

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper

January 2021

December Image of the Month



Teton Winter Daybreak
Digital Image of the Month - Dean Taylor

December's 10's



A Flower for Christmas
Em McLaren



Watchfull Bald Eagle
Heide Stover



The Universe Within
Christine Blue



Gibbes Mausoleum
Sharon McLemore



Bubbles On The Water
Em McLaren



Duncan Cove Epic Sunrise
Trey Steinhart



Ross Geese Taking Off
Heide Stover



Mom and Her Kids
Ron Wetherell



Sandhill Cranes
Heide Stover



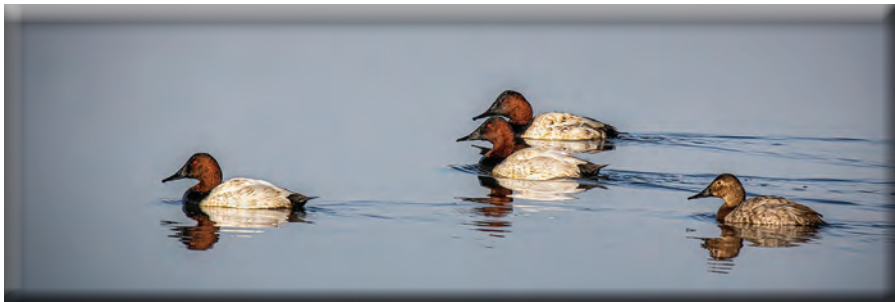
Thinking About The Day
Em McLaren



Colorado Fall Color
Sharon McLemore



Wrestling a Calf
Em McLaren



Canvas Backs, Just Cruising
Ron Wetherell

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President's Message

January 2021

By Heide Stover

I was glad to see how many of our members joined our zoom meeting with the England Stockton Club. Some of us have also joined their Facebook page. Our next joint meeting will be in January. I do not have a date yet but will get that to you as soon as I have it.

I enjoyed our competition meeting with our judge Susan. She did a wonderful job and had very good comments about the images. It is great to see many of our members hanging in there with our zoom meetings.

Try to keep photographing!

Heide

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



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2021 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
January 21	Zoom Meeting	End of the Year Meeting Competition Awards
TBA	TBA	Joint Meeting with the Stockton Camera Club/UK
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
December 2020**

Heide opened the meeting. There were 16 people including the judge. There were 56 images (43 + 4 makeups) and 13 Special Subjects.

1. A vote was taken on accepting the slate of board members and it was passed by the members present on Zoom. The board remains the same as last year as no one else volunteered.
2. Wayne asked that members wanting to send in images for the end of the year, please send them to him by December 21 so they can be included. Remember you can send in 2 images in each category (Open, Black & White, and Special Subject.) for a total of 6 images.
3. Heide said the meeting with the English Stockton Camera Club was fun. Our turn to send in images to present to them will come up in mid January Heide asked for you to let her know if you will send in your own presentation or if you want her to send them for you. Each presentation should not be longer than 10 minutes. Sharon suggested that we do a run thru before presenting. Heide asked that you let her know before Saturday January 2 (h1stover@aol.com).
4. Dean introduced this month's judge, Susan Boverly. She has judged for our club before and is an excellent photographer. She has won many awards. Susan invited our club to view the Yolo County Arts. org's 2 photo shows on line. One show is about Humor and the other about Shadows and Reflections. She also mentioned that she was able to go to a tornado chasing workshop which was very exciting for her.

DECEMBER DIGITAL COMPETITION WINNER:

“Teton's Winter Daybreak” by Dean Taylor.

Congratulations Dean!!

There is no competition in January but there will be a meeting to view the end of year digitals and winner for the best photo of the year. More info will be coming about it.

The special subject for February is: **“LONG EXPOSURE”**

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

Have a safe and happy Holiday and New Year!

Stockton Camera Club

November 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

2021 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.

Mirrorless v. DSLR – What’s Best for You?

by Matt Meisenheimer

We’re at a weird point in digital camera history where many manufacturers offer DSLR and mirrorless systems – plus, there have never been more choices on the market in terms of cameras (at every price range too!).



In the past few years, we’ve seen a huge transformation of the mirrorless market, and I’d say this year was one of the most monumental yet. Alongside Sony, Nikon and Canon cemented a position in the mirrorless game with excellent respective cameras. If you want something different, look no further than Fuji and Panasonic.

