

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper **December 2020**

November Image of the Month



Say's Pheobe, Hanging With His Bud
Digital Image of the Month - Doug Ridgway

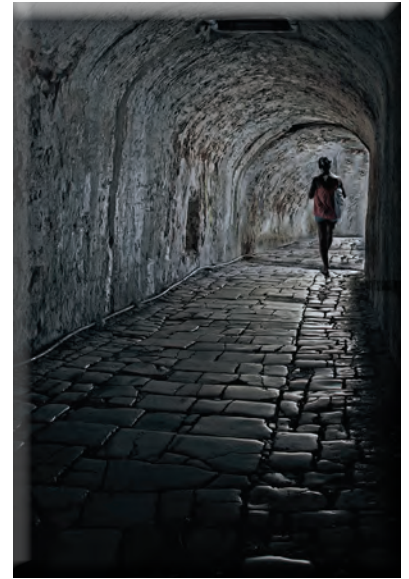
November's 10's



**Capturing a
Flame**
Wayne Carlson



The Lone Cosmo
Ron Wetherell



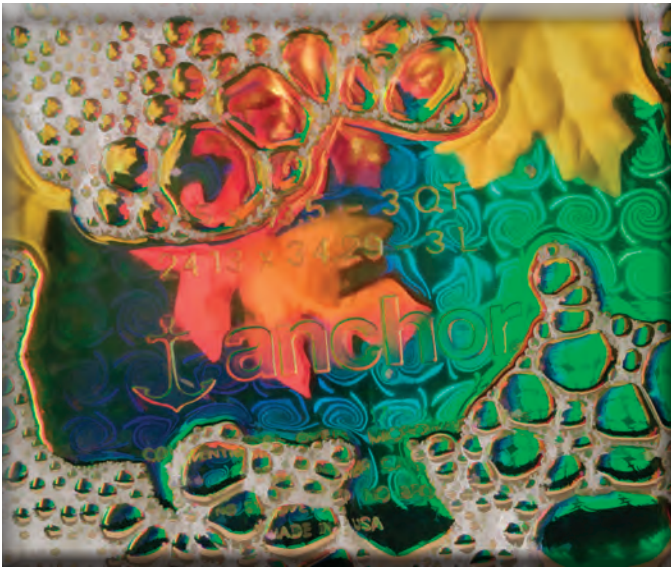
Woman in Tunnel
Joanne Sogsti



One Footed Pelican
Trey Steinhart



Kanab Canyon Erosion Pano
Dean Taylor



Jewels of the Sea
Elizabeth Parrish



Amber Light Kaleidoscope
Dean Taylor



He's Always Watching
Ron Wetherell



Harbor Seal
Joanne Sogsti



Osprey Family in Nest
Joanne Sogsti



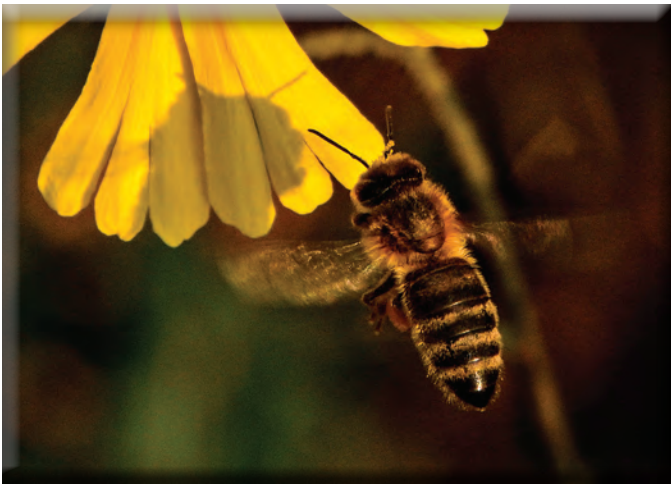
**Walking Up Wrights Beach on a
Perfect Fall Morning**
Trey Steinhart



Finger Painting With Light
Wayne Carlson



Cache Valley Wagon
Dean Taylor



Bee and His Shadow
Karleen Gansberg



City Warp
Christine Blue



Lights and Rust
Dean Taylor



She Likes The Red Ones
Ron Wetherell



Overcast Tuscan Morning
Sharon McLemore

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President's Message

December 2020

By Heide Stover

Though I did not get any images in last month I did enjoy our meeting and the comments made by the judge. We are almost at the end of the year now with December being out last competition month for 2020.

My husband, Bob, is recovering from triple bypass surgery so my time to work on images is very limited. I hope to get some in along with make ups for last month. End of the year competition will be images only this time around. You will be getting information about that. Our England meeting is December 5th and I hope you can all join in.

See you on zoom.

