

# The Nikonian



eZine

35

[www.nikonians.org](http://www.nikonians.org)



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Nikonians co-founder J. Ramón Palacios (jrp) captured this image of a moonrise at sunset in Heyden Valley, Yellowstone National Park with his Nikon D2X and 28-70mm f/2.8D ED IF AF-S Nikkor at 42mm with 3-stops soft transition Graduated Neutral Density Hitech filter on Hitech P holder. The D2X was on a Markins M20 ball head and Gitzo GT3530 tripod, which helped him pull off a 4 seconds exposure at ISO 100, with his lens aperture at f/16. The photo was taken at the 7th Annual Nikonians Photo Adventure Trip (ANPAT) this fall.

## **On our Cover:**

A group of Nikonians was photographed by J. Ramon Palacios (jrp) at the Cathedral Group of the Grand Teton Mountains at the 7th ANPAT. With the same camera and camera support setup as above, the lens was the 12-24mm f/4G ED AF-S DX Niikor at 12mm. Exposure: 1/30 sec at f/22. ISO 100. >From left to right, Albert Esschendal (alberte), Peter Curatolo (pcuratolo), Steve Johnson (reuben) and Brandon Curiel (CO1969SHARK),

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## Greetings Fellow Nikonians

After serious consideration of viable alternatives, we decided to have the Nikonians field event of the year, the 7th Annual Nikonians Photo Adventure Trip, at the Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks.

Long before that, National Parks websites, encyclopedias, books, travel agents, rangers and previous visitors to the parks were consulted and a trip leader chosen. As it turned out, this ANPAT became the largest such undertaking ever and

our trip leader's many tasks and responsibilities required extraordinary effort. Thankfully, Ernesto Santos (esantos) met every challenge with untiring patience and zeal, later assisted by Pete Wilson.

A budget within the set threshold limit was made and so we announced it.

Bang! – We sold out in three days and a waiting list began to build up.

Pressure mounted. Should we increase the size of the group?

OK. Four vans instead of three.

Waiting list expanding.

OK. Nine- per van instead of the now planned eight, but that's it!

Waiting list now soaring.

OK. A second group, but let's keep it small, we said.

Not a chance, the waiting list is now of 56!

And so we ended up with two groups of 36 Nikonians each.

72 Nikonians out in the field, together!

Cancellations were filled the same day and 15 days after the announcement the 2nd group was sold out too. More last minute cancellations. Yet, replacements came immediately out from the woods looking for the opportunity to join.



**jrp**  
Administrator,  
co-founder  
20486 posts

And then, all of a sudden the dates arrived. Man! Where did the year go?! And off we merrily went. A chance to unwind a bit from daily routines, out in the field looking for targets while geek-talking about lenses and bodies and what the D4 would be like, under good weather – we hoped - and fantastic scenery –we had. Paradise!

NAS victims had succumbed and the troupe was well armed, 200-400mm lenses were not the exception this time around. We even had a few 400 and 600mm lenses for the promise of some wildlife.

Eight out of every nine Nikonians – on the average - had Gitzo tripods and Markins ball heads. The word had been heard: The conspiracy to bring the best possible gear to Nikonians at the best possible prices is working. Good!

Die hard film users had switched to digital, coming in strong with a solid photographic experience baggage. No “What button do I press for the lens to zoom?” questions were heard, even when we don't mind them.

Local rangers told us: “You couldn't have chosen better timing, the aspens are turning”.

“Where do we have dinner?” Big problem! Only two establishments had room for all of us. Chinese can definitively be ruled as not in the preference of Nikonians, at least not for two days in a row. Sorry guys and gals. Such is life in some of these areas.





# Editorial

At the Yellowstone gates our Park Ranger had many of us highly impressed with her professional assistance. "Where do you recruit these sharp, courteous, knowledgeable and gorgeous looking beauties?" Man! Life is great.

Loud laughs and grumps from tired Nikonians resonated through the valleys, while magnificent images were captured. It did not matter that some sites had been visited for decades and by many outstanding professionals, Nikonians managed to get newer perspectives and vibrant new colors –and not by accident. Wildlife was not too shy of Nikonians either. Check the Impressions – [ANPAT 2007 galleries](#).

Tips and tricks were exchanged and Nikonians community life thrived in each van. At the end of each group session, we saw tired faces (but with a big smile).

The second group had to run out from Mammoth with a snow storm on our heels. "Now we know why you call this an Adventure."

And so, it abruptly ended. But, what a trip!

For those of you who were fortunate enough to join us, we hope you share the feeling that Bo and I have: that photographing with Nikonians makes you a better photographer and a happier person. If you do, we hope to see you next time! It will be hard, but we'll make it even better, again. That's a promise.

In closing, Bo and I wish to take this chance to thank Ernesto, Pete and our dedicated group of volunteer van leaders, navigators and drivers who made this 7th ANPAT a huge success.

We especially want to thank Tom Hubbard, Hewlett Packard Pro Photo Business Development Manager, who took time from his busy schedule to visit our First Group, bringing an informative presentation and an HP B9180 for us to try out. He has generously donated the printer for an ANPAT participants raffle in the near future.

Have a great time!

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**datacolor**

# Membership levels

Nikonians offers several levels of membership. Of course there is a free, basic membership, but we invite you to enjoy the fun and benefits of Silver, Gold and Platinum membership levels providing you with sell & buy opportunities, image upload, free shipping and more.



Access our free forum areas.  
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# ANPAT memories

By J. Ramón Palacios (jrp)



Despite careful planning of itineraries, destiny had two vans cheerfully meeting at Mormon Row in Group II. From Left to right, standing, J. Ramon Palacios (jrp), Richard Hulbert (rhulbert), Jon Bloom (jbloom), Robert Moody (different\_drummer), Pete Wilson (Pete Wilson), Rick Paul (rickpaul), Jason Odell (DrJay32), Steve Johnson (reuben), Danny Levenson (TiggerGTO), Rimón Rafiah (Rimon), Albert Esschendal (alberte), Jay Newmark (drbrog), Brandon Curiel (CO1969SHARK), Chris Gray (wpgf100) and Larry Anderson (mnbuilder49). At front, kneeling, Philip Boggs (Photo\_Phil) and Perter Curatolo (pcuratolo).



# ANPAT memories



## "C'mon Lucille"

The elk were in the middle of the rut season. Bugling of males calling their heard of cows and calf could be heard frequently and Nikonians jumped out their vans with their long lenses at every possible occasion. In this image one can imagine a dialog like this: "I don't want to hear more of this 'I was just posing for the Nikonians' nonsense, while I am out here bugling my heart out. You hear me Lucille?!" - Handheld Nikon D2X, 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6 AF VR Nikkor at 360mm, f/8 at 1/350 sec at ISO 800

<<<



## "Mormon Row barn at Grand Teton National Park"

>>>

Freezing long before dawn, a line of 9 Nikonians was formed in front of this barn, waiting for the fist light to come up from behind. Only the clicking could be heard onsite when the laughs at the joke of the moment stopped. Exactly when the wind turned calm and the first sunlight hit the base of the barn, a tourist walked and stood in front with his point and shoot camera, regardless of the war cries from the line of shooters. Once he was done clicking once, this image was made by J. Ramon Palacios (jrp) with his trusted Nikon D2X, 28-70mm f/2.8D ED AF-S Nikkor lens at 48mm with B+W polarizer. Exposure: 1/10 sec at f/22.



