



# FOCAL POINT

<http://assabetvalleycc.com> - The club meets on the first and third Wednesdays of each month except July and August. Meetings are hybrid - in person at the Hudson Senior Center, 29 Church St., Hudson and on Zoom. Meetings begin at 7:00 PM with a 15 minute social time and at 7:15 a brief business meeting. Programs start at 7:30 PM. Email us at [avcc.digital@hotmail.com](mailto:avcc.digital@hotmail.com) for more information or if you wish to attend as a guest.



*Happy New Year - Cathy Robotis*

*I'm having fun. I'm being myself. I'm doing what I love. That's all that matters. James Charles*

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## Note from Our President

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I hope everyone is having a safe and happy holiday season!!

At the end of the year, it is tradition to reflect on the past year, and make resolutions going into the new year, and be thankful for the positive things this past year. In 2023, we all suffered a great loss with the untimely passing of Elliot. Elliot left a positive mark on the AVCC membership - he had a quick, dry wit, and a passion for learning new photographic tips and tricks, which he was eager to share with all. He was dedicated to making the club a fun, educational, and rewarding place for all to share their hobby and/or passion. For me personally, 2023 was a year of change as I changed careers, and I went from taking a relative back seat in the AVCC to becoming president.

As for resolutions.... Researchers suggest that only 9% of Americans that make resolutions complete them. In fact, research goes on to show that 23% of people quit their resolution by the end of the first week, and 43% quit by the end of January. Some reasons include the idea that we're thinking too big, we're not considering the 'why' behind them, and the fact that we may not be ready for change. So, my 2024 resolutions are easy and attainable: (1) take more time to enjoy and photograph wildlife nature, and (2) challenge myself to learn and explore different aspects of photography - and what better way to start than to participate in the AVCC Photo Ops scheduled for February.

I am thankful for so many things even though 2023 brought challenges; one thing I am thankful for is all of the assistance, support, guidance, suggestions, and input that so many of you provide in making this an awesome club! This is an organization that runs on the support of everyone - I am just here to steer the ship and navigate in the direction that all of you want to take the SS AVCC in. Thank you all for all that you do!

As of right now, we are still planning on hybrid meetings going forward, however, COVID, Flu, Common Cold, and RSV numbers are all skyrocketing, and with the holiday gatherings, they are expected to go higher. Please remember, if you are feeling ill, or have had a recent contact with someone that is COVID positive, please join us via Zoom. If for some reason we have to cancel the in-person gatherings, I will let everyone know as soon as possible.

Best wishes for a Safe and Happy New Year!

John Mauro

*"There is nothing magical about the flip of the calendar, but it represents a clean break, a new hope, & a blank canvas." - Jason Soroski*

## Note from the Editors

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On a recent Sunday afternoon, a local truth was revealed – if you want the woods to yourself, take your trek during a Patriots’ game. During that quiet it is possible to notice the many elements that our New England woods are composed of: trees, of course, but also lichens, fungus, mushrooms, dead and dying logs, dappled sunlight, moss on rocks and trees, stone walls, rock outcroppings, brooks, water falls, underbrush and wild plants and flowers. So many elements to consider for the “Inside the Woods” category in January.

Our interview is with Bob Cooke, who newer members probably have not met in person, since Bob isn’t a “Zoomer”, as he calls it. Bob’s love of the natural world is reflected in his long career as a science writer and author. He notes the fun he had – and oh! – the adventures!

Your editors, too, had fun as members responded to our invitation to send in favorite photos from 2023, whether they seemed “competition-worthy” or not in your eyes. (Apparently, more than a few of us worry about this every month). We hope it was fun and freeing simply thinking about what gave you joy.

Our Tips and Tricks section is chock full of great information on Still Life Photography. And members shared some interesting responses to the question: What are your New Year's resolutions for photography?

Your editors are grateful for all the fun we have putting together this newsletter each month. We are grateful to have gotten to know club members a little better through our communications with you all. We wish you a happy and healthy 2024. See you at the meeting!

*“Do anything, but let it produce joy.”*

*Walt Whitman*



*Mary and Margaret Hatcher  
- Robyn Saur*

## January Program

AVCC is pleased to present “What were They Thinking? What Judges Look for when Scoring an Image” by Maureen and Todd Mathieson on Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at 7:30 PM. The meeting is a hybrid format; in person at the the Hudson Senior Center, 29 Church St., Hudson (please arrive no later than 7:15), or remote on Zoom. The Zoom meeting room opens at 7:00 with a 15 minute social time followed by AVCC business at 7:15. The program begins at 7:30 PM. Nonmembers interested in attending as guests should email [avcc.digital@hotmail.com](mailto:avcc.digital@hotmail.com) .

### Maureen and Todd Mathieson

#### “What were They Thinking? What Judges Look for when Scoring an Image”

This month’s program features our own AVCC club members Maureen and Todd Mathieson. They are members of the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and have been awarded the Master Member, New England Camera Club Council (MNEC) for their service to that organization as well as to local photography clubs. Both Todd and Maureen have served as President of the Assabet Valley Camera Club and have served as judges for clubs in the region such as Nashoba, Greater Lynn, and Leominster. They have also been an integral part of the NECCC Annual Conference Photo Ops area where they are well known for their water drops apparatus. They have also shared their expertise with the AVCC club during the annual Hi-Jinx days. Todd serves as the club representative to PSA and is responsible for entering club members’ photos into the interclub competitions and monitoring AVCC’s results. Maureen and Todd have prepared a presentation based on their combined judging experiences to help club members understand what judges look for in an image when assigning scores.