Heide

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



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2020 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
Saturday December 5	Zoom Conference 11:00am PST Contact Heide Stover h1stover@aol.com	Stockton Camera Clubs California and England Joint Meeting
Thursday December 17	Zoom Meeting Stockton	December General Meeting Special Subject - On the Water

2021 Calendar of Events

January 21	TBA	Annual Banquet
Thursday February 18	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	February General Meeting Special Subject - Long Exposure
Thursday March 18	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Fog
April	TBA	April Workshop/Photo Opportunity
Thursday May 20	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Macro/Close-up
Thursday June 17	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only (No Special Subject)
July 15	West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Creative

Meeting Notes November 2020

Heide opened the meeting. She introduced Bruce Paul as a guest this month. He was in the San Jose Camera Club until he moved to the valley in May. He plans to open a professional studio in Manteca very soon.

Heide reminded everyone that at the Dec. meeting a new Board for 2021 needs to be voted in. Also, it looks like the end of the year competition will not include any prints. It will just be digital with 3 categories: 1. Open 2. Special Subject and 3. Black and White.

There were 56 images this month plus one makeup image. Eighteen people attended the Zoom meeting.

Heide asked that those that want to, please send her images of Stockton, and surrounding areas, including San Francisco., etc. The meeting with the English Stockton Camera Club is set for December 5, so please get your images in soon. Heide will send the Zoom time and info for that meeting.

Dean introduced Jan Lightfoot as judge this month. She is from the Sierra Camera Club and also belongs to the Lodi Community Art Center. She has done a lot of judging including at the SJVCCC and the Bay Area.

**The winning image of the month is:
“Say’s Phoebe, Hanging With His Bud”
by Doug Ridgway
Congratulations!**

The Special Subject for December is **ON THE WATER.**

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

Have a safe and Happy Thanksgiving!

Thanks, em

Stockton Camera Club
October 2020 Competition Standings
Congratulations to the winner!!!

Due to COVID-19 October's meeting was held via Zoom.

OCTOBER DIGITAL OF THE MONTH WINNER - "Reflective Dancing" by Ron Wetherell

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
Joan Erreca	228	175	53	37	26	0	32	33	35	35	30	0
Ron Wetherell	217	181	36	28	0	0	38	37	39	36	39	0
Karleen Gansberg	106	88	18	0	0	0	0	0	35	36	35	0
Lanny Brown	70	52	18	0	0	0	0	0	18	28	24	0
Reginald Lee	26	26	0	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Susanne Nichols	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Charlene Martin	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Brenda DeRoos	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Adrian Ferreya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ricky Ortiz	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Albert Rivas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jackie Berryessa	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
David Wireback	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Doug Ridgway	261	203	58	38	36	0	37	38	38	37	37	0
Wayne Carlson	254	196	58	38	35	0	33	39	36	36	37	0
Elizabeth Parrish	241	191	50	36	36	0	32	34	36	34	33	0
Sheldon McCormick	236	183	53	37	35	0	33	33	33	35	30	0
Christine Blue	220	174	46	38	0	0	32	37	38	36	37	0
Darrell O'Sullivan	70	53	17	36	0	0	34	0	0	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	Nov	DEC
Dean Taylor	269	213	56	39	38	0	38	40	37	37	40	0
Trey Steinhart	267	207	60	40	39	0	35	39	38	38	38	0
Em McLaren	263	206	57	38	39	0	37	38	38	39	34	0
Sharon McLemore	261	207	54	38	38	0	36	37	38	38	36	0
Joanne Sogsti	261	205	56	38	38	0	36	37	37	37	38	0
Heide Stover	226	171	55	38	39	0	36	38	38	37	0	0

2020 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.



Into the Night: Photographing the Milky Way & Night Sky

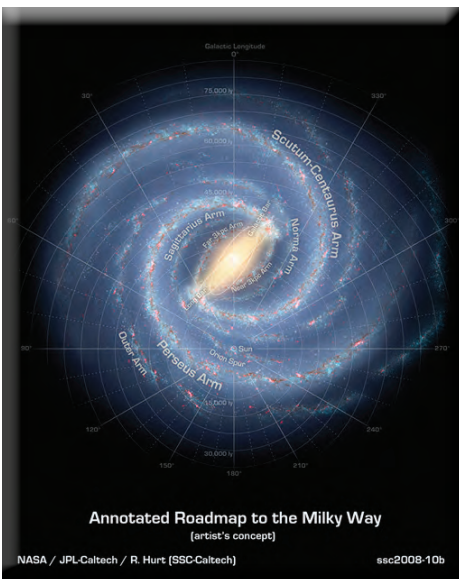
By: [Jennifer Wu](#)



One summer long ago, camping in the bristlecone pine forest in the White Mountains of California, I decided to do some night photography. I had previously seen an image of the full moon at night with a few stars and did some photography with moonlight, however this evening the absent moon made for a dark sky.

Crawling out of my sleeping bag, the blistering hot day turned icy cold at 11,000 feet elevation. The stars shone brightly due to the high elevation. Setting up a shot, I found a tree to add some foreground interest to the composition. I pressed the shutter and a beautiful image appeared on my camera's LCD screen, a silhouette of a bristlecone pine with beautiful colorful gasses of the Milky Way in the background.

