



New Jersey School of Conservation
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Conservation Photography Lesson Plan

****This lesson plan can be used as an extension to the NJSOC Conservation Photography video.****

Subject Description

Capturing images of the natural world is one of the most pleasurable and rewarding ways students can express their feelings about the environment, artistically. For many students who struggle with drawing, painting and other methods for creating art, photography provides a workable medium that allows them to be creative and expressive. The advent of digital photography has opened a new door into visual creativity, providing tools for self expression that were formally unavailable to all but the most accomplished artisan. This session introduces the students to the artistic power and potential of photography to change the way we interact with the natural environment, through the creation of inspirational images of the natural world.

Objectives

- Students will understand the importance of photography in helping to protect and preserve the environment.
- Photography will be a tool to encourage students to see the natural world through ‘new’ eyes.
- Students will analyze the qualities of a given photo and articulate what makes a photograph grab someone’s attention.
- Students will demonstrate the application of the elements of composition in their own nature photographs.

Background Information

See attached Conservation Photography Tips and Techniques Sheet in Appendix A.

Materials

- Example photographs
- Batteries and Memory Cards for the cameras
- Digital Cameras (1 for every pair of students)
- Photography Tips and Techniques Sheet

If printing and matting:

Photo Printer

Photo Paper

Matte board

Double sided tape or glue

Procedure

1. As students enter the classroom, offer a selection of photographs scattered on the table. Instruct students to select a photograph that appeals to them.
2. Begin discussion by asking students the reasons why people take pictures of nature. Some responses may include: for fun, to remember a place/time, for aesthetic reasons, to evoke a strong feel to protect or preserve an area, to monitor change in the environment, to sell things such as in magazine ads, for motivation such as in posters with motivational messages, for money –professional photographer.
3. Proceed with a discussion of basic elements of design and composition in photography (see information sheet and poster, provided). Be sure to highlight topics such as lighting, reflections, color, rule of thirds, foreground, viewpoint, focusing and leading lines.
4. At the conclusion of this discussion, students share what design or composition elements that were just discussed may be evident in the photo that they pulled aside at the beginning of class.
5. Tell students that they will be asked to take a number of pictures that will challenge them to see their environment in ways that they may not have thought of in the past. They should keep the elements of photography that were recently discussed in mind.
6. Prior to leaving the classroom, remind students of safety concerns when photographing animals or positioning themselves to get that great shot. Discuss the basic use of the camera and respect for the equipment. Be certain to point out how to use the macro setting.
7. If time or resources permit, allow approximately 30 minutes at the end of class to print one photograph for each student and allow them to matte these photographs using matte board or mattes that have been pre-cut.

Summary

As a culmination to the class, have students share their photographs with the class and discuss what they learned. If possible, try to tie in a discussion of the importance of protecting the plant(s), animal(s), or habitat(s) that they depicted in their photograph.

Appendix A.

Conservation Photography Tips and Techniques



Lighting

- Avoid harsh shadows.
- Avoid sun flares by hiding the sun behind an object like a tree. Experiment with angles of light (back light, side light etc.).
- Dawn and dusk provide the best light for landscapes. If the weather is bad, look for contrasting colors.
- Remember your flash is only effective 6-10 feet from the object.



Viewpoint

- Get in close (but do not put yourself in danger). Lie down or get up high.
- Look the subject in the eye.



Focusing

- Lock the focus-then move the subject off center.
- Focus on: eyes- for people, stamens/pistils- for flowers, antennae- for insects.



Composition

- Use the rule of thirds.
- Move the subject out of the middle.
- Watch your horizon lines. Keep them straight and use the 1/3 rule. Use leading lines to draw your eye into the picture.
- Put something of interest in the foreground.



Avoid Clutter

- Use a simple background
- Fill the frame with your subject by moving in close to exclude any extraneous elements.
- If practical, move the subject to a better location with a cleaner backdrop or carry a plain background with you.



Additional tips

- Press the shutter button smoothly
- Hold the camera steady. Take some vertical pictures. Use reflections.
- Partial images add interest to some photos.
- Think about the message you want to convey with your picture.
- Take your time; pay attention to what you have included in your viewfinder.