

Close-Up

VictoriaCameraClub.ca

VCC's Workshop Committee
Controlling Remote Flashes
February Workshops
Smartphone File Size and RAW Files
Things Go Sideways
Member Profile: Maureen Reid
Variable Neutral Density Filters
Framing the Image
Getting it Right
Beginner's Corner: HDR Images

"Reflections" by Stephen Ban

Victoria Camera Club

February 2022 Volume 75 Number 2

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"Esquimalt Lagoon" by Richard Letourneau

Established in 1944, the Victoria Camera Club is a group of people who share the love of photography. We come together to appreciate each other's images, to learn, both from the feedback on our own images and from the images of others, and to exchange tips on how and where to take effective photographs. Our focus is on continuous learning. Our media include both film and digital and our expertise ranges from novice to master.

Events

We hold a number of events including:

- Three meetings a month from September to April (excluding December)
- Field trips
- Workshops
- Shared Interest Groups (SIGs)
- Competitions within the Club and externally

Meetings begin at 7:00 PM. All meetings, workshops and SIGs are currently on-line only.

Membership

Annual fees include all workshops (except studio shoots and special events), meetings and all field trips unless travel/accommodation is involved. Annual fees are: Individual, \$85; Family, \$107; Student, \$36.

For current event information and locations please go to the website victoriacameraclub.ca where you can also read or download the colour version of *Close-Up*.

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February 2022

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The Victoria Camera Club is a member society of the Victoria Arts Council, Canadian Association for Photographic Arts (CAPA) and the Photographic Society of America (PSA).



VICTORIA ARTS COUNCIL



Calendar

Our workshop and field trip programs are too extensive to list in *Close-Up*. Please go to the calendar page on the website (victoriacameraclub.ca/club/clubschedules.aspx) for the latest details of all our workshops, field trips and meetings.

Workshops, Meetings and SIGs are currently on-line only. Please check the calendar for updates.

Feb 3rd: Competition Night. The March competition theme is "Bridges". The January competition results will be presented.

Feb 10th: Presenters' Night. Behind the Scenes: The Making of Photographs with Kas Stone.

Feb 17th: Members' Night. Presentations of members' images, field trip slide shows, print reviews or short technical presentations.

Workshop Highlights: Better Backyard Bird Photography and Night Photography.

Field Trip Highlights: BC Aviation Museum, Sherringham Point/Sandcut Beach, and Window Wanderland.

Cover Image: "Reflections" by Stephen Ban. In October 2021 I went to Tofino with two other photographers/videographers and two Vancouver-based models. Thanks to another former Victoria connection, we were able to get discounted rooms at the Tin-Wis Best Western which offered direct access to Mackenzie Beach.

However, this image was taken in daylight at Chesterman Beach using a single off-camera Godox AD200 flash with a MagMod 24" Octabox fitted with a diffusion panel at camera left. The flash was remotely triggered using a Godox X-Pro N radio trigger on a Nikon D850. I used high-speed sync at 1/4000th second (to darken the ambient light), f2.8 (for minimum depth of field), and ISO 64 (base ISO, to minimize noise). Post-processing consisted of brightening the reflection, enhancing the sky, selective sharpening and clarity enhancement.

The dresses were rented from Olivia's Gown Rentals and Flutter Dresses. Models are Samme Wood-Gaines (right) and Elluz Cruz (left). In this issue of *Close-Up* I review off-camera flash triggering methods on page 24. Also, see my articles in previous issues of *Close-Up* (January 2021, May 2020, and February 2020) for other off-camera flash setups. This image placed 1st in the November 2021 People competition.

President's Message

About three years ago I went to a VCC print show at the Victoria Arts Council building on Store Street. What struck me immediately was the amount of talented work on display. That show was the reason I joined the VCC. After more than a year of being a member, I decided to become more active within the Club. I helped with the Nature SIG last season and then served the first half of this season as one of our two Vice-Presidents.

Over this time, I've realized just how lucky we are to have so many opportunities to learn, improve upon and share our photography, including this publication. All of this is made possible by a dedicated group of volunteers who give their time to make the experience of being a member of VCC that much better.

We obviously continue to deal with COVID as a Club. I think I speak for most of us when I say that I want to get back to in-person meetings as soon as possible. Although we have adapted very well using Zoom, the social and collegial benefits of meeting in-person have certainly been reduced. For now, we will continue to take our guidance from the Ministry of Health, balanced with the comfort level of the membership, to determine how and when we return to in-person gatherings.

Zoom will likely be part of our future even when we return to in-person meetings. We can explore hybrid meetings with both in-person and Zoom access or, we could replace an in-person session with Zoom where it makes sense. For instance, Presenter's night is booked for the rest of the season over Zoom allowing us to book presenters from all over North America. When Ursula Abresch joined us from the West Kootenays for the January Presenter's Night we had about 60 attendees at a successful, interactive evening. We will be exploring these options further.

Our AGM is just over 90 days away. The President, Secretary and one Member-at-Large position will become vacant. If you are interested in any of these positions, please contact any of the exec for information on their roles. We will provide more information on this as we get closer to the AGM.

I'm looking forward to being of service to the membership for the rest of this season. I would like to thank Teri Van-Well for her leadership as VCC's President. I enjoyed working with her, and I wish her success in her new, expanded role on the Saanich School District Board.

Steve Sproston, Acting President

VCC's Workshop Committee

by Steve Lustig

You have all received the e-mails and, if you've registered for a workshop, you've got the reminders and the links. These don't appear from the ether but are the result of many individuals' efforts from a hardworking group of volunteers. This article pulls back the curtain on the inner workings of the workshop committee.



"Wizard of Oz"

Unlike the Wizard of Oz our workshops require more than smoke and mirrors. It starts with needs expressed by members. We send out an annual survey to evaluate what workshops members want. The survey responses are ranked. A committee member then contacts photographers to determine if they are interested and able to present a workshop. Once the fee (for non-club presenters), and the date are set, the presenter sends a biography, images and details of the workshop. This is edited into a page that is uploaded to the website calendar.

Each workshop has a host and co-host assigned to it. There is a run-through in advance of the workshop to see if there are any technical or other problems, determine if the presenter wants a break and if they want questions to be asked anytime or during a question period. The host introduces the presenter while the co-host assists in resolving log-on problems, reminds members to mute their microphone so we are not hearing background conversations or a television, asks them to turn off the video feed to preserve bandwidth and collects questions from the chat to share with the host or presenter.

This year we have presented two or three workshops each month by Club members and one workshop each month by a well-known professional photographer.

COVID-19 has presented challenges and opportunities. With in-person meetings being unsafe, Zoom has had a number of advantages for Club members. First, there are no limits on the number of attendees. Second, you can stay in your PJs with your favourite beverage on those dark and stormy nights. Third, we've been able to solicit presentations from photographers located anywhere in the world. Fourth, we've been able to invite members from other camera Clubs to join us for a \$5 fee which has defrayed costs and allowed the Club to be self-supporting with workshop expenses. When other Clubs are invited a separate registration page is created with a link for payment.

We also maintain a spreadsheet of our workshops, the number of registrants and attendees, list our workshops under the members tab on the website, provide Zoom training for members, liaise with Club representatives to CAPA, PSA and the BC and Yukon Clubs and ensure that information is listed in *Close-Up*.

Going forward, COVID-19 creates uncertainty with regard to our workshop planning. At this point we plan to continue with Zoom workshops but will present some in-person workshops for areas that require hands-on assistance and training. These workshops will be limited with respect to the number of participants allowed and require participants to be fully vaccinated.

Over the course of the 2021-2022 Club year the workshop committee has presented and planned workshops on using Lightroom and Topaz, listening to the light, artistic expression, composition, understanding art principles, catching the creative spirit, photographing in any light, setting up backyard bird photography, and photographic genres such as black and white, travel, flash, portraiture, street, night, astro, minimalism and landscape photography.

The current committee members are Steve Lustig, Linda Angelo, Joanne Couch, Gordon Griffiths, Terri Kott, Alec Lee, Kahsia Hartwell, Jeanne Kurz, Kim Smith, Richard Letourneau and Cindy Stephenson. We meet monthly and their interests and strengths are acknowledged and considered when dividing up the work in order to support each other and ensure group success. Our goal is to work as a team to deliver a thoughtful program that is responsive to the interests of Club members.

If you have questions, concerns or comments, please contact me at workshops@victoriacameraclub.ca.

