

# MY BUDDY

## THE MACRO-BIOLOGY DIVER

FEATURE **PATRICK VAN HOESERLANDE**

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Photo by Ivo Madder



Photo by Werner Graf



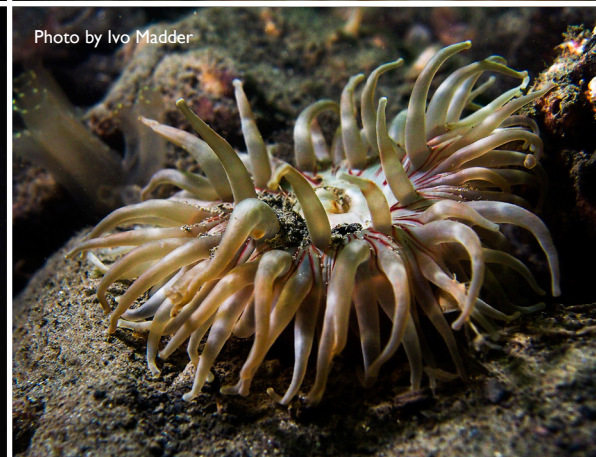
Photo by Werner Graf



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Due to unforeseen circumstances I was able to extend my stay on the Costa Brava. The pleasant outcome due to my late arrival back from this extended dive trip was that I did not have to unload or clean out my dive equipment. Why? I had a rendezvous booked for the next day at the 'Oesterdam' dive site, also known as the 'Bergse Diepsluis' to meet up with my next dive buddy.

When I arrived at the location, I saw my buddy's recreational van and trailer. I found Paul and his wife Maria sat comfortably in two folding chairs enjoying the warm morning sun. Both exuded rest, but still waters run deep and that is certainly true when it concerns these two divers.

It was quiet in the parking lot and because the tide hardly has any influence on the local dive conditions, there was no reason to hurry into the water. We had plenty of time to talk about our favourite subject – diving. My two interlocutors are a well-oiled dive team that focus on filming how certain animals behave underwater. I noticed a slight preference for cephalopods, especially when they talked

about an adventure they'd had in Australia. They want to capture the natural behaviour of animals: how they hunt, how they reproduce, etc., and they do excellent work because they have already produced several films on seahorses, cuttlefish, sea slugs, and the mussel quarries in the Oosterschelde. A number of their films have been sold and some Dutch television channels have their telephone number on stand-by. That's pretty impressive for a team that only started filming in 2002.

I was hoping to kill two birds with one stone by combining one trip with a pair of buddies, but Maria forfeited the dive. I had to take over her role and watch over Paul as his guardian angel. I did not give up that easily however, and after a weak promise of a raincheck, I added her to my list of potential buddies. I got out of my comfortable chair and moved over towards the dive box to give it an inspection.

Paul's dive box is much, much larger than mine. His bin has two wheels and is pulled by the small RV. The large volume accommodates several dive tanks, two complete sets of dive equipment, a compressor, and folding chairs.

There were only dry suits hanging in the trailer. I suspected this was because videographers dive for long periods and very slowly, so they get cold quickly. Paul's answer however was that he simply abandoned diving in a wet suit long ago.

They are currently busy shooting a film about the reproduction of various animal species found in the Oosterschelde, and that is by sheer luck, the subject of our video dive. The briefing covers the necessary safety procedures, but the rest is left to happy encounters.

Our heads were barely underwater when we hit the jackpot. Three fish attracted Paul's attention and he pressed the record button. A lot of shooting and 20 minutes later, he had taken the shots he had wanted. The fish turned out to be bad actors, completely neglecting any directions given and only the patience of the cameraman ensured that the scenes were recorded correctly. We continued to search at low depth for other willing actors.

