



Nature Photo Times

Member: Photographic Society of America & Twin Cities Area Council of Camera Clubs

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Field Notes - AF or MF?

- John Pennoyer

Most cameras have so many automatic features that it can lead a photographer to think that all he has to do is mount the camera on the tripod, come back an hour later and collect award winning images just waiting to be processed. Automatic exposure, focus, and other automated features have certainly allowed me to capture images that I know I would have missed with my old Nikon FE2. However, as I've discovered, I don't use these automatic features very often. This month's article will detail how and when I use auto and manual focus.



© John Pennoyer

One thing that I've always maintained is that there is no camera on the market that can "think". When the first auto-focus cameras began to make their appearance in the late 80's and early 90's, they used one auto-focus sensor which, of course, was right in the middle of the frame. This feature certainly did not help composition very much. Most of the early auto-focus cameras were also very slow to focus. But times have changed and the camera manufacturers have designed very fast AF cameras with multiple sensors to improve our compositions. However, auto-focus still has its limitations.

Most of my Nikon lenses have a slider that allows me to select AF/MF, MF or AF. My decision to choose a particular setting is determined solely by the subject I am photographing. I use MF for all scenics and botanical subjects. However, whenever I am doing zoology, I move the slider to the AF/MF position. If I am photographing static or slow moving subjects, I almost always use this dual position. I can hold down the

shutter half way, and focus manually to take my photos. For example, if I am in my floating blind photographing an Egret, I will generally manually focus on the bird. I nearly always focus on the bird or animal's eye as good eye contact with the viewer is crucial to good bird/animal shots. However, if the bird decides to take flight, my system is ready to go in the AF/MF position and as I press the shutter, auto focus will take over. My equipment is always set-up for dynamic AF and continuous shutter. As the bird or animal moves within the frame, my Nikon system will change AF sensors automatically to keep

the bird or animal sharp. This is referred to as "focus tracking". This is the feature that has allowed all of us to take photos that were virtually impossible in the "old" days. Most AF sensors will focus much more easily on a bright subject. I guarantee that my Nikon will be great on a White egret, but will have much more difficulty on black bears. The better the light coming into the camera, the better the AF will work. That's why the lens is usually wide open to work its best. So, if your 500mm is an F4, it will focus more quickly at F4 and slower at F5.6. Most AF sensors will not work well if they are stopped down more than that. If you're going to attend my Bear Workshop, I recommend setting your camera to MF and

the aperture to at least F5.6 to get that head portrait so both the eyes and nose are hair sharp.

If you're photographing a bird or animal and want to include some of the habitat, I recommend setting the camera to MF and the aperture to the desired depth of field. If you use AF in this situation, the AF sensor may have a difficult time locking onto the subject, or may refocus when the shutter is released and the result is an out of focus photo. In addition, when there is something between you and the bird or mammal that you are photographing, it is almost always necessary to focus manually. At one of the recent competitions, there was a photo of an animal in deep snow feeding on vegetation. If you looked closely at the photo, the snow-covered twigs in front of the animal were sharp but the animal itself was slightly out of focus. My guess is that the photographer had the camera set on AF and the sensor picked up the brightest subject (the snow) and slightly missed the animal.

More often than not, my camera is set to the AF/MF position. By holding the shutter half way down, I will be in manual focus mode. This is the way that I prefer to focus on slow moving subject such as Bighorn sheep, Prairie chickens and Black bears. This allows me to concentrate my focus on the critter's eye. However, if the critter begins to fly or makes a sudden movement, releasing the shutter will allow AF



© John Pennoyer

to take over. When you're specifically photographing birds in flight, the camera and lens must be set to AF.

Good shooting

Captive or Wild

Theodore Roosevelt National Park

April 2003

by Ron Winch



© Ron Winch

With a sandwich in one hand and the shutter button in the other, this group of photographers was taking advantage of the harsh noonday light by enjoying a leisurely lunch and photographing inquisitive prairie dogs as they stood sentinel-like at the edge of their burrows. The rattle of motor drives and the ensuing smiles meant only one thing - great images - and then a bite of sandwich, washed down by a cold drink. Life is good!

