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# Outdoor Photographer

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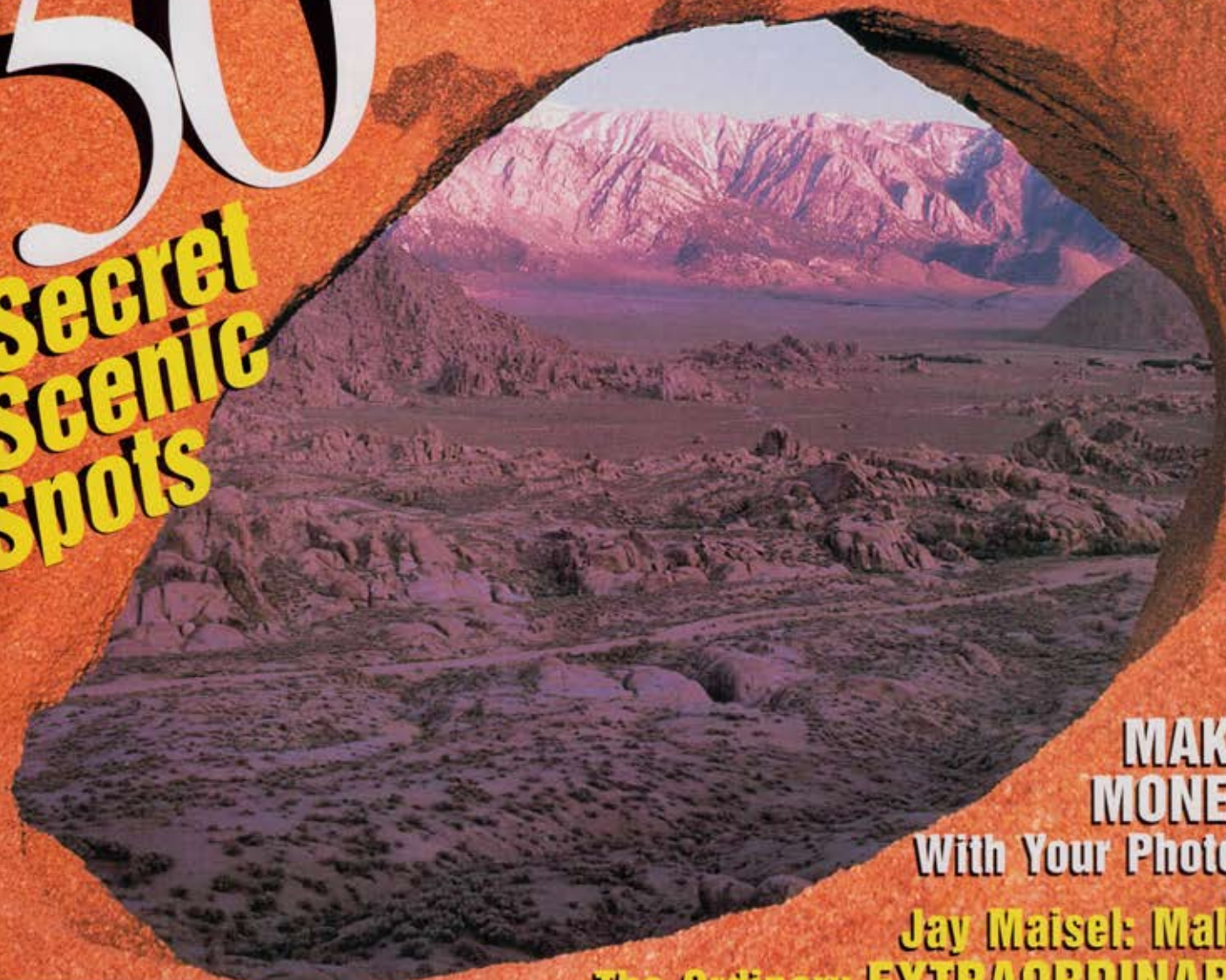
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# 50

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# Outdoor Photographer

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# frozen images

This winter,  
unthaw your  
camera and  
explore the  
season's ever-  
changing colors  
and patterns

*Text And  
Photography By  
Mike MacDonald*

Ice provides a photographer with a wonderful opportunity to traverse frozen lakes and marshes to explore new places and perspectives that are often difficult or impossible to reach when the water is in its liquid state. But, most exciting of all, is photographing the ice and its infinitely diverse formations.

