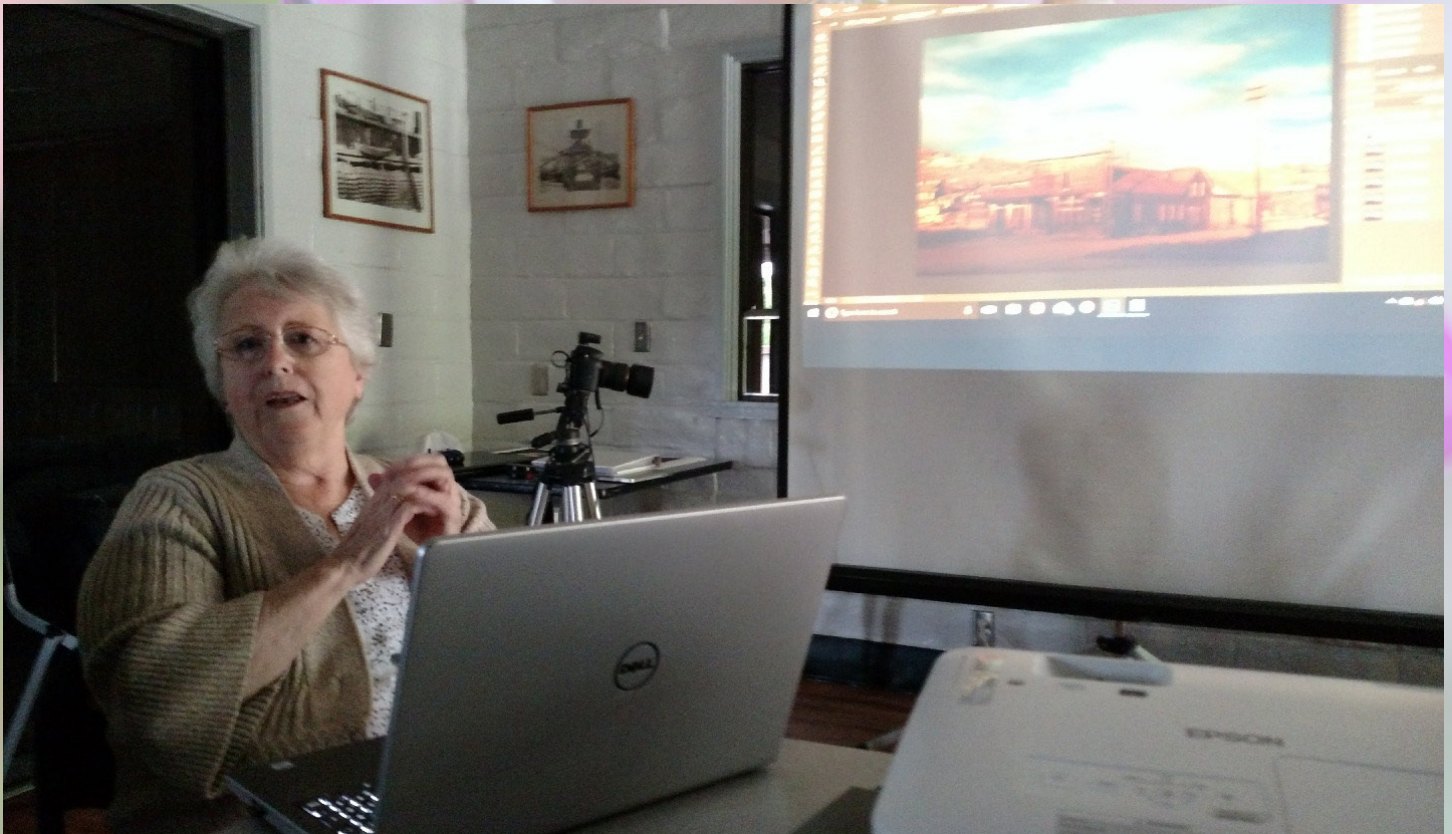# Stockton Camera Club

The Shutter Tripper   May 2018

Profile, Macro, Focus Stacking Workshop

On April 28th SCC put on a great workshop on Profiling your monitor and Printer, Macro Photography and Focus Stacking. For those of you who couldn't make it, you missed on a lot of good information. We had a new member, Pam Killingsworth, and two guests, Jake Babb and his son, from the Modesto Camera Club join us.

If there is enough interest, we would like of have additional Workshops over the year. Please make suggestions for topics to be covered.

SCC Officers 2017

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President's Message
May 2018
By Heide Stover

Our camera club event at Oak Grove Park was wonderful! We had good attendance and met some new people. Thank you to all of you that came to the event!!!!

Doug, Wayne and Sharon were wonderful! I think we all learned many new things from them. Thank you to the three of you for taking your time to prepare and present at this meeting. It is very much appreciated!!! Thanks also to Dean for showing us something about image sizing. That was also very informative.

