

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper

July 2019

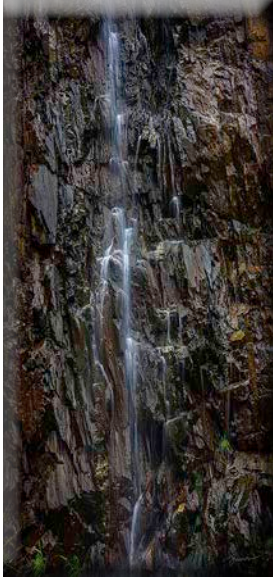
June Print of the Month Image



Colorful Wall

Print of the Month - Sharon McLemore

June 10's



Jewels
Trey Steinhart



Desert View
Grand Canyon
Dean Taylor



Preston Castle
Ron Wetherell



Retired Farm Worker
Joanne Sogsti



Great White Egret with Babies
Joanne Sogsti



Interior
Salt Lake City Capitol
Heide Stover



GMC Rust Abstract
Dean Taylor



San Francisco Highlight
Joanne Sogsti



Wave Crashing on Rock
Heide Stover



Non Sequitur
Christine Blue



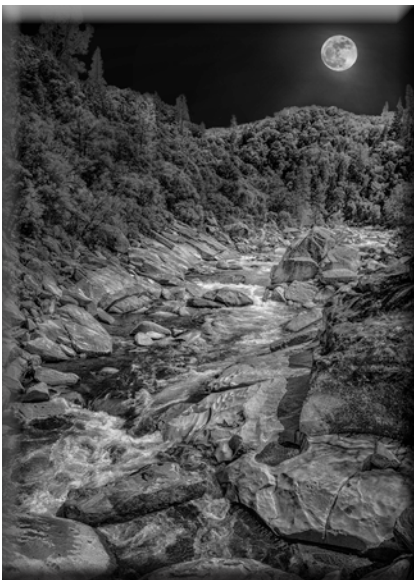
Tree Walking
Darrell OSullivan



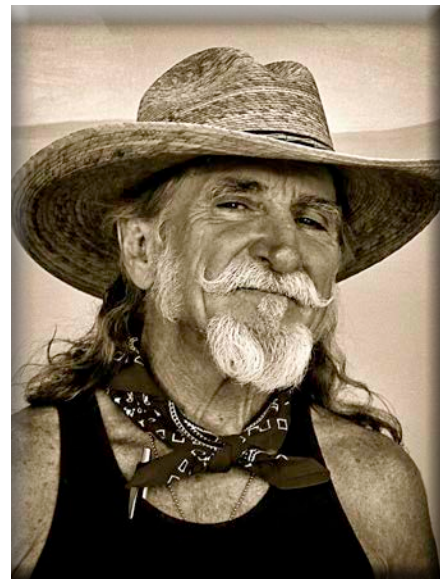
Zabraskie Point Death Valley
Joanne Sogsti



Oprey Returninbg to the Nest
Wayne Carlson



Moon Bathing
Darrell OSullivan



Michael
Em McLaren



\$31,990 of \$100,000 goal



Raised by 232 people in 9 days

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Picture Tim Ulmer Healthy

Picture this, our dear friend and community servant Tim Ulmer is facing a health challenge that impacts not only Tim but our entire community. Many of us know Tim as a selfless servant offering his talent of photography to our fundraising and family events throughout San Joaquin County.

Tim has been diagnosed with Hairy Cell Leukemia, a life-threatening cancer.

Tim's treatment will begin in early March with five straight days of chemotherapy resulting in compromising his immune system. For the next 3 months Tim will be in treatment that leaves him weak, unable to keep his business open, and unable to fulfill his philanthropic photography work.

Tim Ulmer has spent countless hours documenting our fundraising events-often free of charge. Tim needs us to step up now as he faces an immediate need to cover the mounting costs related to the cancer treatment, lost wages, special dietary items, meals, and other living expenses.

Photographs have a way of feeling, touching and loving. It remembers little things and captures the humanity of the moment. It is our moment to capture true humanity through our giving. Together we can and will meet our \$100,000 goal!

Picture a healthy, vibrant Tim Ulmer.



SCC Officers 2017

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President's Message

July 2019

By Heide Stover

President's Message

I was happy to see the good turnout for our print meeting. There were many nice prints to see and the judge had some interesting comments.

