

A Year Underwater in Morro Bay



*Ken
Bondy*

*A Year Underwater
in
Morro Bay*

Ken Bondy

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to my grandchildren, in the order of their appearance:

*Cameron Dirk Bondy
Logan Andrew Dunn
Ryan Ernst Bondy
Elizabeth Kathryn Bondy
Megan Elizabeth Dunn
Sean Kenneth Tierney-Bondy*



Left to right, Ryan, Sean, Logan, Megan, Elizabeth, Cameron

*"As I once became part of them,
all these creatures of the sea are now a part of me,
in my mind,
in my soul,
in my dreams."*

*Christopher Newbert
"In A Sea of Dreams"
1994*

It can't be said any better

Foreword

In 2007, my 67th year, I made 20 dives on scuba under an old wooden T-pier in Morro Bay, a small town on the Central Coast of California. The old pier is called the North T-Pier, or the “Coast Guard Pier” because of the Coast Guard facility located there. 20 is not a lot of dives. I normally do that many in four days on a typical live-aboard dive trip. But for Morro Bay it is unusual to do that many dives in a single year. The dive is tide-related, because of currents and water clarity it can safely be done only straddling the daylight high tide. The window of opportunity is about a half hour before to about a half hour after the slack high tide. There are two high tides every day, separated by about 12 hours. The optimum time to make the dive is on a high tide that occurs around mid-day — lighting is of course best when the sun, along with the tide, is high. Those conditions, a mid-day high tide, don’t happen all that often. When they do, of course my schedule has to cooperate. All things considered, 20 dives in a single year is a lot of dives for Morro Bay.

I made 3 of these dives with my daughter Coleen and my brother-in-law Gary Powell, I made 12 of them with just Gary, and the remaining 5 dives were made alone. During those 20 dives I made 1255 photographic images, an average of 63 per dive. When I was using film for underwater photography, I could only make 36 images on each dive; now with my digital equipment I can make 153 high-resolution RAW images on a single dive. Dive times were typically about one hour. The maximum depth I achieved on any of the dives was 31 fsw (feet of sea water.) Many of the images were made at a depth of 15 feet or less. The lowest water temperature I measured on these dives was 50°F in December and the highest temperature was 57°F in August and September.

The other unusual thing about these particular 20 dives is that I made at least one of them during each month of the year. In the twenty years I have been diving here, this is the first year in which I managed to dive it at least once in each month. As a result, this book is organized by months of the year, showing photos made in each month. I have noticed subtle changes in the animals and invertebrates that are seen here by season. Some animals are here all the time, like the stunningly beautiful *Hermisenda crassicornis* nudibranchs, some are clearly seasonal, like the appearance of *Triopha* species of nudibranchs in the late summer.

You certainly can’t tell, just by looking at it, that this old pier is one of the best dive sites in California, and ranks among the best “muck dives” in the entire world. Under its creaky wood deck, on a silty sand bottom, an amazing number of animals, vertebrates and invertebrates, live out their lives in and on an eclectic collection of man-made junk, on the piles, dug into the silty bottom, stalking their prey in beer bottles, PVC pipe, toilets, tires, old engine blocks, boomboxes. These animals are some of the most beautiful and bizarre creatures in the world. I sure don’t claim to have seen all the critters living under this pier, but this book will show some that I have found, all in one twelve-month period.



The author, ready to hit the water (May 17, 2007, photo by Pam Bondy)

January



Nudibranch, *Hermisenda crassicornis*, on red bryozoan.



Metridium senile anemones on piling.



