

ISSUE 2

FEBRUARY 2018

SCUBAH2O.COM

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$20

Scuba & H2O Adventures Magazine

HAMPTON BAYS' GLITZ
DISCOVER LONG ISLAND

WENATCHEE
EXPLORE & DISCOVER

DISCOVER CENTRAL TEXAS
HIDDEN TREASURES

MARVELOUS MALDIVES
SHADES OF BLUE



SCUBA & H2O
ADVENTURES

CONTENT

SE

ScubaNation Dives into Caves 6
Islamorada After Irma 8



NE

Nat Geo Encounter 16
The Hamptons 20



MW

OWU in Chicago 26
Shipwreck Festival 28
Chicago 30



NW

Divers Weekend 34
WSA Update 36
Lake Chelan 38



SW

Heart of Texas 42



Shades of Blue: Maldives 50
Underwater Photography Tips 56
Divers Alert Network 60
Basic Training 62



Alec's Tech Tips 64
Health & Fitness 66
Diving the Red Sea 68
Diving Almanac 74
Gear Check 76



ABOUT THE COVER:
Technical diver Ron Carlisle showcasing a fossilized snail - one of many invertebrate fossils found in Lake Travis.
Photo by Robert Weiss

Publisher: Selene Muldowney

selene.dnn@gmail.com

Senior Editor: John Tapley

dnn.editor@outlook.com

Interns:

Andrew Pierzchala

Reagan Muldowney

Regional Correspondents:

Gary Lehman - NE

Gene Muchanski - SE

CEO and Advertising Sales:

Rick Stratton

rickstratton.dnn@gmail.com

www.scubaH2Omag.com

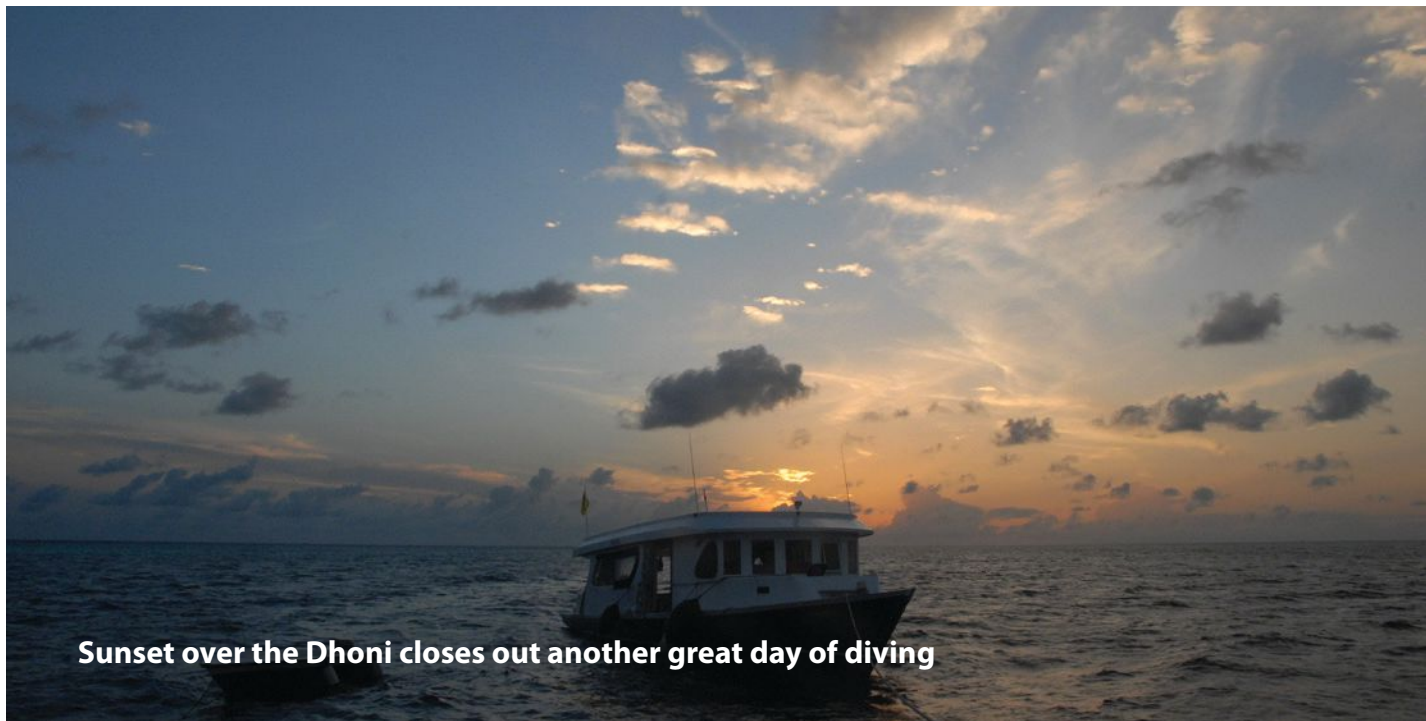
SCUBA & H2O Adventure is published monthly by the Dive News Network Media Group at PO Box 1494, Oak Harbor, WA 98277.