The Boat House is really nice with an outside area that has picnic tables and overlooks the lake. Nice place for an event and I hope we can have one there again.

Our next camera club meeting is coming up so get out there a photograph stuff! I am going to play with some of the new things I learned at our event!

Happy Shooting!

Heide

A Big Thank You to Our Sponsors!

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2018 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.

Stockton Camera Club
March 2018 Competition Standing

This month's judge, Stephen Greiner of the Tracy area, view 41 images with an average of 9.41 He awarded 21 tens. The following received image of the month honors.

Congratulations to all the Annual winners!!!
Print of the Month Class A – Arches #546 by Wayne Carlson
Digital Image of the Month Class A – Viaggio Winery by Wayne Carlson
Print of the Month Class AA – Busting a Pose by Paul Chapman
Digital Image of the Month Class AA – Startled Sandhill Cranes by Heide Stover
Print of the Month Class AAA – Cranes in Flight by Doug Ridgway
Digital Image of the Month Class AAA – Contemplation by Sharon McLemore
Please check out the website, **http://www.stockton-cameraclub.com/home.html**

Class A Standings	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Wayne Carlson	76	56	20	37	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sheldon McCormick	71	52	19	36	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ron Wetheral	27	27	0	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Monica Hoeft	26	26	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Jim Cahill	25	25	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kris Borgen	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gary Brown	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Em McLaren	77	57	20	39	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Paul Chapman	71	52	19	34	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Elizabeth Parrish	70	52	18	36	34	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Heide Stover	68	59	9	39	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Christine Blue	37	28	9	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stan Sogsti	37	28	9	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Richard Bullard	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ed Richter	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Class AAA Standing	TOTAL	OPEN	SS	FEB	MAR	MAY	JUN	JULY	SEPT	OCT	Nov	DEC
Doug Ridgway	78	58	20	39	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dean Taylor	78	59	19	39	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sharon McLemore	77	57	20	38	39	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Joanne Sogsti	76	56	20	39	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Trey Steinhart	37	29	8	37	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Susanne Nichols	20	10	10	0	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

2018 Calendar of Events

Every 3rd Thursday (Except April & Aug) 6:30 PM	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**Membership Meeting Contact Heide Stover h1stover@aol.com**
Thursday May 17	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**May General Meeting Special Subject - Travel With PSA Rules**
Thursday June 21	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**June General Meeting Prints only with no special subject**
Thursday July 19	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**July General Meeting Special Subject - Flowers**
Thursday August 16	**To Be Determined**	**Annual Pot Luck**
Thursday September 20	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**September General Meeting Special Subject - Agriculture**
Thursday October 18	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**October General Meeting Special Subject - Black & White/Monochrome**
Wednesday October 24	**Woodbridge Ecological Reserve Isenberg Refuge**	**Special Photography Tour 4:40pm - 6:40pm**
Thursday November 15	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**November General Meeting Prints only with no special subject**
Thursday December 20	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**December General Meeting Special Subject - Before (Unprocessed) And After (Processed) Photo**

2019 Calendar of Events

Thursday January 17	**SCC Annual Banquet**	**TBA**
Thursday February 21	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**February General Meeting Special Subject - Guilty Pleasure**
Thursday March 21	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**March General Meeting Special Subject - Focus On One Color**
Thursday May 16	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**May General Meeting Special Subject - Backlit**
Thursday June 20	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**June General Meeting Prints only with no special subject**
Thursday July 18	**West Lane Bowling Alley Stockton**	**July General Meeting Special Subject - Gates/Fences**

10 reasons your prints look wrong
The most common problems in printing your photos
Prints not matching your screen and other issues.
By Keith Cooper

Sometimes your prints just don't look right. What's wrong? What should you do about it?
Over the years, Keith Cooper has printed thousands of photos and written many articles and reviews about printing photographs.

This article addresses the most common problems we've been asked about and offers some potential solutions. It includes many links to more detailed articles and reviews that may be of help. We're always happy to answer people's questions about printing

The sections go from the most basic to ones that invite you to ask more complex questions about why you are printing.

1. Your prints come out too dark
The simplest explanation is that your monitor is too bright.

Yes, it really is the most common problem and solution for people contacting me over the years.

Modern monitors are a lot brighter by default and this skews your editing/adjustment of tones. The bright monitor opens up shadow detail, and you can clearly see things. Once you make the print, it's likely to be viewed in dimmer lighting, and because of the way our vision works, the shadows show this up.

If you have a print that's come out too dark, take it out on a sunny day and look at it in bright sunlight. See how it doesn't look so dark in the shadows now? That's OK if you view your prints in daylight, perhaps not so when indoors.

The simple answer – turn your monitor brightness down. The longer answer – use a monitor calibrator to set a known lower brightness.

- **Why are my prints to dark**

This print looks very different (tonally) in daylight
but the colour is spot on

2. Your screen is wrong

Colour management can be a complex technical subject, but you don't need to know all that stuff to benefit from it.

