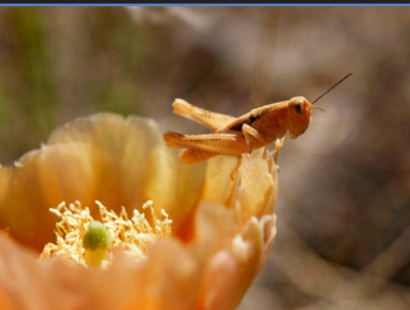


Technique of the Month



Top: a dew-covered blackberry leaf is shot with a +4 Century Optics achromatic close-up lens on a Canon PowerShot G4 camera. Achromatic accessory close-up lenses give quality results with cameras from advanced compact digital cameras like the Canon G-series to digital SLRs.

Above: a grasshopper sits on a prickly-pear cactus flower. It shows off an interesting adaptation of color that matches the flower. It was shot with a Canon 500D achromatic close-up lens on a 14-54mm Zuiko zoom on an Olympus E-330.

Top right: a yellow-striped centipede wends its way through the leaf litter in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. This is a fascinating little critter that moves very fast. The image was made with a Canon 500D achromatic close-up lens on a 14-54mm Zuiko zoom on an Olympus E-330.



Achromatic Close-Up Lenses

I found this little spider along a trail in a botanic garden at the edges of Anchorage, Alaska. This was a really little spider, as you can see compared to the size of the fly, which was pretty average sized. I wondered if this little guy really knew what he was getting into with that fly. This was a really big meal!

I was in Alaska working with Sony's new Alpha digital SLR. I had gotten a 100mm macro lens from the Sony staff to try out, but the lens did not focus close enough for such a small subject.

Not knowing what might be available for close-up work, I had

brought along a Century Optics achromatic close-up lens. I had guessed the Minolta Maxxum mount lenses would use 55mm filters, so I had a 55-58mm adapter for the close-up lens. But this lens had a different size, so I had to hold the lens in front of the macro - it still worked!

A +7 diopter lens in front of the macro lens got me beyond 1:1 into magnification. Depth of field was narrow, but sharpness high and no light was lost from the accessory lens (extension tubes reduce the light to the sensor or film).

I really like achromatic close-up

lenses. I have them in several sizes and strengths and use them with macro lenses to get magnification, with wide-angle lenses to allow wide-angle close-ups and with telephotos to bring in close-up subjects from more of a distance.

Achromatic close-up lenses are considerably different than inexpensive close-up lenses (or filters). These are multi-element, highly corrected lenses that give wonderful results. They are available from Canon, Nikon, Century Optics and Hoya. You need to buy a size that fits your lens or use an appropriate filter ring adapter.



Tips to try:

1 WHAT POWER LENS DO YOU NEED: You need more power to focus closer, obviously, but shorter focal-length camera lenses can get away with less power than longer, telephoto focal lengths, to focus tight on a close subject.

2 CENTURY OPTICS: I find Century Optics achromatic close-up lenses give very sharp results, though of course, this depends a bit on the original lens. They are available in 58mm size in strengths from +2 to +7. That said, the Century Optics website is awful for the still photographer. Most of this company's products are sold for camcorders and the website is designed purely for it. However, the full-size Canon and Sony video cameras mostly use 58mm filters, so try those to find more about these achromatic lenses.

3 ADVANCED COMPACT DIGITAL CAMERAS: I have long used achromatic close-up lenses with non-DSLR cameras. They work great to give an extended close-up range for all focal lengths with such cameras, and with exceptional results.

