

# Stockton Camera Club

**The Shutter Tripper**

**August 2022**

**July 1st Place Image**



**1st Place**

**Flying Across a Super Moon in San Francisco**

**Doug Ridgway**

# July 2nd & 3rd Place Images



**2nd Place**  
**Tundra Swan Over Morning Reflection**  
Heide Stover



**3rd Place**  
**Sandhill Cranes Dancing**  
Heide Stover

# July 10's

Jack Hall was our last judge. Here is how he looks at images:

“My philosophy in taking photos is to show other people things which are interesting or pretty- things which make them feel something or think something. So, naturally enough, that tends to be the way I look at photos. Does it make me feel or think? If it does, I am hooked. After I look for the impact a photo imparts, I look at focus, framing, lighting, composition, and conflicting elements.”



**Magic Light,  
Death Valley  
Sharon McLemore**



**Playing at a  
Horse Show  
Ron Wetherell**



**Purple  
Phalaenopsis Orchid  
Trey Steinhart**



**Blowing Bubbles  
Heide Stover**



**The Fly Geyser  
Joanne Sogsti**



**Desert Spiny Lizard**  
Christine Blue



**Abandoned dock Fly By**  
Trey Steinhart



**My, What Big Eyes You Have!**  
Ron Wetherell



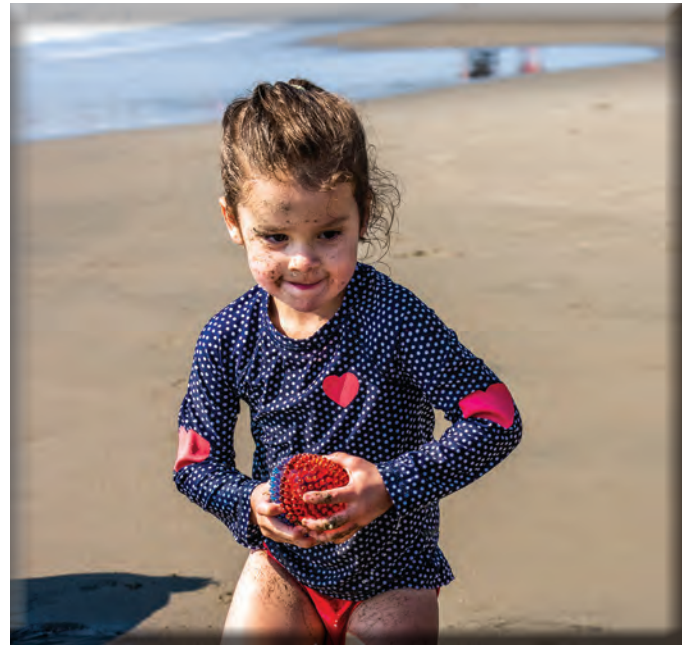
**Summer Fun**  
**Cooling off in the River**  
Joanne Sogsti



**Shades of Brown**  
Sharon McLemore



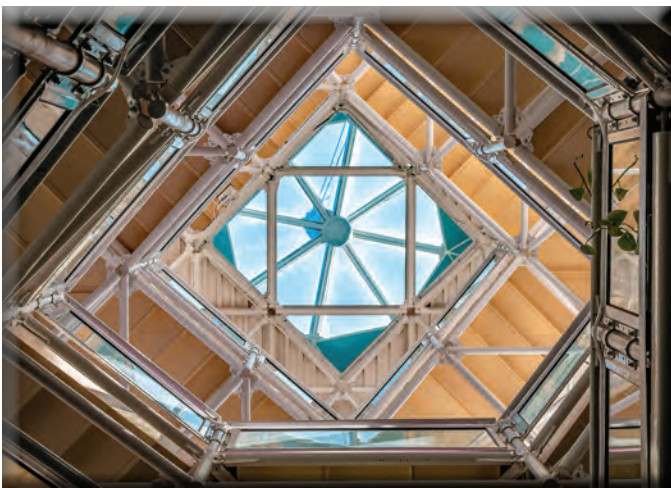
**Proud as a Peacock**  
Sharon McLemore



