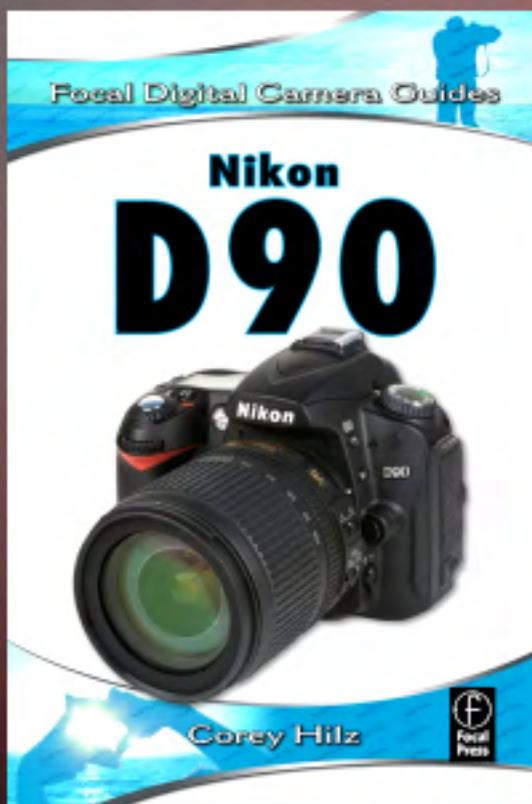


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