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Nature Photo Times

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100 Years and Counting...

Ron Winch



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On March 14th the National Wildlife Refuge System will celebrate its 100th birthday. It has come a long way from March 14th, 1903 when President Teddy Roosevelt set aside the tiny five acre Pelican Island off Florida's east coast as a refuge for pelicans, egrets, herons and other nesting wildlife.



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Today the National Wildlife Refuge System consists of 539 units totaling nearly 95 million acres. It is the largest system of lands in the world managed primarily for wildlife, stretching from Hawaii to Puerto Rico and from Alaska to Mexico. And surprisingly, it is larger than the National Park System by about 20 million acres.

Many refuges were set aside for the protection and preservation of wildlife, many others to beef up waterfowl pro-



© Ron Winch

duction for bird hunters and still more to keep hungry waterfowl out of farmers' fields. Refuges generally are not high profile units like our National Parks with their outstanding scenery and public recognition. But they are the places where wildlife likes to live.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Our own Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is one of the few urban refuges in the country. It sits next to a busy international airport, stretches for

miles along the Minnesota River and is located in the seven county metro area

with over two million residents. And still it has an abundance of wildlife that most of us never see - or even know about.

There are trails, waterways, fens and eagles. Wild turkeys can be seen feeding from the visitor center. Great Blue Herons and egrets nest in the river bottom. Ducks and geese use the river as a flyway; reptiles and amphibians may take a bit of looking for. Cormorants hang out on the old snags and Soras



© Ron Winch

seem to walk on water. Soon bloodroot and rare kittentails will be breaking ground and flowering, or maybe you would rather photograph more mushrooms in May.

We, as members of the Minnesota Nature Photography Club, know the ref-



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uge as our meeting place, but do you know it in a more intimate way as home to hundreds of wild things carrying on their struggle for life under the watchful guidance of Rick Schultz, Refuge Manager, and his dedicated staff? Maybe by year's end some of us could become members of the "Friends" group, or at least contribute a few slides to the Refuge.

Happy Birthday
- March 14, 2003

Waterfowl of the Minnesota River Valley

- Visitor Center
Saturday, March 29
3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.



Join Craig Mandel at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center for a slide presentation featuring waterfowl that you can observe in the Minnesota River Valley. Key field marks for each species will be highlighted and pointers given on where and when to observe them on the Refuge.



The Perch

During my morning runs around the lake, I've noticed there are always several Black-capped Chickadees that hang around one particular area. One morning before I started my run, I put some birdseed in my pockets. When I arrived at the above mentioned area, I walked into the woods looking for a place with a pleasing background to deposit the seeds. I found an old withered tree branch that was loosely hanging down. I deposited the seeds and then continued on my run around the lake.

I walked back to the area about 3-4 hours later and to my surprise there were at least 6 Black-capped Chickadees, a couple of White-breasted Nuthatches, and a pair of Downy Woodpeckers in that immediate area. Every morsel of the seeds was gone! I quickly rigged up a couple of perches for the birds to land on before going to the seeds. I then stood off to the side about 12-15 yards away and immediately the birds came to the seeds. The Chickadees, in their usual fashion, quickly grabbed the seeds and flew to another perch to break them open to get to the hearts. The Nuthatches were more methodical; they hopped along the branch carefully choosing which seed they thought the best. A short time later the Downy came along and checked all of the nooks and crannies of the bark hoping to find some protein in the way of bugs or suet but eventually settled for a safflower seed instead. Standing in plain sight of the birds, they were obviously oblivious of me.

The chance for other birds such as Blue Jays and Cardinals to come to the snack tree was probably next to nothing. Those birds are not quite as people friendly as my sociable Chickadees. Since I had very few good Black-capped Chickadee photos in my stock file, I quickly went back home (which is only

a couple of blocks away) to grab my camera equipment.

