

Into the Great Bear Rainforest

Instructional Photo Tour 2022



The *Into the Great Bear Rainforest Instructional Photo Tour 2022* combines pre-trip professional photography instruction with seven days of photography in one of the most breathtaking environments imaginable. You will be provided with the opportunity, the conceptual and creative tools, and the techniques needed to capture stunning images of spectacular scenery and a diverse array of wildlife. Our “targeted” subjects will include Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, the rare white Spirit Bear, Humpback Whales, landscapes, and more. And, we’ll do all this while traveling into the depths of the Great Bear Rainforest aboard a comfortable and spacious 60-foot boat, the *Afterglow*.

Photography Instruction. The instructional component on this photo tour will take place in the weeks before the trip. Starting in 2022 we have

taken the pre-trip photography instruction online, allowing you to take in the sessions in the comfort of your home. And, by going online and offering the instruction in the weeks before the trip you’ll have time to reflect upon and digest the material long before you are face-to-face with the subjects. The two online sessions will be of benefit to all levels of photographers – from enthusiastic novices through to seasoned professionals. We will discuss both the technical and creative aspects of wildlife photography as well as the specifics and logistics of photographing wildlife and scenery within the Great Bear Rainforest. While the instructional material will be agnostic with respect to camera brand and camera style (e.g., mirrorless vs. DSLR) it will be assumed that most participants will be bringing either digital SLR’s or mirrorless cameras.

Black Ghost of the Rainforest. Coastal Gray Wolves (including black coloured ones!) are actually quite common in the Great Bear Rainforest. However, a century of heavy persecution has left them very wary and shy, making them a very challenging – but highly rewarding – subject to photograph!



Nikon D5 with Nikkor 180-400mm f4E @ 560mm. 1/800s @ f5.6; ISO 2500.

© Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Photography instruction will also take place during our time within the Great Bear Rainforest. This instruction will be less formal and the topics will vary, depending on both the specific interests of, and requests made by, the participants. It will include sessions on digital workflow topics, including raw image processing and some key Photoshop® techniques, tips and tricks.

The Region – And Our Expedition At a Glance

The Great Bear Rainforest. The portion of the British Columbia mainland coast that stretches from Rivers Inlet in the south to the Skeena River in the north is often referred to as “The Great Bear Rainforest”. It is the largest tract of temperate coastal rainforest left on planet Earth. Here the coastal mountains meet the Pacific Ocean – the area is cut by hundreds of steep-sided inlets/fjords and there are countless islands.

This true wilderness is rarely visited by humans and is stunningly beautiful in itself. And, it is literally teeming with wildlife, including Grizzly Bears, Black (and Spirit) Bears, coastal Gray Wolves, Wolverines, Otters, American Martens, Bald Eagles, Humpback Whales, Killer Whales (Orcas), Harbour Seals, Steller Sea Lions, many species of waterfowl and seabirds, and more! The photographic opportunities on this tour are always absolutely amazing.

About The Spirit Bear. The almost mythical Spirit Bear is a rare, white-phased form of the American Black Bear. The subspecies of Black Bear found within the Great Bear Rainforest is *Ursus americanus kermodei* – the Kermode Bear. All the black bears in the Great Bear Rainforest (of any coat colour) are Kermode Bears. But not all Kermodes are white – only the rare Spirit Bear possesses the white coat.

