

INFOCUS



SANDHILLS PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB

Editor: Alison Earl, communications@sandhillsphtoclub.org



VOL XXXXII, NUMBER 01

www.sandhillsphtoclub.org

January 2026

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PRESIDENT – PHIL LEWIS ¶ I am pleased to be taking the reins from Cal Rice as President of the Sandhills Photography Club this month. I appreciate all the hard work that the officers, committees and the membership has put in to make this club a vibrant organization with many activities and resources to enhance our understanding and enjoyment of photography. It seems to me that the club is in very good shape and I strive to maintain the forward progress. That said, I realize that no organization is perfect and I would invite you to feel free to bring to my attention any aspects of the club that are not working for you. The 2025 Members Survey has a lot of good information in it and I and the Board will be carefully reviewing it to see where there are potential areas for improvement. The response rate on the survey was 45%, which is excellent for any survey of its type. Of course, that also means that 55% of the membership did not respond. Hopefully that is because of satisfaction with the course of the club. However, if there are issues that you would like to have examined, please don't feel that the survey was your only chance to give us feedback. We want to hear from the "silent majority" as well.



Phil Lewis

Mary Bonsall, our Membership Committee Chairman, is preparing a short profile of me for inclusion in this newsletter, so I won't waste any space on those details. I would like to use this

Continued



opportunity to initiate a series of discussions of some of the aspects of photography which have intrigued me over the years. I am by no means an expert in any of these topics, but my purpose is to stimulate thought on them and perhaps give impetus for further study. The first topic I would like to touch on is the general theme of the importance of light in photography (duh..., right?). It's right in the name- photography of course is derived from the Latin words for "writing with light". In photographic terms, light can be thought of in terms of intensity, color, and the effect it has on the contrast of the subject.

The intensity of the light on the subject in a photograph determines the aperture, shutter speed and ISO options available. These are, of course, the elements of the exposure triangle that we all know. The more light that is available, the more options you have in producing the correct exposure for the scene. The intensity of the light can be controlled in a studio setting, but beyond that we are mostly at the mercy of the surrounding environment for light intensity. In some cases, a flash unit can provide fill light for exterior shots if the subject is close enough.

Visible light is only one small section of the spectrum of electromagnetic radiation. Within that band of the visible spectrum the color of light varies from red at the lowest wavelengths to blue at the highest wavelengths. A popular way of expressing the color of the light involves using the Kelvin temperature scale. A perfect black body radiator radiates light consisting of white color with no red or blue tint at about 5000oK. Black bodies at lower temperature emit some light in the red to yellow at lower temperatures, black bodies above this temperature emit some blue light. The farther away from 5000oK the body is, the more intense the color shift is. This works for light produced primarily by thermal radiation such as the sun and incandescent light. With the prevalence of LED lights in photography, the LEDs are assigned a correlated color temperature (CCT) by the manufacturer which corresponds to the light emitted by thermal radiation. The temperature of sunlight is approximately 5,750oK. Every digital camera has a way to "tune" the sensor to the temperature of the ambient light known as "white balance" to produce the most accurate color reproduction. If you are like me, I generally stick to automatic white balance to let the camera tune its own sensor, and I am generally pleased with the result.

Perhaps one of the most consequential effects of the light available to use is its effect on the contrast of the subject. This is a product of both the intensity of the light and where it comes from. is generally produced in the studio by placing various light sources at different locations, so the incoming light seems to come in from all directions. A similar situation exists on a very cloudy day when the light is bouncing off the clouds and reaches the subject from all different directions. Flat light is often desirable for portrait photography by eliminating shadows from facial features and softening the appearance of the skin. But flat light is a killer for bird photography.

Continued



Compare the two photos below that I took at the Jordan Lake Dam recently. In the first shot, the Great Blue Heron's face is turned into the direct light, and in the second shot the Great Blue Heron has turned around so that his entire body is in the shadows. Same bird, same fish but an entirely different image. It's a good illustration of why the absence of direct sunlight produces a flat image where the subject appears to blend in with the background and take on much of the color of the water. Improvements can be made in post processing, but if the light isn't right to begin with there are severe limits to what can be done. Of course, bright direct sunlight poses its own set of challenges. The shadows and excessive contrast, it can produce a harsh unpleasant appearance that can ruin an otherwise good shot.



