

WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHIC

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PUMAS, PENGUINS
AND PATAGONIA
MATT TREVILLION

NAMIBIA
UP CLOSE
BILL GOZANSKY

LOVING THE
'BAD HAIR'
PELICANS OF
GREECE
BRUNO WÄGLI

A SERPENT HUNT
THROUGH INDIA,
ARIZONA AND
MADAGASCAR
RAMDAS IYER

COVER CONTEST WINNER

JAN POKLUDA



WINDSWEPT AND WONDERFUL:

Photographing the “Bad Hair”
Pelicans of Greece

by Bruno Wägli

Catch the fish - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII; M.Zuiko
Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
45mm; F3.5; 1/250 s; ISO 200

With a body length of 160 to 180 centimetres, a weight of between 10 and 13 kilograms, and a wingspan of up to 345 centimetres, the Dalmatian pelican is one of the largest flying birds in the world. Seeing one up close is an unforgettable experience.

Its enormous bill, nearly half a metre long, seems almost too big for its head, and the flexible pouch underneath gives it a prehistoric look, as if from another time.



Final approach - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
150mm; F4.5; 1/800s; ISO 500



Jealousy about food - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 7-14mm F2.8 PRO
12mm; F4; 1/1600s; ISO 2000

Juvenile pelican - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
150mm, F5.6; 1/1600s; ISO1600



Pelicans live on every continent except Antarctica. There are eight species in total, found in tropical to temperate zones. Some, including the Dalmatian pelican, can even tolerate winter cold, as long as their waters stay free of ice.



**Posing before snowcrested
Belasica mountains - Lake Kerkini, Greece**
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
40mm; 1/1250 s; F2.8; ISO1250



Often, they hunt together, driving fish into shallow water where they can scoop them up with their huge, net-like bills. Since they cannot dive, they depend on shallow, fish-rich lakes.

Dalmatian pelicans reach maturity at around three to four years and form monogamous pairs for the season. Breeding starts from late March to early April.

Reflection - Lake Kerkini, Greece

OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
40mm; F3.5; 1/1250s; ISO1250

Walking on water - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
67mm; F3.5; 1/1250s; ISO 320



Nests are always built close to the water and can be reached only by swimming. Both parents share the duties of feeding and raising their young, taking turns catching fish for the chicks.

The Great white pelican, also known as the rosy pelican, is another impressive species often seen with the Dalmatian pelican at Lake Kerkini in northern Greece. Males can reach 175 centimetres and up to 15 kilograms, while females are slightly smaller.

Their wings can span as much as 360 centimetres—an extraordinary sight when they glide low over the lake surface.



They prefer to stay in groups - Lake Kerkini, Greece

OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 7-14mm F2.8 PRO
12mm; F5.6; 1/2000s; ISO 250



Rosy pelican - Lake Kerkini, Greece

*OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII,
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
150mm; 1/1259s; F4; ISO640*

Lake Kerkini – Paradise for Pelican Photographers

Lake Kerkini, about an hour northwest of Thessaloniki and near the Bulgarian border, is one of the best places in Europe to observe and photograph pelicans. The lake, originally created in the 1930s as a reservoir, lies just 35 metres above sea level and covers around 38 square kilometres.

It is surrounded by mountains rising over 2,000 metres, often snow-covered in winter and glowing beautifully in the morning light. Actually this biosphere hosts 227 kinds of birds, especially non-migrants, of which 76 are recorded in the National Red Catalogue, but of course, the pelicans are the stars.

To see Dalmatian pelicans in their full breeding colours, the best time to visit is between December and February. Our boatman joked that Christmas and New Year's are "pelican holidays."

The weather can be cold then—frost and even snow are not unusual—but the experience is worth every frozen finger.

In early January, I visited Kerkini with a group of Swiss nature photographers. In recent years, the lake has become a real hotspot for pelican photography, with good infrastructure and several local guides who know exactly where to find the birds.

The Dalmatian pelican is, of course, the main attraction, but the rosy pelican also makes a beautiful subject.



Waiting for the boatmen to throw fish -
Lake Kerkini, Greece

OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 7-14mm F2.8 PRO
12mm; F3.4; 1/1250s; ISO1000

Fight for the fish - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1 Mark II:
M. Zuiko Digital ED 12-40mm F2.8 PRO
12mm; F 4.1; 1/1600s



Perfect synchronisation - Lake Kerkini, Greece

OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
64mm; F4.5; 1/2000s; ISO320



From the shore, you can observe and photograph the birds easily, sometimes they come very close when offered a few fish. But the most rewarding experience is on the water.

