

Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper

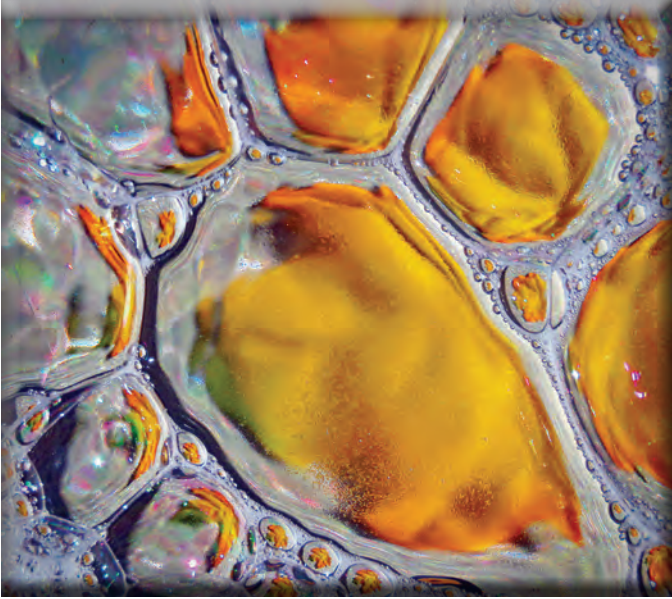
March 2021

February Image of the Month



Golden Door at Pfeiffer Beach
Image of the Month - Joanne Sogsti

February 10's



Almost Like a Paw Print
Em McLaren



Carnival Swirl Globe
Dean Taylor



Valentine Wine Refraction
Christine Blue



Sunset on Pfeiffer Beach
Joanne Sogsti



There's a Storm Brewing
Ron Wetherell



Hawk Taking Off
Heide Stover



Two Snow Geese On The Shore
Karleen Gansberg



A Favorite Tree
Em McLaren



Row of Bottles
Sharon McLemore



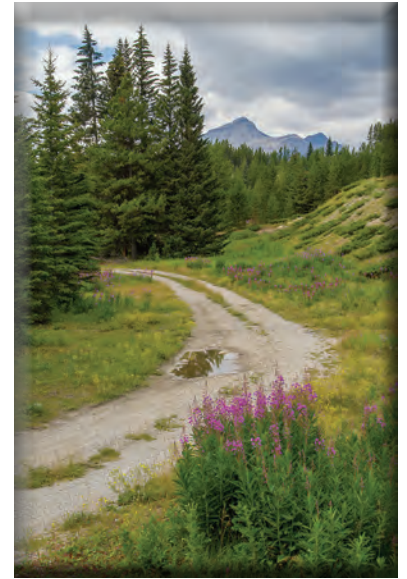
Big Sur
Trey Steinhart



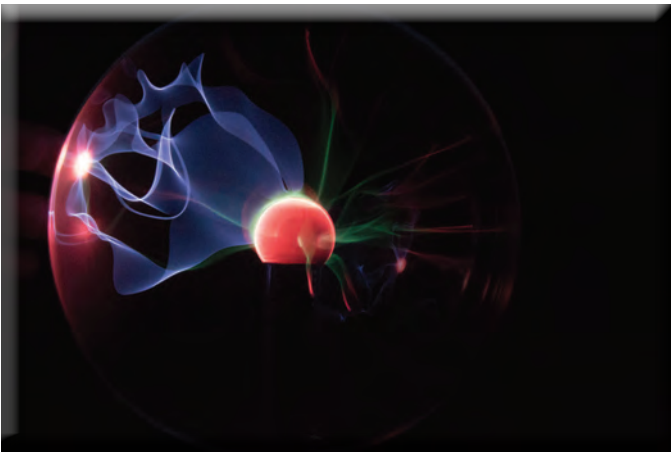
Rust Owl
Dean Taylor



Me and My Reflection
Joanne Sogsti



Spring
Sharon McLemore



Finger Touch on Plasma Globe
Sheldon "Mac" McCormick



Can You Hear Me Now
Ron Wetherell



Pine Cones and Needles
Dean Taylor



**Water Splashing and
Foaming Over Rocks**
Heide Stover



Martis Creek Bridge Sunset and Northstar Ski Resort
Trey Steinhart



Artist Palette.
Sharon McLemore

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President's Message

March 2021

By Heide Stover

It seems that we have settled into our zoom camera club meetings. They are moving along smoothly now. With the vaccines out we can hope that we will be returning to our live meetings by next year. For this year the board voted to lower the dues. I hope many of you are taking advantage of that.

