



Nature Photo Times

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Backyard Birds By Ron Winch

Birds exploded from my backyard feeders. Flashing wings and drab winter colors streaked for cover in the tangle of forsythia and snow-laden spruce trees. Then, all was quiet.

Still clad in a down parka and fleece pants, I had just come in from my photo blind on the deck to make another cup of belly-warming Earl Gray tea. Certainly, it had to be a raptor to spook the birds so violently. Forget about the tea and try and locate the hungry hawk. Peering out the window, there it was – about thirty feet up in a young walnut tree – a sharp-shinned hawk. Fierce red eyes searched for any movement that might make a warm late afternoon meal. Still, all was quiet. Only trouble was I was indoors and it was outdoors and about 120 degrees to the left of my blind.

Quietly I opened the door, got down on all fours and crawled to the blind – never looking up. The sharpie was still there, but could I rotate the blind that 120 degrees before it spooked? Once inside, I slowly lifted the tripod –mounted camera outfit, cautiously pushed my head against the top of the blind and carefully covered the 120 degrees. The bird hadn't moved. Now, very slowly tilting the camera up and rotating it for a vertical framing and spot metering off the breast, I clicked off 20 frames in the next few minutes. Now, time to observe and study behavior. Gradually, the bird leaned forward and seemed headed directly toward me. Instead, it landed on the ground four feet below the deck and not more than twelve feet from me. Impossible to frame it from my position, I watched. Sharp talons flexed open and shut, puncturing the life out of a red-backed vole. Taking wing, this striking small raptor, only about the size of a robin, lifted off, carrying its lifeless prey to a low branch in a white pine and devoured a warm meal.

Not all backyard photography is this exciting. The norm is photographing woodpeckers and other common winter visitors at feeders specially designed for photography and placed eight to ten feet away. The regular feeders are always well maintained with water, suet, fine sunflower chips, black sunflower seeds and Joe's mix from The Wild Bird store. There is intense activity at the feeders in the late afternoon when the birds stock up for the fifteen-hour night and again in the early hours of daylight when they replenish for the day. Activity drops off through the midday, but there's always someone looking for an afternoon snack.

Come photo time, these feeders are taken down and the photo feeders are set in place. The blind is set in place on the deck with a folding chair and a mug of hot tea. Tripod adjusted to the proper height and long lens eased into the camo snoot and focused on the feeder. This gear allows me to capture full-frame blue jays as desired. Snug and warm and with feeding activity, I may stay in the blind for an hour and a half, and capture 100 images – leaving in time for the birds to stock up for another cold night. The camera and lens are slipped into a plastic bag, sealed shut, brought inside and allowed to warm up to room temperature so as to not fog up or have moisture condense on delicate electronics.

Later, in the final edit the keepers are well composed and exposed, usually full profile or three-quarter poses with some activity. The usual discards are probably the same ones you would toss. I usually delete all or most shots of a bird with food in its bill – personal choice.

I hope this was entertaining, enlightening and educational, and gives you an idea about spending a winter afternoon doing something besides watching TV.

Good shooting.



THE VIEW FROM HERE

by Lawrence C. Duke
"Photography Spoken Here"

Play Your Cards Right.

I still remember the breakfast with Rob Sheppard in Las Vegas when someone asked him, "What is the best card to use for 'Digital Capture' when out shooting wildlife?" Mr. Sheppard smiled and said, "... when someone asks you which is the best card to use, start looking for a new table...."

My own life with digital started with a Nikon D1 and the first card was a Lexar 128 MB, purchased for \$69 and capable of 46 Raw or a whopping 104 Jpg. Worked like a charm, but new to the new game I was able to screw it up without too much of a problem. D1 batteries were really fast at dying at the worst time. And I was even faster at shutting down. So some images never made it to the card. It took awhile to see what I was doing: I knew that I shot the critter, but when I took a look it wasn't there. Whatever could it be?

One thing that I started, after I got my brain around it, was that I needed more than one card. Some "Pro" said something about all the eggs in one nest. As a farm boy, I never had a basket. So I bought the big 512MB card for almost the same price as the SanDisk 8GB today.

