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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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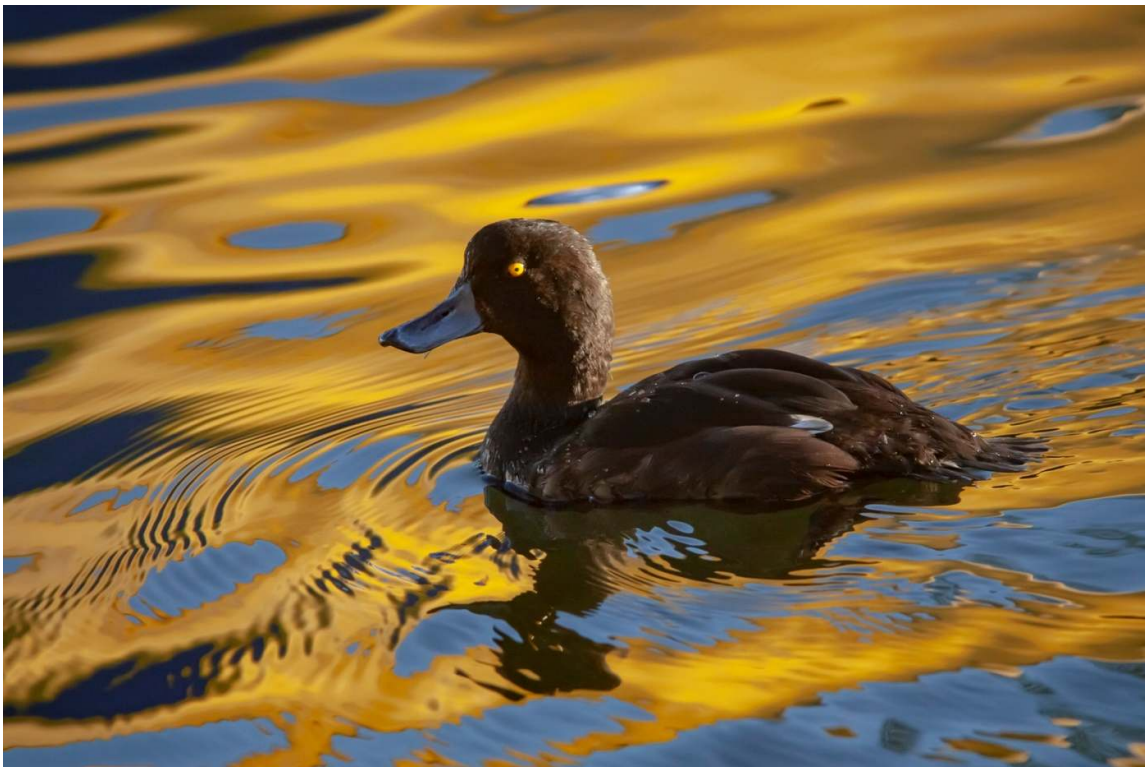
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Newsletter #76 – May 2019

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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.



New Zealand scaup, Wairoa River

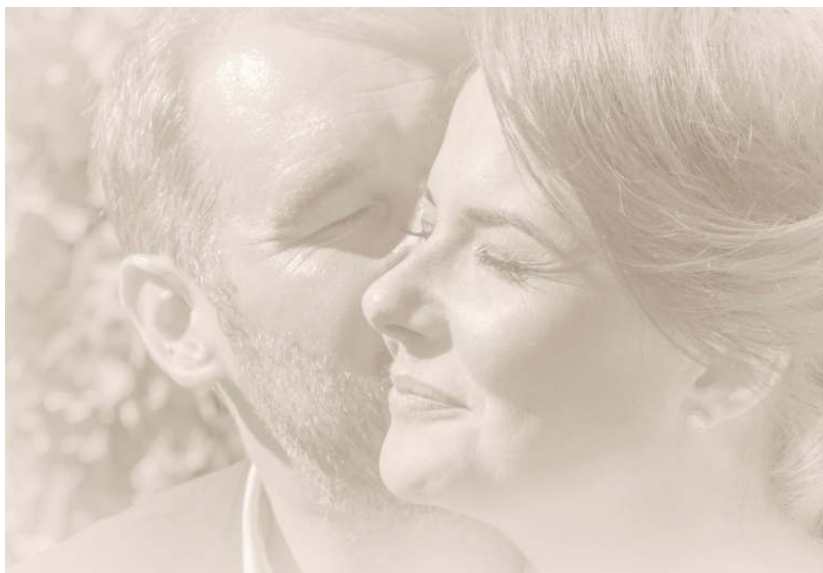
1. Capturing those special people moments

In the long run, most of us eventually realize that the most important photos we take are those of people. Photos of ourselves, our families and friends, our colleagues & even people we've never met before. We're "people people".

