

Wildlife Safaris

Where to, how to and logistics. Tips on how to get the most out of your wildlife photography and your safari.





Wildlife Photography

Google describes Wildlife Photography as “a genre of photography concerned with documenting various forms of wildlife in their natural habitat. It is one of the more challenging forms of photography.”

Photography Rut

- Too often people get in a photography rut.
- Sometimes we need to spruce up our styles so our portfolios don't become too linear.
- When photographing your subject think about the different types of photography for that particular subject.

Types of Wildlife Photography

Portrait
Head or head and
shoulders image.





Anthropomorphic

An image that makes animals appear as though they have human characteristics.



Animal Landscape Photography

Photographing animals as part of the landscape offers perspective of the vastness of the land and helps with composition.



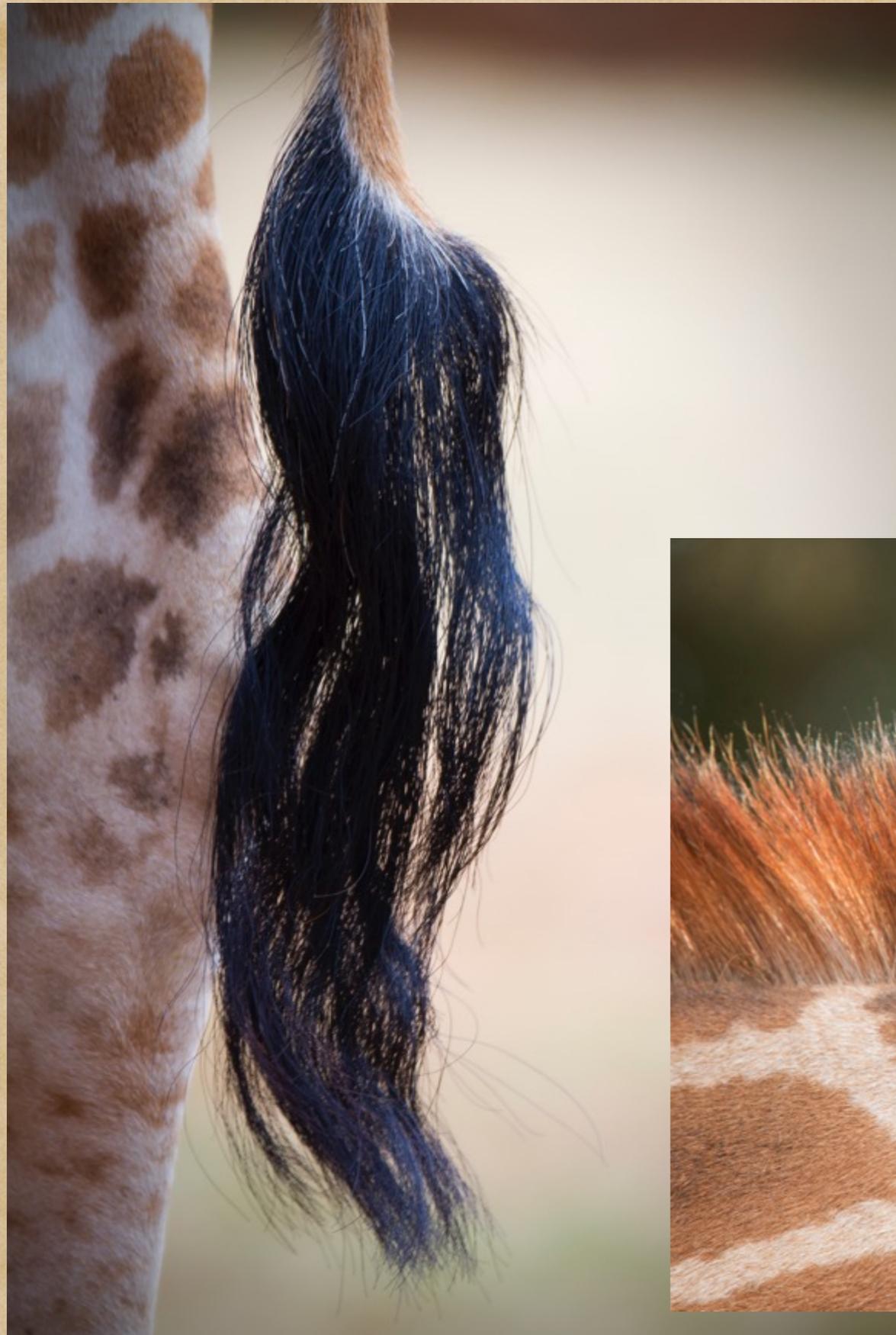
Animal Action & Interaction

Often tells a story or leaves us imagining our version of what may have been going on in the scene.



Silhouette

Taken first thing in the morning or at dusk it requires a bright background so the silhouette of the animal stands out.



Abstract

In wildlife photography an abstract image may be a close-up of part of an animal. The purpose is to look for designs in nature.



HARVEYWILDLIFEPHOTOGRAPHY.CA



"From their homes to yours."

Composite

An image that is significantly edited, creating more of an artistic impression of the image. Often something is added or deleted that wasn't in the original image.

Wildlife Safaris Can Be Very Expensive!!!

- Camera Gear
- Cost of actual safari
- Flights
- Time off work
- Because they are expensive, it is important to put the work in to ensure you get the best images you can get out of the experience.

Three Main Things to
Consider before going on
Safari

What, When & Where?

- What do you want to photograph?
- Where is the best place to photograph that animal(s)?
- When is the best time to see them?
- Visit wildlife photography forums such as trip advisor and safari talk to research the camps.
- What professional photographers go where you are going? If the camp is as awesome as you think it is, other pros go there. If they don't, then it likely isn't as good as you think it is.

Safari/Camp Strategies...

- You know what you want to photograph and what time of year to go. And you know of several pros who visit that camp. Now what???!?
