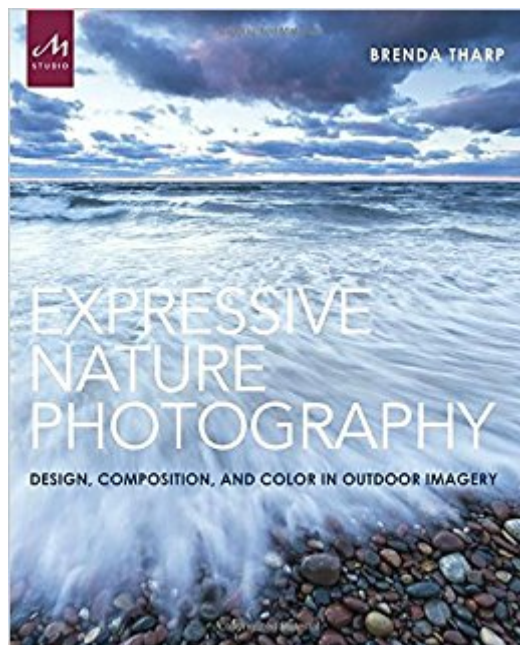




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# Expressive Nature Photography: Design, Composition, And Color In Outdoor Imagery



## Synopsis

Photographer and teacher Brenda Tharp marries photography craft with artistic vision to help intermediate photographers translate what they see into a personal impression of a subject in nature. *Expressive Nature Photography* teaches how to make exposures that are creative, not necessarily correct. Inspiring photographers to get out early and stay out late, this book explains how to use light, an essential element of outdoor photography. Readers will learn how to “see in the dark,” use filters to create very long exposures, create a natural effect using light painting, photograph night skies and moonlit landscapes, and make the best use of available natural light. This book also covers how to use shutter speeds to express motion and capture the energy of fast-moving subjects, such as rushing streams, ocean swells, and bounding wildlife. A chapter on the art of visual flow discusses how to create compositions that direct the viewer’s eye through the frame for maximum impact. Photographers will develop a sense of when to break the “rules” of composition, how to use elements to frame subjects, what to include and exclude in the frame, how to create the feeling of depth and dimension in a scene, and how to push the boundaries of composition to make memorable nature images that capture and convey fresh viewpoints. High-tech cameras can help create a good exposure and focused image, but they can’t replace the artist’s eye for composition, visual depth, and design, nor their instinct for knowing when to click the shutter. There are many books on photography technique focused on technical quality, but *Expressive Nature Photography* goes beyond the technical. It guides the way to pulling emotion and meaning out of a dynamic landscape, a delicate macro study, or an outstanding nighttime image.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Monacelli Studio (July 25, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1580934676

ISBN-13: 978-1580934671

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 0.6 x 10.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #101,893 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #36 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Photography & Video > Nature & Wildlife > Landscapes #82 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Nature & Wildlife > Plants & Animals](#) #151 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Digital Photography](#)

## Customer Reviews

Brenda Tharp is an award-winning photographer, writer, and teacher specializing in travel, nature, and outdoor photography. Her images have been featured in numerous magazines and books, and she teaches throughout the United States, including Maine Media Workshops, Santa Fe Photographic Workshops, the Rocky Mountain School of Photography, Point Reyes Field Seminars, and BetterPhoto.com. Brenda is the author of three best-selling photography technique books—*Creative Nature & Outdoor Photography* (two editions) and *Extraordinary Everyday Photography*. She can be found at [www.brendatharp.com](http://www.brendatharp.com). A short list of her clients includes British Gas, Canon USA, Audubon, Nature Conservancy, Outdoor Photography, Travel-Holiday Magazine, The Natural Museum of Chicago, Sierra Club, several inflight magazines, ATT, United Way, and the Red Cross. Getty Images and Danita Delimont represent Brenda's stock photography. Her fine art images are in private collections across the country. She lives in Santa Rosa, CA.

