

# NATURE PHOTOGRAPHER

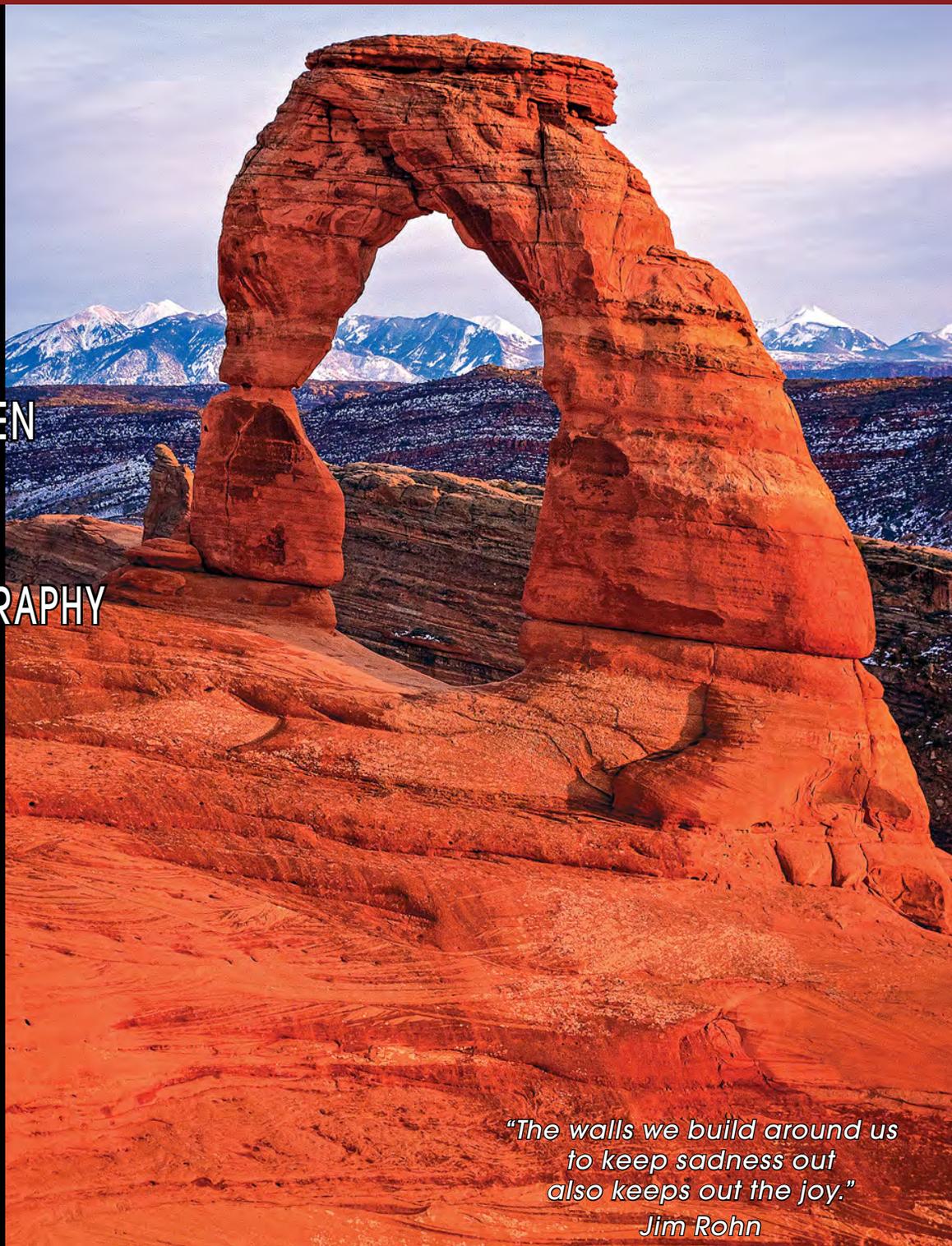
LOVE  
OF ICE

PATH  
LESS TAKEN

STAR  
PHOTOGRAPHY

DELUXE  
EDITION

FALL/WINTER  
2014/2015



*"The walls we build around us  
to keep sadness out  
also keeps out the joy."*

*Jim Rohn*

# AN ICON OF THE WILD GALEN ROWELL'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

Article and Photography by Mark Hendricks, Field Contributor

Mark's web site: <http://markhendricksphoto.com> (Click for Live Link)

Digital capture by Mark Hendricks



Images by Mark Hendricks

**Above:** The Dolly Sods Wilderness features plants and animals more commonly found in Canada. This image shows blueberry, huckleberry, cranberry, sandstone, and red spruce that make up this most unique wilderness. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 40mm, f/11 at 0.6 second, evaluative metering mode, auto bracket exposure mode, ISO equivalent 200.

