

CAMERACRAFT



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LAWSON WOOD



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BACK ISSUES: because Maxwell Place is up for sale, most back issues have now been disposed of as they occupied a room. In future, though it takes more time than can be found now, a downloadable archive will be put on the website and print-on-demand copies enabled. .

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The June heatwave made this issue more difficult to produce, even if it improved the hours available to work on my article on practical infrared photography. My Macs, an early M1 laptop and slightly later high spec M2 Studio Pro Max, didn't overheat but were running at the top end of recommended limits.

At my desk, I work on a 32 inch BenQ sRGB 4K screen. It does not have automatic brightness or calibration adjustment so needs regular manual setting for bright mid-day conditions, the same with window shutters or an opaque blind which once served as a digital projector screen, evening and night. It's a great screen but its size and optimum viewing distance can fatigue the eyes, and also demand that I have one pair of graded focus specs which let me see keyboard and screen in focus.

Unlike my print-room/studio which has no natural light, my office has highly variable light. I live with this rather than shut out the garden view with the awareness of the weather and time of day this brings. And it also doesn't heat up to the high thirties C in summer like the blacked out former darkroom!

While that room is no way equipped to be used again as once set up – the wet bench, fluorescent ceiling safelights, film dryer and all are long gone – its water supply and blackout have enabled me to do some black and white processing and printing. I am too sedentary, as that's what screen and keyboard work mean. Years ago regular spells working in the studio, standing up in the darkroom and operating and maintaining processing machines put me on my feet for half the day and more. I found taking a break to make a few prints a welcome activity.

I've never taken to standing workstations or kneeling stools. The digital publishing office I designed and had fitted over 30 years ago had desks 10cm higher than the normal 75cm. This made it just that bit easier to sit or stand at the desk and use the keyboard and screen, and better for clients who did not need to pull up a chair to view the on-screen progress of work.

Kitchen units are usually 90-95cm high as built-in or under-worktop appliances need this. It's just that bit too much for seated work. Office desks are often low enough for 'riser' supports to be popular for laptops. I find writing and photo editing most comfortable with the laptop as the Mac 14 inch Retina screen does not cause eye fatigue like the 32".

But in June I risked getting fried thighs, and I suspect that as we go through summer actual lap use of laptops will be a no-no – bad news for those who fail to snag a table seat on trains. I'm sitting at my dining table to write this as there really isn't room on my desk top for the MacBook.

That's not an option for laying out the whole magazine, it really needs the big screen. When I first got the BenQ PD3200U I found the text in many menus and dialogues too small. A utility called *Display Menu* adds the maximum possible range of resolution choices and can solve the problem of some applications using very small sidebar views, icons and text. Setting this to 3200x1800 rather than the full 3840 x 2160 improves things greatly and has no apparent effect on how Actual Size images or pages appear, or on the sharpness of detail. Using *Bridge* or *Lightroom*, the larger size of text in editable panels for caption and keywords certainly helps me. The only caveat is that while you can use this *Login Item* to change screen resolution during work, most applications register the screen size and resolution when first opened so Actual Size can stop being Actual unless you quit and open again. It's also very easy to make a window fill the screen, change to a lower resolution, and find you can't resize it. Many applications are intelligent enough to do this on their own: *Photoshop* is not!

– David Kilpatrick

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Nikon Z 120-300mm f2.8 TC VR S



FOLLOWING the pattern established with the 400 and 600mm TC primes, Nikon's latest telephoto zoom for the mirrorless Z system includes a 1.4x teleconverter. Not bundled - built into the lens, as evidenced by the curious bulge on one side where the optic slides away when not required. This gives the competitive 120-300mm F2.8 lens the ability to stretch to 420mm with a still highly flexible f4 rating - combined with an APS-C or

high resolution full-frame body, that should cover all the bases even if you're too far from the field to cover all the bases and the players otherwise.

Given the high cost of the AF-S equivalent (without TC), this lens is likely to be at least £7,000 when launched in September. It's already been spotted earning money at some local and international football matches recently.

See: www.nikon.co.uk

Leica SL3-P



FANCY your L-system camera with a bit more weathersealing and a classic badge? Leica's 44MP full-frame SL3-P is closely related to the cheaper Panasonic S1Rii, but it's not identical. The body and mechanics, assembled in Germany, are IP54 rated, and the camera's capabilities include 8K open-gate video (albeit, to an external recorder), anamorphic preview, and 40 fps potential when using electronic shutter. The price premium for the Leica badge is significant (it is almost twice the price of the Panasonic) but often recovered on resale because the SL is, however it appears on paper, a

different camera with its own character.

However, Leica's lens pricing can dissuade owners from the matched glass - so Leica now offers some lens kit bundles. Adding the 24-70 and 70-200 Vario-Elmarit f2.8 combination will take your SL3-P to £8,560, whereas the 28-70 f2.8 kit is £6,100 - less than £1000 more than the body only, when the lens' RRP is £1,750. You can upgrade to the £2,590 24-70 for just £390 more, making the SL3-P 24-70 kit at £6,480 better value for anyone who wants that classic range.

See: www.leica-camera.com

Tamron 17-70mm now for Z and RF

A HIGHLY versatile zoom range for APS-C cameras, 17-70mm often offers a great balance of portability, reach and close focus for photographers working with smaller sensors. Tamron's latest release, the 17-70mm f2.8 Di-III A VC RXD is set to bring those benefits to Canon and Nikon mirrorless systems. Incorporating optical stabilisation (worthwhile for Nikon as the APS-C models don't have IBIS), it has a constant f2.8 aperture and 19cm close focus at the wide end. More than

the mount differs between the systems, as the lens features hardware controls for stabilisation and focus mode on Canon RF. Despite the f2.8 rating and relatively wide angle, the front element and filter thread is an economical 67mm.

Offering an equivalent 25-105 f2.8 perspective for APS-C Nikons (27-112mm for Canon) the £549 Tamron is a welcome addition to the range for both systems.

See: www.tamron.co.uk

Westcott makes the V-flat V portable

STRAIGHTFORWARD flat reflective surfaces are vital for studio and location portraiture, but they're a bit bulky. Westcott's new aluminium-framed background offers a black or white consistent corner backdrop with magnetic support and variable angle comprising two 41" x 84" (104 x 213 cm) sides or a wide 82" x 84" (208 x 213 cm) set backdrop.

The frame adjusts from 15 to 180 degrees, allowing bounce soft fill, negative fill for dramatic contrast as well as allowing location photographers to block windows or stray light, build book light setups, or use the system as a freestanding backdrop or wedge wall.



When the session ends, the V-Flat collapses neatly into a slim 45" x 9" x 6" (114 x 23 x 16 cm) carry case which will fit into most larger hatchbacks or medium-sized SUVs without having to fold the rear seats or deploy the roof bars.

See: www.lumesca.com

Samyang AF 60-180mm f2.8 FE

LK SAMYANG's latest lens is far removed from the first lenses we saw that introduced the brand. Developed with Schneider-Kreuznach, this latest lens is part of the 'compact zoom series' aimed at bringing high-end performance within reach of consumer budgets. As with the previous 14-24 and 24-60 F2.8 FE lenses in the range, the constant f2.8 zoom is lightweight at just 730g and features a linear stepping motor for fast AF, and maximum 0.26x magnification.

See: www.holdan.co.uk/brands/samyang



With this new addition to the range, LK Samyang now offers a trio of Schneider-Kreuznach partnership F2.8 zooms covering 14mm to 180mm, with a combined weight less than 2kg. List price for the 60-180 F2.8 FE is £899 including VAT, and it is available to order now.

Drop the digital with Lomo and Fuji...

LOMOGRAPHY continues to produce fun, creative products for film enthusiasts who will be pleased to find a new **ISO 800 colour negative film** is on offer for 35mm and 120 systems. The C41 process media is available now with a single 120 roll at £16.90, and three 36-exposure 35mm rolls at £53.90.

If you're wondering what to put the film in - the **Sprocket Rocket** has been revamped with a limited edition range of colours, the **Fisheye No. 2** 35mm body with viewfinder and 170°



angle of view has a new nautical theme with the **La Mer** edition, and the classic LC-Wide is discounted from £349 to £244 at the time of writing.

See: shop.lomography.com/uk

FUJIFILM's camera range includes the instant film Instax and rangefinder-style models, so a campaign against screen time sounds good to us. This summer's campaign is not about skyscrapers and clouds, though - it's about putting the smartphone and the doomscrolling to one side and getting out with the camera.

"It's clear from our research that people in the UK are craving more real-life engagement. With distractions causing them to miss out on important moments and milestones in their lives, Our cameras are designed for intention, with dials you have to turn and decisions you have to make,

helping you slow down and turn emotions into images. We hope it resonates with our customers." - Theo Georgiades, General Manager, Imaging Solutions, Fujifilm UK.

While the comment reflects the GFX and X system environment, the truth is that the Instax range offers the real **Look Up** moment - breaking the screen and digital for (mostly) pure analog and one chance to capture the moment, one copy, yet tangible. Fuji is also offering £10 off **Instax Mini 12** packages, as it happens. Either way, it's a sentiment we can relate to.

See: www.fujifilm.co.uk



TOM HILL

Is it really so Grim Up North?

Many years ago, at a posh drinks party in Hampstead, London, I met a bloke who couldn't place my accent. He asked me where I was from, originally. I'd stopped telling Londoners about the city of Derby years before, simply because most of them don't know where it is. So I just said:

"I'm from up North".

"What, like, Enfield?" He replied.

Which sums up how many people living within the coverage of the London Underground map view the rest of the UK.

In the light of recent events, both within the spheres of photography and UK geopolitics, it might be interesting to assess what and where



A visit to the Red Wall – St George's day 2026, The Coach and Horses pub near Oldham.

by Tom Hill

dark satanic mills and rows of terraced houses disappearing downhill into infinity. Grey skies are skewered by black chimney stacks, often pictured being climbed by steeplejacks such as the late legendary Fred Dibnah.

As for northern people themselves, they all seemed to have been portrayed via the media as blackened-faced miners; or people with cloth caps, whippets, and homing pigeons. Old ladies and head-scarfed housewives would be pictured cleaning doorsteps, as their men sat quietly in small-roomed pubs, drinking pints of dark mild, continually smoking roll-ups.

Conversely, not many photographers have set out to lay bare the flip side of that coin, namely the concept of those with money acting with no decorum. Peter Dench, with his Parr-esque use of heavy fill-flash saturation and in-your-face authenticity, likes to expose the Ascot and Henley crowd, for example, as normal flawed human beings. Dench's work has replaced the cloth caps and quiet pints of mild with top hats and hooray hijinks over vintage champagne. Unfortunately, there aren't many Denches, but there have been lots of photographers documenting 'The North' as such a grim place over the years.

However, let's not forget that photographers like Chris Killip, Trish Murtha and Mik Critchlow have historically redressed this balance, depicting the resilience and nobility of working class northerners going about their daily lives. Positive depictions of The North are nothing new, but they are usually created by those living in the area themselves.



A visitor to Royal Ascot sings patriotic English songs. June 2002 from 'A&E: Alcohol & England', The Bluecoat Press, 23 Oct. 2014 © Peter Dench.

exactly is The North of England, and why its fortunes might soon be on the rise.

Photographic Demographic

Some people in the south regard 'The North' as anywhere north of Watford. Another casually accepted border is that of Watford Gap, which is nowhere near Watford in Hertfordshire, but a motorway service station on the M1 close to Northampton. It sits on an imaginary line drawn west to east between,

say, Gloucester and Norwich. Then there are those who regard 'The North' as anything further north than the East Midlands, extending as far as the Scottish Borders.

For the purposes of this article, I'm assuming The North to consist loosely of Cumberland, Durham, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland and Yorkshire.

Within a photographic context, almost since the discovery of silver halide, The North seems to have been depicted as little other than

Tom Hill ARPS is a semi-retired photographer/copywriter living in the Scottish borders. You can read Tom's blog at: ciderfreezone.wordpress.com

The Black Stuff

Boys from the Blackstuff was a TV series first broadcast in 1982, about the destruction of male working class pride caused by long term unemployment. Set in Liverpool, the 'black stuff' was a slang term for tarmac used by roadwork crews working on motorways throughout the UK. The series was clearly a critique of the early Thatcher era, a period responsible for the fate of many of the unemployed working-class at that time, particularly in the north of England. The show was launched at a time when unemployment had reached three million as a result of an economic recession, whereas it had never reached over one million for most of the 1970s.

The main character in the drama, Yosser Hughes, played by Mancunian actor Bernard Hill, became famous as a man driven to the edge of his sanity by the loss of his job, his wife, and ultimately his perception of self-worth. His catchphrase, "Gizza' job!", became a popular culture iconic saying of the era, exemplifying the mood of those driven desperate by long term unemployment.

Unfortunately, it was almost always the people of northern England who suffered such fates, as the south east of the UK prospered with service industries and rapid growth across the home counties. During those Thatcher years, Maggie collapsed the UK mining industries for good, leaving many thousands of people and communities with few viable ways of making a living. In addition to 'The Black Stuff', you only have to watch movies like 'Brassed Off' and 'The Full Monty' to see how the end of manufacturing and mining affected Britain's northern working class so deeply.

That's when the North/South divide became a deep chasm. The financial sector, based mainly in EC postcodes of London, raised hundreds of times more money from tax receipts than the entire north of England put together. Many southerners berated the north as 'benefits land' a drain on the resources of those hard-working affluent southerners.

Over the last three decades of the 20th century, as coal went out of fashion as a power-generating fuel, when steel became cheaper to ship



Leeds Pride Festival © Simon Hill HonFRPS

Below: Local woman walking under drying laundry, Nelson, Lancs, July 2025. © Simon Hill HonFRPS

in from India – when North Sea oil became more expensive to find effectively because it ran out for practical purposes, the staple manufacturing industries of The North simply died out.

Since then, various politicians over the years have paid lip-service to 'levelling up', bridging the gap between these regional inequalities. But such words are usually only bandied about just before an election, by candidates appearing on BBC's Question Time.

I've a feeling that this might all be about to change. Both in terms of media portrayal and practical action, The North may soon again be in the ascendent. Hopefully, that will be largely down to a politician called Andy Burnham, and perhaps, in some small way, helped along by another northern bloke, a photographer called Simon Hill.

Hill, Bulmer, and Burnham

With the recent resignation of UK prime minister Keir Starmer, and at time of writing, the almost certain impending coronation of 'King of the North', former Manchester mayor Andy Burnham as his replacement, one can hope that under the next two years of this Labour government, The North will begin to feel the genuine lift of levelling up.

Labour politicians have always relied on the former 'Red Wall' of dozens of northern constituencies,



which, for years, voted in Labour candidates unerringly. That Red Wall collapsed at the last general election, and ever since has seen the use of relentless siege ladders and bombardment by political trebuchet missiles of the far-right party Reform UK. People are absolutely desperate for change, as graffitied walls and St George flags everywhere ably demonstrate. One can hardly blame people for voting for anyone who will see their challenges as significant.

Hopefully the recent Makerfield by-election result will be mirrored now for a resurgence of support for The North, as proper money may soon be invested in levelling up, thus perhaps ushering Burnham into a second term at Downing Street. Indeed, there is talk of serious devolution of power ahead, even of a 'Number 10 in Manchester'.

But what's all this got to do with the medium of photography?

Coincidentally, Burnham's election comes at a time when Simon Hill, current president of the Royal Photographic Society, is in the midst of publishing what may turn out to be his magnum opus. 'The North Revisited' (TNR) is a 240pp hard-back book by Simon, which was inspired by photojournalist John Bulmer's original work 'The North', its images produced almost 50 years earlier, throughout the 1960s and beyond.

Simon describes Bulmer's work thus on simonhillphotos.com:

"When Godfrey Smith, editor (1965-72) of The Sunday Times Magazine, commissioned photojournalist John Bulmer FRPS to document life in the industrial centres of the north of England, it was a time when northern society and culture was undergoing a



Gawthorpe World Coal Carrying Championships, held annually on Easter Monday in Gawthorpe, West Yorks. April 2025 © Simon Hill HonFRPS.

vast transformation. Traditional industries – coal, steel, textiles, engineering – had been the wealth creators of the Industrial Revolution but they were now in a rapid and relentless decline. The hard times etched on the faces of John's subjects told of a life of incredible struggle and hardship framed against a bleak industrial background. These were people forgotten as the 'Swinging Sixties' changed the cultural landscape of Britain."

Bulmer's original documentary photography captured the north of England progressing from using solely black and white, onward to colour film. The Martin Parr foundation website similarly describes Bulmer's work: "...the collapse of traditional industries of the Industrial Revolution, deeply affecting communities throughout the region; from the Black Country and Potteries, through Greater Manchester up to the coalfields and shipyards of the North East and Glasgow. John Bulmer's *The North* is a portrait of this difficult time."

The 224pp hardback book was published by Bluecoat Press as a retrospective piece in 2012, and has since been rightly recognised as a cornerstone of British photojournalism.

But here's a thing. Virtually every era of British history could be described as 'a difficult time' for

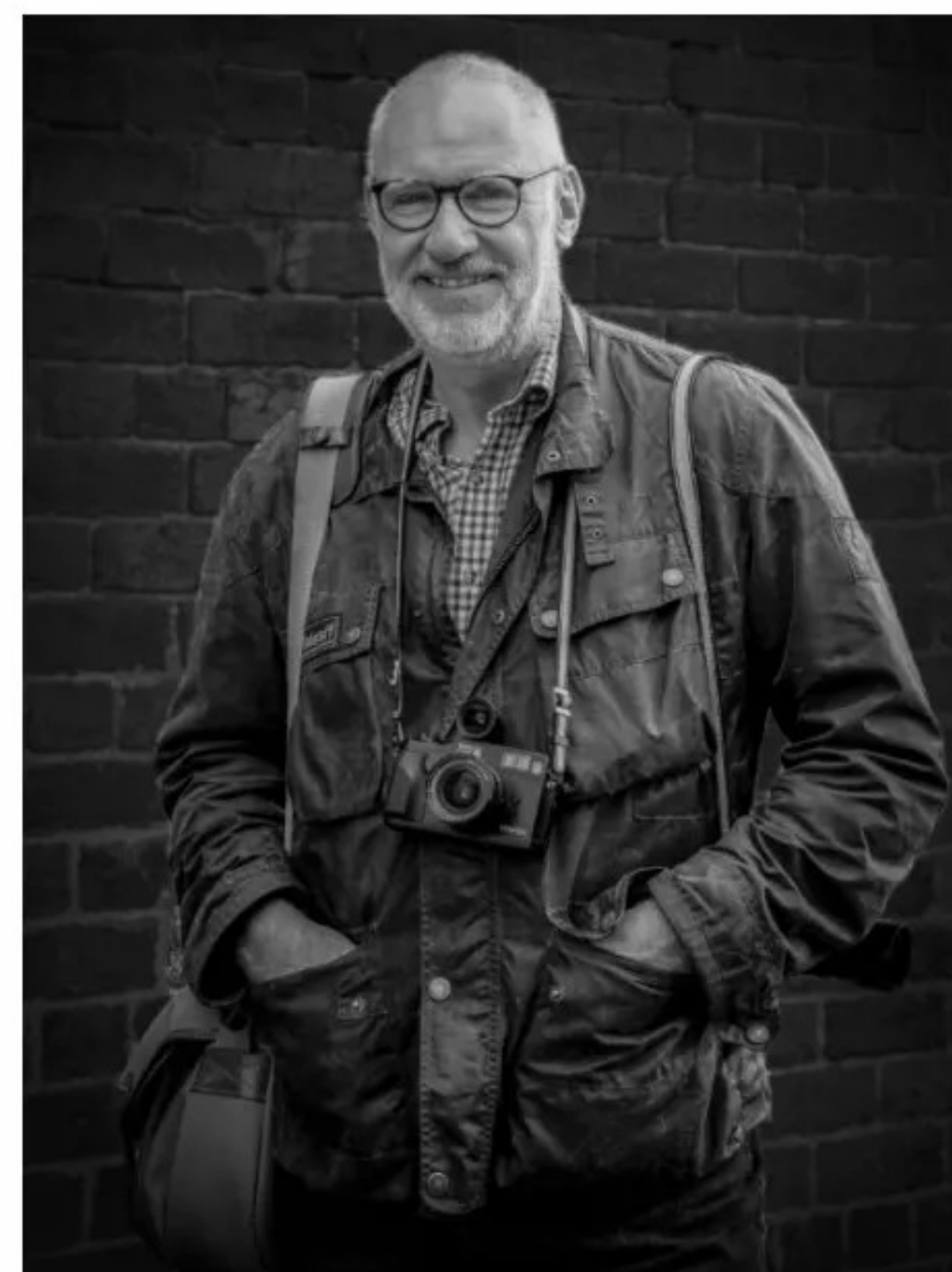
some sub-sector of UK society; bad stuff happens to different demographic groups of people every day, month and year; it's really just a case of when it becomes your turn. However, it seems like the people of the north have had more than their fair share of such hard times.

