



Close-Up

VictoriaCameraClub.ca

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"Goðafoss Falls, Iceland" by Nick Delany

Victoria Camera Club

January 2020 Volume 73 Number 1

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Victoria Camera Club



"Morning Flight" by Jill Turyk

Established in 1944, the Victoria Camera Club is a group of people who share the love of photography. We come together to appreciate each other's images, to learn, both from the feedback on our own images and from the images of others, and to exchange tips on how and where to take effective photographs. Our focus is on continuous learning. Our media include both film and digital and our expertise ranges from novice to master.

Events

We hold a number of events including:

- Three meetings a month from September to April (excluding December)
- Field trips
- Workshops
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Competitions within the Club and externally

Meetings begin at 7:30 PM at Norway House, 1110 Hillside Avenue, Victoria, BC.

Membership

Annual fees include all workshops (except studio shoots and special events), meetings and all field trips unless travel/accommodation is involved. Annual fees are: Individual, \$85; Family, \$128; Student, \$43.

For current event information and locations please go to the website victoriacameraclub.ca where you can also read or download the colour version of *Close-Up*.

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club.

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January 2020

The Victoria Camera Club is a member society of the Victoria Arts Council, Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA), and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



Calendar

Our workshop and field trip program is too extensive to list in *Close-Up*. Please go to the calendar page on the website (www.victoriacameraclub.ca) for the latest details of all our workshops, field trips and meetings.

January 2nd: Competition Night. The theme competition is “Leading Lines”. The November competition results will be presented.

January 9th: Presentation Night. Tony Paine will be speaking about “Getting the most out of Today’s Black and White Photography”.

January 16th: Members’ Night. Presentations of members images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical presentations.

Workshop Highlights: Macro and “Get crafty”, tips and tricks to get you ahead.

Cover Image: Goðafoss Falls, Iceland by Nick Delany. Located in North Iceland between Akureyri and Lake Myvatn, the picturesque Goðafoss or “Waterfall of the Gods” is one of the most impressive in the country.

Ice-blue glacial water flows over an elegant semi-circular arc to create blue-green swirling patterns in the water below among the surrounding lava. The River Skjálfandafhljót falls 12 meters over a width of 30 meters. This photo frames both the main falls in the top background and tracks its flow down to the lower falls.

The Photo trip with Arctic Exposure was led by Aron Reynisson, the 2018 Iceland Landscape Photographer of the year. Aron made me retake the photo in three different locations until he was satisfied with my composition!

This image was framed vertically to show both waterfalls and illustrate the amazing colour value of glacial water.

Tactically, most of our Iceland Winter Landscape photography was taken at the lowest speed possible irrespective of the light and then compensated for the correct exposure with higher apertures and low ISO.

Nikon D850 with a Nikon AF-S Nikkor 24-70 mm f2.8 ED lens. Focal Length 62 mm, shutter speed 1/10th sec., aperture f22, ISO 64.

If you research Iceland photography, most of it seems to be taken in summer and this trip was an opportunity to see Iceland in a unique way.

President’s Message

Happy New Year everyone and welcome back to the second half of our 2019/20 season. We have had quite a year as a Club so far, from an award-winning magazine and website to individuals being recognized nationally and internationally for their talent (which we, of course, already knew about). Let’s make the second half even better. I do have to say that the second half of the current season is looking to be just as busy as the first half! I don’t mean to sound like a broken record but our Club is great because of its members and the work they do for all of us.

If you haven’t yet submitted your work in any number of internal or external competitions, please consider doing so, especially you novice photographers. I know that it’s a scary step to put your work out there but the one thing that I have learned over the years is that the Club judges provide valuable feedback and it sure helped me improve the way I see and photograph things. You won’t regret it. Besides, we love to see everyone’s photographic masterpieces.

The great work of our Club doesn’t just happen. There is planning involved, and a lot of it. The workshop committee will be asking members to take some time to fill out a new survey in January asking for their wishes, likes and offers of assistance for workshops over the next year. They pay great attention to the requests of members for the workshop selections, including which ones we repeat, and new areas of interest. They are also hoping to tap new, previously unused knowledge and talents for the benefit of members. Yes, we mean you! The survey can be accessed through the Club’s website when you are logged in, under the Members Only tab.

I encourage everyone interested in workshops to take the time to complete this survey. It’s so great to have the opportunity to learn something new. The committee will do all they can to make it happen, and the same can be said for field trips.

If you have a request for a place that you’d like to see or you think would be a great field trip then please let Vanessa McDonald know at fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.ca. The field trips committee is always looking for new places to visit.

A resounding “thank you” to all of our members for making our Club what it is!

Teri VanWell, President

Lightroom 2020 Updates

by Cindy Stephenson

What photography plan should you buy? Lightroom used to be so simple; there was one program and the only question was which version you were using. Then, in October 2017, Adobe announced it was switching to a subscription-based service. Lightroom would be called Lightroom Classic. Adobe also introduced a cloud-based application called Lightroom CC. In May 2019, Adobe dropped the term “CC” and Lightroom CC became Lightroom Desktop or Lightroom (Mac/Win); Lightroom Classic CC became Lightroom Classic.

While Lightroom Desktop and Lightroom Classic both offer professional-quality image editing capability, the underlying system behind each is quite different. With Lightroom Classic your photos are stored in folders on your hard drive. You manage the files, the organization and the backups. Understanding how Lightroom interacts with the photos on your computer is key. This option is ideal for photographers with lots of images but requires some computer literacy.

With Lightroom Desktop, your photos, generally speaking, reside in the cloud. You can easily access and work on all of your photos everywhere. You can also keep a copy of your photos on your computer. You can organize your images into albums but you don’t have to worry about file management. Additionally, the Edit mode is powerful but many of the sliders are hidden, making it less intimidating to users.

While Lightroom Desktop sounds tempting there are some things to keep in mind. First, using Lightroom Desktop depends on having a fast Internet connection. If your Internet usage is metered, you might exceed your plan. Second, since all of your files are synced to the cloud and if you have multiple terabytes of files, the plan can quickly get very expensive. You receive 1 TB of cloud storage at the base rate of \$10 US per month, but you pay \$10 US per month for each additional TB, available in 2, 5 and 10 TB packages. If you are concerned with this, use Lightroom Classic. A 1 TB hard drive can be purchased for less than \$100; and you will need an additional one for backup with no monthly fees.

Lightroom (LR) Classic and Desktop are available only on a subscription basis. On the photography section of the Adobe website, the LR Plan (1 TB) refers to the desktop 3.0 version, and the Photography Plan (20 GB) refers to LR Classic. One benefit of the LR Classic plan is that you also get the latest version of Photoshop.

With either Photography Plan, Lightroom for Mobile is a free app that lets you sync and share collections on your desktop computer with your iPad, iPhone or Android device. You can edit the images on your device and seamlessly sync your changes with Lightroom on your computer. You can also share images to Instagram using the app. This is clearly of more benefit to people with Lightroom Classic. The files shared are low resolution versions of your photos, so you can share a lot before you max out your 20 GB allocation.

If you stop subscribing to the Photography Plan, you won’t lose your photos or your Lightroom edits. You can continue to use Lightroom to import and manage your photos, view your images and past editing work on your computer, and export copies of your photos. However, you won’t be able to do new edits or sync your photos.

New HDR and Panorama Merge Features

For those of you who process a lot of panorama and HDR images in Lightroom Classic, you can now batch process multiple panoramas, HDR merges or HDR panoramas, rather than running them one at a time (as of Lightroom Classic 8.4, August 2019). For each panorama, HDR merge or HDR panorama merge, stack together the source files. If, for example, you are creating ten HDR images you should have ten stacks of source files. Select all the stacks, then right-click in one and choose Photomerge, then Panorama, HDR, or HDR Panorama. All of the stacks will then be processed using your most recent settings. Any unstacked images will be ignored.

In the November 2019 update, Adobe made further improvements to panorama merges. When stitching together images into a panorama, Lightroom has to warp the individual source files so that they fit together seamlessly. This leaves transparent (white) areas around the edges. Previously you would need to crop the image or use the Boundary Warp feature. Now there is a new Fill Edges option that uses content-aware fill technology to intelligently fill in those areas. It is similar to the content aware fill feature in Photoshop.

