



Nature Photo Times

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Editor's Corner

Several items in this month's edition demand your immediate attention. First, the Minnesota Nature Photography Club and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge are presenting an exhibit entitled, "The Natural World Through the Viewfinder – A Photographic Exhibit." It will be running from mid-February through March 2005. See Ron Winch's article below and call Ron (651-430-1653) if you have any questions.

Second, Dale Bohlke is back to organizing field trips, here is Dale's note:

Field Trips Return!

Field trips will resume at 1:30 PM on Saturday, January 15th. The swans at Monticello will be the subject for those hardy enough to brave the January weather (last year it rained). Monticello is the winter home for hundreds of the endangered trumpeter swans. The open water on the Mississippi and twice daily feeding brings these big, beautiful, white birds within camera range. Dress warmly to stand out in the January weather. A 400mm lens is the minimum for satisfactory shots. The afternoon light is better for photography and depending on the conditions the birds may fly directly overhead before landing on the river. If you arrive early try lunch at Crostini Grille at 254 West Broadway in downtown Monticello.

Directions: Meet at the gas station/meat market across from the bank 1 block north of the first off ramp from I94. We will leave promptly at 1:30 to caravan to Mississippi Drive Park. If the day is cloudy we may go to Lake Maria State Park to photograph winter song birds at the feeders.

Future Trips:

March 5th, AM in Shakopee for wintering ducks and geese

April 23rd, PM at River Terrace SNA for Pasque flowers

May 21st, AM for small white lady slippers

June at Itasca State Park for lady slippers, etc (tentative)

July at Roscoe Prairie for prairie flowers and sunset

As in the past I will be there regardless of the weather. If you would like help finding the photo site, be at the meeting location a few minutes early and we will caravan to the site. Contact Dale Bohlke at (612) 384-8417 or dbohlke@mn.rr.com for further information.

Field Notes

Keeping it Steady

By John Pennoyer

It was a phenomenal year for Whitetail Bucks in 2002 but the last two years have been very unproductive. In 2003 I never snapped a photo and this year was proving out to be the same. But on Monday, November 15th my luck changed. I was in my blind for about 3 hours and never even saw a white flag running away. So I decided to grab my D100 and 70-200mm lens and just walk slowly to see what I could find. It was not long before I saw a doe and fawn and, looking very carefully around them, I saw a nice respectable buck. He was intently watching the doe and as he approached her I was able to fire off about 15-20 images before they took off deeper into the woods. It was a heavy overcast day and being in very thick woods restricted my shutter speed to 1/60th to 1/80th of a second. I was hand holding my camera and would have been satisfied if just one of the images turned out. Later in the evening as I downloaded my images on the computer, every one was critically sharp.



Next to Whitetails one of my other passions is photographing Bighorn Sheep. At the end of November and early December I made another trip into SW Montana in pursuit of this very photogenic animal. It is not just the passion for the animal but also the passion for their environment. I love being in the Mountains! The first morning sheep were spotted high up on the ridge so it was going to be a long uphill hike under cold, windy conditions. Usually these sheep are fairly acclimated to people and it is not usually necessary to bring the "big guns". So in my photo pack was my Nikon D100 and the 70-200mm lens and, of course, a water bottle and snacks. My trusted Gitzo 1548CF tripod was also making the trip up the mountain.

This is the time of the year that the Bighorns should be in the peak of the rut. I have many images of this magnificent animal. My sole purpose was to try to get some images of rutting behavior; specifically some serious "head banging." This is how mature rams

show dominance, rearing on their hind legs and with full body force banging head first into each other. It took about 1-1/2 hours to reach the animals. As I put my camera system together, I set my tripod down and decided to take images by handholding as the animals are very active at this time of the year and this would allow me to be more mobile and move with the sheep. During the next 4 hours or so I fired off about 60 images and never did use my tripod. My tripod got a free ride up and down the mountain and really never did pay its way. Back in the motel room I downloaded my images and again to my amazement the images were tack sharp. All the deletes were due to the photographer not the result of my handholding. Needless to say for the next few trips up the mountain my tripod no longer got the free ride but stayed in the comfort and security of the vehicle.



