



Close-Up



"Mandarin Duck" by Cim McDonald

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Victoria Camera Club

Close-Up is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club,
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 Editor, Richard James, e-mail to newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org
 for submissions or to advertise in *Close-Up*.



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*.

For additional information: please contact:

Membership: membership@victoriacameraclub.org

Workshops: workshops@victoriacameraclub.org

Field Trips: fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.org

Meetings: meetings@victoriacameraclub.org

Website: webmaster@victoriacameraclub.org

Close-Up: newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org

or call Lloyd Houghton, President at 250-580-7154.

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The Victoria Camera Club is a member club of the Community Arts Council of Greater Victoria (CACGV), 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.

Thursday, Jan. 7th: Competition Night

The November competition results will be presented with one of the judges reviewing selected images. The Theme for January is "Street Photography," the deadline for submission is January 7th.

Thursday, Jan, 14th: Presentation Night

This month's presenter is Joshua Lawrence, a professional photographer focusing on architectural photography. He builds his images with detailed planning and precise execution based on his training as a draftsman. Charged by the energy of light and shadow on his subjects, he understands the intricate skill of creating drama in photographic images. We will see how he plans and composes the arrangement of light and shadow to produce precise, dramatic architectural images.

Thursday, Jan. 21st: Members' Night

Presentation of members' images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical topics.

Featured Field Trips and Workshops

Urban Architecture and Seaspan Shipyard (Industrial theme topic) field trips.

Novice Image Review and File Management workshops.

Cover image: "Mandarin Duck" by Cim McDonald. This image was judged "Best In Animals 2014" by the Professional Photographers of Canada (PPOC) and placed 2nd In the Lions Gate Nature competition in 2014

In 2014, I went on a cruise that included several asian ports of call including China, Singapore and Vietnam. While walking down a path beside a small stream in one of the parks in Beijing, I spotted my first Mandarin Duck. Surprisingly, they are very small but the colours of their feathers took my breath away. Some rested in the trees while others slept on the water. This one kept one eye open to watch me as he tucked his beak into his feathers. Nikon D3, 80-400 mm f4-5.6 lens at f8, 1/250 sec.

President's Message

I neglected to wish you a Happy Christmas last month, so hopefully I can make up for that by getting in a Happy New Year now – HAPPY NEW YEAR.

For some reason this month's message has been a real wrestle to write. It is times like this that I wonder what the purpose of this is, and does anyone read it? Then I remember that from time to time I do get comments that indicate it has been read and resonated with a few of you.

A recent topic of conversation with some of you has been the nature of our Thursday night meetings. A number have said they would prefer more "lights on" activity with time for interaction and discussion rather than "sitting in the dark" watching images for the whole evening. While there are logistical issues to address due to 80-90 people at recent meetings, that does not mean it is not possible to make something work. Where there is a will there is a way. I'm keen to hear from more of you and will be taking a few minutes at the beginning of the January and February meetings to get some discussion going.

Recently, I have been thinking about things that get in the way of my own photographic endeavours. It is easy to let unnecessary distractions get in the way of our creativity. Then, unwittingly, we get bogged down in excessive trivia or other peoples well-intentioned agendas and lose sight of the big picture, those things that are really important to us. Thinking about our Club led me to ask some of you what should be the really important activities of the Club. What would you say if I asked you?

What a great show our November members' night was. But it did get me wondering if shows like that intimidate some members. You don't have to use fancy slideshow software, music is an option but not necessary, and you certainly don't have to have gone to some exotic location. Members' presentations will generally be doing one, or both, of two things: showing us something that may inspire us to try something or go somewhere new, or looking for some feedback. Your presentation can be as simple as a few images in a folder that you manually click through. Your pictures should be the main event.

Last thing. Being a member of the Club should be fun. Not just fun when participating in Club activities, but it should be fun for those who help run the Club. We need to do everything we can to increase the fun factor, for all. On that note, sorry, you'll have to wait for another time to hear about that.

Lloyd Houghton, President.

by Leah Gray



We slowed to a stop as I slowly rolled the window down and quietly raised my camera. The object of my interest was a group of wild horses, who, after a quick look, promptly galloped off into the fading light.

I was on a tour to photograph wild horses, and the horses were definitely wild. We had driven for miles on backcountry dusty service roads where you had better pack a good emergency kit, as there were no signs, no maps, no cell service, and the conditions could quickly turn to heavy mud with rain. In the middle of this vast barren land were a few wild horses hidden in the folds of the Great Divide Basin near Rock Springs, Wyoming, an area of almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million acres. These horses are decedents from Spanish horses introduced in the 1500's, although many are also from Calvary remounts.



We looked for horses for several days with unpredictable luck. When we spotted some, we would quietly exit the vehicle and shoot over the hood or a door. The horses might show their tails and run, or be curious and come towards us. There were also times we were able to walk into their world as they socialized around us, their expressions and actions so much more animated than domestic horses. The shot above was captured during one of these magical moments. The horses are all wild stallions (700 mm f5.6 lens, ISO 400 at 1/2000 second).

Shooting wild horses requires patience and quick reflexes. One moment there is nothing to shoot, and the



next moment there could be lots of activity. Having shot sports for quite a few years, I tend to have decent reactions. That mental checklist runs through your brain, check the light, check exposure, depth of field, do I need a bit more? How is my speed? Where do I want to situate myself? Composition, mood, story, and gesture are things that all need to be addressed.

There can be so much happening that it's easy to get excited and take snapshots instead of making photographs. Shooting with a 500 mm lens (with extender on a full frame camera) can pose its own problems. Sure you can get close, but to frame a shot properly requires moving your feet, something that can be difficult to do around flighty horses. Having a second camera on your shoulder with a shorter lens can give you more options. Do I want a wide shot with the background, or a close-up showing expression? You want to be ready to catch those incredible moments when they happen.

These horses may not always be around to photograph, as the Bureau of Land Management is taking steps to remove many of them, but there are also people wanting to keep them. This was an experience not to be missed. I feel very fortunate to have had the chance to see these wonderful animals in their natural state.



By Suzanne Huot

Nature photographers lucky enough to call British Columbia home are indeed blessed for being able to live here. We have the largest population and variety of mammals to be found anywhere in Canada. The beauty of photographing larger mammals is that a lot of the time a big 500 mm or 600 mm lens is simply too much lens and the use of a smaller lens opens up the field to a lot more nature photographers.

I cannot help but be fascinated by whales and other marine mammals. The lenses I use are from 70-200 mm up to 300 mm and sometimes the old Canon standby nature lens, 100-400 mm. In fact, using a long fixed lens is a hindrance for this type of photography. The advantage of a shorter 200+ mm lens is that you can compose more on an image, such as a whale with Mount Baker in the background. If you were looking at a group of whales swimming towards you it would be impossible to get them all into the frame with a big fixed lens.



Orca, Active Pass

On Vancouver Island we have many opportunities to photograph wild mammals. You can encounter anything from bears to deer, seals, sea lions, otters, both marine and river. Even wolves can be seen in the Tofino area. If your wish is to capture those magnificent grizzlies there are day trips from both Campbell River and Telegraph Cove. My best grizzly bear images were usually taken with a 70-200 mm lens.

Marine mammal watching from Victoria, Sidney, Tofino and Telegraph Cove are readily available with trips of three hours duration. If you prefer to set yourself up and be close and personal with seals and river otters just visit Fisherman's Wharf or the Oak Bay Marina.

If you have time in the summer nothing beats a drive north through the Rockies and even up into the Yukon.

A whole world of photographic opportunities awaits you there. Elk, deer, marmots, rocky mountain sheep, goats, caribou, moose, grizzly, black bears and even bison left free to range. Many sightings were experienced without leaving our vehicle as we drove along the Alaska Highway.

