



# Nature Photo Times

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## Field Notes

### “Are Tripods Becoming Obsolete?”

By John Pennoyer

As I pulled into the parking area at Roscoe Prairie this past summer, my eyes immediately scanned the eastern horizon. It was about an hour before sunrise and with no wind and a thin layer of clouds I was expecting to see an absolute perfect sunrise. You can only imagine my amazement when after putting on my photo pack and reaching into the back of the vehicle for my tripod I discovered that I had accidentally left it at home. For the type of photography I do it is essential that I have a tripod especially when doing landscapes and close-ups of flowers. I had just received my new 12-24mm wide angle lens and I was anxious to put it to the test. I was not about to travel the 60 miles back home so I had to improvise to take my photos. Of course the sunrise was better than I expected and I took many images. It was necessary for me to really tuck my arms in tight and when possible try to support my camera by leaning against a tree or sitting and putting my elbows on my knees for additional support. It was also critical that I paid special attention to keep the camera level, always checking my bubble level and the grid screen in the camera. Shooting at shutter speeds of about 1/15 to 1/30 second I took many images and most of them were as good as if I did use a tripod.

In November I attended a week-end seminar presented by two different photographers. These were two very well known professional photographers and both of them on numerous occasions kept mentioning that they very rarely use tripods. Probably in most cases they are using lens with image stabilization, and one of the photographers specializes in photographing people but he also does other types of

photography. Now don't get me wrong their work speaks for itself, but that is not saying that I can't disagree with them. I would agree that when doing close in portraits of strangers a tripod would be a huge handicap. And yes I also have a Vibration Reduction lens and many times I use that hand held and have gotten some very sharp images. It is so much easier to chase butterflies with just a camera and lens then to have to worry about a tripod. But when I use that lens for a flower or landscape image the VR is turned off and it is mounted on a tripod.

In the type of photography that I do, I still find a tripod a very essential tool for me to use. It is so much easier for me to set up for my composition and get everything level and then lock it down and trigger the shutter with my release cable because in many cases I will be at very slow shutter speeds. On many landscapes the camera may be just a few inches above the ground. I can set the shot up, lock the tripod head and sit up and trip the shutter with my release cable. Just try laying flat on the ground hand-holding your camera and keeping everything level! Usually when I am looking for a landscape image the camera is removed from the tripod and I walk around with the camera and look for my composition or the image that I want to capture. Sometimes after many minutes of looking through the view-finder I will go back get the tripod and set up my shot. Tripods will slow you down, but this is good as it really makes you study your composition and how you want to set-up your shot.

Even though I did get many fine images from Roscoe Prairie the day that I forgot my tripod, the morning would have been a whole lot more pleasant had I had my tripod with me. I came away with many fine images, but I also “deleted” a lot of them.

Yes, I do certainly agree that VR/IS is a great technology for all of us to use. I know that I have captured some great images with this technology but I still find that on much of my photography a tripod is still a very essential tool. Always use technology where appropriate; however there still are times that you may find it necessary to go get the tripod - just don't forget it at home!

Good Shooting

### **“The Color of Snow”**

**By Dale Bohlke**

What great photography snow makes! Snow is unique in at least two aspects: color and brightness. It may seem odd to talk about the color of snow; everyone knows it's white; except your camera. Just look at the blue shadows on your image. Since snow gets its color from the sky the time before sunrise and after sunset give incredible pastel colors that are not possible any other time of the year. Depending on the direction you are shooting the colors can be either warm or cool. The magical hour before sunset makes a hot orange which doesn't fit with our mental image of winter but put that like on the prairie grass or a tree trunk with a blue sky background and the colors sing.

If you don't believe white snow has a variety of colors try this experiment at home. Place a boiled egg in natural light and put a colored piece of paper beside the white egg. Photograph the egg and look at the color of the egg. What color is the egg? Try this with different colors and exposure compensations to see how the color changes. After you are convinced of the colors, go ahead and eat the egg. You could do this same experiment outside in the snow, with or without the egg.

This brings us to the brightness of snow. Your goal as a photographer is to make the snow bright white with detail visible. Snow is white; however,

your camera thinks it is gray, blue, red, or any color of neutral density. This works to your advantage if you set your camera to manual exposure. Take a reading off the side of your dirty car (neutral density) and you will have the proper exposure for snow during the day. During dawn or dusk light spot meter a neutral sky tone. Light can change rapidly so frequently check the exposure. Sometimes I bracket to capture for that unique color I am seeing in my mind. When bracketing the compensation is always at least one stop over neutral, sometimes up to two stops over exposed. If I have to squint my eyes I open 2 stops but usually one stop is sufficient. Remember you want white with detail, not bright white and no detail so you are really slightly under exposing snow to get that detail.

If you are now totally confused go out and find some snow to see for yourself. Your shots will be unique since most shutter bugs are warm and toasty in front of the computer slaving over last summer's images.

### **2005 Image of the Year Winners**

Thanks to John Gregor from ColdSnap Photography for a fine job of judging!!



Botany First Place – John Pennoyer “Pink Habitat”



General First Place – Dave Perez “Dewey Web”



Zoology First Place – Jeff Morgan “Great Blue Heron”



Wildlife Image of the Year – Wayne Sanderson  
“Two Egrets”



Image of the Year – John Pennoyer “Mistletoe Creek”

Check the club website for all the images, including the winners, second place, and honorable mention. Congratulations to the winners and all who entered!!

## Nature Photo Times

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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 80<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bloomington, MN**

### **January 18, 2006 Meeting**

The topic for this meeting is "The Nature International Slides". Hope to see you there.

Salon Judges: John Dykstra and Mike Prokosch

## FIRST CLASS MAIL



### **Of Interest:**

The American Swedish Institute presents an exhibition of over sixty works of art in its Swedish Wildlife Artistry Exhibit, featuring paintings, photographs, wood carvings, and sculpture of wildlife by past and present Swedish artists. The exhibition runs from February 8 to May 14, 2006. The opening reception is Wednesday, February 8, 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.

The American Swedish Institute is located at 2600 Park Ave. Minneapolis, MN 55407. Questions, call (612) 870-3374.