

September 2023  
Newsletter

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

[www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub](http://www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub)

# August PhotoShow Winners "Action"



1st Place – Tom Dierolf

## APC ACTIVITIES

Next Meeting

Sep. 18, 2023      7:00pm First Baptist Church

Programs

Sep. 18, 2023      Cassia Rivera, Nancy Arehart  
& Jennifer Hadley  
(Right of Passage)

Nov. 20, 2023      Ciara Wilder Massingale  
(Wilder Uwharrie Photography)

Exhibits

Sep. 1-27, 2023      Burlington Artist League  
(Double Vision)

2023 PhotoShows

Oct. 16, 2023      People at Work

Field Trips

Q3 2023      Duke Homestead  
Q4 2023      TBD

## President's Comments—September 2023

By Keith O'Leary

Thanks to Bill Warren for his critique of last month's PhotoShow of action pictures. Congratulations to the winners and thanks to all who participated! I'm looking forward to seeing the "Double-Vision" Exhibit this month at the BAL Gallery in the Holly Hill Mall. Please plan to check it out sometime during the month and invite others as well. The reception is Saturday, Sept. 9<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-4:00.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming more involved with any aspect of the club, we would like to hear from you! We are always open to new ideas and can use help in several areas. Please reach out by sending an email to [alamancephoto@gmail.com](mailto:alamancephoto@gmail.com) or by submitting the contact form from our

website at [www.alamancephoto.com/contact](http://www.alamancephoto.com/contact).

Please join us on September 18<sup>th</sup> as Cassia Rivera and colleagues share a video and photo presentation on wildlife conservation. It promises to be an interesting program.

Thanks for your participation in making this a great club and for inviting others to join us!

Thanks

Keith

## APC BOARD

President	Keith O'Leary	Interim Exhibit Chair	Christie O'Leary
Vice President	John Reich	Outings/Field Trips	Hugh Comfort
Secretary	George Siple	Membership	Ken Sellers
Treasurer	Dianne Sellers	Web Master	Christie O'Leary
Interim PhotoShow Chair	Keith O'Leary	Editor	Ray Munns

## August 21st PhotoShow



2nd Place – Ray Munns



3rd Place – Sean Leahy



HM 1 – Mark Austin



HM 2 – David Hall



HM 3 – Mark Austin

Bill Warren, thank you for your time and effort in assembling, studying, and judging our August PhotoShow! Your presentation and comments about each photo were interesting and helpful. Also, thanks to Keith and his team for collecting the photo entries and making the PhotoShow possible.



## WEBMASTER NOTES

Our website: <https://www.alamancephoto.com/> is a great way:

- To introduce potential members to the club.
- To stay up to date on the club events.



Alamance Photography Club is on [facebook!](#)

- [Public Page](#)
- Private Group Page where members can share photos with each other. If you are part of facebook and would like to join this private group, please email me at [alamancephoto@gmail.com](mailto:alamancephoto@gmail.com).

**Christie O'Leary**  
**Webmaster**



## Table Talkers



**Watch your emails for the next  
Table Talkers meeting.**



## September 18<sup>th</sup> Program

### “The Right of Passage”

Cassia, Nancy, and Jennifer will discuss the inspiration and filmmaking journey behind their award-winning documentary short, *Right of Passage\**, while highlighting the challenges the critically endangered red wolves, humans, and all wildlife face in the fragmented habitats of Eastern North Carolina. Learn what conservationists, biologists, researchers, and conservationist organizations are doing to connect these habitats and make travel safer for both humans and wildlife in Eastern NC and statewide.

\*Right of Passage was recently awarded the bronze Telly Award for a non-broadcast film.

#### Cassia Rivera—1st Presenter

Bio: I am a passionate wildlife conservationist who aims to bring compelling visuals and storytelling to the public on behalf of the wildlife I encounter. I believe by telling their stories through photography and film, I can share the challenges wildlife face in a way that will reach the hearts of people to create positive and lasting change.



#### Nancy Arehart—2nd Presenter

Bio: Having spent many hours observing and photographing the black bears in Eastern North Carolina, my love for wildlife has deepened. There is an amazing connection I feel when in the presence of wildlife in their natural habitat. It is hard to explain the feeling, but it has made me passionate about preserving these habitats so that the Earth's beautiful creatures are free to thrive.



#### Jennifer Hadley—3rd Presenter

Bio: I love traveling the world to tell animal stories through photography. I am passionate about showing people how incredible wildlife is and that these animals and natural spaces are worth preserving and safeguarding. By capturing special moments and the personalities of various animals, I hope to change people's perceptions about the animals' lives and value.

# Photos by Keith O'Leary



## *Double Vision Exhibit*

The Double Vision Exhibit will be Friday, Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> thru Wednesday, Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> at The Burlington Artist League (BAL) Suite 330 in the Holly Hill Mall on the corner of Church St. and Huffman Mill Rd. in Burlington.

- Suite 330 is the 3<sup>rd</sup> suite from the Publix end of the mall.
- Exhibit hours are 12:00–6:00 p.m. Tuesday – Saturday (closed Sunday & Monday)
- Reception Saturday, Sept 9<sup>th</sup> from 2:00-4:00

**Twenty photographs were chosen for the exhibit!**

## *Membership Corner*

*Ken Sellers*

As we come to the last quarter of 2023, it is time to think about new memberships. Beginning October 1, 2023, any new member who joins during the period of October-December will receive, in addition to membership for January-December of 2024, membership status for the remaining months of 2023 at no additional charge. It is the best time to invite new members to join because they save money by getting 15 months of membership for the price of a 12-month membership.

