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Martin's Personal Top Ten Photographs for 2020

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It's that time of year again, when I sit back and select my own personal top ten photographs from the previous year, in order to take stock of where I am in my photography, and provide an overview of my progress over the years. As I often do, I'm sitting down to start the process now, and will write this as I work through my selection. I'll try not to go into too much detail as I've done this many times, but we'll see how this goes. Note too that you can check out all of my Top Ten posts since 2007 with [this link](#).

2020, as you might expect, is very different from previous years. Luckily, I was able to carry out all three of my Japan Winter Tours before the virus stopped play, but my Namibia Tour had to be postponed to this year. I should also now be two days into my Hokkaido Landscape Photography Tour, but unfortunately I'm stuck at my desk. None of my Japan Winter Tours this year can go ahead. Recently I spend every night dreaming of being out in open spaces with a group of photographers. Just this morning I woke up and started to tell my wife about my dreams of being in the mountains and had to stop as I felt a lump forming in my throat. I had planned to spend some time on the road this winter in place of my tours, but daily Corona infections are on a steep rise again here in Japan again at the moment, so I doubt I'll be able to make that happen.

As I look back at my Finals folder for 2020 I see 612 images of which 552 were shot in January and February on last years Winter tours. That means that from March to December I only moved

60 images to my Finals Folder for the rest of the year, and a good chunk of these were from testing the Canon EOS R5.

In Capture One Pro I've just created a new Collection Group called 2020 Top Ten and inside that I've created my first album called First Pass and made that my selections folder, and I've set up Voice Control on my iMac Pro to recognize a few words so that I can literally sit back and work through this process without touching my mouse or keyboard. Because it's not possible to simply hit the Q key with a voice command, I changed my Capture One Pro shortcut for adding images to the Selects folder to ALT + COMMAND + Q and assigned that to the

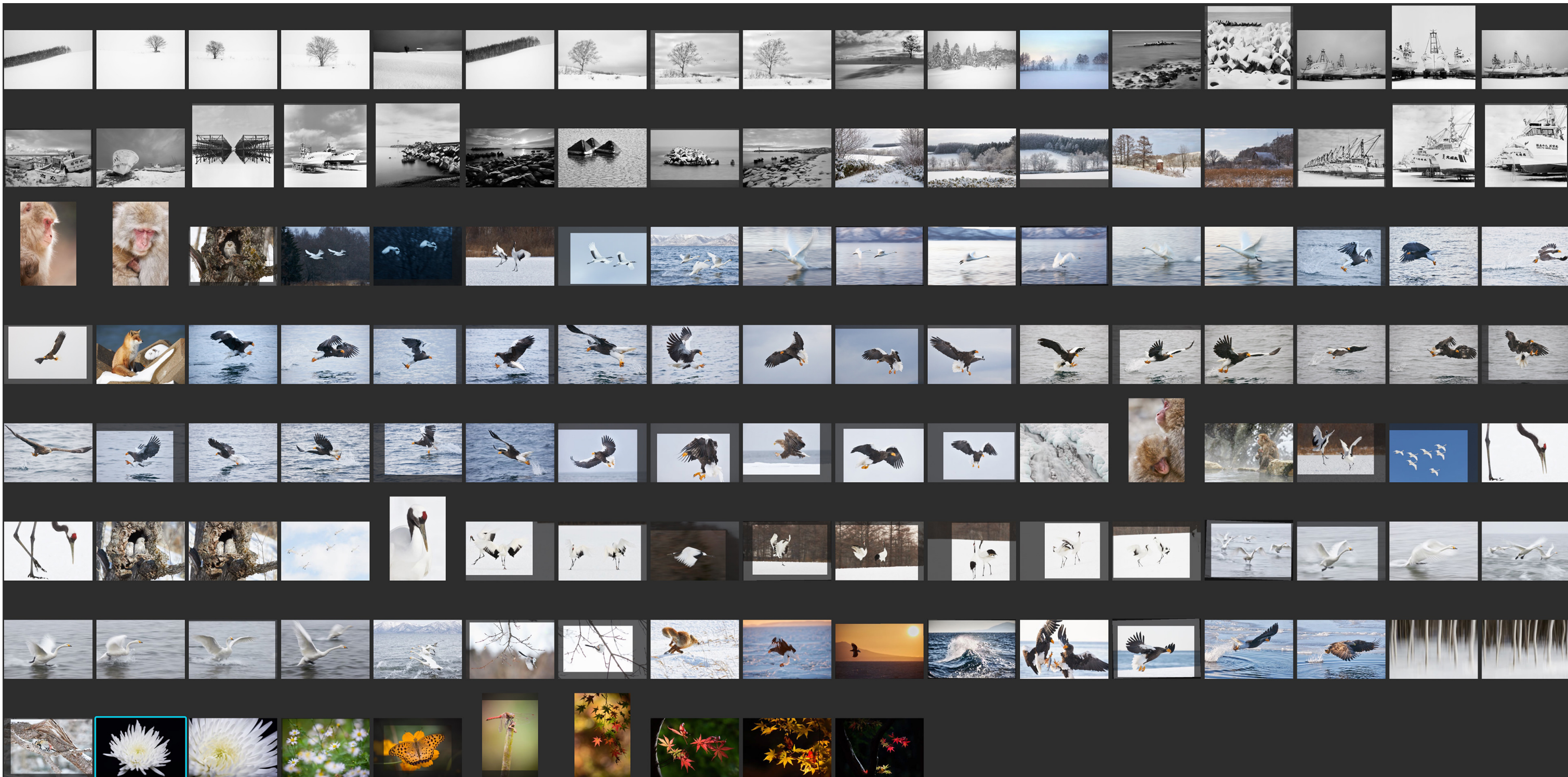
word Select, so when I have Capture One Pro selected and say "Select" the current image is added to my Selection folder. I also mapped "next" and "back" so I can just talk my way through the selection process. There's a slight pause after saying each word, so I still sometimes just use the keyboard, but it's nice to be able to just speak these commands.

