

# Aerial Geometry

A bird's-eye view reveals coastal

Delaware as an undulating

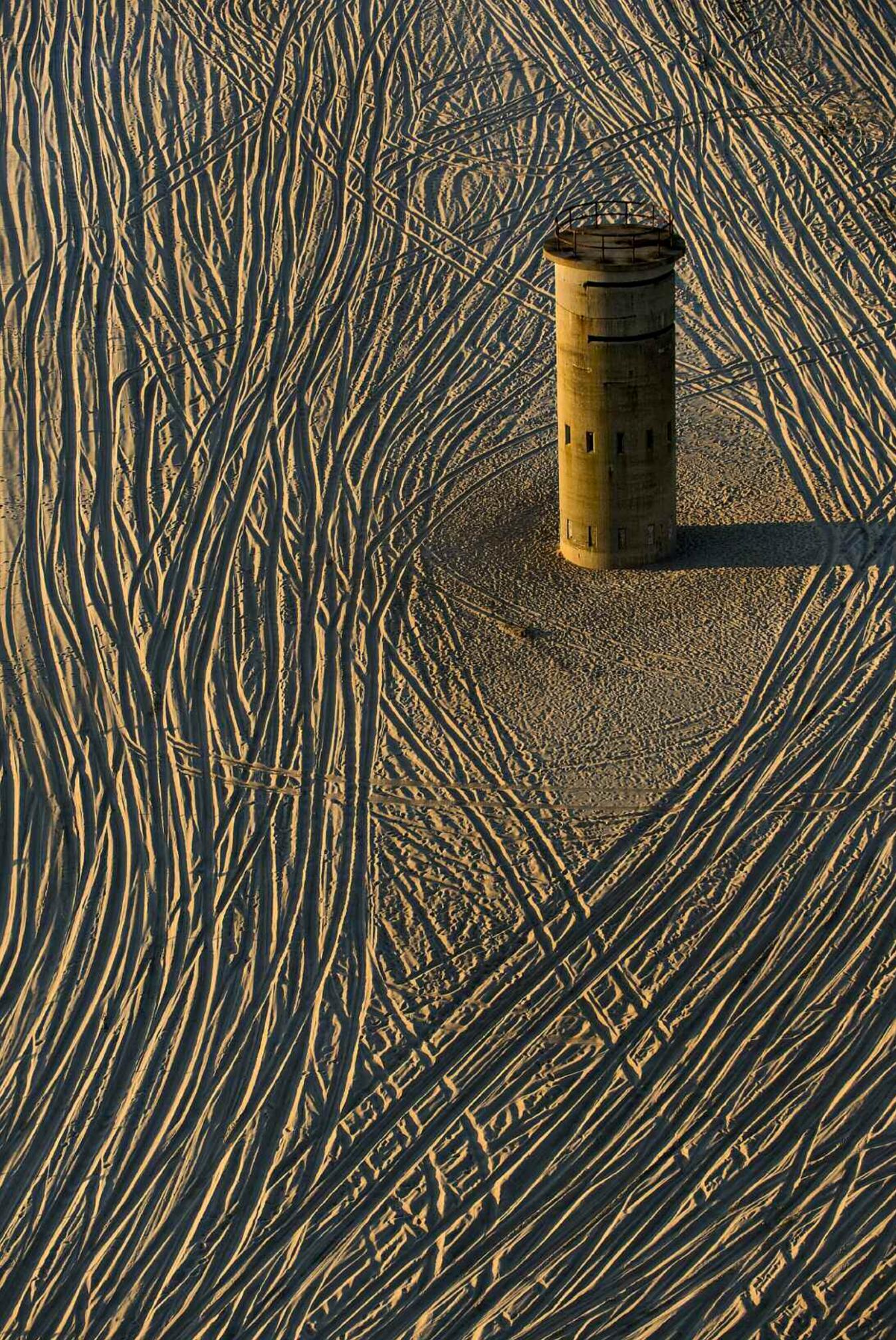
array of lines in the land and water.

Photographer Kevin Fleming, who has

long been drawn to this perspective, captures it with

a craftsman's precision and an artist's eye.

BY PAM GEORGE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEVIN FLEMING



**K**evin Fleming is well-known around coastal Delaware for his wildlife photography, which includes striking images of herons, foxes and deer, among countless other creatures. But for more than four decades, Fleming has also offered a bird's-eye view of the beach and nearby coastal landscape. His lens has captured terrain and waterways sprinkled with geometric shapes. Some are man-made. Others were formed by nature. Then there is the marriage — sometimes unintentional — of the two. With his Nikon 70-200 mm zoom lens, he makes what is ordinary on the ground look extraordinary from the air.

Fleming, who obtained his pilot's license in 1973, has juggled a camera and the plane's controls in the past. These days, he's often a passenger aboard a 1949 Aeronca Champion (called a "Champ," for short). "It's small. You can fly it pretty slow, and it has fairly good visibility — there's only one little wing strut in the way," he says. "I'd prefer an open-cockpit biplane, if I could get one, but there are none around anymore."



In the two-seat tandem, Fleming sits behind pilot John Chirteo, who flies out of Eagle Crest Aerodrome near Milton. Since there is a set of controls in the back, Fleming might steer the plane toward something that catches his eye. But the two have been flying together for so long that Chirteo is “good at getting me where I need to go,” Fleming says.