To use Fill Edges, first select your panorama images and right-click in one. Next choose Photomerge, then Panorama, and lastly check the Fill Edges box. Once you’ve created your panorama using Fill Edges, zoom in and check for any issues. Anomalies can appear when you use content-aware fill. Sometimes, for example, objects are repeated in different parts of your image. You may be able to easily fix this with the spot removal tool. If not, delete the panorama and try it again with either the Boundary Warp or Auto Crop option.

Fine Art and Photography

by Anne McCarthy

The influence of photography on pictorial art has been well acknowledged. Muybridge's 1878 photos of a horse in motion brought precision to the depiction of horse movement. Degas was another prominent early adopter. Even the paintings of Vermeer in the mid 1600s appear to have been facilitated by his use of the camera obscura.



"Frank Island/Leonard Island - Reality"

In my own life, photographs have enabled me to record far more subject, texture and colour detail than would ever be possible even were I able to paint for hours in a single place. Photography allows me to freeze the light at a particular time. Monet, when painting his famous series of Rouen Cathedral scenes, worked on a series of canvases at the same time. He moved from painting to painting as the day and, thus, the light, changed. Apparently, the process and difficulty in really seeing the colours gave him nightmares. This photograph gave me inspiration and some information on composition and colour.

Translated, and actually traced in some areas, the image has been pared down to a single island, the lighthouse emphasized for balance and the view of the water adapted. In this case the photo provided a lot of detail of the lines that define the tree contours.

Note that although I have changed the aspect ratio, removed items and messed with the surface patterns the photograph only provided the inspiration. The influence of painting and prints on photography is also self-evident. We see common composition, colour combinations, subjects and lighting. I think there is a lot more

room for photography to break further from traditional painting to take advantage of different viewpoints, angles, light capture.

The standing of photography in relationship to other two-dimensional artworks such as paintings, and, prints continues to be debated. Some still consider photography a lesser form of art or, worse still, "a form of cheating". I have to wonder if the studio painters of Renoir's time considered him as a cheater for not grinding his own pigments to create his paints. Perhaps I can catch a squirrel this evening to finish up that brush I've been making.

I tend to look at the various methods of creating pictorial art as just that, methods: each with their own limitations and strengths.

Early oil painting was confined to studios with access to home-made paints. The invention of tubes of oil paint opened the door for Impressionism as painters were now able to work outside. For a long time, oil painting had limitations caused by the need to allow sufficient drying between layers. There was danger in overly-quick or thick applications. Lord help you if you laid on a second layer or glaze too soon. It might mix into a mud-like patch or cause later cracking. Today agents can be added to speed up drying so that artists can work more quickly. Allergic to the thinning agents? Try water-based oil paint. Yes, you can mix it with water.

When I first used acrylic paint, I found that it dried too quickly to allow slower blending of colour. Now there are



"Frank Island/Leonard Island - Interpretation"

agents to delay that process. Also the colour was flat in comparison to the deep gloss shades of oil. Maybe I was just buying cheap paint.

Water colour was limited by the inability to cover over a mistake with a good thick second layer. Well actually that hasn't changed. It is possible to lift some colour off a good quality watercolour paper but you can't change a dark colour back to white. White can only be achieved by simply letting the colour of the paper show through. There is no option to simply "re-gesso" the paper and start all over again. Water colour cannot be applied thickly; by nature it acts more like a stain, a thin glaze that stays very close to the grain of the paper. That is just the nature, or limitation of the medium.

Photography has developed a range of capabilities at an astonishing rate. We no longer require a back-breaking massive camera. In the 1970s ISO 400 was high and pushing it to 800 created a very definite increase in grain. I'm reluctant to call this graininess a degradation as the result is still visually very interesting.

Just as I might use a very fine brush for detail or a pallet knife on canvas to make the image I want, with photography I can be out of focus, or use a close-up lens, colour distortion and, now, with editing software, almost anything that could be done with paint and brush.

The advent of digital photography marks a massive leap forward in photographic options. So where does photography stand in relation to painting/printmaking now? To me, photography, in conjunction with good software and printing, is just another equally valid tool to create pictorial art.

It can be used to capture an impression that is used to create a paint-based picture later. Images like "In the



"In the Pool"

Pool", taken with an inexpensive point and shoot camera in 2012, became an inspiration.

A similar shot morphed, after a great number of software adjustments, into this "Swimming Boy" painting



"Swimming Boy"

Photographs can be developed independently using good composition, understanding of light and tonality to create a standalone piece of art. And now, photographs can be extensively modified.

I have only, in the last month or two, really put my mind into working with GIMP's full range of tools (Photoshop-like image-editing software, freeware). So, I can offer only this learning piece to demonstrate a photographic transition into a more print like output.

With skill we can now take things out of a photo, add them in, create the entire scene either physically or digitally, change colours, modify the image to resemble paint and add emotional interpretation. And best of all, there is edit>undo, so that we can go back and fix something that didn't quite work the way we intended.

Finally, is photography art? In 1936 Meret Oppenheim wrapped a spoon, teacup and saucer in fur. Imagine drinking tea out of a fur lined teacup. You can find this piece now at the MoMA in NYC. In 2010 Marina Abramovic sat, for seven hours a day, a total of 700 hours, in the MoMA main lobby. She did nothing but sit and look at whoever sat across the table from her. Around her, throngs of people stood quietly and watched. This performance art was called "The Artist is Present".

If the Museum of Modern Art is willing to call both of these things art, who am I to disagree? Given this, I no longer even consider the question of "is photography art"? My concentration has switched to, "does it elicit a response, does it make me feel, could I live with this, would this still draw my eye in three months or a year, would I study it again in 10 years?"

File Management

by Richard James

Organizing your Files

It seems that quite a few members have concerns about the best way to manage their image files, so I'll start off with some principles that I have found very useful in keeping an organized filing system to make it easier to find your images. I will split this into two parts, dealing first with those ways common to whether you are using Lightroom as a file manager or managing your own files, and then the additional file management functions within Lightroom. The bottom line on this is that you need to use a system that addresses your requirements and you are confident using.

Whether you are using Lightroom as a file manager or not there are a few key things that I have found really help to keeping your photos organized and find images. These include using unique names for each original file, keep all derivatives of that file in the same folder, and naming your folders so that you can easily identify the content by looking at only the folder names. With these in mind, I will describe what I do.

Unique names: Your camera assigns a short name to each image, typically a couple of letters and four numbers. You should have a camera setting option to reset the count every time you change cards or create a new folder on the card. Turn this off! This will probably give you 9999 unique image numbers. After that you need to have a way of prefixing that number. I do this by adding a camera identifier and two more digits since I found that five digits weren't enough after I had shot 99,999 images on one camera. There are a number of utilities that will rename files with some being more flexible than others. The one I use is "Multi-file Renamer" from EF Software. This is a Windows program but others should be available for Mac's. Following this a file from my D850 would have a name like "D85-045689" and my older D3X would be "D3X-123579".

If this is a file that I have edited, then each time I make a major change I save it and add a suffix identifying what I have done. So, an edited and cropped file prepared for printing would have a name like "D85-045689 DXO Adj Crop 8x10 Print.tif".

Folder naming: It is also important that folders are named with the date and either shoot location or content. Naming by date enables you to sort folders by date to easily find the content you shot at a particular time.

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My folders look like this “2019-11-19 Birds” (birds shot at multiple locations that day) or “2019-11-20 Reifel (a field trip to the Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary).

Now that you’ve got your folder structure and naming organized it is really easy to save all the derivatives of a given original in the same place. In my early days of digital photography, I didn’t do this and I quickly started regretting it when I couldn’t find the original of an image of a black mushroom. In addition to not using this naming structure they were stored on different CDs (that’s when file sizes were smaller!).

This strategy applies whether you’re using Lightroom for editing or an editor such as Photoshop. The key difference is that Lightroom does not save an edited file until you tell it to. It is good practice in Lightroom to periodically export edited files as full-size TIFs which then become master files from which you can do further editing.

Now, on to the Lightroom-specific part. Lightroom is a pretty competent file manager allowing you to filter and select images and to use keywords. The file structure I’ve outlined above makes it easy to dive in and find images you shot on a particular day and identify their content quickly. To go beyond this you need the power of Lightroom’s search and keyword functions.

