# Snapshot

Newsletter of Nepean Camera Club April 2024

**Shelly Beach by Gunda Wright**

## Important Dates:

**Tuesday 2nd April 2024 7:30 pm - Club Meeting**

**Sandy Christie Room**
**Old Shire Office 359A**
**Point Nepean**
**Road, Dromana 3936**

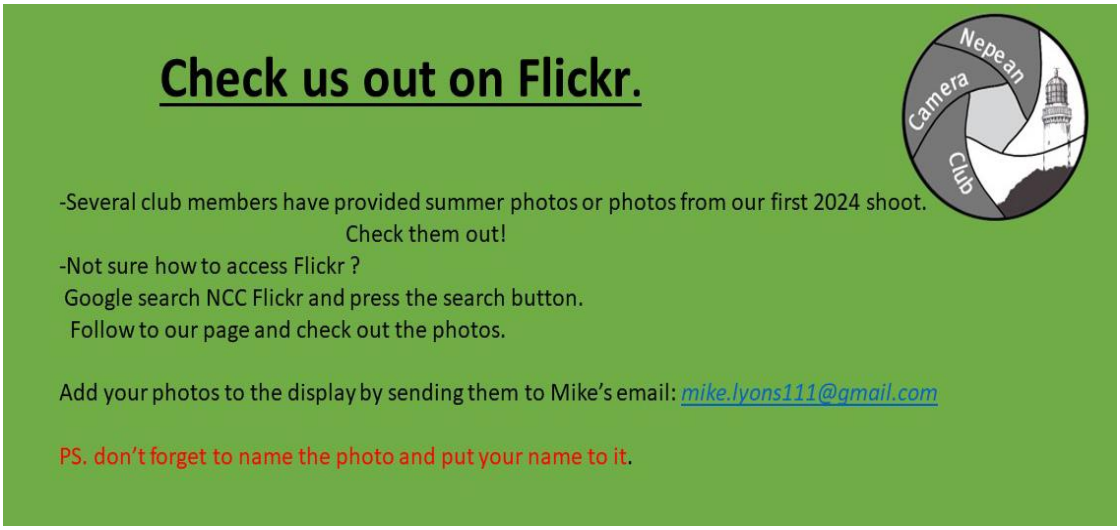
