

Publisher's Commentary - Of Man and Nature

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The appearance of "hand of man" (HOM) in a nature photograph remains a controversial subject. There have been many intellectual scuffles in the forums of NPN on whether the inclusion of any man-made feature, be it a footprint or barn, relegates a "nature" photo to lesser status, or at least calls for its segregation from those photos that are entirely pure in nature content.

The gallery title "Man and Nature" seems to insinuate that man is separate of nature, perhaps even conveying an uneasy coexistence between the two. For the masses, and certainly in the minds of most avid nature photographers, the word "nature" specifically excludes anything man-made, even the appearance of another human. We seek out those slowly vanishing places of nature nirvana that are free of man-made noise, buildings, streets and other HOM influences to enjoy quiet solitude in the hope of connecting with nature in some meaningful way.



Yet the argument could certainly be made that if man is not part of nature, then what are we? Are we the descendents of some ancient alien civilization that came to colonize Planet Earth? Are we outcasts of Mother Nature, the unwelcome offspring of an evolutionary (or creative) experiment gone awry that is now ravaging the planet that we as a species depend on for our very existence?

Or could it be that *Homo sapiens* are just another (and perhaps inconsequential) chapter in a long and never-ending saga of life on earth? If so, is it the subliminal meaning of "Man and Nature" that makes a photo of a beaver dam or a hornet's nest a true "nature" photo, but a photo of a barn something else? By separating man from nature, are we acknowledging that we no longer live in harmony with the world we have made this incredible journey to sentient existence with?

In the case of the NPN Man and Nature gallery, perhaps this philosophical dilemma is a moot point. A Google search for "nature photography" finds NPN at the top of the heap. Even those Googling for "wildlife photography" or "nature" will find a link to NPN staring at them on the first page. Interestingly, NPN is a search-engine-no-show for phrases such as "fences" and "Jeeps."

Sometimes, like in nature, it's better to simply go with the flow.

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