



Nature Photo Times

Founded 1956

Member: Photographic Society of America & Twin Cities Area Council of Camera Clubs

Vol. 53, No. 5 - Jan 2009

From the President

Wow!! What a great turn-out for our December meeting. I am not sure if everyone came because of your Presidents great personality or because of the free eats! Yea! I agree that it must have been the judging and all of the great food that was laid out for us. I want to thank Jay Steinke for taking all of the time to not only judge the images but also for putting on his program on how he got started in his photography on a full time basis. I noticed many of you kept him busy after the judging asking him all sorts of questions. We appreciate Jay for taking the time to stick around and making himself available to us. Congratulations to all that won Honorable Mentions and for first and second place in the General, Botany, and Zoology divisions. Also the two coveted awards; "Wildlife Image of the Year" was taken by Don Nadreau and "The Image of the Year" was awarded to Dave Vichich. You can see the results elsewhere in this newsletter and on our web site (www.minneostanature.org). 2009 will give us another opportunity to enter our monthly salons and at the same time challenge ourselves to improve on those areas that need improvement.

I have one request; many of will be spending some time in Monticello; to photograph the wintering Trumpeter Swans and other waterfowl that congregate in this area. Of course the reason is our friendly "Trumpeter Lady" Sheila, she has been feeding these beautiful birds for several years. It is due only to her generosity that we have the opportunity to get some magnificent photos of these great birds. Sheila has been paying for most of the cost of the corn out of her own pockets, with maybe a small donation from the Trumpeter Swan Society. As we all know the price of corn is skyrocketing. A few years ago the city of Monticello put up a donation box to help offset this cost. I encourage all of you when you go to Monticello to photograph or just observe the Trumpeters, put a few green backs in this donation box. I usually make 8-12 trips a year

and always put something in the donation box. After all what is \$3.00 or \$5.00 for some great photography - sometimes we don't know how lucky we are until it is gone.

Our program for January will be put on by Mike Prokosch on the winning entries from this fall competitions.

John Pennoyer

Field Notes

"Cold Winter Photography 2009"

By John Pennoyer

Well let's see now, I have been writing in this newsletter for the camera club for close to 15 years and I think that this must be my very first article on "Winter Photography." Not! Of course, I have probably written a few articles on winter photography over the years, but I am going to do this one anyway and hopefully it will be different than previous articles.

As I look over the four seasons I have determined that winter is tied for second place for me. Fall leads the pack and spring/winter are tied for second, which means that summer for me comes in last. This of course is only related to photography. As I am sitting here writing this article (December 17) it is an absolutely perfect day to be out photographing. The temps are in the single digits, there's fresh snow from last night, skies are sunny and most important no wind. I just got back from getting my winter photo blind up and running. I set-up my blind in November, but just today I walked out and put in my corn stalks, hung up my bird feeder, and put up various perches. As I walked through the field to my location, I flushed 4 Pheasants and there were pheasant tracks galore on the fresh fallen snow. So I am looking forward to some great photography for what I consider one of the most difficult subjects to get good photos of - Ring-necked Pheasants. So why is it that I am not

out photographing this afternoon? Well tonight is our club end-of-year judging with a party to follow. So this article is being written to whet my appetite for “winter photography”.

Yesterday I went to the Minnesota River hoping to get some images of wintering waterfowl. The temperature was -10F. As I sat there for about 3 hours with no photos taken, it was then that I decided to write my January article on winter photography. Not on what to wear or how to shoot; just some simple things that I do to make “cold” winter photography bearable. Of course this article is being written based on temps from single digits to well below 0 degrees.

