

# The Pacific Rim Explorer

Instructional Photo Tour 2020

**T**he *Pacific Rim Explorer Instructional Photo Tour 2020* combines a day of professional photography instruction with five full days of exploration and photography within British Columbia's amazing Pacific Rim National Park Reserve. On this unique photo tour you'll be provided with the opportunity, the conceptual and creative tools, and the techniques needed to capture striking images of spectacular land- and seascapes and a diverse array of wildlife. And, we'll do all this while traveling among hundreds of islands and islets on the classic and spacious 70-foot schooner, the *Passing Cloud*.

**Photography Instruction.** The Instructional Photo Tour begins with a day of photography instruction. The session will be of benefit to all levels of photographers – from enthusiastic novices through to seasoned professionals. We will discuss both the technical and creative aspects of

nature photography as well as the specifics of photographing the types of scenery and wildlife we're most likely to encounter during the trip. While the instructional material will be agnostic with respect to camera brand and camera style (e.g., point & shoot vs. SLR) it will be assumed that most participants will be bringing either digital SLR's or mirrorless cameras.

Photography instruction will also take place during our time on the *Passing Cloud*. This instruction will be less formal and on a "time-permitting" basis. The topics will vary, depending on both the specific interests of, and requests made by, those on the trip. It could include sessions on digital workflow topics, including raw image processing through to discussions on field-techniques and camera gear.



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

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

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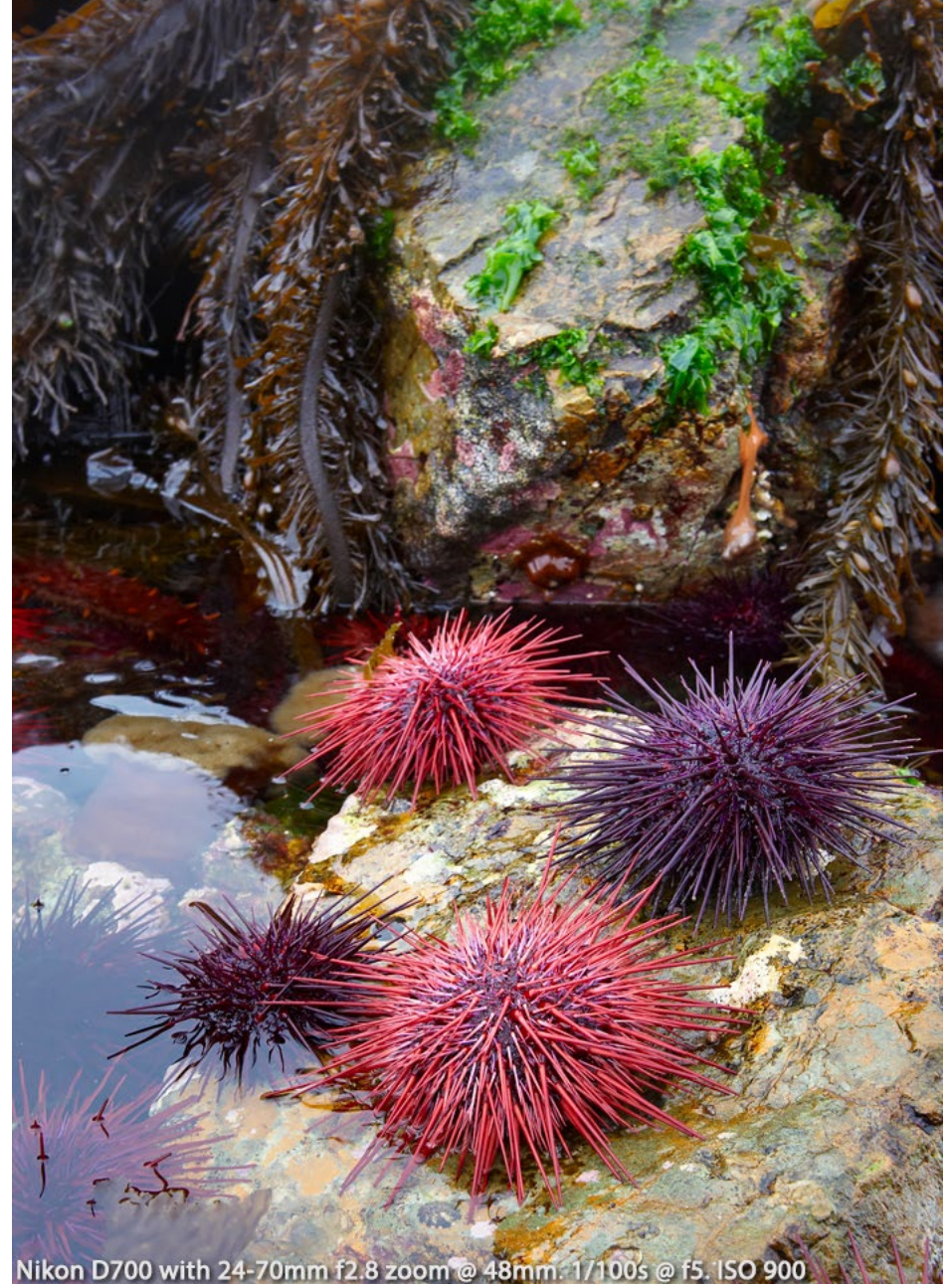
**The Region – And Our Expedition At A Glance.** Our expedition will explore the wildlife, wilderness and the rich Nuu-chah-nulth cultural heritage of Barkley Sound and the Broken Group, which is an archipelago of more than 300 islands and islets. This region has long been considered the crown jewel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

