



Close-Up



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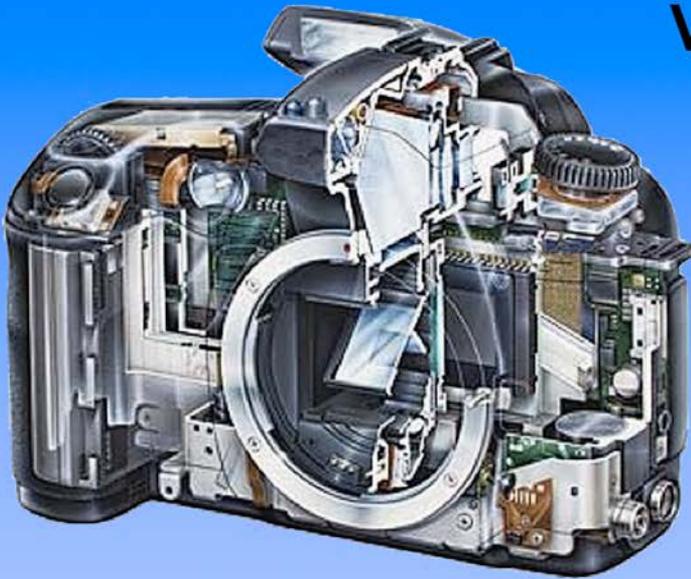
and more...

"Floral Arabesque" by Bobbie Carey

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Victoria Camera Club

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 Mailing address: PO Box 46035, RPO Quadra, Victoria, BC, V8T 5G7.
 Deadline for submissions for the May/June 2015 issue is April 5th 2015.
 Editor, Richard James, e-mail to newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org
 for submissions or to advertise in *Close-Up*.

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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

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

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

For additional information: please contact the appropriate Committee Chair:

- Membership:* membership@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Workshops:* workshops@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Field Trips:* fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Meetings:* meetings@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Website:* webmaster@victoriacameraclub.org
 - Close-Up:* newsletter@victoriacameraclub.org
- or call Lloyd Houghton, President at 250-580-7154.

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Member Discounts: VCC members can take advantage of discounts offered by several retailers in Victoria. Details are on the members only page on our website.

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



Calendar

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

Thursday, April 2nd; Competition Night

The March competition results will be presented. One of the judges will review selected images. The April theme is "Motion Blur." This is the Annual Competition, please see the website for submission rules.

Thursday, April 9th; Presentation Night

Join us for a feature presentation by Sean Sherstone on "The Wonder of Night Photography." Please visit the website for details, victoriacameraclub.org/pages/kalendar.php.

Thursday, April 16th; Members' Night

Presentation of members' images, field trip slide shows, prints or short technical topics. This is also our Annual General Meeting.

Featured Workshops in April

File and Folder Management

Introduction to Photoshop

Featured Field Trips in April

Tofino Weekend trip, Fisherman's Wharf (Tuesday)

Meeting, field trip and workshop visitor policy:

Visitors are welcome to attend any three events in a two month period subject to the availability of space and a \$20 per session fee for workshops.

Cover image: "Floral Arabesque" by Bobbie Carey. This image was made at a lightbox workshop in Edmonton. The teacher was Jim Ainslie, a member of both Images and Crossroads Camera Clubs in Edmonton and a frequent CAPA competition winner. The studio was at Jim's house. Tables, chairs, and the floor were covered with boxes of dried and fresh flowers, sea shells and sea weed, buttons, every kind of grass you can imagine, everything needed to create a unique photograph.

The lightboxes were translucent plastic over fluorescent lights. My camera was on a tripod and I arranged it to focus on the arrangements I designed. A most enjoyable experience!

President's Message

There will be a motion at our April 16th AGM to increase the number of elected board positions from five to seven. The rapid increase in club membership over the last four years, from 100 to about 270, has led to a substantial and unreasonable workload for the five directors to operate and provide leadership to the club.

The board has had some preliminary discussions about the size of the club. Do we try to increase the membership, are we too big already, do we try to keep the membership level where it is now? The board would be interested in your views on this. Please feel free to share them with us.

The quality of the programmes that we provide to members is also a concern. The board is unanimous in their belief that we must not let quality slip. We must cater to members at all levels and consider what they'd like to get out of the club. A significant number of members joined because of the workshops and field trips that we offer, in particular those targeted at those new to digital photography. However we must not abandon experienced members. While we won't be able to meet everyone's every desire, we need to know what they are. Some of you provided us with information in the survey we carried out last year. It would be good to add to that through some face-to-face conversation with those of you that have some thoughts on this matter. No ideas are too silly or trivial. Please talk to us!

The discussion at our last members' night got into talking about processing. It would be easy for newcomers to the Club and/or digital photography to get the idea that they have to be processing wizards to produce a half-decent image. This is not so. Why do we need to process at all? For the same reason that when you used film your images were processed. There was plenty of processing in developing and printing from film. As with film, if you don't do anything with digital image it will look flat and lack contrast.

Your ability to influence the production of a great image is greatest before you press the shutter. Take some time to identify what was it that drew you to want to take a photo. Ask yourself how you can best capture that subject. Exclude anything that doesn't help tell us what made you stop and look twice. While you will benefit from learning how to do some post-processing, if you're new to photography the best use of your time would be to learn how to use your camera.

Lloyd Houghton, President.

by Barbara Burns

There are many ways to approach the making of what we refer to as "creative" images. Some methods such as "deliberate camera movement" and carefully-staged still life studies are done entirely in the camera while others use complex multi-layered Photoshop techniques in the digital darkroom. Some photographers even print their images and apply paint, wax or pastels to them for a truly multi-media approach.

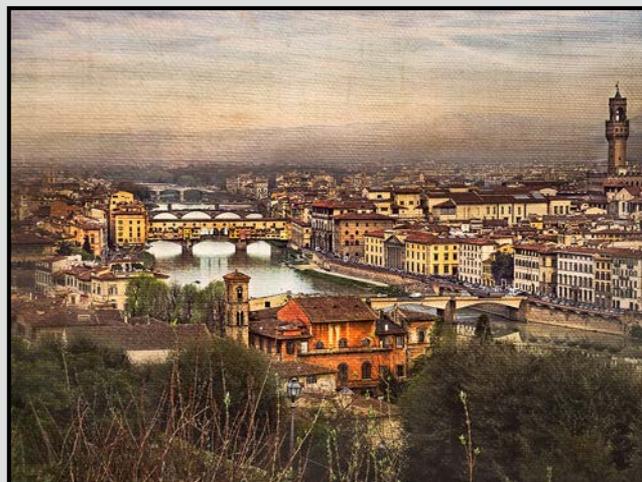
Regardless of the approach that one prefers, I find that the manner in which one begins is more important than it might appear. Just as painters will often speak of the intimidation factor of "the blank white canvas," photographic artists are often unsure of where to begin as well. Questions such as "Which images/ideas should I use as the foundation of my composition?" or "What creative technique will work best for this image?" often freeze the best of us.

An artistic mentor that I studied under gave me some very good advice. She said that most creative endeavours require forethought and contemplation to produce the best results. She suggested that when one is drawn as an artist to a scene, object or image, one must first pause and ask, "What is it about this that excites me and draws me to it?"

When she was preparing to alter a photographic image she would first study it at some length. She would examine the colours, the tonal range, the light, the focal point, the negative space and, particularly, the thought, sensation or emotion that the image evoked in her. After she had identified the story, feeling or "spirit" of the image, she would write in her art journal about the creative vision she had for the piece she was going to make and the general approach she was going to use to develop it fully. She was never afraid to deviate from her plan if a new creative avenue opened up while she was in the midst of the process, but she would stress that if you don't know why you were drawn to the image or project in the first place, you could very easily destroy it's impact without even understanding why or how.