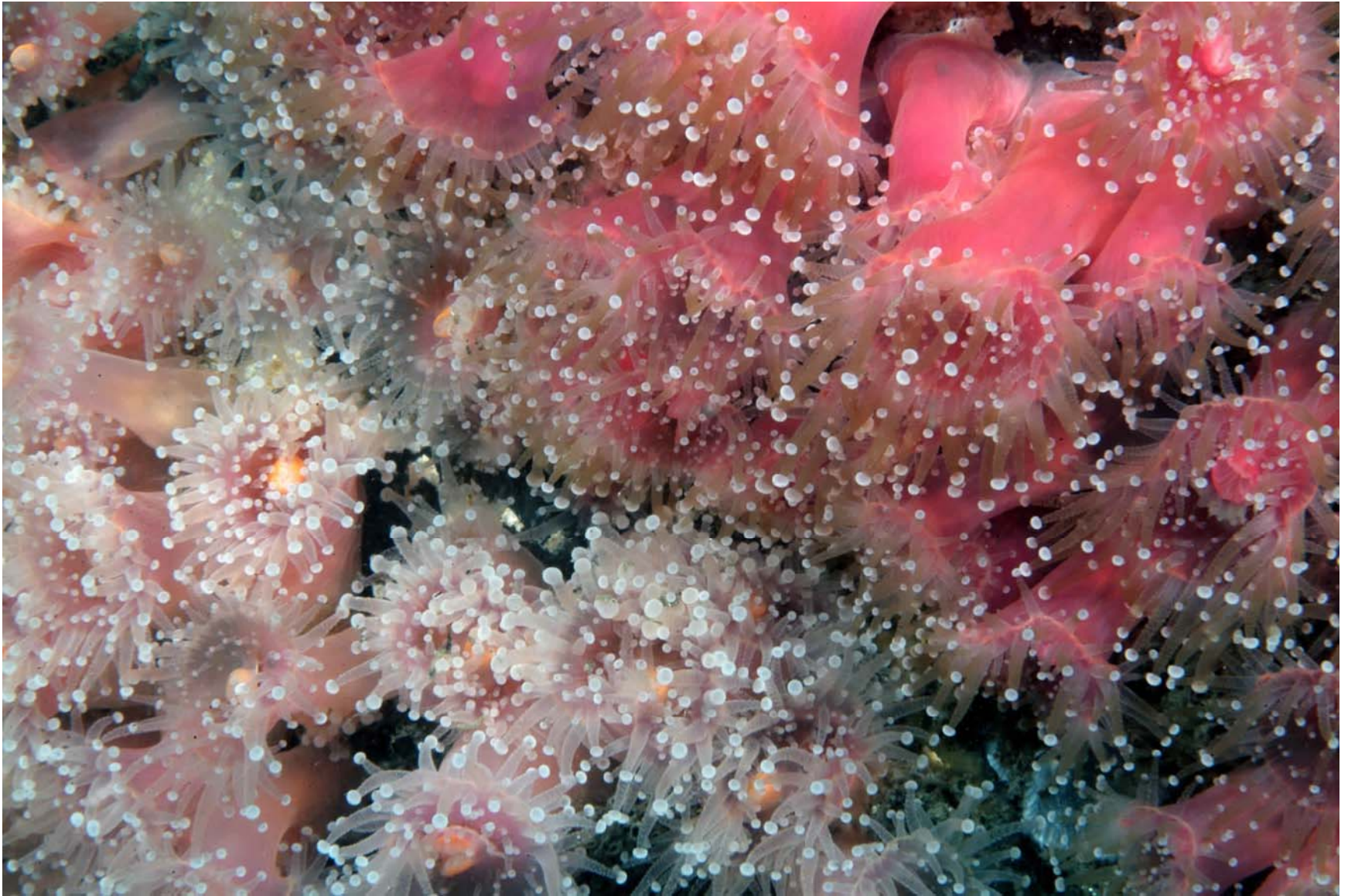
Tube anemone in red bryozoan, possibly *Halcurias pilatus*.



White anemone *Metridium senile*.



Gold anemone *Metridium senile*.



Borderline between two color variations of anemones *Corynactis californica*.



Moonglow anemone *Anthropleura artemisia*.

February



Hermit crab.



Shrimp *Heptacarpus palpator* on red starfish.



Nudibranch *Hermisenda crassicornis*.



Fringehead (*Neoclinus uninotatus*) spitting out piece of debris I had placed at the edge of its home, a length of 2" diameter PVC pipe.



Two nudibranch species squaring off, *Hermissenda crassicornis* at left, *Flabellina trilineata* at right.



Ling cod.



Nudibranch *Hermissenda crassicornis*.

March



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus* in PVC pipe.



Crab in red *bryozoan*.



Hermissenda with deformed right oral tentacle.



Gold *Metridium*.



Orange fringehead in tube encrusted with red *bryozoan*.



Pair of puff nudibranchs *Acanthodoris lutea* in pre-mating behavior.



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus*.



Hermit crab carrying two living and feeding barnacles on its shell.