- Do they offer a private vehicle? How much extra do they charge?
- Research the guides
- Book a year in advance
- Communicate with the camp what you want from your safari. Reiterate that with your guides to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Photographers in a vehicle...

Most camps squeeze six people in a vehicle. Some safaris will sneak in as many as 9 photographers in a vehicle. Avoid those safaris!



In my groups photographers max at three in three-row vehicles so we can each photograph out of both sides of the vehicle.



What Gear Do You Need?

- What kind of images are you interested in acquiring?
- What kind of reach do you need?
- How dark is the environment? What sort of ISO will you require?
- How much weight can you take on your flights?
- How can you trim down your weight?
- How can you take more gear?

Airline Tips and Tricks

- Buy an approved sized carry-on camera bag and personal item that fits all of your camera gear for safari.
- Camera gear must be carry-on
- Airlines don't weigh what you wear. Load your pockets with smaller items like batteries and chargers etc. so you can bring more gear in your carry on.
- vestedinterest.com - John Storrie can custom make you a camera vest specific to your needs.
- When flying on small planes they may allow you to valet your gear to the gate if you ask. Your gear is then the last bag on and the first bag off and you can watch them load the bags.

At Camp, camera in
hand, now what...

Six-Point Image Check List

- Focus- Is your subject in focus
- Light- How are the shadows, where is the sun? Can you re-position to improve the light on your subject?
- Depth of field- Is your aperture setting appropriate for your image? Subject(s) in focus, background not distracting?
- Composition- How is the composition and is there anything looking like it is sticking out of the back of your subject's head?
- Check all around the image. Are the limbs, ears and tail inside the borders of the image?
- If your subject is moving how is your speed? If your image is still and you are using a telephoto lens your speed should be double the millimetre distance to be on the safe side. If shooting with a pro-series lens, then you will just have to ensure your speed is appropriate to the movement of the animal.
- Check Your Horizon- Is your horizon straight? This is especially important if there is a tree-line, or some other kind of physical horizon.



