

The Pacific Rim Herring Spawn

Instructional Photo Tour & Workshop 2023

The *Pacific Rim Herring Spawn Instructional Photo Tour and Workshop 2023* combines online pre-trip professional photography instruction with seven full days of exploration and photography within British Columbia's amazing Pacific Rim National Park Reserve on the west coast of Vancouver Island. On this unique photography adventure you'll be provided with the opportunity, the conceptual and creative tools, and the techniques needed to capture striking images of spectacular land- and seascapes and a diverse array of wildlife attracted by the annual Pacific herring spawn.

During this unique photographic adventure we'll have tremendous logistic support. We'll be spending each night at the fabulous oceanfront *Outer Shores Lodge*. During each day we'll venture into Barkley Sound aboard the *Passing Cloud*, a classic 70' wooden schooner. And, we'll have two Zodiac-style inflatable skiffs at our disposal for exploring.

Photography Instruction. The instructional component on this photo tour will take place in the weeks before the trip. Starting in 2022 I 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. I'll discuss both the technical and creative aspects of wild-life photography as well as the specifics and logistics of photographing wildlife and scenery in this unique environment. 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.



Resting in Peace. A male Sea Otter strikes an iconic pose while resting. Sea Otters have recently re-colonized the region after a nearly century-long absence

Nikon D4 with Nikkor 80-400mm f4.5-5.6 VR @ 400mm. 1/800s @ f7.1. ISO 320

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The “workshop” component of this adventure will take place in the evenings at the lodge. Topics will include the technical aspects of photographing wildlife in this rugged and magical environment, wildlife photography ethics, various post-processing techniques, the natural and indigenous cultural history of the region, and more!

The Region – And Our Expedition At A Glance. Our expedition will explore the wildlife, wilderness and the rich Nuu-chah-nulth cultural heritage of Barkley Sound and the Broken Group, which is an archipelago of more than 300 islands and islets. This region has long been considered the crown jewel of Pacific Rim National Park and can only be accessed by boat. A map of the region can be found on page 11 of this document.

