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Muck diving is now a recognized broad term for (generally) close up photography, usually in terrible visibility and a dark muddy bottom resulting primarily in low light conditions, which may or may not be polluted, too! As the name implies, you are searching in a 'muddy', 'mucky' or 'murky' environment, moving slowly with additional lights to try and spot all of the weird and wonderful creatures that we used to miss in the search for larger weird and wonderful creatures! Do not let the name, muck diving, fool you; it is one of the best dive photography trips that you can do to obtain quite unique photographs. This form of photography encompasses all of your skills, particularly buoyancy as you will be working close to the seabed, if not on it. By its very nature, the muck does get everywhere, and special care must be taken with cleaning your equipment after every dive.

Indian walker or spiny devilfish (*Inimicus didactylus*), Lembah Straits, Indonesia.  
60mm lens, ISO 100, Sea & Sea YS180  
flash, 100th Sec at F:11

# Muck Diving







Snake eel with cleaner shrimp



## Muck Diving

Long-clawed squat lobster (*Munida rugosa*) and leopard-spotted goby (*Thorogobius ephippiatus*) St. Abbs, Scotland. 60mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 100th Sec at F:8

BELOW; Snake Pipefish (*Entelurus aequorus*) Scotland. 60mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 100th Sec at F:8

close to the seabed, which is invariably silty, so great care must be taken on entering and leaving the scene, so as

It is only in the last ten years or so that the term was first coined in the Lembeh Straits, and more specifically, at Kungkungen Bay Resort, which discovered a wealth of hitherto rarely seen or unheard of species in staggering numbers, hidden in the garbage strewn seabed nearby a major sea port in northern Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Muck diving need not be confined to tropical waters, as most of us have had to learn our photographic techniques over many years in British waters, and for me specifically, I personally enjoy exploring the muddy depths of Loch Long and Loch Fyne in Scotland where exotically coloured dragonets, gobies and blennies are framed in multi-coloured anemones and long-clawed squat lobsters.

However, many of us have already experienced forms of muck diving, underneath the Town Pier and Salt Pier in Bonaire; Frederikstad Pier in St. Croix; Tulamben Beach in northern Bali; and Papua New Guinea. Areas of the South China Sea, Red Sea and in fact any location NOT usually well known for its wide angle, clear waters, have inevitably been revisited, re-explored and reinvented. Now new and excit-

ing areas have become popular such as Raja Ampat in Irian Jaya; Mabul and many other exotic locations in the South China Sea.

The following subjects from Scottish waters illustrate that there are weird and colourful fish and crustaceans in colder waters. You will be working very

not to disturb the silt and perhaps ruin the site for other photographers waiting to take photographs of the subject that you have found.

What makes the creatures of the Lembeh Straits stand out so much (apart from their weird and wonderful shapes) is their vivid colours juxtaposed







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Yarrel's Blenny (*Chirolophis ascani*), St. Abbs, Scotland.  
60mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 125th Sec at F:11



Great Weaver (*Trachinus draco*), Malta.  
105mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 125th Sec at F:16

Pygmy Seahorse (*Hippocampus pontohi*) 105mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 125th Sec at F:16

as the seabed under them is always strewn with rubbish, which makes perfect homes for little critters and fish. What you are doing is a slowed-down version of macro photography, but with the option of seeing and photographing larger critters as they come along.

A friend of mine, Max Hillier, always used to say to students, "stop and smell the roses". Well, we are doing the equivalent

with the almost black volcanic sand. It is only with the use of flashlight that we can pick up any of the colours before we photograph them.

You can really go muck diving anywhere. One of the best locations is under piers, new or old. Old ones are always well encrusted with marine life, but new ones are equally as exciting,

Dragonet (*Callyonimus lyra*), Loch Fyne, Scotland.  
60mm lens, Fuji Velvia ISO 50 (scanned), Sea & Sea YS50 flash, 60th Sec at F:11



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Muck Diving



Octopus (*Octopus cyanea*), Lembeh Straits, Indonesia. 105mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 60th Sec at F:11

underwater—stop, slow down and examine every single tiny little bit of sea floor, as something may well be hiding under it, eating something on it, hopping, crawling or walking over it or swimming by, just minding their own business.

### Muck diving etiquette

Remember that other photographers diving with you will also have spent a fair amount of money and time to reach their desired destination and many can be quite aggressively eager to get as much—if not more—from the trip than anyone else.

1. As mentioned many times now, backscatter is the major problem we all face in low visibility conditions. We either try and avoid it by getting in ultra close, or we use it as part of the photograph and accept the back-scatter as a necessary element in the composition.