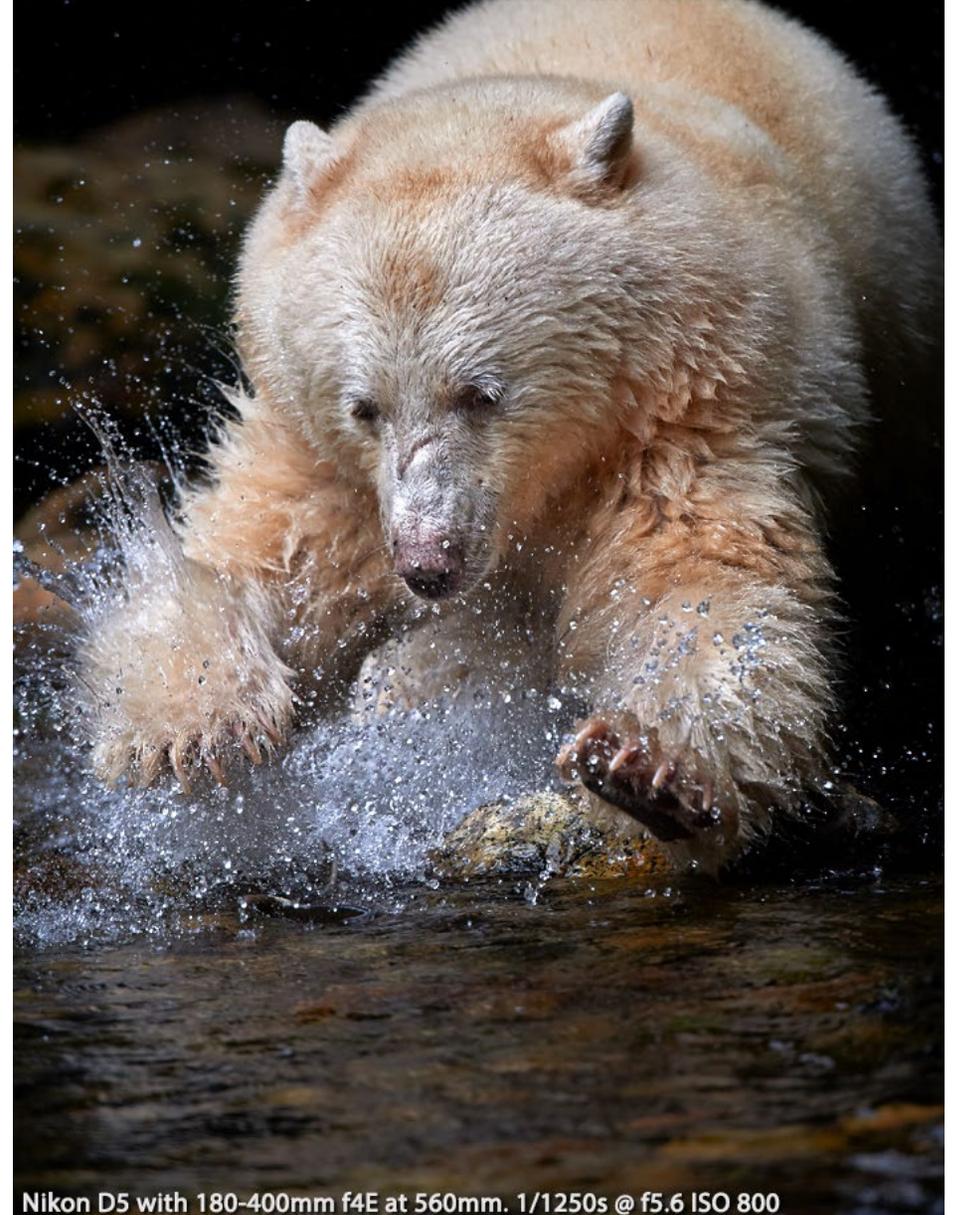
Spirit Bears are not albinos. The white coat colour is caused by a recessive gene and only those bears with two copies of the gene (one inherited from the mother and one inherited from the father) have white coats. The white coat colour of Spirit Bears can theoretically be found in Black Bears anywhere, but they are exceptionally rare in all parts of the Black Bears' range. The one exception is on a small portion of the British Columbia coast where, for reasons that are only poorly understood, between 10 and 20 percent of the bears are white!

