



Close-Up

**When and Why to Use Flash
Creativity
The Right Gear
Member Profile: John Clarke
Altered Reality
More about Tripods
How I Did It
Hornby Island Photography
Beginners' Corner: The Self-Directed Copyist**

"Wolves" by Mary-Lee Sampson

Victoria Camera Club

February 2019 Volume 72 Number 2

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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*.

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February 2019

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

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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.

February 7th: Competition Night. The theme competition is "Tradition." The deadline for submissions for the February competition is February 7th. The January competition images will be shown.

February 14th: Presentation Night. Our guest speaker is Kerri-Jo Stewart who will present "Creativity and Fine Art Photography".

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

Workshops: Basic Digital Photography, and Introduction to Lightroom. **Field Trip Highlights:** Christie Falls, and Ross Bay.

Cover Image: "Wolves" by Mary-Lee Sampson. This image was the first place winner in the November 2018 Intermediate Open competition. I travelled to Golden, BC, in the summer of 2018. While there I visited the Northern Lights Wolf Centre. I spent a few hours with the wolves as I listened to the valuable information presented by staff members while waiting for the wolves to wake up from their nap. Although I never took their photo tour, I managed to get quite a few shots of them in their enclosure. The wolves seem happy, playful, energetic and well cared for.

I shot this image with my new mirrorless Fuji XT2 paired with a Fujinon 100-400 mm lens. I had it on single point focus which allowed me to blur out the fence if I was close enough, hence the tight crop. I had focused on the first wolf's right eye, as I had been taught to focus on the eye closest to me. It was actually quite difficult because they never stopped moving. I got lucky and after a few hundred shots I left happy with my images. Not much was done in post-processing other than a little bit of burning to enhance some of their facial features.

The EXIF data is as follows, ISO 400, 280 mm, f6, 1/125th second. Why I had such a slow shutter speed is beyond me, I think excitement gets in my way sometimes.

Next time I'm near Golden, I will be sure to visit again but I will also budget more time and a lot more money for the photo walk in the wilderness with the wolves.

President's Message

In trying to decide what my message for this month was going to be I discovered that this year marks the Victoria Camera Club's 75th year, a Diamond Anniversary. VCC was formed in 1944 by the union of the Victoria Photographic Society (est. 1941) and the Civil Service Camera Club with 45 members in total. Initially the club was made up of black and white print makers with many using their own darkrooms. Today we are a club of over 250 members with strong interest in both prints and projected images from both film and digital sources. We are one of the oldest, largest and most active camera clubs on Vancouver Island, and in Canada. What an accomplishment that is.

Throughout our Club's history, wonderful and dedicated member volunteers gave themselves in so many ways to sustain the Victoria Camera Club as a place for creative photographic endeavours. We should take pride in the efforts of those members who came before us in shaping our Club into what it is today. One of the things that I hear repeatedly among members is how inclusive and giving our members are. When a new member (or potential new member) attends a meeting, you will always see a veteran member welcoming them to the Club and answering any questions they may have.

We have a wide range of activities for all skill levels that include internal and external photo competitions, workshops, field trips, SIGs, monthly presenters and members night to name a few, and all with one interest in mind, photography. Along with all of our calendar activities we have the annual print show taking place in April/May. This is a wonderful opportunity for members to display their prints for the public to admire. We are also teaming up with the Cowichan Valley Camera Club to bring a CAPA Judging Course to the Victoria area. This is a great way to gain a better understanding of what the judges are looking for in competition photos.

There have been many changes over the years but the one thing that has not changed is the purpose of the Club. Now, just as it was then, the purpose is to encourage and develop an interest in photography. That is something that we truly enjoy doing. It's all about photography and having fun.

It's been an honour and a privilege to have contributed to the Club's longstanding interest in keeping photography alive and interesting over the past 75 years, and we hope to continue to do so for at least another 75 years.

Teri VanWell, President

When and Why to Use Flash

by Stephen Ban

I used to be one of those people who never used flash because I hated the look it always gave my photos. Now I'm still that person, but I'm better at recognizing the situations where a bit of flash is necessary or can even enhance a photo. In fact, some of the best situations to use a flash are those instances when you'd least think you need it! I'm going to confine this discussion to just on-camera flash situations (with a slight digression to include slightly-off-camera flash).

Let's get the situations where you don't want to use flash out of the way first:

1. A stadium or any other large venue where the subject is too far away for your flash to have any effect.
2. Shooting through glass (e.g., an aquarium or a window), you'll just get a great picture of the reflection of your flash.
3. Fireworks (really just an extension of #1), but besides not working at all, you'll immediately identify yourself to everyone around you as a rank amateur.

If you're just using a point-and-shoot camera with a pop-up flash or (heaven forbid) a camera phone, then your creative options are limited in terms of how you can modify the flash. You might be able to bounce or diffuse it, but chances are that you won't be able to compensate for that, and your exposure will end up being off as a result.

So let's talk about the more typical case of a DSLR with a hot shoe-mounted speedlight.

The most common situation when you'll need to use flash is indoors, where there's little or no natural light coming from windows or skylights and your subject isn't static (because if it is, I'd use a tripod for a longer exposure instead) and when you're not in a studio setting (because that's an entirely different article!). Even then, my first two preferences are to: 1) increase the ISO and, 2) shoot with a fast lens, wide open.

If those two don't get you to a fast enough hand-held shutter speed, then break out the flash. Now, to avoid the nasty, flat look that you typically get with on-camera flash, you'll want to bounce or diffuse it. Most speedlights allow you to rotate and pivot the flash head, so ideally you can bounce the flash off a wall or ceiling instead of pointing it directly at your subject.

Remember that the colour of whatever surface you're bouncing it off will give a colour cast to your subject as well. The other option in order to avoid that harsh flash look is to diffuse the flash. You can use either off-the-shelf diffusers like a Gary Fong Lightsphere or something as simple as a paper coffee filter or Tupperware container.

Finally, consider using the slow-sync flash mode, which uses the flash but also "drags" the shutter at a slower speed to allow more ambient light to influence the exposure. This results in much more natural-looking lighting. Most cameras will also allow you to set the flash exposure compensation so, if you find that the flash is too harsh, you can dial the power down a stop or two.

The other situation where flash is extremely useful (if not essential) is one you're not likely to think about: in bright sunlight, outdoors. If you have a person or group of people against a brightly-lit sky or backdrop your camera is likely to expose for the bright background and thus underexpose your subject and render them as silhouettes.

Although sometimes this is the desired effect, more likely you want to be able to see the face of your subject. Thus, the use of fill flash. This is often the default setting for flash on many cameras. In anything other than full sunlight, though, you'll run into issues with colour balancing the flash with the ambient light. That's beyond the scope of this article, but something you'll want to look into if you want to use fill flash in more challenging lighting conditions.

