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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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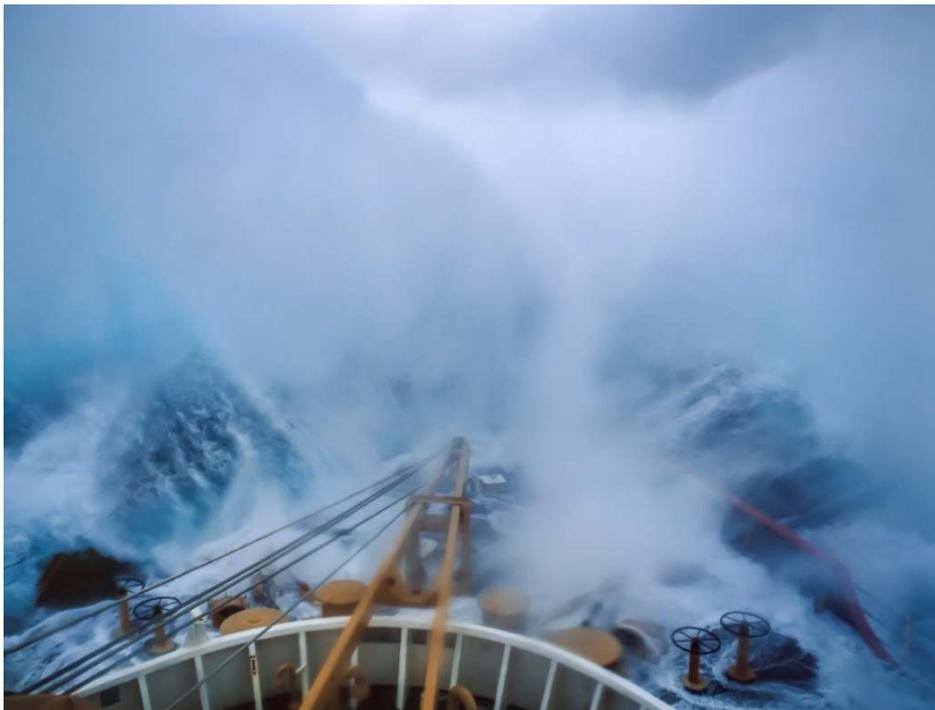
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Newsletter #51 - October 2016

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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.



Bow of USCG icebreaker "Polar Sea" crashes into wall of water in Force 10/11 storm in Ross Sea, Antarctica

1. HOW TO BECOME A REALLY GOOD PHOTOGRAPHER

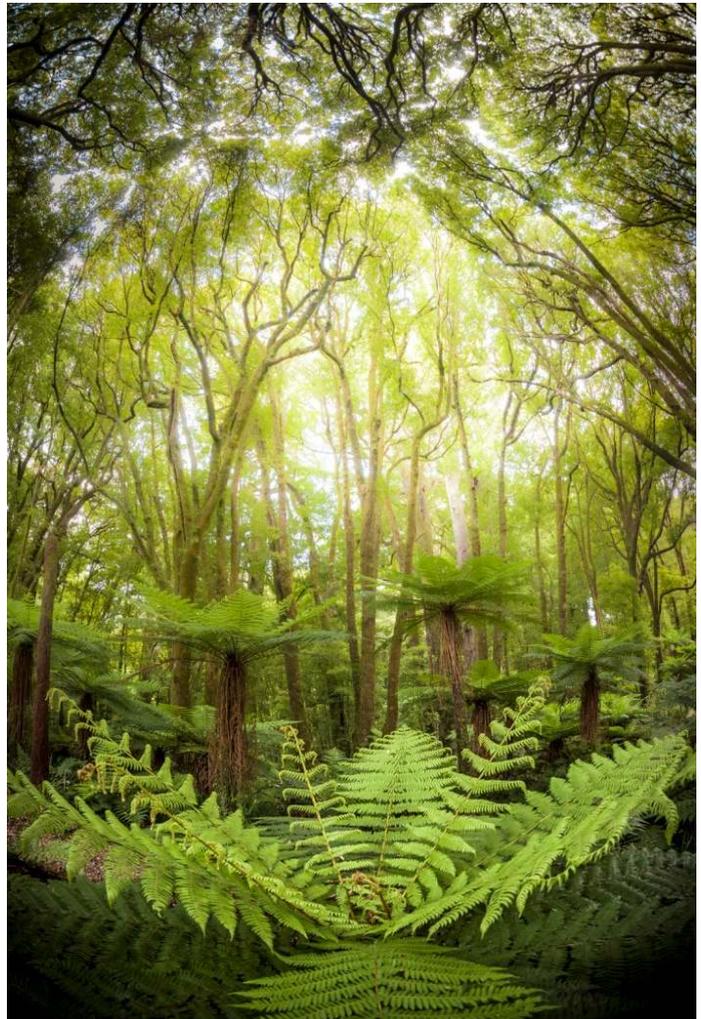
1. Photograph the people or places or subjects you love, those you are attracted to, those places or people or subjects who really mean something special to you
2. Photograph lots. Regularly, if not every day
3. Learn new stuff
4. Look at lots of good photos that others have taken
5. Try new stuff
6. Have your photos critiqued constructively by photographers whose opinion you respect
7. Keep photographing

