



Close-Up

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Shooting Cars
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Photographing Musicians
Memory Cards
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How I Did It
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Beginners' Corner: The Polarizing Filter
Victoria Camera Club

"Tulips" by Peter Koelbleitner

March 2019 Volume 72 Number 3



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Victoria Camera Club



"Sunset Sail" by Vanessa MacDonald

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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

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

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

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

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March 2019

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



Calendar

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

March 7th: Competition Night. The theme competition is “One Colour.” The deadline for submissions for the March competition is March 7th. The February competition images will be shown.

March 14th: Presentation Night. Our guest speaker is Kevin Light who will present “Sports, Action and Event Photography”.

March 21st: Members’ Night. Presentation of members’ images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical topics.

Workshops: Photographing Glass, and the Art of Seeing. **Field Trip Highlights:** Sherringham Lighthouse/Sandcut Falls and “Hard or Sharp” (theme).

Cover Image: “Tulips” by Peter Koelbleitner. On a sunny Saturday morning in June 2018, we were walking along a canal in Utrecht, Holland, and came across the flower market. While there was a great variety of flowers, there was no doubt, the national flower of Holland predominated. It was a busy place and the crowds of onlookers and buyers kept throwing shadows over the packed bouquets. But there was a moment for a clear shot and another memory of this trip was on the card.

Tulips come from Central Asia and South-eastern Europe. Prior to becoming the Dutch flower, they were cultivated in Turkey. In the 17th century, Holland was overtaken by a tulip craze, the so-called Tulip mania, which resulted in the creation of a large variety of tulips, but also resulted in a market crash of hereto unknown proportion.

Today Holland exports about two billion tulip bulbs a year and in spring attracts nearly 1.5 million visitors to view the tulip fields at Keukenhof.

Every spring, I make several visits to Butchart Gardens to admire the great variety of tulip blooms and hopefully from time to time come home with a photo to my liking.

If you are wondering about a possible photo trip a little further afield than the local gardens, consider the Skagit Valley round Mt. Vernon, WA. But wherever you encounter this marvellous flower in the coming months, remember winter is behind us and spring is here.

President’s Message

Goodbye winter, Hello spring. As we head into March, we have spring to look forward to. This means there will be more flowers and trees blooming and the grass will start to grow again. There will be spring flower field trips popping up as the flowers are discovered and I know our new workshop committee will have some exciting new topics on the calendar.

The Wildlife Photographer of the Year images are being displayed at the Royal BC Museum until March 24th. Travelling from London’s Natural History Museum, the exhibition takes viewers on a visual journey around the world and showcases a global selection of outstanding nature photography. The images evoke a range of emotions and are visually stunning and thought-provoking. Definitely a must see if you have the time.

One photography conference that you might want to consider is CAPA’s Canadian Camera Conference that takes place July 16-18th, 2019 in Calgary, Alberta. CAPA has assembled a wonderful and varied group of photographers from whom you will learn and be inspired. Head out to Calgary early or stay later and enjoy the Alberta Badlands, the Rockies or The Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede.

Around this time of the year the President’s Message in *Close-Up* makes mention of the one thing that makes our Club run, volunteers. VCC is fortunate to have an excellent group of individuals who work countless hours to make everything in the Club run smoothly. Without them we would not be able to offer everything that we do, but as is the case with many groups it is often the same people who volunteer their time year after year to help keep our Club viable.

As we start to think about the AGM some volunteers may be considering stepping down from their positions. I encourage all members, especially those who have not volunteered in the past, to think about what you get from the Club and consider giving back by filling a role next year. By becoming an active participant you can have a positive impact through your contribution.

As we move towards the next season in September, one of the volunteer positions that you may want to consider is joining me on the Club’s 75th anniversary committee. I would like to put together a group to plan some events that will celebrate our reasons for coming together in the first place, our love of photography.

Teri VanWell, President

Pros and Cons of Prime Lenses

by Neil Schemenauer

Giving specific recommendations on camera equipment is challenging. Technological improvements occur rapidly and advice can become obsolete. Also, photography is a diverse art that includes many approaches. Advice useful for one photographer could be useless for another. I will try to walk the fine line of giving advice that is neither too specific or too generic.

I will explore the question of when you should consider a prime lens, meaning one with a fixed focal length, as opposed to a “zoom lens” which is a common term for an adjustable focal length lens.

The distinguishing feature of a zoom lens is the ability to adjust its focal length. Why do you need an adjustable focal length? A novice’s answer to this question is probably that they want their subject to fit in the viewfinder. They point their camera at a subject and adjust the zoom to enlarge or shrink the subject. That isn’t wrong but it is important to consider the impact of perspective. This is determined by the position of the camera relative to the subject and has a strong impact on how the photograph looks. Adjusting the focal length does not change that perspective. Instead, it changes the angle of view and, disregarding lost resolution, behaves exactly like cropping the image.

Consider “zooming with your feet.” Novices forget that moving the camera is usually an option. Consciously choosing a perspective first and only then adjusting the focal length could result in better compositions. Having the exact optimal focal length is usually not so important. Modern cameras have a lot of resolution and some cropping generally does not affect the quality of final prints. There are situations when moving the camera is not possible, or maybe, possible, but you do not have the time to move or switch lenses. For example, in wedding photography, you could encounter both of these issues. The 24-70 mm and 70-200 mm zoom lenses are popular for this task. There are successful wedding photographers who only use prime lenses but some careful planning and practice must occur so they have the right focal length available at the right time.

Given that zoom lenses are more flexible and convenient, what is the point of owning a prime? A prime is usually cheaper, lighter and has better optical quality. A zoom lens needs more optical elements and more of those elements move, increasing price, weight and decreasing optical quality. The Lens Rentals[1] website

has an excellent article explaining the trade-offs manufacturers make when building camera lenses.

I do not want to give reviews on specific lenses. There are many online articles available, however, it seems helpful to use some real lenses as examples. In 2018, both Canon and Nikon released new lens mounts (the RF and Z mounts, respectively). These mounts are used with their new mirrorless full-frame cameras and target professional photographers. The lenses released are likely what are considered to be the most useful to the widest range of photographers.

Canon released four lenses: RF 35 f1.8 IS Macro STM, RF 50 mm f1.2L, RF 28-70 mm f2L, and the RF 24-105 mm f4 L. Nikon released three: Z 35 mm f1.8 S, Z 50 mm f1.8 S, and the Z 24-70 mm f4 S. These line-ups are similar so let’s consider the Canon prime lenses. The 35 mm f1.8 is small, fast, affordable and has a wide focal length, which is useful in a number of situations and yet not so wide as to produce the distortion of a fish-eye lens. Wide-angle lenses are used in street photography, landscape photography, groups of people, indoor environments, and astrophotography. If limited to just one focal length, 35 mm would be a popular choice. Because of this flexibility, phone cameras usually have focal lengths that are equivalent.

The 50 mm f1.2 is also useful and could be a choice if you could only have one fixed focal length. It is generally better for portraits since the greater subject distance produces a more flattering perspective. The f1.2 aperture makes it an extremely fast lens (i.e. gathers a lot of light) and probably puts it out of the price range for many people. If you are on a limited budget, a f1.8 lens can often be found for a bargain, especially if you are willing to buy refurbished or used.

Missing from this set of new lenses are those with longer focal lengths because it is quite simple to adapt older mounts to these new mounts. Because a long focal length lens is already heavy and large, the impact of the mount adapter is small. For a 300 mm f4 the adaptor increases the weight by about 10%. For a 35 mm the adaptor adds about 30% more weight.

A lens with a focal length of 85 mm is preferred by many portrait photographers. While perhaps not as flexible as the 50 mm or 35 mm, it would be useful to many photographers. There is a rumour that Canon will soon release an RF mount 85 mm f1.2 lens. Like the 50 mm, f1.2 is an extremely fast aperture. A f1.8 would be fast enough for most situations and would be much less expensive.

[1] <http://wordpress.lensrentals.com/blog/2016/02/optical-quality-assurance>.