Without the use of my blind, I set up my tripod with my 500mm and 2X converter about 15 feet from the tree. I sat down on my campstool and began the wait. After about only 5 minutes, my first Chickadee immediately landed on the branch. I looked through the viewfinder and slowly moved my lens along the tree. As the lens moved along the branch I found that I could not find the Chickadee. I looked above the lens and he was already up in the thick branches breaking open his seed. Another Chickadee suddenly appeared and I quickly focused. Just as the shutter fired the Chickadee took off. (Later I found that the slide showed a perfectly exposed branch with out-of-focus Chickadee tail feathers.) After shooting about 24-30 exposures, the only image that might prove to be any good was that of a Nuthatch. Chickadees are just too "flighty" - they quickly grab a seed and immediately leave. So my dilemma was how to fool these little seed stealers and still get the images I was after. Occasionally a bird would land on my perch, but would be gone in the blink of an eye. Looking over my set-up, I decided to remove most of the seeds from the branch and put a few seeds on my perch instead. I then took my lens and focused on the branch, setting my aperture to F11, and my shutter speed to 1/250. This gave me good depth of field and if a Chickadee landed on my perch I wouldn't have to do any-

thing but press the shutter. During the course of the next hour the birds still landed on the tree branch to steal the remaining seeds. I was beginning to get a little depressed but I maintained the vigil and kept focused on the "perch". I had only about 30 minutes of light left when one Chickadee came and landed on the branch looking for seeds. Finding none, he quickly flew to my perch grabbed a seed and in usual Chickadee style immediately flew away. While this was happening, I was able to keep the shutter down as I had pre-focused, setting the exposure value based on my background and the bird. I looked at my counter and I had fired off 7 images. Of those seven images two were keepers. One of them accompanies this article.



Black-capped Chickadee on sumac, John Pennoyer
Nikon F10, 500mm lens, 2.0X teleconverter, Provia 100F @ 200, Matrix metering, EV: -1/3
Background was neutral, - compensation so as not to burn the whites on the bird, Aperture Priority

During the winter months there are very few birds that come to my yard because of the lack of cover. In addition, the low sun angle leaves my yard in total shade. Even though this Chickadee gathering spot is a couple of blocks from my house it is in a public area. I have been feeding these birds on a regular basis and have taken many great images with different types of perches. One of the best things about this arrangement is that even though many folks will jog, walk, snowshoe or cross-country ski, they never see me hiding off in the woods!

Even though, from my perspective, this has been a lousy winter for photography, it has been great staying focused on "The Perch".

Good Shooting

Minnesota Nature Photography Field Trips



These are the updated plans for the monthly field trips. Additional modifications are possible. All trips are open to prospective members. Trips will take place as planned regardless of weather. For further information contact Dale Bohlke at (952) 445-6125 or dbohlke@mn.rr.com

April April 26th, 6 PM until dark
River Terrace SNA
Subject: Pasque flowers and sunset
Notes: Meet at Cannon River Trailhead, Cannon Falls. Be prepared to get low!
Tips on wildflower photography will be shared.

May May 17th, 7 AM - 9 AM, Tierney Woods
Subject: Ephemerals & Ferns

June June 21st, sunset (Tentative)
Subject: Butterfly Weed, Schaefer or Black Dog Prairie

July July 11th (Tentative)
Subject: sunset at Roscoe Prairie, possible sunrise, followed by butterflies at Regal Meadows

August August 4th Weekend, before sunrise (Tentative)
Subject: Monarch Migration
Notes: Photograph Monarch butterflies before they warm up

September Tentative
Subject: Spiderwebs at Louisville
Notes: Arrive early and finish the morning at the Renaissance Festival

Spring Wildflowers

in the Big Woods



For a short time in May, in the Big Woods of southeastern Minnesota, the spring ephemerals emerge and must bloom before the leaf canopy appears to end their flowering season.

Coldsnap Photography is offering an intensive four-day workshop in the Big Woods that emphasizes field work and personalized instruction. Emphasis will be on composition and visual design, small landscape and macro techniques, effective use of natural light and much more.