**Facing Page:** Dawn storm break, Assateague Island. A rainstorm had gone on all night and as it continued a brilliant sunrise broke over the horizon. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 23mm, f/11 at 1/8 second, Galen Rowell 3 Stop Hard Edge Graduated ND filter, evaluative metering mode, auto bracket exposure mode, ISO equivalent 100.

It is hard to fathom that it has been over twelve years since the world lost the great Galen Rowell. He was the ultimate adventure photographer, a master of prose, and led the crusade against falsification in nature photography before most consumers owned a computer. At a time when so many mountain photographers utilized cumbersome large format equipment, Galen preferred the 35mm SLR because it was lightweight and allowed him to move through the landscape with ease. He held a number of first ascent records in mountaineering, was the oldest man (at 57) to climb Yosemite's El Capitan in a single day and completed a book on Tibet with the Dalai Lama; but beyond his many accolades Galen's legend is that of the archetypal explorer, humanitarian, and intrepid mountain climber. His great talent in writing on photography and adventure travel allowed him to express a deep connection to wilderness that resonated with many.

I have no formal training in photography; the great outdoors is the classroom. Others may augment their learning with workshops and online classes. While these are worthy pursuits, they can be financially burdensome to those without disposable income. Luckily Galen was incredibly voracious in his ability to write profoundly on the complete photographic process. From his classic volume on outdoor photography, *Mountain Light*, to his numerous books and articles on adventure and travel, Galen's insightful words rank among the best "textbooks" for both the amateur and professional

photographer alike. In our overly tech-happy world, where Photoshop is more often used as a verb than in reference to a software package, the writings and philosophy of Galen Rowell are perhaps more important now than when they were first published.

This is not an opine longing for the days of yore; I love digital photography. Nor is this a biographical piece. Details about Galen's amazing life abound in many printed works and blogs. However, it is a tribute to one man's philosophy that has influenced my work more than any other. Galen

AN ICON OF THE WILD—GALEN ROWELL'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

embraced technology, such as digital printing, but his ideas transcend the mediums of film or digital sensors as a means of recording light.

We are in the midst of exciting times as camera technology gets more and more impressive. Yet the constant bombardment of the new, most up-to-date equipment has begun to leave me a tad neurotic. ("You mean we have ok image quality at ISO 204,800?!!") Yearning for the latest camera gear is fine, as we should always strive for quality equipment, but it will never be as important as passion, familiarity with the gear we own, and the emotional response that is elicited from a subject. This is what Galen Rowell has taught me, and unfortunately, I never got the chance to meet him.

Galen documented wilderness and life all across this big blue marble but he is perhaps most known for his work in the Sierra Mountains of California and in Tibet. This is a far cry from the mid-Atlantic region of the eastern United States where yours truly was born and raised. Yet, when I admire a Galen Rowell image I become enthralled with a desire to be within the scene itself, almost like an awakening of the collective unconsciousness that is adrift in the wild all humans share. He was the first photographer who convinced me of the emotional power that can be contained in only one image. Additionally, he was the first photographer whose books I looked forward to reading as much as viewing the images. Because of his talent as a writer he ingrained many quotes in my mind. These are but some of the quotes of Galen's I cherish and I hope their interpretation through my journey inspires you to learn from this great master of the camera. I am better for it and I believe you will be as well.

"[Photography] evolved from an intense devotion to mountains and wilderness that eventually shaped all the parts of my life and brought them together." *Mountain Light*, Page 40.