Shooting Cars

by Stephen Ban

I think many people have the idea that shooting cars is easy. After all, they're ubiquitous, they're accessible, and most of the time you have the luxury (at least when they're parked) of shooting them from nearly any angle you wish. The reality is that it's easy to get a boring picture of a car and quite difficult to get a really interesting or exciting one, partly because it's particularly challenging to find an angle or composition that hasn't been done to death by every car magazine and car aficionado out there. In this article, I will give you a few basic tips for improving your car photography without going into complex lighting set-ups.

In my experience, indoor car shows where each manufacturer releases and shows off their newest cars are about the worst possible place to get car pictures. Most cars are deathly boring econoboxes, family cars, and minivans. There may be a few high-end luxury and sports cars, but chances are that there will be a huge crowd around them and you'll probably have to shoot from behind a velvet rope or other obstacle. The lighting tends to be unfavourable, harsh and high overhead. Even if you manage to keep your own reflection out of the frame, you won't have any control over the rest of the crowd milling about in your shot.



Finding a background that complements the subject is always a plus. In this case, the black and yellow of the car are mirrored in the wall, and literally on the wet ground.

If car shows aren't great, what are the alternatives? Maybe you know someone who owns a nice or unusual car? Otherwise, a great way to get VIP access to a rare or exotic car is to go to enthusiast or specific marque car shows. Simply ask the owner if they would like to have some photos of their car taken in exchange for a private viewing. Some local car shows where you might try this are the Oak Bay Collector Car Festival (late July), the Fords and Friends Car Show in Saanich (mid July), and the All-Japanese Show and Shine in Gyro Park (late June).

Once you have access to a car, how and where do you shoot it? As with any subject the location is key as is the ambient light. Use the reflective surfaces of a car to your advantage by finding interesting backdrops and be careful of the opposite situation where distracting background or foreground elements find their way into reflections. Of course try and avoid getting yourself (or your equipment) into the shot, unless that's what you're going for.



Aston Martin DBS: a slight turn-in of the front wheels plus using the background as a stylistic element and luckily-timed wet pavement. And incorporating models, perhaps a subject of a future article.

The golden hour (the hour after sunrise or the hour before sunset) works just as well for cars as it does for people but even after the sun goes down, there's no reason to stop shooting. Night shots with light painting work especially well with cars. To do this set your shutter to bulb or to 30 seconds and use a flashlight or other light source to highlight the parts of the car that you want to draw attention to. You can also use a speedlight and manually trigger it each time.

You may want to experiment with different apertures and ISO settings to get the exposure and effect you want. Remember, smaller apertures (larger f-numbers) give you greater depth of field and also have the nice

side-effect of turning any point light source into attractive starburst-like patterns.

Also remember that the most boring shots of cars are taken from eye level simply because that's the way most people are used to seeing cars. To make your shots more interesting, experiment with shooting from different angles, especially very low ones. The combination of shooting from ground level with a wide-angle (less than 20 mm) lens makes for a much more dramatic composition than shooting from eye-level with a 50 or 85 mm lens. Alternatively, shoot from a distance and use a longer telephoto to get compression of the background and foreground. This is particularly effective when you have something dramatic in the background like a mountain or a castle.

Of course, the usual "rules" of composition also apply. Try to avoid having your subject dead centre and make use of negative space to make the car look more dynamic as if it's about to go somewhere. Similarly, it often helps to have the front wheels turned in one direction or another rather than pointed straight ahead. However, be mindful of how much you turn them and in which direction because you can either get a very distracting shot of tire tread or reveal parts of the wheel well or suspension that might not be as photogenic. A slight turn might be all you need.



Focusing on the fine details of a car often produces a more interesting shot than trying to get all of it in. However, even though the relatively shallow depth of field has blurred it, the Range Rover in the background is still a distracting element.

Of course, don't forget that cars have an interior as well! You'll probably want a wide-angle lens for shooting interiors, as you'll likely be shooting from the back seat. Getting the exposure right can be tricky; you'll be dealing with bright light through the windows and almost complete darkness in areas like the footwells. This is

where creative use of light painting or flashes can really pay off, as well as the use of HDR techniques.



A long-exposure, single shot HDR taken in Cuba. The light streak in the foreground is from the headlight of a passing moped.

Another option is a racetrack or other driving event where you can catch cars in motion. For this you'll want to perfect the motion blur technique where you pan your camera with the car's movement so that your subject is perfectly sharp while the background is blurred. To do this you'll need to shoot at a slower shutter speed (1/125th sec or lower). A good rule of thumb is to use a shutter speed that's roughly 1/(twice the car's speed in km/h). You'll also need to anticipate the focal point where you'll be taking the shot and either set your manual focus for that spot or use continuous autofocus and "spray and pray".

As you're panning continue to "follow-through" as you would with a golf swing. If the car is coming head-on at you, this technique won't work; plus it becomes much trickier to focus because the subject distance is changing rapidly. You can practice this technique at any roadside and once you're ready you can visit local motorsports venues such as Western Speedway (Langford) or the Vancouver Island Motorsport Circuit in the Cowichan Valley.

You can also achieve motion blur by shooting a moving vehicle from another moving vehicle. This won't require panning so long as there's not a large difference in speed between the cars. Just be careful not to hang yourself or your camera too far out of the window!

If you're looking for inspiration and a bit of a rags-to-riches story, check out Amy Shore (amyshorephotography.com, or @amyshorephotography on Instagram) for an example of a photographer who is completely self-taught, and went from being a relative unknown to an award-winning Nikon ambassador thanks to her car photography.

Good luck, and happy shooting!

Tech Tips: Basic Image Editing

by Richard James

Let's start off by clearing up a misconception. Every digital image saved as a JPEG file in the camera has been edited. There is no such thing as an "unedited" image; a raw file can not be viewed until it has been edited.

In this article I'm going to indicate what types of editing you should consider and I won't go into the details of how to do it in any particular software. It doesn't matter what software you use so long as it's capable of doing what you require.

If you are using Photoshop you should be using adjustment layers wherever possible rather than changing the original image. For flexibility in editing you should also save your file with a new file name before you make major changes. Lightroom automatically stores your adjustments as separate instructions to be applied to the image when it is exported or for the preview on your screen.

Basic adjustments include: colour balance, brightness, levels and curves, hue/saturation/lightness, geometric corrections, lens corrections and photo filters. All of

these are most effectively done starting with a 12-14 bit raw file because an in-camera JPEG that has been edited by your camera settings has a reduced quality.

The first step in editing an image is to look at the histogram, which should be shown in three colours plus luminance. You're looking for clipping: does either end of the histogram touch the ends of the graph or, are there large gaps at either end? For most images you want to end up with a full range from almost detail-less black to almost detail-less white.

Colour Balance: Remember that the sensor in your camera only records the luminance underneath each of the pixel colour filters. A raw image does not have an explicit image colour profile. Your raw converter allows you to specify the output colour profile which is then used by your editor. You may choose to use the default recorded by the camera or specify which one you wish to use, which should be aRGB or ProPhoto. Generally, you would set this as a fixed conversion for all your images. With a raw file you have a great deal of flexibility to adjust the colour balance to ensure that whites and greys really do look neutral under the particular lighting conditions for the image. Be aware that this is much more difficult and cannot be done as well in a bit-mapped image such as a TIF/PSD or JPEG file.



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Brightness: This adjustment is analogous to exposure in the camera. It raises or lowers the overall brightness of the entire image by the same amount. If there is a significant gap on the right end of the histogram you probably want to increase brightness as the first step.

Levels and Curves: These two adjustments are complementary. Levels allows you to adjust the highlight and shadow points. This lets you increase the overall dynamic range of flatter images to better suit the display monitor or print that you're going to produce. It also allows you to brighten or darken the mid-tone luminance. Curves allows you to raise or lower the luminance of any point along the curve to make it brighter, darker or to increase, or decrease, the contrast in that area of the curve.

