

## Shutterbugs Featuring Mike Baird

Shutterbugs Featuring Mike Baird - rough draft for <http://slocoastjournal.com/> submitted 05 June 2011 - published at <http://slocoastjournal.com/docs/shutterbugs.html> 01 July 2011  
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Judy Sullivan, feel free to use some or all of these candidate images.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/sets/72157626895062474/>

I thought I'd try to make the article more useful by including a lesson with each image.

Edit to your delight. I don't need to approve any changes.

Thanks for the opportunity. SLO Coast Journal rocks.

Best, Mike 805-704-2064 mike [at] mikebaird d o t com

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## Shutterbugs featuring Mike Baird

Photography, for me, is mostly an excuse to get outside, socialize with others, and document and better appreciate nature in my role as a California State Park docent. For people like me with almost no artistic ability to paint or sketch, photography is an opportunity to accidentally make an image that may greatly entertain myself or others. I believe that a photo taken but not shared might just as well have never been taken. Creation of such Intellectual Property for single instance use, which is not propagated or otherwise preserved, may be largely a wasted effort when seen in the grander scheme of things. It is human nature to want to share our experiences with others, and photo sharing using a Flickr Group

[flickr.com/groups/photomorrobay/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/photomorrobay/) for photo sharing and a Yahoo! Group

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/photomorrobay/> for discussion and event scheduling, has become a "Facebook equivalent" social outlet for over 300 local SLO County photographers.

These diverse individuals collaborate via [photomorrobay.com](http://photomorrobay.com), which is a social network I opportunistically put together while collecting information as I was writing an article [howto.digitalchocolate.org](http://howto.digitalchocolate.org) in 2006 for the Central Coast Natural History Association's [ccnha.org](http://ccnha.org) Nature Notes Newsletter entitled "San Luis Obispo County California Nature Photographers -- Their Works and Techniques: Interviews with local nature photographers about how they take such great photos." By the time you finish this article, you too may begin to better "get it" as to why photo sharing has become such a powerful social instrument worldwide.

I encourage you to also freely share your photos. It's the best way to promote your skills and end up selling more of your images than you might do otherwise. I say in my Flickr Profile <http://www.flickr.com/people/mikebaird/#credit> that "Life is short, and I get a kick out of seeing others enjoy my images in a responsible way. My motivation for freely sharing almost all of my photographs without compensation, and for almost any purpose, comes from my interest in contributing to a legacy, which I define as the bits one leaves behind on the Internet. This can only be done by having a fair number of images with attribution persist in perpetuity, through

inclusion in a wide number of educational, wiki, archival, governmental, NGO, private, and corporate websites. This follows the LOCKSS (Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe) philosophy for preservation of intellectual property." I have 7445 photos on Flickr, which have been viewed 4.56 million times, with over 3000 new views a day. To emphasize how Flickr facilitates collaboration, a popular photo on my Flickr photostream will have over 100,000 views, be favorited by 400 people, receive 150 comments, and will be invited to 60 groups. If you Google Images "mike baird 'morro bay" you get 27,400 hits, most of which will be authorized re-uses of my photos under the Creative Commons Attribution license associated with most of my images at Flickr. If you hit en.Wikipedia.org and type in the name of any local bird or mammal, it is highly likely that one of my photos is featured on the related description page. I didn't put any of them there, others did. The related wikimedia.org resource page I see today has 244 of my photos utilized [bit.ly/Wikimediamikebaird](http://bit.ly/Wikimediamikebaird) . I throw these numbers out not to impress you, but to encourage you to start taking and sharing *your* photos. It opens up conversations from around the world, from editors, scientists, and students interested in your impressions of the world. Check out [bairdphotos.com/2009expo/](http://bairdphotos.com/2009expo/) for my take on "Flickr: A Radical New Social Networking Paradigm for Photo Sharing." You can find more of my photos at [flickr.bairdphotos.com](http://flickr.bairdphotos.com). Click <http://bit.ly/MikeBairdBestFlickrPics> to see my photos rated "most interesting" by Flickr viewers.

