

# Night and Low Light Photography

Roxy Hastings, IACC Member

At our first meeting of the year on September 10, 2015, I had the honour of presenting a talk representing the Night and Low Light Special Interest Group (SIG). I divided the talk into two parts: what we shoot and where we shoot.

This group currently consists of about 15 active members though our actual list of members is significantly larger than that. We meet once a month for review/critique sessions at a member's home and aim for two outings a month organized by the SIG members. Each member is expected to organize two outings in a year.

Broadly speaking the group's interests include any situation, outdoors or indoors, that tests the limits of both a camera and a photographer's capabilities in terms of long shutter speeds, large apertures and high ISOs.

Classically, when the sun goes down the group gets going. Technically, we could be active at sunrise too, but I think few of us fall into that category. However, we do not limit ourselves to the whims of the sun, as we actively shoot indoor architectural and sports and action too, no matter the time of day. Specifically, our subject matter falls into seven major, but not exclusive, categories.

Firstly, and most obviously, are the magic hours of sunrise and sunset. This is further divided into three times: the Golden Hour of warm orange light, the darker, cooler Blue Hour, of course with blue light, and finally almost total darkness.

Secondly, and as I already alluded to, we are not limited to outdoor work, with indoor topics like available light portraiture or architecture being popular with several members.

Painting with light is one of the specialized areas that has attracted the interest of some members. We have done special outings just to practice the techniques under the guidance of some of our local masters.

Of course, the night sky is of wide interest and given that we are often blessed with spectacular aurora displays many members indulge in getting out in the field to shoot at 2:00 in the morning. This is a case where it is really advantageous to be a member of our group, because you don't want to be out shooting on your own in lonely country at minus 20°C!

For those members not so inclined to wander around the country side in pitch blackness in bitching freezing weather, there is always the opportunity to indulge in the more urbane pastime of night street photography. Again, working with a group offers an element of safety. Last year the group did no less than six outdoor SIG shoots in the twilight hours in the city, plus several members have partnered up to do shoots on their own. It's a great opportunity to meet likeminded slightly looney people who enjoy pushing the limits of light.

Fireworks is another especially challenging area of low light photography that has been embraced by a few members of the Low Light SIG.

Finally, some members have taken on specialized studio photography where they control the light in a darkened environment to create special effects such as smoke.

The Night and Low Light SIG hosted 12 photo shoots last year covering a wide range of subject areas. A few of the shoots that we did include: Elk Island National Park, aurora and light painting; Canadian Finals Rodeo; Legislature Christmas lights; Ukrainian Village; and Alley Kat Brewing tour and shoot.

This year our leader, Gerry Wirun, has set an objective of increasing the number and diversity of outings. Already trips to Elk Island, the Muttart and the All is Bright Festival have been scheduled. If you have any questions about the Night and Low Light SIG (or any of the other SIGs), please contact [Ron Ross, IACC SIG Chair](#).