



# Close-Up

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**Winter Photography**

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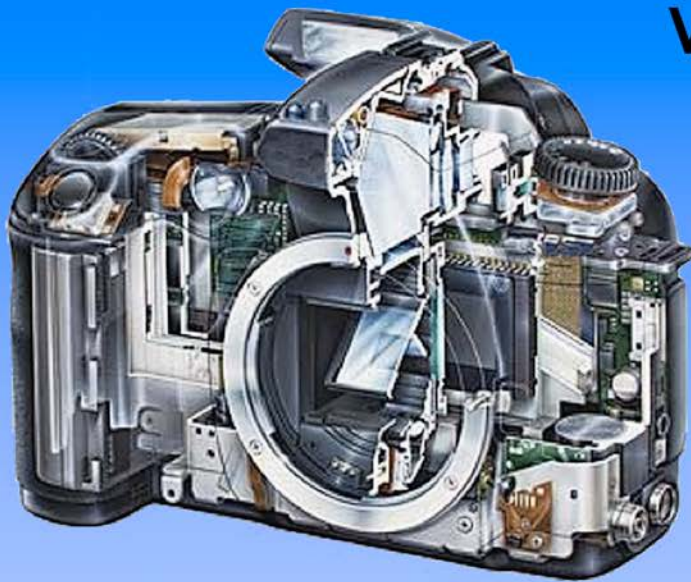
**"Rough-legged Hawk" by Mike Wooding**



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## Victoria Camera Club

*Close-Up* is the magazine of the Victoria Camera Club,

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Mailing address: PO Box 46035, RPO Quadra, Victoria, BC, V8T 5G7.

Deadline for submissions for the February 2015 issue is January 5<sup>th</sup> 2015.

Editor, Richard James, e-mail to [newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto: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.org](http://victoriacameraclub.org) where you can also read or download the colour version of *Close-Up*.

For additional information: please contact the appropriate Committee Chair:

**Membership:** [membership@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto:membership@victoriacameraclub.org)

**Workshops:** [workshops@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto:workshops@victoriacameraclub.org)

**Field Trips:** [fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto:fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.org)

**Meetings:** [meetings@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto:meetings@victoriacameraclub.org)

**Website:** [webmaster@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto:webmaster@victoriacameraclub.org)

**Close-Up:** [newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org](mailto: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.org](http://www.victoriacameraclub.org)) for the latest details of all our workshops, field trips and meetings.

### Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup>; Competition Night

The November competition results will be presented. One of the judges will review selected images. The January theme is "Entranceways." Please see the Competitions page on the website for details.

### Thursday, January 15<sup>th</sup>; Presentation Night

Mike Byrne will be discussing Wildlife Photography. Mike is a professional photographer based in Victoria with extensive background in wildlife as well as sports and commercial photography. See [clocktowerimages.com](http://clocktowerimages.com).

### Thursday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>; Members' Night

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

#### Featured Workshops in January

High Dynamic Range Images (HDR),

Photographic Composition

#### Featured Field Trips in January

Parliament Buildings (interior), St. Andrews Cathedral.

**Meeting, field trip and workshop visitor policy:** Visitors are welcome to attend any three events in a two month period subject to the availability of space and a \$20 per session fee for workshops.

**Cover image:** "Rough-legged Hawk" by Mike Wooding. Wildlife photography requires patience, practice and a certain amount of luck. This year we were fortunate to have had a somewhat rare visit to a very accessible location by a Rough-legged Hawk. Even more unusual, this particular bird was very cooperative and did not seem to be bothered by birders and photographers, likely because he was a first year bird and had probably not experienced any negative interaction with humans as yet.

This image was taken at the Nanaimo River Estuary in late November, 2014. For more images of him, you can check my website at [nahanni.smugmug.com/NewImages-2/November-2014](http://nahanni.smugmug.com/NewImages-2/November-2014). Nikon D800; Nikkor 500 mm f4 VR II lens with 1.4x TC; 1/1000sec; f7.1; ISO 400; -.7EV.

## President's Message

Well, we are now into a new year, so, how did your photography go in 2014?

It's easy to get into a rut in many parts of our lives, including our photography. Sometimes the same old same old can be too much of the same. If you're into New Year resolutions, then now could be a good time to think about how, or if, your photography has changed over the last year. Even a quick 30-minute comparison of what was coming out of your camera last January with what came out in December may tell a few stories. What do you see? Are there any differences? Are you going to the same places, standing in the same place, using the same lenses, and the same settings? Not many people can keep doing that and still maintain the enthusiasm they had when they first started.

For those new to more serious photography, the world outside of Auto and Program doesn't have to be scary. If you're not familiar with that world, things will appear daunting to start with. Learning the effect of changing shutter speed and aperture will enable you to plan how to capture your images and avoid some of the disappointments of the past. But only some of them. This newfound knowledge can give you the ability to work out what changes you need to make to improve the ones that didn't quite turn out as you had visualized. When you take it slowly, but surely, you will be amazed at the differences in your images. Maybe this year you could get a little braver?

Old experienced hands can also benefit from this. Often they can be the ones most caught up in the same old same old. It is easy for the justified satisfaction with their past achievements to cause them to rest on their laurels, stagnation leading to a loss of interest from those who used to look up to their work for inspiration. Brilliant work today becomes average work tomorrow.

At the end of each year, I often put together what I consider to be a list of my top 20 images at that time. It was always interesting to note how some images were only in the list for a year, while some others stayed for two or three years. Looking over the images it was easy to see how style and technique changed over time. I always found it a very encouraging exercise. Often the images from years that, at the end, didn't feel like they had been much proved that I was doing better than I realized. I'm going to do it again this year.

*Lloyd Houghton, President*

by Gita McCormick and Richard Hum

Last month we offered tips and tricks for getting great shots at music festivals and events. This month we're going to explore some of the challenges common to festival photography and some post-processing techniques that will really improve your images.

Lighting is a huge consideration for effective festival photography. Lighting at indoor venues is often less than ideal. You might encounter LEDs, strobes, fluorescents and many other less desirable types of lighting, all of which can interfere with achieving the perfect shot. The lighting might be dim, or in certain locations, you may have a room with pot lights. These all need to be taken into consideration when shooting.

If you get to know the lighting techs, they may sometimes be able to alter the lights depending where you are shooting from, whether from the front floor or an upper balcony. This is very handy and much appreciated, but not something you can count on at every show.

As mentioned in part 1, boosting your ISO is an absolute "must-do." I shoot at ISO 5000 in most venues. Boosting your ISO will help to achieve a sharp image, which in turn will help in post-processing.

Depending on the venue, the lights might remain static throughout the show or they might be constantly changing. Leaving the white balance on your camera set to "auto" allows greater latitude for correcting your

shots during post-processing. It is one less thing that you will have to deal with while capturing the image, and leaves you to focus on shooting. I also prefer to shoot in RAW. This gives much more latitude in editing.

With festival photography, the photographer can't assess the quality of their shots until the show is over, so there is no opportunity for re-takes. The best option is to use post-processing techniques to improve those images that hold promise. Post-processing can turn an average image into a first-class photograph.

First, I import my images into Lightroom. The next thing I do for each image is enable "Profile Correction" to reduce any lens distortion. Straightening and cropping images is also quite important. There are many reference lines to choose from. From a low angle, you may choose the background for vertical lines, or at times, the better choice may be the horizontal lines of the stage. If you are doing tighter shots, a good choice is the mic or cymbal stands.

Next you need to adjust the white balance. White balance can be challenging and indoor shots generally require attention in post-processing. There is no one white balance that fits all images. This is where art meets science. You have to play around, test and assess each image. I find the "Fluorescent" setting in Lightroom works well with the "red or blue" colour cast found at Hermann's. There are situations where "auto" works well too; this is often the case when you have some daylight, or if you are converting an image to monochrome.



