

Inspiring Change

One Image at a Time

BY DENIS GLENNON OA

*"When words become unclear,
I shall focus with photographs.
When images become inadequate,
I shall be content with silence."*

Ansel Adams

A Remarkable Membership List

Photographers, irrespective of their geographic location in the world or their particular area of interest, will instantaneously recognise the majority, if not all of the following names: James Balog, Jim Brandenburg, David Doubilet, Jack Dykinga, Beverly Joubert, Frans Lanting, Thomas Mangelsen, Cristina Mittermeier, Joel Sartore, Art Wolfe, Xi Zhinong, and Christian Ziegler.

If this list reads like the "Who's Who" of the finest photographers on the planet, that's because it is. Furthermore, most of them are founding members of the US-based organisation known as "The International League of Conservation Photographers" (iLCP).



Conservation photographers at work on the research vessel *Whale Song* in Camden Sound, Western Australia. Photo Denis Glennon

"Conservation" Photography is different from "Nature" Photography

A "nature" photograph shows the elegiac eyes of a baby chimpanzee feeding from its mother's breast, in a forest setting. The "conservation" photograph shows the same thing but with powerful machines, relentlessly felling trees in the background - the chimpanzees' diminishing habitat. The "conservation" photograph gives the endangered species a voice. It always contains and conveys a powerful message and has the power to touch the viewer's soul.

Conservation photography involves more than just taking evocative and emotion-filled images. It involves telling a story, doing a lot of research and travel, often under very arduous conditions, frequently in the remotest of places. To get the kind of images that really tell the story of threatened species or cultures in the more remote parts of the world takes months to not only find the locations but to study the behaviour, and gain the confidence of, the subjects.

Further, it involves following up the field work by publishing the images in prominent places, in influential journals and working with scientists, policy makers and others to convey an explicit message to people. A photograph alone cannot coerce. It won't do the work of conservation but it can certainly start people on the way.

Most people, in their lifetime, will never know the experience of looking directly into the eyes of an endangered baby chimpanzee. If the photographer can capture in the image, the relationship he experiences with this being he is looking at through his lens and the feeling he is experiencing at the time, then that photograph has the power to reach into and touch people's hearts - if it is published in the right places. Seeing this photograph and the message it conveys is what makes people want to help with the work of those dedicated to conservation work. A powerful image has a unique ability to transcend language barriers and great distances.

A compelling message in an image can profoundly affect people. A single salient image can really touch people at a very deep level. Like all photographers, conservation photographers



want to communicate and to impact people just as a writer would do with his words or a musician would with his music.

The photographers in iLCP are all men and women who not only have great talent but a great commitment to storytelling and they actively seek out projects that they can document. They have the hope that their photography will augment the safeguarding work that has already been started by others. That takes a serious commitment of time and resources as they cannot do the kind of work that fosters conservation change unless they put themselves out there on the front line.

As one eminent conservation photographer recently put it, "A single tree in a rainforest can be over 1500 years old whereas we as individuals are on this planet for really a very short moment. If the wrong person walks up to that tree with a chainsaw, it is gone, forever. Conservation photography seeks to convey the message that it is important to build boundaries around that tree and assist in preserving the home it provides for its inhabitants."

What is iCLP?

In simple terms iLCP is an entity whereby photographers can join forces with scientists, writers, government leaders, conservation groups and policy makers in using the power of ethical imagery to spotlight the most wonderful but troubled places and cultures around the globe. The overarching goal of iLCP is to use visual artistry to help catalyse a widespread conservation ethic.