Hue, Saturation and Lightness (HSL): You can consider these as fine-tuning the colour balance or, doing further adjustments for artistic reasons. This adjustment allows you to adjust the parameters for six individual colour channels or the image as a whole. Changing the hue means changing the overall tint of the image, saturation is the intensity of the colours and lightness is where they lie on the greyscale. This is a powerful tool for correcting differential colour casts in images. These occur when different parts of the image are illuminated by different light sources such as sunlight and shade or, incandescent, flash and daylight in the same image.

Geometric Corrections: What do you do if verticals are not vertical, or the horizon isn't level in your image? Well, this is where geometric corrections in your image editor come into play. You can adjust the image so that the vertical and horizontal elements truly look that way unless you deliberately want to distort them. You should make a decision as to whether this will be required when you are shooting the image as you will need significant extra space around the key subject elements to make sure they don't get cropped out in this process. Notwithstanding the ability to do this in software, it is always best to get it right, or as right as you can, in the camera as this is one edit that has the potential to degrade the image quality as every pixel is interpolated and rewritten.

Lens Correction: All lenses have optical defects! Your editing software should be capable of correcting these with most good-quality lenses. With some software it is automatically based on lens profile information. But if your camera and lens combination isn't profiled in your software you can do it manually. These issues include colour fringing, comma (very small circular objects look like comma's rather than dots) and barrel, pin-cushion or fisheye distortion (straight lines at the edges of the image appear to be curved).

March 2019

Photo Filters: Your editing software likely includes an adjustment that emulates the colour adjustment filters that you might have used with your film camera. These can be used to emphasize, or deemphasize, particular colours for a quick effect rather than using the colour balance or HSL adjustments. Unfortunately, these filters cannot emulate a graduated neutral density or polarizing filter. The effect of a grad ND filter can be easily achieved by using a layer mask on an exposure, levels or curves adjustment layer. But the only way to get the effect of the polarizing filter is to use it on your lens.

Global and Local Edits: The first four of these editing tools can be applied globally (to the whole image), or locally by the use of adjustment layer masks. In addition, there are a number of editing tools specifically designed for local editing. These include the clone, patch, and healing brush tools. These tools take an area and replace it with pixels from an adjacent area to eliminate issues like dust spots on the sensor or replacement of small objects with adjacent image data.

Beyond the Basics: The next step is how to apply selective edits using selections, layer masks and luminosity masking. These allow you to restrict the edit to part of a layer, or an individual layer within the image file which gives you much more control over how they are applied.



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Challenge Yourself in Wintertime

by Pam Irvine

With the cold rainy weather you might tend to stay indoors but that does not mean you have to forget about improving your photography skills.

1. Sign up for a workshop.
2. Spend some time watching videos: CreativeLive.com offers different free workshops every day. Lynda.com is available free if you have a GVPL library card.
3. Try something different: How about leaves frozen in ice? By freezing whole leaves in a pan of water you'll not only have colourful photography, but interesting and unique ice patterns to photograph as well. Freeze it in a clear container and place it on a light-coloured surface. Shallow containers work best as you only need a few inches of water for this to work. You may also find coloured paper or card useful to add a punch of colour to the background of the image.

Place your leaf in the container, add water and put it in the freezer (how easy is that!). If you can pick leaves with splayed tips so light can shine through them. After about 30-40 minutes check your container as the leaves may have floated to the surface or changed their position a bit.

Small apertures, around f22, will give you a great depth-of-field so you'll be able to shoot patterns right through the ice. Check your camera's meter reading, and if need be, spot meter from the leaf so the camera doesn't get confused from the light shining off the ice. Look for interesting designs, areas where air bubbles have gathered and unusual shapes that cut across the colourful leaf. As it will take a while for the ice to melt, put the coffee on and come back to the ice every half an hour or so to snap the frozen air bubbles and water as it melts.

4. Photograph Just One Colour: This can be done indoors or outside. Pick a colour, it can be any colour, and stick with it. It can be similar objects or totally different subjects but their colour must link. The final results can give you a great set of images that you can also use in a panel for your wall or as an entry to the March Theme competition (deadline March 7th)
5. Enter A Photo in a Competition: Enter one of your images in a competition so we can all enjoy the results of your work.

January 2019 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the external judges for the January Intermediate and Advanced competitions: Gregg Eligh, Judy Higham, Richard Leche and Kelsey Goodwin. We would also like to thank our in-house Novice competition judges: Normand Marcotte, Martin Wright, Steve Lustig, Anne McCarthy, Caspar Davis, Suzanne Huot and Lorna Zaback. Images and judges' comments are available at: victoriacameraclub.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

Gregg Eligh: Open. Gregg is a good friend to the Club and well known to our members for his judging over the years and his very interesting workshops. He currently teaches continuing education photography courses at Camosun College. Gregg has worked across North America and the Caribbean doing corporate, editorial, catalogue and advertising photography. His work can also be seen in several gallery shows every year. Gregg@elighphoto.com.

Judy Higham: Theme. Judy has been photographing seriously since the late 1990s and has been a Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA) judge since 2006. She has a traditional Black and White wet darkroom and enjoys portraiture, macro (especially flowers), wildlife and abstracts. She is also an American Orchid Society Awards photographer for five BC orchid societies. Judy and her husband Ed started the "Darkroom Group" of Coquitlam in their home in December 2009, a CAPA club with 17 members. Judy joined the Lions Gate Camera Club in 2003 and is also a member of the Burnaby Photographic Society and the Pacific Digital Club.

Rick Leche: Wildlife, Natural World and Altered Reality. Rick currently lives in Black Creek, BC and is an avid photographer of anything or everything. He never leaves home without his Canon gear, whether it is traveling around the world or around the Comox Valley. Rick is a member of the Comox Valley Photographic Society where he and his wife Donna act as mentors in photo editing. He was recognized as the top image-maker for 2012-13 by his peers in the club. Rick is an enthusiastic judge with a keen eye and a great sense of humour. ricklechephotographer.zenfolio.com.

Kelsey Goodwin: Prints. Kelsey is a professional photographer in Victoria. For the past 7 years she has specialized in International Wedding Photography. She has been working professionally with photography since she was 16 and shot her first wedding at 18. She also offers photography courses. She has won numerous awards for her work and was chosen as one of the Thirty Most Inspiring Canadian Wedding Photographers in 2015. kgoodphoto.com.



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Advanced Altered Reality Digital - 1st
"Golden in Disguise" by Lorna Zaback

Judge's comments: A beautiful rendition bursting with pleasing colour, texture and patterns. Did you experiment with more colour saturation in the image before arriving here?



Advanced Open Digital - 2nd
"Light Bound" by Richard Webber

Judge's comments: This is strong, bold, dramatic and interesting. The hard contrasty light has also picked up the fine spider webs. You have retained shadow detail and not had your highlights blow out. Well done. Great use of the space.



Advanced Wildlife Digital - 1st
"Contemplation" by Suzanne Huot

Judge's comments: Beautiful image! Pleasing colour palette, tack-sharp, background complimentary. The eyes are sharp and draw the viewer in. Overall very pleasing with a large WOW impact! Thank you.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st
"Tres Sombrero" by Ian Crawford

Judge's comments: Lovely use of composition, framing and artistic retouching. Great maintenance of tones in shadows and highlights and excellent sharpening without over-doing it. This looks like a painting.



Advanced Theme Digital - 2nd
"In Our Hands" by Irene Morden

Judge's comments: A beautiful portrait with a baby too small to open its eyes. The subject evokes emotion and the black-and-white effect gives impact through the warm-coloured hands against the soft white puppy.



Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st
"Willow" by Michael Murchison

Judge's comments: I love the impact and framing. Birds nicely balanced in the tree really elevate this image. Nice straight horizon line. Black and white treatment and sharpening is nicely contrasted.



Advanced Natural World Digital - 1st
"Namib Desert" by Steve Barber

Judge's comments: Contrast "Yin and Yang", light and dark, shadows and no shadows. Well done. Great "S" curve that leads the "yes" through the image and back. Love this image!



Advanced Open Print - 1st
"Behind Open Door" by Steve Lustig

Judge's comments: Lovely use of framing with straight horizon and verticals. I enjoyed the choice of metallic paper to add further dimensions to the image and pop the opposing warm and cold tones.