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

**A Tour of Exploration!** Like almost all our photo tours, this is a multi-faceted trip, focusing not simply on a single species of wildlife, but on *all* the inhabitants of the Barkley Sound region – and the entire ecosystem and land- and seascapes in which they thrive. While viewing and photographing coastal terrestrial mammals and marine mammals are an integral part of this trip, we will be approaching this trip *with an attitude of finding and capturing any form of natural beauty and natural art we can find*. This may include many species of wildlife and birds, intertidal scenes, landscapes, seascapes, and more!

**About the Photography “Style” On This Photo Tour.** On this trip – as on our other photo tours – this is a “*photography in true wilderness*” experience. This means we will spend the bulk of our time alone and we'll have to “track down” our subject matter without the help of other outfitters, spotters or real-time online apps listing recent sightings (i.e., there is no

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



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



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



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

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“network of sightings” for us to plug into!). Additionally we’ll have no “set-up” situations where we can set up in a specific location ahead of time and with the knowledge that a certain species will predictably appear and pose for us! The advantage of our “*photography in true wilderness*” approach is that it produces a far more unique and personalized experience and it can often lead to more original and compelling photos. A possible downside is that it means we don’t know the specifics of the shooting conditions ahead of time and thus may put more onus on the photographer to make snap technical and creative decisions in a field setting. This means it may challenge – and encourage you to expand – your photographic skills more than other photo tours do!

**Our Wildlife Subject Matter:** While this is a *photography-in-true-wilderness* trip, we are definitely headed into a target-rich environment! Here’s a quick run down of both our “*most likely*” wildlife subjects and our “*less likely but possible*” wildlife subjects:

**A. Most Likely Subjects** (50% or greater probability of encounter):

- Grey Whales
- Humpback Whales
- Steller Sea Lions

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

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

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

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

**2020 Trip Start and End Points:** The photo tour starts and ends in Ucluelet, BC.

**2020 Dates:** April 4-11, 2020, including arrival and departure days.  
Aboard the *Passing Cloud* schooner from April 6-11, 2020.

