



PHOTO MASTERCLASS PART 11

in association with
TAMRON®

CREATIVE VISIONS OF NATURE



It's time to free your mind to take truly unforgettable photographs. The aim is to use your imagination to create an inspirational vision – a unique, perhaps abstract view of wildlife or wild places. To achieve this, you've got to work hard and think laterally. But it's very rewarding.

WITH WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER MARK CARWARDINE

A RECENT ESTIMATE suggests that some 50 billion photographs are taken each year. Several billion are probably shown to family and friends, and a few million are selected for publication. Goodness knows how many pictures each of us sees in a typical day, week or month. But how many do we remember – how many photographs can you 'see' clearly in your mind's eye?

Surprisingly few pictures make such a big impact that we remember them later. The ones we do recall tend to be iconic images of memorable events or people, such as the famous portrait of Che Guevara by Alberto Korda. But out-of-the-ordinary images of common subjects can also be memorable. One that comes to mind is *Sky Chase* by Manuel Presti – last year's Wildlife Photographer of the

Year winner – showing a flock of starlings pursued by a peregrine in wonderful graphic simplicity.

This month, we'll be finding new ways of looking at wildlife and wild places. Producing genuinely creative visions of nature goes far beyond the absence of technical flaws and the use of pleasing composition. It demands 'visionary imaging' – a term coined by the late photographer Galen Rowell to describe pulling back from the simple experience of 'being there' and using the aesthetic relationships of everything around you to create an image in your mind and, ultimately, in your camera. So we'll be taking inspiration from nature, but suggesting methods of tackling age-old subjects in rather more original and artistic ways.

▲ Africa's soda lakes, such as Lake Natron, are a dream for anyone looking for textures in landscapes. Here, Art Wolfe has captured the salts left behind by evaporation, which create sweeping patterns in the barren landscape. Lesser flamingos are strewn across the centre of the image like a pink comet tail.



MEET THE EXPERT...

Every issue, our world famous photographers share their knowledge and skills.

ART WOLFE USA

Renowned for his unique approach to nature photography and his mastery of colour and composition, Art Wolfe has taken an estimated one million images and had over 45 books published.



Art Wolfe knew he was “crazy about photography” by the age of 14, and published his first book just three years after graduating with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. Now he spends nine months of the year travelling in search of suitable subjects and the rest of the year planning.

He lives and dreams photography. Even in normal day-to-day life at home in Seattle, he has to force himself to leave his camera behind. “But then my mind is constantly awash with images that are begging to be shot,” he laughs. “If I see a fabulous shot that I can’t photograph, I go cold turkey.”

“Never stop thinking pictures,” he says. “I’m either looking through a camera, wishing I was looking through a camera

or sketching ideas to get something down on paper. And I spend a lot of time pre-visualising images I would like to take.”

Art is passionate about conservation and much of his work revolves around the people, places and wildlife he cares most about. “I ignore market forces,” he says, “preferring to turn my private passions, such as rainforests, primates or tribes, into books and prints.”

When we spoke he had just returned from Madagascar, shooting for a new book, *Moments of Life*. “Even though I am lucky enough to travel most of the time,” Art enthuses, “there are still many subjects on my wishlist. I have a burning ambition, for example, to photograph the remote tribes in southern Sudan.” And then he was silent for a moment, as yet another series of potential pictures flitted through his mind.

Art Wolfe’s top tips for creative visions photography



An abstract image of lesser flamingos on Lake Natron creates an intriguing pattern.

1 Find new angles

The most important aspect of any photography is to find fresh perspectives. Don’t be lazy and take the pictures that are obvious to everyone. Work hard. Think laterally. Find new angles, wait for better light, look for interesting behaviour, vary the shutter speed and aperture – anything to avoid the classic ‘bird on a stick’ shot.



Limpid blue water, hard granite peaks and a glowering sky give a fantasy feel to this Chilean landscape.

2 Keep stimulated

Keep your mind and imagination stimulated. Find new subjects and visit new places as often as you can. Set yourself challenges. Make your photography fun and inspiring. It’s crucial to keep your creative juices flowing. Art firmly believes that constant stimulation gives him the edge, stops him going stale and keeps his lifelong passion alive.

YOUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE...

Mark Carwardine shows you how to apply the theory to get the perfect picture.

1 LOOK FOR STRIKING COLOURS



- » **Use eye-catching colours** to produce more dynamic images.
- » **Learn to balance colours** with the greatest visual impact. Primary colours (red, blue and yellow) are particularly striking, but mixing these with certain secondary colours (red-green, blue-orange or yellow-purple, for example) can make each hue even more intense.
- » **Work with contrasting colours** to add depth to two-dimensional photographs. Warm colours such as reds and yellows advance in the image; cool colours such as blues and greens recede.

2 SHOOT ABSTRACT LANDSCAPES



- » **Look beyond the traditional** broad, sweeping landscapes and try to capture eye-catching vignettes instead. The more abstract your image, the more striking and intriguing it can be.
- » **Try using a telephoto lens** instead of a wide-angle to get something different. Using a telephoto is not the same as moving nearer to a particular part of the picture, because it compresses the scene at the same time as bringing it closer.
- » **Experiment with blurring** – use a long shutter speed to capture wind movement or move your camera as you take the picture.

