

# January 2022 Newsletter

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

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



Photo by – Ed Haynes

## APC ACTIVITIES

### Next Meeting

Jan. 17, 2022 7:00pm First Baptist Church

Board Meeting  
Jan. 10, 2022 7:00pm Kimber's Restaurant  
230 W. Main St, Gibsonville

### Programs

Feb. 21, 2022 Vinny Colucci

April 18, 2022 Bob Finley

June 20, 2022 Melissa McGaw

Aug. 18, 2022 Melissa Southern

Oct 17, 2022 Richard Schenck

### PhotoShows

Jan. 17, 2022 Member's Choice

March 21, 2022 Bridges

May 16, 2022 Churches

July 18, 2022 Fences

Sept. 19, 2022 H<sub>2</sub>O Reflections

Nov. 21, 2022 Abandoned Places

### Field Trips

Jan.-Mar. 2022 Places of Worship

### Exhibits

TBD

## President's Comments—January 2022

**By Keith O'Leary**

Well Happy New Year everyone! I am honored to be your new President. Thank you for your confidence in me and together I feel we can make 2022 a really good year, despite the ongoing pandemic. While May Memorial Library served us well last year as a new meeting place, time constraints to end by 8 PM were not ideal. To that end, and with the help of several club members, we have a new venue for 2022 beginning this month that I think will work well for us.

Meetings will now be held in the Fellowship Hall at First Baptist Church in Burlington on S. Broad St. and we'll resume our 7 PM meeting time. Entrance is at the rear of the building facing Mebane St. and it even has a covered drive-thru. Masks and social distancing are required at this time.

Thanks to all who completed our online survey. We are gathering all of the data and will consider all responses to help make us a better club in the months ahead.

Hats off to Nancy Jacobus who served us well as treasurer for many years and congratulations to our new treasurer, Dianne Sellers. Also, thanks to Tony Beasley and Dick Schenck who agreed to co-chair the PhotoShow Committee this year.

I encourage all to get out and take some photos for this month's PhotoShow: "Member's Choice" (Anything goes!). This is also membership renewal season. Make sure you renew your membership soon and invite others to join our club. Stay safe and Happy Shooting!

## APC BOARD

President	Keith O'Leary	Exhibit Chair	Angela Bostek
Vice President	Sam Lynch	Co-Chair	Sandra Whitesell
Secretary	George Siple	Membership Committee	
Treasurer	Dianne Sellers	Chair	Len Barnard
PhotoShow Committee		Co-Chair	Carole Barnard
Chair	Tony Beasley	Twin Lakes Rep.	Len Barnard
Co-Chair	Dick Schenck	Web Master	Christie O'Leary
Member	Herbert House	Past President	Scott Duvall
Outings/Field Trips	Hugh Comfort	Editor	Ray Munns
Publicity Chair	Carole Barnard		

# AUTUMN IN ELON

By Dick Schenck

Dick has been out and about during Fall—2021 getting some beautiful autumn photos. Thanks for sharing, Dick!





## WEBMASTER NOTES

In 2021, the club's website took on a new look. Here are things you can find on the website ([www.alamancephoto.com](http://www.alamancephoto.com)):

- The latest information - Announcement Board on the Home page
- 2022 Photo Show Topics
- Photo Show Winners
- Membership information
- Newsletters back to Jan 2021
- Field Trip Themes and rules of submission
- Upcoming Exhibits
- Photos of 2021 Exhibits
- Photos from member galleries
- A great place to refer possible members to visit
  - ◆ They can contact the club via an online form with questions or interests.

\*BTW: The Member's Gallery will be updated in March and April 2022. So be sure to keep an eye out for submission information in the February Newsletter.

On the club's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub](http://www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub)):

- ◆ A weekly photography quote
- ◆ Can post pictures you would like to share with other club members and public
- ◆ Updates of the club's activities

Look forward to continuing to share the club's photographs online.

**Happy New Year!**

Christie O'Leary—Webmaster

## Field Trips for 2022

- ◆ Winter (January-March) Personal Field Trip: **Places of Worship**
- ◆ Spring (April-June) Group Field Trip: **TBD**
- ◆ Summer (July-September) Personal Field Trip: **Rivers and Streams**
- ◆ Fall (October-December) Group Field Trip: **TBD**

# Membership Corner

Len Barnard 336-270-3194

## 2021 Christmas Social

2021 was a different year, one that we would not have ever expected. In one way it was a year that we do not want to repeat with the COVID-19 Pandemic. But on the good side, our club grew by 10 members last year. We ended 2021 with our annual Christmas Social and were entertained by *370 Beautiful Images* with back ground music thanks to Keith. If for some reason you have not seen these images, please check out a prior email from Keith that had them attached. A very enjoyable evening. Not sure which I enjoyed the most—the fellowship, the slide show or the food. All were truly outstanding.