Hermit crab in red *bryozoan*.



Flabellina trilineata nudibranch.



Tubeworms *Spirobranchus spinosus*.

April



"Tailing" pair of *Acanthodoris lutea* nudibranchs.



Feeding barnacle and horseneck clam siphon intake.



Sarcastic fringehead *Neoclinus blanchardi*.



San Diego nudibranch *Diaulula sandiegensis* with *Hermisenda* in upper left background.



Flabellina trilineata nudibranch.



Crab *Cancer antennarius*.



Small crab.

May



Hermit crab in *Corynactis anemones*.



Black-eyed goby *Coryphopterus nicholsii*.



Sarcastic fringehead *Neoclinus blanchardi* in bottle.



Tube worms *Spirobranchus spinosus*.



One-spot fringehead and *Hermissenda*.



Orange fringehead.



Nudibranch *Aeolidia papillosa*.

June



Small white *Metridium* anemone in red bryozoan.



Barnacle in *Corynactis*.



Four *Hermissendas*.



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus*.



Hermisenda on horseneck clam siphon.



Coon-striped shrimp *Pandalus danae* in sea grass.



Tubeworm *Spirobranchus spinosus*.



White *Metridium* anemones.



Corynactis anemones.



Corynactis anemones.



Corynactis anemones.



Hermisenda and barnacle.



White *Metridium* on vertical surface of power-plant intake grate.



Tubeworm *Spirobranchus spinosus*.



Tubeworms *Spirobranchus spinosus*.



Hermit crab with 2 barnacles, small *Acanthodoris rhodoceras* nudibranch on clam siphon at lower right.



Same hermit crab with curious shrimp peeking over shoulder at right near clam siphon — small *Acanthadoris* nudibranch still partially visible behind clam siphon.



Octopus.



Octopus.



Shrimp *Pandalus danae* in red bryozoan, *Hermisenda* in lower right corner.



Small crab on red *bryozoan*.



Coon-striped shrimp *Pandalus danae*.



Small sculpin with anemone.



Small sculpin.



Small shrimp in bottle.

July



Triopha maculata nudibranch (first sighting of the year.)



Shrimp *Pandalus danae* on red starfish.



Two shrimp *Pandalus danae* on red starfish (one is tugging on the other's tail at the left.)



Shrimp *Pandalus danae* on red starfish.



Janolus barbarensis, one of the most beautiful nudibranchs in the world.



Janolus barbarensis nudibranch.



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus*.



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus* in bottle.



Crab.



Clown nudibranch, *Triopha catalinea*.



Two nudibranch species, *Hermissenda crassicornis* below, *Triopha maculata* above.

August



Horseneck clam siphon, water out at left, water in at right.



Octopus.



Hermisenda crassicornis nudibranch.



Dungeness crab *Cancer magister*.



Metridium anemones.



Tube anemones.



Polycera atra nudibranch.



Polycera atra nudibranch.



Moonglow anemone *Anthropleura artemisia*.



Shrimp *Pandalus danae* with tubeworms *Spirobranchus spinosus*.



Moonglow anemone *Anthropleura artemisia*.