I enjoyed the meeting and as always enjoyed talking with everyone. The meetings are a good way to learn how to improve on what we do and we have the chance to meet others that enjoy the same thing we do.

I look forward to our next meeting and to seeing the prints and images from everyone.

Happy Shooting!

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



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2019 Calendar of Events

Every 3rd Thursday (Except April, June & Aug) 6:30 PM	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	Membership Meeting Contact Heide Stover h1stover@aol.com
Thursday July 18	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Gates/Fences
Friday August 16	Lodi Grape Festival Grounds 413 E Lockeford St, Lodi, CA	Entry Deadline
Aug TBA	TBA	Annual Pot Luck
Thursday - Sunday September 12 – 15	Lodi Grape Festival Grounds 413 E Lockeford St, Lodi, CA	2019 Lodi Grape Festival
Thursday September 19	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	September General Meeting Special Subject - Photo Journalism
Thursday October 17	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	October General Meeting Special Subject - Monochromatic Color Scheme
Thursday November 21	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	November General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only
Thursday December 19	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	December General Meeting Special Subject - Tools

2020 Calendar of Events

January 16	TBA	Annual Banquet
Thursday February 20	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	February General Meeting Special Subject - Motion/Movement
Thursday March 19	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Sequence of 3
April	TBA	April Workshop/Photo Opportunity
Thursday May 21	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Urban/Cityscapes
Thursday June 18	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only
July 19	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Reflections

Meeting Notes June 2019

Heide opened the meeting. She said the Lodi Grape Festival is coming up. She said the road in front of the festival has been changed. When you go to drop off your photos call them first to get directions as to where to drop them. The photos will be due August 16.

1. Wayne announced he has all the score standings and you can e-mail him for info, and he also puts them in the Shutter Tripper. His e-mail is: photowlcrec@gmail.com

2. The August Club Potluck is also coming up. Heide was thinking she would contact Skylum to see if we could show their programs at the potluck. Place, date and time will be announced as it gets closer. Trey will check to see if he and Becky can host it again at his house and will let us know.

3. Questions were asked about the San Joaquin County Fair if they had a photo contest (like they used to) but apparently they just had a photo exhibit this year.

Dean introduced this month's judge, Terry Toomey. He met her at a judging conference in the bay area. She won Best of Best and Best of Show at the San Mateo County Fair this year. She said she has been judging for a long time and has the philosophy that "everything is good". She lives in Hercules in the East Bay. The entries for this month were PRINTS ONLY and there was no Special Subject.

Please note: Send a digital copy of all prints getting a 10 to Doug so he can post them in the Shutter Tripper. His e-mail is: doug_flyfisher@yahoo.com

COMPETITION PRINT WINNER OF THE MONTH:

"Colorful Wall" by Sharon McLemore

Congratulations to Sharon!

The July Special Subject is GATES/FENCES.

Please let me know if there are any corrections or additions to the notes.

Thanks, em

Stockton Camera Club
June 2019 Competition Standings
Congratulations to all the winners!!!

Print of the Month – Colorful Wall by Sharon McLemore

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
Ron Wetherell	57	57	0	20	10	0	27	0	0	0	0	0
Susanne Nichols	39	39	0	0	0	0	39	0	0	0	0	0
Charlene Martin	38	27	9	0	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Darrell OSullivan	37	37	0	0	0	0	37	0	0	0	0	0
Brenda DeRoos	32	24	8	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	23	23	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adrian Ferreya	22	22	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0	0	0
Lanny Brown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ed Richter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Trey Steinhart	147	117	30	38	39	35	35	0	0	0	0	0
Christine Blue	146	117	29	0	38	37	62	0	0	0	0	0
Doug Ridgway	108	82	26	38	36	34	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	107	73	27	37	36	34	25	0	0	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	95	77	18	38	30	27	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	Nov	DEC
Dean Taylor	150	120	30	36	40	38	36	0	0	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	152	83	29	40	34	38	40	0	0	0	0	0
Heide Stover	149	85	28	39	37	37	36	0	0	0	0	0
Wayne Carlson	143	82	28	39	35	36	33	0	0	0	0	0
Em McLaren	142	79	27	36	33	37	36	0	0	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	137	118	19	38	37	39	23	0	0	0	0	0

