

Storm clouds over lava rocks at sunrise, Lava Beds Nat'l Monument

Chapter 12

LAVA BEDS, SISKIYOU, & SHASTA



Sunset light over Mount Shasta reflected in Lower Klamath Lake

Modoc Plateau: Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge

The Klamath Basin Wildlife Refuge Complex encompasses a geographic region of the Modoc Plateau, which straddles the border between northeastern California and south-central Oregon. There are three primary Basin Complex units on the California side, which include the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), the Tule Lake NWR, and the Clear Lake NWR. The region is a significant, if not the most important, stopping point for many migratory birds traveling north and south along the Pacific Flyway. In fact, the National Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that approximately 80% of all migratory birds along the flyway take advantage of the Klamath Basin refuges during the spring and fall migration seasons. All of the refuges within the complex represent a diverse mix of managed habitats, including open freshwater ponds and lakes, wetland marshes, grasslands, croplands, and open range lands. Of the three primary California units of the complex, both the Lower Klamath and the Tule Lake refuges have public access via a self-guided auto tour route. There are also a number of photography blinds which are available by reservation. The Clear Lake National Wildlife Refuge is generally closed to all public access to protect the habitat, and keep wildlife free from disturbance, except for the state-sanctioned waterfowl and Pronghorn Antelope hunting seasons. I hope I'm not the only one who sees the irony here, between not wanting to disturb the wildlife and allowing hunting?

The Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge stands alone, above all other national wildlife refuges for a historic reason. In 1908, President Theodore Roosevelt established the Lower Klamath NWR as the very first waterfowl refuge in the entire United States. Comprised of approximately 50,000 total acres, nearly 90% of the refuge is located in California, while approximately 6,000 acres are located literally "right across the street" in Oregon. It's estimated on an annual basis, the refuge serves more than one million waterfowl, representing a fairly significant percentage of the state's total wintering bird population.

Only a few miles to the east of the Lower Klamath NWR, the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge is located in the Tule Lake Basin near the towns of Newell and Tulelake. The nearly 40,000-acre refuge was designated in 1928 by President Calvin Coolidge, with the plan of preserving additional habitat for the migratory waterfowl, but balanced against the growing agricultural land use requirements. Today, its acreage is fairly equally divided between open water wetland area and agricultural croplands.

The spring and fall migration usually find the refuges populated by Arctic, Snow, and Ross's geese, along with a sizable population of Sandhill cranes. During spring and summer nesting seasons, a wide variety of waterfowl can be seen, including White pelicans, Great and Snowy egrets, herons, cormorants, and White-faced ibis, among some of the larger species. Other species of waterfowl and shorebirds more commonly seen include the American avocet, Wilson's phalarope, and Black-neck stilts, not to mention a generous supply of coots and grebes. In winter, the refuges are becoming increasingly popular homes for the Bald eagle, with other common raptors often visible, including a variety of owls, hawks, and falcons. Some of the rare species to be seen include the Peregrine falcon, White-Tailed kite, the Snowy plover, and Cattle egret. The White Lake Unit in the Lower Klamath NWR has also been known for sightings of rare species of shorebirds, including the Ruddy turnstone, Sanderling, Hudsonian godwit, Whimbrel, Upland sandpiper, and Stilt sandpiper. Other common wildlife seen throughout the refuges include marmots, coyotes, mule deer, pronghorn antelope, and an occasional bobcat or river otter making an appearance.



Waterfowl at Lower Klamath NWR

In addition to the self-guided auto tour, the Tule Lake NWR also has a visitor center with educational exhibits, a demonstration Discovery Marsh, as well as access to a stone lookout. Perched on a rock cliff on the opposite side of the road from the marsh, the lookout provides the best overview of the area.

The Discovery Marsh Trail can be taken as a short trail which loops from the parking lot, around the initial marsh, or it can be taken as a longer trail leading out toward Tule Lake. The overlook, which was built in the late 1930's by the California Conservation Corps, is accessed via a short, half-mile round-trip trail which climbs up for several hundred feet along the hillside behind the visitor center. In July through September, Tule Lake and the Upper Klamath NWR also have a canoe trail where you can paddle your way through parts of the refuge. Contact the Tule Lake Visitor Center for more information about the Canoe Trail.

Photo Advice: As usual with most wildlife, the longest, fastest lens you have will likely prove to be your most useful. If you're using a slower lens or combination which includes a teleconverter, you may need to increase your ISO to get a fast enough shutter speed needed to ensure sharp, accurately focused images, especially with any flying or action shots. Wide-angle lenses are ideal for capturing beautiful morning or afternoon light reflected in the water, or any dramatic skies over the open landscape. Especially along State Line Road (CA-161) the 14,000-foot high Mount Shasta forms a picturesque backdrop to the open water areas, marshes, and wetlands. The half-dozen photographic blinds, which are only available by advance reservation, are ideally situated in various locations at both Lower Klamath and Tule Lake. For sunrise photography, it is strongly recommended to be set up inside a blind well before dawn, so as to avoid any potential disruption of the local wildlife. Reservations for the photo blinds can be made by contacting the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center at (530) 667-2231.

Getting there: The Modoc Plateau, along with the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges can be accessed from CA-161 via OR-97 or OR-39 heading south out of Klamath Falls, Oregon. If you're coming from the Mount Shasta region and I-5, you'll follow CA-97 north for approximately 54 miles, before turning right onto CA-161, about 2 miles past the small town of Dorris. The area can also be accessed from the town of Alturas by taking CA-299 east, then CA-139 north.

To reach the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge, follow CA-161 east for approximately 17 miles from the intersection with CA-97, or 2 miles west from the intersection of CA-139, to the intersection of Hill Road. From the intersection with CA-161, follow Hill Road south for 4 miles to the visitor center. The parking area for the Discovery Marsh is located on the opposite side of the road. The start of the Tule Lake self-guided auto tour route is located 4.75 miles farther south from the visitor center along Hill Road, where a gravel road turns off to the east, right at the edge of the water.

Time Required: Allow yourself a lazy hour for either of the 10-mile long self-guided auto tour routes at either the Lower Klamath NWR or Tule Lake NWR. At Tule Lake, allow yourself about an hour to walk around the Discovery Marsh, and around a half-hour to hike the short distance up to the overlook along the Sheepy Ridge Wildlife Trail.

Note: When driving on dirt or paved roads in the area, please be sure to mind your speed, being extra careful to look ahead for wildlife that might be on the road. I've personally witnessed several incidents where people have been driving too fast, and have driven into small flocks of ducks crossing the road. It's bad enough to see an occasional dead bird on the road, but nothing quite ruins the experience of being at a national wildlife refuge like watching a multi-ton vehicle plow into several dozen birds at once.