But, all of that hasn’t taken away from the fact that there are still incredible DSLRs available, the Nikon D850, Canon 5D Mark IV, Canon 1D X Mark III, and the Nikon D6 all come to mind from a professional stance.

I think that begs the obvious question – what’s best? Although the most obvious, I don’t think it’s the most important question...I think the most important question

is – what’s best FOR YOU? Only you can answer that question, but we can give you the information you need to make an informed decision.

That’s my intent for this article, we’ll cover some of the pros and cons of both systems, as well as cover my general thoughts. I never shot film, but I did use a DSLR for a long time before making the switch to mirrorless. I also have the benefit of being able to interact with a lot of different DSLR and mirrorless cameras during workshops, so I have a decent amount of experience with the usability and applications of both systems.



DSLR Advantages

Ergonomics

We will talk more about size and weight later. By ergonomics, I simply mean how a camera feels in your hands. Does it feel sturdy, how does it grip for shooting, are the controls laid out in a nice manner, etc.

In general, the ergonomics for a DSLR is going to be better. The reason being is DSLRs is just larger. So, more design options are available when it comes to how a camera handles.

Having experienced both sides, I do prefer the handling of my former DSLR. It’s hard to explain, but it just felt

better in the hands. The control layout was perfect and it was just a pleasure to handle. This doesn’t mean the ergonomics and handling of mirrorless cameras is bad. I’ve grown used to my mirrorless camera now, but do I wish I had the handling of my old Nikon D810 sometimes...yes, I do.

Optical Viewfinder

A DSLR and mirrorless camera work differently. A DSLR reflects light using a prism system to display a true-to-life scene through its optical viewfinder.

A mirrorless camera transmits an electronic signal to a viewfinder, so you’re seeing an electronic transmission versus an optical one. I think an easy way to think of it is like this, an optical viewfinder is like seeing something in real life with your eyes, while an electronic viewfinder is like watching TV.

This is a personal preference, but I do miss an optical viewfinder sometimes, especially in low light situations. I felt like I was better at composing a scene with the optical viewfinder, but I’m getting used to the electronic viewfinder.

Battery Life

DSLRs tend to get more bang for their buck when it comes to battery life. To compare two top of the line models – a Nikon D850 will net you about 1,800 shots off a charge, while the Sony A7r IV will get you around 650.

I definitely notice a difference in battery life. I just went on a recent backpacking trip where I brought 6 batteries. That would have been plenty with my Nikon D850, but with my Z7, I found myself on my last battery on the last day of the trip – I barely made it.

If you mainly shoot close to a car or on day trips, I really don't think the battery should be a big consideration. Because after all, you can always recharge them.

Lenses

At the time of this article, there are many more lens options for DSLR cameras. Sony has specialized in mirrorless so I'll leave them out, but if you look at Canon and Nikon...they both have so many more lenses for their DSLR systems, at all focal spectrums too. This is mainly because of the youth of their mirrorless systems, which are just going on 2 years now. Fast forward a few years and the lens options should be similar.

Autofocus

Autofocus isn't necessarily a benefit of DSLRs, but it's often assumed to be one so I wanted to address it. Professional grade DSLRs do have excellent AF systems, but so do their mirrorless counterparts.

Mirrorless has a bad rap about autofocus due to one of their limitations when they first burst on the scene. Mirrorless was first restricted to a contrast-detection AF system. This is in contrast to phase-detection implemented by many of the best DSLRs. In low light and with fast-moving subjects, contrast detection systems are simply not very good. However, most mirrorless systems now have hybrid AF systems that use both phase detection and contrast systems.



Mirrorless Advantages

Size & Weight

There is no doubt that going mirrorless can save you some size and weight. This was one of the big reasons I jumped ship. I cut the size and weight of my setup by 50%...that's huge! And trust me, I feel it every day I'm out shooting and traveling. I think it's worth it alone.

Mirrorless cameras are able to be built in a more compact manner because they don't need all the additional equipment to capture a frame (the prism and mirror).

Autofocus

As I said in the DSLR section, autofocus is excellent with mirrorless cameras. And because of firmware support updates, it's able to be improved after your purchase. We have seen this with Nikon's Z line and many others.