This shot from the Southern Pines Christmas carriage parade demonstrates that. In my experience, the best light for exterior shots is scattered clouds with enough direct sunlight coming through the clouds to see an attenuated view of the sun. Soft shadows can be very pleasing. I am also very fond of night photography where the ambient light is coming from streetlights, the moon and the stars. Modern digital sensors have made low light photography possible that we could only dream of in the film era. But that is the subject for another discussion.



I hope you are still awake after reading this. If you want a good **YouTube course** on the physics of light as it pertains to photography, one of the best can be found here:

A Photographer's Guide to Light | FREE COURSE: Stay tuned for next month's topic!

Link to website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwiCErDnLqs>

MEET YOUR 2026 OFFICERS



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TREASURER

and BOARD



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NEVA SCHEVE
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PUBLICITY



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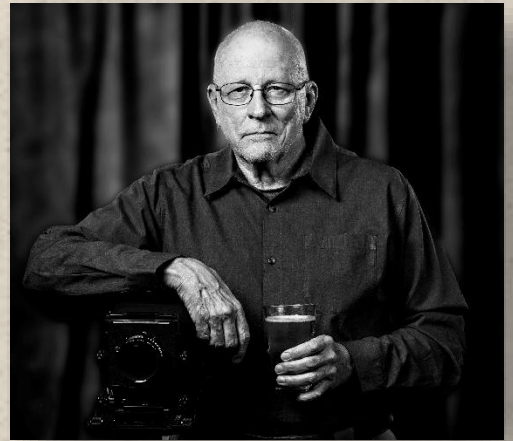
JOHN GERMAN
WEB ADMINISTRATOR



CAL RICE
WORKSHOPS

January Program - Monday, January 12, 7 PM “Entering Image Competitions” by Tom McCabe

Tom McCabe is a retired US Marine who currently lives in New Bern, NC. Tom is an award-winning photographer and is the owner of Coastal Light Photographic Arts. He is a member of Professional Photographers of North Carolina (PPNC) and Professional Photographers of America (PPA) and has the following certifications: Professional Photographer (CPP), Master of Photography Degree and Photographic Craftsman Degree.



Tom received the Kodak Gallery Award in 2012. He also has been awarded 1st Place in Women’s portraiture in 2012, 1st Place in Scenic/Fine Art in 2016, and 1st Place in Commercial in 2017 at the Professional Photographers of North Carolina Image Competitions.

Tom’s presentation on “Entering Image Competitions” will cover:

Image competition is one of the best ways to learn and expand your horizons in the world of photography. You will learn your strong points and your areas needing improvement as you develop as a photographer, both as a craftsman and as an artist. Whether you do well or not, feedback is essential to growth. Learning is what Image Competition is all about. There is no better way to grow as a photographer than by entering Image Competition.

In looking at the 12 Elements of a Merit Print, put out by PPA as a guideline, realize that at best only one element is objective, and that is Technical Excellence. And even the objectiveness of that is questionable. The rest are subjective and at the interpretation of the judges. Understand this and accept it for what it is. You will learn something from each judge, whether you agree with their scores or not.

“The devil is in the details!”

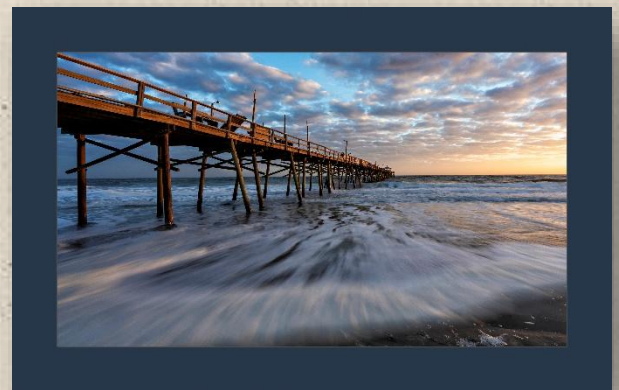
You can see Tom’s work on his website at:

<http://www.coastallightphotographicarts.com/about-coastal-light>

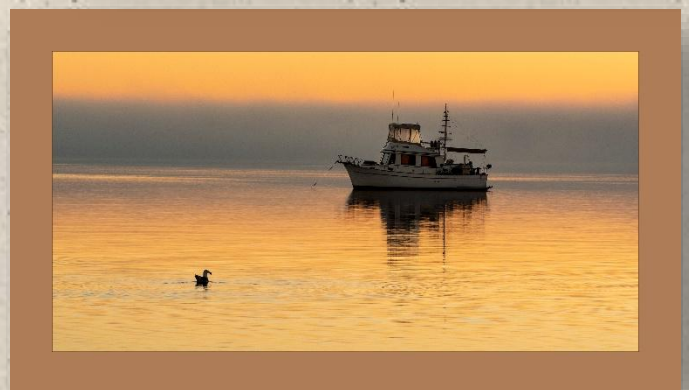
I am looking forward to hearing Tom McCabe’s presentation; I am hope you will attend either in person at the Garden Center or by the Zoom broadcast.

Jacques Wood

Vice President and Program Coordinator



Morning Rush



Companions at Dawn

JANUARY 24TH OUTING INDOOR MACRO PLAY DAY

NO PREVIOUS MACRO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY!

WHEN: SATURDAY, JANUARY 24

TIME: SESSION 1 – 10AM – 12PM

SESSION 2 - 1PM – 3PM

WHERE: BALL VISITOR CENTER AT THE HORTICULTURAL CENTER

WHO: SUSAN BAILEY AND CINDY MURPHY

WHAT: This is a hands-on session to learn about indoor macro photography. There will be six stations with different lighting and subjects.

COST: NONE!! Sandhills Photo Club is paying for the meeting space.

REGISTRATION: Email starting January 3rd to outings@sandhillsphotoclub.org if you want to attend or with any questions. We will fill the morning session and then start the afternoon registrations when we reach 10 people.

EQUIPMENT: Camera with macro lens is ideal but not necessary. Wide angle and long lenses can be fun with close up work too. Smartphones are welcome but you will learn more with a camera that you can control manually. A tripod is strongly recommended.

QUICK OVERVIEW: You will be paired with another person so you can help each other with lights and rearranging things. You can ask to work with a specific person. Every 15 minutes you will go to the next station. Cindy and I will be helping wherever needed.

STATIONS:

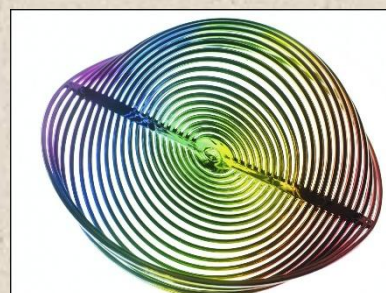


One station will have items to practice with your camera to really understand aperture and how it affects depth of field. This will be especially helpful for those with limited macro experience. More experienced people do not need to work with this exercise. Other stations will have a light pad, light tent, continuous light, and colored flashlights. There will also be foam core for backgrounds plus reflectors. Macro subjects will be abundant.

Come have fun learning more about macro and experimenting in a warm environment! Feel free to bring a few items from home if you want to share with the group.



Susan Bailey



FIELD TRIPS - *DEB CASTLE*

Winter Field Trip to Plymouth NC is almost here. Currently 20 members are attending January 9th - 11th, 2026. Deadline to be included on meals, etc. is *January 4th*! Call or email me to be included!

Deb Castle

Chair, Field Trips

937-409-1582 cell



Deb Castle

VIRGINIA BEACH SANDHILLS PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB SPRING FIELD TRIP APRIL 27-30, 2026

NEW
SPRING
TRIP



**SpringHill Suites by
Marriott Virginia Beach Oceanfront**
901 Atlantic Avenue
Virginia Beach, VA 23451
757-417-3982

*Indoor, Outdoor Pool and Fitness Center
Complimentary Breakfast
All Suites w/Balconies
Restaurant and Bar*

\$179.00 per night (2 Queens or King)
3 night stay required

Click on link below to reserve:
[Springhill Suites](#)

*2 more nights may be available at pricing.
Call hotel directly to request extra days.*

Activities include:

VA Beach & Boardwalk
Virginia Aquarium
First Landing State Park
Military Aviation Museum

Norfolk Botanical Garden
Nauticus Museum and
Battleship Wisconsin
Chrysler Museum
and Perry Glass Studios



**RSVP to Deb Castle
at
937-409-1582 text
or email**

Fieldtrips@sandhillspgphotoclub.org

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER
3/28/2026**

Plans are being made to hold **four workshops** this year.