Our year started out nicely with the special subject of long exposure. There were many interesting images submitted. Sam did a great job of commenting and scoring the images. The judge's comments are a great way to improve your photography. Keep the judge's comments in mind as you work on your images for the following month.

See you all at the March meeting. Till then, keep shooting!

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
March/TBA	Zoom Meeting Stockton	Joint Meeting with the Stockton Camera Club/UK
Thursday March 18	Zoom Meeting Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Fog
April	TBA	April Workshop/Photo Opportunity
Thursday May 20	Zoom Meeting Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Macro/Close-up
Thursday June 17	Zoom Meeting Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only (No Special Subject)
Thursday July 15	Zoom Meeting Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Creative
Thursday September 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	September General Meeting Special Subject - Textures
Thursday October 21	Zoom Meeting Stockton	October General Meeting Special Subject - Black & White/Monochrome
Thursday November 18	Zoom Meeting Stockton	November General Meeting Special Subject - Prints (if meeting) if not Open
Thursday December 18	Zoom Meeting Stockton	December General Meeting Special Subject - Trees

2022 Calendar of Events

Thursday January 20	Stockton	Annual Meeting/Banquet
Thursday February 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	February General Meeting Special Subject - Amore/Love
Thursday March 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	March General Meeting Special Subject - Prints (if meeting) if not Open
April	TBA	April Workshop/Photo Opportunity
Thursday May 19	Zoom Meeting Stockton	May General Meeting Special Subject - Ice
Thursday June 16	Zoom Meeting Stockton	June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only (No Special Subject)
Thursday July 21	Zoom Meeting Stockton	July General Meeting Special Subject - Kids at Play

Meeting/ Board of Director's Notes

February 2021

Heide opened the meeting. There were 17 participants including the judge. There were a total of 55 images, 42 open and 13 special subject (long exposure).

Heide said she would like all who sent in images for the Stockton Camera Club, UK show, to attend the practice sessions. The first will be a zoom meeting, on March 6 at 11:00am and the second will be on March 13 also at 11:00am. The show will be on March 20 at 11:00am with the Stockton Camera Club, UK.

1. Sharon is reminding those who have not yet sent in their club dues to please do so. Individuals are now \$15 and couples are \$25. You can e-mail her for the address. (sfmsap@aol.com)

2. Joanne mentioned that there are white pelicans at Lodi Lake and a nice nature trail with deer. It is off Turner Road in Lodi.

Dean introduced Sam Shaw as this month's judge. He belongs to both the Modesto and Merced Camera Club as well as to the SJVCCC and PSA. He is an excellent long-time photographer and judge.

The Image of the Month Winner:

"Golden Door at Pfeiffer Beach" by Joanne Sogsti

Congratulations Joanne!

Heide opened the Board meeting. Sharon, Wayne, Dean, Doug, Mac and Em present.

Minutes from last year's 2020 Board were approved. Sharon gave the Treasurer's report. Income from the Dues and last years Banquet (before Covid-19) totaled \$841. Expenses for 2020 were \$613.45 (included were judges fees & dinners, awards, banquet expenses and bank service fee). The total Bank Balance as of Dec. 31, 2020 is \$1, 291.18. Sharon will contact Judge Art Serabian to see if he got his check. Sharon will also let the Board know who the paying members are to update the membership list.

The 2021 list of Board Members: PRESIDENT: Heide, VP COMPETITION: Wayne, VP PROGRAMS: Dean, TREASURER: Sharon, SEC.: Em, PRINT CHAIR PERSON: Trey, NEWSLETTER/EDUCATION: Doug, WEB MASTER/FACEBOOK: Janell, HOSPITALITY: Chris, REFRESHMENTS: Sheldon (Mac).

Dean suggested we lower this year's club dues from \$35 per couple and \$22 single to \$25 per couple and \$15 single for this year only. It was voted on and approved. Sharon will send out reminders for members to mail in their dues.

Heide suggested guidelines be set up for the End of Year Competition. Since there are only 3 categories (OPEN, BLACK & WHITE, AND SPECIAL SUBJECT) that all of the images submitted in each category be shown which would include the winners at the end of that category and then move on to the next category, etc. The final image to be shown would be the "Winner of the Year."

