



Welcome!

Our new Australian members in July were:

Meredith Bain, Torquay, VIC

Kathleen Mary Brand, Tralee, NSW

Elisabeth Fidler, Cooranbong, NSW

Thank you!

This month I can share with you articles from Debbie Sutton and Nilmini De Silva.

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

PSA Journal

The August 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>

Congratulations

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.

NEW Free PID INDIVIDUAL COMPETITIONS (2023-2024)

These competitions are in addition to the PID Portrait competition. The PID Creative and AV competitions have been discontinued.

Landscape Competition

This competition will have 3 rounds with deadlines *1st Dec 2023, 1st Feb and 1st April 2024*. The Landscape portal will be available for image uploads from 1st October 2023. There will be Popular Choice Awards with PSA Members voting for the top images from each group. The Jury awards will be decided by an invited Judge during an Online Webinar. There will be a Critical Analysis of selected images and Q&A. This is a new added benefit for PSA members.

Individual Still-Life Competition

This competition will have 3 rounds closing on *1st Dec 2023, 1st Feb 2024 and 1st April 2024*. The award winning images of the 3 rounds will automatically be nominated for the End of Year Round. PSA members are encouraged to register for the competition with their PSA membership number before 1st November 2023 so you get enough time to upload your images before the Round 1 closing date.

Architecture Competition

This competition will have 3 rounds closing on *1st Dec 2023, 1st Feb 2024 and 1st April 2024*. The award winning images of the 3 rounds will automatically be nominated for the End of Year Round. PSA members are encouraged to register for the competition with their PSA membership number before 1st November 2023 so you get enough time to upload your images before the Round 1 closing date which is 1st December 2023.

Keep a watch on the PSA PID Individual Competition web pages for further updates on these new competitions and other PID competitions <https://psa-photo.org/page/pictorial-image> or use the links at the bottom of this page <https://psa-photo.org/page/mo-pid-indiv-portrait> As of today, all the link for entries are not active but I assume they will be soon. Some of the competitions (e.g. Landscape) have special restrictions on what is and is not allowed - so check the information pages carefully before entering.

For further information contact the PID Chair: Heide Stover, pid-chair@psa-photo.org

Mesmerised by Lake Tyrrell

Photographic Adventures at the Skymirror

Nilmini De Silva, PPSA, BPSA, EFIAP, GMAPS

Introduction

I feel inspired and reinvigorated after my recent visit to Lake Tyrrell. It is the largest inland lake in Victoria, and sits north of a small town called Sea Lake, in the Mallee District. It is flat low lying country, with a sparse population, dotted with mallee eucalypts. It's hot in the summer and quite dry year-round with low annual rainfall. The area is renowned for its stunning sunrises, sunsets, and night skies. When the lake is covered by a thin layer of water and the sky is completely reflected in the lake, you can stand there for hours, transported to another world, transfixed, and mesmerised by her colour and beauty.

For thousands of years, the Boorong lived, loved, and danced on this country, caring for it according to their lore, law, traditions, and ceremonies. They called this place Direl, meaning sky or space. It was a sacred and spiritual place to them. When you stand in the middle of the lake on a star-studded night or just as the sun is peeking over the horizon, you too begin to sense that mystery—and Direl becomes part of you.

Sea Lake was once an inland sea, and the surrounding remnants of sand-dunes and salt lakes make it a favourite destination for both Australian and international photographers. While it is hard to do justice to the vastness of this landscape, flying a drone above the area does give a better sense of scale. We are fortunate in Australia to have a network of rare pink salt lakes. They are not permanently pink, but when the conditions are right, the bacteria and algae combine to form a visual feast in these hyper-saline environments. Please remember that this is a fragile landscape when visiting and treat it with respect.



About 120,000 years ago, this lake was about 13m deep, but it has since dried up. The thin layer of water that now bubbles up periodically, makes photography interesting and different each time you visit. When this parched landscape is viewed from above, the colours, textures, shapes, and forms caused by the wind and rain are a sight to behold.

Planning and Gear

Google Earth is a good place to start planning your trip and the proliferation of images on the internet can give you a glimpse of the variety of photographs that can be created here. The lake will be mostly dry during summer, but you can almost be certain to find water somewhere in the winter. The time between mid-autumn to spring is possibly the best time to visit if you are keen to find reflections.

Visiting the information centre in Sea Lake is a must for picking up maps and understanding the current weather conditions. You can also book a tour here if you want help with familiarising yourself in the area. If venturing out on your own, drive to the viewing platform at the lake to get oriented. There you will find information about the history of both the indigenous occupation and the local salt works. On the western side, there is a dry weather only track that takes you along a less trodden path. The painted silos in town are also a favourite with photographers, especially at night when they are sometimes lit.

