



Spring 2011

CURRENTS



THE MAGAZINE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY ASSOCIATION

CONTENTS

Features

2 THE MOUNTAIN GORILLAS OF RWANDA

Economic growth has been good for the mountain gorillas

Story and photographs by Doug Steakley

10 VALLEY OF THE DUNES

Story and photographs by Wendy Shattil

16 PORTFOLIO: LIFE ON THIN ICE

Photography by Jenny E. Ross

Story by Niki Barrie

22 HUMMINGBIRDS AND FLASH

Story and photographs by Kathy Adams Clark

Columns

26 TECHNOLOGY: Photoshop's Refine Edges Tool

Story and photographs by Lewis Kemper

28 THE OFFICE: Developing Contacts

Story and photograph by Charlie Borland

32 CONSERVATION: The Gifts of Gaia

Story and photograph by Amy Gulick

36 MULTIMEDIA: Video Equipment Essentials

Story and photographs by Chris Gammel

Departments

39 BITS & PIXELS

Cover Image



© Jenny E. Ross

A polar bear mother and her young twin cubs hunt for seals in Nordaustlandet, Svalbard. Polar bears are dependent upon sea ice for all essential aspects of their lives; consequently, climate change poses a severe threat to these icons of the Arctic.

DEAR MEMBER,

We love the electronic flipbook. We like the ease of reading it and bookmarking, and as creators, we find that fewer constraints frees the mind and the spirit. We hope that shows. We also like to hold a magazine in our hands and read it on the train and file in an upright desk file for easy reference. That's why *Currents* is also available as print-on-demand through MagCloud. (<http://www.magcloud/browse/Issue/173863>).

Let's get to this issue of *Currents*. The multitasking Jenny E. Ross is the subject of our cover and portfolio, "Life on Thin Ice™." Jenny is this year's winner of NANPA's Vision Award. She is a conservation writer as well as a photographer, and she is also an attorney.

"The Mountain Gorillas of Rwanda" by Doug Steakley provides a wonderful portrayal of what it is like to photograph these magnificent creatures in their habitat while giving us some background on the location and the culture.

Kathy Adams Clark wrote "Hummingbirds & Flash" to share with members some of the hassles being faced by the lodges and inns in Ecuador where birdwatchers and tourists go to photograph a variety of hummingbirds.

Wendy Shattil authored and illustrated this issue's featured location, the San Luis Valley, in her article, "Valley of the Dunes."

The Conservation column, "The Gifts of Gaia" by Amy Gulick, is on the basic life-sustaining elements many of us take for granted. Charlie Borland's Office column, "Developing Contacts," covers how to approach potential editorial clients. The Multimedia column, "Video Equipment Essentials" covers the basics of what you need to get started in video and the Technology column, "Photoshop's Refine Edge" tool will show you an easy way to extract images in CS5. "Bits & Pixels" is the usual mix of interesting odds and ends.

While economic constraints have pushed us to electronic publications sooner than we would have liked, we have been headed in that direction for some time. We feel it is the environmentally sound thing to do, and we'd like to know what you think.

Niki Barrie, Executive Editor

Sharon Cohen-Powers, Creative Director / Senior Editor





LIFE

ON THIN ICE

Photography by Jenny E. Ross



NANPA Vision Award winner Jenny Ross's ongoing project, "Life on Thin Ice™," focuses on the Arctic. Jenny developed this project based on her long-term work documenting the natural history of polar bears and the effects of climate change on their ability to survive. A comprehensive project about the growing impacts of climate change on ecosystems, wildlife and people throughout the Arctic was a natural next step. Jenny explains, "Human-caused atmospheric warming is fundamentally altering the climate system that supports life on Earth as we know it. Nowhere is this fact more apparent and more globally crucial than in the Arctic, where temperatures are heating up more rapidly than anywhere else in the world. As vast expanses of ice melt and disappear, ice-dependent species are facing profound threats to their continued survival, and the entire planet is losing an essential air-conditioning system and freshwater storage mechanism." Jenny's project uses compelling photography (as shown on these pages) and science to educate the public and government decision-makers, inspire people to care, and galvanize action to address the problems.

Arctic wildlife is a primary focus of Jenny's work, and before photographing, she does research "to



Overleaf: A fog bow frames the melting sea ice in the Arctic Ocean in July 2010. Arctic sea ice is disappearing rapidly due to global warming. The surface area of the ice at its annual minimum extent in 2010 was 830,000 square miles below the average minimum extent documented from 1979 through 2000.

Polar bears use various techniques to hunt seals, but all methods require sea ice. Here, a polar bear slips into the water without making a splash as he begins an aquatic stalk of a basking seal in the Arctic Ocean.

