

Feature Photo...

Getting in the Game

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Camera: Nikon N70
Lens: Sigma 400/5.6
Flash: None used
Support: Tripod
Film: Fuji Velvia
Exposure: Unrecorded
Filter(s): None used

Ok, I confess to having "big glass envy." I want to go to Africa with a Nikon F5 and a 600/4. Someday my dream may come true. But I'm having too much fun right now in my own neighborhood with my N70 and Sigma 400/5.6 to worry about what I don't have. Spending a load of money on pro-level photo equipment is unrealistic for many, but for a fraction of that cost you can get in the game.

This photo of a sunning Anhinga was taken a couple of blocks from my office at the University of Florida with a Nikon N70 and Sigma 400. I bought the lens used for \$100 from a kind-hearted professional who was upgrading to big glass. So my camera, lens and tripod cost less than \$650. This is not an equipment review and other mid-level bodies and 2nd party lens combinations may work better, but I've had a million dollars of fun with my outfit!

Certainly the sharper optics, longer focal lengths, additional F-stops, and solid construction of big prime glass are desirable. Someday I may own one, but I doubt that I would get my money's worth if not for previous experience with the little Sigma. The lens is so light that it's always in the bag. Although not cheap to replace, I'm not going to drink concentrated stop bath if I drop it in water or it gets stolen. It's not a burden or worry to take it with me every day. The odds of capturing a subject like an Anhinga in backlit fog are much greater if you carry your equipment on a regular basis.

Since I've gotten in the game, I have become much more familiar with the natural areas of my town, and with the creatures that inhabit them. Getting close enough for full frame shots has become the challenge. Slowly I'm developing photo-hunter skills, learning where and when the wildlife are most likely to be found, and experimenting with techniques for getting within range. So if fortune ever smiles on me and I obtain some big glass, I think I'll be better prepared to use its advantages. But for now I'm just enjoying being in the game!

LK-NPN