

The Bay category,
First Place: Rickard
Andersson

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Underwater photos by prize winners

A new photo competition has taken root on the western coast of Sweden, in which local and international participants can enjoy an exciting week of shooting underwater in Smögen and compete for attractive prizes. The competition is hosted by the dive centre Smögen Dive & Experience (Smögen Dyk & Upplevelse). One of the contest's organisers, Annika Malmberg, shares the story of the event, from the initial idea to the final result, as well as plans for its future.

For over 15 years, I have been a dive buddy to an underwater photographer. I have seen how the technology has developed, how the images have become more creative, and how more

divers are getting underwater cameras. Nowadays, it is almost unusual if there are not several cameras on a dive boat or at a dive site, alongside all the other dive equipment.

Competing in underwater photography is fantastic and fun but it can also be extremely frustrating. It is an adjudicated sport, and there are probably as many opinions about

the photo entries as there are people judging them.

Despite this, there is no doubt that year after year, divers will register for the Swedish Underwater Photography

Championship, and for me, it is not the prizes themselves that draws one the most but the opportunity to spend a long weekend with other divers with the same interest.



Smögen Photo Week

— *A New Underwater Photo Contest is Born in Sweden*

Best-of-show Grand Prize: Rikard Godlund, for his photos in each category, Animal Portrait (right), Dive Environment (far right), and The Bay (below).



When one meets the community of divers who take part in this event, it is sometimes hard to believe that it is a competition, which can lead to a place on the Swedish national team. The helpfulness, exchange of knowledge and sheer joy that takes place during these competition days between participants is palpable.

The idea behind Smögen's photo competition was precisely about this camaraderie. How could we get more people to compete with their photos and experience this community? Our basic idea was that we would make it as simple as possible to get as many people as possible to want to join, with the following guidelines:

- Low registration fee
- No time pressure, with an opportunity to compete for several days
- Participants would be responsible for their own dive plans
- Easy-to-dive environments
- All types of cameras were permitted
- No requirements for dive certificates, so snorkellers/freedivers were also welcome

At the start of 2021, these ideas came together in a real project. After a pandemic without the opportunity to meet at dive fairs, we immediately noticed that the interest was great, and we regularly released new videos in which our sponsors revealed what the prize table would include, and where competition