Consequently, for me, the refreshing beauty of TNR is that it doesn't show people bowing to adversity at all. Rather it depicts northern rock-hard resilience against it. These are tough people who are more than ready to create the best of times, both for themselves and the wider UK economy.

Homage to early colour film

TNR was shot entirely on film, as opposed to digital. And that film has a unique grainy quality all of its own. Simon Hill explains the rationale thus:

"As an homage to Bulmer's pioneering colour work, The North Revisited is photographed mainly using Phoenix 200, a new colour film that was designed and manufactured entirely in the north of England by Harman Technology. This 'quirky' and unpredictable colour film – which was available only as a limited edition – provided an analogue aesthetic that simultaneously harmonised with Bulmer's 1960 colour photographs while affording a unique character to this modern interpretation of what has become an



Leading photojournalist and writer Simon Hill, current president of the Royal Photographic Society. Photo by Ruth Hanson ARPS.

iconic photographic legacy. This experimental film has now been replaced by Phoenix II 200."

Simon's book celebrates a spirit of innovation, alongside traditional grit. TNR portrays the 'joy de vivre' inherent in so many places of England's north. It's no exaggeration to say that the work is truly uplifting.

The book couldn't have come at a better time, and will, of course, throw Bulmer's original seminal work into the spotlight as a result. I had never heard of John Bulmer before I contributed to Simon Hill's kickstarter, now I'm going to order a copy of the original 'The North'.

Comparing and contrasting the two bodies of work is an interesting exercise.

Where Bulmer's images often show stoicism in the face of

difficulty, folks making the best of their lot, Hill's photos show a more dynamic breakout by folks of the north – actively embracing diversity with the Pride festival in Leeds, and the portrayal of ethnic minorities in Nelson, Lancs, for example. Expansive architecture is celebrated as people are photographed within modern, dynamic public spaces.

As you would expect, TNR also depicts traditional stuff. It's unwritten photographic law that when photographing in The North, that every photo session must include a dog picture; northern dogs take being dogs as a serious duty all their own.

There are, naturally, annual events showing big grimy tough bearded men; the Gawthorpe World Coal Carrying Championships is a case in point. Printed grainy and semi-blurred for dynamic effect, such images are juxtaposed with those of healthy looking youngsters going about their days. There are busy agricultural shows, artisan burger joints, American style cheerleader groups of young women, marching brass bands, people organising food banks for those in need; the list of positivity is almost endless.

Of course, the differences between the two bodies of work are necessary and to be expected. It would be very disappointing, if 50 years on, nothing had really changed in the north and the decline had simply continued, omnipresent. But Simon Hill's photos show that the decline is starting to reverse.

The North portrayed here by Simon Hill is very definitely on its way up, and if I were him right now, with his already well earned reputation as one of the UK's finest photojournalists, I might be knocking on the door of Downing Street's press office shouting:

"Oy, Giz a job!!"

Not that he needs one; but even so, I'll bet they'd bite his hand off.

Photographs from 'The North Revisited' 2026 Copyright © Simon Hill HonFRPS

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Cuba – Dancing on the Edge

Just over six years ago, Camera-craft featured the photography of music and events promoter Dougie Souness, with a cover of a dancer taken in Cuba. We learned from his interview that he had been involved in forming a creative bond between the Caribbean nation and Britain, staging exhibitions of his photography in both the UK and Cuba as part of his continued involvement with the Havana Glasgow Film Festival (HGFF) that showcases Cuban cinema and culture within Havana's twin city in Scotland. His company No Half Measures manages leading bands.

As the island is amid a severe economic crisis, we asked Dougie to show us some of his continued coverage and a greater insight into the daily life and culture. He's travelled the entire east-west span, from the streets of Havana to ranches reminiscent of the wild west and some amazing forest and mountain



Dougie Souness has photographed the Cuban National Ballet for years now. He fell in love with the country and is part of the team that works on the Havana Glasgow Film Festival annually. But 2026 is different.

scenery. In the 2020 feature, we also showed his underwater photography skills. You can read the issue it's in here:

<https://bit.ly/4g4e21o>

Here are Dougie's thoughts and hopes for the future of the beleaguered country, and how his friends in Scotland and round the entertainment world are supporting the Cuban people:

This set of pictures was taken on my last visit to Cuba in December 2024. I spent most of my time on that trip in or around the capital, Havana including a visit to the fishing village of Cojimar. I also ventured west to the slower-paced Viñales for a few days. Havana is full

Left: Cuban national ballet soloist Laura Kamila Rojas Sanchez on the Malecon sea wall, Havana. Facing page: arabesque by their soloist Laura Kamila Rojas Sanchez in front of El Morro, Havana. Below: Dancers dressed in Cuban flag colours perform a routine on El Prado.





At the entrance to the fishermen's co-operative at Cojimar is a mural featuring Fidel Castro and Ernest Hemingway, who wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* there. This fisherman reminded me of Hemingway and I asked if he would let me take his picture. The barber, right, invited me into his barbershop in old Havana and I just had to get a portrait of him with the painting behind – I didn't let him cut my hair though!

of contradictions where the architecture, albeit decaying, hints at the city's former elegance which provides the backdrop for the wonderful people who live there and go about their daily lives showing an incredible level of resilience. It is an incredible street photography destination. I have been fortunate to shoot many dancers from the Cuban National Ballet both at work and on the street.

In 2024 I visited two other areas:

Cojimar is deeply connected to Cuba's maritime heritage. It was there that Ernest Hemingway kept his fishing boat, with the village inspiring his novella *The Old Man and the Sea*. The fishermen's co-operative in the village harbour is where locals launch, land, repair and manage their boats and equipment.

Viñales is a small town in Cuba's Pinar del Río province, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Overlooked by huge limestone *mogotes*, it is the heart of Cuba's world-renowned tobacco industry and home to many farms where traditional methods are still used.

Island in crisis

Fast forward to 2026 there is no escaping the fact that the whole of Cuba is feeling the effects of a severe economic crisis brought on by several factors not least of which are the US sanctions, which restrict trade, finance, and access to some international markets. Fuel is no





Extraordinary Cuban resilience on display with a classic car that's still running after nearly 70 years passing by what was once a grand colonial building, now severely decayed yet still providing living space in Havana.



Fisherman's hut. Cojímar. Below, one of the many fishing boats no longer in use there.



longer arriving from Venezuela, a source for many years. This coupled with an ageing infrastructure – especially the electricity grid and power plants – has brought frequent prolonged blackouts. With many airlines and cruise operators withdrawing services, there has been a major decline in revenue from tourism, one of the nation's main sources of income. High inflation, declining production, a lack of access to foreign currency and persistent shortages of food, medicines, and other basic goods are all contributing factors.

For ordinary Cubans, the crisis is really felt in their daily routines as they have to plan life around power cuts, queue when goods become available, repair rather than replace household items, and depend on family or friends abroad for remittances if available to them.

With no electricity, refrigerators stop working, water pumps fail, mobile phones cannot be charged and internet access becomes unreliable.

With no fuel, buses are cancelled, taxis – if running – become

expensive, farmers struggle to move crops, fishermen can't take boats out, rubbish collection is disrupted.

Cuban people are often remarkably resourceful, and continue out of necessity repairing rather than replacing, sharing food with neighbours, keeping '50s cars running with handmade parts, fishing from homemade rafts, growing vegetables in tiny gardens, running small family businesses from their homes.

Recently, HGFF Director Eirene Houston was able to travel to Cuba with multiple suitcases full of donated supplies of aid for Cuban people. Whilst there she was able to work with Havana-based development project Karibuni Cuba on numerous cultural projects, one of which was to develop a community photography course. Without getting involved in the specifics of politics, it is hoped that the powers that be can implement the necessary changes and reforms necessary, attract investment and work quickly to upgrade the infrastructure bringing vast improvements to the day to day lives of the Cuban population.





Everything, especially cars, is subject to on-going maintenance and repair. It has never ceased to impress me how the Cuban people can keep those classic cars from the 1950s still running with such ingenuity, let alone the practical survivals from later decades. With the lack of fuel and tourists in 2026 it's not the best of times for the drivers of any cars. That said, the bicitaxis are busier than ever!

Outdoor activities are everywhere including this basketball court in Havana, above right. Cuba is a great destination for street photography, particularly the capital city. I have always found that people there are fine with having their picture taken. I always try and interact with them and although my Cuban Spanish is not the best, I always seem to get by!

Cigars occupy a unique place in Cuban culture and are a symbol of craftsmanship and a source of national pride. The heart of Cuban cigar production is the Viñales valley where the combination of soil, humidity and climate is ideal for growing tobacco.

Below left, a portrait in Havana – cigar smoking seems like a national pastime. Below right, cigars are hand-rolled on a farm in Viñales.





Loving couple. Havana, above left. Schoolchildren crossing a Havana street with their planetary project in hand, right. With the children, I always ask the parents' permission if around and I carry candy and stationary around to give out. The joy that a brand new pencil can bring is real! Below: three types of taxi waiting for business in Havana (classic and modern cars plus a 'bicitaxi' rank).





Officials at the fisherman's co-operative mark up the board. Cojimar.

Unlike most countries, Cuba has very little commercial outdoor advertising. Murals, billboards and posters feature state messaging intended to reinforce revolutionary values by way of artwork and slogans. They are everywhere and for many Cubans, they are simply part of the visual landscape.



A janitor deep in thought with classic Cuban school imagery. Havana.

Breakfast time with classic Cuban imagery on the wall. Havana.





Viñales has people riding horseback for transportation, fields being ploughed by oxen, cows being milked by hand, and goods transported by horse and cart. Left, a farmer's duties - giving the horses a well-earned drink, the troughs made from old tractor tyres. Right, a farmer sifting the drying rice he grows on his rooftop.

For more from Dougie Souness see his photographic company website <https://www.nohalfmeasures.photography/>

and also his Facebook, Instagram and X all of which are @dougiesouness

*To help Cubans in crisis, see <https://cubavive.org.uk/> and for a the Cuban initiative Karibuni, see Facebook **Karibuni-Cuba-61550241944690/***

Below – close to Dougie's music industry heart... a "great example of Cuban street art, especially the use of seven-inch vinyl records", spotted in Havana.



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It's very important to pick exactly the right specification.

For example, just changing the paper weight in the UK – whether to lighter or heavier paper – bumps the cost up well above a basic (which has increased to £10). However at one point 170gsm paper was costing exactly the same as 130gsm. Selecting the wrong size or binding, or number of pages, or requiring rapid delivery can increase the cost or introduce problems.

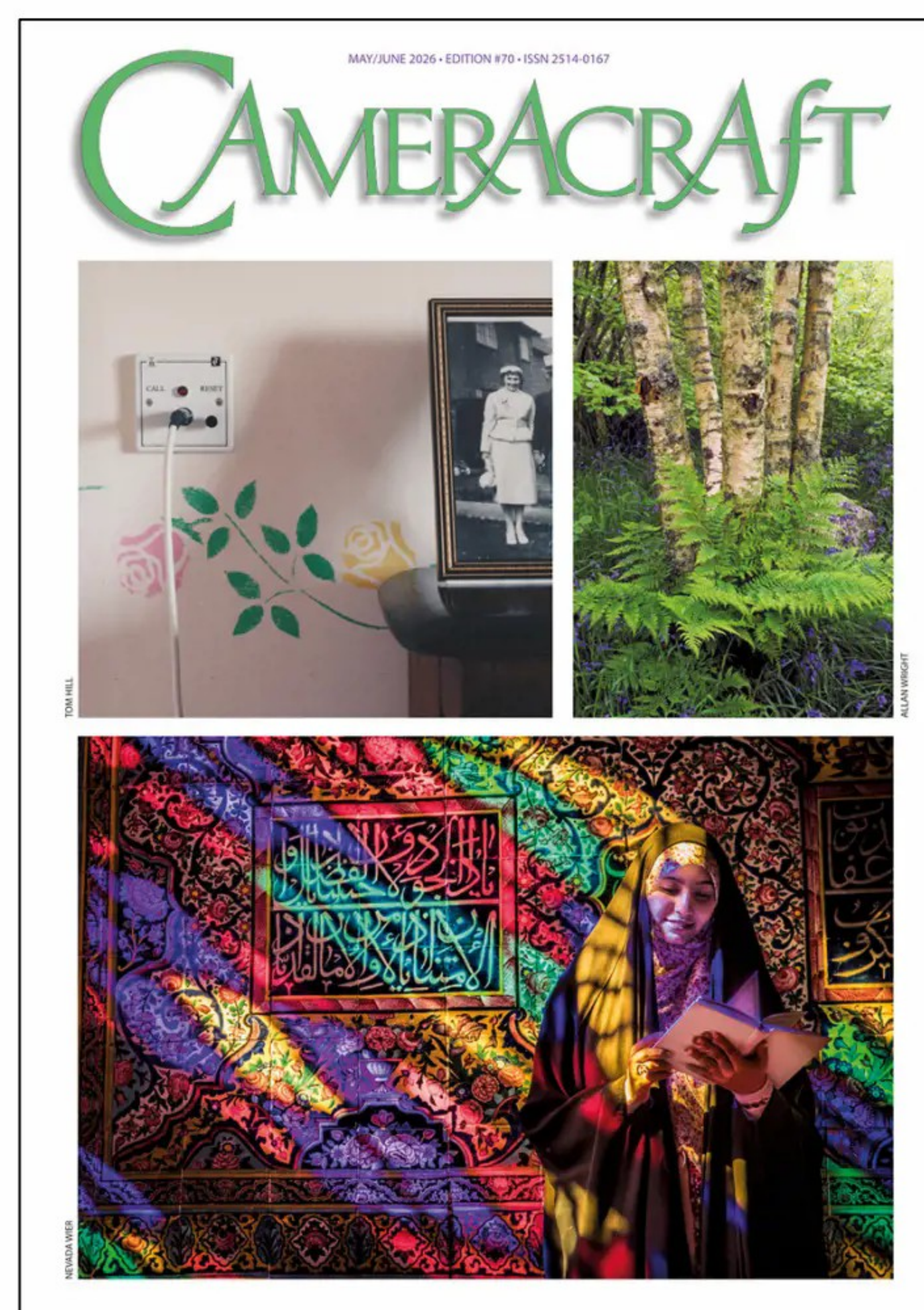
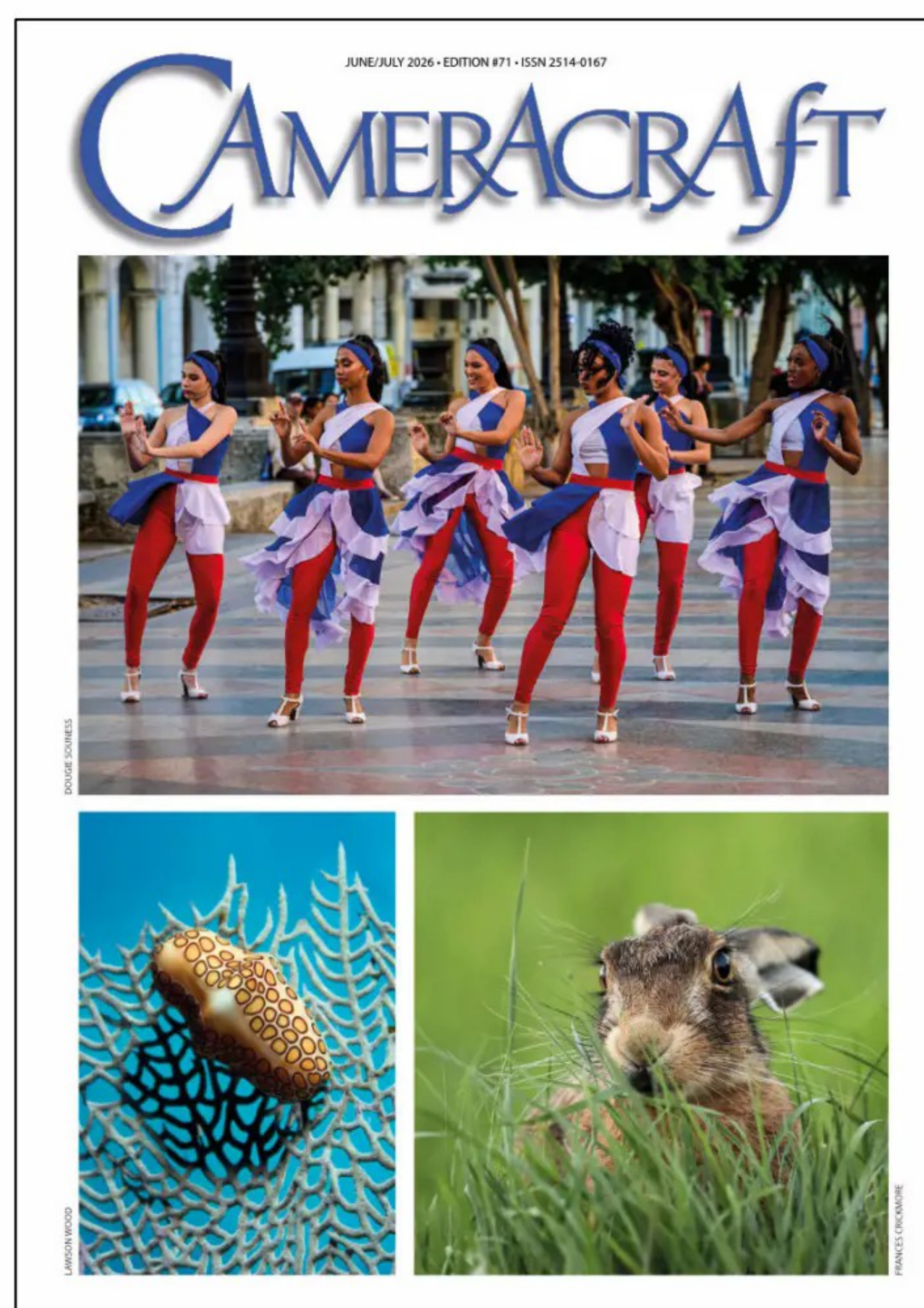
For *Cameracraft*, the correct choices are Magazine printing, Colour, Portrait orientation, A4 size, 130gsm Silk paper, stapled, 48 pages, no additional cover. The screen shot (right) shows this set up. It was made on April 29th last year and would, if a copy had been ordered then, have had a May 7th delivery date. The quality of print is identical to original printed editions.