Controlling Remote Flashes

by Stephen Ban

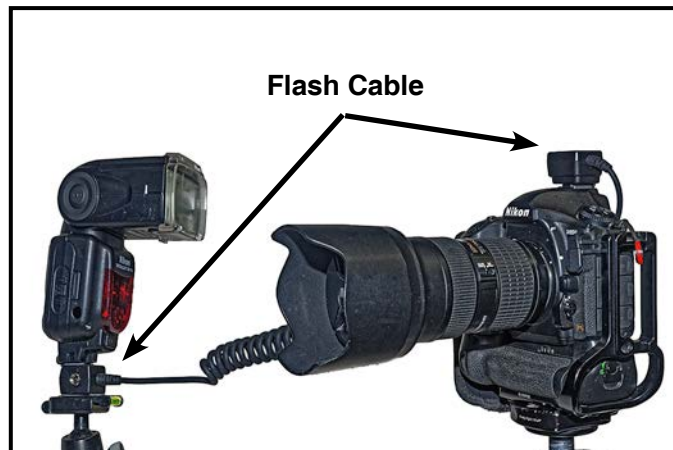
In the January 2021 issue of *Close-Up* I wrote an article on basic lighting techniques that included a brief mention of how to trigger off-camera flashes. In this article, I'll go into more depth on each of the methods. Since I'm a Nikon shooter, my terminology and methods will be specific to that brand but the principles involved will apply to nearly any make of camera and flash guns. I'll also touch briefly on a more advanced technique to capture moving subjects.

The three methods of triggering an off-camera flash are optical, wired and radio triggering. There are some variations on each of these but any method ultimately falls into one of those categories.

First, for optical triggering, whether your camera has a built-in (i.e., pop-up) flash or not, there will be an option to use a connected flash to trigger other flashes. Nikon calls this Flash Commander Mode. Basic or entry-level cameras might not have this option so check the manual or Google it if you are not sure. To switch the on-camera flash to Commander mode, set the flash mode in the camera menu system to Commander mode rather than Manual or TTL (Thru The Lens metering). In Nikon's system you can independently control the power and mode of the built-in flash plus up to three groups of other flashes. A flash group can have more than one flash unit in it. The power of each flash group is set using the "Compensation" option which can typically be adjusted in 1/3rd stop increments.

The pros of optical triggering are that you don't need any additional gear (the exception would be if your camera doesn't have a built-in flash), the simplicity and the reliability (if you're within line-of-sight of your remote flash-

es). The cons are that you can't control as many flashes as you can with other methods, you may have difficulty triggering flashes that aren't within line-of-sight of your camera and in a situation with multiple photographers and light setups, there's no way to tell one set of lights to trigger from only one photographer's set of lights. They will all fire when any strobe goes off.



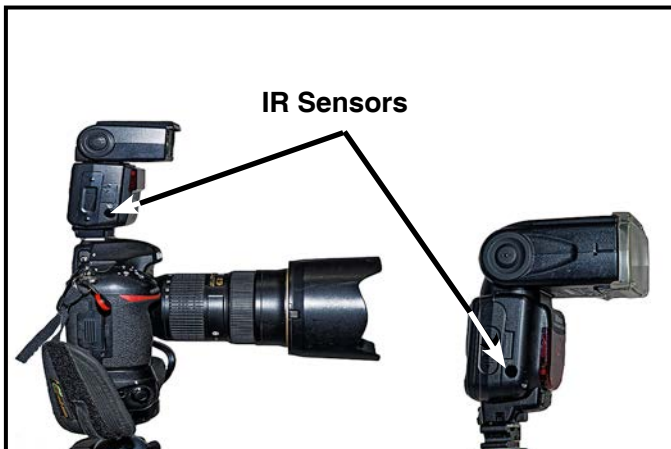
"Wired Flash"

Second, wired triggering. Although the most straightforward method it is also the most limiting because you are constrained by the length of the cable and your ability to control the remote flash.

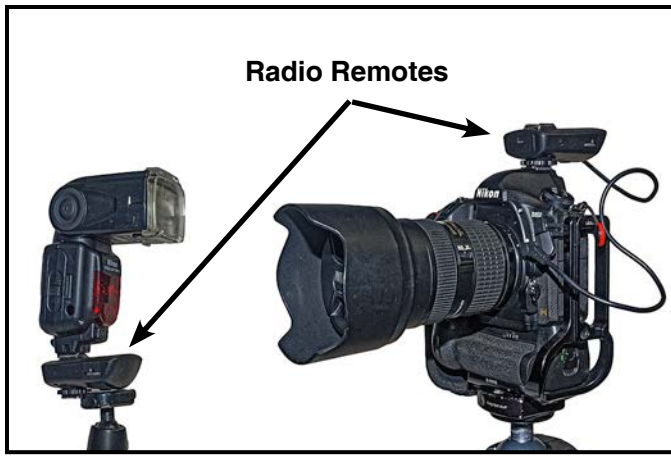
The oldest type of wired connection uses the Prontor/Compur (PC) connection. Unless your camera has a built-in PC sync port (Nikons often, Canons rarely), you will need a hotshoe adapter to plug the cable into. Many modern flashes will also lack a PC sync connection so you will need another hotshoe adapter on the other end of the cable to connect to the remote flash. The ancient PC sync connector has largely been superseded by the 3.5 mm mini-headphone jack. Note that you can use mono or stereo cables for flash purposes.

There are also brand-specific hotshoe-to-hotshoe cables which will allow you to retain through-the-lens (TTL) flash metering functionality. The only pro of wired triggering is its reliability and cost. The cons are that you have no control over the power of the remote flash, limited ability to trigger multiple flashes (except with y-cables) and you're constrained on the distance to the remote flash by the length of your cable.

Third, radio triggering. This method presents more options that span a wide price range. At the low-end are brands like Yongnuo and Neewer, with Godox and Cactus as mid-range options. Higher-end options include PocketWizard, StrobePro, CamRanger and AlienBee. To some extent you get what you pay for, greater reliability and more features. Most radio-trigger systems



"Optical Triggering"



"Radio Triggering"

are also generally proprietary, i.e., you are tied to that brand of camera, strobes and transmitter/receivers for full compatibility. Unfortunately, there is almost no standardization when it comes to radio triggers, although some brands will advertise cross-brand compatibility with some of the major players (e.g., PocketWizard). Godox also manufactures some products for Adorama under the Flashpoint name. The products are identical but with different model names. Practically, what this means is that you'll have to match brands between transmitters and receivers.

If your studio strobes or speedlights have their own built-in receivers, you can often get around the problem of brand-matching by wiring them to a receiver with a simple sync cable or setting them to optical triggering if you have another flash that is being radio triggered.

The most basic radio triggers will do nothing more than simply trigger a remote flash and not give you any control over power or grouping. Most mid-range and higher-end radio triggers will allow you to trigger an effectively unlimited number of flashes as long as they're included in one of the groups.

One thing to consider is whether or not you really need TTL support because you will pay a premium for it, both in triggers and in strobes/flashes. As I have mentioned in previous articles, I never use TTL, only manual mode. There's a stronger case to be made for using TTL if you are shooting film or are working in a fast-paced shooting environment (like sports or a wedding), but, in a studio setting using a digital camera, in my opinion there is virtually no point in using it. However, HSS (High-Speed Sync) compatibility that allows you to exceed the camera's flash sync speed, is an option that I don't think you should pass up.

With these three methods, keep in mind that you are also able to mix all of the methods. For example, you

could use a radio trigger to fire a remote flash and have another flash set to trigger optically from that first flash and then have a third flash wired to the second flash!

With advanced triggering options, some third-party manufacturers (Pluto, MIOPS Smart Trigger) make devices that can trigger the camera or flash through physical events, including sound, motion, light, infrared (heat) and combinations of these. Remote triggers work with their own smartphone app to give you extensive control over your camera's other functions eliminating the need for a separate remote shutter release.

I have used my Pluto trigger (plutotrigger.com) to catch shells ejecting from a gun firing (by using the sound trigger), and in combination with a laser beam to precisely time a shot that involved pills falling in the background behind a model (see the image below). These triggers are also useful for capturing very brief events such as lightning or balloons popping although obviously with lightning, you're triggering the camera shutter instead of a flash and taking time-lapse photographs.

Remember that if you are trying to photograph very fast or brief events it is much more effective to use flash rather than shutter speed to freeze the movement. The fastest speed your shutter can achieve is likely 1/8000th second, but flash bursts can be as brief as 1/100,000th second for studio strobes. However, don't think that you will be able to catch a bullet in flight with a strobe; for that you'd need a flash duration about 10 times faster (Google Harold Edgerton to see how he did it)! As with all things in photography don't be afraid to experiment, so get out there and start shooting!



"Remote Trigger"

February Workshops

by Jim Fowler

On February 8th, 2022, Ontario photographer Andrew McLachlan will speak via zoom on “Better Backyard Bird Photography”. The idea is to attract birds to your own backyard and to create an attractive setting in which to photograph them. The workshop write-up says he will address gear, physical set-ups, tips for sharpness and editing in Photoshop.

