

# DAISY GILARDINI

*“Science is the brain, while  
photography is the heart that  
engages people’s emotions.”—DG*

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## **D** AISY GILARDINI

grew up in Switzerland with the desire to become a veterinarian. But life doesn't always work out the way we plan, taking us on a journey somewhere between dreams and the reality of what is necessary to make a living. Gilardini became an expert in finance and accounting, a far cry from her childhood love for animals and nature, but a profession that provided the necessary support to pursue her passion for travel and photography. It wasn't long, however, before the division of work and outdoor experience became hard to manage as both were becoming successful.

Her accounting business was thriving and her photography was beginning to be published — something had to give. Which was more practical? More secure in earning potential? If you stacked the numbers side by side, the advantages may seem clear, but there was a very important part of the equation that needed to be factored into the decision — fulfillment. The choice was easy for Gilardini, and in 2006 she sold her financial business and became a full-time photographer.



Daisy Gilardini

Gilardini's youthful interest in polar regions was suddenly the focal point of her work. "I was only four years old when I received a little seal pup plush toy from my godparents. Of course, I didn't know anything about the Arctic or the Antarctic, but the stories my mother would tell me about the ice and the amazing creatures living on and under it were mesmerizing," says Daisy. "Today I can count more than 60 expeditions taken to these cold and seemingly barren areas of the world. Many times, I have tried to explain my irresistible attraction to the poles. These extreme adventures transport me out of my ordinary worldliness and lead me on the voyage to self-discovery. Isolation from modern civilization and all the distractions that come with it helps me appreciate and focus on the simple rhythms of the wild. The healing sense of awakening the primordial connection with nature and the interconnection among all species on earth inspires a deep respect for these delicate ecosystems.

"Now, as a professional environmental photographer, I feel it is my duty to document the beauty of our wild

places and wild species at risk to help raise awareness through the universal power of the images I capture.

While science provides the data to explain issues and suggest solutions, it is nature photography that symbolizes these important topics."

**INSET, ABOVE:** Emperor penguin chick winking, Snow Hill Island, Antarctica.  
Nikon D2X; 300mm f/2.8 lens; 1/1000 sec at f/6.3; ISO 100; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head

**RIGHT:** King penguin chicks and adult, Gold Harbor, South Georgia Island.  
Nikon D4; 200-400mm f/4 lens at 330mm; 1/400 sec at f/14; ISO 400; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head.

**OPPOSITE:** Fur seal pup, Stromness, South Georgia Island.  
Nikon 4S; 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6 lens at 300mm; 1/640 sec at f/8; ISO 1250; hand-held.

**PREVIOUS PAGES:** Polar bear, Wapusk National Park, Manitoba, Canada.  
Nikon D3; 600mm f/4 lens; 1/400 sec at f/6.7; ISO 1250; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head.







**ABOVE:** Emperor penguin chicks, Snow Hill Island, Antarctica.  
**Nikon 2X; 300mm f/2.8 lens; 1/320 sec at f/9; ISO 100; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head.**

**INSET, BELOW:** Northern lights, Wapusk National Park, Manitoba, Canada.  
**Nikon D4S; 14-24mm f/2.8 lens at 14mm; 15 secs at f/2.8; ISO 1600; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head.**

**OPPOSITE, TOP:** Macaroni penguin, Cooper Bay, South Georgia Island.  
**Nikon D4S; 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6 lens at 400mm; 1/2500 sec at f/9; ISO 1000; hand-held.**

**OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:** White tern in flight, Hawaii Archipelago. **Nikon D3X; 80-200mm f/2.8 lens at 80mm; 1/1600 sec at f/4; ISO 400; hand-held.**