Subscribers: simply go to the any Mixam website, upload your high res digital PDF download and get a printed copy at any time, in your local currency.

If you use the UK links on this page there's a small margin on the basic cost, which also applies to the annuals below, and helps fund *Cameracraft*.

Go buy the book!

By far the best way to have printed copies of *Cameracraft* is to take all six issues from a year and make them into a book. We've done this for **2025**, **2024** and **2023**. Each has 288 pages on the 130gsm paper used for single editions, a high gloss laminated heavier cover, and the



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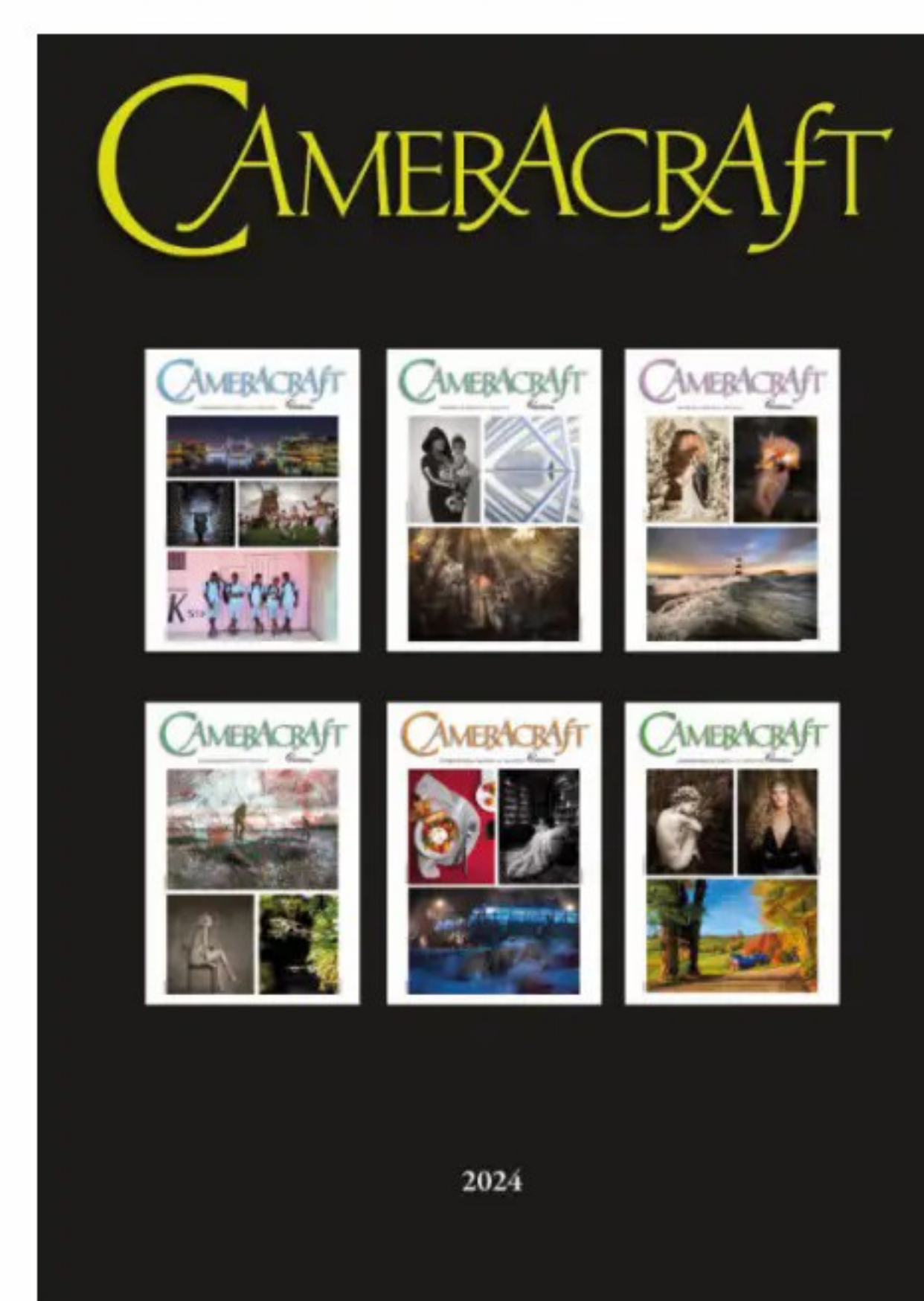
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title and year on the spine. You can order these 6-issue annuals using our **PrintLink** from Mixam UK., for around £35 plus post.

This is a perfect-bound gloss laminated paperback (cover above). We first had one of these made – at much greater expense in the early days of digital print on demand – for the *Cameracraft* first series issues, 2012-2015. It takes up a fraction of the bookshelf space used for binders and for our archives all the past editions will be reprinted in this form.

Diving into the life of the Caribbean

Recognised as one of the world's best underwater photographers with Fellowships to show for it, Lawson Wood is also an expert dive guide and authority on the environments he photographs. Fortunately, he writes about them, with a level of detail you can best encounter in his books. He's photographed, written, and collaborated on over fifty!

The latest to be published is his 'Marine Life of the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and Bermuda' from Bloomsbury, which follows his Mediterranean and North Sea/English Channel books in a neat information-packed series.

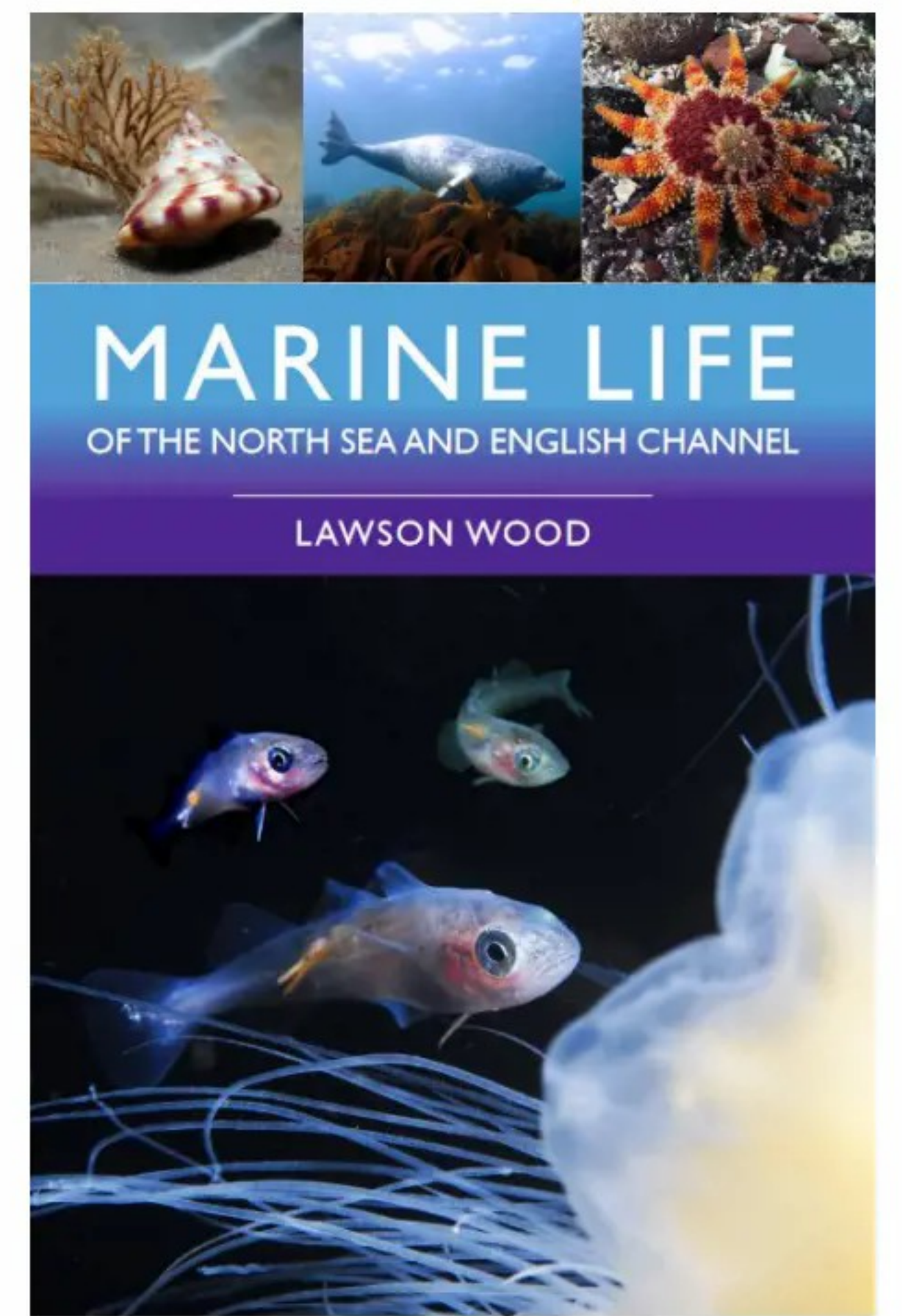
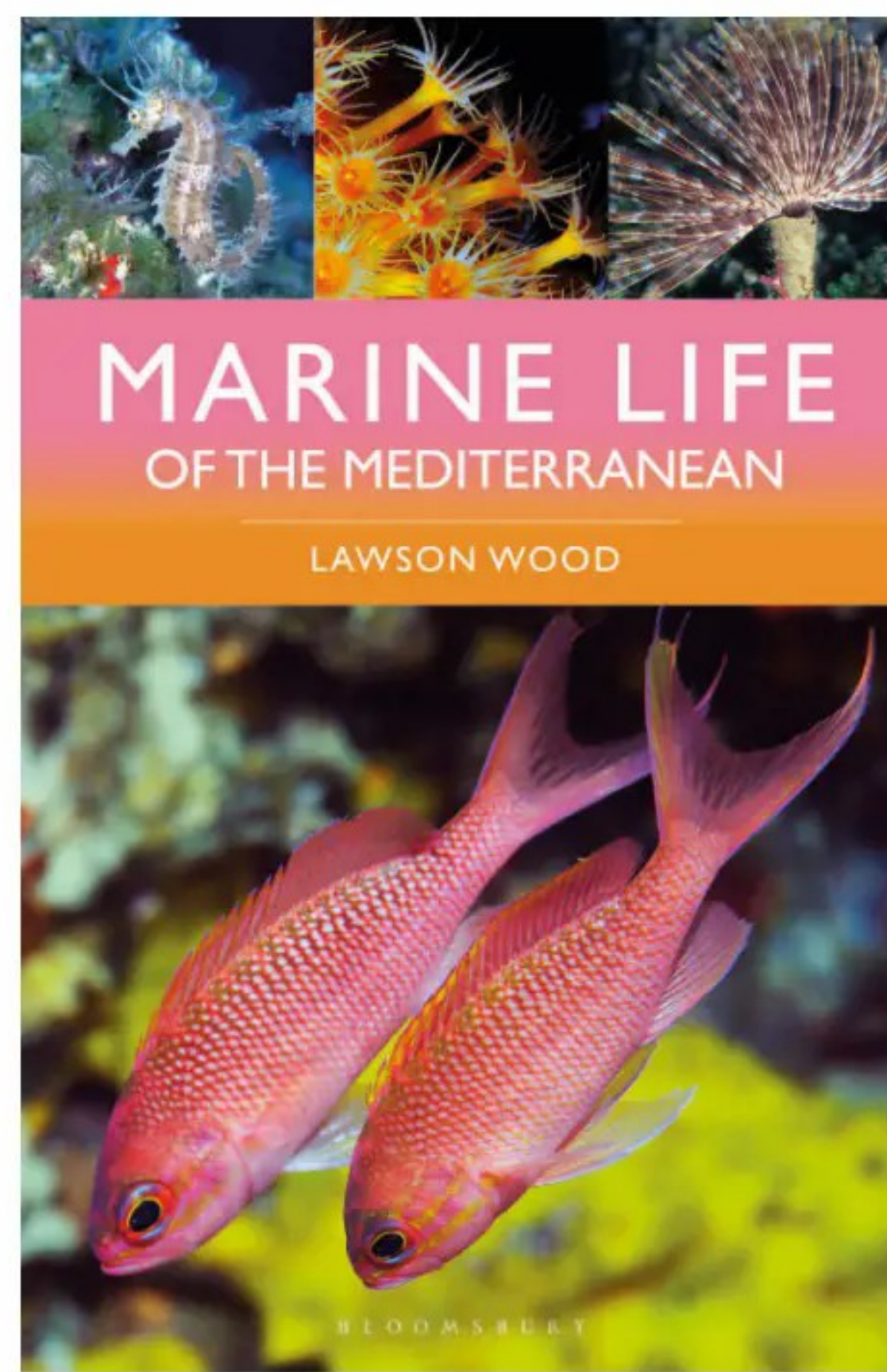
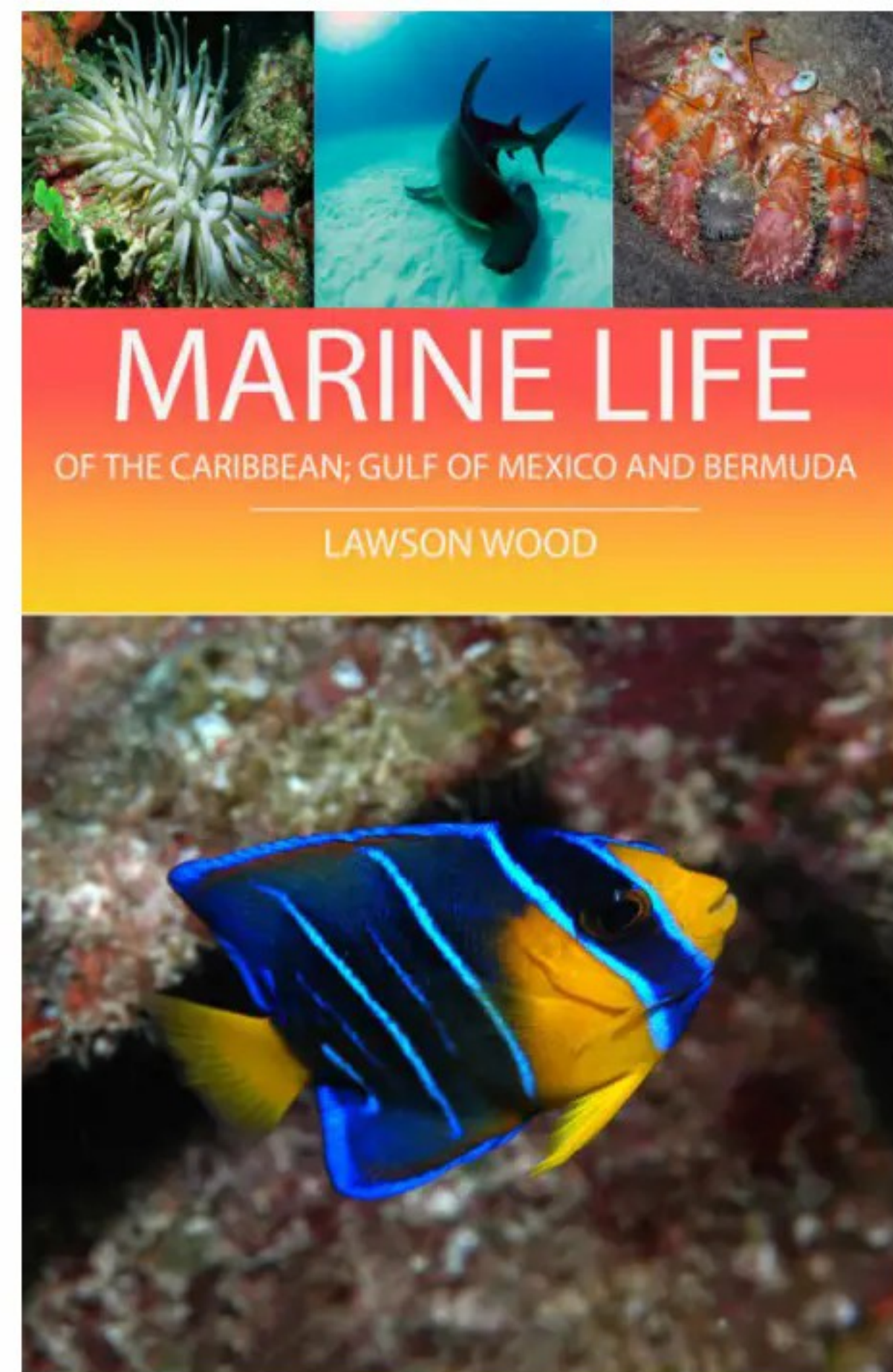
These are not coffee-table volumes but highly practical, serving as working guides not only to scores of dive locations but hundreds of species of fish, reptiles,

amphibians, marine mammals, invertebrates, algae, corals, sponges and the myriad marine life-forms. Lawson has often surprised the uninitiated with the variety and colour to be found off the shores of

Britain, but his Caribbean essay is notable for the intensity of colours. From early days with film sixty years ago to the digital underwater cameras which now reveal so much more, he has used technology to the

best effect and the many individual images of species specimens are amongst the clearest identification guides in print.

There's also a stack of information about the seas this book



Queen Angelfish
Holacanthus ciliaris



covers, without the dryness of a geography textbook or the superficial gloss of tourist guides. Assuming the same applies to the other books in the series they should be in every school, college or municipal library – where such institutions survive.

However, with 228 pages 14 x 25.4mm it's also pocket, travel or camera bag friendly. There's just one criticism which has to be that the superb pictures can be small (sample spread on Worms, bottom).

The good news is that this series is also published in e-book and PDF formats, ideal for readers such as Amazon Kindle Coloursoft which (depending on model) include both waterproof options and ones with bright screen illumination to allow reading in daylight. The ISBNs for three different versions are:

Printed: 978-1-3994-1935-2

ePub: 978-1-3994-1936-9

ePDF: 978-1-3994-1937-6

Depending on your screen, the digital versions may give you a closer look at the images.

The book includes, after a very detailed section on all the types of reef and environment, a Classification, Nomenclature and Identification glossary with clear line drawings. Why, in a book of exceptional photographs? "Colour varies greatly between fish species, therefore it would seem an ideal means of identification. However, even within species, colour varies according to sex, age, region, season and surroundings. For this reason, body shape is a much more reliable means of identification."

This also helps correlate your own sightings and images with the photo examples. There's a set of

symbols to identify key aspects of subjects by Habit (such as solitary or shoaling), Diet and Habitat.

When you finally dive into the main pages of the book, you encounter Sharks and Rays! This is just because the contents start with Cartilaginous Fish, then move on to Bony Fish which are far more numerous and include most of the smaller brilliantly colourful reef fish the recreational diver hopes to encounter.

Lawson's entries for each fish are far from dry – they are personal sometimes including details of an encounter, often with humour. This so much enhances the reading experience that you will find yourself absorbed even if you don't plan a Caribbean dive trip.

After this comes to other vertebrates such as the manatee (sea-cow) which visitors can encounter in dives in Florida, the turtles which are joined by swimmers and snorkellers close to the beaches of popular holiday islands, the dolphins and the great whales few will see.

