

Sunrise Photography

What a way to start the day!

2020-02-08

My favourite photographic light occurs pre-sunrise—dawn—starting as far as an hour prior (a topic for another day), but ...

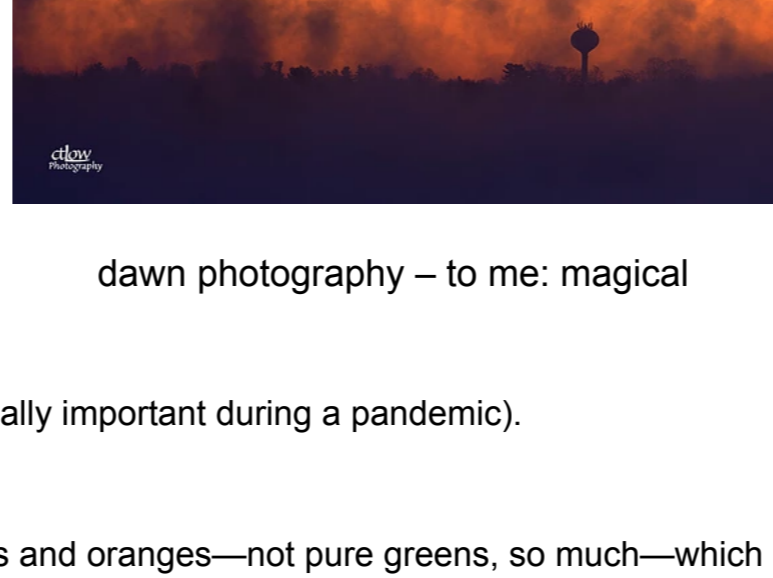
... that will—given clear-enough skies—always end in a sunrise. Sunrise ties (with many others) as my second-favourite light.

I confess to losing interest about five minutes later. Although a firm proponent of [Golden Hour](#) photography, in comparison with the mystical pre-dawn light which I will have just been harnessing, I find full sunlight too harsh in very short order.

That allows me only a very brief window for sunrise work.

I do dusk photography too, but prefer dawn because:

- I often wake early;
- I find that sunset occurs too late for my rhythms near the Spring solstice and right at rush-hour near the Winter solstice;
- I prefer the fewer people and vehicles about at dawn vs. dusk (especially important during a pandemic).



dawn photography – to me: magical

Either dawn or dusk will provide a range of blues and oranges—not pure greens, so much—which continue to make me gasp.

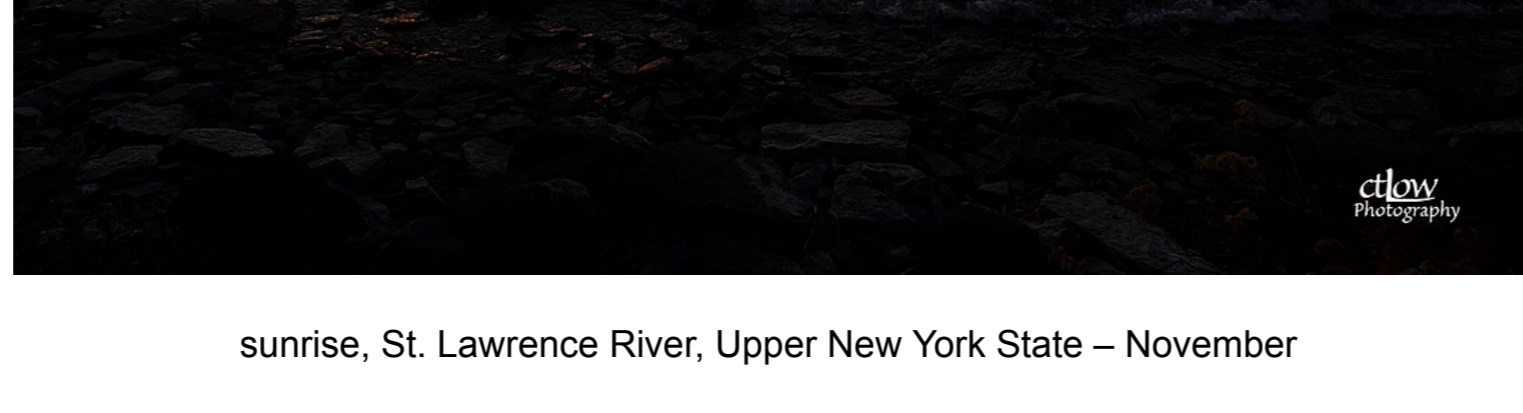
Sunrise arrives just a bit on the [early](#) side near the Spring solstice, as in 5:17 a.m. DST this year, so I might have to be on station by 4:20 a.m. to be ready for whatever might happen (always in some measure a surprise). Unless I have something very specific in mind, I don't set an alarm, but I often check the forecast the evening before, and if I roll over in bed at just the right moment, I might take a quick peek out the window, and then sometimes decide that I will catch up on sleep later.