Ken Sellers  
Membership Chair

# Photos by Mio Winkle





## Q3 2023 Personal Field Trip: Duke Homestead

The field trip for this quarter to the Duke Homestead Historic Site is a personal field trip to be done on your own schedule. Duke Homestead State Historic Site and Tobacco Museum encompasses the historic home, farm, and factory buildings of Washington Duke and his family as they lived on the property from 1852 until 1874. The site interprets the early farming life of the Duke family and the beginnings of their tobacco manufacturing business on the property after the Civil War.

The site, located at 2828 Duke Homestead Rd, Durham, NC 27705, is open Tuesday-Saturday, 9 AM to 5 PM, with free admission. A 15-minute orientation film runs twice each hour. Forty-five minute guided tours are available for a nominal fee, but a free self-guided tour brochure is also available. For detailed information about the site, visit their website at: <https://dukehomestead.org/>.

This personal field trip runs from July 1 – September 30. Information on submitting photos will be provided by email at a later date.

Hugh

# APC Trading Post

Submit brief descriptions of photography items you would like to sell, swap or purchase to Ray Munns ([raymunns@bellsouth.net](mailto:raymunns@bellsouth.net)) no later than the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. Please include your name, contact info (phone and/or email) and if each item is for sale or something you are looking to purchase. Also notify Ray when items should be removed from the newsletter.

### For Sale

Nikon D5000 Camera with 2 batteries \$300

Nikon 28-300 F3.5- 5.6 ED VR  
\$500 Excellent condition



Contact Mio Winkle 787-587-5989

# 10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography

By GNAA

*Ready to make a splash with your photos? Learn essential tips for photographing waterfalls like a pro.*

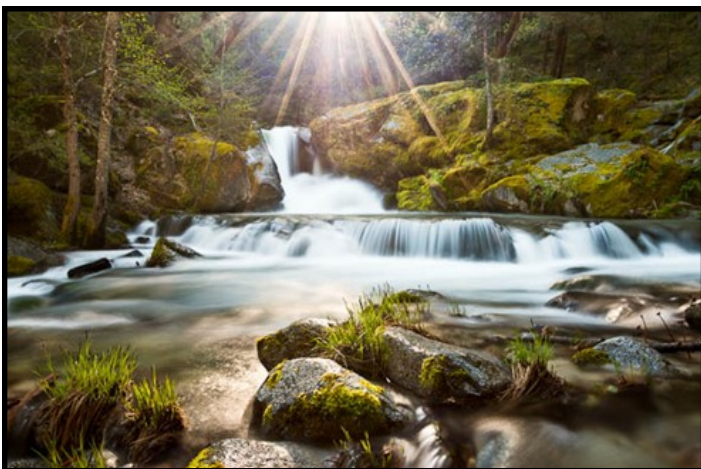
If you're an avid landscape snapper or simply looking to add some awe-inspiring shots to your portfolio, waterfall photography is absolutely *exhilarating*. Brace yourself for the sound of rushing water, the mist on your face, and the thrill of capturing a mesmerizing subject.

But photographing waterfalls is no walk in the park. I've spent years carefully refining my techniques, and I've discovered that there are a few essential tips and tricks that can make all the difference. That's where this article comes in. From essential gear to composition techniques, I'll guide you through each step of the process, ensuring that you're well-equipped to freeze those powerful water flows into stunning visual moments.

So grab your camera, don your rain gear, and get ready to unlock the secrets of photographing waterfalls like a pro!

## 1. Make sure you bring a tripod

Let's talk about an essential tool for capturing stunning waterfall photographs: the tripod. Trust me, you don't want to venture into waterfall photography without one!



Why is a tripod so crucial? Well, to achieve that beautiful water blur while maintaining a sharp background, you need to slow down your shutter speed. Without a tripod, your images will end up looking soft and blurry all over.

## **10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued**

But you can't just pick any tripod. When shooting waterfalls, you may find yourself placing your tripod directly in the water to get the perfect angle. That means your tripod needs to be reasonably stable and capable of handling the flow of the water. Look for a tripod that also offers low-angle positioning, as it can greatly enhance the impact of your images by positioning the tripod low over the foreground.

Another handy tool to consider is a remote shutter release. It allows you to take photos without touching the shutter button, which can introduce vibrations and lead to blurry shots. With a remote shutter release, you can capture sharp, crisp images even as you lengthen your shutter speed.



### **2. Choose the right waterfall photography settings**

Taking gorgeous waterfall photos relies heavily on a key camera setting: the shutter speed. This is what you use to determine precisely how the water looks, and it's what you should use to determine your other camera settings.

What's the best shutter speed for waterfall photography? In general, you'll want to use a longer exposure, but I think the precise answer varies – like people's taste in fast food. Personally, I put waterfalls into two different categories. There are the falls that rage so hard they take your breath away. And there are the falls that are dainty and delicate.

In general, I don't want my waterfalls to turn out as a blob of white water, which is what will happen if you lengthen your shutter speed too much. So I set my shutter speed accordingly.

### *10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued*

For big, roaring falls, I try to keep my exposure under a second. Anything between 1/4s to a full second will show the water's motion and still retain lots of detail.

