

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper

January 2018

2017 Digital Images of the Year



Marksburg Castle
Class A Image of the Year - Rich Bullard

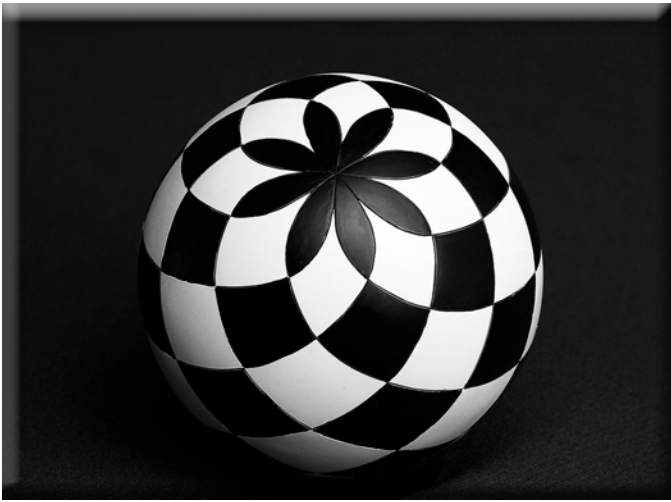


Tundra Swans
Class AA Image of the Year - Christine Blue



Lemon Wee-Wee
Class AAA Image of the Year - Trey Steinhart

2017 Print Images of the Year



A Study in Geometry
Class A Print of the Year Wayne Carlson

Reflecting on the Vietnam Memorial
Class AA Print of the Year- Christine Blue



California Condor Portrait
Class AAA Print of the Year - Dean Taylor



2017 Annual Digital Image Winners

Open - Class A

Pumpkin Patch	First Place	Richard Bullard
Chain Bridge	Second Place	Richard Bullard

Black & White - Class A

None

Special Subject - Class A

Whose Bottle	First Place	Richard Bullard
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Digital Image of the Year Class A

Marksburg Castle - by Richard Bullard

Open - Class AA

Cheetah Portrait	First Place	Christine Blue
Whiskered Onions	Second Place	Elizabeth Parrish
Osprey	Third Place	Sheldon McCormick

Black & White - Class AA

Old Wagon	First Place	Gary Brown
Chicago Skyline	Second Place	Christine Blue
Meets Cloud Gate	Third Place	Paul Chapman
B & W Abandoned Homestead		

Special Subject - Class AA

Hold Onto Your Hats	First Place	Christine Blue
Lassen County's Environmental Problem	Second Place	Paul Chapman
Winding Mountain Road	Third Place	Paul Chapman

Digital Image of the Year Class AA

Tundra Swans - by Christine Blue

Open - Class AAA

Milky Way Over Kayaking	First Place	Trey Steinhart
Campground	Second Place	Sharon McLemore
Milky Way at Mauna Kea Observatory	Third Place	Susanne Nichols
Lanier Bridge to Jekyll Island, GA		

Black & White - Class AAA

Kauai Cows	First Place	Trey Steinhart
The Old Man	Second Place	Em McLaren
Trucks in a Row	Third Place	Sharon McLemore

Special Subject - Class AAA

Student Driver	First Place	Stan Sogsti
Shades of Gray	Second Place	Em McLaren
Amish Roadscape	Third Place	Joanne Sogsti

Digital Image of the Year Class AAA

Lemon Wee-Wee - by Trey Steinhart

2017 Annual Print Winners

Open - Class A

Umbrella Alley	First Place	Richard Bullard
Jelly Fish	Second Place	Wayne Carlson
The Low Country	Third Place	Richard Bullard

Black & White - Class A

Eye Towards Tomorrow	First Place	Wayne Carlson
Avenue of the Oaks	Second Place	Richard Bullard

Print Image of the Year Class A

A Study in Geometry - by Wayne Carlson

Open - Class AA

Cheetah and Cub	First Place	Christine Blue
Remember When	Second Place	Elizabeth Parrish
Great Egret With Hatchling	Third Place	Christine Blue

Black & White - Class AA

Foggy Morning Haiku	First Place	Christine Blue
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Print Image of the Year Class AA

Reflecting on the Vietnam Memorial - by Christine Blue

Open - Class AAA

Milky Way at McWay Falls	First Place	Trey Steinhart
Alien	Second Place	Trey Steinhart
Mercedes Benz	Third Place	Ed Richter

Black & White - Class AAA

Arlington Amphitheater	First Place	Sharon McLemore
Mercedes in Repose	Second Place	Sharon McLemore

Print Image of the Year Class AAA

California Condor Portrait - by Dean Taylor

High Point Winners

<u>Class</u>	<u>Number of Points</u>	<u>Name</u>
Class A - Open	256	Richard Bullard
Class A - SS	64	Richard Bullard
Class A - Total	320	Richard Bullard
Class AA - Open	268	Christine Blue
Class AA - SS	63	Christine Blue
Class AA - Total	331	Christine Blue
Class AAA - Open	273	Trey Steinhart
Class AAA - SS	69	Doug Ridgway
Class AAA - Total	337	Trey Steinhart
		Doug Ridgway
		Joanne Sogsti

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President's Message

February 2018

By Heide Stover

It was nice to see most of you at the year-end banquet. Bill Clough, our year end judge was there and showed a slide show of nature images photographed by he and his wife, Brigitte. It was a nice presentation. He also made some comments about the year-end prints saying it was a difficult choice between three prints. Doug will be posting the year end winners in this newsletter so I am not going to name them all again here.