It's easy to snap away and get large numbers of "candid". We often call them "candid" to hide the fact that we didn't put much effort – or any effort – into getting them. And that they aren't particularly good. We just pointed the camera in the general direction of whoever we wanted to photograph, and clicked the shutter. Or held our camera [or cellphone] at arm's length, pointing it back towards us, taking yet more selfies.

But we can do better than that, and we should. Good people photography is to a large extent about moments. Capturing what I call the "special moments". We looked at some in the last newsletter, and we'll look at some more now. Next newsletter we'll talk about "special moments" without people.

Here's one tender special moment. Kate and Gerard were getting married in the Robbins Park rose garden here in Tauranga. They had asked me to be their photographer. Photographing weddings well is hard work, often stressful, and I generally avoid it. But I couldn't say no to Gerard or Kate.



There's a long list of photos you really ought to get at weddings, so I had an extensive list to make sure I didn't miss anything important. But I also knew that the very best photos – the ones the couple would treasure the most over the years – are often of fleeting, unscripted moments. Like this one. This wasn't "You may now kiss the bride". It just happened in the middle of the ceremony. Throughout the day I was changing lenses as needed. A bit earlier I'd swapped from wide angle to telephoto [80-200mm], perfect to catch this tender moment.



A few years ago I ran a series of photo workshops for teenagers who were being homeschooled. One of the exercises was for them to pair up, go outside and photograph each other. I wandered around, making sure it was all going OK, and taking a few photos of my own. The students knew each other well and chatted happily while they were photographing and being photographed.

"Moments" are one thing, but "backgrounds" are another. Many photos are ruined by bad backgrounds. If I had

photographed Alyssa while just standing normally near her, the background would have been of our fence plus telephone lines, telephone poles, and nearby houses. It was an overcast day, so I crouched down to photograph Alyssa from below while she chatted with her friends. The light grey sky acted as a perfect background, which I later lightened in Photoshop, as well as converting the photo into black and white.



So what is it about black and whites, Kim? Simply that photos sometimes look better in black and white. Black and white often confers an elegance, a timeless quality. This photo of Colin Gavin [an old surfing mate] was taken on Solander Island, “The Rock”, south of Fiordland and west of Stewart Island. I was helping Dave Asher film a documentary about some of New Zealand’s earliest European history when hundreds of thousands of fur seals were targetted by sealing gangs from Australia. As part of a reenactment of the Jackie Price story, Colin was dressed

as a sealer marooned on this island might have dressed. Jackie Price had been caught stealing other gangs’ seal skins and as punishment was marooned on this tiny island with his Maori partner. Filming can be a slow business, with much downtime for the actors. I was itching to photograph the Buller’s Albatrosses [many thousands nest on Solander Island] but wanted some people photos first. As with the two previous photos, this moment was entirely unscripted. Colin didn’t even notice me swinging my telephoto lens around. It was too good a moment to miss.

I’d arrived at Piha straight from a friend’s funeral in Auckland, and had a whole week of photographing this coastline ahead of me. I hadn’t had much sleep the night before, so I was taking it easy. Tomorrow I’d really get into it. Anyway, there wasn’t much swell and not a great deal happening, just a few surfers and hardly anybody else. I sat with my camera in the sand dunes, not expecting a great deal, but aware, as always, that “good photos are everywhere - all the time. It’s just a matter of seeing them”. The waves were tiny but sunlight and shadow danced across the sea. Not dramatic, but pretty.

Most photographic possibilities were at the water's edge and beyond, so I had my 300mm lens and 1.4X converter on, giving me a focal length of 420mm. ISO 500 and f10. I wanted a reasonable depth of field, but also needed a fast shutter speed, 1/1600 second in this case. Vertical or horizontal? I tried both. The many horizontal lines looked good but I needed people as well, more than just a lone surfer or two. Three surfers arrived, geared up, and walked together into the sea. “Click”.



