

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.*

An Annual Newsletter

www.stevewilliamson.ca

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2012 Back to the Bush!

2012 was an exciting and very busy year with some exceptional opportunities.

I spent the winter months at the beginning of the year redesigning and launching my new website. It went 'live' towards the end of January and seems to have been very well received, with over 9,000 'hits' from 59 different countries throughout the year. A definite favourite is the Blog, where I regularly post new images with a short description or story to accompany them and also news of what I'm up to or where I'm at. If you haven't seen it yet, please take a look and hopefully you'll enjoy it. To help you keep up to date with news and the regular postings, you can freely subscribe to the site and will receive an email informing you of updates to the blog when posted.



February was a really special month for me as I finally got to see and photograph some snowy owls in the wild. This had been a lifelong ambition as I had always been fascinated by these beautiful birds since childhood; when I came across one in captivity. A few of these owls travel to southwest BC each winter and 2012 saw an exceptional number show up. The shots from the day quickly became firm favourites and I hope to return to the same location over on the mainland early in 2013 to try and get some more.



The BC SPCA Wild Settings Winner!

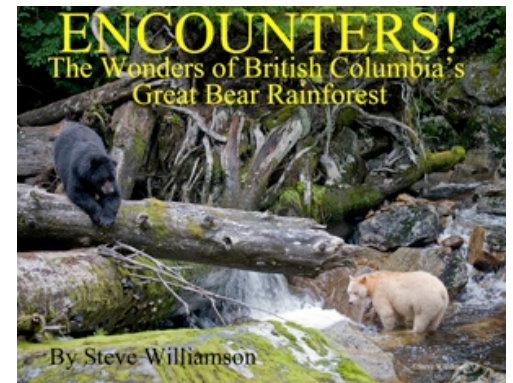
Early in 2012 I was pleased to be able to make a small donation to the WWF's Save Tigers Now campaign (www.savetigersnow.org).

This donation was as a result of sales throughout 2010 & 2011 of 8x10 prints of 'Attie' a Siberian Tiger I photographed, sadly in captivity, in the spring of 2010. A BIG thank you to those who purchased one of those prints.

Other donations in 2012 included donating to fund raisers for MARS (www.wingtips.org) a local wild bird rescue centre, to the Pacific Salmon Foundation (www.psf.ca) and to the BC SPCA wildlife rescue centre here on Vancouver Island. They ran a photo contest and I was proud to be announced the winner of the 'Wild Settings' category with a picture of a female grizzly bear chasing down salmon. You can take a look here: www.sPCA.bc.ca/welfare/wildlife/urban-wildlife/annual-photo-contest/2012-wildlife-in-focus/

I was also proud to receive a runners up award at the Pearl Ellis Gallery in Comox Annual Photo Show, for my picture 'Tree Hugger' showing a young grizzly bear peering out between two trees.

The winter months also saw me give several slideshow presentations featuring the stories and images from my book Encounters! These presentations went down really well and I enjoyed doing them and judging from the feedback I received it would seem the audiences that attended enjoyed them also.





A Humpback Dives Deep

Late February saw a return to one of my favourite photographic spots for humpback whales - Maui. As it turned out, this would not be my only spectacular encounter with humpbacks in 2012, but it was certainly a great start.

The warm waters around Maui are the ideal birthing and mating grounds for this spectacular leviathan and they migrate there every year from Alaska and BC, so it only seems natural to follow them. I had some great encounters with breaches and large males 'butting' heads out of the water. Many of the shots can be seen in the 'Maui' gallery on the website.



I decided not to return to Knight Inlet Lodge this year, there was too much else to do and see around British Columbia - I had to get 'back to the bush' and broaden my portfolio.

This began with a superb trip to the Khutzeymateen in June. My only regret was that I did not stay longer. The Khutzeymateen is Canada's only grizzly bear sanctuary.

