

Feature Photo - End of Another Fall Season

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I reached for the door handle with mitten covered hands and prepared to leave the warm protection of the truck behind. Thinking the wind had subsided, I opened the door only to be assaulted by an icy gust of Sierra wind. Gathering my Bogen 3001 Pro tripod and backpack full of photo gear, I closed the door and headed for the deserted campground across the road.

This trip, in the middle of October, had started a couple days prior with beautiful fall weather; but Old Man Winter had put an end to that and ushered in the first big storm of a wet winter(2004/2005). Overnight brought extremely gusty wind, rain, and by morning it was snowing intermittently.

Willow Campground, Inyo National Forest, read the sign next to the wet dirt road. My first trip during fall colors to Bishop Creek Canyon did not disappoint, even though it was past "peak." Tall quaking Aspens, Willows, and Cottonwood trees ablaze with yellow lined the road to the campground. Each gust of wind would dispatch golden leaves into the crisp air, dancing on the wind currents. Fortunately the trees provided a measure of protection. The breeze that remained carried intermittent sprinkles of rain which lightly fell upon me and the photo gear I carried.



My eyes scanned the scenery before me, while my brain struggled to assemble favorable compositions. I came upon a lovely assemblage of cottonwoods alongside the road which caught my attention. After spending some time photographing these particular cottonwoods, I finished and continued down the road towards the heart of the campground.

A small campground of eight units lay before me, nestled in amongst the trees and at the base of the mountain. Several of those campsites were privy enough to backup to a modest meadow through which the South Fork of Bishop Creek lazily meandered. Momentarily pausing to take in the scene, I decided to wander towards the yellowish colored meadow. Along the way I became aware of the number of fallen leaves which lay on the ground ahead of me. Spread out before me lay a multitude of fall colors: bright yellows, browns, light browns, dark browns, and many others.

The meadow could wait; I had found an intriguing subject. I knelt down to take a closer look and marveled at the detail and colors as my excitement began to rise. On closer inspection I noticed the delicate rain drops resting on the leaves, each drop acting like a magnifying glass. I had made a great find! Sliding my backpack off my shoulders and placing it gently on the ground, I began my routine of making an image. Unzipping the backpack, I bent over and pulled out the Canon EOS3, with the EF28-135 zoom lens already attached, and slid the camera strap over my head. That done, I knelt down on one knee again and studied the leaves; letting my eyes wander over the delicate shapes. I marveled in the wonderful visual texture produced by the contrasts of color, patterns, and rain drops. After thoroughly studying the scene I felt ready to make the final preparations to make an image.

Turning the camera on, the monochrome display panel came to life in an instant. I scanned the information displayed: manual spot metering mode, roll film installed, exposure compensation neutral, and ISO set to 32. Carefully removing the lens cap, I brought the camera up to my eye, both trained on the leaves. I instinctively placed the spot meter over the highlights and delicately pressed the shutter button half way. The green lit display within the view finder sprang to life with the current shutter speed, aperture, exposure number, and light readings. To insure proper values on the Velvia emulsion, I gave additional exposure to the highlights than what the camera suggested. Once the exposure was figured, I checked the depth of field and made sure all was focused.

With the click of the quick release confirming camera to tripod, I searched my fleece pockets for the remote shutter release cable. Successfully finding the elusive cable, I snapped it in place. One more check of fine focus, wait for the calm between the breeze, and lightly depress the remote's button.....click, the mirror flipped up and locked,...wait...then depress the button once again and finally the image has been made.

I made a couple more bracketed exposures, just in case, packed up and headed for the truck. As I walked along that road, I looked up at the swirling mass of gray clouds, the air thick with the smell of rain, and thought it doesn't get much better than this.

Editor's note - be sure to view more of Cory's photography on display in his [online portfolio](#) on PhotoPortfolios.net.

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