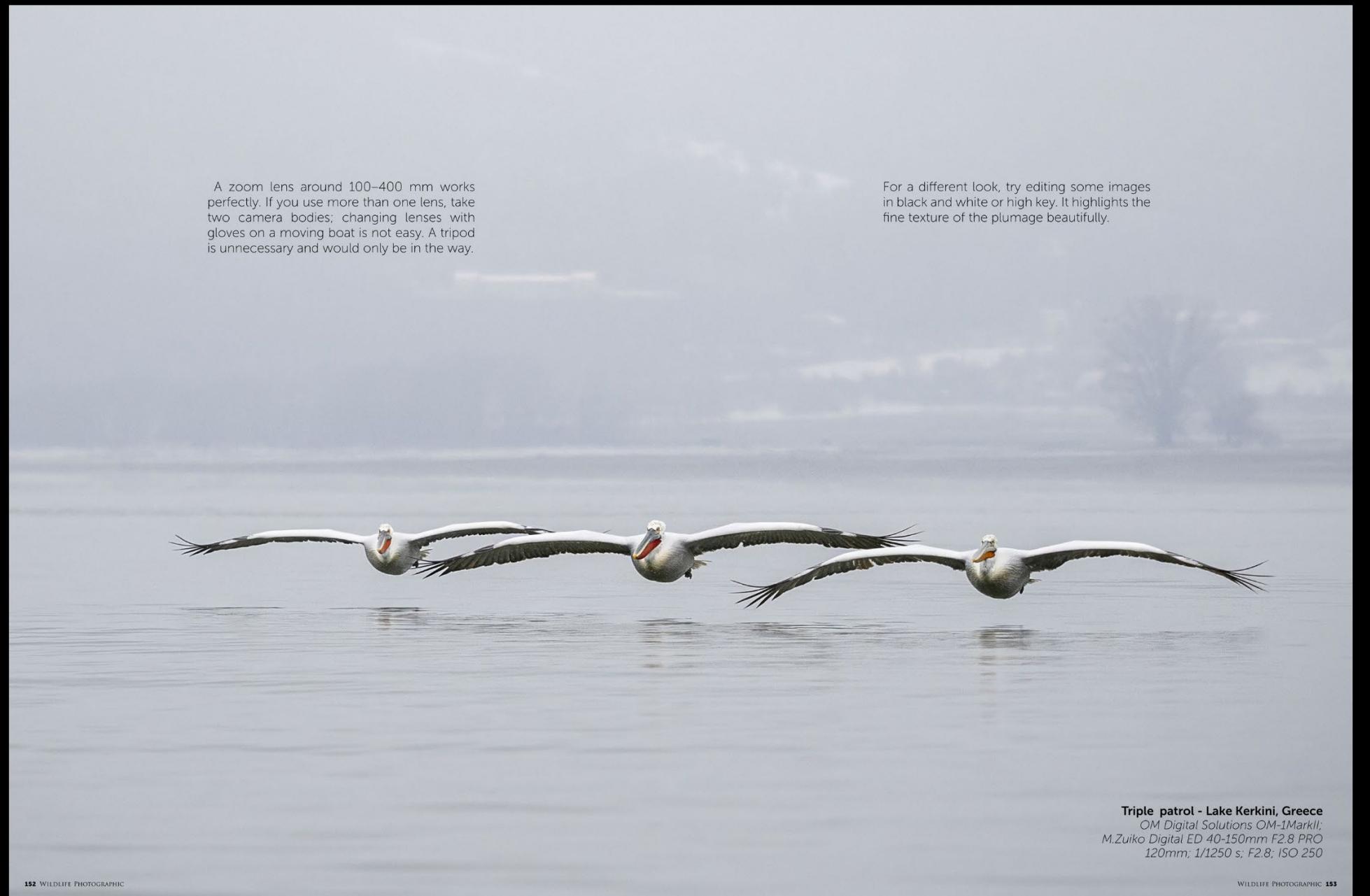
Several operators now offer boat trips designed especially for photographers. The guides bring fish to attract the pelicans close to the boats, and often you can watch them catching their meal in mid-air.

It is fascinating to see these giant birds take off or land on the water. Their powerful wings beat hard, sending sprays of water flying. The action is close, dramatic, and full of movement—ideal for photography.



Early morning flight - Lake Kerkini, Greece

OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
50mm; F3.2; 1/640s; ISO 160



A zoom lens around 100–400 mm works perfectly. If you use more than one lens, take two camera bodies; changing lenses with gloves on a moving boat is not easy. A tripod is unnecessary and would only be in the way.

For a different look, try editing some images in black and white or high key. It highlights the fine texture of the plumage beautifully.

Triple patrol - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
120mm; 1/1250 s; F2.8; ISO 250

The pelican is landing - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII;
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
12mm; F4; 1/1600s; ISO 2000



The English name Dalmatian pelican refers to its traditional range along the Dalmatian coast, while curly-headed pelican—like the German Krauskopfpelikan—points to its special head feathers during breeding season. Depending on the wind, the bird sometimes really looks as if it's having a bad hair day—or better said, a bad feather day.



Black and White High Key - Lake Kerkini, Greece

*OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII, M.Zuiko Digital ED 150-400F2.8 PRO
400mm F4.5; 1/4.5s; ISO 640; DXO Nik Collection Silver Effex*

Bad Hair Day - Lake Kerkini, Greece
OM Digital Solutions OM-1MarkII,
M.Zuiko Digital ED 40-150mm F2.8 PRO
150mm; 1/1259s; F2.8; ISO1250



About the Photographer
Bruno Wagli

Bruno Wagli, Ph.D in contemporary history, enjoys nothing more than to go on extended photo trips to remote areas. He fell in love with southern Africa and its abundant wildlife: Namibia, Botswana, Uganda, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and above all, Zambia are countries he likes to rediscover time and time again. Other favorite places of his include the northern and southern polar regions (Antarctica, Greenland, Spitzbergen), Alaska, and the Yukon. Bruno also keeps chasing new motifs in his home country of Switzerland, where the natural beauty of the Alps and of the many lakes and rivers never cease to excite him.

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