

IN FOCUS



September-October 2026

Volume 99, Issue 7

The Newsletter of the Photographic Society of Rhode Island

CELEBRATING PHOTOGRAPHY IN RHODE ISLAND SINCE 1927



INSIDE

CORMORANT FISHING
ON THE LI RIVER

GIVING BACK THROUGH
PHOTOGRAPHY: NEADS

FLASHBACK

CEREAL CHALLENGE

ASK AI

LOVE ON THE ROCKS

MEETUPS

Photo by Mary Doo

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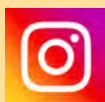
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Leapfest 2026. Photo by Lauren Lambert.

Contents

President's Message	3
Calendar and Meetups	4
Lavender Pond Farm Meetup	5
Ask AI	6
Wickford Art Festival	7
DTLE and Milky Way Meetup	8
PSRI Flashback	9
Giving Back Through Photography: NEADS	10
Cereal Champions	12
Leap Fest Meetup	13
Love on the Rocks	14
Parks and Picnic Meetup	15
Thoughts on Photography	16
Cruise Night Meetup	18
Providence Pedestrian Bridge Meetup	19
Committee Chairs, Co-Chairs and Members	20

President's Message



Summer is a busy time behind the scenes as we plan and prepare for the upcoming 2026-2027 PSRI season. Our work is ultimately anchored on our commitment to help all members grow as photographers. Whether you are just beginning your photographic journey or a seasoned veteran, we

have something that will help you with your lifelong pursuit of the craft of photography.

For the upcoming season, we are working on six different ways to help our members grow as photographers.

Image Studies are a time where we all gather to celebrate the work of our members and offer thoughtful suggestions that photographers might consider the next time they are out shooting and/or post processing an image. For those that aren't keen on competitions, Image Studies provide a welcoming way to receive helpful input from fellow club members.

Mentors are club members who volunteer their time to work one-on-one with photographers of all skill levels, pro-

viding free, personalized guidance and targeted conversations about taking their photography to the next level.

Presentations are offered monthly, often several times a month, where we bring in outside speakers to share their skills, genre, adventure or experience with the club. These presentations are informative, help us learn and inspire us to get out there and photograph.

Photo Meetups are opportunities for the club to gather and enjoy a shared photographic experience. Whether it's a cool place like The Fantastic Umbrella Factory or a challenging experience like photographing the Milky Way or more your style like a wildlife walk, these experiences provide a fun environment where we often learn from each other.

Skill Meetups are specific gatherings where those interested are given the opportunity to learn new skills. Lightroom Classic and Photoshop are frequent topics at these meetups.

Competitions give members the opportunity to receive constructive, specific critiques of the photographs they choose to enter. New last year and back again by popular demand: our fun-filled Men vs. Women competition, which was a big hit! Our first meeting of the upcoming season is also an open house on September 8th. Come join us, bring a friend and we look forward to seeing you there!

Dave DeMarco

OPEN HOUSE

You are cordially invited to our Open House on September 8th as we kick off a new year of programs, events, competitions, get-togethers, and more—all leading into the 100th year of Rhode Island's premier photography club.

Our Open House is a free event and is open to the general public. Throughout the evening, knowledgeable and friendly members will be seated at dedicated tables, ready to answer questions about Photoshop, Lightroom, printing and matting, astrophotography, macro photography, and basic photography. We will also have someone on hand to review a specific image you choose to bring and answer any questions you may have about it.

Members will also be available to answer questions about our club, including our regular photography meetups and the many ways we give back to the wider community through our volunteer work.

Come join us for a memorable evening, meet other like-minded photographers, and enjoy some light refreshments.

PSRI Mission Statement

The mission of the Photographic Society of Rhode Island is to promote photography as an art form and provide a supportive community for photographers of all skill levels. We aim to inspire creativity, improve technical skills, and encourage artistic growth among our members through education, exhibits, competitions, photo outings, and networking events. By creating opportunities to share knowledge and critiques in a positive environment, we hope to advance the craft of photography in our community.

We invite you to join us at one of our meetings to experience this energy firsthand. You will meet people of great photographic talent, and great people to boot.

Calendar September/October 2026

Tue 1 Sept.	7 – 8:30pm BOD Meeting (Zoom)
Tue 8 Sept.	6:30 – 8:30pm Open House
Tue 15 Sept.	6:30 – 7pm Social Time 7 – 8:30pm Image Study 1: Panel Critiques
Tue 22 Sept.	6:30 – 7pm Social Time 7 – 8:30pm Silvana Della Camera: “Color, Contrast, Lighting and Composition”
Tue 29 Sept.	6:30 – 7pm Social Time 7 – 8:30pm Open Competition #1
Tue 6 Oct.	7–9pm BOD Meeting (Zoom)
Tue 13 Oct.	6:30–7pm Social Time 7–8:30pm - Mike Dooley: “Discover the Quiet Majesty of Nature”
Tue 20 Oct.	6:30–7pm Social Time (Zoom) 7 – 8:30pm Mark Battista: “Still Life Photography” (Zoom)
Tue 27 Oct.	6:30–7pm Social Time 7–8:30pm Image Study 2: Post Processing Help

[Click here](#) to see the most up-to-date calendar.

In Person Meeting Place

Lakewood Baptist Church, 255 Atlantic Av., Warwick

Driving Directions (From I-95 North or South)

- **Exit 14:** Take RI-37 East connector to the very end.
- **Post Road:** Curve onto Post Road North. (Pass Gregg's Restaurant on left).
- **Continue North:** Pass McDonald's and Walmart on your right.
- **Turn Right:** Take a right at the traffic light onto Atlantic Avenue.
- **Cross Warwick Ave:** Go straight through the next light at a slight left angle.
- **Arrive:** The church is on the left; parking is on the right.