ISO 5000, f6.3, 1/640 Evaluative metering, +1 exposure compensation Canon 1Dx focal length 560mm on full-frame sensor

Eye Contact

- Eye contact with camera
- Eye level
- Eye Catchlight
- Sunset (Golden) Eyes
- Focus between eyes
- Eye contact looking up.
- Eye contact between animals



ISO 320, f8, 1/250, Evaluative metering, -.33
exposure compensation Canon 7D focal
length 600mm on crop (960mm)

Animal Behaviours

- Are the animals panting and moving?
- Is it hot out? Maybe they are looking for a water source. Water is great for reflections.
- Ask your guide if there is water nearby. If so, get there first and wait.
- Are predators stalking?
- Are prey nervous? running? Are there alarm calls? If so there may be predators near by.
- Has something caught either predators' or preys' attention?



ISO 400,
f4.5, 1/640
Evaluative
Metering
280mm
No Crop

*These foxes are
wildlife models.

Animal Interaction

- Are animals moving toward one another? Canines and cats will often greet one another.
- Are there two males and several females? Anticipate fights.
- Watch pups and cubs. When they are awake and active they almost guarantee great picture opportunities.



Anthropomorphic Activity

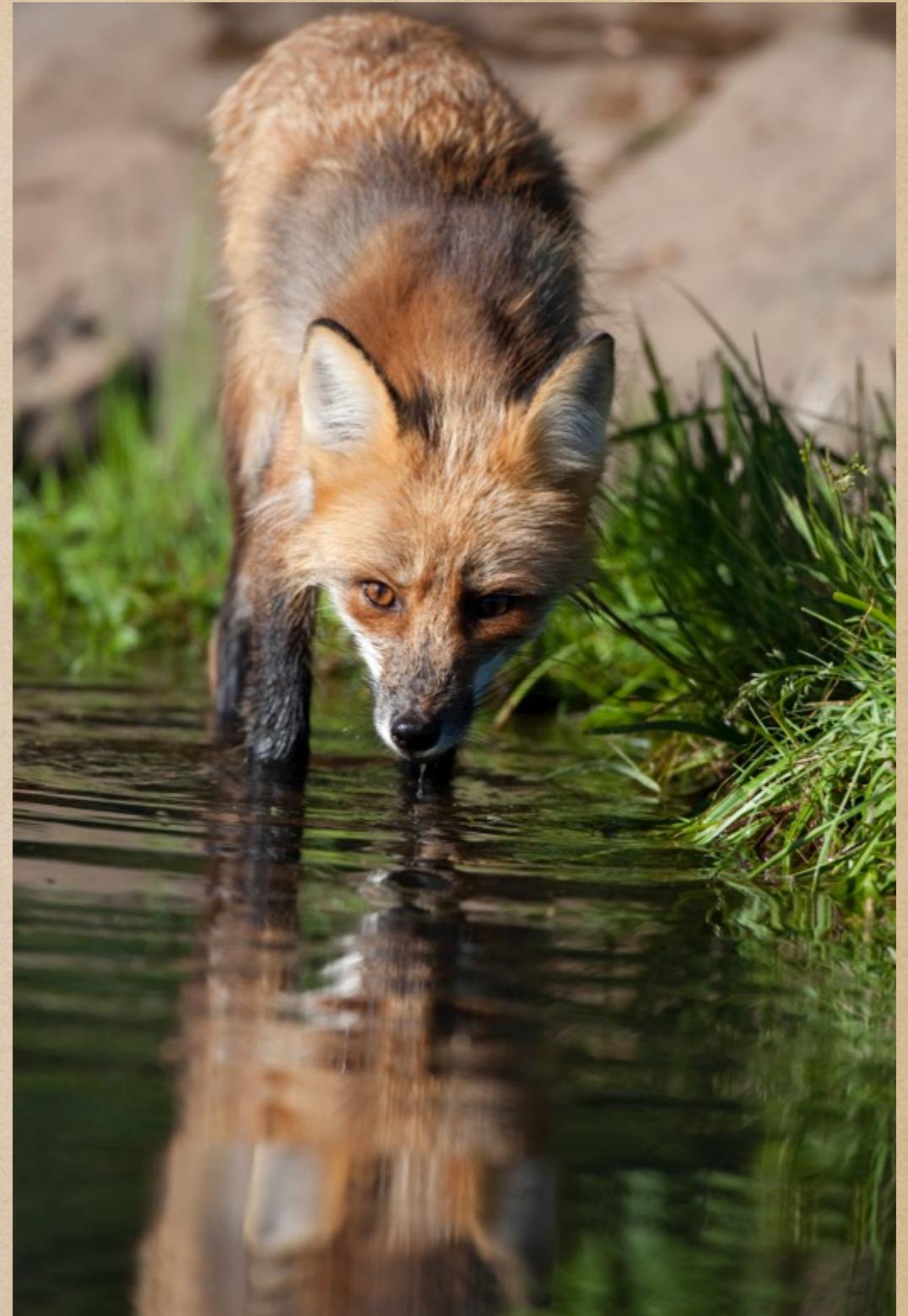
- Animal Greetings
- Standing Up on Two legs
- Paw Activity
- Human-like postures
- Yawns