With the search function you can find all images in a given folder or in your entire catalogue, with particular attributes such as camera body, lens, file name, file type and of course keyword.

Keywords: To use keywords effectively, you need to develop a structured approach which dives deeper than one-word descriptions of the image content. I use a number of major categories including place, plants, animals, birds, buildings etc. Within each of these are finer and finer levels of detail. So for example, “Place” would include individual countries, then states or provinces, which in turn would include cities, parks and localities in general. “Birds” would include Eagles that would, in turn, include Bald Eagles and Golden Eagles as separate keywords. This process is known as a hierarchical system or “nesting keywords”.

With a structure like this it is very easy to find all versions of images shot at a given location, or images of a particular subject. For example, I could easily find all Bald Eagles shot in Goldstream Park and separate them from Bald Eagles shot in Delta.

Backups

Now that we’ve dealt with a naming convention that al-

lows you to find your images we need to think about the security of those images on your electronic media. Media will fail! Murphy’s Law says it will fail when most inconvenient and do the most damage. If you place any value on your images you will keep duplicate copies on different hard drives and you will backup your Lightroom catalogue every time you work on it. Remember that the catalogue contains the information on how you edited the image, not the final image.

Depending on what you are backing up, you can either make a duplicate copy of an entire drive or folder or you can do a full backup and then periodic incremental backups which backup only changed files. I use both strategies for backing up my system. For the operating system and all files other than my images and some archived material, I use the full-plus incremental strategy. I use the copy strategy for my images and archive files.

The backup software that I use, Retrospect, manages the files so that I have the latest copy and previous versions available, should I need to recover a file from the backup. I use two pairs of hard drives for this with one pair lasting approximately six months. This is then swapped for the older pair effectively giving me 6 to 12 months worth of backed up files. Of the pair, one drive is used Monday, Wednesday and Friday, the other pair Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. This means if one drive fails completely the worst case is that I have lost a day’s work.

The backup drives are mounted in an external two-bay drive dock for ease of access. I would not use “cheap” drives for backups. My “sweet spot” is WD “Black” SATA drives. For images and archive material I also use a pair of drives but simply copy changed folders from the working drive to the backup drive every time they are used. This means I have old versions if I change the file name, which I do when I make significant changes, (see above) but if the file name is the same, they will be overwritten.

These backup strategies are not the same as synchronizing a pair of drives which means that each drive is identical. Unless you do a two-way synchronization, deleted files will get lost.

Having two copies protects you against individual drive failure. A third copy kept offsite would protect you against catastrophic damage to your home or office. You would of course have to remember to rotate the drives so all three were up-to-date.

With this strategy the critical Lightroom catalogue files are automatically backed up every night and I can recover previous versions if the catalogue becomes corrupted.

February Theme Abstract

by Lorna Zaback

Abstract images are enigmatic. Any subject matter, flowers, trees, rocks, buildings, household items, paper, fabric, the human form, shadows, reflections, water droplets, smoke, can become abstract images depending on the way they are photographed. Try isolating a fragment of a natural scene or purposely staging an object so that the resulting image takes on a seemingly unreal, unrecognizable appearance.

Abstract images rely on the use of colour, light, shadow, texture, shape and form to convey a feeling, a sensation or an impression. Abstract photography is about telling a story through aesthetics and elements of composition more than through an identifiable subject.

Wonderful abstract photographs can be created using many techniques: camera movement, motion blur, multiple exposure, macro or close-up, light painting and a variety of post-processing procedures.



“Tulip”

An image like this one could be considered abstract. Although we might be able to identify tulip petals as the subject, the photographer’s emphasis on line, shape, texture and colour is an attempt to transform it into something more intriguing and evocative.

So, let’s have some fun with this theme and see what emerges. We have seen many stunning examples of abstract photography from our guest presenters and members of VCC. If you are curious or looking for inspiration, search for “Abstract Photography Images” to peruse awe-inspiring creations by photographers from around the world, and for some ideas about subject matter and techniques.

What Happens to My Image?

by Jill Turyk

Many new members have joined the Club since September and many are interested in competing. It may interest you to know what happens after the competitions are closed. Our committee meets a few days after the competitions close to review submissions and make sure they are eligible. We check that they conform to the definition of the category, titles, watermarks and ensure the image has been submitted for only one competition. We also ensure there is a digital submission for each print.

If the image is not eligible we contact the maker. The image can be moved to the appropriate category or a compliant image can be substituted. We then notify the judges that the images are ready for judging. A committee member delivers the prints to the print judge. To avoid disappointment, please review the definitions of each category before you enter. These definitions are available in the competition guidelines on the website at: victoriacameraclub.ca/Downloads/27f-9bc26-f73d-4c47-97eb-6958af4ee392?o=y.

External Competitions

by Mike Wooding.

In early 2020 we will be entering three important competitions; the North Shore Challenge, the CAPA Pacific Zone Print Challenge and the George W. Glennie Memorial Nature Salon. The North Shore Challenge is an open competition with all subjects eligible. In four of the last five years we have finished no worse than fourth, winning in 2015. In addition to the Club entry, individuals may enter a single image to compete for CAPA medals. Closing date for Club submissions is January 24th.

Last year we finished 3rd in the Pacific Zone Print Challenge after coming 1st the year before. In both years Club members walked away with the individual Gold Medal. The club can enter ten prints. See the website for details. Closing date is January 24th.

In the George W. Glennie Memorial Nature Salon we chose the Diversity Award, coming in 3rd in 2016, 1st in 2017 and 2nd in 2018. This Nature/Wildlife competition has eight categories: Birds, Invertebrates, Reptiles, Amphibians, Mammals, Marine and Freshwater Life, Botany and Landscapes. In addition to Club awards, there are many individual awards. Closing date is February 14th.

Please consider submitting images to these competitions and help keep our track record alive. Thank you!



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Portfolio: Michael Murchison

My photography journey isn't as lifelong as many, but more of a recent passion. I have had an interest in photography going back to my teen years but I was never able to harness that interest into more than snapshots until about six years ago.

My first camera was a Minolta X-700 that I purchased when I was in high school. I was able to save enough babysitting money to buy a camera and a couple of lenses. Unfortunately, I didn't understand how much there was to learn, and I doubt the camera was ever taken off auto mode. It served me well as a vacation camera and got an extreme workout for the first year of my son's life. Life then intervened and the camera got put on the top shelf of the closet and I became a pocket camera photographer for the next 20 years of my life.

About 10 years ago I decided I wanted to rekindle my relationship with a camera and on a whim purchased a Canon Xsi body with a kit lens. After watching a few videos about photography, I considered myself an expert and headed out thinking I could create amazing images. At the time I thought I was doing great work but, of course, looking back at those photos, I can see that they are less than stellar. Then, once again, life intervened and I put that camera away for the next four years, taking it out only a few times.



"Wharf Reflections"

In 2013, I once again decided it was time to be a 'photographer'. I started doing my research and decided to go "all-in" so to speak. The new lower end of full-frame cameras had just been introduced by Canon and Nikon so, after some deliberations, I settled on the Canon 6D as the camera that was going to make me into a 'real' photographer. After making my shopping list, I ended up with a Canon 6D, a 16-35 mm f2.8 and a 24-105

mm f4 lens. I started teaching myself everything I could learn by reading, watching videos and looking at the work of great photographers. This time it stuck and I decided it was something I was not giving up.

At first, I tried to be a Jack-of-all-trades. I wanted to photograph it all, whether it was travel, portraits, landscape, night skies, street or wildlife. I would shoot whatever I could find that interested me, mostly expressing ideas I had seen from other photographers but still, I was still the one creating images.

I was a post-processing junkie as well, learning all I could about Lightroom and Photoshop and using those tools to try to "fix" the mistakes I made in the field. I was intrigued by HDR and experimented with that for a while, thinking it was the most amazing technique! Looking back, I see that, to my current taste, those shots were usually over-processed. Some of them are a little too colourful but I was learning and creating so it was a super rewarding period of time.



"Ready to Fly"

During this stage of my journey one of the first images that I really loved was created in a parking lot waiting for my niece's high school graduation to begin. I saw some seed heads against the building that I thought were interesting, so popped my brand-new macro lens on my camera and ended up with an image that still appeals to me.

