



“A Midnight Feast”

By Ron Winch

It was midnight and the sky had finally cleared, only two hours ago. A full moon shown down on the wintry landscape as moonbeams danced on seven inches of new snow. It was cold – cold enough for the snow to squeak under the snowshoes.

Wait a minute. What is this? Midnight and snowshoeing. Yes! It’s a good thing we don’t have neighbors – they would have wondered about us long ago. Hiking, skiing and snowshoeing on moonlight nights has been a part of our lives for a good many years.

Tonight we’re out to enjoy the crisp, cold January night, and maybe, just maybe hear some of the first courting calls of our resident Great Horned Owls. Courtship in January at ten degrees below zero? Yes and the eggs will be laid 2 months later in late February. That way the young owlets are able to feed on tender prey that are born during normal spring.

The call of the male penetrates the stillness of the night. A few seconds later the soft call of the female drifts in from the tall cottonwoods near the pond. Leaning back on our ski poles we pause to listen to the moonlight duet. Cold nips our cheeks and gloved fingers begin to complain and stiffen. A small price to pay for an experience that few folks will ever enjoy.

Only 300 feet away the owls continue their courtship calling. They pay no attention to us for we have, at other times, approached to within 100 feet of enamored owls and not alarmed them.

Snow squeaks even louder now as feet clad in Steeger mukluks push onward, continuing our moonlight explorations. We discover mouse tracks and tunnels in the new snow and vow to come back tomorrow with cameras. Suddenly its quiet – the owls are silent. And then a SCREAM shatters the stillness of the night. We’ve heard that before – when a fox, owl, or a feral house cat takes a rabbit. We listen, but all is quiet again. Tomorrow we will search the likely spot and see if we can document this happening. As we head for home a pack of coyotes, somewhere to the south, give forth with their serenade to the moon. We listen for a few minutes but the hot chocolate is calling.

The sun is now up and morning chores are finished so we search out the scene of last night’s attack. There in the fresh snow lie the remains of a cottontail rabbit, along with wing prints in the snow. The Great Horned Owls certainly fed well last night.



An Owl’s Supper
By Ron Winch

January Salon Results
Judges: John Dykstra & Mike Prokosch

Photographer	Title	Score
Bertas, Mary Kay	MN Color	8
Cyr, Mariann	Nickel Creek	8
Duncan, Rose	White Pelicans	8
Ellenbecker, Dave	Trillium, Pink Phase	8
Gladitsh, Marilyn	Amanitasin Habitat	8
Gladitsh, Marilyn	Marsh Marigolds #21	8
Hahn, Jeff	Robber Fly	8
Handsaker, Bill	Oregon Coast	8
Lahr, Ron	Carver Reflection	8
LaMere, John	Roadside Bighorn	8
Miller, Joe	Columbine Cluster	8
Pennoyer, John	Ram Liip Curl	8
Samuelson, Tom	MN Dwarf Trout Lily	8
Scholljegerdes, Florence	Frosty Feathers	8
Vichich, Dave	JRTHOEF	8
Vichich, Dave	JSTOTZF	8
Wraalstad, Duane	Showy Lady Slipper	8
Bergman, Lyle	Stark Tree	9
Bergman, Lyle	Afton Sunset	9
Graves, Rick	Badlands Two	9
LaMere, John	Monarch at Blackdog	9
Polley, Lil	Skipper Butterfly	9
Sanderson, Wayne	Tiger	9
Morgan, Jeff	What's going on	10
Morgan, Jeff	Come Dance	10
Pennoyer, John	Lake Superior	10

Field Notes
“Digital Exposure”
By John Pennoyer

My article this month is going to be on exposure, specifically using the digital camera’s histogram for “help” in determining the correct exposure. I also realize many in our club are not shooting digital at least not at this time. But there are enough digital shooters in our club and since my program this month will be on exposure, I thought this would link very well with the February program.

First of all it makes no difference if you are a film or digital shooter because you will always need to get all image details correct during your shoot in the field. Don’t be sloppy with the analogy of “I can fix it later in Photoshop”. I do not necessarily like spending a lot of time on the computer and the more details that are correct in the field, the less computer time I will have.

I will frequently use my camera’s histogram to check my exposure when in the field and will also use the histogram in Photoshop when working on certain images. But all I intend to do with this article is to explain how the histogram can help the photographer. Like anything in photography it is important for the photographer to expose for the most important element in the image.