It's quite simple really ☺

2. "ME TOO" PHOTOS

"Me too!"

- "If everyone else has a photo of the Church of the Good Shepherd in Tekapo, then I want to take one too. Just like theirs".
- "If everyone else has a photo of Mount Cook and Mount Tasman reflected in the still waters of Lake Matheson on the West Coast, then it's time I went and got a photo like that too."
- "I'll be visiting Taranaki soon. I see good photos of rock pinnacles called the "Three Sisters" at Whitecliffs, northeast of New Plymouth. So I want photos of them too – in lovely golden hour light just like the photos of "Three Sisters" I've just Googled."
- "I'm going to India. So I need my own photos of the Taj Mahal. Yes I know there are already millions of photos of the Taj Mahal, but I want my own ones."
- "Same with the Eiffel Tower and London's Big Ben from over the River Thames when I get there."
- And so on.



These aren't my thoughts, these are the kinds of thoughts that seem to wander through the mind of many photographers everywhere.

Yes of course you can take your own photos of these places, but should you?

You're very welcome to, of course. You'll probably feel better for it. Go for it.

But then again, the world at large probably doesn't need you to. As a quick Google search will tell you, there are already more good photos of all these places than the world will ever need. Many are well composed, technically good, in good light, and so on. It's highly unlikely [though not impossible] that you could improve on them, or even meet the current standard of the best ones. So what's your best approach?

If I was driving past the photographed-to-death Tekapo church, would I stop to photograph it? The answer depends partly on what else I had planned for the day. But yes, I'd possibly stop briefly and maybe – just guessing – photograph the church with my wide angle lens, with dozens of tourists in the foreground [all photographing the church too]. Over 100,000 tourists visit this church every year, so there will most likely be some of the day's quota there when I'm there. So my photos would not be just the church by itself [though I may take a few quick ones – a professional photographer never knows what photos may be useful in the future] but rather a few "Society and Culture" photos of a busload of tourists photographing the church. And then I'd hop back in my Hi-Ace van, maybe pick up a flat white at a Tekapo café and carry on, looking for my own photos in the area, any landscapes that catch my eye that day. To a large extent I'd be ignoring the "me too" list of photos that everyone else seems to take.

Later that day I get to large swathes of colourful flowering lupins with Lake Tekapo and the Southern Alps in the background. The light is pretty good. Again I've seen many, many of photos of these lupins over the years. So – drive on or stop for the lupins? I've got a soft spot for most plants, for their beauty as well as acknowledging their vital role in turning the carbon dioxide we create back into the oxygen we need to breathe. I like plants, always have [when I was a teenager I thought I'd either be a botanist or an artist when I grew up], so yes, I'd probably pull my van over to the side of the road, park it and wander off with my camera pack towards the lupins. Yes, I'd probably take some traditional "me too" photos of flowering lupins in the foreground with Lake Tekapo and the mountains in the background. But mostly I'd be looking for new, fresh ways of photographing the lupins. How sure am I that there would be "new and fresh" ways of photographing the lupins? Pretty much totally sure. It's both my personal challenge and my job to find them. It make take me an hour or two, or longer, but if I kept at it, "working the subject", trying lots of new angles, new viewpoints, new lenses, new techniques, I'm pretty sure I'd be able to move beyond the "me too" and create new, fresh ways of looking at those lupins.