Congratulations to all the winners. They are all very deserving.

Time to get ready for our new year. Thank you to all of you that responded to my email regarding the camera club. For those of you that have not there is still time!

Until then, Happy Shooting!

Heide

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



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2018 Competition Policy

A. GENERAL RULES

1. Only paid-up members may enter club competition.
2. Regular print and digital image competition period: Once each month except January. A competition year is February through December. Current regular meetings are February, March, May, July, September, October and December. The number of meetings may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and approval of the general membership as facilities permit. The Annual Awards Dinner will be held in January.
3. A total of four (4) images (all prints, all digital or a combination of both) may be entered each competition month. A total of three (3) images may be entered in the Open Division and a total of one (1) in the Special Subject Division. The number of entries may change from time to time at the discretion of the Board of Directors and the approval of the general membership.
4. Each image will be scored from 6 to 10 points. All prints or digital images receiving 9 or 10 points will be classed as an honor image. The title of each print or digital image entered will be read before being evaluated. The name of the maker will be read for 9-point honor winners. Maker's names will be announced for the 10 point images after the Print & Digital Image-of-the-Month winners are chosen.
5. A print or digital image that does not receive an honor score, may be re-entered one more time in the same division.
6. A print or digital image may be entered in all divisions for which it qualifies; i.e., an honor image in Open may also be entered in the Special Subject Division at another competition. A print or digital image that receives an honor score may not be re-entered in the same division.
7. Any print or digital image that appears to be ineligible for competition or not qualified for a specific division could expect to be challenged. The Competition Vice-President shall decide whether or not the image is acceptable.
8. The exhibitor must have exposed each negative, slide or digital image entered. All images submitted for judging must be the work of the photographer/maker including the taking of the images and any digital enhancements and/or manipulation of the image. This does not apply to the processing of film or printing by a commercial processor.
9. The same image should not be entered both as a print and a projected digital image in the same competition.
10. In the event of absence or barring unforeseen circumstances, a member may submit make-up prints or digital images for one competition night per competition year; and whenever possible must submit all make-up prints or digital images at the meeting immediately following the month a member failed or was unable to submit the prints or digital images. Make-ups in the Special Subject Division must be the same subject as the month missed. Also, in case of absence a member may assign the responsibility of submitting his or her prints and/or digital images for competition to another member.
11. A club member who serves as judge cannot enter his or her own prints or digital images in the same competition. The judge's make-up prints or digital images can then be entered in another competition during that competition year. This is in addition to the once-a-year make-up provision already

allowed.

12. Prints or digital images may be projected/viewed briefly before the judging of each division if the judge indicates he/she would like a preview.

B. PRINT ENTRY RULES

1. Each print entered must have a completed label attached to the back of the print including; name of maker, title, date entered and Division (Open or Special Subject). The writing or printing on the form must be legible. Labels must be attached on the back of the print in the upper left-hand corner for correct viewing of the print.
2. All prints must be matted or mounted with a total size (including mat board) of no larger than 18" X 24" and no smaller than 8" X 10". Exception: One side of a Panorama Print may be no larger than 36". Prints that are smaller than 5" X 7" will not be accepted. The maker's name must not appear on the viewing surface of the image. Framed prints shall not be entered.
3. Prints accompanied by entry forms should be submitted no later than 15 minutes prior to the start of the regular monthly meeting.
4. Prints receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Print-of-the-Month honors. Print-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

C. DIGITAL IMAGE ENTRY RULES

1. Digital images must be submitted in a format and by the deadline specified by the Competition Vice-President. Digital images may be submitted by email, mailed (CD) or delivered (CD) to the Competition Vice-President. Definition of Digital Image: An image taken with a digital camera, a negative, slide or print scanned into the computer and processed digitally.
2. Images must be in a format compatible with the projector. The key thing to keep in mind when formatting photos for submission is that the projector we use in the competition has a (maximum) resolution of 1400 x 1050 pixels. This means that any photo that exceeds this size in either dimension, could end-up being cropped by the projector. In other words: the image width cannot be more than 1400 pixels and the image height cannot be more than 1050 pixels. If your image is horizontal, only change the width to 1400, if your image is vertical, only change the height to 1050. Do not change both. Down-sizing the image from the "native" resolution coming out of your camera also significantly reduces the file size. This helps when emailing the files and takes-up less space on our hard-drives.
3. The maker's name, title of image, date entered and division (Open or Special Subject) must be included as the title of the image. When you have finished re-sizing your image save your image with a new title. For example do a Save as: Smith Sunrise Splendor 05-15 O.jpeg. (O-Open or SS-Special Subject). Specify whether you're Beginner, Advanced or Very Advanced.
4. Digital Images receiving a score of 10 points, in each class, will be regrouped and judged for selection for the Digital Image-of-the-Month honors. Digital Image-of-the-Month honors will be given in Class A, AA & AAA.

Stockton Camera Club
December 2017 Final Competition Standings
Congratulations to all the Annual winners!!!