Look at the picture here. It probably looks fairly OK on your monitor, and if you only ever look at photos on your screen, then that's fine.

If your monitor adds a slight purple cast to everything, you might not notice. Our vision is good at ignoring such things. Let's say you adjust your photos to look good on the screen, you may even cancel out that slight purple tint in your adjustment.

The problem comes when you print the photo and that purple cast that you've removed becomes a greenish look to your print.

Modern screens do tend to be more accurate – well, the more expensive ones do. Whatever screen you are using – you simply can't adjust them by eye, or even spot where they are wrong.
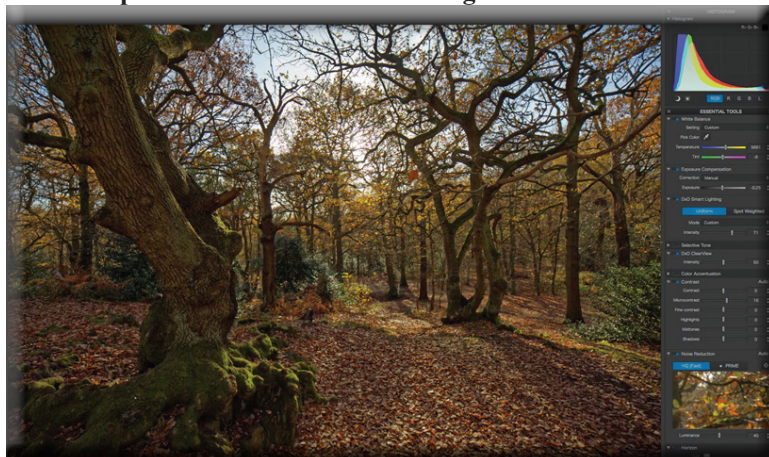

The simple answer – use a basic monitor calibrator.

The longer answer – a better screen and calibrator.

- **Better colour on your monitor**
- **ColorMunki Smile calibrator**
- **ColorMunki Display calibrator**
- **Spyder5 calibrator**
- **BenQ SW271 monitor review**

X-Rite display calibrators.

3. How are you editing your photos?

Most computers come with a basic image editor. That's often fine for quick snaps, but tends to let you down once you start printing larger photos for display.

You don't need to go all the way to using Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom. Even a more basic editor such Photoshop Elements will support the sorts of adjustments you need to make. It will also allow you to make effective use of colour management in your print setup.

Newer software packages such as Luminar, DxO PhotoLab, Affinity Photo and ON1 are well worth a look.

- **Luminar Review**
- **Topaz Studio**
- **DxO PhotoLab Review**
- **Why sharpening is vital for prints**

Editing an image in DxO PhotoLab.

A large test print (printer is the [Pro-2000](#)).

This is a screenshot from my [P800 review](#), where I'd accidentally selected the 'AirPrint' version of the driver – it's easy to do.

Making a printer profile on the PRO-1000

4. Is your printer up to the job?

Whilst it's perfectly possible to make some nice looking small prints with a normal office printer and some 'photo paper', they are never going to match what you can get from a printer designed for photo use.

It is unfortunate, but HP for example, has effectively left the high quality (desktop) photo printing market. I can only really recommend Canon or Epson photo printers these days for high quality photo printing.
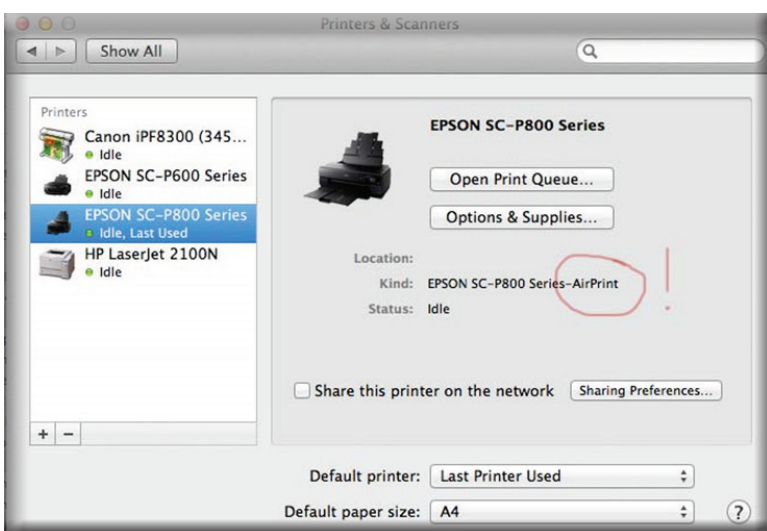
• **[Is your printer good enough](#)**
• **[Epson P400 Review](#)**
• **[Epson P600 review](#)**
• **[Epson P800 review](#)**
• **[Canon PRO-100 review](#)**
• **[Canon PRO-10 review](#)**
• **[Canon PRO-1 review](#)**
• **[Canon PRO-1000 review](#)**
• **[Questions to answer if you want a really big printer](#)**

5. Are you using the right printer driver?

Check that the printer driver you see when sending a print to the printer is the right one.

