



Jim Church School of Underwater Photography on Utila Aggressor
October 11 – 18, 2008



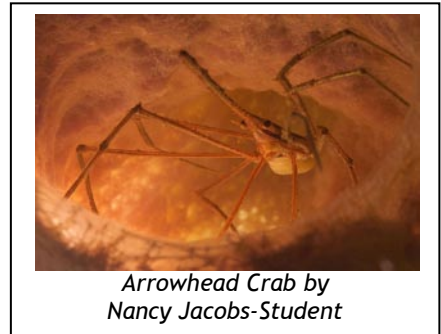
Class assembled around the camera table.

This week's photo class found us back in Utila, one of our favorite destinations for Macro photography. While there are some great Wide Angle opportunities around Utila and Roatan, the critters at the dive sites the Utila Aggressor visits continue to draw us down to their world.

Onboard, we had a mix of new faces as well as returning students. For a few of our past students, this was their first trip to Utila and they were anxious to get in the water and start shooting. So with cameras in hand, we set out for a week of great diving!

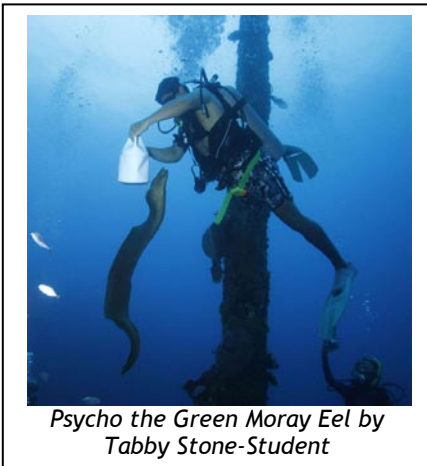
Starting with the very first dive, the photos were coming fast and furious. We had some overcast conditions the first day, so everyone opted to shoot macro. They were not disappointed. Yellow Roughhead blennies, Scorpion Fish, Painted Tunicates and Sea Goddesses were just a few of the many subjects we all found.

On the wreck of the El Aguila, Eddie and Nestor brought out their friends to pose for us. A six foot Green Moray Eel nicknamed Psycho, half a dozen Black Groupers and a various assortment of other fish



Arrowhead Crab by Nancy Jacobs-Student

made for excellent wide angle subjects for what seemed like a never ending show. One of the groupers had a hook in its mouth that was trailing several yards of line. Nestor and Eddie were able to coax it in close so they could remove the hook and the trailing line.



Psycho the Green Moray Eel by Tabby Stone-Student

The next day we all had a fantastic dive with the sharks at Cara A Cara off Roatan. Sergio, the local shark dive operator came aboard early to brief us on how to safely conduct ourselves and take pictures while in the midst of about a dozen Caribbean reef sharks. At around 70 feet, we all organized as per



Stew gets up close with the Utila critters.

Sergio's briefing and, as promised, the sharks showed up. After a few minutes, Sergio gave us the OK to swim signal and we started swimming with the sharks. The entire time everyone's cameras never stopped shooting!

While we were at Roatan, we also visited Mary's Place, one of the most beautiful dive sites in the Caribbean. Mary's Place is covered with deep water gorgonians, sea fans, whip coral, and more azure vase sponges than almost anywhere else. It is truly a spectacular wide angle location.



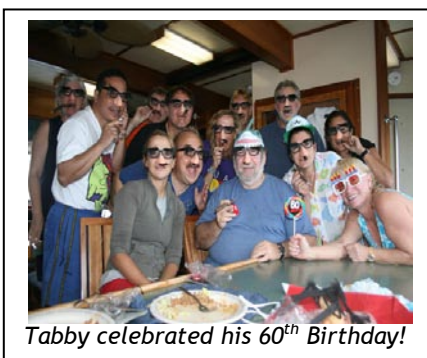
Yellow Sea Horse by Steve Jacobs-Student

As if all this weren't enough, someone wanted to know if we would be able to find a seahorse to photograph. Ask and you shall receive. Nestor was able to locate three different seahorses on three different dive sites. And on the last day, we had an entire corral of them. At Little Bight, there is a large sand patch with about a dozen seahorse living there. The crew are very protective of these creatures and they gave us a thorough briefing before the dive as to how to photograph the little guys without disturbing them. In the water, they were there helping to spot the cleverly camouflaged critters and just about everyone had their pick of brown, red or yellow seahorse. Nestor also found a red lipped batfish so there was plenty of excitement on this big patch of sand at Little Bight.

This week was also one of our advanced photo courses. Each day we presented different topics to help folks improve their lighting, get better at their wide angle composition, understand digital workflow, demystify Photoshop and much more. Mike and I reviewed everyone's photos and provide feedback on good techniques or help correct what needed correcting. We even had to perform major surgery on one student's housing to get the flash firing again. All in a day's work at the Jim Church School of UW Photography.



Reviewing Workflow aboard the Utila Aggressor.



Tabby celebrated his 60th Birthday!

The graduation show on Friday night turned up some of the best photographs ever shot in the waters around Utila. It was a great week, with a great crew. Our thanks to Captain Eddie, Nestor, Sasha, Al, Candy and John for another great week!

Mike & Mike