





*Auckland Photographic Society*  
Since 1883

**Meeting on the 3rd Thursday of every month 7.30pm**

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# FOCAL PLANE

AUCKLAND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

SEPTEMBER 2002



**Nature Photography • Exhibitions**  
**Portrait Introduction • News**



# Nature Into Me: *Discovering Nature Photography*

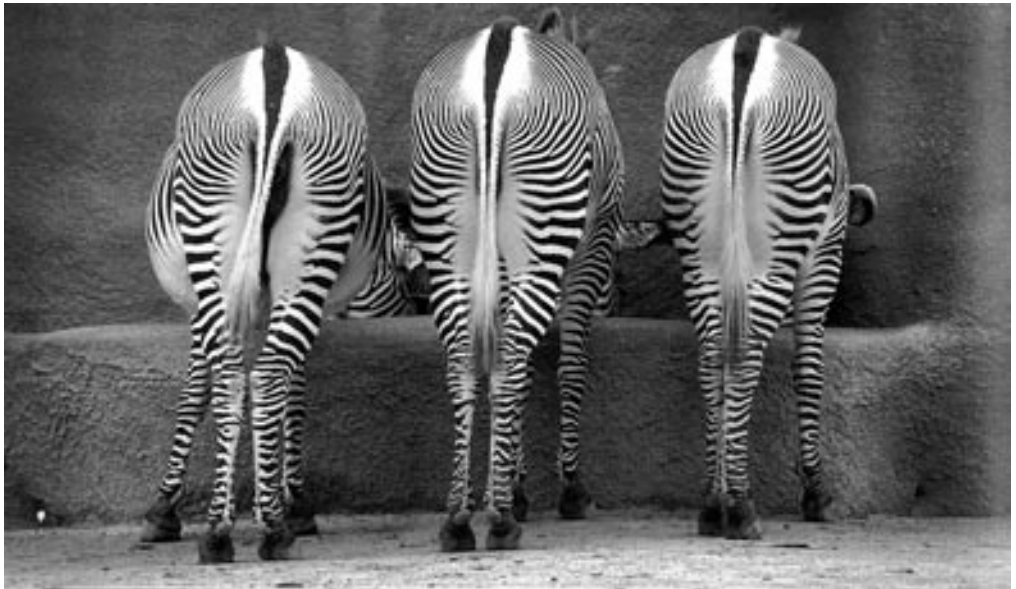
**W**ell. As you all know, it's the nature trophy competition at the club meeting next week. I have often confused nature photography with landscape photography. After all, landscape photography usually includes a selection of natural elements in its composition, namely rocks, trees, animals, textures etc. One way of putting it is that nature photography looks at the individual element that could possibly make up a landscape.

An example would include the texture of bark on a tree or as on the left, early morning dew on moss. Another explanation could be a photograph that does not show 'the hand of man' to be evident in the photograph. If so, would you still regard the photograph of the three zebras having a drink in a zoo below as a nature photograph? I think we

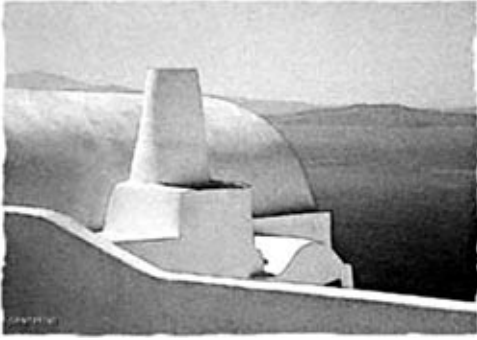
all have in some sort of idea of what we all expect from a nature photograph and whatever we shoot, as long as we enjoy it.

If you know where to look, even a commonplace object such as a tree can be an endless inspiration and source of photographs. Use for example the outline of a tree against the sky. Close up of the leaves or a view looking up from below through the canopy of the leaves above can leave imaginative abstract shapes.

The tree of course is home to an amazing amount of tiny insects and larger animals, all worthy of photographic attention. Spiders, ants, mice and other creatures are all there for discovery. All that is required is the time to look for them.



Can we call these three Zebras drinking together a nature photograph?



interpreted in a unique and individual way. Computer enhancement has been creatively used to create a mood or to accentuate the message.

More than anything this exhibition illustrates how the photographer, no longer shackled by the constraints of the darkroom, can move into creative realms previously the domain of those artists who begin work with a blank canvas.

