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# Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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## Newsletter #46 - May 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.*



Midwinter sunrise over Tauranga. Morning mists over Wairoa River in foreground. Matua and Matua Saltmarsh in middle distance. Tauranga Harbour, Mount Maunganui, Mount Drury and Motuotau Island in the distance.

## 1. WIDE ANGLE PHOTOGRAPHY



“What’s the best lens for good landscape photos?” My answer: absolutely any lens you have can be used to get quality landscape photos, even macro or telephoto lenses, and in the last newsletter we looked at using telephoto lenses for “extracting” landscape photos from the middle distance and far distance. “Extractive landscape photography” is often a useful technique because the part of the landscape that inspired us to get our camera out is often “out there” in the middle distance or far distance e.g. a headland many kilometres away, or range of hills or distant mountains. One negative is that detail, colour, contrast and clarity all drop off with distance and both haze and heat waves distort the image. However, here in New Zealand the air is typically so clear that this is often not a significant concern with short telephoto lenses.

That said, many of the most dramatic landscape photos are taken with wide angle lenses. So, what’s so great about





them? Primarily it's the way they give viewers a feeling of the three-dimensionality of the landscape, the feeling of both nearness and distance, as well as their ability to get so much into the one photo, to tell a complete story in a single image.

The more you can get into a photo, the harder it is to arrange everything "just right". So yes, composition is harder, but when it finally works, it works wonderfully. A well-composed, story-telling wide angle photo is a real achievement, a real joy.

Any lens with a focal length of less than 35mm [or about 23mm if you're using a cropped sensor camera] is considered a wide angle lens, but stronger results are obtained at even shorter focal lengths. 20-24mm lenses are popular choices [to get equivalent views on a cropped-sensor camera you will need a 13-16mm lens], and 14-20mm lenses [9-13mm on cropped sensor cameras] give even more dramatic results.



Wide angle lenses are great for landscapes but work equally well with groups of people [including weddings and sporting crowds] or animals in their habitats. All the photos accompanying this article were taken with wide angle lenses, all less than 35mm focal length.



Any “general purpose zoom” lens you currently have in your kit, when used at the widest settings, is capable of capturing good landscape photos, even that cheap kit zoom lens you purchased with your first camera. Most Canon dSLR users will have one of the following lenses: 15-85mm, 17-55mm, 17-85mm, 18-55mm, 18-135mm, 28-135mm [or the wonderful 24-105mmL lens]. At their widest settings, all these will give you quality wide angle photos. However, if you're serious about landscape photography and do not yet have a proper wide angle lens [zoom or prime], then that might indeed be your next purchase.

The main things about using a wide angle lens are:

1. Spending some time getting a good composition – a pleasing balance of whatever is in the foreground with the middle distance and the far distance.
2. Generally, having something significant in the foreground – and as close as possible for maximum effect.



3. Getting everything from the foreground to the far distance in focus and sharp. This typically means a small aperture such as f22 or f16. Many blogs and articles will tell you not to shoot at f22 or f16 because diffraction softens the image. My advice is to ignore that advice. Yes, technically they are correct, but most photographers reading this will probably never notice the small loss of sharpness. Importantly, the extra WOW!! you'll get from the huge depth of field will far outweigh the minor loss of sharpness. When I need to [for maximum depth of field], I'll happily shoot at f22.

Do I like wide angle lenses? "Like" is not a strong enough word – I **love** wide angle lenses, the wider the better. What I'm often aiming at is feeling that I can almost touch whatever is in the foreground – the foam of an incoming wave in two of these photos, for example.

## 2. GREAT TIP FOR LANDSCAPE PHOTOGRAPHY

This tip is so simple it's almost laughable, but it's one of the best I know. Using it saves me from taking lots of photos that later I'll wish I hadn't taken. It will do the same for you.

The world in front of us is three-dimensional because we have two eyes, but a camera only has one eye [its lens] and so it sees only in two dimensions. This causes a dulling effect, where that great landscape in front of you [when seen with two eyes] loses much of its magic when it becomes a two-dimensional photo.

