

Andy Rouse's Shots of the Month

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Wimberley

Artistic Gulls

This months epic is all about.....Gulls

Yes that's right, gulls. Hardly fills you with enthusiasm I am sure and probably makes you want to switch pages immediately. But gulls can be beautiful and our job as nature photographers is to bring out the beauty in our subjects, no matter what the conditions. I feel that in this day and age of computer geekery, where all too often a great photograph is just reduced into an equipment list, that the art of photography is in serious trouble. Too much emphasis is placed on what camera, what colour space, what colour socks, rather than just getting out in the field and taking pictures. All I live for is getting out and spending time with wildlife and I am a traditional wildlife photographer, i.e. I create the art inside the camera using a bit of skill rather than in a darkened room.

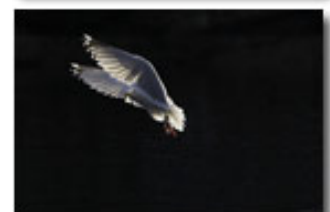
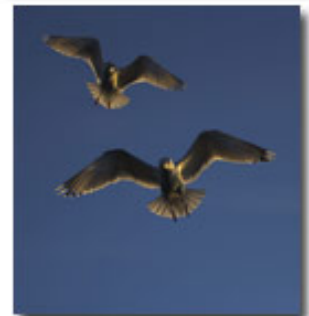
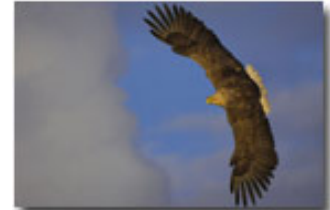
This month's images were taken on a trip to Norway and were a little bit of a surprise as I was there to take photos of white tailed sea eagles. Unfortunately it was a surprise to the eagles too as I was a little bit early in the season for them! The best I managed is this chap shown here, annoyingly with the bottom wing tips cut slightly off. Geeksters would of course extend the canvas and add the wing tips; I cut them off in the first place and so will have to live with it. Back to the story - I remember it was a really beautiful evening, the sun was gently setting into the horizon and there wasn't a breath of wind. We (my good friend Ole was driving the boat) were out bobbing around in the middle of a fjord, surrounded by jet black water and getting ready to turn for home as the last eagle had long since departed for its evening roost. We still had plenty of food left on the boat and Ole decided to reward the legions of gulls that had faithfully followed us for most of the afternoon and chucked the first few remains overboard. A melee of white wings and threatening beaks ensued and immediately I saw the potential for a really beautiful image of a white angelic bird against the black waters of the fjord. Ole saw it too and waited patiently whilst I cursed and fiddled.

I set up my camera to shoot deliberately underexposed, 1 ½ stops in fact, so that the whites wouldn't be overexposed, and if anything, I'd shoot everything slightly dark. It may seem strange not to worry about each individual exposure and try to get it perfectly right but in this kind of frantic situation, where the action is thick and fast and you are shooting on instinct, time dictates shortcuts have to be taken. So I find that it is best to concentrate on getting the subject in sharp focus, which is something that no software can correct (despite the geeks claims).

For 15 minutes the gulls happily fed and I had one of the most memorable boat rides of my life, it was so beautiful to see them silhouetted against the last rays of the sun. And now I will let the images speak for themselves as I think they show an artistic quality that is rarely allowed to surface in my work. To break them down further into technical elements completely misses the point of what they are trying to show. I hope that you agree and enjoy them as much as I enjoyed taking them.

Until next time...

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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.

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