Print of the Year Class A – A Study in Geometry - by Wayne Carlson
 Digital Image of the Year Class A – Marksbury Castle- by Richard Bullard
 Print of the Year Class AA – Reflecting on the Vietnam Memorial - Christine Blue
 Digital Image of the Year Class AA – Tundra Swans - by Christine Blue
 Print of the Year Class AAA – California Condor Portrait - Dean Taylor
 Digital Image of the Year Class AAA – The Lemon Wee-Wee - by Trey Steinhart

Please check out the website, <http://www.stockton-cameraclub.com/home.html>

Class A Standings	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Richard Bullard	320	256	64	37	37	37	33	35	35	36	36	34
Wayne Carlson	305	249	56	33	38	37	31	35	26	37	34	34
Ron Wetherell	184	174	10	0	10	0	35	20	27	38	37	17
Dawn LeAnn Bassnett	120	84	36	0	16	36	0	0	33	35	0	0
Lanny Brown	77	68	9	27	0	17	0	16	17	0	0	0
Monica Hoeft	34	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	34	0
Matt Lawson	27	18	9	0	0	27	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Christine Blue	331	268	63	37	37	38	39	36	35	37	37	35
Elizabeth Parrish	319	257	62	36	36	37	36	37	38	33	32	34
Paul Chapman	318	257	61	37	36	37	33	35	36	35	34	35
Sheldon McCormick	314	252	62	36	34	38	34	37	36	33	31	35
Gary Brown	309	247	62	35	37	36	31	37	35	33	33	32
Kris Borgen	253	199	54	37	38	37	34	36	37	34	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	Nov	DEC
Trey Steinhart	337	273	64	40	39	37	38	36	37	36	35	39
Doug Ridgway	337	268	69	37	40	39	35	37	39	37	36	37
Joanne Sogsti	337	271	66	39	37	38	36	36	39	38	38	36
Dean Taylor	335	268	67	39	38	38	37	40	36	35	36	36
Sharon McLemore	334	266	68	37	40	40	35	38	38	37	35	34
Susanne Nichols	333	267	66	38	40	37	35	38	36	35	38	36
Ed Richter	332	267	65	38	40	38	35	38	37	36	36	34
Heide Stover	329	264	65	39	39	38	33	37	37	36	33	37
Stan Sogsti	324	258	66	36	38	38	33	38	36	36	33	36
Em McLaren	321	261	60	34	33	39	36	37	37	36	34	35

2018 Calendar of Events

<p>Every 3rd Thursday (Except April, June & Aug) 6:30 PM</p>	<p>West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton</p>	<p>Membership Meeting Contact Heide Stover h1stover@aol.com</p>
<p>Wednesday January 31</p>	<p>State Wide</p>	<p>Full Lunar Eclipse, Super Moon, Blue Moon All Rolled Into One</p>
<p>Sunday February 10</p>	<p>Ramada Inn 324 East Shaw, Fresno, CA</p>	<p>February SJVCC Meeting</p>
<p>Thursday February 15</p>	<p>West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton</p>	<p>February General Meeting Special Subject - Neon/Lighted Signs</p>
<p>Sunday March 10</p>	<p>Ramada Inn 324 East Shaw, Fresno, CA</p>	<p>March SJVCC Meeting</p>
<p>Thursday March 15</p>	<p>West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton</p>	<p>March General Meeting Special Subject - Arches</p>
<p>Thursday May 17</p>	<p>West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton</p>	<p>May General Meeting Special Subject - Travel With PSA Rules</p>
<p>Thursday June 21</p>	<p>West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton</p>	<p>June General Meeting Prints only with no special subject</p>
<p>Thursday July 19</p>	<p>West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton</p>	<p>July General Meeting Special Subject - Flowers</p>

Photographing A Lunar Eclipse

Text & Photography by Michael Frye | January 16, 2018
Equipment, planning and exposure techniques to successfully photograph
a lunar eclipse.



Lunar eclipse sequence, April 14th and 15th, 2014
Trona Pinnacles, California.

In case you haven't heard, there's a total lunar eclipse coming up on January 31, 2018. The total eclipse will be visible in central and western North America, Australia, and much of Asia. It will also be a "blue moon," (the second full moon of the month), and a "supermoon," (with the moon closer to the earth than normal, so it will look slightly larger). This page at timeanddate.com shows where the eclipse will be visible, as well as the timing of the event.

In North America the eclipse will occur as the moon is setting in the west just before sunrise. The further west you go, the higher the moon will be during totality, and the longer the eclipse sequence you can see. People in the mountain states should be able to see the entire one hour and sixteen minutes of totality, while those of you in the northwest could see (with clear skies) all of totality plus all of the partial eclipse phase afterwards. Unfortunately, the total eclipse will

not be visible on the east coast of the U.S. and Canada.

Since the eclipsed moon will be low in the sky to the west in North America, there should be some great opportunities to juxtapose the moon with natural or manmade features. I'm sure we'll see photos of the eclipsed moon next to the Space Needle if there are clear skies in Seattle. And the same goes for the Golden Gate Bridge. But any spot with an interesting view to the west could work, so there are tons of possibilities.

Equipment for Photographing a Lunar Eclipse

- DSLR or mirrorless camera with full manual exposure control. Test your mirrorless camera first to make sure you can focus and compose in the dark with the electronic viewfinder (see "Focusing" below)
- At least two fully charged camera batteries
- Sturdy tripod
- Cable release, electronic release, or remote
- Interval timer or watch
- Flashlight or headlamp

Moon Position and Timing

When the partial eclipse begins the moon will become a smaller and smaller crescent as the earth's shadow seems to take a bite out of the moon. During the total eclipse the moon will look much dimmer, and turn orange or even red-orange in color. The sky will be full of stars, as if on a moonless night. Just after the total eclipse the moon will return to a slender crescent and then get larger and larger, until the eclipse ends and the moon becomes completely full again. (You won't be able to see this last partial phase in much of North America during the January 31st eclipse.)

