



The Newsletter of E.J. Peiker - Nature Photographer

Spring 2018 - Vol. 17, Issue 2
All contents © 2018 E.J. Peiker

Welcome to the 17th year of the quarterly newsletter from E.J. Peiker, Nature Photographer and www.EJPhoto.com. In this quarterly publication, I share with fellow photographers my photographic experiences, photo equipment reviews, photo and processing tips, and industry news. I also inform subscribers about upcoming workshops and products that I offer. All content is copyrighted by E.J. Peiker and may not be reproduced but it is permitted to forward this newsletter in its entirety only. If you would like to be added to the mailing list, unsubscribe, or access back issues, please visit:

<http://www.ejphoto.com/newsletter.htm>



Davenport Crack, California (a7R III, 24-70mm)

Utter Nonsense!!!

As we approach the end of the DSLR era in mainstream professional and enthusiast photography due to the accelerating and certain takeover of the market by mirrorless cameras, more and more utter nonsense is being peddled by those that are having trouble letting go of the past. The most common rhetoric is that the size and weight advantage of mirrorless cameras completely disappears when you attach professional grade lenses like the 24-70mm f/2.8 lenses. Let's examine this claim!

For this comparison we will use the three top-of-the line full-frame high megapixel count cameras from the big three manufacturers. The cameras in the comparison are the Nikon D850, the Canon 5Ds R, and the Sony a7R III - the major manufacturer's flagship landscape oriented cameras. The lenses in the comparison will be the workhorse 24-70mm f/2.8 from each manufacturers and the data comes from camerasize.com. This comparison is actually kind to DSLRs because if I used the flagship cameras, the Nikon D5, Canon EOS 1Dx Mk II and Sony a9, the difference in size and weight would be much more substantial.

Top View:



In this view, one can argue that there is only a modest advantage for the mirrorless solution between the mirrorless Sony and the Canon DSLR as they have essentially the same overall length from viewfinder to filter-thread. The Nikon combination is obviously still significantly larger due mostly to the gargantuan size of their 24-70 f/2.8E lens. Much of the argument that there is no size advantage with mirrorless cameras comes from this view. This is due to the necessary optics for a fast aperture zoom which dominates the measurements but it gives a skewed perception of the differences as we will see in other views.

Side View:

When the side view is examined, the height of the camera bodies start to reveal some pretty significant differences in size. The size advantage of the mirrorless body is clear but there is little depth advantage. This is due to user feedback regarding the depth of the handgrip. If you examine earlier Sony a7 models, you would see a large size advantage here as well but users, in general, prefer a deeper grip.



Rear View:



The rear view brings things more into focus (pun intended). There is a pretty dramatic difference in the overall area of the camera from behind since there is no need for a mirror box. The width and height of the mirrorless camera is much smaller. Not only does this help with weight savings as we will see later, it significantly reduces the packing depth allowing the photographer to go with a shallower backpack that is more likely to fit in even the small overhead bins of turboprop commuter planes or smaller regional jets like the CRJ-200 or ERJ-135/145.

Size Table	Nikon D850	Canon 5Ds R	Sony a7R III
Camera Width	146mm	152mm	127mm
Camera Length	124mm	116mm	96mm
Camera Depth	79mm	76mm	74mm
Lens Diameter	88mm	89mm	88mm
Lens Length	155mm	113mm	136mm

Now that we have shown the true size difference, unencumbered by a bias towards wanting to preserve the era of the DSLR camera, we need to look at the weight:

Weight Table	Nikon D850	Canon 5Ds R	Sony a7R III
Camera Weight	1005g	930g	657g
Lens Weight	1070g	805g	886g
Total Weight	2075g	1735g	1543g
	4.57lb	3.83lb	3.40lb

The weight of the mirrorless Sony a7R III with lens weighs more than a pound less than the Nikon D850 with lens and almost a half pound less than the EOS 5Ds R with lens. In percentage terms, the Nikon combination weighs 34.4% more than the a7R III system and the Canon system is 12.6% heavier. The Canon camera is about two generations older in technology across the board than the other two and does not include many of the features of the Nikon and Sony which, if included could increase its weight but the Canon 24-70mm lens does enjoy a very significant weight and size advantage over both competitors while not giving up anything in image quality, in fact it is the best of the three 24-70 f/2.8 lenses.

In many ways the a7R III packs more features into the smaller size and weight - specifically it shoots at a higher frame rate and has better video capability than the other two. It has better autofocus and better image quality despite the slightly lower megapixel count than the Canon due to the much older technology internal to the EOS 5Ds R. The Nikon D850 does have an AF speed and tracking advantage (although a lower inherent accuracy due to the AF being off sensor) and in most tests, the image quality between the 45 megapixel D850 and 42 megapixel a7R III is essentially the same.