*Grizzly Bear Plunges into the Creek  
- Darlene Holman*



*Moving Along on the Incoming Tide - Nick Andruzzi*

## Looking Ahead - AVCC 2023-2024 Program Schedule

Date	Program	Presentor
9/6/23	“What I did this Summer” Member Slideshows	AVCC Members
10/4/23	“Architecture Abstracts”	Angie McGonagle
10/25/23	<i>*Special Program in Honor of Elliot Mednick</i>	Essdras Suarez
11/1/23	“ICM - More than just Pretty”	Silvana Della Camera
12/6/23	Photographing Trees and Forests	Paul Nguyễn
1/3/24	“What were they Thinking?” How images are judged	Todd and Maureen Mathieson
2/7/24	"Flower and Garden Photography"	Irene Sacilotto
3/6/24	“A Murmur in the Trees”	Suzanne Revy
4/3/24	“The Natural Look” HDR Imaging	Hazel Meredith
5/1/24	“How I got that Image” Member Presentations	AVCC Members
6/5/24	Image of the Year Awards	

Link to the club website calendar for all deadline, program, and competition dates: [AVCC Calendar](#)

Or find it on the AVCC website by clicking on “Organization” at the top of the page, then “Club Calendar” in the dropdown list.

## Competitions 2023-2024

### Monthly Competitions:

The club holds monthly image competitions including three categories: print, digital and open. The images are judged by a panel of three judges using a scale of 3.0-10. The final score for an image is the total of the three scores. See the [AVCC webpage](#) for more information about the rules and procedures for monthly competitions as well as the PSA and NECCC competitions. Pay particular attention to the PSA definitions for “Nature”, [Monochrome](#), and [Travel](#) submissions.

### Schedule of Monthly Competition Category Topics & Submission Dates

Month	Print (Details TBD)	Digital	Open	Digital and Open Submission Date
September		Monochrome	Open	9/13/2023
October	Tools	Nature	Open	10/11/2023
November	N/A	Architectural Detail	Open	11/8/2023
December	Still Life	Nature	Open	12/13/2023
January	Open	Inside the Woods	Open	1/10/2024
February	Entryways	Nature	Open	2/14/2024
March	Nature	Creative (In or out of camera)	Open	3/13/2024
April	Open	Nature	Open	4/10/2024
May	Open	Things that Fly or are Airborne (in honor of Elliot)	Open	5/8/2024

#### PSA and NECCC

Image selections to the PSA & NECCC Interclub Competitions are made by the representatives to each organization. Individual entries can also be made to PSA competitions if you are a member. Our PSA representative is Todd Mathieson; our NECCC representative is Robyn Saur..

NECCC has moved to have individual print competitions rather than interclub print competitions at this time. The NECCC Individual Print Competition will be hosted at the Greater Lynn Photographic Association (GLPA). The categories are B&W (mono) and Color. Competitions will be held on Nov. 4, 2023 and April 6, 2024. More details can be found here: <https://greaterlynnphoto.org/NECCC>.

FYI: PSA Guidelines for Borders: (not recommended for Nature) but if any border is added to a Nature, Travel or PJ image it must be a small border of a neutral color (gray tones). There are no border restrictions in the PID Color or Monochrome Division.

### Member Snapshot

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#### Bob Cooke

One's first steps into Bob's apartment reveal a large world map, rolled out and hanging on the wall; a map where Bob has placed pins in every country and location he has been to. The map is thickly studded in all four directions. From Bob's early years, through his career, and into his journeys in photography, Bob's passion and curiosity about the natural world shine through.

Bob was born in Southern California in 1935 to parents who had a tree nursery. He says that at that time "the state allowed kids like me - beginning at age 14 - to have drivers' licenses, so that meant growing up in the Hot Rod culture, creating street-wise hot rods. Fun, adventure and creativity!" Bob's life certainly continued with all three – adventures in travel and experiences, writing three books, and having fun doing it all.

Bob spent four years in the Coast Guard, then went on to college where he discovered a love of writing in a required English course. When his teacher approached him in a cafeteria line and told him that he liked his writing, that was all the encouragement Bob needed to decide on English as his major.



*In Attack Mode - Bob Cooke*

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## Member Snapshot - Bob Cooke - continued from page 7

Bob had a long career as a science writer for “many largish papers,” as he puts it, as well as the Associated Press (AP). He also authored three science-related books. Bob became interested in science in high school, when he took a school trip to Caltech to hear research on liquid air. That whet his appetite. Once out of college he started in daily journalism with a small paper in Pomona, CA, moved to the AP bureau in Los Angeles, then to Caltech, the Pasadena Star-News, and the Boston Globe. He also worked at the Atlanta Constitution, and finally, Newsday on Long Island. Bob says, “It was mostly fun, with a few terrifying moments.”

Bob typically wrote stories dealing with ongoing scientific and biomedical research and also covered aerospace, specifically unmanned missions to the moon and planets. But he took assignments about whatever interested him. While at the AP he did a story on Dr. Charles Richter, the creator of the Richter Scale. His article went out over the wire and was picked up by the LA Times, the NY Times and the Washington Post. This got his name noticed. In 1980 he covered the eruption of Mt. St. Helen’s and, by happenstance, met a pilot who was going to fly over the mountain. He flew over the volcano while it was “burping.” In 1986 he covered the explosion of the reactor at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

Bob has published three books:

Improving on Nature (1980) – about the challenges, the potential benefits and the perils associated with genetic engineering; Earthfire: The Eruption of Mount St. Helens (1982) - about the worldwide chains of cause and effect beyond Mount St. Helens; and Dr. Folkman's War: Angiogenesis and the Struggle to Defeat Cancer (2001) – about Dr. Judah Folkman, a pioneer in the field of angiogenesis - the formation of new blood vessels. Bob met Dr. Folkman at a talk Dr. Folkman gave in Boston, developed a relationship, and went on to get the exclusive story on Dr. Folkman’s research.