# in focus

## NCC Rosebud February Stats

9918 Photo Views

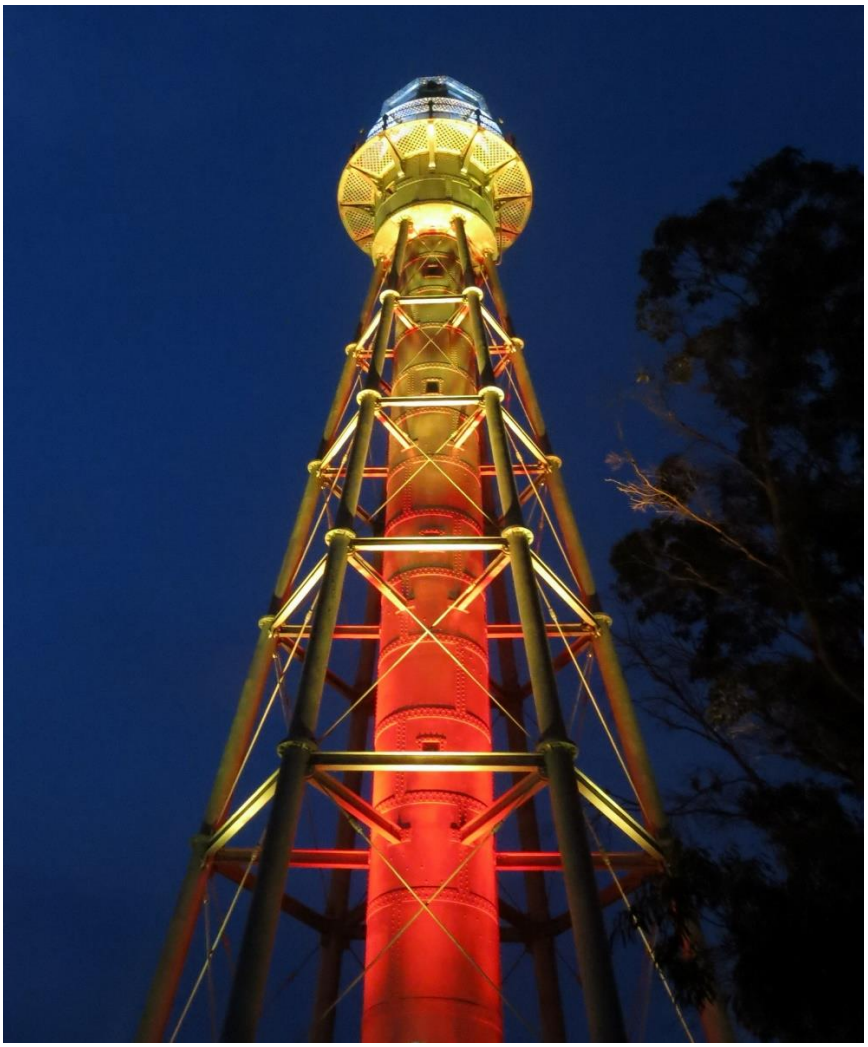
Total Since May 2022 to January 2024

302246 Photo Views



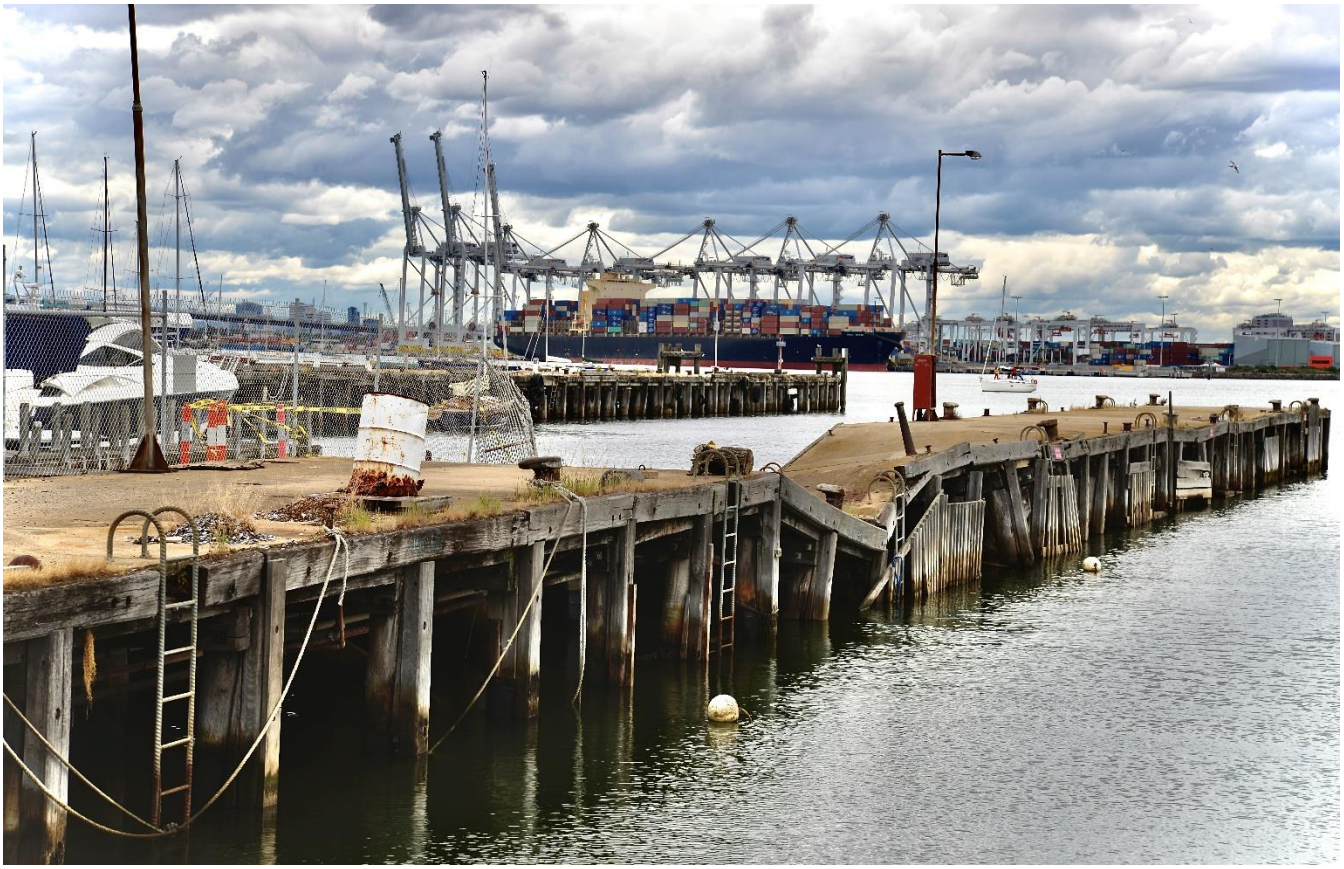
## Out and About on the Peninsula and Beyond

