

# NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER

—VISIONS OF BEAUTY, JOYFUL MOMENTS—

FALL/WINTER COMBO ISSUE

164 PAGES

21 ARTICLES

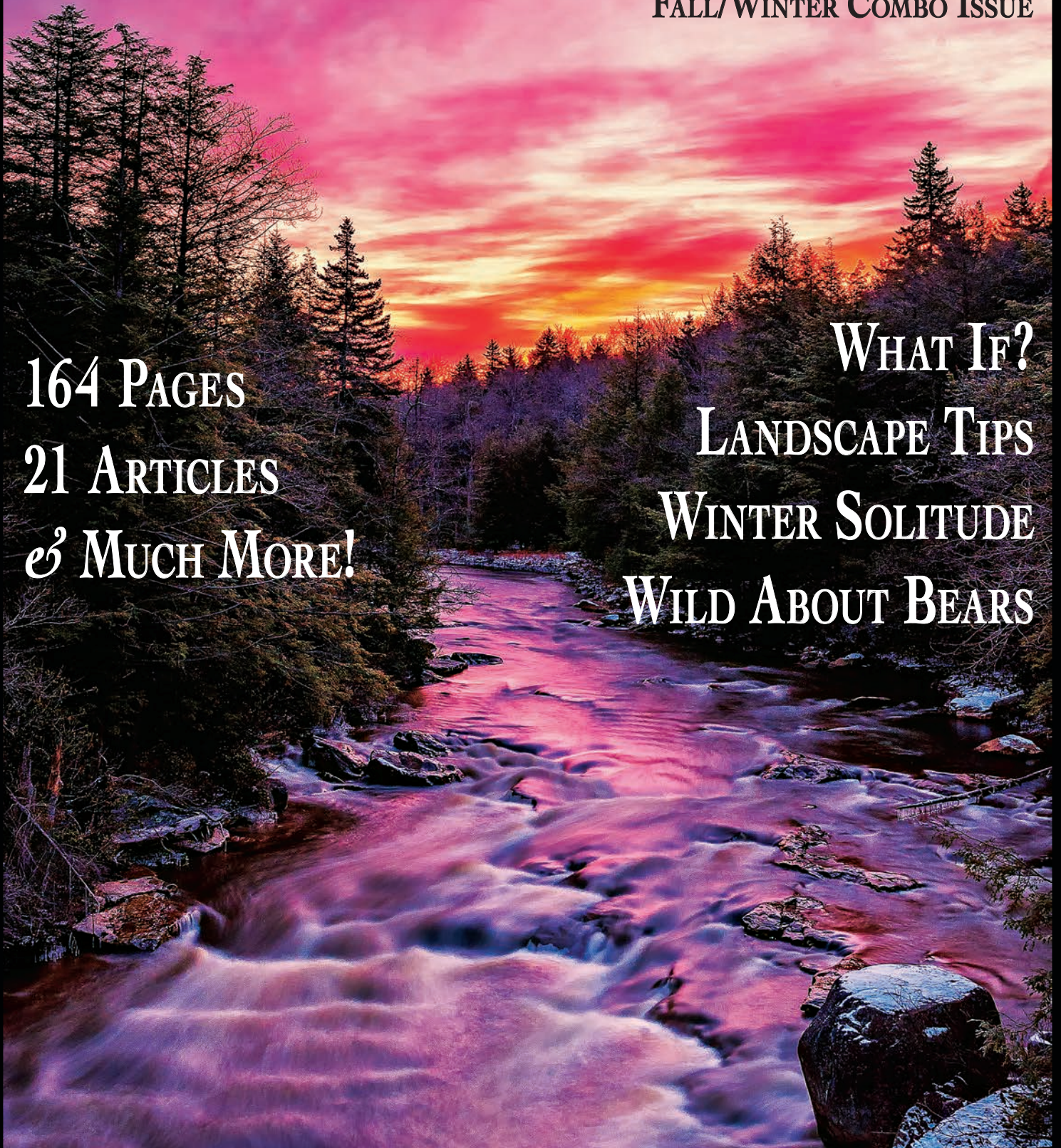
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# NATURE'S MAGNIFICENT BEAUTY

*"Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings,  
turn routine jobs into joy, and  
change ordinary opportunities into blessings."  
William Arthur Ward*



Sunrise in Grand Teton National Park, by Jon LeVasseur, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF-S 18-135mm F3.5-5.6 IS lens, focal length 44mm, f/22 at 0.6 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 320.

Cover:  
Sunrise over Blackwater River, Davis, West Virginia, by Jay OBrien, Field Contributor. Nikon D7100 lens, Nikkor 16-80mm F2.8-4 lens, focal length 25mm, f/16 at 5 seconds, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

*"Friendship improves happiness and abates misery,  
by the doubling of our joy and the dividing of our grief."  
Marcus Tullius Cicero*

Front Cover: Sunrise over Blackwater River, Davis, West Virginia,  
by Jay OBrien, Field Contributor.

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Always a place in our hearts.

## FROM OUR NECK OF THE WOODS



*“One reason why birds  
and horses are happy  
is because they are not  
trying to impress other  
birds and horses.”  
Dale Carnegie*

Wild horses, Assateague Island,  
Maryland, by Tina Wright, Field  
Contributor.  
Nikon D300S, Nikkor 500mm  
lens, focal length 500mm, f/4 at  
1/1600 second, ISO 200.

*“Gratitude changes the pangs of memory into a tranquil joy.”  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

During autumn in the northern latitudes, the natural world shows spectacular shades of red, orange, gold, and yellow. Color is no longer dependent on wildflowers scattered here and there; rather the earth shines in radiance. On the other hand, during winter in our neck of the woods the trees have dropped their leaves, the grass is brown and has gone into hibernation, the landscape is often white and silent—winter is a time of reflection and a time to be grateful for the many blessings. In the above quote Dietrich Bonhoeffer's statement that gratitude changes memories into joy rings true for me.

I am grateful for health.  
I am grateful for Marty who supports me in my every endeavor.  
I am grateful for Phyllis who loves unconditionally.  
I am grateful for Wish2 who, in her wildness, understands me.  
I am grateful for friends and family.  
I am grateful for the gift of being chosen to work on this magazine.  
I am grateful for each of you who support *Nature Photographer*.  
And these all bring me joy.

As I write this I realize that in addition to changing memories into joy, gratitude is also humbling. And for me, being humbled brings into perspective that I am only a blink in time. But as a blink I have an obligation to do my best in this journey called life.

The work on this magazine demands that I do my best. Sometimes I make mistakes, and I apologize. Thank you for your support—we are grateful to you, our readers and advertisers. The work I volunteer to do at Tide Mill Organic Farm also demands my best. The cows' comfort and sometimes their lives depend upon the job being done correctly and I strive to excel. I am grateful for the ability to do these diverse jobs—publishing a magazine and doing barn chores.

Marty and I are gifted with living in a locale that provides outdoor activities. Marty has superb photography locations nearby. And I have the work at Tide Mill Organic Farm, which is physically beneficial as well as giving me a sense of accomplishment and pleasure. We both are grateful for our pursuits in life. They bring us delight.

It is our hope that all your photographic adventures are joyful and richly rewarding. And, also, that all facets of your life provide a reason to celebrate each day.

Thank you for your readership of *Nature Photographer*. We exist because of you, and it is always a pleasure to talk with you when you call. We wish you peace, love, and superb photography adventures!

Merry Christmas and all the best in 2017—may January to December be filled with joy!

*Love, Helen*



Images by Marty Saccone. Top: Desi and Helen. Above Right: Phyllis and Helen. Above: Wish2 and Helen.





Sunrise, Ndotu, Tanzania, Africa, by Bill S. Petrunich, Field Contributor. Nikon D2X, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 G AFS VR zoom lens, focal length 116mm, f/16 at 1/500 second, spot metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 640, handheld.

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## BIRDS AS ART

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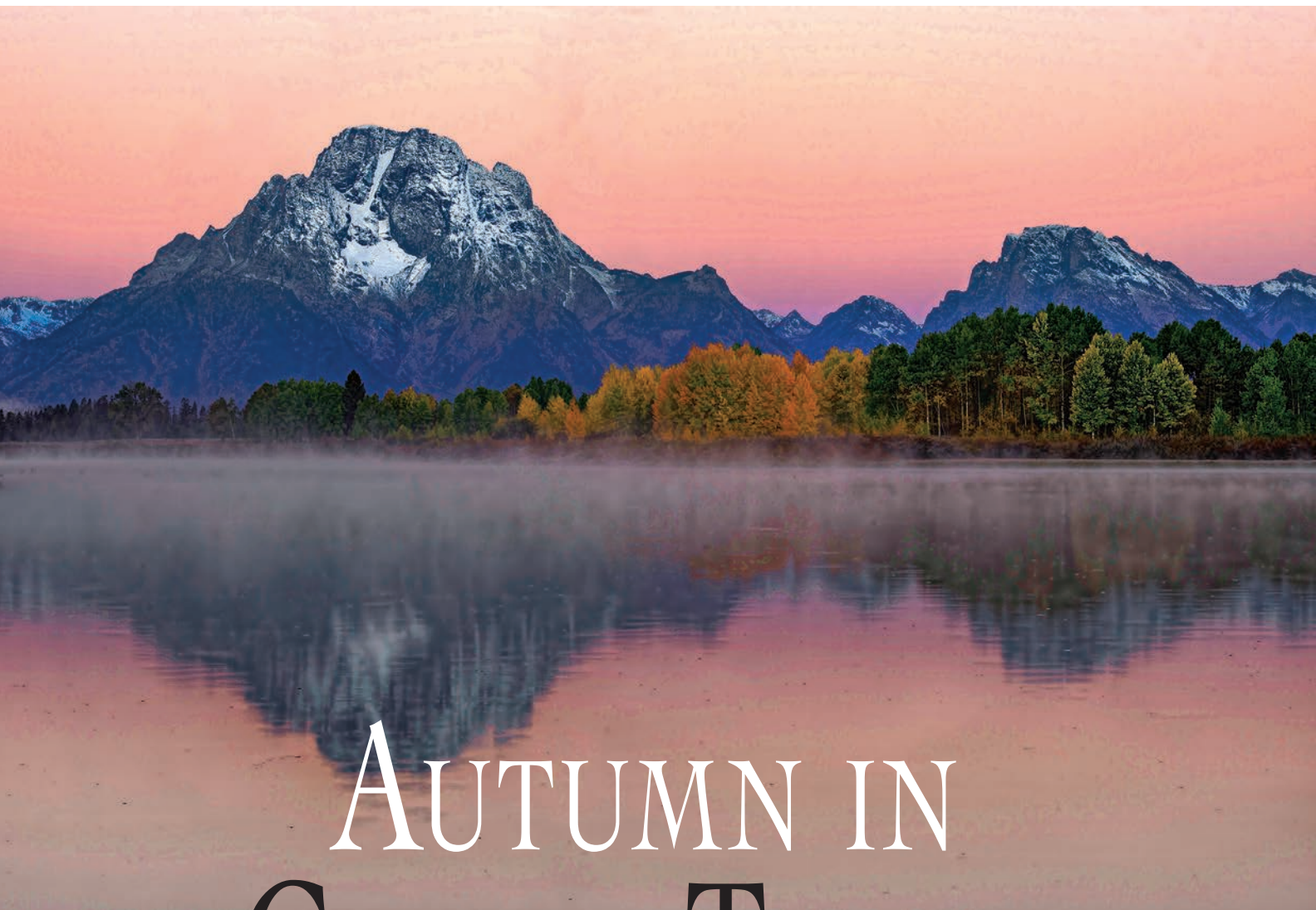
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Brown Pelican, Pacific race in rainstorm with crest raised.

This image was created on the afternoon of Friday, March 11, 2016, at La Jolla, California during a rainstorm with the Induro GIT 304L/Mongoose M3.6-mounted Canon EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM lens, the Canon Extender EF 2X III, and the Canon EOS 5DS R. ISO 800: 1/100 sec. at f/8. AWB. Fill flash at -2 stops with the Canon Speedlite 600EX-RT, the Canon OC-E3 Off Camera Shoe Cord, the Canon CP-E4 Compact Battery Pack, the Mongoose Integrated Flash Arm, and a Better Beamer. Center AF point (by necessity)/AI Servo Expand/Rear Focus AF as originally framed was active at the moment of exposure. The selected AF point fell on the area right between the bird's eyes. Please e-mail for Induro tripod and Mongoose info.





# AUTUMN IN GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK

Article and Photography by Bob Watson, Field Contributor

Bob's web site: [BobWatsonPhotography.com](http://BobWatsonPhotography.com) (Click for Live Link)

## **S** *SO MUCH TO SEE—SO LITTLE TIME*

If you're looking to photograph exceptional autumn beauty, Grand Teton National Park (the Tetons) is a must-see destination. Photographers have been gathering here for decades in hopes of capturing those iconic jagged peaks along with the beauty and wildlife surrounding them.

The Tetons are located in northwestern Wyoming approximately seven miles south of Yellowstone National Park. The park was so named after its tallest peak in the range, Grand Teton, which is 13,775 feet and often towers into the clouds.

Fall is a popular time in the Tetons, because literally around almost every turn in the road, there's a photo oppor-

Digital capture by Bob Watson

Images in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, by Bob Watson.

Right: The many colors of autumn foliage surrounds aspen trees. Nikon D800, Nikkor 35-70mm F2.8 lens, focal length 70mm, f/22 at 1/15 second, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 100.

Below: Dawn at the Grand Tetons as viewed in autumn from Schwabacher Landing on the Snake River. Nikon D800, Nikkor 16-35mm F4 lens, focal length 35mm, f/16 at 1.6 seconds, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 100.

Facing Page: Dawn on Mount Moran, as viewed from Oxbow Bend on the Snake River. Nikon D800, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 92mm, f/16 at 1/8 second, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 100.





tunity. If you don't want to do any hiking at all, you will still have plenty of possibilities to choose from, and with just a little hiking, you will have an amazing array of scenery.

If you are a wildlife photographer or photograph anything nature, as I do, you won't be disappointed. The Tetons' abundant and diverse wildlife is thriving and is another primary reason people visit. Particularly in early morning and evening hours, you are likely to see any of the park's 16 large or 45 small mammals. All animal species inhabiting The Tetons from its early exploration days are still there and frequently observed. You don't have to spend much time and you will see bison, elk, moose, beaver and a host of other wildlife.

I must make special mention of one particular species that I guarantee will peak your interest, whether you are a wildlife photographer, or not. I have been fortunate to view beavers and their behavior on numerous occasions, but never have I observed the beaver action displayed at the wetland area made up of dams, ponds and streams along the Snake River at Schwabacher Landing. I was able to watch these beavers work, and what seemed like play, on at least three separate occasions. This entire wetland area not only supported them,

but also a magnitude of wildlife, birdlife, fish and insects. This beaver colony has even been the subject of numerous studies and has appeared in PBS Specials. Watching them is spectacular and gratifying.

There are volumes of material written relating to the best and most popular places to photograph in and around the Tetons. I will leave this research for you. However, keep in mind there are many great locations that are not the most popular. You may have to hike some distance to find those out-of-the-way places.

When it comes to which lenses to pack, "pack everything". The Tetons have it all—beautiful vista landscapes everywhere, abundant wildlife and, of course, macro photography.

Importantly, make sure you get to your locations early to settle into the spot where you think you want to capture images. The Tetons have many visitors in the fall, and unless you are far in the backcountry, you are likely going to have another photographer near you, if not next to you. Because of this, it is important to carefully scout your locations and try to decide your choice place to plant your tripod. This is certainly true when you are arriving well before sunrise when the stars

A peak autumn day at Willow Flats in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, by Bob Watson. Nikon D800, Nikkor 16-35mm F4 lens, focal length 35mm, f/16 at 1/100 second, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 100.



Images in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, by Bob Watson.

Above: Layers of autumn's brilliant colors blanket Grand Teton National Park. Nikon D800, Nikkor 35-70mm F2.8 lens, focal length 70mm, f/22 at 1/6 second, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 100.

Below: A beaver makes it over the dam they built at Schwabacher Landing on the Snake River. Nikon D800, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/5.6 at 1/360 second, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 100.







Images in Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, by Bob Watson.  
 Above Top: Bull elk with harem in autumn. Nikon D70, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 185mm, f/5.6 at 1/1000 second, manual exposure mode, spot metering mode, ISO 200.  
 Above Bottom: Quaking aspen. Nikon D70, Nikkor 16-35mm F3.5-4.5 lens, focal length 35mm, f/5.6 at 1/250 second, manual exposure mode, spot metering mode, ISO 200.

are still twinkling. For example, for sunrise at Schwabacher Landing I scouted the area the day before during the harsh sunlight hours. The next morning, I had about a 20-minute walk from the parking area in the dark, but with help from my headlamp, I knew just where I wanted to be.

I have been to the Tetons several times for various reasons prior to autumn of 2015 and I was only able to spend two to three days each trip. Mainly because of bad weather, I wasn't as successful photographing as I had hoped. During my trip in 2006 I experienced torrential rains for three straight days. I was prepared, but mother nature had her own agenda.

You have probably heard the saying "Mother nature is a fickle lady" or "timing is everything". I don't mean to sound trite, but this couldn't be truer than when it comes to photography. Just think about your own photography trips when you have attempted to catch that special image. Did it rain, cloud up, not enough clouds, too much or too little sun? Or were you fortunate to have that great sunset or sunrise with just the right amount of clouds you were looking for?

I've learned that I cannot achieve good photographs just because I'm there. All the scouting places to photograph, planning the best times, having the right equipment and being totally prepared doesn't make for a good photograph if you have bad weather or have other conditions that are out of your control. However, it's also true, you do have to be there and be ready when the beauty of our natural world unfolds.

Since you never know when nature's display is going to be the best, I have learned that I will have better overall success if I can spend time concentrating in a smaller area. In

other words, rather than moving on to shoot four different scenes in four days, I may allow four days for two scenes. Such was the case of my last trip to the Tetons when I was there long enough to achieve the shots I had planned by returning to some locations more than once.

For example, I wasn't successful photographing the sunset at Schwabacher Landing until my fourth attempt. The appearance of the sunset from the three previous evenings was not what I had hoped for, with little to no clouds.

I camped in the Tetons from September 18th through the 30th, hoping to be present during the peak of autumn colors. Fortunately I hit it right. Obviously the best time to be there varies somewhat from year to year, but allowing enough time will improve your chances of catching the best color. A good thing to do with any area you visit is check to see when the photography tours are being scheduled. This will give you a good range of dates to plan your trip.

We need to allow the time, if possible, to accomplish whatever we are trying to do, and this is particularly true of nature photography. I emphasize "if possible," because I know that various circumstances will always interfere with our schedule and exactly what we want to do. If we can't spend the amount of time we would like, then limiting the number of locations we try to photograph may be the difference between achieving good, or just mediocre, images.

Once again, if you've never photographed in Grand Teton National Park, I highly recommend you plan a trip in autumn. Don't forget to put the number of locations you hope to photograph in perspective because of "The Fickle Lady". NP



A bull moose drinks from a beaver pond on the Snake River at Schwabacher Landing, Grand Teton National Park, by Bob Watson. Nikon D800, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 200mm, f/8 at 1/400 second, manual exposure mode, matrix metering mode, ISO 200.



# WILD ABOUT BEARS

Article and Photography by Bryan R. Shantz, Field Contributor



Grizzly family, Kananaskis Country in Alberta south of Banff National Park, Canada, by Bryan R. Shantz.

As a child growing up on an Alberta farm, I don't remember ever not being interested in nature. During my teens my main source of information about wildlife was the hunting magazines, and as a result I became obsessed with becoming a big game trophy hunter. Unfortunately the fine nature and photography magazines available today were yet to come. As I began to study zoology at the University of Calgary, I was able to access scientific books and journals and began to focus more on the ecology and behavior of the animals I once wanted to hunt. Following this path I soon traded my rifle for a 35mm camera, and began to study photography. After graduation as a biologist and teacher, I found nature photography to be a great asset in my classroom. Better cameras and longer lenses were natural steps as my career progressed.

At the start of my nature photography career, I set a goal: to take a publication quality photo of a grizzly bear. Little did I know it would take me 50 years to reach that goal. On several occasions I photographed a grizzly, but none met my standard.

Fast forward to May 1999 when I suffered a major stroke. I spent the next three months in the hospital rehabilitating my paralyzed left side. My leg was successful (kind of) but my arm not. To add insult to injury, I missed the best three months of the year for nature photography. Worst of all (I thought

Digital capture by Bryan R. Shantz

at the time) I could not load film in my camera or handle the telephoto lens with one hand. I almost gave up. Fortunately the digital camera market had just come onstream, with countless models offering high quality results. My first step was a DSLR but changing lenses was problematic. Now I use a Panasonic Lumex FZ1000 which has a 25 to 400 zoom lens that I can adjust with my fingertip. With one hand I now control a camera that totally replaces the film equipment—Hasselblad with five lenses.

With the new gear I began to achieve some success with elk and black bear and decided that I could still get my grizzly photo. Two places came to mind, Alaska and Yellowstone. My own province was also a possibility, but I have only seen grizzly on about one percent of my trips to Alberta's Rockies. In 2012 my wife and I booked a cabin in Yellowstone. While traveling during April in Alberta's Kananaskis Country, just south of Banff National Park, we spotted a family of grizzlies across a clearing only 100 yards away. Hazel quickly selected a safe spot to park, and I rolled down my window. I had about 50 seconds to get the shot I had waited 50 years to take. Many people have said that I was just lucky: I agree, but believe that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. My preparation included many years of studying both photography and wildlife. Our trip to Yellowstone yielded only a distant black bear viewing, but some excellent elk and bison photos. Our 50th anniversary was in 2014 so we flew to Alaska, rented an SUV and spent some time in Denali National Park. On the 11-hour bus tour, we saw one grizzly, which Hazel was able to photograph. I was in the wrong spot. However, we both got great images of two bull moose sparring. Our return by cruise ship gave us opportunities for sea lions, sea otters, orca and humpback whales, so we considered the trip a great success.

With black and grizzly bear images in my collection I decided to add polar bears. We booked a day trip, flying out of Edmonton to Churchill, Manitoba, where we boarded a Tundra Buggy for a six-hour tour along the Hudson Bay. In that time we saw 25 bears, many close enough to photograph. We were back in Edmonton 14 hours after we left. Since then I've had two chances for grizzly photos here in Alberta's Rockies.

I urge my readers: Never give up on your dreams; but do your preparation and "Live What You Love!" NP

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# WHEN AUTUMN MEETS WINTER

## PHOTO ESSAY

Photography by Tina Wright and Kevin Juberg, Field Contributors

Tina's and Kevin's web site: <http://www.naturesalbum.com/the-artists> (Click for Live Link)



Cathedral Rock, Sedona, Arizona, by Kevin Juberg, Field Contributor. Nikon D750, Nikkor 28-300mm lens, focal length 28mm, f/9 at 1/200 second, ISO 100.



Digital capture by Tina Wright and Kevin Juberg

Early snowstorm, Oak Creek Canyon, Sedona, Arizona, by Tina Wright, Field Contributor. Nikon D800, Nikkor 28-300mm lens, focal length 52mm, f/10 at 1/30 second, ISO 100.



*“I prefer winter and fall, when you feel the bone structure of the landscape—  
the loneliness of it, the dead feeling of winter.  
Something waits beneath it, the whole story doesn’t show.”  
Andrew Wyeth*



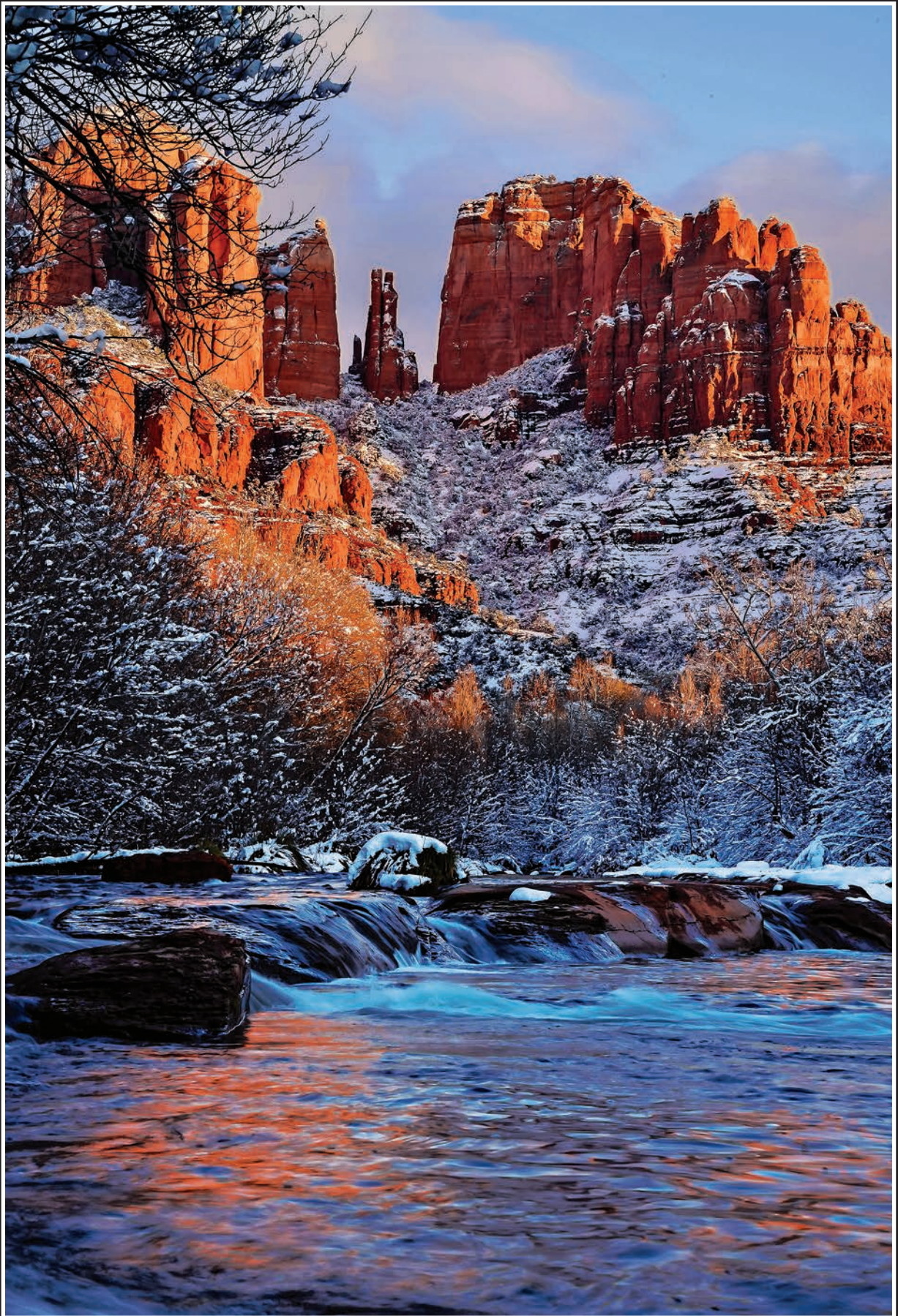
Sedona after winter storm, Arizona, by Kevin Juberg, Field Contributor. Nikon D800, Nikkor 28-300mm lens, focal length 145mm, f/10 at 1/200 second, ISO 200.



Early snowstorm, Oak Creek Canyon, Sedona, Arizona, by Kevin Juberg, Field Contributor. Nikon D800, Nikkor 28-300mm lens, focal length 32mm, f/9 at 1/100 second, ISO 100.

*“Winter giveth the fields, and the trees so old,  
Their beards of icicles and snow.”  
Charles duc d’Orléans, translated by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*





Cathedral Rock after winter storm, Red Rock Crossing, Sedona, Arizona, Tina Wright, Field Contributor. Nikon D800, Nikkor 28-300mm lens, focal length 78mm, f/22 at 1/4 second, ISO 50.

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# WINTERTIME IN ARCHES

Article and Photography by Thomas S. Parry, Field Contributor

Thomas's web site: <http://www.thomasparryphotography.com/> (Click for Live Link)

I will never forget my first visit to Arches National Park as a teenager many years ago as it made an indelible impression on me. I remember entering the park in the late afternoon hours of the day and driving slowly up a steep narrow road along walls of craggy sandstone cliffs, somewhat reminiscent of a giant medieval castle wall rising up from the ground to connect towers and turrets along the way. I remember the altitude gain and how my ears popped as we kept going higher. I wondered where we were going and eagerly anticipated what I might see once at the top. There was nothing that could have prepared me for what I was about to see. All of a sudden, the craggy sandstone cliffs gave way to a breathtaking panoramic view of a vast and glorious landscape that included eroded sandstone fins, cathedral-like rock formations, great walls, stone monoliths, ribs, gargoyles, hoodoos, balanced rocks and scores of natural arches carved out of stone all with majestic snowcapped mountains as a backdrop. I felt as if I had been transported to a different world. I remember how the natural red rock became saturated with the radiance of the late afternoon sun creating the deepest red landscape I had ever seen. There were no words to adequately describe the vastness and the beauty of the landscape and pristine blue skies that enveloped me. Each and every visit I have made to Arches since then has renewed that first impression. When asked if I have a favorite National Park, my answer is always "Yes, it's Arches."