Andrew has shot extensively in both Ontario and the Caribbean. He has produced a series of e-books on subjects including landscape, birds, reptiles, frogs and insects. He has also led a number of interesting field workshops, including one at the Ohio State Reformatory, a storied (and creepy) historical building featured in the Shawshank Redemption movie.

Andrew writes a blog on photography. In May of 2021 he wrote “If you build it they will come”. In this he described a 1.2 x 2.4 metre reflecting pool he assembled and placed next to his bird-feeding station. He recommends that you choose your props carefully. He uses a variety of moss-covered branches, small stones, dried leaves and cones. To attract the birds he uses shelled peanuts, black-oil sunflower seeds and a homemade “bark butter” (a spreadable suet or lard-rich mixture). He places the seeds where the birds have to do a little work to get them, giving him a better chance for a more interesting shot.

On February 23rd Matt Shannon will present his “Night Photography: Expressing Darkness” workshop. This is not a workshop on astrophotography, though it may be mentioned, but rather it is aimed at using photography to show what is not normally seen in darkness. The zoom show will be followed up with a limited attendance field workshop on February 26th or 27th, weather permitting, for no more than 10 people. See the workshop calendar for field trip fees and registration details.

Matt lives on Vancouver Island and works around the Island. His emphasis is on wildlife and landscape photography. He has led workshops on photographing grizzly bears, coastal exploration, water falls and “Wild Renfrew”. Looking at his gallery photos (mattshannon.ca) I found an interesting wood duck photo in which half the duck and most of the photo is in darkness. He calls it “Elegance in Shadows”. Another photo shows what is clearly a night landscape made visible by long exposure. It is true that there are night views all around us just waiting to be captured. The camera sensor can record colour

data that the cones of our retinas cannot see. It is yet another example of using the camera to make visible what cannot normally be seen at all.

As another episode in the BC/Yukon Inter-Club Speakers series, on February 25th George Kourounis will speak about “Documenting Earth’s Extremes”. In case you haven’t heard of George, perhaps you have heard of his made-for-television series “Angry Planet”, consisting of 49 episodes filmed on all seven continents, and shown in 100 countries around the world. Or, perhaps you have heard of the “Doorway to Hell” in the Karakum Desert in Turkmenistan, where a methane gas disaster has burned out of control for decades. In 2013, George was the first person to descend to the floor of the crater. It is now a tourist attraction though fencing prevents any attempts at up-close and personal roasting.

Have you ever wanted to see what lives at Chernobyl, paddle a boat on a lake of sulphuric acid, visit mountain gorillas in their habitat, scuba dive in a shark-proof tank with angry sharks or descend into the superheated cave in Mexico where the largest known crystals in the world have grown? The Naica selenite crystals (a form of gypsum, calcium sulphate) in Mexico are as big as 11 meters long and weigh up to 55 tonnes. The cave where they grow has an air temperature of 50^o C, with humidity of more than 90 per cent. Even with special cooling suits human endurance limits any individual to a maximum of 30 to 50 minutes before the heat will lead to serious loss of brain function. Comedian Ron White sometimes jokes about a fellow in the news in Florida who tied himself to a tree during a hurricane to prove his fitness. “It is not that the wind is blowing, it’s what the wind is blowing that will kill you.”

George has filmed hurricanes and tornadoes. He has travelled to forest fires, climbed icebergs, stood on freshly solidified lava and waded waist deep in floodwaters. “If we had an armoured car ...” he imagines while plotting a course to intercept a tornado. I do not usually list achievements of speakers but to give you some idea of how extensively George is recognized as an explorer and storm chaser, here is a partial list. He is a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society (UK) and the Royal Canadian Geographic Society, is chairperson of the Canadian Chapter of the Explorers Club and director of the “Exploring by the Seat of your Pants” group. He has given five TedX talks. Did I mention he got married on the edge of an active volcano? You will never experience most of the extreme sites George has documented but you don’t want to miss seeing his show and hearing him talk about his amazing experiences first hand on February 25th. Learn more about George at furiousearth.com.

Smartphone File Size and RAW Files

by Kathryn Delany

Two frequently-asked questions about using your phone camera are: How do you get large files out of phone apps and how do you retrieve RAW files from your phone?

If you are using Apple devices across the board you are in luck. I have to give a disclaimer here before I get going. I use Apple devices across the board, iPhone, iPad, and iMac so I am not that familiar with the Windows PC workflow experience!

Firstly, how do you maximize file size using iPhone apps? One thing I have learned is that bigger is better! File size matters when creating and taking images on your iPhone. What goes in is what comes out. How do you get that size file you ask? Most images taken at full resolution will be 4032 x 3024 pixels. If you start with a smaller file it is going to be a challenge to get good results from your editing apps. Having a good quality file to start with makes all the difference in your ability to edit, manipulate and have a good quality output.

Camera apps like iPhone Native Camera, Camera +, Camera +2, Halide and AdobeCam to name a few will let you shoot in RAW. Camera +2 will let you set the output in the app settings and allows you to save as both RAW and TIF files.

When exporting your files from these apps your order of preference you should be to try and export a RAW/DNG or TIF/PSD file. Apps open the files at the size of the original file which reinforces my advice of getting as large a file to start with as you can. Apps that accommodate large file size input/output include Affinity Photo, iColorama, SuperimposeX, Snapseed, Photoshoph, Lightroom, and Procreate. I am sure there are a lot more than I have listed.

Now, how do you transfer these files to your desktop? For Apple users the simplest method to transfer your phone files to your desktop/laptop, without a cable hook-up, is to use Wi-Fi syncing. This way your Mac Photos app and iPhone Photos apps will sync automatically and the files are there on your desktop.

All you have to do is transfer them from Photos to work in your editing software. To do this, open the Photo app on your desktop/laptop and select the RAW/DNG files. In the menu bar click File and you have two options, choose "Export as an unmodified original" or, if you choose "Export Image" you can only save files as JPEG, PNG or TIF.

If you are not using Wi-Fi syncing then you can use the magic tool called AirDrop. It can transfer the RAW/DNG file from the Photos app to your Mac or laptop in a jiffy and you are done. You can transfer files back to your phone in the same way. Be aware, this method is a bit slower than using a wired connection but not by that much.

The third way, which I have never actually done, is to use an USB cable and plug your phone into your desktop and treat the phone like an external drive. This method works for iPhone users who have a Windows machine as well. To use the finder to transfer files to a Mac you need MacOS 10.15 or later. For earlier versions of the MacOS you need to use iTunes to transfer files.

To transfer files on a Mac, once you are plugged in, open your Finder window, click Files, click the disclosure triangle beside an app name to see its files on your iPhone. Drag a file to a folder in your finder Window. To transfer from your Mac to the iPhone drag the files from a Finder window onto an app in the name list on your phone.

The same file size and type considerations apply for Android phones and Windows apps. Bigger and RAW/DNG is just way better quality.

To set up file transfer for an Android and Windows system, check your device's manual to find out which folders your images are stored in and to set the device to make RAW files accessible. The easiest way to transfer files is also the fastest, by using a USB cable.

The first time you transfer files you need to check that the phone and computer recognize each other. When you connect the phone make sure that its USB mode is set to "File Transfer" as it probably defaults to "Charge". From the Windows Start menu go to Settings then Devices. Check the list to see if the device is identified. If not, click "Add a Device" and select it from the list. Now you're good to go.

Each time you connect the device you need to set the USB mode to "File Transfer" and then you can use any file manager to access the device and copy the files. In the destination, window select the drive and folder that you want to copy them to. In the source window select the device and navigate to the folder with the files. Now "Select All" and hit "Copy" or "Move".

Next, you may want to change the file names to something more meaningful but retain a unique identifier for each file. You're done; on to editing with the software of your choice.

March Theme: Bridges

by Judy Plummer

One definition in the Oxford Dictionary for “bridge” is a structure carrying a road, path, railway, etc. across a river, road or other obstacle. Note that in this definition the bridge is part of the landscape. There are other definitions for “bridge” so you may want to research that before planning your photo shoot. Photographing a bridge gives you a chance to show lines, curves, shapes, colour and texture. Are you going to make one of these the main theme of the photo or are you going to incorporate a number of these?

Go online for ideas or base your image on the style of your favourite photographer. In the “Theme” category you can be as creative as you desire. Any type of post-production or in-camera manipulation is acceptable as long as a “Bridge” is the main subject.

Some of the suggestions for photographing bridges that I found online are: Have an interesting foreground and have it in focus (this will give a sense of scale). Choose an angle. You may want to make the structure appear more powerful. Are you going for symmetry? Are you going to use a wide-angle lens for a panoramic view showing how imposing the bridge architecture is or are you going to use a long lens for more intimate compositions (photographing the details of the bridge structure)? Time of day will determine the lighting of the shoot so do you want to shoot during the golden hour or the blue hour? The time of day can contribute to the highlighting of textures and warmth in the photograph.

