

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper

October 2019

September Digital/Print Images



Girl on The Stairs

Digital Image of the Month - Em McLaren



Rainbow at Sunset Cape Royal

Print of the Month - Doug Ridgway



Sandhill Crane Photography Opportunity

Woodbridge Ecological Reserve

Wednesday, October 17, 2018, 4:30 pm - Dark
7730 W Woodbridge Rd, Lodi, CA 95242

The Stockton Camera Club again has the opportunity to photograph Sandhill Cranes as they come into roost. We will meet, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife's Crane Docents at the South parking lot of the Woodbridge Ecological Reserve (WER), also known as the Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve. We will then caravan to the the North side of the Reserve which includes the Crane Viewing Shelter. We can have a total of 20 people come but, have a limit of 10 - 12 tripods.

Members of the Stockton Camera Club will have first priority to sign up. Spots for members of other Clubs and the public will be available on a first come first serve basis. To sign up, or for more information, contact:

Doug Ridgway, doug_flyfisher@yahoo.com, (209) 617-7050.

Crane Tour Details

The Woodbridge Ecological Reserve is divided into two parcels, known as the South Site and North Site. We will meet at 4:30pm, at the South Site, where the docent guides meet you and give a presentation. We will then caravan to the North site. It's suggested that you bring your longest and a wide angle lens for your camera(s). If you aren't doing photography, though not essential, bring your binoculars and/or spotting scopes for up-close viewing. But, you should be able to enjoy the cranes with unaided eyes.

While there is no charge for this tour, a donation to the Lodi Sandhill Crane Association would be greatly appreciated. There will be envelopes available for your donation.

Everyone, over 16, will be required to have a State Lands Pass, www.wildlife.ca.gov/licensing/lands-pass, unless you have a Hunting or Fishing License.

ADA-compliant portable toilets are available, at both the North and South sites.

Tours usually conclude a half hour after sunset with the anticipated fly-in of the cranes at the North Site. The Crane Viewing Shelter will allow us to be hidden from the incoming birds. The Cranes, generally, start to fly-in right before dusk.

Photographing Sandhill Cranes will be the focus of this tour but, there is the very real possibility of photographing other wildlife too. A wide lens will be helpful for the possibility of photographing the sun setting behind Mt. Diablo.

Directions to South Site (starting point for CDFW docent-led crane tours):

From Sacramento, take Interstate 5 south exit on Peltier Road. Turn left under I-5 to the frontage road which is Thornton Road. Turn right (south) on Thornton Road and travel 2 miles to Woodbridge Road. Look for sign "Phil & Marilyn Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve." Turn right (west) on Woodbridge Road and continue 2.5 miles to a pullout on left side of road. This is the South unit of Reserve, our meeting area. The tours will begin here with docent introduction.

From Lodi, SF Bay Area via Hwy 12, Stockton or Los Angeles head north on Interstate 5 and exit on Turner Road. Go left (north) on frontage road which is Thornton Road 1 mile to Woodbridge Road. Look for sign "Phil & Marilyn Isenberg Sandhill Crane Reserve." Turn left (west) on Woodbridge Road and continue 2.5 miles to a pullout on left side of road. This is the South unit of Reserve, our meeting area. The tours will begin here with docent introduction.

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President's Message

August 2019

By Heide Stover

Our judge at the last meeting was interesting. Judges are all different. We learn to become better photographers by listening to different critiques of our, and others, work. Her studio sounds interesting and it might be fun to check that out.

Migration season is upon us and birds from other areas are showing up. Good time to plan on going out to photograph them while they are here. Doug's Sandhill Crane outing last year was super nice and I am hoping to be able to go again this year. If you have not had a chance to do one of his tours think about going. It is pretty amazing.

I am looking forward to October's meeting. Hope to see you all there.

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
Tuesday October 8	Hutchins Street Square Lodi, CA	Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival Art Contest Entry Deadline cranefestival.com/artshow-calltoartists.php
Wednesday October 16	South Parking Lot Woodbridge (Isenberg) Ecological Preserve	Sandhill Crane Photo Opportunity 4:30 - Dark
Thursday October 17	10697 Wellington Cir Stockton	October General Meeting Special Subject - Monochromatic Color Scheme
Friday - Sunday November 1-3	Hutchins Street Square Lodi, CA	2019 Lodi Sandhill Crane Festival 800-581-6150 · info@cranefestival.com
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 September 2019

Heide opened the meeting. Christine introduced a new guest, Cindy Mortishige. Heide announced that Sheldon, Joanne, and herself all placed at the Lodi Grape Festival. Congratulations to all the winners!