Finally if, for some reason you can't bounce or diffuse your flash, your next best option might be to take it off the hot shoe and get it off-axis from your lens for what I call "slightly" off-camera flash. I call it "slightly" because I'm assuming that you don't have an assistant and/or a light stand so you're going to be confined to holding it at arm's length or perhaps mounting it on a bracket attached to your camera. Not only will this reduce or eliminate the dreaded red-eye effect, it will also allow you to get a more flattering lighting angle. The catch is that you'll either need a sync cord, a wireless trigger, or you will have to use your camera's built-in flash in what Nikon calls "Commander" mode (other brands will have similar functionality) to trigger the flash remotely. In this mode they are triggered by a series of pre-flashes or wireless signals from the on-camera flash.

I've only had space in this article to cover the very basics of where and how to use flash so, if your interest has been piqued, check out other resources on the web at places like the [Strobist](#) blog. Ken Rockwell also has a concise article about using fill flash at kenrockwell.com/tech/fill-flash.htm.

Creativity

by Craig Harris

Following an excellent guest presentation at a recent Creative SIG a member told the group they did not consider themselves creative. With this article I am fortunate to be able to share my script on creativity as a (partial) response to this remark.

Expressing the belief, “I am not creative.” is self-defeating. There might be a material reason for believing in a lack of creativity but, absent evidence of physical damage, this belief is inhibiting. This “program” starves expression inside a self-created boundary. I can avoid being creative by labelling myself as “level-headed” but it only nourishes my “practical” ego. To release the real potential, be crafty/creative in a positive way. Instead of entertaining myself with looking down, look up. It’s one or the other.

The internal standard of “proper creativity”, applied when examining others’ images can be a self-judgement. This can be called the trap of comparison when an ideal is an imported standard that overlooks a simple difference of choice. Developing a personal style starts with imitation. This activity is valuable only until you can craft your own. Perhaps the reader understands how these words are my self-programming, my way of “looking up”.

Creativity can be understood as problem-solving in the function of expression. Expression is one of our core functions. If it were not, then you could not understand language, appreciate symphonic music, love good wine, smell the roses, enjoy photography. A big caveat. You do not require words to express yourself, neither do you require representational imagery to appreciate art. Meaning is developed once sensory input is received and then interpreted. Interpretation is where we use our sniff test to sort out “like” and “meh”. This cross-function of our senses is as natural as beer. My caution is that sensory input passing through plugged filters is mistaken for the truth.

For me, creativity is also exploration. The images I produce almost never spring full blown from imagination but from permission to be experimental. Whether productive or bored, I still play with new images, commands, combinations. The simple path is to sit at the computer, try everything, and blend it with composition, colour, and scale. Once underway with transforming a photo-image I work almost exclusively with whole images. I might save dozens of variants because they all appeal and perhaps one of them will germinate.

Photography is nothing without light. The image I have chosen to express my creative process is of a window at the Picasso Museum in Paris, in early October 2017. The blind was drawn down and afternoon sunlight burned through the old glass in a delicious grid of shadows on the back of the translucent canvas. The excitement is in the light textures. That is the fish that I wanted to hook. The original jpg image was taken at f4, 1/250th second, ISO 125, with my Sony NEX7 set on Intelligent Auto and 18 mm focal length. Because of the huge amount of detail captured in digital images I capture broad views first and compose second, grabbing visual data instead of crafting with the camera. Software provides crafting tools that exceed the camera’s tools.

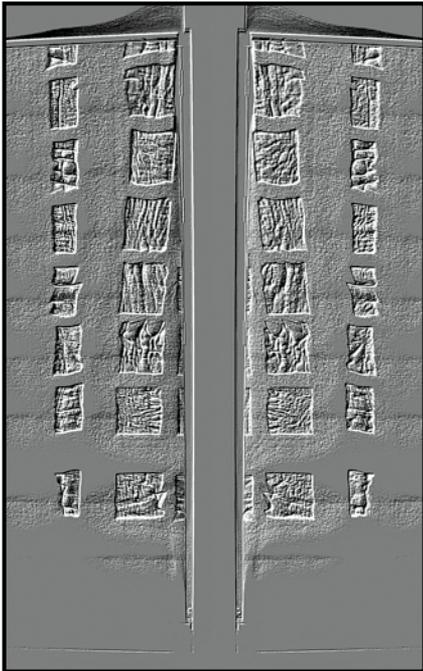


My goals are to push the boundary of recognition, make an interesting image and learn. To work with the light textures I cropped to the white lines at the left-hand side of the blind. The left vertical edge was realigned for reference but I decided against rotating to flat. Not flattening provides subtle visual depth cues. With this first full screen brush I applied quick contrast and sharpening changes, call it light seasoning. Playing with the commands defined and expanded the image zones turning the light into hieroglyphs and cuneiforms.

The amount of detail captured means some digital information is not easily seen in the original image. These values can be stirred into visible compositional elements. This is the filters stage. I may run through dozens of the available commands to expand the effects to see how I might add definition to the image. Over time this becomes intuitive, second nature, efficient.

The next image is the result of about five interventions including reflecting the original once, flipping it over and

inverting. The image below is one of about a dozen that I developed and saved. It turned out to evoke stone carvings. The process still engages black and white imagery while I played with texture and composition and waited for the most unified outcome. “Unified outcome” is my shorthand for the “Oh yeah” result.



Following several hours developing the black and white image the limit of this crafting stage was reached. I now felt the need to bucket some paint on the canvas. Various efforts were made to pour colour into the wide flat spaces. I played with opacity and tolerance (colour range) sliders to bring out more of the image data and set the figure on a colour ground with wider margins. Seven of the banners were saved with different colour fields. It felt like I had reached a plateau so I parked the images for several months for future development.

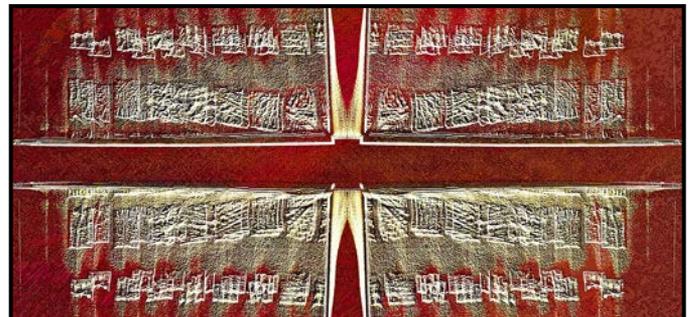


Although I was pleased with the results they felt like templates or baselines.

I upgrade to the latest version of Photoshop Elements when it gets discounted. The latest version (18) includes Double Exposure (DE) in the Guided commands Fun Edit sets. I started using DE by selecting a base image and merging a host of different photos in sequence to get a sense of the variables. There were many discards. I learned the simple graphics of the hieroglyphs made a great combination image and soon made my first triple exposure using it. The image below started with three photographs. One of them is a gazing ball, another a sunrise and the last is the “glyphs”.



I am working to show that Photoshop Elements, despite its relatively low cost, can be and is extremely capable of quality production and entertaining results. I have given myself permission to let the software show me what it can do, not necessarily what I can make it do.



Here is a recent DE variation on the “glyphs” undertaken after completing the image above. This image is textured, colour-shifted to a red-gold-ocher combination and mirrored again, this time on the short axis. Several other images were also created using the anchor of the original lights.

