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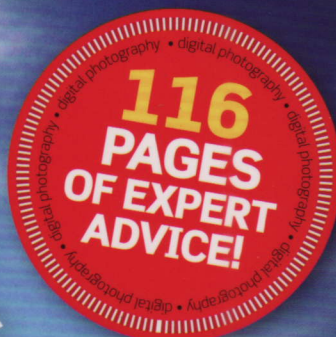
Digital Photography

The Australian Travel Issue

Volume 19

Aussie wonders

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14



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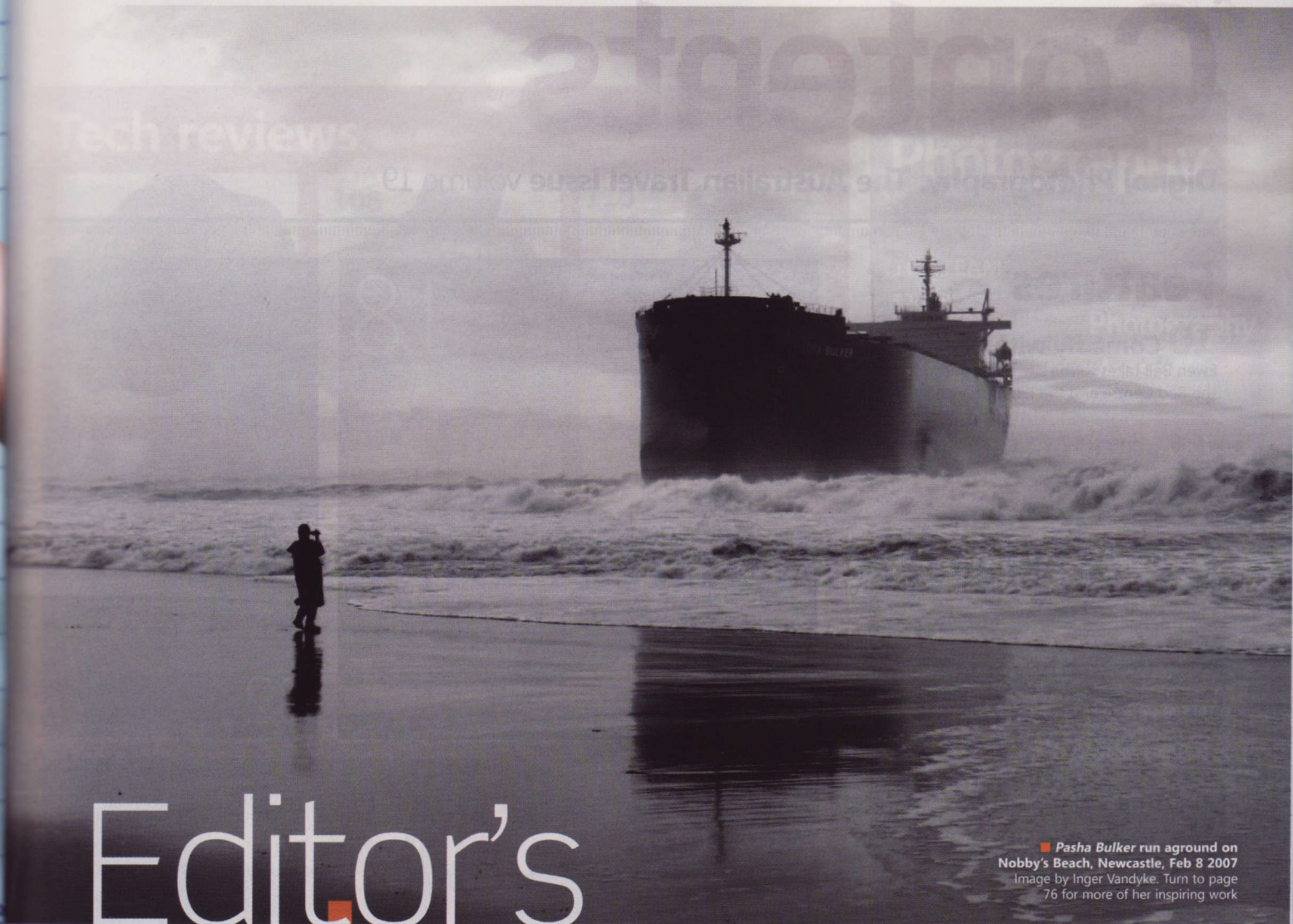
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■ **Pasha Bulker** run aground on Nobby's Beach, Newcastle, Feb 8 2007
Image by Inger Vandyke. Turn to page 76 for more of her inspiring work

Editor's welcome



In putting together this Australian Travel issue of *Digital Photography Magazine*, I noticed a strong, consistent theme running through the various interviews and testimonials of the photographers we approached. The consensus seemed to be that there are no shortcuts.