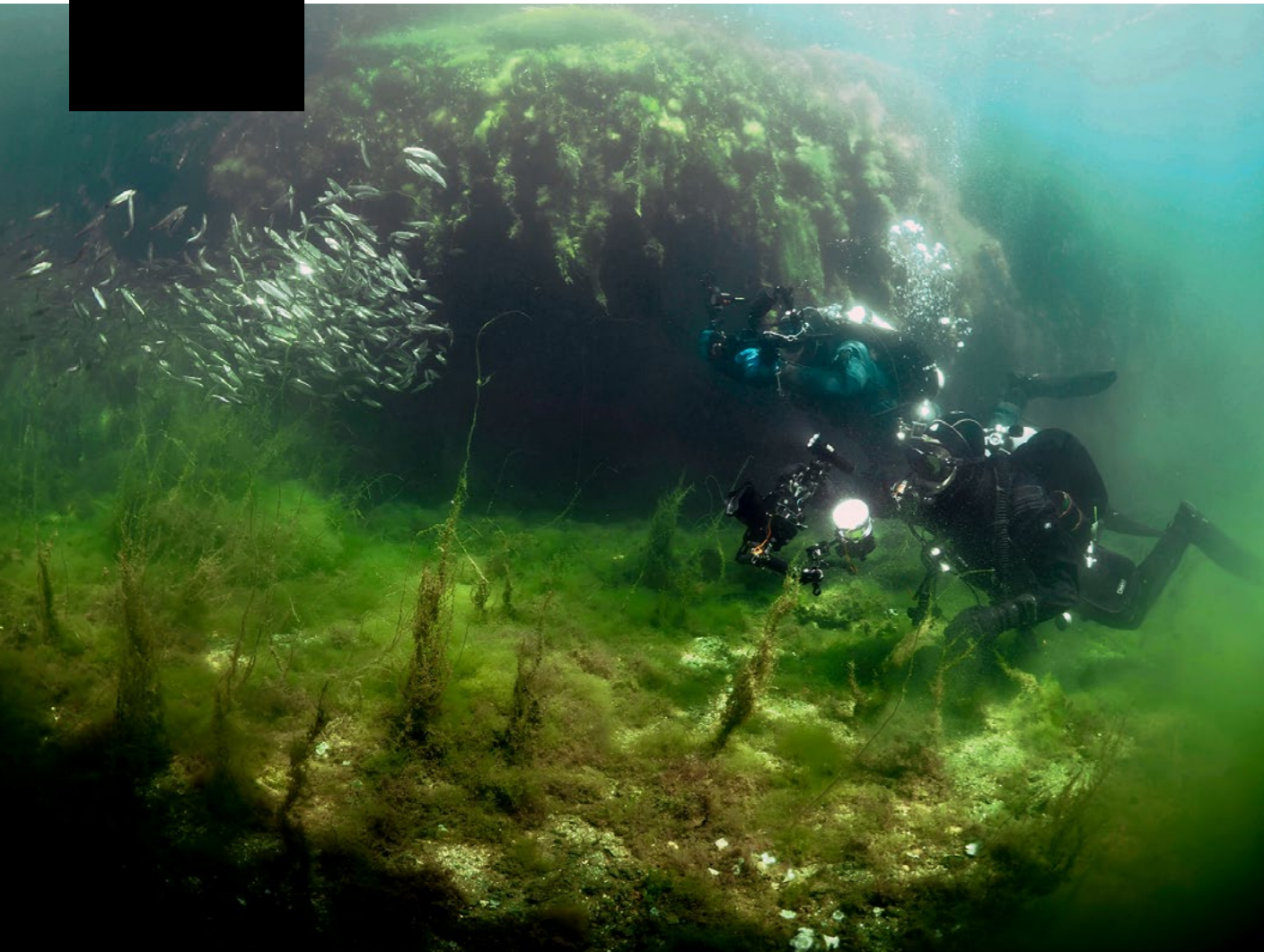
information was released.

Many people were curious, and we received very positive comments, but we had no idea how much interest there would be when we got to the week of competition.

Contest setting

There are several fantastic dive centres on Sweden's western coast that offer different types of diving and experiences. One of the many granite cliffs on the western coast distinguishes the dive centre Smögen Dive & Experience from the rest. This cliff area is one of Sweden's most-visited tourist destinations—namely, Smögenbryggan, a quaint waterfront area in the town of

Dive Environment category, Second Place: Johan Björklund (right); Dive Environment category, Third Place: Peder Pålgård (below)



Dive Environment category, First Place: Fredrik Blomqvist (right)



Smögen. The dive centre is located in a protected bay at Kleven Harbour, where there is also a hostel.

The place for the competition offered experiences for the whole family. In addition to shore diving, boat diving and dive training, there was also a snorkelling trail, as well as opportunities for kayaking and stand-up paddling (SUP).

During the summer, it was also possible to do rock climbing, swimming and more. In addition to adventurous leaps from the rocks, the mountain also provided a sound escape from bustling city life, with warm summer evenings at Smögenbryggan.

During competition week, we had food trucks standing by at the dive centre, but just a five-minute walk away was one of the many excellent restaurants in Smögen.

Competition week

The Swedish summer normally comprises sunny hot summer days but it can also be a little unpredictable, with rain and gusty winds. As we approached competition week in July, a big weight was lifted when we saw the forecast for glorious weather with temperatures over 25°C throughout the week.

However, how many participants and visitors would come to Smögen during competition week was still a big question.

One by one, however, they signed up. In the end, we had 32 photographers who submitted photos during the contest. Each photographer was allowed to submit a maximum of three photos, regardless of how many dives they did.

There were three different categories adapted for diving in the bay, and one could choose which categories to participate in. The participants paid



Expectations were high before the award ceremony (above) and 32 satisfied photographers were awarded prizes from the sponsors.

