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Newsletter from Kim Westerskov

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Newsletter #88 – October 2020

- 1. What matters most in photography?**
 - 2. Featured photographer – Ray Collins**
 - 3. Quote of the Month**
 - 4. 2020 programme**
 - 5. "Composition & Light" workshop – 10th October**
 - 6. "Exciting New Photo Techniques" workshop – 31st October**
- 7-12. Other stuff**

This newsletter goes out to many photographers in New Zealand and overseas - and to anybody who asks to go onto the mailing list. If you know anybody who would like to be on the mailing list, please get them to email me. It's free and they can unsubscribe at any time, of course.



1. So what matters most in photography?

Moment, Connection, Story, Emotion, Art?

So.... what matters most in photography?

I thought about this question yet again today [I think about it most days], and the first five words that came to mind were: Moment, Connection, Story, Emotion, and Art. Even if I thought about it for the rest of the day, I suspect I'd stay with those five.

"But Kim, what about sharpness, exposure, white balance, depth of field, composition, and all the other stuff I thought mattered?" Of course they matter, but I'd argue that Moment, Connection & friends are more important still. The world is full of sharp, well-exposed, well-composed photos. Some are great. Many are OK. Many more still are dull and forgettable. I'll go with Moment, Connection, Story etc.

Greatness in a photo doesn't come from sharpness. Or from good depth of field. Or "good" composition. Greatness – the kind that makes you suck your breath in and mutter "Wow!" – comes from special moments, from connection [it **matters**], telling a story or evoking a strong emotion.

So how do we get Moment, Connection, Story, Emotion and Art into our photos?

There are no easy answers [sorry about that] but a good starting point would be photographing what matters most to you, and putting in time and effort. Making your photography a journey rather than just dabbling every now and then.

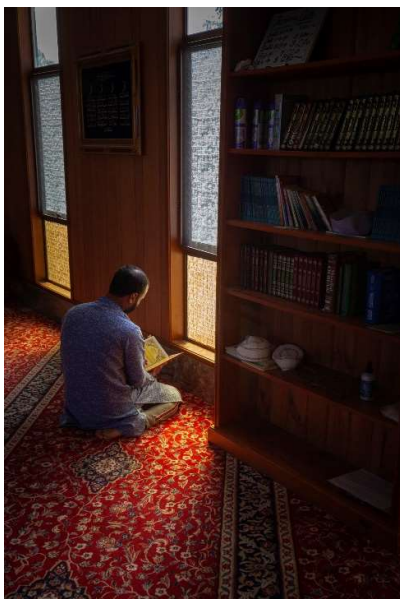
If you look at the backstories of most great achievements – in arts, music, science, most endeavours probably – you'll find similar stories of passion, commitment, effort, time, and suchlike. With "luck" and serendipity scattered like pixie dust along the way. "The harder I work, the luckier I get". Photographers who catch "the moment" typically haven't just spent a few minutes waiting,



but hours, or months. Or years. My photo of the humpback whale family in the warm clear waters of Tonga didn't just happen by chance. It was the result of considerable planning and four trips to the kingdom, each a month or more long, and at considerable cost. [It was good fun too, but that's a separate issue 😊]

Connection? Emotion? Photograph that which matters most to you. That which you are passionate about. And put in the effort.

Story? Art? Hmmm, a bit trickier, but can be learned. Just not in one day. How? The usual suspects: commitment, effort, finding inspiration, learning [any way that works for you], getting quality feedback on your photos ...



2. FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHER – RAY COLLINS



Want to be inspired?

Want to see the work of someone whose work ticks all the boxes in the lead article [Moment, Connection etc.], and more?

Want to see what can be achieved by choosing a niche, running with it, and pursuing it with a passion bordering on obsessive? Then again, every surf photographer I've ever known was pretty obsessive. Waves and surfing are highly addictive - making university studies take much, much longer than planned, among other things.

