

FOCAL POINT

[Assabet Valley Camera Club](#) - The club meets on the 1st and 3rd 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. Are you interested in attending a meeting and/or seeing what the Assabet Valley Camera Club is all about? You are welcome to join as a guest member for 30 days. Just send us an [Email](#) with your name and preferred e-mail address and you will be added to the attendee list for the next 30 days.



Black Crowned Night Heron Fishing
- Darlene Holman

*It is spring again. The earth is like a child that
knows poems by heart." - Rainer Maria Rilke*

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Note from Our President

Hello All,

I want to thank everyone that responded to the 2025 Member Survey. The Executive Committee will review all of the suggestions for 2025-2026 competition theme subjects at the May 13th Executive Committee meeting. The meeting is open to all members and will be via Zoom only.

The exhibit and Meet the Artist event at the Hudson Library was a success! I would like to thank everyone that contributed and hung images, organized and provided refreshments and bookmarks, and put together the Scavenger Hunt for the Meet the Artists event! A special thank you to Jim Williams for making the devices to hand the images!!

The Annual Banquet and Awards, as well as election of officers will take place in June. The following positions are open for the 2025-2026 Club Season (with current member in parentheses) - anyone can run for any of these positions:

President (John Mauro)
Vice President (Mary Coombs)
Secretary (Jim Williams)
Treasurer (John Gill)

If you are interested in running for any of the above positions, please contact Todd Mathieson, chair of the nominating committee.

I plan on running for reelection for the President (that does not preclude someone else from running - **hint, hint, nudge, nudge**) for my third one-year term. This will be my last term if re-elected as I also served as acting president for about 6 months prior to being elected.

Remember, you can keep up on club events on the AVCC website.

Pudge

"The world's favorite season is the spring. All things seem possible in May." - Edwin Way Teale

Note from the Editors

Note From the Editors

"May, more than any other month of the year, wants us to feel most alive." *Fennel Hudson* (author, outdoorsman)

May is just the most incredible, alive month, is it not? We celebrate so many aspects of a full life – warmer and longer days, brighter sunshine, a stunning array of color in trees, flowers and mating birds. Graduations celebrate dreams, and achievements; Mother's Day celebrates joy and the work and reward of nurturing; Memorial Day honors courage, duty and steadfastness. May is Mental Health Awareness month and National Pet Month. It seems especially appropriate that they get acknowledged at the same time, yes?

For this issue, we collected your pet photos. They're sure to make you smile. In addition, there are some photos from the Earth Day field trip to Lake Chauncy. The AVCC Night Hawks group tried to get out to shoot the Lyrid meteor shower, and possibly the aurora, but the weather would not cooperate.

Pam has pulled together a list of happenings that you might be interested in. There are some wonderful opportunities for photographing tulips, daffodils, and the Boston Public Garden. In the last piece of our Tips and Tricks series on light, Cathy offers suggestions and guidance for shooting in Blue Hour. Mary Coombs is our Snapshot subject this month.

Get out the rake, the trowel, the seed packets. Kneel in the earth. Celebrate May!

Notices from the Newsletter Team:

The June issue of the AVCC Focal Point Newsletter will come out after our June 4th end of the year meeting so that we can bring you Image of the Year Awards, end of the year awards, election results, and themes for the 2025-2026 club year competitions.

We would like to thank Tony Monteiro and John Mauro for their persistent work to bring a quorum together to vote on a change to the by-laws!

May 2025 Program

AVCC is pleased to present “Discarding Color: Learning to See in Black and White” by Nancy Ori on Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at 7:30 PM.

The meeting is a hybrid format; in person at the Hudson Senior Center, 29 Church St., Hudson, or remote on Zoom (please arrive no later than 7:15).

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.

Nancy Ori

Nancy J. Ori obtained a BA degree in Fine Arts from Elmira College, Elmira, NY and an MS degree in Visual Communications from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY. She worked for 25 years for Ciba-Geigy Pharmaceuticals and Novartis Pharmaceuticals as their in-house corporate photographer and manager of Video and Photography Services.

Ori is now the owner of New Jersey Media Center, LLC in Berkeley Heights, New Jersey where she continues to do product, portrait, and food photography. She also enjoys teaching photography globally as well as exhibiting her fine art photographs. Nancy was taught by Ansel Adams and then affiliated for many years with the Ansel Adams Workshop in CA as a teaching assistant. She then opened her own workshop company for photography and other mediums and invited dozens of art teachers to join her in Cape May, NJ to teach workshops each spring for 28 years. She now enjoys running photography tours globally, which she has been doing since 2006.



