

# *Bluenose Focus*

The Newsletter of the Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia  
August 2012 Volume 47 Issue 3

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A Visit to Sable Island

Hill Tribes of Western  
China

Cover Image: Sailing to Sable Island  
by Steven Morris

# Bluenose Focus

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August 2012 Volume 47 Issue 3

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## Newsletter submissions

We welcome your submissions to Bluenose Focus and will do our best to make sure that the best submissions make it into the newsletter.

Articles prepared using any current software may be submitted. Should there be a difficulty, the Editor will get in touch.

Submitted images should be JPEG format, sRGB colour space, and high resolution.

Submissions should be e-mailed to:

[gmitchell@ap.stmarys.ca](mailto:gmitchell@ap.stmarys.ca)

## The Photographic Guild of Nova Scotia

### Directors

President:	Laszlo Podor
Vice-President:	<i>Vacant</i>
Past President:	Dean Hirtle
Recording Secretary:	Pam Mills
Newsletter Editor:	George Mitchell
Treasurer:	Dean Hirtle

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PSA Representative:	Viki Gaul
CAPA Representative:	Joyce Chew

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Projection:	Joyce Chew
Host:	Laszlo Podor
Hospitality:	<i>Vacant</i>
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	Vic Fraser, Doug Leahy
Outside Evaluations:	Colin Campbell
Digital Coordinator:	Mervyn Kumar-Misir

Visit [www.photoguild.ns.ca](http://www.photoguild.ns.ca) for more information



# Editor's Corner

By George Mitchell

The 2012-13 season is beginning! The schedule is now available at the PGNS website, <http://www.photoguild.ns.ca/>. As you will see, the year is packed with competitions, seminars, and field trips. Guild competitions will have a different look because we have purchased a new projector which accepts high definition images with a size of 1920 x 1080 pixels. Some implications of this move are explained by Laszlo in his President's Message on page 4. Excellent images will look better at this higher resolution. Of course, the downside is that the faults of a poor image will be more clearly revealed!

Much of this issue of the Bluenose Focus is taken up with the Awards Banquet, including presentations of Certificates and Trophies. I made an effort to include all the 1st

and 2nd place images in the various categories and to show them at a reasonably large size. This newsletter seems to be the only place to easily access the best images of a given year, so I think it appropriate to present them in a large format.

Another highlight of this issue is an illustrated account by Steve Morris of his recent visit to Sable Island. From his description of the hazards of reaching and leaving the beach, I would say that there will not be a flood of tourists in the near future.

Again, I encourage you, our members, to submit images, news items, and articles for future issues of the Bluenose Focus. You can reach me at [gmitchell@ap.stmarys.ca](mailto:gmitchell@ap.stmarys.ca).

## 2012-13 Guild Themes At A Glance

1st Guild Assignment

“Shaped by the Sea”

(Must have been photographed after May 1, 2012)

2nd Guild Assignment

“Wood”

(Must have been photographed after September 1, 2012)

3rd Guild Assignment

“Urban Life”

(Must have been photographed after September 1, 2012)



# President's Message

By Laszlo Podor



Can you believe it is already September? It is officially still summer, fall is just around the corner. I trust you all had a lot of fun during the last few months and we will soon see the great images you have made.

Our Executive was busy this summer - and not just by capturing the great moments of it, but we did get together a couple of times to discuss many things that are important to all of us.

Our Program Chair, Fred Greene has produced an excellent program for this coming season. There will be numerous field trips, seminars and workshops during the year. You can view or download the program on our web site ([www.photoguild.ns.ca](http://www.photoguild.ns.ca)) or pick up one of the printed copies on one of our regular meetings at the Museum of Natural History.

There is a change in our meeting days. Our meetings will be held on the first Sunday of the month followed by three Mondays. I am hoping this will be a better schedule for all of you. This also means we have one more meeting per month.

As you probably know, we purchased a new HD projector at the end of the last season. This brings a welcome change to our Guild competitions. The image size has been increased to 1920x1080 (1080p) for all Guild

competitions and presentations. As CAPA and PSA still accepts only the 1024x768 sizes, our CAPA and PSA competitions will keep last year's size limit of 1024x768. This might cause some confusion at times, since a high scoring Guild image will need to be re-sized for submission to a CAPA or PSA competition.

As we had no success in finding a volunteer to replace Mervyn in the Digital Coordinator's role and we needed to keep the full slate of competitions running, our executive has decided to hire someone for this role. We will not increase the membership fees this year, but we will review the costs once we are getting closer to the end of the 2012/13 season.