A harp seal pup rests on the sea ice where it was born. At this young age, seal pups cannot swim. If thin ice collapses beneath them, they will drown.



understand the biology, ecology and behavior of the animal and the specific threats the species is facing as the result of climate change," she says. Then, she develops a shot list and connects with scientists who are working on pertinent issues. From the scientists, she not only gains an appreciation for all aspects of the subjects involved, but also determines what scientific fieldwork she might be able to photograph. "In some circumstances," she continues, "I also attempt to contact knowledgeable local people who can help me understand the related issues that are affecting them. As the result of climate change, indigenous Arctic people in many regions are losing their traditional way of life." During the course of her work, Jenny's experiences have run the gamut from heartwarming to heart-wrenching to life-threatening. She has photographed young seal pups making their first hesitant moves on the fractured sea ice where they were born. She has documented receding glaciers, melting permafrost, disintegrating sea ice and collapsing shorelines. She has witnessed polar bears struggling to swim in rough seas far from land and even farther from the nearest ice. She has suffered bouts of frostbite, been



Tufted puffins perch near their rookery above the Chukchi Sea in the Russian Arctic. Warming of sea-surface temperatures due to climate change is affecting the food sources of these endearing birds.

Melting of sea ice needed for resting and breeding is a threat to Atlantic walruses like this one near Lågøya Island, Svalbard.

The sun sets at Isfjeldbanken in West Greenland, where icebergs calved from Sermeq Kujalleq travel into the Atlantic Ocean as they melt. Sermeq Kujalleq is one of the most productive and fast-moving glaciers in the Northern Hemisphere.





As the climate warms, indigenous arctic people are losing their traditional way of life. This image shows a ritual site with ancient whale bones on Russia's Cape Dezhnev, located above the Bering Strait.

The Greenland Ice Sheet is rapidly shrinking. Shown is a disintegrating iceberg calved from the outlet glacier Kangilerngata Sermia.

A dead walrus is towed through thin sea ice by Inuit hunters. Indigenous people in this remote region of Northwest Greenland still rely on marine mammals for food.

An Inuit elder performs a traditional drum dance near the edge of northern Baffin Bay in Greenland.

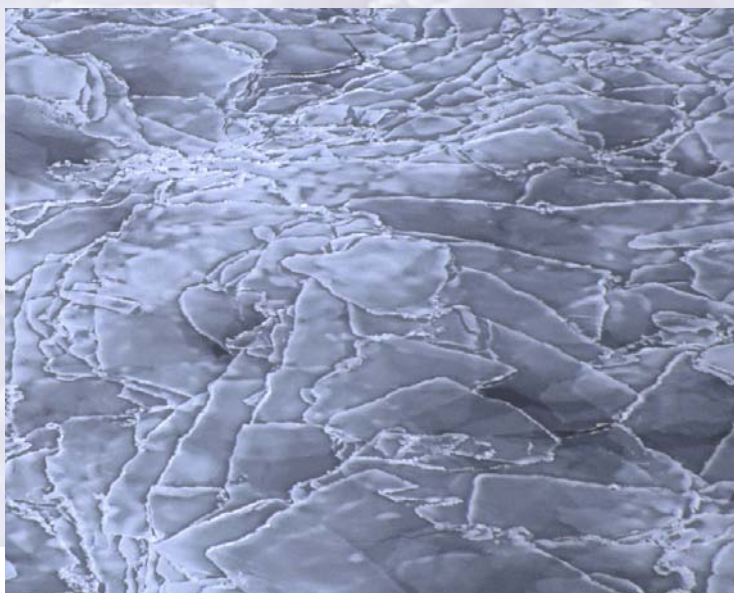
Sea ice on the Gulf of St. Lawrence should be at its thickest in early March, when this photo was taken. An aerial view shows the ice is thin and fractured.



knocked unconscious in 50-foot waves during a powerful storm, and gotten perilously trapped by thin ice, hundreds of miles from help, along with her Inuit companions. "Through it all, I have gained a profound understanding of the many ways in which life truly is on thin ice in the Arctic," she says.

Jenny receives support from a broad range of organizations, government entities, private companies and individuals. "Life on Thin Ice" is supported through donations and grants, in-kind contributions of travel and other services and goods, and funds obtained through publication of project images, print sales and lecture/slideshow presentations. Images from the project have been published in *Nature*, *Nature's Best*, *National Wildlife*, *Ocean Geographic*, *Animan* and other publications. In addition to her lecture/slideshow presentations, photographic support for scientists and conservation organizations, articles and direct advocacy, ultimately Jenny will be producing a book and a traveling educational exhibit. -Niki Barrie

Jenny E. Ross is an award-winning freelance photographer and writer specializing in wildlife natural history and conservation, ecosystems, environmental issues, and related cultural and policy topics. Her clients include the Defenders of Wildlife, Barnes & Noble, BBC, Canon, IUCN, National Geographic, National Wildlife Federation and many more. In addition to her work in the Arctic, some of Jenny's other projects focus on conservation of the world's bears, restoration of the Salton Sea ecosystem, and climate change issues in Antarctica. Before devoting herself to conservation photography and writing, Jenny attended Stanford University and Harvard Law School, and practiced law for a number of years. Her educational background includes the natural sciences, philosophy, art, law, and public policy, all of which, she says, "provided a valuable foundation for the conservation work that is my passion, and which I'm now completely dedicated to pursuing."



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