Small, stringy waterfalls just love putting on a show with longer exposures. These falls look great when you can go as long as possible. If you need to narrow your aperture to get a lengthy shutter speed, that's okay;



don't be afraid of losing sharpness. Photography is always about compromises, and in this case, the slightest loss in sharpness will be greatly outweighed by capturing the water's movement. For smaller waterfalls, I recommend an exposure between one and four seconds, so stop down to f/22 if you need it.

When you're dialing in your camera settings, I'd recommend you start by setting your camera to Manual mode. Then select a shutter speed (based on how you want the water to look), and pick the lowest ISO your camera offers (generally ISO 100). Finally, set your aperture to ensure your image is well exposed.

Then take a step back and consider your settings as a whole. How is everything looking? If you're struggling to narrow your aperture enough to get a well-exposed image, that's a sign that there's too much light. You'll need to either speed up your shutter speed or use a neutral density filter (more on that later!).

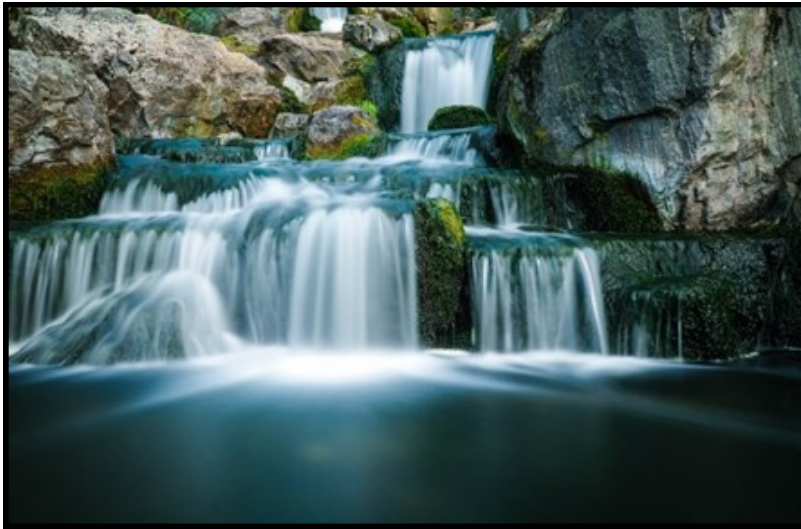
On the other hand, if your aperture is very wide, that's a sign that you don't have enough light. Ideally, your aperture should sit around f/11 – otherwise you won't have enough depth of field to keep the entire shot sharp – so don't be afraid to lengthen the shutter speed or boost the ISO until you get the result you want!

Remember, your goal is to create a good exposure while also ensuring beautiful water. Adjust all three exposure settings, and don't be afraid to capture test shots to get everything looking perfect!

### *10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued*

#### **3. Use a neutral density filter to capture longer exposures**

Neutral density filters aren't an absolute requirement for waterfall photography. In certain situations, when the lighting conditions are low, like in the depths of a dense forest on a rainy day, you might be able to slow down your shutter speed without worrying about overexposure. However, when the sunlight is brighter, achieving that perfect slow shutter speed becomes a challenge.



That's where the ND filters come in. These filters are designed to block out light, enabling you to reduce your shutter speed even in bright conditions without the risk of overexposing your image. By extending the exposure time, you can create a breathtaking effect where the rushing water turns into a soft, ethereal flow.

ND filters come in different strengths, but to start, I recommend using a 3-stop filter and a 10-stop filter. These two filters will give you the flexibility to capture the desired motion blur, even in brighter light conditions. Experiment with different filter combinations to achieve the perfect balance between exposure time and the desired effect.

With the right ND filter, you can transform a regular waterfall into a captivating masterpiece. It adds an element of enchantment to your images, enhancing the serene and dynamic nature of the flowing water. So make sure to include ND filters in your photography kit and unlock the true potential of waterfall photography.

## *10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued*

### **4. Keep your camera dry**

Now let's talk about the practical side of photographing waterfalls. As you can imagine, waterfalls are, well, wet! And if you've ever attempted to capture the beauty of a roaring cascade, you know just how much water can spray everywhere, including on your precious camera and lens.

To ensure your gear stays safe and dry during your waterfall photography adventures, it's essential to come prepared. First and foremost, invest in a reliable rain cover. You can easily find one online that fits your specific camera model. This nifty accessory will shield your electronic equipment from any potential disaster caused by water exposure. Alternatively, you can use a simple plastic bag secured with rubber bands for a makeshift rain cover.



Before heading out, make sure your camera is equipped with a fresh memory card and a fully charged battery. You don't want to risk opening up your camera to the elements any more than necessary. Remember, preparation is key!

Additionally, it's a good idea to carry a microfiber cloth with you. This handy tool will come in handy for wiping away any water droplets that inevitably find their way onto your lens. Check your lens between every shot to ensure no droplets linger and spoil your precious captures.

Now, here's a little pro tip: To capture the most dynamic waterfall images, you might find yourself wading into the water occasionally. This is especially true if you plan on shooting during colder weather. In such cases, it's wise to invest in a pair of waders. These waterproof boots will keep you comfortable and dry as you explore various angles and compositions.

Remember, water and electronics don't mix well, so it's crucial to keep your camera dry and clean throughout your waterfall photography expedition. By taking the necessary precautions and having the right gear, you can focus on capturing stunning images without worrying about any water-related mishaps.