Well, besides the obvious ones – for example, you can take the four-day drive across the Nullarbor, or opt for the four-hour flight. But in terms of the career arc of the average professional travel photographer, it's always the long way around: you just have to put in the hard yards.

Richard l'Anson, one of Australia's most famous travel photographers, whose works appear in over 400 Lonely Planet titles and whose profile feature begins on page 54 of this issue, talks about it in terms of an "apprenticeship" of sorts, where you just have to take

your gear, set your sights on the horizon and go. Take a year. Take two. Just get out there, shoot the hell out of everything, then come back and take stock.

At the other end of the scale, we have fledgling photographer Cameron Herweynen, who at a relatively young age won the right to photograph the indigenous Garma Festival in Arnhem Land (page 64). He's right at the beginning of what looks to be a very promising career – and he's chomping at the bit to get out there and do his "apprenticeship", following in the footsteps of l'Anson and a thousand more with wandering feet and itchy shutter fingers.

And then there's Mark Lang, whose *Langscapes* (page 24) have inspired and influenced an entire generation of photographers. Even though he's done his fair share of hard yards over the decades, fortunately – after a hiatus – he's gearing up to get back out there. Mark is living proof that not only are there no shortcuts, in fact, for a true travel photographer, the road never ends. Thank goodness.

Greg Barton
Editor

LIVING TO CONSERVE

Some people take photos to preserve memories. Inger Vandyke does it to conserve wildlife. Here we look at some of the wildest places she's been, where she's going next, and what she'll save along the way.

Inger Vandyke has loved remote places for as long as she can remember. "I'm the product of a very unusual childhood," she says, "where my only real companions have been the wind, the ocean spray, and the plants and animals that I work with."

She currently resides in northern New South Wales, but six years ago, she and her partner began planning an expedition to Australia's most remote external territory, Heard Island, and its neighbouring islet, McDonald Island. The most pristine territories in Antarctica, and home to Australia's only active volcanoes, the Heard Island Expedition represents the longest and most difficult leg of the Indian Ocean Seabird Expedition, which begins in Broome in September 2011 and finally ends in Hobart in February 2012. It's one of the most challenging and comprehensive marine fauna surveys undertaken in Australia's history, and will

span five months and almost 12,000 nautical miles.

Inger will lead an 8000km leg of that journey that will involve sailing an expedition yacht from Mauritius to Fremantle, taking almost six weeks and crossing one of the roughest oceans in the world. But how did she come to be here, about to embark on the voyage of a lifetime?

Getting her sea legs

"I was brought up on a fishing trawler on the Great Barrier Reef," Inger says. "Instead of getting toys for Christmas, my brother and I played with sea turtle hatchlings on beautiful islands like Lady Musgrave and Lady Elliot."

Inger and her brother were free-diving by the age of five, and grew up with an inherent respect for the ocean. With their backyard made up of the many islands of the Great Barrier Reef,

INGER'S SET-UP

A Canon 7D, and my standard working lenses are the Canon 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS USM telephoto, a Sigma 10-20mm F4-5.6 EX DC wide angle, and a Canon 100mm f/2.8 IS USM macro. Peripherals includes a Manfrotto tripod, Cokin P filters with ring mount and holder, a ring-mounted flash, a Canon 580 series flash and several UV and circular polarising filters. My favourite lens for wildlife photography has been the 100-400mm. I work at sea a lot where everything is on the move: you, the sea, the birds, the boat. The 100-400mm allows me a lot of flexibility when there's a lot of movement between the subject and myself. It also happens to be a really great lens for portraits.

*"If someone looking at my images
feels moved enough to take that
first step towards conservation,
my job in life is done"*

■ **Coconut Crab, Christmas Island**

Christmas Island is home to the largest intact population of Coconut or Robber Crabs in the world. These crabs are the largest land-living arthropods on earth, growing to a leg span on 90cm, a height of 40cm, and weighing up to 4.1kg. This individual was returning from a coconut hunting foray on Dolly Beach when I took this photo. To me, the image really shows Coconut Crabs in their proper realm: on a beach with the jagged cliffs of the island in the background.