It is clear from the above analysis that there is a significant size and weight savings with same generation and largely equivalent capability DSLR and mirrorless cameras such as the D850 and the a7R. A similar comparison can be made with APS-C cameras but there are many more players in that field. But in general, similar capability cameras like a Nikon D7500 and a Sony a6500 with equivalent DX lenses show an even larger gap in size and weight with the DSLR camera and lens weighing about 40% more. Even in top view, the size difference is striking - the Fuji X-T2 is included in the comparison as a more DSLR style mirrorless body. Fuji's lens lineup is a little different than the others so I had to choose the closest lens I could for comparison. If an equivalent lens were available it would be slightly longer:





The DSLR style Fuji X-T2 is only about 10% smaller in rear-view area than the D7500 but it is a whopping 42% lighter in weight.

When analyzing size and weight in its entirety, there is a significant savings in weight and size with mirrorless cameras and their lenses. The capabilities of mirrorless cameras are now at the same level as DSLRs and in many ways exceed them. Those that claim that there is no advantage to mirrorless cameras are simply picking and choosing pictures and statistics that support their narrative but are not looking at the true specs in three dimensions resulting in arguments that are utter nonsense!

The Sony a7R III Unbiased Review

In February I published my voluminous unbiased Sony a7R III review that details the good, bad and just plain stupid of this very buzzworthy new camera. Below is just an excerpt with pertinent conclusions. If you have any interest in this camera at all or are just curious about the state of the art in mirrorless cameras, please give the whole review a read at the link below. If you already own one, you will find detailed explanations of how I set-up the camera and why as well as numerous tips and tricks, some that have not been written about in other reviews. I have been using the Sony a7 series since the day the cameras came to market in late 2013 and now have years of experience using them and teaching others how to use them through private one on one Sony Transition workshops so you will find a depth of information that you won't see in most other reviews. Read the complete review here to see if it is right for you:

<http://www.ejphoto.com/Quack%20PDF/Sony%20a7R%20III.pdf>

Let's be clear upfront; the Sony a7R III is the best all around mirrorless camera made for the outdoor photographer! It has a number of significant flaws, as do all cameras.

Basic Features

- A 42.4 megapixel Back-side Illuminated Sensor that is essentially unchanged from the a7R II
- 10 frame per second maximum frame rate, 8 FPS with viewfinder update and continuous AF
- 1/8000 minimum shutter speed with 23ms shutter lag
- ISO range of 50-102400. Base ISO is 100
- 399 phase detect autofocus points covering 60% of the frame and 425 contrast detect autofocus points covering the entire frame.
- 3.69 million dot OLED viewfinder at 0.78x magnification
- 1.44 million dot LCD
- 4K video at 30FPS, 1080P at 120 FPS
- Dual SD card slots
- WiFi, Bluetooth and NFC
- USB 2 and USB 3.1(C)

- \$3200 USD

On paper and physically, the a7R III doesn't look too different from the a7R II since it has the same megapixel count and same general appearance but the camera is quite different internally since it doubles the frame rate, significantly improves autofocus performance, supports a larger battery and adds a number of new or improved features.



Sony a7R III, Voigtlander 12mm Heliar III

New Features (compared to the a7R II)

- New larger and higher capacity battery
- Fully electronic shutter option for zero internal movement before, during, and after exposure
- Claimed 15 stop dynamic range
- 14 bit uncompressed RAW capability in all shooting modes
- Lower vibration and better damped shutter mechanism
- Multi-shot pixel shift mode to eliminate Bayer demosaicing
- AF point selection thumbstick (joystick)
- AF point auto-orientation
- Significantly improved AF system and more responsive eye focus
- Separate programmable AF and AEL buttons resulting in an additional programmable button
- Meter adjustment/calibration capability
- New Screen Average and Highlight metering modes
- More effective in body image stabilization (IBIS) - claimed 5.5 stops
- Dramatically larger image buffer
- All menu options now assignable to function buttons (not just shooting options)
- More organized menu structure and a user programmable My Menu area
- A touchscreen with touch focus point selection

- USB 3.1(C) connector for high speed transfer in addition to the USB 2 micro-USB connector
- One UHS-II high speed SD card slot and one UHS-1 standard speed card slot

There are plenty of new things that distinguish this camera from its predecessor that definitely bring this camera much more into the realm of a full featured versatile and professional grade camera. The customizability of the camera through the menus has been increased substantially so it behooves anyone that purchases this camera to spend a significant amount of time setting it up.

