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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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Newsletter #47 - June 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.



Figure approaching on walkway in steam from geothermal activity, Rotorua

1. TELEPHOTO PHOTOGRAPHY



Last month we looked at wide angle photography, so this month let's look at the other end of the focal length range - telephoto photography. This is what most serious wildlife and sports photographers spend much of their time doing, but it's also useful for many other kinds of photography. It both allows you to get up close to subjects you could not easily or safely get close to: wild animals, sports people in action, waves [with or without surfers], the rising or setting sun & moon, and as discussed in the last newsletter, even landscapes. The way telephoto lenses compress distant landscapes makes them invaluable in the landscape photographer's backpack. Telephoto lenses not only allow us to get close to distant subjects [or to at least magnify them in the case of sun and moon] but are also great at isolating subjects – separating them from the clutter of their background.



The rules of telephoto photography are relatively straightforward. Generally you only have to worry about your subject, leaving you free to get the subject [animal, person, wave, sun/moon] composed right, sharp and in as good light as possible. People or animals up against the sky do not have a background [unless you want to call the sky a background], but generally there is a background and your job is usually to make it as un-noticeable as possible. Photos like the accompanying Rena salvage photo are an exception – here there are three subjects, and ideally all three should be sharp: the Rena, the salvage barge behind it, and – only just visible above the water – Astrolabe Reef itself.

So that's pretty much it: find a good subject, preferably in good light, isolate it in your viewfinder with your telephoto lens, compose, focus, check exposure, check the background for distractions, wait for the right moment, and press the shutter.

2. PHOTOSHOP TIP - DON'T OVERDO IT

Here's a Photoshop/Lightroom technique I use often. If I want to increase Saturation or Vibrance or Clarity or Dehaze – or one of quite a few other sliders – I will pull the slider much further in the desired direction than I think I'll want. If it's say Saturation [which I usually keep below +10 or +20 – if I use it at all], pulling the slider way up [e.g. to +50 or higher] will show me not only an exaggerated version of the desired effect, but also what will go wrong if I use the slider too strongly. With Saturation this will typically be some particular colours going way out of whack [looking terrible]. Now knowing what specifically to look out for, I pull the slider back to about where I want, keeping a careful eye on the thing that will go most wrong if I overuse that slider. So it's a safety check. It helps me keep my adjustments within safe bounds. Otherwise there's the danger of later on finding I'd pushed a particular slider [or combination of sliders] too far and there's an undesirable result I hadn't noticed before, but is glaringly obvious now.

3. FROM KIM'S FIELD DIARIES – R.I.P. MANY CAMERAS

For me, cameras are there to do a job – to get photos. For much of my career, their job has often been to get photos in inhospitable situations – underwater or in storms or

with the air full of wind-blown sand or salt spray, or at freezing temperatures in Antarctica, or in the rain or on shorelines where there was often the chance of an unexpected wave drenching me and the camera. Many of the resulting photos are ones I'm proud of, and they have done well in photo competitions &/or have been used in many places, but my cameras have had a hard life. Here's a partial list of casualties over the years:

- A Nikonos underwater camera wrecked [flooded – it never went properly again] by an octopus off the Wellington coastline. The good news: I photographed the incident with another camera and the story and photos of "Attacked by an Octopus" were printed in School Journals and in children's magazines in Canada and Holland. My insurance man loved the story too.
- Two more Nikonos underwater cameras, plus expensive underwater lenses and other underwater photo equipment, were washed off Middle Sister Island [just a rock really, hardly an island] north of main Chatham Island by the biggest storm in over 10 years.
- Yet another Nikonos and a very expensive Nikonos 15mm wide angle lens filled up with seawater 20 metres under the surface at Tuhua/Mayor Island at the start of an assignment for New Zealand Geographic. A backup Nikonos and 20mm lenses filled in for the rest of the expedition, and did so admirably.
- My above-water camera at the time [a Pentax Spotmatic] and I were surprised by a bigger-than-usual wave on the steep rocky western shoreline of Adams Island, southernmost of the subantarctic Auckland Islands. I grabbed hold of the holdfast [the stem or trunk] of the last bull kelp I passed on the way down the cliff and held on VERY tightly as the powerful whitewater headed back to sea. Drenched and shaken I dragged myself back up the cliff, making a mental note that in future I should be more careful on the rocky shorelines of remote islands. That camera never went again.
- Not surprisingly, Antarctica is hard on cameras too. During one assignment there I had 6 cameras with me during the coldest part of the year [August-September]. During this time I was photographing outside in temperatures often around minus 30°C and occasionally down to minus 50°C. I'd gone down on "Winfly" – a series of flights by ski-equipped Hercules aircraft between Christchurch and Antarctica in August. After Winfly there's no more flights for two months. During that time [1] I got many great photos and [2] my main four cameras all gave up. The only two still going by the time flights resumed were two second-hand backup cameras I had along "just in case".
- Using a heavy telephoto lens for years on my Canon 5D eventually damaged the lens mount so much that – unknown to me – lenses occasionally didn't attach securely. One day at sea with my friend Graeme Butler on Gemini Galaxsea I was up at the bow leaning over the side for yet more photos when the lens detached and went for a swim. We were over deep water so I never saw it again.
- Plus yet more flooded cameras plus some stolen lenses [from my van in an Auckland carpark] - and there's probably a few more incidents I've forgotten about.

