



Close-Up



**Creating Altered Realities: One
Photographer's Approach
Storytelling Through Photography
Tech Tips
Member Profile: Peter Amundsen
Film Scanners
Advantages of Field Trips
How I Did It
Getting Started in Nature
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"Pearl-spotted Owlet" by Leah Gray

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Victoria Camera Club



“Sunset Sail” by Vanessa MacDonald

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

Events

We hold a number of events including:

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

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

Membership

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

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

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

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For additional information: please contact:

- Membership: membership@victoriacameraclub.ca
- Workshops: workshops@victoriacameraclub.ca
- Field Trips: fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.ca
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July-August 2019

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



Calendar

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

Thursday night meetings will resume in September.

Workshop Highlights: Please see the calendar for late additions to the schedule.

Field Trip Highlights: Long-exposure Seascapes and Sidney Spit.

Cover Image: “Pearl-spotted Owlet” by Leah Gray.

Owls were not something I had thought about photographing when I traveled to Tanzania in 2017. We tend to think about capturing images of lions, elephants, wildebeest, zebras and other larger animals when traveling on an African safari. The photographic opportunities seem to be limitless and there is always something new on the horizon. Often the smaller targets get overlooked. There are many small creatures such as tortoises, hyrax, lizards and of course thousands of different bird species that are within range of our lens, ready to be captured.

Early one morning, as we were setting out to capture the light, we came across a few Impala antelope and a Dik Dik, the smallest deer in Africa. In between these two photography opportunities, a small owl presented itself in the crook of a tree.

It was a Pearl-spotted Owlet, found in Sub-Saharan Africa. This very small owl (17-20 cm) has a rounded head and no ear-tufts. The nape has two large sooty-brown spots that are diffusely bordered whitish which presents false eyes to predators. Found in open savannah and semi open woodlands, it usually avoids areas with long grass, heavy forest and deserts. This owlet is widespread and common in Africa and is not threatened.

This species is diurnal, often hunting by day. It feeds on a variety of prey including small rodents, grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, spiders and millipedes. This owl had its eye on something below for a meal as these owls hunt from a perch.

This image was captured with a full-frame camera and a 600 mm lens with a 1.4x extender for a total focal length of 840 mm. There are times that only a long lens will do and this was one of them. I used the top of the truck to steady my rig on a bean bag to capture this amazing small owl.

President's Message

So summer is here and the time is right for taking photos! Actually, it's always the right time.

I would like to start by thanking everyone for re-electing me as your president for the 2019/20 year. It was wonderful to hear that you liked me. You really, really liked me! Let me introduce you to your new executive. Returning Vice-Presidents are Dan Takahashi and Bob Law and returning as Treasurer is John Clarke. The new Directors-at-Large are Jill Turyk and Grant Hughes and the new Secretary is Susan McRae. We are all excited to work towards making the coming year a great one.

I would also like to thank our members for the contributions that you made over the past year. What a wonderful year we had; too many things to list, but all worthwhile and fun. It was great to see members stepping up when a position needed to be filled. Thank you!

“Once a year, go someplace you've never been before.” – Dalai Lama

So, what is your adventure going to be this summer? My family and I will be heading down to Arizona (a first for me) at the beginning of July to outfit our truck with some overlanding gear. What's that you say? Well, overlanding is a combination of off-roading and camping and our gear allows us to be “off the grid” for an extended period of time.

This means we get to take our rig and go where others can't with a regular vehicle. It also means we get to go to some wonderful photographic locations and spend time exploring without any time constraints. There will be a lot of exploring for me this summer, seeking out dark skies to capture wonders. Maybe I'll see you out there.

“The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.” – Thomas Alva Edison

As you enjoy your summer in Victoria, I'd like to ask you to think about what you'd like to see for the new season, such as workshops or field trips.

Please contact me or one of the other members of the executive with any new (or old) ideas you have for the continued enjoyment of our Club members. Our door is always open.

I am going to stop the corny jokes now and get myself packed up to head out on my summer adventure. I hope you enjoy yours and I look forward to seeing your images in September.

Teri VanWell - President

Creating Altered Realities: One Photographer's Approach

by Lorna Zaback

I had taken up photography in my teens but, only after a long break from my mid-20's until 2010, did I return to the craft as a digital photographer. Fascinated by the range of possibilities digital shooting and post-processing offered and having gained inspiration from some fine art photographers I had discovered online, I decided that I wanted to use my digital images as the foundation for creating "artistic" work rather than taking up landscape, portrait or street photography.

Many of my friends are artists who, miraculously, saw something in my efforts as I took my first tentative steps into that world. I hesitatingly presented some of my earliest, somewhat simplistic, composites to them. They were enthusiastic but also honest and it was their encouragement that motivated me to further pursue my artistic goals.

I set to work, accessing instructional videos, experimenting with Photoshop, striving to develop a richness of colour, texture, movement and other-worldliness in my composites.

In 2012, I was invited to submit images to a small art exhibition a friend was curating for Valentine's Day, called "Love Squared". I was intrigued and readily took up the challenge to epitomize "love", using only photographs.



"What the Heart Leaves Behind"

My thoughts on love at that point were mixed as I realized that "loving" relationships did not always last. I wanted to compose a piece that gave a sense that,

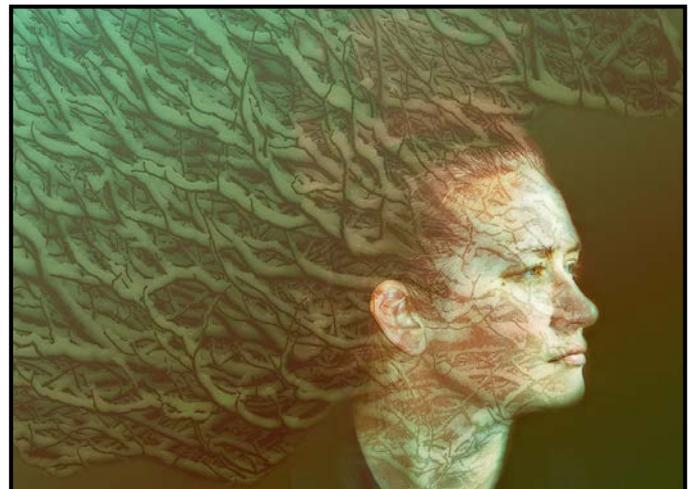
even as the "heart" breaks, or breaks free from an unhealthy situation, something remains in its wake, morsels of regret or, alternatively, small gems of hope or possibility. "What the Heart Leaves Behind" emerged.

In the months that followed, I would often challenge myself to construct composites that depicted a concept, visually interpreted a line of poetry or told a story. More recently, however, I have moved away from this rather goal-oriented approach towards a more random exploration of composite creation. When I search for images to use, I find myself most drawn to shapes or textures that support incorporating them into an image thus giving it "substance".



"Branches"

During one of my fishing expeditions these snowy branches caught my attention. I had a portrait that I had taken of my daughter that I liked but was not completely happy with as it stood. I had no idea what I was aiming for but, as I blended the images and experimented with placement, graduated filters and masking, the branches transformed into a wild mane of hair but, also, magically, into a beautiful henna tattoo covering her face and neck. This happy accident I titled "Into the North Wind".



