

# Dave Harasti

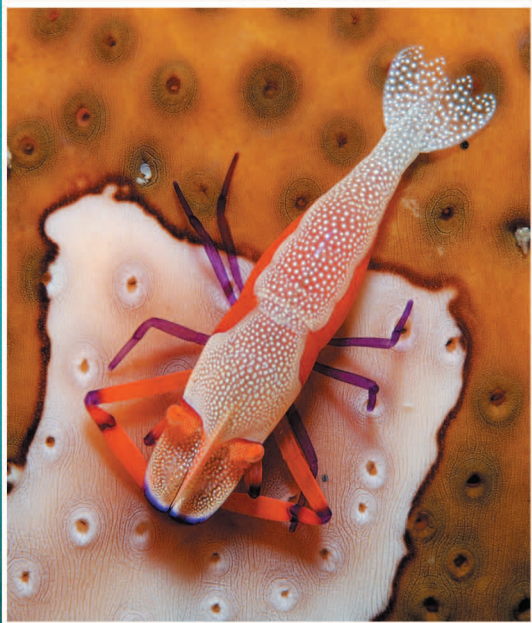
## ADM Featured Photographer

**D**ave Harasti grew up inland away from the sea, and relished the family holidays down to the coast so he could play in the ocean. Fishing and surfing were his passion. It wasn't the thrill of catching a fish for dinner that excited him; it was more about catching something so he could figure out what it was from his many fish books! It was from a young age that he knew he wanted to be either a Park Ranger or a Marine Biologist — it was going to be either kangaroos or dolphins!

In 1996, whilst studying an Environmental Science degree at university, one of his lecturers convinced him to try out scuba diving. One could say that he became instantly hooked as ten years later he's managed to spend over 1000 hours underwater, and still looks forward to each time he gets wet.







His love of diving and marine critters complements his work. He has spent the past ten years working in various government departments on the conservation of threatened marine species (sharks, turtles, and seahorses). He was responsible for the development of a national recovery plan for Grey Nurse Sharks, as well as implementing total protection for seahorses and seadragons in New South Wales.

In his spare time, Dave is currently working on his Ph.D. on the conservation of seahorses, and is examining the role that marine protected areas could provide in their protection. His studies are conducted within Port Stephens and Sydney Harbour, and he spends many hours underwater tagging seahorses and monitoring their habits and movements.

