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Decapitated Slugs & When Anglers and Divers Conflict

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Can You Believe This: Competition for Under Photographers in their Bathtubs.

Organized by *Fourth Element*, the British diving suit manufacturers, and supported by *Underwater Visions* and *Paralenz*, this unique Covid-inspired competition attracted entries from all over the world. After all, if you're not traveling, how can you hone your skills? The whimsical image shot by Mikko Paasi (one of the Thai cave football-team rescuers) in a hotel bathroom in Jakarta, Indonesia, during quarantine, is incredibly inventive. He used children's modeling clay, hotel towels and flipped the image upside down so the viewer would reimagine the surface from below as the surface from above. There were four categories, all with outright winners.

<https://fourthelement.com/underbathwater-winners/>



A New Horror Movie? The Slug's Head Returns to Haunt You. It's bad news when discovering half a garden slug in your salad, but it may be better news if you discover half a sea slug underwater. You see, for at least two species, their severed heads can move, eat, and possibly even eliminate waste while they wait a few weeks for their bodies and their hearts to regenerate. Their other half, a headless body with a beating heart, will live for a few months before it begins to decompose without regenerating a head, say scientists at Nara Women's University in Japan. They were raising one species of sacoglossan sea slugs (*Elysia cf. marginata*) to study the slug when they found a living severed head in their laboratory. Their observations led to this discovery. *New Scientist*

Time to Act, Fellow Divers. Beneath Blue Heron Bridge at Riviera Beach, FL, on the west side of Singer Island, is a unique dive site thanks to the plethora of unique critters and macro, including sea stars, eels, seahorses, octopus, nudibranchs, flying gurnards, jawfish, and frogfish, and even eagle rays, turtles, and manatees visit. However, it's also a popular location for anglers who like to cast a line from the bridge. Jeff Nelson, a dive instructor with nearly 30 years' experience, says a handful of fishermen are deliberately trying to hook divers by putting a fishing line in the water with a hook that has no bait. While some fishermen want 24-hour-a-day access to the bridge, Jim Abernethy, who owns *Jim Abernethy's Scuba Adventures* feels there should be no fishing from the bridge, and divers should be allowed to dive under the bridge at all times. This is a unique underwater environment; fishermen should not be allowed to farm it. Let them fish off the shore, if at all. Riviera Beach District 4 Councilwoman Dr. Julia Botel, is trying to settle the dispute. She needs to know that divers from hundreds of miles away make the trek just for those dives and help boost the local economy. All of Florida's, unique underwater habitats are disappearing, and this is indeed one to preserve. Email her and tell her not to allow any animals to be taken from beneath the bridge, by fishermen or divers: jbotel@rivierabeach.org

Yes, you can still Dive Bonaire. Despite the information supplied to *Undercurrent* regarding the island closing non-essential businesses, we have learned that dive centers still provide filled tanks so divers can rent a truck and head out for all that Bonaire beach diving ... or dive the front porch of your beachfront hotel.

False Alarm over Aluminum Tanks. Though Luxfer will no longer produce aluminum tanks, it doesn't mean Americans will be without aluminum tanks, as we erroneously implied. Diversco reminded us that those ubiquitous Sherwood, Genesis, and Akona tanks are manufactured by Catalina Cylinders and will continue

to be available. Meanwhile, dive centers in Europe were quick to correct us when we said their steel tanks were heavier. In the water, because they have thinner walls than an equivalent aluminum tank, they're displacing less water and are less buoyant, and therefore, feel heavier. But, out of the water, they weigh less.

Paving Over Paradise? Indonesia has offered Elon Musk Biak Island, due north of Cendrawasih Bay, for a SpaceX launch pad and caused anger and fierce opposition among the island's residents who fear it will displace people from their homes and devastate the island's ecology. Russia's space agency, Roscosmos, also aims to develop a large rocket launch site on Biak island by 2024. The nearby Raja Ampat islands in West Papua hold significant nickel deposits. A coalition of Indonesian environmental non-government organizations has argued mining will escalate deforestation, pollute a proposed UNESCO marine world heritage site, and endanger the health of local people. *The Guardian*

Is this Turtle called Jonah? Florida's Fish and Wildlife Research Center's biologists dissecting a largemouth bass discovered a living juvenile turtle in its stomach. A kindly biologist removed him, left him near the water's edge, and he soon returned home. *TimesNowNews*



