



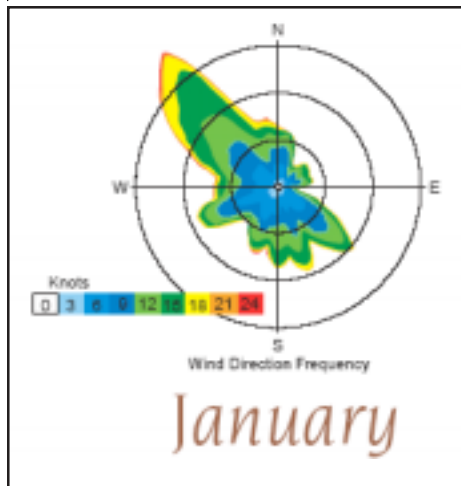
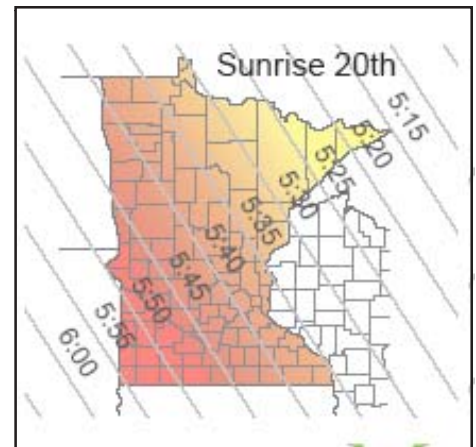
Using the Weatherguide Calendar

by Dale Bohlke

Many of us regularly submit to the Weather Guide in hopes of being published. In addition to the possible monetary reward there is a wealth of useful information in the calendar to the nature photographer. Both weekly and monthly versions contain similar information and the weekly calendar is a great place to write notes. I am writing this with the 2004 monthly version in front of me. The information may be at a different location in the weekly edition.

I always start by seeing where the photo was taken and its photo credit. It is no surprise that several club members are chosen throughout the year. The first useful information on the calendar page is the sunrise and sunset time as it varies over the entire state. The time on the calendar date is for the Twin Cities but it can be extrapolated to the area you will be at on a specific date. Sunrise is the mid point of morning photo sessions and sunset is the beginning of my photo frenzy in the summer with shooting light extending almost an hour beyond sunset. Keep this in mind when you are planning your shooting sessions. In other words eat supper early, everything will be closed before you finish.

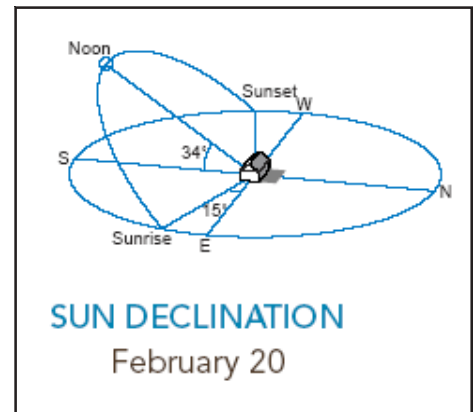
Full moon dates and times are looked at next to see when a full moon rise coincides with any remaining daylight for a full moon over the landscape shot. I usually look at moon rise, but moon setting at about sunrise is another good time to photograph this phenomenon. I rarely use the other data on the calendar page.



The next page shows the wind rose which is very useful when planning where you want to be to photograph birds. Wind and sun at your back make excellent bird shots but you can see by the wind rose that times are tough in January for this combination. Pick one of those rare days with a south wind or do the best you can in the afternoon. Certain locations are sheltered from this arctic wind and may harbor large numbers of birds.

at sunrise. If you want to photograph the sun rising or setting down a river it may only occur a few days of the year.

Phenology* can help find subjects that are in season. The next step is finding a suitable place to photograph them. An example in May is the simple statement "mushroom hunters collect morel mushrooms in moist woods" which may lead you to a mushroom festival in search of this delicacy or you may find something unexpected while in the woods looking on your own.



Although the wealth of information seems overwhelming, these sections have helped me. You may find other areas that are helpful. I would love to hear about them.

* Phenology is the study of the annual cycles of plants and animals and how they respond to seasonal changes in their environment. For example, in botany phenology refers to the timing of flower emergence, sequence of bloom, fruiting, and leaf drop in autumn

A Snowy Adventure

- Ron Winch



© Ron Winch

The snowy landscape is changing from a warm gold to a cold blue as the January sun races for the western horizon. A chill is setting in as it always does when the sun vacates a clear blue sky. I snuggle a little deeper into my down parka and shuffle the hand warmers in my gloves as I wait.