**Going for the End Zone**  
Wayne Carlson



**Long Neck Turtle**  
Joanne Sogsti



**Biosphere Abstract**  
Dean Taylor



**Slalom Racing Fun**  
Trey Steinhart

**Em's 10's**



**Water Fall**  
Em McLaren



**A Bouquet For You**  
Em McLaren



**Old Shack**  
Em McLaren



**Dance of the  
Petals**  
Em McLaren



**Dahlia Circle**  
Em McLaren



**Boys & Their Bikes**  
Em McLaren



**Xmas Flower**  
Em McLaren

## SCC Officers 2022

### President

Heide Stover

Email: [h1stover@aol.com](mailto:h1stover@aol.com)

### Vice President Programs

Dean Taylor - 986-9848

Email: [ditaylor49@aol.com](mailto:ditaylor49@aol.com)

### Vice President Competition

Wayne Carlson - 912-8442

Email: [photowlcrec@att.net](mailto:photowlcrec@att.net)

### Secretary

Em McLaren - 823-7287

Email: [emmclaren@comcast.net](mailto:emmclaren@comcast.net)

### Treasurer

Sharon McLemore - 401-0192

Email: [sfmsap@aol.com](mailto:sfmsap@aol.com)

## Committee Chairs

### Hospitality Chairperson

### Print Competition Chairperson

Trey Steinhart - 471-8438

Email: [Steinhart4@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Steinhart4@sbcglobal.net)

### Refreshments Chairperson

Sheldon McCormick 931-0461

Email: [smccormick11@hotmail.com](mailto:smccormick11@hotmail.com)

### Shutter Tripper/Educational

Doug Ridgway - 617-7050

Email: [doug\\_flyfisher@yahoo.com](mailto:doug_flyfisher@yahoo.com)

### Web Master

Janelle DeRuosi - 838-1881

Email: [jderuosiphotography@gmail.com](mailto:jderuosiphotography@gmail.com)

## President's Message

August 2022

By Heide Stover

There were a lot of good images at our last meeting. Many 10's were given so I am guessing we have many happy members. This was the judges first time judging. He did a good job and had some good comments.

The heat has slowed me down a bit as far as getting outside to photograph. I hope the rest of you are still getting out there.

No in person potluck this year. We will plan on a zoom meeting with Wayne talking about workflow.

Till then, happy shooting!

Heide

## A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!



182 West Adams Street

(On the Miracle Mile Across From The Valley Brew)

Stockton, CA 95204-5338

Phone: 209-464-2299/Fax: 209-464-9229

Phone: 209-464-2299/Fax: 209-464-9229

[www.ulmerphoto.com](http://www.ulmerphoto.com)

Email: [Ulmerphoto@aol.com](mailto:Ulmerphoto@aol.com)

<b>2022 Calendar of Events</b>		
<b>Every 3rd Thursday (Except April &amp; Aug) 6:30 PM</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Membership Meeting Contact Heide Stover <a href="mailto:h1stover@aol.com">h1stover@aol.com</a></b>
<b>Thursday August 18</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>“Annual Pot Luck” Work Flow Demonstration</b>
<b>Thursday September 15</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>September General Meeting Special Subject - Things That Float</b>
<b>Thursday October 20</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>October General Meeting Special Subject - Monochrome</b>
<b>Thursday November 17</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>November General Meeting Special Subject - Open Prints Only If Not Meeting On Zoom</b>
<b>Thursday December 15</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>December General Meeting Special Subject - Optical Illusions</b>
<b>2023 Calendar of Events</b>		
<b>January</b>	<b>TBA</b>	<b>Annual Banquet</b>
<b>Thursday February 16</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>February General Meeting Special Subject - Bokeh</b>
<b>Thursday March 16</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>March General Meeting Special Subject -Circles</b>
<b>Thursday May 18</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>May General Meeting Special Subject - Abstract</b>
<b>Thursday June 15</b>	<b>Zoom Meeting Stockton</b>	<b>June General Meeting Special Subject - Prints Only (No Special Subject)</b>



# July Meeting's Notes

July 2022

Heide opened the zoom meeting. There were 16 participants including the judge and 2 guests. Heide introduced Deidra Muller who is interested in photography, Ken and Janent Heilen were guests of the Judge, Jack Hall.

