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Field Notes

“Minnesota Winter Tips

Part 1 - Personal comfort and Equipment”

By John Pennoyer

We are now at the beginning of another Minnesota winter and maybe some of you are already at your winter place in warmer climates, or at least planning a two or three week visit to somewhere warm. Many photographers actually put their camera away in October and don't bring it out until April. It is great to get away for a couple of weeks to the “south” and photograph the shore birds, sunrises/sunsets with palm trees in the foreground etc. I am sure my wife will eventually entice me to join in on this winter break. But I really do enjoy photographing during our “6 months” of winter for many different reasons that are too numerous to list here. So I thought maybe the next two months of Field Notes would provide some tips on winter photography, not a how to article, but just tips that I use for my winter photography. This month will be on personal comfort and equipment and next month on where to take some winter images and some of my techniques.

Many of my friends actually think that I am crazy when I say that I really do enjoy my winter photography. Not only do I enjoy the challenge of photographing winter scenes but also birds and animals during the winter months. However most of my winter photography is at temperatures no more than -15 F. At those temperatures, and dressed properly, I am good for 3-4 hours of standing to photograph maybe Trumpeters in Monticello. Going to any good outdoor store where the personnel there can certainly fit you for the type of activity and the temperatures that you would more than likely be in.

Staying warm (at least as warm as possible)

Head: As much as 80% of heat loss is through the head! So keep it covered! For me personally I can't stand parkas, especially those with furry edges. Every time I turn my head half of my face is covered with fur. So I prefer a fleece (polar tec) type stocking hat. It is good for both cold and wind and at very cold temperatures my ears are nice and toasty warm.

Face/neck: In very cold weather which I would consider at 0 F or colder, both face and neck should be covered. There are some excellent face masks that can be purchased at

sporting good stores; these are commonly worn by cross country skiers etc. But for me, I turn to my “fleece” neck cover. I purchased this at a running store when I was training in the winter time. It covers both my face and neck and I prefer this because it is very easy to pull down off my face and only cover my neck,

Hands: I use two layers, thinner pair of gloves that can be purchased at sporting good stores, for handling camera etc. - be sure to get lint free gloves. When I am standing around or sitting in my winter photo blind I use heavy mittens to put my hands in. Also in extreme cold weather I will use chemical heat packs that can be purchased at most sporting good stores and cost less than a \$1.00. With these in my mittens I just wiggle my fingers and the chemical kicks in to warm up those frosty fingers. (These make great stocking stuffers)

Feet: In today's world of hi tech, there are some amazing products out there to keep us warm. Just pick out a good pair of winter boots for the type of temperatures that you will be out in. I prefer boots with “Thinsulate.” They come in different amounts for various temperatures. I actually have three pairs of winter boots, depending on my activity, standing/sitting in my blind, snow shoeing etc. For my feet I use the two layer sock approach – a lighter pair and heavier wool socks. Just be sure to try on your boots with the socks that you will be wearing. Boots that are too tight will restrict air movement and make your feet colder faster.

Underwear: I love my “Under Armor”. Not sure of the material but, I believe that it is Polyester. Technology is great, “no more itchy under wear”. Again the technology advances in this area has been phenomenal, just go to a good outdoor store and the store personnel should be able to help you. In my opinion good winter underwear is the number one defense on staying dry and turning back the numbing cold.

Photo Equipment

Camera/lenses: There is no reason to “winterize” today's modern SLR's, they can handle the cold. However batteries are a different story. Cold weather will reduce the capacity dramatically of even a fully charged battery. You will not get the same number of images at 0 F that you would at 70 F. So always have fully charged spare batteries and keep them warm in an inner pocket. One way to increase battery life is to turn off the LCD automatic display and look at it only when you feel it is necessary. Always be careful of switching lenses in the winter

because if it is snowing or even a little windy it will carry a few snow flakes with it.

Condensation/moisture: If it is snowing or the dreaded January rain, keep your camera and lens covered. A garbage bag with a rubber band around the lens works excellent, or use a water proof cover that can be purchased at camera stores which is what I use. Bringing photo equipment from a cold to warm temperature will cause condensation to form on lenses and bodies. What I do to reduce this problem, is I will remove batteries and flash cards while equipment is outside. (This allows me to charge batteries, download images). If I am going to shoot again the next day, my equipment usually stays in the car, unless it is going to get extremely cold. Or if I am at a motel, I will bring photo pack in the room and try to put it in the coldest part of the room. (The type of motels that I stay at this is usually not a problem!) If I am done shooting the photo pack stays in the laundry room and I don't open it for at least 24 hours. The gradual warming will reduce any condensation problem. My photo pack is a Lowe Pro which is very well sealed. If your pack is not sealed well, like my old back pack, I used a large garbage bag and covered the entire pack and sealed it with a twisty. That seemed to work for me for many years, for the moisture collects on the garbage bag and not your equipment.

