



Field Notes - Mushroom Cheeseburger

- John Pennoyer



© John Pennoyer

By the time you read this newsletter, it will be the best time to be out in the hardwood forests looking for one of my favorite subjects to photograph - the Morel mushroom. Morel mushrooms will generally start working their way through the forest floor near the middle of May. 2003 was a fantastic year for Morels. I found more Morels last year than I ever have before. I certainly don't consider myself to be a Morel expert because there are only a couple of places that I consistently visit, but whenever I happen to be in a hardwood forest at this time of year I keep my eyes peeled for these photogenic fungi. To hunt for Morels, look for dead and decaying hardwoods such as Elm and Oak trees. Be sure to look carefully - turning over old decayed bark and sifting through leaf litter. If you find one, be sure to keep looking for there are sure to be more. If they are not there one day, go back the next because they seem to appear overnight. Last year, in the area where I live, I spotted one and as I kept looking I counted at least 40 more!

Whenever I photograph Morels, I look for particular compositions and for some interesting habitat. Most of the Morels around here are of the common or yellow variety. I usually set my exposure at EV -1/3. The reason that I do this is because in the majority of cases the Morel is lighter than the habitat so underexposing by this amount will render perfect exposure on the mushroom and have very little affect on the habitat. For the correct depth-of-field, I usually stop down anywhere from F-11 to F-32 depending on the lens I am using and the composition of the Morels. I use an 81B warming filter to help "pop" the colors and to remove any blue cast that can occur from long exposures in a shady area. Some gardening will be required and it may be necessary to temporarily remove some of the loose bark that is lying around.

Whenever I photograph any subject I always take great care so as not to damage any of the habitat or the subject itself. That is why after I am done photographing, I take out my very sharp pocket knife and cut the mushroom stalk at ground level. This will leave the root for possible growth next year. Yes, it is OK to take the Morel home with you. I have even talked to State Park personnel and there are no restrictions on hunting for Morels. Chances are you will not be the only one out there looking for these very delicious mushrooms. Of the 40-50 Morels that I spotted last year, I probably picked about 10 of them. When I went back later to check on them, they were 100% gone. There is a contest every year for who gets to these mushrooms first!

There are two other folks that know this place and I guarantee you they were the ones who picked the rest.

After picking the mushrooms, I soak them in some salt water as this will help bring out any little critters such as ants that might be hidden in the pores. I enjoy eating the mushrooms by themselves so I just cook them in butter and feast away but, you can't beat having mushrooms with your steak and burgers. Morels are very photogenic and may possi-



© John Pennoyer

bly score well in image competitions; however, on the dinner table they will always score well!

Here's wishing all of you a great summer and take lots of photos. But most of all enjoy the outdoors.

Good shooting

Note: To have been selected as an Honorary Member of this club is truly an honor. I was totally caught off guard last month. This camera club has given me more that I have ever given. Any type of personal achievement that I have ever accomplished in nature photography is the direct result of my membership in this club. To all of you; Thank you for this distinguished honor!

A Morning on the Lek

by Ron Winch



It was 5:15 am and the sun was still sleeping somewhere below the eastern horizon. Stars twinkled overhead and off to the south a Great Horned Owl hooted softly. Then it was quiet for a long time.

Snug in a down jacket and a cup of hot tea warming my stiffening fingers, I waited for the dawn. Slowly, the darkness of night began to fade as a faint sliver of light identified the eastern horizon. My eyes peered through the openings in the blind, but I could see nothing. Quietly at first, but with ever increasing volume, I was targeted by this strange moving sound. Staring intently in the direction of the sound, I began to see shapes. Strange and alien, they seemed to be coming in from all sides.

Anxiously I gripped the long lens, but it was only a reflex action. It would be forty-five minutes before I could achieve a minimum exposure of 1/125 @ f-4. Full of anticipation with nowhere to go, I pulled the down hood over my head and sat back to watch the morning unfold.

Straight ahead the North Star was giving up its brilliance to the encroaching dawn. The rattling call of Sandhill Cranes somewhere in the distance recalled days spent on the Platte River, photographing these magnificent birds. Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh, directly above the blind, a lone Canada Goose wings its way to breakfast in a distant cornfield. In the west, the deep blue of earth shadow gives way to pre-dawn magenta and pockets of fog reflect the warm colors.

The alien shapes are beginning to show color as well as motion. They are heavily spotted with dark brown, cinnamon and pale buff above and below, and with some scaling on the breast. The yellow eye combs show promi-

nently when the bird struts with wings extended, tips almost dragging on the ground.