I think Sony probably has the best AF system out there right now, with the A9 II setting the bar. Although, the Canon EOS R5 has made a splash as well.

Anyway, I just want to say, I don't think you will be limited by the AF system of your camera. The hybrid focusing detection systems are excellent and getting better. That added with features like Eye-AF that can track people and wildlife is a bonus too, but you can find DSLRs with those features as well.

Burst Rate

Because of the way mirrorless cameras capture and transmit light, they are able to achieve faster burst rates than their DSLR counterparts.

The best mirrorless cameras today can capture 20 fps, while the best DSLRs are around 14-16 fps. You can find professional low-end mirrorless cameras that can easily capture 10+ fps too. The DSLRs that can do 14-16 fps will cost you a pretty penny.

This is a big deal for wildlife photography. The AF systems continue to improve and the burst rates are awesome...we just need the lenses (unless you're a Sony user).

Electronic Viewfinder

The main benefit of the EVF is – what you see is what you get. I mentioned I preferred the optical viewfinder, but I'm getting used to the EVF. I used to use exposure simulation with Live View on my DSLR, but now changing settings and seeing them instantly reflected on the display is a breeze (and awesome). The EVF system is really growing on me.

Image Stabilization

Image stabilization is a HUGE consideration. Many DSLRs have lenses that are stabilized, but mirrorless systems offer in-body stabilization AND lens stabilization in some cases, allowing for insane control over movement and vibrations.

I've handheld with Sony and Nikon cameras down to 1/5s, and shots have been sharp. Who needs a tripod? But, seriously, the in-body stabilization offered by many mirrorless cameras is a huge plus and I think it could become a game-changer as technology improves.

Video

Many mirrorless cameras have become video superstars. Most DSLRs are not able to use their highly accurate phase-detection focus systems when the mirror is up, meaning AF can be unreliable. Mirrorless cameras have their phase-detection focus pixels baked into the sensor, so there is no focus limitation.

We're also seeing incredible bit rates and recording modes introduced to mirrorless; 4:2:2 modes, 10-bit modes, and log support.

So, that mirrorless you purchase for stills is most likely packed with video features as well.

DSLR Disadvantages

Size & Weight

DSLRs are big. Especially with professional-grade, super-fast lenses attached to them. This was my main reason for switching. I cut my weight and overall size by 50%. I had a 14mm-24mm f/2.8 with a bulbous front element so I needed to carry around this huge pancake of a filter holder just to use a circular polarizer.

Now, I use a 14-30mm f/4, that takes threaded filters and weighs 2lbs less. My Z7 is also considerably smaller than my old Nikon D810. Now, mirrorless cameras still have some pretty big lenses, but overall you are going to save size and weight with a mirrorless camera body and most lenses.

Burst Rate

We touched on this, but no doubt about it, DSLRs will not (at least currently do not) shoot as fast as their mirrorless counterparts. In general, the faster the better for wildlife so it might potentially be worth it to look into a Sony A9 II or Canon EOS R5. The lenses are still the limiting factor though, as it will be quite a few years before some of the super-telephoto primes are released.

Mirrorless Disadvantages

Lenses

This is mainly for Nikon and Canon, but we just don't have the native lenses yet. A lot are being released, and I'm sure many were delayed by COVID, but the DSLR systems have so many more options. There are way more third party options too, which can be excellent.

This is more of a waiting game though, in time, the Nikon and Canon mirrorless systems will have a full offering of amazing lenses. And speaking from personal experience, the technology and design of the new mirrorless lenses are blowing some of the DSLR lenses out of the water. A lot of that has to do with the flange design on the new Nikon and Canon mounts.

Ergonomics

You save size and weight, but you get a smaller camera body. It probably won't feel as good in your hands and you might find you don't have as many button options, or the layout is just a bit cramped. There's no way around it, but I've found that the slight ergonomic sacrifice is worth the size and weight savings.



Battery Life

I don't think this should be a knock, but DSLRs have better battery life. I don't think battery life from mirrorless cameras is necessarily poor, it's just not as good when compared to DSLRs. Like I said above, a minor thing unless you find yourself off the grid for long periods of time.

Is there a BEST?