## Night Light McCrae by Pan Constanti



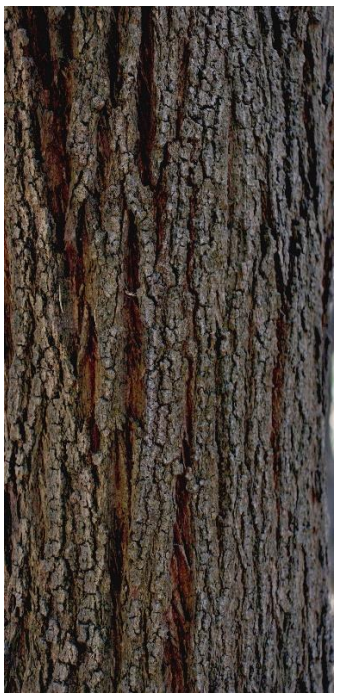
**Cool Coolart by Jeff Nankervis**

**Mornington Peninsula Vines by Anne Gibson**



**Williamstown Jetty by Paul Sullivan**

Banksia Bark



She Oak Bark

Paper Bark

Moonah Park

**Tree Bark by Marnie Fitzsimons**

## Social Gathering Dromana Foreshore

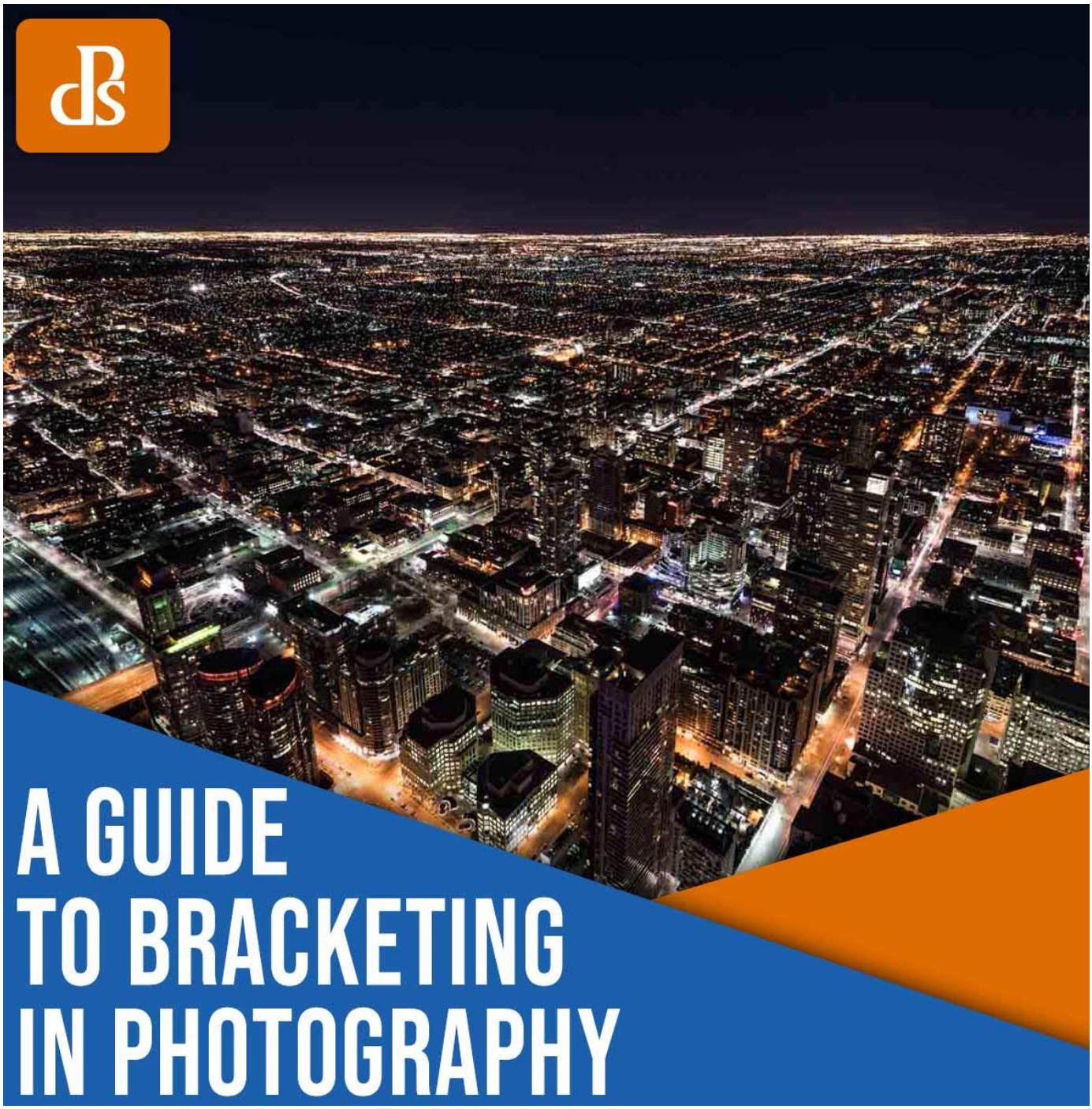
Thursday 28th March 2024

Our social gatherings are quickly becoming a key ingredient in our club
calendar.
Thursday March 28 was once again well attended with a couple of the
members providing some yummy treats for the members. (Thanks to those kind people)
While the topic for the social gathering was “sports photography
techniques” the conversations of the day moved from botanical photography to football to food and many more.
Lynn and Jeff had recently ventured to the Mornington Peninsula Motorcycle Club track in Hastings. Jeff being able to share some of his
photos with the group. Not only did these look great but we have been successful in gaining permission for the next club shoot to be at this track.
Our next social gathering is set down for Monday April 29.

Please diarise the date and come along for a cuppa and a chat with
other club members.

# What is Bracketing in Photography: The Ultimate Guide

By Elizabeth Halford

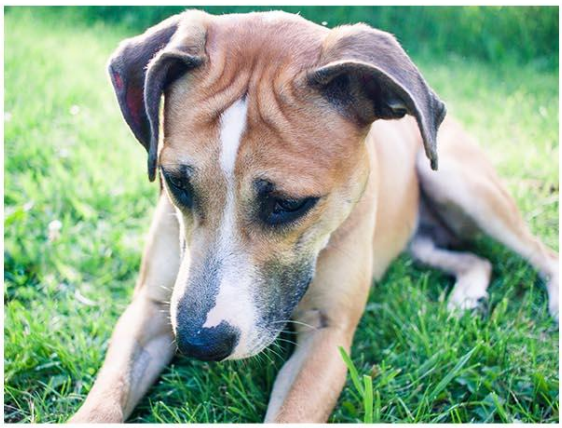



Bracketing is a powerful photographic technique – but what does it achieve and when should you use it?

In this article, I explain everything you need to know about bracketing in photography, from the absolute basics (e.g., how to bracket in-camera) to more advanced tips and techniques (e.g., how you can use bracketing to create pro-level landscape and cityscape shots). I also include plenty of practical advice along the way, so you know exactly when and how to apply bracketing for the best results.

Bottom line: If you've heard about bracketing but aren't sure what it does, or you're an experienced photographer simply looking for high-level guidance, you've come to the right place.
Let's get started.

**What is bracketing?**
Bracketing is a camera technique where you capture several different exposures of the same scene. In other words, you capture a standard image (below, top), a darker/underexposed version (below, bottom left), and a brighter/overexposed version (below, bottom right):



