

# THE GREAT AMERICAN WEST

## PHOTOGRAPHY NEWSLETTER

Brent Russell Paull  
www.amwestphoto.com

Contact: (559) 909-5208  
brentpaull@hotmail.com

August 2010  
5<sup>th</sup> Year, Issue 12

### Newsletter Features

#### Upcoming Safaris

pg 2

#### The Bottom Line

Achieving Selective Focus  
pg 3

#### Photoshop Trick

Creating a Copyright  
Action  
pg 5

#### Great Locations

Leeds Creek  
Washington County, Ut  
Pg 6

#### Image Gallery

Pg 8

### Photography Tip

Don't pass up a good subject because you expect a better one down the road. Shoot now, you may not pass that way again.

Many external factors can influence how a scene looks at first glance, such as the angle of light, the wind, the shadows within the scene, etc. All of these things can be different an hour later, much less six hours later. Shoot it when you see it.

## Welcome

We are in the middle of a very hot summer in the San Joaquin Valley, but especially here in Tulare, California. The agricultural (Ag) belt of orchards, cornfields, and grape vineyards that surrounds me puts plenty of humidity in the air, but in return Ag subjects are plentiful, colorful, and amazingly varied.

Lately I've spent many days on photo safaris up in Sequoia National Park at 6500', where at least the days are cooler. There are plenty of wildflowers at this elevation, as well as an occasional black bear or two. Rivers like the Merced, Kings, and Kaweah are still running high providing amazing waterfalls for

landscape images.

I know that hundreds of you who read this newsletter live here in the valley, and so I encourage you to hit the parks as often as possible. Every time I'm in Sequoia, or Yosemite, Zion, or Yellowstone – there is something new and exciting to photograph.

Besides the great black bear I shot during a custom safari with a father/son from Orange County to Sequoia NP, I was lucky enough to find a couple of Mountain Lady's Slipper flowers, in Yosemite NP – a truly beautiful and unique looking flower.

Since March I have shot dozens of new species of wildflowers,

beginning in Yokohl Valley and working my way higher into the mountains during the months leading up to August. As I have kept looking I have kept finding subjects.

My cycle of photo safaris begins again in September. This year I have pushed the Yellowstone Safari back ten days to the first of October – figuring that like the late spring we will probably have a late autumn as well.

So in September I'm going to start a new destination – southwest Colorado. From Mesa Verde NP to Canyon de Chelly NM, and the San Juan Mountains around Telluride – we will spend three days shooting this gorgeous area of Colorado that's known for its splendid autumn colors.

The last couple of half day Ag seminars this year are coming up as well – and I'm looking forward to photographing ripened grapes, walnuts, and peaches of this hot and humid valley. **BRP**



Dogwood Blossoms - Sequoia NP 24-120mm lens at F9.5



Grizzly cub in Yellowstone

### Photograph Animals Doing Animal Stuff

This phrase is one of my favorite wildlife photography sayings.

Wildlife images are much improved when you can capture their natural, unique behavior in the field. Pass up shooting dozens of “in the meadow” type images ... boring ... get images that define their lives – like feeding, socializing, during the mating season, when adults are raising young, or when there is danger, etc.

As you look for those moments to photograph you begin to understand your subject, you begin to see how their lives play out daily in their world – and you become a better wildlife photographer.

## Upcoming Photo Safaris

Every year my calendar gets packed with scheduled photo safaris and seminars. The reality is that the United States has so many national parks and monuments, amazing landscapes, pounding coastlines, and wildlife hotspots that I will never see them all in my lifetime.

I’ve spent my life in our western states photographing just about everything I can find – and yet I’ve hardly come close to seeing it all.

