

# The Parting Shot



In our globally connected and well-travelled planet, Triton Bay in West Papua stands out as remote, idyllic and relatively untouched diving destination. It is breathtakingly beautiful above and below the surface. So it may seem strange to publish an image taken there over a coral rubble bottom and in fading light, of all things. However, Alan Powderham's photo captures the fleeting moment of a male Flasher wrasse *Paracheilinus nursalim* in its full, glorious and uniquely

brief (albeit many times repeated) mating display. Such spectacular subjects present the ultimate challenge in underwater macro photography - these fish are small (3-5 cms), move at high speed and very erratically, display for a split second, and don't let one get close. Getting one of these subjects in sharp focus and good light as it flamboyantly displays in front of its prospective partners is difficult indeed. The courtship activity by the competing males becomes increasingly fre-

netic towards sunset, and so concludes in a dazzling display of sexual frenzy. If, as was the case here, there is more than one species involved in the frantically and confusing twisting shoals, Flasher wrasses will produce the highest recorded rate of hybridization in any species of fish. This is visually evident in the variation of colour, pattern and the number of dorsal filaments, which once more make correct identification of the species a complex and often frustrating endeavour. ●