"Into the North Wind"

Storytelling Through Photography

by Josh DeLeenheer

The old adage, “A picture is worth a thousand words”, may certainly be true but, sometimes, the complexity of the narrative requires more than a single photograph can illustrate, so multiple pictures are combined to show all of the associated facets. The nature of the story and the relevant information you want to share will determine the images you select. However, you must carefully select each photograph to ensure that you are correctly setting the tone and disseminating information exactly as you wish to express in your story. Begin by carefully planning your work, considering all the essential components, photographing the materials and, finally, editing and arranging your collection in a way that meaningfully conveys your intended message.



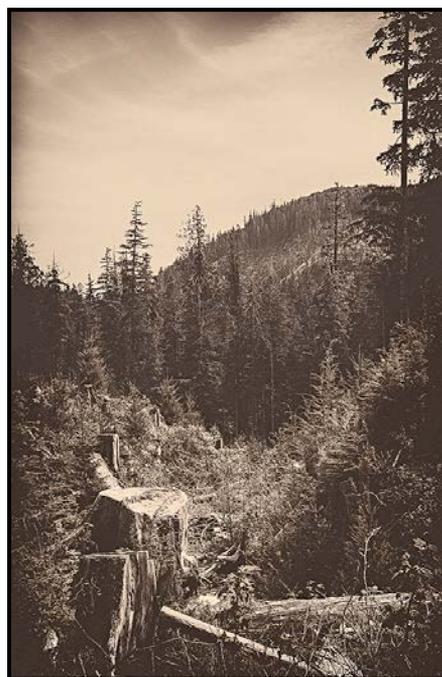
“Measuring Time”

The first and most important part of developing the story is the planning phase. You need to understand the story that you want to tell and develop it in your mind. Write notes to document the key points you wish to show and then refine the details to ensure that the idea is fully developed. From there, you will need to consider many of the essential components that will define the context such as the location(s) where the photographs will be taken and the time of day that best portrays the mood you want to express. The preparatory components are like those for any photographic expedition but it’s essential that you consider your vision for your artistic endeavour. Other factors to consider are: permission or permits for location access, time constraints, associated costs, travel requirements, and weather conditions. Finally, ensure that you have prepared and packed all the equipment necessary.

The subject matter that you include in your photographs will provide much of the context of your story. When you define your vision as part of your planning, the process

should also help define the content of your images. Each image should illuminate a portion of the whole so that they weave together into the fabric of your story. Try to remain objective and analytical as you consider the subject matter, as that approach will enable you to better conceive all the essential aspects. To that end, you may wish to apply a journalistic approach to answering the basic questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how? Your content should reflect the message you wish to impart to your audience, leaving nothing uncertain that is not intentionally so.

Another method of communicating meaning is through the incorporation of action into one, some, or all your images. The action of your subject or peripheral figures helps to project emotion, urgency, drama, exhaustion, or calm, all of which are invaluable in the development of a good story.



“Reminiscence”

Although always a consideration, lighting becomes especially important as it can infer significance in terms of the time of day. For example, dawn represents peacefulness and calm, mid-day can suggest the hustle of daily life, dusk can reflect camaraderie and companionship with friends and family, and evening can be romantic or mysterious. The time of day you choose to capture the photographs is highly relevant to the subjects in each image. If you are shooting images indoors, you may wish to employ available light to create a natural environment or stage the lighting to control the message in a way that is meaningful to the scene.

Like lighting, the atmosphere of a setting helps in projecting the tone of your story. Utilize weather condi-

tions such as rain, fog, storms, and snow to embody visual elements. If you are working within a structure, the interior decor and conditions can create a sense of nostalgia, warmth, or discomfort depending on the content of the picture as they connect to the individual's personal experiences. Make use of the environment to explicitly state or implicitly imply scenarios that will add substance to the storyline.

Often the setting for a photograph provides the essential context to the subject or action within an image. In some instances the location is the subject, whereas in other scenarios you may want the scene to provide complementary support or contradictory juxtaposition to the primary content. Also, consider the foreground and background content of the image. If your intention is to draw your audience's attention to a specific portion of the image, consider eliminating any distractions in the scene.



“Contrast Between Life and Death”

We are attuned to emotional content so incorporating emotion into your story is an effective method of communication. The expressions of both your subject and surrounding characters represent the mood of the moment. You can also engender specific sentiments with dramatic or traumatic images but, in doing so, you will need to consider the relevance to the whole story. When arranging the selection, be aware of any conflicting emotional expressions that may detract from your intended message. Guide the emotional journey to cover the range of feelings that you want each observer to experience but be prepared for unintentional and unexpected reactions.

Details present in each frame are another important

element to consider. Not all details are relevant, but some are essential. Try to exclude any that could distract from the message but ensure that the crucial elements are thoughtfully incorporated. Hidden meanings are especially intriguing and keep your audience returning to your images to seek new visual clues contained within the scenery.

Once you have captured the set of images you believe best encapsulates your desired content, proceed with editing your photos while reflecting on the effect the editing has on the content of each photograph. A basic edit will produce a result similar to the way the scene was viewed at the time that it was captured. By utilizing artistic styles in your editing process, the content becomes more interpretive, offering the viewer the opportunity to project their own perspectives on the story. Different lighting effects can narrow or broaden the focus of the audience, while leading lines can draw attention to specific subjects. The same rules that apply to all photo editing are applicable with visual storytelling, of course, but may have greater relevance when all the photographs are combined.



“Sheltered”

The last consideration is the final selection and arrangement of your images, which is equally if not more important to clearly tell a well-defined story. As with any good writing, the content should progress in a natural, intuitive flow. Interpretive content is valuable in that it can be designed to make the audience consider various possibilities but also risks losing your message in ambiguity. Whatever your intention, ensure that the final arrangement reflects your vision and accurately embodies the narrative you wish to share.

Tech Tips

by Richard James

Flat Field Correction

With the May 2019 update to Lightroom Classic (desktop) Adobe made a previously lesser-known plug-in a part of the basic installation. This feature provides an alternative way of correcting for vignetting and colour differences across an image that are introduced by the combination of lens optics and sensor construction.

This note is based in large part on the material presented in the Reid Reviews article published here: reidreviews.com/examples/flatfieldnew.html. Since I've simplified that material considerably it might be a good idea to review the original article.

If you're not using the current version of Lightroom (Creative Cloud) you can obtain the plug-in that works in earlier versions here: labs.adobe.com/downloads/lightroom-plugins.html. There is also the Lightroom Help Page at: helpx.adobe.com/lightroom-classic/help/flat-field-correction.html. The concept is related to flat field and dark frame techniques in astrophotography.

Vignetting, where light fall-off towards the corners of the image, has always been present in camera lenses. Lens designers attempt to minimize it but there is almost always some residual effect. In many instances it is not visually apparent and is ignored. However, in some cases, it is obvious and needs correction.

