

# Camera Club News

## Letter From The President

Hello All

Like most camera clubs, the Wairarapa Camera Club exists to offer its members the opportunity to share and improve their photography. Photographers learn both by studying others' images and by having their own images commented on by peers and experts.

Last month we held a workshop on 'photographic composition'. The workshop took the form of members bringing a couple of images along to seek critique and suggestions about their composition from other members. From comments received after the workshop it seems that those who came found this very helpful. While you can learn a lot from looking at others' images, I feel you learn a lot more from having your own images critiqued.

Our monthly competitions also offer regular opportunities to have our photographic boundaries challenged, and our work critiqued, often by expert judges. Which should help us improve, as photographers.

The committee has become concerned that only a few members have been entering competitions of late. Anxious that something about the nature of our competitions may be putting people off, and thus limiting their opportunities to benefit from membership, at its last meeting the committee decided to make some changes to competition entry criteria. The changes are outlined in 'Committee News' inside.

Hopefully, these changes and further workshops will encourage more people to make new images and enter them in competitions.

There's an old joke where the speaker asks anyone who cannot hear to raise their hands. I'm interested to know who is not getting our emails. As the newsletter is distributed via email, I concede I may not find out! If you saw this via another member, or on the website, and didn't get your own copy via email, can you let me know please ([tim.mcmahon@xtra.co.nz](mailto:tim.mcmahon@xtra.co.nz)). Email is currently our only means of communicating up-to-date information.

Until next time. Happy shooting.

Tim

## Club Information

To learn more about photography, to share your skills and experience or simply to enjoy photographic time with like-minded people, come to a meeting or contact us at

[info@wairarapacameraclub.org](mailto:info@wairarapacameraclub.org)

Meetings start at 7:30 pm on the first Tuesday of every month from February to November, at the Education Centre next to Parkview Motors in Dixon Street, Masterton.

WCC, PO BOX 502, Masterton

[www.wairarapacameraclub.org](http://www.wairarapacameraclub.org)





## Trip Report



*Cook Strait weta, by Kevin*

A small group of us went to Matiu/Somes Island on an overnight trip on Easter weekend. Glenys had organised a wonderful volunteer ranger and 'penguin man' – Reg – to introduce us to the island, acquaint us with its history, and show us where to find the animals. That introduction, and further insights from Glenys, who has previously worked on Somes in the penguin program, meant we had no trouble finding good opportunities to photograph the animals when night fell. After dark, it was not only night owls like Carolyn and Glenys, but a large proportion of the island's 63 tuataras and 1500 or so Cook Strait wetas that were lolling about on the tracks and grass waiting for photographers. We must have seen all the wetas! Unlike the more



*Reg with 'Blue Boy', by Glenys*



*Vicki and the weta, by Glenys*

common tree weta we see in our gardens, they're not shy. They're magnificent creatures and once they get their jaws around some juicy grass can't be budged. The island's skinks, geckos, and kakariki were less co-operative – tending to take off as soon as a camera was pointed their way. The little blue penguins waddled ashore after nightfall to make their way up to burrows – some high up the tracks. As a consequence we often found ourselves walking up behind them as they made their way home, which offered some excellent opportunities for candid photos!



*Poser, by Carolyn*



*Kevin's tuatara, by Kevin*



*Swimming on sticks, by Tim*



*Yet another Landscape, by Tim*

Our grateful thanks to Sid for his year-long effort in organising this. Also thanks to Reg and the island's DOC ranger, Jo, whose welcome and freely shared knowledge contributed greatly to a very satisfying trip.



*Gecko, by Carolyn*

## Digital Camera 101

On Saturday March 9 a group of us (Kevin, Dave, Bruce, Nik, and Tim) led a workshop for Wairarapa residents. REAP helped us by advertising and coordinating the event.

We had a good turnout - 18 participants in all.

We began with a round of introductions where the people showed us their camera and said what they hoped to learn. It was mostly "what do all these dials and buttons mean/do?". There were 3 Canon 1100D DSLRs, apart from which the rest were *all* different! Therein lay a challenge!

Following an initial powerpoint presentation in the Education Centre, we split into groups and went across to the park so people could practice and ask questions and get help with their dials, buttons and settings! Because we had a team of five from the Club on hand we had a ratio of about 1 to 4.

While you can never tell what people are going to say when they get home, the impression I got, when we re-grouped, was that most people got at least something out of the session.

One person from the workshop turned up at Camera Club last Tuesday (welcome Maz!) so hopefully the club has made an impression.

## DigiCam 102?

REAP has suggested that we mount another, 'follow up' workshop in May. If anyone would like to be involved in that, could you please let Tim know ([tim.mcmahon@xtra.co.nz](mailto:tim.mcmahon@xtra.co.nz))

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## Committee News

Here's brief summary of the committee meeting on 25/3.