The whole area is a conservation site, with the river estuary and inland up river being the sanctuary. There is no logging and no hunting and very few people, only around 200 a year, get to go right into the sanctuary. More information on the Khutzeymateen, who to go with and images from the trip can be seen on the new Khutzeymateen gallery on the website as well as on the pages of the blog.



Throughout the summer I was 'back on the road' doing art shows, markets and fairs up and down Vancouver Island. This proved to be a very busy time and left me yearning to be back in the bush with my camera. But it was also an important time - I met lots of great people and some sound contacts, as well as learning a lot more about the local area. It also gave me the opportunity to inform hundreds of more people, residents and visitors about our wildlife and some of the threats it has to live under.

Late summer saw me head off through BC in search of new photographic encounters as I covered over seven thousand kilometres by road, air and sea.

During this time I came across some spectacular scenery, which started just north of Vancouver on highway 99. Some of the parks and lakeside vistas along this route were just superb.

Near Smithers I called in on the Northern Lights Wilderness Society to make a small donation and saw first hand some of the work they are doing to help rescue and protect the province's wildlife. Visit www.wildlifeshelter.com to learn more.

As I left NLWS I got to see my first North American kestrel and like the snowy owl, I was really pleased to finally see one of these birds, having had a childhood fascination with its European namesake.

Continuing north, just outside of Quesnel I came across 10 mile lake and whilst checking out the 'beaver pond' I thought I had myself another much sort after first when I photographed what I believed was a young beaver, only to find out later it was in fact a muskrat. It was still a first, but not quite what I was expecting, especially on 'Beaver Pond'. Apparently it's a common mistake!





My northbound target was the twin border towns of Stewart in BC and Hyder in Alaska and here I spent a couple of weeks photographing some superb wildlife and finally some beaver too!

This really was a great location and unlike some other spots I've heard of, the 'regulars' here were really friendly and helpful with information to improve my photographic work and I made several new good friends.

This far north, the salmon run was in full swing by the time I'd arrived and not long after, it was over. But I knew where it was only just beginning and after my time on the border I headed off back to the Great Bear Rainforest (GBR).

But before I arrived in Prince Rupert for my flight to Hartley Bay, I had one more surprise and discovery to make.



Back in the mid 18th century, a volcanic eruption occurred in Northern BC. Today the Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Provincial Park marks this site and is home to the Nisga'a First Nation. I had no idea such a place as these lava beds existed in BC and was mesmerized by the spectacular 'martian' landscape and glacier fed lakes which stretched for miles along the Nisga'a highway from Terrace.

Upon arriving in Hartley Bay I was set for another fantastic trip with my friends Trish & Eric back aboard the Great Bear II (www.oceanadventures.bc.ca). The trip enabled me to return to photograph a spirit bear that I had first come across in 2009. It is always great to see a bear still around years later and to know they are still ok. We also paid a short visit to Khutz Inlet in the heart of the GBR. This inlet is spectacular and has to be one of the most scenic on the coast.



Probably the biggest highlight of the trip (besides the spirit bear and the Khutz) was coming across over 20 humpback whales in a narrow channel.

They were all around us and we spent over 4 hours just enjoying their company and watching them as they fed & rested in the calm waters.

With a new portfolio full of the many amazing sights BC and it's wildlife has to offer it was back to Vancouver Island and the very busy Christmas market season.

Looking forward to 2013 - I've recently had confirmation of a boat charter so I'm hoping to do at least one photo field trip to photograph the bears of Knight Inlet (above centre) in June. This tour will only have limited space, so if you'd like to attend sign up on the website as soon as it is announced in January.

There are some exciting new projects in the pipeline too, but I guess they'll be for next year's newsletter!

However, new images will be posted throughout the year and news will continue to appear regularly on the blog page of the website. Don't forget to subscribe to be amongst the first to learn of updates and reports 'from the field' as well as news of any open field trips.

I'll be at a few shows locally here on the Island when I can throughout the year too, so if you're out and about at any of the shows, please stop by and say hi.

*Have a great 2013!
Steve*

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Humpback Whales Abound

Verne Channel, BC