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A New Sharp Shooter

The D810 Passes My Ultimate Test

Featuring **MIKE CORRADO**

As manager of pro photographer relations and product marketing for Nikon Professional Services, there's no denying I have advantages when it comes to early information about, and access to, new Nikon gear. But as a person who loves to take pictures (and, some might say, who lives to take pictures), I'm like any other photographer when it comes to actually using the gear. The advance information is all well and good, and pretty much a requirement of the job, but like any shooter, what really matters to me is how the gear will perform when it's out of the box and in my hands in the field.

When I first heard about the new [D810](#), I made a mental list of great expectations based on the camera's specs and features: improved speed of autofocus acquisition thanks to the new focus points option; a quieter shutter; less vibration; faster framing rate at full resolution; a host of video capture refinements; and, because the D810 had no anti-aliasing filter, improved image quality. Add in the pickup of the D800's low-light capability, and the D810 added up to a camera that should be ideal for me. I shoot everything, but my specialties are rock and roll, sports and wildlife. Less vibration? Faster AF and framing rate? Higher quality images? Sign me up.



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A California Sea Lion pup makes an appearance. I'd set the D810 for manual exposure and selected Group Area AF, a feature the D810 shares with the D4S. In Group Area AF, I can choose any one of the camera's 51 autofocus points and four surrounding points will be automatically activated to keep my subject in focus. The result is speedier acquisition of a moving subject—and I was going to need it. D810, AF-S NIKKOR 500mm f/4G ED VR, AF-S Teleconverter TC-20E III, 1/400 second, f/8, ISO 2000, manual exposure, Matrix metering.

So there I was on day one of shooting with the D810—at the Bronx Zoo, early in the morning, positioned and waiting for the California Sea Lion pups to show their whiskered faces. I'm at a pretty good distance, so I'm working off a monopod with a 500mm lens (the [AF-S NIKKOR 500mm f/4G ED VR](#)) and a 2X teleconverter (the [TC-20E III](#)), and my attitude is pretty much, okay D810, show me something.

And it did. Something amazing; something I'd never seen before.

One of the pups comes out of its rocky den, followed quickly by its mom. They go nose to nose and I'm shooting at five frames per second. Then I check the LCD to see what I got, and because I set the multi selector button on all my Nikon DSLRs to display magnified images at 1:1, life-size, what I'm seeing is a huge blowup. I move the image to an area of the frame that I need to know is super-sharp: the mom's whiskers. They're so sharp I can hardly believe it. First I'm saying, "Look at what this camera just did." Then I switch to, "Look at what I just did with this camera." Then I'm thinking ahead to what a confidence builder this camera is going to be, and the kind of richly detailed images it can deliver. I don't deny there's a lot of satisfaction in thinking, look what I can do now.



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I spend quite a bit of time at the Stony Brook Bird Sanctuary on the north shore of Long Island, where the egrets are among my favorite subjects. With the 500mm lens, 2X teleconverter and my monopod, I challenged early morning's low light by setting 1600 ISO to get 1/1600 second shutter speed. I selected Vivid from the picture control menu to punch the colors a bit. D810, AF-S NIKKOR 500mm f/4G ED VR, AF-S Teleconverter TC-20E III, 1/1600 second, f/8, ISO 1600, aperture priority, Matrix metering.

I'll admit that not every photographer would be as excited about this example of incredible sharpness as I was, but to me, sharpness is the ultimate test. If the key area of the photo isn't dead-on sharp, I delete it; close is not good enough. Sharpness is my confirmation that I've got the shot and can move on to the next setup, the next scene...or just the next moment.

Simply, that one image from my shoot at the zoo was an indicator of what the 36-megapixel D810 and its incredible sensor could do for me.



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Original image – A big advantage of the D810 is that the resolution, detail and image quality produced by its 36-megapixel FX sensor gives photographers the freedom to consider deeper crops into frames during post to get the most out of situations that have exhausted the reach of the longest lens they've got with them. In this case, it was the 500mm NIKKOR I had on the D810 one day at the bird sanctuary. Relying on five-frames-per-second advance and Group Area AF, I focused on an egret that was quite animated in its hunt for food. As it leaped forward and grabbed a fish, I got one well-composed image. D810, AF-S NIKKOR 500mm f/4G ED VR, 1/3200 second, f/9, ISO 500, aperture priority, Matrix metering.



Featuring

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Mike Corrado's title at Nikon is senior manager, pro relations and marketing business development. Check out Mike's work on [Instagram](#).

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