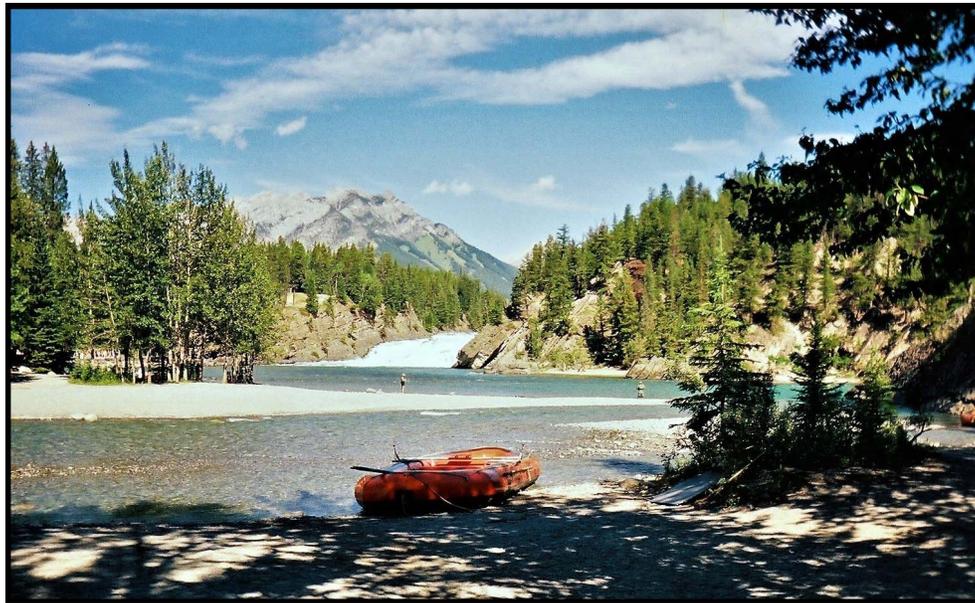


# May 2021 Newsletter

[www.alamancephoto.com](http://www.alamancephoto.com)

[www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub](https://www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub)



By John Reich

## APC ACTIVITIES

### Next Meeting

May 17, 2021      Zoom

### PhotoShows

May 17, 2021      Duplicates

July 19, 2021      Pets/Animals

Sept. 20, 2021      Hills & Valleys

Nov. 15, 2021      Time-lapse (using tripod)

### Field Trips

April-June 2021      Parks

July-Sept. 2021      Cemeteries

Oct.-Dec. 2021      Country Roads

### Programs

June 21, 2021

Chris Almerini—“Moving from Snapshot to Expressive”

Aug. 16, 2021

Dan Walker  
“Travel Photography”

Oct. 18, 2021

Darrell Coble  
“Nature, Community Activism and Digital Collage Art”

### Exhibits

June 2021

Burlington Artists League

## President's Comments—May 2021

**By Scott Duvall**

This is starting to sound like a broken record but we still can't get in to our regular meeting place in Twin Lakes because of COVID. So we'll continue meeting via "ZOOM". Our next meeting is a PhotoShow on May 17<sup>th</sup>. Judging will be by the members. Besides following when we can resume meeting at Twin Lakes, Len Barnard has become the new Membership Chair replacing Carole Barnard. Thank you Carole for a great job. Another upcoming change is the "retirement" of Nancy Jacobus as Treasurer at the end of this year. She has been a wonderful Treasurer and will be sorely missed. We need to find a replace-

ment for Nancy as soon as possible so that person can start learning the details of the job from Nancy. The Club would appreciate someone quickly volunteering to take on this responsibility.

Scott Duvall

APC President [duvallse@earthlink.net](mailto:duvallse@earthlink.net)

336-438-1791

## APC BOARD

President	Scott Duvall	Publicity Chair	Carole Barnard
Vice President	Sam Lynch	Exhibit Chair	
Secretary	George Siple	Membership Committee	
Treasurer	Nancy Jacobus	Chair	Len Barnard
PhotoShow Committee		Co-Chair	Carole Barnard
Chair	Keith O'Leary	Twin Lakes Rep.	Len Barnard
Members	Herbert House	Web Master	Christie O'Leary
	Gene Lentz	Past President	Mike King
Outings/Field Trips	Hugh Comfort	Editor	Ray Munns

# May 17<sup>th</sup> Zoom PhotoShow: "DUPLICATES"

*(2 or more objects, animals, people, etc. that appear identical or almost identical)*

**Keith O'Leary, PhotoShow Chair**

We encourage ALL members to submit photographs for our bi-monthly Photo Show and would like to see EVERYONE represented!

We try not to exceed 50 photos per show. Therefore, we ask that you submit a maximum of two (2) photos. We may only use one of your photos based on the number of entries so PLEASE indicate your preferred photo in the file name of each photo (01 or 02; See naming information below). If you have any issues with formatting or submitting, please let us know at [apcphotoshow@gmail.com](mailto:apcphotoshow@gmail.com) and we will be happy to assist. Also let us know if your submitted photo is not acknowledged within a few days and/or by the deadline.

