

Cayuga Nature Photographers *Newsletter*

December 2018 - Volume XXVI, No. 12

It's still a Hard-Light Life

What's with this " *It's still a Hard-Light Life*" header? We did not have time in our meeting last month to share our photos dealing with hard light, meaning high contrast scenes. So we've had an extra month to come up with examples to bring. At right is the same hard-light image seen in the November newsletter, only in b&w. See page 7 for more on this option. Mark Malkin will also be reporting on a workshop he attended in Vermont.



The November meeting began with Paul Schmitt sharing photos from an August small boat trip in Southeast Alaska. He featured feeding humpback whales and brown bears fishing for salmon. We also had a spirited discussion of the relative merits of prime versus zoom lenses. In summary, prime lens designs are less complicated, often collecting more light and also of lower weight. Zoom lenses are more flexible but heavier. While heavier, zooms can replace several lenses that are in total heavier. Overall cost also is a factor. There is a place for both approaches. One important input was the option, when puzzled, about which lens to purchase. One can rent a lens to evaluate, and often apply the rental to buying the rented lens. Also, Brian brought samples of a UK magazine offering independent reviews of Canon lenses. See page 9 for details.

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Thursday, December 6 at 7:30 PM
Cornell Plant Science Building,
Whetzel Seminar Room (Rm.404)



Imagine cruising the sheltered waters of the Inside Passage on a boat small enough to anchor in quiet coves with visitors like harbor seals and bald eagles. Enjoy gourmet food on the enclosed aft deck while motoring to a tidal glacier. Visit a stream to watch brown bears catching salmon on the same day you follow bubble feeding humpback whales. This sums up our week on the 86' Westward. There were eight passengers and a crew of three. The boat had four double cabins on the lower level for the passengers, a mid-ship salon and the after lounge/dining area. We saw a part of Alaska invisible to the huge liner that passed us one evening. Built in 1924, the Westward still operates the original Atlas diesel. The interior is modern and very comfortable.



Our first close view of brown bears was during low tide at small salmon stream. We boarded the zodiac skiff and motored up to the first riffles below a 20' falls and fish ladder. We were around 100' from the bears. The fish were stranded until the tide rose, and this female with two cubs had the timing perfect. She was very comfortable with us.

After a while, a smaller adult bear appeared at the top of the falls. It crossed the falls and disappeared in the forest before appearing near the sow and two cubs. There appeared to be a recognition passed between the sow and smaller adult, and we wondered if it was one of her cubs from two years previous. However, it moved to the far side of the stream, giving her and the cubs their space.



Junior surveyed the pools in the stream and soon broke into a run which quickly yielded a nice salmon. The sow paid him little attention as she was finding salmon for her cubs in her pools, and probably knew better than to roam far from her cubs. All seemed calm between them.

It seemed peaceful until junior wandered back to the other side, and mother had a few choice words that established the boundaries. There was really no conflict, but the subordinate bear soon retreated to the forest. The next day we'd have more of this plus some incredible time with a pod of humpback whales.



In the morning as we motored to another stop, Captain Bill spotted whales bubble feeding. What followed was 2-1/2 hours of following a pod that grew to eleven whales. In bubble feeding, they dive



and locate a school of fish that they surround with a curtain of exhaled air. Working together, the pod tightens the curtain and then plunges upward with jaws wide to capture masses of fish. It is spectacular.

Once they have strained the fish through their baleen, the whales recharge their air and dive again. This was obviously a highpoint of the trip. Captain Bill offered that we had seen more bubble feeding than they usually see in the entire summer in Alaska.

One could ask how this could be matched. Well, we were not finished with the brown bears.





The next morning, I awakened early and went on deck to find a bald eagle perched near the boat in Hidden Cove. It was a good omen. We had permission to visit a salmon hatchery nearby. There are no fish farms in Alaska. The hatchery is on a stream with a falls too high to pass a salmon run. A pond built at the base of the falls mimics a wild stream, and captures a run of salmon established to supplement the runs on wild streams. Unlike a farm, the fry are released to the ocean to

effectively take pressure off of the wild run population. Their food source is largely from the ocean, not fish pellets.