Victoria Camera Club 2019 Print Show

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"Nature's Reflection" by Tim Agoston

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Intermediate Natural World - 1st

"Misty Morning Mushrooms" by John Clarke

Judge's comments: Beautiful Image! The light is magnificent. The motion of the rain is magnificent. The colour palette is great. Sharp where it needs to be, luscious and soft where it is effective. The waterdrops. Well done. Evokes emotion in the viewer!



"Intermediate Open Digital - 1st

"Weave the Ring" by Anne McCarthy

Judge's comments: This is a huge success. You have succeeded in portraying the energy and fun of the action. The slow shutter speed was the right decision. Well done.



Intermediate Creative Digital - 1st

"Framed" by Stephen Ban

Judge's comments: Lovely image, the group of three images of the same model is a clever idea, laid into the frame more so. Choosing to desaturate all except for the beautiful auburn hair was a good choice. Very well done and a pleasure to view. Thank you!



Intermediate Wildlife Digital - 1st

"Crowned Head of the Rain Forest"

by Daniel Rondeau

Judge's comments: Great Shot! Tack sharp, nailed the eyes. Beautiful background with superb bokeh out-of-focus areas. Nicely saturated with natural greens.



Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
"Dragonfly" by Jim Fowler

Judge's comments: A beautiful soft moody background showcases this tack-sharp dragonfly with an attitude. He is in my face! The light falling on the insect is beautiful and composition of the picture is excellent.



Novice Digital Open - 1st
"When Chinese Lanterns Turn to Gold"
by Penny Authier

Judge's comments: Great title. Good sharpness and depth of field. This shot has a nice capture of the intensity of the orange berry, and the fragile shell.



Novice Open Print - 1st
"Partnering Flamingos" by Jennifer Douglas

Judge's comments: This image is beautifully sharp and well exposed. The judges liked seeing the birds in the larger environment.



Novice Wildlife - 1st
"Fishing Interruption" by Sharon Mosey

Judge's comments: This shot has a nice capture of the moment of emergence from the water and an almost confrontational gaze. The achievement of sharpness, depth-of-field and capture of the moment of this gaze are all excellent.



Novice Natural World - 3rd

"Sunrise at Tofino Inlet" by Rilla Ballentyne

Judge's comments: This is a nice capture of a rather intense morning sunrise. In this situation the silhouette of the islands works well.



Novice Theme - 2nd

"It's a Fine Line" by Leigh Lennick

Judge's comments: There is a nice separation between this dragonfly and the soft background. Lovely warm colour. This shot really reveals the wing transparency. The judges appreciated the sharpness and diagonal composition.



Photo by: Thomas Yee

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Member Profile: Tim Agoston

While I wasn't into photography as a child, I was in awe of the sports photographers that I saw with their massive lenses. My first camera was a Chinon which I purchased at Kits Cameras in the early 1980s. Before too long I traded-up to a Contax 137MA. As I'm not much of a team player, photography as a solitary hobby worked very well for me.

Eventually, I became the so called "staff photographer" at workplace events. I actually looked like I was a better photographer than I really was, big lenses, flashes and filters. I even purchased a soft-focus lens, which gave everyone that soft "Dallas" or "Knots Landing" look. What was I thinking?!

As it does, life changed and my camera found its way to the second-hand store, and in a moment of blurred thinking, I packed up all of my images and slides and passed them on. Twenty years and a new life later, my wife gave me a Nikon D7000 as a retirement gift; her not-so-gentle nudge encouraged me to rekindle my previous love of photography.

With the help of the Internet and YouTube, I have learned to focus more on taking photographs and not so much on the gear. Remember my "Dallas" and "Knots Landing" phase? When I stumbled upon a Lightroom video by the French photographer Serge Ramelli, I was blown-away by what was possible with RAW images and I purchased Lightroom 5. I'm still discovering the creative possibilities that post-processing provides.

A new camera came into my life shortly after joining the VCC, a Fujifilm X-T2. As I gained confidence with my new camera and my own creativity, my good friend, Richard Letourneau, suggested that my photos were competition worthy (apparently marijuana legalization had come early in the VCC). It took a year and much encouragement, before I was ready to enter my first competition as a novice.



"Lift Off"

In my first competition my pelican image "Lift Off" won 1st place in the print category and "Beyond The River Flow" took 1st in Natural World. I was very excited to have achieved such a good showing my first time around. Another log had been added to the flame of my passion and, I must admit, I received a couple of "I told you so's".



"Beyond The River Flow"

As I continue to learn and explore the features of my camera and software, I find great joy in the possibilities inherent in black and white photography. It reveals mood, texture and soul. Street photography is another of my interests though the timing and invisibility can be challenging. I have learned to engage people while living with the fear that someone may punch my lights out! Sometimes you ask and sometimes you're just quick!

While the solitary aspect of photography suits my character it also gives me many opportunities to kindle new friendships. During a trip in Europe, I was befriended by a couple who were both Associated Press photographers. What an amazing opportunity, having them offer their experience and share their stories! On a trip to China I found a kindred spirit in a retired wedding photographer. We developed a knack for trailing behind the rest of the group, since unique photo opportunities were everywhere. I even connected with a photographer who spoke no English but we shared the common language of photography and were soon showing each other the images that we had taken. These connections provide opportunities for me to learn from others. What a blessing.

The 2018/2019 VCC year has been off to a fabulous start for me and I would like to thank the members of the Club who have encouraged and helped me grow my skills and I also thank those who urged me to step out of my comfort zone and share my story for *Close-Up* magazine.

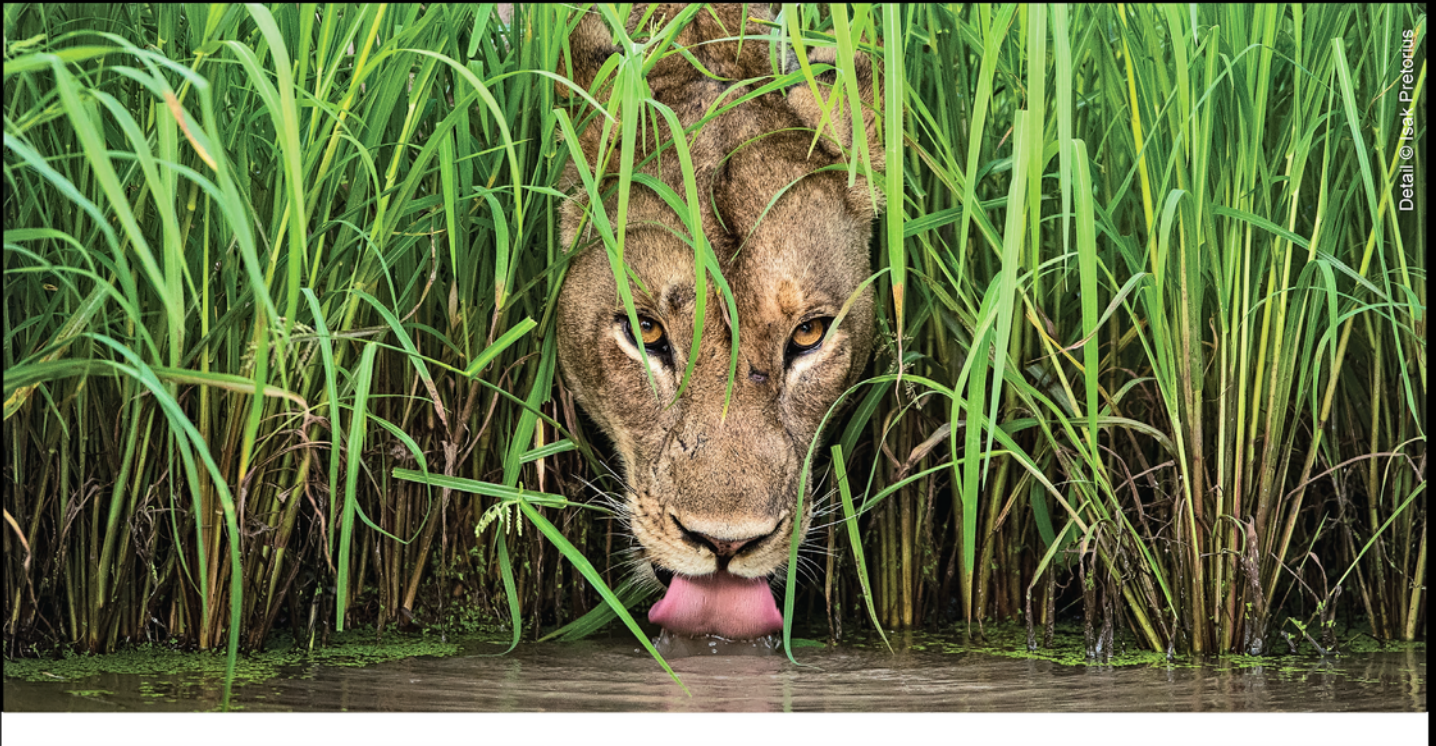
I hold dear what a fellow photographer once shared with me, "I shoot what makes my eyes smile".