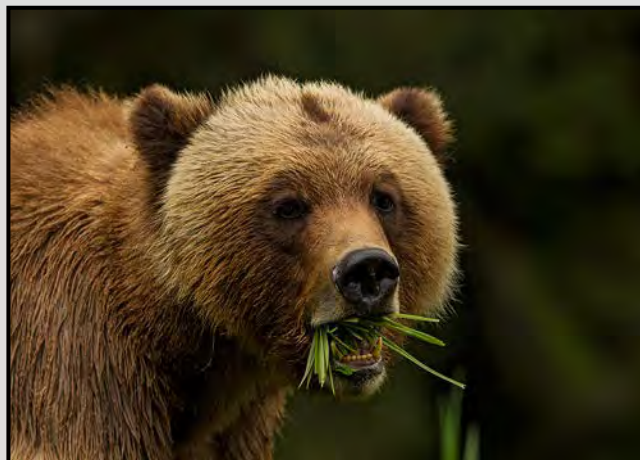
When on a road trip quite often your car becomes an excellent blind from which to photograph. Have you ever noticed how often your subject vanishes as soon as you open the vehicle's door? It is always a good idea to carry a bean bag in your car on which you can rest your camera and lens without leaving the car. This will give you support for a nice steady shot and avoid camera shake that comes from hand holding.

There are also trips available where one can go for several days on a wildlife watching tour and still remain within the province of British Columbia. It is not always about Africa and safaris. We have world-class wildlife right here on our own doorstep and photographers come from everywhere for the opportunity to catch wildlife in the raw.

One of my favourite trips has been to the Khutzymateen Grizzly Bear Sanctuary near Prince Rupert.

The Khutzymateen is the only grizzly bear sanctuary in Canada. There is a day trip available out of Prince Rupert. Bears are seen coming to the mouth of the river and into the estuary and are particularly numerous in the spring walking along the mud flats looking for the high protein sedge. In the spring, as they come out of hibernation, they will bulk up as much as 45 kg per day.

Also available are a couple of charter boats that do three or four day trips. If you take this option you will live on the boat anchored in the estuary. When the tide is right you will go out in a Zodiac for several hours and often come



Grizzly Bear, Sedge

to within a dozen feet of a bear feeding on sedge. Often you will see a sow with cubs and the odd macho male wandering about looking for romance. Be prepared to like the rain, though!

Another awesome mammal that we have exclusively in BC is the Spirit Bear otherwise known as the Kermode Bear, which is a white Black Bear. This is not an albino but a Black Bear that carries recessive white genes. So if both the female and male carry this gene they may have white cubs or even, if a pair of cubs, one white and one black.



Kermode Bear, Salmon for Lunch

To see a Spirit Bear is a very special experience. Once again you must not be deterred by rain as this bear's domain is called the Great Bear Rain Forest. If you are driving from Prince Rupert to Cranberry Junction you might be lucky to spy one. Several companies offer trips to observe and photograph these iconic bears.

If Grizzly Bears are of interest to you it may be worth your while to drive up to Stewart in July or August. There is a campground and a few hotels. Stewart is located right on the US border with the tiny hamlet of Haynes on the Alaskan panhandle. Haynes, AK, is a five-minute drive from Stewart. A further ten minutes will bring you to Fish Creek where salmon come in to spawn. Grizzlies and Black Bears regularly show up to feed on the salmon and observation platforms have been built to allow wildlife enthusiasts to enjoy the action. The long platform is ideal to set up your tripod, camera and umbrella and you have a clear view looking down on the creek. Occasionally you will spot a coastal wolf also looking for a salmon meal as this is an important part of their diet. A big lens is not required here.

I have, so far, addressed options when photographing mammals but small lenses are also very useful for

birds, frogs, dragonflies and other tiny creatures.

Birds in flight are best handled by a 300 mm lens or less because with a long lens it is more difficult to locate and lock onto a moving target. The reason for this is that a longer lens covers a smaller area of the sky.

Here in the southern part of Vancouver Island we are fortunate to be near Esquimalt Lagoon. Between November and March photographers come from everywhere to photograph the abundant overwintering species of ducks, geese and swans. Kings Pond is an ideal location for Wood Ducks. Cattle Point and Clover Point, on the other hand, offer otters, seals, Harlequin Ducks and many other species. In any of these locations one can spend many happy hours, camera in hand, returning home with many lovely images.



Pintail Landing

In the fall and winter, Boundary Bay on the mainland is a wonderful place to find Snow Geese, Short-Eared Owls and Northern Harriers. At Reifel Bird Sanctuary, you can get close to the birds and they seem to be used to people, making it a simple task to get a good shot. If you are lucky you might even get to see some Sandhill Cranes or Black-crowned Night Herons, they are ideally suited for a small lens.

In the spring, back here on the Island, visit Swan Lake along the floating bridge and listen for the Marsh Wrens. You can get very close to them when they are nest building as they gather fluff from bulrushes.

So as you can see British Columbia really is a wildlife photographer's paradise.

All the images accompanying this article were shot with 70-200 mm and 300 mm lenses.



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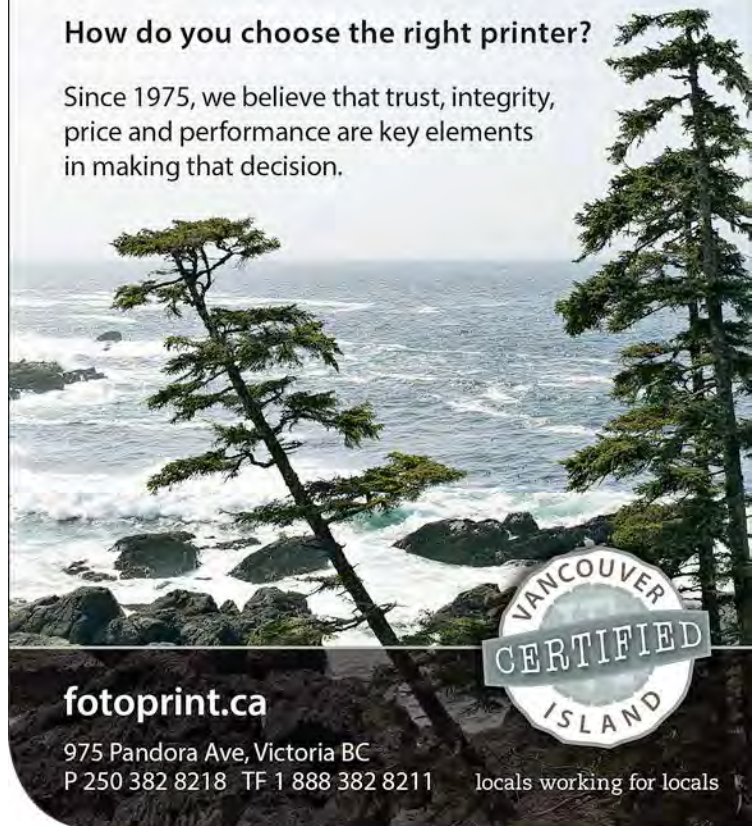
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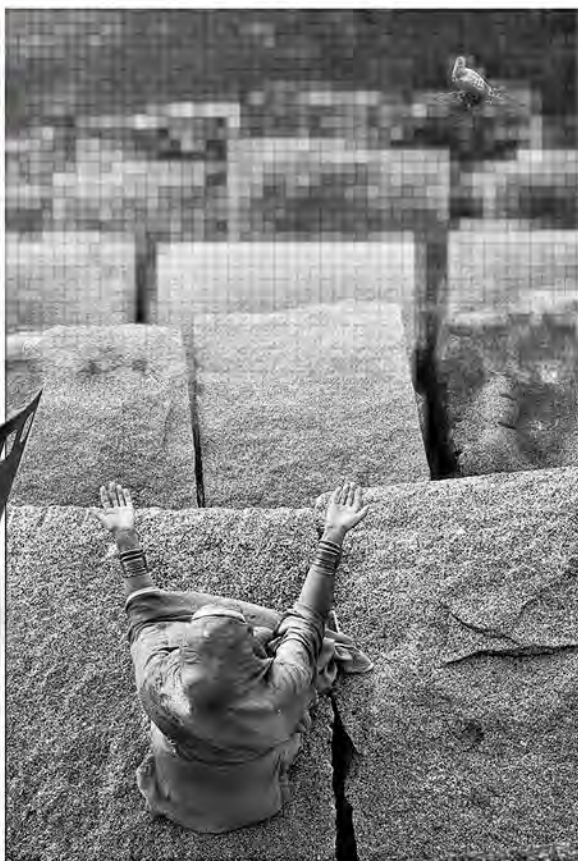
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Bridging Photo Technologies

by Richard James

It's winter, but don't put your camera away! Even here in Victoria there are opportunities for winter photography that can truly express this season of the year. And even if you are one of our snowbirds, heading to California, Arizona or New Mexico you can still produce winter images. Snow on the red rock of Sedona or Bryce Canyon, or even on the Saguaro cactus in the desert around Phoenix or Tucson can make magical scenes.