**2020 Price:** \$4599 CAD plus 5% GST. Subtract \$75 for shared accommodation in Ucluelet, BC.

**2020 Photo Tour Leader:** Brad Hill.

## What's Included?

- All meals and accommodation in Ucluelet beginning on the evening of Day 1 (see Itinerary)
- A full day of professional photography instruction at the beginning of the trip and multiple informal instructional sessions during the course of the trip
- All food and accommodation while aboard the *Passing Cloud*
- A highly-experienced crew, wildlife guides, chef and a professional photography guide
- All First Nation, Conservation, Park, and Stewardship fees
- Use of onboard gear and resources, including rubber boots!
- Use of Zodiac® and all associated safety gear (life jackets, etc.)

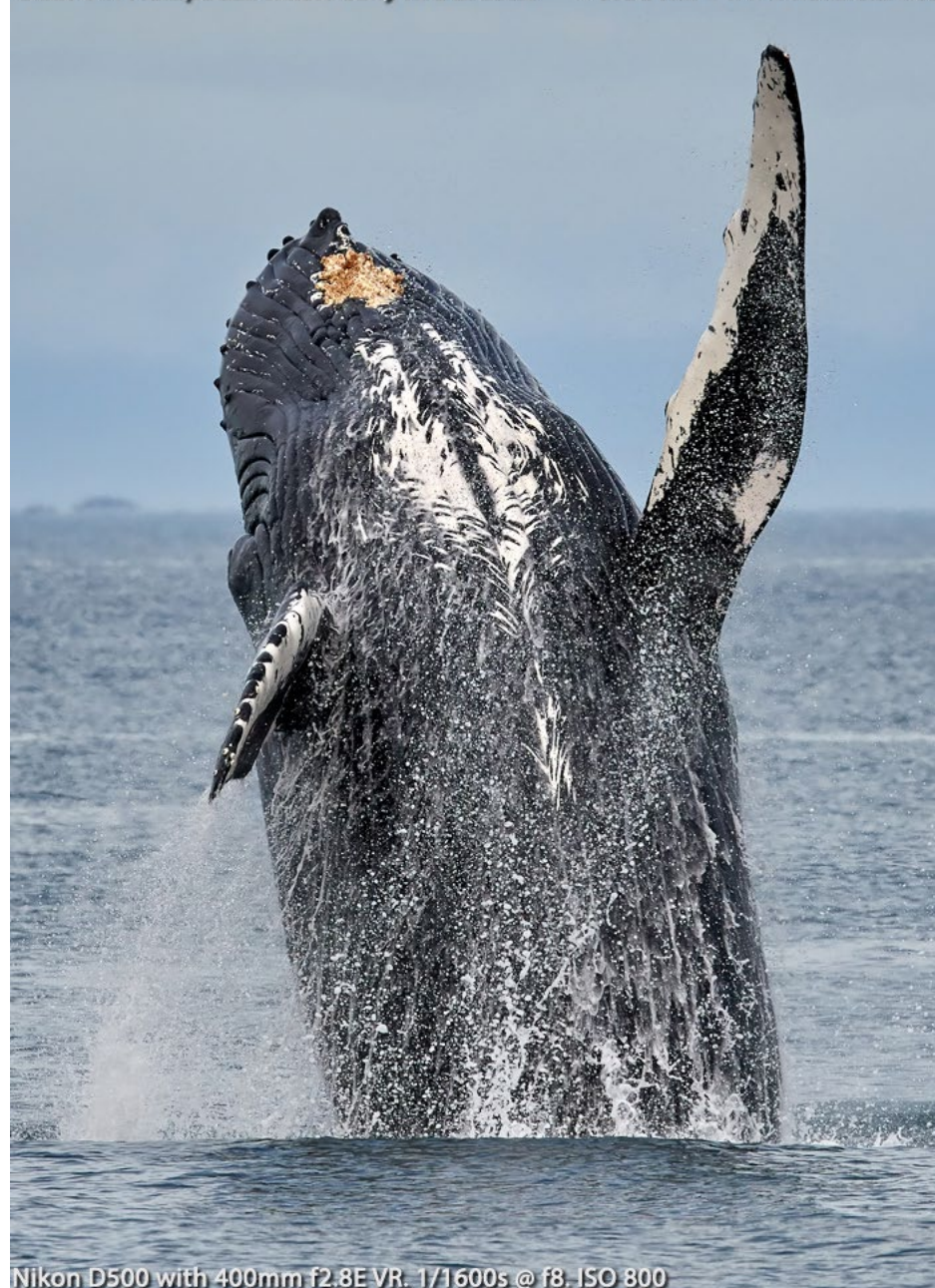
## What's Not Included?

