

The background of the image is a vibrant, out-of-focus photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). It features streaks of green, yellow, and orange light against a dark, starry night sky. The lights appear to be dancing and flowing across the frame, creating a magical and ethereal atmosphere.


Stars in My Eyes: Composing and Shooting Powerful Aurora Photos

By Aubrieta V. Hope

What is Composition?

The artistic arrangement
and placement of visual elements
within the picture frame.

-Neil Weaver

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights). It features vibrant green and yellow light streaks and curtains against a dark, starry night sky. The lights are concentrated in the lower half of the image, with some fainter streaks visible higher up.

A well-composed image
captures *your vision* of the Aurora's
fleeting colors, textures, shapes, and
power. It may also include the *beauty*
of the world that surrounds it.

PLAN AHEAD ☺



- **Scout locations in the daylight**
Look for intrusive lights, trip hazards, safe parking, bathrooms
- **Visualize compositions in advance**
Imagine a faint Aurora, an overhead Aurora, SAR, STEVE
- **Study the Aurora data in advance**
What is the cause & confidence level, how is data trending?
- **Check weather forecasts & moon calendar**
- **Pack what you need to stay out late**
Warm layers, waterproof jacket/pants, headlamp, knee pads, cushion, handwarmers, bug spray, snacks, water

Possible Visual Elements

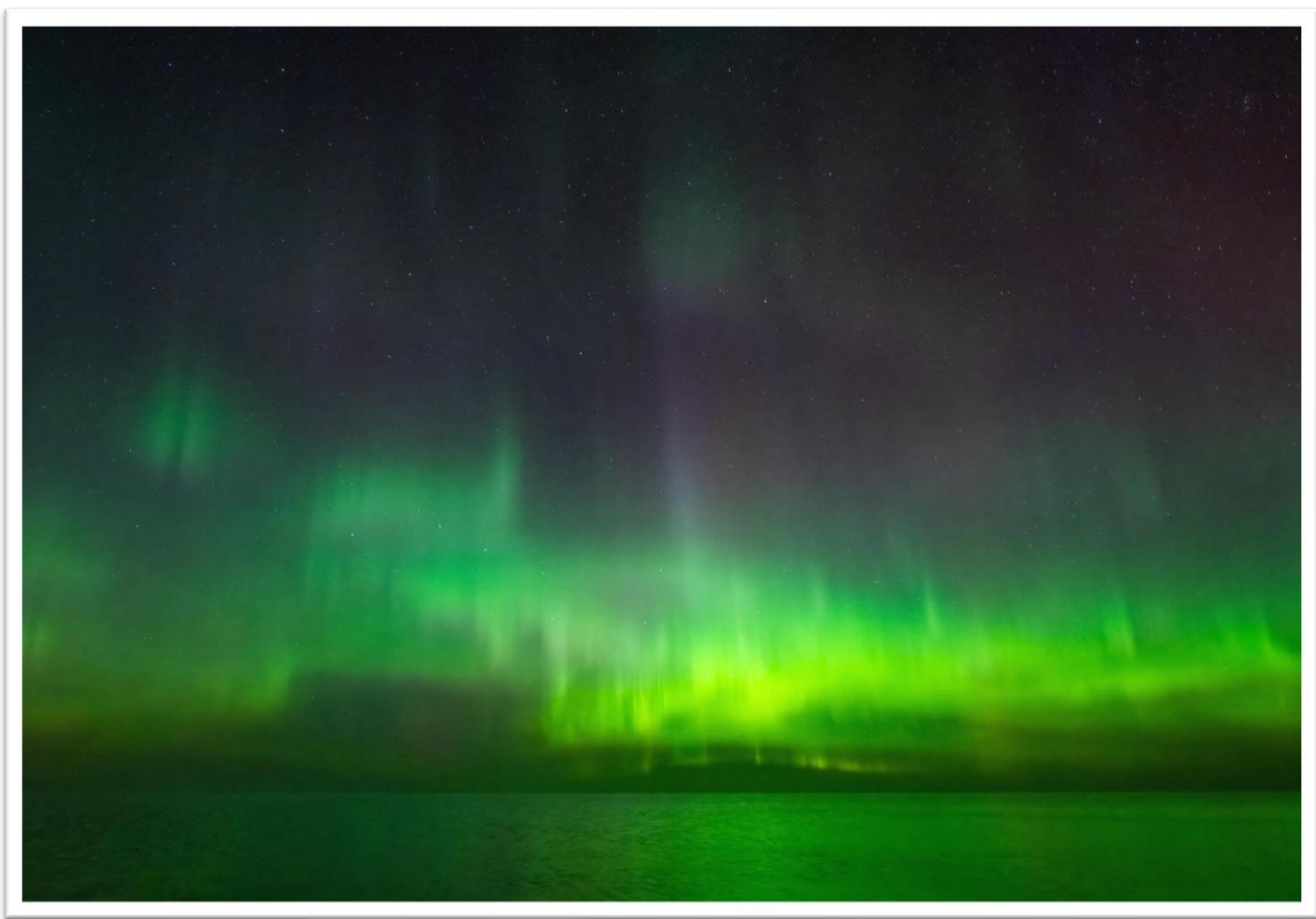
- Reflections – puddles, rivers, ponds, lakes
- Leading Lines – roads, trails, docks
- Diagonal Lines – on land and in the sky
- Framing - vertical or horizontal elements
- Silhouettes – people, trees, fences
- Architectural features – barns, lighthouses
- Star Trails – with long shutter speeds

Reflections

**Magnify the
Aurora, creating a
colorful foreground**

**August 23, 2016
f/2.8, 20 sec., ISO
1600 at 14mm**



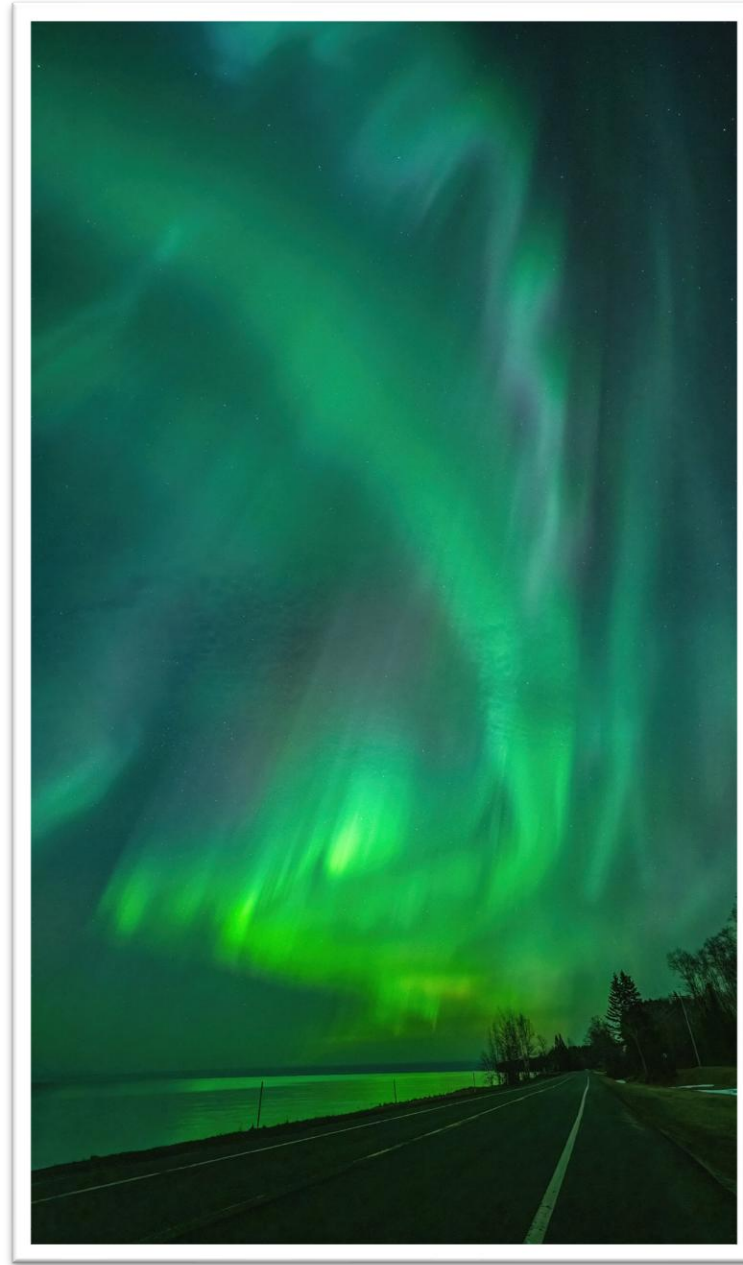
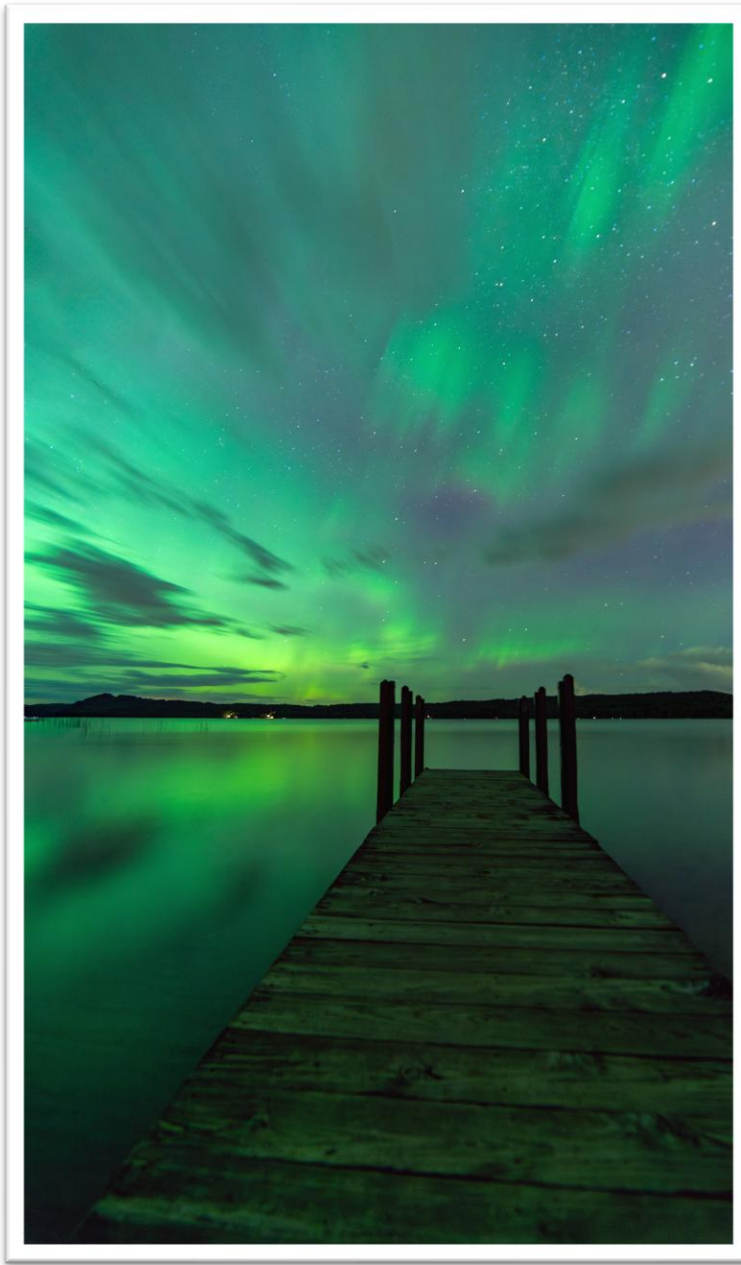
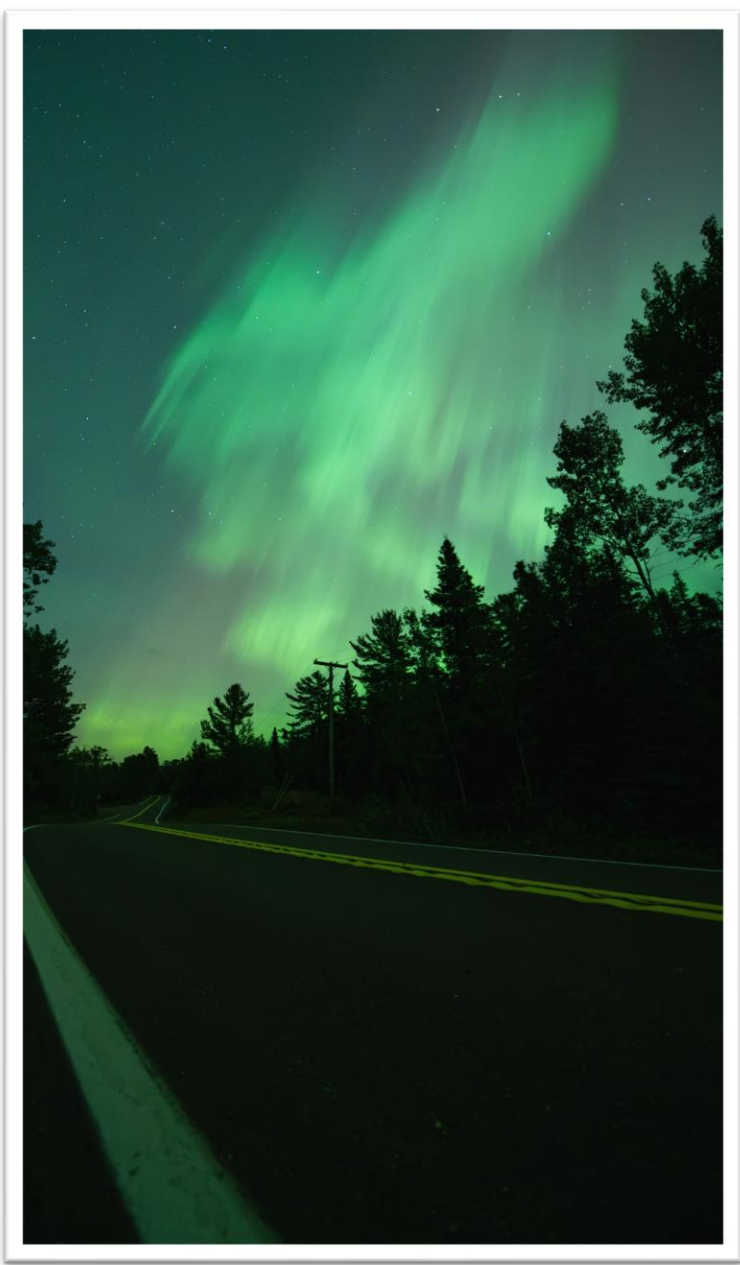