With most nighttime images you want to get away from city lights and light pollution. You don't necessarily need dark skies for a lunar eclipse, as the moon should be clearly visible even in urban areas (and even during the maximum eclipse). Having said that, the moon will stand out more clearly with darker skies away from city lights.

To calculate the moon's position accurately — if you want to line it up with a building or mountain, for example — you'll need an app like [The Photographer's Ephemeris](#), [The Photographer's Ephemeris 3D](#), or [PhotoPills](#). And you'll need to know the timing of the eclipse, so here are the important moments:

- Partial eclipse begins: 11:48 UT, 3:48 PST
- Total eclipse begins: 12:52 UT, 4:52 PST
- Maximum eclipse: 13:30 UT, 5:30 PST
- Total eclipse ends: 14:08 UT, 6:08 PST
- Partial eclipse ends: 15:11 UT, 7:11 PST

Knowing the timing of the eclipse, you can use one of the aforementioned apps to figure out exactly where the moon will be from a given location at each stage of the eclipse. For example, from my house in Mariposa, California, at 5:30 a.m. (the maximum eclipse), the moon will be at an azimuth (compass direction) of 277 degrees, and an altitude of 18 degrees. I won't be able to see the end of the partial eclipse from here, as according to The Photographer's Ephemeris the moon will be at an altitude of -0.4 degrees at 7:11 a.m. — just below the horizon. (It will also be getting pretty light by then, since sunrise will be at 7:04 a.m.)



Lunar Eclipse Sequence
1:23 a.m. to 4:49 a.m., August 28, 2007
Yosemite National Park, California.

Focusing

Since most modern lenses focus past infinity, you can't just crank the focusing ring all the way to the end and expect to get sharp photographs. The most accurate way to focus in the dark, by far, is to use live view, magnify the image to zoom in on the moon, and focus manually. Autofocusing on the moon should also work if the moon is bright enough (like before the total eclipse begins) — but be sure to then turn autofocus off so that the camera doesn't accidentally focus on something else when you press the shutter button.

Exposure

Light meters are useless for getting good exposures of the moon, because even a one-degree spot meter can't read just the moon, but will also include some of the surrounding black sky. So here are some suggestions based on past experience, including making the accompanying photographs. You'll need to use manual-exposure mode, and check your camera's highlight alert (the blinkies) to make sure you're not overexposing the moon:

- Full moon, or moon more than half visible: 1/60 sec. at *f*/11, 200 ISO
- Half to one-quarter of the moon visible: 1/30 sec. at *f*/11, 200 ISO
- Less than one-quarter of the moon visible: 1/15 sec. at *f*/11, 200 ISO
- Just the edge of the moon lit: 1 sec. at *f*/11, 200 ISO
- Fully eclipsed at the beginning and end of totality: 8 sec. at *f*/11, 800 ISO
- Fully eclipsed, deepest totality: 8 sec. at *f*/11, 1600 ISO

In these examples I've kept the aperture constant at *f*/11, but if you need more depth of field you could use *f*/16 and either double the ISO or the length of the exposure. But you want to keep the exposures relatively short, otherwise the moon will move and blur. You can get away with eight or maybe even fifteen seconds with a wide-angle lens, but with a telephoto lens you need to use shutter

speeds of four seconds or less. To find the maximum exposure time for your lens before movement appears, divide the focal length into 400. So $400 \div 25\text{mm} = 16$ seconds, or $400 \div 100\text{mm} = 4$ seconds. Bracketing exposures is a good idea.

Eclipse Strategies

Trying to include a foreground makes things more complicated, so the simplest way to photograph a lunar eclipse is to take a long lens and zoom in on the moon. If you photograph the eclipse from beginning to end you can even use Photoshop to assemble your images into a montage showing the whole sequence.

A more evocative approach — but a more complicated one — is to use a wide-angle lens and capture the eclipse sequence with a foreground, as I did in the accompanying images. To do this you'll first need to figure out the exact path the moon will take so you can compose your photograph accordingly. The apps I mentioned above, PhotoPills, The Photographer's Ephemeris, and The Photographer's Ephemeris 3D, are invaluable for this. And you'll want to get to your chosen spot early enough to capture the entire eclipse sequence, from full, to partially eclipsed, to fully eclipsed, and (if possible from your location) back through the partially-eclipsed stages.

Once you've composed, make sure your tripod is solidly planted and locked tightly. If your composition includes a foreground you'll want to focus at the hyperfocal distance, which will be somewhere between the closest object to the camera and infinity, but closer to the foreground. (If you don't know how to find the hyperfocal distance, just focus on the foreground.) Then use a small enough aperture to get both foreground and moon in focus. (A bright flashlight and live view are helpful for focusing on the foreground.)

Then make a series of exposures to capture the eclipse sequence. In the three photographs here the interval was ten minutes between each moon capture, but you could make it fifteen or twenty minutes if you want to space the moons farther apart. Just make sure you keep the interval the same throughout the sequence. You can use an interval timer for this, or just use a watch and trip the shutter manually (using a remote or cable release, of course). You'll need to adjust the exposure times (and possibly the aperture or ISO as well) as the moon dims and brightens.