Milky Way Reflections - To photograph reflections of the stars and Milky Way, look for calm lakes and ponds. Sometimes the water was too choppy from the wind to reflect the stars on this lake, however on this night, the calm weather allowed the stars to reflect beautifully. The 24mm focal length shows more core Milky Way gasses than its band through the sky. Photographed at f/1.4, 20 seconds, ISO 1600, EF 24mm f/1.4L II USM, Canon EOS 5D Mark II.



Amazed at the intense colors and abundant stars I tried to figure out how there could be so many stars. Anyone watching would have thought I was a bit strange as I kept looking from the sky to the screen. I stared into the sky until I found two bright stars with only a few stars between them. When I located the same stars on my screen, the image was filled with more stars than my naked eyes could see! I felt like one of those points of lights in the sky, one point among so many, infinite yet small at the same time. What an incredible experience to photograph the Milky Way and from that moment on, I was hooked!

This artist's concept illustrates the Milky Way's spiral structure with radiating arms. Notice where our sun is located and we are looking through the dense area April- September. Courtesy NASA/ JPL-Caltech/R. Hurt (SSC/Caltech).



Milky Way Panorama - I created a horizontal panorama of the arch of the Milky Way in July by taking five vertical images with a 16mm focal length lens at Mauna Kea, Hawaii. The warm glow on the horizon on the left is from the city of Hilo and the pink glow is from the Kīlauea volcano. Photographed at f/2.8, 30 seconds, ISO 3200 with EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM lens, Canon EOS 5D Mark II.

The Milky Way

Our Milky Way galaxy is filled with 200 billion to 400 billion stars, yet we only see a few thousand at a time with our naked eyes. When I say we are photographing the Milky Way, I mean the band of the greatest density since every star we see is part of our own galaxy. The Milky Way looks like a white band of light to our eyes, but the camera picks up more stars as well as the gasses that we cannot see with our naked eye, creating amazing images!

May in the early morning and June in the late evening are good months to see the dense center of the Milky Way from the latitudes of the contiguous United States. You can see it as more of a horizontal band in those months. The Milky Way will appear after sunset and more vertical in the night sky by July and August. In September you will see part of the dense center just after sunset, and it disappears quickly. From November to February, the densest area will mostly be behind the sun and won't be as strongly visible again until the following April in the early morning hours.

For other latitudes, you can find the Milky Way and Moon's location in the sky by using apps like Star Walk 2, PhotoPills or the free and planetarium software [Stellarium](#).



Use the Stellarium software by entering the location and date and time windows on the left hand side. Press H for the help menu. You can see the position of the Milky Way in the sky and where it will be located, such as to the South moving to the Southwest through the night, as shown here in mid-July in California.

What is a Good Lens Choice?

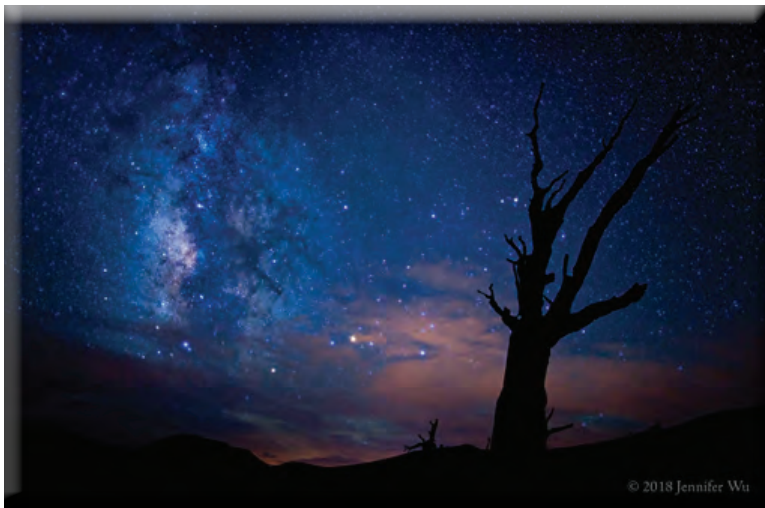
Any wide-angle lens with an aperture of f/2.8 or faster will work for photographing stars as points of light. I recommend using a lens as wide or wider than 35mm for a full-frame camera or 24mm for APS-C cameras on a dark night.

The wider angle of view will lessen the movement of the stars and keep them closer to being points of light instead of trails. The longer the focal length of the lens, the faster the shutter speed of your camera needs to be to stop this movement and have the stars appear as points of light.

Ultra-wide focal lengths like 14mm to 16mm on a full-frame camera or 10 mm on an APS-C camera would include more of the Milky Way in the image, but the core containing its most visible gasses will be less prominent. Alternatively, a narrower focal length like 24mm or 35mm lens on a full-frame camera or 16mm to 22mm on an APS-C camera will help make both the core gasses and foreground elements more prominent while seeing less of the night sky.



Tufa at Mono Lake - The Milky Way expands across the sky with the 17mm focal length. Photographed at f/2.8, 25 seconds, ISO 6400, EF 16-35mm f/2.8L II USM at 17mm, Canon EOS 5D Mark III. I lit the tufa with a tungsten flashlight and warming gel for about 15 seconds.