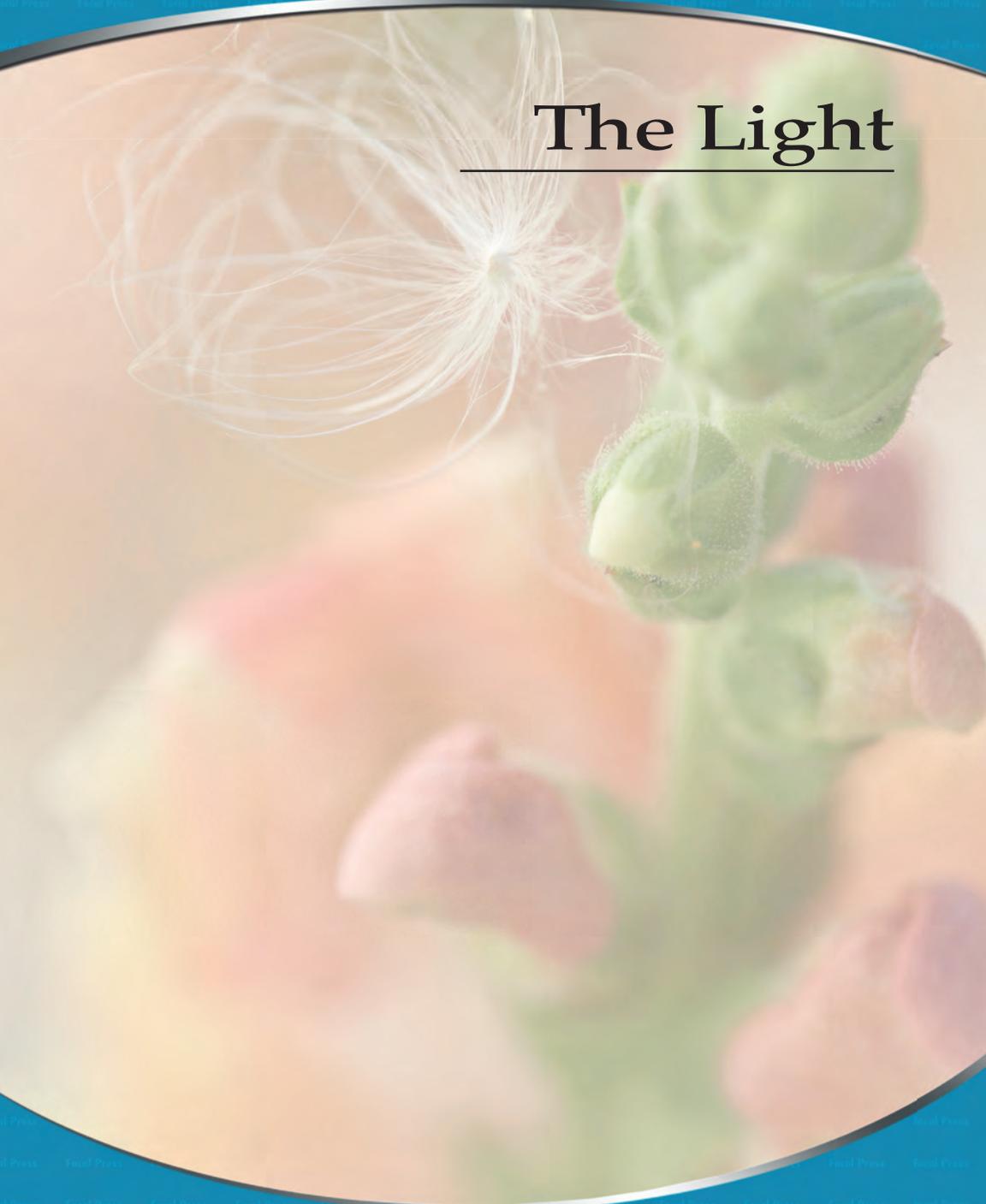
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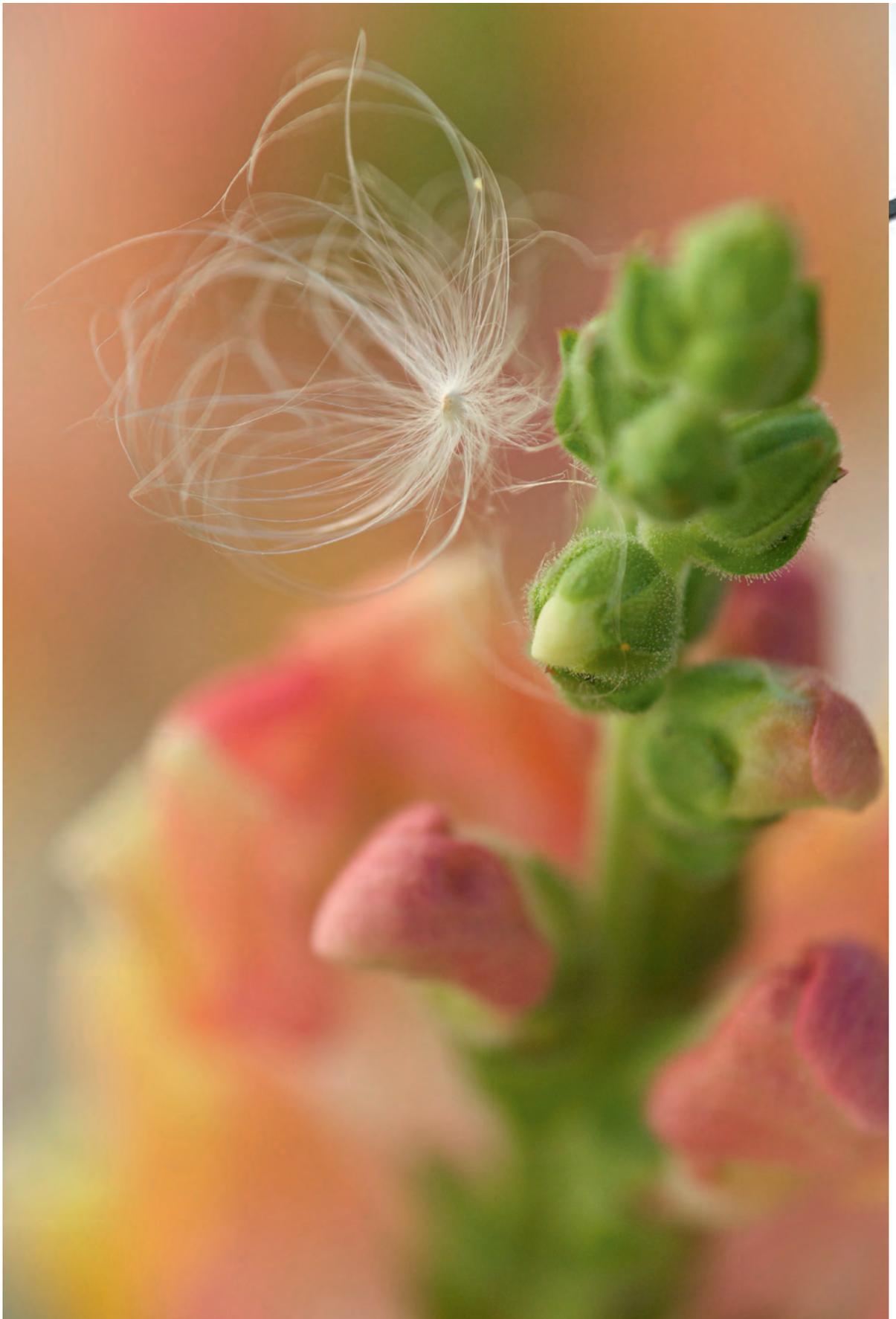


