



Nature Photo Times

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Tundra Swans

By Ron Winch

Glowing red in the light of the setting sun, her large white breast surges with every heartbeat. Shimmering water droplets clinging to her body appear as thousands of tiny crimson jewels. I am looking almost straight up now – through a 600 mm lens. Pressing the shutter release, I fully expect to hear the motor drive rattle off a series of exposures. I hear only a groan as big black letters appear on the viewfinder screen: END. D____!

The focus was sharp, the framing was great, the angle was superb and the lighting would be hard to duplicate. Well aware that such things happen, I stepped back from the camera and observed the broader view. Five Tundra swans in tight formation, appearing rosy-red against the blue-purple sky crossed the zenith and became smaller and smaller as they headed for the Mississippi River.

Maybe it is for the best that I missed the shot. Memories grow richer with each passing day whereas that image on film becomes finite; the image would still be the same after years – no matter how exciting it appeared at the moment of capture. What can I say? The light was fading fast and a northeast wind has been kicking up for the past few hours. My ungloved fingers are slow to function in the 30 degree temperature. Maybe next year.

Cuddling a cup of hot tea in my cold hands, I reflect back on the day. I arrived at Rieck's lake just north of Alma, Wisconsin – less than 100 miles from the twin cities – at 2 p.m. this afternoon. Conditions were ideal, but the hint of an impending storm agitated the birds. Four to five hundred Tundra Swans were tipping-up the shallow lake, feeding on the bottom vegetation. Scattered among the swans were mallards, wood ducks, teal and ring-necked ducks. Hundreds of Canada Geese also used the lake to rest and feed before moving on. They will follow the Mississippi to their wintering grounds. Swans will veer east and eventually spend the winter on Chesapeake Bay.

An eagle perched on an aspen snag turns an eye toward the sky as another eagle rides the thermals. Nuthatches work the rough bark of the oaks, gleaning their food supply. Blue jays uncover acorns from under the leaf litter and squirrel them away in their secret hiding places – to be enjoyed at a later date. Ever present chickadees garner seeds from vegetation along the shore. On the observation stand visitors chat with the volunteer about wildlife – especially the swans. Everyone has binoculars and still most folks enjoy the sporting scopes provided by the volunteers.

Just maybe, if we continue to encourage people to observe, feed and photograph wildlife the world will be a better place for all.

Camera gear packed away, fingers warmed and the down jacket tossed into the back seat, I head north to Stillwater with wonderful memories and a few good photos and a great afternoon.

Field Notes

Minnesota Winter Tips

Part 2 - "What to shoot in winter"

By John Pennoyer

Snow, ice, cold, and sun that is what we need for a good old fashioned Minnesota winter! Those are the conditions that I like to have to do my winter photography. The sun will put a sparkle in the snow, and give some interesting shadows for the photographer to work with. Not only will ice give some interesting compositions but also can help to add some color to a winter scene. I love the cold and feel relatively comfortable at -15 F as long as the wind stays calm. Plus the cold can add atmospheric type conditions to open water.

There are many Minnesotans that do not enjoy our lovely Minnesota winters. Unfortunately the reason they do not enjoy winter is because they stay inside by the fire with a cup of hot chocolate. So the number one rule to enjoy a Minnesota winter is "get outside". By that I mean let's grab that camera gear and I will give some tips that I look for when photographing subjects from December through March.

Birds and Animals

This is the easy one. Backyard type birds will come to bird feeders much easier in the winter than at any other time of the year. So if you are already feeding birds just keep it up in the winter and take your pictures. But I want to talk about birds but not in your back yard. For the last few years I have used a double bean bag on my vehicle window for photographing birds and animals. My bean bag is always filled with bird seed to support my camera. My bean bag is "always" in my vehicle whether I intend to use it or not. Many times during the winter I have taken some seeds out of my bean bag and laid them on a log or other suitable type perch and gotten some great bird images. Whitetail deer many times will be closer to roads looking for food; just drive around in some state or community parks and a person can get some great whitetail images. Kathio State Park and Goose Island County Park in Wisconsin are two good choices. Get out of the vehicle and snow shoe or hike on some of the trails and you may even get better images. Of course, be sure to walk or snow shoe slowly and keep your eyes peeled for the whitetail or other critters. I just got some great winter pictures of wild turkeys using this method a couple of weeks ago. Always be aware that winter is a stressful time for birds and animals. Of course, most of you are aware of the Trumpeters Swans on the Mississippi in Monticello, and Bald Eagles from Red Wing to Wabasha. Both of these are great spots from about Christmas time to the first week of March. Rare bird alerts from the Minnesota Ornithologist Union is updated every Thursday (www.moumn.org) I check it regularly looking for that hawk or owl that might be in our area.