June Aggregated Scores June 2019

First	Last	Open	Special	Total
Joanne	Sogsti	123	29	152
Dean	Taylor	120	30	150
Heide	Stover	121	28	149
Trey	Steinhart	117	30	147
Christine	Blue	117	29	146
Wayne	Carlson	115	28	143
Em	McLaren	115	27	142
Sharon	McLamore	118	19	137
Sheldon	McCormick	105	27	132
Doug	Ridgway	82	26	108
Elizabeth	Parrish	77	18	95
Ron	Wetherell	57	0	57
Susanne	Nichols	39	0	39
Darrell	O'Sullivan	37	0	37
Charlene	Martin	27	9	36
Brenda	DeRoos	24	8	32
Joan	Erreca	23	0	23
Adrian	Ferreyra	22	0	22

2019 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.

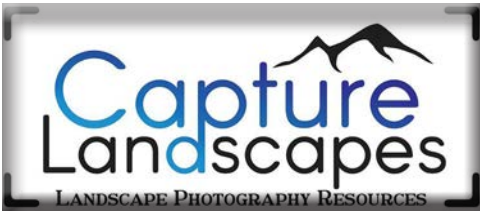
12. Prints or digital images may be projected/viewed briefly before the judging of each division if the judge indicates he/she would like a preview.

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.



How to Photograph Rivers and Streams

What you need to know before photographing rivers and streams

By Nick Dautlich

There are many reasons for shooting rivers and streams in landscape photography and there's a lot involved so here's part one (probably).



Being in the landscape regularly will inevitably lead you along rivers or creeks. A lot of joy can be found being immersed in a shot from within a river. The bubbling rushing sounds, water drop splashes, glowing mossy rocks and birds whooshing along catching insects are some of the many highlights. You really do feel alive photographing from a stream and often the challenges it presents are well worth overcoming as the visual rewards can be fabulous.



Compositionally water presents excellent opportunities for a photograph such as making leading lines to another subject – like a mountain or waterfall. The patterns and shapes made by flowing water offer endless possibilities and can be the main subject in themselves. You will sometimes find S shapes and curves which are sought after compositional devices. Looking closely and exploring will reap visual rewards and you may see reflections plus reflected colors which help build a composition if the water isn't too fast flowing. If you are lucky and the sun is shining at the right angle, water spray can form rainbow prisms which can make welcome color splashes too!



Don't be a pussy, get in!

Eventually, you will want to get into the river or creek you are photographing, it happens to everyone. Unless you're going to drown. Stay out if you intend to drown – yes it can be dangerous. Often the best compositional leading lines and action is from within the river, there's no getting away from the fact you will want to get in at some point. When you do decide to take the plunge (waka waka), you'll want to consider investing in appropriate footwear because if you wear your regular hiking shoes they will fall apart quickly. And they'll get stinky quickly!

Use our very scientific and informative Arctic-ometer© infographic to pick the most appropriate footwear. Here's a brief rundown:

1. **Flip Flops** - If you are somewhere warm enough good for you! Flip flops are great for hot places where there are no leeches or other waterborne critters. Shooting in warm places is a dream for landscape photographers and flip flops beat barefoot if there are scratchy rocks etc.
2. **Water Shoes** - These specifically designed shoes let out the water and are apparently more grippy on slippery rocks. As above you're probably somewhere pretty warm if you can get away with water shoes. Enjoy!
3. **Wellington Boots** - Wellies are maybe the easiest all-rounder for beginners as you can hop into the creek as well as wear them on the hike, which saves some extra weight. Often they will do the job and you can find insulated boots for colder conditions.
4. **High Waders (Hip Boots)** - Longer and heavier than wellies, waders allow far deeper... wading. I carry these with me most of the time over wellies nowadays. The considerable extra weight is well worth it when you can happily reach most parts of a river or creek.
5. **Chest Waders or Fishing Waders** - These are the Mecca of water footwear. In fact this is pretty much whole body wear. If you are too embarrassed to get chest waders simply tell everyone you are taking up fishing and they will nod agreeably. You may get a look or two when you don chest height neoprene style-lead waders, however after a couple of hours in snow-melt rivers you'll be grateful for the investment. (The ones I use were about \$90 from Amazon).
6. **There's a six? Yes – a wetsuit.** - If you're wearing a wetsuit while shooting, you're doing something awesome and you don't need our advice!