**And the Best News of All:** For the first APC meeting of 2022, January 17th, we will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall of the First Baptist Church, at 400 S. Broad Street. It is about 3-4 blocks South of May Memorial Library. Please enter at the rear entrance, facing Mebane Street, at the covered drive-thru.

Please arrive between 6:30 pm and 7pm. Meeting will begin at 7:00pm and probably end near 8:30pm.

## **Announcement—New Club Meeting Location**

*Beginning next month, on Jan 17th, we will start meeting in the Fellowship Hall at First Baptist Church at 400 S. Broad St. in Burlington.*

*Enter at the rear of the church facing Mebane St. at the covered drive-thru.*

*Masks and social distancing are required.*

*Please arrive between 6:30 and 7:00. Meeting will begin at 7:00 and probably end by 8:30.*

*All must be out by 10 PM.*

## Alamance Photography Club

### 2022 Dues

With the New Year of 2022 arrival, it brings forth Dues renewal time. Effective January 1st your 2022 APC dues are due! The good news is that they have not increased. They are still \$40.00 for an individual and \$60.00 for a family.

We also have a special rate for students—\$15.00.

For 2022, we have a new Treasurer, Dianne Sellers. If you wish, I am very sure she will accept your payment at our January and February meetings.

For dues unpaid by March 1st, members names will be removed from our Membership Roster.

If you desire to mail your dues in, please send to:

Dianne Sellers, 3853 Wesley Ct., Burlington, NC 27215

## What makes a good tripod?

The tripod should be strong and rigid enough to take your camera and lens firmly, with a margin for heavier equipment later if required. Put your camera on one and try before you buy.

1. Those long handles on pan and tilt heads dig you in the throat. Get a ball head for easy maneuverability.
2. Make sure the head has a quick release for the camera, so you're not screwing things in and out. That wastes time and adds to frustration.
3. Check that the tripod is steady at full extension, and the legs are independently adjustable for setting up on uneven ground.
4. If the center post is removable, you can use it mounted horizontally or upside down, which is useful for close-ups and avoiding the tripod legs in vertically down shots.

# January 17<sup>th</sup> PhotoShow

## Member's Choice

Tony Beasley, PhotoShow Chair

We encourage ALL members to submit photographs for our bi-monthly Photo Show and would like to see EVERYONE represented!

We try not to exceed 50 photos per show. Therefore, we ask that you submit a maximum of two (2) photos. We may only use one of your photos based on the number of entries so PLEASE indicate your preferred photo in the file name of each photo (01 or 02; See naming information below). If you have any issues with formatting or submitting, please let us know at [apcphotoshow@gmail.com](mailto:apcphotoshow@gmail.com) and we will be happy to assist. Also let us know if your submitted photo is not acknowledged within a few days and/or by the deadline.

### Submission Details

#### Number of Entries:

Max of two (2) entries per member. Please indicate your preferred photo with the number 01.

#### Size:

No larger than 25 MB.

Preferred minimum size is 1024 x 768.

#### Format:

.jpg

#### File Naming:

Please rename your photo submissions using the following format:

Firstname.lastname\_01 or \_02 (*per use preference*)

Example: john.doe\_01.jpg john.doe\_02.jpg

#### Email:

Email Address: Send all images to [apcphotoshow@gmail.com](mailto:apcphotoshow@gmail.com)

Email Subject Line: Include the month of the PhotoShow and your name.

Example: Photos for January Photoshow – John Doe

#### Entry Deadline:

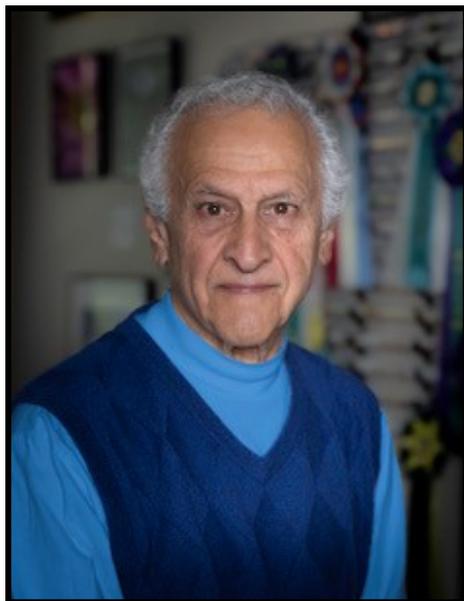
5:30 PM on Monday, January 10, 2022.

#### Please Note:

*Submissions that do not adhere to the guidelines above may be returned.*

***Don't forget: Photos may be submitted early for the following show!***

## PhotoShow Leader Dick Cicone — Biography



Dick has been an active semi-professional photographer and involved with amateur photo clubs as a participant, judge and instructor for over 50 years.

