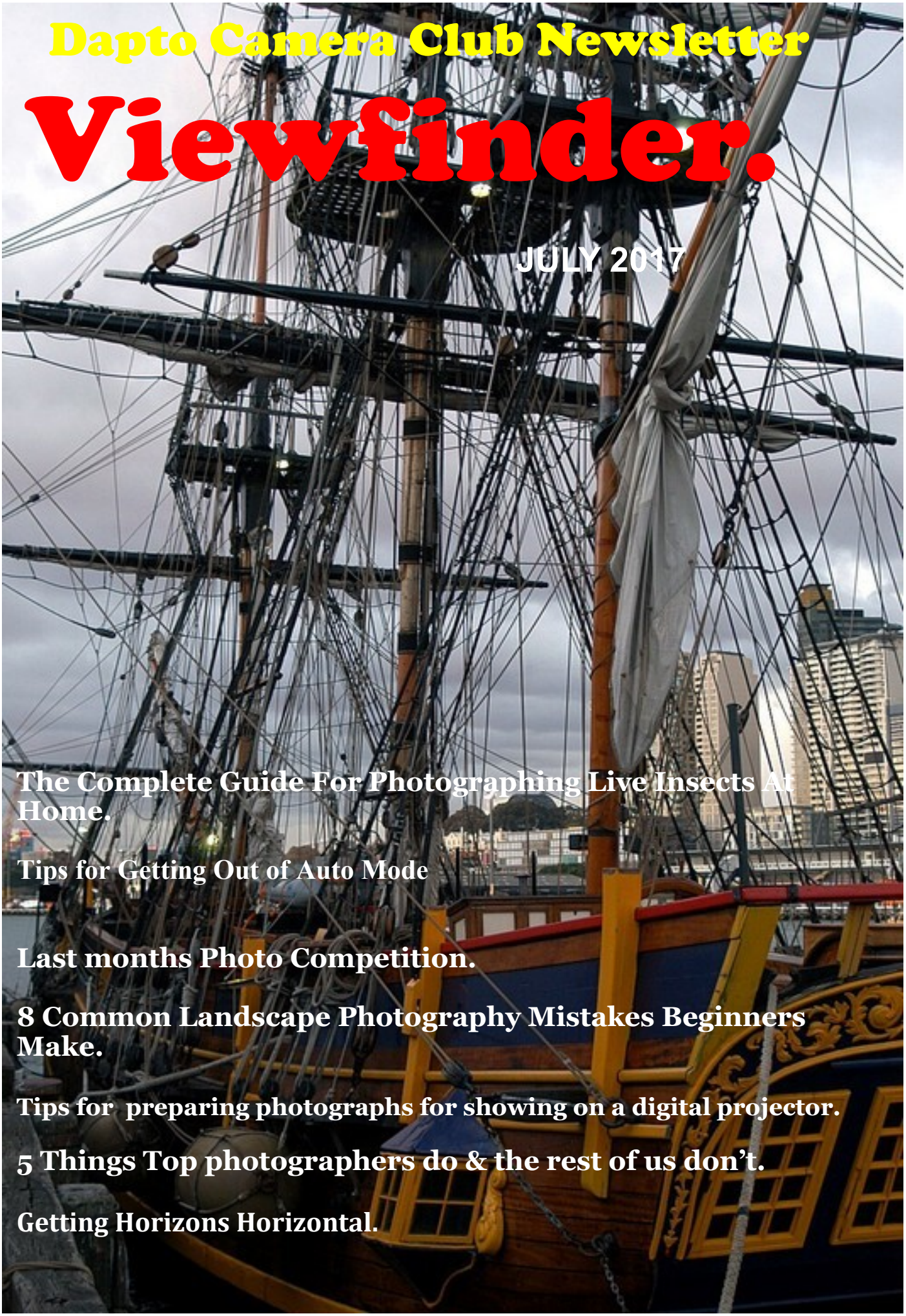

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Getting Horizons Horizontal.

The Complete Guide For Photographing Live Insects At Home

by Udi Tirosh

I started toying around with insect macro photography about 18 months ago. And to be honest, those first few months produced some amazingly bad photographs. But as scientists say, there is no such thing as a failed experiment – as long as it yields data. Well, I've managed to amass quite a lot of "data". And I am grateful that I am able to share some of that knowledge with the DIY community.

As bad as they were, those first few macro shots opened my eyes to the amazing detail and intricacies that lay just beyond the capabilities of our vision. Watching the insects move through the viewfinder was – and still is – a fascinating experience. So, from my earliest attempts, I decided I was going to only shoot live insects.

Of course, the advantage of shooting dead insects is that they hold really still for you. The downside is that – well – they're dead – and often, a keen observer can tell. You also miss out on watching the bugs in action – and sometimes capturing that action in stunning detail.

For starters, I'll walk you through the gear I am shooting with and some basic technical tips, then I'll wrap this up by sharing some ideas on working with the insects and most importantly "containment" during the shoot.

