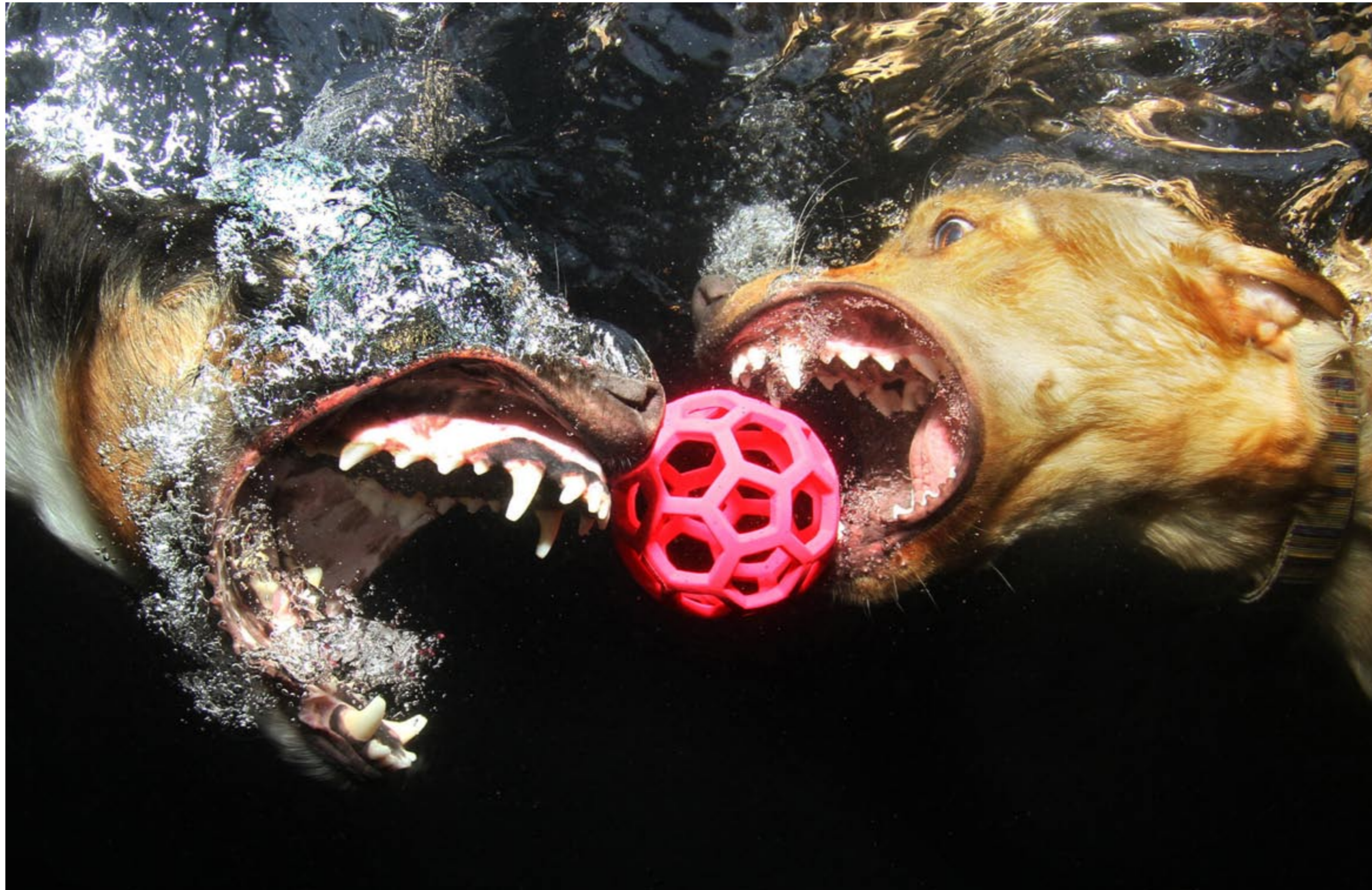


Seth Casteel



P O R T F O L I O

Edited by Gunild Symes
All images by Seth Casteel

Move over human divers, you're not the only ones who love to dive. Apparently, divers these days are not just of the hominid kind—American photographer, Seth Casteel, has captured the astounding and often humorous side of our canine companions who love to dive underwater. We caught up with the world famous photographer after some of his underwater dog images went viral and asked him about his unique perspective on man's best friend underwater.