At this point in time I was still living in Saskatchewan and as all photographers seem to feel, I thought that what was near me was boring. So, in March 2014, I planned a trip to Vancouver Island for ten days of exploring, learning, and making photos. By the end of that trip, I knew in my heart, that my passion truly lay in landscape and nature photography. I still enjoyed shooting other things but my true love was being out in nature, looking at the

world around me and trying to capture in a photograph what I was seeing and feeling. This was also the start of my love affair with the Pacific Northwest! The ocean, the rain forests and the waterfalls grabbed my heart and have never let go.



"The Wave"

I learned a lot on this trip, and started to understand light better. This particular image is still one of my favourites because, for the first time, I was truly photographing light. I had noticed the first light of the morning on the waves as they rolled across this scene and decided to try to capture that moment.

Over the next year I joined photography groups on social media and began sharing my work. As it turns out, I made connections with other photographers that I maintain to this day and started to explore the world with them. My next major source of learning was the discussions on technique, composition, processing and vision we would have driving to and from locations.



"Let There Be Light"

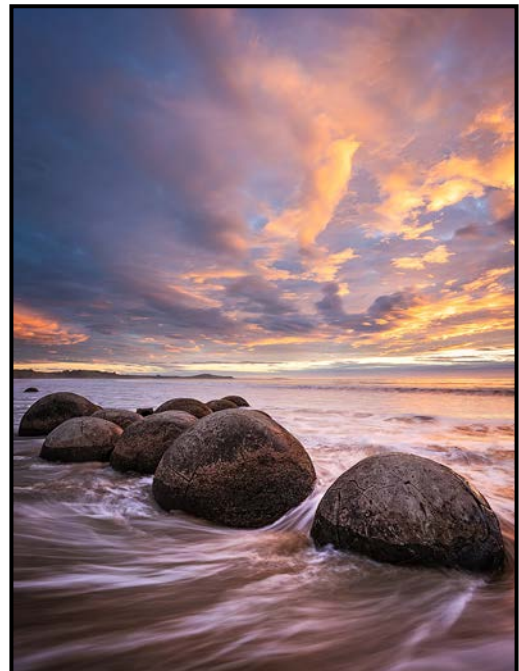
It was during the summer of 2015 that I became interested in photographing the night skies. As it happened, 2015 was an amazing year for the Aurora in the prairies so I had ample opportunity to get out and practice shooting at night, with some great skies blessing my journey.

These nighttime explorations led me to meeting my future spouse though it would still be a couple of years until we connected as more than friends.



"Atop Castle Butte"

2016 started off in a difficult way as we lost one of my new friends and his family due to an impaired driver. The loss, however, ended up forging stronger bonds with other friends and led to new explorations for all of us. It was during that summer I started to explore black and white photography more deeply. I found that shooting without colour helped strengthen my compositions and to this day, I really enjoy working in monochrome.



"Moeraki Illumination"

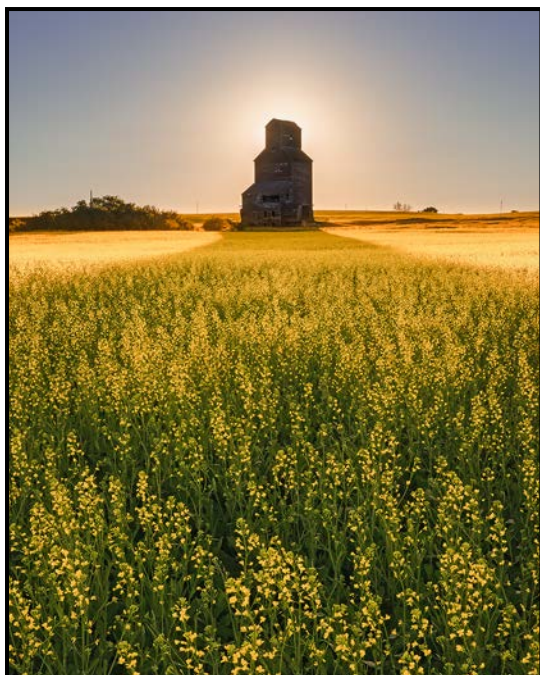
2017 and 2018 were filled with travel and a continued development of my photographic style. I visited iconic locations in New Zealand and Iceland and was also able to visit Hawaii, Newfoundland and, on multiple occasions, my favourite location, Vancouver Island.

During these travels I was often blessed with stunning scenes and fantastic light. I feel lucky to have been able to visit so many great locations but I also learned that standing in line with dozens of other photographers trying to create an image of what I call “Instagram locations”, is not enjoyable. It took a bit of the magic out of the process and it wasn’t what I was looking for in my work.



“Still Standing”

I found I preferred to be somewhere where I could explore a scene in my way and try to create images that resonated with my heart. During this time I really started exploring more minimal compositions and using long exposure to create and alter the mood of a scene.



“Saskatchewan Farewell”

With this in mind, I began studying the work of photographers who resonated more with this style and tried to understand better how to use colour, shape, line and texture to craft my compositions. For me, learning and growth are a large part of my enjoyment of photography. My path has altered many times and I am sure it will alter again but I love that I do not know where my creativity will take me in the future and look forward to those explorations.



“Sensuality”

In the late fall of 2018 I found myself with the opportunity to move to Vancouver Island. Having already fallen for the beauty of the island it was an easy decision. We said goodbye to Saskatchewan and set out on a new chapter in our lives. I suddenly found myself in what I consider the most beautiful place on earth and feel lucky to have the endless stunning landscapes to explore and photograph.



“Fingers”

Upon arrival in my new home, I immediately explored camera club options. Having been an active member in the Saskatoon Camera Club, I realized what a great way it is to connect with other photographers and continue to learn and grow as both a photographer and a person. I have enjoyed getting to know many members of the Club and look forward to meeting many more.

Portfolio: Vanessa MacDonald

My journey with photography started almost 20 years ago with an unforgettable experience. I lived in Geneva, Switzerland, with my family for three years, after my Dad had taken up a posting with the International Committee of the Red Cross. I was a teenager finishing up high school and during this time I was surrounded by beauty, history and culture, and wanted to photo-document it all. I was the family photographer and I used a basic point-and-shoot film camera to capture our adventures. Through my 20s and through the early days of digital, I spent many years using various bridge model digital cameras.

My first “real” digital camera came along in 2013, a generous gift from my Mom. She’s been one of my champions over the years and knew how passionate I was about photography and the arts and wanted to support me in going to the next level. I’ve been using this same crop sensor model ever since, with an 18-135 mm kit lens and a 10 – 8 mm wide-angle lens.

Nothing fancy. I’m a photographer on a budget and I’ve always subscribed to a mindset inspired by Theodore Roosevelt; “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are”. This is my *modus operandi* and it really pushes me to be more creative. A lot can be done even with mid-range equipment when you are really committed and passionate.

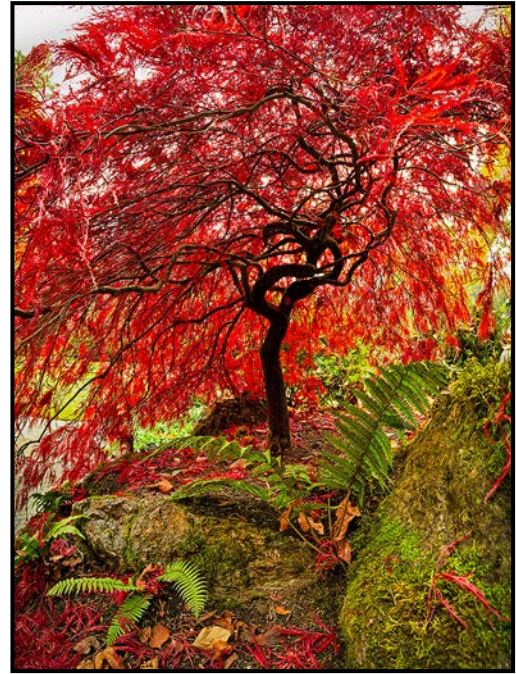


“Fanciful Fan Tan Alley”

And I should mention that a lot can be done locally. I don’t travel very often so I’m always trying to find ways to make the most out of where I live.