Colour differences across an image are more directly related to the sensor construction and again may be more or less apparent. As a generalization both of these become more apparent with a more uniform background across the image. The corners tend to be darker and may show a colour shift.

A number of camera manufacturers provide correction data within their raw files and some software developers also include a similar feature. These are all based on average parameters across a particular lens/body combination. Potential advantages of Adobe's flat field correction are that you can make it image specific and can use it for body/lens pairs that are not covered by other data.

The process is based on a "calibration image" of an evenly-illuminated untextured subject that is analyzed to find the average illumination across all pixels in the image. The difference between this average and the actual



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value for each pixel in the calibration image is the correction to be applied to the target image. The process can be applied to illumination or colour cast, or both. The output is a corrected DNG file that can then be used for further processing in Lightroom or Photoshop.

Since the effects to be corrected are dependent on lens focal length, aperture and focal distance you need either to generate a set of generic calibration images for your equipment or produce one for the specific lens settings you are using for the subject image.

If you use this process you need to ensure that any in-camera or Lightroom adjustments are turned off or you will be “double correcting” which will result in a poor image.

Texture Slider

Also new in this release of Lightroom and ACR, the texture slider in the Develop module (under “Presence”) gives you local and global control over how texture is managed. It can be used to smooth fine detail, such as skin, or emphasize a texture such as rock, wood or just generally in the image where that is more appropriate.

It is related to Sharpening and Clarity but works a little differently. It focuses on mid-frequency detail but can sometimes pick up noise in high ISO images, so care is needed in its use. To see how it works set Sharpening, Clarity and Texture to 0, then change each setting from -100 to +100 and see what the differences are.

Adobe’s help page is here: helpx.adobe.com/lightroom-classic/help/whats-new/2019-3.html#texture.

Smart Objects

Smart objects have been around in Photoshop for a number of versions. They are a powerful tool that allow you to re-edit a number of types of changes to a layer. They do this by preserving the content of the layer while still allowing you to edit it. The smart object layer can be either a layer from within the current file or it can be a linked layer from an external file. If it is from an external file it will be updated when that file is edited.

Allowable edits include any non-destructive transformation such as scale, rotate, skew, distort, perspective transform, as well as the application of filters and layer masks. However, you cannot alter the embedded pixel data such as by painting, dodging and burning or cloning. If you need to do this you have to either go back to the source layer and edit it (internal layer) and then re-create the smart object or, go back to the external

source and edit that directly. If you rasterize a smart object you lose its “smart” properties and freeze its content which can then be edited as a normal layer.

A process I commonly use is to do some editing on the file and then duplicate the edited layers, merge them and create a smart object from that merged version. I can then do a number of things such as take that smart object into NIK/DXO Silver Efex to create a black and white version of the file. If I don’t like the result I can then go back to the smart object and restart the editing where I left off. You will note that this process always leaves me the unconverted information within the file if I want to take an entirely different approach later.

However, one thing you need to remember with smart objects is that if you change the image size or resolution, the smart object may rework the change and give you something you did not want. This is particularly the case if the change is scale dependent (the “oil paint” effect is one example). The way around this is to flatten the file first and then save it with a different name identifying it as a flattened version. Remember, once you have flattened it you’ve lost all the editing layers!

Adobe’s help page for smart objects is here: helpx.adobe.com/ca/photoshop/using/create-smart-objects.html.

July-August 2019

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October Theme: Signs, Letters and Numbers

by Normand Marcotte

The October competition theme is “Signs/Letters/Numbers”. The deadline for entering the competition is Thursday, October 3rd, 2019. Signs/Letters/Numbers are something we drive by, walk by or ride past everyday. However, they are not something that we really look at for more than a few seconds while we work out what they are telling us. They can stand alone as street signs displaying a speed limit or they can be mounted on buildings as an advertisement. Signs take many forms, from the well-known metal plaque on a post, simple single letters and numbers individually mounted on any surface or even spray painted graffiti. Letters and numbers are also omnipresent in printed material such as books, magazines and newspapers but they are also evident in the digital media we consume every day on our televisions, computers and phones.

For signs that are particularly interesting or funny, you can zoom right in and fill the frame but most of the time try to shoot them within their context. For example, a “Men at Work” sign on a street with a background of workmen standing around a pothole with coffee cups in their hands makes for an interesting and humorous juxtaposition.

Make sure you have the appropriate depth-of-field in order to get front to back sharpness. Signs often have glossy surfaces so watch out for unwanted reflections. Polarizing filters are very useful in reducing glare, increasing contrast and colour saturation. You can try to isolate small groupings of letters and take them out of context from their surroundings. Pay attention to details.

A group of objects can also form a letter, word or number. (Think of the “Welcome to Victoria” sign made of flowers in the Harbour).

Any type of post-processing or in-camera manipulation is acceptable as long as the Signs/Letters/Numbers are the main subject. You could try various techniques including classic Orton technique for an ethereal look, Solarization (an old darkroom-era tone reversal technique possible in today’s post-processing software), in-camera double-exposure or composites. As a final thought, signs can be in places that make them difficult to access; don’t put yourself in danger for the sake of a photograph.

For more on photographing signs go to this Travel Photography Tip: digital-photography-school.com/photographing-signs-travel-photography-tip.

Annual Competition Judges

Our Annual Competitions for both prints and digital images were judged by a team of three judges on April 13th. The images were given placements (1st, 2nd, 3rd, HM) rather than being given scores or comments. We thank the judges for the Annual Competition: Gregg Eligh, Tracey Farrington and Mike Byrne. We would also like to thank our volunteers who worked on organizing the event: Richard Webber, Dan and Gail Takahashi, Normand Marcotte, Judy Plummer, Pam Irvine, Rea Casey, Lorna Zaback and Jill Turyk. We also thank our visitors, Teri VanWell, President, and Leah Gray, Chair of the External Competitions Committee. All of the images are available for viewing on the website under competition results for May 2, 2019 at victoriacameraclub.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

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

Tracey Farrington: Tracey has been recognized by her peers as one of the best photographers in Canada. She is a multiple award-winning photographer in business since 2012. Recently her business has been transformed into Fusion Artistry. She was awarded National Photographic Artist of the Year by the Professional Photographers of Canada and is recognized as an International Photographic Speaker and Judge. She has earned her Fellowship and her Masters of Photographic Arts (MPA) for Canada. She was named the BC Photographer of the Year, National Portrait Artist of the Year and has won the Kodak Gallery Award, Nikon Excellence Gold Awards, and numerous Judge’s Choice awards from Canada and the UK. Recently, Tracey was nominated for the 72nd Canadian Photographer of the Year award, an accolade she won back in 2008. fusionartistry.com.