Here is a list of upcoming photo safaris. Custom safaris are also available for you, with a minimum of two photographers. The agriculture workshops are for a half-day, all others all full day or multiple photo safaris. For more info go to:

[Photo Safaris](#)

### PHOTO SAFARI DATES

**Aug 28** Agriculture  
Tulare County, Ca

**Sep 18** Agriculture  
Tulare County, Ca

**Sep 23-25** Mesa Verde  
NP and SW Colorado

**Oct 2-5** Yellowstone  
and Grand Tetons

**Oct 14** Agriculture  
Tulare County, Ca

**Oct 23** Sequoia and  
Kings Canyon NP

**Nov 7-9** Zion and  
Bryce Canyon NP in  
Southern Utah

**Dec 3** Bolsa Chica in  
Huntington Beach

**Dec 18** Yosemite in  
winter

**Jan 9-11** Bosque del  
Apache NWR in NM

**Jan 22** Elephant Seals  
California Coast Safari

**Feb 18-19** Eagles of  
Farmington Bay, Utah

**Feb 21-23** Yellowstone  
Winter Wildlife Safari

**Mar 5** Blossom Trail in  
Fresno/Tulare County

**Mar 20-22** Death  
Valley NP in California

**Mar 26** Yokohl Valley  
So Sierra Nevada Mtns.

**Apr 2** Tehachapi  
Wildflower Safari

**Apr 10** Tehachapi  
Wildflower Safari

**Apr 23** Sequoia and  
Kings Canyon NP

**May 8-10** Southern  
Utah Spring Safari



Strawberries fresh from the field in Tulare County, California. 60mm Macro at F16

## The Bottom Line Articles

### Foreground Elements

May 2010

### Aperture Priority

February 2010

### Work Flow or Work Slow

October 2009

### Exposure Compensation

July 2009

### Shoot at Eye Level

April 2009

### Editing your Images

February 2009

### Find the lens Sweet Spot

August 2008

### Hyperfocal Distance

October 2007

### Creative Light / Wildlife

February 2007

### Close-but not too Close

September 2006

### Focus on the Eyes

July 2006



**Coyote - Yellowstone NP**  
Using selective focus places the coyote in its environment hiding behind the blurry fg sagebrush and in front of blurry bg snow.

## The Bottom Line: Achieving Selective Focus

There are times when we worry about getting “everything” sharp and in-focus, but there are situations where we want to limit focus to just our subject, even to just part of our subject. Thus, achieving some selective focus is really our goal.

There are three initial facts we should understand. First, wide angle lenses produce greater perceived depth-of-field (dof) than do telephotos, at the same f-stop. So we have to anticipate how a 24mm lens setting will look at F4, compared with a 500mm lens at F4.

Second, telephoto lenses compress perspective so that in-frame subjects appear closer than they really are. This means that to apply selective focus our choice of f-stop might depend on how far apart those in-frame subjects are. Let’s look at a couple of examples.

Third, how close we are to a subject directly affects how much selective focus we can apply in separating the subject from its background (bg).

These factors all influence our choice of F-stop that provides the needed dof.



**USU Marching Band 12-24 Zoom Lens at F4** The F4 setting limits sharp dof to just the hands/flute.



**Snow Geese 500mm Telephoto Lens at F8** Distance compression is obvious here as the birds appear to be flying on top of each other.



**Rosy Fairy Lantern 60mm Macro at F9.** Being physically close allowed me to blur the background and shoot at the lens “sweet spot” of F9. 5.

## Photography Tip

Wood craft, animal craft, photography craft, tricks of the trade – call it what you want – what it really means is to learn about your subjects, what they like and don't like.

For instance, in shooting bighorn sheep never get above them; always shoot from eye level or below. They feel threatened by photographers who come in above them, cutting off their retreat like a predator, and always run away. Pushing an animal into running away makes them expend valuable energy and results in poor images.

If you want to shoot that beautiful green ocean wave coming ashore wait for an off-shore breeze day when all the spray and foam are blown back behind the wave. When the wind is coming in so is the spray, it not only interferes with the clarity of your subject (the backlit green wave) but makes attaining critical focus of the wave difficult because the auto-focus keeps catching the bright spray out in front of the wave.

