

David Doubilet



Circling Pacific barracuda, New Hanover Island, Papua New Guinea, 1987

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Biography



David Doubilet was born 28.Nov.1946 in New York City. He began snorkeling at the age of eight in the cold, green seas off the northern New Jersey coast. By the age of thirteen, he was taking black and white pictures above and below the sea with his first camera -- a pre-war Leica.

Parts of summer and winter vacations were spent at Small Hope Bay Lodge on Andros Island in the Bahamas. He worked as a diving guide and on days off would take his camera. Doubilet later spent several summers working as a diver and photographer for the Sandy Hook Marine Laboratories in New Jersey. He is presently a Contract Freelance Photographer for the National Geographic Society where he has been steadily working since 1971.

In 1965 Doubilet began studying film and journalism at Boston University's College of Communication. He majored in still photography and graduated in 1970 with a Bachelor of Science degree. In 1988 he received their Distinguished Alumni of the Year award. During the summer of 1966, he attended a pilot course in underwater photography at the Brooks Institute of Photography in Santa Barbara, California.

Doubilet's first work for National Geographic Magazine was published in 1972. Since then, as a Contract Photographer for NGM, he has produced over fifty stories for the magazine, in recent years adding author to his credit line of photographer. His warm-water work has taken him throughout Indonesia, Micronesia, Australia and New Guinea in the Pacific; Sri Lanka and

the Seychelles in the Indian Ocean; and all over the Caribbean. The Red Sea, his favorite "underwater studio", has produced at least ten different stories for the magazine. Cold-water work has immersed him off the coast of England; in Scotland's Loch Ness; into the teeming waters of the Galapagos; around the mysterious shores of Japan; and deep in Canada's Northwest Pacific. He has also worked off the entire eastern coast of the United States -- from Maine to the Florida Keys -- and California.

Doubilet's photography has won many prizes including in 1969 the prestigious "Sara Prize and International Award" given by Mondo Sommerso Magazine in Italy. He was the first American and the youngest person to win this award. In 1975 he was named "Diver of the Year" by the Boston Sea Rovers, one of the diving world's most honorable organizations. He has also received several honorable mentions by the National Press Photographer's Association over the last decade. In 1993 he was honored in France by winning first place trophy in the Professional Category of an international contest sponsored by C.M.A.S. (World Underwater Federation); and by appearing as Guest of Honor at the 20th World Festival of Underwater Photography in Cap D'Antibes.

Although most of Doubilet's photographic time is spent working for the National Geographic Society and its diverse publications, his work has also appeared worldwide in other magazines and books. His commercial work includes several ad campaigns for clients such as Kodak, Fa Soap, Vitaspa, Seagrams, and Microsoft. He did the still photography for two films -- **The Deep** and **Splash**.

Doubilet's first book, **Light In The Sea**, was published in 1989 by Thomasson-Grant in the USA. Foreign editions were printed in Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Japan. Doubilet's second book **Pacific: An Undersea Journey** was published in 1992 by Bulfinch Press, received an award from the American Institute of Graphic Arts and went into a soft-cover edition in Japan. **Under The Sea From A to Z** written by Anne L. Doubilet with photographs by David Doubilet was published in 1991 by Crown Press (Random House) and received notable mentions from a national organization of science teachers and a national children's panel.

A popular speaker and instructor, Doubilet has appeared on the "Today Show" on NBC-TV and is in demand for his lectures and slide shows at universities, underwater film festivals and clubs (the Explorer's Club and the Harvard Club both in NYC) around the world. In 1993 Doubilet broadcast a live underwater interview for National Public Radio from twenty feet deep in Ginnie Springs, Florida. In 1995-1996 Doubilet and his work are featured in a national advertising campaign for the Rolex Watch Co. From 1994 through

1996 he is the author of a popular monthly feature entitled "Magnificent Moments", including text and photography, in Japan's SINRA Magazine.

Doubilet's wife and partner, Anne Levine Doubilet is also a diver and photographer with pictures appearing in National Geographic Magazine. They have been working together for over twenty years. She also attended Boston University where they met (no, they did NOT meet underwater!) graduating from the College of Liberal Arts in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. Anne grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts where she spent most of her childhood summers in the icy waves of Cape Ann on Boston's north shore. Anne and David were married in 1974 and spent their honeymoon in the Red Sea for three where they completed their first magazine assignment together. When not shooting on assignment, she runs a stock photography library out of their New York City studio.