Changes to the Northern Californian Underwater Coastline. Using satellite imagery, scientists at U.C. Santa Cruz have found that the kelp forest off the Sonoma and Mendocino coast has declined by 95 percent since 2013. The cause is an explosion of the sea urchin population that feeds on it. Only eight years ago, it formed a leafy ocean canopy along the coast replete with fish, but scientists now worry that many fish and other species that depend on the food and shelter there might not bounce back. The unprecedented destruction was related to unusual ocean warming and an explosion of purple sea urchins that feed on it. If it does bounce back, it likely won't be soon. *San Francisco Chronicle*

Truth Aquatics Sells its Remaining Fleet. Glen Fritzer, the ill-fated owner of the liveaboard *Conception* that burned and sank off the California coast, killing 34 people, has sold his two remaining dive boats to Channel Islands Expeditions. Fritzer and Truth Aquatics haven't been charged with a crime, but they face wrongful death lawsuits filed by families of those who died. Channel Islands Expedition plans to operate the boats *Vision* and *Truth* in the waters around the Channel Islands and elsewhere in California. *San Francisco CBS Local*

Cold Records Made to be Broken (Again). Just as we told you about Czech free-diver David Vencl breaking Danish Stig Avall Severinsen's record for diving the farthest distance under ice, little more than two weeks later, on March 8, a Russian woman, Ekaterina Nekrsova, has trashed his attempt by swimming 336.9 feet. That's a spine-chilling 71 feet more. *Guinness Book of Records* might do best to

only pencil in these results because before we could send out this email, Finnish swimmer Johanna Nordblad went further (to 338 feet) under the ice. *Russian Freediving Federation/Green Water Productions*



Philippines' Reefs Covered in Masks. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is now washing up on coral reefs close to the Philippine capital, Manila. According to an estimate by the Asian Development Bank, during the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, that city alone could have been generating up to 280 metric tons of extra medical waste per day. The problem is exacerbated as the waste collected in underwater cleanups is added to landfill and later finds its way back into the ocean. This problem is becoming apparent all around the world. If only we could have seen this coming and ramped up production of washable and reusable KN95 face masks. *BBC*

Fiji Bounces Back from Disaster. Scientists are delighted that coral reefs in Fiji have recovered from the destruction of Cyclone Winston that hit Fiji in February 2016, which had winds of up to 170 mph. The Namena reserve and Vatu-i-Ra conservation park were especially hard hit. They collectively cover 77 square miles, with a landscape comprising various marine ecosystems, including shallow reefs, deep water passages, and small islands. The storm, the most destructive cyclone ever in the Pacific, reduced the coral reefs to rubble. *The Guardian*



Good News and Bad News. We reported that 2000 great sea turtles were rescued from frigid Texas water in February and returned once the temperatures were normal. However, now green turtles are stranding on beaches along Florida's west coast and are too weak to swim, lethargic, and low on glucose. Those rescued are being given fluids, broad-spectrum antibiotics, and vitamins. Blood cultures and tests are also being conducted. Could they be the same turtles previously rescued and released in Texas? *USA Today*

Tourism for the Vaccinated. Ben Davison's favorite diving destination is becoming easier to get to. Belize now recognizes those who have been fully vaccinated. No negative PCR test is required for entry into the country if you have completed the required vaccine dosage(s) at least 14 days previously. We're not sure what evidence you must provide. Another opportunity for American divers exists in the U.S. Virgin Islands, including St. Croix. You don't need a negative PCR test to return if you live and originate travel from the United States . . . Entering the Maldives without a PCR test might become simpler for those who can prove they're fully vaccinated against the ravages of COVID-19. The Tourism Minister has said that since so many countries now have vaccinations and since the Maldives were one of the first to reopen to those with negative test results, they're now considering offering permits for Vaccine Tourism. belizetourismboard.org/One *Online Maldives*

Manatee Crisis. A considerable spike in manatee deaths is being investigated, leaving biologists wondering why so many of these threatened animals are dying. In the first six weeks of 2021, 317 manatees died in Florida, almost half of last year's deaths: 638. It looks like it's an extenuation of severe losses of food resources for the manatees, primarily seagrass (they eat 100-200 pounds per day), which is killed by too many man-made nutrients from ground and surface water flowing in. *MiamiCBSLocal*

Whale Falls Victim to Plastic. The sperm whale that was stranded in Outer Hebrides islands off Scotland apparently ate 220 pounds of plastic while hunting squid. Scottish scientists reported the material included a scrap of net 9 feet long and 6 feet wide, a stack of plastic cups, and flat packing straps. Squid beaks were embedded in the ball of litter, which also included three bundles of fishing rope, fragments of rubber gloves, and rubber tubing. Our hearts break as we think about what we humans are ignorantly doing to destroy our planet. *BBC*

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Wear a Mask, Socially Distance, Wash Your Hands
Don't Share Your Air*

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Wash your hands



Wear a face covering



Give space



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