

Polk County Camera Club

Newsletter

Mar-Apr 2005



Photo by © Doug Small

“Lights at the Fair”

This issue is full of informative articles, from daring to go digital to the use of graduated neutral density filters. Enjoy!

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Welcome to the Polk County Camera Club

Mar-Apr

Creative Night Photos

Photos by ©B.Shedd & Doug Small

Doug and I always look forward to the Citrus Festival every year because it gives us an opportunity for some night/motion shots of the midway rides. This year we



You can be as creative as you want by controlling the shutter speed.

©Bonnie Shed/Doug Small

also were able to spend some time on the midway at the Florida State Fair.

The lights and motion of the rides can provide some really interesting images. Sometimes, much to our surprise, the ride with the simplest design produces the “knock your socks off” image!

Both of us used f16 and f22 aperture settings for all of these shots. This gave us the sharpness that we desired for the points of light.

Bonnie used her 18-35 wide angle lens for this project. At the Citrus Festival the midway is much smaller and the rides are spaced out. Here the 28-200 lens works just fine. The State Fair is another story because the rides really packed in tight in the midway area. Being able to have a wide



It's a good idea to keep some elements static for comparison.
©Bonnie Shed/Doug Small

angle shot under these conditions is a definite advantage. Often going “backstage” or behind the scenes will give you a much better area or angle to shoot from! We found that our exposures were in the one second to three second range. Rides that move rather sedately, like the Ferris Wheel usually required 2.5 to 3 second exposures to produce the desired results. Other rides that move rapidly need only a 1 or 2 second exposure. Thanks to our digital cameras we are able to preview the results and make adjustments as needed.



Every shot it's different.
©Bonnie Shed/Doug Small

We also experimented with zooming our lens during the longer exposure times. This produced some really astonishing results. The lenses were zoomed both ways -- in and out during the exposure time.

The 28-200 lens worked much better for this technique since it has a longer travel distance. The 18-35 lens did make some interesting images, but it has a much shorter distance to travel so the results were not quite as dramatic.

NIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS:

Always use a tripod especially when some elements in the composition need to be in sharp focus. If sharpness it's really important, use a remote control or the self-timer to avoid any camera vibrations during the exposure.

Daring to go digital

(Even without a computer!)

By: *Karen T. Ivankovich*

I became the proud owner of a Nikon Coolpix 3200 around October of last year. It was one of the best choices I could make. It is a 3.2 mega pixel and has a video feature mode. The camera cost around \$250.00 and the memory card (Kodak 128 mb) cost close to \$40.00. I am sure the price has gone down since then. In fact, I chose to buy my camera from Walmart even though another store offered it for less. Why? Walmart offers a 90 day return policy on electronic merchandise. The other store only had a 20 day return policy.

I dared to go digital after I came to the realization that it would be less expensive and allow greater control over the final image.

Now, please don't misunderstand what I am saying; film is still very valuable. However, my photography is based mostly on documenting my life experiences through photos. Many of my photographs cannot be set up in advance. I shoot life as it unfolds.

Digital photography can be for you even if you don't own a computer! Owning or having access to a computer would allow you to put the images from your digital camera into files on the computer. These files could be sent to other people that have computer access and e-mail. So, why own a digital camera without owning a computer? The answer is very simple. Walmart and other stores have machines set up near their photo labs that lets the digital photographer insert their memory card from their digital camera.

After my memory card is in the machine, I choose which pictures I



Patrick being funny!
©Karen T. Ivankovich

want to print. The machine allows me to change the picture to black and white, crop the picture, and change the color, contrast, and more.

How do you permanently save the pictures from the memory card if you don't have a computer? Walmart will put the pictures from your memory card onto a CD. You bring that CD into the store when you want to make reprints!

You will find digital photography very rewarding! Go ahead! I dare you!

Keeping Files Organized

©Reinier Munguia

Shooting digital have many advantages, but the basic image organization continues to be a problems. While we have ruled out fungus and dust as we used to have in our slides and negatives, the storage and retrieval of images is a challenge by itself. On average I shoot over 1,000 images a month, keeping track of all the images can be a hassle. First comes the hard disk space, followed by the naming of files and ways to retrieve them when you need them.

