islands, Thailand and Sipidan, Malaysia. He has also trained to be a technical diver. In Red Sea Careers, we get the low-down from Tom on life as an underwater videographer and what it takes to be successful in such a challenging and unpredictable career, page 28-30.



Maria Munn

Maria Munn, 38, has established herself as one of the leading teachers of underwater compact camera photography, particularly in the UK, where she is based. She offers her skills and tips on wide-angle photography with compacts on pages 42 - 43. This year BLUE's Class Shot columnist has seen many of her former students pick up prestigious awards, including three Sport Diver magazine 'photo of the month' wins and the 'best beginner award' from the British Society of Underwater Photographers. Two others have had their work published in magazines - a great endorsement for her new book Underwater Photography for Beginners. However, in 2010, she says she would like to devote more time to her other passions: conservation and charity work and plans to travel to Latin America to volunteer on various projects.



The Red Sea just got a whole lot better!

Exclusive Itinerary: Exploring the Sudanese famous dive sites up to Eritrean borders from Port Ghalib - Egypt and back in a two week trip.



Tracking device law

All safari boats operating at the Brothers Islands or any remote site further south must carry a diver-tracking system on board by law as from July 2010. The Egyptian Minister of Tourism issued the decree following recommendations put forward by the CDWS in a bid to help prevent cases of lost divers in remote and current exposed areas, such as the southern-most dive sites.

Such systems are already being used by some safari boat operators in remote areas as an extra safety measure to prevent problems of missing divers at the surface. Remote areas are currently defined by the CDWS as the Brothers Islands and any site further south.

All safari boat operators have now been given until the end of June 2010 to implement the new system. Any tracking device that meets the following criteria is approved under the new law:

- Those approved by the NTRA (National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority): www.ntra.gov.eg
- Those tested and approved by CDWS

To date only the SeaSafe system has completed the approval process, with two other products currently undergoing a series of tests. The results of the latest approvals will be announced to CDWS members once completed.

The SeaSafe system is tested to accurately pinpoint a diver who is lost within an 18km radius of the boat. All divers wear a transmitter on their arm, with which they can also activate an alarm to signal a diver in distress.



photo: Emperor Divers

Ship owner fined for reef smash

The owners of the cargo ship that smashed into Woodhouse Reef off the Strait of Tiran have been ordered to pay up to five million US Dollars by the Egyptian government for damages to the environment.

The 260m-long CSCL Hamburg collided with the north side of the popular diving reef on 31 December 2009.

There were no injuries or leakage from the Hong Kong flagged vessel, but the South Sinai National Park office said significant damage had been caused to the reef.

Director of the South Sinai National Parks office, Dr Mohammed Salem told BLUE: 'The damaged area is almost 700m-square because of the slope. To 35m there is 100 per cent damage, which we estimate will take around 100 years to recover. Between 35m and 40m the coral community at this depth is not so dense, with an almost entirely sandy bottom.'

The ship remained stuck on the reef for nine days, while damage to its hull was repaired. Once repairs were complete, the CSCL Hamburg was able to make its way to the Gulf of Suez with its cargo. It was then impounded by Egyptian maritime authorities.

According to reports, just prior to the collision, the ship received a warning from the navigation centre north of Ras Nasrani. It was veering off-course, approximately 1,200m from the shipping lane.

'With GPS and all the navigation systems on board such vessels, this shouldn't be happening,' Dr Salem added. 'Thousands of ships pass through this area each year without incident. It looks like the ship changed course 2,000m before it should have done, leading to the collision.'

Underwater videographer Tom Osborn filmed footage of the damaged reef following the collision. He said: 'The entire reef in the area of the collision has been destroyed. It resembles a chalk quarry with fresh white lumps of rock scattered everywhere. At 35m you can clearly see a large slab of reef plate that used to be near the surface.'

The fine will supplement funding for environmental projects run by the government throughout Egypt.



MoT licence extensions



CDWS dive centres renewing their annual Ministry of Tourism (MoT) operating licence may be eligible to extend the licence period for as long as three years, following the issue of a new government decree. The decree was issued to try to reduce the paperwork that has to be completed by existing ISO-certified CDWS members.

The three-year licence is only available to dive centres that have renewed their ISO certification and meet with all of the following requirements:

1. The technical validity certificate is valid for the required period.
2. CDWS membership fee is paid for the required period
3. The premises rental/right of use contract is valid for the required period

For those not eligible, such as new dive centres, safari boats or watersports centres, a one-year licence will still be issued once compliant with all the current requirements.

High-speed diving



Red Sea Diving College says RIB trips to the Strait of Tiran and Ras Mohammed are proving extremely popular with its diving guests. The Sharm-based centre said the 8.5m-long Valiant RIB takes guests to world-class sites, such as Shark and Yolanda Reef and Jackson Reef, in as little as 15 minutes. The 8.5m RIB, owned and chartered by Sinai Yacht Charters, has twin 150hp engines, enabling top speeds of up to 40 knots and cruising speed of 25 knots. For more information, see Red Sea Diving College website: www.redseacollege.com.



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Multi-million EU fund for marine parks

The South Sinai National Park has received 5.3 million Euros from the European Union which will fund patrol boats to monitor areas around Dahab, Taba and Nuweiba as well as install new moorings. The multi-million Euro grant will pay for five new boats and allow the park to employ more wardens.

One large boat will be used for research and mooring installations, while five smaller speed boats will be operating between Taba and Sharm el Sheikh to help monitor areas facing threats such as illegal fishing. Park authorities have already met with the South Sinai Governor to put forward proposals, such as a ban on net fishing along the entire coast and measures to stop the use of destructive fishing techniques.

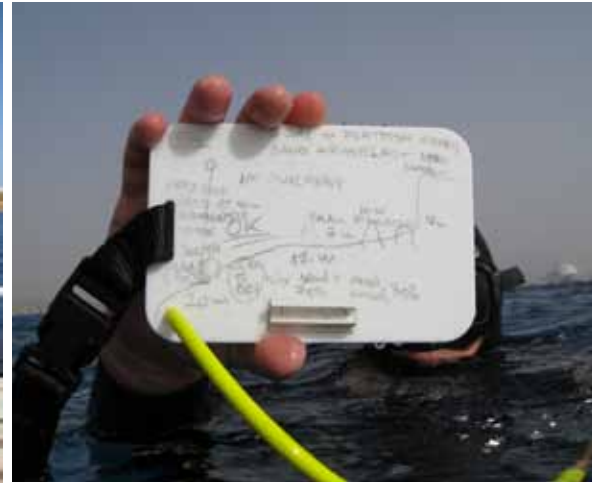
'We've been trying to move further north from Sharm for at least five years and the new funds will allow us to do this,' said South Sinai National Park director, Dr Mohammed Salem.

Established in 1983, the South Sinai National Park protects and manages the natural marine resources around the Sinai, covering areas in the Gulf of Aqaba from Ras Mohammed in the south to Taba. From its inception it received funding from the EU for training and equipment. However, this funding scheme ended in 2003/04.

The Egyptian government took over and the park received what it needed to pay salaries, buy equipment and cover general running costs. The new boost in funding will now enable it to expand its projects further afield.

The park has already installed ten new moorings in Dahab, including the Um Sid and Islands dive site. More moorings will be installed following the purchase of the new vessels.

'A letter of complaint was sent to governor of the South Sinai about the lack of moorings,' said Dr Salem. 'The letter was then sent to me. The plan is to eventually install 13 moorings, but we started with ten in December. We are also looking at installations in Taba and Nuweiba, which should help to ease pressure on the coral reefs in these areas.'



New sites open in Ras Mohammed

Nine new dives sites are being opened within the Ras Mohammed National Park, as part of a phased plan to ease pressure on local sites in Sharm el Sheikh. The move to open more sites suitable for training and introductory dives is the first part of a project which will see the closure of well-known areas such as Ras Katy to divers.

Ras Katy is an area popular for training dives, however, increased surface traffic in the area, most notably glass bottom boats, has led to safety fears for divers. The CDWS and Ras Mohammed National Park have insisted any moves to close Ras Katy to divers between the hours of 10am and 5pm will only be announced once the new sites have been installed with all moorings.

The new sheltered sites, located over a 2km area between Travco Marina and Marsa Ghozlani dive site will each have three moorings and in total will accommodate up to 30 boats. The sites were chosen following a detailed survey of the area by the national park and CDWS together with a team of experienced local divers from Sharm-based Camel Dive Club.

the new dive sites will be ideal for teaching



The survey identified the area as ideal for training and introductory dives as it comprises sloping sandy patches peppered with healthy coral pinnacles, table corals, soft corals and rocky sections. The area slopes gradually, from depths of 6m to 50m and is generally sheltered from the wind.

Dive instructors Francesco Germi, Deniz Aymer and Sven Kreische recorded a variety of marine life over the three-day survey, including eagle rays, emperorfish, glassfish, blue-spotted stingrays, jackfish, moray eels and barracuda.

Dr Mohammed Salem, director of National Park South Sinai Protectorates said: 'This move will help the environment by taking pressure of places, such as Ras Katy and Temple. They [new sites] are sandy, safe and have attractive coral heads.'

Proposals for closures include 10am to 5pm diver exclusion at Ras Katy in the summer months and 10am to 4pm in the winter. Safari boats will still be permitted to conduct early morning dives and night dives outside of these hours.

Near Garden is another site which may be open only to watersports and not divers. Plans are yet to be finalised and all CDWS members will be informed once these have been officially agreed to by authorities

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Nuweiba power plant plans scrapped

Photo: Scuba College, Nuweiba



A community-led campaign in the popular diving Sinai resort of Nuweiba is being hailed a success after plans to construct a 105,000 square-metre power plant, which conservationists said would have caused untold damage on the environment, were scrapped. Early last year, the Egyptian Electricity Holding Company put forward the proposal to build a power plant, complete with 80m-high 750Mw gas-powered turbines, in the centre of Nuweiba.

Divers and marine conservationists throughout the world signed a petition calling a halt to the plans and backed up the campaign started by businesses, dive centres and Bedouin communities in Nuweiba. Egyptian non-government campaign group the Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA) also commissioned a group of experts to examine the situation in April 2009.

HEPCA's report concluded that the plant would have needed to consume 1.3 million cubic meters of water from the sea per day to function. This water would then have been pumped back at higher temperatures, as much as 9°C warmer. Such a radical temperature hike would have had a devastating impact on the coral reefs in the area, many of which lie within marine protected zones.

Prospective investors including the African Development Bank and European Investment Bank have declined funding of the 320 million US Dollars needed for the project. It is thought their decision not to invest was heavily influenced by the campaign calling for plans to be scrapped.

Nuweiba-based CDWS dive centre, African Divers, said it was delighted to hear of the decline in funding for the project, which will almost certainly put a halt to any plans to construct a power plant.

'We are 99 per cent sure the power plant is off, based on the newspaper reports,' African Divers dive centre manager told BLUE. 'We have not had any official correspondence from the bank or the electricity company though, and we are hoping to get this to ensure it is 100 per cent confirmed. But it looks like Nuweiba is safe!

'Nuweiba is one of the most picturesque parts of the whole southern Sinai peninsula, has an excellent and unique tourism potential, is home to two major Sinai Bedouin tribes, and has an almost unique, relatively undisturbed underwater marine life.'

See details of the petition online: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/stop-the-destruction-of-nuweiba-and-its-coral-reefs>

New chamber in Hamata



A new recompression chamber and 24-hour medical facility has opened at the marina in Hamata, located 135km south of Marsa Alam. DECO International opened the chamber in February this year making this the fourth facility of its kind run by the organisation in Egypt.

DECO International also runs chambers in El Gouna, Safaga and Dahab. The newest chamber in Hamata has an onsite ambulance where patients can be transported to El Gouna International Hospital if required.

DECO International offers a number of dive medical related treatment, as well as offering the PADI Recompression Awareness Speciality. For more information, see its website www.deco-international.com.



Emperor Divers teams up with Dive Tribe



Emperor Divers has teamed up with Dive Tribe in El Gouna, expanding its number of dive centres in Egypt.

'Adding to the long-established Emperor dive centres in Hurghada, Marsa Alam, Nuweiba and Sharm el Sheikh, divers now have an even greater choice to dive with Emperor Divers' expertise coupled with the Dive Tribe knowledge of the El Gouna area,' Emperor Divers said.

For more information on diving Emperor El Gouna, email info.reservations@emperordivers.com

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CDWS managing director Zeyad ElBassel on stage at Boot Show, Dusseldorf

CDWS on the road

CDWS members have been travelling together throughout Europe and Russia to showcase the best the Red Sea has to offer divers. The first of the 2010 dive shows was held in Paris, France, in January. It was the first time CDWS had participated in the show, with a Red Sea Zone joined by members Camel Dive Club, Coraya Divers, Nesima Resort and Dive Centre, Sharks Bay Umbi Village and Sea World Diving.

The Salon de la Plongee organisers reported that the weekend event saw the biggest number of visitors in its history.

Regular Red Sea visitors, the French diving public found out about the work of the chamber and its members and took advantage of some of the special holiday show deals on offer. The success has led Salon de la Plongee to invite Egypt to be the country partner for the 2011.

A nine-day event, the Boot show in Dusseldorf, Germany, is one of Europe's leading dive shows. Once again, CDWS promoted the Red Sea and diving in Egypt at the late January show together with a

number of member partners, including Aquarius Dive Club, Camel Dive Club, Coraya Divers, Ilios Dive Club, Nesima Resort, Royal Evolution, Sea Queen Fleet, Sea Serpent Fleet and Sharks Bay Umbi Diving Village. Many other members attended the show and it was a great success, with tens of thousands of visitors passing through the impressive Boot show halls.

CDWS chairman Hesham Gabr and managing director Zeyad M ElBassel met with representatives of the European diving market, as well as journalists, to highlight the work being done by the chamber to raise safety and service standards in the Red Sea.