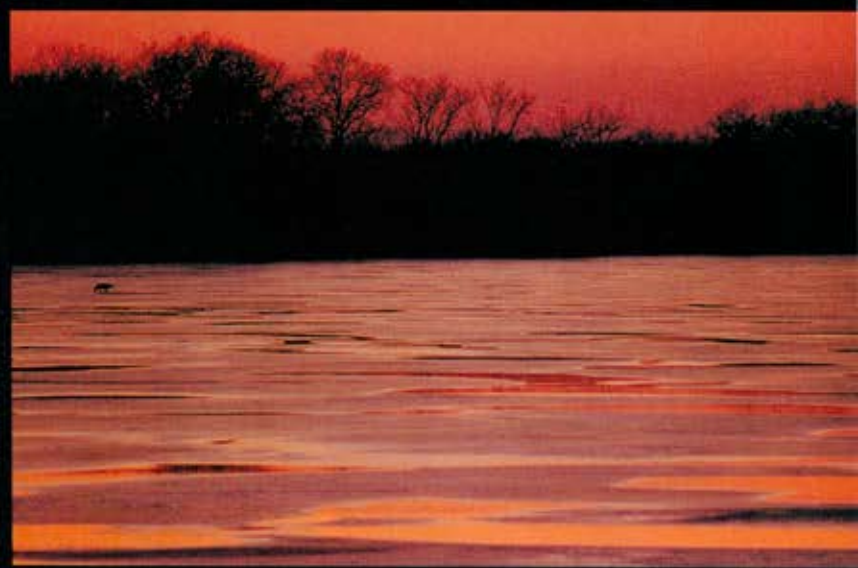
As a nature photographer living in the urban sprawl of Chicago, ice formations give me hours of extraordinary photography in the nearby Cook and DuPage County forest preserves.

Chicago winters don't provide tremendous snow levels, but this can be an advantage when it comes to finding ice. Frozen lakes, marshes and

streams are left snowless, exposing the ice for your exposures. Near the shoreline, look for fallen leaves embedded in the ice. Marsh grasses and other aquatic plants frozen on or just beneath the surface can mold ice into interesting shapes and patterns.

Weather can cause ice to form in mysterious ways. For example, if it's windy as the water is freezing, frozen ripples and waves can form. When it's very cold and the wind is still, delicate, feather-like frost sculptures can be found "growing" out of the ice as if there had been an enormous pillow fight.

An especially exciting time to shoot is when temperatures rise. Some of the best ice formations are created by



*There's still time for great winter images available to nearly anyone who lives in or near snow-and-ice country. FAR LEFT: A delicate sculpture formed by warming temperatures and rushing water. TOP: Low temperatures and shallow water shape intricate geometric patterns in thin ice. A low sun gives the color. LEFT: The golden color of sunrise is captured in ice-covered trees. ABOVE: As the ice melts, it reflects the light differently than the pooling water. A coyote crosses in the distance.*

SCULPTURE: Olympus OM-4T, Zuiko 300mm *f*/4.5, Fujichrome Provia;  
PATTERNS: Olympus OM-4T, Zuiko 300mm *f*/4.5, Kodak Lumiere 100X;  
ICY TREES: Olympus OM-4T, Zuiko 75-150mm, Fujichrome Velvia; MELTING ICE:  
Olympus OM-4T, Zuiko 300mm *f*/4.5, Kodak Lumiere



## Cold Camera Care

Keep your camera out of hibernation with these basic tips for low-temperature use *Text And Photography By Rob Sheppard*

**M**odern cameras do beautifully even in below-zero weather, but you need to understand some basics about cameras and the cold and snow to get the best results.

Most cameras function fine well down into the minus temps. Unfortunately, batteries don't. Depending on the size, type and use, all batteries will either cease to function or provide decreased power as the temperature of the battery drops.

Cameras with battery packs will last longer because the battery mass is larger and will stay warm longer. Cameras with small batteries last the shortest length of time. Regardless of the battery, it's

always a good idea to carry extras in a warm pocket. When the camera battery dies (i.e., the camera body ceases to function normally), just change batteries. The warm one will give peak power, while the cold one can warm up.

As outside temperatures drop, so does the humidity in the air. This makes your film vulnerable to static electricity discharge (it looks like little lightning bolts around the edges). The best thing to do is avoid winding or rewinding your film too fast (don't use the high-speed settings of your film advance).