Shooting Experience

The Sony a7R III handles much like its predecessor for the landscape photography mission. There are very few, if any, changes needed in the workflow, both in the field and in post processing. The improved autofocus, especially at the edges of the day are very much welcome as is the enhanced customizability of the camera. I continue to use the small flexible spot AF mode for this type of photography and the ability to now use autofocus with a small spot in magnified view is a great addition when extremely precise placement of the AF point is needed. Even with the fully eclipsed moon during the recent Lunar Eclipse, shooting with the f/5.6 100-400mm lens at 400mm, the AF had no problem whatsoever in locking focus accurately on the very dim blood moon. The fully eclipsed moon required an ISO 800, f/5.6, 1s exposure which is equivalent to -1.5 Ev - that's serious DSLR Dedicated Phase Detect AF territory. On-sensor PDAF has come a very long way in just a few years. I tried the previous generation a7 II camera and it had absolutely no chance of auto focusing in this situation. I have assigned dial position 1 on the mode selection dial to instantly go to my default landscape set-up relieving me of at least a dozen different changes between my wildlife set-up and landscape set-up. This means I can immediately switch between landscape and wildlife, which is programmed for dial position 2. I have saving the set-up to an old low capacity SD card in case the camera ever gets full reset. It won't return all of the unrelated settings like the My menu settings, button assignments, etc but at least I can get my shooting set-ups back in such an event.

For wildlife photography including birds, the a7R III is a completely different camera compared to its a7 predecessors.

While I would not recommend the earlier a7 models to anyone for this type of shooting, the a7R III is a capable performer in this arena. The biggest thing that is missing is long lenses beyond 400mm but a Canon mount Sigma 500mm f/4 with the Sigma MC-11 adapter provides very good AF, if not excellent capability; however, when the TC-1401 teleconverter is added, the AF no longer performs up to the task for most moving subject photography. At local parks with acclimated wildlife such as the wintering ducks in the Phoenix Metro area, coupling the a7R III with the Sony 100-400mm G-master lens becomes a capable and highly portable combination. The AF mode I use most for this type of shooting is Expand Flexible Spot . With earlier Sony cameras like the a6300/a6500 which are also capable of action photography, the Lock-on AF - Expand Flexible Spot mode worked to lock onto a subject and then track focus but on the a7R III, the



a7R III, 100-400mm GM

Expand Flexible Spot option provides better shot to shot accuracy. Flight shooting and AF tracking is very good in light levels needed for fast enough shutter speeds to shoot in-flight birds on predictable flyers but the tiny bit of EVF lag (9 ms) on really fast flyers takes some getting used to. The a9 without its zero blackout viewfinder is significantly better at this and the a9 AF system also outperforms the a7R III's system. Unfortunately if you crop the a9 to the equivalent frame size as the a7R III's 18 megapixel APS-C crop mode you are only left with 9 megapixels making the a7R III the more desirable camera if cropping is necessary and for anything but close and fast action. Once the sun has risen flight shooting is definitely possible but in early light, before it has risen several degrees above the horizon, I would not attempt flight shooting with the a7R III and the f/5.6 100-400mm lens. Perhaps once the announced 400mm f/2.8 lens is available enough light will get to the sensor to even allow flight shot tracking prior to sunrise. For now, serious flight shooters will find that a DSLR is still a superior option but for larger predictable flyers in good light, the a7R III is capable.



Sony a7R III, 100-400mm GM

Summary

Overall, the a7R III improves the shooting experience over the previous generation cameras substantially due to its better autofocus, faster frame rate, larger capacity battery, and being able to much more fully customize the camera to your exact liking. Being able to autofocus in magnified view is a big improvement but annoyances like not being able to focus in Bright Monitoring mode remain. While Sony touts significantly improved image quality over the a7R II, much of that is due to specsmanship and the real world image quality improvement, while present, is not very significant. The a7R III is a great update for people that need better AF performance and higher frame rate or are annoyed by constant battery changes. If you are a slow methodical landscape shooter, the older a7R II will serve you very well for the foreseeable future. For those shooting with something like a Canon 5D model and thinking about making the jump to mirrorless, this is a good generation to make that leap from any of the 5D cameras as the Sony a7R III is superior in

virtually every way. Nikon users looking to upgrade will need to make a call on whether going to go to a new system (Sony) or moving to a D850 is the best choice for them. The two cameras are direct competitors with similar capabilities. For fast action the D850 holds a bit of an autofocus edge. For landscape photographers, it has a negligible megapixel advantage. Other than that, the Sony a7 R III is the equivalent or better camera depending on your evaluation criteria. For most, a switch will likely come down to lenses already owned or whether specific lenses that you need are available for the Sony system. As with other Sony cameras, virtually every lens made back to the dawn of 35mm format photography can be adapted to work on Sony E mount cameras with varying degrees of capability from full AF with many Canon lenses attached to the right adapter (Metabones or Sigma adapters are the only ones I recommend for Canon lenses) to full manual capability with virtually everything else. The a7R III is easily the best and most versatile all around mirrorless camera on the market.