## **10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued**

### **5. Find leading lines for captivating waterfall compositions**

Waterfalls are truly awe-inspiring and capturing their breathtaking beauty in your photos requires careful composition. One technique that can take your waterfall shots to the next level is the use of leading lines. These are lines within the scene that guide the viewer's eye from the foreground all the way to the background, creating a sense of depth.

To discover leading lines, take the time to explore your chosen waterfall from different angles. Look for linear elements in the foreground that clearly guide the viewer's gaze toward the majestic waterfall in the distance. These lines can be created by rocks, fallen logs, icy formations, or even the graceful flow of water itself.

To maximize the impact of leading lines, grab a wide-angle lens and position yourself low to the ground, right over the leading line. This perspective will immediately captivate the viewer, drawing them into the image and creating a sense of being a part of the scene.

### **6. Use a wide-angle lens for a breathtaking perspective**



To capture awe-inspiring waterfall shots, you need the right lenses – and when you're starting out, a wide-angle model is your best friend. These lenses, typically ranging from 12mm to 35mm, make things easier for beginners, and professionals rely on them for waterfall photography, too.

Why are wide-angle lenses so great for shooting waterfalls? Well, they offer a wide field of view, allowing you to include both

foreground elements and distant background elements in your composition. This combination helps create images with depth and a sense of grandeur.

Additionally, wide-angle lenses magnify foreground elements in your photos, such as leading lines, and they do a great job of really hitting the viewer over the head with these subjects.

Of course, as you become more experienced, you can explore using longer focal lengths to capture more intimate details within the larger waterfall. But starting with a wide-angle lens will set you on the right path to capturing stunning waterfall photographs that will leave your viewers in awe.



## **10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued**

### **7. Take a second exposure to keep the foliage sharp**

Have you ever tried to shoot a waterfall with a long exposure and noticed that the leaves on the trees and plants move with just the slightest breeze? And turn into a messy blur?

It happens all the time, and it's not ideal. So here's what you do:

After you've bagged your main shot of the waterfall, look around the edges of the photograph. See if the plants are soft and fuzzy. If they are, increase your shutter speed to 1/100s or faster (the goal is to freeze the moving plants). To keep a nice exposure, you can open up

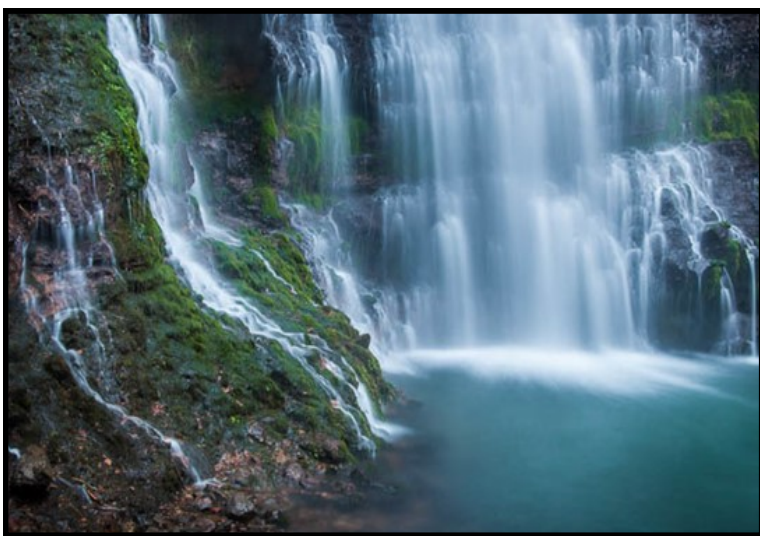


the aperture, but make sure you don't lose your maximum focus. If you still don't have a fast enough shutter speed, boost your ISO until you get the result you're after.

Back home, take the two exposures and blend them together using layer masks in Photoshop.

### **8. Head out when it's cloudy**

Cloudy days are incredible for waterfall photography. (And rainy days? Even better!)



Cloudy days offer all the benefits of shooting when the sun is low or when the waterfall is in the shade – except you have the freedom to shoot all day long without stopping.

I also find you get much better color when it's overcast, so mossy rocks and autumn leaves really pop. And you get a wonderfully dark, dramatic mood with lots of beautiful shadows.



## **10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued**

One pitfall to avoid on cloudy days, though, is including the sky. Cloudy skies are boring and drab and generally poor additions to a waterfall photo.

So if you can get up high to shoot down on the falls, do it; you'll eliminate the sky for a more pleasing composition. You can also try shooting falls in heavily forested areas, or you can zoom in for a more intimate waterfall shot (one that keeps the sky outside the frame).

Worst-case scenario, you can frame out part of the sky then clone out the rest in post-processing. But this takes an annoying amount of time, which is why I highly recommend getting it right while out shooting.

### **9. Photograph waterfalls in autumn**

Waterfalls are already captivating, but when you combine them with the vibrant colors of autumn, the result is pure magic. As a passionate waterfall photographer, I highly recommend dedicating some time to capturing these mesmerizing scenes during the fall season.

During autumn, nature treats us to a breathtaking display of red and gold leaves, which beautifully complement the cool blues and greens of the cascading waters. The contrast between the warm hues of the foliage and the refreshing tones of the waterfall creates a visual symphony that is a delight to behold.



To make the most of this enchanting combination, it's important to plan your waterfall shoots in advance. Research the waterfalls you wish to photograph, ensuring they flow during the autumn season. A great starting point is to explore images captured by fellow photographers on platforms like Instagram. These visuals can provide insights into the optimal time to visit each location.

