

May 2018

Volume 1 Issue 2

SPPC Perspective

The Seven Ponds Photography Club, formed in 2009, was created to promote the advancement of photography as an art. The purpose of the club is to bring together persons of like mind who are dedicated to the advancement of their skills by association with other members, through the study of the work of others and through spirited and friendly competition. The club exists to offer opportunities for all to share knowledge within the club and in the community, through exhibitions and programs that excite interest in the knowledge and practice of all branches of photography.

Phil Stagg presenting on May 4th

Please join the May 4th club meeting to hear Phil Stagg, present on the topic of Michigan Waterfalls.



Phil has been aggressively documenting Michigan's waterfalls since 2009. He has a passion for photography and waterfalls. This started him on his quest to create a set of guidebooks with wonderful pictures as well as detailed maps and data about the many waterfalls that Michigan has to offer.

[Phil Stagg Photography on Facebook](#)



In addition to guide books, Phil also has a line of photographic merchandise. This merchandise includes Calendars, postcards, note pads and more. Phil will be bringing some of his merchandise to the May 4th meeting that will be available for purchase.

[Phil Stagg Photography Web Site and on-Line Store](#)



Phil is married and has five sons and four grandchildren. He is the president of Stagg Machine Products, Inc., a full service CNC and screw machine production shop. He is also active at Temple Hill Baptist Church in Cadillac. He enjoys golf, volleyball and kayaking. And once in a while you may find him with a camera in hand!



A special thanks to Todd Bielby for making arrangements for Phil to visit the SPPC.

President's Corner (Ward McGinnis)

What lens should I buy?

The internet is alive with that question on every photography Facebook page and every photography website I can think of. Sometimes I see a newbie asking what camera to buy, but generally its "I have XXXX camera and the kit lens and I'm ready to purchase another lens. Which lens should I buy?" And as photographers, that lens is often more important than the camera. As such, most of us have many lenses.

There is no simple answer to that question. First, what do you like to shoot? If you want to shoot birds and mammals from a distance you want a long lens. But how long? And how much are you willing to spend? For many years the answer to the long lens was to get a 500/4.5 or a 600/4, period, end of story. And today those lenses will cost you ten grand or more for a new lens. But today we have other choices. Both Sigma and Tamron offer a 150-600mm f/5-6.3 Super Zoom for about \$1,100.00 that do a nice job. Nikon offers the 200-500mm f/5.6 for around \$1,200. All three of these lenses can bring respectable results and the Nikon, being an f/5.6 can be used with the 1.4X to give you a 700mm f/8 that is quite sharp and will still autofocus. Other options for a long lens could be getting a 300mm f/2.8 or f/4 and using it with a tele-extender. Generally speaking, bird photography requires a 400mm or longer. And keep in mind if you want great results it will most likely mean using a high quality tripod and head!

But not everyone wants to shoot birds and wildlife. Many people enjoy close-up and macro photography. And bang for your buck I can say my macro lenses get much more use than my long lenses. Here too we have many choices. If you are shooting Canon or Nikon rest assured they both made some great macro lenses. But again, you can save some cash and purchase a Tamron, Tokina or Sigma that will do a great job. Personally, I own a 14 year old Sigma 150mm f/2.8 that I dearly love to use for macro. I also own a Nikon 105mm f/2.8. Both are extremely sharp so no concern there. When I shoot macro I use the 150mm Sigma over 90% of the time. Why? Several reasons: The biggest is that it's a bit longer and therefore allows me to shoot a bit further back from the subject and for bugs that is important because I don't want my subject to leave! But also, being a bit longer means it's a narrower view so I can minimize background clutter

better. Often I will team up the 150mm with the Sigma 1.4X giving me a 210mm macro! Yes I lose one stop as it becomes an f/4 but in macro that isn't really very significant. The other reason I like the Sigma over the Nikon is it has a tripod collar. Why Nikon didn't add one is beyond me. So if you are looking at macro lenses I would recommend longer over shorter and make sure it has a tripod collar.

The other thing people enjoy shooting are landscapes and here we start looking at wide angle lenses. How wide depends on whether you are using a crop sensor or full frame and again, what are you shooting? For a full frame camera a 17mm is very wide. Wide enough you can stand in the corner of a room and capture the entire room. If you are shooting a crop sensor you need to drop to a 12mm to get the same area. Here again the choices are Canon, Nikon or a third party like Sigma, Tokina or Tamron. I have a Tokina 12-24mm for my crop sensor cameras and it's a great lens and it was almost half the cost of a Nikon. Is it as sturdy? Will it outlast a Nikon or Canon? Maybe not. But for what I do it works very well and is sharp. For my full frame camera I picked up a used Nikon 16-35 which gives me about the same coverage. These are the lenses I use for sunsets, open woods shots and cities! I wouldn't travel without my wide angle lenses.