Lava Beds National Monument

If somebody asked you to name the largest volcano in the Cascade Range, most people might answer with Washington's 14,411-foot high Mount Rainier. It is certainly correct to say Mount Rainier is the tallest volcano into in the Cascade Mountain Range. However, the largest volcano in terms of overall land area by volume is the almost completely unknown Medicine Lake Volcano, which dominates northeastern California's Modoc Plateau. Structurally known as a Shield Volcano, the immense Medicine Lake Volcano covers an area of nearly 800 square miles, and lies at the heart of the geologic features of Lava Beds National Monument. The monument itself was created in 1925, preserving more than 45,000 acres of land because of its geophysical attractions, as well as for its historical significance as the site of the Modoc Indian War. Located at the junction along the eastern flank of the Cascade Range and the northwestern corner of the Great Basin, the geological origins of Medicine Lake Volcano can be traced back more than 500,000 years. The last localized eruption occurred at Glass Mountain approximately 1,000 years ago. The Lava Beds National Monument encompasses a number of popular volcanic features, most prominent of which are the various lava flows, lava tubes, caves, and cinder cones.



Lava rocks & brush

The most common route into Lava Beds National Monument is via the entrance along Hill Road, just south of the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Upon entering the monument, you'll be traveling along the base of Gillem Bluff, where the road passes along the west side of the Devils Homestead Lava Flow. There is a large scenic turnout located approximately 2.5 miles south on Hill Road from the T-intersection, a half-mile past the signed entrance to the monument. From this turnout, you get a good view looking to the east over the dark

basalt lava flow, which stands in stark relief to the lighter, sage-covered plateau. Because of direct east facing direction of the vista, sunrise shots can be extra challenging due to the contrast between dark rock and the bright sky when looking directly toward the rising sun. For better overall balance between landscape and the sky, this location might be better in the late afternoon or at sunset, including the soft pastel light of early evening, when the landscape is more evenly front or soft lit. There is another roadside viewpoint located an additional 1.25 miles south, where the road crosses over the same lava flow. In addition to having a much more immediate proximity to the lava formations, the view from here looks northward, providing much better cross-lighting over the landscape at both sunrise and sunset.



Skylight in Lava Tube

Continuing on Hill Road, you'll pass by several smaller caves and craters, including the Fleener Chimneys, a series of small, castle-like volcanic vents which you can peer down into. One of the most visible geological features is Schonchin Butte, rising more than 500 feet above the landscape along the base of the plateau. Technically, the term 'Butte' is a mild misnomer applied to a number of the volcanic features scattered across Lava Beds National Monument. While the word 'Butte' correctly denotes any geologic feature that rises abruptly above the surrounding landscape, Schonchin Butte, along with numerous other similarly-named features within the monument, are actually volcanic cinder cones. Take the road which leads along the northwest side of Schonchin Butte, where you'll find a trail heading .75 miles uphill to the top of the cone. There is a fire lookout station at the summit, where you can get excellent panoramic vistas of the Medicine Lake Volcano, Mount Shasta, and the Modoc Plateau. Allow yourself approximately an hour and a half to make the round-trip hike. From the base of Schonchin Butte is also a good place to photograph the Schonchin Lava Flow which runs off to the north.

Another great geophysical attraction of the Lava Beds National Monument can't be seen while driving through the area, primarily because they're all subterranean. There are more than 200 lava tubes and caves within the monument, a number of which the National Park Service have made easily accessible and available to explore. Located just a quarter-mile beyond the Schonchin Butte Road is another road heading off to the right, which you can follow for approximately one mile to the entrance of Merrill Cave. For early homesteaders and visitors to the area, Merrill Cave earned its fame as an attraction when people would

descend into the darkness using a lantern, and enjoy themselves by ice-skating across the frozen cave floor.

Located behind the visitor center is Cave Loop Road, where more than a dozen accessible caves and lava tubes are located within close proximity to one another. Most of the caves and lava tubes that are considered least challenging are several hundred feet long, and don't require any specialized equipment other than a flashlight and a good pair of boots. Some of the more challenging caves extend between a quarter-mile, to more than a mile in length, and may have travel and mobility restrictions which require you ducking or crawling on hands and feet to navigate the narrow or low-ceiling passageways. Obviously, the more difficult caves require additional protective caving gear, such as helmets, gloves, and kneepads, to guard against injury from the sharp lava rocks.



Captain Jack's Stronghold

Probably the most popular cave within the entire monument is one of the smallest, and also one of the most difficult to access. Fern Cave is most noteworthy for the lush green flora that permeates the ground near the entrance to the cave. Access to the cave is restricted to Ranger-led tours which require advance reservation. There is only one tour per week and it is limited to six people. Contact the Lava Beds Visitor Center for information and reservations regarding the Fern Cave tours; <http://www.nps.gov/labe>.

For history buffs, other important areas in Lava Beds National Monument include Capt. Jack's Stronghold and Petroglyph Point. Back near the entrance of the park, at the aforementioned T-intersection, (between Gillems Camp and Canby Cross) follow the road east for just over 3 miles to the parking area at Capt. Jack's Stronghold. It was here, during the fall of 1872 through the spring of 1873, where a band of Modoc Indians held the U.S. Army at bay by hiding among the rugged lava rocks, refusing to return to the nearby Klamath Reservation. In what proved to be the last of the great Indian Wars fought in California, the government spent \$400,000 to fight the Modoc, rather than pay \$20,000 to purchase land and provide the Modoc with their own reservation. Instead, the war was fought over forcing the Modoc to go back and live with the neighboring Klamath tribe, who looked down on them and treated them as inferiors. At the stronghold, a short interpretive trail leads through the Modoc encampment and defensive positions, with a longer loop trail available for those who wish to wander further afield. Here it's still possible to see where lava rocks have been built up for defense by the Modoc and army troops, or the large areas where the tribe used to shelter. Allow yourself about an hour to take the shorter

loop trail, and a couple hours to take the longer trail.

In case you feel like the Modoc War is a little too recent in history, then you may want to pay a visit to nearby Petroglyph Point, which is a separate detached unit, though still part of the Lava Beds National Monument. Here, carved-rock



Native American symbol, Petroglyph Section

petroglyphs, some thought to date between 4,000 and 6,000 years old, decorate the side of a cliff on what used to be an island in the middle of Tule Lake. As you look upward along the cliff face, you can see where petroglyphs are carved at different levels. This is because the early Modoc would paddle out in canoes, carving their rock art at whatever water level the lake happened to be at the time. Though the area was fenced off more than 80 years ago,

there's still a blatant amount of graffiti and vandalism which has marred the location. It's still possible to pick out some of the original petroglyphs, especially if you're using a telephoto lens. Additionally, scattered throughout the monument, keep your eyes peeled for black, hand-painted pictographs, many of which can be found near the entrances to the caves.