This teacher would insist that all of her students have an Art Journal in which they would keep their ideas for creative projects. When we would begin the process of making a creative image she would insist that we write in our journal about what we were seeing, feeling and planning. She would ask us to articulate to her what it was we were trying to achieve with a particular image/project and then she would work together with us to

examine the main image or concept and analyze what needed to be changed/added or subtracted to more clearly express our artistic vision. A seminal moment for me occurred when I was editing a picture I had shot in Florence with a point and shoot camera. My vision for it was an antique look that would evoke the rich cultural past of the city as well as the lovely Tuscan earth tones that this part of the world is so famous for. After I felt that I had "perfected" my image, I showed it to my mentor. She immediately focused on a number of small objects in the image that had very bright blue tones. She pointed out that these were inconsistent with the colours and "feel" of my composition. It was useless for me to protest, "But that's the way they were when I photographed it!" Everything inconsistent with the artistic vision had to be modified to harmonize with rather than detract from it. The image "Dawn Tapestry, Florence" is below. I will let the reader decide if I achieved my artistic vision for it and if my mentor was right in demanding a meticulous approach.



Although I have tried painting, texturing, collaging and applying pastels to printed photographs, my preferred way of working is in the digital studio using Photoshop. On the advice of the same mentor, I have spent many hours photographing textures, "backgrounds" and objects in order to compile a large artistic inventory of images that I can use as components for building creative pieces. I keep them in folders on my desktop computer, organized in a way that allows me to access them easily. To give you a sense of how this works, suppose that you have decided that you want to have a full moon in your piece but when you shot your base image there was no moon in the sky. It will be very helpful if you have already photographed the full moon and stored it in your digital inventory for when you may want to add it to a work.

I generally begin with a base image and, as recommended, take the time to determine what I like about it and where I want to go with it creatively. I make sure that I have optimized the image in the digital darkroom so that it is at its best at the beginning of the process and so that flaws do not later crop up when they are much harder to fix. Next I go to my creative components inventory and take out a number of images that I think may work for my project.

Although I start with these initial selections, most often I find myself going back into my collections as I am inspired to do by the creative process itself. I then begin what can only be described as "playing." I try this image and that. I change blend modes, I overlay different textures and change colours, always alert to what serves my artistic theme and what does not. It is at this point that I find myself giving thanks for the immense flexibility and forgiving nature of the digital darkroom. When I was doing acrylic painting in the past, if I wanted to see if a purple overlay would be good on my piece, it was a fairly irreversible decision. If it went bad, likely the piece and the hours I had worked on it went into the garbage. In the digital darkroom you can try every colour in the rainbow without damaging your work.

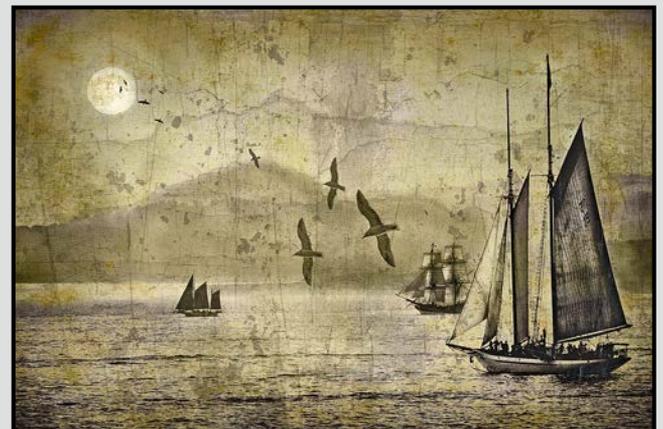
A simple example of how this works is the dual image below: "Kate" and "Day Dreaming". I had photographed the model some time earlier and had processed the particular image as a portrait. I liked it but felt that somehow it did not express fully the beauty and delicacy of this woman, particularly the golden tones of her hair and skin. I decided to creatively enhance those qualities by overlaying several images that I had photographed previously. Because I was looking for images that would harmonize with a theme of delicate, soft, natural beauty, I did not use my favourite textures such as rock, rusty metal and scratched surfaces that I normally use when looking for an antique or "grunge" look. Instead I settled



on several shots I had in my textures inventory of gently blowing golden grasses and dried wild flowers and overlaid them in Photoshop. "Day Dreaming" was the result.

A second more complex example, also done in Photoshop, is the set of images below: "Tall Ships by Ogden Point" and "Explorers." I was fascinated by the original image that was shot just off Ogden Point when the Tall Ships last visited Victoria because it reminded me that in the past seafarers and explorers in their great sailing ships often visited these coastal waters. I decided to alter the "Tall Ships" image to better express an antique theme and story. In order to give the overall feel of an old map or parchment, I overlaid the image with pictures I had taken of old stained and damaged paper and scratched surfaces. I then layered in and masked other images I had taken of the full moon and seabirds to add a sense of movement and mystery. As a finishing element, I painted in the soft silvery effects of moonlight on the water and, using Levels and Curves adjustment layers, I darkened and vignettted the image to add to the overall sense of the distant past. I hoped that my vision of the history of our coast would come to life in the final piece "Explorers."

Happy creating!



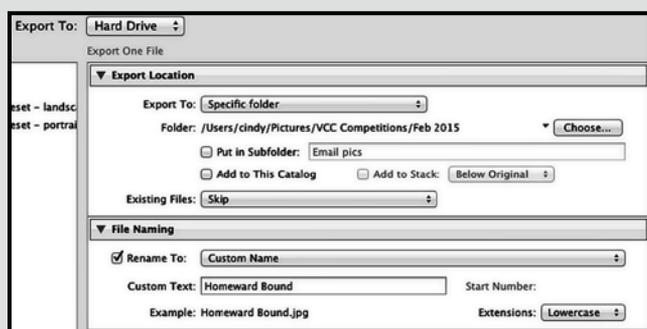
by Cindy Stephenson

This is the sixth, and final, article in our series on Lightroom and focuses on sharing your images through email, prints, or on your iPhone or iPad.

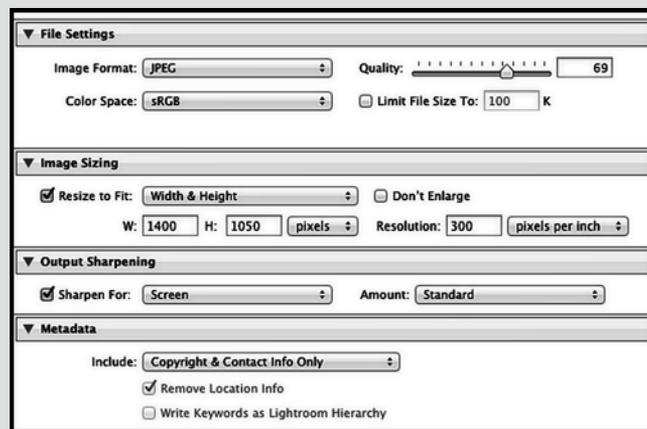
Exporting small jpeg copies of your images to share via email or upload to the VCC website

In the Library module, select the photos you want to export copies of. If you don't select any, Lightroom will assume you want to export all of the photos within the folder or collection you are currently in.

Click on file/export and a dialogue box will pop up.



At the top, under “Export to:” choose “Hard Drive”. Then within “Export Location” choose a specific folder, in my case I use either Email Pics or VCC Competitions. Within “File Naming” Lightroom will ask if you want to rename your export copies. I usually do.



Within “File Settings,” if you are sharing via email, something between 60 and 70 for quality is fine. Or you can choose to limit file size to a certain amount. For VCC Competition images, I use 100. Because they’ll be viewed on the screen, choose sRGB as the colorspace.

In the “Image Sizing” section, for emailing and sharing on the web I usually choose 700 pixels by 525 pixels

as that size fits nicely in an email. If your image is intended for a VCC competition, the file size must be 1400 pixels wide by 1050 pixels high, so use 1400 x 1050 for landscape and 1050 x 1050 for portrait.

In the “Output Sharpening” section, I choose “Sharpen for Screen.” Note that this is “Output Sharpening.” In the Develop module we do “Capture Sharpening” to correct for the inherent softening in digital images.

With Metadata, you can choose what information is attached to your photo, such as copyright and contact information. You can also choose to remove location information. You can then add a watermark if you like.

To summarize, you’re deciding where the image is going to go, whether to rename it, specifying file type and size, specifying size in pixels, sharpening for the output medium, and then you’re ready to go.