Again the full in depth review that is literally 8 times as long and contains much more information and detail than what has been written above, visit <http://www.ejphoto.com/Quack%20PDF/Sony%20a7R%20III.pdf>

I have received some questions about the recently announced a7 III 24 megapixel camera. It is essentially the same camera as the a7R III but with a 24 megapixel sensor, the a9 AF system and a slightly lower spec EVF so most of the a7R III review applies to the a7 III also.



Sony a7R III, 100-400mm

What's In The Bag in 2018?

The numerous "What's In The Bag" articles and videos may be a bit cliché but they continue to be one of the most common questions that are submitted to professional photographers. For that reason, I have prepared this article for my current state of photography. My equipment lineup is probably in more of a state of flux than most so this does change somewhat throughout the year and sometimes changes dramatically from year to year. In 2017 I completed my transition for my most serious landscape photography from the 35mm format to the 645 format - a transition that has its roots all the way back in the late 1980's when I first used a borrowed Mamiya 645 camera. It was 2013 when I first shot with the Mamiya derived Phase One medium format system in northern Italy's spectacular Dolomites. My travel and back-country photography continues to be 135 format based so I maintain a state of the art Sony mirrorless

system but rather than a bag full of prime lenses, I now use primarily the best zoom lenses made for the Sony Full Frame E-mount (commonly referred to as FE, but not to be confused with Canon's EF mount). For my wildlife/bird photography, I continue to use the Nikon DSLR system but as my Nikon lenses wore out, I have mostly replaced them with the more affordable and in many ways superior Sigma lenses from their Global Vision Sport series. I am also doing more infrared photography and currently use a hybrid Nikon/Sony set-up which is less than optimal and may see some changes through 2018. With that preface, here's what's in the bag in various situations in 2018:

Wildlife/Birds:

Camera: Primary - Nikon D500 with battery grip, Backup - Nikon D7200 with battery grip

Long Telephoto: Primary - Sigma 500mm f/4 and Sigma TC-1401 1.4x teleconverter, Secondary - Sigma 150-600mm f/4.5-6.3 OS Sport

Intermediate Telephoto: Nikon 80-400mm f4.5-5.6G

Wide to Short Telephoto Zoom: Nikon DX 16-80 f/2.8-4E

Tripod/Head: Gitzo 3532LS, Uniqball 45XC

Bag: GuraGear Bataflae 26L or Guragear Kiboko

Commentary: It is important to note that both cameras are APS-C cameras (DX in Nikonese) so the effective reach is multiplied by 1.5x. As an example, the Nikon 16-80 would be similar to a 24-120mm lens on a full frame camera or the Sigma 500mm with 1.4x teleconverter would be similar to a 1050mm optic on a full frame camera. If I am driving to the shooting location I will generally take both the 500mm f/4 and the 150-600mm f/4.5-5.6 lens in the large GuraGear Kiboko photo backpack but since they are both large 7lb lenses, if I am flying to the destination, I will make a determination on which lens to take based on the likely shooting scenario at the destination. In those cases I have to make a choice and possibly a compromise on whether low light performance is more important (500 f/4) or the versatility of the zoom lens (150-600mm) is more important. If the 150-600mm lens is in the bag, I will generally not take the 80-400mm lens. In addition to my standard wildlife kit, I may pack the Irix 11mm ultra-wide angle if I anticipate significant landscape opportunities where the 16-35 may not be wide enough or if I anticipate some vast animal scape photography. On the camera support front, for travel, I have switched to the larger model Uniqball due to much smaller travel size and weight than a Gimbal head like the Wimberley Head II. While I still prefer the way the Wimberley Head and other full Gimbal heads work, the size and weight disadvantages of these heads in today's travel environment overshadow the slightly less convenient Uniqball for wildlife shooting. Additionally, a second ballhead for any incidental landscape shooting is no longer necessary since the Uniqball can be pressed into service for that type of photography with some compromises there as well.



Landscape Photography:

Camera: Primary - Phase One XF - IQ3100,
Backup - Sony a7R III

Telephoto: Schneider Kreuznach BR 75-150mm f/4-5.6LS (approximately 48-96mm full frame equivalent), Mamiya 300mm f/4.5 AF (optional)

Standard: Primary - Schneider Kreuznach BR 40-80mm f/4-5.6LS (approximately 26-52mm full frame equivalent), Sony 24-70 f/2.8 GM

Wide: Schneider Kreuznach BR 35mm f/3.5LS (approximately 22mm full frame equivalent)

Ultra Wide: Schneider Kreuznach 28mm f/4.5LS (approximately 18mm full frame equivalent)

Tripod/head: Gitzo 4532 LS, KPS-T5 Geared Ballhead

Bag: Mindshift Backlight 26L or 36L if taking the Mamiya 300mm lens

Commentary: Many readers may wonder why I would call a 28mm an ultra wide lens!