The Right Gear

by Richard James

It has frequently been said that “The best camera is the one you have with you”. The essence of this is not so much that the camera doesn’t matter but if you don’t have it with you it doesn’t matter what you have. Notwithstanding this, it is easier to get the best results if you have the right gear for the job.

A multi-purpose lens/camera combination that covers most of what you might like to shoot may be a good solution for some photographers and be the right gear for you. But if you get into more extreme photographic situations you will most likely need to go beyond this.

The right gear depends on what your photography objectives are as well as the objective for that particular shoot. Clearly, you don’t need a super-telephoto lens for shooting portraits, nor a wide-angle lens for shooting a bird in a bush. So, the right gear also means taking just what you need for that shoot.

A consideration is cost. Like almost anything else the “law of diminishing returns” applies to camera equip-

ment. The further up the scale you go the more you have to pay for small improvements in capability and quality. Do you really need this upgrade?

Your biggest investment is likely to be in lenses since they last a long time and can generally be used on future generations of camera bodies, at least of the same make. So it is often said, “Invest in good glass”. In general, the best quality glass is prime or top-line zoom lenses designed for full frame bodies. (Prime versus zoom lenses will be discussed in the March issue of *Close-Up*.) That doesn’t mean to say these are the only lenses you should buy but that you should be aware of the differences between these and lenses designed to sell at a lower price point. This is especially important if you are going to be using high resolution cameras (more than 25 megapixels) as the sensor resolution may be greater than the resolution of the lens and you will not get the full benefit of the camera’s sensor.

Stepping up the feature scale you need to ask the question, “How much resolution do I really need?” If you are interested only in posting web-size images and never doing large prints or heavy crops then, do you really need a 35 to 50 megapixel sensor? Your final image is going to be a couple of megapixels at most and the sensor is likely the most expensive component in the camera.



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However, sensor size isn't everything. With a higher-level camera you also get features like better autofocus and in-camera image review capabilities, and a higher framing rate. For example, more focus points covering more of the sensor allow for easier focusing on subjects closer to the edge of the frame. Also, the ability to show the RGB histogram as well as luminance gives you much better information about your exposure and the risk of clipping one colour channel.

Then there are all the accessories. You can spend a lot of money here! Some cameras have a built-in flash, but is this really useful for the type of photography you're likely to do? These flashes are generally low-powered, face-forward only and are mounted immediately above the lens, which does not give very good subject lighting if it is the primary light source. A separate flash unit with an extension cord connecting it to the hot shoe provides much more flexibility and allows you to use the camera's multiple-flash control systems.

Camera stability is much more important with high-resolution sensors but you may say that your camera has image stabilization/vibration reduction. Yes, that is convenient but is it the best? The best camera support is "rock-solid" and anything else is just an attempted fix, which leads you to a tripod. An oft-repeated comment is, "You'll keep buying a better tripod until you buy the right one. Save yourself the money and buy the right one the first time". Tripods are discussed on pages 20 and 21 of this issue.

If you want to do long-exposure images of moving objects such as waves or waterfalls, or night photography, then not only do you need a sturdy tripod, but also good quality neutral density and polarizing filters. Cheap filters are often lower quality. You will probably see a difference if you compare an image taken with a cheap filter with the same image taken with a higher quality filter. Variable intensity neutral density filters tend to be quite uneven in their effect and may not give usable images.

Many camera bodies will go up to a maximum 30-second exposure but you may need exposures of several minutes or longer to get the effect that you're looking for. You may be able to use a phone app to control your camera or you may choose a more conventional wireless or wired remote release that includes an intervalometer. This can be programmed for much longer time periods and can also do time-lapse imagery over many hours.

Now that we've covered the basics of getting the right gear let's explore a few other tools that will make your photography easier and thus more pleasant and attractive. There is a vast range of camera bags available from a small hip bag to airline carry-on size backpacks and

even bigger packs. If you wish to fly with your photography gear; all the expensive and delicate parts need to be in your carry-on bag and not in your checked baggage.

If you normally carry your camera around your neck the manufacturer-supplied neck strap (with their name in glowing letters) is not the most comfortable strap. Properly padded, slightly stretchy neck straps are a step up but beyond that there are several vest-style carrying systems that will take the full weight of your camera off your neck and onto your hips. With a heavy camera and lens this system makes it easier to walk around all day.

If you're doing macro work, and even if you're not, camera rails give you the ability to put the centre of gravity of your camera/lens over the middle of your tripod's ball head so it balances more easily. They also give you the ability to slide your camera backwards and forwards without moving the tripod when focusing at macro distances. You can also use two rails at 90° to allow you to move sideways as well as backwards and forwards. If you want to get your camera down to ground level, a long vertical rail does the job perfectly.

So, the right gear is dependent on what you want to do with your photography and how you make the best use of what you have.



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VCC Internal Competitions

by Pam Irvine

The Victoria Camera Club holds six monthly competitions during the year, in September, October, November, January, February and March. Each has a number of different image categories and each competition has three skill levels, Novice, Intermediate and Advanced. There are a total of 19 different internal competitions per month. I am not aware of any other club in Canada that offers such an extensive program.

This makes for a lot of images each month that need to be judged. Advanced and Intermediate digital images are judged by trained judges from across Canada. Novice images are judged by a committee of advanced Club members who are interested in helping the novice members develop their skills. The following individual categories are available each month for our internal competitions. Members can enter one image in each of the categories at their level.

Novice: Digital categories are: Open, Wildlife, Natural World, and Theme. Print categories are Open only (you can enter two prints in the print competition per month).

Intermediate: Digital categories are: Open, Wildlife, Natural World, Theme and Altered Reality. Print categories are Open only (you can enter two prints in the print competition per month).

Advanced: Digital categories are: Open, Wildlife, Natural World, Theme and Altered Reality. Print categories are Open, Monochrome and Nature (you can enter one print in the each of the three print categories for a total of three prints per month).

A different theme is chosen for the Theme category each month providing a challenge for members to try shooting images that they might not normally attempt.

At the end of the year three external judges review all the placed images (1st, 2nd, 3rd or Honourable Mention) over the past year and choose the best of the best.

We also have a point system for members who win placements through the year and present awards to members for the best aggregate score. The year-end award presentations will take place on Thursday May 2, 2019, our last meeting before the summer break.

In the end it is all just for fun and hopefully to help our members improve their photography skills.

November 2018 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the external judges for the November Intermediate and Advanced competitions: Wes Bergen, Glenn Bloodworth, Larry Breitreutz, and Mike Byrne. We would also like to thank our in-house Novice Judges: Normand Marcotte, Steve Lustig, Martin Wright, Anne McCarthy, Caspar Davis, Suzanne Huot and Lorna Zaback. The images in Intermediate and Advanced Open competitions were judged at the last minute by members of the competitions committee. Thanks to Pam Irvine, Richard Letoureau, Normand Marcotte, Jill Turyk, and Lorna Zaback for their judging skills. Images and judges' comments are available at: victoriacamera-club.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

Wes Bergen: Wildlife and Natural World. Wes has been a keen amateur photographer for almost 45 years. He has experience in Black and White and colour prints and slides. He has used medium and large format cameras as well as 35 mm film and digital cameras. He has been a member of the Lions Gate Camera Club for over 44 years and has also been a member of CAPA (Canadian Association for Photographic Art) for almost as long. Wes is a certified CAPA judge and presents workshops at local photography clubs and seminars.