Bristlecone Pine - After many cloudy days, a clearing storm at night provided some interesting clouds to the bristlecone and Milky Way in the White Mountains in the Eastern Sierras of California. Photographed at f/1.4, 20 seconds, ISO2000, EF 24mm f/1.4L II USM, Canon EOS 5D Mark II.

What Settings for the Milky Way?

When creating my first Milky Way images in 2007, I made mistakes and the following information is what I learned by trial and error. It's okay if you prefer a different exposure, f/stop or color temperature. Feel free to experiment on your own.

Shutter Speed: Set the shutter speed for the maximum shutter speed you can use with your wide-angle lens choice to keep the stars as points of light. The checklist below has my recommendations on shutter speeds for various lens focal lengths to minimize most of the movement of the stars. Review your image on the LCD screen with a loupe and if you see oblong shapes or trails, use a faster shutter speed until you see circles instead of lines.

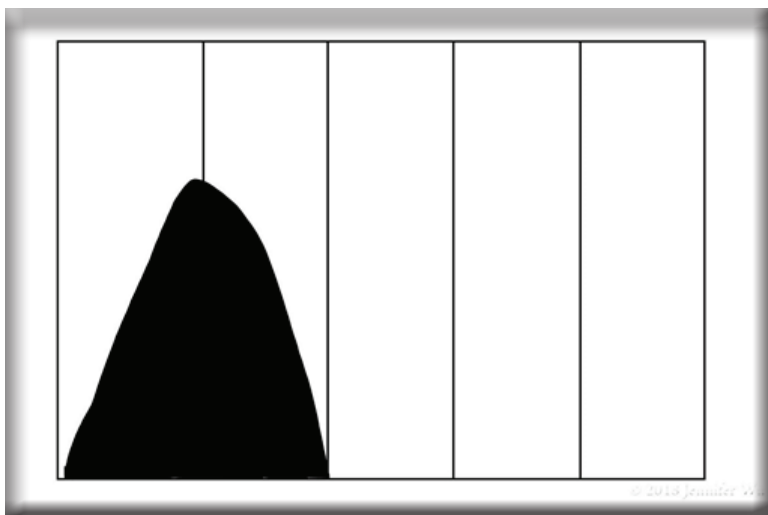
Aperture: This will vary depending on how much light is in the sky. For a dark night use a wide-open aperture to get as much light into the camera as possible. With strong moonlight, such as the week around the full moon, you can set your aperture to f/4 or higher and still get a good exposure.

Wider apertures such as f/1.4 allow for lower ISO settings and less noise but there is a trade-off. With wider apertures, you'll see increased optical aberrations of the stars; and a general softness becomes more apparent, especially at the edges of the frame. This is less of an issue with Canon's wide-angle L-Series lenses like the EF 35mm f/1.4L II USM and EF 16-35mm f/2.8L III USM. On other lenses, using f/2.0 or f/2.8 will help significantly.

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ISO: It is important to set the ISO high enough to get a good exposure. You don't want to have to lighten the images in post-processing. This will dramatically increase the noise when you are using too low of an ISO. Conversely, darkening the image in post-processing will result in lower image quality if you had used too high of an ISO setting.

Use Manual shooting mode and set the exposure so that it is on the plus side by one or two stops over the standard exposure reading of the sky. For a very dark night without the moon, settings of f/1.4 at ISO 1600 to 3200 or f/2.8 at ISO 6400 will get you in the ballpark for a correct exposure.



The histogram shows the various values of digitized light from black to gray to white the image with black represented on the far left side and white on the far right side. This is an example of an ideal histogram on a dark night with information at the second bar coming from the left. This provides a good exposure of the sky. You can have spikes on the left or reaching up and past the top of the histogram and that is fine for night sky photography.

Review the Histogram

On that trip to the bristlecone pine forest, the morning following shooting the Milky Way I reviewed my images. I discovered that the images were underexposed. When I reviewed the images at night while I was still shooting, they looked so bright on the LCD screen because my eyes had adjusted for the dark night, making the image appear to be a proper exposure. That night was the only evening with a clear sky so I did not get any usable night images on that trip. This is why histograms are so beneficial!



Hawaii Caldera - I used filters to obtain the correct exposure of the Kīlauea Caldera and Halema'uma'u Crater. I used three-stop and two-stop hard edge graduated neutral density filters over the bottom of the image to retain detail in the crater's edge and volcanic plume. Photographed at f/2.0, 20 seconds, ISO 3200, EF 24mm f/1.4L II USM, Canon EOS 5D Mark II.

Camera Checklist - Things to do before leaving your hotel room or location:

- Place a fresh battery in the camera and have a spare battery in your pocket to keep warm if in cold weather.
- Put a formatted media card in the camera.
- Set the LCD screen brightness to low to maximize your night vision, to get more accurate-looking night photographs. (Don't forget to reverse your LCD settings when you're done.)
- Mount a wide-angle lens with the lens hood.
- Remove any filters.
- Turn off Mirror Lockup, Image Stabilization and Exposure Bracketing
- Long Exposure Noise Reduction – set as desired. I normally don't use it.
- Set file type to RAW.
- Place dark gaffer or electrical tape over camera processing red LED light.
- After I set the focus on my lens for the stars, I put a piece a tape on the lens to make sure the focus stays in place.