There are many suggestions for camera settings such as selecting a low ISO, using a small aperture for extensive depth of field and using a neutral density filter to allow a longer exposure. What exposure length are you going to use? If it is night photography it may well be a long exposure and the use of a tripod will be necessary. Use of light may determine the importance of shadows.

Use the theme as a challenge to improve your photography. Themes give you a chance to shoot activities outside your norm. When you get to the location of your shoot take the time to plan the shot, look around to observe before you begin your creative process.

Safety first. Be aware of your surroundings as well as what is in the photograph. If you are on a bridge that is busy having a spotter with you would be very helpful.

The deadline for entering is Thursday March 3rd.

November 2021 Competition Judges

We extend our sincere thanks to the judges for the November 2021 Intermediate and Advanced competitions and Novice/Intermediate prints: Leah Gray, Wes Bergen, Dan Jones, Robert Laramee, Karen Stoyles and Ed Moniz. We also extend our thanks to the in-house judges of the other novice competitions: Pam Irvine, Lorna Zaback, Nicci Tyndall and Lorna Shaw. Images and judges' comments are available at: www.victoriacameraclub.ca/Competitions/CompetitionResults.aspx.

Leah Gray: Altered Reality. Leah is a CAPA Certified Judge and VCC member. Leah's images have been accepted into numerous International Photography exhibitions and have won many prestigious awards. Her interests range from wildlife and landscape photography to sports, travel, macro, studio and creative images.

Wes Bergen: Nature. Wes has been a member of the Lions Gate Camera Club for 44 years (serving two terms as President) and a member of NAPA/CAPA for almost as long. He has taught Photoshop courses for 10 years. He is a frequent judge and presents workshops at local clubs and seminars.

Dan Jones: Open. Dan has been a member of the Camera Club of Ottawa for 24 years. He is a part-time professional photographer working for stock agencies and a calendar publisher. His fine-art photographs have been hung in art galleries in Ontario. Dan has enjoyed judging for a variety of photo clubs over the years.

Robert Laramee: People. Robert joined the RA Camera Club in Ottawa in 1975 but left in 1984. He returned to the renamed RA Photo Club in 2002. On retirement he studied at the School of the Photographic Arts in Ottawa. He has taught digital photography for the City of Ottawa for several years. Robert is a CAPA Certified Judge and trainer.

Karen Stoyles: Theme. Karen lives in Kitchener, Ontario and has been judging photography for camera clubs, local organizations and fairs for over 15 years. Her main photographic interests lie with wildflower, macro, and creative photography.

Ed Moniz: Prints. Ed studied black and white photography and printing and completed a one-year mentorship program with George DeWolfe. As a Professional Photographers of Canada member, he earned Accreditation in Night Photography and designation as “Craftsman of Photographic Arts”. Ed is a former VCC member who has presented workshops for 10 years.

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Advanced Nature Print - 1st
"Owlet Eyes" by Mary-Lee Sampson

Judge's Comments: Powerful eyes, great image.



Advanced Theme - 3rd
"The Colony" by Lorna Scott

Judge's Comments: Lovely image with very effective lighting which sets a tranquil mood. The maker has divided the image between water, sea lions and background. Nicely done.



Advanced People - 1st
"Pursuit of the Ball" by John Clarke

Judge's Comments: An excellent capture of the action. The exposure is perfect, superb colours. The composition is especially well done, with the two main players on the left and oriented towards the middle and the other player in the top right; the tight crop is perfect. A very strong image.



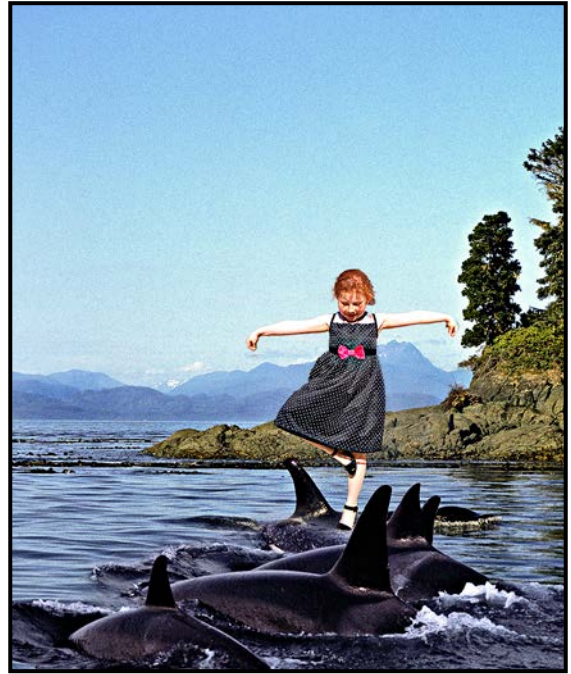
Advanced Open - 1st
"Snowboarding at Night" by Bill Cubitt

Judge's Comments: A wonderful action shot, complete with snowboarder crouched down on his board with an outstretched arm and eyes visibly focused on the path ahead. The flying snow stands out beautifully against the black void, adding to the action of the moment. The lighting on the colourful boarder is a little contrasty and hot, but really draws your attention to the subject. The overall impression you get from this dramatic image is of the boarder being engaged in some kind of cosmic flight through the blackness of space. Very well executed both technically and aesthetically.



Advanced Nature - 1st
"Catch of the Day" by Kim Smith

Judge's Comments: A dynamic shot with high interest and impact. Great composition and technically flawless!



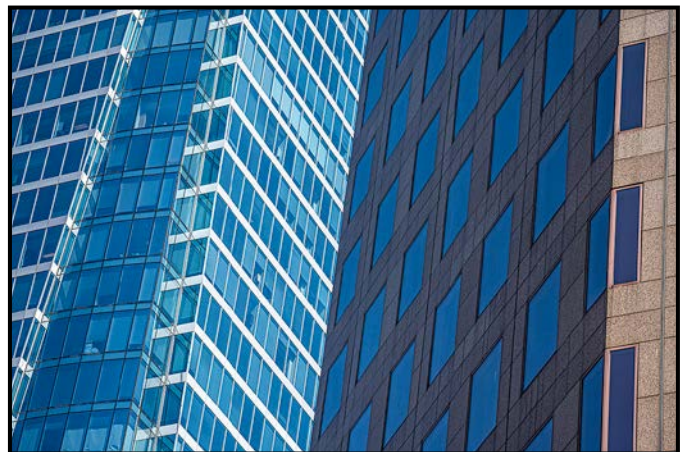
Advanced Altered Reality - 1st
"Having a Whale of a Time" by Lee-Anne Stack

Judge's Comments: This image conveys a good story. What a tenacious little girl, nicely done.



Advanced Monochrome Print - 1st
"The Journey" by Nick Delaney

Judge's Comments: A great image, great mood. The editing was well managed.



Advanced Open Print - 1st
"Blue Windows" by Steve Lustig

Judge's Comments: Great graphics.



Intermediate Altered Reality - 1st
"Kinsol Trestle" by Don Piper

Judge's Comments: This is an original treatment of the subject. Repeating lines and interesting patterns lead us into this image. The crossing point is not quite centered (horizontally), but not really on the thirds. There is a bit of orange at the end, which adds to the image



Intermediate Open - 1st
"Thank Goodness for Breakwaters" by Greg Blaney

Judge's Comments: A perfectly timed action shot of the wave smashing against the breakwater. Exposure and contrast are both spot on, providing great detail in the white water and much drama in the stormy sky. The masts protruding above the water give the impression that the unseen boats are being pounded by the powerful waves.



Intermediate Nature - 1st
"Overflowing" by Heather Thompson

Judge's Comments: Beautiful warm pre-sunset light. Great exposure and focus. Very well composed with strong lead-in lines on the left (clouds) and on the right (rocks). The length of exposure is perfect. Scattering of leaves at the bottom adds to the image.



Intermediate People - 2nd
"Intensity of the Dragon" Terri Kott

Judge's Comments: People in action, very well captured. The backlight and the selective depth of field help in separating the individuals from the background. The "mild" panoramic crop suits the subject very well. Great story.



Intermediate Theme - 1st
"Fishing the Li" by Gwen Long

Judge's Comments: This image conveys a good story with an original treatment of the subject instilling an emotional reaction. This is an exquisite image that tells a very interesting story. The composition and placement of the subjects is very well-handled.



Novice Open - 1st (Tie)
"Songhees at Night" by Jerome Rozitis

Judge's Comments: Beautiful colours help to create a strong image. The focus is on the sailboat which is important due to the lines and wires. Nice calm water has created lovely reflections.



Intermediate/Novice Print - HM
"Fire Haze" by Joanne Couch

Judge's Comments: Wonderful mood in this image, Overall, a good composition. Going for the dark mood enhances the image.