Breaking waves have been a siren song not just for surfers, dreamers, artists and probably most of us, but also for photographers for a long time now. Back when modern surfing was exploding like a supernova in the 1960s and 1970s, wave photos were mostly just **photos** rather than **art**.

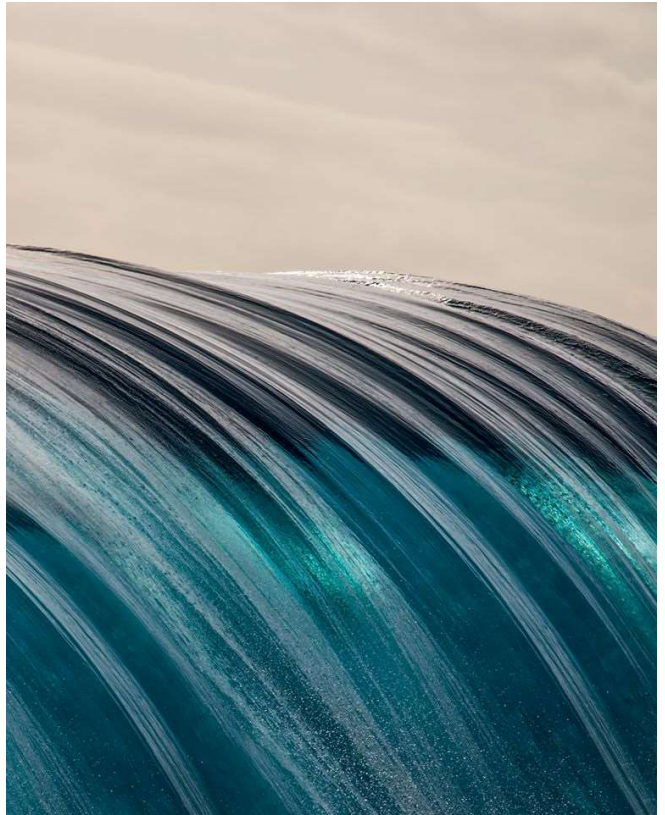
Helped by digital photography and many advances in the camera gear that could be taken out into the surf, the standard of wave photography has risen over the decades to where it is now amazing.

Several of the photographers who have raised the standard of wave photography to an artform are Aussies, and none do it better than Ray Collins.

So.... perhaps spend some time looking at his photos.

<https://raycollinsphoto.com/>
<https://raycollinsphoto.com/collections/seascapes-landscape>
<https://raycollinsphoto.com/collections/seascapes-portrait>
<https://raycollinsphoto.com/collections/limited-edition>





Some learning points or takeaways from Ray's photos:

1. Find something you are genuinely passionate about, then photograph it for years and years.
2. Put big effort into it. Don't be afraid of being labelled "obsessive".
3. Get close to your subject. Very close. Immerse yourself in it. Perhaps half of Ray's photos were taken with a telephoto lens from somewhere safe, the other half were taken from somewhere very close to the breaking waves and definitely not safe.
4. Capture "The Moment". Wave photography is all about moments. The same for wildlife, sports, and even grandchildren playing.
5. Compose roughly at the time and then crop tightly later in Lightroom/Photoshop. Get rid of everything that doesn't add to the impact of the photo.
6. Get to know Lightroom or Photoshop well, because much of the drama in his photos is accentuated in Photoshop. He caught "The Moment" out there among the waves, but drama from the tone [light and dark], colour and contrast is brought to life in Photoshop.
7. Someone who doesn't know much about waves might innocently say "But a wave is just a wave. I'll take a few photos - job done" But waves are like snowflakes – [almost] every one is different, and Ray shows this marvellous diversity. But this didn't happen overnight. Much effort is required.
8. See some of Ray's thoughts below.



3. QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"The Ocean has been my place of healing. From growing up in government housing, losing my father to suicide, bouncing through almost 10 different schools, working for years in an underground coal mine, experiencing a life altering knee injury, picking up a camera, quitting the mines, giving up alcohol, dealing with trauma and anxiety and somehow making my passion my life. The ocean has been the single constant through it all. It's been my teacher and my grounding force. Whenever I'm near it, anywhere in the world. I am home."