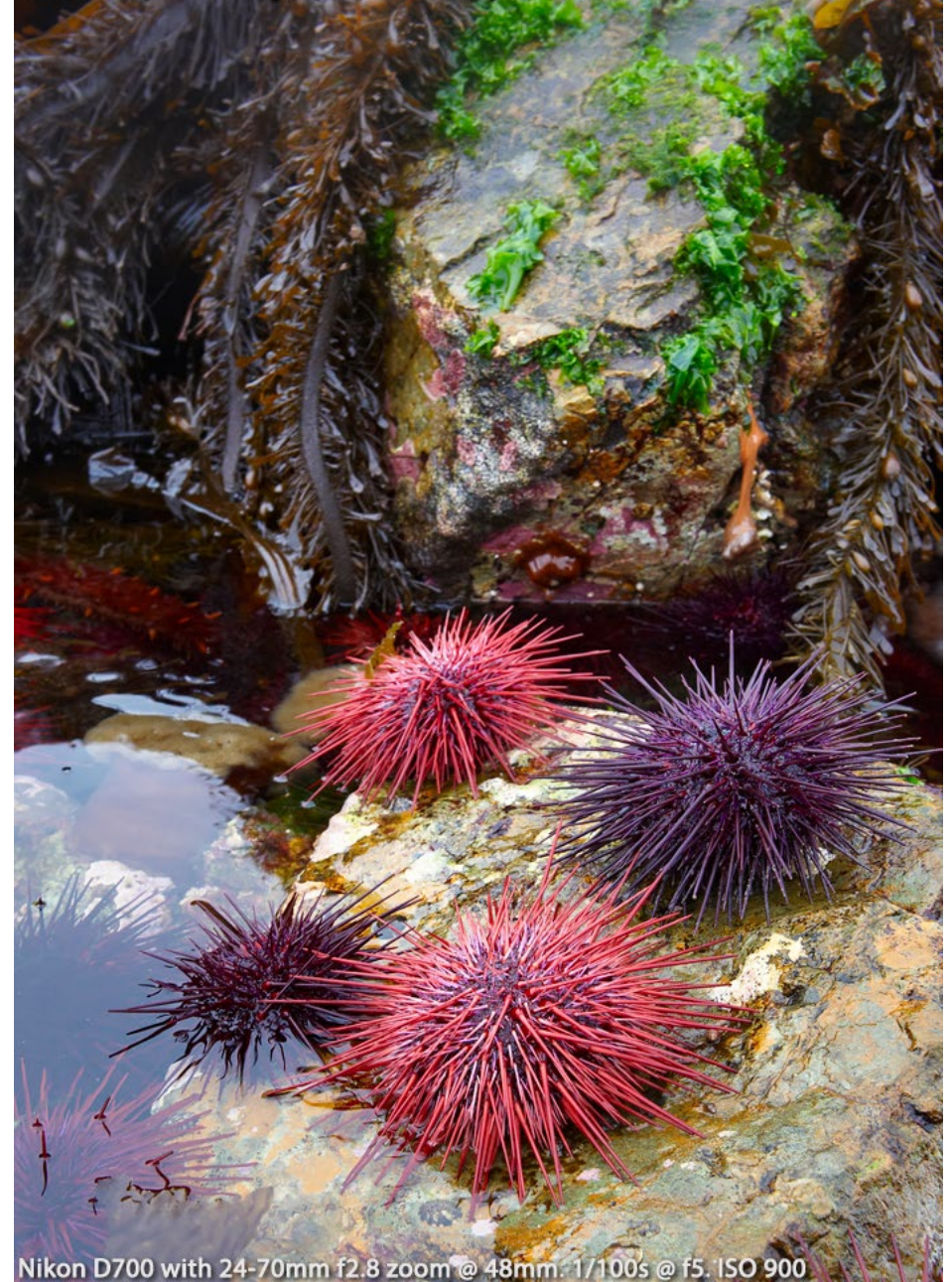
Spring is simply a spectacular time to discover the many wonders of Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. While aboard the *Passing Cloud* and through both shore walks and zodiac excursions we’ll explore the vast diversity of the Broken Group’s many islands, beaches, shores, old-growth rainforests, rocky intertidal zones, kelp forest communities, estuaries and fjords of this incredible region. We’ve scheduled our adventure early in the season during the peak of the impressive herring spawn phenomenon which, in turn, attracts an absolute feeding-frenzy of species, including emerging Black Bears from hibernation, Bald Eagles and other birds of prey, several species of whales, seals, both Steller and California Sea Lions, Sea Otters, and an incredible array of resident and migratory birds. We also hope to catch one of the longest migrations of any mammal – the grey whale, that pass through these waters from mid-March to early May.

More About The Pacific Herring Spawn. The early spring herring spawn on the west side of Vancouver Island is one of nature’s most stunning spectacles. Some compare it to the great migration in the Serengeti – both are huge and spectacular migrations of biomass! Check out this YouTube video to get a bit of the flavour of the herring spawn:

YouTube: [Herring Spawn! Serengeti of the Sea](#)

More About Outer Shores Lodge. *Outer Shores Lodge* is nestled at the edge of a rocky outcrop on the west coast of Vancouver Island, BC,

The Barkley Sound region has a strikingly beautiful and prolific intertidal zone.



Nikon D700 with 24-70mm f2.8 zoom @ 48mm. 1/100s @ f5. ISO 900

Breeding Surf Scoters commonly form huge flocks in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve in spring (this flock was photographed there in April 2019)



Nikon D5 with Nikkor 180-400mm f4E VR @ 560mm. 1/1600s @ f5.6; ISO 2500

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Canada, in the remote historic fishing community of Bamfield and traditional territory of the Huu-ay-aht First Nation. It's located in an unbelievable spot in Barkley Sound, directly fronting Canada's exposed west coast but only a minute's walk to a protected harbour to safely launch our daily excursions. This remarkable five-acre oceanfront lodge consists of the main lodge with six unique spacious bedrooms, four with private ensuite bathrooms, and features a luxurious great room with massive stone fireplace, spacious dining room, a spectacular kitchen with secondary dining area, library, and workshop space. Additional on-site amenities currently include a beach-side fire pit, outdoor hot tub, indoor steam shower, plus an abundance of private forests, gardens, and shorelines to find peace, solitude, and space for relaxation and contemplation. Find out more about the *Outer Shores Lodge* here:

<https://outershoreslodge.ca>

A Tour of Exploration! Like almost all my photo tours, this is a multi-faceted trip, focusing not simply on a single species of wildlife, but on *all* the inhabitants of the Barkley Sound region – and the entire ecosystem

and land- and seascapes in which they thrive. While viewing and photographing coastal terrestrial mammals and marine mammals 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 wildlife and birds, intertidal scenes, landscapes, seascapes, and more!