Along with all the cards I was carrying, Rob Sheppard wrote in OP '03, about needing a good back up system like the one he used, the EZ-Magic CD burner. So now I was carrying 10 cards of different MB's, a Ez-Magic burner and a couple dozen CD's. Also, I had started using a Nikon D1x with a "Buffer." Oh man can I shoot now! I try not to fill the card to the max - I may have heard that somewhere or just decided to do the same thing I did when shooting film: I shot 135/36 but reloaded at 30, 34, or what ever, depending on what was happening. I always wanted to be ready for the next shot.

The manufactures tell us there's not much that can go wrong with their cards. Go to their sites read about your next card. Learn about the specs or how someone else used the very same card. Most of the problems for cards can come up with our mishandling them. Like not running them through the washing machine or taking a saltwater dunk getting in to the Zodiac: oh yes I did, and my guide says, "Hey, what you doing Man?"

If a card is going to fail, it will most likely do it right away. Just as Big Foot walks into the light. I've also read that some cards are too good to be true - like really cheap and from a small town in China. You used to see some on e-Bay. Do yourself a favor and buy high quality cards, not just the cheapest

And now, my life has changed and gone to a 12 MP camera. The old cards hold fewer shots and now that the cards are in GB's, my Ez-Magic can't burn DVD's and the new laptop is really heavy. In weighting the whole thing for the last big trip, I asked, and was told to buy more cards and not carry all the stuff that I had been carrying before. So I have. I now work with card readers, I format cards in-camera after complete back up, I still keep an eye on the camera battery and the little green light on the camera back while it's writing. I'm now working with enough cards to spend a whole evening down loading my images.

A lot of cards will have to go bad before I even think of buying this one or the "New" 100 GB.

I always liked what George D. Lepp said "... Just because you can doesn't mean you should ..."



**Minnesota Nature
Photography Club
January 2010 Salon
Scores
Judge: Michael
Prokosch**

| Photographer | Title | Score |
|---------------|------------------------|-------|
| John Anderson | Ruffed Grouse (w) | 8 |
| Mariann Cyr | Rainier Fox (w) | 8 |
| Lawrence Duke | Bee on Flower | 8 |
| Alan Schulz | Albatross and Fog (w) | 8 |
| Don Specht | Grooming Spoonbill | 8 |
| Larry Weinman | Flying High (w) | 8 |
| Eric Baker | Running Moose (w) | 8 |
| Ted Galambos | Three Stems | 8 |
| Kristin Holt | Hoarfrost Tree and Sun | 8 |

| | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|----|
| Dave Klein | American Bittern (w) | 8 |
| Carol Madison | Schwabacher Landing | 8 |
| Jean McDonough | Three Wolves in Snowy Scene | 8 |
| Alan Schulz | Brown Bear Looking Back (w) | 8 |
| Don Specht | Butterball (w) | 8 |
| Ron Cleveland | Aquasabon River | 9 |
| Dave Ellenbecker | October Sumac | 9 |
| John LaMere | Little Chipper | 9 |
| Jean McDonough | Grey Fox Portrait | 9 |
| Dave Vichich | Frosty Deer (w) | 9 |
| Barbara Wilson | Grand Pacific Glacier | 9 |
| Mariann Cyr | South Georgia | 9 |
| Dave Vichich | Ermine (w) | 9 |
| Larry Weinman | Orbweaver Spider in Web (w) | 9 |
| Karl Fiegenschuh (s) | Light Snow in Red Rock | 9 |
| Dave Klein | Snow Goose (w) | 10 |
| John Anderson | Robin (w) | 10 |
| Ron Cleveland | Sand River | 10 |
| Jerry Hogeboom | Hawk with Rabbit (w) | 10 |
| John LaMere | Common Redpoll (w) | 10 |
| Karl Fiegenschuh (s) | Caribou Kill #1 | 10 |

Upcoming Meeting Programs:

March: Ron Winch

April: Bill Handsaker

May: Mariann Cyr

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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

**February Meeting
Wednesday February 17, 2010**

Our February presentation will be

Minnesota professional wildlife and nature photographer, John Gregor of ColdSnap Photography, will be presenting a program on recent work from Lake Superior . The program will include some black and white and panoramic images along with photographic techniques and favorite places to shoot.

John's website is: john@coldsnap.com where you can find information on current workshops.