While we descended slowly with many stops along the way, I received a biology lesson. In



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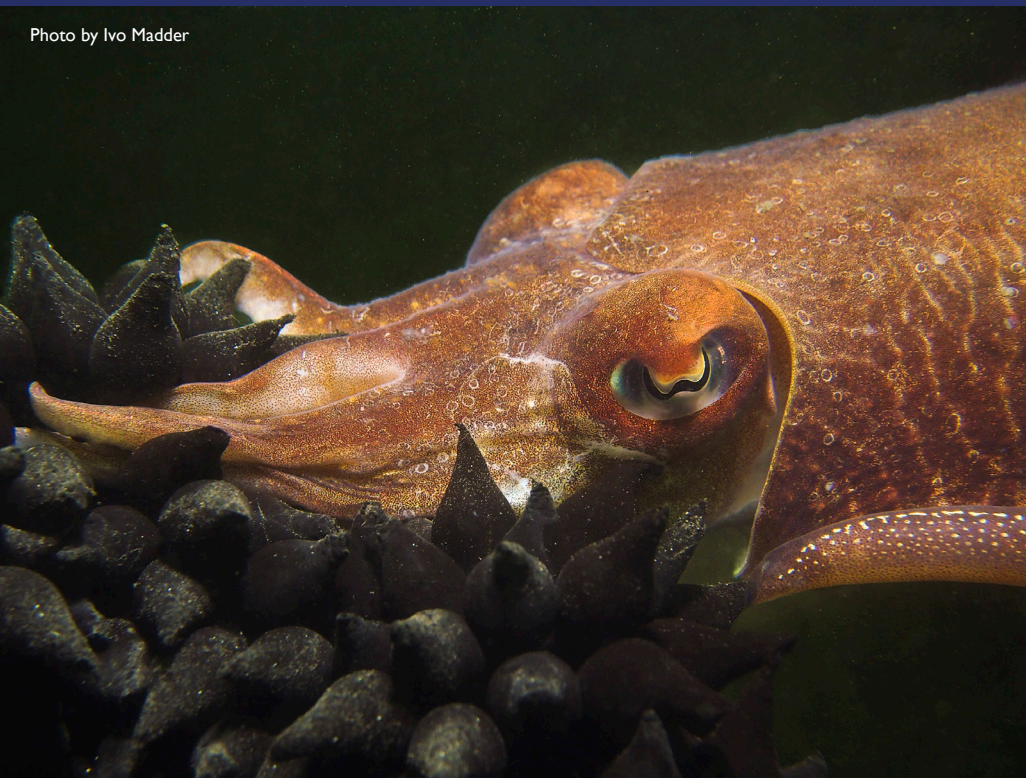


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a diver's sign language, Paul gave me some interesting facts. When he set his camera to run again, I circled around him in search of potential players. I came into the company of a sea bass. Was he observing us? The dividing line between actor and spectator was fading.

I got enough time to see my buddy at work. For a layman, not much seems to happen, but I can imagine that adjusting the light, choosing the right perspective, the right position – is not sinecure. All this while the actors do what they want with no intention to follow any scenario at all. Filming, checking, adjusting and re-filming.

When I saw my buddy concentrated in his work, I understood that a good film is created through teamwork. A cameraman is focused on what is happening in front of his lens and thus loses all awareness of the environment around him. The buddy ensures safe dive operations and facilitates the filming. The buddy must have as much patience as the person holding the camera.

Despite the hundreds of hours spent shooting,

scenes for which most other divers would not normally stop for, my buddy the videographer is charmed by it all. The distance we travelled together in our hour's dive is easily bridged by pleasure divers in the first 5 minutes of a 'normal' dive, and yet I have seen and learnt more in this dive than all my others put together.

Thank you Paul for taking me on this very interesting video exploration dive and I apologise for my inexperience as your buddy.

I drove out of the parking lot of the Oesterdam and passed through countless Dutch people enjoying the sun. I mentally checked macro-biology videographer off my list of buddies and looked up my next buddy's speciality. Also interesting and another experience I look forward to.

#### LET'S CONNECT

Do you know someone who has a special approach to diving and wants me as his or her buddy? Or are you such a diver?

Contact me via email and let's connect:  
[patrick.vanhoeserlande@nelos.be](mailto:patrick.vanhoeserlande@nelos.be)



**Diver:** Paul Engels  
**First Dive:** 1992  
**Total Dives:** 2,700

**Club:** KTWV, Belgium  
**Certification:** 1 Star Instructor

**Other Certifications:** Nitrox  
**Special Equipment:** Canon XA25 with a Gates underwater housing.  
**Favourite Dive Site Local Waters:** Oosterschelde  
**Favourite Dive Site Abroad:** The whole world.  
**Preferred Type of Dive:** A quiet dive with little current.

**Most Spectacular Dive:** Gigantic whale sharks and hammerhead sharks on the Galapagos, as well as my encounter with giant octopus in Canada or the pygmy squids in Indonesia.