



VIEWFINDER THE NEWSLETTER

Alaska Society of Outdoor and Nature Photographers

December 2019
Volume 36 Issue 7
www.asonp.org

Tips for Entering alaskaWILD (or any photo competition)

Written by Margaret Gaines & Tara Horton

AlaskaWILD, ASONP's juried traveling photo exhibition, opens for submissions at the end of December and closes at the end of January. It is our largest project as an organization and since it travels around the state to a variety of places locals and guests visit, it reaches a large and diverse audience. We would love to have more photographers of all skill levels and from more locations enter and share their work. The judging is anonymous, so the judges are not swayed by who created an image (and if they happen to know, they remove themselves from judging or commenting on that particular image).

So what makes a good image for alaskaWILD?

Tara and I thought we would give you some feedback on what catches the judges eye from our observations over the last three years of judging alaskaWILD. While we have a different panel of judges each year and each panel has prioritized different qualities each year, we have seen some common threads through the years. These ideas apply to images submitted to alaskaWILD but could also be used when deciding if your image makes the impact you want it to in any situation.

Have a clear subject

Choose images that that have a clear subject and that don't have a lot of other distracting elements. The images should have one primary story. When the images have competing stories or subjects they are usually dismissed as distracting and cluttered. Photographs do not need to be simple, but the subject needs to be strong and easily identified.

Don't over saturate or over process and image (unless the image is in the creative category)

The judges have looked closely at color choices. They have not been attracted to overly saturated imag-

es. Use HDR selectively, the judges appreciate HDR when it looks natural. Images that sell well or get many "likes" online may not place well in the competition.

Present "common" subjects in a new way

Let's face it, we live in Alaska and have all seen bears and moose. It takes a little more to impress the judges. The images of bears, moose, eagles and other wonderful (but common for us) subjects that get selected for the show are those images that show less common behaviors or a different perspective on common behaviors.

Technical Finesse Counts

The other way to wow the judges besides uncommon behaviors is to offer a technically superb image. It could be anything from a behavior to a portrait. If it's technically flawless, it will make an impression.

Creative images should be more than a filter applied to an image

Creative images impress the judges when they turn the photograph into a work of art. Applying a single filter and not tweaking the image usually does not impress the judges. Take the image further by dodging and burning, applying multiple filters, or by limiting the parts of the image that are affected by a filter. In general, make a beautiful image that is worthy of hanging as art on a wall.

There are fewer images submitted for the creative and black and white categories, but quality still counts

Creative images and black and white images have fewer entrants, but that does not necessarily improve the odds that your image will be chosen. The judges are not required to select images from each category for the show. If they do not like the images that were submitted in a category, they do not have to include any entries

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Tips for entering alaskaWILD (or any photo competition)

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from that category in the show. There might be less competition in some categories, but the judges are still looking for quality.

Sharpen and denoise appropriately

Sharpening can make an image win or lose in this competition. Beautiful but overly sharpened images or images that are not sharpened enough have been dismissed for those reasons alone. Similarly, noise reduction should be applied appropriately. Overly “crunchy” or “soft” images from heavy sharpening and noise reduction have gotten images rejected in an instant.

What about bigger photo competitions?

Thinking bigger than alaskaWILD, why should you enter any photo competition? Especially for the larger national and international competitions, the chances of winning are extremely small, so why do it?

The best reasons I have heard to support of the idea of entering a photo competition are: to give yourself a deadline for a project, to have a project to work on, and focus your attention.

Deadlines and projects provide good framework for getting work done, which opens you up to doing more work down the line. They force you to finish and move on, which can be important. Completing work gives you a sense of accomplishment.

In doing the work you have the chance to practice your craft and to improve your skills and vision through the process of doing the work.

Working towards a goal helps you to focus on what you are doing. Focus can get you past a dry spell in your creativity, it can help you choose a direction to take your work, and it can give you a way to evaluate whether that is the direction you want to take your photography.

There is a lot to be learned from pushing yourself in a direction and discovering along the way that that direction does not make you happy, that knowledge allows you to focus in more on what actually does make you happy and make you want to improve your craft.

So, which images do you share?

Each image you choose to share or submit to a photo competition reflects you as a person. It is important to think about the message the image conveys and if you have edited it appropriately for your tastes and your audience.

