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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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Newsletter #52 - November 2016

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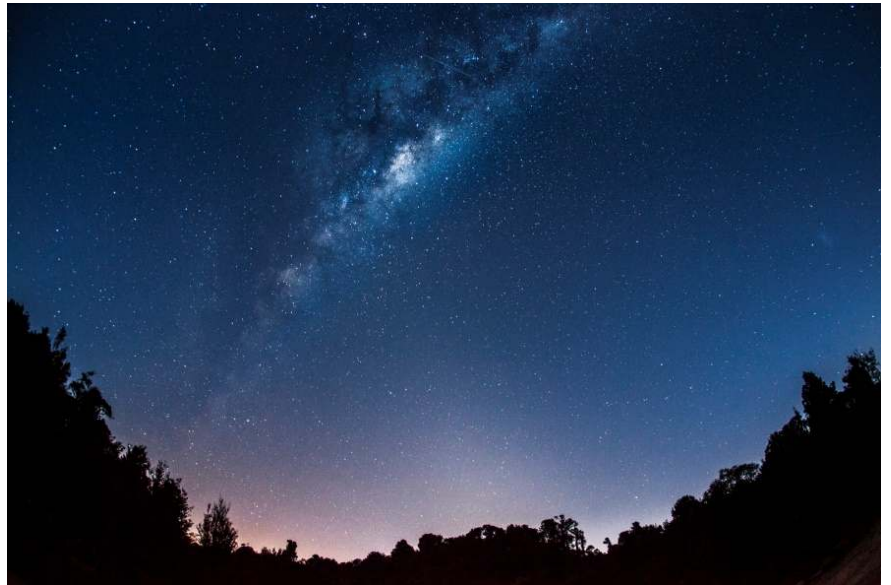
This newsletter goes out to many photographers in New Zealand and overseas - and to anybody who asks to go onto the mailing list. If you know anybody who would like to be on the mailing list, please get them to email me. It's free and they can unsubscribe at any time, of course.



1. GET QUALITY FEEDBACK ON YOUR PHOTOS

Want to be a better photographer? One of the best things you can do is to get good feedback on your photos. Not just any feedback, but quality feedback.

78 "Likes" on Facebook [or even 1,078 "Likes"], won't tell you much about your photo, other than that at least 78 [or 1,078] people have seen it and they either like it, or at least are being nice about it, maybe so you'll be nice about their photos in return. Being nice is a good thing to do, we should all do more of it, but just "nice" by itself won't help your photography get better. Encouragement is good, vital even, and Facebook is good at that, but constructive criticism is needed too.



Without feedback, it's easy to feel somewhat lost, not quite sure how your photos measure up, or what directions you should be heading in or how you could be doing better.

Feedback can come from many places. It can be formal feedback from a teacher at a workshop, photo course, or as part of mentoring. It can be from other members of your camera club or the judging panel at a competition you enter. Or friends or family. It can also be how well you do [or don't do] in any photo competitions you enter, or whether your photos get accepted for magazines or calendars or wherever else you have offered them.



Overall, try to get feedback that is a good mix of encouragement and "could be better". If all you get is Facebook "Likes" or "Nice photos!", then your photography won't be getting better as fast as it could. And if most or all of what you get is negative criticism then that never works well either – you'll quite likely just become discouraged and lose interest. What you need is "the right mix", what I call constructive criticism. Some "That's nice, well done!" and some "Next time why don't you try". But how do you get the right mix? There's no simple "one size fits all" answer, but some important points are:

- Ask for feedback from people whose opinions and knowledge you respect.
- We all see things differently and have different opinions, so get feedback from a variety of people, including non-photographers – good artists can give excellent feedback even if they have never taken a single photo.

- Adjust your input from various sources until you're getting what you feel is a good mix of positive and critical feedback. Only you will know the right mix for you.

If you find that some people or photography teachers or groups [e.g. camera clubs] are getting you down – that they give you too much negative feedback and not enough constructive or positive feedback, then go elsewhere.

If you live within driving distance of Tauranga, consider coming to one of the Tuesday "Photos & Coffee" evenings I run on the first Tuesday of every month except January. Keen photographers come from as far away as Rotorua and Cambridge to these evenings. You'd find them [1] friendly [2] fun [3] you will get good feedback on any photos you bring along.