There are only forty minutes of good light left and I wait. I've been waiting for over an hour and I'm getting stiff from inactivity, but out there on a weathered old snag is a Snowy Owl scanning the open field for his evening meal. Even through the 600mm lens, the owl looks like nothing more than a headless form against the distant horizon. But I am hopeful. The owl's body remains motionless, but its head is constantly turning as it watches, listens and triangulates on the location of its prey.

Although the Snowy Owl hunts primarily in the low light hours of early morning and early evening, it shares a hearing sense with

the hunters of the dark. In order to hunt successfully at night, owls have evolved in unique ways. Since they depend on their hearing to locate prey, owls have every large, wide heads to accommodate their huge, highly developed ears. The ears of most owls are arranged asymmetrically (with one higher than the other) so they can triangulate on their prey.

When an owl hears potential prey, such as a mouse rustling in the grass - or even under the snow - it begins to bob its head up and down and from side to side while its body remains stationary. This head movement tells the owl exactly where the prey is located.

Having located its prey the owl drops off the snag and glides in near total silence toward the prey and me. This is possible because their flight feathers have no hard edges and have a soft velvety covering to muffle the sound as the wings pass through air. Even the legs and feet are feathered so the extended talons make a silent approach. Wide wings and lightweight bodies also help in silent flight.

I hear not even a whisper of sound and, obviously, neither does the prey as the owl, with wings fully extended



© Ron Winch

and tail spread, terminates its glide with a slight lift - then plunges into eight inches of powder snow. It bobs

up and down only twice, then stands tall with a brown rodent - a mouse or vole. Quickly turning away from me, it mantles over its prey and then in one



© Ron Winch

quick gulp the Snowy has finished the first course of its evening meal.

What I had just observed seemed like an old time movie as the mirror of my F5 flapped up and down at eight frames per second.

As the owl flew back to its hunting perch and I worked the stiffness out of my joints I thought that if all went well, I should add to my file a few great Snowy Owl photos.



Equipment for Sale

The following equipment is being listed for sale by Mariann Cyr:

Lenses

- Canon EF 300mm F4 L (~\$600)
- Sigma APO 500mm F7.2 for Canon (~\$150)
- Sigma APO 170-500mm F5-6.3 for Canon AF (~\$250)

Monopod

- Gitzo 562 Mono Sport (~\$30)

If you're interested, please contact Mariann at (651) 636-3738 or email her at mcyr@mmm.com

Digital Corner

by Jeff Morgan

Digital Competition

Well, as those who attended the January meeting know, we successfully opened our monthly competition to digital images. I hope those who were there found the judging of these photographs to be of interest. The digital projector in the Nature Center is a really good one; in fact it's so good that we would like to request that you send us images with increased resolution. The ideal size now would be 1280 pixels on the longest side, but since the software we use to show the image will automatically scale the image down, there would be no problem in sending your image in even larger than that. There were a couple of images entered that were only about 650 pixels long and they did look quite "pixilated" so higher resolution would really help. If you do not know how to correctly size images to 1280 pixels long, then just send them as they are—we can work with them.

There were a couple of things I hope we can improve on. The digital projector showed a very large, bright picture compared to the slide projector and we will try to minimize this as much as possible. The start and finish slides were very bright and these have now been turned down. One slide was inadvertently skipped and the acceptance review at the end surprised me, so I hope to improve with practice.

Digital Focus Group

One comment we got was to review the issue of sharpening since we say nothing about it in the guidelines. Technically as far as PSA is concerned, you are not allowed to manipulate a nature image. However they do not count cropping, sharpening, color correction, brightness or contrast as digital manipulation since you are not altering the truth of the image. The digital focus group will meet this month to discuss this issue and make recommendations for next month. The meeting will take place at 7:00pm Wednesday, February 25th, at a to-be-determined

location. All club members are invited to be part of this digital focus group. If you would like to know the meeting location, please email mnpcc@comcast.net or speak with me.

