

ON BECOMING A NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER IN THE DIGITAL AGE

by

Dr. Robert Berdan



Taken by Nicéphore Niépce, this is the first photograph ever taken which still exists. He called his method heliography (sun writing) and this photograph took 8 hours of exposure time (hence sunlight on both sides of the building). France, 1826.



Brownie 1900-1935



Kodak Instamatic 1963



Olympus Trip 1968

Professional Single Lens Reflex Cameras



Nikon FM2 1982 Film

**Canon 5D Digital and HD Video
21 Megapixels - 2008**

**Nikon D700 12 Megapixels
2008**



Hog Bay Trestle, Port McNicoll 1908-1978

Built in 1908 Demolished 1978

Robert Berdan 1972

Edmund Fitzgerald sank in Lake Superior Nov 10, 1975
29 men perished - it was one of the biggest 730 feet
long. Shown Here moored in Midland Harbour







Taming Wildflowers

by Robert Berdan

Taking artistic photos of wildflowers can be challenging. Mastering specific photography techniques, having the correct equipment, and knowing when and where to find them all contribute to capturing beautiful shots.



Although the Canadian Rockies are home to more than 900 wildflower species, the average visitor sees only a few. Many emerge at specific times and only last a few days or weeks. The Prairie Crocus first appears in the Bragg Creek area as early as March, and along with certain other hardy alpine plants, survives in the snow by generating heat through an exothermic chemical reaction that melts the snow. The Glacier Lily is another common flower that emerges early and follows the retreat of the snowline. As the ground warms up, a succession of different plants flower throughout the spring and summer, especially at different altitudes. In the mountains, some plants don't even begin to flower until late July or August.

Wildflowers are good photography subjects because, unlike wildlife, once you find them, they don't run away. In fact, the biggest challenge is finding them and keeping them still in the wind. Most new digital compact cameras offer a macro mode that allows you to move in very close. The trick is to focus carefully and keep the camera still, so using the manual focus and viewing a live preview on the LCD can be very helpful. A good tripod is a necessary accessory, especially up close, where the depth-of-field is shallow and accurate focusing is harder. The best tripods have legs that go flat to the ground when getting closer to the subject. If your camera has interchangeable lenses, you may also want to invest in some additional accessories such as close-up filters, extension tubes, teleconverters or macro lenses.

Overcast cloudy days provide the ideal lighting conditions for photographing wildflowers – sunny days can over-expose highlights and create too much contrast. If you are hand-holding your camera, a flash can be helpful, but natural light is generally the best. My favourite time to shoot is right after a rainfall, when the plants are covered in water droplets and everything looks and smells fresh. If there is no apparent natural dew, you can add some with a small spray of water from a perfume bottle. A polarizing filter is a useful tool for reducing the shine and reflections off the leaves, while increasing overall colour saturation.

To capture unique wildflower shots, you will need to play and experiment with the composition. Try allowing other plants or flowers to touch the front of your lens and shoot through them to create gentle blurs and a soft vignette effect around the edges. Another technique is to get in real close and fill the frame with the flower to show off its inner parts. If your camera has a depth-of-field preview button, use it to check for background distractions like bright branches or blades of grass, and then alter your camera position or remove the offending elements.

Finding and identifying specific wildflowers requires knowledge about when they bloom and their likely habitats, so a good portable wildflower guide is priceless. I recommend "Wildflowers of the Rocky Mountains" by G.W. Scotter and H. Flygare. If you don't have such a guide, I would recommend that you target river valleys and damp areas. These areas are generally rich with a broad range of wildflowers in early June.

Finally, a few general tips: take notes on the location and time of year you encounter specific flowers for future reference; always bring a small cushion or spongy kneepads, since you will likely spend some time on the ground; and if you're lying in the grass a lot, check your hair and clothing at the end of the day for deer ticks – they usually won't bite until you go to sleep, and you don't want to wake with one embedded in your skin ... trust me!



Photograph by Donna Berdan

Robert Berdan is a professional nature photographer located in Calgary, AB and offers regular photography workshops, including a Spring Wildflower workshop in June.

He may be contacted at (403) 247-2457, by email at rberdan@scienceandart.org, or visited on his website at www.naturephotographers.com/workshops.html.

Flowers from left: Roundleaf Orchid; Prairie crocus in snow; Wood Lily; Oxeye Daisies; Common Harebell; the aptly named Elephanthead Lousewort.