About the Photography “Style” On This Photo Tour. On this trip – as on my other photo tours – this is a “*photography in true wilderness*” experience. This means we will spend the bulk of our time alone and 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 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):

- Grey Whales
- Harbour Seals
- Bald Eagles
- Surf Scoters
- Dall's Porpoises
- River Otters
- Asst'd seabirds
- Humpback Whales
- California Sea Lions
- Black Oystercatchers
- Harlequin Ducks
- Harbour Porpoises
- American Mink
- Asst'd shorebirds
- Steller Sea Lions
- Black Bears
- Herring Gulls
- Common Loons
- Sea Otters
- Asst'd songbirds

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

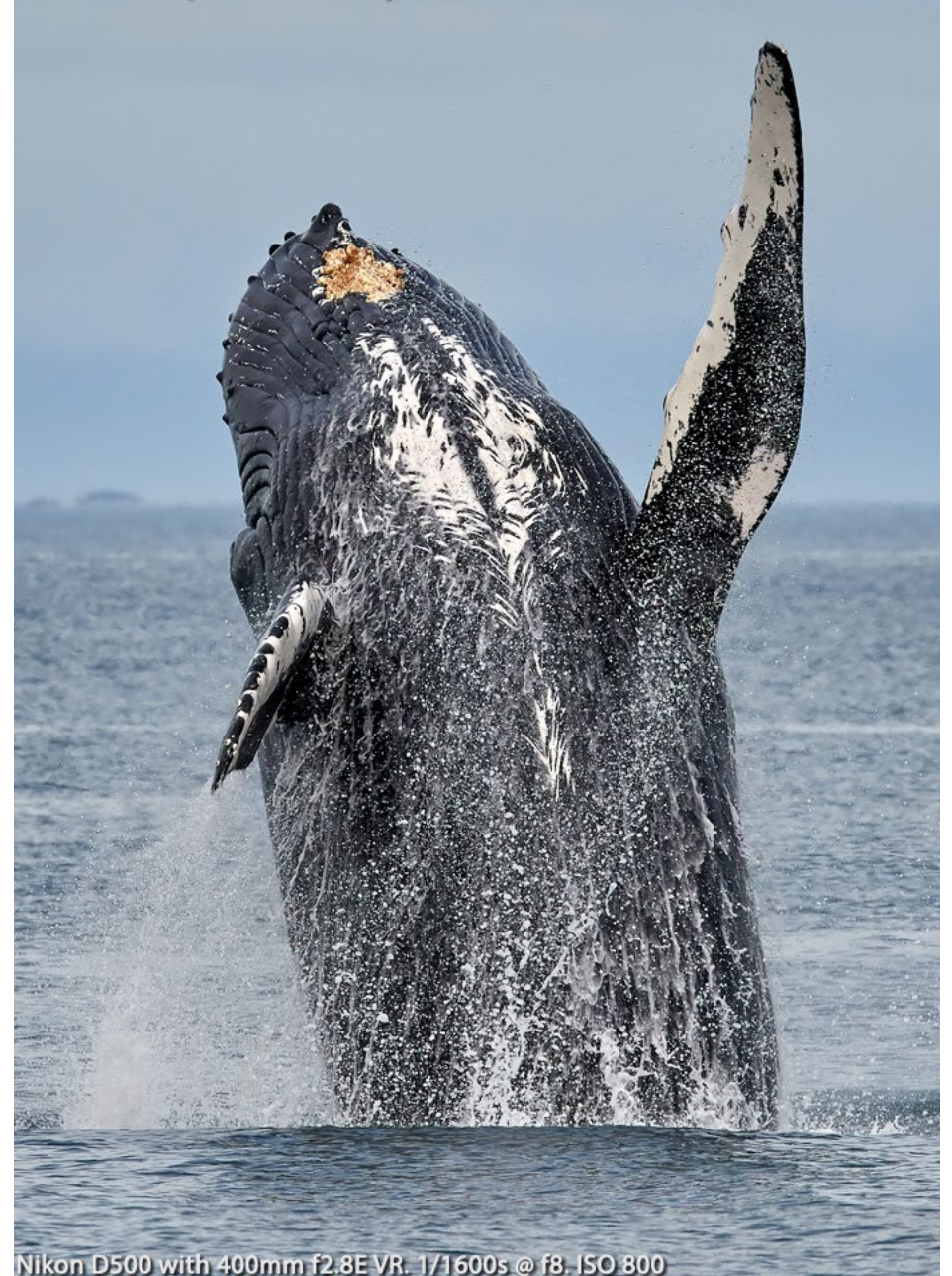
- Killer Whales
- Pacific Loons
- Coastal Gray Wolves
- Northern Fur Seals
- Minke Whales
- Cougars

