

THE CAMERA CLUB OF CENTRAL MINNESOTA



The Newsletter of the Camera Club of Central Minnesota

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Club Meetings and Other Bits of Information

The Camera Club of Central Minnesota will be meeting on the first Monday of each month with the second Monday of the month as back up starting in January 2017. We will meet at the Public Library in St. Cloud from 6:45 to 8:45 pm.

The club has monthly photo topics, image sharing and critique, hands on demonstrations of photographic gear and software, member online gallery links, discussions about photography, and is open to all.

Assignments

Monday, January 9, 2017, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is to bring your favorite "five" photos from 2016. Bill Vossler will be presenting in January on a recent trip he took, sharing images from the Greek Islands.

Monday, February 6, 2017, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is: Artificial Light.

Monday, March 6, 2017, Bremer Community Room 104. The assignment is: Winter — snow, ice, outdoor sports, etc.. Janice Springer shared some incredible images from India and will be presenting a full image set and talk about her experiences there at our March 2017 Meeting.

REMEMBER ALL YOUR PHOTO ASSIGNMENTS AND MEETING DATES ARE ONLINE AT <http://cameraclubmn.com>

If you haven't attended a meeting for a while, due to fires at the Library, etc, you will be pleasantly surprised to see our exciting new Digital Projector in the Bremer Room! The colors and brightness are amazing.

This projector can also display printed photos as well.

Notes from the December Meeting

The December meeting was the club's annual Christmas Party meeting. We had several treats available, which we all enjoyed. Most of us had prints to share which we passed around and shared information about them.

We also had a few vintage cameras that were displayed and discussed

About fourteen members were able to attend and we all had a good time discussing photography and anticipating the assignments of the coming year.

Batteries

With the love of photography, especially on location speed light use, comes the need for batteries and a way to manage them. I started out using alkaline batteries. They were cheap, easy to replace, and very easy to find when out on a shoot. But I realized I was throwing them away as fast as I was buying them. At this point I started to think that there had to be a better way.

I started researching rechargeable batteries. All of the ones I found initially had the same issue, they would lose their charge over time. I needed a battery that was rechargeable, but acted like an alkaline. I found the Eneloop batteries by Sanyo that stated they were slow discharge and would have 75% of their charge after 3 years of non-use.

I was skeptical, but decided to give them a try. They worked and they worked well. In my non-scientific tests, they held up in my flashes as well as alkaline which always lasted longer than the NiMH. I could now charge up these batteries and leave them in my bag with no worries about dead batteries.

I have several Double-A Eneloops but have not been able to find them recently. Hope they are still available.



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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota

Camera Settings for Landscape Photographers



THE HIGHLIGHT ALERT MAKES ANY PART OF AN IMAGE THAT'S OVEREXPOSED FLASH ON AND OFF, AND IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TOOLS FOR EVALUATING EXPOSURES.



Every camera has default settings that seem to have been designed for beginning photographers who are handholding the camera. When preparing a camera one needs to dive into the menus on the cameras to change those settings to ones more suitable for landscape photographers working on a tripod. And people usually tell me they wished they'd known about those settings sooner.

So here are six camera settings that I urge you to consider changing. These changes will make operating the camera easier, and in some cases might be the difference between getting the shot and missing it.

Turn Auto Rotation Off

By default, most cameras automatically rotate vertical images so that they appear in their correct orientation when holding the camera in a horizontal position. This might make sense when you're handholding (although I don't like it then either), but makes absolutely no sense when using a tripod. On a tripod, with auto rotation on, the image appears sideways, so you have to twist your head around to see the image properly. What's more, the image is tiny, because it's not using all the screen space available:

With auto-rotation on, vertical images are skewed sideways, and don't fill the available space

After turning auto rotation

correct orientation, and fills the whole screen:

Much better!

Every camera is different, so I can't give you exact directions for changing this annoying auto-rotation behavior. With Canon models look for a menu item called Auto Rotate. Choose the option for rotating images only on the computer monitor but not the camera. With Nikons the menu item is labeled Rotate Tall; you want to turn it off. On Sonys look for Display Rotation and turn it to Off.

Set Auto Review to Hold

By default most cameras briefly display the image you've just taken on the back of the camera. This is called Auto Review on most cameras and the default setting is usually two seconds – hardly enough time to see the image, much less evaluate it. Once the image disappears after two seconds you can always press the playback button to see the image again, but that's an extra, unnecessary step. Instead, I recommend delving into the menus to find the Auto Review option (on Nikons it's called Image Review), and set it to Hold. That means the image you've just taken will remain on the back of the camera until you press another button (like the shutter button or menu button), allowing you to evaluate the image at your leisure.