If these settings are those you are going to want to use in the future, click on Add, and a New Preset box will open up. It’ll prompt you to give the preset a name, something like “VCC Competitions” preset, and click create. It will then appear under User Presets.

Now go ahead and click on Export.

Sending out one or more images to be printed

To print an image that is a specific size, the first step is to go to the Develop module and crop it to those proportions. To get there using Shortcuts, type D for Develop and R for Crop Tool (or just type R).



Click on the Crop Tool (in the tool drawer on the far left) and select the crop proportions you want (by opening up the drop-down menu next to “Original”). Now you will need to adjust what is in the image. To do that, click on a corner or side and drag it into place, and drag the photo around within the frame until you get the composition you want. Once you are happy with it, close the crop tool by clicking on it. Just a reminder here that those pixels you just cropped out are not gone. Lightroom has not touched your original photo. You can always go back into the crop tool to change your mind. Once you are satisfied, you are ready to export it.

Right click in the photo and choose Export. This takes you to the Export dialogue. You follow the same pro-



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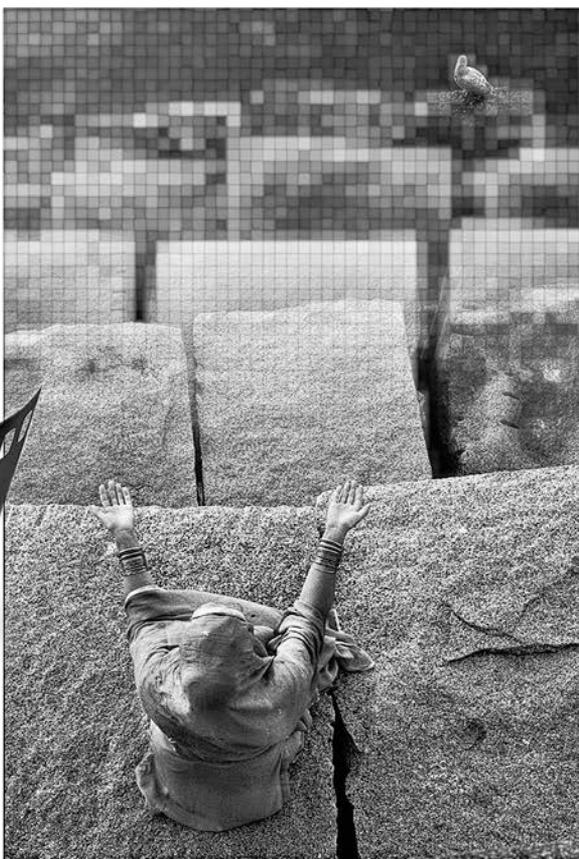
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Bridging Photo Technologies

cess that I described above with a few modifications which are:

- Under “File Settings”, all labs will accept JPEGs; they may also accept TIFFs. If they print in a color space other than sRGB, you should specify that too. Because it’s for a large print, go with quality of 100.
- Under “Image Sizing”, specify the size in inches rather than pixels. For example, an 11” x 14” or 11” x 17” print will fit nicely in a 16” X 20” frame.
- If you don’t know if the lab does output sharpening, it is recommended that you uncheck output sharpening rather than risk having your image over sharpened. (Even better, find out!)
- Choose matte or glossy paper. Then, as noted above, if you’re going to be exporting photos under similar scenarios, you can save these settings as a User Preset.

Posting copies of your images on your iPad or iPhone using Publish Services

As a photographer it’s always nice to have some images on your iPhone or your iPad that you can show people. If you do this through Lightroom’s Publish Services, you can export images to your hard drive, and then when you are syncing your phone, you can point iTunes to that folder on your hard drive in order to sync your photos. The advantage of this is that Publish Services will also keep track of photos that you work on after they are published so that you can re-export or publish and update photos on your iPhone or iPad after you’ve worked on them. I first learned about this handy feature through Laura Shoe’s *Lightroom Fundamentals and Beyond* video.

This is set up through the Library module. Click on “Publish Services” and then under “Hard Drive”, click on “Set up” to open up a dialogue box. Under “Description”, call it iPad/iPhone if you want one set of photos going to both. Under “Export Location” select export to your desktop and put them into a sub-folder called “iPhone/iPad Lightroom.”

Under “Image Sizing”, I use a resolution of 1024 x 768 pixels and sharpen for screen. Rather than starting to post right away, you may find it helpful to set up a few folders. To do this, right click on iPhone/iPad in Lightroom and select “Create Published Folder”. This creates a sub-folder. Name the sub-folder and click on “Create.”

To create another one, repeat the process. I have one for each of my recent trips, plus nature.



Next go to the folders which have photos in them that you would like to include, and drag the photos into the folders you have created. When you are done, you can publish each of those folders. They are then ready to be synced to your iPad and iPhone.

To do that, connect your iPhone or iPad to your computer and open iTunes. Click on your device (at the top left corner of your screen when iTunes is open) and then click on photos and select your iPad/iPhone folder. Then choose “Sync”. Once done, you’ll be able to see them on your device. If you develop any of these photos further, when you go to Publish Services, Lightroom will tell you that those photos need to be republished. Repeat the steps outlined in this paragraph to re-sync your device.

Lightroom 5 gives you the option of going through a similar process to export images to Facebook. I’ve used this with Lightroom 4, but it does not work well with Lightroom 5. I use this to post to the photo sharing site Flickr and it works well. The only issue with Flickr and similar sites is that unless you have a pro account, comments on your images are not saved if you re-post them once you’ve made further changes.

In Publish Services, you can also use Lightroom’s Smart Collection functionality. As an example, one of the folders on your iPhone/iPad can be all of the 5 star photos from your catalogue. Right click on iPhone/iPad, say “Create Smart Collection”, give it a name, and set up the rules. Click create. Because it’s a smart collection, it automatically pulls together all of the photos in your catalogue that meet this criteria. Go ahead and publish. Every time you have a new photo that you give 5 stars to, Publish Services will update, and indicate it is waiting to be published.

The club offers basic and advanced Lightroom workshops and I encourage you to attend. If you have any questions, please email me cindystephenson@telus.net.

Novice Competitions

by Pam Irvine

Our Novice competitions are judged by a group of Intermediate and Advanced members. All team members have found the experience to be educational and enjoyable. Sometimes we agree on a score for an image and sometime we are wide apart and discuss the image in great depth, pointing out the aspects that work and don't work, keeping in mind that these are novice images.

Images scores are: focus 2 points, exposure 3 points, and composition 5 points, which includes visual impact, subject matter, achieving purpose, creativity and originality. Images entered in the theme category are rated on how well the image represents the theme. Theme categories are a great opportunity to step outside your box and shoot something totally new, or to try a new technique.

We then choose the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place images and an honourable mention (HM). This is the most difficult step because there are often several images with the same score. We try to recognize cases where the maker has really stepped outside the novice box to try something different. 1st place images receive 10 points, 2nd place 9.5 points, 3rd place 9 points and HM's receive 8.5 points.

The top problems that we see with novice images are:

1. Focus is too soft, the subject should usually be in sharp focus. This is especially important with the eyes of people and animals. Shallow depth of field is great, but be sure the point of focus is on the subject.
2. Horizon lines are tilted; the human eye can see even the smallest of tilts.
3. The subject is set in the center of the frame. This can create a static feel to the image. Try the Rule of Thirds (actually a guideline, not a hard and fast rule).
4. There is not enough space around the subject, especially in the direction the subject is moving or looking. We see this often with bird images.
5. There are unnecessary elements in the image that do not contribute to the subject or the image. Don't be afraid to crop in close (except for situations mentioned in item #4).

As the weather improves, take the opportunity to get out and do some exciting shooting. If it is raining, then stay inside and try painting with light. The more you experiment, the more you will learn. Then please enter your experiments in the competitions and share the excitement with your fellow club members.

February 2015 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the judges for the February Intermediate and Advanced competitions Paul Saturley, Satya Danu, Marilyn McEwen and Mike Byrne. We would also like to thank our in-house Novice Judges this month Pam Irvine, Caspar Davis, Willie Waddell and Suzanne Huot. All images and judges' comments are available here: victoriacameraclub.org/vcccompetitions.