Glenn Bloodworth: Theme. A visual artist in the medium of photography, Glenn's works are held in a number of public and private collections in Canada and abroad. Glen is a certified CAPA judge and, since 2017, a trainer of, and examiner for, certifying CAPA judges. He is a founding member of the Ottawa based photographic collective Studio Zone V and a Past Chair (2012–2015), Board of Directors, School of the Photographic Arts: Ottawa. bloodworthphoto.com

Larry Breitreutz: Altered Reality. Larry has been an avid photo enthusiast for over 35 years. He enjoys the inspiration and challenge of all types of artistic images, whether created with the camera, with software, or with brush and paint. Larry is a Certified CAPA Judge and currently serves the photographic community as the Past-President of CAPA.

Mike Byrne: Prints. Mike is one of the co-founders of Clock Tower Images in Victoria. Growing up in Alberta's Rocky Mountains, he has always pursued outdoor activities. As a natural extension, he started to produce outdoor adventure films and videos. Mike offers travel photography tours to locations around the world. His educational presentation at the January Competition Night was well received by our Club members. clock-towerimages.com.



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Advanced Altered Reality Digital - 1st
"Partially Eclipsed" by Lorna Zaback

Judge's comments: One wonders what mystery lies in this image. Partially hidden, pensive, posing. The hard, round metal rings contrast with the delicate face, adding tension to the image.



Advanced Open Digital - 1st
"Eventide" by Leah Gray

Judge's comments: Stunning image. Beautiful warm side-light rims the horses and the reflections on their wet hair give shape to these gorgeous creatures. The pink light is even reflected in the splashes which a fast shutter speed has caught



Advanced Wildlife Digital - 1st
"Sibling Rivalry" by Evan Guengerich

Judge's comments: Delightful shot of cubs interacting. Lighting, sharpness and detail are perfect. No distractions in the background.



Advanced Natural World - 1st
"Family" by Steve Smith

Judge's comments: Superb lighting of, and detail in, the foreground mushroom. Selective focus works well here. A nice background.



Advanced Theme Digital - 1st
“Pest Control” by Mike Murchison

Judge’s comments: Light and exposure are used very effectively, with evident consideration of the time of day to create, in combination with the composition, a very nice sense of depth. Organization of the elements is cardinal to the success of this image. The leading line created by the roadway or walkway leads the viewer through the image nicely. The image is very well done. Congratulations, it evokes a strong emotional response, with the subject well selected and portrayed.



Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st
“Down and Out” by Peter Reid

Judge’s comments: I really love the scale and impact of this image, the anguished man is such a small thing in this world. Light handling is excellent. I generally don’t like images that are so symmetrical, but the man fixes this issue just fine.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st
“Bow Summit, Banff NP” by Richard James

Judge’s comments: I really love the play of light on the snow near the mountain summit and across the clouds. The composition works very well with the small tree at the bottom left and the bottom edge of the pond nicely contained within the image.



Advanced Open Print - 1st
“Eyeball” by Jacqui James

Judge’s comments: I love this image and really appreciate the work that must have gone into creating it. The exposure is excellent and the impact is great



Intermediate Theme - 2nd

"Let no Garbage Bag go Unopened" by Anne McCarthy

Judge's comments: Light and exposure are employed very effectively. The subject area is sharp, with excellent blurring of background areas to enhance the impact. Well considered, with capture of a moment that evokes an immediate emotional response in the viewer, well done.



Intermediate Digital Open - 2nd

"Meanwhile at the Marina" by Daniel Rondeau

Judge's comments: What a great and unique capture of a kingfisher on a mast. The bird is perfectly positioned in the frame. The background elements are softly out-of-focus so as to not conflict with the front mast and wires.



Intermediate Creative Digital - 1st

"A Friendly Djinn" by Vanessa MacDonald

Judge's comments: Extremely well designed, planned and executed image. Perfect vertical symmetry. All of the lines bursting from the center add action, tension and drama. Central part reads as a face with two large eyes. A spooky alien. Well done!



Intermediate Wildlife Digital - 1st

*"Snow Monkeys, Group Therapy (Nagano)"
by Judy Johnston*

Judge's comments: Excellent composition, great detail. Love the mood.



Intermediate Natural World - 1st

"Dreamy Autumn Mist on Fairy Lake" by Ken Johnston

Judge's comments: Gorgeous mood, excellent exposure, composition and balance.



"Intermediate Open Print - 1st

"Dividing Line" by Tim Agoston

Judge's comments: Monochrome is a great choice for this image. The zigzagging fence and its matching high-contrast shadow create an engaging composition. Tonal qualities and detail are excellent.



Novice Open Print - 1st

"Incinerator Rock" by Peter Amundsen

Judge's comments: This shot beautifully captures the sun's glow over many different textures, from the fog in the distance, cirrus clouds above and granular sand in the foreground. Repetition of the zig zag lines from top to bottom draws us into and through the frame. Black and white was a good choice for this scene. Well done!



Novice Wildlife - 2nd

"Crow Wading" by Johanne-Pascale Audet

Judge's comments: An engaging shot capturing both the texture and detail in the crow's plumage and the warmth of the background colour. The exposure and composition are both well done.



Novice Natural World - 2nd
"Myra Falls" by Rilla Ballentyne

Judge's comments: Looks like you had a great location to set up for this longer exposure shot. The composition is nicely balanced.



Novice Theme - 1st
"Is that my Uber?" by Sharon Moysey

Judge's comments: This is an image that could be left alone with the interplay between "why are they taking a photo of that truck out of focus?" and "Oh, now I get it", or cropped down to focus on the furry little rodent. This crop works well with the title and the theme. Nice sharpness on the leaves and the urban wildlife with just enough blur of the background to tell a humorous story.



Photo by: Thomas Yee

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Member Profile: John Clarke

Growing up I wanted to be a journalist. I would often pretend to be a reporter, complete with one of my grandfather's fedoras with a "press" tag along with my camera and note pad. At university I continued my "journalistic" journey writing and photographing for my university newspaper, The Queen's Journal, culminating in my final year as Sports Editor.

So, in 1999 I took my first photography course in Prince George and that proved to be a good step in my journey. I credit my photographic progress to three things: joining the Victoria Camera Club, continuing my learning, and challenging myself to do things I am not comfortable with.

One of my most memorable VCC workshops was on motion blur by Lloyd Houghton. I didn't consider myself a creative photographer however I learned techniques in the classroom that were quickly tested in the field. Coupled with Lightroom workshops, I found I could create photographic art. Now I am frequently looking for ways to capture artistic motion, knowing the creative enhancements I can do in post-production.