A Tour of Exploration! The *Into the Great Bear Rainforest Instructional Photo Tour 2022* is a true tour of photographic exploration. We'll explore the inlets, bays and old-growth forest of the spectacular mid-coast of British Columbia. We'll walk trails, explore creeks, and search for the unique mix of subject matter that only the Great Bear Rainforest can provide – Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, Spirit Bears, Humpback Whales, many bird species, landscapes, and more. Due to potentially extreme weather conditions and rough terrain, and to maximize our chances of seeing a Spirit Bear, we may utilize native-built viewing platforms in certain situations.

This is a multi-faceted trip, focusing not only on the bears, but on *all* the inhabitants of the Great Bear Rainforest – and the entire ecosystem in which they thrive. While the bears are an integral part of this trip, we will be approaching this trip *with an attitude of finding and capturing any form of natural beauty and natural art we can find*. This may include many species of terrestrial and marine wildlife and birds, intertidal scenes, landscapes, seascapes, and more! ***If your sole goal is to photograph bears (to the exclusion of other subject matter you will be present-ed with), this may not be the trip for you.***

About the Photography "Style" On This Photo Tour. On this trip – as on our other photo tours – this is a "*photography in true wilderness*" experience. This means we will spend the bulk of our time in isolated and remote wilderness and away from other humans (and other photographers). We'll have to "track down" our subject matter without the help of other outfitters, spotters or real-time online apps listing recent sightings (i.e., there is no "network of sightings" for us to plug into!). Additionally

The Pounce – Fishing Spirit Bear! All Black Bears in the region are of the *Kermodei* subspecies but only those with two recessive genes for the white coat become all-white Spirit Bears. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca



Nikon D5 with 180-400mm f4E at 560mm. 1/1250s @ f5.6 ISO 800



The Original Big Gulp! Humpback Whales feeding along the shoreline in the Great Bear Rainforest.
Nikon D4 with AF-S 80-400mm VR @ 180mm. 1/1250s @ f6.3. ISO 1600

we'll have no "set-up" situations where we can set up in a specific location ahead of time and with the knowledge that a certain species will predictably appear and pose for us! The advantage of our "photography in true wilderness" approach is that it produces a far more unique and personalized experience and it can often lead to more original and compelling photos. A possible downside is that it means we don't know the specifics of the shooting conditions ahead of time and thus may put more onus on the photographer to make snap technical and creative decisions in a field setting. This means it may challenge – and encourage you to expand – your photographic skills more than other photo tours do!

Our Wildlife Subject Matter: While this is a *photography-in-true-wilderness* trip, we are definitely headed into a target-rich environment!

Here's a quick run down of both our "most likely" wildlife subjects and our "less likely but possible" wildlife subjects:

A. Most Likely Subjects (50% or greater probability of encounter):

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| • Black Bears | • Grizzly Bears | • Spirit Bears |
| • Harbour Seals | • Humpback Whales | • Steller Sea Lions |
| • Bald Eagles | • Herring Gulls | • Dall's Porpoises |
| • Surf Scoters | • Harlequin Ducks | • Common Loons |
| • River Otters | • American Mink | • Great Blue Herons |
| • Asst'd songbirds | • Asst'd seabirds | • Asst'd shorebirds |

B. Less Likely But Possible Subjects (<50% probability of encounter):

- Killer Whales
- Coastal Gray Wolves
- Sea Otters
- American Marten
- Elephant Seals
- Wolverine

2022 Trip Start and End Points: The photo tour begins in Terrace, BC. It ends in Bella Bella, BC.

2022 Date: October 5-13, 2022, including arrival and departure days. Aboard the *Afterglow* from October 6-13, 2022.

2022 Price: \$8,699 CAD plus 5% GST.

What's Included?

- All meals and accommodation in Terrace beginning on the evening of Day 1 (see Itinerary)
- Pre-trip online professional photography instruction and multiple informal instructional sessions during the course of the trip

- All food and accommodation while aboard the *Afterglow*
- A highly-experienced bear guide and professional photography guide
- A great cook and crew
- Use of Zodiac® and all associated safety gear (life jackets, etc.)

