



Congratulations

Helen Walker has been award MPSA2

If you gain a new ROPA or Portfolio distinction, or achieved anything else that you would like to share with other PSA members, please let me know.

Thank you!

This month I can share with you articles from three readers.

Jen Fawkes has shared some of her thoughts on AI.

George Skarbeck gives us some insight into his drone photography.

Debbie Sutton takes us on a wonderful journey to the Subantarctic Islands in Part 1 of her great adventure.

Please email me if you have anything related to photography that you would like to share with fellow PSA members.

PSA Journal

The July issue of the PSA Journal is available now and can be downloaded from the PSA website after you log in. <https://psa-photo.org/page/journal>

Battery Life

If you are concerned about the battery life you are getting from your mirrorless camera, you might find this video interesting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3jGNw6AtUc>

Your thoughts on AI

Last month I invited members to share their thoughts on the issues and challenges surrounding the developments in AI. Here is a contribution from *Jen Fawkes, EPSA, SPAS, FAPS*.

Before I start this discussion, I just want to clarify something. There is AI technology, that we all love and use in our post-processing programs. This AI technology allows us to manipulate our own images to create beautiful works of photographic art. Then there is the new AI – the ability to generate an image from scratch, no camera required. It is this AI technology that I will give you my opinion about.

There seems to be a lot of hype, hysteria, and panic that this new technology has created, with a real fear that ‘this will be the end of photography as we know it’. I wonder if this was the same fear that was voiced when digital cameras became popular.

Recently there were two examples of how this new AI technology has crept into the photographic world and has shown us how vulnerable we might be. Fortunately for us, in both of these examples, the makers were honest and declared their position, refusing the award they won.

The first was the 2023 World Sony Award, where German artist Boris Eldagsen won the Creative Open category. At his award ceremony, he said that he had used the picture to test the competition and to create a discussion about the future of photography. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/apr/17/photographer-admits-prize-winning-image-was-ai-generated>



The second example is closer to home, in a competition run by Digi Direct. The winner, using the pseudonym Jan Van Eyck, created a drone image that won a \$100 cash prize that was returned when the maker came clean about using AI technology to create the image.

<https://www.australianphotography.com/news/ai-generated-image-wins-australian-photo-comp>



Sure, there are concerns about honesty in competitions and there will always be cheats, such as the need for improved egos associated with competition wins, and the financial gains to be made by advertising photographic success. The Photographic Society of America (PSA) has made the first steps to preventing the submission of AI-created images into PSA-recognised competitions. They recently developed a generic statement that bans the use of totally AI-generated images in any PSA-recognised competition. But I feel this will not be enough. Organisations, such as PSA need to have strong processes for identifying, and penalising cheats so that competitions are fair for all. Not just to issue a statement saying that this type of imagery is forbidden, but a robust and rigorous system of identifying and penalising cheating. Maybe this is about regularly asking for access to RAW files of images entered into competitions, or publicly announcing photographers who cheat using this technology (a powerful deterrent for others).

But one thing I am certain about is, that if we don't allow people to embrace the new technology and give them space to learn and practice new skills, then PSA will be viewed as old-fashioned, an organization where people cling rigidly to what they believe 'real' photography is (or was).

A few years ago, I embraced the idea of learning some photo artistry. I did the course on Photo Artistry by Sebastian Michaels, and I found a wonderful community of photo artists who produced amazing work. There is even an Australian/ NZ photo artistry community called 'Artists Down Under'. At first, I was amazed to find out that most of these artists actually used acquired content – textures, images, vectors, brushes, and images, that were purchased, with a licence, to use in their art. This is definitely NOT permitted in the creative competitions run by PSA. These artists had their own competitions, many sold their work commercially, and they all understood that such images had no place in the Exhibition/ camera club world.

Perhaps this is where the thinking about AI might head – that we actually allow AI-generated images into their own competitions. Perhaps those that are interested in this digital artistry could form their own community, and advise organisations about rules, competitions, and education. It's a given that this technology is not going to go away.

While it might not be called 'PHOTOGRAPHY' as we know it, it is digital art, that does align with the techniques and tools that we already allow in competition. Because of this we can't just ignore it and hope it will go away.

Have you considered photography from a drone?

George Skarbeck

I have DJI Mini 3 Pro drone and enjoy flying it, as well as taking photos from a different perspective. As well as taking photos at 8064x6048, it can take 4K videos. The camera has a 1/1.3-inch CMOS sensor, with effective 48 MP and can shoot in bursts as well as single shot.

It has collision avoidance detection and a Return to Home button. Battery life is 34 minutes but if the battery becomes too low it will automatically return by itself. It is very easy to fly and this drone can be purchased for just under \$1,000.

For a drone under 250 grams, you do not need to obtain a licence. However, if used for commercial use, you must register the drone. Registration is free for drones under 500 grams. For all the rules and restrictions for drone flying in Australia, see: <https://www.casa.gov.au/knowyourdrone/drone-rules>. The most important rule is that you cannot fly within 5.5 km of a tower-controlled airport.

Here are a few of my recent photos. These photos were shot as RAW (DNG files) and I used DxO Pure Raw to automatically correct for any lens distortions and to sharpen the image. Then I used Lightroom to crop and make very minor adjustments.



Brandon Park shopping centre, SE freeway on right



Mt Buffalo near Bright
in NE Victoria



Subantarctic Islands – Part One: Enderby, The Snares and Bellany

Debbie Sutton

This trip was part of an Antarctic adventure tracing the voyages of heroic era explorers Scott and Shackleton. On the way to the Ross Ice Shelf we had the opportunity to visit Enderby Island in the Auckland Island group, as well The Snares, Macquarie and Bellany. On the return voyage a stopover at Campbell Island provided a rare experience that will be long remembered.

