

Monthly Newsletter: January 2026

January Photography Club Highlights

It was wonderful to welcome everyone back, and we hope all our members enjoyed a relaxing holiday filled with special moments shared with loved ones. With cameras charged and creativity flowing, we're ready to take on the photographic challenges of 2026 together.

Our January club evening was alive with creativity, laughter, and that unmistakable buzz that fills a room when photographers come together.

From the first image to the last, the shutters may have been quiet, but the energy was undeniable. HPS Open Category: once again offered our members complete creative freedom, and they embraced it wholeheartedly. The result was a diverse and inspiring collection of work, every photograph reflected bold vision and fearless exploration. Each image stood strong on its own, yet together they formed a powerful reminder of what makes our club special, imagination, curiosity, and creative courage at its finest.

Our set subject was Trees & Forests: These images invited us into landscapes that went far beyond wood and leaf, becoming places of memory, light, and emotion. Through these photographs, the ordinary was transformed into something truly extraordinary. Like brushstrokes on a canvas, trunks and branches told stories of resilience, calm, and beauty. Leaves became mosaics of colour, shadows evolved into sculptural forms, and forests emerged as living galleries. Through the eyes of our members, trees were no longer just part of the landscape they became its soul.

As we step into a new year, this January collection beautifully captures what our club does best: stepping beyond comfort zones, embracing creativity, and creating together. Remember, growth in photography comes from challenging yourself. Submit your images every month, think outside (or inside) the box, and never hesitate to ask for guidance. Our club is full of knowledgeable, supportive members who are always happy to share and help you grow.

The editor



January Results

Choosing an overall winner turned into a bit of a friendly showdown, with two images going head-to-head and plenty of animated discussion in the room. After much debating, nodding, and a few “oohs” and “aahs,” the judges made their call, a close vote, but a well-earned win in the end.

Our **Overall Winning Image**, *Pied Kingfisher in Hover* by Riaan van den Berg, captured a breathtaking moment suspended between sky and water. Wings outstretched and eyes locked on its prey, the kingfisher hovers in a split second of perfect balance and instinct. This image goes beyond wildlife photography; it reveals the poetry of motion. The fast shutter speed, razor-sharp focus, and beautifully softened background come together to create a photograph that feels like a painting in motion. A truly timeless capture.

A big congratulations to all our winners, your work truly set the tone for an inspiring year ahead.

Top 3 Open Category

Pied Kingfisher in Hover – Riaan van den Berg

Symmetry – Bernard Seymour Hall

The Cruel Sea – Peter Dewar

Top 3 Set Subject: Trees / Forests

Spionkop Dam – Peter Dewar

The Forest's Soul Leaves in Colour – Carima van den Berg

Misty Morning Acacia – Steve Trimby

Top 3 Prints

Ink on Pencil – Peter Dewar

Winter Sunrise – Peter Dewar

The Barn – Peter Dewar

OVERALL WINNER: JANUARY'26

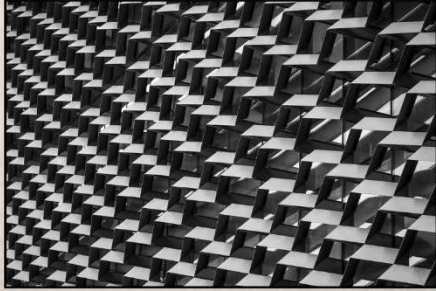
**PIED KINGFISHER IN HOVER
BY
RIAAN VAN DEN BERG**



