



VIEWFINDER THE NEWSLETTER

Alaska Society of Outdoor and Nature Photographers

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Photographing Eagles in Homer

Written by Ayden Smith

In late April of last year, my wife and I visited Homer for a few days. I was looking forward to photographing eagles before the shore bird festival brought in the crowds. At that time of year, Homer is a sleepy little town - the galleries are just getting ready for summer and the RV parks are either empty or not yet open. And the beaches and road along the Spit are quiet. We arrived late in the day and found a spot in the city camp ground for the night. After setting up the RV, I located some driftwood logs surrounded by tall yellow grass above the high tide mark. Several eagles had been using this log for preening late in the evening on the first day. All that had been missing was good light that the morning sun should provide. The plan was to be up early for the morning light on the east side of the Spit.

The next morning I awoke to the sound of wind. It was 4 a.m. - one hour before twilight and two before sunrise. I thought the wind might lie down as the sun came up. One thing was certain - if wasn't out there, I wouldn't get the shot. So half an hour before sun-up, I

was out walking the beach with my camera. The wind was brisk at 18 to 20 mph, coming across the Spit and up the Kachemak bay. The eagles were not to be found at sunrise. I grew up on the banks of the Tanana River and spent part of my youth north of the Brooks Range where the weather governs the rhythm of life. Being out on mornings like this with the wind and high clouds always reminds me of the energy in life. This particular



morning turned out to be only a walk. After a hot cup of coffee and some breakfast back at the RV, it was time to do some scouting. The weather forecast had been updated with winds out of the west at 20mph and gusts to 25mph.

On the windward side of the Spit, the eagles and gulls were riding the updraft. They were not sitting still, but drifting northwest up the Spit one after another. The light angle was bad and the birds were high and fast, only dropping to the beach to investigate possible food. However, the wind that was keeping them up high also made their flight pattern predictable.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

AlaskaWild 2018 & 2019 Photography Exhibit Schedule

March 1 – Mar. 31, 2019: Steam Dot at Williwaw 609 F St. Anchorage, AK
April 5, 2019: alaskaWILD Show at Resolution Brewing (First Friday)
Selected images and winners will be announced

ASONP General Membership Meetings:

Held the second Tuesday of each month from October through May at 7:00 p.m. in the auditorium at the Anchorage Museum, Rasmuson Center. We will have an exciting and interesting series of speakers lined up for our monthly meetings this coming year beginning in the fall of 2018.

June thru September: Summer break—no general meetings

October 9 : Member's Images

November 13: Daryl Pederson—Prince William Sound

December 11: Gayle Neufeld—Africa Trip

January 8: Charles Mason—Denali Wet Plate Photography

February 12: Jackie Sawyer—Bohemian Waxwing Bird Photography

March 12: Roy Corral—A 50-year Odyssey of a Photojournalist

April 9: AlaskaWild 2019 Exhibit photos showcased

May 14: Brendan Smith—Research Photography: Capturing the science, life, and times of an arctic voyage aboard R/V Sikuliaq

We want to hear from you!

What are you interested in seeing in this newsletter?
More photos? More articles? Photography technical
skills? Camera equipment knowledge?

Submit your ideas to Roxannepeter@gmail.com

Please join us for our April 9th meeting. If you would like to share up to 20 images during the member slides portion of the meeting, please use the following link to submit them through dropbox.

[Member Slides Upload](#)

We are looking for up to 20 images per member. Files should be in the JPEG format and sized to 1200 pixels on the long side. Please name the file as: Photographer's name or initials-sequence number-name of photo. Sequence number should be 2-digit (01, 02, 03, etc.). This will make Alan Musy's job easier. If you want to e-mail the files send them to Alan at musya@admphoto.com by Monday evening prior to the meeting.

ASONP Business Reminders:

If you haven't done so already, please renew your membership either through the link on our website asonp.org or at one of our monthly meetings.

Membership benefits will end on March 31 for all memberships that expired on December 31, 2018.

WORKSHOPS, OUTINGS, & OTHER INTERESTS

Landscape/Wildflower Workshop

Mark your calendars for July of 2019 to visit the quaint town of Hope for this three-day landscape and wildflower workshop.

Photographer Ray Bulson will lead you to a remote alpine valley near Hope filled with streams, ponds, waterfalls and tarns. In mid-summer this lush place explodes with dozens of wildflowers. This is a target-rich place for macro and landscape photographers. We'll also explore the tidal flats around Hope during low tide to photograph the unique glacial silt patterns.