*Oops, Recalculate - Bob Cooke*

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## Member Snapshot - Bob Cooke - continued from page 8

Bob describes himself as an enthusiastic “hobby photographer.” He uses a Nikon digital camera, but only shares his images via prints, so the club has not seen his images during the Covid/Zoom era. He belongs not only to AVCC but also to the Sudbury Valley Nature Photographers. He has taken thousands of photos on his travels. In the US, he has traveled to the Puget Sound, the Oregon coast, the Grand Tetons, up and down the Maine coast, and the east coast of Canada to name a few places. He also took a trip down the Colorado River in AZ and through the Grand Canyon. Some of these trips were with AVCC. He has traveled far and wide outside of the US for work, for photography, and for adventure.

He has been from the North Pole to the South Pole; to Hawaii, China, Hong Kong, Bhutan, South Africa, and Botswana, among many other places. One of his favorite trips was to the Svalbard Peninsula, a Norwegian archipelago north of mainland Norway and 500 miles from the North Pole, an area so remote that there are more polar bears than people. Another “terrific trip” he mentions was to the Pantanal Region of Brazil. He excitedly lists some of the wildlife he saw on that trip - crocodiles, a huge variety of fish, jaguars, and other exotic creatures.

Bob offers some tips to fellow club members: for photo tours, he highly recommends Van Os Photo Safaris – <https://photosafaris.com>; for printing and framing he goes to “Framed in Time” in Framingham for the mounting and matting, then heads to the back wall of Savers in Marlboro. There he scouts out pictures whose frames he likes and buys them for only \$5 or \$6.

Bob’s passion, curiosity and enthusiasm radiate out of him, and are represented by the dozens of framed photos hanging on and leaning against nearly every wall. “Fun, adventure and creativity” indeed!

© Lynn Kerner

*As long as you’re having fun and still doing stuff, it doesn’t matter what other people think. Nick Carter*

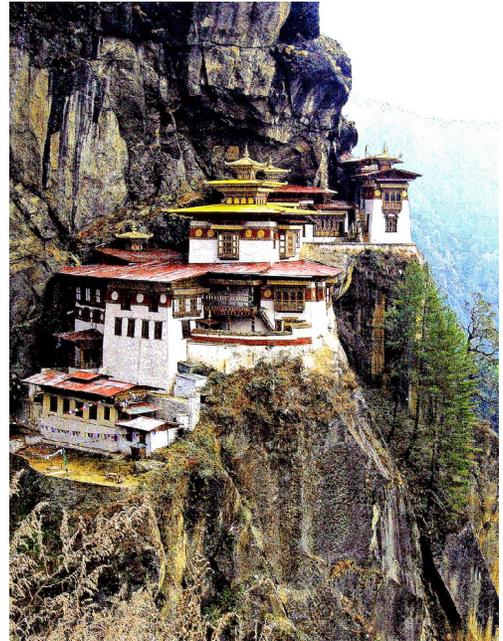


*Ice 6 - Bob Cooke*

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*Tibetans - Bob Cooke*



*Tiger's Nest - Bob Cooke*



*Honeypot - Bob Cooke*



*I'll Drive - Bob Cooke*



**Zooming Out** - Members and AVCC in the greater photographic community - member exhibits, competitions, meetups, field trip opportunities, workshops, etc.

**Zooming In** - A Reflection, Musing, or Experience (travel, how I got that great shot, my favorite photo or place to shoot for example) shared by a member

**Tips and Tricks** - Members' shared suggestions for the Monthly Theme

**The Bigger Picture** - Happenings in the World of Photography

Many thanks to the following members for their contributions to this month's Newsletter: Cathy Robotis, Lynn Kerner, Mary Coombs, Doris Monteiro, Pam Meoli, Darlene Holman, John Mauro, Robyn Saur, Rick Beauchamp, Terry Vachowski, Jane Parker, Sue Abrahamsen, Eric Frere, Glenn Fund, Bob Cooke.

### Zooming Out

#### On the Wall at Cafe 641

This month Cafe 641 will feature the work of Eric Frere. Eric joined AVCC in the fall and we are pleased to welcome him to the club! This is Eric's second exhibit at Cafe 641. If you were fortunate enough to see his exhibit in the fall you are aware of the compelling images he captures in his travels.



*Image Courtesy of Eric Frere*



*Eric Frere*

*Mongolia\_2023 - Eric Frere*

To learn more about Eric and his images see the next page. You can also visit his website at <https://www.frere.net/home>.

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## Zooming Out - Cafe 641 - Eric Frere - continued from page 11

I've been shooting for about 50 years but really taken it to heart over the last five years. My passion is traveling throughout the world to meet and photograph everyday people in their natural surroundings. The three photos that I attached are as follows:

1. Trading funny faces with a little girl in Mongolia. I especially loved capturing the reaction from the parents.
2. Indonesian woman in Yogyakarta. A great way to discover an area and their people is by bicycle. I was able to make a stop on a side street to capture this lady in front of her home (photo taken with her permission).
3. Early one morning, I was visiting a small settlement in the Omo River Valley (Ethiopia) when I came upon a beautiful young lady contemplating her day while having breakfast. This was my first trip to photograph people and I was hooked.



*Karo\_Girl\_Bowl - Eric Frere*

After taking photos of people, I show them the results (if I can). Of course, I prefer to interact with them first in order for them to relax and build a trust. If I just pull out my camera first, my photos often don't come out the way I want as the person's composure is too stiff.

