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Photographing the Flint Hills

John D. Morrison

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DECEMBER TALLGRASS - LAST LIGHT

“Plan an early or late excursion when the light emphasizes the topography and the colors. Landscape colors are more saturated in the few minutes before and after sunrise and sunset.”

Photographing the Flint Hills

Ten years ago, after careers in programming and teaching, Flint Hills photographer John Morrison “got serious about landscape photography.” In this annotated photo essay, Morrison offers his advice to other photographers.



PRAIRIE FIRE AND SUN

“Make a photo trip on one of the special occasions discovered during your research – spring pasture burn, rodeos, wildflower tours, parades.”



ICY FENCE

"If you can't get away from the road (or a fence), include it in the sweep of your composition."



DOWN THE HILL

"In those areas with no roadside fences to keep cattle off the road, the cattle have the right-of-way. Be prepared to pass through the herd at a crawl."



FLINT HILLS JULY DAYBREAK

"If you travel an unpaved road in the Flint Hills, you should expect an eventual flat and be prepared to deal with it. A friend and I once had two flats in forty minutes, but that was before my ten-ply tires."



FLINT HILLS LIMESTONE

"Consider some possible photo themes – textures, colors, grass seed heads, lighting effects, topography, the wind, the expanse."



FLINT HILLS SPRING MIST (ABOVE)

“Revisit an area in different seasons. If you see a striking scene while driving, safely turn around, then go back and photograph it.”

FLINT HILLS CLOUD BURST (BELOW)

“Be safe. Don’t make yourself a lightning rod. It only takes a little rain to make some of the unpaved roads impassable.”





MUSTANG RUN

John D. Morrison

Large herds of wild horses once ran free in frontier Kansas and the rest of the Great Plains, but in the twentieth century the range of the mustang became centered in Nevada and other Great Basin states. There wild horses have thrived, so much so that today their vast numbers are a threat to the fragile cold-desert ecosystem.

To help combat that threat, the Bureau of Land Management has instituted a program to relocate mustangs to other areas. Since the early 2000s, thousands of mustangs have roamed Flint Hills pastures. These mustangs, all geldings and mares, are living out their lives in freedom on the 777, Shadow Valley, and Vestring ranches in northeast Butler and northwest Greenwood counties.