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Photographing Musicians

by Johanna Vanderpol

In 2014 I had the opportunity to photograph the Summertime Blues Festival in Nanaimo. The bands changed hourly, with different genres of music and stage presence from each performer. Since then I have collected over 40,000 photographs and probably gone to more than 300 performances. I am the in-house photographer for the [Cowichan Performing Arts Centre](#) in Duncan, BC and the second photographer for [Barely North Entertainment](#), a local promotion company for musicians mainly from BC. Barely North performers span many genres of music. I created and displayed four exhibits for them in 2018. What have I learned about photographing musicians in these five years that I can pass on to you?

During the Shoot

The most challenging thing about photographing musicians is the low-light conditions and the best solution to that is a fast lens. I use a Nikon D610 full-frame camera with three lenses: f2.8 17-35 mm, f2.8 24-70 mm, and f2.8 70-200 mm. I tend to photograph at 1/200th sec, f2.8, ISO 3200 with single point focus and colour balance set to AWB or Tungsten, and no flash. If I use a slower lens I need to reduce my shutter speed and push the ISO up further resulting in higher noise and less-sharp images. The next challenge is focusing the camera. The Nikon D610 seems to do a pretty good job of focusing but some venues have such low light that the camera says, “I can’t see!” But most places have light on the musician’s face and I usually focus on their eyes.

Now for the interesting and fun part. When the musician or band is first starting, observe how they move. What body postures do they return to repeatedly? What expression seems to be one of their soul? Get to know them. Then put the camera to your eye and look through the lens, focusing on the eyes, waiting for an expression to capture. Click. And another. And another. I become totally engaged in looking for an interesting posture or expression and there are many! Off I go for hours if the venue allows it. I have captured some beautiful candid expressions or postures by studying the artists first.

When composing your image, watch for things like microphones, wires and lights, and other equipment in the background. Where are they positioned in relation to the artist? Does it look like wires and lights are growing out of his head? Is the microphone in her eye? Move around and try to position the artist in between the lights or the wires. Pay attention to the space around the artist.

Look for interaction between the band members. Position them so that there is equal space around them. It creates a more attractive image and reduces the amount of cropping needed in post-production. Also, photograph from different angles. Most of the time I am in front of the stage and moving from side to side. When I crouch down, I can sometimes create a shot that makes them look larger than life. When possible photograph from the back or side of the stage. Keep an eye out for rim lighting created by lights behind them. It can create a lovely effect on your image. Sounds like a lot. I know, but all these things are what keep you engaged.



“Interaction”

My personal style is one of zooming in to capture one individual musician expressing their music with a 70-200 mm lens. In order to get the whole band, I need to change to a 24-70 mm lens. A wide-angle lens provides another effect. Experiment with different lenses to see what you like. I would love to have two full-frame bodies hanging on either side of me so I have a short lens on one and a long lens on the other. Yikes! \$\$\$\$. But soon. Does anyone have a used D610 they want to sell? I am looking.

In more formal settings, take into consideration the audience. Get permission from the band manager and venue in advance. Often, they agree as long as I observe the “first three songs and no flash” rule. It is a standard in the industry.

Post-Production

Now, what do you do with all those photographs when you get home? As much as you would like to get the composition and exposure right in-camera, there is much that can be done to make an image shine in post-production. I use Lightroom (LR) to organize and edit photos. It has powerful editing features if you know how to use them. Dodging and burning are two terms from the film



“Expression”

era that are especially useful techniques in post-production of photographs of musicians (hence my website: www.dodgeandburn.ca).

Dodge refers to making an area of the photograph lighter. Burn refers to making an area darker. I use two main methods in LR, the Adjustment Brush (K) and the Radial Filter (Shift+M). To use the adjustment brush in LR, select the image, go to the Develop Module and click on the adjustment brush or press K. A little dotted circle will light up on the right icon. Then increase (dodge) or decrease (burn) your exposure. Start with +1 or -1 so you can see the difference. Make the brush larger or small by pressing] or [on your keyboard. Then place your cursor where you want to change the exposure on your image and “paint” (hold down the left mouse button) on to the area. You will see it change.

Here is an example of how to use dodge and burn techniques on the photograph of Dave Harris, playing on Fisherman’s Wharf. He one of our longstanding master blues musicians and one-man bands on Vancouver Island. In the before image, the sky, umbrella, buildings, drum and shirt are washed out, no detail. (Shoot raw in order to be able to bring out more detail.) I start by cropping in a little tighter, keeping the aspect ratio of 2:3. Then I press K and change the exposure setting of the brush to -1 (burn), make the brush larger, and paint broad strokes over the sky, umbrella, buildings and drum. Then I make the brush a little smaller by pressing [, and paint over his shirt. If I wanted his face to be a little lighter, I would click on “New” in the adjustment brush settings, set the exposure to .30 and lighten his face a bit (dodge).



“Dave Harris before”

This is just one of many post-production techniques that can be used to bring out the best in a photograph of a musician. Dodging and burning will go a long way to make the artist stand out.

In summary, observe the musician performing before taking the shot, compose for balance and exposure, and enjoy the music!

Feel free to contact me at info@johannavanderpol.com with any questions you may have. Go to www.dodgeandburn.ca to see more examples of my images of musicians.



“Dave Harris after”

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Memory Cards

by Matt Speight

I still remember buying my first memory card. I had just bought a new Nikon camera, and back in 2001 when it came to buying memory cards, you just looked at price vs megabytes and nothing else. I spent \$100 on a 96 MB card. Yes, that's megabytes, not gigabytes. I was happy to pay \$100 as I was getting a good deal on it. I was dating the salesperson who was selling it to me for cost. It was a Compact Flash card that was the only practical choice for camera manufacturers as the SD card and the propriety memory card from Sony were still in their infancy.

Today the memory card selection is very different and rather confusing. We now have the SD format which comes in many speeds and capacities: SD, SDHC, SDXC, UHS I, II, III, and SDUC. We also have Micro SD, XQD, CFast, CF Express and the good old reliable Compact Flash card.

SD Family cards: A standard SD card was limited to a maximum of 2 GB. Then came the SDHC card with up to 32 GB. Shortly after that the SDXC card appeared with up to 2 Terabytes. The pinnacle of the SD format is the new SDUC card with a maximum data speed of 900MB/s and up to 128 Terabytes of data!

CFast cards: With the faster frame rates and the ever-increasing megapixels of today's cameras, new memory card formats have been introduced. CFast is one of the new formats. It looks almost the same as a Compact Flash card but doesn't have the pin system of CF and is, of course, faster. But in this ever-changing world it already looks like the CFast card's day is already done.

XQD cards: This card was introduced by Sony and Nikon and has superseded CFast in terms of write speed, capacity and reliability. It is also a smaller card like the SD, freeing up space for a bigger processor or a larger battery in the camera. Write speeds are estimated up to an impressive 2 GB/s.

CF Express cards: These cards were introduced by the Compact Flash Association in an attempt to standardize camera memory. They have the same form and shape as the XQD card and are compatible with the architecture used for the newer SD cards and XQD cards. This makes it easy for camera manufacturers to change over to the new cards with future models or to update firmware in existing cameras that take XQD cards.