*Nancy Ori Ansel Adams
-Image Courtesy of Nancy Ori*

In 1994, she founded the New Jersey Photography Forum, which under Ori's direction, has become the largest and most recognized group of fine art exhibiting photographers in the state.

www.njphotoforum.com

Ori's work has been widely collected and exhibited in museums & galleries throughout the globe & has been chosen to participate in numerous grant projects and fine art exhibits. Her work is in permanent museum and corporate collections internationally including the Museum of Modern Art in NYC. Along with exhibiting her own work, Ori has curated and juried hundreds of exhibits for a wide variety of venues internationally. www.nancyori.com

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Discarding Color: Learning to See in Black and White

Rather than just converting your color images to black and white in post, wouldn't it be better if you could see the potential of a scene, portrait or still life object as a black and white image while you were shooting? This lecture is designed for beginning and intermediate black and white photographers and will cover: visualization, scene evaluation, lighting, seeing contrast, understanding brightness values of colors as they convert to black and white, as well as some post processing tips. It is designed to get you thinking differently while shooting.

**Nancy J. Ori, Photographer, Instructor and Event Producer for
New Jersey Media Center LLC in Berkeley Heights**

Author: www.amazon.com/author/nancyori

Director: New Jersey Photography Forum LLC

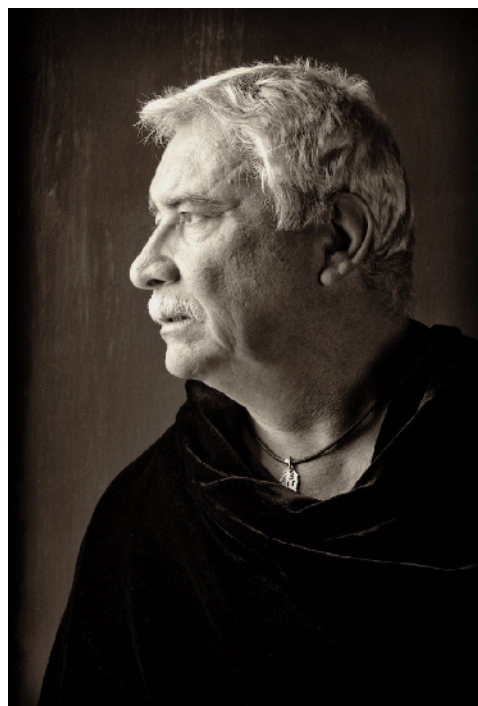
nancyori@comcast.net (908)790-8820

www.nancyoriworkshops.com

www.nancyorifineart.com



Amarillo - Nancy Ori



Gulio - Nancy Ori

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Joy - Nancy Ori



Lawyer's Bench - Nancy Ori



Olive Harvest - Nancy Ori



Speculation - Nancy Ori



La Jolla Cliffs Paragliding - Angelo Maiuri

Date	Program	Presentor
9/4/24	"What I did this Summer" Member Slideshows	AVCC Members
10/2/24	Composition	Mike Roman
11/6/24	Spain and Portugal	Robyn Saur
12/4/24	Landscape Photography	Meredith Fontana
1/8/25	Bird and Wildlife Photography	Shawn Carey
2/5/25	Masks and Layers	Hazel Meredith
3/5/25	Colors of Spring	Ed McGuirk
4/2/25	Creative Photography	Joe Pellicone
5/7/25	B&W Photography	Nancy Ori
6/4/25	Image of the Year Awards	Charlie Burke

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 2024-2025

Monthly Competitions:

The club holds monthly image competitions including two categories: digital theme and open. AVCC Print competitions have been suspended. The digital 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	Digital Theme	Open	Digital Theme and Open Submission Date
September	Balloons	Open	9/11/2024
October	Nature	Open	10/9/2024
November	Action	Open	11/13/2024
December	Nature	Open	12/11/2024
January	The Color Red	Open	1/15/2025
February	Nature	Open	2/12/2025
March	Abstract	Open	3/12/2025
April	Nature	Open	4/9/2025
May	By or On the water	Open	5/14/2025

PSA and NECCC Digital Interclub Competitions

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.

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.

2024-2025 NECCC Individual Print Competition

The NECCC Individual Print Competition was held on October 19 and March 29 hosted at the Greater Lynn Photographic Association (GLPA). To see the winners of the competitions go to: [NECCC October '24 Print Competition](#) and [NECCC April '25 Print Competition](#)

