

Feature Photo...

Los Padres National Forest

By Michelle Maas and David A. Baker
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- Camera: Nikon D1X
- Lens: 28-70mm f/2.8 AF-S Zoom-Nikkor at 65mm
- Support: Gitzo 1548
- Film: Lexar Digital Film
- Exposure: 1/500 at f/11
- Filter(s): None used

We have all been there, waiting patiently to take the perfect picture, making sure the lighting conditions are just right, perfecting everything so that the picture is just that--picture perfect. As a nature and wildlife photographer that is my goal: to capture images that will hopefully give the same joy to those who view my images as it did for me to take them. I want the viewer to feel like they are in the moment of the picture, that they are right there viewing the image as it happened for the first time. That special visual connection to the image does just that.

This photography trip required a little more than the average. I had to visit the Forest Rangers office in Ojai, California near where the photograph was taken, to obtain a special permit that allowed me to be permitted into the back country of Los Padres National Forest. With the help of the combination to the forestry gate, (also obtained at the forestry office) and a 4x4 vehicle to travel the mountain road, I was ready for my expedition.

We arrived at the location early in the morning and had plenty of time during the day to explore and capture many breathtaking images. In this case, we set up for a reflection of the sunset on the Topa Topa Mountains. These are the famous bluffs of the Los Padres National Forest that make what is called the "Pink Moment" famous. The Pink Moment is a combination of clouds and setting sun to the west of the mountains making the skies of Ojai a dusty pink color. As we were setting up to shoot these, waiting for the perfect moment, I turned around and there it was--the perfect image not right in front of me, but surprisingly behind me. The way the sun was setting and its bright shadowing was perfect for the shot. This was the kind of image I had waited for all day and finally there it was--when I least expected it.

This image reinforces the fact that not everything is right in front of you. You can plan and plan for a certain pose or picture, but the best ones are those that catch you completely by surprise. Turn around and look!

Editor's Note - Michelle, the writer, and David, the photographer, are a granddaughter/grandfather team. Michelle is a journalism student at Chico State in Northern California. During the summer she lives and works in Ojai, California with her family. David lives

and shoots his digital images in Ojai, California, which is located near Ventura & Santa Barbara. Nestled in the foothills of the Los Padres National Forest, there are many natural photographic opportunities. He believes that one could spend a lifetime in the valley and never photograph all there is in this beautiful rural setting.

David Baker-NPN 335

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