### Financial Report

The finances remain healthy with a cash balance of \$3212.78 in the bank. We approved the purchase of more mat board for resale to members. (If you want to buy mat board, contact Sid [sid41south@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sid41south@xtra.co.nz) or 063771922 – it's much cheaper than in the art shops)

### Meeting Times

Committee members passed on concerns of members that some club meetings were beginning to run too long. After a discussion it was agreed that we would adhere firmly to a 7.30 - 9pm timeframe for the formal part of club meetings. Meetings will start at 7.30 sharp. Supper will be served at 9pm.

### Competition entries

The committee is concerned that relatively few members are entering images for our regular competitions. We noted that, at the end of last year, we sent a survey to all members asking what members most wanted. The overwhelming response was to continue with monthly competitions. And yet the majority of members are not entering these competitions. We agreed that some members are quite satisfied looking at others' images and hearing the judges' comments on them, but we nevertheless discussed a number of theories as to why so few members are contributing entries. Martin blamed the weather – he felt that activity would pick up after daylight saving and our wonderful summer have passed. Nik blamed his motorbike! More seriously, we discussed whether the topics may be too difficult, or whether members may be put off entering prints because of the difficulty or price of printing and/or preparing mats.

We agreed to adopt the following changes for the remainder of the competitions this year.



### Number of entries

We decided to **remove the restriction that only two images may be prints and only two images may be Projected Images.**

There will still be a maximum of 4 entries per person, but any combination of Prints and Projected Images will be accepted. A member could, for example, enter 4 Projected Images and no Prints, or vice versa, or 3 of one and 1 of the other, or 2 of each as now. Of course, no one is obliged to enter as many as 4 images.

### Subject

We decided that at each competition date, **regardless of the set subject, members *may* enter up to one 'open' image** (that is, the image can be of any subject at all). Open entries will be judged separately.

An 'open' image, if entered, would be one of the the maximum of 4 images allowed.

*So, for competition nights,*

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- each member *may* enter up to 4 images in total;
  - they *may* be any combination of prints or projected images;
  - a maximum of one of the entries *may* be on any subject the member chooses.
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**An 'open' entry in a set subject competition must be clearly marked 'open'** on the back, or it will be judged as if it were part of the set subject, and marked accordingly.

e.g 330\_Mudlark\_OPEN

### Spot Prize

Additionally, it was agreed that at each competition, the members present would vote for their favourite entry and **the maker of the most favoured image would be awarded a spot prize.**

### Matting

Kevin reminded the meeting that prints must be mounted, but there is no requirement for prints to be matted. The requirement for mounting is essentially for the preservation of the photograph. Matting is a finesse that some people feel helps presentation. Others find it hard to do. It was resolved to remind members that matting is not required.

### **Mat Cutter**

On the subject of matting we discussed (without resolution) the longer term storage of the mat cutter. In the meantime, we resolved to remind members that the tool is presently housed at the Education Centre, and that members who want to use it could do so before or after club meetings or workshops, or at any other time by arrangement. Contact Sid ([sid41south@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sid41south@xtra.co.nz) or 063771922) or Tim ([tim.mcmahon@xtra.co.nz](mailto:tim.mcmahon@xtra.co.nz) or 304 8884).

For those who are not sure, a mat cutter is a device, at whose heart is a really sharp, angled, knife, and a ruler, that enables one to cut mounting and mat board with precise angles and lengths very quickly and easily. For those who have attended, the mat cutter we have is the one that Sid used when leading matting workshops.

## Competition: Water

The April competition was judged by Sandra McNabb. Sandra commented that she thought the entries were generally of a higher standard than previously. That's good news: perhaps the club is achieving its goal of helping members improve their photography! Particularly impressive are the number of high marks given for composition and technique.

In her general critique, Sandra emphasised the challenge of a set subject such as 'water'. Essentially, as far as she was concerned, to meet this challenge the photograph has to be clearly *about* the water, not to simply have water in it. Sandra pointed out that some beautiful images had failed to score highly in this competition because they'd said more about the location of the water, than about the water itself. A couple of excellent waterfall shots were singled out in this context.

Sandra suggested we think more about the use of composition, cropping, and/or black and white to emphasise the features relevant to the subject, and de-emphasise other elements that might distract the viewer from the central idea. The phrase "less is more" occurred quite often. She talked about general rules of composition:

- the 'rule of thirds' – placing the centre of interest away from the centre of the photograph to introduce a dynamic, rather than static, feeling. However, she did comment favourably on a couple of images that worked in spite of, or possibly because of, breaking this rule;
- the use of 'leading lines' – lines made by elements within the picture that lead the eye through the image and toward the centre of interest;
- the use of strong colours and sharp contrast to draw attention to the centre of interest, and conversely, avoidance of the use of strong colours in other places in the image, or using black and white to neutralise the potential effect of distracting colours;
- the use of selective focus and shallow depth of field to draw attention to subject and de-emphasise potentially distracting elements;
- varying point of view to find the best placement of the subject – i.e. don't take all images from standing height. Her advice was to try and photograph any subject from as many different angles as possible – high, low, front, back, etc – then to evaluate them and decide which works best and why.

