



Yukon Spice

Photographing Greyhounds for Fun



Greyhound, close-up

Jon Fishback
Vancouver, Washington

Volunteer opportunities abound in this country and it can be a blessing when the opportunity for community service coincides with one's love for photography. Many states have organizations that rescue unwanted animals. Some of these groups are in need of photographs for advertising available animals on their websites and newsletters. As a photographer you can pick and choose your subject, from the obvious dogs and cats to the more exotic reptiles.

Greyhound racing can be captivating. Not only do they work for a living, they are also magnificent, beautiful animals. But, an average greyhound only races until four or five years old and then an adoptive home is needed. After adopting two greyhounds, it was easy to volunteer and become involved in a local rescue organization. The need for quality photographs of the dogs was obvious.

Associating with the Greyhound placement group, it became easy to get permission to photograph the animals racing. **Now talk**



Belinda

about having fun! The particulars of this type of photography dictate at least a 300 mm lens. Standing next to the track is not an option. The dogs come by so fast; there is no way to keep them in the frame. Step back 50 or 60 feet from the track. The best location is the first 50 yards out of the box because within three steps, the dogs are going 45 miles per hour. The ability to pan the camera at speeds above 1/250th is a must, so a bit of practice on moving cars is important. Try to use ISO 800 during the day and keep shutter speeds as fast as possible. Don't try to photograph at night, it just won't work. Unless interested in some very abstract images restrict your fun to the weekend matinees.

The needs of the volunteer rescue organizations are quite different. A good headshot and a nice full length of the Greyhounds that are up for adoption are needed. The dogs that need rescuing are retiring from the track and are still quite active. After several months of working on a project a formula was developed that worked quite well, using a good helper. The person handling the dog can make or break the photographs. Try to work in open shade for obvious reasons. Here in the Northwest it is easier than in some places as there are many overcast days. Use a monopod set at about 36 inches, down to the dog's level, as

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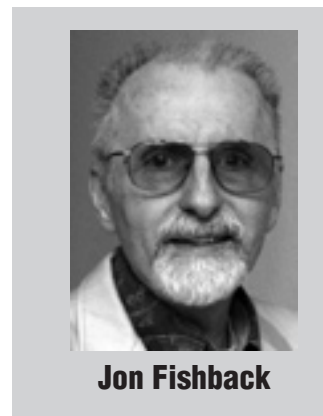
this makes for a more satisfying finished product, not to mention how it makes the dogs feel more comfortable. Use shutter speeds above 1/125th when possible. Try to use a plain background or settle for one that is not distracting. In the worst case, raise the camera a bit and use a large expanse of grass as the background and always eliminate clutter when possible. The completely automatic digital camera has come into its own in work like this because the dogs have fleeting expressions and manually focusing on the fly would be quite difficult. Use a completely automatic Single Lens Reflex (SLR) camera, and apologize to no one.

Teach the helper how to get the leash on the backside of the dog so as to minimize retouching and to pose the dog, throw something in the direction that they should look. Using this technique results in a dog with a closed mouth and raised ears; the perfect pose. Try it at home by waiting until the family dog is panting and having fun. Stop the dog for a minute and have someone hold it. Throw a crumpled piece of paper to the side and watch the dog's mouth and ears. Work quickly, as the whole thing revolves around reflexes and the moment is fleeting.



Violet's Fury

It is guaranteed that rescue organizations will be pleased to receive good photographs. Many of the highlights of my month are photographing Greyhounds. Maybe other photographers would like to try something like this? 🐕



Jon Fishback

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