How To Photograph A Butterfly

by Jeffrey Glassberg

Step 1. Buy a camera.

OK, you say, but which? There are hundreds of different camera choices! Before making your choice, check your photographic priorities. Is your primary goal to obtain photographs that you can sell, for use on magazine covers or calendars, for example? To document the species that you see? To help identify the species that you see? Or just to obtain some neat photographs?

Any camera will allow you to photograph butterflies — but, depending upon your purpose, some cameras may work better than others. Here, I only discuss digital cameras (In the introduction to Butterflies through Binoculars: The West, written in 2000, I said “The performance of digital cameras has now approached that of traditional cameras and, in the future, film will be used for special purposes.” That future is now.), of which there are currently three major types — point-and-shoot, DSLR-like point-and-shoot, and DSLR cameras.