Each composition is identical, yet the exposure level varies from shot to shot. Generally, this is done on a tripod to prevent camera movement between images, but there are also photographers who bracket handheld (and I discuss this option below!).
Note that bracketing most commonly occurs in groups of three. However, this isn't a requirement; some situations need only two images, while others call for five images, seven images, nine images, or even more. It depends on your exposure skills and the scene itself, as I discuss in the next section:
**Why is bracketing useful?**
At its simplest, bracketing increases your odds of nailing a difficult exposure.
You see, every modern camera is equipped with a meter, which analyses a scene and determines the proper exposure settings for beautifully rendered detail. But while camera meters are powerful, they *often get the exposure wrong*. For instance, cameras characteristically overexpose (over-brighten) dark scenes (e.g., a nighttime image of a city skyline) and characteristically underexpose (over-darken) bright scenes (e.g., a stand of white aspen trees in snow).

When this happens, you can always make adjustments using Manual mode or exposure compensation – but unless you have lots of experience and an excellent mental exposure system, it's tough to know exactly how much to modify your camera settings for a good result.
Enter bracketing, where you take a *series* of differently exposed images. Sure, the first shot might be poorly exposed, but if you take three (or five, or seven) images, one is bound to look good. With a fastidious eye and a careful bracketing process, you can practically guarantee a nice exposure.
Bracketing in this way – that is, as insurance – is especially helpful when facing very bright or very dark scenes, as well as when photographing scenes with lots of tonal variation. Beginners may choose to bracket even in more standard exposure scenarios, just to be safe.
But there's a second reason to bracket your images, one that's very popular among landscape and cityscape photographers in particular:
Bracketing lets you capture high dynamic range (HDR) photos.