The Golden Dolphin Show held in Moscow, Russia, in February was certainly the coldest location CDWS members visited. Egypt was the partner country of the four-day 2010 show, where outside, near to the spectacular Kremlin and Red Square, temperatures plummeted as low as minus 11°C. Despite the cold, thousands of dive enthusiasts visited the show, where CDWS members Aquarius Dive Club, Camel Dive Club, Coral Diving Club, Coraya Divers, Flowers of Sinai, Royal Evolution, Sea Serpent Fleet and Sinai Dive Club exhibited in the Red Sea Zone. CDWS chairman Hesham Gabr took to the stage in the opening ceremony as Red Sea sponsor representative. Mr Gabr also took part in a press conference, where he was questioned about the work of the CDWS and the diving industry in Egypt. This sparked

lively debate among the delegates, particularly on diver safety and accident prevention.



Paris



Moscow



Dusseldorf



Salon de la Plongee, Paris



Socialising on the stand at Boot Show, Dusseldorf



Chairman Hesham Gabr (3rd right) taking part in the official opening press conference at Golden Dolphin, Moscow



CDWS chairman Hesham Gabr (3rd Left) with representatives of the Egyptian Tourist Authority at Golden Dolphin, Moscow

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Soma Bay new watersports hotel



The Breakers Diving and Surfing Lodge has opened in the Red Sea resort of Soma Bay. Marketed as a 'watersports lifestyle hotel' the 173-room lodge is situated close to the Orca Dive Club dive centre and house reef.

The Breakers has a waterfront restaurant and bar, roof garden, beachside barbecues and heated swimming pool among its many facilities.

The Breakers Diving and Surfing Lodge general manager, Stefan Reichl, said: 'Here we have some of the best conditions for wind-surfing, diving and kite surfing in the world. The opening of The Breakers means that Soma Bay's many unique attributes will be more accessible than ever before.'

TopShot winners

The winning images of this year's Red Sea themed underwater photographic competition at the Boot show in Germany celebrated the uniqueness and variety of diving in Egypt. Wrecks, dugongs, schooling fish and colourful macro subjects made up the winning combination.

The TopShot competition, run in association with the CDWS, the [Egyptian Tourist Authority](#), [www.Taucher.net](#), [Unterwasser](#) and show organiser [Messe Dusseldorf](#), covered four categories of pictures taken only in the Red Sea, including 'life on the reef', 'diver', 'wreck' and 'macro'.

Judges at Taucher.net selected 25 out of more than 400 images entered, and framed these for display at the nine-day Boot show in Dusseldorf in January, one of the biggest diving events of the year. World renowned underwater photographers, Americans Todd Essick and Helmut Horn, Austrian Wolfgang Pölzer Werner Thiele and Eckhard Krumpholz, Norbert Probst and Udo Kefrig from Germany, picked out the final winners for each category.

At the awards ceremony at the show, CDWS managing director, Zeyad M ELBassel, spoke of the work of the chamber and said how the beauty and variety of the Red Sea features shown in the competition images demonstrated why Egypt was one of the best places in the world to dive. He highlighted the CDWS's commitment to also make the Red Sea one of the safest places for divers through the adoption and implementation of European standards throughout the industry.

The main prizes for the winners were donated by the ETA and CDWS, which included a 'wildcard' entry to a Red Sea photo shoot-out in November with flights, accommodation and diving. Those awarded second place in each category received diving equipment donated by Aqua Lung, Mares and SeacSub. Third placed contestants were given prizes by both Scubapro and SubGear.

More than 2,000 of the 15,000-plus visitors to the photo-exhibition also added their competition comments for judges, grading each of the 25 Red Sea images. As it turned out, these visitor-judges demonstrated a keen eye for photographic knowledge – their scores were a close match to the professionals' final decision.

The judges said the standard of images was extremely high for a non-professional competition and that the winners showed outstanding skills. Thomas Heckman was awarded first place in the 'life of the reef' category with his shot of a dugong feeding in sea grass. A striking image of the wreck of the Giannis D was enough to crown Ivo Vaessen in the wrecks category. Franz Hejek picked up first prize in 'macro' for his blenny shot. The final first place went to Thomas Lueken in the 'diver' category for his shot of a diver in glassfish.

Famous Red Sea residents, such as dolphins and dugongs, featured highly in second and third places in the competition.



Photo: Ivo Vaessen



Photo: Franz Hajek



Photo: Thomas Heckmann



Photo: Thomas Lueken



Photo: Patrick Neumann



Photo: Martin Strmyska

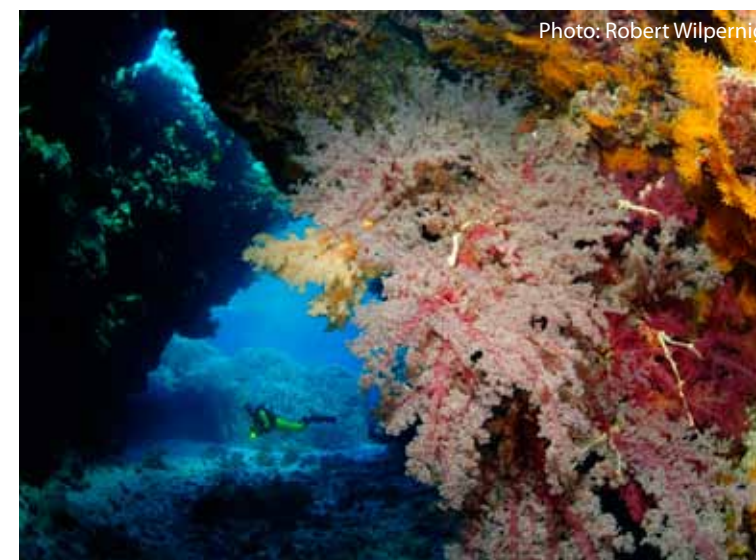


Photo: Robert Wilpernig



Photo: Peter Ryngaert

Winter Wonderland

Stories of big animal encounters throughout the Red Sea traditionally kick off in the spring months, but the 2010 season has started surprisingly early with increasing reports of dolphins, whale sharks, mantas and even dugongs as far north as the Sinai resort of Taba.

In early February this year, talk of the town in Taba was of sightings of the rare and elusive dugong. Andrew Day, general manager of Red Sea Waterworld Taba Heights said the dugong was spotted about 50m from the shore outside the front of the Radisson Blue Hotel.

'The news generated huge excitement,' he said. 'As soon I got the call from Taba Heights, I jumped in the car and drove down there. Although it was only a brief glimpse, you can see [picture shown] that it was definitely a dugong. There was always talk of them being around this area because there is a lot of sea grass. There is a Bedouin camp further south along the coast where one was spotted last year. I have been here six years and seen a lot of turtles in the sea grass, but this was the first dugong I have seen.'

Divers from Nesima Dive Centre in Dahab had a whale of a time in the water in early March when the same shark visited the same group of divers in completely different areas of the Sinai resort within two days. Whale shark sightings this far north are extremely rare, and almost unheard of so early in the season.

Gamal Haline was heading south to Gabr El Bint when the whale shark, estimated to be between 3m and 4m-long, appeared for the first time. 'We saw it very close to the surface and the captain came in close,' said Haline who has been diving in Dahab for 20 years. 'The next day I was diving in the north at the Blue Hole with the same group when the whale shark appeared and swam around us for about 15 minutes underwater. It was definitely the same shark. The guests I was diving with were obviously very happy.'

But that wasn't the final spot. While the story was being recalled to staff based at the dive centre at the seafront in Dahab the afternoon following the Blue Hole sighting, a whale shark fin was seen a few hundreds metres away. Although Nesima's office-based team only caught a brief glimpse of the shark from the surface, it was thought to be the same one.

Elsewhere throughout the Red Sea during 2010, there have been plenty of reports of dolphin pods, manta rays and a variety of sharks cruising by divers. One Camel Dive Club instructor, Jim Potter, who has been diving in the area for nearly ten years said he was couldn't quite believe it when he saw a 5m-wide manta cruising Jackson Reef in Strait of Tiran close to his group of divers in early March this year.



Photo: Red Sea Waterworld



Photo: Reda Juerg Messikh




Director Scorsese sets sail in Sharm

Sinai Yacht Charters said it was thrilled to welcome one of Hollywood's most famous Oscar-winning directors on board its sailing boat for a luxury cruise around Sharm el Sheikh. Martin Scorsese, famous for directing such films as Goodfellas, Casino and The Departed, flew to the Red Sea to take time out from Hollywood chartering the 15m-long luxury catamaran Universe Lagoon on New Year's Eve. 'Martin, his wife Helen, and daughter Francesca enjoyed the peace of true sailing, snorkelling the reefs in the Strait of Tiran, and the hospitality of the yacht's professional crew,' said a spokesperson for Sinai Yacht Charters. www.sinaiyachtcharter.com.

Talking about my Generation


Recently qualified PADI Junior Open Water Diver and Sharm resident, Thomas Johnson, decided to do his bit for the marine environment during his day off school in February. The ten-year-old, who qualified in November last year, buddied up with an instructor from Red Sea Diving College for a dive in Naama Bay to pick up litter from one of Sharm's most popular shore dives. 'I have done about 11 dives, most of them in Naama Bay,' Thomas told BLUE. 'It was mostly plastic bags and a few beer bottles that we picked up. They [clean-ups] are important because they make a better environment. Marine animals, such as turtles can die if they eat plastic bags. I haven't seen a turtle. I don't want them to die because I want to see one.'





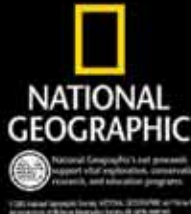

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Liveboards lost in dry dock fire

Popular Red Sea liveboards including MY Typhoon, MY Hyatt and Sweet Dream have been destroyed by fire while undergoing routine maintenance in dry dock in the Suez. No-one was injured in the 30 January blaze, which is believed to have started on MY Typhoon before spreading to other vessels in strong winds.

Firefighters tried to control the fires during fierce winds caused by recent storms across the Red Sea; however, they were unable to rescue three of the boats. MY VIP One also caught fire, however, was not completely destroyed.

The authorities are still investigating the exact cause of the blaze, but preliminary reports indicate that the first started in the dry dock electricity wiring to MY Typhoon. As a boating incident, the investigation has to be carried out by the Egyptian Maritime Authority.

The operators of the liveboards, all CDWS members, are currently planning alternative arrangements for diving guests booked on these boats throughout 2010. A spokesman for Red Sea Diving College, which operates MY VIP One, said the vessel is expected to be repaired and back in the water by summer.

'Although VIP One was affected by the fire fortunately the damage is limited compared to the other boats,' he said. 'We will not be absent from the 2010 liveboard scene.'

In a statement, Tornado Marine Fleet, which operates Typhoon, said: 'Typhoon has given many happy memories to clients and staff alike and will be missed within the fleet. Plans are already in process to expand the fleet once again and we hope we will be announcing a new arrival in the near future.'

Passing on his message of support to members affected by the blaze, CDWS managing director Zeyad M ElBassel said: 'Thankfully no person was injured. These safari boats, all CDWS members, have been operating for many years and it is sad that they will no longer be welcoming divers to the Red Sea and showing the best that these waters have to offer.'

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Red Sea winners

Red Sea dive centres and safari boats have been highly rated in two major magazine awards in Europe. In the UK, the Red Sea was awarded Destination of the Year once again by the readers of Diver magazine.

'The popularity of Egypt with Diver readers reflects its convenient proximity, its good value for money, the hospitality of its people and the high quality of its diving in terms of both wrecks and reefs,' said Diver.

For the fourth year running, Sharm el Sheikh-based Red Sea Diving College (www.redseacollege.com) won the Dive Centre of the Year award after receiving the most votes of Diver readers. The competition was dominated by CDWS centres in Sharm, with Ocean College taking second place and Camel Dive Club coming in third.

thank everybody who voted for us.'

Marsa Alam-based Coraya Divers (www.corya-divers.com) was named Best Red Sea Dive centre by leading German magazine Tauchen during a lavish awards ceremony held in Dusseldorf, Germany during the nine-day Boot Show. Coraya Divers chairman Hans Heinz Dilthey collected the award.

Winning the overall Tauchen magazine Best Liveboard award was MY Longimanus (www.barakuda-diving.com), also based in Marsa Alam.

Red Sea College said: 'It [the award] is a tribute to the hard work, dedication and passion of all our staff, as well as a reflection on the continued support of our guests, with not only their votes but also the enthusiasm they bring to us with each visit. The Red Sea Diving College would like to

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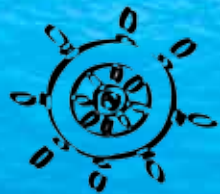
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Sea Queen Fleet

Photo: Simon Rogerson

Win a liveaboard trip for two worth 700 Euros

BLUE has teamed up with Sharm el Sheikh based liveaboard operator **Sea Queen Fleet** to offer a lucky reader a three or four day safari to the Northern Red Sea sites of Ras Mohammed and Tiran or the wrecks of the Suez.

The prize, worth around 350 Euros, includes accommodation in a fully air-conditioned double cabin, all dives (up to three in the day and one night dive), cylinders, weights, dive guide, full board meal plan, plus soft drinks. Subject to availability, prize winners can choose the safari on board either Sea Queen 1, South Moon or Golden Emperor 1.

For more details about the Sea Queen liveaboard fleet see its website www.seaqueens.com/our-fleet.html.

To enter: simply visit www.seaqueens.com and tell us the answer to this simple question: What's the length of Sea Queen Fleet boat Golden Emperor I?