## INTRODUCTION

Established November 12, 1971, Arches National Park encompasses 76,359 acres and protects the largest proliferation of natural arches in the world. Over 2000 arches have

been catalogued in Arches National Park. An arch is defined as having an opening with one side at least three feet wide. Landscape Arch, with a span measuring 306 feet (longer than a football field) from base to base, is the second longest in the world and is an unforgettable sight. New arches are constantly forming while old ones eventually collapse through eons of exposure to the erosive forces of water and wind. The sandstone formations throughout the park define not only the landscape, but also its plants and animals. The scarce precipitation in Arches (8.5 inches annually), extreme temperature ranges and relatively high elevation, all conspire to limit life among the rocks only to species that can adapt to such a harsh environment. The park contains ephemeral pools, from a few inches to several feet in depth, that are essentially mini-ecosystems, home to tadpoles, fairy shrimp, and insects. The pools form among the sandstone basins, within potholes that collect the rare rainwater and sediment. Elevations at Arches National Park range from 3960 feet along the Colorado River to 5653-foot Elephant Butte, the park's high point. A pygmy forest of piñon pine and juniper covers about half of the park; scrubby steppe and bare slick-rock blanket the rest.

## NATURAL HISTORY

Perched high above the Colorado River, Arches is part of southern Utah's extended canyon country, carved and shaped by eons of weathering and erosion. Some 300 million years ago, inland seas covered the large basin that formed this region. Scientists believe that the seas refilled and evaporated—29 times in all—leaving behind salt beds thousands of feet thick. Later, sand and boulders carried down by streams

Digital capture by Thomas S. Parry



Arches National Park, Utah, by Thomas S. Parry.

Above: Canon EOS M, Canon EF70-200mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 200mm, f/5.6 at 1/1600 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

Below: Park Avenue. Canon EOS 40D, Canon EF16-35mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 23mm, f/4 at 1/1600 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.







Arches National Park, Utah, by Thomas S. Parry.

Above: North and South Window, also known as the Spectacles. Canon EOS M, Canon EF70-200mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 200mm, f/5.6 at 1/1600 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

Below: Double Arch. Canon EOS 40D, Canon EF16-35mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 16mm, f/11 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.



from the uplands eventually buried the salt beds beneath thick layers of stone. Because the salt layer is less dense than the overlying blanket of rock, it rises up through it, forming it into domes and ridges, with valleys in between. Most of the formations at Arches are made of soft red sandstone deposited 150 million years ago. Much later, groundwater began to dissolve the underlying salt deposits. The sandstone domes collapsed and weathered into a maze of vertical rock slabs called fins. Sections of these slender walls eventually wore through, creating the spectacular rock sculptures that visitors to Arches see today.

The land has a timeless, indestructible look that is misleading. With nearly one million visitors each year, there is a heightened threat to the fragile high desert ecosystem. The dark and crusty cryptobiotic soil composed of cyanobacteria, algae, fungi, and lichens, is actually "alive" and prevents erosion. Footprints tracked across this living community may remain visible for years. In fact, the aridity helps preserve traces of past activity for centuries, which makes the park an attractive destination for geologists studying earth's past. Visitors, therefore, are asked to walk only on designated trails or stay on slickrock or wash bottoms.

#### VISITING ARCHES

Besides the magnificent red rock landscape and cobalt blue high desert skies, another major draw to the park is how easy it is to get around and navigate. Many sites are easily accessed by car via the 40 miles of roads in the park or require a very short hike to reach. As such, the park has become extremely popular and yearly visitation has exceeded one million people in the last two years. The summer period between Memorial Day and Labor Day is especially crowded. During summer months, the National Park Service advises visiting before 8:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m. to avoid parking congestion at major roadside sites and trailheads and crowds on the hiking trails. This actually works to the advantage of photographers who seek the golden light of early morning or early evening and near sunset to capture beautiful saturated images of the landscape.

Until the winter of 2014, all of my visits to Arches were during the summer months. I had never experienced the park without crowds of people on the roads, in the parking areas or on the trails. I made a trip to Arches in mid-February of 2014 to experience the park with the least amount of people there as possible. Also, as a photographer, I wanted to avail myself of the shorter winter days with the low southerly position of the sun throughout the day so as to capture more drama, depth and color in the landscape. Sunrises come later and sunsets come earlier and the twilight works magic on the landscape unlike any other time of year. If there is snow on the ground, as there was in some places during my visit, it is an added bonus as the contrast between the white snow and colored rock formations is striking. Snow amounts vary each year and there is no guarantee there will be snow during a winter visit to Arches.

#### PHOTOGRAPHING DIFFERENT SITES IN ARCHES

Although I stayed in nearby Moab, I spent two full days in the park and wanted to get to and photograph as many structures as I could in the early or late hours of the day. I had a shooting plan and each day I arose before sunrise and was inside the park ready to photograph at first light. I remained there until well past sunset to maximize my time during the golden hours. Each day I concentrated on a different set of structures. Winter offers the advantage of a lower sun angle

adding depth to structures throughout the day, making it possible to get good compositions anytime. I can honestly say that no other season in Arches can compare with winter. It is the experience of a lifetime! My intent is to return to the park again in winter in the years ahead.

The first and last stop for me each day in Arches National Park is the Park Avenue viewpoint. This breathtaking view of a dry desert wash surrounded by immense sandstone monoliths on either side is reminiscent of the wide boulevard in New York City adorned with soaring skyscrapers. Hence, the name is Park Avenue. As impressive as the view is from the overlook, the enormity of the sandstone formations can only be felt taking the well-maintained one-mile-long trail from the overlook to the end of Park Avenue. Excellent views of the Courthouse Towers, The Organ, The Tower of Babel, The Tree Gossips and Sheep Rock await. This is an incredible location to capture wide-angle views and dramatic panoramas. Use a circular polarizer to deepen sky color and enhance the redness of the soil and structures.

On the afternoon of my first day, I planned to hike the 1.5-mile trail to Delicate Arch to capture images of the arch at sunset. Delicate Arch is one of the most iconic natural sandstone arches in Utah and, although it has been photographed a million times, it is totally worth the 50-minute hike up to the plateau. The arch sits at an elevation of 4829 feet. During the summer months, Delicate Arch is overrun with crowds of visitors and impossible to photograph in solitude during the sunset hours. As I made my ascent on a cold February afternoon to Delicate Arch, I encountered only a handful of people on their way back down the trail. When I arrived at the arch, I was shocked to find there was no one there! For almost two hours I had the entire place to myself! As I sat there in solitude enjoying the stark and breathtaking beauty of the landscape, I heard only the rush of the cold wind amongst the surrounding rock formations and the caw of ravens flying high overhead. The view and the silence were magical. As the sun dipped closer to the horizon, the arch shone with the most brilliant red I had ever seen set off by the backdrop of the majestic snowcapped La Sal Mountain range. I stayed there until well past sunset and watched and photographed the colors of the landscape as they changed from shades of red to salmon to purple as the night deepened with each passing minute. Another indelible memory made in Arches National Park.

Early in the morning of the second day, just before sunrise, I first stopped at Balanced Rock to capture an impressive silhouette of the structure against the backdrop of the brightening eastern sky. I then drove on to the Devil's Garden area at the northern end of the park to hike the mile-long trail leading to Landscape Arch. Landscape Arch is best viewed and photographed in the early morning hours and is stunning at first light. It is believed that Landscape Arch has the second longest span in the world although this point seems to be in dispute. With a span arcing 306 feet from base to base, geologists disagree on whether or not the arch is currently stable, as large pieces of the giant sandstone structure have broken off in recent years. Whilst some believe it will soon fall, others argue that the dropping of excess weight has actually strengthened the arch. Regardless, with the sandstone now only six feet thick at its thinnest point, hiking trails that used to snake underneath the arch have been closed for safety reasons. Be sure to use a wide-angle lens and a polarizer when photographing Landscape Arch to capture the full length of the span and enhance the color of



the red sandstone against the deep blue morning sky. This is also a good place to capture a panorama if you want a larger-scale image.

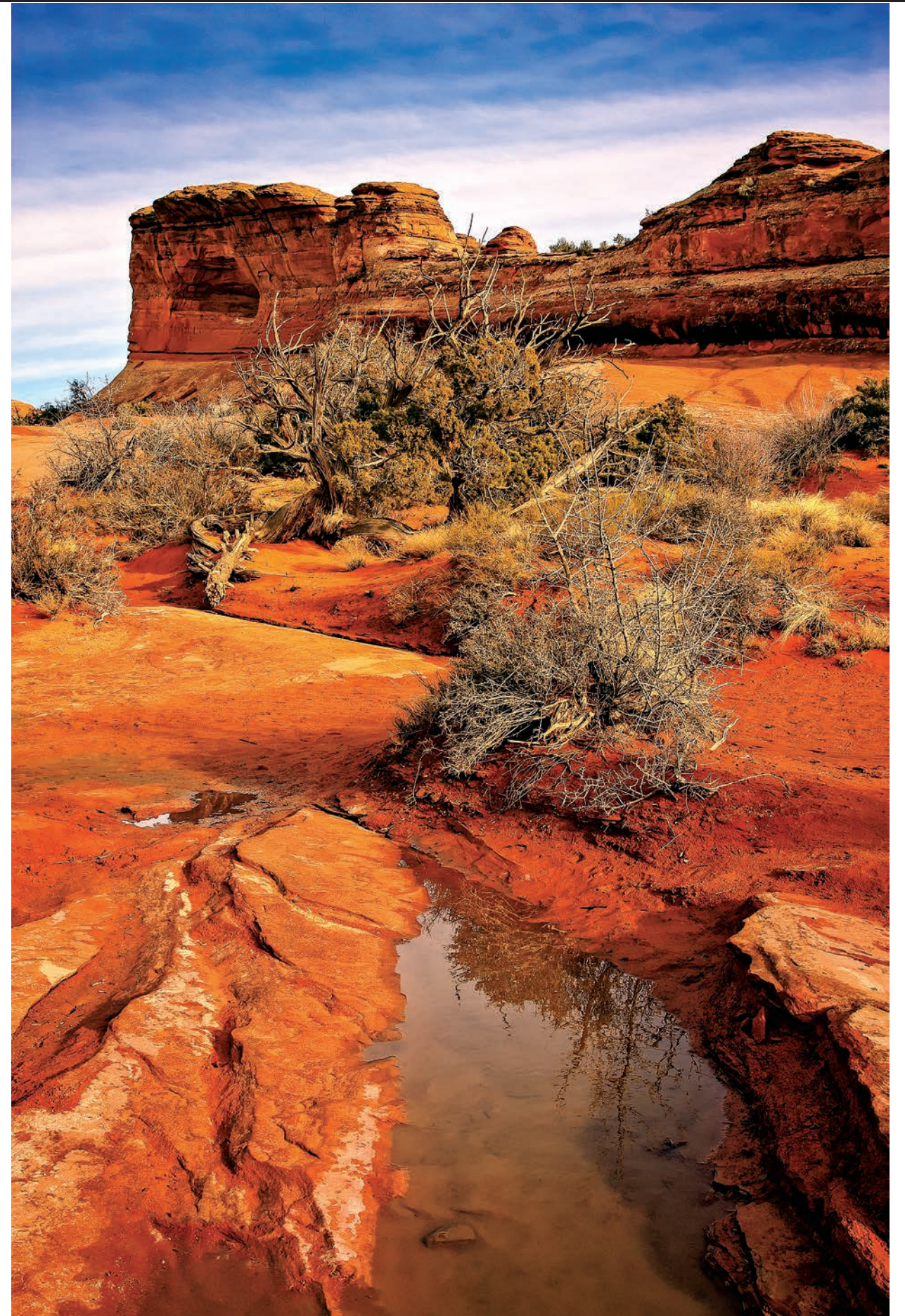
Continuing another mile on the same trail from Landscape Arch will lead to Double O Arch and Dark Angel Arch. Returning on the trail past Landscape Arch it is possible to see Pine Tree Arch and Skyline Arch. All of these structures are well lit in the morning hours. I recommend using wide-angle lenses to contextualize the natural arches with the surrounding structures and low to medium telephoto lenses to isolate the arches for dramatic affect. This will provide a variety of striking landscape compositions. The Devil's Garden area contains some of the most stunning arches in the entire park and is an extraordinary place to explore. There is so much to experience that it would be easy to spend days there.

In the late afternoon and evening hours and staying well past sunset on the second day, I explored the Windows section of the park. This area, noted for large rock formations, is home to four very impressive arches. The main attractions are the North and South Windows. Also known as the Spectacles, these two arches stand side by side, though separated by some distance, cut from the same sandstone fin. A large nose separates the Spectacle Arches visually from the southwest, made of a gigantic fin remnant over 100 feet wide. Approaching the North and South Windows, it is possible to stand under the massive South Window and experience the size of the opening. Walking through the South Window, there is a primitive loop trail that circles around the back of the Windows section that provides a different perspective of the area. This site is well suited for photography in the early morning and late afternoon and evening hours and presents

Arches National Park, Utah, by Thomas S. Parry.

Below: Canon EOS M, Canon EF16-35mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 25mm, f/8 at 1/1000 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

Facing Page: Ephemeral pool in the Courthouse Towers area. Canon EOS 40D, Canon EF24-70mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 24mm, f/11 at 1/200 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.





an almost infinite number of compositions to photograph. A wide-angle lens is best when up close to the arches and trying to capture unique angles and points of view.

Situated directly southwest of North and South Windows sits Turret Arch with its vigilant tower. The fin that Turret Arch is carving away is over 100 feet wide, but the arch itself is relatively young and small. There is a secondary, smaller arch directly to the right of the main arch, and it is possible, within a few hundred thousand years or so, the two of them will join to create a larger arch.

The giant Double Arch takes its name because it consists of two arches that share the same stone as a foundation for both of their outer legs. Double Arch was formed by downward water erosion from atop the sandstone, rather than from side-to-side water erosion. It is possible to hike up inside Double Arch and, using a wide-angle lens, capture extraordinary angles and perspectives of the arches. Almost any time of the day is a good time to photograph at Double Arch with its southern exposure to the sun, especially in winter. Just to the south of Double Arch lies a lone section of sandstone,

the remnants of the fin to which Double Arch used to belong. The rock formation suggests the appearance of a herd of elephants, holding each others' tails, traveling single file.

**SOME FINAL THOUGHTS**

I could spend a lifetime exploring Arches and never see it all nor would I ever tire of its dramatic red landscape, exquisite desert skies, magnificent sunrises and sunsets and ever-changing seasons. This park is a paradise for photographers no matter what season of the year and, while everything in Arches has been photographed thousands of times, the changing seasons and extraordinary light make it possible for each photograph captured to be a unique and exquisite composition.

Winter, for me, is a unique and beautiful time to experience Arches with fewer people, little traffic, beautiful light and cooler temperatures. It presents opportunities for solitude, contemplation, exploration and personal renewal unlike any other time of the year. It will leave an indelible impression upon you that will last a lifetime. NP



Landscape Arch in early morning, Arches National Park, Utah, by Thomas S. Parry. Canon EOS M, Canon EF16-35mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 16mm, f/11 at 1/400 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 250.

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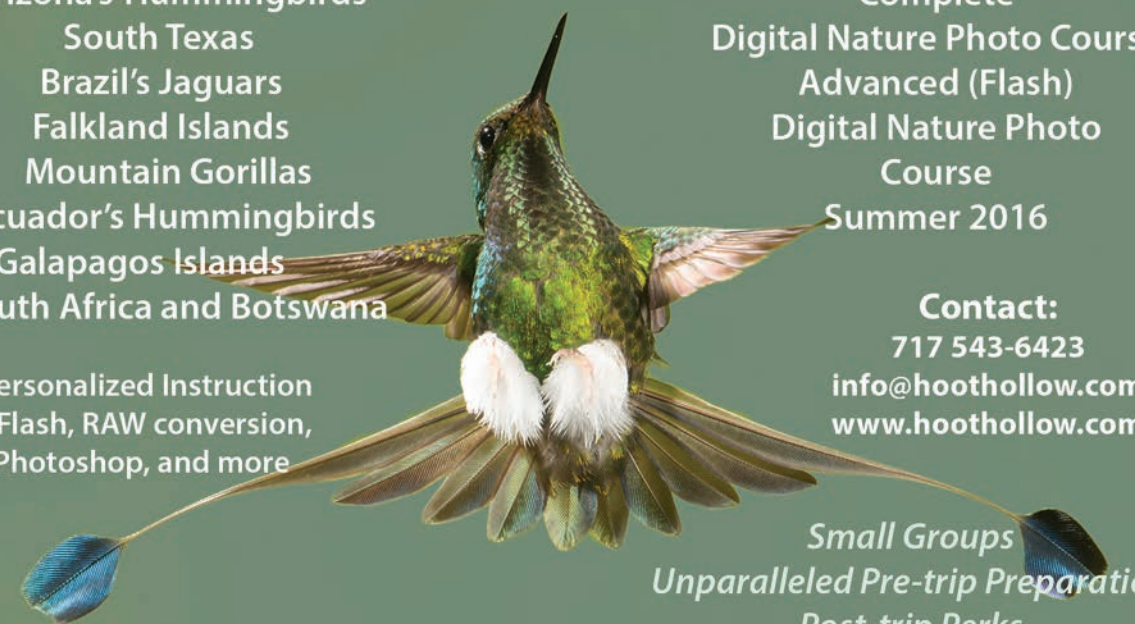
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# MAPLEWOOD MUDDLATS

Article and Photography by Karen Denise Evans, Field Contributor

Karen's web site: <http://www.karenevansphotography.ca> (Click for Live Link)



Juvenile golden eagle, Maplewood Mudflats, North Vancouver, by Karen Denise Evans. Nikon D200, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 300mm, f/5.6 at 1/125 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 250.

Digital capture by Karen Denise Evans

Tucked along the Burrard Inlet in the District of North Vancouver is a piece of land the locals call “the Mudflats”, “Maplewood Flats” or simply “the bird sanctuary”. It is officially called Maplewood Conservation Area. This nature reserve is a five-minute drive from my house and is my go-to photography haven whenever I have the sudden urge to grab my camera and get outside to capture nature in all its glory. I have heard it suggested to writers that they should write what they know so maybe it rings true for photographers, in a sense, to shoot where you are.

The mudflats is approximately 310 acres of land situated on federally owned land and is managed by the Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia. With only a 25-minute drive out of Vancouver’s busy downtown core east of the Iron Workers’ Memorial Bridge, you can find yourself in this amazing little nature reserve boasting over 230 species and subspecies of birds sighted annually and hosting a variety of wildlife. It is aptly referred to as a sanctuary, not only for the birds but also for the folks who come out in all seasons to bird watch, to walk the five or six nature trails, or to sit on a bench listening to the waves while reading a book. I come here to take pictures.

I have been photographing the mudflats for ten or more years now without knowing much about its history. From my many visits to this spot, an interest in its history began to grow in me and so I started digging into its past. Much to my surprise, it turns out this area has a rich and colorful past as much as it has a natural abundance of beauty found here today.

During the 1930s and 1940s, much of the foreshore of the Burrard Inlet was a squatters’ paradise including these mudflats. Over the next three decades, the Inlet was home to a community of artists, writers, hippies and free spirits who lived in small shacks, cabins, lean-tos and driftwood-constructed ramshackle huts on pilings. The famous British writer and poet, Malcolm Lowry, lived for many years in a small cabin in this area with his wife during the 1940s until 1954, where history tells us he wrote some or most of his famous novel *Under the Volcano*. An annual music festival carrying the same name as his novel continues to be a community event a kilometer or so down the road at Cates Park, another squatters’ community in the Inlet from back in the day.

In 1961, a lumber company purchased the land, forcing the hippies out by bulldozing some of their shacks into

the ground. Interestingly enough, during the early 1970s the hippies and free spirits moved back into the foreshore hoping to escape city life and the establishment. They created a peaceful community where artists, poets, writers and musicians, along with their children, lived once again off the land and away from mainstream society. The area had no sanitation, running water or electricity, which caused The District of North Vancouver great concern, so eviction notices were served but to no avail. The District took unthinkable action and burned down some of the dwellings on December 17, 1971 and many more of these huts received the same consequences the following year in 1972. The bulk of the squatters relocated to different areas but some stayed on longer with the last resident leaving in 1986. The District’s reasoning for razing of the tract, besides the obvious sanitary concerns, was a waterfront shopping mall development planned for the site, which, thankfully, never did take place. Instead in 1989, with much intervention and lobbying by local naturalists, Maplewood Flats was declared a conservation area!

If you are curious to see what this locale looked like during the hippy era, there is a short documentary film produced by a few of the residents who lived there during the early 1970s. The film—*Mudflats Living*—can be viewed for free through the National Film Board of Canada’s website at [www.nfb.ca](http://www.nfb.ca).

Today, the Maplewood Conservation Area is as diverse and colorful as its past. The reserve is surrounded by the ocean and consists of saltwater marshes, an intertidal mudflat system, freshwater ponds and marshes, forests of cottonwoods, alders and mountain ash and open meadows full of flowers, grasses and shrubs. There exists a plethora of birdlife as well as ample wildlife such as black-tailed deer, river otter, harbor seal, black and grey squirrels, butterflies, dragonflies, turtles, tree frogs and the occasional black bear (which luckily I haven’t run into yet). Maplewood is an IBA designated site—part of a global network of places recognized for its outstanding value to bird conservation.

As I mentioned, this is my go-to place for photographing nature. I think we should all have a place like this to escape to with our cameras. I know it is important to me and perhaps it is to you too. I can’t wait until my next big trip to get out into nature, so for that spontaneous quick fix when I need to be surrounded by nature and want to get lost behind my



camera creating beautiful nature shots, I come here. There is definitely a strong pull for most nature photographers to go to an exotic land and photograph the unique animals and scenery found there—but we cannot always have that luxury. I am no exception to this desire as I love to travel to exotic places to capture everything new and fascinating, but again this is a luxury for me and not always practical. Maplewood Conservation Area is a good substitute for me and I get just as filled up creatively here as anywhere else.

To create this go-to place for yourself, I would humbly suggest picking a spot within a 10- to 15-minute drive so you can easily access it from home. I know for myself, if it seems like it is too far to go and I will end up in traffic, I will most likely make some lame excuse to stay put and will just scrap the whole spontaneity of getting out there. You want to avoid this so do not make it a big deal by picking a photographic locale too far away. There are ample nature parks within an hour or two drive to where I live but I tend to hit these spots when I have the time to be away for a good chunk of the day and, in which case, I usually hook up with a photography gal-pal—

which requires more planning than what I am talking about here.

Fog can roll in over the mudflats in the early mornings during the fall and winter months and when combined with the decayed pilings left over from the hippy era, this weather phenomenon can help to create striking west coast photographs. But I have to get there quickly as the fog isn't going to wait for me to show up. This is another reason to pick a spot that is close by. During these cooler months of the year, if I wake up and see fog out my window, I can act pretty fast and be there while the fog is still lingering over the land. So for the quick creativity fix, pick a place you can get to in a relatively short period of time.

Try to find a place that will offer a diversity of nature, like trees and flowers mixed with a body of water such as a stream or a pond. Birdlife is sure to be around this type of an environment too. Maplewood allows me lots of opportunity to create beautiful nature images and I find I experiment more here than when I am away on a big trip. From birds, to wildlife, to the tidal pools and marshes, to a variety of trees

Fog on the mudflats, Maplewood Mudflats, North Vancouver, by Karen Denise Evans. Nikon D800, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 300mm, f/16 at 1/50 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 250.



Maplewood Mudflats, North Vancouver, by Karen Denise Evans.

Above: Autumn beach. Nikon D800, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/14 at 1/250 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 250.

Below: Pond reflections. Nikon D800, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 200mm, f/18 at 1/15 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 1600.





and plants, I have many subjects available to capture with my camera throughout all four seasons experienced here on the west coast of British Columbia.

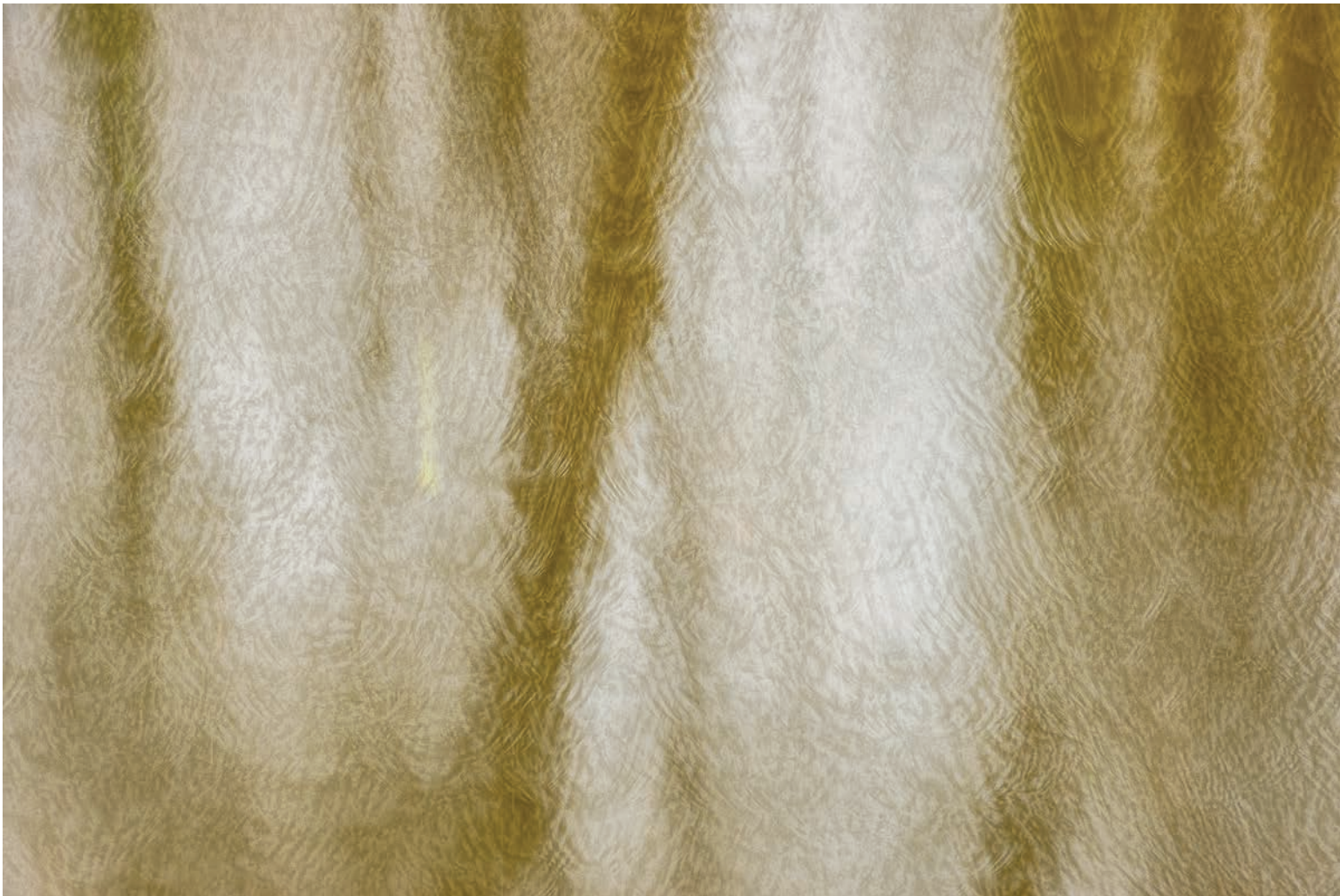
I have been exploring abstract photography from nature scenes recently, and find the mudflats present me with a great opportunity in its cottonwood and alder forests to experiment with different techniques and ideas. Another interesting way to photograph nature that I have been experimenting with lately is capturing reflections in the water, but this occurs only when the light is right. Down at the mudflats I can take the time to capture dramatic scenes reflected in the small ponds or the saltwater sloughs, or I can come back when the light is right. Which is another good reason to have a go-to place nearby, so you can easily return to the area to recreate your shot when the light is different or better. We can't always go back to a certain spot in the Maasai Mara to photograph that lion in different lighting conditions.

Here are a few more ideas to make it easier on you for the spontaneous photography shoot at your special place. I always have a tripod in the trunk of my car so this important piece of equipment does not get missed when I want to get away from my computer, or a sink full of dirty dishes, and jump in the car before I change my mind. I carry an old beach blanket in the trunk too just in case I need something to kneel

or sit on during one of my excursions. Another important thing I do with the spontaneous photo session in mind is to have a spare camera battery plugged in under my computer desk at all times so I will have a fresh battery available at any given moment. Nothing is worse than ending up at a nature park raring to go to discover your camera has half battery power. I also keep my camera gear on the same shelf in my studio and fairly well organized so I can easily grab it when I want to leave the house. When I think I might want to experiment with long exposure that day, my ND filters, cable release and exposure chart is usually together in the same spot.

These small tips and simple practices help me to react quickly when the creative urge strikes. Perhaps they may work for you too.

In conclusion, I hope you will consider finding a go-to place for yourself so you can keep happy by getting your creative juices flowing and creating awesome nature photographs. I know for myself, life would be pretty bleak if I wasn't making photographs. Here is a final thought—I do not think any of us needs to go on extensive and expensive trips to make beautiful pictures; quite often they are right there in our own backyard. Of course, this doesn't stop me from booking my next exotic photography adventure back to Africa, Namibia this time, a few months from now. NP



Rain abstract (pond reflections), Maplewood Mudflats, North Vancouver, by Karen Denise Evans. Nikon D800, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 200mm, f/20 at 1/4 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 320.

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# WINTER SOLITUDE

Article and Photography by David DesRochers, Field Contributor

David's web site: [www.desrochersphotography.com](http://www.desrochersphotography.com) (Click for Live Link)



Images by David DesRochers.

Above: Winter rainbow, Lake Minnewanka, Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF14mm F2.8L II USM lens, f/22, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

Facing Page: Winter scenic, Grundarfjörður, Iceland. Canon EOS 7D, Canon 150-500mm lens, focal length 189mm, f/8 at 1/200, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 640.