My grateful thanks to all the cameras & lenses listed above for their sterling service. R.I.P.

4. "BLACK & WHITE MAGIC" workshop – Sunday 26 June

“To see in color is a delight for the eye but to see in black and white is a delight for the soul.”
Andri Cauldwell

“When you photograph people in color, you photograph their clothes. But when you photograph people in black and white, you photograph their souls!”
Ted Grant



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 black and white can do "gritty" even better than colour e.g. photos of victims of war or famine or other misfortune.

“So what's the big deal? Can't I just select the black and white mode in my camera? Or just desaturate all the colour in Photoshop or Lightroom” Well, yes, of course you can, but you won't get **good** black and white photos that way, let alone **great** photos. And this workshop is all about getting great black and white photos.

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.

My recommendation is that you do NOT use the black and white setting in your camera, but rather capture colour images and then convert





these to black and white in post-processing. This can either be in Photoshop/Lightroom, or in standalone programs [or their Photoshop/Lightroom plugins]. We'll look at both. The good news [among lots of other good news] is that one of the very best programs is not only clever and easy to use, but also totally free. So there doesn't have to be any upfront financial outlay to get you going in black and white. Just some learning and some time getting used to the new ideas and new techniques. You will end the workshop confident and with a level of competency in black and white that you'll be pleased with.

We'll cover not just pure black and white photography but also toned black and whites - as well as monochrome photography. And we'll look briefly at infrared black and white photography too.



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.

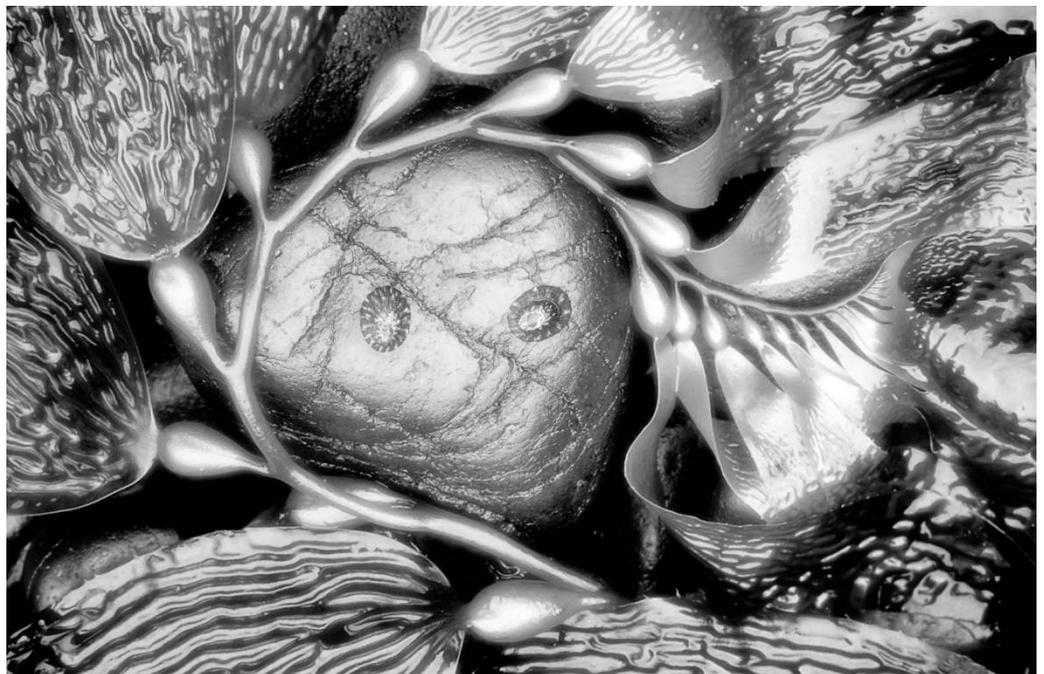
The plan for the day is that we spend more time “hands on” than other workshops. After lunch we’ll start the afternoon at a local park taking photos and then head back to the workshop studio where we will process our new photos into black and white. It should be a rewarding and fun day. Join me?