Happy New Year! Eric Frere

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**Members - please consider a Cafe 641 exhibition of your work. It is good experience! Contact Glenn Fund at [gfund@comcast.net](mailto:gfund@comcast.net) if you are interested in exhibiting in April or beyond.**

### **Liz Krouse**

Reminder - Liz's image, "Blue Dasher Dragonfly" was selected for inclusion in the Small Stones Festival of the Arts exhibition beginning January 27 through February 4, 2024 at the Brigham Hill Community Barn located at 37 Wheeler Road in North Grafton, Massachusetts. For more information click here: [Small Stones Festival](#).

### **Mary Coombs**

Reminder! On April 8, 2024 we will experience a nearly or total eclipse of the sun depending on your location ([eclipse2024.org](http://eclipse2024.org)). For tips for eclipse photography click this link: [Eclipse photography](#).

**Save the Date!** Saturday, February 3, The Assabet Valley Camera Club is planning to host Hi-Jinx - a day filled with fun indoor photo opportunities at the Hudson Senior Center. The day provides a wonderful opportunity to engage your creativity and socialize with other club members.

## Zooming In

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### **New Year's Resolutions**

We asked our members to share some of the New Year's Resolutions for Photography. Here are their intriguing responses:

**John Mauro:** Resolution: To make more time to get out and photograph!!

**Terry Vachowski:** As for goals, I've spent a lot less time photographing this year as it was just too hot. I hope to replace my iPhone with a newer model and learn to use it. Also same as last year, which didn't happen- to work on my manual skills on my "big girl camera."

**Rick Beauchamp:** My NY resolutions are to shoot in manual vs aperture priority which is my go to and commit to learning how to use Lightroom and Photoshop.

**Bob Cooke:** I hope to arrange another "club" show of prints again at the Maynard Public Library (cross your fingers ) and maybe elsewhere for any club members who'd like to participate.

**Robyn Sauer:** New Year's Resolution: To learn Photoshop and Lightroom.

**Pam Meoli:** My New Year's plan for photography is to step outside the box of nature. Although it's my first love, when I was in Italy, I tried my hand at Street Photography under the influence of Esdras Suarez. Capturing different types of stories by expression, activity, surroundings. Although I have to say - the older I get, the more I love my dog - this challenges me and I think it's good to challenge oneself - that's how we grow.

**Cathy Robotis:** In 2023, I did my Instagram challenge and took an iPhone photo daily and posted it to Instagram. My goal now is to put them all together into my own Book of Days. Taking an iPhone photo daily was a great exercise to get me to pay attention to the world around me, but it also resulted in me becoming quite lazy when it comes to carrying my camera equipment with me. So, for 2024, I plan to get back into using my camera, and I will challenge myself to do more in manual mode. I need to learn skills like "dodging and burning" and working with layers. I would also like to do something with my photos, such as turn them into greeting cards or something artistic like wood transfers. I've wanted to do this for a long time. Let's see if 2024 is the year!

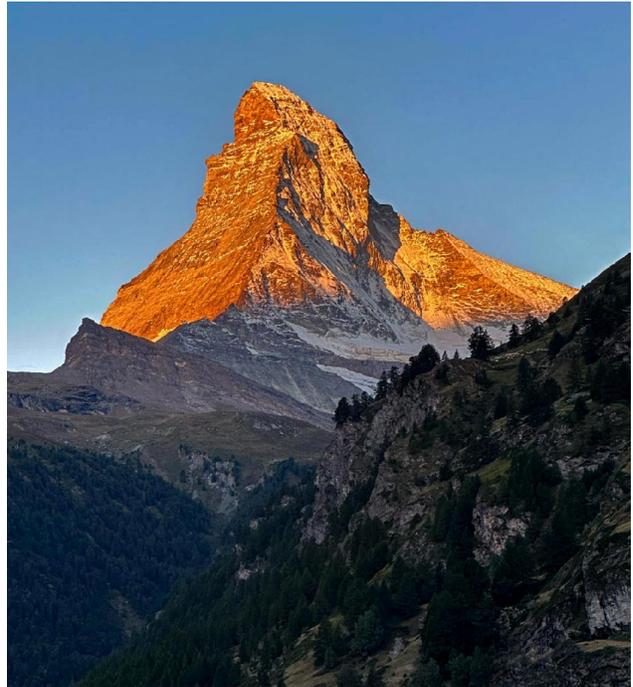
**Mary Coombs:** I still have much to learn about the capabilities of my camera and various lenses - I will strive to do that in 2024 before deciding on the next camera! A resolution from last year that is still on the table - learn how to better post process those RAW images in LR and PS and how to make composite images in Photoshop.

## Members' Favorite Photos from 2023

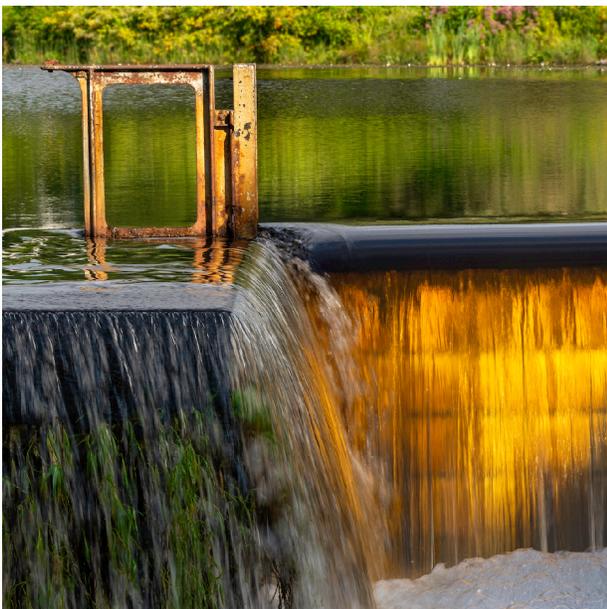
We asked members to submit some of their favorite photos from 2023. Maybe these were images not submitted for competition, but loved all the same. Here are the beautiful submissions! Enjoy!