Sandra explained that she often gets her students to study, and to copy as exactly as they can, the photographs of great photographers, replacing the original subject with their own subject but trying to make the compositional elements and lighting as similar as possible. She advised us to try the same technique. After a while, she said, we would come to understand what it was the photographer had achieved and what they were looking for. We would, she promised, begin to do these things automatically.

Finally Sandra advised us that the art collection of the former Wairarapa Polytechnic, including a significant number of photography books, is now held at the Masterton library. She suggested seeking out those books and studying the photographs. She also recommended a website [500photographers.blogspot.co.nz](http://500photographers.blogspot.co.nz) which is building up a huge online exhibition of the work of 500 contemporary photographers. (I had a look today: there are some wonderful, as well as some challenging, photographs in the blog and on the selected photographers' own sites. I agree with Sandra. Well worth a look!)

Congratulations to all the photographers who scored 12s in this competition.

Congratulations to Jazell, whose "Reflections" featuring the broken up reflection of a balloon in the lake won the member's popular choice award for the night.



Projected Image Entry		Impact	Com-position	Subject	Tech-nique	Presen-tation	TOTAL
		0 to 4	0 to 3	0 to 2	0 to 2	0 TO 1	(up to 12)
Martin Connelly	<i>Bubbles</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Martin Connelly	<i>Water Tank</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Dave Ferguson	<i>Reflection on Water</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Kay Halligan	<i>Water Play</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Kay Halligan	<i>Chilly Bin Kids</i>	2	2	1	2	1	8
Bruce Levy	<i>Apple Grab</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Bruce Levy	<i>Thirst Breaker</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Richard Lambert	<i>Trickle Down</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Mike Longworth	<i>Down Down</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Mike Longworth	<i>White Rock</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Tim McMahon	<i>After Rain</i>	4	3	1	2	1	11
Tim McMahon	<i>Wharf Wellington</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Kevin Morgan	<i>Waihi Falls</i>	2	2	2	2	1	9
Nik Player	<i>Into The Blue</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Glenys Robertson	<i>Bubbles of Life</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Glenys Robertson	<i>Silky Patterns</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Carolyn Smith	<i>Golden Rapids</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Carolyn Smith	<i>Taranaki Falls</i>	2	2	2	2	1	9
Jazell Wilkie	<i>Reflections</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Jazell Wilkie	<i>Rushing Bubbles</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Print Entry		Impact	Com-position	Subject	Tech-nique	Presen-tation	TOTAL
		0 to 4	0 to 3	0 to 2	0 to 2	0 to 1	(up to 12)
Martin Connelly	<i>Droplet #1</i>	3	3	2	1	1	10
Martin Connelly	<i>Droplet #2</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Sid Hayes	<i>Not The Ideal Swimming Hole</i>	1	1	1	2	1	6
Sid Hayes	<i>Reflections</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Richard Lambert	<i>Twilight on the Estuary</i>	3	2	2	2	1	10
Richard Lambert	<i>Archibald Fountain</i>	2	2	2	1	1	8
Tim McMahon	<i>Gates of Haast</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Tim McMahon	<i>Sea Levels, Okarito</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Glenys Robertson	<i>Silver Tide</i>	3	3	2	2	1	11
Glenys Robertson	<i>Furious Wave</i>	4	3	2	2	1	12
Jazell Wilkie	<i>Out of the Blue</i>	3	3	2	2	1	10
Les Wong	<i>Pour It On</i>	4	3	2	1	1	11
Les Wong	<i>Splash</i>	3	2	2	1	1	9

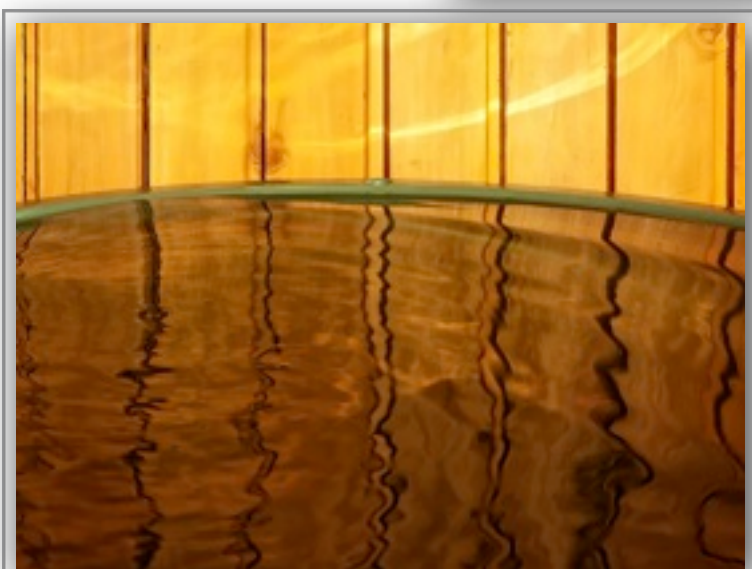
**A selection of the judge's favoured images:**