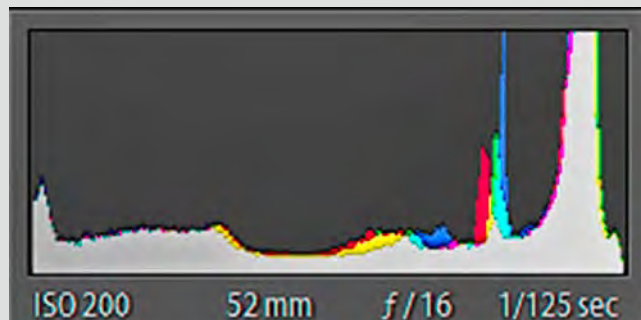
Before I discuss what you can shoot to express the winter season, let's cover a couple of technical issues. The two key issues are exposure and colour balance. Don't we all know that snow is always white, never grey or blue? Unfortunately, the camera does not. Certainly modern cameras do a better job at figuring out exposure and color balance than their predecessors but you still need to understand how to get them right. If you are only shooting JPEG's this becomes critical as there is very little latitude in processing to adequately correct the whole image. The recommendation in this case is certainly to save your images in RAW format and make the appropriate adjustments in processing.

Grey snow and blue snow need different approaches. Simply put, grey snow is underexposed. Snow is likely to be the brightest part of the image so in the histogram on the camera it is important that the right side of the histogram is almost touching the edge of the display. Do not go over this or you will have overexposed and burnt out snow which will not be recoverable in processing. If the snow is grey it most likely means that the shadows are grossly underexposed and will approach detail-less black. Trying to pull detail out of them in processing will give you a lot of noise in that part of the image.

Sunlit snow is never blue, however snow in shadow will be because it is being lit by the blue sky on a sunny day.



"Old Barns", Anachist Mtn, BC



"Old Barns" Histogram (Lightroom)

If you are shooting only JPEG's it is critical to check the LCD display and reset your color balance so that sunlit snow is white. However there is one exception to this and that is shooting in the golden hours around dawn and sunset. That is when you really do want snow to show that warm glow rather than a cool white.

Now let's move on to the creative side. All that's been said in many places about positioning subjects in the frame applies to winter photography. What we can concentrate on instead is the type of subject. Landscapes can be "big picture" images showing features such as wide open spaces (prairies), trees, rock formations, or urban landscapes etc. nestled in a bed of snow. Landscapes can also close in on the finer details of snow, the rounded drifts on the ground, around trees or buildings etc.. Imagine snow as miniature scale sand dunes and rely on a low sun angle to show the surface relief of the drifts themselves or the fine detail of the windblown snow.

Going from landscape to almost macro you can shoot snow flakes clinging to the cactus spines, the leaves of our Douglas firs, or gently coating man-made features such as street furniture. Ice and snow flakes themselves make for challenging photography. Light shining on, and refracted through, the ice on a pond or simply a small puddle, or the crystal structure of individual snowflakes can create wonderful symmetry or abstract patterns.

Now here is a challenge for you. Go out there and find the snow and come back with an image worthy of the cover of the December 2016 *Close-Up*. I will give you a big hint. While I can use vertical or horizontal format images on the cover, why don't you try cropping to an almost square format to get the most coverage on the page.

Why You Should Print Your Images

by Pam Irvine

Photograph literally means “to write with light.” Photographs are meant for paper, not monitor screens. An image on a monitor is effectively backlit (transmissive) and a print is reflective. It’s almost impossible to get the same level of deep shadow gradation on a monitor, which is why prints tend to look much richer, especially those of low-key black and white images.

Some images are better suited to large prints than others. Images with fine detail and lots of resolution are prime candidates. Clean subjects with sharp edges and not much detail will print well at any size, but tend to lose impact at anything above normal viewing distances and sizes, say 13”x19”. The physical size of the subject plays a part here: if it’s normally very small, a large print can give the impression of being inside the subject; if it’s normally very large, then small prints do not convey a sense of scale.

What type of paper? You can select paper texture and warmth to compliment your image.

Gloss and Semi-gloss: Color images can look good on glossy, smooth paper to give them ultimate density and saturation, however, the gloss creates reflections that can obscure your image. If you’re planning to frame a print, glossy paper may give glare from both the gloss and the glass.

Matte: Fine art B&W may work well on fine, matte fibre papers. While they do not create distracting reflections, matte papers do not give really dark black tones and can sometimes look “muddy.” Quality matte paper may show finer detail than glossy paper, which is important for images where detail and texture are critical.

Canvas: A quality canvas print will deliver contrast and color like a matte paper, but since there is no glass over the print to reduce contrast and saturation, the colors remain much more vibrant when viewed from a distance. A canvas image struck by side light will show a lot of bumps.

Art Paper: Finally, there are “art” papers that deliver a matte finish with a fair amount of texture, like water color paper. These papers offer varying degrees of contrast and color, and a different overall look. Some might appear more painterly, and many will be a noticeable yellow or beige color. Images with broad areas of flat color, like landscapes, can work very well on these papers.

External Competitions and International Salons

Some members enter external competitions such as those organized by CAPA, North Shore Photographic Society, Lions Gate Camera Club as well as Photographic Salons that have been sanctioned by FIAP (Federation Internationale de l’Art Photographique) or PSA (Photographic Society of America). If you are not aware, salons are juried exhibitions of images with entry open to the public. The key criteria is that images that have been accepted are considered to be the best of those submitted and, for international salons, meet very high standards for visual presentation and technical expertise.

We recently presented a slideshow of some of these images on members’ night. In *Close-Up* this month there is a gallery of images from those and other members comprising images that have either placed (1st, 2nd, 3rd or Honourable Mention) in competition, or have been accepted in salons.

PSA and FIAP sanction a large number of salons each year throughout the world. In addition to the acceptance of images, PSA runs a ranking system for its members showing the number of points awarded each year. This year, Wendi Donaldson-Laird ranked 18th in North America (8th in Canada) in the PSA Projected Image Division and 11th in North America (3th in Canada) in the PSA Pictorial Print Division, large color print category. Her image “*Rescue at Sea*” also received a PSA Gold Medal for Photojournalism at the 121st Toronto International Salon of Photography. Wendi was also recognized by the Australian Photographic Society with the “Associate” designation (AAPS) and the “Artiste” designation from FIAP.

Members routinely submit images to the Sooke and Sidney Fine Art Shows. Other shows or competitions represented in the gallery include: Cowichan Valley Arts Council, Professional Photographers of Canada Awards, Cork (Ireland), International Loupe Award 2014 (Australia), CAPA Photo Expo (Vancouver), CAPA inter-club competitions, Denver Audubon Society, Bristol Salon (UK), IV International Photo Salon (Bulgaria, Wild Animal in the Zoo), International Circuit Exhibit “Child” (Serbia), and the Canadian Geographic Wildlife Photography of the Year competition.

For an artist it is the creation of the work that is important but to have it recognized by one’s peers certainly means that you have “done a good job” in expressing your artistic intent.

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Essence of Light & Spring 2014 Hungary
FIAP Bronze Medal
"The Stare" by Wendi Donaldson-Laird

The daughter of a good friend in Adelaide, Australia, posed for me one day. She enjoyed playing "dress-up" wearing my big black hat which almost dwarfed her. Image taken in natural light and in colour and then converted to B&W. Canon EOS 50D with EF 50 mm f/1.4 USM lens, 1/125 sec. at f/3.2, ISO 100.



Cork, Ireland 2013
"Snowy Owl on a Mission" by Suzanne Huot

Every few years Snowy Owls leave their Arctic home in search of food further south. Boundary Bay, with its long log-filled shore, is full of mice and voles, a food of choice for these owls. I set up my tripod and camera and waited patiently for an owl to take off from a nearby log. This was the shot. Canon EOS 1D Mk IV, 500 mm lens 1.4x teleconverter at 700 mm, 1/3200 sec at f7.1, ISO 640.