Every serious photographer should acquire Lightroom or Photoshop and learn how to do cropping, basic image contrast and levels enhancement, and sharpening. Adobe Lightroom is my software of choice for preparing my RAW photos for publication on Flickr. Computer post-processing techniques complement photographic skills, and the sum of the two bests either approach. Shoot using the highest resolution and image quality settings your camera supports (RAW if you have it). Good basic equipment (camera body/sensor, lenses, tripod, etc.) does make a difference. Good equipment does not make a professional, but a professional photographer needs reasonably good equipment. My basic set-up is all Canon -- but Nikon users love their equipment just as well." Buy the brand that the people you will be shooting with will use, to best be able to learn from each other.

Taking good photos is part luck, part practiced technique, and skilled limited computer postprocessing. No matter how good a photo you take, it can be improved and be made closer to reality (or into an artistic distortion of reality, if that is your pleasure), through the use of proper photo enhancement and normalization techniques. In fact, if you shoot in RAW format, you *have* to make a JPG conversion decision, if nothing more than to poke "auto" in Lightroom to yield more-or-less what your camera would do if you had set it to record in a lossy JPG format. Etiquette dictates that photos, "excessively manipulated" beyond say what could have been done in a chemical darkroom of the past, are best annotated accordingly. Improving your technique minimizes the need for such enhancements. However, many handheld shots are not going to be perfectly parallel to the horizon; a shot perfectly focused on the eye of your moving subject may, by necessity, be poorly composed by being in the exact geometric center of the frame (versus the more pleasing rule of "thirds") , but such defects are often easily corrected in Lightroom, Photoshop or similar software.

I was a computer scientist, author of a best-selling startup business book [eysu.org](http://eysu.org), and an entrepreneur at [ask.com](http://ask.com) during the insane Internet IPO days in Silicon Valley ten years ago, but I currently make little if any real contribution to society now, merely sharing my passion for photography here on the SLO Central Coast. You are welcome to email me at mike [at] mikebaird dot com. Join our photomorrobay Yahoo! and Flickr Groups by starting at [photomorrobay.com](http://photomorrobay.com)

The images I chose for this page (also purposed in one set at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/sets/72157626895062474/>) have tiny lessons associated with them. Absorb these several lessons and you will be miles ahead of many photographers who consider themselves advanced.

1. Lesson: Get low, get lower, get at the eye-level of your subject if it has eyes.

Harbor Seal Pup, Villa Creek, Estero Bluffs, Cayucos, CA

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/757169050/>

2. Lesson: Remove distracting parts of an image in post-processing.

Black-crowned Night Heron

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/223107486/>

(see <http://morro-bay.com/stealthispicture/images/night-heron-black-crowned/> for the before and after).

3. Lesson: Capture behavioral activity to add interest and scientific value to your nature photos.

Osprey with fish dinner, at Morro Strand State Beach

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/271484045/>

4. Lesson: Take a burst of photos, easily a hundred in a minute's time, to best capture one precious pose.

Use (or crop to) Portrait mode - don't always shoot in Landscape mode.

Cute Little Girl in Pink Dances on Beach

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/4549438383/>

5. Lesson: Blur the background to make the subject pop.

Use a wide aperture, or long focal length lens as was done here (180mm Marco).

Chocolate Lily (*Fritillaria biflora*)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/2353293201>

6. Lesson: Human interest sells - capture an emotion.

Jason Edward's dog Duke lays on a big sloppy wet tongue kiss

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/3520581061/>

7. Lesson: Get close, get closer, you can't get too close. "If your pictures aren't good enough,

you are not close enough” was attributed to war photographer Robert Capa.