First and foremost we need to talk about batteries. Everyone knows how the cold rapidly drains batteries. For both of my cameras I have two sets of lithium ion batteries and each camera has a holder for 8 AA batteries. All will be freshly charged and the two sets of spares are with me, in a pocket on my inner jacket. To save battery life I “**always**” turn off image review!! If you have automatic review on every image that is taken, that will use up a lot of battery power. Turn it off and only review when you need to. Also winter is a great time to do flight photography; in most cases I want shutter speeds of at least 1/1000 second. For shutter speeds that fast there is no reason to have IS/VR operational. VR/IS is a huge battery drain, and with a lenses such as 80/400 VR or 100-400 IS and with those very fast shutter speeds, save on your battery by turning them off.

Before I head out for my winter photography, I usually know my subject matter-waterfowl, eagles, winter scenic’s etc. The night before I always have things set out ready to load in vehicle. I go one step further, the legs on my tripod will be extended to the position I “think” I will be in. Waterfowl on the river means I will have the legs in a position that when sitting down the camera will be at eye level. If I will be standing the legs will be fully extended. My two cameras are out of the bag with the appropriate lenses attached. So when I get to my site all I have to do is mount the camera on tripod. This will save me a lot of fumbling around getting everything set-up outside at -15F!! Speaking of sitting down—to keep my tush from getting wet, I purchased a low sitting stool with back rest from Cabela’s that is only about 3-4 inches above the ground and it is great! I stay comfortable and still get the lens to the eye angle that I strive for.

Next to photography equipment, one of the greatest technologies that has been developed for us weirdoes that really enjoy cold weather is the

chemical hand/feet/toe warmers. All I ever use is the hand warmers with a good pair of boots and I don’t feel the others are necessary. But let me give you a quick tip; buy them in “March” for the next winter. Every March I go into Cabela’s or Gander Mountain and look for them. Last year I bought about 40 hand warmers for \$.59 each. There has been lots of improvement in winter clothing etc. but for me the chemical hand warmers are the one thing that has made cold weather photography bearable.

With the extreme cold weather it is always important to let your camera equipment warm gradually to room temperature. I leave mine zipped tightly in my Lowe pro photo packs and they stay in my store room for at least a day. If I intend to go out again in the AM I may leave them in the car in my garage overnight. However, if I am in a Motel, I bring them in the room. The batteries and flash cards can be removed first for charging and down loading. All you have to do is let a little warm air in and condensation will form. It will probably do some damage or at the very least cause the mirror to stick from ice.

Some of my winter photography locations:

Monticello City Park: Trumpeter Swans, Geese, numerous ducks

Shakopee (Veteran Memorial Park): Ducks and geese - great opportunities for behavior and flight shooting.

Blackdog road: Ducks, geese, gulls, Bald Eagles, (been there several times over the last 3 years but not necessarily my favorite area).

Colville Park Red Wing: Known for Bald Eagles but is also one of my favorite areas for other waterfowl.

Read’s Landing: Bald Eagles, but I don’t think it is as good as Colville, because generally the eagles are further away.

Sax-Zim bog, Aitkin county, Crex Meadows

WMA, Carlos Avery WMA: All of these areas can be good for Hawks, and especially Northern Owls.

North Shore: From Duluth to Grand Marias, icescapes, snowscapes, sunrise/sunsets, moonrise/moonsets, frozen waterfalls etc. All of the scenic’s you can think of, but also a very good place for whitetail winter photography.

Ely Area: What can you say next to the BWCAW-great for snowshoeing and winter photography, my wife and I always spend a week or so in the winter in this area.

Local Areas: Much of my winter photography is done within a few miles of my house at community

parks and other areas, so be sure to check your local parks. Opportunities are just waiting for you.



“Trumpeter Swan” By John Pennoyer



“Lake Superior Ice” By John Pennoyer

Good Shooting

Year End Competition Results

Here are the winners from the year end competition. Thanks to Jay Steinke for his presentation and excellent images, and for judging the year end images for us.