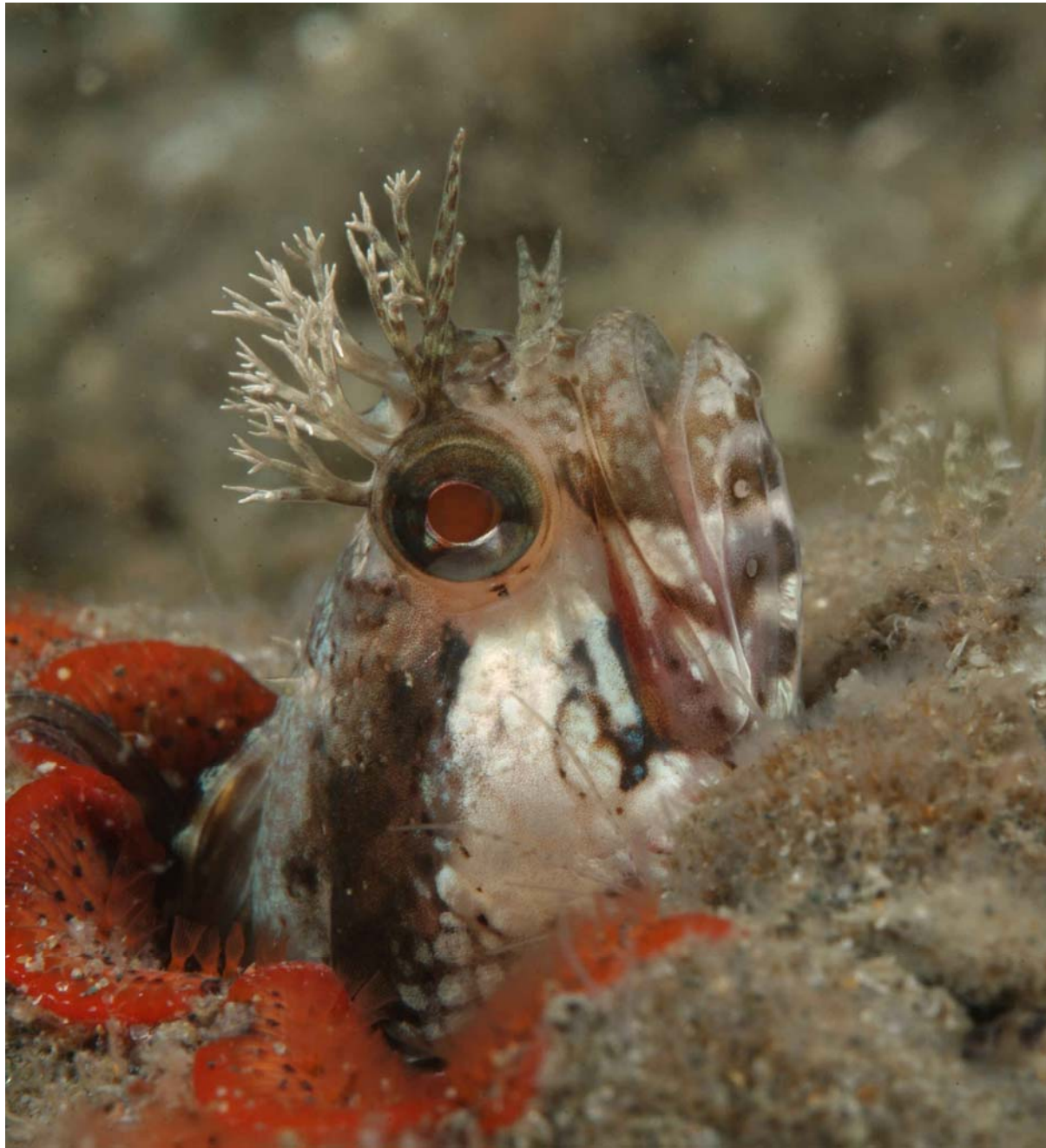
Triopha catalinae nudibranch.



Flabellina trilineata nudibranch in bryozoan.



Squadron of *Hermissenda nudibranchs*.



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus*.

September



Triopha catalinae, clown nudibranch.



Sarcastic fringehead with small cleaner shrimp coming out of its mouth.



Shy little octopus.



One-spot fringehead with great hair.



Lemon "dirty" dorid, *Doris montereyensis*.



San Diego nudibranch *Diaulula sandiegensis*.



Small tube anemone with beautiful shaft.



Triopha maculata nudibranch with small *Hermisenda crassicornis* at lower left.



Nudibranch *Triopha maculata*.

October



Nudibranch, *Flabellina trilineata*.