Monticello Trumpeter Swans,

FEB. SPECIAL for taking images of the Trumpeter swans in Monticello from the deck next to Swan Park

February is a special time of the year for the swans wintering on the Mississippi River in front of Swan Park and provides the start of a variety of activities which usually have not been seen with such "aggressive flair" during their stay here in the month prior. As the weather warms and hormonal changes associated with mating urges begin, a high percentage of the adult birds take on a total different "attitude" towards their mates and the rest of the flock.

The territorial activities of family units bonding, which usually include excessive head bobbing and wing fluttering with family members, and family posturing and fighting with other family groups, becomes a normal daily occurrence and often can produce pictures that are or can be a once in a lifetime shot. For those interested, during this time, close observation of mated pair activity often can result in being able to witness the foreplay leading up to and including the mating act.

In addition each year, there are also the activities involving "single" individuals and first year breeders in search of mates that during the normal course of action, put on courtship displays as well as fighting displays that are often worthy of comparison to heavy weight boxing matches. Often the fighting between individuals can result in several minutes of continued abuse to each other. Again, the activities referenced provide for unique pictures of trumpeter swans for those interested and prepared for a special once in a lifetime shot.

All profits from the deck and concession stand on my property go to help provide for corn to feed the trumpeter swans here in Swan Park. I have given Sheila Lawrence \$491 this winter in 09/10 from the use of the deck and the concession stand on my property. This is the first year for the use of the deck. In 08/09 I gave Sheila \$508 from the concession stand. In 07/08 I gave Sheila \$602 from the concession stand. Thanks to all of you who have used the "deck" and the concession stand, thereby contributing towards helping the Swan Lady to provide corn for these magnificent waterfowl. It's truly appreciated. Rich Thurman

Normal deck rates are \$20/hr per person

February rates:

Option 1 - Individual rates

1. One hour = \$15 per person
2. Two hours = \$25 per person
3. Four hours = \$40 per person

Option 2 - Group rates for photography clubs/observers.

1. 1-2 people on the deck = \$15/hr per individual for 2 hours

2. 3-4 people on the deck = \$10/hr per person for 4 hours

BE SURE to email in advance to confirm there will be a spot available for your reservations. I will be out of town from Jan. 28-31. I will go thru all your emails and get you on my calendar when I return on the 31st, and confirm your reservation. Thanks to all of you for your support.

Rich Thurman

201 Mississippi Drive

Monticello, MN. 55362

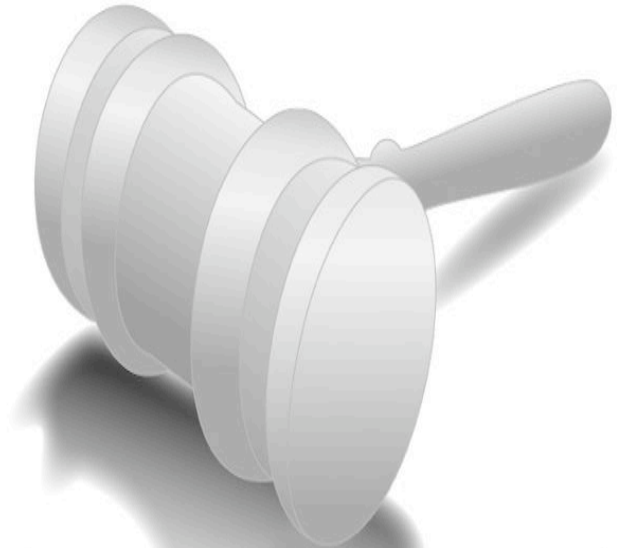
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Camera Council

JUDGING SCHOOL

Learn to become a better photographer and a
Camera Council Certified Judge



COMPLETION of this excellent 6 week course plus 3 practice judging sessions at local competitions under the guidance of a senior judge will qualify graduates to judge Photography Competitions through the Camera Council.

Requirements to become eligible to take this course:

- Be a member of one of the Camera Council member camera clubs
- Have been a competitor for at least one year at the local club level

Class dates are Thursdays on April 15 and 22, June 17 and 24, and July 15 and 22 from 7 to 9 p.m. The class location is Ridgepointe (North of Ridgedale Shopping Center).

Partial course contents include defining the role of a judge, discussion on judging rules, presentations on lighting and composition, judging competition criteria, practice judging sessions, and photography assignments on various subjects with review in class.

Register early as class size is limited.

For more information please contact Ron Timm at 612-701-9647 or rontimm@msn.com

FIRST CLASS MAIL

