



Field Notes – Graduated ND Filters By John Pennoyer

It makes no difference if a photographer is shooting slide film or digital, correct exposure is not only determined by exposing for the correct tone but also to have detail in your subject. Slide film has latitude of about 5 stops, digital slightly more at maybe 6 or 7 stops. As you look at your subject and a difference of more than 1 stop exists it will be very difficult to expose correctly for the entire image. It is always important for the photographer to expose correctly for the main subject and let all other details fall where they may. When shooting a black cub up in a birch tree, a photographer should expose for the cub and let the birch tree be a little over-exposed. When shooting a mature Bald Eagle it may be important to expose for the white head and let the brown feathers on the body show a little under-exposure. But in certain situations there is some help in your camera bag; the Graduated Neutral Density Filter (GND).

For me these filters are a necessity when shooting scenes where the skyline is lighter by one stop or more. This is where GND filters can help by bringing the lighter part of the image in balance with the rest of the image. They will come in 1, 2, 3 or 4 stop graduations with either a “hard” or “soft” edge. If you are going to use a hard edge the skyline must be defined to hide the transition. I use only 1, 2 and 3 stop GND filters, held in a Cokin P filter holder. As I look through the view-finder I slide the filter up and down for the best position to bring the lighter areas in balance with the darker area. The graduated part of the filter will easily blend into the transition from light to dark.

So how does a photographer know which GND filter to use? The majority of the time I just look at the scene and determine which filter to use. If I am in doubt I will take images using both filters. Some Photographers will spot meter on the light part of the scene and again on the darker area. The stop difference will be the filter they select.

Using the wrong GND filter can cause the lighter areas to be darker than normal. When I expose for a scene with the filter in place, the camera’s reflective meter will take in consideration the GND so my exposure is based on what I want the subject to show. If the scene is neutral my EV is set at EV 0 and if I’m doing some backlighting, such as the pasque flowers in this article, I adjusted the EV to -1/3 to highlight the flowers. I also use my GND filters for reflections and sunrise/sunsets. Remember that it is very easy to overuse a GND, such as the reflection of mountains in a lake. The reflection of the mountains should be darker than the mountains themselves. Always try to maintain the area that is supposed to be lighter to less than 1-stop difference.

Of course, like many things in photography there are always challenges to overcome. Using the Cokin P filter holder is difficult with lenses of 32mm or less. The wide angle lenses will pick-up the edges of the filter holder and make the edges of the image darker. To counter that problem I remove the first slot in the holder which solves the problem down to my 28mm lens. If I use a lens wider than 28mm, I will usually just hold the filter in front of the lens, making sure my fingers are not in the way. A photographer can also purchase gaffer tape and tape the filter to the lens.

Another problem when using filters on backlit subjects is lens flaring. Looking into the viewfinder these bright “donut holes” are easy to spot. Try moving the sun or bright areas just out of the viewfinder or change composition so the “donut holes” are in a lighter area of the image. Sometimes using your hat as extra shade can also be helpful.

If you have never used a GND filter, I heartily recommend that you purchase at least a 2-stop GND and experiment with your next series of scenes. Good Shooting!



Soaring Bald Eagles/3-stop GND Filter



Backlit Pasque Flowers/ 2-stop GND Filter

May Awards

Judges: Mike Prokosch and Mariann Cyr

10	
Cathy Jones	Glowing Egret
Cathy Jones	Royal Tern
Jean McDonough	Eagle Eating Fish
9	
Eric Baker	Heron
Michele Burkstrand	Fisher Smiling
Ron Cleveland	Rue Anemone
Jeff Hahn	Squast Bug Mother
John D La Mere	Redwing Blackbird
Jean McDonough	Mountain Goat Resting
Aaron Moen	Superior Shore
Jeff Morgan	Sandhill Crane(d)
Tom Samuelson	Ruff Grouse
John Zeiss	Walrus After A Hard Day
8	
Dave Ellenbecker	Skunk Cabbage #9
Cynthia Fleury	Swan Lake 3-4 (d)
Jeff Hahn	Yellow-necked Caterpillar
John D. Le Mere	Crex Crane
Jeff Morgan	Bird (d)
John Pennoyer	Turning Eggs (d)
John Zeiss	Old Burl

September Awards

Judges: Rose Duncan and Marilyn Gladitsch

10	
Don Nadreau	California Sea Lions (d)
David Perez	Monarch Butterfly on Spotted Knapweed (d)
Mariann Cyr	Primroses & Ferns
Jean McDonough	Yucca at Sunrise
Mary Kay Bertas	Merced River
John D LaMere	Monarch 2004
9	
Jeff Morgan	Yellowstone (d)
Amitabh Chaturvedi	Grand Canyon of Yellowstone (d)
Jim Aronson	Prairie Chicken Show
Tom Samuelson	Roscoe Prairie
Michelle Burkstrand	29 On Look-out
Dave Ellenbecker	Jewel Weed
Jeff Hahn	Mating Flower Flies
Ted Galambos	Uluru Australia
Jim Aronson	Spring Bellwort
Ted Galambos	2012 Apostles
Curt Snowden	Showy Lady Slipper
Mariann Cyr	Greater Prairie Chicken
8	
Rick Graves	Mallard (d)
Amitabh Chaturvedi	Baltimore Oriole (d)
Don Nadreau	Montana de Oro (d)
Vern Nelson	Male Northern Cardinal
Joe Kandiko	Lagoon
Flo Scholljegerdes	Upper-Lower Yosemite Falls
Ron Cleveland	Virginia Bluebells & Anemone

Curt Snowden	Dewey Spider Web
Vern Nelson	Bull Thistle
Jeff Hahn	Gomphid Dragonfly
Jean McDonough	Two Burrowing Owls
Ron Cleveland	False Rue Anemone
	Blossom/Bud

East Greenland – September 2004

By Ron Winch

“Grab the dishes and hold onto your breakfast!” Those few words had a double meaning on a mid-September morning as we crossed the unruly Denmark Strait riding the tail-end of Hurricane Francis. The sea was as rough as anything I had encountered in four crossings of the southern ocean’s Drake Passage.