"Stay ethical... I've seen photographers cut down trees just to photograph a bird"

they spent their waking hours befriending seabirds, defending sea turtles, and spying on sharks, Manta Rays and a myriad other sea creatures. "We knew no danger," says Inger. "Especially since our parents fostered an unbridled independence and fearlessness in us."

Later, at the age of 30, Inger took a trip with the Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association, the longest continual study of the Wandering Albatross in the world. While at sea, one of the scientists, while working with an Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, placed the bird on Inger's knee. "Something was sparked within me," Inger recalls. "The smell of seabirds brought back my youth. Here I was sitting on an old fishing trawler with the salty air blowing around me, in disbelief that the bird on my lap had travelled almost 8000km from its

home on the Crozet Archipelago in the Indian Ocean to Wollongong and the warmth of my knees."

It was that extraordinary experience that drew Inger into conserving the wildlife of the Southern Ocean. Since then she's assisted on dozens of conservation projects throughout Australia. "Working on rugged, difficult-to-access islands re-ignited a passion I've held for island conservation since I was a child," she says. "And this passion now drives my professional career as a wildlife photographer, specialising in Australia's offshore territories."

With location offices that now include Tasmania, Christmas Island, Cocos Keeling Islands, Norfolk Island, Lord Howe Island, Torres Strait Islands and the Australian Antarctic Territories of Macquarie, Heard and MacDonald Islands, Inger is about as far out there a travel photographer as you can get

■ Red-footed Boobie and Red Crabs, Christmas Island

There's no place on earth you can capture a shot like this, other than Christmas Island, one of Australia's remote Indian Ocean Territories. During May, Red-footed Boobies spend a dangerous amount of time on the ground in search of nesting material to breed. I woke up at dawn one morning and spent hours watching while they collected twigs and leaves to build platform nests in the rainforest canopy. While searching the forest floor, they were joined by the ubiquitous Red Crabs of Christmas Island, there for a different reason: a leaf-litter breakfast.



INGER'S ABSOLUTE NO-NOS

1 Don't back animals into a corner or get too close to one in a compromised situation, like a bird on a nest. Approaching a nesting bird is one of wildlife photography's greatest taboos, as they might desert their offspring. Choose a longer lens and move away.

2 Never claim that a captive animal is wild. While the temptation is huge to get great shots of animals up close, taking photos of zoo animals and claiming they're wild can land you in trouble and your reputation can be irreparably compromised. In 2009, Spanish photographer José Luis Rodríguez entered an image of a wolf jumping a fence into the prestigious international Veolia Wildlife Photographer of the Year awards, and won the grand prize. In January the following year, he was stripped of his award amid claims the wolf was a trained animal. His story serves as a warning to aspiring nature photographers to maintain originality and integrity in their work.

3 Keep it natural. Don't edit your images to the point where you have to cut pieces out or replace large portions. It's far better to wait a while for better light, for the animal to do the right thing, or walk away and miss the shot, than enter the world of editing images to make them "perfect".

4 Never bait wildlife. Stay ethical... I've seen photographers cut down trees just to photograph a bird, get too close, grab an animal and generally leave a negative impact in the wake of their activities. But perhaps the biggest taboo is baiting animals to come out from hiding. Not only are you creating a dependency in a wild animal on an artificial food source, you're potentially creating a future danger for other photographers following in your wake, if that animal associates photographers with food.

IMAGES

Coconut Crab (previous spread)

» Shot with Canon 550D; 1/125sec; f/10; ISO 100; 10-20mm lens

Red-footed Boobie

» Shot with Canon 7D; 1/320sec; f/6.3; ISO2000; 100-400mm lens

Buller's Albatross

» Shot with Canon 20D; 1/1600sec; f/5.6; ISO400; 100-400mm lens

Hawksbill Turtle

» Shot with Canon 300D; 1/100sec; f/6.3; ISO100; 18-55mm lens



■ Buller's Albatross, Wollongong

Doing pelagic seabird trips looking for some of the world's rarest avifauna, it's rare to have the gods align themselves and everything come together for a perfect shot. This was one of a few occasions when this happened to me. On a near perfect day off Wollongong in 2008, this Buller's Albatross landed close to the boat and, just as a wave swelled up around it, I took this photo. I feel that the wave gives this bird a "jewelled" platform to sit on and it really emphasises the parrot-like colours of Buller's Albatrosses living in their indigo world of the open ocean.