Mike Byrne: Mike is one of the co-founders of Clock Tower Images in Victoria. Growing up in Alberta’s Rocky Mountains he has always pursued outdoor activities. As a natural extension, he started to produce outdoor adventure films and videos. Mike offers travel photography tours to locations around the world. He has presented to the club on competition nights regarding the print judging as well as conducted workshops on the use of flash in photography. www.clocktowerimages.com

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Advanced Altered Reality Digital - 2nd
“African Sky” by Steve Barber

This photo was taken in eastern Etosha National Park in Namibia on a photo tour with Brenda Tharp in July, 2018. It was at the edge of the Etosha “pan”, a dry lake bed that is impermeable clay and 60 kilometres wide. The image was shot handheld from a small tour bus, at mid day at ISO 400, f8, 1/1600th second. at 38 mm. It was processed with the NIK/DXO software, Colour EfX Pro using a combination of filters.



Advanced Natural World Digital - 3rd
“Autumn” by Leah Gray

Autumn in Victoria is glorious. The red leaves of a maple tree can be an amazing subject to photograph. One needs great light, the proper location and the correct camera settings to capture the image you have in mind. For this capture, I crawled into the tree’s low (ground-level) canopy and steadied my wide-angle lens, adjusting for stray bits of bright light coming through the composition. This was shot at 35 mm, f22, ISO 100 at 1.6 seconds on a tripod. The colours were not enhanced beyond normal processing in post-production.



Advanced Monochrome Print - HM
“Saturna Island Workshop” by Steve Lustig

This workshop on Saturna Island was in a large wooden shed on the grounds of a sawmill. I was drawn to the natural triangle formed by the hanging wrenches. Because of the high dynamic range, I took seven images with different exposures and blended them in Nik (DXO) HDR EfX Pro. The resulting image was then processed in both Lightroom and Photoshop and printed on metallic paper.



Advanced Nature Print - 1st
“Into the Mystic” by Mike Murchison

While exploring Saturna Island on a Club field trip, we found this beautiful fog near the top of Mount Warburton Pike. The conditions were perfect for photography so we pulled over and, after shooting a couple of different compositions, I started looking for something green to use as my subject against the backdrop of the tree trunks receding into the fog. This small tree did the trick and I really liked the zig-zag of trunks on the ground that led the eye into the scene.



Advanced Open Digital - 2nd
"Lake Superior Solitude" by Lee-Anne Stack

The long and stunning drive to B.C. from southeastern Ontario was made even longer and more interesting with all of the frequent photo-op stops. Finding a quiet cove along the shores of Lake Superior afforded a chance for a bit of exploring. I loved how the late September snowfall highlighted the lines of colour on the far shore and capped off the pilings, expressing the chill of early autumn. Shot with a Nikon D2X, 17-55 mm lens at 1/200th second.



Advanced Wildlife Digital - 1st
"Sandhill Crane" by Clive Townley

This Sandhill Crane was taken in Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Delta, BC, on an early March morning. I hoped the observer would feel that they are close enough to reach out and touch the crane's head. Image cropped, Nikon D850, Sigma 150-600 mm lens at 370 mm, f9, 1/1600th second and ISO 2000.



Advanced Theme Digital - 1st
"Dinner is Served" by Suzanne Huot

I attended a Hummingbird and Flash photography workshop in Costa Rica in early 2018. We had the opportunity to photograph many different varieties of Hummingbirds. It was amazing to capture one sipping nectar from a flower and sometimes even two would appear at the same time to dine together. To capture these amazing little speedsters in flight we were using multi-flash set ups. Upon returning home and reviewing all the images I was surprised to find, not only two, but three Hummingbirds all feeding at the same time. Speedsters indeed!



Advanced Open Print - 1st
"Cycling in the Rain" by Normand Marcotte

This photo was taken in Tokyo, Japan in October 2017. I leaned against a wall for stability and some rain protection and waited a few seconds for the first cyclist to reach the middle of the frame. I was amazed by the number of people who managed to cycle and handle an umbrella at the same time. I chose to have the image printed on metallic paper to highlight the bright ambient light reflections on the wet pavement. The image was shot with a Canon EOS 6D with a 24-105 mm f4L IS USM lens at 105 mm. Exposure: RAW, ISO 6400, f4, at 1/125th second.



Intermediate Digital Theme - 1st
“Water Under the Bridge” by Pam Irvine

The bridge in the image is the new bridge on Wilkinson Road over Colquitz Creek. I was walking our dog one sunny winter day and saw the fantastic reflections from the water onto the new concrete. I came back the next day (luckily the sun was still shining) with my camera and a tripod and captured this image. The walls are now covered in graffiti. Maybe I should go back and do a sequel.



Intermediate Open Digital - 1st
“Time Machine” by Stephen Ban

I took this HDR image in Cuba, in the small town of Trinidad. I took a few different shots from the same angle but this one, fortuitously, turned out the best of the bunch because a moped just happened to drive through the shot at mid-exposure, leaving the enigmatic light trail. I think it makes the shot special.



Intermediate Wildlife Digital - 2nd
“Eye Spy” by Kelvin Nelson

It was early morning in the Ngorongoro Crater, Tanzania when we happened upon a pride of lions. This female took a drink and wandered over to check us out. She stopped directly in front of us and gave us a look-over before heading on her way. I was lucky to have been able to capture this moment. Edited in Capture One, Nikon D7100 and Nikkor 200-500 mm lens, at 200 mm, ISO 1000, f8, 1/1000th second.



Intermediate Open Print - 2nd
“Snow Day” by Lorna Shaw

February 3rd 2019 was a very special snow day in Victoria. I walked my dog at Cedar Hill Golf Course then brought her home to trade her for the camera. Many hours later, after many shots, this picture was my favourite. I was aiming to capture how the snow stuck on the very textured bark as well as framing the Garry Oaks in the background. What a bonus when a person walked into that winter wonderland. Just the subtle amount to keep the calmness of the scene while giving perspective to the trees.



Intermediate Natural World - 1st
"Awoken by Sunlight" by Martin Lennick

This image was taken at 8 am on a sunny August morning in my yard in Fairfield. The Pasqueflower is usually a spring flower, so it is unusual to see it this late in the summer. It was just opening as the sun was shining on it, a lucky happenstance. I was shooting with a Fuji XT1 with a 50-200 mm lens, f20, 1/17th second, ISO 320. I did some minor editing in Lightroom.



Intermediate Altered Reality Digital - 2nd
"Aspens Altered" by Mary-Lee Sampson

I shot this in Alberta in a park off the Bow Valley Parkway. I had wanted this shot and was elated to find an Aspen forest. I used post-processing to achieve the blur as opposed to in-camera because I knew, ahead of time, I wanted one Aspen to be in focus, so I purposefully looked for that composition when taking the shot. I used radial blur in Photoshop to achieve the look. Nikon D610, 16-35 mm lens, handheld.



Novice Digital Open - 1st
"Afternoon at the Mud Pool" by Frank Thirkettle

We were driving with our guide in the country near Siem Reap in Cambodia. We saw four children standing in a shallow pool of muddy water. They would point excitedly and then lunge into the water. Our guide said they were trying to catch small fish. We stopped and I asked if I could take pictures. The children were having a great time, completely ignoring me. I happened to catch this boy with an interesting expression on his face. The encounter showed that kids everywhere will make their own fun with water and mud plus fish, in this case.