One final point: don't forget that the best feedback will often come from YOU. These are your photos, it's your journey, so it's in your own best interest to be as constructively critical of your own photos as possible. I do it all the time with my own photos, and have done for as long as I remember. I'm continually asking myself "What could be better? And how can I achieve it?" Big things, little things, anything, everything. Better, better, better. But don't beat yourself over the head about it – enjoy your photography, enjoy the journey, but keep asking yourself and others "How can I do it better?" And enjoy all the compliments too, of course. It's meant to be fun, remember.

2. FROM KIM'S FIELD DIARIES – SHARK #5

Thursday 8 September. Day #20 in Tonga. Still 2 weeks to go.

- 7.30 up. Breakfast: Julia's fresh scones plus papaya, bananas & pineapple, all from the local market. Love that Tongan fruit. Especially when there is a mug of freshly-brewed Royal Tongan Coffee sitting next to it.
- John pulled the anchor up and yacht "Melinda" was on the move by 8.30.
- Out to sea west of Hunga. Calm, glassy, blue sky, sunny. Underwater visibility as good as it gets – well over 100ft [above water I think in metric, underwater I'm in feet – works better for my photography]
- Darryl and I swam with a mother and baby humpback whale.
- Over deep water now. One oceanic shark, medium-sized, then two more, swimming somewhat erratically – always a worry – until I swim straight towards them [that's what photographers do – get close – isn't it?]. Which kind? Silky shark probably. Silky sharks, also called grey whalers, are common the world over in warm seas. Rather beautiful in a very "predator of the open ocean" sort of way.

- Joined up with Patti and Grant on “Phoenix” for a few hours. Open ocean, deep, blue, warm, humpback whales courting below us, also dolphins far under us - plus a manta ray.

- Then we saw “The Shark”. Big [big enough], grey, blunter nose than the silky sharks, swimming easily.

Patti grabbed me and hung on tightly, yelling for Grant to bring the boat over.

- Back to “Melinda”. Bit of a swell so swam back rather than pulling up alongside.
- A shadow under “Melinda” materialised into a Blue Shark, heading straight for me. Closer. Closer. Effortless. Grace. Never slowed until it bumped into the dome port of my underwater camera.
- Shark #5 was a medium-sized Blue Shark. Growing to three metres, these sleek open ocean predators are distributed widely from the tropics to cold temperate seas [I’ve swum with them in the Bay of Plenty].
- Like other sharks, blue sharks are usually in cruise mode, swimming steadily at just a few kilometres per hour. And like other predatory sharks, they are capable of short bursts of high speed. Cruising mode is good [for people close to the shark - like me]. High speed is not. This one stayed in cruising mode.
- It turned away, swam around me, and drifted gracefully off into the deep blue forever.



Footnotes:

- The third of three consecutive wonderful days.
- Much later: shower, followed by a Julia meal of nut roast with eggplant, zucchini, roast potato, beans and – later – papaya crumble.
- Aaaaah! [big smile]

3. BirdsAPlenty PHOTO COMPETITION

I was so impressed with the winning photo in this competition that I asked the photographer – Tauranga's Jeanette Nee – to tell us about it. In Jeanette's own words:

"Taken on Christmas day at a Park called Lynn Reserve, Glenfield Auckland. Canon Mark IV 1D with the awesome 400 2.8 IS Mark II lens. Hand held I might add. I had Christmas dinner with our daughter and family at Lynn Road. Then I was free to explore the two beautiful reserves across from their home.

The day was cloudy and the light was good. I had three to four hours of freedom with nature. Wunderbar—a favourite time and space. There were few people about in the reserve - good, good, no attention paid to the gal in full veil camo and the big lens over her shoulder.

[I sometimes wear a little leather cushion to support the lens on my shoulder when moving quietly and softly around].



You are quiet, you are in your realm, you are in tune with your environment. I was focused with practicing on rosellas in flight, sparrows, mynas and eventually the beautiful NZ tui. Previously I had researched the area and was impressed with the number of tui about the flax and native flowering plants. The males being the more dominant bird and more aggressive in their territory.