Leading Lines

Invite viewer into
the scene

August 5, 2023
f/2.8, 15 sec., ISO
4000 at 24 mm





Diagonal Lines

**Eye-catching,
convey energy**

**August 12, 2024
f/2.8, 6 sec., ISO
4000 at 14mm**



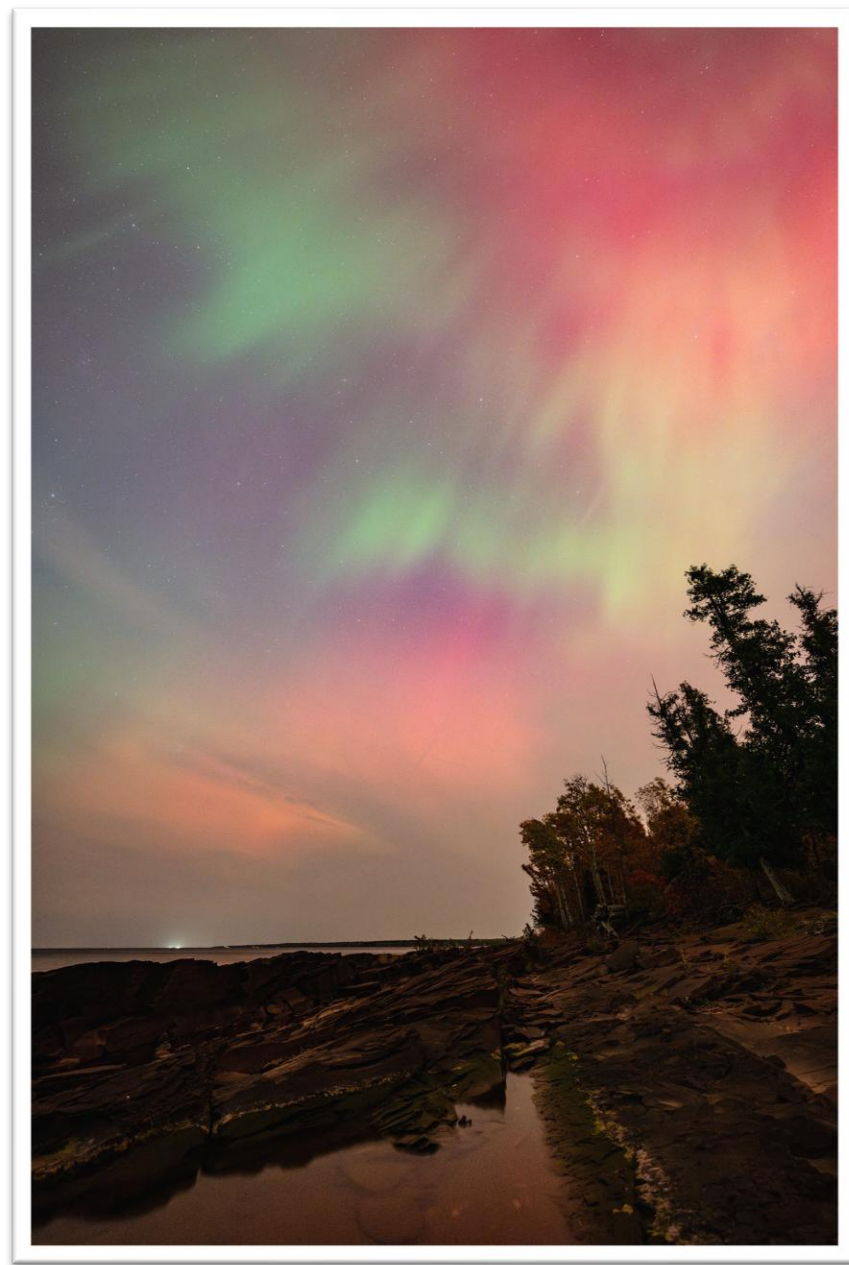
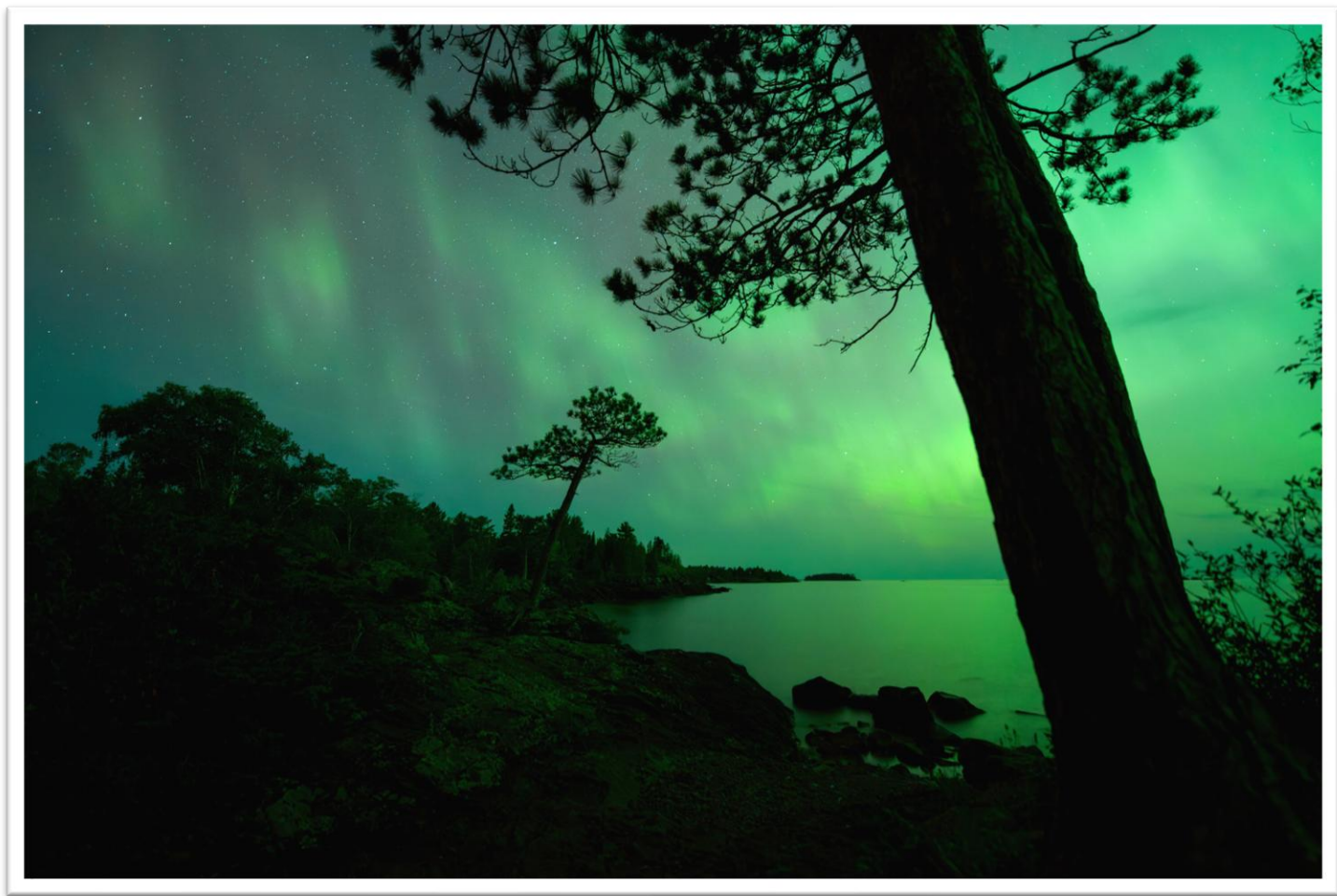