2019 alaskaWILD Spotlight

Photographer: Ken Baehr

Image Title: Sandhill on Alert

Winner: Best of Category for Creative

I took this image in late August during the annual Sandhill Crane migration. The birds stop off to bulk up for their long journey south at Creamer’s Field in the heart of Fairbanks, Alaska. Creamer’s field used to be a dairy farm but is now a bird sanctuary. The fields are planted with barley and wooded areas are optimized for a variety of bird



Caption: Image 1

species. The scientific community also uses the area for significant research. The day was overcast light was not what I would normally prefer, but with the cloud cover, the image did give me a lot of shadow detail and low contrast. The image was shot at 1/200 sec at f/8, ISO 100, 700mm (EF500mm f/4 lens +1.4X extension). I was extra careful to insure good camera technique with my tripod. i.e. cable shutter release, full lock down, etc. I have included a series of images with different processing.

Image 1 is as shot with no correction of any kind. Image 2 has been cropped and processed normally in Lightroom. I increased clarity, vibrance, and saturation just slightly and used a bit of dehaze. I was careful to not overdo any of the adjustments to avoid creating artifacts when I opened the image in Topaz Impressions.

I opened Image 3 in Topaz Impressions and applied the Van Gogh filter at 80% to give it a painterly



Caption: Image 2

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ASONP Board of Directors Meetings 2019-2020

December 4, 2019 (Elections)

****** January 25, 2019 (Retreat 10am—3pm, email Margaret Gaines for Address)******

February 5, 2020

March 4, 2020

April 1, 2020

May 6, 2020

All meetings start at 6 pm at the BP Energy Center except for the January Board retreat.

There will be at least one opening on the board during elections. If you're interested in joining the board, please talk to a board member, email Margaret: margr8gaines@gmail.com , or attend any board meeting.

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 next meeting. If you would like to share up to 10 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 10 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.

2019 alaskaWILD Spotlight

Photos by Ken Baehr

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Caption: Image 3

effect. I then opened the processed image and the Topaz filter image as layers in Photoshop. I erased the Topaz effect at 100% opacity from the Topaz image of the bird resulting in the crane being a natural photograph and the background being a filtered effect. I also used

a levels layer to darken the image and increase contrast just a touch. Image 4 depicts the result of that effort.

Finally, I opened Image 4 in a program called Photomorphis which allows for the adding of textures to the image with a lot of control over the where and how much. Again, I erased the effects from the crane in the foreground. The image in alaskaWILD, Sandhill on Alert, is the result.

I have been doing photography for almost 60 years. I started with a Kodak box camera in my early teens, continued in High School and became a Combat Photographer in the US Air Force in 1965. I was an enlisted technician for 5 years. The Air force then sent me to USC for a degree in Cinematography and I became an officer in the Combat Camera Field. I was also afforded the opportunity to attend workshops at Eastman Kodak, Technicolor labs and became a combat qualified aerial



Caption: Image 4

photographer. Only five other people ever held that position as an officer. As a technically qualified officer I was given the opportunity to participate in some of the most significant operations of that era.

Most of my professional career in the Air Force involved motion picture film and still film. In the

last part of my career I was involved in the early transition to video and digital photography. I came back to photography in the digital world as a semi-professional/amateur/hobbyist when the digital cameras came of age. I no longer made my living with photography, but I did work with a stock agency and did commission work along with teaching Lightroom classes.

I joined ASONP in 2002. I have entered alaskaWILD almost every year since 2004. I have received one Best of Show, a few best of Category, and several Honorable Mentions during that time.

I am at the core a documentarian. I want to record the world around me as it is without manipulation. Unlike Ansel Adams, I do not envision an end product when I am capturing images. To paraphrase Nancy Rottenberg, I try to open my eyes and my mind to the gifts of



Caption: Final

the universe on that day and time and place. It is only days after a shoot that I look at my images evaluate them for their potential. It is only then that I contemplate natural images, composites, or processing techniques. And, it is important to me that viewers of my work know which is which. It is difficult for me to pick a favorite subject to photograph. I try to be very eclectic in my subject matter. I guess if I am pinned down, I would prioritize in order: bears, birds, other critters, macro work and landscapes.