What's Not Included?

- Transportation between your home and Terrace, BC at the beginning of the trip and from Bella Bella to your home at the end of the trip
- Your personal belongings and equipment
- Any meals and accommodation in Terrace prior to Day 1
- Any extra personal expenses incurred because of weather, logistical delays, or missed flights
- Any gratuities for the crew of the *Afterglow*



Family Time. Killer Whale calf with its mother. In the Great Bear it's possible we'll encounter Killer Whales from two different populations – Northern Residents and Transients. The Residents typically feed on salmon (strongly preferring Chinooks!) while Transients prey on various species of marine mammals.

Nikon D4 with Nikkor 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/1000s @ f5. ISO 360. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Kitimat Arm – Gateway to the Great Bear. Shortly after we leave Kitimat we'll have opportunities to photograph whales and other marine mammals
Nikon D850 with Sigma 24-70mm f2.8 Art @ 34mm. 1/100s @ f8. ISO 64. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca



What To Expect?

- Cool weather (daytime highs of about 10-15°C or 50-60°F); rain showers, with the possibility of heavy rain
- Mostly calm seas, with some short-duration bouts of rolling water
- Hearty, healthy and delicious food
- Always warm, always dry floating basecamp!
- A truly unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Photo Tour Leader: Terri Shaddick.

Accommodation: While in Terrace we will be staying at the Best Western Hotel.

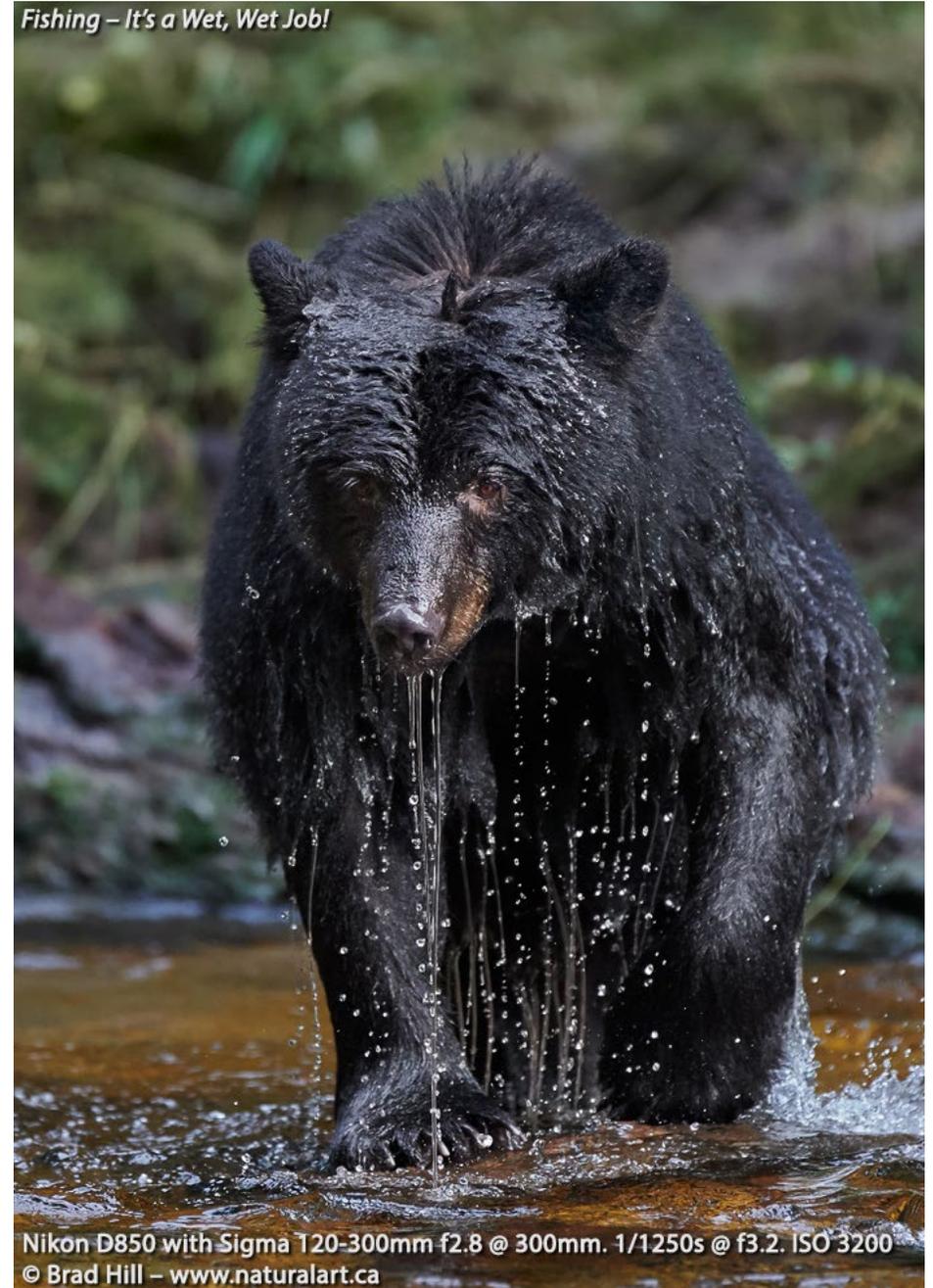
While in the Great Bear Rainforest we will be staying on the *Afterglow* boat, a 60-foot Gulf Commander. Please be aware that it is likely you will be asked to share a berth on the *Afterglow*. This will be dependent on the make-up of the group (e.g., the number of couples attending, gender mix of the participants, etc.).