If you have ever visited some of the iconic photo locations in spring, summer, or fall, I feel sure you found yourself standing side by side with several other photo enthusiasts, all waiting to capture an image that had been captured many times before. Moderate temperatures, summer vacation schedules and fall colors draw crowds to the most popular destinations, and finding your own private spot on our planet to engage in your art becomes more of a challenge every year. So what is a nature photographer to do? Backpacking into a wilderness area is one option but venturing out on the trails requires proper conditioning, the right equipment and, most important, wilderness training.

There is a second option. Take advantage of nature's crowd filtering system—the cold weather of winter. When the days get shorter and the temperatures drop, many photographers spend their days at a computer working on the photos taken during the more moderate seasons. For those willing to invest in some warm clothing, heading out on a photo expedition in some of the coldest regions on the planet will present opportunities to capture some truly unique images and to experience nature in a very spiritual way.



*NATIONAL PARKS*

The first time I visited Arches National Park it was during peak tourist season. I hiked to Delicate Arch for sunset looking forward to capturing the arch bathed in the golden light of the setting sun. I arrived about thirty minutes before sunset which was clearly too late. As I searched for a space near the arch to set up my tripod, it became apparent that my photo would be similar to those taken by the other eight photographers waiting for that magic moment. Just as the light became magical, a tourist decided that it was the perfect time to pose under the arch so his friend can take a snapshot (not to be confused with a photograph). Some of my fellow artists made it quite clear that his appearance in their photos was unwelcome. As the light faded, I packed up and headed back to the car, content that I had my photo of Delicate Arch.

A few years later I received a call from my friend, Roman Kurywczak. He had started his photo tour business and wanted me to join him on an exploratory trip to Arches National Park to focus on night photography. He scheduled the trip in February to take advantage of the long clear nights as well as the low number of visitors. We visited all the popular spots in Arches and Canyonlands and I was delighted to find we were the only two people there. We hiked up to Delicate Arch in the dark and unlike my previous visit, we photographed for hours with no one in sight. Mesa Arch in Canyonlands is another big draw for landscape photographers for the classic sunrise shot. Again, when we arrived, we had the location to ourselves.



Arches National Park, Utah, by David DesRochers.

Above: Balance Rock. Canon EOS 40D, Canon EF-S17-85mm F4-5.6 IS USM lens, focal length 35mm, f/25 at 1/6, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

Facing Page: Star trails over South Window. Canon EOS 40D, Canon EF-S17-85mm F4-5.6 IS USM lens, focal length 35mm, f/4.5 at 3669 seconds (56 minutes and 15 seconds), evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.





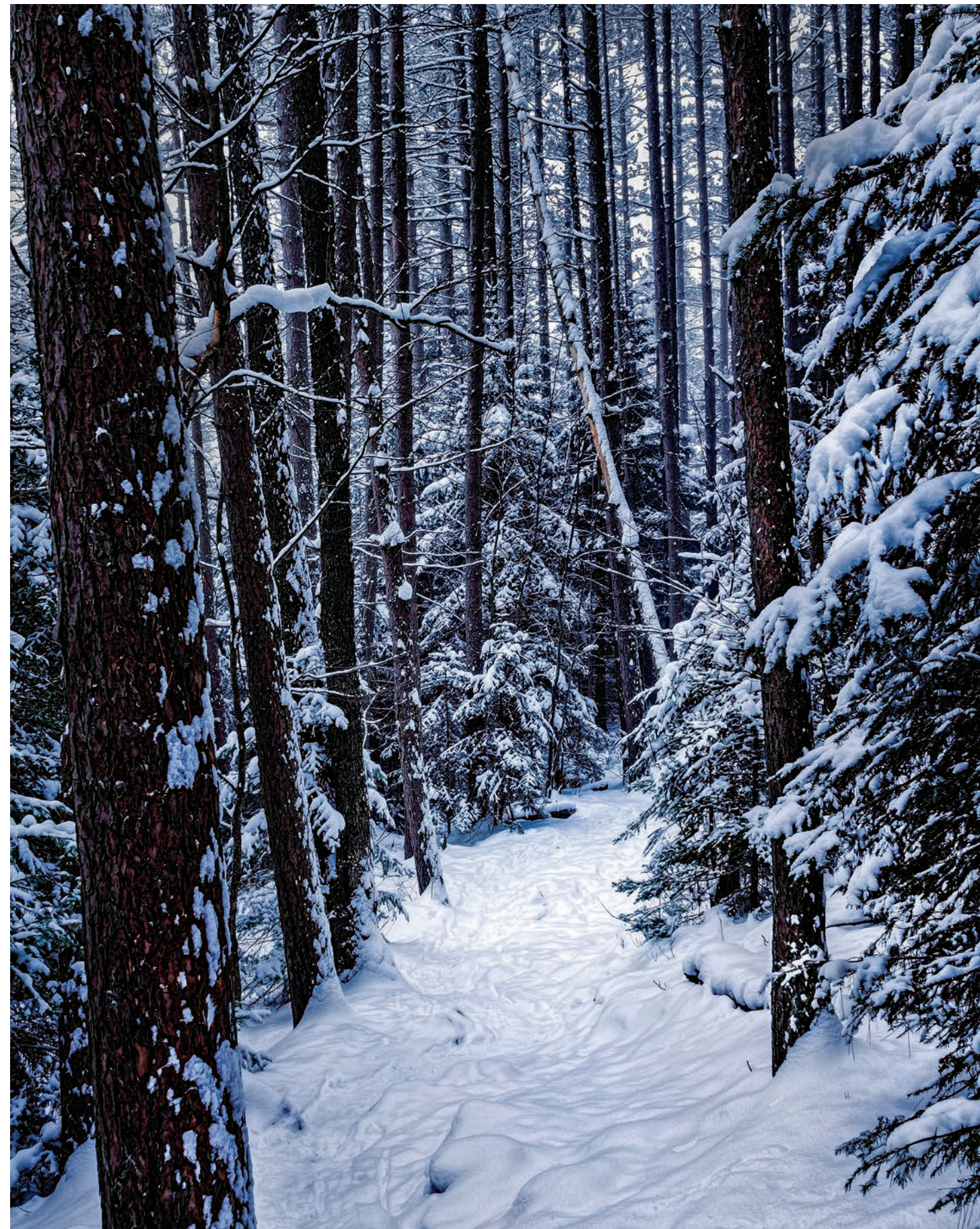


Images by David DesRochers.

Above: Lake Louise, Banff National Park, Alberta, Canada. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF14mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 14mm, f/22 at 1/6, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

Below: Lenticular clouds over Budir, Snaefellsnes Peninsula, Iceland. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF24-105mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 75mm, f/8, evaluative metering mode, auto bracket exposure mode, ISO 800.

Facing Page: Adirondack Park trail near Heart Lake, New York. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF28-135mm f/3.5-5.6 IS USM lens, focal length 38mm, f/5 at 1/18, center-weighted average metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.





CANADA

With dreams of photographing the northern lights, I traveled to Churchill in northern Manitoba, Canada. My journey began in the city of Winnipeg where I boarded the Winnipeg-Churchill train for a 1000 plus mile trip through a vast subarctic region. The train ride was enjoyable but I was looking forward to arriving at my destination. I arrived midday and thankfully the sun was shining. I was aware that Churchill was cold in February but nothing prepared me for the biting winds and minus 30 degree temperatures.

Over the next three nights, I ventured out into the cold dark night waiting for the light show to begin. Thankfully, the cold weather clothing I wore made it possible for me to explore the night time wilderness and the sense of solitude in this unique landscape gave me a sense of serenity. NP



Northern lights, Mount Kirkjufell, Grundarfjörður, Iceland, by David DesRochers. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 17mm, f/4 at 10 seconds, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 1250.

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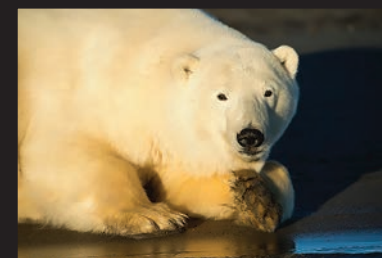
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# WHAT IF?

Article and Photography by Mike Bachman, Field Contributor

Mike's web site: <http://www.mikebachman.com> (Click for Live Link)



Warm dreamscape, by Mike Bachman. Nikon D700, Nikkor 28-300mm F3.5-5.6 lens, focal length 48mm, f/16 at 1/350 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 1100. Two photos are combined. MB

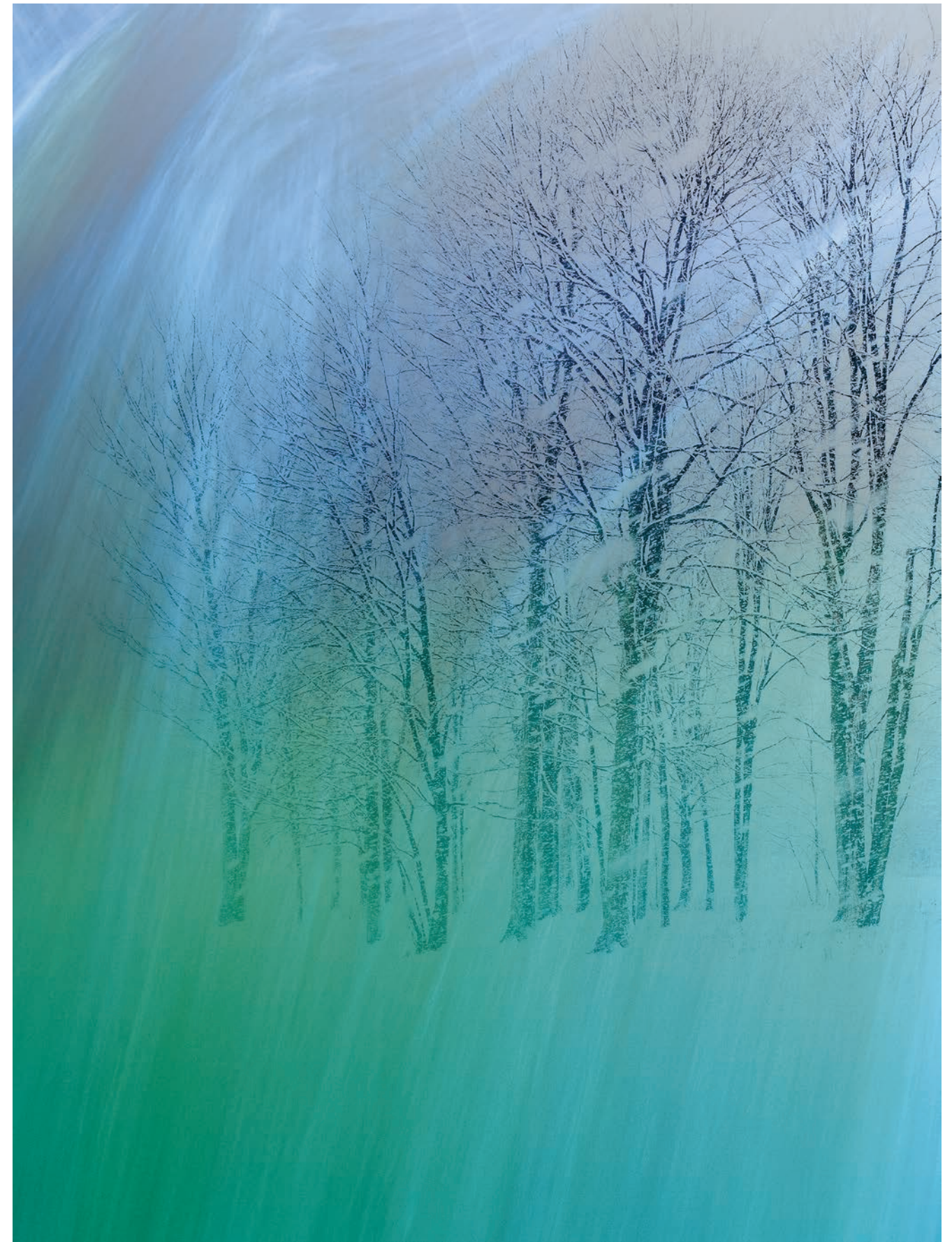
As nature photographers we need to explore. I don't necessarily mean we put on a 20-pound pack and hike into the mountains in search of new photo opportunities, although that is not a bad idea. I mean we need to explore and experiment with new ideas and directions.

Everyone loves a mountain landscape with snow-covered peaks reflected in a glacial lake, or a sunrise on a misty morn-

ing or silkened water in a fast-moving stream. But, what if? What if we shot with the camera out-of-focus instead of creating a tack-sharp image using a tripod and the mirror-up feature?

What if we zoomed in tight with that long lens and noticed the intricate details in a scene; the interplay of colors, lines, shapes and textures?

Digital capture by Mike Bachman



Cool dreamscape, by Mike Bachman. Nikon D700, Nikkor 50mm F1.4 lens, f/11 at 1/250 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 1600. Two photos are combined. MB



## WHAT IF?

What if we didn't hold the camera steady? Instead, we panned vertically, horizontally, slightly shook the camera or used a swish?

What if we tried to use that multiple exposure "thingy" in the shooting menu, provided we have that feature? Mine can

take up to 10 shots; film buffs will sometimes take up to 20 shots.

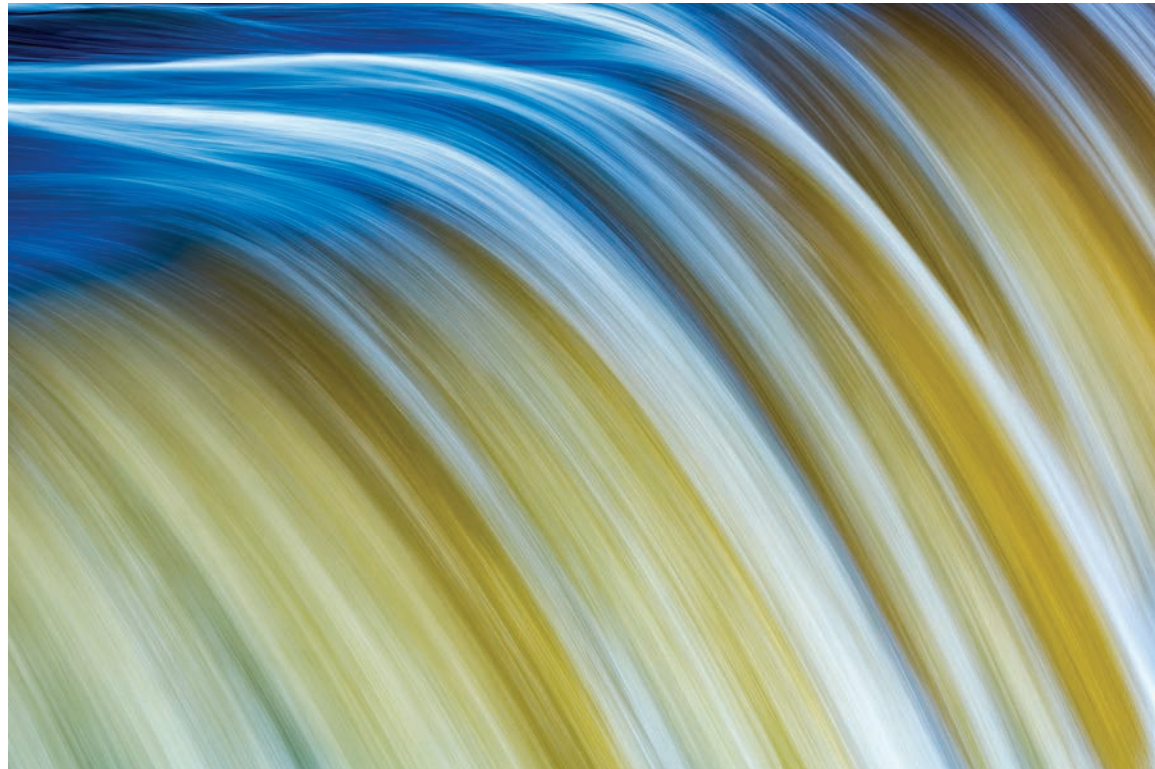
What if within our software program we duplicated an image, blurred one and dropped it on top of the other and played around with the opacity and blending modes?



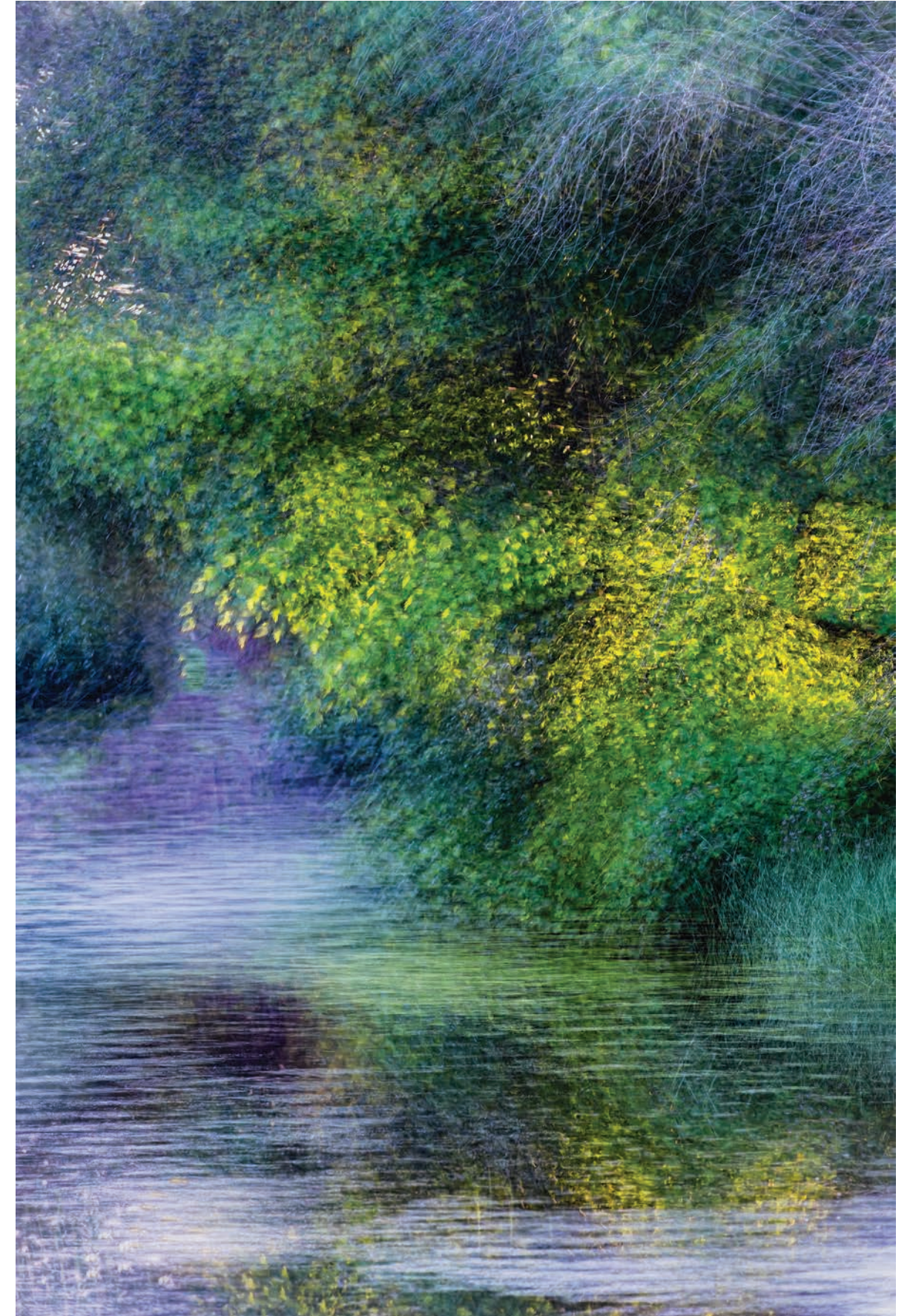
Photos by Mike Bachman.

Above: Winter dreamscape. Nikon D810, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 116mm, f/16 at 1/13 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 64. Two images are combined on a panorama. MB

Below: Design. Nikon D810, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 100mm, f/14 at 0.8 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 64.



Pond, by Mike Bachman. Nikon D810, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 195mm, f/7.1 at 1/13 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200. Ten multiple in-camera exposures make this image. MB





What if we duplicated the image, rotated it and placed it on top of the original?

What if we combined two different images in our software to create a dreamscape? It is possible to collect images that work well with this technique; for example, shots of waterfalls, skies, sand dunes, snow drifts. Why not make a collection of such images for this purpose?

What if we applied a texture to a photograph? There are many available online, some cost nothing. Besides, we could make collections of our own. Photograph skies, tiles, pebbles on a beach, rusty fenders on old cars, sides of barns, oil spills, peeling paint on walls—the possibilities are endless!

What if we tried some of the more obscure presets in our software plug-ins? I particularly like the midnight preset in “coloreffex pro”.

These are neither my ideas nor are they particularly new. They are employed by many photographers seeking to express what they feel. There are also many online tutorials and books that explain such ideas in detail.

I recently participated in a workshop at St. Martins, New Brunswick, on the Bay of Fundy under the tutelage of Freeman Patterson and Andre Gallant. Both men encouraged the group to try different techniques to discover new directions. Not to cater to what others wanted, but to find our own style, to follow our own hearts. If you choose to do so, you may be surprised and pleased with some of the results.

And, if you are like me, you probably have a large collection of old photos on your hard drive just waiting to be resurrected. Instead of watching your favorite TV sitcom, or complaining about the snowstorm, or cleaning the kitchen, why not dig into your archives and try something new? You might find yourself heading off in an entirely different direction—one which will bring new life to your photography. NP



Cattails and loosestrife, by Mike Bachman. Nikon 200mm F4 lens, f/8 at 1/8 second, matrix metering mode, 200mm f/4 exposure mode, ISO 64. Multiple in-camera exposures make this image. MB

*“Photography has always been a major part of my vision: my excuse for meddling with what the world looks like.”*  
Robert Rauschenberg

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2016/2017 Workshop Schedule  
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OCT. 9 – 15, 2016  
OCT. 1 – 7, 2017  
OCT. 8 – 14, 2017

YELLOWSTONE BY SNOWCOACH  
JAN. 22 – 28, 2017  
JAN. 29 – FEB. 4, 2017  
FEB. 5 – 11, 2017

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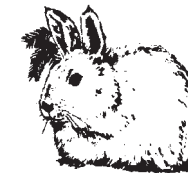
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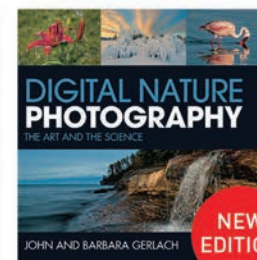
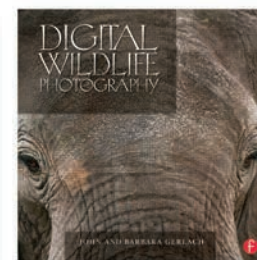
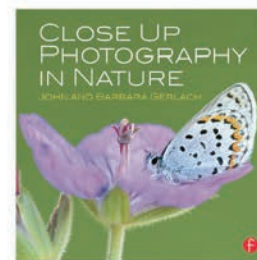
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# YOSEMITE BEYOND THE ICONS

Article and Photography by Stan Ford, Field Contributor

Stan's e-mail: [fotosbyford@gmail.com](mailto:fotosbyford@gmail.com) (Click for Live Link)

For many of us who are drawn to nature photography, we can point to images of Yosemite National Park as peaking our interest or being our inspiration. Ansel Adams is one of the most recognized names in photography and when we think of his images, we think first of his work in Yosemite.

After camping in Yosemite, Theodore Roosevelt commented: "It was like lying in a great solemn cathedral, far vaster and more beautiful than any built by the hand of man." John Muir said, "It is by far the grandest of all the special temples of nature I was ever permitted to enter."



Digital capture by Stan Ford



Yosemite National Park, by Stan Ford.  
Above: Merced River.  
Left: Happy Isles.



This year, we celebrate 100 years of the National Park Service but it all began a half century earlier with the Yosemite Grant Act (1864) signed by President Lincoln.

There are likely few locations as photographed as Yosemite, yet it remains at the top of most photographers' bucket list. For some reason, we want our own images of Half Dome, El Capitan, Yosemite Falls, Tunnel View and the Horsetail Fall "firefall" even though it has been done before—many, many times.

These iconic features are certainly special but there is so much more to Yosemite. I personally believe the best part of photographing Yosemite is beyond the icons. One stop at the Ansel Adams Gallery and looking at the work of William Neill, Keith Walklet and Charlie Cramer will forever change your vision of the park and set you on a new course.

Fortunately for nature photographers, the best opportunities to capture the depth of the park is during the less crowded times.

Winter offers the expected ice, snow and bare trees but also an abundance of what is commonly referred to as Charlie light named after the great Charles Cramer. This phenomenon is when a subject is both front lit and back lit from the same, single source: the sun. The granite walls surrounding the valley reflect the light onto the opposite side of the valley thus creating this unique lighting source. Since front light is the light left over when all of the good light is used up, it helps to have Charlie light. The tall walls surrounding the valley also make it possible to photograph anywhere without having the sky in your images.



Luke's tree, Yosemite National Park, by Stan Ford.



Yosemite National Park, by Stan Ford.

Above: Rainbow Ice  
Below: Merced River.



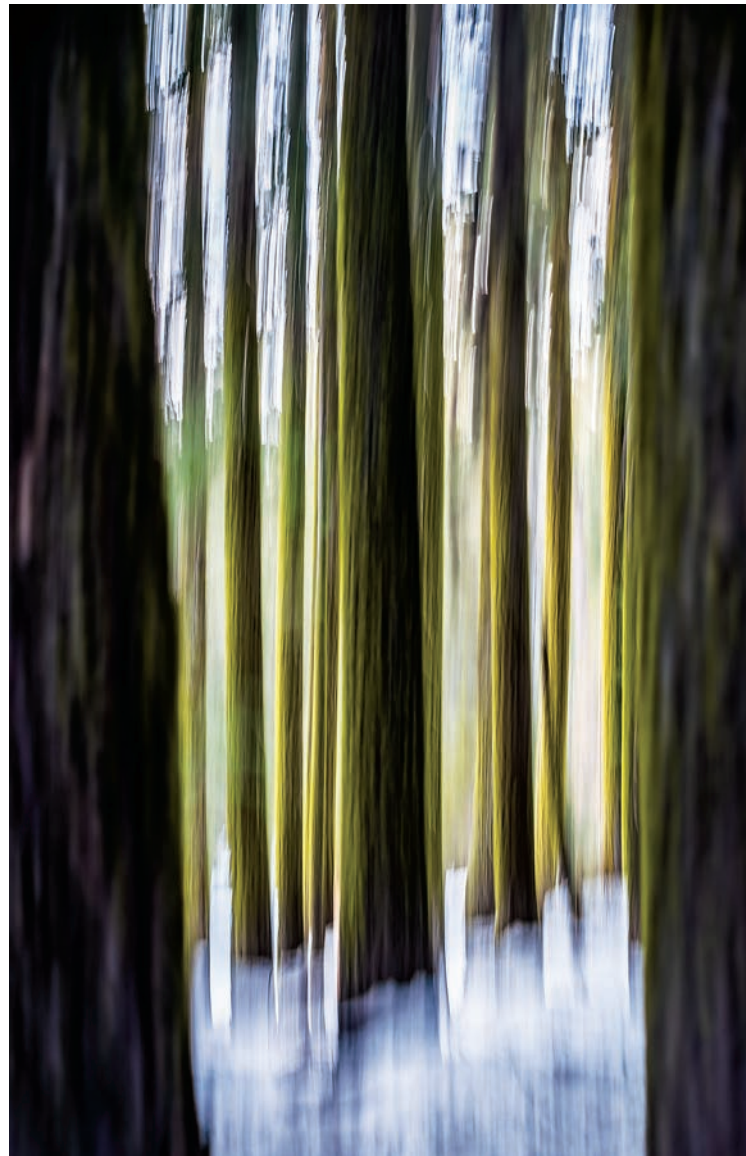


Knowing when and where the light will hit certain areas is both a challenge and rewarding. Fortunately, this information is easily obtained. One morning I waited over an hour for the light to hit the Three Brothers and finally realized it was not going to happen so I walked downstream. I found an interesting area where the water was flowing over some rocks. As I began shooting, the light started reflecting onto the water. It was the “perfect storm” of conditions. This location was not noted in any guides I had read but I happened upon it—the right amount of water and the right angle of light. I shot until the light was gone—about 30 minutes. I had wanted images of the Three Brothers but was rewarded with unique and more interesting images.

The reflected light also makes for some interesting ice images. Get the morning sun at your back and use a polarizer and you can get a rainbow of colors in the ice. It can be overwhelming. This is when creativity is rewarded. Walk the banks of the river and find a formation you like and then wait for the light.

Another unexpected subject was discovering the large number of lady bugs that spend the winter in the valley. While walking down to the river (just a few yards from the parking area), I came upon the ladies climbing on plants and a fallen tree. When I brushed away some snow, I uncovered hundreds of them, forgot about the river and quickly filled a memory card.

Perhaps the best-known winter images are now the firefall shots of Horsetail Fall. This year was a particularly good year for Horsetail Fall thanks to El Nino. During the drought years there was not much water, if any, flowing over El Capitan (i.e., Horsetail Fall). I admit I have taken shots of the firefall but my favorite image of Horsetail Fall was taken on a day when clouds blocked the sun preventing the firefall.



Crane Flat, Yosemite National Park, by Stan Ford.



Horsetail Fall, Yosemite National Park, by Stan Ford.