■ Hawksbill Turtle, Flinders Beach

In the tepid waters of the Gulf of Carpentaria, hatchlings from three species of sea turtles begin their life. This tiny, pebble-sized Hawksbill Turtle hatchling took its first sand trek on Flinders Beach, north of the remote Indigenous community of Mapoon. To me this image really gives you an idea of how big hatchlings are in relation to the tiny bubbles in their sea foam. Once this hatchling makes it to sea, if it survives, it will remain in its pelagic realm, undertaking massive migratory patterns, until it reaches maturity at around 30 years of age.



■ Southern Humpbacks, Tonga

In September 2009, I went to Tonga on a photographic trip swimming with the migratory Southern Humpback Whales and their calves. During almost two weeks on the water, we encountered a myriad of different behaviours while we joined these gentle giants of the sea as they looked after their young. Probably the most adrenaline-rushed encounters involved "Heat Runs", where a pod of up to a dozen 40-tonne animals would gang up and chase a female for mating rights. At one point we were dropped in on a heat run with eight males who charged past, less than 2m below us, leaving us behind in the wake of their bubbles. It was really quite something to be within breathing distance of 300 tonnes of animal on a mission to pursue females. It made you feel very humble and vulnerable.



IMAGES

Southern Humpbacks

» Shot with Nikon D200; 1/40sec; f/6.7; ISO 100; 10-20mm lens

Black swan

» Shot with Canon 400D; 1/100sec; f/5.6; ISO 100; 100-400mm lens

King Penguin chick

» Shot with Canon 400D; 1/200sec; f/5.6; ISO 100; 100-400mm lens

"I hope to remain involved in the conservation of these beautiful places long after I'm physically unable to visit"

without leaving Australia.

"When people ask me about my true passion," she says, "I usually respond with 'Island Conservation', because the offshore territories of Australia are representative of some of our most beautiful places.

I hope to remain involved in the conservation of these beautiful places long after I'm physically unable to visit and play an active role in their preservation."

What it takes

"Wildlife photography often translates into long hours of sitting, watching and hiding from the animals you work with so that you don't disturb them doing what they do naturally," says Inger. "And for that, you need superior levels of patience and an exact knowledge of what your camera does so you can get

the best shot, even when you have the narrowest window of opportunity."

Inger has always been a fervent observer of wildlife. She feels it's important to understand the creatures you work with, so that you can second-guess their next move. "Through simply spending hours in the field and watching the creatures I work with, I've learned a lot about their habits, their migratory patterns, their food sources, their habitats and what drives them to do the things they do."

Largely self-taught as a travelling wildlife photographer, Inger has learned much in the field. "It's important to practice, practice, practice," she says. "Go on walks, do photography tours, take your camera with you everywhere you go and use it. Don't be frightened to experiment and take notes of the settings you used to get different shots."

