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The Northern Forest

By Ron Winch

I didn't see you there, but I hope you made it up North this fall to photograph the splendor of our great northern forest – actually the southern terminus of the northern forest. The hills were ablaze with vibrant reds and oranges of the maples and the rich gold of aspens. Scattered among the deciduous trees were the occasional small stand of white spruce lending the color contrast to make the fall foliage really pop.

A serpentine band of black spruce crowds the waterways and occasionally encircles lowland lakes and ponds. Bogs and wetlands vibrate with the smoky gold of tamarack, punctuated with the dark green of black spruce. Pockets of birch and aspen add sunshine to the high ground. Moist soil and rocky ridges host the colorful mountain maples – a large shrub or small tree seldom more than 30 feet high. A Red Osier dogwood, also an under-story shrub, proudly displays leaves graduating from green to eggplant.

Clintonia or blue bead lily, wintergreen and creeping snowberry add color and pattern to the ground cover. Several ferns, many non-flowering plants and mosses blanket the ground. Lichens – British Soldiers, only one inch high at most, show off their red caps as they crowd into the ground cover. And fungi, especially if it is a wet autumn, can be found on the ground, on rotting wood and high on living trees – take your pick.

Then there is the weather to contend with or rejoice in, depending on your point of view. Several years ago I began a two week round the lake trip in September beginning on the north shore. It turned out to be a slow trip as it rained some every day. After ten days we had to make a major drive to get to Grand Marias. We never did make it around the lake. The rain had absolutely saturated the colors and fungi were popping up everywhere. The forest was a kaleidoscope of colors – everywhere you looked was a potential photo. Rain pants and Bean boots were essential gear to keep the wet and dirt on the outside as we reveled in the great colors of the wet northern forest.

You may have photographed some of this in much the same way, but let me recount how we did things. All exposures were on Velvia film photographed with a 35mm SLR, tripod mounted, using of an electronic shutter release to avoid any camera movement. A tripod that lets you go down to near ground level is a great plus as you view subjects at their eye level. Lenses ranged from 20mm to 300mm, with the 105mm macro being the real workhorse.

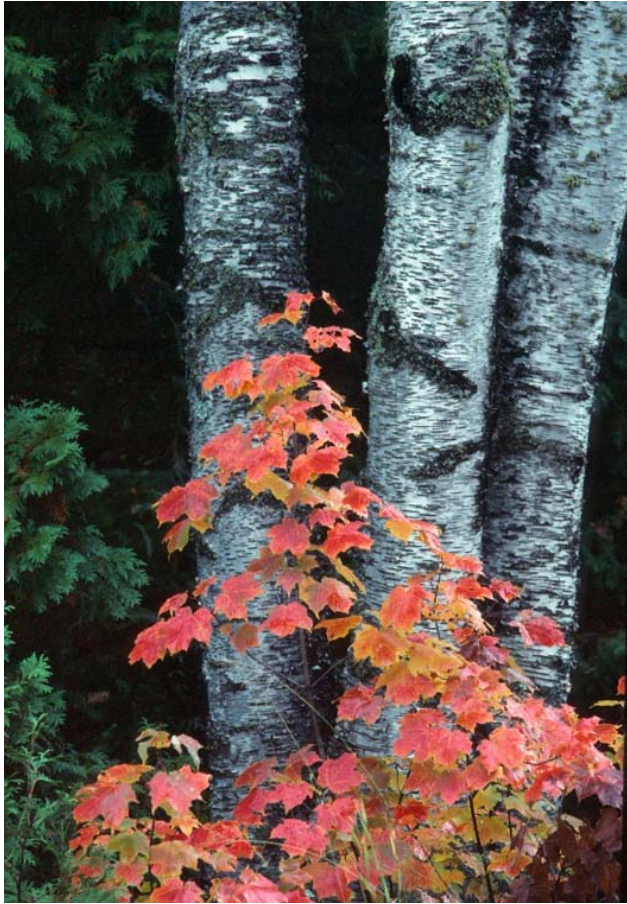
A polarizer was generally used to eliminate reflections from wet foliage. Carefully watch through the viewfinder as you rotate the polarizer – at times too much polarization takes the edge off the leaves and all that's left is a mush of color. On overcast days or shooting in the shade on a sunny day an 81A or 81B filter helps eliminate the excess blue the film records. Go for the f-stop as determined by the camera's preview button and let the shutter speed fall where it will. Using a silver/gold reflector will soften shadows and put a bit of life into the shot. Reduce contrast on a sunny day with a diffuser – held too far back it simply casts a shadow – brought in very close to the subject and it becomes an all encompassing beautiful light source. Many times I'm forced to shoot in the early morning or late evening during the transition time when the sun quiets the day wind and before the evening breeze sets in. Take advantage of the morning fog for its mood and sense of depth.

The joy doesn't end here. Later, when the slides are laid out on the light table you relive those moments all over again. Finally when assembled into a slide show and shared with folks who don't have the opportunities or vision you do, it is sometimes a better feeling than a check in the mail.

Hope you enjoyed your time in our northern forest.