*Courtesy of Pam Meoli*



*Matterhorn Sunrise - Sue Abrahamsen*



*Dam Waterfall, Southboro  
- Rick Beauchamp*



*Autumn in Brookline III - Jane Parker*

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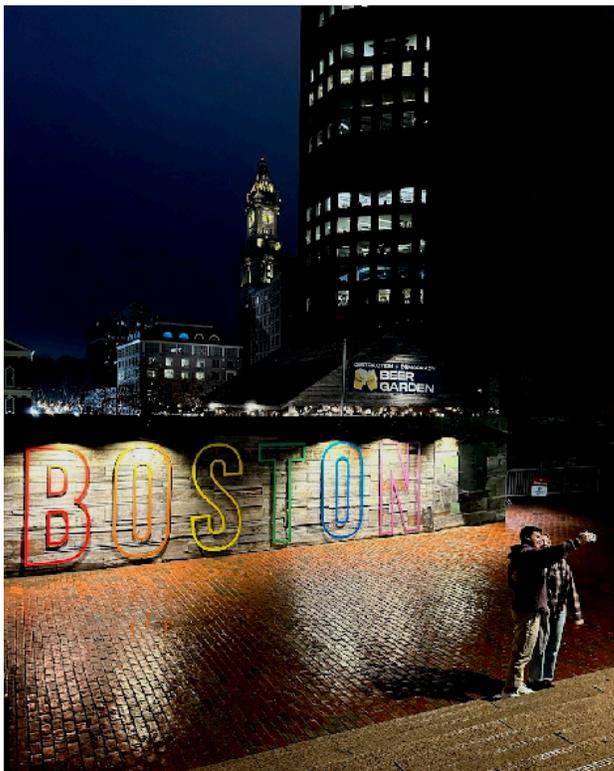
Zooming In - Member Favorites - continued from page 14



*Boston by Night - Cathy Robotis*



*Courtesy of Pam Meoli*



*Courtesy of Pam Meoli*



*Courtesy of Pam Meoli*

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Zooming In - Member Favorites - continued from page 15



*Seed to Stem  
- Terry Vachowski*



*Tower Hill  
- Terry Vachowski*



*Courtesy of Pam Meoli*



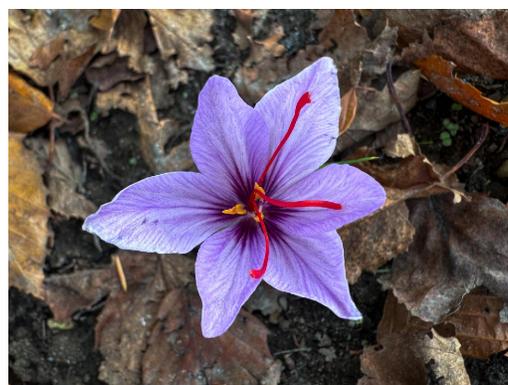
*Puffin Love - Darlene Holman*



*Brimfield - Terry Vachowski*



*Capturing Memories - Cathy Robotis*



*Saffron Crocus - Sue Abrahamsen*

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Zooming In - Member Favorites - continued from page 16



*Taj Mahal Main Entrance  
- Glenn Fund*



*Taj Mahal from Main Entrance Rear Steps  
- Glenn Fund*



*Taj Mahal from the Grounds - Glenn Fund*



*Lotus Bee - Darlene Holman*



*Spent Tulip - Mary Coombs*



*Micro-rivers\_Newburyport - Lynn Kerner*

Continued on next page

Zooming In - Member Favorites - continued from page 17



*Ice Curtain - Lynn Kerner*



*Coming up the Mountain - Jane Parker*



*Alga flow around rock - Rick Beauchamp*



*Courtesy of John Mauro*



*Berlin Farm 3 - John Mauro*



*Courtesy of John Mauro*

## Tips and Tricks - January's Theme: Still Life Photography

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### Tips for Still Life Photography

*Still Life Photography* falls within the realm of *Fine Art Photography*. It's a form of photography where we essentially use our artistic vision to bring inanimate objects to "life," using our camera lens to tell their story. *Food photography* is a form of Still Life Photography that seeks to depict foods in an attractive way. *Product photography* is also considered Still Life, but instead of creating a narrative, the focus is more on promoting the product itself, without distraction. Under the umbrella of Still Life, we have *Found Still Life* and *Created Still Life*. In Found Still Life, we may stumble upon a scene (such as in a kitchen or in a workshop) and then compose and capture the image, highlighting the beauty of everyday items. In Created Still Life, we have a vision and look for items to assemble to bring it to fruition. For those new to photography or those trying to hone their skills, Still Life Photography is ideal because it allows you to build your foundational skills. You have an opportunity to set forth your vision in a setting where you have control over everything and can arrange and rearrange your elements until you get them exactly how you want them. You can try different camera settings and experiment with different light sources without challenging the patience of your cooperative inanimate subjects. You can take the time to become more familiar with the intricate workings of your camera. So, as we put away our holiday decorations and look for indoor pursuits to fend off the winter blues, why not try your hand at Still Life Photography? We have put together some tips and tricks to consider as you envision and plan your own still life scene. And while we're at it, we hope you will bring your expertise to our HiJinx on February 3rd. We look forward to seeing what you come up with!