Heide also needed feedback on the PSA judge who judged the End of Year Competition. The group felt he did a good job. The PSA judge is not paid but is a volunteer. If prints are added for End of Year judging, a separate judge could be arranged for that. There was a suggestion that all the images for competition would need a backup person to make sure all that sent in images were entered. Doug volunteered to help Wayne to make sure no one was left out.

Doug suggested that when we return to regular meetings at the bowling alley, we include Zoom, so that those who can't make the meeting in person can be there too. Sharon suggested that Doug look in to it as the time got closer.

Heide said she is working on the images to show to the England Stockton Camera Club. She has set the date to meet with them on Zoom for MARCH 20 AT 11:00am. The date for the test meeting (before sending the program) will be MARCH 6TH at 11:00am. She will send reminders out for it.

The SPECIAL SUBJECTS for the year 2021 and 2022 were picked. It also includes a change in June 2021 from Open to TRAINS.

2021

February: Long Exposure

March: Fog

April: Workshop (no competition)

May: Macro (Closeup)

June: Trains

July: Creative

September: Textures

October: Black & White/Monochrome

November: Prints (if meeting) if not Open

December: Trees

2022

February: Love/Amore'

March: Intentional Camera Movement

April: Workshop (no competition)

May: Ice

June: Prints (if meeting) if not Open

July: Kids at Play

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

Thanks, em

**Stockton Camera Club
2021 Competition Standings**

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
Karleen Gansberg	28	28	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Reginald Lee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lanny Brown	0	0	0	0	0	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
Darrell O’Sullivan	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	38	28	10	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ron Wetherell	38	29	9	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	36	26	10	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christine Blue	36	28	8	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wayne Carlson	34	25	9	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	33	25	8	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	33	25	8	33	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEP	OCT	Nov	DEC
Dean Taylor	39	29	10	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	39	30	9	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	39	30	9	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trey Steinhart	38	29	9	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heide Stover	38	28	10	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Em McLaren	37	29	8	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	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

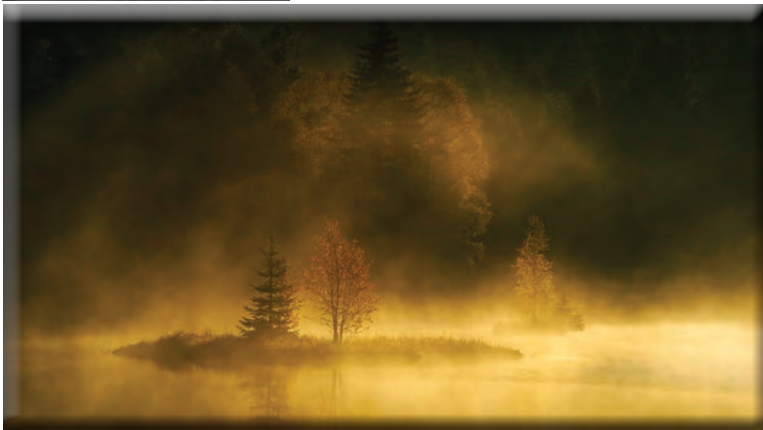
1. Digital images must be submitted in a format and by the deadline specified by the Competition Vice-President. Digital images may be submitted by email, mailed (CD) or delivered (CD) to the Competition Vice-President. Definition of Digital Image: An image taken with a digital camera, a negative, slide 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.



How To Improve Your Fog Photography (10 Easy Tips)

by Ellen Borggreve

Would you like to make your landscape photography magical? Turning your hand to fog photography might be what you're looking for.



There is nothing quite like fog to give images a mystical or ethereal quality. It softens the light, gives a painterly, dream-like feel and covers any clutter in a scene.

Fog can create a ghostly atmosphere in dark forests, or a heavenly appearance when the sun's rays pierce through. Join us as we talk you through 10 practical tips to improving your fog photography.



You too could create magical misty images, like this one of a layer of fog floating above the water of the Old Rhine.

Photo by Ellen Borggreve.

1. Know When to Expect Fog

I am not a meteorologist, but I usually have a good idea of when to expect fog in locations I know well.

The first thing to watch out for is the humidity level. Anything over 90% will spark my interest, especially if the temperature reaches the dew point.