Tripods: Aluminum tripod legs will suck the heat right out of your fingers, mittens or no mittens. For years I used pipe insulation on the legs and this worked excellently. Or you can purchase leg wraps from many of the photo stores. Carbon fiber tripods legs do not get nearly as cold and after many years of winter shooting with my CF tripod, I feel no reason to use any insulation. But I know others still do.

Breath: I would like to say that when photographing during the winter that you should not breathe. But unfortunately your winter photography would not last very long. But on more than one occasion my breath has fogged over the viewfinder or shooting digital the LCD screen covered with a layer of ice! So that is just something the winter photographer has to be careful of.



Winter Photo Blind

By John Pennoyer



Rooster Pheasant

By John Pennoyer

Next month the article will be on actually photographing in the winter - where do I go, what do I look for, etc.

Good Shooting

PS: If you have any winter photo tips whether on clothing, where to go, photo technique, etc, why not shoot Don (our Editor) an e-mail and maybe he can start a "Winter Photo Tip" column.

"December 21, 2006"

By Ron Winch

The seconds are ticking away toward that unheralded event that will occur at 6:22 PM – winter solstice! Simply put, the sun will be at 90 degrees to the earth's surface at the tropic of Capricorn, 23.5 degrees south of the equator, and winter officially begins in the northern hemisphere. For us living at 45 degrees north, the sun will climb only 22 degrees above the horizon.

Folks in the southern hemisphere will experience the longest day of the year while we experience the longest night of the year. It's the beginning of winter according to the calendar. Snow showers will make the earth clean and pristine again, and falling temperatures will pose the age old question for the two-legged, the four legged and the winged creatures alike – Do we hibernate, migrate or tolerate?

As for the two-legged, a few will hibernate in cozy weatherized homes or apartments. Some will definitely migrate to the sunny climes of Florida or Arizona. And those who choose to tolerate will have a sparkling winter wonderland to photograph and enjoy. Towering cottonwoods and laser red winterberries beg to be photographed in the warm light of sunrise. Chickadees, nuthatches, blue jays and cardinals will visit your feeders and promise spectacular photos – and you might even

photograph from the comfort of your home while listening to Christmas music.

Capturing the world when it is wearing a mantle of fresh snow is a rewarding experience for any nature photographer. It could be Yellowstone, Lake Superior or your own backyard. You'll always find subjects like frost patterns on windows and evergreen branches heavily laden with new fallen snow. Streams and waterfalls are favorites and offer a plethora of photo ops. The metro area is fortunate to have a good variety of picturesque streams and water falls within easy reach of most folks. You might like to explore Minnehaha Creek and the falls at the south edge of Hastings. Then there is Brown's creek near Stillwater – one of the few remaining trout streams in the metro area. A bit farther north discover the Mill Stream in Marine-on-St. Croix, and across the river you'll find dancing cascades and a twenty foot waterfall in Osceola, Wisconsin.

The greatest winter photo ops in the world are worthless if you can't stay warm and comfortable. The adrenaline flow created by a momentary high of an exciting shoot does wonders in keeping you warm, but only for a short time. It is far better to depend on several layers of fleece and a good windbreaker. If your body thermostat must work overtime to keep you warm, you might consider a quality down jacket.

Warm and windproof headgear is essential! It is estimated that more than 70% of our winter heat loss is from our head and neck. Hands and feet, being so far from our furnace, are always a problem to keep warm. Some of the warmest Pac boots are rated to 100 degrees below zero. Look for brands like Sorrel, La Crosse, or Steeger Mukluks. Fingers are the biggest problem since we are handling a cold tripod or camera. Light weight windproof Thinsulate gloves with a chemical hand warmer in the palm are the answer.

NEVER attempt to blow a spot of dust or a snowflake off your lens or viewfinder. Instant ice! Carry extra batteries, preferably in an inner pocket, to pop in when your firing rate slows down.

At the end of the day, slip your camera gear into a plastic bag – squeeze the air out before bringing it inside. Moisture will condense on the outside of the plastic bag – not on your camera.

Being good Minnesotans, most of you probably have good winter gear and know how to take proper care of yourself and your photo gear. For those of you who don't, I hope this serves as a basic guide to greater enjoyment of winter photography.

Till next time – Happy Holidays - and may you find in your stocking hung by the fire a photo trip to an exotic location of your dreams.

Upcoming Photoshop Class

We are finalizing the Photoshop classes. They will be held on a Saturday morning. Tentative dates are January 13, January 27, February 10, February 24, and March 10. Full details and description and sign up sheet will be sent soon. If you have any interest in attending, please contact Mariann Cyr (phone and email on last page of this letter).

Holiday Party at Next Meeting

Remember to bring a food item to the next meeting for our annual holiday feast. It's always a good time and the food is great!!

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

My juice camera, get your own!



Standing on the corner of Nicollet and Grant in Minneapolis, near the White Castle, you could find three or four of us kids trying to sell the old "Minneapolis Times". "... HEY, Whatda' ya read, whatda' ya read?... " or "... HEY, you got the TIMES, anybody got the TIMES?... " You didn't want them to hear the "s".