Reflections

Reflections make an otherwise average image interesting.

ISO 500, f6.3, 1/1600
Evaluative Metering
600mm
No Crop



*This fox is a wildlife model.

Silhouettes

- When shooting silhouettes, set your camera on manual. Choose a low ISO, maybe 200. Set your exposure compensation to -2. Take a picture and look at the image. If it is too dark, lower your aperture. If it is too bright, raise your speed or aperture.
- Get down low and shoot up into the sky.
- Use a fixed or small zoom lens for these images. Zoom lens should be between 24 and no larger than 200mm.



ISO 250, f6.3, 1/640 exposure
compensation -2

Scene Variations

- Shoot vertical as well as horizontal
- Look for eye contact
- Look for portraits
- Look for wildlife landscapes
- Keep shooting!



ISO 500, f4, 1/125 Evaluative Metering
Canon Mark 7D, 600mm= 960mm



Post Safari Image Analysis

Check for sharpness, light, depth
of field, composition and noise

ISO 200, f5, 1/400 Evaluative
metering, 0 exposure compensation
@ 235mm on foot. He was really
close!

Sharpness

Check Camera info. for Speed, Aperture & Point of Focus



ISO 320, f8, 1/500
Evaluative metering,
+67 exposure
compensation
Canon 1Dx focal length
560 mm

Depth of Field

Check for depth of field- look at aperture settings.



*This red fox kit is a wildlife model.

At f4 and with nothing directly behind the kit, the background blurs completely

Red Fox Kit
ISO 800, f4,
Exposure compensation +67
Evaluative Metering

Composition

- You can correct composition in the editing phase.
- In tight scenes check that you are framing the scenes in a way that you think are pleasing to the eye.
- It is wise to check your composition to correct any mistakes going forward. Sometimes we don't realize how close to the edges we are framing our subjects. We can accidentally crop out important parts of the scene.



ISO 320, f10, 1/500
.-33 exposure compensation
Canon 7D @ 840mm

This image was taken in bright light so I dimmed it down a bit on the exposure compensation. With a fixed lens it can be challenging framing the scene.

Light

- Check light in your images on your laptop.
- Are you shooting too far to the right?
- Are your images too dark?
- How does the histogram look?



I blew out the highlights in this image thus wrecking it.
320, f8, 1/640 exposure compensation +1.67

Noise

- How is your camera handling the noise?
- Should you be using a lower aperture and or speed in hopes to lower your ISO?
- You should know what the highest ISO your camera can process while still maintaining acceptable image quality.