## Submission Details

### Number of Entries:

Max of two (2) entries per member. Please indicate your preferred photo with the number 01.

### Size:

No larger than 25 MB.

Preferred minimum size is 1024 x 768.

### Format:

.jpg

### File Naming:

Please rename your photo submissions using the following format:

Firstname.lastname\_01 or \_02 *(per use preference)*

Example: john.doe\_01.jpg john.doe\_02.jpg

### Email:

Email Address: Send all images to [apcphotoshow@gmail.com](mailto:apcphotoshow@gmail.com)

Email Subject Line: Include the month of the PhotoShow and your name

Example: Photos for May Photoshow – John Doe

## **OUR MAY SHOW WILL BE MEMBER VOTING!**

***Be on the lookout for an invitation to complete the online voting form.***

### Entry Deadline:

5 PM on Friday, May 7, 2021. **Online voting to occur Sat, May 8<sup>th</sup> thru Fri, May 14<sup>th</sup>.**

### Please Note:

*Submissions that do not adhere to the guidelines above may be returned.*

***Don't forget: Photos may be submitted early for the following show!***



## WEBMASTER NOTES

### Join the APC Gallery on the APC website!

A Gallery of members' photographs is being added to the club's website. Members can begin sending photos to [alamancephoto@gmail.com](mailto:alamancephoto@gmail.com) for the gallery. Each member who submits photographs will have a personal slideshow on the website. We encourage ALL members to submit photographs for the club's website gallery and would like to see EVERYONE represented!

You will receive a confirmation email that your submitted photos have been received. If you have NOT received a confirmation email within a WEEK, please let us know at [alamancephoto@gmail.com](mailto:alamancephoto@gmail.com).

#### Submission Details

Number of photos: no more than 20

Size of each photo: 1 to 2 MB preferred. Max. size 10 MB

Format: .jpg

File naming:

Please rename your photo submissions in the following format:

Firstname.lastname\_01 or \_20 (*per order you want them to be shown in your personal slideshow*)

For example: john.doe\_01.jpg john.doe\_20.jpg

***\*Your '01' photo will be used as the thumbnail on the Gallery Page.***

Email:

Email Address: Send all photos to [alamancephoto@gmail.com](mailto:alamancephoto@gmail.com)

Email Subject Line: Please include gallery photos and your name

For example: Gallery photos - John Doe

Entry Deadline: May 31, 2021

**\*\*Going forward, you will be able to submit photos annually in January and February to update your personal Gallery\*\***

Please Note:

Any submissions that do not adhere to the guidelines above may be returned.



#### All Facebook Members:

We welcome you to post your photographs on the Alamance Photography Club Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub](http://www.facebook.com/alamancephotoclub)).

**Please Note:** Your posts will have to be approved before they can be seen by others. This of course is to protect the integrity of our club's Facebook page. After approval, your post will appear as a share.

Thank you,

Christie O'Leary—Webmaster

## Membership Corner

Len Barnard – Chair    Carolz Barnard – Co-Chair    336-270-3194

### Jay Cee Sanders

We have another new member to our Club. I am sorry that you can not meet Jay face to face as I did. But when you do get to meet him, please say welcome to our Club Jay! Also you might want to add — Congratulations! He is a newly wed of about 3 months and has just moved to Burlington from the Raleigh area.

WELCOME JAY!!

*I am starting a new section in our "[Membership Corner](#)" this month. It will be featuring one or more of our members with a short version of their BIO! Below and on the next page we begin with our Club Secretary, George Siple.*

### George W. Siple—APC Secretary

I grew up in a time of slow film and blue flash bulbs. I can still recall my father taking forever to compose and snap a photo—a habit that I adopted for many years (my wife would say I still do). My first camera was a Kodak Instamatic which I carried everywhere during my senior year in high school as an exchange student in northern Norway. Point-and-shoot was so simple, and I just wanted to record my experiences: indoors, outdoors, people, places. It expanded my horizons and gave me an appreciation for travel. The photos were a side benefit and a way to spark memories.



After I finished graduate school and started my first real full-time job, with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lab in Las Vegas, one of the first major purchases I made with an early paycheck was a single lens reflex camera (that and a stereo hi-fi were my major “wants”). Over time, I added various lenses, filters, and other accoutrements to accommodate my photographic interests.

## Membership Corner—continued

*George Siple Bio (cont.)* — Initially, I shot mostly with Kodachrome 64 film for slides or sometimes prints. Eventually, I tried ASA 400 film and infrared film, which proved interesting. After June and I were married, I hauled that camera and equipment in a well worn shoulder bag on all kinds of vacations—I'm not sure my shoulder has ever recovered.

Eventually, my first SLR was consigned to the closet as I moved on to a video camera for those family vacations. Sad to say I don't even remember the brand of that camera, even though I held onto it for almost 40 years before finally letting go.

