

## **Artist Statement**

As a child, the woods, fields, streams, and the river near my home were my playground. As an adult, and now a retiree, they are more than a playground, they are a refuge and a never-ending source of wonder.

I've long had an interest in photography and capturing images of the natural world around me. In the days of film photography, capturing great images often required lots of film and long waits for prints to come and when they came, they were often accompanied by disappointment.

Now, with digital cameras and photo editing software, I can capture hundreds of images on an afternoon walk and know immediately if I've done justice to the wonders I see around me.

By professional standards, my equipment is modest. I use a Canon EOS M100 mirrorless digital camera with three basic lenses. A 28 mm macro, a 15-45mm standard lens, and a 55-200mm zoom lens. All my editing is done with a Samsung Galaxy tablet and the Gallery software that came with it. However, the greatest tools of all with nature photography are patience, silence, and mindful observation of the world around you; from the tiniest insect to the widest landscape. A tolerance for mosquitoes, deer flies, gnats, and temperature extremes comes in handy too.

By sharing my nature photography, I hope to encourage people to slow down and take a closer look at the natural world around them, to appreciate the beauty in all things— even the creatures who often evoke fear or repulsion. There is beauty to be found in the subtle iridescence of a rat snake's scales or in the pattern formed by the soft silky hairs that cover a wolf spider's body.

In my lifetime I've seen the natural world around me change. I've seen a decline in indigenous species, like the once common American toad, European honeybee, and other insects. I remember the time when an evening drive in the summer resulted in dozens of insects splattered on the windshield. Now, due to modern agricultural practices and climate change, you find only a few annoying spots.

Just in the past forty years, I've seen new species move into my neighborhood, such as fire ants, groundhogs, and coyotes, all because of habitat loss or fragmentation and climate change.

In the 1970s the United States made great advances in establishing environmental standards that helped to clean up our air and water and establish protections for wildlife, including endangered species. Now with the current administration, the natural world of which we are a part is once again under threat. With the relaxing of environmental protections, the opening of public wild places for oil, gas, and mineral prospecting and production, and the unnecessary harvesting of trees, we stand to lose all we have gained and more.

By showing my work, I hope to instill in people a deep appreciation for the natural world and the importance of conserving and protecting the plants and animals, and the environment in which we coexist. We humans have shared this planet with millions of other species from the beginning. When they are healthy and thriving, so are we.

Look for the overlooked then, take *A Closer Look*.

— *John Overman*