Photographer – Morgan Heim/iLCP

Pristine wetlands frame the mouth of the Nansemond River, a tributary of the James River near Suffolk, Virginia. This river is one of the most untouched areas in Chesapeake Bay and a haven for wildlife and nature lovers alike. It is also the river where John Smith experienced some of his most famous encounters with Chief Powhatan.

iLCP's Advisory Board comprises some of the most respected names involved in recording and documenting the natural world and biodiversity conservation – Sir David Attenborough, Dr. Jane Goodall, Chris Johns (Editor in Chief of National Geographic magazine), Dr Mike Fay (The Wildlife Conservation Society), Dr Sylvia Earle (National Geographic Explorer in Residence), Dr Edward Wilson (Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University), Dr Christian Samper (Smithsonian Institution), Sir Ian Douglas Hamilton (Save the Elephant Foundation) and others of similar stature and competence.

Kathy Moran, Senior Editor for Natural History at National Geographic sits on the iLCP Board of Directors. Its stated mission is to "further environmental and cultural conservation through ethical photography. The four values guiding iLCP are "conservation, integrity, photographic excellence and storytelling ability."

Any photographer desiring to be invited to join the iLCP elite group "must demonstrate these values through work that has helped to safeguard the biodiversity of the planet and the integrity of natural ecosystems; adhered to moral and ethical principles especially in behaviour towards and depiction of the



Photographer – Cristina Goettsch Mittermeier/iLCP

The pristine waters surrounding Bella Coola, British Columbia. What does the future hold? Will megatankers ply these waters as they make their way to Kitimat to pick up tar sands oil from the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline? Will we ever learn, or care? Taken on iLCP RAVE project.

natural world, and set standards of photographic excellence for others to follow.”

The iLCP was initially founded, in 2005, with 40 Fellows considered to be among the most outstanding photographers at that time. At last count it is made up of 106 photographers and a growing international Affiliate base. The iLCP is a group of high calibre photographers, each of whom runs their own professional business and ventures, yet who are committed to a common goal and to working collaboratively with scientists, media, and others involved in furthering conservation work across the world. The iLCP photographers provide the compelling images and pictorial stories that help draw attention to the work which these organisations are undertaking. Although headquartered in the USA, with a small permanent staff of five, its stakeholders, conservation communities, fellows, associate fellows, affiliates and sponsors are global.

The high quality expertise, talent, and field-based know-how, accumulated over years, documenting complex environmental subjects combined with a collegiate commitment to conserve the landscapes, people, and wildlife in the places they reside and work, is what differentiates iLCP photographers from their peers.

Their focus on conservation photography means this genre of photography will inevitably become more mainstream as all of their projects tell a story about our natural world. The focus is on much more than “raising awareness”. It is about using some very effective, carefully planned approaches to influence effective changes to environmental stewardship.

iLCP RAVE – Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition

A “RAVE” is the flagship program initiated by iLCP when requested to assist with an issue. In simple terms, it means organising a team of iLCP photographers (numbering 3 or 4 or sometimes a much larger team) to capture compelling images of an endangered or threatened ecosystem (e.g. inshore and offshore coral reefs, rainforest canopies, a biodiversity ‘hotspot’ such as Fitzgerald National Park in the SW of Western Australia) or an endangered or threatened species (local examples would be Greater Bilby, dugongs, Australian sea lion). The typical duration of a RAVE is from ten days to four weeks. RAVES are visual expeditions to places where regular reporters do not go and where stories that matter are being told. iLCP photographers give of their time on a volunteer basis to all RAVE expeditions. Their job is to bring back a wide-ranging portrayal of the focused conservation issue or threat and to hopefully point the lens of the international media on that issue.



How To Win Photo Competitions

An eBook by Peter Eastway

G.M. Photog., Hon. FAIPP, Hon FNZIPP, FAIPP



I have judged many photography competitions and there are lots of little things that entrants

forget to do. If only I could let them know before entering the competition, they would do so much better!

Well, as a judge I'm not allowed to ring up and help entrants, but I can write a book that distills what I have learnt over the last twenty years that will give you a great head start.

Of course, no one can give you an iron-clad guarantee that you will read my book and then win the next photo competition you enter – and I explain why in the book. However, what I can guarantee you is that if you read my book, you will improve the quality of your photography.

You see, whether you're aiming to win a photography competition or just take a better photograph, the advice is very similar. And I know that the tech-

niques and approaches I've developed over the years will help you capture and produce better photographs.