The digital 645 format has a "crop factor" of about 0.65 so that would be equivalent to about 18mm on a 35mm camera. It is the widest lens available for the Phase One XF camera system. Similarly the 35mm lens would be about 22mm equivalent, the 40-80mm lens would be equivalent to 26-52mm and the 75-150mm would be equivalent to 48-96mm. These lenses are large and heavy so I typically have anything longer than 150mm (98mm full frame 35mm camera equivalent) but realize I can crop this image to 50% of the frame and still be left with slightly over 50 megapixels with an equivalent 200mm field of view which is generally long enough for most landscape applications and still provides plenty of very high quality pixels. I do have a 300mm f/4.5 Mamiya lens that I take if I feel like I am going to need something much longer but that would have to be packed in a separate bag. On driving trips, of course this lens will be along for the ride but for flying trips, I almost never bring this lens. One of the problems with the medium format system is its size, weight and cost making a medium format backup camera and digital back prohibitive. In those situations I still take a Sony a7R III body with 42 megapixels and a 24-70mm lens in case disaster strikes or I need the nimbleness of a small camera in certain situations - this is packed separately and usually makes the trip in my computer bag. The a7R III and 24-70mm f/2.8 combination of camera and lens weighs less than one zoom lens for the 645 system. In addition to the lenses above, I also have an mint condition and optically exceptional 1990's vintage Mamiya Sekor 45mm f/2.8 (~30mm full frame equivalent) fully manual lens whose mount has been modified to work on the Phase One XF camera body. I will take it if I anticipate low light or night-time shooting. For Camera Support, the precision adjustments of a geared head are a boon to precise composition, this the KPS-T5 ballhead is always used. For the 40-80mm and 75-150mm



lenses (and the 300mm), I use a lens support bracket made specifically for the Phase One system by Hejnar Photo.

Travel Photography:

Camera: Primary - Sony a7R III, Backup - Sony a7R II

Telephoto: Sony 100-400mm f/4.5-5.6 GM

Standard: Sony 24-70 f/2.8 GM

Wide: Sony 16-35mm f/2.8 GM

Ultra Wide: Voigtlander 12mm f/5.6

Tripod/head: Really Right Stuff TVC-24L, Really Right Stuff BH-40 or MeFoto Globetrotter CF if doing carry-on luggage only.

Bag: Ruggard Outrigger 45

Commentary: Travel photography, in my world, can mean extensive travel by air including the potential for airlines and/or aircraft where there is a weight or size limitation smaller than standard US airline carry-on allowances for large planes (737/A319 or larger). It can also mean situations where mobility and ease of carrying gear for long periods of time with maximum versatility are necessary such as last year's trip to Singapore where I walked 18 hours a day in 90+ degree/90%+ humidity conditions for several days. As such, this would also be the typical kit for a photo trip with extensive hiking, either distance wise, or difficulty wise. Even under those conditions, I would still travel with the 100-400mm lens but may not take it with me on outings where there is likely no need. This category is all about maximizing image quality while minimizing the weight and size of the gear. I often get asked about a travel tripod that will fit in carry-on luggage. There are a number of them on the market, I have had success with the Carbon Fiber version of the MeFoto Globetrotter (not the Air version). I do replace the stock ballhead with the RRS BH-40. This tripod easily fits in legal carry-on luggage.



Infrared:

Camera: Sony a6000 - 665nm, Nikon D7100 - 720nm

Standard: Sony 24-70mm f/2.8 GM, Nikon 16-80mm f/2.8-4E

Wide: Sony 16-35mm f/2.8, Irix 11mm f/4

Ultra Wide: Irix 11mm f/4 and/or Zeiss Touit 12mm f/2.8

Tripod/Head: Really Right Stuff TVC-24L, Really Right Stuff BH-40

Bag: Mindshift Backlight 26L

Commentary: My IR set-up is most definitely not optimal since my two infrared cameras are of different mounts with different batteries but since the Sony a6000 can be charged from the same charger as my iPhone, it does not require taking an extra charger. I primarily use the Sony a6000 with a 665nm visible light cut-off for false color infrared and my Nikon D7100 with a 720nm visible light cut-off for black and white IR photography. I will likely be transitioning to Sony 100% in 2018 for IR photography. In addition to what is listed above, I will usually take a Novoflex Nikon mount to Sony E-mount adapter so that I can also use the Irix lens on the Sony camera if I need something wider than 16mm (remembering that 16mm on APS-C is equivalent to 24mm on full frame and 11mm is 17.5mm equivalent on full frame)