A Raleigh resident since the mid-90's, Dick moved from South Florida where he was active with many of the Photographic Society of America (PSA) clubs from West Palm Beach to Miami.

Working with Photo clubs, Dick has conducted portrait classes for studio and environmental settings, and wildlife field trips in the Florida Everglades.

As an instructor Dick taught Basic and Intermediate Photography classes at Wake Technical College Continuing Education (2002—2012). He also accepts students for private instruction.

He has been a judge and contributor at the Chapel Hill Camera Club, Capital City Camera Club, NIEHS Camera Club, RTI, Coastal Carolina Camera Club, Yates Mill County Park Annual Photo Competition, Cary Photographic Artists Juried Competitions, Wake Forest and Durham Camera clubs, South Carolina State Fair and a number of other Triangle photo competitions.

Group exhibit participation at local photo exhibits include Horace Williams House, Carol Woods Retirement Community and Durham Art Council, Chapel Hill Museum, Hugh Mangum Museum of Photography-Durham, NC State Craft Center, Page-Walker Museum-Cary, NC State gallery of Art and Design, Through-this-Lens Gallery-Durham, City of Raleigh Museum, CNPA, Annual Capital City CC events and other venues.

Semi-professional work includes individual and group portraits, sport and publicity photos, product photography, weddings, special events, photo-art and contributed photo coverage of the NC Special Olympics.

Published work includes photo essays in the Florida Sun Sentinel, News and Observer, trade magazines and product brochures.

*"Photography is the art of recording light on select subjects to create memorable images." - Dick Cicone*

## 2022-Q1 Personal Field Trip: **Places of Worship**

Hugh Comfort, Outings/Field Trips Coordinator

Tony Beasley, PhotoShow Chairman

With Covid concerns continuing, we are planning for 2022 quarterly field trips with a mix of personal and group field trips. Locations and times of the group field trips will be announced in the month prior to the trip at club meetings and in the newsletter.

For the first quarter of 2022 (January 1 - March 31), our locations will be Places of Worship. These may be traditional places of worship (churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.) as well as outdoor worship venues, and may be taken from outside or inside. (If taking inside photos, you should be sensitive to not disturb any activities going on and to observing any masking/covid requirements.) While the locations are fairly general, the time frame is not: all photos must be taken during the first quarter of 2022. A link to all submitted photos will be shared with the club on the first day of the month following quarter-end. Up to 5 field trip pictures may be submitted per member to share with the club. Based on participation, we may only share your top 3 or 4, so please number them in the order of your preference. See below for details.

### Field Trip Photo Submission Details

#### **Number of Entries:**

One (1) to five (5) entries per member. Please indicate your preferred photo with the number 01, etc.

#### **Size:**

Due to the number of photos for this event, we ask, if you are able, to resize your photos to 1-2 MB if possible, but nevertheless not to exceed 20 MB.

#### **Format:**

.jpg

#### **File Naming:**

Please rename your photo submissions using the following format:

FirstName.LastName\_nn, where nn is the number (01-05) indicating preference where lower numbers are more preferred than higher numbers.

Example: john.doe\_01.jpg john.doe\_02.jpg

#### **Email:**

Email Address: Send all images to [apcphotoshow@gmail.com](mailto:apcphotoshow@gmail.com)

Email Subject Line: Include the Field Trip "topic" and your name.

Example: Photos for Places of Worship Field Trip – John Doe

#### **Entry Deadline:**

Thursday, March 31, 2022.

A link to view all submissions will be emailed to members by Friday evening, April 1, 2022.

#### **Please Note:**

Pictures not taken in field trip time period (Jan-Mar, 2022) are subject to rejection as these should be recent photos taken specifically during these personal field trips timelines.

# 5 Tips for Jaw Dropping Winter Landscape Photography

By Christian Hoiberg

Winter landscape photography is a lot of fun – and it doesn't have to be hard, either, assuming you know the right techniques.

In this article, I'll share five critical winter landscape tips so you can start capturing beautiful snowy landscapes like the pros.

Specifically, I'll discuss:

- The best time of day for winter landscape photography (this one might surprise you!)
- The right winter photography camera settings
- How to enhance your winter landscape compositions

Much, much more!

So if you're ready to take your winter images to the next level, then let's dive right in, starting with my first tip:

## 1. Look for contrast to make those winter compositions stand out

After a few days of heavy snowfall, the landscape is completely white: white trees, white lakes, white mountains, and (normally) a white sky. And when everything is white, it's quite challenging to find a compositional focal point, as nothing really catches the eye.

So what do you do?

You look for contrast – either *color contrast*, where you find a splash of red, blue, or green against the white – or *tonal contrast*, such as a splash of darkness against the bright snow.