Ray Collins

4. Kim's revised 2020 PROGRAMME

JULY

- Tuesday 7th July. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Sunday 12th July. "Close Up Magic" workshop. Full day plus follow-up.
- Saturday 25th July. "Photo Essentials" workshop. Full day plus follow-up.

AUGUST

- Tuesday 4th August. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Sunday 9th August. "Slow, smooth & wonderful – long exposures" workshop. Full day + follow-up.
- Saturday 22 August. "Great people photos" workshop. Portraits, kids, families, candid, travel, events, weddings. Full day plus follow-up

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday 1st September. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Saturday 5th September. "Photo Impressionism & Photo Art" workshop. Full day plus follow-up.
- Sunday 27th September. "Landscapes & Seascapes" photo workshop. Full day plus follow-up.

OCTOBER

- Tuesday 6th October. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.
- Saturday 10th October. "Composition & Light" photo workshop. Full day plus follow-up.
- Saturday 31st October. "More Exciting New Techniques" photo workshop. Full day plus follow-up.

NOVEMBER

- Sunday 15th November. "Good Photos, Great Photos – Anytime, Anywhere" workshop. Full day plus follow-up.
- Tuesday 3rd November. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

DECEMBER

- Tuesday 1st December. "Photos & Coffee" informal meeting. 7.00 – 10.00pm. Free.

One day workshops are from 9.00 am – 5.00 pm

COST: Course fees include tuition, detailed hand-outs, yummy catering, plus [for most workshops] an assignment and follow-up evening.

- **One day workshops:** \$295 – or \$245 for Early Birds if you register by 10 days before the workshop. Fulltime students with ID \$145.

5. “COMPOSITION & LIGHT” WORKSHOP – Saturday 10th October

How to make your photos sing! For good photos you need good composition. For great photos you need great composition. And great light.

Your camera is good at getting some of the technical things right, such as exposure and focus, but **YOU** are totally responsible for the creative input: where to stand, where to point the camera, which lens, and – perhaps most important of all – “seeing” the photo and then composing it, refining it until it’s as good as you can make it.

There’s many things that you can correct in Photoshop/Lightroom if you didn’t get them quite right at the time, but composition is not one of them. You’ve got to get it pretty much right when you press the shutter. A photo whose composition is fundamentally flawed usually cannot be rescued, even by diligent use of Photoshop or Lightroom.

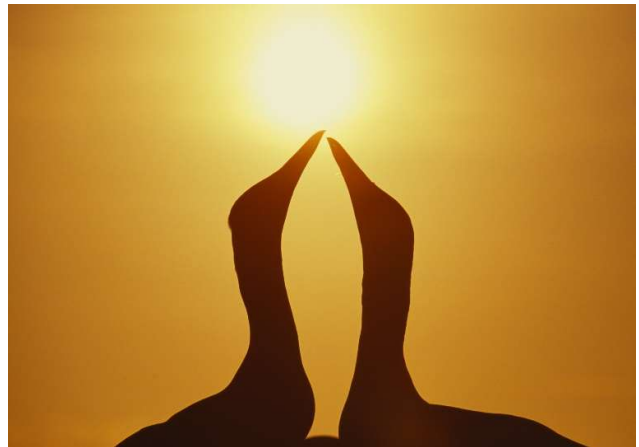
It’s a big and somewhat complex subject, though some “rules” [guidelines] have evolved to help get you going: the “rule of thirds”, “leading lines”, the “rule of odd numbers” etc. We’ll look at these rules and guidelines and then move past them, into “the New You” where great compositions and creativity can really flourish.

And light. Without light there is no photography, of course, but it goes much deeper than that. A great subject in dull light will usually give you a dull photo. A not-very-exciting subject in great light can easily be a winner.

