

IMAGES, IDEAS, and REFLECTIONS

Periodical Letter #22
November 2021

from
FREEMAN PATTERSON



Mama Lys of Nourivier, Northern Cape, South Africa

For many years in November my thoughts turned to preparing for my return to southern Africa, South Africa for sure, but often to Namibia as well. Normally, I fly south sometime in January or early February, but this year with the Covid-19 pandemic still raging, I'll be spending a lot of time instead with the thousands and thousands of photographs I've made there. Many of my images of Namibia exist as colour transparencies and, now that I have a new scanner, I'll be carefully going through my files to select the photographs I also want as digital files. Then I'll turn them over to Kim Nickerson, my office wonder, who will do the scanning, and when she returns the scans to me I'll take them into Photoshop for the necessary adjustments. So, although I'll be seeing places I love, I'll miss the sounds and smells that accompany the visuals. Those I'll simply have to imagine.

In a future issue of Images, Ideas, and Reflections I'll write more about Namibia, my experiences there, and include more of my images, many from areas far off normal tourist routes. Only once in my life, away back in 1970 in West Africa, have I been on a safari or a guided tour, and the tour leader proved to be so incompetent that the group "fired" him in the middle of the tour and "elected" me to lead it instead, which I agreed to do only on the condition that I had unanimous support. Needless to say, I learned a lot in a hurry.



Dawn in the Great Sand Sea, Namibia

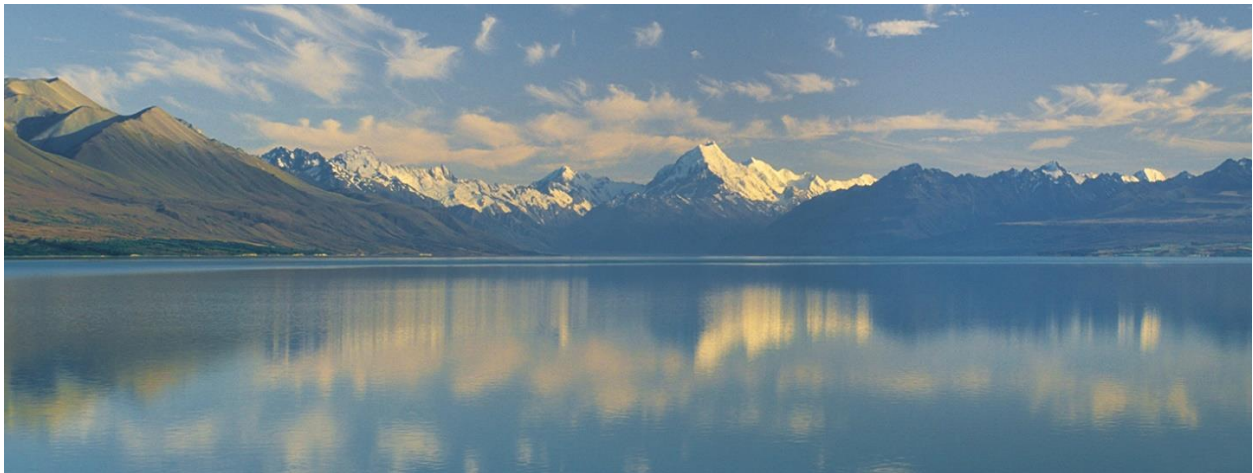
"You cannot leave Africa. It is always with you ..."

Bridget Dore

As many readers know I often travelled to South Africa by way of New Zealand, sometimes motorcycling, sometimes teaching there, but always enjoying the beauty of the country and the warm hospitality of the people. Kim and I have already converted a good percentage of my New Zealand slides from the earlier trips to digital files, so I won't be spending as much time there in these coming months as I will in Africa, but I'll sure be hopping on an imaginary motorcycle to cruise again through the southern Alps or to visit friends in Christchurch, Nelson, and Tokoroa. Here are images from a couple of memorable South Island mornings.



Early morning along Highway 6, west coast



Aoraki/ Mt. Cook

Although I'm not planning on travelling outside of Canada in 2022, I'm looking forward to workshops in New Brunswick again. Only the first of the six I had planned for summer and autumn 2021 had to be cancelled (due to provincial Covid regulations) and each of the other five possessed its own special character. The deep, probing questions, the discussions about the relationship of art and craft, the pleasure of participants making photographs entirely for themselves, the belly-aching laughter, the exceptional meals that themselves generated conversations about art and craft all led to the same conclusion – the experience of on-line

workshops can't come close to that of on-site workshops, especially when the participants and instructors are living together as a community. Although sessions on ZOOM (and its relatives) are useful for dispensing and acquiring information, they can never provide the holistic value of what happens when a group pursues a common worthy goal for a week.