In the accompanying photographs I used electronic flash or a flashlight to light-paint the foreground in between making exposures of the moon. Light painting is a complex subject that I won't get into here, and if this is the first time you've ever tried photographing an eclipse I'd suggest you keep it simple, and don't try light painting. Just try to capture single images of the moon itself, or perhaps a sequence with silhouetted trees or other objects in the foreground.

You might also capture a frame to use as the base (background) layer in Photoshop. For example, in the sequences from the Trona Pinnacles (first image, above) and Yosemite (second image, above), during the total eclipse I made an exposure for the stars, and used that starry sky as the background for the eclipse sequence. For the sequence with the oak tree from the Sierra foothills (below) the background is an exposure made as the sky was beginning to lighten and turn blue at dawn:



Oak tree and lunar eclipse sequence

December 10th, 2011, Mariposa County, Sierra foothills, California

This was also a winter eclipse that occurred just before sunrise, so the moon's path was quite similar to the path the moon will take during the upcoming eclipse on January 31st in North America. The moon's path will curve to the right as it descends, and in most of the continent the sky will start to lighten during the total eclipse, as it did here.

Assembling A Sequence

If you get ambitious and try a sequence, the final step is to assemble the images in Photoshop. From Lightroom you can select the images and choose Photo > Edit In > Open as Layers in Photoshop, and Photoshop will stack the images into one document as separate layers. Or you can do this by hand using the Move tool to drag one image on top of another; just make sure you hold down the shift key while dragging so that the images align properly.

Drag your background layer to the bottom of the stack in the Layers Panel. Then change the

blending mode of every layer except the bottom one to Lighten. This makes light areas override dark areas, so the moon from one frame will override dark sky from another frame. As you do this you'll see all the moons magically appear and complete your sequence. If you light-painted a tree or other object, that too will appear when you change the blending mode for that layer. And if you used a telephoto lens to capture the whole eclipse sequence, you can use the Move tool to drag each layer around and arrange the moons on your canvas.

Upcoming Lunar Eclipses

Photographing a lunar eclipse takes planning, and a willingness to lose some sleep, but it can be a tremendously rewarding experience. And if your photographs don't turn out as well as you hoped, you might get another chance soon. There will be another total lunar eclipse on July 27th this year, visible in Europe, Africa, and much of Asia. And on January 21st of 2019 a total lunar eclipse will be visible in all of the Americas, Europe, and some of Africa.

Good luck!

Read more articles like this on Michael Frye's blog at michaelfrye.com.

Michael Frye is a professional photographer specializing in landscapes and nature. He is the author or principal photographer of *The Photographer's Guide to Yosemite*, *Yosemite Meditations*, *Yosemite Meditations for Women*, *Yosemite Meditations for Adventurers*, and *Digital Landscape Photography: In the Footsteps of Ansel Adams and the Great Masters*. He has also written three eBooks: [Light & Land: Landscapes in the Digital Darkroom](#), [Exposure for Outdoor Photography](#), and [Landscapes in Lightroom: The Essential Step-by-Step Guide](#). Michael has written numerous magazine articles on the art and technique of photography, and his images have been published in over thirty countries around the world. Michael has lived either in or near Yosemite National Park since 1983, currently residing just outside the park in Mariposa, California.



Last time, I talked about my trip to the [American Sign Museum](#), an interesting destination packed with the world's most beautiful neon lighting. Hopefully, the history lesson I gave you provided some inspiration. Now I think it's time to talk about how to photograph neon lighting. These tips and tricks can be applied to other kinds of lights but for now, I'd like to focus on neon lights because they are a beautiful, colorful part of our history.

Be Prepared for Low Light



It sounds strange, I know, that in a museum full of neon lights, you would run into a low light situation. However, neon lights (as well as other types of lights, like indoor incandescent lighting) are not meant to provide bright illumination. Instead, these lights are supposed to be colorful, eye-catching, not too bright to look at — just enough light to provide ambience in the space that they are displayed. In the American Sign Museum, in particular, it costs extra to bring along a tripod and I didn't want to be burdened with extra gear. Instead, I used some other tricks to capture the lights despite the low luminosity.

First, I found myself bracing often to take photos. Bracing is a technique that you can use when you don't have access to a tripod or a monopod. To brace, all you need to do is find a way to support or stabilize yourself so that you can minimize shakiness at slower shutter speeds. Lean against a wall, prop yourself on the back of a chair or ask a friend for a steady shoulder to lean on. It depends on the person and the capabilities of your camera's image stabilization, but in general, you should consider bracing at shutter speeds between 1/100 to 1/60 and lower. In fact, you should consider practicing ahead of time so that you know which shutter speeds require you to brace and which are slow enough to make a tripod a necessity.

Another thing you'll find in situations like this is that it really helps if your camera can handle low light situations at high ISOs without producing a lot of noise. I found myself several times shooting at ISOs of 25,000 or greater. On top of that,

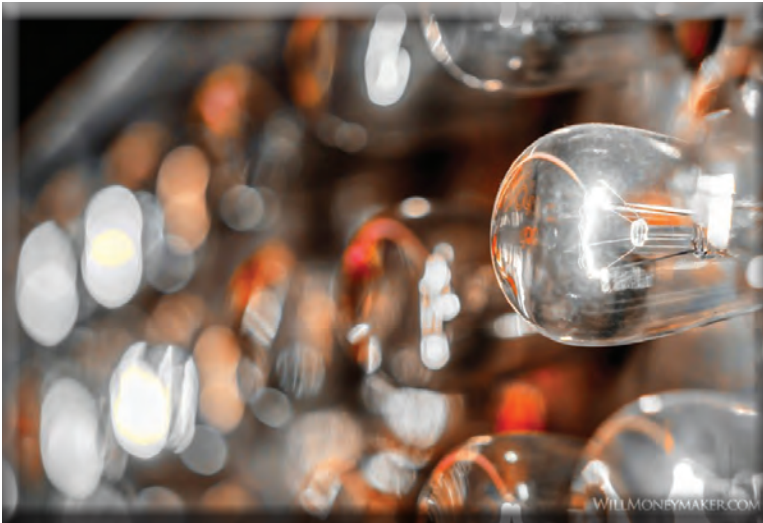
make sure that you have a good noise removal tool at your disposal. For the neon light images, I used Luminar to reduce noise.



