



Week 1: Where I stand

5 Jan 2020

Introduce yourself to us by sharing an image of a place where you feel especially connected to the earth.

Extra credit - Story: write about your place and how you're connected. If you've been thinking about starting a blog, this could be a good place to start. Or start a 2020 visual/written journal and add your story and photo.

Week 2: Leafy greens

12 Jan 2020

Showcase the beauty of leaves.

Extra credit - Creative: make a leafy still-life arrangement to photograph.

Week 3: Off the beaten path

19 Jan 2020

Get off the beaten track and head further into a conservation area than you normally would, or investigate a new spot. Inspire others to do the same by taking a compelling photo.

Extra credit - Advocacy: Tag the organization in your post so they can see and share it. Story: Write a blog about your adventures.

Week 4: Fill the frame

26 Jan 2020

Fill the frame with your subject, leaving no room for background or foreground.

Extra credit - Technical: use manual focus to ensure the focused spot is exactly where you intend it to be.

Week 5: Raindrops

2 Feb 2020

Look for raindrops or dew caught attractively on something - use a mist bottle if you need to but ideally look for a naturally-occurring source.

Extra credit - Technical: try to capture a raindrop in mid-air or a drop splashing. You'll need a fast shutter speed.

Week 6: Nature's candy

9 Feb 2020

It's Valentine's Day this week so find some natural candy - it's up to you how to interpret this challenge.

Extra credit - Creative: use your photo as inspiration for a Valentine's card for a loved one.

Week 7: Bird's eye view

16 Feb 2020

Change your viewpoint from a human level to a birds-eye level or insect-eye level. Get up high, get down low and change your angle on the world. Mind your knees and mind your balance. Wildlife photographer Tui de Roy talks of the "road kill" shot, which is the typical human-eye level looking down on a critter. What a difference it makes to get down and shoot across instead!

Extra credit - Technical: save your knees and learn how to use a remote shutter release and/or your mobile phone to remote control your camera.

Week 8: Mobile Phone Magic

23 Feb 2020

Using your phone camera, experiment with creative effects.

Extra credit - Technical: There are a million apps out there that can turn an ordinary photo into something engaging. Look for Snapseed, Distressed Effects, Tiny Worlds, ... or perhaps try out a clip-on lens. If you don't have a phone camera, experiment with one of the creative settings built into your camera (e.g., double exposure).

Week 9: Prickly

1 Mar 2020

Your inspiration this week is "Prickly". Interpret as you see fit.

Extra credit - Technical: dig out your macro lens and get a close-up.

Week 10: Analogous colours

8 Mar 2020

Take a photo of a harmonious scene that has an analogous colour palette. Analogous colours are groups of 3 to 4 colours next to each other on the colour wheel. They are often found in nature: imagine red-orange autumn leaves, the blue-green ocean, purple-blue delphiniums. Aim for one of the colours to be dominant and for the other colours to be accents.

Extra credit - Creative: get your paints out and loosely make an artistic rendition of your photo.

Week 11: Equinox

15 Mar 2020

It's either the vernal (spring) or autumnal equinox this week depending on where you are.

Take a photo that reflects the beauty of the season you are in.

Extra credit - Creative: start planning a project where you'll use your nature photos taken for this challenge. Perhaps a calendar, postcards, notecards, a blurb book, a series of paintings - the sky is the limit!

Week 12: Golden Hour

22 Mar 2020

Take a photo that captures your subject in that low golden light just after dawn or just before dusk.

Extra credit - Technical: Download an app that will tell you when Golden Hour is for your location.

Week 13: Habitat

29 Mar 2020

Take a photo that describes the habitat of a specific organism - i.e., its natural home or environment.

Extra credit - Story: read up about the habitat you've chosen and, in your own words, write a description to accompany your photo.

Week 14: Yellow

5 Apr 2020

Be inspired by bright and sunny yellow, whether its autumn leaves or spring daffodils or something else entirely. Brighten our day!

Extra credit - Creative: use your photo as inspiration for a quick sketch augmented with a splash of yellow.

Week 15: Close to home

12 Apr 2020

Check out your garden or a local park or reserve (in walking or biking distance if possible), and find out what lives there.

Extra credit - Story: write about your adventures on your blog or social media.

Week 16: Urban Wildlife

19 Apr 2020

Our towns and cities host a variety of native and exotic wildlife, from the ubiquitous sparrow to the rare and endangered. Find a local critter and tell their story.