Paul Saturley: Paul has been a photographer, graphic artist and post-secondary educator for more than 30 years. He was an early adopter of digital workflows, first with desktop colour separations for commercial offset printing, and later as an aesthetic toolbox for complex image construction. His more recent work has been called dark and secretive, reflecting an ancient order in nature. His work is in private collections and has been published in Canada, the United States and Europe.

Satya Danu: Satya came to photography about 14 years ago. She says that it's been a steep walk up-hill since. She started with her own black & white darkroom, and when it became time to master a digital SLR camera, oh what joy! Now the artist in her gets to show as she is experimenting with abstract creations that are mostly based on nature/flower photography. Another obsession is wandering around downtown, capturing reflections in buildings. They too sometimes get transformed into abstracts.

Marilyn McEwen: After 6 years of photography courses she formed her own company in 1989. She taught photography at Focal Point and Langara College and was Editor of CAPA's *Camera Canada* magazine. She was awarded an Associateship in the National Association for Photographic Art (now CAPA) in 1996. She is a member of the PPABC and PPOC and has acted as a judge of many photographic competitions at all levels.

Mike Byrne: Mike has worked as a photographer and filmmaker for over 20 years. He travels extensively and when he is not making nature images he is busy photographing a variety of sports. In 2010 he shot for the IOC at the Olympic games in Whistler. Though Mike usually works outdoors, he has a small studio as he loves to dabble in portraiture. He is a huge believer in hands-on learning, if you take one of his courses you will find the majority of time is spent making photographs, fine-tuning techniques, and critiquing images. Mike is a member of the North American Nature Photography Association.

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Advanced Monochrome Print - 2nd
"The Way Home" by Richard Webber

Judge's comments: Great picture. The character on the stairs, going with the direction of the image, really helps to provide a central focus. Great range of tone and the picture is very sharp. Really nice work here.



Advanced Digital Creative - 1st
"Into the Wind" by Barbara Burns

Judge's comments: Lovely creative, giving the cyclists a lot of space to drive into, and surrounding them with an oil paint effect. I can virtually "feel" the wind!



Advanced Digital Open - 1st
"Ocotillo" by Neil Boyle

Judge's comments: Great impact! Shallow depth of field adds to the simplicity, while ghosts of spikes take the eye around and around. Negative space is well used with just enough of it. Sharp exposure on the top spikes. Nice muted tones do not distract from central image.



Advanced Digital Nature - 1st
"Northern Harrier" by Mike Wooding

Judge's comments: A fabulous image, I love it and have no critiques or quibbles.



Advanced Open Print - 3rd

“Cruising into the Sunset” by Jacqui James

Judge’s comments: The picture does a good job of depicting the size of the cruise ship. The relatively low camera angle makes it tower over everything else in the picture. Nice capture of the twilight and the lights on in the ship, makes for a romantic image.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st

“Sea Anemones” by Doug McLean

Judge’s comments: What an awesome print! I love everything about it. It certainly has great impact and it has been beautifully rendered.



Advanced Digital Theme - 1st

“The Hulks” by Gail Takahashi

Judge’s comments: Excellent composition with high impact. The image simply speaks for itself!



Intermediate Digital Creative

“Sea Swells” by Blair Ross

Judge’s comments: The liquefy filter worked well here



Intermediate Open Print - 3rd
“Basalt Beach” by Steve Lustig

Judge's comments: Beautiful landscape. Obvious centre of interest, nicely composed and technically well handled. Overall, this is very effective.



Intermediate Nature Print - 2nd
“Quiet of the Morning” by Ian Crawford

Judge's comments: Without the bird in the top-left corner, I don't think I'd like this image, but with the bird, it works quite well. It has a very nice feel to it



Intermediate Digital Open - 1st
“In Stride” by Judy Bandsmer

Judge's comments: Love the story element, lots of juxtaposition of shoes/dress/graffiti, great colours and mirrored shapes, lighting on folds of dress is perfect, love the panoramic format.



Intermediate Digital Nature - 3rd
“Sunrise over Bow River” by Ian Farris

Judge's comments: The sky and clouds above the mountain are great, the light on the mountain is awesome.



Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
“Tumacacori Mission” by Del Lucas

Judge's comments: The rating says it all, composition and colour, despite of being during mid-day, perfect. Could well be a framed image.



Intermediate Monochrome Print - 1st
“Big Sky Maelstrom” by Jonathan Adams

Judge's comments: Great sky, nice sharp foreground and nice light on the distant buildings. Overall, it's a great picture. Warm toning works well here.



Novice Digital Nature - 1st
“Icy Reflection” by Peter Koelbleitner

Judge's comments: Gorgeous image. The hole in the ice makes the image unique. Excellent capture of the reflection. Dark background makes the iceberg pop. Great exposure, bright areas are not blown out. Composition: Strong triangle shapes.



Novice Digital Open - 1st
“Lesotho Shepherd” by Mary Weir

Judge's comments: Lovely portrait of a shepherd. Good exposure gives nice shadows on the face from the hat but we can still see the eyes. Good depth of field to softly blur background. Subject well positioned in frame.



Novice Digital Theme - 2nd
“Chapel Tower, Harlech Castle” by Steve Smith

Judge's comments: Nicely composed black & white image. Focus and exposure are good.



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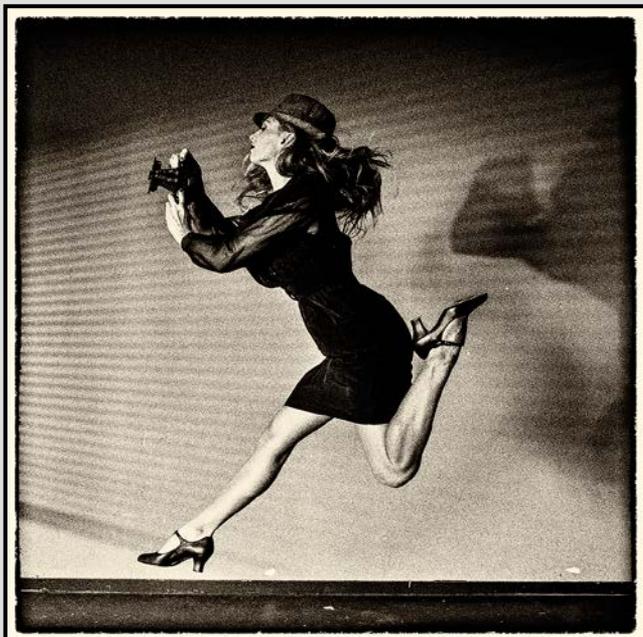
In my early days in photography learning was mostly a “teach yourself” system. However it was mostly from reading and seeing good examples in magazines, and a love of art, that I learned a lot of the key techniques.

Equipment that I used in the past, starting in the 60’s when I was working professionally, was a Pentax 35 and a Rollicord twin-lens. I then moved up to a Topcon RE Super 35 mm with several bodies and an assortment of lenses, as well as a Hasselblad 500C and SWC with extra bodies, backs and lenses. After I quit pro work, I just kept the Topcons until I went to the Nikon F100, and then F5. Digital came late for me, and I currently have several Nikon DSLRs and am now transitioning to Canon.

From 1968-1983 I was fairly active in the music/performance scene in Toronto. I have shot industrial, product, fashion, portrait, weddings, publicity/publication. Have to admit my favourite stuff back then was music and fashion, even if they were the least remunerative. I went on to become a psychologist and in mid 1983, I pretty much walked away from it all, and did not get back into much of anything photographic till around 1999, although I never truly stopped taking pictures.

Since coming to Victoria in 2000 until 2011, I have either had a yearly solo exhibit, or been part of a group exhibit. I have been part of, or taught, various lighting workshops for the Victoria Camera Club, and I have also run/taught several dance photography workshops for Ballet Victoria.

Working in Toronto, I learned a lot from some professional photographers. Otherwise, more formally, from: Al



Gilbert Studios, Bill Browne Studio, Wm. Smith Studios, Monte Zucker (workshops) and Ken Bell (assisted). Some useful sayings learned along the way are, “Stop over-thinking what you are doing!” (Still the bane of my life). And, “Light is light, learn to use it.” “There is no such thing as bad light, it just means that you have not looked hard enough to find its good side.” “Every photograph tells as much about the photographer as it does about the subject.”

