

Technique of the Month



Right: These really cool squawroot flowers in Tennessee had popped through the leaves after a lot of rain. The ground was wet and muddy, but I did not have to lay down on it for this shot because of the tilting live LCD on my Olympus E-330. I also used a wide-angle lens to capture more of the environment. Above top: These are wild primrose growing in England. I set the camera on my knee for stability and used the tilting LCD as a low-angle viewfinder. Above bottom: I was amazed to find this odd flower blooming in my garden. It is a stapelia, a succulent, and I had never seen this bloom. It really looked its best with the camera at its level, and again, the tilting live LCD was a tremendous help.



Low Angles Part 2

If you've been reading my Technique of the Month, you know that one of my very favorite ways of photographing is the low angle shot like you see here. These are the flower stalks of the very interesting squawroot, a flowering plant without chlorophyll. It gets its nutrients from other plants in the woods.

Last time I wrote about low angles, the Olympus E-330 had just been announced. I was excited about the possibilities of a true digital SLR with a live LCD. A live LCD means you can see what the lens sees on the LCD, which was

not possible with a true digital SLR until the E-330. I try to be pretty neutral about cameras because I recognize what a personal decision a camera represents. I have to tell you, though, that in using the E-330 for a couple of months now that it has become a real workhorse for me.

Let's be honest. I know this camera is not for everyone, but for me, it is ideal. These environmental shots provide impact for an image, plus they satisfy my needs as a naturalist to place subjects into an ecological setting.

I used to practically have to bury my head in the ground to get

this sort of shot with a film camera. Advanced compacts like the Canon PowerShot G6 worked well, but were limited in lens choice and a small sensor size. The E-330 gives me a great choice of lenses, plus it has a larger sensor that gives what I have found to be excellent color and tonality for nature shots, and very low noise.



In My Bag

It is always dangerous to talk specifics about camera gear. Many people want to debate gear as some absolute separate from how an individual uses it. I can't do that. My gear is tightly connected to how I work with it.

I also can't say if this camera will work for you, but it has become a definite favorite for me. It makes a light, compact package. I love the colors and contrast that come from its sensor. The RAW software that comes with the camera is a bit dorky, but RAW files look good, too. And obviously, the tilting live LCD is a very big deal for me.

I have the Zuiko 14-54mm f/2.8-3.5 and the Zuiko 50-200mm f/2.8-3.5 – a great package. I added a 1.4x converter for more magnification. I have found the Zuiko lenses to be very sharp and crisp with a nice look to images from them.

I also have a 77mm Canon 500D achromatic close-up lens with 77-67mm filter adapter ring so it fits both lenses for close up work. I think very highly of these achromatic lenses (Canon, Nikon, Hoya and Century Optics make them in various sizes) – they are very sharp.