Sample Itinerary

NOTE: The itinerary of the *Into the Great Bear Rainforest Instructional Photo Tour* is designed for flexibility. This allows us to react to the ever-changing distribution and abundance of wildlife and fluctuating weather conditions. Our primary observational and photographic “target” species will be Grizzly Bears, Black Bears, Spirit Bears and Humpback Whales. We will observe and photograph other species and landscapes as opportunities present themselves.

The actual route we’ll follow will be determined by weather conditions, any recent information on wildlife distribution and abundance, and the need to get to the trip end point on schedule. Please keep in mind this is only a *sample itinerary* and how we actually spend our days may differ.

Fishing – It’s a Wet, Wet Job!



Nikon D850 with Sigma T20-300mm f2.8 @ 300mm. 1/1250s @ f3.2. ISO 3200
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Day 1 – October 5, 2022

Arrive in Terrace, BC. Make your way to the Best Western Hotel to check in. You may check-in any time from 3 PM on. If you arrive early in the day feel free to sightsee or check the town out. Our first official activity will be meeting in the hotel lobby for dinner at 6:00 PM.

Day 2 – October 6, 2022

Early breakfast, followed by van transport to the *Afterglow* at the marina in Kitimat, BC. Following meeting the crew and guides of the *Afterglow* and allocating the cabins we will begin traveling south towards key wildlife viewing and photographic locations. Photographic opportunities often begin shortly after we push off!

Days 3 to 8 – October 7-12, 2022

Tour through the Great Bear Rainforest with stops in numerous locations to photograph our “targeted” wildlife species, and other species as

opportunistically encountered. Humpback Whales typically frequent the inlets and bays at this time of year and we will watch and photograph these magnificent mammals when the opportunity presents itself. We will use the *Afterglow* as a base, and a motorized inflatable to transfer people between the boat and the shore. Four kayaks are on the *Afterglow* for those wishing to enjoy the tranquility of paddling as we explore one of the last unlogged temperate rainforests in the world.

Note that Terri will be giving informal photography instruction between shooting sessions and in the evenings. It is very difficult to offer any instruction when actually working with the bears or other wildlife as we will have to remain as motionless and quiet as possible.