Photography has provided me an incredible fulfilling and satisfying career. And, it is cheaper and a whole lot less hassle than a psychiatrist.

Board Member Spotlight

“My Favorite Place for Photography”

Alaska Botanical Gardens

Text and Photos by Joan Nunn

I love floral photography so one of my favorite places for photography in Anchorage is the Alaska Botanical Gardens.



A nice thing about this garden is that nearly all the flowers and plants are identified with a label. The grounds are laid out with different themed gardens and

wide paths, giving photographers plenty of room to set up tripods. Along with all the beautiful flowers and plants to photograph, they also include some outdoor art pieces throughout the garden.

Because of other commitments, I would usually arrive at the garden between 5 and 6 pm to take advantage of the lovely summer evening light. It was like moving into magical peaceful space where I could get lost in one or two areas for hours! I learned last summer that the garden now close at 7 pm during the summer with no admittance after 6:30 pm. This was quite a disappointment for me, so I didn't make nearly as many visits last summer as I had in the past.



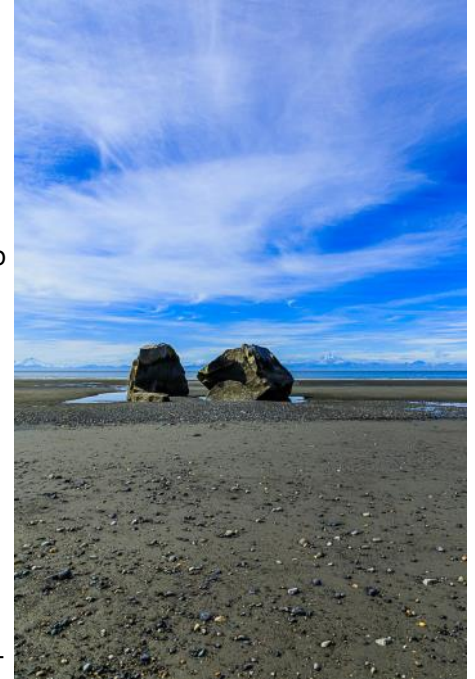
Even though the hours don't fit with my schedule, it is still a wonderful place to visit, photograph and stroll the many paths through the birch and spruce trees.

Clam Gulch State Recreation Area

Text and Photos by Alan D. Musy

Ever since I first saw these large boulders on the beach at Clam Gulch State Recreation Area, I have always considered this as one of my most favorite places to see and camp when visiting the Kenai Peninsula. Situated along the Sterling Highway about a half hour drive south of Soldotna, Alaska is Clam Gulch SRA.

There is a small campground near the end of the road, and a steep access road continues from there down to the beach.



Caption: Large boulders on beach at Clam Gulch State Recreation Area



Caption: Noctilucent clouds over Cook Inlet and Mount Redoubt

The beach is one of the few beaches with sand, which is one of the main draws for me. I usually don't bother with the campground, instead preferring to camp right on the beach. I have camped there at least once every summer since 1992.

Up until a few years ago, they used to allow clamming for razor clams on the beach at low tide. Winter storms a while back decimated the razor clam popula-

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Board Member Spotlight

“My Favorite Place for Photography”

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tion, and it is still recovering, so they have banned clamming for the last few years. The sand stretches for eleven miles to the north; all the way to the Kasilof River. To the south, the beach becomes rockier, but leads to a beautiful waterfall at Falls Creek. I have taken several photographs of these falls, as they cascade down the bluff into Cook Inlet.

The bluffs along the beach sport coal veins stretching along vast distances.



Caption: Falls Creek waterfall cascading into Cook Inlet



Caption: Mt. Redoubt and Cook Inlet at sunset viewed from Clam Gulch SRA

You can often find chunks of coal laying on the beach, along with vast quantities of driftwood, the latter of which makes for great campfires. Directly across Cook Inlet you can see four volcanoes, the most prominent of these is Mount Redoubt. I have taken many photographs of this mountain, and it often provides a great backdrop for beautiful sunsets. You can see Mount Spurr to the north, Mount Iliamna to the south, and on a clear day, you can make out Mount

Saint Augustine in the distance.

The beach is also a popular place for set netters, many of which place semi-permanent structures and stretch their nets, buoys, and metal poles into the sand.