Extra credit - Advocacy: write something to accompany your photo and use hashtags or link to social media relating to your town and critter.

Week 17: Dark & Moody

26 Apr 2020

Create an image with a dark and moody feel, either in-camera or by editing afterwards.

Extra credit - Technical: use your camera's histogram to create a low key photo where most of the histogram is to the left with a few highlights to give shape and form. Creative photo-art: try some dark and moody Lightroom/Photoshop presets - Kim Klassen has some great samplers

Week 18: Symmetry

3 May 2020

Create an image where the composition is symmetrical.

Extra credit - Technical: turn on your camera's gridlines and horizon level to aid in composition

Week 19: Personality

10 May 2020

Bring out the personality of something from the natural world - it can be animate or inanimate.

Extra credit - Creative: turn your photo into an artwork, making sure the subject's personality shines through.

Week 20: Advocacy

17 May 2020

Do you want your wildlife and nature photos to make more of a difference? Take a step towards getting your photos out there by finding a relevant social media group to post your images to.

Extra credit - Advocacy: For that extra special image, contact the Comms staff of wildlife organizations to see if they are interested in using it. Or start a blog about your photography adventures.

Week 21: Before & After

24 May 2020

Without much thought, take a snapshot of a scene. Review the image and find three things that could be improved. Then take the shot again. Post your before and after and describe what you did to improve the shot so we can learn too. Things to consider: camera lens choice, composition, exposure, distractions... etc, etc. Take the time to think it through and you'll be rewarded.

Extra credit - Technical: take the first photo in auto-everything mode. Then take it again with entirely manual settings. Can you do better than the camera's algorithm?

Week 22: My favourite critter

31 May 2020

It's Environmental Awareness Day on June 5 - be sure to post about your favourite critter along with a story about what perils it faces in its environment.

Extra credit - Advocacy: Look for a social media group or hashtag dedicated to your favourite critter and be sure to post your image to their group and/or use their hashtags. If none exist, create something.

Week 23: Scales

7 Jun 2020

Show us something scaly from the natural world

Extra credit - Story: using your own words, tell us more about your scaly choice and what drew you to the subject.

Week 24: Microcosm

14 Jun 2020

Show us a miniature world where various lifeforms cohabit - a mossy stump, a leafy mound, a lichenized branch - take time to bring out the textures, detail and beauty.

Extra credit - Technical: it can be such an effort getting the tripod set up that its tempting to just wing a handheld shot. But for the sharpest image, a tripod and a long shutter speed, narrow aperture, and low ISO are essential. If you don't have a tripod, use a beanbag or some other improvised support and use the timer shutter release to reduce vibrations. Make the effort, then compare the results to a handheld shot of the same scene and tell us if it was worth it.

Week 25: Three views

21 Jun 2020

Choose a subject and then take three photos, each examining the subject in a different way. Consider different angles and distances. Most of all, think about how each images relate to the others so there is flow. One option is to take a wide-angle shot showing the subject in its environment, a portrait of the subject, and then a close-up of part of its body. Be sure to use similar exposures/post-processing so that the images have a similar look-and-feel.

Extra credit - Creative: turn your three scenes into a triptych artwork. Story: create a photo-essay about your subject and lead the viewer through your views.

Week 26: Natural forces

28 Jun 2020

Show the effects of a natural force on the landscape. Think wind, erosion, earthquakes, etc.

Extra credit - Story: in your own words, tell us more about how this natural force had this effect.

Week 27: Plastic free

5 Jul 2020

Inspire people to remove plastic from their lives.

Extra credit - Advocacy: Organize or participate in a clean-up. Take some compelling photos to inspire others to do similar.

Week 28: Light and airy

12 Jul 2020

The opposite to dark and moody. Create an image with a light and airy feel.

Extra credit - Technical: use your camera's histogram to create a high key photo where most of the histogram is to the right with a few shadows to give shape and form. Creative photoart: try some light and airy Lightroom/Photoshop presets - Kim Klassen has some great samplers

Week 29: Hands

19 Jul 2020

Use hands to tell a nature story.

Extra credit - Advocacy: Explore the human touch by including human hands in a nature photo.

Week 30: Big sky

26 Jul 2020

Your inspiration this week is "Big sky". Think carefully about composition to best show off your chosen sky, which should be the main subject in the photo.

