



Nature Photo Times

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From the President

By the time everyone receives this month's newsletter spring will be here within a short few weeks. March is one of those very fickle months, it can make winter last another four weeks or it can be a great entrance for an early spring. March is also one of those months that it can be very difficult to find subjects to photograph, but subjects can be plentiful especially after a March snow storm, if spring does begin to make its presence in March, this is a good time to grab your photo gear and head to some wetlands and look for Skunk Cabbage, these are one of the first plants to push its way up through the snow. Banning State Park, Nine Mile Creek in Bloomington (off of 106th) are two of my favorite places for these early arrivals. But if anything else use this "slow" time to clean and check all of your photo equipment to get ready for some Minnesota spring photography.

I have reserved the REI Conference room through May 2010 (excluding June-August), Mikaela Kramer is the new manager and she has been very helpful in this process. She also is going to improve on the REI website regarding our club meeting that is on their monthly calendar. It will be a short line or two just to include a little information about the month's program. And speaking of programs we are in the process of looking at programs for next fall, if you know of any programs that you think might interest the club members, please let me know, I would just like to have the type of program and a contact person (phone number, e-mail etc), if we can fill the first couple of months this will take a little pressure off the new club officers.

Thanks to Mike Prokosch for being our judge last month, also to Dean Rehphol for bringing snacks and Dave Vichich for putting on a mini program on the "Bald Eagles of Burlington IA".

Our program for March will be "Wild Horses of the Pryor Mountains" by Rod Blesener
John Pennoyer

Field Notes

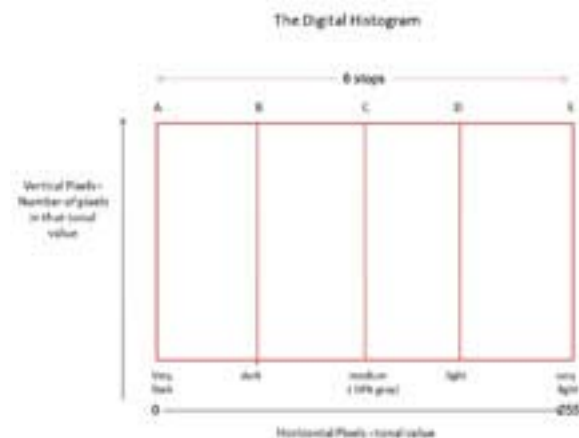
"The Digital Histogram"

By John Pennoyer

Just recently I made an all day trip to Sax-Zim Bog to photograph birds, with my main goal to get images of the very elusive Boreal Chickadee. I left home around 4:30 AM and arrived at the bog about 3 hours later, It was not long before my camera and lens were mounted on my tripod and I was busy looking for my little Chickadee. After a couple of hours I managed to capture images of Gray Jays, Pine Grosbeaks etc. but no Boreal Chickadees. All of sudden there he appeared sitting on a branch next to the suet. Quickly he attached his little feet to the hunk of suet and began pecking away. I set my exposure and fired off several images, but it was his entire backside. Suddenly he fluttered to a nearby branch and gave me a nice broadside pose; I was able to fire off a couple of images before he left deep into the boreal forest. I was ecstatic to not only see this little bird but to actually capture images of him. However; the celebration was short lived, with the chickadee on the suet I had perfect exposures, but it was his entire back, when he flew to the branch which was in different light, I had not changed my exposure to compensate, my "Histogram" had told me that I was probably about 1 1/2 stop under-exposed. That is one of the best things about shooting digital; the immediate feedback, I was very disappointed for I knew that I missed a golden opportunity my only hope was that he would come back. He of course did and I got many excellent exposures of this very rare Minnesota bird. The Digital Histogram is one of the best things about shooting digital, you will know if you have correctly exposed for your image. Once you understand your histogram your accuracy for exposure can be dead on or at least within 1/3 to 1/2 stop. So for this month's Field Notes I thought that I would review the "Digital Histogram". The histogram I will be writing about is the Luminance (tonal) histogram and not RGB Histogram, although it will be the same interpretation just tonal values and not color channels.

The histogram will have about 6 stops of dynamic range, moving horizontally from left (A) to far right (E). Tonal range on line A is very dark (black) which would be under-exposed with no detail. As the graph would move to the right all the way to line E it would be very light (white) which would be over-exposed

with no detail. Always remember that no post-processing software can ever bring back detail that was not captured in the camera. So any pixels going up line A (black) or line E (white) your image will lack detail in those areas. The vertical movement of pixels is determined by the number of pixels in that tonal range. So as an example; you just got lucky and captured an image of a black bear in green grass; (for this example we will say green grass is neutral) the bear is only 10% of the frame and the rest is filled with green grass. The correct exposure for a black bear, I would want my pixels to be between lines A and B but with the bear being small in the frame the vertical movement would only be about 10%, however the grass would be somewhere around line C but the vertical movement would be almost to the top (90%). Well you lucky photographer, this bear keeps walking toward you, and you take another image and the bear fills 90% of the frame with just 10% of the grass showing. Of course, your histogram would now be the opposite for vertical movements, but the tonal values should remain the same. Guess what if the tonal values are not the same; you just missed your exposure! (Just like my Chickadee story) Of course no reason to go any further with this black bear scenario because if he comes any closer, you will be too busy fighting him off with your tripod!