## *In Other News...*

It seems that despite our best efforts with our publicity, we do not seem to have got the message across about this years Central Regional Convention to be held at Lake Waikaremoana on the weekend of 13-15 September 2002. The cost of \$200 (\$225 for non-PSNZ members) is fully inclusive. It covers all meals from (& including) Friday night to Sunday Lunch. Accommodation is also included. Add up the total cost of a normal convention plus accommodation, meals etc and this convention looks pretty cheep.

The venue of Lake Waikaremoana is an unspoilt area NZ nestled within the Urewera

National - one of my favourite spots and excellent for photography of landscapes and natural history. For anyone who joined a camera club because you love to take photos, then this is the convention for you!

For those of you who are sick of going to conventions to watch slide shows, then this is the convention for you too! We will concentrate on photography (not slide shows - you will only be sitting down to eat).

I extend an invitation to all members of your club who have not registered yet to do so, there is still time - we would love to see you there. Could you please contact your local club members and urge them not to miss this opportunity. Anyone requiring registration forms, please contact me as per the contact details below. See you there

Pete Renshaw,  
Tel. 06 863 1056  
36 Cook Street, Gisborne

That's about it for this month. I would like to thank Jack for the great AV displays that you gave us all last month. I just goes to show that a bit of imagination and enthusiasm can go a long way. Dont forget that Its portrait trophy on October 17th.

Remember, if you hear of anything first, Something that you think readers would want to read, email me at [terry@paradise.net.nz](mailto:terry@paradise.net.nz) and let me know. I wouldn't mind some tips, jokes, exhibition notes. Basically anything that you can throw at me. It will all come in handy. Til next month. PS. I was hoping to type enough to get to the bottom of the page.

# Portrait Photography: *Keys to Success*

There are many ways in which to approach portrait photography. Some better than others. One rule that seems to be common throughout them all is that if you want to take good photos, you have to be interested in the people in front of the camera. The portrait should provide an insight into the models nature and perhaps reveal something of your relationship with him or her.

Being photographed is a bit like a public performance. Most people, unless they are used to presenting themselves publicly, do find sitting in front of a camera intimidating. On the other hand, the subject may welcome the chance to have a record of them taken by someone that is interested in them and who, they feel will photograph them sympathetically.

## The Model

Even the best portrait photographers do not always take successful photographs. One of the most important rules is to first enjoy yourself. Talk with your subject, find out what he/ she is interested in. Look for expressions that reveal character and mood. Some peoples expressions are constantly changing. The more relaxed you both are, the more chance you have of capturing this on film.

If you find it difficult to put at someone at ease, take your first portraits outdoors. Pick out faces at random and use a telephoto

lens so that you do not intrude. As your confidence increases, you will soon find that you will move onto family and friends, and eventually strangers.

## Backgrounds

The setting will exert a strong influence on your pictures. For a picture to be thought of as a portrait, the person must be the centre of interest. The background can be used as a shape, directing attention towards the subject, or it can include objects that are associated with the subject. If the background is to help describe the model, you will want it sharp or nearly out of focus. If the background is to be used as an extension



*Natural daylight like above is often best for informal portraits.*

of the composition, you may want the model only in focus. For lighting, your control of background and lighting is the choice of camera and subject person. To begin with, most people are hesitant about placing their subject in a shaded spot, although this can provide the most interesting and rewarding light. Direct sunlight is harder to use. It is more revealing and less flattering. It should not be discounted, however, because it can be ideal for some faces. Whatever light you use, place the subject so that he or she can look at the camera without squinting.

### Through the Viewfinder

When you have chosen the background and lighting, look through the viewfinder and decide how much of the persons face you would like in the frame. Often the best lens for a 35mm camera is a 80-90 mm lens. Lenses outside this range tend to suffer

from varying degrees of disorientation. The longer the focal length of the lens, the flatter the face will look on film. Going the other way. The wider the focal length, the more rounded the features will become. This is not to say that these lenses should not be used. It will depend on the look and feel of the portrait that you want to achieve, that will help you decide which lens to choose.

### Expression is Everything

The one thing that can really make a portrait is the expression on the subjects face. Capturing that moment when lighting, camera angle, background and expression are in harmony can make shooting rolls and rolls of film all the more worth while. Portrait photography is a vast subject, of which we have only scratched the surface here. Above everything, take your time, have fun and you will be rewarded with great photos.