Member Snapshot

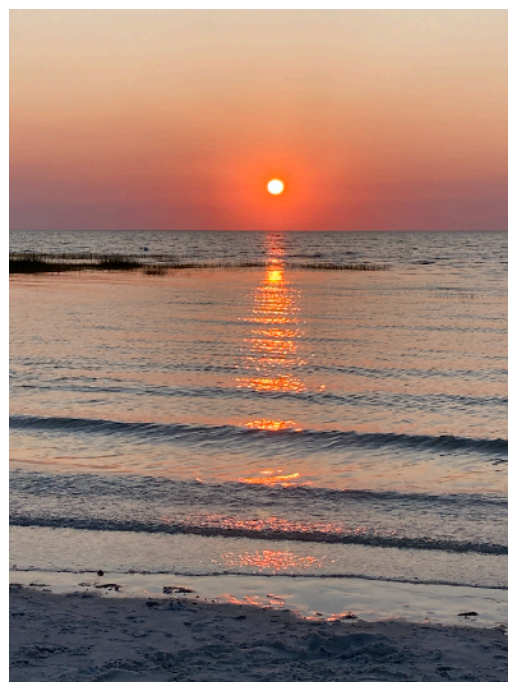
Mary Coombs

I grew up in a large family (five siblings). Until I was 14 my father was a dairy farmer in Vermont, and then in Hardwick, MA where I attended school with the same 23 classmates from 1st through 8th grade. Farm life for a kid is wonderful - perhaps not so much for the beleaguered farmer. My siblings and I spent most of our free time outdoors (kickball, excursions through the fields, picking dandelions, buttercups, and wild strawberries, skating on the frog pond, sledding down the steep slope in front of the barn) or playing in the barn (hayloft hide and seek, searching for hidden kitten nests, visiting the calves). It was a young life full of imaginative play but also farm responsibilities - feeding chickens and calves, fetching eggs and milk from the milk parlor, tending the garden (believe it or not I did not enjoy gardening in those days), helping move the herd to new pastures, rolling hay bales into piles around the field and helping dad load them onto the truck - it was scratchy business. And because I was the second born and oldest girl, my task was often to watch over my younger siblings.

Being a farm community, 4-H played a large role in our lives. I started 4-H sewing at age 8 and learned on one of the several treadle sewing machines upstairs in the Grange hall. I also took 4-H knitting, gardening, and cooking. Hardwick is known for holding the oldest community fair in the country and a focus of 4-H membership was preparing for the fair exhibits - your neatest stitching, your best quick bread, your most uniform vegetables, etc. My mother, a very talented seamstress, would make our costumes for the annual themed children's parade. I say all this because I think it is this upbringing that fostered a creative and problem solving mindset - if we needed or wanted something, we figured out how to make it.

Though idyllic in so many ways, a small dairy farm was not enough to support a family of eight. My dad always loved the ocean and the Cape and we moved to Orleans when I was 14. From the fields and the trees to the ocean and the sand was quite a transition. I grew to love the Cape, its salt air, ocean waves, tidal pools, and sunsets.

*"The heart can think of no devotion
Greater than being shore to ocean -
Holding the curve of one position,
Counting an endless repetition."
-Robert Frost*



Skaket Sunset - Mary Coombs

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Member Snapshot - Mary Coombs - continued from page 9

How did I get into photography? I went to UMass Amherst and my older brother, also a student at UMass, bought a 35mm film camera which I began to borrow (often) during our college days. When I got my first teaching job my first major purchase was a 35mm KX Pentax camera. I took a short photography course and my camera became my fifth appendage. I have boxes and boxes of slides chronicling a road trip across Canada, trips to the west coast to visit my sister, a year teaching abroad in a small American boarding school outside of Salzburg, Austria, and of course all the family gatherings and Cape Cod walks and sunsets.

And then life became busier. I continued to work full time as my husband and I raised our family. As each daughter was born the camera came out less and less - and my photography was used sporadically to capture family moments and girls growing up. Also, film was dying out. The local photo shop closed. Eventually my husband bought me a Panasonic Lumix point and shoot that sparked an entry into the world of digital photography. As a middle school science teacher I was always looking for ways to illustrate the concepts I was teaching. Digital photography, computers, and technology to project images onto a SmartBoard gave my photography a new purpose. I created many lessons using images from class labs and the surrounding environment. My favorite images were macro, taken through microscopes! When I got my first iPhone things shifted again - the phone became my camera of choice.



*Pond Study: Damselfly Nymph
- Mary Coombs*

Time flies doesn't it? My three daughters grew up, went to college (all three majored in art), and moved out on their own. I began shooting for fun - my subjects being predominantly botanic. I had been reading about the Assabet Valley Camera Club in the Action Unlimited for a few years with the thought that it might be something to try out in retirement. And the inevitable happened. I retired. Cut adrift from a regular schedule and my hectic work environment I needed something beyond my summer gardening to fill my time, fuel curiosity, and build new skills. I wanted to actually learn about photography and what makes a good image - a shift from taking snapshots to learning about photography as a means to make art. So in the fall of 2019 I walked into an AVCC meeting at the Hudson Senior Center - with my iPhone. I was greeted by Tony and Doris Monteiro. John Gill was president. Elliot Mednick took me under his wing (he had joined the club the year before) with assurances that the club would make sense after a few meetings and that indeed I would learn a lot! But, of course, I would need to invest in a real camera. It was several months before I dared to enter a competition.