Where he wants to go includes places with interesting shapes, such as the waterway that winds through the Great Marsh near Lewes. From above, the water looks like a broken blue paisley pattern on plush velvet. Note the length of tree shade that extends into the scene from the left; the photo was taken at sunrise.

An image featuring one of the World War II fire-control towers was taken near sunset. The tower is on the Gordons Pond side of Cape Henlopen State Park, where surf fishermen and women drive their vehicles onto the beach. After days of the vehicles’ circumventing the concrete cylinder, the tire tracks create lines and textures in the sand that resemble strands of hair or undulating sea grasses. The tower appears as though it’s standing alone on a small, smooth island.

Fleming typically takes aerial photos as the sun rises or a few hours before sunset, but is flexible if he wants to incorporate a human element. ▶

To see more of Kevin Fleming’s work, visit [kevinfleming.com](http://kevinfleming.com) or his galleries in downtown Lewes and Rehoboth Beach.



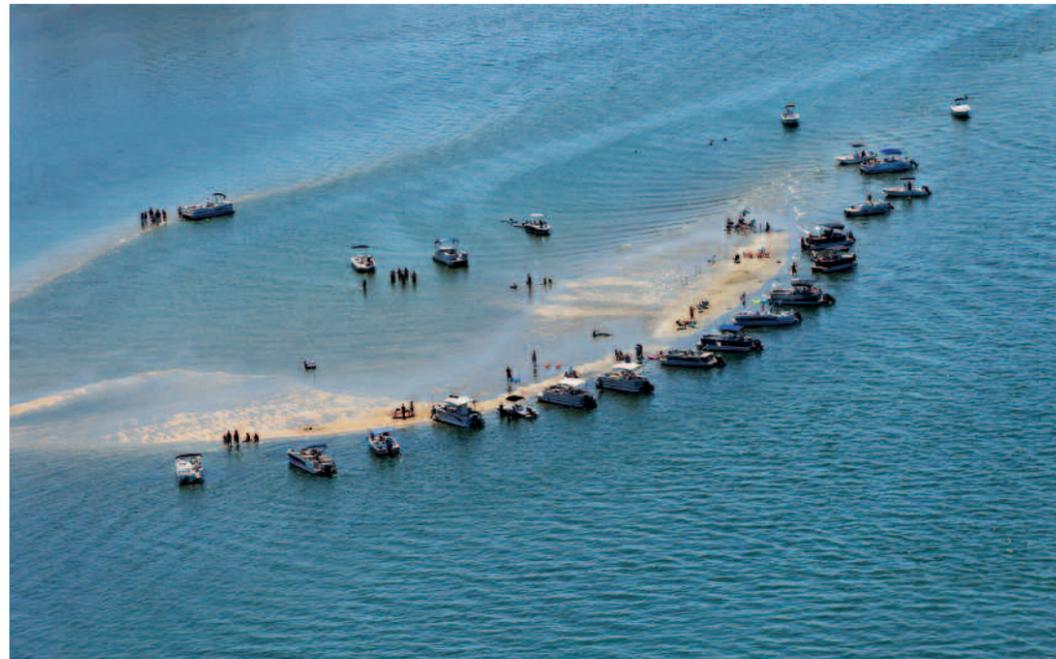
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Consider his photo of beach umbrellas, which march diagonally across the frame. He took the photo of the Henlopen Acres Beach Club between 9 and 10 a.m., after the staff had painstakingly arranged the umbrellas. To create the uniform alignment, a worker drives a Jeep straight down the beach; colleagues then place the umbrellas along one set of the tire tracks. "On busy weekends, there are two rows," Fleming says. "They've been doing it for years and years."

Under each royal blue umbrella rests two matching lounge chairs. In Fleming's photograph, it's still early — the chairs are mostly empty. As a result, the eye easily hops along from one to another. The blue-and-white-striped rental shed near the top right of the photo and the triangle of white-foamed sea in the bottom left anchor the color scheme.

Early one afternoon, Chirteo and Fleming flew over the Indian River Inlet's cable-stayed bridge (officially known as the Charles W. Cullen Bridge). Some photographers might have captured the entire span in the shot. Not Fleming. "I wanted to get in close to get the lines," he explains. The intersection of the cables resembles a fishing net against the inky blue water in the background.

On another afternoon fly-by, the long-time photographer pointed his camera toward Herring Point in Cape Henlopen State Park, one of the most popular beaches for anglers and their entourages. The



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line of parked vehicles on the sand mirrors the scalloped edge of the water, whose whitecaps look like eyelet lace.

Fleming is especially drawn to diagonals, which is evident in the image of a boat motoring down the Lewes-and-Rehoboth Canal. "There's a stretch where there's no wake restrictions, and you can go pretty fast," he notes.

The boat's location in the scene makes the wake — not the vessel — the main subject. The folds and shape of the foam suggest a paper airplane in flight. Look close, and you'll spot the shimmering reflection of the boat's prow in the water.

In contrast, a scene at an Indian River Bay sandbar conveys a sense of ease. This is a popular place for pontoon boats, and as in the fishing beach photo, the boats have pulled up to the crescent-shaped sliver of sand in an arrangement that mimics the bar's shape.

Fleming likes taking aerial shots so much that he's contemplating a new book devoted to them. If the idea takes off, it will be his 28th tome. ■

PAM GEORGE is the author of "Shipwrecks of the Delaware Coast: Tales of Pirates, Squalls & Treasure," among other books, including one on Delaware sculptor Charles Parks that features photographs by Kevin Fleming.



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