Photo Advice: To achieve the best results with a properly exposed sky and detail in the darker rocks in the lava flows, you'll probably want to consider shooting with either a graduated neutral density filter, or plan on taking bracketed exposures for post-processing using either a manual blending technique, or an automated High Dynamic Range (HDR) software rendering program. While wider-angle shots would certainly be appropriate from this location, I personally found that using a telephoto lens worked slightly better, compressing the scene, and allowing me to focus on the most interesting landscape formations, or places where the light was best.

Photography in the caves can definitely be challenging, not just because of the darkness, but it's compounded because of the dark basaltic rock. Once inside the cave, you'll probably want to consider using a flashlight for illuminating the scene, light-painting the sides of the cave while the shutter remains open. For equipment, you'll most definitely want to carry a tripod, along with a cable or remote shutter release so you can utilize your camera's bulb setting for long exposure shots. A good, fast wide-angle lens, along with a high ISO, i.e. 400, 800, or 1600 will also prove useful. You can also photograph near the entrance of the caves, in the area where daylight filters through the opening, providing the main source of illumination. However, the contrast between the bright and dark areas will probably require using a multiple, bracketed exposure technique for either HDR or manually-blended layers in post-processing. For photographing the landscape surrounding Captain Jack's Stronghold, a wide-angle lens will

probably be best suited to show the features of the stronghold in relation to the rugged terrain.

Time Required: If you're traveling through on a day trip, allow yourself a minimum of a half a day to drive through the park, including stopping at the visitor center, and exploring a few of the smaller caves along Cave Loop Road. Camping is available within the monument, at the Indian Wells Campground. The nearest major town with a decent amount of hotel accommodations will be about 40 miles to the north of the monument in Klamath Falls, Oregon. If you're going to be spending the night in Klamath Falls, plan on at least a one-hour drive to get well inside the monument in time for shooting pictures at sunrise.

Getting there: Lava Beds National Monument is located, and most commonly accessed via Hill Road, a few miles further south beyond the Tule Lake NWR. *Note: For more complete directions to the area, see the 'Getting there' information listed under the Tule Lake NWR section.* From the intersection of CA-161, also known

as State Line Road, turn onto Hill Road. Travel south for approximately 12.5 miles to the signed entrance of Lava Beds National Monument. Approximately a half mile past the signed entrance, you'll come to a T-intersection. Turning to the right and following Hill Road for just over 9 miles will bring you to the visitor center. To reach Petroglyph Point, turn left at the intersection, following CR-120 past Capt. Jack's Stronghold (at 3.25 miles), traveling a total distance of just over 8.5 miles to the intersection of CR-111, also called Great Northern Road. Turn left (north), traveling just over three quarters of a mile to a signed turnoff to Petroglyph Point. Here you'll see a large dirt parking area at the base of the rock cliff, approximately one mile down the small, nondescript CR-126.



Rugged lava field at Captain Jack's Stronghold

Also in the area: If you're a history buff, especially with an interest in World War II or Asian-American studies, you might want to also pay a visit to the Tule Lake War Relocation Camp. Similar to the much better known Manzanar internment camp in the Eastern Sierra, the Tule Lake camp was used to segregate and house Japanese-Americans following the racial paranoia that broke out across the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Actors Pat Morita (*Karate Kid*) and George Takei (*Star Trek*) were both interred here during their childhood. Today, the Tule Lake Camp is part of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument. For more information, visit the National Park Service website at: <http://www.nps.gov/tule>.

Mount Shasta

Towering an impressive 14,179 feet, Mount Shasta reigns supreme as the dominant landmark for most all of Northern California, save perhaps for Yosemite, hundreds of miles to the south. The often snow-capped summit, a popular destination for mountaineers, climbs nearly two vertical miles into the sky, high above the surrounding landscape. This dormant volcano, initially formed more than a half million years ago, rests near the southern end of the Cascade Mountain Range, part of the geologically active Pacific Rim of Fire. Mount Shasta is the second highest peak in the Cascade Range, superseded only by Mt. Rainier in Washington State. It's also the second southernmost volcanic peak in the range, save for its sister, Lassen Peak, which is located 100 miles farther to the south at the very southern tip of the Cascades. The main summit presents a dramatically different face depending on the angle of view, but Mount Shasta is usually seen being flanked on its shoulder by the slightly lower volcanic cone known as Shastina. Also notable for photographers, and situated immediately north of the small town of Mount Shasta, is the beautifully-shaped cinder cone, Black Butte.

There are a number of places from which to photograph Mount Shasta in a scenic setting, though in some areas, the good views can be few and far between. Often, the peak, despite its height, is hidden or blocked from view by the forest and surrounding hillsides. One nice view of Mount Shasta from the south can be seen along the Ski Park Highway. Here you get a great view of the mountain as it rises above the surrounding forest. While it's a nice location during the summer, because you're looking to the north, the best light on the mountain will be in winter when the sun is rising or setting further to the south, or at least well after the autumnal equinox and before the vernal equinox. The other nice thing, and especially fitting for the winter season, the road provides access to the only local ski area, and is regularly plowed in winter. The seasonal disadvantage; when the road is coated in snow there may be very few available parking areas near where you might want to take a photograph. It's not advisable to stop in the middle of the narrow road just to take a photo. Of much more immediate proximity to the mountain, and located along its southwest slopes, Bunny Flat is the place to go for an up close and personal Mount Shasta experience. This is where most mountaineers begin their trip up to the summit. At an elevation of around 7,000 feet, you're already more than half a mile vertically higher than the town of Mount Shasta, but still well over a vertical mile below the 14,179-foot high summit. In early summer, or about three or four weeks after the snow melts, is an ideal time to photograph blooming alpine wildflowers below the snow-capped peak. Bunny Flat is a good place for wide angle shots facing the mountain. It's also possible to get a more distant telephoto shot of the Castle Crags, located approximately 15 miles to the south. Another good location is the nearby Panther Meadow where, following the snowmelt, nice displays of alpine wildflowers can often be found. During the early part of the blooming season, the Forest Service strongly discourages any off-trail travel due to the fragile nature of the landscape.



Sunset on a snow-capped Mount Shasta

Both Bunny Flat and Panther Meadow offer trails for day hiking. Panther Meadow is an easy 1.5-mile loop trail which can be completed in just under an hour, while the Bunny Flat trail is a moderate 4.5-mile hike, ascending a thousand feet along the flanks of Mount Shasta, and requiring approximately 4 hours to complete the round trip. One other nice thing; you don't even have to hike the full 4.5-mile Bunny Flat trail, because the nice scenery starts practically at the trailhead.