Camera Settings:

Manual settings:

Aperture at f/2.8 (if your lens doesn't have f/2.8, use the largest aperture available)
 Shutter Speed maximum to stop movement of stars:

For full-frame cameras:

- 14mm at 30 seconds
- 16mm at 25 seconds
- 24mm at 20 seconds
- 35mm at 15 seconds



For APS-C cameras:

- 10mm at 25 seconds
- 16mm at 20 seconds
- 22mm at 15 seconds

- Set ISO to 3200 for f/1.4. If you have an f/2.8 lens then ISO 6400 will be okay, without moonlight.
- Set white balance to Kelvin temperature 3400 to 4400 or as desired.
- Focus the lens.
- Take a photo and review.
- Use the magnifier on your LCD to make sure the stars are in focus.
- Check histogram to get a bright enough exposure to fill up to the second bar from the far left.
- Check white balance and adjust if desired.

Family and Stars - Hours after sunset, I was hiking in Yosemite National Park on a quiet night. The daytime crowds disappeared and then I saw headlamps beaming through the dark night. Hikers came up the hilltop. Although surprised, I was delighted to meet an astronomer sharing the stars with his family. He inquired, "What are you doing here so late?" I replied, "I am photographing the stars, can you pose for me?" I got a yes and asked them to stand on different boulders. "Now stay still and don't breathe for 20 seconds!" They did a great job and later I sent them prints. They provided a sense of scale to the Milky Way and I like the image better with them in it. Photographed at f/1.4 at 20 seconds at ISO 1600 with EF 24mm f/1.4L II USM and Canon EOS 5D Mark II.

Focusing – Getting the Stars Sharp

Be sure to have the stars in sharp focus. The easiest way is to auto focus on a distant horizon like a range of mountains, or on the moon when it's visible and then switch to Manual focus. If you are able to get into position early enough in the day, focus on the horizon before the sunset completely sets and tape the lens in place. Regardless of which method you use, be sure to turn off the Autofocus so the camera doesn't refocus by accident. Using Live View is another way to focus for night sky photography. Place a bright star in the center of the frame, turn on Live View and press the magnify button to zoom in to the star. Then manually focus by turning the focusing ring on the lens. Using a loupe on the LCD screen will aid this process, and also in reviewing the images for sharpness. The star should look small and not like a donut.

An easy way to focus on the stars at night is to use the SharpStar 2 or similar focusing filter. With this method, focus on a star with Live View and then add a filter using a filter holder. Focus the lens until you see a star flare come into focus. Learn more about how to use it [here](#).

Accessories

- Using a wired remote controller (also called a cable release) is very handy for night photography, especially in cold weather.
- You can use the self-timer to prevent motion blur when you press the shutter button.
- Protect your night vision by using a red headlamp and/or red flashlight. This is very important!

Equipment Selection

Camera Selection

Any current Canon DSLR or EOS M mirrorless camera will offer excellent quality and high enough ISO settings for night photography. I recommend an ISO setting of 3200 to 6400 for a good exposure depending on the lens you are using and the conditions you encounter. Higher ISO settings are not recommended, as they will only serve to increase noise.

Full-frame Cameras

Full-frame sensor cameras offer the highest image quality with the ability to make the largest prints. In addition, the full-frame sensor allows for the use of the full range of wide-angle lens available, whereas the APS-C cameras have a crop factor of 1.6. My recommendations for full-frame cameras include (in order of my preference):

EOS 5D Mark IV - EOS-1D X Mark II - EOS 6D Mark II

The current APS-C sensor size DSLRs and EOS M mirrorless cameras offer the next best image quality and the ability to make large prints. I have used the EOS 7D Mark II and EOS M cameras with excellent results. I would recommend the 7D Mark II, EOS 80D, EOS Rebel T7i, EOS Rebel SL2 and the current mirrorless cameras. Some of these cameras have a Vari-angle screen. This makes it easier to focus and to review your images on the LCD screen, especially in more difficult and rugged terrain. I have used the astrophotography camera EOS 60Da (no longer in production) with excellent results and I still prefer a full frame sensor camera.

I normally use the EOS 5D series of cameras for night sky photography, however you can use any current APS-C camera, EOS M mirrorless series camera or PowerShot G series cameras with the same recommendations.

Composition

Scout your shooting location during the day. Look for interesting foreground elements like trees, mountains, boulders and bodies of water. Take some test shots to determine what focal length you like the best and the ideal camera location. This will eliminate the need to take test shots at night when you won't be able to see as well.

Photograph the foreground and a large area of the sky in your test shots. The foreground provides a sense of scale to the Milky Way. In addition, it creates a grounded feeling in the image.



Yosemite's Trees - I photographed these trees with 16mm and 24mm during the day and decided I preferred the look of the 24mm lens (left image). That allowed me to return at night and set up quickly. While I was photographing the image to the right, a car went by and dimly lit the trees with indirect light. I also used a large flashlight pointed away from the trees or subject for indirect light. Photographed at f/1.4 for 20 seconds at ISO 6400 with EF 24mm f/1.4L II USM and Canon EOS 5D Mark II.