Currently my main passion is nature photography, although I am also doing a lot of studio work with models and would not turn down the cover of Elle or Vogue. But, really, I shoot whatever subjects catch my interest at any time.



I have been published in, or shot for, a number of magazines including, MacLean-Hunter Pub., Popular Photography, Canadian High News, RPM, Hit Parader, Jazz, Cream, Rolling Stone, RCA records (trade and publicity), EMI Records, Dance Current (2008), Canadian Art Teacher News (2010), Art and Design 2 (2011).

Some of the people and groups that I have photographed include, in no particular order, not even alphabetic: Dionne Warwick, Twiggy, Marshall McLuhan, and the Bolshoi Ballet. In the music scene the following are just a sampling of people or groups that I have shot. Please check my website for a far more extensive list. Gordon Lightfoot, The Who, John & Yoko, Neil Diamond (album back cover), Peace Train (for Rolling Stone Magazine).

I have been asked what my style is, and I have no idea. I am forever trying to develop one. I am told that a form of my style, at least with animals, is that there is a connection between myself and the animal.

I can be found on the web at www.facebook.com/hermansurkis.photography and at hermansurkis.com.

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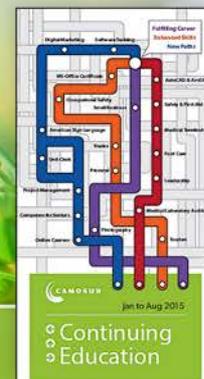
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“He was relevant, clear, helpful, concise and knowledgeable. First rate.” –PA

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Tony Bounsall *“Excellent instruction. Obvious that Tony really knows a lot about photography and art.” –JW*
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Joel Friesen *“Enjoyed and appreciated the pace allowing questions to be answered fully. Highly recommend.” –DF*

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Filters on a Lens that is Filter-less!

by John Roberts

Some of us have a lens that can not take a filter on the front of it. This happens for typically one of two reasons, the lens is a super wide angle, and the front lens element is curved quite severely, or it is a super-telephoto with a rear filter slot.

There are only so many lenses that are like this, Canon's 8-15 mm L fisheye, and 11-24 mm L f2.8, Nikon's 14-24 mm f2.8, and 14 mm f2.8, Samyang/Rokinon's 14 mm f2.8 (various mounts), Panasonic's 7-14 mm f4.0 micro 4/3, Olympus' 7-14 mm f2.8 for 4/3, Sigma's 12-24 mm DG f4.5-5.6, and 8-16 mm DC f4.5-5.6, Tamron's new 15-30 mm f2.8 VC, Tokina's 16-28 mm f2.8 FX and 11-16 mm f2.8 DX.

For some of these lenses, the manufacture has thought about this, and has supplied the ability for the user to add in a rear gel filter on the back mount, which is pretty cool, but at the same time, they are delicate, and difficult to change. But, when it comes right down to it, I personally do not have to change the filter often when I am out in the field using a lens that has one of these gel filter holders built in. I own the Sigma 12-24 mm DG, which is a full frame wide angle, and I will put in a 4-stop ND gel into the back holder when I am out shooting long exposures.

I own the Panasonic 7-14 mm f4 for the Micro Four Thirds, which does not give the luxury of providing you a rear gel holder. So for this lens, I had to think outside of the box a bit! And as I am fairly sure many of you now know that I really enjoy long exposures, so the concept of a lens that is super-wide, and not being able to attach a dark ND filter was weighing quite heavily on me. So once I got the lens, I pondered, would there be some way I could attach a large square filter, say the Cokin P or Z size somehow without it vignetting? The short answer is, kind of.

I found out that a 72 mm filter ring will snugly fit over the built in hood of the Panasonic 7-14 mm, and then I could fit the filter holder right to that, and if I use the Cokin Z size holder, with its user adjustable filter slots, I only got the most minor of vignetting at the extreme corners at 7 mm. I did have to remove the multiple filter holders in front and make it so that it could only hold one filter, but that is enough for me! That gives me the use of one ND filter, be it my 6-stop or 10-stop.

Now, there was one issue that I came up with when I was using this for the first time. I discovered that the "flower-petal" built-in hood, was letting in light in the four corners that dipped behind the filter holder, and that the light was then reflecting off of the back of the filter, and I had this odd flare in the image.

After a few minutes of playing to see where the light was coming in from, I was able to correct it with a highly technical tool that I had in my backpack, an elastic band! This one was one of the wide ones that Canada Post use to bundle the mail together. By simply adding that, I covered up the four small light-leak points which allowed me to shoot without any further light leak from that set-up.

Now, not all super wide angles are that small and convenient to just attach a Cokin Z holder to, some of the other lenses like the Nikon 14-24 mm require the specially designed holder like the Formatt-HiTech Lucroit system, which is a ludicrously large 165 mm filter. There are a few other designs that I am aware of, but have never seen myself, so I can only really speak about the Lucroit for certainty.

The Lucroit system is available for several lenses, most of which I have listed up above, but as one can imagine, this system is not the most pocket book friendly system. But, if you own a lens that is super high quality, and ultra wide angle, and you just really want to use a filter like an ND on it, this is one of the few official systems you can use.

For those of us who do not wish to spend Lucroit money, I know that Cokin has made an adapter ring to make that lens fit the Cokin X-Pro system to the good old Nikon 14-24 mm, and while officially Cokin has not said this adapter will work on other lenses, I do not imagine it would be all that hard to use that adapter ring to fit the new Canon 11-24 mm or the Tamron 15-30 mm, as they are all a fairly similar size in length and width. I have heard that this Cokin vignettes slightly at the widest angle, but only slightly.

So, if you have been toying with idea of buying a lens that does not allow the use of filters, but you have been holding back because of the lack of filter availability, you can now rest a bit easier; there are unofficial workarounds for you to use. Be it if you use one of the systems I have mentioned here, or any one of the plethora of YouTube videos for a DIY option you can look up.

by Mike Wooding

In the February 2012 issue of Close-Up, I wrote a piece entitled “*Bird-Photography: Some Pointers for Beginners*” (<http://www.victoriacameraclub.org/closeup/closeup-feb-12.pdf>). In this article, I may briefly cover a few of the points that I did then, but since I have another three years under my belt, hopefully I can offer some new information that I have learned along the way. For me, creating images of birds is more than a hobby. Over the last few years it has become my passion. Why would anyone sit in a blind on a cold winter’s day for hours or even days, just to get a picture of a bird? Well, first of all, it’s not just a picture, and for me, it’s not just a bird. But I will touch on setups later.



Varied Thrush

Equipment

I covered this three years ago but it deserves to be updated. You still don’t need to mortgage the farm to get started in bird photography. Although serious bird photographers use lenses ranging from 400 to 800 mm costing up to \$19,000, you can do quite well with lower priced gear. If you watch sites like Used Victoria, you can sometimes spot attractive deals. As I write this, I found a Nikon D300s with less than 6000 actuations for an asking price of \$500. If you want to get a used camera checked out, you can take it into Victoria Camera Service. With regard to lenses, you can do quite well with a focal length of 200 to 300 mm, especially when using a crop-sensor body (APS-C/DX etc.). When you add a teleconverter, you can get close to 500 mm or even higher. I sometimes shoot with a cousin who has an Olympus E-M5 micro four-thirds system. It is very compact and lightweight gear that is relatively inexpensive and he does very well with it. It doesn’t match the Nikon and Canon DSLR systems, but he gets to enjoy watching me lug around my big heavy expensive equipment.

Location, Location, Location

So you’re not packing around a 500 mm lens? Fine, go where the birds are close. We are blessed with an abundance of locations where the birds are used to people and allow you to get really close, thereby eliminating the need for expensive glass. Here are a few:

Esquimalt Lagoon: this is a world class location for photographing many species of waterfowl plus a few shorebirds. Nowhere are in-flight shots of Northern Pintails, American Widgeons, Buffleheads, and Common Goldeneye, to name a few, easier to get. Plus, when the water is calm, you can get killer shots of them on the water.