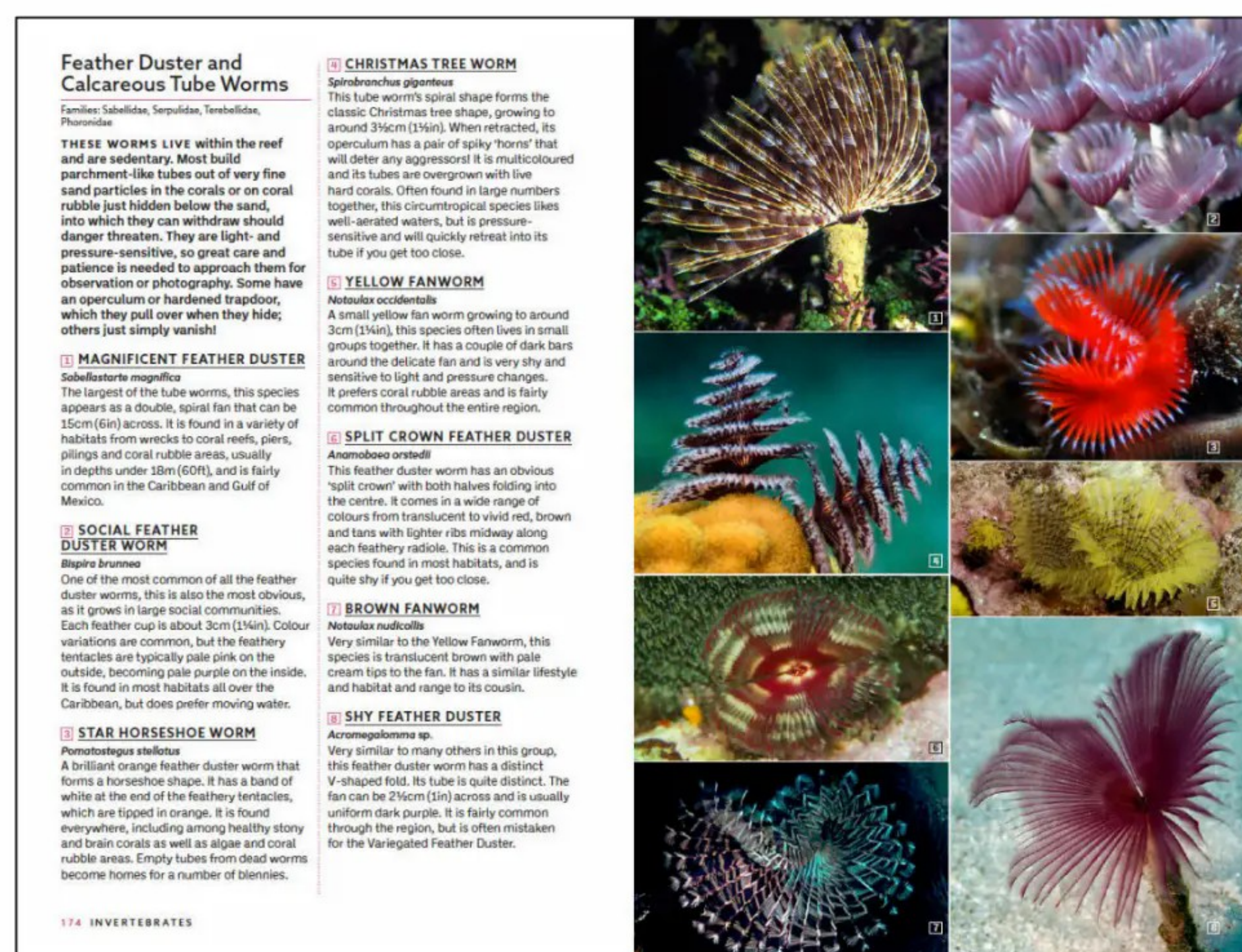
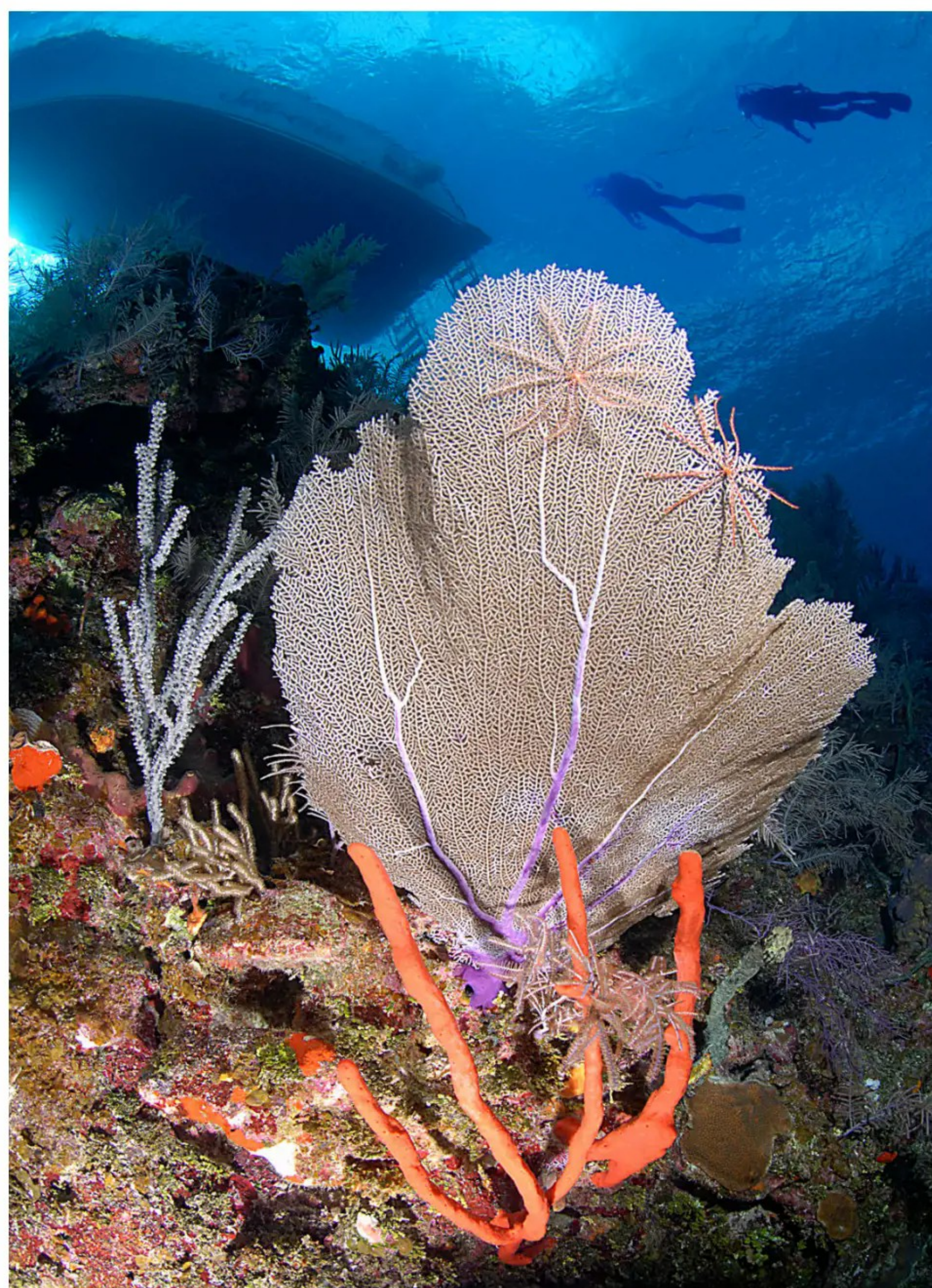
And then, of course, there's are sections covering the invertebrates which are too diverse to list, and crustaceans – Lawson found one shrimp which did much the same job on his teeth as a dental hygienist, free of charge, as a break from offering cleaning services to passing fish. And much more, including the worms, cnidarians, sponges, one lonely bryozoan, algae, seagrasses and almost venturing on land – mangroves.



Due out September the paperback can be pre-ordered for £20 from Amazon – Cameracraft affiliate link <https://amzn.to/4v1fANm>



Above, Flamingo Tongue, *Cyphoma gibbosum*, on fan coral. It has a shell but the mantle is able to completely cover it, giving it a lustre like the inside of other shellfish. The ochre shell has a high mid-ridge and a longitudinal paler stripe. The mantle is a distinctive yellow with darker yellow irregular spots lined in black. It is a popular subject to photograph as it is always found on various sea fans and rods. Below: Sea fans at the edge of a reef drop-off often have crinoids on them, also filter feeding in the gentle current.



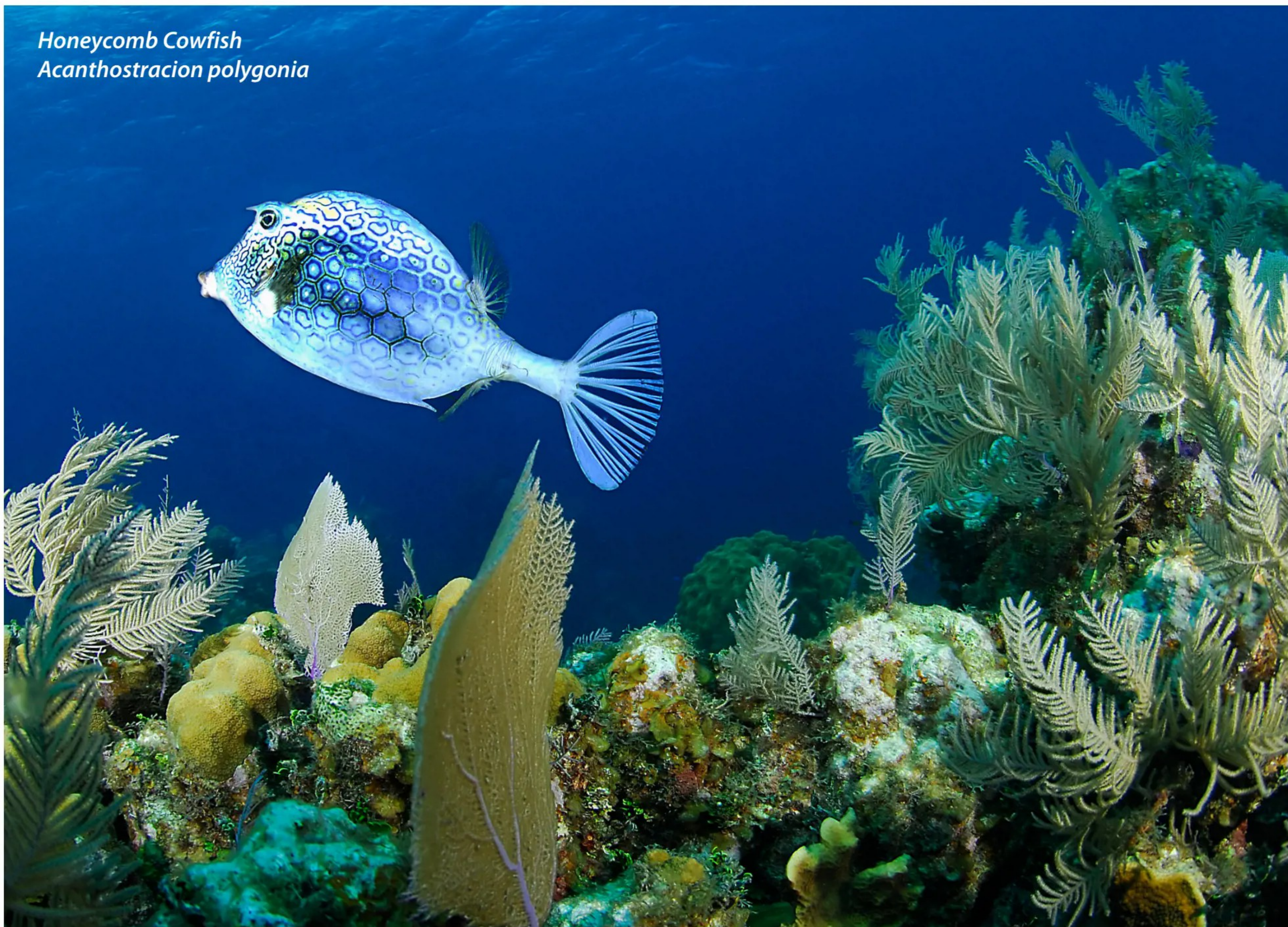
West Indian Manatee
Trichechus manatus



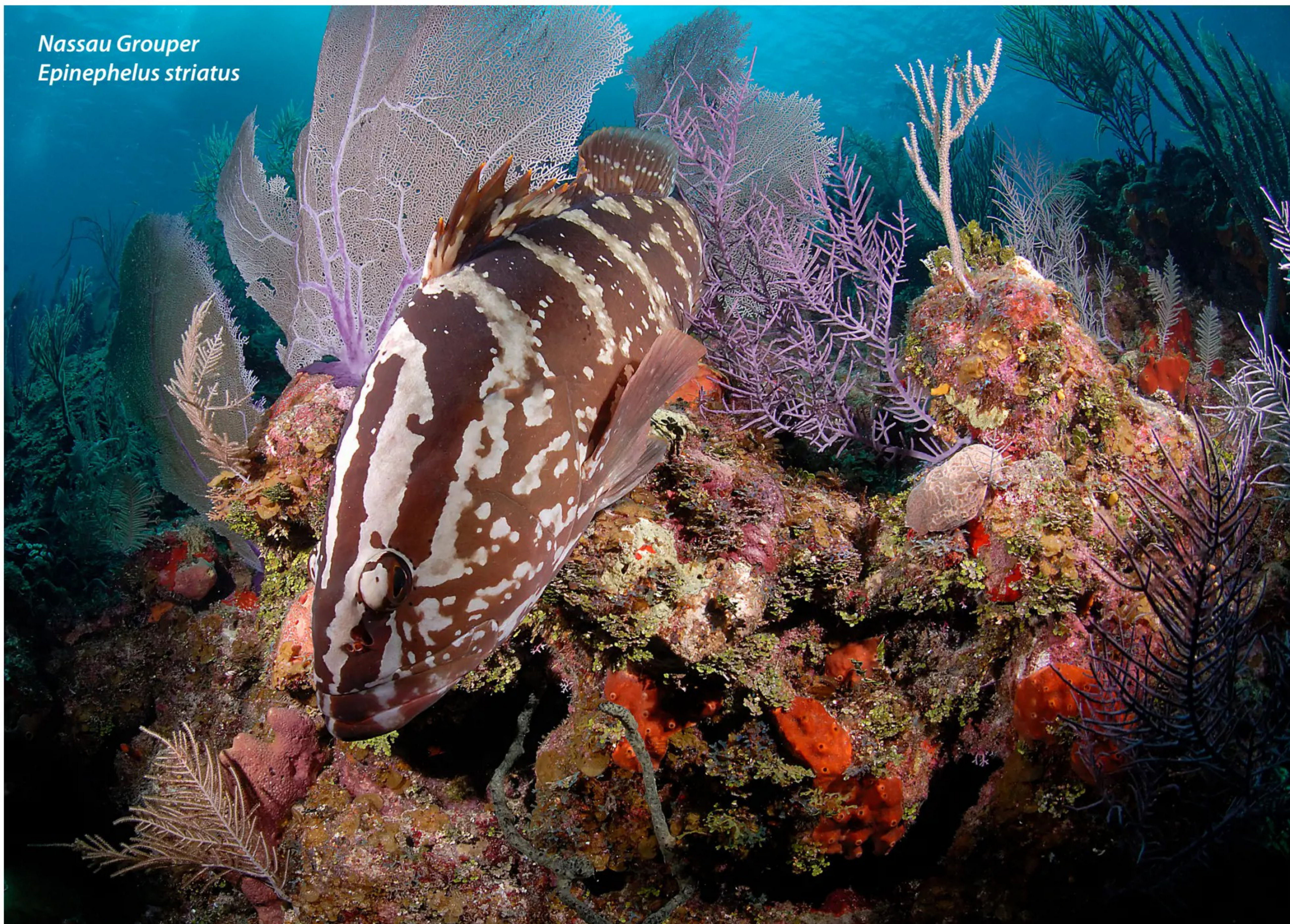
Hawksbill Turtle
Eretmochelys imbricata

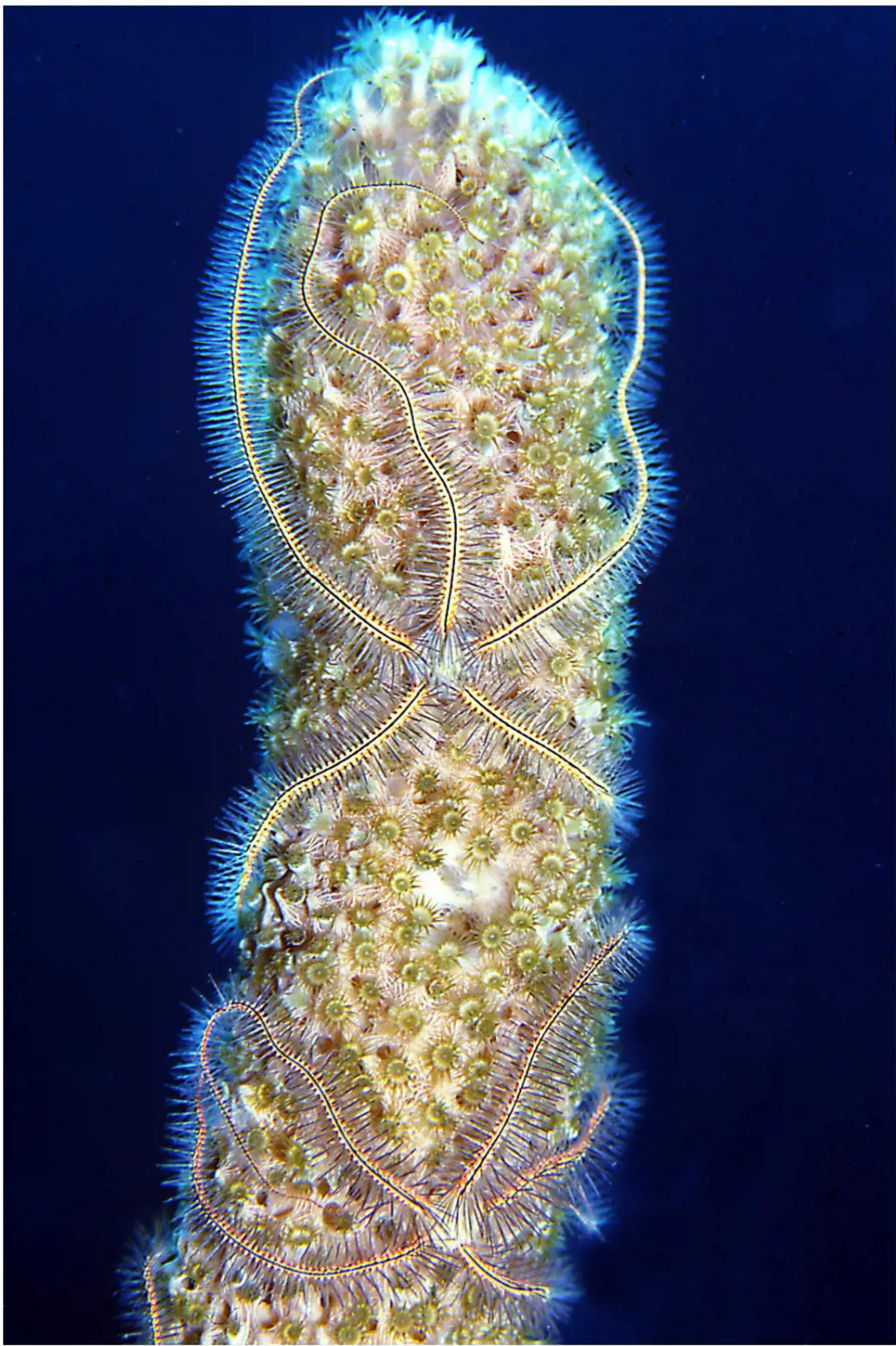


Honeycomb Cowfish
Acanthostracion polygonia



Nassau Grouper
Epinephelus striatus





Sponge and Sponge Zoanthid (*Parazoanthus parasiticus*) & Brittle Starfish
Longsnout Seahorse (*Hippocampus reidi*)