Sidney Fine Arts Show 2015 - HM
"Sandhill Crane" by Barbara Burns

This image was shot one afternoon at the Reifel Bird Sanctuary. I added grunge texturing to complement the gorgeous but edgy quality of the bird and a hint of a frame to suggest a special portrait session. Canon 1Ds, 70-300 mm lens at 1/640, f.5.6, ISO 160.



Sidney Fine Arts Show 2015
"Djupavik Herring Factory" by Steve Lustig

Djupavik is a village of seven houses, a hotel and an abandoned herring factory in the Westfjords of Iceland. Once the largest concrete building in Iceland, the factory was built in 1934 and closed in 1954. Due to the high dynamic range, a 5-shot HDR was required. It was processed in HDR Efex Pro and then Silver Efex Pro. Nikon D800, 24-120 mm lens at 55 mm, ISO 4000, f8.



Sidney Fine Art Show 2014
"Waiting" by Mary Weir

This image was shot on November, 2013 in Melbourne, Australia. I wanted to capture the reflection of the yellow tram doors in the wet pavement to give vibrancy to the image and also to repeat the colour and the metal elements in the bike and the bench. Canon EOS Rebel 3Ti in AV mode, f4, 1/50 sec.



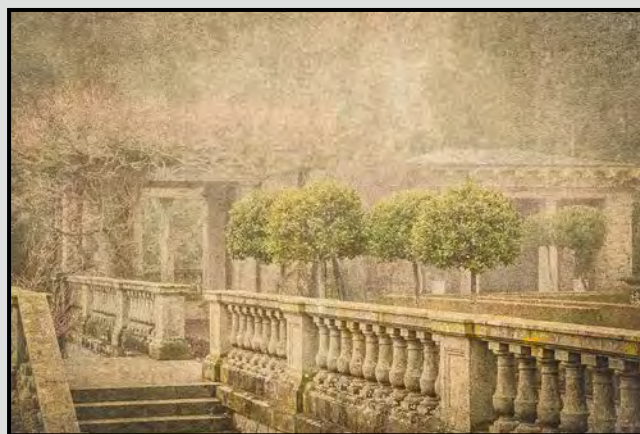
Sidney Fine Arts Show 2015
"What the Heart Leaves Behind"
by Lorna Zaback

The heart (actually a Christmas ornament), the scallop shell, the stones and the watercolour background were all photographed on my work table. The lacy bits are sandstone formations photographed on Saturna Island. Images are layered and blended in Photoshop. Nikon D60, 18-55 mm f3.5-5.6 lens.



Sidney Fine Art Show, 2014
"The Watchman" by Deb Thurlbeck

Shot along an abandoned train track. A dapper man standing by the tracks looking down at his watch, lantern by his feet. I created the mask and added steam punk detail to the eye on the mask to bring attention to this action. The photo was taken in early evening, fill flash was used to darken the background and create the shadow effect on the umbrella. Nikon D7000, f 4.5, 1/60 sec, ISO 100,



Sidney Fine Arts Show 2015
"Castle Grounds" by Donna Robertson

The image was shot at Hatley Castle in the fog. It has some texture layered onto it. Nikon 300s, 1/10 sec, f25, 56 mm focal length lens.



Sidney Fine Arts Show 2015

"Ferguson Beach, Earth Day" by Sue Ferguson

I went to Ferguson Beach (Saanichton) on Earth Day, April 22, 2015 to photograph the Lyrid Meteor Shower. Although overcast, the repeating disc-like cloud formations were fascinating. I did some beautiful low light photography that night. There is very minor light painting on the sunken boat. A long exposure otherwise absorbed the ambient light for all night sky and water reflections. This photo was taken between midnight and 1am. Canon 70D, Tokina 11-16 mm f2.8 lens, at 11 mm, ISO 200, f3.5.



CAPA Nature Oct 2014 Gold Medal, Mississippi Valley 2014, Denver Audubon Society 2014, and Bristol (UK) Salon 2015

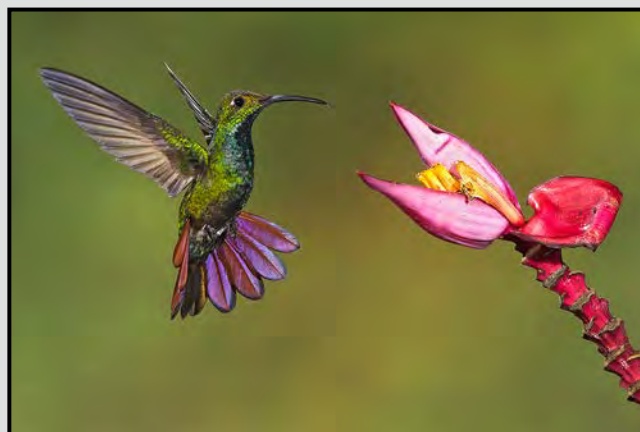
"Atlantic Puffins Billing" by Mike Wooding

Taken on a trip to Newfoundland with Don Peterson and Bryan Kemper at Elliston on the Bonavista Peninsula in July of 2014. We were fortunate to have ideal shooting conditions and the birds came in close. Nikon D800, Nikkor 500 mm f4 VR II lens, ISO 500, 1/320, f8, -1/3 EV.



*Sooke Fine Art Show 2015 Award of Excellence
"Girlz Welding Class" by Ian Crawford*

The venue was the metal shop at Victoria High School. The image was taken with a Canon Rebel XS and a kit lens because my Canon D7 and good lens were being used making a video recording of the class. The video was a requirement as the last part of an Instructor or Diploma Course that Judy (my wife) was attempting to pass. Judy achieved her Instructor's Diploma and I got enough to pay for my second lens, a happy day for us both.



*Canadian Association for Photographic Arts
Photo Expo 2015 Best Nature Entry*

"Green-breasted Mango" by Linda Anne Baker

This male Green-breasted Mango image was taken at the world famous Rancho Naturalista, a rain-forest retreat in the Caribbean foothills of Costa Rica. Canon 60D, 300 mm f4 L IS lens, ISO 250, f14 and 1/250 sec using a multi-flash set-up.

I first became interested in photography in 2009 when I bought my first digital SLR camera and joined the Victoria Camera Club. I felt fortunate to be part of such a dynamic club with warm and welcoming enthusiasts. Members were keen to share their knowledge and passion, which was really inspirational for a beginning photographer. Victoria Camera Club was, and is, a great place to develop knowledge, skill and motivation.

Entering competitions was a turning point in my skill level and learning from the judges' comments has enabled my photography to progress from a beginner to being able to produce some winning competition images. Having your own work judged helps you to focus on where you can improve and there is great satisfaction in seeing your images get better along the way.

Since joining the Club I have immersed myself in photography and have become passionate about it. My other two passions in life are travel and art, and photography is the thread that weaves them all together.

I have an interest in many areas of photography including natural history, especially birds and wildlife, landscapes, and portraiture. Although I enjoy traditional photography, I am an artist at heart. There is so much more that you can do with a simple photograph which makes photography a very creative medium. I use photography as a form of artistic expression by combining traditional photography with digital technology to create artistic images.

I use a number of software programs and allow myself the freedom to experiment, trying different methods and techniques with a goal to creating impressionistic artwork that is rich, vibrant and bold in colour.

We are fortunate to live in a very scenic part of the world with easy access to a wide array of photographic opportunities, places that you can return to on numerous occasions and still find different ways to photograph.

I have also travelled around the world visiting some of the world's greatest cities and regions. These destinations and cultures are very different from our own country but whether it be scenic Canada or exotic destinations, the world around continues to inspire me.

Through my travel and photography I seek to document and define my own personal experiences of the places I visit and the cultures connected with them, and to share their vitality, grandeur and timelessness.

While my photographic subjects vary widely, I have a deep respect for nature and am drawn to the splendour

and beauty that nature illustrates in its many different and constantly changing ways. I am constantly searching for unique expressions of nature. Sometimes I am rewarded with a great photo, but sometimes it is not about the photography at all, just the enjoyment of being outdoors hiking in the woods, or beside a stream or waterfall.