James Frankham, owner/editor of New Zealand Geographic magazine and convenor of judges of the "New Zealand Geographic Photographer of the Year" competition, is even blunter than I am about "me too" photos: James: "If I see another photo of driftwood on the beach - I'll puke". So you are warned – don't send your favourite driftwood on the beach photos to this competition.

Unless, of course, you've managed to come up with a fresh way of looking at driftwood on the beach. In the 2014 "New Zealand Geographic Photographer of the Year" competition, yet another photo of the most photographed tree in NZ, [and maybe the Southern hemisphere] - the Wanaka willow - was entered. All four judges had seen photos of the tree many times, too many times but this one was gorgeous - moody monochromatic blues on a foggy winter morning. We all loved it, so it won the

Landscape category – ahead of the 1,500 or so other entries. In this case, the subject – the tree – was perhaps “me too” but the stillness, the fog, the blues, the composition, all turned what could have been just a “me too” into a work of art, and a competition winner.

<https://www.nzgeo.com/photography/photographer-of-the-year-2014/> - scroll down to see the winning photo.

The “moral” of all this: Add your own unique perspective or twist or timing and your “Me too!” photos can be absolutely valid and well worth creating. Go for it. Have fun [it’s meant to be fun, remember]

3. KIM TIP – PROTECTING YOUR LENSES

My approach to many things is “What’s the simplest way I can do this?” As a keen photographer pretty much all of my life, both as a dedicated amateur and a full time professional, I have had to look after my camera gear the whole time. Yes, I ask my cameras to create their magic in many inhospitable situations [spray-drenched coastlines, underwater, in rain and wind, blowing sand, acidic volcanic gases, minus 30°C in Antarctica, minus 50°C in Antarctica, spray-drenched boats in rough seas] but when the equipment is not being used I need to look after it.



Over 15 years ago I came up with a beautifully simple idea for protecting my lenses and camera bodies. Yes, they live inside a well-worn Lowepro camera backpack but extra protection is needed. Not so much in the bottom compartment which has padding and movable dividers but definitely for the lenses up in the top compartment. My equipment needs are often changing, so rather than using a backpack where every lens and camera body has its permanent [or semi-permanent] padded hole that it fits snugly into, I’ve gone for flexibility. I achieve this by putting each lens or camera body inside one – or usually two [one inside the other] – fleece beanies. I purchased 8-10 of these for \$2 each from a \$1 and \$2 shop, and another 6-8 from Kathmandu during their 50% off sales. Even the lenses and camera bodies in the bottom compartment with its padded cells usually live inside a fleece beanie as well.



The lenses and bodies are pretty well protected against bumps with 2-4 layers of fleece around them [my Kathmandu beanies have two layers of fleece]. They live deeper inside the beanies than shown in the accompanying photos - to show you how the beanies protect my lenses, I pulled the lenses halfway out of their beanie sleeping bags. After the photo session they went back deep inside the beanies again. Until needed next. And when I’m out in the elements and it’s getting cold, I can always borrow one of the beanies for my own head.

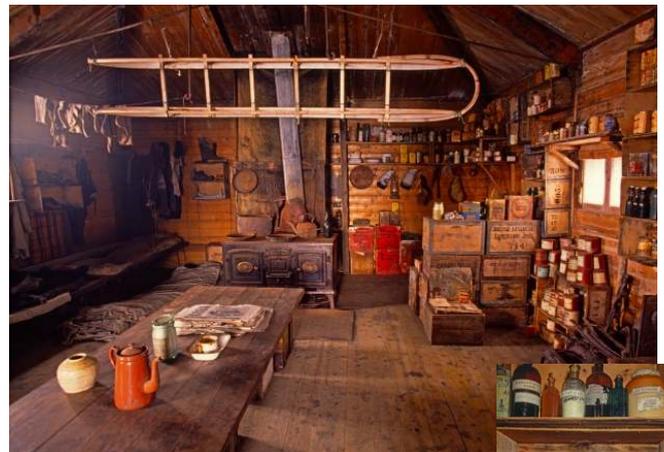
An even cheaper idea if I’m travelling by aircraft, I sometimes roll each lens inside ordinary bubblewrap. The big roll of bubble wrap I have here cost only \$30 or so from Warehouse Stationery. I’ll roll each lens until there’s at least 2-3 layers of bubble wrap around each lens, and then keep it place with tape or rubber bands. Very light. Very cheap. Very effective.