Date: May 8-11, 2003 **Cost:** \$635.00 (includes lodging and meals) **Location:** Wabasha, MN For further details, contact John Gregor toll free at 1 (800) 963-8785 or visit his website at www.coldsnap.com

February Awards

Judges: Rose Duncan &
John Dykstra

10

Dave Ellenbecker	Frosty Pine Needles
John D. Jenkins	Arches Court House Rock

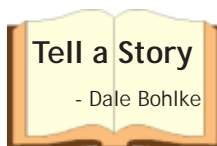
9

Betty Goossens-Bryan	House Sparrow #2
Jean McDonough	Gentoo and Baby
Aaron Moen	Lily
Aaron Moen	Swallowtail
Vern Nelson	Male House Finch
Pauline Nystrom	Cheetah on Watch
Pauline Nystrom	Intense Red Fox

8

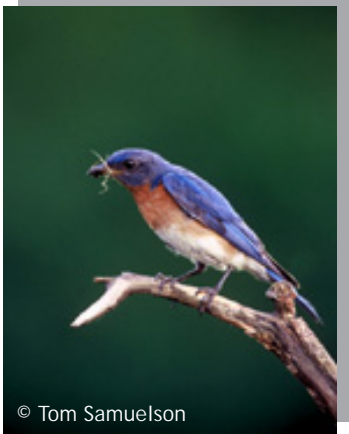
Michele Burkstrand	Grooming Oneself
Michele Burkstrand	Raven
Ted Galambos	Sunset No.2 Lake Superior
Ted Galambos	Lake Superior Sunset No. 1
Marilyn Gladitsch	Hepatica Trio
Betty Goossens-Bryan	Killdeer #1
Jeff Hahn	Treehoppers Mating
Marsha Kessler	Valley Sunrise
Charles Kessler	Downy
John D. La Mere	Roadside Pheasant
Tom Samuelson	Goldfinch #1
Tom Samuelson	Monarch #1

Open the Door



The open door invites me into the house. Pleasant conversation awaits me. Wait, I thought this was about nature photography. An open door represents the foreground in landscape photography. A strong foreground element, the lower third of a landscape, starts the visual journey through a landscape photo. The open door invites passage from the foreground into the middle ground. By being open it does not overpower the photograph and allows movement into the middle ground. A closed door blocks movement. Choose your foreground object carefully so the door is open.

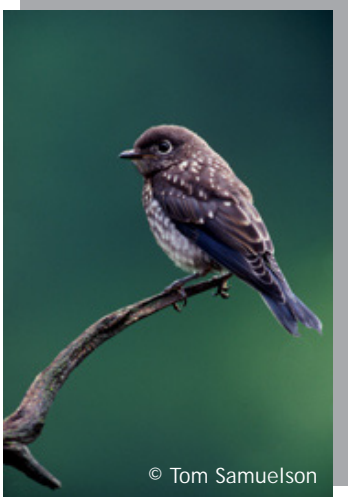
Look at the work of master landscape photographers such as David Muench who has used the same camera his entire career. Study the lower third of each image. Note how many have a strong foreground element. Also remember these are taken with a large format camera with a fixed focal length, no built in light meter, capable of one shot every few minutes. The images are a product of vision, not technology.



© Tom Samuelson

Adult male Eastern Bluebird with insect

“Approximately two-thirds of the diet of an adult Eastern Bluebird consists of insects and other invertebrates, notably grasshoppers, crickets, katydids, and beetles.”



© Tom Samuelson

Immature Eastern Bluebird

Introduction

Nearly everyone’s favorite migratory songbird, the Eastern Bluebird’s bright blue color and melodious song make it a welcome visitor to any backyard, notably mine. It’s truly a pleasure to watch these birds throughout the summer. They are roughly five and a half inches in length with bright blue along the head, back and tail; an orange-red throat, breast and sides and a pure white belly. The male is bolder in color than the female, which has the same coloration but is overall duller in appearance.

Population

Bluebird populations dwindled in the past due in large part to the introduction of the English House Sparrow and the European Starling. The additional competition that these alien intruders presented combined with the overall human population growth and our insatiable desire to clear fields and fencerows for more crop acreage, contributed to the downward spiral of their populations.

Today, Bluebird populations are healthy. Their population growth can be largely attributed to their acceptance of artificial nesting structures. Many concerned citizens manage bluebird “trails”. A trail is a series of houses that are monitored for bluebirds. This year “my” bluebirds successfully raised two broods to the fledgling stage. The daily visits to the sticks on my deck have become commonplace. They use them as hunting perches for insects to feed their young.

