



Placer Color



Year 47 Number 4 **Newsletter of the Placer Camera Club** April 2009 **est. 1952**

<http://www.placercameraclub.org>

PO Box 4990, Auburn, Ca. 95603

Placer Camera Club meets the third Tuesday of each month, except August, at 7:00PM in the Beecher Room of the Auburn Placer County Library, 350 Nevada Street, Auburn, Ca. **Visitors Welcome!**

Event Calendar

April 21

Monthly meeting
Lee Whiting – Focal lengths
Projected image evaluations

May 19

Monthly meeting
Print image evaluations
Annual competition entries due.

June 16

Monthly meeting.
Annual awards
Theme is **reflections**

July 21

Monthly meeting
Silent auction
Theme is **close up**

This month's meeting will be Tuesday **April 21st**. Informal gathering at **6:30** with the meeting starting **promptly at 7 PM.**

This month Lee Whiting will give a short presentation on focal lengths followed by our projected image evaluations. This month's judge will be **Pekka Liemola**. Many of you know Pekka from his printing business in Auburn.

April will see a **change** in our **image evaluations**. Due to length of evaluations we are moving the Assigned **Theme** category to months that have no evaluations. **June** will be reflections and **July** will be close-up. Only 2 entries per person so it should be quick. Entries can be projected or print. No judge, it will be a group evaluation and discussion. This way we will be viewing and discussing photos at every meeting.

Oh, did I mention we are now, for the first time, having a meeting in July? Yep, July 21st. We will have our theme photos and a silent auction. More on the silent auction later.

*Moss & Rocks
Table Mtn*



Our “Honey Spot”

By Jim L White



Everyone has a “Honey Spot”. You know what I mean. A place where you love to go and hate to leave. A place where you do well, catch more fish, have more fun, take better pictures. Maybe not better pictures but where you really enjoy trying. I am going to reveal to you one of our “honey spots”.

We love wildflowers. We like to be in the middle of them. To sit or to lie down in them. To look with

wonder at them. To try and capture their beauty with our cameras. No place in California is better than the canyons of the Middle Fork of the American River above Foresthill.

Starting each spring about April first, the canyons of the Middle Fork erupt in vivid beauty. One of our favorite “honey spots” is on top of the cliffs above the Ralston Power House after bay. Today April 5th the cliffs were alive! It was breathtaking. Yellow poppies by the thousands, Purple Bush Lupines, Yellow Monkey Flowers, and if you look closely, the first brilliant red Indian Pinks. Not far away, the first Avalanche Lilies or Adder’s Tongue and Brodiaea.



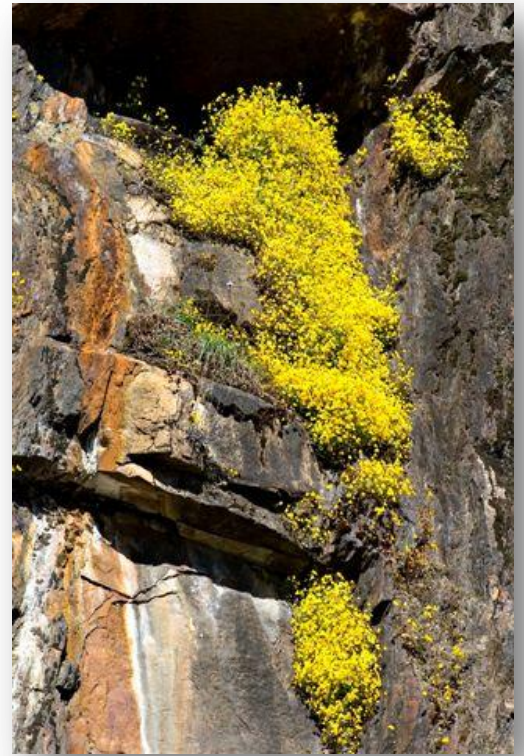
There are more flowers to come all spring and summer long. Look for the beautiful orange Monkey Flowers, brilliant red Canyon Dudleya and Indian Paintbrush. Look for new species flowering about every two weeks, depending on the temperature. It is a never ending real canyon video of color.

Go to Foresthill; turn right in front of the Wells Fargo Bank on the road to French Meadows and Mosquito Ridge. In about a mile start looking at the canyon walls on your left. It is too early right now, but in about 3 weeks the canyon walls will come alive with blooming flowers. Drive slow! You can't see wildflowers when you drive fast and it is a long way down over the cliffs. Go down in the canyon and cross the North Fork of the Middle Fork and climb up the hill to Mosquito Ridge. Take the first paved road to the right (it is signed) the road to the Ralston Power House and Hell Hole. As soon as you see the blue waters of the Ralston after bay you should be in the middle of the poppies. Plan on having lunch at the bottom of the hill on your left.



