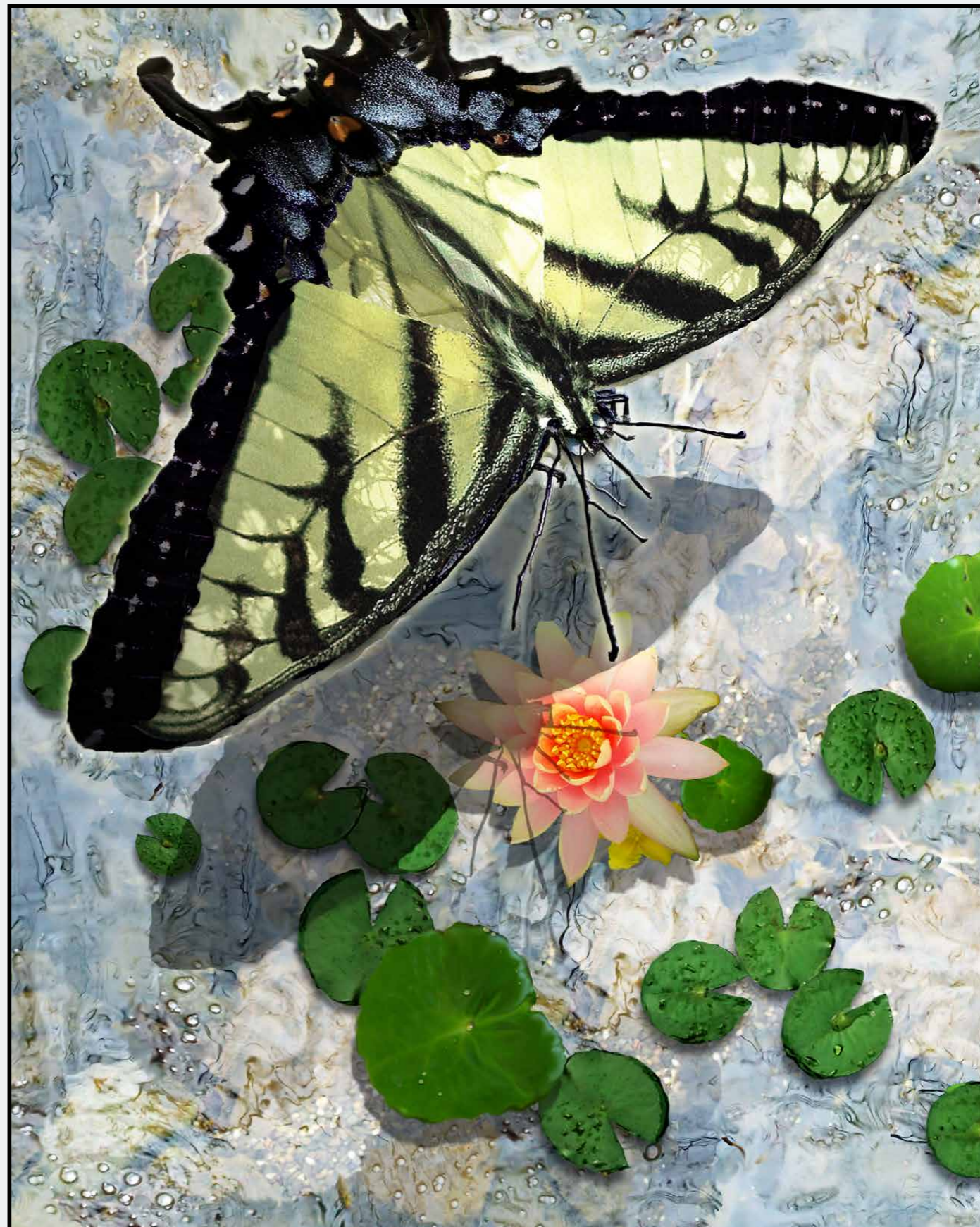




focus

a publication of the GCA Photography Committee

**Winter
2016**



focus

Editor **Jean Matthews**
Associate Editor **Penelope Ross**

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Deborah Fitzgerald (page 4)

SUBMISSIONS

Focus magazine welcomes articles from GCA club members on topics of interest to GCA photographers. We publish award-winning photographs which have received Best in Show, the Photography Creativity Award, the Certificate of Excellence, and/or the GCA Novice Award from GCA Flower Shows and GCA and Non-GCA Major Flower Shows. When submitting your winning photographs please use the Focus Photo Submission Instructions found on the [Photography Committee](#) page sidebar/RESOURCES/focus, Online Magazine/Focus Photo Submission Instructions. Also, if appropriate, we would welcome a description of “how you did it.” Any questions may be directed to photography@gcamerica.org To submit your photo include:

Word or Pages document per Photo Submission Instructions

Photograph - jpg approximately 2.0 MB or 2000x3000 pixels or larger

Email: photography@gcamerica.org

(These emails are answered by Penny Ross or Jean Matthews.)

MISSION STATEMENT

The object of **focus** magazine of The Garden Club of America is to enhance the knowledge and enjoyment at all levels of involvement in the art of photography and to appreciate its unique blend of technical skill, knowledge of composition and creativity. Articles written express the opinion of the writers and are for the purpose of clarity and education about the photographic process, exhibiting and judging. The Garden Club of America and **focus** magazine do not endorse any product or service. All entries in Flower Shows are limited to members of GCA. By submitting your work to **focus**, you grant permission to publish your work on the GCA website accessible to the public, and not limited to the Members Area.

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What Is The Story Behind The Cover? By Deborah Fitzgerald / GC of Cleveland

TECHNICAL INFO: Combined three different photographs to give a special illusion of height. One of a butterfly, one of the water, one of the water lily. Manipulated shadows and light, and created water droplets.



“WISH YOU WERE HERE”



BETTY SWANN

Gertrude Windsor GC

SHOW: *Wish You Were Here!*

Gertrude Windsor GC

Tyler Rose Garden Center

Tyler TX

May 2015

AWARDS: Second and the GCA Novice Award in Photography

JUDGES' COMMENTS: “Colorful pattern and palette make a compelling image.”

TITLE: “Taters”

LOCATION: Fresh Grocery Store



“ROOTED IN CLEVELAND”

DEBORAH FITZGERALD

GC of Cleveland

SHOW: *Rooted in Cleveland*
Zone X Meeting Flower Show
InterContinental Hotel
Cleveland Ohio
June 2015

AWARDS: First and GCA Novice Award

CLASS: “The Heights”

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “Beautiful artistic rendering, flowing blend of contrasting organic elements from butterfly wings to lily pads, superiorly achieved through color, shape, and rhythm while achieving a strong sense of depth. Looks like a beautiful Japanese silk print!”