My first foray into the digital SLR world was with a Sony DSC T7, one of those credit card-sized cameras that had, what was for me, a dizzying array of controls. Frankly, I tended to ignore many of those controls, and my photos reflected that ignorance. The beauty was that, regardless of my laziness, the camera still took some pretty decent photos—and it fit in my shirt pocket.

After moving on briefly to a Sony DSC H200 DSLR, I purchased a Nikon D3200, an entry level "kit" DSLR which is still my main workhorse. A couple of years ago I added a macro lens (Nikkor 40 mm 1:2.8G), and after taking a short course on macro photography, this has become one of my main interests. Then my wife got me a super telephoto zoom lens (Sigma 150 – 600 mm F5 - 6.3 DG OS HSM), which I'm still learning about but is opening up new avenues in my interest in wildlife. I am hopeful that as we work our slow way through our bucket list (trips to the Galapagos and the mule ride to the bottom of the Grand Canyon already in the bag), my photography will inexorably improve—if nothing else, I'm an optimist.

### April 19, 2021 Program—Bird Photography

**By Sean Leahy**

Thanks Sean for your presentation about bird photography in North Carolina including an informative question and answer session following the PowerPoint slide Show.



## 2021-Q2 Personal Field Trip: Parks

Hugh Comfort, Outings/Field Trips Coordinator

Keith O'Leary, PhotoShow Chairman

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, field trips will be conducted on a personal level vs as a group event. Please practice social distancing and do not trespass in the effort to get that perfect shot. Be well and be safe.

For the second quarter of 2021 (April 1 - June 30), our locations will be Parks. These may be local, city, county, state, or national parks, as well as state or national forests. While the locations are fairly general, the time frame is not: all photos must be taken during the second quarter of 2021. A link to all submitted photos will be shared with the club on the first day of the month following quarter-end. Up to 5 field trip pictures may be submitted per member to share with the club. Based on participation, we may only share your top 3 or 4, so please number them in the order of your preference. See below for details. Enjoy spring in the great outdoors and good shooting!

### Field Trip Photo Submission Details

#### Number of Entries:

One (1) to five (5) entries per member. Please indicate your preferred photo with the number 01, etc.

#### Size:

Due to the number of photos for this event, we ask, if you are able, to resize your photos to 1-2 MB if possible, but nevertheless not to exceed 20 MB.

#### Format:

.jpg

#### File Naming:

Please rename your photo submissions using the following format:

FirstName.LastName\_nn, where nn is the number (01-05) indicating preference where lower numbers are more preferred than higher numbers.

Example: john.doe\_01.jpg john.doe\_02.jpg

#### Email:

Email Address: Send all images to [apcphotoshow@gmail.com](mailto:apcphotoshow@gmail.com)

Email Subject Line: Include the Field Trip "topic" and your name.

Example: Photos for Parks Field Trip – John Doe

#### Entry Deadline:

Wednesday, June 30, 2021.

A link to view all submissions will be emailed to members by Thursday evening, July 1, 2021.

#### Please Note:

Pictures not taken in field trip time period (April-June) are subject to rejection as these should be recent photos taken specifically during these personal field trips timelines.

## You may be Interested !!

The Burlington Artists League would like to extend an invitation to the Alamance Photography Club to participate in an Annual Photography Exhibit at the Burlington Artists League Gallery in Holly Hill Mall. This display would be featured in the Gallery for the month of June each year and will feature photographers from both groups. There are no parameters with regard to editing for this display, you are welcome to edit or not, as much or as little as you would like. The pieces for display will require hanging wire in order to work with our hangers. **Drop off will be May 27-29, 12-6pm** at the Gallery. **Please notify the Gallery by May 15<sup>th</sup>** at [balartgallery@gmail.com](mailto:balartgallery@gmail.com) if you would like to participate. Additional details are listed below.



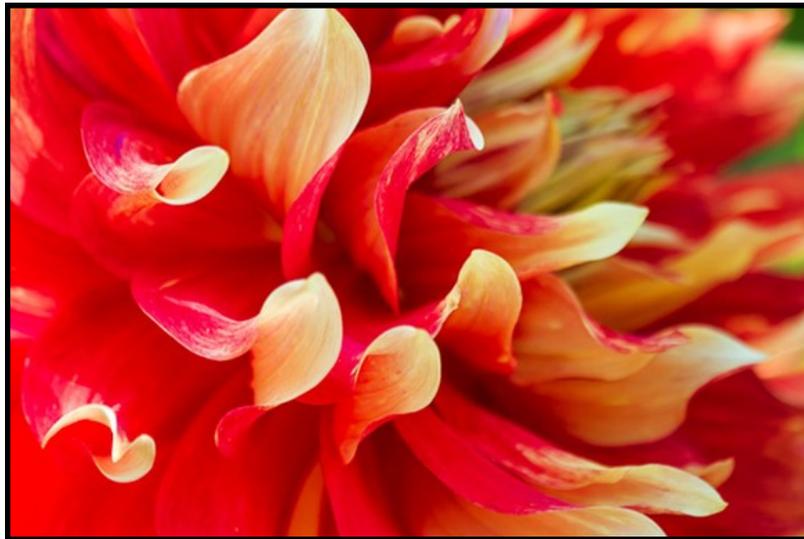
### June - Annual Photography Exhibit (beginning this year)

