



F. STUART WESTMORLAND OCTOPUS'S GARDEN

For F. Stuart Westmorland, 35, photography offers a psychological (if not physical) defense against the hazards of the marine underworld he explores. "When you have a bulky camera housing in front of you, you tend to forget the danger," says the widely published Seattle photographer, whose subjects have ranged from Australia's great white sharks to the unique marine life of British Columbia's Nakwakto Rapids, the highest-velocity ocean waterway in the world.

Westmorland found this giant octopus in B.C.'s coastal waters. "Contrary to their reputation, octopuses are quite shy," says Westmorland, who kept himself within reach by shooting with a 15mm wide-angle lens on his Nikonos III. "But if you pique their curiosity, they'll start probing you with their tentacles."

If that sounds a little scary, consider the photographer's close encounter with a white tip shark while he was swimming without a wetsuit or scuba gear. "Even the great white will usually flee at the sight of a bubble-breathing diver, but these sharks made a beeline for me and veered off when they were just a foot away," Westmorland remembers. "It didn't occur to me until later that my exposed thighs were just dangling there like chicken legs." Yet for Westmorland, who grew up loving TV's *Sea Hunt*, there's clearly no thrill in danger itself; the rush of getting good photographs, he says, is more satisfying.

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