Go play.

Versatile and essential, get your footwear sorted and you won't look back! The good news is that any of these are applicable to photographing in oceans too.

Other essentials and tips for photographing rivers



Generally, avoid the sky

As a rule of thumb avoid the sky as it will probably be blown out. Of course, there are always exceptions and sometimes a little blowout isn't too bad. Exceptions include having subject matter in the distance, such as a mountain or waterfall. Usually, these will be higher than the creek in the frame and have some sky around them.

Experiment with your shutter speed.

Use the right speed for the water you are shooting; if there is a fast flow it could be quicker or you may want a slow dreamy look. As with all landscape photography try and visualize the end result when making the photo. Here's one example when shooting multiple frames in the landscape can be really useful. Find the shutter speed you like the best, whether it is 1/2 second or milky smooth at 5 seconds by taking enough pictures to see the difference. More on [shutter speeds](#) here.

Polarize

Invariably you'll need a polarizer, but you don't have to use it to the full effect. Sometimes the contrast will be too great when used at 100% so again use some experimentation in the field. See our related article about [photography filters here](#).

Exposure is critical

If you are making an HDR blend this isn't so critical, but for single frames, you will want to carefully consider your exposure. Generally, the brightest part of the image will be the fastest flowing water, using this will make for a solid exposure baseline.

Watch the weather

Shooting water can be done on any day, but partially cloudy are generally the best.

Having some light on any scene, rather than completely flat grey days will improve river and creek photos just as they do dry-landscapes. Some beams, patchy light through trees and golden hour color all make for creating depth, although beware of strong sunlight as the water will easily blow out.

Beware fast flowing rivers

Not only can these be dangerous, but your tripod can easily move when shooting. Put your leg in front of the tripod if it's really fast flowing to disperse the water and try and position the other legs behind rocks to lessen the impact.

Regularly clean your lenses

Your lens will probably get misty/sprayed if you are in the water. Check the element to avoid disappointment later. If there is a lot of spray use a baggy or graduated filter to compose the shot first or consider taking your lens-hood. See our post here about keeping your [lens clean](#) in water.



Some extra things to consider are having a lot of pockets. You may be away from the river banks and will end up stuffing your pockets with bits and bobs. Similarly using a backpack is pretty essential rather than a sling back or other bag, which may flop into the water. One thing I will be getting one day soon is polarized sunglasses. It's virtually impossible to gauge the slippery rocks with regular glasses and this has been on my list for ages!

Ultimately you really don't need all the exact right gear, you need the will to get out and shoot. Do it, have fun and be safe and leave nothing but footprints! If you enjoyed this please leave a comment or share, we appreciate it!

- TAGS
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[Nick Dautlich](#)

<http://www.ndgallery.com>

Nick Dautlich is a semiprofessional landscape photographer from the UK who currently resides in the Pacific North West USA with his talented wife April. He has clients such as The National Trust as well as private collectors. See more of Nicks work at his [landscape photography website here](#).

The More Megapixels the Better?

Joe Brady



Clearing Rainbows, Monument Valley, AZ, Canon 7D - five frame stitch

A couple of weeks ago I started a series based on common misconceptions about digital photography gear. Today I wanted to talk about megapixels.

I've mentioned before that there has always been a megapixel war amongst camera manufacturers with the latest salvo coming from Fujifilm with the announcement of the \$9995, 102 megapixel GFX100. While there are certainly times when more is better - particularly when really big prints are necessary for commercial applications. But for most of us, we can get by just fine thank you with a lot less.

I went through my image catalog and came across a panorama I shot with a Canon 7D way back in 2009. This was an 18MP camera and by stitching together five images I ended up with an image file that was 18,855 pixels across - or large enough to easily make a print 9 feet across. Now I'll admit that I really like having the 42MP of my Sony a7RIII. There are many times when just one shot will do when you have this much resolution to play with and it also provides the flexibility to take a small portion of the shot and still make a pretty big print. Since I routinely print images from 36" to 60" wide, that is an important consideration for me. That said, I also really appreciate the size and weight savings of APS-C and Micro 4/3rds camera systems.