Find a Natural Frame

with trees, rocky
shorelines or
other visual
elements

September 2, 2025
f/2.8, 15 sec.,
ISO 6400 at 14mm



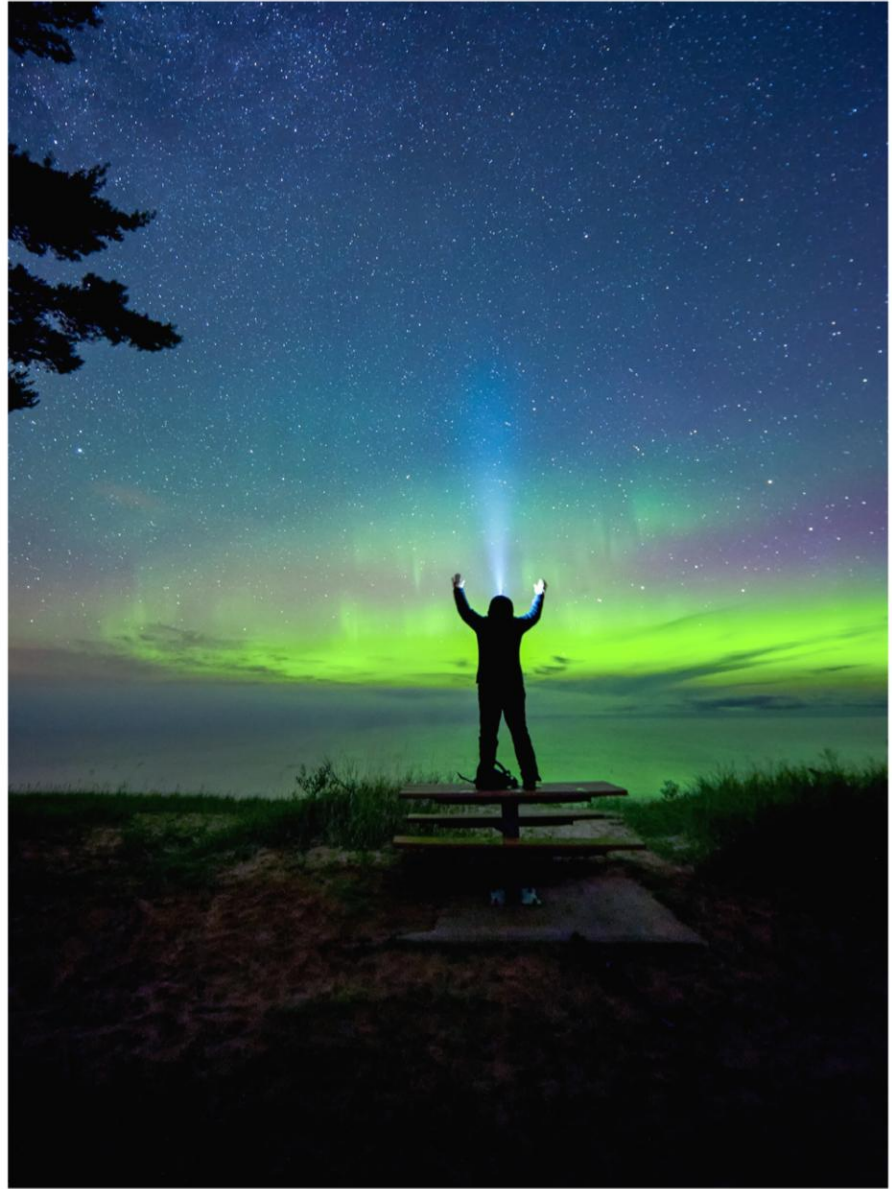


Silhouettes Add Impact!

Use as a
frame or point
of interest

September 1, 2019
f/2.8, 25 sec., ISO
4000 at 22mm



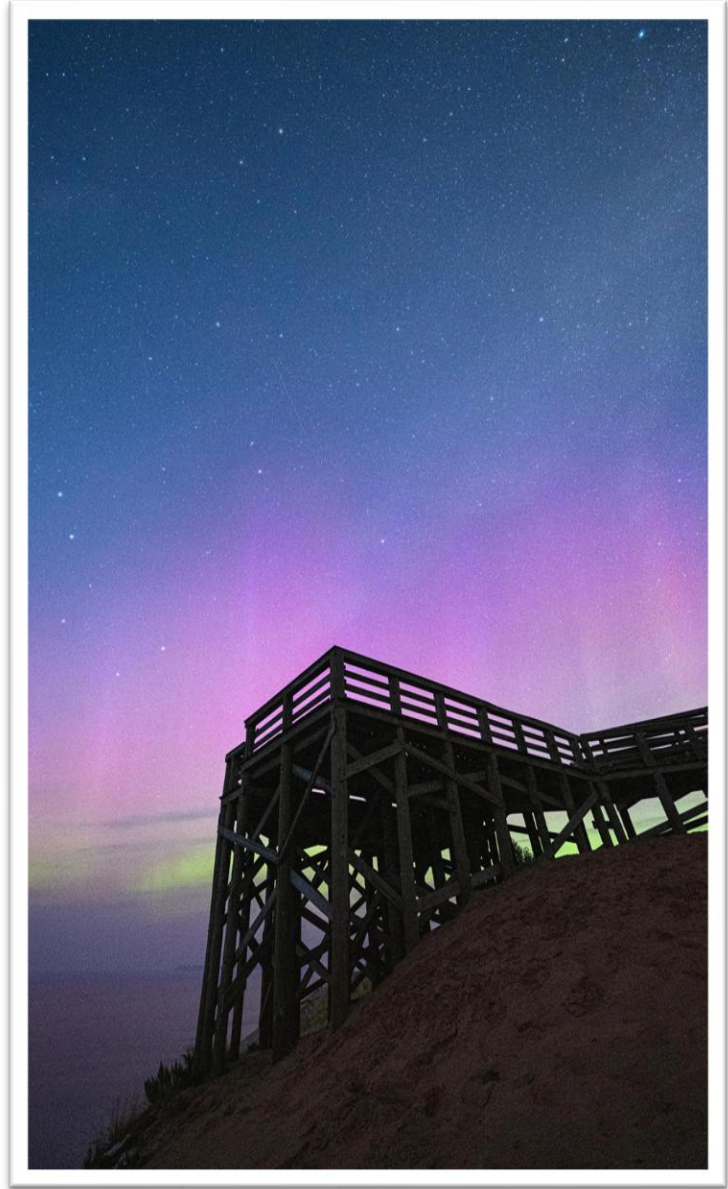
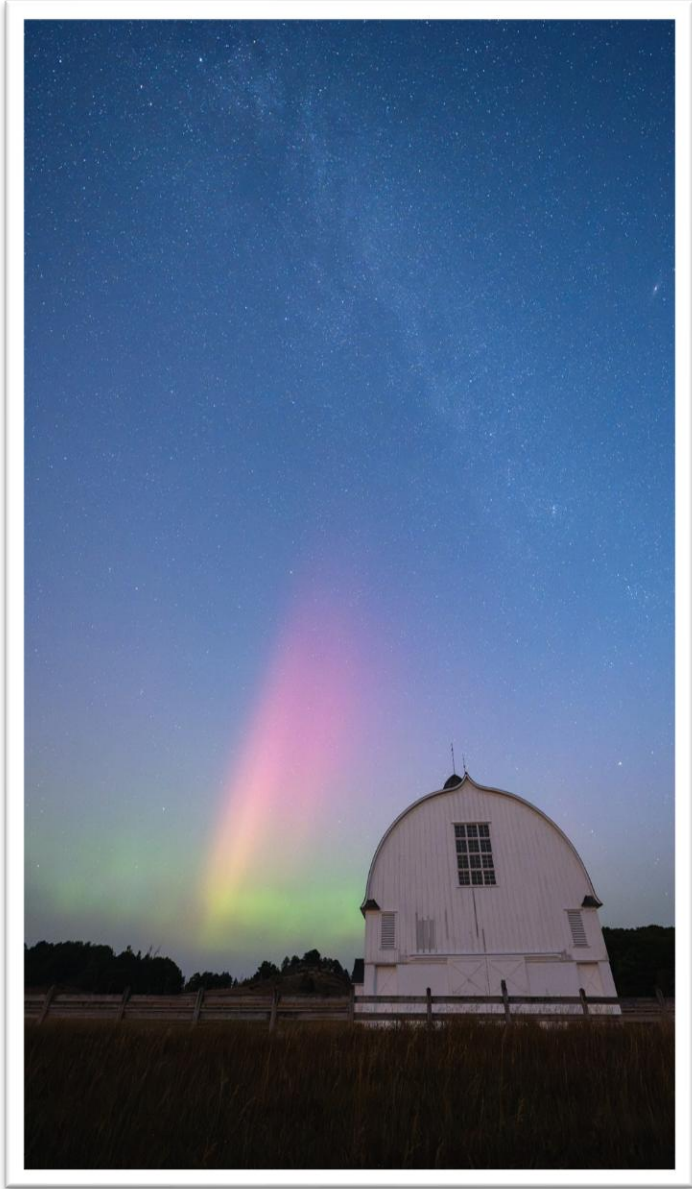
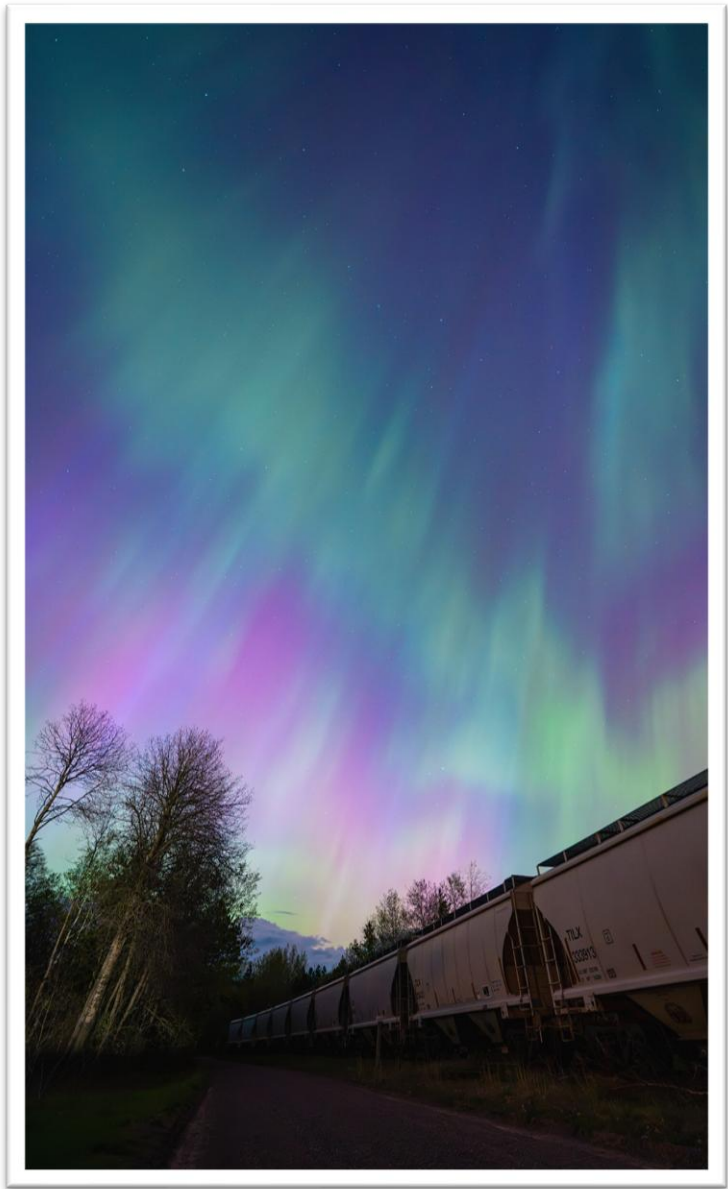


Architectural Structures

Add Interest
to a Scene

June 7, 2024
f/2.8, 6 sec., ISO 2000
at 14mm





Opportunities and Obstacles

- Tiny Aurora, low on horizon
- Overhead Aurora
- STEVE, SAR, Proton Arcs
- Moonlight, Dawn, City Lights
- Wildfire Smoke, Fog
- Clouds Moving Through
- Electrical Wires