All of that is about what lens should I get next? But what if you only had one lens? What lens are you using for general photography or as a "carry" or "walk around" lens? My first SLR was a Canon AE-1 and the first lens was a 50mm f/1.8. It was a great lens and back in those days no one worth listening to would shoot a zoom. Zoom lenses were simply not sharp in those days. Thankfully today the zooms are quite wonderful. So while I do have a few fixed focal length lenses, most of my lenses are zooms. For my crop sensor I have a Tamron 18-270 f/3.5-6.3 I often use as a one lens fits all choice. Is it as sharp as my Nikon 17-55? No!! But it is sharp enough for most things I do and think about the range 18-270! So it takes the place of my Nikon 17-55 and my 70-200, both of which are heavy lenses. They are better, yes, but at the cost of carrying that weight around. For my full frame I use a Nikon 24-120 f/4 which is actually the "kit" lens that was offered with the D750. It's a great lens and covers a good range of focal lengths but I do wish it was a bit longer.

For many years I shot only Canon lenses and then gradually bought into a couple Vivitar lenses back in the film days. When I switched to digital in 2003 I really thought I would shoot only Nikon lenses. But I tried a couple Sigma lenses and found them to be excellent. Today I own Nikon, Sigma, Tokina and Tamron lenses and I get good results from all of them. So when you are in the market for a new lens do some research? Google the reviews for each lens and talk to others that have the lens. Post on our FB page what you are looking for and see what club members might have used it. And go shoot! Always, go shoot and make your own opinions.

Tawas Point State Park Weekend Trip

The SPPC members will be meeting at [Tawas Point State Park](#) the weekend of May 18th through the 20th, [Todd Bielby](#) is leading the weekend outing. This trip should provide many opportunities to photograph a wide variety of Warblers, during their annual migration north. The park is also the home of the Tawas Point Light House that offers tours and is a great place to photograph. The park has several sandy beaches and a number of nature trails to explore. If you plan to camp it is recommended that you make [reservations](#) soon. For non-camping people East Tawas has many motels to choose from, the state park is just a short drive out from town. The state park does require a [recreation passport](#) on your vehicle to enter. You can purchase the [passport](#) as you enter the park, if you do not have the annual stamp on your license plate.



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<https://www.facebook.com/events/1508219099290634/>

Contributors Requested

I invite all of the SPPC members to provide your "Perspective" on the various club activities and events that you participate in, and perhaps share one of your photos, so they can be published in the newsletter. If you have a favorite place you like to shoot, and wish to share the information with others, please write that up as well. Please send your contributions to [Mark Robinson](#).

Blue Water SandFest

Contributor: Kathy

The Friends of Fort Gratiot Light are hosting their annual [Blue Water SandFest](#) this July 6th, 7th and 8th. It will be held at the Fort Gratiot Light Station County Park. There will be seventeen master and advanced artists displaying their skills, as well as a number of amateurs. This event should provide numerous photographic opportunities as the sculpting progresses. [Tickets are required](#).

SPPC Wild Flower Outing

Contributor: Nancy Kleist

The wildflower shoot at Quickstad Park in Royal Oak was a success! Nine members and a couple of new friends enjoyed perfect weather and an abundance of bloodroot flowers along with a few other species. Members shared their knowledge and even some of their equipment with the newcomers and everyone was able to get some great shots.



Following the shoot we met for lunch at a nearby National Coney Island. People shared some of their favorite locations to shoot both flowers and wildlife and a trip to the For-Mar Nature Preserve & Arboretum (in Burton, MI) was planned to shoot the owls that nest there. Unfortunately, a scout reported that the owls did not return to the same nesting site as last year and the new site has not been found.

A special thanks goes to Jerry Badgero for making the arrangements and scouting out the area.



Should You Shoot in RAW format?

Contributor: Mark Robinson

Film photographers use a darkroom and various tools to create a final image from a negative (the film). In the darkroom a photographer can make various print renditions of a photograph. These renditions can vary widely depending on what mood or effect the photographer wishes to create.

In Digital photography software replaces the darkroom. Software converts the RAW data collected by the sensor (the film) and renders a photograph. The photographer tells the software how the image is to be rendered into a photograph. The software the photographer chooses to use can reside in the camera or outside (e.g. on a computer).