*Darius Jones Quartet - Before*



*Darius Jones Quartet - After*

If the image is dark, I boost exposure and contrast depending on the look I want. Be sure to watch the histogram to avoid clipping the highlights or shadows. However, you may want to artistically blow your highlights or have deeper shadows, especially for “moody” monochromes.

From that point I work with contrast and the four sliders: Highlights, Shadows, Lights and Black. By using the Highlight slider you can regain highlights; the shadow slider helps gain detail in the darker areas of your image. The Black and White sliders set your lightest and darkest areas of the image.

In some images you may want to get rid of artifacts, whether unwanted mics, pot lights, or spectators. Seldom will you have a clean image. I use the spot tool to get rid of those artifacts. Some singers will always have a mic “in their face” and it helps tell the story. If the mic or other musical artifact wasn’t in the shot, the message of what is going on in the image could get lost.

Pot lights are a pain. Not only do they challenge your shot by throwing in unwanted light flares, but they tend to be right behind an artist’s head. Again the spot tool can help to get rid of those lights. Spectator’s heads are treated the same way. Photoshop also has a great “content-aware” tool that does a great job of getting rid of spectators and replacing the background.

Noise reduction is critical for high ISO images. It really depends on the look you are going for. I tend to go to

the middle in my slider. I find that this is a good starting point. Capture sharpening is the final step of the post-processing. I sharpen after noise reduction so that I don’t sharpen the noise. I go straight to the middle of the sharpening slider and start to play from there. I also use the detail slider. This will help in producing a nice smooth finished image. Note, this sharpening should not be confused with output sharpening (see page 7).

To finish off, I may use a bit of vignetting to draw the viewer’s eye into the image. This is also a great way of diminishing unwanted lights or artifacts that you may not have cloned out. For daytime shots vignetting is also useful to keep the viewer in the image.

When you have your image adjusted to perfection, you need to create a “master image.” This is the image that you will use for resizing and sharpening as required for printing, a digital image for competition, or for a website.

Each image has its own challenges and there is no right or wrong way. Post-processing is a personal choice.

The decision to post-process is in the eye of the photographer/artist. Post-processing can add mood, correct for colour, remove unwanted artifacts or do a host of other things. Do take your camera and shoot lots. But don’t throw away your images because you don’t think they are any good. That is why there are a host of programs that can help you take your images to the next level. Have fun!



*Brandi Disterheft - Before*



*Brandi Disterheft - After*



by Richard James

In parts 1 and 2 of this series (November and December 2014 *Close-Up*) we covered some of the background of why sharpening is required and a couple of gotchas encountered along the way.

Now, let's look at real life and how do we do it. In the January 2014 issue of *Close-Up*, John Coenraads referred to sharpening in his article "*Custom Filters: Part 2*" on page 21. This is the mathematical explanation of one of sharpening's classic tools, the Unsharp Mask.

There are other sharpening tools which can be found in Photoshop including the filters "sharpen," "sharpen more," "sharpen edges," "smart sharpen," and "high pass." There is an array of adjustments associated with these and learning how to effectively use all of these would be a daunting task.

However, do not despair, there is a solution! "Sharpening" is an option in a number of other software packages including Lightroom, Google/Nic Sharpener Pro, PK Sharpener (Photoshop plug-in), Focal Blade and others. Which route you choose is dependent on their features and flexibility. As I don't intend to do a review of them, you'll have to do your own research on this. Just for the record I use PK Sharpener because it appeared to be the most suitable to me at the time that I made the selection, and it does output sharpening for offset printing which is required for *Close-Up* production.

Whilst all of these packages reduce the number of choices, the ultimate goal is flexibility. Since individual images will require different sharpening based on their content, and sharpening is also dependent on the image size and output media, it is critical that the result of your sharpening be editable. In Photoshop terms this means that the sharpening is on a separate layer, or group of layers, that can be turned on or off, have their opacity reduced and be masked.

As noted in part 1 of this series, image sharpening relies on an optical effect where edges within an image are enhanced by outlining them with a very thin line. This line is achieved by making the "dark side" of the edge slightly darker and the "light side" slightly lighter which enhances the contrast across the edge. The objective of sharpening the image is to produce just enough of this line that it works for the particular image and the way it is to be presented without becoming unduly obvious (over-sharpened). If it is too obvious, the edges seem to be outlined with a "halo."

So how does this work in practice? There are essentially two things working against each other. The finer the image detail the thinner the line has to be or it will obscure the adjacent detail, but the greater softening that occurs with printing, especially offset printing, vs. the web, indicates that a wider line is required!

Images that are intended to be soft, or are naturally soft, clearly do not require as much, or any, sharpening compared to those that are intended to express a lot of detail. Then of course there are images that contain soft, out of focus areas as well as areas which are critically sharp.

Sharpening can be divided into three steps; input sharpening, creative sharpening and output sharpening. It is at the output sharpening stage where there are the most options. Input sharpening is generally low-level and uniform to reduce some of the blur introduced by the anti-aliasing filter and the conversion from the Bayer array (sensor pixels) to an RGB file (see the January 2014 *Close-Up*, page 9). Creative sharpening, as its name implies, is used to create a specific effect, often only on a part of the image, to enhance its appearance or sometimes to reduce the impact of parts of the image by blurring (which could also be considered as the opposite of sharpening).

**Capture sharpening** is best done in your raw conversion, whether in Lightroom, Photoshop (ACR) or in the raw converter of your choice. In Lightroom and Photoshop this is done on the "Detail" tab where you can see the effect of adjusting the parameters in real time. Conveniently, noise reduction is also applied at the same time. Since Lightroom and Photoshop use the same ACR engine for converting raw files, you should be able to achieve the same effect in each.

**Creative sharpening** can be done in Lightroom using the adjustment brush to apply local sharpening using different parameters to the rest of the image. In Photoshop, ACR does not have as much flexibility with its adjustment brush as you do in Lightroom.

However, you can achieve much greater flexibility with creative sharpening in Photoshop using layers and masks. Layers and masks, as well as blending mode and opacity, allow you a fantastic degree of freedom to emphasize different parts of the image.

Once you have your image processed to your satisfaction, you need to save a full-size "master image." This is the image that you will then use to resize and sharpen appropriately for each output use.



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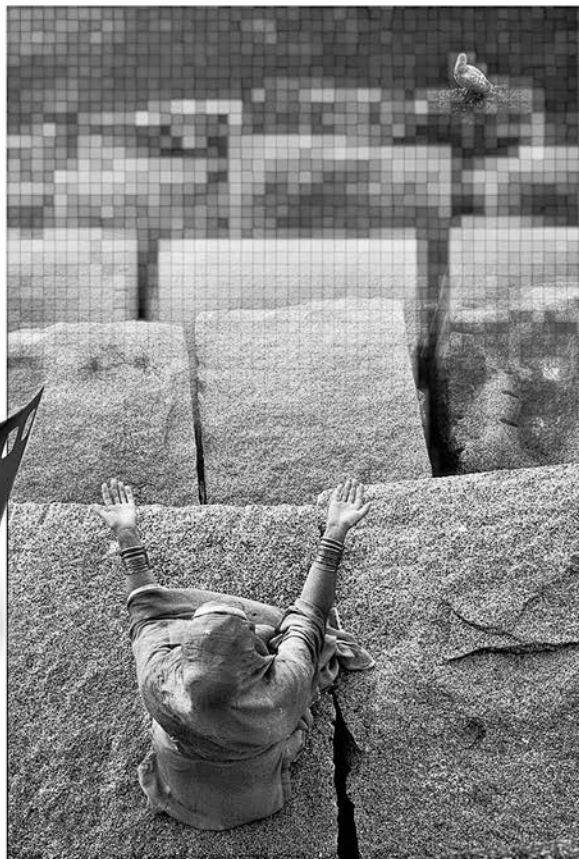
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**Output sharpening** can be done either in Lightroom or Photoshop (see below regarding Photoshop plug-ins). As noted elsewhere in this article, there is less flexibility in selecting appropriate sharpening in Lightroom than in Photoshop. If using Lightroom then be careful that you do not modify your master image file. You need to either create duplicates with a change of name or create “virtual images” before resizing and exporting with sharpening applied.