PSRI is a Proud member of:



Upcoming Meetups



Parks and Picnic meetup. Photo by Lauren Lambert

Monday, September 14, Milky Way photography

Location: Drosty Drew Observatory at Ninigret Park, 61 Park Lane, Charlestown, RI. Meet at observatory parking lot, 8pm

Sunday, September 13th, Architectural Meetup

RI State House – Exterior and Surroundings, 2:30pm-4:30pm

Sunday, October 25th, Architectural Meetup

Slater Mill and Surroundings, 1:30pm-3:30pm

Keep an eye out for emails about upcoming meetups.

Digital and Print Competition Dates '26-'27

Open Competition #1	September 29, 2026 Entry due date: 22 September 2026*
Open Competition #2	November 3, 2026 Entry due date: 27 October 2026*
Nature Competition #1	December 8, 2026 Entry due date: 1 December 2026*
Open Competition #3	February 9, 2027 Entry due date: 2 February 2027*
Open Competition #4	March 16, 2027 Entry due date: 9 March 2027*
Nature Competition #2	April 20, 2027 Entry due date: 13 April 2027*

* Bring prints to the meeting or bring them to ANY Tuesday meeting prior to the competition and give them to either Lincoln Smith or Tara Marshall.

How We Use AI (Editorial Transparency)

We use AI tools—primarily ChatGPT—to assist with drafting and editing parts of this newsletter. PSRI editors set direction, fact-check, and approve all final text. We also use AI for grammar, clarity, and styling as needed.

Unless noted, all photographs are made by PSRI members. If AI is used to generate text or create/alter an image beyond standard edits, we label it clearly as such.

IN FOCUS Earns High Marks in PSA 2026 Newsletter Contest

By Bernadette van der Vliet. We're proud to share that *In Focus* (the May/June 2026 issue) was recognized in this year's PSA newsletter contest, with three judges weighing in on what makes our publication stand out. Here are some comments about our newsletter.

The three judges praised *In Focus* as a clean, well-organized read that punches above its weight, packing an impressive range of material into a compact format. The masthead — featuring the PSRI seal cleverly worked into the "O" — and the roadrunner-and-rattlesnake cover photo (by Karl Zuzarte) were singled out as memorable, story-driven touches that grab attention right away. The judges also passed along a few suggestions for future issues.

Content highlights called out by the judges included:

- "Is Photography a Spiritual Exercise?" by Mary Doo — won Best Opinion Article and was described as thoughtful and well written
- Community coverage, especially the Giving Back Through Photography feature with the Black Storytellers and the food bank benefit concert, which judges felt captured the club's spirit
- The Ask AI column, the historical Flashback reprint, and thorough events coverage for adding welcome variety
- "The Psychology of Matting Prints" — praised as a clear, practical guide with helpful before-and-after examples
- The club's editorial transparency statement about AI use, which one judge noted as a nice touch
- One judge summed it up as a warm, community-focused entry with real strength in both its writing and its giving-back spirit.

LAVENDER POND FARM Meetup



By Lauren Lambert. On July 13th, PSRI photographers explored the beautiful and peaceful property of Lavender Pond Farm in Killingworth, CT. Surrounded by the sweet smell of lavender plants, we walked between row upon row of English and French lavender in hues of purple and white.

It was fun to photograph the bees and butterflies drinking the nectar of the plants as well as the dragonflies flitting about. Some of the butterflies spotted include the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Monarch, Great Spangled Fritillary, and the Clouded Sulphur.

After a couple of hours, the group enjoyed lunch and each other's company at the nearby Cafe Laurel.

Photos by Lauren Lambert



Architectural Photography and Meetups, by Bob Mattera

This season I will be a guiding hand for PSRI members who are interested in helping to document the rich history of architecture across our state. The hope and plan are for this to involve meetups, individual efforts, presentations to PSRI by knowledgeable members of our preservation communities, such as the Providence Preservation Society, Zoom-only review sessions, and self-study, all culminating in an exhibit of our work at the Warwick Public Library. The aim will be a display of significant architecture across the state—old and new, faded and flourishing, famous and lesser-known. It will invite photographers of all levels, with the main photography consideration being that you hope to learn through the process. A win-win, etc., all around. Stay tuned.

Interested in seeing what the Photographic Society of Rhode Island is all about?

Join as a Guest Member for 30 days, available September through April.

Fill out the [registration form](#) and select the 30-day guest option.



Go to our website

BY BOB MATTERA

Ask AI

My question this issue says it all:

Q Looking for themes to shoot for architectural photography. Maybe 4 different approaches. I have about 2 hours to kill in Newport RI and am stuck for themes to work on. Maybe BVV, competing lines, looking up, not abstract though, or rhythm or timelessness or craftsmanship or local only. Also will have some post workflow after. Mostly Sunny day. Have a wide range of lenses from a super wide to a modest zoom. Like the idea of Dave Black who said “If you want to make a picture look interesting only light part of it.” Fire away with a paragraph on why, etc for each.

A With two hours in Newport and strong sun, I would give yourself four distinct assignments rather than wander around waiting for “good architecture” to announce itself. Each assignment should produce a small, coherent set—perhaps 6–10 serious frames—with enough variety to make the editing afterward interesting.

1. Architecture revealed by light

Make this your Dave Black assignment: photograph buildings only when the light reveals one important part and allows the rest to become secondary. Look for a sunlit doorway surrounded by shadow, light striking only the upper story, a bright façade seen through a dark foreground, or columns alternating between illumination and shade. The subject remains the building—not an abstraction—but you are deciding which part of it the viewer is permitted to see. Expose for the important highlight and let some shadows become genuinely dark. A sunny day is ideal because it creates the separation that overcast light cannot.