ISO 3200, f3.2, 1/640s, exposure compensation +33

Learn From Each Game

- It may sound redundant. Focus, ISO, light, speed, aperture, depth of field, composition, over and over...
- These things combine to create sharp and interesting images. As photographers if we don't keep examining what we did right and what we could have improved upon, our photography never improves and we continue making the same mistakes.



ISO 320, f 5.6, 1/640, 840mm
Evaluative Metering, 0 exposure compensation

While this image may seem somewhat interesting, it is missing something. The soft focus bear in the background distracts us from the interesting pose of the sharp bear in the foreground. I believe the image would have been more interesting at a different angle or vertical so the bear in the background wasn't in the image.



Wildlife Safari Strategies

1. Early To Rise

- Get out early enough to catch silhouettes
- Try to find a subject(s) while it is still dark so you have something to photograph during the golden hour.
- If you are in a blind you need to be in the blind while it is still dark.



2. Regular Test Shots...

Take test shots throughout the day and check histogram and camera settings. Light changes, scenes change etc. It is easier to make setting adjustments before the action than during it.

3. Downtime at a Sighting?

- Check images, but keep an eye on the animals. You don't want to miss the action while you are looking at your LCD screen...I have done this several times!
- Check with hoodman for sharpness
- Check for DOF and Composition.
- Check for Variety of shots- close ups, scenes, video, panoramic etc.
- Some cameras will enable voice notes that attach to images. Make notes on what you learn on safari and what you are photographing. Take a notebook too. Take lots of notes as there is a lot to learn on safari. Languages, terms, prides, birds, animals, places, parks, people, etc.
- If you take notes, when you return in a year or five years you won't have to re-learn the same lessons. What equipment did you use? What lens/camera combinations were effective? etc.
- Meter regularly and pay attention to changes in light.
- Pay attention to where the sun is so you can help your guide to position the vehicle or your group.

4. What about Video???

- You can't be a great photographer and a great videographer at the same time. It is mostly one or the other because you will either miss valuable shots or valuable videos.
- For video shoot at speed of 1/60 to 1/100 or the footage will be shaky.
- Shoot video when the background or the lighting situations are not optimal. If the images aren't going to be great, you may as well shoot video.
- Shoot video footage of events that can't be justified by images.
- Memories of video footage will provide aspects that images can't. The sounds, ambiance, etc.
- Shoot on a solid surface. Shaky videos are annoying and can make the viewer want to turn the video off rather than view the entire clip.
- When you start videoing, remind people around you that you are about to shoot video. A subtle hint that you would appreciate it if people didn't talk while you are videoing. When you are done your video tell them you are done videoing.

5. Between Safari Game Drives...

- Download, back up and folder out favourites.
- Charge batteries
- Blow dust off lenses and format cards.
- Load batteries and fresh cards.
- While on safari always take at least one camera to every meal and every where you go. The safari doesn't end when you go back to camp. There are often animals in camp too. Sometimes these moments make for the most interesting safari experiences.



When ever possible, get down to
the animal's level and shoot up.

Post Safari Workflow

Post Safari Work Flow

- Download to two hard drives after every shoot.
- Analyze for Sharpness, noise, depth of field and composition.
- Separate out “Best Of” into another folder on a laptop.
- Look for composition and variety of image scenes.



ISO 250, f11, 1/1000 Evaluative metering, 0 exposure compensation Canon 7D focal length 800mm on crop (1280mm)

Post Safari Workflow Cont.

- Always bring a laptop on safari. Check your images before your next drive to ensure your images are sharp, there's no dust on your sensor and your camera and lens is working properly.
- Do not depend upon keeping SD and CF cards as back ups. They can get lost or damaged.
- Hard drives can fail too. That's why we download to one hard drive and back up to another.
- Make mental notes on your mistakes. Do you have any soft images? Look at your files and figure out why the images are soft so you can make the appropriate adjustments for the next game drive.