You can photograph the stars anywhere it is dark enough. I hope you will use this information to create your own amazing images of the night sky with your unique point of view. I honor you as a photographer of the night. May you be hooked on photographing the stars!



Resources and More Information

The International Dark-Sky Association- Protect the night sky and find dark areas. <http://www.darksky.org>
Find out the sunrise, sunset and phases of the Moon at www.timeanddate.com

Watch the weather forecast for clear or partially clear skies at 7 Timer: <http://ftp.astron.ac.cn/wchart.php?lang=en>
PowerShot G3 X article with night photography <http://learn.usa.canon.com/resources/articles/2016/jen-wu-g3x.shtml>

Check out Jennifer's Online Learning class on Landscape Photography at <https://shop.usa.canon.com/shop/en/catalog/great-landscapes-made-easy>

The CDLC contributors are compensated spokespersons and actual users of the Canon products that they promote.

<http://learn.usa.canon.com>

JENNIFER WU

"In reaching for the stars, I'm on a quest to empower others to do the same."



The Navajo Nation: A Photography Guide

Story and photos by Jerry Ginsberg



The Famed Mittens,
Calling Card of Monument Valley Tribal Park
© Jerry Ginsberg

These days, whenever I think of the innumerable terrific photo destinations throughout our county, especially the great Southwest, my reaction has become, “Wait until next year.” With travel planning now stuck in limbo waiting out the coronavirus, it doesn’t hurt to catalog some of the places that await us when we are once again free to roam around in search of great places and great images. High on that list are the lands of the Diné Bikéyah or Navajo Nation.



The Mittens © Jerry Ginsberg

At over 27,000 square miles in Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah, this sprawling tract is home to about 180,000 Native Americans. Tragically, they have been hit very hard by the coronavirus. As a result, the reservation has been locked down and prohibiting visitors for some time with an end not yet in sight.

Looking forward to brighter days, let’s take stock of some of the region’s visual highlights.

Monument Valley Tribal Park

By any standard, the top spot on all lists has got to be the famed [Monument Valley](#). Before we delve into the specifics of this land that teems with fantastic forms, a word of history is in order. The Navajo have lived in the Four Corners area for centuries. They were preceded by even older native peoples dating back to the Ice Age. Among the best known white settlers to make their home here were Harry & “Mike” Goulding, who arrived around 1921, bought about 640 acres, and set up shop to trade with the locals. After the first structures of [Goulding’s Trading Post](#) went up in 1928, Harry continued looking for more opportunity.

Eventually, he recruited pioneering landscape photographer Josef Muench, father of the legendary landscape master David Muench and grandfather of Marc Muench, to make some images of the fantastic landscape. Harry Goulding then took those prints to Hollywood where he caught the interest of Director John Ford who made his iconic 1939 Western “Stagecoach” right there in Monument Valley.

That started a decades-long trend during which Ford and others shot numerous films, many now classics, within the valley and adjacent lands.

Many of those now familiar Monument Valley scenes are all over the place just waiting for us to make fresh interpretations. Surprisingly, the classic composition of the Mittens and Merrick Butte can be seen right from the parking lot, but that’s just



Distinctive Totem Pole and Yei Bi Chei © Jerry Ginsberg

scratching the surface of all that this place has to offer. As a quick orientation you might wish to take a standard valley tour during the often harsh light of day, but to get serious, you will need to hire one of the many local guides to take you around both well before sunrise and again in the late afternoon.

With a competent private guide, you can learn the names of the many distinctive forms and when they can be photographed in the best light.

Such iconic spots as Yei Bi Chei and its columnar Totem Pole, North Window, the Three Sisters, John Ford Point, the Stagecoach, King on his Throne and the fancifully named Mystery Valley are all there for you.

However, for some even more special images, you will need to go a bit off the beaten path and wander beyond the heart of the valley itself. For these you will need one or two more specialized guides who really know what they are doing.



First, catch a ride up to the Teardrop Arch above Monument Valley High School. Try to be there in the late afternoon in spring. About 3:00 PM in April and May works best. Autumn light can cast an objectionable shadow line right across this unique redrock window.

Right alongside Route 160 between the valley entrance and the town of Kayenta stands mighty Agathla Peak. This volcanic plug rises dramatically from the flat ground surrounding it. Its dark and brooding form has been a backdrop in several Hollywood movies, notably the closing scene of the classic Western “My Darling Clementine.”

View through the Teardrop Arch into Monument Valley © Jerry Ginsberg



View from Atop Hunt's Mesa © Jerry Ginsberg

For the quintessential Navajo Nation experience, hire an experienced outfitter and spend 24 hours camping on top of Hunt's Mesa. The afternoon and evening views from a thousand feet above the valley floor are simply stupendous!

Even though this is a dry desert climate, the summer months here bring monsoon season. Strong thunderstorms accompanied by lots of lightning can be present here in spring, but June, July & August are more likely to see them, especially in the afternoon. If you own an electronic lightning trigger, this is definitely the place to use it.