Color

Although I really enjoy trying to be creative with winter landscape images, I also get tired of my winter images being monotone. So I always try to add some type of color to the image. It could just be blue sky, blue water, orange sunrise/sunset, lichen on rocks etc. Adding color during the winter months can be a challenge but is certainly worth the extra effort.

Open Water

No matter how cold it is, a photographer can always find some open water. Fast moving water is very difficult to freeze and will usually stay open in the coldest winters, maybe there is a power plant that keeps the water warmer. Whatever the reason these areas can be a photographer's paradise. Open water many times means waterfowl and other birds will use the area and many times they will tolerate human activity. Open water also gives the photographer points of interest to put in your landscape image. Sun, cold and open water may also result in steam rising off the water. The Trumpeter Swans accompanying this article were shot at -15 F at sunrise. Where there is open water many times there is also ice or icicles to put in your composition. Shooting the sun through a hanging icicle can certainly add interest to a winter image. Better yet a sunrise or sunset on ice or hanging icicles is hard to get but certainly worth the effort.

Sun-Moon-Shadows

For me the best time to shoot the sun and moon is during winter time, especially the full moon (visit my web site on full moons www.impressionsofnature.net). The sun is much lower in the sky during winter time and this can cast some interesting shadows on the snow. A creative photographer may be able to get some great compositions with these shadows. I also like to shoot the sun as it peeks through the forest using the trees to break up the brightness and give a cold feeling to the winter landscape. What is nice about winter is that sunrise/sunset and moonrise/moonset are also at respectable times. A photographer can capture sunset or moonrise and still be able to eat dinner with the family. Unless there is a cloud cover, I almost always try to capture the full moon in winter. I just like the full moon, snow, leafless trees etc. in a winter scene. I usually try to capture the full moon the day before the official full moon and the day of the full moon. The reason is that the moonrise is close to sunset and the light helps in putting a little light on your subject. Even though the day before is not the official full moon, you will never be able to determine that by looking at your image. But I also will shoot the moon when it is dark, this will put a blue cast (white balance set to incandescent or fluorescent will "cool" the image and put in more blue.) I do like this blue cast on the snow and landscape. Again this type of image gives the viewer another perspective of a Minnesota Winter.

Those are just some of my ideas when I shoot during our beautiful Minnesota winters. After you have been out a few times trying to capture images of a Minnesota winter, you can now feel good about sitting around the fire and having that cup of hot chocolate.



"Elm Creek Park" by John Pennoyer



"Deer in snow" By John Pennoyer



Trumpeter Swans by John Pennoyer

Good Shooting

ST. CROIX WATERSHED RESEARCH STATION ANNOUNCES ARTIST/WRITER RESIDENCIES FOR SUMMER 2007

Artist at Pine Needles, a residence program sponsored by the St. Croix Watershed Research Station, seeks applications from artists and writers for summer 2007. The Artist at Pine Needles project invites natural history artists or writers to spend 2 to 4 weeks in residence to immerse themselves in a field experience, gather resource materials, and interact with environmental scientists and the local community.

The St. Croix Watershed Research Station, the field research station of the Science Museum of Minnesota, is located near Marine on St. Croix, Minnesota. The setting for the Artist at Pine Needles project is the James Taylor Dunn Pine Needles Cabin, located just north of the village along the St. Croix River. In 2006, the artists selected were photographers Linda Gammell and Stephanie Torbert and painter Rebecca Silus, all of the Twin Cities area.