Rithet’s Bog: the best place for Red-winged Blackbirds and Virginia Rail, and they come really close!

Swan Lake: the best location by far for Marsh Wren is at either end of the boardwalk across the water. It can also yield American Bittern and other species.

King’s Pond: if conditions are right you can get great shots of Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Northern Shoveler, and Wood Duck to name a few. If you are positioned on the south side of the pond you can get a gorgeous gold reflections on the water from the willow trees.

Observatory Hill: the Violet-green Swallows come within reach, as do Chipping Sparrows, Yellow-rumped Warblers, and if you are lucky, you may get an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Turkey Vultures fly past and occasionally will come in relatively close, I still don’t have that shot, but I will be trying again this year.

Goldstream Park: You can get really close to Pacific Wrens here, it helps to have a flash since it can be pretty dark in there. The American Dipper is a favourite and if you can get out and lie on the gravel bar, you could get lucky. Red-breasted Sapsuckers, Varied Thrush and Steller’s Jay’s can also be found around the picnic area.

Make Your Own Location

I dealt with this three years ago, so I won’t go into detail. If you have a back yard, you may wish to invest in an inexpensive blind, a feeder and a perch holder. Try to use perches on which your target birds would normally land, so the image looks natural. A Varied Thrush on a branch of a flowering plum tree just doesn’t make it. It needs a rain forest perch, such as a mossy stump. Small birds such as Chickadees and Nuthatches require more deli-

cate perches, although a Red-breasted Nuthatch going down a tree trunk head-first works because that's what it does. So it pays to know something about the habits of the various species that you are photographing, especially if you are working with set-ups.

OK, let's deal with set-ups. There are some people who do not believe that photographing birds at set-ups is true nature photography. My feeling is that whether you are capturing an image of a Short-eared Owl at Brunswick Point or a Steller's Jay in your back yard, these are still wild birds. The fact that you are attracting them to a perch that you have carefully chosen does not make it less of a nature image. When you photograph Bufflehead or Goldeneye at Esquimalt Lagoon, guess what? You are shooting at one big set-up, these are some of the best fed birds on the planet, and that's why you can do so well there. The same can be said for King's Pond, Goldstream Park, Swan Lake and many other places.



A Simple Back-yard Setup

What I find challenging and rewarding about set-ups is the fact that I have control over so many aspects of creating the image. I select the perch, making sure that it is appropriate. I have control over the lighting and the background. I even have some, but not complete, control over where on the perch the bird lands, because I have, in the case of flowering perches, for example, created an opening for it. I regard my set-up as an outdoor studio where, if the bird that I have invited in lands where I want him to and strikes the perfect pose, I have the opportunity to create not just a picture of a bird, but an image that really shows him off in all his beauty, in his natural surroundings. It is said that when Roger Tory Peterson, the famous naturalist and artist, created a painting of a robin, it wasn't just any old robin, but the perfect robin. I believe that I know how he felt.

Be Level With Your Subject

Quite a few people have already heard me preach this sermon, but here it is again anyway. I strongly feel that the best way to establish a connection with your subject is for both of you to be at the same level. I realize that this is not always practical, but I have seen so many photographers standing while shooting birds on the ground or on the water when they should be lying flat on the ground. When you are at eye level with any creature, the picture becomes much more intimate. You will also find that getting low will give you a much better background, since it will be farther away and more out of focus.

Shooting Birds in Flight

In-flight images require much practice until you find a way that works for you. For what it's worth, here's what works for me, most of the time. I hand hold my gear instead of shooting from my tripod. I just have more control that way. I use spot focus 99% of the time. I tried 9 point and it just doesn't work for me, especially if I don't have a sky background, and I try not to. On that topic, I don't like sky backgrounds, especially if there are no clouds. I much prefer trees or grass or mountains. I find them much more interesting because you gain a sense of habitat, even if it's blurred. I shoot on aperture priority because I like to get as much of the bird in focus as possible. If I need more shutter speed I increase the ISO but not over a specific level that's right for my camera. I try to lock on a bird in flight as early as possible and follow it in. My autofocus is on continuous mode and my metering mode is centre weighted.

There is so much more to cover but I am out of space. You have any questions, track me down at a meeting or send me an e-mail.



Short-eared Owl

Peace Bridge

by George Skelton

Peace Bridge is a pedestrian bridge, designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, that accommodates both pedestrians and cyclists crossing the Bow River in Calgary, Alberta. The bridge opened for use on March 24th, 2012.

Having seen this included in a “Travel Alberta” TV advertisement I was intrigued with the uniqueness of the design, a functional structural installation with outstanding architectural lines that I was determined to photograph the next time that I was visiting Calgary. That opportunity came last Thanksgiving, and with the help of my sister who drove me there, my mission was fulfilled.

The right conditions were all there for me. A full moon, little in the way of a breeze, clear sky and very little ambient light at my chosen location. A location that gave me the city as an anchor at one end. This is a clear span structure with no intermediate supports. By some miracle this bridge was not affected by the devastating flooding of the Bow River in 2013.

The selected lens was my “go to” workhorse for wide angle to moderate telephoto (28-300 mm). Pedestrian traffic was very light, which could have been good, as the lack of people also eliminated any ghosting from moving figures. The smoothly flowing river responded with reflections, even the moon. A grassy verge between the paved pathway and the river bank gave me ample space to set up my tripod supported camera gear.

With little in the way of trees, I was able to set up my Nikon D600 several times and with each setup take several images, approximately twenty five in total. Very minimal post editing was needed.



City Light Up

by Allan Ng

It was a beautiful location across the river from lower Manhattan in New York City with a great view of New York’s iconic Brooklyn Bridge, a favourite spot for photographers. I understand the backdrop has been used in many commercials. On a clear night it would have been difficult to take a bad picture. Unfortunately (or maybe fortunately) it was raining steadily that night with only intermittent breaks from the heavy rain. I had no choice but to try and squeeze in a few shots as I was in New York for only a brief time with family demands on what little time I had. I wasn’t going to miss this opportunity, rain or not.



I think what made my photo stand out is the hue generated by my white balance (WB) selection. It was a cool, wet night and I wanted to be warm. While I couldn’t warm my body I could certainly create a “warm” image. Since it was cloudy, it seemed appropriate to experiment with this unusual WB setting (I would normally have kept the WB at tungsten to capture the building lights). I tried a few test shots with the WB set to cloudy and I liked what I saw, and I just kept shooting away.

The shot was taken with my trusty Nikon D7000 with the Nikkor 17-55 mm f2.8 lens with the focal length at 38 mm; I used a tripod, of course, (night photography without a tripod is beyond my abilities) and a wired remote. The ISO was at 100 (counter-intuitive but necessary for those longer shutter speeds), my shutter was open for 5 sec. and the aperture was f3.5, the WB was set to Cloudy adjusted to A2 G1 on the fine tuning screen. To achieve the sharpness, I really needed to manually focus. Auto-focus is fine but for really sharp images, focusing manually is the way to go. And that is how the shot was created.

Tuesday Shoots

by Wayne Swanson

April 7: Fun at Fisherman's Wharf

This isn't San Francisco, so why all the fuss about Fisherman's Wharf? The fishing industry died in this city long ago. Yet many tourists rush to this hidden corner of Victoria with its remaining fishing vessels, its colourful floating homes, its funky food kiosks, and its friendly seals. They paddle kayaks around the harbour or ride on the little harbour ferries or buy fresh seafood. They watch kids eat ice cream and feed the otters. (Some of those kids have grey hair.) It's time for the Tuesday shooters to join the happy people and to capture the vibrant atmosphere. You can get shots of the unique homes, or marine scavengers who are after the scraps, or interesting inhabitants. Whatever your subject, just have fun.

April 21: Hidden Gems in Beacon Hill Park

We've all been here to capture the old stone bridge or the blue herons or the flower beds, but what about the Emily Carr Bridge? Have you got a good shot of a metasequoia (dawn redwood), a tree thought to be extinct until rediscovered in China in the 1930s? Perhaps you need to complete your shots of the Hands of Time statues with Digging Camas Bulbs? This large urban park abounds with many overlooked gems, such as mini-waterfalls, unusual plants, and unexpected statues and plaques for those who are willing to take the time to explore beyond the well-trodden paths. Exercise your curiosity to observe subjects seldom seen by most visitors.