Timing is crucial when it comes to fall photography. Keep a close eye on the changing colors of the leaves, as they can vary from region to region. The vibrant hues of autumn leaves often last only a few weeks before transitioning to less appealing shades of brown. Staying updated on the color forecast and being prepared to seize the opportunity will help you capture the best fall shots.

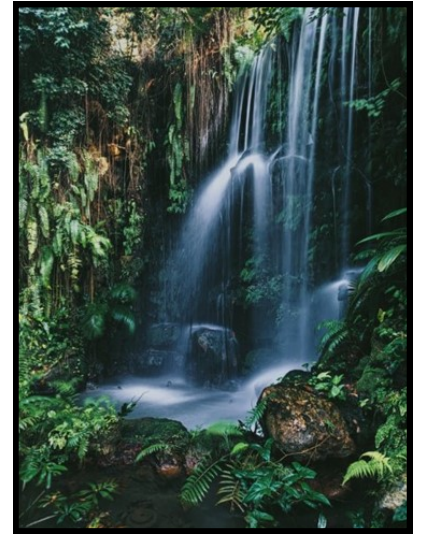
Pro tip: When shooting in autumn, consider incorporating fallen leaves into your compositions. They can serve as leading lines, drawing the viewer's eye toward the main subject and adding an extra layer of interest to your photographs. Explore different angles and perspectives to find the perfect balance between the flowing water and the vivid foliage.

## *10 Tips for Gorgeous Waterfall Photography . . . Continued*

### **10. Edit your waterfall images**

Composing an image and pressing the shutter button is only the first step in your photographic journey. To truly elevate your images to a professional level, spending some quality time in the editing room is essential. Even the most carefully composed and exposed photographs can benefit from a touch of post-processing magic.

Begin by examining the composition and making any necessary adjustments. Sometimes a simple crop can enhance the overall balance and focal point of your image, giving it that extra oomph. Also adjust the white balance to ensure the colors accurately represent the scene as you witnessed it.



When it comes to tones, play around with adjustments to bring out the details in the shadows while preserving the highlights in the water. This balance ensures that every element of the waterfall is showcased with clarity. Adding a touch of contrast can give your image that extra pop and make it visually striking.

Moving on to colors, consider selectively boosting certain hues to enhance the vibrant greens of leaves or the warm oranges of autumn foliage. Conversely, you can desaturate distracting colors that take away from the beauty of the waterfall itself.

To draw attention to the waterfall, try adding a subtle vignette that darkens the edges of the frame, creating a natural spotlight effect. This technique directs the viewer's eye toward the central focus of the image. Additionally, you can experiment with dodging and burning to add depth and three-dimensionality to the scene, giving it a more immersive feel.

Remember, there's no need to go overboard with editing. The goal is to enhance the inherent beauty of the waterfall while maintaining a natural and authentic look. Each image is unique, and your editing decisions should be guided by your personal artistic vision. On the other hand, processing really does allow you to refine the composition, enhance the tones and colors, and create a captivating visual narrative. So before you share or print your photographs, embrace the power of editing to bring out the full magic of your waterfall shots.

As with all things photography, shooting waterfalls takes practice and experimentation. But if you remember these tips and persevere, you'll get great shots in no time at all!



**Digital  
Photography  
School**

# A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography

By Mat Coker

Aquariums offer gorgeous views of fish, dramatic lighting, and plenty of incredible photographic opportunities. Unfortunately, without the right approach, capturing great aquarium images can be insanely difficult thanks to the ultra-dark environments and fast-moving subjects.

Fortunately, I love photographing in aquariums, and I know how to capture crisp, clear, and well-exposed images of an array of fish subjects. In this article, I explain how you can create stunning shots of sharks, lobsters, eels, and so much more – so if you're ready to start producing some stunning aquarium photography, then let's dive right in!

## The best settings for aquarium photography



If you step into an aquarium with your camera on Auto mode, you're bound to end up with frustratingly blurry photos.

Why? In low-light scenarios, your camera will automatically slow down your shutter speed, which will amplify camera shake and fail to freeze subject movement.

So it's important that you choose the right camera settings to ensure your images are consistently sharp.

In particular, you need to use a decently fast shutter speed – generally 1/125s or above, depending on the length of your lens and the speed of your subject. This next image was taken at 1/10s – the kind of shutter speed chosen by a camera left on Auto mode – and the motion blur is very obvious.

## *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*



My advice? Don't rely on your camera to pick the shutter speed. Instead, choose a shooting mode that lets you dial in the shutter speed directly – either Shutter Priority mode or Manual mode.

Shutter Priority mode lets you select the shutter speed and the ISO (which essentially refers to the sensitivity of the camera sensor to light), while the camera automatically picks the aperture. If you set your camera to Shutter Priority, I recommend setting the ISO as high as you can without risking image-ruining noise. (I have no problem going to ISO 3200 on my camera, though you should test out your own camera model to get a sense of its high-ISO capabilities.)

Then you'll need to set your shutter speed. I'd recommend starting at 1/125s; you want to set a shutter speed that's fast enough to freeze the action but no faster than necessary. If the shutter speed is too fast, your images will be sharp, but they'll be dark (i.e., underexposed).

