

## Andy Rouse's Shots of the Month

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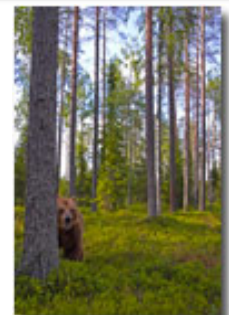
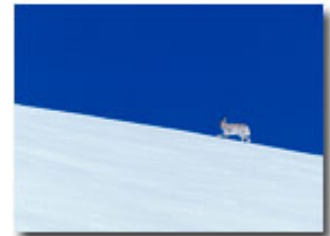
### The Wider View

As we all grow older there are many things about us that change. We develop as people, often losing our hair in the process, and look at everything we do through experienced eyes. The same is true of our wildlife photography, and in my case the past year or so has seen a major change in my style of photography. As a change of pace from my usual columns I thought that it might be interesting to look at the factors that have influenced me and where I see my photography moving to over the next few years.

There has never been any argument that I am, and always will be, a very commercial photographer. This stems from the necessity of travel, i.e., I love to travel to watch wildlife and need to fund it somehow. I tried lap dancing but I kept falling off so I need to ensure that the business side of my photography is successful enough to fund my international desires. I am also part of a very competitive, cut-throat industry, and to be successful and to make a name has entailed me curbing many of my creative juices and taking what I know the market wants and what my agent can sell. Underlying this, I have always had a strong conservation message beneath these commercial tendencies. I regularly support worthy causes through my work (always anonymously) which gives me great pleasure and a sense that my images can help in some small way. As a conservationist, first and foremost and not just a photographer that pays lip-service to good causes for the PR for their work, I understand that my images needed to show both the harshness and the fragility of the wilderness in which my subjects play out their daily fight for survival. I have all the full frame 'chocolate box' shots of animals, which initially attract people to the cause of endangered animals but they do little to foster a greater understanding of the habitats and environments upon which these animals, and ultimately ourselves, survive.

Taking amazing panoramics of wild landscapes, such as those of my professional colleague Colin Prior, are a photographic genre of their own and are utterly awe-inspiring; if combined with the wildlife element that is my inspiration, they would send out an awesome message. I believe that to advance as a photographer one must always be critical of your own work. My main criticism was that my wide-angle, up close and personal approach to dangerous animals was admirable in its own right but because they were close up they lacked a sense of wilderness, of the habitat in which the animal is found. In short the relationship between animal and environment was missing. This wasn't a deliberate omission on my part; I just looked at my wildlife through different eyes and simply didn't see the bigger picture. With these shots I had other things to worry about with my frame being consumed by a looming rhinoceros. Looking at the work of the late great Galen Rowell, I remember reading an article about how he photographed Caribou in the NWT, walking up to them with an upturned tripod to mimic the antlers. At the time I didn't see much in the images, as there was far too much landscape in them for my liking, but now I realise that this was exactly the point. Re-visiting these images with my new "corrected" eyesight I can see the amazing genius within them and perhaps one of my greatest regrets will be that I will never be able to tell him that to his face.

I needed to do something about this craving and support for my change in direction came from an unexpected source. Just over a year ago, I was asked to join Getty Images. Having several agents world-wide I had long regarded Getty from afar as a place that I wanted to be by choice, although I never quite had the courage to try. Eventually, when my images were accepted into the collection I was summoned into their London offices for a day to look at my work. I had to swallow large



amounts of humble pie! Those of you that know me know that I don't suffer fools gladly and find it difficult to accept criticism; I had to sit and listen to a bunch of strangers telling me why my work was just too commercial and that to be in with a chance I needed to change my style. This was hard to take at the time but annoyingly their comments reverberated around my head for the following weeks and I grudgingly had to admit that they had a point. The strangers' comments I found were to give me that extra confidence to take a step away from what I had known and grasp a new nettle.



So I set about adding a new dimension to my photography, which began with the Grizzly Bears last year that you all saw on NPN. If the close-up shot was there then I would take it, but I found myself looking increasingly for some inspirational light on the landscape as a backdrop for the bears. This continued through my work on the annual migration in Kenya and finally to the Falkland Islands work that many of you have said is my best to date. Certainly it is the most complete body of work that I have ever taken in one expedition, ranging from high speed action, intimate portraits and "big view" animal in landscape shots. Personally, I feel that I have done the Falkland Islands justice, having illustrated all facets of the wildlife there in the short time that I was allocated. There is much to do there and I will be returning shortly to add some more to the collection, but again I will be leaving the big lens behind. Taking along a 500mm lens encourages me to use it and in turn means that I will concentrate on more intimate close up work. So I'll be taking my 70-200 zoom, a 17-40 and a 300mm f2.8. As you read this I will be out in Norway using exactly this equipment and I hope that next month I will be able to show you some of my work from this trip. I'll be taking an X-PAN too, as I want to try to see if I can get some panoramics with wildlife as the central focus. I saw some work recently by a British wildlife photographer Geoff Simpson that showed Red Grouse in a beautiful habitat taken with the X-PAN.



My final words are simply this - I hope that you can take something from this article, and from the accompanying pictures, that will encourage you to take a wider view the next time that you are out photographing wildlife. This applies not only to your photography but also to the subjects you are trying to shoot. Try to use the habitat to show how the subject interacts and depends on it, and don't always make your long lens your first choice. As photographers we have the power to affect public opinion greatly, to shape political campaigns and to highlight our concerns about habitat and wilderness destruction to a wide audience. But we can only do it if we actually show the habitat that is under threat.

Until next month, happy shooting!

Comments on NPN wildlife photography articles? Send them to the [editor](#).

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Andy Rouse is a professional wildlife photographer based in the U.K. His professional credits include hosting the Discovery Channel's Wildlife Photographer TV series, and the publication of six books, including his soon-to-be-released [The DSLR Masterclass](#). Andy's images are represented by NHPA and Getty Images and are sold worldwide. To learn more about Andy, check out his [NPN bio](#). To view more of Andy's work, visit his website at [www.andyrouse.co.uk](http://www.andyrouse.co.uk).