Send your answer by email to blue@cdws.travel

Closing date: 30 April 2010

**prize does not include flights, Ras Mohammed National Park entry fees, dive equipment or tips for the crew.*



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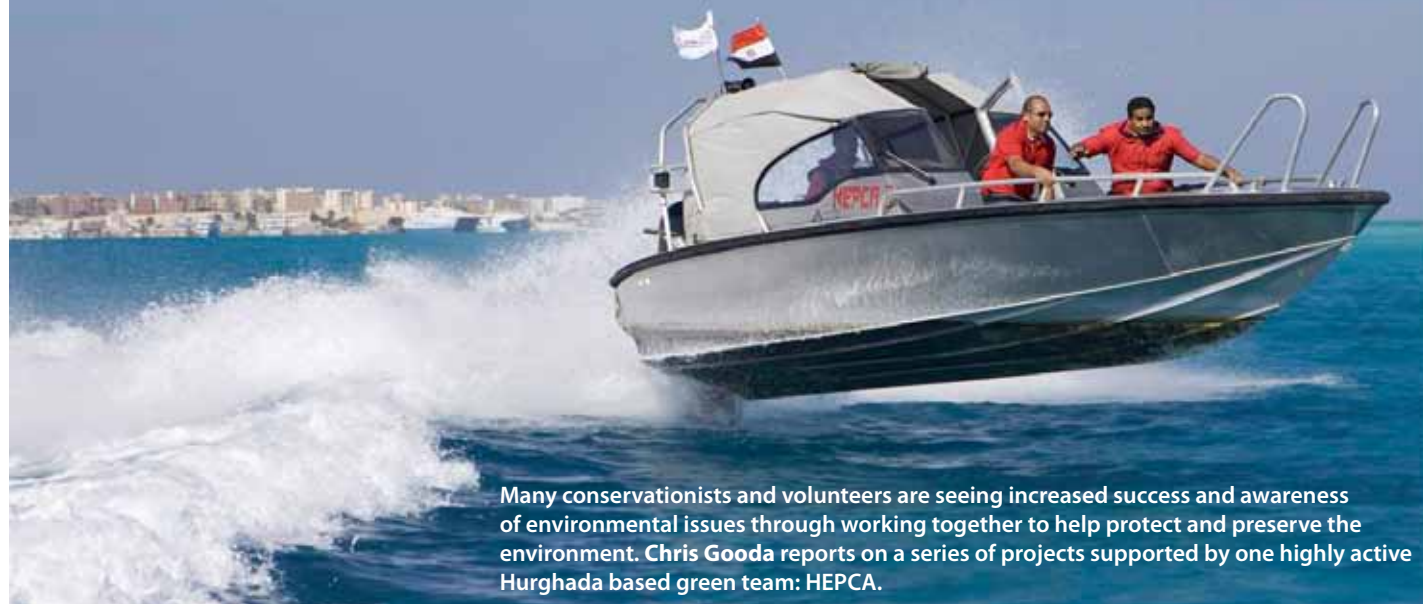
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Working together for a greener Red Sea



Many conservationists and volunteers are seeing increased success and awareness of environmental issues through working together to help protect and preserve the environment. Chris Gooda reports on a series of projects supported by one highly active Hurghada based green team: HEPCA.

HEPCA (Hurghada Environment Protection and Conservation Association) is well known for its conservation initiatives across the entire Red Sea. Since its conception in 1992 the NGO has successfully lobbied and initiated a huge range of projects both on and offshore including permanent moorings in Hurghada, Aqaba and Wadi Gamal; the protection of Sha'ab Samadai and Marsa Abu Dabab; the banning of plastic bags in the Red Sea Governorate; the creation of 800 health clinics at schools in underprivileged areas across Egypt, and helping to stop power plant and oil rig projects being built that would have had a disastrous impact on the Red Sea ecosystem.

Following great success in the southern Red Sea, HEPCA has now secured the contract to manage solid waste in the Hadaba area of Hurghada. HEPCA estimates that 9,000 tonnes of waste has accumulated in the area and this will be cleared during the next month. Also, each building within the area will be provided with a waste bin which will be regularly emptied to stop the problem recurring. Chris Jansen, a resident of Hadaba, spotted workers outside his new villa. 'I'd heard about the plans,' says Jansen 'but was amazed and delighted to see a huge team of people with diggers and trucks clearing away years worth of waste that had accumulated in front of my house.'

Alongside these highly visible projects HEPCA has been working hard to secure funds and promote a variety of research initiatives since 2008. Amr Ali, Managing Director of HEPCA, believes that tangible scientific results are key to conservation. These can provide valuable evidence to justify the creation of marine reserves and conservation areas in essential areas such as breeding grounds. They also provide opportunities to confront 'mercenary scientists' employed by corporations to justify environmentally unsound projects.

Last year, in conjunction with IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and Kuoni Travel, scientists were tasked with researching the consequences of climate change on coral reefs and to suggest practical measures to reduce its impact. Working with local tour operators HEPCA set out to undertake three tasks:

- Assess the vulnerability of the tourism industry to climate change
- Train and empower local capacity to monitor and manage coral reefs in the face of climate change
- Undertake an environmental education and public awareness campaign addressing the impacts of anthropogenic activities on marine habitats

In January this year the first findings from the project 'Responding to Climate Change in the Red Sea' were published (available online at <http://hepca.com/newsletter/jan2010/iucn-report.pdf>). These were the result of detailed interviews with many dive tourists and operators in the Egyptian Red Sea. Visitors placed significant importance on environmental quality and sustainability of tour operators.

This research can help the Red Sea tourism industry to understand its vulnerability to climate change and the importance that its customers place on environmental issues. Through early awareness and pro-active planning the tourism industry in the Red Sea can attempt to minimise its impact and capitalise on any opportunities presented by climate change.

The next phase of HEPCA's scientific work involves two new initiatives initiated in conjunction with the Italian Egyptian Department for Development Swap Program. The first is the launching of "Red Sea



Defender", formerly the liveaboard Tala. This 37m-long steel hulled vessel has been renamed and will be refitted with sampling equipment, wet and dry laboratories and advanced IT capabilities.

The research vessel will be used as a base for field trips, education and outreach programmes throughout the Red Sea. It will be utilised for undergraduate and postgraduate education and research, marine biology courses and training, as well as local community training schemes for conservation and tourism related roles. HEPCA describes it as a 'classroom without walls' and plan to host scientists and researchers from all over the world.

Several educational outreach programmes are already being developed to utilise the new vessel's capabilities. These include an intensive one week course for university students covering the geology, oceanography, taxonomy of marine species, ecology of marine habitats and threats to the Red Sea environment; a programme for schools offering students the opportunity to experience first-hand aspects of research conservation and diving operations and, for researchers, the opportunity to take part in a wide range of sensitive species monitoring and data collection to be used for management and protection of key species.

Its first challenge will be the first marine mammal survey. This will chronicle marine mammals between Marsa Alam and the Sudan border using hydrophones and ROVs. It's planned that the survey will be



HEPCA
CARING FOR THE RED SEA

repeated every six months to uncover trends and patterns in location and behaviour.

Red Sea Defender will be a component part of the second major initiative: The

HEPCA Research Centre, which will be built on the coast at Abu Dabab during 2010.

Independent researcher Dr Elke Bojanowski, who runs the Longimanus Project (www.longimanus.info), monitoring and cataloguing oceanic whitetip Sharks in the Egyptian Red Sea, is excited by the support that HEPCA is showing to researchers. According to her, 'there has never been a better time to carry out research in the Red Sea' and she is 'looking forward to making the most of the opportunities that these new initiatives can bring.'

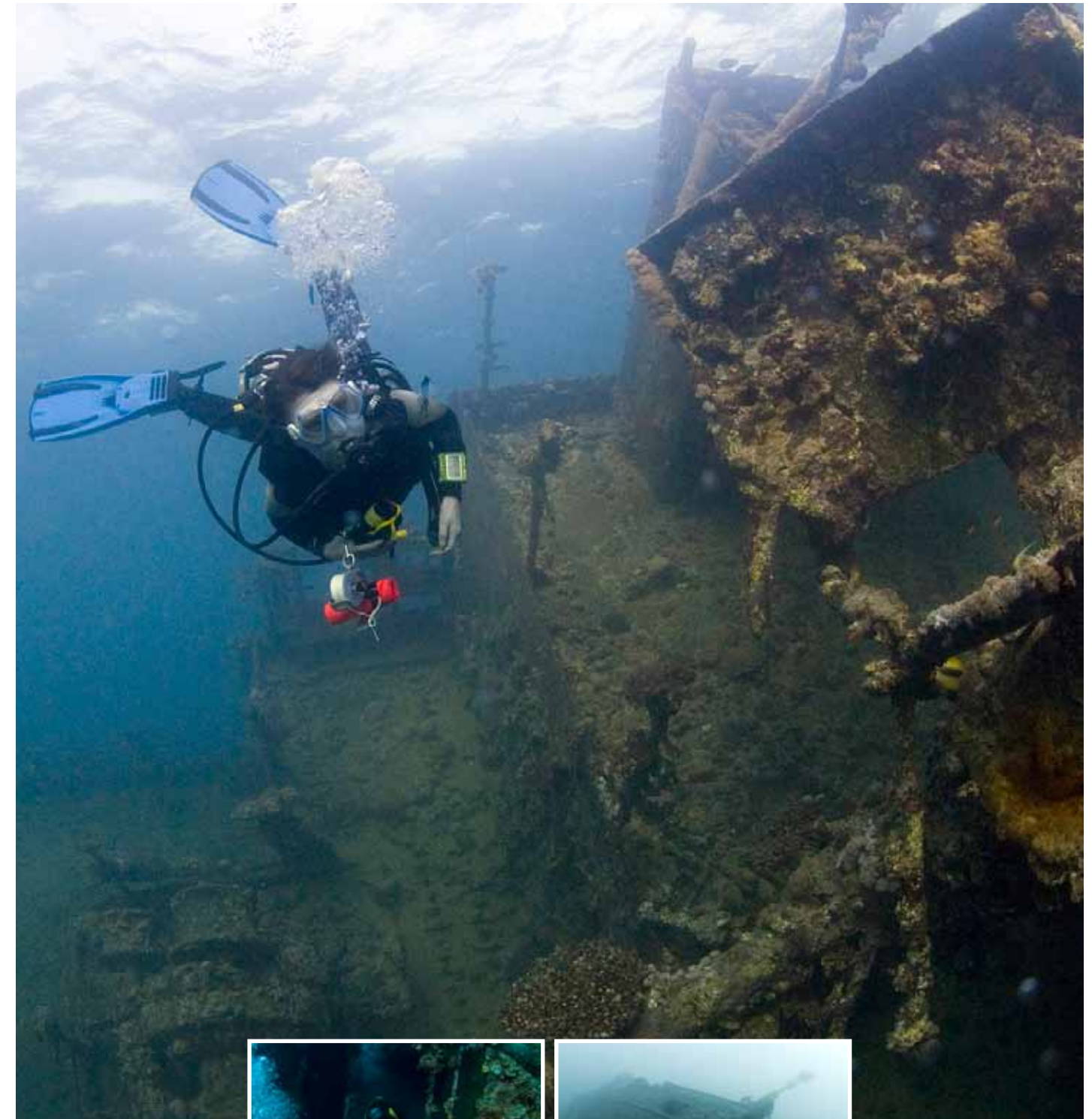
The Red Sea ecosystem has never faced such uncertain times, with increased tourism, coastal development and the threats of global climate change. These initiatives will provide a timely opportunity for scientists to protect and conserve the Red Sea through education and research.

Chris Gooda lives in Hurghada and works as a safari guide for blue o two. He is interested in Red Sea ecology and has developed a series of presentations to provide guides and guests with more information about the marine environment. Email chris.gooda@mac.com.

Insider's Wreck Guide: Umbria

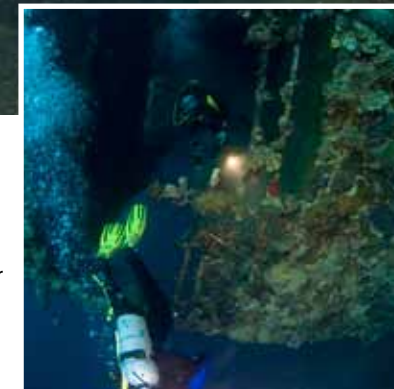
A popular stop-off for Egyptian Red Sea liveaboards heading south across the border to Sudan, the wreck of the Umbria provides a wealth of interests for visiting divers. John Kean explores the wreck and its explosive story.

Photos: Jane Morgan



On 6 December 1917 the French ship Mont Blanc collided with the Norwegian ship the SS Imo in Halifax Harbour in Nova Scotia, Canada. There was initial minor damage to the bow; however, a small fire broke out as a result of sparks igniting some of the benzol and picric acid barrels on the bow deck. The crew, unable to reach the fire-fighting equipment, abandoned ship under the orders of the skipper, Aime Le Medec, and within ten minutes had reached portside where they immediately ran for their lives.

Proceeding hurriedly along a main road they shouted their warnings to



abandon the area immediately to anyone who could hear. The French crew's warnings went largely unheard by the mainly English speaking community of Halifax. Twenty-five minutes later the fire aboard SS Mont Blanc ignited the cargo of 2,366 tons of picric acid, 250 tons of TNT, 62 tons of gun cotton and 246 tons of benzol.

Buildings covering nearly two square kilometres (500 acres) around the adjacent shore were wiped out, including those in the neighbouring communities. The massive explosion caused a tsunami in the harbour reaching 18m high and a pressure wave that snapped trees, bent iron

rails, demolished buildings, grounded vessels and carried fragments of the Mont-Blanc for kilometres. Even the anchor, weighing over a ton, was blown two miles away. A total of 1,951 people were killed with over 9,000 injured. To this day, the Halifax Explosion caused by the Mont Blanc stands as the world record for the largest accidental manmade explosion in history. The force of the blast was nearly a quarter the size of a World War Two conventional nuclear bomb.