Sharknose Goby (*Gobiosoma evelynae*)
Yellowhead Jawfish (*Opistognathus aurifrons*)



Green Moray eel (*Gymnothorax funebris*)
Duane, Key Largo, Florida Keys



FARM FRIENDS

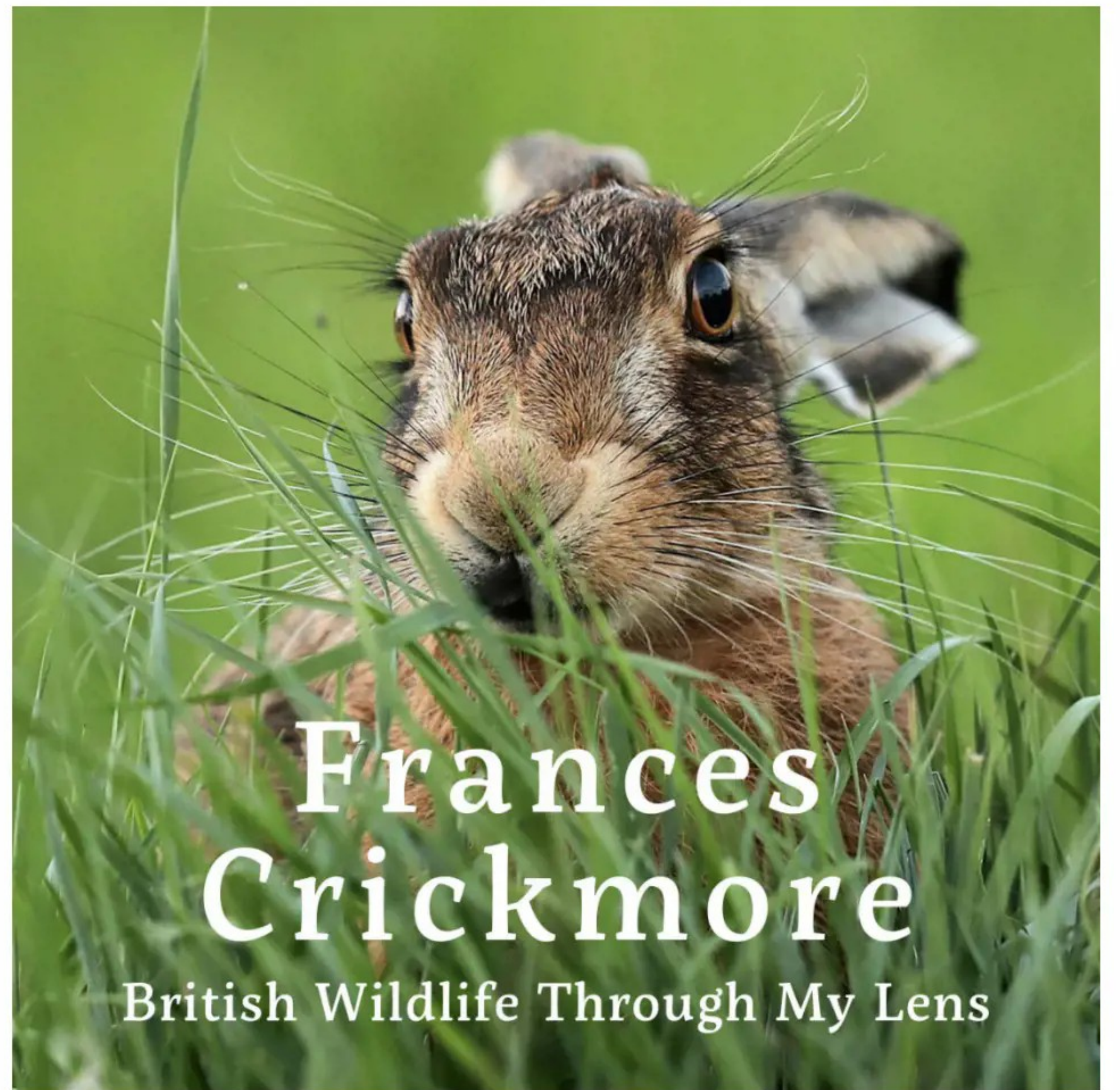
It's no great wonder that a hare features on the cover of Frances Crickmore's debut photographic book. Hares are one of her most frequent encounters on her family's eco-active Fen Farm, and she was photographing them since her teens – long before her work became well-known through social media. That took off from 2020 onwards, a familiar story in the Covid-19 period of housebound web scrolling.

She found the feedback so encouraging she began to make regular sorties by car – Norfolk is a big county and farmland lent itself to what she calls 'car safaris' where the vehicle, a familiar part of the scenery to wildlife, got her close enough with either her close-up friendly Canon 100-400mm zoom or big 500mm f4.

"I started to get such lovely messages from people saying how my images of nature were making them feel comforted", she told Jane Russ

Living on a Norfolk farm, Frances Crickmore needed no hides or bait or staged settings to capture the native wildlife she sees around her – just her feet and her car.

who authored the text for her eponymous *British Wildlife Through My Lens* book published by Graffeg. "Since then my followers on Instagram and Facebook have increased and I just love the thought that I can show people the beauty and joy that is out there in the real world. Most of these images were shot on our farm. When I started capturing them years ago, I didn't have the high-quality kit that I have now, but I soon realised that that didn't matter, what was needed was



"Frances Crickmore – British Wildlife Through My Lens" with text by Jane Russ is published by Graffeg, ISBN 9781805951551, as a 128-page 215 x 215mm hard cover book for £20 plus shipping.

The ubiquitous Red Fox – highly variable in colour from sandy to dark brown – is everywhere on farms and in country and urban gardens. EOS 5D MkIV, 100-400mm lens at 330mm.



Hummingbird Hawk Moth feeding from Norfolk lavender, a shot where she found the versatility of Canon's 100-400mm lens ideal. EOS 5D MkIII, at 400mm.



patience to sit and wait for the subject to come to me.”

Of hares, she says they need a plentiful high-quality diet, preferring young plants and herbs, and the flat, arable farmlands of Suffolk and Norfolk offer rich pickings.

“They are mainly active at night and for this reason are most often seen at dawn and dusk”, author Jane explains. “Adults move around and graze at either end of the day, unless the weather is very wet when they will sit tight, perhaps in a plough furrow, where they will hunker down with their back to the wind.

“The iconic brown hare is the only game species in England and Wales that does not have a close season, whereas in most countries in Europe hares are protected by one. These beautiful creatures are more fertile in the spring after a winter break, just when the shooting starts for other game on 1st February and therefore orphaned leverets without maternal support, will almost certainly die of starvation as a result.

“The change in the climate can also be difficult for the hare. Living in the open makes one very susceptible to cold and, perhaps more

importantly, wet, which can affect numbers. Even with the wonderful triple-layered coat that hares have, not being able to dry out properly for long periods, particularly for young and old hares, is a real issue. Although numbers have fallen over the past 100 years, it is hoped that this most outstanding mammal will continue to bring joy to all who see it.”

Frances’s love of hares – rewarded by a *Country Life* magazine cover — does not diminish her interest in the wide range of creatures found on a typical English farm. She looks for birds where she

knows they can be found – the kingfisher and water-voles near watercourses, owls in barns and hollow trees, pheasants in fields near woodlands shared with deer, foxes almost anywhere including gardens, insects where wildflowers have been encouraged.

Spotting her subjects can require more than sharp eyes. “There is also a sound clue that you might get if you see a water vole”, she explains. “A rat will just keep swimming away if disturbed, whilst a water vole will dive with a very distinctive plop. Furthermore, being lighter than rats, who only have

Main photograph: a young Little Owl reveals just how small this bird is, captured by Frances's 500mm lens with 1.4 converter on the edge of pantiles above guttering on a farm building roof.

Below: the size of a Kingfisher, something rarely apparent from typical diving shots, is also made clear from its perch on the reeds. Taken with Canon EOS 5D MkIII and EF 400mm f5.6 L wide open.





The Water Vole, far larger than garden voles and sometimes confused with a Water Rat or common rat, is equally apparent as it feeds on fresh green shoots among dried reed stems. Taken with the 100-400mm zoom at ISO 1000 to achieve 1/200s shutter speed in relatively low light – most of Frances's shots are taken between ISO 500 and 800 and the open fenland light allows speeds from 1/500s to 1/2500s to ensure sharpness.



Young hare in summer grass taken using the Canon 500mm f4 with 1.4X converter, Canon 1DX MkII. Right, sparring male pheasants shot on the EOS 5D MkIII with the same lens. This shot was at 1/5000s – for high speed action!

their head above water when swimming, the body and head of the water vole can be clearly seen level with the water as they execute a smart dog paddle.”

The voles live in colony burrows strung out along the riverbank. In the past they were widespread in the waterways of the UK but it is estimated as of November 2025 that they have disappeared from up to 96% of their original territory (writes Jane). “Like many of our island's mammals they have suffered from habitat loss and pollution. Poor riverside management has played its part too, as well as predation by the non-native American mink.

“Needing to eat up to 80% of their body weight every day to survive, it is not surprising to discover that they have been recorded eating over 200 species of plants. Biodiversity is a way of life for a water vole. It can only be hoped that now

that the general public has come to understand the importance of our inland waterways.”

Jane asked Frances if she gets to know the individual animals and birds she sees regularly. “Yes, I definitely do”, she says. “I will often have known them since they were very small, fledgelings or leverets. for instance. They do have individual characteristics – a slightly darker head, one predominantly droopy ear. I very quickly get to know my sitters.”

Frances shoots with Canon DSLRs and has used the 100-400mm f4.5-5.6 zoom, which has the best close focusing, the 400mm f5.6 L and 500mm f4 with or without 1.4X tele extender.



See:
Instagram: @francescrickmorephoto
Facebook: frances.crickmore
Flickr: francescrickmore



Barn Owl in the hollow of a dead tree trunk.
The full 1DX MkII image, taken with the 500mm and 1.4X
converter, would cover both pages of the spread.



Tamron 35-100mm *f*2.8 DiIII VXD An alternative to the 28-75mm and 35-150mm which fills a need

Tamron's latest midrange zoom has a relatively conventional focal range but useful full aperture, combined with a very fast and silent movie-friendly voice-coil AF drive. The 35-100mm range is optimal for natural video filming and social photography, whether weddings with large groups or head and shoulders portraits.

Some will wonder why not a 28-100mm or a 35-135mm even though Tamron make 28-75mm and 35-150mm designs. The answer lies in 100mm. It's a great focal length to shoot with where 70 or 75mm may not feel the same.

There was a time when 35-100mm *f*2.8 would have been a dream. The first commercial zoom approaching this, the Voigtlander Zoomar 36-82mm *f*2.8 of 1959, reveals in its specification what the challenges were to reach this wide maximum aperture. It was huge and heavy, and constrained by the leaf-shutter narrow mount throat of the Bessamatic SLR. It sold for more than the already premium priced camera body, which even Sony G-Master fast zooms fall short of.

The closest vintage lens to this new Tamron is the Konica Hexanon 35-100mm *f*2.8 of 1973. This manual design was also large and heavy, and was labelled as a Varifocal, not a zoom, because the focus distance changed with focal length. This also applied to the more manageable Vivitar Series 1 (Kiron) 35-85mm *f*2.8 of 1975.

In the film SLR era, a fast maximum aperture made a massive difference to the brightness and focusing accuracy of the optical pentaprism finder. It was accepted that these lenses might be fairly soft wide open, even if *f*2.8 could also be useful in low light or to achieve fast shutter speeds with slower high quality films.

Today things are very different. Most mirrorless cameras use hybrid phase and contrast detect AF combined with subject recognition and tracking. Even an *f*5.6 maximum aperture at a focal length

around 100mm will enable them to focus with pinpoint accuracy and often do this in near-darkness. The oddity of Viltrox's AF 28mm *f*5.6 pancake lens proves that while this aperture does work at shorter focal lengths it's far from ideal. In contrast, compact kit zooms going from *f*3.5 at the wide end down to as little as *f*7.1 perform well.

So what, then, is the Tamron 35-100mm *f*2.8 DiIII VXD all about?

Programmable video

It's an excellent lens for still shooting but along with other new Tamron lenses has a twist for movie-making which may decide a purchase. The USB-C socket on the lens side is not just for reprogramming lens behaviour like focus throw and direction through desktop Tamron Lens Utility Mac or PC software. By adding a Bluetooth adaptor, it allows the Tamron Lens Utility app on iOS or Android to control key functions such as focusing (preset distances, focus transition timing and speed) and aperture to be programmed into a command sequence set into action on the phone. This will be like having a production crew member (it's the job which you may have seen in movie credits as Focus Puller) even if you are a one-person team.

I say 'will be like' as I am assuming the Bluetooth and app will work. I could not get the connection to confirm and therefore could not test this. I can confirm the desktop USB wired connection worked well and it can indeed be useful to change manual focus rotation from a quick twist to get to infinity to a slow three-quarter turn, or make the focus ring into an aperture ring.

Fortunately I do not make videos at the level the app and Bluetooth control would benefit and my own focus is on shooting stills.

What this lens does is bring the crystalline sharpness contrasting with smooth bokeh blur which the 35-150mm Tamron offers to a



much smaller, lighter and lower cost optic. As expected, it's got superb colour and full aperture sharpness.

It's also very quick to use as the zoom as light in the hand with under a quarter turn from 35mm to 100mm. The physical length of the lens does not change much although it is not an internal zoom, but it has little of the resistance found when a heavier extending optical tube must be moved.

In the same way, the focus driven by the silent VXD is effortless – at 35mm, it can follow a moving target or snap to a new subject so quickly you don't realise it is focusing at all. On some subjects I was unsure if it had

The Tamron 35-100mm is only 35g heavier than the 28-75mm G2 and 3mm longer. Although it does not call itself a G2 lens, that's because it is a model and in fact it could be considered 'G3' compared to the 28-75mm. The zoom action only extends a little over 1cm and does not change its balance noticeably. The small box plugged into the side USB-C port is the Bluetooth receiver for the smartphone control app.



35-100mm is a versatile range for everyday photography. The Tamron has excellent colour and contrast – too much colour for the abandoned beer kegs, where light and texture are the key. The Green Veined White butterfly was at 100mm with AF as close as it would reliably lock on, and is a 31MP crop from the frame.





The 35mm angle – a classic 60° diagonal – proved ideal for the coach and four as the horses rapidly approached being level with the camera position. The shots at 67mm and 56mm, right, have too much compression and a wider lens like 24mm would have taken a side view.



You can see from the wild eglantine rose below what the Tamron can do set 100mm and closest focus, moving the camera to get the flower sharp. These also show full aperture and f22 compared.



refocused but every time the results proved it definitely had.

When driving, I heard the distinctive sound of a horse-drawn vehicle as I came to a narrow bridge I know well. One way or the other one driver has to pull aside. There was a replica Victorian coach and four doing exactly that just before the bridge. They let me pass from behind them after a car had come the other way, and I knew there was a pull-in shortly after the bridge so did exactly that and grabbed the camera already with the Tamron on it.

I had time to take just three individual shots as the Sir Walter pulled over the bridge taking tourists on the first leg of a staged coach-and-four tour from Kelso to Edinburgh. I found on checking three perfect shots I had used 67mm, then 56mm and finally 35mm as the coach approached and passed. I had quickly set the ISO to 320 and the lens was already at f8, resulting in a 1/320s shutter speed which stopped the movement with just a hint left on one hoof. I had no idea this new high end tourism experience even existed and now I've got a stock shot of worth.

I will admit to removing very out of place power lines crossing the sky. The lens showed no flare at all from the contre-jour light.

Do you need more?

Setting out with just a 24-70/75mm guarantees you'll encounter a shot which needs a 200mm. The 35-100mm lens does not replace an outfit. 35mm is a modest wide-standard, like many compact fixed lens were in the past. 100mm is a portrait length not something to pull in distant subjects. The total range of this zoom is exactly what a keen amateur of the 1950s or 60s would have expected from a three-lens 35/50/100mm kit, even the $f2.8$ aperture.

But this is now, not then. Provided you have a camera with a high resolution sensor, at least 36 megapixels, you can get an A4 print or fill a UHD screen from one-quarter of the frame. If you have a 60MP or now 66MP model you can crop to the same view as a 300mm lens on the full frame. You just need perfect focus and very good glass. The Tamron 35-100mm does this. Combined with the Sony A7RV's Eye-AF it nailed focus on rapidly moving butterflies and a running roe deer.

The lens does not have great close focus – like many Tamrons, you get that only at the wide end and when it would be great to have it at the long end. However the point applies to macro just as it does to tele, if you have the pixel real estate, it delivers to the limit of the sensor resolution for cropping.

I did shoot some social functions in low light with perfect results but nothing right for print.

The candid portraits of my daughter Ailsa were taken three days before her 44th birthday – she's been in print from my shots for all those years! They were shot, from the top, at full aperture, $f5.6$ and $f10$ with the lens set to 64mm.

If you like this focal length range it makes a perfect set with the Tamron 16-30mm $f2.8$ DiIII G2 VXD and 150-500mm $f5-6.7$ DiIII VC VXD. It weighs only 575g, is 120mm long and takes standard 67mm filters. In Sony E or Nikon Z mounts the price is £799.

– David Kilpatrick



See: <https://www.tamron.co.uk>

LENSES

Viltrox 55mm $f1.8$ EVO Apo

The EVO series from Viltrox offers new designs with apochromatic correction and full features



Above, the front element of the Viltrox is nothing like the concave of the CZ Sonnar. Below, an opportunistic wedding couple portrait made at $f2.2$ on the Viltrox – thanks to Ian and Kerry McKinley for letting me reproduce it here.

When a maker claims Apochromatic correction in a useful standard focal length moderately fast lens, it can be time to consider upgrading from earlier designs. Viltrox makes this claim for both their new EVO full frame $f1.8$ designs, 35mm and 55mm. I decided to invest in the 55mm as a replacement for the basic Sony 50mm $f1.8$ FE, and much the same could apply to Nikon users who have their 50mm $f1.8$ Z S, though this is a £460 lens when Sony's really is low budget at £159. The Viltrox is £359 with de-clickable aperture scale, AF/MF switch and USB port for updates.