- The first is **March 7** on the topics of **Focus Shift Photography** and **Multiple Exposure**, led by **Robert D'Ottavio**.
- Later in March, **Jacques Wood** will explore **Pet Photography**.



Cal Rice

Still to come will be a **two part session**:

1. **On using the internet.** **John German** will lead a detailed immersion into our own website
2. **Josh Simpson** will help us get started accessing photography education on the web.

The fourth workshop is still being finalized.

Cal Rice



Note from Alison: I hope you all are aware after reading this newsletter, that our Board took your ideas, suggestions, and complaints very seriously in looking at 2026! While I know I can please everyone, I do try to get as much into our newsletters as possible. Neva suggested a TIP of the MONTH article and led us off this month. Please feel free to send me ideas, thoughts, or suggestions. **WE ARE ALL SANDHILLS PHOTO CLUB!**

Alison Earl: communications@sandhillsphotoclub.org



Tip of the Month

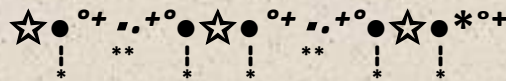


Neva Scheve

NEW! TIP OF THE MONTH – Neva Scheve This year, the Workshop Committee is working hard to meet the needs of the members that were expressed in the recent survey. So, in addition to the hands-on workshops being planned, we are trying something new that will guide members to expand their photo learning experience and also encourage member participation. Each month the Newsletter will feature a **Tip of the Month!**

This will be a place for members to share one tip that was helpful to them, and to also share links to favorite online sources that may be of interest to members. It will be short. No more than one or two short paragraphs or a short list, plus up to three links. It can be brand specific or general. Any topic.

I hope members will participate and share something that has been important to them. My motto is: Nobody knows everything, but everybody knows something! No matter your skill level, if YOU have a tip you would like to share, email it to me at ombudsperson@sandhillsphtoclub.org. We will publish one tip a month, so I'll use them in the order received. For an example, I will go first. Now send me yours!!!



This is a tip I just learned recently. Are you a long lens shooter? Most people dismiss this out of hand, but the truth is, heat distortion is often the root cause of a surprising number of poor-quality images. So, if you've ever been out shooting and just can't quite explain why your images aren't as sharp as they should be, heat distortion may have been the cause. Here is a link to a video by Steve Perry to explain more :

<https://backcountrygallery.com/long-lens-heat-distortion/>

My favorite sources. I am a Nikon Shooter and Steve Perry (Backcountry Gallery) has many videos, shooting tips, and Nikon and Sony setting tips. Even if you aren't a Nikon or Sony shooter, he has many great tips for wildlife photography in general. I have purchased two of his e-books and found them invaluable. Secrets to the Nikon Autofocus System and All about Auto ISO <https://backcountrygallery.com/>. My next favorite source is Hudson Henry. He has lots of good videos for Nikon. He also has settings set up guides for almost all Nikon cameras. Mirrorless and DSLR. <https://www.hudsonhenry.com/>.



SANDHILLS PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB'S WEBSITE

WWW.SANDHILLSPHOTOCLUB.ORG

Happy New Year



John German

Website Notes for January 2026:

This month's featured member's website is by [Susan Bailey](#). Click her name to view her gallery or the link to her gallery is on our website homepage.

Club Directory

You may view the club directory at: [Club Directory](#). If you would like to have your photo added to the directory, or change the one in the gallery, just send a favorite to me at [John German](#). I will add it to the gallery. If you need the password, please email me and I will provide it. It is included in Alison's Upcoming Events announcement sent along with the club newsletter. The Club Directory and the Member's Only page passwords are the same.

Member Galleries

Members who would like a personal gallery should let me know at website@sandhillsphtoclub.org, and I will send an upload link for their use.