The Umbria shipwreck, which was scuttled in Port Sudan, Red Sea on 10 June 1940 was carrying more explosives than the SS Mont Blanc – 360,000 bombs, large calibre projectiles, bomb parts and 60 boxes of detonators contributing to a total cargo of 8,600 tons. All of the cargo is still on board.

Fancy a dive?

The Umbria, measuring 153m long, is a big ship in comparison to its Red Sea competitors, such as Thistlegorm at 126m and the Rosalie Moller at 108m. It was built in 1911 and could carry 2,000 passengers and 9,000 tons of cargo. The sinking was the result of the Umbria's Italian skipper, Captain Lorenzo Muiesan, scuttling the ship to avoid it falling into the hands of the British who were stationed in Port Sudan. He had just learned that Italy had declared war and was keen to keep his deadly cargo from being taken and used against his country by the new enemy. On 10 June 1940 the crew sent the Umbria to the seabed outside Port Sudan by the Windgate Reef. She lies on her portside at depths ranging from 37m to 30m from bow to stern. The wreck rises to just a few meters from the surface around the bridge area



giving it appeal to recreational and technical divers alike. You can snorkel it too.

Cargo holds are easily reached on the Umbria, where in addition to the munitions, divers can see storage jars, wooden boxes, cement bags (now set), Fiat cars and rolls of electrical cables. There are many cabins, companionways and rooms to explore. The engine room is home to two big engines but has very little light penetration. Much of the wood has rotted on this largely metal ship, which at least allows easier access to many areas now devoid of wooden decking. The Umbria also has more soft coral and detail than several other Red Sea wrecks and holds a great appeal for photography.

Bomb enthusiasts should head to the aft holds where the bulk of the aircraft bombs are stored in their thousands in neat, compact rows. The propellers are big, but the portside one is buried by sand, although you can see the rudder between the two.

The Umbria is accessible by daily boats leaving Port Sudan, however a growing number of safari operators are now including Sudan and the Umbria in their itineraries.

It is because the Umbria is in a relatively remote position in relation to popular Red Sea destinations that it remains in such great condition. Many who have had the privilege of visiting it claim it is one of the best shipwrecks in the world.

They might also agree that it's probably best not to touch anything.

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Just the job



An underwater videographer in the Red Sea for the past five years, **Tom Osborn** shares his view of what it takes to make a real living behind the camera.

From leaving the jetty in the morning, equipment set-up and diving backwards into the blue, to clownfish, stingrays, coral reef and more - each event and encounter both above and below the water is filmed, edited, put to music and presented on that very same day. As everyone settles down in the cabin to watch this aquatic feature, a guest turns and says: 'Wow! You have the best job in the world. It must be easy doing what you do.'

Diligently, I smile and nod my head. 'Easy' is a relative term. The job of an underwater videographer is so wide that I can only begin to touch on the truths of working behind the camera.

Starting out

It seems an obvious point to make, nevertheless, to be an underwater videographer you have to be a very competent diver. Most videographers I know are at PADI Divemaster level or above with well over 500 dives under their belt. That isn't to say that people with less dives can't be good at filming underwater. After all, it is pretty straight forward - point the camera in any direction you want and record. Swimming slowly towards the delicate coral reef you can capture some great shots, such as an anemone swaying in the water or a clown fish rapidly swimming in circles. But, what happens when you realise, too late, the current is pushing you toward the reef? Like a bull in a china shop you frantically manoeuvre to avoid crashing into the world's most fragile eco system. Or perhaps you suddenly find yourself at 25m with just 40 bar left in the cylinder. Filming should never take over your awareness of your surroundings.

Equipment

It is not the camera but who is behind it that is important. I have seen three short films made with the same camera and housing, but you could easily see the difference in quality and creativity between them. No matter what equipment is used, in the right hands an excellent

underwater sequence can be captured. Obviously, equipment has its limitations. But it is not all about the money. You would not give a wildly expensive IMAX 3D camera to an elephant and expect to get good footage back!

The thorn in every videographer's side is their equipment. It has an amazing ability to be both a best friend and enemy all in the same day. Here is a list of a few of the many problems I have had in the past:

*Running out of battery at the worst possible moment, such as when an eagle ray swims directly towards the camera.

*Accidentally recording over 16 minutes of an incredible whale shark encounter at 30m.

*A stomach-churning moment when my housing flooded because of a microscopic working part.

The frustration of such problems is threefold. First, you usually lose or are unable to get the shots you feel so passionately about. Second, you can't make any money for that day of work. Third - if the equipment needs repairing it usually means a week (or more) with no money being earned to pay for the repairs.

The job

When I started this job I thought it would be easy, perhaps less work or stress than if I was teaching or guiding. Get up, go on the boat, potter around filming the guests and crew, have two nice dives, dry off, eat lunch, edit the film, sell some DVDs and be home in time for tea. I guess for some videographers it can be that easy, but these are the guys who usually don't rouse much of a reaction among their viewers and generate a negative reputation for the work of so many talented underwater filmmakers out there.

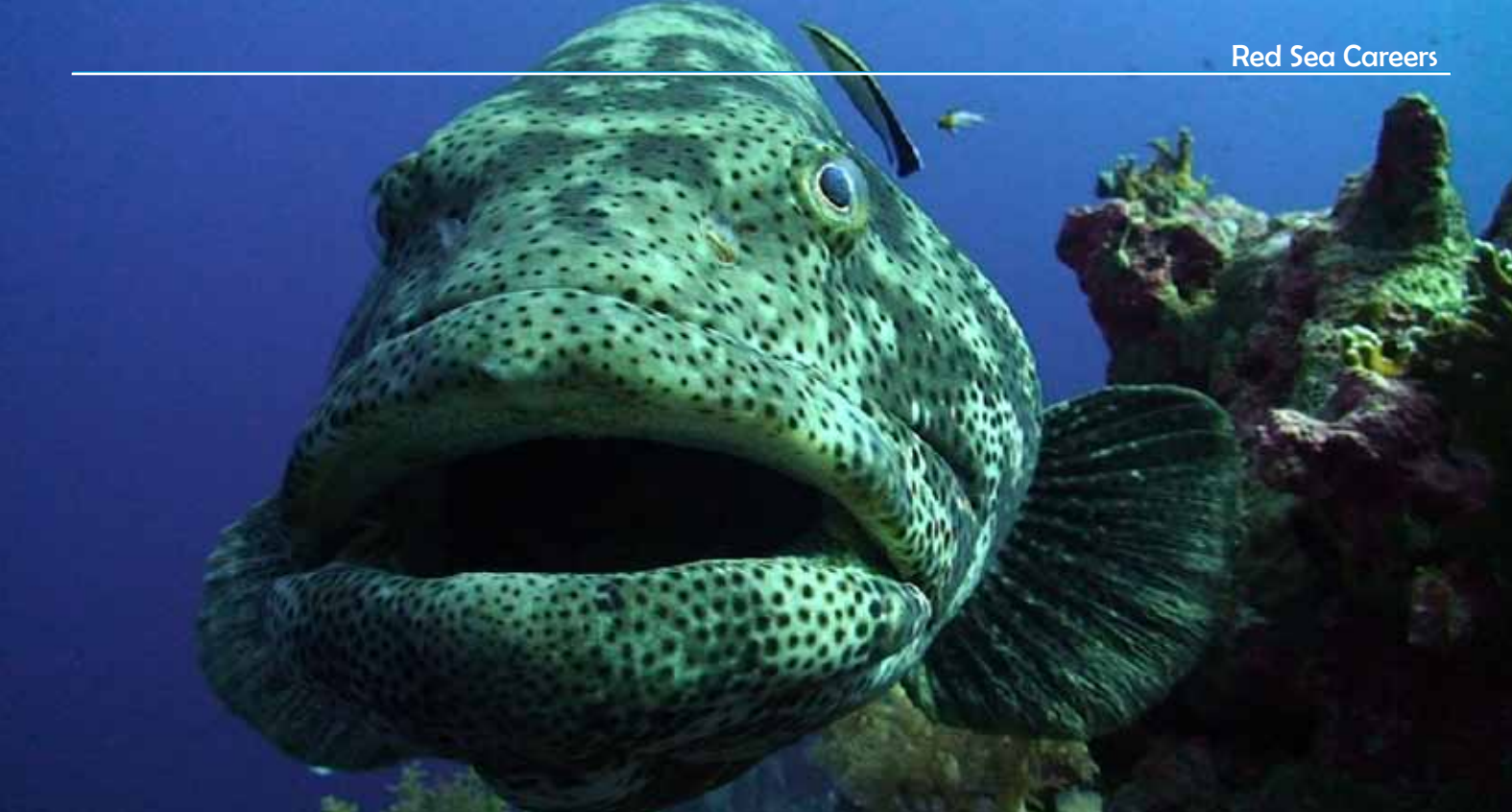
When I am filming I usually get to the jetty 15 or 20 minutes early to capture some establishing shots. I will board the boat, prepare my equipment and start making the film once the guests trot down the ramp. There is nothing worse than setting up your kit with your camera inside and missing a pod of dolphins riding the bow wave. A good videographer always has his camera at the ready. The day is not over when you step off the boat - the burning of discs carries on well into your night.

The greatest thing is to have creative licence. Having a good dive guide on board who can play up to the camera creates a nice atmosphere and is key to having a film that makes people laugh.

Another joy of my job is the interaction with aquatic life. The behaviour you capture while filming forms very personal relationships with undersea creatures. For example, if you catch the light at just the right angle on a camera lens whilst filming a turtle head-on, the turtle will see its reflection in the lens. Thinking it is another turtle, they will try to nibble the lens. Understanding the behaviour of different animals and anticipating their reactions to the camera and/or your positioning is a skill that comes with experience. Once mastered it can be the difference between capturing that perfect shot or filming the vanishing backside of a Napoleon's fleeing body.

Underwater videographers also have to film humans who, after all, are the prospective buyers. This can be an arduous task. While there are many different ways to film people underwater you need to aim for the 'money shot'. This would be a diver swimming with something rarely seen, such as a whale shark or a manta ray. Unfortunately, however, humans will not always be in the right place at the right time. I have even filmed underwater wedding proposals which never seem to go according to plan!





Editing

After all the fun of being at one with nature, the editing begins. What is often overlooked in this job is that the whole film is edited with music and must be done in time to show before the boat arrives at the jetty. This requires you to work very fast whilst simultaneously making the final edit exciting to watch. It is a frustrating task. Some of us edit a lot, while others rely purely on the footage captured. This is one aspect where experience can really make a difference in the length and quality of the final cut. If you can edit well with a software programme or directly onto the camera, almost any footage can become a good film.

Rewards

The gritty reality is that this is not a job that will make you financially rich. Most underwater videographers in the tourist diving industry make their money purely on commission. If no one wants a DVD diary of the day then no money is made. Equipment will fail, fish will swim the other way, people will ignore the camera and you will miss things that others see. But the hard work does eventually pay off.

Having an occupation that keeps you in the water as much as possible is a privilege. To find and capture that unique moment in time is a joy. After two and a half years of filming solidly in the Red Sea I now have a wealth of great footage stored on my many hard drives. I have captured film that has been enjoyed by thousands of different people from all over the world.

If you put in your bottom time, stay sharp and take care of your surroundings you will eventually be rewarded with some stunning footage and a superb sense of achievement. For me it is not about money or ease. It is all about capturing the moment. The perfect shot. The Holy Grail.



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ICE BREAKER



Egyptian Tourist Authority sponsored freediver, Christian Redl, invited ten journalists from across Germany to try breath-ok donehold diving in the Red Sea after watching him set another underwater record in Austria. One breath carried freediver Redl 100m from one small snow-framed hole to another under ice, in water temperatures of only 2°C – stark contrast to the 25-plus degrees of the waters off Port Ghalib on the Red Sea coast, where his media guests flew a few days later.

The 34-year-old is a dynamic freediver. This discipline is about horizontal distance underwater rather than depth. A freediver for more than a decade, Redl has many records to his name including a 101m world record in dynamic apnea with fins, in a cave, which he set in Mexico in 2006.

He broke his latest record on 6 February this year, completing the 100m under ice challenge in one minute and 12 seconds. The event gave Redl's new sponsorship partner, the Egyptian Tourist Authority (ETA), the chance to unveil its new campaign: 'Egypt: where it all began.' A 100m Egypt promotional banner was displayed along the entire length of Redl's record path in the Austrian snow.

Like most freedivers, Redl loves training in the Red Sea. He has dived in many parts of the world, but believes the diving off Egypt's coast is the best in the world. As well as training in clear waters, Redl enjoys the variety of underwater attractions, particularly the wrecks of Abu Nuhas. The select group of journalists from Germany invited to share his passion for freediving and Egypt followed his world record

achievements to the coral reefs of the Red Sea.

The journalists from the non-diving and diving press joined the team at Emperor Divers in Port Ghalib to experience both scuba and breath-hold diving. Redl ran through a series of focus and breathing techniques with the team over two days at the resort. When not competing or honing his own skills, Redl successfully trains hundreds of breath-hold divers each year.

This visit by prominent journalists also provided an opportunity to highlight to the German press the work of the CDWS and its work to make the Red Sea one of the safest places in the world to dive.

The team of visitors, which included writers and photographers from Germany's main diving magazines Tauchen and Unterwasser, also enjoyed three days in the desert. Redl said the desert was the perfect location in which to experience the stillness and peace needed to prepare the mind for sports such as freediving.

Redl said: 'The world needs heroes, I want to be one. I am proud to be supported in my athletic creativity by Egypt; a country that is, for me, the best dive destination in the world. Egypt has been the setting for thrilling stories for thousands of years and I am honoured that Egypt is the setting for my own story.'