Spring brings the dogwoods and many animals to the valley, as well as the melting snow. The direction of the sun is different but Charlie light still rules. This is a time when I prefer Happy Isles and the waterfalls.

In May, each night at sunset is the opportunity to see Bridalveil Fall present a rainbow. A young man (approximately 8 years old) once asked me how I got a rainbow into the waterfall. I had no response. But I do recall being as excited as a child when I saw the rainbow and fired away.

Once in the valley, any of these locations can be reached in just minutes. However, the time spent photographing Yosemite will take hours and days and the memories will last forever. NP

Bridalveil Rainbow, Yosemite National Park, by Stan Ford.

*“It is easier to feel  
than to realize,  
or in any way explain,  
Yosemite grandeur.  
The magnitudes of the rocks  
and trees and streams  
are so delicately harmonized,  
they are mostly hidden.”  
John Muir*



Focal Length: 600mm Exposure: F/7.1 1/1250sec ISO: 1600



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# SAFARI IN MAKALALI

Article and Photography by James O. Day, Field Contributor

James' web site: [www.jdaypix.com](http://www.jdaypix.com) (Click for Live Link)

When my good friend, John Miller, invited me last year to join him in the South African bush for a wildlife photography trip, it was just too good an opportunity to pass up. There would be just us four photographers, our guide and a cook. Guides in South Africa, locally known as rangers, have to complete rigorous training and are experts in the local wildlife and plant life. Our guide proved to be no exception.

I began my journey alone from Atlanta to Johannesburg, joining the other members of the group, who had arrived a couple of weeks earlier. After spending the night near the airport, we took a commuter flight on South African Airlines to Hoedspruit, a small town in northeastern South Africa. We were met there by shuttle and traveled about two hours into the bush to the 60,000-acre Makalali Wildlife Reserve.



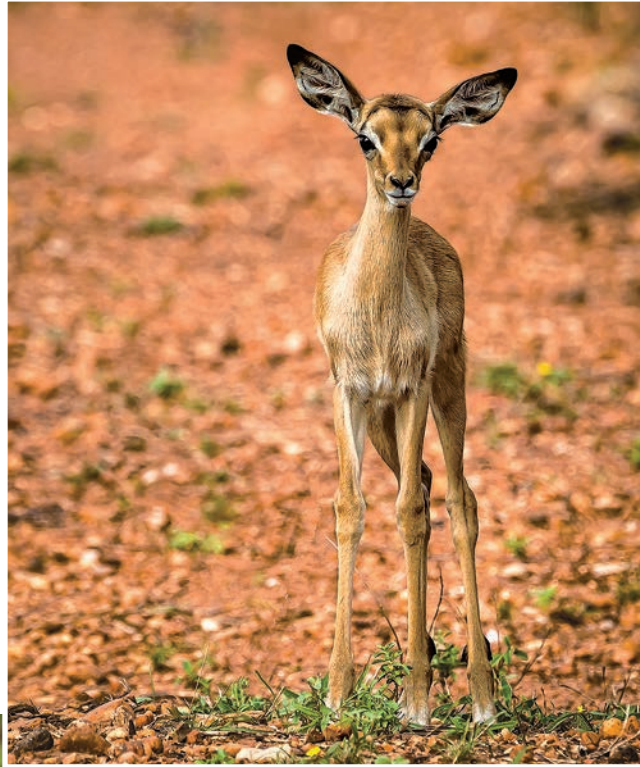
Images in Makalali, South Africa, by James O. Day.

Above: Elephant after mud and water bath. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 80mm, f/58 at 1/400 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 800.

Facing Page: Leopard. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/5.6 at 1/125 second, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

Digital capture by James O. Day





Images in Makalali, South Africa, by James O. Day.

Left: Impala. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/9 at 1/180 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

Below: Lion. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 220mm, f/8 at 1/250 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 800.

Facing Page: Lilac-breasted roller. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/5.6 at 1/800 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 500.



Our accommodations in Makalali were tent chalets, consisting of canvas walls and thatched roofs on wooden foundations. Electricity was by generator only a few hours a day for recharging camera batteries and laptops. There was no television, cell phone service, newspapers, or Internet. That actually proved to be an added bonus.

After arriving in our camp, we wasted no time. Our guide took us on our first game drive in a Range Rover, a tough

open vehicle with three rows of seats for passengers. Range Rovers reminded me of a tank since they can go virtually anywhere. In no time, we were photographing giraffes, impalas, zebras, and lions up close, many times closer than 10 feet. Photographing in the bush proved to have some advantages over large national parks like Kruger. We could drive off road and follow animals almost anywhere, compared to Kruger where you have to stay on the road. After the afternoon light





dimmed, we made our way back to camp for salmon quiche and salad, and were in bed by 9:00 p.m.

Our morning routine started around 4:30 a.m., light breakfast and coffee at 5:00 a.m., and leaving in the Range Rover by 5:30 a.m. Makalali was full of wildebeests, zebras, impalas, giraffes, and an occasional group of baboons and monkeys. On our third day, we found a pair of cheetahs in the morning with a fresh kill and then photographed a pride of lions in the afternoon. Every day around 10:00 a.m., we would head back to camp for brunch and to rest until late afternoon game drives from 4:30 p.m. until dark.

Early in our stay, we were fortunate to spend a couple of days shooting with well-known South African nature photographer, Albie Venter. He was a tremendous help with shooting tips and technique. When we left in the dim morning light, it was necessary to frequently photograph with a higher ISO, generally around 800 and sometimes higher. Albie suggested that we generally use f/5.6 for single animals and f/8 if we needed more depth of field, such as with groups of animals. He also encouraged us to be more aggressive at

increasing our ISO to allow photographing at higher shutter speeds to help promote sharper images. A little bit of noise is easy to deal with, but a blurred photo due to a slow shutter speed cannot be fixed in post-processing. I tried to use 1/500 second or faster most of the time, although I did make some images at slower speeds. I always used continuous-servo autofocus (AF-C) and aperture priority. My shooting mode was generally set for continuous high speed. It was also very helpful to learn how to back focus, separating the shutter function from focusing. This was done by assigning one of the back buttons to focus only. I was amazed at how much this improved my technique with a little practice.

My primary camera was a Nikon D600 with a Nikkor 80-400mm lens, and I also had a Nikon D300s and Nikkor 70-200mm F4 lens, which I hardly used. Most of our image making was handheld and up close. It was much too awkward to photograph from inside a vehicle with a tripod, and none of us wanted the extra weight with our airline luggage. We did occasionally use a monopod, and retrospectively I should have used mine more.



Images in Makalali, South Africa, by James O. Day.

Above: Zebra. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/8 at 1/180 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 800.

Facing Page: Giraffe with tick birds. Nikon D300S, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 202mm, f/5.6 at 1/50 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 1600.





At first I found it a little disarming to have a lion staring right at me, as if I would make a great snack. But eye contact does make for more dramatic photographs. Predators tended to look at the vehicle and contents as if it were a large animal. So, it was important to adhere to certain rules for our safety. No sudden moves, no standing when predators were near, and obviously not getting out of the vehicle. Crucial advice!

On one of our morning game drives, we came upon a bull elephant and watched him take a bath, spraying mud and water all over himself. For a few minutes, it looked as though he might give us a mud bath and ruin half a dozen cameras. We watched and photographed him as he knocked over trees, ate the leaves and roots. Then he got very curious and came up to the Range Rover, literally close enough to touch. None of us were sure what he might do, so it was important not to freak out and startle him. After he had a closer look at us, he was satisfied and slowly walked away. He was the only animal that got my heart rate up. Even a charge by a rhino on another day did not phase me as much.

We were cautioned to shake out our clothes and shoes before dressing to check for possible scorpions. Thankfully, I never had one in my tent. But I did have a surprise guest one morning. A fist-sized hairy spider with a row of eyes across his head greeted me from inside my mosquito net. Heart in

my mouth, I eased out of the bed. As I learned later, this was a jumping spider and not particularly deadly, but very scary looking first thing in the morning!

By far the scariest experience I had wasn't animal or insect related. Getting caught in a violent lightning storm on an evening game drive with no available shelter was pretty terrifying. You have not lived until you have seen lightning fill the sky from horizon to horizon, and you are wet in an open vehicle. I was certain that I would likely be killed by lightning, ironically after surviving elephants, lions and leopards and a charging rhino.

Finally, our most exciting animal encounter was finding two male leopards playing in a tree. They tend to be very nocturnal animals and can be difficult to locate during the day. We must have watched and photographed the two for a couple of hours as they frolicked in the tree above us. On other days, when big animals were scarce, there were countless exotic birds to photograph including my personal favorite, the lilac-breasted roller. This trip was without a doubt a wildlife photographer's dream.

Our guide provided a great and unique safari experience. He also proved himself to be an outstanding tracker, guide, driver and even a cook at times. Photographing in Makalali was truly a fantastic adventure and one that I hope to repeat some day.

NP

*"A thing of beauty is a joy forever:  
its loveliness increases;  
it will never pass into nothingness."*  
John Keats



Yellow-billed hornbill, Makalali, South Africa, by James O. Day. Nikon D600, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 400mm, f/8 at 1/1500 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 800.



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# GLORIOUS RAPTORS OF CAPE MAY

Article and Photography by Susan Puder, Field Contributor

Susan's web site: <http://www.eaglecreekphotos.com> (Click for Live Link)



Digital capture by Susan Puder

Hawks, harriers, falcons, velociraptors! All these raptors, except maybe the last one over 65 million years ago, can be seen in New Jersey, especially during fall migration. There are several good spots to view these birds of prey, such as Raccoon Ridge in Warren County, Sandy Hook in Monmouth County, and Montclair Hawk Watch in Essex County. But the best of all in New Jersey for raptors is Cape May during October and November.

New Jersey is actually a peninsula surrounded by water on both sides of the state,- the Delaware River and Bay and the Atlantic Ocean form most of the boundaries. The birds migrating south beginning in late August are funneled to Cape May, whether they followed the Atlantic Coast or the Delaware River and western mountain ridges south. There

they stop, rest, and feed up before heading over the expanse of the Delaware Bay on their journey south.

Raptors have really grabbed my attention, not because they are flying killing machines, which they are, but the challenge of photographing them on the wing is so great. There are hawks, both buteos and accipiters, falcons, harriers, and eagles. I have taken thousands of shots and only been satisfied with dozens. It has been a steep learning curve over the years, learning the birds and learning how to photograph them. And every autumn I feel like I am going back to school to learn more about both.

I have been going to Cape May in the fall ever since I got into birding almost eight years ago. The Cape May Bird Observatory and Swarovski Optics sponsor several interns



Images at Cape May, New Jersey, by Susan Puder.

Above: Banded juvenile osprey. Nikon D7100, Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/8 at 1/2000, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

Facing Page: Peregrine falcon. Nikon D7100, Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/11 at 1/320, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.



every year who are stationed on the Hawk Watch platform at Cape May Point State Park to help novices and expert birders identify the thousands of raptors and other birds flying over Bunker Pond, the dunes, and other points visible from the platform. Their knowledge of the birds is breathtaking, and they add much to the experience. Over the fall season thousands of visitors from all over the country come to Cape May, whether for a day, a week, or stay the season. I have met many folks from Pennsylvania to Texas to Colorado who just have to be there to see the migration.

And exactly what are we all looking at? By late August and September, the largest number of broad-winged hawks, ospreys, bald eagles, and American kestrels would be seen. Every year I see large kettles of broad-wings flying over if the winds are right. Raptors are diurnal flyers, meaning they migrate during daylight. They need northern or northwesterly winds to provide the updraft that helps them in their flight. After a cold front has passed through is usually the best time to catch large movements.

Later in September and October come the peregrine falcons and merlins. Also, joining the movements are sharp-

shinned and Cooper's hawks. Finally, bringing up the rear in later October and November are the larger raptors, rough-legged, red-shouldered, and red-tailed hawks, and with any luck, northern goshawks. I have yet to get any goshawks, as I am usually a day late and a dollar short. Some years, golden eagles are seen in good numbers, as they were in 2013. Northern harriers are always seen flying low over the marshes looking for mice and other small rodents, but will also take a waterfowl if it is handy.

Ospreys in New Jersey are a great environmental success story. Due to DDT usage in the 1950s and 1960s, osprey numbers collapsed. In 1972, there were about 50 nesting pairs in the entire state. DDT was banned in 1968, and people began a recovery program for these magnificent raptors, and in 2014 there were over 560 nesting pairs in the state.

Another effort that is helping raptors is The Cape May Raptor Banding Project. To quote their material, the project "was created to conduct long-term monitoring of the status and trends of migrating raptors and to analyze and disseminate this information." To paraphrase their information, they



Red-shouldered hawk, Cape May, New Jersey, by Susan Puder. Nikon D7100, Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/7.1 at 1/1600, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.



Juvenile bald eagle, Cape May, New Jersey, by Susan Puder. Nikon D90, Sigma 50-500mm F4-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/13 at 1/800, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.





Images at Cape May, New Jersey, by Susan Puder.

Above: Bald eagle. Nikon D90, Sigma 50-500mm F4-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/9 at 1/1250, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

Right: Osprey with fish. Nikon D7100, Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/9 at 1/2000, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

Facing Page: Red-tailed hawk. Nikon D7100, Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/8 at 1/1600, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.





have several banding stations located around Cape May every fall, and volunteers capture the hawks, band them with United States Geological Survey (U.S.G.S) bands, record measurements, and release them. The information is sent to the U.S.G.S. Bird Banding Laboratory and is available to various research projects. Since 1974 over 141,000 raptors have been banded. During migrations, these birds may be recaptured to check the band or if the band is found, the information is reported back to the U.S.G.S.

During this season the volunteers also bring the banded birds to the Cape May Hawk Watch every Saturday and Sunday for public educational sessions. Usually three to five raptors in cylindrical tubes are brought over and each bird is taken out and shown to the public. It is a great teaching tool and provides photo opportunities allowing you to get wonderful close-ups of raptors that you will probably only see flying hundreds of feet above. The entire process from capture to measuring and banding to display to release takes under 30 minutes, so as to not stress the birds too much.

Using my Nikon D7100 camera along with the Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 APO lens I sit on the Cape May Hawk Watch platform waiting for these raptors to fly overhead.

Every autumn this location is packed with birders and photographers, and tripods loaded with spotting scopes and long lenses. I use aperture priority f/6.3 with ISO's from 640 to around 1000. As the birds are usually flying, I use shutter priority with shutter speeds from 1/2000 and above. I use continuous high speed release mode, autofocus continuous-servo mode, and spot metering. When the lighting is bright, the afternoon is best as the sun will be behind you. I will use my exposure compensation to underexpose the image, and do the opposite when the lighting is darker.

There are trails to take around Cape May Point State Park, and you may find osprey diving into the ponds for that nice fat fish or a merlin flying low overhead aiming at an unfortunate songbird for a tasty meal. I would also suggest heading to the Nature Conservatory's South Cape May Meadows for trails and another viewing platform for migrating songbirds, shorebirds, and hunting merlins and peregrines.

To sum it up, heading to Cape May in autumn should be on every bird photographer's list of places to visit. There will be shorebirds, warblers, and those glorious raptors—more than enough to fill up your memory cards and keep you on your toes.

NP



Broad-winged hawk, Cape May, New Jersey, by Susan Puder. Nikon D7100, Sigma 150-500mm F5-6.3 lens, focal length 500mm, f/6.3 at 1/2000, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 1000.



Broad-winged hawk, Cape May, New Jersey, by Susan Puder. Nikon D90, Sigma 50-500mm F4-6.3 lens, focal length 135mm, f/11 at 1/2200, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.



# WINTER IN YELLOWSTONE

Article and Photography by Morris Erickson, Field Contributor

**W** Yellowstone—the wildlife preserve on top of a volcano—is one of our favorite destinations, usually in the fall after the peak tourist season. But we were blessed with “tools and opportunity” so we took a winter excursion. Millions of folks visit Yellowstone every year, but we saw less than a few hundred in six days in February.

The only park road that remains plowed and open in winter is on the north side between the towns of Gardiner and Cooke City through the Lamar Valley. (Only the north entrance at Gardiner is open. The northeast entrance is closed at Cooke City.) If you are looking for a road trip of reasonable cost, this is a good option since this area is a prime wildlife-



Coyote in Yellowstone, by Morris Erickson. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens, focal length 400mm, f/7.1 at 1/500 second, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.



Digital capture by Morris Erickson

Yellowstone thermal steam, by Morris Erickson. Canon EOS 5DS R, Zeiss Otus F1.4 55mm ZE lens, focal length 55mm, f/5.6 at 1/200 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 100.





Trumpeter swans, Yellowstone National Park, by Morris Erickson. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS II USM lens, focal length 100mm, f/5 at 1/100 second, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

viewing location even in the winter. The two days we took to explore this stretch of road yielded bison, elk, bighorn sheep, coyote, and fox. Gardiner would be an ideal base camp since the Mammoth Lodge is going to be closed for a year or two for renovation.

But the high point of our trip was the four days we spent at the Old Faithful Snow Lodge. The interior roads of the park are closed for the winter. The only access is by daily snowmobile trips and snow coaches from West Yellowstone, Montana, or the all-day, fifty-mile snow coach expedition from Mammoth Hot Springs to Old Faithful, which we took.

Our first rest stop was in the middle of a snow-covered valley at Swan Lake. Unlike what you would encounter at this turnoff in the summer, there was not a living soul beyond your own little group. As you gaze into the distance you reassess your concept of infinity. The cold breeze consumes the token sunlight warmth, the vastness of the snowfields inhales all sound—reality has a new zero baseline and sensory perception is now measured in a logarithmic scale. You are no longer a child but you again believe in magic.

Our next major stop is a warming hut—a chance to caress a wood stove, consume a warm beverage, and listen for a moment to a local sage.

We continue on our journey and watch a continuous display of geological exhaust in various forms from the Earth's crust, cracks, and orifices in winter-framed splendor, encountering all types of fauna along the way.

The Old Faithful Snow Lodge is our final destination, a four-star hotel with a pretty good restaurant and an adequate snack bar. (It's not an epicurean delight, but you won't starve

during your stay.) You can hike/ski/snowshoe the immediate area—snow tractors groom the roads and trails. Snow coach tours are offered to various destinations in the park.

Our first excursion was a daylong photography tour with Lisa Culpepper. She is the resident winter photography guide in Yellowstone when she is not doing her summer tours in Alaska. She gave an excellent preliminary instruction for setting up your camera for snow light conditions. She also knows the park—the flora and the fauna—and where to get the best shot in the best light. A day with her guidance is money well spent.

We were fortunate to view an early-morning fogbow. It involves the same principle as a rainbow, but it is a white light reflection. The water droplets, formed with steam fog hitting the cold air, are larger so you do not get a prismatic effect.

Wildlife is less abundant in the winter—the elk have gone to lower elevations, bears are hibernating—but remaining critters are more apparent. They are framed against the snow and they don't have the intimidation of crowds. We spotted several eagles, swans, and coyotes, and many bison struggling through the winter.

When we noticed a coyote feasting on a downed bison in Lamar Valley, we asked a ranger about the possible cause of death. His response was simply, "Winter." Grass is not accessible except in the thawed beds of the thermal fields, and that forage is dormant and of little nutrition. When a bison is down, the wolf, coyote, and fox quickly consume it—various birds remove the remaining evidence in days. There is a pecking order and each critter must wait its turn—we observed a fox waiting around the hill for the coyote to tire of the bison buffet.



Yellowstone National Park, by Morris Erickson.

Above: Stream field. Canon EOS M3, Zeiss Distagon T F2.8 15mm ZE lens, focal length 15mm, f/5 at 1/640 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

Below: Early-morning fogbow with photographers' shadows in foreground. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Zeiss Distagon T F2.8 15mm ZE lens, focal length 15mm, f/10 at 1/400 second, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.







Biscuit Basin with stars ablaze, Yellowstone National Park, by Morris Erickson. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Zeiss Distagon T F2.8 15mm ZE lens, focal length 15mm, f/2.8 at 30 seconds, spot metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 6400. The bright headlights of a snow tractor grooming the roads and trails painted the foreground with light and accentuated the ground exposure. ME

The compassionate soul must step back and accept the fact that this is a preserve, not a zoo. Intervention is not permitted in this natural ecosystem.

Lisa was especially respectful of the bison in their fragile condition. When we encountered a typical postcard road-block group, she shut down the engine and waited for them to pass at their own pace. She didn't want to cause them any more stress than necessary. The bison seem to prefer traveling the roadway—probably because they appreciate the packed, groomed pathways that we provide in the winter. Walking nose deep in snow—as our parents did when they went to school—is not fun.

The lodge is the only oasis in this winter desert. You can snowshoe or ski various surrounding trails—we took a trek to Morning Glory Pool one afternoon—or just sit in the lobby by the fireplace. Watching an eruption of Old Faithful is more amazing when you look around and realize that you maybe saw it by yourself.

The last night of our stay, we took a “Stars and Steam” tour. Our guide, Jenna, took us to the area around Biscuit Basin to focus on our senses other than visual—the sounds, smells, and feel of the earth rumbling. In the dark and with no one else around, you hear the subtleties of the thermal activities, have a greater discernment of field aroma, and hear and feel the vibrations of the ever-active underground plumbing system.

It was snowing when we left the lodge for the tour, but I took along a Gitzo tripod, a Canon 5DMkIII, and a Zeiss 2.8/15mm, just in case. I thought it might be a good chance for astrophotography since I always think tools and opportunity—and opportunity happens when it is meant to be and you remember to bring your tools. The clouds began to break

as we arrived at Biscuit Basin and the stars were ablaze in the true dark sky. I put myself at the end of the line in our little group so as not to disturb the others and set down my camera at each stop in our boardwalk trek.

I kept the tripod collapsed to its lowest height, and set the camera to 30 seconds, 1600 ISO, and the lens set to infinity and f/2.8. I just pointed it in a general direction (crop later) and released it with a two-second delay, picked it up a half-minute later and moved on. Fifteen minutes into our session, the guide got very upset because a snow tractor started grooming the roads and trails around our area, disturbing our tour. I was upset because his headlights—which were so bright they could have been used for landing lights—interrupted some of my exposures.

But later when I opened the images, I had light painting that I could not have choreographed. The high-intensity beams were short enough that my sky exposure was not overwhelmed, but the output was high enough to accentuate ground exposure. The fascinating discovery was the predominant color of the foreground. The bacterial and thermophile mat pools produced red hues, while the hydrothermal springs favored yellow, and the geyser steam beds were on the green side. This was an artificial accident, so I had to speculate on true color—and be grateful for the capture of the “there but not seen”.

A winter in Yellowstone should be on your top-ten bucket list. It is like an Arctic expedition with creature comforts and lots of creatures. It's cold—it's desolate—it's cold—it's expensive—it's cold—and it's an experience like no other. After you go, you will check one thing off your list and add another one: one more winter in Yellowstone, even though it is cold—because you can again wear your really cool fur hat. NP



Bison, Yellowstone National Park, by Morris Erickson. Canon EOS 5DS R, Zeiss Otus 1.4/55 ZE lens, focal length 55mm, f/5.6 at 1/200 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 100.



# MAKING SENSE OF CAMOUFLAGE AND COLOR

Article and Photography by Joe McDonald, Editor

Joe's and Mary Ann's web site: <http://hoothollow.com/index.html> (Click for Live Link)

**I**rony can be instructive. As a wildlife photographer, I am usually attempting to capture images that clearly show my subject, either as portraits, or in action, or as a part of a larger scene, "animals in habitat" as I call them. In almost every case the animals are clearly visible and conspicuous, leaving no question what is my subject. When, earlier this year, I was asked to do a book on camouflage, *Camouflaged Wildlife, How Creatures Hide in Order to Survive*, I was quite worried that in the hundreds of thousands of images I have made, ironically, I would not have



Digital capture by Joe McDonald



Camouflage, by Joe McDonald.

Above: Polar bear, Svalbard. Canon 1D X, Canon 800mm F5.6L IS USM lens, f/5.6 at 1/2000 second, ISO 800.

Facing Page: Dobsonfly, Hoot Hollow, Pennsylvania. Canon 1D X Mark II, Canon 100mm F2.8L IS Macro lens, f/32 at 1/8 second, ISO 2000.

Even with a small aperture, it is important to remain parallel to your subject and, in this case, the tree bark to keep everything in focus. JMcD

Editor's Note: The polar bear is easy to find in the above photo, but the dobsonfly on the facing page is a different story being greatly camouflaged. You will find the dobsonfly in the far right portion of the image. HLS



sufficient material to illustrate that book! As it turned out, I could make the book, aided in part by good friends that supplied wonderful shots of undersea life that illustrated some of the most effective forms of camouflage in the animal world.

That potential editorial dilemma, however, taught me an important lesson, and that was to keep my photographic

horizons broad, to shoot everything, and not to be fixated on just getting the perfect portrait. On our photo tours I always admire those photographers who are thinking about doing a camera or nature club presentation and are shooting “establishing shots” that show habitat as well as the close-ups and action shots most of us strive to capture. As part of this

*“Look deep into nature, and  
then you will understand everything better.”  
Albert Einstein*

Eurasian thick-knee, Kanha National Park, India, by Joe McDonald. Canon 1D Mark IV. Canon 100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS USM lens, f/22 at 1/200 second, ISO 800.

Thick-knees are cryptic, nocturnal shorebirds that remain motionless during the day and are easily missed.

JMcD

Editor's Note: There are two Eurasian thick-knee birds in this image. You will find one in the far left portion of the image and the other in the far right. HLS







Camouflage, by Joe McDonald.

Above: Fowler's toad, central Florida. Canon 1D X Mark II. Canon 100mm F2.8L IS Macro lens, f/25 at 1/250 second, ISO 800. By shooting down on this toad and using a small aperture the toad blends in well with its surroundings. JMcD

Below: Wood frog, Hoot Hollow, Pennsylvania. Canon 1D X. Canon 180mm F3.5L IS macro lens, f/22 at 1/30 second, ISO 800. A wide variety of animals exhibit several forms of camouflage, like this Wood Frog whose ground color uses Background Matching, its eye-patch for Disruptive Coloration, and its white belly for Countershading. JMcD

Editor's Note: The Fowler's toad above is just right of center of the image and the wood frog can be found in the right upper portion of the image below. HLS



broader coverage one should consider photographing wildlife that not only illustrates their camouflage but also shows why they are colored and shaped the way they are.

Most animals, whether they are predator or prey, are fairly inconspicuous and blend in with their environment. To be seen is counterproductive, as this may expose them to predators, and thus risk being eaten, or become visible to their prey, which could result in going hungry. Blending in, not being noticed, hiding in plain sight, this is the order of the day. Of course, there are exceptions. In the breeding season animals may do all they can to be noticed. Some do so with color, vividly standing out from their surroundings, while others do so with sound, broadcasting their presence through songs or roars or bellows. Some do so by engaging in conspicuous displays. Many do a combination of all three in some form or another. Consider a woodcock or a common snipe which engage in crepuscular courtship flights. During the breeding season both of these extremely well camouflaged birds broadcast their presence visually against the sky as they fly high, further drawing attention by a twittering or whistling flight as air passes through their flight feathers. Back on the ground, motionless woodcocks and snipes seem to vanish, as their cryptic pattern matches their surroundings perfectly. Most of the year, however, for most species, conspicuous colors, sounds, or behaviors are absent. Then, blending in and remaining unseen are the norms. The various ways wildlife does this, I discovered, are indeed quite fascinating, and take several different forms.

The most common form of camouflage, at least for many of us when considering this topic, is Protective Coloration, also known as Background Matching. In this an animal's coloration matches that of its surroundings. The green or Carolina anole of the southern United States is a classic example, for not only does its soft green color match the leaves and grasses where it is found, but the anole also has the ability to change color to various shades of both green and brown. Because of this, green anoles are sometimes erroneously called chameleons, although they are not at all related.

True chameleons are the quintessential examples of camouflage, and these lizards are incredibly cryptic as they may employ several different types of camouflage. Chameleons can, of course, change color and blend in with their surroundings in this way. But in chameleons, color changes and the patterns that subsequently form may also reflect the reptile's mood. A chameleon courting a mate or fighting or intimidating a rival can be anything but cryptic, and instead may vividly stand out from its surroundings. Chameleons also employ Disruptive Coloration, where an animal's pattern breaks up, or disrupts, its outline or shape. Instead of seeing one continuous shape that might be recognized as a lizard, the eye is deceived into seeing only sections. This type of camouflage is quite common throughout the animal kingdom, employed by animals as diverse as hungry tigers and tasty dobsonflies.

Spots and stripes are common variations of Disruptive Coloration. While a leopard or a jaguar may seem conspicuous when seen out of context, say in a zoo on an open lawn, either cat becomes virtually invisible when lying flat against a forest floor or draped on a limb, framed by leaves and branches that create a patchwork of lights and shadows. Sometimes vivid spots aren't designed to have an animal blend in, but instead the spots so draw the eye that one misses the whole, an example of not seeing the forest from the trees. A white-tailed deer or elk fawn can be lying in plain

sight just feet from you, but missed as your attention is drawn to the white spots, overlooking the entirety of the animal's motionless form.

Most of us see in color, so an animal's coloration may seem less effective to us than it actually is, as many animals are color blind, seeing the world monochromatically. A base color of yellow or orange, as in leopards and tigers, or the vivid stripe of a ribbon snake may make the animal a little more obvious to you, but in black-and-white, as many animals see the world, these colors help the animal to blend in. Many animals are two-toned, being light above and dark below, and this coloration is still another form of camouflage, called Countershading. Penguins and puffins are two of the most vivid examples of this, but the white bellies of a tiger or a deer or a wood frog are more subtle variants of this as well. In the case of swimming or fishing puffins and penguins, as well as sharks and many types of fish, the two tones help the animals blend in when seen either from above or from below. From above, the dark dorsal surface of these marine creatures matches the dark sea, while from below, their white bellies blend in with the bright sky. From the side, the two tones create a less conspicuous, uniform tonality. For terrestrial animals, the white bellies reflect light and soften shadows, and when pressed to the ground these animals merge seamlessly with the substrate.