It may be that with CF Express we will have one card to rule them all, well almost. We'll still need the tiny micro SD for cell phones and action cams. And just in case you were curious about what happened to that 96 megabyte card, well, I can't remember where it is but, luckily that sales person behind the counter that got me my wicked \$100 price? We made more memories. She's now my wife of almost 18 years.

Card Capacity: Memory is now relatively cheap. You can buy a good 32 GB card in the \$30 range. Work out how much memory you will need. Look in your manual to see how many megabytes each image will be for your preferred choice of file: RAW, JPEG or TIF. Then multiply that number by how many images you estimate you will shoot in a day.

I recommend splitting that size into two cards rather than getting one large card. If your card gets lost (happens to me all the time) or has a corruption issue, you have a spare card. Also, if your camera gets stolen or goes on an adventure on its own without you, having all of your images lost on one large memory card would be even more devastating.

Speed: Originally the speed rating was designated by an 'x' (times) like 100x or 633x, This was how much faster the cards were compared to a CD ROM drive 1x speed. You will still find the 'x' speed rating on cards but, now the much more practical MB/s speed is also listed. Cards have two ratings, write and read speeds. The write speed is the most important as it determines how fast the memory card can write images from the camera. This helps when the camera's buffer is full. If you often shoot in high-speed mode or save RAW files it would be best to choose a fast card, in the 90+MB/s range. The read speed is how fast the card will download images onto the computer. The larger the memory card, the more importance you want to put on having a higher read speed rating. Note that if you use different speed cards in two slots in your camera, it will write at the slowest speed when writing to both cards.

Compatibility: Memory cards have changed to match the changing digital camera world so it's important to ensure you buy the right card type for your camera. It could be a tiny micro SD card for your action camera or an XQD card for your new Nikon. Where it gets complex is in the world of the SD card. Newer cameras that take SDXC cards are backwards compatible to SDHC and SD. A slightly older camera made for SDHC can't take SDXC cards but is compatible with SD. Cameras that took original SD cards do not work with SDHC or SDXC even though the cards look the same and will fit into the cameras card slot.

Spring Brings New Photo Opportunities

by Jill Turyk

It is spring! I welcome the thought of spending more time outdoors with longer days and warmer temperatures. It is a good time to add to our portfolios, go ahead with our new year's resolutions, and make use of the downtime from the Club activities of the fall and winter. As photographers we are all eager to get "out there" and do some shooting with more light, more time, better weather, and more to shoot. But where is "out there" and what can we shoot? Lately this has been a recurring question that I ask myself.



"My Hero!"

With the arrival of any new season I know I feel invigorated, particularly in the spring when everything is being renewed. We have different photographic opportunities from those of winter. Winter photography has its own possibilities with weather conditions such as mysterious fog and high winds at the shore creating waves and spray. While those are wonderful subjects to many, the outdoor photography opportunities in winter are limited, with less light available and generally less desirable weather conditions. Winter can be a challenge for outdoor shooting for some but spring has something for everyone.

Along with pollen, love is in the air and wildlife becomes more active and accessible to photographers. It can be found hunting and foraging in the morning and evening, building nests and protecting young during the day or simply enjoying each other's company. The longer days bring beautiful light for both morning and evening shots, and as days become longer, so can our shoots. We are never far away from nature in Victoria. A short drive will get you to a host of lakes, trails and parks in the area where many types of waterfowl, other bird species and animals can be found. Get out to the beaches or into a boat with your camera.

The wildlife is not just limited to rural areas or bodies of water, we have plenty of wildlife literally in our own backyards. There is an abundance of squirrels, raccoons, hummingbirds and other interesting resident birds. We have deer almost everywhere as well as the more common gulls and crows.

Many beautiful (if fleeting) flowers are rampant in the spring. This provides an opportunity to use your macro lenses to capture the first buds of the season as well as the many blossoms as they bloom. They are found throughout the area including in our own backyards. Many of the local parks are known for their beautiful and abundant spring flowers.

Even at the side of the road a variety of blooms can be found. During the season the type of flowers in bloom change and this makes flowers an ongoing and diverse photo opportunity for some time. Cultivated gardens are also available to us with each week seemingly showcasing different blossoms. If wild and cultivated flowers are not of interest to you, the new greenery and blossoms are helpful in different ways. They can provide a wonderful background to use for bokeh and provide colour and texture that is a perfect backdrop for your subjects.

In Victoria we are fortunate to have many beautiful beaches. Apart from people and wildlife as subjects beaches provide beauty and interest of their own. The large rocks as well as the small stones and pebbles create colour and texture for your shots. The driftwood often has interesting shapes and colours, and in the "golden hour", these are very photogenic. Try a wide-angle landscape, or wide-angle close-up shot of anything you may find interesting.



"Driftwood Portal"

I find beaches a great place to get creative. Each of our beaches is different and is teeming with flora and fauna.

For those less nature-photography-minded, the beaches have many boat and outdoor sports opportunities for the photographer. The possibilities are endless.

For those of you who take to the trails hiking or running, try doing those trails with your camera. There are many interesting aspects to see and photograph when you slow down and go with a different perspective. Again, flora and fauna abound. When I slow down and take my camera, I have a chance to see what I miss when I am there for a different purpose. For example, I have seen many owls in the daytime in the shadier parts of some of the trails that I frequent and I would have missed them if I were moving by at a faster clip. For the landscape photographer these parks and trails often provide panoramic views from lookouts along the way.



"Stairway to Heaven"

Spring brings many prospects in more urban locations as well. Many of our local farmers' markets begin to sprout up. These provide a huge opportunity for shots of artists, people selling their wares, onlookers and bystanders, and more. Apart from people and crowds, there are colourful stands of food, jewelry and items for sale.

This brings to mind the increased opportunities for street photography. More people are out browsing and more vendors are outside their own shops on a nice day. In parks and public squares performers such as musicians and mime actors can be found. It is a good time for some interesting architectural photography, possibly of buildings under construction. Generally, much more is taking place on the streets in the spring and it is there for us to photograph.

Spring is a terrific time of year for photographing families outdoors, especially those young kids who will not sit still for portraits. Playgrounds, parks, beaches are goldmine venues for family photos. It is a good time to bring out those long lenses. Use the fastest shutter speed available and stop the action or slow the shutter speed down and blur the action, both techniques are wonderful for shooting active children.



"Henry"

Many of these outdoor shots are candid. You can capture the most delightful images of people when they are engaged in activities with which they are familiar and comfortable. I have found these to be more successful and gratifying than posed shots. This is true of subjects of any age; however, it is especially true of young people. In the spring we are able to take advantage of the outdoor natural light. This is great for people shots, particularly during the golden hour when the light is warm and flattering.

Each season brings fresh opportunities to photographers. Outdoor photography changes significantly as the seasons change and it pays to give some thought to this as each season arrives. Different kinds of weather afford us a variety of light and mood, with the golden hours occurring at more or less convenient times of the day. Outdoor sports and activities vary, from muddy rugby and soccer games to hang-gliders off the cliffs. The landscapes change immensely from season to season, with variations in light and vegetation. Some seasons are easier than others to get out there and to be motivated.

Spring brings more than just spring flowers. The longer days, better weather and the beautiful light also bring people and animals out. Much can be found in and around the city, in your own back yard and on beaches and trails. It is a great time to get out and see the world in spring from newborn wildlife to new sports teams. There is so much to photograph everywhere "out there". So, have fun and enjoy yourself!

How I Did It

Snow Monkeys

by Judy Johnston

Every year, when winter arrives in the mountain region of Nagano, Japan, (think 1998 Winter Olympics) the resident snow monkeys head for the natural hot springs in the municipality of Yamanouchi. When walking the streets of this quaint town you will be transported back in time, to somewhere around the 1950s.



These monkeys spend their days bathing in the warmth of the hot springs and engaging in endless hours of mutual grooming. I was struck by their human-like behaviour and personalities. The youngsters would spend endless hours chasing each other, fighting over a precious snowball, or curling up in the protection of their mother's arms.