When the camera body is very cold, film gets brittle and can break if handled roughly. Some

photographers actually attach a hand warmer (such as the Grabber warmer packets available at outdoor equipment stores) to the back of the camera to keep the film warm (this can also keep batteries warmer). You can keep these warming packets inside a camera bag to keep your camera warm as well.

All cameras are very much affected by temperature changes. Condensation will quickly form on a cold camera brought into warm and more humid conditions (into a house, inside a car and even inside a thick down jacket next to your body). The moisture is bad enough if it starts forming inside the camera and shorts out electronics or damages the inside of a lens. But it also can freeze if the camera is very cold, and the formation of ice crystals inside your camera can damage it.

Your best bet is to keep the camera inside a tightly zipped bag until it's room temperature. We like to take along a plastic garbage bag, then put our camera and bag inside it before bringing the camera into a house or warm car.

Taking a warm camera into the cold is usually no problem. But snow on a warm camera melts and can cause big problems: First, your camera gets wet and, second, when it re-freezes, the camera or lens can be severely damaged. When it snows, keep your equipment protected until the camera is cold enough so that the snow doesn't melt on it.

melting and cracking ice. But, remember, conditions are continuously changing so, if you see something you like, photograph it. It isn't going to look the same later. If the melt lasts for a few days, you'll have plenty of opportunities to find new and unique subjects.

(As ice changes, be careful of its thickness. Be aware that ice can melt more near a dark shore and become unstable. Watch for large areas of dark ice in lighter ice—the dark ice may

be too thin to support your weight.)

Because light dramatically affects how ice looks, try shooting ice under a variety of lighting conditions. Sunlight bouncing off of or passing through ice can make for stunning images, while cloudy days provide nice, even lighting that will reveal wonderfully fine detail in your subject.

Ice has many of the same optical properties as glass—they're both transparent and reflective. Use these properties to add color to your compositions.

For instance, find transparent subjects with colorful backgrounds or take shots of highly reflective ice at sunrise or sunset.

A sturdy tripod is mandatory since great depth of field and slow shutter speed are frequently the case. I prefer a camera with a spot meter and depth-of-field preview, such as my Olympus OM-4T.

A longer lens is often necessary because it may not be prudent nor possible to get close enough to your

subject. The ice may be too fragile or there might be five feet of cold rushing water between you and your subject. Another advantage of a long lens is that it narrows your field of view and helps to keep distracting elements out of the shot.

Sometimes metering ice can be quite straightforward, as in the case of ice on a lake that's reflecting the light of sunset. Just spot meter a color on the ice that you like and vary the exposure to lighten or darken the tone of that color to give you the mood that you wish to convey.

You can't always get a good meter reading off the ice itself. You'll have to meter off a gray card, substitute spot meter off something of known tonality or use an incident light meter—all of which must be in the same light as your subject.

Difficulties with exposure also exist with close-up work. Icicles, for instance, are both transparent and reflective and can be clear, white or the color of the background. Nothing in the shot may be of a known tonality.

A gray card works as long as it's in the same light and you have it angled

squarely with the back of the camera. You can also use an incident light meter. Again, you must take the read-



### Early Ice

**W**atch for the first ice that covers a pond or lake early in the season. You can't walk on it, but it will offer you some superb image possibilities. It's the smoothest ice and highly reflective of sunrise and sunset. It will also capture leaves and other waterborne objects, as well as air bubbles that make fascinating abstracts that you can find along the edges of the lake or pond.

ing in the same light as the subject. The big drawback, however, is that it can't automatically compensate for light lost due to filters or, in the case of close-up work, lens extension. You'll have to calculate these values yourself and open up accordingly.

Often, your frozen subject can have white in it, like snow or the bubbles found in icicles. If you shoot slide film, you'll need to expose carefully to maintain detail in the whites. Using your camera's built-in spot meter, meter the brightest white portion in the frame. Then open up 1 to 1½ stops. If you don't have a spot meter or the area of white is too small or scattered to get a reading, use your gray card or incident light meter, then close down one stop. Take a few more shots with slight variations in exposure (say ½-stop under or over) to create different colors and moods.

Ice is to winter as flowers are to spring. A single sparkling icicle is to a lone frail blossom as a field of flowers is to a frozen lake at sunset. Just as flowers fade, ice melts away. Make this winter your time to discover the magical world of ice. **OP**

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