

The Beginner's Guide to Point and Shoot Nature Photography with the Sony RX10 V: shooting in Auto.



Point and Shoot Nature Photography means: letting the camera do everything it can for you—especially focusing and determining correct exposure—so that you can spend your time and energy finding your subjects, seeing the image that needs taking, framing it effectively, and pressing the shutter. And of course sharing your images. It means learning to trust the camera to do what it does best, so that you can do what you do best—in fact the parts only you

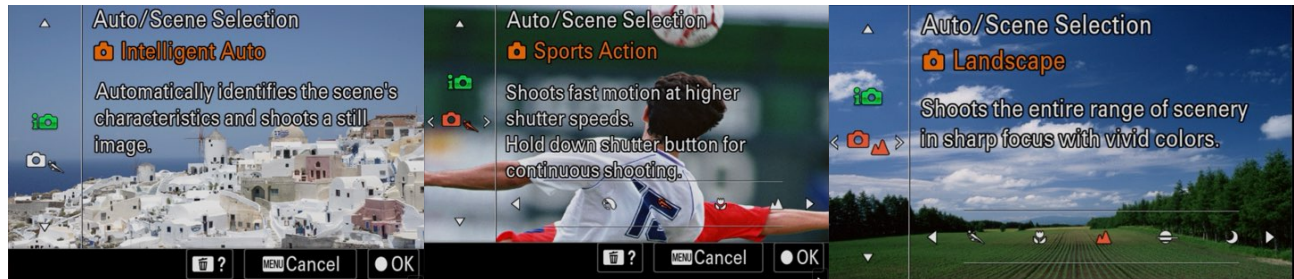
can do.

If you want to shoot birds and wildlife, landscapes, and natural macros with your new Sony RX10 V, but you are not comfortable going beyond the Auto setting on the Mode Dial, or doing much deep menu work, I am going to show you some ways of making life easier and bringing back more satisfying images of the nature you love and love to photograph—using only a few modifications to Auto mode.

(If you have already learned to make more than basic adjustments to your camera to give you more satisfying images than Auto provides, you may find the Intermediate or Advanced Guides more useful. See the link on the last page of this book.)

Sony's Intelligent Auto—sometimes called Scene Selection Auto—is pretty amazing. It has built-in Scene Modes tailored for Portrait, Sports, Landscape, Macro, Sunset,

Night Portrait, and Night Scene, and in the full-on Intelligent Auto mode, it attempts to recognize these different scenes as you are shooting and select the correct mode based on lighting, subject motion, distance to the subject, etc. Each Scene Mode adjusts the settings of the camera to increase your success and help you to capture satisfying images.



Sports Mode (or Sports and Action to give it its full name), for instance, emphasizes higher shutter speeds and tracking auto focus to freeze action. Landscape brings out the blues and greens of a scene while keeping both foreground and background sharp. Portrait Mode emphasizes skin tones and blurs the background. And so on.

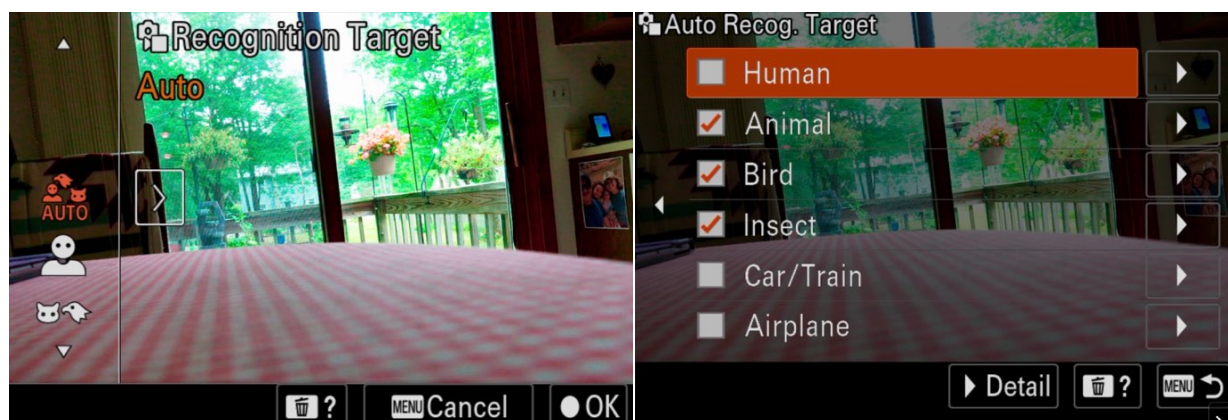
While there are both Landscape and Macro modes built in, and I will show you how to get the most out of them, you will notice that there is no Wildlife Scene Mode. For Wildlife just going about its normal business, moving but not moving fast—including birds, animals, and insects—we will rely on making a few modifications to the regular Auto mode. For active wildlife—including birds in flight and running or fighting animals—we will use Sports and Action Mode.