The group had been shooting since the first light of day. A coyote, muzzle to the sky, mouth open and howling, against the exquisite sunrise of an April day. Film rolled through the cameras almost as fast as a movie camera. As the sunlight reached the lowlands, the

© Ron Winch



long lenses began to focus on a badger grubbing for insects and burrowing into the hard earth. Even in the hard soil of the ranch, the badger dug more quickly than a man with a shovel could. Long lenses and fast cameras - both film and digital -

captured the badger's every movement.

When you're having fun and capturing great images, minutes quickly turn into hours - so, a short break and time to move into Teddy Roosevelt National Park and photograph wild horses. Several bands are within working distance of the road, and offer wide-angle herd shots as well as long lens shots of stallions or mother and young.

At about 1:00 pm the stomach is telling the brain what to do, so it's off to the picnic area. The trailer with the coyotes, badgers and all is parked in what little shade the old cottonwoods provide and everyone chows down. Enter a couple of other photographers - lunch time. They notice the trailer and animals, and talk leads to, "So you guys are shooting captive animals?" Hans, a quick-witted chap of German ancestry, quickly fires back, "So what do you think you're doing? This park is fenced and all the animals are captive." Time to reconsider. Something to think about. To what degree is a captive a captive? Is an animal that is put away at the end of a shoot captive? Certainly. But is the bison, rattlesnake or coyote that lives within the fenced confines of Teddy Roosevelt National Park also a captive? Yes - only his confines are larger. The same could be said of Custer

State Park and Wind Care National Park in South Dakota, or the National Bison Range National Wildlife Refuge in Montana. Even Lake Nakura National Park in Kenya is fenced. Does the white rhino, cape buffalo or flamingo classify as a captive there? Only the flamingo is free to come and go as it pleases.

On our deck each year are several pots of parsley among the other herbs. A Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly visits and deposits eggs, which later hatch and range over the plants as caterpillars. Are they captive - or free ranging? Suppose I bring the plant into the studio to better control light and wind. Is it now a captive?

Does it really matter if you photograph captive or wild critters? The answer is simple. It depends! Many of the images you see in books and maga-



© Ron Winch

zines are indeed captive. If these images were not available, think of the great void in knowledge that might exist. But more important is that when you photograph captives in particular, you become engrossed in the subject, learn all that you can about it and pass that knowledge on to others. Of course the same is true of wild critters, but knowledge and good photos of captives are many times much harder to come by, especially photos of the lesser species.

And if some of your images are spectacular, simply mark the slide mount with a "C" when you submit them for camera club competition. May your scores be a "10" whether it be a "C" or a "W".

Good Shooting - and remember to share.

Digital Corner

by Jeff Morgan

Digital Competition

Our digital entries continue to climb. We had 14 entries in the February salon. Please keep those entries coming! The projector did not work out quite as well as the previous month in the color consistency department. It seemed to drain the colors out of the weak areas and enhance strong colors. There were quite a few of the images entered in the wrong color space, Adobe RGB, instead of sRGB, and I'm not sure if this played a part in the problems. In March I will get in early and attempt to do a manual calibration on it.

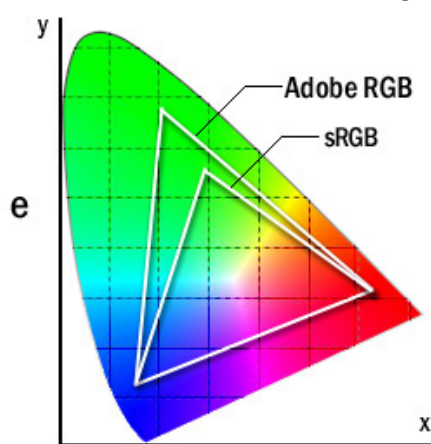
Digital Question

Someone asked me if the same image that has been entered as a slide and accepted could be scanned and re-entered into digital. The answer is no! The medium (slide or digital) you use does not matter, it is the image that counts.

Images (slides or digital images) not accepted may be resubmitted once, but accepted images (or similar images) may not be submitted again for club competition.

Technical Subject

This month I would like to take a quick look at "color space". Color space can be defined as a standard model representing color numerically using at least three coordinates. There are standards organizations that have defined accurate digital standards to represent consistent color quality across multiple devices.