Of course if you leave the image displayed on the back of your camera for a long time that will drain your bat-

tery, but you just have to remember to lightly press the shutter button to make the image disappear when you're done looking at it.

(Note that Sony cameras don't have the Hold option; unfortunately the longest you can set the Auto Review for is 10 seconds.)

Enable the Highlight Alert

On many cameras the highlight alert (which everyone calls the blinkies) is not enabled by default. Fix that now! The highlight alert makes any part of an image that's overexposed flash on and off, and is one of the most important tools for evaluating exposures in the field. In most cases you don't want to see any part of an image blinking at you; if you do the photograph is probably overexposed, and you want to make a darker exposure.

On Canon cameras find the menu item labeled Highlight Alert and turn it on. With Sony cameras the highlight alert is on by default – in fact there's no way to turn it off. On Nikons go to the playback menu and find Playback Display Options. Check Highlights (and while you're at it, check the RGB histogram), and be sure to select Done to make the changes stick.

Once the highlight alert is enabled, you typically have to cycle through different display modes to see the blinkies when reviewing an image. On some Canon mod-

els you'll see the blinkies (if there are any) in any image-review mode. On other Canon models you only see the blinkies when the histogram is also visible; just keep hitting the Info button until you see the histogram and the blinkies (if there are any). With Nikons press the up or down arrows on the control dial until you find the screen labeled Highlights (unless you've set up your camera so that pressing the left and right arrows cycles through the display modes). On Sony cameras press the button labeled "Disp" (on the control wheel) until you see the screen with the histogram, where you'll also see blinkies (if there are any).

Enable the RGB Histogram

By default most cameras only show you the luminance histogram, not the RGB histogram. But the ability to see histograms for the individual red, green, and blue color channels is essential when photographing scenes with rich, saturated colors, like sunsets or autumn leaves. You want to pay particular attention to the red channel in those situations, and make sure the red channel isn't clipped. You don't want to see the red channel pushed up against the right edge, or find a spike at the right edge.

The RGB histogram on my Sony A7rIII, showing clipping in the red channel

Overexposed reds and yellows are usually very difficult to work with later, even in Raw files. No matter what you do they end up looking weird and splotchy or poster-

ized. So if the red channel is clipped you need to make a darker exposure. Keep going darker until you don't see any clipping in the red channel. Or you can bracket and blend the exposures together later – just make sure at least one of your bracketed exposures shows no clipping in the red channel.

But first you need enable the RGB histogram. On Canon cameras there's usually a menu item specifically for the histogram; find that, and turn on the RGB histogram. With Nikons you'll find a checkbox for the RGB histogram under Playback Display Options (make sure you select Done to make it stick). On Sonys the RGB histogram is always on.

Once the RGB histogram is enabled you will again have to cycle through different playback display options to see it (as described in the previous section).

Turn Off Image Stabilization on a Tripod

Image stabilization (or Vibration Reduction for Nikon users) is designed for handholding. If the camera is on a tripod and the camera senses any vibration, image stabilization will try to compensate for that vibration, but won't do it correctly, and will actually blur the photograph. Turn off image stabilization when using a tripod!

Some lenses will sense when the camera is on a tripod and automatically

turn image stabilization off. That's a great feature, but unless you're sure your lens will do that, the safest bet is to turn off image stabilization manually.

Use Back-Button Focus

By default, with every camera I know of, you activate autofocus by pressing the shutter button halfway down. But I prefer to separate those two functions – focusing and pressing the shutter – by using back-button focus. And I'm not alone: virtually every professional photographer I know uses back-button focus.

Back-button focus takes the autofocus function away from the shutter button and assigns it to a button near the top-right corner on the back of the camera. You use your right forefinger to press the shutter (as usual), and your thumb to activate the autofocus.

Divorcing autofocus from the shutter button has many advantages. First, you don't have to flip a switch to change from autofocus to manual focus, because the camera is always in both modes. Just leave autofocus on all the time, and if you want autofocus, press the button on the back of the camera. If you want to focus manually, just turn the focusing ring; the camera won't override your manual focus when you press the shutter because autofocus isn't attached to the shutter button anymore.

For that matter, you can just leave the camera in continuous focus mode, rather than changing from single-shot focus to continuous focus. If you want single-shot focus, just press the focus button on the



VIRTUALLY EVERY
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KNOW USES BACK-
BUTTON FOCUS.



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...Camera Settings (continued)



back until focus is locked, then let go. You can then keep pressing the shutter as many times as you want, but the focus will stay locked at the same distance until you press the back focus button again. If you want continuous focus, just press and hold the back focus button while you follow your subject.