At left: Robert zooms in on a cluster of prairie crocuss flowers.

Nature Photographer's Dream Job Travel Across Alberta & Photograph Nature



Bow Habitat Museum (Sam Livingston Fish Hatchery)



















Some of my Best Shots are taken in the Toilet



Robert Berdan ©

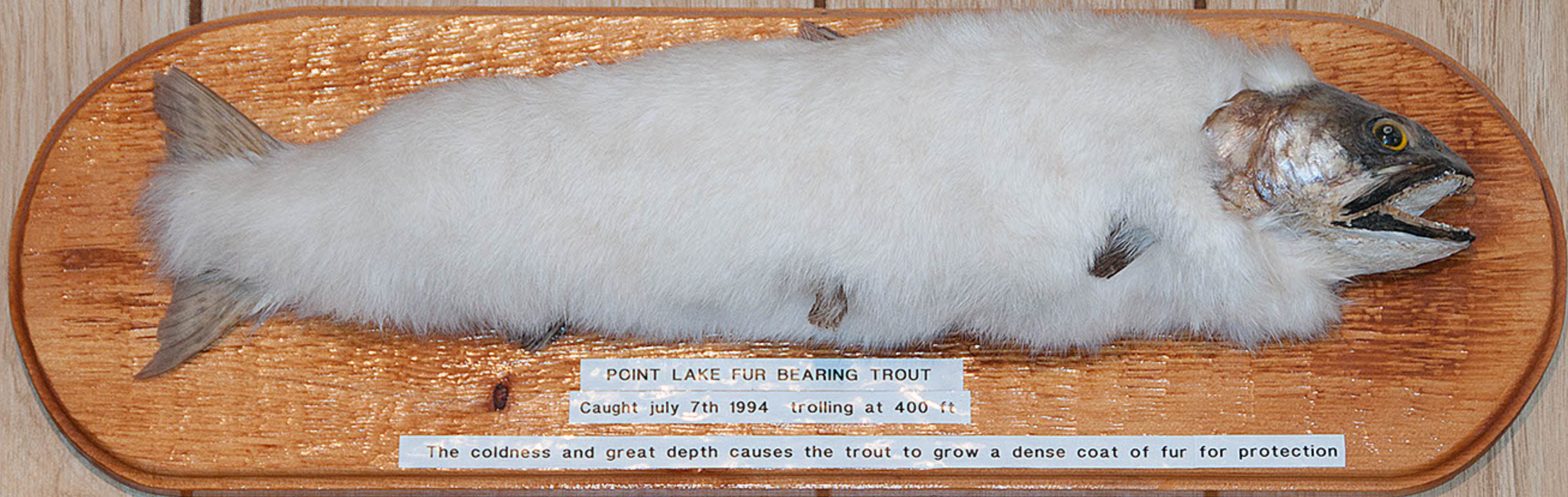
Flourescent Dinoflagellates



inspired by N. Koven







POINT LAKE FUR BEARING TROUT
Caught July 7th 1994 trolling at 400 ft

The coldness and great depth causes the trout to grow a dense coat of fur for protection