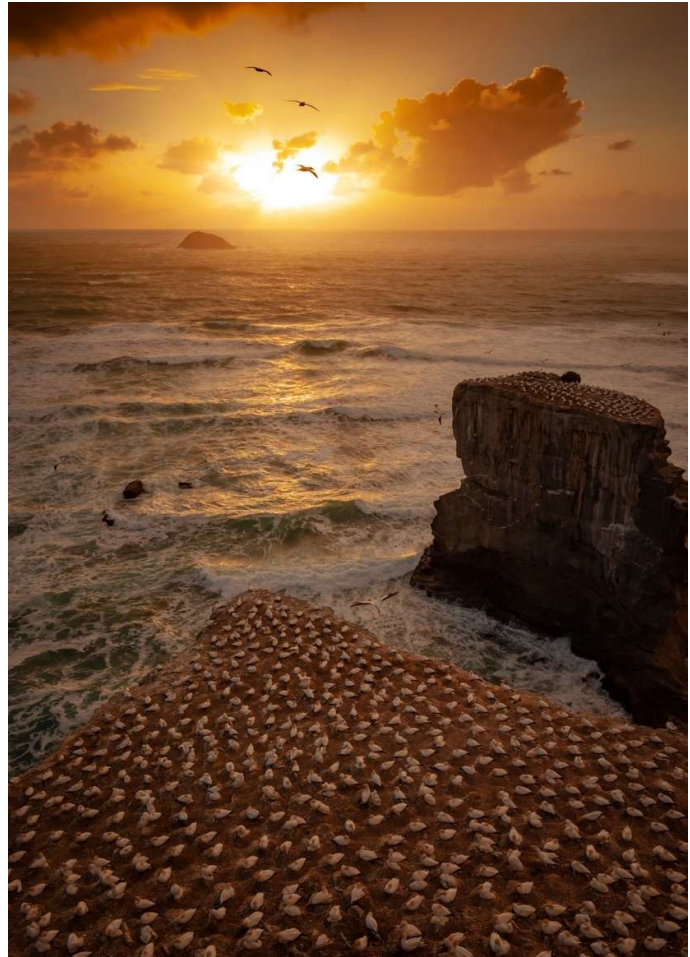
It’s a four-part workshop:

1. Saturday morning and early afternoon – the theory. The principles, the guidelines and “rules” & when to break the rules. My “One Rule to Rule Them All”. A great mix of theory and practical exercises for you. Many finer points and tips. Topics include:

- Finding clarity & meaning in the busy scene you’re standing in front of [“seeing” possibilities]
- Using composition to create order, clarity and impact
- Foreground and background, depth of field, three-dimensionality
- The National Geographic style



- Why what your eye sees and what the camera sees are not the same
- Simplification. Minimalisation. Decluttering
- What your eye is drawn to in photos
- The crop tool - your new best friend
- Patterns, textures, repetition, symmetry
- Lines, curves, diagonals
- Balance, visual weight
- Relationships, negative space
- Framing
- The golden ratio, golden mean, Fibonacci spirals - yes or no?
- Flash - graduating from amateur flash to pro flash
- Light - the different kinds. The good and the bad. Dealing with "bad" light
- Black and white, monochrome, colour palettes [limited, bold, pastel etc]
- Colour - a painless introduction to colour theory
- Using colour palettes to create your own style
- Colour and mood
- Perfect light for your portraits



2. Later Saturday afternoon – the practice. We'll be photographing a variety of subjects with the emphasis on getting your composition looking ~~good~~ great.

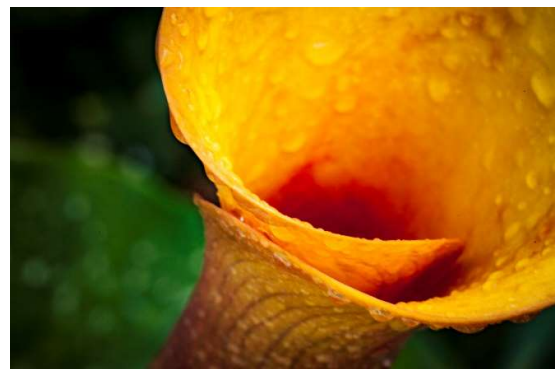
3. Assignment. You will then have 2-3 weeks to put what you've learned into practice. I will give you a series of assignments that will help consolidate what you've learned. Photographers report that they find this really useful.