I learned an old hunting trick when shooting mule deer bucks. If they are moving away from you and reach a ridgeline, make some noise, they seem to have a habit of looking back – for one more shot, or photo.

There are tricks to every type of photography, so learn them – and improve your photography skills along the way.

## Achieving Selective Focus - continued



Bighorn Ram in Yellowstone National Park 500mm lens at F8. I got close to this ram which helped blur my background more at F8, F8 is the "sweet spot" for this lens which means the quality of the image is high, and I had enough dof to include all his head and horns.

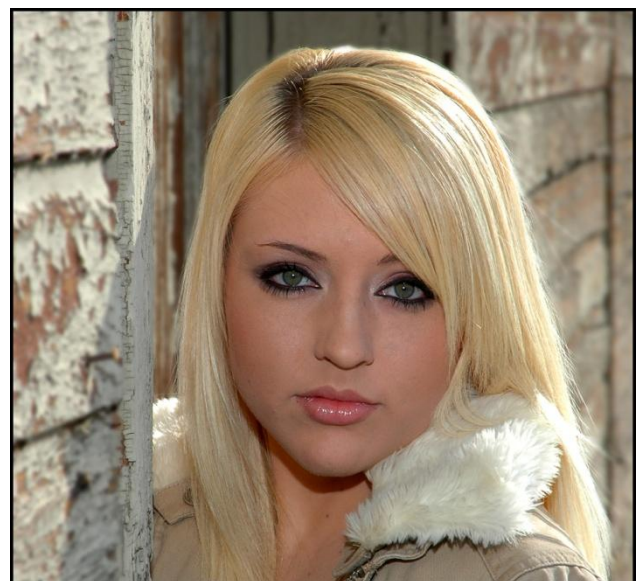
So achieving selective focus is a product of the type of lens you are using, the f-stop you are selecting, and how close you are to your subject.

If you really wanted to blur everything but the point of focus, use a telephoto lens at its largest f-stop and get so close to your subject that it fills a lot of the frame.

Lastly, work yourself or your subject into a position away from bg or foreground (fg) elements that are close to the point of focus, don't let them compete for sharpness

with your subject. The image below is another example of applying the principles of selective focus, making

sure the subject stands out from the bg and fg and has the maximum impact in your image.



Senior Photo 24-120mm Lens at F5.6 Increased FG and BG blur came via photoshop in this image.



Cotton in Tulare County  
4 cells of cotton is good,  
5 cells is better.

### Photoshop Tip

No program will do more to improve your photography than Photoshop. In the seminars I do I tell folks that Photoshop will do more for them than the next lens they are considering buying.

Processing your digital files is nearly as important as taking them. There are so many simple steps that can have a dramatic effect on how those final images look.

If you aren't using Photoshop spend the money (an Education version is the least expensive) and buy the program – it's not as difficult as you have probably heard. Following the steps for this, or other Photoshop tricks, will build your skills with the program. If you can learn one software program well, this is the one that will benefit you the most.

## Photoshop Trick: Creating a Copyright Action

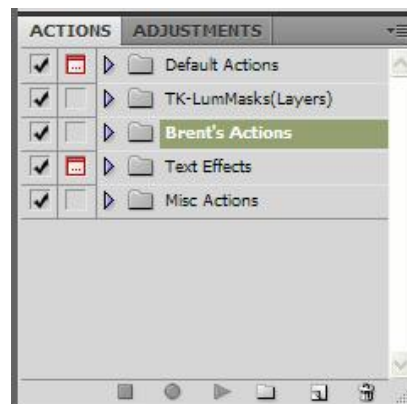
Adding your copyright, name, address, e-mail, or any other useful information to an image is simple in Photoshop. That series of keystrokes also makes adding this information a perfect reason to create an Action to simplify and quicken the process.

Have an image open in Photoshop and the Actions Palette visible (Alt + F9); I'm using CS4 for these instructions in creating an Action to add copyright info to your image.

