

Night Photography

Steve Thompson

- ❖ I retired in 2019, one of my photography goals was to improve my night sky photography. You will consider it a success if you get well focused stars and decent exposure. Next start working on single shot images while considering composition. The limiting factor is keeping the shutter time short enough the stars stay pinpoint sharp with no trailing or streaking. Shoot lenses wide open and use a ISO high enough to gather enough light for decent detail and limit noise. That July our club had a night shoot at Beaver Creek Nature Area, we had some props to add interest and were even surprised with some fireflies. Photo #1 is an example of one of my early single shot attempts.
- ❖ Trying to improve details in dark areas and reduce noise was my next objective. Star Stacking is frequently used to accomplish the goal with many free software options. Stacking not to increase Depth of Field but to layer a series of images without moving the camera between shots to add light and reduce noise. This requires advance time in post processing, increasing storage space, and plenty of trial and error. Photo #2 is an example of what can be achieved star stacking.
- ❖ To save storage space another option is to use a Star Tracker. This device rotates your camera at the same speed as the earth rotates allowing the shutter to be open several minutes with shorter focal lengths. The tradeoff is the foregrounds blur. This requires us to make an image for the sky plus turn off the Star Tracker and take another longer exposure for the foreground. In post processing the two images are opened in an editing software such as photoshop using the Layers feature. One of the images is masked, then the two images are blended into the final result to achieve sharp good exposures in both the foreground and sky. Photo#3 is such an image.
- ❖ Photo #4 is a normal foreground blended with a Stacked and Tracked sky. The sky image is 8 tracked exposures of two minutes each, then stacked. The sky and foreground are Blended in Photoshop.
- ❖ No matter which method you use they all work better the darker the sky. Take into account light pollution, Moon Phases, and atmospheric conditions such as clouds, humidity, and wildfire smoke. Each night I am shooting the stars I ALWAYS take some time to just sit and marvel at the beauty of our Universe.

Photo #1 is an example of one
of my early single shot
attempts.



Photo #2 shows what can
be achieved with star
stacking.



Photo #3 illustrates what I did in post processing. Two images are opened in an editing software such as Photoshop using the Layers feature. One of the images is masked, then the two images are blended into the final result to achieve sharp good exposures in both the foreground and sky.



Photo #4 is a normal foreground blended with a Stacked and Tracked sky. The sky image is 8 tracked exposures of two minutes each, then stacked. The sky and foreground are blended in Photoshop.



Bob Boone

“Falls Park Christmas”



Bob Boone
“Texas Condo”



Bob Boone
“Great Bear”



Bob Boone
“Big Buck”



Tim Schmit
“4th of July”



Tim Schmit
“After Sunset”



Tim Schmit
“Aurora”



Tim Schmit
“Neowise”



Sue
Hohenthanner
“Untitled 1”



Sue
Hohenthanner
“Untitled 2”



Sue
Hohenthanner
“Untitled 3”



Mike Davis
“Evening Storm”



Mike Davis
“Moon Rise at
Okoboji”



Mike Davis
“Murder in the Air”



Mike Davis
“Sunset
Reflections”



Robin Sweeten

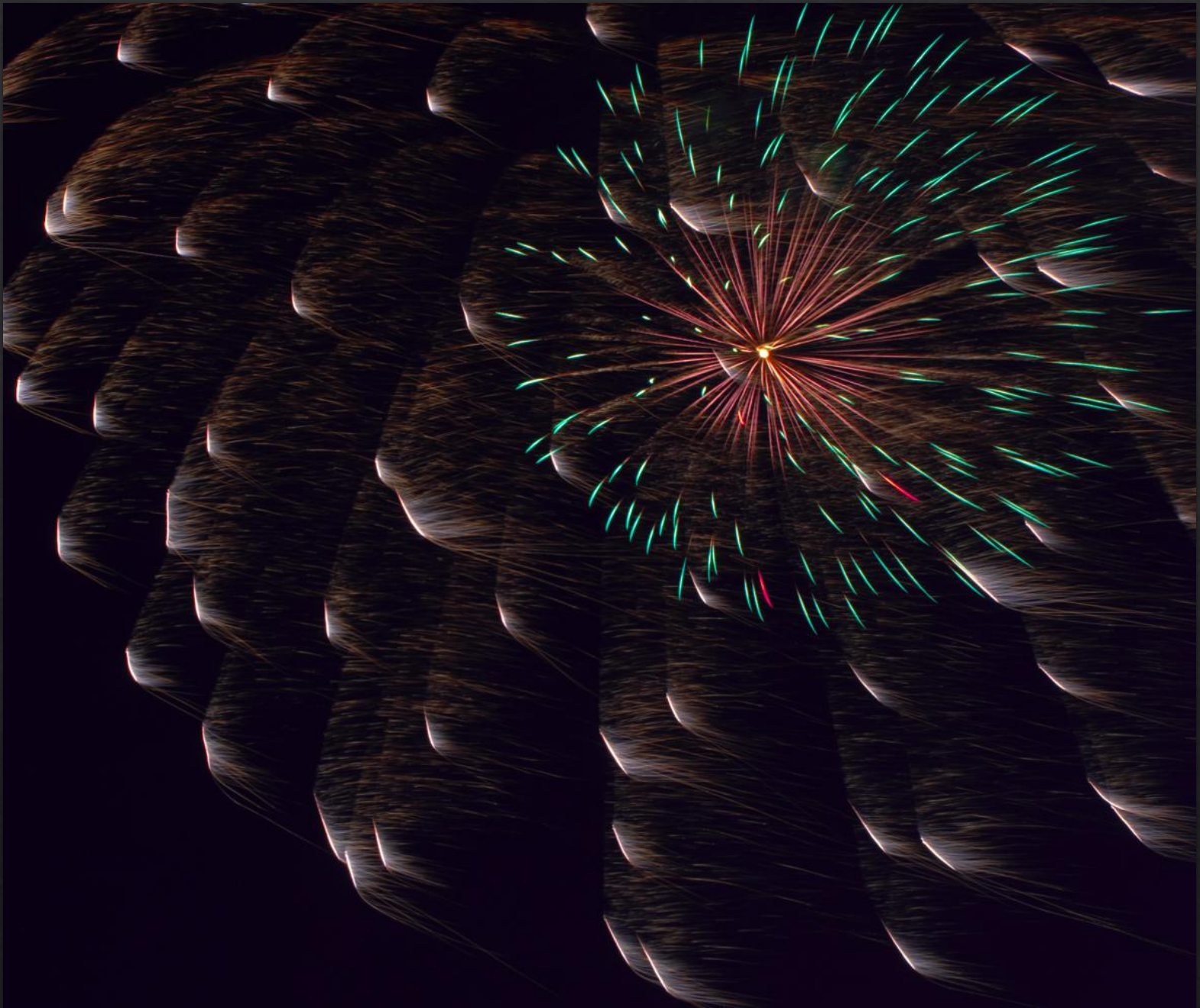
“First Attempt”



Robin Sweeten
“We’ll Leave
the Light On”



Robin Sweeten
“4th of July”



Robin Sweeten “Fire Dancer”