Please note that because of our location on the “edge” of the open Pacific, the list of all possible bird and marine mammal species we *could* encounter is almost endless!

2023 Dates: March 10-18, 2023, including arrival and departure days. At *Outer Shores Lodge* from March 11-18, 2023.

2023 Price: \$6,999 CAD plus 5% GST.

Blast Off! Humpback Whale early in a breach. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca



Nikon D500 with 400mm f2.8E VR. 1/1600s @ f8. ISO 800

While common on all sides of Vancouver Island, Harbour Seals are exceptional photographic subjects! This seal was photographed in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve in April of 2019



Nikon D500 with Nikkor 500mm f5.6E PF lens.1/800s @ f5.6; ISO 900

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What's Included?

- Two pre-trip online photography instruction sessions
- Transportation from Nanaimo Airport to our hotel in Port Alberni on Day 1 (see Itinerary).
- All meals and accommodation beginning on the evening of Day 1 (see Itinerary)
- Use of all facilities at *Outer Shores Lodge* during our time there (Day 2 to Day 9 – see Itinerary)
- Daily use of the *Passing Cloud* (a 70' classic wooden schooner) to access Barkley Sound
- Use of two inflatable Zodiac-style skiffs and all associated safety gear (life jackets, etc.)
- Use of waterproof rain jackets, rain pants and rubber boots
- Highly experienced lodge hosts and chef, wildlife guides, *Passing Cloud* crew, and a professional photography guide

What's Not Included?

- Transportation between your home and Nanaimo, BC at the beginning and end of the trip
- Personal belongings and equipment
- Meals and accommodation prior to Day 1 of the photo tour
- Any extra personal expenses incurred because of weather, logistical delays, or missed flights
- Any gratuities for the staff of *Outer Shores Lodge* and crew of the *Passing Cloud*

What To Expect?

- Cool and rapidly “changeable” weather (daytime highs of about 10C or 50° fahrenheit) with some light and moderate rain
- Mostly calm seas, but with some short-duration bouts of rolling water
- Hearty, healthy and absolutely delicious food

- Always warm, always dry floating basecamp
- Exceptional comfort and serenity at *Outer Shores Lodge*
- Great wildlife, landscape and seascape photo ops
- A truly unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience!

Photo Tour Leader: Brad Hill

Accommodation: While in Port Alberni (one night) we'll be staying at the Best Western Plus Barclay Hotel. While in Bamfield (7 nights) we'll be staying at *Outer Shores Lodge*.


Sample Itinerary

NOTE: The itinerary of the *Pacific Rim Herring Spawn Instructional Photo Tour and Workshop 2023* is designed for flexibility. This allows us to react to the ever-changing distribution and abundance of wildlife and fluctuating weather conditions. While we will place some emphasis on observing and photographing some of the higher profile coastal wildlife species (including Humpback and Grey Whales, Killer Whales, Sea Lions, Sea Otters) we will watch and photograph other species and landscapes as they present themselves to us. Because Barkley Sound has many different habitats and environments “jam-packed” into a relatively small area, we will spend much less time in transit between locations and much more time in the field exploring areas than on many of my other coastal photo tours (which is a very good thing!).

Here's one example of how our time together might look!

Day 1 – March 10, 2023

Arrive in Nanaimo, BC. At 4 PM our group will meet an executive bus at Nanaimo airport which will transport us to our hotel in Port Alberni, BC. Following checking-in and settling in to our rooms, we'll have dinner together and discuss some of the logistics and adventures of the the coming days.



The Blow! This female Killer Whale and her calf are part of a small pod of 5 transient Killer Whales hunting for their primary prey – marine mammals. While not common in the Barkley Sound region, transient Killer whales can be seen there any time throughout the year.