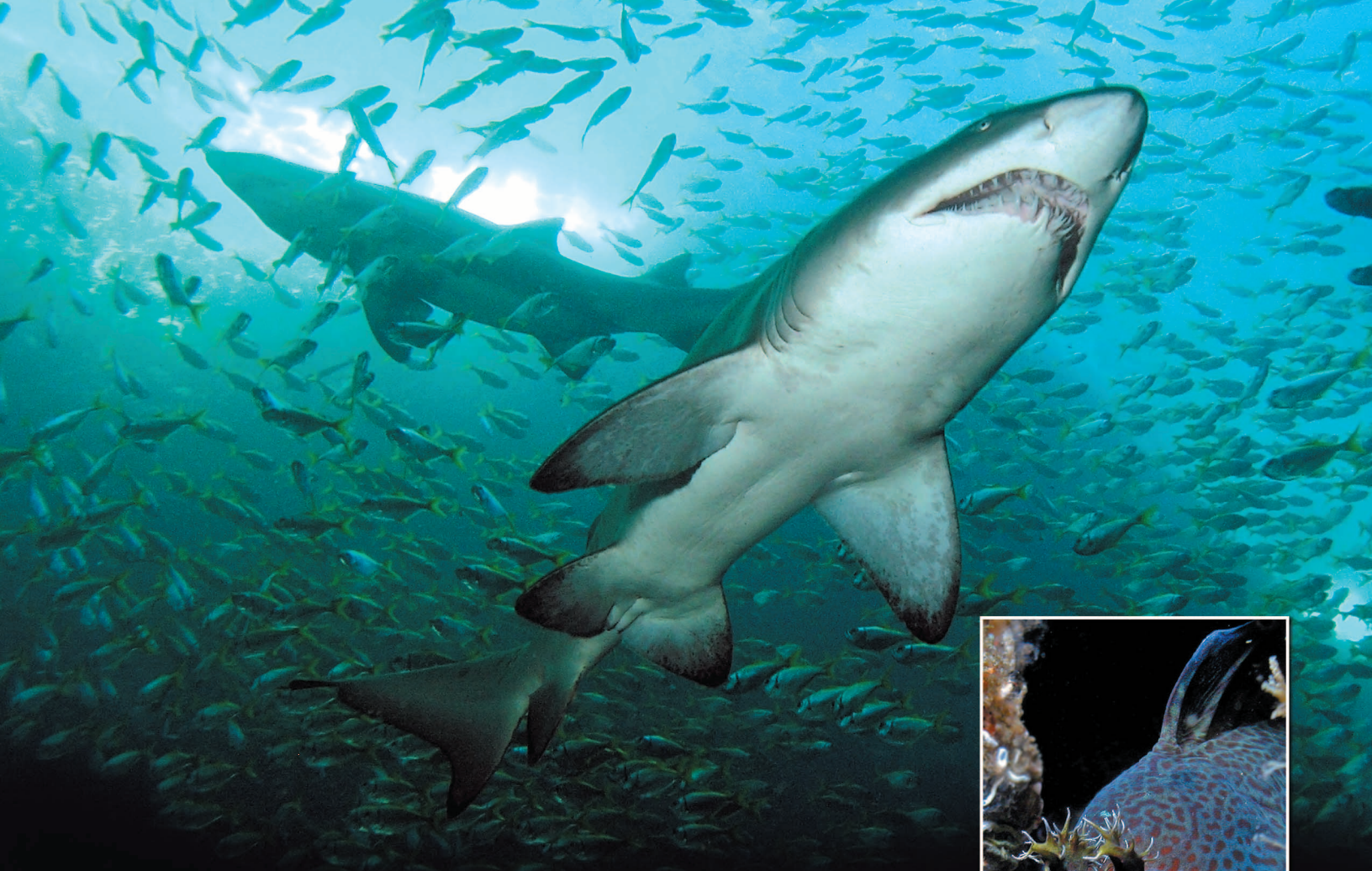
His passion for photography developed through his increasing quest to figure out what all those critters were that he saw on a dive. He found it was too hard to identify a nudibranch or fish from a drawing on a slate, so invested in the old Sea & Sea MMII film camera. Finally, he had a photo reference to figure out what his critters were!

In 2003, he finally upgraded to the digital era with the purchase of a Nikon Coolpix 5000; this is when he discovered his results greatly improved. His photography has been internationally recognised as he has won several major photography competitions, including Australasian Digital Photographer of the Year 2003, the Australasian Digital Download 2004, Wetpixel Photo Competition 2004, Dive OZ Digital Shootout 2004, and the 2005 OZTek Underwater Photo Competition.

Dave's digital underwater system of choice is a Nikon D80 in an Ikelite housing with dual Ikelite DS125 strobes. His favourite lens is the Sigma 17-70mm macro because of its fantastic versatility, and he loves using the Tamron 90mm for macro. His preference is for macro photography, as he loves recording species he hasn't seen before, and it's on the very rare occasion that he will use a wide-angle lens. As a result of his knowledge in photography and marine life, he regularly runs courses on both subjects for local divers.







In 2005, he ditched his open circuit equipment and purchased the Sports Kiss. There was considerable hesitation over the rebreather purchase; however, he now dives primarily on the KISS, and only dusts off the OC when he has run out of sorb! Over the past 2 years, he's given the Sports Kiss a good workout clocking over 200 hours, with 90% of the time spent in less than 15 metres searching for seahorses!

He has been lucky enough to visit many diving destinations around the world, with his favourite locations being Papua New Guinea, Rowley Shoals, East Timor, and Northern Sulawesi. His favourite dive sites, however, are located in his own backyard with the fabulous shore diving of Nelson Bay. His favourite dive site is Fly Point, which he generally dives once a week to seek out the seahorses, hairy frogfish, and the elusive Red Indianfish.

The Galapagos Islands and the Bahamas are high on his wish list for his next diving destinations; however, as they are located far from Australia, he will probably just continue to dive around the Indo-Pacific — which isn't too hard to take! He will continue to search for rare and unusual marine life. And, even though he has discovered several new species of nudibranchs, his real goal is to find a new species of seahorse; so far, *Hippocampus harastii* is still eluding him!

More of his work can be seen at his website [www.daveharasti.com](http://www.daveharasti.com).

