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# Landscape and Wildlife Photographs

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*Denali in Alpenglow (from Wonder Lake)*

Wonder Lake is about a ninety mile drive on the only road in Denali National Park; the road is about 95 miles long in total. During the summer Denali (Mt. McKinley) is shrouded in clouds most of the time. In

early August, when this photograph was made the sun sets at about midnight; this photo was made at about 11 PM. I was up the next morning at six as the sun rose; Denali was shrouded in clouds. Time, luck and patience again . . . and long days.



## Landscape and Wildlife Photographs

*Frank Gorga*

**T**ime, patience and luck . . . these are the photographer's most important tools. Of course, the three are intimately related. Application of the first two allows one to be prepared when the third is good.

Time is required to travel to places where one wants to photograph and to concentrate on one's surroundings once there. Patience and luck are required because all the elements of a great photograph are rarely present for more than a brief interval. Thus, in order to make a great photograph, one needs to be present and prepared when the karma is right.

Landscape photography is all about light. Landscape photographers cannot control the light on their subject; all we can do is try to be in the right place when the light is good. Thus, landscape photographers talk about the "golden hour" -- periods

in early morning and late evening when the light comes from a low angle and is often soft and warm. A landscape photographer's day often begins with a hike in the dark of early morning or ends with a hike back home in the dark of the evening, all in hopes of capturing a scene in good light. Sometimes, when nature does not cooperate, the hike is for naught. Other times one is rewarded with great light and a great photograph or two.

The photographer Robert Capa once said "If your photographs aren't good enough, you're not close enough." While Capa was not talking specifically about wildlife photography his idea is one of the keys to successful photographs of wild animals. Getting "close enough" to a living and usually wary wild animal requires a combination of the right equipment and skill. One needs an understanding of the behavior of the animal and the ability to effectively stalk the subject in order to get close enough so that one can "fill the frame" with an eye-to-eye view of the subject using a telephoto or macro lens.

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Another key to strong wildlife photographs is action. While portraits of wild animals can be interesting, photographs of animals doing things are generally more interesting. If one spends time “in the wild” you realize that two activities occupy the large majority of many animals’ time: food and reproduction. Thus, many of my wildlife photographs depict eating or sex.

For the past several years, I have had the luxury of time to pursue landscape and wildlife photography more-or-less full time in the summer. In this time, my wife, Joan, and I have

made trips to Alaska, the Northwest Territories (two weeks by canoe) and taken a six week road trip across the northern United States as far west as Montana. We have also spent extended intervals at our cabin in New Hampshire. Four of the ten photographs shown here were made on those trips. The remaining six photographs were made near our cabin. I hope that you enjoy looking at them as much as I enjoyed making them.

*Frank Gorga is a Professor in the Chemistry Department.*



*Feeding Time – Tree Swallows  
(East Harbor SP, OH)*

Taking an after dinner stroll near our campsite we happened upon this bird house. The racket within indicated hungry babies inside.

Fighting off the mosquitoes (an occupational hazard of wildlife photography), I staked out the area in anticipation of the arrival of a parent. I did not have to wait long, not much patience needed this time.





Above: *Arctic Beach – Early Morning (NWT, Canada)*

This photograph was made on the last morning of a thirteen day canoe trip in the Canadian arctic. The float plane would arrive to pick us up after breakfast. It had been windy and rainy for the previous twelve days. Luck and patience were definitely involved.

Right: *Autumn Reflected*

The abstract nature of reflections always grabs my attention. This photograph is an example of luck in making a photograph. There was a very short interval, as the wind began to blow, between the too perfect, mirror-like reflection of the completely calm lake and no reflection at all on the wind-stirred waves.





Left: *Lark Sparrow with Prey (Badlands NP)*

While hiking in Badlands National Park we saw a wide variety of birds. This lark sparrow alit for a brief interval on a nearby hillside and I made this photograph reflexively. It was not until I reviewed the images later that I noticed the grass hopper in its mouth. Lots of luck but no patience needed.

Below: *Meadowhawk Mating Wheel*

When one spends time in haunting wet lands in summer you realize that mating dragonflies are quite common. Patience is required to find "windows" which allow for an unobstructed view in which to photograph them.







*Female Meadowhawk*

I was sitting on the ground near a bunch of black-eyed Susans at the edge of our yard. My goal was making photographs of the various pollinators (bees and flies) that were attracted to them. When this dragonfly alit on one of the flowers, I, with macro lens mounted on camera, was ready. A total of three frames, taken in rapid succession, were captured before she took off again.