

# SCENIC WILD PHOTOGRAPHY

- NOVEMBER, 2003 -

## Welcome to the first edition of the *Scenic Wild Newsletter!*

Fall has been very productive this year. The turning aspen, maples, cottonwoods, boxelders, and oaks provided a spectacular, albeit short-lived, display of color. Other than hopping around the Wasatch Mountains, the Aquarius Plateau, and the red rock canyons, I also got a chance to experiment with two new and exciting films from Fuji and a lightweight handheld meter from Gossen. Several new images are now available on the website (<http://scenicwild.com>), and I am glad to announce a new sale for those of you considering fine-art prints as holiday gifts.



As previously announced, friend and fellow photographer Michael Gordon and I are planning to offer an outdoor photography workshop in Utah's beautiful canyon-country sometime during Spring of 2004. Exact dates will be announced on the website, but please feel free to inquire if interested and let us know if any specific dates will work best for you.

On a different note - I would like to take this opportunity to offer my sincere condolences to the friends and family of Maine photographer Bill Silliker who passed away recently. While I have not met Bill myself, I greatly appreciated his work towards protecting the land and wildlife he so loved to photograph. Farewell, Mooseman! You will be missed.

In this first edition, I offer you a range of topics - from wilderness musings, the contentious debate on film vs. digital, and a couple of reviews and new image offerings. At this time no exhibits are scheduled, but at least one is in the works. Stay tuned!

Your feedback is always welcome and appreciated so do not hesitate to email me at [scenicwild@scenicwild.com](mailto:scenicwild@scenicwild.com) with any questions, concerns, and opinions.

Good night to you all,

Guy



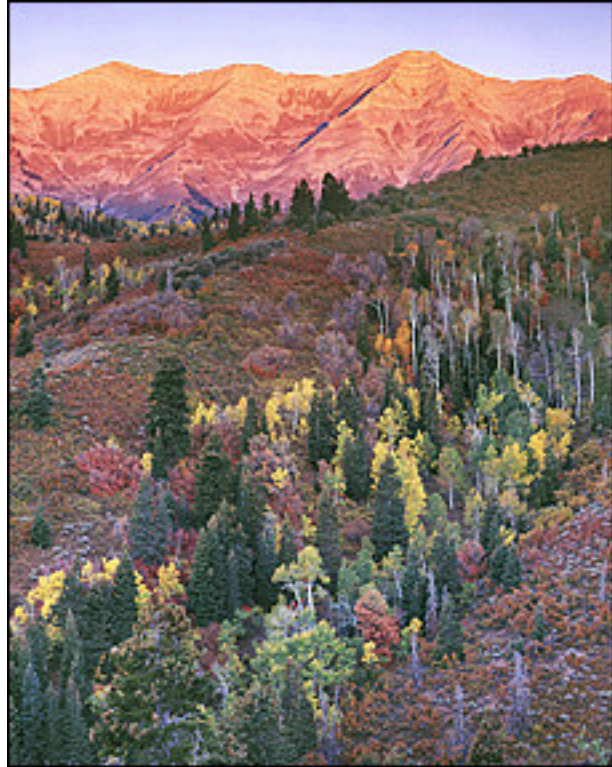
## The Wilderness Within

We come to these places at first out of curiosity or interest, maybe to seek inspiration, or just to have our picture taken to prove we were there. Then, much like falling in love, an urge is born – an inner drive to go back, like an ancient seed awakened by a drop of rain after a century of drought. We don't quite know what it is we seek, but we hope an answer will present itself as we go back again and again, as familiarity grows into intimacy, intimacy into love, and love into obsession. And the answer? There is no answer. Or rather the answer is so obvious that the question becomes trivial: we come to these places because it feels right. Because for

thousands of years we have become conditioned to them. It was not until recently that we were torn away, placed in the confines of cities and offices and cubicles. Something deep inside knows, and whether we are conscious of it or not, going into wilderness is going home, going back to simpler, if more challenging, times. Those of us who have gone as far as to allow this great love of wild places to take over our souls can never go back. We'll never be happy away from it. We yearn for it when it is distant, fear for it when it is threatened, and jealous when it reveals its beauty to strangers. Wilderness is not about dirt or rocks or trees, just like air is not about oxygen, hydrogen, or nitrogen. Its value as a whole is far greater than the sum of its parts – like air and water sustaining the biological processes of a living organism, it sustains life for the spirit. It stirs emotion, evokes thought, feeds inspiration. As love quickens the heart and instills desire in the depths of every cell and organ, so does inspiration arouse the wilderness within. The wilderness within is vastness portrayed in sublime peaks, deep canyons, rushing rivers, raging storms, earthquakes, avalanches, the crashing of waves and the soft whisper of evening breeze, the desolation of desert, the explosion of color in a blooming mountain meadow, the primal scents of pine, ocean breeze, sagebrush, seasons, light, passion, life, death, scenery of minute detail and sheer enormity forms, dissolves, and forms again – greater, more powerful and complex and beautiful than anything a mere mortal soul can begin to grasp, more detailed and diverse than a lifetime of learning can begin to comprehend. The life force connecting all things begins and ends in wilderness, and those who experience but a glimpse of it will forever be changed.

