

Photographic Essays of Place ~The Changing Faces of Water~

by Roy Beckemeyer

“All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.”—Ecclesiastes 1:7, The Bible, King James Version.

Water. We can't live without it. Sometimes, in floods, ocean storms, it represents danger and destruction and we are lucky to survive it. But we photographers are always attracted to it: the way it responds to the sky, the way it can be a flat mirror or an infinitely convoluted surface. In this article I present a series of photos in which water, in one or the other of its myriad forms, liquid, solid, vapor, takes on a role of importance in the image.

In the first photograph (next page), taken from a helicopter flying over Glacier National Park in Montana, icy water reflects the sky like a turquoise gemstone, grained with clouds, framed in green, and set amidst sharp peaks.



*Above: Turquoise Tarn—Glacier National Park,
Below: Rain Puddles, Budaduna Island, New Guinea*



I liked the way the scattered rain puddles on the sand look like shards of an antique mirror

reflecting a broken version of this Budaduna Island, New Guinea dwelling (previous page). Overcast skies and misty air eliminate the blue, show us the sky as it truly is, or perhaps, even more leaden. The sky and water together performing their own magic act.

Another trick: ancient ice in Antarctic icebergs seems to glow from within with a unique light.



Study in Iceberg Blue, Neko Harbor, Antarctica



Leaving Kamchatka—Bering Sea

On the Bering Sea at sundown a ship's wake forms a path for the streak of the setting sun, the waves small and more random than not, the skies scattered with clouds, dark and rugged outline of land separating water and sky, the ocean surface reminiscent of tarnished metallic foil that was crumpled and then smoothed back almost flat.

Rivers with a high enough sediment load, or steep enough gradient, that experience frequent rapid changes in discharge, form a network of channels separated by small islands, and are called braided streams. The photo on the top of the following page shows a braided portion of the Yukon River. The

exposed soil and slender stream channels give the river a muddy brown appearance.



Braidings of the Yukon River, Alaska

On the next page, in the Valley of Geysers National Park on Kronotsky Nature Preserve, Kamchatka, Russia, a glacier-fed stream turns steely gray with granite powder ground from mountains, is frothed white by boulders and falls, makes a sharp bend beneath snowfields and glaciers hanging from mountain flanks. Clouds against the lovely blue of sky contrast with clouds of steam rising from vents in the volcanic rock underlying this remote and primitive park, accessible only by helicopter, or by a long and difficult trek.



Valley of Geysers National Park, Kamchatka, Russia



Koryaksky Volcano Overlooking Petropavlovsk

On the Bering Sea off Kamchatka, Koryaksky Volcano is lit to a misleadingly warm glow, framed by the fore-

ground hills and set off by the cold greenish-blue waters outside Avacha Bay.



Tree Reflections Shivering

At Sprague Lake in Rocky Mountain National Park,

Colorado, a ghostly reflection of a grove of trees wriggles in the shimmering water (p. 7) , while (below) ripples dapple the sky's image on another part of the lake, providing an almost Moire-pattern of light and shadow behind overhanging branches.



Patterns of Light and Shadow

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