Day 9 – October 13, 2022

Breakfast on the *Afterglow* near Bella Bella. Shortly thereafter our time together in the fabulous Great Bear Rainforest will draw to an end, but you’ll be left with many fabulous memories and photographs!



Shake it Up! Adult male Grizzly pausing in his pursuit of prey for a quick shake.

Nikon D4 with 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/400s @ f6.3. ISO 560.

© Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Bridging the Gap! Grizzly triplets find an innovative way to cross a deep channel in an estuary in the Great Bear Rainforest.
Nikon D4 with AF-S 80-400mm f4.5-5.6 VR @ 230mm. 1/250s @ f6.3. ISO 2200.



© Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Our Ethical Stance – Wildlife FIRST!

Wildlife conservation is the primary reason for our involvement in wildlife photography. As such, *we place the welfare and value of our subjects above the value of any photograph of them.* This philosophy is embodied in our **Wildlife FIRST** rules of conduct that guide our actions during all our photo tours. These four simple ethical rules state that:

1. We engage in *PASSIVE* wildlife photography only. This means we strive to capture images of wildlife behaving as naturally as possible

and without the use of “set-ups”, contrivances, or any actions that could guide the subjects toward desirable settings and/or backdrops or elicit specific “poses”.

2. We do nothing intentional to alter or influence the behaviour of our subject(s) for the purposes of photography. This means we do not engage in any form of luring or baiting (or any other form of food supplementation). Additionally, we will not use any form of sound to alter the behaviour of the subject for the purpose of photography (including using predator and/or prey calls, vocal clicking, or making

any other sound to encourage the subject to look at us).

3. While respecting any legal guidelines on minimum approach distances, we always allow the wildlife subject – regardless of the species – to determine the distance it is *comfortable with* between itself and us. This principle not only serves to reduce the stress on the subject, but it also allows photographers to capture the subject behaving in a more natural, and often more interesting, fashion.
4. We strive to always consider both the individual and collective effect-sour photographic activities can have on our subjects. This includes being aware of the total time spent with the subjects. This means we will often break contact and withdraw from the subject, especially if there is any indication that our presence is impacting on the subject's behavioural routine (including activities such as feeding, resting and/or sleeping, caring for its offspring, etc.). This consideration is always important and may become even MORE important if multiple photographers or groups of photographers are working with the same subject.

