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Field Notes

Entering Club Competitions

By John Pennoyer

The Bald Eagle was perched on the log pile and I could see by the position of his head that he was intently looking into the water trying to spot his next meal. Suddenly he lifted up from the logs and dived low just above the water and he headed right for me. I kept my center AF sensor right on his head and he thrust his powerful talons into the water and with hardly a splash lifted the fish right out of the water. Now is the time for me to pull the trigger and with my camera set to Dynamic AF and continuous high speed firing, my focus tracking is right on the money. The Eagle slanted his wings and lifted above the water with the fish secured in his talons and flies right over my head. I managed to fire off three frames. I can't wait to see the images so when I got back to the motel room I downloaded the images immediately. Two of the three images were hair sharp and the exposure was right on the money. But my favorite of the two images had a little imperfection. The upper wing tip got clipped at the top of the frame. After getting home from Alaska, I began the process of making final edits on my Bald Eagle images. Without a doubt my favorite image on the trip was the one with the top wing clipped. The bird was perfectly exposed, composition was perfect (except for the clipped wing) but the clipped wing really did bother me. I needed another opinion so I decided to enter the image in our monthly competition. The judges scored it a 10 while talking about the image never once was the clipped wing mentioned during the comments.

For many years I did not enter our Monthly competitions, but now with us being able to enter digital images it is so much more convenient to enter images. It is so much easier to sort through my files and e-mail the images to Jeff and I don't have to worry about waiting around to pick them up and also no finger smudges on the image. Like every one else I would like to always hear the judges say "10" with nothing but positive comments. However more often than not I am interested in hearing what the judge's say, especially if there is something that bothers me about the image. Besides the example above let me give you a couple of others.

Loon turning eggs: This image is one of my favorite Loon images. This was originally a slide that I scanned and

cropped and converted to digital. While I was cropping the image my mind was trying to figure out how much to crop. I entered it in the judging. I believe it scored an 8 and the judge's comment was that it should have been cropped more to have the Loon bigger in the image. Isn't that a coincidence that was the same problem my mind was trying to figure out? Later in the week I used my computer and did some more cropping and my Loon is now a little larger in the frame, not by much, because I think the nest and habitat is still important.

Trumpeters taking off: This was also a slide image that I took several years ago on the Mississippi. The Trumpeters are beginning to take flight very early in the morning, the exposure was perfect, and the one bird closest to the camera is hair sharp. Technically there were a couple of items that bothered me. The image has a slight blue cast to it because it was taken just at sunrise so the birds were actually in shade. Also the far bank was snow covered, and when I cropped the slide I was trying to show that the birds were on a river. However I know that it was snow, you could see the texture of the snow, the slide scored an 8 and the comment was the white line at the top. I did try to crop the image and remove the snow, but I am not sure that I like that composition and the birds are centered in the frame.

Bald Eagle snatching fish: This image was taken this year in Homer. I caught an eagle actually pulling a fish right out of the water. This was an adult eagle with blue water and blue ice. My camera was set to EV 0, the water, ice and the brown feathers of the bird were perfectly exposed, but the white head was overexposed. This is just a case of not having enough latitude from white to dark. The overexposed head also bothered me, but I was hoping the action of the fish at the talons and the beautiful color, maybe the judges would over look the head. No such luck, it scored an 8 and the comment was that the head was over-exposed. A couple of days later, I took the RAW file of that image and changed the exposure. When I changed it another -1 the head was right on, but everything else was way too dark for my tastes. The feathers were way too dark and the blue water was almost black. So I changed it another -1/3 as a compromise.

In all of those incidents the judges actually confirmed what was on my mind. I can't think of a better way to get an opinion than to enter our club competition. We can use the critiques of a judge to help us not only learn, but to confirm

what might be bothering us about a particular image. Now don't misunderstand me I also will enter images just too hopefully get a "10", but even if they don't I like to hear what the judges see wrong that I did not.

For this month's competition, I entered two more images; one of them specifically is entered to hear the judge's critique. This is an image that I tried a new technique on and I am interested to hear what they have to say. Have a great summer!



MNPC March 2005 Salon Scores

Judges: John Pennoyer & Alan Schutz

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Cyr, Mariann	White-tufted Grebes
Ellenbecker, Dave	White Lady-Slipper Pair
Gladitsch, Marilyn R	Hepaticas by Tree
McDonough, Jean	Baby Harp Seal
	Penguins Near Huge
McDonough, Jean	Iceberg
Sanderson, Wayne	Egret Fishing

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Blesener, Rod	Wax Wing
Cyr, Mariann	Gentoo Colony
Fleury, Cynthia	Yellow Mounds Badlands
Galambos, Ted	Saguaro in Arizona
Hahn, Jeff	Immature Grasshopper
Hahn, Jeff	Immature Stink Bug
Moen, Aaron	Jay Cooke State Park
	Great Blue Herons Nest
Morgan, Jeff	building (W)
Perez, Dave	Beetle on Geranium
	Oystercatcher Mating
Prokosch, Mike	Display

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Aronson, Jim	Trillium Close Up
Baker, Eric	Owl in Tree
Blesener, Rod	Gray Owl in Snow 2
Cleveland, Ron	Owl Lunch
Gladitsch, Marilyn R	Spring Beauties #26
Jenkins, John D	Mule Deer in Winter Snow
Kandiko, Joe	Autumn Reflections
Mueller, Torsten	Moonrise
	American Painted Lady on
Nelson, Vern	False Sunflower
Perez, Dave	Mallard Hen in Flight
Polley, Lil	Great Gray
	Silvery Grebe with Chick
Prokosch, Mike	0445
Sanderson, Virginia	Burrowing Owl #4
Sanderson, Virginia	Egret in Flight #8
Sanderson, Wayne	Heron with Fish
Scholljeggdes, Florence	Three Water Lillies

The View from Here
“Photography Spoken Here.”
By Lawrence C. Duke

A good camera club can be a heck of an experience. It should be a place to meet, to exchange information and ideas, to find out what's the latest, that you just have to have. Maybe to help a new photographer or learn from an older photographer.

