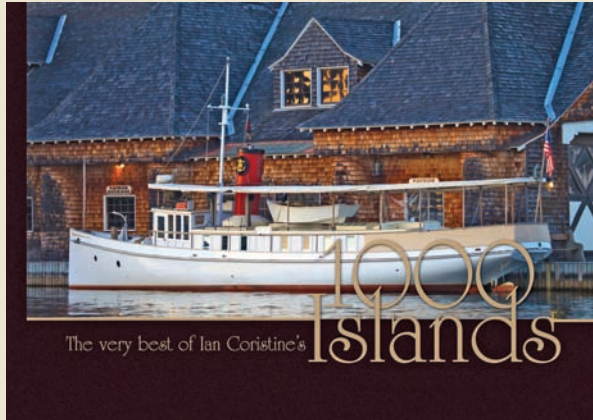


Behind the Lens

Ian Coristine's Very Best



Aerial photographer Ian Coristine has been capturing the breathtaking beauty of the Thousand Islands for nearly two decades from all angles. The pilot from Hudson, Quebec first discovered the region while flying over it in his Challenger float plane 18 years ago and has been documenting this majestic archipelago ever since from air, land and water by plane, power boat, kayak, tall ship and the granite shores of his own Raleigh Island retreat just west of Brockville. Coristine's fifth book, *The very best of Ian Coristine's 1000 Islands* will be available this spring.

He is the author of the best-selling *The 1000 Islands, Water, Wind and Sky*, *The Thousand Islands* and the booklet *1000 Islands*, published in 2007, which sold out 30,000 copies, winning a Premier Print "Benny" Award in the graphic arts industry's largest and most prestigious worldwide printing competition.

The very best of Ian Coristine's 1000 Islands lives up to its title. The high gloss or "liquid gloss" used to print the book has created "a book of covers" to showcase his photographs. Coristine is already at work on his next book: a memoir of life on his island called *One in a Thousand*.

His fifth book is a compilation of his finest photographs, selected from a library which exceeds 30,000 images. Once again, Coristine showcases this place through a unique lens from pictures of its iconic landmarks such as Boldt Castle's Heart Island and Singer Castle's Dark Island, to historical Carleton Island and the Lost Channel. Coristine, who "lives in the assignment" showcases the scenery all around him, ships, lighthouses, St. Lawrence skiffs, and the loons that circle his shores. His aerial photographs give, as he says, "a privileged view" of the islands.

The high gloss or "liquid gloss" used to print his latest "book of covers" required a search around the globe to find a printer willing to attempt this new technique to showcase his photographs. Enjoy a preview of some of his spectacular portraits of this special place and the stories behind them in Coristine's own words in this photo essay. They are, indeed, some of his very best.



The Lost Channel

I've shot thousands of photos from my plane low from above, but one of the "aerial" scenes which resonates most strongly with me is this perspective of the Lost Channel which I've shot in all seasons. I discovered this spot not from the plane, but from the walkway of the Canadian span. If you've ever seen the historic print of the 1000 Islands done by W.H. Bartlett in the early 1800s, you'll see the similarity with this scene.

On August 14, 1760, Britain's HMS Onondaga was lured into the labyrinth by French and Indian attackers. Realizing they were becoming trapped in tight confines, they lowered a boat with 14 men to row back to warn HMS Mohawk away, but neither the boat nor the men were ever seen again. Eventually the Onondaga drifted clear so they lowered another boat to look for the first. On failing to find even where the first had been lowered, this spot became known as the Lost Channel.

Thanks to Simon Fuller, I have had the privilege of sailing many times on the Fair Jeanne, including a trip down the St. Lawrence to the Atlantic. Unfortunately, despite all the time aboard which included filming a music video of Great Lake Swimmers' song *Palmistry* (from their album "Lost Channels"), conditions never had been right to set every sail. Also, despite plenty of coaxing, I had never managed to get the Fair Jeanne into the Lost Channel. The Captain kept saying "It's not my ship and I'm not willing to risk her." Fair enough, but ...

Finally, last fall Simon brought a renowned tall ship photographer to the River with the plan of taking Fair Jeanne out on Lake Ontario with all sails set for photography for Bytown Brigantine who operate this and another tall ship as adventure camps afloat. I asked if I might go along in hopes of learning from the photographer and finally getting to see every sail set.