It is my goal as a photographer to inspire others to reach out to that sense of wonder, and to encourage you to journey to and explore the uniqueness of the world's most extraordinary places.

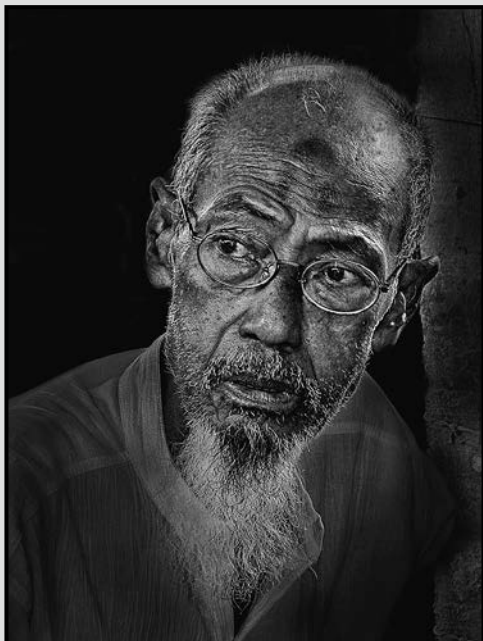


"Autumn Whispers"

I enjoy watercolour paintings, particularly those where a wet on wet technique is used allowing the colours to flow and blend into one another in beautiful and unexpected ways. This creates a soft diffused effect, which was the look I was trying to achieve with these pieces. The original images were captured as HDR images and then several programs and filters were used to achieve the painterly style that I was trying to attain. Once the basic style was accomplished, the image was duplicated, blurred, and several blending tools were used to blend the edges and remove detail.

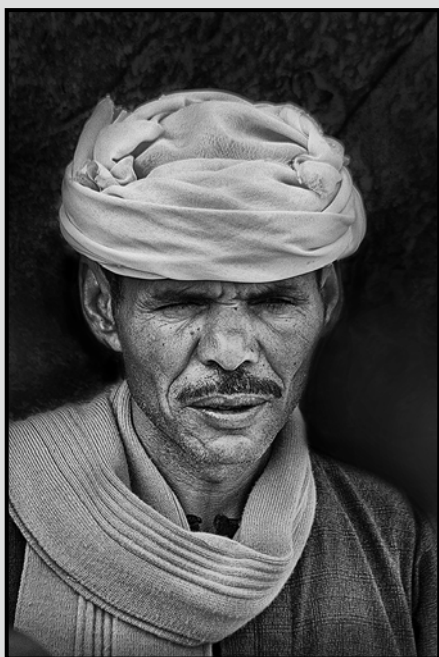


"Red Canopy"



"Absorbed"

Portraiture is an area of photography that I enjoy both in the studio and in the field. In particular, I like black and white portraiture. It is dramatic and has more of an emotional impact if you can capture the expressions and emotions conveyed by the eyes. In post processing my images, I tend to like portraits that are dark, heavily textured and low-light moody. Focusing on light, shadow and textures adds a distinct sense of intensity and feeling to the image.



"Ammon"



"Steller's Jay"

The Steller's Jay is among my favourites for bird photography. They are very colourful with deep azure blue plumage, distinctive black crests and distinguishing blue streaks on their forehead. What makes this bird so much fun to photograph is that it has lots of personality and its behaviour is very entertaining. They hop from place to place, pausing often to eye their surroundings and cock their heads with sudden movements this way and that. They are extremely intelligent and can mimic the calls of other birds. I have often observed them picking up several peanuts and weighing them in their beaks to determine the largest one. They are very easy to attract and are non-migratory which means you can photograph them year round.



"Old Mill Site"

The capture of this image was a matter of being at the right place at the right time. I was passing by the Old

Youbou mill site one early fall morning and the alder trees on the shore seemed to just glow in the early rays of the sun. The colours represented in this image are as they were captured. Nothing was done to enhance or saturate the colours following capture. The only adjustment made was to clone out some unwanted maple branches that were obscuring the image and to add a brightness adjustment layer.



“Roosevelt Elk”

The Roosevelt Elk are indigenous to Vancouver Island and although almost hunted to extinction, their conservation has been very successful. This image of a Roosevelt Elk cow was taken at Lake Cowichan where several herds now reside. Sightings of the herds are common and, as they have become quite habituated to humans, it is possible to view and photograph these majestic creatures in very close proximity. I was about 15 feet away from this particular cow when I took the image.



“Vintage Barn”

A favourite pastime is to drive the country roads seeking out dilapidated barns, rusty old cars, vintage farm equip-

ment or other remnants from a bygone era. This image of an old barn was taken near Westholme. It had a lot of character and I was intrigued by the stories behind it.



“Colours of Dusk I”

I have wanted to capture a scene like this for a long time, but I could never find the appropriate setting, so I decided to try to create it artificially. The background image originated from an abstract of some trees that I had created previously. This was blurred so that only the impression of vertical trees remained in the background. A red adjustment layer was added and opacity adjusted to add some red to the background. The trees were created from a single image of a maple tree which was duplicated several times, scaled, distorted and warped to create the forest. A semi-opaque white was painted over the trunks to make them whiter and brightness and contrast layers were clipped to each tree layer to change the tonal values to bring them forward or push them further back in the composition. Finally a layer of vegetation was introduced to give some definition to the foreground and background.



“Colours of Dusk II”

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by John Roberts

I know many photographers who are “fair weather photographers,” and at this time of year they hunker down in the wet and cold weather we get in Victoria. This is a good time to catch up on what many people never think about doing during the rest of the year: keywording your photos.

Because we have all done this at one point or another, you started searching through the thousands of images you have (from last month alone), and you are looking for just that one image, and you know it was about this date, but you are not 100% sure, and it takes you a long time just to locate it. You wished there was an easier way to scroll through your images to make this faster.

Well, what you have been asking for has been here for a while now. But many of us, myself included, do not keyword at the time of uploading. It takes time to think of the keywords, especially if you were on a trip and you have to think of the country, city, whether you were at a specific location in that city that you may want to list, i.e. “France, Paris, Eiffel Tower”, but trust me, the use of keywords for your images will save you a ton of time later.

It took me a while to start using keywords and I cannot imagine a workflow that does not use keywords anymore, it is just far too handy and useful for me. So let me explain to you why you might also want to use keywords.

Keywords are a super handy tool to assist you in correctly categorizing your images, and will speed up searching your images when you are looking for _____. Say you are looking for that image you took on Remembrance Day 2014 and you know you keyworded that whole shoot “2014-11-11”, all you have to do is type your search into Lightroom (or whatever organizational software you have) and all your images will appear, and nothing else.

I am currently scanning all of my family’s old photos that came from my grandparents collection, and as I am scanning them in, I am keywording them all with the names of the people that are in the photos.

So when my parents ask me for a photo of cousin Niko from Belgium that time he visited in 1996 with his parents, I can literally just search “Niko”, and the 18 photos from that visit with him, will show up as my search results. This is just one example of what keywording can be used for.

If I am photographing a model, I will include their name,

the date of the shoot, the location of the shoot, and from there, I will even go into more detail, such as what they are wearing: a black dress, lipstick, hat, or a hairpiece, anything that can help my search. Even adding the camera and lens you were using can be important at a later date. It is also important to keep to an organized keyword structure, not “random words.”

A couple of years ago I was using Lightroom to help me figure out what my most commonly-used focal length lens was because I was itching to get a new lens just for my portrait photography. I searched my “Portrait” keyword and then had Lightroom break it down to what lenses I was using, whether they were zooms, what zoom range I was using most often etc.

So, using keywords can be useful in so many more ways that just finding your images. It can also be used as a tool to follow your progression with a particular type of photography. Seeing that progression, you can see where mistakes were made and what you would like to see improved upon in the future.

Adding keywords after the images have already been downloaded and edited will take you some time, but with the super wet winter that we are expecting this year, time is not going to be the issue. Winter will be a great time to go through the last year of images and begin the colossal undertaking of inputting all the keywords.