Even on a camping trip, fellow travelers will chastise me for waking up at such an early hour. "Pre-dawn light is pure magic," I will normally reply to the sounds of snoring from my tired companions. To experience the earth as it meets the sun is one of life's most wonderful daily events, with or without the camera. Yet what is it about the sunrise that drives us to carry the camera? Why do we photograph? And why do we choose to photograph nature? Superficially these questions appear rhetorical, but these are important questions every photographer should consider before the shutter is released. At its most fundamental, photography is a form of communication. Whether showing the plight of an endangered species or ecosystem, exhibiting our artistic perception of a scene, or simply wanting to share with others a moment that we enjoyed, we are communicating with a viewer.

Galen was first a rock climber and wilderness adventurer who began to carry a camera only after these passions were firmly established in his life. The impetus for his early images came from a desire to communicate with non-rock climbers why he was hanging off vertical granite cliffs and hiking in remote backcountry. He first had a passion, or rather a devotion, to wilderness which then transferred into photography from which the two became congealed and inseparable. His emotional response to a scene was as tangible for him as his Nikon. As his career blossomed he later developed photographic techniques to better exhibit his subjects. These techniques ranged from the athletic to the intellectual, i.e. developing chest pouches for carrying a camera when trail running and having a firm grasp on the physical properties of light and the cognitive sciences.

To make film record a scene more like the human eye, Galen became an expert on the way film rendered light. He partnered with Singh-Ray to create a line of graduated neutral density filters that I find invaluable, though today's camera RAW files provide much more flexibility in dynamic range than slide film ever did. With the current technologies of exposure blending and in camera HDR, one can argue that use of Graduated ND Filters have become archaic. I have flirted with all the above methods to increase dynamic range but I now appreciate my Graduated ND Filters more than ever. I would much rather use the filters than spend more time in the digital darkroom. The less time in front of the computer, the more time I can be out enjoying the wild lands that give meaning to my life. The camera is a tool in the journey, and it is the wilderness that inspires me. I find the optical quality and color fidelity of these filters to be superb and I continue to prefer them over the current technology when appropriate, which is almost always.

Galen was also a master storyteller and often wrote of a photograph being more powerful than reality. To give a sense of depth and majesty, he often placed the figures of human or animal subjects within a mountain landscape. These images became visual narratives of rock climbing expeditions and conveyed the natural history of a species. When adding a human figure to the landscape it not only shows the grandeur of the wilderness but also may make it relatable, and thus more powerful. This works just as well for wildlife. One of my favorites of Galen's photographs is "Mountain Goat Climbing a Shear Wall, Logan Mountains, Northwest Territory (Canada, 1973)." While the subject is self-explanatory, the image shows the goat in the midst of a vertical climb that would give even the most confident climbers some difficulty. The relationship between the goat and mountain are deeply demonstrated. The goat is a powerful, strong animal that can handle terrain that is as beautiful as it is dangerous. This juxtaposition of wildlife photography into the landscape imparts meaning that would have been lost if Galen had only photographed the goat closely.

Fast forward to the fall of 2013, which saw one of the largest irruptions of snowy owls on record in the United States. Concentrations of owls were found near my home in the mid-Atlantic including, but not limited to, downtown city areas and suburbs. Much to the chagrin of bird watchers and photographers many sand dunes on my beloved Assateague Island National Seashore were transformed into wintering time-shares by the majestic owl and the occasional seal. Often I met budding photographers who, acting ethically to not disturb the animal, were nonetheless enervated by not being able to "fill the frame" with the white feathered visitors. At one time I too would have been perturbed by this seemingly innocuous, but disappointing, feeling but from studying Galen's wildlife photography I learned that placing the animal in the landscape transforms the meaning of the photograph. There are already an innumerable amount of portrait-esque images of most animals. Here was a real opportunity to document an uncommon wild species and how it lived in a foreign landscape, but the notion of "filling the frame" blocked creative output and appreciation of the rare sightings. Galen's wildlife images are visual sentences that disclose the season, the weather, the struggle of existence, etc. Whether the subject is close or far, I strive for my wildlife images to tell a story, and Galen's did just that.