Outer Space, Golden Retriever by Seth Casteel
PREVIOUS PAGE: *Sharing is Caring, Nevada the Border Collie & Bardot the Yellow Lab* by Seth Casteel



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underwater photography. In 2010, I was photographing a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel named Buster in his backyard. The shoot was meant to be 'on-land', but Buster decided it should be 'in the pool' when he began diving in over and over again after his mini tennis ball. I wondered, "What does he look like under there?" If he never jumped into the pool, I doubt I would have pursued this!

X-RAY MAG: Do you freedive or scuba dive or both with your dogs and why?

SC: I freedive so that I have better mobility. It's necessary for me to move fairly fast through the water to achieve some of the photos, so having heavy scuba gear on me would make it quite difficult.



Sunken Treasure, Bardot the Yellow Lab (above) Haunted Surprise, Buster the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel (right). All images by Seth Casteel

X-RAY MAG: How and why did you get into underwater photography?

SC: I've never really been interested in underwater photography—only animals, especially dogs. And dogs are, in fact, the reason why I began to explore



X-RAY MAG: What inspires you about the underwater world, about dogs underwater?

SC: The underwater world is such a mystery. From the depths of the oceans to just below the surface of your neighbor's swimming pool, there is a hidden world of opportunities. Uniting this world with our best friends is just exhilarating! Water is surprisingly natural for most dogs, and it presents them with opportunities to explore their wild instincts and allow their brilliant range of emotions to shine through. It's also unpredictable. You never know what's going to happen. Unpredictable subjects in unpredictable situations result in super unpredictable moments!

Lulu, a Parson Russell terrier, plays underwater fetch in a Phoenix, Arizona, pool. The quintessential shot required a friendly rapport between dog and photographer, around ten dive attempts, agility underwater and perfect timing. Featured in *National Geographic—Visions of Earth August 2012*



X-RAY MAG: Do you work just in the pool or also in open water, ocean, lakes, etc.?

SC: I've worked mostly in the pool, but have started shooting in salt water and fresh water. One of the photos in [my new] book was shot in the Puget Sound. Super excited about that one!

X-RAY MAG: Do you photograph critters other than dogs underwater?

SC: I have, but I'm definitely most interested in dogs. I think Mermaids would be cool to photograph, if we can find some one day. If not, maybe dogs

dressed up as Mermaids.

X-RAY MAG: What's it like to have dogs as models? What did you do to prepare or approach the shots?

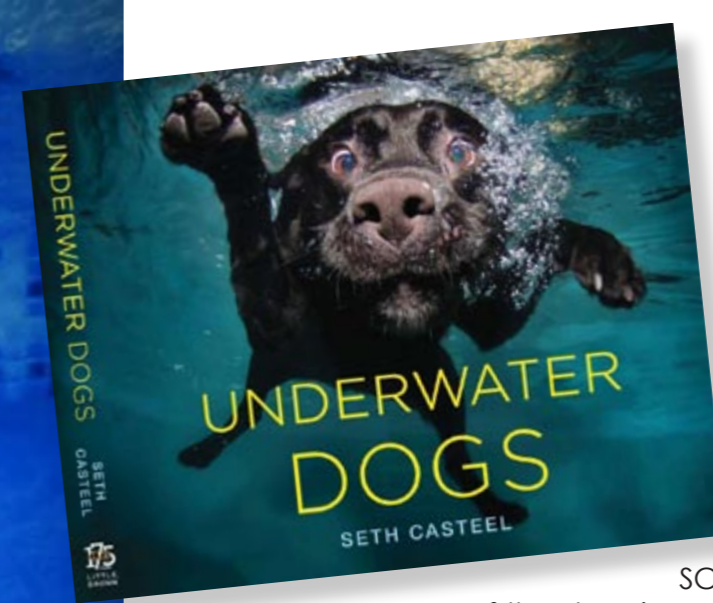
SC: I don't do much to prepare—I like to keep it as spontaneous as possible! Show up. Befriend the dog, earn their trust. Play some games in the pool. Snap some photos. It's really all about the dynamic of the relationship I have with the dog and how interested the dog is in playing games. Some dogs are certainly on-land photo shoot kind-of-dogs, but it's amazing to see how many dogs will dive into the water and

check things out. Many of the dogs I've worked with have never even been swimming before. It's unreal!