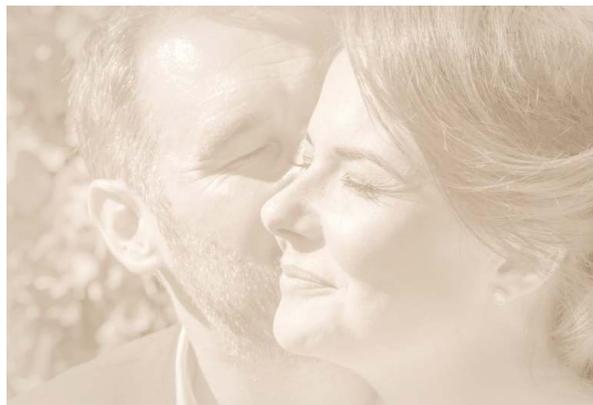
Sunday 26 June

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 before 20 June. I’ve extended the Early Bird deadline because this newsletter is out later than I’d hoped [they take a long time to put together]. Fulltime students with ID **\$150**.





5. "MACRO & CLOSE-UP PHOTOGRAPHY" workshop – Saturday 16 July

Macro and close-up photography – with or without a macro lens.

A whole new world opens for you when you & your camera get up close and personal with the world we live in. I've been exploring both documentary ["real photos"] and creative [artistic/impressionist] close-up photography for some time now. So in July I'll run my first ever Macro and Close-up photography workshop. The good news is that you don't need to own a special "macro lens". For most readers, you probably already have lenses that can get close enough to enter the wonderful and exciting world of close up. More details in the next newsletter, but if you're interested, note the day on your calendar.

6. PROGRAM FOR 2016

JUNE

- **Sunday 26 June. "Black & White Photography" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

JULY

- Tuesday 5 July. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 16 July. "Macro & Close Up – with or without a macro lens" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.
- Thursday 21 July 7.00pm. "In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition". Details below

AUGUST

- Tuesday 2 August. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 14 August. "Photo Impressionism" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.
- Thursday 18 August. 7.00pm. "In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition". Details below

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 6 September. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 10 September. "Landscape Photography" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.
- Thursday 15 September. 7.00pm. "In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition". Details below

OCTOBER

- Tuesday 4 October. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday-Sunday 8-9 October. "Great Photography Weekend" workshop.** Weekend plus follow-up.
- Thursday 20 October. 7.00pm. "In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition". Details below.

NOVEMBER

- 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.

- Thursday 17 November. 7.00pm. “In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition”. Details below

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 6 December. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

7. QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Photography is the only language that can be understood anywhere in the world”

Bruno Barbey

8. NZ GEOGRAPHIC PHOTO COMPETITION

Got some photos you’re rather proud of? Entries are now open for the annual New Zealand Geographic Photographer of the Year competition. This is New Zealand’s largest and most prestigious photography competition. And the richest. There’s \$5,000 in real hard cash up for grabs, as well as an expedition voyage and some other great prizes. Entries close 13th July. There’s a new category too – Aerial [from drones, helicopters or planes].

<https://www.nzgeo.com/photography/photocomp/>

9. MENTORING

Being mentored is possibly the fastest and most rewarding way of progressing rapidly. It’s at your pace and at your level. 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 or Skype. More details in the last newsletter and the next one.



Photos of Kim by Malcolm Macfarlane & Tony Whitehead

10. IN-DEPTH PHOTO EVALUATION & TUITION EVENINGS

A good and cost-effective way of moving your photography ahead rapidly. Think of these evenings as a cross between private tuition and workshops, with lots of targeted feedback based entirely on **YOUR photos**. You bring along some photos you’d like evaluated and I

critique them, both plusses and minuses, in considerable depth. Not just “how can we improve this photo in Photoshop or Lightroom?”, but what can you learn about photographing a similar subject next time: maybe changing the timing, lens selection, depth of field, aperture/ISO/shutter speed choice, composition, lighting etc. – anything and everything that helps **you** on **the road towards better and better photos**.

The next In-Depth Evening will be on Thursday 21 July, starting at 7.00pm. Book by email.
Cost: \$55 for the evening.

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 5 July, 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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