#### **Recommended equipment:**

- Camera.
- Lenses: The 50 mm prime lens is the classic lens for Still Life, but you can also use a macro lens to highlight intricate details or even a telephoto lens to properly fill the frame.
- Sturdy tripod.
- Remote shutter release.

#### **Other equipment that might come in handy:**

- 5 in 1 reflector and diffuser kit.
- Dulling spray (to reduce shine on objects).
- Speed light or strobe.
- Flashlight or external flash.
- Soft box.



*Tulip - Mary Coombs*

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### Setting the scene

- **Preparing:** Prior to starting your session, it might be wise to study the work of prominent Still Life Photographers. Think about your own goals. What is important to you? What message would you like to convey through your work?
- **Setup:** Because your scene will probably be small, a tabletop will generally be the best place for your setup. In fact, tabletops are the most commonly used setup in Still Life Photography.
- **Background:** You can generally choose your own background for Still Life, and subdued backgrounds work best. You don't want to distract from your subject. If you use a table cloth or some form of linen, make sure it is ironed so there are no distracting creases (unless they are part of the story). You can even use a canvas to paint your own background. Other examples of backgrounds might include pieces of wood, wallpaper, linens, drop cloths, or other materials. You might consider using real velvet (not crushed velvet) because it absorbs the light without giving off a shine.
- **Props:** Props can also be used to add to the story or help make the image cohesive and meaningful. Interesting props might include vintage items, objects with unique character, or objects that relate to your theme. Placing your items on a mirror may add interest (if it fits with your theme).
- **Subject Matter:** The sky is the limit in terms of what you choose to put in your still life scene or what theme you may choose. Ideas for still life subjects include flowers, fruits, kitchen utensils, or tools. Your theme may be a color. Or a season. Or something different altogether. Make sure your items work together and don't appear random. For example, if your theme is Fall, make sure the colors are appropriate and that you don't include fruits that are not in season (like strawberries). You may want to get very creative and photograph something out of the ordinary, like a popsicle in the process of melting.
- **Arrangement:** As you arrange your items, try to place them strategically to use the shapes to provide leading lines. Look for an interesting geometric perspective. Make sure the scene is well balanced and free of empty gaps or overly busy areas (unless they are part of your story).



*This Ol' Trumpet - Jane Parker*

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## Tips for Still Life Photography - continued from page 20

- **Colors:** Work with the color wheel. Remember that opposite colors are complimentary and work well together while colors next to one another on the color wheel can be very impactful. Black & White also works very well for Still Life, allowing you to place emphasis on textures, tones, and shapes.
- **Composition:** Your composition should follow the *Rule of Thirds*. You should also consider using the *Rule of Odds*. Because our brains are programmed to try to put everything in order, we typically look to arrange things in pairs. In an image with an odd number of items, it's not very easy for us to put things "in order." This results in our brains concentrating more and longer on the image, thereby generating more interest. Consider arranging your items at different heights and depths within the scene. Adding props can help achieve this. Zenfolio recommends that you use a "hero object" that leads the viewer's eye into the scene. For example, a brightly colored object on a duller background can serve as your hero object. Try photographing your scene from different angles and heights. You may also consider employing a *flat lay composition*, where you shoot your images from above, looking down.
- **Movement:** Although still life involves inanimate objects, you can consider adding movement to your scene. An example might be a music box with a spinning ballerina.
- **Lighting:** Side lighting works best for still life photography. If you place the light source so that the scene is lit from left to right, it will guide the viewer through the image as if they were reading a book. Pay attention to your shadows because they can add interest (or take away from it). There is more on lighting below.
- **Evaluating your image:** Ask yourself the following questions: Is your scene well balanced? Is your composition strong? Is it cohesive and meaningful? Have you conveyed a narrative? Have you conveyed your message?

### Lighting Considerations

- Examples of light sources may include indirect light through the window, a lamp, a flashlight, or a candle. Beautiful lighting may foster moody or painterly effects.
- Natural lighting works very well with Still Life. You will find the best natural light on overcast days.
- If you are working near a window, you should avoid direct sunlight. If there is too much sunlight, consider adding a sheer white curtain to diffuse it. A diffuser can also reduce hard shadows.
- If your shadows are too harsh, consider adding another light source.
- Colored reflectors can add warmth and help to bring out specific colors and tones.
- Using a flash can result in very flat, hard lighting. This can be improved by using an off-camera light source.
- Avoid overhead lighting.
- Side lighting works best.
- Consider using *split lighting*. With split lighting, the light source is on one side of the subject, leaving the scene half illuminated and half in shadow. This gives a sense of drama and contrast.

*"And if a day goes by without my doing something related to photography, it's as though I've neglected something essential to my existence, as though I had forgotten to wake up. I know that the accident of my being a photographer has made my life possible." - Richard Avedon*

Continued on next page

## Tips for Still Life Photography - continued from page 21

**Additional tips on Lighting from Jane Parker:** As far as lighting goes... I love the light you get through a north-facing window. The bigger the window, the better. You get no direct sunlight, and the window behaves like a giant diffuser panel. Place a white reflector on the shadow side of the subject, and the shadows will still be visible, but they'll become softened, and you get beautiful, wrap-around light.

### High Key versus Low Key in Still Life Photography

- With *high key still life photography*, there is even light throughout. The colors are vibrant. There are brightly lit details, and there are soft shadows. The focus is on color and details.
- With *low key still life photography*, the scene is dimly lit and moody. There are harsher shadows and more contrast. This works well with B&W and emphasizes textures, shapes, and form. To take a low key still life shot, use a fast shutter speed, low ISO, and narrow aperture so the only light visible is from your light source.

