



# In Focus

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## In Praise of Winter by Karen Fulham

What's not to love about winter? How about toe-numbing cold; white-knuckle drives to work and back in the dark while dodging black ice; slushy streets; the shoveling; the windshield-scraping...or how about the beauty that unfolds with the first frost? Let me make this perfectly clear: spring and summer are my favourite times of year, and I really



hate feeling cold. As a photographer, however, I have developed a special affection for winter, and am able to see the other side of the coin. At the first sign of snow, I'm ready to embrace winter and all the photographic opportunities it offers. Don't hibernate this winter; there's plenty of beauty out there to capture- the key

is proper preparation.

Need it be said? Dress warm! Winter footwear must be warm and waterproof, and hopefully with good traction. Invest in a pair of ski pants- got mine at Value Village and find that though ugly, they are absolutely essential. The fingerless glove/mitten combo is also very useful for manipulating camera controls, and don't forget head covering, whatever works for you. Big, puffy down jackets

offer the ultimate in warmth; it's also a good idea to dress in loose layers.

### February Program

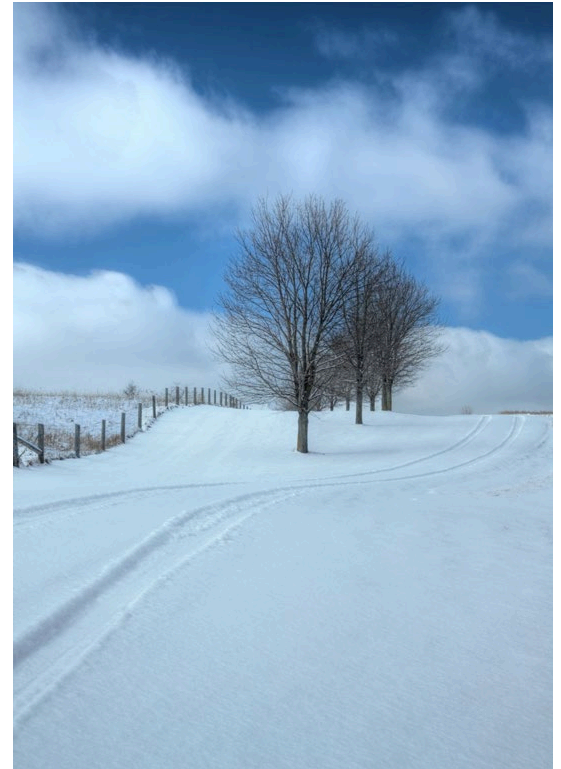
February we will have a hands on workshop. Table Top Studio Setup: Macros and Still life captures of flowers. Be sure to bring your camera for this workshop.

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Protect your gear as well as yourself- DSLR batteries will drain very fast in cold temperatures. Keep a spare battery in a pocket close to your body. Plastic rain covers for your camera and lenses are available and are a good inexpensive investment but any plastic bag with a hole cut in it will do in a pinch. Avoid breathing on your gear in the cold to avoid condensation. Don't bring your cold equipment directly into a warm environment from outside- the condensation that forms on and inside the camera can damage it, and can even lead to mold growth. Leave your gear inside the camera bag and allow it to warm up slowly, by leaving it in the porch, garage or basement. An extra large Ziploc bag is a valuable accessory to carry at all times for any outdoor photographer. Put your camera/lenses in the Ziploc before you bring it inside. Condensation will then form on the bag, not on the camera as it warms up.



On the technical side, the most important thing to remember is that your camera's meter will expose that white expanse of snow for 18% grey with predictably disappointing results. This is the time to set your camera on Manual mode, overexposing your snow scene by at least 2/3 of a stop, even up to 1 1/2 stops in order to render the snow a truer white. If you must use Auto mode, use your camera's exposure compensation feature. In the case of winter portraiture, taking your meter reading from your subject's face will be sufficient to cause the rest of the elements to fall into place. The challenge is to render the snow in your scene as white as possible without losing detail in the snow, or having the highlights "blown out". Bracket your exposures to make sure. It's harder to achieve detail in the snow on overcast days when lighting is flat- much easier when the sun is low in the sky. Keep in mind that getting snow detail throughout the whole scene will be impossible in most cases- and not always necessary.



Showing snow detail in part of the image (usually the foreground) is most often all that is needed for the image to be effective. Shadow areas on snow on a sunny day will be blue, and there's nothing wrong with that.

A Daylight White Balance setting will give your images a bluer, cooler cast; "Cloudy" or "Shade" a warmer one. Shoot RAW and tweak white balance in your RAW Image Editor for best results.