1. Heide said the bowling alley is now open and we can meet there again. She would like you to e-mail her your preference to continue zoom meetings or meet in person. Please reply to: [h1stover@aol.com](mailto:h1stover@aol.com)

2. Because the Covid is on the upswing and there is no place to have the Pot Luck, Wayne has agreed to do a presentation on Zoom instead. Heide will send out the date and time in August.

3. Trey said he has lots of various size frames he is willing to sell at a good price. Please e-mail him to let him know if you want to buy some at [steinhart4@sbcglobal.net](mailto:steinhart4@sbcglobal.net) or call him at 209-471-8438.

Dean introduced our July judge, Jack Hall. He is president of the Modesto Camera Club. He completed the N4C judging seminar and enjoys photography. He especially enjoys photographing Nature, Landscapes, and Technical photos. He said he took his first photo with his camera at age 10 as he was growing up in the Los Angeles area. There were 37 Open images and 11 Special Subjects for a total of 48 images.

## JULY COMPETITION WINNERS!

First Place: "Flying Across the Super Moon in San Francisco" by Doug Ridgway

Second. Place: "Tundra Swan Over Morning Reflection" by Heide Stover

Third Place: "Sandhill Cranes Dancing" by Heide Stover

Congratulations to the winners!

The Special Subject for September is: THINGS THAT FLOAT

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

Thank you. Em

**Stockton Camera Club**  
**July 2022 Competition Standings**  
**Congratulations to the winners!!!**

Because the bowling ally conference room was not available for SCC competition,  
our meeting was held via Zoom.

**1st Place - Flying Across the Super Moon in San Francisco - Doug Ridgway**

**2nd Place - Tundra Swan Over Morning Reflection - Heide Stover**

**3rd Place - Sandhill Cranes Dancing - Heide Stover**

Please check out the website <http://www.stockton-cameraclub.com/home.html>”

Class A Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>Class AA Standing</b>												
Heide Stover	187	150	37	37	38	37	36	39	0	0	0	0
Wayne Carlson	185	147	38	38	38	37	36	36	0	0	0	0
Ron Wetherell	150	121	29	38	0	36	39	37	0	0	0	0
Joan Erreca	92	75	17	32	0	26	0	34	0	0	0	0
Christine Blue	67	58	9	30	0	0	0	37	0	0	0	0
Ren Wright	44	35	9	0	0	9	35	0	0	0	0	0
Karleen Gansberg	35	27	8	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	35	27	8	0	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	32	24	8	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Darrell O’Sullivan	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
<b>Class AAA Standing</b>												
Joanne Sogsti	193	153	40	38	39	39	38	39	0	0	0	0
Em McLaren	192	154	38	39	39	36	38	40	0	0	0	0
Dean Taylor	190	151	39	39	37	39	38	37	0	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	189	152	37	38	37	36	39	39	0	0	0	0
Doug Ridgway	189	151	38	38	37	39	37	38	0	0	0	0
Trey Steinhart	185	146	39	36	36	37	37	39	0	0	0	0

## 2022 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.

## Basic Steps to Improve Your Photography But Not a "Top Ten List"!

By [Joe Brady](#)



Morning Canyon View, Dead Horse Point State Park, UT

Whenever I see a "Top Ten" list on Improving Your Photography, I cringe. Most of them restate the same, worn out "tips" that in many cases are either vague or plain unhelpful.

"Golden Hours" - Yucch

"Use a Wide Angle Lens" - What's the subject matter?

"Use Prime Lenses" - Nah

"Shoot Every Day" - Nonsense, I have s#!t to do

I would like to offer some steps, activities and/or philosophies to help improve your photography. Just like anything else, there is no "One size fits all" set of recommendations, but these things have worked well for me, so let's dive in.