Manual mode, on the other hand, you select your ISO, your shutter speed, and your aperture. It's a good mode for more seasoned photographers, so if you're comfortable with such an approach, I recommend setting your ISO as high as you can stomach, opening the lens aperture as much as you can (or are comfortable doing from a creative perspective), and then set your shutter speed to 1/125s or faster.



You'll then need to adjust the shutter speed to ensure a perfect exposure; it's important to pay attention to the exposure bar in the viewfinder, though you can also capture several shots, view them on the LCD screen, and make adjustments accordingly.

My typical aquarium photography settings are: ISO 3200, f/2.8, 1/60s.

However, shooting at 1/60s takes practice and only works with slower subjects, so don't be afraid to widen your aperture, boost your ISO, and bump your shutter speed as required.

## *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*

### **The best aquarium photography gear**

Aquarium photography is an exciting endeavor, but having the right gear is often essential to success. Here are a few key items to consider:

#### **A powerful camera**

I encourage you to opt for a DSLR or a mirrorless camera; these models generally give you manual control over settings so you can adjust different elements to suit different aquarium environments. They offer the flexibility to play with exposure, focus, and other essential elements so you can capture stunning underwater aquarium images.

Low-light performance is another crucial aspect to consider. Aquariums are often dimly lit, and using flash can create unnecessary reflections. A camera with an impressive high ISO performance allows you to shoot in these conditions without compromising on clarity.

Finally, shooting in RAW can be a lifesaver. It provides more latitude in post-processing, enabling you to correct colors, balance exposure, and ensure that your photos look exactly how you envisioned.

#### **A carefully chosen lens**

The lens you choose can significantly impact the quality and creativity of your aquarium photographs. A versatile zoom lens gives you the flexibility to compose shots, particularly in confined spaces where moving around might be restricted. With a good zoom range, you can capture both close-ups and wider shots without needing to switch lenses continually.

If you plan on taking detailed shots of smaller species, a macro lens becomes essential. It enables you to get up close and personal with the subjects, capturing every intricate detail. Pair this with a wide maximum aperture like f/2.8, and you're equipped to shoot in especially dark environments. (A wide aperture lets in more light, allowing for faster shutter speeds and reducing the risk of motion blur.)

When investing in lenses, remember that quality matters and that reputable brands generally offer superior performance and build.

## *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*

### **Best accessories for aquarium photography**

Aquarium photography doesn't technically require any accessories; that said, many photographers do prefer to work with a tripod when possible. Not only do tripods keep your camera stable in low light, but they can also be a big help when composing each image.

Unfortunately, tripods are often off-limits at most aquariums. If tripods are not allowed or impractical, a monopod can be a good alternative. It provides some stabilization without being as intrusive as a full tripod.

Additional accessories can also play a vital role in a successful aquarium photography session. Extra batteries and memory cards are essential, as aquarium photography can be time-consuming and you don't want to miss that perfect shot. Keeping your lens clean from smudges, especially when shooting close to the glass, will ensure your images remain clear, so don't forget your lens cleaning supplies.



### **Essential tips for aquarium photography**

Now that you're familiar with the basic gear and settings for photographing aquariums, let's take things to the next level with a handful of my best tips, starting with:

#### **1. Turn off your flash and get close**



Most cameras, when left to their own devices, will automatically turn on the flash in dark environments. But while aquariums are extremely dark, you definitely don't want the flash to fire; it'll create a huge reflection on the glass that'll almost certainly ruin your photo.

So before you even enter the aquarium, make sure to disable your flash.

### *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*

Even with the flash deactivated, however, you still might encounter some ambient light reflecting off the glass, which will distract the viewer and can make your subjects appear less sharp. To avoid such reflections, simply move up to the glass (you can even press your lens hood against the surface!). Note that, if you follow this advice, you'll be standing right up at the glass looking through it rather than standing back a few feet looking at it.



Check out this image of a fish at an aquarium. It looks okay, but if you look carefully, you'll see a reflection on the left side of the frame.

To avoid an unwanted reflection of your own, try stepping closer to the glass and angling the camera to avoid including any reflections.

Much better, right?



Shooting in an aquarium often means dealing with low-light conditions. To combat this, you'll likely need to use slower shutter speeds, which in turn can lead to camera shake and blurry images. As I discussed above, if the aquarium's rules allow it, a tripod or monopod is a great solution. But if not, there are still ways to stabilize your camera.



### ***A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued***

First, utilize any built-in stabilization that your camera or lens might offer. This technology can significantly reduce the effect of small movements and vibrations. If your camera doesn't have this feature, pay close attention to your posture and grip. Holding the camera with both hands and tucking your elbows into your body can provide extra stability.

Another useful method is to find support within the environment. Leaning against a wall or resting the camera on a solid surface can help. Remember, practicing and finding what works best for you in different situations is key. Every aquarium is unique, and mastering the art of handheld shooting can open up new opportunities in this fascinating world of underwater photography.

### **3. Try manual focus**

One of the greatest challenges in aquarium photography is achieving the right focus, especially when dealing with viewing glass that can confuse your camera's autofocus system. This is where utilizing manual focus can make all the difference. Unlike autofocus, which frequently accidentally targets reflections or smudges on the glass, manual focus puts you in control, allowing you to pinpoint exactly what part of the scene you want to be sharp.



If you're new to manual focus, it might seem intimidating at first. Start by practicing on larger, more stationary subjects within the aquarium. Many modern cameras offer features like focus peaking, which highlights the in-focus areas on your screen and helps guide your adjustments. These aids can be incredibly effective as you learn to navigate manual focus.