The old adage “Bad weather makes great photographs.” is certainly true. So is “Lightning is dangerous to photographers.” Be careful.

From Monument Valley we can explore other great places both on and off Reservation lands. Spoke roads radiate out to the north and west. Let's first head north.

Goosenecks of the San Juan State Park & Valley of the Gods

Lying just a short drive northeast of Monument Valley and across the San Juan River is the tiny town of Mexican Hat, Utah. Here you will find an [overlook offering a panoramic view](#) of the convoluted twists of the river and the repeating land forms shaped by its flow. With its largely monochromatic look, this is a really good place to consider making images in black & white.

Moving on a bit further north will bring you to The Valley of the Gods.

Its many red sandstone formations are interesting and can be photographed successfully in the right light, but after a couple of days in nearby Monument Valley, might seem quite understated.



View from Atop Hunt's Mesa during a Thunderstorm in Monument Valley © Jerry Ginsberg

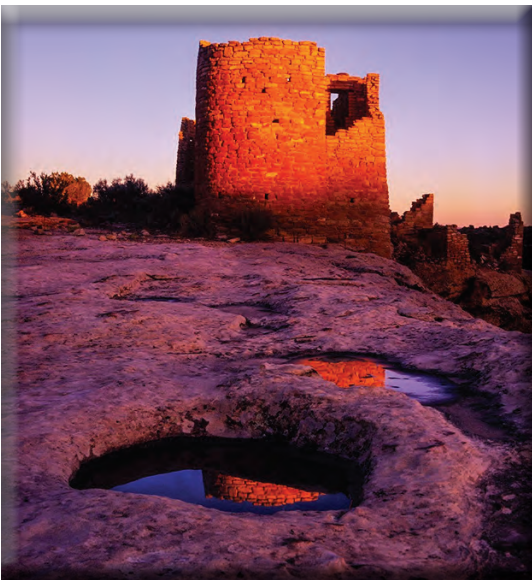
The Moki (Moqui) Dugway and Beyond

Once you are ready to move on from the valley area, head north up the steep and winding Moki Dugway toward Cedar Mesa. Once reaching the top, look for the inter-agency ranger station on the right. It holds a wealth of good information in the area. This large mesa is just honeycombed with countless centuries-old Native American sites, many as yet undiscovered. These are mostly granaries and small dwellings.

One of the most photogenic and my personal favorite is a small spot within Mule Canyon popularly called House on Fire because of its brilliant red overhang that seems reminiscent of many tongues of flame reaching up.

Close by Mule Canyon is Natural Bridges National Monument. A one-way loop road of about ten miles passes the trail heads of all three of the huge stone arches for which the monument is named.

This area is west of Rt. 191 and the little town of Blanding, UT. Wandering further afield – east of Blanding is Hovenweep National Monument with its many wonderful historic Anasazi structures lining the edges of an oval shaped canyon. A loop trail will take you past most of them.

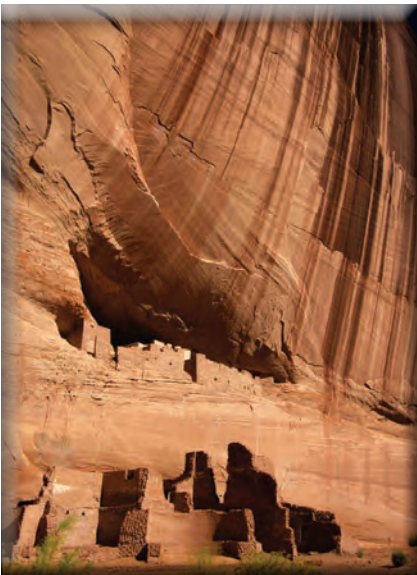


Hovenweep Tower in Hovenweep National Monument © Jerry Ginsberg

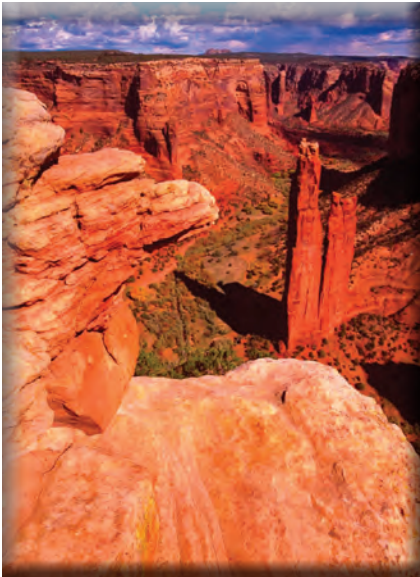
National Monuments

Let's turn our attention now to a couple of great chunks of Navajo land that lie east and west of Monument Valley.

One of the anomalies on the Navajo Nation is the overlay of National Park Service jurisdiction within Navajo lands. Two such locations stand out: Canyon de Chelly and [Navajo National Monument](#) (aka Tsegi Canyon). While the Res. nominally holds sovereignty, the Feds have rights of way to specific roads and trails. It's a delicate, if sometimes ambiguous balance that requires all visitors to respect the wishes of their hosts and be on their best behavior at all times.



