

Photography

*When you visit the forest, take it all in and enjoy what you see,
but when go home please leave it behind, let it all be.*

A Seasonal Newsletter

Issue No. 1 - Winter 2011

2010 A Great Year!

2010 was full of new firsts for me and saw my photography move up to another level both in quality and sales.

I spent the winter months at the beginning of the year researching and writing two articles about my spirit bear encounters the previous fall whilst working with Pacific Wild. This had been an exciting project and involved working with the people of Hartley Bay to install remotely operated video cameras in the bush and beam the images back to the local school for the children in their classrooms to see live.

The first article tells of the spirit bear and how best to get to see one. This was published in the local Comox Valley magazine 'In Focus' and can still be seen on line. From the feedback I received, the article was enjoyed by those that saw it. www.infocusmagazine.ca/2010/capturing-the-spirit/

I also wrote my second article, which was equally well received, for an on-line photography 'e-zine' type website called Canadian Nature Photographer. This is a little more photography oriented and includes pointers for working in the field in the Great Bear Rainforest. www.canadiannaturephotographer.com/stevewilliamson2.html

Back to work!

The arrival of spring saw me back in the field brushing off the cobwebs and I was able to get out and enjoy the arrival of migrating birds through the region and capture some beautiful harlequin ducks and brant geese and record for prosperity the Comox Glacier looking splendid in its winter snow.



River Spirit - A spirit bear checks a river for salmon in the Great Bear Rainforest in early fall 2010.

I completed the Commercial Bear Viewing Association of BC's 'Assistant Bear Viewing Guide' course this spring. Conducted by top bear scientist Grant MacHutchon, this was an excellent insight into the make up and world of the bear. Not only has it helped to improve my own safety whilst out in the field, but that of those around me too.

I took some 'refresher' training in the form of a photography workshop, hosted by fellow wildlife photographer Paul Burwell, in Kallispell, Montana.

As well as classroom teaching, Paul had organized the opportunity for some 'in the field' coaching. Part of this was in conflict with my personal beliefs in that it included animals in captivity at ranches in the area, but for some on the course this is the only opportunity they have or want to work with this type of animal.

It included a pack of wolves originally rescued from government biologists in Alaska that were slated to be euthanized and a born in captivity Siberian Tiger (below), which I have since put to work to try and help the few remaining tigers left in the Russian far east. (See my 2011 charity piece website page for more info.).



Outside of the course times, groups of us went off in search of other Montana scenery and wildlife in the area and were richly rewarded.

2010 also saw me attend my first ever 'outdoor' art shows and craft fairs and I thoroughly enjoyed them. Not only did I get to meet some wonderful people, both vendors and visitors to the events, but I was also able to tell people first hand about my work in and the wonders of the Great Bear Rainforest.



Another first was a few photo oriented tours that I organized for local like minded people who either just wanted to get out and photograph some local wildlife and/or wanted a little coaching with their photography. These trips were a huge success and I hope to be able to repeat them in 2011.

As a new member of the community, I was proud to receive a runners up award for my picture of the black & white spirit bears voted on by the Comox Valley public at the Pearl Ellis Gallery 'People's Choice' show. My thanks to all who voted.

Throughout the summer I also worked with local eco-tourism operators in the area including Discovery Marine Safaris out of Campbell River. These were great opportunities and lead to some wonderful whale and bear shots both for me and the operators involved.

These included transient orca (above) checking us out and a sighting of 'Springer' the orca that was successfully rescued, nursed back to health and released back to her family in 2002.

Other highlights included bear encounters and watching a bear cub - with its mother clearly distressed on the riverbank - washed away by river torrents, but successfully save itself after what seemed like an age in the river.

The highlight of my photographic year was without doubt my return to the Great Bear Rainforest, this time with Trish & Eric at Ocean Adventures. (www.oceanadventures.bc.ca). We got to visit the local Gitga'at community village of Hartley Bay (below), which is campaigning hard with others to try and stop the invasion of the area by Enbridge and their oil tankers.



We were invited to a wonderful feast they held for a group of photographers from the International League of Conservation Photographers (ILCP) and Pacific Wild who are all helping with the oil campaign.

We also had some wonderful whale and spirit bear encounters and were 'mugged' by mother and calf humpbacks when they suddenly appeared alongside our stationary boat.

I was especially pleased when I came across a fairly old spirit bear that I had seen the previous year and was pleased to know he was still around. At about 15 he is starting to look a little tired, but is a great character.

Trips with this company are superb with great food, great company and on a great boat. Best of all, there are only 5 guests on board so when you're out in the field you all get a good spot, it's nice and quiet and still feels personal.

2011 will hopefully be as good as 2010. I have plans to conduct some eagle studies and field work, have been working over the winter on my first book which will be released in the summer and I hope to have some more tours locally in the late spring. I will be back at the shows, hopefully including Comox Nautical Days and the Kitty Coleman Art & Bloom festival and of course I will be returning to the Great Bear Rainforest in the fall.

News will appear regularly on my website and if you're out and about at the shows, please stop by and say hi.

Have a great year!

Steve

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