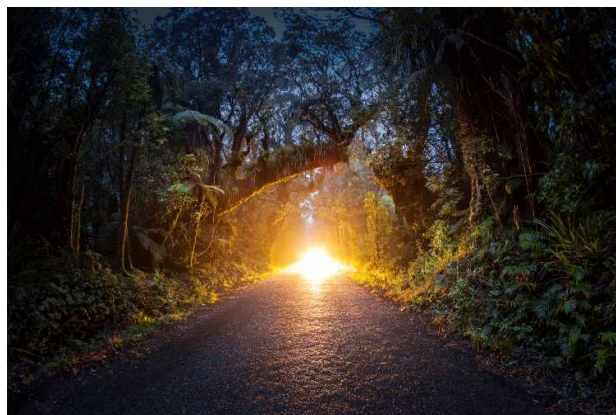
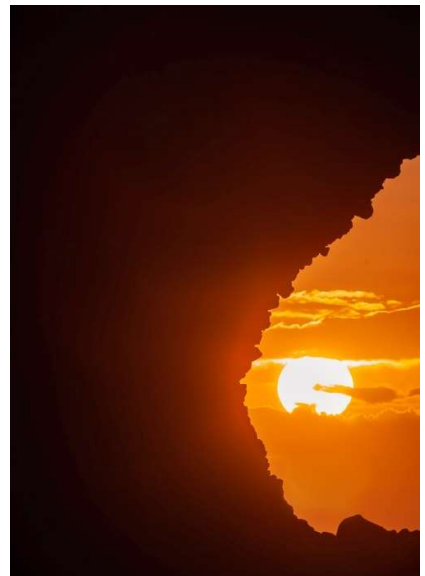
4. We meet again [at a time that suits everybody, probably a weekday evening] to look at and evaluate your assignment photos. This evaluation can be done by email if you're from out of town.

Saturday 10th October. 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Venue: Kim's comfortable workshop studio
[18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga] plus field trip TBA

Cost: Full course fee [which includes tuition, hand-outs, yummy catering, assignment and follow-up] **\$245**. Fulltime students with ID **\$145**.





6. "EXCITING NEW PHOTO TECHNIQUES"

Workshop – Saturday 31st October

Is your photography in a bit of a rut? Would you like to create some new and different "Wow!" photos? Would you like some clever new ideas to get "Honours" at your camera club? Want to try some new techniques? Want to lift your photography to a new level?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then this is the workshop I've designed for you. In fact, I've been working on it for several years now: researching &, looking for new "Wow!" ideas that you might like. And then experimenting, testing the ideas and their potential for a workshop.

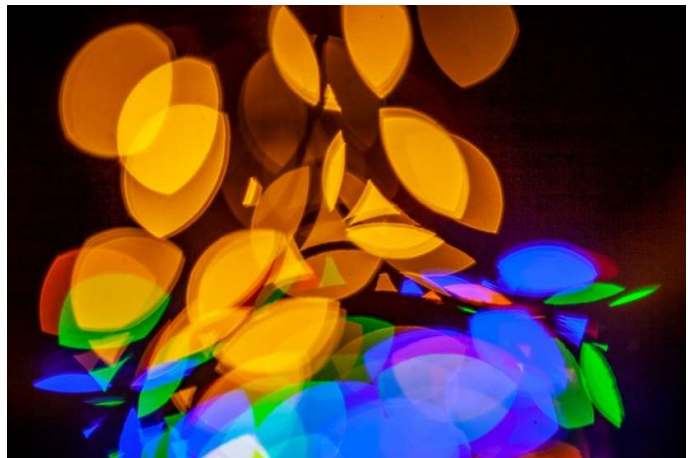
We'll explore the exciting possibilities of using mirrors [broken and unbroken], crystal glass balls, soap bubbles, effervescence, bokeh from fairy lights, and many more ideas. All you need to do is bring yourself and your camera. I've already got the fairy lights, prepared the broken mirrors [not as easy as it sounds] and gathered together the other stuff we'll need: the crystal glass balls [flown in from USA], a variety of mirrors [from local op shops and emporiums], special soap for bubbles [also flown in from USA], effervescence [from my local supermarket], feathers, and more.