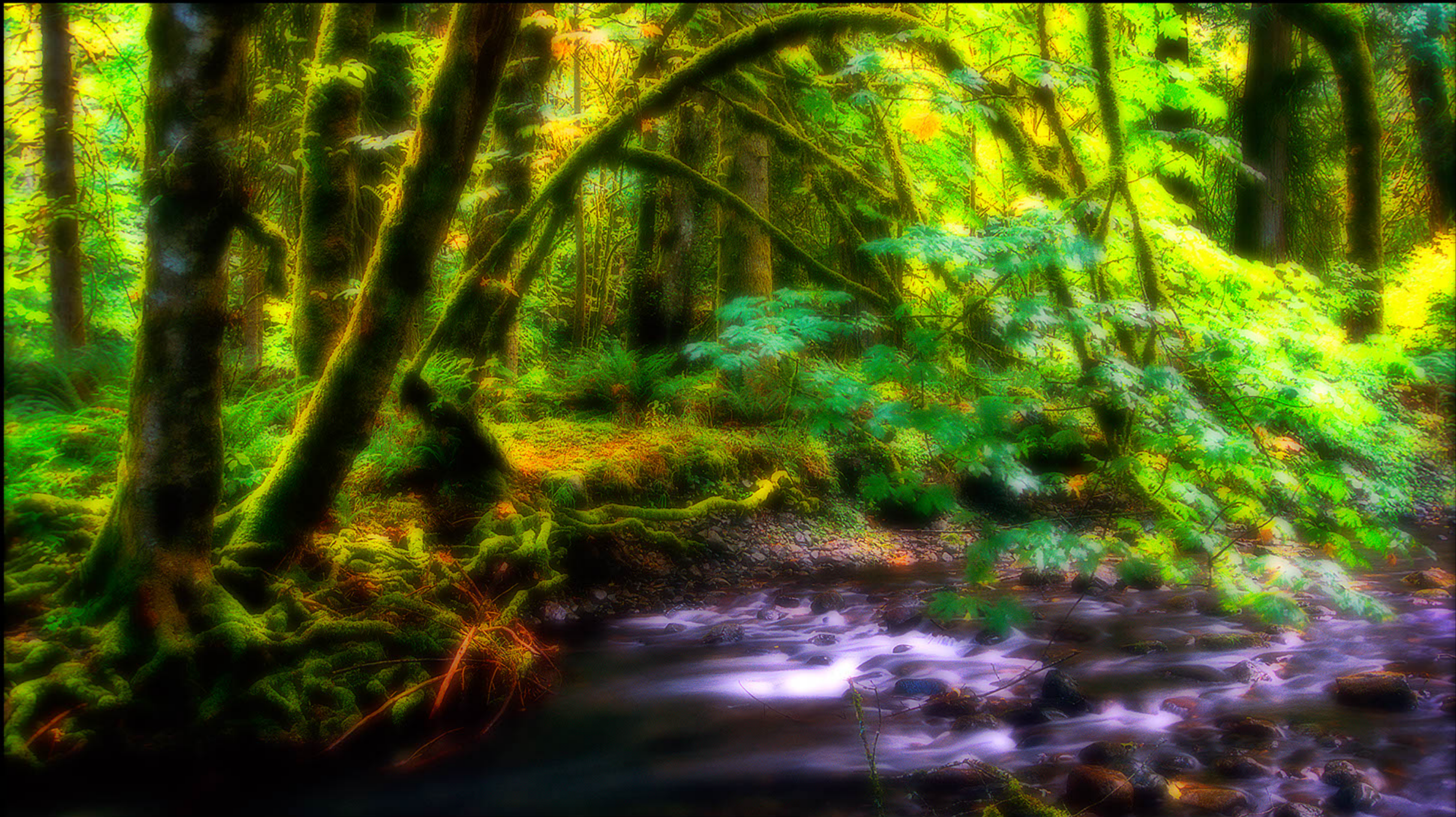


Stoney Park, AB February 13, 2010

Robert Berdan



Robert Berdan





Robert Berdan
February 9, 2010



Kananaskis Upper Lake Stitched Panorama

360 PANORAMAS





Panorama Heads
Set Camera to Manual - lock exposure







Robert Berdan
2010