In Lightroom, resist opening the shadows globally. Start with a restrained profile, reduce highlights only enough to preserve surface texture, deepen blacks, and use masks to guide attention toward the illuminated feature. Try both color and black-and-white, but BW will often strengthen the idea by removing competing paint colors, signs and foliage.

2. Rhythm—and the thing that breaks it

Search for repeated windows, columns, porch posts, railings, roof dormers, shingles or closely spaced buildings. But don’t merely record the repetition: find the interruption. It might be an open window among closed ones, one curved element in a rectangular pattern, a flag breaking a row of columns, or a person passing through an otherwise orderly composition. That disruption gives the photograph a subject and keeps “rhythm” from becoming a sterile pattern exercise. Newport’s dense façades and elaborate porches should make this especially productive.

Use a moderate focal length when possible—perhaps the equivalent of 35–75mm—to keep verticals reasonably controlled and compress the repeated elements. In Lightroom, correct perspective enough that the repetition feels deliberate, crop precisely at the edges, and use local contrast or Texture selectively. Don’t push Clarity across the entire image; it can make shingles, foliage and masonry compete equally for attention.

3. Newport craftsmanship: evidence of the hand

Treat buildings as things made and maintained by people. Concentrate on carved brackets, stone joints, ironwork, door surrounds, weathered shingles, leaded glass, copper, masonry, old hinges and the places where one material meets another. Unlike an abstract-detail exercise, include enough surrounding architecture to show what the feature does and where it belongs. A carved capital is more meaningful when we see that it supports a porch; a worn threshold becomes stronger when it still leads us toward the door. Side lighting will bring out relief, tool marks and accumulated age.

Use your modest zoom or a normal lens and keep the camera plane as parallel as practical to the detail. In post, Texture is generally more useful than heavy Clarity. Consider a slightly warm color treatment for wood, brick and copper, or a neutral BW conversion that distinguishes materials through tone. This could become a very coherent six-image “Made in Newport” sequence.

4. Looking up: buildings meeting the sky

Work deliberately from low positions and photograph façades, towers, chimneys, rooflines and corners rising into the blue sky. The challenge is to make these feel intentional rather than like accidental converging verticals. Place a building corner near the center and let its two sides create competing diagonals; use shadows from cornices and balconies to divide the façade; or allow one sharply illuminated edge to emerge against a darker wall. Your super-wide lens will exaggerate height but try a few longer-lens compositions too—the compression may produce a more dignified, timeless result.

In Lightroom, decide frame by frame whether the converging lines are expressive or merely distracting. If expressive, preserve them and make the symmetry exact. If they look accidental, use Guided Upright—but leave enough room around the building because correction will crop heavily. These are natural candidates for black-and-white, particularly when the sky can be darkened enough to separate pale stone, clapboards or trim.

A useful two-hour structure would be:

- 25 minutes for each assignment
- 10 minutes moving between areas
- Final 20 minutes revisiting the strongest idea once you know what is working

My instinct is that **architecture revealed by light** will give you the strongest individual pictures, while **craftsmanship** and **rhythm interrupted** will produce the best small series. For every composition, make three versions: the establishing frame, the tighter interpretation, and one frame in which you wait for a person, shadow or passing element to activate it.

Final thoughts: I set out following this script, and during this I stumbled upon the old State House, which was open for tours, as well as Trinity Church. In the end it was ‘good architecture’ that announced itself that won my heart and interest. So much for planning.

Wickford Art Festival



By Bob Mattera “A resounding success,” said Mike Di Stefano, and others echoed that sentiment in a post-event email summary.

A large contingent of PSRI members had a hand in making the weekend a success. Dennis Goulet and Ted Lawson worked especially hard leading up to the event, ensuring that our tent and its accessories were tested, delivered, and set up.

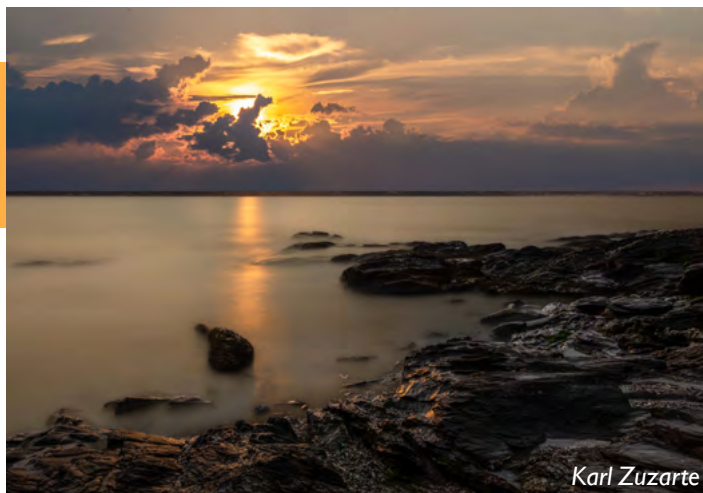
In many ways, this was an inaugural undertaking: we quite literally started from the ground up, designing and equipping our booth and then staffing it throughout the weekend. Many other members—too many to mention here—worked at the booth and greeted the many festivalgoers who stopped by for a visit. Nearly 20 of those visitors were interested enough to request additional information about PSRI and becoming members.

Many thanks to everyone who pitched in to make this first event in our year-long 100th anniversary celebration such a success.