Until recently, I was shooting with a Canon 10D, but this Spring I treated myself to a "major" upgrade … a used Canon 20D bought off ebay for $325. So, it's safe to say that just about any DSLR will be adequate for this.

Lenses

For lenses, I typically shoot with one of two set ups.

1. Extension Tubes

Canon 50mm f/1.8 (it can be bought for about $95) mounted in front of some Kenko extension tubes. The multiplier effect gained from the extension tubes allows me to count the hairs on an ant's head.

2. Reverse Lenses setup

The standard "kit lens" that came in the box with the 10D (28-105mm f/3.5-4.5) mounted in front of the extension tubes. Then, using a macro coupler ring, I mount an old Minolta 50mm f/1.7 BACKWARDS in front of the 28-105 lens.

The first time I heard about this reversed lens technique, I was sure it was voodoo. But if you think about what goes on inside a lens when you mount it correctly – it takes a large scene and reduces it down to fit on the camera's sensor. So, when you mount it backwards, the opposite is true. Tiny objects suddenly appear rather large. Add to that the multiplier effect gained from the extension tubes and suddenly, you can count the cells in a fly's eye.

I won't bore you with a lot of math, but basically, if you divide the focal length of the main lens by the focal length of the reversed lens that is the degree of magnification you are getting. So w/ a 50mm lens

reversed in front of a 100mm lens, an object that measures 12 x 8mm will completely fill a 24 x 16 mm CMOS sensor. By stacking extension tubes between the main lens and the camera body the magnification factor is further increased. Now, go reverse mount that same 50mm lens in front of a 300 mm lens and you are bordering on the microscopic.

Below you can see a typical setup: Canon EOS 20D with 3 Kenko extension tubes (12mm, 20mm & 36mm), Canon 28-105mm lens and Minolta 50mm f/1.7 reverse mounted via macro coupler ring. Also depicted are 2 LumoPro 120 flashes.

But all this magnification comes at a cost

It's going to cost you three ways actually…

1. Less light hits the sensor. When I add the reversed lens, I know I've just given up 2 stops of light. For each 20mm of extension tubes I add, I give up roughly another stop. I've got a couple of standard lighting setups that produce consistently good results for me, but I'll cover those later

Links of Interest:

Viewbug - http://www.viewbug.com/

ePHOTOzine - http://www.ephotozine.com/

Federation of Camera Clubs [NSW] - http://www.photographynsw.org.au/

Australian Photographic Society - http://www.a-p-s.org.au/

Gurushots - https://gurushots.com/

Free Lessons with Serge Ramelli - http://photoserge.com/free-lessons/all

on. For now, just know that you're going to want to get a hold of 1-2 strobes that you can adjust manually. I use LumoPro 120s from mpex.com (the new 160s are available!) These lights cost about $125 apiece and are adjustable in 1-stop increments down to 1/32 power.

2. Depth of field. Trust me, you want to ease into this. Start with a 12m extension tube, then gradually work your way up. I am regularly working with a depth of field that is less than 1mm – even at f/29. That's hard enough to deal with when your subject is inanimate – but live insects tend to be quite active. As a result, I have to shoot these things handheld. Now, I can already hear you saying, "Wait a minute, Scott! Everybody who writes about macro photography says you've got to use a sturdy tripod." If I were shooting an inanimate object, I would absolutely agree – but when your subject is running around and you've got a 1mm DOF, you learn to ditch the tripod in a hurry.

3. Forget that your camera has an auto-focus feature. Extension tube manufacturers will tell you that their tubes work with your camera's auto-focus system. While the tubes may allow the auto-focus system to communicate with the camera, there is little chance that you will actually be able to acquire focus at these close distances. In fact, I don't even use the focus ring – I switch to manual focus, set the lens to its "macro" setting and I acquire focus by moving the camera closer to or further from the subject. This is only possible because I am not bolted to a tripod.

A big disadvantage of shooting handheld is, of course, camera shake. But, welcome to the world of small off-camera flashes. Those cheap little LumoPro 120s fire at 1/30,000 of a second when they are set to 1/32 power. Even though my 20D may only syncs at 1/250 sec., the flash duration is what is exposing the scene and when you get into exposure times less than 1/5,000 sec. even a moderate hand tremor can be imperceptible.

Lighting set ups

Because of the tremendous loss of f-stops and the fact that I want my lights firing as quickly as possible to reduce the negative effects of hand holding the camera, I usually want to get my lights in fairly tight to the subject. This allows me to fire the lights at a low setting (low power = faster flash duration). But of course, there is a downside to this (there is always a downside to everything in macro photography it seems).

The downside is that if the key light is 2 inches away from the subject, and the subject scurries 3/4 of an inch away from the light, I've just lost another stop of light. So I have had to find ways to restrict the insect's movements to a small surface area, and then light that surface area as evenly as possible.