Steven MacDowall of the [Thursday File](#) marvels at my constitution, and asks if I have a thermos of coffee with me, but no I do not (nor do I need it), as that would induce a different call of nature which would be most inconvenient under the circumstances.

I perceive nothing unusual about my constitution. I do feel wonderful at dawn.

Back at the studio, however, one big mug of coffee quickly appears.

I would like to present a very small selection of recent sunrise photographs, without much exposition.



sunrise, St. Lawrence River, Upper New York State – November

The photograph above could barely get much simpler, and sometimes I feel that anything else would only distract from some compositional essence.

This wide-angle (but not fisheye) image includes a little foreground, as in: we can see a bit of the river bottom through the water, meaning that I stood right at the shore.

Let's look at something a bit more complicated:



SabreJet, Blockhouse Island, Brockville, ON – December

Well, "complicated"—I mean nothing more than that it includes a few more elements. I had not ever seen this iconic Brockville landmark in just that light with just that sky (and also from a vantage which I hadn't tried before), and likely never will again. A general photographic principle has always stood me in good stead: be there.

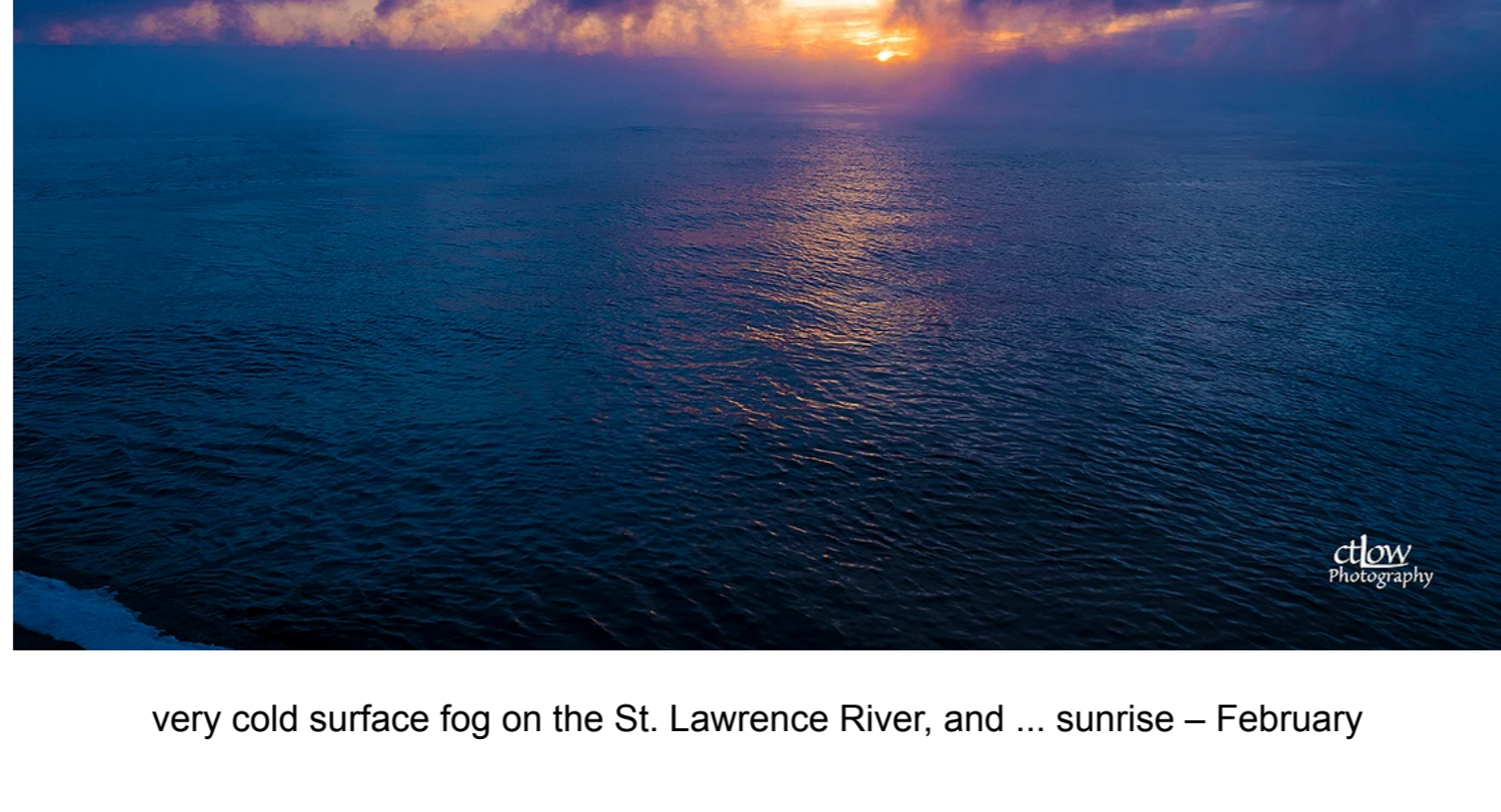


sunrise, cold fog, St. Lawrence River – January

The image above includes (in my humble opinion) enough sky, but emphasizes the orange river-reflection, the sunbeam split presumably by some tree, itself not visible through the very cold fog and the sun itself.

Have I ever said before in this space that light trumps everything (rhetorical)? Many elements matter to produce a satisfying image, but for me, light almost always predominates, and many otherwise pleasing photographs never see the light of day because of the light of the day.

Having the actual sun in the frame does not make light-management any easier, but when it all comes together (and it doesn't always), then I absolutely find the extra effort worth it.



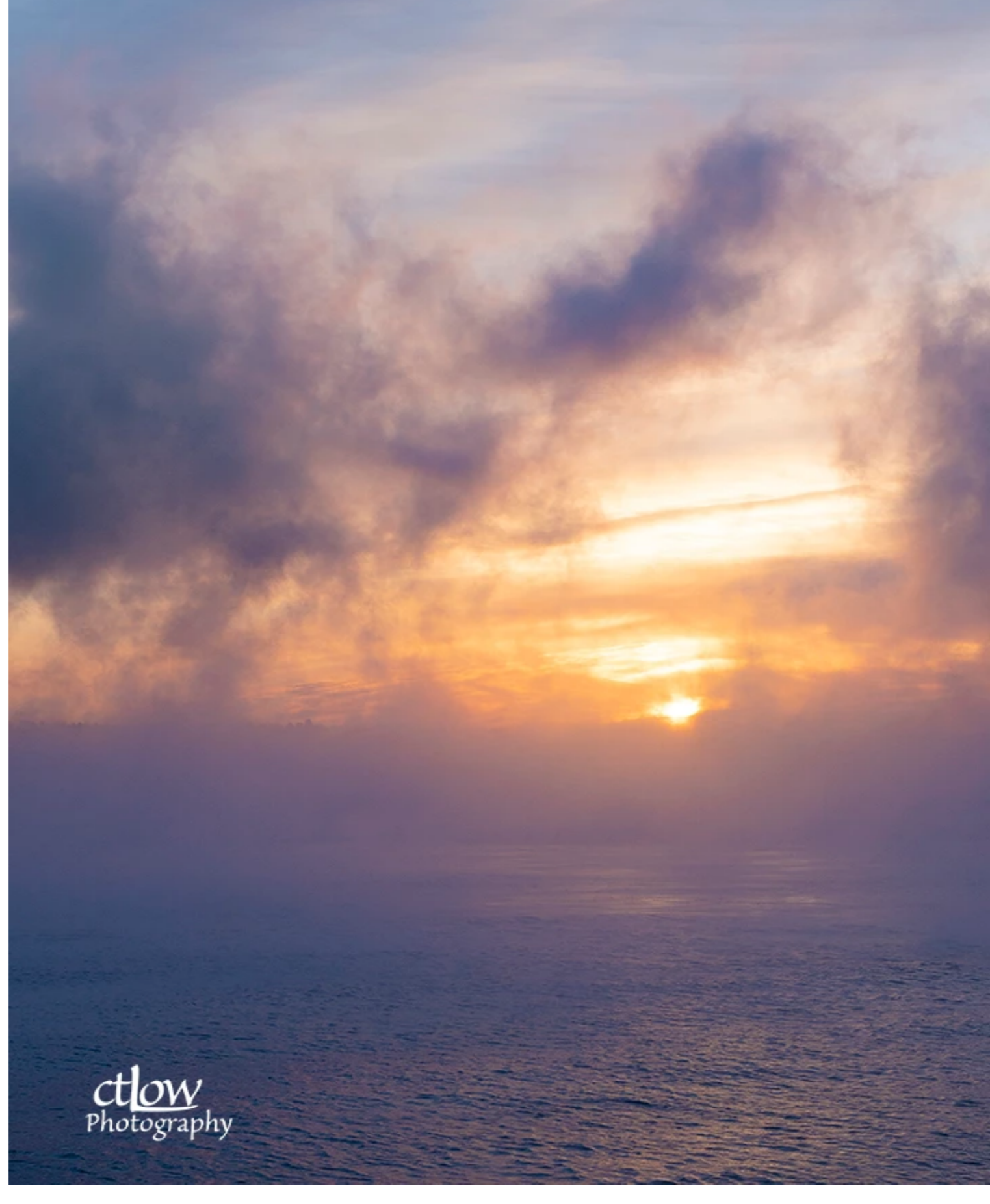
very cold surface fog on the St. Lawrence River, and ... sunrise – February