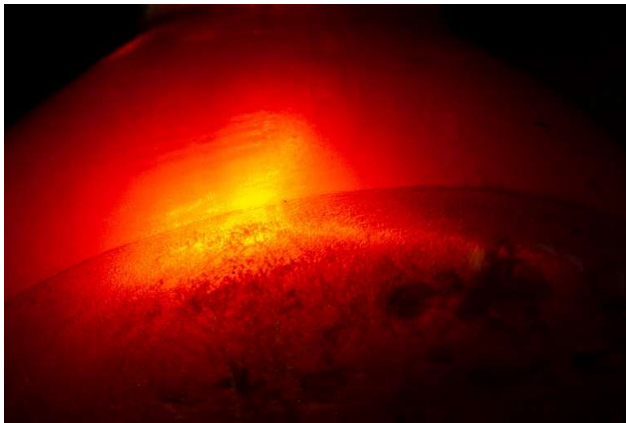
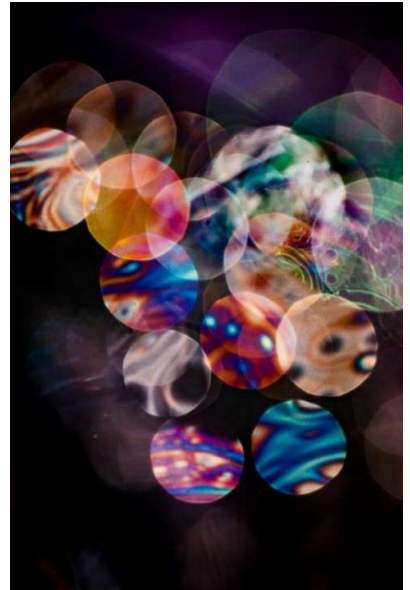
This workshop will be very different from my other workshops. We'll spend some time looking at a variety of good and great new ideas and techniques for you, and then - much earlier in the day than usual - **I'll set up the equipment and you'll bring out your cameras and get photographing.** You'll go home with your memory card full of exciting new photos. Promise!

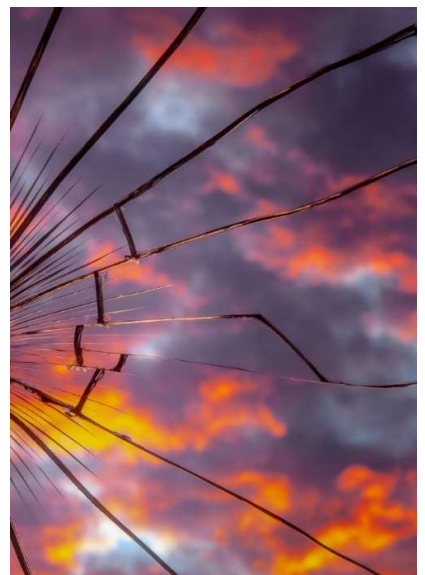
Saturday 31st October. 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Cost: Full course fee [which includes tuition, hand-outs & yummy catering **\$295** - or **\$245** for Early Birds [if you register by 21st October]. Fulltime students with ID **\$145**.

Have a good look at the photos on these three pages: I'll be showing you how they were achieved, and how they can be achieved by you.







7. FEEDBACK FROM RECENT WORKSHOP

From the Marketing Department, some nice feedback from a recent workshop:

“Hi Kim

Great day, thoroughly enjoyed it, thank you.

