

Nature Photography in a Forest Habitat

Photography in a forest habitat can be both rewarding and challenging. You have many choices of subjects but each choice will require different approaches and equipment to make the most of the images that you want to create.

In this talk I will also assume that 'forests' will also include such things as vernal pools, streams, swamps, ponds and marshes.

Vernal ponds offer breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders. Spring flowers bloom early before the hardwoods grow a canopy of new leaves to restrict the sunlight reaching the ground. It's also the time when many of our woodland migratory birds begin arriving. It is often easier to find and photograph these migrant birds before the leaves are fully out.



Vernal Pool



Blue-winged Warbler

For scenery, plants, mushrooms and small animals you can use a point-and-shoot camera, a consumer or professional Digital Single Reflex Lens (DSRL) camera with a medium or wide angle lens or even a good cell phone camera. Birds and larger mammals can be photographed with a multi-zoom (30x, 40x or 50x) point-and-shoot camera or a DSRL with longer zoom (100-400 mm, 150-600 mm etc.) or more expensive prime lenses such as a 500mm F4.

Longer lenses and challenging light conditions may also require using a sturdy tripod to keep your equipment steady. Time of day is important too. Most bird species, for example, are generally more active from dawn til around 10:00 a.m. and after 3:00 p.m. until dusk. If you are good with bird calls it can certainly be a great aid to finding species in your area.

Knowledge of your subjects and their behaviour can help you create better images.

You can also look for traces of bird and animal activity. Used woodland trails, drumming logs for grouse, nest hole excavations by woodpeckers and harvested saplings by beaver or porcupines can all be signs of recent activity.

Many birds harass hawks, owls and other birds of prey if they find them roosting during the day. If you hear Crows, Blue Jays, Chickadees or other birds making a racket investigate the area. You will often find that they have discovered a hawk or owl.

Roosting Owls often use the same tree leaving 'whitewash' on the trunk or regurgitated pellets on the ground below their perch.



Owl Pellet



Long-Eared Owl

If birds and animals are not your thing you can always experiment with landscapes, the night sky (in dark zone areas) or other types of landscapes such as waterfalls. Tripods are also good for nighttime and long exposure photography.



Sugar Maples



Milky Way

Don't forget to visit swamps, marshes and ponds on your property. These habitats can expand the number of exciting things to photograph.

Please follow the Nature Photographers Code of Conduct:

<http://www.naturephotographers.net/codeofconduct.html>

The whole idea is to experiment and to have fun!



Long exposure of Lower Joslin Falls, N.B.

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