500 mm F4.8 1/200 sec ISO 400



































630 mm F3.2 ISO 1600 1\6400 sec



















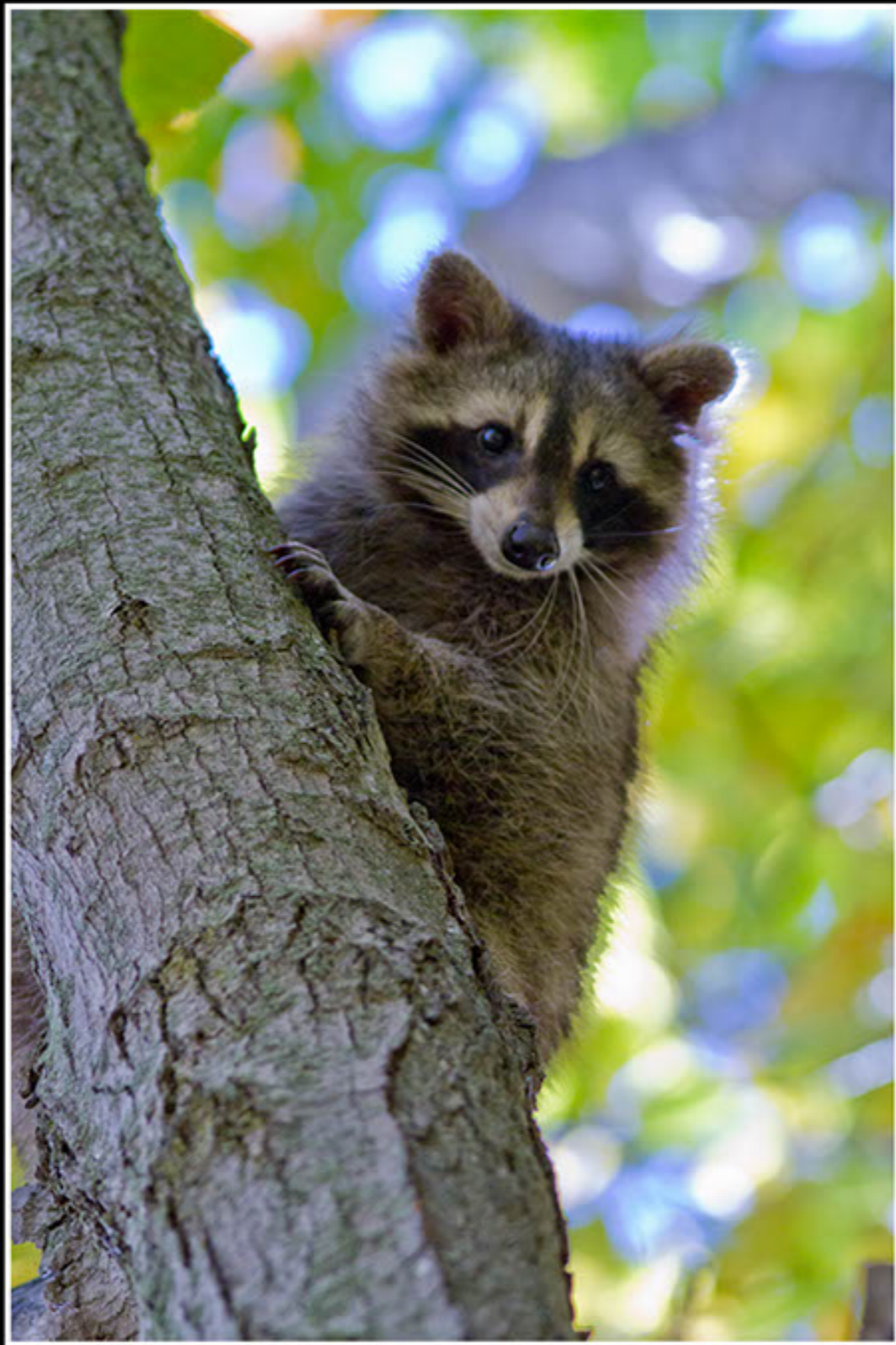
630 mm F4.8 1/400 sec ISO 200















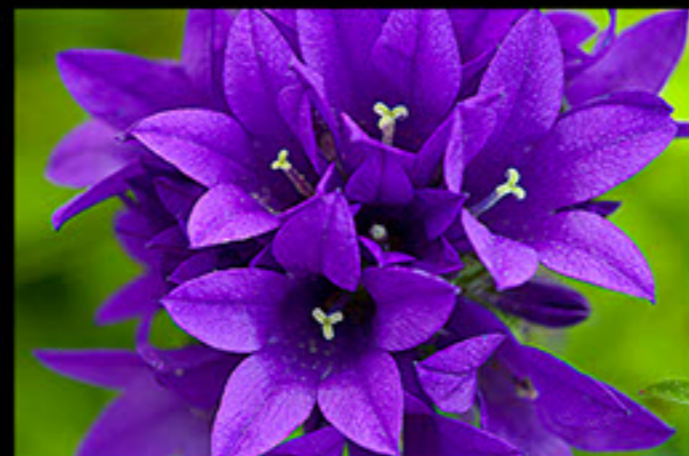
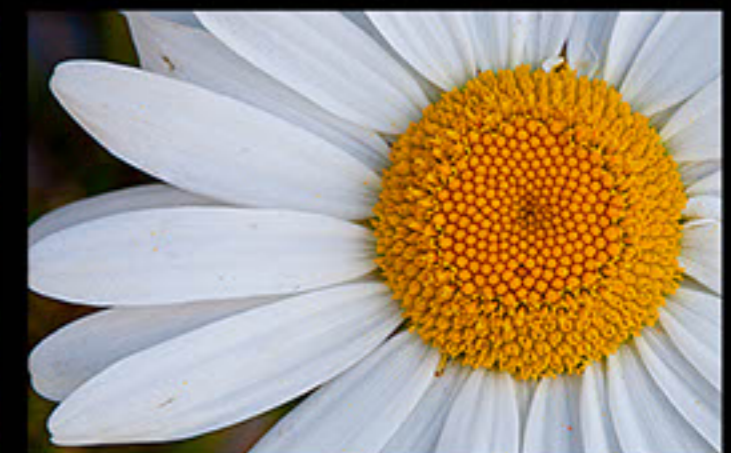