Here's an example of color contrast, where I found a red house against a white and gray background.

The red color is what makes this picture interesting. Without it, the scene would lack a focal point and the viewer's eyes would have no place to rest, which would make for a bad shot.



### **5 Tips for Jaw Dropping Winter Landscape Photography . . . Continued**

Happily, contrast is easy to find on snowy days, because it'll catch your eye just the same as it'll catch a photo viewer's eye. So you can just go around with your camera, searching for an eye-catching element or two. Make sense?

By the way, I find red color contrast to be particularly pleasing in winter landscape scenes, but search for any dominant color or tonal variation. Perhaps there's an autumn leaf laying on top of a thin layer of snow, or maybe it's a few skiers wearing red jackets, or a dark mountain surrounded by white. Just find a dominant color or tone in the otherwise white landscape, then use careful composition techniques to make it a standout focal point.

#### **2. Overexpose for beautiful winter landscape photography**

Say that you can't find tonal or color contrast. You can still make great images, even with an utterly white landscape. You just need to use this trick—Overexpose your image.

If the landscape is white – especially if it's snowing – a winter image can benefit from being a stop or two brighter. Just avoid clipping the highlights.

For instance, check out this image, which features very little tonal or color contrast.



I've added a bit of overexposure, so that the snow at the bottom of the frame is a near-pure white, and the sky at the top of the frame features a featureless white, as well. The snow-covered trees in the middle of the image, however, offer a desaturated green that almost looks gray, and it gives an interesting, even ghostly, sense of atmosphere. I also love how the slight overexposure helps convey just how cold you were when the shot was taken, plus it provides a sense of wonderful calmness.

The technique won't work for every image. But plenty of snow landscape photography can benefit from a bit of brightness, plus it'll help you retain detail in the shadows, which is always a good thing.

### **5 Tips for Jaw Dropping Winter Landscape Photography . . . Continued**

By the way, I'd recommend overexposing the shot by reducing the shutter speed. But make sure you have a sturdy tripod, and watch out for falling snow; a long exposure plus heavy snowflakes can white out your shot completely, so make sure to preview your LCD often, and don't be afraid to raise your ISO or widen your aperture if necessary.

#### **3. Choose a cold white balance for the best snow landscape photography**

Technically, you can choose your white balance in camera or – if you're photographing in RAW – in post-processing. Either of these options work well, though sometimes it's nice to see a preview of the white balance in camera, so don't shy away from doing it that way (and remember: you can always change it later!).

Anyway, the point here is that winter is cold, so a beautifully cold white balance looks gorgeous, like this.



Note how the cool colors enhance the shot. The image feels frigid, wouldn't you say? That's thanks to the color balance.

Now, I don't recommend you go overboard. You don't need your shot to look like it came from a blue alien planet. But feel free to push the white balance, experiment, and see what you get!

You're also free to experiment in post-processing, assuming you've shot in RAW. You can use the Temperature slider to move back and forth between warm and cool effects, and you can determine what you prefer.

### *5 Tips for Jaw Dropping Winter Landscape Photography . . . Continued*

#### **4. Photograph during blue hour for ethereal winter landscapes**

The blue hour refers to the time just before sunrise and just after sunset, when the sun sits below the horizon and the world goes all beautiful and blue.

You still have enough light to shoot, yet nothing is lit directly. The light is soft and gorgeous.

And it works great for winter landscape photography.

You see, the soft light caresses the snow, making for a fairytale effect. And if your photo includes streetlights or house lights, the composition can turn even more magical. Here's an example blue hour image.



See the magical effect? And do you see how the lights from the cabins look truly gorgeous against the cold background?

Spend a few days shooting during blue hour, and you'll realize that it's cold, dark, and sometimes snowy. In other words, during the blue hour, you'll probably want to stay inside underneath a blanket.

But do yourself a favor. Force yourself to put on a coat, grab that camera, and get outside. The images will be worth it, even if the cold hits you like a blast in the face!

Note: You can still capture beautiful snowy landscape shots during sunrise and sunset, or even in the middle of the day. But if I was able to choose just one time of day to head out with my camera during winter, it would be the blue hour. It really is that amazing.

## *5 Tips for Jaw Dropping Winter Landscape Photography . . . Continued*

### **5. Bring extra batteries and keep them warm**

When it comes to photographing in cold climates, this last strategy is absolutely essential. Batteries drain much quicker in winter, and if you shoot mirrorless or you use Live View for most shots, you'll soon find yourself heading home – unless you remember to bring plenty of extra batteries.

One tip that winter landscape photographers often use: keep the spare batteries in an inner pocket of a jacket. That way, the batteries stay warm, which prevents fast drainage.