Now is The Time for Automatic Settings

It's hard to let your camera do all the work. We photographers often find ourselves unsatisfied with full automatic controls because the art-making process doesn't feel complete unless you've carefully chosen shutter speed, aperture, ISO and all the other necessary settings. However, in a place like the American Sign Museum, automatic settings are your friend. In a place like this, the lighting can change with every step you take and if there are flashing lights, then it is changing between each shot. If you stop to adjust your settings between each and every shot, you are likely to spend more time fiddling

with your camera than creating artwork. Turn that dial to "Aperture Priority" and let go — let your camera decide the settings so that you can focus on composition and most importantly, enjoying the experience.



The same goes for white balance. Now, if you are in a place with consistent lighting — incandescent, fluorescent, what have you — then you can set your camera up to achieve the white balance you need. And, if you are going for a certain set of colors or a certain look, then, by all means, set your white balance to get that look, if it helps. But when you are in a setting that features lights in red, yellow, blue, green and every other color imaginable, then, here again, you'll find that the decision-making process is better left up to the camera rather than attempting to make adjustments between each shot.



What about Post Processing?

For this type of project, I cannot recommend Adobe Lightroom enough. When you rely on automatic settings and creative ways to brace yourself, you will likely take a lot more photos than usual just to make sure that you get a nice collection of great images to work with. Software that can handle images in bulk will make your life much easier.



To do this project, I started by importing the images into Lightroom so that I could flag those that I liked. Then, I left them for a few days so that I could sort my thoughts out, come back and look at the flagged images with a more objective eye. After that, I did a basic processing routine, making adjustments to exposure where necessary, and boosting or lowering highlights — a task that you will likely need to do a lot when photographing lights of any kind.



With neon lights, color is just as important as exposure. Don't hesitate to go over each image, boosting the saturation of certain colors, enhancing the overall vibrancy or making other color corrections as needed to really make the lights pop. You may also choose to selectively sharpen some of the most important elements of each image. When all of this is done, move on to noise removal, if necessary.



Finally, the most important part: cropping. In a place like the American Sign Museum, there are innumerable elements that you can't physically move out of the frame and believe me — those distracting elements will make their way into your images. Fortunately, modern technology makes it easy to crop out those distracting bits and pieces. Take your time on this task, trying different orientations, aligning the most important elements with various compositional rules and removing objects that are making their way into the edges of the image. Most importantly, go about your cropping with the idea that you are telling a story in each image or across a series of images. This mentality will help you determine what needs to stay and what needs to go in each photograph.



If you ever have an opportunity to do a project like this, keep these tips in mind. Hopefully, the things that I have shared will help you enjoy the experience even as you capture a beautiful series of images that you can enjoy for years to come.

Will Moneymaker



Will Moneymaker is a freelance photographer, family historian, a husband of twenty-five years and devoted father of four. The arts have always been a part of his life. Join Will as he shares his thoughts and adventures in photography. [Subscribe to his weekly newsletter.](#)

Outdoor Photographer®

Point Reyes National Seashore

Text & Photography By Daniel Dietrich | July 25, 2017

One of the best-kept secrets of the National Park Service, Point Reyes National Seashore is a year-round wildlife destination



Waves crash on Kehoe Beach as seen from Kehoe Trail
Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF 600mm f/4L IS II USM.
Exposure: 1/800 sec., f/8, ISO 320.

In 1579, English sea captain Sir Francis Drake's ship was in need of major repairs. He steered the tattered Golden Hind into Drakes Bay on the Point Reyes peninsula. After making the necessary repairs to his ship, he nailed a brass plate to a tree claiming the land for the queen and sailed away. Today, that land represents one of the most wildlife-rich areas in the country.

Jutting 10 miles out into the Pacific Ocean, Point Reyes National Seashore sits just 30 miles north of the bustling activity of San Francisco. Yet when you sit on the cliffs of Drakes Bay, you feel like you have the place to yourself.

I first discovered this national treasure nearly 25 years ago. Needing a reprieve from the grind of my job in Silicon Valley, I spent the day hiking a popular trail at the north end of the park. Driving home, I remember saying to myself, "How do I get to live in that magical place?" The long commute made that dream impossible back then, but dreams do come true. Today I call Point Reyes home as I continue my career as a full-time wildlife photographer, writer and guide.

I moved here for one reason: the wildlife. Point Reyes boasts one of the greatest animal diversities of any national park in the country. Over 50 percent of North America's bird species and over 80 species of mammals have been documented here. That is a tremendous amount of wildlife assembled in 72,000 acres of land. As you pack your gear, don't forget your landscape lens. There is a magnificent scene around every curve in the road.



