

# Gill Moon Photography Photo Club



## January 2024 Challenge

### Winter Photography made interesting

*Hello*

and welcome to my monthly photo challenges.

Each month I will be setting a new challenge for club members to work with. The challenges are not designed to be competitive but they are designed to be fun and inspiring and help you grow as a photographer.

Every monthly challenge will be followed by a 1.5 hour Zoom session (which is entirely optional) on the last Wednesday of every month where we will discuss some of the submitted images and talk about what worked and what didn't. I hope this feedback will be useful.

Thank you very much for being part of the Photo Club and I hope you will find it a fun and rewarding challenge.

Gill.

# Photographing Winter Landscapes



Welcome to a new year of Photo Challenges - I hope you will enjoy them.

This month's challenge is all about winter and how to get the best from the season. While many photographers rave about photographing in winter and the beauty of the landscape at this time of year, the reality in this part of the world is quite often less inspiring.

Snow, frost and ice can transform the landscape into a winter wonderland but these conditions are becoming less and less frequent in this part of the world. So how do we go about feeling inspired on grey, damp, and cold days where the principle colours in the landscape are grey and brown?

For this challenge I am going to pick three things to focus on that will hopefully give you

some inspiration for your winter photography.

## 1. Using the weather as inspiration.

There are some clear advantages to photography in the winter. The days are shorter so sunrise is later, avoiding the need for really early starts. So even if you are not an early riser there really is no excuse for not getting up to watch the sunrise in the winter.

The sun is also much lower in the sky for most of the day avoiding the harsh shadows of summer and giving much nicer light at all times of the day. This means that in the winter you are not restricted to shooting at sunrise and sunset for the best light.

Winter conditions can produce some of the most magical light of the year so it is a

good idea to have a list of locations lined up suitable for whatever the weather throws at you.

## Working with the weather

Freezing temperatures add a new dimension to the dormant landscape and help give a magical quality to otherwise stark and dreary scenes. Shooting successful images in these conditions can throw up many technical challenges for the photographer as well as the more obvious physical ones of simply keeping warm.

Before going out on any winter shoot remember to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. Boots, a warm waterproof jacket and some thin gloves which don't hamper your ability to use the camera controls are essential basics for hours in the field. You will also have to think about protecting your equipment from the cold. Camera batteries tend to drain more quickly in freezing temperatures, so make sure you always pack a spare, fully charged battery and try to keep it warm either by wrapping it in your camera bag or by keeping it in a pocket close to your body.

Other common problems to be aware in the field are lens misting and condensation. Try to let your camera acclimatise before taking any shots especially after removing the lens cap as this is when misting can occur. Its also a good idea to carry a lens cloth with you at all times.

## Snow and Frost

Snow, frost and ice may be magical but capturing it on an image can present all kind of problems to the landscape photographer; the most fundamental of which is exposure. Using your camera in full automatic mode when photographing snow or ice will play tricks with the metering system. The sensor will be fooled by the brightness of the landscape and will underexpose the scene. This will render the snow or ice as a shade of grey and everything else much darker than

it should be. The best way to counteract this is to over expose the scene. A general rule of thumb is to dial in +1 or +2 stops of compensation, but experiment and check your histogram regularly.



White balance can also be tricky to get right in camera. Snow tends to take on the colour of the surrounding light; in sunshine it appears white, in shadow bluish and in overcast conditions it appears grey. You can experiment with the white balance in camera but as I am shooting in RAW I tend to leave mine on auto and adjust in post processing.

Snow transforms a landscape and makes shapes and forms much more pronounced. Colours tend to be muted and subtle so it pays to look for something striking with a splash of colour to use as a focal point. If this is lacking try shooting at sunrise or sunset to add a colour contrast to your landscape.



When out in a snowy landscape try to think creatively about your image. If it looks a bit drab and there is no colour to lift it consider converting to black and white. This works really well if you have some good shapes, forms or textures in your composition.