Discussions indoors at a local lodge will include photographic techniques, equipment and Lightroom post-processing as well as image reviews.

You won't want to miss this chance to discover this charming location a short distance away from the hustle and bustle of the big city.

For more information visit the website: <https://www.raybulson.com/hope-workshop.html>

Photography Cruise

Interested in a photography cruise from Sitka to Gustavus this summer? Roy Toft and Jaime Heimbuch are leading a tour on the Snow Goose .

When: June 19-28

Where: Sitka to Gustavus

Website: <http://www.snowgoosetalaska.com/adventure/sitka-to-glacier-bay-2019.html> for more information.

Macro Master Series Workshop

Andrea Gulickx, Don Komarechka, & Jackie Kramer

Anchorage, Alaska July 18 – 20, 2019. Register online at: <https://tinyurl.com/PhlorographyMS>
Three vastly different styles, gear, vision, & techniques come together in this high energy & intensely focused workshop. \$575.00 [\$525 before 9/1/18] \$200 payment to hold spot

Workshop will include focused sessions with each instructor in small groups of 15 or less on photography & editing techniques that can be applied in the field or indoors when shooting flowers. After the initial plenary session, the group will be split into 3 breakout groups who will work directly with Andrea, Don, and Jackie. Everyone will go home with creative images that reflect each of their teachings.

Call Jackie if you have any questions at 907-317-4667

Photographing Eagles in Homer

Written by Ayden Smith

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Moving northwest up the long sand bar that is the Homer Spit, we stopped at the last city park. This is where the peninsula joins the mainland, so the updraft would be changing. Sure enough, the birds were dropping down lower here before crossing the roadway and heading back southeast down the thin peninsula. It appeared they were making a long loop up the windward and down the leeward side of the Spit. The birds were back lit with no sun on their faces. It was late morning by now and any chance of good light was gone. It was time to get out of the wind for a while.

My wife is a pen and ink artist and Zentangle

geese and ducks out in the estuary.

We returned to the city park at the beginning of the Spit while the sun was still too high for good light. I had a long winter of rust to knock off my birds-in-flight photography, and the only way for me to get consistent is practice. My favorite BIF set up is a Canon 1DX and a 300mm f2.8 IS II and the 1.4 and 2x tele extender in my jacket pocket. For the next couple of hours I photographed every bird that passed by. The gulls and pigeons are every bit as good to practice panning and focus acquisition on as any other bird. The immediate feedback from the LCD on my camera helps to cut the



instructor. Over the years I have done sculpture and furniture design. We had some time to kill and wanted to see what was happening in the Homer art scene. We hit a couple of our favorite local galleries. As you probably know, Homer never disappoints when it comes to art. After a good lunch at a local coffee shop, we went for a short walk at the Bishop's Beach boardwalk. A loud kar-r-r-o-o-o call gave away the location of two Sandhill cranes. I could only see their heads above some tall salt grass. There was also a small flock of white-fronted

retraining curve, and after several hundred exposures, the muscle memory was coming back. Unlike film, the ones and zeroes of digital photography are free and should be used as such.

As the sun got lower in the sky, the light began to soften, leaving behind the hard shadows of midday. The wind laid down just a bit, to maybe ten mph. This let the eagles drop down a little lower, but continue riding the updraft along the coastline. There was plenty of light for a fast shutter speed with low ISO. I got in posi-

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Photographing Eagles in Homer

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tion with the evening sun and water at my back. There were some nice clouds on the horizon and tall yellow grass at the top of the beach for background interest. These were not my best shots of all-time. However I was able to make some solid exposures with good composition for my efforts.

With about an hour of light left, we moved back up the coast to Bishop's Beach to check on the cranes. The estuary downstream of Beluga Lake is relatively small and I was hoping the cranes might be moving about. When we arrived, there were three more cranes and the first pair was trying to drive them away. It must be tough for them to set up housekeeping at a place so many others use as a stopover on their way north. With the ruckus going on, both groups of cranes were alternately taking off and looping back around trying to gain a better position in the marsh. The low sun cast dark shadows on the background and warm light on the cranes in flight. This made for a fine ending to a good day of photography on the coast of south central Alaska.

Wild life and landscape photography seems to be no different than the rest of life. We all make the best plans we can. When the conditions change, we observe, re-evaluate and move on with a new plan. On good days I remember I am lucky to be out in nature with my camera and double fortunate that that nature is in Alaska.