Novice Theme - 1st (Tie)
"Jellyfish" by Jeanne Kurz

Judge's Comments: These jellyfish look so ethereal floating in the blue water. The focus is sharp on the main (center) jellyfish. Exposure appears good. Congratulations on using an iPhone to take a good image in difficult lighting conditions.

Things Go Sideways

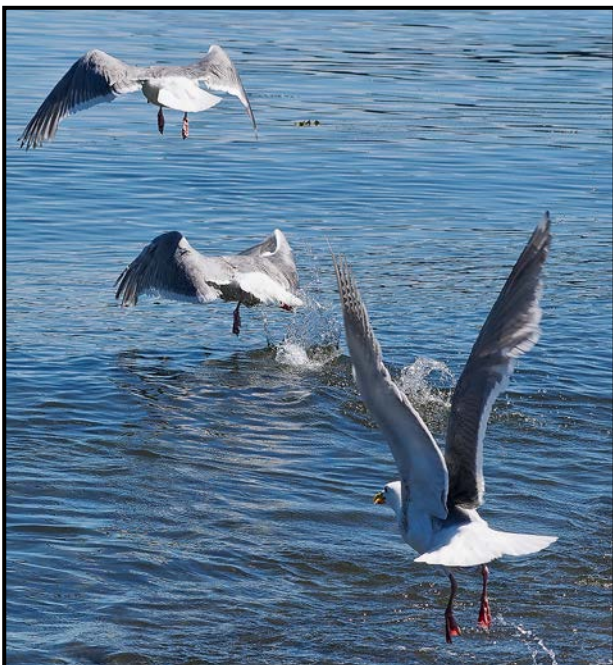
by Anne McCarthy

This is a story about heading in one direction and ending up off-track. It started with two images that I thought I might combine in Photoshop to give a sense of movement, freedom and soft space. The first image was extracted from the reflections on a west-facing window in "Background Source". When the morning light is right, the trees to the east, normally only seen by craning my neck, become visible. The effect is soft, translucent and a bit romantic.



"Background Source"

In my mind it linked with the progression of the three birds in the "Birds in Liffort" Image.



"Birds in Liffort"

And so I began: separating the birds from their background and adding them to the background image. No joy. They stuck there as if pasted on with kindergarten glue. It would be easy to move them as separate layers for more flexible placement and to transform their sizes. No joy. There was no kinship between the light or level of detail. They were transformed in various ways by posterizing and the "glass" filter. All the blend modes were tried, along with changes in opacity and fill. More than once. The birds, whether modified, twisted, separated and re-sized still refused to harmonize. It was like a taking a Swaggering Rapper to a Baroque Harp Concert.

The birds were the problem. In the process of changing the size and layout of the birds, I gradually came to realize that whether separated, resized or rendered less photographically perfect, the bottom of the three birds was easily identified, the top a little less so, while the center image, if taken out-of-context just looked like a blob. So much for the idea of spacing them out in decreasing size across the image.

And then there was the problem of lighting and colour on the largest bird. After many iterations I admitted that the light created a solid white block of a tail with no detail. It looked more like that normally found in whale photos. My most easily recognized bird had become a rapper clapping her hands out of time with the harp.



"The Tangled Stained Glass Effect"

Time to try another route. If the birds were too precise and defined, perhaps the background could be hardened. I planned to create one layer as more of a line drawing, using the neon filter, then going to monochrome and layering a lower opacity layer on the more romantic original layer and sandwiching the birds in between. I thought it might be possible to gradually blend into multiple layers.

Along the path to transform the image the combination of layers took on a much more stained-glass style that made me think of the French painter Rouault. Somehow, I'd taken another road that completely transformed the background into something more tangled, tangible and jewel-like. The tangled, stained glass, jewel-like background quite intrigued me, so I ditched the birds and created a new version in a square format. I'm reasonably satisfied with this image, the colours, tension from the off-balance box and circle and jewel-like glow between the branches work. Printing might be tricky as the image may be too dark to show up well at a distance. It might work printed on a metallic canvas.



"Walking on Dallas"

The objective of merging two images still eluded me, so I browsed through my stock of "creative" shots and did a U-turn by layering "Walking on Dallas" an image adjusted to have strong contrast. When first working with this image I'd wrestled with the choice between detail in the tree or the starker effect of high contrast. Now the very dark area became a canvas.



"Dallas Road Becomes Stained Glass"

Putting the image together with lower opacity and fill versions of a neon line modified background (blend normal) and the original version (blend difference) created the

"Dallas Road Becomes Stained Glass" image. This image satisfies me although it bears no kinship to the misty reflective image.

Although I am happy with the result, it still frustrated me that I headed for New York City with a Rapper and ended up in Albuquerque with a Stained-Glass Artist playing the saxophone. So, I went back to the original background source image and its feeling, and found a better set of birds "Second Bird Image".



"Second Bird Image"

In the final image, "Ahead of the Storm", the background source reflection has been modified using the glass filter in the filter gallery. Masking on the second bird image has been painted in to allow only some of the stormy sky texture to show through. The image pulls together now although I'm not entirely sure about the cyanotype intense blue. I may try a sepia version.



"Ahead of the Storm"

Apparently even a planned route can go sideways. My original set of shots were too dissimilar to harmonize into anything resembling music. By modifying or, perhaps, more honestly, ignoring my original plan, I was able to find some images that satisfied.

Now what to do with the lifting-off birds? The sequence is compelling, with lovely sharp angles. They are still nagging at me.

Member Profile: Maureen Reid

I have always been an avid photographer. Growing up I had a small Kodak camera with the flash cube and would follow my brothers and pets around looking for that perfect Kodak moment. Then I would beg my parents to take my canister of film to the store to be developed.

The anticipation of opening the envelope with the prints inside was nearly unbearable and I would race back to the car and tear open the envelope and admire all my prints with red eyes, light leaks, unintentional double exposures, cut-off heads and blurry, unrecognizable images. They were glorious and I was hooked.



"Frog in a Flower"

In high school I joined the yearbook club and became the official photographer for all the sporting events and activities. While all the cool kids had "Basketball" and "Volleyball" embroidered on their letterman jackets, mine was emblazoned with "Yearbook" and I wore it proudly.

In University I studied nursing but never lost my enthusiasm for photography. I scraped together whatever money that I had left over from tuition and textbooks and bought my first digital camera with "four easy payments" from The Shopping Channel. That first experience of being able to delete poor images and try again was a game changer.

Along came Facebook and Instagram. Social Media was the perfect outlet to display my images and I dove into it with gusto. I became known for posting a lot of photos! It became a great way to learn as the feedback I received helped me to grow as a photographer. To this day I still post a lot!

When I had my son I joined the Victoria Camera Club so I could learn to capture his milestones. Having an outlet to be creative and have connections with adults was important to me as well. I learned so much that

year however the demands of work and family eventually overtook my ability to continue.



"Clam Harbour"

Time passed, my son grew up and I finally retired from work. I had been longing to rejoin the club and had it in the back of my mind for years. I bought a fancy new camera and suddenly felt the pressure to learn how to use it.

I took a few images and of course posted them on social media. My friends' comments and praise gave me the confidence to join the camera club once again.

I was again welcomed so warmly into the Club even though the meetings were now held online via Zoom. I could feel the warmth emanating from the computer screen. It gave me the confidence to gather up my courage to enter the first monthly competition. I was so nervous about how it would score, I had butterflies in my stomach.

As the competition results presentation began, I was caught up in the music and the amazing images of the members that flashed before my eyes. I felt my work wasn't in the same league. Suddenly, there it was. My image. It had scored well. Relief washed over me and I may have let out a whoop or two. I was hooked.

I ended that year earning enough ribbons to fill a cork board and even earned the "Distinguished Photographer" award for the Novice category. I couldn't believe how far I'd come in my first year in the Club.

I credit my achievements to all the Club members who graciously shared their time and knowledge guiding me to become a better photographer.

If you are reading this and are not yet a member of the Victoria Camera Club, I suggest you dive in with both feet. You don't know what you are capable of until you give it your best shot!

Variable Neutral Density Filters

by Roger Botting

Back when video started showing up on DSLR cameras I was excited. For years I had wanted an all-in-one camera solution to my photographic wants. These wants date back to my days as a news photographer. Some news events were better as still photos, some worked better as a film, later a video clip.

After I left the news business, newspapers started to want their staff to shoot stills, video and write a news piece. A nice voice-over if possible and if you looked great on-camera, all the better. Welcome to the internet era.

I quickly realized that daytime video was very limiting on the DSLR camera. Settings were usually limited to the camera's minimum ISO, f16 and a higher than desired shutter speed.

In video and film movies the ideal shutter speed is about $1/30^{\text{th}}$ to $1/60^{\text{th}}$ of a second. This gives a nice smooth look to the video clip. Faster shutter speeds give a look that many experienced film makers do not like although using a fast enough shutter speed means that you can do frame grabs.