"Motion Blur"

Being a competitive individual I have relished the opportunity to compete in Camera Club competitions. While learning to be more selective with my image choices, I have also searched for opportunities to photograph uncommon subjects. This has resulted in my recent interest in concert photography and, more specifically, heavy metal thrash bands. I research the bands and listen to their music and I always reach out to them on social media, requesting permission to shoot their show. I arrive early and introduce myself and exchange contact details so I can share images with them.

In 2017 I was asked to photograph a friend's son's wedding and agreed only because they didn't want the

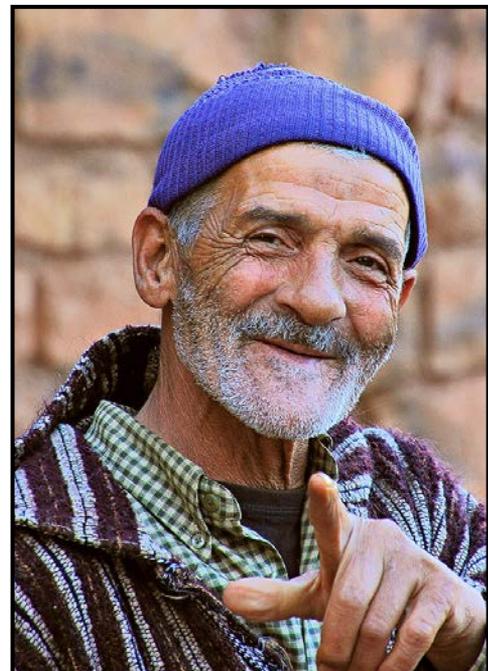
formal family and wedding party shots but, rather, candid shots of the guests. I took this assignment seriously, scouting out the venue so I would know where the sun would be and what the background would look like.



"Concert"

I found this opportunity allowed me to learn the importance of engaging with my subjects. I took this learning with me on our recent trip to Morocco, where I was able to capture images of Moroccans in their environment, while being sensitive to their culture and values. I asked many people for the opportunity to take their picture. Most were very welcoming and for some I showed my appreciation with a small monetary thank you.

As I continue my photographic journey, I need to frequently remind myself to seek more learning opportunities and to never stop challenging myself to do the uncomfortable. The first page of my daily notebook is this quote from Ansel Adams, "You don't take a photograph, you make it."



"Portrait"

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Altered Reality

by Leah Gray

Altered Reality. Creative. These words can send shivers down your spine if you feel you are not a creative person or send you into a delightful spin of joy if you are. For myself, I am firmly on the fence. According to the Photographic Society of America a creative image may be of any subject matter and must obviously display a change in natural colour, form, shape or any combination of these three.



"Zebras 1"

Creativity takes time. You must let yourself be free to wander with your imaginative spirit. Time is an essential ingredient that must be added generously to every endeavour, an ingredient that I have been sadly lacking.

I am determined to not let my lack of creative accomplishments become a permanent habit. Attending the VCC Creative SIG on Wednesday nights is a starting point when looking for inspiration. The encouragement and exercises given to the group are an excellent way to loosen up the artistic mind.

One of the tasks given to the group last year was to produce five creative images from a single photograph. The selection of the initial photograph was crucial. It had to have texture, detail, and enough elements to be used in the creation of the five different creative offerings needed. The skill to do what was required would not hold me back, but knowing what to do would be the trial.

Working with layers in Photoshop you can mask and add elements as different layers. You can work non-destructively and change your mind, rearranging and hiding layers as needed.

Details of the original image can be pulled out and scaled up or down. Mirroring and repeating fragments can create patterns. The foregrounds can be edited into textures and colours can be altered. I used the liquefy

filter, posterize adjustments, and other filters that are available as well as different blend modes to modify the layers until a pleasing effect was found. Changing the opacity, using adjustment layers and layer styles are also options.

My initial image was possibly a bit plain, but it had possibilities. I pulled out several individual zebras to create patterns, adding swirls of colour to complement the initial image.

Deciding when an image is finished can be the difficult part. I saved each iteration before moving on with another creative session, trying to come up with something unique each time.

I always admire creative images that manage to tell a story but I am still working on getting to that level. As with most activities, the more you do, the better you become. Practice pays.



"Zebras 2"

Something from this exercise must have permeated my brain last year. On my last holiday to visit family, I found myself looking for textures and photographing single specimens that might be brought together in some future creative project.

With a little time, there is the hope that I may come up with something interesting and inspired in the future. I have fallen off the fence into the creative pool.



"Zebras 3"

Using a Tripod

by Neil Schemenauer

A tripod is a valuable tool for many styles of photography. Inexperienced photographers often overlook the value of a good tripod. If they do decide to purchase a tripod, a common mistake is to choose one that is not sturdy or tall enough for their intended use. I have personally made this mistake. After buying a nice full frame DSLR camera I went shopping for a new tripod. Unfortunately, I chose a tripod that only looked sturdy enough. The salesperson did not talk me out of it. After using it for a few months and realizing it was woefully inadequate I did a bit more research and got a better one. I hope this article might prevent people from making the same mistake.

The last part of this article is fairly technical. For those not interested in the technical details I will summarize some recommendations here. Get a sturdy set of tripod legs, tall enough so you can comfortably look through your camera. Buy carbon fibre legs if you can afford them. They are lightweight and dampen vibrations. Buy a good quality head to go on top. Ball heads are popular but some people prefer other styles. Do some research and decide which style head works for your kind of photography. A good quality head is likely going to cost at least a few hundred dollars. Your camera support system is only as good as its weakest link so don't neglect this component. Also, a good head will make it much easier and quicker to compose your subject. A poor head will be frustrating to use.

Research the kind of mounting plates you want to use. The "Arca-Swiss" style plates are popular but there are other systems. Consider getting an "L-plate" that is specifically designed for your camera body. The mount will be more secure and also give the option to easily mount the camera in portrait orientation.

Learn how to correctly set up and use your tripod. Consider hanging a weight from the centre post (i.e. your camera bag or a bag of something heavy like rocks). This weight will reduce camera movement. Don't let the weight swing. Use spiked feet pushed into the ground if possible. If the feet are sitting on leaves or something similar your support may not be sturdy enough. If the legs have retractable sections keep the smaller sections retracted for better support. If there is a centre column keep it retracted unless you really need it. Use the "mirror up" or electronic shutter feature of your camera if you can. The "mirror slap" of a DSLR camera usually causes significant movement.

With the summary of the recommendations out of the way let's take a step back and consider when a tripod is useful.

While using a tripod is inconvenient some people find that slowing down to use it results in more careful and better compositions. A tripod is necessary, or at least very helpful, for certain kinds of photos. Some examples are photos in low light conditions, astrophotography, photos with long exposures for effect (e.g. waterfalls), macro photography with a shallow depth of field, and time-lapse photography. In short, there are quite a number of situations where the photo would not be possible or, at best, would be significantly worse unless a sturdy camera support like a tripod is used.

How sturdy should a tripod be? I think this is a case where intuition or "gut feeling" leads people astray. The ability of a good camera system to resolve details implies that even a tiny amount of camera movement will degrade the sharpness of the image. Getting peak sharpness is obviously not the ultimate goal of photography. However, if you have a good camera and have made the investment in good quality glass, the sturdiness of the camera support required to fully realize the sharpness possible might be surprising.