Emily Dara Doubilet, their daughter, is now age fourteen. She has been on assignment with her parents in the Galapagos, Palau, Australia, New Guinea, Japan, the Red Sea, and throughout the Caribbean. A story about Emily diving with stingrays in the Caymans appeared in National Geographic's World Magazine in the July 1993 issue. Her first published story about a trip to Japan appeared in the March 1994 issue of Kid's City Magazine. In May of 1994 Little Mermaid Magazine featured some of her photographs of stingrays. In August of 1996 she received her PADI diving certification.

NG Gallery

Source: National Geographic

David Doubilet, one of the world's premier underwater photographers, has shot primarily for NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC since 1971. Doubilet's more than 40 assignments for the magazine have propelled him from the Red Sea to the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, from Japan's Suruga Bay to Monterey Bay in California. The consummate artist, Doubilet also writes most elegantly about the moods and magic of this underwater world.

[Silversides and diver, Grand Cayman Island, 1984](#)

My job description is to make a picture of a place no one has ever seen before or, to make a picture that's different of a place that everybody's seen before.

[Marine biologist Eugenie Clark with bull shark, Isla Mujeres, Mexico, 1974](#)

You can be as intimate with a heartless sea creature as you can

	<p>with a child. Each of them has a soul. Each of them has a reflection inside its eyes that comes out toward the camera.</p>
<p><u>Juvenile Lionfish, Suruga Bay, 1993</u></p>	<p>I want people to feel, when they look at my pictures, a little bit like a fish—to feel that freedom, that weightlessness of the sea.</p>
<p><u>Tropical grunts, Galápagos Islands, Ecuador, 1976</u></p>	<p>The sea is the most chaotic street in the world. And what you have to do is simplify the chaos, to make a pattern out of the chaos that is at least visually arresting and not visually confusing.</p>
<p><u>Cowfish in diver's red glove, Izu Peninsula, Futo, Japan, 1983</u></p>	<p>The problem with photography underwater is that you cannot talk to your subjects. They look at you with fish eyes, and you look back at them with human eyes. And they comprehend nothing.</p>
<p><u>Giant octopus, British Columbia, northeast Pacific, 1980</u></p>	<p>Diver-photographers look like strange, horrible, alien beasts. And they have this immense death-ray contraption in front of them that makes flashes, and the creature's main desire is to flee, to run away from this enormous thing that's chasing it.</p>
<p><u>Moray eel in soft coral, Izu Peninsula, Futo, Japan, 1983</u></p>	<p>Most of these pictures are made with micro lenses and now micro-telephoto lenses. And most of them require infinite patience. It's a creeping kind of photography. At times I find myself lying on the bottom, inching up on my elbows, putting my head down, holding my breath, pretending I'm a rock. Sometimes I shut my eyes and hope that the fish is going to reappear again. And when it does, you take a bunch of pictures and hope to hell you didn't blow it.</p>

<u>Sea tulips, Jervis Bay, New South Wales, Australia, 1984</u>	When you look at an ocean, you see a monotone, monochromatic world: a world of moonlight. When you find a fish underwater or you find a scene, not only must you get that moment, that decisive moment, but that decisive moment has to be lit by something.
<u>Embryo and yolk sac inside an egg case of a swell shark, Izu Peninsula, Futo, Japan, 1982</u>	A strobe is nothing more than a bottle of sunlight, and when you turn that strobe on, just for a brief, pulsating second, for 1/2500 of a second, the image in front of you virtually boils with color. That's what light is in the sea—it's a tremendous and total surprise. It's a bloom of light in a dark world. All of a sudden an image becomes something almost unworldly.
<u>Forward gun tub of the ship, President Coolidge, Espiritu Santo Island, Vanuatu, 1986</u>	The minute a ship crosses that final barrier between air and surface, as it settles into the sea, it loses the heat and the pain and the blood and the smell, and becomes a sculpture. And the sea surrounds it and supports it. And yet, when you photograph it, it still has that historical human content to it. If I can do a picture of a shipwreck with voices and ghosts in it, then I feel I'm successful.
<u>Australian sea lions, Hopkins Island, South Australia, 1984</u>	It's very nice to say I've shown people a secret part of the sea, in a secret vision. But it's more than that. The rewards of underwater photography for me are at one point particularly huge and wondrous: It's looking for the first time at a slide—that tiny little piece of film surrounded by the tiny little piece of cardboard—and suddenly blinking and gasping and saying, 'My God, I've done it.'"

Photos

[Backlit Coral](#)

[Diver](#)

[Dolphin](#)

[Manta Ray](#)

[Manta Ray and Boat](#)

[Plane](#)

[Plane Wreck](#)

[Shark and Cage](#)

[Sharks](#)