- Photographers may submit one piece 16x20 or larger  
Or two pieces under 16x20
- Work may be for sale
  - Non-BAL members pay 25% commission
  - Sales will be done via Square at the Gallery
  - BAL will issue checks for any sales minus commission at the end of the month
- Will need the following information:
  - Photographer's name and address
  - Title of work
  - Price (or if not for sale)
- Exhibit will be publicized in and by the Mall, on Facebook and websites, and through Alamance Arts, and on Maverick Radio via Holly Hill Mall.
- There will be a reception on Saturday, June 5th, 6-8pm.

# How to Photograph Flowers

By Anne McKinnell

In this installment of “Great Subjects”, we’re going to look at how to approach flower photography for more creative and interesting photos that go beyond snapshots.



Flower photography is one of the most popular types of photography, especially for amateurs. Perhaps it's because anyone can point their camera at a blooming rose, hit the shutter, and get a pretty good snapshot. But creative and compelling photos must go beyond snapshots. Just pointing your camera at a pretty flower won't transfer the innate beauty of the flower into your photograph and often you'll be left with lackluster imitations of the splendor you're trying to capture.

If you want your image to do justice to the earth's wonder, you need to change the way you approach the whole process. Rather than playing the role of an observer by taking a photograph, place yourself in Mother Nature's shoes instead, and *make* the photograph. When you fully involve yourself in the construction of the image, your choices will affect the visual impact the photograph carries. In this way, you can make a photograph that is as exquisite as the subject itself.

### *How to Photograph Flowers . . . Continued*

Making purposeful choices about what you are trying to convey in your photographs is what is going to help you transform from snapshot taker to photograph maker. If you just see a pretty flower, hold up your camera and snap, you'll get a snapshot. But when you take the time to decide what is important, what you want to convey, and how you will convey it, you'll start to notice your photographs improving.



The only thing standing between you and incredible flower photos is a little bit of thought, technique, and practice. This holds true for all types of photography, but flower photography is a good place to start putting the concepts into practice and then you can apply what you have learned to all of your subjects.

To begin this transformation, simply ask yourself a few questions: What is so special about this flower? What attracted you to this one? What makes it better than the other ones around it?



Maybe it has perfect form, or the light is hitting it just right. Look closely at the flower and figure out its true significance and what you want to say about it. These are the qualities that you want to emphasize through thoughtful composition and technique.

Every image has a message, but it doesn't necessarily need to be complex.

In flower photography, it is often as simple as, "These colors are awesome!" or "Check out the texture of this pollen". Or, it can be conceptual like life blooming in the sun, or the perfection of nature. Whatever it is, the best pictures are created when the photographer knows the message or the concept before making the image. At that point you can decide which type of light is best, what kind of composition you want to use, and what techniques are appropriate to convey your message.

## *How to Photograph Flowers . . . Continued*

### **Diffused Light**

The quality of the light in a scene deeply affects the overall mood of the photograph. Flowers are most often photographed under diffused light because it hides their blemishes and makes them look gentle, delicate, and serene. The light is dispersed and shadow contrast is low, making plants look silky, delicate, and healthy.

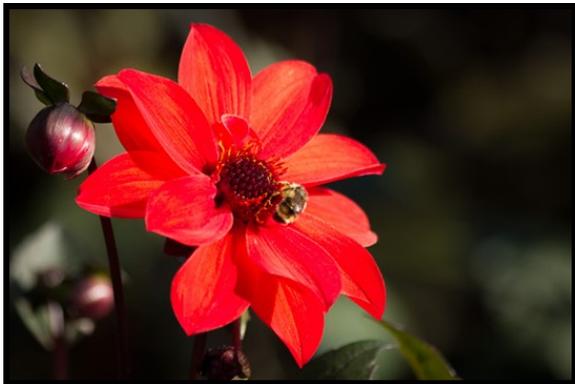
Because the light is less intense, you'll be able to use a wider aperture to achieve a shallow depth of field to blur the background and increase the overall softness of the image. Overcast weather is perfect for this type of photograph, but even on a bright, sunny day you can find diffused light in the shade, or when a cloud drifts by overhead. In a pinch, you can also place a diffuser between your subject and the sun to soften its hard light.



Overcast weather is perfect for this type of photograph, but even on a bright, sunny day you can find diffused light in the shade, or when a cloud drifts by overhead. In a pinch, you can also place a diffuser between your subject and the sun to soften its hard light.

### **Dramatic Light**

Using diffused light may be the most popular way to photograph flowers, but it isn't the only way. If you want to create more dramatic images, use more dramatic light! Dramatic light is bold with high contrast and strong shadows.