We now have a PayPal account for the Guild. You will be able to pay your membership dues this year using PayPal. If you have not paid your dues yet, I encourage you to use this new method of payment. Just go to [www.photoguild.ns.ca/membership](http://www.photoguild.ns.ca/membership), select the membership type and click on "Pay Now". You will be able to use your credit card or debit card. If you still prefer the traditional cash or cheque payments, we will be happy to accept it.

More good news - we now have Photo Guild FaceBook pages set up. To see what's happening, or share your comments about a field

# President's Message

trip or seminar, go to [www.facebook.com/photoguildns](http://www.facebook.com/photoguildns).

As in the past years, you can save money by purchasing services or products at the following stores and asking for the Photo Guild discount: Henry's; Carsand Mosher; Atlantic Photo Supply and National Art.

PSA competitions will now have five categories for prints: Large Colour, Small Colour, Large B&W, Small B&W and the new Creative Print category. We kept the limit to maximum 4 prints and maximum two per category. The creative print category description will be the same as for our other creative competitions.

We have been informed by PSA officials that the multi club members have some restrictions on how to compete with their images. As there is a new PSA Division, we will send an e-mail through our Google Group when we have the rulings from all divisions.

Whether you are an experienced member or have just joined, and you have a question about our processes or competitions, please

do not hesitate to ask one of us. We will be happy to answer all your questions. You can also e-mail to us or give us a call at any time and we'll be happy to discuss your questions.

Our club would not work without volunteers. I would like to ask you to help us making the club one of the best. This would not only help our team but it gets you involved and result in a more enjoyable Guild experience for yourself.

As you can see from our program, you'll have plenty of opportunities to use your camera on many of our field trips or workshops. So if you were busy at work this last summer, grab your camera and join us to shoot together and share our experience.

The very first field trip will be on Sunday, September 9, at 1:00 pm at the Dingle Tower. Bring your camera, flash, reflector, tripod and be ready for a wonderful afternoon with live models.

Happy shooting,  
Laszlo Podor  
President



# CAPA News

By Joyce Chew

Hello all,

I hope you all got out to enjoy the summer and shoot. Next summer Photo Fredericton will host the Canadian Camera Conference (CCC2013) from June 25- July 3, 2013. It is a great opportunity to meet other photographers across Canada and learn from photographers all over North America. There will also be an opportunity to register for the CAPA judging workshop. The fee for Individual CAPA members is \$115 + HST, \$120+ HST for CAPA Club members and \$125 + HST for individuals that do not have an affiliation with CAPA. Freeman Patterson and David duChemin will be the keynote speakers. Keep checking [www.capaconference.com](http://www.capaconference.com) for updated information on field trips, presenters and talks.

Please remember, in order to encourage new images, CAPA requires that the image have been captured within 24 months of the CAPA competition closing date. IE. For the Fall 2012 competition, images should have been shot after Oct 29, 2010.

There are two divisions (Digital and Print). The Digital Division consists of Open, Altered Reality, Theme and Nature categories. CAPA's definition for the OPEN category also applies to the Print and Theme categories. This year's CAPA Digital Interclub Theme is **"Sports Action"**. In the OPEN category **composites are not allowed**. The photographer can make enhancements in the camera (zooms, pans, multiple exposures, blurs, cropping) as well as modifications and enhancements using digital imaging software (HDR, focus-stacking, selective layering – using photographs of the same scene) to improve the overall presentation of the original captured image e.g., improved contrast/tonality, enhanced colour. Non-photographic components such as

text, lightning or computer-simulated imagery (which were not part of the original photograph) are not acceptable.

HDR techniques are acceptable in the Nature category as long as the result is what the eye naturally sees. Black and white as well as slow shutter speeds of water are allowed.

Domesticated, caged or restrained animals or cultivated plants are not allowed in the CAPA Nature category.

All the gloves are off for the Altered Reality category. You may manipulate your own photographs using post-processing software to create surreal images -- abstract, impressionistic and experimental effects using montages, collages, composites, or any other techniques. There is no limit to what you can do.

Please keep close track of your entries. An image that has been accepted to go away to a CAPA interclub competition **may not be entered in another CAPA competition** concurrently or in another competition year. For example, an image that has gone away to represent the club in Nature cannot be entered in the Print Division and *vice versa*. Unless given, entry of images in CAPA competitions held at the club implies permission for CAPA to publish a low resolution version of their image on the website, in the national magazine and other CAPA promotions.