The main two standards that are most likely to be used with home computers and digital cameras are Adobe RGB (1998) and sRGB IEC61966.

The color space chart is the easiest way to visualize a color space. The colored area represents the visible spectrum that you can see with your eyes. The triangular lines on the chart show what each color space is capable of representing.

The sRGB color space was defined mainly for use on the Internet and it was chosen to include only colors that a typical home computer 15" monitor was capable of reproducing. This is so that when shopping on the Internet,

for example, you can order clothes and other items without receiving a nasty shock when they arrive.

If you use an amateur digital camera or a semiprofessional digital camera or Adobe Photoshop Elements, it is likely you are using the sRGB color space.

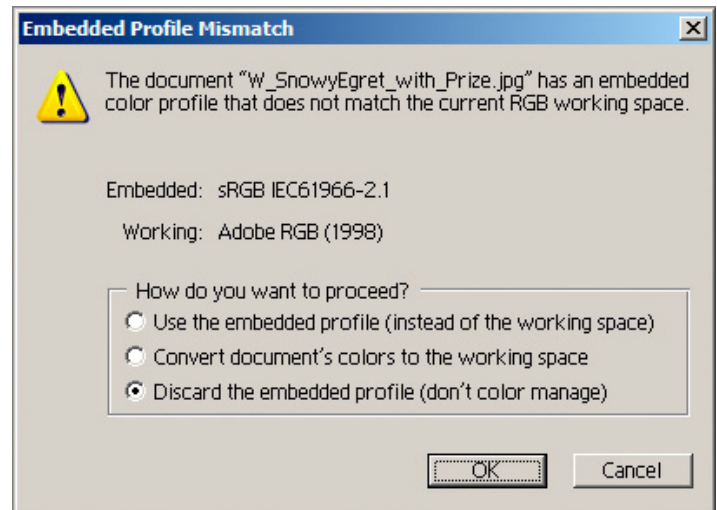
If, on the other hand, you are using a film scanner and a full version of Adobe Photoshop, it is very likely you are using Adobe RGB color space.

The problems come when you try to display a file encoded in one color space on a device that is reproducing a different color space. The club's digital projector is using the sRGB color space, so if you enter digital images into the salon in Adobe RGB or any other color space other than sRGB, then the colors of your image could be wildly different than you expected.

Except for the top professional digital cameras, most cameras come set to sRGB color space, so that will be right for our salon, but if you scan images then you need to check what color space you are using. Here are the instructions for changing the color space of an image in Photoshop:

- 1 Image > Mode > Convert to Profile
- 2 Set "Destination Space" to sRGB IEC61966-2.1
- 3 Make sure "Conversion Options" are set to
 - Engine = Adobe (ACE)
 - Intent = Relative Colorimetric
 - Check = Use Black Point Compensation
 - Check = Use Dither
 - Click "OK"
- 4 Then "Save As" .jpg

Just one final thing I would like to cover is if you ever see this warning screen in Photoshop, be very careful.



Make sure you check one of the two upper "radio" buttons and not the default one shown (Discard the embedded profile) which will turn off color management and may result in wild colors.

Club Tidbits...

Captive Versus Wildlife

At the February meeting a vote was taken to determine if the year end procedures should be changed to allow for a new section for just Captive images in Zoology. The vote was 50 for the change and 8 against the change.

This vote means that for the year end salon in December, all images submitted for the Zoology category, must have either a "W" or a "C" on the slide. In the case of a digital image, the first letter of the title must either be a "W" or a "C". Entries not marked can NOT be judged.

In the Captive section of Zoology, a Slide of the Year and Runner-up Slide of the Year will be awarded along with the appropriate number of Honorable Mentions and acceptances as is the current practice.

This change will only effect the Zoology category.



According to the *Upcoming Events* calendar, our own Bill Handsaker will giving two presentations at the Ridgedale Public Library on March 30th and April 1st.

Armchair Travel: New Zealand

Tuesday, Mar 30, 7:30 pm

Travel with serious amateur photographer Bill Handsaker as he covers the entire length of both the north and south islands of New Zealand. See the spectacular and unspoiled coastline, rain forests, mountains, and pastoral scenery. Hear about the people, cities, and climate of a country known for its beautiful scenery and exceptional culture.