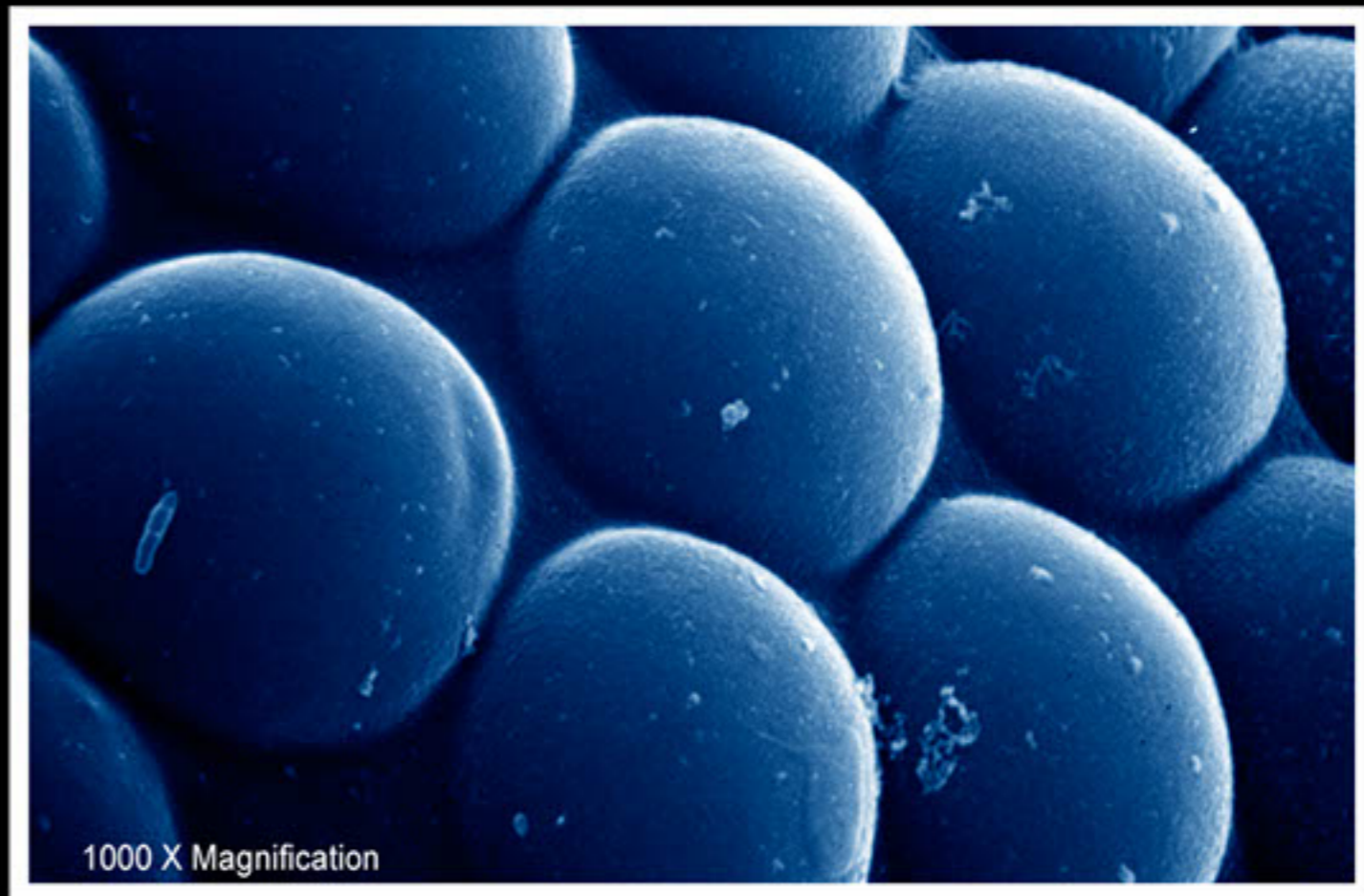