"I've visited enough wilderness in the east to know not only what is there, but also what has been lost in this area of



Images by Mark Hendricks

Above: Smoky Mountains, Cades Cove, brilliant golden fall light made the valleys in Cades Cove burnished in yellow. A Galen Rowell Two Stop Soft Edge Graduated ND Filter was used to properly expose the grass and blue sky. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 36mm, f/7.1 at 1/1250 second, evaluative metering mode, auto bracket exposure mode, ISO equivalent 400.

Below: Fall color display, Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 25mm, f/11 at 1/60 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO equivalent 200.



AN ICON OF THE WILD—GALEN ROWELL'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

Images by Mark Hendricks

Right: Balsam fir, Shenandoah. A balsam fir is contrasted against a snow-covered mountain in a Shenandoah National Park designated wilderness area. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF100-400mm F4.5-5.6L IS USM lens, focal length 105mm, f/9 at 1/200 second, evaluative metering mode, auto bracket exposure mode, ISO equivalent 400.

Facing Page: The Dolly Sods Wilderness features plants and animals more commonly found in Canada. These images show blueberry, huckleberry, cranberry, sandstone, and red spruce that make up this most unique wilderness. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 17mm, f/11 at 1 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO equivalent 200.



early settlement by Europeans." *North America The Beautiful*, page 174

Preach to the choir, Brother Galen. Whenever I return home from a trip in one of the great wilderness areas of the American West I normally become a tad melancholy due to the lack of representation of the wild in my motherland on the east coast. The history and urbanization of the eastern United States took place long before the ideas of wilderness advocates like John Muir became engraved in the social conscience of its citizens. But the east has its superlatives. Whether the tropical species found within the mangroves of Everglades National Park, the elk that wander the rugged Alleghenies of North Central Pennsylvania, or the crown jewels of Appalachia parklands, Shenandoah and Great Smoky Mountains National Parks, wilderness is alive in the east.

Galen's work as an advocate for wilderness inspired me to seek out lesser-known (but extremely rewarding) locales near my home. One such area is the Monongahela National Forest of West Virginia. Within the vast hardwoods of this wild forest and sitting upon the Allegheny Plateau is the Dolly Sods Wilderness area, my personal Shangri-La of designated wilderness in the east. When one first enters this area it is common to feel as if you were transported to a more arctic environment. Vast fields of heath barrens and sphagnum moss are contrasted with wind swept red spruce groves and ancient sand stone formations. During the fall months the tundra-like high sods becomes burnished in spectacular autumn hues. Neighboring to this area, but still within the Monongahela, are the Roaring Plains and Otter Creek wilderness areas. Old growth conifer and hardwood forest fill this ancient land and I am overcome with appreciation that these sanctuaries exist and forget that I am only hours away from Washington, D.C.

While eastern wilderness places are not as vast or as frequent as their western counterparts, when I am in these areas I have found components in each that I enjoy as much, and in some locales more, than the west. Galen, a California boy, realized later in life that his home state offered the wild lands he desired, though it took his frequent journeys around the world to truly appreciate it. When I visit the wild lands near my home I am reminded of this quote from Galen's artist statement featured on his website MountainLight.com, "I have a confession to make. I've known all along that more of what I am seeking in the wilds is right here in my home state of California than anywhere else on earth." I also share in this confession, and implore you to find something to appreciate close to home.

"I have made many of my favorite pictures when I was carrying only one camera with a couple of lenses." *Galen Rowell's Vision*, page 62, "Carrying Light and No-So-Light," and

"What I mean by photographing as a participant rather than observer is that I'm not only involved directly with some of the activities that I photograph, such as mountain climbing, but even when I'm not I have the philosophy that my mind and body are part of the natural world." "Frequently Asked Questions," *Outdoor Photographer*, April 2002

A constant mantra I have heard in nature photography and photojournalism is "1/8 and be there." Now wherever the subjective "there" is depends on the photographer, but if your subject is found within wilderness it may be more difficult to get to your "there." Galen, the mountaineer, stressed often the necessity to travel light. Backpacking and mountaineering require specialized equipment and when paired with photographic gear the weight increases rapidly. The weight can be both physically and mentally limiting, with the



AN ICON OF THE WILD—GALEN ROWELL'S ENDURING INFLUENCE

mental being the biggest blockade in capturing images. Too much gear equates to too many choices. Outdoor photography, when the light is fleeting or an animal is fleeing, requires quick decision making. Unless I am working for a client and require specific gear, I will only carry two lenses with me on wilderness expeditions: a medium telephoto (70-200mm or 100-400mm) and a wide-angle lens (16-35mm or 17-40mm). These two workhorses cover most of the situations that arise in the wild, do not add much extra weight, and grant me the creative freedom that would not exist if I had not forced myself to become very familiar with this light gear.