Since I typically try to shoot my insects isolated on white, I like to start out with one light coming almost straight down, but just a little bit behind the subject and angled towards the camera slightly. The second light will usually sit approximately 60° off camera axis. Both flash heads are usually within 3-5 inches of the subject area and each flash head is oriented horizontally so as to spread the beam evenly over as wide an area as possible. I usually place the insect inside a white ceramic bowl or casserole dish. Casserol dishes have the extra added benefit of having a glass lid which can come in handy when working with live insects.

Refer to the set up photo above to see how these lights are arranged.

Restricting the insect's movements

Each type of insect offers its own unique set of challenges with respect to restricting its motion. I have discovered that earwigs and several types of spiders absolutely refuse to step into Vicks® Vap-O-Rub™. These creatures can be held in place simply by smearing the greasy, stinky goo in a circle around the spot you want the action to take place. However, other insects – ants, for instance – will just walk right through Vicks like it's not even there.

I have discovered that ants love to swim in water. Swimming in vinegar, however is not high on their list of “likes”. They don’t like swimming in bleach either, but I’d rather not use that if it can be avoided. So, for ants, I build a little suspension bridge out of a couple paperclips and some clear tape.

The bridge then gets placed into a bowl of vinegar. The ants will scurry all over the surface, even climbing down the paperclips to the vinegar. Most often, the ants will try to swim away once, but instead of swimming they just end up twitching a lot instead. I simply lower a tooth pick which the ant will invariably grasp gratefully, and I lift the ant back onto the bridge. Most ants don’t go back for a second dip after that.

After an ant has taken a vinegar bath, it will spend a few minutes grooming itself to remove the droplets of vinegar from the antennae and legs – so be ready with the camera!
Flying insect present a whole different set of challenges. Since I do most of these shots on my kitchen counter, I clearly don’t want to let dragonflies loose in the house. Even if I was working outside, I wouldn’t want the insects to be flying away constantly, either. That was problematic until I ran across some information that indicated insects need the air temperature to be at least 52°F in order to achieve flight.

Shooting on the kitchen counter is one thing … shooting inside the refrigerator is an entirely different matter, however. And I am not THAT committed. By refrigerating a flying insect for 20 minutes prior to shooting, I can usually get 2-3 minutes of shooting before the insect will exhibit signs that it is considering flight. I then recapture and stuff it back in the fridge for another few minutes.
I have also discovered that by placing the ceramic bowl inside of a larger bowl filled with ice, the ambient air temperature around the insect is much lower while I am shooting and this can greatly extend the length of time I can work with an insect before it starts thinking about taking off.

http://www.diyphotography.net/the-comlete-guide-for-photographing-live-insects-at-home/

Tips for Getting Out of Auto Mode

By Graham Hettinger

With your first entry-level DSLR camera in hand, you may be wondering what all of the letters and symbols on your camera's mode dial mean. Instead of staying in Auto Mode for every photo you take, it's time get out of Auto and learn about your other options for creatively capturing images. Besides the self-explanatory Sports, Portrait, Low-Light, Close-up, or Landscape modes that your camera may have, your camera body will be equipped with Program, Shutter-Priority, Aperture-Priority, and Manual modes. As you move through these four modes, you gain a little more creative control in different areas of shooting.

Don’t Get Intimidated

Nothing about these different shooting modes should be anything to be intimidated by, and can be extremely useful skills to master for photographers at any level. Just because you read somewhere that you can’t be a “professional” photographer unless you shoot in Manual Mode, doesn’t mean it’s true. There are many circumstances where a photographer is out on a shoot and it makes practical or creative sense to use the Sports or Shutter-Priority modes, for example. Whether you are photographing a baseball game, shooting portraits, or capturing a beautiful rose, there is a mode that will be perfect for you. Below you’ll find a little more information about how each of these modes can be useful for a different purpose or style of shooting, and what you will be able to learn by experimenting with and mastering each mode.

1. Program Mode (P)

In Program mode, the camera will automatically determine the best shutter speed and aperture for optimal exposure and gives you the option of changing the ISO yourself. This mode, marked by the letter “P” on the mode dials of both Canon and Nikon bodies, is a great place to start after you have spent a little time getting used to Auto mode on your camera. Program mode puts you in control of the ISO setting while the camera picks the best shutter speed and aperture to properly expose your image. For those not familiar with what this means, in short, ISO controls how sensitive your camera’s sensor is to incoming light.

Program mode allows you, the photographer, to learn about how varying ISO levels will affect the image in terms of things like exposure, noise/grain, color quality, etc. For example, this image below was shot in an extremely dark room, with an ISO of 4000. You can see the increased amount of noise that appears in the image when the ISO is too high.

2. Shutter-Priority Mode (S or TV)

As the name suggests, Shutter-Priority mode puts you in control of the shutter speed, while the camera automatically takes care of determining the best aperture for optimal exposure. Again you will have the option to adjust the ISO. This mode is marked by the letter “S” on Nikon bodies, and “TV” on Canon bodies. Shutter-Priority mode is perfect when you need freeze the fast motion of sports or when you want to capture a long exposure shot of a skyline at night, all depending on how long or short your shutter is.