Getting There: To get to Ski Park Highway: From I-5, follow CA-89 east for 5 miles, then turn left (north) on Ski Park Hwy. You'll find the best views of the mountain approximately 2 miles up the road. Allow yourself about 15 minutes to reach this location from downtown Mount Shasta. To reach the Bunny Flat trailhead from Central Mount Shasta and I-5, follow Lake Street east toward the mountain for just under a mile until you get to N. Washington Street, where you'll turn left. Almost immediately, N. Washington Street becomes the Everitt Memorial Highway when it crosses Rockfellow Drive. Continue straight ahead on the Everitt Memorial Highway, winding your way uphill for approximately 11 miles, until you come to the proverbial end of the road at the Bunny Flat Trailhead. Allow yourself approximately 25 to 30 minutes to get from the freeway to Bunny Flat. The road is usually plowed during winter, although not regularly. Big winter storms can close the road for several days at a time, so be sure and check the weather ahead of time. You certainly don't want to get stuck up on the mountain during a major winter storm. The Panther Meadow trailhead is just two more miles up the road, provided the road is open.

Lake Siskiyou

One of the most popular places to photograph Mount Shasta is located just outside of town, on the opposite side of I-5. From along the southeastern shore of Lake Siskiyou, Mount Shasta is perfectly situated for a nice reflection shot looking across the water. Located to the southwest of the peak, this vantage point from Lake Siskiyou means you'll be looking northeast toward the mountain, making this an ideal year-round sunset location. In winter, when the sun is setting further to the south, you'll be getting the best over the shoulder direct lighting at sunset. In the weeks surrounding the summer solstice, when the sun



Lake Siskiyou & Mt. Shasta (photo by Kevin McNeal)

is rising and setting furthest to the north, the sun will be rising practically behind the mountain. At the end of the day, the sun will be setting almost perpendicular to your line of view, creating good opportunities to catch some beautiful side lighting across the western face of the mountain. It's also possible to photograph Mount Shasta from the beaches just a mile or so farther along the southwest shore, located in the private Lake Siskiyou Camp Resort. The disadvantages of this location are that they require an entrance fee, and a distant ridge located across the lake begins to visually block a portion of Mount Shasta. However, if you're camping or traveling with kids, this could be a very viable option.

Photo Advice: A wide-angle lens will probably give you a good range of compositions depending upon how much sky or water you wish to include, or how tightly you want to frame the mountain. For a closer, more frame-filling shot, a standard range telephoto lens should provide good reach for either a horizontal or vertical composition. The best location along the Lake Siskiyou shoreline is a publicly accessible area located not far from the dam, requiring an easy 100-yard walk down to the lake.

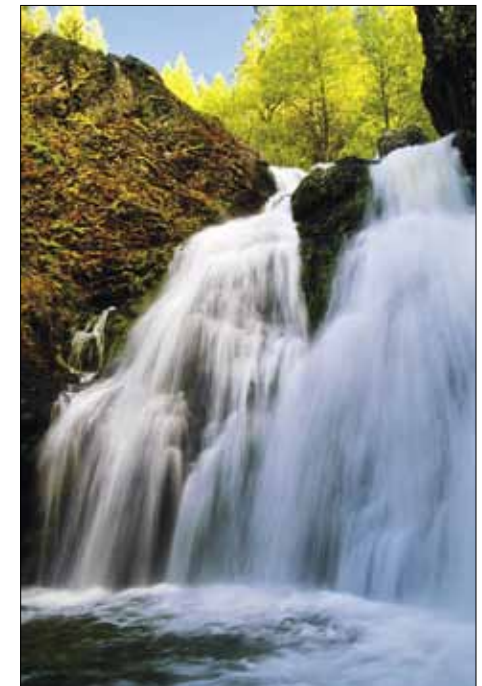
Getting there: From the central part of Mount Shasta (town), follow West Lake Street to the west side of I-5, where it soon turns into Hatchery Lane. Continue on Hatchery Lane for approximately a quarter mile west, turning left at the intersection of South Old Stage Road. After another quarter-mile, the road will fork with South Old Stage Road veering off to the left. Here you'll continue straight ahead, following the right-hand fork onto W A Barr Road. After traveling for two more miles on W A Barr Road, you'll cross the Box Canyon Dam. Immediately after crossing the dam, the road will make a sweeping S-turn over

the next quarter mile. As soon as you come out of that turn, you'll see the large dirt roadside parking area with a prominent trail which heads down to the lake. If you are racing to catch the sunset from downtown Mount Shasta, allow yourself about 10 minutes to reach this location, and another five minutes to get yourself down to the lakeshore. The entrance to the Lake Siskiyou Camp Resort is another 1.25 miles farther west along W A Barr Road.

Faery Falls

Just a couple short miles away from Lake Siskiyou, Faery Falls is a beautiful, nearly 50-foot high, fan-shaped cascading waterfall located along Ney Springs Creek. At its prime flow during the spring, Faery Falls is considered to be one of the tallest waterfalls in Siskiyou County. It can be accessed via a relatively easy 3-mile round-trip hike, or you can drive to a much closer location, requiring only a short hike up a moderately steep four-wheel drive road. The hardest part of the hike is a short side trail that leaves the road, skirting the hillside toward the waterfall. The biggest challenge will be getting a good shot through the thick forest foliage in the narrow canyon where Faery Falls is located. To get past some of the trees and branches, you can try and work your way down toward the base of the waterfall. The footing can be steep and slippery, especially when wet, and should definitely not be attempted by those with any mobility issues. There is a good chance that the climb down to the base of the waterfall and back up may well involve using your hands. There is a very small rock cave near the base of the falls, which can be a good place to duck out of the spray if needed, especially if you want to change your camera lens.

Photo Advice: From the base of the waterfall you can get a good view looking directly up and across toward the fan-shaped cascade. At this point, you'll be so close to the base of the cascade that you want to use an ultra-wide lens to get the full cascade in your frame. Also, because of the many overhanging trees, the ideal time to shoot here would be on a day with a high bright overcast sky, so as to avoid the extreme contrast of sunlit water with darker shadows falling across the scene. By late summer, the water flowing through Ney Springs Creek is dramatically reduced, approaching something more akin to an enhanced trickle. In the fall, if you can time it within a couple days of



Faery Falls, along Nye Creek

any early-season rainstorms, you might be able to get some nice flow over the waterfall combined with the changing colors on the deciduous foliage lining the stream and immediately above Faery Falls.

Getting there: Follow the instructions previously listed for getting to Lake Siskiyou via W A Barr Road. Almost immediately after crossing Box Canyon Dam, the road will make a sweeping S-turn over the next quarter mile. As soon as you come out of that turn, you'll see Ney Springs Road on your left. Turn left on Ney Springs Road and continue straight ahead for .10 miles. Here the road forks, with the paved road turning sharply to the right and becoming Castle Lake Road. Ney Springs Road veers off to the left, becoming a wide dirt road, easily passable by any passenger vehicle. Within the first few hundred yards along the dirt portion of Ney Springs Road, you'll see some parking areas along the right side shoulder of the road. This is where the 3-mile round-trip hiking trail starts. If you'd like to drive closer, continue on along Ney Springs Road for approximately another mile and a half, where you'll see a steep four-wheel drive road heading uphill off to the right. You'll see a dirt parking area at the base of this road. Park here and hike the last half mile up the fairly rugged four-wheel drive road. Continue hiking about 5 to 10 minutes past what will appear to be a turnaround or parking area used by vehicles, keeping your eye out along the left side of the road for a very narrow, single person wide trail that heads off along the hillside below the road. Faery Falls is located a couple hundred yards down the trail along the narrow path.