One of the objectives of image processing is to achieve consistent and repeatable results. This applies as much to sharpening as it does to any other part of your work. To achieve this many people adopt a standardized workflow. The key components of this are listed below.

**Raw conversion:** globally adjust exposure, colour balance, contrast, noise reduction, lens corrections etc., apply selective adjustments if necessary, and apply input sharpening.

**Image adjustments:** this is where you get creative adjusting individual components of the image to reflect your interpretation of the scene where they could not be done in the raw conversion stage. Creative sharpening would be applied at this stage.

**Compositing:** if you are producing an image from multiple files this is where you do it. You can also include adjustments to each component here.

**Master file:** after these three stages you have an image that represents your interpretation of the scene or the composite that you wish to produce. You save it with a unique name and go back to it every time you need to produce a new output file. For the greatest flexibility this should be a file with all layers preserved so that you can create another version with changed parameters if you wish to at some time in the future, and remember to give it a new name!

One of the difficulties of image sharpening is that it is extremely difficult to assess sharpening for printing on a monitor. Even if your image is going to the Web, your viewers will be using different size (read pixel dimension) monitors which theoretically need different sharpening for each resolution! Inkjet and offset printers need stronger sharpening than web images and, particularly for offset printing, the appropriate sharpening can look really ugly on your screen.

With practice, and a reproducible process, you should be able to get “close enough” at least 95% of the time without making test prints.

The way that I have chosen to get around this is to use a Photoshop plug-in that gives me completely reproducible results so long as I make the right choice regarding image content, size and media. I don't have to try three different options and fiddle with sliders in Photoshop, I have more flexibility than Lightroom allows, and the results are saved as a separate layer group so that I can fine tune them or discard them and start again.

**Output files:** for each specific output you create a new file, resize it and apply output sharpening. Then save it with a new unique name identifying its destination.

Some examples of output files would include:

**Web image for a VCC Gallery:** resize to no more than 1400 x 1050 pixels and sharpen for “web output.”

**Print image:** resize for your output image size, say 11” x 17” and resample to 300 or 360 ppi depending on your printer (300 for Canon and 360 for Epson inkjet printers, check your printer manual to be sure). Then sharpen for “inkjet printer” and glossy or matte paper as appropriate.

If you are using a professional print lab instead of doing your own printing, or if preparing images for offset printing, then it is critical to find out their specifications for sharpening (as well as the colour profile that they will be using) before submitting images to them.

**Image for printing in Close-Up:** firstly, submit your full-size master file; do not resize it or flatten it. I will then take your file and go through a couple of steps that enhance the detail and adjust it for the relatively low contrast/low brightness of images printed on paper before I resize it as required and sharpen it for “offset printing – 150 lpi, 300 dpi,” either coated or uncoated paper depending on whether it is going to be printed on a colour or black-and-white page. Since we produce three versions of *Close-Up* I actually have to produce three versions of each image file and substitute the appropriate one for each version.

Does all this sound scary? Well, in reality it isn't! Remember that you want the best from your images and that sharpening is the final stage in producing a polished image.

With this in mind it's worth investing a little time in learning the best way to do it for your images in either Lightroom or Photoshop, whichever may be your choice of image processing software.

## Jonathan Adams

Like many other photographers, my interest in cameras began in my teenage years. I bought a used Chinon CE-4 which had gone unclaimed from a camera repair store. Along with an enlarger of unknown but ancient vintage, I spent many hours locked in the family bathroom with a towel stuffed under the door to block any unwelcome light from entering my makeshift darkroom.

Life has a habit of getting in the way of hobbies, and the time and financial constraints of University meant the end of photography for me for a while. After graduating I did buy another camera, again used, a wonderful Pentax LX, and dabbled with slide film. But living in a remote Northern community meant quite limited access to film and development. It was not until I moved to Victoria, about the same time that digital SLR cameras really hit their stride, that I re-entered the world of photography in a more serious way.

I have always been enthralled with the technical side of photography, and digital cameras are an obvious extension of that. My years spent with fully manual cameras and in the darkroom provided a solid foundation for understanding settings on modern cameras and post-processing software. I still marvel at the features modern DSLR cameras have, and how the most basic camera today has so much more ability than the most advanced cameras of years ago, features I could not have dreamed of.

What I did not learn in my earlier years, and what I had not even considered, was the artistic requirements of photography. Beyond a vague notion of the rule of thirds, I had very little concept of photographic composition and form. It was not until I joined the Victoria Camera Club that I began to understand what was lacking in my photos. My understanding really began to ramp up once I started entering the monthly competitions, with the wonderful constructive criticism that the judges provide. While I still have much to learn, I have experienced more satisfaction and growth from these exercises than I would have thought possible. This is a tremendous service that the competition committee provides to the club, and a valuable member benefit.

Destination workshops are a great way to combine travel and explore new aspects of the hobby. My most recent trip was a night photography workshop in Arches National Park. This also played into another interest from my youth, the night sky and astronomy.

(continued on page 12)

## Hanna Cowpe

From the time I was a child I enjoyed artistic expression through sketching, as did my father and grandfather. But in my artwork I didn't use much imagination. My drawings were representational rather than creative. As an adult I experimented in many media such as oils, watercolour, pencil and even ink and watercolour through calligraphy, but I was not pleased with the results. So I put my pencils and brushes aside and turned my creativity to gardening, transforming small and large gardens in the many pre-war English houses we lived in and renovated. This led to studying interior design. But a life of frequent house moves around the country and internationally made it impractical to pursue interior design other than in my own homes.

On returning to Canada, after many years in England, I turned my thoughts to photography. It was during the rising popularity of digital photography. After some basic photography courses and a few years of shooting negative film and slides, my husband presented me with my first digital camera. I frequently disappeared for hours, quickly losing track of time and temperature as I chased the light on winter afternoons. I roamed in the falling light at favourite places and whiled away enchanting summer days photographing the intimate details of flowers in my garden. I shot architecture in any city I visited and photographed most members of my family.

Soon, I entered Monday Magazine photo contests and won multiple awards. Other competitions brought more rewards. I was hooked and saw my world through an extra dimension. I became fascinated and fixated by detail, colour, light and design. There were few subjects I didn't enjoy capturing. I joined a camera club and found a fellow photographer who shared the same subject interests. Whole days were consumed by choosing favourite locations, patiently standing for hours to capture images of birds in flight, dragonflies, frogs and other more urban subjects. We shared thoughts of photography over lunch or coffee. We joined Victoria Camera Club where I widened my horizons as I met photographers with experience years beyond mine.

Over time I expanded my genre to monochrome, abstracts and creative images through camera motion and long exposures. I participated in club competitions to have my work critiqued by accredited judges and learned how to improve my images.

(continued on page 15)



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Modern cameras, with good high ISO performance, easily allow the capture of impressive views of the stars and milky way that would have involved an enormous amount of equipment and technical knowledge only a decade or two ago.



*Arches National Park at Night, Moab, Utah*

I feel these images speak to something deep within us, recalling a time before the rise of cities and light pollution washed out the dark skies that would have been commonplace. Under dark skies on a moonless night, a high ISO setting will reveal many more stars than are normally visible with the naked eye.

Canon 5DIII, stitched panorama of 7 exposures, 15 mm lens, f2.8, 25 sec each, ISO 4000.



*Double Arch, Arches National Park, Utah*

While a foreground silhouette can be aesthetically pleasing, illuminating the desert rock by light painting with a non-LED flashlight can make for a particularly effective composition. Having an assistant light paint from off to the side will provide texture and definition, while light painting from behind the camera will give a flat and uninteresting appearance.

