



NPN Member Profile...



Betty Frazier - NPN 191



It was January of '96 when I realized it was time for a new interest or hobby, maybe something more challenging than anything I'd tackled in the past. I agonized over the possibilities for several weeks, then narrowed it down to a few. As usual in my case, affordability was the main consideration with ease of learning a close second. Phil, my husband, must've thought I needed a nudge so he bought a photography magazine and suggested I take a look through the ads. He added that most retailers offered package deals well within the amount I was willing to spend. After finishing the magazine, I needed no persuasion to give photography a try. I ordered a Canon Elan, 2 Sigma lenses, a few filters, a

camera bag, a very inexpensive tripod, only the basic necessities. Typical of the first-time-buyer, quality had little or no bearing upon any of my choices.

I spent the following summer practicing on nesting bluebirds and the common backyard birds that were easily enticed with a handful of sunflower seeds. Equipped with a pair of 50X binoculars and a 50' long shutter release, I shot hundreds of frames of Eastern Bluebirds as the pair successfully raised 3 broods of young. I watched as they fledged and recorded a couple of the little guys only seconds before their first flight. By then I was already regretting that I hadn't started with better lenses. I doubt I'll ever duplicate some of my earlier images, especially the behavior shots.

That same summer I bought a copy of Wild Bird Photography by Tim Fitzharris. Not in my wildest dreams did I ever hope to produce material of the same caliber as that in the book but that didn't stop me from wanting to make images with the same appeal and in the same glorious light. The book was a much-needed source of inspiration, full of lovely images accompanied by informative text.

I switched to digital about 2 1/2 years ago with the Canon D30 and shortly afterward purchased the 100-400 IS which has been my workhorse lens since the day it arrived. Canon has since released 4 or 5 more advanced cameras but I still enjoy my D30. If and when I want or need to make larger prints I'll consider upgrading but probably not until that time. By choice, I'm still photographing with very limited equipment. There's probably a total of 4 filters in my camera bag, 8 or 9 compact flash cards, 3 lenses and a few accessories. My goal is to keep it as simple and economical as possible but still be able to get that occasional keeper.

Last spring I went out almost daily looking for new subjects and to reshoot others I'd only half-heartedly attempted to photograph in the past. Those few months were probably the most enjoyable and productive since that first summer. Spring wildflowers can be such a delight, even in areas with relatively mild winters. Whether it was a single tiny bloom or a showy cluster I wanted to record every species I came across. I



located a lot of gorgeous butterflies, species I'd never seen before simply because I'd never spent any time in their habitats. Dragonflies were plentiful and it was very easy to get close enough to see the incredible markings without the aid of any kind of magnification. As I told a fellow NPner, the change of subjects seemed to help revive my enthusiasm for photography in general. Hopefully, shooting new subjects periodically will also help me gain experience in handling a variety of situations.

I feel very fortunate to live about 25 miles from Savannah NWR and only 7 miles from Pinckney NWR. Savannah NWR has provided me with a lot of photo opportunities, not that wildlife is so plentiful there but I go often so I figure that improves my chances. A few weeks back, Phil and I would hurry to finish dinner and then we were off to Pinckney just to hear a Painted Bunting sing his heart out from an overhead line while a female darted back and forth to the tree line. There was no chance whatsoever for a shot but it was a treat just to listen to his song and watch the lively pair.

I wasn't aware NPN existed until I received an email recommending the site. That was over 2 years ago and much has changed since I started posting, including my photography. I like to think it's improved significantly, partly as a result of the advice and encouragement from some very talented and generous people willing to share their knowledge.

Cooler weather has finally arrived and it's about time for the Painted Buntings and the other migratory birds to head south but I'll feel the same excitement next spring as in springs past. In the meantime, I'm going to focus my attention and lens on the birds that stay in the area year-round. I'm already checking often for the Hermit Thrushes that learned to recognize my car and came to the edge of the woods, flapping their little wings for a few worms. I'm looking forward to a wonderful winter season, followed by another incredible spring filled with new subjects and experiences.

*Editor's Note* - Click any of the thumbnail images on this page to view a slide show of larger images. You can view more of Betty's work in her online portfolio at <http://bfrazier.imageculture.com>.

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