DAYTIME LONG EXPOSURE & MILKY WAY MEETUP

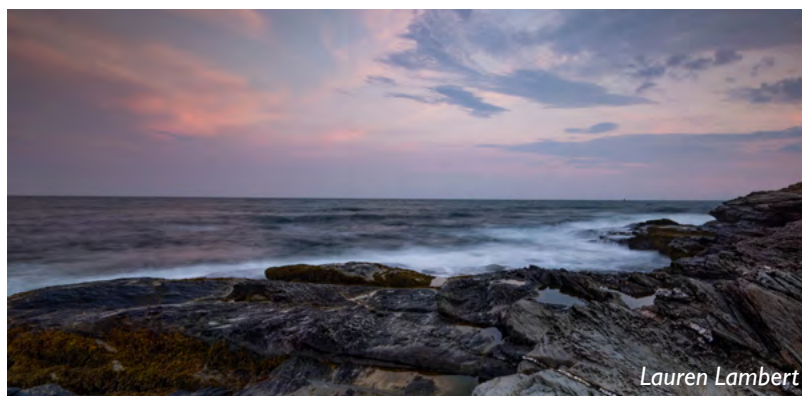
By Lauren Lambert. Organizing a meetup to photograph the Milky Way can be challenging as it requires a number of conditions to align. This was once again the case on August 8th when the weather prevented us from capturing the Milky Way's galactic core. Fortunately, Beavertail State Park in Jamestown, RI, rarely disappoints. Instead, PSRI members were treated to a beautiful sunset and the opportunity to create some stunning long-exposure images along the coast.



Karl Zuzarte



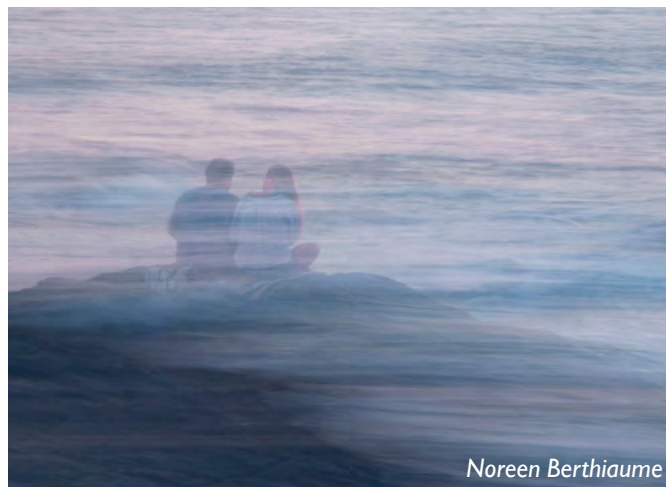
Bob Arnold



Lauren Lambert



Marion Faria



Noreen Berthiaume



Bob Arnold



Lauren Lambert

PSRI FLASHBACK

Capturing Moments, Reviving Memories!

by Lincoln Smith

Camera Club of Providence Moves to New Meeting Place

A Message from the President. I am happy to announce that with our first meeting on September 9th, we begin the 1986-1987 season in a new meeting place – the Meeting Hall of the Lakewood Baptist Church, 255 Atlantic Avenue, Warwick. Your Board of Directors has discussed this change for several months, and after extensive deliberation, we feel confident that the move is in the best interest of the club. Four years ago, the club shifted its meeting place from Providence to Cranston. The past four years at Woodridge Congregational Church have been good years. However, increasing costs there, as well as in other matters, dictate that we discover methods of living within a smaller budget. We took the first step this past year when we combined the six regular slide and print competitions into three meetings, thereby reducing rental costs.

The Lakewood Baptist Church facilities afford us a well-lighted, heated hall, seating 80 – 90 on the ground floor, with an adequate storage room for our equipment, and an excellent parking lot. The church is conveniently located for a majority of our members in a quiet residential

neighborhood; as well as an accessible handicap ramp and the reasonable rental cost will ensure that our income will exceed operating expenses, permitting the club to concentrate on presenting valuable, informative programs.

We are indebted to members Lincoln Smith and Dale Douthit, who are members of the Lakewood Church staff, for making the availability of the new quarters possible.

There is another change in club operations this year which is expected to increase the efficiency of the club competitions. The traditional, unwieldy “Pick-up Stations” will be eliminated. Going forward all slides and prints will be dropped off at the church the week before each competition.

This article was written by President Stan Rzewuski and it was published in the “In Focus” newsletter of the Camera Club of Providence, Volume 59: No. 1, September-October 1986, Our 59th Year.

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WE NEED YOU!

We want to hear from you! Submit a favorite photo, recap of a recent workshop or photo trip, spread the word about an upcoming workshop, or share your favorite tips and tricks. The PSRI newsletter is your space to connect and inspire — reach out to us to contribute to the next issue! Email submissions to PSRI-newsletter@psri.us

Giving Back Through Photography

NEADS (NATIONAL EDUCATION FOR ASSISTANCE DOG SERVICES)



Joan Teno

By Lorelei Ludovicz. Being able to document the impressive work of others is one of the most rewarding aspects of photography. In July, the PSRI Giving Back team had the opportunity of working with NEADS (National Education for Assistance Dog Services) in Princeton, Massachusetts.



Lorelei Ludovicz

NEADS is a nonprofit organization that trains Yellow and Black Labrador Retrievers to become highly skilled service dogs for individuals with disabilities, giving them greater independence and improving their quality of life. Through the lenses of Lorelei Ludovicz, Chris Williamson, and Joan

Teno, these remarkable dogs were captured performing the tasks they are trained to do every day.

They were photographed retrieving canes and keys, tugging open freezer doors, drawers, and cabinets, walking calmly alongside wheelchairs, pushing elevator and accessible door buttons, and remaining focused in busy public settings. The dogs are also trained to wake their owners to the sound of an alarm or guide someone who is deaf or hard of hearing to a ringing doorbell or other important sounds.

