



EXAMPLES

23 images and the stories of how they were made

by Steve Berardi



Chocolate Lily

Aperture	f/6.3
Exposure	1/250
Focal Length	200mm
ISO Speed	400
Canon 70-200mm f/4L IS	
Canon Rebel XTi	

THIS SPECIES OF CHOCOLATE LILY (*Fritillaria biflora*) is endemic to California. It got its name from its color, not because it tastes or smells like chocolate! However, there's another species of flower (*Arthropodium strictum*) which is also known as a chocolate lily and that one actually *does* smell like chocolate.

I shot this photo at a very popular nature preserve in southern California that's known for its annual bloom of Chocolate Lilies. Lots of people make a special trip each spring just to see these magnificent flowers, and unfortunately a lot of them leave without ever seeing them. Why? Because they're hard to

spot, they don't stand out from the crowd very well.

In fact, while I was in the middle of photographing this flower, about three people walked by and asked me what I was photographing! Another group of people came by and asked me if I'd seen any Chocolate lilies! This is a good lesson to learn for not only photographing wildflowers but for enjoying your time in nature: stop and **take a look around** once in awhile.

When you're hiking down a trail, it's easy to get caught up in a conversation with your hiking partner, or focus too much on the trail ahead of you. So, take some time every now and then to explore your surroundings slowly and carefully. Otherwise, you're sure to miss out on a lot of amazing sights, like this Chocolate Lily!

Upon seeing this flower, I immediately knew I wanted to photograph it **from the side** because of the wonderfully bright green back-ground, so I decided to use my telephoto lens. Since the flower didn't have a whole lot of depth, I was able to use a fairly wide aperture of f/6.3 and still maintain good focus.

Lighting was perfect for this flower: it was partly cloudy and although I had to wait 30 minutes for a cloud to cover the sun, it was well worth it. I think for this type of flower, the **overcast sky** isn't necessarily the best lighting condition like it is for other brighter flowers.



Moonset at Sunrise

Aperture	f/16
Exposure	1/13
Focal Length	200mm
ISO Speed	100
Canon 70-200mm f/4L IS	
Canon Rebel XT <i>i</i>	

THIS PHOTO WAS TAKEN IN THE SONORAN Desert of southern California, where the landscape is scattered with big brown boulders that glow with a magnificent hue of red in the warm light of sunrise or sunset.

I shot this photo on a cool spring morning, as the sun was rising above a distant mountain in the East and the moon was setting behind another in the West.

About **once a month** you have the perfect opportunity to photograph the moon as part of a landscape: when the moon is full (or nearly full). This is when the moon will rise as the sun is setting or vice versa, putting it low on the horizon during the golden hours of sunrise and sunset.

I think the moon in this particular image adds a nice touch of contrast to the scene, and I was immediately drawn to the scene because of how the moon seemed to be rolling down the mountain.

I didn't notice the large shadow in the center of the frame until I viewed the

image later on my computer, but I think it's an important part of the image. The shadow helps show depth, hints at the time of day the photo was taken, and perhaps most importantly it also provides another bit of contrast between bright and dark.

In post-processing of this image, I had to make a significant adjustment to the **white balance**, which the camera failed to determine automatically. Normally, the auto white balance is pretty good on modern digital SLRs, but they still have trouble sometimes with scenes like this where there's not a whole lot of different colors. Luckily, I shot the image in RAW, so no quality was sacrificed for the white balance correction.



Anna's Hummingbird

Aperture	f/8
Exposure	1/1250
Focal Length	420mm
ISO Speed	800

Canon 300mm f/4L IS

Canon 1.4 Extender

Canon 5D Mark II

THE ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD IS ONE OF THE most common hummingbirds of southern California. They're the only hummingbird that can be seen year round in California, and they also happen to be the **fastest creatures** on the planet (if you measure speed in terms of body-lengths per second, heh).

They're absolutely fascinating creatures to watch, not only for their speed but also because they're the only birds that can fly backwards!

Understanding hummingbird behavior is imperative to **photographing them**. At first they may seem like impossible creatures to photograph in the wild, but after a little observation and a lot of patience, you'll soon be able to capture photos of them with ease!

This particular hummingbird was photographed in the Sonoran Desert in November. So, there weren't many flowers around (a problem for the hummingbird, which requires 2/3 of it's body weight in nectar per day).