My book is called **How To Win Photo Competitions**.

It begins with a little about me. After all, it's easy enough to write a book about winning photography competitions, but it's better if you have a little bit of experience. Fortunately for me, I've been lucky enough to win quite a few competitions, plus I have a lot of experience as a judge. I can talk to you about both sides of the competition.

Add in the fact I've been a magazine editor for 30 years and I hope I'm able to communicate my message pretty well. So, in just a couple of pages (I don't want to bore you), I explain why I know what I'm talking about (even though my Dad told me not to boast).

We then look at competitions and how they work, how you should

approach them, and how to use the results to assess your own photography. It's important to set the scene before we get into creating photos that win competitions.

The next two sections are the nitty gritty. We begin by talking about taking a great photograph in the first place. Competition winners begin with the camera and so we talk about camera technique, colour, composition, framing and so on - little tricks and hints that will make a world of difference to your photographs.

From here we step into post-production – using the computer to improve the images our camera has captured. Most readers will have dabbled with Photoshop, Elements or Lightroom and this is all you need to enhance your images so they are in the running for a competition win. These days, no matter how good your camera is, you simply must do a little post-production to finesse your entry.

I finish the book with some useful background information about how competitions work (generally speaking), and then I analyse some of the images that have won awards for me, pointing out the aspects that the judges responded to in a positive way.

The book has lots of photographs and illustrations to explain exactly what I'm talking about.

And it is an eBook. It is easy to read on a computer, laptop or iPad, and you need Adobe Reader (Acrobat) to view the book. There is no paper version of this book, although you can print out the Acrobat Reader file if you wish.

I have created a sample eBook for you to look at on the Better Photography website, so please visit and have a read. If you like what you see, I hope you'll purchase a copy.

And for your next photo competition - good luck!

– Peter Eastway

For more information and a read of the free sample, please visit:

www.betterphotography.com



Above left: Two whales breach. Photo taken onboard the research vessel Whale Song. Above right: The awesome Antarctic. Photos Denis Glennon

Prior to commencing a RAVE, iLCP and its local partners carefully plan a communication strategy targeting audiences and demographic groups for increased awareness and knowledge, e.g. politicians, corporates, NGOs, national or international populations, regional or local residents, scientists, regulators, philanthropists, etc.

Outcomes from RAVE projects typically include new stories, media releases, large print exhibitions, video documentary, multimedia, new or enhanced website building, use of social media and books both large and small. Several examples of RAVE expeditions are viewable on the iLCP website. Several RAVE projects have been successful in replacing environmental indifference with a new culture of environmental stewardship at both local and national levels.

iLCP's work is unashamedly conservation photography; mission-driven photography that combines artistry and action to further biocultural conservation. From the deserts of Africa, to the rainforests of South America, to the barren landscapes of Antarctica, its photographers spend countless hours in the mud, ice, skies, and waters of the world to capture both its beauty and fragility.

iLCP photographers are storytellers, they are the voice of the planet, bringing back the stories that can inspire, raise awareness and ultimately effect change. The goal of the iLCP is to get these photographers in the field to document the beauty and the challenges of our threatened planet.

Another way iLCP does this is through its Tripods initiatives. These missions are strategic photographic expeditions to places of particular biocultural importance. Capturing nature's story in a visual narrative, these missions contribute directly to supporting a number of conservation efforts around the world.

The success of these initiatives rests on the three legs of the tripods: a world-class photographer, an engaged conservation organisation, and iLCP. The photographers and conservation partners rely on iLCP to facilitate the expedition as well as to aid with postexpedition outreach and outreach materials. iLCP currently has three Tripods initiatives – Tripods in the Mud (TIM), Tripods in the Sky (TIS) and Tripods in the Blue (TIB).

