

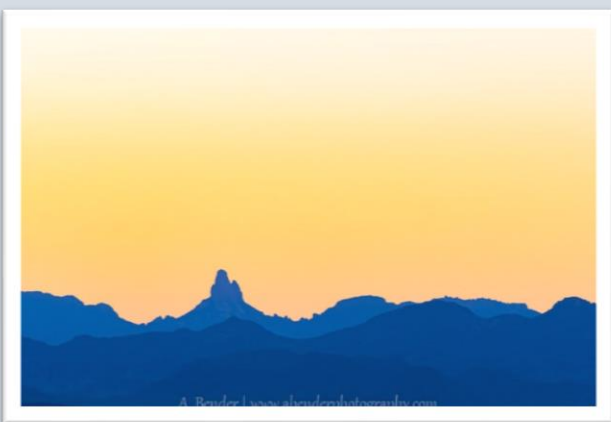
10 PRINCIPLES OF NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY

“PHOTOGRAPHY FOR ME IS NOT LOOKING, IT’S FEELING. IF YOU CAN’T FEEL WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING AT, THEN YOU’RE NEVER GOING TO GET OTHERS TO FEEL ANYTHING WHEN THEY LOOK AT YOUR PICTURES.” ~ DAN McCULLIN

COMPOSITION

Composition is key for any photograph and plays a key part in keeping a viewer’s interest by creating a 2D image with depth for the viewer to explore.

Important aspects of composition include image balance and the use of visual cues such as lines, symmetry, natural framing, and depth of field. Ensure you are making the most of a location and subject by photographing both horizontally and vertically.



LIGHT

This entire craft is based on working with and recording light. There is no such thing as bad light, only light that is not ideal for the subject you originally set out to photograph. To increase your skills, practice working with natural light and studio/controlled light situations. Learn to read the quality of light and you will be well on your way to mastering photography.

COLOR

Color theory exists for a reason. We see in color. Color often is the first thing to attract us to an object, especially in nature. Look to compose images around complementary or analogous colors. When taking an image, make sure to be aware of any reflective color from the surrounding environment, such as the white in a waterfall looking green due to the canopy of leaves above or blue snow on a bright day. Correct the white balance during image development for best results. When photographing people, be very careful with skin tones.

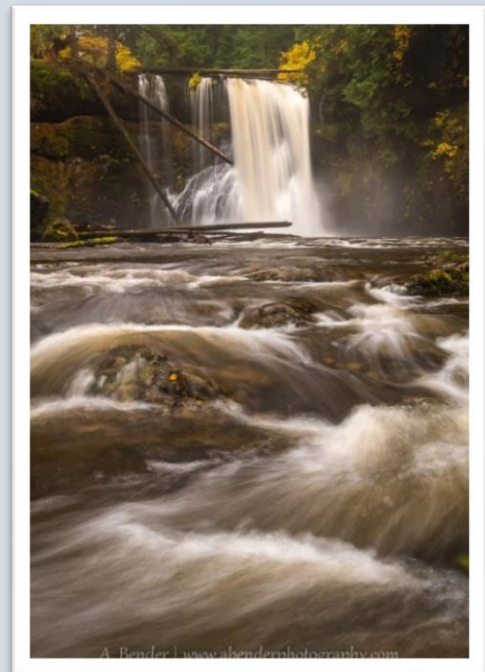


PERSPECTIVE

Don't just shoot from the typical human eye level that we all see from. Make your images stand out by finding a unique perspective. By getting up high or laying low, you can change the perspective you give the viewer of a subject through your image. When photographing wildlife, people, or domestic animals, do shoot at eye level – THEIR eye level!

TIMING

When capturing a moment in time, you want to make sure you are capturing the best moment. So, plan your images around the time of day that is optimal for your subject. Example – you are not going to get golden tones during midday light. Time your travels or the subject you are after with the time of year. Seasonal changes are a part of nature and that should be reflected in your planning. Wanting elk bugling? Going to Colorado in summer is not going to get you those images as they rut in fall. Also, the timing of your image is also related to shutter speed. Play with long exposures.