First, with the folder selected (Brent's Actions) click on the New Action Icon that looks like a paper with a bent edge – second from right at the bottom of the Actions Palette.

Second, give the New Action a name, like Photographer Info or something similar. Once you have typed in a name hit the Record button. From this point forward your key strokes will be recorded.

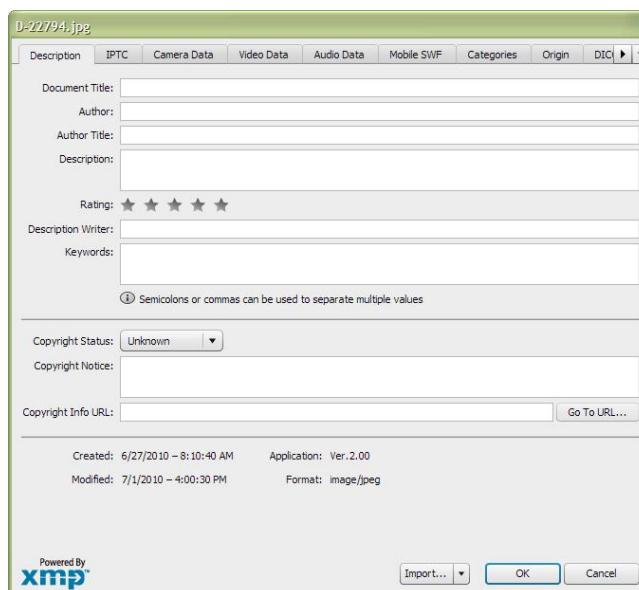
Third, go to **FILE > FILE INFO** to open the File Info Dialog box. This is where you will enter your Copyright and Contact Information. Look through the Description and IPTC



Actions Palette



New Action Dialog Box



File Info Dialog Box



Valuable images should be copyrighted. Not just images, but created art work as well, such as this salsa ad for Windmill Farms.



Utah Mountain King Snake  
Leeds Creek, Utah



Lupine Blue Butterfly  
Leeds Creek, Utah

## Creating a Copyright Action - continued

menus to see what information can be added.

Four, enter the information you would like to add in the appropriate fields. Click on the Copyright Status button and change the selection to

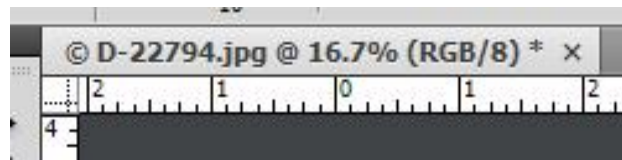
Copyrighted. Enter your contact information correctly.

Five, when you're done entering the information click OK.

Six, then go to the Actions Palette and click the Stop icon (blue) to end recording

the Action.

You're done. You will notice a copyright symbol next to the file name when the image is open in Photoshop. This information has been added to the EXIF data recorded in the image.



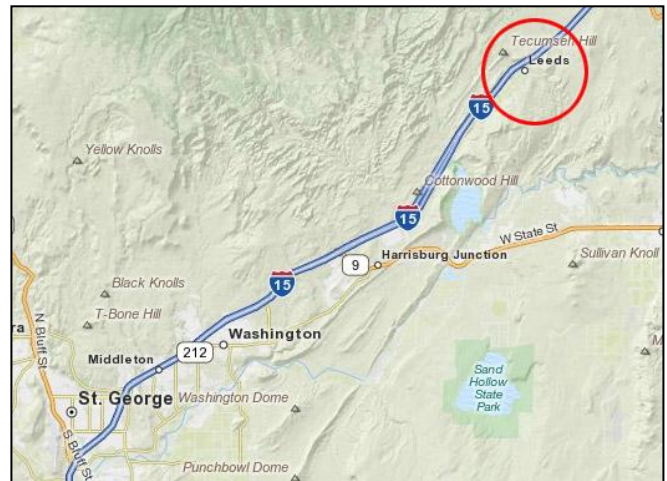
Copyright Symbol and File Name

## Great Locations: Leeds Creek in So. Utah

Leeds Creek is located off I-15 near the towns of Leeds (south side of I-15) and Silver Reef (north side of I-15). Going northbound on I-15 take the Leeds exit, travel through the town (there are no stop lights) and turn left at the underpass of I-15.