Feedback:

- Lots of fun learning new, interesting things
- Friendly relaxed atmosphere
- Excellent teacher, thorough, easy to understand, calm patient manner
- Very good handouts

AND yummy lunch, thanks to Viv, Anne (and Kim) !!!”

Hugs

Lyn”

8. KIM’S FOUR PRESENTATIONS at the BAY OF PLENTY GARDEN & ART FESTIVAL 19-22 November 2020

If you’re into gardens and/or art, the 2020 Bay of Plenty Garden & Art Festival will be a four-day highlight for 2020 as we come towards the end of a highly unusual – and difficult – year.

From the festival website: “A multi-day festival pass will allow you to see all gardens on all days of the festival, visit your choice of over 70 beautiful gardens and meet more than 100 magnificent artists. You will also experience fascinating landscape gardens, exhibitors, live music, tasty food and beverages and the amazing Festival Gallery at our festival hub “Bloom in the Bay” at the Tauranga Race Course.....”

This year the Festival Hub will be at the Tauranga Racecourse, and I was delighted to be asked to give four presentations there on photography and in particular photography of the plant world: flowers, ferns, and forests. I’m on each day between late morning and mid-afternoon. More details in the next newsletter. Access to the festival hub is free with a festival pass [\$65 multi-day, or \$35 one day]

<https://www.gardenandartfestival.co.nz/bloom-in-the-bay/kim-westerskov/>
<https://www.gardenandartfestival.co.nz/>

9. INVITATION TO CAMERA CLUBS & GROUPS

If your club or group might be interested in hosting one of my presentations - or workshops - or “Field Trip • Photo Critique” days, please get in touch.

10. KIM'S PHOTOS & COFFEE EVENINGS

We meet on the first Tuesday of each month [except January], chat about photography, and view some of the recent photos we've taken. It's **free [no charge]**, **supper is served**, and there's no obligation of any kind. **Please email me if you'd like to come** [it's not a big room so I need to keep an eye on numbers]. These evenings are always fun and friendly - there's usually many smiles and laughs. It's a great way of meeting up with like-minded people, **being inspired by the creativity of our group of photographers, and coming away with new ideas and tips**. There's a wide range of interests and abilities – so you're very unlikely to feel out of your depth. Bring photos if you wish, but there's no obligation to. Some people do, some don't. **The next one is on Tuesday 6th October starting 7.00 pm. 18 Greerton Road, Gate Pa, Tauranga.**

11. PRIVATE TUITION

Yes, like you I'm usually busy doing "other stuff" too, but I can nearly always fit private tuition in, and I am very happy to do so. Two hours \$150.

Or – for just the cost of a full-day workshop [with Early Bird discount] - \$245 – you get my full attention - one-on-one - for 4 hours. This can be out in the field or at my studio, looking at your photos on my computer, going over your camera functions, looking into specific techniques, or all of the above and more – whatever you want to do. I'm here for you. For only \$475 I'm yours for the whole day.

Think not just about cost, but "value" – it's one-on-one with an experienced photographer and teacher and we cover a lot each hour. Bring a friend if you wish - no extra charge.

12. PHOTOGRAPHING ARTWORKS PHOTOSHOPPING PHOTO RESTORATION

As well as teaching photography and mentoring a number of photographers, I also offer photo restoration, Photoshopping, and "Photographing your Artworks" services. \$50 per hour [we get a lot done each hour].

ABOUT KIM

- **Passionate about photography and passionate about inspiring, guiding, and supporting photographers.**
- Over 30 years as a professional photographer and teaching photography for 13 years now
- Five First Prizes in the BBC "Wildlife Photographer of the Year" competition, the Olympics of nature photography worldwide.
- 18 books published [international distributions] – written and photographed by Kim.
- <https://www.sunlive.co.nz/news/220936-kim-westerskov-award-winning-photographer.html>
- http://kimwesterskov.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/f11_Magazine_March-2015_Westerskov_2_4MB.pdf