After you are done with those those, start on the year before that, and before you know it, you will not be able to stand, because you have been sitting at the computer for too long.

Also a good thing to remember is that for every 30 minutes of sitting in front of the computer, you should stand up for one minute and walk around the room, and let your eyes rest for a moment. If you have the Apple Watch, it can even remind you to do that. I set a timer on my phone and it chimes every 30 minutes. I just do a quick lap of my work place and let my eyes readjust from LCD light to daylight. It actually makes a difference after a long day of working on a computer.

So next time you upload some images, remember to keyword your images to save yourself some time down the road.

So as always, if you have anything you need clarification on, or would just like to share your success, you can reach me at jrphotographybc@icloud.com.

by Trevor Hardy

We are deluged with offerings from camera equipment makers, with a vast array of options and features. In deciding what is best for you it is important to focus on both the benefits for your style as a photographer and your budget. The following guide is meant to help you avoid regretting your equipment investments.



A dizzying array of expensive investment options.

Set your investment budget

The first thing to realize is that expensive equipment does not make you a good photographer. That comes from your understanding of the medium: the technology and the art. Arguably, the best way to improve your photos is to really get to know how to use your gear, especially the functions on your camera.

What kind of photographer do you want to be? How specialized do you intend to be?

At one extreme is the recording of information, where accuracy and faithful reproduction may be critical. Specialization may well require investment in custom equipment. For example a specialist astrophotographer may use a telescope with a camera mount, a customized camera body, plus a heavy tripod with stellar tracking technology and a remote release system.

Commercial, real-estate, portrait and fashion photography add creativity, often to produce a flattering effect. For the specialist in fashion or portraiture this may require large cameras and a studio setup. Alternatively, portraiture can be achieved with a good moderate telephoto and skillful use of available light. Real estate photography makes rooms appear appealing, using multiple flash units combined with available light and wide-angle lenses.

Dominating the photographic scale is the recording of events. Photojournalism, landscape, nature, animal and street photography seek to record faithfully, yet capture

or create an emotional reaction. Further degrees of creativity take us towards artistic or abstract photography.

For that we will likely use a much wider range of equipment: wildlife photographers may use a range of focal lengths: from long telephotos to macro lenses depending on their subject and how close they can get.

You need to consider sensor size and lens performance. All lenses show a focal length based on a 35 mm sized-negative, where a 50 mm lens has a Field of View (FOV) equivalent to the human eye. Lenses with full-frame digital sensors behave the same, however most sensors are “cropped,” i.e. smaller than a 35 mm negative. These don’t “see” the whole lens, producing an effective “magnifying effect” on the lens’s focal length and a reduction in its FOV: e.g. a 35 mm negative is 1.6 times larger than the APS-C Canon sensor, so a 50 mm lens would have an effective focal length = 50 mm x 1.6 = 80 mm, which is a moderate telephoto. This phenomenon has the effect of making wide-angle lenses less so and exaggerating telephoto effective focal length. So if you want to work with very wide-angle lenses you might want to consider a full-frame sensor.

What are you prepared to carry?

It is no use having a big DSLR and with a heavy zoom lens if you leave it at home because it is too cumbersome, wasting money and photographic opportunities.

If you are hiking, or travelling for weeks on end, you will most likely have only limited luggage or carrying capacity, and security is an issue so less is more. Thus, compact but versatile equipment becomes critical, so one may look at a DSLR with wide-range zoom or good compact camera. If you shoot outdoors you may want to consider dust and weatherproofing issues. If you really “go bush” you may want a camera that takes batteries that don’t need charging.

Depending on your criteria you may want to consider a bridge camera. For a modest investment these offer many of the functions of a DSLR, but without an interchangeable lens. This has some advantages: they are likely to be more resistant to water and dust as there are fewer joints in the body. They usually have all of the controls of their bigger DSLR cousins and they are more portable and inconspicuous. They often have enormous zoom ranges. The down side is that bridge cameras have small sensors, limiting the size of your prints, however they work fine for a modest print, and for computer or TV display.

What kind of output do you want?

Are you looking at large size high-resolution prints, postcard-size photos, digital output for your computer, or publication on the web? For the former one needs high resolution, implying expensive lenses and large format sensors; at the other end of the scale you can use a bridge, compact camera or even a cellphone.

Consider the new, ultra-slim, high quality LED TV screens with HD resolution as picture frames. They offer two advantages: backlit images usually have more punch (if you saw the World Wildlife Photographers' show at the BC Museum in 2015 you will know what I mean), yet the resolution is probably in the modest range of around 1920x1080 (1080p). Secondly you can change the image whenever you want just by selecting a different picture to display on screen, or having a slide show that changes daily. A 32" (80 cm) HD screen is not far off the framing costs of a similar size print.

Video: If you do decide to include video capability in your considerations you will have to evaluate the video performance of both the body and lens in the mix. You will find that some fabulous still cameras are just that, and do not perform well in video. Still, without busting the budget you can mount a camera on a tripod with a separate microphone and a good lens and get excellent results.



This Nikon Coolpix 900 bridge camera looks and feels like a mini-DSLR, has most of the controls, but has a fixed super-zoom lens and a smaller sensor. It boasts the equivalent focal length of 24-2000 mm.

Identify potential products

By now you should have a list of the features you want, having decided the type of photography and the output.

You need to take several things into account: the sensor size, the quality of the lens, stabilization, focal length and speed, and the size, weight and cost of the

unit to match the results you want. You don't have to buy a sledgehammer to crack a nut.

Start with the lens or lenses you will use. In the interchangeable lens world the glass is the big issue to get right; optics change relatively slowly with time, whereas new bodies appear almost every year. Deciding on a lens will probably lock you into a brand so you need to think carefully when choosing. For interchangeable lens cameras get the best lenses you can afford for your purpose.

Visit web sites from suppliers and consumers, or consult authoritative magazines to learn what's out there. Ask people you respect about their choices.

Evaluate the products using the selection criteria

Look at reviews from unbiased sources to see what you want, considering upgradeability, reliability, quality.

If price is an issue consider new and second-hand. If you buy new ensure it has a Canadian warranty as some manufacturers specify region-specific limits. Buying second-hand can offer bargains, as long as you can be sure of its quality. Check the shutter count on second-hand cameras. Look for wear shine on the handling points of gear; it's a sign of use. Look for dents and dirt as they indicate the gear has had a rough life.

Shortlist a few likely brands and models that you want to investigate in detail. Handle, and experience the feel and interface of your equipment. A camera might look wonderful but you may hate the user menu system.

Rigorously evaluate and rank products against your selection criteria and priorities.

Select the most suitable. Take the plunge!

In conclusion asking the right questions will help you identify what you want out of photography and consequently your needs. Remember camera equipment manufacturers offer a host of features. What you want to do is to isolate and concentrate on those that offer real benefits and value to the kind of photography you want to be engaged in. We are all in danger of buying on emotion. This process helps to reduce the chances of living to regret your investment.

Image Credits:

1. A dizzying array of expensive investment options: Canon Corporation.
2. The Coolpix 900 bridge camera: Nikon Corporation

Intricacy in Simplicity

by Meherzad Romer

I was in search for a subject to photograph for the camera club's "Simplicity" theme competition and came across a few molted feathers in a local park. I chose one of them to take home, not knowing how I was going to photograph it. Feathers are quite intricate so I had to come up with a simple way to portray it.

Without any particular vision in mind, I started to take some photos of the feather on my kitchen table. Not really liking the table as the background I added a full length mirror under the feather and loved the reflection! To improve the lighting I added one flash which resulted in unwanted dark shadows so I added another flash 180 degrees from it. I now felt like I was getting somewhere. I experimented with three different lenses and finally found the best composition with a telephoto lens combined with an extension tube. I positioned the feather and the flashes in several different ways. After I found the position I liked the best I added a drop of water with a small spoon and took four pictures while manually focusing from the back of the feather in the first picture to the front in the fourth picture. I did all the shooting over three consecutive nights, each night refining the composition and technique to get the final four images.

I imported the images into Photoshop using the stacking option and used "Auto-Blend Layers" to combine all the focused parts of the feather into one picture. I then used the adjustment brush in Lightroom to selectively brighten parts of the feather including the edge in the foreground and to remove dust spots from the mirror.