TIM – Tripods in the Mud

The first of iLCP's tripods initiatives, TIM, reflects the essence of the program: getting a dedicated photographer's 'lens on the ground'

to lend a pictorial voice to conservation efforts. From capturing the challenges that new dams will present for the Snake River salmon of Idaho, to discovering new species of amphibians on the remote slopes of Massif de la Hotte, Haiti, TIM missions have been telling important stories.

TIS - Tripods in the Sky

Sometimes you need a bird's eye view. iLCP's partnership with LightHawk, an organisation of skilled pilots who volunteer their flights for conservation, provides a unique aerial perspective to conservation issues. From manatees in Florida, Flamingos in Mexico, and wild rivers in the Pacific Northwest, the TIS missions have provided exciting new perspectives that are catching many people's attention.

Through getting the right politician and/or publisher into the air, where political restrictions wane and the landscape or seascape speaks for itself, and capturing indelible images, this partnership of pilots and photographers is breaking down barriers of indifference with compelling images rather than just words.

TIB – Tripods in the Blue

The third leg of iLCP's Tripods initiative, launching in 2012, will allow iLCP to extend these missions to over seventy percent of our blue planet. Our oceans are in peril. These missions will combine the talents of the world's best underwater photographers with conservation organisations to protect underwater biodiversity. The first TIB will surface to tell the story of amazing marine protected areas in Cabo Pulmo, Mexico.

Like RAVEs, all TIM, TIS and TIB projects collaborate with conservation groups, leading scientists, policy makers, government leaders and those charged with the protection of wild nature. Projects have been undertaken in such far-flung places as, Alaska, Antarctica, the Bahamas, Baja, Canada, Europe, Fiji, Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, Madagascar, Mexico, New Guinea, North America, Patagonia and South Africa.

iLCP-type activities in Australia?

Tasmanian photographer Peter Dombrovskis is recognised as being the dominant influence in stopping the building of the



Franklin Dam project in Tasmania, in the process conserving a vast expanse of pristine wilderness. His evocative image, Morning Mist, Rock Island Bend, is credited with being the image most instrumental in generating the public debate and the political will that resulted in the decision to abandon the dam project. Much of Dombrovski's inspirational photography can be seen in his acclaimed book *Wild Rivers*. In 2003 he was the first Australian to be inducted into the International Photography Hall of Fame and Museum. But who carries his legacy forward?

The use of conservation photography for humpback whale identification has played a significant part in the protection of this species along Australia's coastline. The species has recovered from a dangerously low number of a reported 600 mammals, to the well-documented number of over 40,000 whales now seen in our coastal waters each year as they migrate north in June/July to give birth and return to the Antarctic in October/November with their newborn calves.

Conservation photography has also played a key part in influencing regulators in Western Australia to place into permanent conservation some of the world's richest and most concentrated biodiversity in Fitzgerald National Park in the south-west of Western Australia.

Conservation photography is photography with a higher purpose, as a pro-active tool for supporting conservation work, not just a passive documentation of iconic shots, solely for sale. It is reshaping the way people think and care about our natural

Photographer – Joe Riis/iLCP

Sow grizzly bear near Swiftcurrent Pass in Glacier National Park, Montana; within the Flathead River basin. The bear is within 100 metres of the continental divide in this picture. The well-known "Highline" backpacking trail is in the lower left side of the picture. This picture was made during the iLCP Flathead RAVE on 7/29/2009 at high noon. I set up cameras for bears and wolverines on the RAVE because I wanted to show folks the animals that need really big houses to live in, the types of houses that are a few hundred sq. miles and are connected via corridors to other big houses to the north and south. This is a camera trap picture, the camera was there for 35 days and she walked past once (=big home range); about 30 seconds after the picture was made, her two cubs walked through the camera trap.

world. Importantly it positions photographs in a new context, namely the context of environmental stewardship.

If Australians, young and old, don't have a connection to nature and an appreciation of 'natural capital', then they certainly will not be inclined to protect it. Images have, time and time again, shown they can reach beyond words to assist people decide for themselves what the important conservation issues are, what is at stake and what actions are required for creating a legacy for tomorrow's Australians, old and new.

