

The Traveling Nature Photographer Blog

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How to choose your field of work

I get asked all the time how did I get into wildlife and nature photography. Easy question to answer. It took time and not much thought. The real question is how long did it take. I started out shooting for local weekly newspapers and doing darkroom work in my darkroom. I started out shooting B&W and worked into color positives (slides). It is a great way to learn your craft. There was no photoshop or editing other than what was done in the darkroom with dodging tools and your hands manipulating the exposure of the light on the paper from the enlarger. No computers and no buttons to push to have it done for you. You had to know your craft not rely on auto settings and computer software to do it for you.

I got into doing darkroom work for some agencies and others in my basement darkroom. That led me to shoot things for them and later expanding into commercial and industrial work. I worked at a state fair photography group for a while. That was interesting. I got to shoot various items and places as I was well versed in medium format and had the cameras. I was also using 35mm for news work.

I had my own studio for a while until it was destroyed in a tornado. Back then insurance companies did not pay for "acts of God". I worked almost exclusively as a freelancer as I did not want to be tied down to one style of photography or restrict my knowledge or shooting ability.

I did normal wedding shootings and portrait things but found them uninteresting and boring. They did not pay that well at that time but the skill level needed does not seem to be that high. You had lists of people to shoot. Not very artistic to say the least.

I had to reduce my workload when my wife got sick and required care. I did get to do some bird work in and around where we stayed in Florida and it set me on a path. That expanded into alligators dolphins and manatees. I photographed a few snakes but not really my thing since I was bitten when I was about 7 years old.

I got into the animal image business a few years ago almost by accident. It seems the animals especially the bears and mountain lions want to be photographed. These are not in zoos, cages or in the GSMNP group of humanized bears as I call them.

Now it is back to a little more normal landscape shooting. I will still be shooting wild animals but not in the backcountry or places like that. I will miss some of it.

That is not how you choose yours but how my work progressed. The question is not that. The question is how are you going to do your career and craft. Do not follow someone's path figure out your own and part of that is to think about what you want to do and then find those out of the way places that represent what you want to be and what you want to shoot. Look for the places others do not. I can't tell you where to look because I have no idea what you are looking to photograph. In other words, follow your heart and feelings more than your brain or others. Others will normally not be that supportive or knowledgeable about your choices.