Nikon D7100, 70-200 mm f2.8 lens at 120 mm, ISO100, f8.0, 1/200 sec, 12 mm extension tube, two Speedlights.



Grizzly Portrait

by Ken Johnston

In early April, I received an email saying that a reservation had been cancelled on a grizzly bear viewing tour near the B.C./Alaska border. I quickly paid my deposit and made travel arrangements for the June 3rd date.



Arriving by float plane from Prince Rupert to an awaiting 22 m sailboat at the head of Khutzeymateen Inlet, I began my three-day adventure photographing the bears of the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary with a naturalist, and in the safe confines of a Zodiac.

Each day we were always close to many bears. The time of year is very important. The bears feed on sedge grass by the water's edge until berries ripen inland later in the season. It's important to not be too late in this season, because fully grown sedge grass obscures the animals for photography.

The bear had swum to an islet covered in sedge grass with a fallen tree that had been swept down the river. The bear, tired after his swim, walked up to the large stump and kindly modeled for us from about ten meters away. At no time did the bear seem threatened or aggressive, having lived in the safe confines of the sanctuary. Having fulfilled his modeling duties, he fell asleep on the stump, giving us a marvellous picture of a huge teddy bear.

Photo conditions in this setting are tricky. No tripod was possible in a moving boat. We had overcast conditions amongst mountains in low light. Minor editing was the black and white points adjusted and a small crop using Adobe Bridge.

Canon 7DMark II, 300 mm f2.8 lens, f/8.0 1/320 sec., ISO 800.

Tuesday Shoots

by Wayne Swanson

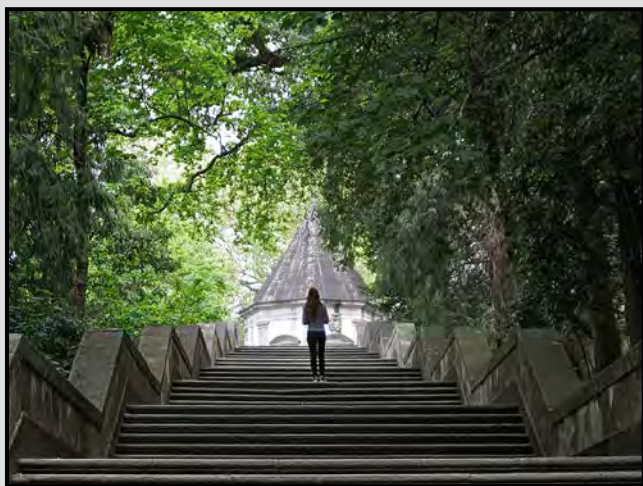
January 12: Something New

The New Year with its promises of change has dawned and the last vestiges of the holiday are stowed away. Now you must forget the old and look for the new. What is changing in your community and your life? There are recent developments that you may not have noticed such as a new service or merchandise. However you can also examine works in progress such as construction projects.

Changes to your personal life may be harder to chronicle. You have made promises to make your life better. What bodes well for your personal improvement? Perhaps you can show things that are new to you such as a Christmas gift. All we are really asking is that you take images that would be impossible to find in your files because the subject is new to you.

January 26: Framing with a Natural Frame

Borders draw your viewers' eyes to the subject of your image. Use natural objects, such as tree branches, or man-made objects, such as windows, to enclose your theme. The frame will always be your foreground which is used to enhance your subject in the background. You must be conscious of your depth of field to get both your frame and subject sharp. Just remember, the smaller the aperture, the greater the depth of field, and the shorter the lens, the greater the depth of field. You will need to balance these factors to get an image that flatters both the background and the foreground.



"Climbing the Stairs"

Weekend Shoots

by Steve Smith and Rea Casey

Planning is well underway for our winter and spring field trips and we will share some of our ideas with you now.

January 23: Urban Architecture

This will be a walking tour of photographically interesting buildings and structures in downtown Victoria. Possible venues might include government buildings, churches, store fronts and hotels. We will try to get you into a couple of interiors as well as the exteriors. This will be an opportunity to dust off your tripod and try out your wide angle lens. Bring along a polarizing filter if windows are of interest. Architectural photography is one genre that really benefits from the ability to show images in correct perspective. You can do this in post-processing or you can use a T/S (perspective correcting, PC) lens to minimize perspective distortion. While it is not necessary to have this equipment to take great photos, we suggest that you read up on these techniques and check out our advertisers, who may have these lenses for rent.

Industrial Theme

The competition theme for March is "Industrial." We are planning trips to the Seaspan Shipyard and Vancouver Island Brewery to cover this theme.

This theme can cover many facets from documentary to artistic interpretation of industrial activity. Your images can vary from long-shots to close-up or almost macro images. Like architectural photography, representation of correct perspective may be important. This can also include people doing industrial things (see Ian Crawford's image of welding in the external competition gallery). This theme is also suitable for black-and-white imagery.

Future Trips

We are working on a number of field trip ideas suggested by members. In addition the Nature SIG is planning weekend field trips which are likely to include flying ducks at Esquimalt Lagoon, flowers at Paradise Meadows (Strathcona Prov. Park), Christie Falls (Duncan), and night skies.

As always these trips end with an informal social get-together at a nearby eatery for refreshment.

Please check the website calendar for details.

by Edward Moniz

George DeWolfe (www.georgedewolfe.com) has been my primary photographic teacher and mentor. I have learned many things from George but two lessons that have really resonated with me were:

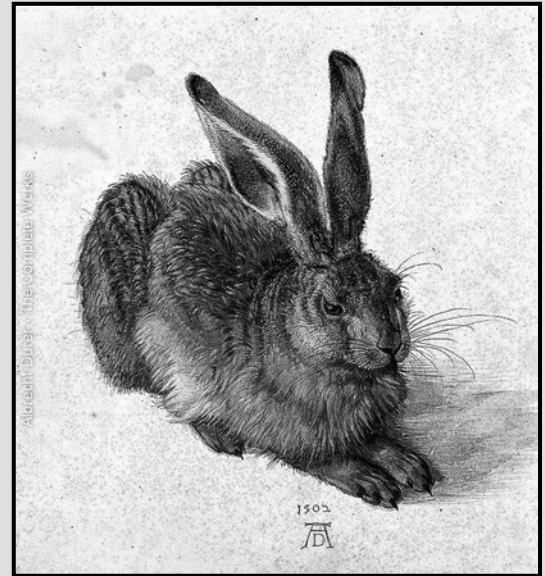
1. "To learn more about photography start with studying the master painters"
2. "Adopt and consistently apply a digital workflow"

These two topics have become such an important part of my photographic work that I wanted to share them with all of you (for those of you who have been in my Lightroom workshops this will be a review that I hope you will find worthwhile).

One of the assignments that George gave me during the advanced mentorship year that I spent working with him was to select a painter that I enjoyed and study that painter. I chose John Constable, the English landscape painter whose work really moved me. To select Constable I looked at works from many artists and eventually his work stood out for me. The choice of Constable led me to embark on a wonderful journey of exploration, studying his work and emulating his style in my photography. This discovery and a full discussion of this experience is beyond the scope of this article and may come out as a separate article or workshop in the future.

The essence of what I learned by studying the master painters, including Constable, was the underlying structure of their paintings. In every case when a colour painting was converted to monochrome the underlying structure was consistently a beautifully articulated greyscale. Not all images include pure black or white but within the tonal range of the image there is a greyscale. Studying the paintings of Monet is a good example of a beautiful greyscale with no black. *"The Hare"* by Albrecht Durer is another example of this, a beautiful greyscale with no black. The second example is the *"Princesse Albert de Broglie,"* by Jean August Dominique Ingres and to my eye is a most beautiful black and white portrait even though it was painted in colour.

The lesson learned from this study of the master painters was that a strong image has a solid underlying structure consisting of a solid greyscale with good separation of tonal values. While we may not see this greyscale when studying the colour image the structure appears to be recognized by our visual receptors and we react accordingly. I encourage all of you to do this exercise yourselves



"The Hare" by Albrecht Durer

by downloading images of your favourite painters from the internet and load them in Lightroom (as I did with these samples) and simply switch them to black and white with no adjustments. The results will astound you and hopefully lead to your own journey of exploration.

