



NATURE FIRST

The Alliance for Responsible Nature Photography

Texas Region 2022 Spring Newsletter

WELCOME AND THANK YOU!

As the Texas Region Nature First Ambassadors, we want to thank you for your support and your dedication to putting Nature First when interacting with the environment for photography. In these quarterly newsletters, we hope you will find some inspiration and helpful tips to further grow your positive impact and photography. Each newsletter will have a handful of actions or suggestions that are seasonal specific to our region here in Texas but can be applied elsewhere too. Enjoy!



#[NatureFirst](#)

To start, be sure to familiarize yourself with the 7 Principles of Nature First and take the member pledge if you haven't already. This will help lay the basics to what this entire movement encompasses and how you can create a culture of respect for Nature within the photography community.

WILDFLOWER PHOTOGRAPHY ETHICS

Spring brings with it the beauty bursting around each hill and across the fields. The famous and well-loved Texas Bluebonnet is often hunted like a rare jewel during the few weeks each year it blooms across the state. Following Nature First principles will help ensure future blooms to come.

1. Stay on trail. Crushing or damaging flowers can harm future generations of the flowers as well as local pollinator food sources this season.
2. Don't post coordinates. This can lead to others who are not as thoughtful in how they photograph these natural beauties.
3. Respect private property. This is a big thing as anyone who has lived in Texas knows. Don't cross fence lines or enter peoples' yards without permission for photos. Not only does this give photographers a bad rap but it can be a serious personal safety issue.



Instead consider these tips for creating beautiful images without damaging the flowers or needing to trespass.

1. Use a telephoto lens to compress the scene and allow yourself to work from the fringes of wildflower patches. I love using my 100-400mm lens extensively for this subject.
2. Utilize the beautiful wild spaces that are open to the public such as state and local parks or gardens. Visit some of the smaller towns and find quiet public greenspaces that are full of flowers but not visitors.
3. Advocate for your State! Tag Texas or a region such as Hill Country when sharing your images so that visitors get an idea of where to go but specific fields don't get overwhelmed with traffic.



SPRING BIRDING PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS

Texas has some amazing birding locations throughout the year; however, the migration brings a whole new set of species not seen any other time of the year. "Fall out" locations along the coast can experience daily avian visitor numbers in the thousands. Human visitation often spikes as well, as birders and photographers try to add to their annual and lifer lists. It is important to understand how vulnerable birds like buntings, warblers, grosbeaks, and other birds that have made the 600-mile Gulf crossing are at this time. Additional stress from observers can mean life or death.



Consider following these tips in order to capture images while looking out for the wellbeing of your subjects.

1. Use a long lens to avoid having to approach too closely. Lenses with a range of 500mm or more are ideal.
2. Go slow. Finding a spot to sit and photograph from is much less stressful for the birds than having to follow them around. Find a food or water source and post up for a while. A single mulberry free can offer hours of feeding behavior opportunities.
3. Avoid creating sounds. This includes utilizing any sort of electronic playbacks. Whether the sound startles the bird or calls it closer to investigate, it creates a situation where the bird is having to react to you and burn calories it doesn't necessarily have to use responding just so you can capture a photo.

MEET THE TEXAS REGION NATURE FIRST AMBASSADORS

ALYCE BENDER is a nature photographer, writer, educator, and adventurer. Camera in hand since childhood, her fascination for photography developed into a career after serving in the U.S. Air Force. Her passion for wildlife and the natural environment compels her to connect others with nature through sharing both visual art and in-field experiences that promote conservation, creativity, and ethical photography.

She is a Tamron USA Ambassador, contributing writer and photographer for the Journal of Wildlife Photography, and a Nature First Texas Region Ambassador. Her work has been featured in group and solo gallery shows across the U.S. as well as in international publications from the U.K. to Japan. Bender leads photography adventures around the world to help beginner through advanced photographers explore and expand their personal vision and naturalist skills ethically. When not in the field, she offers a variety of educational programs both in person and virtually for photography organizations large and small.

You can see more of Bender's work at www.abenderphotography.com or find her on social media @abenderphoto .



BRIE STOCKWELL is an Austin-based landscape photographer, coach for creatives and self-proclaimed social butterfly. She began her photographic journey by completing a huge personal goal of hosting a gallery show in her home. Since then, she has immersed herself deep in the community through various podcast appearances, hosting live conversations and is now co-host of a new podcast, “A Creative Affair”. It’s also her privilege to represent Texas as a Nature First Ambassador and help support Texans in preserving nature in our beautiful state. Her favorite subjects to photograph are rocks, interesting textures, and dunes. Brie is thrilled to have recently won the New Mexico Magazine Photo of the Year with a favorite dune image. She currently spends most days helping creatives achieve their goals with less stress and tons more fun!

To find out more about Brie and her work with creatives check out www.creativemindscoach.com and you can follow her photography work on social media @asliceofbrie2020 .