Ayden L Smith
www.aydensmithphotography.com
Remember, Have Fun



© Ayden Smith Photography

DEAR JOHN COLUMN

By John R. DeLapp

Can You Explain the Significance of Bit Depth?



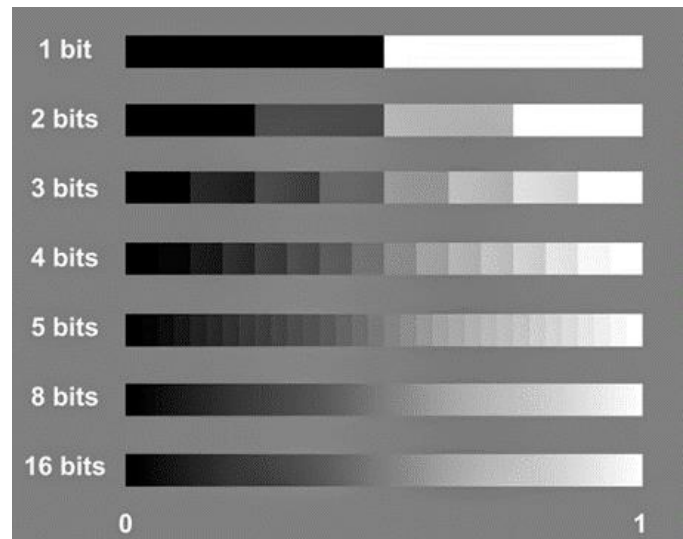
First, what is bit depth? Bit depth refers to the number of electronic bits per channel (the digits 0's and 1's that computers read) that are "stored" in the pixels to represent tones (grayscale or color) in an image. The higher the number of bits, the more tones that are available to produce an image. A bit depth of one, would be expressed as 2 to the 1-power (2^1) and would only record two tones, black or white. A bit depth of 2 would be 2^2 which would provide four digits (four tones). A bit depth of 3 would be 2^3 , or eight tones, and so on. Keep in mind that a higher bit depth does not increase the number of pixels, it only provides more precision for the captured information to be converted into an image. The accompanying chart gives a visual representation of various bit depths for a gray scale image (one channel). A color image would have three channels, RGB.

What bit depth do cameras use? Most, if not all, the current DSLR and mirrorless cameras use 12-bit or 14-bit capture per channel which provides a huge number of tones for making images. In producing a RAW image, a 12-bit camera system provides 4,096 digits of information per channel, while a 14-bit system provides 16,384 digits of information per channel. On the other hand, a JPEG capture from your camera will always be an 8-bit image, providing 256 digits of information per channel. Capturing images in RAW format provides "extra" information which allows larger adjustments to be made to the image in post processing without causing problems such as banding, posterization, or pixilation. If a quality JPEG image is needed, it is always best to capture the image in RAW, process it as a RAW file (or in Photoshop as a 16-bit TIFF image), and then, as the last step, convert it to the final JPEG image. If you do shoot in JPEG, it is important that the exposure and white balance values be correct since there will not be as much "room" to make adjustments in post processing compared to RAW capture. One option to consider, is to capture the image as both a RAW and JPEG, if your camera has this feature. If the JPEG produced by the camera is not suitable, the RAW image is still available for post processing.

Is 14-bit capture better than 12-bit capture? In theory, it should be since it captures much more information. But, can you actually see that a better image is produced using 14-bit capture? Some people claim that it

is difficult or impossible to tell the difference. In practice, I doubt it is an issue to worry about since most of our modern cameras capture in 14-bit. However, I do have one recently made camera (Olympus OMD E-M1-mark2), that captures in 12-bit and it produces beautiful RAW images with more than enough information for my post processing needs. Since this camera was designed and marketed for its blazing shutter and processing speeds, the company may have used 12-bit capture to keep the files smaller to help in boosting speed. While I agree it makes sense to capture as much information as possible, in practice you will not likely see any difference using cameras with either bit depth.