An easy error to make is to use something like an AirPrint or WiFi specific one. These may be fine for printing snaps from your phone or tablet, but not if you are making larger prints that you've spent time adjusting and editing.

In general, use a wired connection if you are making large prints. This also avoids potentially cut down WiFi printing capabilities that could affect your prints.

6. Not using colour profiles

Whilst printer drivers have got better over the years. It's still better to use a printer profile that matches the paper you are using. Canon and Epson both provide profiles to go with their papers.

Many better paper suppliers will provide free profiles with their papers, and some will even make custom profiles for you, if you buy paper.

This is not the place to go into the details of using such profiles, but have a look at any of my printer reviews to see examples of using them.

• **[Why colour management matters](#)**
• **[All of Keith's in-depth printer reviews](#)**

A few of the test prints from a printer review.

7. Are you too cheap?

The quality of the materials you choose make a big difference.

If you use cheap third party inks or get your paper from a discount store because it has 'Photo' writen on the front of the pack, then expect variable and unpredictable results.

Sure I've been able to make excellent prints on a paper that cost a few pence a sheet, but I've got custom profiling equipment and software that costs thousands of pounds. Even then I'd not like to predict how the print will look after a few months.

That doesn't mean you have to use Epson or Canon branded paper – my day to day paper for large commercial prints is a good 300gsm Lustre finish paper from a local supplier. There are large prints of mine (several metres long) in offices and architects practices that look superb, years after I printed them.

- • **Pinnacle Lustre** – my 'go to' paper for commercial prints
- • **Two Fotospeed cotton papers** – includes info about why you might choose a particular paper for an image.
- • **Innova IFA69 FibaPrint Baryta** – a paper I like for many of my 'fine art' prints
- • **All our paper reviews**

8. The screen is not the print

A common notion is that you get the image to look exactly how you want it on screen and then just print it. The idea is that if the printer (and paper) are good enough then the print will look 'right'.

At one level this sounds fine, since how are you going to edit your photo, if not by looking at your screen?
Where the problems (and disappointment) come in is that many forget the simple fact that screens and prints are two entirely different technologies.

At its most basic, screens emit light and prints just reflect it. More than that, screens have a much wider range of brightness than paper prints. With the print, the brightest white is the paper, and the blackest black depends on the ink used and paper.

In printing, you are looking to fit the dynamic range of your screen into the much smaller one of a print. If you also consider that the dynamic range of the real world is usually even more than a screen can display, you can see that a print is a different object in its own right. A frequent reaction is to ask how anyone can get a print right? A quick look at prints you like shows it is eminently possible.

My own approach is to remember that what I'm seeing on the screen is only an intermediate stage in creating a print. The print will look different but I'm prepared for that.

This comes from experience, and includes really looking at how test images look as prints compared to how they look on the screen. I'll always print them unaltered, since they are test images for the printer, not my editing setup.

Once my print setup is OK, I know there's no problems in printing and I can concentrate on the image I'm working on. Many aspects of the photograph, such as its composition and balance are perfectly clear on the screen.

Looking at a print

Paper choices are much more subjective. The 'right' paper can give the edge to a great photo but won't save a bad one any more than masses of filters and HDR techniques.

You might want to look at Soft Proofing as a tool to give a feel for how an image will look on a particular paper. However, be very wary of how the screen is NOT the print.

Soft proofing can easily become a crutch to avoid thinking about and understanding how prints look under different lighting and on different papers – use it judiciously.

- • **Using a PDV-3e print viewing stand** – about looking at screens and prints
- • **Impressora papers review** – how prints look different on different papers
- • **Innova Fine art cotton papers** – how do paper textures affect your image

A custom black and white test image.

9. Are your photos up to the job?

When you start printing it seems like there are many technical challenges and it's easy to wonder if you are using the right paper or printer settings.

I've seen people continually look for 'better' papers because their prints just don't come out as they want. This is often a sign of deep seated issues in their print workflow.

By print workflow, I'm looking at the whole photography process, right from taking a photo and getting it out of your camera, right through to the print coming out of the printer. If the print looks wrong, then there may be a problem somewhere in that path.

Unless you understand your whole workflow, you are just guessing as to where the problem is.

This is why, when testing a new paper, I always start with a known good test image. I take the view that if I can't produce an excellent looking test print, then what hope have I for one of my own images.

- **Free printer test images collection**
- **A special Black & White printer test image**
- **Comparing cameras, from print quality**
- **Tutorial:** A large black and white print
- **Making a print** – from seeing a view and through to the print

10. The real challenge?

I take the view that if I can produce a perfect test print, but my photo prints don't look good, then the problem is not with my printing, printer, paper or ink.

More photos – mostly commercial images I've taken for clients, that I'd not seen before as prints.