More information on CAPA can be found on its website ([capacanada.ca](http://capacanada.ca)), including the benefits of individual membership. Individual members receive a 20% discount when purchasing Photomatix which is used to create HDR images. There are also discounts for popular software like TOPAZ Labs, Proshow Gold and Producer and BLURB publishing as well as the opportunity to join digital imaging and print circuits for critiques. Another benefit is the Annual Digital Competition for Individual and Family members.

# CAPA News



September 30, 2012 is the deadline to enter the Annual Digital Competition. Keeping with the success of last year's competition, there are two themes for 2012. You may choose from **"Circles & Wheels or Harbours & Lighthouses"**. More information on conditions of entry and great prizes from the sponsors like ADOBE, Lowepro and Sony can be found at <http://www.digitalcapacanada.ca/>

If you have any questions about joining CAPA please do not hesitate to email me.

Looking forward to seeing your images!

The following will be of special interest to our long-time members who will remember Paul Brunelle as a member of the Guild for many years.

Paul Brunelle, BEM, CD\*, Lt (RCN, Ret'd) – 93 of Dartmouth, passed away July 21, 2012 at the Camp Hill Veterans' Hospital. A memorial service was held on Wednesday July 25, 2012.



He served in the Royal Canadian Air Force (Permanent Force) from 1939 to 1947. He joined in the ranks and rose to become an officer. He was awarded the British Empire Medal (the King's Honour List, January 1946) "for outstanding service and devotion to duty whilst serving with the RCAF overseas". He transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy in 1948, where he served until his retirement in 1969 as a Lieutenant. His main hobbies were cacti and other succulent plants and, in 1997-98, he donated his large plant collection, a photo gallery of his plants, and his Cactus and Succulents library to Dalhousie University. Incorporating his interest in photography, at Dalhousie, with the title "visiting scientist", he produced the "Dalhousie Collection of Cacti and Other Succulents" educational web site

(<http://cactus.biology.dal.ca/>). Paul and I designed the

Guild's light box and Paul built it at his home. This box is still in service as it was very well built and it has stood the test for 20 years. Paul had many shoots at his home which Guild members appreciated as he always had many beautiful flowering cacti and other succulents to photograph.

Fred Greene



# 2011-12 AWARDS BANQUET





# 2011-12 Trophies and Awards

## **Reid-Sweet Trophy**

Best Image in the Pictorial Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Nick Honig**, Least Tern Sprucing Up

2nd Place Certificate

**Clive Elson**, Vanishing Camel Trail

## **Tim Randall Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Pictorial

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Viki Gaul**

2nd Place Certificate

**Nick Honig**

## **Peter Herschorn Trophy**

Best Seascape/Landscape Image in Pictorial

Trophy and Pewter Medal

**Clive Elson**, Vanishing Camel Trail

## **Camera Shop Trophy**

Best Image in the Nature Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal,

**George Mitchell**, Green on Green

2nd place Certificate

**Joyce Chew**, Robin Feeds Young

## **Cyril Smith Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Nature Category

Trophy and Silver Medal

**George Mitchell**

2nd Place Certificate

**Nick Honig**

## **Robert Thorpe Memorial Trophy**

Best Botanical Image in the Nature Category

Trophy and Pewter Medal

**Viki Gaul**, Triple Pink Efflorescence

## **Mary Primrose Memorial Trophy**

Best Wildflower Image in the Nature Category

Trophy and Pewter Medal

**Viki Gaul**, Triple Pink Efflorescence

## **Abbotts Trophy**

Best Image in the Creative Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Esther Thériault**, Stage Lights

2nd Place Certificate

**Ken Renton**, Aboriginal Dancer

## **Gilbert Van Ryckevorsel Trophy**

Highest Cumulative points in the Creative Category

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Marian Boyer**

2nd Place Certificate

**Elio Dolente**

## **Mayor of HRM Trophy**

Theme: Street Scene

Trophy

**Laszlo Podor**, Spring Garden Road at Night

# 2011-12 Trophies and Awards

## **Michael Walsh Trophy**

Best Image in the Photo Travel Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Ken Renton**, John Ford Point

2nd Place Certificate

**Nanciellen Davis**, Erg Chibbi Men at Rest

## **Barb and Paul Bingham Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Photo Travel

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Sean Kelly**

2nd Place Certificate

**Laszlo Podor**

## **Atlantic Photo Trophy**

Best Image in the Photojournalism Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Mervyn Kumar-Misir**, In Full Flight

2nd Place Certificate

**George Mitchell**, Before the Fall

## **George Ghiz Sports Action Trophy**

Best Peak Action Image in Photojournalism

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Mervyn Kumar-Misir**, In Full Flight