Castle & Heart Lakes

Castle Lake is a small scenic lake which sits in an old glacial, steep-walled mountain cirque at an elevation of 5,440 ft. in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest. Most notable are several vistas with Mount Shasta, and hiking trail access into the scenic neighboring Castle Crags Wilderness. From lake level, the best views of Mount Shasta rising above the lake and trees along the opposite shore can be had by taking the easy, half-mile long Castle Shore Trail along the western shoreline, heading toward the southwestern corner of the lake. From the parking area (looking at the lake), follow the trail off to the right. The trail is pretty easy, with the biggest obstacles being occasional tree roots growing across the path. A more scenic vista awaits those willing to hike above the lake, following the Castle Lake Trail toward Heart Lake. This 2.5-mile round-trip trail starts off following the eastern shoreline, climbing somewhat steeply at first, then easing up a bit as it travels moderately uphill along a rocky path to a ridge near the base of Heart Lake. Once on the ridge, the main trail continues on toward Little Castle Lake to the right, while an offshoot user trail continues left toward Heart Lake. From here you can get a sweeping vista looking from high over Castle Lake, with Mount Shasta rising in the distance.

Photo Advice: Approximately three-quarters of the way up Castle Lake Road is an obvious roadside vista with Mount Shasta rising directly over the forest and

ridgeline to the northeast. The ideal time to shoot would be during the afternoon or sunset during late spring or early summer, but if you're an early riser, you can also catch the sun rising behind Mount Shasta near the summer solstice. The ideal time for hiking to Heart Lake would also be in early to mid-summer, such that you don't have to worry about snow on the trail above Castle Lake, but there is still plenty of snow left on the upper reaches of Mount Shasta.

Time Required: Allow yourself approximately 30 minutes to reach the far shore along the mostly level trail, which follows the northern shore. Allow yourself 2 to 3 hours or so to hike to the ridge above Castle Lake and back, mostly because of the slow hike uphill. Take your time, as the altitude can really suck the wind out of your sails on the trail.

Getting there: Follow the instructions previously listed for getting to Lake Siskiyou via W A Barr Road. Almost immediately after crossing Box Canyon Dam, the road will make a sweeping S-turn over the next quarter mile. As soon as you come out of that turn, you'll see Ney Springs Road on your left. Turn left onto Ney Springs Road and continue straight ahead for one-tenth of a mile. Here, the road forks, with the paved road turning sharply to the right, and becoming Castle Lake Road. Follow the paved Castle Lake Road uphill for an additional 7 miles to the parking area at the north end of the lake. Allow yourself about 30 minutes to reach the parking area when driving from Central Mount Shasta.



Castle Lake (photo by Brian Rueb)

North of Mount Shasta

There are also several nice places to photograph Mount Shasta north of town. From the northwest, one of the easiest and most accessible places would be from just south of the Weed Airport, immediately adjacent to the eastern side of I-5. From this side of the mountain, the peak begins to take on a more traditional pyramid-like cone shape. This northern vantage, with its open landscapes and more distant hills, provides a nice sweeping vista highlighting the height of the peak above the surrounding terrain. Similar vantage points can be had a few miles further north along Slough Road, which runs parallel to the freeway. This six mile long rural dirt road is easily passable by all types of vehicles, at least when the ground is dry. The route passes through mostly fenced-off cattle grazing lands, but there are places where lichen covered rocks and seasonal wildflowers,



Mount Shasta & high meadow

including colorful purple lupine, can combine with the more distant rolling hills to create a really nice scenic photograph. *A reminder: Please be sure to respect all private property signs.* The direction of view from this area is such that the mountain will receive the best light late in the afternoon and toward sunset from spring through fall.

Situated almost directly north of the mountain along CA-97 is another good roadside scenic vista of Mount Shasta, along with a great profile of Shastina. This northern vantage point, situated on the western edge of the Modoc Plateau, will get good light from spring through fall, when the sun is rising and setting north of the equinox. When the sun is setting further to the south, especially toward mid-winter, the mountain will be more shadowed or backlit as the sun remains lower in the sky.

Photo Advice: Wide-angle lenses will be good for larger scenic shots emphasizing the broad sage-covered landscape, especially if you're placing something prominent, like a bush or wildflower in the foreground. A midrange telephoto lens will provide more frame-filling shots of the mountain, emphasizing the height of Mount Shasta set against the foreground hills. A longer telephoto lens between 300-400mm will be good enough to get you a frame-filling close-up of the peak's summit.

Getting there: The Weed Airport is located approximately 15.5 miles to the north along I-5 from central Mount Shasta. To reach Slough Road, continue north on I-5 for just over 5.5 miles from the airport to the Louie Road exit. Turn east, following East Louie Road for just under a half mile, then take the first available right turn, heading south onto the dirt Slough Road. From here, you can follow the dirt road south, to where it intersects Edgewood Road near

the south end of the Weed Airport. I realize some of you might be asking, why not just take Slough Road, north from the Weed Airport. The reason I recommend taking I-5 north, and returning south via Slough Road is so you'll always be looking toward Mount Shasta.

To reach the roadside Vista Point along CA-97 from Central Mount Shasta, take I-5 north for 9 miles to the Central Weed exit. Follow CA-97 for 19 miles toward Klamath Falls, where you'll see the signed turnoff for the Vista Point on the left (west) side of the highway. Allow yourself about 35 to 40 minutes to travel the one-way route from the town of Mount Shasta to the scenic viewpoint.

Black Butte

Impossible to miss given its immediate proximity along the side of I-5, the 6,334-foot Black Butte is a classically shaped volcanic lava cone. Formed nearly 10,000 years ago, and rising more than 2,000 feet above the surrounding landscape, this offshoot vent of Shastina has an especially photogenic profile from almost any angle. It is easily photographed from the area between the town of Mount Shasta, to north of the Weed Airport, or from the Everitt Memorial Highway. From the latter location, it's possible during spring and summer to get a nice silhouette of Black Butte with the sun setting behind the pointed dome.