■ Black Swan, Canberra

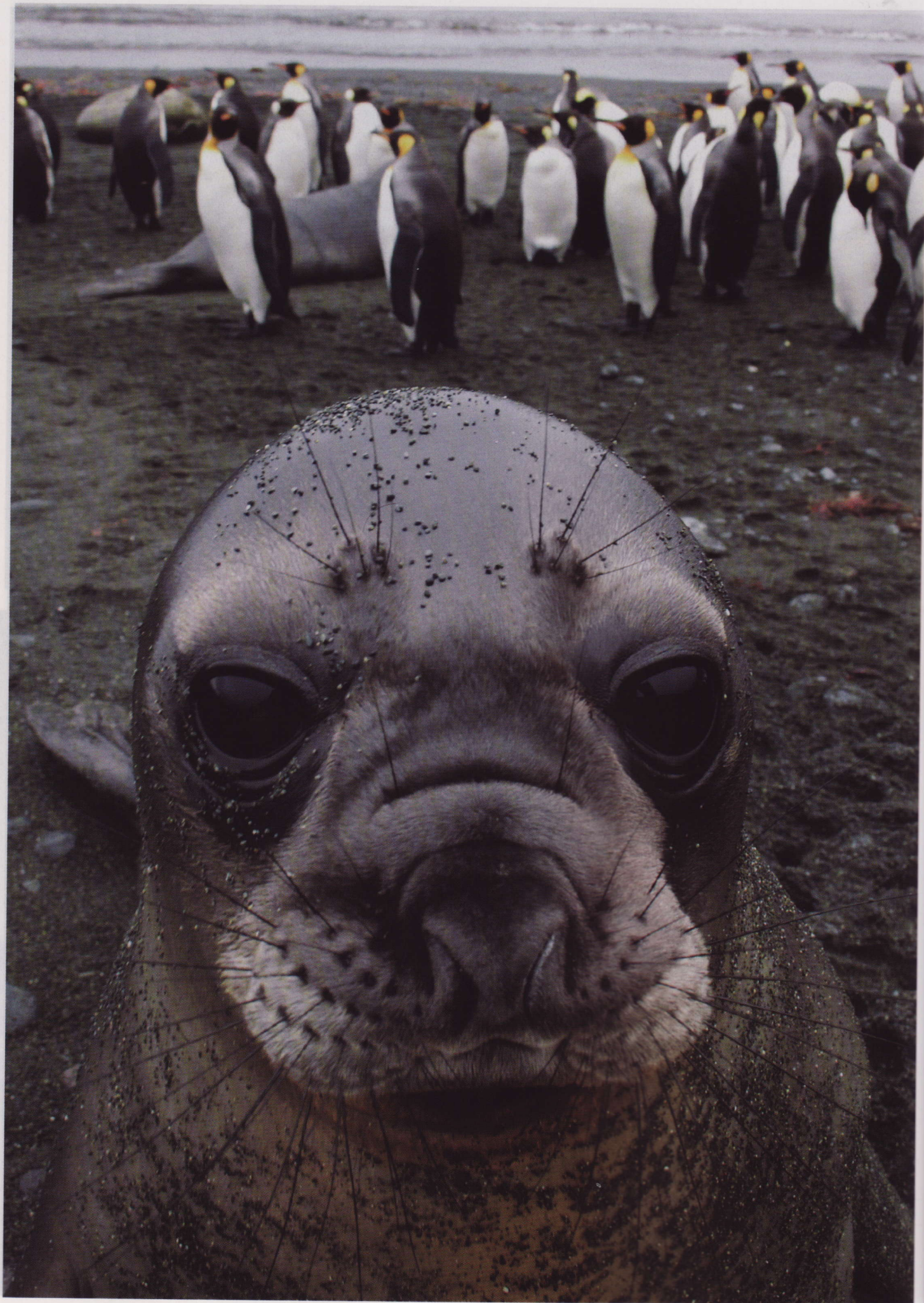
Black Swans are one of Australia's most graceful and beautiful water birds. I once went on location to Canberra and during a boring afternoon, when the weather wasn't ideal, I decided to take a stroll with my camera. While I was out, I found a Black Swan preening its feathers so I took a couple of shots.



■ King Penguin chick,
Macquarie Island

Over three million penguins breed on the Australian Sub-Antarctic territory of Macquarie Island, including King Penguins, whose chicks contrast dramatically in colour to their parents. Fluffy brown chicks patiently wait out isolated snow showers and sleet storms on Sandy Bay. When they aren't practicing their calls, they take quiet naps waiting for their parents to bring them food from sea trips.





Southern Elephant Seal, Macquarie Island

Every November on Macquarie Island, it's breeding season for the Southern Elephant Seal. As the world's deepest diving seal, even as babies they have gargantuan eyes. For a brief period, the mother Elephant Seals leave the pups on the beach to wean them from dependency and prepare them for a life at sea. During this time, the pups will approach anyone or anything to seek warmth. I placed my backpack on

the beach to get out a new lens and was instantly approached by this seal pup. Weighing 300kg, I really didn't know what to do. I ended up choosing a small lens because this pup got so close, a zoom wasn't necessary. For a moment I felt really threatened but the guide reassured me that this baby was only seeking warmth and it was just curious. It was an extraordinary experience getting so close to one of the biggest animals in Antarctica.

"Each time I turned my back, the shark would dart back in and swim within centimetres"

King Penguins, Lusitania Bay

This image was taken with a simple little Olympus Mju Tough under some of the most challenging photographic conditions I've ever experienced. At Macquarie Island, visitors are not allowed to get in the water to dive, snorkel or see the animals from that perspective. At Lusitania Bay, on the southern tip of the island, there is a colony of around 1,000 King Penguins. The density of birds on that beach actually makes it appear almost white from a distance when the sands are naturally black. The sheer numbers of animals also make it impossible to land a boat. Storing around close to shore in an inflatable dinghy, we were joined by lots of King Penguins who broke free from the pongs to swim out and investigate our visit. My partner and I thought it would be fun to get shots of swimming birds with our two underwater cameras so we got down on our knees, plunged the camera under the boat to avoid the wash and took random shots. We took it in turns, alternating when we lost grip in our fingers due to the cold or when our hands turned blue. It was tricky because we weren't able to see underwater and we had to take pot luck as the penguins swam by. We took almost a hundred shots in this hour that afternoon. From those, only three made it out; this is the best of them.