ETA website: www.egypt.travel

Photo: Andrew Slater



Have You Got a GUE?

Equipment configuration is a complicated process in technical diving, with a whole raft of different systems and philosophies out there adopted by divers. KISS and DIR follower **Cath Bates** checks out the GUE way and talks to a leading Red Sea technical diver about its safety benefits.

As a technical diving instructor, I class myself as a creature of discipline and pride myself on following a set of standard rules: I try to maintain a horizontal position in the water; I adopt the KISS philosophy (keeping things simple and streamlined); and I believe that being part of a team is crucial to successful, problem-free dives.

In many ways however I am a Do It Yourself techie. I do not have a standardised equipment configuration as is essential in the mantra of Global Underwater Explorers (GUE). But does that mean I am not Doing It Right?

The GUE diver uses:

- One continuous piece of nylon webbing on the harness (there is no pinch clip).
- A knife secured to the waist on the left webbing tab.
- Particular placement of D-Rings (there are none on the right hip)
- A single bladder wing in a circular or horseshoe shape (in the event of a puncture a drysuit becomes the back up buoyancy device)
- No bungee of any sort affixed to the buoyancy cell (unnecessary for a low volume wing)
- Crotch strap looped through the waistband
- Cylinder markings are three inches (7.6cm) in size
- Small restrictive bands for the placement of reserve lights on the harness (lights play a HUGE role in communications deeper than 30m)
- the Hogarth rig (from the Florida cave diver William Hogarth Main)

First – let's clarify one thing: I am not GUE trained. I don't always configure my primary long hose in the Hogarth style across the chest and behind the neck. Why? Because I am primarily deep-reef diving

and there is little chance of one of my colleagues running out of air after entrapment. I can store it through the rubber bungee fixed to my wing, where it is still easily retrievable. I carry stage cylinders on both sides as I rarely dive with a scooter and therefore do not need to direct the wash under one arm or trail scooters behind me. I use a double-bladder wing in the summer: without my dry suit I feel safe in the knowledge I have a backup inflation system for supporting multiple cylinders at depth.

The Hogarth open circuit rig is however the most minimalistic stripped-down rig there is. When team diving under conditions that might be classed as strenuous, each member should know exactly where to find their team mates' tools and how they will dive. This is not something I can say when a guest approaches me for a deep technical dive. First I need to assess their diving habits.

It is a common misconception that DIR (Doing It Right) is all about equipment. The GUE states it 'promotes diver safety and enjoyment through a reasoned approach to teamwork, equipment choices and diver training...that sees each element of a system as an integral part of the whole.' When researching this article I was surprised at how modest the GUE website is, considering the aggressiveness I've seen from some of its disciples in online technical diving forums.

In my capacity as a technical instructor, I am seeing an increasing number of divers (including recreational) using Halcyon wings, back plates and harnesses. The design is DIR but Halcyon market their equipment as 'professional dive gear for everyday diving', in addition to aggressive exploration diving.

Leigh Cunningham, a Red Sea tech aficionado, took the GUE



Fundamentals Course and Tec 1 last year because he was joining an expedition to dive HMS Manchester in Tunisia. All divers on the expedition were Global Underwater Explorers. As an experienced deep and cave diver of ten years, what did he get out of it?

'I like to do a diving course every couple of years to keep learning. These are entry-level courses, but for me to join an expedition it was crucial to take the basic GUE Fundamentals training, so as to be on the same understanding as the rest of the team. The approach, skills and equipment configuration derive from cave diving, but in my opinion work well in other environments and 99 per cent of all other scenarios. The GUE team ethic is rigid, again because of its cave roots, but can only add additional safety to all types of diving in any environment.'

I was impressed to hear that the course requires a fitness test in the form of a timed 275m swim. There are less than 100 instructors worldwide and Leigh says after certification and membership payments have been made you are well looked after by the training agency.

'Each GUE instructor must be 100 per cent sold on every aspect of the DIR philosophy. The skills and manner in which they are conducted is rigidly outlined by the training agency, whereas other agencies do not detail to the same degree.'

Other training agencies leave specifics to the discretion of the instructor, which worked quite well a decade or so ago. However, in the modern day of technical diving and training I think a more standardized approach (from other training agencies) should be adopted.'

I am privileged in my position to have a lot of choice in how I train my students, as long as I follow the required subject areas and skill

performance as laid down in my instructor manual. However, there is no standardisation and this creates very different divers across the world.

Leigh wears a single bladder and the Hogarth configuration suits him 99 per cent of the time, but he would reconsider on a 150m-plus dive. Carrying eight stage cylinders he would be very 'gas overweight' and would switch to a double. He does believe that the absence of a pinch clip on the harness is a weak link in the GUE design. This is for convenience and particularly helpful for RIB divers removing the rig at the surface. He was eager to learn more about the GUE ratio decompression strategy and has adopted the procedure since. Doing deco 'on the fly' is a method of recalculating and altering decompression quickly in your head during a dive, with decompression profiling based on an average rather than the maximum depth. You do need a clear head for it, hence one of the reasons for GUE divers keeping their equivalent narcotic depth (END) shallower than most.

So what did I learn in researching this subject? A rigid set of rules does not need to be as restrictive as the bands adorning our harnesses. Arm yourself only with crucial equipment but ALWAYS be open to change.

Special thanks to Leigh Cunningham. Leigh is a DSAT Tec Trimix Instructor, PSA Advanced Trimix Instructor Trainer, IANTD Trimix Instructor, TDI Advanced Trimix Instructor Trainer, NSS-CDS Technical Cave diver and GUE Tec 1 diver.

GUE website: www.GUE.com

Cath Bates is part of the technical team at Camel Dive Club in Sharm el Sheikh (www.cameldive.com).

Quick Quiz

photo: Karin Brussaard

1. The world's largest fish, the whale shark, is a well known inhabitant of the Red Sea. But how big can these gentle giants get?
 - a) 8m
 - b) 10m
 - c) 12m
2. More people are killed each year by coconuts than sharks?
 - a) True
 - b) False
3. In many species of shark, the teeth are constantly replaced throughout the shark's life. Some sharks are known to lose up to how many teeth in a lifetime
 - a) 3,000
 - b) 13,000
 - c) 30,000
4. Scalloped hammerhead sharks are seen by divers all over the Red Sea. But in 2009 the species made its first appearance on which list:
 - a) The IUCN Red List of endangered species
 - b) The Shark Attack File
5. Egypt is one of few places in the world where there is a complete ban on shark fishing. Decree 484 banning fishing and trading of sharks in the Red Sea was introduced in which year?
 - a) 2005
 - b) 2007
 - c) 2008
6. There are estimated to be how many different species of shark in the Red Sea?
 - a) Between 15 and 25
 - b) Between 20 and 30
 - c) Between 40 and 50

Answers: 1c, 2a, 3c, 4a, 5a, 6c

Have your say: This is your Red Sea watersports community magazine and we want to hear from you. Share your views with others in the industry, email: blue@cdws.travel. Letter should be no more than 200 words. Letters may be edited for reasons of space or clarity.

Celebrity look-a-likes. Do you know a watersports professional working in Egypt who looks like a famous celebrity? Send your pictures to blue@cdws.travel

I heard a rumour that...

Rumours, rumours, rumours, you'd have to have your head buried in the sand underwater not to hear a few when living in Egypt's hot spot diving destinations. To help us in filtering out some of the best and funniest community rumours stories, our resident gossip guru reports in their own unique style straight from the diver's mouth:

'There is going to be a big storm tonight', the hairdresser announced to an instructor while tidying her hair. The instructor then in turn passed this rumour on when she arrived in the local pub. 'Yeah right,' they all said and carried on drinking.

When the storm started in full swing, they had to make a run for home and didn't even finish their beers!

Hairdressers are the font of all knowledge as we know. It's worth getting your hair cut more often just for this very reason. The recent storm we had was the strongest I have ever seen in my 15 years or so living here. The thunder was so loud the whole apartment shook and I somehow found myself under the bed. With the dog! And no electricity, which didn't matter too much, as the lightening was giving off enough light to put your make up on.

We drove around the next day to see the aftermath, clever neck

craners that we are. We drove through the lakes that were once roads and felt lucky that we only lost one of our number plates as we splashed through. Would have been wiser to put the wellies on and help with the clean-up.

Parts of major roads in and out of the Sinai were covered in mud slides, which caused a mild panic at the supermarkets as people rushed to stock up on necessities, such as Sakara (local beer), crisps and tonic water.

As always after a storm, stories abound. Who had the most damage? How high was the water in the living room? There is even a video showing people almost swimming in their apartment trying to salvage their belongings.

I heard a story once after a storm in Dahab, that a certain highly regarded resident found himself hanging on a pole (no mean feat, he is not a little chap). The flood waters swept past him, bringing with them a taxi driver, still trying to drive as the water lapped up around the doors of his car!

A couple of days after the recent storm, there was a rumour of another big one approaching, so the sand bags came out ready in time. Luckily, it didn't materialise. We should have asked the hairdressers first!

Wadi el Gemal trekking

photo: Sharif Henri



Egypt's resident watersports professionals report on their favourite short breaks.

Located about 40 km south of the town of Marsa Alam, Wadi el Gemal is one of the latest additions to the national parks and protected areas of the Red Sea.

Other than covering nearly 100km of a to-dream-of coastal landscape (mangrove bays, palm groves, soft and white sandy beaches), the park penetrates into the Eastern Desert with an impressive 60km-deep wadi (valley).

When, in the early afternoon, I arrived at the eco-lodge inside the park, I watched a very interesting documentary about nature, geology and the park's inhabitants: the nomadic Ababda tribes.

I then went for a camel ride of the park led by a highly professional local guide.

The trek is what I can only describe as the perfect desert experience: impressive colours, scattered acacia trees and a marvelous display of a wealth of greenery. Wadi el Gemalin in Arabic means valley of beauty and, as I stared at the multi-coloured formations around me, I found it easy to understand why.

Before heading back to Marsa Alam, I stopped at the elegant and exotic Fustad (tented camp) of the park where I was served a delicious, traditional dinner.

So, if you think Marsa Alam is only diving, kitesurfing and windsurfing, let the valley of beauty change your mind.

Laura Coppa

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Schooling Fish – Black and White: Fisheye lenses are great for creating really effective shots. They give a beautiful round effect to large groups of schooling fish

The BIG picture

How do you photograph a 6m-long whale shark or the entire bow of a wreck with a compact camera? **Maria Munn** explores the wide-angle lens options available to underwater compact users and offers essential advice.

A wide-angle lens is an absolute must for those wanting to capture images of the famous wrecks and caves of the Red Sea, as well as those summer month, big pelagic encounters in places such as Sharm, Hurghada and southern sites including Elphinstone and the Brothers Islands. A wide-angle lens is also an essential for shooting smaller subjects, such as turtles or Napoleon wrasse. By getting closer to your subject with the wide-angle lens, the water column is automatically reduced. This creates a sharper final picture as well as allowing more of the creature to fit in the frame.

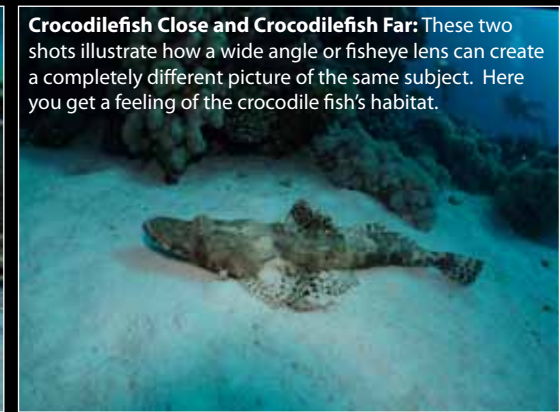
For split-level shots where you record a scene both above and underwater at the same time, a wide-angle lens is a great tool. This way you can capture the classic split-level shots of coral gardens in the shallows together with Egypt's beautiful sandy beaches. Just remember to turn the lens a little when underwater to let out any trapped air, thus avoiding wavy lines in your pictures.

When purchasing a compact camera for underwater use, it is vital to make sure that the housing will allow for the attachment of an external lens if you are planning to do any kind of big subject shooting. Always ensure that you know exactly what kind of lenses that particular housing can take, as you will find some housing cases may only fit a few of the many wide-angle lenses available.

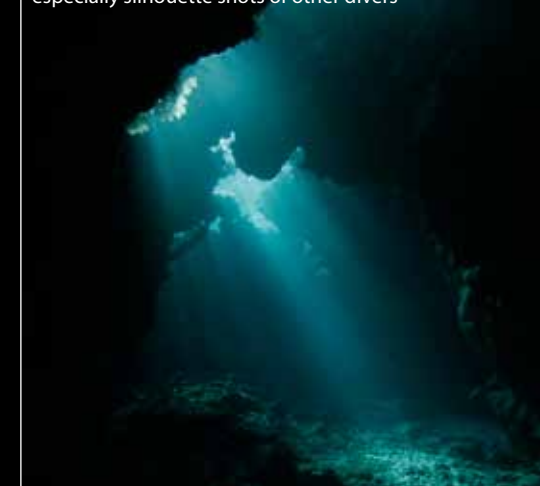
There are two kinds of wide-angle lenses that can be used with compact cameras: standard wide-angle and a fisheye lens. Standard wide-angle lenses give a field of view of between 80 and 105 degrees, whereas a fisheye lens will give up to a 165 degree field of view. A fisheye lens can also add an extra artistic element to underwater photographs by distorting straight lines created by the wideness of the lens. It can be used to shoot down on divers who are swimming around large pinnacles – this often gives a moon-shape effect. Alternatively, looking up from just beneath the surface of the water can create a 'Snell's Window' style effect (where an almost perfect circle can be created). An extra bonus is being



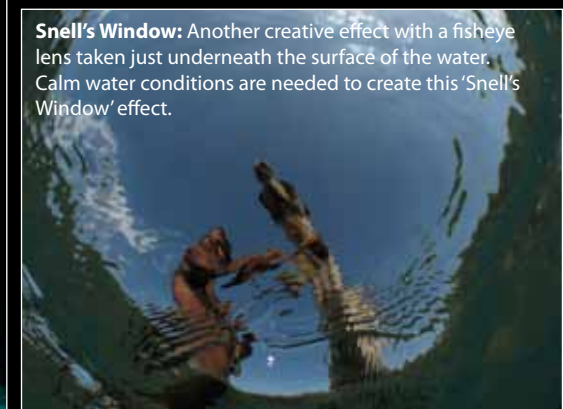
Crocodilefish Close and Crocodilefish Far: These two shots illustrate how a wide angle or fisheye lens can create a completely different picture of the same subject. Here you get a feeling of the crocodile fish's habitat.