Look for flowers that are lit differently than their surrounding area, particularly ones that are in direct sunlight and have a dark, shady background. Hard light is less forgiving than soft light because you cannot hide anything, so you'll have to make sure you pick flowers without any flaws. Finding the right subject is half the battle!

When working with dramatic light, you need to pay particular attention to your camera angle because sharp shadows can make or break an image and should be placed thoughtfully within the composition. For instance, if you're shooting with the sun directly behind you, you won't see the shadow falling on the other side of the subject. This can sometimes make a flower look flat and boring, because shadows give a photograph a sense of dimension that draws the viewer in. If you change your point of view, however, the shadows will become more visible. Remember that shadows create a feeling of drama, but can also completely obscure parts of your subject. You should always think about where they are when framing your shot.

### *How to Photograph Flowers . . . Continued*

Exposure is especially important when working with high contrast scenes. Sometimes your camera's meter can be confused when part of the scene is bright and part is in shadow. The most important thing to remember is that the main subject should be properly exposed so use spot metering to meter on the flower and let the background fall where it may.

You can also use backlight to create dramatic flower photos. Because the flower's petals are translucent, they will often glow when you position the light behind them. Backlight can also illuminate what is inside the plant – such as the veins that bring them life – much like a simplified x-ray. These types of compositions can be very dramatic because they show us a familiar subject in a way we may have never seen it before.



### **The Environmental Portrait**



Most flower photos that we see are portraits where a single flower is the main subject. But you can also explore the flower and its environment by including the landscape that the flower is in – the flower and its context. The flower should still clearly be the main subject, but instead of blurring the background or having a dramatic black background, add a sense of place to the image.

When making environmental portraits, your composition is going to be more complex to show the flower and the landscape. We're not just filling the frame with the flower anymore.

The first decision you need to make is how you want to frame your photograph. The frame is the confines of the picture – the box that contains your image. When we talk about framing your image, we're referring to arranging your subject within that area, including how many elements are visible, how large they are, and where they're placed within the frame.

### *How to Photograph Flowers . . . Continued*

You'll probably find yourself using a wider angle lens so that you can incorporate the flower's surroundings into the frame. With this in mind, give some thought to the perspective you choose so that you don't come away with a snapshot.

Most flower photos are taken from the front and slightly above, just like we might see it as we walk by. And while this is a perfectly fine point of view to shoot from, it can easily lead to snapshots. What makes a photograph stand out amongst others is a willingness to look at things a little bit differently.

Whether you move the camera up higher, down lower, or to either side, changing your point of view of any subject or scene will give you a more unique perspective that will add instant interest to an image.

The way we look at something changes the way our brain processes it, and therefore the impression it leaves. Looking up from a low angle makes a subject appear large and grandiose, while looking down at it from up high seems to shrink it. Getting closer or further away from the subject can change its apparent size compared to what is around it, and moving your camera relative to the sun can show a completely different side of something – literally, in a whole different light.

Perspective becomes an especially important factor when you start adding other elements in the frame, in addition to your main subject.

#### **Exploring Your Creativity**

There are many different ways to photograph flowers, so I want to challenge you to come up with a creative concept and then put it into action. Do something you have never done before. Find your inner artist.



### *How to Photograph Flowers . . . Continued*

Here are some ideas to get you started exploring your own creativity:

- change your perspective
- focus through another flower by putting one flower very close to the end of your lens and focusing on a flower that is farther away
- don't include the entire flower
- photograph a different object with a flower reflected in it
- try some creative processing techniques
- use a long exposure and let the flower blur
- forget about the flower, and think only about shapes and colors
- photograph the flower through some fabric or glass or something else
- zoom the lens while the shutter is open



The word “creativity” frightens many people. “I’m not an artist,” they’ll protest, or “I’m just not a creative person.” If this sounds like you, put those doubts away. You don’t have to be an artistic genius or come up with something that’s never been done before to express your creativity. Creativity, at its heart, is simply about remaining open to all possibilities in your approach to a subject, idea, or problem.



In photography, remaining open to all possibilities often requires us to slow down and spend more time observing than we do shooting. When we get caught up in “taking the shot” and then quickly move on, we can walk right by other ideas that might lead to a more interesting image.

Try taking a slower, more thoughtful approach to flowers. Before you raise your camera to take a shot, stop, and simply spend time observing the flower or flowers, using as many senses as possible. What possibilities arise?

