



Painting with Light: Nature Photography at Night

Content

In this workshop we will explore the use of light to illuminate night-time subjects. Creative use of illumination, coupled with long exposure times, may be employed both to take night time pictures of natural surroundings and to create stunning artistic views of the world. We will begin indoors with a discussion of techniques and then, as darkness provides our palette, we will move outside to experiment with various lighting scenarios. Using flash, flashlights and lasers pointers, various colors and platforms, we will shoot stationary and moving subjects outdoors, at night.

The first hour of the course will provide a review of the definitions of and relationships between ISO speed, shutter speed, aperture and depth of field. Covered topics include answers to questions like: what happens to noise as you change ISO? If you drop ISO by 50%, how should you change your shutter speed? How do you calculate the depth of field for your lens? Photographers comfortable with these and related topics may wish to join us after the first hour.

After a short break and before heading outside to experiment, we will discuss techniques for night photography. In addition to standard night exposure techniques we will expand on the painting metaphor. Think of the dark night subject as a blank canvas. Using various light sources as paint brushes we will explore techniques that paint that canvas to expose the subject: A broad flash is like a roller filling a background. A small colored flashlight creates areas of highlight. A laser pointer creates crisp, fine detail like a colored pencil. We will then head outside to experiment in the field.

Prerequisites

The workshop is intended for intermediate to advanced photographers. Your camera should be capable of setting aperture and/or shutter speed, have a time exposure setting and support a flash attachment. Bring a tripod. Remote shutter device (bulb or wireless) is highly recommended to avoid camera shake. Not all point and shoot cameras support these modes. Consider reading or reviewing your camera manual before the workshop. Digital cameras are strongly preferred. Please have your camera make and model and preferred lens specifications available when you register. Teen through Adult. Normally, a maximum of 12 participants. Please be prepared to be outside in the dark with insect or weather conditions subject to the time of the year. Bring a small flashlight to use to make camera adjustments and to find your way in the dark. Using a red flashlight, you will find that you are less likely to destroy both your night vision and that of those around you.

Leader David Saxe

David Saxe is a systems architect, pilot and photographer with a strong background in scientific programming and systems design. Mr. Saxe has worked with digital images and techniques since the early 1970s. Working for fifteen years at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, NJ, he created software for analysis, reduction and graphical presentation of astrophysics images, including data from Hubble Space Telescope. In 2002, he formed USA Aloft, LLC, a New Hampshire based software and aerial photography company, specifically to digitally photograph the Lewis and Clark Trail. Teaching a variety of technical subjects throughout his career, he began teaching nature photography in 2007. In addition to this and a basic workshop, USA Aloft offers advanced photography instruction for post processing and printing, depth of field, field exercises, computer control of camera systems, time lapse photography and stereo photography.