The moment is NOW! Warm hands and cold camera meet and ever so cautiously the long lens is panned to locate the first bird. He struts, rattles his quills, and advances to challenge another bird. A magnificent sight - two Sharp-tailed Grouse, each accepting the other's challenge. Purple neck sacs inflated and quills rattling, they posture, trying to bluff the other out. When that doesn't work, there are only two options - retreat or battle. This being the first encounter of the day, both birds spring forward into the air, wings flailing and feet jabbing - each one sure that he can intimidate the other. The challenge becomes more intense as a hen saunters by, but she pays no attention for it is still too early in the season.

WHAT?? I press the shutter release and nothing happens. Jammed, dead batteries or???? Oops, frame #38, end of the roll. How quickly film flies through the camera when you're caught up in the action.

Sharp-tails are everywhere on the lek. Dancing, strutting, challenging or just sitting face to face eight to ten inches apart as if trying to stare each other down. With more light comes action stopping shutter speeds and the chance to capture some of that action.

As if by signal, the birds freeze and hunker to the ground. Scanning the sky, I spot a Red-Tailed Hawk at some distance, but the grouse are spooked. The lek - or courting grounds - is located on flat grassy plains devoid of trees and shrubs, thus assuring the birds of minimal attacks from predators.


Five rolls of film later, the last pair of Sharp-tails is leaving the lek. It is now 8:30 am. They had gathered, danced, challenged and sparred. Probably in grouse language some things have been settled, but that is beyond me. They will continue again tomorrow, and for many tomorrows until mid-April. It feels good to stretch after nearly four hours in the blind.

Interested? Contact Crex Meadows Wildlife Management Area in Grantsburg, Wisconsin for more details.

Just remember, you must be in the blind well before sunrise and you cannot leave the blind until the last bird has left the lek.

Club Tidbits...

Election Time

Elections for club officers will be held at the May meeting.  The offices of Vice President and Editor need to be filled. For the past two years, two members have shared the responsibility of the Vice President position. If you are interested in running for either of these offices, please contact Tom Samuelson at 952-472-2235

Timberwolves

No, it's not another article on Kevin Garnett, its a featured story in Wisconsin Outdoor News with photographs by our own *John La Mere*. Taken at Crex Meadows, one of John's photographs appears on the cover of the publication while two more accompany the story inside. Congratulations John! For more information, go to www.wisconsinoutdoornews.com.

Club Photo Display

Arrangements have been made for the club to have a photo display early next year. Details will be provided at the May meeting

Coffee Anyone?

Cynthia Fleury will be exhibiting her photographs at Dunn Brothers Coffee Shop in Roseville from May 1st through May 31st. Stop by and have a cup of coffee while you enjoy Cythia's prints.

For the Birds

Expert birder and MNPC member *Arden Aanestad* has turned his Edina property into a savanna garden, which serves as a haven for birds. Wild Ones, an organization advocating native plants in natural landscapes, will be conducting a tour of Arden's property on Sunday, May 23rd from 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm. The tour is free to Wild Ones members and \$10.00 for non members. For more information, visit www.for-wild.org.

Club Tidbits... (cont'd)

Shooting with John Pennoyer

An interview with *John Pennoyer* is featured on the Beyond Main Street website this month. Beyond Main Street is a volunteer-based organization headquartered in Stillwater, Minnesota. Its goal is to promote a working knowledge and respect of Minnesota's amazing wilderness, and assist other conservation organizations in bringing their word to the public. The site is created and maintained entirely by volunteers, and they accept submissions, including photographs and columns from the public. For more information, or to read the interview in its entirety, go to www.beyondmainst.com.

April Awards

Judges: *Vijay Karai & Bill Handsaker*

10

Jean McDonough	Red Flower
Jeff Morgan	Squirrel
Don Nadafau	Big Sur
John Pennoyer	Great Catch

9

Jim Aronson	Fiery Sunrise
Mariann Cyr	Claret Cup
Mariann Cyr	Curved-Bill Thrasher
Dave Ellenbecker	Spotted Jewel Weed
Cynthia Fleury	Fog at Sunrise Badlands
Ted Galambos	Mono Lake, CA March '04
Rick Graves	Pasque Close Up
Paul Hoppe	Loon Resting
Charles Kessler	Spiderwort
Virginia Sanderson	Little Egrets
Florence Scholljerdes	Bark and Moss
John Ziess	Falkland Upland Goose