So, is there a best? I'm not really sure. I think the benefits are starting to tilt the scale towards mirrorless. We are just seeing incredible designs and innovations with new cameras. The EOS R5 hit us right in the face with that. The A7r IV is a powerhouse. And, Nikon's new mark II Z cameras look excellent as well. There are a few downsides

of going mirrorless, but I don't think there are many and I don't think the downsides are actually very important. You'll get used to the ergonomics, the EVF, and the lenses will eventually come.

I think we're in the middle of a mirrorless movement and I have definitely bought in. I think it's important to state though that some of the key differences maybe aren't that key.

If you don't travel or hike a lot, is the weight really that important? If you don't shoot wildlife, do the burst rate and AF systems matter? If you don't care about video, do those features even play a role? Those questions can change the perspective and recommendations. We're also in a time where every camera being produced is absolutely insane for the price.

Technology has come a long way. I know if I go out with say a Nikon D800 or a Nikon Z7 II, I'm probably going to come back with the same shots. So, maybe the camera doesn't really matter all that much? I think it's important to think about that because ANY CAMERA made in the last 3-5 years is super capable and will get you the shots you want.

So, think about what mirrorless brings to the table, but there's a reality where maybe those things just don't matter that much because you're already getting excellent shots with your DSLR!

We'd love to know what you think!



Matt Meisenheimer is a photographer based in Wisconsin. His artistry revolves around finding unique compositions and exploring locations that few have seen. He strives to capture those brief moments of dramatic light and weather, which make our grand landscapes so special. Matt loves the process of photography – from planning trips and scouting locations, taking the shot in-field, to post-processing the final image.

Matt is an active adventurer and wildlife enthusiast as well. He graduated with a degree in wildlife ecology and worked in Denali National Park and Mount Rainier National Park as a biologist. He also spent 6 months working in the deserts of Namibia before finding his path in photography. Matt's passion for the wilderness has taken him to many beautiful places around the world.

As a former university teaching assistant, Matt is passionate about instruction. It is his goal to give his students the technical and creative knowledge they need to achieve their own photographic vision. He truly enjoys working with photographers on a personal level and helping them reach their goals.

You can see Matt's work and portfolio on his webpage at www.meisphotography.com

What is Aperture in Photography?

Understanding the Basics

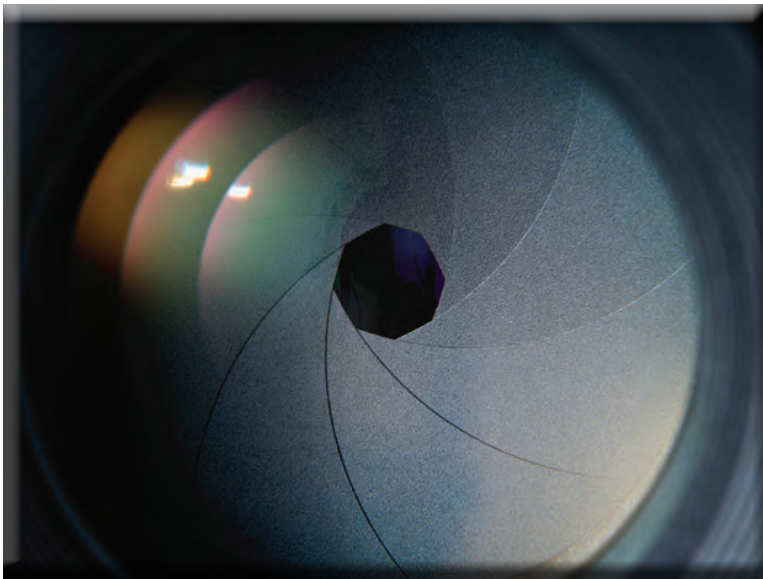


It's said that in life, small changes can yield powerful results — and when it comes to photography, this concept rings true. Whether scouting out the perfect location or experimenting with an interchangeable lens, the choices we make, no matter how small, have the power to enhance and inspire our creative vision.

Just consider some of the elements that make a photograph striking: perhaps it's the background blur framing a subject, or a sprawling landscape in super-sharp focus.

In photography, there are a number of minor tweaks that can add major impact to the look and feel of your images. Stepping away from your camera's automatic mode (as scary as that sounds!) and challenging yourself to make small, but impactful changes is a great way to kick your skills into high gear.

What's one of the easiest and arguably most important first steps? Understanding how aperture can play a major role in enhancing your photography.