Nikon D4 with 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/1000s @ f5.6. ISO 2000. © Brad Hill – www.naturalart.ca

Getting the Evil Eye! Steller Sea Lions on a haulout rock. Both Steller and California Sea Lions are drawn into Barkley Sound and the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve by the large spring herring spawn



Nikon D5 with 180-400mm f4 @ 370mm. 1/1600s @ f6.3. ISO 1100.

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Day 2 – March 11, 2023

After an early breakfast we'll take taxis to the municipal dock and board the *Frances Barkley* which will take us out Alberni Inlet to Barkley Sound and Bamfield. During this 4-hour voyage we'll be passing through beautiful land- and seascapes. We should arrive at *Outer Shores Lodge* at around 1 PM. We'll spend most of the afternoon orientating ourselves to the lodge and the local area.

Days 3-8 – March 12-17, 2023

Each morning we'll have a hearty breakfast at the lodge. Following breakfast we'll board the *Passing Cloud* and head into Barkley Sound. Once

there we'll observe and photograph the natural wonder of the herring spawn, including the many species of birds and mammals that are drawn in by it. We'll be keeping eagle-eyes out for Humpback and Grey whales, harbour porpoises, Orcas, and more! We also hope to encounter some of the newest arrivals to Barkley Sound – Sea Otters that are re-colonizing this region after an absence of nearly a century! We may be shooting from the *Passing Cloud* or from the two Zodiacs we'll have with us. At times we may choose to go ashore and explore some of the many small islands in the Sound.

Come mid-to-late afternoon we'll head back to Bamfield and the lodge aboard the *Passing Cloud*. Once back (and once settled, or even following

your steam bath!) we'll experience the fantastic cuisine the chefs of *Outer Shores Lodge* will prepare for us.

Evening activities will include relaxation and informal discussions on various photography topics.

Note that on any given day participants will be free to head into Barkley Sound with the group or stay at the lodge. There are several self-guided hikes in the immediate region of the lodge and Bamfield itself is interesting to explore (especially for keen street photographers!).

Day 9 – March 18, 2023

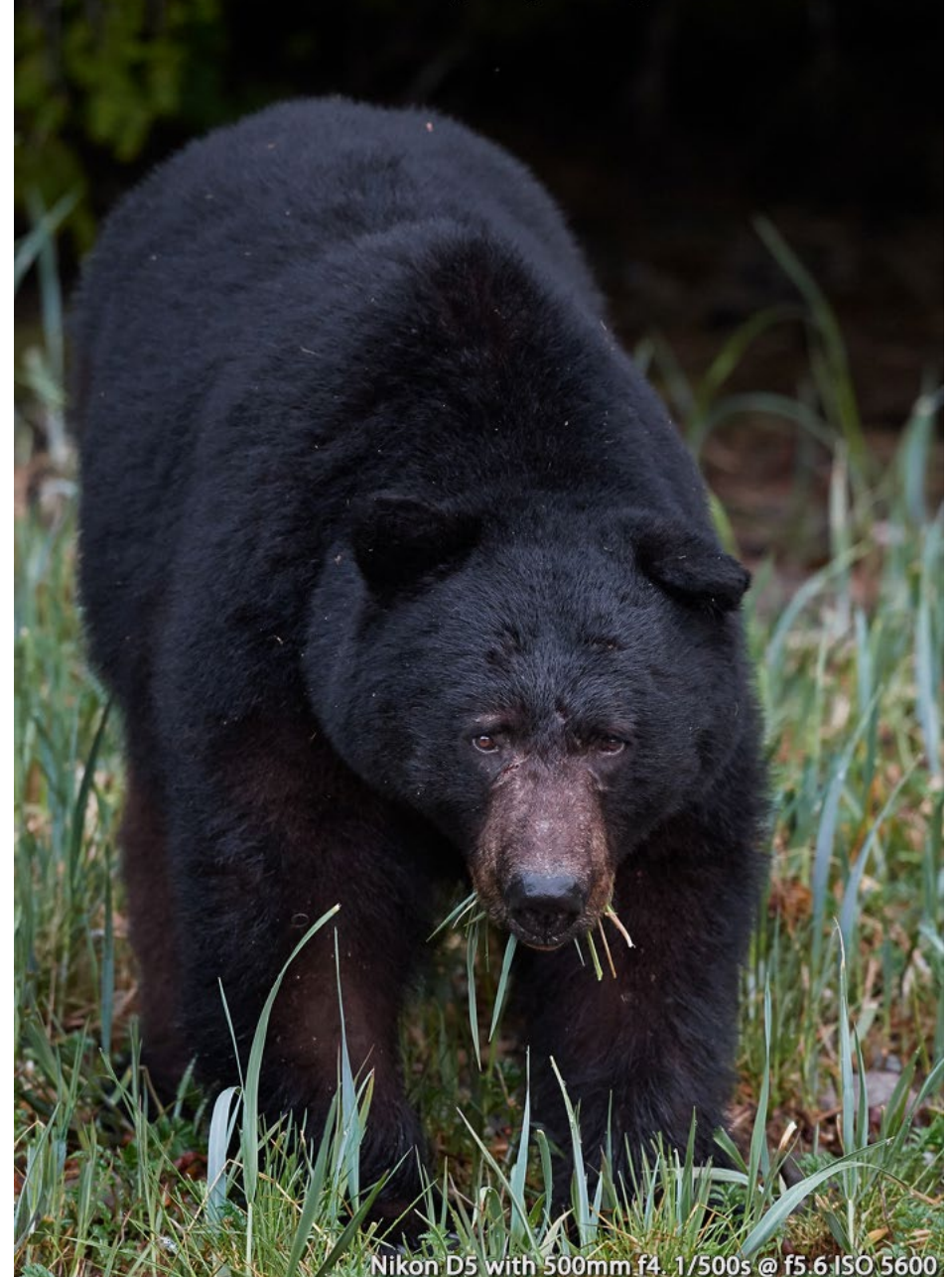
Following our last hearty lodge breakfast, we'll meet our executive bus and be transported back to Nanaimo Airport. We should arrive at the airport slightly after 1 PM. At that point we'll say our reluctant farewells and all begin our return trip home while processing all the great memories (and photos) created during our time together!