2. Tripods – love them or hate them?



Yep, that's me, surrounded by thousands of Northern Royal Albatrosses and Buller's Albatrosses on Middle Sister Island, north of the main Chatham Island. I was there with a BBC film crew and Rob Chappell from DOC to keep an eye on us [Rob took this photo]. What was meant to be a two-day visit became a week-long adventure [and a children's book about it – "Albatross Adventure"] courtesy of the biggest storm in 15 years. In the photo above, note the use of:

- Tripod
- Special wildlife photographer footwear.



So – should you use a tripod? If so, when?

As with many things in life, "it depends".

Some photos you absolutely 100% need a tripod for. Night sky photos or long exposures [minutes or even hours long, so the waterfall or waves or clouds blur into a pleasing velvet foggiess] would be good examples. See the photos on the next two pages.



On the other hand, there are many times where you don't need a tripod or simply cannot use one: when your grandkids [or any kids] are running around having fun, most candid and street photography, places where tripods are not allowed [e.g. overseas museums and churches where signs tell you "No tripods!"], photos out of airplane, helicopter or car windows, and many more.

But that still leaves us with all the situations where you "could" use a tripod, or you "could" hand hold your camera. What to do? It depends [thanks Kim!]. Let's look at an example.



Imagine that two photographers are standing in front of a vase of flowers on a table, cameras in hand, and are about to spend 15 minutes photographing those flowers. Photographer “A” was told at a recent workshop [not one of mine] that you really should use your tripod whenever possible, so he does. Photographer “B” hand holds her camera.

Over the next 15 minutes, what happens? Photographer “A” sets up his tripod and camera at what he thinks is the best angle, then proceeds to get the camera, lens, focus, composition, etc as good as he can. He takes the photo. Done.

He then moves on to the second photo: a different angle, a different focal length, a different tripod position, etc. He stuffs around a bit more, getting it just right. [Stuffing around, getting things “just right” is generally to be applauded, of course, we should all do it more often]. Photo #2 taken. Then the same again for photo #3. After 15 minutes, Photographer “A” has taken 4 different photos. As Photographer “A” used a tripod and knows what he’s doing pretty well, his photos are all good: good angles, good composition, appropriate depth of field, sharp, etc.

So what about Photographer “B”? Freed up from having to deal with a tripod, she’s been a hive of activity: moving around the vase of flowers, down low, up high, getting a variety of backgrounds and “looks” [just by moving around], tried different focal lengths [and different lenses possibly], different points of focus, varying depths of field, and so on. After 15 minutes, Photographer “B” has taken 37 photos, nearly all of them different. Not using a tripod has freed her up that much.

So, who got the best photos? The answer depends on many things. It could be either of them. One thing is certain: Photographer “B” will have a much greater chance of finding the most creative, the most pleasing photo. After all, she has 37 to choose from. Photographer “A” only has 4.

I continue to have a love/hate relationship with my tripod. I don’t enjoy carrying it around and setting it up, but I very much enjoy the results that can only come when I use a tripod. All the photos on this and the next page were taken using my tripod. I couldn’t have taken these photos without it.





3. "EXCITING NEW PHOTO TECHNIQUES"

Workshop - Saturday 18th May – Early Bird price extended!

Is your photography in a bit of a rut? Would you like to create some new and different "Wow!" photos? Would you like some clever new ideas to get "Honours" at your camera club? Want to try some new techniques? Want to lift your photography to a new level?

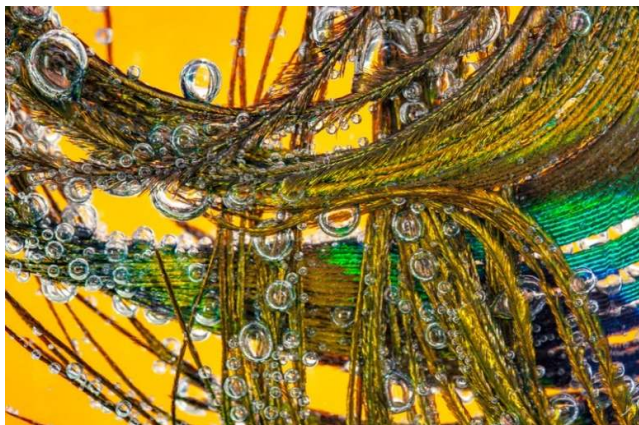
If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then this is the workshop I've designed for you. In fact, I've been working on it for the last two years: researching &, looking for new "Wow!" ideas that you might like. And then experimenting, testing the ideas and their potential for a workshop.