Bird and Wildlife modifications

For now we are going to accept the JPEG file format the camera has already chosen. Later on I will show you how to change to a higher quality file format. (You can jump there now if you are brave and ready for some Menu work. See Image Quality below.)

I used to never recommend Auto for Birds and Wildlife because one of the limitations of Auto, great as it is in most other ways, is that you have no control over where the camera focuses. Intelligent Auto is limited to two focus areas: Wide, which covers most of the frame, and Tracking Wide, which, in Sports Mode, engages predictive Tracking. Both work well, but with active birds and wildlife, I always like to give the camera a little more help when it comes to where it focuses, so I always have recommended setting your focus areas to a smaller section near the center of the frame.

However, with the AI-assisted Subject Recognition and Eye-Tracking built into the RX10 V, you can more or less get away with a Wide focus area. Subject Recognition is turned on by default in Intelligent Auto, and it is set to Auto. The camera will do its best to recognize humans, animals, birds, insects, airplanes, and Car/Trains, and to lock on to them and follow them to keep them in focus. For humans, animals, and birds, it follows, if possible, the eye, and if not, the head or body. For insects, it locks on to the head. For planes and vehicles, it locks, presumably, on the leading edge.

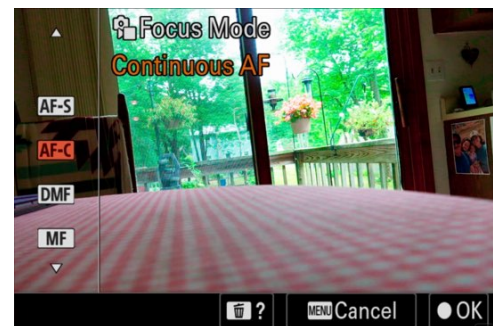


However, if our primary interest is photographing birds, animals, and insects, we can make Subject Recognition's job easier by limiting its choices to animals, birds, and insects. You can do this without opening the main menu system by using the Function Button right above the 5-way control wheel on the back of the camera, or by dragging your finger up from the bottom of the LCD screen to reveal the Function menu. Touch or scroll to the Subject Recognition icon. It is the one with the human, eagle, and cat in it above the word AUTO just right of center in the top row. Touch or select it with the

center button on the 5-way control wheel. The live view will open with your choices down the left side. Auto will already be selected and you will see a little arrow next to it pointing right. This always indicates that there are more options to choose. Touch it or use the right edge of the 5-way control wheel to open your options. You will have a list of the Subject Recognition Targets: Human, Animal, Bird, etc. They will all have a check mark next to them. By touch or using the 5-way control wheel, uncheck all but Animal, Bird, and Insect. Use the Menu button to close that Menu and then the OK (or center button of the 5-way control wheel) to return to the live view.

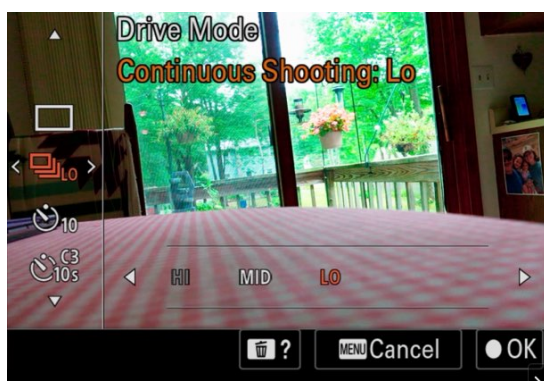
If you are going to use Intelligent Auto to photograph people, you might want to leave Human checked as well, but it will, perhaps, slow down Subject Recognition of animals, birds, and insects.