PLANT MATERIAL: *Nymphaea* Water Lily

LOCATION: Pond in home garden

TITLE: “Flying High”

“ROOTED IN CLEVELAND”



RYN CLARKE

Shaker Lakes GC

SHOW: *Rooted in Cleveland*
Zone X Meeting Flower Show
InterContinental Hotel
Cleveland Ohio
June 2015

AWARDS: Second and GCA Creativity
Award

CLASS: “Bridges East and West”–
monochrome

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “Delicate
and other-worldly rendering of a strong
composition with an implied ethereal
light.”

TITLE: “Ravenal Bridge, Charleston,
South Carolina”

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

By Gail Atwater / GC of Honolulu

LOGISTICS, EQUIPMENT AND FILE MANAGEMENT

Take a variety of camera types if you can. On a long trip I happily alternated using an SLR with several zoom lenses and a small point-and-shoot. This provided some choices as shooting situations changed from day to day. It may be avoiding the weight of the SLR on a day with a lot of walking or anticipating the lack of a powerful zoom on the point-and-shoot in a landscape situation. It could be rain or other weather conditions that threaten an SLR but allow a smaller camera to be hidden safely under clothing or raingear. For good measure, bring your smartphone if you get caught without one of the “real” cameras and simply must record the moment. Or be like my good friend and just take your smartphone or iPad!

Take a separate data card for each camera. Use large-capacity cards (e.g., 32 GB) so you don’t have to worry about running out of shots and waste time deleting files while you should be taking pictures. If one of your cards is damaged, you still have a backup.

Buy two chargers for each camera you take. I went to India where my only Nikon charger was blitzed by an electrical surge early on. Thankfully, someone else in our small group had the same camera and we passed my depleted-then-charged battery back and forth. You may not be so lucky.

Playing “dress up” as adults, three young women pose for a selfie while touring Gion, the entertainment district of Kyoto.



Bring and alternate two camera batteries. While one is in use, charge the other and switch them as soon as you return from the day’s activities.

Back-up each day’s shots on your laptop if you have brought one or use cloud-based storage.

I never, ever travel without a laptop loaded with Adobe Photoshop and Lightroom. One caution: beware of situations with no Internet connection, and, therefore, no access to the online-only Adobe Creative Cloud applications.

Take a class, and then use Adobe Lightroom to manage your photo collection. If you use Adobe Lightroom, get into the discipline of emptying your camera card each evening and rating your photos using the software. Then your hundreds of photos will not seem so intimidating.

Maiko (apprentice geisha) in Kyoto, Japan, critique their selfie on a smartphone.



Use an intuitive file-naming system. Set up a naming system that will help you find those great shots later on. You think you will always remember the date of each trip, but you won't. You will probably continue to associate your photos with a particular trip's location, so that's a good place to start.

Take photos in Raw format whenever possible. If you must shoot in jpg, convert to TIFF before editing to minimize the repeated destruction of pixels inherent in jpg editing.



Patience is a virtue when someone else is controlling the camera. A BIG camera.

Uniformed Japanese schoolboys jump for joy on an excursion to a feudal castle as their pal snaps away with an SLR.

YOU MAY NEVER RETURN TO THAT PLACE, SO...

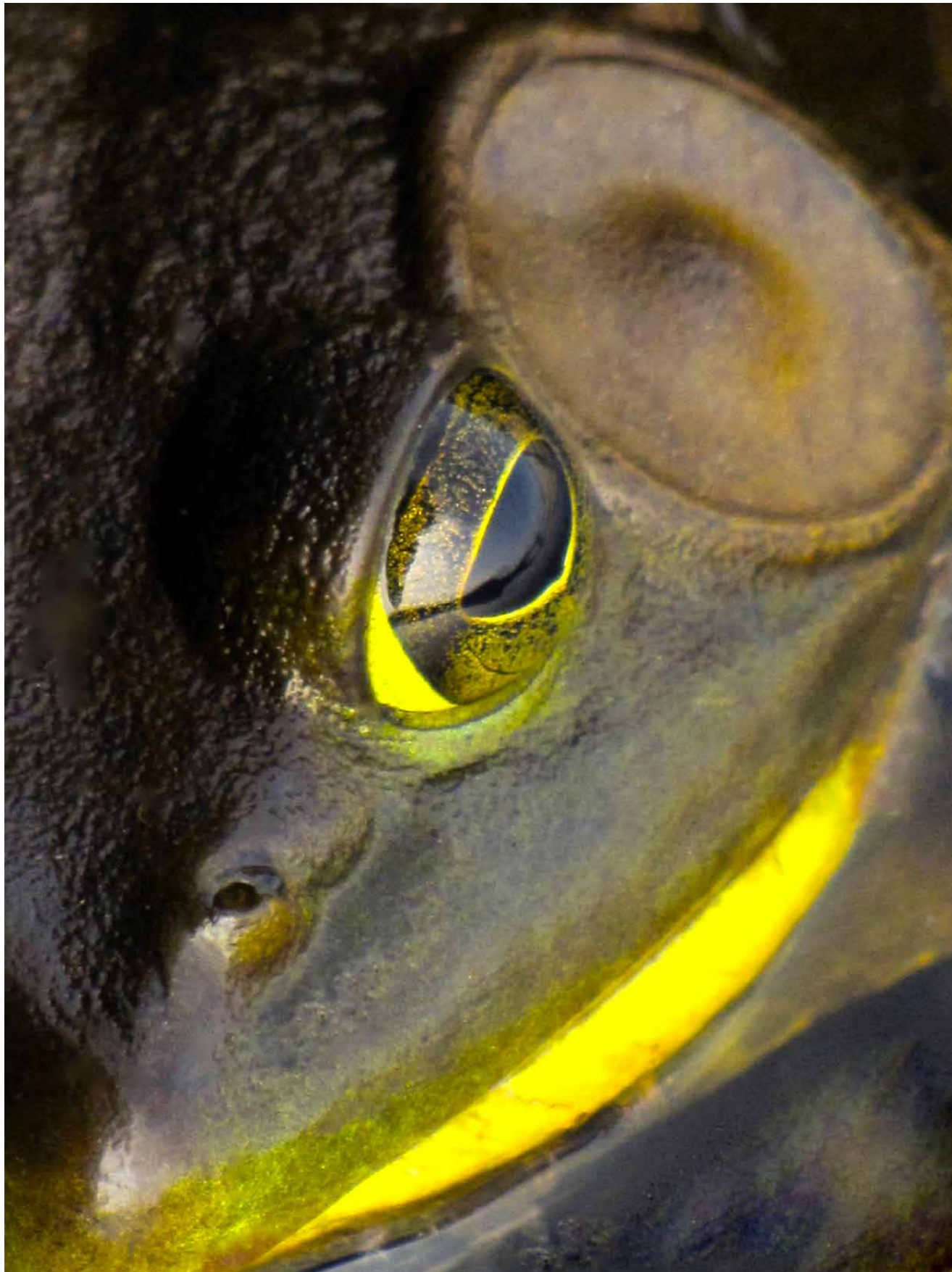
Avoid ready-fire-aim photo shooting. Take a moment to move the camera around different ways until you have the best composition. Sometimes getting the camera down around ground level produces great results.