2020 First Pass

OK, so after my first pass, I find myself with 129 images in my selections folder, so I selected about one in five of my Finals. This is pretty much what I expected as all of the images in my Finals folder have already been selected from my various

shoots, so they are already images that I like, and that is what makes this process so valuable, and difficult. I made a second folder in my 2020 Top Ten group and named it Second Pass, and copied all of the images from my First Pass into this second folder. From here it becomes a deductive process, as I try to reduce the number of images from 129 to 10. As usual, I'll start to look for groups of images. The most obvious one being Steller's Sea Eagles catching fish.

I have 20 images of Steller's Sea Eagle with their talons out catching a fish from the sea, so I've selected all of them and will start to compare them to whittle this selection down to just one image.



Capture One Pro fails to provide the functionality I need when doing this though. With multiple images selected I want to be able to hit delete to remove the currently selected image but when I hit delete all 20 images are removed from the Selection so it's a bit of a mess in this respect. Still, I was able to remove all but one fish catching shot, and started to reduce my Steller's Sea Eagle shots in general as there was an obvious winner for the flights shots as well.



The next obvious big group was Whooper Swans, of which I have 18, so I'll work on that selection now too. This was actually more difficult than the Steller's Sea Eagle shots because most of the Swan shots are panning shots, so the aesthetic beauty of the shot comes into play more. I got down to the final four that you see in this screenshot relatively easily, but then it got more difficult. I think I'll leave the bottom two in the selection for now and then remove one of them later.



Final Four Swan Shots

I'm down to 83 images now, and I'm moving on to the Red-Crowned Crane shots. I had 15 left which I quickly got down to 4, and I also removed 2 of the

four snow monkey shots while I was at it. I then went back to my Hokkaido Landscape work and removed a bunch of boat shots. I then went through the remaining images and removed a few

more that were obviously not going to make it now that I was getting a better picture of my final selection. I was left with the following 36 images (next page). Note that I'm uploading these in pretty

high resolution, so if you click on them and open up your browser window you should be able to see a fair amount of detail in each image.

Down to 36

I saved this as the results of my Second Pass, and created another copy of this set called the Third Pass, then I went to Fullscreen and ran a slideshow. I used the voice command "Green Label" to add a green label to each image that made me feel good as it appeared on the screen. This enables me to vote with my heart as I literally feel my reaction to