The dedication of the NEADS trainers was evident in every interaction. Their patience, compassion, and commitment are reflected in the confidence and temperament of the dogs they train. Of course, each dog also has its own personality—like Morris, who loved rubbing his head against someone. It was clear that these dogs are not only exceptionally well trained but also deeply loved and cared for.

The NEADS staff also have their fun! They are allowed to bring their dogs to work with them every day! They have a huge, fenced area to play in and toys and humans to play with! The PSRI crew mildly partook in the activities.



Chris Williamson

It's not all work for the dogs either! Training is balanced with plenty of time to play to just be dogs. Even during play, though, they are taught appropriate behaviors—for example, they never play tug-of-war with people, only with other dogs. It's just one of the many thoughtful ways NEADS prepares them for a lifetime of service. NEADS also maintains an on-site breeding program to ensure the health and temperament of future service dogs. Due to extensive training and breed-

ing restrictions, the wait for a service dog is typically between two and five years. Breeding dogs have three to four litters before retirement, after which they are placed in loving homes, often with members of the NEADS staff who have helped care for them throughout their lives.

Spending the day at NEADS was both inspiring and humbling. Witnessing these remarkable dogs at work (and the dedicated people who train them) was a powerful reminder of how compassion, patience, and partnership can truly change lives. If you'd like to donate or volunteer (they need volunteers), you can visit their website at NEADS.org. You'll probably find Lorelei there!



Chris Williamson

WHAT IS "GIVING BACK THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY"?

By Karen Johnson-Nieuwendijk. For 3 years, PSRI's group [Giving Back Through Photography](#) has helped non-profits tell their stories — for FREE! These few paragraphs will give both new and continuing members an understanding of what we do in this group.

Our group offers photography free of charge to non-profit organizations for them to use in any way they would like — on Facebook or Instagram, or for any public relations reason they choose. This has a two-fold benefit: it saves the organization money that they'd otherwise spend on a professional photographer, and it spreads the word about what PSRI is and what we do. On top of that, we get to meet some truly wonderful people. This is an all-volunteer group from our club. Some members have expressed concern that their photos would not be good enough, but the organizations we have worked with only require that the photographs capture the scene and the emotion of the event. They are not looking for competition-perfect photos.

There is an [application form](#) for a non-profit to fill out at our website. It lists the information that we need — the date, place, how many photographers are needed, etc. Once we get a request for photos, we coordinate with the club for volunteers to take photos at the event.

Some of the organizations we have worked with are the Attleboro Art Museum, Village Common RI, ECHO Village that serves people experiencing homelessness, Rhode Island Black Storytellers, our own Lakewood Baptist Church, Pawtuxet River Authority which cleans up and maintains the Pawtuxet River, Ronald McDonald House, and most recently the NEADS organization that trains service dogs for people with disabilities.

I have a favor to ask of all of you who read this. If you know of any non-profit organization(s) that would benefit from our expertise in photography, or if you would like to volunteer to be available for any of our photo shoots, please send me an email at kejnie@gmail.com.



Joan Teno



Lorelei Ludovicz



Chris Williamson

"Cereal Champions!"

"6th Annual July Cereal Challenge Overflows with Community Spirit"



From left to right: Stan Moretti, Lincoln Smith, Brody Vernet, Carlton Watkins.
Photo by Cecily Douthit



Caden Denton bringing cereal to the truck. Photo by Lincoln Smith



Jordan Hiatt, Marketplace Supervisor unloading the truck. Photo by Lincoln Smith

Warwick, RI — The 6th Annual July Cereal Challenge was a huge success. The "HELP END HUNGER" Food Ministry at Lakewood Baptist Church set a goal of 1,500 boxes and collected 1,904 boxes to benefit Westbay Marketplace, run by Westbay Community Action — all thanks to the incredible support of local businesses, faith communities, and generous individuals throughout the community.

"fighting hunger one box at a time"

Spearheaded by Lincoln Smith, a member of Lakewood Baptist Church, the Cereal Challenge has become a summer tradition focused on fighting food insecurity by stocking the shelves of Westbay Marketplace with kid-friendly, shelf-stable breakfast options.

This year's effort was made possible through the collaboration of many community partners, including Lakewood Baptist Church, Shaw's, Stop & Shop, Dave's Marketplace, Asbury Methodist Church, Pawtuxet Baptist Church, Spring Green Memorial Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Martorelli Property Services LLC, **members of the Photographic Society of RI**, VFW Post 183, and anyone else who donated cereal or money for Lincoln to shop with.

"Every box collected is a small act of kindness that adds up to something truly powerful," said Jordan Hiatt, Marketplace Supervisor. "These donations will go directly to families in need — especially important during the

summer months when kids are out of school and access to free meals is limited."

Lakewood Baptist Church has proudly sponsored the challenge for six years running. Church member and Westbay volunteer Lincoln Smith reflected on the growing impact: "To see more than 1,900 boxes come in from across the community is deeply moving. It shows what can happen when people unite for a common cause."

With shelves now full and spirits lifted, the team at Westbay Marketplace is already looking forward to next year's challenge — inspired by what this community can accomplish together. **Together, we're fighting hunger one box at a time.**

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LEAP FEST MEETUP



Helen Lambiase

By Lauren Lambert. It was a great opportunity for PSRI members to witness and photograph LEAPFEST, an international parachute competition held on August 1 in Exeter. Representatives from Allied foreign militaries, along with the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, competed in this impressive display of precision and teamwork.

Each team consisted of four jumpers who exited a CH-47 Chinook helicopter from an altitude of 1,500 feet. Using steerable parachutes, the competitors aimed to land as close as possible to a designated target within the landing zone. After touching down, they raced against the clock to reach the scoring area, where their time was recorded.

