

The Traveling Nature Photographer Blog

www.davidgeorgephotography.com

Shooting Winter Landscapes and Animals:

Shooting landscapes can be fun, difficult and frustrating yet rewarding. The spring, summer and especially the fall are great times for shooting colorful landscapes. What about the drab winter? I think the first thing you must think about is that the winter is not as drab as one might think. Yes the fall colors have faded and leaves have dropped or have they. I have told students and others about shooting the leaves with the sun coming through them vs shooting them with the sun bouncing off of them. The sun changes everything. It depends on your perspective as to how drab the winter can be. In the forest there are areas that stay green, some maintain their leaves and the colors while not the same as the fall they can be interesting especially in the early winter.

I also find the ability to see more in the forest and find small ponds with reflections to be a nice change of pace. Yes in most cases it will be cold depending on your location. Winter in Florida is quite different than winter in the mid-west or the west especially in the Rockies. So chose your location for they type of shot you want and not the weather. If you want a snow shot with animals or just a snow type landscape think a little farther north than Florida. Some of the information and images that are in this blog came from Colorado, Tennessee, Indiana and other places. Winter gives you a different perspective because the lighting angle changes as the sun transitions from fall to winter and then back to spring. You should notice the changes and take advantage of them. Some cameras and lenses will fog when taking them out a warm enviroment to the cold. You can help keep that from happening or at least slow it down by keeping the equipment in the trunk of your vehicle. I advise people to clean their equipment and set it up the night before the shoot if you can because cleaning lenses and cameras in the cold if that is needed is not a good idea. I have seen some people just learning with the idea they know more than they do actually clean lenses with water when it is around zero. Yes the water is warm but the change in temperatur can cause problems. I seen one lens actually form ice on the glass. Now think about that. I strongly suggest using a tripod for the landscape shots with a cable release or timer. The cold does effect things and you may be shivering just a little or your hands are cold and you can not notice you are moving the camera ever so little. Put it on a tripod and shoot. The cold crisp air is normally cleaner and the air is compressed allowing for more detail in the shots.

The animals are a different ballgame. If you have been lucky enough to see the animals beforehand and studied their patterns than the winter shoots will be easier in most cases. Animal behavior and hunting patterns change as the cold and snow come. They still have to eat but their diet may change and that means hunting different food sources. Coyotes like to hunt rabbits but in the winter they may be more difficult for them to catch as the coyote has less things to hide behind. However they also eat small animals. We have all seen the shots of a coyote jumping up in the air and landing to catch a mouse or similar small animal. It is really almost comical the way they do it. Open fields are a good place to set up a shoot as long as you can hide in the edges and have a lens that fits the bill. Hawks, owls and other predators also hunt the small animals that try to move, eat and hide under the grasses and weeds in the fields especially with snow on the ground.

The larger animals like deer can be tracked if you move quietly. You need to be properly dressed for the area and temperature. If you are in the woods camo is good but if you are working grasslands you may need to rethink the clothing and the boots. Waterproof is always good in the wintertime. One important thing to think about is that you need to hike a little to find the areas that have not been totally changed by the wind and rain. Several of the shots here showing the orange colored leaves were shot the same day in the same area but in a valley, on a hill or near flatland. The day was raining heavily with wind so the high areas had lost most of their leaves while down in the valley the wind was almost nothing. You can see white areas in the images as rain hit the lens. Sitting in a car and shooting may work for some shots but you really need to have the clothing, boots and equipment to handle the cold, rain and wind because you need to get out and find something others normally do not get to see.