If you choose to have your camera save images as JPEG files, you are using the software inside the camera to produce the photograph. A number of the settings on digital cameras are there for that reason. This includes settings such as picture style, white balance, noise reduction, sharpening, tone priority and others. The advantage of using in camera software is it saves time in producing a photograph and significantly simplifies the rendering process for the photographer. The disadvantage is it locks you into the changes you can make, to add mood, effect, or in some cases save an image from the trash can. This is not to say you cannot edit JPEG images in out of camera software. In fact many of the software products do support JPEG editing, but they are far more limited in what they can do with JPEG images than RAW files.

Unlike JPEG files that contain a rendered image (a photograph), RAW files do not. RAW files contain all the data collected by the sensor when you pressed the shutter button (a negative). And just as a film photographer can do more with a negative than a photograph, you can do more with a RAW file than a JPEG. Software that processes RAW files allows you to control fine details that will define the final rendered image. These details include lighting (contrast, shadows, and highlights), sharpness, noise reduction, white balance, color saturation, color luminosity and many more details. This is the reason why most advanced photographers choose to use RAW files.

You may ask if RAW files are not rendered images how can I view them in my camera. This is because when the image is presented on your camera screen, it is temporarily processed using the software settings mentioned earlier. But, the important part to understand is the RAW file is stored on the camera not the rendered image.

As the photographer it is your choice to use JPEG, RAW or both formats. Keep in mind RAW files will use a lot more space on your memory card than JPEGs. Changing the format can also affect the speed and number of photos you can capture in burst mode, due to various technical reasons (check your manual or experiment). You may fear all the new details that that processing RAW files provides, but be assured that default values will be applied and you can learn just a few detailed settings at a time. Also, most software that process RAW files allows you to return to the original default rendering at any time, even if you saved the changes days ago.

What is your favorite?

This month's topic for "What is your favorite" is photo post processing software. Our SPPC members use a wide variety of post processing software to produce the spectacular images we see in our competitions, assignment shots and on our [Facebook](#) site.

Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom and CS6

Photoshop is very popular, but what is Adobe Photoshop? Adobe has at least three products with the Photoshop trademark they are "Photoshop CS6", "Photoshop Lightroom" and "Photoshop Elements". When someone says Photoshop they are usually referring to "Photoshop Elements". The other two products are usually referred to as CS6 and Lightroom. Elements target the everyday and amateur photographers who wish to have a solid editor that works with RAW and JPEG file types. Elements also has a large collection of special effect filters that can be used to produce images that would fit into the "Creative Color" category of our competitions. Elements can be purchased for about \$70. CS6 is aimed at the professional and high-end amateur and is priced starting at \$1,299. Lightroom is targeted for the more serious amateur and professional photographers. Lightroom provides a much finer level of detail manipulation than Elements but requires more

expertise to use than Elements. Lightroom costs around \$150. Adobe offers these product through their “Creative Cloud” offering with prices ranging from \$9.99 to \$52.99 per month through Creative Cloud (CC).

The following web sites provides a comparison and details of theses Adobe products.

<https://photographylife.com/lightroom-vs-photoshop-elements>.

<https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud.html>

SPPC members that use Adobe product include: Ward McGinnis (CS6), Sheri Winans Harvey (LR), Todd Bielby (LR and PS CC), and Mark Robinson (PS).

Nik Collection

Until recently the Google Nik collection was available for free from Google, it now is owned by DxO, but is still available for free (if you give them your email address). Nik is a collection of special effect filters that allow you to apply effects that; emulate film photograph, allow for color correction and manipulation, sharpen images and many other things. The Nik collection are plugins that work with Photoshop Elements and Lightroom. The Nik collection also offers HDR Efex module that works independently from Photoshop and Lightroom.

<https://www.google.com/nikcollection/>

<https://nikcollection.dxo.com/>

SPPC members that use Nik include: Mark Robinson, Ward McGinnis, Buddy Beyer and Jerry Badgero.

Topaz

Topaz is a suite of 17 plugins that work with Photoshop Elements and Lightroom as well as a number of other products. It also offers its own free editing toolbox that you can use with the plugins. Individual plugins cost between \$30 and \$80, or you can purchase the entire suite for \$500.

<https://www.topazlabs.com/>

<https://www.topazlabs.com/store>

SPPC members that use Topaz include: Melody Munro-Wolfe and Silvia Bergland.

ON1 Photo RAW

A great alternative to Photoshop and Lightroom is On1, which is not a subscription, and is only \$89.00 for the software. It can do everything Lightroom and Photoshop

can do. Geared more for photography than graphic artists like Photoshop. (Todd Bielby)

<https://www.on1.com/>

SPPC members that use ON1 include: Todd Bielby.