**This image was taken on Loch Lurgainn in Assynt.  
Nikon D850, Nikon 24-70mm lens. F11 at 1/125 second, ISO 400 handheld.**

## Fog

Fog can produce some really atmospheric images. To make the most of the conditions keep an eye on the weather forecast and have a few favourite locations in mind that you can visit if the conditions are favourable when you get up.

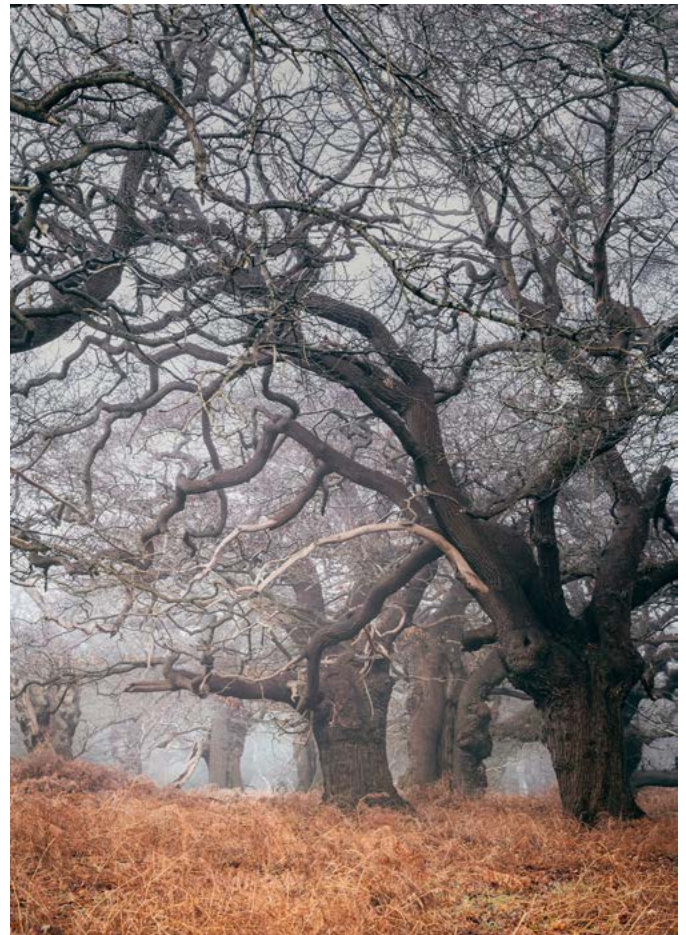
I use the Clear Outside app which tells me the temperature, wind speed, the humidity and the dew point. Fog is more likely at a humidity over 90% when the winds are light. It is also much more likely to form at dawn after a cold night.

Choose your location to suit the density of the fog. In thick fog I will always travel to the woods where the conditions help to simplify the compositions by cutting out the clutter around the trees. The fog also adds mood and atmosphere and helps simplify the colour pallet.

Fog can produce some really atmospheric images. To make the most of the conditions keep an eye on the weather forecast and have a few favourite locations in mind that you can visit if the conditions are favourable when you get up.

I use the Clear Outside app which tells me the temperature, wind speed, the humidity and the dew point. Fog is more likely at a humidity over 90% when the winds are light. It is also much more likely to form at dawn after a cold night.

Choose your location to suit the density of the fog. In thick fog I will often travel to the woods where the conditions help to simplify the compositions by cutting out the clutter around the trees. The fog also adds mood and atmosphere and helps simplify the colour pallet.



When considering what lens to use it is worth bearing in mind that a telephoto lens will compress the scene and and make the fog appear thicker whilst a wide angle lens will have the opposite effect.

Once the sun starts to break through the fog you will get the opportunity for some lovely backlight images with rays of light shining through the trees.

When it comes to processing foggy images I tend to reduce the clarity in Lightroom as I want to keep that soft effect that fog creates. I may also add some dehaze and push the whites as far as they will go without over exposing. I will also tweak the blacks a little to introduce a little contrast within the scene.