Technical Subject

Each month I would like to discuss one technical issue associated with entering digital images into the competitions, and this month I would like to look at the process of entering your images. There are two ways to enter:

1. Email in advance: This is the most foolproof. You simply send an email to mnpcc@comcast.net and attach your images (Insert / File, or Click on the paperclip). The advantage of this method is that someone will check that your image(s) arrived correctly and will email you a confirmation that they are good to go.

2. CD on the night: This is easy and gives you more time, but could result in the CD not being able to be read on the computer if it is not in a correct format. You could be disappointed.

It turns out there are quite a lot of ways you can write to a CD-R disk. The one that is normally used for data interchange is ISO-9960 or ISO-9960 with Joliet extensions. These are the only two formats we can accept. The good news is that nearly every system I have ever seen can produce these standard CDs, but it may not be the default setting on your system. When you make a standard CD it is normally a two-step process: 1) you select the files, then 2) you burn and close the disk. These disks are either single-session or multi-session disks. Each session is a fixed process that is closed at the end, and each session remains a separate space with an associated overhead.

Because of these difficulties and inefficiencies, CD drive manufacturers and software writers thought they might increase public acceptance and use if they made the CD-R drive work more like a floppy disk drive. So quite a few companies brought out device drivers and software that made the CD-R drive a "drag and drop" disk drive. The issue is that these formats are unique to each company and there are no uni-

versal standards for data interchange. Most companies refer to these products as "drag to disk", "drag and drop" or "packet writing" and it is a one-step process. Sometimes the first time you use a new CD you will have to format it. When you install the CD burning software it will normally try to install both options on your system, but I recommend you deselect the "easy" or "direct" CD software and install just the standard ISO or Creator option. If you have already installed both, then I recommend you uninstall the direct drag and drop filing system. Whenever you make a CD for reading in another computer or device, it has to be made in a standard CD ISO type format.

This month's subject was quite technical and not directly photography related, but next month it will focus on a subject related to digital photography. Looking forward to receiving some more great digital images from you soon!

Club Tidbits...

Welcome

Please welcome the following new members and add their information to your roster:

David Zosel
14767 192nd Ave.
Elk River, MN 55330
(H) 763-441-1564
(W) 763-506-6058
zoselfamily@juno.com

Rod Blesener
2810 Overlook Dr.
Bloomington, MN 55431
(H) 952-884-4352
(W) 952-285-8145
blesener@mn.rr.com

Judging

Are you interested in judging a salon, but are a bit nervous? Need some practice judging before you try the real thing? If you're interested in practice judging, please contact Mariann Cyr for more information.

If you have tidbits of interest to the club, please submit them to Cathy Jones at cathyj@toomuchheat.com



My son and daughter-in-law were scheduled to have our first grandchild in early January '04. I decided for a Christmas gift that I would buy them a digital camera. They live in Dallas, TX and being a first time Grandpa, I didn't want to miss a thing. During my hunt for a digital camera, I went to Best Buy where there are two counters - one for film cameras and one for digital cameras. No one was at the film counter and at least 7 people were all looking at digital. We settled on a Nikon Coolpix 4300 which we finally bought at National Camera. As the young lady was helping me I asked her how many film cameras were sold that week. Her answer was one film camera and something like 15 or 16 digital cameras. While I was there 5 folks were looking at digital (including me) and one person looking at lenses. It is predicted that in 2004 many more digital than film cameras will be sold.

The price of digital cameras is beginning to decrease. I just bought a Nikon D100 that is \$500.00 less than it was one year ago. I have been shooting digital for about 3 months and have shot approximately 1000 images. So I decided that for this month I would write an article on my experiences and opinions on shooting digital. This article is not to try and convince anyone to switch; both systems have pros and cons.

The Purchase

My Nikon N90s has been a great camera but I decided to replace it. I had every intention of purchasing another Nikon F100 film camera, but Nikon had just dropped the price of the D100 another \$200.00. I knew that eventually I would purchase a digital camera, but was considering it to be a couple of years down the road. My new camera arrived about one week before I was going to leave for SW Montana for a week of photography. This only gave

me about 3-4 days to get somewhat familiar with this new technology. That evening I read and re-read the owner's manual and played with the controls on the camera as I studied it. The next day I went outside and snapped some photos of leaves, trees, etc. It is then that I studied downloading the images to the computer. As I was doing this, I could tell that I was beginning to get excited about this new technology. The next day I took my new system and went whitetail hunting. But no whitetail wanted to have his photograph taken with my new system. However, a cooperative Red Squirrel came and started

to eat the birdseed that I leave on a tree branch to photograph birds while I sit in my blind waiting for Whitetails. So my first true animal photos with my new camera were of this squirrel. Two days later I left for Montana. I was still unsure if I would use mainly film and only occasionally digital or use digital and film as a back up. At this point I had only taken about 30 images with the new digital camera.

