



*The Camera Hunter®*

## Digital Acquisition: A Tool for the Camera Hunter?

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“No digital submissions accepted.”

“Digital cameras don’t provide professional quality images.”

“We accept dupes or JPEGs (reluctantly) for initial edits, but for final production we require original color transparencies or true drum scans, with proofs made from originals.”

That’s what some editors think. Many here at NPN know better. As football coach George Allen once said: “The future is now.” Depending on the file size and the output image size needed, a lot of the digital cameras available for the last several years provide readily publishable professional quality images. Several digital cameras now rival film.

Some might even surpass film as a camera hunting tool. More about that in a moment. First, I’d suggest that if you haven’t read all of the articles about digital photography here at NPN over the past three years by Niall Benvie, Tim Grey, Matt Hagadorn, Uwe Steinmueller, Guy Tal and others, it’s time that you did. As a full time professional wildlife photographer who teaches workshops and lectures as well, I’m not afraid to tell you how much I have learned from them and the contributions of many others in the Forums. And so on the third anniversary of this magazine, it’s time to say a loud thanks to Jim and crew for providing this unique opportunity to exchange information and learn more about the craft of nature photography that so intrigues us all.



Some of the knowledge gained here helped The Mooseman make the decision to jump into the world of digital acquisition. While scanning and sending digital files to those editors and photo buyers willing to accept them has grown into a regular part of my business over the past three years, the digital acquisition of images waited until the right camera came along.

Since I’m a Nikon shooter, some might think that the right camera has been here with the D1X that other Nikon fans use to get some wonderful images. Others might say take the plunge and switch to the Canon 1D.

Nikon or Canon both make great digital cameras. But I decided to wait until my friends at Fuji came up with a better option than the S1. While the Fuji S1 gets professional images, it’s lack of a decent autofocus better suits the wedding and portrait photographer set that it was designed for.

The S2 is a different matter. It’s built on a Nikon N80 body – not the best of that line, but one that has the predictive 5 point fast AF capability similar to the Nikon F5 that I’ve been shooting thousands of rolls of slide film per year with.

But the real kick with the S2 is its resolution. Described by Fuji as a “6.17 million effective pixel” camera, the S2 actually records images at resolutions as high 4256 X 2848 pixels per picture. Simple math says that it get a 12.12 megapixel image. RAW files shot

at high resolution step up to the plate at 34 megabytes when you open them with the new Adobe plug-in.

While some decry that Fuji uses black magic software to make this work, I only care about one thing: can this camera record publishable quality images in acceptable sizes?

My answer came when photographing two distant coyotes in Wyoming this past February. At least a quarter mile separated the critters from the 700mm of lens attached to the S2. Since the S2, as most digital cameras do, has a multiplier effect of 1.5 due to the sensor size, the focal power enhances to an equivalent of using a 1050mm lens. While landscape specialists like Guy Tal might not want that, I sure do. The reach makes a wonderful tool for capturing wary wildlife – if the pixels are in the final proof.



Forget the gobbly-gook of pixels and CCDs and multiplier effect. The coyotes still looked wicked tiny in the viewfinder. Remember that over a quarter mile separated us. However, cropping in the computer to select about 1/12 of the frame, the pixel density remained high enough to make an 8 X 10 inch print that's not only sharp but in which you can see the pupils of their eyes!

Such technology provides one hell of a tool for this camera hunter.

Catch yours in the good light.

#### **BS-NPN 012**

<http://camerahunter.com>

Comments on this column? Send them to the [editor](#).

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**Maine wildlife & nature photographer Bill Silliker, Jr.** – The Mooseman - photographed at many wild places in North America, with the results published in magazines internationally and in 9 of his own books. Bill was an instructor of wildlife and nature photography for L. L. Bean's Outdoor Discovery Program and a member of the Fuji Film Talent Team. Read more about Bill on the [Camera Hunter archives page](#).

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