Canon 5DIII, 15 mm lens, f2.8, 25 sec, ISO 4000.



*Monument Valley, Utah*

The deserts of the American Southwest are a favourite destination for me. The rugged landscape, painted red rocks and (occasional) isolation provide a beautiful sense of solitude. The photo of Monument Valley was taken just after a storm had passed through. It has been said that landscape photographers grab their cameras when the weather turns for the worse; while in Victoria that generally means several days of drizzle and dull light, in most places a good storm means interesting skies.

Canon 40D, 19 mm lens, f16, 1/200 sec, ISO 100.



*Antelope Abstract, Antelope Canyon, Page, Arizona*

This image was taken on a photographers-only guided tour through Antelope Canyon in Page, Arizona. While the internet is a great resource to research places to photograph when travelling in unfamiliar territory, I have found that having a local guide can be invaluable for finding the best locations to photograph. There really is nothing like local knowledge.

Canon 40D, 10 mm lens, f8, 4 sec, ISO 100.



This was particularly true during a recent trip to Iceland. The country is known as a destination for photographers, and there are a number of locations that are on every photographer's list. There was certainly no lack of tours and groups when I was there last February. Many were staying in the same hotel and a number were led by photographers who had only travelled to Iceland once or twice before.



*Luceo Non Uro*

The local guide that I had signed up with, besides being less expensive than the "big name" guides, was also able to find the only clear skies of the whole week which allowed us to capture the Northern Lights. Of the several groups on week long tours, our small group was the only one to capture the lights.

Canon 5DIII, 27 mm lens, f2.8, 10 sec, ISO 1600.



*Cold Light, Jokulsarlon Beach, Iceland*

I am always interested in new techniques. I have taken a couple of workshops in the Magic Cloth/Black Card technique, and while it is not the only way to balance

dynamic range, it can be a very useful technique in the right circumstances. I used the technique frequently during my trip to Iceland, such as in this photo of an iceberg on Jokulsarlon beach. Essentially, using a Neutral Density filter to slow the exposure, a solid black object is held in front of the lens for part of the exposure to underexpose the brighter portions of the scene.

Canon 5DIII, 40 mm lens, f14, 1 sec, ISO 100.



*Peregrine Falcon*

I generally photograph landscapes and nature. I do not enjoy working with human subjects, but wildlife is another matter altogether. I have been fascinated with birds since my family acquired backyard chickens, and I have gained a new appreciation for their habits and intelligence.

The photo of the Peregrine Falcon was taken at a nature park outside of Tucson, Arizona over the winter holidays in 2013. While it may be seen as a type of cheating, it was an easy way to get a great pose of an uncommon and beautiful bird.

Canon 7D, 100-400 mm lens at 235 mm, f8, 1/1000 sec, ISO 400.



*Sandhill Cranes*

During the same trip, we travelled to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, on the banks of the Rio Grande in New Mexico. This fabulous winter destination for birders acts as a wintering ground for 10,000 Sandhill Cranes, 30,000 Snow Geese and all of the associated raptors, predators and other wildlife that accompany them. A system of dikes and valves divert some of the water from the river to flood grain fields which provide a food source. Numerous viewing platforms, filled with photographers armed with an impressive array of gear, keep wildlife and people happy.

Canon 40D, 100-400 mm lens at 365 mm, f6.3, 1/1000 sec, ISO 400.



*Cormorant*

While destination travel is enjoyable, we are privileged to live in a wilderness playground in our backyards. The photo of the cormorant was captured on a recent club field trip organized by Suzanne Huot on a whale watching boat, off Mandarte Island. The many field trips and workshops organized by members of the Victoria Camera Club are another incredible benefit of membership.

Canon 7D, 500 mm lens, f7.1, 1/4000 sec, ISO 800.



*Goldstream River*

Goldstream Park is justifiably popular with adults and children alike with spectacular scenery, flora and fauna. While the day use area is almost always crowded, the trails leading from the campground can generally be relied upon for a secluded photo walk, with only the occasional passing hiker or dog. A number of compositions can be found along the path to the upper falls.

Canon 5DIII, 28 mm lens, f11, 2 sec, ISO 100.

For me, the fall is the best time to hike Goldstream Park. Mushrooms abound, the river fills up after the summer drought, and the sun no longer streams down from overhead, casting harsh highlights and shadows. On the west coast, this is also the time of year for renewal, coloured leaves falling from trees, salmon returning to their birthplace to spawn and die, and the musty smell of decomposition, balanced by the return of welcome rain and green colour, all topped off by omnipresent moss.



*Smoke and Fire*

The last photo in this portfolio uses the technique for photographing smoke that Barbara Burns has written about, with a twist, showing the first instant of a match igniting. The match was held by a clamp with the camera pre-focussed, and the ignition was courtesy of a propane torch held just out of the frame. The image was backlit with a flash off to the right, with a macro lens for a flat depth of field.

Canon 5DIII, 100 mm lens, f10, 1/200 sec, ISO 200, flash.



Competitions were all on one level at the time and it pushed me to improve my photography in many ways. Next I took the step into Fine Art shows and, after a few rejections, I was successful with entries and was delighted when I sold my first print.

I still make annual trips to my family in England where I can explore new locations as well as old favourites. Such a small country offers a great variation in scenery within short distances. I aim to catch up on all the opportunities I missed there before I discovered photography.

I am a bit of a technophobe so I limit my image processing to the bare essentials and restrict my creative photography to in-camera motion and long exposures. I prefer enjoying the light in the natural world than the one emanating from my computer screen. My addiction to photography never ceases and I hope I'll be able to pursue it and enjoy it for many years to come.



*Southwold Pier*

Southwold is a seaside town in Suffolk on the east coast of England. It is a traditional English holiday location with a pier with restaurants, an amusement arcade and beach huts. The town is very attractive and has a working lighthouse in its centre. Tours are offered and allow the opportunity to view the entire town and pier and areas for miles beyond. It is an area of natural beauty and is a well known site for waterfowl and seabirds. There is a wide variety of attractive villages with their distinct characters which provide interesting subjects for photographers. The beaches are a combination of sand and shingle and stretch for miles parallel to the dunes. Colourful beach huts flank the pier and more traditional black ones are situated on the dunes at Walberswick to the south.

Canon Rebel T1i, 24-105 mm L IS lens at 24 mm, f14, 1/50 sec, ISO 800, handheld.



*A Day At Southwold*

This is a long exposure taken at daybreak in early April in Southwold. We spent the night in a B&B nearby so I could plan to rise with the sun and do some long exposures of the water and waves surrounding the Pier. It was a chilly morning and there was a light fog which helped to reduce the light and create a seamless and invisible horizon. This enhanced the soft, ethereal effect I was hoping to achieve.

Canon Rebel XT, 24-105 mm L IS lens at 24 mm, f14, 30 sec, ISO 100, Neutral density filter, tripod.



*Dunes At Walberswick*

Walberswick is a small village situated at the mouth of the River Blyth south of Southwold. It has a small harbour with fishing boats and a passenger ferry which runs to Southwold. The dunes, with their attractive thick grasses, are dotted with clusters of black huts which are used by holiday makers and local residents for a day at the beach. There is also a National nature reserve just outside the village which I have marked for a future visit.

Canon Rebel T1i, 24-105 mm L IS lens at 24 mm, f22, 1/250 sec, ISO 400, handheld.



*Great Blue Heron*

This image was taken at Panama Flats in Saanich. We are lucky to be surrounded by numerous bodies of water which are home to the great blue heron. They can be found in garden ponds, lagoons, fresh water lakes and the ocean. Their intense patience while fishing provides photographers with the perfect opportunity to capture images in various poses. Even their flight is slow which allows for flight shots with relatively long shutter speeds.

Canon Rebel T1i, 70-200 mm f4.5 L IS lens at 196 mm, 1.4x converter, f8, 1/1600 sec, ISO 400, handheld.