Extra credit - Technical: get creative in post-processing to really bring out the details in your sky.

Week 31: Square

2 Aug 2020

Most cameras shoot in a rectangular format but sometimes its hip to be square! Compose an image for a square format. Think carefully about where to place the main subject in relation to the rest of the image. Some cameras will let you compose square in-camera, otherwise crop the image afterwards in your photo-processing software.

Extra credit - Creative: if you've not composed in a square before, grab a square sketchpad, canvas, or board at your favourite art supply store and experiment. Let us know what you found challenging about creating in a square.

Week 32: Shadows

9 Aug 2020

Create an image where shadows are an important compositional element.

Extra credit - Creative: how are you coming along with your creative project (from Week 11)? This week you will assess your progress and consider what the next steps will be.

Week 33: World Photography Day

16 Aug 2020

It's World Photography Day on 19 August. Use this opportunity to post a single photo about a critter or natural place that is important to you. Be sure to use the #WorldPhotographyDay hashtag and other tags important to your cause.

Extra credit - Meetup: find or arrange a local meet-up and meet other photographers

Week 34: Black and White

23 Aug 2020

Either in-camera or in post-processing, create a black and white image. Look for interesting textures and high contrast.

Extra credit - Technical: use split toning to subtly colour the highlights and shadows in post-processing.

Week 35: Panorama

30 Aug 2020

Take in the view in panorama mode. Many smart phones and cameras have a panorama mode that automatically combines multiple images. If yours doesn't, crop a single-image to at least a 16:9 (wide) format.

Extra credit - Technical: manually shoot and stitch a multi-image panorama. Both Lightroom and Photoshop have panorama stitching modes to help. The secret is to ensure each image is exposed identically so shoot in manual mode for every setting (aperture, shutter speed, ISO, white balance, and focus).

Week 36: Water life

6 Sep 2020

Tell us about a critter that lives on or in the water.

Extra credit - Technical: shoot underwater!

Week 37: An artistic touch

13 Sep 2020

Take a photo then turn it into a painting. How? You can use painterly effect filters in Photoshop, Topaz Impression, or various apps (many are free or have free trials), or print out your photo and embellish it, or perhaps pull out those paints and brushes and create a painting based on the photo - it's totally up to you!

Extra credit - Creative: everyone gets creative this week so for those creative souls out there, your advanced challenge is to create an artwork in a new medium.

Week 38: Scavenger hunt

20 Sep 2020

Go for a walk locally and find three things that have some sort of connection (colour, shape, type... whatever grabs your imagination). Arrange them thoughtfully and take a photo. Pay special attention to which object takes focus.

Extra credit - Technical: experiment with focus stacking to control which parts of your image are in focus. If you're lucky, your camera may do it automatically, otherwise you'll need to combine photos in Photoshop.

Week 39: Bokeh & Blur

27 Sep 2020

Our most popular previous challenges were bokeh and blur! Go for bokeh if you're a bit more confident with your settings and have a lens capable of a wide aperture, otherwise go for blur. Bokeh: open up your aperture to its widest setting to get a shallow depth-of-field. Look at how the size of the background bokeh changes depending on the aperture, how close your subject is to the lens, and how far the background is from the subject. Blur: if you prefer, aim for background blur instead - you can achieve this on any camera by ensuring your subject is close to you and the background is far away. Try it and see!

Extra credit - Technical: use an aperture template for your lens to create shaped bokeh - or experiment with attaching a card with a shape cut in it over your lens. If you have a Lens Baby, this is the week to use it!

Week 40: The Recyclers

4 Oct 2020

Tell us about organisms that recycle for a living - the worms, slaters, fungi and other unsung heroes that convert decaying material into humus.

Extra credit - Technical: this challenge lends itself to macro photography, if you have the gear.

Week 41: Selfie

11 Oct 2020

Take a self-portrait, but get creative as to how you achieve it. Despite the complaints from boomers about millennials' obsession with their own image, the selfie is not a modern concept - many great artists have used themselves as a muse. But the selfie is made much easier these days with rear-facing mobile phones. Alternatively use a tripod/support and the delay timer feature on your camera.

Extra credit - Creative: recreate the look of a famous selfie from art history. Think Frida Kahlo, Rita Angus, Rembrandt, Cindy Sherman... The inspirations are endless. If the thought of a selfie horrifies you, get creative on how you include yourself like I did here with my reflection in a bird's eye.