8

Eric Baker	Blue Heron
Eric Baker	Pelican and Fish
Mary Kay Bertas	Destin, FL '02
Cynthia Fleury	Moose in Willows in Storm
Marilyn Gladitsch	Indian Paintbrush
Dale Hargadine	Osprey in Mangrove
Jerry Harlow	Tawny Funnel Cap
Cathy Jones	Great Blue Heron Portrait #1
Jean McDonough	Five Penguins on Ice
Jeff Morgan	Gallinule
Vern Nelson	Chickadee on Lilac Branch
John Pennoyer	Showys in Habitat
Mark T. Smith	Female Cardinal
Mark T. Smith	Zebra Butterfly
Duane Wraalstad	Red Cactus
John Zeiss	Fish Close Up

Minnesota Nature Photography Field Trips

Field Trips, the Next Step

By Dale Bohlke

I am relocating to south central Minnesota this summer. This creates a new opportunity for a club member to continue the field trips. During the past two years several new members have had their first experience with the club during a field trip. Longstanding members have shared ideas and strengthened friendships. More importantly, more people are now aware of some great natural areas in the Metro.

Many more unique areas and subjects in the Metro area are awaiting discovery. The more widely known these areas are, the more likely they are to survive intact into the next century. Examples of threatened natural areas include Louisville Swamp which is under significant attack by an outdoor amphitheater, Wood Lake is losing ground to encroaching buildings, and Springbrook Nature Center is all but lost because of uncontrolled water levels and a lack of funding.

If you want to share your special photo locations and carry on the two year tradition, now is your chance. Contact me and I will give you planning and logistical details for setting up a field trip. Contact Dale Bohlke at dbohlke@mn.rr.com or 952-445-6125.

At A Glance Calendar

<i>May</i>	May 22nd, 8:00 am <i>Location:</i> Schaefer Prairie <i>Subject:</i> Lady Slippers
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Trip Details

Schaefer Prairie Field Trip

May 22nd, 8:00 am

Lady Slipper Morning

The small white lady slipper is a delicate prairie orchid that can be hard to find. Schaefer Prairie, managed by the Nature Conservancy, has several of these plants which typically bloom during the latter part of May. There are other locations in the Metro area where these can be found but Schaefer was chosen as a field trip location to spread out photographers and minimize habitat damage.

Meet at the fast food restaurant (Burger King?) on the Northwest corner of the stop light in Glencoe at 8:00 am on Saturday, May 22nd. We will caravan to Schaefer Prairie which is about 6 miles west on 212. Caution: Poison ivy is everywhere! You will be in direct contact if you leave your vehicle. Wearing rain gear and washing thoroughly within 6 hours of contact will decrease the risk of acquiring this miserable rash.

Digital Corner

by Jeff Morgan

Salon

We had 18 entries in the April salon. Excellent! Please keep those entries coming! I brought in my own projector in April and the brightness and color accuracy seemed very good to me, but please let me know what you thought. I did get into a little trouble for obstructing the judges' view with the lectern, but I had to have something to place the projector on, so that was a trade-off.

Reminder

To enter the monthly salon in digital:

1. Images should have 1280 pixels on the longest side.
2. Images should be JPEG or .jpg format.
3. Images need to be in the sRGB color space.
4. Bring your images on CD or email them to mnpc@comcast.net.
5. The file name should consist of title, your name and (W) for wildlife images. For example: "Bear in River by Jeff Morgan (W).jpg"

Topic: Photoshop Sharpening

There are quite a few myths about digital images and sharpening that I would like to talk about and hopefully dispel.

You can sharpen an out-of-focus subject. This is not true! If a photograph is taken out of focus, it cannot be sharpened in Photoshop. To understand this you need to remember two things:

1. The way sharpening is applied in software is to find edges or transitions in an image and to lighten pixels on one side of it and darken pixels on the other side of the transition. This extra contrast along the edges makes the image look sharper to our eyes. If it is overdone, there appears to be a black and white stripe down each edge in the picture and it looks very unnatural.
2. Consider what is happening on a pixel level with a subject that is out of focus. Imagine a fine hair as just a

line of single brown pixels on a green background in an image that is sharp. That same strand of hair in an out-of-focus image becomes 3 to 5 pixels wide and much softer in color. So if you then run that out-of-focus hair through the sharpening filter in Photoshop, you end up with one line of light green pixels, one line of dark brown pixels, a couple of lines of lighter brown pixels, one line of dark brown pixels, and finally another line of light green pixels. That hair is now a far cry from the thin one-pixel wide hair in a naturally sharp photograph.