Cold nights followed by a quick rise in morning temperature create a higher probability of fog. These ideal conditions usually occur in autumn or spring mornings.

However, heavy rainfall on a hot summer's day can also create a chance of fog in woodland areas.

Very low clouds can deliver dense fog as well. Most of the time, there needs to be a very low amount of wind for the fog to appear, but I have also photographed fog in windy conditions in the mountains. This type of fog is actually photographing fast-moving clouds, which can be very challenging.

Photographing a mountain forest in the clouds can be challenging

Photo by Ellen Borggreve

2. Get up Early to Photograph Fog

Fog usually occurs early in the morning, when the sun is not yet at full strength. This means that you have to be at your shooting location before or around sunrise.



You have to rise early to capture misty wood shots like this, as the fog does not linger for long. Photo by Ellen Borggreve.

This is also a time when there is usually the least amount of wind, giving more opportunity for the fog to linger. Most people think I live in a very foggy place as they never get fog, but most of the time they are not up early enough to witness it.

A weather app like Weather Pro ([Android](#), [iOS](#)) is useful to check the humidity levels and the dew point to predict if there is a chance of mist.

Chances of fog are best when night temperatures drop below the dew point and the humidity levels are above 90%. The best way to predict fog is through knowing an area very well—some spots are more prone to mist than others.

I don't live in a particularly foggy area and last year there were very few foggy mornings, but I make sure I am on location early in case fog appears. This can sometimes be frustrating as you don't get what you want, or not in the place you expected.



Use manual focus, as fog reduces contrast and saturation in an image, such as this forest in winter. Photo by Ellen Borggreve.

3. Use Manual Focus

Fog is a blanket of tiny water droplets that scatter the light and add a layer of grey over colors/contrast in a scene. As a result, fog photography does not usually contain harsh highlights or deep shadows: unless sun rays are piercing through.

Saturation will also be low and this results in muted greyish colors. Sometimes contrast will be so low that your autofocus will not work, this is the time to switch to manual focus.

It is always best to use manual focus in these kinds of conditions because even if the autofocus manages to lock onto something, it might be mistaken.



Depth of field is greatly reduced in dense fog. Photo by Ellen Borggreve.

4. Use a Smaller Aperture

The [depth of field](#) is greatly reduced in foggy conditions as you might imagine. This means that the denser the fog is, the less point there is in trying to get everything in focus.

The mist will not just hide things from sight: if subjects are further away, they will be vague in both contour and color.

With that said, forests can absorb a lot of fog, especially in seasons where there are leaves on the trees. If you are photographing a scene with lots of depth in it, you might still have to opt for a [smaller aperture](#), especially when using a [wide-angle lens](#).

5. Choose the Right Focal Length

Choosing the right lens for fog photography can be tricky, as telephoto lenses compress a scene, whereas wide-angle lenses make things look further apart.



I shoot using shorter focal lengths when the fog is dense.

Photo by Ellen Borggreve

Telephoto lenses compress the fog (making it denser). So if you are taking pictures in very dense fog with a telephoto lens, you might get pictures where the subjects are difficult to identify.

However, a wide-angle or standard lens will appear to eat the fog away (make it less dense). If you have ever tried to take a picture of a foggy scene with your phone, you know that this focal length makes fog magically disappear, which is not always what you want.

What this means is that it is wiser to use a shorter lens when the fog is really dense: this will keep your subjects visible. If the mist is very faint and you want to emphasize the atmosphere, choose a telephoto lens instead.



I took this photo when the sun warmed up the cold water of this lake—it created misty magic for just a few minutes.

