

# Ring's Reflections

by Bob Ring

## Workshop in the Desert

As part of my never-ending quest to improve my skills in writing this column (usually with accompanying photographs), Pat and I recently completed a two-day *Arizona Highways* photography workshop. The magazine, known for its fabulous pictures, hosts over 40 workshops a year, for beginners to pros, in some of the most beautiful and historic places in the southwest. See [www.ahpw.org](http://www.ahpw.org) for 2013 programs.

We participated in a workshop on how to get the most out of a point-n-shoot camera – held at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix and taught by premier photographer Jeff Kida, whose main job these days is Photo Editor of *Arizona Highways*. (Pat had to convince me to go, because I had never taken a photo of a garden or anything in one.)

We began on a Friday evening in the offices of *Arizona Highways*; there were seven participants, two knowledgeable volunteer “trip leaders,” and our teacher. Jeff Kida ran us through the basics of point-n-shoot cameras, with the added challenge that each of us had a different camera with quite a variation in technology and capability. Then he discussed why we might want to get away from the “auto” setting; how to control such parameters as light, exposure time, and depth of field; and the importance of tripods for stability and self-timers for flexibility in composing photos. We had a lively discussion on how to achieve better image quality and finished up talking about available software programs to improve photos on a computer.

Saturday morning we met at Desert Botanical Garden – an impressive 145-acre site with more than 50,000 desert plants - to begin our day of taking and analyzing photos. We used a well-appointed conference room in one of the educational buildings as our base camp and set out to take photos.

Over the course of the morning, we visited the Herb Garden, Cactus and Succulent Galleries, and the Butterfly Pavilion. With Jeff's and his two assistants' guidance, each of us took over 100 photos, mostly close-ups of flowers, cacti, or butterflies.

A little spice was added to the day when it turned out that it was “Bring Your Dog Day” at the Garden. We were surprised at the number of dogs attending, avoided getting bitten, and were impressed with the frequent doggy water stations, manned by volunteers.

After a box-lunch break back at our conference room, we downloaded our photos to the laptop computers we were asked to bring, and we each selected three photos to share and discuss. The workshop assistants collected the photos and Jeff Kida projected them on a large screen.

The next two hours were truly fascinating. One by one we looked at the photos. Jeff made comments, in a very positive critique style and then proceeded to operate on each image – using a Photo-Shop-like program - to try various cropping options, change the color and lighting, or a host of other editing actions – all the while inviting comments - until we all agreed that we had an improved photo.

What a fun learning experience! Pat and I learned a lot more about the capabilities of our point-n-shoot cameras and some important principles for better photos.

*These are a few of the photos we took at the Arizona Highways  
photo worksho at Phoenix's Desert Botanical Garden.  
(Courtesy of Bob Ring and Pat Wood)*