Cave St John: This photo illustrates how a wide-angle or fisheye lens can create striking shots when in a cave, especially silhouette shots of other divers



Giannis D Wide and Giannis D Fisheye: These two photos show the difference in the field of view between a wide-angle lens and a fisheye lens of the same subject. Notice how the barrel distortion has made the straight line of the wreck appear bent.



Snell's Window: Another creative effect with a fisheye lens taken just underneath the surface of the water. Calm water conditions are needed to create this 'Snell's Window' effect.

able to zoom through your fisheye lens and use it as a macro lens for close-up shots.

At their widest settings, wide-angle lenses can add both drama and ambience by being able to fit in more of the scene. From only half a metre away, it is possible to photograph a full shot of a diver. Close focus wide-angle shots can also be achieved - the subject is right in front of the lens, pin sharp and in focus, and the habitat where it lives is also in shot as a creative background. These lenses are an essential to capture the gorgeous, colourful reef scenes that the Red Sea is so famous for. Used with

a strobe (which will be covered in the next issue of BLUE) gorgeous, punchy, vivid colours of the stunning reefs with glassfish swirling all around can be captured.

Finally, always make sure that your wide-angle lens is secure. A cable tie secured around the ridge of the lens and tied onto your camera's housing will save you a heap of money in the event of it falling off. And for any of you diving at the Brothers Islands, you may just be lucky enough to find the one that I lost there which taught me the value of cable ties the hard way.

Maria's forthcoming book *Underwater Photography for Beginners* is now available to buy. From the beginner through to the more advanced snapper, this book will inspire and show you how to take beautiful underwater photographs in an easy-to-understand way. For more information on ordering the book, email Maria at maria@oceanvisions.co.uk.

Top tips on buying and using a wide-angle lens

INON make adaptors which fit onto most makes of compact cameras and allow the use of its brand of macro, wide-angle and fisheye lenses. However, such cameras with a 28 mm field of view can only take the UWL 100-28AD lens which gives a 100 degree field of view. An extra dome port can be added onto it to give it a fisheye effect of 150 degrees. They also make screw on lenses to attach to Ikelite housings.

Sea & Sea, Sealife and Intova make their own wide angle lenses to fit onto their models of housings.

Epoque make wide angle lenses for those with Olympus or Ikelite Housings.

Fantasea have introduced a new range of Bigeye Lenses with an 80 degree field of view for the newer Canon Powershot G range or the Fuji Finepix F100 and F200 EXR range.

Important

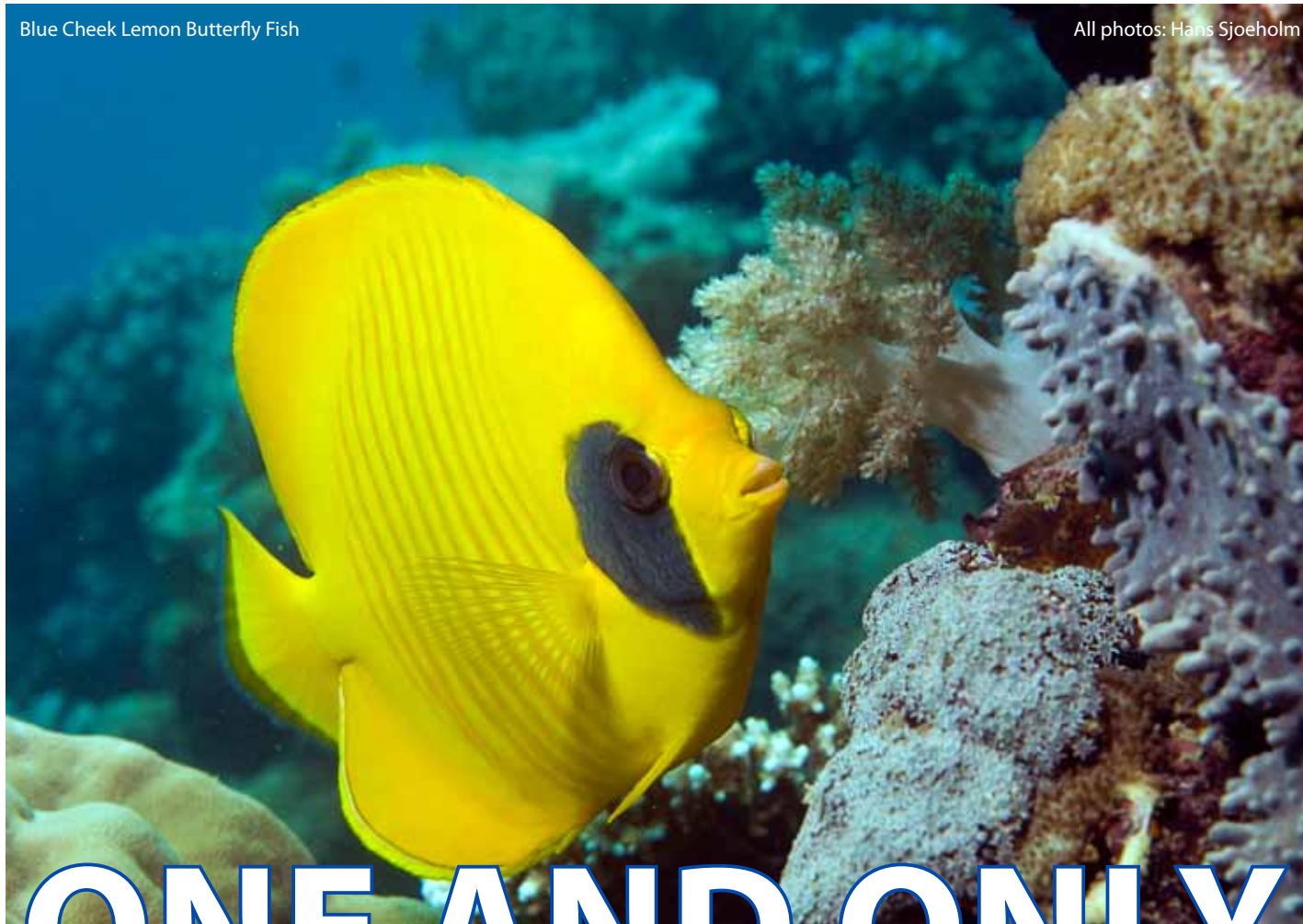
Wide-angle lenses bring in an extra amount of light to your photograph, so make sure that you have your camera set to a lower film speed between 80 and 400. Using a higher film speed can result in an overexposed photograph, especially when using a strobe.

When using fisheye lenses, flare marks can sometimes appear at the bottom left of your photograph. Always remember to use the black sticker which comes with the lens and place this on the rim of the camera lens to stop the light reflecting off it.

Finally when using screw-in lenses, remember to put a little grease on the rim to stop the lens sticking to the port of the housing. Mine got stuck once and the whole port of the housing came off with the lens. An expensive mistake!

Blue Cheek Lemon Butterfly Fish

All photos: Hans Sjoeholm



ONE AND ONLY

As a body of ocean, the Red Sea is unique with fascinating topography and a huge population of endemic underwater creatures. Save Our Seas cameraman and marine biologist Owen Bruce looks at why so many of its resident species are found nowhere else on the planet.

It could be claimed that the underwater life of the Red Sea is more vivid and colourful than anywhere else on the planet. One, particularly imaginative, explanation for this is when the angels were painting the world, they took a little 'siesta' in this part of the world and accidentally spilled all the leftover paints in the Red Sea. Another, more conventional, explanation is the process of evolution.

The main reason why an unusually high number of species have evolved in the Red Sea unfound anywhere else on Earth, is the Red Sea's near enclosed shape. Known as 'species endemism', only the remote Hawaiian Islands archipelago has a greater number of endemic species than the Red Sea. As continental plates drifted apart, species isolated in certain areas, such as animals on a landmass surrounded by water, or as in the case of the Red Sea, a sea surrounded by land, evolved to suit the specific needs of the surrounding environment. As evolution of the trapped species progressed, unique species formed in each area, all of which are perfectly suited to the specific ecological niches of their environment.

Five million years ago the Red Sea was connected to the Mediterranean by a narrow channel. This channel was eventually closed as the continents gradually rose leaving the Red Sea an enclosed basin, isolating the species in the Red Sea from their relatives elsewhere. Later, the southern Red Sea opened into the Indian Ocean, now known as the Strait of Perim or Bab el Mandeb. Today, this channel is the narrowest and shallowest section of the Red Sea and still acts as a physical barrier to the movement of many reef species in and out of the Red Sea. As a result, the perfect

environment has occurred, formed over the millennia for the evolution of unique endemic species. Thanks to this evolutionary process, not only is the marine life of the Red Sea so vibrant, but approximately 20 percent of the species present are completely unique. Many of these species are commonly found in Egyptian waters and are regularly encountered by divers and snorkellers.

The Red Sea is home to 300 species of corals, 10 per cent of which are endemic. The common brain coral (*Erythrastraea flabellata*) found on all Red Sea reefs and characterized by a winding pattern of cream coloured polyps found on reef slopes down to 20m is a classic example of a Red Sea endemic species.

The most noticeable and colourful of all Red Sea endemics, are the fish. The Red Sea bannerfish (*Heniochus intermedius*) is one of the endemic fish species of the Red Sea most easily recognized by divers and snorkellers in Egypt. They occur in pairs or small groups on the reef and feed on small invertebrates and zooplankton.

Butterflyfish flourish in all tropical seas, with 12 species listed in the Red Sea. Half of these species are endemic. Being small and territorial, when isolated by the moving continents, they quickly evolved as a different species to their cousins outside the Red Sea. Butterflyfish range in size but are generally small, from 10 – 20cm, they occur normally in pairs or small groups and inhabit only healthy reef systems, where they feed on tiny coral polyps, algae and zooplankton and even jellyfish.

Sohal and Cleaner Wrasse



One of the most iconic Red Sea reef fishes, the blue-cheeked butterflyfish (*Chaetodon semilarvatus*) is an endemic species. Easily recognized by its bright lemon yellow body, blue cheeks and larger build compared to other butterflyfish, they occur in pairs close to the reef. On occasion they can be seen schooling in large numbers with the Red Sea bannerfish. Being territorial, they are often encountered in exactly the same part of the reef on different dives.

The orangetail butterflyfish (*Chaetodon paucifasciatus*) is another territorial butterflyfish. Small in size with distinct striped markings and an orange stripe through the eye and orange tail they can be seen in disputes with members of the same species as they try to defend the favoured table corals on which they feed.

More mobile species of butterflyfish can be found cruising the reef in search of food. The threadfin butterflyfish (*Chaetodon auriga*) and racoon butterflyfish (*Chaetodon fasciatus*) are colourful common species that can be seen throughout the Red Sea nibbling on coral polyps as they

move along the reef. The Giant butterflyfish (*Chaetodon lineolatus*) is, as its name suggests, the largest Red Sea butterflyfish, while the ornate (*Chaetodon austriacus*) is one of the most beautiful, and the orange-faced butterflyfish (*Chaetodon larvatus*) is the rarest of all.

The sohal surgeonfish is a Red Sea endemic that inhabits the shallow reef flats of reefs. It is a strikingly beautiful fish with black and white stripes and a bright orange razor sharp spine at the base of its tail. The Sohal (their Arabic name) are extremely aggressive towards other fish that may venture into their territory and will even defend their patch from snorkellers or divers. They feed on algae that grow on the bare rock of the reef.

Being isolated, endemic species are particularly prone to environmental threats both manmade and natural. The declining state of the world's reefs from destruction by man, climate change and pollution are well documented and these threats can have an even greater effect on the presence of endemic species in areas such as the Red Sea. Simply put,

Red Sea Racoon Butterfly Fish and Chaetodon Fasciatus



Antenna and Lemon Butterfly Fish



Crown Butterfly Fish



once numbers of endemic species start to fall it can be nearly impossible for the numbers to increase because of the limited size of the population.

In the Red Sea all species face threats from man in the form of reef reclamation to provide foundations for the spread of coastal development as well as coral bleaching caused by increased sea temperatures depriving the endemic fish of their shelter and food sources, while physically killing endemic coral species.

The sheer beauty of many endemic species, in particular the butterflyfish, makes them massively attractive in the aquarium trade. Fishermen throughout the Red Sea, often acting illegally, catch huge numbers of reef fish that are sent to all four corners of the globe to satisfy the increasing demand for live tropical fish. This added pressure on the endemics of the Red Sea impacts greatly on these unique species and may even go some way to tipping the balance into a downward spiral with inevitable consequences.

An awareness of not only the existence of Red Sea endemic species, but also their importance, will help visitors to Egyptian reefs conserve the reef organisms that they love to see. Do everything in your power

to help promote conservation and reduce your impact on the marine environment. Enjoy spotting endemic species while out on the reef and always remember that they are prettier sight in the wild than in an aquarium at home.