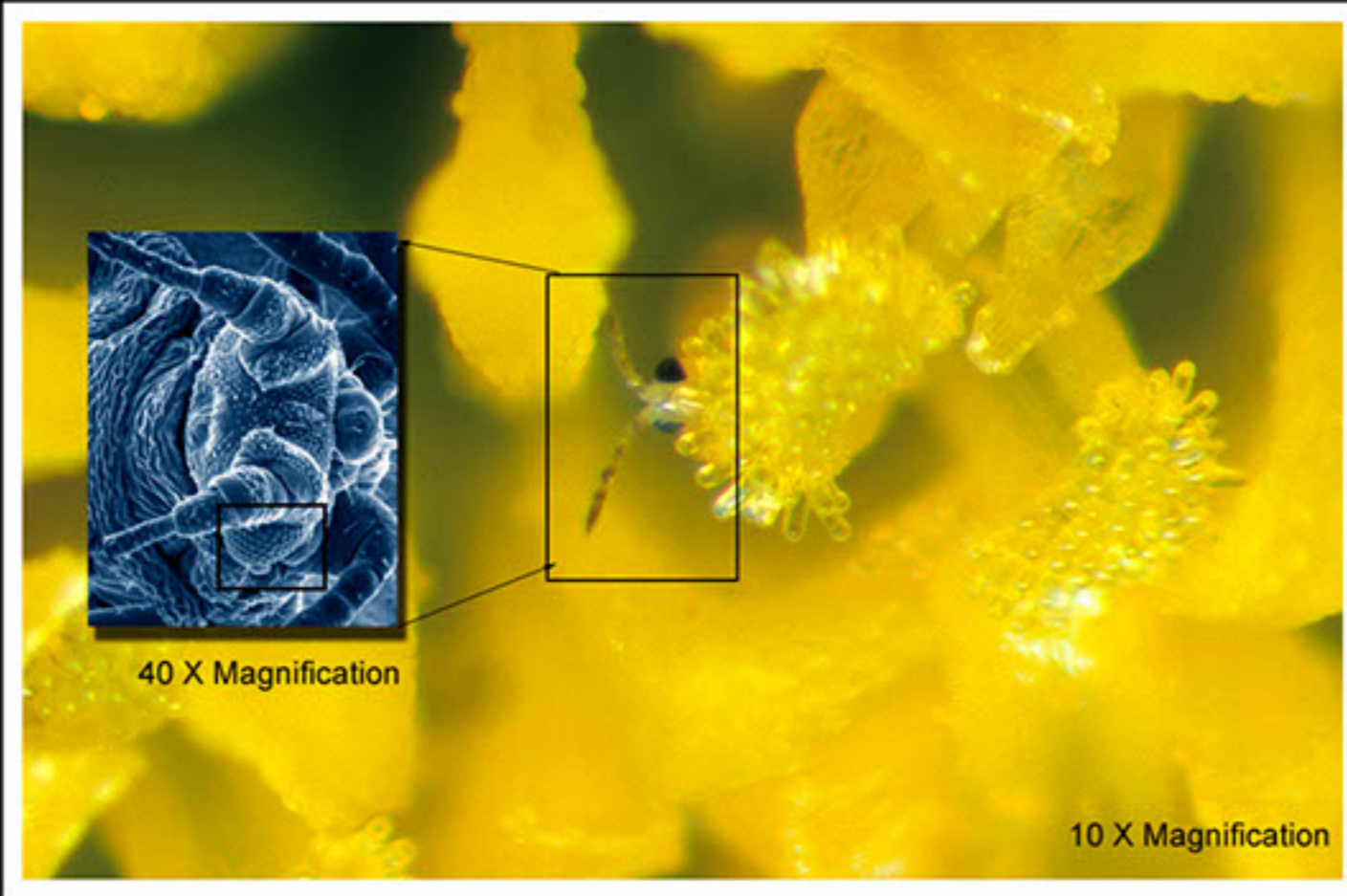
PHOTOGRAPHING FLOWERS