IMAGES**Southern Elephant Seal**

» Shot with Canon 400D; 1/250sec; f/10; ISO 800; 15-55mm lens

King Penguins

» Shot with Olympus Mju Tough; 1/200sec; f/3.5; ISO 80

Although Inger's outdoor upbringing taught her to respect – but not fear – the animals she encounters in her work, she has met a couple of creatures that have put her on edge. One of the places she regularly photographs is the tepid waters of Cocos Keeling Islands in the Indian Ocean. This chain of coral atolls is teeming with small reef sharks, and diving and snorkelling with them is one of Inger's greatest joys. On an infrequently visited area of the lagoon one day, however, she had her first threatening encounter with an animal she'd had 35 uneventful years of contact with. "I'd geared up and jumped in the water first to take a look around, see what the visibility was like and what

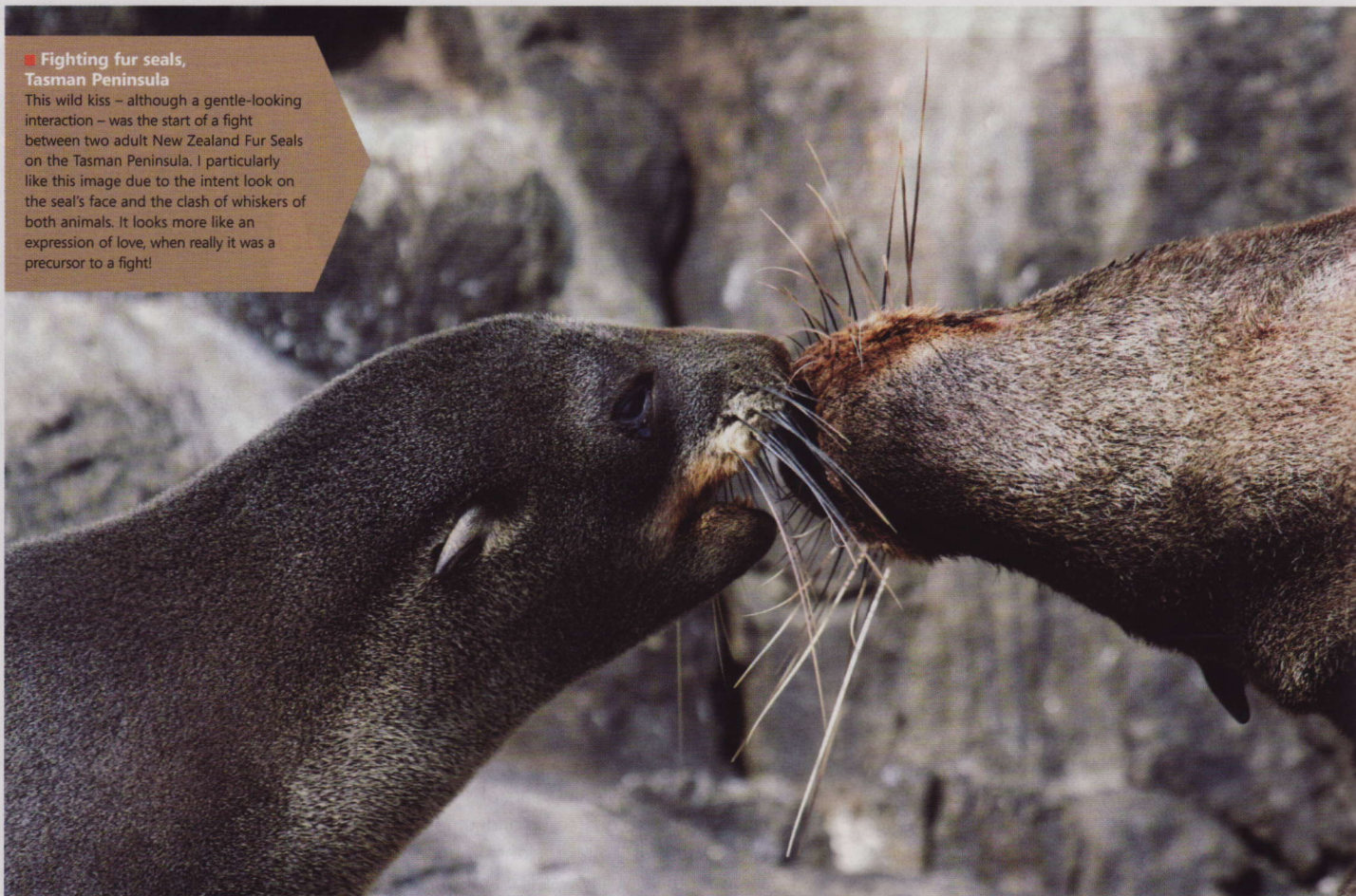
was there. I was instantly approached by a White-tipped Reef Shark, so I turned to face it. Each time I turned my back on it, the shark would dart back in and swim within centimetres of my back, yet every time I turned around, it would disappear. It eventually lost interest and I continued on with my dive but it was the first time my hair was raised during a shark encounter."