Sunlight & snow on Black Butte

Mossbrae & Hedge Creek Falls

Mossbrae Falls, like its larger and scenic cousin to the east, Burney Falls, is one of Northern California's most beautiful waterfalls located outside of Yosemite. Like Burney Falls, the source of the water feeding Mossbrae Falls is an underground aquifer. But unlike Burney Falls, where the aquifer comes to the surface a short distance upstream of the falls, at Mossbrae Falls the spring comes directly out of the ground on a hillside immediately above the waterfalls. Situated on the banks of the northern stretches of the Sacramento River, the main waterfall creates a streaming curtain of water that is about 50 feet tall at the highest point, and spans about 150 feet wide. From all appearances, while standing on the opposite side of the river, the water seems to surge directly out of the lush green foliage, before dropping straight down into the river via a rocky, moss-covered escarpment. Just a short distance upstream from the main falls, a secondary spring also comes cascading out of the brush, falling over 20 feet before hitting the rocks below. Historically, Mossbrae Falls has long been a popular, yet quietly reserved local attraction for more than 100 years.

The allure and scenic beauty of Mossbrae Falls, mixed with the ease of sharing information in the modern era, has caused a once local, hidden gem, to become a much more well-known and popular destination; perhaps too popular. When I visited Mossbrae Falls in 2007, the common access route was via an approximately one-mile hike along the railroad tracks which ran above the river, north out of the town of Dunsmuir. In 2010, problems began to arise with overcrowded parking conditions near the railroad tracks, and citizens of Dunsmuir complaining that people were parking illegally, many times blocking access to their property. By early summer of 2011, the city of Dunsmuir's Chamber of Commerce had posted a notice on their website saying the access trail to Mossbrae Falls via the Union Pacific railroad tracks is closed. That same season, it was reported the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department was issuing citations to vehicles that were illegally parked, as well as for anyone that was caught walking along the tracks. So currently, while visiting Mossbrae Falls is allowed, there really isn't any legal access. There is a plan to construct a trail running from Hedge Creek Falls to Mossbrae Falls, but as of the writing of this book, there is no definitive date for the opening of a public use trail. The best thing I can suggest for photographers who want to photograph Mossbrae Falls is to do their research, including contacting the Dunsmuir Chamber of Commerce and the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Department to find out about current access or restrictions. Hopefully, within a year or two of this book's publication date, public access to Mossbrae Falls will be restored.

Photo Advice: (If access has been restored) The best place to photograph Mossbrae Falls is from a small beach on the opposite side of the Sacramento River. The river is only 10-15 yards wide at the base of the falls. Facing the waterfall from the opposite shore, you'll be looking to the east, so your best chance to get sunlight on the waterfall will be in the afternoon. Using a tripod is recommended if you want to shoot with shutter speeds that are slow enough to create the silky flowing water effect. A polarizer can be useful for reducing reflections from the water in the river, or along the moss-covered rocks and foliage. A polarizer can also be used to help slow down your shutter speed by up to a stop and a half.

In the meantime, Dunsmuir has another popular waterfall right near town. The smaller Hedge Creek Falls drops approximately 30 feet over a rock cliff. Access to Hedge Creek Falls is relatively easy, and extremely short, taking only a few minutes to walk the quarter-mile trail. The falls are at their best following the spring rains and subsequent snow melt, but there is generally some water flowing in the creek throughout the year. The Hedge Creek Falls Park is dedicated to a pair of sisters who reportedly helped save the waterfall from being destroyed during the construction of nearby I-5. Noteworthy to photographers are some hexagonally-shaped basalt rock features at the base of the falls, similar in nature to the formations seen at Devils Postpile National Monument, and the Columns of the Giants, both located in the Sierra. Probably most notable to everyone who visits Hedge Creek Falls is the hollowed out cave-like section of rock that allows

Right: Mossbrae Falls near Dunsmuir





Pellucid Mossbrae Falls (photo by Laurent Martres)

people to walk behind the waterfall. Given the density of trees in the area, extreme contrast between sunlit water and shade could be problematic on sunny days. I suggest the best shooting times would be in spring or summer, when there are high clouds and a bright overcast sky keeping the scene evenly lit.

Getting there: Regrettably, the best

I can say about Mossbrae Falls is that it's located about 1 mile upstream from the north end of Dunsmuir, near a railroad bridge crossing over the Sacramento River. For legal reasons, namely that I can't advise anyone to trespass, I just can't really tell you how to get there. Again, hopefully within a couple years, a newly constructed trail will once again provide photographers and other visitors with relatively easy public access.

To reach Hedge Creek Falls, exit I-5 at the Dunsmuir Avenue / Siskiyou Avenue off ramp, and head toward the T-intersection on the west side of the freeway. Turn right (north) onto Dunsmuir Avenue, where you'll almost



Hedge Creek Falls, Dunsmuir

immediately see a large parking area on the right side of the road. A crosswalk leading across Dunsmuir Avenue will lead you to the trailhead for Hedge Creek Falls. Allow yourself about half an hour to make the short round-trip hike to Hedge Creek Falls.

Castle Crags

Anyone who has traveled north or south on I-5 between Lake Shasta and Mount Shasta have certainly noticed the jagged, glistening peaks of the Castle Crags as they rise dramatically off to the west of the freeway and neighboring Sacramento River. Like a line of silver shark's teeth, these large granite spires share the same basic geological structure as many of the formations found in Yosemite and other parts of the Sierra. Known as a pluton, this bubble of granite is formed amidst a primarily volcanic landscape. As the softer, more sedimentary ground was slowly eroded away over the eons, these harder, massive crags remained. Today they sit as if enthroned above the lower—yet more-rounded—forested hillsides, but still remaining subservient to the massive Mount Shasta nearby. Historically, they're known as the site of a battle in the mid-1850s between local Native Americans and an ever-increasing population of miners coming into the area following the gold rush of 1849. The battle became one of the initial sparks which eventually lead to the region's Modoc Wars. The continued commercial interests of miners and the lumber industry in the area eventually led people to set aside land near the base of the crags, becoming Castle Crags State Park. Oddly, the crags themselves are actually located within the neighboring Shasta-Trinity National Forest, of which more than 8,500 acres was declared a wilderness area in 1984 by the United States Congress.

The Castle Crags span a vertical elevation which rises more than 4,000 feet from their base along the Sacramento River. The lower elevations are comprised of primarily oak and woodland habitat, while the higher elevations, which can exceed 6,000 feet, are primarily mixed coniferous forest. There are several moderate hiking trails, including the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail, which leads directly up toward the crags or provide access to the neighboring wilderness area. Probably the most popular trail is the nearly 3-mile long Castle Dome trail which during the short distance, pushes itself up nearly 2,000 feet to the base of Castle Dome. Along the way, this trail provides excellent scenic views of the crags and neighboring Mount Shasta. There are also a couple trails that provide access to several waterfalls located within the area. One of them, a moderately challenging trail, climbs about 1,000 feet in slightly more than 3 miles, providing access to Sulfur Creek and the 40-foot high Burstarse Falls. Another trail of similar length and difficulty will lead hikers to what's been termed one of several recently "re-discovered" waterfalls in the region. The 350-foot multi-tiered Root Creek Falls cascades down the rocky canyon, situated well below the imposing granite face of Castle Dome.