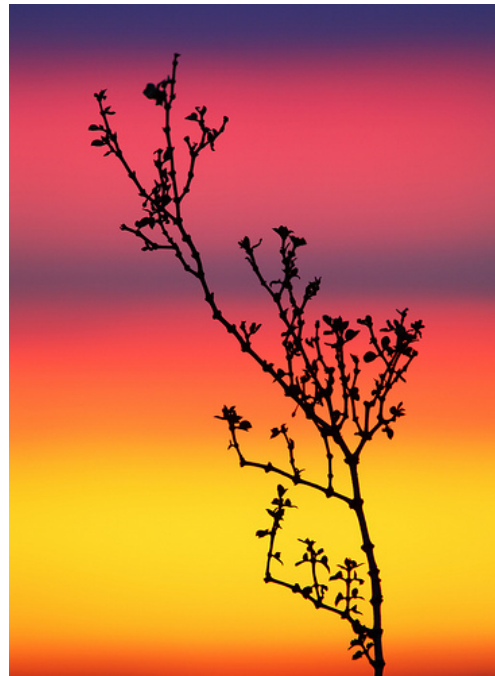
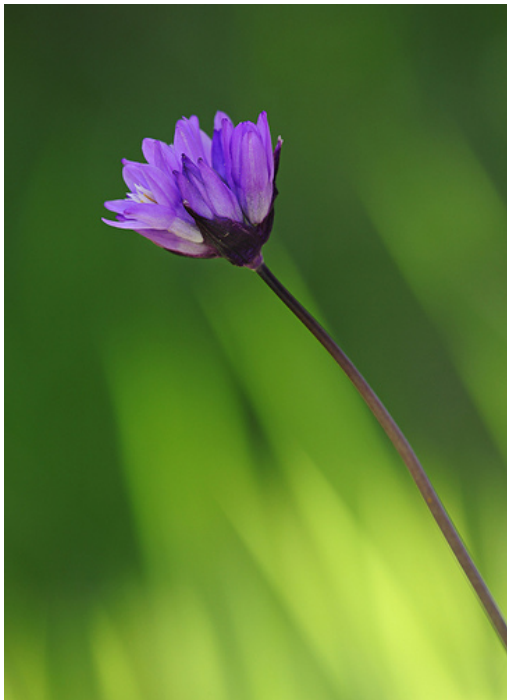
You might think that a shortage of flowers would mean a shortage of hummingbirds, and although this is true, it also means that the hummingbirds that are around are much more likely to stick to their ground and not

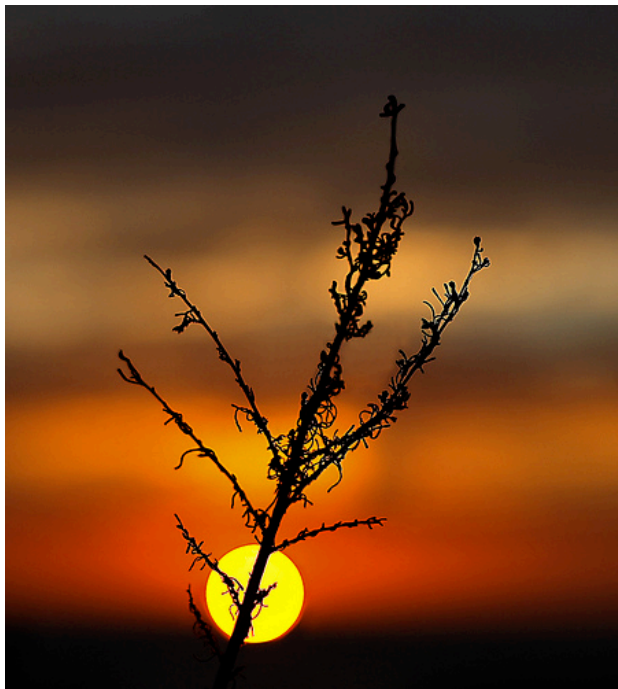
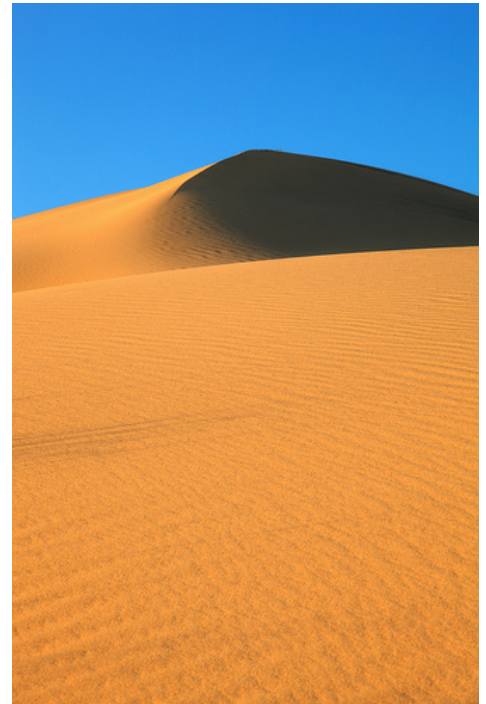
get scared away by your presence. And, that was just the case with this particular Anna's hummingbird. He let me stand just five feet away from him when I shot this photo. Try getting that close in spring when there's an abundance of flowers, and the hummingbird will gladly just move on to a new patch of undisturbed flowers.

Unfortunately, I didn't have the best lighting conditions the day I shot this photo. There was a thin layer of cloud cover that forced me to use a slower shutter or higher ISO.

Since this hummingbird didn't seem to mind my presence much, I actually had a chance to try both a high ISO and a slower shutter speed. I found that with a slow shutter (1/640), I was getting somewhat blurry photos. It was too slow of a shutter for handholding the lens. So, I tried increasing the ISO to 800. Although this theoretically adds more noise to the photo, I barely noticed any degradation later when I viewed the image at 100% on my computer. So the lesson here is: thoroughly test out your camera's different ISOs so you know the highest you can go while still maintaining good quality.

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About the Author



Steve Berardi is a naturalist, photographer, computer scientist, and founder of PhotoNaturalist—a blog that publishes weekly tips and tutorials on digital nature photography. You can usually find him hiking in the beautiful mountains and deserts of Southern California. His photos have been used by the National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, and *Nature Photographer Magazine*. He's also written numerous articles for *PhotoYou* magazine, and the Digital Photography School, the largest photography blog on the internet.