## *How to Photograph Flowers . . . Continued*

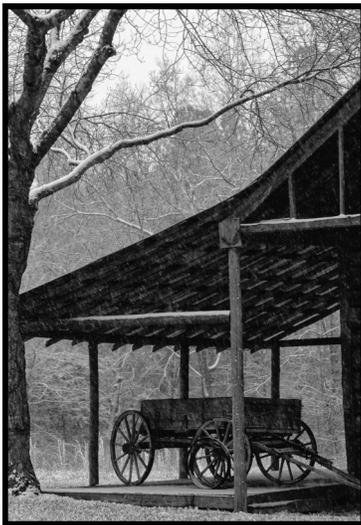
### **Final Tip: Eliminate Distractions**

If you look at a lot of successful photographs, you might start to notice that the most effective compositions are the least complicated. Try to focus the entire image towards telling your story, and eliminate anything that is distracting from it. Anything that can be seen in your photo that doesn't add to the story, only takes away from it.

If your composition contains clutter and errant objects, there are a number of ways to get rid of them. If you can physically remove them, great! Otherwise, you may have to change your perspective to hide or minimize the offending elements. Things near the edges of the frame can be cropped off by moving closer, zooming, or otherwise re-framing the shot.

Backgrounds especially should be clean so they do not distract from the detail of the main subject. This is why wide apertures are often used to get a shallow depth of field that blurs the background and minimizes distractions.

I hope you'll get out there and take some of the ideas in this post to make four very different flower photos: use diffused light; use dramatic light; create an environmental portrait; and something creatively different.



**Fairly recent Winter photos by Dick Schenck. Makes me more thankful for Spring.**

**Thanks, Dick!**



# Mastering Autofocus

By Russ Burden



It was 1985 when Minolta revolutionized the world of photography with the release of their first autofocus SLR—the Maxxum 7000. With autofocus in its infancy, my ability to manually focus was better than what that camera and lens combo could provide. Fast forward to 2017. There’s no way I can outperform the autofocus systems in today’s cameras and lenses. But even with the amazing advancements, there are photographers who don’t take advantage of all the available AF features. Given the paces through which I put autofocus to the test photographing birds in flight and other fast-moving subjects, it behooved me to learn every nuance of my AF system. Let me share what I’ve found so you can get the most from yours.

**Set The Proper Focus Point:** Inside the viewfinder, small squares represent the active focus point. It’s essential the active point hovers over the subject when the shutter is pressed or else the camera focuses on a different plane—the plane over which the focus point is placed. Depending on what camera system you own, use either the main command or sub-command wheel to position the square over your subject. If the lens is wide open, be very accurate with where you position the focus point since the depth of field is narrow. For instance, if you compose a photo of a pregnant woman and the center focus point is on her belly, chances are her face will fall out of the depth of field if the lens is wide open. If this is the effect you want, excellent. Always be cognizant of the most critical plane of focus and move the AF focus point to that location.

### *Mastering Autofocus . . . Continued*

Continuous or Single: Many DSLRs provide an Autofocus option that allows you to release the shutter even if the subject isn't in focus. This is known as continuous release / AI servo / release priority, etc.—it depends on the camera brand you own. Continuous mode is best reserved for subjects that move erratically. I use this ALL the time for any moving subject. The idea behind it is that although you get a few out-of-focus images, the AF system catches up with the subject's movement to provide sharp photos. The alternative is Single mode, which allows the shutter to release ONLY if the camera detects sharp focus. If a subject isn't moving, it works great. All my landscape and portrait work is done in this mode. In Single mode, the camera determines if the shutter can be released. In Continuous, the shutter can be released whether or not the subject is in focus.



Initiate Focus From Far Away: If action comes toward you, lock onto the subject when it's small in the frame and maintain focusing. In Continuous mode, the camera tracks the speed at which it moves and "learns" its pace. As it gets closer, begin to make pictures. Keep shooting until you cut off important parts of the subject. I do this ALL the time when I photograph birds in flight. If you know where the action will occur, prefocus on an object on the same plane. The camera will have a reference point from which to initiate focus so the lens doesn't have far to search when it locks on the subject.

The Center AF Point is the Most Sensitive: For action shots, I use continuous focus and lock on the subject using the center AF point. The center point is the most sensitive point of the system. In Continuous mode, as the subject comes closer, I recompose the photo so the subject isn't dead center in the frame. The beauty of Continuous is that the center focus point "hands off" the tracking to other focus points while I recompose the photo. It takes practice to do the recomposing, but it's well worth the effort and result.

## Mastering Autofocus . . . Continued



Use the Focus Limit Switch: Many AF lenses have a Focus Limit Switch. If the subject won't come into close proximity, set the lens to the infinity marker. The reason for this is if the subject falls out of focus while you're tracking it, it won't unnecessarily search the entire range of the AF system. As a result, locking on again takes less time. The AF limit switch is mostly found on longer telephoto lenses.

Turn Stabilization OFF: Image stabilization works great to steady the lens, but too many photographers leave it on all the time. Turn it off if you encounter the following:

- a) When photographing action, fast shutter speeds are necessary to stop motion. The fast shutter speed negates camera movement. With stabilization ON, it uses the gyros and eats up battery power.
- b) Image stabilization may slow down an AF system. If the action is fast, I want all the AF horsepower I can get, so I leave it off.

Incorporate the above techniques into your workflow and, hopefully, you'll have many more keepers in the future.