2nd Place Certificate

**George Mitchell**, Before the Fall

## **Keith Vaughan Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Photojournalism

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Joyce Chew**

2nd Place Certificate

**Mona Ghiz**

## **Frederick Joyce Trophy**

Best Images in the Portrait Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Sean Kelly**, Hannas

2nd Place Certificate

**Ken Renton**, Fred

## **Betty Orchard Memorial Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Portrait Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Marg Nolen**

2nd Place certificate

**Sean Kelly**

## **Sam Yanofsky Trophy**

Best Image in the Humour Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Dean Hirtle**, Should we Let Him Out of the Bag

2nd Place Certificate

**Mona Ghiz**, Iggy Showing His Receiving Skills

## **Betty and Ken Fraser Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Humour

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Dean Hirtle**

2nd Place Certificate

**Mervyn Kumar-Misir**

## **Markus Stasiulis Trophy**

Highest Points in the Silent Essay

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Viki Gaul**, Flight

2nd Place Certificate

**Jen Fried**, Wildflowers

# 2011-12 Trophies and Awards

## **Frederick Greene Trophy**

Highest Points in the Sight and Sound Essay

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Colin Campbell**, Colour in Black and White

2nd Place Certificate

**Viki Gaul**, Bird Vignettes

## **Doris and Laurie Hancock Trophy**

Best Image in the Print Category

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Marg Nolen**, Beautiful Egret Nesting

2nd Place Certificate

**Nick Honig**, Male Cardinal

## **Carsand Mosher Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Print Competitions

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Nick Honig**

2nd Place Certificate

**Viki Gau**

## **John William Webb Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in Slides

Trophy and Pewter Medal

**Marg Nolen**

2nd Place Certificate

**Eugene Mio and Tuma Young**

3rd Place certificate

**Mervyn Kumar-Misir**

## **Mervyn Kumar-Misir Trophy**

Highest Cumulative Points in CAPA Theme/  
Guild Assignent Competitions

Trophy and Pewter Medal

**Viki Gaul**

2nd Place Certificate

**Keith Vaughan**

## **CAPA Award**

Highest Cumulative Points in CAPA digital and  
Print Competitions

CAPA Medal of Excellence in Photography  
and Pewter Medal

**Viki Gaul**

2nd Place Certificate

**George Mitchell**

## **Gordon R. Lay Trophy**

Highest Points for the Guild in External  
CAPA and PSA Competitions

Trophy and Silver Medal

**Viki Gaul**

2nd Place Certificate

**Nick Honig**

## **Robert K. Mann Trophy**

Highest Points in Competition Whose Theme  
was Chosen by R. K. Mann

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Marian Boyer**

2nd Place Certificate

**Laszlo Podor**

## **Nova Scotia Bird Society Trophy**

Trophy and Bronze Medal

**Jen Fried**, Spotted Sandpiper



# 2011-12 Trophies and Awards

## Atlantic Geoscience Society Trophy

Trophy and Bronze Medal  
**Nick Honig**, Red Sandstone Canyon

## Last Billion Years Trophy

Trophy and Pewter Medal  
**Colin Campbell**, Bramber Sill, NS

## Schooner Cove Trophy

Highest aggregate for "Guild Only" Competitions

Trophy and Pewter Medal  
**Viki Gaul**

2nd Place Certificate  
**Mervyn Kumar-Misir**

## Reta Cook Trophy

Best Image of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust  
Competition

Trophy and Bronze Medal  
**Colin Campbell**, Stewiacke Oak, NS



## Distinction Award Certificates

Cumulative Points Collected in Guild Competitions

Novice (100 points)

**Sean Kelly, Cliff Sanderson, Gilbert Van-Ryckevorsel**

Bronze (200 points)

**Bob Deluca, Mona Ghiz, Dean Hirtle,  
Nancy Johnston**

Silver (300 points)

**Viki Gaul, Nick Honig, Bob Kerr, Mervyn  
Kumar-Misir, Eugene Mio, George  
Mitchell, Teunis Obdam, Carolyn Ren-  
ton, Peter, Steeper, Melvina Weatherby**



## Distinction Award Certificates

Cumulative Points Collected in Guild Competitions

Gold (500 points)

**Hubert Boudreau, Joyce Chew, Elio Do-  
lente, Esther Theriault**

Platinum (750 points)

**Marian Boyer, Nanciellen Davis, Ken  
Renton, Keith Vaughan, Laszlo Podor,  
Marg Nolen**

Diamond (1,000 points)