The Subantarctic Islands are often called the ‘Forgotten Islands’ as they are largely uninhabited due to their remote, hostile landscape and harsh climate. Some islands have scientific bases that are used during NZ Department of Conservation and/or scientific and research projects.

These islands are the territory of New Zealand, with the exception of Macquarie Island, which is an Australian territory.

They are recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Area due to their unique geology and climate, and endemic flora and fauna.



Physical features and flora

This photograph was taken on Enderby Island and gives a clear indication of typical physical features of the islands, but also the weather and flora with a few birds riding the thermals. Each island we had the privilege to visit was unique in terms of its physical features and untamed beauty.





Megaherb *Anisotome latiflora* is a giant member of the carrot family. This is one of many megaherbs that grow on the islands. Shipwrecked sailors and early settlers used these megaherbs for a variety of purposes ranging from vegetables, stock food and they even brewed alcohol using its leaves.



Whilst this is more of a memory shot than a potential award-winning image it is a good illustration of the vegetation on Enderby - ranging from the rata forest which is impenetrable across most of the island, to grasses, moss and lichen. The palette of colour was truly beautiful.

Fauna

For photographers these islands are a paradise and with the most diverse collection of seabirds in the world it is clear why it is often called a 'seabird capital'. More than 40 seabird species - at least 11 percent of all the world's seabirds - breed in the New Zealand subantarctic region, and over 120 species have been observed at the islands or in the surrounding ocean.



Buller's Albatross, Enderby Island

The islands are also home to penguins with the Snares crested and erect crested penguins being endemic to the islands and the royal penguins sole breeding site being



Snares crested penguin

There is also an abundance of sea lions, fur seals and elephant seals. This young pup had attitude – he owned the boardwalk and would not allow anyone to pass by!



Auckland Island shag is endemic to that group of islands.

Southern royal albatross – there is a small breeding colony of about 50 pairs on Enderby Island. The main breeding colony is on Campbell Island.



Bellany Island and seamount

This island is south of Macquarie Island and there are no landing options. The area is rich in marine food sources due to its proximity to the Antarctic Convergence and therefore a feeding ground for many whale species.



Human occupation

A number of the islands have had futile attempts at human habitation. The New Zealand government sold land grants to keen farmers on Enderby Island and brave families tried to tame these inhospitable locations and make a living! The islands were also occupied at various times by shipwrecked sailors leading to the government building shelters on many islands just in case they were required.



Sadly, these activities also brought a range of pests to these pristine islands, including pigs, sheep, cattle, goats, French Blue rabbits, mixed-breed rabbits, rats, mice and cats. In some cases these farm animals and pets overran the environment and caused great damage. In other cases, government policy, such as stocking islands with a food supply for possible shipwrecked sailors (cattle, goats, rabbits etc), also severely impacted ecosystems.

Needless to say, the biosecurity regime for our trip was extremely thorough with a full scrub down and detailed physical inspection of all clothing completed between each site.

Pest eradication

The New Zealand Department of Conservation has undertaken many pest eradication programs on a number of islands and has plans to continue this important work. A recent project was undertaken on Antipodes Island. These projects are extremely difficult and expensive. This 16 minute video is well worth viewing - <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/eradicating-mice-from-antipodes-island/>

Photographic Challenges

This type of experience is not without its challenges. From the images it is obvious that the climate presents its own photographic challenges. These islands are very wet. Campbell Island experiences 300 days per year of rain or snow with as little as 600 hours of sunshine. They are also misty and windy with extremely changeable conditions.

In two four-hour sessions on Macquarie Island we experienced sunshine, rain, wind, stillness, hail and snow. Then the weather cleared, it was sunny and a rainbow appeared. By the time we left the weather was in a repeat cycle.

Coupled with the weather is air that is full of tiny penguin feathers that float like extremely fine snow as the penguins finish their moulting in preparation for winter. Only the brave or the foolish would change lenses in these conditions.

These conditions make your initial equipment selection critical. You need either two camera bodies providing two lens options, or a lens that will cover a range of options. I found that a 100 – 500mm lens was the best suited to most of the sites visited. A smaller camera – either phone or a point-and-shoot camera is also essential. A camera option that provides video recording is vital, as video provides so much more detail of the scene than single images, in terms of sound and movement. Fortunately, neither the still images or video record the smell!

Shooting from a zodiac presents its own challenges! The movement of the vessel, proximity to other passengers and having enough space and flexibility to safely change positions to capture the moment is all challenging. And then there is just the luck issue – being in the right place at the right time with the zodiac in the position best suited to your needs!

Some Upcoming Exhibitions

VIGEX Digital (PSA 2023-247). Three PIDC sections (Open, Creative, Scapes), PIDM, Nature and Photojournalism. **Entries close 2nd July**. PSA, FIAP and APS approval. Full details here <https://vigex.org.au/>

Newcastle International Digital Circuit (PSA 2023-333). Sections for PIDC, PIDM Open, PIDM Portrait, Nature. **Entries close 2nd July**. Full details <https://newcastleint.myphotoclub.com.au/> APS approval for three exhibitions in the circuit.

NSW International Circuit (PSA 2-23-429). Sections for PIDC, PIDM, Nature, Land or Sea Scapes (PIDC). **Entries close 1st October**. Full details here <https://nswint.myphotoclub.com.au/> APS approval for three exhibitions in the circuit.

A full list of all PSA-recognized exhibitions for 2023 is available here <https://listings.psaems.org/>

Everyone, please consider sending me some news or articles for my next newsletter!

If you need help with any PSA matters please contact me.

Regards,

Roy

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