In closing, I will slightly modify these as necessary for specific situations but in general the above kits are what I shoot with on location in 2018. If I am just going on a "non-shooting vacation" (Is there such a thing for a photographer?), I tend to take a Sony a6300 with the 16-35mm and 24-70mm lenses along with a MeFoto Globetrotter travel tripod. If there is the possibility of some birds, since I often travel to tropical islands for vacations, I will also take the 80-400 which has the field of view of a 120-600mm lens on the a6300. The bags that I use and which tripods and heads I take may vary based on specific situations but again, in general, what I wrote above is what I tend to go with. In addition, of course there are, polarizing and neutral density filters (6 stop and 10 stop), battery chargers, spare batteries, lens cloths, rain covers, media cards, a computer, card reader, data cables, and whatever else is necessary.

While I realize my gear choices are more extensive than the majority of photographers, I hope that my "What's In The Bag In 2018?" summary and the reasoning behind my choices can be helpful to some of my readers.



The Forest of Nisene Marks, California (a7R III, 16-35mm)

The Story Behind The Photo

In the last year I have been including a photo in each newsletter that has a story behind it. Reader feedback has been very positive so I will continue this new feature when possible. This quarter's photo is one I took in Iceland in July 2014 but it was three and a half years in the making.

While riding shotgun with renowned Icelandic Aurora photographer Olgeir Andresson in search of Aurora in January 2013 in just awful weather conditions we passed by the famous and very touristy Seljalandsfoss due to its proximity to Iceland's main perimeter highway. This place is visited by thousands every day. Even in winter it is a stop for an endless stream of tour busses and vacationers. While Seljalandsfoss is a must for any south Iceland tour, the experience has drastically diminished over the years due to being overrun by people - a common theme for most sights near the perimeter road. From the highway, you can see Seljalandsfoss and two other waterfalls that run right next to it. As we passed this place, Olgeir told me about a 4th waterfall called Glufurafoss which is also in the area that is a little north and not visible at all and therefore has far fewer visitors. This waterfall is hidden as one must walk through a slot cave to actually see it. That was not happening in the icy conditions and near 100 MPH winds coming through the cave on that day and common to winter.



Glufurafoss (a7R, 24mm)

I was back in Iceland that same year in Summer leading a photo workshop but the time it would take for me to get there, photograph it and get back to the group was prohibitive with a group of paying clients so getting to this waterfall remained on my Iceland Bucket List. I was back in Iceland the following summer leading a northern Iceland tour so we did not pass this area but after this tour was over, my father was meeting me for a private father and son Iceland tour which completed his lifelong dream of visiting Iceland. Since this was much more leisurely and we weren't on as rigid of a schedule as a large tour with many clients, I finally had the opportunity to trek a bit north of the popular roadside waterfalls, find the cave, and finally photograph Glufurafoss. When I got there I realized how incredibly difficult it was going to be to get this shot. The narrow slot cave that one has to go through to get to this waterfall creates a Venturi effect of horizontal blowing water that completely soaks the lens in under 5 seconds. It was impossible to get a photograph without a soaked front element no matter how quickly the photo was taken after removing any rain protection from the front of the lens. I was getting absolutely drenched; it was the equivalent of being hosed down with a giant horizontal shooting high pressure shower head. Being a determined sort when I put my mind to getting a photograph, I took a dozen shots, cleaning the front element between each shot with the intent of later putting the photo together using the parts of each frame that did not have rain spots on it.

When I got back home I realized how difficult of a job it was going to be to process the photo. I did the best I could with the software I had but I was just not happy with the results - Photoshop CS6 couldn't handle it, I had to do it all manually and I was never really happy with the results. Perhaps if I had had the Extended edition which was released primarily for 3D rendering I might have been able to do it with its median stacking tool but Adobe did not offer upgrade licenses and I certainly wasn't going to shell out \$895 for this photo. A couple of years later I tried again using Helicon Focus, a focus stacking tool but I still wasn't happy and Helicon struggled since the focus plane was not shifting throughout the various exposures. Then along came Affinity Photo, a very capable competitor to Adobe Photoshop at a fraction of the cost and no monthly subscription fees. It has a number of stacking features built in including median stacking. I gave it a try even though I wasn't very hopeful. In a matter of second, Affinity Photo returned the above photo. It completely ignored the water spotted parts of the photo where possible finally giving me something I am reasonably happy with - Glufurafoss as shot through a slot cave!

