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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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Newsletter #92 – March 2021

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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. Beach Photography – like Forrest Gump's chocolates

I find that beach photography is a lot like Forest Gump's box of chocolates: "My mama always said, life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get."

Sure, the beach is always there, and the sea and sky and the dunes, but even just these basic elements combine into endless variations for us to enjoy. And to photograph. Add people, gulls, dogs, plus whatever else is there on the day, and there's usually enough to keep us happy for many hours every time.

I ran a "Beach Magic Photography" workshop a few weeks ago, and all the photos on the first six pages of this newsletter are from that day, plus the day before when I visited for pre-workshop reconnaissance.

So, could we have some beach photo tips please, Kim? Of course. For starters, let's look at which parts of the beach will give you good photos. Up in the sand dunes or along the edge of the dunes there is often good potential for photos. I've spent many happy hours photographing bunny tails, Spinifex, Pingao, marram grass, and other dune plants and have many good photographs from the dunes. It's these dune plants that protect the beach from storm damage so please be careful around them.

My ratings of the three main beach zones for photography:

1. Sand dunes and sand dune edge – **good, sometimes great.**
2. Middle beach – **hopeless**, usually, unless you're photographing what the people are doing. This part of the beach is usually messy: footprints, lost jandals, seaweed that the last storm brought in, flotsam and jetsam, coke cans.... There will be exceptions, but usually, the middle part of the beach [the nice dry bit we all walk on and lie on] won't yield you many good photos.
3. Water's edge – **excellent**. Read on.

2. Beach photography – The water's edge

The water's edge is my happy place. Well, any and every beach is a happy place for me [and for most of us] but once there, my happiest place is usually down at the water's edge. Why? Simply because most of the visual poetry is there. The sand is washed clean by each new wave and the retreating water creates wonderful patterns.

If you want good beach photos, don't expect your feet to stay dry, so wear shoes that don't mind getting wet, or go barefoot. Most of the beach's magic is down at the waters' edge, especially at low or mid-tide when there is a reflective slick left as each wave retreats.





“Foot paddling” is used by gulls around the world to forage for food. This shuffling dance exposes small prey such as worms, crustaceans, or other invertebrates. It is thought that the vibrations may even coax prey from their burrows. So I was pleased to find a “foot paddling” gull going hard at it. For maximum effect I shot into the sunlit reflections, backlighting the gull and highlighting the concentric waves of ripples. Converting to black and white increased the dramatic effect.

3. Beach photography – People

PEOPLE CAN BE GREAT IN BEACH PHOTOS. They add connection and scale and often tell a story. Many people photos will just happen [if you stay alert, and predict where people are going – “Aha – in a minute or so that couple and their dog will walk onto that low tide part of the beach where they will be reflected in the slick – telephoto shot – better get ready for that ...” Or take someone with you that you can direct as a model [for as long as they remain interested]. Some people will happily model for you in return for some photos of them afterward.

HOW CLOSE? There’s no need to be close to people unless they are someone special to you. Twenty metres or more away or even way off in the distance often works well.

Here are some of the photos I found on the workshop day, late in the afternoon. It was probably half an hour before I took the first photo that day. I walked down the beach, looked around, walked onto the causeway to Leisure Island, and looked at the surfers and others happily playing in the sunlit but somewhat scruffy surf. Everyone was enjoying themselves, but no particularly interesting photos were offering. Yet.

Then I noticed a young woman in a long white dress and sunhat. “I’m a tourist,” she told me, “Please can you take some photos of me with my camera?” Sure. No problem. Happy to help. She then continued filming herself high on the rocks and later down at the water’s edge. I had my first subject.





Not everyone wants their photos taken, and that's both understandable and fine, but quite a few people don't mind at all, especially if you introduce yourself and ask if it's OK. Offering to send them the results later is an excellent idea, a goodwill gesture that always seems to be appreciated.

Olly is 16 months old, cute, always smiling, and very much a water baby already. Her mum Lynn and dad Ben were keeping a very careful eye on her. Her older brothers were 100% occupied playing sandcastles. Life looked good. Life was good. The next day I sent the 15 best photos to Lynn [I always carry a pen and paper for the names and email addresses of people I'm promising to send photos to]. Lynn replied that the photos were "absolutely beautiful" and thanked me very much.





The photos of Olly and her family were taken with my 70-200mm lens and all were at ISO 640, f11, and whatever shutter speed Aperture Priority gave me, mostly between 1/1000 and 1/2000 second. There's nothing magical about these settings and in hindsight, ISO 400 or even lower would have worked just as well. An aperture of f11 gave me a good depth of field and the fast shutter speeds, combined with Image Stabilizing [Vibration Reduction] being "On" gave me nice sharp results. All the beach photos on these pages were handheld. My tripod was back in the van in case it was needed. It wasn't.