Week 42: Simplicity

18 Oct 2020

Take a photo of something in the natural world but keep the composition simple and serene. To help achieve this, consider including only one subject, one colour, and one shape.

Extra credit - Technical: simplify the background by using a backdrop (dark cloth, a card, a texture board) - if it's placed sufficiently far from the subject, it will blur and not be noticeable.

Week 43: Babies

25 Oct 2020

Photograph a baby. It can be a plant or animal or interpreted creatively.

Extra credit - Story: in your own words, tell us something about the life-cycle of your subject.

Week 44: What's that setting?

1 Nov 2020

There are many seemingly mysterious buttons and dials on a camera (or settings on a mobile phone). Choose just one and Google it or check the user manual to find out what it does. If it still is mysterious, choose another one. When you eventually find one that seems to do something interesting, take a nature-related photo and tell us what the button did so we can all learn too. Feel free to ask for help on our Facebook group.

Extra credit - Technical: if you have a reasonable idea already how your camera works, switch to M mode for the day and shoot entirely in Manual.

Week 45: Teeny tiny

8 Nov 2020

Find a tiny critter or fungi to photograph. If you don't have a macro lens, try your camera phone as most are good at focusing close-up. Or, alternatively, use a telephoto lens. Extra credit - Advocacy: post your photo to iNaturalist and add to the knowledge about the range where your critter is found. No worries if you can't ID it because experts on iNaturalist will try to identify it for you. It's a good idea to upload your photos on iNaturalist with a creative commons licence so they can be used by others such as scientists and educators. I use the CC-BY licence which means users are free to use the image if they give me an attribution.

Week 46: Backlight

15 Nov 2020

Shoot into a light source so that the outside of your subject gets a gorgeous glowing rim of light. If the sun is low and in your eyes you're doing it right! Extra credit - Technical: The secret here is to make sure your subject is correctly exposed. If you just let your camera go on auto, you'll likely get a silhouette. You may need a reflector to bounce light back on the subject (white board or tinfoil will do) or master your exposure-compensation dial.

Week 47: Negative space

22 Nov 2020

Compose an image where the subject is to the side and the rest is "negative space". Extra credit - Advocacy: use the negative space to include a meaningful message and post it on your social media for people to share.

Week 48: Volunteering

29 Nov 2020

It's International Volunteer Day on 5 Dec - tell us a story about a local wildlife/nature volunteer (person) or project. Be sure to get peoples' permission before posting identifiable photos of them online. Extra credit - Advocacy: create a photo essay that tells a fuller story. Consider using a service like Adobe Spark to showcase your essay online.

Week 49: Ancient

6 Dec 2020

Your inspiration this week is "Ancient". Interpret as you see best. Extra credit - Creative: back in Week 11, extra-credit was to plan a project that would use photos taken during the challenge. How are you getting on?

Week 50: Let your photo fly free

13 Dec 2020

Give a gift to the world and donate a photo to Wikimedia Commons for anyone to use. We all use Wikipedia so I believe we should all give a little back too. Think about a subject that is special to where you live or an exotic place you have travelled. Do you have photos of rare species? A sexy slime mould? A rare lichen? The more esoteric the better - just be sure it's correctly identified. You can choose various usage licences for your photos (I use CC-BY-4.0: free to use including commercially, but with attribution).

Extra credit - Advocacy: Get in touch with your local Wikipedians and ask if they need specific photos to illustrate their Wiki entries. I've twice had my photos used for national coverage of a critter in New Zealand because my photo inspired the Wikipedia entry to be fully written.

Week 51: Celebration

20 Dec 2020

Whatever holiday you're celebrating this time of year, include friends and family and nature in your plans. Perhaps arrange a picnic, a walk, a hike - something outdoors. Try and impart your love of the outside world to your guests and capture their joy in experiencing it too.

Perhaps get them to do one of your favourite challenges? Be sure to get their permission if you include their faces in your photo and you wish to post your photos online.

Extra credit - Advocacy: it's simple this week - just share your enthusiasm and passion with your loved ones.

Week 52: Journey

27 Dec 2020

You've been on a journey of discovery this year. This week, go back to the first week's challenge (about a place where you feel especially connected) and take a new image. Then post it along with your first image. Tell us about your journey. Is it the same place? Do you see it in a different way?

Extra credit - Creative: showcase your project that you've been working on throughout the year!