For freezing fast-moving subjects, like baseball for example, starting with a shutter speed of 1/500 of a second or faster will allow you to completely freeze the action and will eliminate any motion blur. Conversely, if you wish to capture the movement of a waterfall, selecting a shutter speed of ⅕ of a second or slower will allow you to see the flowing water in your final image. In this image be-

low, you see the effects that a shutter speed of ⅕ of a second has on this image.

3. Aperture-Priority Mode (A or AV)

When you need to have complete control of the aperture setting, while the camera takes care of determining the shutter speed, then the Aperture -Priority mode is perfect. This mode is marked with an "A" on Nikon cameras, and "AV" on Canon. With the shift in aperture, you are able to control the depth of field (or how much of the photo is in focus). Additionally with the aperture variations, you will be able to control the exposure of the image.
In this photo of a budding plant, you can see how selecting an aperture of f/2.8 made the depth of field very narrow while blurring out the background of the image.

4. Manual Mode (M)

Now that you have mastered all of the semi-automatic modes, you can move on to Manual mode. After having spent time learning about ISO in Program mode, shutter speed in Shutter-Priority mode, and aperture in Aperture-Priority mode, you are ready to bring all of your learning together. With these skills combined, you are ready to start shooting in Manual mode where you will have precise control of all of these settings at once. It may not be easy at first, as there are many variables to control, but your perseverance in learning and practicing will be the key to bringing your photography skills up to par with the professionals.
If you are a hands on person like myself, I find it best to just get out and shoot. Trial and error is a great way to learn how to and how not to shoot photos. With knowledge of the basics of each shooting mode, take some time to see for yourself how little adjustments to the shutter, aperture, or ISO affect your final images. It may take some time to learn how all of these settings work together, and you may find that along the way some of your images may be under or over exposed. It won't happen overnight, but eventually you'll develop your own creative style and will soon master the skills necessary to create beautiful images.

http://photographycourse.net/tips-getting-out-auto-mode/

Last months Photo Competition.

Small Colour

Colour

More Colour

Monochrome

8 Common Landscape Photography Mistakes Beginners Make

by Richard Walker

If you are interested in landscape photography I'm sure you have read lots of "how to improve…" type articles, which are all useful in their own way. But often to get things right you need to analyse what you are doing wrong. With this in mind here are 8 common mistakes that can spoil a landscape. This list is by no means scientific, it is simply anecdotal evidence that I have observed over the years.

It is important to remember that how the brain interprets a scene when you are actually there is very different from how the brain interprets a photograph. When you are actually there *all* your senses are feeding your brain information to keep the interest level up. Your brain won't care that there is nothing in the foreground because it chooses to focus on the beautiful mountains in the distance as well as taking in the smells and sounds to create a moment full of emotions.

Chances are that you also only look at those mountains for a few seconds before your brain puts the image into its memory banks and turns its attention to something else around you that may be equally as beautiful. You remember the whole scene as the sum of the most beautiful parts.

This is in stark contrast to looking at a photograph which can only capture one small part of the whole experience. As a result photographers must work extra hard to capture the elements that their brain wanted to capture and, more importantly, filter out those elements which the brain automatically filters but the camera does not.

Remember, the human brain is attracted to beautiful things and will filter out anything it finds unattractive to concentrate on the parts it likes. Your camera will not do this and one of your main jobs as a photographer is to override this filter when you look through your viewfinder and compose your shot accordingly.

Forgetting to Include Foreground Interest

This is probably the most common mistake that beginners make when shooting landscapes. It's easy to get caught up in the beauty of a distant mountain range and think that it will make for a beautiful image. But for the reasons stated above it generally will not on its own. The viewers eye will generally look at the foreground first and if there is nothing there to spark an interest then you'll probably lose them at that point. Remember, in a photograph there are no sounds, no smells, no gentle breeze caressing your cheeks – it's all about what the viewer sees with their eyes and for that reason you need to make the whole image scream "look at me."

If there is no natural foreground interest you can try adding a little as I did in this shot – (Photo by Richard Walker Photography)

Rushing a Shoot

If you want to achieve great landscape photographs be prepared to spend plenty of time at your

Photography Outings.

Bass Point Reserve - Shellharbour

Bass Point Reserve is a 72 hectare coastal jewel, located just south of Shellharbour Village and contains one of the few littoral rainforest areas in the Illawarra. The reserve is recognized as one of the most important archaeological sites on the NSW coast and is listed on the Australian Heritage Commission register. You will always be able to find something to photograph here.

Minnamurra Rainforest

A beautiful board-walk through a rain-forest with an additional walk to the Minnamurra Falls. There are some good photo opportunities with the lush green growth of the rain-forest trees and creepers.

Start at the Albion Park roundabout.

At the roundabout take the exit onto the Illawarra Highway.

Continue on Terry Street – go through two roundabouts. Continue on Jamberoo Road for just over 6 kms.