So what do you read today? There is so much information out there; it's hard to find the time to turn pages. There's; Outdoor Photographer, Nature Photographer, Nature's Best, Popular Photography & Imaging, (isn't that nice?) PDN, PCPhoto, Digital PhotoPro, Camera, American Photo and many, many more. Just stop at the big Barnes

&Noble, Borders, or your local used bookseller. And now in this computer age all you have to do is; log on, log in, download, get connected, open email, go to the Forum, (beam me up Scotty) and just find the time. I've bookmarked 37 sites, just relating to photography, myself. Camerataalk.org, mnpc.org, creativephotography.org, cameraworld.com, sites or blogs; which just leads to more time in front of this computer.

And today, I read an article in a digital magazine that talked about the cost of shooting film getting more expensive. I can tell you that it sure is. Mailers, which I never liked, have doubled and local labs are now about \$10.00 a roll for 35mm. And medium format is following, both in cost and processing. Any one seen a Bronica lately?

Digital has forced its way into this field, just as "Super 8" did in the sixties, which killed 8mm and itself. And now if the amateur market in digital starts to decline as is expected, because of household saturation, by the end of the decade. Where will we be standing? It's the amateur that feeds the R&D in this business. We use to say, "... thank God for the amateur, we could never afford this new "F" whatever, without the amateurs ..."

What can the photographers like us SLR or D-SLR expect to see in the future? I don't think that the cost for the Pro level D-SLR is coming down any time soon. Look how long computers held their prices. My first Mac 1984 was \$4000. My first D-SLR 1990 was \$4000. The next D-SLR is going to cost me another \$4000.

A new film camera will cost me \$1600. If I go for it. An old F4, film friend, is worth \$450, my old D1, digital is worth \$350.

I've got to find a corner and think this out.

November Salon Results
Judges: Tom Samuelson and Jim Aronson

Score of 8:

Ellenbecker, Dave	Showy Lady-Slipper	
	Group #6	
Ellenbecker, Dave	Autumn Veins	
Galambos, Ted	Wind Cave N.P.	
Gladitsch, Marilyn	Trout Lilies #31	
Gladitsch, Marilyn	Sulfur Polypores	
Jenkins, John	Cattle Egret-Breeding	W
	Plumage	
Nelson, Vern	Male House Sparrow	W
Scholljegerdes, Florence	Yellow Lichen	
Scholljegerdes, Florence	Seeds waiting for the	
	Wind	
Cyr, Mariann	In A Row	
Eckman, Karen	Messy Eater	W
Goossens-Bryan, Betty	Wood Duck Family1	W
Graves, Rick	Pheasant	W
Mattison, Drew	Sunset	
McDonough, Jean	Long eared Owl	
Miller, Joe	Morraine Park	
Nadreau, Don	Bryce Sun Rise	
Polley, Lil	Sparring Bucks	W
Polley, Lil	Moose	W
Schultz, Alan	Hidden Doe	W
Schultz, Alan	Rosy Finch	W
Vichich, Dave	Arches	
Vichich, Dave	buffalo	

Score of 9:

Baker, Eric	Great Grey Owl 3	
Baker, Eric	Pelican w/fish	
Hahn, Jeff	Lubber Close-up	W
Hahn, Jeff	Blister Beetle	W
	Monarch Butterfly on	
Zosel, David	flower	W
Zosel, David	Honeybee on Sedum	W
Fleury, Cynthia	Cascade Falls	
Hoyt, David	Trumpeter swans	W
Lahr, Ron	droplets	
Morgan, Jeff	Light Sanck	W
Pennoyer, John	Bald Eagle Pair	W
Pennoyer, John	Prairie Sunrise	
Wilbrecht, Jon	Cougar	

Score of 10:

Nelson, Vern	Female Downy	W
Cyr, Mariann	Albatross Soaring	W
Fleury, Cynthia	Cascade River	
Goossens-Bryan, Betty	Monarch 2	W
Handsaker, Bill	The Wave	
Miller, Joe	Jones Pass	
Morgan, Jeff	Nest Building	W
Perez, Dave	gull close-up	

Note: You must let us know if you capture is wildlife, it appears some on this list are but were not coded with the "W" when submitted. The rules and procedures are listed on the club website.

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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

December 20, 2006 Meeting

December's Program:

The annual year end competition for best photos judged by Mark Lissick. Mark is a Minnesota-based, freelance nature photographer whose images have won numerous awards from organizations such as Nature's Best Photography and the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA). His images and articles have appeared in a variety of publications including *National Geographic Traveler*, *Audubon*, *Aer Lingus Airlines*, *The Nature Conservancy*, *Faite* (Ireland Tourist Board), *Ranger Rick*, and *Smithsonian Magazine* in addition to a number of books, newspapers and calendars. Along with producing fine art prints, he teaches field-based photography workshops, online courses, and leads instructional-based photo adventures world-wide. For more information about Mark Lissick visit www.wildlightnaturephotography.com.

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