Nesting

Bluebirds need open areas like meadows, pastures and yards with access to forest edges and open cavities for nesting. The acceptance of artificial nesting boxes is a major reason for their comeback (I use the Peterson box). Nest boxes should be monitored and cleaned out once the babies have

fledged. The parents will rebuild their nest for the next attempt at family life.

The English Sparrow is also a cavity nester and can become a major problem. They are much more aggressive than Bluebirds and will take over, or even kill them for their nesting box. Sparrows must be dealt with if you wish to have success in raising bluebirds.

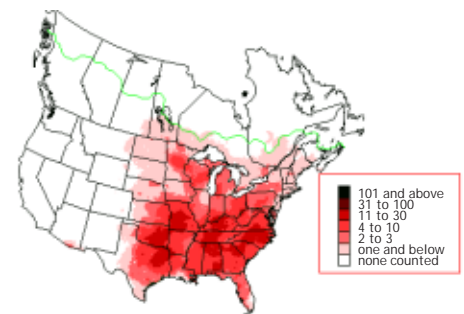
The bluebird’s clutch size ranges from 3 to 6 eggs that are a beautiful powder blue. The eggs are incubated for about 12 to 14 days. The nest itself is made up of soft grasses, woven in a perfect circle. It is always clean as the baby’s fecal sacks are discarded outside the nest box.

Food

Approximately two-thirds of the diet of an adult Eastern Bluebird consists of insects and other invertebrates, notably grasshoppers, crickets, katydids, and beetles. The remainder of the bird’s diet is made up of wild fruits, like dogwood, hawthorn, wild grape, and sumac and hackberry seeds.

Range

Bluebirds can be found throughout the eastern half of the United States. Their range extends from Canada to Florida on the east coast and stretches westward as far as the central plains.



Resources and information

1. “Bluebirds in the Upper Midwest” A guide to Successful Trail Management by Dorene Scriven
2. The Minnesota DNR

Have fun, they can be addicting.

Kandiko & Kandiko

Watercolors & Photographic Art



The artwork of Joe and Georgia Kandiko will be on display at the Chanhassen Recreation Center March 15 through May 15, 2003. You are invited to the Artists' Reception on Sunday, March 30, 2003 from 3 pm to 5 pm. The Chanhassen Recreation Center is located at 2310 Coulter Boulevard, Chanhassen, MN. Hours: M-F 5:30 am - 10 pm, Sat. 8 am - 8 pm, Sun. 10 am - 8 pm. For more information, call the Recreation Center at 952-227-1400.

Upcoming Photo Tours & Seminars Through May, 2003

John Gregor - www.coldsnap.com

March 29, 2003 (Madison WI, Marriott Hotel)
The Art of Seeing Photographically

April 12, 2003 (Bloomington MN, Bloomington REI)
The Art of Seeing Photographically

May 8-11, 2003
Spring Wildflowers of the Big Woods
Wabasha, MN

May 29-June 1, 2003
The Art of the Black and White Photograph
Silver Creek, MN

George Lepp - www.leppphoto.com

May 3-4, 2003
Minneapolis Convention Center - Optimizing the
Possibilities and The Digital Desktop Darkroom

Arthur Morris - www.birdsasart.com

May 16-18, 2003
St. Augustine Alligator Farm (FL) 3 day Instruc-
tional Photo-Tour

John Shaw - www.johnshawphoto.com

May 31-June 6, 2003
California Redwoods & Oregon Coast

Wildlife Science Center



The Wildlife Science Center in Forest Lake is offering photo shoots of wolves and raptors. To make an appointment for your personal shoot, contact Larry Luebben at 651-436-2828 or by email at larryluebben@aol.com. Shoots are limited to one or two people per session and the cost is from \$75.00 to \$100.00 per hour depending upon the number of subjects. 🐾

The 1854 Authority

Ron Cleveland

I had an interesting call from MNPC member Ralph LaPlant the other day. He has a LowePro Super Treker backpack for sale for \$200. You can contact him via e-mail at northwoodsimages@yahoo.com or on his cell phone at 1-866-284-2940. His web site is at northwoodsimages.com.