Zebras, of course, are two-toned but are not examples of Countershading. Their patterns must have survival value, and there are several theories on this. One suggests that since each zebra has a unique striped pattern, their distinctive appearance may allow herd animals to recognize one another. Another theory involves heat dissipation, since the black stripes absorb heat and light, while the white stripes reflect, and thus the alternating pattern creates micro convection currents that may help to cool the zebra. Perhaps the most valid explanation is that the stripes function to confuse a predator when several members of a zebra herd are racing away from a predator, a type of coloration called Motion Dazzle.

On a similar note, I have to mention another form of coloration, often called the Startle Effect. In this, a vivid pattern or coloration is suddenly displayed, presumably to frighten off a predator, or curtail an attack long enough for the potential prey to escape. The owl's eye butterfly is a great example, as the butterfly can flash its wings and display two very owl-like eyes. Recently, in Brazil's Pantanal, I had the opportunity to photograph a sun bittern engaging in a similar behavior, as it flashed the dragon-like eyespots on its wings when the bird was harassing a yellow anaconda. While the eyespots were not visible to the snake, as they are located on the back side of the wings, they were visible to any animal attracted to this display, thus alerting other wildlife that a dangerous predator was slinking about.

While colors and patterns serve to protect animals by making them less conspicuous, some use vivid colors and distinctive patterns to provide protection in a completely different way. Many well-known animals warn off potential predators by advertising that they are dangerous, bad-tasting, or even poisonous. Best known examples of this Warning Coloration are venomous snakes and poisonous frogs. The monarch butterfly and a myriad of other arthropods and marine creatures also exhibit Warning Coloration. You might wonder about the survival value of this, since a predator may not instinctively know that a conspicuous creature is dangerous or bad tasting. An animal exhibiting Warning Coloration may be attacked



and killed, but this may leave such a nasty impression that the predator avoids any future confrontations with animals sporting the same colors or patterns. Thus one or two individuals of a given species may be lost to a predator, but the population as a whole is safer as a result. A broad-winged hawk, for example, could potentially consume hundreds of amphibians during its lifetime, but might, after just one or two encounters with a red eft, a foul-tasting terrestrial newt sporting bright orange colors, never attack another eft again.

Some animals that exhibit Warning Coloration are anything but passive. Take the irascible African honey badger that sports a conspicuous coat of black and white, warning any potential predator that they would face a very formidable opponent. It is thought that cheetah cubs, when still quite small and very vulnerable, mimic the fearsome honey badger with their similar-looking coats, thus lessening the chance of predation.

Regardless of the form of camouflage, movement can catch the attention of both predators and prey. Not surprising then, to avoid detection, some animals even incorporate their own locomotion into a form of camouflage. Ever wonder why a spotted sandpiper seems to rock or teeter as it hunts along stream banks? Well, along a stream where ripples twinkle in

endless patterns the rocking of a spotted sandpiper actually blends in, presenting a changing shape instead of a static one, just as dippers do when foraging along fast-moving mountain streams. Chameleons seem to travel even more slowly when rocking back-and-forth, mimicking the swaying of leaves, as they advance along a branch or vine.

Recognizing these forms of camouflage and understanding their applicability, you might be able to turn lemons into lemonade, as you purposefully compose images that illustrate effective camouflage rather than being frustrated by not getting the perfect portrait. If you want to capture this camouflage look, use small apertures for greater depth of field so that the surroundings are in focus too, as opposed to shooting wide open with shallow depths of field that would isolate your subject and draw your eye there. This may require higher ISOs and using a tripod since smaller apertures require slower shutter speeds. With greater depth of field more of the elements inside your frame will be in focus, or nearly so, and your viewer's eye will not be immediately directed to your subject but instead may search through the image, looking—the whole point behind being camouflaged. Photographs should tell stories, and effective camouflage shots will surely do so. NP



Camouflage, by Joe McDonald.

Above: Green anole, central Florida. Canon 1D Mark III, Canon 180mm F3.5L IS macro lens. f/4 at 1/400 second, ISO 640. As a domestic example of Background Matching, green anoles are capable of changing color from shades of green to shades of brown. JMcD

Facing page: Meller's chameleon, Tanzania. Canon 1Ds Mark III, Canon 180mm F3.5L IS Macro lens, f/20 at 1/250 second, ISO 200.

Chameleons are famous for their color changing ability, which can be for camouflage or to indicate mood. JMcD  
Editor's Note: These two subjects while camouflaged in the natural world are easy for us to find in the images. HLS





# AUTUMN WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY

Article and Photography by Weldon Lee, Editor

Weldon's web site: <http://www.weldonlee.com/> (Click for Live Link)



Deer, by Weldon Lee. Film image.



Deer, by Weldon Lee. Nikon D2Xs, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 280mm, f/10 at 1/60 second, center-weighted metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.

The sounds of bugling elk fill the air as bulls gather their harems in open meadows. Bighorn rams engage in bone-jarring head crashing rituals for male dominance. Moose are busily polishing their antlers in preparation for the battle that lies ahead. Grizzlies and black bear are putting on layers of fat in anticipation of their long winter sleep. The reds and golds of autumn clothe the forests and mountainsides, and the animals are in their prime. This is the world that awaits the wildlife photographer in autumn.

The two most frequently asked questions I receive are how do you get those images and where do you go to do it?

I'll try to answer these questions and more, as I share insight into some of my techniques when I discuss autumn wildlife photography.

## GETTING CLOSE

The secret for getting close to wildlife—members of the deer and sheep family in particular—is for them to accept you as part of their natural surroundings and not feel threatened by your presence. To get within photographic range, I use

what I call the “grazing approach.” It’s a technique I developed a number of years ago while observing herds of elk. Individual animals would constantly move about, yet the herd appeared to stay in one location. Despite appearances, the entire herd was actually advancing toward ungrazed areas.

Once your subject has been sighted, remain where it can see you. Do not attempt to go any closer. Sit down or mill about, but stay where you are for at least five minutes; then you can begin your approach. Never walk directly toward your subject. Pick a direction of travel that will take you past the animal. After going some distance, turn around and walk past the subject again, altering your direction of travel so you pass a few feet closer. Continue this zigzag approach until you are within photographic range.

While zigzagging, act as if you were grazing. Walk slowly, stop often, mill about. Even sit down for a minute or two. Watch for any change in your subject’s behavior. Stop the moment you see a change.

You will avoid stressing your subject as long as it can anticipate your actions, and not feel threatened.



While on the subject of stress—it is best to approach most members of the deer and sheep family from the downhill side. Since they typically escape predators by fleeing uphill, this avoids cutting off any potential escape route that may cause them to exhibit signs of nervousness. I have found mountain goats can be the exception to this rule, appearing to be more comfortable when approached from above.

**PHOTO TECHNIQUES**

Backgrounds cause more problems for wildlife photographers than any single element. Often, they are either too cluttered, or they lack contrast with the subject if not both. I generally prefer a background darker than my subject. This produces a more dramatic image in my opinion. By simply repositioning your camera a few feet in one direction or another, you can often locate a more desirable background.

Catch light in the eye of your subjects can add life to an otherwise drab photo. This is the tiny speck of light reflected in your subject's eyes. Watch for it to appear as the subject moves its head. If you fail to observe any catch light, you might try repositioning your camera closer to the ground. This will often produce catch light when all else fails.

Typically focus on your subject's eyes. However, when photographing animals head-on, this technique may render an image with eyes that are tack sharp while the nose is so out of focus that the image is unusable.

In order to understand and correct the problem, it is important to know something about depth of field. The area of apparently sharp focus, or depth of field, extends twice as far behind the focal point, as in front of it. When photographing a subject head-on at close range, take advantage of this phenomenon by focusing approximately halfway between the subject's eyes and the tip of the nose. This will produce

the desired results—an image with both the eyes and nose in focus.

**BEST TIME TO SHOOT**

Your best photo opportunities typically occur early in the morning, and again just before dark. I prefer mornings. This is when most animals are active and light quality is at its best. Not only that, early mornings often find mist rising from lakes and streams, and low-lying valleys enshrouded by fog.

Take advantage of bright overcast days. The soft light produced is great for close-up portraits. It also increases the intensity of autumn's colors.

A histogram is basically a graphic distribution chart on the back of digital cameras depicting an image in terms of light levels, represented by black on the extreme left side and white on the far right. Check it frequently. It will tell you if you are under or overexposed. Digital noise is minimized the farther to the right an image is positioned within the histogram. In the field when photographing wildlife, I prefer to have it positioned approximately one-fourth the total distance away from the right edge. This provides a cushion as your subject moves around. Any inaccuracies can be corrected later on the computer.

**EQUIPMENT**

I've said it before and I will say it again. It doesn't matter whether your subject is brown bears in Alaska, exotic hummingbirds in South America, or elephants in Botswana, one of Nikon's 80-400mm VR lens mounted on a digital body having a magnification factor of 1.5x, or greater, cannot be beat.

My Nikon D2Xs body features a 32-frame buffer when shooting JPEG Fine, and shoots at 8 frames/second with a 2x



Images by Weldon Lee.

Above: Elk. Nikon D1X, focal length 280mm, f/5.3 at 1/1000 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode.

Below: Elk. Nikon D2Xs, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 360mm, f/9 at 1/320 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.

Facing Page: Bison. Nikon D2Xs, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 116mm, f/8.5 at 1/320 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.





magnification factor in crop mode. Coupled to my 80-400mm VR lens, this gives me the equivalent of an 800mm lens, which I can handhold down to 1/100 second. Talk about versatility.

The ability to handhold this setup allows me to get shots never before possible. Having said that, when working from a blind my Manfrotto really comes in handy as it keeps me from having to hold my equipment all the time.

**MY FAVORITE LOCATIONS**

Not only is it important to go where fall colors exist, you will also need to be where your chances of locating wildlife is also good. When it comes to this type of photography, some spots are just better than others. Here are my favorite fall locations for wildlife photography.

**ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK, COLORADO**

Rocky has it all, breathtaking scenery plus a variety of wildlife. Opportunities abound for the wildlife photographer. Photograph bugling elk, mature mule deer bucks, full curl bighorn rams, and bull moose, a relatively new introduction.

Fall colors reach their peak during mid-September. Your best opportunities to photograph bugling elk usually occur between this time and the end of the month as they congregate in Horseshoe and Moraine Parks on the park's east side, and in open clearings along the first miles of park road on the west side.

In early November, bighorn sheep can be photographed along the Fall River Road, between the town of Estes Park and the park entrance. This area is under private ownership. Conduct your photography from the roadside, or obtain permission from the landowners before going on their property.

Photograph mule deer along Beaver Creek. Hike east along the creek from Bear Lake Road. After hiking approximately one mile, you will see several park service houses.

Carefully search this area. Deer are also frequently observed along the road between park headquarters and Deer Ridge Junction.

Search for moose among the willows along U.S. Highway 34 on the park's west side, between Timber Creek Campground and the Onahu Creek Trailhead.

My favorite location for photographing marmots is the Forest Canyon Overlook. Search the talus slopes near Rock Cut for pika. Ground squirrels and chipmunks are easily photographed at Rainbow Curve, Farview Curve, and Many Parks overlooks.

Note: When photographing wildlife in national parks, it is important to obey park rules and set an example for others to follow. It is interesting to note that in Rocky Mountain National Park, unlike other parks with which I am familiar, there are no distance restrictions when photographing wildlife.

**BAXTER STATE PARK, MAINE**

Fall is unique in New England. The mixture of hardwood trees create a color palette like none other in the world. Wildlife photographers have no idea what they are missing until they've had the opportunity to photograph a bull moose feeding in Sandy Stream Pond at sunrise with blazing fall colors as their backdrop. Early October is usually the best time to visit.

**CONCLUSION**

It is the time to get out those long lenses, dust off the camping gear, and head for the wilderness. Autumn has no equal when it comes to photographing wildlife. And remember, no picture is worth more than the well-being of your subject. I'll see you down the trail.

Join me next time as we continue exploring ways of capturing the likenesses of our wild brothers and sisters. NP



Images by Weldon Lee.

Above: Bighorn sheep. Film image.

Left: Mountain goat. Nikon D2Xs, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 105mm, f/12 at 1/640 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.

Facing Page: Moose. Nikon D2Xs, Nikkor 80-400mm F4.5-5.6 lens, focal length 105mm, f/8.5 at 1/320 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.



# ON THE BEACH

Article by Larry Kimball

Photography by Barbara Magnuson and Larry Kimball, Field Contributors

Barbara's and Larry's website: [www.pronghornwildlifephotography.com](http://www.pronghornwildlifephotography.com) (Click for Live Link)

We headed north out of the traffic cluster that is LA having attended an October wedding in the City of Angels. Not our idea of a place to hang out, so having never visited the central California coast this seemed to be a good opportunity to see and photograph some of the wildlife found between Los Angeles and San Francisco. After some research we knew there would be opportunities to see and hopefully photograph the monarch butterflies gathered for the winter at Pismo Beach. We also knew that sea otters were common at Morro Bay and from there north of Cambria there would be elephant seals.

There is none of the edgeless blue sky of the mountains or desert, fog lays gray like a blanket off the coast. Air thick with haze after the fog rolled out to sea is also filled with sound, gulls of course, but sharp barking, groaning growls and a curious glunk, glunk, glunk, glunk, guttural with a vaguely heavy metallic undertone. Here on this wide sandy beach, with virtually every square foot covered with life, is one of the great wildlife spectacles in North America.

The shore is carpeted with northern elephant seals, *Mirounga angustirostris*, a little smaller than their southern cousins but with a larger proboscis and we are lucky to see them at all. Back in the latter 1800s these seals were virtually wiped out (familiar theme here—think bison, wolves, etc.) by sealers and whalers. A few survived off the coast of Baja California, 20 to possibly 100 individuals, and in 1922 were protected by the Mexican government. We now have a population possibly near 200,000 and while this seems to be an impressive number they are given sanctuary under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. A large number yes, but seeing them is no less a miracle. Coming from such a minuscule gene pool they are one disease away from having their numbers riddled with emptiness. Barring tragedy, time may put this to right. It is illegal to harass or injure them.

What we found in October were the males coming to the beaches near Piedras Blancas for the fall haul-out. The big guys show up later in November. When I say big guys I mean seriously large animals. Mature males weigh in at 3000 to

5000 plus pounds and are 14- to 16-feet long. The glunk, glunk sound mentioned before is the signature call of the bull—part territorial warning, part threat display and all strange. The ladies are less massive, 9- to 12-feet long and weigh in at 900 to 1800 pounds. The immature males that arrive ahead of the adult bulls put on quite a show, they spend a lot of time sparring and testing each other on the beach and in the surf.

The viewing of these beasts is as easy as wildlife watching can be. The Piedras Blancas viewing area has a big parking lot right off of Highway 1 north of Cambria. A boardwalk parallels the beach for hundreds of yards and an easy trail continues to a smaller parking lot to the north. And yeah, it gets crowded on weekends, so best to visit on a week day if possible. You can escape to some extent by walking along the path to the north.

In January we were back to see the beachmasters, AKA alpha bulls fight for territory and the females giving birth. The single pup is 60-80 pounds at birth and grows fast, it is weaned after a month and will weigh 250-300 pounds.

Elephant seal cows have the richest milk of any mammal on the planet, but produce only enough for one pup. After weaning, the pups stay on the beach for two and one-half months, teaching themselves to swim and dive before they head out to sea. Maybe you find this bull and cow creating a “pup” thing a little strange, I’ve never heard of a bull and cow producing a pup—this is apparently a holdover from the whaling days. Not an easy life, only 37 percent of pups make it to one year, only 16 percent make it to the age of four.

Elephant seals spend most of their lives at sea, the females hunting squid, the males feed on small sharks, rays and hagfish to a max depth of 5000 feet. Trying to keep cool while on land is a challenge for these huge animals, designed to stay warm in cold Pacific waters. The most obvious way they try to protect themselves from the sun is by flipping sand over their backs. The pups seemingly start flipping sand not long after birth.

All this takes place from October into February, the pregnant cows arriving mid-December and most births taking

Northern elephant seals, Piedras Blancas viewing area, north of Cambria, California, by Barbara Magnuson and Larry Kimball.

Right: Male northern elephant seal. Nikon D300, Nikkor 200-400mm F4 lens, focal length 400mm, f/6.3 at 1/320 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

Below: Northern elephant seals on the beach. Nikon D800, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, f/6 at 1/320 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.



Digital capture by Barbara Magnuson and Larry Kimball





Northern elephant seals, Piedras Blancas viewing area, north of Cambria, California, by Barbara Magnuson and Larry Kimball.

Above: Northern elephant seal pup flipping sand over its back. Nikon D300, Nikkor 200-400mm F4 lens, focal length 340mm, f/14 at 1/80 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

Facing Page Top: Northern elephant seal pup. Nikon D800, Nikkor 500mm F4 lens, focal length 500mm, f/8 at 1/400 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.

Facing Page Bottom: Northern elephant seal cow and pup. Nikon D800, Nikkor 500mm F4 lens, focal length 500mm, f/8 at 1/400 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 640.



place in the last part of January. Most mating occurs around Valentine's Day, go figure.

All of these animals are fasting (except pups) the entire time they are on the beach. Conserving energy is paramount for them so they do not move unless they have to. The females fast for about a month or so, for the males fasting lasts for about three months.

Friends of the Elephant Seal—a non-profit that has volunteers at the viewing area to answer questions and enhance a visitor's experience through education. Check them out online at [www.elephantseal.org](http://www.elephantseal.org). They also have a web cam on the beach so you can see a slice of what's going on with the seals.

Even though many of the seals are fairly close to the viewing area, telephoto zooms are very handy. We used a 70-200

F2.8 for closer animals, a 200-400 F4 and a 500 F4. Longer lenses are useful since the surf zone is out there a ways and getting images of whatever the seals are doing in the water is a big part of the experience.

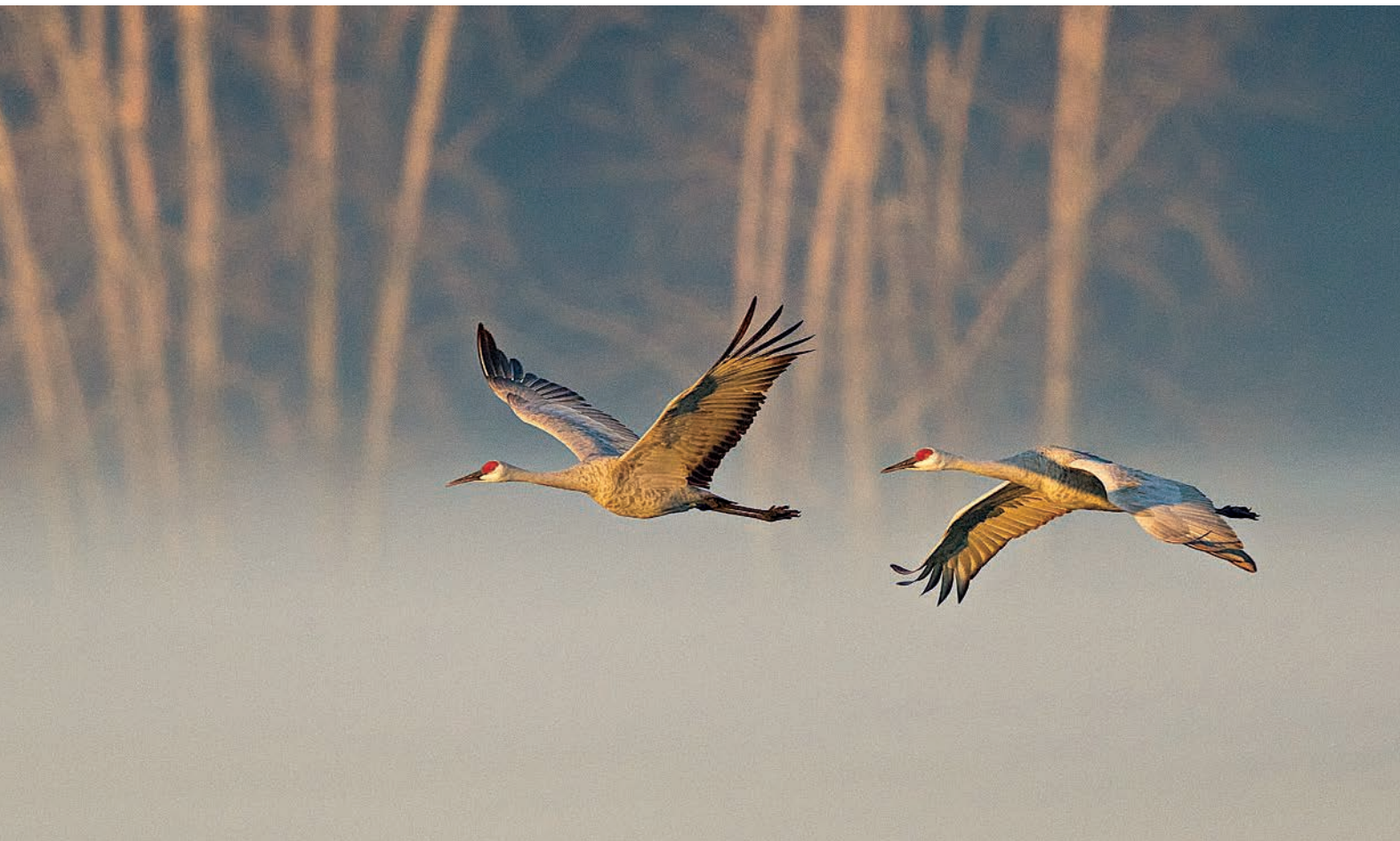
There are other areas to view elephant seals on the California coast but this location near San Simeon is as good as it gets. Just spend some time. Piedras Blancas offers more than just elephant seals, as if they were not enough. There are harbor seals on the near shore rocks and California sea lions farther out. Sea otters can be found anywhere along the coast. Of course there are shore and wading birds and you may, as we did, even find a seal carcass washed up in the rocks with the attending vultures. Awe-inspiring wildlife, mellow temperatures and the neverending drama of the sea, we will be back.

NP



# AN INDIANA WILDLIFE SPECTACLE

Article and Photography by David Watts, Field Contributor



Every fall the migration of sandhill cranes from Canada come through Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area which is 25 miles south of Valparaiso, Indiana. It is an 8142-acre wetland, upland, and woodland game habitat that is quite ideal for the stopover of these migrating birds.

While the region began during the 1930s as a game farm and preserve, hunting actually started in 1958. The tract was designated a fish and game area in 1965, and then in 1972 it became a fish and wildlife area under the Indiana DNR.

From late September through December, with peak numbers in mid-November, these noisy flocks come through with

a total in 2015 of just over 18,300. It is one of Indiana's greatest wildlife spectacles.

At sunrise huge flocks rise and fly out of roosting marshes to Goose Pasture. The cranes socialize in the pasture for awhile before flying out to feed in surrounding private land (agricultural fields). During the day, cranes can be spotted feeding and dancing in nearby harvested farm fields.

Beginning about one hour before sunset, flocks of cranes kite into Goose Pasture from all directions. They gab and socialize again before returning to roosting marshes at dark. Roosting marshes are closed to the public.

NP

Digital capture by David Watts



Sandhill cranes, Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area, Indiana, by David Watts.

Above: Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF500mm F4L IS II USM lens with 1.4x III teleconverter, focal length 700mm, f/10 at 1/1000, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 1600.

Below: Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF500mm F4L IS II USM lens with 2x III teleconverter, focal length 1000mm, f/10 at 1/1250, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 800.

Facing Page: Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF500mm F4L IS II USM lens with 2x III teleconverter, focal length 1000mm, f/8 at 1/1000, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 1600.





# UK PUFFINS *e3* GANNETS GALORE

Article by Arthur Morris/BIRDS AS ART, Editor

The BIRDS AS ART web site: [www.BIRDSASART.com](http://www.BIRDSASART.com) (Click for Live Link)

**I**magine a bird photographer's paradise with Atlantic puffins on every rock, many with a mouthful of sand eels for the young in their burrows. Think of cliffs paved with common murrens and the handsome razorbills with their ochre-lined mouths. And for each of these species there are lots of individuals with cuter-than-cute chicks. (If you mention "murre" to a Brit they will likely think you a bit daffy, as that species is known as guillemot on the other side of the pond.)

How about Arctic terns that sit placidly atop their chicks right next to access paths until—for seemingly no reason at all—they decide to fly up and whack you on your head with their sharp red bills. Tip: wear a loose-fitting cap! Picture fluffy white black-legged kittiwake chicks in cliff-ledge nests too close to focus on! Shags with their jewel-like green eyes and big ugly chicks are also close enough to touch in several spots. It is strange and a bit damning that almost every nest has a piece of thick blue or green rope woven into it.

Imagine an accessible kittiwake colony—right in town—where you get to use short lenses to photograph the birds with short lenses on beautiful seaweed-draped nests where the cliff walls are covered with green algae and kittiwake whitewash, "nest-scapes" if you would. (Note: if the backgrounds are dark or black be sure to underexpose to avoid blowing out the whites.)

Black-headed gulls—I call them chocolate-headed gulls as that name is much more accurate—nest on boulder walls that were constructed a hundred years ago on the afternoon island. Both herring and lesser black-backed gulls are constantly patrolling for meals of young seabird chicks. Every time that a puffin lands near its burrow there is a gull or two right on its tail. And in addition to perched birds and the seabirds on their nests, there is abundant flight photography action.

If you understand the relationship between the direction of the light and the direction of the wind you can put yourself in perfect position to photograph all of these species in flight: Atlantic puffin; common murre; razorbill; shag; black-legged kittiwake, black-headed, herring, and lesser black-backed gulls; Arctic, common, and sandwich terns; and Eurasian oystercatchers which also nest on the two accessible islands.

Now see yourself on a small fishing boat near the world's largest single-location gannetry: Bass Rock in Scotland, where hundreds of gannets are diving for fish within yards of the boat. You have created well more than 1500 flight images in the first hour and you can barely lift your lens. The muscles in your neck and upper back are burning from lactic acid build-up. And you still have an hour to go.

Such is bird photography in early to mid-July along the Northumberland coast of England and the eastern coast of southern Scotland.

As with many of the locations that I visit, lots of folks insist that there is no need for a super-telephoto lens or even teleconverters... But as "clean, tight, and graphic" is my style, I never listen. Thus, the Canon 600mm F4L IS II lens is always in my Think Tank rolling bag as I board my flights to Edinburgh (say ED-in-burr-uh) along with both the 1.4X and the 2X III teleconverters of course. The latter gives me 1200mm of reach with the 600mm and one of the three full frame bodies that I now use exclusively.

Digital capture by Arthur Morris/Birds As Art



Arctic tern on nest, Inner Farnes, Northumberland, England, by Arthur Morris. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon 100-400mm L IS II lens, focal length 200mm, f/5.6 at 1/800 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, +1/3 stop, ISO 800, handheld.



I always have my trusty B-roll lens, the 24-105mm, with me for scenics, images of photographers, and the usual travel stuff; whenever I fail to put it in my vest I wind up wishing that I had it with me in about five minutes or less. I take and use the new, amazingly versatile, Canon 100-400mm L IS II lens on virtually every trip that I make. It is always on my shoulder on a Black Rapid strap on the UK trips where it serves many purposes as my intermediate telephoto zoom lens. It is a great flight lens and with the birds so tame, its incredible less-than-one-meter close focusing allows me to create head portraits and body-part abstracts of most of the species that we encounter.

In decent light it does quite well with the 1.4x teleconverter especially with the 1DX Mark II and the new 5D Mark IV, both of which allow you to use all AF points and all AF Area Selection modes when you are working at f/8. For our trips on the gannet boat out of Dunbar I began taking the 70-200mm F4 L IS lens because of its tiny size and its light weight. With the frantic gannets-in-flight action I am always the last photographer standing when using that lens.

Bright sun and blue skies are not what you want for puffin photography. In late June and early July we pray for cloudy-bright weather and our prayers are usually answered as clouds often replace the occasional early morning blue skies by the time we make it out to the islands.