Novice Wildlife - 1st
"Say Aaahh" by Sharon Moysey

This Common Merganser was relaxing on a log as we slowly drifted by on a rafting trip near Bella Coola in September 2018. As I was snapping photos, she briefly opened her mouth and displayed her impressive serrated teeth. Perhaps she was trying to get rid of the fluff stuck in her bottom teeth? The picture was taken with a Nikon D7200 at f8, ISO 640, and 1/1000th second. exposure using a 70-300 mm lens at 210 mm.



Novice Natural World - 1st
“Sproat Lake” by Peter Amundsen

This image was taken in 2018 on the way home from the Club’s Tofino field trip. I was intrigued by the mist and fog on the lake. After taking some images I looked across the lake as the fog started to rise and the sun shone through the clouds. The image of the far side of the lakeshore is highly cropped and developed in Lightroom. I then used the tonal contrast filter in NIK/DXO Color EfX Pro to further increase the contrast to the point of creating a pixelated result. I manipulated the image to get the contrast I was seeing with my eyes and think the result closely resembles what I remember.



Novice Theme - 2nd
“Lagoon Ebb Tide” by Dale Aylward

Just after buying my Nikon D750, I went down to Esquimalt Lagoon trying for the classic shot of the Fort Rodd lighthouse at sunrise but was having trouble getting it. I decided to leave but, as I turned to go, I noticed the water was rushing under the bridge, like a river. I thought it looked amazing. I kept the ISO low and wanted a deep depth of field so my exposure was long, 1.3 seconds. That’s when I noticed the look of the water and discovered long-exposure photography. The big lesson for me was to not give up, turn around and look. Maybe I might find something totally unexpected.

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Member Profile: Peter Amundsen

My photographic journey began at the age of ten. I received a Brownie Hawkeye camera for Christmas and started taking very bad pictures immediately. My older brother had already set up a darkroom on the bathroom floor. There was just enough room in front of the toilet for the three trays needed for chemicals and a box containing a light bulb on a switch. The box had an opening covered with clear glass. We were able to produce amazing contact prints with a dynamic range from light grey to dark grey and sometimes even achieved the odd print with whites and blacks on the paper.



"Cutting Rebar"

The journey continued when I was able to convince my parents to gift me a new 35 mm SLR camera (an Asahi Pentax) with a light meter perched in the hot shoe. I was slowly able to get a 35 mm and 135 mm lens and a flash for the camera. I used it a lot and took pictures for the Sparwood High School newspaper which was printed using the school's Gestetner copy machine.

When I was at the University of Alberta I joined the Photodirectorate and took pictures for the student paper, "The Gateway", and many pictures for the year-book. The Photodirectorate had a good selection of cameras and a good darkroom which helped in my photographic education. Some money was earned using a 4 x 5 camera and selling pictures of groups of students living in residence. During my summers I worked for the Alberta Hail Studies developing 100 foot rolls of film (a frame was taken for each sweep of a radar). We also used a Super 8 movie camera to do time-lapse pictures of forming hailstorms.

I continued taking pictures while at University and upon graduation moved to the Crowsnet Pass in Southern Alberta, 40 kilometers from where I grew up in BC.

Soon, I was married and had a house where I built a darkroom under the stairs and bought all the necessary equipment to develop both black and white negatives and prints and also dabbled a bit in colour, mostly printing from slides using Cibachrome.



"Incinerator Rock"

I continued to be active in photography and as children came I was presented with many opportunities that required new cameras and other photographic toys.

I became more serious over the years especially when I had a 130 sq. metre office with many rooms needing pictures on the walls. I virtually had my own gallery under my own control unless one of my staff thought a picture was not that great. Staff members were some of my toughest critics.

There were not enough photographers in the small town where I lived to form a club, but the Crowsnet Pass Allied Arts Gallery became an outlet for artistic creation with a couple of yearly shows that I could enter. Over the years I attended a few one-day or weekend events in Calgary, Lethbridge and Canmore learning more about Photoshop and general photographic skills.

After I retired we started coming to Victoria for three months in the winter and I joined the Victoria Camera Club. Living part time in two places made it difficult to commit to very much. We recently moved permanently to Victoria. I have really enjoyed being a member of the Club and have taken part in more competitions and workshops. The Club is full of very helpful, welcoming and friendly members who help you strive to be a better artist. Thank you all very much for all your friendliness, help and warm friendship.

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Film Scanners

by Matt Speight

Many months ago, (Sept/Oct 2018 issue), I wrote in an article about film and its renaissance, that film was making a come-back. This follow-up article is about the film scanner. In the current social media climate, digitalizing negatives is the main way people will see those images. Darkrooms are also very scarce these days so the only way that many photographers can edit and print their images is to scan them. Here's what to look for in a scanner so that you can make an informed decision and ensure you get the right one for your needs. There are two main types of scanners on the consumer market: flatbed and dedicated film scanners.

Photo Flatbed Scanners: These scanners are usually designed to scan documents and photos up to 8.5"x11" in size. Usually, they come with holders for 35 mm and 120 mm film and mounted 35 mm slides. Originally flatbed scanners were mediocre at best, lacking fine detail and true blacks but those days are long gone. You still need to do your due diligence however and ensure the specs are up to the results you'll need if you go the flatbed route.

Dedicated Film-Only Scanners: These scanners used to be a sure thing for getting quality results from your film but alas, this is no longer the case. There are a lot of inexpensive scanners now on the market that are fine, if all you want to do is view your images on a small phone screen. Thankfully, there are still some good options out there. Most film scanners are normally limited to 35 mm format or smaller. Film scanners that do 120 film or larger are rare and usually expensive.

Now that we have the two different types of scanner out of the way, let's go over some of the technical things to look for.

Dmax: Dmax is technically the darkest part of the negative or the highlight detail in a slide that the scanner can read. A higher number will mean that the scanner will have the ability to record a larger gradation of tones in the highlights, mid-tones, and blacks. Most scanners will be in the 3.0-4.0 range. With more demanding negatives and slides, you will see a difference between a 3.0 and a 4.0 but for most images' needs, a 3.4/3.5 range should be sufficient.

Colour Bit-Depth: One of the reasons we set our cameras to shoot in raw is for the higher bit-depth that raw has over JPEGs. JPEG only records in 8-bit. Scanners have a bit-depth rating as well. The rating is on the red, green

and blue channels combined so that, for example, if the scanner has 14-bits per channel, it will be listed as 42-bit depth. The higher the bit-depth, the better the scanner will be at capturing a higher colour range and nuances in the original. A decent scanner will have a rating in the 40s. Try to avoid scanners with a rating lower than this or it's likely you'll be disappointed with the results.

Resolution: This is usually given in dots per inch (DPI), although entry-level film scanners often give a megapixel rating. Scanners have two maximum resolutions listed: an optical and an interpolated rating. The optical is the true rating of the scanners maximum DPI. The interpolated rating is where the scanner software is interpolating the final image to increase resolution. If you want to print your images higher than 8"x10" look for a scanner that has at least a 3200 DPI optical resolution.