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Member Snapshot - Mary Coombs - continued from page 10

I bought a Panasonic LUMIX GX85 in the late winter of 2020 - just in time for the last AVCC Photo Ops Day before the Pandemic. At first I used only automatic settings and took jpeg images - gradually I relearned camera settings and how they work together. And white balance! I didn't understand that despite years of taking pictures. It was only a matter of time before I ventured into the world of post processing beyond Apple Photos and started shooting RAW files. I continue to learn something nearly every meeting and get-together with AVCC members. I have much to thank the club for, and so much more to learn.

My photographic aspirations now are to couple my love of the natural world with photographic processes that illuminate the essence of a subject - be it a flower, an insect, a still life that incorporates objects from the past, a tree, etc. in an artistic way. I am still searching for my photographic voice - a work in progress!



The Climbing Tree in Spring - Mary Coombs



Bumblebee on Tithonia - Mary Coombs



2 Arrangements 2 - Mary Coombs



Little Bits of Everything - Mary Coombs

Members' Lens



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, Pam Meoli, Jim Williams, John Mauro, Maureen Mathieson, Eric Frere, Robyn Saur, Darlene Holman, Natalie Schiavone, Doris Monteiro, Rick Beauchamp, Terry Vachowski, Bridget Perch, Glenn Fund, Alan Mertz, Linda DeStefano Brown.

Zooming Out

On the Wall at Cafe 641

The May exhibit at Cafe 641 features the work of Eric Frere. A meet and greet will be held on Sunday, May 4 from 12:00 - 1:30. Come spend some time with Eric and AVCC friends.

June will feature an exhibit by Darlene Holman.

Dave Morin will be exhibiting work in July.

Photos by Mary Coombs will be featured in August.



First Wife - Eric Frere

"One doesn't stop seeing. One doesn't stop framing. It doesn't turn off and turn on. It's on all the time." - Annie Leibowitz

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*Glenn's Meet and Greet at Cafe 641 on
April 5 - Mary Coombs*



*Glenn, Pam, and Jim at Cafe 641
- Mary Coombs*

Eric Frere - ongoing:

I will be displaying some of my work at the Ellison Center for the Arts in Duxbury for the month of April and May. The Ellison Center is one of the campuses of the South Shore Conservatory and the home of the Duxbury Art Association.

For more information click here - [SSC](#).

Alan Mertz

I will have a show of about 40 photos I have taken in the last year on display at the Acton Senior Center, 30 Sudbury Rd., Rear, Acton (978-929-6652) starting June 17th and running thru July 31st. I have called it Backyard Birds and Blooms. It includes all of the birds that visited my home over the winter during my Feeder Watch for the Cornell University Ornithology Lab as well as flowers around my yard and our neighbors. If you have some time, please stop by and visit the show and let me have your feedback.

Thanks, Alan Mertz

Brian Dean - Proprietor - Hudson Art and Framing

Hudson Art and Framing will hold its Grand Reopening, Saturday, May 3 from 11AM to 5PM. Brian recently joined AVCC. Come welcome him to the Hudson business community and see what his wonderful shop has to offer!

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Zooming Out - continued from page 13

AVCC is 40! 40th Anniversary Exhibit at the Hudson Public Library

Several members of the club gathered for the “Meet the Artists” event at the Hudson Public Library on April 26 in recognition of AVCC’s 40th Anniversary. It was an enjoyable time and several visitors (and members!) participated in the scavenger hunt that drew their attention to the 32 images on display. Darlene Holman’s “Zakim Bridge” and “The Paint Factory” were both cited as favorite photos by a viewer who admired the black and white treatment of the subjects and remarked on the illumination of the bridge and the ambiance of the Paint Factory. Many people admired Sue Abrahamsen’s “Red Eyed Tree Frog.” Many positive remarks were heard about the overall exhibit. Our thanks to Maureen Mathieson for photos of the event. The exhibit will continue through the month of May.



*Maureen at “Meet the Artists”
- Mary Coombs*



*Sue holding the AVCC bookmark
featuring her frog photo
- Maureen Mathieson*



*Terry with the Scavenger Hunt
- Maureen Mathieson*

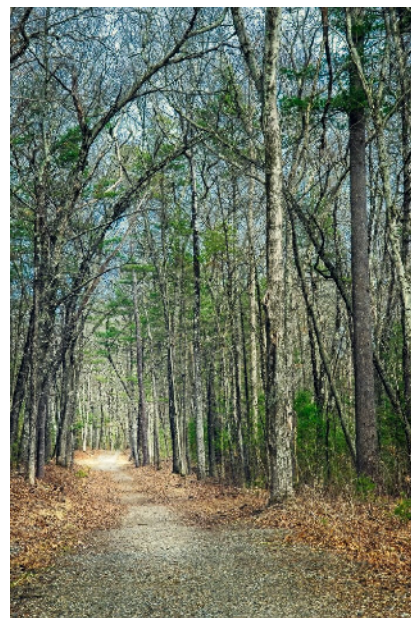


*Blair, Mary, Mimi, Carlos (library
employee and photographer), Pudge,
and Glenn at Meet the Artists
- Maureen Mathieson*