2. Do not monopolize a subject, as the subject may be light sensitive, and others may well be waiting in the sidelines to photograph the same subject, particularly if a guide has discovered your critter in the first place.

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Juvenile painted frogfish (*Antennarius pictus*), Lembah Straits, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. 105mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 125th Sec at F:16



Pygmy Seahorse (*Hippocampus denise*) 105mm lens, ISO 100, Twin Sea & Sea YS110 flash, 125th Sec at F:16

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3. Similarly, if you find another photographer in the midst of a 'shoot', do not intrude on the scene; this is not only extremely bad manners, you may also spook the subject, and therefore, really annoy the other photographer as well as lose the chance to photograph it, too. So, stay well away, have patience and wait your turn; better still, find another subject nearby to be more productive than just copying someone else.

4. Be careful of your buoyancy at all times, as kicked up particulate may

drift away from you, but can spoil someone else's scene. Some areas have heavy sand or rocky substrates, but many have fine sand or mud, which acts like waterborne talcum powder and gets absolutely everywhere. Treat your exit from a photo opportunity the same way as you enter the scene, with great care and awareness of the critter and your fellow photographers.

5. Many of the muck diving favourite locations are also keen conservation areas and have strict rules of con-

duct, particularly about handling subjects. Unsurprisingly, some guides may be less than subtle about inducing behavioural responses from subjects in the quest for greater kudos and gratuities. Please do not encourage this behaviour, as it totally makes a mockery of any conservation logic in place. ■

Sharptail snake eel (*Myrichthys breviceps*), Virgin Islands. 60mm lens, Fuji Provia ISO 100 (scanned), Sea & Sea YS120 flash, 125th Sec at F:8







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### Nikon D800 and D800E

The D800 is an FX-format, full-frame camera with a 36MP sensor that takes 7360 x 4912 resolution images and also features 1080p video with manual exposure controls that records at 30, 25, and 24 fps and the ability to feed uncompressed video to a monitor or recording device via HDMI as it's being captured. The D800E has the same sensor as the D800, but with the industry standard Anti-Aliasing, integrated low-pass filter removed. The AA filter is used to reduce the moire effect in some images



### BS Kinetics Negev

The camcorder is operated by a cable and/or infrared remote control in the housing. It is suitable for Sony, Panasonic, Canon und JVC camcorders. All camcorders can be operated with this flexibility. If one wishes to change camcorders during a dive, the controls can simply be switched to the new camcorder as required. The Negev has a broader range of controls compared to the Gobi because of the greater number of buttons available, which allow access to the camera's entire menu of options. A 3.6" TFT colour display gives a preview of the short. The display is battery-powered and lasts for up to 8 hours.

### Canon EOS 5D Mark III

Canon has announced the release of its new Canon EOS 5D Mark III full-frame DSLR camera. The EOS 5D Mark III is the latest in its enthusiast full-frame 5D series and successor to the popular EOS 5D Mark II. The new camera is based around a 22MP full-frame sensor and can shoot 6 frames per second and features a 61-point AF system much like the EOS-1D X. It can also capture 1080p movies at 24, 25 or 30 fps and offers high quality intraframe (All-I) video compression amongst a host of movie-related improvements. The Canon EOS 5D Mark III will be available from the end of March with an MSRP of \$3499 / €3299 / £2999.99



### E-M5

Included in the accessories package for the Olympus E-M5 mirrorless camera is a new polycarbonate underwater housing. The PT-E08 housing is rated to a depth of 45 meters and has a total of four strobe flash cable connections - two for electronic cables and two for optical cables. Olympus states that two ports will be available, consisting of a dome port suitable for use with the Zuiko 8mm (or equivalent Panasonic) fisheye and the 9-18 wide-angle zoom plus a flat port for the Zuiko 50mm macro lens.



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### Adobe Photoshop Lightroom 4 Now Available

Adobe has announced the release and availability of the latest version of its photo editing software. Lightroom 4 is a major release, adding significant new capabilities and innovations. New adjustment controls maximize dynamic range from cameras, recovering exceptional shadow details and highlights. The software features new and improved auto adjustments to

dynamically set values for exposure and contrast, and additional local adjustment controls including Noise Reduction, Moire and White Balance. The estimated street price is US\$149 for new users or US\$79 for upgrades.

For more detailed information about product features, upgrade policies, pricing and language versions, please visit [www.adobe.com/go/lightroom](http://www.adobe.com/go/lightroom).