# ANPAT memories



## "Mousing"

Cruising Lamar Valley, van leader Steve Johnson (reuben) hawk eye caught a glimpse of this magnificent coyote running back and forth at a long distance in the prairie. Backlit and with brush up front, auto focusing with a fully extended 80-400mm f/4.5-5.6D AF VR was not easy. Rapid switching to manual focusing, pumping up the ISO to 400, deep breathing and very conscious long lens technique allowed our co-founder JRP to make this shot of the beautiful animal mousing, in the single jump he made that late afternoon for his Nikonians audience. Exposure: 1/350 sec at f/7.1

Check our

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# ANPAT memories

## "Nikonian at work"

In the second visit to Schawbacher Landing, by the Snake River at the foot of the Grand Tetons, Peter Curatolo (pcuratolo) and J. Ramon Palacios (jrp) were looking for different takes. The later decided to illustrate a Nikonian at work. Nikon D2X with Kirk L-bracket on Gitzo G3530 with Markins M20 Ball head, 28-70mm f/2.8D ED AF-S Nikkor at 28mm, with Hitech soft transition 3-stop graduated neutral density filter. Exposure: 1/8 sec, f/14 at ISO 100.

<<<

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# Nikonians 100,000 Members

## Celebration begins

Nikonians, the international friendly home for Nikon® enthusiasts on the Internet, is celebrating a significant milestone in its short seven years of existence.

The community has rapidly accelerated past 100,000 members, touching off a week-long international celebration, complete with prizes and special offers to community members.



The Nikonians 100,000 Member [Celebration](#) begins with the official announcement of the winners of three prizes courtesy of event sponsor [Nikon-Europe](#).

**The First Prize**, a [Nikon D200](#) DSLR Body goes to: Mark Foley, (mdfnikon), Silver member, beginner, from New Jersey, USA

**The Second Prize**, a [Nikon D40x](#) DSLR Body with AF-S DX 18-55mm/3.5-5.6G ED II Lens and a Crumpler CF-EU03 backpack The Second Prize, a Nikon D40x DSLR Body with AF-S DX 18-55mm/3.5-5.6G ED II Lens and a Crumpler CF-EU03 backpack goes to Emma Wagner (emmawagner) is from Swindon, England, Great Britain (UK). Emma tells us she shoots mainly people and is a beginner photographer.

**The Third Prize**, a Nikon High Grade 10x25 HG L DCF Binocular, will soon be delivered to Stefan Cook, (stefanjc), Gold member from Gloucester, England, Great Britain (UK). Stefan shoots mainly generic nature with a D200.

The three grand prize winners, chosen through a random drawing of [Silver, Gold and Platinum](#) level members, are the first to benefit from the Nikonians 100,000 Member Celebration party. Additional winners will soon be announced, gathering prizes donated by [HP](#), [Markins](#) and the Nikonians [PhotoProShop](#).

The Nikonians community, formed in 2000 by [co-founders](#) Bo Stahlbrandt and J. Ramón Palacios is an international family composed of Nikon photographers from all walks of life, ages spanning from teens to seniors and experience levels from beginners to celebrated professionals. The [community history](#) is available online.

It has rapidly grown to more than 70 forums, some now in multiple languages and now features Podcasts, newsletters and this eZine to serve its now more than 100,000 members.

## PhotoProShop joins the Party

To help celebrate this milestone our [PhotoProShop](#) staff has set up a raffle.

The PhotoProShop prize package includes a Nikonians [Soft Wrap](#), Nikonians [Black Cap](#), Nikonians [Pro Camera Strap](#), one set of Pro (Loop) [Camera Strap connectors](#), a Nikonian (Spudz) [Lens Cloth](#) and a Nikonians [Patch](#). Also to be raffled are three [Markins Q3](#) ball heads

Nikonians USA [PhotoProShop](#) representative Amy Enyart helped make Phil (pmwollenberg) Wollenberg's day by personally delivering his [Scanjet G4000](#) Photo Scanner from [HP](#). Phil had won the Scanner by earning 2nd Place (Nighttime Category) honors in our [Nikonians Photographers of the Year 2007 Contest](#). His winning entry is featured on page 15 of this eZine. Amy says when she noticed Phil's address was close to her region she decided to make the special delivery and grab a photo of the occasion. Thanks Amy!







## Prize winners recognized

Contests Director Chris Gray (wpgf100) has contacted the winners of Segment Two and Three in our Nikonians Photographers of the Year 2007 Contest, letting them know they have earned prizes in their categories, and the **First Place** winners have also been selected to move on to the finals of this year's contest.

### Segment Two

judging concentrated on the **Portrait**, **Still Life** and **Nature** categories, with the following Nikonians taking top honors.

#### Portrait

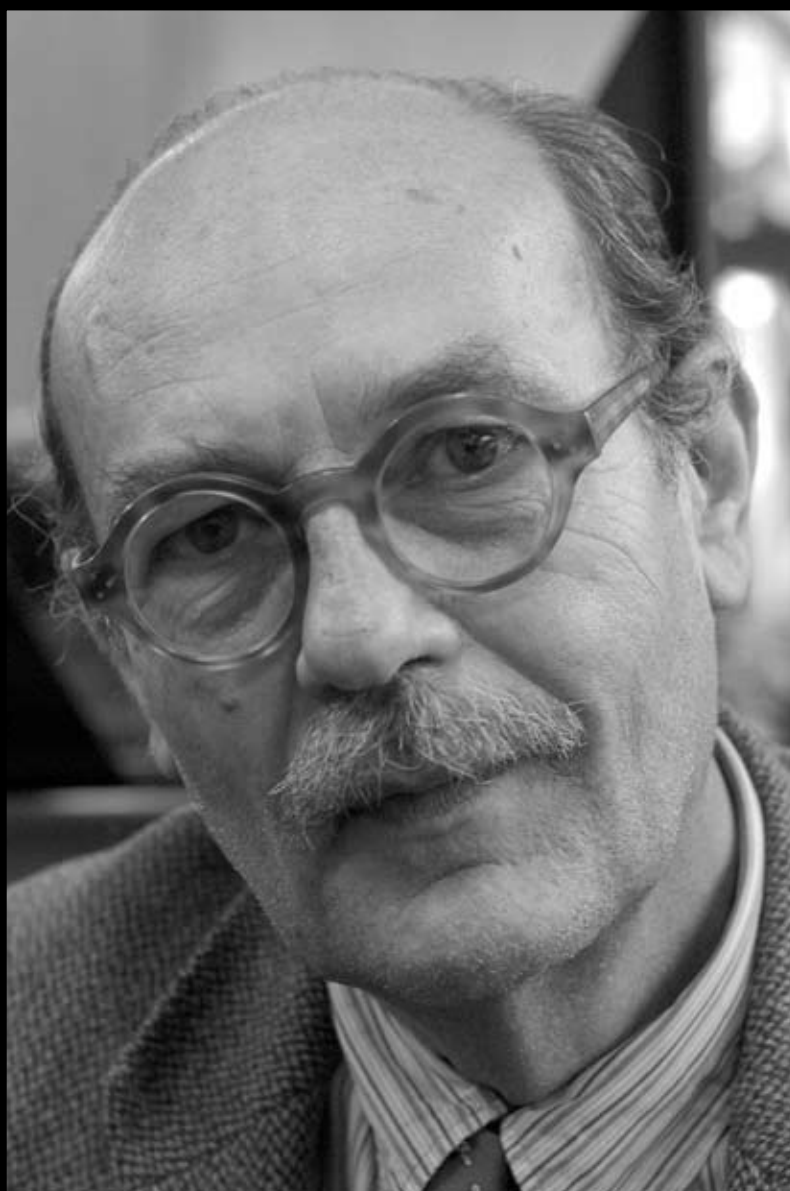
**First Place**  
Carol (essorcalcc) Abrams  
"Kashmir Elegance"

Winner of a Spyder 2 Pro  
from Datacolor and a seat in the finals.

<<<

# Contest Results

Segment Two



## Portrait

Second Place  
Jacques (archivue) Pochoy  
"Behind Glasses"

Winner of a ScanJet G4000 from HP.  
<<<

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## Still Life

First Place  
Bob (Bob Simrak) Simrak  
"Sphere"

He is winner of  
a Silver Fast DC Pro Studio  
from Laser Soft Imaging  
and a seat in the finals.

>>>



© Bob Simrak



# Contest Results

Segment Two



## Still Life

Second Place

Peter (peterst6909) Stacey  
"Origins of Life"

Winner of a Glass Taxi Backpack from [TTP](#).

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# Contest Results

Segment Two



## Nature

### Second Place

David (davidjon\_99) Jones  
"Yum"

Winner of a Capture One  
LE from Phase One.  
<<<

## Nature

### First Place

Jeff (jeffmeyers) Meyers  
"Earth Waves"

Winner of an A618 Printer from HP  
and a seat in the finals.  
(not shown)

## Segment Three

Segment Three  
judging concentrated on the  
**Night Time, Open and Digital Art**  
categories, with the following  
Nikonians taking top honors.



PHASE ONE





# Contest Results

Segment Three



## Night Time

### First Place

Sten (stenrasmussen) Rasmussen,  
from Norway, for  
"[Norwegian Spring Night](#)"

Winner of a [Spyder2PRO](#) from  
[Datacolor](#) and a seat in the finals.

(above)

## Night Time

### Second Place

Phil (pmwollenberg) Wollenberg,  
from the USA, for  
"[Overlook at Chateau de Blois](#)"

Winner of an [HP Scanjet G4000](#)  
Photo Scanner from [HP](#).

>>>



# Contest Results

Segment Three



## Digital Art

**First Place** - Sue (Sue A) Ahon, from Australia, for "Inner Soul"  
Winner of an HP Photosmart A618 Compact Photo Printer from HP  
and a seat in the finals.

**Second Place** - Alexander (Alejandro) van Toom,  
from Spain, for "Un lugar donde la paz se puede tocar"  
Winner of a Capture One LE from Phase One.

The Nikonians Photographers of the Year 2007 Contest is open to all Silver, Gold and Platinum Members. All entries are judged by a panel of expert Nikonians photographers who cast their vote on the photographs received within a given period.

Segment Four is currently being judged.  
This segment concentrates on **Landscape**, **Architectural** and **Sports**.

### Open

**First Place**  
Jeff (Jrayner) Rayner,  
from the USA, for  
"Underwater Danger"

Winner of a SilverFast DC Pro Studio from LaserSoft Imaging and a seat in the finals.  
(not shown)

### Open

**Second Place**  
John (WINDSURFER) Bambace,  
from the USA, for  
"Dream Boats"

Winner of a Glass Taxi Backpack  
from Think Tank Photo.  
(above)

## Download D3 samples!

High-ISO samples from the Nikon D3 Digital SLR  
have been released

Included among the JPEG examples  
are action photos at 3200 and 6400  
by noted photographer Dave Black



## Workshops stress problem solving

Facing the assembled Nikonians eager to master their cameras Winston Hall quickly sets them at ease.

His first priority is to set the tone for the rest of the day.

That tone - in his own words is to let them know: "I'm your problem solver."



**flashdeadline**  
Administrator  
04-JUL-2002  
3508 posts

Winston's [Nikonians Academy](#) workshop schedule recently brought him to Raleigh, North Carolina, a short distance from one of my three son's home.

He's a Nikonians Silver Member with the username "speedy."

A few phone calls and emails made it possible for Eddie to attend a

workshop "on assignment" to capture images free of charge, but as soon as he saw the schedule he signed on (and paid) for another.

With his computer graphics design and paternal Nikonian background, we wanted his unvarnished appraisal of Winston's workshop routine and told him to "give it to us straight."

Asked to sum up the Winston's style in just one word, he said "entertaining."

"He's the opposite of what I had expected from a lecture or workshop setting," he explained.

"You quickly understand that he has a very solid knowledge of photography, but he doesn't act like it. He tells stories about shooting scenarios that are so interesting that you they make you want to listen. He adds humor at just the right times and that is entertaining in the best sense of the word."

Each discussion of photographic challenges in a typical workshop concentrates on marrying the powers of equipment with the art of photography with equal attention.

Winston Hall says his priority is to walk the fine line between those two forces with a measure of balance that often shifts from one city to another, based on the backgrounds of his workshop participants.

"I'm not coming in there trying to portray every single thing about a specific Nikon camera," he says. "Photography is not about memorizing every single custom setting. It's how to use that camera in a creative way. If it comes across as entertaining, that's a plus."

"I don't like to think of this as a teacher and a student," he adds. "That puts things on a different level. My approach is to think about the participant who owns this camera who may be finding out how complicated and mysterious it may be. In that case, I'm their problem solver."

Early into his workshops, he begins to gauge the experience levels in the room.

"A lot depends on the camera," he says. "An average D200 workshop would have 10 percent who are serious photographers who really understand camera, followed by 20 percent who are really brand new to it, and trying to figure out the thing, with the other 70 percent as serious amateurs."



Winston Hall

# Nikonians Academy

On the other hand, at the D80 workshops he finds an average of 85 percent "almost newbies" with the other 15 percent having a bit of background and transitioning from their original gear.



"The secret is to not think of them on terms of experienced photographer or amateur," says Hall. "I think of everyone in the room as photographers."

With the common ground settled, discussions of photography basics are easily handled.

"That's the first thing I noticed," says our assignment photographer Eddie. "I could have walked in with a Canon EOS and still come out with a bunch of valuable lessons."

Winston concentrates on his Nikon users, making sure they understand the photographic potentials in their hands.

"Very early, in the first 20 minutes we'll go through the custom settings. We learn how to navigate and make sure you realize your camera won't blow up and not work again for the rest of your life if you make a mistake."

Workshop participants who may be very familiar with their cameras rarely get

bored during this introductory phase says Eddie.

"I'm not a professional but I like to think I know more than the average guy because of my graphics background. But --No matter what subject he was on-- there was always something I didn't know."



Lindsay Hook and Robert Milton

"The creative tips I picked up in two days have totally changed the way I approach photography," says Eddie.

"Instead of just setting my camera to Program and shooting, I'm actually thinking about the many possibilities I have available."

Winston says the "secret" for a successful workshop is to make sure he accurately gauges each new group.

"You have to be ready to adjust. If I find that this 12-person workshop is highly experienced I know I'll lose them in the first hour and never get them back. They could easily be concerned that they may have walking into a 'basic class.' I'll take it up a notch, but I won't ignore the few members who may be looking for that basic information."



# Nikonians Academy

His willingness to adjust is affirmed by a recent "thank you" letter received from Nikonian Dee Rowell (DJROWELL):

"Thank you for being so helpful to everyone no matter what the level of experience each of us may have had," she wrote.



Steve Jordan & Chris Schonwalder

"I have been to workshops before where I was almost afraid to say I had a D70 or did not understand something because everyone else had higher quality cameras or they knew so much more than I did, so I was too embarrassed to ask any questions. You were extremely helpful and made every request for help or assistance one that put the student at ease and you always seemed more than eager to really show us how to get it right. In so many of the workshops and seminars I have attended, everyone else was much more advanced in their experience, skill, and understanding, so to have someone be so kind and patient was refreshing."

If you plan on attending just the [Master Nikon i-TTL Flash](#) workshop you should consider adding the Nikon camera workshop for your model that comes before it says Ed die.

"The first workshop, where I learned stuff I didn't know about my D80, went hand-in-hand with the flash workshop, he says. "On one day you learn a lot – on the second day – it sticks."

With each new city on the schedule, Winston also contributes a final "secret." He's gathering new information to share all the time.

Regardless of his workshop tutorial preparations and experience level, he says he somehow manages to learn something new from fellow Nikonians.

"This is as much a learning experience for me as it is for them," he says.

"If I learn something new at one workshop I'll pass it on at the next. The most important thing for me is to make sure that regardless of the workshop title, I convince our Nikonians to express themselves creatively." □

## Nikonians Academy Prepares for the New Year

### Topics for 2008:

- Nikon D200 In Depth
- Nikon D200 Advanced
- Nikon D300 In Depth
- Nikon D300 Advanced
- Nikon D80/D70
- Nikon iTTL Wireless Flash
- Nikon Capture NX
- Numerous travel and outdoor photography workshops

### Camera, Flash and Software Workshops

- Vancouver BC, January 10 to 13
- San Francisco, CA January 17 to 20
- Los Angeles, CA January 24 to 27
- Las Vegas, NV February 14 to 17
- Austin, TX February 28 to March 2
- New Orleans, LA March 6 to 9

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Details available at our [USA](#) and [International](#) sites

# Nikonians Academy

## Camera, Flash and Software Workshops (continued)

- Savannah, GA March 13 to 16
- Seattle, WA April 17 to 20
- Denver, CO May 15 to 18
- Seattle, WA June 26 to 29
- Detroit, MI July 10 to 13
- Minneapolis, MN July 17 to 20
- Omaha, NE July 24 to 27
- Raleigh, NC August 7 to 10
- Indianapolis, IN August 14 to 17
- San Diego, CA October 16 to 19
- Seattle, WA October 30 to November 2

## Travel and Nature Photography Workshops

- Page, AZ April 8 to 11
- Tulip Festival, Washington State, April 21 & 22
- Moab, UT May 5 to 9
- Banff, Canada May 21 to 24
- Balloon Festival, Albuquerque, NM October 6 to 10
- Wildlife Safari Trip #1, Tanzania, November 11-23
- Wildlife Safari Trip #2, Tanzania, November 24-December 7
- Columbia Gorge, OR April (TBD)
- Olympic NP, WA (TBD)
- North Cascades NP, WA (TBD)

The collaboration of a father and son Nikonian team for an article may be an interesting twist, but it is by far not the first time in the history of our community.

Our own Rick Walker, of the Nikonians [podcast](#) team has previously collaborated with his son Eric and podcast Image Doctor partner Jason Odell for a review of the [Nikon D50](#), and a [Super-Wide Angle Lenses Shootout](#).

Our international community encourages family members to team up for articles in our publications. If you have a family collaboration item to share and inspire fellow Nikonians, contact Chief Editor [Tom Boné](#).

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DIGITAL PHOTO SERIES



# Nikon D3 Hands On Review

By Nikonian Victor Newman  
(vfnewman)

## The D3 tackles NASCAR

I'm a lucky guy. I'm a really lucky guy. I just got to use a pre-production Nikon D3 for five days. As a [Nikon Professional Services](#) member, I was able to obtain a D3 on loan from Nikon to shoot the NASCAR Busch and Nextel Cup series races at Lowe's Motor Speedway.



**vfnewman**  
Moderator &  
Administrator  
Charter member  
3820 posts

When I wasn't at the Speedway, I was making the very best of my opportunity to try out this incredible piece of machinery.

A couple things are important to note: This was a preproduction camera, with 0.xx firmware. It is entirely possible that Nikon may make changes before 1.0 firmware is released. Thus: features, functions, menu items and image characteristics could be subject to further improvement in production cameras.

Second, this review was deliberately kept to a reasonable length. An exhaustive review of the camera would fill a book.

Victor is our Head of Equipment Testing and is also Moderator of:  
[Image Making & Shooting Issues / Shooting Panorams](#)  
[Image Making & Shooting Issues / Sports & Action Photography](#)

The announcement of the D3 may have created the most interest since Nikon's first digital single-lens reflex, the D1. The most anticipated (or surprising, depending on your outlook) feature is the "FX" size CMOS sensor. At 23.9 x 36mm, it's effectively equal to the traditional 35mm film frame size. Photographers who bemoaned the effect that the smaller "DX" format sensor had on their wide-angle lenses can again have the angle of view and depth of field they had on film with the same lenses.

Also surprising to many is that this new FX sensor "only" produces a 12.1 megapixel image, at 4256 x 2832 pixels--a sliver smaller than the predecessor D2x's 12.4 mp image of 4288 x 2848. But what has probably generated even more interest since the release of sample photos is the incredible low noise levels of high-ISO images.

It's the freedom to distribute the (approximately) same number of photosites as the D2X over the larger FX sensor area that helps make the low-noise qualities of this camera a favorite subject of discussion about this camera.

As if the "full-frame" sensor and exceptionally low high-ISO noise aren't enough to make this camera worth a very close look, Nikon has packed it with:

- Continuous shooting at 9 frames per second in FX format/11 frames per second in DX format
  - 3.0-inch super density VGA color monitor
  - 51-point Multi-CAM3500FX autofocus sensor with 3-D focus tracking
  - Two Live View shooting modes
  - HDMI video output
  - More sophisticated picture control (sharpening, contrast, etc.) settings
  - In-camera image retouching
  - 12 or 14 bit raw file output
  - Two CF card slots for overflow, raw vs. jpeg storage, real-time backup or card-to-card copy
- And much more...

## First impressions

As soon as I took the camera out of the box I noticed it's bigger than a D2X. According to Nikon, it's a fraction of an inch taller and wider, and .3 pounds heavier. The prism housing is visibly taller than a D2X. The camera came with an EN-EL3a battery, and accepts the older EN-EL3 battery (from the D2 generation of cameras), but the battery cover is different from the BL-1 used by the D2 bodies.

# Nikon D3 Hands On Review

The next thing I noticed was the HUGE 920,000-dot display on the back, with fidelity that matches its impressive size. The external white balance sensor on the top-front of the D2X prism housing has vanished.

External controls are very similar to the D2 cameras. The AE-L/AF-L button is smaller and has moved down, closer to the multi-selector button. The multi-selector button now has a very welcome separate push button in the middle. Missing from the selection of AF patterns on the AF selector is the "Group Dynamic" option, now addressed by menu selections. Pressing the "info" button on the back of the camera turns the rear LCD into a giant replica of the top LCD along with some additional information like the currently-selected AF pattern and Picture Control setting.

## Navigating nuances

Navigating the menus is not difficult if one is already familiar with the D2 family of cameras. Users who are not familiar with D2 cameras will be spending a great deal of time with their owner's manual. As a rough guess, there are probably 25% more functions and options to be found in the menus. Having received no documentation with the camera, I found some easier to figure out than others.

On race weekend another D3 recipient gave me a pdf copy of an abridged user's manual, which proved to be exceptionally helpful. The menu layout is very similar to the D2 cameras, with the addition of a new "root level" menu for in-camera image retouching. As before, there are four banks for custom sets of shooting and control settings. "Recent settings", which, on the D2X,

"cached" the most recently-used selections on a first-in, first-out basis, has changed to "My Menu". From all the available menu items, the user now picks those he or she wishes to be held in one's own personalized subset of menu items. The items stored in My Menu hold their place regardless of the use of other menu items.

An exhaustive list of all the menu functions is simply too long to go through here. Instead, I'll try to cover the most important differences and additions.

The addition of a second CF card gives rise to a "Copy images" item in the Playback menu. The user can copy all images, or just selected images from the card in slot 1 onto the card in slot 2. When shooting, the "Slot 2" menu item in the Shooting menu allows the user to dictate the function of the card in the second slot. Slot 2 can be set to accept "overflow" when the card in slot 1 is full, it can be written to as a real-time backup to slot 1, or raw files can be written to slot 1, with jpeg files going to slot 2.

## Functionality

Since DX lenses do not (in most cases) cover the entire FX sensor area, the shooting menu provides an option to let the camera automatically switch to DX format when such a lens is detected. When Auto DX crop is turned off, the user can select FX, DX, or 5:4 format at will, regardless of the lens attached.

Raw files can now be written as uncompressed, lossless compressed, or (lossy) compressed, with the further option of 12 or 14 bits per pixel. Be forewarned





# Nikon D3 Hands On Review

that shooting in 14 bit mode will reduce the maximum frame rate to 2.5 fps. While I had no software to open the Nikon Electronic Format (NEF) files, I found 12 bit compressed, lossless compressed, and uncompressed files to be approximately 10 MB, 11 MB, and 19 MB, respectively, while switching to 14 bit mode produced files of 12 MB, 14MB, and 25 MB, respectively. Full-size fine jpeg files at optimal quality were a little over 5 MB.

**“Set Picture Control”** in the shooting menu is an entirely new and extensive set of controls for sharpening, contrast, brightness, hue and saturation, with groupings for standard, neutral, vivid and monochrome. Custom picture control sets can be saved and loaded from a CF card.

**“Active D-Lighting”** makes adjustments to the exposure, contrast and brightness to preserve details in high-lights and shadows.

In addition to the ability to program specific functions to the “Func” button, one may now program the Depth of Field preview button and AF-On buttons from a lengthy list of functions like AE lock, Flash off, AF-on, spot/matrix/centerweighted metering, etc.

A “GPS Auto meter off” function allows the camera meter to turn off like normal when a GPS receiver is connected to the camera and transmitting data.

AF fine tune allows users to make precise adjustments to the focus settings and save specific values to a list.

An all-new “Virtual horizon” turns the back display into a replica of an aircraft’s artificial horizon indicator. When the camera is side-to-side level, the “horizon line” in the middle turns green.

When tilted, the line turns yellow and the graphic rotates just like the instrument in a plane. The system is quite sensitive. I found it difficult to hand-hold the camera and keep the indicator level for any length of time.

The Retouch menu has sub-menus for D-Lighting, Red-eye correction, Image Trim, Monochrome, Filter effects, Color balance, Image overlay and side-by-side comparison.



## Hands-On

So all that’s nice, but what’s it like to use this thing?

In a word, very nice. Ok, that’s two words. That happens a lot when talking about this camera—needing to use extra words to convey how well it performs.

Snapping a lens on and looking through the camera, the bright viewfinder is much bigger than the D2X, which is no doubt attributable to the FX format. The in-viewfinder display is logically laid out, and similar to previous

Lowes Motor Speedway. Nikon D3 with AF-S VR Zoom-NIKKOR 70-200mm f/2.8G IF-ED lens at 155mm, shooting at f/4, 1/500 seconds and 3200 ISO.

# Nikon D3 Hands On Review

cameras. A new twist is the relocation of the segmented bar graph exposure meter to the right side of the frame, in a vertical orientation. Selecting the DX or 5:4 format causes the appropriate area of the viewfinder to be masked with a partially-opaque overlay of LCD material, clearly indicating the shooting format.

Autofocus is extremely quick and precise. With AF-S or mechanically-driven lenses, it's quicker than a D2X. A thin, black, etched hairline defines the bounds of the cluster of AF sensors. The focus area markers themselves are effectively invisible unless illuminated. When illuminated, the focus area markers show up as red LEDs. Curiously, the focus sensors only span the area covered by the DX format, leaving a noticeable margin without sensors.

Nikonian member Brian Wong (blw) lives not far from me and dropped by for a visit while I had the camera (we all know what he really came to see). As a test of the camera's capabilities, Brian successfully and repeatedly tracked Canada Geese in flight with an AF Micro-Nikkor 200mm f/4 lens—hardly the lens one would choose for such a subject.

I took the camera to Virginia International Raceway and tested the autofocus shooting sports cars head-on at close range with an AF-S 400mm f/2.8 and AF-S 600mm f/4 lenses. The camera's ability to track the cars—especially at close range—definitely exceeded that of the D2X.

When shooting in 51-point 3-D mode, the illuminated focus area is capable of moving very quickly, keeping the user informed of the active sensor. I found

this to be quite useful at monitoring the camera's choice of target. If Auto-area mode is selected along with single-servo AF, the active focus points will be displayed for about one second after the camera locks focus. Nikon literature states that with G or D lenses, the camera can distinguish human subjects from the background for improved subject detection.