## FOCAL PLANE TOP TIP

Many professional photographers prefocus the camera lens on the approximate distance they anticipate the action to occur. If for example you wanted pictures of athletes leaving the starting block. Prefocusing would be a simple matter of focusing on the starting line. One way of ascertaining that your lens is adjusted to produce the greatest possible zone

1.

of sharp focus is by setting it to the hyperfocal distance. To do this, select the smallest aperture that will allow a reasonable shutter speed, and focus the lens on infinity. Now look at the depth of field scale and note the closest point of sharp focus to the camera. This distance is known as the hyperfocal distance. If you next refocus the lens to this closest point, the zone of sharp focus

2.

will then extend from infinity to only half the hyperfocal distance. An example, if with the lens focused at infinity and an aperture of f11 set, with a 50mm lens the depth of field scale might indicate a zone of sharp focus stretching from infinity to 15ft from the camera (1). If you refocus for 15ft, depth of field will then extend from infinity to only 7 1/2 ft from the camera (2).

# Focal Plane *Exhibitions*

**Alien Registration (lost voices)**  
**Photographer Naomi Bell**  
**Artstation Until 14th Sept,**  
**9am-5pm Mon-Fri (5pm-Sat)**

Displacement and dislocation come together in a new exhibition entitled Alien registration: lost voices at Auckland City's Artstation.

Twenty-six-year-old photographer Naomi Bell says she has always been intrigued by her maternal grandparents' journey to New Zealand in 1939, as Czech refugees escaping Nazism. Once here, they were again classified as "aliens." "It was something that wasn't really spoken about in my family for a long time and it was a mystery, so that made me want to find out," says Naomi.

"My grandmother said it wasn't uncommon for refugees who came here to say they'd just come on holiday, which is very far from the truth." The exhibition is based around a series of photographs taken during this



*Photographer Naomi Bell delves into displacement and dislocation in her exhibition Alien registration: lost voices*

recent trip combined with smaller images from the 1930s to the present day.

"It's about my family and home, lost histories, lost voices, displacement and dislocation. I'd like to think that anyone who's experienced that translation of people and places could relate to it in some way." Reproduced with the kind permission of City Scene, Auckland City Council.

**Beyond The Camera**  
**Jack Sprosen and Maurice Petchell**  
**Pumphouse Gallery, Killarney Park (off Manurere Ave) Takapuna, Till 15<sup>th</sup> September, Monday to Friday 10.00am to 3.30pm and Sunday 2.00pm to 4.30pm**  
**Enquiries; ring Jack on 486 2844**

An Exhibition not to be missed. There seems to be a photographic exhibition on every corner these days and one tends to become a little blasé about them. Many feature the seamier side of life, war-zones, poverty, and sometimes feature strange images that defy understanding unless you carefully read the art-speak publicity. Finally here is an exhibition that we can truly enjoy. Our own club member Jack Sprosen, together with well known photographer Maurice Petchell, have assembled a body of their digital work that celebrates the pleasure of photography. Some fifty vibrant images that need no complicated explanation and which owe as much to old-time pictorialism as to later day impressionism. A variety of subjects each



## Equipment and Accessories

Many nature subjects may be off the beaten track, but you may be surprised how much is in your own back garden. Useful items include a small flash unit and a small white piece of card in which to bounce light into small crevices and under rocks. A sturdy tripod is a must for longer exposures and sequences, as is a slow film for finer detail. The choice of lens to use can vary depending on the subject. If you were photographing animals, then a telephoto of at least 300mm would be an ideal without the chance of scaring it off. Of course, if you are using a lens like that, then a sturdy tripod will not go a miss as well. The use of a macro lens can allow you to get incredibly close to your stick insect or butterfly without scaring it off. This is where your piece of card will come in particularly handy. If you have the cash, a ring flash for the front of the camera is an excellent choice.

## Anticipate the Shot

This is especially important if you are trying to photograph wildlife. Knowing their behaviour and being able to guess what they will do next will help, enabling you to get the shot that you want.

## Use a Journal

When you are out taking photos, write up a section in a journal throughout the day. It doesn't have to be a novel or anything. Just a few notes on location, what you photographed, weather etc. That way you can be reminded of the special times and places to capture particular photographs.

## Protect Equipment From the Rain

Lets face it. When you are out taking photos, one day, you are going to be caught in the rain. Instead of rushing to put your camera away for a brief shower, how about purchasing a cheap shower cap. When it starts raining, whip it out and throw it over the camera. They are dirt cheap and very convenient.

## Remaining Observant

When on a general nature photography trek, keep your eyes moving. Scanning the ground may reveal great macro opportunities, looking ahead or above you allows you to sight birds, mammals, a pleasing light pattern through the trees or an interesting cloud formation. And, don't forget eye level! I don't know how many times I've looked right next to me on the trail and have seen a small bird watching me from a few feet away!

*-Terry Bowyer*



*Early morning dew on moss. Photographic opportunities literally under your feet.*