Outdoor  
Photographer

# How to Photograph Forests and Trees

By Dag Ole Nordhaug

## Master the Art of Photographing Forests and Trees

Landscape photography is often associated with the grand landscape and the famous vistas. I love a beautiful sunset from a vantage point with impressive mountains in the background just as much as anyone, and I have several times traveled across the globe to find such a scene and capture it.

However, one of the problems with this kind of photography is: you sometimes have to travel across the globe to find a scene and capture it! And when you do, you will probably find that you are not alone on location and the scene has been photographed so many times before that you will have a hard time separating your own masterwork from thousands of others.

I am not saying that there aren't any grand vistas out there that you can discover and make your own, but you get the idea. Most of us do not live close to countless undiscovered, fabulous viewpoints and many of the famous, grand landscapes have been so much photographed that making something new can be difficult.



*Anemone woods: Careful framing and composing towards the soft morning light gives the impression of a large forest in this image. However, this is a very small wooded area, consisting of not much more than the trees in the frame. From Trondheim, Norway.*

My own home country, Norway, is well known for mountains, waterfall, fjords, midnight sun and aurora borealis but I still find that chances are limited and it may be difficult to do a grand vista with a ground-breaking touch. Furthermore, the area where I live is dominated by more mundane nature; woodlands with Norwegian spruce.

### *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

I love to get out in nature and create images more or less on a daily basis. Thus, a few years back I came to the conclusion that I had to get a grip on photographing more intimate landscape scenes in the woodlands nearby. This would open up a whole new world to me, and allow for literally innumerable compositions and possibilities. I thought. I soon found that the forest is a cluttered, chaotic and unforgiving place to photograph and the good compositions can be very hard to find and figure out. To add insult to injury, even a well-composed forest scene is somewhat demanding for the viewer, rendering it less suitable for the fast-paced world of social media of which so many photographers depend on.



*Dancing trees: Soft morning light in a slightly hazy forest makes the structures of the trees stand out and enhances depth. From Jylland in Denmark.*

The sub-genre of forest photography can be quite scary. It is, in my humble opinion, the most difficult part of our craft. However, after having studied those that master this very elegantly (Hans Strand, Lars Van De Goor, Christopher Burkett, Charles Cramer and Kilian Schönberger to name a few), I set out to learn the tricks of the trade. Years later, I found myself just as frustrated as before and with an extremely thin portfolio of forest images. But I've kept on working and throughout the years I hope to have unveiled a few of the secrets that make forest images compelling, at least in my eyes.

## *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

### **Compositional elements**

#### *Light*

While the grand landscape most often benefits from spectacular light, the forests are more forgiving. Grey, dull skies and even rain softens the light and simplifies the scene.

Direct sunlight or hard midday light may create too much chaos with burnt-out reflections in foliage and a cluster of black shadows. An overcast day may be ideal for venturing into the woods, but I'm not saying that a clear day is unsuited. Just be sure to visit very early or very late, in the hours where the sun is low in the sky and the light not too hard. Few things are more beautiful than trees in the soft, warm light of the morning sun.



*If you are lucky enough to find yourself in fog, this adds an ethereal atmosphere, simplifies an otherwise chaotic scene and enhances the depth in the composition, an element I find very important in forest-photography. I will come back to that shortly.*

In my opinion, ideal conditions for capturing forest scenes are early morning fog that slowly clears out as the sun appears. Such conditions may result in spectacular light, including light beams, and may lift an otherwise average location to divine levels. Unfortunately, this is rarely to be seen, at least where I live, so having memorized a few locations and compositions beforehand makes it much easier to run out and capture that stunning image when conditions happen to appear. As with most landscape photography, planning is the key to success.

## *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

### *Finding the special "It"*

As beautiful as a straightforward forest scene can be in the right light, I often find that a composition needs a special element that draws attention. It can be almost anything, as long as it is a detail that somehow stands out. It can be a single tree that is particularly gnarly or just skewed; it can be a small pond or stream, a few flowers, leaves or even a sunstar from a low-angle sun.



*Scent of spring: The beautiful flowers caught my attention first, but I was also drawn to the nice structure of the trees and the color-contrast between the flowers and the trunks, as well as the depth in the scene. From Yosemite National Park.*

Looking for elements to focus on makes the search for compositions easier and I often find that the scene benefits from that little extra "it". When I am out wandering the forests, I primarily look for such details and then try to figure out the rest of the composition around it.

## *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

### *Depth*

I find depth to be an extremely important element in the forest images that I like. Finding a composition where you somehow see further into the forest, creates the impression that the forest goes on and on and what you are photographing is just a tiny element in a bigger whole.