One of the highlights for photographers was scanning the sky for the approaching helicopters and anticipating the perfect moment to capture the jumpers as they stepped into the open air. Timing, patience, and a keen eye were essential to freezing these exciting moments.

Beyond the competition itself, the event showcased the professionalism, precision, and camaraderie shared among the teams. Spectators enthusiastically applauded every landing, recognizing the remarkable skill, courage, and dedication of all the participants. It was an exciting day that provided PSRI members with countless opportunities to capture compelling action photographs while witnessing an exceptional international event.



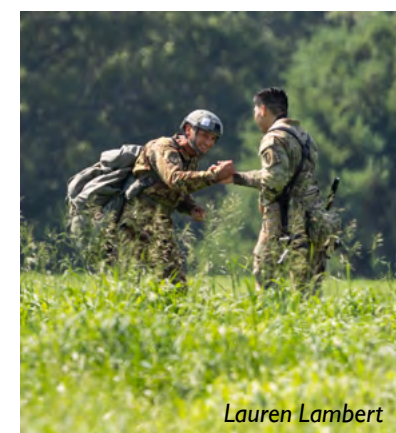
Terrie Pierse



Terrie Pierse



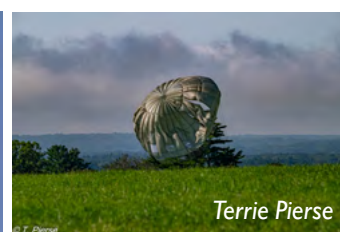
Helen Lambiase



Lauren Lambert



Lauren Lambert



Terrie Pierse

The Quiet Majesty of Nature: *LOVE ON THE ROCKS*

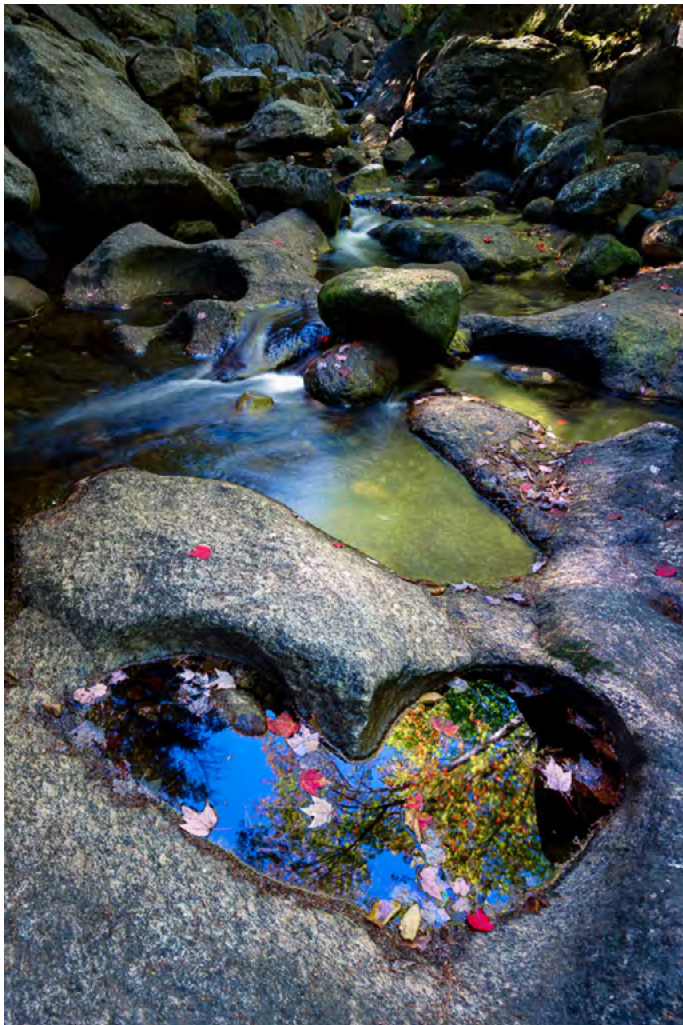
I had a plan that day. I usually do.

A friend and I drove up to a spot in New Hampshire called Sculptured Rocks, and I'd already pictured the shot in my head—water tumbling between stone walls, the current catching the light, that classic photographer's playground. I could practically feel the shutter clicking before we'd even parked the car.

We got there, and there was no water. Not “not much.” None. Someone had pulled the plug on the whole scene, and with it, my plan.

I could have called it a wasted trip. Packed up, driven home, chalked it up to bad timing. Instead, I did what nature has slowly taught me to do over the years: I kept wandering. Camera in hand, no expectations left to protect, just walking the dry riverbed to see what was actually there instead of what I'd hoped would be.

That's when I found it.



A heart shape, worn into the stone by water that wasn't there anymore. It was quietly collecting leaves, holding on to a small puddle of leftover rain—like the rock itself had decided to keep something gentle long after the drama had moved on.

I looked at it for a while before I ever raised the camera. There's a version of me from earlier that morning who would have walked right past it, still chasing the shot he'd already imagined.

I almost cleaned it up. A few leaves sat right in the middle of that carved heart, and some part of my brain—the tidy, technical part—started calculating how I'd scoop them out, or fix it later in post. But I didn't. It felt honest the way it was. Nature's version of a love note, scribbled in stone, and I wasn't going to edit its handwriting.

I printed that one myself, right at the dining room table—no darkroom, no chemical trays, none of the waiting I grew up with in photography. Just paper, ink, and a quiet afternoon turning a found moment into something I could hold.

I called it Love on the Rocks—partly for the obvious reason, and partly because I can't look at that image without Neil Diamond showing up uninvited in my head.