Making prints of your photographs is a rewarding thing to do, but after a while you do have to come back to asking if your photographic skills are letting you down? At a show I was asked to comment on why a print didn't work, and my best answer was that the photographer should have stood about six feet to the left to take the photo.

Sometimes a particular photo just doesn't look good as a print – accept it, learn from it and move on.

Whilst I'm thinking of the skills you bring to the actual taking of the photos, I shouldn't ignore the temptation to overdo all the editing tricks/filters/presets. They only go so far in making a mundane image interesting.

Whilst much of my commercial work is delivered digitally, I still make a point of printing things – it's a real test of whether the image is good enough to stand on its own.

One other thing always worth remembering about making large prints – very few people will notice your choice of paper, what they see is what the photograph is about, and what it means to them. Really solid technique and printing technologies can give your prints extra impact

and appeal, but a poor photo is still a poor photo...

- **Where is your photography going next year**
- **The art of the big landscape print**
- **Moving back to film** – how nostalgia almost made it

Buy Keith a Coffee?

The Approach To Better Landscape Photos
Three perspectives on seeing what is familiar—versus seeing what is new—in landscape photography
Text & Photography
By Marc Muench, Andy Williams And Sivani Babu

Pioneer Basin
John Muir Wilderness, Sierra Nevada Mountains, California.
Photo by Marc Muench

You are standing atop a ridge looking down as the world spreads out below you. Late afternoon sunlight dapples a forest of pine trees that stretches for miles along either side of a winding river. In the distance, rugged mountains rise from the earth, their jagged peaks scraping the clouds above. Where do you point your camera?

Approaching a landscape can be among the most daunting parts of landscape photography. It is also the most important. Everything begins with seeing. But how we see is situational and is influenced by our experiences and familiarity with a location and subject. Photographers Marc Muench, Sivani Babu and Andy Williams discuss previsualization, discovery and how they each approach the landscape.

Marc Muench

For the first half of my life, almost every landscape was new. The West was filled with unexplored regions¬¬—lakes, rivers, canyons, forests and glacially capped mountains that I wanted to climb. I was exposed to many of these places at an early age while traveling with my parents on landscape photography excursions. Each visit to a new and wild place opened the door to more intrigue. But we visited many locations more than once and, over the years, they became familiar.

When I began my professional career as a photographer, some of the first places I resourced for commercial and editorial assignments were those I had been to before—some locations I visited more than a dozen times in just a few years. Familiarity meant efficiency, and many of the photographs I made in those places were previsualized.

Bechers Bay
Santa Rosa Island, Channel Islands National Park, California
Photo by Marc Muench

As my career grew, the destinations diversified. The world was shrinking, and I found myself flying to the corners of the United States and then to Mexico, Canada and the Caribbean. I didn't realize it at the time, but the way I saw and created imagery was evolving.

I was regularly visiting locations that were totally unfamiliar to me. With no internet at that time, there was little documentation of existing work, and I was forced to innovate on the fly, to create images using compositional skills that were not influenced by other photographers or artists. This was a period of what I call "discovery" landscape photography.

Both landscape photography approaches offer advantages and disadvantages. Both are important. And both have provided me with rewarding experiences and memorable images.

Pear lake
Sierra Nevada Mountains, Sequoia National Park
Photo by Marc Muench
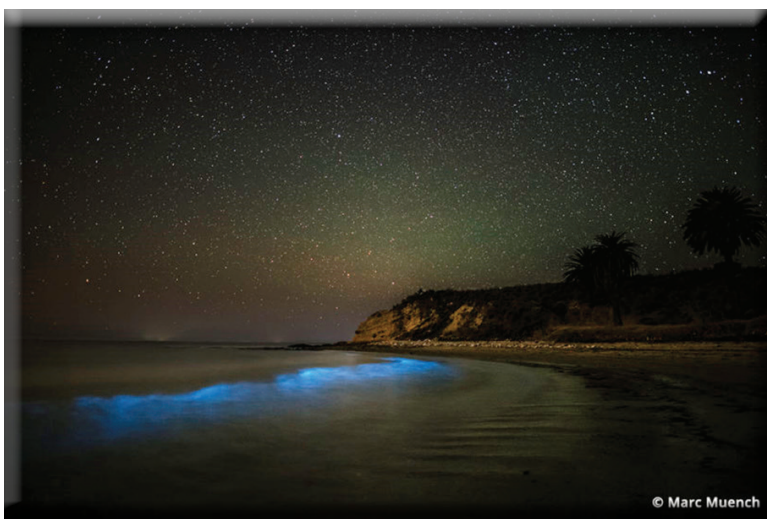
The Previsualized Approach

The white granite is young by geological standards. In fact, so is the entire Sierra Nevada mountain range, which is still growing. Small glaciers cling to some of the high summits—on the northern slopes, where there is less direct sun, and above 12,000 feet, where it is cooler. Waterfalls plummet down the canyons through a maze of steep cliffs and deep alpine lakes, and only take a respite while meandering through the occasional meadow. The scent of the granite mixes with foxtail pine sap, ozone and wild onion. The Sierra Nevada mountains are familiar to me. I've been sleeping under the stars, high up in their steeps, for more than 40 years.