Let's say you want to focus on an off-center subject. Rather than moving the focus point, or attempting to press the shutter halfway down to lock it on your subject, just move the camera until the focus point is on your subject, then press the back focus button until focus locks, and let go. You can then recompose and fire away, knowing that the focus won't change and will

still be locked at the right distance for your subject.

I could go on and on, but you get the point. The only potential disadvantage of using back-button focus is that you might forget to press the back button and end up with an out-of-focus image. It takes a little practice at first to get into the habit of pressing that back button, but once you get the hang of it you won't go back.

Unfortunately I can't give specific instructions on how to set up back-button focus on your camera, because the procedure varies so much from one model to the next, even within the same brand. I'd suggest Googling "back button focus (your camera model)." You should get a bunch of hits, including

YouTube videos. And back-button focus isn't available on some models, but should be an option on most higher-end cameras.

Two More Obvious Ones

First, I recommend using Raw mode for the highest image quality and most flexibility in adjusting the images later. **Second**, if you're using Raw mode there's little reason to adjust the white balance in the camera, since with the Raw images it's easy to adjust the white balance later in software, so most of the time you can just set the white balance to Auto.

Okay, that's really it! I hope you find these tips helpful.

I RECOMMEND USING RAW MODE FOR THE HIGHEST IMAGE QUALITY AND MOST FLEXIBILITY IN ADJUSTING THE IMAGES LATER.

Tips for Low Light Photography

Photography is always fun but not always easy. And trying to get great results with low light photography can be downright frustrating. Isn't it irritating when the potential picture is amazing but the lighting situation is less than ideal? I've been there.

We all want to take amazing photos and share them on our blogs but what do you do when the light is low and you need to take pictures? This is a question I get asked all the time because lack of good light can ruin our photos! Luckily in digital photography, if you

get to know your camera, there are a few things that can help you.

Here are some tips for taking better photos in low light:

Use a Flash

I'll get the easiest solution out of the way first. In low light situations using your built-in camera flash is the quickest fix. Pop it up and you are good to go. But, using light from a flash often ruins the photograph more than low light can. Using your flash lights your subject from the front, often washing it out, and it compresses the

depth of field of your image making it look flat. Ugh.

A quick way to soften the light from your built-in flash is to subdue it with a sheer white tissue that you can use to cover the flash. This will diffuse the light and make it less harsh and can help you if you're in a bind. But, if you're using a DSLR and you must use a flash then your best bet is to invest in an external flash, also known as a "hot shoe" flash, that you clip on to the top of your camera. These flashes can be manipulated and turned to bounce off of a wall or the ceiling so you're lighting your subject



from the top or the side.

Steady your camera

If you're like me, you prefer to capture a moment using natural light. Yes, sometimes the use of a flash just can't be avoided but if you get your camera on a steady surface, you can avoid the blur that inevitably spoils your perfectly set up photograph. My choice would be to use a tripod. Mount your camera on top of it, use your settings the way you normally would and then snap the shutter. Ta da!

But I don't always have my tripod with me and sometimes it's impractical to use one so I improvise by setting my camera on a steady surface. Use a table, a wall or the floor (if this makes sense for your picture), or even your leg if you're sitting. In low light, you simply cannot avoid the slight shake of your hands so just rest the camera on your knee. You can also lean against a stable item (like a wall or barrier) and steady your hands/arms on that before you snap. Or hold the camera very close to your body, take a deep breath, exhale, and then hold your breath while you take the photo. This isn't as good as a tripod, but it's surely better than having a blurry photo.

Even so, this sounds like an easy fix and not one that can always help because in a lot of cases, we are shooting objects in motion – fashion shows, people on the street, kids, animals, whatever – what to do then?

Open your aperture as wide as you can

A camera is basically a box that reads light and the aperture tells the camera how

much light to allow in at any given time. If you have a DSLR, or even a point and shoot that has some manual settings, then you can control your camera's aperture. So the larger the amount of light that is coming into your lens (the wider the aperture), the faster your shutter speed will be and the sharper your photos. Lots of light and fast = good. Low light and slow = bad.

Set your aperture to its widest setting, so that the most light available is entering your lens. To do this, choose the lowest f-number possible (the lowest that your particular lens allows) such as f/1.4 or f/1.8. More expensive lenses often have larger apertures and have those wonderfully low numbers, but sometimes your budget doesn't allow for that. So, what then?

Boost your ISO

The ISO controls your camera's sensitivity to light – the higher the ISO, the more sensitive it will be. In low light photography, it's almost always necessary to raise your ISO speed (like when you had a film camera and you bought ISO 200 or 400). Your DSLR, and even most point and shoot cameras, allows you to set your ISO manually and it's really easy to do this in your menu options.