(Make sure, however, you don't put your camera in your coat. That may cause the lens elements to fog up, which is very problematic.)

By the way, you can't keep your batteries warm if you're not warm, so you need to stay warm, as well! Always be prepared; it's far better to bring too many layers than too few.



You should also be very careful with your equipment. Don't change lenses in snowy conditions, keep a towel handy to wipe the snow off your camera, and – if the snow is heavy – consider using a rain cover for your camera setup.

### **Winter landscape photography: final words**

Hopefully, you can now confidently photograph winter landscapes – so the next time you get a nice snowfall, head outside! Take some photos, appreciate the beauty, and have fun.



Digital  
Photography  
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# How to Take Food Photography in Restaurants

## Taylor Young Photography

We've all been there. Sitting in a dark, corner table of a fantastic restaurant, wishing that we had more light, so we didn't have to use that terrible built-in flash. Perhaps the meal was one of the best we've ever eaten and the one thing that would have made it better is gorgeous photos to post to our website, Facebook page, or blog.



*Photo by Daniel Lee; ISO 800, f/3.5, 1/80-second exposure*

When we get home the results are less than spectacular. Usually, the flash creates hot-spots on anything reflective on the table. Including, stemware, cutlery and crockery. The grain from the high ISO used also is a very annoying factor in low-light, restaurant photography. There are some easy solutions to this.

### **How to capture great photos in any setting:**

**1. Diffused sunlight** – The quickest and easiest way to get great photos is to shoot with available, indirect sunlight. This could be choosing a table outside, under an umbrella, where the sunlight would be diffused by the umbrella. This method is by far the best for achieving excellent photos.

**2. Get a table by the window** – If there are no outdoor tables available, or it's too cold, rainy, etc. there are other methods. One trick is to ask the reservations desk if you can have a table by the window when booking. If they say no, than ask when the next available seating is when a window is available. Don't be embarrassed to push it and insist. They are there to serve you.

### *How to Take Food Photography in Restaurants . . . Continued*

**3. Use fast lenses** – Outdoor and window tables work during the daylight, but what about dining in the evening, when the sun is down and there's nothing but the available light in the restaurant? This is where it gets tricky. For those with point-and-shoot cameras you don't have many options. To achieve really brilliant results indoors, using dim light, you need to get yourself a DSLR (digital single lens reflex) camera or mirrorless camera, which has the ability to swap lenses. That is, one that doesn't just have a single fixed lens. The lens is really what matters. You want a fast lens. Meaning, a lens which lets in a lot of light. One that has a large aperture, (amount of light let in reflects aperture size) f1.8, or f2.8 lets in lots of light and are called large apertures, or fast lenses. Despite their small numbers. Anything smaller (f4.0 and above) and you're going to have trouble. Unless you have IS (image stabilization) on your lens.



*Photo by Nick Nguyen; ISO 100, f/4.0, 1/125-second exposure*

**4. Use image preview** – I have found that having image preview on my camera works very well for restaurant photography. This is built-in to almost all point-and-shot cameras, but is still very limited on DSLRs. The reason I find it so helpful is because I don't have to hold the camera up to my face to shoot. This can be very distracting when taking photos in nice restaurants especially. With image preview, you look at the LCD screen on the back of the camera and focus your photograph without having to bring the camera above your food.

**5. Shoot at table level, not eye level** – When shooting food, you want to always strive to photograph at an angle which is 10-40 degrees from the table. Meaning, don't take food shots at eye level. We humans always see our food at eye level and it's more intriguing when we see it at the actual level the food is at. About 10 degrees above the plate is perfect.

### *How to Take Food Photography in Restaurants . . . Continued*

**6. Get in close** – I see way too many food bloggers shooting with wide-angle lenses and as a result the photographs aren't attractive. There is way too much going on in the foreground and background, when really, all we want to see is the food. So unless you want to highlight some specific areas of the table, or the restaurant, get in close.

**7. Don't use your built-in flash** – Built-in flash tends to flatten an image and make it dull. Try to utilize one of the methods above first and if all else fails, flip that flash, but only in an emergency.



*Photo by Mack Male; ISO 100, f/3.2, 1/60-second exposure*

And finally, don't discount your photo editing software. Even bland, flat images can be saved using the curves function.

Today you can find top quality, used equipment for a fraction of the price new. Get yourself a good DSLR and 50mm f1.8 lens and your restaurant and food photography will really start to shine.

# A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography

*Learn how to create compelling Black & White photographs*

**By Sarah Marino**



A lot of photographers think of black and white as the classical form of photography but digital technology helps make black and white photography a dynamic and creatively fulfilling modern pursuit.

With black and white photography, the constraints of conveying reality do not come into play since there is no reality conveyed in shades of gray. Thus, I can take an image file and using the tools available in the digital darkroom, create something that reflects my interests, visual preferences, and emotions about a scene in a much different way than I can with a color photograph.