**Bracketing and high dynamic range photography**
The dynamic range of a scene refers to the difference between its lightest lights and its darkest darks.
A grey wall has a very low dynamic range, as it's full of midtones and little else. But a sunset – with a bright sky and a dark foreground – has a *huge* dynamic range, as does a white cat on a black background, a mound of snow against a black tree, and so on.
And camera sensors *struggle* to capture the entire tonal range of such scenes. When photographing a sunset, if you set your exposure for the midtones, you'll end up with detail less

foreground shadows and detail less sky highlights. But if you expose for the shadows, you'll lose detail in the highlights, and if you expose for the highlights, you'll lose detail in the shadows.

See the problem? Scenes that feature bright areas and dark areas can't be easily rendered by a camera sensor, no matter the exposure value. Fortunately, there's an easy solution:
Instead of capturing one image of the scene, you bracket.
And then you blend *all* of your bracketed images together in a post-processing program. That way, you can use the detailed highlights from one image, the detailed midtones from another image, and the detailed shadows from a third image. It doesn't matter if each individual shot is missing details at its extremes, because all the detail is present, just spread across the three images.
This may sound difficult, but it's really not. The bracketing process is the same as I described in the previous sections. And post-processing programs often include an auto-merge feature, where you select several images, and they quickly combine them together for the best (HDR!) result.
One final note: While many scenes only require three bracketed shots – a standard shot, a light shot, and a dark shot – in extreme situations, you may want to use five, seven, or nine images instead. That's the hardest part about bracketing: deciding exactly how many images to capture!

**Bracketing and camera settings**
Image exposure is determined by three variables: aperture, shutter speed, and ISO.
Adjust any of these variables, and you'll get an incrementally lighter or darker shot. But each variable will also affect your photo in other ways:

1. The aperture will affect the amount of the scene that is in focus, also known as the *depth of field.*
2. The shutter speed will affect the sharpness of your image, especially when photographing moving subjects.
3. The ISO will affect the noisiness, sometimes referred to as the graininess, of your image.

So when bracketing, which variable should you target for adjustment?
In general, you should bracket using the *shutter speed*. If your subject is stationary and you're working with a tripod, you shouldn't have any issues increasing and decreasing your shutter speed, and you'll get the desired underexposure/overexposure effect.
However, if you need to keep your shutter speed at a particular value, you can bracket using ISO. Just know that the higher you boost your ISO, the worse your images will look, so be very careful before pushing your ISO to significant heights.

**How to bracket your photos: a step-by-step process**

Now that you're familiar with the basics of bracketing, I'd like to offer a simple process for bracketing your shots, which you can use regardless of your camera equipment.

**Step 1: Select Manual mode or Aperture Priority mode.**

Bracketing only works if you have control over your camera settings, which is why bracketing in Auto mode is a bad idea (and is impossible on most cameras, anyway).
Instead, you need to set your camera to Manual mode, which will let you individually set your aperture, shutter speed, and ISO, or Aperture Priority mode, which will let you set the aperture and ISO while the camera sets the shutter speed.
(Why not Shutter Priority mode? You can bracket using this mode, but it works by adjusting the aperture, which is rarely ideal.)

**Step 2: Take a photo using your camera's recommended exposure settings.**

If you're using Aperture Priority mode, set your preferred aperture and ISO, then let your camera select a corresponding shutter speed.
If you're using Manual mode, set your three exposure variables so the exposure bar lines up at the zero mark in the viewfinder.
Note that if you *know* your camera is likely to underexpose or overexpose the scene, feel free to adjust your initial exposure to compensate. So if you believe your camera is going to underexpose a snow scene, you could decrease the shutter speed slightly (in Manual mode, you'll need to turn the shutter speed dial, while in Aperture Priority mode, you'll need to apply positive exposure compensation).
Otherwise, just use your camera's recommended settings.
Then take a shot.

**Step 3: Take an "overexposed" and an "underexposed" bracketed photo**

Next, you need to take your lighter and darker images.
In Manual mode, simply decrease your shutter speed by a full stop (generally three increments on the shutter speed dial) for the overexposed image. Then increase your shutter speed by a full stop for the underexposed image.
In Aperture Priority mode, simply dial in +1 exposure compensation for the overexposed image, then dial in -1 exposure compensation for the underexposed image. This will automatically adjust your shutter speed in either direction.
Feel free to experiment with the bracketing increments. If you're bracketing for insurance, a stop (i.e., +1/-1) in either direction is often safe. But if you're dealing with high dynamic range scenes, two stops might be the better option.