*Thirst Breaker*  
by Bruce Levy



*Bubbles of Life*  
by Glenys Robertson



*Water Tank*  
by Martin Connelly



*Droplet #2*  
*by Martin Connelly*



*Furious Wave*  
*by Glenys Robertson*

*Sea Levels, Okarito*  
*by Tim McMahon*





## Have You Ever Wondered About ? ...

### Highlighting your subject using “Depth of Field”

In her comments on Tuesday Sandra McNabb praised some photos for the way they'd used 'Depth of Field' to make the important part of their image crisp, while softening and de-emphasising the rest. This is because sharpness or crispness tends to draw a viewer's eyes, while soft areas do not hold interest. So, how is this done?

Previously in the newsletter (*Issue 20: July 2011*, and *Issue 21: August 2011*) we explained the phenomenon of depth of focus. Briefly, a real lens focuses 'exactly' at only one point in a scene, but depending on the aperture value and focal length, nearer or further points may *appear* to be in focus because the 'out-of-focusness' of those points may be too small to see.

In general, if you want most of your scene to look sharp and appear in focus, you should use a *narrow aperture*. An aperture value of f/16 or smaller will have most parts of the scene from front to back reasonably sharp. (Remember, the bigger the A (or  $A_v$ ) number, the narrower the aperture).

Conversely, if you want to emphasise the subject (say the eyes of your model) and have items in the image that are behind or in front of the subject soft, or out of focus, you should use a *wide aperture*.

Portrait photographers often use apertures of f/2.8 or wider. (Remember, the smaller the A (or  $A_v$ ) number, the wider the aperture).

The challenge with using wide apertures (apart from the cost of lenses that open as wide as f/2.8 or wider) is that your camera technique has to be pretty good. With only a short range of 'in focus' points you cannot afford to focus at the wrong distance or your subject will look pretty stink!

There are challenges with narrow apertures and large depth of focus too. Ansel Adams and some of his compatriots, who were very famous landscape photographers, formed the "f/32 club". They were dedicated to the narrowest apertures to keep everything in the photograph as sharp as possible. Few affordable lenses can be closed down as far as f/32, but of more practical concern is that, with such a narrow aperture, shutter speeds need to be very slow indeed to let in sufficient light for a decent exposure. Heavy tripods and lack of wind and earthquakes are prerequisites!

### Other tricks

If you want to make the important part of your image crisp, while softening and de-emphasising the rest there are additional things you can do 'in the computer'.

The simplest thing to do, if your software enables this, is to use selective sharpening: sharpen the subject and unsharpen, or 'blur', the background or surrounding stuff. This shouldn't be overdone because over-sharpening as well as over-unsharpening(!) can look pretty awful.

Some software also allows selective application of 'local contrast' – sometimes called 'clarity'. The 'clarity' tool simply emphasises the tonal difference between small patches of light and dark in the places where it is applied. It has the effect of increasing the apparent crispness of the image at those places. Conversely, negative 'clarity' decreases local contrast and has a softening effect.

Another device that has been used for very many years, particularly in portrait photography, is vignetting. Applying a vignette (pronounced 'vin yet'), essentially means darkening the corners and/or edges of the image to push the viewer's gaze back toward the centre of interest. In the old days this was often done very aggressively – some of you will remember the sepia-coloured, *oval* photos of your great grandparents. With modern software quite subtle vignettes can be applied that are hardly noticeable, but which viewers react to unconsciously.

As usual, if there is anything about making digital photographs that you've wondered about, email me at [tim.mcmahon@me.com](mailto:tim.mcmahon@me.com) and if I can find the explanation I'll try to include it in a future newsletter.



## Noticeboard

### Next Year's exhibition

Don't forget next year's exhibition: *Wairarapa at Work*.

Keep making photographs. We don't want a big rush at the end!

(PS refer back to Newsletter Issue 26, March 2012, for general hints on image quality for exhibition)

Thanks to those who came to the workshop on Composition that we held last month.

Don't forget:  
Day Trip ...  
Sunday 14 April

Zealandia

### Next Month's competition

Don't forget next month's competition: Humour.

Print entries must be in by 5pm Wednesday 1st May. Projected Images by Thursday 2nd.