A cautious barn owl peers through the branches of a cypress tree.
Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM. Exposure: 1/320 sec., f/5.6, ISO 400.

Wildlife At Point Reyes National Seashore

If you want to visit Point Reyes for a wildlife photography vacation, what animals will you most likely be able to photograph? Let's break it down.

Tule Elks

Tule elk are native and endemic to California. Nowhere else in the world will you find these magnificent creatures. Approximately 500,000 roamed California before European settlers arrived. By the 1870s, they were all but gone. They hadn't been seen in several years before a land owner in central California found an extremely small herd on his property. Thankfully, protections were put in place and today California has around 5,000 roaming the state.

Where To Find Them. There are several places you can find and photograph tule elk in the park, the best being at Pierce Point Ranch in the far north section of the park. As you enter the Tule Elk Preserve, keep your eyes on both sides of the road. The elk often graze in the open pastures as you approach the ranch.

For a photographic experience with the elk on foot, from Pierce Point Ranch hike the Tomales Point Trail, where you will find spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and Tomales Bay. Somewhere along the hike, you will run into the elk.

Best Times. All year, with the rut happening from September to December.

Elephant Seals

Northern elephant seals were hunted to near extinction by the late 1800s. History claims that a very small population was found in the 1880s, and the group was quickly shot by scientists to collect more information about the species. Luckily, protections were put in place, and the species has rebounded to a now-estimated 150,000 individuals. Point Reyes National Seashore is one of the only places in the world where you can see elephant seals give birth.

Where To Find Them. The best place to photograph the elephant seals is the Elephant Seal Overlook at Chimney Rock. A short, flat walk from the parking lot takes you to a cliff overlooking the main colony. Here you can shoot the males battling for breeding rights, females giving birth to their 80-pound pups, and hundreds of pups taking their first swim after all the adults have left for their migration.

Drakes Beach is another good location to find them. This year nearly a dozen individuals called this sanctuary home. Males fought daily over the small group of females present on the beach. Three pups were born here this year as well.

Best Times. Males arrive in December and females in January. By March only the pups remain. Adults return in July to molt and leave again in August.

Gray Whales

One of the star attractions of the park is the gray whale. Reaching nearly 50 feet in length and weighing in around 35 tons, these massive sea animals have one of the most epic migrations on the planet, swimming over 10,000 miles round trip from Alaska to their breeding grounds in Mexico. They round the Point Reyes peninsula and come within meters of our shores.

Where To Find Them. The lighthouse is the best place to photograph gray whales. Walk the 0.4-mile paved trail from the parking lot to the viewing platform where whales are easily spotted. If you are feeling fit, take the 300 stairs down to the lighthouse itself. From there, you are nearly on top of the gray whales that hug the coast as they migrate past.

Best Times. The southern migration is best between November and February. The northern migration is March and April.



A bobcat checks his surroundings after an unsuccessful hunt.
Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF 600mm f/4L IS II USM.
Exposure: 1/200 sec., f/4, ISO 1600.

fields and on the trails with confidence. Scan the hillsides and the trail in front of you with your binoculars. Find a sit spot on top of a hill and set up your scope. Be patient and be persistent.

The hiking trails on which I have found the most bobcats are Bear Valley Trail, Abbott's Lagoon and Tomales Point Trail. I have also seen bobcats on the Earthquake Trail and Muddy Hollow Trail.

Driving to the lighthouse and to Pierce Point Ranch, use the pull-outs to scan the open pastures. Bobcats often hunt these gopher rich fields.

Best Times. All year.

Bobcats

My personal favorite animal to photograph in the park is the bobcat. Nowhere else in the country do you have the same ability to photograph this incredible animal. Shy and elusive, yet confident and powerful, bobcats inhabit all corners of the park. No studies have been done on their populations here, but on any given day, with some patience, you have the opportunity to find North America's wildcat. With my guiding business, we see bobcats about 75 percent of the time we are in the park.

Where To Find Them. The short answer is anywhere. The challenge is spotting them. They have perfect camouflage and are wary of people. The best way to find them is with binoculars. Then sort out how to best position yourself for your photography.

As you drive or hike through the park, stop at any point where you have wide vistas. While bobcats are wary of people, they are most wary when they are approached by cars or by hikers. From a distance they move about the



A wet coyote pauses during a long hunting session. Canon EOS 7D Mark II, Canon EF 600mm f/4L IS II USM. Exposure: 1/1250 sec., f/4.5, ISO 400.

Coyotes

Coyotes are one of the most heavily persecuted animals in the country. It is estimated that over 500,000 coyotes are killed each year, yet their resilience is incredible. Despite this persecution, there are more coyotes in America today than there have ever been in our history. Coyotes have lived on this land for more than a million years, and Point Reyes is a native home for them.

Coyotes hunt the open fields of Point Reyes every day. While they are extremely timid in most of the country where they have no protection, we are fortunate to have encounters with these beautiful animals on a daily basis. Their main prey is rodents. It is an incredibly exciting experience training your lens on a coyote as it creeps up on an unsuspecting gopher. When the moment is right, they leap into the air, smashing nose first into the ground under the weight of their entire body. After the crushing blow, the coyote snatches the gopher from its hole and enjoys a quick meal.

Where To Find Them. It is not hard to find a coyote in Point Reyes. You can find them hiking any of the many trails in the park and on all stretches of road, but put some effort into it. While you are likely to see them while driving, be sure to stop, get out and scan. The open fields are best viewed at elevation. Find them crossing the fields, then drive yourself to a position that gives you the best opportunity to photograph them.