There are two picnic tables and bar-b-ques with a toilet. No drinking water available. The river running by the power house is the Rubicon River. The flowers end about on half a mile past the power house.

So you can't find the Avalanche Lilies and the tons of other water loving flowering succulents? They are on a north facing steep canyon wall at 2800 feet nearby, much of the time in the shade. You have to explore to find them. They are at another of our "honey spots". Have fun and good luck.



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Digital Photo Exposures

Understanding Histograms

Text and Photos by Sue Barthelow

Whether a histogram comes from a camera or from photo processing software, it gives you valuable information about your photo. Having a basic understanding of what a histogram shows about an image may help you make improvements. At the very least, it will give you a better understanding of your photo's exposure.

In my December 2008 newsletter article on using your camera's histogram, I discussed using the histogram displayed on a digital camera's monitor to help get better exposures. I mentioned that the left side of the graph is for showing pure black and the right side is for pure white. Middle gray is in the center of the graph. The height of any point on the graph indicates the number of pixels that have the value represented by that point. I also said that you should try to adjust your camera settings so that the graph of an image does not run off either the left or right sides of the histogram.

But what does all that really mean? A histogram is all about an image's exposure. It tells you if your image is underexposed, overexposed or just right. It also tells you how balanced your light, dark and in-between values are.

You probably know that colors have lightness values. As an interesting exercise, convert a color photo to black and white and look at its histogram. Compare the image with its histogram to get an idea of how the image's converted colors range across the scale.

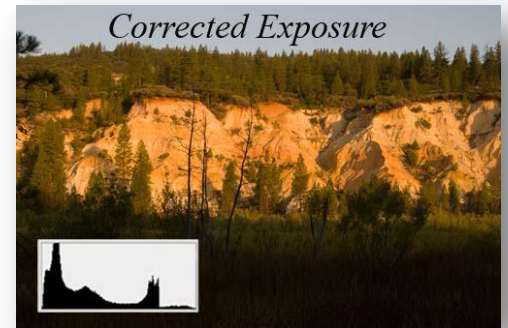
The graph shown on a histogram has a shape that reveals all kinds of information about your image.

Does your photo have too much contrast? Is it dull and lacks visual interest? Learning how to interpret a histogram and then putting what you've learned into practice will help you improve your photos.

Tweaking Your Exposure



Remember what I said about finding an exposure setting that results in a histogram whose values don't run off either the left or right edge? Well, that's only part of the story. Even when the histogram values stay within the frame, a photo may be under or over exposed. The histogram's shape tells you if you can improve your image by changing the exposure in-camera and taking another photo or by using software tools to change the image's exposure.

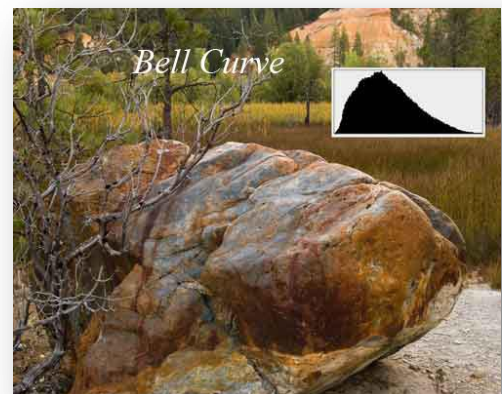


When the graph shows values that lie entirely on either the left or right side with the opposite side empty of values, your image's exposure can be improved. Keep in mind that some images are meant to look like this. If you intend your photo to be a high or low toned image, you'll expect its graph to be lopsided.

A well-exposed image will have values that reach for both the left and right edges. Don't worry about where the peaks and valleys lie, just watch the edges. The peaks and valleys show the number of image pixels that have the corresponding value. You can change the peaks and valleys by using exposure compensation or metering on something slightly lighter or darker.

A graph that does not have values that reach for both edges indicates that your photo is probably either too dark or too bright. Unless you were trying to get that particular effect, either take another photo at a different exposure setting or change the exposure using your software.

Photoshop's Shadow/Highlight tool works well for making large adjustments to an image's exposure. Another tool, Levels, has sliders that work well for slight changes. The Levels tool also lets you select what should be white, black and middle gray in your image. That works well for some problem images.



Bell Curve Images

An image with a wide range of mid-tone colors and a bit of both light and dark areas has a histogram that shows a bell curve. Most of the peaks lie in the middle of the graph. The heights dip to nothing at or near the edges. The curve's shape depends on the distribution of the middle tone pixels. There is no right or wrong shape to the curve. You are in control of your image's exposure and should adjust it to please yourself. As shown in the Bell Curve example photo, the center of the highest point of the graph is to the left of

middle. This is because there are more dark middle tone pixels than absolute middle or light middle tone pixels.

High Contrast Images

A high contrast image's histogram will have one or more peaks that lie at or near one or both of the edges.

