

Images of the Wild



Photo: Lissa Millar

Wildlife photographer David Young.

By Carolyn McTighe

By definition, photography is the painting of pictures with light. It is the ability to recognize the perfect moment and then capture it in such a way that the picture becomes almost life-like in its detail, texture and colour.

It is a craft that many people try their hand at, but few master.

Meet David Young. For the past 30 years, he has been painting pictures with light, wowing photography experts and enthusiasts around the world. His photos are breathtaking examples of what it means to be a true photographer.

And while he's modest about his talent, his work

and the accolades he has garnered truly speak for themselves.

"I think I got into photography because I was a very shy lad," Young says. "I was always interested in theatre groups at school, but I was too shy to get involved.

But when you get behind the camera you can be involved without being on centre stage. I learned quickly that I could participate in the things I loved while taking pictures. Photography was my way of fitting in."

As an adult, Young's passion for photography took a back seat to earning a living. For 30 years he oper-



“This little fella, a baby elk, was just three to four weeks old, and suckling his mom moments before I took the shot. I was watching, and waiting, and finally he caught my scent, turned around and looked straight at me, as if to say, ‘I’m an elk. What are you?’ Moments later, either his mom caught my scent, or she heard the shutter click, but she was gone, with him in hot pursuit.”

ated and ran a Victoria-based retail electronics store, dabbling periodically in photography, but never able to give it the time and attention he desired.

It wasn’t until his retirement at the age of 51 that Young’s second career as a photographer began to develop. Since then he has sold his pictures around the world, taught photography courses to many eager students and written articles detailing the techniques of his craft.

“In many ways it’s harder than other forms of picture taking, but when you finally get that shot you’ve been trying for, it’s a wonderful and rewarding feeling.”

In 2001, Young decided that it was time for a change. Looking for a challenge and inspired by the natural beauty of his surroundings in Logan Lake, Young turned his attention to wildlife photography.

“I’ve done all types of photography, from industrial to tourism to portraits,” says Young.

“I loved doing these other forms of photography, but I was craving a change and wanted something that was going to truly challenge me as a photographer. So in 2001 I decided to get into wildlife photography. In many ways it’s harder than other forms of picture taking, but when you finally get that shot

you’ve been trying for, it’s a wonderful and rewarding feeling.”

Unlike landscape photography, which uses small apertures, wildlife photography uses wide apertures in order to achieve a faster shutter speed and freeze the motion of the animal. It also works to blur the background so that the subject of the photo is the only thing in focus.

Devoted to capturing interesting animals in action, many wildlife photographers use blinds, camouflage and lures to facilitate this objective. These methods don’t appeal to Young. Instead, he prefers to capture each animal in its natural habitat, without contrivance or manipulation.

“Some photographers will go out into a field and set up a small table,” Young says.

“They’ll cut down some branches from a tree and arrange them on a table, and then drop a bit of food around the branches. Then they’ll walk back 25 feet and hide behind a curtain and wait for the birds to show up so they can take pictures. To me, that’s bird photography, but it isn’t wildlife photography.

“I go out into the woods and I find a spot where I know there is a lot of wildlife activity, whether that’s



“These Barhead geese are native to northern China and winter in Burma and India. How one pair came to find Logan Lake, I’ll never know.”

David Young's Advice for Aspiring Photographers

- ▶ Learn to “see” the light. It is the understanding of how light (and the colour of light) plays on your subjects that separates the photographers from the snap shooters. To quote Ted Grant: “To learn the magic of light, get up before sunrise...and watch.”
- ▶ Understand your camera. Sit down — as many times as necessary — with your camera in one hand and the instruction book in the other. Go over it until every function of your camera comes to you automatically. If you need to refer to the manual for anything, you're not ready. If you must read the manual in order to set your camera up for a shot, by the time you've done so, that opportunity will be gone forever.
- ▶ Take a few lessons. Join a photo club. Join an Internet photo discussion forum. Read books on photography — both the technical kind and the large photo books. Discover what it is that you like, and what you want to say through your photography.
- ▶ Bend your knees. A viewpoint only a few feet different from what we normally see will make your photos look more interesting to most people. Of course, this is most important when taking photos of kids and pets. You've got to get down to their level.
- ▶ Always have your camera with you. “You have to be ready for luck.” (Neil Leifer)

birds or deer, and I just wait. I take my little aluminum camping chair and I sit quietly and watch. I may spend a half an hour or an hour there, but I only take pictures of animals in their natural habitat. I don't like to use anything that will take away from this real experience. It can be hard, and I'm certainly not saying one way is better than the other, but it's just the way I like to take my pictures.”

As a wildlife photographer, Young admits you never know when inspiration will strike. There have been times where one picture doesn't work out, but another quickly presents itself. In these instances, having a working camera and a steady hand are the only things required.

“I went out one time to try and take some pictures of an osprey nest and the babies that had recently hatched,” he says.

“I took a few pictures, but none of them really worked out that well. I was walking up to the nest when I got this feeling like I was being watched. I turned around slowly and there standing in front of me was this beautiful doe. She was staring at me, but she wasn't moving. So I stopped and got my camera ready. I shot a few pictures. It was as though she was letting me take the pictures I needed. It was one of the serendipitous moments that are actually quite common in wildlife photography.”

An avid traveller and adventurer, Young has taken pictures in faraway places like Ireland, Brazil, Costa Rica, France and Germany. But no matter how far he goes, Logan Lake is by far his favourite place to photograph. With its abundance of wildlife and natural beauty, Young is never at a loss for inspiration.

“You're going to have to take me out of here in a hearse,” Young says. “This area has everything you need to be a successful wildlife photographer. I'll go out on a hike and spot something new every single time. The landscape seems to change on a daily basis, and there are always things to photograph.

“I couldn't imagine being anywhere else.”

More of David Young's intimate wildlife shots are featured in Snapshots on the following pages. Also, check out his website: www.furnfeather.net. ●

Snapshots





Images by David Young - clockwise from top left: Inquisitive robin; Mountain vista; Blue jay; Bohemian Waxwing with its beak tucked under its wing to stay warm; Autumn riders; Mountain sheep

Photos © David S Young