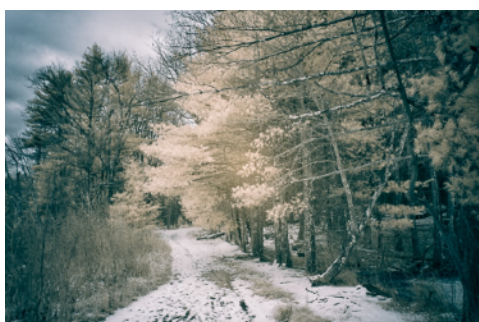
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Exhibit of Fine Art Photographs by Linda DeStefano Brown:

Artist Statement: Through my photography, I search for hidden meanings beyond the visual world, beyond what we see with our eyes, focusing on what our mind's eye envisions. Regardless of what technique is used, the image expresses a relationship felt with the surrounding world. The feelings I have when walking through our world--be it into a forest, along the seashore, up mountains, or through city streets--enhance the thoughts I have when working on a particular image. It is not the objects before the camera that are important but rather the thoughtful contemplations manifested in the final image. When I work on an image, it reveals itself as it mingles with my thoughts. My interpretations of an image may differ from yours. They are each from our own individual experiences; our own past, present and future; our own impressions of joy, fantasy, mystery, fear, and beauty. There is a life-force that is beyond the familiar. The images push reality inward as we enter the realm of awareness. As our perceptive contemplation increases, so does the awareness of ourselves and our place in the world.



Forest Cathedral
- Linda DeStefano Brown



Warmth in Winter
- Linda DeStefano Brown



The Takeback
- Linda DeStefano Brown



Sitting in Silence - Linda DeStefano Brown

The display will be at **19 Carter**, 19 Carter Street, Berlin, now to the end of August. The hours are Mon-Fri, 9-5 and Sat 10-1. Hope you can make it there.

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Zooming Out- continued from page 15

Congratulations to Darlene Holman!

Darlene's image "Hummingbird on Lion's Ear Flower" was selected as a winner in the New England Botanic Garden *Five Senses* member photography contest. Her photo will be on display in the Tower Hill Visitor's Center lobby beginning sometime in the summer. We will email the membership when the date is determined.

MEMBER PHOTO CONTEST: *THE FIVE SENSES*

Our Member Photography Contest is back! This year, the theme is *The Five Senses* and we are expanding to 2 displays with 12 total member photographs taken at the Garden. Winning photographs will be displayed at the Garden and highlighted in a spring Members' Minute, and on our website. **Photo submissions should include a photo of the Garden that captures the essence of one or more of the five senses—sight, sound, touch, taste, and/or smell.** We look forward to seeing your interpretation of the theme!



Hummingbird on Lion's Ear Flower - Darlene Holman

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Zooming Out - continued from page 16

Our Earth Day Gathering - Tuesday, April 22

Nine members of the club met up at Lake Chauncy in Westborough on April 22 for an Earth Day walk, talk, and shoot event organized by Pam Meoli. The weather was fantastic and the company wonderful. Critters of note were two swans, a heron, many basking painted turtles, and lots of dogs! There were no snakes.



At Lake Chauncey - Jim Williams



*Jim Williams behind the Camera
-Pam Meoli*



*Front Row Seat
- Mary Coombs*



Great Blue Wish Fish - John Gill

Did you know....? The Rule of Fourths is a compositional guideline that is similar to the Rule of Thirds. In the Rule of Fourths, you divide your frame into four equal parts vertically and horizontally, resulting in 16 equal parts. You then place your subject and other elements along these lines and/or where they intersect. This is useful for creating images with a wider background and an expanded expression, particularly landscape scenes (Global.canon).

Zooming In - National Pet Month - Our Pets

This month we asked members to share photos of their pets (or other peoples' pets) in recognition of National Pet Month. We have some very special furry ((scaly, feathered) friends (and some of their humans) to share with you!



This is Titus. Always looking away from the camera. - Bridget Perch



Bella Loves Millie - Linda Shelales



Mikey & Millie - Linda Shelales

"Until one has loved an animal, a part of one's soul remains unawakened." - Anatole France

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The Girls with China (when the bay was frozen in 2007) - Mary Coombs



C'mon Riley! - Mary Coombs

"The bond between a pet and a human is a sacred one, and when a pet is gone, a part of us goes with them," - James Herriot.



