

# Lessons from a pro on taking better outdoor photographs

BY PHILLIP GENTRY  
FOR THE JOURNAL

Some things about the outdoors haven't changed — they've just updated with the times.

In grandpa's day, he sat around the campfire and told stories of great days afield. He used words and emotion to share his great love and triumphs of the outdoors.

Today, you just take a picture and post it to Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat or whatever social media platform you prefer. In some ways, social media is better because the photo and a sentence set the stage for telling a great outdoor adventure the next time you're sitting with your friends over breakfast.

"You don't have to have a high-dollar camera," said Brian Carroll, who owns Marine Marketing Group in Charleston. "Great photos come from the photographer, not the camera. I've seen and taken some great shots from an iPhone or even an old 2.0 megapixel point and shoot."

Carroll said probably the biggest technical mistake most casual photographers make is with lighting. It's in the wrong place and at the wrong time.

"As a rule of thumb, always put the sun at the photographer's back so it shines on the subject," Carroll said. "If the sun is behind the subject, all you get is silhouette. Use the sun to your advantage, but a.m. and p.m. hours are best, say from sunup to 9 a.m., and from



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**Taking better outdoor photographs is easily achieved by keeping a few simple pointers in mind.**

4 p.m. till dark. Soft light is more forgiving than a harsh overhead light."

Subject matter is the next issue. A cooler full of dead fish or a dead deer in the back of a pickup truck make for boring and unimaginative photographs. To appeal to the viewer, you need to have the subject in the photo with the game or fish.

"Take your photos as soon as you lay your hands on the animal," Carroll said. "Live fish pictures always look better because the fish is vibrant, full of color and there's a natural background. If it's a deer, duck or other hunted animal, take your photos right after the kill so that the eyes, fur, skin, feathers are still clear and glossy."

Everyone knows the closer you hold the fish to the camera, the bigger it looks, but there's more to it than that, and there's more reasoning behind positioning the animal in relation to the camera than just making a 2-pound bass look like an 8-pounder.

"Focus on the animal,"

Carroll said. "The hunter/angler is in a supporting role. Sure, you want everyone to see that it's whoever is holding that monster buck or fish that caught it, but the primary focus is on the game.

"If it's a trophy deer, position the head up so the viewer can see whatever makes the rack impressive. If it's a fish, show its size, color and girth. Always work to reduce any white underbelly. If there's blood or signs of wounds, try to conceal those."

His last advice pertains to the hunter/angler in the photo. He can't emphasize enough the need to smile in the photo.

"Show some emotion," Carroll said. "Put your hunting clothes back on if you had to take the deer somewhere to get a photo. Take the deer out of the truck and place it in a natural setting and smile."

**PHILLIP GENTRY** is the host of PG & Boatgirl Outdoors Podcast. Download the podcast on Apple, Google Play, Spotify or at [pgandboatgirl.com](http://pgandboatgirl.com).