Learning is about so much more than acquiring information.



Three workshop participants, Kennebecasis River at Hampton, New Brunswick, October 2021



“Ideally, you participate in a workshop to unleash your creativity.” *Anon.*



WORKSHOPS 2022

Artists' Retreat (St. Andrews, NB)

July 5 (Tuesday) -10

October 17 (Monday) -22

Inscape with David Maginley (St. Martins, NB)

September 4-10

Photography and Visual Design with André Gallant (St. Martins, NB)

August 7-13

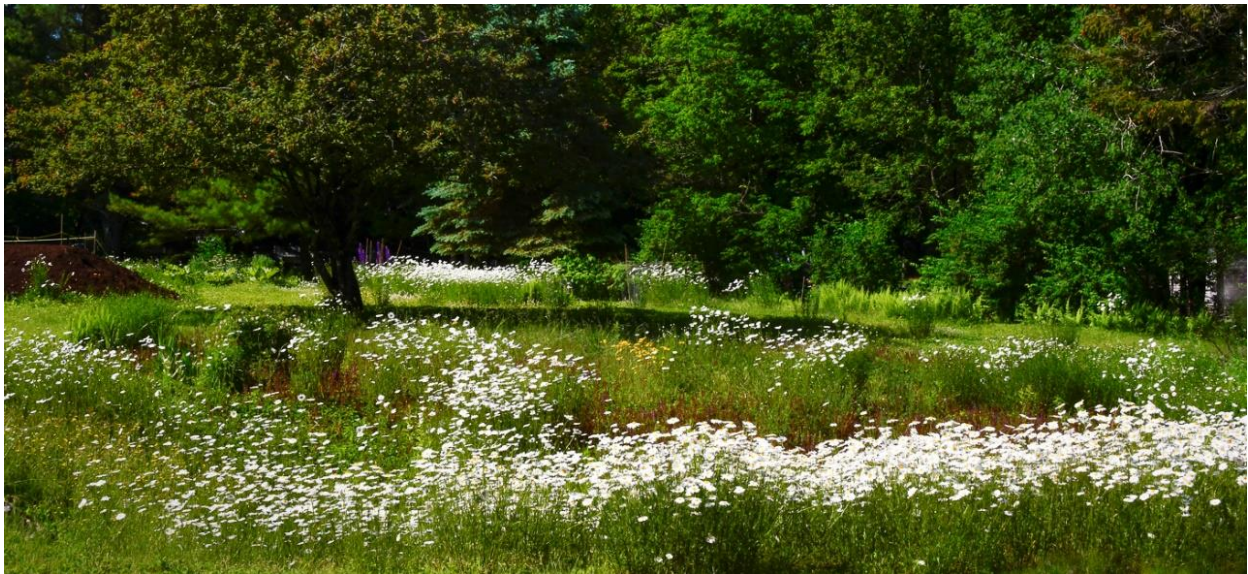
September 18-24

October 9-15

For complete information about workshop content, pricing, and reserving a spot, please go to www.freemanpatterson.com and click on "Workshops" on the home page.

The North American Native Plant Society

My good friend David Corkett, who lives in suburban Rothesay about a half hour from Shamber's Bluff, is one of the uncommon, but increasing number of individuals who mows only tiny bits of his half acre occasionally – and has quieted neighbours and avoided bylaws that would endeavour to rid the world of dandelions and virtually all other wild plants except grass, gradually eliminating all the insects, birds, and other creatures (including humans) who depend on them for food and dwelling. Instead of maintaining a lawn, David is creating an ecosystem. (For more photographs and text about David's project, click on [WILD SUBURBIA](#).)



Part of David Corkett's suburban property of 1/2 acre (just over 1/5 hectare.) Photo by David

This brings me to the North American Native Plant Society, a registered charity that is devoted to the study, conservation, cultivation, and restoration of North America's native flora. NANPS, formerly the Canadian Wildflower Society, was founded in Ontario in the 1980s, but as more and more Americans joined, it went continental for other reasons as well, among them encouraging the growing of native plants in small places, just as David is doing.

NANPS' quarterly publication, The Blazing Star, (print and digital) is chock-a-block full of interesting, informative articles, book reviews, and excellent photographs. Illustrated articles in the most recent edition include "A Sedge For All Seasons," "Moss-covered Rock Ecosystems," and "Restoring Biodiversity One Person at a Time."

NANPS conducts an annual seed exchange, providing tips on how to harvest native plant seeds, then how to send them to the seed exchange for distribution on a first-come, first-served basis. Also, from time to time it hosts webinars, such as the recent "Plant Selection for the Birds."