My first memory of the Sierras was a rather long backpacking trip with my parents when I was only 8 years old. At 9,000 feet elevation, at the entrance to the Golden Trout Wilderness, we began the hike on our way to climb Langley Peak, the southern-most mountain in the Sierra that is taller than 14,000 feet. I had no camera. The only images I made were memories: I remember my father composing with his large format camera and carrying it over his shoulder in a leather case the entire way. I remember the trail being hot and dusty, and the nights being cold and dark. I remember the thunderstorms racing across the sky while we summited and the stinging pellets of hail that forced us to seek shelter beneath overhanging slabs of granite. For an 8-year-old, it was all very exciting.

Forty years later, my most recent hike into the Sierras was with a group of friends, all fathers with children from my hometown of Santa Barbara, California. We have been making these six-day trips for about 10 years. Each time, we visit a new location in the Sierras, places like Graveyard Lakes, The Tablelands and others. We spend the days hiking unnamed peaks and high alpine cirques with no trails and the nights telling tales around the campfire. The only schedules we keep are determined by the sun and our stomachs.

Unusually for me, on these trips, I am under no pressure to photograph. Instead, I become more of a sponge, absorbing locations, scenes and good times with good friends. I never intended these trips to become a great creative outlet, but they have. They allow me the opportunity to practice landscape photography as I believe it should be, with the right mix of familiarity, uncertainty and atmospherics that bring out the best in me. My understanding and familiarity with the sights, sounds and smells of the Sierras are born of great nostalgia and give me a lot to work with. Even new locations feel familiar, and returning there feels like hanging out with an old friend.

Bioluminescence
Gaviota Coast, Refugio State Beach, California
Photo by Marc Muench

Another location that became familiar to me was the Channel Islands. Each year for 15 years, I sailed to Santa Barbara Island to catch lobsters. I learned to lobster dive from a good friend, a retired underwater diver named Jack Baldelli, or "Captain Jack," as I like to call him. One windless midnight some 20 years ago, Jack showed me how to catch lobsters in the dark while free diving. Donning thick, 5-millimeter wetsuits, flippers, gloves and masks, we slid into the water from the back of Jack's sailboat and began snorkeling to the shallower areas where the lobsters feed on barnacles. The bioluminescence caught me by surprise. Every time I pushed my arms through the still water, the world around me lit up. The ocean came alive.When the elements for a previsualized image don't come together, being open to discovery can lead to the concept materializing in another way.

I only caught three lobsters that night, but I was inspired to capture the experience in pictures. For the next 15 years, I saved time to sail with Jack to the tiny island off the Santa Barbara coast at the beginning of lobster season not just to catch the incredibly tasty lobsters but also to create underwater images that reminded me of that first night. I tried many times to find and photograph the bioluminescence, but it never occurred again while I was there, and I had to settle for daylight images. I still carry that first impression with me, though, and to this day, I hope to capture something I experienced 20 years ago. As elusive as the scene might be, it was real, and it inspired me to create more images in a place that became familiar.

The Discovery Approach

I'd been to Iceland many times, but until last summer, I had not been to the interior. The rugged coastlines of Iceland had kept me busy for years with their waterfalls, glaciated volcanoes and aurorae. But getting to know the coastline made me curious about what was just over the horizon, inland.

During the summer of 2016, I finally got the chance to explore the highlands of Iceland with a good friend, climbing partner and photographer, Dan Evans. Dan and I wasted no time after meeting in Reykjavik, driving straight out to a remote inland area. We camped for the next eight days, with only the occasional dip in one of the Icelandic hot springs to clean up and soak. We had no single destination, but rather a list of many places friends had recommended. We were guided by our intuition, our curiosity and, of course, the weather.

Highlands
Vatnajökull National Park, Iceland
Photo by Marc Muench

Once we veered off of Highway 1, the main road, everything was new. There are few roads in the Icelandic highlands, but driving off-road threatens the amazing little mosses, plants and animals that live there, so we hiked. When we noticed an intriguing-looking canyon or waterfall, we stopped, packed our camera bags with water and snacks, and set out on foot. Even in today's social media frenzy, there is little literature about the highlands. This made each hike more intriguing and more challenging. We were responsible for choosing where to go, how far to go, and when to go. We made all the decisions about managing our time, our resources and, most importantly, our creativity.

The first region we explored was a remote section of Vatnajökull National Park around the notorious volcano Laki. It was vast, rugged and full of surprises that we could have spent a month exploring.

I studied the horizon with binoculars and noticed what appeared to be spray from a large waterfall several miles away, but because of a hill between us, I could not see the actual fall. It was an intriguing mystery, so we decided to spend the night nearby and hike out to the location early the next morning.