An image that has lots of white background with a smaller dark subject will have a graph with a tall peak at the right edge. On the other hand, an image that has lots of black background with a small light subject will have a graph with a tall peak at the left edge. In both of these cases, as long as your graph shows that the image has pixels that run along the width of the graph, your exposure is probably as good as you can get it. If you want to down-play the darkness or lightness of an image like one of these, you might be able to crop out some of the background.



An image that has lots of both light and dark areas will have a graph with tall peaks at both edges. The middle of the graph will vary depending on the range of mid tone color or gray values in the image. If a graph like this is low in the middle, it indicates that you have probably lost detail in the dark, light or both regions. If that isn't what you were looking for, you may be able to change the exposure to reveal more of the dark or light area details. Using the Shadow/Highlight tool, Photoshop lets you lighten the shadows and darken the highlights to bring the contrast down and to bring back some detail.



Wrapping it up

To get better exposures more of the time, experiment and check the results. Use your camera's or your software's histogram and see how the curve changes as you change your exposures. Have some fun with it and even make some wild changes to see what happens. You may be pleasantly surprised with the results.

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Three Club Photo Shoots

Text by Mike Schumacher

Photos by Jim Bennett, Jim White & Mike Schumacher



In the past month or so we've been on 3 field trips. The first one was a hike on the **Robie Point** trail in Auburn. This is an easy hike and is about a mile or so. The point overlooks the American River and the trail has lots of wildflowers. The trail head is located on highway 49.

Take 49 from

Auburn to the green gate about ½ mile from Lincoln way. The hike was attended by Jim and Shirley White, Judy Hooper, Jim Bennett, Carl Koenig, Steve Aldridge and Mike Schumacher.



The **next** outing was a day trip to the snow led by our own Jim White. We met for breakfast at Mom's in Colfax and then headed up the hill to Eagle Lakes Road. After that we went to Cisco Grove and the bridge overlooking the Yuba river. We headed up old highway 40 to Rainbow Lodge, a great old bed and breakfast, and nice snow views in the area.

After that we stopped and went snowshoeing for a while and had lunch. We then went to Rainbow Bridge overlooking Donner Lake. It was very





windy and cold. On this years trip we didn't find the best snow conditions but it was a fun day! The snow trip was attended by Jim & Shirley White, Richard Myren, Judy Hooper, Carl Koenig, Steve Aldridge, Dolores Frank & friend Bob, and Mike Schumacher.



The **next** outing was to Table Mountain in Oroville to see all the incredible wildflowers. Table mountain is legendary in this area for fields of wildflowers and this year was no exception. The weather was superb, very little wind which is great for macro work. After Table



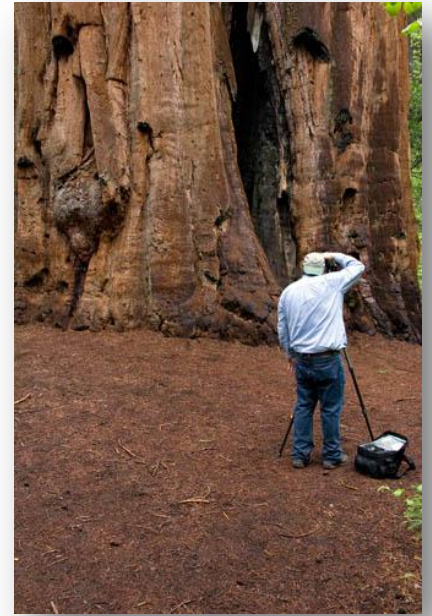
Mtn we went to the Sutter-Buttes via North Butte Road to West Butte Road which is part of the Sutter-Buttes scenic highway and a back road from Graylodge wildlife refuge that connects to highway 20. The trip was attended by Tony & Kristi Middleton, Steve Aldridge, Carl Koenig and Mike Schumacher.

In **May** we are going to Calvarias **Big Trees** State Park to see the Dogwood's bloom in the midst of the Giant Sequoias. This park is amazing and if we hit the bloom



just right it will be an incredible photo op. It will be in the first or second week of May depending on the Dogwood bloom. I'll try and give as much lead time as possible but it may be relatively short

notice. Stay tuned and don't miss this one!



More trip photos.....



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Placer Camera Club Webpage

Check out the Placer Camera Club webpage.
Webmaster Sue barthelow has been doing a
fantastic job! Thanks Sue!

<http://placercameraclub.org>

Mike Schumacher (Newsletter) 530-367-4505
radioman@ftcnet.net

Don't forget our tutorials webpage. It's at:

<http://www.placercameraclub.org/tutorials/index.html>

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Huey Monitor Calibration

The club has a Huey monitor calibration system for use by club members.
Contact Judy Hooper to 'check out' Huey. 530-888-8308.

→ *Please feel free to
contact me with items for
the newsletter!*