I did a "back of the envelope" calculation to estimate how much camera movement is too much. Consider a 40 megapixel full-frame camera. With a 50 mm focal length, the angle of view is approximately 40 degrees. That angle is calculated according to the formula: angle of view = $2 \times \arctan(\text{sensor height} / (2 \times \text{focal length}))$.

Based on my own testing, I've found that my Nikon D850 can resolve 80 lp/mm. This was a modulation transfer function (MTF) test using the spatial frequency at 50% contrast loss. As a drastic simplification, let's consider one line pair of movement to be unacceptable. A rotation of the camera by 0.014 degrees would produce that movement on the sensor. If the front of the lens is 240 mm from the tripod centre, the front would move 60 μm (about 2 thousands of an inch). That's roughly half the width of a sheet of paper. A longer focal length lens will be more affected by tripod movement.

These are rough calculations but I think they explain why our intuition as to what is sufficiently sturdy is often wrong. The maximum allowable movement is so small that looks are deceiving. My advice is to not rely on your intuition. Find a trustworthy salesperson to advise you. Or, better yet, find a friendly photographer who shoots the same style of photos that you wish to and ask for advice. I'm sure many Club members would be happy to share their knowledge.

Tripod Options

by Matt Speight

Tripod design has improved greatly over the years and we are now spoiled for choice. I want to share with you some of the options that are available today.

Since we are talking about tripods, let's start with the obvious first, the legs and how they can differ. The majority of legs these days are made out of carbon fiber or aluminum.

Advantages of Aluminum: Lighter than older steel and wooden tripods. Very durable, not likely to snap or break like carbon fiber can if they are mistreated. They are also inexpensive compared to their carbon fiber cousins.

Advantages of Carbon Fiber: On average, they weigh at least 30% less than their aluminum counterparts. This allows you take that extra lens or, if you are travelling on foot over great distances, there is less need for painkillers the next day. Carbon fiber dampens vibrations, reducing or eliminating movement which can resonate through the tripod to the camera. Leg lock designs are how we can control the extension of the legs. We have two main choices: flip lock and twist lock.

Advantages of Flip Lock: It's a simple open and close lever and easy for the novice to know if the leg is locked. That's really about it.

Advantages of Twist Lock: It is a stronger lock that clamps evenly around the leg allowing the tripod to hold more, compared to a flip lock tripod of the same weight. With practice they are easier to set up. One hand can unlock all the twist locks at once with a simple quarter turn. They are more streamlined so less likely to snag on stuff when inside a bag or attached to the outside of one. You can't pinch your fingers on a twist lock.



When deciding on a tripod look for one where the legs can have different angular positions when they are open. Most good tripods will have at least three different options. The image demonstrates the benefit of a tripod at its widest setting.

The photo also shows the advantage of having a tripod with the option of the centre column extending out horizontally. A more expensive design will give you much more versatility in how you can shoot.

Look for tripods that have a bubble level as this will come in handy if you delve into panoramic photography.

If you're looking at a tripod that has a head, make sure it is detachable. On some of the more budget-orientated tripods, the heads are not removable. It is always good to have the ability to switch the head from a ball head to a three-way head, or to replace a broken head.

Think about the height of the tripod. It should extend to at least a comfortable shooting height for you. Ideally above head height is best.

With tripod heads, it's partly personal preference. You might like the precision and control of a three-way pan and tilt head or the smaller and quicker set up of a ball head. I used to shoot with three-way heads but ball heads have come such a long way, with separate pan adjustment, improved friction control and very smooth hermetically sealed ball mechanisms, so that I find the benefits outweigh that slight lack of precision.

In terms of weight, your tripod and head should be able support your gear easily. Check the rating of each if you are buying the tripod and the head separately to ensure they can take the load. Don't forget to add the weight of the head to your total calculations if you are buying the legs separately.

Buying a tripod can be a challenging decision. There is no one perfect tripod that will cover all your needs. It is important to do your research. Don't be afraid to go in to a store and put your gear on a variety of tripods and head styles and simply play with the different designs.

If you find a tripod that fits your camera's weight and your style of shooting, make sure it's a tripod you are truly willing to carry with you. An extra couple of hundred dollars for the lighter carbon fiber tripod might be worth it. A tripod should be something you're willing and happy to take with you on your photographic journeys, be it a short hike up Mill Hill or an expedition to an Icelandic volcano. Otherwise, you may not have a leg (or three) to stand on.

How I Did It

Surviving Stokksnes

by Mike Murchison

This image was taken in an area of Iceland known as Stokksnes, which is famous for the majestic seaside mountain, Vestrahorn. Having spent a couple of days shooting the mountain, we noticed this scene on the road into the area. On our last day at this location, we made a quick roadside stop to shoot some images.



The first thing I thought about was the story I wanted to tell. In this case it was about this old shed surviving the harsh elements and avalanches of the location. The second element was the graphic quality of the scene. I loved the diagonal lines the different colours of rock created on the slope and I was also drawn to the way the colour of the roof and the red rocks tied together.

With all those elements in my mind, I began to search for a composition. I used a longer lens to remove the sky because it was flat and grey and because it wasn't part of my story. I settled at 93 mm on a 70-200 mm lens because I wanted the shed to feel small and vulnerable.

I positioned the building in the bottom right corner so that the red rocks were top left to create a diagonal connection to offset the strong diagonals of the rockfall. The shot was hand-held at 1/50th second, f5.6, ISO 200 with image stabilization on. I focused on the fence posts to give enough depth of field for the whole image to be in focus.

The processing of the image was quite simple. I burnt in the top left corner to help keep the eye in the frame and desaturated the image a bit to create the sense of loneliness. I then re-saturated the reds and oranges to make that connection in the image a bit stronger and help the building stand out more.

Palouse At Dawn

by Sharon Moysey

In June 2018, I joined fellow VCC members Jill Turyk, Judy Plummer and Kim Smith on a photography tour of the Palouse area in southeastern Washington state. Many VCC members have visited this region and we were inspired by their photos to put our hands up when VCC offered spaces in a tour, led by Jack Lien of Four Seasons Photo Tours. We travelled over 500 miles with Jack, to iconic Palouse photography locations as well as to obscure back roads where the canola fields were in full bloom and abandoned barns leaned in states of disrepair, waiting for our cameras to tell their stories.

One of my favourite parts of the trip was our sunrise shoot on Steptoe Butte. This butte (hill) rises about 500 metres above the rolling hills of the Palouse and we arrived at its peak just as the sun rose. We spent the next two hours following the strengthening light to capture the 360-degree vista.

I'm learning what settings to use in different situations and getting to know my Nikon D7200 camera, so I experimented with ISO, aperture and exposure combinations. This picture was taken with a 70 mm to 300 mm zoom lens at 165 mm focal length (247 mm full frame equivalent), ISO 100, f5, 1/80th second. I used Lightroom for post-production and had to add some dehazing. I adjusted the exposure, contrast, whites and blacks to add some depth to the shadows and bring out the contours of the rolling hills.

