

December 2023
Newsletter

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Photo by George Bohannon

APC ACTIVITIES

Next Meeting

Dec. 18, 2023

7:00pm First Baptist Church

2023 PhotoShows

Dec. 18, 2023

Christmas Party &
Slideshow

2024 Programs

Jan. 15, 2024

Birds from Columbia
by Sean Leahy

FEB 19, 2024

The Rule of Thirds (and 'Back
to Basics' Ice Cream Social!)

Field Trips

TBD

Exhibits

TBD

President's Comments—December 2023

By Keith O'Leary

Thanks to Ciera Wilder Massingale for sharing her story with us last month. Her presentation was both interesting and inspirational. As we bring 2023 to a close I am grateful for God's many blessings on my life and for all of you who are part of this great camera club. I am looking forward to our last gathering of the year as we get together for good food and fellowship while we watch the Christmas video showcasing your photo submissions.

2024 promises to be an interesting year as we plan to launch an extended program called "Back to Basics". Activities will be scheduled that will appeal to photographers of all levels, from beginner

to advanced, in an effort to help draw a more varied age range to our membership. More information will be coming out soon.

Several of you have asked if 'Table Talkers' are still gathering for fellowship and a meal. While that has been suspended during this busy time of year, we will be resuming monthly activities beginning in January. Stay tuned for more info.

Thanks for your participation in making this a great club. Stay warm and happy shooting!

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



WEBMASTER NOTES

Renew Membership Online!

For your convenience you can renew your membership online via a bank card:

- Go to www.alamancephoto.com
- Click on Join/Renew in the menu bar under the Membership Tab.
- Click on Renew button.
- Choose Membership Level.
- Follow the instructions to complete payment.
- You will receive a receipt in your inbox!



For those who pre-ordered 2024 APC wall calendars, I will have them at the Christmas Party.

If you are interested in pre-ordering a calendar(s):

- Before the Christmas party, please email me at alamancephoto@gmail.com and send a check to Dianne Sellers, our treasurer. (\$18 each)
- For January's meeting, then you can place your order at the Christmas party.

Christie O'Leary—Webmaster

APC Membership Corner

December 2023

We are planning some exciting activities and events in 2024. If you have been thinking about inviting someone to become a member, why not give the holiday gift of an Alamance Photography Club membership. As they say, "it's the gift that keeps on giving." In 2024, we will be offering many new and different opportunities to become a better photographer as well as to expand our knowledge of new and existing photography techniques. Membership fees are as follows: Adult - \$42, Family - \$62, Student - \$15. For additional information contact Ken Sellers - APC Membership Chair.

Ken Sellers – APC Membership Chair
336-253-1113 or taikijorsel@gmail.com



Christmas Party

December 18, 2023

December is around the corner, meaning our party will soon be here! This year:

- **A food sign-up sheet will be sent out by email early this month** so watch for an email and choose from the provided menu what item(s) you would like to bring if you did not sign up in person at November's meeting.
- **Your spouse or significant other is welcome to accompany you.** On the form you will be asked to list the number attending.
- **Paper products will be provided.**
- **On your calendar, write in December 18th, 7 pm** (doors open @ 6:30 pm) @ First Baptist Church of Burlington fellowship hall.

We are excited to see you and your spouse (significant other) at our annual Christmas Party!

Looking forward,
Christie O'Leary
Chair of Christmas Party Committee

Photos for Christmas Slideshow!

As mentioned in our November newsletter, the December meeting will be a social for members...and spouses...to enjoy a time of good food, fellowship and a video/slideshow of member photos set to music. We would like to see photos from every member this year! See our November newsletter for submission guidelines.

As announced earlier, Friday December 1st is the last day for submitting your photos in order to allow time to prepare the video/slideshow.

Alamance Photography Club Annual Audit

As stated in the Alamance Photography Club By-Laws, Section 4, "The Club is an affiliate of Alamance County Arts Council, Inc. (Alamance Arts), which acts as a physical agent for the Club for tax donation purposes. The Club's financial records are audited annually as part of the professional auditing performed through Alamance Arts."

It is also the responsibility of the Treasurer to give a report of the audit to the APC membership. The audit was found to be acceptable to Alamance Arts and their professional audit company.

Dianne Sellers

Alamance Photography Club Treasurer

APC Trading Post

Submit brief descriptions of photography items you would like to sell, swap or purchase to Ray Munns (raymunns@bellsouth.net) no later than the 20th 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 336-329-4423

Black and White Landscapes

By Dick Schenck



How to Photograph Christmas Lights (Best Settings and Tips!)