This methodology was rooted in Galen's idea of participating in the wilderness and going beyond mere spectating. To the casual observer most nature photography is thought of as a sedentary hobby. And why shouldn't they? How many times have you witnessed large groups of photographers lined up in the same location waiting for the right light? Galen ran and climbed to get a different angle. While his intellectual curiosity made him an expert in understanding light and optical phenomena, he would create moments for himself when the light was not optimal or at an angle he preferred. His epic images of mountain climbing could only happen because he was a climber himself much like his landscape images were so unique because he actively "chased" moments.

Galen often analogized this approach to outdoor photography much like an action sport. His most famous photograph, *Rainbow Over the Potala Palace, Lhasa (Tibet, 1981)* serves as the perfect example. This incredible image depicts a rainbow seemingly sprouting to the heavens from the great palace bathed in golden evening light. Galen may have been

in Tibet at the right time to see that rainbow, but he was only in the right place due to pure athleticism. Not happy with the distracting elements which limited his compositions Galen dropped most of his camera gear and ran over a mile at 12,000 feet in elevation to "line" the rainbow up with the palace. He ran with a light tripod and carried one body and one lens. While the surroundings were nothing less than perfect, it was the quick mobility and even quicker thinking of Galen to bring that image, almost surreal, to life.

"The elements of the art of adventure apply just as much to a walk through a city park as to photography of the most exotic places on earth." *Galen Rowell's Vision, Preface.*

Most will not be able to get to the wild areas Galen visited, nor equal his athleticism. Some photographers love their graduated ND filters while others prefer image blending in software. These differences in personal style can help us to express our photographic vision, but also distract from the fundamental value of the art form. I believe the most important lesson Galen taught us was to passionately care about what we photograph. Allow that passion to fuel the desire to create an image that is as equal parts you as it is the subject. Allow it to help you tell a story about a cause dear to your heart. The tragic plane crash that claimed the lives of both Galen and his wife, Barbara, prevented us from ever knowing what work could have come about if he had transitioned to digital. However we can take solace that this incredible artist left behind a legacy of work that can continue to inspire and educate photographers for generations to come.

Thank you, Galen. May your memory exist on every mountain and in all wild lands. NP

Dolly Sods sandstone, by Mark Hendricks. Ancient Sandstone formations abound in the Dolly Sods Wilderness in the Monongahela National Forest. Canon EOS REBEL T3, Canon EF17-40mm F4L USM lens, focal length 26mm, f/11 at 1/4 second, evaluative metering mode, auto exposure mode, ISO equivalent 200.



You create the Art...  
I'll create the mats!

Call 1-800-385-6540  
Visit [www.matcutter.com](http://www.matcutter.com)

Ballheads  
Panheads  
Quick Releases  
5-Year Warranty

MH 1300-657  
MH 2000-550C

HP Marketing Corp.  
800/735-4373  
[hpmarketingcorp.com](http://hpmarketingcorp.com) [giottosusa.com](http://giottosusa.com)



Fern, a gentle horse, was rescued by First Light Farm Equine Shelter, a licensed, 501(c)3 non-profit shelter from an out-of-state auction where "meat buyers" go to purchase horses. At approximately 22 years old Fern, a former harness race horse, lives a peaceful and healthy life at First Light Farm Equine Shelter in Perry, Maine.

Neglected/abused horses, and also horses sent to auctions where they can be bought by "meat buyers" who send them to slaughter factories outside the U.S. can use your financial help!

Every dollar helps! Example—The cost of 1 LATTE can buy 1 BALE OF HAY.

• First Light Farm Equine Shelter ... a licensed, 501(c)3 non-profit shelter  
Connect on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/firstlightfarm>