Know enough about your gear so that it doesn't get in the way.

If you have ever read or tried to read your camera's manual, it is a frequently painful experience, though it may help with insomnia. Camera capabilities and menus have gotten somewhat out of control, but you don't need to know how to use all of them.

You may have some very specific needs, but for the basics, here's what pretty much everyone should know:

1. **The Histogram** - nothing will help you get the best exposure better than understanding the histogram - it contains what you need to know!
2. **ISO/Shutter Speed/Aperture** - Make sure you know about the exposure triangle and how and why to adjust these three things quickly and easily on your camera
3. **Focus Modes** - As a landscape photographer, I generally put my camera on center spot focus and then recompose as needed. When shooting portraits, I may either have eye-follow focus or a center weighted matrix setting. You need to understand which focus mode best suits the type of photography you are doing and how to switch among the modes that best suit the subject.

### **Prepare Your Gear Before Heading Out**

Having an idea about shutter speed and ISO before you head outside from missing shots when you first arrive on a location. If you were out shooting astrophotography the night before and had your ISO at 3200, you're in for a shock in the morning sun.

Think about what the subject will be and what focal length range of lens will be best suited.

Gear that is already in the ballpark with its starting settings will allow you to focus on the composition and take in the feeling of the place.



Lower Yellowstone Falls,  
 Yellowstone National Park, WY



Evening Twilight at Ox Bow Bend,  
 Grand Teton National Park, WY

### **Don't Talk - Listen!**

When I first arrive at a beautiful location, I admit it drives me nuts when people are talking about some recent TV show or movie, or endlessly talking about family. When you are having brunch with friends - this is great, but when you have just arrived for sunrise at Grand Teton, it's time to listen.

Listen to the sounds of the place. Take time to experience the sensations and try to understand the feelings that made you want to stop and create new photographs.

When you are talking, you aren't listening, and you aren't giving yourself the ability to fully understand the place. This will make your images suffer.

## Engage All of Your Senses

You might not think about the sense of touch, but consider how it affects you. Your skin reacts to the slightest breeze, the sun warms you, and even clouds, mist and drizzle all add up to help create a mood.

In addition to listening, it seems like taking everything in with your eyes is obvious, but are you truly taking everything in? Your eyes simply bring in information, it's your brain that deciphers the light and color. But there is much more! Think about the light and color define shapes, create emotions, and tell a story. Why does a scene like sunrise at Grand Teton deliver such a feeling of awe, wonder and majesty?

And how can you best capture that moment with your camera?

## Shoot Like You Are Making a Movie

While I do shoot a lot of video, I rarely see any of my fellow photographers do so, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't think that way. When you want to tell a story about a place, you need not only strong subjects, but images that explain the entire scene, and close up shots that isolate features that fill in the details. Imagine putting together a book or perhaps a collection of images designed to hang together with each type of image telling a more complete story of the place.

## Take Care of Yourself

If you are sick, injured or just plain stressed out, you aren't able to really focus on creating great photos. I know that many of us - myself included - have some chronic, nagging injuries. If you slow down, take a deep breath and look deeply into what's around you, you will often find the negatives fading into the background - at least for a little while.

Take it slowly, make sure to get enough rest, and schedule some quiet time.

If your gear is ready to go and you are looking forward to the next morning's explorations, you have made important preparations to get the most out of our photography. Of course life gets in the way and I am one of those people who will sometimes push too hard. That always seems to eventually bite me in the ...



Steaming Through the San Juan Mountains,  
Durango & Silverton Railroad, Durango, CO

producer and passionate about my photography, both portrait and landscape. While this site is dedicated to Landscape Photography, I will be adding a site for portrait work as well.

I'm getting feedback that many of my Newsletter readers like to hear about photo and travel gear. I am frequently introduced to great gear, tools and accessories that I know my fellow photographers would love, so the ability to purchase from this website is now easy to do!