Applications for 2007 will be accepted from writers and visual artists who focus on environmental or natural history topics. Participants will have an opportunity to interact with environmental scientists and to create links between their art, the natural world and the sciences. As part of the program, artists will be encouraged to design an outreach project to share their work with the local community. In addition, the residency requires that participants contribute an original work for the benefit of the research station.

Housing and rustic studio space is provided for the artist's choice of a 2, 3, or 4-week residency; up to three residencies will be awarded for the summer of 2007. Application packets are available from the research station or at www.smm.org/SCWRS/pineneedles.php. The application deadline is March 2, 2007. For more information, contact Sharon Mallman at the St. Croix Watershed Research Station, 651-433-5953, extension 13.

Photoshop Classes - Date Changes - Register Again

Sorry to have to do this, but Jeff is not available for two of the dates which were originally set up for the Photoshop classes. I have managed to change the dates, but retain the location at our regular meeting rooms in the Wildlife Refuge for the Saturday morning Photoshop Classes. The Center and room will open at 9:00 am and it will take us a short while to set up the projector and room, so the start time will be about 9:15 am. We have the room until noon so we will start to pack up about 11:45 am, about 2.5 hours.

Nothing else is changing, just the dates. The classes will be projected in CS2 on a Windows machine but most of the things we will be doing can also be done in Photoshop Elements on the MAC.

These sessions will be question driven. Jeff will do his best to help you get to a point where you are comfortable enough to take a well exposed RAW image, have an understandable workflow to get a good color balanced image ready for a Nature salon. There

will be no prepared notes and what we do not finish in one session will be carried over to the next. The later sessions will be defined by questions and requests made at these earlier classes and move towards more advanced techniques.

Class 1 - January 20th - The digital image basics.
(Originally scheduled for January 13th, but now changed to 20th)

HISTOGRAMS! Questions about the digital camera and shooting in digital. Getting images into the computer and setting up Photoshop and Bridge (the preferences, display and defaults). Then how to sort, rate, move, backup and apply settings to one image or groups of images.

Class 2 - January 27th - The digital workflow.

This class will be a walk-through of a good basic Workflow for both RAW and JPG camera images.

Class 3 - February 17th - The digital touch-up and finish.

The third class is open to suggestions but could be removing sensor spots, clone tool, healing brush, resizing, sharpening, shadow - highlight, projectors - printing and color calibration (image output).

Class 4 - March 10th - Layers and Masks.
(Originally scheduled for March 3, but now changed to 10th)

This class could be layers, layer masks and non-destructive editing, and cover the digital split neutral density filter, using filters, adding noise, blur, etc., and black & white conversion.

Class 5 - March 17th - Advanced.

HDR or Pano Stitching or Batch Processing or Recording Actions or ??? You name it!

These are suggestions and Jeff will look for input from the people who attend. He is happy to do both beginner or advanced techniques. It is quite possible we will finish the first three lessons in the first two classes but that depends on how many questions and your understanding of the process.

Cost is \$15 per class, or \$75 for all five. Needs to be paid in advance to me (at Jan 17th meeting or mail to 3955 Glenview Ave, Arden Hills MN 55112). Checks made to Minnesota Nature Photography Club.

Please sign up for classes with Mariann Cyr - mcyr@mmm.com.

PLEASE SEND ME E-MAIL AGAIN, EVEN IF YOU HAVE ALREADY DONE SO. I WANT TO MAKE SURE I HAVE AN ACCURATE COUNT NOW THAT THE DATES HAVE CHANGED.