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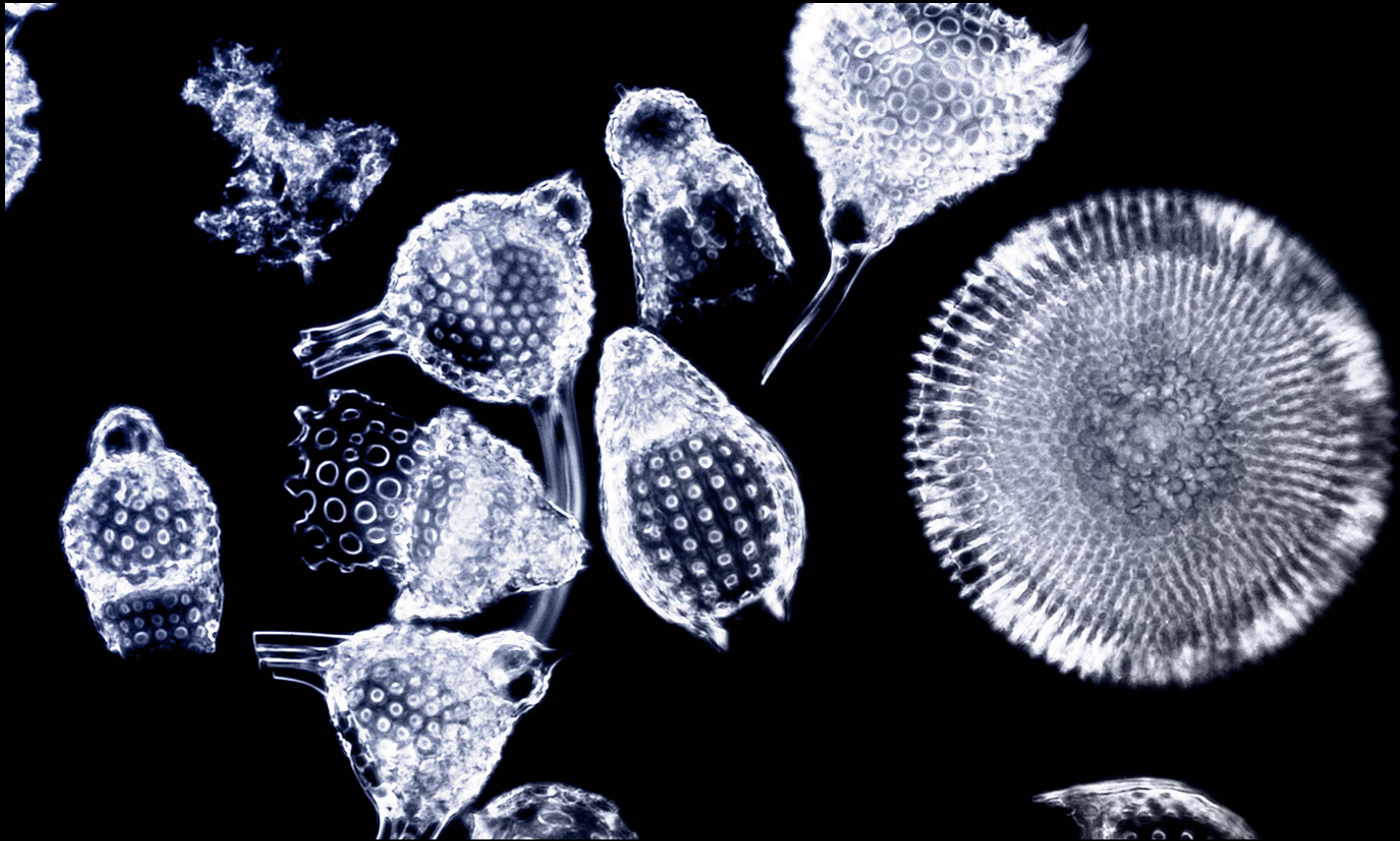