Zoom into compositions with care. Remember that the more you use a zoom to frame a picture the less light you are allowing into the camera. Try to resist framing photos perfectly and wait until you crop later on. You'll have more pixels to work with.

Think ahead for future Flower Show photo entries. As you travel, try to visualize possible situations that fit into class categories in upcoming shows. Be on the lookout, or go out of your way to create, situations where you can capture a possible entry subject. Would the judges see a strong connection between your photo and the intent of the class?

Make use of museum time. Take your time when looking at the style of an artist across many works, or at a genre of art such as landscape painting or portraits. Look for patterns in illuminating the subject and composition. Look for repetition of patterns and color. Try to understand what defines an artist's style. Then think about how you might be developing a photographic style of your own.





“TALES, TROWELS & TREASURES”

DANNA DEARBORN

Piscataqua GC

SHOW: *Tales, Trowels & Treasures*

Fox Hill GC

Medfield MA

June 2015

AWARDS: First and Best in Show

CLASS: “All Creatures Great and Small”–color

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “The blue ‘ribbit.’ Highly creative, interpretive response to class. Close cropping intensifies emotion–the eyes have it.”

LOCATION: Camp Otterbrook, Adirondacks NY

“AMERICAN BEAUTY”



MARY JO BECK

GC of Cincinnati

SHOW: *American Beauty – Timeless Style*
The Preservation Society of Newport County
Rosecliff Mansion
Newport RI
June 2015

AWARDS: First and GCA Certificate of Excellence

CLASS: “I Hear America Singing”– Color Landscape

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “This is an exquisite photograph that captures a dramatic moment in time.”

PLANTS: *Ammophila breviligulata* American Beachgrass

TITLE: “Oh Beautiful for Spacious Skies...”

LOCATION: Nantucket Massachusetts

STATEMENT: “I was just in the right place at the right time with late afternoon light and an approaching thunderstorm.”

COMMENTING TO THE NEXT LEVEL FOR EXHIBITOR AND PUBLIC ALIKE

by Gay Estes / GC of Houston

There is a wonderful group of publications in Houston named *The Buzz Magazines*, targeted to various neighborhoods. They have an annual photography contest juried by three professional judges (I never win). I am always so appreciative of the comments, as they are clear and inclusive of all aspects; naturally, they have more time for editing than our GCA panels do.

The publisher of the magazines, Michael Hoffman, has graciously sent me images in the past for use in PowerPoint programs. My garden club advertises in the magazines for our bulb mart. Buzz Magazines has a People's Choice category, which I think would be a fabulous addition to shows in order to allow more interaction from the public.



Darren Inoff

The Grand Prize winner was a stunning black-and-white close-up of the head of a pensive leopard waiting to feed at a kill. The comment from the three judges read: "The crisp black and white emphasizes the details of the animal."

Utilizing selective focus creates a blurry background to strengthen attention to his face. The details of the wispy grasses in the foreground repeat and echo the shape of the whiskers. An elegant portrait. The shallow depth of field helps separate the subject from the background, while the contrast of the black and white helps to add drama. These elements combine to make a very dynamic image."



Raymond Zrike

Another fine example is commenting on the image of a young skater taken by a 15-year-old. The comments: "This particular picture artistically documents a brief moment of inactivity. Amongst the flurry of motion, the red jacket stood out as a static mystery." The magazine has five contest categories: People, Animals, Landscapes, Nature and Sports and Action, the last one being a masterful show of photographic artistry with figures in motion. I look forward to receiving this publication, especially the July issue with the photo contest winners. You will enjoy all of the images and the stories behind the images: a virtual photography show.

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<http://www.thebuzzmagazines.com/>

“4 x 4 FOURSORE AND TEN / FOR ALL SEASONS”



SUSAN ROTANDO

Fairfield GC

SHOW: “4 by 4” Fourscore and Ten / For All Seasons

Carrie T. Watson GC

Erie PA

June 2015

AWARDS: First, Best in Show, and The Carrie T. Watson Award

CLASS: “Winter White”—color

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “Stunning image with a well-placed vantage point. Exquisitely rendered iconic scene.”

Taken in Fairfield CT with an iPhone and Pro-HDR app

Photography Study Group Goes to Portland, Oregon

by Crissy Cherry, GCA Photography Chairman, Lake Forest GC

Fall in Oregon... Thirteen GCA photographers traveled to

Portland, Oregon for three and a half days of photographing under the tutelage of renowned photographer Bryan Peterson and his assistant, Roger Morin. The focus was learning to see creatively. Zooming, panning, use of reflections, morning fog, shadows, silhouettes and more were taught and practiced.

Our group was up early every day, dressed in waterproof

boots and layers for the weather. Our trips took us to Shaniko, a wonderful, deserted ghost town, national parks along the Columbia River Gorge, and Cannon Beach on the coast. Meals were on the run, as everyone wanted to get back to shooting. Dinners were late so we could capture the evening sun. We all arrived back at the hotel exhausted, but happy.



Photo by Leslie Purple

See Bryan Peterson's new edition of *Learning to See Creatively* for illustrations and instructions on the techniques that we learned.