**Jen Fried, Colin Campbell**

# 2011-12 Trophies and Awards

## **Gerald Shea Memorial Trophy (Novice Photographer of the Year)**

Trophy and Silver Medal  
**Sean Kelly**

2nd Place Certificate  
**Tuma Young**

## **Guild Volunteers of the Year Award**

Pewter Medals  
**Joyce Chew and John Wm. Webb**

## **CAPA Volunteer Medal**

Pewter Medal  
**Joyce Chew**



## **Cameraland Trophy (Photographer of the Year)**

The Highest Cumulative Points for the Top 75 Images

Cameraland Wambolt-Waterfield Trophy and Gold Medal

**Viki Gaul**

2nd Place Silver Medal

**Nick Honig**

3rd Place Bronze Medal

**Jen Fried**

4th Place Pewter Medal

**Marian Boyer**

5th Place Certificate

**Marg Nolen**

# 2011-12 Best Images: Pictorial



1st Place  
Least Tern Sprucing Up  
**Nick Honig**



2nd Place: Vanishing Camel Train, **Clive Elson**



# 2011-12 Best Images: Nature



1st Place  
Green on Green  
**George Mitchell**

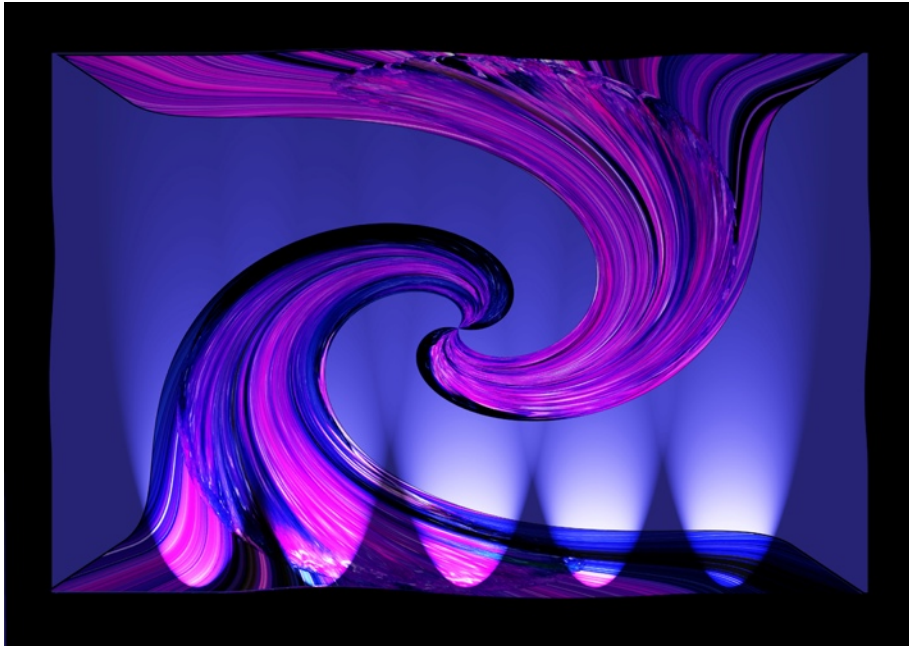


2nd Place: Robin Feeds Young  
**Joyce Chew**



Best Wildflower Image: Triple Pink Efflorescence, **Viki Gaul**

# 2011-12 Best Images: Creative



1st Place  
Stage Lights  
**Esther Thériault**



2nd Place  
Aboriginal Dancer  
**Ken Renton**



# 2011-12 Best Images: Photo Travel



1st Place: John Ford Point, **Ken Renton**



2nd Place: Erg Chibbi Men at Rest, **Nanciellen Davis**



# 2011-12 Best Images Photojournalism



1st Place  
In Full Flight  
**Mervyn Kumar-Misir**

2nd Place  
Before the Fall  
**George Mitchell**



# 2011-12 Best Images: Humour



1st Place: Should We Let Him Out of the Bag, **Dean Hirtle**



2nd Place: Iggy Showing His Receiving Skills, **Mona Ghiz**

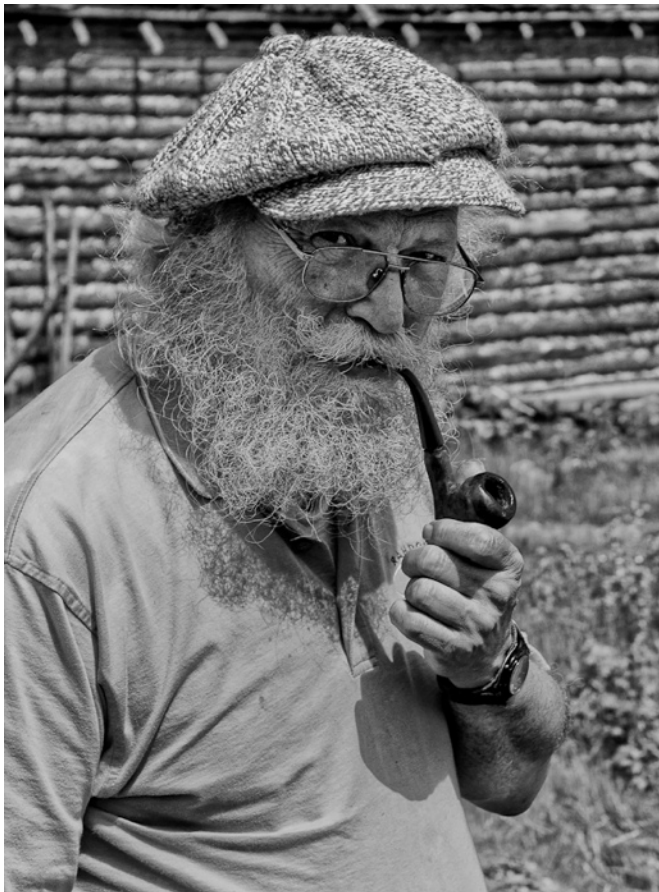


# 2011-12 Best Images: Portrait



1st Place  
Hannas  
**Sean Kelly**

1st Place: Hannas, **Sean Kelly**



2nd Place  
Fred  
**Ken Renton**



# 2011-12 Best Images: Various



Reta Cook Trophy: Stewiacke Oak, **Colin Campbell**



Atlantic Geoscience Society Trophy:  
Red Sandstone Canyon, **Nick Honig**



Shubie Wildlife Park Print: Martin, **Jen Fried**



Last Billion Years Trophy: Bramber Sill-NS,  
**Colin Campbell**



Nova Scotia Bird Society Trophy: Spotted  
Sandpiper, **Jen Fried**



# 2011-12 Best Images: Various



1st Place, R. K. Mann Trophy

Choices

**Marion Boyer**

2nd Place, R. K. Mann Trophy

Berries

**Laszlo Podor**



Shubie Wildlife Park Print

Lynx

**Jen Fried**



# 2011-12 Award Presentations





# 2011-12 Award Presentations





# 2011-12 Award Presentations



# A Visit to Sable Island

By Steven Morris