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

## What To Expect?

- Cool and rapidly “changeable” weather (daytime highs of about 10-15C or 50-60° fahrenheit) with some light and moderate rain

**Blast Off! Humpback Whale early in a breach.** © Brad Hill – [www.naturalart.ca](http://www.naturalart.ca)



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



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



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

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- Mostly calm seas, but with some short-duration bouts of rolling water
- Hearty, healthy and delicious food
- Always warm, always dry floating basecamp
- Great wildlife, landscape and seascape photo ops
- A truly unique and once-in-a-lifetime experience!

**Photo Tour Leader:** Brad Hill

**Accommodation:** While in Ucluelet we'll be staying at the Black Rock Oceanfront Resort.

This trip is being offered in association with *Outer Shores Expeditions*. While in Pacific Rim National Park Reserve we will be staying on their classic 70-foot wooden schooner – the *Passing Cloud*. Please be aware that you will be sharing a berth with one other person while on the *Passing Cloud*.

## Fitness Requirements of Participants

This photo tour requires only a moderate level of physical fitness and good mobility. We will be walking/hiking a number of times on this trip and we will be shooting images from the deck of the sailboat, from within a Zodiac®, and on shore. To participate in this trip you should be able to perform the following tasks:

- **Be able to hike up to 1 km (under a mile) on uneven, slanted and potentially slippery terrain and/or over some obstacles that could be up to a meter or slightly more high (e.g., large fallen logs) – all while carrying your own camera gear.**
- **Be able to easily move between the sailboat and the Zodiac®.** This involves climbing up or down a 5' vertical ladder.
- **Shoot your camera from within a Zodiac®.** This involves multiple tasks, including shooting your camera while sitting on the pontoon of the Zodiac® or, at times, while sitting on the floor of the Zodiac®. In some cases you may find that the most convenient way to shoot will

be while kneeling (on your knees) on the bottom of the Zodiac®. This is the reason knee pads are included as optional items on the gear list. Note that tripods and monopods can **not** be used within the Zodiac®. The obvious consequence is that you must be able to *hand-hold the camera/lens system* that you will be bringing and using on this photo tour.

On some occasions it WILL be possible to stand in the Zodiac® when shooting, but you will be shooting while sitting or kneeling far more frequently. A degree of flexibility and/or suppleness can make your time in the Zodiac® far more productive and enjoyable!

## Sample Itinerary

**NOTE:** The itinerary of the *Pacific Rim Explorer Instructional Photo Tour 2020* is designed for flexibility. This allows us to react to the ever-changing distribution and abundance of wildlife and fluctuating weather conditions. While we will place some emphasis on observing and photographing some of the higher profile coastal wildlife species (including Black Bears, Humpback and Grey whales, Killer Whales, Sea Lions, Sea Otters) we will watch and photograph other species and landscapes as they present themselves to us. Because Barkley Sound has many different habitats and environments “jam-packed” into a relatively small area, we will spend much less time in transit between locations and much more time in the field exploring areas than on many of our other coastal photo tours (which is a very good thing!).

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



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

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



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



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

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### ***Day 1 – April 4, 2020***

Arrive in Ucluelet, BC. Make your way to the Black Rock Oceanfront Resort. You may check-in any time from 4 PM onwards. If you arrive early in the day feel free to go for a walk or check out the facilities. Our first official activity will be a meet-and-greet in the lobby at 6 PM followed by dinner together.