For this reason, black and white photography often feels like a more expansive pursuit.

## ***Creating Compelling Black and White Photographs***

In this article, I will start by sharing a few introductory lessons that can help photographers create more compelling and personally expressive black and white photographs.

Next, I will walk through an overview of my black and white photo processing workflow, sharing a few examples of how I apply the workflow to a specific photograph along the way.

## *A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued*



*A dramatic summer storm brings lightning strikes to the Great Sand Dunes in Colorado.*

It's difficult to distill years of learning and experimentation into a few bullet points but I consider the following lessons to be the most important for photographers who are just starting out and want to create better black and white photographs:

Black & White = A deliberate creative choice

Typically, the most compelling black and white photographs result from making a deliberate creative choice to create a black and white photograph. This process often starts in the field.

The sooner you see black and white photography as an equal to color photography, the better.

Black and white photography is not just a fallback for saving a bad color photo but an equally valid creative pursuit that opens up all kinds of opportunities for personal expression and experimentation.

### ***Depart from "reality"***

Black and white photography is by its very nature a departure from reality.

Since we do not experience scenes in monochrome, black and white photographs do not have the same emotional tethers and expectations as color photographs might. Embracing this aspect of working in black and white is part of what makes this such an expansive and freeing creative pursuit.

While all of the scenes you see in this article reflect single moments I experienced in nature, I depart from the literal interpretations of these scenes during the processing stage to help me meet my goals for my black and white photography (specifically accentuating the darkness and drama often present in nature).

## *A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued*



*Fluffy cotton grass surrounds a small tarn in Jasper National Park's backcountry (Alberta, Canada).*

### ***Learn to visualize a scene in black & white***

Learning how color scenes will translate into a black and white photograph can be challenging but is an important skill to learn. For example, a photo of a green bush with red berries will have a lot of color contrast but when converted to shades of gray, the same scene will look dull.

Why?

Because the greens and reds become similar tones of gray, leaving the scene with little tonal contrast.

For another example, take white clouds against a dark sky. When converted to black and white, the bright white tones will contrast nicely with the darker gray sky.

A good way to start learning this skill is to take some color photographs and convert them to black and white using software like Lightroom. Observe how the colors translate to tones of gray and then work on applying those observations in the field.

The next step is learning how to manipulate colors to introduce or tame contrast when processing a black and white photograph. Experimenting with the color sliders in the "Black & White Mix" panel in Lightroom's Develop module can help you build this skill, as well.

### ***Mood and light***

Mood and light are essential in filling a photograph with emotion but in different ways than with color photography.

For example, strive to see past typical landscape "rules" like "only photograph during the golden hour". Doing so will help create many more opportunities for black and white photography while in the field.

## **A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued**

All types of light can work, including harsher light in the middle of the day. Likewise, seeking out moody scenes, like dark and dreary weather, can also work well for black and white photography.

A long exposure helped capture an interesting pattern in these waves in Vík, Iceland.

*This photo was taken on a very dreary, gray day – a time that many would see as ill-suited for landscape photography.*



### **Composition**

Some color photos can succeed due to the sheer overwhelming power of dramatic, colorful light even with a less-than-compelling composition.

With black and white photography, the emotional reaction associated with strong color is gone.

This means that composition plays an elevated role in creating compelling black and white photographs. Thus, learning to integrate strong graphic elements and abstractions into your compositions can help elevate a black and white portfolio.

### ***Push beyond presets and the basic grayscale conversion***

My personal experience suggests that carefully adjusted tonal contrast is often what brings a black and white photograph to life. Thus, grayscale conversions and presets are almost never the final solutions.

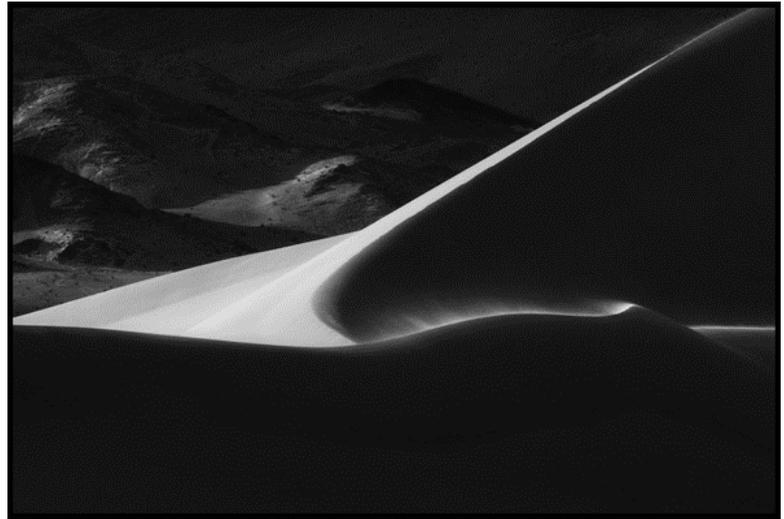
Why? A simple grayscale conversion rarely goes far enough in processing. And, black and white presets often convert a photo to grayscale and add some contrast but often not enough and in some of the wrong places.