Fighting sea sickness, many folks had elected to stay in their bunks, flat on their backs, rather than fight the rolling 230 ft. Russian ship to partake of a good breakfast; which may come back to haunt them a bit later. As the ship pitched and rolled, table settings, even with rubber mats, defied their place on the table and headed for the floor. Some folks who had not taken motion sickness medication made hasty exits, napkins clasped tightly over their mouths. Most of us who enjoyed breakfast managed to keep it – and so the day went.

After cruising at half speed for 40 some hours to combat the tumultuous sea, the sky began to clear and the sea settled down to tolerable rolls, and folks began to appear from their long sleep.

As we entered East Greenland’s Scoresby Sound the first giant iceberg began to appear. Fulmars and Kittiwakes accompanied the ship and the south coast seemed even more dramatic in the presence of the many icebergs. Cocooned in multilayer of fleecy and windbreakers or down jackets, we watched from the front deck. Numerous seals were spotted and an occasional whale – most too distant for good photos. A disturbance in the water near a huge iceberg proved to be a pod of narwhals – the unicorn of the sea. They are one of the mythical animals I have yearned to photograph. I still do.

Choked with brash ice and bergy bits the fjord offered little resistance to the Russian research

ship, the Professor Multanovskiy, as it gently eased its way deeper into the narrow fjords. The highlights of these probes put us in front of the enormous Christian IV glacier, over 7.5 miles wide at its face and 275 ft. high. As the captain zigzagged through the ice to give us the best view possible, a call came over the P.A. system that lunch was served. Obviously, this ship has taken very few serious photo trips. A cold lunch was relished when we finally left the glacier.

Zodiac cruising certainly lets one appreciate the size of some of the icebergs – over fifty feet high above water which means there is over 400 feet of ice below the surface – no wonder the Titanic didn’t stand a chance. Never getting too close – on the chance that the berg might roll and swamp the Zodiac – we photographed the deep blue ice of the older bergs that had been compressed until most of the air had been squeezed out.

One afternoon the zodiacs cruised among the ice while the ship went on ahead. Staying close to shore we spotted 2 groups of five musk oxen – close enough to photograph as they grazed on the meager plants and mosses. Leaving the shoreline we spooked a small flock of Long-tailed Ducks which were immediately harassed by a magnificent white Gyrfalcon. The Gyrfalcon is a bird of the high arctic, and for centuries past they were the prized flacons of kings. I have been fortunate to have photographed one on a previous arctic trip and am now using the image on my business card.

Looking around, the ship was nowhere to be seen because of the ice. Having no radio, we were up a fjord without a ship. Continuing on into the ice choked fjord we came across some areas of thin ice where the zodiacs, pushed by 40 hp motors, crashed through and at times tried to ride up on the ice. It didn’t seem like a good idea, but the ship was somewhere ahead of us. Finally open water and the ship at anchor appeared among the icebergs. A great afternoon photographically, but as the zodiacs were being brought aboard, the Russian seamen observed the bottom of the boats and said in stern broken English, “Zodiac Not Icebreaker!”

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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. Meetings are held at:

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

Editors Corner

I wanted to include a little background about myself. I'm currently retired from Xcel Energy and have a little spare time to devote to this effort, which is the primary reason I took on this role. I have been shooting photographs for about 35 years; you would think I would be better than I am by this time, but I keep trying. I have just recently converted to shooting digital (Canon 10D) and really love it. I have some background in using Microsoft Word and hope this will carry me through this process.

Some ground rules and miscellaneous items:

1. Articles are welcome, let loose and submit an article of your experiences. I prefer articles be submitted via email or a CD, this will reduce errors and make my life easier. I need items submitted by the 1st of the month so I can get them into the newsletter. Slides I can handle; however, I don't have a scanner so I will need a little extra time to get the slides scanned.
2. Those of you getting this via email (or wishing to get it via email), you will receive an email telling you the newsletter is out on the club website for your viewing pleasure. I will not be attaching the newsletter to an email due to constraints with some ISPs.

3. There was no September 2004 newsletter. The number on that newsletter would have been Volume 49, Number 1. I'm numbering this newsletter Volume 49, Number 1 & 2 to make-up for the missed newsletter in September. Also, I have included the May salon winners in this edition.

October Meeting: Wednesday 10/20/2004

Program: Jeff Morgan "Digital Phase 1"

Membership Dues

Just a reminder that membership dues are due.
Please send your membership dues to:

Jim Duncan
304 Blue Heron Lane
Woodbury, MN 55125-2850

Or, give them to Jim at the next meeting.