Taking pictures of holiday lights is a great part of the winter holidays (in my list, it goes right after Christmas baking). Christmas lights photography is fun and interesting, but it can also be a challenge.

In this article, I'll show you how to photograph Christmas lights, including fairy lights. You'll be using ambient light and a carefully placed speedlight.



Christmas carol concept for a header or postcard.

How to Set Up Your Camera for Shooting Christmas Lights

1. Use a Slow Shutter Speed

Christmas lights are beautiful but not very powerful. Our eyes adapt to a dim light rather quickly, so we can see the dim scene as brightly lit. But the camera isn't that sophisticated.

We need a relatively slow shutter speed to make the glow visible. The exact number depends on many factors like the power of your particular fairy lights and the nature of ambient lighting. But I can recommend starting with 0.25 seconds and going down from there.

Take a test shot, see if you like the result and if the lights don't look shiny enough, set the shutter speed to 2 full seconds or even slower.

How to Photograph Christmas Lights (Best Settings and Tips!) . . . Continued

The difference between 2, 8, and 20 seconds shutter speed.



In the example image above, you can see the difference that a slow shutter speed means. Because of it, the fairy light will transform into a starburst as the aperture size will narrow. Don't get carried away, though. If you set too long a shutter speed, you'll see an overexposed picture drowning in warm light.

2. Get a Tripod



Slow shutter speeds capture holiday lights in their full glory, but they also leave your photo vulnerable to motion blur.

A clumsy gesture, a fallen prop, or a cat caught in the frame can cause blur. To minimize that, be careful not to move the items of your composition during exposure. And get a tripod.

You can hang some of the fairy lights on your tripod to shoot some of them closer to the camera and out of focus.

How to Photograph Christmas Lights (Best Settings and Tips!) . . . Continued

I definitely recommend shooting with a tripod every single time you take a photo (of course, I'm talking about still life photography). It saves time, allowing you to focus on the fine details of your composition.

For Christmas lights and fairy lights, using a tripod is necessary, and adding a remote control is also useful. Shooting handheld compromises the image quality too much.

If you don't have a tripod, try placing the camera on a steady surface and using the camera's self-timer feature. That will get rid of camera shake from pressing the shutter release.

3. Shoot with Low ISO to Avoid Grain

High ISO produces digital grain if you don't have an ISO invariant camera body. I usually shoot with artificial lighting I set purposefully, so most of the time, I use the lowest ISO possible.

In cases where you can't control the ambient light, a higher ISO can prove useful.

Start with the ISO at around 100 (some DSLRs are capable of going below 100). That should be enough to overcome the problems of the dark environment. And just go up from that if necessary.

My settings for shooting this image were the following:

- Shutter Speed: 1/6 s
- Aperture: f/5.6
- ISO: 125

If you need more light, I would suggest increasing the exposure time first. Raising the ISO should be your last resort.



How to Photograph Christmas Lights (Best Settings and Tips!) . . . Continued

4. Create Bokeh with Shallow Depth of Field

You might want to create warm, dreamy holiday photography. To include beautiful bokeh from blurred lights, you will need a wide-open aperture more often than not. Sometimes you don't even need any objects in focus.

It creates a very shallow depth of field, which throws your background out of focus. It also turns your Christmas lights into little balls of glowing warmth.

You can make the bokeh flares even bigger and blurrier by increasing the distance between your subject and the lights. You also need to have an aperture around or below f/4 to get a decent bokeh in your images.



5. Don't Use an On-Camera Flash

First of all, forget the flash that's built into your camera. This is a general photography tip, to be honest.

In most cases, frontal light looks flat and unappealing. And when you're trying to capture something as magical and subtle as Christmas lights or fairy lights, it's even worse.

If you're trying to capture holiday lights outside, you're probably far from your subject. The camera flash isn't going to contribute much to the exposure.

For this kind of shot, an on-camera flash is simply useless.

If you're shooting indoors, a camera flash, on the contrary, tends to get too powerful, and you may end up with an overexposed image.

It overpowers all ambient light, and the resulting picture lacks any warmth or cozy atmosphere. Camera flash can also interfere with the colors of fairy lights or Christmas tree lights, bringing an unpleasant blue tinge.



How to Photograph Christmas Lights (Best Settings and Tips!) . . . Continued

Inspirational Christmas Lights Photo Ideas

There are many ways to incorporate Christmas lights into your picture. They can serve as decoration, background, and even as a primary lighting source. Here we collected some photo ideas that you can use your holiday lights for.