**Step 4: Take any additional photos.**

At this point, you'll want to observe your scene. You might also check the histogram for the photos you've already taken and look for any spots of overexposure (highlight clipping) in the darkest image and underexposure (shadow clipping) in the lightest image.

If your scene has a significant dynamic range not fully captured by your series of bracketed shots, go ahead, and capture additional images at +2/-2 stops, +3/-3 stops, and so on, until you're satisfied.
Otherwise, consider your bracketing sequence finished, and head on to your next subject!

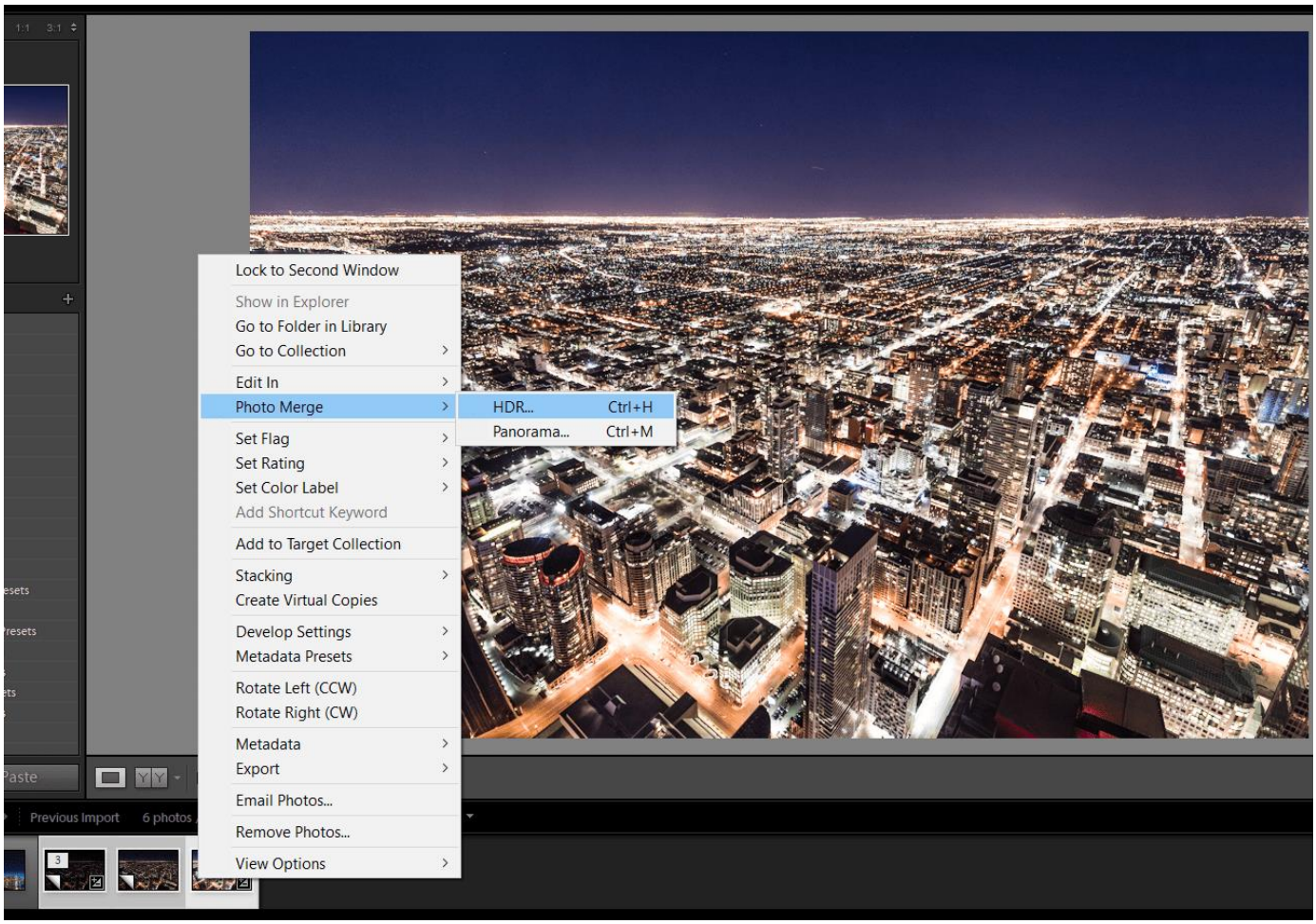
**Auto Exposure Bracketing**
If you become a frequent bracketer, or you simply wish to simplify the process, modern cameras do tend to offer an Automatic Exposure Bracketing (AEB) setting.
You simply dial in the number of bracketed shots you need, indicate an increment (e.g., two stops), then fire off several images. Your camera will automatically adjust the exposure settings, so you get a series of bracketed files.
Unfortunately, Auto Exposure Bracketing doesn't work in Manual mode, so you'll need to use Aperture Priority instead.