Helen Glaenzer



Crissy Cherry



Dana Parker

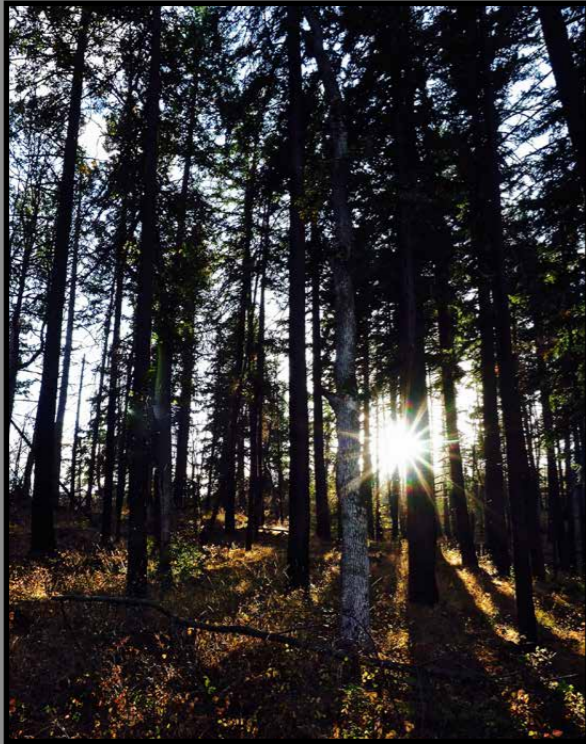


Karen McCormick

Ann Franzen

Evelyn Lorentzen-Bell





Leslie Purple



Susan Rotando



Peg Codey

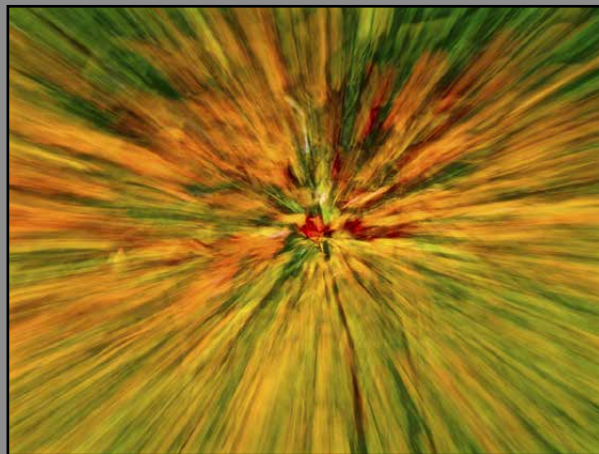
Mary Waldron



Sandy Scott

Sally Wilse





“SINCERELY, ’SCONSET”



CRISSY CHERRY

Lake Forest GC

SHOW: *Sincerely, 'Sconset – Glimpse from a Summer Village*

Nantucket GC

Nantucket MA

July 2015

AWARDS: First and Best in Show

CLASS: “Dinner at the Chanticleer” –
monochrome still life

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “Superb monochrome! Exhibits full tonal range in a great composition.”

TITLE: “Le Dessert”

PLANT MATERIAL: *Paeonia* Peony

“SINCERELY, ’SCONSET”



ANN FRANZEN

Fairfield GC

SHOW: *Sincerely, 'Sconset – Glimpse from a Summer Village*

Nantucket GC

Nantucket MA

July 2015

AWARDS: First and GCA Creativity Award

CLASS: “A Nantucket Squantum”

PLANT MATERIAL: *Helianthus annuus*
Sunflower

JUDGES' COMMENTS: “Manipulation changed an ordinary moment into a festive occasion. Subtle addition of calligraphy adds humor.”

TIPS ON DOCUMENTING YOUR CLUB MEMBERS, ACTIVITIES AND SHOWS WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

By Avery Brighton, GCA Photography Rep Zone IV, Rumson GC

When I look back at our club's visual history, it is the photographs of the members that I find most interesting. In this digital age of photography it is all too easy to take images, but how many are being organized and kept for the next generation of club members? I suggest assigning a person to be in charge of photographing club activities, meetings and fellow members. This person could work with the club historian and set up an archivable system by year.

Here are some tips to capturing better group and portrait images for your club.

Set up your camera

The night before, charge your batteries and format your card. The quality of an iPhone is good in a pinch, but the control you have with a DSLR will give you more consistent images. Know your camera and how to adjust the settings. For group shots use an Aperture or F-stop of f/8 or higher. For individual or small groups a shallow depth of field obtained by using an Aperture of f/3.5 or f/5.6 will blur out the background so that the person is the main feature. If you are hand holding, make sure you have a shutter speed of at least 1/60th sec. I like to use my camera on aperture priority and check that the shutter speed is 1/60th or faster. I also set the white balance and ISO to automatic.

Scout out your location ahead of time

Check that the background is not distracting or busy. You want your subject to be the main focus. Taking out unwanted elements in post processing is both time consuming and takes practice to do well.

Make sure the lighting is right

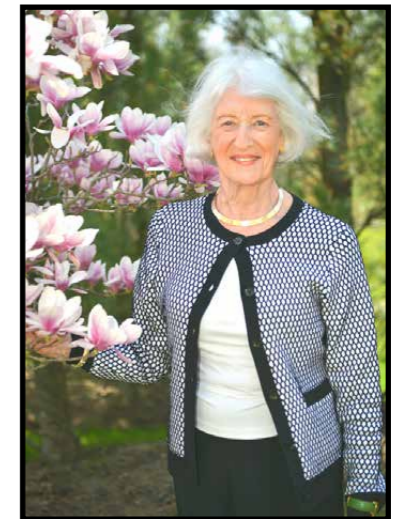
Avoid harsh and direct sun. Looking into the sun will make your subject squint. Harsh overhead sun will give them "raccoon eyes." If you are outside, head into the shade and make sure there is even lighting across all the faces of a group. Beware of the dappled light that comes through trees, I look for "open shade" created by a wall or building.

Be sure that everyone who needs to be in the picture is there

It is a big help to have an assistant gather your groups together so you can focus on taking the images.

Posing can make the difference in how people look

Try to have an even space between everyone's heads and check to make sure the clothes are neat and tidy. Try not to make the group too "deep," maybe just 2 or 3 rows. This will help keep everyone in focus and the heads will be a similar size in the picture. If you have a very large group use a tripod and step stool. Photographing from a higher angle is flattering to most people and it is easier to successfully capture all the faces into the image. Leave enough framing space around the group so you can crop different ratios for printing and the web.



Take control

Make sure you are the only one photographing the group. Get your shot then allow others to take theirs. You need the complete attention of the group to get a good shot. Take several images. Rule of thumb is 1 capture per person in the group. With a group of 10 I would take 8-10 images. This way you will be sure to have an image where everyone looks good and is not blinking. Keep communicating with the group. This helps maintain eye contact. Let them know for how long you will need them and stress that if they follow your instructions they will like how they look in the picture.