The second lesson learned from George was to "adopt and consistently apply a digital workflow." My own workflow has evolved and has been very much influenced by my study of the master painters, the workflow is: (please note that while I use and will refer to Lightroom in this article you can apply a similar workflow in most if not all raw conversion processes):

Core Workflow

1. Complete all adjustments using a RAW conversion program
 - Global Adjustments
 - Broad Adjustments
 - Local Adjustments
2. Export Image to Photoshop and complete necessary adjustments in 16-bit PS
3. Save 16-bit file
4. If necessary, convert Image to 8-bit in PS and complete any adjustments that are limited to 8-bit only. Then save the 8-bit file

RAW Adjustments in Lightroom

1. In the Basic Panel
 - Convert image to black and white

- Crop image to suit artistic desire
 - Set the white point by using the Exposure Slider
 - Set the black point by using the Black Slider
 - Create tonal separation in the Mid-tones with the Clarity Slider
 - Tweak the greyscale as required with Shadow, High-light and White Sliders.
 - You now have a basic image with a good greyscale, convert the image back to colour, or continue processing in black and white for a monochrome image.
2. Using one of the two graduated filter tools make any necessary Broad Adjustments
 3. Using the Brush tool next make local adjustments to specific areas of the image.

The workflow outlined above (a simplified list) is what I use to produce my images. The conversion to black and white to perform the tonal adjustments is critical to the process as this allows you to more easily see the tonal separations. I have found that it is much easier to see the tonal separations in black and white as I can read the separation of greys more easily than I can tonal separations in colour. This workflow gives the work the underlying structure necessary to create a stronger image.

One key to remember when editing images is that the greyscale should be true to the tonal range that existed in the original scene. Under normal circumstances you would not attempt to create an image with a pure black and a pure white when the scene consists only of mid-tones. If you have an image that is only mid-tones then



“Princesse Albert de Broglie”,
by Jean August Dominique Ingres

edit it to create good separation in those tones and allow the image to remain truthful to the original. If you wish to push your image for creative effect that is great and you are free to explore many aspects of your image.

In Lightroom I tend to make the global adjustments quite quickly and have an image with a basic structure but that is only the beginning. After the basics are completed I spend most of the image editing time using the local adjustment brush to selectively lighten, darken or otherwise adjust small areas of the image.

This is an important step in the creative process and will allow your own vision to come through. The basic RAW adjustments can create a good greyscale and make your initial image look stronger but by the use of local adjustments you can bring forth the original vision that you saw when you took the image. The local adjustment brush can allow you to direct the viewer's eye to parts of the image that are an important part of the message you are trying to convey.

When studying your image remember that light things attract attention and look closer to the viewer, dark items tend to recede and look further away. Also sharp items attract more attention while blurred items or less sharp items tend to recede.

Before leaving your image remember to examine the edges and corners looking for distracting elements that may draw attention away from your core message. To create a powerful image you must direct the viewer around your image leading them to the key points but also giving them a place to rest their eyes. Removal of distracting elements will help hold your viewer's attention and create a much stronger image.

A workflow needs to be yours and whatever workflow you adopt use it consistently. By doing so you will be able to create images that have the elements of good composition and underlying structure. Once you can consistently produce such images you will be able to reach out and test your creative boundaries. I hope you have enjoyed this article and that you will consider studying the master painters. While photography is still a relatively new medium the painters explored these techniques for many years and developed many concepts in making great images. We have much to learn from them.

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Leading You On

by Nancy MacNab

When you picked up your first camera, your first concern was probably which button to push to turn it on, and which to use to make it take a picture. Next comes how to adjust the zoom range for the lens. Once you've got the hang of that, it's time to turn your attention to composition, the positioning of your subject within the image and the arrangement of the supporting features.

The lines within an image can be obvious, such as a road or fence, or subtle, like the angle of a dancer's arm or the edge of a shadow. Such a line can direct the viewer's attention to the subject of the image or away from it. This is referred to as a leading line. These can be used to reinforce the impact of the image or can inadvertently distract from your subject.

Straight or curved, actual or implied, connecting to the edge of the image or not, leading lines can influence the viewer's emotions. Because our language is written from left to right and top to bottom, lines that start at the left seem to lead into the photo, while those that start at the right appear to lead the eye out of the photo. For people whose language is written right to left, the impact will be reversed.

To test this out, take an image that includes a line starting in the lower left, leading to your subject near the centre. What is your reaction to this image? Ask some family or friends about their reaction. Then either find a similar image where the line starts at the lower right side of the image, or reverse your first image on the computer. Does your reaction differ? What feelings are evoked?

You can try similar experiments with curved lines versus straight lines versus s-bends, or lines from the lower corner versus the upper corner. Each will result in different reactions to what is essentially the same image, just rotated.

One line that we should all be very aware of when setting up our cameras to photograph landscapes is the horizon. Make sure it is straight as it is very distracting to have the horizon on even a slight angle. The only exception is if you are going to make the horizon deliberately angled, in which case make sure that it appears an obvious choice of the photographer, and not just an accident. One situation to be careful with is when an apparent horizon, such as a water shot with a shoreline, has a diagonally receding shoreline (horizon). In this case it

will not be "horizontal" but may need other objects that are vertical to correct one's interpretation of the scene.

While you are ensuring that your horizon is straight, you should also consider its placement within the photo. The middle is rarely the best place for it as it cuts the resulting image in half. An exception would be when you are deliberately doing so, either because you are creating a mirror image or because both the upper and lower halves of the image are of equal interest. This is where the "rule of thirds" comes into play.

The rule of thirds suggests that you divide the image into three sections, both vertically and horizontally, and place your important lines or your subject either on a line or at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal lines. This creates a more dynamic and aesthetically pleasing result than the static, unmoving feeling evoked by the centred subject.

But rules are made to be broken, I'm told, so if you are going to place your subject in the centre of your image, know why you are doing so. Are you reinforcing the symmetry? Are you trying to invoke a feeling of stability? Are both halves equally important and equally interesting for the viewer?

It is time for another experiment, take a small object, a flower or small plate will do, and photograph it four times, located where each of the vertical and horizontal third lines cross. How does the different placement of your subject change your impression of it? What feelings are evoked by having the subject in the top left quadrant rather than the top right quadrant?

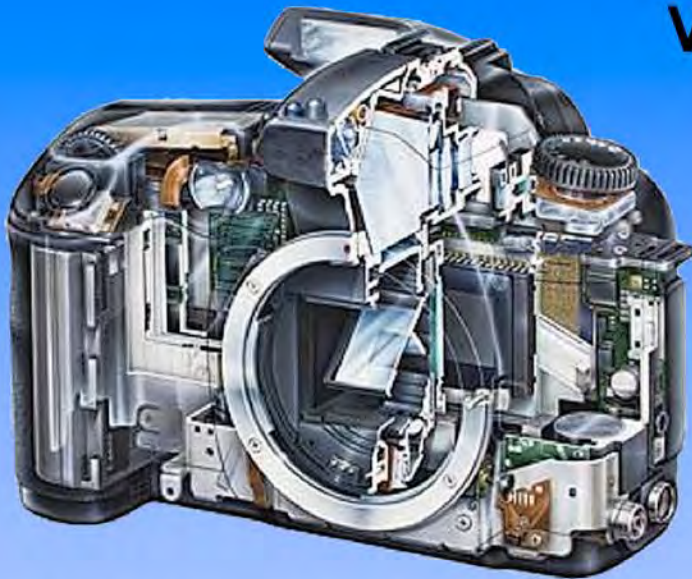
Lines and subject placement play a major role in the composition of your photographs. Learn to use them to your advantage. Look at images taken by the top photographers and see where the lines are. Are they obvious or implied? Do they lead in to the subject, or out of the image? How do they make you feel? Do others get the same impression, or do they have a different reaction to the image? The annual BBC World Wildlife Photography Exhibit at the Royal BC Museum gives an great opportunity to look at excellent images by world-class photographers.

Now it's time to start using the lines in your images to your advantage. Think about the feeling you want to create and how you can use lines and subject placement to help you create that. With practice, this will become an automatic part of your photography.

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