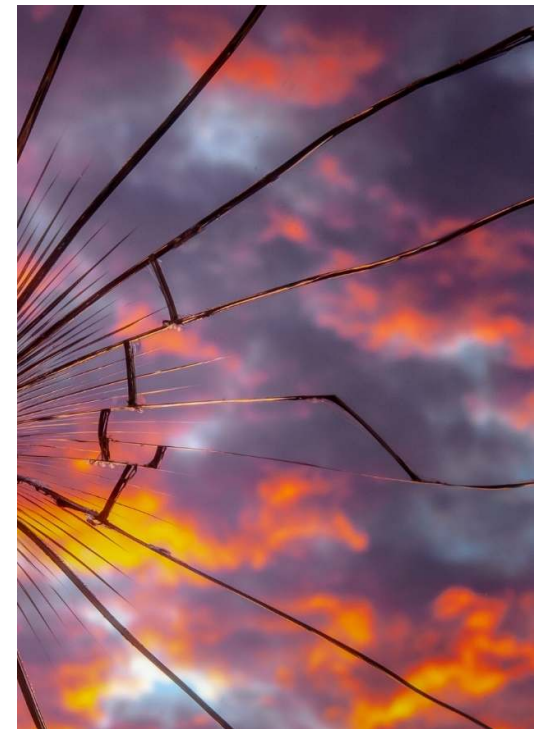
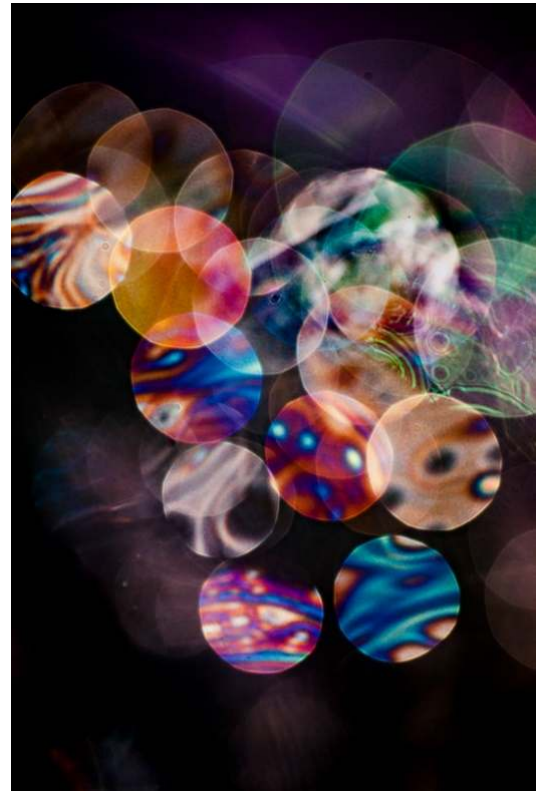
We'll explore the exciting possibilities of using mirrors [broken and unbroken], crystal glass balls, soap bubbles, effervescence, and many more ideas. All you need to do is bring yourself and your camera. I've already prepared the broken mirrors [not as easy as it sounds] and gathered together the other stuff we'll need: the crystal glass balls [flown in from USA], a variety of mirrors [from local op shops and emporiums], special soap for bubbles [also flown in from USA], effervescence [from my local supermarket], feathers [from Jeanette] and more.

This workshop will be very different from my other workshops. We'll spend some time looking at a variety of good and great new ideas and techniques for you, and then - much earlier in the day than usual - **I'll set up the equipment and you'll bring out your cameras and get photographing.** You'll go home with your memory card full of exciting new photos. Promise!