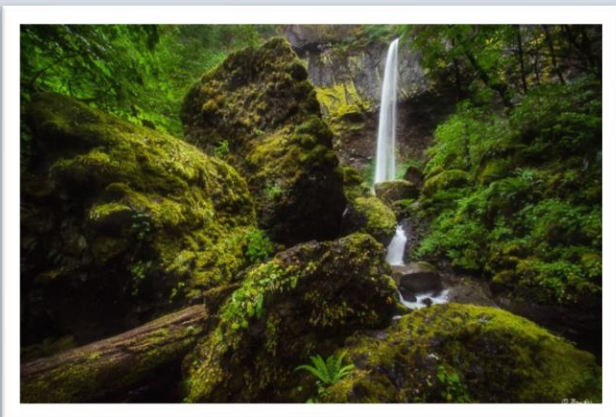
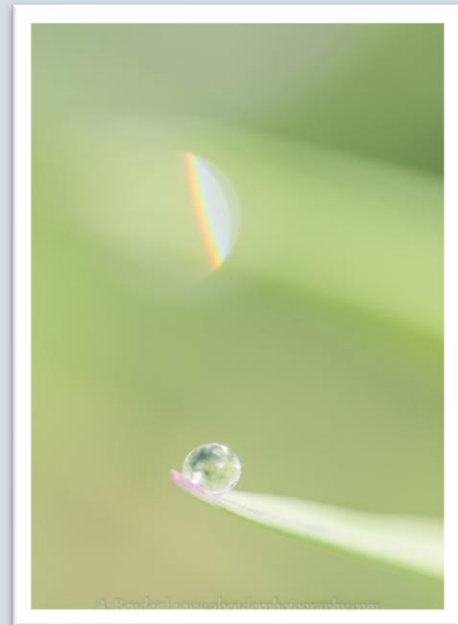


PLANNING

For the best images make sure you put some planning into your outing. While luck does play a part in some great shots, planning will ensure you have the best chance at creating more portfolio worthy images. Research your locations, your subject, and the lighting you should expect when visiting. Consider things like tides, migration and behavioral patterns for wildlife, sunrise and set, and moonrise and set.

SLOWING DOWN

The idea that the journey is the destination and that we should be open to whatever images might present themselves is a wonderful way to really explore nature photography. It means looking not just for that epic landscape vista, but also the patterns of fallen leaves or the minimalist composition of reeds sticking out of the water. Slowing down also allows you to really get the shot right in camera. Slowing down the process to ensure correct exposures, ideal composition, and taking the time to visually conduct an “edge patrol” of your shot before pressing that shutter release. And remember to work a subject completely.

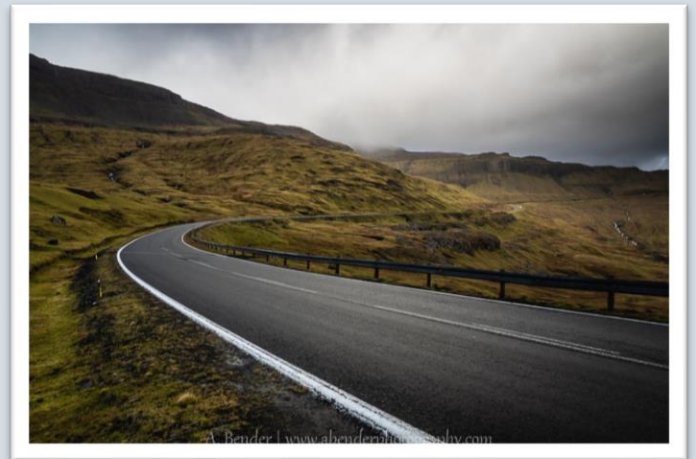


IMPACT

“An image is worth a thousand words.” Well, it is the impact of an image that really impresses upon a viewer those words. Storytelling in a single image can be difficult but it will make all the difference with how an image is received. Action shots, whether it is eagles fighting or lightning over the Grand Canyon, automatically tell a story. More difficult and nuanced stories come in the form of images of old growth forests or a pastoral landscape. Find a way to impart in your image the feeling that compelled you to take that image in the first place.

EXPLORE

Explore far and wide, but don't forget your own backyard! You don't need to go to the far side of the world to create amazing images. You just have to find those images that are waiting to be discovered wherever you are. This might mean walking a bit further than the specific lookout point or exploring a new point of view. Explore different photography techniques and styles.



PRACTICE

Practice, practice, PRACTICE! I cannot say it enough. The best thing you can do to improve your photography is to continue shooting. Learn your camera so it becomes a part of yourself, so you instinctively know how to use your camera without looking. This lets you visually concentrate on the scene in front of you so you can create images without thinking about the physical technical details of the tool (your camera) that you are using.

About the Author



Alyce Bender, a Tamron USA Ambassador, roams the globe, exploring Earth's natural beauty. Happiest in the field, Bender uses photography to connect people to wildlife and environments from across the world. She leads tours, publishes articles, and hosts workshops promoting exploration, creativity, and ethical nature photography. Her work has been recognized nationally and internationally.

Find more of her work at: www.abenderphotography.com