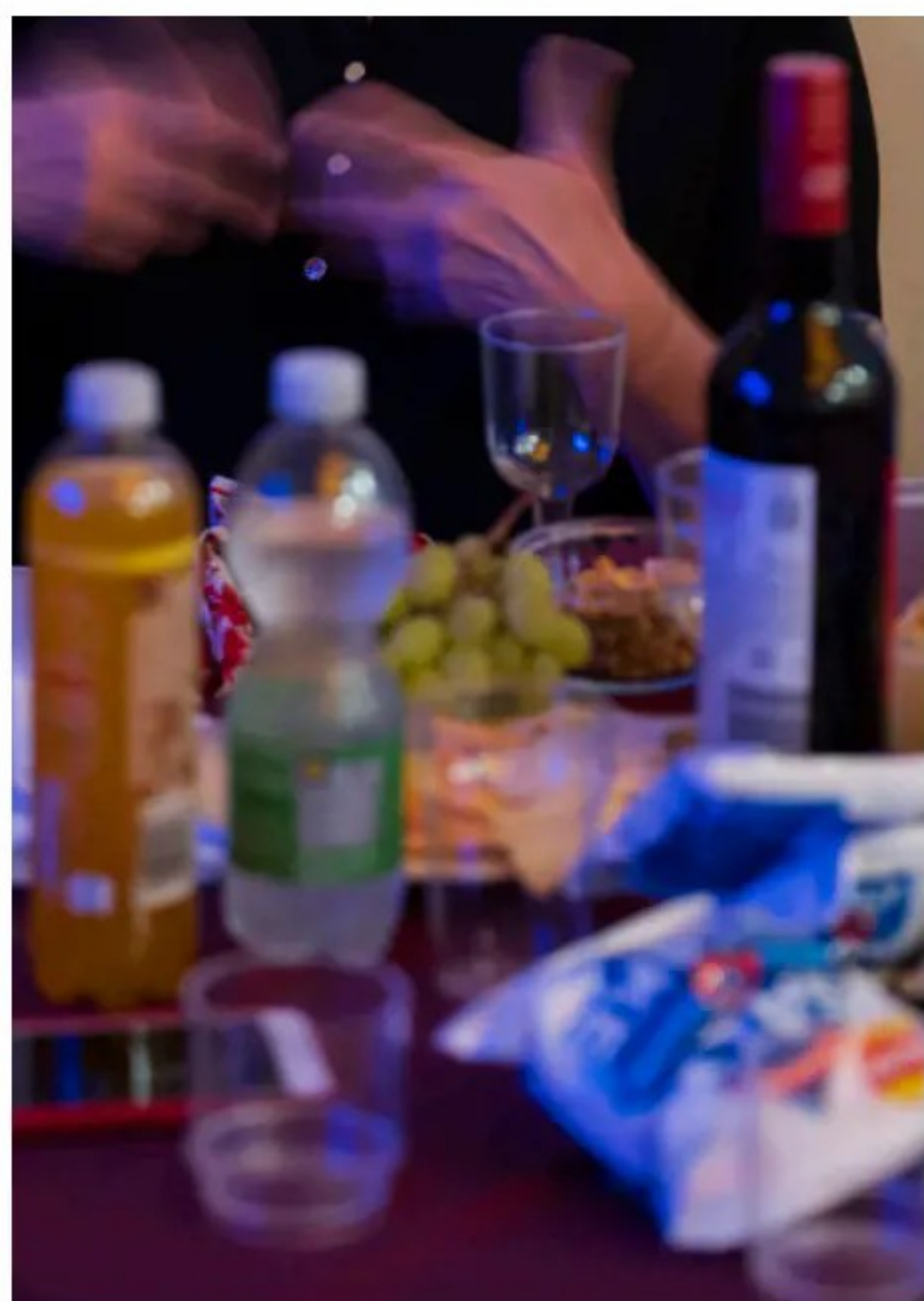
Sony launched their higher spec lens the 55mm $f1.8$ CZ Sonnar T* ZA FE in 2013. It now costs £620. It was highly praised so I bought one, really disliked the wiry bokeh which looked like a fault in some shots, sold it... then later bought a second one thinking I must have been wrong. I was not. The Planar design 50mm $f1.8$ is so much smoother in focus transitions even if minimal colour fringes are added to LoCA, the longitudinal focus shift which makes out of focus backgrounds look magenta tinted and foreground blur look green.

The Viltrox is an ideal and affordable alternative to both and some may prefer it to the faster 50mm $f1.4$ GM if not the top line GM $f1.2$. Apo correction means no LoCA as well as no colour fringes. I loved the Voigtlander 65mm $f2$ Macro Apo-Lanthar, but that lens is





When out testing the Viltrox I was using Kelso's town hall (and register office), and as I was about to press the shutter for an f1.8 test, a wedding party stepped out and threw confetti. With such a good looking couple I had to ask to take a proper shot. But an A4 vertical crop right down to just the door and the group is pin-sharp with confetti frozen at 1/2500s! Below: tiny part of a wide open shot. There's no trace of LoCA bokeh colour shift.



Top left, the Viltrox in a magnified crop from the left side of the same view as the shot with wedding party displays very high sharpness wide open in the focus plane – the ventilator in the window has colour moiré. The slightly out of focus more distant modern building has a wiry bokeh, blurring the chimneys and aerial with a double edge and confusing the pebbledash texture. The Sony 50mm taken after studying this is very clean. A 1965 Minolta Auto Rokkor PF 55mm f1.8, lower left wide open same crop, had low contrast with a wash of residual aberrations and flare but the core detail of the texture, the aerial and the ventilator are finely resolved within this veiling. A 1967 Auto Rokkor PF 55mm f2 wide open, lower right, has higher contrast but fails to resolve the ventilator, while rendering vertical anti-pigeon wire spikes at the top much better. This indicates a degree of astigmatism. The Viltrox with its non-traditional 13-element, 9-group design does not have this fault but its slightly wiry rendering of marginally defocused distant detail lacks the smoothness of the classic double Gauss (Planar) type old Rokkors and Sony.

huge, heavy, and manual focus. The Viltrox while lacking the wonderful close focus of the Macro Lanthar offers a similar high resolution with true apochromatic purity.

I have used other Viltrox designs and own their incredible 16mm f1.8 FE and small light 14mm f4 FE. I know they can make lenses which are up there with the best optically even if the firmware match to host cameras can be poor. This design, which takes 58mm filters and weighs 365g, is another world class winner. At the time of writing not all UK dealers had stock but its sister 35mm f1.8 II EVO generally was. Beware the sheer range of choices in this brand and don't order the 56mm APS-C model by mistake!

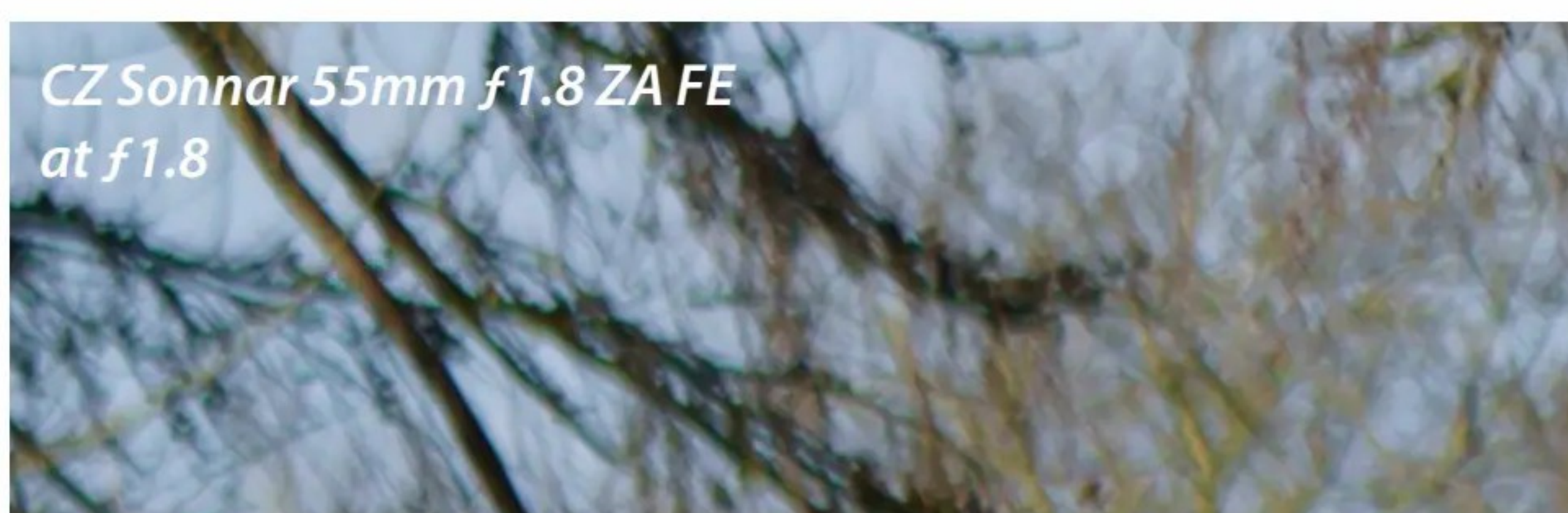
– David Kilpatrick



Viltrox at WEX (Affiliate link):
<https://wex.pxf.io/jRV416>



A square crop at Beamish Living Museum. Even at f16 the defocused background has a smooth quality on the Viltrox. Cone at closest focus of 43cm.



The CZ Sonnar 55mm f1.8 FE displays far worse defocused bokeh issues which can show up in group photo backgrounds. Right, the small repro is the full Sonnar frame at f1.8 with the focus slightly beyond the closest tree. The top left corner shows a directional slur of aberrations with distinct colour fringes.



Sony A7R VI

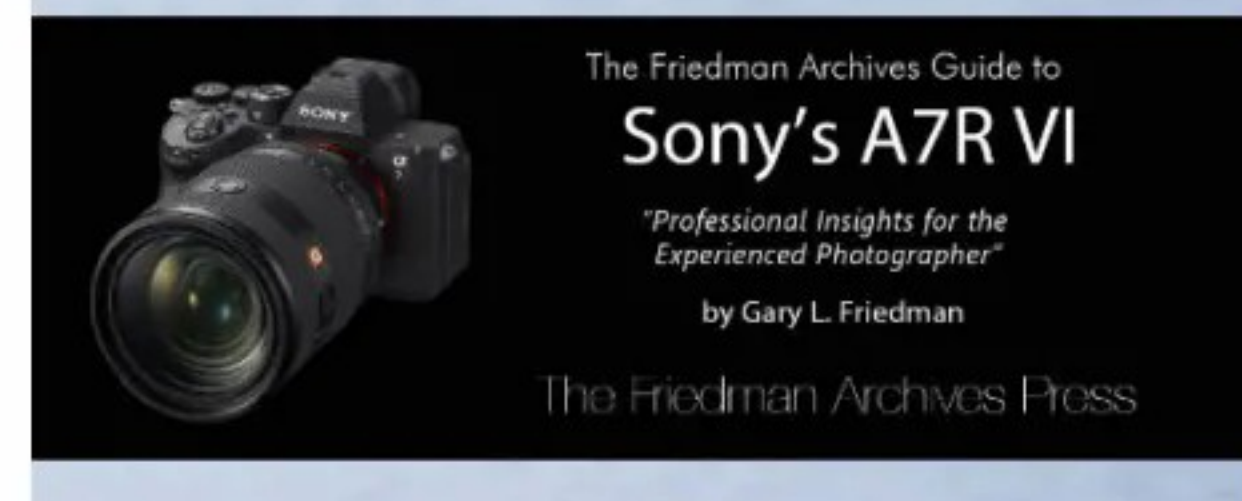
Gary Friedman offers insights from his forthcoming book's research into what makes the generation 6 full framer work for its money

Sony has the best engineers on the planet. And they keep pushing boundaries.

Take the new A7R VI as the latest piece of evidence. It combines the speed of the A1 II (30 fps shooting, with pre-capture) and subject recognition and tracking intelligence, all with a blackout-free viewfinder. It also has more megapixels than any other camera (having a sensor the size of a conventional 35mm frame): 66.8 MP. So, higher resolution at a lower price, plus you retain features like 8K video and the ability to record RAW video out the HDMI port, a feature normally reserved for highest-end cameras.

I am currently putting the finishing touches on a new book on this camera, explaining every feature clearly with examples, which should be out before the end of July. You can pre-order it here:

<https://FriedmanArchives.com/A7RVI>



In this article I won't go on about heralding its specs – you can read the news story at *cameracraft*.online. Instead I want to share some of my favorite aspects that nobody is talking about that I discovered while using this camera.

Maximum Shooting Speed and Bit Depth: The advertised 30 fps shooting speed can only occur in the following conditions:

1) You are using a Sony-brand lens. Although it's not documented anywhere, the shooting rate drops

to 20 fps using 3rd party lenses.

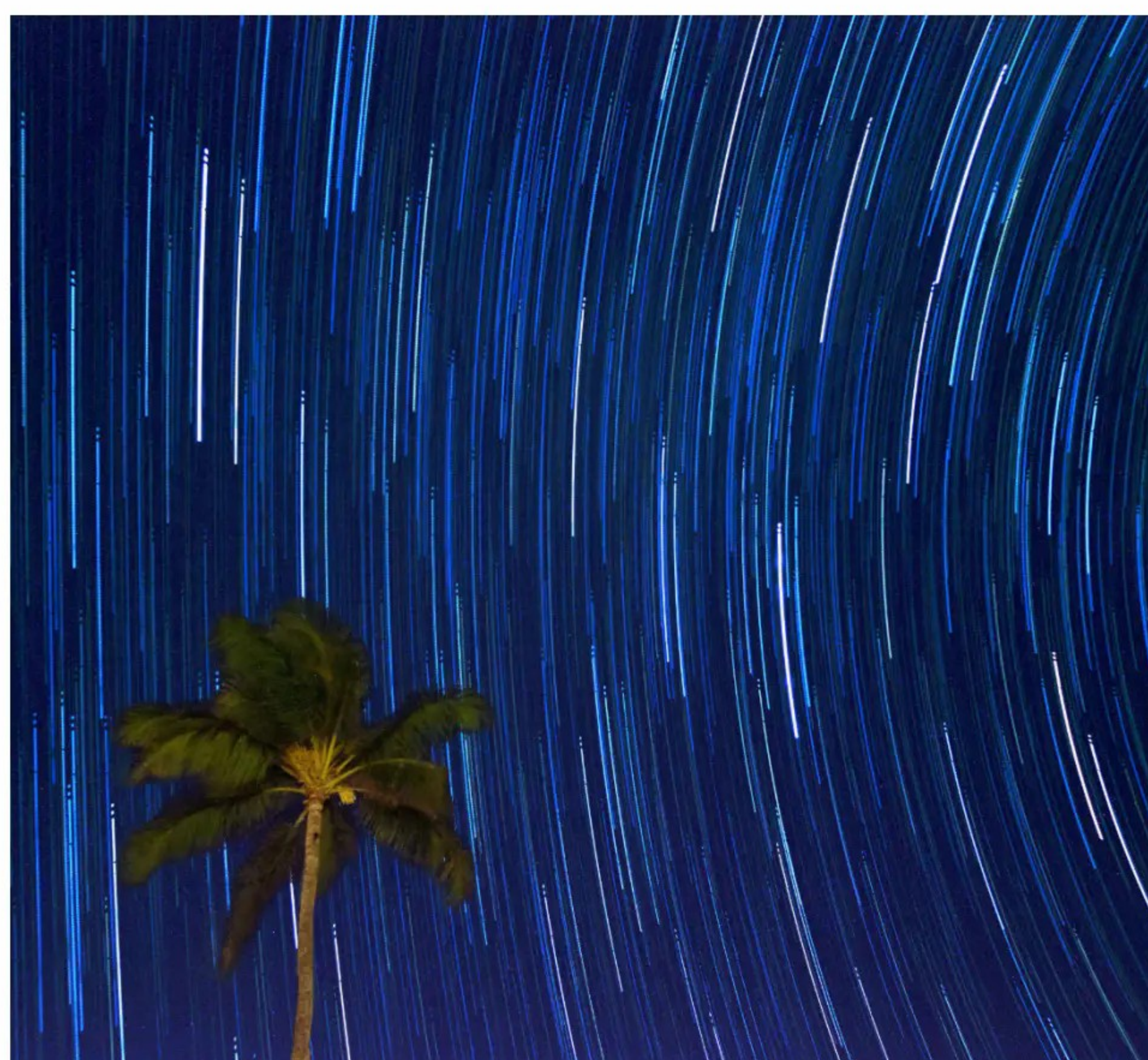
2) Electronic shutter only. (Duh!)

If you are shooting RAW, you can only achieve 30fps if the RAW file type = "Compressed", which reduces the bit depth from 14 to 12 bit per pixel.

Dual Gain Output: This sensor, like many previous Sony sensors, has two native ISOs: One at ISO 100 and at ISO 320 when shooting stills. The numbers vary depending on the gamma selected when shooting video. For S-Log3, for example, the base ISOs are 800 and 3200. The earlier Dual Gain Switching uses one gain below the baseline and one above. Dual Gain Output allows the camera to capture both readings at once – one from the first baseline; one from the second – and merge them together, allowing the capture of well-lit highlights and some additional detail in the shadows. Technically this gives you slightly greater dynamic range, but only applies when using the mechanical shutter with stills.

EVF: The specs say that the new high-resolution electronic viewfinder can also show you a greater dynamic range when shooting in HLG HDR mode (ideal for HDR TV's and high-end computer monitors). I was unable to see any difference when properly configured.

Bright Monitoring: For years this useful function was buried in the camera – you could only access it if it were pre-assigned to a button first, as it didn't appear in any menu. It is used when you're trying to compose your shot in an extremely dark environment – so dark that the 60 fps live view feature will look black. Bright Monitoring oversamples the Live View screen so it appears much brighter than it looks to your eye – enough to compose the shot. It also now will even try to autofocus in this mode, and if you prefer to focus manually (as I do) it will activate the focus magnifier so you can focus critically in impossibly



The Bright Monitoring function was designed to help you compose your shot in extremely low light – situations where previous Live View cameras would only show you a black screen. It works with Magnified View Manual focusing as well.



Billboards meant to be seen from far away can be made with as little as 2 megapixels; but a 66 megapixel camera using the 16-image pixel shifted function can make giant enlargements from 266 MP images that can withstand unreasonably close scrutiny, like the kind on display at airports.



The A7R VI can recognize all sorts of subjects, and if they have eyes it can zero in on those.

low light. This is way better than the film days!

Pixel Shift Multi-Shoot:

Although this isn't new, this is one of my favorite features because they managed to reduce the need for a tripod when shooting 4 or 16 images to get a 266 MP final image (!). There are two additional modes that can shoot multiple images to

reduce noise, or to expand dynamic range. Regretfully the images have to be combined on a computer later on instead of in-camera.

Get that dopamine fix while you're pre-boarding – picture this (no pun intended)... with your camera still off and packed away, you can whip out your

smartphone, wake up the camera's CPU via Bluetooth, download thumbnails of what you've shot today, specify which ones you want to download in high-res, post those to Instagram, and then shut off the camera – all while it's still packed away!

Live Streaming and USB

Streaming: I give zoom lectures to

photo clubs worldwide, so it's important that I look good to enhance my credibility. In addition to good light I use this camera's ability to act as a webcam with a portrait lens, streaming in 4K for those services that support it. You can also tether the camera to your phone and live stream your video to youtube or other social media platform. Finally, there's an "Auto Framing" feature that shoots wide and digitally zooms in to keep you centered in the frame as you move around.