Shooting a Tiny Aurora

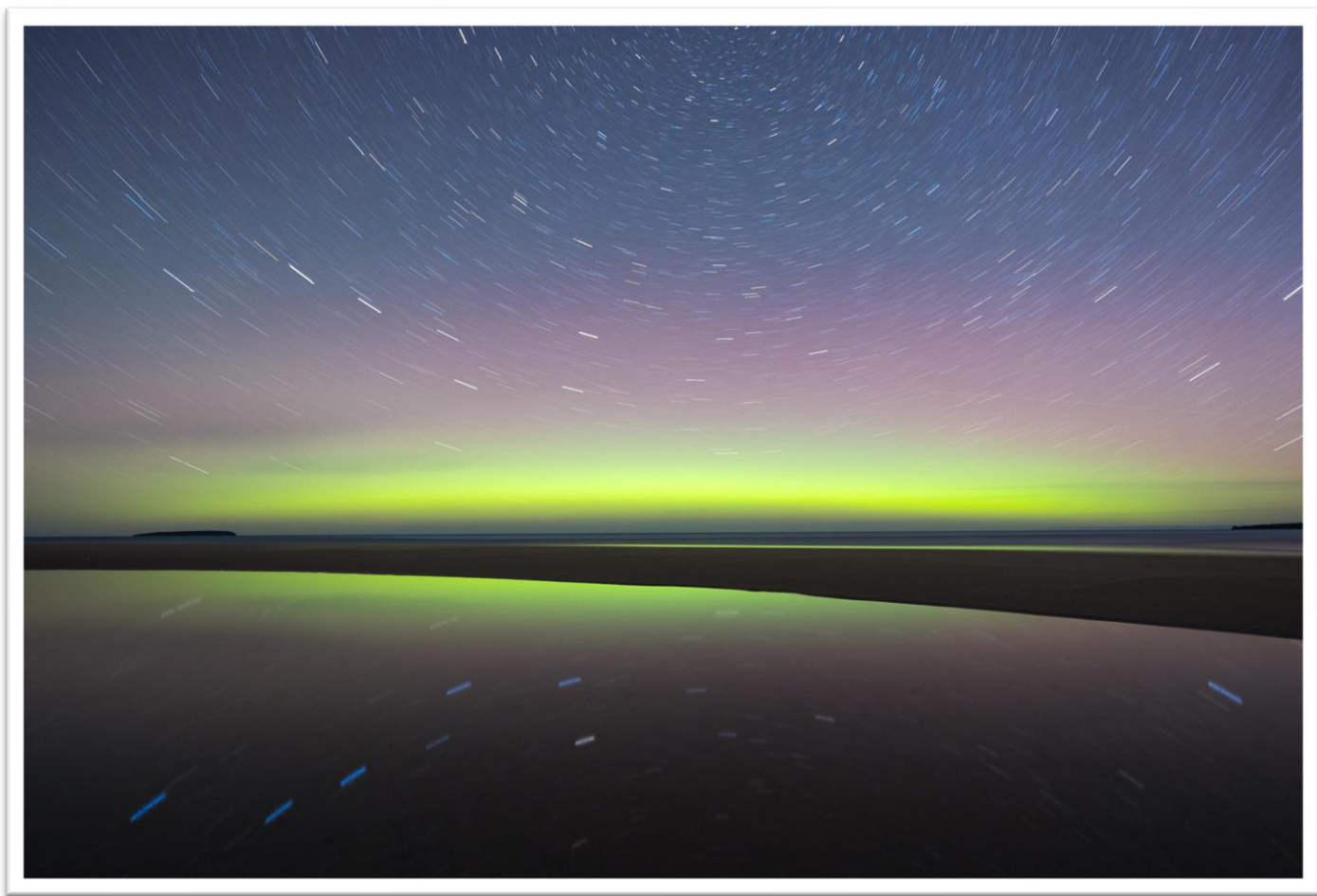
1. Try a Long Exposure for Star Trails (4 min. or more)
2. Frame It with an interesting foreground
3. Add a silhouette/person
4. Point Camera Down and catch reflections
5. Include Milky Way, trees, or other vertical elements
6. In Lightroom, slide Dehaze into the negative

Tiny Aurora?

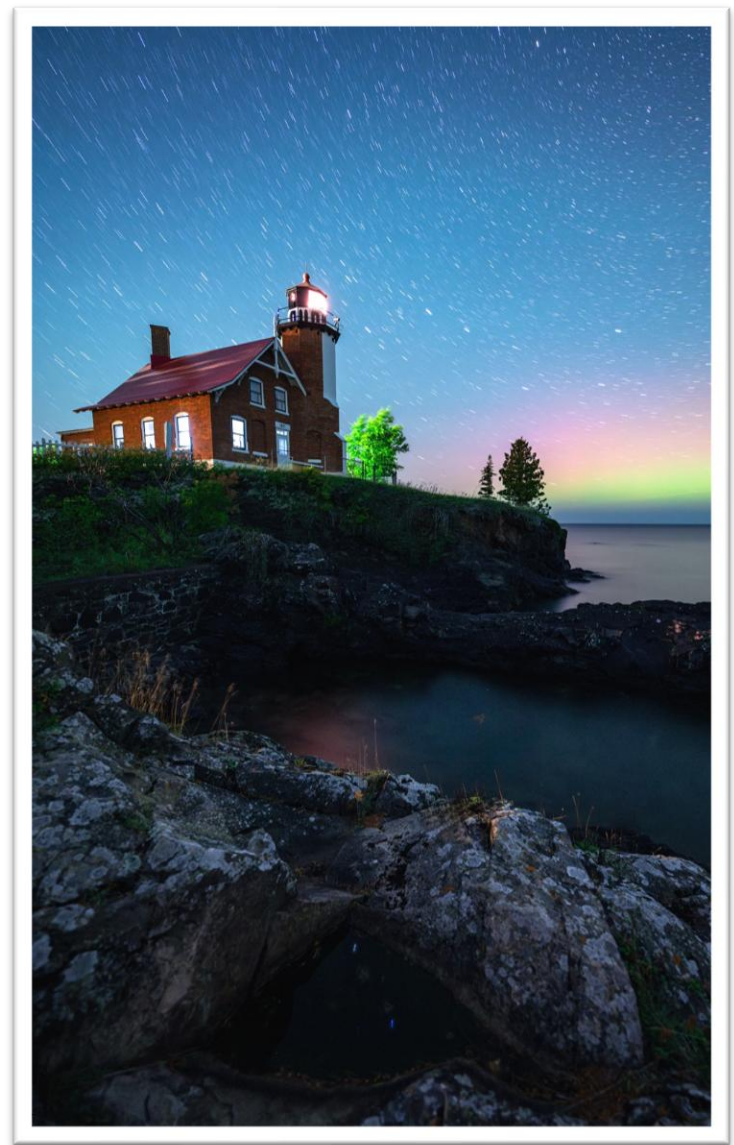
Use longer
shutter speeds
to reveal its
colors

August 28, 2022
f/2.8, 25 sec.,
ISO 6400, 20mm





12 min. shutter speed



4 min. shutter speed

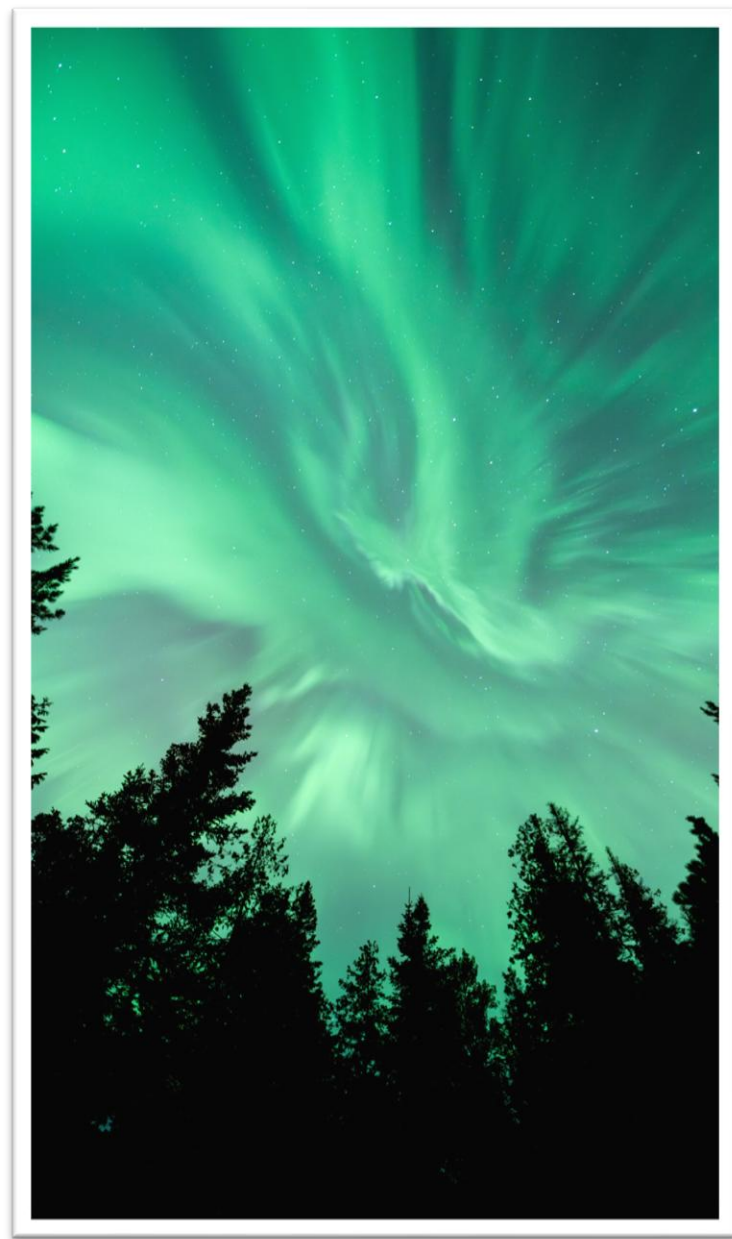
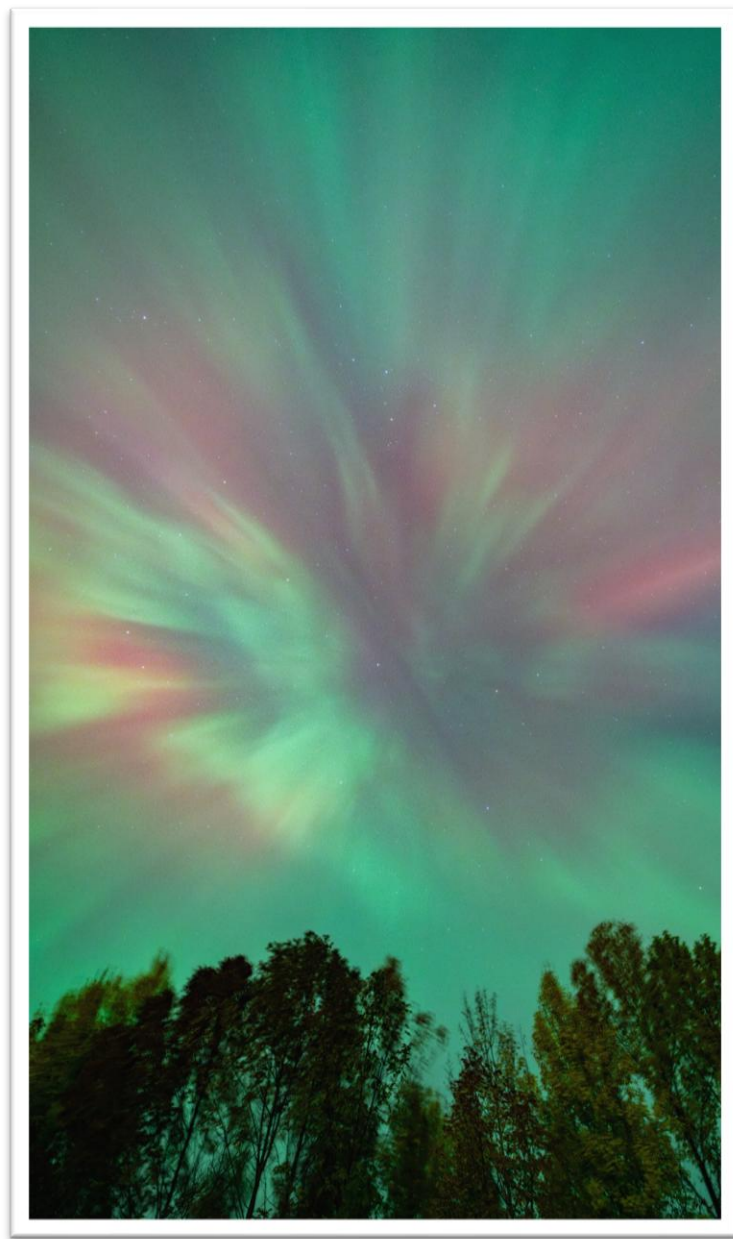
**Backlit by
a crescent
moon, my
friend
frames a tiny
Aurora**

**May 30, 2025
f/2.8, 15 sec., ISO
6400 at 14mm**



Shooting Overhead Aurora

- Overhead Aurora can be invisible to the eye. Take overhead test shots if you see very tall pillars.
- Shoot overhead in all direction: the corona moves fast and can appear anywhere.
- Use the fastest possible shutter speeds, 1-5 seconds for best results.
- Treetops or other visual elements may frame it well.

