

How to Capture Portraits of Ambush Predators

Tips for PADI Pros teaching the Digital Underwater Photographer Specialty course

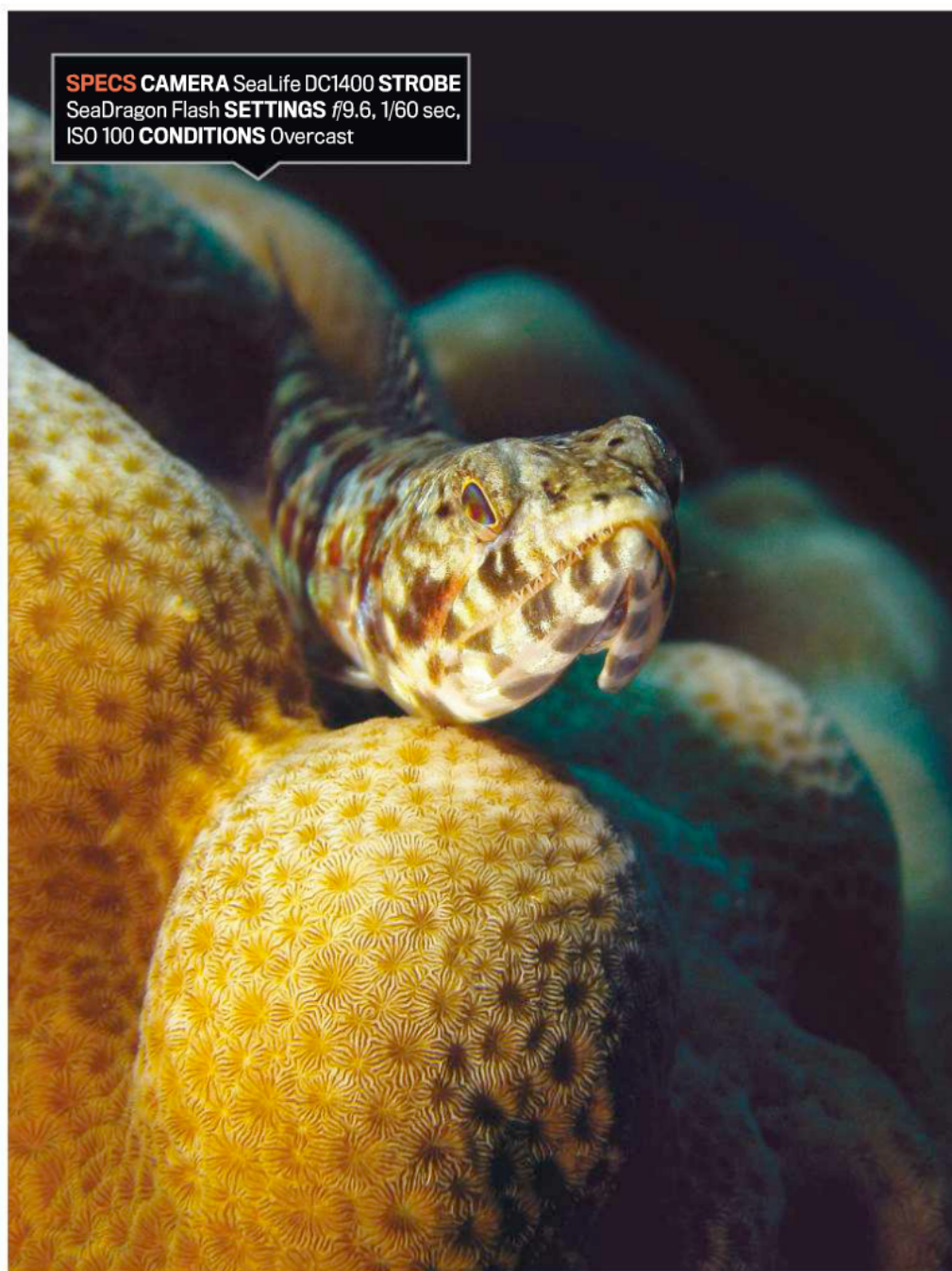
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Shooting marine life portraits might look like a relatively simple technique to master, but divers new to underwater photography may struggle to find the right combination of perfect subject, composition, lighting and timing to get shots that are “keepers.”

BEHIND THE SHOT

Ambush predators are great subjects to photograph because they are usually slow moving or stationary. I found this one perched in a perfect position on some coral. To capture the shot, I rotated my camera 90 degrees so my single strobe fired from the side. This allowed me to create shadows in the picture, which helped to highlight the position of the fish and its awesome teeth. By rotating the camera, the lizardfish and coral also blocked the strobe from penetrating the water column behind, creating a black background.

SPECS CAMERA SeaLife DC1400 **STROBE** SeaDragon Flash **SETTINGS** f/9.6, 1/60 sec, ISO 100 **CONDITIONS** Overcast



HELP YOUR DIVERS CAPTURE FISH PORTRAITS OF AMBUSH PREDATORS WITH THESE FIVE TIPS:

1 Use one strobe instead of two. A single strobe puts the focus on the animal by creating shadows that give contrast, while distinguishing it from the background. Where you place your strobe is also important, so

try different positions or rotating your camera if possible.

2 Get low and shoot up for a black or blue background.

Ambush predators are usually well camouflaged, so by creating a contrasting background the photo focuses more on the predator and it won't get lost in the coral or substrate it uses for camouflage.

3 Focus on the face. Ambush predators usually have awesome features, like a strange face or pointy teeth. Sometimes you can get a great shot by filling the frame with the face from directly in front of the animal.

4 Approach slowly. If you approach too quickly, you may spook the fish, causing it to switch positions (and, perhaps,

to a spot that's less photogenic or approachable).

5 Don't ignore the “normal” fish. There are many common fish you might ignore. Use them for practice to enhance your photography skills. This will allow you to try different light and framing techniques with subjects that are similar in size and position.

🔴 If you have an image and tips you'd like to share in Photo Corner in an upcoming issue, please email ashley.annin@bonniercorp.com