Ralph hosted a fall photo shoot a couple years ago at his place outside of Garrison, MN. At that time he was a conservation officer for the Mille Lacs band. Now he is a conservation officer with the 1854 Authority and will be moving to Two Harbors when he sells his home and acreage near Garrison. Ralph, a moose hunter and photographer, is thinking about hosting a moose photo excursion after he gets settled.

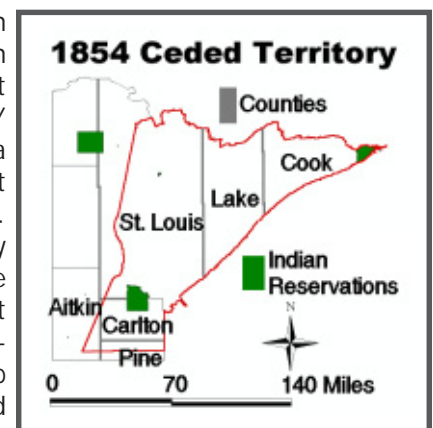
The Authority

The 1854 Authority is an inter-tribal natural resource agency that manages the off-reservation hunting, fishing and gathering rights of the Grand Portage and Boise Forte bands of the Lake Superior Chippewa in the territory ceded under the Treaty of 1854.

The Territory

The area covers the entire Arrowhead region of Minnesota and then some. Their web site at www.1854authority.org/ has a map of the area and information about the 1854 Authority. Among other things they have an aerial moose survey and track count programs for other critters. Go to their web page on amphibians and you can play recordings of the frogs of northern Minnesota.

I had never heard of the 1854 Authority before but was fascinated by the scope of their activities and responsibilities. They work in close cooperation with the Minnesota DNR to keep a watchful eye on the wildlife resources of the area. We wish Ralph good luck in his new assignment.



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Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month,
Sept-May at the Visitor Center of the Minnesota Valley
National Wildlife Refuge, 3815 East 80th Street,
Bloomington, MN

FIRST CLASS MAIL

February Program:



Judging of
Interclub Nature
Slides



USPS Issues New Stamp

On March 14, 2003, the United States Postal Service will introduce a new stamp featuring a photograph by James Brandt of a brown pelican. This stamp commemorates the centennial of the creation of Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge on the east coast of central Florida, an event that also marked the beginning of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Today the refuge encompasses 5,377 acres and shelters hundreds of plant and animal species.


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The Falkland Islands

*"One of my favorite spots to
photograph birds..."*

Interested?? Check out the trip that
Mike Prokosch is planning for Decem-
ber 2004 - January 2005 on our website
at www.minnesotanature.org. or catch
him at our next meeting and ask for
details.



Equipment for Sale

*Bogen #3047 Tripod
Head*

Features include three
handles for precise
positioning, full post,
top bracket and 2
quick release camera plates - \$35

Seal Dry Mount Press:
Standard, 120 in good condition - \$25.

If you're interested, please contact
Jerry Moran at (651) 777-7084 or you
can email him at
g Moran1975@worldnet.att.net

Call For Submissions...



The Crossing Arts Alliance, Brainerd, invites you to sub-
mit to its jury for purposes of determining those photogra-
phers to be selected to exhibit at Picturing III: Outer Light/
Inner Sight, the third such exhibition sponsored by *The Cross-
ing Arts Alliance*. Up to 20 photographers will be selected
to exhibit at Central Lakes College, Brainerd, from August 4
through August 15, 2003. Each photographer will exhibit 8
images, matted and made suitable for installation and will
receive a \$100.00 honorarium.

In conjunction with the exhibition, *The Crossing* will spon-
sor workshops throughout the day on Saturday, August 9.
Workshop admission is \$5.00 for the day (fee waived for
exhibiting photographers). Workshops are in lecture for-
mat with Q & A and typically have a concurrent slide pre-
sentation. It is anticipated that some 200 to 250 people
will attend the workshops on August 9, with many additional
gallery visitors before and after.

There is no theme which needs to be addressed in this
call for submissions. The deadline for submissions is May
16, 2003 and the entry fee is \$10.00.

For further information, please contact John Erickson
at (218) 829-7852 or email him at
attorney@ericksonpearsonlaw.com or
ericksonbrd@hotmail.com