Zephyr 2001-2024
- Mary Coombs

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Golden girl in the golden hour - Cathy Robotis



This is Leela as floor washing supervisor. Seriously. - Terry Vachowski



Artie - Cat in the Hat - Mary Coombs

"In ancient times cats were worshipped as gods; they have not forgotten this." —Terry Pratchett

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This is my golden retriever, Capri, and her love interest, Buddy, the Berner, taken in 2016 when they were youngsters. - Marilyn Tromer



What a Big Bite! - Lynn Kerner



Copper and Kelly - Lynn Kerner

"The dog is the god of frolic." - Henry Ward Beecher

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Zooming in - Pets - continued from page 21

Images on this page courtesy of Natalie Schiavone



This is Smokey. He is the sweetest little guy. He turned 12 on Easter day!
-Natalie Schiavone



"Pets have more love and compassion in them than most humans." - Robert Wagner

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Kuchen at Christmas - Pam Meoli

Kuchen:

One of her eyes came out green so of course I had to make the other red for the holiday but interesting fact in doing a bit of research: Green eye occurs when light enters the eye of an animal at the same level as the eye. If your pet looks up at your camera when the flash goes off, the light from the flash can reflect from the back of their retina and this can cause a colored glow over their pupils.

Big Ess:

My “work pet” who lives at the Tufts Wildlife Care Clinic in Grafton where I volunteer. She has been there for ten years. She is very healthy. She was given up by someone. I was giving her a “warm soak.” - Pam Meoli



Kuchen in lights - Pam Meoli



*Big Ess
- Courtesy of Pam Meoli*

Money can buy you a fine dog, but only love can make him wag his tail. Kinky Friedman

Continued on next page

Zooming in - Earth Day - continued from page 23

Here are 2 pictures of my past beloved pet, Holly, who was a "model" for many photo ops. She loved modeling as she always got treats. I dressed her up in many different outfits. - Robyn Saur



Holly getting ready - Robyn Saur



Hollysend - Robyn Saur

"Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole." - Roger A. Caras

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Zooming in - Pets - continued from page 24

Images on this page courtesy of Rick Beauchamp

These are pictures of Baxter, "how it started and how it's going" all 85 lbs of him.

Baxter is named after Baxter state park in Maine.

He will be 4 in July and he still thinks he is a puppy. - Rick Beauchamp



"We've begun to long for the pitter-patter of little feet - so we bought a dog. Well, it's cheaper, and you get more feet." - Rita Rudner

Tips and Tricks - May's Theme: Blue Hour Photography

Tips for Blue Hour Photography

Spring has finally sprung! The days are getting longer, and there are new signs of life all around us. Emerging from our winter hibernation, most of us can now tolerate outdoor exploits for longer periods of time. Last month, we brought you the Golden Hour of photography. This month, let's look into that time period before sunrise and after sunset that is known as the Blue Hour. The Blue Hour occurs when the sun's elevation is -4 degrees to -6 degrees (some say -8 degrees), just below the horizon. It is generally felt to last 20 to 40 minutes, though this can vary depending on where you are and the time of year. During the Blue Hour, indirect sunlight produces predominantly strong blue hues; this is a physics phenomenon known as Rayleigh scattering. During the transition from the Blue Hour to the Golden Hour (and vice versa), there is a phenomenon known as Civil Twilight, which is considered a sweet spot because in addition to the hues of blue, you will also see gold and pink hues. The Blue Hour is known for velvety, stunning, ethereal light, which is soft and lacks directionality, giving subjects a timeless quality and resulting in cool, peaceful images. Cityscapes, architecture, and landscapes with some artificial lights are considered the best scenes for Blue Hour photography. The cool blue skies contrast with the warm colors of the lights, yielding a pleasing palette of colors. Wildlife, bird, and sports photography, on the other hand, may be very challenging during the Blue Hour because of the difficulty in capturing sharp, moving subjects in low light. If you are an early riser or enjoy staying out after the sun sets, now is the perfect time to experiment with those cool, blue hues. We have put together some tips and tricks to help you as you plan your Blue Hour photography excursion.

Setting the scene

- **PhotoPills** and **The Photographer's Ephemeris** can help you plan for the best times to capture the blue hour.
- Try to get out and scout the scene beforehand so you can choose the right spot to set up ahead of time.
- Some consider the morning to be better for blue hour photography, especially in winter. However, you should try to photograph in both the morning and evening to see which you prefer.
- If you are photographing cityscapes, your morning shots will appear quieter and more tranquil because the day is only beginning for many. Your evening shots will convey a sense of action with the typical hustle and bustle of cities in the waning hours.
- Try to include electric lights whenever you can. If you are photographing a city skyline, you can capture the moments when the twinkling lights first appear in the buildings against the backdrop of the darkening evening sky.
- If possible, incorporate water into your scene, and try to capture reflections. This will add stunning effects.