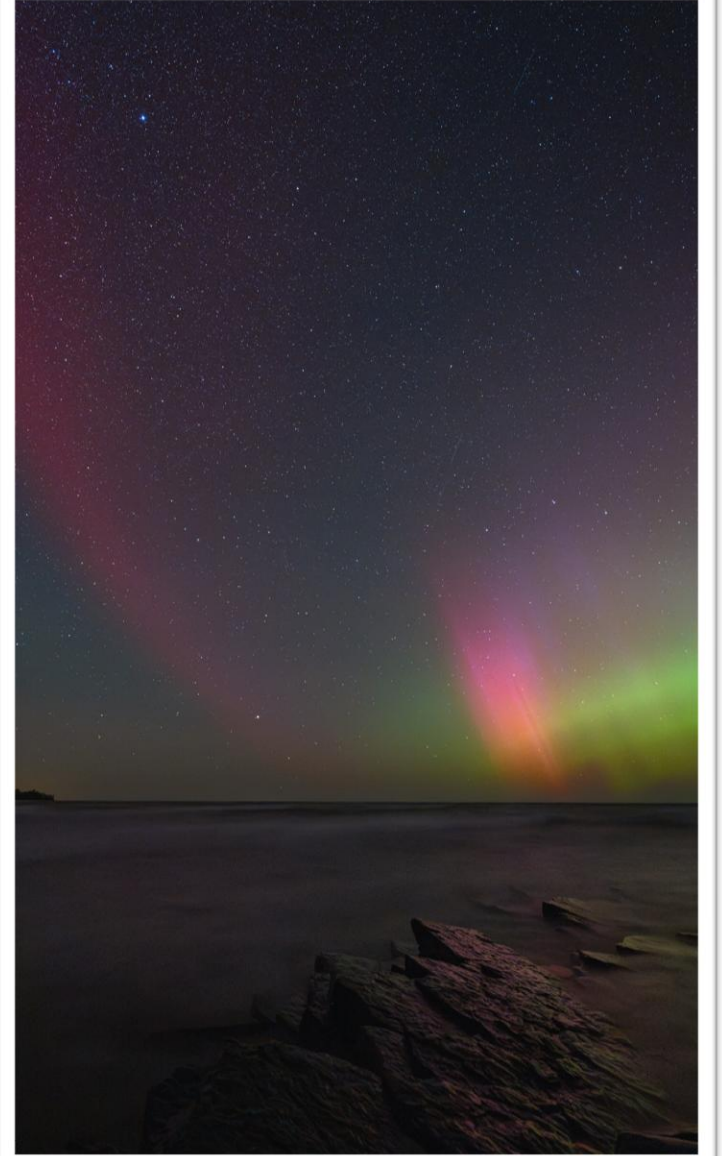
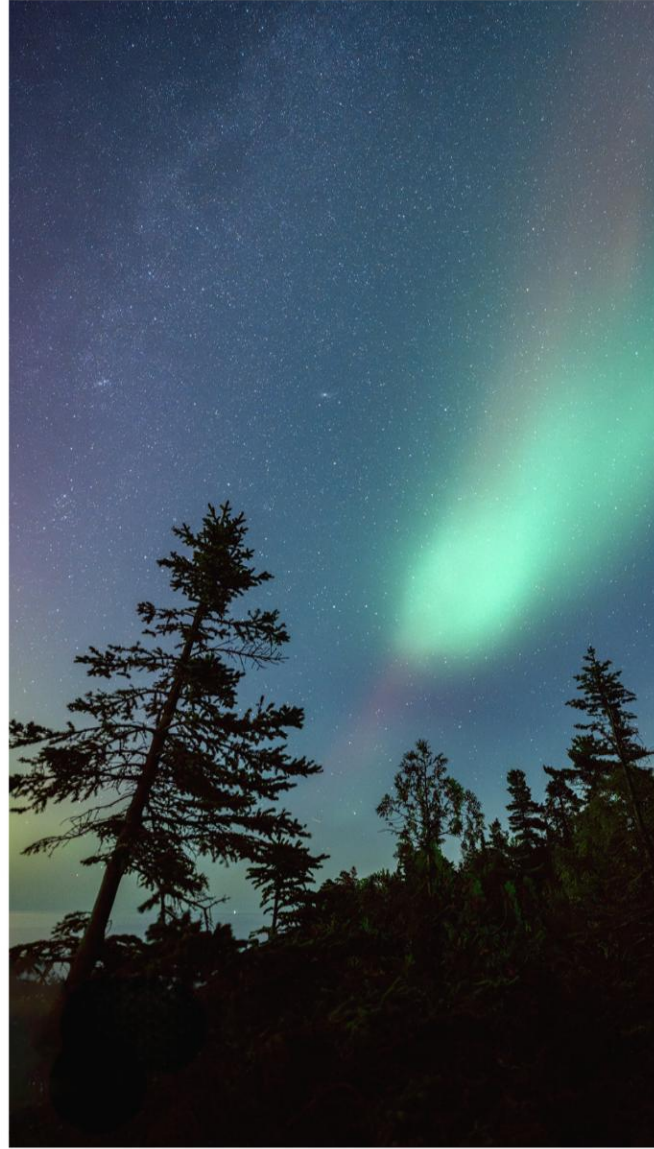


STEVE, SAR & PROTON ARCS

Spin around or
you might miss
them

September 29, 2025
f/2.8, 13 sec.,
ISO 6400 at 14mm





Make Friends with The Moon!

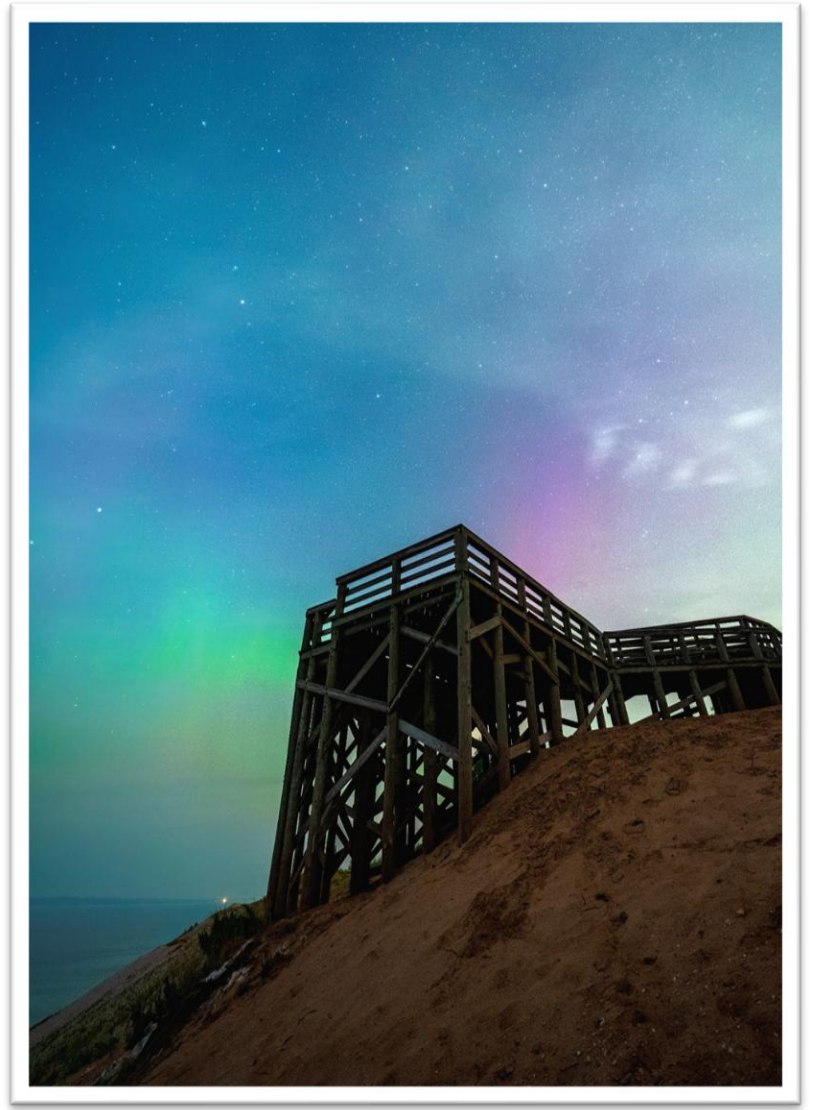
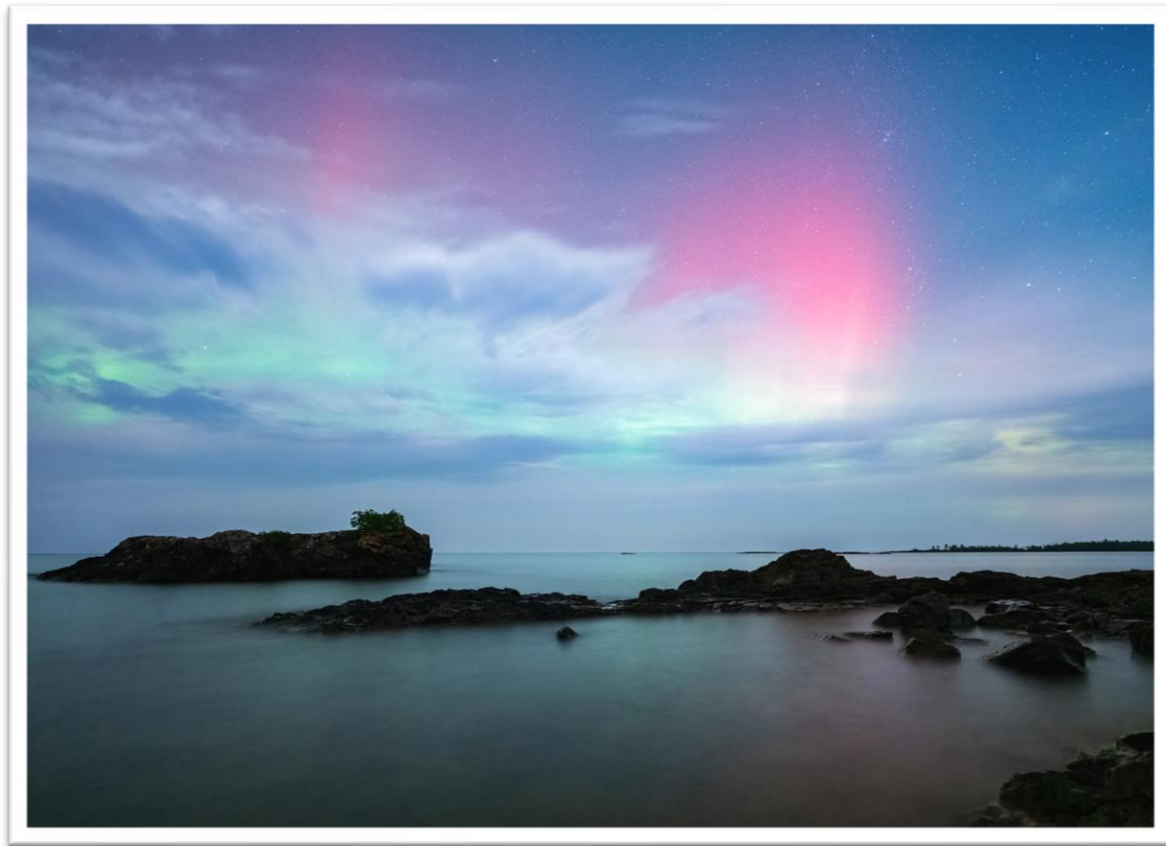
- Moonlight makes the best fill light! It lifts dark shadows to light up cliffs, lighthouses, barns, shorelines, etc.
- Moonlight allows for tighter shots with pinpoint stars. Choose shorter shutter speeds and zoom in!
- Use the moon to backlight translucent subjects.
- Shoot moonlit scenes during substorms, taking care to not overexpose the sky.