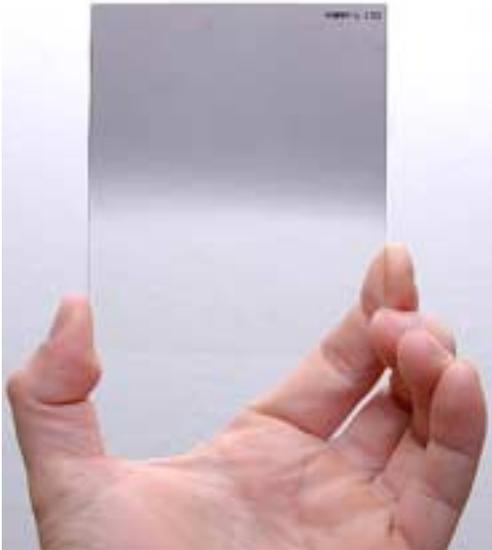
Hard drive space it's a simple issue to solve. With the low prices per gigabyte of today's large capacity drives, this seems to be a minor problem. But when one of those drives die, your images are vanished forever. To overcome that kind of problem I have invested on a RAID system (Redundant Array of Inexpensive Drives) in which 3 or more drives are connected together and data is safe at all times. Even when a drive fails, all the data can be reconstructed from the remaining drives. Although you can still have two simultaneous drive failures, these cases are extremely rare. The truth is that hard disk are made of magnetic media and a lot of electronics, meaning sooner or later they'll fail. DVD's and CD's are not exempt from failure either. More than once I have lost an important volume due to an accidental scratch that rendered the CD useless. The answer to this, it's a simple one, backup, backup, backup. Yes, make double copies of all your important files, keeping one in a safe place, if possible away from home and the other set for daily use. The reason behind keeping them away from home, it's to avoid losing all volumes in case of fire, or theft. The copies for daily use, will eventually need replacement, and that's when the second backup comes into play. Make a habit of backing up your media, every 5 years, unless your buying expensive archival quality CD's that have a more stable shelf life. To organize so many pictures are rely on applications such as Extensis Portfolio or Adobe Album, both allow you to create thumbnail albums of your images with reference to the media in which they were saved, making it easy for retrieval when needed. These applications will save you a lot of time, while keeping your files organized by date, categories, themes or any other category.-RMC

Using a Graduated Neutral Density Filter

Text & Photos ©R. Munguia

How many times have you taken a picture of a magnificent landscape, to later find out that the sky is roughly overexposed? Well, we all go through this process. Then one day you discover that there's something called a "split neutral density filter" and everything starts looking right.

The GND filter is the second most important filter for the landscape photographer. Topping the filter list is the all-mighty circular polarizer, that helps to reduce reflections while enhancing the color saturation of the sky and vegetation. Now in order to



Cokin P120 Graduated Neutral Density Filter

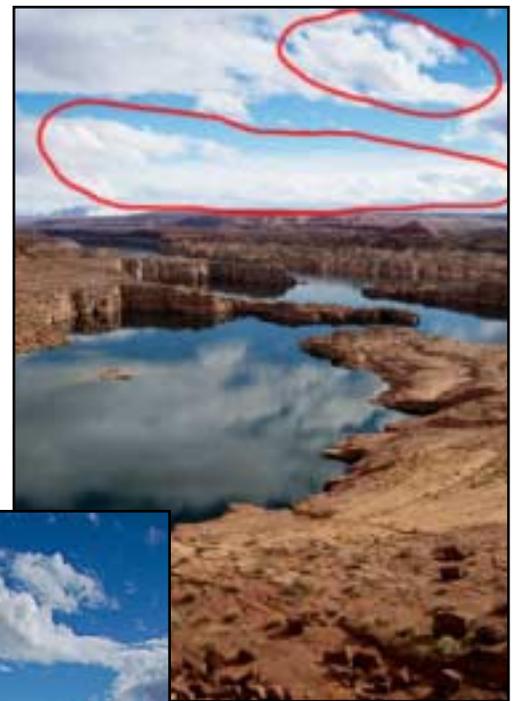
balance the exposure of the sky with the that of the foreground we use the GND filter. GND filters come in three basic strength -1, -2, & -3 stops. Here's how they work. The filter has a darker tint on the top section and slowly graduates as it reaches the center. The idea is to block light gradually from the top section of the filter until the center is reached, then allowing light to pass through on the bottom section. To use it properly, you must meter the foreground and then meter the sky to find the *f*-stop difference. For exam-

ple if your foreground reads 1/125 @ *f*16 and the sky reads 1/500 @ *f*16 then you know that there's a 2-stop difference between them. Using a -3 stop GND filter, you'll be able to reduce the exposure of the sky by three stops, making the sky darker while keeping details on the highlights such as clouds. The idea is not to match the foreground exposure



Lake Powell, Utah. using a GND filter.
©Reinier Munguia

with the background, but rather find an exposure for the sky that renders the most details especially if there are any clouds. Once you have decided on what strength to use it's time to compose the picture correctly, then slide the GND in it's holder and preview the position of the gradation with the lens stopped-down to the aperture being used. The reason behind stopping down the lens is that



Top: Notice the overexposed highlights on the clouds.