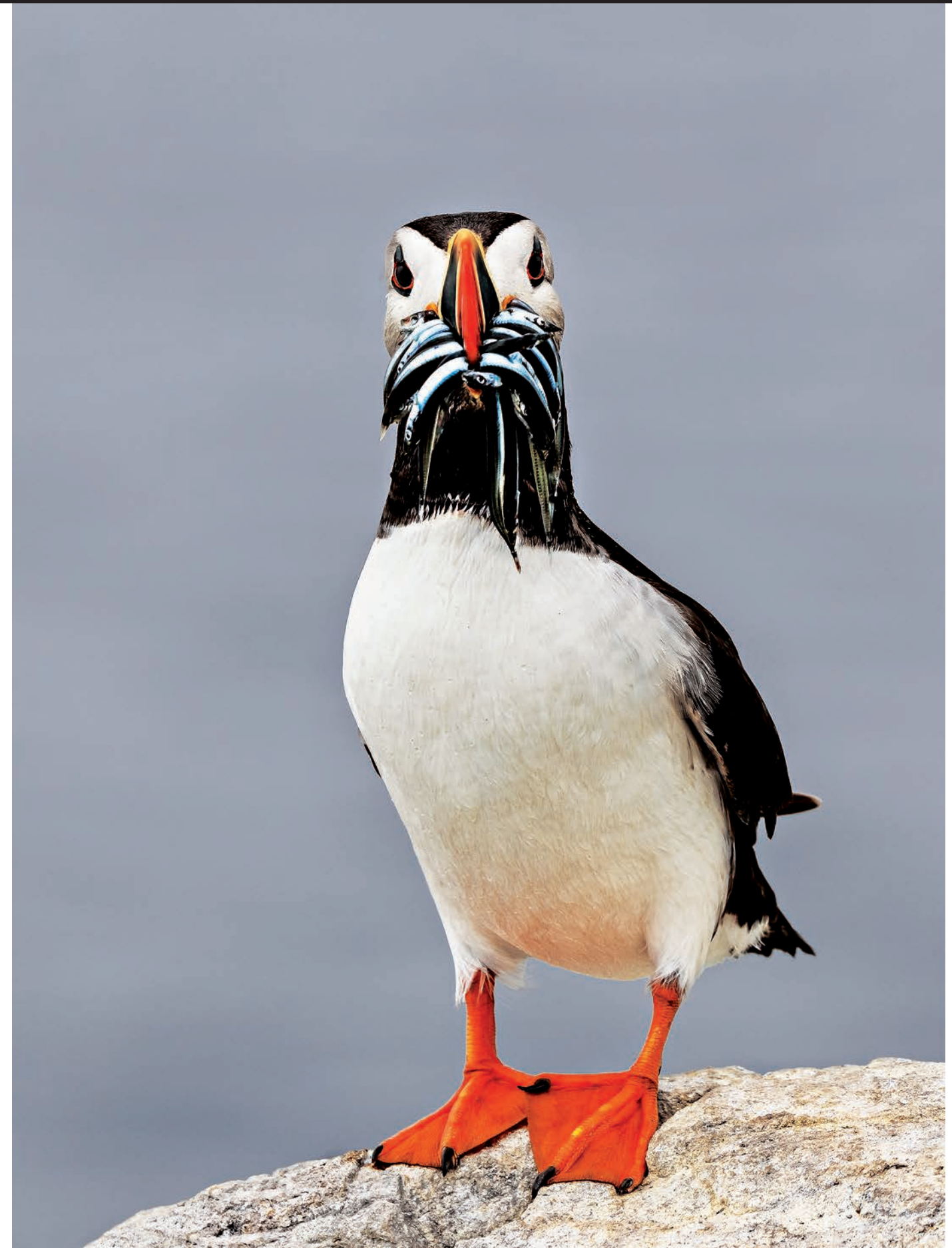
We take a large, stable boat from town at about 9:00 a.m. to Staple Island where it is easy to photograph nearly all of the previously mentioned species. As the landing times are strictly controlled by researchers, you may do a bit of sightseeing before being permitted to land, usually at about 9:45 a.m.



Images by Arthur Morris.

Left: Atlantic puffin preening, Staple Island, Northumberland, England. Canon EOS 5DS R, Canon 600mm F4L IS lens with 2x III teleconverter, f/11 at 1/1250 second, Av mode, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, +1/3 stop, ISO 800, Induro GIT 304L tripod with Mon-goose Action Head M3.6-mounted.

Facing Page: Atlantic puffin with sand eels for chicks in the nearby burrow, Inner Farnes, Northumberland, England. EOS 7D Mark II, Canon 100-400mm L IS II lens, focal length 371mm, f/9 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, +1 stop, ISO 400.





Keep a hand-holdable lens at the ready and you might get some good opportunities to photograph gray seals, the packed seabird cliffs, scenics of the various seabird nesting islands and walls, and at times, even close-ups of murres and kittiwakes on their nests, sometimes with chicks.

Once you arrive at Staple Island, be careful getting off the boat and making your way up the steps. The boatmen will be more than glad to help you off the boat with your gear. Once you are safely at the top of the landing, it is just a matter of reading the light, the wind direction, and the sky conditions and heading to the right spot.

As my Instructional Photo Tour there in July of 2017 will be my fourth visit in as many years, I have everything pretty much down pat. Look for situations where both the wind and the light are behind you or at least not blowing in your face when all the birds will be flying and facing away from you. Do note that on some clear sunny mornings having both the light and the wind behind you will simply not be possible and that west winds in the morning on sunny days are almost always very bad for bird photography.

If you are able to find a good spot for flight photography on a cloudy day be sure to start by metering off the sky and setting your exposure manually to at least two stops brighter than the sky. (Canon folks should be using Evaluative metering; Nikon folks should be using Matrix.) Then photograph a flying bird and check your histogram. You want to expose the light sky far to the right with lots of data in the fifth box of the histogram. For birds with black on them, having very few blinkies in the sky would likely give you a close-to-perfect exposure.

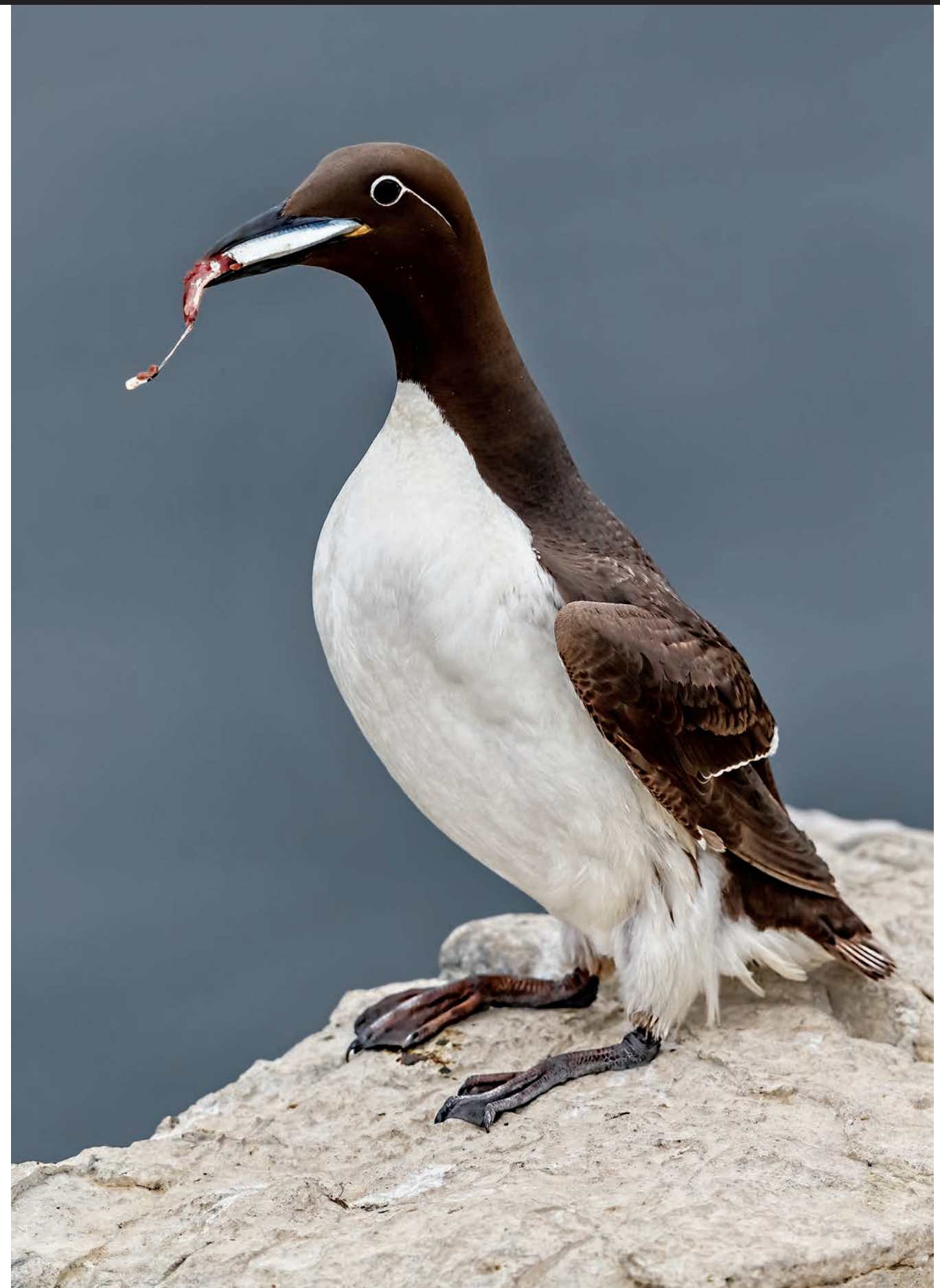
In fact, this approach can work well for all of your bird photography in Northumberland. If you have any blinkies on the subject, simply go to a click or two faster shutter speed. Whether it is cloudy or sunny it is imperative that you work in Manual exposure mode when photographing black and white birds like puffins, murres, and razorbills. Why?



Images by Arthur Morris.

Above: Northern gannet, near Bass Rock, Scotland. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon 70-200mm F4L IS lens, focal length 169mm, f/4 at 1/2000 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, +2-2/3 stops off white sky, ISO 800, hand-held.

Facing Page: Common murre with baitfish, Inner Farnes, Northumberland, England. Canon EOS-1D X, Canon 600mm F4L IS II lens with the 1.4x III teleconverter, f/8 at 1/1000 second, evaluative metering mode at zero, manual exposure mode, +1/3 stop, ISO 800, Induro GIT 304L tripod with Mongoose Action head M3.6-mounted.







With the light constant you first determine the correct exposure for the black and white subject by making sure that you have some data in the right-most box of the histogram while avoiding any blinkies on the subject. As long as you are working in Manual mode, your framing will not affect the exposure if you have either lots of white or lots of black in your frame. Why not? The exposure you set is the exposure that you get.

If you stubbornly insist on working in an automatic exposure mode like Av aperture or Tv shutter-priority when photographing birds with large areas of black and white plumage, the meter will open up when there is a lot of black in the frame and stop down when there is a lot of white in the frame. You do not want either of those things to happen just as you do not want the size of the bird in the frame to influence the meter (and thus your exposures). With the light constant, learn to determine the correct exposure as noted above and then set it and forget it.

If the flight photography conditions are not optimal, take a walk with your gear and keep your eyes open. You could make the trek from one end of the island to the other in about ten minutes. Be sure to wear sturdy footwear with high traction soles and be extra careful when the rocks are wet so that you do not wind up on your butt, or worse. As you go, look for birds on cliff edges with clean, distant backgrounds; finding such ideal subjects will pay big dividends as far as the artistic success of your images is concerned. NP

Artie is widely noted as a premier bird photographer and educator. His work is consistently honored in the world's most prestigious nature photography competitions. Learn more about bird and nature photography by subscribing to his educational blog at [www.BIRDSASART-Blog.com](http://www.BIRDSASART-Blog.com). His goal is to publish a new blog post every single day for the rest of his life. He currently travels and teaches around the world.



Images by Arthur Morris.

Above: Northern gannets and gulls on foggy morning at Bass Rock, Scotland. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon 8-15mm fish-eye lens, focal length 15mm, f/4 at 1/2000 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, -1/3 stop, ISO 1600, handheld.

Facing page: Black-legged kittiwake feeding chick, Seahouses, UK. Canon EOS-1D X, Canon 600mm F4L IS lens with the 2x III teleconverter, f/10 at 1/630 second, evaluative metering mode at zero, manual exposure mode, +2/3 stop, ISO 800, Induro GIT 304L tripod with Mongoose Action head M3.6-mounted.



# WITH A GLOW LIGHT'S GENTLE TOUCH

Article and Photography by Joseph Cagliuso, Field Contributor

Joseph's web site: <http://www.josephcagliusophotography.com> (Click for Live Link)

It was a cold morning, with fog, broken clouds and overcast skies. I arrived the day earlier, one of many visits to the Great Smoky Mountains. I left my motel just before the break of dawn. The overcast conditions and the quality of the soft lighting caught my attention and provided me with some nice and graceful compositions using the low contrast light as my center of focus.

When observed closely atmospheric conditions such as fog, snow, low cloud cover, or rain illuminate the landscape with highlights and shadows by the slightest sliver or fragment of light. Soft or indirect light can transform shapes, textures and patterns thus create a mood and insert depth into the composition. Capturing an image in that one split second of time often results in vivid and expressive photographs. It is true that the quality of light, weather direct or indirect, side lighting, front lighting or backlighting, is the first step to consider when composing an image. I however contemplate or look at light in a different manner. I think more about the endless possibilities that are experienced with the feelings or sensations of light and how I can capture the soft and sometimes mysterious mood with its gentle touch upon a subject.

This one particular morning when I arrived at the park, the conditions were ideal for me. The temperature was cool, there was ground fog slowly drifting into the valleys and a nearby river. The sky was overcast with some broken clouds on the horizon. My first instinct was to look down in the valley, basically in the same direction where the tripods and cameras of other photographers standing near me were pointing, and compose and capture the classic or iconic photograph. Motivated but somewhat hesitant, I did shoot a couple of record shots. However, after a few shots I chose instead to isolate some of the muted light radiating through the trees and fog. At that moment I noticed a sliver of light obscured by the broken clouds spilling across the landscape, and shining just below my tripod onto some low lying shrubs and rocks that were nestled at the river's edge. This natural setting of soft radiance almost unnoticed by me set the stage, and I immediately started to compose my image. As I previously stated, the presence of any atmospheric element in a scene, in this case broken clouds, can diffuse lighting conditions unique to that particular moment, resulting in photographs that can be very expressive and dramatic.

When photographing in these types of conditions the basic properties of light still apply. Timing and previsualization are also factors to keep in mind. Since the weather is in a constant state of change, you need to sense how the changing light will affect and alter the illumination of the landscape you are working with. Through my own personal experience and instincts, I can basically predict how to adjust for such changes. For example, are the broken clouds going to drift away and will the direct sunlight fully illuminate my subject? If this should occur, how will the effect of direct sunlight change the scene? Should I change camera angle or reposition my tripod and camera? All of these questions can be challenging, but after time you will automatically make these changes without hesitation.

The biggest challenge is photographing in inclement weather. For this obvious reason many photographers do not leave their house when the weather is less than perfect, preferring sunny days. Nonetheless, on overcast and inclement days you have a built-in diffuser—a cloud umbrella to work with. You do not have harsh contrast, your highlights are nicely saturated and shadows are soft. Again, we are discussing soft light and gentle glow.

After a rainstorm or during a foggy day there can be numerous opportunities to capture infinite details and isolate areas of the landscape. The colors are quite saturated, such as the wet rocks and stones by the river, trees with wet leaves all glistening with a layer of gloss. The low contrast stays well within the camera's range of exposure thus preventing blown out highlights and blacked out shadows.

Throughout the day as I walked the trails along the river and through the forest numerous compositions echoed to me. I began to compose some textured sand patterns, using my 105mm macro lens. Along the forest floor a small trio of mushrooms caught my eye. The possibilities were endless.

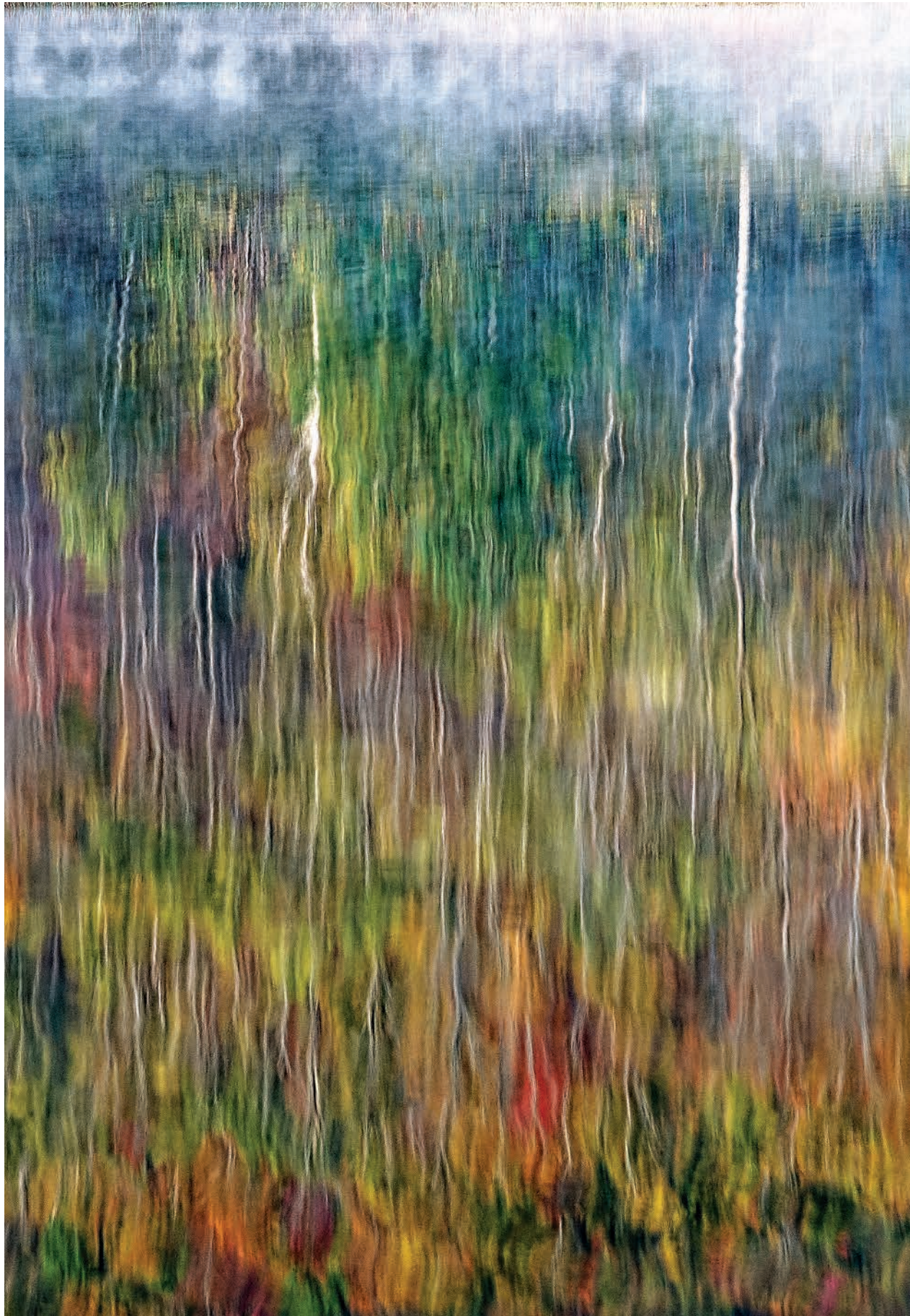
I was working some rock formations at a river's edge. The water was gently flowing downriver; the large rocks along the edge were just touching the water. A couple of rocks in the river with a rust-colored layer of minerals and some algae all caught my attention. But my first reaction was how the indirect light so effectively detailed the grains of sand on the rocks and algae. What I found most interesting was a type of soft texture in the water, produced by the indirect light of the

Digital capture by Joseph Cagliuso



Soft treescape and reflections, by Joseph Cagliuso. Nikon D300, Nikkor 300mm F4 lens, f/22 at 2.5 seconds, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.





Images by Joseph Cagliuso.

Above: Treeline in fog. Nikon D300, Nikkor AF Zoom-Nikkor 80-200mm F2.8D ED lens, focal length 145mm, f/20 at 1/4 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

Facing Page: Fog and reflections. Nikon D300, Nikkor AF Zoom-Nikkor 80-200mm F2.8D ED lens, focal length 170mm, f/4.5 at 1/100 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.



overcast sky. I set up my tripod and camera using a 200mm macro lens. I composed the photograph shooting at f/16 and with a shutter speed of one-half second the gentle flow of the water was captured.

I often photograph autumn and winter foliage along the road or on mountain passes. Again, on this one particular day, the indirect light and overcast sky accentuated the rich colors and highlighted in detail the maple trees and low lying leaves and pine needles on the ground. I composed the photograph, extracted a section of the scene using a 70-200mm lens, shot at f/16 with a shutter speed of 1/250 second to stop the slight movement in the leaves.

Learning to work with the delicate aspect of light is an important element of nature photography and goes beyond the concepts and rules or principles we so often follow in photography. Working with soft light effectively is an art in itself. It begins by observing and seeing the light with its soft glow, and learning to recognize and feel its gentle touch rather than its flamboyant radiance.

The fourth and final day of my visit to the Great Smoky Mountains proved to be rewarding. The early autumn morning was cool and a foggy overcast was over the valley and moving across the forest floor. I observed broken patterns of

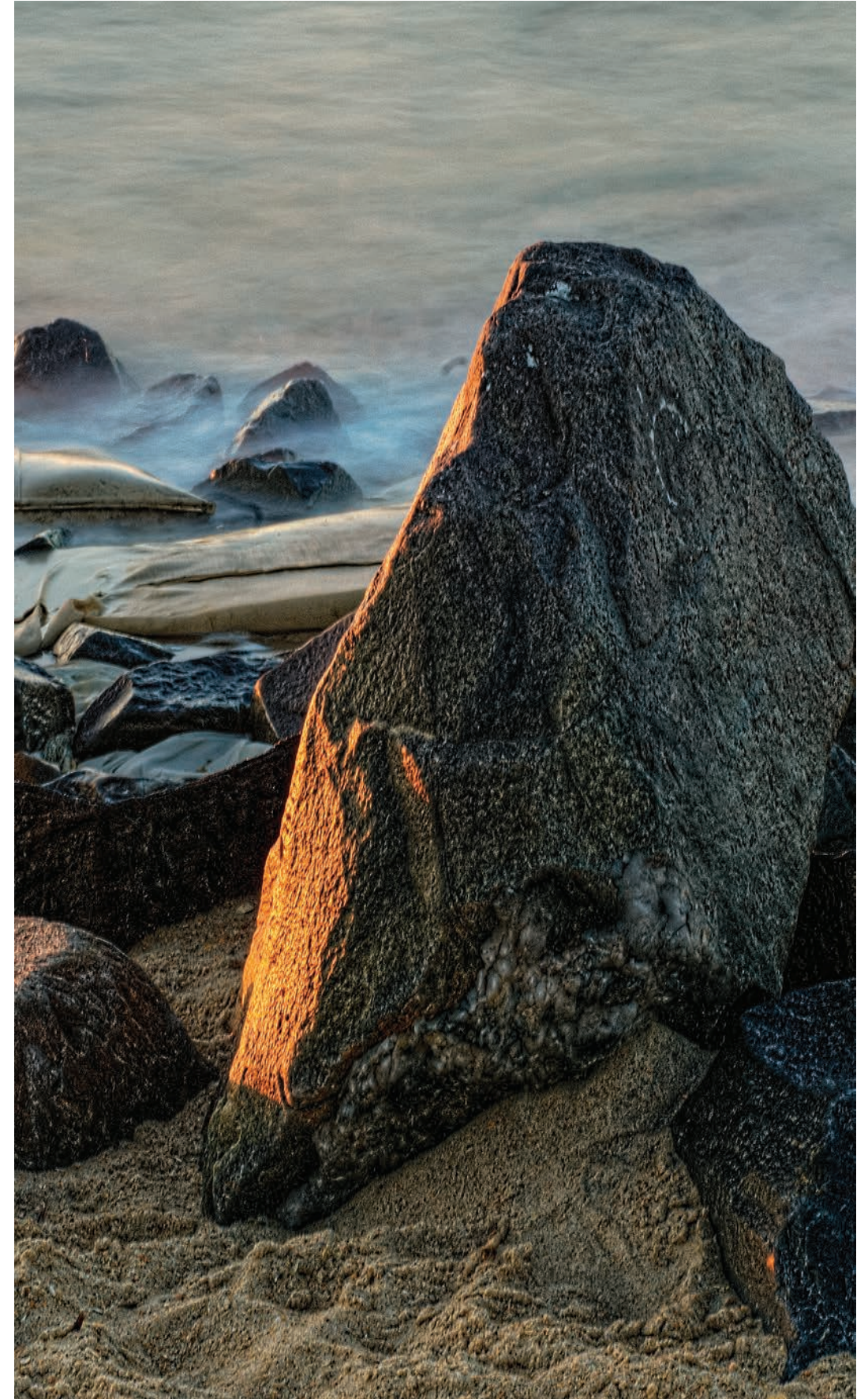
light appearing on the distant hillsides that softly illuminated the trees and the exposed mountain stone. I quickly repositioned my tripod and began composing the image, using some low shrubs in the meadows to frame the foreground and complete my composition. Again, I used a 70-200mm lens set at f/16 and a shutter speed of 1/60 second. I overexposed the image one and one-half F-stops to compensate for the fog band, giving the image a bit of a spiritual theme. Taking advantage of the rapidly changing light comes from a combination of personal experience, the right time, and chance.

It was time to start heading out. As I packed up my gear, I slowly took one last look at the valley and the nearby river that was sprawled out before me. The magical light was gone, but remained in my mind for I know on my next trip there will be many more magical moments to capture. I put my gear in the car, pulled out of the parking area and headed towards home.

Nature's atmospheric conditions lead us to discover unknown curiosities hidden within the earth's mysteries. On your next photo endeavor as you approach your subject on a quiet, cloudy and dreary day, listen to the sound, the sound of silence. Look down at your feet and look for light's gentle touch and for the glow. NP



Trees in abstract, by Joseph Cagliuso. Nikon D800, Nikkor AF Zoom-Nikkor 80-200mm F2.8D ED lens, focal length 200mm, f/7.1 at 1/60 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 800.



Soft light on rock, by Joseph Cagliuso. Nikon D300, Nikkor AF Zoom-Nikkor 80-200mm F2.8D ED lens, focal length 85mm, f/22 at 8 seconds, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.



# AUTUMN ADVENTURE IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES

Article and Photography by Randall J. Hodges, Field Contributor

Randall's web site: [www.randalljhodges.com](http://www.randalljhodges.com) (Click for Live Link)

Even though I had visited, hiked, and photographed the Canadian Rockies on three other occasions, visiting these majestic mountains in the splendor of autumn has remained on my bucket list for many years. With a goal of timing a visit to hit the golden larch of the high country in their full fall glory, it was decided that mid-September into early October would be our best bet. We started the planning process a year in advance to get the trip details and necessary permits aligned. We came up with a fantastic itinerary! This is not easy to do as the Canadian Rockies offer so many incredible locations to choose from. But by starting well in advance, we developed a plan to get the most out of our visit. Finally the day arrived, and on September 16 my good hiking and photography buddy, Bryan Moore, and I hit the road, with visions of magical mountains and stunning images dancing in our heads.

Deciding that Glacier National Park would be a good place for a layover on our second day, we headed over Going to the Sun Road and decided to camp at Two Medicine Lake on the east side of the park. You could really tell the season was already waning, as many areas of the park had signs and postings alerting us of the upcoming winter closures. We got our camp established and headed out for a sunset that unfortunately did not materialize. Waking before light the next morning, our hopes of capturing a calm sunrise reflection in the lake were dashed, as we were greeted with forty-mile-an-hour winds and bone-chilling temperatures. I was still able to capture my first signature image of the trip, with sunrise on Rising Wolf Mountain, using the windblown waves on the lake as my foreground. Oftentimes, you have to use what nature provides for you. It was a great start, but it was then time to break camp, and head north to the border and enter Canada.

Our first destination was to be Lake Louise Campground in Banff National Park for a two-nights stay. If you have never been there, you would be surprised to see the five-foot-high electrified fence that surrounds the entire campground area to protect campers from grizzly bears. Yep, we were in bear country. Running late, we tossed up our camp as quickly as possible and headed out to do the first hike of the trip, Valley of the Ten Peaks above Moraine Lake. Weather did not cooperate on our first night's hike but we did make it into Larch Valley, in the rain, and found our timing was absolutely per-

fect. The golden larch (golden tamarack) was just beginning to peak. Yes! What a relief, a year of planning and dreaming had paid off, and we had timed it right! Up early the next morning we arrived at Moraine Lake in time to capture an incredible sunrise over the lake with the Ten Peaks as the jaw-dropping backdrop. I now had my second signature image of the trip in the bank! What a treat it was to see first light touch these majestic peaks. The first snows of the season added that special frosting to the tops of the mountain peaks, we decided right then and there that we had to visit this location again before we left the Canadian Rockies.

After our two-night stay at Lake Louise Campground, with our backpacks packed up and ready for adventure, we headed off to our next location, the Lake O'Hara Region of Yoho National Park. For a backpacker, this is a real treat. Rather than hiking and slogging your massive backpack in to the area, you instead get to put your backpack on a bus and get driven to and dropped off at a backcountry camp. It doesn't get any easier than that! Although getting a permit for a site is not easy, and must be done well in advance, the camping at Lake O'Hara is as good as it gets. Assigned your own tent site, this campground boasts two cook-up cabins with wood stoves (very appreciated on our visit as the overnight temps were well below freezing), a central campfire area, and storage lockers for your food and extras. There is also a dishwashing sink and a very good backcountry privy. These amenities make a wilderness backpacker like myself feel spoiled and grateful indeed! With three nights booked in the outstanding area, it was time to get our camp set up and hit the trail. I have hiked and photographed over 25,000 trail miles in the last 28 years, and I can say with all honesty, this is one of the best hiking destinations on the planet. It had been many years since my last visit here, and with overwhelming anticipation, I could not wait to get back on these amazing trails.