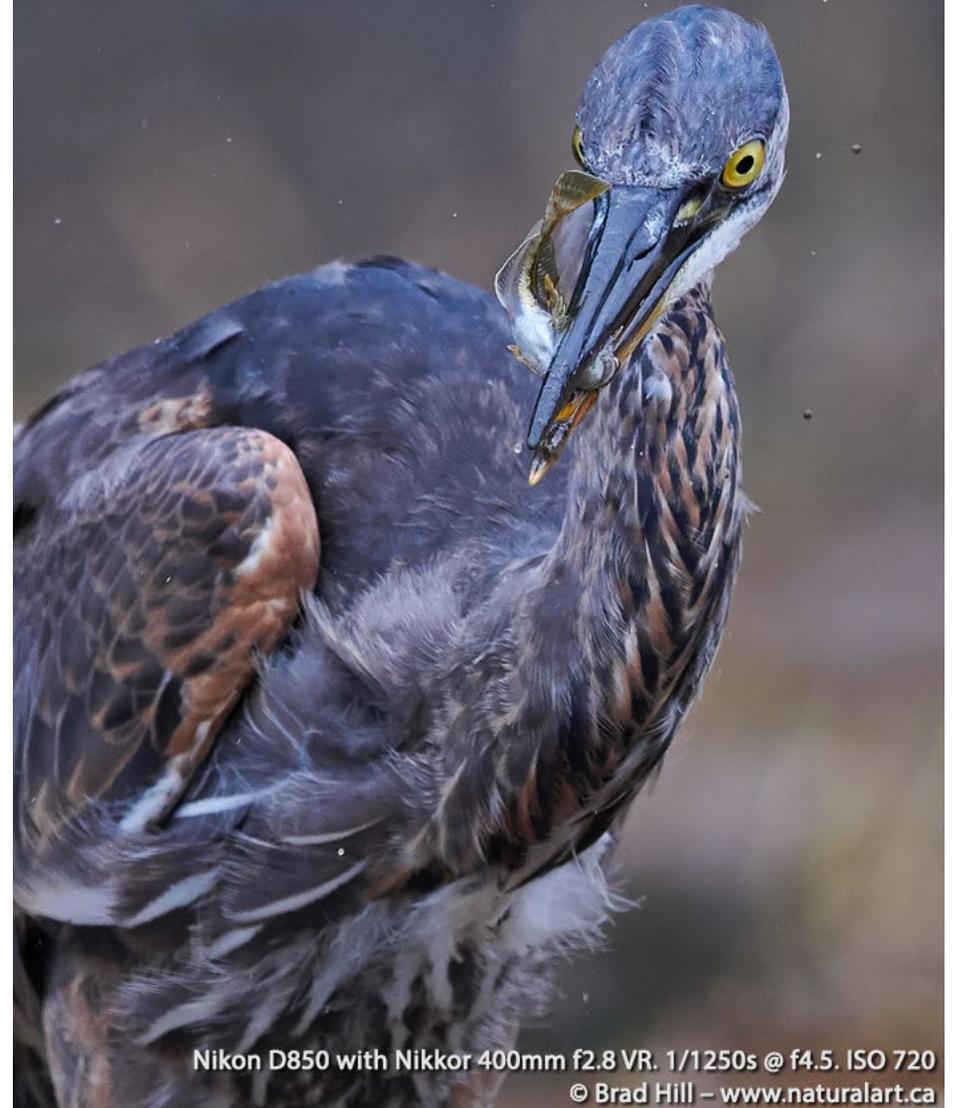
Those participating in our photo tours are expected to conform to these rules of photographer conduct.

All images in this trip compendium and the Natural Art Images website (www.naturalart.ca) were captured following these *Wildlife FIRST* rules of photographer conduct.

For more information about this amazing trip contact Brad Hill at:

seminars@naturalart.ca

Sushi Anyone? While the subspecies of Great Blue Heron found in the Great Bear Rainforest is officially listed as Endangered they are still commonly seen in many estuaries and inlets.



BREACH! Humpback Whale numbers have been on the rise in recent years in the channels and inlets of the Great Bear Rainforest. In the autumn they pause their migration to feed and socialize in the nutrient-rich waters. The whales are commonly seen during our photo tours – but capturing images of breaches is always a special and rare treat!

Nikon D5 with Sigma Sport 150-600 zoom @ 390mm. ISO 1250. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