Drone photography can be done at any time of day but depending on what you are looking for—long shadows, golden light and abstract imagery—decide when to fly. Of course, you can't beat the golden light at sunrise and sunset to capture landscape images with your camera. A good App like Clear Outside, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) app, and PhotoPills can further aid your decision-making. Open Sky will indicate the restrictions on flying a drone in Australia.



When visiting in winter or the shoulder seasons, you will need layers of cold weather gear. Pack gumboots as the lake can be muddy. Gloves, a beanie and pants you don't mind getting dirty will come in handy for those freezing cold mornings and nights. Besides your tripod and camera, remote trigger, polarizers, and ND filters, bring lenses that are suitable for landscape photography. I shoot primarily with my Canon R6 and my Canon EF 16-35mm f/2.8 L lens with a RF adapter. If you have a drone, this is perfect territory for aerial imagery.

You will need backup batteries, chargers, memory cards, and an external hard drive for storage. I like to bring a laptop to download and check my images between shoots. Bring lens wipes and a plastic bag for your camera in the event of rain and a head torch for those early morning or night shots. Some people cover their tripod legs with little plastic bags to shield them from the salt. I make sure to give my tripod a rinse after every shoot. Reflection shots mean that you will be shooting quite low down, so a portable stool might also be handy.

There is accommodation at Sea Lake including a caravan park. The pub is the hub of this small town and is a good place to wind down in the evening and meet the locals. It is just a 10-minute drive to the lake from town. Make sure you visit the Skymirror Gallery in Sea Lake to be inspired while sipping a great mug of coffee or indulging in a hot breakfast.

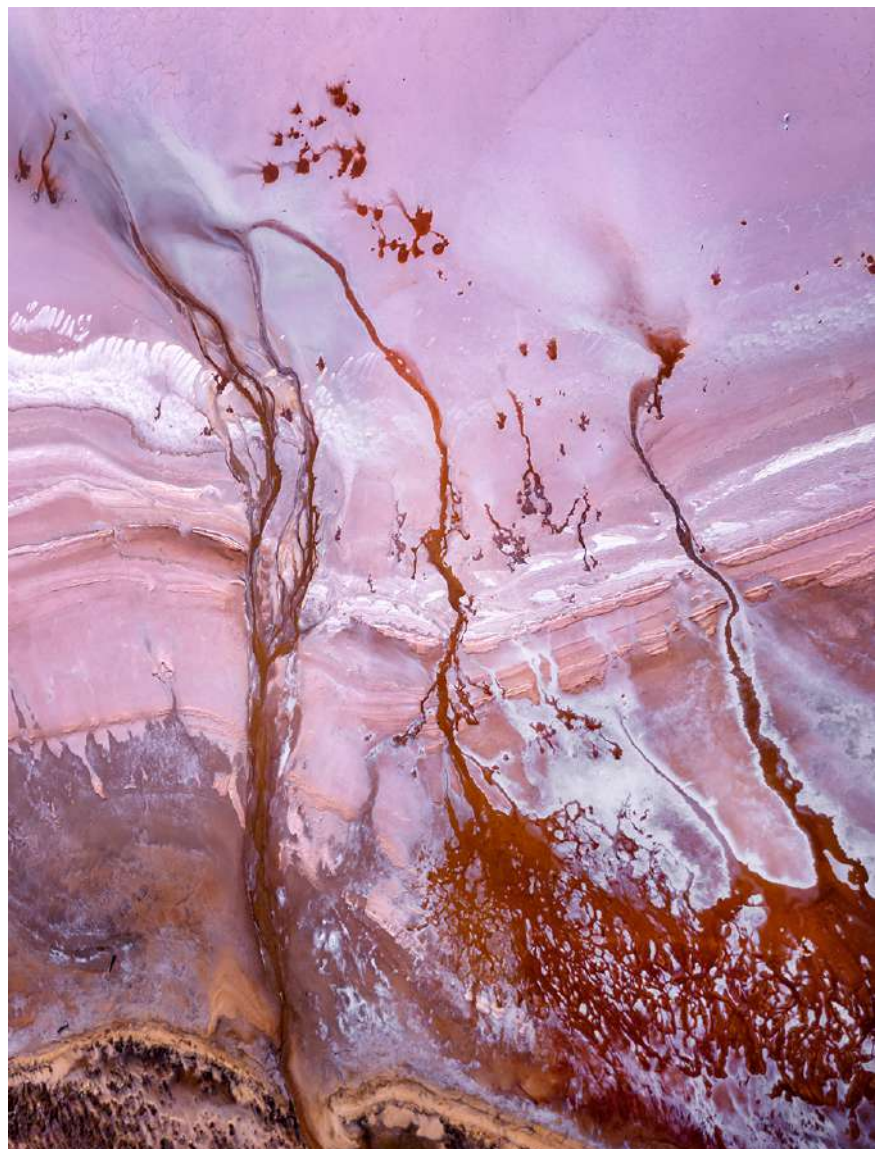
Understanding the Challenges and Settings for Your Tripod and Camera