Create Bokeh Lights on the Christmas Tree



There is no better way to capture the magic of the Christmas tree than covering it with lights and showing its shape with gorgeous bokeh. Use manual focus to blur the tree and let your lens create bokeh out of the tiny lights.

Take a Close-up Photo of Christmas Ornaments



You can make use of the lights when taking photos of Christmas decorations on the tree. The closer you get to the subject and the wider aperture you use, the nicer the bokeh in the background will be.

How to Photograph Christmas Lights (Best Settings and Tips!) . . . Continued

Light Portraits with Christmas Lights

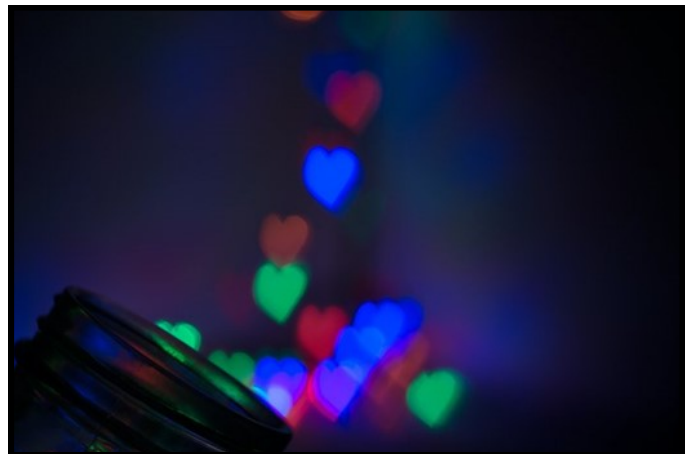


To add an extra level of creativity to your Christmas photos, try taking portraits where the fairy lights are the primary light source. Make sure to use spot metering and meter the light based on the lights. This way, they will not be blown out, and you will get attractive low-key lighting on the person's face.

Create Shaped Bokeh

Bokeh can appear in different forms (hexagons, octagons, etc.) depending on the number of aperture blades in your lens. You can easily make custom bokeh shapes for your own photos.

Just make a fake lens hood out of black paper and cut out the small shape you want in the center. Keep the shape to at least 5mm and at most 20mm.



Set your camera to its lowest aperture value and enjoy the results of your custom bokeh filter.

Conclusion

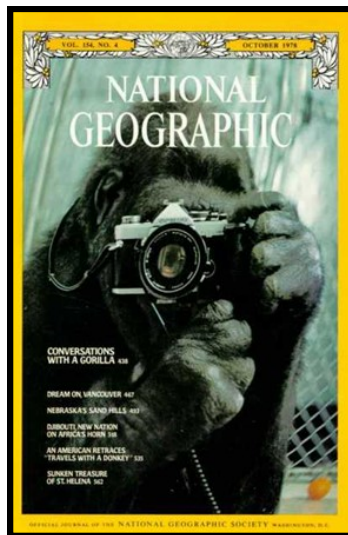
Christmas lights come in handy when taking Christmas photos. They are easy to find, cheap, and create a truly beautiful atmosphere in every image. We hope that this article has shown you what to pay attention to when setting up your camera for photographing lights.

Now it's time to think of new Christmas stories and capture this magical feeling of wonder in other still life shots. We wish you the most wonderful Christmas photos this holiday season!

Do You Take Photographs or Make Them?

By Tedric Garrison

In October 1978, the cover of National Geographic showed a self-portrait of a gorilla using a camera. I'm serious—you can look it up if you would like. The cover shot was a self-portrait, taken by a gorilla, and by the standards of the day it was actually pretty good!



“Conversations with a Gorilla,” National Geographic cover, October 1978 (Cover Browser)

Each year 100 million Americans also take some pretty good photos. OK, admittedly not all of them are that good . . . but with auto focus and extremely high mega pixels, it is fairly safe to say that more people are taking better pictures than ever before. So the obvious question is where does that leave us “serious” photographers?

For those of us who know that “pretty good” is not good enough, we must push ourselves further; we must create with more artistic flair and emotional impact. The desire to move beyond the basics is what separates us from . . . the gorillas of the world. Technologically advanced cameras are now so readily available that anyone can pick one up at their local Wal-Mart just as easily as getting groceries.

A great camera does not make a great photographer. Learning how to create a great photo is not as simple as one might think. There may be thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of books and magazines that will teach you the craft of photography. But learning just the craft is like running a race with only one shoe. Photography is both an art and a craft.