The Dive News Network Media Group reserves the right to refuse service to anyone it chooses.

© 1997-2018 Dive News Network Media Group. All rights reserved.

Important notice: The contents of SCUBA & H2O Adventure are opinions of individual writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, editor or any of its staff. The publishers and contributors assume no responsibility for any mishap claimed to be a result of use of this material. Adventure sports contain inherent risks. Improper use of equipment or improper techniques may result in serious injury or death. Readers are advised to use their own best judgement in each individual situation.

We encourage readers to participate in determining the content of this publication by giving us their opinions on the types of articles they would like to see. We invite letters to the editor, manuscripts and photographs related to diving or dive-related business. Send us your stories and photos!



Sunset over the Dhoni closes out another great day of diving

Shades of Blue: Diving the Central Atolls of the Maldives

Article and Photos by Michael Salvarezza & Christopher P. Weaver

Azure. Indigo. Turquoise. Aqua. Sapphire. Cobalt. There are seemingly innumerable shades of the color blue...and every single one of them seems to be on display in the Maldives! Standing on the deck of the Conte Max, the luxury Maldives liveboard that was to be our home for the next week, we gazed out across a patch of the South Male Atoll and tried to count the different shades of blue we could see. We stopped at seven... not because we couldn't count more colors but because the ship's bell had rung, indicating it was time for the next dive briefing.

From the air, the Maldivian Islands appear very much like a set of small stones flung across a wide expanse of the Indian Ocean. Each of these tiny specks of sand is surrounded by a fringing coral reef, creating the idyllic postcard perfect tropical island vistas prized by the resorts that have been built on many of these islands. The islands themselves are part of the coral reef systems of the various atolls that comprise the Maldives, atolls that have become legendary in

the world of diving: Ari, South Male, Felidhoo, Malaku and Baa to name just a few. While land based diving from the resort islands can be very rewarding, the best way to explore the vast ocean wilderness of the Maldives is by liveboard dive vessel.

Shortly after our arrival into Male, we met the dive boat and began steaming south to the South Male Atoll. Our objective for this trip was an exploration of the central atolls of the Maldives. Within a few hours we pulled up to our first dive site, Velassaru Giri, a massive coral outcropping off Velassaru Island. This was to be our "checkout" dive.

We quickly climbed aboard the diving Dhoni, a dedicated dive tender used by the liveboard to bring divers to and from the dive sites, and prepared for the dive. After a few minutes travel to the site and a giant stride entry we were on the reef.

Here, we were immediately impressed with clouds of Anthias darting in and out of the hard coral outcroppings

of the site. We also noticed countless Redtooth Triggerfish alongside the coral wall, each of them daring to stray only inches from the safety of a crevice in the coral into which they would quickly hide upon our approach.

For a "checkout dive", this was not bad!

Our dives at Velassaru Island included exciting drifts through the channels in the fringing reef and a dive on an unidentified sunken fishing vessel known as the Kuda Giri Wreck. This picturesque shipwreck lies perfectly upright alongside a coral dropoff, and is an ideal place to observe schools of brilliant red Soldierfish hiding within the wreckage. To reach this wreck, divers first descend along the coral wall and then make a short swim over the sand at about 80 FSW for about a hundred yards. In minutes, the ghostly bow of the vessel emerges from the blue and the wreck comes into view. Divers can swim along the deck, peering into the dark recesses of the cargo holds. For experienced

wreck divers, it is very difficult to resist the temptation to venture inside! Once a fishing vessel dedicated to removing marine life from the sea, today the wreck is home to countless populations of marine life.