When it comes to choosing a scanner, there is more to consider than just numbers in regard to bit-depth, resolution and Dmax. For example, a higher-end flatbed scanner like the Epson V800 will have a dual lens system. One is dedicated to prints and documents and the other lens is for film. This is because the film is in a holder and doesn't lie flat against the glass like a print. The second lens accurately focuses on just the film giving you a sharper scan.

Software: This an important factor as well. How easy it is to use and how much control does it give you over the image before and after the scan? Does the scanner have dust and scratch removal software? If you plan on scanning older negs, this can be a huge time saver.

Speed: Before you buy a scanner, check how long a scan will take at the resolution you'll need. An inexpensive scanner may take several minutes to do a scan that a higher-end scanner would take only 30 seconds to do. If you are scanning a large backlog of slides or negatives, look for a scanner that does batch processing with an automated feeder and let the scanner do the work for you.

The most important thing to do before making the leap into the new old world of scanners is to be clear on what you will be using your scanner for. What you will need from your scanner and how much scanning will you do? Will you be scanning slides and negatives in multiple formats or just in one size? What will your output be? The more demanding output of larger prints will need a scanner of higher quality.

Since the joy of shooting with film seems valid again, if you are going to buy a scanner, invest in one that will meet your needs. Happy Scanning!

Advantages of Field Trips

by Gita McCormick and Vanessa MacDonald

Have you looked at the club calendar and wondered about all those field trips? There are many benefits to participating in field trips including; getting to know other members and bonding through a shared interest, gaining special access to locations that otherwise you cannot get to on your own, early admission (no people to get in your way), or simply challenging yourself to experience shooting something that is outside your normal style.

The Club organizes weekday and weekend trips to various locations around the Island and sometimes a little further afield. The duration of each field trip can be anywhere from two to four hours to a packed day full of shooting, or a multi-day out of town trip. If we are going to the north or west side of the Island, typically we will meet at the Helmcken overpass park and ride. Arrangements can be made there for carpooling (optional). We highly recommend it as a great way to meet and chat with other members while driving to the location, not to mention the savings on gas and footprint. For other field trips a meeting place is always posted. We make it convenient so that members who don't drive can get to the meeting place without difficulty.

Members of all skill levels are encouraged to participate in field trips. If you are feeling shy because you are new or maybe feel you are "not good enough", we would say this is for you; we personally want everyone to know that field trips are for everyone, no exclusion or judgement occurs on the basis of one's skill level or equipment! That's not what matters, but rather your passion for photography and the joy of getting out with others, at a great location. You can take your time to really focus on setting up and practicing different techniques. You can really get in the zone, versus getting rushed along by your non-photographer friends or family.

If you are new to the Club or don't attend regular meetings and don't know anyone, this is a good chance to change that. One of the best ways to meet and bond with other Club members is out in the field but we will say that, sometimes, it takes sticking with it and going a few times before you start to feel more of a sense of community. Don't give up on it after just one trip; every field trip experience is different. We have a range of different group leaders and people attending so there are

a lot of opportunities to meet new people or see some familiar faces. Sometimes as an added bonus, there will be a group lunch or dinner out afterwards.

In addition to many of the local Island field trips, we also have a number of multi-day overnight trips, including Tofino, Hornby Island and the Olympic Peninsula. There have also been trips to the Palouse in Washington State. Many of these "away" field trips tend to fill up very quickly. Local tips also fill quickly too, but we encourage anyone who's interested in a field trip to stay signed up even if you are on the waitlist. Many times, as it comes closer to the date of the trip, there will be spaces opening up.



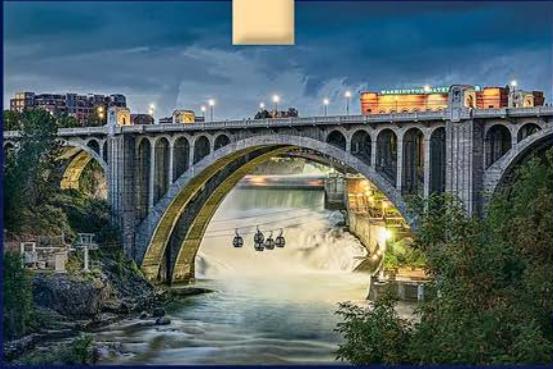
"Drama at the Church by Gordon Griffiths"

Our group leaders have a general knowledge of the area or type of trip planned. They have likely been to the area, or may have special knowledge or skill in a particular area of photography. So don't be too shy to ask questions. If you have been to a comps or member's night and wondered "how did they get that shot?" here is your opportunity to ask questions of other members.

Quite often we find that field trips can be a good time to trade tips and tricks on settings, gear, strategies etc. Within our Club is an amazing wealth of knowledge and experience and most members will generously share what they know with you.

Whether you are a new or seasoned member, there is a field trip for you. Why not sign up and join in on the fun? It doesn't matter what style of photography you enjoy, what experience you have, or the equipment you own, a field trip has something for everyone.

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How I Did It

Sweet as Honey

by Ian Crawford

One spring afternoon I was testing a new-to-me 180 mm macro lens on a Canon 5D MK III. I was using an on-camera flash outfitted with a homemade diffuser. I had cut a rectangular hole into the side of a 500 ml yogurt container so it fit snugly onto the flash with foil wrap and covered it with an opaque white lid. The flash was tilted straight up and the diffuser was offset from the lens by about 23 cm. The flash output was set for 1/8 power to give a short flash duration of about 1/1000th second, enough to freeze the insect's motion. The lens was set for manual focus and lens stabilization was on.



The borage plant had seeded itself in the yard and was providing food to many insects flying around its multiple blooms. When the bee was attracted to this flower, I took its picture using manual settings on the camera of f8, 1/200th second and ISO 400.

Some post-production was done in Lightroom. I love a square crop as it makes me feel like I used a Hasselblad camera. I switched to black and white and adjusted for exposure and tonal values and then saturation. I then used Photoshop for sharpening. I copied the background layer and changed blending from “normal” to “overlay”. Under filters I picked “other” then “high pass” for sharpening. Using a radius of less than two pixels the image was sharpened modestly to enhance the details on the foliage and the insect. I then moved back to Lightroom for printing. The image was printed using an Epson R3000 and Red River 60 lb Polar Matte C1S Paper. I obtained their paper on-line and am quite pleased with its quality.

Cycling in the Rain

by Normand Marcotte

This photo was taken in Tokyo, during a family trip to Japan in the fall of 2017. We were walking in a market in the early evening and I noticed the colourful reflections on the wet pavement due to the rain. I felt that the open area made quite a nice background scene. I decided to wait for cyclists to enter the scene as the main subject because I had noticed that cyclists in Japan routinely managed to cycle and handle an umbrella at the same time.



I did not have a tripod so I decided to lean against a wall for stability and some rain protection. I tried a few photos and adjusted my exposure settings, checking the histogram, to avoid “blowing” the highlights. I prefocused on the middle of the scene.

I saw two cyclists coming from behind my right shoulder and waited a few seconds for the first cyclist to reach the middle of the frame. In retrospect I wish I had waited a fraction of a second more in order to get a bit of separation between the leading cyclist and the pedestrian walking away in the background. Because of the low light condition, I had the camera set to aperture priority at f4, auto ISO (with a minimum shutter speed of 1/125th second).