Best Times. All year.

Birds

Point Reyes National Seashore is a birder's paradise. Over 50 percent of North America's birds have been documented here. Ten different owls, including the endangered northern spotted owl, and 20 different birds of prey, including four falcons, a dozen hawks and even golden and bald eagles have made the list. And there are enough ducks, loons, herons and shorebirds to make your head spin.



A burrowing owl rests outside its burrow
Canon 7D Mark II, Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM
Exposure: 1/160 sec., f/5.6, ISO 1250

Where To Find Them. Bear Valley is a hotspot for warblers, woodpeckers, hummingbirds and owls.

Giacomini Wetlands was formerly a cattle pasture, and in 2008 the land was returned to wetlands, and the birds followed. Many species of ducks, rails, herons and egrets can be found here, as well as many birds of prey such as white-tailed kites and harriers. It is also the spot where I saw my first bald eagle in Point Reyes.

With beach, marshes and ponds, Limantour Beach is arguably the best birding spot in Point Reyes and home to an incredibly diverse number of bird species. It is also a good place to find the threatened snowy plover.

A recent hike to Abbotts Lagoon with a safari guest of mine netted over 20 species of birds in a 1.5-hour walk, including a peregrine falcon knocking a cormorant out of the sky. Two connecting lagoons ending at the ocean provide incredible habitat for a variety of birds. It is very common to see river otters in this area as well.

The trees at the lighthouse provide refuge for many migrating species. In high winds and poor visibility, the birds welcome the sight of the cypress trees protecting the walk to the lighthouse. From a platform you can scan the rocks for nesting common murre, brown pelicans, red-tailed hawks and turkey vultures. A pair of peregrine falcons nest near the lighthouse and are seen here regularly.

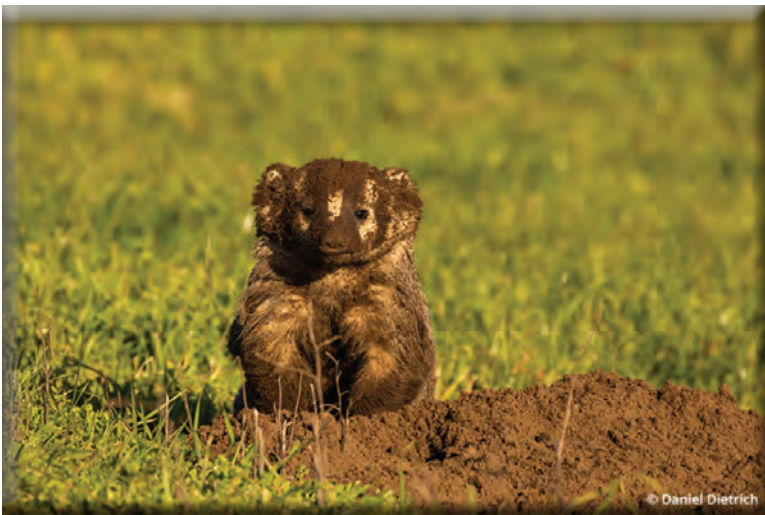
Best Times. All year, with the peak fall migration in late September and spring migration in April.

Other Wildlife

There is so much other wildlife in this amazing place. Badgers, river otters, sea lions, harbor seals, long tailed weasels ... the list goes on and on. I invite you to contact me through my website to discuss any particular animals you hope to find while visiting here.

Tips For Photographing Wildlife At Point Reyes National Seashore

1. Practice strong ethics. When shooting animals anywhere, put the animal's safety in front of your desire to get the shot. Never change the behavior of an animal. If it moves away from you, you are too close. Never bait an animal for a shot. Never approach a nesting bird. Do not use calls to bring animals in. [Learn more about wildlife photography ethics and best practices.](#)
2. Use a long lens. We can't all afford a 600mm lens, but we should always use the longest lens possible to not disturb wildlife. Teleconverters are a very economical way to increase the reach of your lens.
3. Capturing animal behavior is a skill learned through patience. When you find a subject, stay with it. If a coyote is crossing a field, stay on it. If an owl is sitting on a fence post, stay on it. The longer you wait (and are ready), the better the chance of something extraordinary happening.
4. Use a blind. There are many affordable professional blinds available. Consider one if shooting for longer periods of time to provide comfort for your subject or to provide the opportunity to shoot in more inclement weather. I often use a single sheet of camouflage mounted to stakes that I can stick in the ground and sit behind.
5. Get out early and stay out late. Some of the best light can be pre-sunrise and after the sun sets. Many animals are more active at these times, especially owls, badgers and bobcats. When the sun goes down, it doesn't mark the end of the day for me. It represents the start of a short window of epic wildlife photography opportunity.



When To Find Popular Wildlife At Point Reyes National Seashore

Whales Nov. – April

Elephant Seals Dec. – March & July

Bobcats All Year

Coyote All Year

Burrowing Owls Dec. – March

Ferruginous Hawks Dec. – Feb

Badgers All Year

An American badger emerges from a hole as it digs for a meal
Canon 7D Mark II, Canon EF 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6L IS II USM
Exposure: 1/640 sec, f/7.1, ISO 200.

Daniel Dietrich is a full-time wildlife photographer living in Point Reyes, California. He owns and operates Point Reyes Safaris, a wildlife photography tour company. Visit his website at danieldietrichphotography.com.