What is Aperture?

Aperture is an adjustable opening inside your lens that allows light to pass through to the imaging sensor in the camera body. An easy way to visualize aperture is to think of it in terms of the human eye. What happens when we shine a flashlight onto the iris of our eye, and then quickly remove it? Our pupil dilates larger or smaller based upon the amount — and intensity — of light.

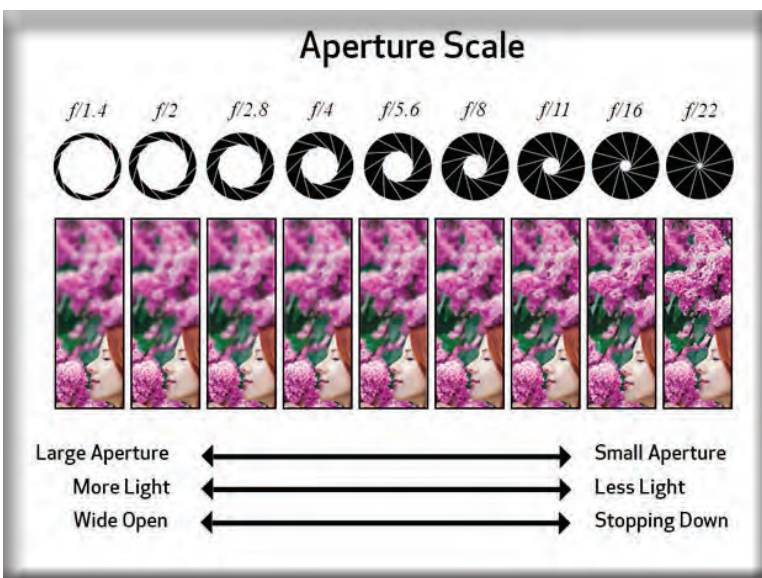
When capturing an image, aperture works in similar ways. In dimly-lit situations, for example, a larger aperture takes in more light — just as our eyes need a larger, more dilated pupil in order to view our surroundings better. Conversely, a smaller aperture, or smaller pupil size, is helpful when taking in bright, sunny conditions, where less light is needed to properly expose a scene.

In essence, aperture controls the amount and intensity of light affecting an image — so it should come as no surprise that gaining an understanding of how, why and when to

use aperture can greatly strengthen and boost your photographic techniques.

F-Stop & Aperture: Understanding the Connection

To put this concept into practice, let's discuss the connection between f-stop and aperture. When photographers refer to an f-stop or f-stop number, they are speaking directly about aperture. You might also hear phrases such as “opening up,” “stopping down” or “shooting wide open.” Put simply, these phrases all relate to the aperture's ability to open wider or close smaller when letting in available light.



A large aperture (remember, large pupil size) is measured using a low f-stop number, such as f/1.4. When the maximum aperture (lowest f-stop number) is used, this is referred to as “shooting wide open” — essentially, letting in the most light possible. On the opposite end of the spectrum, a small aperture (remember, small pupil size) is measured using a high f-stop number, such as f/22. Since a small aperture takes in less light, you'll be “stopping down” each time a higher f-stop number is used. To help visualize the connection between f-stop and aperture, take a look at our diagram below:

Depth-of-Field & Aperture: Merging the Two

Aperture serves two very important functions. Not only does it control the amount and intensity of light affecting an image, but it also controls a scene's depth-of-field — in other words, how much of the foreground and background are in focus.

Experimenting with varying apertures is a technique used by photographers to add dimension to a scene. A large aperture (low f-stop number) keeps a subject in sharp focus by blurring out the foreground and background, creating what's known as bokeh in photography. This dreamy, romantic background blur is considered "shallow" depth-of-field and is achieved using low f-stop numbers, such as f/2. Large apertures are perfect for isolating your subject and eliminating distracting elements from a scene — a key component of portrait photography.

A small aperture (high f-stop number) produces "deep" depth-of-field — a term used to describe an image that displays sharp focus across the board, ranging from foreground to background. Small apertures, such as f/16 or f/22, are ideal when an entire landscape or group setting is the center of attention.



Creative Control & Aperture: Making the Switch to Aperture Priority Mode

Whether you're experimenting with aperture for the first time, or simply honing your craft, learning to incorporate aperture into your photography routine is an excellent way to exercise greater creative control over your images.