## Digital vs. Film vs. Digital vs. Film vs. Digital...

I was recently accused of being "anti-digital" after pointing out the quality shortcomings of some DSLR or another. Let me clarify my position on this whole futile debate. The truth is I embraced digital photography technologies a long time ago and use them extensively in my printmaking process. Where I find the technology deficient for my personal needs is in direct digital image capture (as opposed to scanning of film). To me, photography begins with a vision and ends with a print, and these two extremes of the photographic process are the most significant. The intermediary steps of image



capture (on film or digital sensor) and post-processing (digital or otherwise) are of far less importance and serve one purpose – to facilitate the transition from vision to print in the best possible way, preserving the utmost detail, tonal transition, subtleties of light and color, etc. Digital cameras do excel in some of these aspects, but alas, none comes close to a quality scan of large sheet film. I fully expect this to change in the future and I have no prejudice against the technology. For me it's just not there...yet. At this point in time the best results can be achieved with a combination of analog and digital techniques, and my own work only stands to suffer from replacing my view camera with a digital one (not to mention the prohibitive entry cost).

So, I am not "anti-digital." My statements were made in the context of the available technologies of today. There are some who claim digital photography is not "real" photography (whatever *that* is). I'm sure there were those in the days of glass plates who made similar claims about film.

My word to you is to use what works best to capture your vision and express it in whatever your final product is.

## **New from Fuji: Velvia 100F & Astia 100F:**

Over the past few weeks I tested and eventually switched to these new emulsions. My preliminary review of Velvia 100F is in the August, 2003 edition of Nature Photographers Online Magazine (<http://www.naturephotographers.net>). As I predicted then, the film ended up replacing the original Velvia in my pack.

Velvia has been my film of choice for muted scenes where its palette and contrast brought out color and detail without going over the top. The new Velvia 100F seems not to saturate things as much as the original, but it does so evenly across the spectrum. Its contrast, while high enough to bring out subtle transitions, is less likely to block up shadows which was often the case with Velvia 50. Given that these scenes are usually under dim light, the extra stop and improved reciprocity make it a better choice for me.

Astia 100F caught me by surprise. For the last few years, my "standard" color film (read: film for all things unsuitable for Velvia) has been Provia 100F. Its less-saturated palette, rendering of shadow detail, and suitability for long exposure made it a great companion. However, two things consistently plagued my Provia images: a pronounced blue cast in shaded scenes (practically always requiring the addition of a warming filter) and a tendency to lose highlights in high contrast situations. Astia 100F seems to be the ideal replacement - same superb fine grain, a relatively neutral palette with clean whites, and it does not seem to suffer from the same blue cast that Provia does (there will obviously be casts created by reflections of the sky, but they are not nearly as pronounced in the overall palette). On a recent trip I also got a chance to test Astia 100F pushed 2 stops while photographing a tree in particularly stubborn wind, and although somewhat grainy, the results were very much acceptable.

## **New from Gossen: Digisix**

When weight matters, this little gadget is a life saver. Tiny light meters are nothing new. The Gossen Pilot and similar models have been around for a while. What makes the Digisix unique are its sensitivity (accurate measurements down to EV1) and wealth of additional features. The digital display is easy to read, and other than measuring both reflected and incident light, the Digisix also has a built in thermometer, timer, and alarm clock (although it will likely not wake a heavy sleeper, it's useful for the occasional reminder). More importantly, it is as accurate as you would expect from a Gossen. Compared to other meters, the price is also very reasonable. B&H has it listed for \$109 (\$30 below MSRP).

## **Your Thoughts – Secret Locations**

Many of us know of places we hold dear and for one reason or another wish to keep secret. I would be interested to hear your thoughts on the pros and cons of keeping location information secret. Would you reveal your secrets to someone, if so, who, and why?

Email me at [scenicwild@scenicwild.com](mailto:scenicwild@scenicwild.com) with your opinion. Also let me know if you would be willing to let me quote your email in the next edition.

## **Holiday Special – Free Prints with Your Order**

Starting immediately and for the entire month of November, I am offering the following special to subscribers of this newsletter (that's you!), their friends and family (feel free to pass it on):

- Receive one free, unmatted 8"x10" print (\$50 value) of your choice with your order of any print up to 16"x20".
- Receive one free, unmatted 12"x16"\* print (\$100 value) of your choice with your order of any print 16"x20" or larger.

Please mention "Newsletter Special" when placing your order and let me know your choice of free print.

Orders received during the sale period are guaranteed to ship in time for Christmas or Hanukah.

## **Coming Up in the Next Edition**

Notes from a fall trip to Zion National Park, more literary musings from wild places, a first installment in a series about vision and photographic composition, highly-contentious opinions about landscape photography as art, and more!

As this is my first edition, I would appreciate any feedback, requests, and suggestions – please send them to me at [scenicwild@scenicwild.com](mailto:scenicwild@scenicwild.com).

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\* Prints from 4x5 or 6x7 originals will be printed to 12"x15".