

June 25, 2022: Night Sky Photography Workshop Recap

written by Tom Oliver | July 1, 2022

For about a year, the [Keweenaw Mountain Lodge](#) has been hosting night sky photography workshops on or near the date of the new moon each month. This month's workshop was the first, following our designation the [Keweenaw Dark Sky Park](#), by the International Dark-Sky Association – for which the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge serves as the headquarters.

The workshop this month was attended by three people. Since we are entering the time of year when the core of the Milky Way is more visible in this region, the primary focus was planned to be about shooting the Milky Way. However, conditions for possible Aurora activity were predicted earlier in the day. So, each of those topics were discussed during the class portion of the workshop. All-in-all, the workshop lasted around two and a half hours, during which time several tips for taking night sky photos were discussed.



Because this workshop occurred near the summer solstice, the onset of darkness did not occur until about 11:30pm. Additionally, thunderstorms were occurring throughout the area and we had very overcast skies during the class portion of the workshop. The plan was for me to scout locations for conditions between when the in-class portion ended and the “hands-on” practice was planned to begin. Then we all would meet back together and decide whether or not conditions were favorable for photographing the night sky.

After scouting potential locations, we decided that the conditions did not appear promising and we decided to fore-go a photo shoot of the dark sky. However, one participant (Brad) requested that I show him a good location so he could try to go take pictures when conditions were better. I agreed and the two of us went to one of the Lake Superior shoreline locations not far from the Lodge.

While we were there, Brad, used the Photopills App on his phone to pre-plan some shots he thought he would like to take. While he was doing that, I noticed that the sky, far to the north, over Lake Superior was starting to clear. I pointed it out to Brad and told him that I thought the local sky conditions might improve two to three hours later (It turned out that was a gross overestimation.)

Our walk back to our vehicles was about 50-60 yards through the woods, in the direction that Brad had been planning his shots. When we emerged from the woods, most of the sky was crystal clear – all the clouds for at least 80% of the sky had simply dissipated in a matter of a few minutes. It almost felt like passing through the woods had teleported us to another time and place

So, Brad and I quickly returned to the shoreline, where he set

up his tripod and camera for the composition of the Milky Way that he wanted. While he was taking those pictures, I took a general picture of the Lake Superior horizon to the north (opposite of the direction Brad was facing) and I surprised to see that we could also capture the distant glow of the Aurora that had been predicted, earlier. When I showed Brad what my camera had captured, he was thrilled beyond description. He told me that he had never before been able to take pictures of the Northern Lights. We ended up staying there for an additional two hours, which gave him the chance to try a number of different compositions, for both the Milky way core and the Northern Lights – and to try various combinations of settings and lenses.



A picture of Brad taking a picture of himself celebrating his Northern Lights victory along the Lake Superior shoreline – under the dark skies of the Keweenaw Dark Sky Park.

I just received the following note from Brad:

I'm so grateful you went out with me, helped with the shoot, and patiently waited for me to get the shots I wanted before leaving. I really appreciate that. Without your help and patience I wouldn't have gotten all of these terrific shots. It's rare I'm under dark skies so this was really important to me. Thank you! I have all of these marvelous shots because you stuck it out.

The Keweenaw Mountain Lodge has scheduled multiple Night Sky Photography Workshops for this summer season – each one scheduled for a weekend around the time of a new moon. Our next [Night Sky Photo Workshop will be held Saturday, July 30th, 2022 at 7:30pm.](#)

Please see our [Calendar of Events](#) for the complete listing of upcoming workshops, then contact the Keweenaw Mountain Lodge – [Outdoor Activity Center](#) or [Events & Education Department](#) for more details and to reserve your space.



[Tom Oliver](#)

Since I was a child, nature, wildlife, and the outdoors have always been my deepest fascination – the intrinsic force which drives me. Those interests led me through, both, my career (in wildlife ecology/management and science education) and my preferred forms of recreation (hiking, backpacking, canoeing and kayaking, photography, hunting and fishing, and birding). Although, I was born and raised in the UP, these pursuits also

provided me the opportunity to live overseas (in Europe and Asia) for 15 years, which greatly expanded my experience with the outdoors and outdoor recreation in different cultures. So, if you're interested in anything related to the outdoors, stop by the Lodge (or catch me anywhere you may see me on the grounds) to chat about or get set up for your next outdoor adventure.