### ***Day 2 – April 5, 2020***

Photo instruction. After breakfast we'll spend 4 to 5 hours in a classroom-style instructional session on modern digital photography, with special emphasis on both the technical and creative aspects of wildlife photography. We'll pay particular attention to the nuances of

photographing wildlife in a *coastal environment* as well as the specifics and etiquette of shooting from the close quarters of a reasonably small inflatable Zodiac®. The late afternoon activities are not firmly scheduled – options could include an extended question-and-answer session on photography, roaming the region to sightsee, getting some exercise, or, if you wish, some free time.

### ***Day 3 – April 6, 2020***

After breakfast we'll meet the crew of the *Passing Cloud* and board the boat in time for a late morning snack (or early lunch!). You can then settle into your accommodations and we'll set sail for Barkley Sound. As



we head through Macoah Passage we'll be on the lookout for spawning herring and the Grey Whales, sea lions, seabirds that congregate to feast on this nutritional bonanza! We'll likely anchor just outside the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve where we have a good chance of spotting coastal Black Bears.

## ***Day 4 – April 7, 2020***

An early morning Zodiac® excursion will have us exploring an estuary and salmon stream. We may also explore a forest in search for Black Bears that come here in spring to feed on sedges and shellfish. By lunch we should be back aboard the *Passing Cloud* and traveling into the Broken Group of Islands where we'll spend time exploring in the Zodiac®.

## ***Days 5-7 – April 8-10, 2020***

Exploration of the Broken Group Islands! We'll be keeping eagle-eyes out for Humpback and Grey whales, harbour porpoises, Orcas, and more! We also hope to encounter some of the newest arrivals to Barkley Sound – Sea Otters that are re-colonizing this region after an absence of nearly a century!