X-RAY MAG: Describe your artistic vision or aesthetic approach/philosophy.

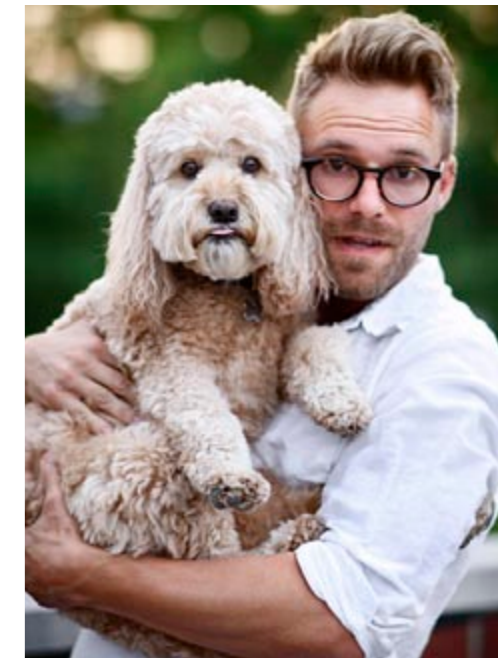
SC: My vision is to showcase the brilliance and complexity of the emotion of dogs. My approach is to embrace the lifestyle of dogs on-location and keep things super positive and fun. I don't shoot in the studio because I personally don't know any dogs that just LOVE to be in a weird, sterile studio environment with strobes flashing off. And I know a lot of dogs.

Paws First, Yellow Labrador Retriever (above); Mr. Beefy, the Olde English Bulldogge (top left). Images by Seth Casteel



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CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: *Buster the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel*; Cover of Casteel's new book; Casteel and friend; *Focus, Bardot the Yellow Lab & Nevada the Border Collie* by Seth Casteel



SC: All of the dogs in my book have chosen to go in the water and under the water of their own free will. And they all had fun. The experience has been inspirational for me—to watch a dog that has never been swimming before choose to jump in, retrieve a ball and emerge victorious. Dogs teach us all about life in the strangest of ways. If you just jump in, you might have fun along the way.

For more information, visit Seth Casteel's website and gallery at: www.littlefriendsphoto.com To preorder his new book, *Underwater Dogs*, see: www.amazon.com ■

X-RAY MAG: What underwater equipment and camera gear (any extra staff?) do you use and why?

SC: Canon 7D/fisheye lens with a variety of housings. No extra staff, although I do often collaborate with the dogs' human companions. I love the 7D for the tracking and frame rate. The fisheye lens is [used] to achieve that "Wow, that dog is really close!" effect. Have had good luck with a number of housings—each definitely has its advantages.

X-RAY MAG: Now that you have the underwater gear, what do you want to do with it? What are your future plans for your underwater work?

SC: I'll keep working with dogs in the water, and we'll see where else that takes me! I have some other ideas...

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about your background that led you to photography and to your work underwater.

SC: I got started in photographing dogs through volunteer work at Los Angeles animal shelters. I snapped improved photos to help increase adoption rates. One thing led to another, and all of the sudden I had a career! Helping animals in need is still a big part of my photography—I started a non-profit called SecondChancePhotos.org. Definitely check it out—one photo can save a life!

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about your new book and what divers might like about it.

SC: The book is called, *Underwater Dogs*, with a release date of October 23. It features dozens of never-before-seen underwater photos starring new 'underwater models'. A Pug. Twelve-week-old puppies. A Wolf. That's just the beginning. Divers appreciate the hidden world underwater and the various surprises that present themselves. Every page in this book offers just that!

X-RAY MAG: What else would you like our readers to know about you and your work/adventures underwater?