Should you be content with lots of depth-of-field, all is good however if you like the shallow depth-of-field look, the idea of separating your subject from the background, then you may want to shoot with a larger aperture, f8, f4, f2, f1.2 or whatever your budget will allow.

Of course, the use of High-Speed Sync for outdoor daylight flash photos might also require the need for a larger aperture, one larger than your camera's maximum shutter speed might allow.

Enter neutral density filters. They work fine providing they don't show any colour shift. Variable density neutral density filters can also do the job, maybe. I went out and bought one, an expensive one and it worked great. It had a range of densities which allowed me to shoot video quite nicely with a good range of f-stops and acceptable shutter speeds until I tried it on a wide-angle lens then I got the dreaded X-Factor.

Variable density filters work by having two polarizing filters rotating against each other. The first one polarizes the light and the second one then filters that light. Generally great in practice, they do have one failure that shows up as a marked variation in brightness in your photos. You probably would not see this issue on



"The X-Factor"

a longer lens but it is most pronounced on wide-angle lenses. Back to the fixed neutral density filters.

Today, there are some variable density filters that do not have the X-Factor but they would not necessarily work properly with a circular polarizing filter. Then I saw an advertisement for the K&F Variable Density filter which allegedly did not give X's and included a circular polarizing filter.



"K&F Filter"

I bought one and have tried it. The filter has a rotating metal ring, as you might expect on a polarizing filter and a lever on the ring for adjusting the amount of density. No X-Factor, even with a lens at 14 mm. And the polarizer function works well with the variable density.

All of this is good if the colour does not shift between density settings. A quick test using the colour sampler in Photoshop shows that a white object did not change significantly in colour between shots. Nor did the black objects change colour.

Any downsides? It's reasonably priced but it does have a limited density range of 2X to 32X or about 10 times the exposure. It is good enough for most daily use, besides, I still have all of those old ND filters

Framing the Image

by Toby Snelgrove

I was coaching a new photographer who “just wanted to take better pictures”. We found an ocean scene with eelgrass bulbs in the foreground and stems winding their way into the background. From my perspective, the key elements for this image were patterns, symmetry and depth of field. He picked up the camera in its natural “horizontal” capture mode and snapped a picture. He wondered how the photograph could be improved. The first thing I suggested was the image might work better as a vertical shot. He said, “How do I do that?”

What seemed obvious to me, a seasoned photographer, wasn't to him. We can easily become prisoners of the equipment we use. He was delighted with the image once he rotated the camera. The next challenge for him was editing. The image was captured on a standard 2x3 sensor, but it would work much better as a 1x2 crop. He was stuck again until I coached him on some post-processing framing options.

The choice of orientation and framing affects the message you want to send to your viewer. It should be a statement of how you want the eye to move through your image.

In horizontal (landscape) orientation the image is wider than the height. Most cameras are designed for this. Not only is it the most comfortable way to hold the camera but it is also how we view the world; we tend to look from side to side. Most landscape scenes work in this orientation when you want to demonstrate expanse. Many new photographers, however, get stuck in this orientation simply because of the camera grip.

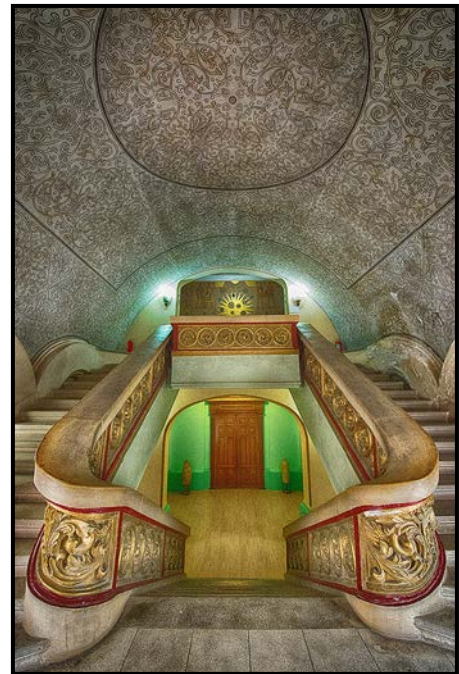
In vertical (portrait) orientation the image is taller than the width. This works best when you want to draw your viewer's eye to height or depth, or for a head-and-shoulders portrait. Unlike most cameras, the design of most phones encourages portrait capture as the shutter button appears at the bottom of the phone. Becoming a prisoner of this orientation is demonstrated every night when TV viewers submit videos where they pan back and forth to capture all the information that would have worked by holding the phone horizontally.

There is no fixed rule with orientation just as there isn't with the rule-of-thirds. These are guidelines to help you evaluate the message you want to convey. If the lines of the scene move your view from side to side as with most landscapes, consider horizontal. If, on the other

hand, the lines move from the foreground to the background as in my student's capture of the eelgrass, use vertical. Or if height is what you want to emphasize, remove side information by shooting vertical.

These are simply some guidelines. If you are not sure what orientation to use view it from both and note how your eye is invited to move around the image. An exercise I give to students is to spend two hours shooting only vertical images then two more covering the same ground restricted to horizontal images. Most tell me that after doing this exercise a whole new world has opened to them.

Here are three examples of why I framed the image as I did. In the first scene I was captured by the stunning architecture in this old building, the bold line of the staircase railings in contrast to the fine detail of the etching on the ceiling and walls. This would have worked just as well as a landscape capture of just the stairs and railing but that wasn't the message I wanted to send. By keeping the image tall and narrow, your eye is drawn between these two elements.



“Stairs in Constanta”

In the second image there was a beautiful early morning mist rising off the water creating a delightful silhouette. I could have taken a tight vertical image of just the boat and the mist but the real mystery to me was, “Where is this boat going?” A landscape perspective allowed me to create a dance between the boat and the point of land.

The second trap new photographers can run into is being constricted by the aspect ratio of the camera's



"Morning Mist"


sensor. Most cameras have a ratio of 4:3 or 3:2. When you are viewing a scene through your camera these ratios can easily become visual prisons. Whether you zoom in or out your view will always be defined by the ratio of your sensor. One way to avoid this trap is to study the scene without your camera. I did this with the first image. What message do you want to accentuate by how you frame it? In this final image, I was captured by the movement of the toes. The upper leg and bottom heel were irrelevant. To be symmetrical, it had to be a square boxing in the twisted toes.



"Toes"

The goal in photography is to share with others how you see the world. It is your point of view, aesthetics, drama, political or whatever. You want your image to be sharp, well framed and only include in the frame visual information that conveys the message. You don't want to be constricted by the equipment you are using. Think "outside the box".

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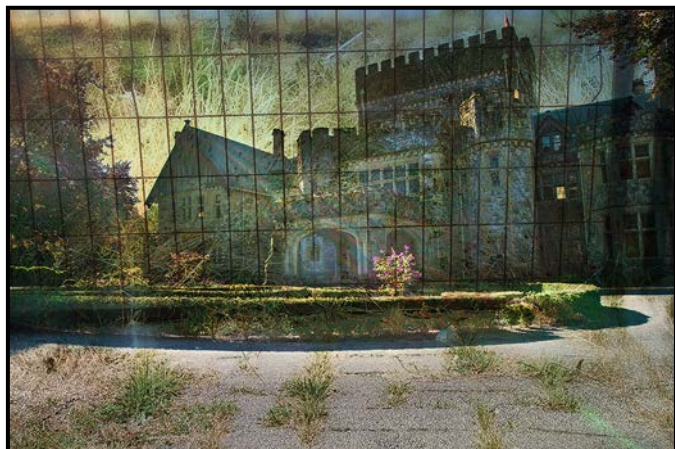
How I Did It

Hatley Castle

by Kevin Keliher

I combined two photographs to create this composite image. One was of Hatley Castle taken with my Sony A6000 around 9:30 in the morning. The sun was still casting quite a bit of shadow. The second photo of a fenced pre-construction site/field in waiting was taken with my iPhone 6. This was taken later in the morning resulting in a flatter image.

I used Union, a mobile photo editing app on my iPad. Union, restricts the user to three layers. You must start with your background image (i.e., Hatley Castle), pick the aspect ratio and orientation and then using sliders you can adjust the exposure, contrast, saturation, and colour temperature of the image. You also can flip the image horizontally/vertically or invert it.



The second layer in Union must be the foreground image (i.e., fallow field) or solid colour. You have the same adjustment choices and may also choose a blending mode (e.g., multiply, colour dodge, overlay).

The third and final layer is for masking, allowing you to use an eraser, shape, or another photo to select what parts of the foreground you wish to keep or remove. Of course, you can cancel the entire project and start again, or save that composite and then re-introduce it as the background to a new Union project.

