



Olympus C740. Left top: Fulvous Hairstreak, uncropped. Merritt Island, FL. Left bottom: Same as left top, but cropped and enlarged. Above: Gulf Fritillaries. Merritt Island, FL.



Jim Escoffier (3)

Olympus C740

by Jim Escoffier

My camera, an Olympus C-740, is one of the cheaper ones but still takes good pictures. Like all things it has good and bad features but I believe it gives very good performance for the price. It has 3.2 megapixel "resolution" and a 10 power optical zoom. The high magnification makes it great for photographing small butterflies or large butterflies at a distance. The viewfinder is an electronic one so you will get exactly what you see. I prefer to the small (1.5") LCD display which washes out easily in bright light. Also, it does not affect battery life. The biggest problem with the camera is

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one that is shared with almost all low priced cameras whether digital or not. These cameras allow only auto-focusing which means that what they focus on is not, necessarily what you want to focus on. Focusing on a butterfly atop a single flower can be difficult. You usually get a blur centered within a perfectly focused background. To get around the problem, you focus on a large object and then set the camera at the same distance from the butterfly before snapping the picture. I'm sure you are familiar with this technique if you have ever used a low priced camera. Otherwise, I'm very satisfied with the Olympus and would recommend it to anyone wanting a reasonably priced camera (around \$225) which will take good pictures of things as small as a butterfly.



Nikon Coolpix 8800. Top: Southern Cloudywing. July 30, 2005. Shaw Nature Reserve, Gray Summit, MO. Above: Same at top, but cropped and enlarged.

Nikon Coolpix 8800

by David Larson

A few months ago, I purchased a Nikon Coolpix 8800 digital camera. This particular model features a 10x optical zoom with a vibration reduction system, 8 megapixels, and macro focus.

Since its acquisition, I have been very happy with this camera. The Coolpix 8800 very well suits my needs, and has functioned perfectly in many situations, including butterfly photography, and has proved to be an easy-to-use camera.



Nikon Coolpix 8800. Gray Hairstreak. July 30, 2005. Shaw Nature Reserve, Gray Summit, MO.

Its "pros" or pluses are many, including: an excellent quality Nikkor lens, long-lasting batteries, a great 10x zoom (equivalent to 350 mm), optional manual focus, and a very good "one-button-to-engage" macro. It uses easy-to-obtain and relatively inexpensive Compact Flash memory cards. I found the controls and menus intuitive and easy to learn. The camera focuses relatively quickly, and is quiet when the shutter is released. It comes with other standard features such as pop-up flash and a remote control. It is extremely versatile and I've used it for wildlife photography, landscape scenes, close-up macro work, portraits, and sporting events. A big "bonus" is the VR or vibration-reduction stabilization system, which does indeed reduce photo shake especially while hand-holding during long zoom shots of elusive subjects such as butterflies.

Its "cons" include a touchy auto-focus in shade or low-light conditions. And at times I wish the lens was a bit more "wide-angle" than its 35 mm (I loved my 28 mm wide-angle lens on my old 35mm camera!). Another con is possibly its 680 g or 1 1/2 pound weight, which is more than most digital cameras, yet this is still lighter than SLR cameras with interchangeable lenses. Also, I find this weight as a stabilizing "plus" when trying to focus on butterflies 10 or 15 or more feet away.

David Larson (3)