If you are a birder and wish you had a longer lens, having the megapixels to play with does allow you to crop the image a lot too have the bird larger in the frame, but unless these are activities you routinely take part in, megapixels are relatively unimportant. As you may have noticed that I currently shoot a lot of different cameras (BTW I borrow or rent most of them) and constantly look for the best tool for the job. By year's end I plan on having three different bodies with different capabilities to cover the types of photography I pursue. I'm still testing and will eventually let you all know what my choices end up being and why.

If you are a 16x20" printer (or smaller) most of the time, then as I've said in the past, more megapixels really isn't necessary for most of you. You can easily stitch together several frames to create really big images as Lightroom Classic CC has made this activity incredibly easy. If you are using a high resolution camera (like the aforementioned Sony a7RIII, then keep in mind that processing time and storage are going to become an issue. As I write this, I'm stitching together a 9-shot panorama that's really choking my computer at the moment. It's been 10 minutes and it's only halfway done at this point.

(Further update - it crashed Lightroom on my MacBook Air - I'll have to create the panoramic stitch on my desktop computer!)



Schwabacher Landing Clouds Blanket the Teton Range,
6 frame stitch, Sony a7RII

The bottom line - unless you have very specific needs that require a lot of megapixels - very small crops, very large prints - megapixels aren't even a top 5 concern. If the camera feels good in your hands, makes sense to you and makes you happy when you use it, then it's the right one!

Sandhill Crane Migration

Photographing the rhythms of the
last great American wildlife migration
Text & Photography By [Chema Domenech](#)



Sandhill Cranes accentuate the layered landscape of the Platte River.



Sandhill Cranes silhouetted against the setting sun over the Platte River.

Westward expansion and the fragmentation of the Great Plains saw the migration of the American bison disappear, leaving the sandhill crane migration as the last great animal migration in America. Every year, over half a million sandhill cranes converge on a 75-mile stretch of the Platte River for a layover before heading to their breeding grounds in Canada, Alaska and Siberia.

I first became interested in the sandhill crane migration when I met conservation photographer Michael Forsberg at a nature and wildlife photography workshop in Grand Teton National Park. As a teenager, I had driven across the Great Plains as part of my own migration. States like Kansas and Nebraska were drive-through states with the promise of the Rocky Mountains after hours of corn and wheat fields. That opinion changed for me when [Forsberg presented his photography](#) of the Great Plains with awe-inspiring images of the sandhill cranes. I quickly got online and began researching the migration, and Forsberg's name kept popping up alongside the most captivating crane images. I also noticed he was co-leading a trip with OP's "[Wild By Nature](#)" columnist [Melissa Groo](#) during the peak of migration in the middle of March. I could not pass up that opportunity.

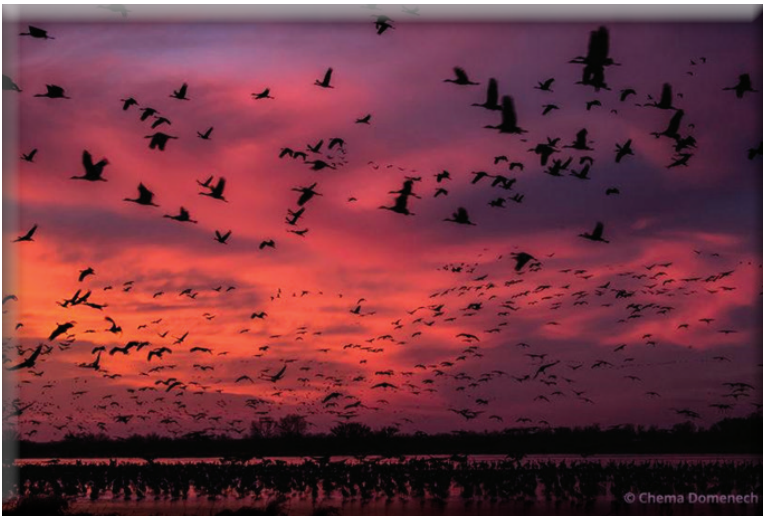
The second week of February, I received an email from Forsberg and eagerly read through the contents. The first wave of sandhill cranes had arrived (about 10,000) and were roosting in the Platte River Valley. He expected the number of cranes to be around 300,000 or more by the time we met in mid-March. I had never seen a group of even 10,000 animals, and 300,000 was just unimaginable. For the first time in my life, I was going to Nebraska with the intention of staying. With the Rockies at my back and the Great Plains ahead of me, I set out to meet the cranes in Kearney, Nebraska.