The options available to you are restricted, however the experience of the user, at least to me, is one of freedom. Somehow the limited options allow for a quicker exploration and experimentation. A study (Journal of Marketing Research, June 2011) “Focus! Creative Success is Enjoyed Through Restricted Choice” found that “restricting the choice of creative inputs actually enhances creativity for experienced consumers” because the person enjoys the creative process more.

Shelter in Place

by Penny Coddling

Given recent events, it is a striking coincidence that I am now writing about my image “Shelter in Place”. This image was made in April 2020 when the COVID pandemic was just beginning, and we were learning the meaning of “lockdown” and “shelter in place”. During that first pandemic April I decided to review my image archive for all the past Aprils with a view to sharpening my editing skills or making something new. This is a product of that effort.

I wanted to express my feelings of insecurity and anxiety even while sheltering. Delicate flowers like shooting stars and a shelter that seems precarious or broken, expressed my feelings of fragility. I made this collage from two images taken in 2009, April shooting stars with shallow depth of field and a broken window that I found in Wilmer, BC.

The images were edited in Photoshop CC as separate layers, the window image above the flowers. The interior of the building was masked so that the shooting stars and their green background would appear to be on the inside.

To connect the two layers I wanted one flower to peek out of its shelter. I made a rough selection of the left flower and applied a free transform to it thus making the flower appear to protrude out of the window. The image was finished with masking to blend the transformed edges of the flower, dodging and burning, and adding a texture layer.



Shoots Around Victoria

Shawnigan Lake Area

by James Dies

This is a three-stop field trip as all three of these spots are in a triangle within 7 km of each other. These sites are not interesting enough on their own to spend a lot of time at each one. This way people can spend a good day in the area and get plenty of shots.



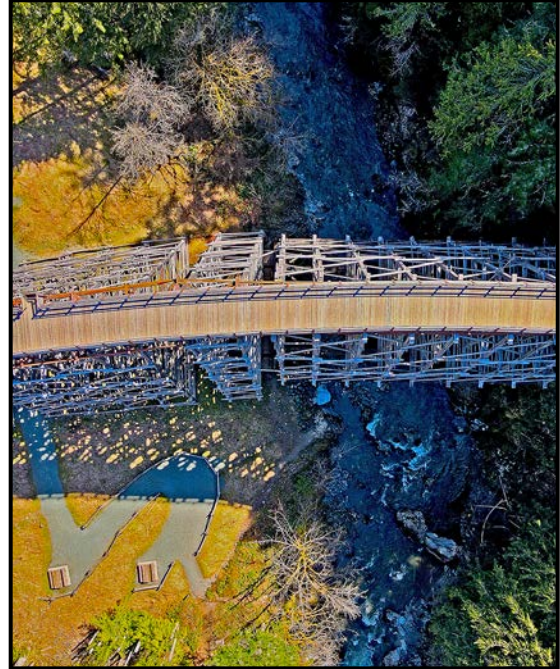
"The E&R Railway"

Shawnigan Lake's Old Mill Community Park is the historic site of the Shawnigan Lake Lumber Company that ran a mill from 1889 to 1943. It is on Recreation Road south of the village (GPS 48.6424, -123.6312). Industrial artifacts are scattered throughout the park; however, nature has grown back and some of the steel and concrete remains might be hard to locate. There are remains of piers at the lake where it once stood. The E&N railway might lead you to some of them as it runs straight through the park. The Park is also a bird sanctuary with over 64 bird species being recorded. A plaque lists all the bird species to be found here.

The village at 1778 Shawnigan Lake-Mill Bay Road is a quaint little unincorporated village. The lack of development in 50 years makes it a throwback to the 1970s. There are a few coffeehouses and nick-nack stores. It is a good place to stop for a coffee and a muffin and sit outside on the sidewalk. There is Shawnigan Wharf Park along the shore that has nice shots of the lake, the floating dock, and the hills and clouds on the opposite shore, especially when the lake is calm.

The Kinsol Trestle is off of Renfrew Road at 2869 Glen Eagles Rd, (GPS 48.6682, -123.6939). This incredible structure spans 187 metres and stands 44 metres above

the Koksilah River. Started in 1911 it was completed by CNR in 1920, abandoned in 1980 and restored in 2011. The Kinsol Trestle is one of the tallest free-standing and most spectacular railway timber trestle structures in the world. The trestle looks spectacular from above. It is a popular spot for photographers as the structure offers many different types and styles for the photographer to experiment with. Expect an easy 1 km easy walk along the old railbed from the parking lot to the trestle.



"Kinsol Trestle from Above"

Koksilah River Provincial Park is an undeveloped park located 7 km from Shawnigan Lake. It requires driving about a kilometre on a gravel logging road. Take Renfrew Road and drive to Burnt Bridge (GPS 48.6428, -123.7388) and park there. Under the bridge are deep pools and from the bridge it's a nice view of the river and the rocky gorge it runs through. There are hiking trails that follow the river through the rainforest all the way back about 5 km to the Kinsol Trestle. There are rapids which are most interesting when the river is running high.

As a bonus stop on your way home drive to Cobble Hill which is only 6.5 Km from Shawnigan Lake. It is a quaint little village which is becoming famous for its vineyards and the wineries that have sprung up around the village.

A good winery is Damali Lavender and Winery (*damali.ca*) at 3500 Telegraph Road. (GPS 48.6863, -123.5530), There is free admission and wine tasting, lavender fields (best in July and August) and the vineyards to photograph. Check opening times before you go. A perfect end to your day.

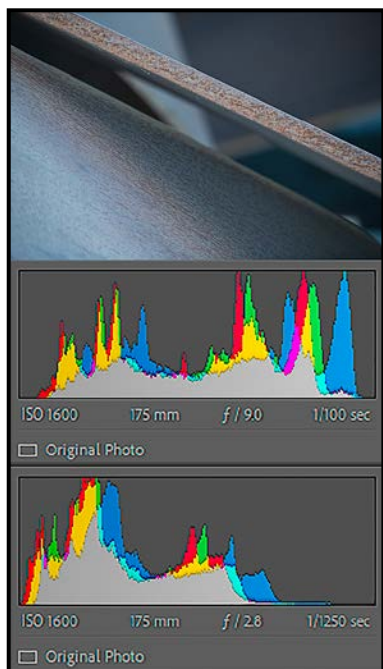
Getting it Right

by Richard James

There are a number of things that you need to consider on a consistent basis in order to “get it right” with the minimum amount of work. On page 20 of this issue Toby Snellgrove writes about framing the image. In a future issue he will be writing about cropping. It is often said “get it right in the camera” but there are many times where you may still need to adjust it later.

Getting the exposure right is key to capturing the maximum amount of detail in both the highlights and shadows in your images. The approach is somewhat different between shooting RAW files, which is always recommended, and only shooting JPEGs on which you are not going to do much editing afterwards. Following on from the in-camera exposure is the post-processing required to optimize the image.

To capture the maximum amount of luminance detail in an image you need to ensure that the exposure is sufficient so that the highlights are not quite burnt out. This means that you capture both the maximum amount of detail in the highlights and the shadows. If the exposure is lower than this you will lose detail in the shadows and waste unused space in the highlight end of the dynamic range of the sensor.



“Histograms”

With RAW images you do this by “exposing to the right” (ETTR). That is so that the right end of the histogram is almost touching the end of the scale. The top histogram

shows this. This requires a little bit of trial and error to interpret as what you are seeing on the camera’s LCD panel is the “baked in” JPEG version of the image using the specific camera settings in effect at that time, not the actual RAW data. When you first open a RAW image, looking at a default conversion, it may not look that close to what you thought you saw in the field which is where the post-processing comes in.

With JPEG images you need to do it slightly differently because you have very little latitude to accurately adjust the exposure (or colour) in post-processing since you already have a set of conversions baked into the image and you cannot access the original data. In this case what you want to see on the LCD panel is a representation of the scene that is as close as you can get to what you see with the eye. The lower histogram shows this. Note the unused part of the dynamic range on the right.

This may mean you should change the JPEG settings in your camera for each individual scene and lighting condition in order to get the best image possible. For example, if the highlights are not particularly bright then you should not make them so bright that they look unnatural. This is where you lose the dynamic range of the sensor.

Using in-camera exposure metering is very helpful for this task. The key thing to remember is that any of the exposure metering modes will try to make whatever is being measured 18% grey. Is the distribution of illumination in the image such that this is always achieved? Clearly it is not, so you have to accommodate that in your metering.

Looking at the two extremes, spot and everything, if you spot-meter something that is very bright it will underexpose your image (grey snow) and conversely if you spot-meter the shadows it will overexpose the image (blown highlights). Using one of the modes that covers a large sensor area and compares the information with an image database stored in the camera will often give you quite a good match.