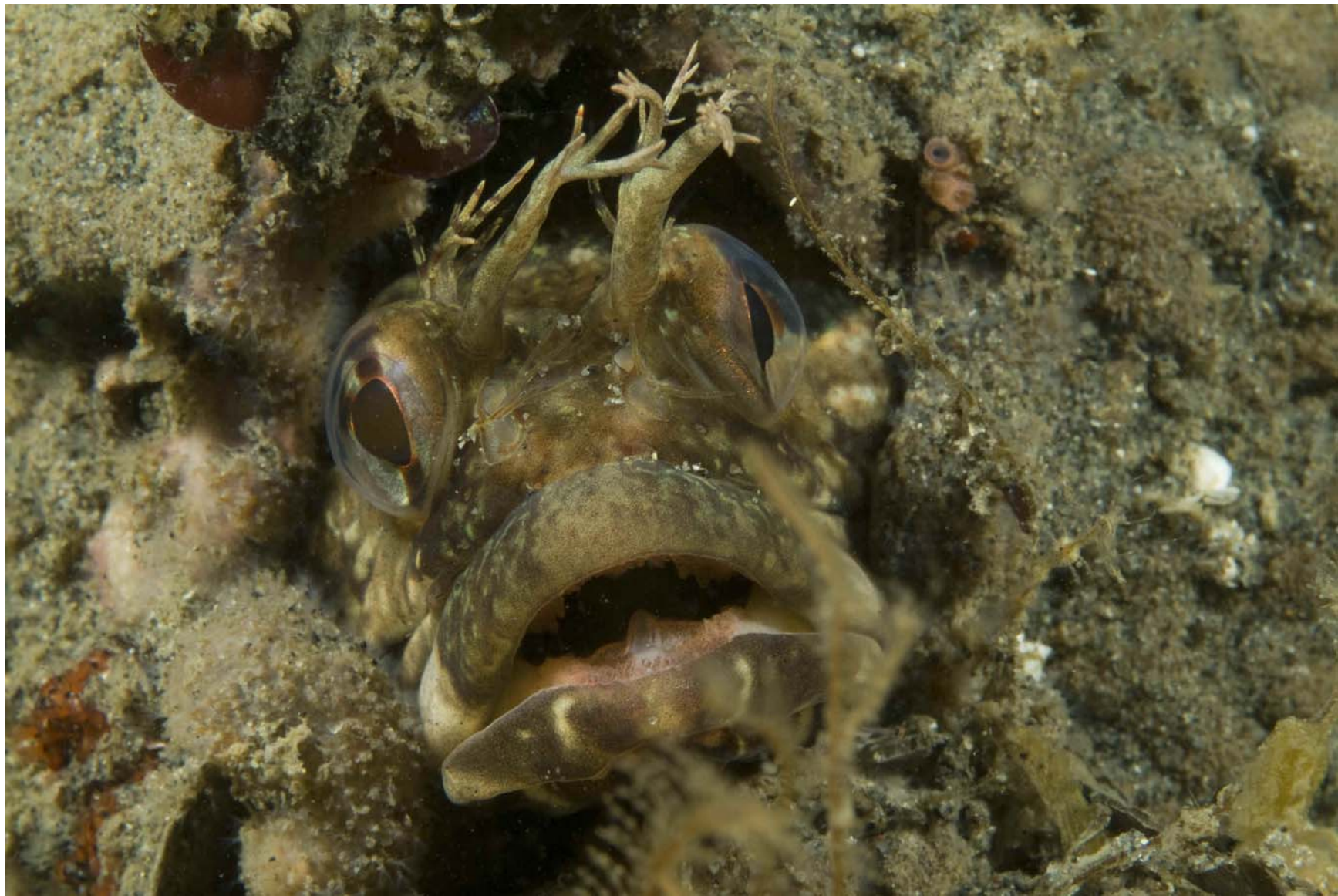
Tube anemone.



Triopha catalinae "clown" nudibranch.



One-spot fringehead.



One-spot fringehead.



One-spot fringehead in a newly-discarded Parrot Bay rum bottle. I think I know why he was so mellow.



One-spot fringehead in newly-discarded Parrot Bay rum bottle.

November



Polycera atra nudibranch.



Shrimp *Pandalus danae*.



Tubeworm cluster.



One-spot fringehead *Neoclinus uninotatus*.



Hermissenda nudibranch on kelp.



Unidentified.



Feeding barnacle in *Corynactis* anemones.

December



Clown nudibranch *Triopha catalinae* passing *Hermisenda* nudibranch on sand/silt bottom.



Pale orange *Corynactis* anemones.



Tubeworm *Spirobranchus spinosus* with trumpet-shaped operculum in front. The operculum covers the tube when the worm retracts.



White *Metridium* anemone, red starfish, and little *Hermisenda* nudibranch.



Hermissenda nudibranch laying eggs on a kelp blade. The eggs are the whitish tangled mass just below the body of the nudibranch.



Barnacle with extended tentacles feeding in the current.



Trilineata nudibranch.



Shrimp *Pandalus danae*.



Lemon doris *Doris montereyensis*.