3 EXPERIMENT WITH FLASH



- » **Don’t be put off** by the bad old days of ancient manual flashguns and the guesswork once needed to achieve accurate exposures. Modern flashguns are remarkably powerful and easy to use.
- » **Try shooting on a dull day**, using flash to brighten your main subject and make it jump out of the picture.
- » **Use flash in bright sunlight, too.** It helps to fill in the shadows and reduce contrast. But best of all, it enables you to experiment with more unusual vantage points. With flash you can shoot against a sunny sky, for example, and still get perfect exposures.

4 SET UP A HOME STUDIO



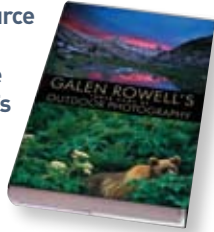
- » **Hone your creative technique** by spending time at home with a few simple props.
- » **Try freezing a leaf** in a glass dish for an unusual frosty close-up. Light it from the side with daylight, flash or even a reading lamp. Then try placing the dish on a lightbox to emphasise the transparency of the ice and the intricate details of the leaf.
- » **Shoot feathers, leaves, twigs, acorns, fir cones** – whatever you can find – and experiment with light. Place the light to one side, on both sides, in front, underneath and overhead for different effects.



ESSENTIAL KIT...

GALEN ROWELL'S INNER GAME OF OUTDOOR PHOTOGRAPHY

This is an essential source of inspiration by one of the masters of creative nature photography. It's not a 'how-to' book in the traditional sense, but it shows how the late Galen Rowell used pre-visualisation to turn the world around him into memorable works of art. He describes the spiritual side of his photography, the thinking behind his most creative images and the lifestyle of an innovative outdoor photographer. This is a great way to get in the mood for more inventive and inspired photography – as soon as you start reading you'll be itching to have a go yourself.



WHAT TO LOOK FOR

» Galen Rowell's *Inner Game of Outdoor Photography* (WW Norton & Co, ISBN 039304985X, £32).

CHEAPER ALTERNATIVES

» Galen Rowell's *Vision: The art of adventure photography* (University of California, ISBN 0871564580, £13.95). Focusing on creativity in adventure photography, but the ideas are applicable to any outdoor photography.

BBC WILDLIFE SHOP

Order on p75, quoting codes W1206/36 and W1206/35 respectively.

DOS & DON'TS

- » **DO** keep experimenting.
- » **DO** ask family and friends to comment – they don't have the emotional attachment that makes it so hard for you to separate the pictures that were fun or challenging to take from those that really have impact.
- » **DO** look at other people's pictures and analyse why some imprint themselves on your memory while most don't.
- » **DON'T** try to copy other people's work – just learn from it and feel inspired.

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MASTERCLASS CHALLENGE UK...



Sources of inspiration are everywhere, but it's easy to overlook them. UK photographer **Ross Hoddinott** shows you how to see the magic in the commonplace.

Bark

Creative eyes are needed to identify and isolate the colour and intricate form of bark. Widespread species, such as pine and birch, are well worth closer inspection. Strong side lighting can help to emphasise texture and add depth. Position your camera parallel with the bark to keep the subject in focus throughout.



Frost

Frost transforms subjects you might otherwise ignore. Get outdoors early while the landscape's glistening. Look for interesting detail. Utilise the natural curve of a leaf to create a simple composition. Take time to compose your shot. Ensure there's nothing distracting in the background. A clean, diffused background is often the key to a successful close-up.



Lichen

Lichen grows almost anywhere, though a churchyard is a good place to visit. If the light is poor, avoid using flash, as this will create an artificial feel. Instead, reflect natural light back onto the subject using kitchen foil stretched tightly over a piece of A4 cardboard. Carefully angle your home-made reflector to evenly illuminate your subject.



Ice

Frozen water can create striking patterns. Look for interesting detail or shapes. Employ your camera's macro facility so you can fill the viewfinder and maximise impact. Air bubbles and cracks should be utilised as a compositional aid. Strong sunlight will wash out subtle hues and detail. To avoid this, try casting your shadow across the ice.



MASTERCLASS READER PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Now it's your turn. Use our experts' hints and tips to take a creative photograph of the British countryside or its wildlife. All of Ross's suggestions should be easy to locate this winter. Upload eight images on our website and the winning shot will be published in *BBC Wildlife*.

HOW TO ENTER

Log on to www.bbcwildlifemagazine.com and click on Photo Masterclass, then follow the instructions to upload your images. Closing date: Wed 13 December.

RULES 1) The competition is open only to amateur photographers. 2) Up to eight entries only per person. 3) Entry of a picture constitutes a grant to BBC Worldwide to publish it in all media. 4) Entries will be judged by *BBC Wildlife*. 5) The winning image will be published in the February 07 issue. 6) No correspondence will be entered into and winners will not be notified. 7) Entries will not be accepted by post or email.



'BIRD PORTRAITS' WINNER: Darren Chaplin
This grey wagtail with a freshly caught mayfly is beautifully composed, with perfect light. The soft focus foliage in the distance provides the ideal backdrop.