There are changes brewing for the website and as soon as my travel schedule lightens up, I'll be back to you with a major update.

Please sign up for my newsletter and keep an eye out for new Blog posts (also something new for you!). My presence on social media will increase and I have many new projects in mind including a new web series on capturing better photographs.

Please sign up for the [FotoFriday Newsletter](#) if you aren't already a reader! There are blog posts, photo and event news, books, travel and gear.

Thanks for reading and for visiting with me.



Eilean Donan Castle,  
Kyle of Lochalsh, Scotland

## Enjoy Yourself and Smile

I feel very fortunate to travel and to have near constant opportunities for great photography. I know that those who join me typically feel the same way. Stop and take it all in - without the camera - and smile at the beauty around you. Acknowledge the good fortune you are being gifted just by being there.

Never take this for granted, and be thankful for these opportunities and experiences, I know that I do every day.

## About Joe Brady and this Website

I've spent most of the last twenty years full-time in the photography business and exclusively as a photographer for the past five. I'm a writer, workshop leader, video





Capturing images that are well exposed in both the foreground and sky isn't as easy as one would think. In fact, it's a common problem when working with high-contrast scenes.

Too often we find that the sky is blown out when we expose for the landscape. Exposing for the sky leads to a too dark foreground.

Maybe this sounds familiar. If so, know that you're not alone. This is one of the most common difficulties landscape photographers face.

The benefit of it being a known problem is that the solutions already exist.

In this case, there are two main solutions: [Exposure Blending](#) (Advanced) and Graduated Neutral Density Filters (Easy)

It's the latter that we're going to look closer at today. These filters are a favorite amongst landscape photographers as they make it easy to capture well-exposed images.

Keep reading and you'll learn exactly what Graduated Neutral Density Filters are, why they're loved by photographers, how to use them and which models to choose.

## What are Graduated Neutral Density Filters?

Let's start with the obvious question: What are Graduated Neutral Density Filters?

If you've read our article [Why Neutral Density Filters Will Improve Your Photography](#), you may already have an idea.

A Graduated Neutral Density Filter (simplified as GND) is a partially darkened filter that's placed in front of the lens.

The purpose of the darkened part is to allow less light to reach the camera's sensor. Just as a regular Neutral Density Filter does.

What differentiates these two filters is that only the top part of the GND is darkened. The rest is transparent. This means that the filter allows you to darken a part of the frame while the rest is unaffected.

In other words, it can balance the exposure by darkening an otherwise over-exposed sky.

## Types of Graduated Neutral Density Filters

This is where things get a little confusing. So, buckle up and make some notes; There isn't just one type of GND filter. They come in many shapes and variations.

It would be convenient if you only had to deal with one specific set of filters for every situation. Reality is quite different. First off, you have three different types of transitions: Soft, Medium, and Hard. Then you have degrees of darkness: one-, two-, or three-stop. You have ordinary versus reverse filters, screw-in versus square, different materials, and a wide range of manufacturers.

Ugh... Where do you even begin? Let's find out.