The image of Sable Island shrouded in fog somewhere off the coast of Nova Scotia struck fear in the hearts of early mariners prior to the age of sophisticated electronic navigational devices. There are many estimates of the total number of shipwrecks claimed by Sable, but since the 1500's, a conservative estimate is 400 to 500 ships lost on her sandy shores.



Most Nova Scotians are aware that Sable Island is a 44 km-long sandbar about 140 km off the coast of Nova Scotia. The long narrow sickle-shaped island probably exists due to 3 merging ocean currents in the north Atlantic: the Gulf Stream, the Labrador current and the Nova Scotia Current. However, the shape and dimensions of Sable are ever-changing. As well, most people are aware that Sable is home to about 400 wild horses who somehow have managed to survive completely on their own in a very harsh environment.

Like many, I have always been fascinated by the stories and photos of Sable. When I had the opportunity this summer to travel to

her shores, I leapt at the chance. My brother-in-law, Tom, was planning to travel to Newfoundland this summer with his 41-foot sailboat, "Broad Cove", and invited me to join him and a third crew member Mike. Our itinerary was to sail from Halifax to Sable, spend some time there, and then con-



tinue to St. Mary's Bay on the southern Avalon peninsula of Newfoundland, a journey of approximately 500 nautical miles alto-



# A Visit to Sable Island

gether. We arranged the necessary permissions from authorities to land on Sable and provisioned the sailboat for the trip.

On July 19, we headed out of Halifax harbour on a beautiful warm morning by 6 am. Winds were light south-west, which intensified to about SW 15 knots over the course of the morning, yielding a lovely beam reach with a course of 125 degrees, distance



110 nautical miles to Sable. Off Chebucto Head, we passed the tall ship “Bounty” under full sail on her way into Halifax for the tall ships festival. A while later, a large 50-foot-long whale surfaced off the starboard bow. As land slipped out of view, we saw increasing numbers of ocean birds, particularly shearwaters, gannets and northern fulmars. Our speed was consistently 7-8 knots, which made for excellent progress over seas of 2-3 meters. We had a very tasty steak dinner on the high seas and settled into an evening and night of alternating wheel watches. The sunset was spectacular but the night sky was even more amazing. The sky was completely clear and the Milky

Way stretched overhead as bright as a rainbow.