If an image is just very slightly soft and you apply a small amount of sharpening, the image can at first look a little better, but not much.

You do not need to sharpen digital images that were correctly focused.

Again, not true! If you think back to the days when checkered suits were popular and viewed on a television screen, remember those dreadful "moiré" patterns? Well, the same thing happens in digital cameras (and scanners) with square pixels all in a fixed-grid pattern. This effect can be reduced by anti-aliasing (low pass) filters built into cameras, which unavoidably reduce resolution by softening the image. Another issue is that conventional digital sensors have their pixels arranged in a pattern known as the Bayer mask, with two green pixels for each red and blue pixel. This is appropriate because the eye is most sensitive to green. With the Bayer mask sensor there is some resolution loss and side effect, mostly "moiré fringing", due to interpolation—the process of filling in the data for the two missing colors at each pixel location. Both these issues have the effect of softening the image and making some form of sharpening required.

My camera does not sharpen images or my digital camera produces fuzzy images. This may or may not be true! Most cameras, especially in the pro category, capture an image without applying any sharpening to it, resulting in an image that appears "soft" or even slightly out of focus. Others apply a

certain degree of sharpening to the images and output crisp looking images. Generally speaking, the less expensive and less sophisticated the camera, the more it sharpens the image. For example, point-and-shoot cameras have a high amount of sharpening that you cannot turn off. A Canon 10D can be set to low, medium or high, and the default is medium. Is this enough sharpening? Generally not, because for SLR cameras and above, the camera does not "see" the subject the way your eyes do and therefore does not know what amount of sharpening to apply. Since sharpening is a destructive process (changes image data), it is much better to err on the low side. The more professional the camera, the less the sharpening because the camera manufacturer assumes the photographer knows how much to sharpen the image.

When I resize my images down for the web or entry into a salon, they appear to lose focus.

This is true! Think about it for a moment. You have this high-resolution image that looks sharp, and you have just asked Photoshop to discard 11 pixels for every one pixel you keep. Which pixels does Photoshop discard? Some of those sharp edges and other details get thrown away, so you do end up with a softer image. You can purchase plugins or "actions" to reduce your images down to size, and some of these will automatically apply sharpening.

How do I sharpen my images? My favorite way is Photoshop's "unsharp mask" filter. In the "Amount" setting I would suggest from 50% to 150% would be a good setting range to try. The "Radius" is how many pixels on each side of the edge Photoshop will use to lighten or darken. I would suggest a setting of 1 pixel. The "Threshold" setting is harder to understand, but this is how Photoshop finds an edge to work on. It is the difference in brightness required to find an edge. I would suggest you never go below 5, but anywhere from 5 to 10 works for most images. If you go lower, it starts to sharpen, mist, noise or (scanned film)

grain and things like that. Always expand the image up to 100% to examine the effects of sharpening, and do not overdo it. Always save and keep the original "unsharpened" image because sharpening is destructive.

If you are interested in a local, one-day workshop on Digital SLR Workflow, take a look at www.elmstudio.com or speak to me.

Free Admission to Minnesota State Parks

on Open House Day, Sunday, June 6

Visit your favorite state park for free on the first Sunday in June. No vehicle permit is required to enter a state park on Open House Day, however, tour fees, camping and lodging fees will still be in effect that day.

Local Photo Opportunities

Over the course of the past two years, Dale Bohlke has organized photo field trips in and around the Twin Cities metro area. If you're looking for nearby places to take pictures this summer, here's a list of the places Dale and fellow club members have visited on their outings. Although these locations were visited at certain times of the year for specific subjects, check them out for their year-round natural beauty.

- Reicks Lake - Alma, WI
- Colville Park - Red Wing, MN
- Rapids Lake Unit - Carver Co, MN
- River Terrace SNA - Cannon Falls, MN
- Seven Mile Creek - Nicollet Co, MN
- Lake Maria State Park - Monticello, MN
- Tierney's Woods - Bloomington, MN
- Black Dog SNA - Burnsville, MN
- Schaefer Prairie - McLeod Co, MN
- Roscoe Prairie SNA - Stearns Co, MN
- Louisville Swamp - Shakopee, MN
- Wood Rill SNA - Orono, MN
- DeSoto NWR - Missouri Valley, IA
- Bluestem Prairie SNA - Clay Co, MN
- MN Valley NWR - Bloomington, MN
- Memorial Park - Shakopee, MN

And remember John Pennoyer's words of wisdom... "There is always an image out there - it is just up to us to go and find it"

Upcoming Photo Tours & Seminars

John Gregor (Coldsnap Photography) - www.coldsnap.com

2-Day Weekend Primers:

Lecture/demonstration, field shoot, and a critique of images taken during the field shoot.