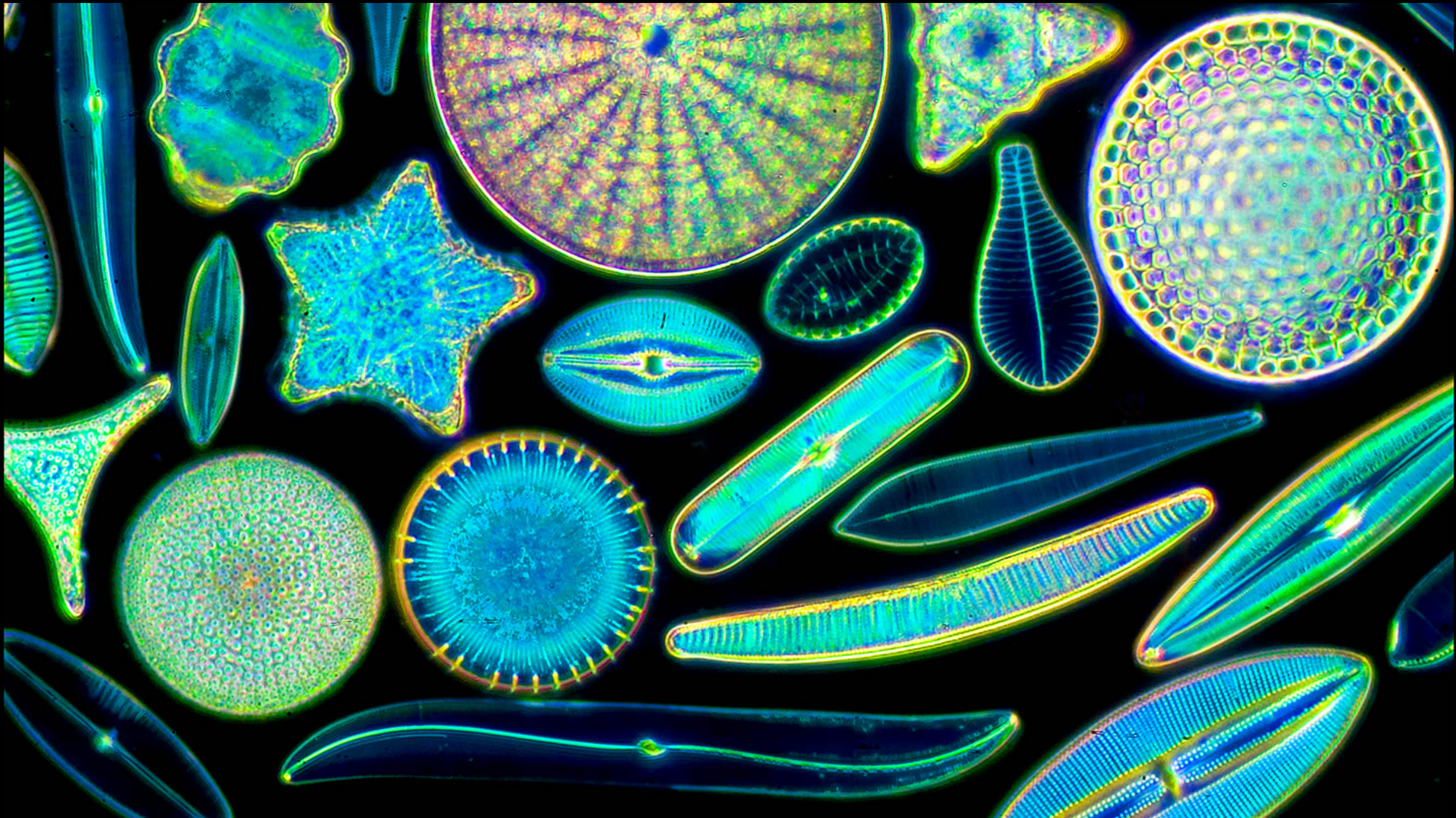
Water Drop Technique















Nature Photographers Disease - Lens Lust 400 mm F2.8 VR II ~ \$11,000.00

Shooting in the Rain







































Waxing Gibbous Moon - 1500 mm ISO 800 1/640 sec



Nikon D300 F2.8 300 mm (420 mm)
ISO 800 1 sec Feb 20, 2008

Things that help make a nature photographer successful:

- ✓ Learn how to create and manage your own web site and utilize it to promote and sell your photographs.
- ✓ In addition to photography skills learn how to shoot and edit video, many of the new cameras are capable of shooting HD video and the demand for video appears to be increasing.
- ✓ Master a variety of software programs including a word processor, book publishing, image editing, video editing and web development.
- ✓ Buy the best camera equipment you can afford, but understand that while your lenses may be good for a decade or more, your camera bodies will likely need to be replaced about every 3-5 years as new technology supersedes older technologies.
- ✓ Learn to write well so you can sell not only your pictures, but your stories - take courses on effective writing or read "On Writing Well" by William Zinsser.
- ✓ Find people that can mentor you - seek out the best photographers and business people you know and listen to them - they can provide you with shortcuts to success.
- ✓ A degree in biology or zoology with a minor in business will help.
- ✓ Seek out subjects that either you know better than anyone else or that no one else is photographing. You need to differentiate yourself from the herd, but be wary of becoming too specialized.



The Canadian Nature Photographer



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**Photography, Photoshop Workshops &
Private Training**