When I got interested in REAL photography you shot with a 4x5, maybe, just maybe, you could do the same job with 120, but 35mm was not the way to go. Magazines and News Papers were just starting to accept 35mm, and there are a lot of Leicas out there in the field.

This club will be coming up on 50 years, soon. The St. Paul Camera Club is over 100 years old. Something must be fun and interesting to have that kind of staying power. A lot has to do with the membership. The more involved you get with the "Club" the more you get out of it. Dewitte Jones, Op, always says "Take it all in, give it all back." Isn't that what it's all about? I like to see what other photographers are doing and I like to show other photographer what I see.

As Yogi says "You can observe a lot by watching."

Passing along the Emotion of
Photography
By
Ron Winch

It's embarrassing! As the image of the pine forest fades and melds into an image of a Saw-Whet Owl surveying the forest floor in hopes of locating breakfast – a Red-Backed Vole, perhaps. Emotions are high and words don't come easy. My voice cracks a bit and the lump in my throat grows large.

Strange that I should have these feelings now, as I'm in the midst of a slide presentation to some fifty folks at a Wisconsin State Park. The image on the screen is being experienced only with my eyes, although the soft background music relaxes the spirit and encourages a mood.

Step back in time to the morning the image was made. The sun, like a big orange, peeked over the horizon two hours ago and kissed the river valley with its warmth.

A Veery's song drifted through the woods like the morning fog, and the smell of moist earth, reminiscent of decades of spring mornings, is so succulent you can almost taste it. A shadow glides by on silent wings. The Saw-Whet Owl glides to his hunting perch on an aspen snag. Soft green maple leaves unfold in the warmth of a new day as I loosen

the ball-head and frame the tender leaves and owl into a pleasing composition. The soft green background enhances the image as my index finger gently presses the shutter release. Two seconds and twelve frames later the owl, startled by the staccato rattle of the motor drive, flies to a quieter part of the forest.

For me, this is what nature photography is all about. Being alone in the woods – it's like being in a living library. You experience nature at her grandest with all your senses. It is here that feelings are at a high pitch for you have captured an elusive moment in the secretive life of a Saw-Whet Owl.

Over the river an eagle screams and only fifty yards away a Ruffed Grouse – high on testosterone – drums frantically to attract any unmated female. Thoughts begin to drift as I wander the forest in search of more fine images, but I can't forget that moment.

Editing the slides on the light-table, I find 4 discards, 7 very good shots and one exceptional image where the bird – close to the edge of the frame – is looking out of the shot, ala Robert Bateman. Although I recognize it's a great shot, a myriad of distractions prevents me from truly savoring the moment.

Only in the slide presentation, after a brief introduction to the program and what nature photography means to me, do the images begin to get to me. Soft mesmerizing background music and the near darkness of the room overcome all distractions. It is in this dark void with slides projected on a six foot screen that feelings for the images are at their strongest. I am transported back to the taking of every image, only now emotions are higher. There is only me and the audience, background music and the images. It is the audience that I am playing to and I want to involve them in the moment. There is a time for quiet and a time to tug at their emotions.

If you can truly get your viewers emotionally involved in the beauty, wonder and awe of the story you and your images are portraying, you will have done a great job in entertaining, educating and giving them a greater appreciation for our natural world.

And they will invite you back.

End of the Year

Thanks to all of you for a great year. In particular, the club officers, judges and event volunteers deserve a round of applause for their contributions. The next newsletter will be out to you in early September. Have a great summer and enjoy the outdoors and the art of photography.

Don Nadreau

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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

May Meeting:

The May meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 5/18/2005. The Program will be put on by Mike Prokosch on his trip to the Falklands this winter. The Judges will be Cynthia Fleury and Rose Duncan.

Election of New Leaders:

The slate of five candidates assembled by the nominating committee:

President - Mariann Cyr
Vice Pres. - Lawrence C. Duke
Treasurer - Jim Duncan
Secretary - Rod Blesener
Editor - Don Nadreau

Members will have an opportunity to nominate additional candidates from the floor.

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Western Wisconsin Club Note:

The western Wisconsin photographers club will be having a gallery showing at the Phipps center for the arts in Hudson, Wisconsin. The gallery will run from May 5th, 2005 to June 5th, 2005. Hours will be Monday-Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Sunday 12 noon to 4:30 p.m., as well as one hour before and through intermission of all performances in the Phipps theaters. They are hoping for 3 to 4 dozen prints to be on exhibit. Please forward this to anyone you can think of that would have interest. There are other galleries that will also be open to the public. The Phipps center is very easy to find. It is in downtown Hudson, one block off the St. Croix River.