Sailboat Anchored for the Evening - John McKinney

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Tips for Blue Hour Photography - continued from page 26

- Incorporate background and foreground elements to give a sense of depth.
- Consider shooting a city scene through a window from an elevated vantage point. Wipe the glass with a cloth beforehand, and hold your lens parallel to the glass to reduce reflections. You may also use a polarizing filter.
- You may choose to look for a focal point illuminated by a lantern, candle, or light, and compose your image around it.
- Look for scenes with warm colors (reds, oranges, and yellows) to contrast with the blue hues.
- Consider photographing silhouettes.
- If you are photographing a landscape, your foreground will be especially important. Try incorporating a silhouette of a tree or structure to offer a focal point.

Equipment

- **Camera:** The camera you have with you will always be your best camera, but some believe there is an advantage to using a full frame, mirrorless camera.
- **Lens:** A fast lens (at least f/2.8) will be best for handheld photography, but you will have more flexibility if using a tripod. A wide angle lens works well for expansive shots.
- **ND filter:** An ND filter will be helpful when working with a very slow shutter speed (10 seconds or greater) to help prevent overexposure and blown highlights.
- **Tripod:** A tripod is important because you will be working with slower shutter speeds. If you are unable to use a tripod, consider working with a camera bean bag.
- **Remote shutter release:** This will prevent camera shake when releasing the shutter.
- **Torch, flashlight, headlight:** Remember there will be low light, and you want to be able to see your equipment. It's also important for your safety when moving around in the dark.

Camera settings

- Shoot in **RAW**.
- **ISO:** They generally recommend starting at 100 and adjusting up to 400-800.
- Consider working in **manual mode** so you can make your own adjustments. Start with a low ISO and good aperture (based on your scene and how much you want in focus), and adjust the shutter speed to keep the exposure where you want it.
- **Aperture:** Recommendations generally range from f/7.1 to f/11. Adjust as needed to ensure that what you want to be in focus is in focus. You can use a more narrow aperture to create a starburst effect with the lights.
- **Shutter Speed:** Depending on your scene, you may find that 2-4 seconds works well, or you may need to use shutter speeds of 10 to 30 seconds.
- **Auto white balance** is recommended.



*Blue Hour at Race Point Beach Provincetown
- Liz Krouse*

Continued on next page

Tips for Blue Hour Photography - continued from page 27

- **Beware:** Because the blue hour is dark, your camera may try to overexpose the scene, which may look unnatural and/or result in blown out highlights. To avoid this, add some negative exposure compensation if needed.
- **Long exposure noise reduction:** Some recommend that you turn this off, especially when trying to capture light trails.
- Consider working with **manual focus or back button focusing**. Because of the darkness of the blue hour, your camera may have trouble focusing with autofocus. You can try to use autofocus by using a single focus point and focusing on your subject, and once you have the subject in focus, switch to manual focus (and leave the focus where it is). This would be especially helpful in the evening, when the scene will be darkening as you work.
- **Check your histogram:** It will be mostly to the left, but make sure it at least touches the right side.
- **If you prefer shooting in aperture priority mode**, set your aperture to f/8 as a starting point to keep things in focus. Start with an ISO of 100. Your camera will then determine the shutter speed. If you want the shutter speed to be slower (for example, to capture the movement of morning clouds), make your aperture more narrow, as this will slow down the shutter speed. If you are trying to freeze motion, widen the aperture, and increase your ISO, since this will result in a faster shutter speed.

Post processing

- You will have blue tones in your image. Just make sure they are not overwhelming, and adjust them as needed (depending on your preference).
- Increase the contrast as needed.

Blue Hour Light Trails

- You can create light trails in the blue hour or at night by photographing moving traffic.
- Find a location with a great view and a lot of traffic.
- Shoot from a location that is higher than ground level (such as a footbridge over the road).
- Look for curvy roads when possible.
- Think about whether you want headlights, taillights, or both, and look for a scene that will give you what you are after.
- In addition to car traffic, try to capture lights from vehicles that are higher off the ground (like buses or trucks) for added interest.



