

PDNedu ASKS PHOTOGRAPHERS... WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU MADE TO YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY PRACTICES TO REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT OR OTHER- WISE HELP THE ENVIRONMENT?

At a time when green initiatives make good business sense, seven photographers discuss what they do personally to contribute to environmental awareness.

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David Bowman

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I once heard that film processing was the world's number one source of pollution; all those mini-labs around the world, pumping bleach and silver into the global water supply. Not to mention the packaging from one afternoon's shoot in the studio. I remember easily filling two garbage bags with nothing but film and Polaroid boxes, paper and plastic containers.

Closer to home, I'd say my biggest carbon reduction would be in the automobile department. There's a cliché image of the hotshot photographer cruising around in a sports car or a giant SUV. But here's a fact: The coolest and smartest photographers all drive minivans. You can practically get one for free. They hold lots of gear, you can bang them up and not care and they get great gas mileage. Get a minivan for free, spend your money on a digital back and make the world a better place.

Michael Clark

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As an outdoor adventure photographer, I work in the outdoors pretty much all the time. In recent years, I have witnessed first hand a lot of the receding glaciers, and it is shocking how fast the mountain environments in particular are changing. On the business end, with the advent of digital photography, I suppose we have increased our carbon footprint more than most of us would like to admit, though on the flip side, we've eliminated some very toxic chemicals used in film photography. I still shoot some film, but this is becoming increasingly rare. Everything relating to digital photography runs off batteries or needs electricity, so it comes down to how you get your electricity. In New Mexico we are given a choice of where our energy comes from and how we can help the electric companies pay for more environmentally friendly options. There is a large wind farm in the southern part of our state, and I signed on to their program so that a portion of the electricity I use comes from there. Internally, I am very aware of recycling and how I use paper in the office. We recycle glass, paper and aluminum, and old computers are sent back to Apple to get recycled as well. Since New Mexico is so sunny, in the future I'd love to get some solar panels to supply more energy for my home and office.

Jim Reed

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For quite some time, just about all my long distance (non-storm-chasing) travel has been done via Amtrak. Traveling by rail is extremely energy-efficient and contributes fewer greenhouse-gas emissions per passenger mile than cars or aircraft. On a per-passenger-mile basis, Amtrak is 17 percent more efficient than domestic air travel and 21 more efficient than auto travel.

It's responsible, reliable and relaxing.

We've also increased our "environmental vigilance." We monitor potential weather challenges on a daily basis. If you take personal responsibility for understanding your local forecast, especially severe weather watches and warnings, you help mitigate a natural disaster. If you ignore the forecast and drive to the mall during heavy fog and end up in a multi-vehicle pileup, you've contributed to the problem. Your actions may result in the need for dozens of emergency people and rescue vehicles. People need to get into the habit of carefully checking their current weather before leaving their home or office. Vigilance is a form of respect.

Daniel J. Cox

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Since the beginning of my career, I've worked extensively with nonprofit conservation organizations. But within the past seven years, I've increased my workload with one group in particular to a near full-time level—Polar Bears International <www.polarbearsinternational.org>. This group has virtually no paid positions, so all my time and efforts are volunteered. The hours are often long and grueling and the work sometimes dangerous, but it's all worthwhile due to the message I'm helping them deliver.

As we've added more computers and hard drives to our studio, the internal heat has increased dramatically. The lighting system in our office building also produces a lot of heat. To help negate the higher temperatures, we've started turning off all the overhead lights that aren't needed at each workstation. Thankfully most of my staff do not need light other than their computer screens. By turning the overhead lights off, we generally don't need the air-conditioning.

We're always on the lookout for more eco-friendly products that are commonly used in our studio. These include hard drives that use less power and monitors that have a better energy-efficiency rating.

We also have a recycling program—not only for the garbage, but for ink cartridges from our fine art printing department too. Staples gives us credit for all empty Hewlett-Packard ink cartridges. This provides substantial savings given the amount of ink we use. It's one of the many reasons we use HP and not other printers. For our everyday, general printing, we have the ink cartridges refilled.

The one area of greatest concern for me is the sky-rocketing use of huge monitors. I was initially seduced into the big screens myself, but since I've experienced how much heat they generate, I've decided I can live with smaller monitors for my work. I'm hoping that all photographers may start rethinking their use of the monster displays for work, as well as the television displays that we use for relaxation. For a prime example of just how much heat large monitors give off, visit your closest Best Buy and stand next to their large-TV-screen display

isle. You'll walk away feeling radiated.

Amanda Marsalis

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When on location, I use a motor home that runs on biodiesel and we recycle everything we can in my office. I'm sure it is a debate as to whether shooting digital has less impact on the environment than film, but I shoot all digital on advertising jobs. I also rent hybrid cars when I travel for work, whenever they're available. Lastly, I had my promos printed on recycled paper.

Rob Van Petten

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The number one green change for my business is going all digital and not using heavy metals, sulfuric acid hardener and other nasty reagents and dumping them into the water system every day. Non-chemical photography is a major change for the planet.

We use rechargeable batteries whenever possible, in portable strobes, cameras and accessories. Modern strobes also use a lot less power than previous models and much less than incandescence—which stayed on and burned hot.

We recycle seamless backdrops and have bottle and paper recycling bins in the office. Online banking has reduced the mail load and paper usage. With 50 pieces of banking monthly, it's a big annual savings. I was also removed from junk mail lists, which translates to less gasoline, less time wasted and less waste throwing it away. Of the junk mail envelopes I do receive, I use the backsides for scratch paper.

Technology, which has its electrical impact, has lead to a much softer carbon footprint on the daily workflow. I have global reach by e-mail instead of phone and snail mail. This produces much less impact by volume. Especially in big agencies with lots of people, using e-mail has reduced the paper waste. We now do casting and preproduction by e-mail and conference call too.

We choose to work with FTP delivery instead of a delivery service, cabs and even FedEx. We now deliver photos through all-digital systems, so the use and delivery of prints, discs and real portfolio books is hardly ever the case. My delivery service bills were in the hundreds of dollars every month. Now: Less gasoline and less traffic.

Most practically, I bought a more fuel-efficient car. It gets 35+MPG.

Doug Menez

www.menez.com

I've been trying to embrace digital and find ways to get the same feeling out of this new medium that I love from film and silver gelatin prints. And honestly, aside from the bad idea of pouring dark-room chemicals down the drain, I just can't take the fumes from fixer anymore, so digital has to work for me. Digital is the new green. ■