

Fog Shooting

*Tips and Techniques from The Louisiana Photographic Society
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"There's nothing worse than a sharp photograph of a fuzzy concept"

Ansel Adams

However, there are times when a *fuzzy* subject can present unusual photographic opportunities; **Fog shooting.**

Fog always seems to add an element of mystery or perhaps depth to an image. My eye is drawn deep within a foggy image in an attempt to extract a message from the shapes that tempt to show themselves within the midground and backgrounds of these scenes. I guess they draw my involvement in a moody way.

Our June speaker challenged us to think of the differences in lighting at night. Some of his images showed us a different interpretation of normal scenes, but with lighting that gave the images a different feel. Fog can also alter the normal lighting of a scene. In this image, Sunrise Deep in the Swamp, I feel a sense of mystery or eeriness. Additionally, I feel the depth of the swamp drawing me in.



Fog can also be an effective control element that can mask unwanted backgrounds. Like a large aperture, fog can de-emphasize or even eliminate distracting details. Consider the image below. These two fishermen were relatively close to the dock I shot from. The morning fog covered the far shoreline that I felt had unattractive and distracting elements. The isolation of the fishermen allows the image to exude more simplicity and intimacy. I am drawn into to the thought of having the water to myself on this foggy morning. Consequently I have named the image “Foggy Solitude.”



I have found that one of the keys to making fog compositions work is to gauge my relative distance to the foreground subject compared to the background subject. Given the density of the fog and how defined I want my foreground subject, I can move closer or farther from my subject to control its relative sharpness.

I am told that in the morning “fog happens” when the overnight low is going to be within 5 degrees F or less of the dew point and there is very little or no wind. Once the temp gets 5 degrees or so above the dew point, the fog will begin to dissipate. For the meteorologically challenged like myself, I just watch the evening news. Several times, when on photo trips away from the T.V., internet, radio, etc., I have enjoyed the spontaneity of waking to fog showing itself as a creative



canvass moving through the countryside. One morning, shortly after sunrise, we spotted this moose along the roadside crossing a field. As he approached the river basin, his unmistakable silhouette was attractively outlined by the backdrop of a slowly creeping fog bank. I can still remember the feeling of this cool morning in Yellowstone.

Technical note: Fog is usually lighter than the 18% gray for which camera meters are calibrated. Therefore, unless you use some form of exposure compensation, the scene would likely be rendered darker than you remember. Additionally, many times fog will have a blue tint. A cold mist is sometimes what we intend to share. Otherwise an 81A or B filter could be helpful to warm the scene.

Perhaps one of the main things I enjoy about fog shooting is the relative unpredictability of the opportunity presented. It's a great morning when technical preparation and a creative eye have the chance to observe and share a moment when nature is serving up the unexpected. As I reflect on these moments, I recall the photographic quote, which reminds me that success lies in the intersection of where opportunity and preparation meet. ... "f/16 and be there!"