Helicon Focus

Helicon Focus is specialized software that allows for focus stacking. Focus stacking is when you take a number of photos of a single image, moving the focus point a little bit each time, then merging all the images into a single photo. Focus stacking is very helpful in macro and micro photography, where being so close to the subject creates a very shallow depth of field. The cost is \$30/year for its lite version or \$65 for the premium version, life time licenses are available as well starting at \$115 for lite version and \$240 for the premium. Helicon also sells other products that assist in actual image collection via automation.

<http://www.heliconsoft.com/>

SPPC members that use Helicon Focus include: Jerry Badgero, Ward McGinnis and Kelly Daniels.

Luminar

Luminar provide functionality similar to that of Lightroom. As adobe moves more and more to cloud based subscriptions, Luminar direction is more local processing on your own PC. Luminar cost is \$69 and has a free trial.

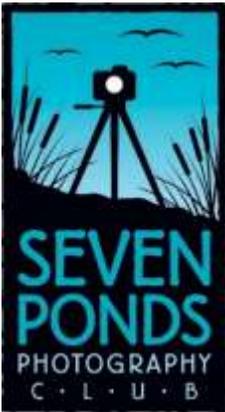
<https://skylum.com/luminar>

SPPC members that use Luminar include: Jerry Badgero.

Next Months what is your favorite?

This monthly column is for members to share their favorite of the topic chosen for the month. This way we can share the wide experience of our club to all the members. For the June issue the topic will be Camera and Lens **Accessories**. Please write a sentence or two on the accessories you like to use and why. If you have a link to a web site that has more detailed information send that as well. Please email your favorite lens accessories comments to [Mark Robinson](#).

Is your camera gear insured? Many of us have a lot of money invested in our camera gear, and most insurance policies have limits. Talk to your insurance agent to make sure you're adequately covered.



May 2018

SPPC - Activities and Events

Meeting Location

Seven Ponds Nature Center

3854 Crawford Road Dryden, MI 48428-9776

The Seven Ponds Photography Club holds its meetings on the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm. All meetings are open to members and nonmembers.

Guest Speakers (1st Monday Meetings)

- May 4 - [Phil Stagg, Michigan Waterfalls](#)
- June 1 - Photo Shoot and Swap meet (No Speaker)
- July 1 - Photo Shoot (No Speaker)
- Aug 3 - Jason Stewart, Time lapse Photography
- Oct 5 - Marilyn Murphy Feather

Assignment Topics (1st Monday Meetings)

Please send your images to [Stu Davis](#), by noon on the day of the meeting.

- May 4 - Flowers
- June 1 - Clouds
- July 6 - Patriotic

Club Outings

Club outing details change due to various reasons. Please check the Facebook event links for current details.

May 12: [Vlasic Community Fest Bump-N-Run](#) is being held at the Eastern Michigan State Fairgrounds. Lead Person: [Stu Davis](#)

May 18, 19 & 20: Weekend camp at Tawas State Park. The warbler migration should be in full swing by this weekend. Wild flowers should also be in abundance for many providing many photographing opportunities. For non-camping people Tawas has several motels. Lead: [Todd Bielby](#)
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1508219099290634/>

June 1-3: Silver Lake Sand Dunes. June 1 is a scheduled club meeting. So those going on this trip will miss the meeting. State Park for campers. Several motels in the area. Shooting the sand dunes and the Little Sable Lighthouse plus whatever else we find interesting. Part

of the dunes are very popular with dune buggy and quads and motorcycles and could be fun shooting action shots. Lead: [Todd Bielby](#)
<https://www.facebook.com/events/199927343937847/>

June 15 & 16: [Inlay City Busker Fest](#) is being held at the Eastern Michigan State Fair Grounds. It features a large array of performing acts. Lead Person: [Stu Davis](#)

July 7: Bay City Fireworks. This will be a day trip that runs late in the evening. Lead: [Jerry Badgero](#)
<https://www.facebook.com/events/186853161924625/>

Meetings

The Seven Ponds Photography Club typically holds its meetings on the 1st and 3rd Friday of each month from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.

1st Friday meetings focus on educational presentations and monthly assignment photographs.

3rd Friday meetings are competition night, photographs submitted by members are scored and reviewed. Some photos are then sent to the Greater Detroit Camera Club Council (GDCCC) to compete with other clubs.

Mentoring Sessions

Mentoring sessions are typically held the 4th Friday of each month please contact [Dale Vronch](#) if you plan to attend. Bring your laptop and an image to work on.

Helpful links:
[SPPC Facebook Page](#)
[SPPC Home Page](#)
[GDCCC Home Page](#)