



Whale Story

Jasmine Rossi finds photographic passion in Patagonia.



four years ago, Jasmine Rossi couldn't have told you the difference between an f-stop and a shutter speed. Born in Switzerland to a German mother and an Italian father, raised in Spain, and educated in Italy, Germany, and England—she calls herself a Euro—Rossi was on her way to a career in international politics. But while she was co-authoring a book on the European Union with a member of its fledgling parliament, tragedy

struck: The constant typing caused serious repetitive motion syndrome in her hands. "I couldn't hold a cup, open a door, or brush my teeth," says Rossi. "I was sure I wouldn't be able to pursue the career of my dreams." In fact, Rossi's seeming misfortune would change her life for the better. And a couple of years later, she was busy creating a very different kind of book—a handsome new

coffee-table volume, *The Wild Shores of Patagonia: The Valdés Peninsula & Punta Tombo* (Harry N. Abrams)—that features her remarkable wildlife photography.

Unable to continue in her London-based job, Rossi fled the cosmopolitan scene to which her ambitions were so closely linked and headed for South America. "All I wanted was to get out in nature," she says. "I canoed through the Venezuelan jungle, rode a horse across the Andes, and camped out in the Bolivian desert." All along, she was taking point-and-shoot pictures of the stunning scenes that surrounded her—and soon discovered that photography was her true passion.

That passion found a perfect subject when Rossi arrived at the continent's southern tip, along Argentina's Patagonian coastline. There she discovered the Valdés Peninsula, a unique marine wilderness populated by a half million Magellanic penguins, hordes of roaring elephant seals, hundreds of endangered right (continued on page 89)

Above: A right whale in the waters of Patagonia's Valdés Peninsula, captured by Rossi with a Canon EOS A2E and EF 15mm f/2.8 fisheye lens in an underwater housing. Left: Rossi with a friend

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(continued from page 32) whales, and, most spectacular of all, huge killer whales snatching sea-lion pups right off the beach—a once-a-year spectacle that happens nowhere else in the world.

Nine months after leaving London, Rossi returned and processed her film—and was so captivated by the results that she decided to become a professional photographer. After a French publisher asked to see more work, she bought a Canon EOS A2E and a full set of lenses, including the supertelephotos so essential to wildlife photography. But unable to find photography classes that would teach her the specific skills she needed, she turned to books. "I bought every how-to book I could put my hands on," she says. "It was a theoretical crash course." She then took a monthlong trip through California and Utah to test her new abilities.

Rossi's photo education actually continued when she returned to the Valdés Peninsula. There she encountered some of nature photography's biggest stars—among them Art Wolfe and Jeff Foott, who taught her how to meter manually by using an elephant seal as a gray card. "It was like getting a one-on-one workshop with some of the world's best photographers," she says.

Rossi went on to spend the next two years at the Valdés Peninsula, which was recently declared a World Heritage Site by the United Nations. She took up residence at a remote ranger station on a windblown cliff overlooking the South Atlantic, venturing out daily to shoot the photographs now assembled in *The Wild Shores of Patagonia*. "I'm so lucky to have been the only photographer ever permitted to live inside this giant nature reserve," says Rossi, whose hands healed just in time for her to write the book's text. "It's one of the last truly wild places on the planet."

To see more of Rossi's photography, visit www.agpix.com/jasminerossi.



Rossi's image of Patagonian gray foxes at play was shot with a Canon EOS A2E and an EF 70-200mm f/2.8L USM zoom.

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Rossi learned to meter manually by using an elephant seal as a gray card.

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