Divers exploring the Maldives must be prepared for strong tidal currents that flood in and out of the atolls. These currents can be disconcerting for unprepared divers, however they bring with them breathtaking action. At our next stop, Gulhi Island, we dove Miyaru Faru Corner, which is a bend in the coral formation marking the entrance to a channel. After a quick descent to the reef, we were swept up in the powerful current and immediately began flying over the reef. Our hearts raced as we passed over hard and soft coral colonies, and glimpsed briefly the brilliantly colored tentacles of sea anemones flapping in the tidal flow. These flyovers were nice, but our objective was the actual bend in the reef, where the big action of predators and prey was taking

place. We were there in a few moments.

Using reef hooks, we allowed ourselves to float in the water column like kites and watch excitedly as Grey Reef Sharks, Jacks, Tuna and Eagle Rays drifted by in the deep water. When it was time to move on, we simply detached our reef hooks and resumed our "flight" over the reef until we reached an area where the flow of water diminished and we were able to slow down and enjoy the shallow sections of the coral jungle.

Further south, we next visited the reefs alongside Alimatha Island in the Felidhoo Atoll. The memory cards in our cameras were quickly filled to capacity with scores of macro and wide-angle images. For example, we encountered Green Sea Turtles, schools of Oriental Sweetlips and massive clouds of Red Tailed Butterflyfish. But it was the tiny world of macro photography that really came to life here. As we peered

underneath coral overhangs dripping with soft coral, we spotted many species of Angelfish and Butterflyfish, all of them featuring dazzling color designs like the bold yellow bands of the Royal Angelfish, or the mesmerizing line drawings of the juvenile Emperor Angelfish. Indeed, these fish can fairly be described as nature's true works of psychedelic art.

Before the Conte Max left this island for its final island destination at Guraidhoo Island, we made a unique night dive at the Alimatha Jetty. Here, as local fisherman clean their fish and discard bits of fish into the water, dozens of Nurse Sharks, opportunistic Jacks and stealthy stingrays congregate for an easy meal. For divers, the action is spellbinding as the Sharks and Jacks patrol searching for food completely unaware of and uninterested in the voyeuristic divers. We remained fairly motionless on a sandy bottom in about 45 FSW and watched as 70-80 Nurse Sharks patrolled above, with countless Jacks



A Juvenile Emperor Angelfish is hard to miss (Pomacanthus imperator)



The Maldives Anemonefish (Amphiprion nigripes) generally live in pairs or family groups



The luxury liveboard dive vessel Conte Max

slicing through the water column. An occasional stingray would lazily glide through the group of divers, scouring the sand for food. Although it is somewhat of an artificial dive because the marine life has been conditioned to look for food here, it is still an exciting dive and one that produces smiles of satisfaction every time.

Fierce currents and dizzying arrays of marine life characterized our final dives at Guraidhoo Island.

At a dive site known as Kandooma Beyru, we descended along a dramatic vertical wall to about 120 FSW and then began a brisk drift along the reef, stopping periodically to explore cuts in the wall where we could get out of the current and search for marine life and photographic

subjects. Its an interesting sensation to duck into these natural shelters and then turn to peer back out into the blue, watching divers and the occasional jack or trevally glide by in the current.

Macro photography is a challenge in fast moving water, but careful examination of whip corals and gorgonians revealed the presence of tiny gobies, each perfectly camouflaged to blend in to the host coral they inhabit. But stopping in the flowing water, maintaining neutral buoyancy, and focusing the camera on these tiny subjects while the whip coral or gorgonian they are perched on is flapping in the watery breeze is no small feat!

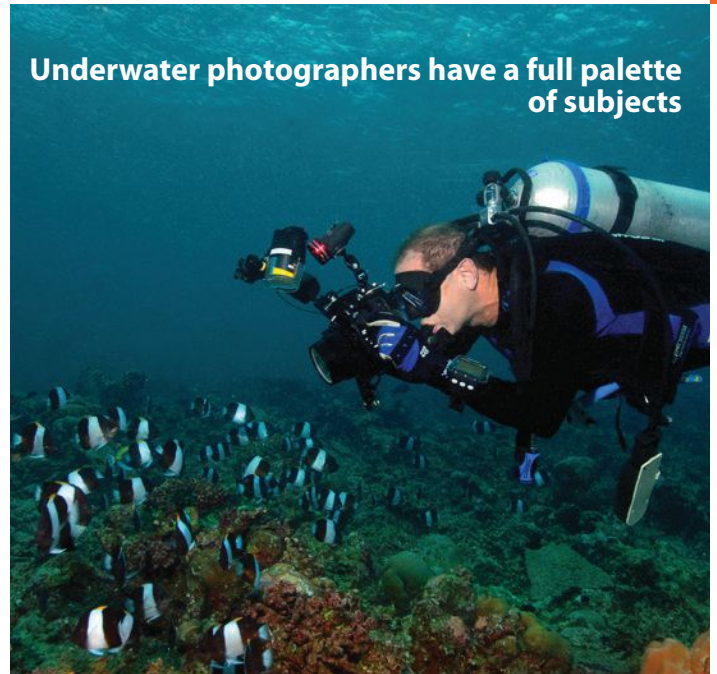
It was here that we also found a rainbow of large anemones, each