Now that you're prepared, it's time to be inspired. Shorter days and longer nights mean that you don't have to get up ridiculously early to capture the magical light at sunrise: in winter's darkest days you won't have to be ready and in place

until between 7 and 8 am. It's the time of year I make my yearly pilgrimage to Table Rock at daybreak to capture Niagara Falls at its most beautiful. From the Table Rock vantage point, the sun rises directly over the Horseshoe Falls and the plume of mist does magical things. You may even be lucky enough to experience the winter wonderland that occurs when that mist blows towards the Canadian side and coats the surrounding trees with a thick layer of ice.

The recent ice storm that wreaked havoc in Eastern Canada and the US, disastrous as it undoubtedly was, was nevertheless a treasured event for photographers. I seized the opportunity to take a walk around my neighborhood(as I'm sure many of you did) to observe a world transformed. A layer of ice makes even ordinary objects look interesting. My icicle-laden clothesline; my neighbor's Christmas decorations; all became objects of unique beauty. In late Fall, watch out for the first frosts to create similar delights- when the entire world appears frosted with sugar. Get up early to catch this phenomenon, as it melts away very quickly as the sun rises. Still plenty of opportunity for macro photography, even in winter.

When you think of winter, think Minimalist photography. A fresh blanket of snow eliminates the visual clutter from the landscape, allowing for simple and stark compositions. A simple pop of colour (a red cardinal; a figure in a colourful jacket) in an otherwise monochrome landscape adds a lot of impact. Look for line, and form; think of fences meandering through farm fields, lone figures in a landscape, and isolated, bare-branched trees. In the same vein, winter lends itself very well to black and white photography.

Capture falling snow by playing with your shutter speed- a slow shutter speed will render falling snowflakes as streaks across the frame; a fast shutter speed will "freeze" those flakes in mid-air, giving your image a nostalgic, "Christmas-y" feel.



If you often employ vignetting in your images in post-processing, or darken the corners to emphasize subject matter, try a white vignette or even white matting (for prints) for your snowy scenes to give your images a light, ethereal feel.

In the rush and crush of Holiday preparations, don't overlook the many photo opportunities this time of year can present. Santa Claus parades, lighting displays, Christmas concerts, and candlelit scenes are among those not to be missed.

So pull on your snow pants, dig out your mittens, charge up your batteries, as you eagerly anticipate the next fresh snowfall. The way the winter of 2014 is shaping up, looks like you won't have to wait too long. And did I mention...a good set of snow tires?

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Karen is a long time member of the Niagara Falls Camera Club, and a Diamond Level Photographer.

## Colour Print Competition

Name	Entries	HA	Score
<b>Bronze Div.</b>			
Gerhard Miethig	6	6	96
Bebbie Drew	3	3	47
Jim Kershaw	1	1	13
Risa Macdonald	1	1	13
<b>Silver Div.</b>			
Christine Hess	8	8	133
<b>Gold Div.</b>			
Lorraine Pichette	8	3	102
Jim Koniar	7	3	92
Chuch Martyk	6	4	85
Derek Bottomley	5	4	73
Bill Feder	6	1	70
<b>Diamond Div.</b>			
Karen Fulham	8	5	118
George Beehler	8	2	102
Terry Babij	2	1	29

## Digital Image Competition

Name	Entries	HA	Score
<b>Bronze</b>			
Debbie Drew	8	8	124
Pat Lizmore	8	7	111
Jim Kershaw	8	8	110
Bill Feder	6	5	83
Kurtien Gittens	6	4	79
<b>Silver</b>			
Christine Hess	8	6	116
<b>Gold</b>			
Derek Bottomley	8	6	123
Denis Grantham	8	5	114
Chuck Martyk	8	4	110
Mary Nikisher	8	4	105
Jim Arcangeletti	8	3	105
Cindy Phillips	8	3	102
Laurie Rees	8	3	100
Cliff Empey	8	2	97
Lorraine Pichette	8	1	94
Jim Koniar	8	1	88
<b>Diamond</b>			
Scott Simons	8	8	136
Chris Empey	8	7	132
Eric Baloga	8	6	123
Karen Fulham	8	4	113
Laura Cardwell	6	5	95
George Beehler	8	1	94
Terry Babij	6	3	88

## Monochrome Print Competition

Name	Entries	HA	Score
<b>Bronze</b>			
Risa MacDonald	1	1	14
<b>Silver</b>			
Bill Feder	6	3	74
Christine hess	4	3	59
<b>Gold</b>			
Lorraine Pichette	8	3	104
Charles Martyk	4	3	59
Jim Koniar	4		42
Derek Bottomley	3	1	38
<b>Diamond</b>			
Chris Empey	8	6	127
George Beehler	8	3	111
Terry Babij	2	1	29

## Scavenger Hunt Topics

September ... Self Portrait	October ... Left Behind
November ... Outside the Box	December ... Slow Shutter
January ... TBA January 6	February... TBA Feb 3

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