### Suggested camera settings for Still Life Photography

- Shoot in manual mode
- Aperture: f/8 is the standard choice, but you may increase or decrease the f/stop based on how much of the image you want to keep in sharp focus.
- A shutter speed of 1/60 or slower is recommended, which is why it is important to use a tripod.
- Keep your ISO as low as possible to reduce graininess.
- Light painting: You may want to refer to the previous AVCC presentation on *Light Painting by Harold Ross* or refer to this how to article: [Light-Painted Photos](#). When light painting you illuminate the image in strategic locations using a moving light source over a longer period of time (up to 10-30 seconds or more).

### Sources

[Pixpa.com](#), [Format.com](#), [Adobe.com](#), [Adorama.com](#), [digital-photography-school.com](#), [Proedu.com](#), [zenfolio.com](#)



*Wine Cork Collection - Glenn Fund*

## The Bigger Picture

### Upcoming Photography Workshops and Programs

#### American Graphics Institute, Boston, MA

- They offer courses on studio lighting, lighting and composition, beginner/intermediate photography, Photoshop Lightroom, real estate photography, and SmartPhone/iPhone photography.
- For more information: [agittraining.com](http://agittraining.com).

#### Hunt's Photo, Melrose, MA

- They offer photo walks, photo adventures, and classes.
- For more information: [www.edu.huntsphoto.com](http://www.edu.huntsphoto.com).

#### Worcester Craft Center, Worcester, MA

- They are offering Intro to Digital Photography, Intro to Darkroom, Intro to Studio Lighting.
- Classes start in January 2024.
- For more information: [worcestercraftcenter.org](http://worcestercraftcenter.org).

#### Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA

- Advanced Photography Concepts and Portfolio Building Skills.
- Saturdays, 1/27/24-4/6/24, 10 am to 3 pm, with Katie Doyle. \$350.
- For more information: [worcesterart.org](http://worcesterart.org).

#### Boston Photography Workshops

- They offer online and in-person classes on a variety of topics, including: Digital Cameras I & II, Better Composition/Photowalk, Organizing Photos, Night Photography, Food Photography, Portraiture, and Lightroom Classic.
- For further information: [bostonphotographyworkshops.com](http://bostonphotographyworkshops.com).

#### Worcester State University

- They offer many interesting courses, such as: Discover Digital Photography, Mastering your Digital SLR or Mirrorless Camera, Secrets of Better Photography, Photographing Nature with your Digital Camera, Photographing People with your Digital Camera, Intro to Lightroom Classic CC, and Photoshop Elements for the Digital Photographer.
- Classes are typically 24 course hours over 6 weeks, and prices range from \$115-\$335.
- Further information: [ed2go.com](http://ed2go.com).



*Red Dress - Pam Meoli*

## Photography Workshops and Programs - continued from page 23

### **Assabet After Dark**

- Spring photography courses include Cape Cod Lighthouse Photography, Digital Photography I, Digital Photography II, Macro/Close-up Photography, SmartPhone Photography, and Wildlife Photography.
- Classes are taught by Steve McGrath
- For more information: [assabetace.org](http://assabetace.org) (look for their Spring 2024 Course Catalog).

### **Essdras Suarez (workshop information shared by Pam Meoli)**

- [Crafting your Photographic Vision. Great Composition & Beyond](#)
- Three-day Virtual class on Jan 24-26<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- We discuss all things that make photography great, and we even talk about the psychology behind great photography. There about 6 hours of live instruction, two group reviews and as a bonus I am including a 45-min one on one private photo review.

### **Matt Kloskowski (workshop information shared by Lynn Kerner)**

- [Fresh Start 2024 Program \(From Stagnation to Inspiration!\)](#)
- **Note: Enrollment closes Jan 2, 2024**
- Three week program - 2 videos/week - Mondays and Thursdays starting Jan. 8.
- \$9.99 - includes a \$10.00 coupon code for MattK.com Store



*Almost as Fast as a Speeding Bullet - Tony Monteiro*

Continued on next page

The Bigger Picture - continued from page 24

## **Photography Exhibitions**

### **Leica Gallery in Boston, MA**

- How Easily We are Undone, by Jennifer McClure.

### **Griffin Museum in Winchester, MA**

- Illuminating the Archive by Bill Chapman, 12/13/23-1/31/24.
- Winter Solstice 2023 by various artists, 12/13/23-1/7/24.
- Transcendence: Awakening the Soul by Juan Hui Ng, 12/13/23-1/7/24.

### **Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA**

- Dialogues, Diasporas, and Detours through Africa (10/14/23-1/14/24).
- Capital Vice: Politics of the Seven Deadly Sins

## **Upcoming Competitions**

### **Istanbul Photo Awards 2024**

- Deadline: 1/15/24.
- Free to enter.
- Categories: Single news, Story news, Single Sports, Story Sports, Single Nature and Environment, Story Nature and Environment, Single Portrait, Story Portrait, Single Daily Life, Story Daily Life.
- Cash prizes.
- Contact: [istanbulphotoawards.com](http://istanbulphotoawards.com)

### **IPA Photography Competition 2024**

- Deadline 1/31/24.
- Fees range from \$30-\$55.
- Categories: Advertising, Analog/Film, Architecture, Book, Editorial/Press, Event, Fine Art, Nature, People, Special, Sports, and their subcategories.
- Cash prizes.
- Contact: [www.photoawards.com](http://www.photoawards.com)