The road goes about 1.5 miles, through the upscale Silver Reef homes, until it turns to dirt where it crosses over Leeds Creek.

Now the road begins a slow climb, rising through multiple life zones, until after about 8 miles it dead ends into Oak Grove Campground at the foot of Pine Valley Mountain.



Leeds is 15 miles north of St. George on I-15.

This stretch of easy dirt road has an amazing diversity of possible subjects. There are cactus, agaves, wildflowers, butterflies, songbirds, owls, raptors, lizards, mule deer – predators like coyotes, bobcats, fox, badgers, and a number of species of

snake, including the rare Utah Mountain King Snake.

Leeds Creek crosses under the road at spots and parallels its track as it climbs in elevation to its headwaters near the campground.

Ephemeral springs combine with early season snow melt to

## Hyperfocal Distance

Here are some easy to remember hyperfocal distance for popular cameras and lens settings for landscape images.

### 24mm Lens at F16

**Nikon** (1.5x Crop Factor)

Focus at 6 feet. From 3 feet to Infinity will be within the dof.

**Canon** (1.6x Crop Factor)

Focus at 6.3 feet. From 3.15 feet to Infinity will be within the dof.

**Full Sensor Cameras**

Focus at 4 feet. From 2 feet to Infinity will be within the dof

### 20mm Lens at F11

**Nikon** (1.5x Crop Factor)

Focus at 5.9 feet. From 2.95 feet to Infinity will be within the dof.

**Canon** (1.6x Crop Factor)

Focus at 6.2 feet. From 3.1 feet to Infinity will be within the dof.

**Full Sensor Cameras**

Focus at 4 feet. From 2 feet to Infinity will be within the dof.

I choose these settings for a reason. Since F11 is considered a "sweet spot" setting (best quality, sharpest subject, and least distortion), your lens choice and positioning can improve the overall quality of your images.

With a given subject, changing from 24mm to 20mm (and moving a little closer) I can shoot at F11, not F16, and get a better quality image.

## Leeds Creek in Southern Utah - continued

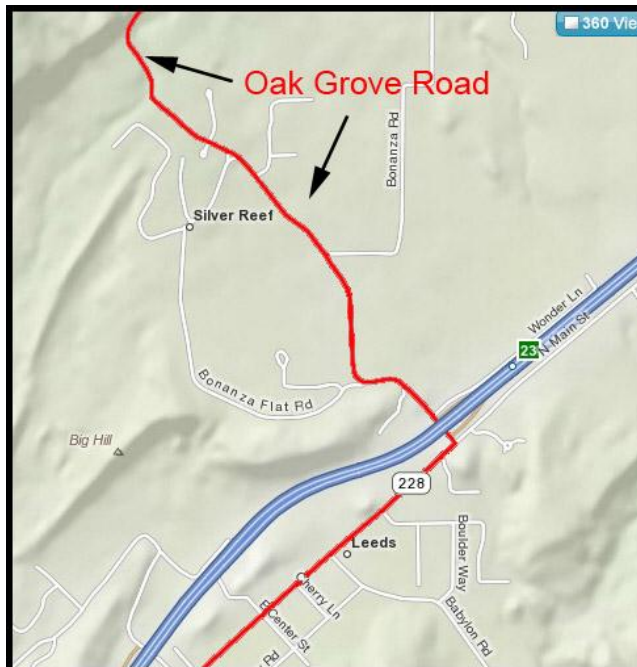
keep the creek flowing year around. A riparian habitat of cottonwoods follows the creek down the mountain and provides homes for raptors and owls, while hillsides of Gambel's Oak and Manzanita create shade and cover for many other species.