Saturday 18th May. 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Cost: Just for this workshop, I've extended the Early Bird price **[\$245 – standard price \$295]** right till the end of the week 😊. The course fee includes tuition, hand-outs & Vivienne's yummy catering. Join me?





Have a good look at the photos on these three pages: I'll be showing you how each of these was achieved, and how they can be achieved by you.





4. 'PHOTO ESSENTIALS' WORKSHOP – Sunday 16th June

- Just starting out?
- Still on “Auto”?
- Just got a new camera?
- Not getting photos you’re happy with?
- Been photographing for a while, but still not “on top of it”?
- Not very confident with your current camera?

If you’re answering “Yes” to any of these questions, then the “Photo Essentials” workshop is probably exactly what you need. Aimed at beginner and intermediate photographers, you’ll come away much more confident about your photography. For those of you who have been photographing for quite some time but never really felt you were “on top of it”, we’ll cover all the basics that you probably should have learned when starting out but didn’t [or have since forgotten] - and then move on to making you a much more competent and confident photographer. You’ll finish the workshop a much better photographer. And a more relaxed, smiling one.

Topics we’ll cover include:

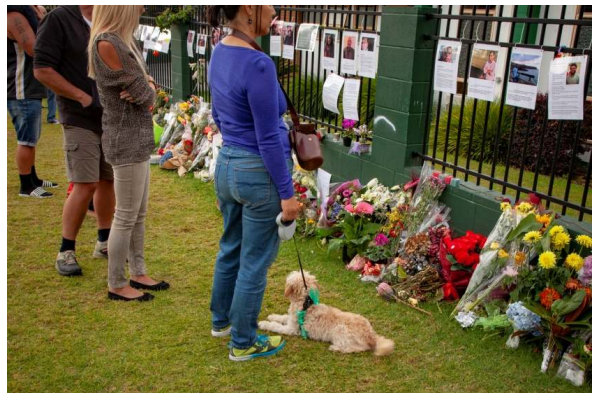
1. The myths about photography
2. The 4 things that hold most photographers back
3. Digital workflow
4. Composition
5. The different kinds of light
6. KIM’S TRIANGLE: Head, Heart & Technical
7. EXPOSURE TRIANGLE: Aperture, Shutter Speed, ISO
8. DEPTH OF FIELD TRIANGLE: Aperture, Distance, Focal Length
9. Lenses. Which is best for any particular subject/situation.
- 10 “Spot the shot”
11. Camera modes [Auto, Program, Manual, Aperture Priority, etc]
12. Introduction to travel, landscape and people photography

Handouts:

1. “Before Taking the Photo – Checklist”
2. “Checklist for Critiquing Photos”
3. “Elements of a Good Photo”
4. Depth of field - the three amigos



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 8th June]. Fulltime students with ID **\$150**.



5. KIM'S PHOTOS & COFFEE EVENINGS

We meet on the first Tuesday of each month [except January], 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 4th June** starting 7.00pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.

6. 2019 PROGRAMME

MAY

- **Saturday 18th May. "New Photo Techniques" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

JUNE

- Tuesday 4th June. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 16th June. "Photo Essentials" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

JULY

- Tuesday 2nd July. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 13th July. "Photo Impressionism" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

AUGUST

- Tuesday 6th August. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 11th August. "Black & White" photo workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 3rd September. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Saturday 7th September. "People" workshop.** Portraits, kids, families, candid, travel, events, weddings. Full day plus follow-up.

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OCTOBER

- Tuesday 1st October. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- **Sunday 6th October. "Good photos, great photos – anytime, anywhere" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

NOVEMBER

- Tuesday 5th November. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 3rd December. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

Half-day workshops 9.00am – 1.00pm

Full day workshops 9.00am – 5.00pm

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

- **Half day workshops:** \$135 – or \$115 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before the workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$70.
- **One day workshops:** \$295 – or \$245 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before the workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$150.

7. Quote of the month

“You don’t take a photograph,
you make it”

Ansel Adams

8. 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. First 2 hours: \$80 per hour, after that \$70 per hour. If you come again, it’s \$70 per hour right from the first hour. 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.

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.

MENTORING: See the previous newsletter at www.kimwesterskov.com/newsletters or contact me.

ABOUT KIM

- **Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.**
- Over 30 years as a professional photographer and teaching photography for 12 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.