All post-processing was done in Lightroom 6. I added a slight darkening vignette to tone down the edges of the frame and keep the viewer's eyes from leaving the image. I reduced the luminance and colour noise due to the high ISO. I chose to have the image printed on metallic paper to emphasize the bright ambient light reflections on the wet pavement.

Images shot handheld with a Canon EOS 6D with a 24-105 mm f4L IS USM lens set at 24 mm. Exposure: RAW, ISO 6400.

Tuesday Shoots - July and August 2019

by Jim Fowler

The Tuesday groups photographers continue meeting right through the summer. Join them for a variety of photographic shoots followed by lunch at a local pub.

The Regular Tuesday group has coffee at 10:00. July and August topics are decided by drawing from a hat. Topics were collected from members in June and will be drawn just prior to departure at 10:30. Trips are on July 9th, 23rd, August 13th and 27th starting from the Bay Centre Food Court.

The Alternate Tuesday group will continue to visit places in and around Victoria. Alternate Tuesday shoots start at 10:00.

July 2nd: Heritage Acres. This wonderful resource beside the highway to the ferries is full of artefacts from the past. If it is raining, there are many buildings open to the public. In nice weather, the vehicles and machinery scattered about make interesting subjects for outdoor compositions.

July 16th: Beaver Lake ponds. Park at the Equestrian Centre parking lot at Beaver Lake ponds. Take Beaver Lake Road from Hwy 17, go past Beaver Beach and the old filter beds, and follow Beaver Lake Road until you see the Equestrian Centre sign on your right. This flat area is full of dragon and damsel flies in summer. Look for frogs poking through the green pond weeds and there is usually a Great Blue Heron fishing.

August 6th: Dean Park. Take Dean Park Road off East Saanich Road to John Dean Provincial Park with 174 acres of old growth Douglas Fir, Garry Oak meadows and views of the Saanich Peninsula and Gulf Islands. Meet at the top parking lot. The terrain varies from easy trails to steep stairs and cliff faces. Know your limits and stay safe. Wet surfaces can be slippery. The deep forest is a treat in hot weather.

August 20th: Selkirk Trestle area. This area is full of walkers, cyclists and kayakers. Hopefully it won't be as smoky as it was last year, even so there were some interesting shots of the trestle in the haze.

Some events require a fee or donation. Registration enables the group leaders to make reservations for lunch. Please check the Club calendar for details related to each field trip and to register.

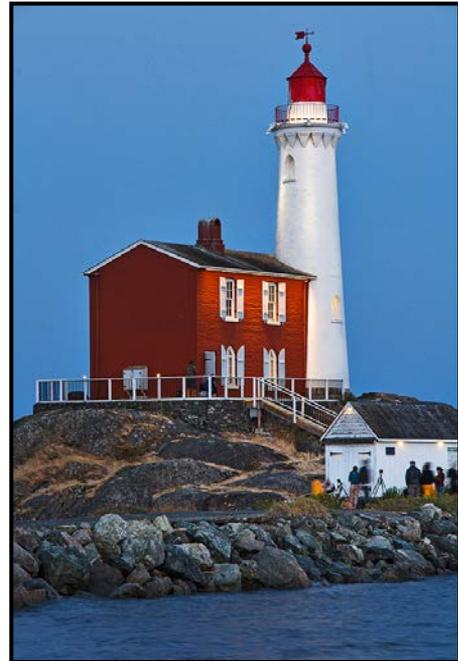
July-August 2019

Weekend Trips - July and August 2019

by Vanessa MacDonald

Hope you all are having a fantastic summer! We have two field trips planned for July and August, so have a look in the calendar for dates and further details.

July 20th: Sidney Spit, Gulf Islands National Park. This park is at the North end of Sidney Island and is reachable by passenger ferry in the summer months. The spit is a one kilometre long, narrow, sandy strip of land that stretches out into the sea and is flanked by tidal flats and salt marshes. You could walk the whole length during low tide or check out some of the other trails on the island. This field trip could be great for spotting birds or capturing some seascape shots for the fall competition theme "At the Beach".



"Lighthouse at Fort Rodd Hill by Gordon Griffiths"

August 9th: Night Photography at Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Site: This tends to be a popular summer event where you can meet up with your Club friends and enjoy wandering this beautiful National Historic Site after hours. There are few opportunities to get on the grounds of Fort Rodd Hill for night photography, except for when they host public events in the summer months. Here's your chance to get that gorgeous sunset or blue hour shot of the iconic lighthouse and surrounding landscape.

If you have any further questions, please contact Vanessa and Gita at fieldtrips@victoriacameraclub.ca.

Getting Started in Nature Photography

by Evan Guengerich

Nature photography encompasses many different genres, landscapes, birds, wildlife, insects, plants and astrophotography, among others, that can each take a lifetime to explore. Much has been written on the subject and the amount of information can be overwhelming. So how can a novice photographer get started? While this short article can't make you an expert, I'd like to provide a bit of a road-map to help you on your way.

You probably already have what you need: a camera, a basic understanding of photography and something to photograph. I'll cover some things you need to know about each of these then outline some key concepts that can help your photos have impact.



"Find nature just outside your door"

Let's start with equipment. Almost any DSLR or mirrorless camera purchased in the last several years will be suitable since most modern cameras can take excellent photos under most conditions. You will need a wide-angle lens for landscapes, preferably at least a 24 mm full-frame equivalent. The kit lens that came with your camera will likely be fine. A 70-200 mm or 70-300 mm lens will be suitable for more distant landscape photography while a longer lens will be ideal if your goal is photographing birds and wildlife. If cost is a consideration, look at third-party lenses like the Sigma and Tamron 150-600 mm lenses. For Nikon the 200-500 mm lens, while a little more expensive, is excellent and great value. That's really all you need in terms of equipment to get started. The specialty gear such as fast primes and macro lenses can come later if you find areas of specific interest and start being limited by your existing gear.

Make sure you thoroughly understand the exposure triangle: the relationship between shutter speed, aperture and ISO. No concept is more critical to your success in

any type of photography. You'll also need to thoroughly understand your camera's controls. Read, and re-read your manual. With this knowledge you'll be able to make creative decisions about your photos, decreasing your depth of field to isolate your subject or controlling your shutter speed to freeze the action or create a blur.

While many of us dream of a cheetah on the Serengeti, snow-covered peaks in the Alps or toucans in Costa Rica, we have a wealth of opportunities at our doorsteps. From the wood ducks and turtles in the urban park to the beaches and forests on the edge of town. The beauty of nature is everywhere, from the large and majestic to the small and ordinary. Just getting out there regularly is the most important first step.



"Discover beauty in the ordinary"

As you explore new locations think about what inspires you. Is it the dew on ferns next to the old growth tree or the herons fishing in the lagoon? Wildflowers in the park or the spider and the bee on the flowers in your garden? You don't need grand vistas and exotic wildlife to discover the beauty and challenges of photographing nature.

