

## Self-Assigned Projects

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I never seem to run out of ideas for our wildlife photography web site. The biggest problem I seem to have is finding the time to work on all the ideas I come up with! What I have learned to do over the last few years has helped me tremendously. I either carry a note pad or an electronic personal assistant with me wherever I go. This allows me **to jot down the ideas as they come to mind** so I can work on them at a better time.

Sometimes, the "mood" to research and write will "strike". However, the vast majority of the time, I need to force myself to work. The "Feature Creature" section of my web site is a result of this discipline. It's also a great way to share what I have photographed and what I have learned. The ultimate purpose of the Featured Creature project is to share the beauty and wonders of nature through my photography and encourage its preservation through my writing.



### Idea Bank

Before I start on the research, I sort through my idea bank and select one idea or subject that intrigues me the most□ the one that gets me fired up and eager to learn more about it. Sometimes I will select a subject that I already have in my stock files. At other times, I choose a subject that I have not yet had a chance to photograph.

The background research and subsequent essay that I write helps me enormously. First and foremost, my knowledge of the subject is greatly enhanced. By studying the biology, habitat & behavior of the subject, I am better able to know where (location/habitat) to find the subject, when (season, time of day) I am likely to find the subject and most importantly, signs to look for that I might be disturbing the animal's normal behavior (something you should avoid). Also, by familiarizing myself with my subjects' behavior, I know if what I'm observing is normal activity or a relatively rare occurrence of a seldom seen behavior. If the action I am photographing is unusual or rare for the species, I not only increase my chances of being published, I am able to enjoy something few people have the opportunity to see.

While shooting, always be aware of your surroundings and how the subject moves and behaves and reacts to different situations, conditions. Each and every time you photograph a subject you've studied and photographed before, your knowledge of the species will grow and your images will show it.

I encourage you to create self-assigned projects to learn more about your subjects and to further hone your photographic skills. I assure you, you will be very pleased with the improvement you see in your photographs.

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