In normal outdoor lighting you can set your ISO at 100 or 200 depending on whether it's really bright (ISO 100 would work) or a bit overcast (ISO 200 or 400). If I'm shooting indoors or in low light outdoors I raise my ISO to 400 or 800 and sometimes even higher

if it's really dark.

Raising your ISO to 400 or 800 is usually safe because you'll have a limited amount of noise (grain) in the pictures. At ISO 1600, if your camera goes up that high, you'll definitely see more noise but it can often be removed or at least minimized in post-production using Photoshop or another program. Even so, the results you get with a DSLR camera at high ISOs is pretty amazing these days so you can shoot away using an ISO of 1000 or higher (if your camera can do that) and see very little, if any, noise. (also, note that this is one of the areas camera companies continue to advance in. It's getting more and more common for the newest cameras to offer incredibly high ISOs. You'll just need to experiment and see what's realistic for your camera before the grain makes the shot unusable.)

Figuring out how high to raise the ISO is pretty easy – you just need to raise it high enough so that you're able to shoot fast enough to avoid the shake in your camera and the blur in your pictures. A very simple and obvious way to tell if your camera settings are too slow is how long it takes the shutter to click when you snap a photo. If it sounds like the "click" is happening too slowly, you'll see a blurry photo in your screen.

Shoot in burst mode

This is a cool way to take pictures and one that a lot of people don't think about. That, plus I love the word "BURST!" – Switch your camera to make continuous shots (ie. burst mode) and snap



YOUR DSLR, AND EVEN MOST POINT AND SHOOT CAMERAS, ALLOWS YOU TO SET YOUR ISO MANUALLY AND IT'S REALLY EASY TO DO THIS IN YOUR MENU OPTIONS.





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Membership is \$25 per year. Members should provide: Email Address, Mailing Address, and Phone Number.

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The Camera Club of Central Minnesota publishes a monthly newsletter which is distributed via e-mail. The newsletter will contain information about up-coming meetings, summaries of previous meeting, recommendations for photographers, announcements of photographic workshops, and other material that seems appropriate.

If you would like to send suggestions, comments, or other communications concerning the club or newsletter, please send your e-mail to rheath@tds.net.

Tips for Low Light Photography (continued)



away! When you hold the shutter button down (without letting go) and take five or more shots one right after the other, you have a higher chance of getting a sharp photo.

When you take a picture one shot at a time you're always introducing a vibration to the camera – your hand and fingers are causing a shake. But, if you use burst mode and press the shutter, that vibration will only really affect the first photo of the five or more you take. So, basically every photo except the first one will be a little bit sharper than the one before it in the continuous series.

Bonus idea – Use your phone's flashlight from a different angle

One little hack you can use is to introduce an outside light source. I've seen people turn on their camera flashlight and position it as an always-on flash. This allows you to adjust it with precision, allows you to high-light certain things while diminishing the light in other areas, and it's a cheap tool that we almost always have on hand (although, obviously this doesn't help if you're using the phone's camera. But, in a pinch, we all get creative with the resources available to us at the time.

One of the greatest things about digital photography is that you can just shoot and shoot to try to get the image that you want. It's not always practical if you're trying to capture a spontaneous moment or if you're at a fashion show and just need to get the photos, but just practice and have fun with it! Don't forget to zoom in to check out the details and to see whether the picture real-

ly is sharp, since pretty much all photographs look awesome on your little screen. Learn about and test out your camera settings and remember that whatever photos don't turn out to be so fantastic you can just dump in the virtual trash or at least use them as a learning tool. And, finally, have fun!

Timing

Taking great photos of the outdoors requires more than a nice set of camera equipment. If you really want your vacation photos to pop, it's all in the timing.

Location and equipment are only part of the landscape photography equation. Being in the right place only matters if you're there at the right time. Think ahead and make sure you have plenty of time to climb to the top of that mountain peak, or make sure you're up early enough to catch the sun rising over that lake. And if you really want to snap an amazing photo, be prepared to wait.

As photographers, we're not just going to shoot when the skies are clear and the sun is out. I can't tell you how many times I'll set up my camera and just wait. You're waiting for the clouds to move, to have that light come through perfectly, or you're waiting for a sunset.

Waiting for clouds can give you the opportunity to catch long sun rays, and shooting just before or after a storm can provide some amazing lighting. When a rain shower clears out, for example, the foliage will shine brighter. Without a little patience, your nice camera won't do a beautiful locale justice.