with their attendant anemonefish. Green, yellow, white, purple and even day-glo orange were some of the colors of these anemones, causing us to begin referring to the Maldives as the Rainbow Reef!

While many of our dives would begin in deeper water, often the true circus of marine life could be found in the shallows atop the coral heads. Clouds of Yellow Sweepers, Blue and Gold Fusilers, and many schools of snapper and grunt, along with a wide array of reef fish in eye-popping colors, kept us endlessly entertained. On one dive, an army of Convict Surgeonfish rolled over the reef feeding on algae and other detritus in unison while on other dives we encountered Napoleon Wrasse, Titan Triggerfish and the uniquely patterned Clown Triggerfish in the shallows. Indeed,



Clouds of Anthias swarm the reefs



Underwater photographers have a full palette of subjects

there really is no reason to go very deep in the Maldives because much of the interesting life of these reefs can be found in 40 FSW or less.

Pulling anchor and heading back to Male after a week of spectacular diving, we faced into a freshening wind and watched as Flying Fish took to the air ahead of the boat while dolphins cavorted in the distance. The northern monsoon was upon us and dark clouds hinted at troublesome weather to come. But despite the choppy seas between the atolls, and the growing wind and rain, the Conte Max remained a comfortable home on the Indian Ocean. Indeed, there is no better way to become immersed in the ocean world of the Maldives than to experience it from a liveboard dive vessel, free to roam from atoll to atoll and to discover the

wonders that lie beneath the waves in the Maldives coral jungle.

Getting There

The only international airport is located on the main island of Male. It is serviced with direct flights from Doha, Dubai, Colombo (Sri Lanka) and a few other destinations.

Visitors to the resort islands will next board speedboats or seaplanes depending on the location and distance of the resort. Check with your resort for arrangements. Many of the upscale resorts have comfortable lounges at the main airport where visitors can relax while waiting for transfers. Tours of Male can be arranged if the transfer time is longer than a few hours in duration.

Liveboard dive boats, such as the Conte Max and the Duke of York, will arrange pickup right at the docks alongside the airport.

A valid passport is required for entry. Visas are not required.

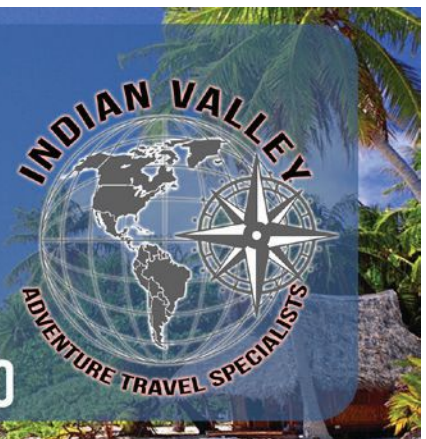
Baggage

Baggage allowances vary for each international carrier so check before you leave. There are strict weight limits on the seaplanes so check with your carriers before departing.