A rare find, a pipefish *Syngnathus leptorhynchus*. Pipefishes are closely related to seahorses.



Pipefish *Syngnathus leptorhynchus*.

Details, details.....

All of the underwater images in this book were made with a Fuji S2 Pro Digital SLR camera (RAW format), either a Nikon 60mm or 105mm Macro lens, in a Subal FS2 aluminum housing with a flat lens port, and two Nikon SB-105 strobes. I use a DUI TLS 350 drysuit, DUI weight harness, SeaQuest QD Pro buoyancy compensator, Scubapro G250 regulator, Oceanic ProPlus2 air-integrated dive computer.

Species

Scientific Name	Common Name	Page
<i>Acanthodoris lutea</i>	Yellow dorid	23, 30
<i>Acanthodoris rhodoceras</i>	Red-tipped dorid	61, 62
<i>Aeolidia papillosa</i>	Shaggy nudibranch	44
<i>Anthropleura artemisia</i>	Moonglow anemone	8, 92, 94
<i>Artedius coralinus</i>	Sculpin	68, 69
<i>Cancer antennarius</i>	Crab	35
<i>Cancer magister</i>	Dungeness crab	87
<i>Cancer sp.</i>	Crab	19, 80
<i>Corynactis californica</i>	Strawberry anemone	7, 47, 54, 55, 56, 124, 127
<i>Coryphopterus nicholsii</i>	Black-eyed goby	39
<i>Diaulula sandiegensis</i>	San Diego dorid	33, 105
<i>Doris montereyensis</i>	Lemon dorid	104, 134
<i>Enhydra lutris</i>	Sea otter	Front cover
<i>Flabellina trilineata</i>	Three-lined aeolid	14, 27, 34, 96, 110, 132
<i>Halcurias pilatus</i>	Tube anemone	4, 89, 106, 111
<i>Heptacarpus palpator</i>	Shrimp	11
<i>Hermisenda crassicornis</i>	Thick-horned aeolid	2, 12, 14, 16, 20, 33, 42, 48, 50, 57, 65, 82, 86, 97, 107, 122, 126, 129, 130
<i>Janolus barbarensis</i>	Santa Barbara nudibranch	76, 77
<i>Loxorhynchus crispatus</i>	Decorator crab	36, 66
<i>Mediaster aequalis</i>	Red starfish	129
<i>Megabalanus californicus</i>	Acorn barnacle	25, 31, 47, 57, 62, 124, 131
<i>Metridium senile</i>	Plumose anemone	3, 5, 6, 21, 46, 53, 58, 88, 129
<i>Neoclinus blanchardi</i>	Sarcastic fringehead	32, 40, 101
<i>Neoclinus stephensae</i>	Yellowfin (Orange) fringehead	22, 43
<i>Neoclinus uninotatus</i>	One-spot fringehead	13, 18, 24, 42, 49, 78, 79, 98, 103, 113, 114, 115, 116, 121
<i>Octopus sp.</i>	Octopus	63, 64, 85, 102
<i>Ophiodon elongatus</i>	Ling cod	15
<i>Pagurus sp.</i>	Hermit crab	10, 25, 26, 61
<i>Pandalus danae</i>	Coon-striped shrimp	51, 62, 65, 67, 70, 73, 74, 75, 93, 119, 133
<i>Polycera atra</i>	Black dorid	90, 91, 118
<i>Spirobranchus spinosus</i>	Tubeworm	28, 41, 52, 59, 60, 93, 120, 128
<i>Syngnathus leptorhynchus</i>	Pipefish	135, 136
<i>Tresus nuttallii</i>	Horseneck clam	31, 50, 84
<i>Triopha catalinae</i>	Clown nudibranch	81, 95, 100, 112, 126
<i>Triopha maculata</i>	Spotted nudibranch	72, 82, 107, 108
<i>Unidentified</i>	Unidentified	123
<i>Watersipora subtorquata</i>	Red bryozoan	19, 22, 26, 48, 66

The Author

Ken Bondy has been diving and taking pictures underwater for 30 years. He has logged more than 2,000 dives in the world's greatest dive destinations. He lives in Southern California with his wife Pam and his English bulldog Sarah. He is retired from a long career as a structural engineer specializing in the design of concrete building structures.



Ken Bondy (photo by Amos Nachoum, Cocos Island)