So with a light snow falling, we headed out on our first hike with a goal to get up very high, so we could survey the area and come up with a three-day plan of attack. We decided to head up the Schaffer Lake Trail, then climb the All Souls Route to the high country. Around the back of Schaffer Lake we found a small tarn and marked this as a place to

Digital capture by Randall J. Hodges



Sunrise on Rising Wolf Mountain over Two Medicine Lake, Glacier National Park, Montana, by Randall J. Hodges. Canon EOS 5DS R, Canon EF24-105mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 24mm, f/20 at 0.4 second, -2/3 stop, 3-stop graduated split neutral density filter, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.



return a little earlier in the afternoon for better light, then headed on up, up, and up into the high country. We were both totally blown away with the views from the All Souls Route, as we now had a look over the entire Lake O'Hara Region. The golden larch were peaking, and enormous portions of the high country had turned the normally beautiful forests of green to a stunning combination of eye-popping yellow and orange. If you are one of those people like myself, who hunts for places to view golden larch in fall, you must put Lake O'Hara on your bucket list. In my entire life, I have never seen anything like it. Miles and miles of beautiful forests turned to gold! We used our time here formulating a plan. Being up high, overlooking the entire scene, we could now see the sun's path, and we knew where we should be, and at what time. We could also now see the better portions of all of the hiking areas we had hoped to hit. The fresh snow had capped all the mountains and peaks, and added that extra special finishing touch. It was like a little seasoning on an already fantastic dinner! The hour was getting late, so we high-tailed back down to Schaffer Lake, and we captured an amazing sunset with Mount Huber towering over Schaffer Lake surrounded by golden larch. On our night hike back to camp, we were filled with excitement and joy, as we both already knew this would be a trip of a lifetime.

Up early again, we made our way to Lake O'Hara for sunrise and were treated to beautiful light and reflections in the lake, and got day two off to a great start with our sunrise images. On this day we would visit Opabin Plateau. From our scouting the night before, we knew this area was all golden larch that needed to be visited in the morning light. Once we switch-backed our way up to the high country from Lake O'Hara, it did not take long for cameras to come out, and they would not be put away for a few hours as we slowly made our way throughout part of the area. I cannot even recall how many amazing images were made on this morning, but once again it was as good as it gets, as there seemed to be a new image around every corner. Beautiful lakes, tarns and streams dot this area, and I am not sure if you could ever capture it all, but I sure made a gallant effort. It was no doubt one of the most spectacular photo days of my career, and something I will keep in my memories forever. I remember telling my friend Bryan many times that I had just captured the best golden larch photo of my life, only to tell him that again a few minutes later. Morning light had come to an end, we decided to take the Alpine Circuit Trail, up even higher, and loop around over the All Souls Route again to see if we could improve our images from the evening before. After the thrilling hike up and over, we made our way back to camp for a well-deserved lunch break.

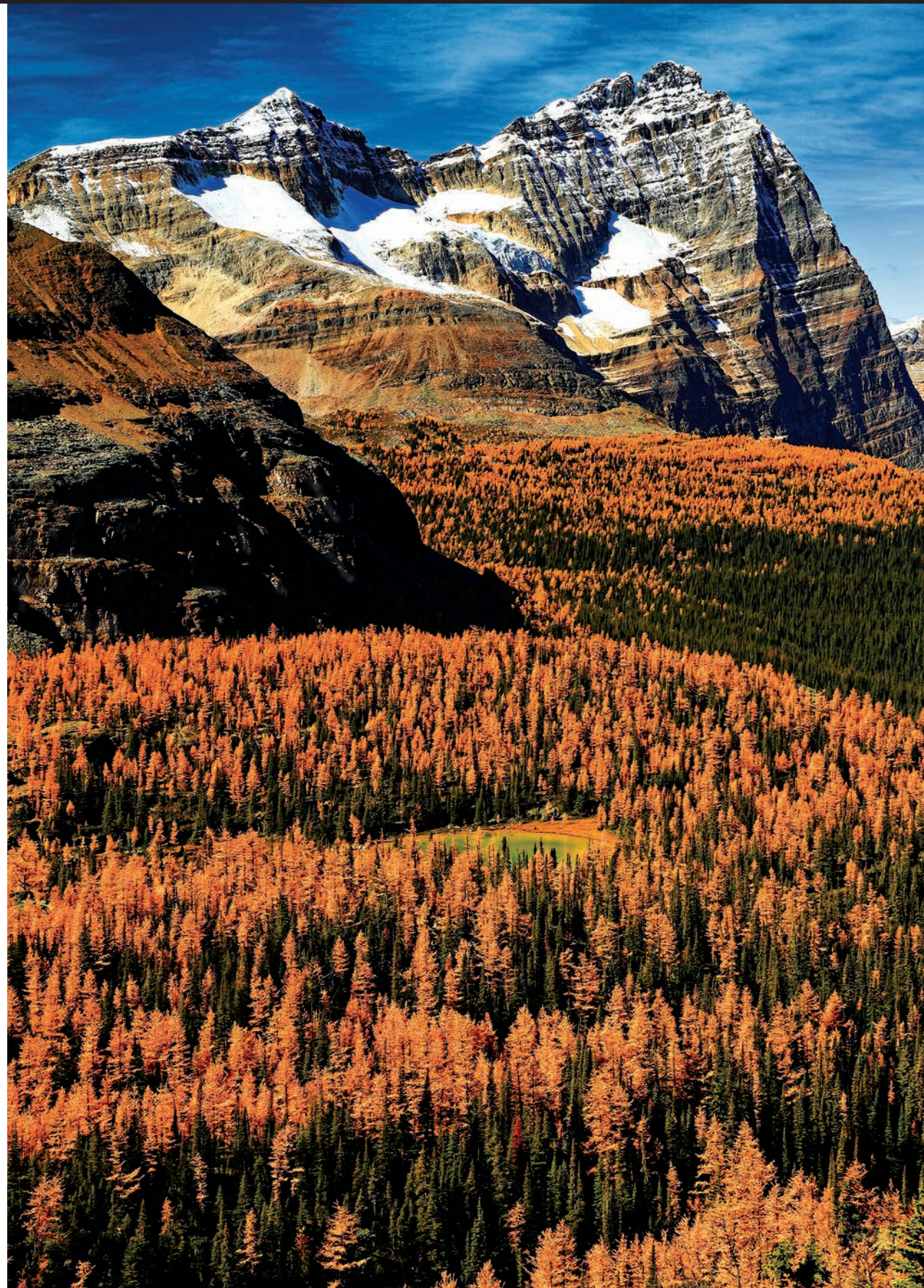
Then it was back up the Schaffer Lake Trail so we could capture an image of a tarn we had scouted the day before. Again our planning paid off, and we put some images of perfect reflections with Mount Huber in the bank. POW! Nailed it! Back on the trail we made our way up and over the Low Level Circuit Pass, and dropped into the Lake McArthur Basin. Thinking we would hit some late afternoon shots and get ourselves back over the pass before dark, the beauty of this area had us waiting it out here for sunset. Many arguments can be made that this is the greatest hike in the Lake O'Hara Region. I will not join in these discussions, as I truly believe that ALL of the hikes in the Lake O'Hara region are equally beautiful, making it impossible to pick a favorite. In my opinion, they are all as good as hiking gets anywhere in the world. I will say, that the light here this time of year never fully lights

up the peak and lake basin, so the best shots come during or after the sun officially drops below the ridge, as the light gets more balanced. Add golden larch in the foreground, with Mount Biddle as the backdrop, and you now have yourself an image. During hot summer days, a jump into Lake McArthur is refreshing, but not at this time of year, it is hypothermic! Getting dark, it was once again time for our night hike back to our camp, and we took the High Level Circuit Pass out. Reflecting on the marvelous day we had just experienced, we looked forward to our last full day in this spectacular mountain paradise.

After another excellent sunrise on Lake O'Hara, we gobbled down our breakfast, repacked our gear, and headed off to make the climb back into the high country. We had decided to get back up into Opabin Plateau for morning light in the basin, then we would take the Yukness Shelves Route along the Alpine Circuit, and make our way around to Lake Oesa. This combines two hikes into one big loop and we hoped to arrive at Lake Oesa around one o'clock. Starting the hike, while making our way around Lake O'Hara, we were stopped dead in our tracks gawking at Odaray and Cathedral Mountains reflecting in Lake O'Hara. Getting our gear out as quickly as we could, we had time for six or seven shots, then the wind picked up and the photoshoot was over as fast as it had begun. Our timing could not have been better, as we got out our cameras and watched the last of the early morning shadows leave the lake, got our shots, and then the wind shut it down. As so often is the case in photography, timing is everything!

Again the morning light in Opabin Plateau was absolutely to die for, and we slowly shot our way through the beautiful autumn splendor, all the way to Opabin Lake at the head of the plateau basin. We focused on areas we had missed the day before, and one of my favorite stops was above Cascade Lakes. With the fresh snow on Mount Huber and the unforgettable blueish-green color of the lake, this image really captured the beauty of Opabin Plateau, and all the spectacular scenery this area has to offer. From Opabin Lake, looking down over the valley we had just come up, I was mesmerized at everything I was seeing. Time to hike on. Shortly after we started our hike on the Yukon Shelves, once again we were stopped in our tracks. Now we had a view over the end of Opabin Plateau and out over Lake O'Hara, all the way to Odaray Plateau. This will go down as one of the best views I have ever put my eyes on in my entire life. And I actually believe the image I captured explains the beauty way better than I ever could. Both a vertical and horizontal images were made, and once again, I said to Bryan, this is the best larch image I have ever taken! And Bryan agreed. The hike around the Yukness Shelves was another exciting experience and we stopped many times for more images. It is so difficult to make good time while hiking here, the camera just keeps coming out, and the views need to be pondered and enjoyed! We hit Lake Oesa just in time, as shadows were taking over. After our shoot at Lake Oesa, we dropped down to Seven Devils Lake, and decided to eat lunch while waiting for the light to get around Yukness Mountain. Once it did, yet another special image was captured with Glacier Peak towering above the lake. Perfect clouds seemed to build just for us, and accentuated the scene, finishing off this excellent composition.

Running a little behind schedule, we decide to stay at Lake O'Hara for sunset. We found a super composition with colorful canoes on a dock in the foreground, and nature treated us to a very enjoyable evening. We decide to cap off the outstanding day we had just experienced by doing a night



Golden larch and Odaray Mountain from the Yukness Shelves, Yoho National Park, Canada, by Randall J. Hodges. Canon EOS 5DS R, Canon EF24-105mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 50mm, f/20 at 1/15 second, -2/3 stop, circular polarizer, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 100.



hike around Lake O'Hara. One more sunrise on the lake for morning reflections, and it was time to pack up camp and catch the shuttle bus back to the car. This no doubt was one of the best hiking and photography experiences of my life, and I could not have felt more grateful and blessed to have been able to do it.

After our bus ride out, we moved our base camp back to Lake Louise Campground, and got our camp set up within the safety of the electrified bear fence. It now was time to revisit The Valley of the Ten Peaks hike, and this time we were extra excited, and had perfect weather for it. Be forewarned, this hike often has a bear restriction on it. This restriction requires that you must hike in a group of four or more. This is for your own safety as you are hiking in grizzly bear habitat, and grizzlies are known to frequent the area. This is easy enough to get around however; just show up a little early with some patience, and wait for another group to show up, and ask if you can join them. Often another party of two or three will show up needing another person or two. We did not have to wait long, and joined a very nice couple on their way up to the high country. This is much better than tempting a \$10,000 fine and jail time! Once we reached Larch Valley, the afternoon light was right, and it was time for image making. A marvelous afternoon was had by all, as the golden larch glowed even more golden in the late afternoon sun. The fresh snow on the Ten Peaks really popped the images, and picking a winner from this batch would be nearly impossible. What a perfect problem to have, too many amazing photographs to choose from. I will take those problems any day!

Up well before sunrise the next morning, we made our way back up to the overlook of Moraine Lake and the Ten Peaks. Frigid temperatures and a steady wind made shooting conditions difficult, but a spectacular sunrise made it well worthwhile. Again it was a real joy to watch first light touch the tips of these majestic peaks. People who do not hike a lot, or backpack into the wilderness, will be blown away with this spectacular vista, as it only requires a small walk from the parking lot to the viewing area. After sunrise we were on a timeline to get back to camp, break it down and make our way to our next exciting location. Next up was a helicopter flight into Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park in British Columbia.

There are two ways to get to Mount Assiniboine. One way is to do a long backpack, through a grizzly bear corridor (which we had both done on another visit). Or you can book a helicopter flight in, in advance, which will carry you and your backpack to Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park. This is how we chose to go this time, and it was a short but exciting and scenic helicopter flight in. The views during your flight, and once you step out into Assiniboine country, are absolutely outstanding. Once off the helicopter you may find yourself speechless, with your mouth gaping open, in awe, while you take in the amazing scenery. For those who feel uncomfortable sleeping in a tent in grizzly bear country, might I suggest you also book a spot in the Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Cabins. In hindsight, this is probably the best way to go, as you will find out as this story continues. Your other choice, and was our plan, is to hike yourself and your gear a couple of miles in to an excellent backcountry campground. There are a couple of group cook-up shelters, along with food storage lockers, and decent outhouses. Water is close at hand making this a mighty fine camp indeed, and the only downside are those pesky grizzly bears.

On the hike to the campground we were again feeling fantastic, as the views were to die for and the golden larch

were still peaking in this area. We picked a pair of outstanding tent sites and got camp and chores out of the way in a hurry. It was time to make the journey to the spot we would visit all three nights of our time here, the awesome Niblet Viewpoint. Once out of camp, with our bear spray always close at hand, we took time to enjoy the hike up. This is an excellent viewpoint midway up the mountain trail to Nub Peak. Adventurous hikers and photographers from around the world come to the Niblet to try and capture their image of this iconic mountain location. Standing a thousand feet above Cerulean, Sunburst and Magog Lakes, with Sunburst Mountain rising out of the earth, and the snowy peak of Mount Assiniboine in the background, this truly is a unique and magnificent scene to behold. And we were no different, as we made our way up to this Promised Land, and scouted around for the spot to claim our own chance at glory. It had gotten pretty cloudy out and the wind picked up, and it proceeded to get very cold. I found my spot and was mesmerized by the unforgettable scene. After I got my wits about me again, I readied my camera gear, put on all the clothes in my pack, and waited it out for sunset. Even though we did not have a blowout sunset, great tones lit the scene underneath the clouds, and I captured my signature image of Mount Assiniboine on this first night. Right after the sun had set, the wind calmed down, the clouds cleared considerably, and we enjoyed a nice, if chilly, night hike back to camp, making noise the entire way. "Hey bear! We are here bear! Coming through bear! We taste terrible bear!" It is important to make noise in bear country to avoid surprising one of the many grizzlies in the area. We had only been there one day, and already everywhere we went, the talk was all about the bear. Luckily for us, we had not seen one and hoped not to.

On our second day we were up well before sunrise and made our way to one of the many frozen tarns we had passed on our way up to the Niblet the day before. We captured an excellent reflection of the mountain as it received the first rays of light from the sun. We made a mental note that this would make an excellent spot for a star photo. After an amazing day of hiking the trails, exploring the area, we returned to camp to fuel up and get ready for another journey to the Niblet. Arriving at camp, we noticed a commotion around one of our neighbor's tents, and realized a group of people were talking about a bear that had apparently destroyed his tent while we were away. Oh my! That is close to home, too close for comfort, and left us all uneasy that a grizzly had come right through camp and ripped up his tent in search of a snack. Well, nothing we could do about that, but the park service threatened to shut down the campground, so we all begged them not to. As a compromise, everyone farther out moved their tents closer to the shelter, so we would all be together and have strength in numbers. Then off we went back to hike to the Niblet. Many great images were captured, but we did not outdo ourselves from the night before. We did, however, make a stop off for star photos on our way down in the same tarn we had shot at sunrise. With moonlight lighting the mountain, it made for a fantastic night shot indeed!

Day three was a carbon copy of day two as we hit sunrise from one of the partially frozen tarns, then went exploring the trails of the area again, making noise all the way. I was beginning to get tired of hearing my own voice, and I was running out of things to say! Once again we made our way up the trail to the Niblet and gave it another try. My best images on this evening were definitely of the golden larch and other peaks in the area during alpenglow. Another night hike made for a

great time to stop for more night and star photography. Once arriving back at camp, and prepping dinner in the cook-up shelter, we were asked if we had seen the grizzly bear right near us while we shot star photos. What? Apparently a couple of our neighbors noticed him as they walked by us, but thankfully for us, we did not! Bears, bears, bears, everywhere there are bears!

In the morning we decided on Magog Lake for sunrise, and once again, in the still morning air, we captured outstanding reflections of Mount Assiniboine. After sunrise we made our way up to the lodge area to capture an image in morning light of the view the guests have with Mount Assiniboine towering over Magog and the Assiniboine Valley. It was beautiful but, unfortunately for us, this meant it was then time to head back to camp and pack up in preparation for our helicopter ride out to the trailhead. For a full-time professional photographer like myself, this may go down as one of the best commutes to and from work ever!

Once we were back at the car, we wasted no time in heading out as we had to make it south back across the bor-

der into the United States, and make our way to the Many Glacier Area of Glacier National Park. We ran late and did not make it in time for sunset, but got our tents set up and hit the sack early. We had now been on the road for eighteen days, and exhaustion was definitely setting in.

We were up in time for sunrise, but since we had not had time to scout the area the night before, we headed for the only spot I knew would have a view which was over Swiftcurrent Lake. We were just in time and had to scramble to get our cameras out quickly, as we were treated to one of the best sunrises we had witnessed on the entire trip. The color to the east over Swiftcurrent Creek was outstanding, but my favorite and last signature shot of the trip was of morning light hitting Mount Wilber reflected in Swiftcurrent Lake. For me, this was the perfect ending to an absolutely spectacular adventure. All that was left to do was to pack up camp and make the two-day drive back to western Washington. What a trip it was indeed, over 127 miles hiked, nineteen days of sleeping on the ground in a tent, and 1000 new images added to my collection. Happy hiking and happy exploring everyone! NP



View over the Lake O'Hara Region from Opabin Prospect in Opabin Plateau, Yoho National Park, Canada, by Randall J. Hodges. Canon EOS 5DS R, Canon EF24-105mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 50mm, f/20 at 1/10 second, -2/3 stop, circular polarizer and 1 stop graduated split neutral density filter hard graduation, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 100.



# DRIP WATER FOR BIRDS

Article by John and Barbara Gerlach, Editors  
Photography by John Gerlach, Editor

John's and Barbara's web site: [www.gerlachnaturephoto.com](http://www.gerlachnaturephoto.com) (Click for Live Link)

I frequently use black oil sunflower seeds and sugar water to lure birds within photo range at my home. For certain species of birds this strategy is effective and provides them with food as well. Sunflower seeds are eagerly devoured by blue jays, cardinals, evening grosbeaks, chickadees and many other species. Hummingbirds love sugar water. And I would use suet, but the black-billed magpies gobble it all up in minutes. Unfortunately, warblers, flycatchers, kinglets, and most other insect eating birds are not attracted to seeds or sugar water.

Seeds have other problems too. Most of the time bits of food appear in the image, either from seeds sticking to the bird's beak or strewn about the photo setup. While it is possible to use software to remove unwanted food debris after the image is made, it is far more convenient to avoid food residue altogether!

All birds need water and most readily visit water sources throughout the day. Water is a huge attractant in dry areas like the desert or during dry periods of the year and greatly needed by our feathered friends. Often summers are dry, and outside of a creek one-half mile away, water is scarce in the forest around my home. The water drip provides life-giving water to a horde of birds at my mountain home near West Yellowstone. The birds benefit and also become my models.

In 2015, I decided to drip water into a natural cavity in a rock where a six-inch pool could form. I only had a few days to see how it would work before I had to go to Michigan to teach my annual autumn color workshops. But, in just three days, I became hooked on using dripping water to lure birds because it was enormously successful. Plus, also being beneficial for the birds. For years I saw Wilson's warblers flitting about the bushes in my yard during September on their southbound migration, but I could never get a decent photograph. Wilson's warblers are readily attracted to water, so I shot many pleasing images of them right away.

As I write this, it is early September in 2016, and my success has been stellar. In only a couple of hours at first light in the morning, and also during the last two hours of the day, I commonly shoot 1000 images of twenty species or more at the drip. My biggest problem is attracting too many birds who squabble over the water. I have hoards of pine siskins and Cassin's finches. When a flock is at the water drip, which is most of the time, it is impossible to get a clean shot of a single bird with all of the splashing and fighting going on. And that can be frustrating when I have a gorgeous warbler bathing in the pool of water, but four out-of-focus pine siskins are standing in front of it. With each passing day, I continually modify my setup to improve my results. I am far from an expert at water drips, but it has produced many images I cherish. Indeed, as I use the drip, my questions are growing more rapidly than my answers, but that is part of the thrill of learning.

## MY STRATEGY

The key to using dripping water as a lure is to make sure the water drops make a loud noise when they hit. Dripping water on a rock isn't nearly as effective. You need a small pool of water for the water drops to fall in. The aspen forest in front of my home is loaded with lichen-covered boulders and some have natural small cavities that have formed over the eons when rainwater accumulates and slowly dissolves the rock. I selected a rock cavity that is several inches across and six inches deep. Using a flash stand and a wooden dowel rod, I suspended a water drip above the pool of water that forms when the cavity fills with water. I soon noticed that birds only bathed along the margin of the pool, instead of in the middle because six inches of water is too deep, so I filled in the cavity with clean gravel from my driveway until the pool was only ½-inch deep. The birds love it! This is a key point, so make certain the water isn't too deep to encourage bird bathing!

Digital capture by John Gerlach



Red-breasted nuthatch, by John Gerlach. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon EF200-400mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 400mm, f/16 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 400.



*SELECTING A PHOTO STATION*

I have naturally occurring cavities in the rocks around my home. Still, I am already creating some attractive settings in my mind. As the fall colors develop and peak at the end of September, I plan to drill a small cavity into a colorful rock with a hammer drill and masonry drill bit to hold just a little water. Then I will cover the rock with brilliant yellow aspen leaves to photograph the birds and chipmunks that come to drink amid the colorful leaves.

*THE DRIP*

I first used a water drip that I bought for \$50 at Birds Unlimited. It worked pretty well, but chipmunks soon chewed up the plastic tubing. I needed something more durable. Fortunately, the Westmart Do-IT Center hardware store in West Yellowstone had everything I needed. I bought six feet of one-quarter-inch OD white poly tube (OD means outside diameter), a one-quarter inch OD straight needle valve that lets me adjust the drip rate, and a brass three-quarter FGH by three-quarter OD fitting to attach to the end of my garden hose. All of it cost less than \$20. To help you buy the correct equipment, the numbers on the brass garden hose adapter are FLF 766GH 3/4 FGH x 1/4 OD CO. The straight needle valve is DIB45-51-CLF.

I hung the drip about three feet above the pool and adjusted the needle value to allow a steady drip that makes a lot of noise when the droplets hit the pool of water beneath it. If it drips too much, the water can appear in the image and some birds shy away from it. I find having one water drop hit the pool every second is effective.

*LIGHTING*

You could set up the drip where ambient light is bright enough to photograph birds. But, my boulder is in the dark woods and I want to be sure of making sharp images, so I use three Canon 600EX-RT Speedlites and control them with a radio signal from the Canon ST-E3-RT transmitter mounted in the camera's hot shoe. Having radio-control is quite critical because a bag blind covers me and my tripod-mounted camera to avoid scaring the wary birds. Optical signals would be blocked by the blind fabric, and therefore would not control my flashes. Three of the less expensive Canon 430III RT's would work just fine for this too.

*LIGHTING UPDATE*

After photographing the birds and the chipmunks at the drip about a dozen times over two weeks, I started to notice a couple of problems. Every once in a while I seemed to have the perfect pose, but the image I captured was a split second later as the subject was leaving. It seemed like the bird or chipmunk saw the flash fire and started to leave before the shutter opened. I also noticed that my shooting speed wasn't quite as fast as I expected. Since the subjects around the small pool of water that forms from the drip are close to the same distance, I tried it again, but this time I did not use automatic flash exposure. I set my flashes to manual exposure. When the flashes are six feet from the subject, having birds a few inches closer or farther away did not really change the ideal exposure that much, so manual flash would work. With manual flash, I could shoot almost twice as many images per second, shoot more of them before the flashes could not keep up their energy requirements, and no longer did I capture images where the animal was reacting to the flash, at least not in the first image of a series.

Here is what I think is happening. Automatic flash sends out a pre-flash prior to the shutter opening. When the small pre-flash is emitted, the camera must wait for the light to bounce back to the camera's meter, determine the optimum exposure, and then fire the real flash to expose the image. Although we cannot discern that two flashes are firing, I believe the birds and the chipmunks do and react quick enough to cause the flushing images I sometimes get. Plus, it takes more time for the flash to emit two flashes and determine the exposure, so that accounts for the reason it is possible to shoot more images per second with manual flash. Remember, with manual flash, the flash controller merely tells the flashes to fire now—there is no pre-flash and no flash metering. Plus, I found I could shoot seven images in less than a second before the flashes did not fire due to lack of power when set to manual flash exposure. With automatic flash exposure, the number of images that can be shot consecutively was only five, and that was at a slower rate. Remember some of the energy in the flash is used up when the pre-flash fires. So for situations like this now and in the future, I am back to using manual flash!

I set my camera to manual exposure to lock out ambient light. By using the maximum sync speed of 1/250 second and stopping down to f/16, very little ambient light will record in the image unless bright sun illuminates the bird. If you use any auto exposure mode—shutter priority, aperture, program—the camera attempts to make the exposure with the ambient light. Ambient light can cause ghosting where a blurry image from the ambient is superimposed on a sharp flash exposure.

Get rid of the ambient and the ghosting problem is solved. The lighting arrangement for three flashes is straightforward. First, the rock behind the pool of water is high, so the flashes can easily light the background. If the camera could see a background several feet away, then a closer background must be added to the set (perhaps a log or large piece of bark) or a fourth flash must be used to light the distant background. I have two flashes on the front of the bird and a third flash above and behind it to rim light the bird. One of the flashes on the front is the main flash. I pull the other back a few feet so it does not overfill the shadows created by the main flash. Zoom the flash heads to the longest focal length—in this case 200mm—to concentrate the light on the bird. Be sure to aim the flash carefully at the pool of water. Concentrating the light on the target means the flash does not need to emit as much light to make the optimum exposure. This preserves battery power, allows shorter flash durations to freeze motion, and enables a quicker full-powered second or third shot.

*EXPOSURE*

I find ISO 400 is an excellent choice to preserve both image quality and the batteries in the flash. If you used ISO 100, the flash must emit two stops more light which creates longer recycle times and depletes the batteries faster. F/16 provides depth of field without getting too much diffraction from the small aperture, and the maximum sync speed of 1/250 second with my Canon 1DX Mark II reduces ambient light to prevent ghosting.

*WHITE BALANCE*

Although I shoot large RAW files exclusively, and I know the white balance can be easily adjusted with the Canon Digital Photo Professional software I prefer, I still set it to the Flash WB to more closely match the light source.



Townsend's warbler, by John Gerlach. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon EF200-400mm F4L IS USM EXT lens, focal length 400mm, f/16 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 400.





Yellow pine chipmunk, by John Gerlach. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon EF200-400mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 400mm, f/16 at 1/200 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 400.



Red-wing blackbird, by John Gerlach. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon EF200-400mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 355mm, f/16 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 250.



**SHOOTING SPEED**

I use continuous Low because I know I can get at least three optimally exposed images in less than a second. Due to the large boulder, I cannot place my flashes as close to the pool as I would like, so I mount them on flash stands about six feet away. If I could put the flashes closer, I might be able to get more than seven optimally exposed images in a second because the Speedlites would not have to emit as much light at the shorter distance. However, this might be of minimal help because the flash heads are already zoomed out to 200mm to concentrate the light at the pool.

**LENS**

The Canon 200-400mm F4 lens with the built-in 1.4x teleconverter is ideal for blind photography of small birds and mammals. When the smallest birds are present, I set the lens to 560mm by flipping the switch to insert the 1.4x teleconverter into the optical path. When a larger subject is present, I take out the 1.4x. And if a really large subject arrives, such as a robin, red squirrel, or black-headed grosbeak, I zoom the lens to a slightly shorter focal length. Nonetheless, the lens I use is expensive. Fortunately, any zoom lens that reaches 400mm works well for this sort of photography. If the lens doesn't focus close enough, then add a short 25mm extension tube.

**TRIPOD**

I use old Gitzo 1325 legs with a Kirk BH-1 ball head on top. Added to the ball head is a Wimberley Sidekick to convert the ball head into a gimbal-style head. Any gimbal head should be ideal for wildlife blind photography. Because the lens and camera are in perfect balance, it is easy to swing the lens side to side or up and down. It works really well! It is unimaginable to me to not use a gimbal head for wildlife photography!

**FOCUSING**

This is a case where back-button focusing is king. Birds drinking water move quickly. When one takes a drink, they typically repeat the movement several times. I focus on the bird's head as it sips the water, but I am too late to shoot the image the first time. I let up on the back-button to deactivate autofocus and fire as soon as I see the bird's head move toward the water. In this way, I capture some sharp images of the bird drinking. If the bird is still, then I prefer to move my single AF point over to coincide with the bird's face while composing the shot I want, push in the back-button AF control, and fire away. By the way, my camera is always set to continuous autofocus (and not one-shot) when I am using autofocus. I also use manual focus a lot, but normally for landscapes and close-ups.

**HOW DO THE BIRDS REACT?**

Most birds will fly or jump back a foot or two to assess the situation at the first shot. They react to both the sound of the camera and the brief flash. Once they see the flash and hear the camera a few times, most birds quickly learn to ignore all of this and then you get to shoot a lot of images without disturbing the birds. However, when photographing during the fall migration, many "untrained" birds are present each day. Of course, some individuals are more sensitive to the flash than others of the same species.

