

# \* 7 Nature Photography “Musts” \*

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## 1 Background, background, background!

A busy jumble of sticks, bright spots, or other distracting background elements commonly ruins otherwise fine photos. Sometimes you can't do a thing about it, but quite often you can. Don't spend an hour on Photoshop doing something that you can easily do in mere seconds the field! For example, a simple change of position or waiting just a bit for an animal to change *its* position frequently does the trick. A bird in a tree with bright spots of sky showing through makes creating a non-distracting background extra challenging. Try moving until a solid clump of leaves backs the bird. The key is you want the viewer's eye to head *first* to your subject, *not* to undeserving background distractions.

## 2 Get that eye sharp.

When photographing animals at least one eye must be sharp. Even if you don't have enough depth of field to cover the entire animal you can still create a keeper if the eye is sharp. Viewers look to the eye first & if they find fuzziness there they intuit that the image lacks “life.”

## 3 Scenics generally need a focal point.

When shooting landscapes, wide angle lenses tend to make things smaller & exaggerate distances. Use a foreground element to help anchor your scene & provide perspective. Even if your subject is the Milky Way, something recognizable—maybe a silhouette?—in the foreground adds impact, while “placing” the viewer into the scene.

## 4 Get on your subject's level.

Mammal, bird, insect, frog, even flower images feel much more intimate if shot from their level. Doing so helps put viewers emotionally into the scene. Shots taken from above or below, on the other hand, reinforce viewer-subject separation.

## 5 Be patient.

Waiting for the right light, waiting for an animal to do something besides sit there, waiting for the best head position—we could almost call nature photography “The Waiting Game.” But you've heard the saying “Good things come to those who wait,” right? Well, it especially applies to photographing natural scenes & subjects.

## 6 Come to grips with exposure theory.

Today's digital cameras do a very good job when left to their own devices. However, there are still times—many of them—when you need to help your camera out with exposure compensation. In particular, when faced with bright backgrounds (e.g. snow, white skies), auto modes tend to underexpose. In such situations, it's up to you to take charge & tell your camera to expose for the subject. (Your histogram is your friend!)

## 7 Most importantly have FUN!!

Once you buy the equipment, digital capture costs nothing so why not experiment? Don't hold back! Take lots of shots, break the rules, express yourself. Bottom line: after your initial investment, each shot comes free so why not do something different? If it doesn't work, delete it!

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