When the sun rose at 3 a.m., we bounced out of the tent and began the hike. There were fissures formed by a volcanic eruption in the 1700s that created the small, moss-covered craters that became interesting foregrounds for images of the vast volcanic landscape at dawn. The pink clouds cinched the deal, and we suddenly became immersed in photographing something completely unplanned.

Although our hike was slightly delayed, we eventually made it to the waterfall — one that neither of us had ever seen in images. Without great light, we simply recorded possible compositions that we could use when we return in the future.

Later in the trip, we set our sights on climbing Hekla, an active volcano. Hekla is not a technical climb but rather a hike up through snow, ice and very rugged volcanic fields of sharp lava. On the drive up to the trailhead, a sign instructed us to download an application that would send us text messages of an imminent eruption.

A 2 a.m. departure got us up through the lava fields and over the snow-capped summit ridge just in time to photograph the sunrise as climbing tendrils of low cumulus clouds danced around the lower ridges of the surrounding mountains and volcanoes. Views of the highlands stretched for miles and wrapped around to the ocean to the south. My eyes feasted on new sights and images I could never have conceived of—images I had never seen in any publication. This was why I had come to the highlands: to experience something new and unusual and to welcome the challenge, as a landscape photographer, that came with that. I was reminded that finding new images in new places is a thrilling part of my art that I love to practice.

The "Previsualized Approach" is a test of our skills, but, more than that, it is an examination of the depth of our experiences in and knowledge of a location. To become familiar with a place is to understand its character. It is to learn to read the light and to believe that we can capture part of a location's story. This takes time—weeks, months, even years. The more time we spend, the less we have to rely on the grace of luck.

I've heard from many photographers that the most amazing images they've ever created were at places they frequented, and that on just that one day, while passing by, they were able to catch "the moment." But in many cases, the reality of that story is that they only knew to capture that image at that moment because of their history with that place. Familiarity with the subject and location creates a bond that is personal and that is, for me, an incredibly rewarding aspect of landscape photography.

Myvatn geothermal areas, Iceland
Photo by Marc Muench

The "Discovery Approach," on the other hand, is about the act of seeing, and how we work with composition, light and subject. By refraining from researching the images already created in a place, we can all practice the discovery approach. And while we might come to some of the same conclusions about certain well-known locations and vistas, without a preview, we can be more fully engaged in the seeing process, viewing these places through our own eyes rather than the eyes of others. Making these images successful requires focus, energy, time and the one ingredient that we can't manufacture: luck. In many discovery landscape shoots, luck is the gracing element of true success, but I've found that if we're trying, luck usually shows up.

Blue iceberg under dark sky
Svalbard, Norway
Photo by Sivani Babu

Sivani Babu

Familiarity is a fluid concept for me. In my work as a photographer and as a travel writer, I regularly find myself in new places, and I am resistant to conducting extensive research about a location beforehand. There are several reasons why I don't like to know too much before I go, but the most important is this: A place will never look or feel the same as it does during those first encounters. To the greatest extent possible, I want those initial impressions to be my own and not what others have perceived before me. Add into the mix that I am also drawn to places and things that are utterly unpredictable, and previsualization in the traditional sense goes out the window. But the fundamental principle of previsualization—the idea that we must understand something on an intimate level in order to more fully tell its story—still plays a significant role in my craft.

When I fell in love with photography, I fell in love with ice, particularly big ice. Antarctica was unlike any place I'd ever been. There were animals I'd never seen and centuries of history that fascinated me, but it was the ice that captivated and inspired me. It had personality. Through its wind- and water-shaped curves and cracks, it told stories, the tales unfolding as we circled an iceberg and each majestic arch, emerald pool and crystalline icicle revealed itself. I've returned to Antarctica several times since that first visit, and more than any single place, it is the ice that feels like home. But Antarctica isn't the only place with ice.

Earlier this summer, a series of fortuitous events landed me in Svalbard, Norway. It was the farthest north I'd ever been. I knew that we would be looking for polar bears and that at those northern latitudes there would definitely be ice, but beyond that, I knew very little of the character of Svalbard before I traveled north. What I found was a landscape that was as foreign as it was familiar: deep fjords cut by the movement of glaciers over millennia; striated hills and mountains; apex predators that sauntered across pancake ice in front of our ship; and icebergs, glacial blue and intricately sculpted by water and weather. The fjords were new. So were the hills, the mountains and the polar bears. But the ice—I knew the ice. And without knowing where we would be, when we would be there or what I might be looking at when we arrived, I could, in a very general sense, previsualize what facets of the ice I wanted to capture.

The images floated in my head. Abstract close-ups of the face of an iceberg with water below, a giant berg with birds in flight set against the blue ice, and monolithic icebergs that conveyed both beauty and power. One afternoon, as the sky grew dark and the water grew black, I finally saw it—a massive, triangular iceberg floating by itself in a still fjord. Maybe this is the one, I thought.