Start small by switching from your camera's automatic mode (it's OK, we promise) to Aperture Priority mode, instead. Aperture Priority (Av) simplifies the exposure process by allowing you to practice with different f-stops. In Av mode, you set the aperture and your camera selects an appropriate shutter speed to correctly expose your shot — allowing you much more creative freedom, and ultimately, more fun.

Mastering the Fundamentals: Small Changes, Powerful Results

The bottom line? In life, and in photography, small changes can lead to bold, powerful results. By learning more about aperture — and how it affects elements such as light and depth-of-field — you'll quickly discover that making small adjustments can greatly enhance the look of your images, and not to mention, elevate your skills in the process.



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The Fruitful Rewards of Bare Trees: Using Nature to Enhance Urban Winter Photography
by Blog Poster



Ominous-Looking Tree Overlooking Manhattan Skyline
© F. M. Kearney
Story and photos by F. M. Kearney

Aside from the cooler temperatures, which I greatly prefer over the blazingly hot, dog-days of summer, I look forward to winter. There's something magical about capturing the fleeting beauty of a winter wonderland, festooned with snow-covered fields, sparkling ice crystals and dangling icicles. However, the weather's been a bit on the mild side here in the Northeast. Some people are still running their AC's! Indeed, winter can be unpredictable. In some years, you may be inundated with a steady stream of snowstorms, and in other years, there may not be a flake in the forecast for the entire season. But, no matter what, the one thing you can always depend on each winter is the abundance of bare trees. After they shed their fall foliage, most people usually don't pay too much attention to them in the winter – unless they're coated with snow and ice. But bare branches can provide excellent framing and/or foreground elements for a number of photography subjects in natural and urban environments as well.



Entrance to the Brooklyn Promenade © F. M. Kearney

I've shot a number of locations in and around the New York City area specifically because of the nearby trees. For a variety of reasons, some of these shoots can literally take years to capture. Since bare trees are the main focus of the shoots, I only have a narrow window of 3-4 months out of the year to get the shots. My window is narrowed even more if conditions are hampered because of weather, construction in the area, or any other things beyond my control. Sometimes, I have no choice but to wait until the following year.

The opening photo is a shot of Lower Manhattan from Brooklyn Heights. Movie buffs might remember this view from the 1977 horror film, "The Sentinel," about a blind priest attempting to keep evil at bay as the lone occupant of a creepy corner brownstone. The building, incidentally, is still there – located just a few feet behind the spot I took the photo. I discovered this tree while exploring the area on Google Earth – a perfect way to scout new locations. Fortunately, the Google pictures were taken in the winter so I could clearly see the potential for a great shot of it ominously looming over the Manhattan skyline. Unfortunately, when I visited the location, construction was taking place nearby and a Port-O-Potty was planted directly under the tree! The construction continued until the tree began to sprout leaves the following spring – completely changing the mood of the scene. I returned again next winter and was finally able to get the shot I was seeking. I felt the dead-end sign was the perfect accent to the image, which I titled, "The End is Near."

Google Earth also helped me find another location not far from this spot. The photo above is one of the entrances to the Brooklyn Promenade – an 1800-foot-long pedestrian walkway in Brooklyn Heights built over the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway. It's one of the premiere locations in the city to see unobstructed, expansive views of Manhattan. But my aim was to get a slightly more obstructed view. The railings acted as leading lines and the bare trees provided a nice frame for the grand view.

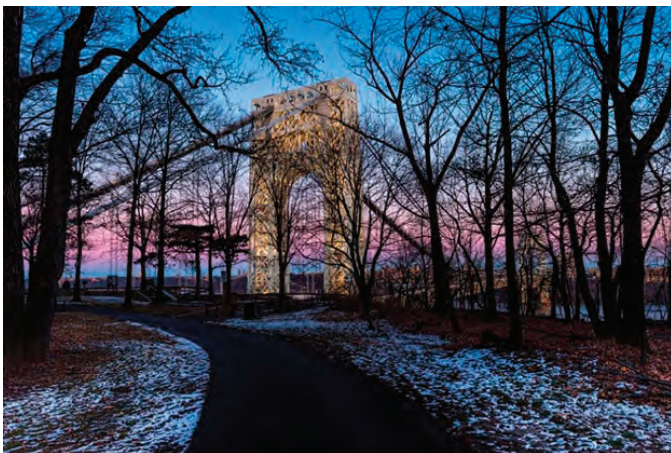
Sometimes, interesting scenes can be found just by walking around town. While passing a park in the Flatiron District of Manhattan, I noticed a tree that perfectly framed the Empire State Building within its crook. I made a mental note to return a few weeks later and captured the shot below. Luckily, it was during the holidays and the building was decked out in Christmas colors, instead of its standard signature white.