When we boarded in Gananoque, it was raining and worse, calm. There was no point in heading out onto the lake. I saw my opportunity and leapt at it, asking (or was it begging?) Simon to head downstream to the Lost Channel which with him on board, the Captain was willing to do. We jumped into a zodiac and ran well ahead, climbing up onto the bridge to wait.

Eventually, I spotted a tree moving behind one of the distant islands. It was the tip of the mast. For the first time in 249 years, a tall ship was entering the Lost Channel! A hazy sun cooperated while the sky threatened behind. Heart beating frantically in excitement, I snapped dozens of shots, but this is the one I liked the best. I may have photos that will please others more than this one, but I don't think I'll ever get a Thousand Islands shot that will please me more. I have a five foot wide canvas print of it above my mantelpiece at my winter home and find myself endlessly sitting in front of it, exploring the inlets and islands and the unlikely scene of a tall ship in full sail amongst them.



Reflections on Raleigh Island

Power boats are a must in the 1000 Islands, but the slower pace of a rowing skiff, canoe or kayak is the absolute best way to fully appreciate the islands' beauty. While they are similar in makeup, each is remarkably different and from each, the River appears to be an entirely different place. Where waves have washed away the various lichens, you can see the pink hue of Frontenac Arch granite which is common to the vast majority of the islands between Brockville/Morristown and Clayton/Gananoque. Calm, foggy mornings like this are hard for me to resist, so you'll usually find me out somewhere with my camera. The reward on this particular morning was finding a pearl in an oyster as the sun melted through the mist to be reflected in a small pool of water. Finding the real thing would not have pleased me more.

On River's Edge: Tibbetts Point Lighthouse

I love flying amongst the islands in the River, but whenever I go near Lake Ontario I have a deep respect for it. Engine failures don't happen very often, but any pilot who figures they won't happen is a dreamer. I've had my fair share, including hundreds in gliders where the engine has already failed before takeoff. It teaches you to think ahead and not put yourself in harm's way. With altitude, any plane can trade height for distance or airspeed, but when your height is spent, you'd better be where you want to be, because you're not going to get a second try.

On floats, the freedom is much greater than on wheels because anything wet essentially becomes a runway. All well and good as long as land is near, but here at Tibbetts Point Lighthouse, where Lake Ontario meets the St. Lawrence just west of Cape Vincent N.Y., it isn't River. If the wind is blowing the wrong way and you are forced down here, the next land you reach may be 300 miles away. For this reason, I never fly low at Tibbetts unless the wind is onshore as it was late on this summer afternoon.



Baby On Board

I love loons, but find them very challenging to photograph, particularly while respecting their privacy as they are easily stressed. I always hoped to photograph a mother carrying her baby, despite only ever seeing it once, briefly. When I discovered a mother nesting on a nearby island, I thought the opportunity might have arrived. I managed to get several shots of her sitting on her nest, but never actually saw her carrying her baby. When she returned again the following year I couldn't believe my good luck, but a single distant sighting of the baby on board was as good as it got, though I did get some reasonable shots of them swimming together. Last summer was her third nesting here. Out one morning in my pedal-kayak which is very stealthy because there is no need to be waving a paddle around for propulsion, I finally got my chance. A strong telephoto lens is challenging to hand-hold still enough even in virtual calm like this, but the backlighting was perfect even if it complicates life by making the exposure tricky. I was doubtful as I pedaled home, but had hopes. To say I was delighted when I saw this shot doesn't go nearly far enough.



Sailing Away

For most of my life I suffered from acute acrophobia. High ladders were not a place you'd ever find me but surprisingly, like many pilots I know, I had no problem in a plane. No problem that is until one day when I flew by the top of a tall tower and began contemplating the fact that there was little difference between sitting on it than sitting where I was. For a brief moment I was terrified, but once past, the anxiety passed too. It bothered me that this fear was preventing me from enjoying a number of interesting experiences so I began working on it. Not recklessly where real risk was involved, but pretty much whenever the opportunity presented itself. To my surprise and pleasure I found that it seemed to be working. I began to think I might actually have conquered it, but it wasn't until two summers ago when I had my first opportunity to sail aboard the Fair Jeanne that I could actually test the theory. Interestingly, I discovered that high in the rigging or out on the bowsprit (where an off duty crew member is relaxing), became my two favourite places on the boat. I actually enjoyed spending time there without any fear whatsoever. What an incredible freedom it has been to know that I am no longer constrained in this way. The moral to this story is that if you suffer from a deep-rooted fear or anxiety, worry not. You CAN overcome it.