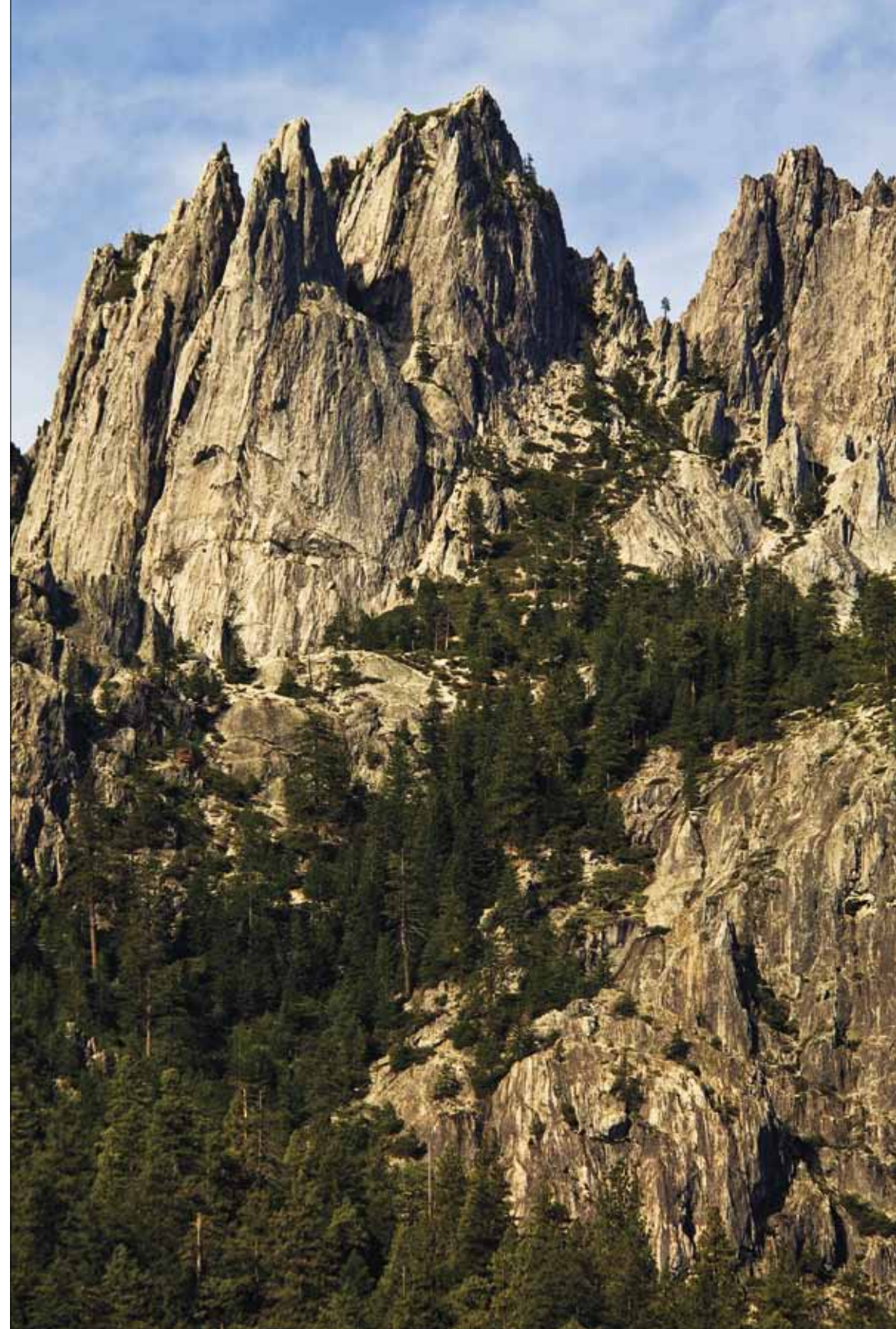


Castle Dome (photo by Frank Kovalchek)

Photo Advice: Within the Castle Crags State Park, there is a drive-to viewpoint up a very narrow and winding forest road which is not suitable for larger recreational vehicles or trailers. The road, which works its way uphill for more than a mile from the park entrance, leads to a small parking area, where a short trail leads just 100 yards or so to a hilltop overlook. The biggest obstacles at this overlook are the nearby trees, which prevent really nice wider-angle scenic shots. Ideally, you'll want a telephoto lens to get more frame-filling compositions. From this viewpoint, you're looking due west toward the crags, which means the granite peaks will get the best light in early morning. It would be a bonus to time your shot as the moon is setting in the western sky. Because this overlook is within the State Park, an entrance fee is required. Another good view of the Castle Crags can be seen from the south by taking Castle Creek Road past the park entrance for approximately 3.7 miles to where it makes a sharp climbing left-hand turn. Continue to follow the road for just under another mile uphill, where you'll see an obvious roadside dirt pullout with an unobstructed view looking north to the Castle Crags. The primary difference between this view and the one from the park overlook, is that the Crags themselves don't have the same jagged, incisor tooth-like appearance from this southerly vantage point, instead resembling a more rounded, though still sharp-crested molar.

Seasonally, the best time to visit the Castle Crags will be in the spring or fall. The waterfalls are usually flowing at their best during the latter part of spring, while spring and early summer will also be the best time to photograph wildflowers in the area, especially in the lower elevations along Castle Creek. The area is also home to the Castle Crags Harebell, a rare, area-specific wildflower which blooms nowhere else on the planet. The same lower elevations also offer good seasonal foliage for color photography in fall, especially when the leaves of the oak trees start turning a rich golden hue in October and November. Wildlife photographers in the area will most likely find common woodland creatures like deer and raccoons, while at higher elevations and throughout the wilderness, bears and rattlesnakes can sometimes be seen. If you plan on photographing Burstarse Falls and Root Creek Falls, both situated along the eastern facing slopes, you will have the best available light during the mornings and early afternoons.

Right: Castle Crags



Time Required: From the park entrance, allow yourself a half-hour to visit the state park overlook, or 20 minutes to drive up and back along Castle Creek Road. If you plan on visiting the waterfalls, allow a solid half day to tackle either of the approximately six mile round-trip hikes to Root Creek or Burstarse Falls.

Getting there: Castle Crags and the Castle Crags State Park are located approximately 12 miles south of the town of Mount Shasta and the intersection of CA-89 and I-5. If you're traveling north from the Sacramento Valley, you'll find the Crags approximately 30 miles north of Lake Shasta, and 45 miles north of Redding. From either direction, you'll take the Castella exit. Camping is seasonally available within the park, typically from April through October.