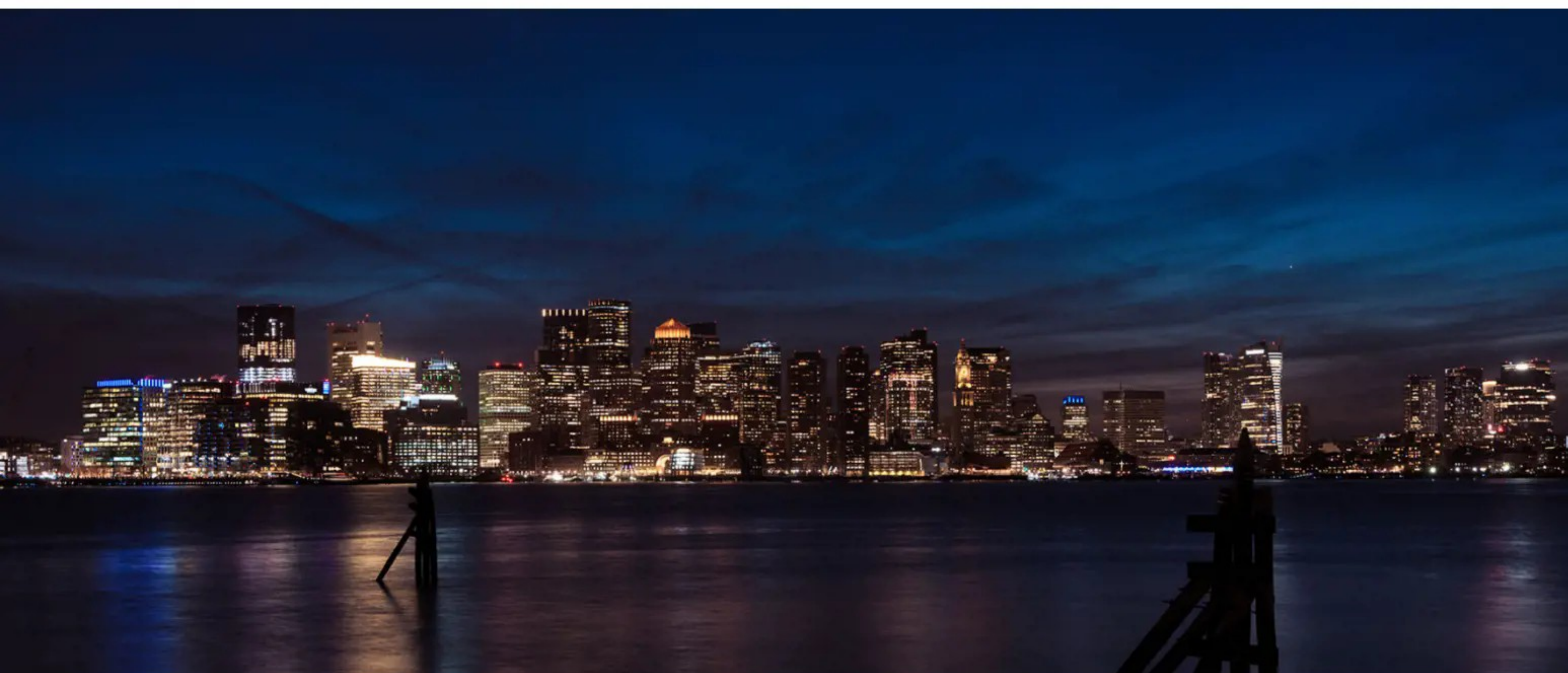
The Sony Creator's App for your phone allows remote control and instant downloading of any or all images to your phone. Not only that, but it can also be configured to invisibly upload them to Sony's cloud service and then from there plop them into Adobe Cloud or Google Drive.

In using the camera out in the field, there were really no surprises other than the frame rate and the bit depth pointed out above. The new, larger battery lasts all day; the camera is solid and responsive and produces stellar images. The biggest problem (if you can call it that) is the learning curve. With each generation, the cameras get gratuitously complex and the amount of customization can be mind-boggling to the new owner. I try to sort through all that in the book, explaining things non-condescendingly.

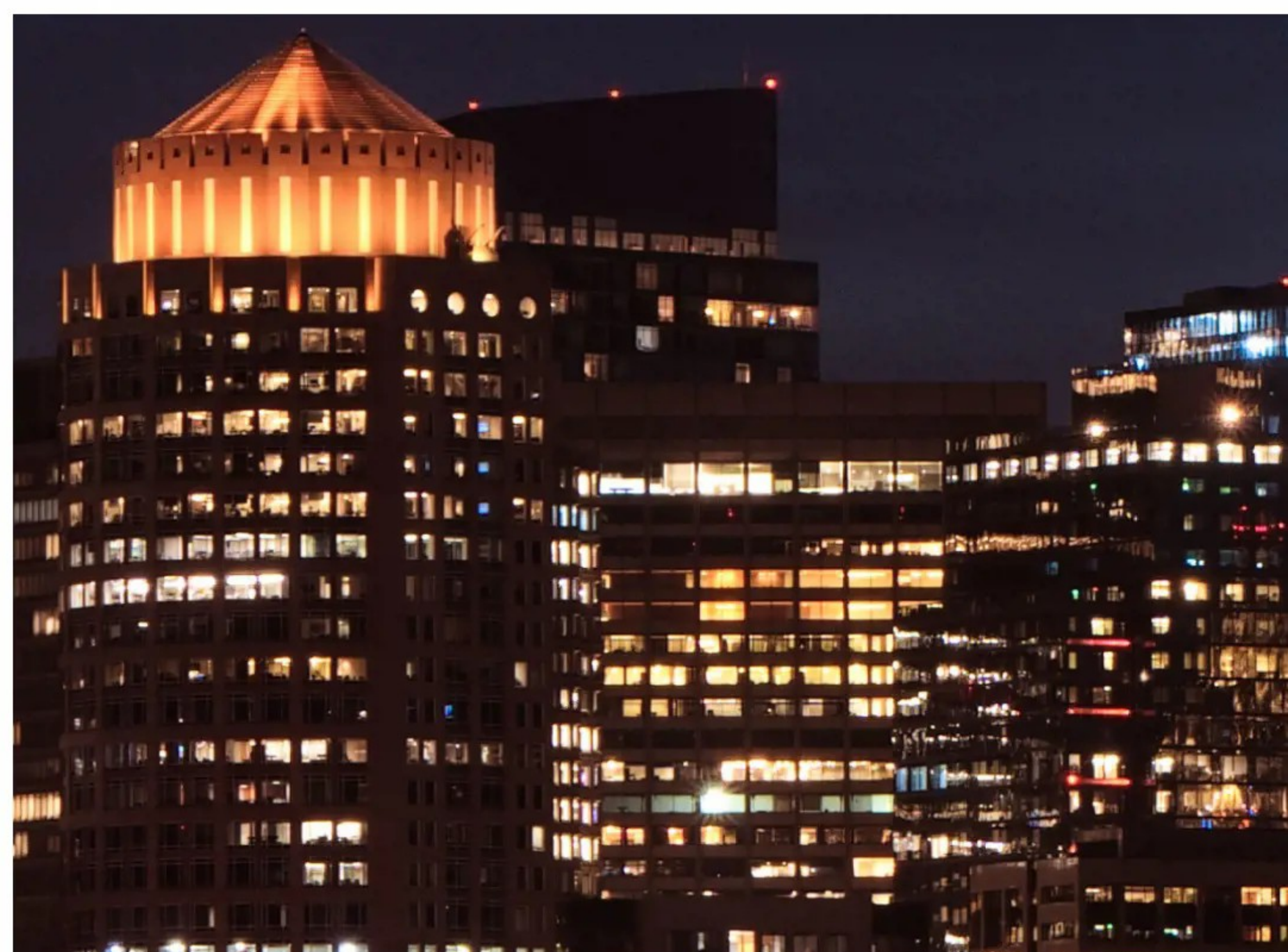
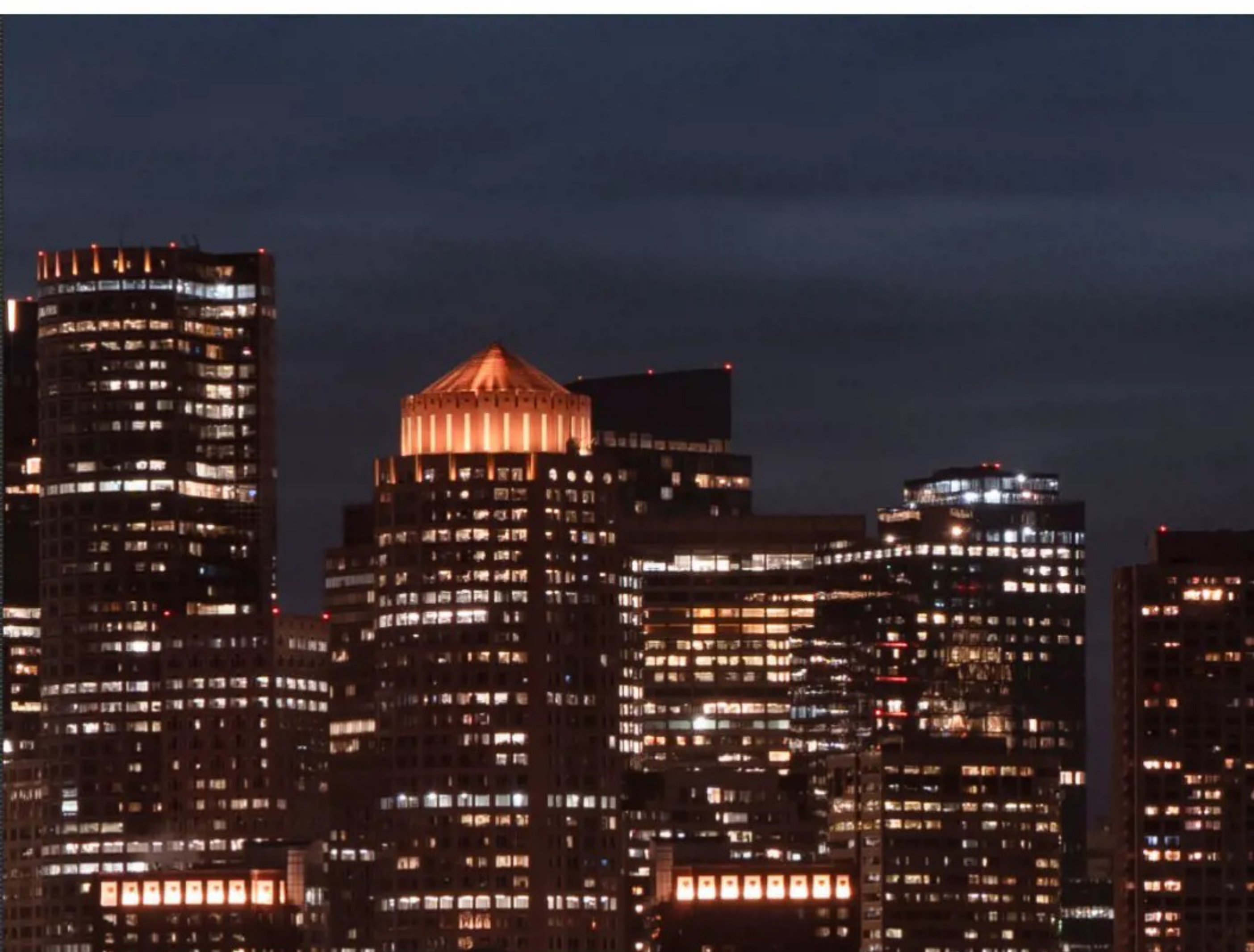
– Gary Friedman



For Gary's monthly blog and updates on progress see: friedmanarchives.com/blog
For details of photo books see friedmanarchives.com



A shot of the beautiful Boston Skyline. Using a tripod, I took a single image, and a 16-shot pixel shift. 300dpi crops of the results are below – left, single image; right – 16x Pixel Shift. Is someone undressing on the top floor?



Darkness Visible

Light beyond the range of human vision can still be recorded photographically. Infrared B&W film shooting has been practical for over a century and popular since the 1970s.

Digital camera conversions, special sensors and filters go beyond this to capture beautiful renderings of this invisible realm.

Infrared art photography started almost 90 years ago. Kodak High Speed Infrared (born 1937) was the only easily available film until the 1980s, came in 35mm only, and gave a distinctive grainy result with an unusual halation glow surrounding high contrast edges.

Simon Marsden's spooky prints of old castles, churches and houses with a supernatural reputation will be familiar to many readers. Sir Simon was 4th Baronet of Grimsby and produced 12 books on ghost-hunting and supernatural phenomena. Infrared monochrome was his signature style, continued with new films up his death in 2012 at the regrettably young age of 63.

Kodak HIE had been discontinued in 2007, two years after the end of its only competitor Konica Infrared 750nm – launched in 1987 in 35mm and 120, with an anti-halation layer, and did not record such far infrared.

The downside and also the magic of Kodak's film, which was sensitive to 900nm, came from the lack of an anti-halation layer on the film base. Most SLRs have dimples in a pattern on the pressure plate which holds film flat to the film gate. Without these, fast winding on could be impeded and any trapped dust particles could score lines on the reverse of the film base.

Those vital anti-vacuum dimples would then be imaged on any film with a highly transparent base and no backing layers, like HIE. Serious use meant getting exactly the right camera body, the right Wratten 25 narrow-cut red filter almost opaque to the eye, a lens which focused IR well and was marked with an infrared index to show how much closer the manual focus must be set. Cameras like the Leica M series were and still are ideal for IR film shooting as

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Devon in Infrared – from full frame to a Hasselblad XD with Neil Burnell

With many awards behind him including WEX Photographer of the Year twice, Landscape PoY and World Landscape PoY, along with Sony Awards shortlisting and commendations. Working with Nikon kit over the years, he has had full spectrum conversions from

Protech Ltd and now after advancing to work with Hasselblad (both 500C/M classic film and the latest digital mirrorless X2D II 100C) he uses a converted X1D II. His commitment to serious infrared shows as this is no low-budget solution! Here we show one of





Neil's recent black and whites and three of his 590nm filter soft landscapes with some of the most beautiful pastel colours. Neil uses infrared in misty conditions just as

readily as sunshine. He's now lining up his sights on the Hasselblad Masters series and we can expect to see great medium-format IR in future. You can follow Neil –

neilburnellphotography on Facebook – or read his deeply informative blog, also covering his interest in film shooting with classic and modern colour negative stock, at

<https://www.neilburnell.com>. Look for his Wistman's Wood series and Dartmoor, close to his base in Brixham, Devon, where he runs popular workshops.



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composition through an optical finder removes the problem of shooting through a filter you can't see through.

Konica's film eliminated the dimpled pressure plate issue and other films with extended red sensitivity such as Ilford SFX 200 and their specialised aerial photography emulsions were also much easier to work with than HIE.

IR in colour

Kodak's false-colour Infrared (Aero) Ektachrome started life as an E-4 process slide film in 1966 but had to wait until 1997 – some 20 years after regular Ektachrome was updated – to switch to the accessible E-6 process. It gave a fixed colour rendering with its own 'swapped channel' recording foliage in oranges and reds. Digital sensors had high IR sensitivity from the start, to the extent that it was a problem to be controlled in the 1990s. Digital full spectrum IR can be used with various filters which include the Aerochrome filter type which combines blue skies with golden foliage. Channel swapping in raw or JPEG post-processing can create different false colours.

It took around ten years from 1992 onwards for the cover glass used to protect image sensors in consumer and early pro digital cameras to become an effective

UV/IR cut filter, removing IR which was diluting colours and produced the muddy tones of much early digital colour.

At the same time, the anti-aliasing filter also used on the sensors was progressively refined to use diffractive coatings reducing in strength as sensor resolution improved. Eventually full frame sensors like the Kodak DCS 14n, Leica M9 and Sony's R series eliminated the anti-aliasing filter making finely detailed results better without software deconvolution as part of de-mosaicing. There was an increased chance of moiré patterns.

In the run up to this, one pre-R Sony body appeared with almost R-series sharpness – the 2012 NEX-7. Its 24 megapixel APS-C sensor is almost the same density as the 61MP A7RIV/V full frame, and this has been the standard resolution for the 6000-series of bodies which followed up to the A6700 with 26MP instead of 24. The NEX-7 has a very weak anti-aliasing filter with hardly any blurring in the horizontal direction, making landscape-orientation shots have sharper vertical details like grass and trees or building walls.

NEX-7 conversion

The downside with the NEX-7 was that moiré could easily spoil video takes and 1080p video was its new

selling point. Specialists offered modification to replace the weak AA filter with a normal one. Since the pack covering the sensor also includes the vital IR cut filter, the modification skills acquired in dealing with this firmly fixed (not in-body stabilised) sensor naturally led to accessible full spectrum conversions. These keep the RGGB Bayer filter matrix and the weak AA filter, and produce an image with much the same diluted colours as the first CCDs of the early 1990s camera generation.

We obtained one (via eBay) converted by specialists Lumographic. Alison from the company said this: 'We remove the AA filter. It's slim and subtle on the NEX-7 anyway. Issues with moiré will very rarely occur with a 24 MP APSC sensor, the pixels are tiny (the same size as on a 50MP full frame) and these days most high res cameras don't use them. Even if you do get moiré it can be removed in stills. If you are a dedicated videographer videoing fine repeating patterns then you may have a problem- but you probably would not be shooting a full spectrum NEX-7.

She confirmed that the CMOS of the NEX-7 can 'see' wavelengths to 1000nm (far infrared) and have excellent sensitivity at 720nm, almost the same as the Konica IR 750nm black and white emulsion.

Fitting an IR 720 filter to any lens has a small effect on full spectrum exposure times, meaning hand-held shots are completely practical at ISO settings below 400. The NEX-7 has high noise levels above this like any model of that generation.

By processing the raw file as black and white, images virtually identical to 750nm film are easily made and you can go further with 950nm filtration for real black skies. Setting BW in the camera and increasing the contrast in the related camera settings gives an EVF/LCD view which is accurate enough. Because of the way the unfiltered sensor works, it can be necessary to use different levels of plus exposure correction – typically at least +1 and sometimes as much as +3 EV. This can be seen clearly and is reflected in the histogram if shown in the finder.

The 2012 NEX-7 is a neatly designed camera and even the relatively small EVF view doesn't spoil its ergonomic and functional qualities. The ultrasonic vibration of the sensor's AA filter does not remove dust efficiently, and the modified body is even more likely to show visible dust. But IR imaging suffers from diffraction more than visible light, meaning it's a good idea to shoot at f5.6 or wider – both visible dust and detail sharpness can be an issue at f8 or smaller apertures.

Great conditions for the tenth shot taken after getting the full spectrum converted NEX-7 with 720nm filter





I used the 18-55mm kit lens supplied with the body, and for better sharpness my Viltrox 14mm f4 AF. It's very much like having a Leica with 21mm Super Angulon, one of the favourite film combinations for IR. The NEX-7 did not autofocus reliably with the Viltrox but did work with magnified manual focus. This is what can happen with a body 14 years older than a lens – firmware changes!

For the rabbit field shot above, simulating how many predators including my own cats see rabbits against grass, I used a 70-300mm fitted with a 62mm 720nm filter, at 300mm and avoiding cut-off from step-down rings thanks to APS-C.

The experience of shooting dedicated IR BW with this converted camera is so good that it's been tempting to shoot with it and not take a regular camera along as well. Though a passable colour image can be recovered from a shot taken without an IR filter, excellent natural colour can be had by fitting a Hoya UV/IR cut filter or equivalent. Setting Custom White Balance created a normal visual spectrum NEX-7. These filters normally cost around £50-70 depending on size.

The IR BW results with a 720nm Zomei filter look very much like Konica IR 750nm, helped by using Adobe Camera Raw's BW09 profile. When you use these numbered BW conversion settings, the result is a greyscale image. I don't like this and prefer my BW files to be RGB as this can help make much richer prints. All that is needed is to change the mode in *Photoshop* from Greyscale to RGB. De-saturating a colour image 100% in Camera Raw also forces it to be greyscale so I set the control to 99% if doing this, it looks exactly



Top left: cat-vision rabbits, 300mm, IR720, 1/800s at f9, ISO 400. Top right: weeds on York stone, IR720. Above: colour with IR720, camera JPEG processed in Adobe Camera Raw -68 Color Temperature and -54 Tint.



the same and avoids this step.