All text and photos © John R. DeLapp



Caption: Grey Scale Chart
Courtesy: www.the-working-man.org/2014/12/bit-depth-color

MEMBERS' PHOTOS

All photographs © Harry Walker



Battery Point Light is battered by a winter storm; Crescent City, Northern California



Wind blown waves shortly after winter storm; off Point Arena in Northern California

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MEMBERS' PHOTOS

All photographs © Harry Walker

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Redwoods; Lady Bird Johnson Grove; Redwoods National Park, Northern California



Western Sword ferns and Redwood tree; Lady Bird Johnson Grove; Redwoods National Park, Northern California

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MEMBERS' PHOTOS

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All photographs © Harry Walker



Roosevelt Elk bull bugles for a mate in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park; Northern California



Harbor Seal hauled out on rocks near Point Arena Lighthouse; Northern California

TECH CORNER

By Chuck Maas



Coming to Terms with the Canon EOS R

I've used Canon equipment for the last 18 years. During that time I've watched Canon and Nikon leapfrog each other at various times with meaningful improvements, but as of yet I've not seen a perfect do-it-all camera from any brand (though the Nikon D850 comes really close). However, I'm not inclined to abandon my collection of fine Canon EF mount lenses, so choosing a mirrorless body able to seamlessly bridge from EF to RF mount was critical—hence the EOS R.

The R is a major departure from all the previous 5/7 series DSLR bodies. There's pretty much an all new set of controls, an expanded menu system, and a far greater ability to customize button and dial functions. Add the rear touch screen and the sheer variety of options can be daunting. That said, the body feels really good—solid, well made, smaller, but not too small.

Additional items I like include the fully articulating LCD screen, automatic shutter closing to protect the sensor when you detach the lens, and available lens adapters for immediate use of EF lenses. The electronic viewfinder is first rate, and a small feature that other eyeglass wearers are sure to appreciate is a generous 23mm eye point plus a menu setting (VF display format) with a "Display 2" choice that slightly decreases the viewfinder image size to make all of it viewable corner to corner (a little bit like the function in Panasonic's G9 and S1/S1R). It's the best Canon viewfinder I've ever used.

This is just the beginning; I've a long way to go to make full use of this new tool. There are lots of reviews on the web, many of which aren't all that kind in comparing Canon's first full-frame mirrorless body to Sony and Nikon in particular. But so far I find the EOS R a worthy, capable mid-range body that will get a ton of use in the coming months. And, I expect additional R bodies in the near future with more specialized purposes. It's a new era.



EOS R with Mount Adapter EF-EOS R + EF 40mm f/2.8 lens

Unanticipated Benefits

The big push by Canon and Nikon in the last six months to field new full-frame mirrorless bodies with new lens mounts has created a host of considerations for photographers, especially those heavily invested in a large collection of glass. It's very disruptive and expensive to sell all the old stuff and acquire new. Anticipating this issue, both brands also brought lens adapters that allow relatively seamless use of "old" lenses with the new bodies. Panasonic also has two new full-frame bodies which use—as part of an alliance with Leica and Sigma—the Leica L-Mount, and Sigma offers an adapter for lenses with the Canon EF lens mount. So making the transition from DSLR to mirrorless need not be an all-or-nothing proposition, which is very good news for most of us. And in at least one case there is a silver lining.

With the announcement of the Canon EOS R came three mount adapters to enable compatibility with existing EF/EF-S lenses. One of these adapters—the Drop-in Filter Mount Adapter EF-EOS R—accepts either a circular polarizing filter or a variable neutral density filter, placing these filters between the back of the lens and the camera body. This creates a much more convenient way to use these filters, especially with certain lenses like the EF 11-24mm wide angle zoom which has a very large protruding front element. For a detailed description of using this combination see [Erin Babnik's article](#) on the Canon USA website.

For the last several months I've watched full-frame mirrorless become mainstream. That has not made DSLRs obsolete overnight, but it does mean future development will be concentrated on mirrorless technologies.





ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Alaska Society of Outdoor and Nature Photographers (ASONP) is a non-profit organization with the purpose of promoting individual self improvement in, and exchanging information about outdoor and nature photography, promoting ethics among outdoor and nature photographers, assisting members with marketing and selling their photographs, and informing and educating the public on outdoor and nature photography. Yearly membership is \$25 for individuals, \$35 for families, \$10 for students, and \$100 for business members. ASONP holds meetings at 7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month from October through May at the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center, 121 West 7th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska. The public is welcome to attend all meetings.

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HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP YET?

2019 ASONP Membership Application

Name _____ Home Phone _____

Address _____ Work Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

email _____

Web Site _____

____ New Member? ____ Renewal (same email & address?) ____ Yes ____ No

The Viewfinder newsletters are sent by email 10 times a year in PDF format

WE TAKE CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS AT THE MEETINGS!

DUES: Individual (\$25) _____ Family (\$35) _____

Student (\$10) _____ Business (\$100) _____

Make checks payable to ASONP and mail to:

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