*Enchanted path: Planning can help! I found this scene a long time ago and planned to return when conditions were perfect. On a day with very dense fog, I dropped everything and returned here immediately. From Trondheim in Norway.*

Factors that may help you increase the sense of depth may be placing the “it”-element in the foreground or using leading lines created by branches or fallen trees towards a backdrop. Light and atmosphere is also a major contributor to the sense of depth. I have already mentioned how fog gives a wonderful blurring of more distant subjects, but even if you don’t have fog, light can be used. Small clearings in dense forests are always brighter, and when I have found an area I like to capture, I often try to compose towards a lighter area to enhance the sense of depth.

### *Edges and corners*

When composing forest scenes, I believe that taking extra care of the edges of the frame is important. Always take an extra look through your viewfinder towards these areas to make sure that they contribute to the composition and don’t work against it. Beware of highlights that draw attention from the main subject and what you want to convey. Unless there is a specific point to it, I try to avoid including anything of the sky in the forest scenes.

## *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

### **In the field**

For forest-photography, I carry a range of focal lengths ranging from around 16mm to 105mm (full frame equivalent), a polarizer, a tripod and a remote. Good shoes, right clothes, a snack and mosquito repellent are also important.

When I set out to photograph in the woods, I often start by looking for the small extra “it” that draws my attention. As soon as I have found something that interests me, I make a long walk around this subject, carefully considering light, depth and all other elements. I take care not to step on anything that may be included in the composition later.

*Silver birches in fog: I always consider focal length carefully. Sometimes a tight crop works best. From Trondheim, Norway.*



Forest photography is hard, and at least my brain needs time to take in the scene properly. If you find it difficult, a small break with a snack will help you see if there really is something there. Take your time. Patience is key. If I still find the scene interesting, I then take out the camera and try out different frames and different focal lengths through the viewfinder. Carefully consider the choice of lens. Focal length is so much more than angle-of-view. Different focal lengths alter the compression of the scene and thus the relationship between near and far subjects. For a composition in the forest, this relationship can mean all the difference.

I don't set up the tripod until I'm pretty confident that the scene is good and I have found the best possible composition of it. I then start to take care of the technical details. I almost always use a polarizer when photographing in woods. This removes unwanted reflections and desaturation of foliage and makes the colors stand out better. I always photograph at the lowest possible ISO, but in many instances that can actually be quite high. Light is often dim in the woods and the polarizer also steals some light. If I manage to make a composition with some depth, I want a decent depth of field, and thus a fairly small aperture. All this contributes to long shutter-speeds. The problem is, even a slight breeze will move ferns and branches and blurring details you may want to keep tack sharp.

### *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

So, the ISO needs to be high enough to give an adequate shutter speed to freeze those details at the same time as you have a small enough aperture to have the right depth-of-field. With modern sensors, I have no problem with using an ISO up to around 800. I have often found that the chaotic and heterogeneous forest scenes are rather forgiving with respect to noise.



*This was captured the same morning as the image “Enchanted path”. As with that image, this location had been found long before and I had planned it for misty conditions. Fortunately, a little bit of sunshine penetrated the fog and gave a nice depth in the composition.*

Regarding depth-of-field, I sometimes use focus stacking, but in my experience, this must be used with caution. First of all, the blending process is not always perfect and may render branches and foliage weird. There are of course workarounds for that, but my point is that uniform, tack sharpness all through the scene may steal some of the depth in the composition. I find that a sharp foreground and main elements suffice and that the compositions actually may benefit from a very slight blurring of the distant elements.

My go-to aperture is around f8-16, and I try to keep my shutter speed as fast as possible, depending on the wind. Although I put much work into metering the scene, I often end up bracketing up to +/- 2 steps. The light is difficult in the forest with bright highlights and dark shadows and although the histogram is of much help, you will not really know how you want your exposure before you look at it on a larger, calibrated screen.

## *How to Photograph Forests and Trees . . . Continued*

### **Post-processing forest images**

I do not use standardized post-processing for forest-images. As with all my landscape work, captures are processed on an individual basis. However, a few common elements can be pointed at.

As mentioned, my experience is that noise rarely represents a major problem. Sharpening should be done carefully, as always, to avoid artifacts. Contrast and clarity must also be used with caution, as it is very easy to get a too-hard result. I often end up taking down clarity about -5 and I often leave contrast to 0.

Sometimes, a scene may benefit from a touch of the Orton Effect, but I tend to use that in highlights only to add to the soft, hazy feel in the lightest areas.

Be very careful with the colors, and adjust hue, saturation and luminosity separately with care. Give the greens and yellows special attention and try out different balances.

I always try to capture the scene right in a single exposure, but techniques such as panorama stitching, perspective-blend, focus stacking or even focal-length stacking can be used although the forest-scene with all its lines and details may make a good blend difficult.

If there are small, disturbing details (such as odd branches and light spots from the sky) that I want to remove, I have found that the spot repair tool in Photoshop often does a decent job. If not, the clone stamp tool can be tried out.

### **Conclusion**

This is merely a description of how I think when photographing in the forests. Please consider it as suggestions and examples on how woodland-scenes can be captured, not guidelines or rules.

Find your own ways, sometimes the beauty lies in breaking away from the tips and tricks and make something completely original!