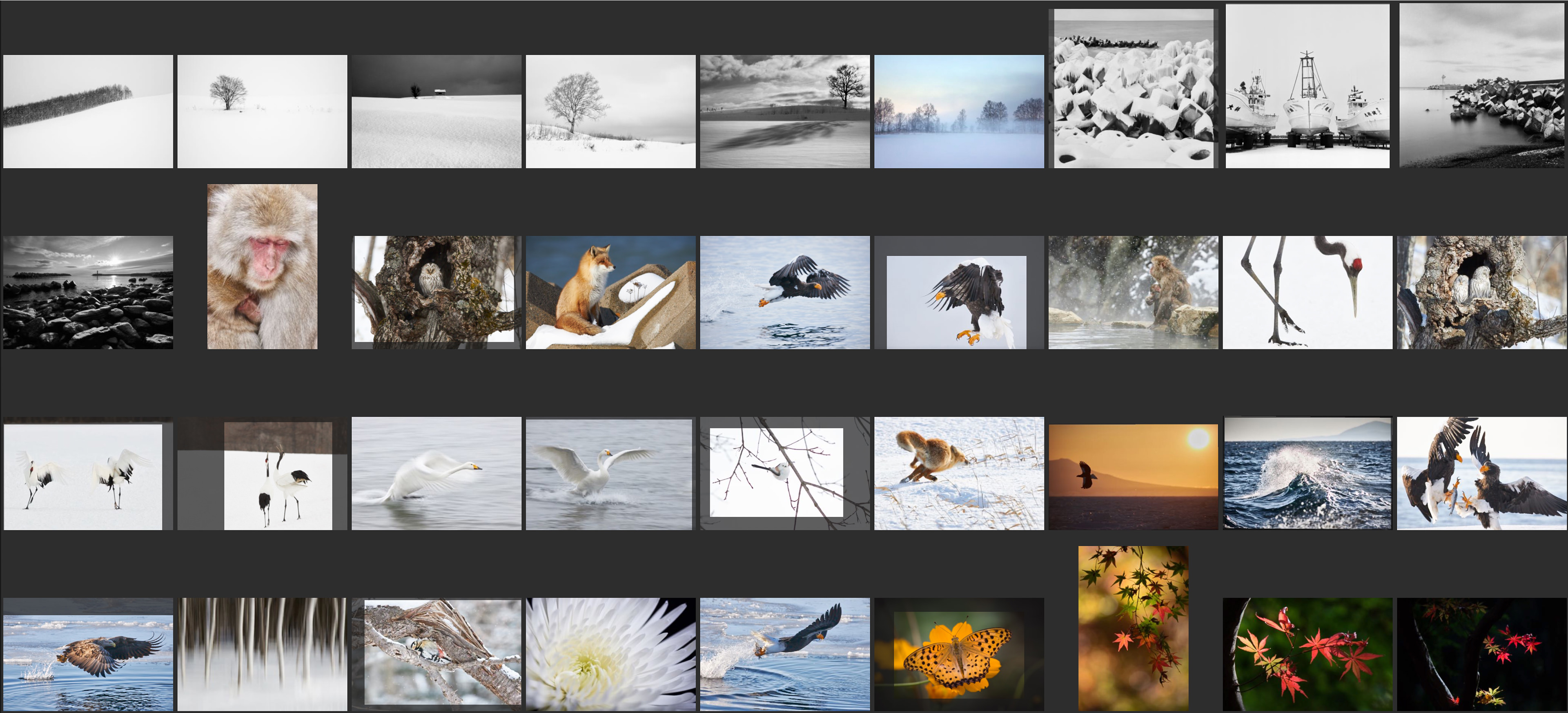
each image. The result was a reduced collection of 20 images for my third pass. I selected all of the green labeled images and created a new Album and this time turned the checkbox on for both the Select collection after creation and Add selected images after creation.

