



Distinctive Image

featuring...

Daniel D. R. Charbonnet III, FPSA, EPSA

Westwood, Massachusetts



Nursery Web Spider

The *PSA Journal* continues its *Distinctive Image* series, this time featuring Photographic Society of America (PSA) artist **Daniel D. R. Charbonnet III, FPSA, EPSA** who specializes in Nature Photography and who is known to have a spectacular collection of Spider Images that he shares with us in this issue. Dan has been a member of the Society since 1973 and currently resides in Westwood, Massachusetts.

Although Dan has achieved (Pre Conversion) 3 Galaxies in CPID; a Diamond rating in ND (Pre Conversion where the Nature Diamond was between 5 Stars and 1 Galaxy); 4 Stars in the Photo Travel Division; and 2 Stars in the Photojournalism Division, he only applied for Recognition of Photographic Achievement in 2010 and was granted the Distinction of Excellence (EPSA) at the conference in Charleston.

Well known to Society members because of the enormous amounts of services that Dan has

provided, the *Journal* can only offer highlights of Dan's efforts, as the list would be too long to publish. Most currently, he is a candidate for National Office as the Exhibition Services Vice President for the Photographic Society of America (PSA) and if elected will take office at the close of the PSA Conference in Colorado Springs. For the past two years he has performed the job of Chairman of the PSA International Exhibition. When Dan first joined the Society he became interested in the activities of the Nature Division (ND) and the Color Slide Division, now called the Color Projected Image Division (CPID). For ND he has served terms as Director in the Slide Competitions For Individuals; Subject Identification Service; New Member Image Evaluations; and the Digital Interclub Competitions, which he organized and initiated; he has served in an officer's capacity for ND: Second and First Vice Chair and Chairperson for



Argiope wrapping prey

two terms, and from 2006 to 2008 Dan chaired the Nature sections of the PSA International Exhibition. He is a much sought after judge for international and local competitions.

Dan's record of service to the Society includes: terms on the PSA Honors Committee, which he chaired in 2009 and 2010; and the PSA Ethics Review Board. At conferences he can be seen helping out on the Conference Equipment Committee and he has presented many Nature programs at conferences. Dan was elected an Associate (APSA) of the Society in 1995 and a Fellow (FPSA) in 2005.

Locally, Dan has been a strong supporter of New England Camera Clubs and photographers. He has presented multiple hands-on workshops on various creative techniques at the annual New England Council of Camera Clubs' (NECCC) Conference in Massachusetts. For service performed for NECCC Dan has been honored with an MNEC (Master Member, NECCC) and he has been designated as an Honorary Member of the Photographic Society of Rhode Island. He belongs to the Massachusetts Camera Naturalists, Greater Lynn Photographic Association, and the Stony Brook Camera Club, performing various services for them over the years.

Dan received his education at Northeastern University and graduated with a BS in Electrical Engineering. After 35 years as an engineer specializing in power systems, he retired but still keeps his hand in as a part-time consultant designing electrical substations.



Crab Spider with Carpenter Bee

The road to discovering photography has been different for each PSA member and so it has been for Dan, who tells us, "I had always been a snap shooter with a trusty Minolta rangefinder camera. It was stolen on my first day in country when stationed in Vietnam and on the second day I became the proud owner of a Minolta SRT-101 courtesy of the base PX. A couple of years after my return home, my mother was responsible for getting me into organized photography to get my mind off of my recently failed marriage. Since then, photography has been a pleasurable uphill climb and a major part of my life. Mother was never wrong." For Dan, photography was therapeutic.

Photos © Daniel Charbonnet III, FPSA, EPSA

ARTIST'S STATEMENT



Writing this *Artist's Statement* was tougher than I thought it would be. Photography has become such an ingrained part of my life it was difficult to step back and put in words why this is so. Like photography itself, the reasons are many and varied. Quite simply, I enjoy it. Like my career as an engineer, it fulfills my need to be creative and to constantly be learning.

In the years since I joined PSA my goals and aims have changed as my skills and interest have developed and evolved. Creating technically good images has always been a key goal that has been significantly impacted by digital captures. While image-editing software has made it easy to overcome technical problems with the digital capture, I still endeavor to capture the best image possible in camera. This same software has led me to attempting photography under much less than optimal conditions, conditions I would tend to stay away from in the film era. Also key is trying to capture a subject in a way that makes people viewing my images see what I saw in the first place. I find the process is a constant learning experience that keeps photography fresh and exciting in my mind. While I rarely take images specifically with competition in mind I do try to be aware of the competitive potential of the moment. I do admit that this competitive potential was more important to me in my earlier days than in the present. Sharing, whether by shows or by teaching, is now a more important aspect of my photography. While nature and natural history are my favorite subjects, they are by no means my only interest in photography. I try not to think of my subjects as objects but as arrangements of light, form, color and texture and enjoy trying to arrange those elements in a pleasing manner. I also delight in being able to morph images from documentary to fantasy in fresh and new ways.



Jumping Spider with Spittle Bug

Technique

My technique for spider photography varies depending on whether I am taking the shot locally or on a trip, primarily due to the difference in equipment I have available in the situation. My preferred technique is the use of a macro lens, a focusing rail, a tripod, extension tubes and electronic flash.

- While not universal, I try to use a tripod whenever possible; it reduces the number of moving elements, especially when the spider is on a flower subject to blowing in the wind and it lets me set up on a spider to compose and focus the image then lets me wait until an insect comes along to be caught by the spider.
- With the use of a tripod comes the use of a focusing rail as well. With close up focusing it is impossible to make the fine adjustments in the positioning of the tripod required for accurate focusing. When doing close ups I focus by moving the entire camera in and out from the subject instead of turning the lens barrel or using automatic focusing. Both turn the lens barrel which also changes the magnification of the image. While not really a problem with composition, changing the magnification does change the already small depth of field which could be a problem depending on the zone of sharp focus.
- When I have the working room, I mount my 180mm Macro lens on the focusing rail. This lets me stay outside the spider's safe area and reduces its tendency to try to escape. Since many of the spiders are fairly small, I also use extension tubes with the Macro lens for greater magnification. If that still does not give me sufficient magnification I will switch to my 100mm Macro with the extension tubes since the same tubes will give me greater magnification with the shorter lens.
- I set a small f/stop to give a wider depth of field. I mount a twin flash on the front of my lens and use that for exposure in the ETTL mode (an internal metering system to control exposure in an automatic or partially automatic way). This lets me freeze any motion during the exposure. I synchronize the flash with the ambient light to prevent my background from going completely black. Theoretically I should also use mirror lockup for these close ups but admit I frequently forget to.

Having recently purchased Helicon Focus® software and a motorized focusing rail, I hope to expand my technique to include focus stacking for even better depth of field and depth of detail in the future, provided I can somehow prevent the spider from moving during the series of shots required.



Crab Spider on Goldenrod



Tarantula face



Crab Spider with Sweat Bee