



I'm not a fan of images that show huge moons composited in wide-angle landscapes, but I also don't like the way the moon looks in a wide-angle scene when it isn't composited. In the straight scene I shot last night, the moon is so tiny you can't even tell it is being eclipsed. But viewing with my eyes, the moon stood out well against the starry sky.

The solution was to shoot an additional exposure of just the moon with a 300mm lens and stack that moon shot onto the wide-angle shot. The moon looked a little too large at 300mm, so I reduced it to the point where it looked close to how I experienced the eclipse.

This is a stack of eight exposures: One for the moon, one for the background stars, and six for the waterfall.

I light painted the waterfall with a flashlight, shooting multiple exposures as I always do to make sure I get everything covered well. Next, I made a single exposure for the sky, with the camera in the same position and with the same focal length as the light-painting exposures. Last, I changed lenses and shot the moon with a focal length of 300mm. The idea was not to make the moon appear big, but to make it look as close as possible to how I was seeing it. If I had used the same 24mm focal length, the moon would look like a tiny dot, and that's not how my eyes and brain were interpreting the scene.

Capturing and processing this image took a lot of work, and some may see it as cheating since I didn't get it all in one

shot. If you've been following along with me, you know that I don't care what anyone else thinks. The reality is that it's impossible to get many kinds of night photos in a single shot, and this is one of them.

Specifications

Gear: Tripod, Nikon D780, Nikon 14-24mm at 24mm, Nikon 28-300mm at 300mm, flashlight.

Exposure: Eclipse—f/5.6, ISO 3200. Sky—f/3.2, ISO 3200, 13 seconds. Waterfall—f/5.6, ISO 800, 6 seconds (one shot was at ISO 1600).

Post Processing: I stacked the waterfall shots as layers in Photoshop and changed the blend mode to Lighten. I performed a little work using masks to clean up bright areas. After flattening the file, I used a black brush to paint out the sky so the moon and stars from this layer wouldn't show up in the final stack.

Next, I stacked the shot of the moon on top of the one for the sky and lowered the opacity of the top layer so I could see the bottom layer under it. Then I moved the top layer (the one with the eclipsed moon) so that the eclipsed moon was directly over the moon in the bottom layer. Then I created a mask on the top layer and brushed out everything except for the moon. Next, I flattened the file and stacked it on top of the flattened waterfall image and changed the blend mode to Lighten.