Towering Ponderosa Pines and Rocky Mtn Maples create a cool forest climate for songbirds that nest throughout the campground area.

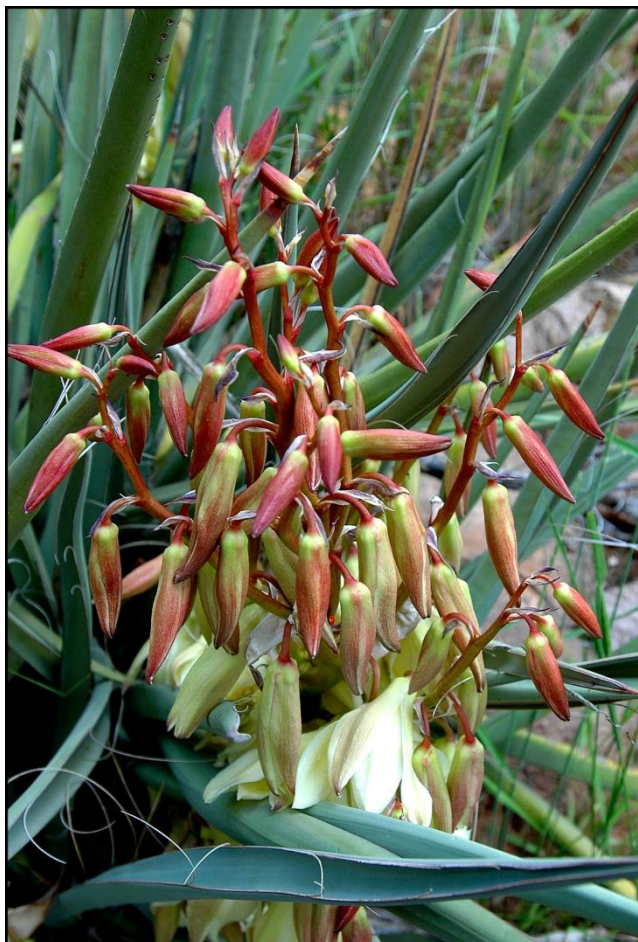
There is some traffic for the campground, and an obsolete charcoal kiln from Silver Reef's mining days. The road is closed in early spring to prevent rutting.

May is the peak month along Leeds Creek. Cactus flowers and wildflowers are blooming; flowering agave and yucca, a myriad of butterflies, songbirds, and reptiles really create an unspoiled, exciting environment for a photographer.

There is water and bathrooms at the campground. The road splits at a couple of different places, but follow the signs towards Oak Grove Campground, if there is no sign then don't turn. This is one of my favorite spring Utah photo safari locations.



Red outlines the road through Leeds and across I-15 before heading north, turning to dirt, and climbing towards Oak Grove Campground – which does have facilities.



Banana Yucca along Leeds Creek.