Later this year, Inger will also find herself in close proximity to the largest colony of Leopard Seals in the world. "They're the top predator in Antarctica," she says. "So hopefully I won't be having any frightening encounters with them!"



■ Fighting fur seals, Tasman Peninsula

This wild kiss – although a gentle-looking interaction – was the start of a fight between two adult New Zealand Fur Seals on the Tasman Peninsula. I particularly like this image due to the intent look on the seal's face and the clash of whiskers of both animals. It looks more like an expression of love, when really it was a precursor to a fight!



INGER'S TOP TIPS

1 Look for animal behaviours. A frog jumping mid-flight from one rock to another, a pelican swallowing a fish, a flying fox cruising past the setting sun, a whale calf hiding under the pectoral fin of its mother – all of these are more interesting than a shot of the animal itself.

2 Having a good feel for composition and what makes a clean image over a cluttered one is vital. The space around an animal is important, so try and capture some of the environment that the animals live and thrive in, rather than a straight up portrait.

3 Always looking for eye shine. The best times of the day to achieve this are dawn and dusk. At other times, or when the weather disallows this, it's important to consider the animal and its behaviour before taking out your flash to get the same effect.

4 Focus – if nothing else is sharp in your image, at least try to make sure the animal's eye is. Eyes draw the audience's attention and give the animal character.

Conservation through the lens

Inger retains an unshakeable belief in the power of her photography as a tool for conservation. "The Southern Ocean is a vast expanse of rough seas and spectacular, uninhabited islands," she says. "It's also a very fragile and ecologically vulnerable place that's currently going through unprecedented environmental change. Due to the fact that 90% of the world's population will never see it, I feel it's

vital for us to document our journeys there through photographs. If someone looking at my images feels moved enough to take that first step towards conservation, my job in life is done. Unless people see images of these remote and beautiful islands, how on earth will they understand why they deserve our protection?"