Animal Portrait category, First Place: Ronny Einarsson (left); Animal Portrait category, Second Place: Annika Persson (right); Animal Portrait category, Third Place: Ulrik Carlsson (below)



a registration fee of 150 SEK for each day they participated, and all kinds of cameras could be used in the competition, from small compact cameras to large professional cameras.

The three categories were:

• **Dive Environment:** In this category, participants would capture images of the underwater environment during a dive. They could take both wide views of the underwater environment, such as wide-angle underwater landscapes, but also views on a smaller scale of the underwater environment as in macro photography.

• **Animal Portrait:** In this category, participants would pho-

tograph any animal, but the focus of the shots must be on the animal.

• **The Bay:** Photography in Smögen Dive & Experience's own house reefs

It turned out to be a wonderful week, and it sometimes felt as if we were in the southern latitudes when folks leapt off the rocks into the water. Many participants tried out the snorkeling trail and went out on the bay with kayaks or SUPs.

The ice cream box was emptied quickly in the hot weather, and there were more refills from the ice cream supplier than in a normal week. The dive centre's information board, which lists divers

in the water, was quickly filled and had to be updated many times during the day to accommodate all divers who competed in The Bay category during the day.

Final day

It was another morning with glorious sunshine. The air seemed to be filled with anticipation of "D-Day," and many wanted to go for one last dive

was quickly filled up, thanks to a demo exhibition by the competition's sponsors in which photographers and visitors squeezed into and tried out drysuits, as well as tested

to see if they could capture photos for submission that were just a little better.

The wooden deck at the dive centre

drones, flashlights, cameras and other gadgets for divers.

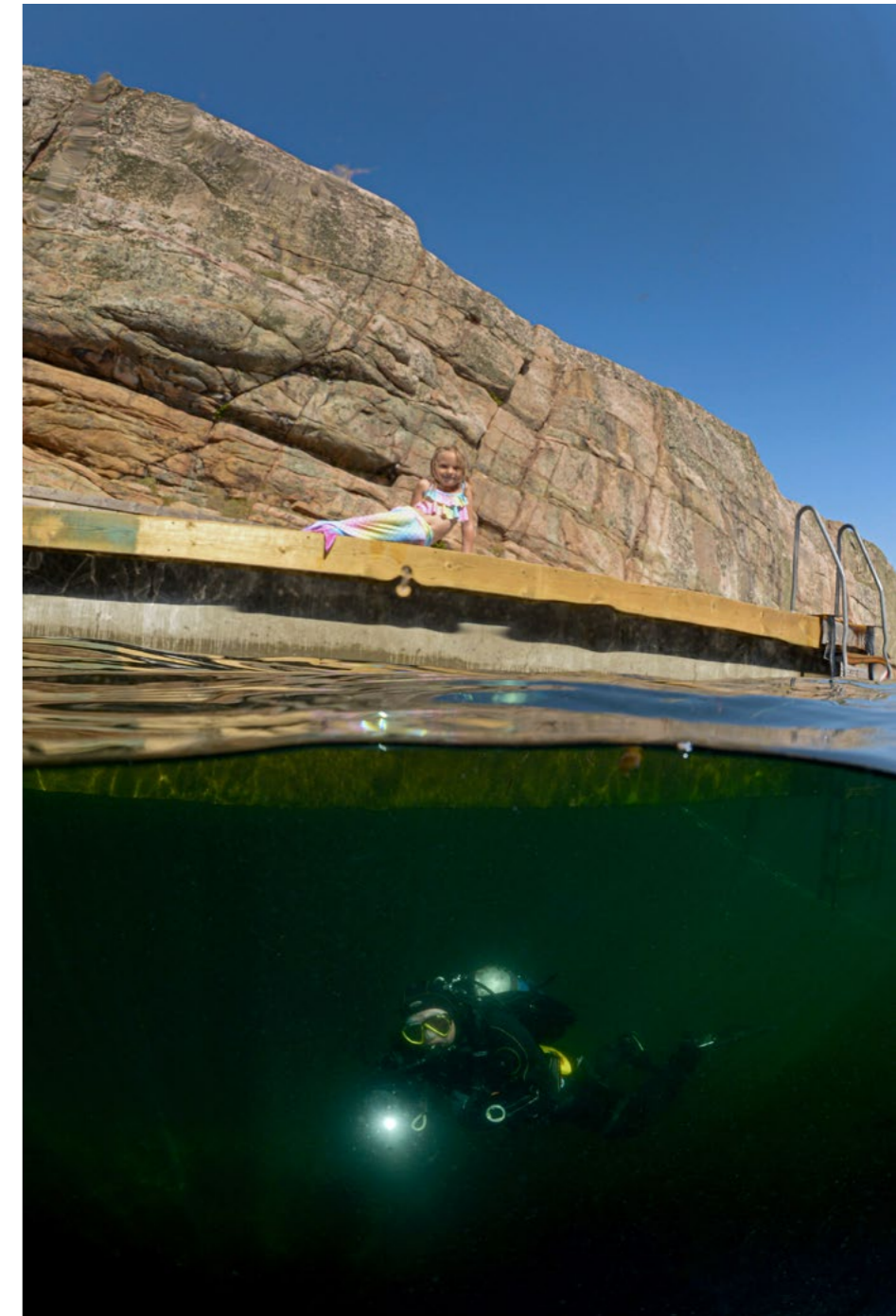
Tommy Jarnbrink, who coordinates the annual Scandinavian Dive Show (DykMässan) in Gothenburg, walked around and enjoyed the ambience. My guess was that he got a taste of what it would be like at the next DykMässan.