Top 3 Open



Pied Kingfisher in Hover – Riaan van den Berg



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Top 3 Prints



Peter Dewar

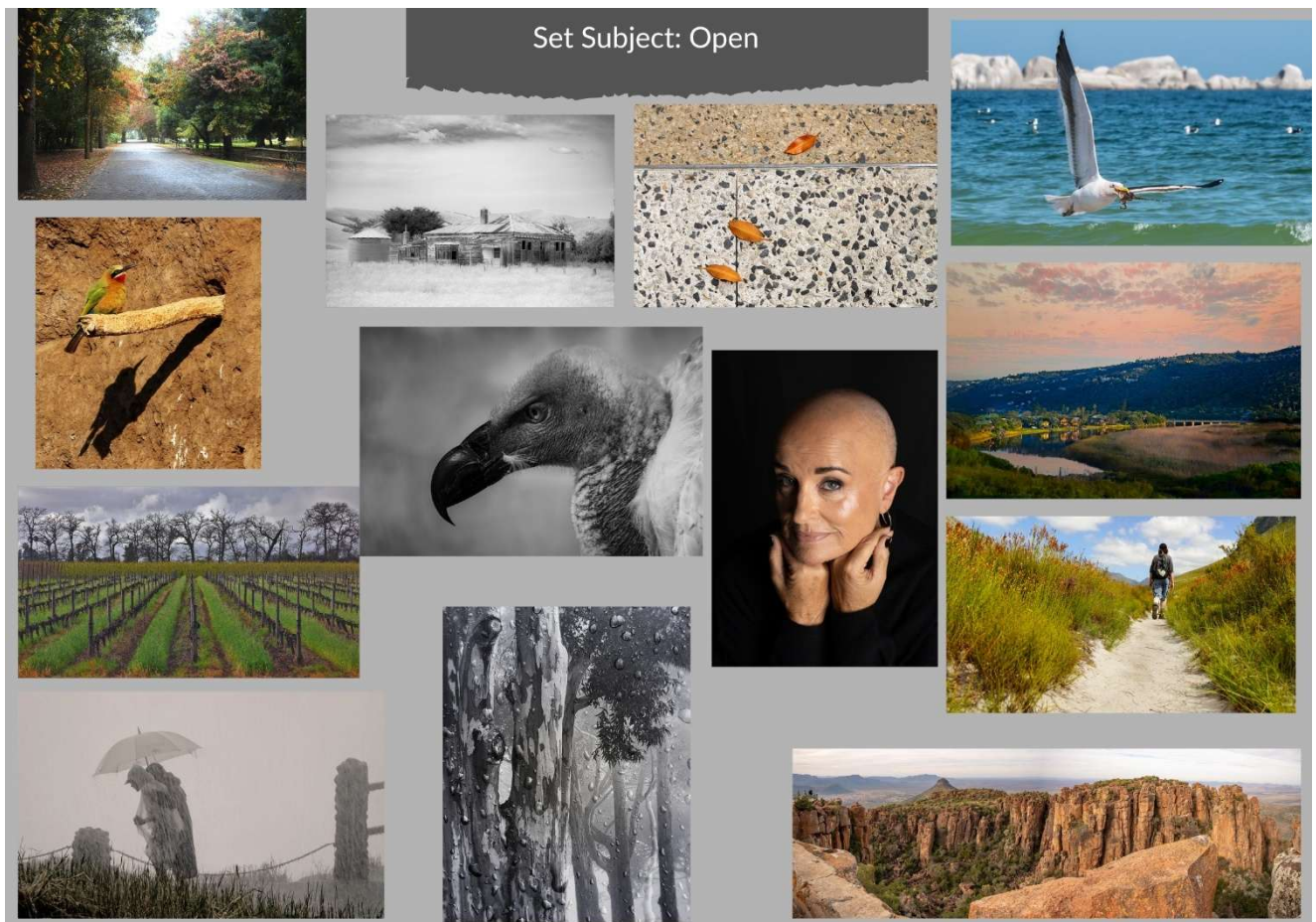
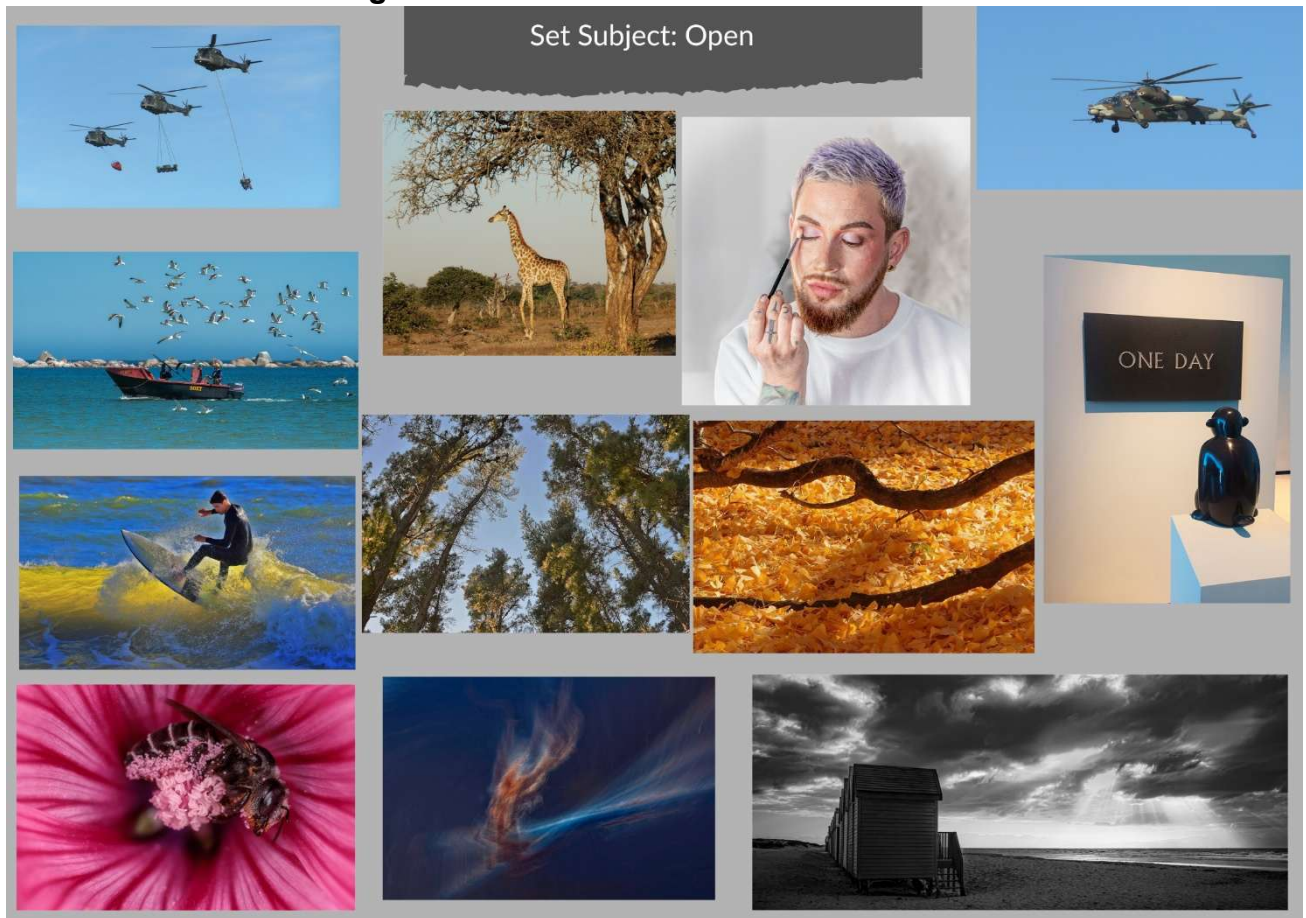