Post process in a photo editing program

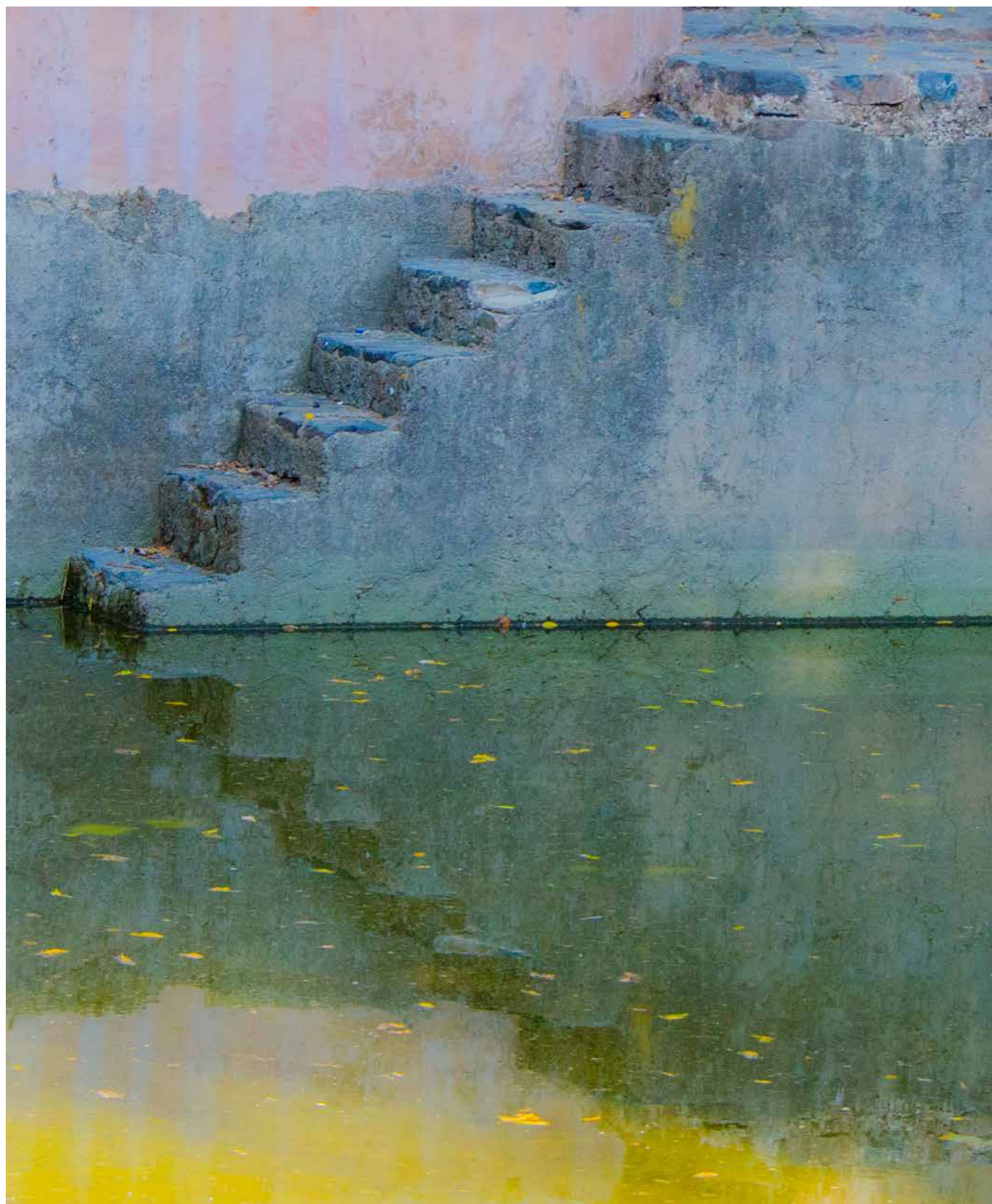
When you get home transfer the images to your computer before you forget. Doing a little post processing even if its just to sharpen and adjust the exposure in the shadows will give an ordinary group shot a finished look. Next burn images to disc, email and get them to where they need to go. So many times the images are taken and not shared.

I have set up a photo sharing site on SmugMug for our club.

For a small yearly rate we have our own mini website just for photographs. We have photographs of different flower shows we have visited, monthly meetings, civic activities and member gardens. This makes it easy to upload photographs to share with our club members. The photographs are secure and in a central location. Custom settings can allow for passwords and members to download the digital copies to their computer.

This is the link for our site: <http://rumsongardenclub.smugmug.com/>

Remember to smile yourself. By taking a little extra time and care it's easy to capture flattering pictures for your club!



“THE COUNTY FAIR”