For more of Inger's work,
go to ingervandyke.com

IMAGES

Fighting fur seals

» Shot with Canon 400D; 1/400sec; f/7.1; ISO 400; 100-400mm lens

Wave runner

» Shot with Canon 20D; 1/1250sec; f/5.6; ISO 400; 100-400mm lens

Shy Kiss

» Shot with Canon 300D; 1/2000sec; f/5.6; ISO 400; 75-300mm lens



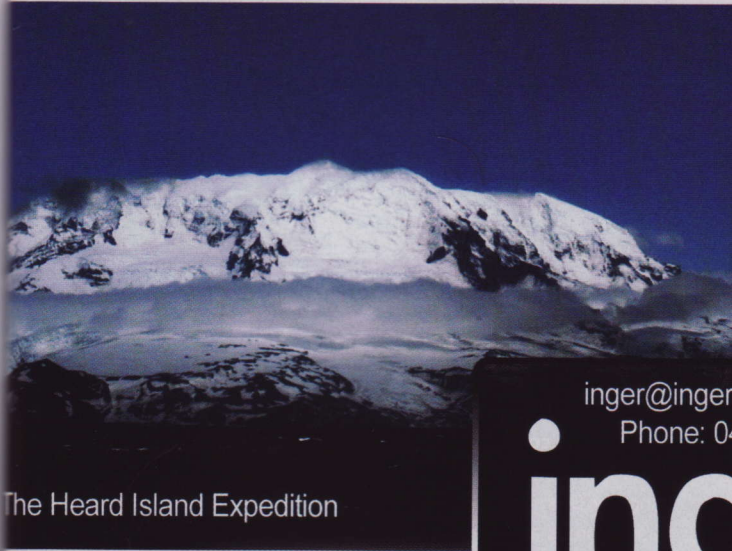
■ Wave runner, Southern Ocean

Tiny Wilson's Storm Petrels are the true denizens of the Southern Ocean swells. In mammoth seas, these tiny birds, no greater in size than a swallow, can be seen scooting across the surface of the waves searching for tiny food morsels like krill. This image is unusual in that Storm Petrels rarely come close to boats at sea, it was a beautiful sunny day and the tiny yellow webbing in the bird's feet (a diagnostic identification feature of the animal) was in clear view.

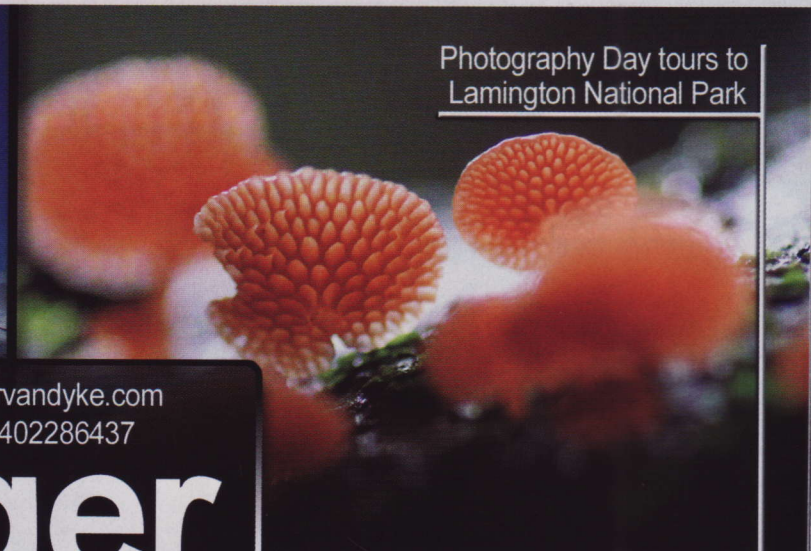
Shy Kiss, Tasmania

Shy Albatrosses are Australia's only native albatross. They breed on isolated rocky islets off the coast of Tasmania. When they fledge from their nest, they take off over the Southern Indian Ocean to the rich feeding grounds in the Benguela current off the coast of Namibia.

As an albatross that has to fight to compete for food in large flocks, Shys are used to getting their way. This photo was taken on a rainy day off the coast of Eaglehawk Neck, south of Hobart. These two birds were actually about to fight, but in the image their interaction looks almost gentle, like they are kissing. I often call this picture "Shy Kiss" for that reason.



The Heard Island Expedition



Photography Day tours to Lamington National Park

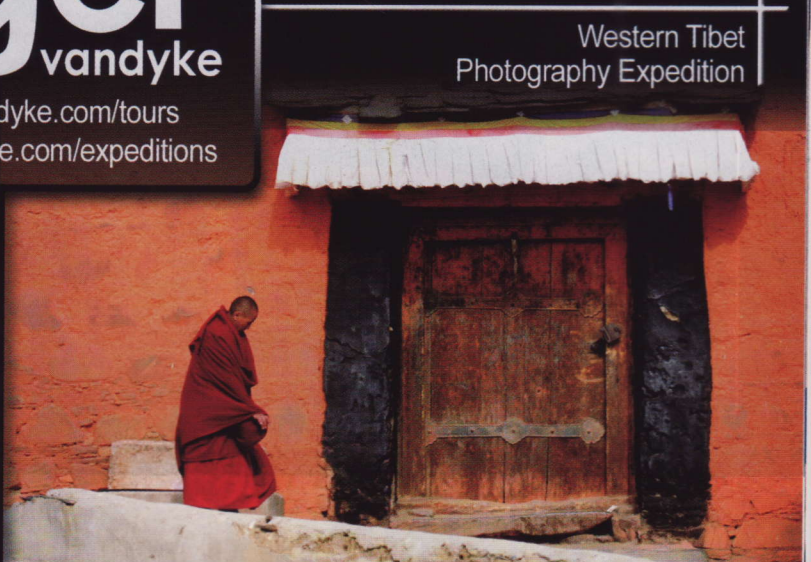


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