The photograph above serves as a good example of the dynamic nature of landscape photography, people of course quite naturally assume it static. But a fairly stiff breeze, that morning, kept the (very cold) fog moving along, and I wanted that to show that, while not obscuring the sun, so a few seconds either way wouldn't have worked.

You will by now have noticed that these all include water. The sun, so they tell me, also rises over land, and often quite visually spectacularly. These simply all happened over water.

Water draws me.

Finally:



sunrise, St. Lawrence River, cold fog – February

Again, it feels to me that I could hardly have made it simpler (although also very dynamic in creation), and yet it resembles nothing else I have ever done, nor anything else I likely ever will do.

Conditions like this simply do not repeat; the extreme cold, the fog, the clouds, and of course the sunrise, all combine to make this image unique, and not as simple as it first appears.

I said of that one, from the outset, that I could not decide whether it felt dramatic, or whether it gave off a more subtle, nuanced vibe.

I still cannot decide.

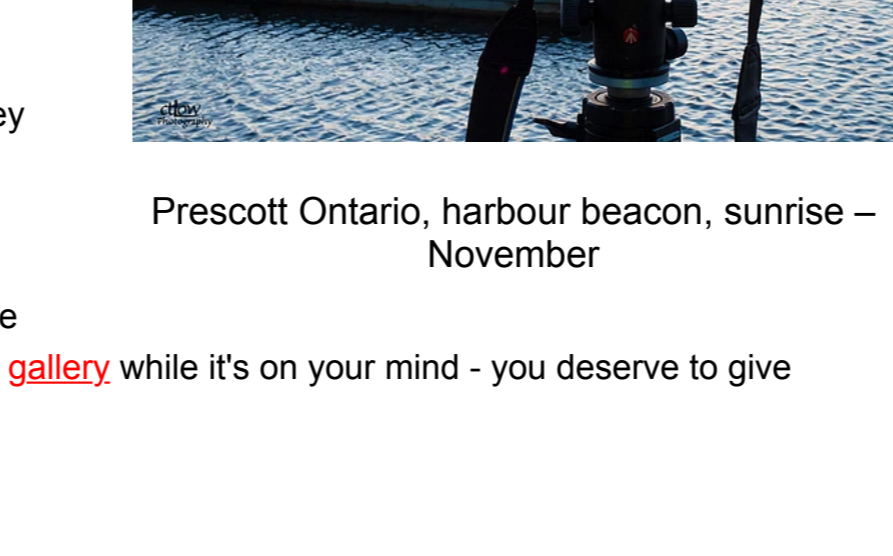
And I really like that about it.

When I searched my digital art-photography files for "sunrise" I got 82 results, so you could all count yourselves lucky that I restricted this to five recent ones.

As with so much of my work, I strive for improvement more than successful repetition, so if you want to see all 82 some day, then I can assure you that they all differ (and that some occurred over land).