But underneath the joke, the name means something plainer to me now: love doesn't always show up where you were looking for it. Sometimes it's carved quietly into the ground you almost walked past.

That's what I mean when I talk about the quiet majesty of nature. It's not the waterfall I went looking for. It's the thing that was there all along, waiting for me to stop expecting and start noticing.

I think that's true off the trail too. We plan for the dramatic version—the big win, the perfect outcome, the shot we already have in our heads—and when it doesn't show up, it's easy to call the day a loss and go home.

But something beautiful is usually still out there, just around the bend, holding its shape in the quiet. You only find it if you're willing to keep walking after the plan falls apart.

I know that better now than I did the day I took this photo. And every time I look at it, I'm reminded: keep wandering. Even when—especially when—the vision doesn't match the reality.

Mike Dooley

PARKS & PICNIC

MEETUP



Kathy French

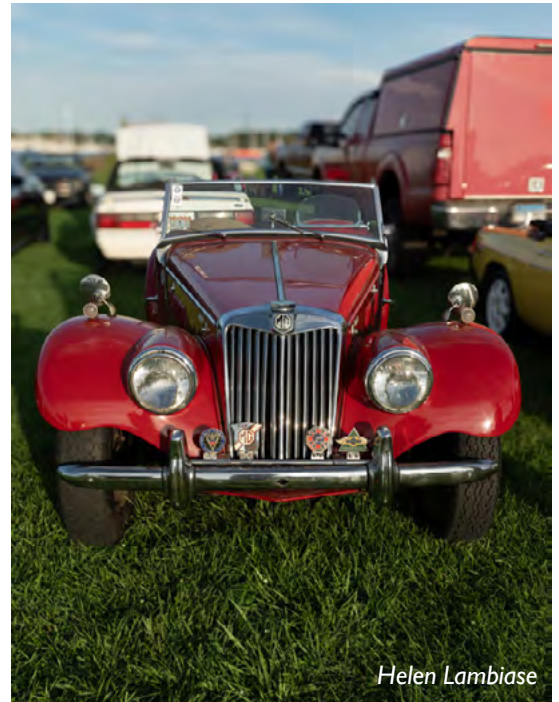


Lauren Lambert



Stephen Spencer

By Helen Lambiase. PSRI photographers had a wonderful time at the Parks and Picnic event in Newport sponsored by the Audrain Automobile Museum. There were hundreds of classic cars to photograph against the backdrop of historic Fort Adams, Newport Harbor and Narragansett Bay. The choice of cars to photograph included a Corvette, Mustang, MG, Maserati, Porsche and a McLaren to name a few. We also had the opportunity to photograph sailboats gliding by the fort as the evening light changed.



Helen Lambiase



Stephen Spencer

The Story I Forgot: Cormorant Fishing on the Li River

by Mary Doo

I was recently invited to give a presentation about my travels in China to the Cape Cod Art Center Camera Club. I decided to combine photographs from my 2025 trip to Xinjiang with images from earlier trips.

While reviewing my old images from Guilin, I encountered a small mystery. There were frames of cormorants wrestling remarkably large fish from the water, fishermen reaching down to retrieve the catch, birds flapping and splashing beside bamboo rafts. These were among the most active photographs I had made that morning. Yet I could barely remember photographing them.

What I did remember clearly were the photographs I had intended to make.

Like many photographers before me, I went to Guilin with particular images in mind: fishermen standing on bamboo rafts at dawn, cormorants nicely perched beside them, perhaps glowing lanterns reflected in the water, all surrounded by those ethereal limestone karst mountains for which the Li River is famous.



Perhaps that was “end of story” for me. I don’t know. Because what I had almost forgotten was much of what happened in between.

Seeing What We Expect to See

Was this a photographer’s version of inattentional blindness? When we arrive somewhere with a preconceived photograph in mind, our attention can

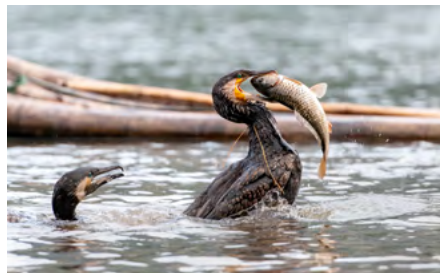
become remarkably selective. I woke up before dawn, arrived in that beautiful early light and waited excitedly for the fishermen to appear against the misty karst mountains. I knew what I hoped to photograph.

When we concentrate intensely on what we expect to see, other things can pass through our field of vision without becoming firmly lodged in memory. Apparently, that may have happened to me.

My camera certainly recorded the cormorants catching fish. I followed the action, focused, composed and pressed the shutter. Clearly, I was paying enough attention to photograph it. But mentally, I was still focused on “the picture”—the fishermen on their bamboo rafts, the lanterns, the exquisite dawn light and the misty karst mountains.

Looking at the files now, I find the irony amusing. The photographs that interest me most today are not necessarily the ones I had traveled there intending to make. They are the ones I almost overlooked.

And they made me curious about what I had actually witnessed.

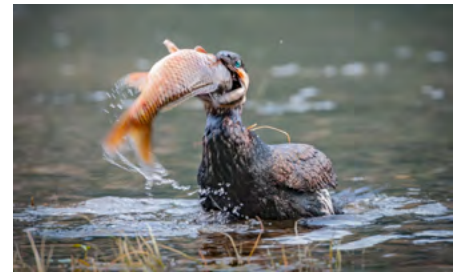


A Thousand-Year Practice

Cormorant fishing has been practiced in China for more than a thousand years. Instead of relying on nets or fishing lines, fishermen trained cormorants to do something the birds already do well: dive and catch fish.