1. PLEASE NOTE: there will NOT be a camera club meeting at the bowling ally in Oct. Instead we will be meeting at Wayne Carlson's house at 10697 Wellington Cir. in Stockton on Thurs. Oct. 17 at 6:30. If you need directions please call him at (209) 912-8442.

2. Dean announced that the Lodi Community Art Center will have a photo show coming up at their downtown gallery. Several of our members will be entering. The awards will be given Oct. 12 and the show will run thru the month of Oct. For info: dtaylor49@aol.com

3. Darrell O'Sullivan will be part of the Sac. Co. Art Studio and invited the members who are interested to attend this Sat. & Sun., 10-5pm at his house in Galt, (900 Lariat Loop). dosully@comcast.net for more info.

4. Doug said that Isenberg Refuse on Woodbridge Rd. will be holding a sunset photo shoot of the cranes again. He asks that you him about it, if you are interested in attending this year.

Also, Doug said the Fred Larson will be heading up a whale watching photo trip. They will be meeting at the Marina Greens on Friday October 4th, (7:15am). The fee is \$45, for the Meet-up group, and \$135 for the [Oceanic Society's](#) boat. Check with them to see if there are any spaces available.

He also said that the Sandhill Crane Festival in Lodi will be November 1-3rd. The sign up to enter photo images is Oct. 8. Doug will be leading some of the crane tours during the festival. Please contact him for further information on any of the above: doug_flyfisher@yahoo.com.

5. Dean said the FotoClave 2019 in Pleasanton, will be coming up Oct. 25 thru the 27th. There will be a lot of interesting photo lectures and workshops during this 3-day event. Please contact Joan at: joan421@comcast.net for information.

6. Chris announced that "For the Sake of Art" will be this weekend Sept. 21st. The \$30 fee includes art, a classic car show, wine tasting as well as a live band from 2:30-5:30. This is a charity event to provide art outreach for kids and adults. It will be held in Morada. For more info: deroos420@att.net

7. Sharon said she brought photo books to give away to all who are interested.

Dean introduced Rita Hill as guest judge this month. She is a professional photographer and has a studio in Lodi. She was formally from the Clovis, Fresno, Madera area. She was chief photographer for Assoc. Press in Madera. She is also now active in the Lodi Community Art Center. She invited our club to visit her studio. She often gives free workshops. You can contact her at: rhillphoto@comcast.net

PHOTO PRINT COMPETITION OF THE MONTH WINNER

"Rainbow at Sunset Cape Royal" by Doug Ridgway

PHOTO DIGITAL COMPETITION OF THE MONTH WINNER

"Girl on The Stairs" by Em McLaren

The Special Subject for Oct. will be MONOCHROME. Remember the regular club meeting will be at Wayne Carlson's House instead of the bowling ally in Oct.

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

Thanks, Em

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

PRINT OF THE MONTH WINNER - "Rainbow at Sunset Cape Royal" by Doug Ridgway

DIGITAL OF THE MONTH WINNER - "Girl on The Stairs" by Em McLaren

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	110	92	18	20	10	0	27	17	36	0	0	0
Darrell OSullivan	96	89	7	0	0	0	37	28	31	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	54	45	9	0	0	23	0	0	31	0	0	0
Lanny Brown	51	51	0	0	0	0	0	28	28	0	0	0
Susanne Nichols	39	39	0	0	0	0	39	0	0	0	0	0
Charlene Martin	36	27	9	0	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brenda DeRoos	32	24	8	0	0	32	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adrian Ferreya	22	22	0	0	0	0	22	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	219	137	82	38	39	35	35	39	33	0	0	0
Christine Blue	215	168	47	0	38	37	62	36	42	0	0	0
Doug Ridgway	213	136	77	38	36	34	35	29	41	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	197	123	74	37	36	34	25	36	29	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	158	124	34	38	30	27	0	35	28	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	Nov	DEC
Dean Taylor	223	174	49	36	40	38	36	38	35	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	222	136	86	40	34	38	40	37	33	0	0	0
Heide Stover	222	177	45	39	37	37	36	39	34	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	219	171	48	38	37	39	23	37	45	0	0	0
Wayne Carlson	212	166	46	39	35	36	33	37	32	0	0	0
Em McLaren	212	132	80	36	33	37	36	37	33	0	0	0

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.