White House Ruin in Canyon de Chelly National Monument © Jerry Ginsberg



Spider Rock Towers over Canyon de Chelly National Monument
© Jerry Ginsberg



Light filters down into a unique slot canyon. This image of the Corkscrew in Lower Antelope Canyon has appeared on the cover of Arizona Highways magazine.

© Jerry Ginsberg

Navajo National Monument

A fairly short drive from Monument Valley through Kayenta, AZ is the canyon known as Tsegi. It's interesting to drive through, but to appreciate the essence of this special place, you will need to lace up your hiking boots.

Check with [monument administration](#) for availability of the early morning ranger led hike down to the huge and elegantly curving Betatakin niche enclosing its ancient homes and other buildings.

Canyon de Chelly

Just outside the tiny town of Chinle, AZ (southeast of Monument Valley) lies this large and very scenic eroded sandstone canyon. Years ago it was a simple matter of driving up to the visitor center and hiring one of the many local guides available there. In today's age of mass tourism brought about largely by Instagram, the process has become far more regimented and less favorable for our specialized needs. Most group tours are run during the day when the light does not lend itself to photography.

There is another option. By simply driving the rim roads and adding in a little hiking, you can take in a few of the primary Canyon de Chelly spots at your own convenience. The paved road will get you to the sandstone monolith called Spider Woman Rock and around adjacent Canyon del Muerte. Perhaps the most iconic place here is White House Ruin, famously expressed in high contrast black & white by none other than Ansel Adams. Since his visits to Canyon de Chelly predated the age of social media, he was able to explore where and when he chose unencumbered by group tours.

The best opportunity to see White House Ruin under the most favorable light is to hike down from the road in mid-late afternoon. Once reaching the canyon's bottom, walk a short distance along the Chinle Wash until reaching the ruin. The trail cuts through private farmlands so it's important to be mindful of the privacy of the local folks.

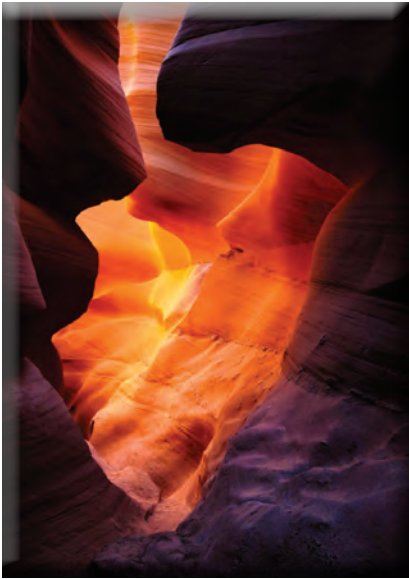
Page, Arizona

No visit to the lands of the Navajo can ever be complete without adequate time spent in Page. This once sleepy reservation town is now a tourist magnet thick with hotels of every possible stripe. It has been fairly well established that the catalyst for this explosion in tourism is social media.

Page is surrounded by several great natural features. The best known high spots among these are:

- Upper Antelope slot Canyon (the Corkscrew)
- Lower Antelope slot Canyon
- [Horseshoe Bend of the Colorado River](#)
- Lake Powell & Glen Canyon NRA
- [The Vermillion Cliffs—Paria National Monument](#) featuring Coyote Buttes and the famous Wave.

In recent years, several of these have become extremely popular tourist spots. Be prepared for crowds and some level of regimentation. Each one of these locations provides the elements to help you come home with outstanding images. A few of them have enabled me to produce some commercially-successful work.



The unique sandstone forms of Lower Antelope Canyon were carved by wind and water. Basically just a crack in the Earth that allows sunlight in, slot canyons are unique places found in the Southwest.

© Jerry Ginsberg



Jerry Ginsberg is an award-winning and widely-published photographer whose landscape and travel images have graced the pages and covers of hundreds of books, magazines and travel catalogs. He is the only person to have photographed each and every one of America's 62 National Parks with medium format cameras and has appeared on ABC TV discussing our national parks.

His works have been exhibited from coast to coast and have received numerous awards in competition. Jerry's photographic archive spans virtually all of both North and South America.

More of Ginsberg's images are on display at www.JerryGinsberg.com or e-mail him at jerry@jerryginsberg.com.

Logistics

If flying into the area, the best airport choices are Las Vegas and Phoenix. Both will still require a bit of a drive to reach the Navajo Nation.

Lodging choices can be a bit limited if aiming for the most convenient locations. For Monument Valley my favorite is venerable Goulding's Lodge. The newer View Hotel is perched right on the rim of the valley overlooking the Mittens. Reservation towns such as Kayenta and Chinle, Arizona, as well as Blanding, Utah, offer a few excellent options. However, Page now has what may be an over-supply of choices.

After leaving the highways behind, you will find that many of the roads in the area are unpaved. Consider renting an SUV with 4 wheel or All Wheel Drive.

A well known and seemingly ubiquitous local dish is the popular Navajo Taco or 'Frybread.' This is best enjoyed by folks who have really low cholesterol.