## Drop-In vs. Screw-On

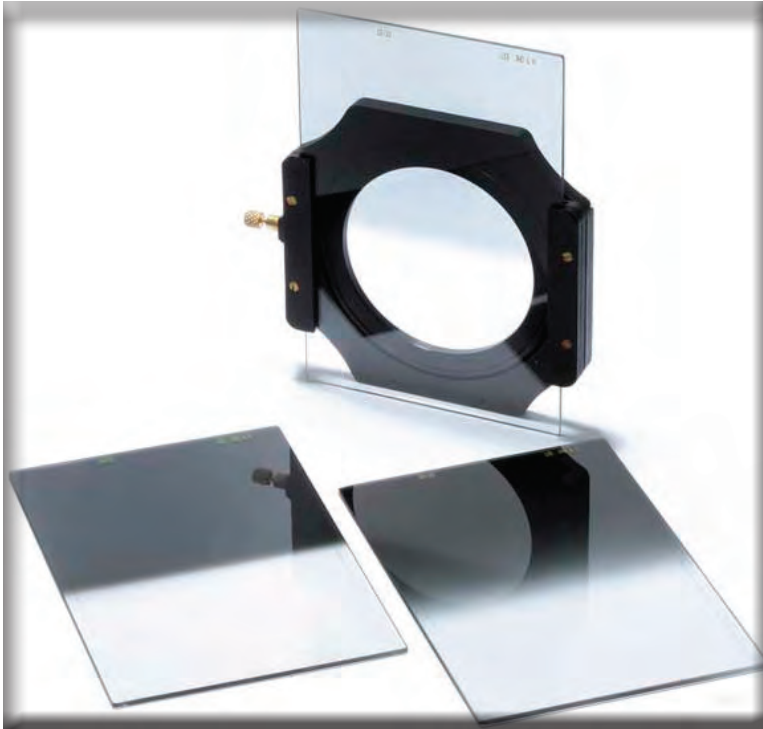
The first decision you have to make is whether you want a screw-on or drop-in (often referred to as square filters) system. This decision will impact all your filters, so give it some thorough thought before deciding.

Head over to my article [How to Choose Your First Filters](#) (and Which Systems to Use) to learn more about the differences and what you should choose.

Both systems have their pros and cons but when it comes to Graduated Neutral Density filters, there's one that's preferred: drop-in filters.

A drop-in system allows you to slide the filter up or down without moving the camera. This means that you can position the dark-to-transparent transition along the

horizon. A circular, or screw-in, filter is fixed on the lens. Meaning that you have to move the camera in order to align the transition and horizon.



### Soft Edge vs. Medium vs. Hard Edge

You already know that graduated filters are delivered in three different strengths. What you may not yet know is that they are also made in three variations; soft, medium and hard edge.

This defines the transition between the darkened- and transparent parts of the filter. If you look at the picture above you can see a difference between the right and left filters.

To the left, you have a Hard Edge GND Filter. In this, the transition between the neutral density and clear glass is hard and there is no “in-between”.

The filter to the right has a smoother transition between dark and clear, making this a Soft Edge GND Filter. The smoother transition means that the darkened area has a less distinctive beginning and end.

A Medium GND Filter is somewhere in between the soft and hard.

I wouldn't say that one is better than the other. It depends on the situation which one you want to use. If the horizon is even, a hard edge may be preferred. When the horizon

is less even, you may prefer a soft edge to ease the transition and reduce the risk of getting a very obvious hard line.

If you are to only choose one, my recommendation would be to get a [medium edge](#) as it works fine in most situations.

Read More: [Is This the Only Graduated ND Filter You Need?](#)

### Reverse Graduated Neutral Density Filters

The final option you have is a *Reverse Graduated Neutral Density Filter*.

Just like a normal GND, the reverse graduated filter is only partly darkened. The difference is that instead of the darkest part is at the top and the brightest in the middle, a reverse GND is the other way around.

Say that you have 3 stop Reverse Graduated Neutral Density Filter. The darkest point (3 stops) would be at the transition to clear glass, while the top of the filter would only be 1 stop. In other words, it allows more light to enter the top of the darkened part than the bottom – while the lower half is still clear.

This filter is normally used when the sun is about to set, and the light just above the horizon is bright. A normal graduated filter would have done an ok job but most likely the top of your image would be very dark since this is where the darkest point of the filter is, while the horizon may still be bright.

As I mention it's darkest at the end of the darkened area. By aligning the darkened edge with the horizon you get a correctly balanced image; avoiding overexposure while maintaining details in the upper sky.

### When to Use Graduated Neutral Density Filters

The power of Graduated ND Filters is that they can correct an otherwise overexposed sky. The problem, however, is that it might also darken elements you don't want.

#### Why is that?

It's quite simple; the filter has a horizontal transition between the dark and transparent areas. This means that anything above the transition will be darkened. This is great if you have a flat horizon with no projecting elements but it's problematic if there are trees, buildings, or mountains in the image.