Kearney sits right in the middle of the migration confluence. The cranes travel from their wintering grounds in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and northern

Mexico. They gather in Kearney to build up energy reserves before continuing their journey toward their nesting grounds in the Arctic Circle. At night, the birds roost together in large numbers on the Platte River sandbars. While the number of cranes in the wild remains stable, their roosting habitat has decreased significantly. The spring runoff that used to clear the sandbars of vegetation has been reduced by up to 70 percent. That is where the folks at the Audubon Rowe Sanctuary come in. Every year, they clear the growth on the sandbars and reclaim a portion of sandhill crane habitat.

It is 5 a.m. when my alarm goes off, but I have been awake for an hour, unable to sleep due to my excitement. We meet in the hotel lobby and head toward the Platte River. Our destination is a blind on the river's north bank. We take an unmarked dirt road and turn our headlights off. On that road is a gate you can only find if you've been there before. This is my initiation into a spiritual photography experience that transcends the physical world. In the distance, you can hear the ancient dinosaur-like calling of the cranes. A crane fossil found in Nebraska, estimated to be 10 million years old, is identical in structure to the modern sandhill crane, which would make the crane the oldest-known bird species alive today. Illuminated only by the light of a full moon, we make our way across a field 200 yards wide toward the trumpeting of the cranes and arrive at a small wooden blind.

An hour before sunrise, the blind is pitch dark. The cranes are roosting right in front of us. We are doing our best to remain quiet, but I am terrified that any movement will send the cranes flying away. Sandhill cranes are shot in every state and province



The prairie sunset reflects on the Platte River as thousands of cranes return to the river.

along the Central Flyway — except for Nebraska — so by the time they arrive on the Platte River, they have no tolerance for human presence. I quietly set my tripod up with my 600mm lens and point it out one of the small windows of the blind. It is a cold Nebraska morning, 16 degrees, but with the wind blowing at a constant 25 miles per hour, it feels even colder. The blind hides us from the cranes but does little to protect us from the wind.

As the first rays of sunlight appear, I want to start photographing, but I am paralyzed. Less than 100 yards in front of us on a sandbar still dusted with snow and ice, a group of about a thousand cranes is huddled up. Some are awake, but others remain sleeping with their heads tucked firmly into their back feathers. I look up and down the river, and every sandbar in sight is covered in cranes. I am trying to take it all in. This is all new but strangely familiar. We estimate that there over 50,000 birds in our two-mile stretch of the river.

After few minutes observing, I get back to my camera and

begin photographing the cranes. As more and more of them wake, the Platte River rises to a crescendo of thousands of cranes calling. I am focused on a group halfway across the river awaiting the climax, and then it happens. A single crane 100 yards up the river lifts off, and the thunderous sound of wings flapping rolls down the river. In less than 30 seconds, 50,000 cranes clear from the sandbars and take to the sky. They won't be coming back until dusk. The cold air filling my lungs makes me realize that I had stopped breathing.

A wave of cranes flies over another group that will join them momentarily.

Photographing the sandhill cranes presents a series of difficult challenges. There are 50,000 birds, and every moment at least a few of them are doing something exciting. At first I try to follow the action, but I am constantly just missing. I could do this for the next three days and get nothing, so I decide to change strategies. I commit to small groups, and through close observation I start understanding and predicting the cranes' behavior. Flashes are not an option, and lighting varies widely. Having a plan is good, but you must be flexible. I came in with the expectation of photographing extremely sharp portraits. That first morning is frustrating until I embrace the creative possibilities.