We arrived at the Station on Sable Island at 3 am. Five flashing lights herald the “city” which we later found are wind generators. We dropped anchor with 100 feet of chain in 20 feet of water. There is no protected anchorage on Sable Island, so the ocean winds and waves determine whether it is possible to anchor and to land on the north beach of the island. We all dropped into our bunks for a little rest prior to landing on the island.

As the sun rose, we were treated to a spectacular view of the island thin and golden against the pink early morning horizon stretched across our view. The early sun lit up the sand dunes and we could make out horses walking on the beach several hundred meters away. The skies were com-



pletely clear and winds were light, making it an ideal day to land on Sable Island. As we admired the view, inquisitive grey seals popped up next to the boat and had a little look at us before sliding back into the water. There were dozens of seals around the boat



# A Visit to Sable Island

and they checked out everything that we did to ready for landing, making sure to keep a safe distance from us, particularly if we were aiming a camera in their direction. We flipped our zodiac off the deck of the sailboat into the water and lifted the heavy outboard engine onto it to make the 200 meter run into the beach. We had a hearty breakfast and at 8 am made VHF radio contact with Gerry on Sable Island. He said that he would meet us on the beach, so when a truck appeared on the beach we headed out in our zodiac through a 2-meter NW swell.



Our landing through the heavy surf resulted in everyone getting wet but luckily we had all of our gear in waterproof bags. Gerry and Zoe helped us to land and then welcomed us to Sable Island.

What could be better? We had a perfect day; blue skies, warm, no fog and wonderful hosts. Sable spends a lot of time in dense fog so the great weather conditions were promising from a photographic perspective. Gerry offered to give us a ride up the beach to explore the eastern end of the

island. He drove through the several buildings of the Station, joking that the locals call it the “City.” The island is only a half kilometer wide so the traverse to the south side didn’t take long in Gerry’s old jeep. However, the path led past a massive com-



mon tern colony and we had to stop several times to shoo the flightless chicks off the road while their agitated parents dive-bombed us. On the south beach, we drove across the “airport”, which is a wide flat densely packed sandy expanse. Gerry



spends a lot of time preparing the runway for the regular flights used for passengers

# A Visit to Sable Island

and supplies. We drove up the south beach about 10 km to an area that Zoe had chosen to show us some of the sights. The entire drive was spectacular: grey seals, birds, parts of shipwrecks, rolling surf, sand dunes, blue skies.

As we disembarked from the jeep, Zoe gave us a little chat about the rules of Sable Island; don't touch the horses, be gentle with the very fragile plant life and enjoy the view. For most of the day, she provided incredibly detailed descriptions of the animal and plant life of Sable. She explained complex aspects of horse biology in a very thoughtful and informative manner. She answered all of our questions about the island, the plants, the birds, the shipwrecks and life on the island in a patient and thorough way. When we asked, she described some of her



very interesting natural sciences research work. As we meandered our way through the dunes, we saw large groups of horses and got to see them interacting and moving around. The horses seemingly had no fear of humans and, except for one individual, basically ignored us. The one young stallion

who kept moving towards me even as I backed away seemed to like the clickity clickity click of my camera and we postulated that some photographer might have previously enticed him with treats to get him to "pose." Finally, Zoe gave him a very firm "STOP" and he wandered away.



As we walked through the dunes, we saw many bird species, including herring and great black-backed gulls, red breasted mergansers, least sandpipers, many common terns and the Ipswich sparrow. The latter is a subspecies of the savannah sparrow which only nests on Sable island. We visited several ponds where the horses tended to gather. If water levels drop, the horses dig down into the sand to find the water table and Zoe gave us a demonstration of how it is possible to drink from these fresh water ponds. After wandering around for a while, we came to "bald" dune which we then hiked up. It is a sandy hill which at 90 feet is the highest point on the island. From the summit, the panoramic view is unrivalled. You can see from one end of Sable to the other and see the crashing waves on both the north and south beaches. Large groups

# A Visit to Sable Island

of grey seals can be seen lolling about on the beaches. The Sable Island grey seal colony is the largest in the world with about 50,000 pups born annually. During our walk we saw a large amount of debris on the island reflecting man's influence on our oceans. We also saw a number of bottles and at one point I asked if Zoe had ever received a message in a bottle. She responded



that she had never found a legible message to her in a bottle found on the beach.

