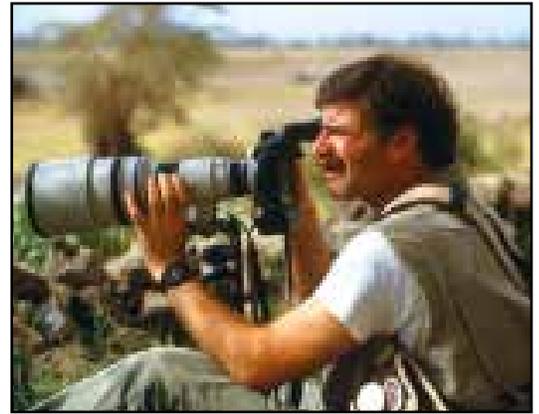


Ron Berchin

My passion for photography began in a somewhat unconventional way. While working towards my degrees in Nuclear Engineering, I worked as a darkroom assistant to earn a bit of extra money. I became fascinated by the “magic” of watching an image slowly emerge on a piece of paper sitting in a tray filled with developer. But it wasn't until after I left graduate school that I started to take my own photographs. And even that came about in an unusual way.



My first job was in the corporate world, and caused me to move from New York City to central Virginia. My escape from the demands of designing nuclear power plants was to spend the weekends hiking in the Blue Ridge Mountains, which were only a 25-minute drive from my new home. It was there that I met a group of people who were working on a guide book to the wildflowers that are indigenous to that area. The technical nature of what they were doing appealed to me — close-up macro photography using flash outdoors — and it wasn't long before I was hiking on my own and photographing wildflowers all along the BRP, stretching from the Shenandoah to the Smoky Mountains.

To my great surprise, I found that with a bit of perseverance I could sell my photographs, mostly as stock photography. In those days, you had to identify the subject with a label on the slide mount — including the scientific name. So, I even managed to become a bit of a self-taught botanist in the process.

Eventually, my photographic pursuits led me to discover new worlds and I became intrigued with life underwater. It was, for me, the perfect way to combine my love for the natural world with my photography exploring what was then — and still is — an alien world.

Based in Sydney, Australia I spent five years as an underwater photographer working primarily in what is sometimes referred to as “The Golden Triangle” — the area of the Indo-Pacific that lies between Papua New Guinea, The Philippines and Sumatra. My work also took me to Fiji, The Solomon Islands and, naturally, the Great Barrier Reef and The Coral Sea.

After developing a severe case of vertigo, my photography became more terrestrial and found me on assignment or freelancing in Alaska and Africa, as well as starting to do more and more landscape photography in the lower 48 states, using a 4x5 view camera.

After retiring, I found my photography drifting back to my beginnings — making images of flowers. Only this time — and with some of the advantages that digital offers — with more of an eye towards creating art rather than botanically accurate photographs.