4. FROM KIM'S FIELD DIARIES –TO SHACKLETON'S ANTARCTIC HUT



I've already been to Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds a number of times, once travelling on a traditional polar Nansen sled pulled by a dozen enthusiastic huskies. That trip with a Japanese film crew and some Kiwis I'll tell you about some other time.

This time I'm on what we call a "jolly", a trip away from Scott Base for no particular reason other than to get away from the base and out into real Antarctica, the real Antarctica that drew us there in the first place. Jollies – recreational trips also called fam [familiarization] trips – play an important role in Antarctica. I flew down from Christchurch to Antarctica a month ago but the others are members of the Scott Base Winter Over Team. They have been cooped up together for nearly a year now, recently through four months of complete darkness [at Scott Base's latitude the sun does not rise above the horizon for four months during winter] and getting away from base is important for everyone's wellbeing.



So, on the promise of good weather from the met people, we packed everything we needed onto two sledges each towed by a Skidoo [snowmobile] and this morning headed out over the fast ice from Scott Base. Briefly we headed south-west, turned around Cape Armitage and then headed north over the frozen sea, stopping for a break - and a photo - at the terminal face of the Erebus Glacier Tongue, halfway to Cape Royds. A nearly-full moon hung in the blue sky over the wind-sculpted terminal face. A little later the Dellbridge Islands fell away behind us in the clear, crisp Antarctic air, as did Cape Evans [with Scott's Hut – another hut from the Heroic Era of Antarctic exploration] off to our right.

Tonight we are staying in a small semi-permanent hut near Shackleton's Hut. We've explored the area, had a good look through Shackleton's Hut, cooked our dinner back here at our hut, talked, felt glad to be alive and glad to be here. Soon we'll creep into our polar sleeping bags – one sleeping bag inside another. Life is good.

5. "GREAT PHOTOGRAPHY WEEKEND" 8-9 October



If you're thinking something like "hmmm, maybe I'd like to go to one of Kim's workshops sometime, but which one?" then this is the one I'd most recommend. Over two days it covers enough to inspire you for the next 12 months and well beyond. And it's different from all the other workshops I run. Instead of covering just nature photography, we spread our wings wider, touching on most of the topics covered in my workshops & tuition over the last 10 years, but also including people, travel and weddings. "Will I learn a lot?" "Yep". **"Will it be fun?" "I'm afraid so!"**

This is the biggest workshop I run, **a full weekend of workshops and field trips, followed by an assignment and an evaluation evening** about 3 weeks later at a time that suits everyone. Learning is via many paths: a creative mix of modules with detailed hand-outs, live demonstrations, screen-projected images, questions answered, and taking real photos in the field.

Topics include:

- Landscapes & seascapes
- Wildlife photography
- Photographing people
- Travel photography
- Composition, depth of field
- Which lens to use? Telephoto vs. normal vs. wide angle. Using each for best effect
- Wedding photography
- Going professional or semi-professional - or not
- Photo competitions – should you enter? What do the judges look for?
- Copyright, legal stuff, model and property releases
- Specialised techniques for night/dusk photography and aerial photography
- Digital workflow, backing up, archiving
- That troublesome triangle of ISO/aperture/shutter speed - often not understood well [if at all] but absolutely vital if you want real control over your photography
- Photoshop & Lightroom
- Manual or Auto or?
- What makes powerful photos powerful?
- Harnessing & developing your creativity
- Silky waterfalls, long exposure photos
- Dealing with problem foregrounds... and more

** Cost: The standard price is \$475, reducing to \$425 for EarlyBird registrations. However this newsletter is out too late to be able to offer both options, so let me give you the EarlyBird price anyway [I'd love to see you next weekend!]. So, **\$425** is the full price - great value, I believe. The price includes the workshop, follow-up, detailed hand-outs, and yummy catering [courtesy of Vivienne] on both days. **You will feel well looked after.** Special rate for **fulltime students** with ID **\$225**.

For anyone living outside the Tauranga area, there are three good motels within 8 minutes' walk of Kim's studio. The workshops are held at Kim's comfortable studio at 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.