Like most photographers you might find your first photos aren't quite as compelling as you had hoped. That will start you on a challenging yet enjoyable life-long journey to create images that are powerful and have lots of impact. You'll soon learn that mastering the technical aspects of nature photography is the easy part; it's the art of photography, the creative side that is much more challenging to develop.

There aren't any real shortcuts but I can give you a few suggestions and guidelines that have helped me. Some guidelines have gained stature because they frequently give good results. Use them when they are useful and discard them when they don't work. As you gain experience and confidence, your photographic eye and

your compositions will become more intuitive. Until then, consider these suggestions for the quality of the light, the pace of your shooting, the composition of your landscapes and your connection with creatures.

More than almost anything else the quality of light is critical. For nature photography that usually means shooting early in the day or late in the evening when the light is soft. Nothing will do more to destroy a beautiful scene or a great composition than the harshness and high contrast of direct mid-day sun. While you may sometimes get reasonable light when clouds are diffusing the mid-day sun, the warmer and softer light around sunrise and sunset will transform your photos.



“Shoot when the light is good”

Take time to observe a scene and consider what you find compelling about it before you start shooting. What is the subject of your photo and how can you best show it? What are the visual elements you should include? Look around the edge of the frame. Are there distracting elements that you can remove by reframing? Do you want the entire photo in focus or just your subject? Be deliberate and thoughtful as you compose your shot.

When composing your landscapes, try to show depth in the scene. That is usually done by having a foreground and a background. Find an interesting object to put in the foreground of your landscape. If you have a horizon in the background, make sure it is level.

Look up the Rule of Thirds and learn the concept of leading lines then consider them in your compositions. They can apply to a grand landscape or an intimate portrait of a sparrow on a branch so use them when appropriate to compose your photos. These are probably the two most common rules of composition and are a good place to start when you are working to frame an interesting and engaging photo.

For wildlife there are several guidelines that are usually effective. Most importantly, the eye needs to be sharp; have at least one eye visible and in focus unless it's an



“Use foreground to create depth”

intentional artistic decision. It's also important to photograph from the level of the subject whenever possible. Shooting at eye level will almost always create a better connection with the animal and result in a more powerful image. Also, shoot when the subject is facing or traveling toward you rather than away from you. Finally, leave some room in the frame for the subject to move in the direction it's facing. For example, if a bird is flying left to right, leave more room on the right than on the left.

Beyond these fundamental guidelines for composing your photos, spend some time reviewing images by others that you find compelling. Consider what makes them strong and evaluate them within the context of the guidelines above. Try different apertures, shutter speeds and perspectives, then evaluate the results. Learn what you like and don't like so you can be more intentional as you compose your photos in the field.

As you progress in nature photography, you'll discover there is no substitute for patience and practice. Nature moves at its own pace with no consideration for our desires as photographers. When the clouds obscure the sunset, the owl in the tree is behind some leaves, or the wind keeps blowing the spider's web, we must learn to be patient or maybe just try again another day. When the diving osprey eludes our autofocus or we clip the wings of the eagles fighting over a salmon carcass, we are reminded that there is no substitute for practice and that there is an even better photo out there than the one we captured today.

Finally, and most importantly, be an ethical nature photographer. Our human footprint is growing and our climate is changing. Our forests, our waters and our wildlife are all under stress. As nature photographers we can have a positive impact by being conscientious in the field and by showing people the beauty and fragility of our world. Whether we're photographing wildflowers in our local park or traveling to remote and pristine areas, let's do our part to preserve the natural world we photograph.

Histograms: More than Meets the Eye

by Josée Ménard

Last month I showed how histograms are structured. Now, we will look at the information they contain and how they can assist us to achieve in-camera goals while on-site, or during post-production adjustments. Learning to recognize what data the peaks and valleys of the histogram contain allows you to know far more about how the camera settings recorded the scene.

You may have heard that even though raw mode is selected, you still see a jpeg histogram. So, just remember that the colour peak seen is in 8-bits in jpeg whereas it will saturate at 14-bits in raw. Therefore, more dynamic range is available to work with. More bits, less compression, more room to play and push. As practice will make perfect, experience at reading a jpeg histogram will allow you to take advantage of how much more room there is in raw mode. Just tread with care so as not to clip the highlights.

While we are on the topic, let's cover the ETTR technique (exposure to the right). Guessing correctly, it means pushing the exposure to the maximum possible without causing clipping in the highlights. As a result, the mid-tones, peaks and valleys will also shift to the right. The result is that in post-processing the image is darkened and as such, shadows have more details, colours are richer, and the dynamic range is increased.

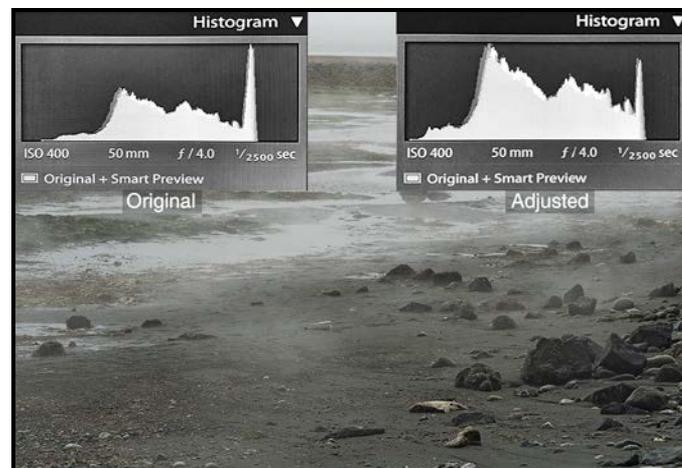


“Seaside Wheats”

In “Seaside Wheats”, I played with fire safely and used ETTR. While on-site, give it a go. Increase EV compensation selectively until you reach the maximum desired on the histogram. Or, in manual mode, change the desired values to increase exposure.

In post-production, darken the image as desired, adjust exposure, increase contrast and vibrance, decrease noise, and sharpen as needed. Finish up, take a break and revisit the image from a distance. Continue to practice as this is a difficult skill to master. Also, continue to learn how much your camera allows you to push the exposure before clipping. Last, but not least, practice with different exposures and see how they affect the results. Reaching your composition and mood effects goals will become easier and easier. Using ETTR will become easier. Understanding what the histogram is talking about is the key.

Histograms reveal how the scene was captured by the camera despite what we see or desire. They also reveal much detail about the scene, colour and its lighting. A broader tonal range distributes itself across the axis whereas a predominant subject in a lighter or darker tone will display peaks in their respective zones. As expected, on sunny days, expect there will be more edges and less mid-tones. Lots of highlight peaks? Reduce exposure. Do you have a polarizer on? Light and airy feel? More peaks to the right. More moody? More peaks to the left. On cloudy days expect a more even distribution.



“Moonscape”

“Moonscape” was captured on an eerie day. With the clouds so low the histogram peaks were not so far to the left. It set the mood perfectly. In post-production I selected the image with more mid-tones to build on and to enhance texture via stronger contrasts. It paid off. At a quick glance you may not realize this is the seaside.

There is so much more to learn about histograms. May this series give you a good start.

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