I wasn't sure about joining a photography tour where I was the least experienced member of the group but, as VCC members can attest, photographers are a welcoming and supportive community and I thoroughly enjoyed the trip. Although there was not a lot of specific instruction, my photography improved greatly through watching others, experimenting with settings, and diligent use of my tripod.



Tuesday Shoots

by Jim Fowler

Winter is a good time to think about where you want to go with your photography. This year my goal is to take fewer, but better photos. What is your goal?

February 5th: Witty's Lagoon. The alternate Tuesday group is going to Witty's Lagoon. Meet at the main entrance parking lot of this Regional Park in Metchosin. From there you have the choice of the north side trail past Sitting Lady Falls (which should be quite noisy this time of year) and on down to the lagoon, or take the south side trail through drier woodlands and on to Witty's Beach.

February 12th: The Bay Centre Food Court. The theme for this Tuesday is "One Colour". Many compositions can be built around a dominant colour. An image dominated by a bold hue can have more drama than an image with a full range of colours. One-colour pictures can be quite eye-catching, and often take people by surprise because they are so rare. How about a black cat against a black wall, or a brown egg on a brown plate? This is the VCC March competition theme so use this shoot to get your mind into the theme.

February 19th: Ross Bay Cemetery. The alternate Tuesday group will meet at the Ross Bay Cemetery. Park on Dallas Road just west of the cemetery, and then you have your choice of the cemetery or the beach along Dallas Road. Did you know that Billy Barker, Sir James Douglas and Emily Carr are all buried here? Did you know that many Chinese and Japanese graves, once located on what is now Dallas Road, were washed away in a storm in 1909? (The Chinese section was later moved to Harling Point.) There are gravestones and monuments of all descriptions, in a formal, park-like setting.

February 26th: The Bay Centre Food Court. Leading lines are a very important compositional element that every photographer needs to master. Use straight lines or curves in your images to guide the viewer through the shot, draw their attention to the main subject, or create a sense of depth and perspective. They are also an excellent means of creating symmetry and asymmetry.

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.

February 2019

Weekend Shoots

by Vanessa MacDonald

We hope everyone is enjoying the start of spring in Victoria! We have a few announcements to share with regard to field trips in 2019. First, we have introduced a new Trail Rating System, to be found on the field trips page on the Club website. The reason for introducing this is that we occasionally host field trips that are more strenuous and may involve more rugged terrain or an increase in elevation. Before signing up for any trip that involves a hike-in, please check the rating first and our description of the hike. We will try to provide as much detail as possible.

We would also like to announce that we have a position open for a third field trip coordinator, in order to help us better manage the workload. If you love field trips and think this might interest you, please get in touch!

February 20th: BC Legislature, Architectural Photography. We have arranged for a free art and architectural tour of the BC Legislature building. It has been scheduled on a weekday since the Legislature is not open to the public on weekends at this time of year. This is your chance to hone your architectural photography skills in this beautiful iconic heritage structure built in the late 1800's in the Neo-Baroque style. We plan to access the buildings for the first tour of the morning with the hope of getting ahead of the crowds. There will be time to self-guide after the official tour. You may want to step outside for some exterior shots too, and even hunt down a blossoming cherry tree to include in the frame.

February 9th: Christie Falls (round two!). Our field trip plan to this location was foiled last November due to the unexpected installation of a new logging gate. We are pleased to report that we will be able to gain entry this time through personnel at the fish hatchery. Winter is the best time to capture waterfalls, with water flow being at its peak, so you don't want to miss out on this opportunity for special access to this local hidden gem! The falls are to be found in the Ladysmith area and feature several different waterfalls along a beautiful forested section of river. They are located along a trail that starts near the Bush Creek Fish Hatchery. Bring your tripods, polarizers, ND filters, and shutter remotes or cable releases, as this will be the ideal location for daytime long exposures. Other nature and wildlife photography opportunities will abound in this wilderness area.

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

Hornby Island Photography

by Don Peterson

Hornby Island offers visitors an alluring combination of beautiful beaches, towering cliffs, tranquil forests, mountain views, abundant wildlife and a friendly, artist-rich community. The island's popularity makes it a busy place during the summer so the off-season is best for quieter pursuits like hiking, wildlife viewing and, of course, photography.

The VCC field trips to Hornby over the past three years have been timed for the Pacific Herring spawn (early March) and wildflower season (early May). Dan and Gail Takahashi and Richard James as well as Amanda and Rob Zielinski of the Hornby Island Dive Lodge have been instrumental in making these Club adventures a success. In this brief article I would like to share some my favourite locations for photography on Hornby in the hopes that a visit to the island will lead you to your next great image!

Helliwell Provincial Park: Robert Bateman recently declared that Helliwell Provincial Park is his “most meaningful place” which is quite something when you consider how much of the natural world this preeminent Canadian artist has immortalized in his amazing works of art.

A well-marked trail of about three kilometers encircles the park and provides visitors with the opportunity to enjoy much of what this park has to offer. Watch for the ever-present bald eagles soaring above the cliffs. In the waters below catch glimpses of sea lions travelling to and from their haul-outs on Flora Islet. More adventurous photographers can explore less travelled paths such as those that lead to the middle of the old-growth forest or west along the cliff tops to Mushroom Beach and the High Salal trail.



“Mushroom Beach”

Ford Cove: Named after the first settler on Hornby, John Ford, this small community features a number of houses, a store, the government wharf and the Hornby Island Dive Lodge. The well-maintained Shingle Spit Trail provides an interesting forty-five minute walk above the beach and through the forest to Shingle Spit, by the ferry landing. Near the beginning of this trail you can find John Ford's ancient orchard and the fascinating “Leaf House” created in 1970 by the famous artist/builder, Mr. Lloyd House.

Heron Rocks: A short distance from Ford Cove are the Heron Rocks at Norman Point, the southernmost point on Hornby Island. The campsite was established there in the 1950s by renowned social activists the late Hilary and Harrison Brown. The inter-tidal seashore features a fascinating array of sculpted sandstone and granite “glacial erratics” especially during a lower tide. Sea lions can be observed swooshing by near the shore or sometimes hauled out on the south side of Toby Island (accessible on foot at lower tides).



“Chocolate Lily”

The Heron Rocks campground area is perhaps the best place on Hornby to view and photograph wildflowers with Fawn lilies, Chocolate lilies and Camas being abundant here in the spring.

The public can reach the Heron Rocks foreshore by walking along the sandstone shelf from the Ford Cove store or via a public trail from the small parking area above the Heron Rocks Campground office. Note that access to the campground lands requires permission from the campsite caretakers whose home is adjacent to the campground entrance.

Tribune Bay and Spray Point: Perhaps the feature most commonly associated with Hornby Island is the broad expanse of white sand at Tribune Bay. Access points include the BC Parks parking lot off Central Road, and a short trail at the end of Shields Road (past the Co-Op store and Tribune Bay Campground).