Digging Camas Bulbs

Weekend Shoots

by David McLean and Donna Robertson

Spring Wild Flowers

There are currently four field trips scheduled in April. Keep referring to the club calendar, as there may be changes due to flowering times. With this year's above-average temperatures that we have been experiencing, the flowers are blooming much earlier than usual. April's trips will cover a number of ecological areas and will provide a variety of photo opportunities. Each location will have a slightly different ecosystem, and this will result in different plant, insect and wildlife species in each area. If you want to explore and see what the various sites have to offer, great! If you're looking to capture only a specific plant, or bird, it is recommended that you do a little research to determine the particular ecosystem that your subject inhabits. For example: if you only want to shoot a pink fawn lily, then register for the Sutton Creek ER trip to Lake Cowichan and don't bother going on the other field trips offered.

Regardless what plant species you wish to photograph, you normally want to get low to the ground. In order to do this, there are a number of things you might wish to consider before going out shooting.

First, whether you are using a tripod or not, you can expect to be shooting on your knees, or lying on the ground. If kneeling, consider wearing knee-pads, or if lying on the ground, consider something water-proof to lie on (a large garbage bag, or polythene sheet).

Second, as the weather in the Victoria area is unpredictable, consider protecting your camera from the rain and moisture. You could always elect to stay at home, however, some of the best pictures are taken during a break in really ugly weather. For example the raindrop on the pink fawn lily taken by Eileen Seto during last year's Cowichan field trip. A garbage bag is a very simple, inexpensive, versatile and compact means of protecting your gear. The garbage bag can be folded up and kept in a pocket. It can be manipulated to cover your camera, or your camera bag. It can also be laid out flat and used to lie, or kneel, on while taking pictures.

Finally, consider using/acquiring a right-angle viewer for your camera. This will not only save your back/neck and other body parts, but will enable you to spend more time framing and focusing your picture, rather than rushing your picture in a very uncomfortable position.

by John Coenraads

Everyone is familiar with Fresnel lenses, those small, flat, rectangular pieces of plastic engraved with a pattern of concentric circles, that can be used as magnifiers, while still fitting comfortably in a wallet. Larger ones used to be commonly found attached to the rear windows of motor homes, just under the glass of an overhead projector or in theatrical lighting. In photography, a thin Fresnel lens can be mounted in front of a flash unit to concentrate the beam and extend its reach when used with a telephoto lens. Normally not associated with high quality imaging, I was surprised to learn recently that both Canon and Nikon use this technology in some of their lenses in an effort to make them lighter and more compact.

The Fresnel Story

In the 19th century, making the weak light from the oil lamps, used in light-houses, visible for long distances presented a major problem. The large apertures needed would require immense lenses, difficult to make, heavy and expensive. Lenses work using refraction, the bending of light as it crosses the boundary between air and glass. Noting that the bulk of the glass making up the lens does nothing to contribute to this bending, famed French physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel suggested reducing the lens to a series of annular rings that retained only the “curvy bits” that do the actual bending. Figure 1 illustrates how a thick lens can be sliced and diced to produce one that is essentially flat without losing its ability to focus light.

The original light from Trial Island Lighthouse, dating back to 1908, represents a fine example of this type of 19th century optical engineering and can be found in Bastion Square. It is well worth a closer examination.

Of course, slicing up a lens this way does compromise its ability to produce a sharp image. The flaws can be reduced to some extent by making the circular rings narrower and narrower but, at a certain point, diffraction becomes significant. As it turns out, lens manufacturers can take advantage of this.

A Unique Lens Design

In January of 2004, Canon announced a new zoom lens, the 70–300 mm f4.5-5.6 DO IS lens. DO indicates the use of diffractive optics and such lenses are distinguished by a green ring. Although not inexpensive, they are lighter and smaller than a comparable lens using

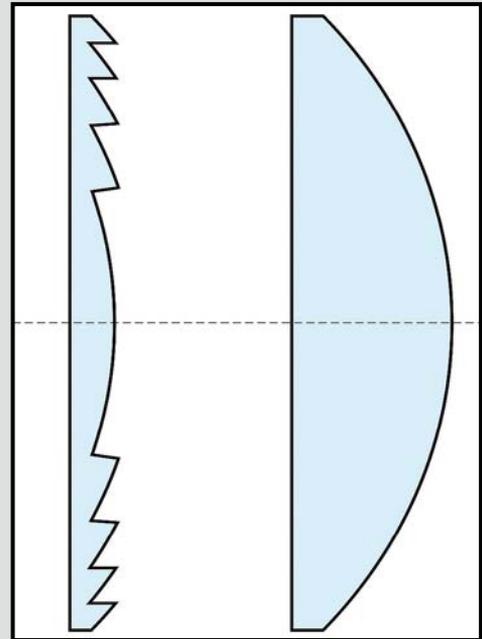


Figure 1: Cross section through a Fresnel lens equivalent to the convex lens on the right. Only the convex sections, that do the actual bending, are retained.

refraction only. The use of the DO designation probably reflects Canon’s reluctance to use the “F” word. Nikon has no such qualms announcing in January of 2015 a new 300 mm f4 lens featuring “PF” or “Phase Fresnel” technology. Although Nikon is a late-comer to this type of optics, and Canon has many of the patents, these lenses are similar in principle. What is remarkable about this approach is how it harnesses the various properties of light, such as refraction, diffraction, dispersion and interference towards a single goal: the formation of a sharp image.

The Physics

All camera lenses employ multiple glass elements to focus incoming light onto the sensor. But glass has two problems: it’s heavy and it exhibits a nasty little defect known as chromatic aberration. As light refracts upon entering and leaving the glass, different colours are bent by slightly different amounts so that if green light focuses on the sensor, blue light will focus just in front and red light just behind. This physical phenomenon is known as dispersion, and while this gives rise to rainbows, it also results in images that are not as sharp as they could be. Manufacturers go to great lengths to minimize chromatic aberration, for example, by using low dispersion glass or fragile and expensive fluorite crystals from which to grind lenses.

Diffraction refers to that property of light that causes it to spread out when passing through a narrow opening. This phenomenon is familiar to photographers who know, that because of diffraction, images captured with very small apertures such as f22 will actually be less sharp than images taken at slightly larger (numerically smaller) apertures. When a Fresnel lens is made with exceedingly fine features, diffraction begins to play a large role and physicists refer to any such element as a diffraction grating.

A diffraction grating also causes light to be spread out into a spectrum, but this time it's not due to dispersion but the interference of light waves. Different colours have different wavelengths and head off in slightly different directions as is vividly demonstrated when a DVD disk reflects light. But whereas dispersion results in light being separated in the order from red to blue, diffraction gratings result in light spreading out from blue to red. You can see where this is headed. Some very smart cookie said, "Why don't we use a diffractive optical element to cancel the dispersion of a glass lens element thereby largely cancelling chromatic aberration?" This happy outcome is illustrated in figure 2 where a diffractive optical element, embedded in glass for protection, is followed by a regular refractive lens: dispersion counteracts interference.

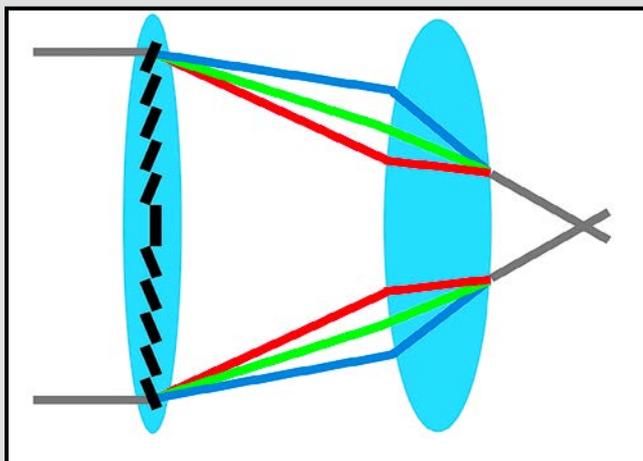


Figure 2: Canon's solution to building a smaller, lighter lens. Chromatic aberration produced by the diffractive element (left) is corrected by the refractive element (right).