Turn right onto Jamberoo Mountain Road.

Drive 1.3kms then turn right onto Minnamurra Falls Road.

The Rainforest is at the end of the road – about 4kms drive.

lawarra Light Railway Museum - Albion Park

The whole family will love cheering and waving from the steam train as it

travels past the station and navigates its way through the quiet bushland setting in Albion Park. The museum also has tram and miniature train rides that let the children experience a piece of history that was enjoyed at fairgrounds by their parents and grandparents alike.

Photographing Light trails [star trails]

Star Trails, Set up an ultra-long exposure, position your camera on a Tripod, point it up at a clear night sky and see the path that the stars make once your image is developed.

A great chance to take some great photos.

chosen location and keep shooting and moving around throughout. If your wife / kids are going to get bored waiting for you, leave them at home. Unless you get lucky you need to give yourself at least an hour at a location to get a great shot. You need to take your time to survey the area and pick a spot, set up your equipment and wait for the light / clouds / whatever to be just right. These things just cannot be rushed. You should also allow yourself plenty of time to move around and shoot from different angles.

Forgetting About Shooting Portrait

When shooting landscapes the overwhelming urge is to shoot in landscape mode, i.e.. have your camera horizontal. The fact is that most of the time this will be the best option, after all it's landscape mode and you are shooting a landscape, the clue is kind of in the name. However, it won't always be the case. Sometimes a scene is crying out to be taken portrait style and sometimes it's almost impossible to tell which is going to turn out best, especially if you are a beginner. So, what do you do, shoot landscape or portrait? That's easy, do both. Set up, shoot landscape and then rotate your camera through 90 degrees and do some portrait shots. Worry about which is best when you are sitting at your computer.

Sometimes shooting portrait style is better than shooting landscape –
(Photo by Richard Walker Photography)

Getting a Crooked Horizon

This is probably the easiest on in this list to fix. There really is no excuse for the horizon being anything other than straight but don't trust your judgement, use a tripod and a spirit level to ensure that your camera is absolutely straight. If you don't already have one, you can get a level which fits into your hotshoe on your camera for the price of a beer. If your camera has a built in level it may be best not to trust it, they are not always the most accurate things.

Whatever you do, don't try to judge it by eye, the contours of the land can be far more disorientating than you realise and although you can straighten in post you will inevitably lose some of the image.

Only Shooting Wide

Many people think that landscape photography is all about throwing on your widest lens and capturing as much of a scene as you can. It isn't.

Landscape photography is about selecting the right elements and incorporating them into the shot to produce the best work you possibly can. Don't get me wrong, wide is good, but it's not the be all and end all. Sometimes you can capture too much of a scene and this can detract from what you are trying to achieve.

If you can move yourself to a better vantage point then fine but this all takes time and with condi-

tions inevitably changing fast it's often too much of a risk. Don't be afraid to zoom in, wither a little or a lot, there are plenty of fantastic landscapes around taken at 200mm or more. One interesting side effect of shooting zoomed in is that it flattens out the depth bringing all the elements closer together, this can create a very pleasing effect even with landscapes.

This image was shot at 97mm using a 24-105mm lens –
(Photo by Richard Walker Photography)

Getting Incorrect Exposure

Landscape photography often requires photographing both the land and the sky and these 2 elements are normally very different in terms of how they need to be exposed. The problem is that if you expose for the sky, the land can be too dark and if you expose for the land, the sky can be blown out and detail will be lost.

Your job as a landscape photographer is to make sure all the elements in the shot are exposed correctly so that maximum detail is revealed to the viewer. There are 2 *main* ways to control your exposure in this situation, HDR and use of graduated filters.

HDR involves taking multiple exposures, generally at least 3, and merging them together using software. One exposure will be for the bright parts of the image (sky), one for the dark areas (land) and then one somewhere in between. Graduated Neutral Density filters are a means of controlling the exposure at the time of shooting to try and get an even exposure in camera rather than in post. Using a graduated filter is a bit like putting a pair of sunglasses on your camera but only on the bright part (sky). Graduated filters work best when there is a well-defined horizontal separation between the land and the sky.

Including Too Much Clutter

In day to day life the human brain is great at removing the unwanted from a scene and focusing on what it wants you to notice, which tends to be the more attractive elements. When you are stood on the beach surveying a beautiful seascape with the sun setting in the distance you don't even notice that pile of rubbish underneath the jetty. But translate that scene into a photograph and it will stick out like a sore thumb. You have to condition yourself to spot these issues otherwise they will ruin your end product.

Always take the time to either compose the scene so that the unwanted elements are not there, or if possible remove these elements before you shoot, or if all else fails, remove them in post.

Try to remove any unwanted items from a scene by adjusting the position from which you shoot and your angle.– (Photo by Richard Walker Photography)

Failure to Post Process

Some people have a hang up about manipulating their photographs after they have been taken. They see it as somehow cheating. I personally say that anything goes depending on what you are trying to achieve.