Moving to British Columbia from Ontario over 12 years ago was like hitting the bull’s eye. I knew that this was paradise found for the artistic mind. Beauty is so abundant on Vancouver Island, and I’m always overjoyed

by the fact that one doesn’t need to drive far to find epic scenery. Heck, you don’t have to walk far to find it: mountains, ocean, beaches, rainforest, waterfalls, lakes, gardens, abundant wildlife (even in the inner city), mega-sized trees, and Victoria itself is quite the jewel. Plenty to fill up the heart, mind and spirit with a sense of numinous awe.



“Crimson Maple - Butchart Gardens”



“Todd Creek and Twin Falls”

Something I’ve learned after living on the Island long term is that there is treasure to be found in every season. Even the onset of winter is an event to look forward to. Winter means to me that the rivers and waterfalls are full again. There’s mist hanging in the air, the forests just amp up their level of greenery and the tides are dropping in the evenings with the new and full moons. Not to mention, the sunsets are more vibrant and one can head out early, at around 4 p.m. for a combo sunset and twilight shoot.



"Songhees Sunset"

Having photography as my main art form has certainly had the effect of deepening my awareness and connection with nature and my surroundings. I'm constantly attuned to what is going on in the local environment, the ever-changing rhythms of life around me.

I'm always watching and appreciating the cloud patterns, tides, lunar cycles, the quality of light at different times of day in different locations, and the ever-changing flux of plant life and animals. It is a constant study. I sometimes feel that photography might actually be an extension of our hunter's instinct that has developed over the millennia and that this is just a modern expression of it. We are hunting, after all, for beauty, for light and for the right conditions and subject matter, anything that will attract and sustain our eye.



"Fairytale Mushrooms"

I would describe my personal photographic style as colourful, somewhat eccentric and extremely experimental. I try not to get too caught up in the idea of shooting exclusively for competitions or trying to come up with something that might be considered "fine art". I greatly admire photographers who do manage to do it consistently, however, there's a lot more in it for me than just that. Maintaining a joyful spirit for the craft

means trying things that are bit left field or just purely fun and following my internal guidance and natural curiosity toward more novel or whimsical subject matter. Model: Paige Whitehead.



"You Glow Girl!"

I enjoy researching and learning new photographic techniques that are somewhat different or unusual like camera rotation or the creative use of pyrotechnics. It wasn't always this way. My interests really started to branch out a few years ago, from primarily landscape and nature photography into night photography and light painting. This required additional technical learning and becoming far more comfortable using the manual settings on my camera. Night photography, in particular, is a genre that has always captivated me, I just love to see how places come alive after dark. The colours are different, as are the mood and the lighting. Victoria has so much character and personality but, somehow, it always has a little extra magic at twilight and after dark.



"Celebration"

Darkness really opens up a whole new set of options for creativity; you get to add light sources and light elements into the scene and come up with something completely different than what was originally there.

For example, adding gels to my tactical flashlights and painting the scene with colour adds some texture and bit more of a surreal mood, like this monochrome shot of Charlie's Trail Waterfall in the winter months. It's an ordinary scene, transformed by the snow and ice plus the added interest of a glowing blue hue.



"Ice Blue"

My interest in light painting started out with just simple and fun techniques like steel wool spinning but has progressed to other light and pyrotechnical elements like fire staffs, sparklers, electroluminescent (EL) wire and light sabres. I make a lot of my own lighting equipment including fire staffs (to create the image on the right), the LED light rope rigs for the steel wool shot on the previous page ('You Glow Girl!'), and the gel attachments for my flashlights. There is a whole DIY sub-culture and seemingly endless creative innovation that surrounds this genre which is a big part of why I'm attracted to it. I've always been into a variety of crafting projects so making my own light painting tools is just another way to carry that interest over to my photography.

Luckily, there's been no shortage of people willing to collaborate on these shoots, something that is absolutely essential to creative light painting. My co-conspirators for "Twilight Fire" were: Melody Harrison (model), Paige Whitehead (fire staffs), and Mary-Lee Sampson. This was a shoot I'd been envisioning for months and required planning and just the right conditions to pull off.



"Twilight Fire"

The blue hour coincided exactly with an evening super-low tide at Witty's Lagoon. We had a narrow window of 20-30 minutes to get this shot before the light was done and tide started flooding in.

This journey with photography is far from over. There is still so much more learning and experimenting to do. Going forward, I'd like to delve more into fantasy-styled shoots, portrait work and lighting. I'm eternally grateful to the Victoria Camera Club for helping me to upgrade my skills as well as to find some like-minded fellow shutter-bugs to go out on photo missions with. I've been a member since 2016, and have greatly benefited from workshops, presentations and field outings, which have all had immense learning value. This year I was honoured with the Distinguished Photographer's Award, 1st Place in the Intermediate category and I felt that it was testament to my growth and improvement as a photographer over the years.

To conclude, photography has brought a strong and sustaining joy into my life. Without a doubt it has been one of the most powerful ways for me stay in a good state of mind and weather some serious life challenges.

I will always be a proponent of the idea that the arts can be a powerful tool for healing and a means to uplift the spirit. A long-time mentor of mine once told me, when I was going through a difficult time and didn't know how I would get through, to "focus on beauty". No words have ever been truer and I try to remind myself of this often. As long as I have my camera in hand and I am wandering this green jewel of an Island, it's all I could ask for.

Shooting Birds in New Zealand

by Neil Boyle

Photographing wildlife in New Zealand is somewhat limited as the only native mammals are bats, rare and hard to find. All other mammals are “pests”, introduced species doing serious harm to the environment (rabbits, possums, stoats, hedgehogs, cats) and the locals are busy killing them. That leaves insects (not many) and the rare tuatara (a prehistoric lizard) and birds. Lots of birds.



“Kea”

Full disclosure: I cheat at locating good birding sites. I look up professional bird tours and follow their itineraries.

Native land birds are hard to find as they are very good at hiding in vegetation. I found my shooting efficiency rose dramatically with a local guide who knew where the birds hung out and the better angles and places to shoot from. Wrybill Birding Tours, a New Zealand based birding company, is particularly helpful this way. Take a bird book for ideas on what species are present where you are.

The best places are islands where the local people had eradicated the pests and the native birds have subsequently thrived. There are many of these, usually reachable by local water taxi for a few dollars.

Kea are lovely and cooperative parrots but they are parking lot birds looking for a handout so the challenge is to make a bird on a car look natural. Pukeko, known elsewhere as Purple Swamphens, hang out in parks and farmers’ fields.

Shore birds are perhaps the easiest to find and photograph: terns, gulls, dotterels (plovers), oystercatchers, shags (cormorants), gannets, herons, wrybills, godwits and shelducks. Miranda, on the north island, is the most famous place for migratory shorebirds.



“Pukeko”

Pelagic birds are those found out at sea, usually coming to land only to mate and nest. The technique for photographing these birds is a pelagic trip, a boat trip out to deep water, often many kilometers out to sea, often rough seas, usually organized by more dedicated birders or higher end birding trips. These birds tend to soar in big arcs around the boat, making good shots on the wing. The birds will often soar very close to the boat and directly overhead, providing different flying shots. Many will land on the water near the boat and fight for the chum, providing opportunities for portraits and behaviour shots. Take lots of batteries, cards, and sea sickness treatments.

The best time to go to New Zealand is the time the birding companies do their tours, in the New Zealand spring, October/November. The birds are calling to claim their territory, brightly coloured to attract mates and easiest (relatively) to photograph.

Of course, one has the usual risks, snow in the mountains, rain and wind. And the unusual risks, frequent earthquakes, volcanos that go off regularly, flooding can close an area, and roads often fail (mudslides or erosion). But the rewards are definitely worth it.



“Cape Petrel”

Lights for Photography

by Matt Speight

When I was a student studying photography, there were only two options available for most photographers: flash-lights (strobes) and hot lights. Now, technology has advanced, and we have a few more choices, mainly with LED and fluorescent lights.

LED, fluorescent and hot lights are constant light sources so they stay on continuously. Strobe lights put out a short burst of light for a fraction of a second.

Advantages of Continuous Lighting Over Strobes.

1. With a constant light source, you can see and adjust the lighting before you take the shot.
2. You can use the camera's exposure meter, so you don't need a flash meter that costs about \$400.
3. A constant light source system costs less than a strobe system.
4. There is no need to sync the camera shutter to the strobes. Most cameras have a maximum shutter speed that you can use with strobes, usually around 1/200th of second.