## Rain

Many of us choose not to go out in the rain but as long as you have the right clothing and look after your equipment photography in the rain can be very rewarding.

I tend to head for the woods on a wet day. The rain really saturates the colours of the vegetation and the reduced visibility associated with drizzle acts a lot like fog obscuring the background and simplifying the image.



**This image was taken in Kilchoan in heavy drizzle. Nikon D850, Nikon 24-70mm lens. F8 at 1/80 second, ISO 800 handheld. B&W conversion in Lightroom, with some grain added to enhance the atmosphere.**

Shooting in the rain can create images with lots of atmosphere, particularly if you convert them to black and white. The rain creates an atmosphere a lot like fog and the soft, low contrast tones make for very calming images, particularly if you combine the a black and white conversion with a long exposure image.

If you want some more inspiration for shooting black and white images in the rain check out Adrian Vila's website

<https://aows.co>

Many of his images are shot on rainy days.

## 2. Shooting the beauty in decay

Everywhere you look in winter you will find reminders of past seasons. Plants that have set seed or foliage that is decaying. These things can make really attractive images particularly if they are shot in wintery conditions such as frost or snow.

Below are a few examples.

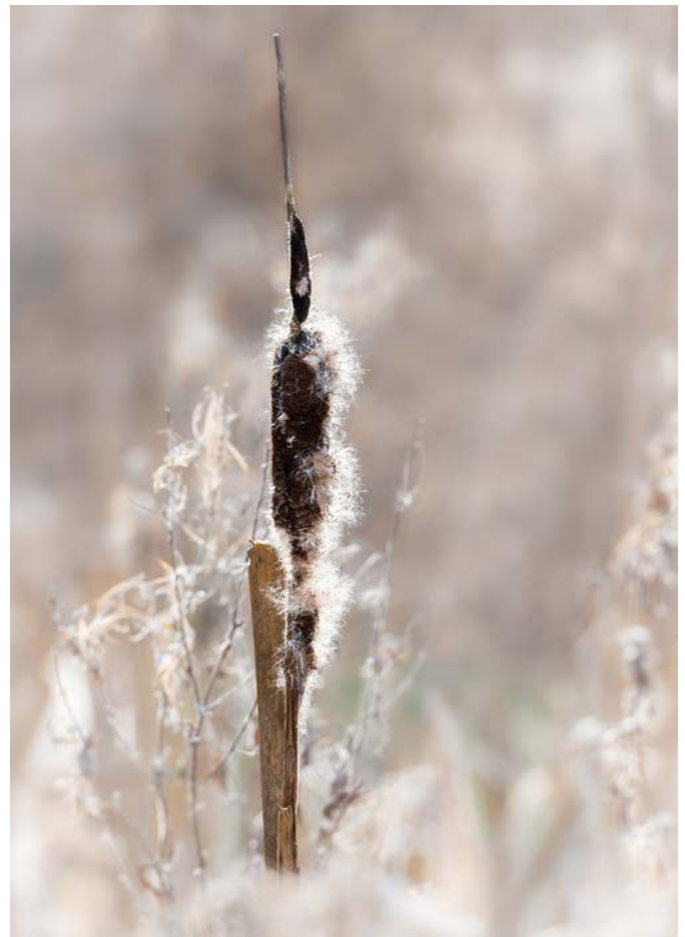


**Decaying sea kale leaves on the beach. This one reminds me of a venician mask.**

**Nikon D850, Nikon 105mm macro lens. F5.6 at 1/100 second, ISO 500 handheld.**



This image shows some frost edged seaweed found on the beach. Nikon D700, Nikon 24-70mm. F16 at 1/60 second, ISO 400, flash.