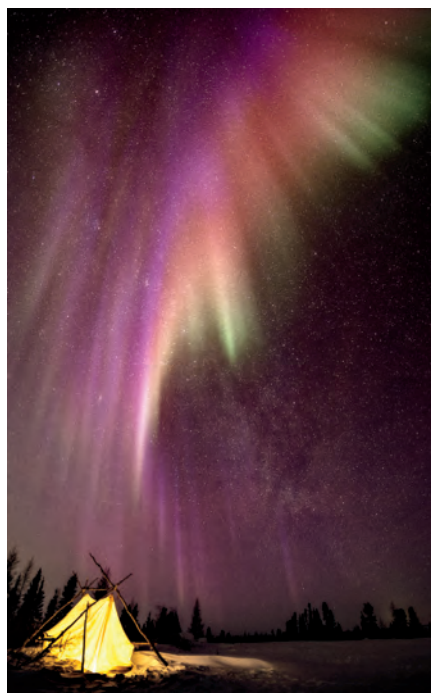
*“To isolate a photo subject in white simplifies the composition while emphasizing the personality of the individual.”—DG*



“Science is the brain, while photography is the heart that engages people’s emotions and can move them to action,” says Daisy. “I don’t create or make images, but rather feel more like an interpreter, humbled by the extraordinary diversity of landscapes and the wildlife that survives within them. A powerful tool for communication, photography is the only language understood by everyone no matter which country you are from, no matter your age, and no matter the level of education. To me, the perfect photograph is one that reaches the viewer on a personal level.”

Through the past several years, Daisy has been developing her photographic style. In the field, she likes to keep her images simple, focusing on sharp contrasts in black and white subjects or isolating them against often pure white backgrounds. Sometimes, there are blasts of color from Northern lights, deep blue skies, or bright green foliage bringing intensity to compositions. Each situation requires special preparation to be in the right place at the right time.

“My advice to prospective photographers is what I call the ‘3P’ rules. First, you need to find your *passion*. The love you put in your work will shine through your images. Second, *patience* is essential for dealing with the frustrations of spending long periods of time at the mercy of rough weather and not being able to get the shot you are after. Third, you need *perseverance*: never give up! Keep trying to achieve your goals.”





One of Gilardini's lifelong projects is called "Polar Wonders" which aims to document the polar regions and bring awareness to climate change. Traveling extensively in the far North, she has seen first-hand the loss of bear habitat as Arctic sea ice has been forming later and melting earlier. The difficulties of photographing the polar bears in freezing conditions are extreme. The cold is hard on your body as well as your equipment.

"But it is all worth it when you are able to capture the moment of a lifetime," remarks Daisy. And that very image (*inset*) is now on display at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History where millions of visitors will have the opportunity to view and be enlightened by her heart-warming photo of a polar bear mother with her two cubs. She says, "The instant I pushed the release button, I knew this image was unique. I have been working with polar bears since 2008 and never



David McEown

saw anything like that before. When behind your camera, you know when you are witnessing a special moment. You feel the adrenaline flowing in your veins and your heart racing. And the Smithsonian is the perfect place where science meets

photography to educate the public and create strong messages."

Daisy Gilardini's commitment to conservation matches her talent in the art of photography. With a strong desire to bring attention to polar issues, she says, "It is an amazing honor to have my work displayed in this world class museum, and I hope the viewers will take away a sense of responsibility for animals and help to protect them."

*Daisy Gilardini is from Switzerland, and now resides in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Visit: [daisygilardini.com](http://daisygilardini.com)*



**ABOVE:** Polar bear mother with cubs, Wapusk National Park, Manitoba, Canada. Nikon D4S; 800mm f/5.6 lens; 1/800 sec at f/14; ISO 640; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head.

**OPPOSITE:** Polar bear family, Wapusk National Park, Manitoba, Canada. Nikon D2X; 600mm f/4 lens; 1/500 sec at f/6.3; ISO 100; Gitzo Mountaineer CF tripod; RRS ball head.

*Bear Tales*

By Daisy Gilardini

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For the past 10 years, Gilardini has roamed bear country from the Arctic into Alaska and the Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia. This collection celebrates North American bears including the grizzly, polar, black, and kermode bear species, and highlights current issues such as poaching, trophy hunting, and habitat loss.