*Autumn Breeze*

In-camera movement provides for experimentation and surprise results. Here the autumn colours at Royal Roads introduce splashes of colour and an impressionist image. I used a 90 degree rotation with a 1/13 second exposure. This requires practice to find a suitable combination of shutter speed and hand movement to achieve a satisfying result. Camera rotation can be combined with vertical or horizontal panning or zooming.

Canon G11, 28-150 mm lens, f6.3, 1/13 sec, ISO 80.



*Surfing At The Airport*

I shot this whiling away the hours between flights. It is a vertical panning of luggage trolleys on blue carpeting in the departure lounge at Vancouver airport.

Canon G11, 28-150 mm lens, f7.1, 1/10 sec, ISO 80.



*The Visitor*

While roaming in my garden I spotted this tiny white spider on a Lace Cap hydrangea. I liked the way it complemented the lone white flower in the hydrangea. Travelling to exotic places isn't required to capture rewarding images. Sometimes the best subjects are just outside our door. It is a convenience that allows us to take a break, grab a camera and have a 20 minute shoot without having to drag a lot of equipment with us. And we can get into any awkward pose necessary to photograph a hard to reach subject without getting funny looks from passersby.

Canon Rebel T1i, 100 mm IS Macro lens, f2.8, 1/320 sec, ISO 400, handheld.





*Dining At The Louvre in Paris*

I was struck by the irony of the common man eating his sandwich outside this grand historic building. Busy tourist locations eliminate the awkwardness of photographing strangers, especially from a distance. Including people in images of architecture can add another dimension and may alter the message we are trying to convey.

Canon Rebel XSi, 24-105 mm L IS lens at 75 mm, f10, 1/125 sec, ISO 200, handheld.



*Pacific Tree Frog*

Tiny tree frogs the size of a thumbnail nestle in the pond reeds at Heritage Acres in Central Saanich. These charming little amphibians with their big voices can be spotted with some patient effort at local ponds and forests. They are well camouflaged by their immediate environment but you will quickly develop the ability to spot them. Tread gently as they are frequently near the ground among plant stems. With careful movement they can be "captured" from a few inches with a macro lens.

Canon Rebel T1i, 100 mm L IS Macro lens, f6.3, 1/160 sec, ISO 400, handheld.



*Aging Gracefully*

This was a prop in a dress shop. I was attracted by the intense colours and textures of the aging paint. Being observant of our surroundings can aid in widening the possibilities of subject matter. I dismissed this door until I looked closely and noticed the missing handle, the crackled paint and the wire mesh. Reducing the radius of our working area can concentrate our efforts and mind to find photogenic details in common scenes and objects. It is beneficial to look up above and down below eye level.

Canon Rebel T1i, 24-105 mm L IS lens at 40 mm, f5, 1/20 sec, ISO 400, handheld.



*Country Life In The Martindale Valley*

There are many wonderful scenes of country life to be found around the Saanich Peninsula. Here a vintage piece of farming equipment situated pleasingly in front of a pump house presents an array of warm colours and textures from rusty metal to aging wood interwoven with grasses and a backdrop of wintry poplars.

Canon Rebel XT, 24-105 mm L lens at 50 mm, f16, 1/250 sec, ISO 200, handheld.





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## Neutral Density Colour Shifts

by John Roberts

I was having a nice conversation with our B+W rep about how I like to do long exposure photography, and use the B+W ND110 10-stop Neutral Density (ND) filter. At times I have seen some colour cast; which lead us into a long conversation about the B+W 486 MRC UV IR Cut filter, and what it could do for my long exposure photography.

Apparently this filter cuts out excess IR light that the digital sensor is exposed to during the long exposures. During shorter exposures it is not that big of a deal, but when you start to extend the exposure times with the use of a dark ND filter, it starts to become significant. Wanting to see this for myself, he was kind enough to loan me this filter to test.



I tested the 486 UV filter with my B+W ND110 on my Olympus E-M5, on a Nikon D610, and on a Canon 6D. I was quite surprised to see that it was making very little difference on any of them. So I had heard that it might be the fact that one of them was on the front when it should have been the other way around. So I tried it with the B+W 486 on the outside, and the inside. And no matter what I did, it really made little difference. OK, not totally true, there was an ever so slight colour shift in one series. But by no means was it conclusive enough for me to want to spend an additional \$60-\$190 depending on filter size. I tried it on a Hoya Pro500 (9-stop) filter as well, thinking it might have been the fact that I am using an older B+W ND110 that I have had for about 12 years now.

But again, that was not the case. I was flummoxed. I had read several people's blogs about how adding that

filter in front of the Neutral Density filter would solve the pinky/magenta colour cast from the long exposures, and it was just not doing it for me.

I expanded my testing to a FujiFilm X-E2 and a Sony A7 with the same results! There was a very minor colour shift back towards neutral, but the skies were a pinky/magenta colour and not the completely neutral skies I was lead to believe were going to happen.

I started over, thinking if I manually white balance the camera before adding the ND filter with the UV IR Cut on top of that, it might make a difference. Then again I put the UV IR Cut in behind the ND. By this time I was ready to scream and throw the thing out. Then I reminded myself that it was not mine, and that I had to send it back in one piece.

And by that statement right there, you can guess how well the second go around went with the filters. So yeah, no change whatsoever.

I do know that there are some new filters out there that will have the UV IR Cut coatings already on them, but these are the larger square filters like the Cokin-Z or Lee filter holders, and not everyone is going to want to use filters like that. I will be testing those as soon as they are available from the rep for me to try out. I do have the Cokin-Z holder, and I have some filters from various ranges of NDs and from various manufactures. And all of the dark filters (4-stop +) do give that pink/magenta colour cast.

I have gone to the length of taking a long exposure photo and putting my ColorChecker Passport in the frame on the edge, so I can set the colours after the fact right. But it would be nice to get it done right in the camera without having to do such things.

So for now, I am still on the hunt to find a way to shoot super long exposures in colour without getting that colour cast.

*[Ed: One way to deal with a persistent colour cast in a series of images is to adjust one image, then create a custom preset in your raw converter and apply it to all similar images.]*

*You can also create a custom adjustment layer in Photoshop and save it as the only layer in a file. When you need it, you simply drag that layer into the subject file. In both case you may have to fine-tune the images.]*

by Cindy Stephenson

This is the third in a series of articles on Lightroom that we are running in *Close-Up*.

This part focuses on some features in the Library Module including: Evaluating Photos, Keywords, Collections, and Searching for Photos. I'll also cover selecting and moving photos.

## Evaluating Photos

Lightroom has a number of different tools to help you efficiently evaluate a photo shoot, decide which photos you want to keep and which ones you don't, and assign quality ratings and colour labels.

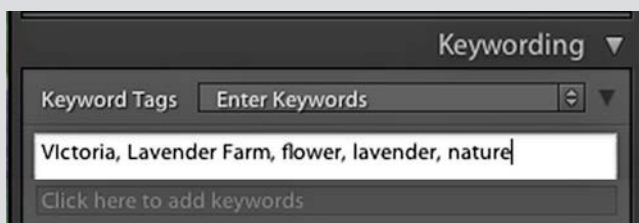
There are three different types of information you can assign to your photos: pick and reject flags, star ratings, and colour labels. Talk to ten different club members and you'll hear ten different systems for using these tools. Some might use pick and reject flags, others might use star ratings to indicate quality and colour labels to indicate what stage a photo is at in their workflow. As you start using Lightroom, you'll likely come up with a system that works best for you.

Here's what I do. After a shoot, I download and review all my photos. I assign one star to any with some potential. I'll then bring up just the one stars, go through them again and pick out any that are two stars. That usually narrows it down quite a bit. I will go through a third time and pick out the three stars. Those photos that did not get any stars will be the ones I eventually delete.