Giant Swallowtail - *Papilio cressphontes* - Close-up of a Butterfly

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/3718611889>

8. Lesson: Macro photos especially, let you see afterwards at home what you could not see in the field.

The Spittlebug, or spit bug, produces a cover of frothed-up plant sap resembling spit

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/3597133920/>

9. Lesson: Late or early light, and water, imaged together, may yield an amazing result.

Morro Rock at sunset on Morro Strand State Beach

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/3048731033/>

10. Lesson: A good photo will usually tell a story.

Woman receives Baptism in the Pacific Ocean in Morro Bay

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/3435305847>

11. Lesson: Cute works, always. And, always get closer.

Adult Sea Otter (*Enhydra lutris*) in Morro Bay, CA

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/2112205672/>

12. Lesson: Cute works, always. And, always get closer

Red Fox Pups Morro Bay, CA

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/2526370079>

13. Lesson: Multiple lessons are illustrated here: Get close. Early light wins. Capture interesting behavior and action. Get the eyes in focus. Capture a catchlight in the eyes. Blur the background to make the subject pop using a wide aperture and long focal length lens.

Northern Elephant Seals Fighting, Piedras Blancas, San Simeon, CA

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/2237782585/>

14. Lessons: Multiple lessons are illustrated here. Get close. Get at eye level. Capture catchlight in eyes. Blur the background with a wide aperture and long focal length lens. Focus on the eyes. Tack sharp is essential.

Western Snowy Plover

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/72825507@N00/324187595/>

15. Lesson: Simplicity is best. Don't ruin an image by including irrelevant elements.

Point-and-shoots may yield a winning photo. This was taken with a Canon PowerShot SD950 IS, and is one of my most popular images at Flickr with 67,000 views and 950 favs, despite being intentionally over-processed.

Two equestrian riders, girls on horseback, in low tide reflections on serene Morro Strand State Beach

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/2985066755>

16. Lesson: Get low, get lower. Use the rule-of-thirds. Here the eye is positioned to intersect lines of a tic-tac-toe pattern imagined over the image.

Distressed Sea Lion Pup Morro Strand

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/3673591219>

17. Lesson: Reflections work, and work best in late light. Note also the background is intentionally blurred (with a 600mm long focal length lens, with aperture wide open at f/4.0) to make the subject pop. At 19m, there is a depth of field of only about 35cm. A catchlight was also obtained in the subject's eye here.

Marbled Godwit, Limosa fedoa, a large shorebird in a lagoon at sunset

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/5176032423>

18. Lesson: Late light, water, reflections, and a cute kid in colorful dress, taken using a fun angle to instill a sense of spontaneity, can't help but work.

Little girl in colorful dress stands in the wet sand during an ultra-low tide at sunset on Morro Strand State Beach

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/3190392908>

19. Lesson: A long focal length lens (600mm here) compresses your subject, often making it more dramatic, for example, by making it look like the dancing girl on the beach here has achieved a lot more altitude than she really has. The art of a making good photo is often in making a slight distortion or emphasis of reality.

Girl dances at water's edge on Morro Strand State Beach

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mikebaird/2678310549>

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Also published at

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EWCu4rvjklisKYisqA6SwOmjcsnYL4YPKaGr9IyYJnhk/edit?hl=en\\_US](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EWCu4rvjklisKYisqA6SwOmjcsnYL4YPKaGr9IyYJnhk/edit?hl=en_US)

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Here is the version published at <http://slocoastjournal.com/docs/shutterbugs.html>

(see that link for the mini-lesson images annotated etc. Many thanks to Judy Sullivan for editing and publishing this article).

### **Shutterbugs**

Featuring Mike Baird

[as edited and compiled by Judy Sullivan of Slo Coast Journal

<http://slocoastjournal.com/docs/shutterbugs.html> ]

In this monthly feature some of our best local photographers share their passion for capturing beautiful and fascinating images. You will find more of their work on various photo sites, like

[Flickr](#), and in our own [Great Shots](#) section. This month Mike Baird has been invited to talk about his interest in photography and to share some tips with you.