Image of the Year
-Dave Vichich "Fumble"

Wildlife Image of the Year
-Don Nadreau "Seal"

Zoology - First Place
-Nadav Cassuto "Bee Eater #1"

Zoology - Second Place
-John Pennoyer "Pileated Family"

Botany - First Place
- Ted Galambos "Lily Interior"

Botany- Second Place
-John Dykstra "Iris"

General - First Place
-Dave Vichich "Mesa Arch 2"

General- Second Place
-Jeff Morgan "W Falls"

Wildlife Image of the Year



“Seal” By Don Nadreau

Image of the Year



“Fumble” By Dave Vichich

All the year end images, including honorable mentions, are available for viewing on our website at www.Minnesotanature.org.

“The Story”

By Ron Winch

It’s embarrassing! As the image of the pine forest fades and melds into an image of a Saw-Whet Owl surveying the forest floor in hopes of locating breakfast – a Red-Backed Vole, perhaps. Emotions are high and words don’t come easy. My voice cracks a bit and the lump in my throat grows large.

Strange that I should have these feelings now; I’m in the midst of a slide presentation to some fifty folks at a Wisconsin State Park. The image on the screen is being experienced only with my eyes, although the soft background music relaxes the spirit and encourages a mood.

Step back in time to the morning the image was made. The sun, like a big orange, peeked over the horizon two hours ago and kissed the river valley with its warmth.

A Veery’s song drifted through the woods like the morning fog, and the smell of moist earth, reminiscent of decades of spring mornings, is so succulent you can almost taste it. A shadow glides by on silent wings. The Saw-Whet Owl glides to his hunting perch on an aspen snag. Soft green maple leaves unfold in the warmth of a new day as I loosen the ball-head and frame the tender leaves and owl into a pleasing composition. The soft green background enhances the image as my index finger gently presses the shutter release. Two seconds and twelve frames later the owl, startled by the staccato rattle of the motor drive, flies to a quieter part of the forest.

For me, this is what nature photography is all about. Being alone in the woods – it’s like being in a living library. You experience nature at her grandest with all your senses. It is here that feelings are at a high pitch for you have captured an elusive moment in the secretive life of a Saw-Whet Owl.

Over the river an eagle screams and only fifty yards away a Ruffed Grouse – high on testosterone – drums frantically to attract any unmated female. Thoughts begin to drift as I wander the forest in search of more fine images, but I can’t forget that moment.

Editing the slides on the light-table, I find 4 discards, 7 very good shots and one exceptional image where the bird – close to the edge of the frame – is looking out of the shot, ala Robert Bateman. Although I recognize it’s a great shot, a myriad of distractions prevents me from truly savoring the moment.

Only in the slide presentation, after a brief introduction to the program and what nature photography means to me, do the images begin to

get to me. Soft mesmerizing background music and the near darkness of the room overcome all distractions. It is in this dark void with slides projected on a six foot screen that feelings for the images are at their strongest. I am transported back to the taking of every image, only now emotions are higher. There is only me and the audience, background music and the images. It is the audience that I am playing to and I want to involve them in the moment. There is a time for quiet and a time to tug at their emotions.

If you can truly get your viewers emotionally involved in the beauty, wonder and awe of the story you and your images are portraying, you will have done a great job in entertaining, educating and giving them a greater appreciation for our natural world.

And they will invite you back.

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

6:00 PM - Set-up and Social Time

6:30 PM - Announcements and Business

6:45 PM - Program

7:45 PM - Nature Salon (Competition and
Judge's Comments).

Meetings are held at:

REI
750 West American Blvd
Bloomington, MN 55420

January Meeting Wednesday Jan. 21, 2009

Mike Prokosch will present a slide show of
the entries and winner of the Northstar competition.
John Gregor from Coldsnap will be the judge for this
months salon.

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Note from the Editor:

This will be my last year as your newsletter editor. If
anyone is interested in picking up the mantle, please
drop me a note, call me at 763-377-4589, or see me at
one of the meetings. I will be more than happy to help
you get started. It is an interesting job if you enjoy
working on the PC and writing. This position is an
elected position and is also a member of the club board
of directors.