Those of you that know me or have been to any of my classes or workshops know how I have preached about using the tripod for stability. I certainly still believe this, but with the new feature of Image stabilization/Vibration reduction in our new lenses this has added a new twist with the way that we approach the use of our tripods. The “old” rule of handholding is not to handhold any speed less than the focal length of your lens. If you are using a 200mm lens the shutter speed should be at least 1/200th of a second. Canon and Nikon will advertise that you can handhold at 2-3 stops less than this with the use of IS/VR, which would be about 1/30th of a second. Like most of you, I have missed some shots because I had to set-up my tripod. Last August I missed a great photo of a dew covered Monarch butterfly against the rising sun. As I was setting up my tripod the movement of grasses allowed the butterfly to escape. This helped me make up my mind to sell my five year old Nikon 80-200mm S lens and purchase the Nikon 70-200mm S VR lens. My first use of the VR was the whitetail described above. I could have hand held the old lens but I would have had to be satisfied with maybe one or two images. The Vibration Reduction allowed every image to be sharp.

IS/VR does have its place, but my tripod will still be used a considerable amount as there are some situations that you will still need to use the tripod even if your lens has IS/VR. This technology has given the photographer another trick in the camera bag and gives you the advantage to capture a difficult image.

Other camera and lens manufacturers are now offering this type of technology. Sigma refers to theirs as Optical Stabilizer (OS). If you are in the market for a new lens and the manufacturer offers this type of stabilization, it would be a mistake not to make use of this new technology. Good Shooting!

Salon Thoughts **By Dale Bohlke**

Viewing the hundreds of slides at the North Star Salon was one of those days when a revelation strikes, subtly, without warning, and there is clarity of vision. While looking at several hundred slides I was amazed by the sameness of images. Sure there were images from Antarctica, the Arctic, Africa, the Pacific Ocean, and even Minnesota but most were the same. How can images from the far reaches of the world be so similar? The subjects were all different and they were all in focus and well composed, but still they were the same. How can they all look alike? Let's go back to the basics; the definition of photography is “painting with light.” Light that did not enhance the subject is what made these images alike. The outstanding images had outstanding light and stood out from the rest. The light may have been warm, cool, directional, or described in many other ways but the light enhanced the subject.

Much has been said about telling a story and I have been a proponent of this concept. As we start photographing and develop the courage to share our work we progress beyond the average photographer and our work stands out from that of friends and relatives because the shots are well composed, in focus, and up close compared to others images. By telling a story with our images we start winning in local competition and move on to international salons where the rules are more refined and the story still must be told in a dramatic way. There must be an exclamation point at the end of the sentence instead of a period. Sometimes the drama is the subtle position of the subject or the dew on the leaf that gets our attention as we look at the image during the second millisecond of viewing. After our story telling technique has been perfected we still need dramatic light to stand out from the crowd.

At the international salon level story telling has been perfected by most of the entrants so more is needed to be unique. Successful salon participants have discovered the essence of the dramatic image: LIGHT! When you see the results of a salon, think about the light. When you view your images think about the light. Make a card that you see whenever you view your photography. Tape this to your view box or the screen: “Think light!” Have you exposed the image properly? Be sure it is not the correct exposure for the film but the proper exposure for the subject?

Perhaps you do not plan to enter a salon but plan to get published, as most of us wish (either secretly or openly). Think about the photo editor who goes through thousands of images. What catches the eye after image number 789? It has to be the light that creates the second look.

As you take your photography to the next level in 2005 think about the light. Study the light as you are walking outside. What kind of image would work in it? When you look at each image you see ask yourself: Does the light enhance the subject? What light would have made the image better?

2004 Year-End Awards

General - Honorable Mentions

Rod Blesener - Tettegouche Fog
Cynthia Fleury - Fog at Sunrise Badlands
John Jenkins - Yellowstone in Winter
Joe Kandiko - Wonder Lake View
Joe Miller - Yucca Plant
Robert Swanson - Lassen National Park Painted Dunes
Jon Wilbrecht - Windy Autumn

General - 2nd Place



General - 1st Place



Botany - Honorable Mentions

Ron Cleveland - False Rue Anemone
Mariann Cyr - Claret Cup
Marilyn Gladitsch - Maidenhair Fern
Jean McDonough - Yucca at Sunrise
George Ryan - First Snow on Mushrooms
Tom Samuelson - Hepatica

Botany - 2nd Place



Botany - 1st Place



Zoology - Honorable Mentions

- Michele Burkstrand - On Look-out
- Michele Burkstrand - Fisher Smiing
- Mariann Cyr - Snake with Toad
- Cynthia Fleury - Moose in Willows in Storm
- Cathy Jones - Great Blue Heron Portrait #1
- John La Mere - Monarch 2004
- Jean McDonough - Two Burrowing Owls
- Jeff Morgan - Cranes
- Jeff Morgan - Ducks
- Jeff Morgan - Silver Lake
- David Perez - Buck in Velvet at Sunset
- John Pennoyer - Great Catch
- Virginia Sanderson - Little Egrets

Zoology - 2nd Place



Zoology - 1st Place



Wildlife Image of the Year



2004 Image of the Year



Congratulations to all the participants, especially the winners in each category. Jim Duncan deserves a patch for the image of the year; get on that when you get a chance Jim!!!