## Gallery: Recent Images



Black Bear in Sequoia NP



Mountain Lady's Slippers in Yosemite NP



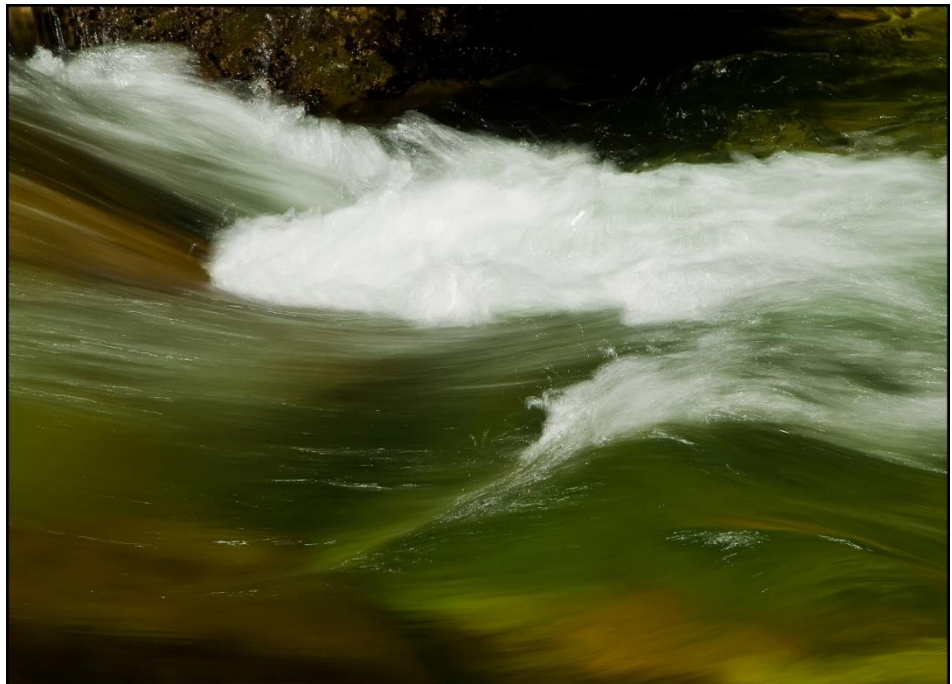
Upper Yosemite Falls  
Yosemite NP



Grizzly Cubs in Yellowstone NP



Chinese Houses taken in  
Yokohl Valley  
Tulare County, Ca



Marble Fork of the Kaweah River during spring runoff in Sequoia NP

## Gallery - continued



Blooming Pomegranate  
near Exeter, Ca



Grizzly Cubs  
Yellowstone NP

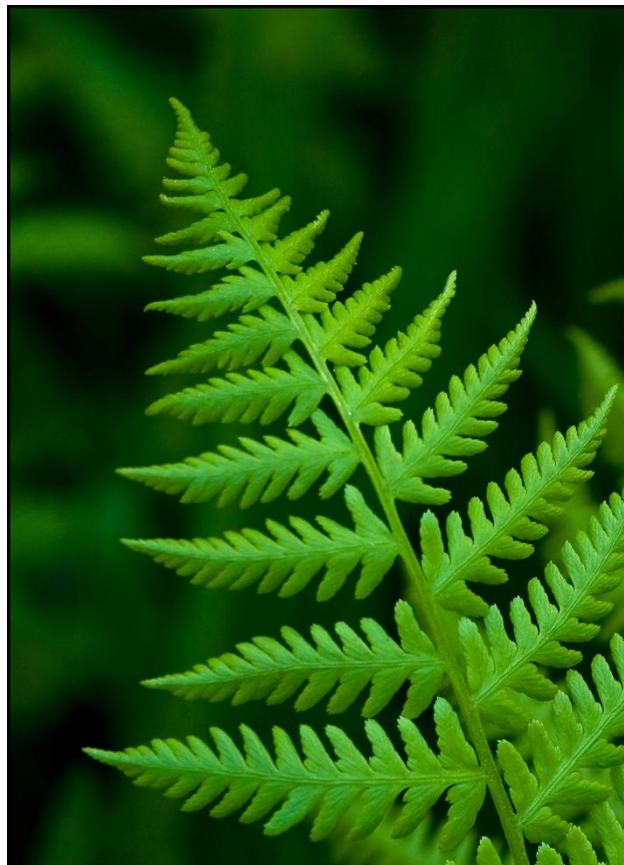
I hope that you have enjoyed this newsletter. In some way I hope that you are more inspired to get out and take photographs.

No matter what part of the country you live in there is beauty all around, maybe around just the next corner or down the next dirt road.

Take a photo seminar, go on a photo safari, drive a back road, go to a national park, pick up a photo magazine – do whatever it takes to get you energized about photography – and I'll see you in the field. **BRP**



Baby Badgers in Yellowstone NP



Maidenhair Fern in Sequoia NP