Clam Gulch SRA is such a beautiful place in Alaska, with one of very few sandy beaches. It will always be one of my favorites.

Forsyth Park

by Margaret Gaines

One of my favorite places to get away in Anchorage is Forsyth Park located off Birch Road on the mid-hillside. It's a small park with walking trails in the woods, a small playground, some picnic tables and tennis courts. The parking lot is directly off Birch Road near the intersection of Birch Road and O'Malley Road.

I found this park when I was looking for a place escape civilization and walk my dog that was also close to home. It has a good number of trails that wander through the woods and is usually pretty quiet. I enjoy the park year-round, but my favorite time to take my camera is late summer when the mushrooms emerge. I have found mushrooms of all shapes and sizes once I get focused on them. They grow everywhere, on the ground, on or in stumps, on trees, in the moss and grass or under leaves. I have even made it a point to return every couple days to document the growth and decay of a particular mushroom that caught my attention.

My other favorite thing to photograph here is lichen and moss after a rain when they are plump and colorful. Since the park has a variety of settings from woods to open areas, I can find a nice variety of mosses and lichen to photograph.

This park is not the kind of setting where a telephoto lens is very useful since the woods close in around you. However, if you have a 180-200 macro lens or want to find small birds and squirrels a longer lens could be useful. I tend to take either my 16mm or 16-55mm zoom lens when I wander the trails. I find many intimate landscapes here or I get down close with these lenses to make close up images that include the environment around my chosen subject. Since I don't own a macro lens anymore, I will sometimes bring along a set of extension tubes and add those to my wide-angle lenses for a different perspective.

Just remember to be on the lookout for large animals, I often see evidence of moose and bears along the trail.

DEAR JOHN COLUMN

By John R. DeLapp

Can You Provide Examples of Infrared Photography?



Background

As some of you know, I have been using IR cameras in some of my photography for many years. If you are not familiar with IR photography, let me provide a quick explanation. Traditional photography, both digital and film, utilize the visible spectrum of light



Caption: B&W tree, processed in Lightroom from the accompanying RAW image.

(wavelengths of 380 to 780 nanometers). On the other hand, IR which is most accurately called Near-Infrared-Light (NIR) photography, uses mostly the invisible IR light just beyond the red end of the visible spectrum (i.e. greater than 780 nm). Your TV remote most likely uses an IR beam. All digital camera sensors are sensitive to NIR light up to a wavelength of about 1100 nm. For this reason, camera sensors are fitted with an IR-cutoff filter which blocks the IR portion of light. IR light is produced by the sun, and in much lesser amounts, by virtually every other source of light. (I have taken IR photos of campfires).

Equipment

The best method to make IR photos is by using a camera that has been converted to utilize NIR light. This is accomplished by removing the IR-cutoff filter and replacing it with a filter that stops much of the visible light from reaching the sensor. Not all visible light is blocked since some is needed for the autofocus and metering system to work. When a camera is converted, the type of IR filter used can be chosen. Some filters block most of the visible light, while others transmit

more visible light. Cameras fitted with filters block the most visible light are typically used mainly for producing B&W images. Two of my DSLR cameras are of this type. I also have a mirrorless Panasonic that has been fitted with a “super IR” filter which allows transmission of more visible light. This type of conversion permits more color in the finished image if desired, but may not make as dramatic B&W images.

The first camera I modified was a Canon D60, a 6-megapixel camera, and it has produced many very nice B&W images. I now use a Canon 5D (full-frame, 13 MP), and a mirrorless Panasonic GF-1 (micro four-thirds, 12 MP). All these cameras were converted to IR by Life Pixel www.lifepixel.com/shop, which is located in the Seattle area. I should mention that, if you choose, it is possible to purchase the filter and with a little(?) work make the conversion yourself. I was more comfortable having a vendor do this work for me. The vendor price for conversion varies between \$175 to \$350 depending on the camera and the filter that is selected.

An alternative to converting a camera for IR is to use an external IR filter on the lens. I have not tried this method because of its inherent limitations. These filters block most the visible light so composing and focusing may need to be done before placing the filter on the lens. Also, the exposure times are longer using this method.



Caption: RAW IR tree, Canon 5D, 24mm, 1/25 sec., f/11, ISO 160.