What **was** needed was sunscreen and a sunhat, not being in a hurry and an open mind about what photographic opportunities might present themselves. At the beach, I always go with a list of ideas floating lazily around in my mind, but, just as importantly, remaining open to whatever may present itself. Beach photography is like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates – you never know what you're going to get.

4. Beach photography – Serendipity

Serendipity [luck, unexpected but good events] is a perfectly valid photographic technique. The more that you carry your camera with you, and the stronger your desire to get some good photos, the more luck or serendipity will find you.

My string of serendipities on those two beach visits included KFC chip-loving seagulls, a "foot paddling" seagull, meeting Olly and her mum Lynn, a water-phobic dog called Gregory, and a gull-commandeered beach access sign.



5. Kim's KFC technique

This might amuse you. I call it my KFC Technique. Driving to the beach the day before my “Beach Magic Photography” workshop to check out the beach and take some photos to show the course participants what I’d seen, I brought a snack pack of KFC. I avoid junk food mostly, but I was hungry and in a bit of a hurry, so I picked up a KFC snack pack. By the time I parked at The Mount it was mostly gone. A lone red-billed gull patrolled the grass in front of the van. Just the one gull. “If I sacrifice one chip – throw it out the window towards the gull, I wonder how many other gulls its appreciative cries will attract?” The answer was 28 red-billed gulls and one black-backed gull.

I threw out a few more chips just to keep them interested. Less than 8 chips now left. Small ones mostly. How best to use them? I noticed that the gulls seemed to know all about humans and cars and chips and were ready to take to the air at the first sign of any action.

What if I opened the window, held out a chip in my left hand, and tried photographing the gulls in mid-air with my right hand. Wide-angle, 24mm in this case, ISO 640, a fast shutter speed 1/2000 second or faster, f11 to get a good depth of field, and manually focussed on the chip being held in my left hand. Motor drive [burst mode].

Trying to stretch out the few chips I had left, I was soon offering the gulls miserly half chips or even quarter chips. This kind of photography is always going to have a high failure rate [some photos were of open sky, with not a gull in sight], but occasionally there might be a good one. I got three good ones, the two on this page and the one on the opening page of the newsletter.

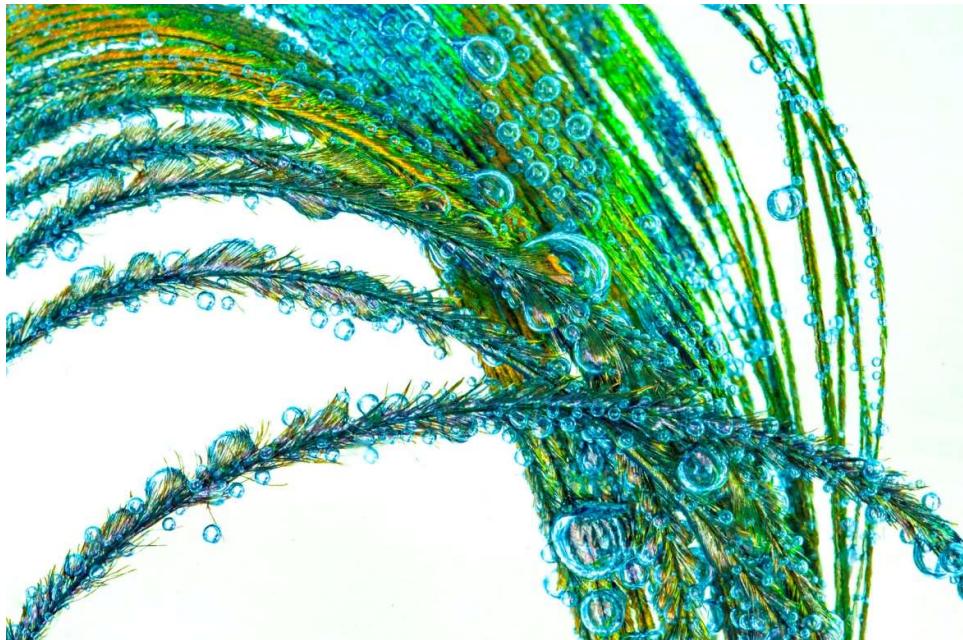
So there you go, wildlife photography at its easiest. No need to get out of your car. Let me know if it works for you as well as it did for me 😊



6. "CLOSE UP MAGIC – WITH OR WITHOUT A MACRO LENS"

Workshop - Sunday 28th March

Intimate Encounters with our amazing world
- finding magic, creating magic.