- **June 4-5, 2004**
Spring Tune-up
- **August 13-14, 2004**
High Summer
- **October 8-9, 2004**
Fall Color

June 17-20, 2004.

Wild Orchids of Minnesota's Boreal Forest

September 30-October 3, 2004

Lake Superior In Autumn

Rick Hobbs - www.rickhobbs.com

August 22 - September 1, 2004

Southeast Alaska

Humpback whales, grizzly bears, black bears, orcas, porpoise, sea lions, harbor seals, eagles, magnificent scenery, and more

September. 23-28, 2004

Theodore Roosevelt N.P.

Medora, ND - Badland scenes, wild horses, bison, mule deer, prairie dogs, and more

John Shaw - www.johnshawphoto.com

May 29 - June 12:

Spain

An exciting cross-section of wildlife, landscapes, classic architecture and cultural photography

June 27 - July 9:

Iceland

The Land of Fire and Ice as few will ever see it—puffins, icebergs, waterfalls, wildflowers, geysers and unusual coastal landscapes

September 4 - 11:

Denali National Park, Alaska

The mountain, wildlife and landscapes at the predicted height of fall color

September 10-15:

Brown bears, Katmai National Park, Alaska

Bears in winter pelage with fiery red salmon.

Rocky Mountain School of Photography

September 11 - 17, 2004

Rocky Mountain National Park - Estes Park, Colorado

Spectacular sunrise views of Longs Peak; mountain reflections in alpine lakes; and waterfalls and fall colors adorning Moraine and Horseshoe Parks

Nature Photo Times

published Sept-May by the

Minnesota Nature Photography Club

www.minnesotanature.org

Editor: Cathy Jones, 952-897-1881, cathyj@toomuchheat.com
3533 W. 103rd St
Bloomington, MN 55431

President: Tom Samuelson 952-472-2235 thsamuel@citilink.com
Co Vice Pres.: Mike Hagerty 612-920-2635 michaelhag@yahoo.com
Co Vice Pres.: Vijay Karai 763-757-6300 vkara@temgweb.com
Treasurer: Jim Duncan 651-459-3558 jduncan001@comcast.net

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

FIRST CLASS MAIL



May Program

A Mid Winter Photo Shoot

*presented by
Vijay Karai*



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May Program

A Mid Winter Photo Shoot

Undaunted by a family that didn't share his enthusiasm for a winter road trip, Vijay Karai recruited a couple of his friends to share his dream of capturing winter images of Yellowstone National Park. During their 10 day excursion from Minnesota to Wyoming and back again, the three companions went from shirt-sleeves to parkas and photographed images as varied as the weather. Geysers, Mule deer, Bison, Pheasants, Sheep, Wolves, Elk and Bald Eagles were just some of the subjects that met their lenses during this trip.

Join them as they travel across the country letting serendipity be their guide.

Photo Quote

Thirty-six satisfactory exposures on a roll means a photographer is not trying anything new.

-Freeman Patterson



John Pennoyer Receives MNPC Honorary Membership

At the April meeting, John Pennoyer was presented with a plaque commemorating his Honorary Membership in the Minnesota Nature Photography Club. This award is presented to members

who have provided exemplary service to the club over a period of many years. This distinction carries with it a lifetime free membership to the MNPC.

John has been a very active member of this club since 1983. For the past 11 years he has been the club's Ombudsman, a position which entails writing a monthly article for our newsletter, and making himself available to anyone to answer questions about the club and about nature photography. In addition, he has been our club judge many times and has always done a great job in critiquing the slides. He has put on numerous programs, including a memorable presentation in 1989 called "Brown Bears of Katmai". John has also been the projectionist at our club meetings since the late 1980's. In addition to being a judge at the MN Botany Internationals (sponsored by MNPC) he has willingly volunteered his help on many judging days. He also arranged for the club to meet at the General Motors Training Center (his place of employment) when we had no other place to meet.

Thanks John, for your years of commitment and service to this organization.