All the images above and the images from the honorable mention categories are now loaded onto the club's website, www.minnesotanature.org. They are much more spectacular in color.

Is a Photograph Really Worth a Thousand Words?

By Ron Winch

It depends. Sometimes yes. Sometimes no. In my own file there are many that are worth a thousand words – or more, and there are thousands that speak to me alone.

Several photographers, whose images are worth a thousand words, and then some, are Ansel Adams, Robert Glen Ketchum, Subhander Banerjee, Jack Dykinga and Mike Nichols. Adams is still probably regarded as the master of black and white photography. His images lent much credibility to the Sierra Club and helped to protect many wild and scenic areas in California. Robert Glen Ketchum is best known for his magnificent photos of Alaska, especially the Tongass National Forest. Subhander Banerjee recently produced a book and exhibit on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge that was so powerful that the Smithsonian, apparently bowing to pressure from certain congressmen, moved the exhibit from prime space into a “backroom.” Pulitzer Prize winning Jack Dykinga’s sensual images of the western landscape have helped to set aside prime scenic areas in the west.

Mike Nichols is probably best known for photos of mountain gorillas and the African interior, where virtually no one goes. In September 1999, Nichols joined biologist Michael Fay and entourage on the African Mega transect across the Congo and Gabon – a hike of 1200 miles and months of slogging through some of West Africa’s toughest and most hostile environment. Biologist Fay recorded the minutest details in his waterproof notebook, including date, time and GPS coordinates. Nichols captured much of the “never seen by white man’s eyes” on film.

Jump ahead to August 2002 in Libreville, Gabon where Dr. Fay and several others are meeting with Omar Bongo, president of Gabon, and his cabinet. In an hour long presentation of Mike Nichol’s still images and video footage by Fay, the biologist highlighted 13 acres deemed to be prime candidates for new national parks. The biologists were hopeful that the president would sign on for the “crown jewel” of the 13 acres, but when the presentation ended President Bongo called one of his ministers and questioned some of the data. Dr. Fay went to the presidents side and affirmed that “yes, this was the correct information for the “crown jewel, Lope.”” Tension grew. President Bongo spoke, “I want the whole thing not just Lope. I want all 13 acres as national parks.” And so it was! A picture can be worth.....

Our photos may never have that kind of impact, but they do make a difference. They must be seen. They must be shared. They must exude your passion, not just for photography, but for the natural world. I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, “I’d like to see more members who sit quietly in the audience share their ideas and images.”

The Natural World through the Viewfinder A Photographic Exhibit

As mentioned in the Editor’s Corner, the Minnesota Nature Photography Club and the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge will co-sponsor this exhibit from mid February through March 2005.

Members of the Minnesota Nature Photography Club are passionate about capturing the best of nature on film or digitally. The goal is always to share with others for their enjoyment and education. Cameras range from the basic unit to full-blown professional outfits in both film and digital. Lenses span the range from 16mm to 600mm, with skills to match. Don’t be put-off by the big numbers for many fine photos are made with simple and relatively inexpensive equipment – as you will see in the exhibit. Only as your passion grows and your checkbook can tolerate it does your equipment and travels expand. Exquisite images have been made in the backyard by passionate photographers, while others with wanderlust have traveled from 81 degrees north to 66 degrees south in search of knowledge and fine images.

As a state, we do not have mountains or seacoasts, but we do have Lake Superior and more than 10,000 lakes, thousands of miles of rivers and streams, and four major landscapes – prairie grasslands, deciduous woods, coniferous forests, and the aspen parklands. Populate these areas with 70 plus species of mammals and over 250 species of birds and you can expect to see some spectacular images of Minnesota. Don’t be surprised if you see images from the Dakotas, Wyoming, Alaska or even Antarctica or Africa – for the grass is always greener ..., and sometimes it is.

The exhibit date is about six weeks away. It is time to select your favorite image, get it printed and framed so we will be ready when mid – February rolls around. Also, please add a bit of information on a 3X5 card to go with your photo; include your name, phone #, title, where the photo was taken, any comments, and price (if the photo is for sale). We have 55 feet of wall space in which to showcase our talents so limit your submission to one photo. If you have questions, call me, Ron Winch at 651-430-1653.

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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**

January Meeting:

The January meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 1/19/2005. This month's program will be "The Basics of Bird Identification."

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