

Monthly Theme: Insects with Wings – Discovering the Small World Around Us

For many photographers, insects are easy to overlook. They're small, constantly moving, and often disappear before we even raise the camera. Yet they are among the most fascinating photographic subjects we can find.

This month's assignment challenges us to photograph an **insect with visible wings** as the dominant subject. While the theme may sound straightforward, it offers an opportunity to improve many aspects of photography—from observation and patience to lighting, composition, and macro technique.

Slow Down and Observe

Successful insect photography rarely begins with pressing the shutter. It begins with watching.

Spend a few minutes observing your subject before taking photographs. Notice where it lands, how it feeds, how often it returns to the same flower, or which direction it faces. Many insects follow predictable patterns, allowing you to anticipate the moment rather than chase it.

Patience is often the most valuable piece of equipment in your camera bag.

Find Beautiful Light

The best insect photographs are usually made during the "golden hours" shortly after sunrise or before sunset.

Morning offers several advantages:

- Softer, more flattering light
- Less harsh shadows
- Calmer wind
- Cooler temperatures that often make insects less active
- Dew drops that can add sparkle and interest

Cloudy days can also produce wonderful images by creating soft, even lighting that reveals delicate wing detail.

Wings Tell the Story

Because this month's assignment specifically requires **visible wings**, think about how to showcase them.

Ask yourself:

- Are the wings open or closed?
- Does backlighting reveal their intricate patterns?
- Can sunlight illuminate their transparency?
- Does the wing position enhance the composition?

Sometimes moving only a few inches changes the angle enough to transform an ordinary photograph into one that highlights the remarkable structure of an insect's wings.

It's About More Than Close-Ups

Many photographers assume this assignment requires extreme macro photography. It doesn't.

Consider a variety of approaches:

- A butterfly resting on a colorful flower.
- A dragonfly perched on a reed overlooking a pond.
- A bee collecting pollen.
- A moth illuminated by soft morning light.
- A cicada emerging from its shell.
- A flying insect captured in motion.
- An environmental portrait showing both the insect and its habitat.

Sometimes showing where an insect lives creates a stronger image than filling the frame with the insect alone.

Composition Still Matters

Even when photographing tiny subjects, the same compositional principles apply.

Think about:

- A clean, uncluttered background.
- Adequate space in front of the insect if it is facing or flying in a particular direction.
- Diagonal perches that add energy.
- Selective depth of field to isolate the subject.
- Complementary colors between the insect and its surroundings.

Remember that the insect should immediately become the viewer's center of interest.

Focus on the Eyes

Whenever possible, make the insect's eyes critically sharp.

Just as with birds or mammals, viewers instinctively connect with sharp eyes. Even with shallow depth of field, sharp eyes help create a compelling image.

Don't Forget Behavior

Some of the most memorable insect photographs capture a moment rather than simply documenting a species.

Look for behaviors such as:

- Feeding
- Pollinating flowers
- Landing or taking off
- Territorial displays
- Mating
- Emerging after metamorphosis
- Cleaning wings or antennae

Behavior adds life and tells a story.

Technical Tips

- Use a fast shutter speed for active insects.
- Increase ISO if necessary to maintain sharpness.
- Consider continuous autofocus for insects in flight.
- Use exposure compensation when photographing bright wings against dark backgrounds.
- A small amount of fill flash or reflected light can reveal detail without looking artificial.

Don't hesitate to experiment. Digital photography allows us to refine our technique with every frame.

Challenge Yourself

This month, try photographing more than butterflies.

Look for:

- Dragonflies
- Damselflies
- Bees
- Wasps
- Moths
- Beetles
- Flies
- Cicadas
- Grasshoppers with visible wings
- Any naturally occurring winged insect that fits the competition rules

The more diverse your subjects, the more you'll discover about the remarkable miniature world around us.

This assignment isn't simply about photographing insects. It's about learning to notice details, anticipate behavior, and create images that reveal beauty many people never stop to see.

Happy shooting!

By ChatGPT