When I instruct my black bear photographing workshop, I always instruct the attendees to expose for the black bear between lines A and B usually somewhere in the middle. When I look at their histograms I know positively if they hit the exposure on the black bear. If you enjoy Minnesota winters like I do, I consider a correct exposure for snow to be somewhere between lines D and E, but never ramping up line E. In most cases I usually want to see gaps between lines A and/or E, if there is a gap you have captured some detail if it ramps up just remember it is either over or under exposed with NO detail.

Now let's venture out to one of my favorite subjects Minnesota Prairies. You have just captured a great image at Roscoe Prairie. Beautiful green prairie grass, blazing star flowers, blue sky with a few white puffy clouds. Now let's see what maybe a histogram

should look like, the bulk of the tonal values should be between lines B and D but a few will go towards E (white puffy clouds) but you also notice a few going towards line A. You might think, what is going on here I have no black in the image, but if you look closely at the image there will be shadows which are very dark. Remember the histogram will show every pixel.

A couple of other notes for you to remember, even if shooting Raw when looking at the image and histogram on your camera's LCD, it is a jpeg image and histogram, which has less data than a Raw file, but I still believe that the camera's histogram will always be a great indicator on your exposure. You also will see numerically values attached to the histogram (especially in your post processing editor) those are called binary numbers, 0 is black with no detail, 255 (256) is white with no detail and of course the numbers in-between. I generally pay very little attention to them and have a tendency to just watch the graph.

Well there you have it, my interpretation of the digital histogram. The only way I could be more accurate would to be in the field with you and look at your subject through your view finder. But with digital not everything is the same so here is a very simple exercise to check your very own histogram on your own camera's tonal range. I encourage everyone to try this exercise!

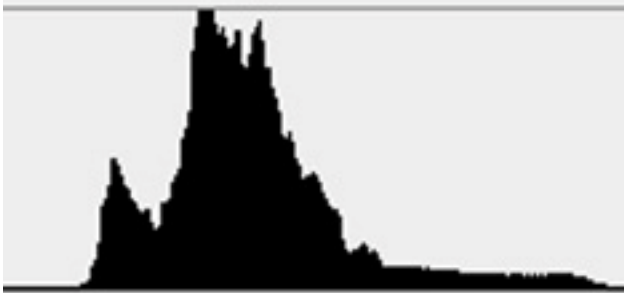
Camera set-up: Aperture Priority- Exposure EV 0 - (Using a gray card I use a macro lens for this exercise)

1. Take exposure of 18% gray card EV 0 (blue sky, green grass could work but card is more accurate.)
 - a. Histogram should show very narrow like dead center (line C or binary number 128) it should go all the way to the top (This will also show the inaccuracy of your camera my D200 vs D300 has a difference of 1/2 stop-no problem I just now know that)
2. Change EV to -1
 - a. Graph should move to the left!
 - b. How far did it move? (Each camera/manufacture will vary)
3. Change EV to -2
 - a. Graph should move further to the left!
4. You can continue putting in minus (-) values and also make graph move to right by putting in positive (+) values

This is a fun exercise to check the tonal range and accuracy of your own camera's system.



Boreal Chickadee By John Pennoyer



Boreal Chickadee Histogram

Good Shooting

PS: Study the Boreal Chickadee Histogram and locate the black point-neutral-white points of histogram to image.

THE VIEW from HERE
By Lawrence C. Duke
Photography Spoken Here

“Here comes the judge, here comes the judge.”
(1965 was a great year for Laugh In).

The following is only my opinion and not necessarily the opinion of others. I pay my dues, so. In my opinion, it's just an opinion! We, me, the MNPC, ask to have the “Salon” judged by a member or an outside photographer. And we, the MNPC, get what we asked for. And of course you can be the “Judge” of that, or have an opinion. It's an opinion. Likes or dislikes. I can remember a out standing club member, who would score an image low if selective focus was used. It was a very

narrow opinion. Another club member, who would lower the score if the photographer was standing in the water of the image, I thought that opinion was all wet.

