

Through My Electronic Viewfinder

In Focus, July 2007 Issue

Westchester Photographic Society Newsletter

Summer in Westchester always presents new challenges and opportunities for the photographer. This summer is no exception. First, we've had to contend with some pretty bizarre weather from violent early summer storms to wearing jackets on the Fourth of July to suffering the hot, hazy, humid days more typical of August than early July.

I've had to cancel our July field trip to Ward Pound Reservation as the early storms knocked down many of the old specimen trees I planned to use as photo subjects and scenic backgrounds.

Our future field trips to NYC have also been challenged. In Maym the Mayor's Office of Film, Theatre and Broadcasting has proposed a new set of rules for restricting photography on the streets of NYC. They tried to sneak through the new rules without any input from street photographers. Fortunately the American Civil Liberties Union objected and the New York Times publicized the new regulations and got the deadline for public comment extended to August 3rd. We have sent our objections to the Mayor and the Film office and urge you to do the same. If the new rules go through, you will need a permit and liability insurance to do casual photography on the streets of NY.

The California legislature is also engaged in a sneak attack on photographers. They have introduced a bill that changes photo licensing agreements retroactively. Basically, if you paid licensing fees in the past for using a dead celebrity's photo, the people you should have paid may suddenly have changed retroactively, and you may now be subjected to additional licensing fees and liabilities!

Even in Europe, the EU is trying to impose a new tax on any still camera that can also shoot video. This would greatly raise the price of many digicams in Europe and stifle future technological developments.

Other current challenges to photographers include facing arrest for photographing any child that isn't yours or even your child in any pose that could be considered suggestive, photographing on trains, highways, airports, bridges or any other sensitive area, and photographing of any police officer or public official doing anything.

What's left to photograph? For nature photographers in Westchester this summer we still have a good supply of flowers, butterflies, bugs and birds to challenge our photographic skills.

Dick Budnik