*See the website "Member Galleries" page for instructions on sizing, etc. **This link will continue to work but if you wish to change images, I must delete the old ones. You can upload at will. If you have lost your link, just let me know and I will resend it to you.***

Member Websites

If you have a personal website, please let me know and I can provide a link on the "Member's Galleries" page for you. Please view the member's websites & galleries on this tab on the club website.

PS: Please email any errors that you may notice on the website. I will correct them as soon as possible. website@sandhillsphtoclub.org

Happy New Year to all our members - We do wish you all a happy, healthy and photo-filled 2026. We are very excited about making this year better than ever. As we approach year end, we have 90 members in good standing...with only a few days left this year, we hope for more renewals for 2026 membership.

Members In Good Standing for 2026	90
Honorary Members	3
Paid Renewals	85
4 th Qtr New Member	2
Members Not Newed	22
Members Who Have Resigned	
TOTAL	114



Mary Bonsall

If you are not renewing, please drop us an email at membership@sandhillsphtoclub.org

Zoom – many members zoom into our programs from the comfort of their homes (I'm often jealous). We do account for attendance and guests on zoom as well as in person. If you have an unusual Zoom alias, please drop us a line at membership@sandhillsphtoclub.org to identify yourself. If you have a guest that you're inviting please let us know. We don't want to cut anyone out who belongs there.

Please welcome Jim Jones, of Pinehurst, our newest member at SPC.

After a few sub-freezing days, we have been having unseasonably warm weather here in the Sandhills. I hope you're taking the opportunities to enjoy long walks and capture great photo moments this weekend. We took an opportunity a few weeks ago to visit the zoo, dam and tiger rescue, where we enjoyed snow on our two hour tour.... I greatly prefer 70 degrees that we will have on Christmas Day here in Moore County.

Thanks to our members for capturing and sharing so many festivities in our area – it makes me want to find more hours in the day to do more – that said, it has been a very busy season and I've enjoyed sharing time with family and friends to eat, drink and be merry too. I have not recovered from tasting 'homemade' marshmallows in hot chocolate! Can't wait to try these on s'mores this winter.

January is the month that opens the new year's doors and gives us the opportunity for renewal. January photography includes moments of joy and fireworks during the New Year's celebration, the last days of Christmas decorations, travels and short trips, beautiful foggy sceneries and winter landscapes with snow or rain or daily routines with hot beverages beside the fireplace. Hoping you all find special photo ops this month and share.

Member Highlights

It's a good time to meet our new **President, Phil Lewis**. If you were at the Christmas party, Phil took the floor at the end of the festivities and was really quite funny. He has aspirations to 'not screw up the club too badly' and shared a few of his familiar dreams which included one about the SPC elections! I really enjoyed his humor to round out a lovely event. It was great to see his wife Jackie out also after a serious injury from a fall. As well, **Joann Sluder**, who began the holiday dinner planning in the summer, also made a wonderful appearance and is really recovering like a champ, thank the Lord. Jacques finished the event planning and ran it like it should be his first career.

Continued



Back to Phil, he was born in California to a Navy family and by five was living in Norwich, Connecticut, his third state. He spent his early years in CT, then attended Purdue and studied biology. He married Jackie out of college, joined the Navy, went active duty for 6 years as a surface warfare officer on a destroyer. He and Jackie moved to Japan while serving the Navy and thoroughly enjoyed their time there. Following his tour, Phil attended Medical School in Des Moines and studied podiatry. He practiced podiatry in Maine for about 16 years and then a friend, who was chief of staff at Fayetteville NC, invited him to help in the Podiatry department there. Phil and Jackie moved to Fayetteville, then Southern Pines, before building their home on acreage in Vass where they are nearing completion of a barn for Jackie's future horse. He practiced podiatry for 33 years - but please don't take off your socks and shoes to show him your foot issues as a recent patient had done in a grocery store!!

Phil's photography journey began at age 13 and he went on to be the photographic editor at the HS newspaper in his senior year. When he joined the Navy and there was no darkroom in sight and he took a hiatus from his hobby. Later on, after they moved to Vass, he became involved in digital photography. He has not had formal training workshops or classes, but enjoys YouTube instructional videos and practicing his craft. His favorite genres are bird, landscape and night photography. I believe his last two awards are night shots!