Monochrome vs. Black and White Photography: Is There A Difference?

By Peter Dam

Related course: Effortless Editing with Lightroom

You may think the terms ‘monochrome’ and ‘black and white’ are synonymous. After all, it’s quite common for people to use these terms interchangeably. They’re not exactly the same, though—there is a distinction which can be helpful to know. In this article, you will learn the difference between monochrome photography vs. black and white photography and begin to understand how this relates to your camera settings and post-processing.



Vintage sepia photograph of newsboys, c. 1909

What is Monochrome Photography?

Monochrome photos are photos that contain variations of only one color and nothing else. This could be different shades of blue, green, or grey, for example.

If you were to make a green monochrome photo using only your camera, you would seek out a scene where the only colors in the frame are variants of green, from the darkest shadows of green to the brightest variant before reaching white.

You can also decide to post-process a photo as monochrome, taking an image and limiting it to a single color range. These days this is most commonly done using Lightroom or Photoshop, although it is not a new practice.

You may have seen vintage sepia or cyanotype photographs. These are perhaps the most common examples of monochrome photography that existed before the digital age or even the advent of color film.

In such photos, the warm (in sepia photos) and cool (cyanotype photos) tones were the results of specific toning chemicals used in the developing process.



Vintage cyanotype photograph of schoolgirls doing calisthenics, c. 1899



Capturing a Slice of the Colour Wheel

Take a look at the color wheel below. You can see that each color is divided into smaller pieces which show you a rough illustration of variants within a single color.

Let's take the example of green and variants of green. On the outside ring, you have the pure color (sometimes referred to as the 'hue'), labeled with its name.

Going towards the middle of the color wheel, we next have the 'tint', which refers to the green highlights. Next up you will find the neutral green variants, which is the same as green mid-tones.

Closest to the center of the color wheel, you will find the 'shades' or shadow tones of green.

In-Camera Monochrome Photography

If you want to capture a natural monochrome image in the camera, you will get the best results if you get both the brightest variants and the darkest variants of the color into the frame. This will create more contrast in the photo.

A close-up photo of leaves or similar would be a good example of a natural green monochromatic photo that you can capture directly in-camera.



Another example is the photo of the underside of a mushroom below, which only contains variants of yellow-brown colors.

This close-up photo of a group of mushrooms shot from below only contains variants of yellow-brown colors. It's a natural monochrome image.

The photo below is not perfect monochrome photography, but it's close. It was captured in-camera with a long shutter speed.



Because of the time of day during which it was taken, the colors in the water and the sky matched quite well with the bathhouse.

This photo appeared on the [Google Nik Collections](#) website with the following comment: 'This image caught our eye with its cool blue hues and simple composure [sic], not to mention that this type of colorful image is a great twist on a monochromatic image.'

If you'd like to learn more about the Google Nik Collection, check out our [in-depth tutorial](#).

Using Lightroom to Post-Process a Photo as Monochrome

As mentioned above, you can also post-process a photo to be monochromatic or monotone for a creative look.

To do this in Lightroom, go to the Develop module (press D), and then locate the Split Tone panel on the right-hand side of the screen.



In the Split Tone panel, you can set different tones for the highlights and the shadows.

To create a monotone photo, you can simply set both the shadow tone and the highlight tone to the same color value setting.

You can use this technique for creative purposes, but I have rarely found a photo that truly benefits from being made monochromatic in post-processing.

You'll get the strongest photos and best results by looking for scenes that are naturally monochromatic.



While it's uncommon, you can also occasionally find scenes that only contain strong black and white colors.



An example of a high-contrast black and white photo containing only tonal values in the dark shadows and the bright highlights.

What is Black and White Photography?

Black and white photography contains variants of the color grey ranging from absolute black to absolute white.

This means that, by definition, all black and white photos are monochrome photos, but not the other way around.

