

# ***Hunting in the Forest,*** ***by Ray Guillette, MNEC***

Photography in the forest can be very rewarding. It's a great place to lose yourself in the creative process. But the forest landscape presents some challenges. As always, light is the first element to consider. Diffuse, non-directional light will allow the complex graphics found in trees and branches to be best appreciated. Bright, directional sunlight creates a "forest" of highlights and confusing shapes in a wooded landscape. Cloudy-day light will simplify the composition and minimize highlights. It will also bring out details that would otherwise be hidden in shadows. Remember that leaves and pine needles are great reflectors of even diffuse, cloudy light. A polarizer will minimize these reflections, and enhance color saturation. Careful framing can eliminate most of the cloudy sky, and focus attention more toward the ground.

In bright sunlight, try backlighting to emphasize shape and add drama to the image. Early or late light gives the opportunity to use a small lens opening and make a sunstar with the sun partially hidden behind a tree. If you are blessed with a foggy morning or a windy morning after a snowstorm, the backlit sun will interact with the fog or the snow being blown off of treetops to enhance the sunstar effect.

Viewpoint is critical in forest photography. Try to find a camera position that will make a composition with contrasts of size and shape. Try to show depth, width, and scale in this large, complicated space. An interesting tree or other foreground element might help this effort. Look very carefully before and after selecting a viewpoint. Use your viewfinder to see possible distractions resulting from the type of lens you have chosen.

A wide angle lens pointed up will make trees converge and look unnatural. A higher camera position and a medium focal length will minimize the convergence and make the trees more parallel. I carry a light stepladder, allowing me to raise my tripod to its maximum height. Telephoto lenses will compress trees and depth, giving an abstract element to the composition.

My favorite position in a tall forest is flat on my back, looking upward with my widest lens. Here the intentional and maximized convergence of treetops is captivating and purposefully unnatural. Watching the slow sway of treetops is hypnotic in a forest quiet but for the swish of leaves and the creak of tall trunks. Don't miss this opportunity. Forests also show the change of seasons; the buds and new green of spring, the lush summer foliage, the warm fall colors, and the snow-covered silent beauty