While the sandy beach is the main attraction here other highlights include the natural meadow above the beach and at the west end of the bay, Spray Point. This sandstone bluff separates “Big Trib” from a smaller (clothing optional) beach to the west known as “Little Tribune”. The point can be approached from either of these beaches at low to mid-tides. The access can be challenging but the inspiring sandstone formations found here will make this effort worthwhile particularly at sunrise.



“Spray Point Sunrise”

Mount Geoffrey Park: Almost 40% of Hornby island is made up of protected natural areas and the largest of these is Mount Geoffrey Park. The park is best known for its walking and mountain biking trails. Pick up a trail map at the Co-Op or at the Bike Shop if you want to explore the mountain.

There is a spectacular “Outer Ridge Trail” that provides views to Denman and Vancouver Islands. The shortest access to a good viewpoint along this trail is from the top of Euston Road (just past Middle Mountain Mead). The first viewpoint is about a twenty-five minute walk at a moderate pace.

Grassy Point: This triangular piece of land juts out of the northeast shore of Hornby towards the northern tip of Texada Island. During late spring the grassy area of the point becomes a virtual carpet of blue Camas flowers. The point is also famous for its expansive view that extends more than 180 degrees up and down the strait. So if you time it right, you can watch the sunset over Mount Washington in the northwest then watch the moon rise over Texada Island in the southeast.

The Herring Spawn: Between late February and mid-March each year one of most amazing natural events



“Grassy Point”

in coastal BC occurs in the waters around Hornby and Denman Islands.

Pacific Herring in their millions gather here to spawn along local shores. Thousands of migratory diving ducks and shorebirds time their northern migration to be in the vicinity at this time. It is not unusual to see large aggregations of Harlequin ducks, Surf Scoters, grebes, Long-tailed ducks, and loons along with swarms of gulls and hundreds of Bald Eagles! California and Stellar sea-lions and harbour seals are also here to gorge on the herring although they can also become prey for the Biggs (transient) Orcas that frequent these waters. Note that the third annual Hornby Island Herring Festival will take place on March 9th and 10th, 2019. See the Conservancy Hornby Island website for more information (conservancyhornby-island.org).

Equipment and other Considerations: My choice of equipment when photographing Hornby varies and depends completely on my goal/vision for the day. The choice is so wide that I should just say “bring everything”! Remember the weather here is very changeable so always include layers of clothing, sturdy footwear and don’t forget rain gear for you and your precious camera!

Please contact me if you have questions about visiting Hornby Island. I can be reached via email at donpeter-sonphotography@gmail.com



“Stellar and California Sea Lions”

Beginners' Corner: The Self-Directed Copyist

by Josée Ménard

The word “copy” in copyist alerts your ethical conscience. The practice of copying great works of art has legally and illegally been at play for centuries. The same could be said for the Copyist Programs, however this time they are for educational and artistic development. Throughout history young masters have learned under the tutelage of great masters. In 1873 in the aftermath of the French Revolution artists, for free, could pick up an easel at the Louvre Museum and do just that; copy the master of their choice as often as they wished. Artists could study and copy a brush stroke, a technique, problem-solve lights and shadows and then copy where they are.

Imagine where Degas, Picasso, Dali, or Monet would be without their free access to the Louvre under this copyist access. In case you are wondering, yes, copyist programs are still available to artists today, not only at the great museums of Paris, but also at the MET in New York each spring. Other museums around the world allow copyists under specific rules and regulations.

Does the same exist in photography? To some degree we can achieve such studies of works and techniques, just differently, because we do not have numerous museums of photographic art or such copyist programs. When we think about it, most photographic principles and elements do link up to those of the great masters of art. In a way we momentarily become copyists ourselves when we take the opportunity to study or try to emulate say Henri Cartier-Bresson or Ansel Adams. As we flip pages or browse repeatedly, we notice more details about their photographs, and we understand them better. We learn about composition, techniques, skills, lighting choices, colours, black and white contrast, etc. To admire and learn from our chosen photographer allows us to reflect on our own photography. No worries, one can rarely precisely replicate works. Not very original, really. So, let's get inspired, let's learn and let's apply.

My subconscious recently linked up to Steven Steigman's iconic 1978 photograph and ad for Maxell known as the “Blown Away Guy”. For copyright reasons I am not including the original image. Instead, I will let your mind remember or search for it. A man sitting in a Le Corbusier chair facing box speakers blasting his hair away as well as the lamp shade, tie and martini glass. The impromptu composition naturally given to me had to be captured. This time the sun rather than the amazing sound re-energizes this sun seeker.



“Blown-Away Sun Seeker”

Looking for a different copyist photographic adventure, I once had a long stay in Paris. I replicated a photographic exhibition that I visited about a photographer who re-photographed sites from old images. With a book of Atget's images, I became a Parisian copyist. In the process, my photography refocused. I ventured around discovering a new Paris. There, was a bonus in that a few images were fully recreated in one of Atget's old locations that had been architecturally modified.



“Alley Cafe”

How do you self-direct your copyist learning experience? Set yourself a goal, or an I-wish-to goal for growth or renewal. Not sure where to start? Explore the Victoria and Albert Museum Photographic Centre online collections, plan a trip to London when their new teaching, library and studio residences will open in 2022. Visit the Royal BC Museum for the Wildlife Photographer of the Year Exhibit in April or the Vancouver Art Gallery for the Moving Still Performative Photography exhibit (April - September). Enjoy the Club's print night. You can even have a personal chat with the photographer about their print.

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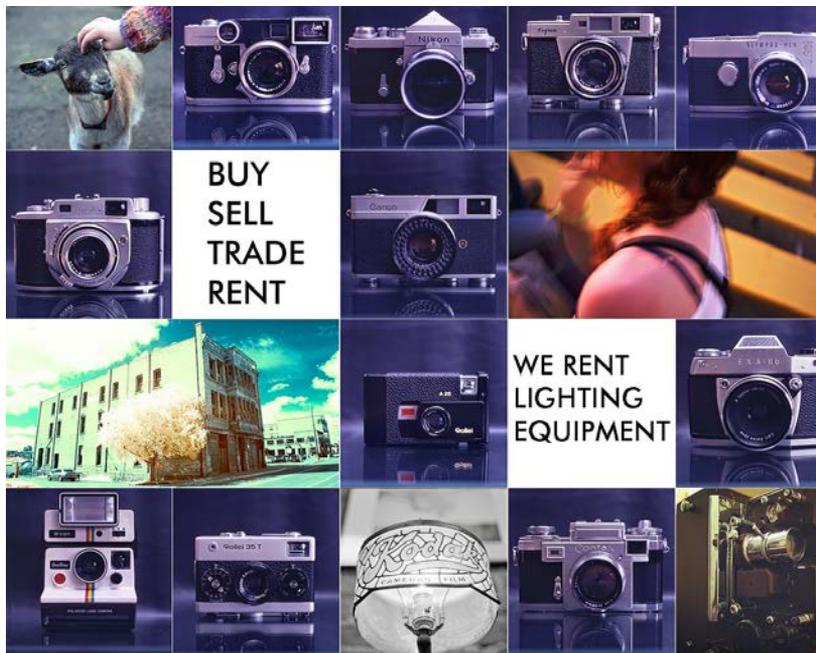
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