A more accurate (but decidedly less popular) term for this type of image is 'grayscale'. This is because the image typically comprises grey tones, not just the color black and the color white.

Black and white images as you probably know them are images like the one immediately below. In these images, no color information has been captured or the color information has been removed. Note the rich variety of grey tones.

This photo is a high-contrast black and white photo lacking mid-tones—gray is barely present, if at all.

While the overall tonal profile of each of these photos differ greatly between the two, both count as black and white photography.

Should You Capture Black and White Images in Camera, or Convert Them in Post?

If you want to set your camera to capture your photos in black and white, be aware that both Canon and Nikon call this Monochrome in the menu navigation on their DSLRs. Confusing, right?

Anyway, I suggest that you always shoot your images in color and then convert them to black and white in post-processing. If you force your camera to capture black and white, it will do so in JPG format, which doesn't contain the same amount of data.

But if you [capture in RAW format](#), you will automatically capture a color photo and get more image data, which is useful for post-processing your photos.



If you still want to capture your images in black and white you can set this on a Nikon DSLR by using the menu: Shooting Menu > Set Picture Control > Monochrome.

However, it is better to learn how to identify what makes a good black and white image (such as [tonal contrast](#) and [texture](#)) but still capture it in color, to be converted later.

What Does Grayscale Mean?

Often, you'll hear the term 'grayscale' instead of calling a photo black and white. As mentioned above, these two terms are one and the same thing. However, 'grayscale' can also have another meaning.

To a [photo editing software](#), grayscale is also a way of storing information about how a photo is presented, just like RGB or CMYK.

In Photoshop these methods of storing the information are 'color modes'. RGB and CMYK are color modes which store color information and display it in a certain way. Grayscale, however, does not store color information at all.

If you want to discard color information in a photo in Photoshop, you can opt to convert it to grayscale mode.

However, be aware that this is a destructive way of converting a photo to black and white in Photoshop. This means that once you convert it using grayscale mode, you lose the color information in the image forever.

Converting photos from color to black and white in Photoshop is a whole topic in itself since there are a lot of different ways to do it.

Concluding Words

Now that you're clear on the difference between monochrome photography and black and white photography, go and experiment with both. You can try taking some [black and white portraits](#) of friends and family or some [black and white landscape photography](#).

With your camera, look for natural monochromatic scenes to capture, or scenes that will look great when converted to black and white. Or see if you can find a real-world place that only contains black and white colors without the grey mid-tones. Then you can capture your own natural high-contrast black and white photo.



Explore your camera's settings and photo editing software too. This way you'll learn the options you have when you want to create and work with black and white images.

Looking for some photography inspiration? Why not try a photo walk, [photomontage](#) or check our article on [great photography quotes](#) that will inspire you to shoot!

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Tips on How to Create Better Black & White Images

By [Moose Peterson](#)

Black and white was once the only means we had to communicate, photographically. That was long before most of us got involved with it. But for some of us, B&W is how we started off in photography, and how we saw our images in print. But since the beginning of photography, black and white has been a very romantic medium. That romance continues to this day, with black and white easier and simpler to do than ever. And yet, for some, it's just as complicated and difficult as ever. Perhaps this will give you some ideas to advance your black and white photography.



Watch B&W Movies like Casa Blanca

I'm a huge fan of B&W movies from the 40s and 50s! I watch the plot, but even more so, I watch the lighting! They couldn't use color to pull our attention around; they had to light to do that, using shades to tell their story. Mystery, death, love, hate, jealousy—they said them all with light! You can watch and learn a lot about B&W photography from these old movies. Keep in mind that everyone watches them. The public has certain preconceived visual concepts because of them. Learn them, explore them, and exploit them, and you can vastly improve your B&W photography!



Contrast is Your Friend!

Traditionally, black and white photography has been a contrasty medium. In color photography, big contrast is often discouraged. In the days of film, we often would attach a red filter when shooting black and white, just to increase the contrast. In this example, because of the large boulder, the bald skies of Alabama Hills go very dark, thus making the boulder visibly pop. Looking under the boulder, you can see the heavy shadow, telling you it's a contrasty condition.