Keep in mind that mastering manual focus is a skill that takes time and patience to develop. However, once you've honed this skill, the creative control it offers can be incredibly rewarding. Whether you're trying to capture a detailed close-up of a coral or track a fast-moving shark, manual focus enables you to decide what's important in the scene, ensuring that your photos turn out exactly as you envisioned them.



## *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*

### **4. Adjust your angle to make your shots more interesting**



Once you've figured out how to get sharp aquarium photos, it's time to get creative – and for me, varying the camera angle is the quickest way to make images more interesting.

In other words, rather than capturing each fish from a head-on angle, try shooting from a variety of perspectives.

For instance, you might try:

- Getting below your subject and pointing your camera upward
- Getting up high and pointing your camera down (to achieve this angle, see if you can find a clear glass walkway)
- Crouching down so you're on a level with your subject
- Walking to the right or the left for a diagonal perspective

### **5. Seek out stunning silhouettes**

Silhouettes are a great technique for capturing breathtaking aquarium photos, and – bonus! – they're really easy to capture in aquariums thanks to the unique lighting situation.

The key to a silhouette is to photograph a dark foreground subject on a bright background. You often simply need to angle your camera to include bright light in the background, then wait for a subject to swim over. Fire off a shot, then check your camera LCD. If the image is too bright, simply raise your shutter speed or add in some negative exposure compensation until the subject turns into a perfect silhouette!

You can also capture gorgeous silhouettes of people standing by the aquarium glass. Children, for instance, are often captivated by sea creatures, and parents are often captivated by watching their kids! This silhouette shot happened quite naturally because the aquarium tank was really bright compared to the people in the foreground.



## **A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued**

Depending on its settings, your camera may produce a similar result, or you may need to make the exposure adjustments discussed above. Unfortunately, when shooting toward glass from a distance, you'll often end up with some ambient light reflections, but if they bother you, you can always remove them during post-processing.

### **6. Consider the direction of the light**

Aquariums are often lit by all sorts of interesting lighting angles, so it pays to carefully observe the direction of the light in the water.

You can use backlighting to create silhouettes (as discussed earlier), but you can also brighten up the image (by lowering the shutter speed or increasing the exposure compensation) for an interesting overexposure effect.

I also recommend looking for side light, which can give a cool sense of drama and three-dimensionality.

Don't be afraid to experiment, and when in doubt, capture more photos, not fewer. And make sure you frequently check your camera's LCD; when dealing with a mix of bright light and dark shadows, it can be difficult to get the exposure right, so you may need to make a few adjustments before you get a good result.

### **7. Enhance your photos with a bit of editing**

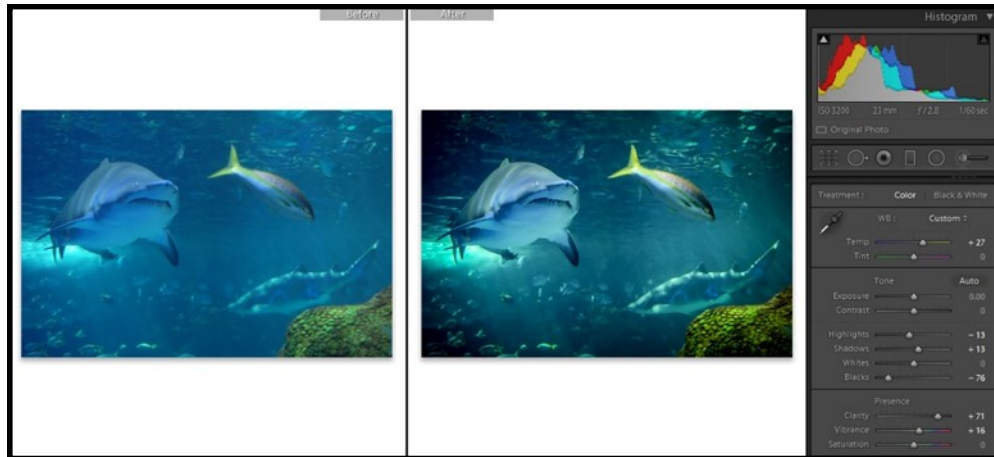
It's always important to capture the best possible images while you're actually at the aquarium. But once the chaos of your trip is over, you can relax, sift through your photos, and – if you want to really take the files to the next level – spend some time editing.

Note that editing isn't necessarily about creating unrealistic, over-the-top results. Instead, it's often about recreating the scene as it was. I like to keep my photos looking as natural as possible, but I always want my photos to look the way the moment felt, so I don't mind exaggerating colors or exposure if need be. The particulars are up to you, but here are a few items to consider:

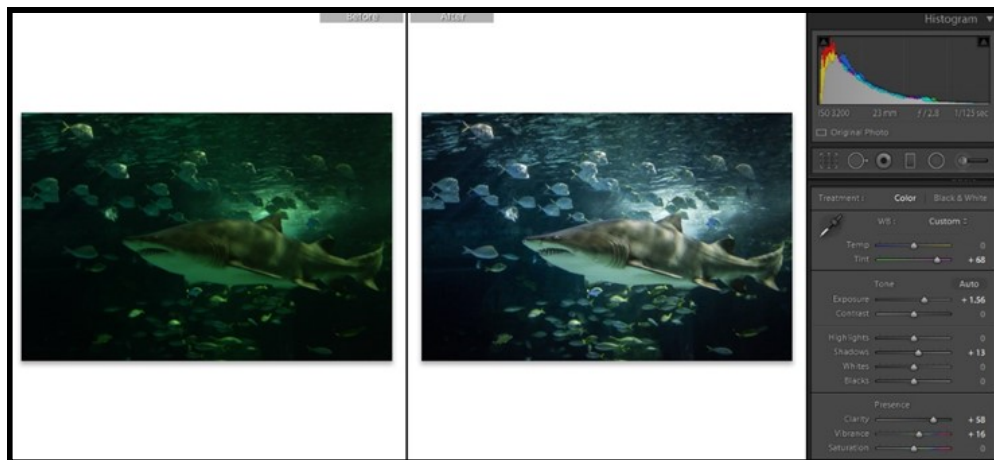
- Try adjusting the white balance to eliminate any unwanted color casts
- Raise or lower the exposure to retain detail in the highlights and the shadows
- Add contrast for a bit of extra punch
- Add some clarity for extra crispness
- Boost the saturation or vibrance to more accurately represent the lush aquarium colors

## *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*

For this first image, I subtly adjusted the exposure (via the Highlights and Shadows sliders), dropped the Blacks for extra contrast, and really cranked up the Clarity:



This next shot was far too dark, so I boosted the Exposure slider, then added some Clarity and Vibrance to give the image some pop. I also altered the white balance, which got rid of the green color cast in the original:



## *A Guide to Breathtaking Aquarium Photography . . . Continued*

### **8. Mind your surroundings**

Aquariums are often bustling places filled with excited visitors of all ages. While this creates a lively atmosphere, it also means that as a photographer, you must be mindful of your surroundings. Being considerate of others, ensuring you're not blocking views, and avoiding bumping into fellow visitors is paramount. Always be aware of where your camera equipment is, use straps to secure it, and be careful not to obstruct pathways or exhibits.



Sometimes, the most unique angles and captivating shots are found in unexpected places. Look beyond the main exhibits and explore different viewpoints, and don't be afraid to venture into lesser-visited tanks or corners of the aquarium. This exploration can lead you to hidden gems and offer great photo opportunities away from the crowds.

An interesting aspect of aquarium photography is capturing human interaction with the exhibits. Observing how children marvel at a giant fish tank or how a couple enjoys a tranquil jellyfish display can add a new layer of storytelling to your photography. These candid shots can convey emotions and human connection to the aquatic world, making your photos more engaging and relatable.

Lastly, it's essential to understand and respect the rules and guidelines of the aquarium. From keeping tripods and monopods out of the way to obeying any flash photography restrictions, adhering to the aquarium's policies ensures a pleasant experience for everyone. Plus, it reflects well on the photography community so everyone can maintain a good relationship with these amazing venues.

### **Tips for aquarium photography: final words**

My top tips for improving your aquarium images! Just remember to adjust your settings and approach until you can capture sharp, well-exposed photos. Then see if you can capture creative shots by changing your angle, paying attention to the lighting, and more.

One final tip: Don't rush around the aquarium trying to photograph everything. Instead, take your time with each subject – even if it means you need to come back another day to finish your photoshoot. Patience is generally rewarded!



**Digital  
Photography  
School**

# 13 Habits of Highly Effective Photographers

By Ray Salisbury

1. Don't expect their camera to do all the work. This means saying goodbye to 'Auto' and bravely using other modes such as Aperture Priority or Manual.
2. Read the camera manual—several times—to get familiar with their gear.
3. Gradually work through various functions and features on their camera.
4. Take control of their camera, and the lighting conditions they are faced with.
5. Understand that pressing the shutter is only half of making a good photograph. Modern cameras are no match for the human eye, and still have lots of limitations, especially in low light situations. Post-processing has been done since the invention of photography (either in a traditional darkroom or on a computer). This is where you polish your final images, and make adjustments to compensate for the constraints of the camera.
6. Select and present only the very best images from a photo shoot.
7. Store a back-up copy of their images onto an external hard drive, or somewhere safe.
8. Publish photographs, so they aren't destined to die on a dusty hard drive, unseen by the world.
9. Share their work to get constructive feedback from peers (via online galleries such as 500px, Flickr, Google Photos, Instagram or a Facebook group).
10. Present their images as a means of self-expression—their contribution to recording the world, from their point of view (e.g. framed photos, greeting cards, calendars, art galleries, photo books, or merely as prints inside a simple photo album).
11. Get inspiration from other photographers they admire. Read eBooks, magazines, blog posts, look at Facebook posts, or view YouTube videos. Visit galleries, take workshops or go on a photography tour to learn from a more experienced shooter.

### 13 Habits of Highly Effective Photographers . . . Continued

12. Travel in search of fresh subject matter; this could be interesting locations or photogenic people. On a micro level, they use their feet to find fresh angles and perspectives – they ‘work the scene’, and don’t just settle on the first composition they see on a macro level, they visit exotic or remote locations away from home, opening their eyes to new possibilities.

13. Avoid shooting clichés, looking for a new take on well-photographed subjects.



*Photo by b k*

In summary, you can be a more effective photographer by educating yourself, embracing challenges, and becoming proactive.

Thomas Edison once said that “genius is one percent inspiration, and 99 percent perspiration”. The one thing that will greatly improve your photography is practice... lots of practice. Go for it!

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