Whenever photographing wildlife a part of the process is being fortunate enough to be in the right place at the right time. This particular photo captured the moment when a small group of adolescents were tightly snuggled together.

When I first saw the group I had the distinct impression they were seeking comfort from each other. They would shift around, the younger ones surrounded by the larger ones, deeply nestling into the warmth and security of their "protectors". As the shutter was released one young monkey had just opened his eyes and stared right into the lens, possibly wondering who this intruder was? He snuggled deeper into the group, seeking reassurance from his peers. Hence the title "Group Therapy".

Photo taken with a Nikon D750, ISO 180, 190 mm, f5 at 1/200th second.

Johnston Canyon

by Mary-Lee Simpson

In 2018 I took my summer vacation in the Rockies. I arrived at Johnston Canyon in Banff NP around 10 am. I had no expectations of what I would discover as it was my first time there. I was pleasantly surprised by the beauty that unfolded before my eyes as the creek has cut through the limestone rock to form sheer canyon walls, majestic waterfalls, caves, tunnels and pools. Once I reached the upper falls, which was a 2.8 kilometre one-way hike, it was inundated with hordes of tourists and I needed to find a spot to just breathe.



Shortly thereafter, as I was looking at a waterfall, I saw people below at the bottom. I had to find a way down there and discovered a trail near-by. It was a little slippery, and very steep so I gingerly watched my footing and using my tripod for a hiking pole, I was down in no time, and in one piece! There, I was blown away by a huge cave, 6 m tall and 15 m wide at its largest, a gorgeous waterfall, a huge rock with the river twisting around it. Now, I'm in my element.

Out comes the tripod, a Manfrotto 190, wounded and broken. My Fuji XT2 had its 18-55 mm kits lens and a Hoya variable ND filter. I was careful to have the filter on one of the markings to avoid the dreaded X you can get with these cheap filters. The image was shot at ISO 250, f9.0, 18 mm, 25 seconds.

Editing was in Lightroom, Photoshop CC and in Nik Collection Color Efex Pro 4. In LR I adjusted the exposure, shadows, highlights, whites and blacks, vibrance and dehaze. I also sharpened and reduced the noise. In PS I used curves, levels, a warm colour filter and removed sensor dusts spots and unwanted debris. In Nik I used the control points with detail extractor, sunlight, and glamour glow effects. Now I was happy with the photos from my day and had found an easier way to get out of the cave!

Tuesday Shoots

by Jim Fowler

The Tuesday Group meets twice monthly at the Bay Centre and then spreads out around downtown Victoria. The Alternate Tuesday Group goes outside the downtown core to include the West Shore, Saanich Peninsula and occasionally the Cowichan Valley.

March 5th: Tod Inlet Trail. Twenty-five minutes from downtown Victoria, this 2.8-kilometre trail goes from the yellow gate on Wallace Drive down to the inlet. Driving north on West Saanich Road, pass the Red Barn Market, then turn left on Wallace Drive. The gate is on the left (west) side of the road opposite Quarry Lake. The trail is just about as “mossy” as it gets around Victoria. Remnants of the old cement plant and wharf remain, with views of the creek, falls and a nice flat estuary where there are always water-fowl. The main trail is an easy walk.

March 12th: The Bay Centre Food Court. The theme for this Tuesday is “Hard/Sharp”. This week we are searching for clean sharp lines and crisp details in your subject. Capture images in which your subject is hard and sharp. The use of light and contrasting tones may help in this challenge. This week sharp is in.

March 19th: Dean Park. The main access road to John Dean Provincial Park reopens every Spring. Located on top of Mount Newton, Dean Park offers 174 acres of old growth Douglas fir forest, Garry oak meadows, and views of the Saanich Peninsula and the Gulf Islands. From the top parking lot you have the choice of deep forest shade, small ponds, and cliff faces with views. The terrain can be easy trails to stairs to cliff faces. Choose a route that is suited to your ability. Surfaces can be wet and slippery.

March 26th: The Bay Centre Food Court. “Minimalism”. Make more with less. Limit your components, whether colour, shape, line or texture. Keep it simple. Focus on just a few elements and cast aside everything else. When executed well, minimalist photography can be very dramatic. Follow the minimalists’ golden rule of composition: if it isn’t essential, leave it out!

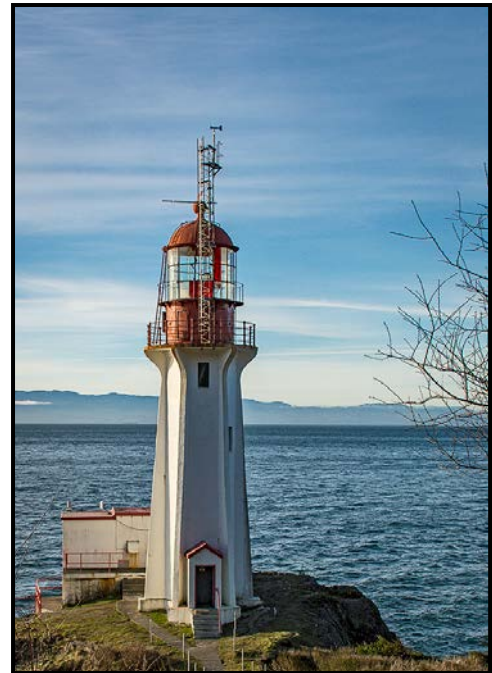
Some events require registration and a fee or donation may be requested. Please check the Club calendar for details related to each field trip. Some destinations require a minimum number for special arrangements. The group leaders count on the registration record to reserve a lunch table, so please register.

March 2019

Weekend Shoots

by Vanessa MacDonald

March 24th: Sherringham Lighthouse and Sandcut Waterfall. The renovations at Sherringham Lighthouse are now complete so we are excited about this two-in-one field trip. The lighthouse will be our first stop for the morning and after that we will go and explore Sandcut Beach and waterfall. This is a very unique attraction located between French Beach and Jordan River, with 3-5 m falls spilling over a sandstone rock ledge onto a very scenic beach. We expect the water flow to still be pretty good in March. The Falls can be accessed via a 15-20 minute hike along a rugged rainforest trail and cobble beach.



“Sherringham Lighthouse” by Bob Law

March 30th: Ancient Forest Expedition: This full-day trip will appeal to the nature-loving photographers in the Club, with the specific focus and intent to produce images for the purpose of conveying a conservation message. We will capture images that highlight the distinctive beauty of the flora and fauna of Vancouver Island’s ancient rain forests and also attempt to document the devastating and destructive impact of deforestation practices. We will head to the Port Renfrew area with Josh DeLeenheer, our group leader and guide, and will stop in at a number of different locations (as time allows) including Avatar Grove, The Big Lonely Doug (and the cut block in which it sits), and Fairy Lake.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.ca.

The Wonders of Namibia

by Steve Barber and Steve Lustig

With a number of photo tours of Namibia available, how does one choose? In our case, we compared who is leading each tour, the ratio of tour leaders to participants, length of the tour, cost per day, places visited, and settled on “The Wonders of Namibia”. This aptly-named tour was led by Brenda Tharp and Jed Manwaring. “The Wonders of Namibia” is one of many world-wide tours led by various professional photographers and offered by [Strabo Tours](#).

Preparing for this trip was made considerably easier due to the immense amount of information provided by both Brenda and Strabo Tours. We received a one-hour video about each location to be visited, the photographic challenges and suggestions for dealing with them. We were sent information sheets on Namibian history, geography, currency, health concerns, clothing and gear needed and detailed packing lists for both carry-on and checked luggage.

The camera gear recommendations included two camera bodies, lenses ranging from 16 mm to 500 mm and numerous cleaning and shooting accessories. Needless to say, we had lots of “stuff” and were prepared for any eventuality.

In July, after months of reading, gathering our gear, seeing a travel doctor and dealing with all other necessities, we began our thirty-five hour journey to Namibia, via Seattle, London and Johannesburg, finally arriving at Windhoek. After resting for two nights in a game reserve lodge outside of Windhoek, Namibia’s capital, we spent the next 19 days travelling 3500 kilometers, mostly on unpaved roads.