Should you choose to do so, turning the release mode selector dial past the "CH" setting brings up an entirely-new feature to Nikon cameras: Live View. Here the user can see a live through-the-lens image on the rear display. The live image is clear, with automatic brightness adjustment, with the option for the user to override as well. There is some jerkiness in the response of the live image if the camera is moved too quickly, but for anything less than a panning shot it's quite satisfactory.



Virginia International Raceway (not NASCAR but a good test of daylight autofocus plus HI ISO). Nikon D3 with AF-S Nikkor 400mm f/2.8D IF-ED II lens. The shutter speed was 1/3200 seconds, with the lens set to f/14 and the ISO at 12800 (HI 1).

The user has the option of selecting Handheld or Tripod mode from the shooting menu. The main difference between the two is in the way the camera focuses. In handheld mode, the user aims the camera, and then presses the shutter release to make the mirror drop (blacking out the LCD display) and the camera focuses. Releasing the shutter button restores the live view, now with the subject properly focused. Pressing the shutter button again takes a photograph. This mode is perfectly workable for a tripod-mounted camera, despite the name.

Tripod mode, however, does need to be used on a tripod. The difference here is that when focusing, the mirror never rises, and the camera accomplishes focus by contrast detection in the live view image. The unique attribute here is that the active focus area is no longer



# Nikon D3 Hands On Review

tied to a physical focus sensor. The multi-selection button can be used to place the active focus area anywhere in the image area. Contrast-detection AF is not particularly fast, and the camera must remain steadily aimed for this to work, hence the "tripod mode" name.

The first time a user fires the camera, he or she will be treated to an exceptionally quick and crisp-sounding shutter. With the camera set at the highest frame rates, it takes a quick finger to avoid getting two or more frames. Holding the shutter down for an extended burst at maximum frame rate is a gratifying experience for D2X users that have wished for faster performance. Selection of the AF pattern (with some exceptions), AF mode, exposure mode, exposure compensation, frame rate, white balance and metering pattern are identical to D2 cameras. In fact, using the camera in general is very similar to the D2 cameras. I was completely comfortable using the camera for a paying job, with the accompanying expectation that I get the shots that mattered (and I did).

I have found no documentation from Nikon that details buffer size, which I found to depend on a

number of variables, some of which I found to be predictable and expected (FX vs. DX format), and not so in other cases (jpeg image size), based on my D2X experiences. I saw a buffer size as high as 50 with the camera set to DX format and jpeg small, and as low as 13 in raw+jpeg mode with High-ISO noise reduction on "High". Higher and lower numbers could even be possible since I had no way of knowing all the variables and their effects. Writing to the Sandisk Extreme IV CF cards that I used was very fast. I never had the time to measure the write speed nor compare it directly to a D2X.

## Welcome surprises

Using the camera brings few surprises compared to a D2 body. It just works, and works very well.

This camera delivers all that's expected of it, and probably more.

The reduction of high-ISO noise is, as far as I'm concerned, all that it's said to be. For all practical purposes, there is none up to and including ISO 1600. At ISO 3200 there's a little.

At ISO 6400 there's some. At H1 (ISO 12,800) there is definitely noise. At H2 (ISO 25,600) there is quite a bit of noise.

When I first got the camera, High ISO Noise Reduction was on "High". This, in my opinion, is not the best thing. The noise reduction causes too much loss of edge definition. At most, "Nor-



Lowes Motor Speedway. Nikon D3 with AF-S VR Zoom-NIKKOR 70-200mm f/2.8G IF-ED lens at 200mm, shooting at f/6.3, 1/800 seconds and 25600 ISO (H2). The image, when a properly cleaned-up, would be useable for newsprint

# Nikon D3 Hands On Review

mal" noise reduction is the best, if not simply turning it off and managing the noise later.

By shooting properly-exposed images with in-camera noise reduction off, and processing the jpegs with Photoshop and a third-party noise-reduction plugin, I was able to get very nice final images at up to ISO 12,800. Even at ISO 25,600, the image would be useable for newsprint.

Image quality, in general, is exactly what one would expect from Nikon's new flagship. Color fidelity, sharpness and tonal range are top-notch. Auto white balance produced consistently good results. I also made a quick test for corner falloff with wide-angle lenses. With a 35mm f/1.4 and 24mm f/2.8 I took a photo of a clear blue sky at wide-open aperture. And found that darkening in the corners is clearly evident, but no worse than on film with the same lenses.

## The D3 delivers

If anything can sum up my experience with the camera, it would have to be one pivotal moment at the end of Saturday night's NASCAR NEXTEL Cup race.

With just a few laps to go, driver Ryan Newman (no relation) shot into the lead on the restart from a caution flag. On the third lap following the restart, as the field came into view, the first thing I saw was Newman's car rapidly sliding backward against the outside wall, as the result of having blown a tire. As quickly as I could, I aimed and hit the shutter button. I got 14 perfectly-focused, properly-exposed and correctly white-balanced frames.

Two shots from the sequence are in this week's issue of NASCAR Scene magazine, one at 14" x 6"—a page and a half wide. At ISO 3200 there was only negligible noise.

The camera did *exactly* what I needed and expected it to do, and did it well. The bottom-line on my experience in evaluating the D3 is that I have already placed my pre-order.

This close crop shows the kind of flexibility newspaper photo editors would have available to them from the original image.

>>>





# Nikon D3

## Sports shooters enjoy D3 preview

Victor Newman's recent experience with his pre-production Nikon D3 confirms previous reports from the field. The folks at Nikon have been quick to provide key representatives of their target market for their new DSLR flagship with "test-drives" in real world situations. The field reports started coming in within days of the August unveiling.

Nikon Professional Services Manager & Editor in Chief of Nikon-News Pascal Richard was in Japan for the unveiling of the Nikon D3, D300 and five new lenses in late August.

As a part of his trip he was also on location a few days later to observe first-hand reactions from professional photographers who were issued D3's by Nikon officials for a full day of coverage at the 11th International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) World Athletics Championships in Osaka.

With 30 D3's to share among 80 professionals waiting their turn, Pascal told us a high priority was obviously going to be the much-discussed abilities of the new camera to produce images under rigorous low-light conditions.

"Everybody wanted to test the noise ratio at high ISO's," he said. "We were there from early morning until 11 p.m. at night under some poor lighting conditions. It was interesting to see the reactions from photographers who had previously been scared to go past 1600 ISO. They were completely amazed with the results."

Pascal said he and his Nikon technician colleagues knew they had a winner as photographers returned their cameras with "huge smiles on their faces."

"There were a lot of people from our development company at Osaka," he said. "They knew they would get good reactions on the noise ratios at high ISO's and they were happy to hear the photographers tell them the ergonomics of the camera have been very much improved, especially for sports and action. They also liked the autofocus, describing it as fast and precise."



Another highlight in the reactions was a number of comments describing the LCD display.

"People loved the color reproduction," he said. "They were describing it as very close to the results you will see later on the computer. They said you really can judge from the display."

With descriptions of "the feeling and sensation of a good film" and "great dynamic range" coming back to them, the Nikon Team found it easy to explain why the full frame FX-format CMOS image sensor was kept to 12.1 effective megapixels.

"These sports and action photographers are not looking for huge files," said Pascal. "The D3 was designed with sports photographers and photojournalists in mind. They want a good quality picture that is good for newspapers. In most situations, what do they need with a 20 megapixel image?"

He said the D3 camera concentrates on the quality of the image, using the technology benefits of the larger sensor to work in the noise reduction aspect, instead of making the trade-off for larger megapixel images. "Most of our pros agreed that a 12 megapixel image can easily provide a 300 dpi full page image as it is," he said. "We've reached a certain level in this regard. Right now, with the D3 we've concentrated on the quality of the picture." []

# New From Nikon

## COOLPIX lineup expands

Nikon has boosted their COOLPIX camera line-up with eight new models ranging in price from \$149.95 to \$399.95 (U.S. manufacturer suggested retail prices). The new cameras add to the Nikon Style, Life and Performance families of COOLPIX cameras.

The Life series adds the 7 megapixel **COOLPIX L14** (\$149.95) and the 8 megapixel **COOLPIX L15** (\$179.95).

Both provide three innovative imaging functions:

- Face-priority AF automatically finds, then focuses on people's faces for crisp, clear results time after time.

- In-Camera Red-Eye Fix automatically compensates to help eradicate traces of the annoying red-eye effect that can sometimes be encountered during flash photography.

- D-Lighting can be applied to improve underexposed images or shots taken with too much backlight. D-Lighting automatically creates a copy of the image with detail added where necessary, but with well-exposed areas left completely untouched.

In the Style series, Nikon introduces the 12.1 megapixel **COOLPIX S700** (\$379.95) and 8.1 megapixel **COOLPIX S510** (\$299.95).

The cameras include the innovative imaging functions of the L14 and L15,



COOLPIX L15

COOLPIX S700



and add VR (Vibration Reduction), the S700 has 3200 ISO capability and a 2.7-inch LCD monitor while the S510 can handle 2000 ISO, displaying on a 2.5 LCD monitor.

Adding another wireless technology model to the line-up Nikon introduces the new 8.1 megapixel **COOLPIX S51c** (\$329.95) which has a companion model, the **COOLPIX S51** (\$279.95) which does not include wireless transfer capabilities.

In the Performance series add the 12.1 megapixel **COOLPIX P5100** (\$399.95) and the 8.1 megapixel **COOLPIX P50** (\$229.95). The P5100 takes the title as flagship of the COOLPIX line, boasting Optical lens shift VR, ISO up to 3200, full compatibility with Nikon SB-400, SB-600 and SB-800 Speedlights.



COOLPIX P5100

More information the entire COOLPIX line is available at <http://www.nikonusa.com>.



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# Custom Brackets

By J. Ramón Palacios (jrp)

## A sturdy flash bracket is your key to success

By J. Ramón Palacios (jrp)  
Administrator, co-founder - 20486 posts

I have been a fervent user of Speedlights, ever since the introduction of the magnificent Nikon FE-2 bodies in 1983 which allowed for TTL flash. All the time, whether in exteriors and interiors and more so when doing people shots - whether as main light source or for fill flash.

Over the years, camera bodies and Speedlights have become more and more intelligent and flash diffusers are now common and an essential component of a serious photographer's kit. And yet, nasty shadows behind subjects near walls continued to be a frequently found problem, except for weddings masters like Nikonians [Neil van Niekerk \(Saxophonix\)](#), [Brian Hinz \(photobri\)](#), [Genevieve Nisly \(Genevieve\)](#) and a few others.

Flash brackets, cumbersome attachments enabling the flash to always be over the camera, became the recurrent solution especially when doing vertical shots. So I used them extensively, developing good arms muscle tone in the process.

Then came Gary Fong with his [Lightsphere II](#) and [WhaleTail](#) systems and I thought the days of the flash bracket were numbered. To confirm this I requested a couple of flash [Custom Brackets](#) to do some live testing. What follows are the surprising results.



It took long to have an event where I could test the brackets with human subjects, but finally arrived: the christening of my latest granddaughter.

Waiting for the date of such happy event I did some testing at home, using some training swords against a white wall.

In this first photo (next page), with Nikon Capture set at low contrast on Mode I (my typical settings for portraits) and with no curves adjustments, there is a well defined shadow when using the SB-800 at the hot shoe. This happens even if bounced into the ceiling, with its own dome on. With higher contrast the



# Custom Brackets



shadow would be even more noticeable.

This image, the one with the softest shadows in the series taken, corresponds to shooting with the SB-800 and its Gary Fong Lightsphere II CLEAR bounced into the ceiling, atop the QRS-E2 Custom Bracket. Both images were made with the camera on Manual exposure, at f/4, 1/60, ISO 100.

My reason for choosing the QRS-E2 over the Pro-M bracket is that I like to shoot either with the SU-800 as



commander (for multiple Speedlights) or with an SC-29 cable when with a single unit. These would be interfered by the straight handle of the Pro-M when using the camera-rotation feature for vertical shots with a big camera body, like a D2X. Also, the accessory handle (more so the one with a strap) is very comfortable to use. Furthermore, the bottom plate can be substituted by an Arca-style one for easy use on a tripod with a pro ball head and industry standard clamp. This is a most welcome improvement over the Strobframe brackets I used before and had to adapt myself, making them much heavier.

The day arrived. A very modest rural church, all white and gray, with tall ceilings, but with a wall to wall window behind the altar and quite a few at the sides, subject to both backlight and harsh direct sunlight and a resulting strong contrast. Happily, the day was mostly overcast and during the ceremony the strong desert

# Custom Brackets

sun came in only a few times.



First, the child arrives with her Mom. Hey! No shadows and light is the softest ever!

To abbreviate, the christening came to happen ...



Even the grandpas look better than normally would!

Her sister and aunt look radiant (and with no shadow under the eyes, a curse in this our family).





# Custom Brackets



And the combination worked very well in the outside too

## Conclusions:

The introduction of advanced Speedlights technology, combined with flash diffusers, made many users think the need for a flash bracket was over – myself included. The addition of a Custom Bracket proved to be superb for further elimination of shadows and even to light softening.



And in other settings as well

The added weight to the setup is more than compensated with outstanding results, achieved from the camera, without long hours of post processing.

There are several [Custom Brackets](#) models to suit your needs. I encourage you to give them a try. I have made myself the solemn promise to always use one for important events. []



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# Calendar

## Nikonians Academy North America workshops

Depending on location, the workshops offer instruction on the Nikon D200, D80/D70/ D70s cameras, Capture NX, and the i-TTL/ Nikon Creative Lighting System.

November 8-11, Albuquerque

November 15-18, Phoenix

December 6-8, San Diego

December 14-15, Seattle

Complete listings by city, date and topics can be found at the Nikonians Academy page.

Complete listings by city, date and topics can be found at the [Nikonians Academy](http://www.nikonians.org/academy).

## Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life, 1990—2005

September 15–November 25, 2007  
October 13, 2007–January 13, 2008

Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC

Annie Leibovitz: A Photographer's Life, 1990-2005 includes more than 200 photographs by the celebrated portrait photographer, encompassing well-known work made on editorial assignment as well as personal photographs of her family and close friends. "I don't have two lives," Leibovitz says. "This is one life, and the personal pictures and the assignment work are all part of it."

More Info: <http://www.corcoran.org>

## PMA 08 convention and trade show

January 31 – February 2, 2008

Las Vegas, Nevada

PMA 08 International Convention and Trade Show, the world's largest annual photo imaging trade show for the estimated \$83 billion worldwide industry, is set to begin Jan. 31 at the Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev., USA. PMA 08 will mark the 84th annual convention for the association. PMA conventions are open to business owners and executives in the photo imaging industry, as well as press and media representatives.

More Info: <http://www.pmai.org>

## Impressed by Light: British Photographs from Paper Negatives, 1840–1860

September 25, 2007–December 31, 2007  
Metropolitan Museum, New York City

This exhibition of British calotypes - photographs from paper negatives - will focus on the period after the 1851 introduction of glass negatives, when artists who used paper negatives did so by choice rather than by default. Contrary to the usual account of early British photography, this exhibition will vividly demonstrate that the calotype flourished, rather than faded, after 1851, encouraged by the displays at the Crystal Palace, the formation of photographic societies, and the loosening of Talbot's patent restrictions. Artists who chose to work with the paper negative process did so either because they preferred its aesthetic qualities, because it offered practical advantages for travel photography or work in hot climates, or because it helped distinguish gentleman-amateur practitioners from the trade, which was dominated by the use of glass negatives. The exhibition will be divided into four sections: The Rise of the Calotype, 1839–1851; The Calotype in Great Britain; British Calotypists Abroad; and The Calotype in British India. The vast majority of the works included have never before been exhibited in the United States. The exhibition catalogue is made possible by Howard Stein.

More info: <http://www.metmuseum.org>

## AIPAD Photography Show

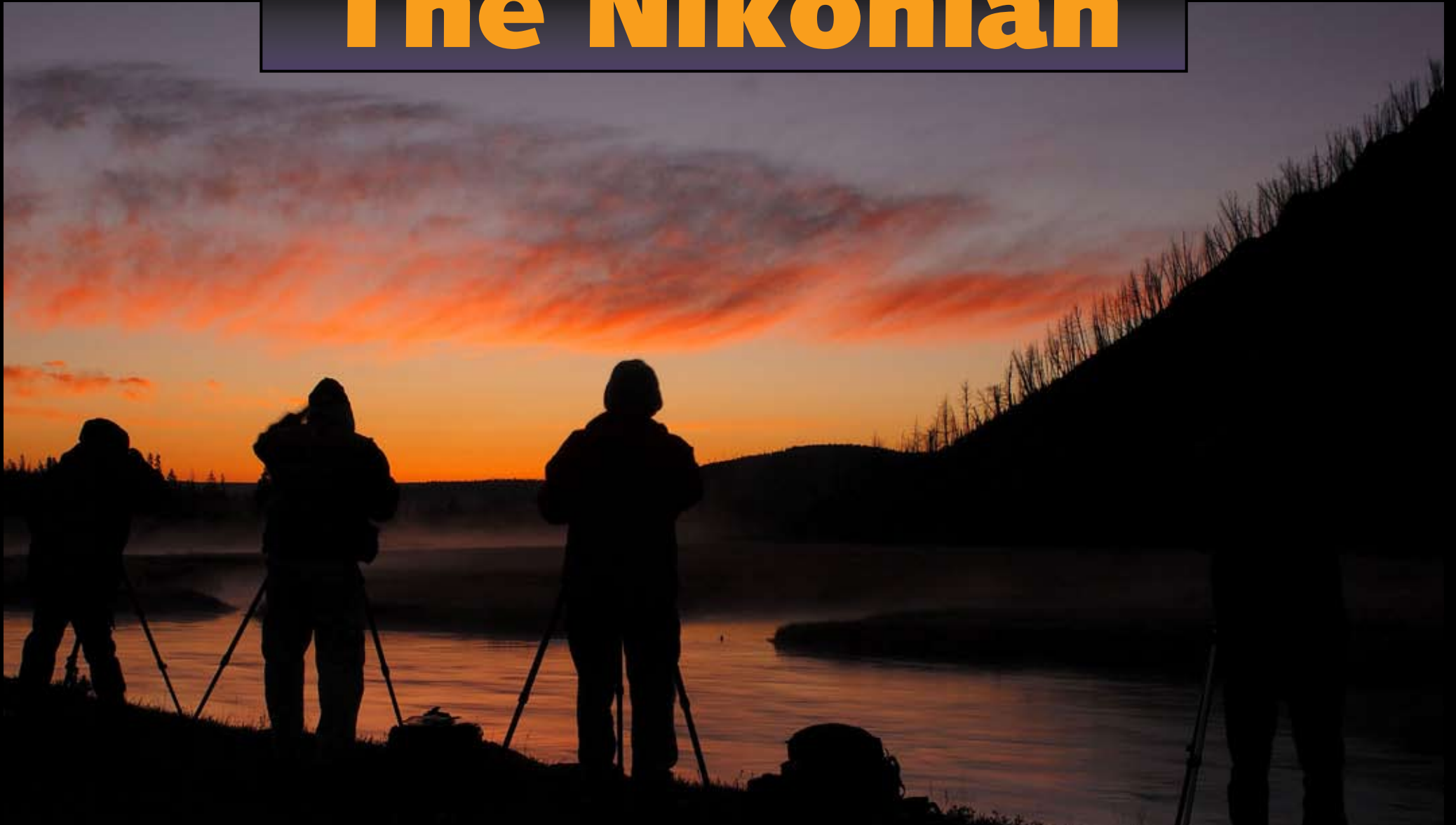
December 5 – 9, 2007 - Miami, Florida

More than 45 of the world's leading photography art galleries will present a wide range of museum-quality work by 19th century, modern and contemporary masters. The new art fair will run concurrently with Art Basel Miami Beach, as well as numerous other art fairs. It is sponsored by the Association of International Photography Art Dealers. The Photography Show Miami will open with an invitational preview on Tuesday, December 4, 2007.

More Info: <http://www.aipad.com/photoshow/>



# The Nikonian



We close this issue of eZine 35 with a final shot by Nikonians co-founder J. Ramón Palacios (jrp). The photo depicts Nikonians before dawn preparing for another day of exciting image captures and camaraderie at the 7th Annual Photo Adventure Trip (ANPAT) at Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks. JRP used his Nikon D2X, with a 28-70mm f/2.8D ED IF AF-S Nikkor lens set to f/16 to pull off a full one-second exposure, relying on his Gitzo G3530 tripod with a M20 Markins ball head over a TB-30 Markins anti-vibration plate for steadiness. Stay Tuned to the [Nikonians Travel & Getting Together Forums](#) for news and discussions on the 8th ANPAT next year.

eZine

[www.nikonians.org](http://www.nikonians.org)