If you are a journalist then it stands to reason that you shouldn't manipulate your image beyond getting the brightness and contrast correct, but as a landscape photographer I think there are no rules. What are you trying to do? Are you trying to portray the scene exactly as it was when you were there? Or are you trying to create a piece of art that people will want to look at again and again?

I don't think many people would disagree that it is ok to change the brightness and contrast to make the shot a little more vivid, but what about removing unwanted elements? Is that acceptable? I say it is. After all, if you think about the above point (too much clutter), that is what you are doing. What's the difference between doing it when you are there and doing it in post? At the end of the day if you zoom in you are removing lots of elements.

But what about adding elements? This one really is controversial. If your shot is great but your sky is boring is it acceptable to add in a better sky? Well, I say yes. It's not something I do very often but it's certainly not something I am adverse to.

To enable yourself to post process properly you need to shoot RAW rather than JPEG. RAW images allow far greater control in post processing and often make the difference between a good and a great photograph.

Remember, these are not hard and fast rules but simply ideas that you can choose to ignore if you wish but hopefully one or two of them may help you see the wood for the trees.

https://www.lightstalking.com/8-common-landscape-photography-mistakes-beginners-make/

FastStone Photo Resizer

FastStone Photo Resizer 3.2 makes quick work of batches of digital snapshots. It not only resizes and renames images quickly and with minimal fuss, but it also crops, rotates, adjusts, and edits your pictures, too, and even applies text and watermarks. It has everything you need to take those huge folders of megabyte snapshots with cryptic names and, in one step, convert them all to JPEGS (or whatever), resize them to manageable dimensions, and rename them all, even sequentially (such as: RoadTripAug2012_1). It's better than Plan B, which is to just forget about them and then spend hours finding, sorting, and converting them to post and share. We have a lot of experience with Plan B, so it was nice to see how easy Plan A was with help from this basic but effective tool. Something else we like about FastStone Photo Resizer 3.2: it's freeware.

http://download.cnet.com/FastStone-Photo-Resizer/3000-2192_4-10319476.html

Tips for preparing photographs for showing on a digital projector.

Sizing images.

At Dapto Camera Club we need to have our images set at 1920 pixels wide X 1080 pixels high. Square images 1080 pixels X 1080 pixels square.

File format and compression.

Problems can arise if images are very large, which can slow down the slideshow software. This particularly applies to large JPEGs that have been saved at maximum quality.

When you are saving images for projection, use JPEG format. When you save each image you should be offered a range of quality settings and we recommend Level 8 in Photoshop, also known as 60% or the lowest “High” setting. This provides the best compromise of size and quality. Do not use the “maximum” or level 12 quality setting - this can slow the slideshow down. Which ever software you are using it should not be set higher than 60%.

If you are familiar with colour management, we recommend saving images in the sRGB colour space. Most projectors have an sRGB preset which should be a close match for this space. Remember to use “Convert to profile” not “Assign profile” if using Photoshop - the latter will give incorrect colour.

Please set your resolution at 300 pixels/inch, It is recommended to always use this setting as it is also valid for printing.

Borders.

Some photographers like to put borders round their images when preparing them for projection. If you want to show your images at their strongest, this border should be black. We advise against using white borders. While white might look good on your computer screen, many projectors project a very bright white, which can dazzle viewers and make the images harder to look at. If you want that effect or need a visible border (ie not black), we suggest trying a mid grey.

Renaming images.

As JPEGs - the main problem here is when images are projected in the wrong order. Be careful when numbering images. The problem we find is the computer reads the first character first. So 11smith.jpg will appear before 2smith.jpg. To get round this problem, use a three digit numbering system and start from 100. So 100jones_mytitle.jpg, 101jones_mytitle.jpg ... etc will work perfectly.

Sending by email or handing in presentations on a USB flash drive.

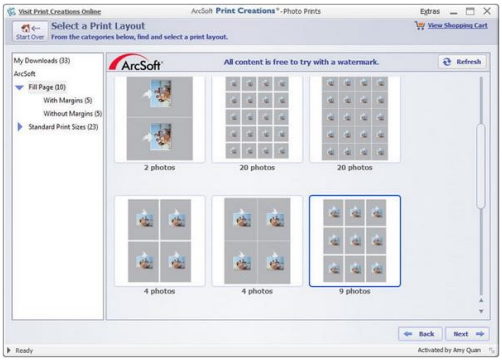
If you are sending in advance, you can send presentations as email attachments up to about 20MB. Larger than that you will need to use a file transfer system such as mailbigfile.com.

If you are bringing a presentation, Please put them on a USB flash drive with your family name marked on it. Bring a spare copy with you as these drives can fail.

Free ArcSoft

It is extremely easy to print a full page of photo. Open the photo in your printing software and just hit the "Print" button, right? May be it is. But if you want to print multiple photos in custom layouts, or need it in a certain size, then you need ArcSoft to print your photo prints.

http://www.arcsoft.com/topics/print-creations/photo-printing-software.html



5 Things Top photographers do & the rest of us don't

At some time or another we've all looked at the work of top photographers and wondered… What makes their photos better then mine? Is it because they use the best camera gear, work with the best models or get access to locations that mere mortals like us can only dream of? Well perhaps but here are five things top photographers do that may be you and I don't.

