

7 Tips for Culling Images

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Digital photography affords us the ability to take an almost unlimited number of photos. The other side of that coin is that you can end up with an almost unlimited number of photos to go through. I hope these tips help you decide what to keep.

1) Use burst mode with restraint.

While shooting don't go burst crazy. With birds in flight, stop shooting when the bird is perpendicular to you. All those shots of birds flying away-- a.k.a. "bird butts" --will just need to be deleted.

2) If in doubt, delete.

If you're on the fence about an image, ask yourself why you're considering keeping it. Is it the only frame you have of a particular species? Well, then keeping it makes sense. But for common subjects only keep the best of the best. Why keep mediocre shots if you've also got an awesome one?

3) Fuzzy eye? Bye, bye.

Unless you have a very good reason (*see Tip #2*), any shot of an animal that does not have a sharp eye goes bye-bye. Seriously! If at least one eye isn't in focus it is not a keeper. With birds in particular, check for the nictitating membrane covering the eye. This will give the eye an unattractive milky appearance.

4) Background, background, background.

Distracting background elements like bright spots or trash? A stick sticking out of your subject's head? Trash that image. (*You might be tempted to Photoshop it out, but you're better off with an image that doesn't need as much manipulation.*)

5) Start with thumbnails.

When going through a set of photos view them first as thumbnails. Right away the smaller size can often help you separate shots that stand out from those that don't.

6) Give 'em some room.

In general, with people or animals you don't want them facing away from you or exiting the frame of the photo. The subject needs some room to move into the photo.

7) Notice nuances.

If you have a series of virtually identical shots there are usually some slight variations that can set an image apart. With wildlife, a head angled slightly toward you tends to work well. But don't just look at the subject; consider other elements, e.g. water droplet positions, a particular glint of light on nearby vegetation, etc.

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Award-winning naturalist photographer, Jeff Parker, leads friendly & informative photo tours & workshops focused on the flora & fauna of North, Central, & South America, in addition to parts of Europe.

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