He and Jackie enjoy travel to less populated areas. Recent trips included southwest – NM and AZ and then South Dakota and Wyoming. They are looking forward to visiting family in Hawaii in the spring also.

Phil enjoys the friendly, sharing nature of our club members. He enjoys the comradery and also the challenges of completion. Like many members, he chuckles at the subjectivity of many judges, while also trying to learn from their viewpoints.

We are grateful and happy that Phil stepped up to lead our SPC team.

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I'd like to introduce one of our newest, and definitely youngest, member **Samantha Bellavance**. Her passion, discovery and excitement for photography is demonstrated in all my discussions with her – she's even experimenting with film photography!

Born in New England, Samantha studied graphic design. She worked for the state of Massachusetts as a graphic designer until an opportunity to relocate to be with family and fiancé together arose. Samantha left New England and followed her sister to Missouri when her fiancé and her sister's husband were based in Army Corp of Engineer training. She does describe Western Missouri as very quiet even compared to here, but she is excited to discover Southern Pines and Pinehurst and all the outings in SPC too. They subsequently were transferred to Ft. Bragg and both have since headed to different countries. Samantha's fiancé, Franklin, is stationed in remote areas of Japan for a year but they recently met and vacationed in Tokyo. They both loved discovering the city together and were amazed by the safety in the city. She recalled one event where a bicycler with a child on the back went into the market leaving not only his bike unsecured but his child as well! They hit the jackpot buying camera gear there and exploring the city. Fortunately, her fiancé shares her love of photography, and he looks forward to returning to US and joining the club as well.

Samantha's photo journey began with a Canon point and shoot in High School. She took a photography class there and also entered competitions. Samantha missed out on the opportunity to study film and a gallery showing of the student's competition shots due to COVID shutting down just about everything but remote learning. Following HS, with the iPhone photography enhancements, that was her primary tool and her subjects were air shows, dogs, friends, and vacations. She has progressed to DLSR and film. She wants to pursue Marine Law and Art and is eager to continue pursuing these interests.

Continued



Samantha, in addition to helping her sister and family, works at Shady Maple Flower Farm in Carthage, obviously a slow time now, but busy three seasons of the year. She is excited they will have cows in the spring, and she can be part of their lives.

She does currently freelance graphic design and offered her services to the club in the future. She is very excited about the new workshops and learning opportunities to be held in the new year.

In the future, she hopes to return to the New England charm but also travel to Iceland, takes cruises and her greatest 'bucket list' goal is to swim with whale sharks!!! She is looking forward to travels with her fiancé and excited to see where his career will take them.

Samantha often joins us at meetings in person so get to know her before the sharks do!