1 Fill the frame

From landscape photographers to portrait photographers there's one thing that all top photographers know and that's to fill the frame with your subject. Now I'm not talking about simply zooming or cropping in closer, although that can be one solution. I'm talking realising what's important to your photo as you're looking through the viewfinder and pressing the shutter when the composition is exactly what you want

Top Tip: If it's not part of the story, don't have it in your photo.

2 Revisit a location/subject

Like all photographers I look at the work of my peers and wish I could shoot an image even half as good. From time to time I've even gone to the same location to try and recreate the photo. Sadly it's never quite the same.

So how do top photographers get great photos? They return to the shot again and again and again until they get it right. Each time they learn a little more about where to shoot, when to photograph and what makes a good image. You may have to visit the same location a dozen times before you get the perfect light, or shoot at the same sporting venue many times to discover the best vantage points.

Top Tip: If at first you don't succeed… go back and do it again

3 Specialise on a subject

Many photographers flit from one type of photography to another. One day they're trying to master landscape photography the next they're trying their hand at shooting weddings. There's absolutely nothing wrong with mixing it up but try to specialise in one area more then any other.

The fact is top photographers tend to become well known for not for shooting one area of photography but for being the best at a small niche of one area in photography. For example great fashion photographers don't make great wedding photographers. Motor sports photographers may be rubbish at shooting football.

Top Tip: You only need to be the best in one area of photography

4 Learn from failure

All photographers have bad days and most of us have bad weeks too. Sometimes nothing goes your way. Maybe the weather doesn't play ball or you accidentally shoot with the wrong exposure or perhaps you just run out of ideas.

When that happens, it's natural to feel down hearted, frustrated and ready to throw in the towel. Top photographers will quickly get over the initial disappointment and the best photographers will embrace failure as all part of learning.

Going further, top photographer will expect to mess up and they'll plan accordingly. Things like taking more then one photo, moving the view point, bracketing exposure and experimenting with lens choice are all part of the secret of success.

Top Tip: You're the only one who will ever see your bad shots.

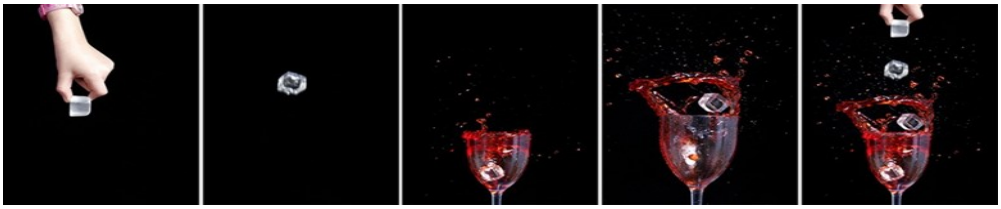
5 Think about post processing whilst taking photos

Let's be honest, every photographer aims to get the photo right in the camera most of the time. We all know that Software/Photoshop can do amazing things to help to fix photos and enhance photos but top photographers are thinking about post processing whilst holding the camera.

Let's be clear, they'll not think "I'll fix that in Photoshop" they're thinking this might work best with a square crop or this scene would look better in black and white.

Being aware of what can be done in post processing and you're skills at doing it, should be in your mind whenever the camera is in your hand.

Top Tip: Clicking the shutter is the start of the photo and rarely the end.



http://www.gavtrain.com/?p=2509

Getting Horizons Horizontal

A Post By: Darren Rowse

One of the first ever tips I was given when I began taking photos as a teenager was to watch the horizon when framing a photograph.

The day after I was given this tip I went back through all of my photo albums (I was using film cameras back then) and discovered that a fairly large proportion of the images I'd been taking looked a little like this one.

While there is a lot to like about the above picture there's an obvious mistake with it when you know what to look for. The roof of the building is crooked (sloping down to the left). While this might actually be the case in real life (it is an old building) the problem goes further when you look at the place where the water meets the sky.

Oceans don't slope upwards (even though there is some hills in the background of this picture). When I took this photo I was so concerned with getting the colors right (I'll write about polarizing filters another day) that I completely forgot to look at the horizon and make sure that it was level.

This is an elementary mistake that many photographers make. It has the ability to spoil otherwise brilliant shots.

Of course at times you might want to experiment with holding your camera at different kinds of angles and put your horizon purposely offline my rule of thumb is to either make it perfectly flat or very obviously off line. 'Slightly' off horizontal does nothing except make your photos viewers feel dizzy or lean their heads when they view your shots.

How to Get Your Horizons Straight

The simplest way to get your horizon horizontal simply line it up with the top or bottom of your view finder. Keep in mind that the edge of your frame in your viewfinder or LCD screen will be the edges of the actual image and will be the reference point for the eventual viewers of your shots to work out whether your shot is straight or not.