One more change to the focus. Go back to the Function menu, either using the Function button or dragging it up from the bottom of the LCD. You will see an icon that says, probably, AF-S for Auto Focus Single Frame. Select that. Again, you will get the live view with options down the left-hand side.



Choose AF-C, for Auto Focus Continuous. Subject Recognition Tracking does not work in AF-S.

Now press the left edge of the 5-way control wheel to open the Drive Mode options, or touch the 2nd icon down on the left-hand side of the LCD. It will be a single rectangle to represent single frame shooting. You will again get your options down the left-hand side of the live view. Continuous shooting is the second icon from the top, the one that



looks like a stack of frames. When you select it, you will see a set of icons across the bottom of the screen to select how many frames per second you want to take while holding the shutter button down. I recommend, for birds

and wildlife and insects, choosing the Lo option, which is 5 frames per second. Mid is 15, and on up to 30 fps. I find that 5 fps give me enough different poses of a bird or animal or bug to make a choice, without too many near duplicates which I end up throwing away. On the other hand, I never recommend taking just one photo of anything. You never know.

Your ISO range in Intelligent Auto is already set to Auto, from ISO 100 to ISO 6400. The ISO setting determines how dim the light can be to still produce a usable image. You cannot change it in Intelligent Auto, but that is already set to a very useful range. In more customizable modes, you can also set a minimum shutter speed to make sure subject or camera motion does not blur your image, but in Intelligent Auto, you just have to let the camera do its thing. That might mean that some of your shots in low light will be blurred. We can deal with that when you are ready to take the next step in the Intermediate or Advanced Guides to Point and Shoot Nature Photography available at the link at the end of this eBook.

With these few modifications to Intelligent Auto, you will have increased the number of satisfying images of birds and wildlife that you bring back, and hopefully eliminate some of the frustrations of using Auto. The camera will remember these modifications even when you turn it off, and you will be ready to shoot as soon as you turn it on again. (As long as you don't make any other changes.)

Please note: one of the most frustrating things about Sony's auto focus is that it seems to get stuck on far away objects and not be able to focus back in to find and recognize your subject. Here's a trick. Focus on your feet or the ground at your feet for just a second before you bring the camera up to your eye. Just half press the shutter button or hold the AF-On button in for a split second—long enough to force focus, and then the camera will almost always find your subject in the center of the frame when you return to it.

Flight and Action

While the camera in Intelligent Auto does a good job of selecting Portrait, Landscape, Macro modes, etc., it does not always recognize when you need Sports and Action. It is best to set it yourself when shooting action.

To do so, you can open the function menu again and touch the bottom left icon. This opens a screen with your choices (see above). The top one, already selected, is Intelligent Auto. The bottom one is Scene Selection, and when you select it, you will see your choices again across the bottom of the screen. For Action and Flight, select Sports.

As mentioned, Sports Mode does two things. It favors the higher shutter speeds needed to freeze active subjects, and it turns on the Tracking Wide focus area, which engages Sony's predictive Object Tracking. Predictive focus is very effective and very sophisticated when dealing with human subjects, from base runners to ballet dancers, but much less so with birds and wildlife. And being limited to the Tracking Wide focus area can lead to some misidentifications of your subject.

The thing that Sports Mode does not do, but ought to, is to increase the Drive mode to at least Medium (15 frames per second). You will have to do that using the left edge of the 5 way control wheel or the Drive Icon on the LCD display. Just select Continuous, and change your selection along the bottom of the display to Mid.