6. "GOOD PHOTOS, GREAT PHOTOS – ANYWHERE, ANYTIME" One day workshop – Sunday 6th November

Will your 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? Your 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 [or create] good photos wherever you are. 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’ll get great photos if only I go to Paris or Africa or Antarctica or anywhere 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 workshop, follow-up, hand-outs, and Vivienne’s yummy catering] only **\$295** [or **\$245** Early Bird – if booked by **27th October**]. Fulltime students **\$150**.

7. “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.



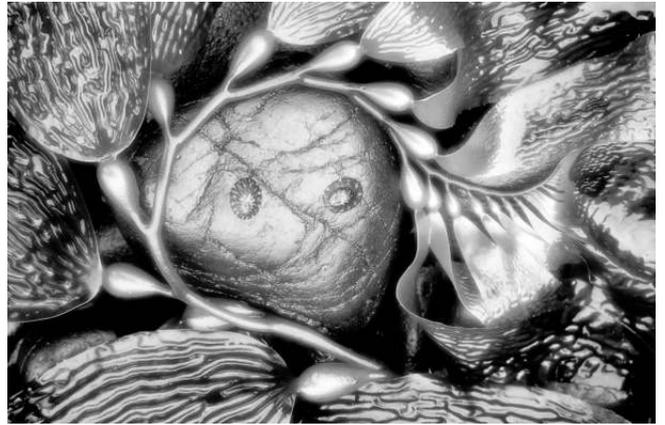
As photographers, most of us are looking for ways to make our photos stand out from the crowd. Black and white photography is one of the very best ways of doing exactly that.

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 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 9 November. Fulltime students with ID **\$150**.

8. WHANGAREI, DARGAVILLE & WHAKATANE

My recent Whagarei/Dargaville trip went wonderfully [thanks for asking, as some of you did]. The illustrated talk [“slide show”] had to be moved to a larger venue and even the new venue was at full capacity. I caught up with an old friend, gave some private tuition & mentoring, and ran two “field trip + critique” days, the first with Whangarei photographers and the second with the Dargaville Camera Club. Good people, lots of smiles, two good days! I’ve never run such days before, but they were so well received that I will definitely run more – here in Tauranga and anywhere else in the North Island that I’m invited to [have white Hi-Ace van, can travel].

On Saturday **15 October** I’m running the third of these “**field trip + critique**” days in **Whakatane**. Saturday is already fully booked, but if there is enough interest I’ll run another one the following day - Sunday 16 October. The cost will depend on numbers, but will be somewhere between \$60-100 for the day. Contact Mandy Hague at hague_art@hotmail.com [hague_art@hotmail.com]

If your club or group might be interested in hosting one of my presentations or workshops or “field trip plus critiques”, please get in touch.

9. BirdsAPlenty PHOTO COMPETITION

On Friday evening I drove to Whakatane for the annual BirdsAPlenty Photo Competition, part of the BIRDSaPLENTY Festival, an annual celebration of the Eastern Bay of Plenty’s migratory and native birdlife. Many good photos – including some outstanding photos – had been entered. Congratulations to the winners, in particular to Tauranga’s Jeanette Nee for her amazing “Tui in flight” photo which won both the “New Zealand Birds” category and the overall prize. Congratulations also to other subscribers to this newsletter who featured among the prize-winners: Alan Haultain [Whakatane], Tony Whitehead [Rotorua], and Cosima Ray [Tauranga].

The winning photos are here: <https://goo.gl/DvqDk1>
Also: <https://www.facebook.com/BirdsAPlentyPhotoCompetition/>

10. PROGRAM FOR 2016

OCTOBER

- Tuesday 4 October. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday-Sunday 8-9 October. "Great Photography Weekend" workshop.** Weekend + follow-up.
- **Saturday-Sunday 15-16 October.** Morning field trip followed by critique, discussion & Photoshopping of the morning's images in afternoon. Whakatane [field trip to Ohiwa].

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.
- **Saturday 19 November. "Black & White Photography" workshop.**

DECEMBER

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

11. QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever... It remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything."

Aaron Siskind

12. 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. And 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 currently offering two 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.

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. Five are currently "in print".
- **Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.**

13. 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 **4 October** starting 7.00pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.

14. 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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