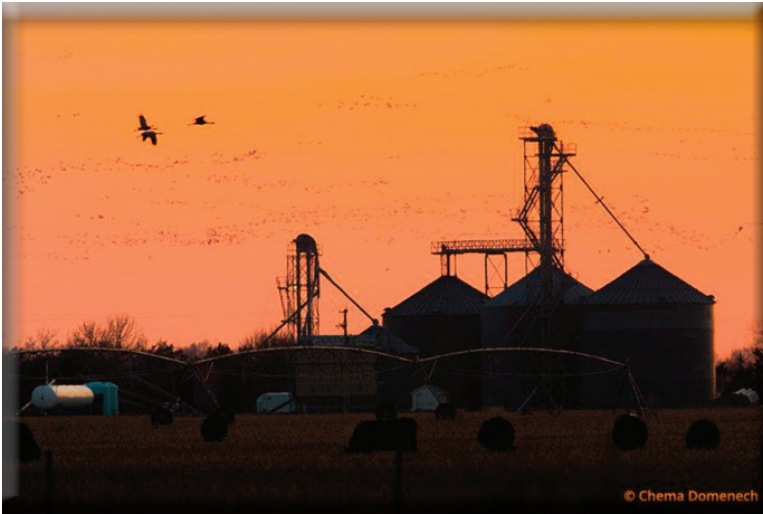
I find that at 1/30 sec. shutter speed with my 600mm lens, the cranes in flight blur, but those on the ground are still enough to remain sharp. Most of the time, I photograph wide open at $f/4$ for a shallow depth of field. I also want to capture the detail in the plumage of the cranes as they

dance in the morning light. That requires completely freezing their motion using a shutter speed of 1/2000 sec. On the other extreme, I experiment with long exposures of 30 seconds when the cranes are roosting in complete darkness, which creates ghosted images of the cranes and burns their reflection into the river.

The photo opportunities extend beyond the river. As the cranes head for the cornfields, we return to the hotel to offload our images and take a rest. I quickly realize that napping is going to be an exercise in futility. Every time I close my eyes, I see the cranes, so I, too, head for the fields, where a dichotomy becomes apparent. While the Platte River is running low due to the diversion of water for agricultural use, waste grain from the previous fall harvest provides the cranes with the nutrients and fat reserves they will need to complete their journey.

Photographing the cranes in the fields requires patience. Your car serves as a blind, and leaving it means you risk scaring the cranes. After driving around the fields for a while, I challenge myself to remain quietly in one spot and hope the cranes become accustomed to my presence. I find a small patch of tall grass and wait. Lying down at the edge of the field, I feel more connected to the cranes, and I can acknowledge their perspective. Hours pass like minutes, and before I know it the sun is dropping and the cranes are headed back to the Platte River.

In the evening, we use a different blind at Rowe Sanctuary on the south bank of the Platte, a newly constructed blind that



Sandhill cranes making their way back to the river over the farm silos.



A family of cranes on their feeding ground in the Nebraska corn fields.

stands level with the river about 20 yards from a sandbar. Whether the cranes decide to roost on that spot is a matter of luck and patience. A family of two or three cranes chooses the sandbar, and soon hundreds of cranes follow. Photograph too soon and you risk spooking the cranes and they don't return. You must wait until a certain number of cranes gather and they feel safe.

We are particularly fortunate that night — the cranes gather on the sandbar, and the sky lights up with what is probably the most spectacular sunset I have ever seen. What begins as a fiery display of reds and oranges transitions into a velvety show of pinks and purples in a moment that seems to last an eternity. Safely on the sandbar, the cranes settle in for the night to start the process all over again tomorrow.

While the sandhill cranes have adapted to human activity, their behavior is still ruled by the natural rhythms of the earth. We don't yet know what effects the droughts and stronger storms due to climate changes will have on the cranes, but observing and creatively photographing them necessitates that we connect to the same rhythms.

Tips For Photographing The Sandhill Crane Migration

- **Book a Blind at Audubon Rowe Sanctuary.** This is your best chance to get close to the cranes. You are also contributing to the ongoing efforts to restore sandhill crane habitat each year. You can book a blind starting Jan. 2.
- **Bring a Long Telephoto and a Wide Lens.** Something in the range of 400-800mm is needed to fill your frame when the cranes are at long distances, but don't forget your wide lens to photograph the spectacular prairie sunsets.
- **Vary Your Exposures.** Try both long and fast exposures. Embrace the layers of the landscape and the effects of blurring and freezing motion. A sturdy tripod is a must for the long exposures.

- **Explore the Fields.** The cranes spend most of their day eating in the fields. This is a great opportunity to get close.
- **Dress in Layers.** One day on the Platte River can be 70 degrees and sunny, and the next it's 10 degrees and a blizzard. Either way it is magical — dressing in layers will help you stay comfortable.

See more of Chema Domenech's work at chemadomenech.com.