## Keywording Basics

Keywords are terms you assign to your photos to be able to find them later. In grid view, photos with a pencil badge have keywords assigned. If you click on the badge, it pops open the keywording panel and you can see the keywords you have assigned to a photo.

Enter keywords by typing in the big box or the small white box in the keywording panel. You can assign a keyword to more than one photo at a time by selecting



a group of photos, then typing the keyword. Remove a keyword by highlighting it and deleting.

If you select a group of photos, and there is an asterisk beside some of the keywords, it means that keyword does not apply to all the photos in that group. If you want it to, just click on the asterisk to remove it. The keyword is then assigned to every photo in the group. If in that same group of photos you want to delete a keyword from all of them, just highlight the keyword and click delete.

To assign a keyword(s) to every photo in a folder, click on edit, select all, then type the keyword(s) and hit enter to apply. To keyword individual photos, you can drag keywords to that photo to assign a keyword, or you can drag the photo to a keyword.

Lightroom starts building a master keyword list as soon as you begin entering keywords. To see a list of every keyword that has been assigned to a photo in your catalogue, go to Keyword List.

To find photos based on keywords, click on the arrow beside the keyword on the keyword list panel; all of the photos with that keyword will appear in the centre panel.

## Keyword Lists

If you just do this, then over time your keyword list will get very long, unwieldy and hard to work with. One solution is to create nested keywords or hierarchies. You could for example, have a top level keyword such as location, and then within that have countries, and within countries have cities and within cities, list various landmarks etc.

To create a hierarchy, click on the "+" sign to the left of the Keyword List, and type the keyword you want to go at the top of the hierarchy, such as Location. Lightroom will prompt you for synonyms of that word, ignore that for now. After you've typed in the keyword, click "create." Then right click on it and you'll be able to add the next level keyword. Follow the same process. Once you have your hierarchy set up, you can click and drag keywords into the appropriate hierarchical level.





You should plan your keywords and organizational structure, but you can add to it later. Think about how you think of your photos and what words will help to find them. If you do this as a word document, you can import the list into Lightroom if you save it as a text file. Go to Metadata, import keywords, choose the text file, and open.

You can correct typos by using “edit keyword tag.” If you have duplicates, decide which one you want to remove, portrait or portraits, for example. Go to the photos that have the wrong keyword by clicking on the right arrow, select all the photos, assign the correct keyword to them and then right click on the bad one to delete.

### Searching for Photos in Lightroom

Searching, is known as filtering; you can filter on any metadata associated with your photo. Start by telling Lightroom where you want to search, i.e., within a folder, collection or the entire catalogue. To search your entire catalogue, click on “all photographs.” Tell Lightroom what you want to search for using the filter bar that you see when you are in grid view. Look for “Text Attribute Metadata None” above your photos. (Type the shortcut “G” to make sure you are in Grid view; go to View and click on “Show Filter Bar” or “\”).



If want to search your entire catalogue for all five star flower photos taken with your macro lens, click on attribute, select five stars and all of your five star photos show up. Then click on metadata to specify keywords, type “flower,” thus helping you to narrow down your photos. Finally, click on metadata to specify your macro lens. To do a new search, click on none. You will also have to reset the search by clicking on “all” for each attribute.

If you set your search criteria and find you are searching within the wrong folder and want to select another folder, click on the custom filter padlock to save the search criteria. Then you can select a different folder to search in using the saved criteria. If you had not hit the custom filter padlock and just gone to another folder, Lightroom would not have retained the previous search criteria.

Say a photo you really like comes up and you want to know what folder it lives in. Right click on the photo and “Go to photo in library.”

### Collections

Collections allow you to group photos without having

to move them on your hard drive, or create duplicates. The collections panel is below folders in the left panel.

To create a collection, click on the “+” sign next to Collections. Pick “Include selected photos.” Click and drag photos into the collection, clicking from within the thumbnail. You can click and drag photos from many different folders into a collection.

You can rearrange the order of the photos in a collection. This is useful if you are creating a slide show.

Smart collections are automatically generated collections of, for example, “all your five star landscape photos”. You can set the parameters or rules for what photos go into a smart collection. A wonderful benefit of smart collections is that they automatically update. Whenever you add a photo to your catalogue that meets the conditions of the smart collections, it is automatically added.

To add photos to a collection choose the collection you want to target by right clicking on it and choosing “Set as Target Collection.” Then type “B” to add a photo, and type “B” again to remove it. The “+” is your only clue as to which is the target collection.

Removing photos from a collection does not delete them from the Lightroom catalogue or from your hard drive.

### Selecting and Moving Photos

There are two ways to select a group of photos in Lightroom when you are in Grid view. If the photos are all in a row, select the first photo by clicking on it, hold down the shift key, and click on the last. The selected photos will be highlighted. To select several photos that are not side-by-side, click on the first, hold down the control (Ctrl) or command (Cmd) key, and then click on the next image.

To move photos from one folder to another, select the photos by clicking in the grey border. To move the photos, click inside the thumbnail of any of the photos you have selected, and drag it into the correct folder. In this article, I mention dragging photos to keywords or collections. As with moving photos, you have to click inside the thumbnail to drag the photo to the keyword or collection.

The Club offers Lightroom workshops to help you get started. An excellent resource is Laura Shoe’s DVD called Lightroom: Fundamentals and Beyond. Our next article will focus on the Develop module.

## Eye of the Dragon

by Ian Crawford

*"The time will come when you will be able to make the entire photograph electronically. With the extremely high resolution and the enormous control you can get from electronics, the results will be fantastic. I wish I were young again!"* Ansel Adams 1983.

I have spent many hours working in a darkroom. With a digital camera and Photoshop I was amazed. What used to take me 20 to 40 minutes could be accomplished in two minutes using a computer, plus the images were in full colour. The whole world of photography changed for me.

Who knew a dragon was hiding in the fireplace in our living room? One of the joys of digital photography is that you can experiment with wild abandon. Experimentation was not so easy with film cameras. I tripped the shutter and at the same time rotated the camera about 60 degrees. The settings were ½ sec, f5, ISO 400. The silver helix to the top of the image is a heat powered electric fan.

The image was processed in Lightroom 4. I would like to thank Ed Moniz for his fantastic Lightroom workshops. As well as showing how to organize multiple images, he shows participants how to do proper tone adjustments and how to use the global, broad and detail adjustment tools. And thanks to many other club members for sharing their knowledge and skills. With so much to learn, like Mr. Adams, I wish I were young again.



## Inflection 1

by Dennis Crabtree

A couple of years ago I attended a show at Luz Gallery in Victoria and was puzzled at how the photographer had achieved the effect in their beautiful abstract photographs.



I tried an approach that, if not exactly the one used by that photographer, was able to create images which looked quite similar. This effect is created by dramatically resizing the image (larger or smaller) in one direction and then resizing the image back to its original size.

If you take an image that is 4000 pixels wide by 3000 pixels high, the process is to resize the image to 11 pixels by 3000 pixels, and then resize it back to the original 4000 by 3000 pixels. The magic is created because different algorithms are used to reduce and then increase the image size, and that throws away a lot of the data.

I used the free image viewer Irfanview (at [IrfanView.com](http://IrfanView.com)) to process my original image. The specific steps are:

1. Export the image from Lightroom as a tif or jpeg and load the image into IrfanView.
2. Select "Image/Resize/Resample" from the menus to resize the image and then uncheck the "preserve aspect ratio" box and select the "Set new size" box.
3. Set the width to 11, leave the height at 3000, click OK and you will end up with an 11 x 3000 pixel image.
4. Now reverse the process, setting the width to 4000.
5. There is an option on the resampling method for enlarging and you can play around with this to achieve different effects.
6. Click OK and voilà you have your abstract image.

The original image for "Inflection 1" was a sunset and can be seen at: [flickr.com/photos/astrocbt/15669427057/in/photostream](https://www.flickr.com/photos/astrocbt/15669427057/in/photostream). You can also do this in Photoshop.