Just after 2:15pm the bird calls, flying patterns and sightings increased and I had a feeling something good was about to happen. It did. Tuis zapped straight at me diving and darting around flax. Almost like putting on a special aerial display for the excited lady photographer who with practice, perseverance and patience had all the right ingredients for a winning shot.

Yes I scored a heck of a lot of misses but when day was closing I knew I had some pretty good stuff on the memory stick. That is when you want to have a little peep – chimping - but resisted the temptation and headed back to Janelle and Mels.

The next day we returned home to Tauranga. I so put off the moment to download the images - I guess I was excited and wanted to savour the moment.

And I did."

See the other winning entries at: <https://goo.gl/DvqDk1>

Also: <https://www.facebook.com/BirdsAplentyPhotoCompetition/>

4. PAPAMOA PHOTO EXHIBITION – LEIGH NICHOLAS – 17-20 November



Papamoa fine art photographer Leigh Nicholas is again exhibiting a selection of her flower and sea photographs, as part of the Bay of Plenty Garden & Art Festival 2016. Leigh exhibited both her art and her garden at the previous festival two years ago, and was delighted at the number of people who liked her framed photos enough to reach for their credit cards. Although her exhibition is officially part of the Garden & Art Festival [Stop #55], Leigh warmly welcomes all photographers [plus any family or friends] to her exhibition.



An invite to view Leigh Nicholas Fine Art Photography

Bay of Plenty Garden & Art Festival 2016

Where: 468 Papamoa Beach Road, Papamoa

When: Thursday 17th November till Sunday 20th November 2016

Hours: 9.30-5pm Thursday, Friday & Saturday

9.30 -3pm Sunday

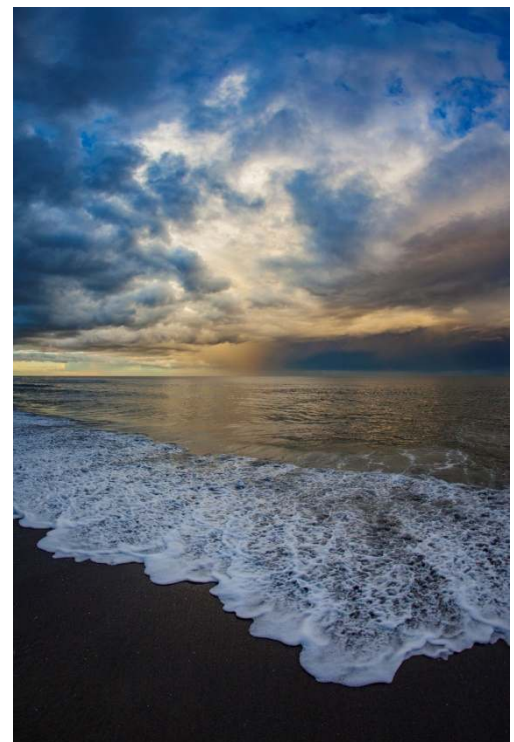
Phone for enquires: 07 5720630

<http://www.gardenandartfest.co.nz/gardentrail>

5. "GOOD PHOTOS, GREAT PHOTOS – ANYWHERE, ANYTIME"

One day workshop – Sunday 6 November

Will that overseas trip to Africa or Europe – or anywhere – make you a better photographer? Probably not. You'll take more photos than usual, but will they do the trip [the expense, the time, the effort, the early starts] justice? Those big trips are precious, so you owe it to yourself to bring back the best photos you can. The best approach is to become the best photographer you can BEFORE you leave on your big trip. A new camera or lens may or may not make much difference either, but a collection of new skills definitely will. And that means getting to know your camera better, the principles of photography better, and – most important of all – developing your vision – being able to "see" photos everywhere. There is no simple "secret setting" for this but it can be learned. That's what this workshop is about – "seeing" photos wherever you are. "Finding" photos wherever you are, whatever the light.



This workshop will explore the idea that you can find and take [or create] good photos wherever you are. Right where you are at the moment! Right here, right now will do just fine. Or within walking distance or 30 minutes' drive at the most. Or anywhere else. We will dispel the myth that "I would get great photos if only I could go to Paris or Africa or Antarctica or somewhere interesting". We explore the idea of "seeing photo possibilities", seeing and getting good [and sometimes great] photos wherever you are. LOTS of techniques, approaches, tips, ideas, inspiration, lists of "get yourself going" ideas for you to try.