Left: By using the GND filter on the sky I was able to darken the sky thus keeping the highlight details on the clouds. The final image it's more appealing than the top image without the use of the filter. Since the filter is mounted on a rotary holder, it's important to stop-down the lens to ensure the correct positioning of the filter in respect to the horizon.

it will allow you to see where the gradation ends. In few occasion you'll find yourself using the GND in the opposite direction with the darker area blocking the foreground. Take for example a storm forming in the background full of dark clouds and then you have the foreground made of dry sawgrass glowing with the sunset light of the sun behind you. In this situation you turn your filter

the other way around and proceed to expose accordingly.

Most GND's come with a high price, but it's worth the price if you do a lot of landscape photography. Singh-Ray filters run for \$144.00 a piece, while Hitech and Cokin can be purchased for around \$40.00 each. I have used Cokin filters with great success, but good care must be taken not to scratch the resin filter. Give it a try, you'll get images that are far more appealing and with better exposure.

How to: Painting Backdrop

Backdrops are easy to make and can add a nice touch to your portrait photography. While there are several choices such as paper, wood, cardboard the preferred material it's muslin- a fabric that looks almost like canvas but it softer to the touch. Occasionally I use wood to create backdrops for food photography, as it allow some to set plates on a sturdy surface while adding some interesting colors and textures. For our project will be using muslin, that can be purchased from the local fabric store and even WalMart. Raw muslin has a beige tone, so in order to get the best colors, it's necessary to add a base color, for this I prefer using plain white. The paint to be used it's just regular exterior acrylic polymer based paints, that can be obtained from Home Depot. This paint need to be thinned out at a 50-50 using water. The best way to paint the muslin is by dipping it in a bucket with the paint-water solution, making sure it gets totally wet. I usually leave it in the solution for about 10 minutes to ensure a good absorption of the pigments. Once this is done, proceed to squeeze any excess of the solution off the muslin. Next lay the wet muslin over a sheet of flatten plastic

tarp or fabric. Stretch the muslin as to leave no big creases. Now get creative by adding strokes of the pigments to be used for your colored background and diffused them rapidly as you go. Acrylics will take from 1 to 2 hours to dry, giving you enough time to mess with the patterns if you're not satisfied with the effect. I usually use two colors one dark and the other a darker version of the same tone. If making a baby blue background, I'll use a navy blue and light blue to create a nice gradation. Once you finish your painting job, it's time to allow it to dry thoroughly, and not better way than to hang it from a string out in the sun. Next day, you'll be able to run it through your washing machine using cold water cycle, and then allowing it to dry while hanging outside. If you put it in the dryer, wrinkles will be more noticeable.

Muslin and canvas backgrounds are too expensive to justify the purchase for only seasonal use. By painting you own, you'll save money while having fun. If you don't want to go that fancy yet, give it a try using poster board first. If you can paint a wall in the house, you'll be able to paint your first backdrop.-RMC

Spring It's Here!

If you haven't realized yet, spring it's here, at least that's what my sinus tells me, if you know what I mean. Flowers are everywhere. The orange trees are blooming, and the wildflowers too. This is the perfect time to go in search of beautiful Florida native flowers.

On a recent trip to the Everglades, I notice the vibrant colors of a native bromeliad hanging from an oak tree. Without a doubt it made an interesting photo, with the vibrant colors of its flower. Walking around the park-



ing lot I found another native plant with amazing colors too. The Florida Coral Bean (above) is one of the most colorful plants you can find in the Everglades National Park. But almost any place is good to look for flowers, even the side of the road, the local park and nature preserves. Circle B Ranch has one of the largest Blue Flag Iris fields I have ever seen. Even the simplest flowers can have a world of colors and patterns inside, like the photo below. Go out camera in hand and capture what spring is all about.-RMC