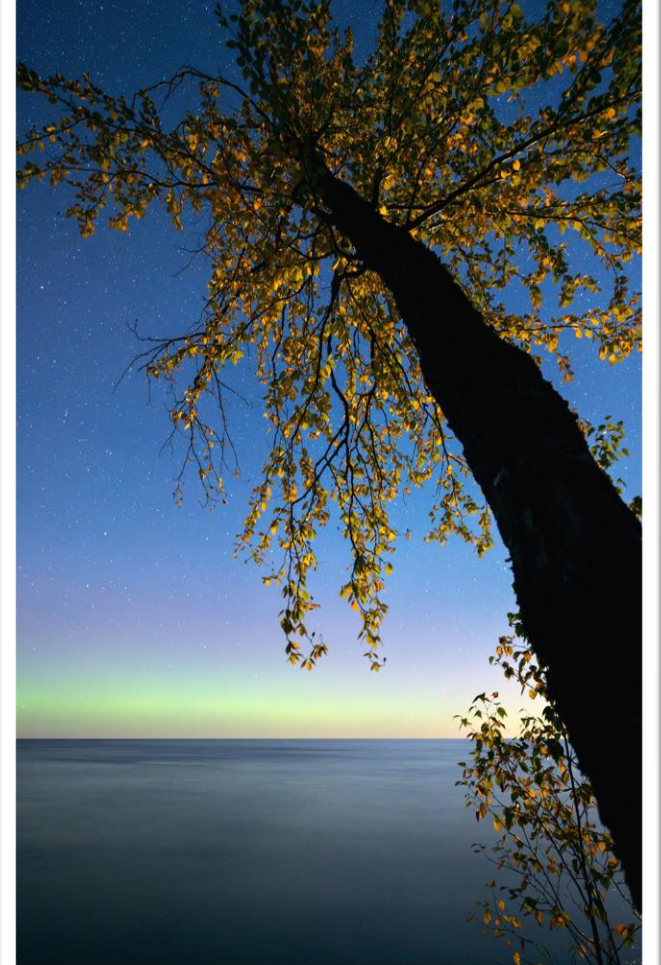
Aurora at Eagle Harbor

In the light of a
crescent moon

October 1, 2025
f/2.8, 6 sec., ISO 4000
at 14mm







Aurora at Dawn!

September 26, 2023
f/2.8, 15 sec.,
ISO 5000 at 14mm



City Lights?

Expose for the Aurora

Even if it means
overexposing
streetlights

July 4, 2022
f/2.8, 15 sec.,
ISO 5000 at 14mm

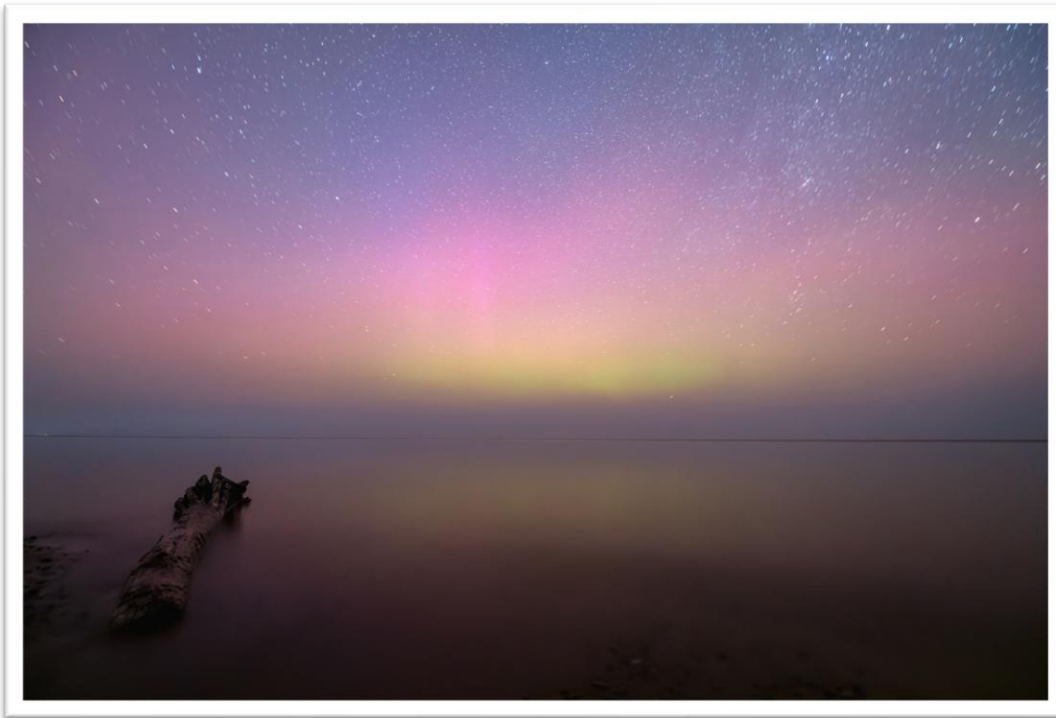


Light Painting?

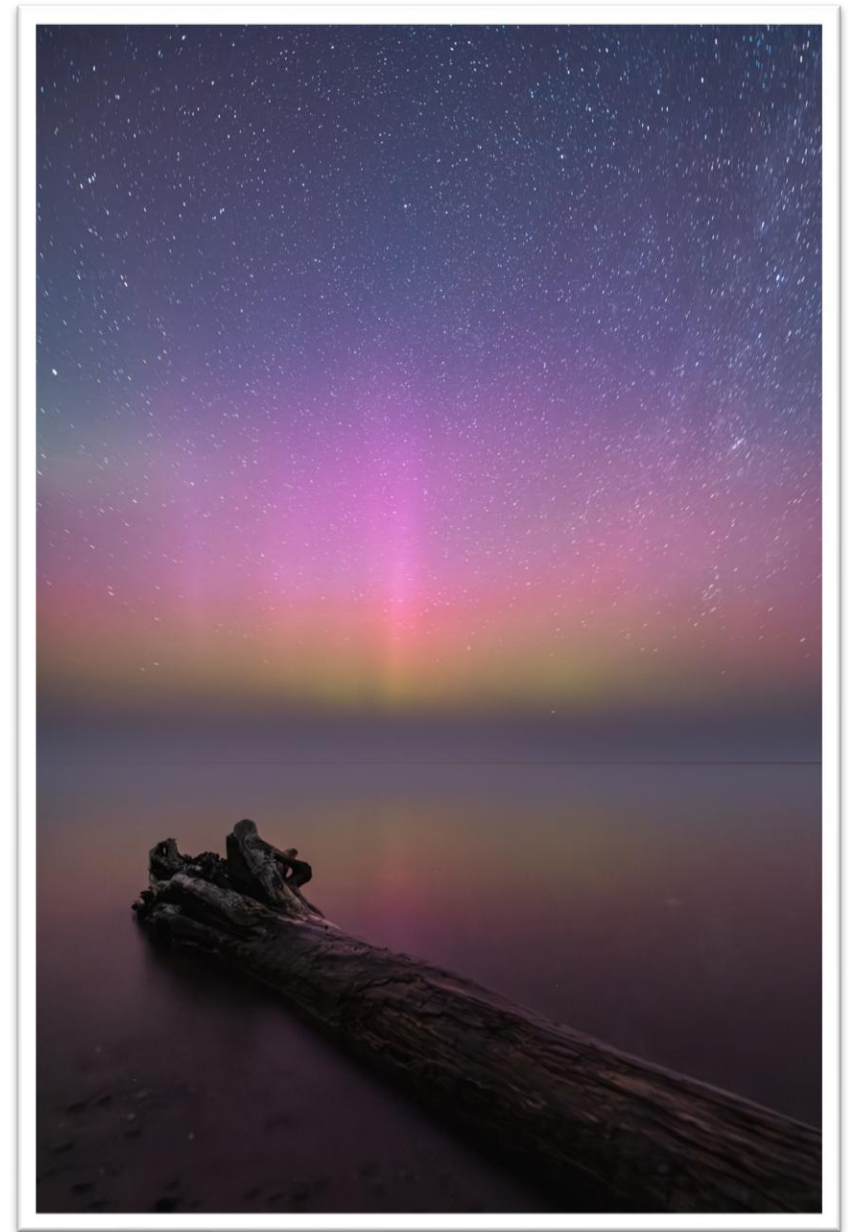


Wildfire Smoke?