As a professional photographer, I am asked to do all kinds of work ranging from wedding photos to portraits. I am happy for the work. However, my love is with landscape and nature photography. This is the area where operating my camera is the most fun and where my heart resides. I am drawn, therefore, to a well written, well produced book on the subject of landscape and nature photography. This is one such book. Although her book is about nature and landscape photography, Brenda Tharp discusses light a great deal in her book, "Expressive Nature Photography: Design, Composition, and Color in Outdoor Imagery." And well she should because without a firm understanding of light and its various natures, it is difficult to impossible to expect quality results in photography. Tharp is not just focusing (no pun intended) on mundane but necessary things such as aperture or shutter speeds. Yes, those are covered. She even includes the recorded focal length, aperture and shutter speed for each of the numerous example photos in her book--a most helpful addition to the book itself. Still, what drives Tharp and what should drive each of us as photographers (amateur, semi-pro and pro) is the quality and type of light. Is it top-down (direct noon-type light,) front light, sidelight, backlight or bounce light? What color is the light? Yes light, even sunlight, can exhibit different colors at different times and seasons. Each type and color impacts the nature of light seen on the subject and therefore the resulting photograph. The same

object is not the same photograph under different lighting conditions. Tharp provides clarity and direction concerning light, even going so far as to dispel some common misconceptions about the histogram. However, she is firm in pointing out that, "There is no such thing as bad light; there is only light." I agree--especially when it comes to digital photography. Some of my best and most cherished digital images were taken in horrid light. Sometimes the light was so poor (low quality or at a horrid angle) that I assumed that the photo would be a complete waste of time--that is until I post processed the image and saw the inadvertent magic that the light had created. I do a major disservice if I fail to mention something that Brenda Tharp states right at the beginning of her book. *“This book is about making your best photographs of nature. It’s also about being present in the moment when making a picture.”* (Page 13.) This is so very important. If our minds are elsewhere, our photos will show our distraction. Tharp even recommends that, at times, we should leave our cameras behind and simply soak in the elements with our eyes. This is equally important because, while the camera is a wonderful tool, it is also a distraction. If you are photographing something you are not really looking at it. You are instead focused on the process of image taking. My father used to have a saying. *“Do as I say not as I do.”* Tharp, on the other hand is saying something very different. *“Listen to what I say, but look at what I have done.”* Her text and her photos do a wonderful job of complementing one another. To be honest, I own a ton of photography books. Most, except for a precious few, are bound for the recycling bin. *“Expressive Nature Photography: Design, Composition, and Color in Outdoor Imagery”* is not one of them. Brenda Tharp has done a marvelous job with creating her book. That, coupled with a quality printing job on decent paper stock, makes this a book that I not only read cover-to-cover, but will also keep permanently as a reference book.

As someone who lives in a beautiful wooded area in California, with plenty of locales in a days’ drive distance as well, and with wildlife flying or wandering past my house most days, I can well appreciate what Ms. Tharp discusses. Indeed, her book is a well-arranged discussion of photographing landscapes, flowers, trees, wildlife animals, skies (clouds and starscapes) -- both in panorama and close-up. The book assumes at least a nodding familiarity with cameras, though she keeps the discussion on four main controls: focal length (i.e., lenses, in mm sizes), aperture (f/stop) and shutter speeds, along with ISO. (Indeed, her captions of the many and beautiful photos illustrating her teaching points will include the first three.) She’s very clear, and understandable, about how these work to achieve the affects she shows. This book is, indeed, more aesthetic than

technical in its approach. She is down-to-earth in discussing how to look for, compose and frame such pictures even before considering camera controls. Indeed, she talks at length about the low-tech methods, how to position oneself, what weather, lighting and terrain to look for. Her use of close and intermediate objects to give a picture depth is intriguing -- for instance, don't just take a picture of a mesa, look for rocks or brush in the foreground, and intermediate-distance terrain, to give the picture perspective even before you fiddle with f/stops. She shows us how landscapes can be intimate, even close-up, and the flowers, plants, even dried, cracked mud, can be wonderful at close range, not just in long-focus telephoto. Her chapter on the narrative image, subjects chosen and photographed in a way that would imply a story, a context to the viewer, is profound and worth careful thought. Her last two chapters, on "impressions of nature" and on the night sky, are more involved and challenging, involving deliberate blurring of objects and colors in the former, and time-elapse in the latter. It's not just very helpful technical tips on extreme ISO and shutter speed, but also talks about the need to bring, say, layered clothing. The book is lavishly illustrated, every page pretty much, both to cleverly illustrate her teaching points, but is simply pleasing to behold. She uses frequent sidebars -- tips, exercises, simple breakout insights -- that vary the layout and add interest. The book is on good glossy paper and well formatted. The pictures are a wide-ranging selection of landscapes and wildlife -- she has traveled widely -- but often are locations a reader might have, in a few cases, visited themselves. Highest recommendation, for its thoughtfulness, design, insights and love of photography and nature. Indispensable for anyone with a digital camera and places to seek in which to use it, with renewed appreciation.

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