



Field Notes

“The Deer Stand”

By John Pennoyer

As I sat on my little camping stool eating my peanut butter and jelly sandwich, I heard a noise right next to me and as I slowly looked over my shoulder sure enough there was a little whitetail doe fawn about 8 feet from me. She was intently trying to figure out what this strange figure was doing in her wood lot. At first I thought she wanted a bite of my sandwich, but as I moved she snorted and jumped a few feet away intently looking at me. I was able to get my 500mm lens focused and fired off a few head shots of her intense stare. After 4 hours of sitting in the cold, I was able to capture my first whitetail images of the day.

There is no better time to be in the woods than on a cold and frosty November day and on this morning the temperature had dipped down to 8 degrees - the coldest of the fall so far. Late October and the month of November is always a special time for me. The fall colors are past their peak, most of the migrating birds have already flown south, and it is usually too early for winter photography. Many photographers figure this is a real slow time for photography but for me it is not. This is the time that I actively pursue the state mammal of Minnesota, the Whitetail deer. With well over one million whitetails in Minnesota the opportunities abound. My preference to photographing whitetails is in their own living room. I enjoy setting up my blind, which is nothing more than camo netting with myself and camera equipment completely covered. My blind is always set-up in a location based on their movement. This is done by searching the area for deer trails, droppings, buck rubs, scrapes, etc. I have special permission from a couple of park reserves that allow me to be off trail to photograph, in turn I make large prints for them to use in their visitor centers. I refer to these deer as semi-wild because they are used to people but like all whitetails they will always have their wild nature. Both of these parks have either a shotgun hunting season or a controlled shooting to thin the deer herd. Of course this has made for some very difficult photography. We could photograph does and fawns almost in our back yards, but the reason that I use my system is because I am always after the trophy class Whitetail Buck. Not only do I get an adrenaline rush when I spot one of these monster bucks, but they are also very marketable. The hunting season, however, has made this a very difficult pursuit. Not only are they fewer but they are also much more cautious. I know my trophy is out there and I have visually seen him from a distance as his sign is everywhere.

It is November 20th and so far I have spent 65 to 70 hours in my blind and taken about 30 images of small bucks, does and fawns. I figure there are another 10 days or so for me to capture my trophy. So what do I do to pass the time while sitting in my little hideaway? Why not throw some sunflower seeds on a fallen log or stump and very quickly the birds will discover this free tray of “hors de oeuvres”. Curious foxes and squirrels will come by to check out this stranger in the woods. Last week I even had a coyote come within 15 feet of me, but by the time I turned around to check out the movement he was gone. Whitetails are very easy to meter, they are neutral gray, or as I would say EV 0. The photographer only needs to consider how the habitat will affect their exposure. Some of the reasons that I like to photograph whitetails at this time of year are that the entire deer family will be in peak condition, they will probably be moving at most times of the day, the foliage is now gone which makes it much easier to spot them, and the photographer has a better chance to catch some behavior.

Most photographers may not want to spend the amount of time or the effort to go after whitetails that I do and that is understandable. So where can a photographer go to possibly capture a trophy class buck? There are many state parks that have an abundance of whitetails. However, the photographer needs to be careful as many of them now have hunting by permit. My favorite is Kathio State Park which has plenty of whitetails and during the November rut you will see trophy class whitetails from your vehicle. Also Goose Island State Park in Wisconsin is also good. Visit your local park and there will probably be whitetails willing to look into your lens. What makes whitetail photography difficult is the habitat they live in. Twigs, branches etc. seem to find their way into the most unfortunate spot on an image. But careful composition and exposure can still reward the photographer with a great image of our state mammal.

For me I thoroughly enjoy my late fall Whitetail hunts by sitting in my deer stand with my thoughts of a Trophy Class Whitetail buck filling the frame. And yes PB and J sandwiches are one of my favorites!

Good Shooting!



Chickadee by John Pennoyer



Fawn Visitor by John Pennoyer

Camouflage in Nature

By
Ron Winch

Your heart races a little faster, and your palms begin to sweat. Your best slide of the evening is on the screen. You agonize through ten seconds of silence – waiting for the score. “Seven” the judge calls out and then goes on to elaborate. “Good exposure, nice composition, good subject placement, but the subject doesn’t stand out from the background. Next.”

“That should have been a nine – maybe a ten,” you say to yourself. Perhaps the subject didn’t stand out from the background, but how many centuries has it taken to evolve this camouflage? The body form lends itself to the environment, the colorization fits superbly and the spots help breakup the body outline and give depth to the animal – making it a natural part of the environment. What more could you ask for?

The idea of camouflage is not new to nature. It has been evolving since the beginning of time and is likely responsible for the survival of many species. The military picked up on this as evidenced in battlefield clothing and equipment. Hunters take great advantage of camo clothing for concealment. Even urban planners consider it in more subtle ways when siting a building into the environment.