## Tuesday Shoots

by Wayne Swanson

### January 13<sup>th</sup>: Numbers

Is 2015 Your Lucky Year? Are you superstitious about certain numbers? After all, this is the 13<sup>th</sup>, an unlucky date for some. For the Numbers theme, you will play with the lucky/unlucky digits in 2015. Luck only enters with the digits, not including 0, that you draw from a hat on the day of the shoot. You will draw one and two digit numbers such as 1, 2, 10, 12, etc. For those who really want a challenge, Blair might even include three and four digit numbers. You can represent your number in photos any way you like, but you won't know which is your number in advance. It's a good way of clearing out the holiday season cobwebs and rejuvenating your creative juices.

### January 27<sup>th</sup>: Weathered

Most of you moved to Victoria to enjoy its mild climate and to avoid the weather extremes found in most of Canada. Your desire to view dilapidated barns, sun-burned faces and deserted tractors remains a distant memory. Yet you find a certain beauty in rusty boats. The forces of nature alter exposed things even in this corner of paradise. Greyed logs smashed on beaches add a certain facet to local seascapes, indistinct lettering on old buildings intrigue our minds and the weathered faces of seafaring people add another dimension.

Just a reminder that weathered is the theme of the next club competition. Here is your opportunity to work towards getting a great shot to enter.



## Weekend Shoots

by David McLean and Donna Robertson

### The Parliament Building

On Friday, January 9, 2015, our first field trip of the year will take us to the Parliament Building. The Parliament Building, which was designed by Francis Rattenbury, was recently voted as the second favourite building on Vancouver Island by the Architecture Foundation of B.C. We have been granted the opportunity to shoot from 9:00 am to 11:00 am, so those attending should assemble at the front steps of the Legislature no later than 8:50 am.

There are a lot of things to shoot at the Parliament building, from stained glass, the stairways, fine wood detail, sculptures, people and hopefully up the rotunda (if it isn't roped off).

The lighting at the legislature is variable, so it is recommended that you use a tripod to reduce possible camera shake for longer exposure times; perhaps a flash so that you can reduce exposure times by lighting the low lit areas, or fill-flash for unevenly lit areas; or even consider High Dynamic Range (HDR) photography. In order to shoot HDR, you will need a software package such as Photoshop, Google/Nik HDR Efex Pro, or Photomatix (among others) to process your pictures.

The intent of HDR is to take a sufficient number of shots using the same aperture setting, but different exposure settings, in order to correctly expose all areas of your photograph, to enable you to get sufficient detail in the highlights, and in the shadows. Depending what you are shooting, this may require more than three images. For example, if the scene your are shooting includes a south facing stained glass window, and the inside of the building has a number of areas in shadow, you will want to expose correctly not only for the stained glass window, but also for the shadows within the frame. This particular scenario may require 5, 7, or even 9 images in order to accurately get the complete detail in your photograph of the subject. You can adjust a picture's exposure by about 1-2 stops in post-processing, however it takes far less time if you expose all areas of the photograph correctly when taking the picture.

At 11:00 when the formal part of the field trip is completed, consider, weather permitting, walking around the outside of the building and the grounds. There are a lot of interesting lines and details worth photographing.

*by John Coenraads*

What the . . . ?! I awoke with a start. And why was the bed inclined at an angle? I grabbed onto the edge to keep from rolling off. As I got up, I would have fallen had I not grabbed onto the edge of the dresser. The room too was all askew. Had an earthquake knocked the house off its foundations? Looking around in the dim morning light, my eyeballs presented me with two uncoordinated images swimming about me. Uh, oh! As a wave of nausea overwhelmed me I lay down and performed a stroke check. All extremities responded appropriately as did my hearing and voice. Clearly it wasn't reality that had gone off the rails but the usually reliable and stable model of reality my brain normally constructed from the sensory input it receives. In this case, the accelerometer in my head was generating nonsense.

Two sensory organs, based on tubes filled with liquid and lined with sensory hairs, lie just behind each ear. The one coiled in the shape of a snail is the cochlea. It senses sound vibrations. The other consists of three semicircular canals oriented at right angles that detect motion by sensing the swirling of the liquid as we move our heads. It is remarkable that nerve impulses from two such similar organs are interpreted by the brain to yield two such different sensations as hearing and balance.

In my case, a CAT scan confirmed that the vertigo I was experiencing had no deeper underlying cause and that the otoliths, crystals of calcium carbonate, in the semicircular canals had probably either grown or rearranged themselves and that the inner ear (actually the brain) just needed time to recalibrate. Sure enough, by late afternoon, all symptoms had disappeared.

### **Accelerometers**

Accelerometers measure acceleration, or the pull of gravity; physics does not distinguish between them. As Einstein observed in his General Theory of Relativity, the gravitational force experienced while standing on a massive body, such as the earth, is actually the same as the "pseudo-force" experienced while being accelerated, in a dragster for example. My apologies for the physics lesson, but this, the Principle of Equivalence, is one of those fundamental insights about the universe that excites me.

So the accelerometer built into your laptop can sense that it is in free fall and dock the heads on the hard drive to prevent damage when the imminent collision with the floor actually occurs. And the one built into your tablet, sensing gravity, always knows which way to orient the image

on the screen. The accelerometer built into your camera can tell which way is down (gravity) and tell you when the camera is level, and the one built into your camera lens can sense vibrations (acceleration) and adjust the internal lenses to stabilize the image on the sensor.

Like the semicircular canals in your ears, we tend to take these little devices, and what they do, for granted. Let's delve a little deeper.

### **Accelerometer Technology**

The reason that accelerometers get built into everything nowadays (e.g., fitness trackers, Wii controllers) is that these micro-mechanical devices can easily and cheaply be built using the same process, and material, used for building electronic chips.

Typically a tiny mass is mounted on the end of a tiny silicon beam, more like a hair, which bends as the mass responds to gravity or acceleration. A small electric charge is placed on the mass and as it changes position, the shift in this charge is measured. Since each sensor responds only to acceleration in one direction, three, mounted at right angles, are typically used to sense motion in three dimensions.

### **Ensuring a Level Horizon**

Nothing can ruin a landscape, or an architectural shot, like a horizon that is not level, or verticals that are not vertical. Now maybe you believe in dealing with this issue in Photoshop, but rotating an image involves some serious pixel mashing and the pixels in your image will be subtly damaged. So it is best to get it right in-camera.

The latest crop of cameras makes this easy by using built-in accelerometers to provide a virtual horizon displayed on the rear screen. Check your camera manual for how to turn this on. Looking much like the attitude indicator in an aircraft cockpit, the camera's orientation is clearly visible. And cameras such as Canon's EOS 7D take this aircraft analogy one step further by also including an indicator for vertical pitch thus making it easy to ensure that your lens is pointing neither up nor down. See figure 1.

The accuracy of a built-in level is around one degree, which is good, but a one degree error is not insignificant and can be (just) noticeable in an image. Although nothing beats a virtual horizon when shooting in the





Figure 1: The display on Canon's 7D clearly indicates both "roll" and "pitch," to use aircraft terminology.

dark, in other situations the usual tried and true techniques are still relevant.

### Alternate Techniques

**Use the Viewfinder:** The focus points in the viewfinder are horizontally aligned and provide a handy reference when judging if the camera is aligned with the horizon.

**Grid Lines:** These are available in the Live View of most cameras; grid lines provide accurate horizontal reference lines.

**Spirit Level:** For sheer convenience, when your camera is mounted on a tripod, it is still hard to beat an old fashioned spirit (bubble) level. The name originated with the filling of the tubes with alcohol which doesn't freeze. A typical two or three axis version mounts securely in the camera's hot shoe.

### Panoramas

Levelling your camera when shooting panoramas can be especially tricky. Here we have to ensure that the camera remains horizontal as it is rotated about the camera's vertical axis.