Armchair Travel: Nepal

Thursday, Apr 1, 1:30 pm

Photographer Bill Handsaker takes us with him to the Solo Khumbo region of Nepal, including a trek to the Mt. Everest base camp, starting point for climbing the highest mountain on earth. His focus is on the scenic extravaganza of this small Asian kingdom as well as its proud and handsome people, known for their tolerance and peaceful ways.



Ooops!

Bob Hosker's phone numbers and email address were inadvertently omitted from the MNPC Membership Roster. Please add this new information:

Bob Hosker

Home Phone: 763-473-4795

Work Phone: 612-340-4515

Email: bwcabob1@comcast.net

NATURE'S
BEST
MAGAZINE

Nature's Best
International Photography
Awards Competition

Nature's Best Magazine is currently accepting entries to their Nature's Best International Photography Awards Photo Competition that is celebrated annually at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. Past keynote speakers have included Art Wolfe, Frans Lanting, Michael "Nick" Nichols, and Jeff Corwin.

Members may enter the competition individually and/or as a Camera Club category submission. The deadline for entries is April 2nd, 2004.

Slides and digital images will be judged on technical quality, composition, originality and artistic merit. Categories include:

- **Wildlife:** Wild animals photographed in their natural habitat (no captive animals).
- **Landscape:** Dramatic scenes and unusual perspectives of the land.
- **Oceans:** The fascinating world of the sea. Coral landscapes, marine life, etc.
- **Animal Antics:** Wildlife in humorous or surprising situations
- **Plant Life:** Flowers, trees and other flora in their natural habitat.
- **Backyard Habitat:** Native wild animals or plants photographed in urban/suburban settings
- **People in Nature:** People enjoying the outdoors, backpackers, kayakers, divers, adventure travel, family travel in outdoor locations.
- **Endangered Species:** Plants or animals that are listed as endangered species
- **Environmental Issues:** Images that document current environmental issues
- **Art in Nature:** Naturally occurring artistic compositions in nature (not digitally manipulated)
- **Youth:** Photos in any category by photographers 18 years old or younger.
- **Creative Digital:** Any nature related image or combination of images that is created and/or manipulated using digital/electronic technology.
- **Zoos and Aquariums:** Images submitted in this category must be taken at AZA accredited venues (see list a www.aza.org) and may include animal portraits, behavior, keepers working with animals, visitors or special events.

For more information, go to www.NaturesBestMagazine.com

Como Park Zoo & Conservatory

Camera and Artist Event Schedule for 2004

Update

The Artist and Camera Event originally scheduled for April 4, 2004 at the Como Park Conservatory has been changed to March 28th, 2004 from 8 - 10 am

February Awards

Judges: John Dykstra
and Rose Duncan

10

Eric Baker	Great Blue Heron
Rod Blesener	Cascade
Mariann Cyr	Snake with Toad
John D. Jenkins	Harsh Winter
Jeff Morgan	Silver Lake
Vern Nelson	Palamedes Swallowtail

9

Rod Blesener	Tettegouche Fog
Michele Burkstrand	Slot Canyon #8
Mariann Cyr	Fiddlehead
Larry Duke	Tres Rios Bird Refuge
Marilyn Gladitsch	Largon Lake Algae (pattern)
Dale Hargadine	Snowy Egret with Prize
Jerry Harlow	Fallen Tree
Vijay Karai	Snow Magic 4
Marsha Kessler	Camo Spider
Dottie Lillestrand	Bleeding Heart 1-2003
Dottie Lillestrand	Jack in Pulpit #2-03
Jeff Morgan	Heron & Young