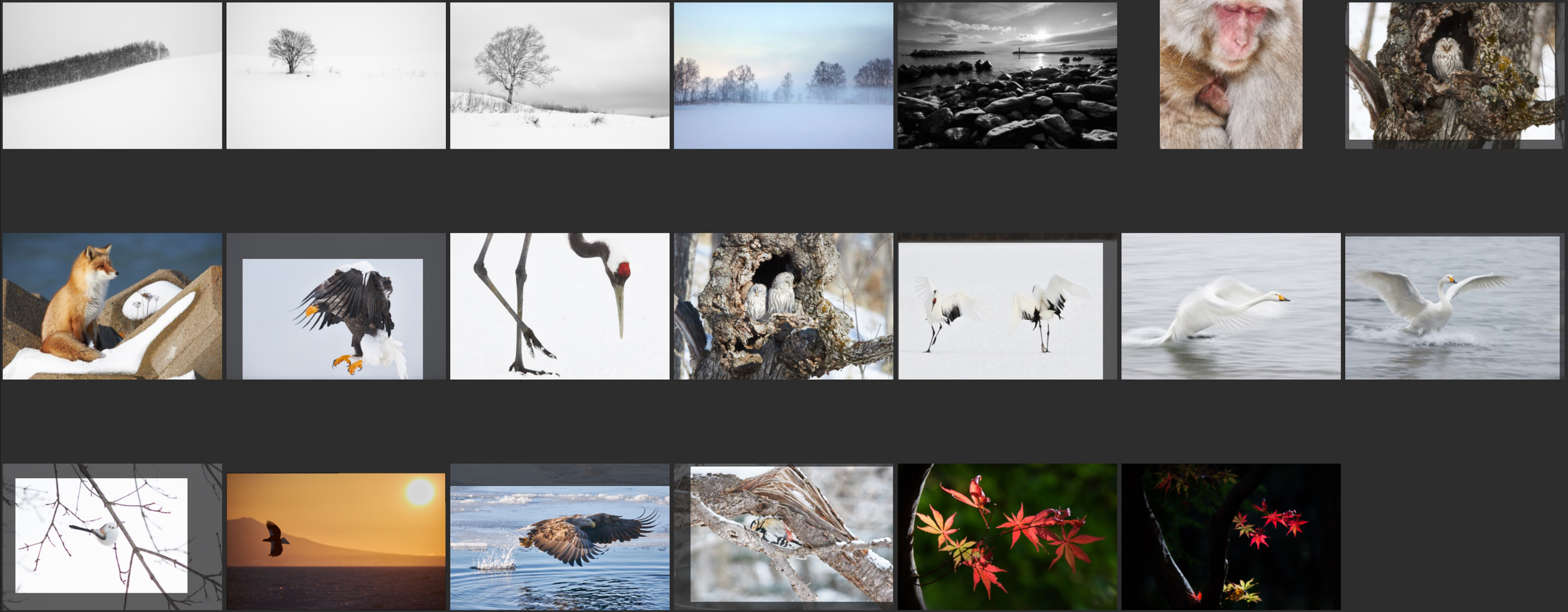
To help me remove the final ten I called on my secret weapon. My trusted critique, in the guise of my wife. I always

find that making the more painful decisions of this process is much easier to do with an impartial and unbiassed set of eyes on the images. It took us about 10 minutes to remove ten more to reach my final selection. Probably the hardest to remove was the fox shot, as I really like the feel of that image, but it was not one of the strongest of the set. We also agreed that although the shot with two owls is nice, the single owl looking at the

camera is more impactful and the texture of the tree is better.

Removing the sunrise shot was not so difficult. I'm really not much of a sunrise person. I don't mind being out before dawn, it's just the sunrise and sunset photo that doesn't really do a lot for me. On the landscape front, I was disappointed to lose the lone tree shots, but I believe the line of trees and the





color image of the morning mist are stronger images, so the deal was pretty much done.

I'm not going to talk about each individual image as I've spoken about all of these in the past, but there are a few points of interest that I'd like to cover.

The Top Ten images are on the following ten pages.

The colors of the second shot of the morning mist in Biei for example, are the colors that I used for one of the Light Appearance color schemes in our [iOS app Photographer's Friend](#). The cranes dancing shot really captured my heart because the two cranes are dancing in perfect synchronization. Their poses are

identical, just rotated around 180 degrees, and I found that fascinating.

The Hokkaido Long-Tailed Tit is a tiny little bird that I've been hoping to capture for the last few years, and finally got some shots that I was happy with last year, so I had to leave that in. It's the cutest little bird I think I've ever seen. The Great Spotted Woodpecker was a nice catch as well. We go looking for these guys on the last day of my Japan Winter Wildlife tours but they've been pretty elusive in recent years. It was nice to be able to get a shot of one is such strange looking surrounding last year. The first nine images were all shot with my EOS R, and the final maple leaf image was shot with the EOR R5 and the new RF 100-500mm

lens. I've been out shooting with the new gear quite a lot, but my local work doesn't even come close to the sort of images that I get on my tour locations.

I feel that photography-wise I've been true to myself and feel that the images are of a high enough standard for me to be happy with, but I do miss my photos from my yearly visit to Namibia in the summer. My 2021 Top Ten is going to be very different again, but hopefully I'll be able to get out on some personal projects as soon as the virus is under control. The government here is planning to put us into a state of emergency again later today, for at least one month, so maybe something can happen in February, while it's still my

favorite season for photography here in Japan.

Post Your Own Top Ten

OK, so we'll start to wrap it up there for this week. As usual though, I'd like to invite you to [share a link](#) to your own personal top ten if you also go through this exercise each year. I've been in remiss in recent years and too busy to comment, but this year I'm at home and will make an effort to reply to anyone that posts a link to your own gallery or blog post etc. I look forward to seeing what you made of 2020.





















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