The Falls of the McCloud River, a.k.a. McCloud Falls

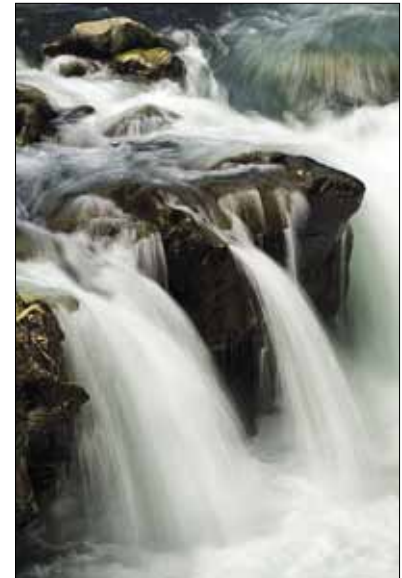
Situated along the McCloud River in Siskiyou County, southeast of Mount Shasta, the Falls of the McCloud River, also known as McCloud Falls, are a series of three separate falls, namely an upper, middle, and lower, all located within a relatively short distance to each other. By far, the most photogenic of the three is the Middle McCloud Falls, which during the height of its spring flow is a powerful, 50-foot high cascade, more than 100 feet wide. The Lower and Upper Falls are much smaller in comparison, approximately 12 feet and 25 feet in height, respectively. Access to all three falls is relatively easy, as each has its own separate parking and viewing area. It's also possible to access all three via a riverside trail which runs approximately 3.5 miles round-trip, starting and ending at the Lower Falls Viewpoint. Unlike the larger Middle McCloud Falls, Lower McCloud Falls is a small, punchbowl-type waterfall, located only a few hundred feet away from the parking area. On warm summer days, photographers will likely have to compete with crowds of people jumping off the rocks next to the waterfall and swimming in the large pool below.

The Middle McCloud Falls can be reached in about 20 to 30 minutes by hiking upstream from the Lower Falls, or accessed via its own parking area a bit more than a mile away. A very short trail leads from the parking area to a scenic viewpoint on the rim of the canyon, high above and overlooking the falls. From the viewpoint above the Middle Falls, the trail descends a couple hundred feet, switch-backing its way down the side of the canyon to the river. *Note: This is also the same trail coming upstream from Lower McCloud Falls. Despite its short length, and due in part to the steepness of this section, the relatively easy trail to the base of the Middle Falls might be considered somewhat more moderate for people with weak knees or other mobility problems.* While the view from the top of the viewpoint overlooking the Middle Falls is nice, the view from the riverside in front of the waterfall provides a much greater sense of the falls real height and width, which is somewhat difficult to appreciate given the angle of view from the upper vantage point. Of additional compositional interest is a small rock outcrop along the river, near the right-side base of Middle McCloud Falls, where the water seems to step down a small rock staircase.

The Upper McCloud Falls are a short distance further upstream, and can be reached via the same trail that continues from the top of the viewpoint at Middle Falls, or via a short, five minute walk from the Upper Falls parking area. The 25-foot high Upper Falls consist of a series of small cascading steps where the McCloud River is forced through a narrow rock gorge, powerfully funneling the water as it drops into a large open pool. There is an unmaintained user trail which heads down along the side of the steep embankment toward the water's edge at the base of the falls. Probably most often used by local fishermen, it can also provide photographers with a more direct, water-level view looking head on at the falls.

Photo Advice: The most common view of the Upper Falls will be from above, where a wide-angle lens will provide a larger view which includes the forest and the pool of water below the falls. A mid-range telephoto lens will give you a more detailed shot of the area where the water has cut its way through the rocky cliff face. From the Middle McCloud Falls overlook, a wide-angle or standard lens will give you a good view looking upstream above the falls, and catching the water as it plummets over the rocky face of the falls. A slightly longer lens will give you a frame-filling vertical shot of the falls from above. From the river's edge, a standard 28-70mm lens will provide ample reach for many frame-filling compositions.

As for the exposures (i.e., direction) when facing the falls, and the best time to shoot: you'll be facing north when looking at Lower McCloud Falls. Because it's in a fairly open location, the Lower Falls should have good light throughout much of the day, for most of the year. From the overlook viewpoint at Middle McCloud Falls, you're looking downward and to the south. Because the falls sit in a bit of a gorge, the best time to get direct light on the falls is during the afternoons. The same general lighting applies from the base of the falls, however there you'll be looking due east. When shooting at Upper McCloud Falls, the view facing the falls is looking to the southwest, so your best chance of getting direct sunlight on the falls is during the mornings from late spring through early summer. However, with the denser forest foliage and narrow rocky gorge, the contrast between sunlit and shaded areas can be rather extreme and problematic. The two obvious solutions under such circumstances would be to shoot multiple exposures with the plan of creating an HDR blend during post-processing, or shooting on a more overcast or cloudy day, when the entire scene is lit by fairly even light. Additional equipment that you might want to carry along would be a polarizing filter to help reduce reflections off the water or wet rocks, a tripod,



Lower McCloud Falls



Middle McCloud Falls

and cable or remote shutter release if you want to use slower shutter speeds, and a soft towel to dry off any water spots that may reach your lens from the mist and spray coming off the waterfalls.

Time Required: Allow yourself a total of about 1 to 2 hours to photograph each of the three waterfalls, assuming you drive to each of the respective areas. Although all three

falls could be seen within an hour, the extra time would be needed if you plan on hiking down to the base of Middle McCloud Falls from the upper viewing area, or hiking a short distance upstream to see Upper McCloud Falls. If you plan on doing the nearly 4-mile, out-and-back hike along the river from Lower McCloud Falls, give yourself between 3 and 4 hours to comfortably make the round-trip.

Getting there: The Falls of the McCloud River are located in the Shasta-Trinity National Forest, just off CA-89, not too far east of the small town of McCloud. The most direct route follows CA-89 for 15.5 miles east from its junction at I-5 near the town of Mount Shasta. The other common approach would be from the south, namely coming from McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park. From the nearby Junction of CA-89 and CA-299, follow CA-89 north for 40 miles to Fowlers Public Camp Road, and the turnoff to the Lower McCloud Falls.

On the north side of the highway, you'll see a forest service sign for Fowlers Campground and the Lower Falls. Turn right onto Fowlers Public Camp Road for 1.25 miles south, following the signs to the Lower Falls parking area. Note: after traveling south on Fowlers Public Camp Road for just over a half-mile from CA-89, you'll come to an extended five-way intersection. Following the main paved road south goes to the Lower Falls. Turning left at this intersection onto the only other paved road takes you to the viewpoint parking areas for both the Middle and Upper Falls. From this intersection, traveling 1 mile east will bring you to the parking area for the Middle McCloud Falls viewpoint. Continuing for another half-mile around a strong curve to the right (heading south) will bring you to the signed turnoff on the right for the Upper Falls area, which is an additional half-mile down the Upper Falls Road.