SUE KLEIN

Akron GC

SHOW: *The County Fair*

GC of Mount Desert

Northeast Harbor ME

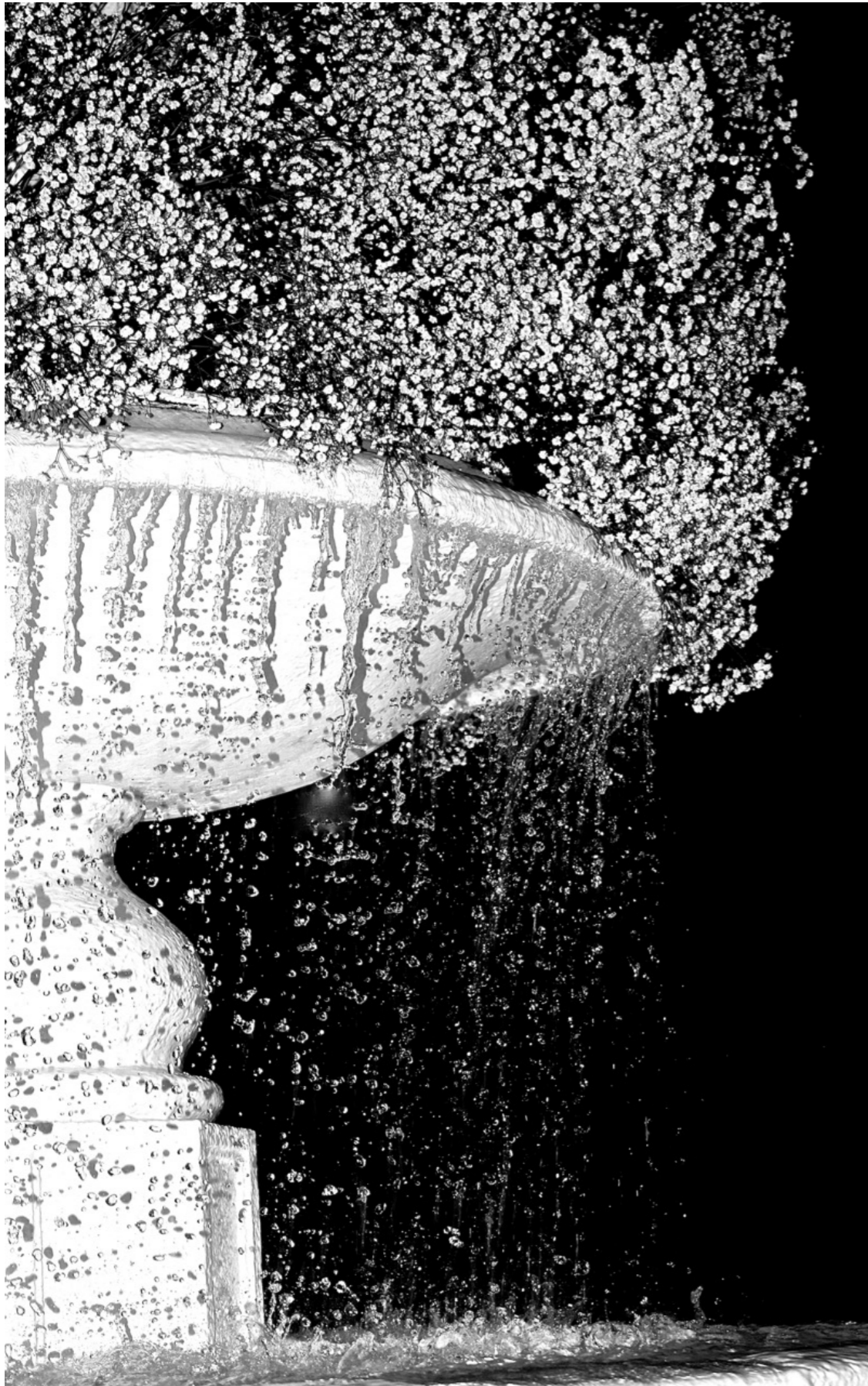
July 2015

AWARDS: First and Best in Show

CLASS: “Step Right Up”

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “Painterly abstract composition using elements and principles of design with distinction. Simply stunning.”

TITLE: “In a Faraway Place”



“THE COUNTY FAIR”

MARY ELIZABETH SMITH

GC of Jackson

SHOW: *The County Fair*

GC of Mount Desert

Northeast Harbor ME

July 2015

AWARDS: First and GCA Creativity Award

CLASS: “Capture a Splash”—black and white

JUDGES’ COMMENTS: “Wet, Wild, and Wonderful.”

PLANT MATERIAL: *Gypsophila paniculata* Baby’s breath

TITLE: “Water, our first Mother”

LOCATION: New Orleans courtyard

THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

... (FINDING PHOTOGRAPHS ON THE RUN)

By Sue Klein - Part 2 of a 2 part article. Part 1 was included in the focus Fall issue

Visiting the National Parks took us to some unimaginable places in our own magnificent country. The following four parks complete the sampling of the U.S. National Parks started in the focus Fall Issue.



SAGUARO

Arizona, April 2008

This park is divided into two parts, separated by the city of Tucson. We spend the night here in the 1930s Arizona Inn, a classic Spanish style place... very high class for our National Park adventures that usually run more to tents, Hampton Inns, and 1930s cabins (with one double bed and a bare overhead bulb).



Above: Saguaro's terrain and vegetation varies but is always extraordinary. The solid intense blue sky tends to overwhelm the fascinating display of texture and color. I crop the sky severely.

We head for Saguaro West and this time I have an agenda. I am looking for an image to enter in the "Joy of Sex" class at a GCA show. My 105 macro and monopod are with me as I walk along the Cactus Garden Trail. Oh, my gosh! When I focus in on the ripe blooms, it is a virtual porno show. I think I'm blushing. Giggling my way around this Garden of Eden, trying not to be such a prude, I discover a whole new lustful plant world. Mission accomplished.

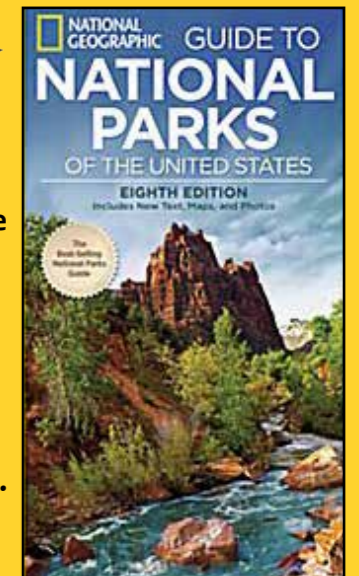
Measuring up to 50 feet tall and up to 16,000 pounds, the saguaro plant is the largest North American cactus. In some places they covered the landscape like a forest.



Three options for the "The Joy of Sex" class. My 105 macro and 28 – 200 zoom have vibration reduction (the best invention), making it possible to shoot without a proper tripod. However, I do increase the shutter speed and maybe the ISO to make sure there is no movement. The saguaro cactus is on the **Top Right** with its flowers so perfect they just don't look real!



News Flash: A new edition of "The National Geographic Guide to the U.S. National Parks" (8th edition, the Bible for our adventures, is scheduled for release February 23, 2016.



ISLE ROYALE

Michigan, 2009

The essence of this place is wolves, moose, granite, water, prehistoric copper mining pits (1500 B.C.), a boreal forest, bogs and plant diversity. This 209 square mile park is an international biosphere reserve, encompassing a remote and primitive wilderness archipelago on Lake Superior. It consists of one big island and several smaller ones off the Minnesota/Canadian border. A 3-hour boat ride from Copper Harbor, Michigan is our gateway to the park.

We explore only one little section of the main island and nearby Raspberry Island. Nevertheless, we get a taste of everything except for moose and wolves. But, miraculously, in the evening a professor lectures on wolves and moose and how they keep each other in check. Park talks are something we always look forward to and this one is especially interesting. Our basic lodging accommodation is the only place with beds and plumbing in the park. Otherwise it's tents.

On our second day, we hear a big storm with big winds is headed our way. We opt to get out of Dodge before the storm hits and hop the evening boat on calm waters back to Copper Harbor. Isle Royale is a place to come back to, maybe to stay in a tent and just soak in all the goodies in this small jewel of a park. Perhaps we would even see a moose or wolf!