If we look-up the word camouflage in the dictionary, we find it defined as concealment by disguise. The disguise may be of such a nature as to actually simulate the immediate background or merely to break up the outline or reduce the solid shape of the object camouflaged.

Most wild creatures live in constant danger from enemies or are themselves ever on the alert for prospective prey. It is not surprising to find animals of all sorts exhibiting countless types, degrees and variations of concealing adaptations. One of the fundamental factors in the lives of wild creatures is the constant struggle between species, generally referred to as the struggle for existence.

The immediate surroundings in which animals are found are quite variable as to vegetation, amount of light, color and type of earth. Consequently the patterns needed for effective concealment are equally diverse. Common to animals in all these backgrounds, regardless of their color pattern, is to become relatively invisible by losing its appearance of being a solid object. Light falling on an animal generally comes from above; consequently, the back is in stronger light while the sides and underbelly receive much less light. Color patterns have evolved with darker tops and lighter undersides so not to make an animal appear so solid.

Counter-shading is a basic principal of animal coloration and is of wide occurrence in nature. Many and quite unrelated groups of animals – mammals, birds, reptiles and fishes - in all parts of the world show it. Add to this color resemblance, the general similarity in appearance between some animals and their surroundings, and the effects of camouflage are greatly increased. Examples might include the polar bear, snowshoe hare, arctic fox and shorebirds in general. This accounts for so many green birds, tree snakes, tree frogs and arboreal insects in the forested parts of the world, while on the forest floor we find large numbers of brownish critters. The salt and pepper mottling of shorebirds is a given on shorelines and costal areas.

Even with better than average color resemblance and some counter-shading an animal is often recognized by its easily identifiable contours. For effective concealment, it is essential that the telltale appearance of form be destroyed. Here a combination of color and pattern tends to break-up the visible outline of the animal.

Camouflage in nature is widespread in all parts of the world and within all groups of animals. It may be brought about by coloration alone, by form alone or by any combination of color and morphological characteristics.

Considering the above information, look back at your score of “seven”. You did the photo; you decided it was a keeper; you did the research to learn everything possible about the capture and you decided it was worthy of entry. You should be the expert on your photo. You probably entered the slide to get another opinion or just in hopes of a high score? The judge had viewed the slide for only ten seconds and was asked to score and comment on it – based on his or her background and experience. Consider that in judges we find photographer/naturalists or naturalist/photographers and rarely someone who is equally versed in both. Learn from another viewpoint.

Let us – all of us – be aware of the talent we have, being able to “see” and capture vignettes of the natural world and the even greater joy of sharing and education others.



Ron Winch



Ron Winch

November Salon Results

8

Dewy Columbine	Dave Ellenbecker
Sunrise Smyrna Beach, Florida	Joe Miller
Yellow headed Blackbird	John Jenkins
Dwarf Fireweed	Bill Handsaker
Water and Ice	Michael Schup
Squirrel on the move	Joe Miller
Monarch #2	Tom Samuelson
Trumpeter Swan	Jim Aronson
Fall Color	Lyle Bergman
Mistletoe Creek	John Pennoyer
Gray Owl	Dave Perez
Lunch	Dave Vichich
Feather	Duane Wraalstad
Reflection	Rod Blesener
Landing	Jeff Morgan
Sky Rat	Dave Vichich
Magnolia 4	Jon Wilbrecht

9

Florida Damselfly	Jeff Hahn
Morning Glow	Jim Aronson
Blue Heron #2	Eric Baker
Northern Pearly Eye	Jeff Hahn
Hidden Falls	Rod Blesener
Hummer	Ron Lahr
Anhinga Call	Virginia Sanderson
Pink Habitat	John Pennoyer
Bee Flower	Dave Perez

10

Dragonfly	Lil Polley
Bee	Virginia Sanderson
Two Egrets	Wayne Sanderson
Egret Dip	Wayne Sanderson

Nature Photo Times

Published Sept.-May by the
Minnesota Nature Photography Club
www.minnesotanature.org

Editor: Don Nadreau, 763-377-4589,
dnadreau@usfamily.net
124 Ardmore Dr.
Golden Valley, MN 55422

President: Mariann Cyr 651-636-3738
mcyr@mmm.com
Vice Pres.: Larry Duke
lduke1601@earthlink.net
Treasurer: Jim Duncan 651-459-3558
jduncan001@comcast.net
Secretary - Rod Blesener 952.465.3420
rblesener@fishbowlsolutions.com

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

December 21, 2005 Meeting

The December meeting will be devoted to the year end competition and the annual Christmas Party, see you there and remember to bring some goodies to share!!

FIRST CLASS MAIL