Advantages of Strobes Over Continuous Light

1. Strobes are more powerful so using strobes allows you to shoot at smaller apertures and lower ISO than normally possible with continuous lights.
2. There are more options for modifying the light. For example, larger softboxes create a softer light or umbrellas spread the light evenly over a larger area.
3. Strobes don't get hot, so you can add creative colour effects with coloured gels. You can also match the colour of the strobe to the ambient light.
4. The strobe fires only when you take the shot. This is an advantage with portraits, particularly for difficult subjects like kids and pets. To have them under glaring and uncomfortable continuous lights makes it even harder to get the shots you want.
5. As the strobe is lighting your subject only for a fraction of a second, it can freeze the action, even if your shutter speed is too slow to freeze your subject.

Comparison of LED, Fluorescent and Hot Lights

LED Lights

1. LED lights have become the standard in the movie industry and are increasingly popular in still photography. Traditionally they are rectangular in shape, varying from 10 x 7 cm to a meter long.

2. Companies like Rotolight have created round beauty dish LED lights in various sizes specifically designed for portraits. You can dim the lights, and adjust the colour temperature, between 3000°K and 6000°K.
3. Wescott makes LED lights with light panels that you can bend and you can fine-tune the colour and vary the power output.
4. There are no reliability issues with filaments breaking and the bulbs run relatively cool. They are also much more power efficient than photoflood bulbs.

Fluorescent Lights

1. When fluorescent lights came out, they were a good idea. They weren't too expensive, more than a set of hot lights but far cheaper than a set of strobes.
2. They resolved the problem of photoflood lights being too hot and temperamental.
3. They are more power efficient and often come with a softbox option.
4. However, even with multiple fluorescent tubes per head in the soft box, they lack the power of strobes.
5. You can't change the colour temperature (generally daylight balanced at 5000°K), and the only way to lower the power of the lights is to turn off one of the fluorescent tubes in the head.

Hot Lights

1. Hot lights are cheap. You can get a couple of light stands with sockets and a set of reflectors for around \$100. The photoflood bulbs are specially made for photography and have a much higher output than normal bulbs; 250 and 500 watts. They are available as daylight at 5000°K and a warmer bulb at 3200°K.
2. Hot lights are not dimmable. You need to physically move them towards and away from your subject to increase or decrease their effect.
3. Hot lights get hot which can be very uncomfortable for a portrait subject. The bulb filament is fragile, if you move them while they are hot, or turn them off and on too many times in a session, the bulbs fail.
4. They are very power hungry. Using two 500-watt bulbs is the equivalent power of a toaster oven.

Of all of these systems, I have achieved the best results from a strobe system. If you have the budget, time and effort to invest in a studio strobe system, it can be very rewarding. LED lights have come a long way since their early days and now offer much to the still photographer. If you have fluorescent lights or, are still using photoflood lights, perhaps it's time for an upgrade; it will give you more control and happier subjects, and will help put your photo work in yet another light source, the spotlight.

Avoiding Colour Banding

by Neil Schemenauer

Colour banding is an artifact that can arise in any digital imaging system. At a basic level, it is caused by converting an image of a real scene, composed of continuous-tone colours, to a digital form where there are only discrete colours



“Colour Banding”

Digital imaging systems typically do a good job of realistically reproducing the image, however, at times, the nature of the system reveals itself and the image looks unnatural. Colour banding artifacts typically show up in images with large areas of nearly uniform or smoothly changing colours, for example, the sky in the top half of this image.

It helps to know a bit more about the internal workings of digital imaging systems. Each pixel in a camera sensor measures only the amount of light falling on it, i.e. the number of photons. The colour of the light is not directly measured, it is determined by the position of the pixel on the sensor. To record colours, individual pixels have tiny filters above them that allow only red, green or blue light to reach the photo-sensitive pixel below it.

These sensor pixels are organized into a repeating pattern (e.g. for a block of 9 pixels, 5 are green, 2 are red, and 2 are blue). Within a “raw” image file, only the brightness for each of these pixels is stored. Typically, either 12 or 14 bits are stored for each pixel (4 or 16 thousand brightness levels).

To create a JPEG image, a number of processing steps are performed. Neighbouring red, green and blue pixels are combined to create full-colour pixels, a process known as demosaicing. Within a JPEG file, each colour pixel is stored using 24 bits. That allows over 16

million colours, which would seem more than enough for realistic reproduction. However, note that the set of colours is the same for every JPEG file. Images typically contain a small subset of these 16 million colours and have similar colours next to each other.

In-camera JPEG conversion is less flexible than working on a raw file and then converting it. As a result in-camera JPEGs are somewhat more prone to banding and other artifacts than post-processed raw files.

You can think of each JPEG pixel as storing 256 levels (eight bits) of red, green and blue. If a sky is pure blue, a JPEG can store a maximum of 256 shades for it. If the sky is similar in brightness, only a small fraction of those blue values are used. It is in those kinds of cases when colour banding can become visible.

Post-processing of in-camera JPEG files increases the chance of visible colour banding. Common processing steps will increase the contrast in parts of the image (e.g. levels, tone curve, highlights slider, shadows slider). If the source image doesn’t record enough shades of colour in those areas, visible banding will result.

A raw image file contains many times more shades of colours (12 or 14 bits per colour) and post-processing it will rarely show banding artifacts. This is one reason why post-processing raw images is preferred. After post-processing is complete, the image is typically exported as either a TIF/PSD or JPEG file. In rare cases, colour banding will still be visible in the final output especially if it is a JPEG file.

Can the issue be minimized? The “add noise” technique can be used to hide those artifacts, but not remove them.

Using a general-purpose image editor like Photoshop or GIMP, create a duplicate layer for the image, then select the part of your image that contains the banding. For this image, I selected the entire image. Then I used a “noise” filter to add some artificial noise to the image. In Photoshop, you can use Filter>Add Noise. In GIMP, you can use Filters>Noise>HSV noise. The trick is to add just enough noise to hide the visible colour banding.

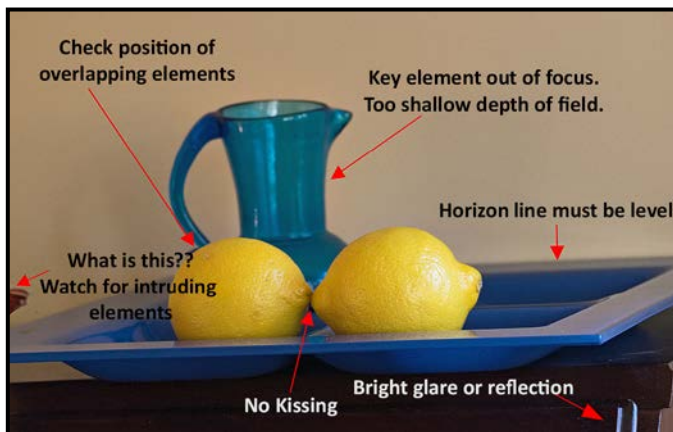
The bottom half of this image has some noise added to it. Both the top and bottom halves have been converted into a 256-colour indexed image in order to exaggerate the colour banding. Adding noise as described is a “dithering” process. For low bit-depth systems (black and white, or 8-bit colour), dithering is a common processing step. For modern camera systems (using more bits per pixel), dithering is more rarely applied but at times still useful.

What Judges Look For

by Pam Irvine

The value of entering an image into competition is the critique offered by the judge. Composition is what makes a good image great and it is not dependent on the make or cost of your camera. With auto-focus and auto-exposure the problems with many images are often not technical but compositional.

There is no way to overemphasize the importance of composition. It takes practice and time to train ourselves to look at the whole scene in the viewfinder and plan the composition of the image.



"What Judges Look For"

Horizon Line: The commonest fault that judges identify is a skewed horizon. The eye can spot a slight tilt in the horizon. It is best to fix in-camera, but it is important to check and fix it in post-processing. Comment from a September 2019 judge: "A well composed image with a tragic flaw that distracts greatly from the image. A sloping horizon."

Cropping: A judge will often recommend cropping to "get rid of the intruding or distracting element". Do a perimeter patrol around your image looking for stray bits and pieces.

Lines: Diagonal lines are dynamic and often lead the viewer's eye into and through the image. Horizontal or vertical lines do not have the same "leading" tendency. Lining elements up in a straight line is rarely a good idea.