So whenever you're standing in front of a scene that you think might make a good photo, **simply close one eye**, or hold something in front of one eye. You are now seeing the scene in 2-D, as will your camera. If when you close one eye, the scene loses much or most of its magic, then that magic will also be missing in your photo. If it doesn't look good with one eye closed, then it won't look good as a photo. If it still looks good – then press the shutter.

## 3. FROM KIM'S FIELD DIARIES – NO DIVING TODAY



It has snowed all night - "night" being a surreal concept here during the Antarctic summer when the sun never sets. Between late October and late February the sun freewheels around and around the often dazzlingly clear sky, lower to the horizon at "midnight" but still high in the blue sky.

It's now "morning", for lack of a better word. I extricate myself from my two polar sleeping bags [one inside the other], dress and poke my head out the door of my tent. Drifting snow. Whiteness. Whiteout. Quiet.

I head across to the dive team's wanigan. In Antarctica, wanigans are small portable huts used by field parties. Breakfast over .... still snowing .... definitely no diving today.

We check out our dive hole. Every night it freezes over into porridge-like icy slush. This morning it is iced with snow. A Weddell seal is in residence, using it as a breathing hole.

A few weeks earlier, our friends at Mactown [the American McMurdo Station – Antarctica's largest "town"] had brought some serious ice-drilling equipment and drilled two big holes for us through the two-metre thick sea ice. The holes overlap, forming a large figure-8-shaped hole that we use for getting ourselves and our ROV [Remote Operated Vehicle with lights and camera] through the fast sea ice into the cold dark sea underneath.

I'm in Antarctica making my way through a long "Please get photos of ...." list for the Antarctic Visitor Centre at Christchurch Airport. My creative director [boss] wasn't at all keen on Westerskov spending a week or more diving in the hope of getting some underwater photos, but he reluctantly agreed. So I'm tagging along with a team from NHNZ [formerly the Natural History Unit of TVNZ] who are in Antarctica making a series of documentary films.

The dive team is camped next to the snout of the Erebus Glacier Tongue, a floating extension of the Erebus Glacier that flows down the lower slopes of Mount Erebus, disconnects from the land and floats out to sea for many kilometres. It is early summer and so the sea ice is currently "fast ice", an unbroken skin of frozen sea stretching out from the shoreline for as far as the eye can see. It's a simple landscape out here. Sea ice, glacier cliffs, sky. White. Bluish-white. Still snowing. Both serene and surreal. No diving today.



#### 4. "WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY A-Z" WORKSHOP

Africa & Antarctica & Anywhere - & Zoos  
Photographing animals in the wild and in captivity

Saturday 21 May 2016



**Saturday 21 May** 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.

It's definitely about time! Although I've been a wildlife photographer all my professional life, and have been running workshops for 9 years now, I've never yet run a workshop just on wildlife photography. So it is definitely about time.

We can probably divide "wildlife photographers" into two main groups: the serious wildlife photographer with "big glass" [big expensive telephoto lenses] and "big tripod" and [2] amateurs without big glass and possibly without tripod who just wants to get some good wildlife photos on their next trip to Africa or Borneo or Antarctica – or the local beach or park. I've designed this workshop for both groups.

We'll cover the obvious things, such as the equipment, techniques and approaches needed to get good wildlife photos. We'll also cover some less-obvious things, such as the importance of post-processing, what to do with your photos [good wildlife photos can be used in many different ways], how to put a portfolio together that could be your self-published book, what photos might you be missing, what if the wildlife doesn't show or if the weather's lousy, where to find wildlife, getting maximum benefit out of a wildlife trip, and much more. We'll have a fun day too, as usual. Join me?

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





Lion & elephant photos by Vicki Ostler



## 5. PROGRAM FOR 2016

### MAY

- Thursday 19 May. 7.00pm. "In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition". Details below
- **Saturday 21 May. "Wildlife Photography" workshop.** Full day plus follow-up.

### JUNE

- Tuesday 7 June. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Thursday 16 June 7.00pm. "In-depth Photo Critiques & Tuition". Details below
- **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.

## 6. QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“The whole point of taking pictures is so that you don’t have to explain things with words.”

Elliott Erwitt

## 7. 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 to begin with 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.

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.

## 8. 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 19 May, starting at 7.00pm. Book by email. Cost: \$55 for the evening.

## 9. 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 7 June starting 7.00pm. 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 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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