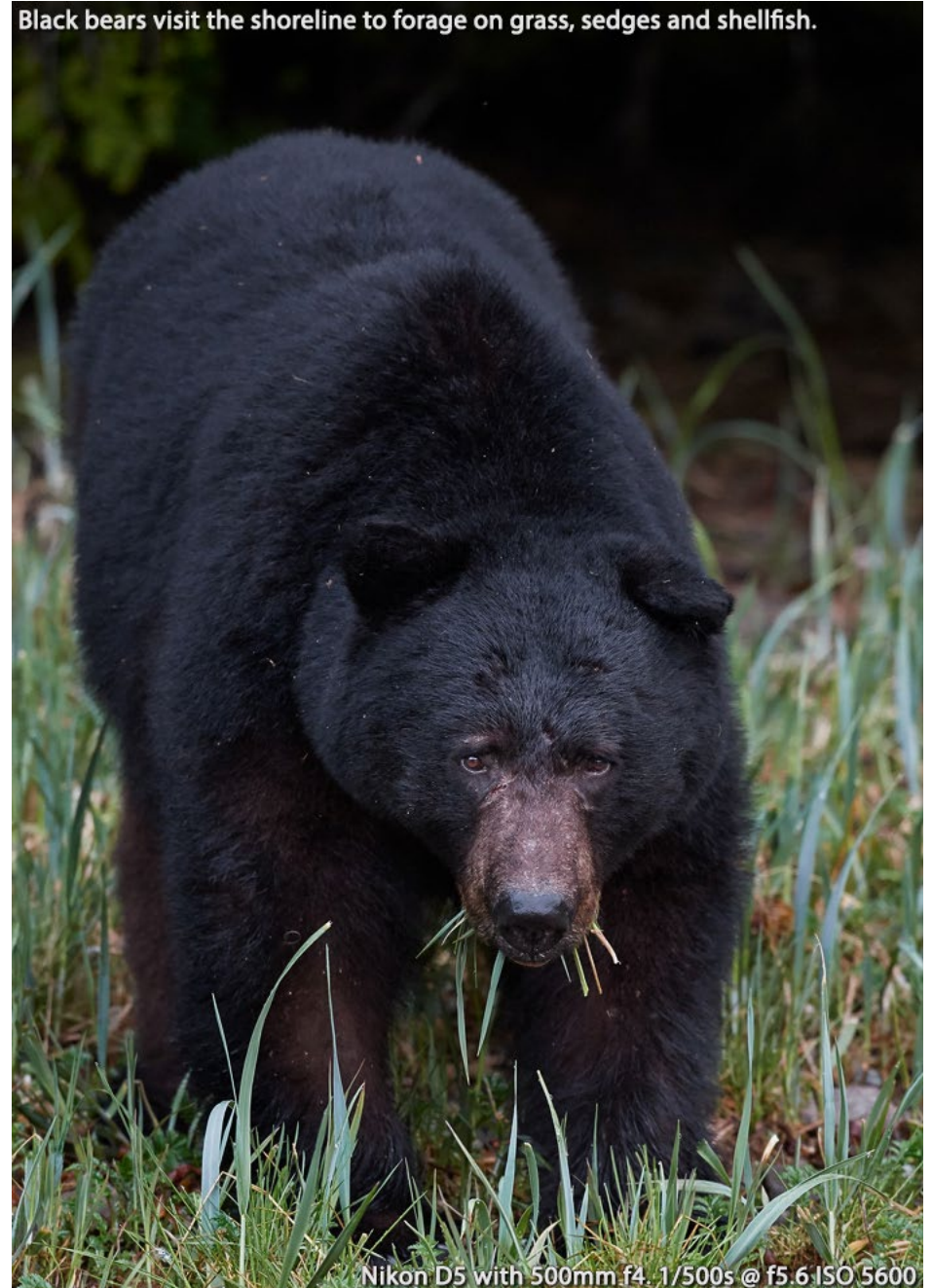
## ***Day 8 – April 11, 2020***

In an effort to squeeze every last drop out of this expedition we will take a final morning shore walk or Zodiac® excursion before heaving anchor and heading back to Ucluelet. Of course, we'll keep our eyes open for more Sea Otters, whales and seabirds as we return to port to say our reluctant farewells!

## **Our Ethical Stance – *Wildlife* FIRST!**

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

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



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

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

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Grey Whales have characteristically mottled skin. The white blotches are scars from parasites picked up in warmer waters that are shed in cooler, northern waters

1. We engage in *PASSIVE* wildlife photography only. This means we strive to capture images of wildlife behaving as naturally as possible and without the use of “set-ups”, contrivances, or any actions that could guide the subjects toward desirable settings and/or backdrops or elicit specific “poses”.
2. We do nothing intentional to alter or influence the behaviour of our subject(s) for the purposes of photography. This means we do not engage in any form of luring or baiting (or any other form of food supplementation). Additionally, we will not use any form of sound to alter the behaviour of the subject for the purpose of photography (including using predator and/or prey calls, vocal clicking, or making any other sound to encourage the subject to look at us).
3. We always allow the wildlife subject – regardless of the species – to determine the distance it is comfortable with between itself and us. This principle not only serves to reduce the stress on the subject, but it also allows photographers to capture the subject behaving in a more natural, and often more interesting, fashion.
4. We strive to always consider both the individual and collective effects our photographic activities can have on our subjects. This includes being aware of the total time spent with the subjects. This means we will often break contact and withdraw from the subject, especially if there is any indication that our presence is impacting on the subject's behavioural routine (including activities such as feeding, resting and/or sleeping, caring for its offspring, etc.). This consideration is always important and may become even MORE important if multiple photographers or groups of photographers are working with the same subject.

Those participating in our photo tours are expected to conform to these rules of photographer conduct.

For more information about this amazing trip contact Brad Hill at:

[seminars@naturalart.ca](mailto:seminars@naturalart.ca)





**The Region We'll Explore  
on This Photo Tour**

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





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



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