Peter Dewar

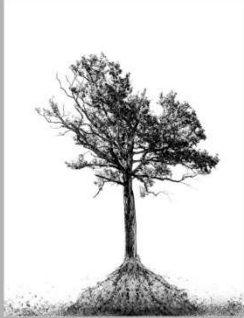


Peter Dewar

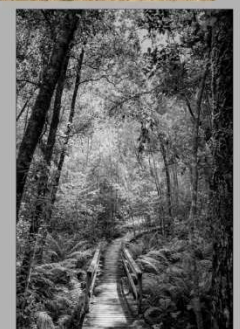
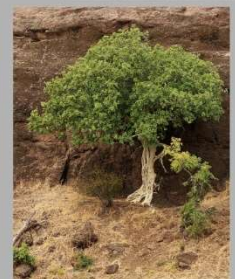
Some Photos of the evening

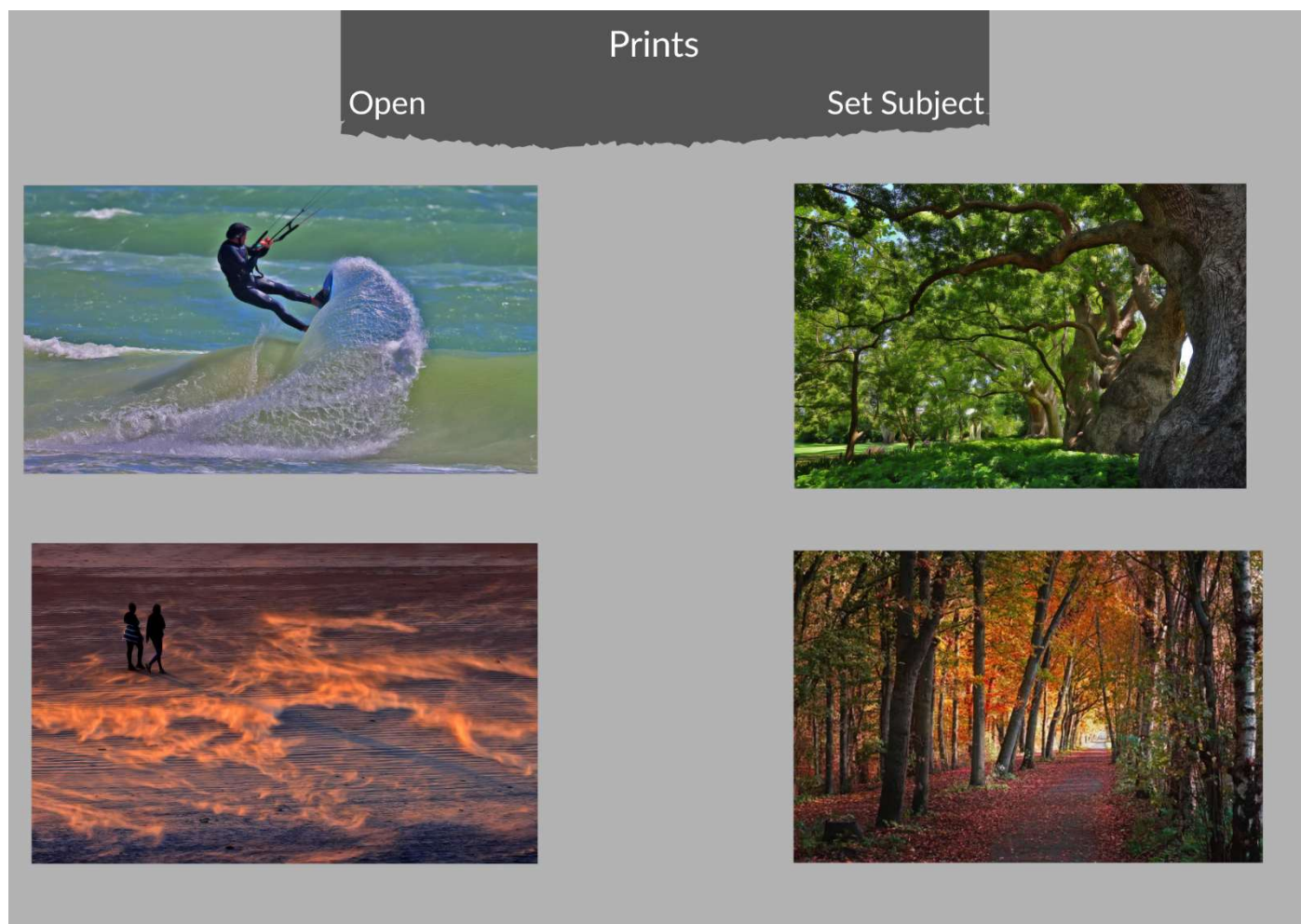


Set Subject: Trees / Forest



Set Subject: Trees / Forest





Club Meeting Information:

Our next meetings will be on the following dates in January remember the closing dates of Photo Vault (PV)

Meeting	PV Closing Date	Meeting Date	Set Subject
Club B&W	30 January 2026	03 February 2026	Trees and Forest
			Spirals in Nature
Club Normal	10 February 2026	10 February 2026	Spirals in Nature

Take note:

- HPS Annual General Meeting will be held on 10 February 2026.
- The subscriptions for 2026 are R 450.00
- February **Set Subject** is Spirals in **Nature** This category requires the photographer to seek out naturally occurring spiral formations – for example in plants (fern fronds, tendrils), shells, waves, ripples, geological patterns, vines or growth forms – and to present them in a visually strong manner. The spiral may be the dominant structure, or may form part of a composition emphasising pattern, repetition, form or rhythm. Manipulation is allowed so long as the final image is legitimately derived from a scene captured by the photographer and retains photographic integrity.



Outings, Workshops and Courses

Outings

We have a few exciting outings planned, but there is always room for more, if you see something interesting on Facebook please share with the group.

Audio-Visual

Invitation: AV Showcase Day

Join the AV community for a relaxed evening of sharing

Audio-Visual productions on the big screen, not a competition, just creativity, stories, and good company.

Next JAP training starts 10 Oct 2026

A general application form will be available to download from this section of the PSSA website as of **1st July 2026**. The closing date for applications will be **1st August 2026**.

Light & Lens Monthly Articles – looking for some ideas on what you want to read about and send me some interesting articles that I can use

Light & Lens Monthly Article

by Carima van den Berg



In 2026, I made a conscious decision to do things a little differently, and this article reflects that choice. We all have our own ideas, paths, and ways of seeing the world, but this is mine. I'm sharing my thoughts not because they're the only answer, but because they're honest, meaningful to me, and perhaps they'll resonate with someone else too.

What Are Your Photography Goals for 2026?

One of the things I hear time and time again is that photographers feel completely overwhelmed. There is *so much* to learn: camera settings, composition, editing, gear, social media, printing, business, competitions and it often feels like you are running in twenty different directions trying to learn it all at once.

