

Publisher's Commentary...

A Common Thread

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By definition, nature photography would seem to encompass a rather limited and well-defined range of subjects and disciplines within the much larger world of photography in general. But as we have seen through the 2-1/2 years of discussion in the NPN forums, there are many issues that defy a consensus and remain open to lively debate.

Among other things, we find ourselves debating whether nature photographers are artists who deliberately create works of art, or simply documentarians who strive to be in the right place at the right time to take the shot. We debate whether our images should be recorded in a completely natural way using only the light Mother Nature provides us, or to use our electronic speedlights to help overcome the recording limitations of the medium used. Seldom are we in agreement over what constitutes a "wild" animal versus one that is

captive, and we hotly contest the subject of whether captive animals are worthy of our photographic time and effort. We even debate whether our own *Homo sapiens* species is a true nature subject, and find little common ground on the discussion of whether any sign of human existence should be tolerated in a true nature photograph. Of course, this is not to mention that many of us have become very subject specific in our nature photography endeavors, for which we have amassed a collection of highly specialized equipment – note the avid bird photographer with their super telephoto lens and electronic calling device, or the landscape purist with their medium or large format gear. We debate the virtues of the various techniques for attaining proper exposure, and what constitutes an appropriate background or setting for our fauna and flora subjects. As if this is not enough, we argue the merits of any post-shutter manipulation, including whether cropping the image from the size and proportions in which it was originally captured makes it any less worthy. And we will not even mention the pointed discourse that always ensues on the subject of film versus digital capture, 35mm versus medium format versus large format, Fuji versus Kodak, or God forbid, Canon versus Nikon.

So what is the common thread that binds us so tightly together despite these issues we so passionately debate? Is it our love and appreciation of the natural world, or perhaps the connection we feel with nature when we have it in our viewfinders? Is it the challenge of photographic self-improvement, or the satisfaction we feel when it all comes together in the form of an image worthy of display on the wall? Is it the solitary escape from everyday life that we savor when we venture into the field, or the fellowship of sharing our passion and experiences with those who enjoy the same?

Perhaps we have more in common than we realize.