



Video courses with Jeff Goodman in the Red Sea in association with OonasDivers and Red Sea Diving Safaris

July 2013. Diving the house reef at Marsa Shagra in the Egyptian Red Sea is about as easy and beautiful as it can get when it comes to shore diving. I'm writing this on the last evening of a 2 week trip while sitting on the balcony of the restaurant with a cold beer in front of me and the stars slowly get brighter and filling the darkening sky. Looking out over the now dark sea I note the occasional splash and wonder what dramas of survival are being played out there just beyond my vision.

The first week of the trip was with Chris Moore who booked a private one-to-one course as he wanted to add underwater filming to his work CV. Chris was using his Canon 5D Mark 2 in an Ikelite housing bought from **Cameras Underwater**. With the housing he had a 50mm lens for general shots and a 100mm macro for bright sharp close ups. For lighting he used an Epoque EL-1000L HP A105 wide angle video light which at max output gave a useful 1000 Lumens.



Chris did not take up the editing part of the course but decided to concentrate solely on camera work. As the 5 days progressed we covered how to get the best from his camera in terms of settings as well as use. We also covered framing, lighting, exposure, colour balance and many other aspects of underwater videoing. Buoyancy control was, as always, high on the agenda. Many people think they have perfect buoyancy control underwater. But when they put a video camera in one hand and a light in the other and then try to stay motionless while shooting a sequence they find it's not quite as easy as first thought. Chris soon mastered the techniques and progressed quickly onto taking great shots.

Although Chris wasn't doing any editing, we did cover extensively how to video for the edit, to make sure he had all the shots for a good sequence and not simply a catalogue of pretty pictures. Chris's testimonial for the course can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FURoBBJ1bmM>

The images in the rest of this article are frame grabs from video clips and so the quality is not the same as a still photo. But at least you can see the animals I'm talking about.



The second week was spent producing a short video with Sarah O’Gorman who is the on-site Environmental Manager for **Red Sea Diving Safaris**. We worked on an environmental briefing video which is to be shown to guests on their arrival at the diving village. It basically lays out a few essential environmental rules that need to be followed if the reefs and supporting ecosystems are to be preserved for the future. Part of this briefing is how to deal with plastic waste and although great care is taken at the village to recycle, there is always plastic in the ocean from other sources. Red Sea Diving Safaris clean their reefs regularly and encourage others to do the same, but still the plastic can persist.

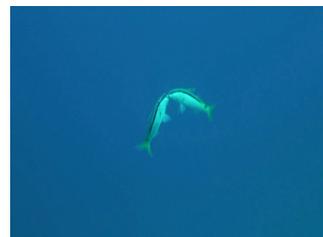


Here a **Collector Urchin** has captured a plastic bag to cover itself with instead of the usual sea weed or bits of rock and shell.



The house reef was really busy and the week started well with a rare visitor to the Red Sea, a **Blackblotched Stingray**. The ray was about a meter across and gliding across the vertical coral wall. It is generally harmless to divers but can defend itself if harassed. We know little of the life history of this ray except that it is very susceptible to over fishing and slow to reproduce.

Three large **Blacktip reef sharks** cruised the 25m north reef drop-off. The Red Sea **Goat fish** were doing their mouth to mouth mid water courtship display.



The **Moray eels** were in abundance, watching the reef from their holes in the coral. The young **Hawksbill turtle** made the occasional appearance as did the **Spinner dolphins**.





The fabulous **Blue blanquillo tilefish** were showing us how easy it is to stop dead in the water. If you see these fish at any time, just take a moment out of your dive to watch them. Their motion control is breathtaking. One moment they are speedily finning over the reef and sand and then in the blink of an eye they have stopped dead and are motionless in the water. They usually stop when they have spotted a possible meal below, they then dive head first into the sand to catch their prey.



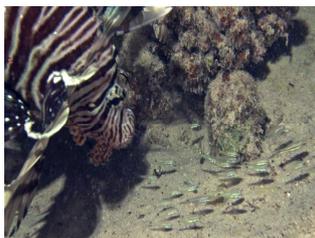
And of course not to forget the night diving where the life of the reef takes on a whole new character with a host of new players. The darkness that surrounds the well defined beam of your light conjures the imagination into new worlds and yet at the same time focuses the mind on the life captured by your lights narrow field of view.



The alien looking **Feather starfish** snaking out their arms looking for small prey.



The **Parrot fish** sleeping under a small head of coral.



A **Lion fish** following your torch light to spy out unwary smaller fish.

Then came my greatest surprise of all. **The Red Sea anemone hermit crab** *Dardanus tinctor*. It was to my pure delight that I watched two of them scuttle away from my light. It brought back vivid memories of my final days at photography collage in Plymouth UK where I made a short film for my finals on the British hermit crab *Pagurus bernhardus* which is almost identical, especially with the several sea anemones



Calliactis parasitica adorning its shell. For a moment I felt I was back in the murk of Plymouth sound, hoping my home made wet suit would stay together at least until I got out of the water.

If you would like to know more about the underwater video courses, contact me at jeffgoodman@supanet.com or look at www.jeffgoodman.co.uk

Further information can also be found at www.oonasdivers.com or www.redsea-divingsafari.com