I still feel that way! One of the most powerful ways to cut through the overwhelm is by setting clear photography goals.

Photography goals are exactly what they sound like: deciding what you want to be able to do by a certain point in time, honestly assessing where you are right now, and then creating a plan to bridge that gap. Instead of randomly watching YouTube videos or hopping between blog posts and hoping it all magically comes together, you follow a plan with intention.

You know the saying: ***a goal without a plan is just a wish.***

So, in this post, we are going to slow things down and focused on planning your photography goals for 2026, starting with the first six months. My hope is that you will follow the steps, write things down, and put them into action so that 2026 becomes your best photography year yet.

Grab your wine... we are going in 🍷

Before We Start: Two Important Things

First: Write everything down. Not in your head. Not “I’ll remember later.”

Writing things down makes the process clearer, less overwhelming, and you are far more likely to follow through.

Second: Only plan for the first six months of the year.

Six months gives you enough time to make progress without locking yourself into goals that might no longer fit. At the halfway point, you can reassess, refine, and plan the next phase with more clarity.

Step One: Where Are You Now?

Before you can decide where you are going, you need to know where you are starting from. This is also a great chance to reflect on the past year, what worked, what did not, and what drained your energy versus what excited you.

Ask yourself:

- What is your biggest struggle with photography right now?
- How confident are you with the technical side of your camera?
- What do you struggle with most in post-processing?
- How much did you spend on gear this year? Was it worth it?
- How much did you invest in learning? Was it worth it?
- What did you really enjoy photographing?
- What did you not enjoy?

Step Two: Reflect & Define Your Focus

Now that you know where you are, it is time to decide what deserves your energy in 2026.

- **Review 2025:** What worked? What did not? What gave you energy, and what drained it?
- **Niche down:** Do you want to focus on weddings, branding, fine art, landscapes, street photography, or personal storytelling?
- **Define your “why”:** For what do you want to be known? Mood, emotion, storytelling, colour, light.

Clarity here saves *so much* time and frustration later.

Step Three: Set SMART Goals for 2026

To avoid overwhelm, goals need structure. An effortless way to do this is using **SMART goals**:

- **Specific:** “Shoot 10 Landscapes” or “Learn flash photography.”
- **Measurable:** “Enter in all the categories in club evening or start entering salons.”
- **Achievable:** “Take one photo a day” (yes, your phone counts).
- **Relevant:** Align goals with what matters to *you*.
- **Time-bound:** Set deadlines: weekly, monthly, or by a specific date.

Step Four: Break It Down into Actionable Steps

Big goals become achievable when broken into small, clear actions.

Ask yourself:

- How will I reach my **technical goals**?
- How will I improve my **editing**?
- What **personal projects** will help me grow?

Add deadlines to every action.

Example Action Plan

- Invest in a grey card to improve white balance.
- Study photographers whose work you admire.
- Complete a Project 365 with daily prompts.
- Create a private space (Instagram, Facebook, or WhatsApp group) to share work.
- Create a Lightroom collection for a future photo book.

Small steps. Clear direction.

Step Five: Skill Development & Personal Projects

Growth happens when learning meets practice.

- Commit to a personal project (portraits, seascapes, street, nature).
- Focus on mastering *one* technique at a time e.g. long exposure, low light, flash.
- Learn AI tools for inspiration or workflow help but keep storytelling authentic.

Projects give learning purpose.

Step Six: Explore & Get Inspired

- Explore new local locations, especially at dawn and dusk.
- Plan dream trips or “someday” shoots to stay inspired.
- Join communities: clubs, online groups, or challenges, for feedback and motivation.

Photography grows faster when shared.



Step Seven: The Right Mindset for 2026

- Print more. Photos deserve to exist off screens.
- Aim for “good enough” and keep shooting.
- Stop waiting for perfection.
- Most importantly, **have fun**.

A Simple 30-Minute Exercise

1. Review your images from 2025, what no longer fits your direction?
2. Identify one story you want your photography to tell more clearly.

That is, it. **Simple. Powerful.**

My goals for 2026 are simple. Get out as often as I can with the camera, especially when the light is nice around dawn and dusk, explore new locations and take part in competitions. Overall, it is to continue having fun and enjoy my photography.

Additional Information:

Our **website** is being updated regularly, go and have a look. Thank you to Riaan for all your hard work.

Visit our **Facebook** page, invite friends to like our Facebook page.

Let's Invite people to come to a club meeting, maybe a few members can have ideas about how to grow the club, get in new young members.

Webpage: <https://helderbergphoto.com/> Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/helderbergphoto/>