Traditionally, a loose cord or ring was placed around the bird’s neck. The cormorant could swallow smaller fish, but a sufficiently large fish could not pass through. When the bird surfaced with a large catch, the fisherman retrieved the fish and sent the bird out again. The birds were fed and rewarded as part of this working relationship.



The first time I learned about this practice, I was quite disturbed by it. Years ago, I remember watching a 60 Minutes segment about cormorant fishing. What stayed in my mind was the revelation that a ring or cord around the bird’s neck prevented it from swallowing the larger fish it had caught. I felt for the cormorant: How unfair. The cormorant did all the work, and the fisherman took away its dinner. That interpretation remained in my memory.





A Change in Perspective

As nature photographers, many of us have watched wild birds catch fish. Sometimes a great blue heron, egret or other fishing bird succeeds in catching something so large that swallowing it becomes a spectacle. The fish gradually disappears while the bird's neck bulges around it.

In Africa, I once saw several great white pelicans aggressively pecking another pelican as it struggled to swallow a large fish as quickly as possible. Nature is not always gentle.

Watching these cormorants—and especially looking at the images years later—made their relationship with the fishermen seem more complicated to me than my earlier good-bird/bad-fisherman interpretation.

These were clearly trained birds accustomed to working in close association with the fishermen. The birds I photographed appeared well fed. They remained close to the rafts and to the men handling them. The relationship between bird and fisherman seemed familiar and stable. One image in particular shows an elderly fisherman almost hugging his bird.



I hesitate to impose human emotions on an animal, and a photograph certainly cannot tell us whether a bird is “happy.” Nor does this eliminate ethical questions about restricting what an animal catches or using animals for human purposes.

But what I now saw seemed more complicated than cruelty on one side and victimhood on the other. It appeared to be a working relationship developed over generations between humans and birds whose natural fishing abilities were incorporated into a way of life.

Fishing—or a Living Museum?

There was another question I had not considered when I made the photographs. Was I actually photographing fishermen fishing for a living?

It now seems likely that I was not—at least not in the traditional sense.

Modern fishing methods have largely replaced this labor-intensive practice. Cormorant fishing survives today largely because visitors still want to see it—and photographers still want to photograph it, of course.

The technique itself was real. The fishermen knew how to handle the birds. The cormorants really did enter the water and catch fish. The relationship between bird and fisherman was not invented for my camera. But the reason for doing it had changed.

Once, the purpose was primarily to bring home fish. Now, increasingly, the purpose is to preserve and demonstrate a disappearing tradition—and to provide visitors with the experience and photographs they have come to see.

So, what we are watching is something like a living museum.

This realization made me reconsider the extraordinary sequence preserved in my photographs. A cormorant emerges with an enormous fish in its beak. Water flies. Wings spread. The fisherman reaches in and retrieves the catch.

“
A photograph preserves a moment; understanding it can take years
”

It was visually spectacular—perfect for cameras. Perhaps too perfect.

I don't know exactly how our demonstration was arranged, or whether I even thought of it as a demonstration at the time. That doesn't make the photographs false. It changes what they mean.

We photographers are good at recognizing beauty, and Guilin practically demands it—the mist, the karst peaks, the lanterns. There's nothing wrong with making that photograph. But sometimes the more interesting story sits just outside the frame we came intending to fill.



What was once a practical fishing technique has become cultural heritage. What I once interpreted as a cruel transaction between man and bird now seems more like a working relationship built over generations. And what appeared through my viewfinder as documentary action was also, partly, a performance for people like me.

None of these interpretations may be complete. A photograph preserves a moment; understanding it can take years. The images that finally taught me something new were the ones I couldn't even remember taking.



Bob Mattera



Mike Di Stefano



Lauren Lambert

OAKLAND BEACH Cruise Night MEETUP

By Noreen Berthiaume & Mike Di Stefano. A special thank you to all those PSRI members who braved the winds and threats of showers to participate in the Oakland Beach Cruise Night Meetup on Tuesday, July 28th. The car owners also were a little fearful of the weather, as there were many fewer cars there than normal. Since the cars were slow to arrive, some of our members went to Iggy's Clam Shack to get a bite to eat and wait for more cars to show up. So, like the old saying, "when given lemons, make lemonade," we took advantage of the open space around the cars and fewer people walking into our image compositions. The DJ played the oldies from the '50s and '60s, which helped get everyone in the mood to photograph the legendary classic cars.



Mike Di Stefano



Lauren Lambert



Lauren Lambert



Bob Mattera

Providence Pedestrian Bridge meetup



Lauren Lambert



Kathy French



Lauren Lambert

By Lauren Lambert. Photographic Society of Rhode Island members couldn't have asked for a better evening on Sunday, August 16th. The weather was absolutely perfect, offering abundant photo opportunities on and around the Michael S. Van Leesten Memorial Bridge—popularly known as the Providence Pedestrian Bridge. Stretching 450 feet across the Providence River to connect the Jewelry District with Fox Point, the modern wood-and-steel deck was a bustling hub of community life. Camera shutters clicked as young men played chess on the bridge's built-in metal boards, a gentleman played the accordion, and a steady stream of walkers, bicyclists, and rollerbladers passed by. On the lower deck, the public joined a West Coast Swing group for an open-air dance session, creating a fun, energetic atmosphere to photograph. Looking out over the water, members captured paddle boarders, boaters, and couples enjoying romantic gondola rides. As day turned to dusk, the Blue Hour arrived, bathing the downtown skyline in stunning light and painting the river with shimmering reflections of the city lights.



Stephen Spencer



Kathy French



Stephen Spencer



Stephen Spencer



Lauren Lambert



Kathy French



Lauren Lambert

PSRI

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Photo by Helen Lambiase

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