Very Long Exposure Times May Reveal the Color



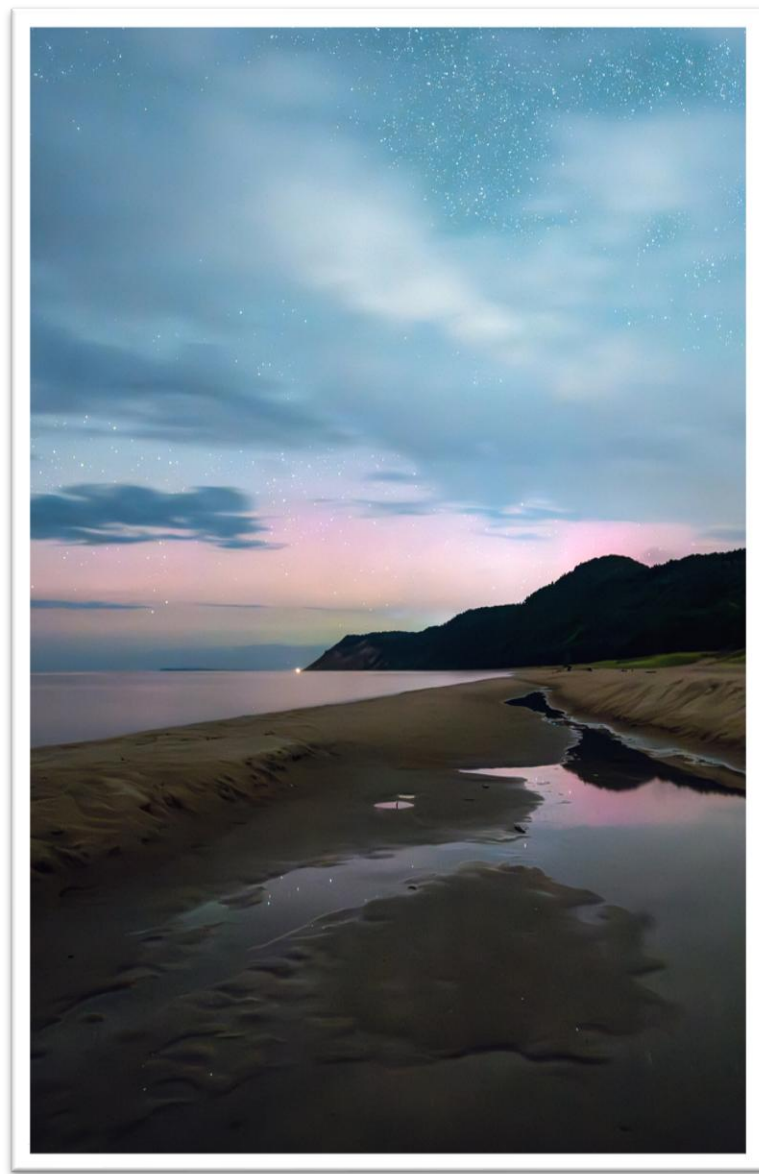
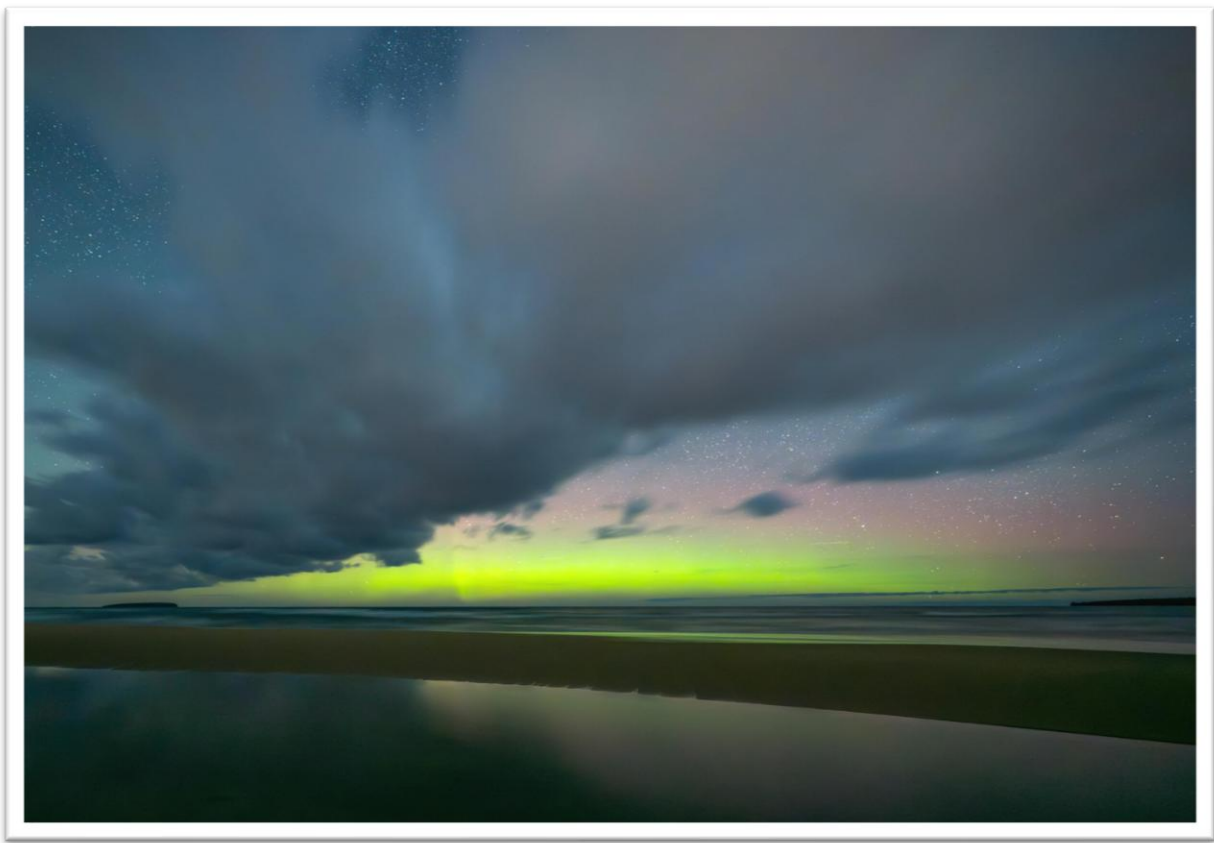
f/2.8, ISO 2000, 120 sec. at 14 mm



A night sky with a starry background and a vibrant aurora borealis at the bottom. The aurora displays a spectrum of colors including purple, blue, green, and yellow. Dark, wispy clouds are scattered across the sky.

“Clouds are just clouds.
They come and go.”

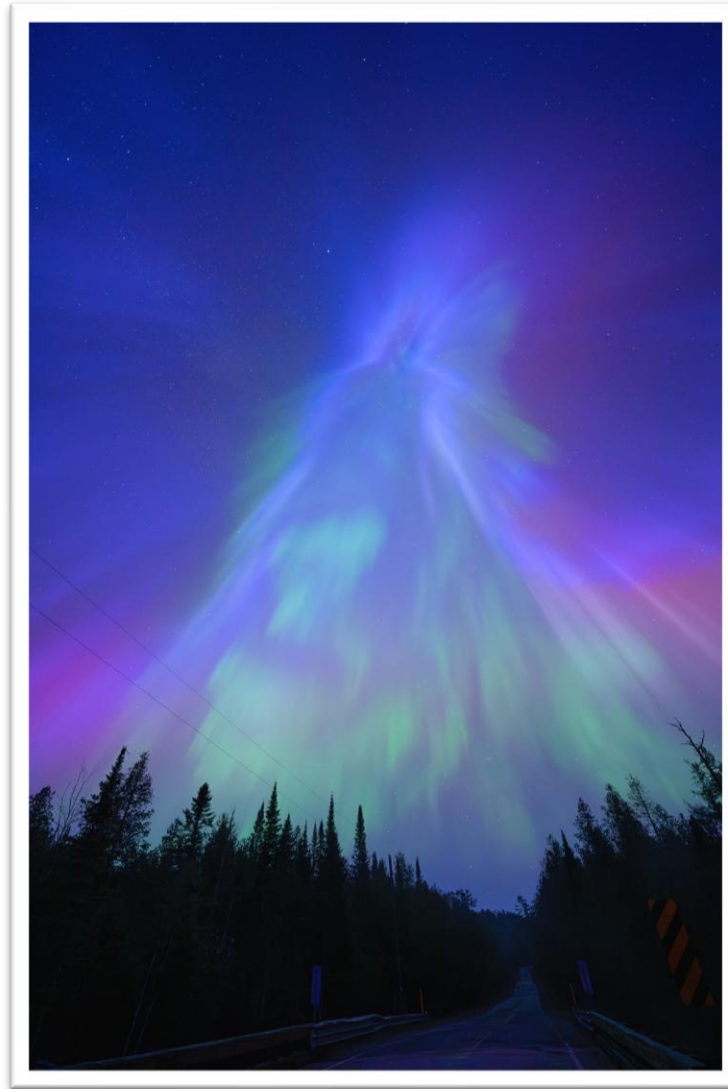
-Neil Weaver



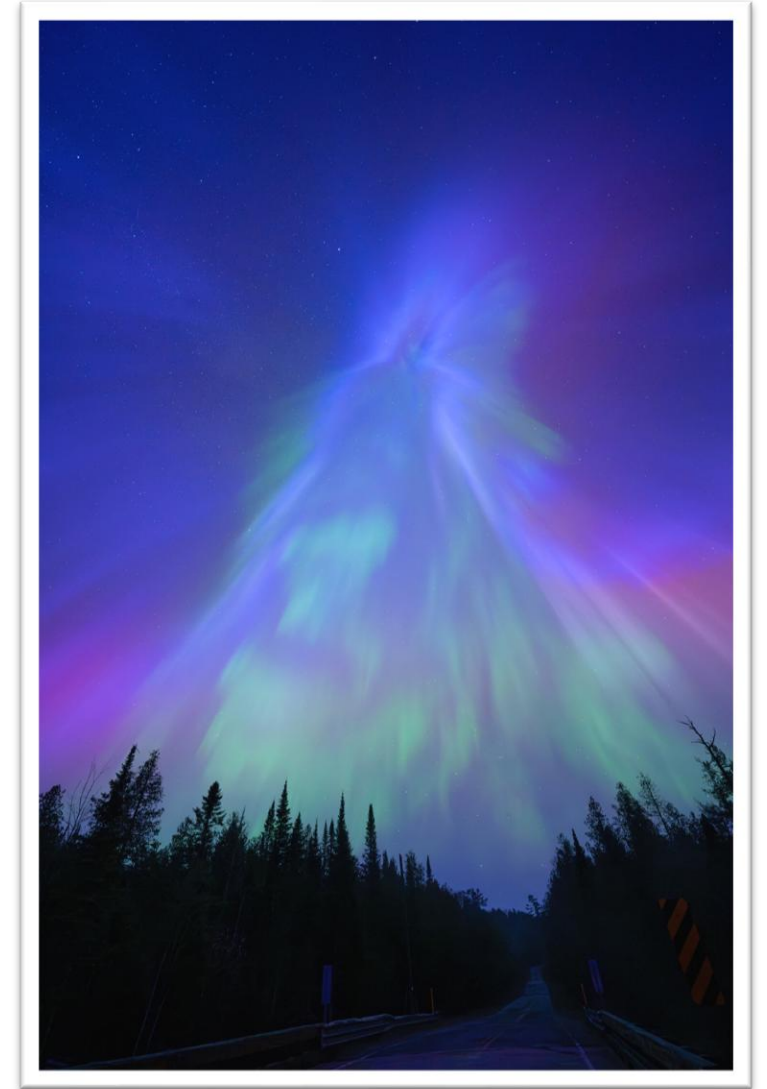
**Electric Wires?
No Problem!**

**Healing Brush
Remove Tool >
Find Distractions >
Wires & Cables**

Voila! GONE!



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER

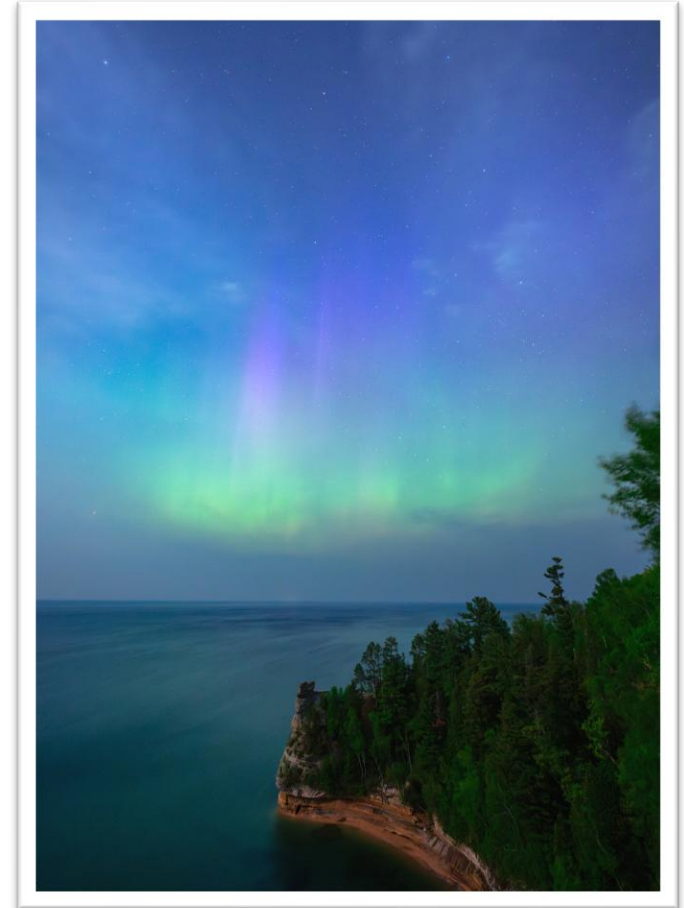
Shooting Strategies

1. ***Work the Scene!*** Try different compositions, move around, get in close, step back, go low, go high, shoot vertical as well as horizontal.
2. ***Spin the Dial!*** Like the Aurora, the ideal exposure is a moving target. If it's faint, try slower shutter speeds, possibly long enough for star trails. If the Aurora flares up, speed up the shutter to capture razor-sharp pillars, corona formations, or swirls.
3. ***Stick Around!*** Substorms take time to build.