**When should you bracket your images?**
Bracketing is a great technique, but you don't need to do it all the time – and in certain situations, it can be harmful rather than helpful.
First, if you're shooting any type of high dynamic range scene, whether or not you plan to blend the images in post-processing, I highly recommend you bracket. It'll ensure you nail the exposure, and when it comes to HDR scenes, a perfect exposure is critical. In particular, bracket your sunrise and sunset landscape shots, as well as any cityscape shots taken at sunrise, sunset, or at night.

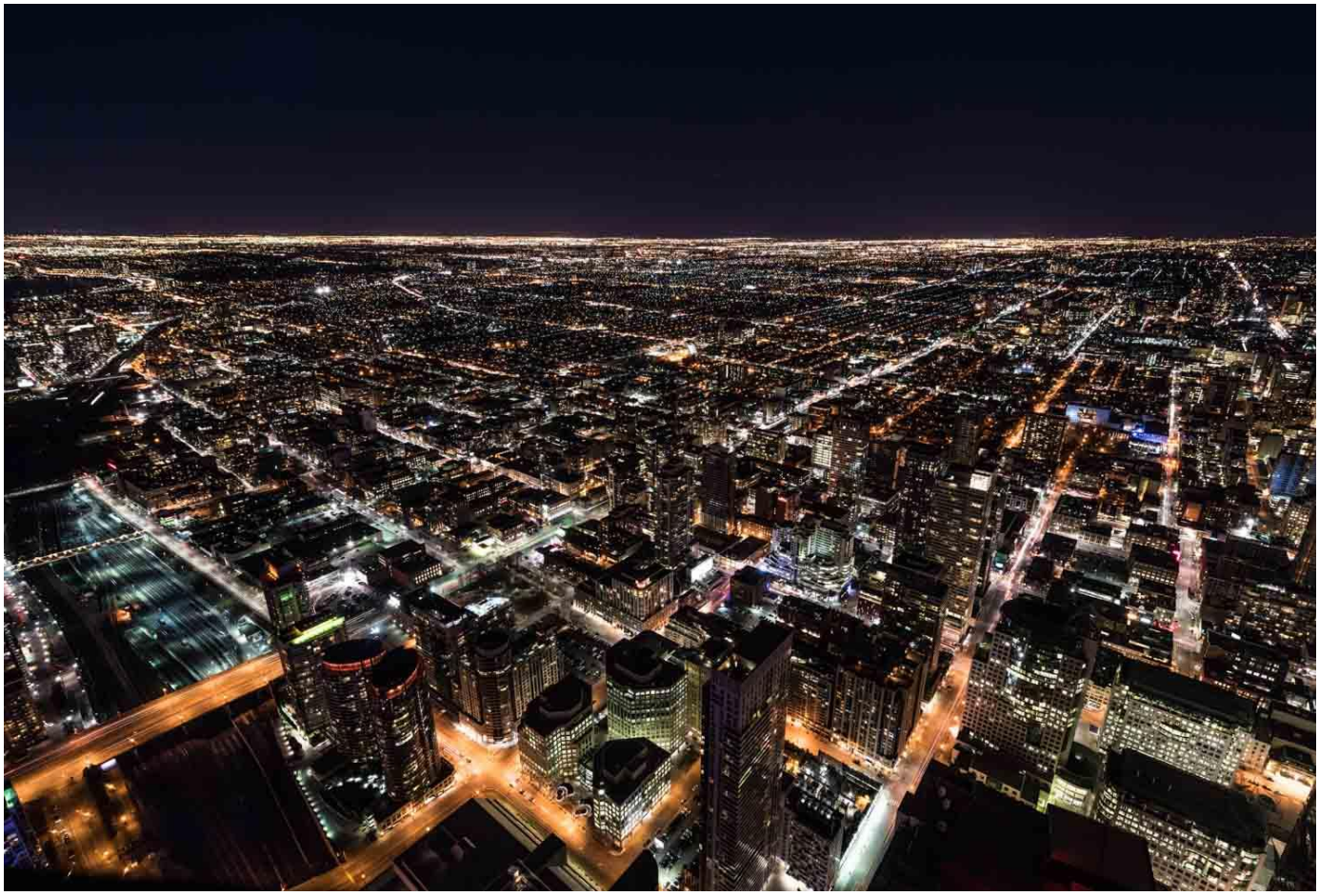
Second, if you're capturing an unusually dark or an unusually light scene, it pays to bracket, because your camera often gets the exposure wrong. You should shoot from a tripod for the most consistent results, but if you prefer to shoot handheld, that's okay, too. Yes, it'll make HDR blending more difficult, but if you're bracketing for insurance, that shouldn't matter.
In fact, if your subject is moving, then handheld bracketing is often the way to go. You can bracket shots of a bird foraging, for instance, and while the bracketed series won't look identical, you'll end up with at least one usable shot.