Wind and weather will be your biggest challenges, but it can also create opportunities for stunning photography. However, you want still days for perfect reflections and moonless, clear skies for the best images of the milky way. Based on the conditions, be creative with your settings, especially your shutter speeds to create images that are here for the taking. I prefer to shoot on manual settings, with a tripod for my landscape images at least when the light is low and at night. This enables me to use the lowest ISO that is suitable for the conditions and determine my shutter speed and aperture depending on what I am shooting. I tend to use around f/11 for my daytime landscapes and f/2.8 for my astro images with a higher ISO. Depending on the size of your drone, decide on the day if it is safe to fly.

The Tyrrell sign, the sky lounge and walking platform at the main entrance to the lake are great for foreground elements for your landscapes. Don't forget to find time to just sit and breathe it all in and feel the spirituality of this place at the Sky Lounge.

Finding Metaphor and Meaning in Composition

While colours, textures, form and shapes are central to abstract photography, many photographers are keen to also find meaning and metaphors in their images. Pareidolia is the tendency for us to perceive meaning from random shapes in the landscape. They can form interesting compositional elements especially in your aerial photography. Aboriginal artists were also keen observers of the landscape and night sky and often painted stunning aerial interpretations of it.



Reflection

This narrative has been written after my second visit to Lake Tyrrell in May 2023. However, on my first visit, exactly two years ago, I captured quite different aerial images for my PSA Bronze portfolio— Impressions of a Salt Lake. The lake is different each time you visit, and this place has become a regular pilgrimage for many photographers. It is not just a place to take stunning images. It is also a place to lose yourself, de-stress and re-connect with the natural environment that is all around you.



Composition

I recently came across some useful resources that are worth a few hours of your time.

This information explores composition as it relates to street photography.

<https://erickimphotography.com/blog/2017/03/21/why-is-composition-important-in-photography/>

The printed resources and the videos on the site use a lot of examples from well-known photographers.

If you explore the website you will find lots of other useful free resources.

A second resource with a different approach to composition is a series of YouTube videos by Pat Kay. Each one is only about 15 minutes long and it is best to start with the first in the series that outlines Pat's 'patterns' approach to image composition.

<https://www.youtube.com/patkay> start with the video called "Frames".

Subantarctic Islands – Part Two:

Debbie Sutton

This article follows on from part one (last month) which explored Enderby, The Snares and Bellany Islands.

Macquarie Island

Macquarie Island is about halfway between New Zealand and Antarctica. The island is part of Oceania and politically part of Tasmania. It was made a Tasmanian State Reserve in 1978 and was granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 1997. The island is 34 km long and 5 km wide and is home to the Australian Antarctic Division station which is staffed all year round.

When we visited, the staff had another three weeks before the changeover of crews and they were quite relieved for some company and conversation.

Macquarie Island is renowned for its wildlife. It is the only breeding ground in the world for royal penguins as well as being home to king, southern rock hopper and gentoo penguin colonies. Elephant and fur seals are also abundant. The island is also a breeding ground for many birds including the Antarctic giant petrel which just nest next to the boardwalk, light-mantled albatross, Macquarie rail and skua.



Royal penguin



King penguins – the odd one out is moulting, a process that takes about a month during which time they can't enter the water and

Before each excursion from the ship we were always fully briefed about the requirements, including exclusion zones from wildlife, safety issues etc. Whilst we were given limits on how close we could go to the penguins, the wildlife was blissfully unaware and lacked any fear of the invaders! If you stood or sat still, they were very curious and just came right up to you. It was at this point that the 100 – 500 mm lens was totally useless and it was just a pleasure to just sit there and enjoy the moment.



It was during these moments that our exclusion zones proved ineffective and the curiosity of the animals took over



Antarctic or southern giant petrel



King penguins in formation – they were often in smaller groups and tended to be doing the same thing.