Many of you will really enjoy this workshop, I think. When I first ran it some years ago I got very enthusiastic comments afterward. One of the photographers, Hazel Ellis, took the techniques she'd learned, found some flowering Cosmos [just like we'd been photographing in Viv's garden here], added a Monarch butterfly caterpillar, and the resulting photo earned her a Highly Commended in the world's largest and most prestigious plant and flower photo competition, the **International Garden Photographer of the Year** - run by Kew Gardens in London. Hazel's photo is here <https://igpoty.com/competition-entries/cewb-12341274/> Hazel told me: "If it wasn't for that workshop I would never have been crawling around inside the plants in my garden trying out all the things I learned with you".

A whole new world opens up for you when you & your camera get up close and personal with the world we live in. I've been exploring both documentary ["real"] and creative [artistic/impressionist] close-up photography for some time now. On March 28 I'll run another "Close Up Photography" workshop. The good news – as well as the fact that it's rewarding and fun - is that you don't need to own a special "macro lens". For most readers, you already have lenses that can get close enough to enter the wonderful and exciting world of close up.

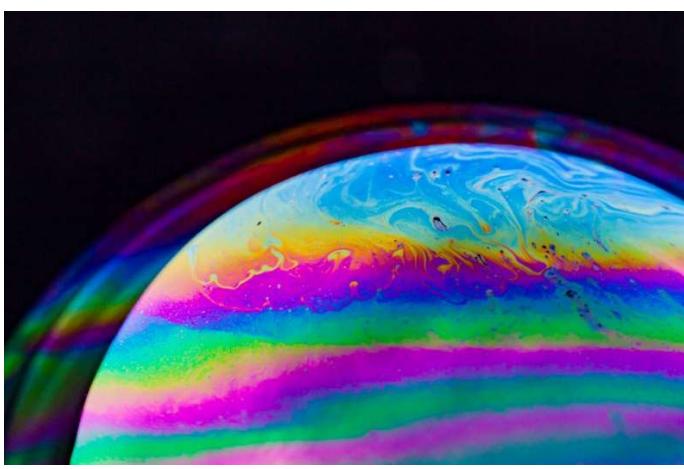
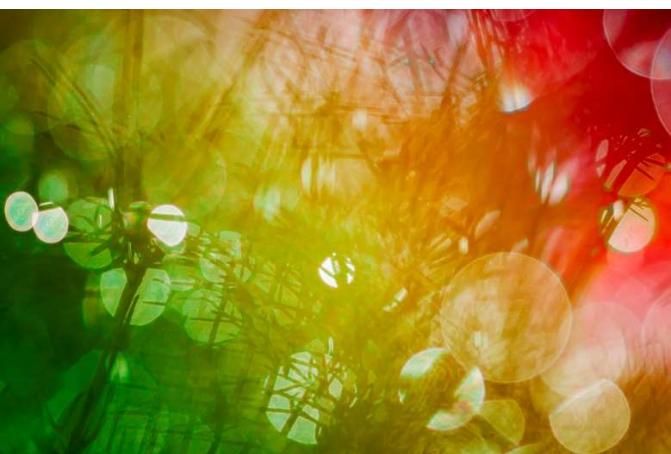
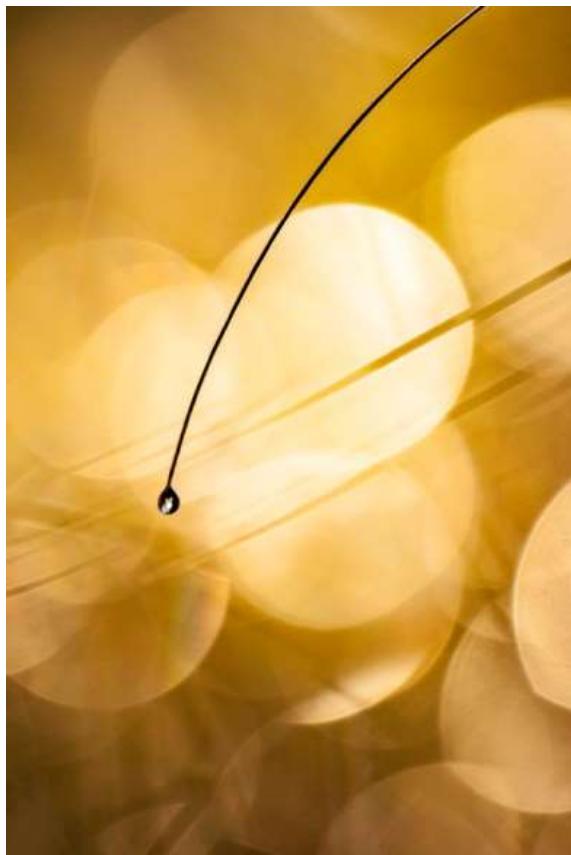
The workshop will, first of all, introduce you to the principles of close-up photography – and to the technical stuff. Then we'll get on to finding magic and creating magic. **All of the accompanying photos were taken here on our property [where Anne and Gareth and Viv and I live], all within 20 metres of where you will be sitting – and photographing - in the workshop studio.** I will take you, step by step, through how I got these photos [and more] - and then in the afternoon, it will be hands-on. Cameras in hand, we will find magic and we will create magic. You will go home inspired and with your head buzzing with ideas and techniques. It should be a lot of fun.