Seljalandsfoss, pictured below, is still a beautiful and worthwhile place but I was very happy to finally get a shot of the hidden Glufurafoss. (Tip, in summer visit Seljalandsfoss between 11:00PM and 5:00AM to avoid the mass crowds - there can be wonderful light as late as 1:30AM and as early as 3:00AM)





DuckShop 2018 Wrap-up

As another duck photography season comes to a close in the southwestern United States, I have some interesting and troubling observations. However, before we get to that, we had another successful workshop season with two sold out group DuckShops and five individual one-on-one private workshops. Lots of great photos were taken and a great time was had by all and everybody came away with some great pictures of beautiful birds like Northern Shovelers, American Wigeon, Canvasback, Ring-necked Ducks, Ruddy Ducks, Lesser Scaup, and other birds such as Pied-billed Grebes, Snowy Egrets, Great Egrets, etc, etc, etc...

I have been leading duck photography workshops in the Phoenix area since 2001 and there is a marked decline in the number of species, the number of individual ducks, and habitat loss continues seemingly unabated. In the first few years, we often photographed 12-15 species of waterfowl in a two day workshop. Today, even though we visit more areas during one of my DuckShops, a typical three day workshop gives us 7-10 species. Some species, like Northern Pintail and Gadwall, which used to be easy, are now hard if you find anything close enough to photograph at all. In the case of Gadwall, once a common duck in the area, is almost non-existent. The number of Teals is way down as well and getting ever more difficult to photograph well with Blue-winged Teal almost nonexistent in the usual shooting locations. Hooded Mergansers also have become few and far between. This year there was another very unusual phenomenon. The Phoenix area's most common wintering duck is the Ring-necked Duck and in most years there is a fairly equal number of males and females. This year, males outnumbered females by a great margin and in some common water areas there were no females at all despite there being dozens of males. It is a big mystery that was also seen in other parts of the southwest.

Why is this happening? Habitat loss is the major problem in our metropolitan areas. Several places that I used to take clients are gone, plowed over, and now shopping centers or residences. Unfortunately, from a photography perspective, photographing waterfowl out in the country doesn't work too well. These are areas where ducks are hunted and do not get accustomed to being around people in close proximity.

The Best Lenses For Your Nikon DSLR, Canon DSLR, and Sony (FE) Cameras

The table of best lenses for your camera is a living document that gets updated every quarter. Changes from previous tables can be seen in bold. Sigma has recently announced their entire line of Art prime lenses for Sony FE so I expect to see a lot of changes in the future on the Sony FE front...

Lens Category	Canon EF Mount	Nikon F Mount	Sony (F)E Mount
Full-frame Fisheye	Canon 8-15mm f/4L Sigma 15mm f/2.8	Nikon 8-15mm f/3.5E Sigma 15mm f/2.8	Sony 28mm f/2 + 16mm Fisheye Conversion Lens
Hyper Wide	Irix 11mm f/4 Sigma 14mm f/1.8 Art	Irix 11mm f/4 Sigma 14mm f/1.8 Art	Voigtländer 12mm f/5.6 Voigtländer 10mm f/5.6
Ultra Wide Prime	Zeiss 15mm f/2.8 ZE Canon TS-E 17mm f/4	Zeiss 15mm f/2.8 ZF.2 Nikon 19mm f/4 PC	Zeiss Batis 18mm f/2.8 Voigtländer 15mm f/4.5
Extra Wide Prime	Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8 Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Milvus 21mm f/2.8 Sigma 20mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Loxia 21mm f/2.8 Tokina Firin 20mm f/2
Standard Wide Prime	Zeiss Otus 28mm f/1.4 Zeiss Milvus 25mm f/1.4 Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Otus 28mm f/1.4 Zeiss Milvus 25mm f/1.4 Sigma 24mm f/1.4 Art	Zeiss Batis 2/25 Sony 28mm f/2
Moderate Wide Prime	Sigma 35mm f/1.4 Canon 35mm f/1.4L II	Sigma 35mm f/1.4 Zeiss Milvus 35mm f/2	Sony-Zeiss 35mm f/1.4 Zeiss Loxia 2/35
Standard Prime	Zeiss 55mm f/1.4 Otus Sigma 50mm f/1.4 DG Art	Zeiss 55mm f/1.4 Otus Sigma 50mm f/1.4 DG Art	Sony-Zeiss 55mm f/1.8 Zeiss Loxia 2/50
Portrait Prime (short telephoto)	Zeiss 85mm f/1.4 Otus Canon 85mm f/1.2L II	Zeiss 85mm f/1.4 Otus Nikon 105mm f/1.4E	Sony 85mm f/1.4 GM Zeiss Batis 1.8/85
Medium Telephoto Prime	Canon 135mm f/2L Sigma 135mm f/1.8 Art	Sigma 135mm f/1.8 Art	Zeiss Batis 2.8/135
200mm Prime	Canon 200mm f/2L Canon 200mm f/2.8L II	Nikon 200mm f/2G Nikon Micro Nikkor 200mm f/4ED	N/A
300mm Prime	Canon 300mm f/2.8L IS II	Nikon 300mm f/2.8G VR Nikon 300mm f/4 PF	N/A
400mm Prime	Canon 400mm f/2.8L IS II Canon 400mm f/4 DO II	Nikon 400mm f/2.8E VR	N/A
500mm Prime	Canon 500mm f/4L IS II Sigma 500mm f/4 DG OS HSM	Nikon 500mm f/4E VR Sigma 500mm f/4 DG OS HSM	N/A
600mm Prime	Canon 600mm f/4L IS II	Nikon 600mm f/4E VR	N/A
800mm Prime	Canon 800mm f/5.6L IS Sigma 800mm f/5.6APO DG	Nikon 800mm f/5.6E VR Sigma 800mm f/5.6APO DG	N/A
Wide Angle Zoom	Canon 11-24mm f/4L Canon 16-35mm f/2.8L III	Nikon 14-24mm f/2.8G Sigma 12-24mm f/4 Art	Sony 16-35mm f/2.8 DM Sony 12-24mm f/4 G
Standard Zoom	Canon 24-70mm f/2.8L II Tamron 24-70mm f/2.8 G2 Di VC	Tamron 24-70mm f/2.8 G2 Di VC Nikon 24-70mm f/2.8E ED VR	Sony 24-70 f/2.8 GM Sony 24-105 f/4G
Telephoto Zoom	Canon 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II Tamron 70-200mm f/2.8 G2	Nikon 70-200mm f/2.8E FL VR Tamron 70-200mm f/2.8 G2	Sony 70-200 f/2.8 GM Sony 70-200 f/4G
Super Telephoto Zoom	Canon 200-400mm f/4L 1.4x Ext Canon 100-400 f/4.5-5.6 II	Sigma 150-600 f/4.5-6.3 Sport Nikon 200-500 f/5.6 VR	Sony 100-400 f/4.5-5.6 GM Sony 70-300 f/4.5-5.6G
Macro	Sigma 150mm f/2.8 Macro OS	Sigma 150mm f/2.8 Macro OS	Sony 90mm f/2.8 Macro