Thus, if the creative expression is one of your goals for your photography, learning to make your own processing decisions is often a key step in developing a more personal portfolio of work. By relying on presets or a simple grayscale conversion, you are allowing an algorithm or another photographer to decide what your photo should look like.

### ***A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued***

While presets can be a great learning tool and offer a good place to start in processing some photos, learning how to make manual adjustments in your favorite processing software can help you finish your photos in a way that is true to your vision.

*A wisp of sand blows off sand dunes in Death Valley National Park's back-country.*



### ***A more personalized approach to black & white photo processing***

The most common question I get about my black and white photos is “Do you use Nik Silver Efex Pro for processing?”

Many photographers are quite surprised when I say no. From my perspective, Silver Efex is one tool in my processing toolbox. It can be fun to experiment with the presets to see potential in a photograph but for my work, I often prefer other tools, specifically Adobe Lightroom and Photoshop.

Why? First, black and white photo processing can push a file to its limits. I get cleaner files when using Photoshop than I do when using presets or other software packages, even when making significant adjustments to contrast.

More importantly, Photoshop offers full manual control over the results and many options for making very fine-tuned adjustments. Take the wisp of sand in the photo above. It would be difficult and/or tedious to accentuate the sand as shown here with any tool other than layers and masks in Photoshop.

While Photoshop comes with a learning curve, the investment of time in getting to know the software is quite worthwhile when considering its flexibility and the potential for superior results. And, as I discuss below, only a few tools are needed to get started (levels, curves, luminosity masks, and dodging/burning tools).

## *A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued*

My workflow for black and white photo processing can be distilled into five steps using Lightroom and Photoshop, which I briefly describe below (if you want to learn more and see expanded examples of this workflow in practice, it is explained thoroughly in *Black & White Photography: A Complete Guide for Nature Photographers*).

This workflow applies to photos that can be created using one file, as blending files for exposure, depth of field or other reasons would add more complexity and quite a few additional steps.



*Heavy winter rains flooded Badwater Basin in Death Valley National Park, offering unique conditions at this iconic location.*

I also share a few examples of how each step applies to the photo above (not the complete steps in processing the photo but some key examples for each workflow step).

I took this photo in California's Death Valley National Park at Badwater Basin. While Badwater Basin is a fascinating place to photograph under any conditions, flooding can turn it into a magical experience.

Here, the edges of salt rise just above the pooled water. This allows for both reflections and well-defined polygons, which worked out well for black and white photography. The white edges of salt stand out against the darker areas of water. This kind of tonal contrast helps add visual interest to a black and white photograph.

Also, I took this photo a few hours before sunset – another important lesson for anyone interested in black and white photography. The harsher light of the afternoon might look unattractive in a color photograph but can work well when translated to black and white.

This is the RAW file with no adjustments. The narrative below describes some of the steps in getting from the RAW file to the finished version above.



## *A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued*

### ***Workflow step #1: Basic adjustments***

After selecting a photo to work with, I start with initial technical adjustments in Lightroom. This often includes cropping, noise reduction, balancing the exposure, and other initial steps for processing the RAW file.

Note: I could process quite a few of my black and white photos using only Lightroom. While it is possible to do many of the same tasks in both Lightroom and Photoshop, however, I prefer the ease and fine-tuned control of the tools in Photoshop.

For this sample photo, my steps in Lightroom included both technical corrections and a few initial creative choices.

For example, I used Lightroom's lens correction tool to remove some of the wide-angle distortions along the horizon. I also used the graduated filter tool to start balancing the exposure between the foreground and the sky.

Using the blacks, whites, highlights, and shadows sliders, I introduced some additional contrast as well.

While I could make these changes in Photoshop, I like to go into Photoshop with a balanced exposure with some initial contrast adjustments when I am using a single file.

Lightroom (or its companion Adobe Camera RAW) can produce better results for recovering highlights and shadows than trying to do the same thing once in Photoshop.

### ***Workflow step #2: Black & white conversion***

Next, I take the photo into Photoshop and convert it to black and white using the black and white adjustment layer.

I sometimes use the color sliders (which are part of the black and white adjustment layer) to make initial adjustments to contrast in the photo, which I fine-tune later with other tools.