This is achieved by first of all making sure that the tripod is level. This is easily done if the manufacturer of your tripod was thoughtful enough to build a circular, bull's eye spirit level into the mount of the tripod itself. If not, you can use a bull's eye, or three-axis, level mounted in the camera's hot shoe.

But first you have to make sure that the camera is perpendicular to the tripod's centre post. If your tripod head is of the "pan-tilt" variety and has degree markings on it, allowing you to set the tilt to zero, this again is easy. However, if using a ball head, you're on your own.

### Rotating Pixels

I always find myself being curious about how a destructive transformation, such as rotation, affects the pixels in an image. To satisfy that curiosity, I decided to take a closer look at the pixels in the red line going up to the left in figure 1.



Figure 2: Staircase pattern of pixels.

Figure 2 shows the typical staircase pattern that inevitably arises when photographing straight lines that are neither vertical nor horizontal. I eye-balled the angle to be about 10 degrees and applied a rotation of that magnitude, to the left, in Photoshop Elements.

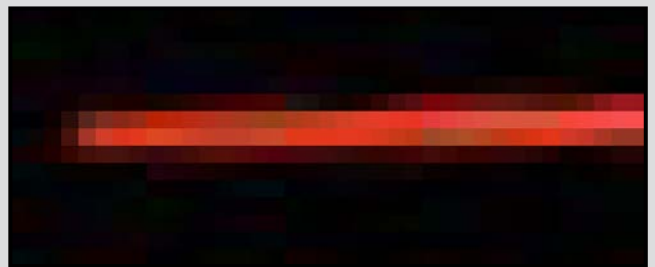


Figure 3: Rotated image.

The result, shown in figure 3, is better than I expected. But closer examination reveals that the "staircase" has left its imprint. If you squint a bit, to blur the image, you'll see that the line in figure 3 exhibits a sort of "barber's pole" pattern.

When I resized and re-sampled the image, the "barber pole effect" stood out very clearly. It is artifacts like this which can be avoided if one "makes it right the first time."

### Breaking the Rules

Of course there are times when you may wish to experiment with the camera at different angles for compositional reasons. But when doing so, always make sure the angle is such that it is clearly obvious and intentional. A horizon that is only slightly off just makes the viewers lean their heads, a sure sign you made an elementary mistake and messed up the shot.

## Winter Photography

by Nancy MacNab

Now Christmas is over, the decorations and tree have been cleared away for the year, and the dark, dull, dreary, rainy days of January have arrived. It seems like it will be a lot longer than three months before spring will arrive. In the meantime, you've got the new thingamajig to try out, along with the watchamacallit that is guaranteed to produce absolutely amazing photos. Sigh. How long will it be before you can use them?

How about right now? It takes time to learn not only the technical aspects of your new equipment, so you know which button produces which bell or whistle, but also time to develop that instinctive, automatic feel for the results it will produce that is so essential for capturing photos quickly, at the peak of the action.

Rather than packing your cameras away, waiting for a sunny, or at least a dry, day, it's time to get them out and keep photographing throughout the winter. Photography is about light, so use whatever source is available, windows, desk lamps, flashlights and candles are all useful. While some may be more challenging to use for photography than others, they will teach you how to judge not only light, aperture and shutter speed, but also shadows, the colour and direction of light, specular highlights and reflections.

If you are primarily a nature photographer, indoor plants or cut flowers may be your choice of subject. Your pets may be persuaded to pose for you, or the occasional spider might become the target of your lens.

If you prefer to photograph people and your friends and family have taken to hiding when they see your lens approach, a friendly teddy bear can be a patient and willing participant. A black and white one will challenge your ability to get details in both the blacks and the whites of your photograph.

Window light provides a natural and familiar source during the daytime, but has usually gone to bed by the time you get home from work. This leaves artificial sources of light, such as regular overhead lights, desk lamps, flashlights and candles. Depending on the light bulb, they can provide different colours of light, ranging from the bright, blue-white light of LEDs to the distinctly yellowish cast from a flashlight with old batteries. Each provides a different challenge, and the differing colour casts are one more reason to work with raw files.

Some simple ways to changing the lighting include pieces cut from coloured plastic report covers, cardboard used to focus the light on a specific spot or to prevent the light from "spilling" into an area you don't want lit, and reflectors made from aluminum foil crumpled up and flattened on a piece of cardboard. Some chocolates come wrapped in coloured foil, so if you want to experiment with colour, here's your excuse for eating the chocolate!

The direction from which the light comes is shown by the direction of the shadows. With the light behind the photographer and in front of the subject (front lighting), colours can be more vivid, but the shape of things is hidden so the photo can look flatter and more two-dimensional. People can end up squinting into the camera.

Side lighting brings out the texture and shape of the subject, with light on one side and shadows on the other.

Back lighting, which can give a halo effect outlining the subject, may require some fill light from a reflector or a second light source if you don't want to end up with a silhouette.

The trio of ISO, aperture and shutter speed result in a specific exposure for the camera's sensor. For various combinations the same amount of light is allowed in, but the change from a wide-open aperture (f2.8-f4.5) and fast shutter speed, which gives a shallow depth of field, to a small aperture (f22-f32) and a slow shutter speed, which gives great depth of field, is like changing from a wide, shallow baking dish to a tall, narrow vase which holds the same quantity of water but in a very differently shaped vessel.

When reviewing your photos on the computer, check the shadows and highlights, to see if they have detail showing in them or are completely black (shadows) or blown out (highlights).

Here are some suggestions, some of which have been demonstrated at various SIG meetings: black subject on a black background; white subject on a black background; white subject on a white background; water drops; candlelight; and a triptych of the same subject with front lighting, side lighting and back lighting. Use this winter to learn your equipment and to learn more about light. You need to be able to use your camera without having to stop and think about each step you need to take. Keep on photographing this winter!



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*I'm Terry Zlot, owner of The PRINT Lab. I have been proudly printing for Vancouver Island's photographic community for over 15 years.*

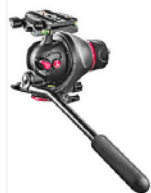
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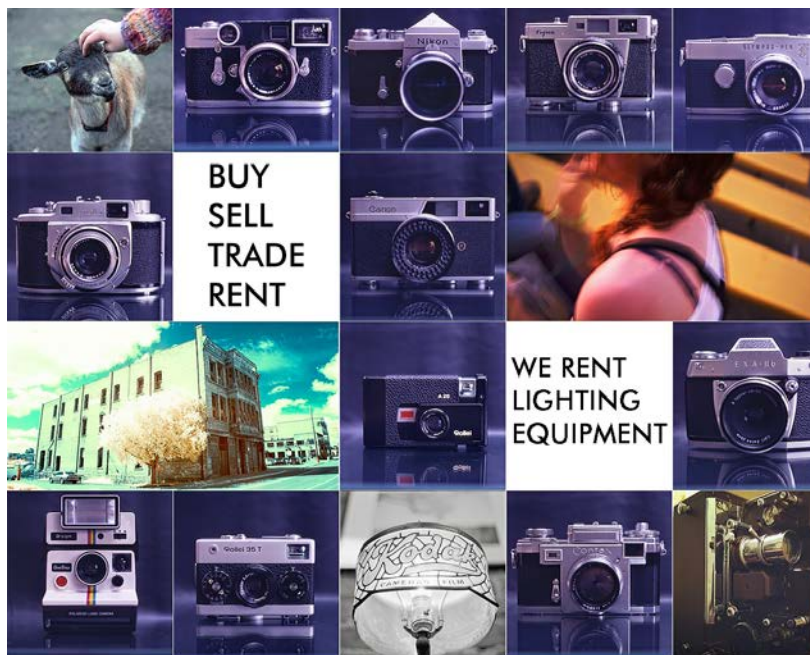
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