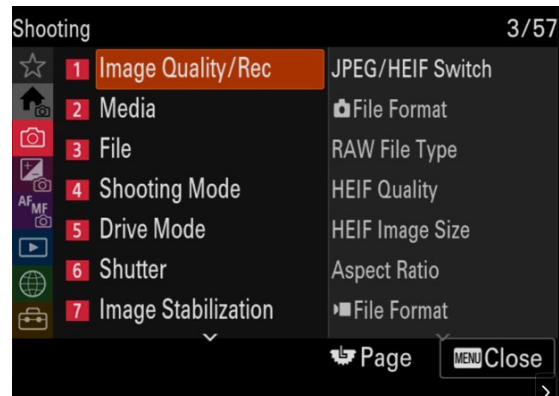
Also, Auto is limited, for some unknown reason, to the Mechanical shutter, which means that in most lighting, your maximum shutter speed is going to be limited to 1/1000th—fast enough for base-runners and playing puppies but not for most birds in full flight. To get around this requires creating our own Flight and Action Scene Mode and some deep dives into the menus and features of the RX10 V. When you are ready, the instructions are in my Advanced Guides to Point and Shoot Nature Photography with the Sony RX10 V. (See the link below.) Until then, put the camera in Sports Scene

Mode and take a lot of frames. You will get some satisfying ones, even of the birds in full flight.

Image Quality.

If you want to improve your image quality at least slightly, you can change the file format the camera uses to store images on the SD Card. I recommend, if your computing devices can handle it, shooting in HEIF 4.2.2 rather than JPEG. Either will do fine, but HEIF has, potentially, a bit more dynamic range and color depth, and can be edited a bit more

effectively. If you are in the Apple universe, it is the native file format for images on all Apple devices, and most editing software that runs on Apple will handle it well. If you are in the Windows world, you need to check to see if your device and apps will work with HEIF; some do not. JPEG is the safe choice. HEIF is the higher quality choice. It is not going to make a whole lot of difference either way, but it is a choice you can make.



I do not shoot in RAW, and yes, I have heard all the arguments. In my testing of this camera in particular, I have not found that I can get any more out of a RAW file in post-processing than, and sometimes not as much as, the camera gets out of it in producing the HEIF or JPEG. All digital images can be improved by post-processing, but I cannot improve the RAW files any more than I can improve the HEIF or JPEGs that the camera produces. And, I use the built-in image quality features of the RX10 V, including Dynamic Range Optimization and Creative Looks, which are not available when shooting RAW. Then too, Intelligent Auto and its Scene Modes rely on DRO and Creative Looks to achieve many of their unique effects.

The camera will be set to JPEG out of the box, but it will be set to JPEG Fine, one step below highest quality. This will require some actual menu work. First step: open the menus using the Menu button on the left side of the EVF (eye-level-finder). Scroll down

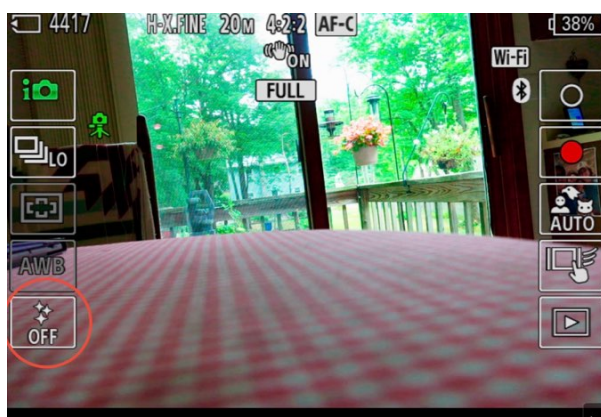
to, using the bottom edge of the 5-way control wheel on the back of the camera, or just touch, the Camera Icon on the left. If you scrolled to it, you will either press the center button on the 5-way control wheel or the right edge of the wheel to open it. Now in the menu that opens, select Image Quality/Rec. If you are ready to choose HEIF, select JPEG/HEIF Switch and set the next menu to HEIF 4.2.2. Return one level. Now select Quality. It will either say JPEG or HEIF Quality, depending on what you chose in the previous step. Set this to Extra Fine. It will make your files slightly larger on the SD card, but it may preserve more dynamic range, detail, and color depth.

Landscape and Macro

When using Intelligent Auto, you can just let the camera identify and select the Scene Mode, or you can choose one of the available Scene Modes yourself. When shooting Action—birds in flight, etc.—it is, as above, best to manually select the Sports and Action Mode. The Camera will do a good job of identifying Landscapes and Macro, but since neither, unlike birds and animals and bugs, are going anywhere while you fiddle with the controls, there is no reason not to select them intentionally when shooting Landscapes and Macros.