Our four-hour hike was over far too soon and Gerry found us on the wide expanse of south beach. We drove back together to the Station and he took over as tour guide. On the way, Gerry pointed out several remnants of shipwrecks which were mostly covered by sand. Once back at the Station, Gerry toured us around the facility, pointing out all of the equipment, supplies and accommodations on the island. The generation of electricity was in particular fascinating. Gerry also showed us the storeroom for food supplies, the machinery and carpentry shops, and all of the meteorological equipment. The data collected includes a vast ar-

ray of information including sunlight, rainfall, barometric pressure, snowfall, magnetic forces, pollution etc etc. Sable participates in a coordinated launch of weather balloons around the world which produce weather data important for meteorologists. Also, there are a number of ongoing fascinating research studies directed towards understanding our environment and in particular pollutants better.

Late in the afternoon, the northwest winds had come up and the big rollers were increasing in intensity on the beach. Therefore, we had to bid adieu to Sable. What a spectacular day! The trip back out to the sailboat was also an adventure. After saying our goodbyes and thanks to our outstanding hosts, Zoe and Gerry, we pushed the zodiac off the beach and promptly got swamped by a few big waves. Finally though we made it through the surf and headed back to "Broad



Cove." Landing on the sailboat was also a challenge due to the heavy seas and at one point the painter line snapped with one crew member aboard the zodiac with no oars and no gas for the zodiac outboard. A



# A Visit to Sable Island

quick scramble landed him back on the sailboat rather than drifting off into the Atlantic. We set sail for Newfoundland with a course of 80 degrees which ran us up the coast of Sable Island for the next 2 hours. We also got a chance to see the enormous and impressive offshore drilling. Just prior to sunset, a bottle became empty. Remembering Zoe's words, we drafted a short note thanking her and Gerry for their hospitality, placed the note in a ziplock bag and sealed the bottle which was sent overboard about 4 hours run from Sable. For the next 3 days, we alternated wheel watches and made it without difficulty to St. Mary's Bay, NF. We had gorgeous sailing conditions with light to moderate seas, sunny weather and a warm southwest breeze.

Two weeks later, I returned to Halifax and caught up on some email correspondence. I sent a note to Zoe thanking her again and she quickly responded to report that that was the second correspondence that she had

received from me that day! She had found the personal message in a bottle!

I had wanted to travel to Sable Island for several decades and the journey was wonderful and highly recommended. It is a difficult place to get to for many reasons and certainly not for everyone. My only regret is that I would like to have stayed longer. Oh well, perhaps again sometime...



# Hill Tribes of Guizhou, China

by Lynn Ellis

On July 25th I left Canada for Hong Kong and then two days later flew into Guiyang China to begin this tour. The tour leader was accomplished photographer Nevada Wier. We were to explore the lesser-known tribes of the Miao people who live in hill-top villiages and remote areas of Guizhou. They have lived in relative isolation until recently. We were looking for festivals and cultural events mainly. We hoped we'd see many colourful costumes decorated with pounds of silver adornments as each tribe is known for their distinctive dress and dance.

During the tour we visited and witnessed many villages in several locations. These included a fertility festival, a funeral, a wake and traditional dance events. We saw many and varied unique costumes, hair and head piece adornments.

On day one of the tour, for example, we trekked along rice paddies to a fertility festival where young and old were all dressed up to impress the gods. Unborn are thought to exist in another dimension and the festival was to bring their spirits into the wombs of awaiting mothers. A revered Shaman threw a pig into the water, released ducks into the rice paddies and burned incense to honour the

gods, urge fertility and a good rice crop.

A funeral on the third day was quite an event! The villagers gathered for song, dance, music and mourning rituals. We paid respect to the dead, a 67-year-old village elder. Traditional instruments were played, colourful costumed dancers performed, and a shaman arrived to help transport his spirit to the distant land of his ancestors.

The Chinese people we encountered were friendly and open which was amazing given we were all there with our cameras in their faces. They were very proud of their traditional ways and dress. Both young and old participated in these events and the ceremonies were obviously emotionally significant for all.

The tour was rough in nature with many physical challenges. The roads were one lane, unpaved and some had steep vertical drops down one side. The temperatures were mid to high thirties and humid. Food was simple Chinese food which often left us

guessing. A chicken foot in Nevada's soup on day two was a reminder to us all that we'd be eating the real thing.



# Hill Tribes of Guizhou, China







Peggy's Cove by Peter Steeper