And there was an out side judge who couldn't see a good landscape, when it was in front of him, a very short sighted opinion. In all the years with the club I've seen a great many wonderful images (my opinion), by some very talented members. And, I've also been crushed by a judge who was scoring by percentages, so many, "eights ", not too many, "nines ", and two or three, "Tens". What, are we saving space in the newsletter? And we hear much the same old terms, "I really like this subject a lot, I'll give it a ' Seven '. How about the old standby, "It's too busy ", this is one of the worst opinions, in my opinion. As lame as it is, it is used to say I don't know what I'm looking at. My last, "too busy ", was published and earned \$600, for one time use.

Another is, as great as the image is “it's too centered ", so what? It's a great shot, got everything going for it, but it's too centered, and there is a RULE about things in the center. The last thing I need to know is that, because I put the image together with the center of interest in the center, it's too centered. Why do they, who ever they are, call it the center of interest, if we are not supposed to put it in the center? Rules in photography may have changed and maybe not. But if we do what we've always done, aren't we going to get what we've always gotten.

Well, in my **opinion** the club should seek new judges, rather than the old rule bound judges, that we have been listening to. The image below is not a high scoring shot by some opinions, but I'm not about to pass it up. “That's the way I saw it and that's the way I shot it!” “A good editor chooses a picture, not because of liking it so much, as needing it”. Hey, you be the JUDGE, it's only an opinion.



Eagle's Nest

By Lawrence Duke

“Spring is coming”

By Ron Winch

The light snows of February created a great pallet for observing the signs of both large and small creatures – even a few birds. Walking the edge on an old snowshoe trail it was easy to follow the hunting tracks of a coyote as he wove in and out of the pines and meadow. Suddenly his tracks stopped – as he listened and caught sight of a shrew scampering for cover in its snow tunnel. The tracks told of a quick leap – coming down on all four feet and enjoying a warm tidbit on a cold morning.

Further on, a cottontail utilized the snowshoe trail after coming out of the buckthorn underbrush. He paused occasionally to bark a small tasty twig before the tracks led away from the trail. A white footed mouse emerged from a snow tunnel and hops across the trail, leaving his telltale sign of trail drag as he hops along.

And so the morning goes – plenty of sunshine and fresh air. Reading the tracks and signs is facilitated by photographing the signs to be identified later or carrying along the best guide book. I’ve found “Mammal Tracks & Signs” by Mark Elbroch, a 780 page book @ \$45.00. Another good book is “Tracking and the Art of seeing – How to Read Animal Tracks & Signs”. Also, “A Field Guide to Mammal Tracking” by James Halfpenny is a good resource.

And then came the six snowfall the end of February. The only visible tracks now are coyote and rabbit. Mice, voles and shrews are tunneling under the snow and enjoying the insulating warmth of the new snow cover.

March brings the vernal equinox on the 20th and the beginning of spring. Buds on pussy willows will be swelling; skunk cabbage will be anxiously reaching for the surface – even creating their own heat to melt the snow that might still be covering them. Great horned owls are incubating their two eggs and bald eagles are again migrating north in search of nesting sites and mates. Horned larks may have already passed through on their way to the arctic. Shore ice on small ponds may be melting and attracting hooded mergansers, but they are always looking for open water farther north. Open water on the Mississippi and St. Croix is a sure invitation for buffleheads and goldeneyes. South facing slopes will soon burst forth with golden yellow marsh marigolds.

If your camera has been sitting idle through the winter, better calibrate and recharge the battery, dig out those rubber boots and enjoy the new season of SPRING.

February Salon Results

Judge: Mike Prokosch

Cleveland, Ron	Terrace Trees	8
Dykstra, John	Shuksan Moon	8
Galambos, Ted	Itasca Fall	8
Graves, Rick	Rocky Mountain Meadow	8
Hodeboom, Jerry	Ibis	8
Hoyt, Kristin	Crimson-collared Tanager (W)	8
Hoppe, Paul	Hepatica 7546	8
Zosel, David	Male Piliated (W)	8
Cleveland, Ron	Flower and Fly	8
Goossens-Bryan, Betty	Struggle	8
Hoyt, Kristin	Red-eyed Tree Frog (W)	8
Hoyt, David	Blue-grey Tanager (W)	8
Nadreau, Don	Pacific Sunset	8
Polley, Lil	Elk Bugling (W)	8
Ramos, Carolee	Green Hummer (W)	8
Schulz, Alan	Fox and Two Kits (W)	8
Gladitsch, Marilyn	Columbine	8
?	Northern MN Wetland	8
Olson-Goude, Jay	Sugerloaf	9
Galambos, Ted	Prairie Storm	9
Samuelson, Tom	Maple Pollen	9
Gladitsch, Marilyn	Indian Pipe	9
Pennoyer, John	Calling Marsh Wren (W)	10
Polley, Lil	Dewy Dragonfly III	10

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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

March Meeting

Wednesday Mar. 18, 2009

Our March presentation will be "Wild
Horses of the Pryor Mountains" by Rod Blesener.

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