Workshops

All of my group workshops are run through NatureScapes Certified Workshops. Please check out all of the great offerings from NSN here: <https://www.naturescapes.net/workshops/>

Private instruction in camera operation, landscape and wildlife photography are also available as well as image processing training. Photo workstation consulting services are also available, To learn more click here: http://www.ejphoto.com/duckshop_private.htm

Facebook Page

I routinely post new photos, articles, etc on my Professional Facebook page as well as links to my latest articles. If interested, please click below and then click on the Like button.

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/EJ-Peiker-Nature-Photographer/150804446733>

Newsletter Info

This is the 17th year of my quarterly Newsletter. I try to cover the wide array of digital imaging and products from mirrorless to medium format and everything in between. Throughout the years, the information contained herein has always been free and will continue to be free despite the many hours it takes to put it together and significant equipment and travel expenses. Most of the products I have tested and reviewed, I have purchased myself; a small minority have been made available to me for review and evaluation by loyal readers and a by the manufacturers themselves. While the newsletter is free either via eMail subscription or via accessing it on my website at <http://www.ejphoto.com/newsletter.htm>, if you find the information useful to you and you do wish to donate for my continuing efforts, you may do so via PayPal and sending the funds to ejpeiker@cox.net.

Disclaimers

E.J. Peiker conducts consulting services and product design services for a number of photographic product companies. Those that know me know I would not endorse a product even for compensation if I did not feel it were a superior product.

E.J. Peiker is a co-founder of www.Naturescapes.net and leads photographic workshops under the NatureScapes Certified Workshops banner

E.J. Peiker is a member of Nikon Professional Services and receives some services free of charge from Nikon USA www.nikonpro.com

E.J. Peiker is a Sony Digital Imaging Pro and receives some services at a reduced cost and free of charge from Sony USA <https://esupport.sony.com/info/1523/US/EN>

E.J. Peiker is a Wimberley Professional Services featured photographer and receives non-monetary compensation from Wimberley. Visit Wimberley at www.tripodhead.com

E.J. Peiker is supported by Hunt's Photo and Video - New England's largest photography retailer. Visit them at www.huntsphotoandvideo.com/

Legal Notice: Written and Photographic Content ©2018 E.J. Peiker, Nature Photographer. The text and photographs contained herein may not be copied or reproduced without written consent. This newsletter may be forwarded without restriction unaltered and in its entirety only.



Lesser Scaup Couple (D500, 500mm)

E.J. Pelker
E.J. Pelker - Nature Photographer