Paper Birch



Mountain Maple and Paper Birch



Hungry Jack Lake

Field Notes **“Getting to Know Your Subject”**

By John Pennoyer

One of the greatest benefits of being involved in nature photography is not only photographing all of nature's wonders, but to be able to learn about your subjects. I have never been one to photograph a pretty “white” mushroom or a pretty “pink” flower, for me it is important to know as much information as possible about a particular subject. Not only will this information be helpful when putting on a program, but can improve your photography. Your “white” mushrooms happen to be called “Oyster” mushrooms, the “pink” flower turns out to be a very rare orchid called “Arethusa”. You find out that “Oyster” mushrooms generally grow in clusters on decaying logs and stumps especially in coniferous forests. They can also be a light gray or yellow gray color. Oyster mushrooms come from the “Pleurotus” genus. The *Arethusa bulbosa* orchid has a common name of “Dragon’s Mouth” they are listed as infrequent in the northeast part of the state, so you have discovered a relative rare orchid in Minnesota. You must be standing in a bog surrounded by sphagnum moss their preferred habitat, probably around the end of June.

All of the information that you gather about your photography subjects will help you to look for them in new areas. Once you can identify their habitat and the time of year, it will be second nature for a serious photographer to keep an eye out for a particular subject if you happen to be in that habitat. This information may also make you want to photograph various stages of the plant, not just the peak bloom. So not only are you a nature photographer, but becoming more scientific with your subjects. You will want to use other lenses, besides your macro for that beautiful close-up, such as a wide angle to help show the habitat that this plant grows in.

So what helps us find all of this information?

Field guides: I would be lost without my field guides; my office has field guides for mushrooms, birds, orchids, flowers, insects, butterfly’s etc. In most cases I have more than one guide for the same species or subject. I prefer field guides that show actual photographs of your subject, instead of artist’s drawings. I want my field guide to give information on genus name, habitat, where they grow, what they eat, nesting info, mating info, leaf size, or any type of information that will help to identify and locate subjects.

Internet: More and more I use this medium to find information. I just photographed a Sphinx moth, my first image of this species, which was taken in my yard. I knew that it was a Sphinx moth and typed in “Sphinx Moth” in Google and was surprised that there are many species of

sphinx moths and found out that mine was a “White-lined” Sphinx moth.

The experts: Talk to those who know, just be sure they are knowledgeable about the subject. We have many experts in our club. I send a small jpeg file to see if they can help me identify a particular subject. Talk to a naturalist at state parks, wildlife refuges etc., they may be able to help you identify or locate a particular subject.

Due to my nature photography I am more versed in the natural world than I thought I would ever be. I was photographing Stemless Lady’s slippers (Pink Lady’s slipper). I found a white phase Stemless plant, but after reading my Field Guide I thought that possibly it might be an albino so I e-mailed a small jpeg file to Bob Djustrom of the SNA. He also thought that it might be an albino and forwarded my image to Orchid expert Welby Smith. I have not heard the final results. It sure is fun to learn about the beautiful natural world that we live in.



Aretusa Orchid



White-phase Stemless

Good Shooting

Outdoor and Digital Photo Seminar

By Don Nadreau

On November 5th and 6th I attended a photo seminar in Minneapolis that featured Jim Brandenburg and Rick Sammon as the speakers. It was an excellent seminar and a good way to get tips and information, get excited about photography and interact with others who share your passion for photography. We had about eight to ten MNPC members and about three hundred participants in total.

Jim Brandenburg handled the seminar on Saturday. He went through a discussion of his career; including his start as a boy in southwestern Minnesota, his work at a newspaper in that area, his career with National Geographic, and his current efforts with his two galleries. Jim’s presentation was mostly about what inspires him and was more spiritually focused. His slides and digital images were amazing. Jim has gone exclusively to digital and was one of the first to do so. Many of the area’s that Jim enjoys shooting are very accessible to us, including the BWCA around Ely and the prairie areas in southwestern Minnesota (primarily Blue Mounds State Park).

Rick Sammon was focused more on the technical aspects of digital photography and spent a considerable amount of time giving tips and techniques for using Photoshop. He did however spend time discussing his photographs and how he gets the shots. He is more of a people and travel photographer. One of the most interesting discussions concerned the capability of the human eye versus digital, film and slides. Rick stated that the eye can see a range of 11 stops of light, film 7 stops, and slides 3 stops. He feels that digital capture and processing using Photoshop can probably get more than 11 stops in an image. This is one of the reasons he has gone totally digital. Rick is also a strong advocate for the use of RAW rather than JPEG in his digital captures. He gave many convincing arguments for the use of RAW, including the flexibility of processing the image and the greater amount of detail that RAW images retain.

Both gentlemen were high energy and fun to listen to. They covered two of the aspects of a seminar that I look for, inspiration and technical knowledge. In addition to the presenters, the seminar had tables for sponsors such as Canon, ACDSEE, ColorVision, Bogen, Paintshop, and whcc (a local digital lab).

I would highly recommend this and other seminars that periodically come to Minneapolis, St. Paul. They are well worth the time and cost.

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Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month, September through May

6:15 PM - Set-up and Social Time
6:45 PM - Announcements and Business
7:00 PM - Program
8:00 PM - Nature Salon (Competition and Judge's Comments).

Meetings are held at:
Visitor Center, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge,
3815 East 80th Street
Bloomington, MN

November 16th Presentation

John Zeiss, will talk about the use of fourth Generation Designs equipment and photography.

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Judging Workshop

Finally!! We have a place to hold the judging workshop.

Place: REI Store Bloomington
Dates: Wednesday evenings: January 25th---February 22nd--March 22nd
Time: 6:30 PM---9:00 PM
Cost: "FREE"

There will be a sign up sheet at the meeting. The class size will be limited to 25.