My most difficult shoot was the George Washington Bridge, which took over two years to capture. This bridge spans the Hudson River, linking Upper Manhattan with New Jersey. On any average night, it's an impressive-looking structure. But, on holidays or special occasions, the bridge towers are specially lit from within – creating a truly spectacular, and memorable sight. I've shot



Tree Frames Empire State Building Adorned in Christmas Colors © F. M. Kearney

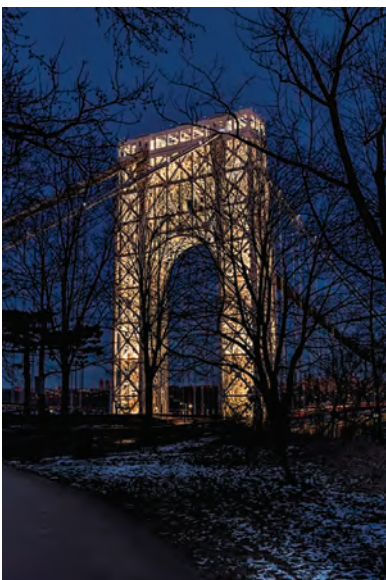
many photos of the bridge from the New York side, but it was the New Jersey side that really interested me. The bridge connects with Fort Lee, NJ, and the prime viewing spot is Fort Lee Historic Park. It's located high atop a bluff on the Hudson Palisades – providing visitors with an almost eye-level view of the bridge. I first visited the area and took some preliminary shots with my phone. When I saw how the trees framed the bridge, I envisioned a shot of the illuminated towers surrounded by bare branches at night. Capturing such a shot proved a lot more difficult than I ever imagined. The bridge is specially lit only about ten times throughout the year. Out of that, only about three of those times occur during the winter months when the trees are bare. This closes my already narrow window of opportunity to a miniscule crack! I was unsuccessful the first year because the weather wouldn't cooperate. On each of the nights the bridge was illuminated, the winds were forecast at about 15 mph. Due to the park's elevation, those speeds would likely be over 20 mph – blowing the branches around into a blurry mess during a long exposure. Of course, I could have increased my ISO to utilize a faster speed, but for best results, I try to avoid going above ISO 100. If I was a tourist, I probably would have done just that, but as a local, I have the luxury of time and simply waited until the following year. I'm glad I did because I had much better luck. On Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January, the bridge was specially lit and the winds were finally calm – allowing me to capture the image below.



Bare Trees Surrounding a Specially Lit George Washington Bridge © F. M. Kearney

I shot this image at sunset, but the real impact of the bridge's illumination can only be realized after dark. Below is the shot I originally envisioned – two years prior. Believe it or not, I almost didn't get it this time. I didn't know it at the time, but the park officially closes after dark. However, an Eyewitness News crew was shooting a segment nearby and the police were nice enough to let me hang out long enough to get this shot.

Bare trees aren't just great photo ops when they're laden down under in inch of snow. If you live in an urban area and find yourself wanting for interesting winter photos during a particularly mild season, take a closer at the trees down the block. Their graphic nature can provide a variety of opportunities to create unique juxtapositions between our natural and man-made worlds.



Illuminated George Washington Bridge Tower Enveloped in Bare Branches © F. M. Kearney



F.M. Kearney began his career as a photojournalist for a variety of local New York City newspapers. It was an exciting profession, which allowed him to cover everything from famous celebrities to ride-alongs with NYPD and FDNY. He now specializes in nature and urban landscapes. To view more of his work, visit www.starlitcollection.com. He can be contacted at starcollec@aol.com, or followed on Facebook ([@fmkearneyphotos](https://www.facebook.com/fmkearneyphotos)) and/or Twitter ([@fmkearneyphoto](https://twitter.com/fmkearneyphoto)).



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