Many cameras also have markers in their view finder (often a rectangle or set of focussing spots). These can often be used to help line up your horizons mid frame.

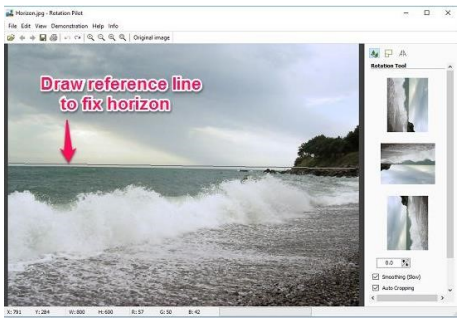
Some cameras have a ‘rule of thirds’ mode where they overlay a grid in your LCD/viewfinder to show you where to place your points of interest. While they’re not intended to help you get your images stright – they can be helpful markers to show you where a level line is.

Lastly, if you’re struggling with getting horizons straight consider buying a small spirit level. You’ve probably seen builders use big ones (they have a little bubble in them to show you when something is straight). You can also get little ones to attach to your camera from eBay very cheeply that work similarly.

PS: a lot of photo editing software these days comes with a ‘straighten’ or ‘rotate’ feature so if this tip has made you go back through your old photos and you’ve shots that are crooked you might want to learn how to use these tools.

Tools like iPhotos straightening one can have a real impact on your photography and I’d recommend learning how to use them.

Free Rotation Pilot for PC’s



Rotation Pilot is a free software that has very simple functionality to straighten photos. You can import a tilted photo to its interface and draw a horizontal or vertical line according to the type of tilt you are dealing with. After fixing a tilted photo, it also lets you auto crop the photo and apply auto smoothing effect to remove irregular edges from the photo.

Rotation Pilot is only meant to fix the images that aren’t properly oriented. So, it won’t be very difficult to understand this software as it doesn’t support other editing functions. Draw reference line horizontally or vertically and it will automatically adjust your image to a proper orientation. And you can save the final corrected image to any folder of your choice.

http://www.colorpilot.com/rotation.html

WEBSITE of the MONTH

Milky Way & Star Photography Tutorial: Camera Settings, Equipment, Photo Editing and Planning Tools.

Learn Milky Way & star photography with this definitive shooting & photo editing guide, from a pro. Master the best camera settings, shutter speed, f-stop (controls aperture), and ISO, balancing the exposure triangle for night sky photography.Step-by-step, easy to follow instructions are **100% actionable for all skill levels.**

http://www.davemorrowphotography.com/p/tutorial-shooting-night-sky.html

We are on the web !!

www.daptocameraclub.org.au

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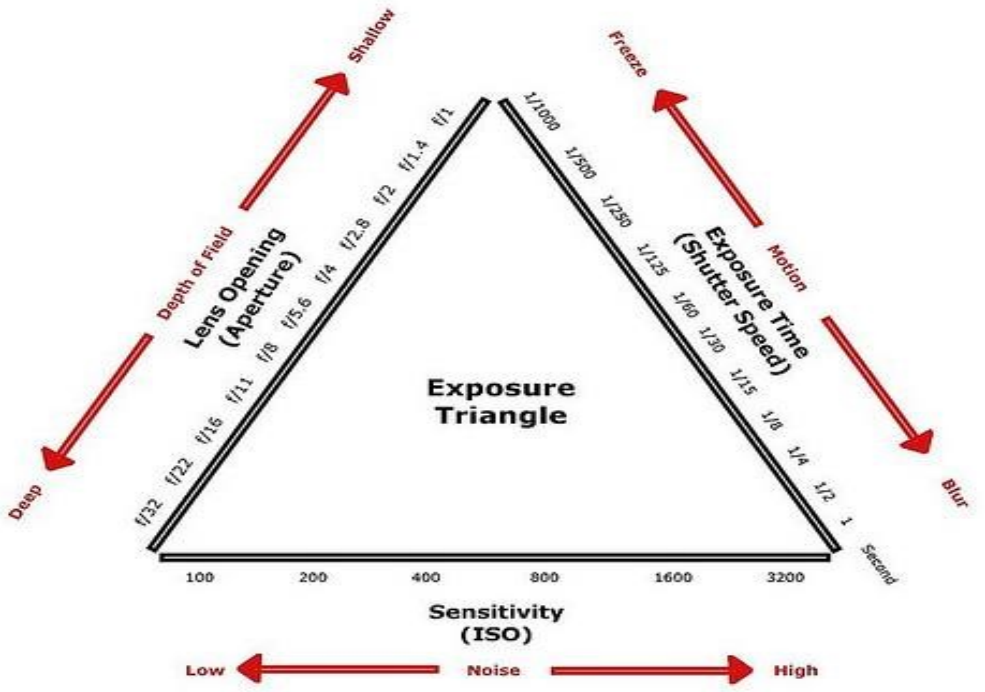

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