Finally, if you've encountered a scene and you desperately want to get the exposure right (e.g., it's a once-in-a-lifetime sky, for instance), then just bracket. It's the safest way to ensure you get a good shot.
On the other hand, try to avoid bracketing if you're faced with a standard low dynamic range scene and fast-moving subjects. You'll spend so much time trying to bracket that you may miss key opportunities, and the bracketing probably won't make much difference, anyway.

**Processing bracketed shots for HDR imaging**
The ins and outs of high dynamic range blending are beyond the scope of this article. But if you've captured a series of images with sufficient overall detail, you'll generally get a great HDR result in Lightroom. Here's how it works:
Import all your bracketed images, then select the entire series in the filmstrip.
Right-click and select **Photo Merge>HDR**.




Lightroom will do all the blending, and you'll end up with a beautiful HDR image!
If you need more control over the blending process, you can always purchase a dedicated HDR program, like Photomatix or Aurora HDR.
Alternatively, you can blend your images manually in Photoshop using luminosity masks; it's a very involved process, but one favoured by some landscape photographers.



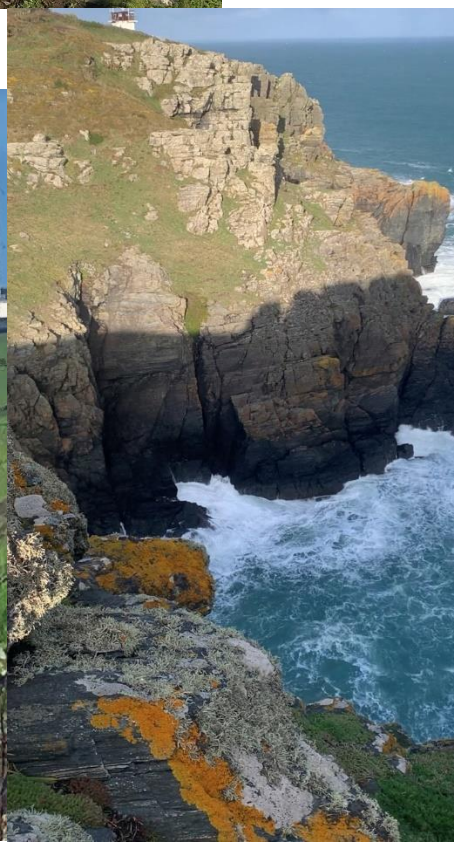
**Bracketing in photography: final words**

Now that you've finished this article, you know what bracketing all is about – and you know how and when to use it.
So go out with your camera and practice. Find some high dynamic range scenes, do some bracketing, and process the results. Alternatively, capture some very light or very dark scenes, then see how bracketing helps ensure you get a good exposure!

# *Members in the Spotlight*

***"You don't take a photograph, you make it." - Ansel Adams***

**Lizard Cornwell UK Robyn Biggins**



**Mike Lyons Egypt 2023**

Rather than show members the traditional Egyptology photos like the one below I thought a few photos of our cruise down the Nile River from Aswan to Luxor may provide a different insight to this vast and dynamic country.

It is well known that 5000 years ago the ancient Egyptians transported everything from food to the granite blocks that formed the Pyramids down the Nile. Today, while there are other transport mediums the Nile remains vital to the Egyptian way. Our few days cruising the Nile showed that not a lot has changed.

Seeing ancient temples as we float along.

Local fishermen were everywhere.

From the cruise ship we were on there were always these characters trying to sell their wares

**At Anchor by Rosalie Arnold**

**Waiting for a Bite by John Clayton**

**Gone for a Swim by Joy Clayton**

**Morning Light by Lynn Nankervis**