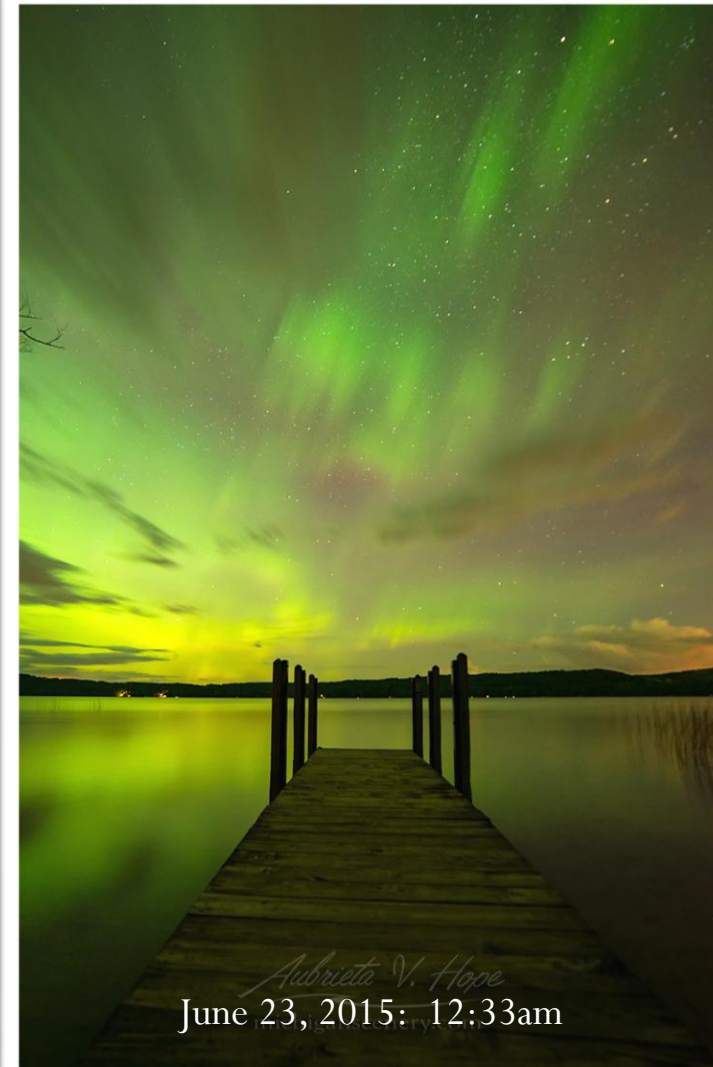
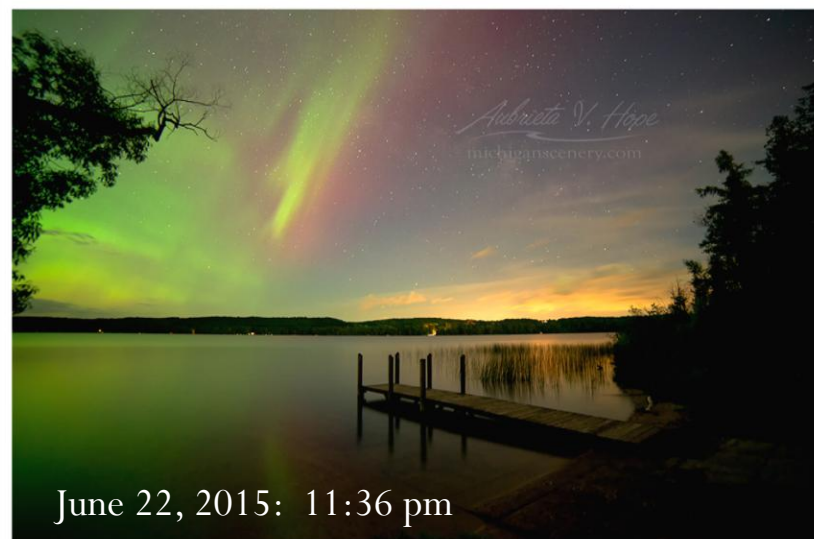
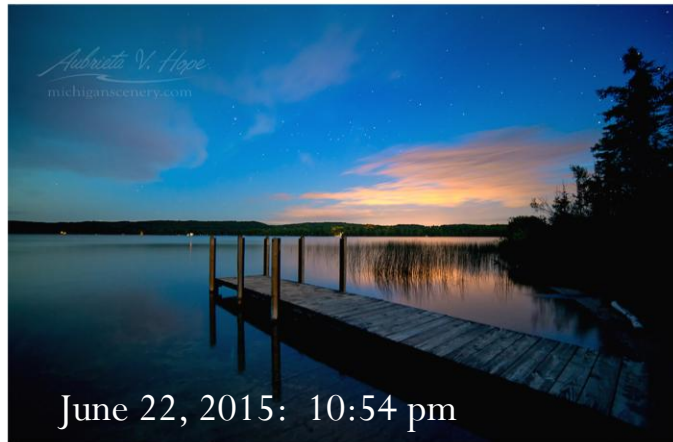
Work the Scene from Different Points of View



**June 2, 2025 at 10:40pm and 10:44 pm
f/2.8, 10 sec., ISO 5000 at 14mm**

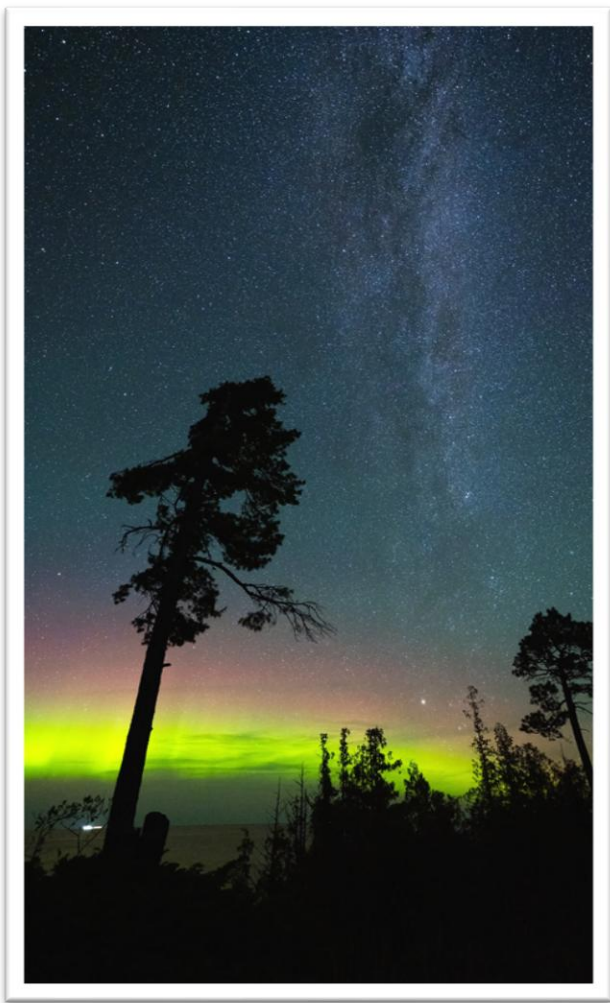


Wait! Stick Around!

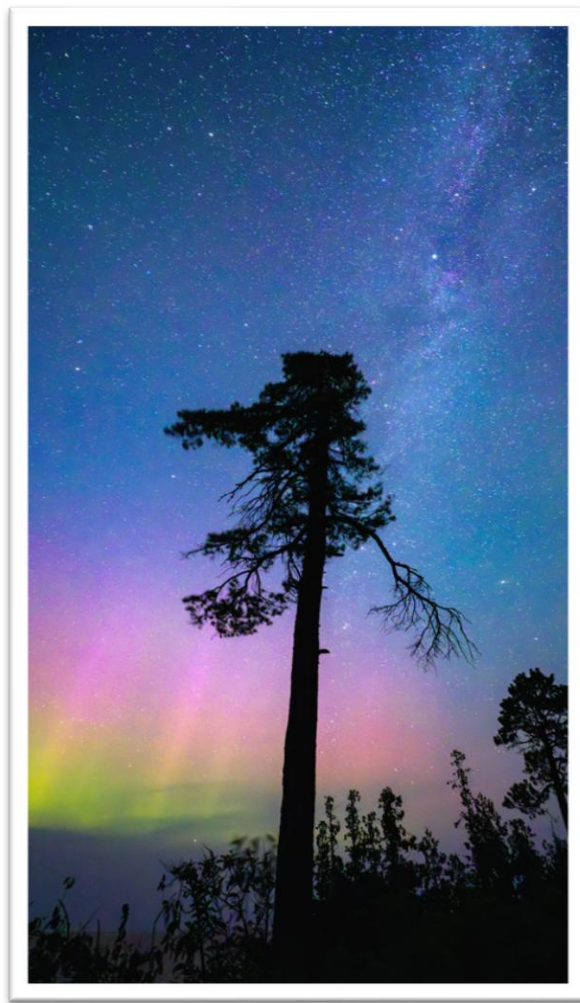


The background of the image is a night sky filled with numerous stars. At the bottom of the frame, there is a vibrant green aurora borealis (northern lights) that stretches across the horizon. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

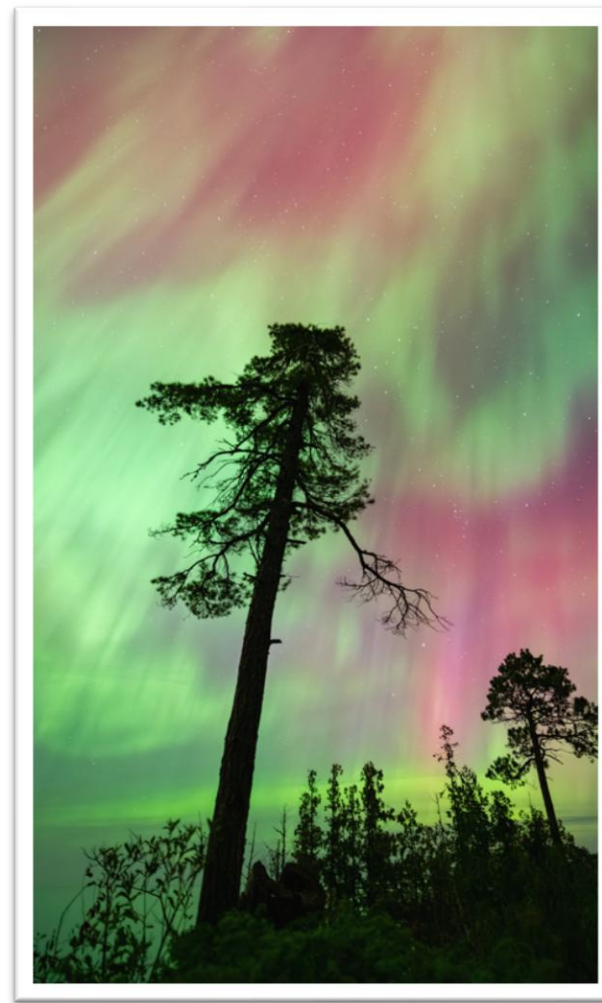
If all else fails...
Try, try, try again!



August 31, 2022



July 31, 2024



August 12, 2024

The background of the entire image is a vibrant display of the Aurora Borealis (Northern Lights) in shades of green, blue, and purple. The lights appear as long, flowing, and slightly blurred streaks of light against a dark, starry night sky.

Aubrieta V. Hope

PHOTOGRAPHY

A white, elegant, curved flourish or scrollwork element that spans across the width of the text above it, separating the name and title from the contact information.

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Instagram: @Aubrieta Hope

Photography Workshops with Aubrieta Hope and Neil Weaver

For Info about Upcoming Events:
www.visionlandscapephotoworkshops.com

Aubrieta: (815) 751-5395

Neil: (517) 743-1442

Upcoming Photography Workshops

with Aubrieta Hope & Neil Weaver

www.visionlandscapephotoworkshops.com

- ***Winter Workshop at Pictured Rocks, Roam Inn, Munising***
Ice Curtains & Caves, Shorelines, Waterfalls & More
February 19-22, 2026
- ***Spring Workshop at Pictured Rocks, Roam Inn, Munising***
Waterfalls, Woodlands, Wildflowers, Lighthouses, Beaches
May 28-31, 2026
- ***Isle Royale National Park Photo Adventure***
September 4-7, 2026 - SOLD OUT (Waitlist Available)
- ***Porcupine Mountains Fall Color Photo Adventure***
Dates? TBD