In addition to two professional photographers we were fortunate enough to have two local driver/guides, Tas and Frick. These Namibian brothers were familiar with the wildlife, botany, history, geography and languages of the country. From a practical point of view, they were able to spot animals hundreds of meters away, they knew where to find the limited gas stations, made sure we always had bottled water, food to eat and that we reached our next lodging safely. With only eight participants, we had the luxury of having just four people in each of the Toyota Land Cruisers, with a photographer and a guide in each vehicle. This was a significant advantage over “self-drive” tourists forced to choose between focusing on driving or trying to spot wildlife.

Despite prodigious planning, we certainly experienced some challenges during our trip. Creature comfort trials included power outages, lack of hot water, lack of Internet, adaptor plugs that did not work, and seemingly endless bumpy and dusty gravel roads. Getting great images was sometimes challenged by harsh or poor light, cluttered waterholes, and dust. Dust was everywhere and impossible to avoid despite our best efforts with dry sacks, not changing lenses and keeping windows closed. We still had to remove many dust spots from images. It is essential to have sensors cleaned professionally before and after a trip to Africa.

Access to the Internet was very poor and hotel staff would tell us that it was “temporarily broken”, meaning sometimes for weeks. To stay connected with others, get a local SIM card at the airport in Windhoek. Cell coverage, unlike the Internet, is ubiquitous and generally good.

We looked forward to our day photographing the Himba people near the town of Opuwa but, unfortunately our shoot was in the middle of the day, in harsh, bright sunlight. It was a real trial to photograph people in such light, but they often sat in the shade, which helped. These images still required much post-processing.



“Stripes”

When we were in Sossusvlei, where we stayed for two nights, the government run-lodge had its generator breakdown. This meant intermittent access to both electricity and water. Dining by kerosene lamps may have its charm but it was frustrating for those of us who needed to recharge our batteries. Since we went out shooting before sunrise, it also meant finding clothing and gear in the dark. Fortunately, power was restored for a few hours, enabling some degree of charging and allowing us to find what was needed.

In Etosha National Park, hundreds of animals of all species cluster together around waterholes. Trying to isolate specific animals with a telephoto lens was nearly impos-

sible. Patience was definitely required. While in the park we learned to manage our fluid intake, as people are not allowed to exit their vehicles in the main areas of the park. The lions would definitely notice!



"Doorway"

Many of the locations we visited were a photographer's dream with spectacular settings, landscapes, people and wildlife. One example is Kolmanskop, a town that once boasted the highest wealth per capita in the world following the discovery of diamonds in 1910.

After production declined the town was abandoned in 1956 but the buildings remained intact, with drifting sand from the desert gradually filling the empty buildings. It is a marvelous site, made famous by Freeman Patterson, with innumerable opportunities for images of rooms with faded wallpaper, dramatically half-filled with sand. High dynamic range images are often required, and a good wide-angle lens is crucial.



"Sand Dune: Namib Desert"

Another highlight was a breathtaking one-hour helicopter ride over the huge red sand dunes of the Namib desert in Sossusvlei. Flying low over the dunes, the largest in the world, we were able to capture magnificent patterns of light and shade in the early morning light. It was fortunate, albeit disconcerting, that the helicopter had no doors, so strapped in and leaning over we were

able to avoid the problem of having to shoot through glass windows. The conditions required a high ISO in the range of 1600 to 2000, aperture around f9, and shutter speeds of 1/1600th second or faster, using a 70 – 200 mm lens. It was important to keep our elbows inside the helicopter as the wind on our arms would cause a lot of vibration.



"Deadvlei"

A peak experience occurred on a day trip to Deadvlei, near Sossusvlei, where we spent the night. We rose early, followed by an hour-long drive on the usual dusty, unpaved roads, and then a forty-five minute hike before sunrise. It was worth the effort to view the astonishing landscape which unfolded before us, a white clay "pan", scattered with dead camel thorn trees, some hundreds of years old.

The trees are set amongst the rusty red sand dunes of the Namib Desert, some of which can reach 325 metres high. As the morning sun gradually crept over the crest of the dunes it lit up the background and we were treated to stunning views of these black trees set starkly against the red dunes with blue skies in the background.

There were a number of lessons learned from this remarkable trip. First, preparation is key and prior research is helpful. Second, having a professional guide is a luxury worth having. Guides can fix a broken vehicle, they know the area, and they communicate with other guides to discuss what wildlife has been seen and in which locations. The third lesson learned is that, on hot, dusty days when we were up before sunrise and shooting all day, sometimes it is preferable to take a break, relax, contemplate the day, and have a beer by the pool rather than continuing to shoot in the midday sun.

Most importantly, while we anticipated having wonderful photographic opportunities, we were not expecting to be treated to so many incredible experiences that photographs cannot capture. That's the best reason to travel and the most enduring lesson learned.

Beginners' Corner: The Polarizing Filter

by Josée Ménard

It is sunny. The clouds are fantastic. The skies are so blue. Time to get out and shoot. Double check the camera bag: batteries charged, an empty memory card, a double-tipped cleaning brush and puffer, and your camera. A must is the circular polarizing filter. Oops it is not clean. Better take a look at the lens and sensor at the same time. Bring the tripod for good measure. Off we go with a minimal basic kit in hand. Of all the filters available the polarizing filter is key for any photographer. So, what is so important about the polarizing filter and how does it work?

In a few words, think of your sunglasses. Without them on a bright sunny day the world is present but reduced in clarity and colour saturation. With them on, a new world opens before your eyes. It is clearer, it has crisper details and it is so much more colourful.

Ah, so beautiful! A similar process happens for your camera when a polarizing filter is placed in front of the lens. Glares and reflections diminish or disappear while colour saturation increases. An amazing tool. With my pocket Canon, I captured the image below. Imagine what it could have been if it could take a filter.



"Port of Vancouver"

Without getting too deeply into the science the atmosphere's natural haze scatters light waves travelling from the sun. Since blue scatters far more than the other colours of the rainbow, we see a beautiful blue sky. As light continues to travel towards us, objects reflect the light in a colour we can see. The polarizing filter restores the colour intensity from the washed-out glares. Reflections on water or glass are removed or diminished. Haze is reduced. The sky becomes bluer.

Technically, a polarizer filters out the light reflected towards the camera from smooth surfaces so that the remaining light becomes more colourful. The maximum

polarizing effect occurs at a 90 degree angle to the light source. As time passes the light angle varies and so does the polarizing effect. As you discover polarizing filters use your sunglasses as the testing tool or take photos at different filter angles. Point your thumb and index at a 90 degree angle. Point your index finger to the sun. Anywhere your thumb points should result in the maximum polarization filtering effect.



"Palms"

Today linear or circular polarizing filters are available as slim filters and with single or multi-coatings rendering them proof to almost anything even the oil from our finger tips. The linear filter, with no rotating ring, has lost its use with the coming of DSLRs with autofocus capabilities. The circular polarizer has a rotating ring that never unscrews from the filter mount and is required for DSLRs. You rotate the ring to increase or decrease the polarization effect.

Have a look through the viewfinder or on the rear LCD screen to see the impact of the filter on the scene as you rotate the ring. In the field replicate your adjustments until satisfied and click. Well known trademarks such as B+W, Tiffen, Cokin and Hoya are a few of the many companies producing such filters. Taken on and off so often they are easily scratched or dropped. Always keep some funds aside for a replacement one.

Out in the field on a sunny day study the scene that you are about to capture. Are there any glares or reflections interfering with your shot? If so, it is time to attach your circular polarizing filter. If the sun hides behind the clouds for a while continue to test and discover how this change in the weather impacts its effect. Learning to master the art of the polarizer takes time. A word of caution if you are using ultra-wide angle lenses, polarizing filters give visible banding in the sky. See the July/Aug and Sept/Oct 2018 issues of *Close-Up* for guidance. Have fun learning the filter's possibilities and limitations.

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