Save Our Seas Foundation (SOSF) is a non-profit organization that implements and supports scientific

research and educational projects focused on the marine environment. It aims to learn more about the role that marine species, particularly sharks and rays, play in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. It hopes to educate the public about the need to save our seas, especially the consequences of removing sharks and rays from the world's oceans, to support natural marine resource preservation and to conserve the marine realm. For more information on SOSF or to make a donation please visit www.saveourseas.com



Over 100 million sharks were killed by humans last year.

Rethink the shark. SaveOurSeas.com

SNORKEL SITE: DAHAB

Famed for its deep diving for technical divers and freedivers, Dahab also has many top spots for surface cruising snorkelers. Most visiting snorkellers head to the world famous Blue Hole; but there are lots of other, shallower fringing coral reefs to explore that are teeming with huge variety of underwater life in this Sinai resort. **BLUE** checks out three of the best snorkel sites.



Photo: www.istockphoto.com



Photo: Simon Rogerson



Photo: Simon Rogerson



Three Pools

At the most southern part of Dahab, you will find a collection of reefs popular with divers which are also perfect for snorkelling. Here the desert mountains fringe long expanses of sandy beach. There is little in the way of buildings, just a collection of small, floor-cushioned Bedouin cafes where you can base yourself for the day. Three Pools is one of the best snorkelling sites – named after three sandy lagoons which lead you out on to the main reef. Beautiful coral gardens in shallow, calm, waters; perfect for getting up close to Red Sea life



Photo: Charlotte Boan

For a full list of legal dive and snorkelling centres operating in Dahab see the CDWS website: www.cdws.travel

Ras Abu Galum

The protected waters of Ras Abu Galum are fairly isolated and contain a wealth of underwater life, from turtles to macro. Often reached by camel on full day excursions, the area to the north of Dahab has incredible coral gardens to explore for snorkellers and divers alike.

The Islands

The maximum depth on this site is only 8m, however, it can be tricky to reach in strong winds. You need to be a confident swimmer and show awareness of the delicate coral below. The area is densely covered in hard and soft corals and there is an excellent variety of macro life, and if you're lucky you might see cruising barracuda, wrasse and potato grouper.



HURGHADA



"It is not unusual to encounter dolphins on dives around Hurghada and some dive centres even go as far as guarantee encounters with such creatures as seahorses on particular dive trips."

The diving capital of the Egyptian mainland, Hurghada is a gateway to some of the best sites in the Southern Red Sea, as well as classic wreck and reef dives in the north. From beginner scuba experiences to deep and cave technical diving exploration, Hurghada is a diving destination of variety in underwater topography, marine life and wrecks.

Most of the dive sites around Hurghada can be reached within 40 minutes by boat, offering an excellent mix of options for full day and half-day trips. Unlike Egypt's other major dive resort of Sharm el Sheikh, boats leave from private jetties belonging to the many beachside resorts where centres are generally based.

The area is famed for having impressive local reefs, particularly within the protected marine park of Giftun Island. It is not unusual to encounter dolphins on dives around Hurghada and some dive centres even go as far as guarantee encounters with such creatures as seahorses on particular dive trips.

DIVES NOT-TO-BE MISSED AROUND THE AREA INCLUDE:

SMALL GIFTUN offers several good dives; the most famous being the drift dive around its giant fan coral to the east of the island. If you venture on the plateau, you are virtually guaranteed to see Napoleons and moray eels. Check out the blue and deeper water and you may be lucky to see a passing whale shark, barracuda or oceanic white tip shark. The island is also popular with technical divers for its sheer walls, caves and canyons.

GOTA ABU RAMADA is a network of coral gardens where you will find the famous Aquarium dive site. Ranging from depths of between 5m and 16m, you will find yellowfish, banner fish, blue cheek butterfly fish, masked butterfly fish, yellow snapper, goatfish, crocodilefish and sweet lips. Some of the larger visitors to the Aquarium include giant morays, jackfish, turtles and eagle rays. In September, watch out for titan triggerfish carefully guarding their nests.

THE EL MINYA harbour wreck lies at a depth of 30m on a rocky sea bed. Sunk by Israeli fighters while lying at anchor in 1969, the 70m-long El Minya can be extensively explored in one dive, including inside a blast hole on its starboard side.

CARELESS REEF is another signature dive of Hurghada, also known as Moray Eel House. Two coral towers merge at a plateau at 16m where you will find a large population of giant moray eels.

A huge number of divers depart Hurghada for some of the Red Seas most celebrated sites. The town's new marina has added another level of luxury for liveaboard travellers with a wealth of shops, cafes, restaurants and bars to chill out on the last day in Caribbean-colonial style surroundings. All of this is just a short walk from the dive deck of your liveaboard. However, it is worth noting that the liveaboard mooring area of the marina is relatively quiet, as it is far enough away from the hustle of the busiest marina bars.

Northern liveaboard itineraries from Hurghada usually head to the Straits of Gubal and cover the famous wreck peppered zone of Abu Nuhas, which includes dives on the Carnatic, Giannis D and the Chrisola K. The world-celebrated Thistlegorm wreck also features on such trips.

The marine parks of the South offer some of the best sites for underwater life in the Red Sea. Most popular liveaboard trips include the south marine park including life filled reefs such as Elphinstone, Samadai, ShaabMakhsour, Shaab Claude, Staya and St Johns. Deep south trips head towards the stunning sites of Rocky and Zabargad Islands.

At the central part of the Red Sea you will find marine parks and the famous pelagic haunt of the Brother Islands. These sites are often exposed to strong currents and may require a minimum qualification of advanced open water or equivalent, plus 50 logged dives.

Won With the Wind

The Sinai resort of Dahab recently hosted the windsurf slalom competition with local and international competitors fighting it out in a high- pressure race. BLUE reports.



Competitive windsurfers were on full speed in Dahab in late February for one of the biggest slalom competitions to be held in the Sinai resort. A total of 63 competitors arrived from as far as Russia, England and Turkey to take part in the event, which was hosted and organised by CDWS member watersports centre Five Circles, based at the Panda Hotel.

Competing over a series of timed races, windsurfers had to expertly manoeuvre their way around a number of buoys on the Dahab lagoon course in a race where speeds can reach up to 70kph.

Windsurf slalom competitions demand a high level of skill from those who take part. Negotiating the tough z-shaped course at such speed can present a number of dangers, such as the hard water surface threatening serious injury to anyone who falls. Ranging between a distance of 2km and 4km, each course had to be completed in a certain number of minutes to avoid disqualification.

Following each race over the ten days slot, competitors in the Dahab Open Windsurfing Slalom Competition were numbered according to time. Time penalties were given to those who failed to complete specific turns around each marker buoy or for any collisions. Each competitor started out five minutes after each other. The one competitor completing the courses in the quickest times without incurring penalties became the overall winner of the tournament. Judges on the scene included well-known Russian windsurfer Ivan Balashov.

Dmitry Davidenko of the Ukraine was named the competition winner, with second place going to Emirhan Talbunan of Turkey and third to Sergey Makarenko of Russia. Prizes included top-of-the-range windsurfing equipment, subscriptions to Men's Health magazine as well as clothing supplied by competition sponsor Animal. Other sponsors included Scorpion Bay.

Slalom windsurfing, particularly fashionable through the Eighties and Nineties, is popular with those who enjoy combining speed with tactical skills and challenges. Although its popularity dropped at the start of the new millennium, windsurf slalom is now seeing a revival. The growth of specifically designed equipment available on the market for slalom riders has retriggered interest. Slalom boards are generally smaller in size than standard boards and, together with sails, must be suitable to handle high and low speeds and handle sharp turns.

Egypt's climate, sea and wind conditions – many places, such as Dahab experience at least 300 windy days a year – make it an ideal holiday destination for kite and windsurfers. This is why Medhat Mohammed, the manager of Five Circles believes the Red Sea should increase the number of international windsurfing competitions.

Medhat is planning to organize a series of freestyle competition events and hopes to see the number of participants increasing.

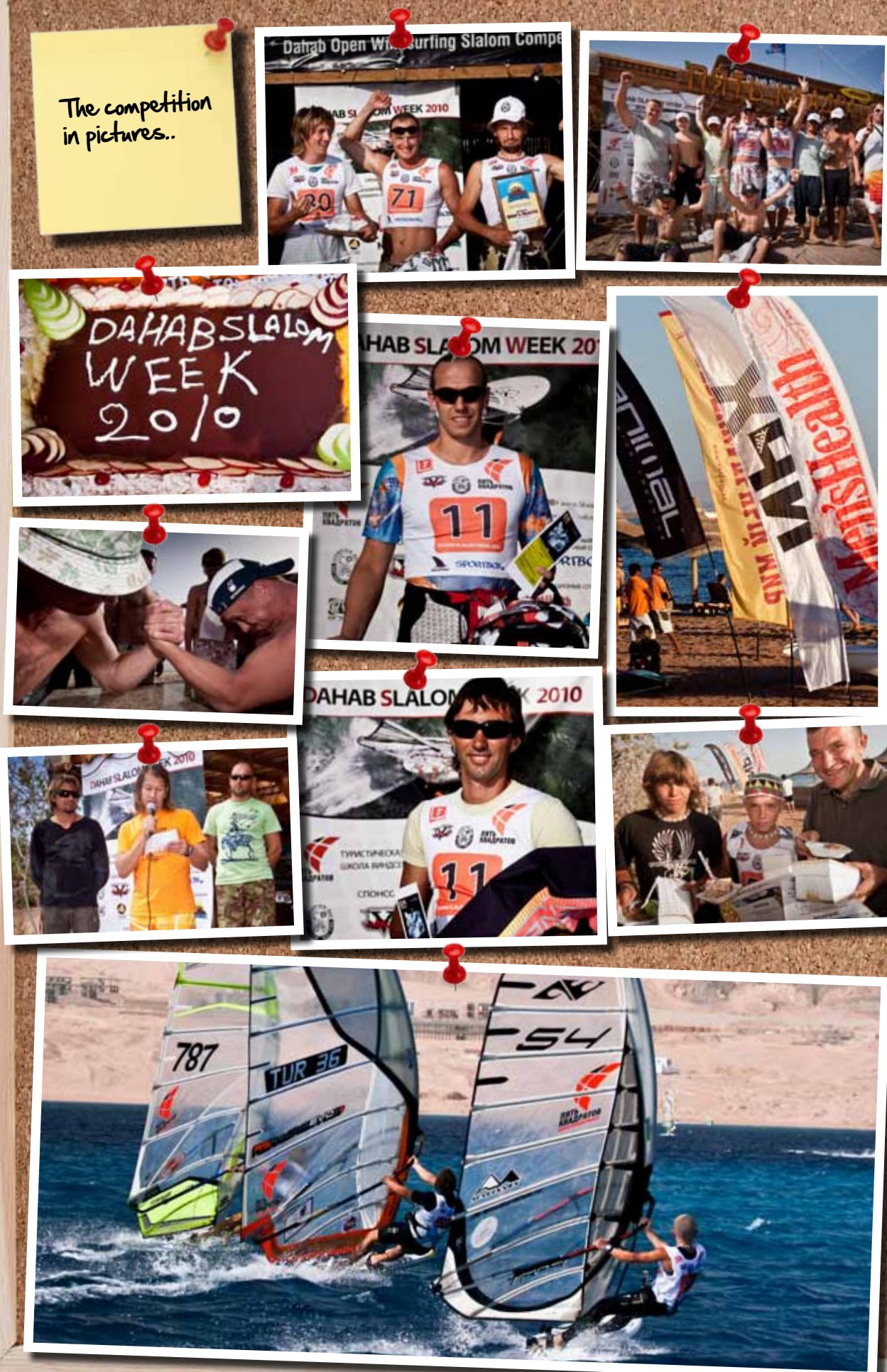
'We started the competitions seven years ago with around 25 competitors,' he says. 'Now we have more than 60. It would be great to increase this number and bring more windsurfers in from different countries.'

The next freestyle competition is due to take place from 15 March, with another slalom event planned for early 2011. For more information email medhat200073@hotmail.com.



To see a list of CDWS member watersports centres, see the CDWS website www.cdws.travel

The competition in pictures..



Screen test: Are you fit to be in the water?

Self-declaration forms for medical diving fitness have seen a huge drop in the number of divers going to see a qualified doctor to ensure they are healthy enough to dive. Dr Anke Fabian outlines why we should be putting as much, if not more, emphasis on checking our body as we do our equipment.

Photo: Simon Rogerson



Diving continues to grow in popularity around the world. With technological developments, it has also seen a growth in extended range diving. Through more sophisticated equipment and use of mixed gases available in technical diving, one can reach considerably greater depths and extended bottom times.

Among scuba divers there is now an almost balanced gender ratio. The age limits have clearly shifted in both directions, with children diving from the age of eight, all the way up to divers of 70 or over. The positive effect of reduced gravity underwater means diving is also used therapeutically. This implies an increase in the number of disabled and chronically ill divers. All of these factors confront the supervising physician with medically borderline situations.

The trend towards ever more remote diving destinations, often in places with inadequate emergency health care, highlights the importance of a detailed medical screening for sports divers. Special problems associated with diving can occur in remote waters.

However, a thorough dive medical examination is sometimes not possible, or sadly, not required. Usually, a dive center will forward a questionnaire to the diver as a self-declaration of his/her medical history and will let it pass when a diver answers all questions negatively. A

possibly fatal mistake, because a self-declaration neither substitutes a medical check-up nor does it necessarily reveal the truth. Another important fact is that the diver, in signing the declaration of health, releases the dive centre of its liability in case of an accident. The diver may even not be covered by his/her own insurance in the event of an accident.

As a doctor, it is my belief that the dive center should refer divers to a doctor who is familiar with the specific aspects of diving, even if all questions are answered negatively in the medical questionnaire. In Egypt, one has doctors at hand, trained to undertake a decent check-up. We recommend people make the effort to get checked by a dive doctor who is familiar with the medical aspects of diving rather than just search for their nearest doctor.