Direct content questions to Jeff - jeff@elmstudio.com

Mariann

2005-2006 Year-end Competition Results

Title	Photographer	
<u>IMAGE OF THE YEAR</u>		
Lake Superior	John Pennoyer	digital

<u>WILDLIFE IMAGE OF THE YEAR</u>		
What's Going On	Jeff Morgan	digital

<u>General Category - 1ST PLACE</u>		
Sunrise	Drew Mattison	digital

<u>General Category - 2ND PLACE</u>		
Itasca	Joe Miller	digital

<u>General - HONORABLE MENTION</u>		
Zion	Mary Kay Bertas	slide
Prairie Sunrise	John Pennoyer	digital
Lake Itasca	Joe Miller	digital
Single Maple	John Dykstra	digital
Austria Fog	Alan Schulz	digital
Clouds	Ron Lahr	digital
Cascade River	Cynthia Fleury	digital
Clouded Sunrise	Jim Aronson	digital
Afton Sunrise	Lyle Bergman	digital

<u>Zoology Category - 1ST PLACE</u>		
Trumpeter Swan	Nadav Cssto	digital

<u>Zoology Category - 2ND PLACE</u>		
Morning Swans	Dave Vichich	digital

<u>Zoology - HONORABLE MENTION</u>		
Mt. Kilimanjaro	Karen Eckman	digital
Elk Eating	Rick Graves	digital
Hummer	Ron Lahr	digital
Long-eared Owl on Branch	Jean McDonough	digital
Brown Pelican	Jeff Morgan	digital
In a Day's Work	Jeff Morgan	digital
Ram Lip Curl	John Pennoyer	digital
Skipper Butterfly	Lil Polley	digital
Egret 2	Wayne Sanderson	digital
Red Fox 2	Jon Wilbrecht	digital
Monarch 2	Betty Goossens-	
	Bryan	digital
Alligator	Jeff Morgan	digital
Elephant	Wayne Sanderson	digital
Eagle Eyes	Alan Schulz	digital
Eagle Snow	Alan Schulz	digital
Rosy Finch	Alan Schulz	digital
Tree Frog	Virginia Sanderson	digital
Kingfisher	John Pennoyer	digital
Come Dance	Jeff Morgan	digital
American Bitten	Jeff Morgan	digital

Roland Grebe	Mariann Cyr	digital
B & W Deer	Dave Vichich	digital
Mallard	Dave Perez	digital
Great Egret	David Hoyt	digital
Avocet	John Jenkins	slide
Beach Wolf Spider	Jeff Hahn	slide
Monarch Butterfly on flower	David Zosel	slide
Honeybee on Sedum	David Zosel	slide

<u>Botany Category - 1ST PLACE</u>		
Showy Lady Slipper Bud	Jim Aronson	digital

<u>Botany Category - 2ND PLACE</u>		
Fern Fossil	Cynthia Fleury	digital

<u>Botany - HONORABLE MENTION</u>		
Showy Lady Slipper	Duane Wraalstad	digital
Pinecones	Joe Miller	digital
Cactus	Jon Wilbrecht	digital
Stark Tree	Lyle Bergman	digital
Autumn Vines	Dave Ellenbecker	slide
Woodland Habitat	Marilyn Gladitsch	slide

All of the above images can be viewed on the Minnesota Nature Photography website, listed on the last page of this newsletter. The category and overall winners are shown on the next page, enjoy!!

General Category First Place



Botany Category First Place



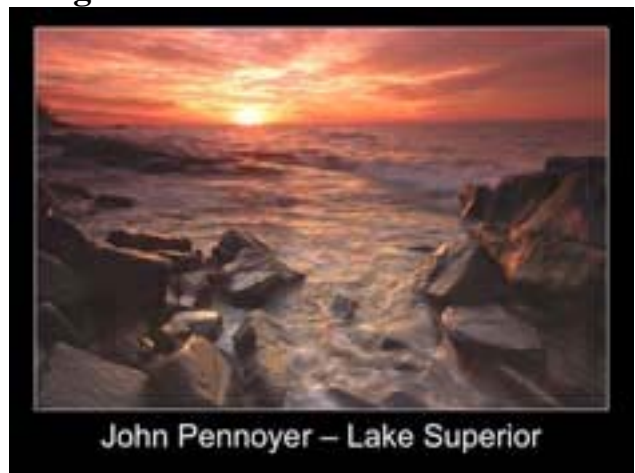
Zoology First Place



Wildlife Image of the Year



Image of the Year



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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

January 17, 2007 Meeting

January's Program:

North Star Nature Circuit slides. Winning slides from the four club competition will be presented.

FIRST CLASS MAIL