Flat Light has Lots to Offer

And the exact opposite is true as well! Flat light, or light which has no giant range of exposure, can make for dramatic B&W images. Typically, though, this requires that you look at the elements, and find one or more deep blacks that grab the eye. In this case, the falling snow is flattening out the light, though the snow on the ground sets the stage. The wet, black road in the center of the frame takes the eye through the image, and then the speckles of black bring the eye back down. Standing there, you wouldn't have thought there was a photo, and that's because of the flat light.



Black Makes White Brighter

This is a favorite trick of mine: making the darks darker so the lights appear brighter. By association—and nothing else—when we make darks go darker, the mind just assumes the other elements have to be brighter, even though in reality they are not. This downpour over Bridgeport Reservoir is an example of that. In this case, I knew what was possible in the darkroom that would pull that black down, making that small microburst really pop. This is not what I saw standing there. It was a pretty even gray sky. The only difference is that the microburst was reflecting light, and the background was not. That's all that was required to make it pop in post.



Graphics Make for Bigger Drama

I just love vanishing lines! When you can include those in any B&W photo, you have a visually powerful image. In this case, with this little rail station in Upper NY, the architecture lends itself perfectly to the drama of B&W. The long, narrow construction, the gingerbread pattern, and the bright rails leading off into the distance take the eye to the stormy skies, which bring you right back to the front of the station. Because it's by the roof line, the bright spot in the sky helps with the competing pattern of the gingerbread.



Gotta Have a Clean White and a Clean Black

If there is one thing you need in a B&W photo, if nothing else, it is a clean white and a clean black. Is this a rule? No, it is merely a starting point in your thinking, capturing and finishing a photo. Without a clean black and a clean white, you have what is called a “muddy” image. This means you simply have a bunch of shades of gray. In this photo of the Bodie Lighthouse, the only clean white is the post of light (and that was created in post), and the only clean black is the roof. But that's enough for you to notice all of the texture in the image. If your B&W images just don't seem to have real zing, it could simply be a case of no clean blacks and no clean whites.



Exposure is Your Friend

“Seeing” (thinking) in B&W is a very common difficulty for photographers. This stands to reason, since we live in a color world. Many B&W images are around you if you just think underexposure. This shot, taken at Cliff House in San Francisco, was an off-the-hip shot as we were walking in to breakfast. It was basically a bright morning, with the storm quickly heading east. I saw that great cloud shape in the sky, and knew I wanted the shot. If I exposed normally, the sky would have been blown out and the sand a medium gray. But by underexposing 2.5 stops, I pulled the sky to gray, the beach went black, and the surf stayed white, leading the eye through the frame.



Filters Make it Easier

In the game of black and white photography, filters still make a world of difference! The polarizer can be used, unconventionally, to darken the sky, which in B&W creates big-time black drama. The split grad can be used for the same purpose, as you see in this photo of Ausable Chasm in NY. The mist from the falls was the photo, but to bring this out, its brightness needed to be set against something dark. By using a .9 (3 stop) split grad turned severely to the left, darkening the left corner, the mist could visually pop. There is no doubt that you have to think B&W when you do this, because you wouldn't have taken the photo if the end results were to be in color. How do you develop an eye to see this? You do it a lot, and learn from your successes as well as your failures. If you don't have failures, you know you're not trying!



Silver Efex Pro

Polycontrast in a slider—that's how I think of Nik's Silver Efex Pro 2! This is the ONLY software I use to create my B&W images. Why? It's so bloody simple, effective and beautiful. And here's the secret: the Structure! It's a slider in the program, and when taken to the range of the 80s, it works magic like nothing else! There isn't a photo here that hasn't been kissed by the beauty of Structure to make the B&W magic happen. And here's the thing—until you own Silver Efex Pro 2 and you use Structure, you have no way of knowing when you're shooting what will or won't make a great photo. If there is ONE trick, technique, tool—anything I can recommend to you to improve your black and white photography, this is it!



Levels & Curves!

Small subtleties add up to big drama! Every one of these photos has seen Photoshop CS6, and that was to add small subtleties you can't do otherwise. It could be the slight darkening of a cloud to make the cloud next to it brighter, using Curves and the Brush. It could be a slight move in Levels to push some blacks to deep black. You might need to lighten a God beam, or darken the side of a rock. These small, fine tunings that we can't do any other way, are a must in making the gorgeous black and white photo!