*Night descends over Lower Manhattan
- Catherine Robotis*

Continued on next page

Tips for Blue Hour Photography - continued from page 28

- An aperture of f/8 will work well, but you can also try f/16 to help create longer, sharper light trails. Try f/22 to also capture starbursts from the streetlights.
- You will want a shutter speed of somewhere between 5-60 seconds, and you can adjust to get your desired effect. Make sure you have your tripod!
- Set your ISO as low as possible to minimize noise.
- Use manual focus when possible, and make sure that the nonmoving elements of the photo are in focus.
- Here is a tutorial to show how it's done: [Light Trail Photography](#)

Cityscape Bokeh in the Blue Hour

- You can create beautiful, abstract bokeh images with city lights in the blue hour.
- Your goal is to have everything out of focus, with an image full of colorful orbs of light.
- Find a location with enough lights.
- Start shooting 10-20 minutes before the end of dusk
- Try shooting in aperture priority with a wide aperture. This will give you larger bokeh orbs. Set the scene and then switch to manual focus and make the image completely out of focus.
- For further information: [Cityscape Bokeh in the Blue Hour](#)

Sources

Skillshare.com; format.com; tuscanypotographytours.com; digital-photography-school.com; canva.com; garyholpin.co.uk; digitalphotomentor.com; iceland-photo-tours.com; learnandsupport.getolympus.com; dailywildlifephotography.nathab.com; photographygloves.com; space.com.



Colorful Harbor - Sheri Craig

The Bigger Picture

Happenings:

Gibbet Hill in Groton is hosting a Bird Walk on Sunday, May 18 – 7:30-9AM

Find event and ticket information.

[Gibbet Hill Bird Walk](#)

Cherry Blossoms in Boston - One of the best places to see cherry blossoms in New England is right in Boston! Along the Charles River Esplanade, you'll see quite a few of them on this already-scenic walk that follows the river.

Boston's Public Gardens is especially magical in May when all the tulips bloom! Around the park, you can expect to see at least 20,000 tulips in bloom in early May across the 60 formal gardening beds.

Tulip Fest at Cider Hill Farm, Amesbury

A gorgeous, fan-favorite variety of 100k tulips are scheduled to bloom in early May. Welcome spring with this multi-weekend festival featuring free live music, self-guided blooming orchard walks, outdoor hard cider bars, food trucks, fitness n' family activities and cut-your-tulips. General entrance is free but online tickets for tulip cutting is required. Walk-in tickets will not be sold upon arrival on the farm. The festival is scheduled for May 3-4 and May 10-11. However, dates may shift based on bloom time. We watch the field daily.

<https://www.ciderhill.com/tulipfest>

Mass Audubon has some great programs coming up. From birding to nature inspired pottery making. As we know – there are photo ops everywhere.

<https://www.massaudubon.org/programs>



Prairie Dog Sentry - Doris Monteiro



Blackbird Singing - Blair Boudreau

Continued on next page

Happenings - continued from page 30

At **New England Botanic Garden** – starting May 3 – Oct 12 is “Art In Motion” exhibit. Explore an extraordinary collection of kinetic sculptures, masterfully crafted by artist and engineer [George Sherwood](#). *Art in Motion* spans an impressive 25 years of Sherwood’s artistic journey, showcasing 17 intricate stainless-steel sculptures that move in the wind and reflect the sunlight. Drawing inspiration from patterns and perspectives in nature such as birds in flight, ripples and reflections on the surface of water, and floral forms, each sculpture captures the dynamic forces of nature and reflects the beauty of our living world. *Art in Motion* invites visitors to find moments of tranquility and joy while considering the subtle, ongoing changes taking place in the natural world around us.

NEBG also has several plant shows/sales coming this spring – fall such as Rhododendrons, Roses, Lilies, Day Lilies, Begonias, Dahlias and more.

<https://nebg.org/shows/>

Tulip Picking is Upon Us at **Golden Hour Tulips** (Berkley, Ma) - Golden Hour Tulips is the first U-Pick tulip farm in Massachusetts, situated on a 20 acre farm with 250,000 tulips planted in the field. Must have advance tickets – they sell out quickly

<https://goldenhourotulips.com/>

Boston Photography Workshops is offering several very interesting options. For on-line, in-person and upcoming workshops, trips and events. Go to:

<https://www.bostonphotographyworkshops.com/featured-workshops>

Daniel J Gregory is hosting a free Lightroom webinar on the new Landscape masking tools and presets on Thursday, May 8. Click here for more information and to register: [Landscape Masking](#)

Photo Contests:

VIEWBUG

Enter photo contests for FREE!

With countless photography contests available, finding the right one that suits your style and genre is crucial. Start by researching the contest’s theme, rules, and judging criteria to ensure it aligns with your photography goals. Some contests also offer feedback or critiques, as these can be invaluable in helping you improve your skills.

Here is a good place to start: <https://www.viewbug.com/photo-contests/>



Little Mushroom Drop - Mimi Boudreau



AVCC is a member of the following organizations:

NECCC



PSA



AVCC website:

<https://www.assabetvalleycameraclub.com>

2024-2025 Executive Board Members:

- President: John Mauro
- Vice President: Mary Coombs
- Secretary: Jim Williams
- Treasurer: John Gill

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 Member packet.



*Procreation on the Pond
- Catherine Robotis*