"What level is this workshop for?" Any level. All levels.

Sunday 28th March, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm 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, yummy catering, assignment, and follow-up] **\$295** - or **\$245** for Early Birds if you register by 20th March. Full-time students with ID **\$145**.





7. "SLOW, SMOOTH & WONDERFUL – LONG EXPOSURES" workshop

Saturday 17th April

Preliminary notice – more details in the next newsletter

Magical. Artistic. Ethereal. Silky. Otherworldly. Clever. Wow! Long Exposure Photography creates magic out of what is often “nothing much”, photographically speaking. It turns scruffy, choppy seas or cloudy skies into satisfying art. It can do the same with rivers, waterfalls, roads, night skies, moving cars at night, even moving wildlife. The results can be so good it almost feels like cheating.

I've been researching, developing, and using these techniques for decades and have recently come back to explore them further. Deliberate blurs easily qualify for the “jolly good fun” category. I love the results. I think many of you will too.



8. Kim's 2021 Programme

FEBRUARY

- Tuesday 2nd February – the first “Photos & Coffee” meeting of the year. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Saturday 13th February “Photo Walk” at McLaren Falls Park 9.00 am to 12.00 midday. Free.
- **Saturday 27th February. “Beach Magic Photography” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

MARCH

- Tuesday 2nd March. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 28th March. “Close Up Magic” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

APRIL

- Tuesday 6th April. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 17th April. “Slow, Smooth & Wonderful – Long Exposures” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

MAY

- Tuesday 4th May. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 23rd May. “Good photos, Great Photos – Anytime, Anywhere” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

JUNE

- Tuesday 1st June. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 12th June. “Photo Essentials” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

JULY

- Tuesday 6th July. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 11th July. “Photo Impressionism & Photo Art” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

AUGUST

- Tuesday 3rd August. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 7th August. “Soul in your photos” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 7th September. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 12th September. “Exciting New Techniques” photo workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

OCTOBER

- **Saturday 2nd October. “Great people photos” workshop.** Portraits, kids, families, candid, travel, events, weddings. Full day plus follow-up. Full day plus follow-up.
- Tuesday 5th October. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

NOVEMBER

- Tuesday 2nd November. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 7th November. “Black and White Magic Photography” workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 7th December. “Photos & Coffee” informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

One day workshops 9.00 am – 5.00 pm

COST: Course fees include tuition, detailed hand-outs, yummy catering, plus [for most workshops] an assignment and follow-up evening.

- **One-day workshops:** \$295 – or \$245 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before the workshop. Full-time students with ID \$145.

9. Kim's Photos & Coffee Evenings

We meet on the first Tuesday of each month], chat 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 new ideas and tips**. There's a wide range of interests and abilities – so you're very unlikely to feel out of your depth. Bring photos if you wish, but there's no obligation to. Some people do, some don't. The next one is on Tuesday 6th April, starting at 7.00 pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.

10. Private tuition

Yes, like you I'm usually busy doing "other stuff" too, but I can nearly always fit private tuition in, and I am very happy to do so. Two hours \$150.

Or – for just the cost of a full-day workshop [with Early Bird discount] - \$245 – you get my full attention - one-on-one - for 4 hours. This can be out in the field or at my studio, looking at your photos on my computer, going over your camera functions, looking into specific techniques, or all of the above and more – whatever you want to do. I'm here for you. For only \$475 I'm yours for the whole day.

Think not just about cost, but "value" – it's one-on-one with an experienced photographer and teacher and we cover a lot each hour. Bring a friend if you wish - no extra charge.

11. Photographing Artworks, Photoshopping & Photo Restoration

As well as teaching photography and mentoring a number of photographers, I also offer photo restoration, Photoshopping, and "Photographing your Artworks" services. \$50 per hour [we get a lot done each hour].

About Kim

- **Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.**
- Over 30 years as a professional photographer and teaching photography for 13 years now
- Five First Prizes in the BBC "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" competition, the Olympics of nature photography worldwide.
- 18 books published [international distributions] – written and photographed by Kim.
- <https://www.sunlive.co.nz/news/220936-kim-westervik-award-winning-photographer.html>