Our Ethical Stance – Wildlife FIRST!

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

1. **Ethical wildlife photographers should engage in *passive* wildlife photography only.** This means striving to capture images of wildlife behaving as naturally as possible and without the photographer taking any actions to guide the subject(s) toward desirable settings and/or backdrops or elicit specific “poses”.
2. **Ethical wildlife photographers should do nothing *intentional* to alter or influence the behaviour of their subjects for the purpose of photography.** This includes not intentionally influencing their distribution in space or their behaviour. This translates into not engaging in any form of luring or baiting (or any other form of food

Black bears visit the shoreline to forage on grass, sedges and shellfish.



Nikon D5 with 500mm f4. 1/500s @ f5.6 ISO 5600

Diving for Dinner! Nikon D4 with 400mm f2.8 VR. 1/1600s @ f5. ISO 450

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supplementation). Additionally, it extends to not using any sound to alter the behaviour of the subject for the purpose of photography, including using predator and/or prey calls, song or vocalization playbacks, vocal clicking, or making any other sound to cause the subject to alter its ongoing behaviour and look at the photographer.

3. While conforming to and working within any legal guidelines determining minimum allowable approach distances, **ethical wildlife photographers should allow the wildlife subject – regardless of the species – to determine the subject-to-photographer distance it is comfortable with.** This principle serves to reduce stress on the subject and also allows the capture of photographs of the subject behaving in a more natural, and often more interesting, fashion.
4. **Ethical wildlife photographers always consider both their *individual and the overall collective effects* photographic activities can have on the subject(s).** This includes being aware of *your total time spent with the wildlife subject(s)* and, whenever possible, *the total time spent with the subject by all photographers utilizing the subject.* In practice

this means the photographer may have to withdraw from the subject and cease photographic efforts of it, especially if there is any indication that his or her 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 simultaneously or sequentially sharing the same subject(s).

All photographers participating in my photo tours are expected to conform to these ethical rules.

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



The Region We'll Explore on This Photo Tour

I am SO Outta Here! Pelagic Cormorants enjoying the view as large waves pound rocks on the outer coast in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve



April Evening Light – Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. Barkley Sound is surrounded by stunning and highly photogenic mountains and hills.



Nikon Z7 with Nikkor 70-200mm f2.8E @ 20mm. 1/500s @ f6.3; ISO 64

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The Passing Cloud Schooner at Anchor in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve

