

## TRAVELOGUE

## Photographing Death Valley

Dan Suzio

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Photographs by the author.

I'm crouched on a black rock outcrop at the edge of a steep gully, my eyes fixed on a big lizard about ten feet away. Its broad head and heavy body are dark gray, almost black, while its thick, round tail is nearly white. It's a Chuckwalla (*Sauromalus ater*), the largest lizard in Death Valley and the second largest in all the southwestern deserts. The Chuckwalla turns its side toward me, showing the full bulk of its body, and lifts itself higher on its muscular legs. It performs a half-dozen pushups, then quickly scurries toward me, bobs its head a couple more times, and runs back to its starting point. I respond in kind — a few quick bobs of my head, then I extend my body forward and back again. The lizard's eyes widen. It takes a tentative step toward me. I crouch lower and retreat a little. Emboldened by my fearful reaction, the lizard moves closer, and

this time it doesn't retreat. We repeat the dance, and eventually the Chuckwalla is less than three feet from the front of my lens. After a few dozen exposures, I slink away backwards and we're both winners — the lizard has proven himself the alpha male, and I've gotten some great shots. Only then do I look around and wonder if anyone has seen me making a complete fool of myself, doing a mating dance with a lizard.

Death Valley — a phrase that's become a part of our popular culture, symbolizing desolation and loneliness, a frightening and inhospitable wilderness. However, Death Valley is a real place that can mean many things to different people. To a geologist, it's a place where almost two billion years of Earth's history is laid bare, ready to be examined and understood. To a biologist, it's a won-



Chuckwallas (*Sauromalus ater*) feel more secure when they have the higher position and a better view of potential threats (top). Lizards may feel threatened in this position (bottom) — you're better off moving away and letting it get above you.



Although the common perception of Death Valley is that of a barren wasteland, that does not apply to all of the park. Spring snowmelt in the Panamint Mountains leads to wildflowers, such as this Brittlebush (*Encelia* sp.) in Hanaupah Canyon.



Looking up toward Dante's View from Badwater — the sign on the cliff indicates sea level, 282 feet above you.

derland of evolution, where plant and animal species have found ways not just to survive but thrive in what appears to us a harsh and unforgiving environment. To a hiker, it's a place to enjoy wide-open spaces, challenging off-trail hikes, and spectacular views. To a wildlife photographer, Death Valley can be all of these things and more. I'll try to show you what it means to me, and at the same time give you some tips on getting photos that you'll treasure.

### The Big Three

If it's your first visit to Death Valley, you definitely shouldn't miss Badwater, Zabriskie Point, and the sand dunes. You'll see more people there than anywhere else (except maybe the shopping and dining areas at Furnace Creek Ranch), but go anyway. Badwater's main attraction is the fact that it's the lowest point in the United States, at 282 feet below sea level. It's also an easy place to walk out onto the salt flats and get a ground-level appreciation of Death Valley's size. From the salt flats, look back toward the parking area and find the "sea level" sign — you may be surprised how far up the cliff it is. Farther up the mountain is Dante's View, more than a mile above you.

An article in the travel section of the *New York Times* once called Death Valley a "monochromatic wasteland" — a phrase that always makes me laugh, especially when I'm standing at Zabriskie Point at sunrise or sunset, watching the constantly changing display of colors and shadows. The view from Zabriskie is a jumble of lakebed deposits that have been uplifted and folded by geologic forces and eroded by wind and water, resulting in a profusion of color and texture that can keep a photographer busy all day. The best colors (and the highest concentration of photographers) will be on display around sunrise and sunset. In spite of the crowds, I've found photographers here to be pretty considerate about not stepping into each other's photos.

Ask the average person to picture a desert, and chances are they'll think of sand dunes — not realizing that less than one percent of Death Valley and the surrounding deserts are covered in sand. However, sand dunes offer endless photo opportunities, so you'll want to make sure you include them when you visit. Sand dunes appear to be constantly shifting, but in many ways they're remarkably stable. Dune formation depends on just the right combination of factors, including a source of sand (such as an ancient lakebed or an eroding canyon) and a wind pattern that keeps the sand in one location, rather than scattering it all over the desert. The most easily accessible dunes in Death Valley are just off the main road a couple miles east of Stovepipe Wells; other major dunes in the park include Panamint Valley, Eureka Valley, and Ibex.

To photograph sand dunes, you'll want to be there in the early morning or late afternoon, when the sun is low in the sky. For the most dramatic photos, position yourself so the light is coming from the side (rather than from behind you) to emphasize the length of the shadows and the texture of the sand. Don't limit yourself to shooting grand landscapes with your wide-angle lens — shoot those, of course, but remember also to experiment with close-ups and telephoto shots. The detail in sand is spectacular, and, as you move in close, you'll find patterns that you might not have noticed at first. Don't forget that wind is one of the essential factors in dune formation, so you'll need to protect your equipment from blowing sand. Use a UV filter over your lens, and keep the lens cap on whenever you're not shooting. You might also want to wrap an extra tee





A Coyote (*Canis latrans*) takes a break from hunting along the road at the northern end of Death Valley.

shirt around your camera to keep the sand off. Be extremely careful when changing lenses. If it gets too windy, it might be best to put off your dune photography until another day. A friend and I once spent about four hours sitting in the car at Eureka Dunes in a howling wind, waiting for conditions that wouldn't destroy our cameras.

If you're out on the dunes very early and the wind is absent or mild, you might find some undisturbed tracks of a Sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes*), a mostly nocturnal rattlesnake with a unique method of moving across the dunes. Photograph the tracks the way you would the dunes themselves, with the light coming from the side. If you're very lucky, you might find the sidewinder itself. You'll be tempted to move in for a close-up, but remember, it may be small and pretty, but it's still venomous. Be careful. Other wildlife you might see on or around the dunes include Desert Iguanas (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis*), Zebra-tailed Lizards (*Callisaurus draconoides*), and a variety of rodents and insects.

#### Dante's View and Greenwater Valley

For a view of Death Valley that seems to go on forever, head for Dante's View, a 5,475-foot overlook on the eastern side of the park. From this vantage point, you'll get a better understanding of how the valley was formed and how it continues to evolve. From here you can see that water played a major role in creating Death Valley. The valley floor looks exactly like what it is — an enormous dry lakebed, with gleaming white salt deposits and traces of narrow,

winding channels where water once flowed (and still does, in wet years). You can also see how the alluvial fans, those piles of rocky debris spilling out from the canyons on both sides of the valley, could, given enough time, eventually cover the valley floor. With an average of less than two inches of rainfall per year, you can only imagine how many rainstorms — and how many years — it's taken to create these gigantic alluvial fans.

Take a warm coat to Dante's View, especially if you're planning to be there at sunrise or sunset — it can get pretty cold at that elevation, and it's almost always windy. On the way back from the overlook, if you have the time, turn off at the trailer parking area onto the dirt road that runs south through Greenwater Valley. It's about a 30-mile drive on a relatively good dirt road through typical mid-elevation creosote bush desert. The road was in good shape the last time I drove it, but always check local conditions before driving off the pavement, and be prepared to change your plans. In the spring, it's a great place to spend a leisurely morning or afternoon photographing wildflowers, driving slowly, and stopping whenever you see something you like. In a typical year, some of the flowering species you might find include Larkspur, Phacelia, Desert Gold, Chia, Evening Primrose, Tackstem, Gravel Ghost, Mojave Aster, Beavertail Cactus, and, of course, the ubiquitous Creosote Bush.

Shooting close-ups of wildflowers can be challenging, as even the slightest breeze can cause enough movement to throw your subject out of focus. Your tripod should allow you to get close to the



View of Manly Beacon from Zabriskie Point at sunrise. This is one of the most popular places to photograph in the park, offering a constantly changing display of colors and shadows.

ground; if it doesn't, you might want to buy a second, mini tripod — mine has a minimum height of about three inches. I also use a collapsible reflector (of the type made by Photoflex, Westcott, and others), which not only adds light to the shadows but can be an effective windbreak as well. Your own body can also help to block the wind — just make sure you're not blocking the light at the same

time. Some flower photographers like to use a “plamp,” a flexible arm with a clamp at either end; you attach one end to your tripod and clamp the other to the stem of the flower, just outside the photo. Above all, be patient. Set up your shot and then wait for the right moment to click the shutter. If it's too windy for a sharp picture, give in to Mother Nature and experiment with photographing the wind, or at least its effect on the flowers. Depending on how fast your flowers are moving, a shutter speed of between 1/30 second and one second should give you some good results.

#### Saratoga Spring and Ibex Dunes

Near the southern border of the park is Saratoga Spring, a 15-acre oasis that attracts a great variety of migratory birds. To get there, you'll need to drive out of the park at Shoshone, head south on state highway 127, and watch for a turnoff to the west about 24 miles south of town. If you're entering the park from Baker, Saratoga Spring is a good first stop. More than 150 species of birds have been recorded here, including many spring and fall migrants stopping for a much-needed rest on their long journeys. The ponds here also are home to the Saratoga Spring Pupfish, an endemic reminder of a time when the entire valley was covered by a vast lake. Sit quietly at the edge of the pond and you can watch the brightly colored males defending their territories and trying to attract females. The Ibex Hills, overlooking the spring, offer the best view of the entire wetland — but be prepared to scramble up a steep, rocky slope.



Desert Iguanas (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis*) often climb Creosote Bushes in the spring in search of tender new leaves.





Desert Prickly Poppy (*Argemone munita*) at the edge of Racetrack Playa in the Panamint Range.

Not far from Saratoga Spring are the Ibex Dunes, which can be reached only on foot, either by hiking from a dirt road that turns off of the Saratoga Spring road just south of the Ibex Hills, or from Highway 127 just south of the Saddle Peak Hills near the turnoff to Dumont Dunes. Ibex is one of the smallest dune systems in the park, but also one of the most beautiful. Somehow the alignment and shape of these dunes, the color of the sand, and the direction of the light have all combined in just the right way to make a photographer happy. This is also the only place in the park where you might see a Mojave Fringe-toed Lizard (*Uma scoparia*).

### Side Canyons

As you study your map of Death Valley, you'll notice the 4WD roads entering several of the canyons on the western side of the valley, including Cottonwood Trail, Hanaupah, Johnson, Galena, and Warm Spring. Any of them can be an interesting place to explore for a day or several days. Camping is generally permitted in back-country areas, as long as you're at least two miles from a paved road (check with park headquarters for other restrictions). Hanaupah Canyon is one of my favorites; it's a rough, slow drive, but worth it, especially in springtime. The upper part of the canyon carries snowmelt from Telescope Peak, ensuring a good wildflower bloom in most years.

Another favorite is Warm Spring Canyon, where you'll find an old mining camp and some abandoned equipment once used

to process ore. The contrast between the delicate, colorful flowers and the stark, rusty metal can make for some interesting photos. If you're really feeling adventurous (and have a high-clearance four-wheel-drive vehicle), continue up Warm Spring Canyon to Butte Valley, a beautiful place to explore the middle of the Panamint Range.

In any of the canyons, you're likely to find Chuckwallas or Collared Lizards (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*), two of the larger and more photogenic lizards in the park. When you first see one of these lizards, it's already seen you. It might just be watching, assessing how much of a danger you pose, or it may already be heading for a crevice, or at least toward the other side of a rock. Approach too quickly and it will disappear — but, if you're patient, you can usually get close enough for a good photo. Both species have very good eyesight, and depend on having a clear view of their surroundings to avoid predators. They also seem to feel safer when perched on a high rock. With that in mind, you can position yourself against a rock where you won't block the view (you especially don't want the sky behind you) and the lizard is slightly above you. Take your time, moving only a few inches with each step, and watch the animal carefully for signs of stress. If it seems concerned, stop where you are, or back down a little. If a Chuckwalla does run into a crevice or other hiding place, make yourself comfortable. They don't generally stay hidden for long; if you can sit still for ten or twenty minutes, you'll likely see it again. Collared Lizards are a different story. In my



Creosote Bushes (*Larrea tridentate*) grows on the Ibex Dunes. Shooting late in the afternoon, when the sun is low in the sky, adds more texture and contrast to the sand while giving the dunes a warm glow.

experience, when you get too close to a Collared Lizard, it will run, and you might not get another chance at it.

When you move in for a close-up, pay careful attention to your subject's eyes — they're the key to a successful portrait, whether human or animal. The closer you are to your subject, the less depth-

of-field you'll have, which means that parts of the photo will be in sharp focus while other parts will not be. Make sure the eye is sharp; when people look at a photo, they look at the eyes. Eye contact is also important. A photo will be more engaging if the subject seems to be looking back at the viewer — but you don't want to overdo it.



Desert reptiles are rarely active during the heat of the day. A Mojave Desert Sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes cerastes*, left) seeks shelter under a Creosote Bush at midday. Sidewinders are generally active at dusk and dawn. Mojave Shovel-nosed Snakes (*Chionactis occipitalis occipitalis*, right) are mostly nocturnal, but occasionally may be seen in early morning or evening.





A Mojave Desert Sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes cerastes*) photographed early in the morning on the Ibex Dunes; the angle and direction of the sun help to emphasize the snake's tracks.

The animal should look natural, like it just happened to look at the camera, not like it's reacting to the photographer's presence. A little reflection in the eye, whether from the sun or a fill-flash, can be the difference between a tired-looking animal and one that appears alert and full of life. Finally, whenever possible, shoot from your

subject's eye level or close to it. Avoid shots where you're looking up or down at a steep angle. Instead, either get down on your belly or start climbing — whatever it takes to meet the animal at its own level and in its own world.



A Desert Iguana (*Dipsosaurus dorsalis*, left) basks on a rock near the south end of the valley. This simple portrait illustrates the importance of the subject's eyes — the eye is sharp and reflects a bit of sunlight; and the photo is shot from the lizard's eye level. The over-the-shoulder look at this Zebra-tailed Lizard (*Callisaurus draconoides*, right) on the Ibex Dunes adds eye contact and makes the photo more engaging.



A Merriam's Kangaroo Rat (*Dipodomys merriami*) at Wildrose Canyon. Kangaroo rats are fast, and generally uncooperative when it comes to photography. When you see one, you have to react quickly to get the shot.



Nevada Goldeneye (*Heliomeris multiflora nevadensis*) in Butte Valley. If the wind makes a sharp flower photo impossible, photograph the wind. Experiment with shutter speeds between 1/30 sec and 1 sec (or slower).

### Ghost Towns

On your way up to Dante's View, you might have noticed a handful of long narrow buildings on the hill to your left. This is Ryan, an old mining camp that was active in the 1920s. In later years, it functioned briefly as a resort hotel and was used as the set for a few episodes of Death Valley Days. It's on private land behind a

locked gate, so don't attempt to go there. Instead, if you want to photograph a ghost town, drive out of Death Valley to the northeast toward Beatty, Nevada, and turn off at Rhyolite. There you'll find the ruins of what was once the biggest city in the area. When Las Vegas was nothing more than a railroad stop and a handful of tents, Rhyolite was a rowdy boomtown served by four stagecoaches each



Looking down at the Badwater area from Dante's View; I used a 200-mm lens to isolate interesting patterns in the valley floor.





Saratoga Spring, at the south end of Death Valley, is a stopping point for migrating waterfowl, including a Canada Goose (*Branta Canadensis*) and American Coots (*Fulica americana*). The Avawatz Mountains rise in the background.

day. The downtown area had concrete sidewalks, electric lights, dozens of saloons and gambling halls, an assortment of restaurants and hotels, a couple of churches, and, of course, brothels. It's a lot quieter now than it was in 1906. Rhyolite is one of the most-photographed ghost towns in the country, but on many visits I've been able to spend half a day photographing the ruins without seeing even one other person.



Salt Creek Pupfish (*Cyprinodon salinus*) mating in Salt Creek.

### Titus Canyon

On your way back to Death Valley, two miles west of Rhyolite, take a detour through Titus Canyon. It's not a short drive. The park service recommends you allow two to three hours, but, if you're a serious photographer, you might want to double that. It's a one-way road, so once you get started, you're committed to it for a while. After crossing the Amargosa Desert, the road climbs into the Grapevine Mountains for some spectacular, sweeping views in the areas of White Pass and Red Pass. This is one place where you might wish you had brought a geologist along to explain what you're seeing. A good alternative is *Geology of Death Valley* by Miller and Wright, which is for sale at the Furnace Creek Visitor Center.

About three miles beyond Red Pass is the ghost town of Leadfield. Unlike Rhyolite, this boomtown went bust almost immediately. Built on hype and exaggeration, it made a lot of money for its unscrupulous promoters, but the prospectors, merchants, and investors weren't so lucky. A post office was established here in August 1926 and closed barely six months later. What remains are mostly corrugated metal shacks, in sharp contrast to Rhyolite's multi-story concrete buildings, making this another great place to stop for photos, with lots of opportunities to experiment with shadows and textures.

A couple miles past Leadfield is a sign describing the petroglyphs in this area. When you photograph the petroglyphs, don't touch them or climb on the rocks; they're thousands of years old and



The Ibex Dunes are the only place in Death Valley where Mojave Fringe-toed Lizards (*Uma scoparia*) occur. The elongated scales on their toes provide traction for running in loose, dry sand.

can't be replaced! Just after the petroglyphs is Klare Spring, a wet spot at the side of the road that is in fact the biggest source of water in the Titus Canyon area. Look carefully in the vegetation along the spring and you might find stream orchids, the only orchid native to the California deserts. The canyon narrows dramatically about three

miles beyond Klare Spring, the near vertical walls at times only about 15 feet apart. Here you'll find intricate mosaics and contrasting rock strata, all created by millions of years of folding, faulting, and erosion. Just as abruptly as it began, the narrow canyon ends when it opens onto an alluvial fan on the eastern side of Death Valley.



Wildrose Canyon at sunset, as seen from the Wildrose Peak trail. Carrying a heavy tripod on the trail may be a nuisance, but it allows you to use a telephoto lens to isolate part of the scene. This photo was taken with a 300-mm lens.





Pacific Chorus Frogs (*Pseudacris regilla*) in amplexus (left); spring snowmelt from the Panamint Mountains provides breeding habitat for these frogs in upper Hanaupah Canyon. A Mojave Collared Lizard (*Crotaphytus bicinctores*) in Wildrose Canyon (right).

### Wildrose Canyon

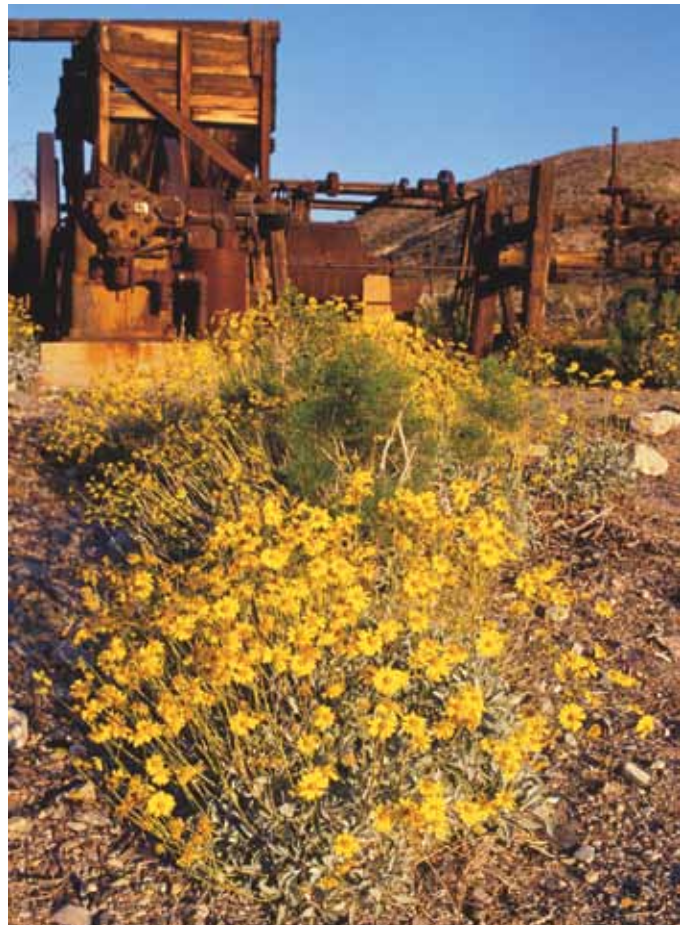
Wildrose Canyon, on the western side of the park, has a little of everything. It's one of my favorite locations for spring wildflowers, with more variety than I've seen in most other places in the park. The road into Wildrose starts near sea level in Panamint Valley, and ends at over 8,000 feet, passing through a variety of desert habitats along the way. If you like to photograph flowers, plan on taking a day just to drive up the canyon, stopping wherever you see something interesting. Hike up one of the side washes in the lower parts of the canyon, and you might find the rare Panamint Daisy, a bright yellow sunflower four inches across that grows on stems up to two feet tall.

Farther up the canyon, you'll find a row of enormous stone kilns that once were used to make charcoal for a silver smelting operation in the Argus Range, west of Panamint Valley. Plan on spending some time at the kilns; their shapes and shadows can make for some dramatic compositions. Near the kilns is a trailhead that will lead you to 9,064-foot Wildrose Peak, a moderately strenuous 4.2-mile hike (each way) with some great views. For a more strenuous hike and even more spectacular views, drive to the end of the dirt road and hike to Telescope Peak, at 11,049 feet the highest point in the park. On both trails, you'll be walking through forests of Piñon Pines, a very different sort of habitat than you saw in the lower parts of the park.

The Wildrose campground, at about 4,100 feet, is a pleasant place to camp — it doesn't get nearly as hot as the lower elevations and seems to be ignored by the vast majority of visitors to the park. Near the campground are a couple of springs that attract warblers, finches, orioles, and many other birds, as well as small mammals. I've had more success photographing jackrabbits, cottontails, and kangaroo rats here than anywhere else. If you're really lucky, maybe you'll have the kind of experience I had one evening.

I had arrived at Wildrose about 5 PM and, after a long day of driving, was eager to stretch my legs and have a look around. I started down the trail that leads past a small spring, thick with mesquite, at the far end of the campground. Almost immediately, I saw a bobcat on the hillside, just above my eye level and no more than ten steps in front of me. I stopped. It stopped. I took a step back; it took a step back. Neither of us knew what to do next. It

was so close, and so unexpected, that it took me a few seconds to really understand what it was. I ran through a checklist in my mind: tufted ears ... short tail ... long legs ... spots ... twice as tall as a house cat ... this was definitely a bobcat.



Old mining equipment in Warm Springs Canyon makes an interesting contrast to this Bush Sunflower (*Encelia actoni*).





A wide-angle lens includes the area surrounding this building in the Rhyolite ghost town and adds drama to the sky.



A wide-angle shot of this corrugated tin building in Leadfield, a 1920s mining camp on the Titus Canyon Road, conveys the isolation that the residents must have felt.



*Have I mentioned that my camera was still in the car,  
a hundred yards behind me?*

For the next few seconds, while the cat and I stared at each other, I had two conflicting impulses. The first, of course, was to run back for my camera. The other was to stay where I was and enjoy the moment — I had never been this close to a bobcat before, and might never be again. And besides, did I really expect a bobcat to just sit and wait for me? I decided to go for the camera. All the way to the car, and all the way back, I cursed myself. How could I be so stupid as to walk away from my camera in a place like Wildrose? I knew I'd never see the cat again, at least not that close.

I guessed the cat would go up the hill, so on the way back I went up the hill myself, coming over a low ridge a few yards above where it had been. I stood for a while, scanning the hillside as well as the trail and spring below. Nothing. Then I thought I saw movement behind a sagebrush about 20 feet below me. Something was different about that bush; the ground behind it was the wrong shade of brown. I aimed my lens at the bush, trying to focus beyond the branches on whatever might be behind them. I couldn't believe what I was seeing when the cat's face popped into focus. Yes, the bobcat had sat — literally — right where I had



A petroglyph near Klare Spring on the Titus Canyon Road; photographing petroglyphs can be a challenge — they blend with the rocks and are often hard to “read” in a photo. Increasing the contrast when processing the image can help.

left it, and waited for me to return with my camera. Thank you, Mother Nature!



Panamint Daisy (*Enceliopsis covillei*) and a Black-tailed Jackrabbit (*Lepus californicus*) near Wildrose Canyon. Backlighting can make the flowers (or the ears) appear more brilliant, and cause them to pop out from the background.



A Great Basin Whiptail (*Aspidoscelis tigris tigris*, left) digs for insects in Wildrose Canyon. Whiptails are fast-moving and skittish, but with enough patience you can get a good photo. A Western Fence Lizard (*Sceloporus occidentalis*, right) on the ruins of an old stone cabin in Wildrose Canyon.





### Equipment Choices

Everyone's needs are different when it comes to camera equipment, depending on what subjects you like to photograph, what you plan to do with the photos, and your budget. If you want a basic outfit for shooting scenics, small wildlife, and close-ups in Death Valley, I'd recommend a digital SLR and three lenses — a medium-range telephoto zoom, a macro lens, and a wide-angle zoom. Add to that a sturdy tripod with a quick-release mount, a collapsible reflector, a pocket full of memory cards, and maybe a flash, and you should be able to handle whatever photo opportunities you find. Personally, the lens I use most for reptile photography is a 105-mm f2.8 macro lens, which allows me to fill the frame with my subject while maintaining a reasonable distance. When I need a longer lens, I like to use a 300 mm or an 80–400 mm zoom. For wide-angle shots, I use a 17–35 mm zoom or a 10.5 mm fisheye lens.

A number of “super-zoom” lenses are available. These go all the way from wide-angle to telephoto in one lens. Nikon and Canon each make an 18–200 mm zoom. Although tempting to get one of these and use it for everything, keep in mind that they're generally not as sharp as fixed focal length lenses or zooms with a smaller range. You'll have to consider the tradeoff between sharpness and convenience, which is not always an easy decision. I've missed many photos because my subject moved while I was changing lenses. In general, higher-priced lenses make sharper photos (when you're comparing lenses of the same focal length and maximum aperture), but that's not always the case. Before buying a new lens, read some reviews and see what other photographers think of it. I've found some very useful reviews at [www.kenrockwell.com](http://www.kenrockwell.com) and [www.dpreview.com](http://www.dpreview.com).

### Food and Lodging

All of the locations mentioned in this article can be found on the park map you receive when you pay your entrance fee. More detailed maps and guidebooks are available at the visitor center at Furnace Creek. Information also is available on the official Death Valley website at [www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva) as well as a number of privately owned websites (just Google “Death Valley”).

Several campgrounds are available in the park, at elevations ranging from sea level to 8,000 feet; your choice of where to camp may depend on the time of year and your tolerance for extreme temperatures. Lodging inside the park ranges from motel-like accommodations at Panamint Springs and Stovepipe Wells to the mid-range Furnace Creek Ranch and more upscale Furnace Creek Inn. Outside the park, lodging can be found at Shoshone, Death Valley Junction, Beatty, and other towns. Stores, restaurants, and gas stations are located at Panamint Springs, Stovepipe Wells, and Furnace Creek.



A Side-blotched Lizard (*Uta stansburiana*) basks on a rock at the side of the road near the campground in Wildrose Canyon.





This young Mojave Desert Sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes cerastes*) was climbing into a Desertgold Plant (*Geraea canescens*) in the Ibox Dunes. Arboreal activity is rare in Sidewinders.

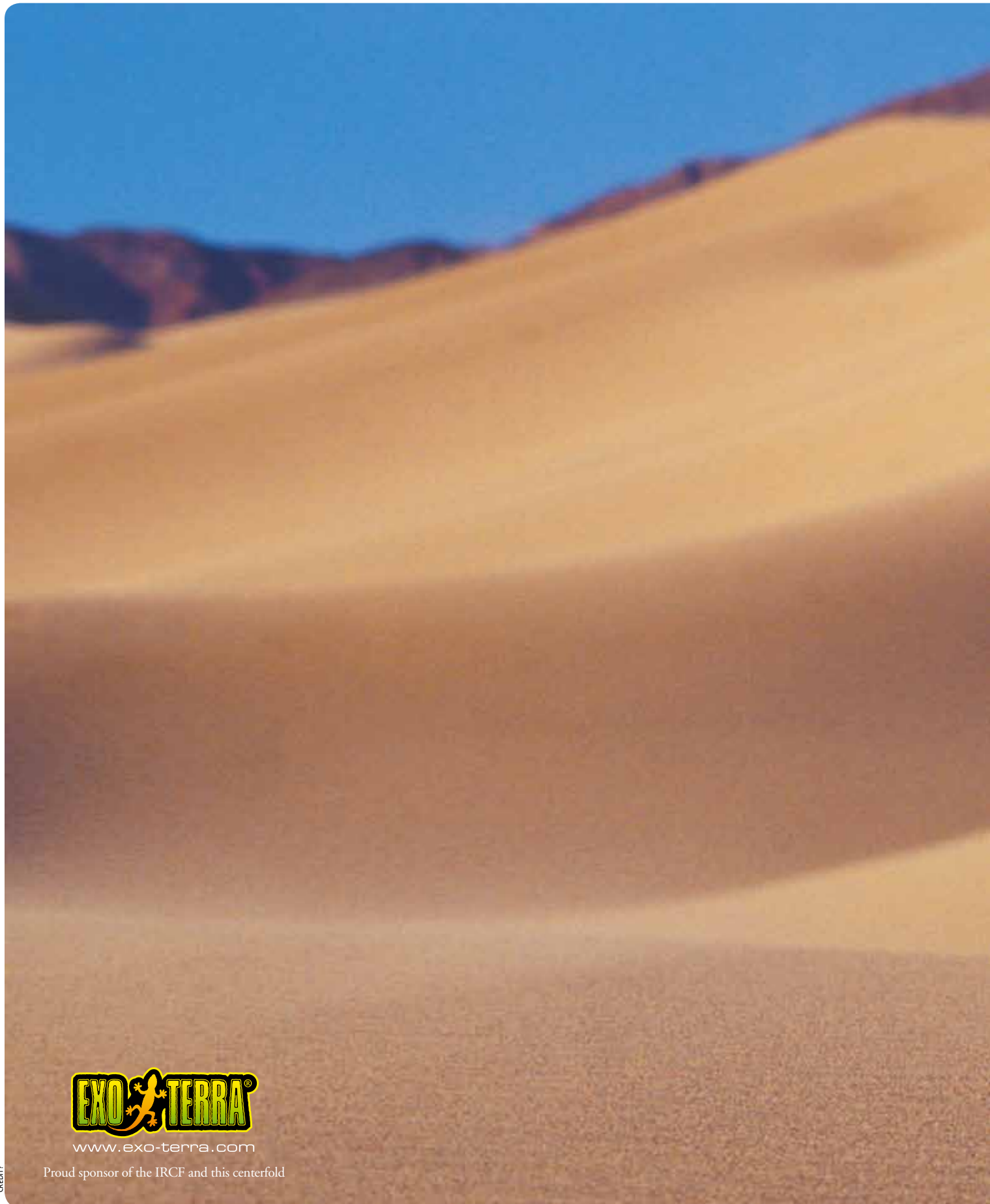


Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) can be surprisingly tolerant of photographers — but only when they're in the mood. This one gave me a couple of minutes and then it was gone.

I moved left for a better view. The cat looked at me for a moment, then walked downhill toward the spring — and lay down in the shade of another bush. A minute later, it stood up and disappeared into the mesquite. That was that. I stayed for two days and never saw the cat again. I had three photos — and one more surprise from Death Valley.

**About the Author**

Since 1978, Dan Suzio's photographs have appeared regularly in a wide variety of publications and museums, including *Audubon*, *Bay Nature*, and *Your Big Backyard* magazines, as well as the newly redesigned California Academy of Sciences. To see more photographs, and to order prints, cards, or other products, visit [www.DanSuzio.com](http://www.DanSuzio.com).



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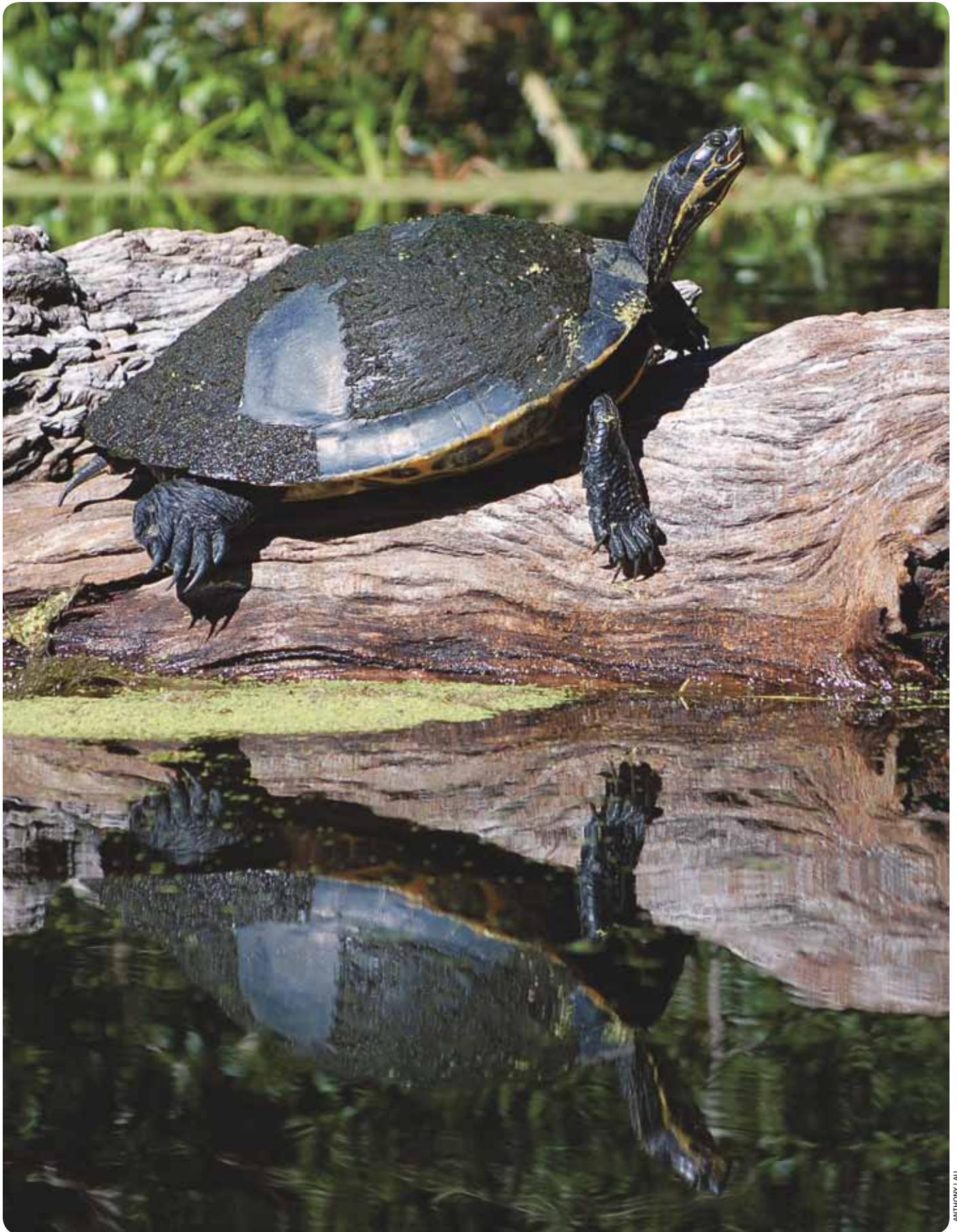
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A Mojave Desert Sidewinder (*Crotalus cerastes*)





*Cerastes cerastes*) in the Ibex Dunes of Death Valley.



ANTHONY LAU

A Suwannee Cooter (*Pseudemys suwanniensis*) basking on a log should remain a familiar sight thanks to new rules limiting the take and possession of the state's freshwater turtles.