Comparison

It took a couple of days but I finally found the Bighorns that I was looking for. On my way both to and from Montana, I stopped at T. Roosevelt N.P. to photograph Whitetails and Mule deer. During this trip I took about 750 images. All were digital except for two rolls of film when my Flash Card filled up. I have also taken some images of Trumpeters this winter.

Comfort Zone

As soon as I picked up the new camera, the controls were almost identical to my F100. I will actually say that taking exposures is not any different than with film. At this point my expo-

sure values are the same with both systems. Some folks have told me that digital has a difference of about 1/3 stop. I have had no exposure problems on the digital system. I do believe there is about 1 stop more latitude than with film. I have always maintained that film has about 5-stop latitude; I think digital is closer to 6 stops.



© John Pennoyer

1.5X factor

The majority of digital cameras, because of the size of the sensor, have a multiplication factor. If you are shooting a 500mm lens, with digital it is actually a 750mm. (A couple of manufacturers do have a 35mm equivalent but those are very high end cameras) this can be great for wildlife, especially small birds. But it is not so good when you need a wide-angle lens. Twice I have missed scenic photos because of this factor. My 28mm lens was actually a 42mm. So I will need to address that issue by purchasing maybe a 17mm or 20mm lens.

Immediate feedback

This is a huge bonus. As soon as the image is taken it can be viewed on the LCD screen on the back of the camera. This will give the photographer an "approximate idea" on the exposure. Also, you can download the images back home or in the motel room, get your images from the days shoot and make the necessary corrections for the next day's shoot.

Field Notes - cont'd

ISO Equivalent

Another Bonus is that you can change the ISO setting any time that you want. Shooting at 200 ISO and the light changes? Switch to 400 ISO. This cannot really be done with film in mid roll.

Saving Money

Don't believe this! Maybe your film purchase will diminish, but you will still spend money on compact flash cards, software, etc.

Computer Knowledge

If you can shoot with a film camera, you will have absolutely no trouble with a digital camera. There are some differences but everyone will learn this very quickly. However, you will spend a whole lot more time on your home computer, downloading images, making adjustments, cataloging them etc. I am still experimenting with different software to determine which system I will use to do this. For me this is the biggest learning curve.

In my opinion the quality of the image is identical between film and digital if the camera is at least about 6 Mega pixels, which is what most of them are. I do not think that one is any better than the other; it just depends on the comfort zone of the photographer. This photographer is certainly no expert on digital, but from my short experience, I do see that I will be shooting much less film. As time goes on I will be writing more info on digital as I begin to expand my own comfort zone.

Oh Yes, about that Grandson he was born on December 30th at 4:32 PM. I was downloading a photo of Nicolas on my laptop at 6:30PM. Isn't digital technology great!!
Good Shooting

Photo Quote

Which of my photographs is my favorite? The one I'm going to take tomorrow.

-Imogen Cunningham

January Awards

Judges: Dale Bohlke
and John Pennoyer

10

John D. La Mere	Yellowstone Elk
Jeff Morgan	Heron Young
Mike Prokosch	Tufted Puffin
George Ryan	First Snow on Mushrooms

9

Jim Aronson	Milkweed Seed
Mariann Cyr	Thistle
John Dykstra	Oak Leaves
Dave Ellenbecker	Small Yellow Lady-Slipper
Rick Graves	Morning Glory Close Up
Jerry Harlow	Reflection
Torsten Muller	Porcupine Mountains, MI
Vern Nelson	Ten Point White-Tailed Buck

8

Jim Aronson	Hot Lava Flow
Cynthia Fleury	Rocks on Shoreline
Jerry Harlow	Eagle Reflection
Cathy Jones	Great Egret Portrait #1
Vijay Karai	Alert Coyote
John D. La Mere	Lebanon Hills Turtle
Torsten Muller	Snomass Mountain and Geneva Lake
Vern Nelson	I Didn't Do It
Mike Prokosch	Adelie Penguin
George Ryan	Monarch in Morning
Tom Samuelson	Prairie Sunrise
Tom Samuelson	Prickly Pear Cactus, Blue Mounds
Duane Wraalstad	Indian Paintbrush
Duane Wraalstad	Weathered Wood

Minnesota Nature Photography Field Trips

At A Glance Calendar

All trips will be held regardless of the weather. Any changes will be printed in the newsletter. An email bulletin will be sent shortly before the planned trip. For further information contact Dale Bohlke at 952-445-6125 or dbohlke@mn.rr.com.