An annual membership in NANPS is a bargain at \$25 (Can. or US), which includes a digital subscription to The Blazing Star or \$30 with the print version. www.nanps.org.

BOOKS

Three weeks ago I drove to the nearest pharmacy to get my annual flu shot and I took my book-laden Kindle along with me just in case I had to wait, which I didn't. Quickly jabbed I sailed down the grocery aisle, picked up some coffee cream and old cheddar, avoided the automatic check-out so I could have a brief chat with a human being as I paid my small bill, and drove home. I was almost at my driveway before I realized my Kindle was missing.

As soon as I had stowed the cream and cheese, I phoned the pharmacy. "Nope" my Kindle was not in the room where I'd been vaccinated and it wasn't at the check-out counter. However, the pleasant woman at Customer Service asked for my phone number - just in case!

The next day at noon she called me with the good news that a customer had found the Kindle and taken it to Customer Service. My very first reaction was "Wow! Kind strangers still exist," a stronger response even than my enormous relief at having my device and all the books again.

Here are some of the books I nearly lost – some read, all explored – and all worth mentioning to you.

Douglas Tallamy, **Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard**, also his **The Nature of Oaks: The Rich Ecology of Our Most Essential Native Trees** (reviewed in the most recent edition of NANPS's quarterly publication, *The Blazing Star*)

David Carroll, **Swampwalker's Journal, A Wetlands Year**. "The author of *The Year of the Turtle* provides a year-long journey through the swamps and wetlands, introducing the varied animal and plant inhabitants of the marshes and describing why such habitats are so important to his own life and to Earth's environmental future."

Tyson, Strauss, and Gott, **A Brief Welcome to The Universe: A Pocket-sized Tour**, or for a longer journey, **Welcome to The Universe**. "*Welcome to the Universe* is a personal guided tour of the cosmos by three of today's leading astrophysicists. Inspired by the enormously popular introductory astronomy course that Neil deGrasse Tyson, Michael A. Strauss, and J. Richard Gott taught together at Princeton, this book covers it all – from planets, stars, and galaxies to black hole, worm holes, and time travel."

Paul Bogard, **The End of Night: Searching for Natural Darkness in an Age of Artificial Light**

As you'll notice, all my book recommendations have to do with nature, ecology, and ecosystems from small to incomprehensibly vast. Even in the world's most crowded cities, we are all affected all the time by natural systems. Our health as humans depends completely on the health of these systems. It can never be any other way. So, it's a no-brainer that taking care of ourselves both as individuals and as communities involves taking care of them.

If you live in a city where light pollution obscures the stars and removes the sense of wonder that comes from lying on your back on a cloudless night, treat yourself by visiting a place where you can observe what filled our forebears with wonder and will do the same for you. (See photo next page.)



Made while lying on my back in the southern Namib; the Milky Way is just one galaxy out of the 500 billion that astrophysicists have been able to verify from Earth for the last century or more.

“The Universe said, ‘Let me show your soul something beautiful.’ ”

Aberjhani

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The stars generate wonder, no less today than they always have. So, the recent inability to see stars in so much of today’s world is an enormous spiritual loss.

Even though I know precious little about physics in any concrete way, lying on my back looking at stars has been one of the major catalysts for my reading “around” quantum physics, in particular how recent discoveries relate to the great advances made in the study of consciousness, which is to take nothing away from depth psychologists.

Although many religious cultures have driven a huge wedge between matter and spirit, quantum physicists have gone a long way to making it clear that we are all talking about the same universe. Indeed, they often seem to echo the writings of many of the great mystics, contemplatives, and theologians, which seems completely right to me.

At the same time more and more contemporary theologians are taking direct aim at the idea that God (however one defines the fundamental generative force) is “outside” the universe, pointing out that there is no outside. Creation encompasses everything.



“Sacred writings are bound in two volumes—that of Creation and that of Holy Scripture.” *Thomas Aquinas*

“A religion is not the church one goes to, but the cosmos one lives in.”

G. K. Chesterton

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After seeing all the fungi photographs in my last letter, B Dass wrote to tell us about:
<https://www.sfgate.com/streaming/article/Netflix-documentary-Fantastic-Fungi-mushrooms-16383646.php>

And, here's one of the Bird's Nest species of mushrooms that I'd like to add to the collection I provided. Raindrops knock the spore cases (eggs) out of the nest (mushroom cap) and, when the cases shatter on impact, they release their spores. I photographed these on Vancouver Island, but I have also photographed a different species growing on some rotting wood on the edge of a tomato patch near my house.

Now that's pretty "wonder" full!, isn't it.



Hartlike wense, ALMAL

Meilleurs vœux, TOUT LE MONDE

Warm good wishes, EVERYBODY!

FREEMAN

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