Overall, we saw twenty-one brown bears in the waters leading up to the chute from the pond. At right are a pair of adults waiting at the exit of the chute to grab a salmon.



As you can imagine, there is no room for sharing in wild bears. When the young bear seen at left snagged a fish, his first action was to get as distant as possible from the other bears. Frequently, the successful bear found its way into the forest or around a bend to be out of sight.

I have saved the most memorable sight for the final page. There were several sows with cubs. The previous day, the sow had two healthy cubs. Here we saw some with two or three cubs born this year, and one sow with a single second year cubs.

There was however a huge sow with four cubs. She was a stern disciplinarian. If another bear caught a fish near her, it was her salmon. Images of her follow on page 6.

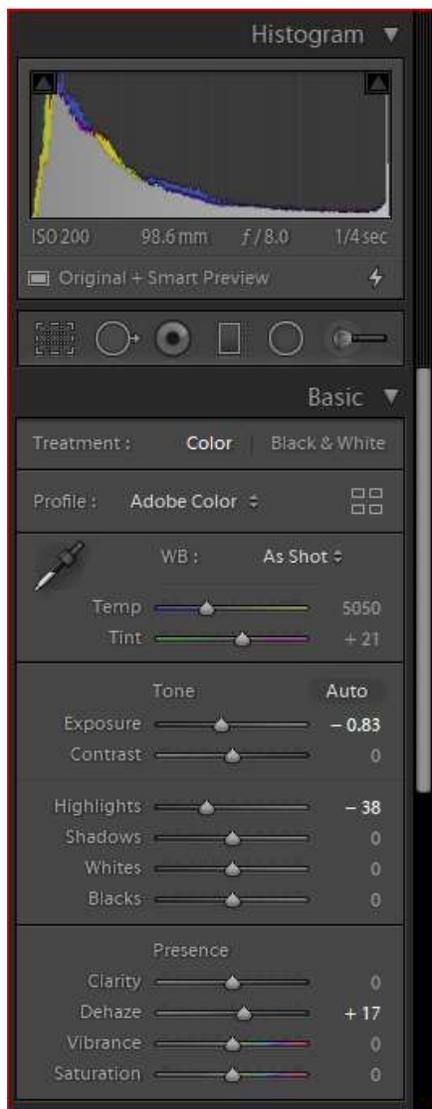


For more, see my blog in three parts at:

<http://birds-n-blooms.blogspot.com/2018/09/alaska-at-civilized-pace.html>

Black & White in Lightroom

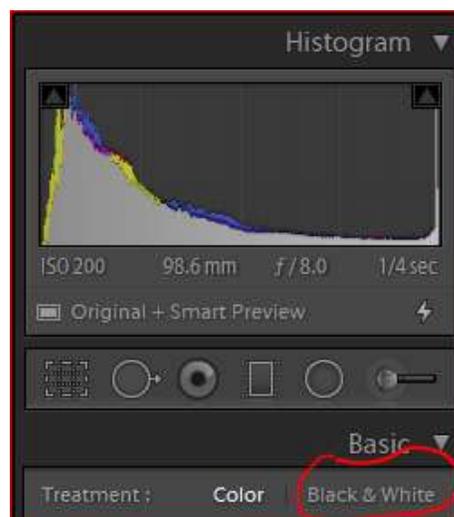
The theme for creative sharing of subjects in harsh light brought my thinking to black and white. There is a style in portraiture that uses harsh light to reduce detail and texture. It makes facial blemishes less apparent. There have been some changes in Lightroom that offer a new approach. Here is an abbreviated summary of how I took a color image with harsh light and little color.



It is not particularly creative. It's just an example. The first step is to optimize the basic panel's exposure values. In the panel at left, note that I pulled exposure and highlight down to control the water where a beam of harsh sunlight caught the water and some foliage. I considered boosting shadows, but did not like the effect since there really was a huge contrast in the scene. Dehaze was applied also for the effect of reducing the glare.