As we approached lunchtime, the remaining photographers were reminded that the jury would leave the dive

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The Bay category, Second
Place: Jennie Soriano (below)



centre at 2 p.m. and that all photos must be uploaded by then. Now, there was even more collaboration between the photographers, as USB sticks were shared, and online chat discussions took place about which photos should be submitted.

At 1:58 p.m., the last photo was uploaded, and the four jury members could begin their work amid peace and quiet in a secluded place.

While the jury worked, the prize table was sorted out. Thanks to our fantastic sponsors, we were able to give all the participating photographers a prize. The prizes for the first to tenth places had already been predetermined and presented, but prizes for the 11th to 32nd places were displayed in a large smorgasbord, which the photographers could view while waiting for the jury's decision.

There have probably never been so many visitors to Smögenbryggan as when we started to present the results. To increase the excitement further, the results for 11th to 32nd places were presented first, and the winners could then choose an optional prize kit from the prize table.

There was a great range of fantastic photos

that were submitted in the competition. We had many contest winners, but the biggest prize was taken home by a very proud and happy Rikard Godlund.

Conclusion of the competition

During the evening after the awards ceremony, I felt deflated at first, it was as if the air had escaped out of me. We had worked so intensively on this project for the last six months and, all of a sudden, it was over. At the beginning, it was just a fun idea, but it had resulted in an absolutely fantastic week in every way.

However, it did not take long before everyone's energy returned, and we started planning for Smögen's photo competition in 2022. After all the positive feedback from participants, visitors and sponsors, we saw that this competition could become an annual tradition long into the future.

The dates have already been set and the competition will take place in the same week as the first one, starting Monday, July 18th and ending Saturday, July 23rd. We have

already started planning for different contest categories too; for example, there would be a category highlighting younger participants. We have already received an offer from one of the sponsors who would lend a camera during the competition to participants who do not own their own camera. Keep your eyes on Smögen Dyk & Upplevelse's social media pages, where information about the next competition will be released regularly.

Both Swedish and international participants

The Bay category, Third Place: Patrik Kolmodin



PHOTO COURTESY OF SMÖGEN DIVE & EXPERIENCE

Aerial view of the location where Smögen Photo Week took place, on the western coast of Sweden. Viken (The Bay) is an easily accessible dive site at the dive centre with varying depths, which allows everyone to be able to participate in the competition.

are welcome to participate, and you can now register for Smögen Photo Week 2022.

Feedback from judges

The adjudication of photos by the four judges was carried out without them knowing who took the photos. They said, "It was relatively quick to pick out the ten pictures that we thought were best. The variety of submitted material was rich in content, creative and very mixed, which made it a very pleasant task to judge the pictures."

Comment from a sponsor

Activities that activate divers are things that sponsors are happy to support. One of the sponsors said, "To be on site and

see all the divers in the competition was really nice, together with [being one of] several sponsors who were on site for demo day on Saturday."