Full course fee [which includes the workshop, follow-up, hand-outs, and Vivienne's yummy catering] only **\$295** [or **\$245** Early Bird – if booked by **30 October**]. Fulltime students with ID **\$150**.



6. "BLACK & WHITE MAGIC" workshop – Saturday 19 November

We're running this workshop again for those of you who were interested in the June workshop but were unable to come at that time. Several have already booked.

As photographers, most of us are looking for ways to make our photos stand out from the crowd. Black and white photography is one of the very best ways of doing exactly that.

There's something special about black and white photography. Good black and white photos have a classic, timeless quality. They often seem more "artistic" than colour photos. Some black and whites have an almost surreal or dreamy quality about them. And they often somehow look cleaner than colour images – although, paradoxically, black and white can do "gritty" even better than colour.

Most of the equipment and some of the techniques needed for good black and whites are the same as for colour, but there are important differences. Two of the biggies are [1] learning which subjects and approaches work well in black and white and [2] post-processing – the Photoshop/Lightroom bit. So we

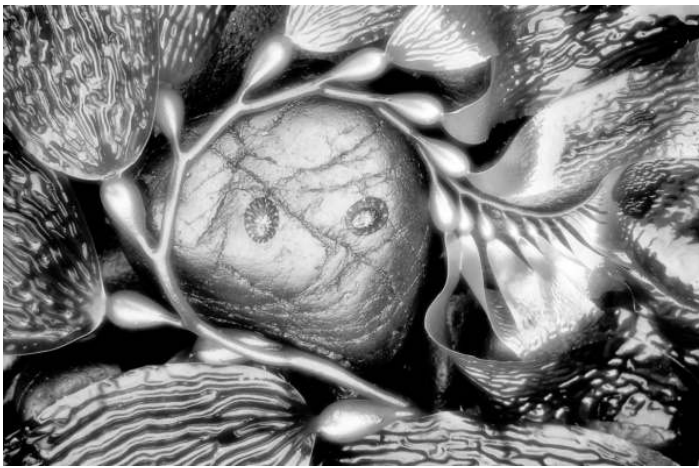


will look at both of these in detail. We'll also look at toned black and whites, monochrome photography, and infrared black and white photography.

This workshop will be more “hands on” than usual. After lunch we'll start the afternoon at a local park or garden taking photos and then we'll process our new photos into black and white. If you want, you sit in front of my laptop and process some of your images yourself – with advise from me as needed. It should be a rewarding and fun day. Join me?

Saturday 19 November 9.00am – 5.00pm plus assignment and follow-up evening 2-3 weeks later for assignment evaluation [at a time that suits everyone]. The follow-up can be by email. Cost: Full course fee [which includes tuition, hand-outs, Vivienne's yummy catering, assignment and follow-up] **\$295** - or **\$245** for Early Birds if you register by 9 November. Fulltime students with ID **\$150**.





7. PHOTO FIELD TRIP + CRITIQUE DAYS

Over the last two months I've run **"Field Trip + Critique" days** in Whangarei, Dargaville and Whakatane. Feedback from all three has been great, so I'll be running more next year. I'll run some here in Tauranga, but if you're reading this from somewhere else and they sound a good idea, then what about getting your Camera Club or even just a group of friends to host one in your town – anywhere in the North Island. They are very cost effective. My charge for the day is \$600, so if you can get 6-10 photographers together, then the cost is somewhere between \$60-100 per photographer. 6-8 seems to be the ideal number for individual feedback. If there's a lot of driving to get to your town, there may be an additional fee to cover diesel for the van, but I'll keep it very reasonable.

The day's programme is:

- 9.00-12.00 noon – I accompany you for three hours of photography to somewhere local as recommended by you. You take a variety of photographs [ideally 20 – 100] and chat to me as much as you wish. I'm there for you.
- 12.00 – 1.00pm. Lunch. Bring your own, or share a potluck, or head off to a café.
- 1.00 – 5.00pm – we meet at a hall or room where I set up my laptop, projector and card reader. I upload the photos you've taken and critique them constructively, taking some into Photoshop/Lightroom to show you how I would process them. Photographers report that they find the afternoon session very valuable. The afternoon goes quickly. You'll find my critiques and comments both friendly and hopefully useful.