There is a mountain of science-based advice already informing public understanding and policy formulation on conservation matters. Sadly, much of it is too complex and is therefore ignored. With the addition of powerful imagery, Australians can be better informed about and connect with their natural world.



In striving to build this connection, scientific information together with good photography can serve as an effective approach to build support for conservation efforts. Imagery based on conservation photography principles, such as those embraced by iLCP, opens a direct window into societal consciousness and is a potent catalyst for transformation.

In most Australian states, and at the Commonwealth level, we are witnessing a widening chasm between photographers and those charged with the stewardship of our natural world. I have written elsewhere about the establishment of Arts Freedom Australia (AFA) and its ongoing skirmishes with various local authorities and state and federal government departments, seeking to lift the punitive restrictions on photographers wishing to capture images of events, natural wonders in national parks and even of many of our iconic buildings.

Conservation Photographers in Australia

iLCP has demonstrated, on a global scale, how photography has helped shaped conservation work and how photographers have functioned in partnership with conservation specialists. I believe there is much to be gained by photographers, conservation specialists and environmental regulators working in harmony; this belief is based on over 25 years' personal experience in environmental protection in Australia and being a devoted conservation photographer.

The powerful imagery and cinematography of conservation efforts, such as that documented by Sir David Attenborough and others, indisputably demonstrate that the collaborative input from conservation specialists to their photography legitimises the

images' importance to conservation objectives.

Where this kind of co-operation is present, the pictorial story told is superior, carries greater gravitas of meaning and "gives back" to nature by advancing public understanding of conservation. More than anyone else on the planet, David Attenborough's work is living proof of this co-operative approach.

The universality of the language of photography and the political weight that photography brings to conservation suggest when the value of combining photography with conservation efforts is mutually recognised in Australia, worthwhile and meaningful partnerships will be easily established.

The work of recording Australia's natural and man-made wonders can certainly be better harnessed. All that is required is for a small group of Australia's leading photographers to commit to a common goal and to work collaboratively with scientists, media, and those charged with environmental stewardship, around the nation.

I am aware the establishment of a new body, Conservation Photographers Africa (CPA), is being considered in Johannesburg. This body will function with similar objectives, ethics and values to those of iLCP but will have a focus on Africa only. There is merit in this local focus.

The first thought I had when informed of this initiative was the acronym "CPA", could also stand for Conservation Photographers Australia. More than a passing thought!

If any readers of Better Digital Camera are interested in pursuing the ideas floated in this article, please contact me at denis@denisglennon.com or on 0418 923 103.

Denis Glennon AO, Member AIPP, spent over thirty-five years in the Australian corporate world, and was appointed as an Officer in the General Division of the Order of Australia (AO) for "service to environmental protection through management control and treatment of industrial and hazardous wastes, and to the community." He has served as a Board Member of the Western Australian Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) for over thirteen years. He believes that every photographer who leaves a legacy does so because of an underpinning purpose to his photography. For Denis, this purpose is conservation, and his special interest is in wildlife and conservation photography. Visit his website at: www.denisglennon.com.



Top and above: Torres del Paine National Park, Chile. Photo Denis Glennon



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ART WOLFE BACKGROUND

Over the course of his 30-year career, Art Wolfe has worked on every continent and in hundreds of locations. His stunning images interpret and record the world's fast-disappearing wildlife, landscapes and native cultures, and are a lasting inspiration to those who seek to preserve them all.

Wolfe's photographs are recognised throughout the world for their mastery of colour, composition and perspective. His unique approach to nature photography is based on his training in the arts and his love of the environment.

"Art Wolfe's photographs are a superb evocation of some of the most breathtaking spectacles in the world." **Sir David Attenborough**

"Art has the broadest range of excellence of any nature photographer I know." **Galen Rowell**

"There's a stunning clarity and vibrancy in Art Wolfe's wildlife portraits, which are careful, often haunting, compositions."

The New York Times Book Review

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