

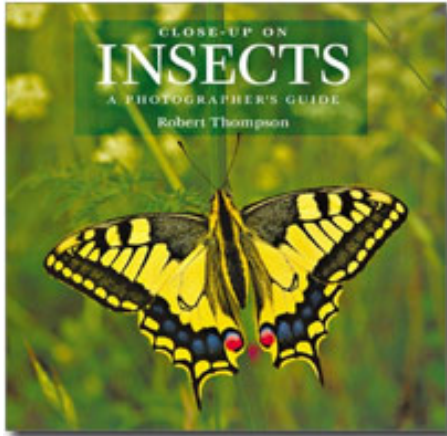


Book Review...

## Close-up on Insects - A Photographer's Guide

Review by Terri Norris

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Hardcover: 204 pages

Publisher: Guild of Master Craftsmen; (April 28, 2003)

Dimensions (in inches): 0.73 x 10.50 x 10.26

"You probably won't like this book" my husband announced having skimmed the beginning pages of *Close-Up on Insects A Photographer's Guide* by Robert Thompson.

"Why is that?" I asked, not wanting to be biased for my review, but also curious as to why he seemed certain that I wouldn't care for the book.

"Because this photographer doesn't like digital!" he answered.

Upon examining the book, I found his statement to be correct. In the book's foreword, fellow nature photographer Stephen Dalton states "this is no coffee-table book: simply

thumbing through the pages will not reveal the secrets of Robert's success. The text has to be read, and then you soon realize that he does not believe in compromises – small format, automation and digital image capture of course all go out the window."

Keeping an open mind, I did do exactly what Dalton advised against and thumbed through the pages, nearly drooling as I visualized over 300 of Thompson's macro images in almost every category of the insect world.

When I was finally able to concentrate on reading the text, it quickly became apparent that Thompson seeks to teach the reader the art of insect photography and utilizes the methods that he has found to be successful. Although he covers macro equipment and techniques thoroughly, he clearly defines which equipment and techniques have proven to be the most successful for him and he dedicates the majority of his instructional text to the optimal utilization of these.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part One, Thompson incorporates comprehensive discussions of value to both the novice and experienced macro photographer in chapters on camera systems, exposure, film, magnification, close-up equipment, depth of field, and working with flash. I particularly found his discussions on flash techniques and black backgrounds to be of interest. He does discuss composition, but I believe that the reader will learn composition techniques just through viewing Thompson's images.

Thompson uses medium format for his insect photography, and it becomes quickly apparent that most of his instruction is directed toward medium format equipment. Potential readers of this book should realize that although Thompson dwells on this format, he does not completely neglect the 35mm format. There is, however, no mention or discussion regarding digital photography. Although the instructions offered on most topics will apply to those shooting digital, a reader looking for specific discussions on digital macro photography will be disappointed.

As previously noted, Thompson doesn't waste the reader's time by elaborating on equipment that he doesn't find useful in creating his wonderful images. For example, while most macro books include extensive discussion on the use of ring flash, Thompson covers the topic in less than a paragraph by denoting that this type of flash is not suited for insect photography. Thompson's clearly stated opinions are designed to point the reader to the path to creating a successful photograph.

The real treasures of this book are incorporated in Part Two. Here, Thompson seeks to teach the reader how to photograph each of the main insect groups. He includes chapters on dragonflies, butterflies, caterpillars, moths, and other insect groups. In each chapter, he discusses where to find the insect, species-specific photo tips, photographing with natural light and photographing with flash. He also incorporates a section in each chapter on interesting aspects of the insect's life cycle to photograph, and concludes each chapter with a reference section and portfolio.

In Part Three, Thompson shares his knowledge on managing the photographic collection and marketing and selling your photographs. Of course, as a medium format photographer his discussions are limited to transparencies and film editing.

Overall, I was impressed with Thompson's ability to hold my interest and his conversational style. I do wish that he had included his camera settings in the script for each photo. Contrary to my husband's prediction, I enjoyed the book immensely and recommend it to NPN readers for the insightful text and the delightful images!

**Editor's note** - *Close-up on Insects* is available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

Terri Norris - NPN 0180

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