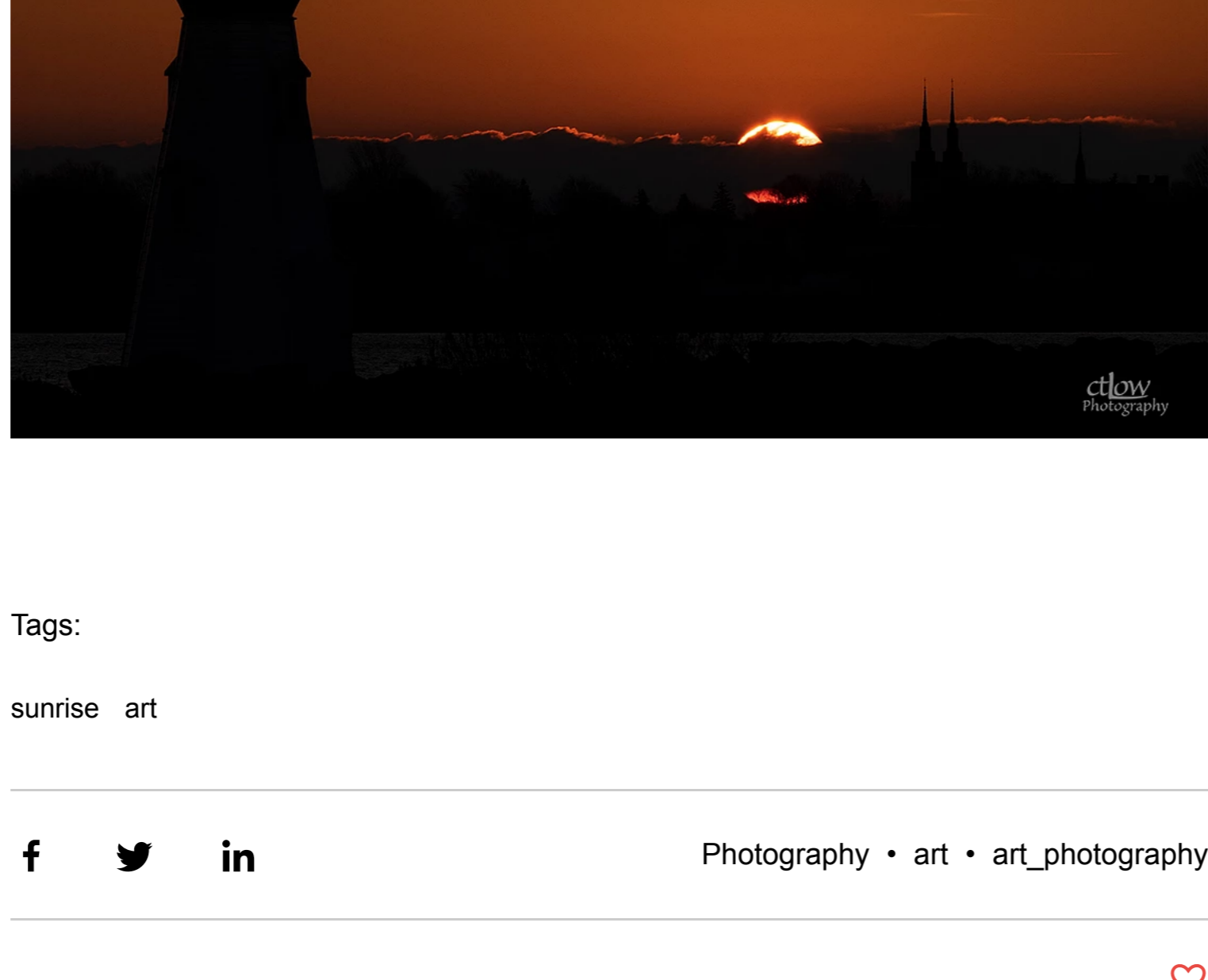
Anything here is for sale and would make a lovely print, and also check out the full [gallery](#) while it's on your mind - you deserve to give yourself a random gift of art.

Thank you all so much for reading.



Prescott Ontario, harbour beacon, sunrise – November

Charles T. Low
Photographer
Blog #60



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David Allen
My favourite time of day too, Sunrise! Wish I could have described it as well as you do Charles! David

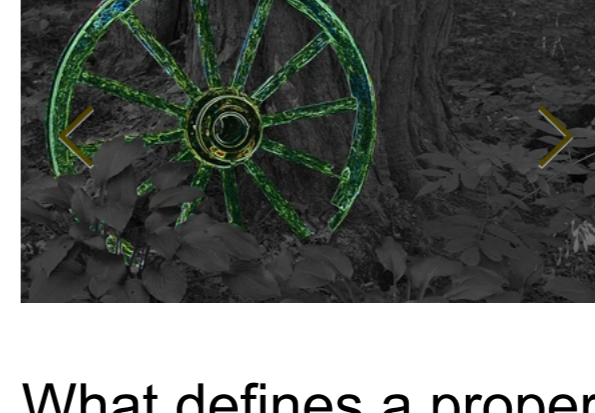
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Paul Wash
I too prefer to shoot an early morning scene, and for basically the same reasons as you. This selection of photographs are truly wonderful. Thank for sharing!

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