Weather

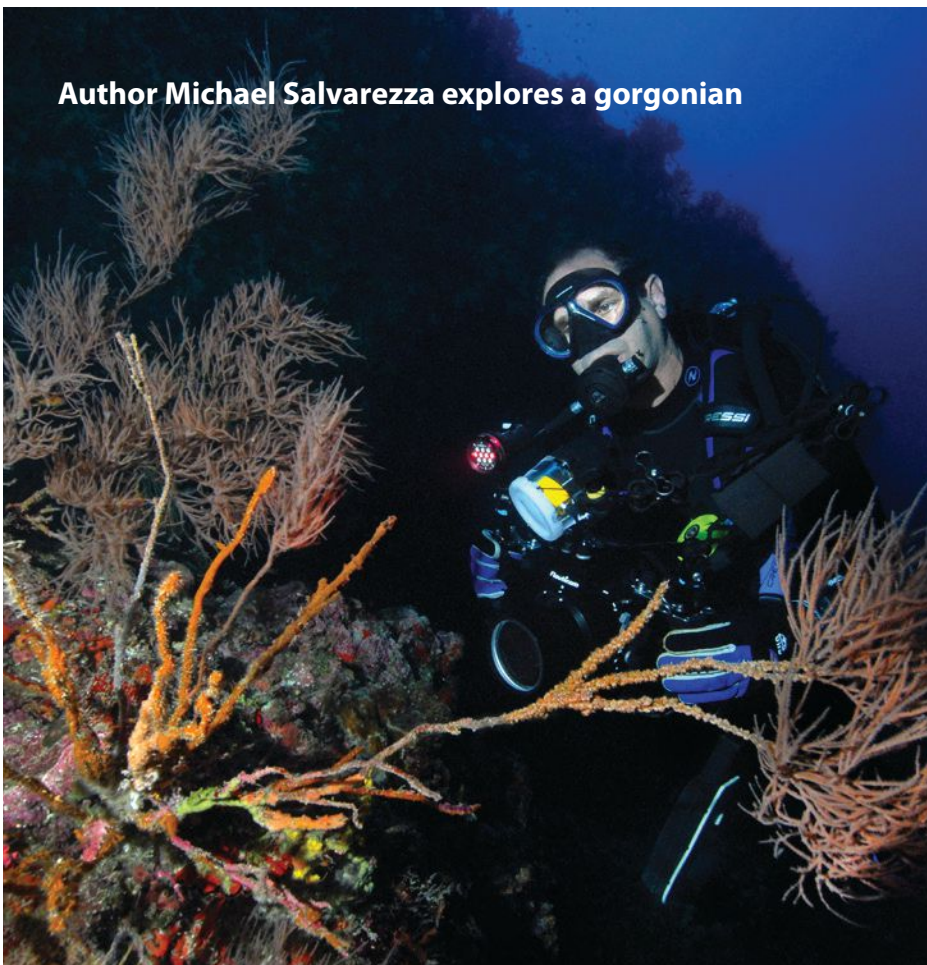
The Maldives has an equatorial tropical climate. December through

ADVENTURE TRAVEL SPECIALISTS
UPCOMING ESCORTED LAND & SEA PACKAGES:
AUSTRALIA & SPIRIT OF FREEDOM NOV 9-26, '17
FIJI & SIREN LIVEBOARD APR 12-26, '18
EGYPT & BLUE O TWO - AUG 10-24, '18
PH: 215.256.6000





A Giant Moray Eel (*Gymnothorax javanicus*) strikes a fearsome pose



Author Michael Salvarezza explores a gorgonian

April is the dry season. February through April is the hottest time of the year, with temperatures in the 80s and 90s Fahrenheit each day. May through November is the rainy season.

Currency

The local currency is the rufiya (Rf) but US Dollars and Euros are generally accepted at all resorts.

Electricity

Power voltage used in the Maldives is 220 Volts to 240 Volts (50 Hz). Be sure to double-check your appliance's compatibility before plugging them in. Converters / adaptors are usually available upon request at your hotel front desk.