*Bodie Lighthouse, Outer Banks, NC  
- Lynn Kerner*

Continued on next page

### **2024 National Wildlife Photo Competition**

- Submissions accepted 1/17/24-3/31/24.
- Categories: Birds, Mammals, Baby animals, Other wildlife, Landscape and plants, People in Nature, Mobile, Portfolio, Young Nature Photographers.
- Cash prizes
- Contact: [www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

### **The iPhone Photography Awards**

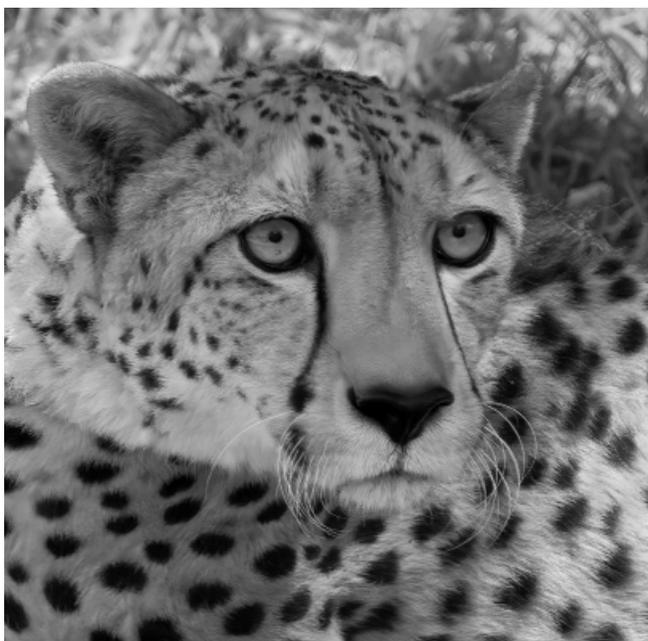
- Deadline: 3/31/24.
- Entry fee: \$5.50/1, \$12.50/3, \$18.50/5, and upwards.
- Images have to have been shot with an iPhone.
- Prizes include title of IPPA Photographer of the Year, gold bars, and platinum bars.
- Contact: [www.ippawards.com](http://www.ippawards.com)

### **Monovision Photo Awards 2024**

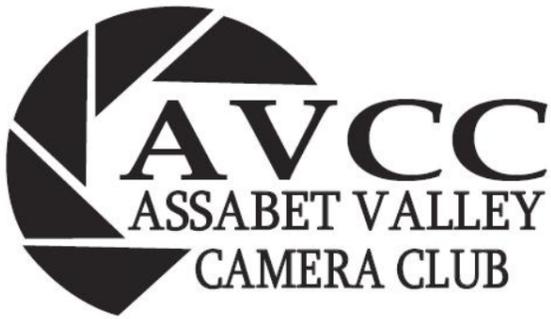
- Deadline: 1/21/24.
- Fee: \$25/series, \$20/single.
- Cash prizes.
- Themes: Abstract, Architecture, B&W, Cityscapes, Conceptual, Documentary, Fashion, Fine art, Landscape, Macro/micro, Nature, Nudes, Panoramic, People, Portrait, Photomanipulation, Photojournalism, Seascapes, Street, Travel, Wildlife.
- Contact: [monovisionawards.com](http://monovisionawards.com)

### **Natural Landscape Photography Awards**

- Deadline: 7/31/24.
- Entry fees: \$15/1 submission; \$40/6 submissions; \$60/12 submissions; \$100/18 submissions.
- Cash prizes.
- Theme: Landscape, Nature.
- Contact: [naturallandscapeawards.com](http://naturallandscapeawards.com)



*Cheetah Standing Guard*  
- John McKinney



AVCC is a member of the following organizations:

NECCC



PSA

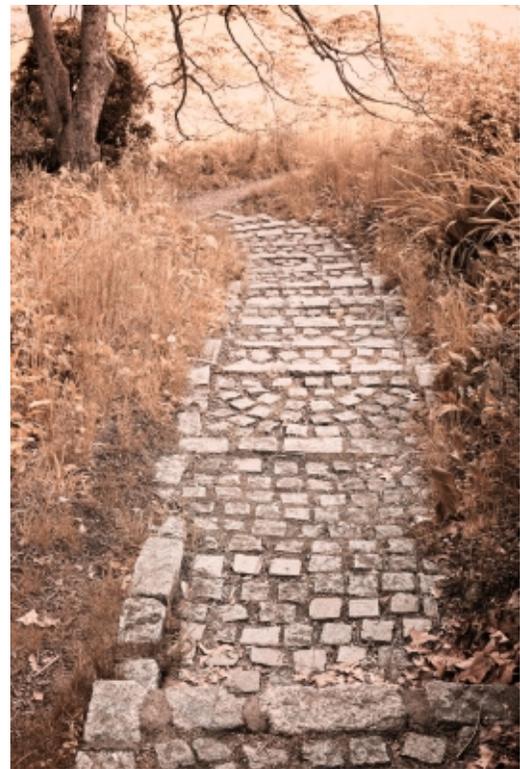


AVCC website:

<https://www.assabetvalleycc.com>

2023-2024 Executive Board Members:

- President: John Mauro
- Vice President: Mary Coombs
- Secretary: Pam Meoli
- Treasurer: Glenn Fund



*Follow the Brick Road  
- Linda DeStafano Brown*

Editors' Note:

Many(!) club members work behind the scenes in various capacities to make the club run smoothly, to engage with the greater community, to reach out to prospective members, to communicate about our organization through the Facebook page, the AVCC website, the Focal Point Newsletter, the Action Unlimited, and provide opportunities for competition, exhibitions, fun, learning, and camaraderie. To see (most) of the volunteer positions and members please refer to your 2023-2024 Member packet. Consider volunteering!