**Nikon D90 Digital
Camera Guide
Hiltz
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Part 3

The Light





USING NATURAL LIGHT

No matter what you're photographing, the light is a key component. Without light, from some source, you wouldn't have a photograph. It affects the appearance of your subject, creates a mood, and directs the viewer's eye. In this section we'll look at photography using natural light.

TIME OF DAY

What time of day you take a picture outside has an enormous impact on the appearance of your photograph. As the sun moves through the sky the quality of the light changes. Early and late in the day are the best times to be out photographing. Even before sunrise you can have rich warm colors in the sky, lighting up scattered clouds. In the early morning and late afternoon the sun is low on the horizon. When it's at this low angle it throws a warm light over the landscape and everything from trees to sign posts cast long shadows. As the sun moves higher up in the sky you lose the warm light and long shadows.

TIP

Rule of thumb when working with sunlight: The light is good when your shadow is longer than you are.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET

Look for vibrant colors in the sky at sunrise and sunset. The warm hues of yellow, orange, red, and pink add dramatic color to a landscape. Include any interesting cloud formations that

roll through the sky. Some of the best sunrise and sunset photographs are taken before the sun is above the horizon or after it has dropped below the horizon.



Fading color at sunset.



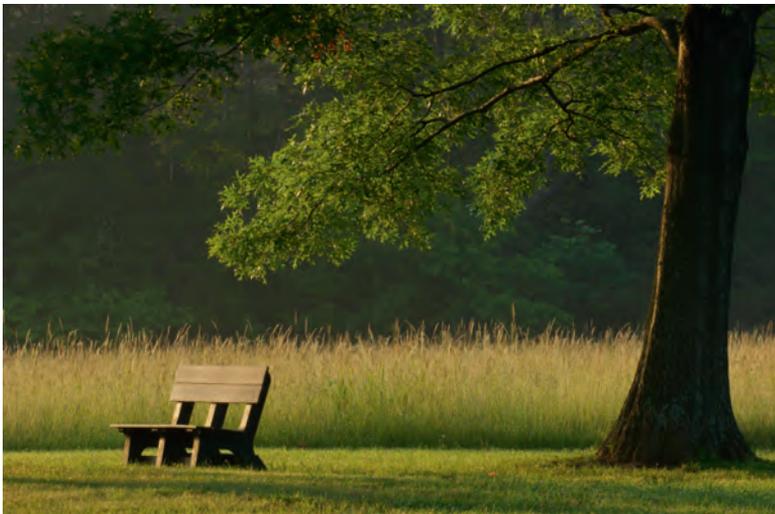
Besides warm light at sunrise, water will also be calm, making it perfect for reflections.

MORNING AND AFTERNOON

For a few hours after sunrise and before sunset, the light is still warm, attractively lighting many subjects. In the morning and late afternoon the sun is lower in the sky.



Late morning offers warm light, as well as a rich blue sky.



In the morning the angle of light is still low enough to produce dramatic lighting.

MID-DAY

The middle of the day is generally the worst time of the day to photograph outside. With the sun high overhead the light is harsh and contrasty. This type of lighting appears flat and is not an appealing look for subjects.

DIRECTION OF LIGHT

FRONT LIGHTING

When the light is coming from behind you (over your shoulder), your subject is front lit. Front lighting is good for showing details because it evenly lights up the subject.