Customs

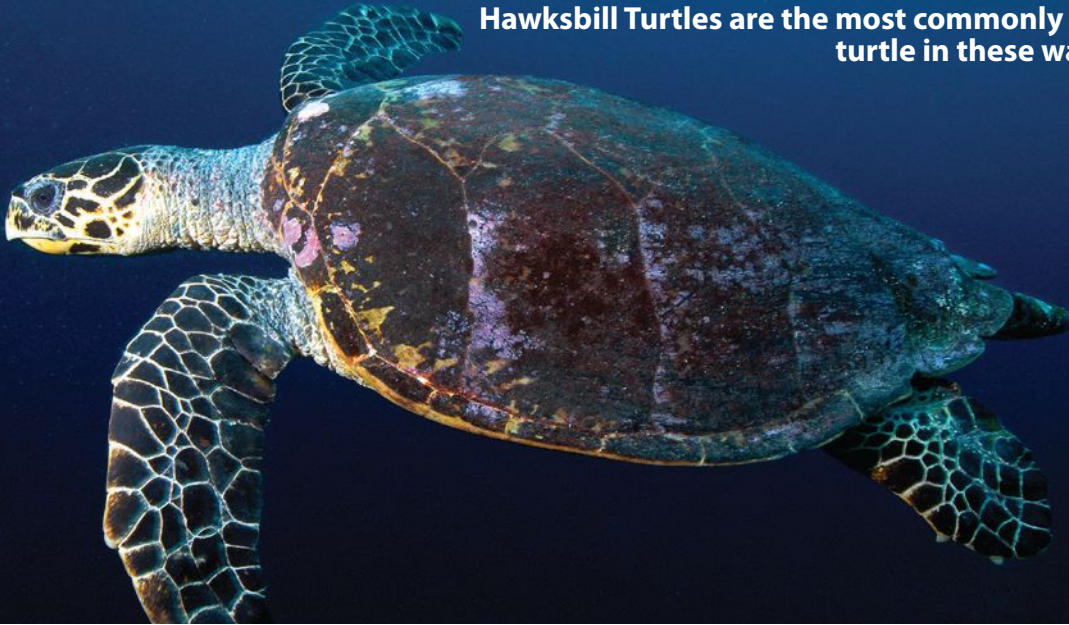
The Republic of the Maldives is a strict Islamic nation. Alcohol, firearms, pornography, pork, narcotics and "idols of worship" are among the prohibited items.

Because of the concern over evangelists spreading their beliefs within the country, attention is paid to religious items. A small crucifix, worn as jewelry, is unlikely to be a problem but a suitcase with several Bibles will likely create concern!

Conte Max and Duke of York Liveaboard Dive Vessels

For more information on the Conte Max and Duke of York dive vessels: www.luxuryyachtmaldives.com/about.php

Hawksbill Turtles are the most commonly seen turtle in these waters

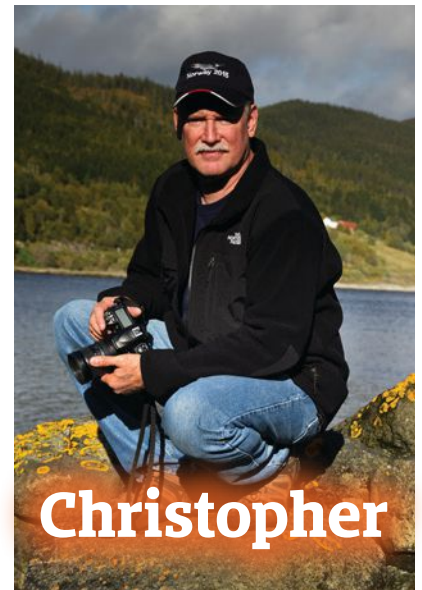


About Eco-Photo Explorers: Michael Salvarezza & Christopher P. Weaver

Michael Salvarezza and Christopher Weaver have been diving the waters the world since 1978. In that time, they have spent thousands of hours underwater and have accumulated a large and varied library of photographic images. They have presented their work in many multi-media slide presentations, and have appeared previously at Beneath the Sea, the Boston Sea Rovers Underwater Clinic, Ohio ScubaFest and Our World Underwater. Mike and Chris have been published more than 125 articles in numerous magazines, including National Geographic Adventure, and have authored numerous articles for the majority of the dive publications the world over. Their work has also been used to support a number of research and educational programs, including the Jason Project for Education, the Atlantis Marine World Aquarium in New York, The New York Harbor School Billion Oyster Project, The Northeast Ocean Planning Recreation Survey and the Cambridge University and the University of Groningen Arctic Centre work on monitoring the transformation of historic features in Antarctica and Svalbard. Mike and Chris are the Executive Producers of the annual Long Island Divers Association (LIDA) Film Festival.

Eco-Photo Explorers (EPE) is a New York based organization and was formed in 1994 to help promote interest in protecting the environment through knowledge and awareness through the use of underwater photography. Photography, multimedia slide presentations, lectures and freelance writing are all used to accomplish this goal. Christopher Weaver and Michael Salvarezza make up Eco-Photo Explorers. Both live in New York on Long Island and have been scuba diving together since 1978, but didn't seriously start photographing the ocean realm until 1989. Since then, they have spent thousands of hours underwater accumulating and putting together a large and varied library of high-resolution stock photography from around the world. They specialize in all aspects of underwater still photography (wide angle and macro), nature photography, magazine and technical writing and have produced many multimedia slide programs that are designed to educate as well as enlighten the public about the marine environment and the various threats that exist to destroy it.

www.ecophotoexplorers.com



Christopher



Mike