

# 7 Common Mistakes New Photographers Make

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## 1) Ignoring the histogram.

Your histogram is a valuable tool. Don't rely on your camera's display to judge brightness; it can fool you! Check that histogram to make sure that you're not clipping highlights or shadows. (Some of today's mirrorless cameras even show the histogram in the viewfinder.)

## 2) Ignoring the background.

It's easy to grow mesmerized by the beauty of your subject & forget about what's behind it. Indeed, that flower, butterfly or bird may be gorgeous, but your shot can be ruined by a busy mess of a background.

## 3) Over editing.

Just because you can doesn't mean you should. The most common infraction that I see is overdoing the saturation. Next most common is over sharpening. Unless you are purposefully going for a surreal look take a moment and judge if your image is overcooked. You might need to revisit it in a day or two with fresh eyes.

## 4) Little thought for composition.

When photographing wildlife remember the animal isn't the whole shot -- it's part of the composition. To develop an eye for composition, study images you like & try to figure out why you like them. At the most basic level, you typically don't want your main subject dead center, nor do you want the horizon exactly in the middle of the frame. Of course, there are exceptions but they should be made deliberately. (See also TIP #6)

## 5) Un-sharp images.

Lack of sharpness can come from camera movement, subject movement or not getting accurate focus in the first place. Lack of sharpness due to movement can be avoided by using a fast shutter speed and/or using a tripod. Accurate focus, in large part, comes down to practice. For living subjects aim to focus on the eye when possible.

## 6) Not learning your camera before going into the field.

A once-in-a-lifetime trip is not the time to figure out how to use your camera. Practice at home before the trip. Especially for bird/wildlife photographers, practice until you're able to adjust shutter speed, aperture, etc. without taking your eye from the viewfinder.

## 7) Cutting off subject / random objects poking into the frame.

This goes along with composition and background (TIP #4). Don't cut off your subject's feet...watch out for that tree branch coming in from the side or out of your subject's head...check for ugly powerlines, etc. In short, check the edges & look for distractions. The more you master your camera (TIP #6) the better attention you can pay to such details.

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**Award-winning nature & wildlife photographer, Jeff Parker, leads photo tours & workshops for the naturally curious throughout North, Central & South America.**

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