Giving elements space: "The top of the lighthouse touches the edge of the picture". Try to avoid "kissing" between elements or at the side of the image. Watch for overlapping elements.

Missing Parts: "It is unfortunate that we do not see the front feet of the dog, as if they were cut off." If you are

shooting an image of a person, or animal, do not crop at a joint (e.g. the ankles or the wrist). Shoot from a higher or lower position, or wider, to ensure you have all of the important body parts. Comment from an October 2019 competition: "the missing part of an ear is distracting."

Perspective: Comment from an October 2019 competition: "... might have benefited from you crouching a bit and looking up at her. This change in perspective would eliminate some of the distracting elements behind her."

Depth-of-Field: When you have more than one main subject in your image, make sure your depth-of-field is deep enough to catch all the elements. Alternatively, if you have a cluttered background, a shallow depth-of-field can soften or remove the clutter. Comment from a September 2019 competition: "Background would be less distracting with more attention to depth-of-field."

Format: Choose the format to suit the image content. It does not have to be 3:2 and horizontal: "The square format is a good choice" and "The image is also crooked. Making it vertical should be easy". Again, an easy fix in post-processing.

Take a few minutes to learn about the different aspects of composition and see how your photography improves. In the end, it's all about your vision.



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January 2020

How I Did It

Sooke Government Wharf

by Michel Ingram

This photo was taken in Sooke, BC, during a visit to my family. I had the luxury of staying within a ten-minute walk to this location so I could venture down to the wharf at dawn and dusk, waiting for the perfect shot. The harbour is very busy from morning to evening, the fishermen were in at the early hours and cleaning up in the late hours of the evening. So, to capture this image I had to start at around 4 a.m. each morning and then at 10 p.m. each night. I was successful at around 11 p.m. one night under bright moonlight. Overall, this was a game of patience.



To capture this shot I used my Nikon D810 with a 24-70 mm lens on a tripod with a cable release to avoid any camera shake. My camera settings were: focal length 66 mm, aperture f7.1, and ISO 64 with a shutter speed of 30 seconds. With this shutter speed I ensured long exposure noise reduction was turned on, although it would add another 30 seconds to my overall exposure time.

To focus in the evenings, I would normally use a high intensity flashlight, but in this image I was fortunate to have lights from various points on the dock and the waning moon. With this advantage, I chose the stern of a boat as my focus point. I then zoomed in on it to manually adjust my focus, and once I was pleased with the focus, I adjusted the focal length to ensure I captured the subject I wanted for this evening shot.

In post-processing, I converted the RAW file using Adobe Photoshop. I then adjusted the photo to illustrate what I saw that evening. I adjusted the colour, hue and saturation within the blue ranges of these settings. I also adjusted my colour temperature for a cooler feel, which I felt represented the mood of this shot.

Old Truck in the Forest

by Ken McLean

As a car photographer, I have the distinct pleasure of photographing many modern cars that are shined and ready to be shown off for the world to enjoy. In between my time photographing cars for people I would enjoy taking walks through the forest. During one of my forest walks in July, at Alta Lake Park in Whistler, I came across this “Old Truck in the Forest”. For me it was a change from my normal shots, and I needed to capture this automotive creation which was left to decompose in the forest.



I did not have my tripod with me, but when it comes to car photography, I have to take the shot. Therefore I set my Nikon D750 to 1/250th second to ensure I did not have any motion blur, and using a Nikkor 24-120 mm lens, I used the following settings on my camera: a focal length of 30 mm, aperture was set to f5.6, and the ISO was 250. I did not use flash as the truck was lit up by the natural mid-day light.

When taking a shot during the middle of the afternoon it is important to work with the shadow lines, or to move your subject under cover to soften or remove the shadow lines. However, I was fortunate enough that this old truck was tucked away within the trees, which provided sufficient coverage for the rear portion of the truck.

The front part of the truck was well lit by the mid-day sun. In this scenario, the added bonus from this type of lighting is it helped to highlight all of the dents that were found throughout this vehicle, adding to the ruggedness of this find.

In post-processing, I converted the RAW file using Corel Paint Shop Pro 2019. I tweaked the photo to emphasize what I saw that day as I wanted to ensure that the colour saturation was strong enough to capture the rust orange of the old-truck. I also needed to ensure the green in the forest was vibrant enough to provide a balancing contrast for the background.

Shoots Around Victoria

Gulf Islands National Park, Sidney Spit

by Robert Benn

I had no idea what to expect from Sidney Spit. I remember reading about it when I lived on the mainland. I'd seen pictures, but it was far more than what I had expected.

The first time I visited I travelled by private boat. We pulled up to the northern tip of the spit. There were gulls everywhere and they launched into the air as the boat nudged its way onto the beach. The smell of the seawater and grass permeated the air as we made our way up the sand. A unique grassy dune in the middle of a strait was strewn with driftwood, shells, grasses, plants, and flowers I had never seen.

As I walked to the northern-most point of the spit what struck me most was the clarity and colour of the water. It was crystal clear. The muted greens and blues of the polished stones below created a gradient of aquamarines as they disappeared into the darkness of the deeper water.



"Sidney Spit"

Continuing around the end of the spit I found more shallows to ponder. On a really low tide you can walk out a great distance in nothing more than knee-high water. If you are lucky enough to visit during a rising tide on a warm summer day the shallows will have been warmed to what feels like bath water. You can explore the northern part of the spit for the better part of an afternoon.

You can find angles, contours, and colours that can be woven into whatever image you choose given the light of the day. If you want to make things interesting bring a neutral density (ND) filter with you. The wind can make things move and if there are clouds, a ten-stop

ND filter can create some dynamic water and cloud movement against the static beach.

Travelling along the east side of the spit you will eventually come to a linear group of pilings set against the motion of the tides. I've seen eagles perch atop one or two pilings

If you visit the spit on a rising mid-tide and venture to the northern part of the spit, make sure that you check the tide charts for the day. A high tide will separate the spit from the main part of Sidney Island, stranding you on the sandbar until the tide ebbs.

Sidney Spit is a day trip from Sidney Pier on a foot-passenger ferry during weekends in May, and daily from June to September. You can leave as early as 10 a.m. with a return ferry at 4, and 6 p.m. on weekends.

When you get off the ferry you can make your way toward the spit or you can choose to explore the island itself which will present you with Arbutus, Douglas fir, fields of grass, and a multitude of seaside 'scapes. You could bring a tent and sleeping bag to stay the night in one of the campsites, available through the Parks Canada reservation system.



"Enchanted Grove"

Staying the night is definitely worth the effort as on a clear night the relative lack of light pollution and a clear view is an astrophotographer's dream.

If you have the opportunity and time plan a trip to Sidney Spit, see: pc.gc.ca/en/pn-np/bc/gulf for information. And, don't forget your camera.

The Five 'Stans'

by Peter Koelbleitner

As some of you may already know, I do enjoy travelling and recently, I was able to take a trip which allowed me to combine my photography hobby with my interest in world history.

It started out when I noticed, on a globe, that there was a very large area, central Asia, where I had never been. The more recent history of this part of the world caught my attention through the books by Peter Hopkirk, dealing with the rivalry between the Russian empire and British-India, often referred to as "The Great Game".

Recently, I also read "The Silk Roads" by Peter Frankopan, which opened my eyes to the fascinating history of Central Asia, spanning many millennia. For example, in the Early Middle Ages (5th to 10th centuries AD) Western Europe was in turmoil with little cultural or literary output, and much more highly developed societies existed in Eastern Europe, Asia-minor and Asia.

So I did a bit of research and found a Vancouver-based travel agency that has been offering small group tours to this part of the world for a number of years.

During this twenty-one-day journey we visited a total of five "-istans" (meaning "land of the people of...") Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, travelling on planes, buses, high-speed trains and four-wheel drive SUVs.

It was not a photo tour and most of my images would fall into the category of casual "tourist images". It was however one of the most fascinating trips I have ever undertaken, due to its great variety of encounters, ranging from archaeological sites, going back several millennia, modern cities with stunning subways, historical walled towns, architectural monuments matching any site in the world, mountain ranges with peaks over six thousand meters and not least the people, whose cultures go back to the Persians, Arabs, Mongols and more.

At one stage of the journey, our local guide pointed out that we stood on ground which had seen the passing of Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Tamerlane and most likely, Marco Polo.