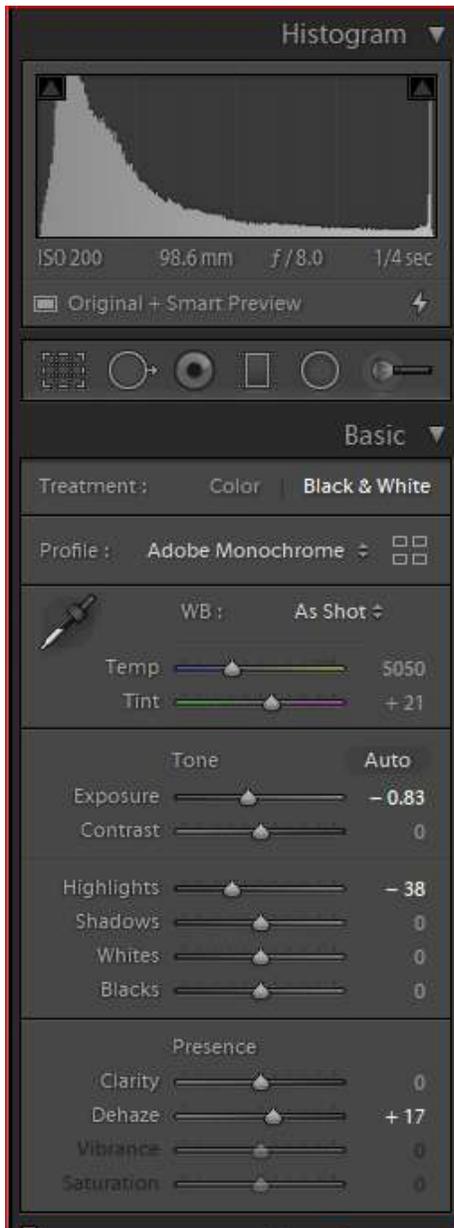
Overall, it still is not a very pleasing image.

In the past, I would have explored black and white using the presets on the left panel, and one can still do that.



But, notice that there is a choice in the right panel under the Basic label. You can select between **Treatment: Color or Black & White**

I decided to use this alternate approach.



Once in the black & white treatment, I explored the template options on the left panel and settled on the high contrast for the overall drama offered. The right panel also has good options beyond the templates.

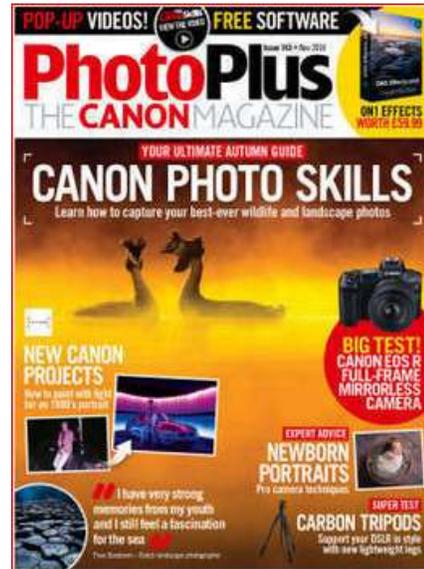
It just feels to me as a better offering without the color distraction. I am not sure how I will view this image in the future, but I do know I will prefer it to the color version.

What is your reaction? Perhaps you can bring a paired result to the meeting, one color and one b&w.

Paul Schmitt

PhotoPlus: the Canon Magazine

At the November meeting, Brian Chabot brought several copies of this independent photo magazine that Kathleen Rasmussen appreciates. While aimed at the Canon systems, it also has wider coverage - noted by this current issue's cover that highlights tripods, portrait techniques and creative photography. Notably, it features in-depth reviews of lenses. So, it plays in to our November discussion of prime versus zoom lenses. The magazine is published in the UK and available here by print and by digital access. I located it at Barnes & Nobles at the price of \$15, but that included a CD with training for Lightroom, Photoshop and Raw Conversions. On the internet, it is offered by several distributors at monthly prices on the order of \$9.23.



PS

Please Note

Membership is \$20, due currently. You may pay at our next meeting, or, if preferred, you can mail it to Nancy Ridenour at 346 Warren Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Thank you!

Cayuga Nature Photographers Newsletter Volume XXVI, No. 12	
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