

Chased by the Light

A zen masterpiece. Veteran magazine photographer Jim Brandenburg, who normally shoots dozens of rolls of film per day, gave himself an impossible assignment. Make a portrait of the north woods in upper Minnesota over the ninety days between the autumn equinox and winter solstice. That's difficult but possible. But take one, and only one, exposure per day. No second exposure, no second chance. A single arrow per day, and a bull's eye each time. That's zen. For amateurs and professionals alike this requires relying on the Force. Particularly since many of his subjects are wild birds and stealthy wolves. The ninety images stand strong, each on their own, but the complete symphony is one of the most impressive acts of mindfulness I've seen.

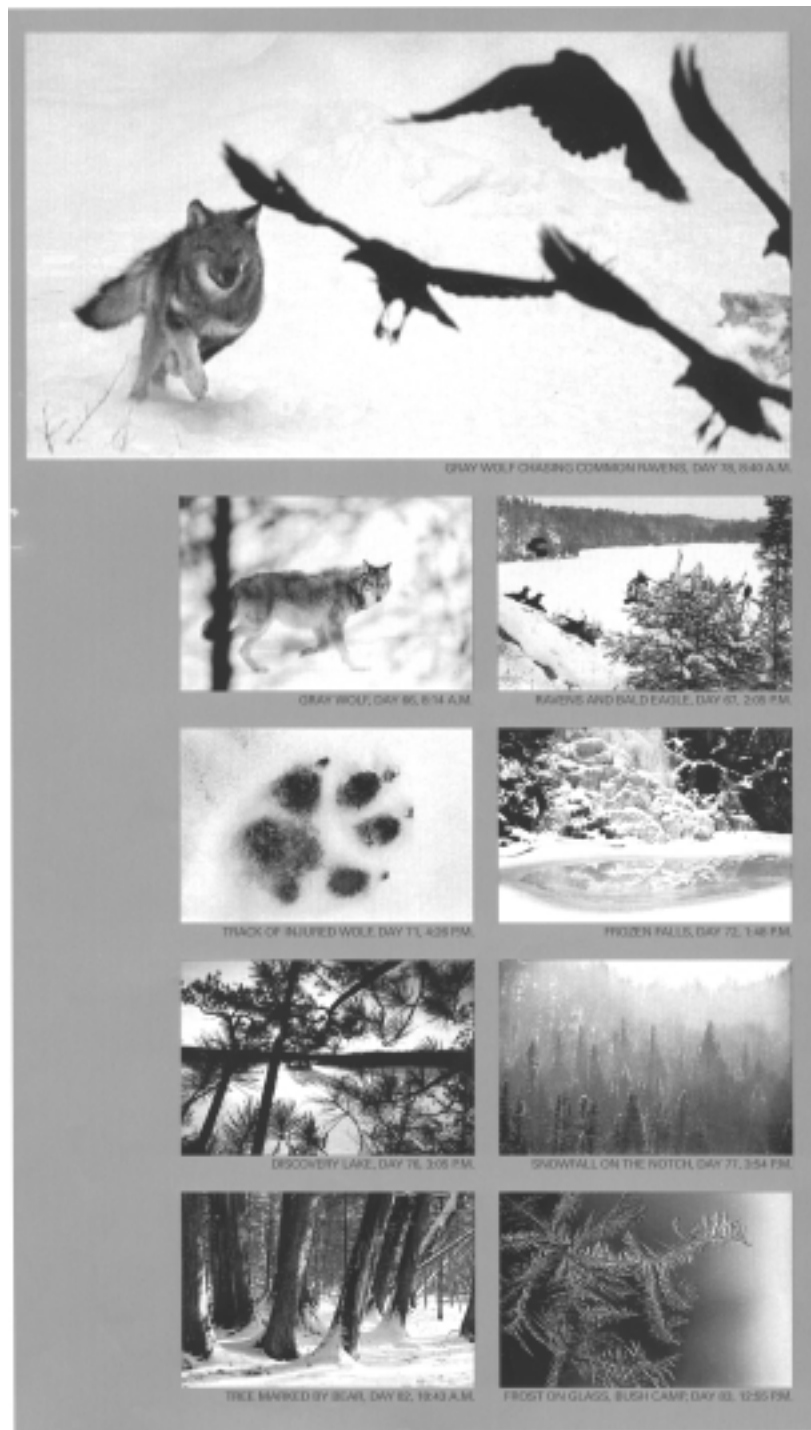
(The full set of images was also published in a smaller format in the November 1997 issue of National Geographic.)

—KK

I sensed there would be lessons learned. There were, but not always those I had imagined. Some were merely lessons remembered, recapturing things I had forgotten, such as remaining open to chance, and that, in nature, not all beauty is giant in scale. One such lesson occurred on October 15th, the twenty-third day. It was late and I despaired of capturing anything of value. The day was dark and gloomy; my mood reflected the weather. I wandered through the dripping forest all day long. Tired, hungry, and wet, I was near tears. I was mentally beating myself for having passed up several deer portraits and the chance to photograph a playful otter. None of those scenes spoke to me at the time.

But perhaps because I was patient, and perhaps because, as natives do on a vision quest, I had reached my physical limits, I became open to the possibility revealed by a single red maple leaf floating on a dark-water pond. My spirits rose the instant I saw it, and although the day was very late and what little light there had been was fleeing rapidly, I studied the scene from every angle. Finally, unsure of my choice, I made the shot anyway, thankful at least that the long day had ended. Once more I was surprised by the result. The image seems to have a lyrical quality, with a rhythm in the long grass.

Nine days, nine images. Among the images shown here (taken from the *National Geographic* article) are a wolf chasing ravens and a bloodied pawprint of an injured wolf.



Art Byte

The thing I like about Art Byte is that it's a true blue digital culture zine with nothing about tiresome, boring stock investments.

—Bruce Sterling

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