In most countries, there are no legal provisions for the screening of sport divers. There are provisions, however, for professional divers and hyperbaric workers, but usually only in relations to the employer's liability insurance. So it would seem only the demand of diving associations and dive centers can put a certain amount of pressure on the divers to undergo a medical dive examination.

The maintenance of a cylinder or a regulator - as a matter of course - is left to an expert, and the costs are paid without complaint, as this is an



essential for safety. However, a diver's attitude often changes drastically when it comes to a medical check of their body.

An oft quoted dictum by divers in my clinic is: if I was down there to die, I could not imagine a more glorious death. But it is not that simple or glorious! We endanger not only ourselves but our buddy by evoking a potentially harmful and dangerous emergency situation triggered by our own health problems underwater. Very few dive accidents end in what these people may see as a 'pleasant death' underwater. Even considering a serious case of decompression sickness, a diver seldom dies, but is more likely to travel home in a wheelchair.

Most divers think themselves safe after a 'goodwill investigation' by a non-diving medical specialist. Some may think that simply because they have a doctor's signature on their dive-medical, nothing can go wrong. Wrong! A lack of medical knowledge of the diving-related physiological aspects can lead to problems. It should be pointed out here, however, that even a thorough examination is not a free ticket for foolish behavior in the water!

In principle, any licensed doctor with the appropriate knowledge can do a dive-medical examination, if he or she is familiar with the physical realities of diving and sports medicine. One can find a trained specialist for diving and hyperbaric medicine locally on the website of any diving medical organisation (see table one).

Screening of recreational divers

In Germany, the guidelines of the Society for Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine regulates the scope of services with a given examination form. It can be accessed on the portal of GTÜM. In the UK, one can refer to the guidelines of the HSE (Health and Safety Executive), EUBS (European Underwater and Baromedical Society). For other websites see table one.

The nature and course of the investigation

Medical history: At the initial examination a detailed survey of the entire medical history is needed, or an interim history for repeat examinations. This provides the physician with the necessary background information, which may indicate the possible need for additional investigations. Also significant are chronic diseases, medication and previous operations, as well as nicotine, alcohol consumption and physical activity.

A diving-specific medical history includes: the level of training; number of dives; date of the last dive; the type of diving (such as air, nitrox and trimix gas diving, rebreather, ice diving and drift diving); the profile of the diver (recreational or professional divers such as research divers, rescue divers, fire brigade or police divers) and, of course, any preconditions of diving-related incidents, problems or even decompression sickness.

Particularly for children, an important but often forgotten question is: can you swim? For beginners and novices, it is interesting in terms of psychological profile to ask about the motivation to dive - particularly in children and non-diving spouses.

Physical Examination

The physical examination gives a general impression of the diver's health to the doctor. The patient should be undressed so conditions, the nutritional status and major skeletal abnormalities can be detected.

The further course of the examination may be done following the official examination sheet and includes the whole body - from the pupillary reflex (pupil response to light) down to a wobble of the big toe. In this way, one small lymph node in the neck area can be recorded as carefully as an attenuated reflex of the Achilles tendon. One by one, the various organ systems are examined; head, ENT (ear, nose, and throat) and neck region of the respiratory - cardiovascular system, abdomen, as well as an orientating neurological examination and a check of the musculoskeletal system. The investigation must be complete and accurate. An essential and indispensable part of the investigation is, of course, the inspection of the ears, ear canals and eardrums, which includes inspecting the eardrum movement during equalization (see Figure 2). In case of functional or structural problems, a so-called tympanogram (ultrasound of the drum) can give further information about the nature of the disorder. (see Figure 3, 4 and 5 + Legend Fig 5)

Particular attention is directed toward the chest, heart and lungs. Auscultation (listening with a stethoscope) of the heart and lungs in all the sections is compulsory. Blood pressure and pulse rate are taken (See Figure 6).

If there are any pathological (abnormal) findings, which could cause problems in diving, the diver should be referred to consult a specialist

for further investigations. These include cardiologist, pulmonologist, neurologist and ENT specialists.

Instrumental investigations

Standard 'must-do investigations' include otoscopic inspection of the eardrum, a resting electrocardiogram and a lung function test, which determines the lung volume and flow-volume curve shows. (See Figures seven and eight)

An exercise test is, in general, desirable and is compulsory in divers above the age of 40. A physical test is also recommended for younger divers who are not in particularly good physical shape or have anamnestic indications. The step test is preferred over the bicycle ergometer for its simplicity. The advantage for an annual step test is to create a baseline for future comparisons, allowing feedback on a diver's fitness.

A blood sample to determine the small blood cell count and organ functions (blood count, kidney function, liver function tests, coagulation and blood sugar) is desirable but not compulsory.

Although an X-ray examination of the lung is recommended within the first examination, there is some controversy over its benefits. In cases of lung diseases or existent breathing disorders, a radiographic diagnostic is mandatory.

Examination for the presence of an intracardiac shunt (hole in the heart, also known as Patent Foramen Ovale) is not a requirement for either the initial or the repetitive or annual check.

It is the medical examiner's duty to reach a conclusion about the fitness to dive. Where doubt about fitness exists, consultation with other appropriate medical counselors or specialists should take place. Any indication for further investigations should be followed up, as diving requires a good physical performance and cardiopulmonary disorders can have fatal consequences. Possible additional tests are a bodyplethysmography (extended lung function), chest fluoroscopy, or HR- Spiral CT scan, EEG (electroencephalogram), test dive in a decompression chamber and testing for an intracardiac shunt (patent foramen ovale, or a hole in the heart) with a bubble-test. When deciding which investigations are useful it is important to consider the overall picture of the diver. A cold-air provocation test is definitely more important in a diver with a history of allergic asthma when planning a trip to cold waters than for a healthy holiday diver in the Red Sea.

In addition to the results of an 'unrestricted dive-medical' there is also the possibility of restricting the diving activities to certain limits. This should be clearly formulated, discussed thoroughly with the divers and only attested when a good compliance (reliability) of the diver is obvious. Options for a restricted certification of diving activity can be in terms of duration of certificate (handicapped divers, in chronic

BAROMEDICAL DIVING EMERGENCIES & HYPERBARIC MEDICINE FACILITIES

Dahab: *Hyperbaric Medical Centre* located next to Dahabeya Hotel, Dahab, South Sinai, Egypt contact: Dr. Heikal Abdel Tawab Primary Tel. (+2) 010 143 3325 Other tel. (+2) 069 364 0536

Deco International located in the heart of the city of Dahab in Mashraba zone. contact: Dr Ahmed El Sherif Emergency Tel. (+2) 012 246 2200 Tel. (+2) 012 219 0372 www.deco-international.com

Sharm El Sheikh: *Hyperbaric Medical Center* located in Sharm el-Maya by the Travco Jetty Tel. (+2) 0693660318 24hr Emergency Numbers: Dr. Adel Taher: (+20) 12 2124 292 Dr. Ahmed Sakr: (+20) 12 3331 325 www.sharmchamber.com

Sharm Hospital located at the Sharm International Hospital, Peace Road, Hi-el-Nur Contact: Dr. Ossama Kamel Emergency Tel. (+2) 010 512 3964 Tel. (+2) 069 366 0318

El Gouna + Hurghada: *Deco International* located in El-Gouna hospital (link) 22 km north of Hurghada. Emergency Tel. (+2) 065 3850 0118 (+2) 012 219 0383 (+2) 012 7445 700 www.deco-international.com

Hypermed located in front of Hurghada Airport Contacts: Dr. Hossam Nassef & Dr. Hanaa Nessim Emergency Tel. (+2) 010 218 7550 Tel. (+2) 012 218 7550 www.hypermed.org

Naval Hyperbaric Medical Center (NHMC) El Corniche Rd, Sekala, Hurghada Emergency Tel. (+2) 065 3449 150 Tel. (+2) 065 3449 151

Safaga
Deco International located at the Safaga General Hospital Contact: Dr. Emad Elhamy Emergency tel. (+2) 012 219 0383 (+2) 012 174 1533 www.deco-international.com

Marsa Alam: *Baromedical* located at Marsa Shagra, 22km north of Marsa Alam Contact: Dr Wael Nassef & Dr Nabil el Alfy Emergency Tel. (+2) 012 243 3116 Tel. (+2) 012 436 2222 www.baromedical-eg.com

Hamata: Deco International, Located in Marina of Hamata 135km south of Marsa Alam in the Deco International Hyperbaric Medical Centre, Contact: Dr. Fadel El Fayoumi Emergency Tel. +20 122 190 383 / +20 122 174 148 www.deco-international.com

Regional societies for diving and hyperbaric medicine

Country/Region	Name	Website
Germany	GTÜM	www.gtuem.org
Switzerland	SUHMS	www.suhms.org
Austria	ÖGTH	www.oegth.at
UK	UKSDMC	www.uksdmc.co.uk
UK	DDRC	www.ddrc.org
France	Medsubhyp	www.medsubhyp.com
Russia	IHME	www.barocenter.ru
Italy	SIMSI	www.simsi.org
Europe	EUBS	www.eubs.org
South Pacific	SPUMS	www.spums.org.au
USA/Worldwide	UHMS	www.uhms.org
Worldwide	DAN	www.dan.org

of additional investigations one could should allow for higher costs.

Comparing the relative cost of a thorough medical check up to the cost of diving equipment, or even a single day's diving on holiday goes to show that the expense of a medical is not as large as the impact on your future health could be, if you choose to dive without one!

diseases or children), duration of dive (diabetic divers), type and remoteness of diving, frequency of diving and depth. Limitations generally relate to:

- Young people under 16 years of age
- Divers with disabilities

In the case of health concerns, the dive-medical certificate must not be issued for the sake of the diver.

Follow-up medical checks

The follow-up intervals vary: In healthy divers under 40 years of age, this should be every two/three years (depending on the national society guidelines of the issuing doctor), and yearly for divers above 40 years. In children, who are still growing and maturing, I recommend a yearly check-up. In cases of a restricted or limited ability to dive, one has to consider the basic disease and its manifestation. We examine the divers each year – sometimes even every time before a diving holiday – in some cases even several times a year (e.g. in phased diseases with exacerbation at times, such as MS) (See Figure 9)

Medical fitness to dive after decompression sickness (DCS)

Previous DCS does not necessarily affect fitness to dive in the future. The prerequisite to dive after a DCS is that the recompression treatment is fully completed and the body condition is stable, even in the case of persisting residual symptoms. After DCS, the examination must be done by a specialized diving physician to investigate the risk factors. Fitness to dive will depend on the findings.

How much can it cost?

On the website of the German society for Diving and Hyperbaric Medicine (GTÜM) there is an official recommendation for the costs of a dive medical examination. Those calculations are befitting a German doctor's expenses and salary, but may differ in each country.

As a general rule, a complete dive-medical examination inclusive of issuing a certificate may cost anything from 70 to 85 Euros, depending on the costs of necessary investigations and the number of available reports. In the UK, the cost of a full HSE medical is around 100 Pounds Sterling.

A medical dive examination in Egypt, performed by a specialist, should not exceed 40 Euros for the basic requirements. In case

CDWS member listings

The status list of our CDWS is updated weekly. It is therefore impossible to print an absolute up-to-date list of members in **BLUE** magazine.

Diving Centres:

www.cdws.travel/diving/diving-centers.aspx

Liveboards:

www.cdws.travel/diving/diving-liveboards.aspx

Watersports Centres:

www.cdws.travel/watersports-centers.aspx

Blacklist:

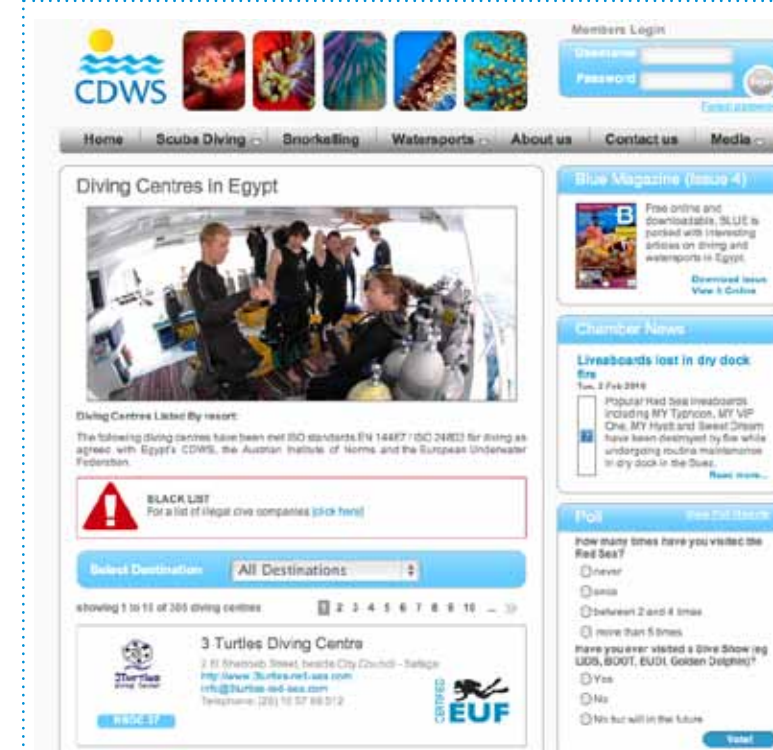
www.cdws.travel/diving/black-list-dive-centers.aspx

If you have a query about a dive operator, please email us at marketing@cdws.travel

Avoid Rogue Operators

Dive only with legal diving operators on your next trip to Egypt's Red Sea.

All CDWS member dive operators have met ISO standards EN 14467 / ISO 24803 for diving to ensure your diving safety.



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