8

Jim Aronson	Red Sumac Leaf
Eric Baker	Reflection
Dave Ellenbecker	Trillium Grandiflorum
Tom Farrell	Bison Bull
Cynthia Fleury	Moose in Snow #1
Ted Galambos	First Snow
Ted Galambos	Menace of the Lily
Rick Graves	Bee on Raspberry Flower
Rick Graves	Lichens on Tree Bark
Dale Hargadine	Watchful Eye
John D. Jenkins	Winter Light
Marsha Kessler	Robin Bath
Jean McDonough	Leopart at Sunset
Gerald Moran	Cascade River
Gerald Moran	Pigeon Falls
Torsten Muller	Ooh-Aah Point on South Kaibab Trail
Venky Narayanaswamy	Maple Plain Fall Colors
John Pennoyer	Black Bear
John Pennoyer	Fighting Prairie Chickens
Duane Wraalstad	Prairie Smoke #14
Duane Wraalstad	Web 38
Diane Zeiss	Mushroom in Moss
John Zeiss	Snail
David Zosel	Ticolored Heron Reflection

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

March 20th, 9:00 am

Location: Memorial Park, Shakopee

Subject: Mallards and Canada Geese

April

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

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.

River Terrace Field Trip

April 18th, 9:00 am

Pasque Flowers! Spring is here! The prairie is starting its rainbow of color with the pale lavender of the pasque flower. Meet at the Cannon Valley Trailhead across the street from the grocery store in Cannon Falls at 6 PM, Sunday, April 18th for an evening of prairie and pasque flower photography. We will caravan to River Terrace Scientific and Natural Area which is about 5 miles east of town. In addition to the flowers there is an excellent opportunity for a prairie sunset and several oak trees for silhouette or texture shots. Any lens will work but macro capability is recommended. There is a short, steep hike from the car to the terrace and best photographs are on the hillside. Sturdy shoes are recommended.

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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.

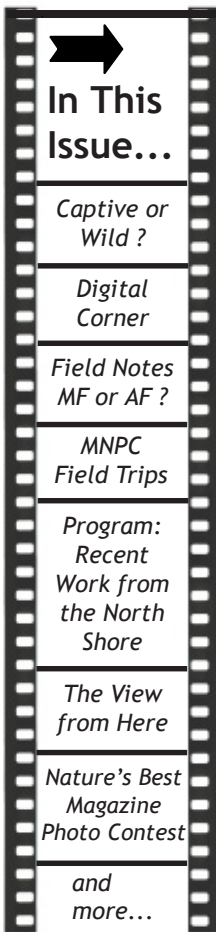
Visitor Center

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

Photo Quote

No place is boring, if you've had a good night's sleep and have a pocket full of unexposed film.

-Robert Adams



March Program

Recent Work From the North Shore
by John Gregor



In December of 2002 I moved ColdSnap Photography to Silver Creek near the North Shore of Lake Superior. Since that time I have been exploring the north shore and surrounding regions. This presentation is a "work-in-progress" of those explorations. This body of work is a mix of 35mm and large format landscape photography. I will show and discuss my process, shoot locations, and philosophy regarding this work. I will present this work in both 35mm slide format and prints. Questions are invited.

FIRST CLASS MAIL



The View From Here

by Lawrence C. Duke

Film and Digital or Keeping an Open Mind

Is the sky really falling? Do those beautiful Coachwhip snakes really snap their tails when disturbed? Must I stop using film, because you're using digital?

I was fortunate enough once to land a photo job for the summer. I was to shoot the life and operation of the family farm. This was to include; a class A dairy operation, "... watch where you step son" and a turkey farm, "...watch where you step son" and a hog farm, "... I'm watchin', I'm watchin'". I worked from May to August, and I was right there on the farm to get the sunrise and the daily chores of farm life without getting in the way, or knocked down, or stepped on. And of course, I watched my step. Farming has to be one of the most difficult professions I've ever followed for photos. And what an eye opener!

But the one thing that really got to me, was when my host for that day came down from his \$160,000.00, four wheel drive, computer operated tractor to go into town for 10 o'clock coffee at the Chatter Box Café with "the boys". I would hear someone ask my new friend, "Why on God's green earth are you still drivin' that old model?"

Sound familiar? Isn't it what you can do with what you've got that is really important?

When Eugene Smith, Life photographer, was asked in a class about how he worked, he replied, "... as for equipment, I use a 35mm camera with a 35mm wide-angle, and that's all the discussion of technique you need."

I hope the day will come soon, when one can mention the words Film and Digital in a sentence without feeling like they just knocked someone off their tractor.