For example, by darkening or lightening a blue tone (like the sky in this photo), I can darken or lighten the equivalent gray tone in the black and white conversion. Repeating this step for each color present in the photo can help adjust the contrast in a scene.

For this photo, I applied with black and white adjustment layer without any major adjustments to the color sliders in Photoshop. I slightly darkened the blues but left everything else alone.

While these color sliders can be a helpful tool, I find that big adjustments often degrade a file with other adjustment tools, like levels, curves, and luminosity masks, producing better results.

## **A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued**

### ***Workflow step #3: Global adjustments in Photoshop***

After the file has been converted to black and white, I move onto the next round of global adjustments, which are adjustments that apply to the full photograph. This step typically includes adjustments to overall exposure and contrast using tools like levels and curves adjustments.

For this photo, I already made a few global adjustments in Lightroom, like adjusting the overall exposure. Here, my global adjustments in Photoshop started with a levels layer to add more contrast – darkening the mountains and darker tones in the reflection and lightening the brighter tones in the salt and the clouds (pulling in the sliders to set the black and white points).

### ***Workflow step #4: Local adjustments in Photoshop***

Next, I use layers and masks to make targeted local adjustments.

In this step, I typically use levels, curves, and luminosity masks to make changes to luminosity (brightness/darkness) and contrast within specific areas of a photo. I also use various dodging and burning techniques to adjust the lighting, contrast, and mood within specific parts of the scene.

While presets, software like Silver Efex, and Lightroom can usually get a photo to this point, this is the step where Photoshop shines. The steps I take here can add a great deal of life to a photograph.

For this example, one major local adjustment focused on brightening the salt patterns and darkening the surrounding reflections to introduce additional contrast into the scene. Here, I used a multi-step process to introduce more contrast in the foreground.

I started with a levels adjustment that applied to the full photograph to set the black and white points, which introduced more contrast to the scene.

Next, I used a luminosity mask to select the lighter tones in the salt (painting black over the lighter tones in the sky so that the luminosity mask would only apply to the lighter tones in the foreground).

With a luminosity mask on a curves layer, I pulled up the curve to brighten only the lighter tones in the salt (this helped brighten only the lighter tones while leaving the rest of the scene alone).

Finally, I used a dodging layer to further brighten some areas of the salt. Without this step, this photo would not be nearly as dynamic.

Without Photoshop, achieving this sort of fine-tuned control would be tedious in Lightroom and impossible in many other black and white photo processing software packages.

## *A Comprehensive Introduction to Black and White Photography . . . Continued*

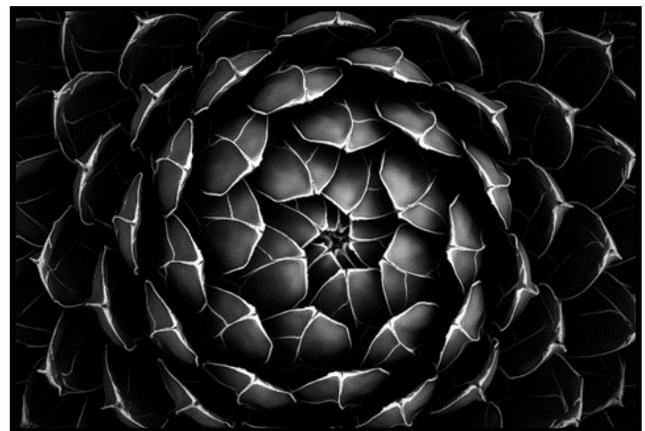
### ***Workflow step #5: Final adjustments***

My final step is typically cleaning up dust spots and adding other finishing touches (Orton Effect, selective sharpening, adjusting the texture of clouds, etc.).

In this case, my final touches included cloning out a lot of dust spots, which I always leave to the end as black and white processing brings out a lot of spots and I prefer to deal with them all at once.

I also added an Orton Effect layer at a low opacity to add a final pop of contrast and the ever-so-slightest glow.

*A perfect specimen of the Queen Victoria Agave in an Arizona botanical garden.*



Depending on the photo, this basic workflow might take 10 minutes and include 2 to 3 layers in Photoshop (example: the photo directly above).

For other photos, like the two at the top of this post, this workflow might involve more complex techniques like exposure blending or double-processing a RAW file plus a lot of time and many layers in Photoshop to fine-tune specific areas of the scene.

Each photo is different and this process is always iterative – I take a few steps forward, assess my progress, and then possibly reverse a decision or two, eventually moving forward in the right direction until I have a finished draft or final version to share.

While some of these steps might seem complicated, all of the tools I discuss above are easy to learn. The hard part is learning how to apply these tools to get to your intended result.

Based on my own experience in learning to process black and white photos and in teaching others, allowing time for practice is essential. Experiment a lot, be bold in testing out new tools, take risks without worrying about the result, and embrace failure as a means of learning.