IR with its longer wavelengths focuses further away than visible light, so for decades lenses have had IR focusing indexes based on a typical film and filter, so you could focus without a filter then move the scale. Usually infinity focus ends up being shifted to around 6m, for infinity to be sharp. With the digital conversion, auto or manual focusing is done off the sensor and compensates for any change. No adjustment is needed.

Simon Marsden's iconic Kodak HIE shots were, of course, all



darkroom prints. He used high contrast paper and very obvious burning-in on the sky most of the time, and if you look at the prints in the website for the archive which now holds his work (www.hymancollection.org) there's one image with two different prints where the hand dodging and burning is not identical. Each print will have been a one-off with the best selected for his books.

Prior art

Infrared monochrome dates back to the 1930s as a consumer or

photo-enthusiast interest and over 30 different emulsions were available then. Even earlier, instructions could be found for immersing ordinary plates in dyes which gave IR sensitivity. The uses were not much like today's effects – instead, the deep red filtered exposure could cut through atmospheric haze or mist and render distant landscapes with superior contrast and detail. IR film was also used to make light-skinned portraits from sitters with dark skin, and for forensic work on paintings, forgeries and artefacts.

There was no advice about only using in full sunshine as almost all shots would be on a tripod with the filter fitted after composing on a ground-glass. IR pictures were taken on foggy days!

Today the only surviving infrared black and white film stock is Agfa Aviphot, made in several film speeds for aerial survey. It's bought for conversion (slitting to widths like 35mm, perforating and spooling into cassettes) by various brands including Rollei who sell it as Infrared ISO 200 at around £10 a roll – which I tried out, see the next article.

For my money, a good slightly vintage full spectrum conversion like the NEX-7 is better value for money than the film and darkroom route and allows relatively cost-free further experiment. I'm not sure how much more IR, monochrome or colour, I will regularly do. In the past I tried a converted Panasonic MicroFourThirds model but it was only 12 megapixels and the image quality was poor. The NEX-7 is very different and captures an ultra-sharp 24MP given a good lens, and it's ideal for UV/IR filtered use too.

– David Kilpatrick



ANALOGGRAPHY

Rollei Infrared

Converted from Agfa Aviphot infrared black and white aerial photography stock, Rollei's 35mm cassetted film is affordable and clean in rendering

It's many years since I processed infrared black and white film. Back in the days of the Kodak stock which gave golfball grain and uncontrolled halation glow, handling the stuff was not easy. The new generation of plastic bodied SLRs was not all IR compatible, the film piped light of any find back into cassette if you left the exposed leader unshielded by an opaque film can, the Estar base was difficult to load into the dev tank spiral reel and unexpected IR sources like the red light on a mains adaptor could fog it. The film had to be used within weeks of purchase and in the hot days of IR-rich summer sunshine – which it pretty much demanded to be of any use at all – it aged fast.

The final popular BW stock, Konica, was far more robust but still needed care. The same goes for the Rollei Infrared which can be ordered. It's a good idea to keep it in the fridge but two rolls ordered on-line for under £20 with shipping were dated January 2029. Described as having extended red sensitivity, it can indeed handle filters in the 720nm and longer bands which are visually almost opaque. It's much more sensitive to red and IR than Ilford SFX 200 (was – it may have changed from the launch version I used in the 1980s).

In fact, with typical exposures in mid-day summer sun around 1/60s at f8 it's entirely hand-holdable if you use a rangefinder camera or an accessory shoe optical finder. I had neither to hand, but found a Sigma 28mm f2.8 on a Minolta SRT100x body gave me enough light through the split-image/micropism central focusing circle to target the centre of a view and adjust by informed guesswork. It is just possible to see by shielding the eye and eyepiece and allowing vision to adjust. For some tests with bracketed exposures I used a tripod and composed without the filter.

To develop this film, which comes with useful dilution and times printed for popular developers inside its box, I decided on Ilford Perceptol which is recommended to be at 1:1 dilution.

eons ago Perceptol and similar mixed-from-powder devs came in small 600ml boxes. Royal Mail makes sure these boxes would never be a large envelope and might not even be a small packet. Ilford now packs super-slim chemical wallets into a large flat poly envelope which, at a guess, will post out for less despite now making a full litre of stock solution. I developed the Rollei IR together with a roll of the Wolfen NP100 I wrote about in the last issue, using a 600ml tank. That needed 300ml of stock solution leaving a perfect 700ml to fill a whisky bottle with every chance of keeping much longer than the whisky did!

1:1 Perceptol does not lose film speed like full strength – it's a solvent developer, almost like a super-weak monobath. At full strength the 'fixer-like' solvent component dissolves about 20% of the exposed halides in the emulsion by the time the developer component has converted 80% of the correctly exposed latent image to silver. At 1:1 the developer wins and the solvent element doesn't have time to beat it. The effect is full film speed but slightly more grain.

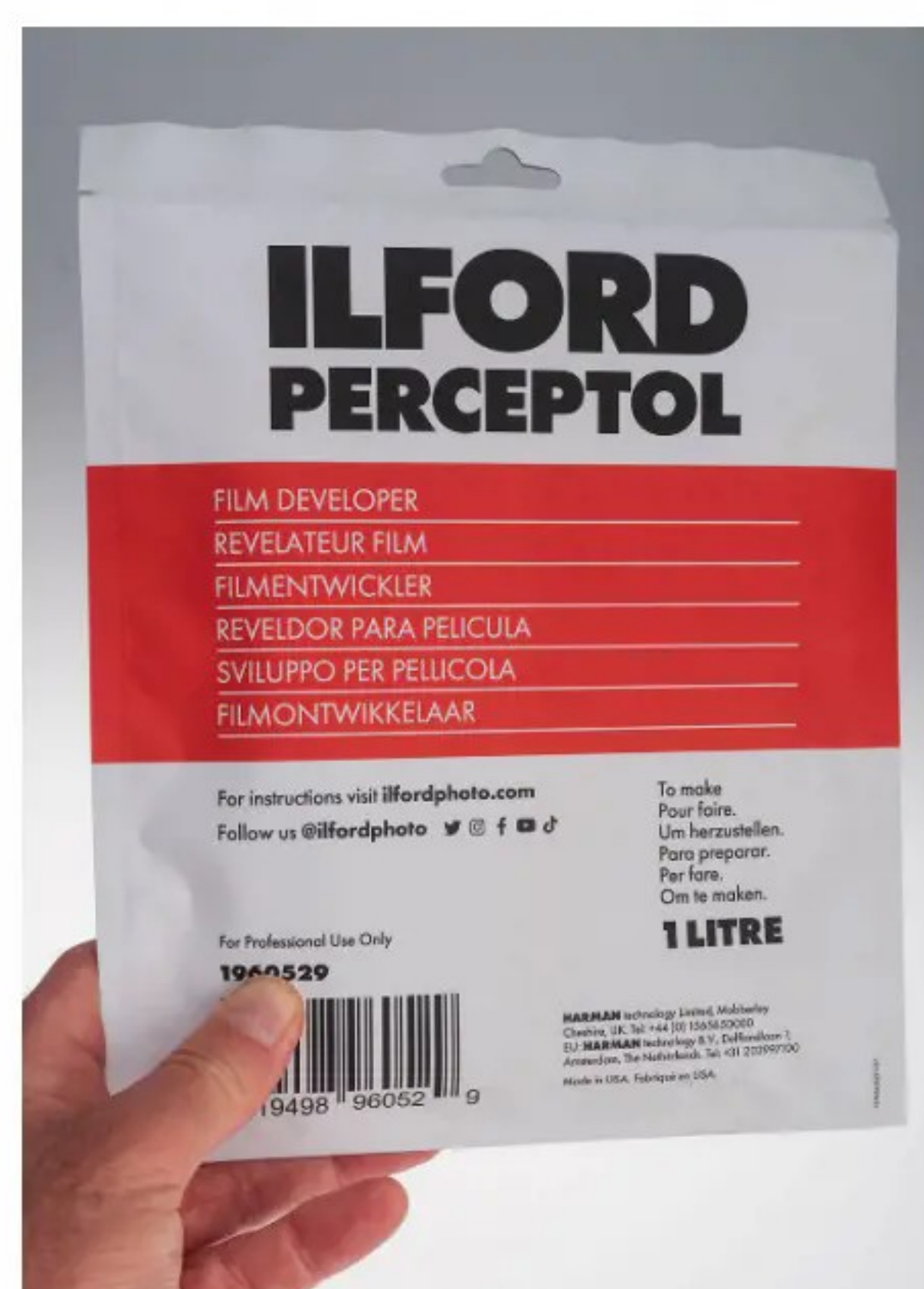
It should have been 10 minutes at 20°C but this was a record-breaking heatwave week and even in Scotland my darkroom was already at 30°C. I had to use the freezer to chill freshly made developer and then monitor how the warm dev tank/reel affected processing. I cut to an estimated 7 minutes at 24°C, and it worked well.

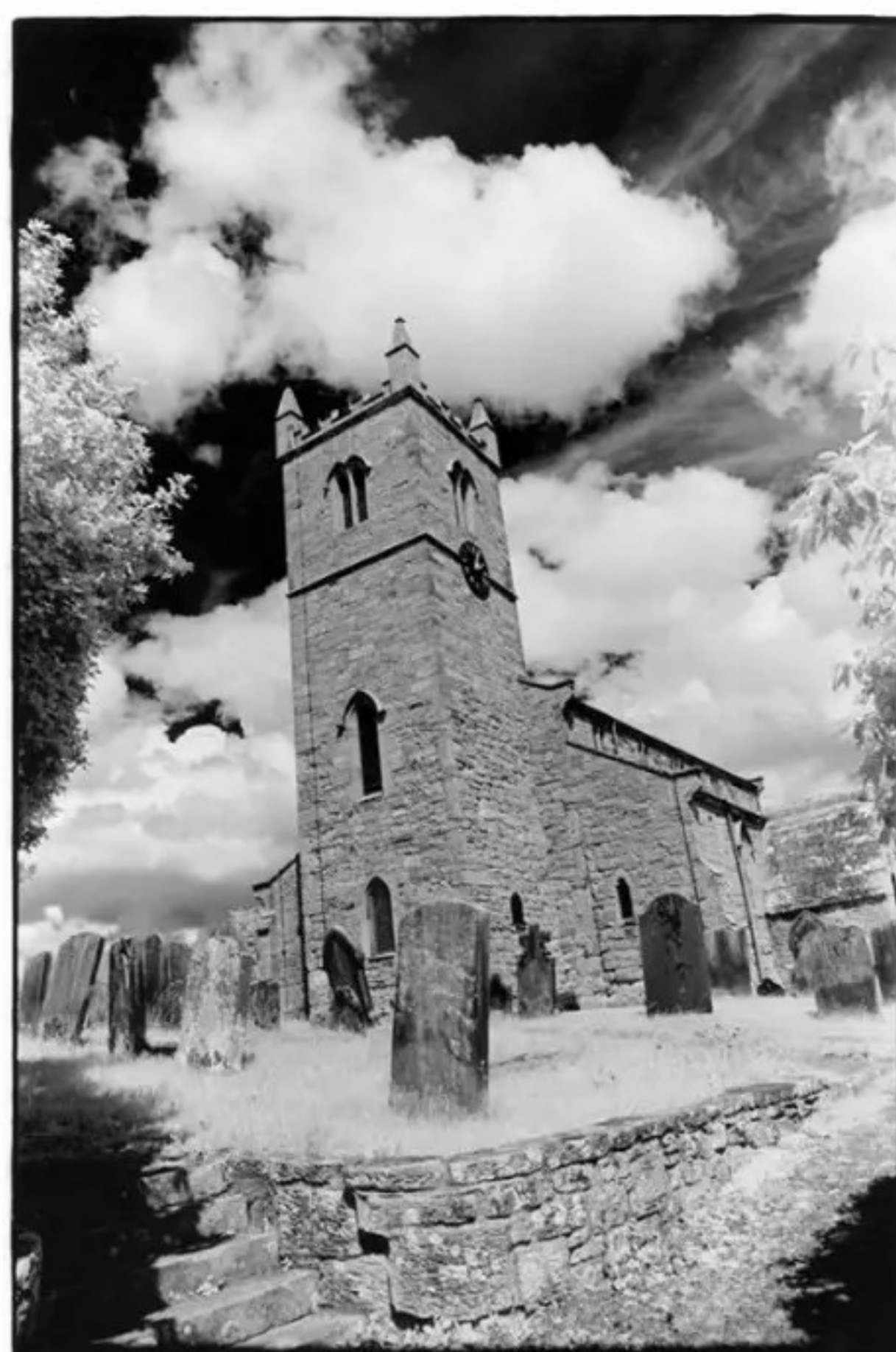
The results were stunning. The film is crystal clear and absolutely free of fog, with a great contrast range, well matched to MGII at Grade 2. My compositions were not accurate enough for 'border printed on' from the Leitz 35mm carrier. The grain was coarse compared to an example of FP4 developed in stock Perceptol back in 1971. Being limited to making 7 x 9.5" prints (cost!) restricted dodging and burning so sky tones, grass and buildings are seen just as the film with IR 750 filter recorded them.

– DK



Rollei Infrared is repackaged Avifot film with a long expiry date and development guide inside the box. Below, the large flat pack used for Perceptol powder and a comparison in base density between Filmotec NP100, left, and Rollei's IR film. The bottom right neg is the one digitally copied.





All taken on the roll of Rollei Infrared processed in Ilford Perceptol 1+1, using Minolta SRT100x with Sigma 28mm f2.8 MD Macro set to f8 and a shutter speed of 1/60s. Above: Clennel Hall in Northumberland, one of three variations in sighting the camera without a viewfinder. No great correction or crop needed. From Ilford MGII G2 filter print. Left, and small inset: Whittingham Church, composed more rapidly as the clouds were forming and moving fast, focusing aid centred on top of tower then camera aimed down slightly. From MGII G3 print. Needed straighten and crop. Below, direct copy from negative, with neg/pos inversion. Levelled by eye, no crop.



Across Clues:

- 1: American 1970s photographer, one-time lover of Patti Smith. (12)
7: The number of frames available on a 120 roll film if using a Pentax 6 x 7 camera. (3)
9: Not an amateur... (3)
11: Did Felix Rolle become confused when designing this camera?! (10)
12: Stuck in a bog, Leroy was a person eyeing up women in an unpleasantly predatory fashion. (5)
14: For an injured eye or a hippy's residence. (3)
15: In a very, very long time, Leo nails it. (3)
17 ac & 2dn: Documentary photographer who passed away in 2025; well known for his saturated colours and heavy use of fill flash. (6,4)
19: Slang term for posh make of German car. (4)
20: Primary source of light in a portrait setup. (3)
22: Celebrity with a heavenly body? (4)
23: Illegal passenger hiding in Chepstow away on holiday! (8)
27 ac, 37 dn and 35 ac: English photographer and creator of the photographic book 'A Day Off' published two years after his death in the early 1970s. (4,3,5)
28: Alien needing to phone home. (2)
29: Steel hawser or old fashioned word for a telegram. (5)
31: Uncooked image file format. (3)
32: Sounds like the ancient roman goddess of the moon is missing an 'R' (4).
34: Lawson, Mansell or Havers? (5)
35: See 27ac.
37: Capa or maybe 1ac? (6)
39: Wanna make a model of Renault car? Sounds like it! (3)
40: Acronym for a British cherished buildings organisation. (2)
41: American expression of surprise when encouraging a horse. (3)
42: She's French! (4)
43: Poor confused Eldcryce didn't know he'd been created from previously discarded materials. (8)

Down Clues:

- 1 & 13: The only foreign photojournalist in Moscow when German forces invaded in WWII. Later created many photos of the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp under the supervision of General Patton. (8,6,5)
2: See 17ac.
3: Fictional character; friend of 28ac. (6)
4: Gradations or varieties of colours. (4)
5: Camera used by Duran Duran? (6)
6: Even longer than 15ac! (8)
8: A previous partner or spouse. (2)
9: Email protocol favoured by weasels? (3)
10: Many years since in school days... (3)
13: See 1dn.
15: First name of Austrian / American photographer, born in 1921. Apparently, in 1946, he traded a 20-pound block of margarine for an 11ac on the Vienna black market! (5)
16: Paul Simon apparently used one of these loaded with Kodachrome. (5)
17: Some might say, at 90 years old, quite literally, he is 'The Don' of photojournalists (8)
18: I want to be a part of it...twice! (3,4)
21: Yes - in Kensington! (2)
22: Stillness at last, no longer standing. (3)
24: Dyslexic photographer tries to work out the talon range of a negative. (5)
25: Very odd sort of person. (6)
26: A graphic file shortcut on a computer or a person holding great influence in a particular sphere of interest. (4)
30: William ***** Smith, American

Cameracraft Crossword
by Phoebus

Use this link for crossword solutions – <https://bit.ly/3N0R0fw>

- photojournalist. (6)
31: e-green activist goes back on a promise. (6)
33: Home for fledgling machine gunners? (4)
34: Manchester-based rock star, that people sing about every Christmas? (4)
35: Hey ***, where you goin' with that gun in your hand? (3)
36: Friedlander initially confused about eel. (3)
37: See 27ac.
38: Opposite of Cyan in the CMYK colour model. (3)



Duran Duran in 2012 – © Jelena Ivanović, EXIT Photo Team, Wikimedia Commons

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CAMERACRAFT

REARVIEW

It is a good time to enter competitions and awards like the Guild of Photographers' monthlies. If you entered during the peak for entries – the Covid-19 years 2020-2022 and just after – there was almost twice as much competition as there is today. It does not lower the standard, but it has relieved all the big association judges of a massive judging load. It's a bit like Zoom virtual meet-ups which have also returned to 'normal' and didn't take over the world as expected. Here are two Gold award winners from the May entry with the Guild.



Ryan Hutton has been featured in our pages before for his consistent and impeccable architectural and urban monochrome.



Paul Tips is a name new to us but very welcome with this very recent (May) garden insect study. It's that kind of world!

CAMERACRAFT

REARVIEW



If there's one photographer who really does make darkness visible (*see page 38*) it's young Daniel Main – he has been awarded Qualified status by the Guild of Photographers, at 18 the youngest ever. Their judges gave this image a Gold. Daniel needs to cut out infrared light, as it overpowers astro shots. He says of this: "The Rosette Nebula (also known as Caldwell 49) is an H II region located near one end of a giant molecular cloud in the Monoceros region of the Milky Way Galaxy. The open cluster NGC2244 (Caldwell 50) is closely associated with the nebulosity, the stars of the cluster having been formed from the nebula's matter. The nebula has been noted to be having a shape reminiscent of a human skull, and is sometimes referred to as the 'Skull Nebula'."

Captured over three months at new moon from the back garden in 2024, this is one of his favourite images. Project Time Totals: 60 hours of HOO (Hydrogen Alpha mapped to the red channel, Oxygen III to the Green & Blue channel) composed of 10 minute sub-exposures.

5 hours of RGB built up from 2 minute subs. 6 hours of post-production. 71 hours in total.

Follow Daniel: [@danielmainphotography](#) Instagram, [daniel.main.169](#) Facebook. For the Guild of Photographers see [www.photoguild.co.uk](#)