To change shooting modes, you can open the function menu again and touch the bottom left icon. This once more opens a screen with your choices. Select Scene Selection, and when you select it, you will see your choices again across the bottom of the screen. For Landscape or Macro, select Landscape or Macro.

When shooting birds and wildlife, or action and flight, there is rarely time to make fine adjustments to the look of the image you are capturing. When shooting Landscapes



and Macros, you generally have time for such adjustments, and your images will benefit if you learn how to do that.

On the LCD, the bottom icon on the left is My Styles. It looks a little like fireworks. Touching it brings up options across the bottom of the LCD. The first one is called Background Blur, and is, in reality, an aperture control. It controls, among other things, how much of your image is in focus at the same time. This can be critical for macros where you are very close to your subject. The second one, the little sun, controls the brightness of the scene. It is actually what we call Exposure Compensation. In landscape mode, you will often need it to lighten the foreground when the sky is big and bright. The remaining two control the warmth and coolness of the colors, and the Creative Look applied to the image. These are touch-only controls. You can only access them and change them on the LCD.

Let's take an example. You are shooting a Landscape of big clouds on a blue sky over a green expanse, varying from the green of grass to the deep darker green of a forest. Maybe there is a stream meandering through. Landscape mode tries to make the best



of it, but to your eye, the greens seem too dark. If you touch the My Styles icon and then the Brightness Icon, you will get a little touch slider that you can move left to darken the scene or right to lighten the scene. Sometimes moving it to the right will bring out more of the greens, but then the sky will be lighter and the clouds brighter too. Adjust to what looks best to your eye.

Then too there is the Creative Looks icon on the far right. Touching it will bring up options across the bottom of the LCD. It will be on Auto. Scrolling to the left you will find Standard, Portrait, Neutral, Vivid and Vivid2, a bunch of film looks, and Black and White. On some landscapes Vivid (adds some pop) and Vivid2 (adds more pop), can

improve the look of the image. You can see how your selection is going to affect the image as you scroll through them. Choose what your eye likes.

In the same way when shooting a Macro, often you cannot get the whole subject in focus at the same time. Touching the My Styles icon and then the Background Blur icon (the one with the little human shape) brings up a slider that runs from Defocused to



Clear. To increase the amount of your subject that is in focus, you would slide the slider all the way to the Clear side. And while you are at it you might want to look at what the Creative Looks do for the image.

One time I would use the My Styles settings when shooting birds and wildlife is if it looks like the auto exposure is making the white and bright parts of birds or animals so bright that there is no detail left. This happens on the RX10 V. If your eye is telling you that the whites are too white (or the reds too red for that matter) setting My Styles brightness control toward the dark side will save the day. It will remain where you set it until you reset it or turn the camera off or switch to an different shooting mode.

Before you leave the My Styles menu, be sure to touch AUTO, or if it is on the screen, the Reset icon, unless you are going to be taking a whole series of Landscapes or Macros that you want these changes to apply to. Or you are shooting a whole series of bright birds in the sun. You can also reset the My Styles by turning them off using the My Styles Icon.

Please be aware that the camera remembers only the last mode you were in when you turn it off. If you want to maintain the modifications we made to Auto, then you must return to the Auto shooting before turning the Camera off. :) Otherwise it will start back up on Landscape or Macro or Sports.

So there you have it. Enough to get you started in Auto for birds, wildlife, landscape, and macro. Point and Shoot. And enough so that you can begin to learn to make a few adjustments to Auto modes to suit your eye and your subjects.

But wouldn't it be nice if you could save those adjustments, once you are happy with them, so you did not have to make them every time? There is, and we will take that up in the Intermediate Guide to Point and Shoot Nature Photography with the RX10 V, using the Memories and the Star Modes. Or if you are ready for the Advanced Guide; Custom Shooting Modes, part one and part two, they are all available on my website at https://psnp.info/psnp/?page_id=2021.) Enjoy.

(I should say once more that the Intermediate Guide is not just for beginners as you gain more experience. Those who owned the RX10 III or IV, or are coming from another camera where you have already learned to make more than basic adjustments to give you more satisfying images, may find the Intermediate Guide more useful.)

The key is: get out and take a lot of photos. Point and Shoot!