March 20th, 9:00 am

Location: Memorial Park, Shakopee
Subject: Mallards and Canada Geese

April 18th, 6:00 pm

Location: River Terrace SNA
Subject: Pasque Flowers

April 23rd & 24th

(Contact Vijay Karai for details)
Location: Blue Stem Prairie
Subject: Prairie chickens and pasque flowers

May 22nd, 8:00 am

Location: Schaefer Prairie
Subject: Lady Slippers

Trip Details

Memorial Park Field Trip

March 20th, 9:00 am

Are you unhappy with your bird images taken with your macro lens? Can't afford a "bird" lens? This trip is for you! Wide angle bird photography is the highlight of this field trip. Any lens and camera body (slide or digital) will get a great image. If you don't mind getting low and possibly dirty a truly unique eye level shot may be possible. Mallards and geese are fed daily by local residents resulting in habituated birds that are virtually at your feet.

Meet at Memorial Park at 9 AM on Saturday, March 20th. Memorial Park is located just east of Shakopee Ford on Hwy 101 or about a mile west of Valley Fair, on the north side of Hwy 101. Turn left when you enter the park.

Note: This is a location change from previous listings which gave the location at the Visitors Center.

Nature Photo Times

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Minnesota Nature Photography Club

www.minnesotanature.org

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Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month
September through May. Set-up and social time with light
refreshments begins at 6:30 pm. The nature slide salon
starts at 7:00 pm and a program follows the salon.

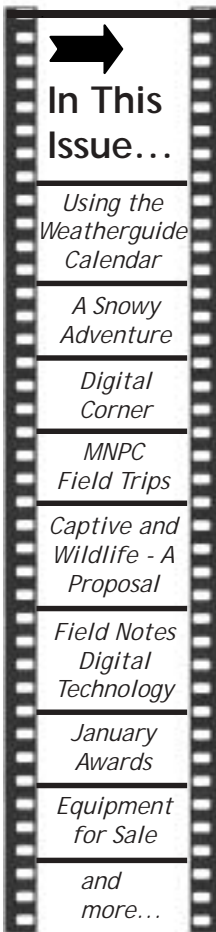
Visitor Center

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge,
3815 East 80th Street, Bloomington, MN

February Program

Mariann Cyr presents the winning
slides as well as selected
accepted slides from the Botany
International Exhibition

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Captive and Wildlife Images

Your Vote is needed



In October 2003, a committee was formed to address the situation of having captive zoology images separated from the authentic wildlife images for our year-end judging.

The committee has met and exchanged many e-mails in an attempt to come up with a favorable solution for the entire club. With that in mind, here is the proposal that we ask the club membership to vote on at the February 18th meeting. By voting **for** this proposal, you will be effecting a change to our year-end judging procedures as defined by the proposal. By voting **against** this proposal, you will be voting to leave the year-end procedures as they have been in the past.

PROPOSAL

Create a new category for Zoology, called Captive, which would have the following awards for the year-end judging:

1. Slide of the Year
2. Runner-up Slide of the Year
3. Honorable Mentions, in the same ratio that is now being used.

The authentic wildlife section will have the same awards at the year-end judging.

All slides must be marked either with a "W" which represents authentic wildlife or a "C" which represents cap-

tive wildlife. All digital images must have a "W" or a "C" as the first character in the title of the image. This will facilitate the sorting for year-end judging.

1. Authentic wildlife is defined as one or more organisms living free and unrestrained in a natural or adopted habitat.
2. Any Zoology image that does not meet the requirements of authentic wildlife must be considered as Captive. This includes game farm images and zoo images.
3. Any image, digital or slide, that is not marked with the appropriate "W" or "C", cannot be judged.

We sincerely hope that everyone can attend the Feb meeting, as this is a very important proposal that needs the vote of all the membership.

Jim Duncan
John Pennoyer
Kathy Hobbs
Janet Cardle
Jeff Hahn