Technique and Post Processing

If the camera is modified by a vendor like Life Pixel, they will normally set the camera white balance for IR use (usually 2000 K with a tint of negative 75, or so) and

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Can You Provide Examples of Infrared Photography?

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can adjust the focus system for a specific lens. Camera lenses are made to focus visible light and do not focus IR light as accurately due to its longer wavelength. I believe this is more of a problem with DSLRs due to the integration of the mirror with the focusing system. Using live view and manually focusing should help eliminate this issue. Stopping the lens down will help to an extent but some lenses will develop a quite severe “hot” spot in the middle of the image when small apertures are used. Life Pixel has published a data base on their website for

many lenses that have been tested for this problem. This problem shows up more for systems using filters that block the most visible light.

A typical IR image will render green vegetation nearly white and blue sky and water dark gray or black, depending on the type of filter used. Exposure metering with a converted camera will vary widely and nearly always requires additional light, sometimes by

adding 3 stops of compensation to get a good exposure.

Processing a RAW image for B&W is accomplished by desaturation using Lightroom’s saturation slider and tweaking the white, black, clarity, and contrast sliders to make a good B&W image. Dodging and burning are also sometimes needed. It is also possible to make a “false color” image by not completely desaturating the RAW image and adjusting the inherent colors. And finally, when using the “super IR” type filter, more natural colors can be achieved by “swapping” the Red and Blue channels in Photoshop and adjusting the sliders to get the



Caption: B&W lake and clouds, from processed from RAW IR, Canon5D, 24mm, 1/125 sec., f/8, ISO 160.



Caption: Palms, IR colored by swapping Red and Blue channels in Photoshop, Panasonic GF-1 m4/3, 18mm, 1/500 sec, f/8, ISO 200.

desired result. Blue skies can be achieved with this method. I can provide more details on this for anyone who is interested.

I have found the best condition for IR photography is bright, mid-day sun, green leafy trees with some interesting clouds. Cloudy days will generally produce low contrast images due to the lack of IR radiation. Trial-and-error is my usual approach when using IR since it is often difficult to accurately predict how various subjects will be rendered. It is a very different but interesting photographic process but one I often find very rewarding.



Caption: RAW IR, Alaska plane, Canon 5D, 300mm, 1/1250 sec., f/6.3, ISO 500.

WORKSHOPS, OUTINGS, & OTHER INTERESTS

ALASKA PHOTO TREK PHOTOGRAPHY CLASSES

It's autumn, so that means that the Alaska Photo Treks photography classes are back!

Lightroom Basics - \$135

December 3, 5 & 10

Learn more at <https://alaskaphototreks.com/anchorage-photography-classes/>.

RAY BULSON NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY WILDFLOWERS/WATERFALLS WORKSHOP

You will be led to a remote alpine valley near Hope filled with wildflowers, streams, ponds, waterfalls and tarns, a target-rich place for macro and landscape photographers. There, we'll also explore the tidal flats around Hope during low tide to photograph the unique glacial silt patterns. Also included: photographic techniques, equipment and Lightroom post-processing. This workshop is limited to 12 participants.

When: July 17-19, 2020

Where: Hope, AK

Cost: \$375 without lodging/\$475 with lodging

Register Here: <https://www.raybulson.com/hope-landscape-workshop>

PHOTOGRAPHY TOUR OFFERINGS

Wayde Carroll, a member of ASONP and ASMP, has been leading photography tours and workshops in Alaska and around the globe for the last fourteen years through Alaska Wildland Adventures, Journeys International, Aperture Academy, Wayde Carroll Photo Explorations, and now his newly formed Lightminded Photo Tours. The tours are appropriate for all skill levels and are especially appropriate for the beginning to intermediate levels. Through presentations, hands on instruction in the field, and positive image critique, Wayde's priority is making sure each participant is set up to get the best images possible in a variety of situations. The focus is on the clients needs, not his own image making.

Where: Costa Rica

When: March 29—April 9, 2020

Cost: \$4,675

Where: Silver Salmon Creek, Lake Clark National Park

When: July 4—July 8, 2020

Cost: \$4,850

Submit Questions To: wayde@lightmindedtours.com



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?

2019-2020 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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