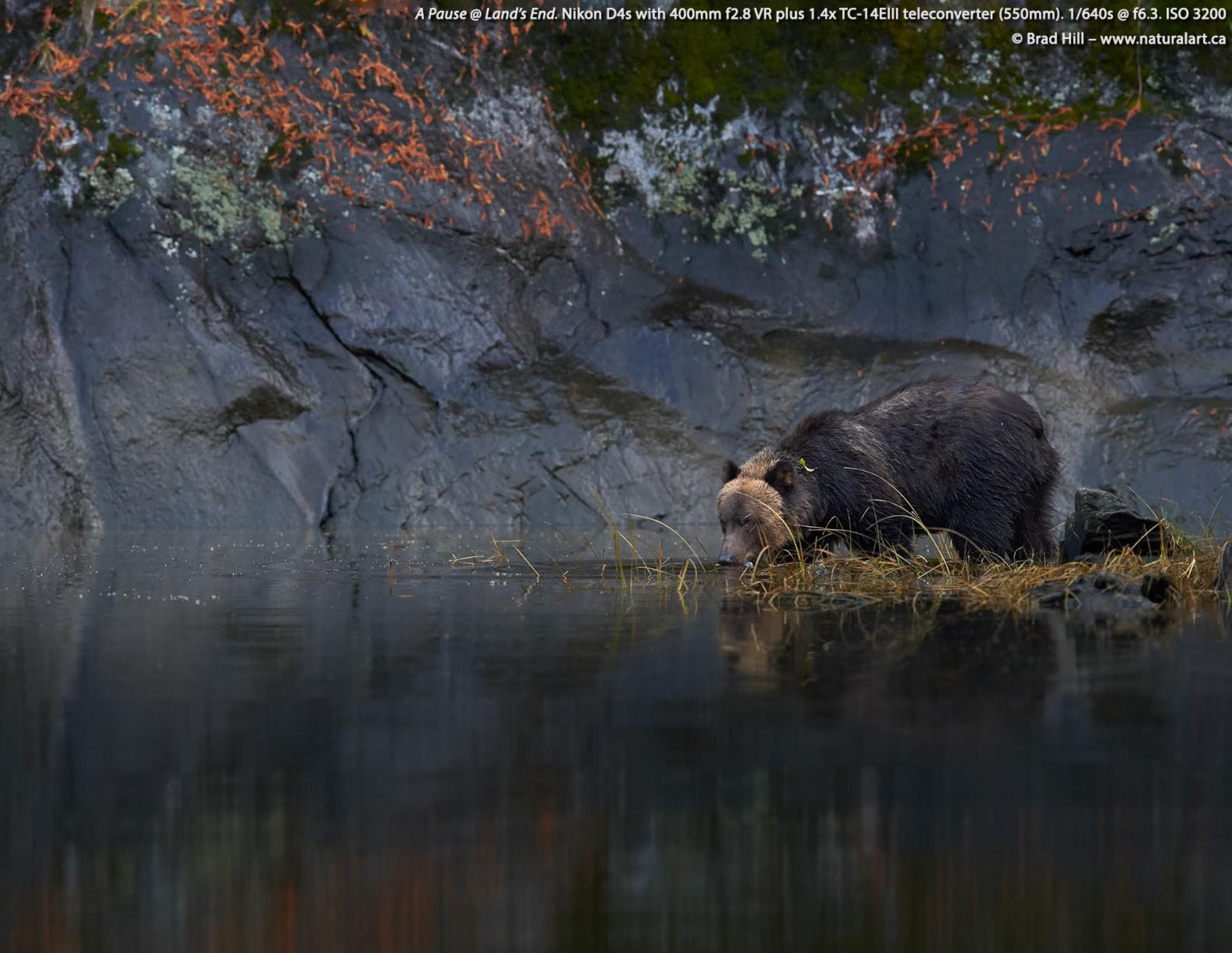




Eagles in the Mist. There is no better place to capture images of eagles and other wildlife with stunning backdrops than the Great Bear Rainforest.
Nikon D4 with 70-200mm f4 VR @ 150mm. 1/160s @ f8. ISO 720. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Channels of the Great Bear. Our photo tour begins in the glacier-carved channels, inlets, bays, and estuaries of the central BC coast. Here towering mountains fall steeply to the Pacific Ocean, with forest often meeting the water line! Humpbacks, Killer Whales, Harbour Seals and the occasional Steller Sea Lion are found in these waters. Brown and Black Bears, coastal Gray Wolves, and many other species reside in the thick forests.





The Great Bear's Lookout. Grizzly watching over its domain – in comfort & style!



Unnamed Falls! Go off the beaten path in the Great Bear and you can find stunning scenes that few have ever witnessed.



A Special Great Bear Moment! The Great Bear Rainforest is home of the iconic white-coated Black Bear known as the Spirit Bear. On this trip we'll be heading into the heart of Spirit Bear territory!