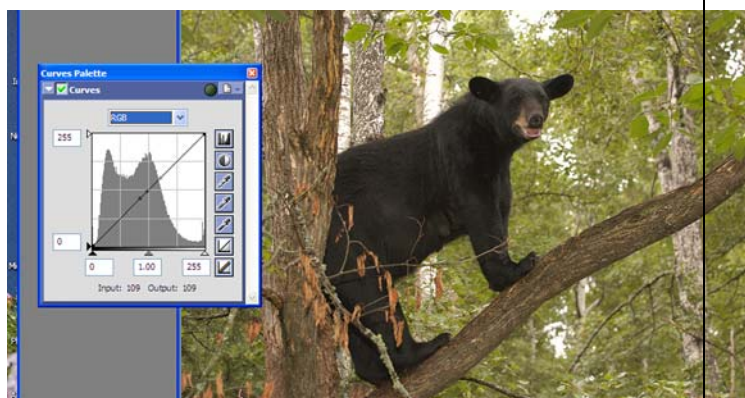
The Histogram

The histogram is divided into 4 sections. Each section is “about” one stop of light. Going horizontal from left to right, commonly a binary count is used from 0 to 255. These numbers represent the tone. 0 is black with no detail, 255 would be white with no detail, and the center of the graph would be neutral tone (18% gray). So as an example when shooting a black bear, I would want the graph for the black bear to be in the column on the left somewhere in the middle of the column to the first line. If I was shooting a Snowy Egret I would want the graph for the egret to be in the column on the right somewhere in the middle or to the immediate line on the left. However if I was shooting a Great Gray Owl, which is very close to neutral tone, I would want my graph to be somewhere in the middle. The vertical movement of the histogram is telling you the number of pixels that are in that tone. The higher the vertical line the greater the number of pixels for that particular tone. For right now let’s not worry about what the binary numbers actually represent as that is too complicated to put in this article for now at least. What is also important about the histogram is any time the graph ramps up on the extreme left (0 count) or the extreme right (255 count), that part of the image is black or white, but with no detail. There is nothing a

photographer can do even in Photoshop to bring back detail (short of patching). There are times on certain parts of the image that there is nothing a photographer can do about this. But if the entire black bear or egret is in this area you have either under-exposed the bear or over-exposed the egret. Let's take a look at a couple of images with their appropriate histogram.

Black Bear Histogram

This black bear lactating sow went up a tree during one of my workshops last summer. Her cubs were also safely in a tree right next to her. A male came through the sanctuary and she took refuge up in the tree. When you look at this histogram she is in the column on the left, which is where I want all of my black bear images to be. The tree and some of the leaves are in the center area for they are very close to neutral. If you look closely you will also see the graph ramping up to 255 on the far right. And I just told you that you want to avoid ramping on either end. But the Black bear was the most important part of this image so it was important to expose for her. The over-exposed white is actually the birch trees but there is nothing a photographer can do - even digital makes it difficult to get detail in both white and black.

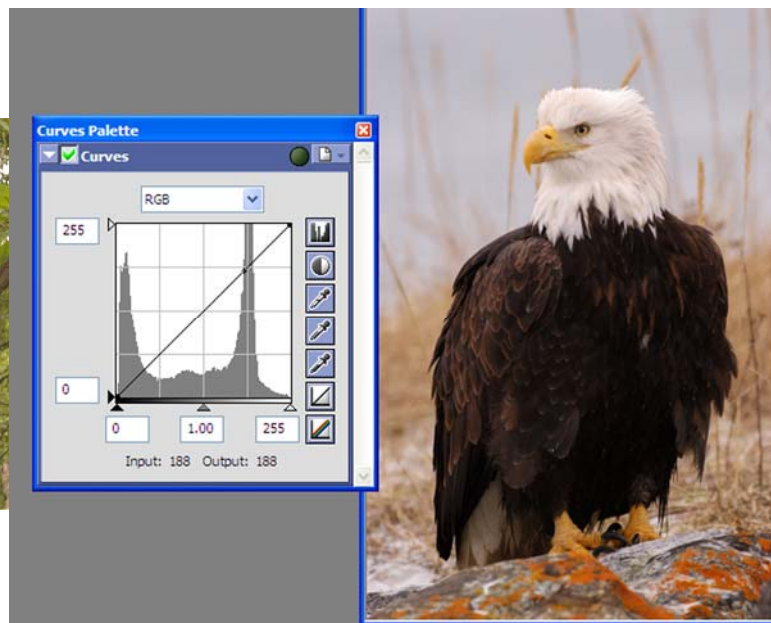


Black Bear
By John Pennoyer

Bald Eagle Histogram

Adult Bald Eagles always will challenge a photographer because they are full of contrast - a very dark body with a white head. Whenever I photograph Bald Eagles I do not want to over-expose the white head. When you look at this histogram you can see the head is right on the line and the body of the eagle is very close to 0, but not quite. For me this is a perfectly exposed adult bald eagle. I can see detail in the white head but still not lose detail in the darker feathers. In the center of the graph would be the rock with grass in the background.

There is really more to the histogram than what this short article is discussing, but this will give you the basics. Does this mean that I never miss an exposure because I use my histogram? Obviously not as we all will miss exposures. But when I do look at the histogram I can almost always get within a 1/3 of a stop where I want to be if I am not right on. We all still have to understand the basics of exposure whether we shoot film or digital. It is just that the histogram is another tool to help the photographer.



Bald Eagle
By John Pennoyer

Good Shooting

Nature Photo Times

Published Sept.-May by the
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www.minnesotanature.org

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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

February 15, 2006 Meeting

John Pennoyer will discuss the importance of exposure and how to get it right. Salon judges will be Jeff Hahn and Bill Handsaker. Hope to see you there!!

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Of Interest:

1. The Crossing Arts Alliance invites you to submit to its jury, your images, for determining photographers to exhibit at Picturing 2006, the sixth annual exhibition of photography sponsored by The Crossing Arts Alliance. Successful photographers will exhibit at Central Lakes College in Brainerd, from April 10 through April 22, 2006. Each photographer will exhibit 5 images at the college and 1 image at a reception the evening of the workshop. Information may be found at their website: www.crossingarts.org.
2. The Galaxie Library is planning a presentation on March 28 at 7 pm. Photographer Darrell Tangen (a teacher of photography at Dakota County Technical College) will present a slide show of his trip to Alaska. I've heard very positive reviews of it. He will also give tips on photography skills. The Galaxie Library is located at 14955 Galaxie Ave. Apple Valley. Their number is 952-891-7045.
3. Applications are available online for the Twin Cities Area Council of Camera Clubs (TCACCC) annual Interclub competition. The link is: <http://cameracouncil.org/2006interclub/2006interclub.pdf>