Front lighting throws a warm, but even light on this bow of the boat.



The sun over my shoulder strongly lights the front of the building while the storm clouds above create a dramatic backdrop.

SIDE LIGHTING

Side lighting is when the light is coming from your left or right. You'll find side lighting in the morning and late afternoons when the sun is low in the sky. It's good for emphasizing texture and showing detail. It can help define the shape of many subjects whether you're photographing a landscape or a city. Shadows are more apparent when there is side lighting.



Side lighting brings out the texture of the rocky ground.



The shadows help fill in the right side of the composition and lead the eye through the image.

BACK LIGHTING

Back lighting occurs when the sun is behind your subject. Back lighting can be dramatic. You can use back lighting to create silhouettes. If the backlighting is strong enough it can create a glow around your subject called rim lighting. With backlighting it can be more challenging for the camera to properly expose your photograph. Be sure to use the monitor to review your image and see if you need to make any adjustments.



Use backlighting to create graphic silhouettes.



Backlighting gives a glow to the leaves on the tree and the Spanish moss hanging in its branches.

DIFFUSED LIGHTING

Cloudy days are also a great time to go outside and photograph. Overcast days produce a diffused light that is soft and even. You capture excellent detail in the highlights and shadows of your subject. Diffused light lets you avoid the high contrast of direct sunlight that can be a problem for some subjects. On cloudy days you could spend the whole day photographing outside because you don't have to worry about harsh mid-day lighting.



Diffused light eliminated the possibility of harsh bright spots and allowed me to retain the detail of the pale clematis petals.



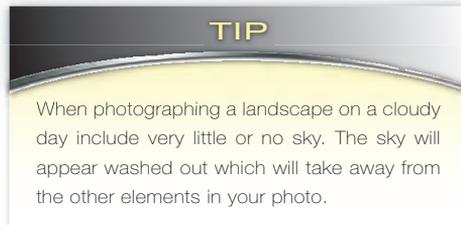
Soft light on the chain helped retain detail in the shadows at the top of the image. The isolated composition removes any references for scale. Each link of the chain is at least six inches long.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If it isn't sunny outside it doesn't mean it's a bad time of day to go out and photograph. Inclement weather such as fog, rain, and snow offer some unique shooting opportunities. Fog can magically transform a landscape. With fog hanging in the air it can make a scene mysterious and moody.

When plants and flower get wet their colors become more saturated. Getting out to photograph right after the rain stops is ideal. Even photographing in light rain is manageable. Just make sure you're dressed for the conditions. Aside from a rain jacket to keep you dry you want to have your camera protected too. While you could bring along a plastic bag, a variety of companies make rain covers for cameras. They include FM Photography (Shutterhat), OP/TECH USA (Rainsleeve), and Kata (GDC Elements Cover).

If you're going out in the snow you definitely want to bundle up. If you stay warm you'll want to stay out photographing longer. It's no fun to stay out shooting when you're cold and wet. Photographing while it's snowing can give your photos a different look with the snow suspended in the air. Or get outside when the snow stops while everything is covered in a pristine blanket of white.



The fog wraps around the trees drawing your attention to the treetops emerging from the mist.



Just after it rained the lily pad is covered with water drops along with a lone frog.



Look for details after a snowstorm, such as this rock at the edge of a frozen pond.

LIGHTING COMPARISON

A location or subject can look quite different depending on the type of lighting. Take a look at these examples and how the feeling of the photo changes with the light.

SIDE LIGHTING VS. FRONT LIGHTING

By moving my position I was able to photograph this small scene with both front lighting and side lighting. In the front lighting photo the azaleas and Spanish moss are evenly lit all the way across the image. From the side the shadows are much more apparent for a more dramatic feel.



Front lighting.



Side lighting.

DIFFUSED LIGHTING VS. DIRECT SUNLIGHT

In these two photos the composition is the same as they were taken from the same spot. All that changed was the lighting. The leaf and water drops were shaded, then the sun poked through between some branches and all of a sudden they were sunlit. The direct sunlight highlights each droplet making them stand out more than under the diffused lighting.



Diffused lighting.



Direct sunlight.