ISO 1200, f4,
1/800 Evaluative
metering, +1.33
exposure
compensation
Canon 1Dx focal
length 200mm

Post Processing

Process for composition, sharpness, light and colour

Wildlife Photography Ethics

- We do not chase or unduly stress wildlife. If you see wildlife in the wild and keep still and quiet, they may come to investigate you a little bit.
- Keep your distance and buy the biggest lenses you can afford. This is better for their lives and ultimately perhaps for yours.
- Calling or baiting wildlife is a definitely grey area.
- Getting between males and females during rutting season or between moms and cubs is not only bad for wildlife, but may also reinforce Darwin's Law.
- If you take pictures of animals in captivity, it is your responsibility to make mention of that fact somewhere either on the image or if on a website below or with the attached information.

Business of Wildlife Photography

“The best way to make a small fortune in wildlife photography is to start out with a large fortune.

-unknown

- Wildlife Photography is back-end loaded. Not impossible to make a living at it, but it can take a decade or decades of consistently working at it before it pays off enough to make a living at it.
- Pro Photographers may need several lines of revenue to make it work...
- Lead Tours
- Greeting Cards
- Stock Images
- Print Sales
- Image sales to magazines
- Printing
- Framing
- Classes

Wildlife Photography Contests

Winning a contest or at least being recognized is a good way to gain some credibility as a photographer.

- BBC's Wildlife Photographer of the year is the most prestigious wildlife photography contest in the world: <http://www.nhm.ac.uk/visit/wpy.html>
- Natures' Best Photography Windland Smith Rice International Awards is the second most prestigious.
<https://www.naturesbestphotography.com>
- Africa Geographic- <https://africageographic.com/photographer-of-the-year/entry-details/>
- Canadian Geographic- Free to enter-
<http://photoclub.canadiangeographic.ca/contests>

Wildlife Photography Contests Continued...

Remember to read the fine print. With some photo competitions you may not win, but they retain the right to use your image(s). That is how some magazines survive. They pay a few well-known photographers for the magazine covers and for the main articles. Then they use amateur photographers' images for free for the rest of the magazine. Free exposure? or Exploitation?

**CAN I HAVE
THIS MEAT FOR FREE?**



IT'LL BE GREAT EXPOSURE

Photography Contests cont.

- Image must be unique somehow. Not just a picture of an animal in focus.
- You can edit tones, slightly adjust saturation, etc.
- You can not add anything or delete anything from the image.
- Some sharpening is expected.
- Cropping up to about 1/3 of an image is okay, but cropping away the integrity of the image and being left with 1/3 will likely be unacceptable.



This image was chosen as “highly honoured” in the Natures Best 2012 Windland Smith Rice International Photography Awards. It hung in the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington as part of the photography competition exhibit for the better part of a year.

Shameless
Self-Promotion

Burwell School of Photography

- Two day wildlife photography course- June 23 & 24, 2018. Second Class TBA in September, 2018.
- 2018 Discovery Park in Innisfail. Not really wildlife photography, but great practice. TBA
- Watch Burwell School of Photography website for details. www.bsop.ca

Kenya-November, 2018

- Giraffe Manor Video-
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O3PuhVUeHg>
- Governors' Camp video by Jonathon Scott-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SwwHwzyNBVg>
- Governors' Camp at Lunch time-
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EGxSITGT7LI>



Selling Your Work

- November 22nd 6:30 to 7:30p.m. South East Edmonton Senior Association.
9350-82 Ave
- We will be discussing...
- What sells and why?
- Who buys art and how to appeal to your demographic.
- Presentation piece by piece/Exhibit presentation
- How to Price your work
- Suppliers, To print or not to print. To frame or not to frame.
- From hobby to business.



'Yours Truly' posing while trying not to fall ten feet down into the polar bear den.



Masai Mara Photo Safari, 2017

Shameless Plug:
My latest passion has been taking people on safari to Southern France,
Africa and Alaska. For more information on these trips and others visit
www.hwphoto.ca

Thank You
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