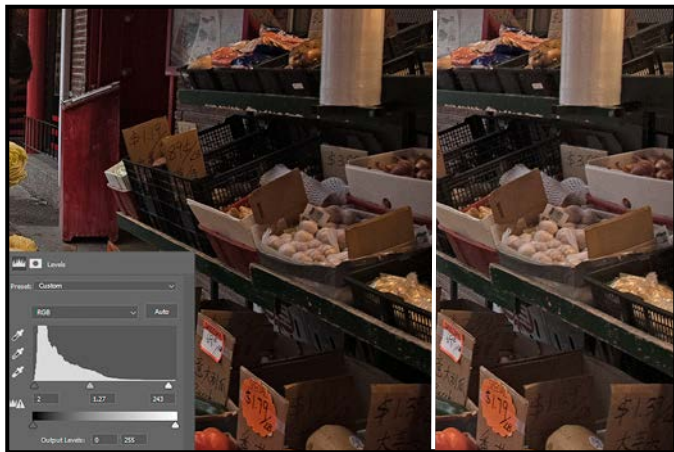
One good way to get a “technically-correct” exposure is to spot-meter on a standard grey card under the same illumination as the subject. So long as you have a wide enough distribution of brightness in the scene this will give you a good image.

Now that you have got a well-exposed image we can turn to post-processing. The following comments apply to virtually any post-processing software so I will not attempt to be software specific.



"Original Image"

With the RAW file it is always best to do as much of the work as you can in the RAW conversion stage before a bitmap (TIF/PSD) file is output as this makes the most use of the inherent flexibility of the RAW data. If you only have the JPEG original image to work with you have to recognize the limitations and work around them but the principles below still apply.

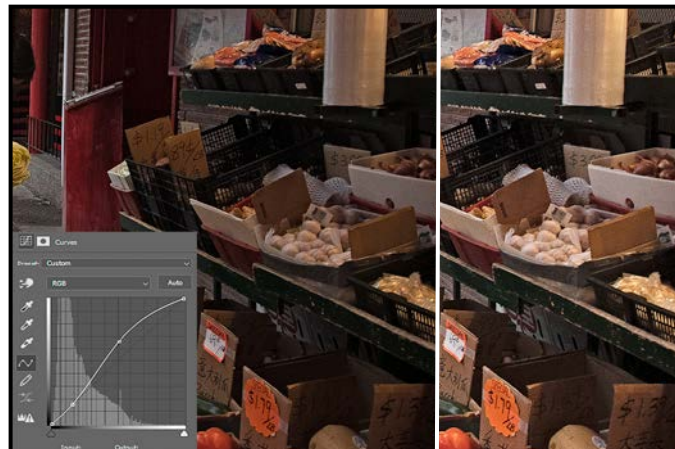


"Levels Control"

Depending on your default RAW conversion settings when you first open the image it may look flat, washed out and pretty lifeless. The first step to bring it to life is to adjust the highlight and shadow sliders to bring the highlights and shadows to the correct brightness. This is often described as highlights and shadows with just discernible detail in both and this often works but some scenes do not have this range, so this has to be taken into account.

The second step is to adjust the mid-tones to show good tonal separation across the range. Joseph Finkleman discusses this on page 26 of the January 2022 *Close-Up*. To do this you need to adjust both the mid-tones in the levels control (image above, right side) and the gradient around the mid-tones in the curve's control (image below, right side).

What I find very useful is to have both the original and the adjusted image open at the same time on the same monitor screen. This gives me a side-by-side comparison and I can see exactly what the changes I am making are doing to the image compared to the original.



"Curves Control"

Both of these adjustments can be made on JPEG images but you will probably find that the range of adjustments that you can make is limited without introducing artifacts or distortion.

One common problem with adjusting exposure (or colour) in a JPEG image is the issue of banding. This is particularly obvious on uniform monocolour areas such as blue skies.

Depending on the software that you are using there are a number of other adjustments related to exposure that can be made. These may be global or selective targeting a specific area of the image.

Some of these adjustments can be made during the RAW conversion stage while others can only be done later in a bit-mapped image. The final image shows additional adjustments.



"Final Image"

Beginner's Corner: HDR Images

by Joseph Finkleman

Back in the film days it was reasonably easy to get ten stops of dynamic range on individually-processed sheet film. It was much more difficult to get that on roll film since the situations that were photographed varied a lot. Besides, it was useless to have more than seven stops of dynamic range if you were projection printing (enlarger) since the paper could not handle more than that. Colour film was even more limited with about five stops total range. Digital sensors have come a long way in a short amount of time. It is now normal to have between ten and fourteen stops of tonal range.

For example, measuring the light from the darkest part of a dark garage out to the whitest white of a white car measured twelve stops, meaning that most modern sensors could retain detail from dark to light. When standing in the sun in front of an old gatehouse, the gatehouse interior was quite dark and behind the gate house was a full sunlit courtyard. In both cases the sensor handled the dynamic range perfectly.



"Memorial Auditorium"

In the last twelve years I have run into only one situation that really needed HDR images (High Dynamic Range). I have to admit, when you need more dynamic range than you have, HDR is an extraordinary feature. I also used HDR once in order to see how to do it. It was an interior of a large venue that just had been renovated. A small group of us were allowed in to photograph it before anyone actually got to use the auditorium.

I was photographing a lake in a valley facing west. The sun had set behind the mountains, yet the sky was still fully lit and the valley was quite dark. This is a situation when a graduated neutral density filter would have been useful, or HDR. In truth, on a tripod HDR is much more useful than a graduated filter.



"Lake View"

I have found that three to five exposures are generally more than sufficient to make a good HDR image. You want to keep the difference between the exposures as close as is possible. I have found that one-stop increments are the closest I need to use.

What you absolutely want to avoid is compressing the highlights and the shadows so much that the scene looks artificial. The goal is to have the scene look as normal as possible.

The other thing you are going to need is software to process the merge. In Photoshop it is easy-peasy. Open the images you want to merge in Photoshop. Go to File and in the drop-down menu, Automate. In the sub-menu there is Merge to HDR. It will then ask what files so indicate all open files. After that it will take care of the merge for you. There are also stand-alone programs for HDR.

Do remember that the closer the exposures are, the better the HDR merge will look. The resulting file is fairly large. There is no way around that. Your computer needs to have at least 16 GB of RAM for this.

What HDR will allow you to do is to process all of the information in the sky and highlights while also being able to process all of the information in the shadows. After you have gone to all of this effort, do remember to process for middle-tone contrast. When you can get the "snap" of the middle tones and still have detailed blacks and whites in a difficult lighting problem, you will have achieved well-deserved kudos.

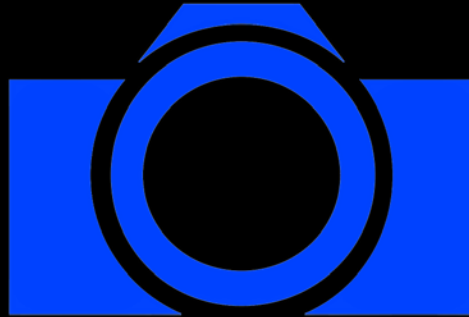
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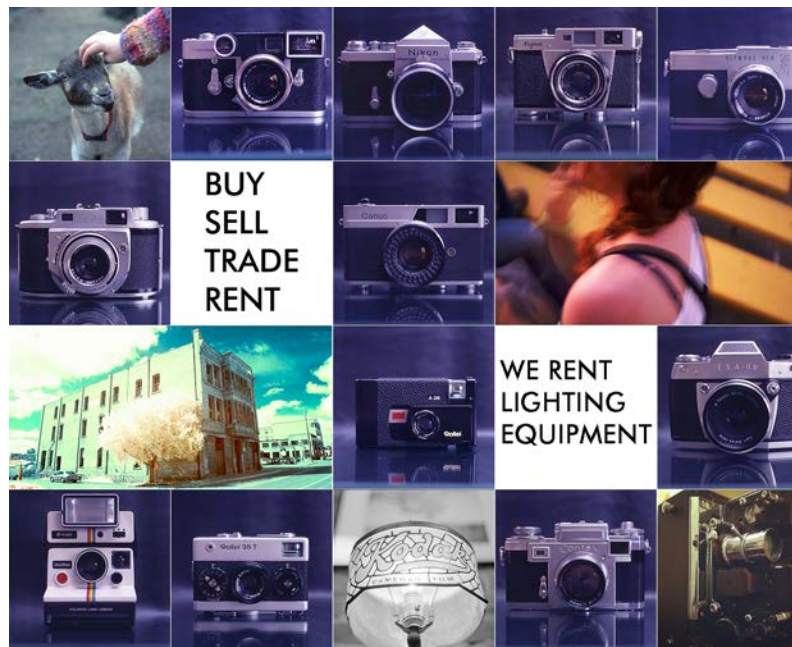
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