If your club or group might be interested in hosting a “Field Trip + Critique” day – or one of my presentations, please get in touch.

8. PROGRAM FOR 2016 - 2017

NOVEMBER 2016

- Tuesday 1 November. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 6 November. “Good Photos, Great Photos – Anytime, Anywhere” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.
- **Saturday 19 November. “Black & White Magic” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

DECEMBER 2016

- Tuesday 6 December. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Private tuition, mentoring, critiquing, advice & Photoshopping. All available as normal.

JANUARY 2017

- It’s your holiday time, so there’s no formal programme. However, private tuition, mentoring, critiquing, advice & Photoshopping are all available as normal.
- The first newsletter of the year from me [due out January] will detail the 2017 programme.
- Enjoy your holidays.

FEBRUARY 2017

- Tuesday 7 February. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- First workshop of 2017 – date TBA

9. QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“To me, photography is an art of observation. It’s about finding something interesting in an ordinary place... I’ve found it has little to do with the things you see and everything to do with the way you see them.”

Elliott Erwitt

10. MENTORING

“Mentoring” is a bit hard to define exactly, but it’s **the ongoing process of inspiring, advising, guiding, teaching, critiquing** ... whatever is needed for the ongoing development of a photographer. It’s one-on-one, so it’s different for each person, as every photographer’s needs are different. One month it may be about equipment or Photoshop, next month it may be “I just want my photos to have more ‘Wow’ in them”, the following month it may be about exhibitions or “Should I go pro?”



Photos of Kim by Malcolm Macfarlane & Tony Whitehead

Being mentored is possibly the fastest and most rewarding way of progressing rapidly. It's at your pace and at your level. I try hard to be as supportive and positive as possible. I've designed it to be both affordable and flexible, so I'm offering "Mentoring by Kim" as a monthly subscription - you can try it and see if it's what you want. If it is, we continue, fine-tuning as needed. If not, then you pull out at the end of the first month. Every month you have a one-on-one meeting with me, discussing whatever you want. My 30+ years' experience as a professional photographer & writer is there, ready to help and [hopefully] inspire you. Your questions are answered, options are discussed, photography techniques or approaches are taught, your photos critiqued, new ideas suggested. This is either in person or by phone.

Who is mentoring for? Anybody. At present I'm mentoring both established professional photographers and amateurs.

I'm offering three levels of "Mentoring by Kim":

1. Everything listed above, with 90 minutes "one-on-one" every month. \$115/month.
2. Everything listed above, with 3 hours "one-on-one" every month. \$165/ month.
3. Everything listed above, with 4 hours "one-on-one" every month. \$200/ month.

Your mentor [me, Kim]:

- Over 30 years as a professional photographer
- Five First Prizes in the BBC "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" competition, the Olympics of nature photography worldwide.
- 18 books published – written and photographed by me. 12 are currently "in print".
- Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.

11. KIM'S PHOTOS & COFFEE EVENINGS

We meet on the first Tuesday of each month [every month of the year except January], chat informally about photography, and view some of the recent photos we've taken. It's **free [no charge]**, **supper is served**, and there's no obligation of any kind. **Please email me if you'd like to come** [it's not a big room so I need to keep an eye on numbers]. These evenings are always fun and friendly - there's usually many smiles and laughs. It's a great way of meeting up with like-minded people, **being inspired by the creativity of our group of photographers, and coming away with news ideas and tips**. There's a wide range of interests and abilities – so for those of you who have not been before, you're very unlikely to feel out of your depth. There's also a small "library" of photo magazines you are welcome to borrow from. Bring photos if you wish, but there's no obligation to bring any. Some people do, some don't.

The next one will be on Tuesday 1 November starting 7.00pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.

12. PRIVATE TUITION

Yes, like you I'm usually busy doing "other stuff" too, but I can nearly always fit private tuition in, and am very happy to do so [I enjoy teaching and mentoring ☺]. So – if you'd like some tuition, give me a yell. First 2 hours: \$80 per hour, after that \$70 per hour [forever!]

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