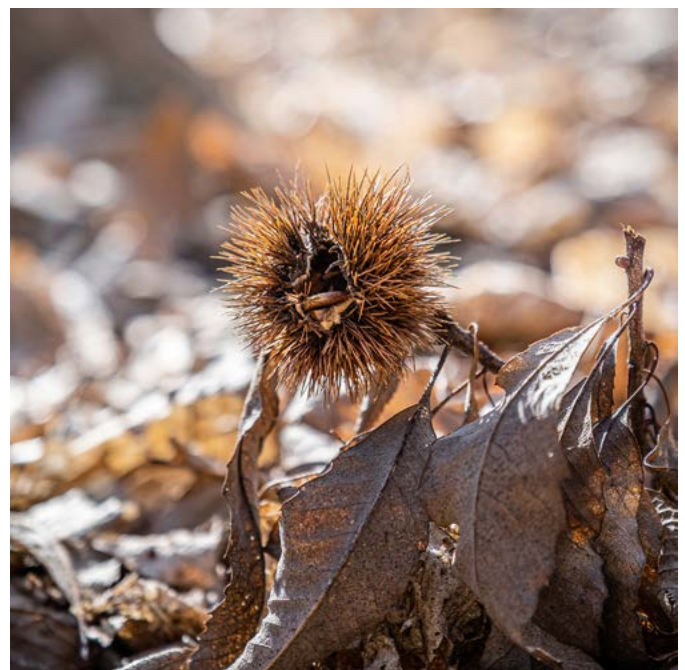


This image shows some frost edged seaweed found on the beach. Nikon D850 at 200mm, F5.6 at 1/400 second at ISO 200.



This image shows some decayed and frost covered leaves which I felt made an interesting abstract shot. I liked the combination of light and dark and the shapes and texture of the leaves that were enhanced by the frost.

Fuji XT4, 48mm, F5.6 at 1/90 second handheld.



This image shows a sweet chestnut seedcase amongst some fallen leaves. I loved the warm tones created by the sunlight. I shot this image into the light to give some nice background bokeh. Fuji XT4, 55mm, F3.2 at 1/400 second, 160 ISO.



**This image shows some frost covered bracken. I shot this into the sun to achieve some nice background bokeh and then I lightened the whole background in post processing to give a dreamy effect.  
Nikon D850 at 200mm, F4.5 at 1/1000 second at ISO 400.**

These images all show different way that you can portray the beauty in decay. There are lots of subjects to point your camera at from fallen leaves or seeds to decaying seedheads such as thistles, reeds or angelica seedheads. When approaching this challenge think about other aspects than can enhance the beauty of the scene such as the light, frost or raindrops. Try and use these creatively to add to the visual appeal of the image.

### **3. Using a low viewpoint to create an image with impact.**

For this part of the challenge the idea is to use a very low viewpoint - placing your camera as close to the ground as you can. Images taken from this type of viewpoint often have a high impact as this is not how we all see the world

usually.



**Fish sheds at Aldeburgh. Nikon D850, 26mm, F11 at 1/125 second, ISO 400**

This image above was taken with the camera almost touching the puddle. The viewpoint creates some great reflections and gives you an image that would not be immediately apparent if you were just walking past this scene.



**Fishing boats on Aldeburgh beach. Nikon D850, 36mm, F11 at 1/160 second, ISO 400**

The only thing you have to be mindful of when shooting with ultra low viewpoints is that your plane of focus will be more shallow. This means that you will probably not be able to get the whole scene sharp front to back without focus stacking. However out of focus foregrounds, particularly shingle, grass or foliage, can look good as a frame around the bottom of the image. So plan your shot and use the viewpoint and focus creatively.

## January's Photo Challenge

This month's photo challenge is to produce **two photos** from this list of three possible challenges:

1. Shoot a winter landscape image that depicts the weather in some form. This can be sunrise or sunset, frost, snow, rain, fog or anything in between as long as the mood of the image is created by the weather.

Or

2. Shoot a detail image which shows beauty in decay

Or

3. Shoot a low viewpoint image that creates a winter scene with impact.

Please submit **two images only** and they should be taken from the three different challenges mentioned.

The Zoom session for this challenge will take place on Wednesday 31st January 2024.

The final two images in these notes feature winter landscape images where the mood and feel of the images has been created by the weather at the time.