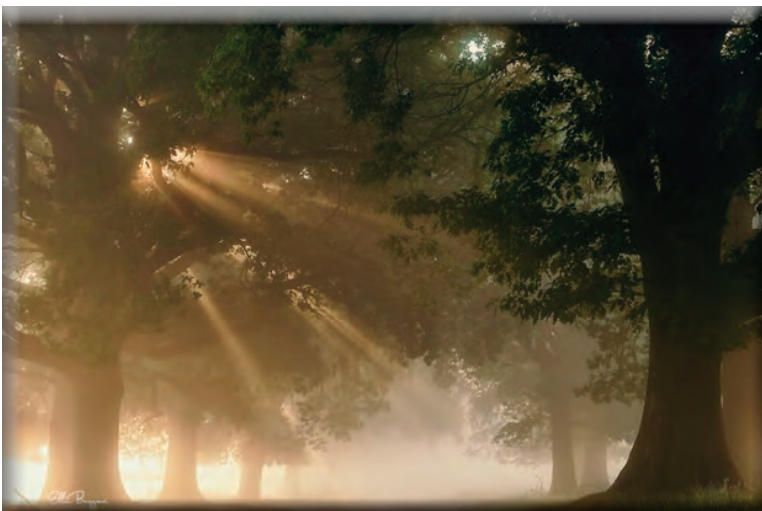
Photo by Ellen Borggreve

6. Look out for Floating Fog

I love fog photography scenes with wisps of mist floating over the water. This is something that is lovely to capture and usually happens for a very limited time just before or after sunrise.

If the previous night has been cold, but morning temperatures are rising quickly, the fog will build up after sunrise.

It does not last long though and sometimes it can completely obscure a scene from sight. You could wait for the mist to evaporate, but then the light will be harsh. So act quickly and capture what you can.



I captured these sun rays on an extremely foggy morning in August: it's a rare example of dense fog and sunshine in one picture. Photo by Ellen Borggreve

7. Search for Sun Rays in Fog

Just because we are photographing foggy conditions, doesn't mean we don't want the sun to shine in our shots.

Sun rays streaming through mist can add a heavenly feel to fog photography. However, the sun makes the mist evaporate very quickly, so you need to move fast.

Make sure you know your location well, so you know when and where you can expect sun rays to appear. This way you won't waste precious time looking in the wrong area.

Humid conditions can also create the right circumstances for perfect sun rays: dust and water particles make them visible.

8. Expose Correctly for Fog

Many people will say to expose to the right of your [histogram](#) when photographing fog. However, it is not quite that simple.



I would say it depends on the kind of fog you are shooting. Dense fog often creates colors that are like a neutral grey, so the camera will expose correctly.

However, when snow and mist are combined, I opt to adjust my exposure and overexpose by one stop or more, depending on how much the snow reflects the light.

If you are in the forest, you can make the image look moody or vibrant. Fog makes a shot look vibrant when it takes on the color of its surroundings. If you like it to look moody, however, underexpose a bit, perhaps by 0.7 stops.

If you have a shot that combines sun rays and fog, you need to keep an eye on your histogram to ensure the highlights aren't blown out.

Make sure you keep an eye on your histogram to make sure the highlights don't get blown out when photographing fog and sun rays. Photo by Ellen Borggreve



Always waterproof yourself and your gear as the fog is extremely wet, which can easily damage your equipment.

Photo by Ellen Borggreve

Related Article: [Best Underwater Cameras](#)

9. Overcome Fog Photography Challenges

Fog photography is not without its challenges. Here are some of the most common and how to combat them:

- **Be patient:** it can be frustrating waiting for the fog to appear. Or by the time you've focussed, the mist might have evaporated;
- **Damp-proof your gear:** high humidity means damp conditions—you and your camera will get wet. I carry resealable plastic bags in my [camera backpack](#), which I slide over the camera to keep it dry between shots. When taking a shot, I usually have a microfibre cloth hanging over my camera to protect it;
- **Choose your forest locations wisely:** fog can be too dense, which will mean focus issues. I usually go into lush forests when the fog is very dense because they will absorb the mist a bit. Fog also hides clutter/chaos in these forests, which can be a huge advantage.
- **Don't change lenses:** the damp can cause damage to the camera sensor and lens. You also risk condensation getting in after you have packed your camera away. Put the camera in your camera bag and leave it there for a few hours when you get home. I usually leave the bag in the hallway for a good few hours before I get my camera out.

10. Post-Processing Foggy Images

Don't be horrified if photos look completely washed out when you see them on your computer screen: this is because images taken in dense fog lack contrast and saturation.

The denser the fog, the narrower the mountain in your histogram will look (i.e. the fewer highlights and shadows there will be). This will make pictures look very flat and almost lifeless.