Its architectural shape with a row of columns set askew vaguely reminded me of an ancient Greek temple crumbling to the sea, and a familiar excitement began to bubble up. Our ship set in for a closer look, and I worked the details, but it wasn't until we moved on from the iceberg that I got what I really wanted. As we drifted away, the ice became both temple and mountain. Its peak was reflected in the water surrounded by bits of sea ice, and the sunlight, still blocked by a canvas of clouds, illuminated the patterns in the sky. And there in Svalbard, a place I'd never been, I felt the addictive thrill of photographing something I inherently understood.

This isn't pure previsualization, but it is previsualization as I tend to practice it—a hybrid approach that is rooted in the emotion of connection but that also draws from the discovery approach to landscape photography. It combines my familiarity with a subject or experience with discovering a new place in real time. This approach challenges me to slow down and thoughtfully portray something I know, while simultaneously challenging me to adapt to something that is unfamiliar. When it all comes together, the images made are, for me, the most gratifying. Familiarity can also be stagnating. That's where the pure discovery approach comes in.

River leading to big boulder, fog and trees
Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, California
Photo by Sivani Babu

I grew up a long day's drive from Northern California's Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, but until a couple of years ago, I hadn't spent any time in that part of my home state.

Our trip was actually to the Oregon Coast. Marc, myself and another photographer and friend of ours had spent four days exploring the area between Brookings and Bandon, but it rained heavily on our last night in Oregon, and we knew that with a little luck, we could be in for something special just south of the state border.

With rain clouds still threatening to open up and soak the earth, we woke early and headed south until we crossed back into California. Somewhat shamefully, I had no idea what to expect. I hadn't really been in the redwoods since my childhood. I imagined that we would be walking through the forest composing images of the tallest of trees. It never occurred to me that I might wind up standing in the middle of a gently flowing river mesmerized by a rapidly changing landscape.

A dense fog hung in the air when we arrived at the turnout by the water, but we could see scattered patches of light, and that was intriguing enough for us to hang around and see what might develop. Rain developed first, heavy enough for us to seek shelter, but, still, we didn't leave. When the rain let up, we wandered back out and waited. The fog began to lift.

We all walked out to the middle of the river and looked downstream. The reflections of the trees on the riverbanks and the stone-covered riverbed created a path that led straight to a large, glistening rock and then off into an ethereal land where layers of trees played peekaboo with the rolling fog.

And then it was gone. As quickly as it had emerged, the layers faded, the light changed, and the need to catch flights back in Oregon became imminent. It was a magical moment, and there is no doubt that luck played a pivotal role, but so too did our willingness to chase the possibility and our readiness when the image emerged.

I didn't (and still don't) have a deep personal connection with the redwoods or with the river in the photo. That kind of familiarity takes more time to build, but seeing and capturing that image was no less an incredible moment, and it provided a challenge that is inherently lost to familiarity.

Andy Williams

I'm the guy who doesn't read book jackets or watch movie trailers. I don't want to know too much about what I'm going to experience, whether that's a story, a film or a place out in the world that I am going to photograph. Previsualizing is not in my DNA, but it is an important and valuable part of approaching landscape photography.

Dunes and shadows
Khongor Sand Dunes, Gobi Desert, Mongolia
Photo by Andy Williams

With the constant bombardment of great images from nearly every place on Earth, the real challenge for me with previsualizing is ensuring that I am pursuing my own vision. Every time I'm out photographing, whether it's a place that is new to me or a place I've visited and photographed many times, I feel as if I have all this "previsualization" in my head—a composite of every image I've ever seen of a place. My job is to parse that out into something that is my own.

I like to get to a place well before the time I think the light will be best. I want to get a feel for it. I walk around, observing the big scenes and the small scenes. What am I looking for? The short answer is I don't know, but, ultimately, the correct answer is the right blend of everything I know consciously and subconsciously about the place.

From there, it's on to execution. I find that if I consciously force myself to do something "different," then I stand a better chance of making a compelling photograph. I might change perspective by getting really low to the ground, or change focal lengths, shooting a traditional, wide-angle landscape scene with a moderate telephoto lens instead and then stitching multiple shots together. I might shoot with a really shallow depth of field or reach for my infrared camera, or intentionally overexpose or underexpose to draw attention to part of the scene.

In the Khongor Sand Dunes in Mongolia's Gobi Desert, I had a swirling vortex of imagery in my head, but the image that came up most often was of camels and their riders on a ridge with the setting sun, a perfect combination if ever there was one. But I didn't find my best shot by looking to recreate this scene. I found my best shot by doing something different. I turned around! And there I found a perfect composition of lines, light and shadow…and those camels and riders.

When I'm photographing, there is no real distinction between the previsualized and discovery approaches to seeing the landscape. There is just one approach, and it is an amalgam of everything I know and everything I think I know about a place before I arrive, and everything I see and take in when I'm there. And only after I spend some time getting to know the place am I best prepared to execute and make a photograph.