Do You Take Photographs or Make Them? . . . Continued

The craft is fairly well known; shutter speeds, f-stops, filters and the like, are an extremely important key to any photographer's success. Of course, the craft of photography is only half the story; it's the easy half that even a big ape could learn (yet not everyone does).

The other half, the one that even those who are looking do not always find, is the art of photography. There is a common misunderstanding that leads people to believe that "art is that which is pleasing to the eye." While this may be true, in part, it is also incomplete. An art critic of the New York Times once said, "The function of art is to clarify, intensify, or otherwise enlarge our experience of life."

Visit any National Park, go to a scenic lookout point, and just sit back and observe. Many people will drive up, jump out, shoot their picture, and zoom off again. This type of person is taking a picture. Simply put, he will take what is before him and discount all the creative possibilities, because he has what he wants.

On the other hand, wait a little longer and you will see someone who leaves his car slowly. He cautiously approaches the scene with silent reverence. His eyes explore like a small child in a toy store. He may stoop down low or strain his neck to see further than his body normally allows. This person is making a photograph. His mind is open to the creative possibilities.



Photo by Aftab Uzzaman; ISO 100, f/22.0, 1/60-second exposure

Do You Take Photographs or Make Them? . . . Continued

How to Make Photographs

If you want to **make** better photos, as opposed to just taking more pictures, there are some basic steps you want to remember:

1. Photograph what you like best. Photography is like a love affair; it is not to be taken lightly. You do not share your heart with every person you meet. Likewise, do not waste your passion on areas of little interest. I, for one, would never be good at aerial photography, mostly because of a fear of heights.



Photo by Jonas Wagner; ISO 100, f/8.0, 1/250-second exposure

2. Prepare yourself. Learn all that you can. Books and magazines are only part of the resources you have available. Web sites, podcasts, art galleries, and photography shows all enable you to expand your own vision. It is very hard for someone to think outside the box who has never even tried to open the lid. Give your mind something to be creative with.

3. Become one with your subject. When the opportunity arrives, let your eyes dance across the subject. Take in the highlights and shadows. The art of seeing photographically means to go beyond the surface. Take a moment; look at it from all possible angles. Whether your subject is living or not, treat it like your best friend. This is where passion comes from.

4. Think your shots through. What emotions are you feeling when you look through your viewfinder? If you can put your feelings into words, the next step is to put those words onto film (or digital media). Have an objective in mind when you go to shoot your photos and you will make fantastic creative images—not just take average snapshots.

Do You Take Photographs or Make Them? . . . Continued

5. Multiply the possibilities. The right subject at the right time is what great photography is all about. Shoot your subject several times from several different angles. If this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, don't leave anything to chance. Take multiple exposures, as well. Remember, your camera always wants to average the light. If you want better than average results, push your equipment as well as your mind.



Photo by Ethan Sykes; ISO 100, f/4.0, 1/800s, 50mm

6. Take notes. A pencil is the cheapest piece of photographic equipment you can carry. If an image is a success or a failure, it means nothing unless you can do it again. Don't change too many things at one time, lest you end up still having no idea what made the image work. Document your efforts and don't be afraid to learn from your failures as well as your successes.

Making a photo is like drawing water from a well. If the well is dry, it doesn't matter how many times the bucket goes up or down. Your job is to keep those creative juices flowing. As you fill the well with knowledge and experience, more inspiration will come to the surface. What gives you style or makes your work unique is what you bring to the surface. The more you put into it, the more you get out of it.

Photographic Standard

How to Critique Your Own Photos

By Tedric Garrison

It has been said the most difficult thing for man to do is to judge his or her creative work, objectively. Be honest, can you tell when your work seems to be missing something? More importantly do you know what it is that's missing? You can only improve your photos if you set a high photo standard to compare yourself against.



Photo by Miwok; ISO 200, f/6.3, 1/125-second exposure.

When Time-Life selected 250 photos for the Great Photographers volume of their Time-Life Photography series, they chose 68 photographers out of thousands. Those editors defined “great” photographers based on three main factors.

3 Characteristics of a Great Photographer

The first factor was intent. What did the photographer have in mind when he took the photo, and did he achieve it? For example, did the photographer successfully make the viewer feel empathy when taking pictures of survivors of a major natural disaster?

The second factor was technical skill. Did the photographer show a thorough understanding of composition, light, exposure, and design?

The final factor was consistency. Did the photographer have just one or two great shots, or did they produce success time and time again? One great photo . . . or even several . . . does not a great photographer make.