I added contrast to this image
The world up close: A conversation with Mike Moats
Bryan Esler

There are a few ways you can deal with this and here's my workflow:

- Step 1: 'Dehaze' in Lightroom.
- Step 2: use the blacks and whites sliders to add contrast to images. I do that by pulling the blacks slider to the left and the whites slider to the right. This is especially helpful if the Dehaze step above adds too much warmth to your photo.
- Step 3: If your picture is particularly flat, try applying contrast locally. You can do this by using a graduated or a radial filter in Lightroom, then move the whites and blacks sliders accordingly. But be careful—if you go too far with the contrast, you lose the atmosphere.
- Step 4: If you boost clarity, this will emphasize water droplets and result in a noisy image. This also happens when you add too much sharpening. Sometimes you need to reduce noise slightly and sharpen with a mask, to prevent sharpening water droplets.

Conclusion

So now you should be clear on how to take fabulous fog photography. It is not without its challenges and mostly comes down to timing.

It can be frustrating at times, but it is worth it when you see the magic unfold before your eyes. I am completely addicted to the look that mist can give to [landscape photography](#).

p.s. if you would like to learn more about fog and forest photography, please have a look at my [magic of forest photography masterclass](#)

Now that you've learned these tips for stunning photos, you're a better photographer.

Guaranteed.

But the fact is, the journey doesn't stop there. There are more tips, tricks, and secrets—all of which will help you take gorgeous photos.

And if you want to learn all of these secrets, I recommend you sign up for the PhotoBlog newsletter. We send our subscribers all sorts of great stuff—including the tips, tricks, and secrets, straight from the experts. All to help you capture world-class photographs.

Did I mention that it's all totally FREE?

(Oh, and we'll send you a natural lighting cheat sheet—designed to help you use light in ways you've never considered.)



Try your hand at fog photography
and create some magical images.
Photo by Ellen Borgreve



I first met Mike Moats at the 2015 Out of Chicago Conference. And while I by no means consider myself a macro photographer, I knew there was something special about Mike's work. His ability to capture the magical tiny worlds are quite simply second to none.

Fast-forward six years, the Michigan-based photographer hasn't skipped a beat. As a Tamron Image Master, Mike regularly presents at workshops, but also runs the [Macro Photo Club](#), a group that provides macro tips on gear, composition and post-processing, along with regular giveaways and social interaction. He also hosts a yearly conference ... while we aren't in the midst of a pandemic.

I sat down with Mike last week to talk about what he's been up to, and some of his most memorable experiences throughout his career.



Mike Moats

Mike's journey into photography

Up until 2004, Mike called himself a painter. He ran a painting company. Along the way, he picked up a camera and was able to set his painting schedule around his photography.

"I had no expectations of this ever-developing into the way it's gone. About 2004, I started to finally get my act together and start producing some good images," said Mike.

When the auto industry crashed, that impacted the Detroit area. Mike had to pivot. That's when he went all-in with his photography, focusing on capturing the macro world around him.

"I had my business nose-dive," he said. "I had a lot of days where I literally had no work. So what I did was I went out to the park shooting on those days. It worked out really well. Then I started to make it into a business. I had to combine the painting with the photo for a couple of years, until I got the photo [business] up and running. Then I could do it full time.

"It worked out just perfect for me being in that type of business. Just being really lucky and being able to have the flexibility to schedule my work around my photography, until I got it to the point where I was making enough money that I could stop doing the painting and dedicate all my time to photography."

Mike's approach to macro

When we think of macro photography, the most talked about subject is by far flowers. But flowers are one of Mike's least favorite things to photograph.



"Flower photography, to me, is so overdone. There's so much of it already out there. I just kind of felt I needed to go in a little bit of a different direction, then doing the same thing everyone else was doing," said Mike.

So instead, Mike turned to leaves. But he didn't stop there, regularly photographing plant life, shells, feathers and more.

"I started to notice there were all these other really cool subjects you can photograph in nature — plant life, leaves, feathers on the beach ... all kinds of different things I was discovering. For a couple of years, I was shooting leaf images like crazy. I became known as the 'leaf guy' on some of the sites where I was posting images. I was doing really well; I was in the art show business for seven years, and the biggest seller in my booth? Leaf images."



“I always loved shooting leaves. There are so many different varieties of leaves — the patterns are totally different. You can put them in all kinds of different backgrounds, and they just are great subjects to photograph.”

The most memorable photograph for Mike? A spurge plant, featured at the top of this article, was taken at Cox Arboretum north of Cincinnati, OH.

“I was really impressed by the plant itself. And what made it just kind of go over the top was the post-processing I did on it. There was a solarization filter in Nik Software that just turned it into an awesome, spectacular looking subject.”