I had read about the stations of the Tashkent metro system, each of which has a different design theme. It was only in 2018 that photography was permitted in the metro system. This was not on the tour program and I



"Kosmonavtlar Station "

arranged to spend part of an afternoon photographing various stations. The one dedicated to the cosmonauts was my favourite. Besides the spectacular architecture I was impressed with how clean everything was.



"Registan at Night"

The Guardian (UK) newspaper refers to the Registan in Samarkand, as "perhaps the most noble public square in the world". The buildings date back to the 14th and 17th centuries and many have been restored to their original beauty. After visiting during the day, I went back at night for more images.



"Ashgabat"

The capital of Turkmenistan, Ashgabat, has been referred to as a cross between Las Vegas and North Korea, the extravagant, white marble clad, architecture (nearly 4.6 million square metres of Carrera marble from Italy), as Las Vegas and the political system as North Korea.



“Ascension (Zenkov) Cathedral”

Almaty in Kazakhstan is a modern city with wide pedestrian boulevards and outdoor cafes. There is money in Kazakhstan. Driving in from the airport, the first car dealership we saw sold Maseratis and Bentleys. The city also has the largest Russian Orthodox cathedral in Central Asia, a reminder that it was once an important part of the Soviet Union. This cathedral is one of the largest wooden structures in the world.



“Photographers”

We found the people to be generally very friendly who mostly didn't object to being photographed, especially outside of the big cities, where women dressed in traditional styles, varying with each country. We frequently saw women with gold teeth, which seems to be fashionable in these parts.

The smart phone is ubiquitous in this part of the world; everyone from school children to old women seems to have one. One hardly sees any regular cameras.



“Polo Players”

Polo originated in Persia (Iran) sometime between the 6th century BC and 1st century AD. It is now played worldwide and is popular in Central Asia. It was originally a training game for horse cavalry troops but has become known as “The Game of Kings” and is generally played with a leather covered ball, except in Kyrgyzstan where a headless goat is sometimes still used.



“Traditional Yurts”

Except for the very southern part of these countries, most of the area is desert or grassland. Where once the camel caravans passed, today the camels watch from the roadside as cars go by. Occasionally there will be camps where tourists can stay in yurts.

Prior to leaving on this trip I did give some thought to whether or not it would be wise to carry a D850 with 28 – 300 mm and 18 – 35 mm lenses with me. However, while I frequently did get curious glances at this substantial piece of equipment, at no time did I ever feel any concern and I would have been very unhappy had I not taken this camera with me.

I just wish that these countries would not, literally, be on the other side of the globe. The time difference was 12 and 13 hours and it took two days flying each way.

Exposure: Depth of Field

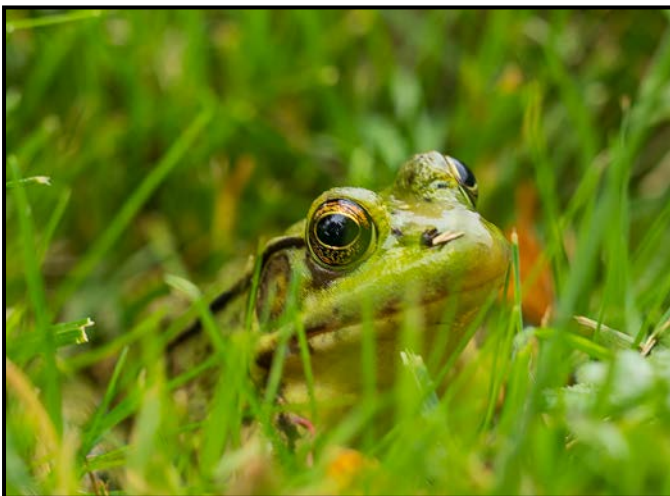
by Josee Menard

So far, this series of articles on exposure has covered exposure itself, aperture and we lightly touched on the sub-topic of depth-of-field (DoF).

This month, we will explore this subject in more detail. We will describe the three factors that have the most influence on the DoF in an image, aperture, focal length and the distance from your camera to the subject. As counterintuitive as it may appear at first, it will become intuitive to apply these factors to creatively manage the DoF and in turn, improve your image.

DoF is the area in the image that is in acceptable focus or “acceptably sharp”. This area can be just your subject or it may include more. Technically, it also means that anything in front of or behind this area will be unfocused to some degree. Managing DoF allows you to capture the scene with uniqueness to draw the viewer to the focused portion of your image.

Aperture is one of the easiest ways to adjust this range of focus in your image. Think of the phrase “opposites attract” where a large aperture gives a shallow or narrow DoF and a small aperture results in a deeper or longer one. If this does not strike a chord, think of it differently. A small f-number aperture equals a small DoF. A large f-number equals a large DoF. Also, each time you reduce your f-stop, you lower the DoF and the reverse occurs if you increase the f-stop.



“Camouflage”

An advantage of creating a shallow DoF is that it results in a blurry background which in turn emphasizes your subject. This image was captured during a fun exercise of trying to capture a frog I came across. It was

camouflaged in the summer grass and hopped about as it sensed me. Luckily, my telephoto lens assisted me before it was too disturbed but, unfortunately, the grass stem came in the way of a great image.

The second key factor, focal length, means the distance between the optical centre of the lens and the plane of the sensor when it is focused at infinity. You can work from a wide field-of-view, better known as wide-angle (say 14 mm) to a more standard one (50 mm) or to a narrower field of view with a telephoto lens (300 mm). This time, the shorter the focal length is, the deeper the DoF. As the focal length increases, the DoF will decrease. The DoF is also changed for cropped-sensor cameras.

The third factor simply refers to the distance between the camera and the subject or area that you want to be in the range of focus. The shorter the distance, the shallower the DoF. Move further back to increase the distance, thus deepening the DoF.

For macro lenses that are designed for close focusing, the lens extends further from the focal plane thus increasing the magnification and decreasing the depth-of-field.

Deciding which factor to use will depend on each subject and how you want to depict it. As you decide, slow down and think about what you wish to achieve and need to correct or emphasize. A blurred background? Are you too close? Should most of the scene be in focus? Are you using the DSLR or the compact camera today? Hmm, will it become a 4x6” or a 16x20” print?

Your practice in playing around with this concept and these factors will intuitively guide you.

And there we have it, a good foundation naturally builds an understanding of depth-of-field. Yes, mathematical formulas do exist but that discussion can wait.



“Curious Sea Lion Pup”

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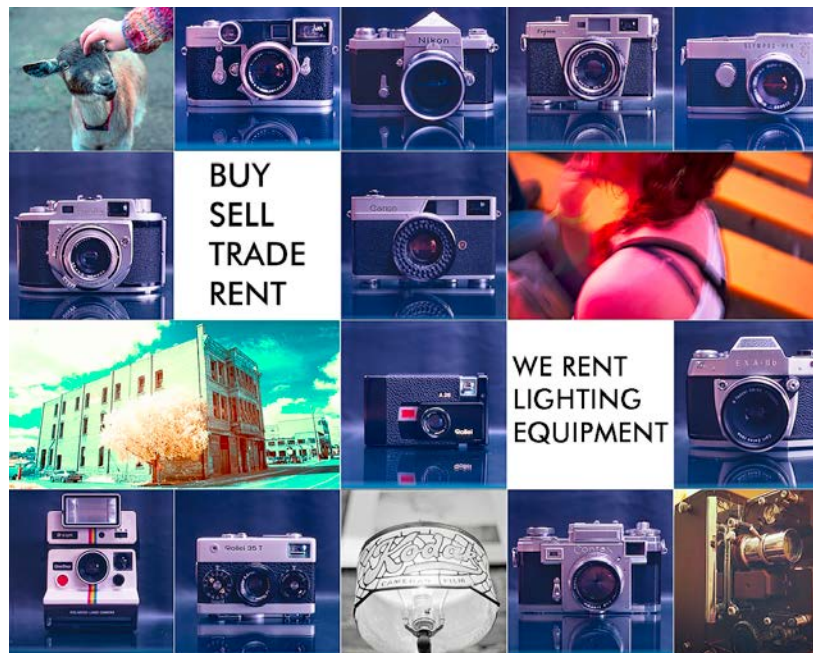
Explore the Beauty of Winter

Image ©Jason Kazuta

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