Photography, for me, is mostly an excuse to get outside, socialize with others, and document and better appreciate nature in my role as a State Park docent. For people like me with almost no artistic ability to paint or sketch, photography is an opportunity to accidentally make an image that may greatly entertain myself or others. A photo taken but not shared might just as well have never been taken.

Creation of such intellectual property for single instance use, which is not propagated or otherwise preserved, may be largely a wasted effort when seen in the grander scheme of things. It is human nature to want to share our experiences with others. Photo sharing using a Flickr group and a Yahoo! Group like mine—[Photo Morro Bay](#) and [Yahoo Group Photo Morro Bay](#)—for discussion and event scheduling, has become a "Facebook equivalent" social outlet for over 300 local SLO County photographers.

These diverse individuals collaborate via [Photo Morro Bay](#), which is a social network I opportunistically put together in 2006 while collecting information for an [article](#) ("San Luis Obispo County California Nature Photographers -- Their Works and Techniques: Interviews With Local Nature Photographers About How They Take Such Great Photos") for the [Central Coast Natural History Association's Nature Notes Newsletter](#). By the time you finish this article, you too may begin to better "get it" as to why photo sharing has become such a powerful social instrument worldwide.

## **Working with Your Images**

Taking good photos is part luck, part practiced technique, and skilled limited computer postprocessing. No matter how good a photo you take, it can be improved and be made closer to reality (or into an artistic distortion of reality, if that is your pleasure), through the use of proper photo enhancement and normalization techniques. In fact, if you shoot in RAW format, you *have* to make a JPG conversion decision, if nothing more than to poke "auto" in Lightroom to yield more-or-less what your camera would do if you had set it to record in a lossy JPG format. Shoot using the highest resolution and image quality settings your camera supports (RAW if you have it). Good basic equipment (camera body/sensor, lenses, tripod, etc.) does make a difference. Good equipment does not make a professional, but a professional photographer needs reasonably good equipment. My basic set-up is all Canon -- but Nikon users love their equipment just as well. Buy the brand that the people you will be shooting with use, to best be able to learn from each other.

Every serious photographer should acquire Lightroom or Photoshop and learn how to do cropping, basic image contrast and levels enhancement, and sharpening. Adobe Lightroom is my software of choice for preparing my RAW photos for publication on Flickr. Computer post-processing techniques complement photographic skills, and the sum of the two bests either approach used alone.

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often easily corrected in Lightroom, Photoshop or similar software.

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## **Share Your Work**

I encourage you to freely share your photos. It's the best way to promote your skills and end up selling more of your images than you might do otherwise. I say in my [Flickr profile](#) that "Life is short, and I get a kick out of seeing others enjoy my images in a responsible way. My motivation for freely sharing almost all of my photographs without compensation, and for almost any purpose, comes from my interest in contributing to a legacy, which I define as the bits one leaves behind on the internet."

To emphasize how Flickr facilitates collaboration, a popular photo on my Flickr photostream will have over 100,000 views, be favorited by 400 people, receive 150 comments, and will be invited to 60 groups. If you Google Images "mike baird 'morro bay,'" you get 27,400 hits, most of which will be authorized re-uses of my photos under the Creative Commons Attribution license associated with most of my images at Flickr. If you hit [Wikipedia](#) and type in the name of any local bird or mammal, it is highly likely that one of my photos is featured on the related description page. I didn't put any of them there, others did. The related [Wikimedia](#) resource page has 244 of my photos utilized [Wikimedia-Mike Baird](#).

I throw these numbers out not to impress you, but to encourage you to start taking and sharing *your* photos. It opens up conversations from around the world, from editors, scientists, and students interested in your impressions of the world.

I was a computer scientist, author of a best-selling startup business book [eysu](#), and an entrepreneur at [Ask.com](#) during the insane Internet IPO days in Silicon Valley ten years ago. Now I enjoy sharing my passion for photography here on the Central Coast. You are welcome to email me or join our Photo Morro Bay Yahoo! and Flickr Groups.

[end Judy Sullivan's edited and published version]