Anything that projects above the horizon will be affected by the filter. Just because the sky needs darkening, doesn't mean that the mountains do too.

Let's take a look at some examples of when Graduated Neutral Density Filters do and do not work:



**LOS URROS, SPAIN – TAKEN WITH A LEE 0.9 HARD GRAD**

The image above is a perfect example of when a hard edge filter can be used. Since the horizon is flat, you can easily align the filter along with it. You don't need to worry about visible transition lines.



This might be a little less obvious. At first glance, you might say that this is a no-go for GND filters. The church spire and the hills create an uneven horizon. Yet, it's all within an acceptable distance.



**Situations the Filters Work**

As mentioned already, a Graduated Neutral Density Filter works best when there aren't any elements projecting above the horizon. Now, that's not to say that the horizon needs to be completely flat.

Keep in mind that there is a difference between the hard, medium, and soft versions. A hard version will leave a visible transition between darkened and transparent while a soft one is more forgiving.

**Now, what was the purpose of a filter in this case?**

I shot the just after sunset. The sky was very bright compared to the foreground which was rather dark. Without a filter, this resulted in blowing out (overexposing) the sky when exposing for the sea stacks.

Using a graduated filter (in this case a 3-stop hard grad), I was able to bring back the details and colors in the sky, while keeping the foreground exactly as bright as I wished.

Note: Keep an eye on [the histogram](#) to make sure you're not over or under-exposing the image.

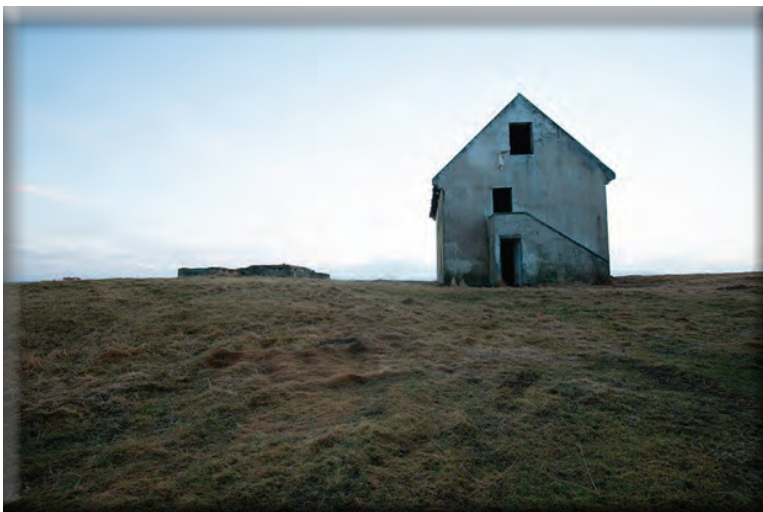
A hard edge filter would not work in this case. You would see a very visible transition line along with the photo. You could place the transition just above the reflections but that would darken the trees and church too much too. It was mainly the sky that caused the problem.

Ideally, I would've used a soft edge filter when capturing this. The smooth transition would do the job without leaving any trace of use behind.

But, for a while now, I'm only carrying a medium edge. This has become my favorite Graduated Neutral Density Filter for many reasons. Luckily for me, it worked just fine for this shot as well.

Let's look at one last image that a graduated filter works on. Yet again, we have a relatively even horizon. It's just a few areas that project just above it. These areas might be enough to make a hard edge problematic, but both a medium and soft edge filter will do the job.





### Situations the Filters Don't Work

You might already have an idea of which situations a Graduated Neutral Density Filter won't work for your photography. Let's take a quick look at some examples, just to clarify:

After a really intense sunrise on Iceland, I stumbled across this abandoned building while walking back to the car. There was something fascinating about the scene and I soon thought that it would be a perfect example for an article just like this.

As you can see, the skies are totally washed out and the picture is rather boring. With a sky this bright it was impossible to capture the full dynamic range. A GND filter solves the sky issue but, as seen on the picture below, it's made the house almost entirely black as well.