Gear to stand the test of time

Mike takes an entirely different approach when compared to most professionals. As his focus is on educating other photographers, he wants to show them that the images he captures can be captured on virtually any camera on the market today.



Up until 2020, Mike photographed with a Nikon D7000 — a camera released in 2010. He only recently switched to the [D7500](#), which is by no means a new camera, having been released in 2017.

“The only reason [I upgraded] was that it had a tilting screen. You know, it had a few extra bells and whistles that the D7000 didn’t have. Is it going to take better pictures? No, it’s going to capture whatever I put into it.

“When [the D7000] was last sold, it was only \$896. And 60 percent of the people that come to my workshops are using cameras that are \$1000 or less. If I’m using a \$6500 camera, people leave my workshop saying, ‘Mike’s images look really good because he’s got a professional camera.’ The point is, I’m using a camera that’s under \$1000, which tells people that, if I can produce these images with that camera, then they’re going to produce good images with their camera.”

Making his gear approachable for education



In terms of lenses, Mike keeps his bag light, really only utilizing two lenses in his workflow. He started out using Tamron lenses with a Fujifilm SLR camera, and never looked back. For Mike, it’s all about producing great images. And expensive lenses aren’t needed for that.

“Tamron has great lenses. I have people all the time say, ‘Hey Mike, are those Tamron lenses any good?’ I say, ‘Have you seen my images? How did they look?’ I don’t have to tell you they’re good — look at my images, You’ll see what I’ve been able to produce with them.”

Rock solid Tamron lenses lead the way



Mike uses just two lenses — the [Tamron 18-400mm f/3.5-6.3](#) is by far his most used, but he also has the [Tamron 90mm macro f/2.8](#) lens. That might be a bit of a head-scratcher for someone who specializes in photographing up-close photographs, but for Mike, it's all about working with the gear you have to make great images.

“I rarely shoot in the 1:1 range, which is actually physically macro. I think the term macro fits what I do — shooting in close on subjects. I've been pretty much exclusively using the 18-400mm, which is working out really great for me. Let's say I'm out shooting in an area, and I want to show the environment that I'm shooting in for teaching purposes. I can always throw that lens on a separate body put it on a tripod and photograph myself out in the field with a wide-angle of 18mm. And then if I'm at the edge of a pond, and there's a frog out of distance from the edge of the pond, I've got 400mm to reach out.



“That's not to say I don't pull up my 90mm and do other stuff with that too. If I'm shooting tabletop indoors, I'm generally using my 90mm. I'm shooting in much closer on subjects with the 90mm, a lot of times getting in closer to that 1:1 range. With nature though, it's not as easy when you're shooting 1:1 because you have to get down on your hands and knees all the time. It gets so close.”

But why not use the native Nikkor lenses for his Nikon camera? “All I can say is that the images I'm producing are excellent. The lens quality is great — I don't have any issues with [Tamron's] quality. People talk about [quality] on third-party lenses, but I've never noticed the difference between my images compared with other people using Canon or Nikon lenses, in terms of the quality of the images. I'm very, very happy with the lenses — they're very solid.”



Advice for new macro shooters

Mike provided a couple of suggestions for those just getting into macro photography. One, to invest in a good ball head And two, to get an L bracket.

“My ball head is key to what I do because the front 145 degrees is gone off that head. It allows me to maneuver my camera in any position I need to get the photograph. That's the thing about macro — we are constantly maneuvering our camera with all kinds of different angles to get our framing right for our subject. We're low on the ground, in all kinds of different positions. The [Arcatech Ultimate Ballhead](#) is just really amazing for me.”



Mike couples his ball head with a Vanguard tripod, which has a center post that lets him get over the top of subjects.

“For the [L bracket](#), that lets me go from horizontal to vertical without having to even touch my ball head, tripod or anything. That’s a must for photographers.”

For Mike Moats, capturing the smallest details in our world is an artistic release. Each photograph is unique in that the outside world is constantly changing. And that artistry is something we all should strive for.

To see more of Mike’s photos, visit tinylandscapes.com or [follow him on Instagram](#).

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Bryan is a photographer specializing in capturing corporate events, food/drink and advertising imagery. Based in Grand Rapids, MI, he has worked with clients such as CNBC, Michigan State University, ArtPrize, Grand Rapids Magazine and more. His work has also been featured by Delta Airlines, NBC, Microsoft and Pure Michigan.

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