Mary



HAPPY NEW YEAR

Hope we see you soon

December Competition - Member

Voting: Subject: OPEN

Tier 1

18 Votes



T1 - Tied HM

Embracing the Blue Horizon ★ Sharon Kitchen Miller

18 Votes



T1 Tied HM

America the Beautiful ★ JoAnn Sluder

31 Votes

Advanced -
Tier 2
Congratulations



T1 – Tied - 2nd Place

I See Moo

★ Cindy Murphy

31 Votes



T1 - Tied – 2nd Place

Morning Glory

Catherine Maready

38 Votes



T1 – 1st Place

White Whiskered Puffbird

★ Dawn Willis

Tier 2 Winners

20 Votes



T2 – 3rd Place

Standing Out

Cathy Locklear

27
Votes



T2 – 2nd Place

Glencoe Canyon

Michael Sassano

28 Votes



T2 – 1st Place

Curious Chimp

★ Joshua Simpson

Tier 3 Winners

20 Votes



T3 - 3rd Place

First Light

Dee Williams

21 Votes



T3 - 2nd Place

On the Rocks

★ Donna Ford

34 Votes



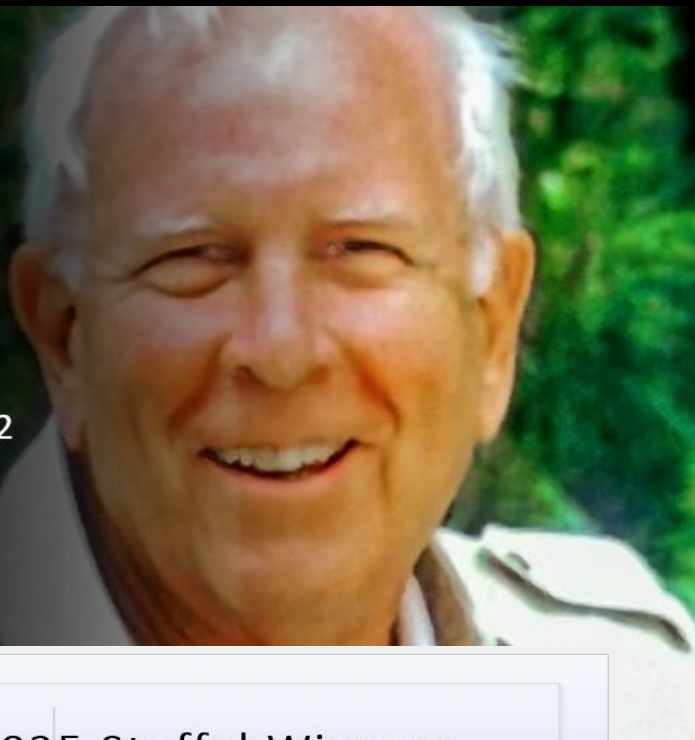
T3 – 1st Place

Horses of the Camargue

Pat Anderson

Stoffel Award Winners

The William Stoffel Year End Awards were established by Bill Stoffel in 2002 to recognize the improvement of an individual's progress in producing photographic images.



Congratulations 2025 Stoffel Winners



Stoffel Award Winners 2002-2025

Alison Earl
Amy Purvis
Bonny Henderson
Brady Smith
Carole Barnard
Darryl Benecke (2)
Dave Powers
Dave Verchick (2)
Debra Regula (2)
Dee Williams
Diane McCall
Donna Ford (11)
Donna Sassano

Drew Steidinger
Frank Pichota
Fred Cirule (2)
Gene Lentz
Gisela Danielson
Jack Mathews
Jacques Wood
Jennifer German
Jill Margeson
Jim Davis
Jim McGill (5)
Joshua Simpson (2)

Kathryn Saunders
Kathy Green
Marilyn Owen
Mary New Wheaton (2)
Mathew Smith (2)
Neva Scheve (2)
Pam Jensen
Phil Lewis
Roy Kita
Shari Dutton (2)
Steve Long
Teresa Bruni
Tobe Saskor



Stoffel Award Winner
Tier 1



2025
Phil Lewis
10 Points

St. Patrick Owns the
Night



T1 Winner Phil Lewis

1876 Victorian



T1 Winner Phil Lewis



Stoffel Award Winner
Tier 2



2025
Joshua Simpson
17 Points

M is for Magic Wand



T2 3rd Place Joshua Simpson

A Dark Reflection



T2 Winner Joshua Simpson

Graveyard Gaze



T2-Winner Joshua Simpson

Curious Chimp



T2- Winner Joshua Simpson



Stoffel Award Winner
Tier 3



2025
Donna Ford
22 Points

Marriott Marquis



T3-2nd Place Donna Ford

Rise Up



T3-2nd Place Donna Ford

Carnival Lights



T3-2nd Place Donna Ford

Arlington



T3-Winner Donna Ford

Left Behind



T3-Winner Donna Ford

On the
Rocks



T3 - 2nd Place Donna Ford

SPC out & about

South Africa



From our friends and fellow member Darryll and Susie Benecke. Members that live in South AFRICA, just a short hop across the pond.....sort of!!!!

See what you're missing by not being in our Facebook group!!!!



Sandhills Photography Club, NC

Darryll Benecke · Top contributor · Yesterday at 2:23 AM ·

Belated Merry Christmas and a peaceful & prosperous New Year to everyone. We are in Namibia. Have been in the desert for 7 days. Arrived in Walvis Bay yesterday and got WiFi for the first time. Leaving for Kgalagadi tomorrow and then home again on 7th Jan. Darryll & Susie



Website: www.sandhillsphtoclub.org

Newsletter: communications@sandhillsphtoclub.org



2025 SANDHILLS PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB BOARD AND CHAIRS

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Alison Earl



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