Left:

The blues and grays in the rock, water and sky image are a little bleak, but I resist warming it up in edit because that would change the true mood of the place.



Left:

Many forms of mosses and lichens grow here. These embellish a huge granite area.



Right:

Can't you imagine a troll popping out of these woods? The light is nice and soft for photography, although a few dark areas are lightened in these images.



Right:

The pitcher plants grow in a bog on Raspberry Island, accessible by a boardwalk. The extraordinary diversity of plants in the park is reason enough to visit.

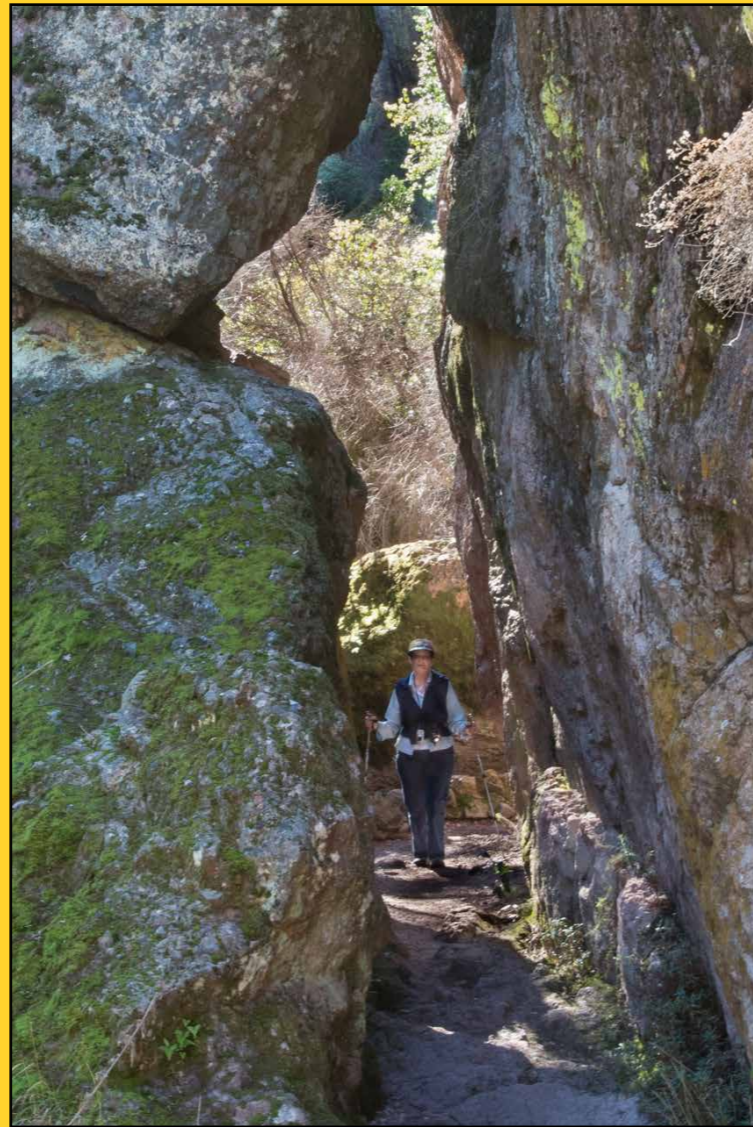
PINNACLES

California, 2013

This park, our second to last, is just east of Carmel and Monterey. In early January 2013, I tell the Superintendent of our Cuyahoga Valley National Park that we are about to complete our quest to visit the 58 National Parks. “Oh no,” says he. “As of last week there is a new one,” and off we go to Pinnacles. My sister and brother-in-law join us for this adventure. Pinnacles, a combination of volcanic and sedimentary rock, is part of a 23-million-year-old volcano 195 miles to the southeast near Los Angeles. The giant San Andreas Fault split the volcano, and the western part crept north, carrying the rock pinnacles.