The sponsors of the 2021 event included Agir, AquaFun, Aquatilis, CBM, Diving Travel Network, Dykcentrum Gullmarsfjorden, Dykeriet, DykMässan, Dyk.net, Dykning.net, Exposure Underwater, Fotografit, Fourth Element, ICA Supermarket Färgelanda, Lars Duvander, Moderskeppet, Musselbaren, Nanight, Olympus, Paddeln & Pedalen, Reel Diving, SiTech, Smögen Dyk & Upplevelse, SSDF, Ursuit and Waterproof. ■

Based on Sweden's west coast, Annika Malmberg grew up by the sea and has

been diving since 1993. Her diving career began when she ran several dive businesses and became a dive instructor. Together with Klas Malmberg, Annika runs the book publisher Aquatilis, publishing several marine biology books and articles, and has created snorkelling trails. She is most passionate about new projects like Havskollo (Sea School) for kids and Fototävlingen (Photo Week). For her, diving is a healing meditation for the soul.

For more information (in English and Swedish) and to register for the next photo competition, which takes place on 18-23 July 2022, please visit: smogendyk.se/fotoveckan/



Photo of starfish by Oscar Godlund, 14, the youngest participant

Smögen

OG: I think the judges like it when you are a little unique. So, when I saw the chains, which I photographed, I thought that picture would stand out. Then, I found a starfish that hung on some sort of string. I thought it looked cool.

What was fun?

OG: That everyone got an award was good, and that there were many who participated.

Would you like to join again?

OG: Yes, but only if it is summer and warm in the water. I do not like to dive when it is cold.

Is there something you think could be better next time?

OG: If you want more young people to participate, perhaps some of the prizes could be more aimed at young people. ■



VILMA STRÖMGREN

The organisers and sponsors of the Smögen Photo Week competition

Edited by Rico Besserdich



Sealife Micro Wide Angle Dome Lens

Sealife's newest lens is designed as an add-on for the Sealife Micro 3.0 compact underwater camera. The attachable lens converts the camera's inbuilt 19mm (full frame equivalent) lens to an equivalent focal length of 13.3mm, and provides minimal distortion and softness in the corners. sealife-cameras.com



Panasonic Leica DG Summilux 9mm f/1.7 Lens

The new ultra-wide-angle prime lens for Micro Four Thirds, the Leica DG Summilux 9mm f/1.7 ASPH is constructed of 12 elements in nine groups and includes two aspherical elements, two extra-low dispersion (ED) elements, and one ultra-high refractive index (UHR) element. The 18mm full-frame equivalent lens has a minimum focusing distance of 3.7in (9.5cm) and weighs 4.6oz (130g). Dimensions: 2in long (52mm), and 2.4in (61mm) in diameter. The front filter thread is 55mm. The Leica DG Summilux 9mm f/1.7 ASPH lens will be available in late July 2022. shop.panasonic.com



Backscatter Color Filter System

Backscatter's Color Filter System is compatible with Backscatter's MF-1 Mini Flash, Macro Wide MW-4300 video light and OS-1 optical snoot. The full bundle includes a bold filter set, pastel filter set and two holders, one of which is designed for the MF-1 strobe. backscatter.com



Saga Trio Wet Lens

This three-in-one macro wet lens system by Saga provides three levels of magnification combined in one device.

Using external levers, a +5 diopter or +10 diopter lens can be rotated into position or can be used together for a combined +15 diopter lens. Saga recommends 100mm or 105mm macro lenses for optimal quality, but 60mm, 150mm or 180mm are supported as well. The device easily attaches to macro ports with a 67mm thread. sagadive.com



Seacam Housing for Atomos Ninja V/V+ Monitor-Recorder

Seacam's housing is compatible with the Atomos Ninja V and Ninja V+ monitor-recorders and offers basic control of their functions, including REC (record), PLAY, MON (monitor) and UNI 2 (free buttons).

Like Seacam's camera housings, the unit comes with a standard leak detector. The unit weighs 1.85kg and is depth-rated to 80m. seacam.com