Photographic Standard: How to Critique Your Own Photos . . . Continued



Photo by Angela Larose

Intent, skill, and consistency are the same three factors that will determine your own greatness. Study the masters like Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Imogene Cunningham, and Diana Arbus, and you will see these three factors again and again. But the question remains, how do you get from where you are now to that level?

Have you ever heard the phrase, “being your own worse critic”? By the very nature of the words being used, most people tend to think of that as a negative phrase, when in reality, nothing could be further from the truth. To learn and grow in photography, you have to be strong enough to admit what does and does not work in your photos.

To that end, here is a strength and weakness checklist for you to use when reviewing your own photographs. It’s not complicated, just look at your photo and mark whether it is strong or weak. There is no middle gray; your image either succeeds or it does not. Once you know your weaknesses you can work on improving in those areas.

Photo Critique Checklist

1. **Intent** – Could any viewer look at this photo and KNOW what you had in mind?
2. **Emotional Impact** – Can this photo be described with words of emotion, like peace, calmness, anger, rage, joy, or sadness? Does your photo make an emotional statement?

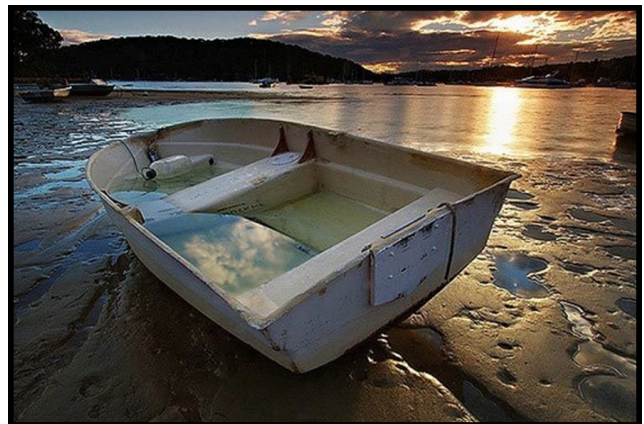
Photo by Olli Henze; ISO 100, f/5,
1/100-second exposure



Photographic Standard: How to Critique Your Own Photos . . . Continued

3. **Center of interest** – When composing your images, do you successfully direct your viewer’s attention to a specific point? Would the viewer know where your center of interest is?
4. **Illusion of depth** – Have you used framing, balance, contrast, and other art concepts to make your image jump off the page, or does it just sit there?
5. **Subject/background contrast** – Shooting a portrait of someone with black hair against a black background is not usually a good idea. Does your subject stand out?
6. **Personal style** – Ansel Adams was known for extreme illusion of depth and all planes in very sharp focus. Jim Zuckerman is known for vibrant colors and simplified subjects within their natural setting. Henri Cartier-Bresson once said, “There is nothing in this world that does not have a decisive moment.” How will others describe your unique approach?
7. **Selective focus** – Do you choose where the viewer will look? If the background is just as sharp as the foreground, things can become very visually confusing.
8. **Composition** – Do you consistently use the rule of thirds, formal or informal balance, and leading lines? Take control of where the viewer’s eyes are most likely to fall in your image.
9. **Exposure** – Do you always shoot at whatever the camera says, or do you take control of the light? Can you see details in your shadows? Have you ever used a reflector or bounced a flash as opposed to straight on?
10. **Story telling** – Is there a feeling of movement within your image, or does it just sit there? Does it leave anything to the imagination, or is it just a statement of what is? If your image doesn’t tell a story, there is no reason to give it a second glance. Great photos make you want to look again and again.

*Photo by Tim Donnelly; f/20,
1.3-second exposure.*



Photographic Standard: How to Critique Your Own Photos . . . Continued

Use this checklist: A) to see where you are at the moment and B) to see where your work is going in the future. Having a photographic standard is like having a road map. It is possible to get from here to there without one but it's a whole lot easier with one. Knowing what areas you need to improve is the first step in becoming a better photographer.

PICTURECORRECT.com

When you're out with your camera, don't just take one shot of each scene and move on - instead, capture each scene from several positions. Get down low, find a vantage point to shoot from above, or take a few steps to the side. It'll increase your chances of capturing a great shot, and it'll also be a great learning experience; you can review the photos later and try to analyze what worked and what didn't about each perspective.

Always give each photo your best effort. To paraphrase a popular saying: don't try, do. I sometimes see photographers who approach images haphazardly - they just point the camera, press the shutter, and walk away.



Rm