**WHAT SPECIES ARE ATTRACTED TO THE DRIP?**

Naturally, it depends on the species you have. My list over two years includes: lazuli bunting, western tanager, northern flicker, hairy woodpecker, goshawk, Cassin's finch, red-wing blackbird, white-crowned sparrow, black-capped and mountain chickadees, ruby-crowned kinglet, American goldfinch, cedar wax-wing, red-breasted nuthatch, evening and black-headed grosbeak and four kinds of warblers: Audubon's, Wilson's, Townsend's, and yellow. The mammals photographed at the drip are yellow pine chipmunk, red squirrel, and long-tailed weasel. Two common birds that I see regularly, but never at the drip are the house wren and gray catbird. Perhaps they get enough water from the natural foods they eat.

Another way to use the drip is to hide the drip behind an object—such as a cattail or a pine cone. Birds will perch on top of the cattail or cone to drink the water. When they look back over their shoulder, they are wonderful models and offer a splendid pose to photograph. Chickadees like to hang upside down on the drip to drink. Indeed, I do not get many chickadees at the pool because they prefer to sip the water directly out of the drip—even if they must hang upside down to do it.

**BATHING**

Remember I made the pool only one-half inch deep by filling the natural cavity in the rock with gravel. Making the water shallow is enormously helpful for bathing images. Wait for the bird to splash the water and try to capture the action. Shoot a lot of images because it is more difficult to sharply focus the bird while bathing—even though the flash freezes the fluttering wings and the flying water drops. Unfortunately, birds tend to close their nictitating membrane over their eyes when actively splashing, so it is difficult, but not impossible to get one bathing with the eyes uncovered. If you shoot whenever the bird is splashing, you will capture some pleasing images. Good luck with drip photography and have fun.

NP

*"Just as the bird sings or the butterfly soars,  
because it is his natural characteristic, so the artist works."*

*Alma Gluck*



Black-headed grosbeak, by John Gerlach. Canon EOS-1D X Mark II, Canon EF200-400mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 355mm, f/16 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 250.





# LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY THROUGH THE EYES OF A WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

Article by Vinny Colucci, Field Contributor  
Photography by Vinny Colucci and Annette Colucci, Field Contributors

Vinny's web site: [www.escapetonaturephotography.com](http://www.escapetonaturephotography.com) (Click for Live Link)

Landscape photography is an art form. Most photographers who specialize in this field have their gear set up specifically for landscapes. But can you get great scenic vistas even if this is not your specialty? Of course you can.

I have been shooting outdoors since 1979 and professionally since 1995. As my portfolio increased it became more evident that my major love was wildlife. My dear friend, Bill Fortney, once said to me that out of all his photographer colleagues, I was a true wildlife photographer. I took that as a compliment and went on making images of wildlife.

Does that mean I do not photograph landscapes, or macro subjects for that matter? No, it does not. I photograph all God's great creations. I just love being in nature whether the bear comes into the clearing or not. I am enjoying what is around me. In our workshop programs we teach all forms of photography, from wildlife and birding to the great mountainscapes of the west. We teach that being there is the most important thing and being ready for any situation gets you the images.

When I am out looking for wildlife I am certainly checking out where my next great sunrise or sunset will be. I try to carry equipment to complement both. My backpack has been the Gura Gear 32L, but lately I have been carrying the MindShift MP-1 or MP3 Moose Peterson bags. They carry a ton of stuff and I can take them on any airline as carryon. They will fit in the smallest of overheads. Among what I carry in my gear bag are the Nikon D5 & D500, D7000 IR converted by Life Pixel, 600mm F4, 200 F2.8, 24-70 F2.8, 16mm fisheye and SP5000 flash. A full set of Singh-Ray filters to help control light are included as well as a polarizing filter on all lens (except on the 16mm fisheye).

When shooting landscapes the 24-70 F2.8, 70-200 F2.8 and fisheye lens are my typical setup. I use a good tripod—I am currently using an Induro GIT 305 with a Really Right Stuff Ball BH-55 head for all my landscapes.

I love the 24-70 F2.8 for most scenic work which is wide enough for a great overall view. I have also done multiple stitches for large panoramic images. I do not always carry the Nikon 14-24 F2.8 lens, but it is great for really wide shots. Only the 14-24 would get the Horseshoe Bend image and my wife, Annette, nails it.

I use a simple approach with these lenses. What do I see with my eye that caught my interest? Then I determine the focal length which will give me a capture of that view. Sometimes it is a 24mm shot and at others it is a 150 or 200mm shot. No matter which, I keep it simple and clean.

As photographers sometimes we try to put too much into a scene. Isolating your subjects makes capturing them a simple process. Some of the things I look for are a single tree in a field with mountains in the background, a fence line leading the viewer's eye down a dirt road or a fog softening the scene.

The early mornings in the Smoky Mountains give way to great morning light burning through the low lying fog hanging in the fields and between the trees. When capturing these type of scenes the light needs to be controlled.

One big secret is to carry a set of Singh-Ray filters, graduated ND and ND filters, which give control of the light so I can achieve the effect I desire. For moving streams I use 5, 10, or 15 stops to control the shutter speed. Graduated filters control and balance bright parts of the sky balanced with the foreground.

What is my trick in getting super sharp landscapes? I use the one-third rule. While looking through the viewfinder, I pick a focus point one third up from the bottom. At f/11 and f/16 one third in front of that point of focus and all the way back to infinity will be in focus. The trick works every time. I usually use f/16 since this is where I get the best depth of field and the lens maintains its sharpness. If I stop down further, let's say f/22 or f/32 the lens starts to soften, hurting what is gained in depth of field.

Digital capture by Vinny Colucci and Annette Colucci

Facing Page Top: Horseshoe Bend, by Annette Colucci. Nikon D3S, Nikon 14-24mm F2.8 lens, focal length 21mm, f/4.5, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 250.

Facing Page Bottom: Sunset by Vinny Colucci. Nikon D800, Nikkor 24-70 F2.8 lens, f/16 at 2 minutes, ISO 100. The use of a very slow shutter speed of about two minutes gave the glassy smooth water that reflected the clouds. VC





Images by Vinny Colucci.

Above: Saint Augustine, Florida. Nikon D5, Nikkor 14-24mm F2.8 lens, f/16 at 30 seconds, ISO 100.

Below: Fence line and trees, Cades Cove, Tennessee. Nikon D3S Nikkor 24-70mm lens, focal length 24mm, f/16, ISO 200.



Waterfall, Grandfather Mountain, Linville, North Carolina, by Vinny Colucci. Nikon D5, Nikkor 24-70mm F2.8 lens, f/16, ISO 100. Tone mapped. VC



To control slower shutter speeds for moving water I pick the lowest ISO and set my aperture to f/16. This allows me to get great depth of field as well as slower shutter speeds. If I need an even slower speed, I will use a ND filter to slow down the shutter. This maintains my sharpest at f/16. I might stack two ND filters to slow the shutter speed even further. The Singh-Ray Mor-Slo filter is a very dark filter that is like stacking multiple ND filters—10 or 15 stops can give a shutter speed of four minutes or more.

I also use a polarizing filter on my entire lens set. I keep them on all the time as my protection filter. I find that even slight polarization helps. Also, when photographing animals I try to use the polarizer when I have time. Every little bit helps my image to be the best it can right out of the camera—the best image possible enables me to use the least amount of software later. If I need a shot in really low light, I will remove the polarizing filter. I feel that a polarizing filter is the most important filter to have on your lens.

Water images reveal my style. Slower shutter speeds to make the water movement soft while rock solid on a tripod insures that everything else is super sharp. The polarizer brings out the detail in water and removes hot spots from both water and foliage. A polarizing filter also pops greens in grass and foliage. This really makes your images stand out.

Look for elements that capture your interest. Emphasize them for the viewers of your work so they feel the emotion you did when you captured it.

With the needed tools, I look at each scene for subject, color, and light. Does the scene move me? Is there is a focal point that I can direct my viewer to? If so, I will compose to emphasize that point. Some scenes have too much going on which I cannot seem to capture, so I don't try. But when one

works, it truly works. If I share that image with a viewer and it makes them say, hey, I would like to go and see that, then my image did a good job. That's what I am striving for. If the morning or late afternoon light is not working, I may choose to shoot for a black and white image. If I see a scene in the middle of the day when the light is at its worse, I will pull out my IR equipment and shoot an IR image. It is all about capturing the emotion I was feeling at the time.

Do I use software? Not as much as most. I like to control the light as much as possible with the filters mentioned above. I do some basic editing to each image. I make certain my exposure is as close to perfect as possible. Then I might tweak a little highlight and shadow, but mostly it is contrast and some sharpening. If I use software extremes it might be some tone mapping in NIK HDR, or B&W conversion in Silver Effects Pro. I keep my time in front of computer to a minimum.

Most of these images with this article were taken while looking for wildlife or teaching landscape photography. When the light happens, capture it. Just make certain you have the tools you will need to do so. The real difference is a landscape purest does not carry 12 pounds of long lens with them. I have to carry enough to do both.

I hope you enjoy the images with this article. They show what I see while out there. I use all the tools mentioned to create images that convey what I have seen. Do not limit yourself by not trying different camera techniques. Practice your craft so when it happens you are ready for it. I hope these images make you want to go see for yourself, and I hope your images do the same for your viewers.

If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail me at [vinny@vinnycolucci.com](mailto:vinny@vinnycolucci.com). NP



Images by Vinny Colucci.

Left: Smoky Mountains, Tennessee. Nikon D3S, Nikkor 24-70mm lens, f/16, ISO 100.

Below: Vierra Wetlands, Florida. Nikon D5, Nikkor 24-70mm lens, f/16, ISO 100.

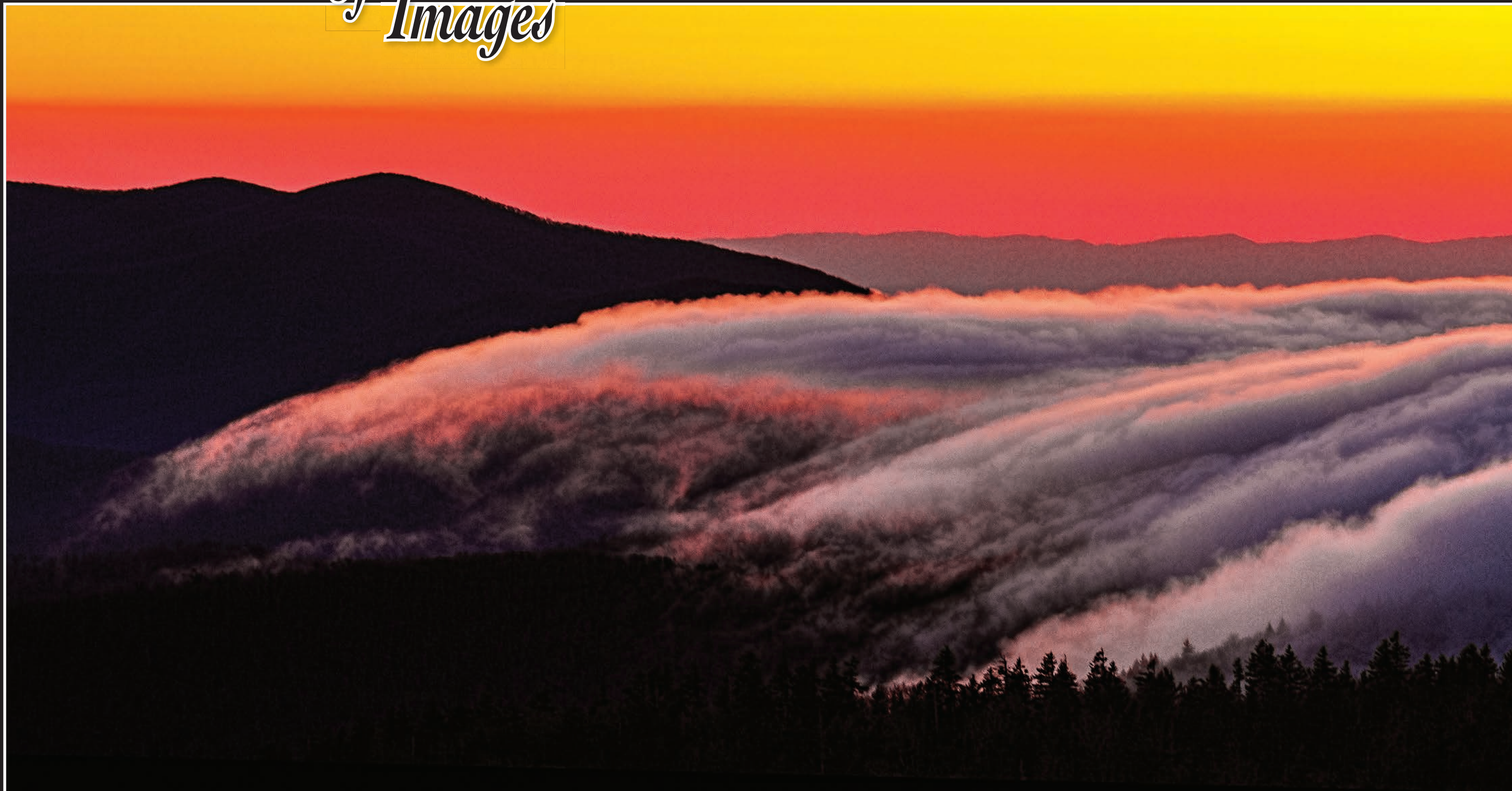
Facing Page: Glacier National Park. Nikon D3S, Nikkor 24-70mm lens, f/2.8 at f/16, ISO 200.





# Showcase of Images

*"Peace is seeing a sunset,  
and knowing who to thank."  
Unknown*



Smoky Mountains sunset, by Jacob Mosser, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF70-200mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 200mm, f/9 at 1/40 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.



*"Mountains are earth's undecaying monuments."  
Nathaniel Hawthorne*



Sunrise on Cuernos Principal, Torres del Paine National Park, Chile, by Edward Lusby, Field Contributor. Canon 5D MKIII, Canon 70-300mm F4.5-5.6 L lens, focal length 221mm, f/8 at 1/200 second, automatic metering mode, center-weighted exposure mode, tripod, ISO 800.

*"The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire."  
Ferdinand Foch*



Cyclist on the Parkway, Gatineau Park (*Parc de la Gatineau*), located in the Outaouais region of Quebec on the border of Ontario, Canada, by Mike Bachman, Field Contributor. Nikon D800E, Nikkor 70-200mm F2.8 lens, focal length 200mm, f/16 at 1/15 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

Each time I begin a hike in the Gatineau Park, I pause for a moment to pay my respects, for here are some of the oldest hills on the face of the earth. The park is only 30 minutes from my doorstep, but it is remarkable to think that in those few short minutes, I can travel back in time about two billion years. It is a humbling experience to say the least, and it makes you realize just how insignificant you really are. This is one of the places I visit to escape from the frenetic life of the city. Here among the rocks and trees and streams city life seems a distant memory. You can feel the history in the names you find here; Algonquin names like *Mahingan* (Wolf) and *Tawadina* (Valley) and names of the early settlers like McCloskey and Dupont. It is a life apart. MB



*"Autumn's the mellow time."  
William Allingham*



Mule deer buck overlooking a valley in Grand Teton National Park, by Jon LeVasseur, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF300mm F2.8L IS USM lens, focal length 300mm, f/16 at 1/125 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 320.

*"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die,  
life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."  
Langston Hughes*



Osprey with fish, Florida, by Gary Herman, Field Contributor. Nikon D500, Nikkor 200-500mm F5.6 lens, focal length 500mm, f/7.1 at 1/4000 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 500.

*"God gives every bird its food, but  
He does not throw it into its nest."  
Josiab Gilbert Holland*



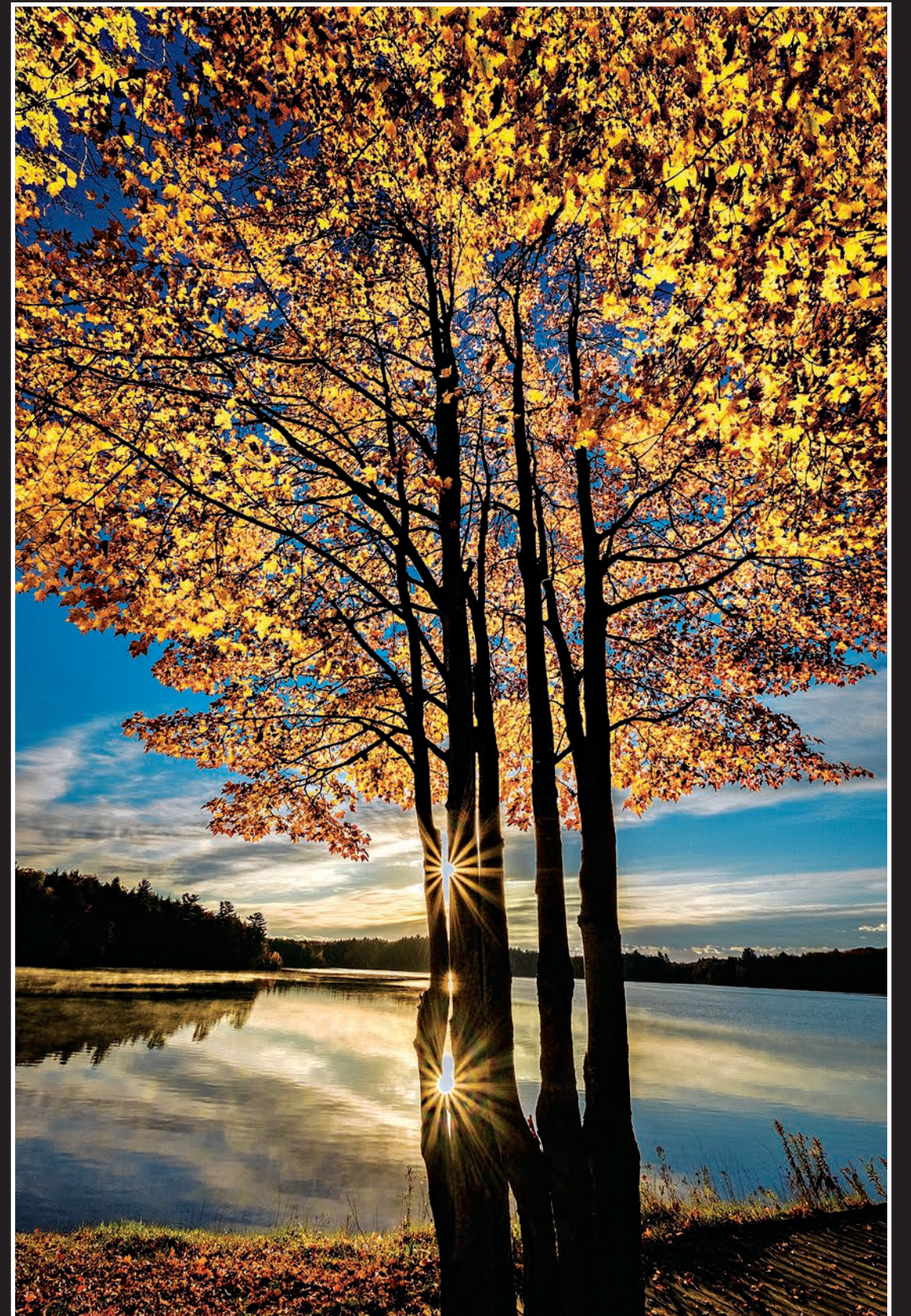
*"The camera is an instrument  
that teaches people how to see without a camera."  
Dorothea Lange*



Aspens and pine, Lundy Canyon, Eastern Sierra Nevada, California, by Craig Malburg, Field Contributor. Nikon D200, focal length 46mm, f/16 at 1/13 second, matrix metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 200.

*"Taking pictures is savoring life intensely,  
every hundredth of a second."  
Marc Riboud*

*"Autumn repays the earth the leaves which summer lent it."  
Georg Christoph Lichtenberg*



Double starburst, Upper Peninsula, Michigan, by Rex Short, Field Contributor. Fujifilm X-T1, Fujifilm XF 10-24mm F4 R OIS lens, focal length 10mm, f/13 at 1/1250 second, ISO 800.



*Advice is like snow—the softer it falls,  
the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind.”  
Samuel Taylor Coleridge*



Snowy owl, winter in Michigan, by Cari Povenz, Field Contributor.

*“In photography there is a reality so subtle  
that it becomes more real than reality.”  
Alfred Stieglitz*



Bosque winter impressions, by Ginna Short, Field Contributor. Nikon D4, Nikkor 500mm F4 lens with teleconverter, focal length 700mm, f/32 at 1/30 second, ISO 5000.

*“He gives rain on the earth and sends water on the fields.”  
Job 5:10*

*“Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving.  
What you have caught on film is captured forever.  
It remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.”  
Aaron Siskind*



*“So the darkness shall be the light, and  
the stillness the dancing.”*  
T. S. Eliot



Lenticular clouds, Mount Rainier, Washington, by Jim L. Shoemaker, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS USM lens, focal length 370mm, f/16 at 1/13 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

*The intellect of the wise is like glass;  
it admits the light of heaven and reflects it.*  
Augustus Hare

*“Give light, and the darkness will disappear of itself”*  
Desiderius Erasmus



Golden winter sunset, Greenback, Tennessee, by Paul Bay, Field Contributor. Canon EOS Digital Rebel XTi, Canon EF 70-200mm F2.8 IS USM lens, focal length 145mm, f/16 at 1/125 second, partial metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 100.

*“It’s not necessary to blow out your neighbor’s light  
to let your own shine.”*  
M.R. DeHaan



*"It is the chiefest point of happiness  
that a man is willing to be what he is."  
Desiderius Erasmus*

*"To find joy in work is to discover the fountain of youth."  
Pearl S. Buck*



Tufa Towers, Mono Lake, California, by Phillip Gooding, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon 24-70mm lens, focal length 67mm, f/11 at 1/8000 second, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 200.



Wind-blown stormy day, by Roger Zimmermann, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 6D, Canon EF70-300mm F4-5.6 IS USM lens, focal length 190mm, f/9 at 1/180 second, spot metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 100.

*"Every moment of light and dark is a miracle."  
Walt Whitman*

*"The pure air and dazzling snow belong to things  
beyond the reach of all personal feeling,  
almost beyond the reach of life.  
Yet such things are a part of our life,  
neither the least noble nor the most terrible."  
Frederick Soddy*



*"Bad hair (feather) day.  
Yikes, you took my picture!"*



Reddish egret, Florida in winter, by Joe Povenz, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS USM lens, focal length 400mm, f/7.1 at 1/2000 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 400.

*"In spring no one thinks of the snow that fell last year."  
Swedish Proverb*



Bighorn sheep. by Willy Onarheim, Field Contributor. Nikon D3S, Nikkor 600mm F4 lens, focal length 600mm, f/5 at 1/2000 second, matrix metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 2000.



*"This world is but a canvas to our imagination."  
Henry David Thoreau*



Cedar waxwings in crabapple tree, Jackson, Wyoming, by Diana LeVasseur, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF300mm F2.8L IS USM lens, focal length 300mm, f/5 at 1/1000 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 200.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,  
longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."  
Galatians 5:22-23*

*"Success is on the same road as failure;  
success is just a little further down the road."  
Jack Hyles*



Polka dot tree frog, by Rick Dowling, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 60D, Canon EF-S 60mm F2.8 macro USM lens, focal length 60mm, f/16 at 1/200 second, spot metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 100.

*"We do not see nature with our eyes,  
but with our understandings and our hearts."  
William Hazlitt*



# ANSWERING THE DOOR

Article by Helen Longest-Saccone, Editor  
Photography by Marty Saccone, Editor

Marty's web site: [marty-saccone.pixels.com](http://marty-saccone.pixels.com) (Click for Live Link)



*"Autumn—the year's  
last, loveliest smile."  
William Cullen Bryant*

Autumn leaves, Northfield, Maine,  
by Marty Saccone.

Nikon D800E, Nikkor 500mm F4  
lens with 1.4x teleconverter, f/4  
at 1/250 second, matrix exposure  
mode manual metering mode, ISO  
200, tripod.

I shot the foreground red leaves  
against a distant stand of yellow  
sunlit trees. At f/4 the color  
was muted nicely for a soft back-  
ground. MS

Digital capture by Marty Saccone

*"To laugh is human but to moo is bovine."*

*Author unknown*

Ubie and Helen in July at Cressey Pasture,  
Trescott, Maine, by Marty Saccone.

I am standing on a little rise along the fence  
line so I can reach over and pet Ubie while  
having a conversation with him. "Yes, I talk  
with the cows and occasionally they moo."

Ubie shared this 14-acre pasture with  
Wish2, Gillie, and Giggle from mid-April  
until November when they returned to the  
barn for winter. Ubie has been with these  
three since the first month of his life. Four  
cows were also on the pasture until they  
moved back to the barn during May and  
June. In August six younger animals, one  
steer and five heifers, joined Ubie, Wish2,  
Gillie, and Giggle. They all had a grand  
time grazing, playing, chewing their cud,  
and being brushed by Helen.

It was a glorious seven months for Ubie,  
Wish2, Giggle, Gillie and their pasture  
mates on this lush organic pasture. And,  
each day was memorable for me as their  
caretaker. HLS



*"And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."*

*Matthew 21:22*

Above is Ubie—a bovine teacher. Did I say teacher? Yes.  
My cow friends teach me valuable lessons.

In November 2014 I volunteered to help with calves at  
Aaron Bell's dairy barn at Tide Mill Organic Farm. On the first  
day I met Ubie, Gillie, and Giggle who were only a week old.  
Little did I know the role the calves would play in humbling me  
and drawing me closer to God. On December 18, Wish2 was  
born and she joined the other three as a teacher.

One day when I was cleaning their stalls and putting fresh  
sawdust down, I reached in and massaged their little bod-  
ies. I was amazed at their positive response. My journey at  
the barn took a turn. As I massaged each calf time slowed  
down and I could feel God's presence. In such an unlikely  
place—a barn—I find God's love and see His power. There are  
many lessons I have experienced during these two years, and  
in June 2016 I was blessed with an incredible experience. It  
happened at their summer home—nearby Cressey Pasture.

Early one evening I arrived to check on the herd—three  
grown cows, three heifers and Ubie, a steer. The herd was  
nowhere to be seen, so I walked across the pasture and up  
a hill beside a wooded area and looked. I did not see them  
until I turned and saw all seven moving quickly toward me. I  
stepped into the safety of the woods and the excited steer,  
Ubie, and heifers, Wish2, Giggle, and Gillie, greeted me while  
the cows, Umber, Turtle, and Morgan, stood nearby. I headed  
toward the gate, walking in the woods with the herd following  
on a cleared path.

Finally it came time for me to step out into the open pas-  
ture. Shortly into the trek toward the gate I made a mistake—

I turned to look back. The "boss cow" is always confident  
and does not look back at her herd. At that point I was the  
boss cow. Ubie seized the opportunity to take the lead posi-  
tion, and he hit me with his 900-plus pounds of weight. I flew  
through the air, landing on my back. Frightened, I began to  
drag myself along the ground toward the gate. With each  
small progress the cows took a step forward—well, all except  
Ubie. He kept pushing me with his head while I was on the  
ground. This was not a good situation to be in.

I called out, "Father, if it be Your Will, please help me. In  
Jesus' name, Amen." Instantly after uttering this prayer two  
of the cows, Morgan and Turtle, hit Ubie hard. Then Umber,  
a brown Swiss weighing 1600 pounds came to me while  
Morgan and Turtle kept Ubie busy head butting him. I laid  
my hand on Umber as she walked me to the gate. She stayed  
with me once I was outside the gate until I calmed down.  
Morgan came and reached out her tongue and licked me as if  
I was her calf. I was filled with the love of God and the unshak-  
able peace of Jesus. It was an emotional and holy time.

I stood in awe giving thanks to God for His loving care of  
this one little person in His vast Universe. I am still in awe.

Before I cried out, our Heavenly Father already knew my  
situation. *Matthew 6:8* ". . . for your Father knoweth what  
things ye have need of, before ye ask Him."

That evening God used the cows to illustrate to me that  
He is always with me ready to give aid, but I must humble  
myself by asking for help. It is also important to offer thanks.  
His style of instructing can be unconventional—like delivering  
lessons to me through my bovine teachers. NP



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Left: Autumn color, by Lisa Koon, Field Contributor.

Below: Fall at Quinebaug River Reservoir, Sturbridge, Massachusetts, by Jyl Hoyt, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 7D, Canon EF-S 17-85mm F4-5.6 IS USM lens, focal length 17mm, f/100 at 1/1250 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 1250.

Facing Page: Fall at South Bubble, Acadia National Park, Maine, by Robert Vestal, Field Contributor. Canon EOS-1D X, Canon EF 24-105mm F4L IS USM lens, focal length 93mm, f/22 at 1/250 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO 1250.

*“Autumn is a second spring  
when every leaf is a flower.”  
Albert Camus*



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*“The very nature of joy makes nonsense  
of our common distinction between having and wanting.”  
C. S. Lewis*

*“Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.”  
Karl Barth*



Sunrise, Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, Swans Cove Pool, Virginia, by David DesRochers, Field Contributor. Canon EOS 5D Mark III, Canon EF14mm F2.8L II USM lens, focal length 14mm, f/22 at 30 seconds, evaluative metering mode, manual exposure mode, ISO 160.

Back Cover:  
Lenticular clouds at sunrise over the Cuernos del Paine, Chile, by Edward Lusby, Field Contributor. Canon 5D MKIII, Canon 70-300mm F4.5-5.6 L lens, focal length 150mm, f/16 at 1/5 second, automatic metering mode, center-weighted exposure mode, ISO 400.

*“Joy is the holy fire that keeps our purpose warm  
and our intelligence aglow.”  
Helen Keller*

*“When it comes to life the critical thing is  
whether you take things for granted or  
take them with gratitude.”  
G.K. Chesterton*