Human predators and pests

The boilers used to render seal and penguin fat can be seen at various locations on the island. Both seal and penguin populations were almost eliminated from the island by this 'economic' activity. A grim reminder of the negative impact human activity had on this unique environment.

In 2014, Macquarie was declared pest free after an extensive program to eradicate cats, rats, mice and rabbits. As a result, the native vegetation is regenerating, and the populations of many bird species is increasing. All positive signs for the future.

Campbell Island

While I knew a little about Macquarie Island and was excited that we had the opportunity to visit it, I knew nothing about Campbell Island. This turned out to be one of the most amazing places we had the opportunity to visit.

Campbell Island experiences 300 days of rain or snow, with as little as 600 hours of sunshine each year. The day of our visit was quite typical - it was extremely misty most of the day and rained regularly. This made photography a challenge but greatly added to the experience.

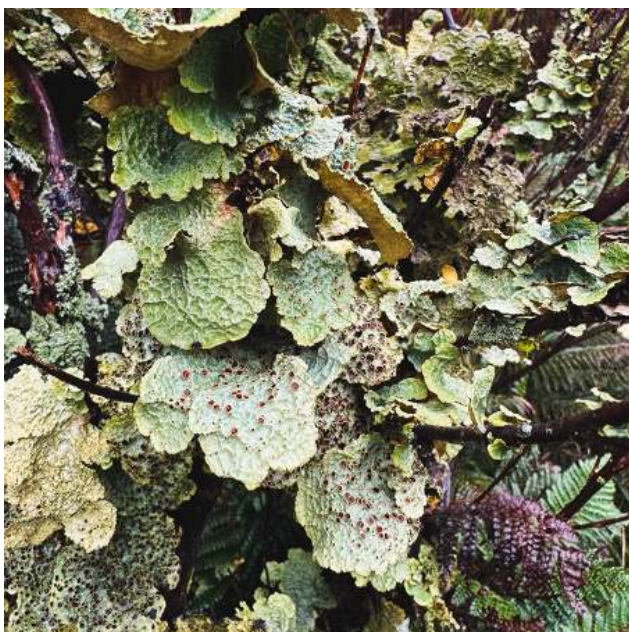
Flora

Grasslands cover much of the island forming sculptured tussocks that are every shade of green imaginable. Mega herbs are also found all over the island.

Following the removal of sheep and cattle from the island in the 1990s there has been a spectacular regeneration of the native vegetation.



Tussocks and fog



Megaherb foliage – colours and textures!



Lichen on small shrubs – colours were just amazing!

Southern royal albatross

Campbell Island is the main breeding site for the southern royal albatross with the main breeding areas quite a long walk from the landing site, on the other side of the island. These albatross are a magnificent bird with a 3 metre wing-span. They are entertaining as they form groups in the late afternoon, displaying their huge wings, gnashing beaks together and generally parading around, preening and looking to impress as they engage in mating rituals! A bit like a rumble at the gym!

Scattered throughout the tussocks, providing great camouflage, were several mothers with chicks.



Typical preening and mating behaviour



Mother and chick in the mist

Standing on the boardwalk watching the albatross soar on the thermals and then come in, close over our heads, to land just in front of us was an amazing experience.

Photographic Challenges

Some of the photographic challenges were discussed in part one. However, Macquarie and Campbell Islands presented two additional challenges.

Firstly, the weather conditions. On Macquarie Island the weather quickly cycled through rain, hail, sleet, snow and sunshine over a period of a couple of hours. All that was coupled with very strong and variable winds with penguin down all through the air. The weather on Campbell Island was typical – raining on and off, with fog and mist that swept in and then swept out on a regular, cyclical basis.

Having confidence that your camera could cope in these wet weather conditions was important, as was a functional rain cover that allowed full access to the camera controls.

The second challenge was to be on the ball and respond to the photographic opportunities being presented. These opportunities were at times so complex and numerous it was difficult to identify the best opportunity and to take the image. At one stage, in the afternoon session on Macquarie Island, I was just too overwhelmed by the spectacle, the uniqueness, and the sounds to take photographs! I guess a photography equivalent to writer's block.

A tip on one of the blogs I read in preparation for the trip was to record video. Whilst photographs record the scene, video records the scene and the sounds and bring back a unique range of memories when watched. Six months after the trip the videos transport me straight back into the unique experiences of this amazing trip.

Some Upcoming Exhibitions

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.

The only exhibitions that I list here are the Australian exhibitions that have PSA recognition. 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

Dr Roy Killen, APSA, GMPSA/S, EFIAP, APSEM

PSA Membership Director for Australia

Email: roykillen@mac.com

Mobile: 0419434311