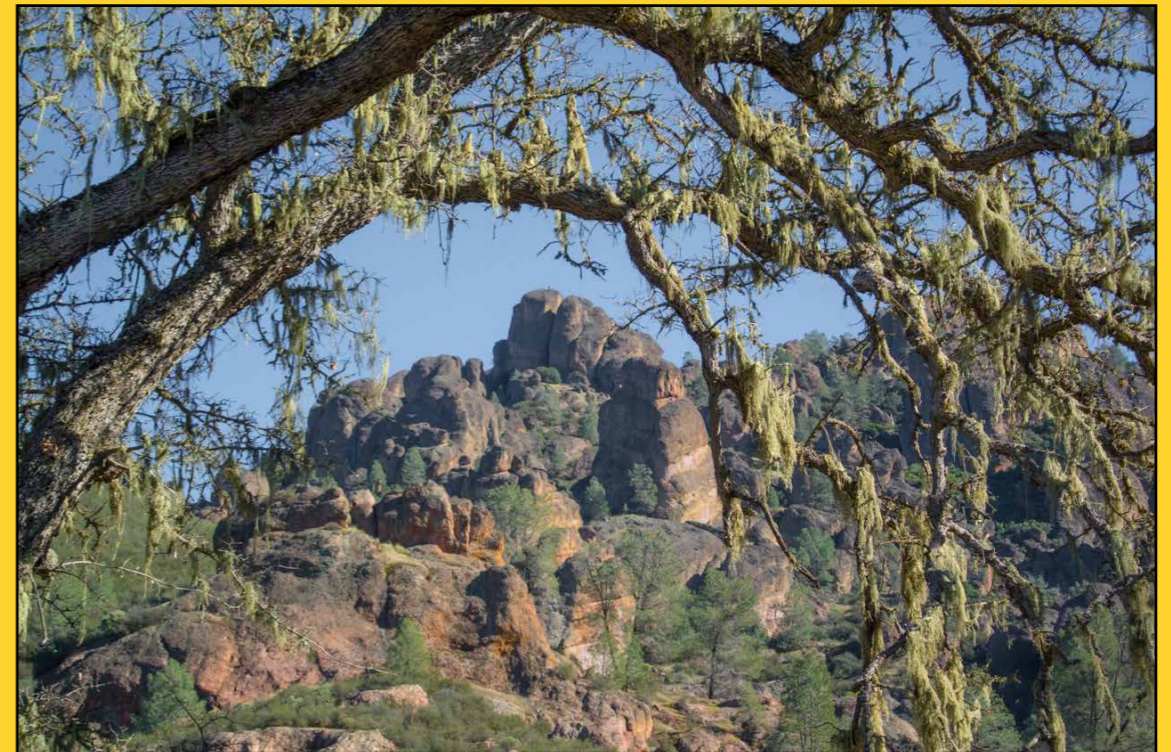
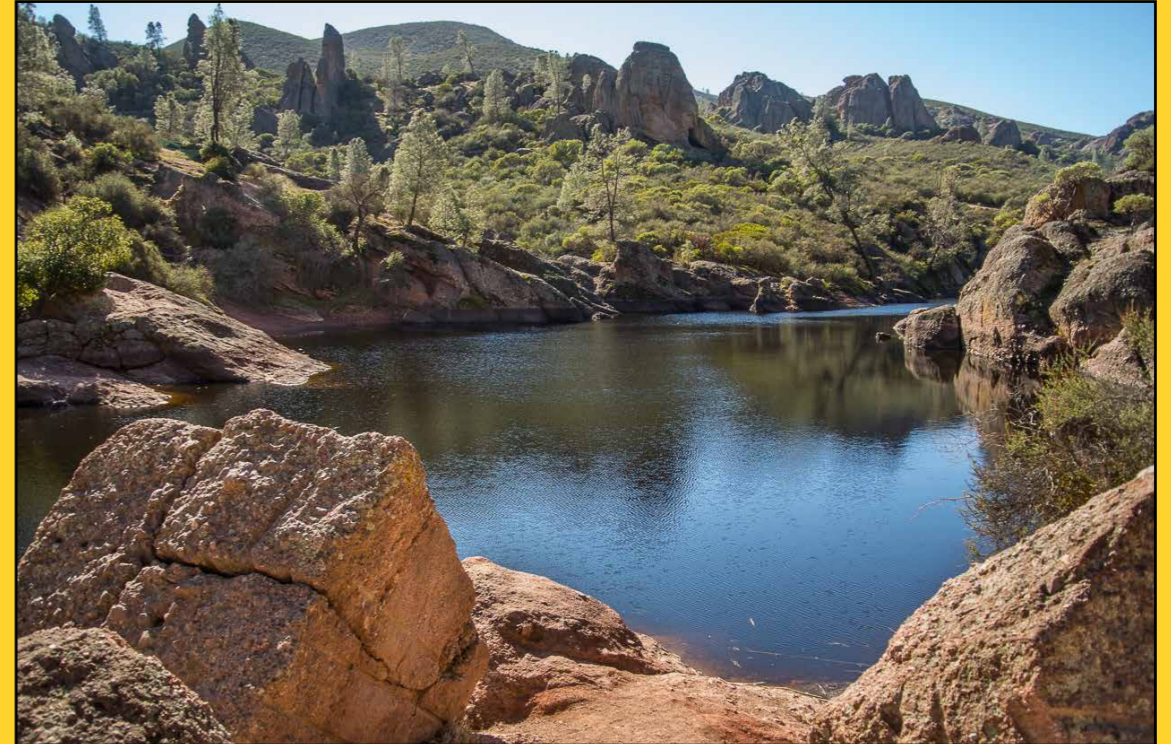
The Junior Canyon loop trail from the west side of the park winds up to the top and goes back down a different way. It's like a Disney ride with every imaginable feature squeezed in along the way: huge rock formations, backlit trees, tunnels through huge rock formations, narrow boards bridging rock ravines, rickety steep metal steps with a surprise lake at the top, scenic vistas from the top and the pièce de résistance: California condors with 10-foot wingspans circling at the summit.

I could walk this 4.2-mile trail every day and never get tired of it. It's spectacular. In fact, I recommend this as my #1 favorite hike in all the parks... really!



Above: The rocks framing my sister give a sense of proportion here. This was only one of the continuing treats that Mother Nature provided. The background is darkened.

Below: The bluebird day creates extreme contrasts in this surprise at the top of rickety stairs. Some of the rocks are compromised by dark shadows, so I lighten the shadows and increase the clarity to reveal more detail and gorgeous color. Lots of editing is not unusual in these one-chance opportunities when traveling.



Above: A group of pinnacles is framed by the tree branches. This is a postcard framing trick but it does camouflage the boring blue sky

YOSEMITE

California, July 2014

“No temple made with human hands can compare with Yosemite,” wrote John Muir. For me it’s about soaring trees, high waterfalls, huge granite walls, snow, meadows, the intimate valley and my memories. This is my home stomping ground for National Parks.

We have been here before with our children, but this time we include our four grandchildren. It’s our victory lap celebration, as well as our 50th wedding anniversary. We expect it to be hot and jammed, and it is. However, somehow visitors have a reverence for this place and it’s very peaceful, like being in a magic bubble. For four days we play in the valley on the river, in the visitor centers, on the trails and on the boulders. Part of the family goes rock-climbing in the high country.



Above: I take many pictures of the majestic trees in the valley, but only the inclusion of people (grandkids and son-in-law) truly shows the feel of the place.



For me there is a heart-stopping “Aha!” moment. Part of our three-generation group drives up to Glacier Point (elev. 7,214 ft.) overlooking the valley. As we drive around a corner we are suddenly up close and personal with the iconic Half Dome (think Ansel Adams). There it is, at eye level across the valley, it is so close. I can’t take my eyes off old Half Dome. It pulls me with an irresistible force. I am speechless! I can still conjure up that moment.

Left: Somehow, looking at Half Dome through the tree branches gives it a place. The storm clouds add strength to the image of this 2,700 ft. formation.

As we leave Yosemite, our oldest grandchild, Jason (then 12) names his three favorite things: the lazy inner tube float through the valley on the Merced River, rock climbing in the high country and (be still my heart) the live, one-man John Muir show. I know he gets it.



Above: This iconic view from the south end of the valley sets the stage. The little blip in the middle of the horizon is Half Dome.

Our thirteen-year adventure took us to unimaginable places in our own country, in many cases far off the beaten track. Whether the park was one of the biggies or something like Hot Springs, Arkansas (my first time in the state), Great Basin in Nevada (a five-hour drive across the Great Salt Lake desert at night), or Theodore Roosevelt in North Dakota (a two-hour drive west from Bismarck past oil wells and sunflower fields), I can remember every one by some unique experience. That is, as we checked parks off our list, we discovered, often by accident, so much about our own glorious country that we never knew!

So, “just do it.” Make plans, but don’t schedule every minute, something better might turn up, like a California condor, a sandstorm, a yin-yang experience or an in-your-face Half Dome.



If you need extra incentive, take your kids or grand kids.