

BETTER PHOTOS

By Rich Plecker

NOTE: Rich Plecker was the CFFU Photographer at the time he authored this article.

Lately, I have been asked by a number of CFFU members “How do I get better photos of my fish?”. The second part of the question is usually ‘without a big bunch of expensive camera equipment...’ In this article I will try to help you get better results using a few easy tips:

Know your camera. It is surprising how many people don’t know how to fully work their camera. Most modern cameras are small and compact, often having small buttons to change various camera operating modes. I want you to learn about these modes, because we will play around with them shortly—read the manual.

Shoot with your back to the sun, and look for shade. You have probably heard this before, but it is true. I see a lot of pictures perfectly exposed in the background only to have the fisherperson’s face almost black. If you can’t shoot with sun to your back, use fill flash. This is where knowing your camera comes in. Look for a feature called fill flash, slow synch mode, or sometimes called indoor mode. This mode attempts to balance the light of the flash and ambient light to get an overall evenly exposed photo. If you just turn the flash on manually (as you may have to depending on your camera) you may get a well exposed subject, but a dark or black background.

Move in tight. Photos are often taken with the idea of ‘getting it all in’. Everyone has seen the pictures taken at ball games where you see little specs in the photo’s. **GET CLOSE!** The zoom lens on many cameras can help you isolate the subject — in this case the fisherperson and the fish — but you have to move close as well. This technique is harder to learn than others because the human eye automatically focuses in on subjects, making you unaware of the other stuff your camera sees. Unfortunately, your camera and lens are not as smart as your eyes, so you have to do the work. Try to focus on facial expressions up close, and not on ‘getting it all in’.



Lastly, Use good film. Watch out for expiration dates and keep your film out of the heat. If you like prints consider shooting ISO 400 film from Fuji or Kodak. Any one-hour place in the world can get good results from these films. If you like richly saturated images and your camera has a good exposure system, consider using slide film. Slide film is trickier to work with, but you will be rewarded with stunning images that you can project and show your friends. Again Kodak and Fuji are regarded as the best overall flavors of slide film, but use what you are most comfortable with. Try these simple tips the next time you shoot. As in fly fishing, the more you practice, the better you get.



P.S. These ideas apply to digital cameras as well, except for the film part.