On top of that, you can see that parts of the foreground is darkened too. This is due to my filter not being completely straight. Just a small error can make a big difference.

Here is one more example of when using a Graduated filter didn't work. Yes, the sky might be good but the trees are now pure black:

### An Alternative to Graduated Neutral Density Filters

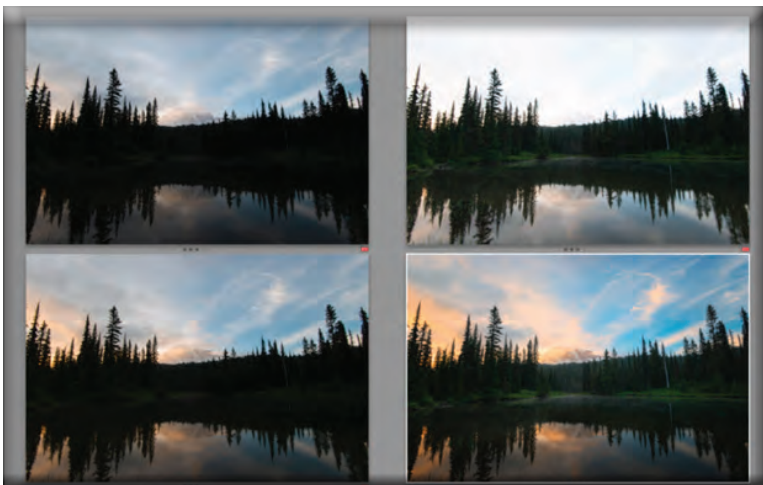
The good news is that all hope isn't lost in cases where a filter can't be used. In fact, there are several alternatives (alternatives that many photographers swear by regardless of the situation)

#### Option #1: Exposure Bracketing

Capturing *multiple exposures and blending them together* in post-processing is a popular technique that many photographers frequently use. In fact, there are many photographers who prefer this method over GND filters in any scenario.

The technique is slightly more advanced and requires a basic understanding of layers and masks in Photoshop or another photo-editor.

Simply put, this technique requires you to capture two or more images of different exposures (i.e. one under-exposed, one regular, and one over-exposed) In post-processing, you then take the correctly exposed parts from each image, and blend them together to one final file.



#### Option #2: Take Advantage of the Camera's Dynamic Range

Today's cameras are getting better and better. The Dynamic Range is among the factors that have drastically improved during the last years. It's almost unrecognizable compared to cameras only 5 years old.

What this means for you, is that you're able to bring out a lot of information in the shadows during post-processing, without introducing high amounts of noise.

In cases where there's a significant contrast between the sky and landscape, expose your image for the sky. Keep an eye on your histogram to make sure that you're not clipping the highlights (but keep the highlights as far to the right as possible without touching the edge)

This will most likely lead to a quite dark image overall but in your RAW editor, you can increase the shadows and bring back those beautiful details.

**Note:** this option won't work when there is extreme contrast between highlights and shadows, and it heavily relies on the quality of your camera. I suggest trying this on various occasions to see how well the Dynamic Range of your system is.

### **Conclusion**

Graduated Neutral Density Filters can make a huge difference to your landscape photography. They have the power to instantly correct an over-exposed sky while leaving the rest untouched.

However, there are situations where the filter can do more harm than good. Obvious transition lines are big red flags and something that will make your images look a lot less impressive.

It's also important to understand that you don't need these filters. You'll be perfectly able to capture impressive images without. However, that will most likely require more time in post-processing.

What a Graduated Neutral Density Filter helps you with is getting the best possible results in-camera. In my opinion, that is part of making life just a little easier. Which I'm not going to say no to.



Christian Hoiberg is a full-time [Norwegian landscape photographer](#) and the founder of CaptureLandscapes. His goal is to help aspiring photographers develop the skills needed to capture beautiful and impactful images. Download his free guide [30 Tips to Improve Your Landscape Photography](#) and start creating better photos today. Visit his website or [Instagram](#) to view more of his photography.

<http://www.choiberg.com>