The Future

But we need to ask whether this technology has a future. Reviewers agree that these lenses can exhibit curiously patterned out-of-focus areas and less contrast than

comparable non-DO lenses. And strong lights within the frame can result in flare which Nikon minimizes in software with "PF Flare Control." These artifacts, although normally not considered that significant, will become more apparent as sensor pixel counts increase. But my guess is that there will always be a market for a 300 mm full frame f4 prime lens that weighs 755 g and is only 147.5 mm long (to use Nikon as an example).

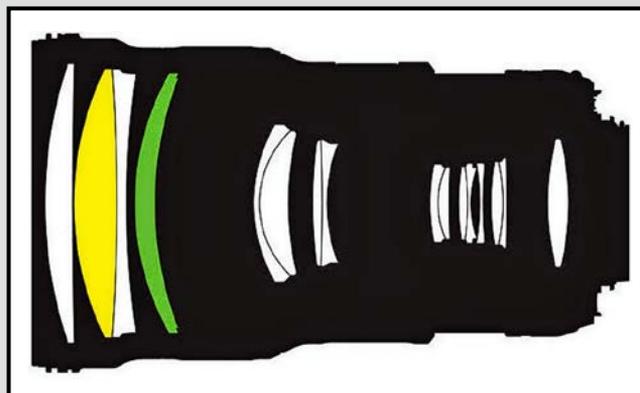


Figure 3: Cutaway schematic of Nikon's 300 mm PF lens. The 3rd element from the front (green) is the Fresnel element.

Which raises the question of how much physics constrains the development of the zero size, zero weight, infinite aperture and infinite depth of field camera lens? Or is there optical trickery out there that no one has yet thought of. I'm prepared to be surprised. Witness the clever design of the focus-free Lytro camera (lytro.com) which captures not only the intensity of light rays but information about their direction. The result is a camera that does not need to be focused because, using clever software, the desired focus point can be selected after the shot has been taken. But physics says that there's no free lunch, and in this camera it is resolution which takes the hit. Perhaps a simple pin hole is the perfect "lens" after all, if someone could only engineer a sensor with enough speed to make it practical.

And for your "Did I need to know this?" file. In December of 2014, Hillary Clinton suffered a concussion. For some time afterwards she was observed wearing glasses that appeared to have a Fresnel prism over the left lens. Apparently the stick-on prisms are used to assist people experiencing double vision. Photographs taken at the subsequent Senate hearings clearly show the fine lines associated with Fresnel optics. Similar stick-on material is available to (temporarily) correct refractive errors or to even add bifocal capability to your sunglasses.

April Showers

by Nancy MacNab

We seem to have several sayings about the weather at this time of year. "In like a lion, out like a lamb," usually applies to March. Or will it be, "In like a lamb, out like a lion" this year? Either way, March usually brings rain.

Then for April we have, "April showers bring May flowers." More rain! Just what you want! What can you do to keep your camera dry in such weather?

Your options range from using umbrellas to plastic bags from your cupboard to specially-made rain covers. Umbrellas are awkward to hold when you are also trying to adjust your lens or camera settings. Camera rain-covers come in several sizes and styles, so be sure to get one that has extensions to fit the longest lens that you are likely to be using. Lens hoods are handy for keeping raindrops off your lens as well as for preventing lens flare under all lighting conditions.

The best plastic bags are heavy-duty freezer bags in the largest size that you can find as they are very sturdy, but any large plastic bag will do. A handy way of cutting a hole for your lens is to take off the lens cap or, better yet, use a screw-on filter, position your camera in the bag where you will be using it, and then put on the lens cap or filter. This will give you a circle the exact diameter of your lens that can then be cut out (after you have removed it, of course). Thank you, Herman, for this suggestion.

In a pinch, if you've forgotten your rain-cover and you don't have any plastic bags available, you can drape a cloth or a garbage bag over your camera, removing it from the front of the lens only to take the photo and then covering it again.

Keep your lens cloth handy so you can remove any stray raindrops that get on your lens. It saves you from having to remove them later on the computer. The same advice applies when photographing near the ocean, regardless of the weather.

Another good thing to carry is a spare towel to wipe down your tripod before you collapse it for carrying, to prevent water from getting into the inner parts of the legs where it can cause problems later. It is also useful when shooting from a boat. Make sure all of your equipment is dry before you put it away.

If you are photographing in the rain, why not photograph the raindrops? Drops trickling down the windowpane can be shot from inside the house, but outside you can try the water rings on the lake. Or slow down your shutter speed so the rain becomes visible as streaks in your image. How slow will vary, depending on the light level and the speed of the raindrops, so take a number of shots at various speeds and check your LCD screen for the best result.

The cloudy skies that come with rain reduce the light level, resulting in slower shutter speeds and richer, more saturated colours. A tripod will help you to keep the lens steady for pin-sharp images.

If you don't want to get wet, then a walk in the woods or garden after a rain can give you beautiful greens, reds and browns. The rain seems to wash the dust off of everything in preparation for a shiny clean start. However, while a light drizzle rinses off the dust, a heavy rain can pummel the delicate flowers into mush.

Talking of shiny, the rain will make leaves and other surfaces more reflective, so make sure you have your circular polarizer filter on your lens. This will help to remove the reflections on the leaves, getting rid of the white specular highlights.

The clouds act as a giant soft-box which helps to reduce contrast in your images, letting you more easily capture details in both the highlights and the shadows. This will be a definite advantage for macro photography with those lovely spring flowers that are blooming now.

Where to shoot? The Easter lilies are blooming at Thetis Lake as I write this. Downtown Cherry trees are awash with blooms, too. Beacon Hill Park and Witty's Lagoon are both great locations for Camas and Shooting Stars, which will be coming out soon.

For gardens, in addition to the well-known Butchart Gardens, you can also go to Playfair Park in Saanich, Finnerty Garden at the University of Victoria, or the gardens at Hatley Castle (Royal Roads University). All have collections of rhododendrons and azaleas covered in bright blooms, in addition to other flowers. The ponds can be a candidate for raindrop photography.

Don't let the rain stop you from photographing. Find a cover for your camera, put on your raincoat, and see you out there, singing in the rain!



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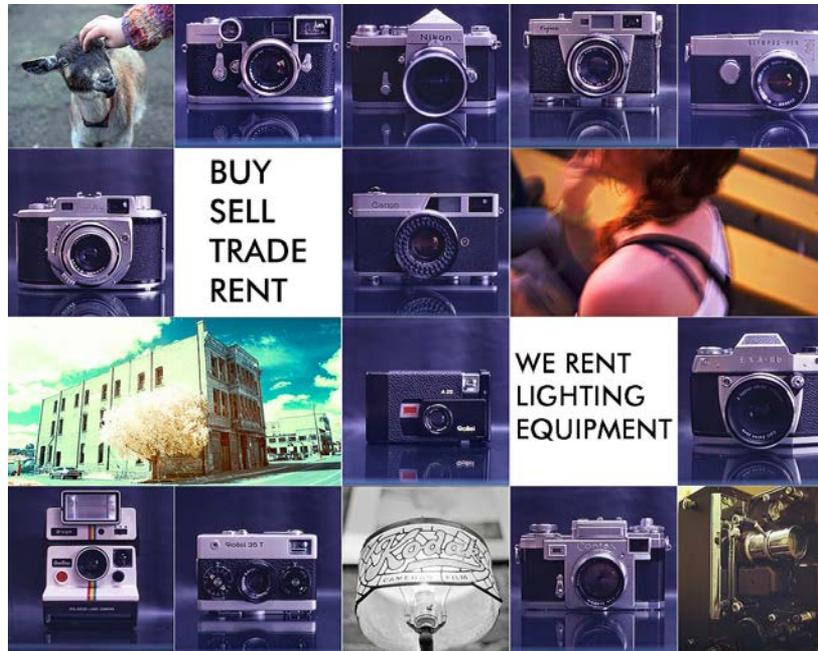
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