

Mile High Wildlife Photography Club

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Winter Wildlife Photography

Text & photos by Don Mammoser

Winter seizes the land for a good part of the year in Colorado. Bitter cold, deep snows and moisture-laden skies pose unique challenges to the outdoor photographer. The landscape is stripped bare of foliage and flowers, but seek out and find color in the winter wildlife. Animals that remain active throughout the winter have fur coats or feathers that are thicker, and more beautiful than at any other time of the year. Although some animal species do sleep the season away, you shouldn't be one of them. Instead, use these tips to get your camera and yourself out of hibernation, and capture that winter wildlife on film.

Tip #1. Take advantage of winter light. Take advantage of the sun being at a lower angle in the sky during winter. Side and backlighting opportunities are more prevalent. Winter light is less intense than at other times of the year, giving great warmth to the light and allowing for photographers to shoot with good results even at mid-day.

Tip #2. Expose for your subject (don't worry about the snow). Metering properly during the winter can seem difficult because there may not be anything middle-toned to base your exposure on. Not to worry. Simply look at the subject you are photographing and ask yourself, "What tonality is it?" Then, expose for that tonality and all others in your scene will fall into place. The tone of a red fox is average, meter it and shoot. A ptarmigan in winter is white with detail, or two stops lighter than average—meter the bird and open up two stops. A dark animal such as a moose is properly exposed when you meter it and stop down 1-2 stops. If you do use snow as your starting point, remember that snow is of a lighter tone than average. You must open up 1-2 1/2 stops from your camera's suggestion depending on whether the snow is shadowed, side-lit or under overcast skies. Here's where testing a roll of film is worthwhile before you get into that once-in-a-lifetime situation.

Tip #3. Track Animals and/or Shoot Tracks. With a fresh snow on the ground you can "read" where wildlife bedded down last night and which direction



they traveled for feeding. Following tracks right to the animals is a possibility. Do remember that wildlife have limited energy and resources in winter, so make it a point to photograph them without pushing or disturbing them. Wildlife tracks themselves make interesting photos, as they head off into the horizon.

Tip #4. Don't Forget the Birds. Not all birds fly south for the winter. Avian species can be abundant throughout the winter and certainly make colorful photography subjects. Take advantage of the fact that songbirds can be attracted easily to your yard in the winter with feeders and fresh, unfrozen water.

Tip #5. Use the Fog and Mist of Winter Days for Drama. The cold air of winter causes the fog and mist that outdoor photographers love for those images with mystery and great drama. Just go to any body of unfrozen water on a crisp day and you'll likely get fog or steam. Then, add in a wildlife subject and the chance for compelling images becomes fantastic. Overexpose fog by one stop from average to render it correctly on film.

Tip #6. Keep Yourself Comfortable. You won't feel much like photographing anything if you feel cold and miserable. To stay comfortable, stay dry. Dress in layers, using fabrics that wick moisture away, wear a windbreaker and keep snow out of your boots with a good pair of gaiters. Keep your head covered, as much of your body heat is lost

there. In order to keep my hands warm and functioning I wear light gloves in order to maintain control of camera functions. When I'm not actually taking a photo my hands go into large, thick mittens. Inside the mittens I'll place a chemical hand warmer if the air is really frigid.

Tip #7. Keep Your Equipment Dry and Functioning. You don't want to get into position with a wildlife subject only to miss the shot because your camera fails. Keep a fresh set of batteries warm by storing them in an inside pocket, near your body. A heavy snowfall gives great winter drama to wildlife shots, but can also soak equipment. Protect camera and lens with a simple shower cap. Never blow onto equipment to remove snow and try not to even breathe on lenses and eyepieces, as fogging will be immediate and annoying in cold weather. I use a photo backpack to carry equipment but also bring a large fanny pack (worn in front) during winter shoots to hold accessories and film. This way I don't have to set my bag down in the snow every time I need some small item. Once I get home all my equipment goes into a sealed plastic bag before I take it inside. This prevents condensation from doing damage.

Tip #8. Add that Silhouette. Winter skies at sunrise and sunset are often the most colorful of any time of the year. Add an animal to a colorful winter sky for a great photo. Expose for the sky color and let the animal go black.

Tip #9. Keep in Mind Your Own Mobility. Heavy winter snows can disrupt both automobile and people-powered modes of transportation. Keep a set of tire chains for your vehicle, even if you have four-wheel drive. Many areas require chains by law if roads are snow covered and chains add a great deal of safety (and peace of mind) to slippery winter driving while in search of wildlife. A pair of snowshoes or cross-country skis add mobility and encourage exploration. They make animal tracking much easier and more enjoyable than the alternative of post-holing through deep winter snows.

NANPA Conference

Mark February 8-12 on your calendar for NANPA's Twelfth Annual Nature Photography Summit and Trade Show at the Denver Hyatt Regency. Complete details at www.nanpa.org. There will also be a NANPA Fine Art Print Exhibit. February 7 – February 18, 2006. Opening Reception to be held at the American Mountaineering Center, February 7, 6:30 pm - 9 pm, 710 10th Street, Suite 100 Golden, CO.

February Meeting Date Changed

Our guest speaker, former NANPA President and Board Member Michael Francis is only available on February 7, so our February meeting will be on **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7 at 7:00 pm** rather than our usual Wednesday meeting night. Please mark your calendar.

At The Last Meeting...

Chuck Winter and **Gordon Illg** provided an entertaining and enlightening look at waterfowl wintering at Bosque del Apache. They provided detailed information on where and when to shoot along with some spectacular images.

Upcoming Programs

February - Michael Francis

Past president and NANPA Board Member, Michael Francis, is a full time wildlife photographer specializing in North American subjects with an emphasis on large mammals. His work has been published in almost every animal, nature, conservation, wildlife, and hunting magazine.

March - Digital Trial Run

This will be a test run for digital projection at MHWPC. You don't want to miss this one.

April - Vince Shute Wildlife Sanctuary

Donna Carr will be doing a digital presentation of her pictures of the Sanctuary .

Braggin' Rights

Ron Eberhart has two juried images from Yellowstone National Park on display at the NANPA conference. See "NANPA Conference" article for details.

John Bykerk recently had images in Canadian Geographics 2006 "Canadian Images Calendar", "Wilderness Canada Desk Calendar" and "Daily Boxed Calendar".

Frank Weston has sold two fine art black & white photos to enhance the décor of the Bent Fork Grille in Longmont.

Club Library

Club members may check out books, videos, magazines and CDs from the club library, one item for one month. Overdue fines of \$1.00 per month will be due on any item not returned the next month. Please be considerate of others who want to use the library resources! Do not check out an item unless you will return it at the next month's meeting. If you miss the next meeting, please contact **Kathy Lingo** to make arrangements to return the item to her. kathy@arch2000.net or (303) 733- 9844

Nature's Best Competition

It's time to think about the club's entry into Nature's Best Photography annual competition. **Russ Burden** (rburden@ecentral.com) has volunteered to coordinate and organize the club's entry. The entry deadline is April 29. Submission guidelines can be found at www.naturesbestmagazine.com.

...Of Interest

Avian pornography—I mean—photography fans can take a tour of the **Greater Prairie Chicken** mating ritual, sponsored by the Colorado Division of Wildlife, March 24-April 23. Contact the Wray Chamber of Commerce for all the lurid details at 970 332-3484 or wraychamber@plains.net

For less risqué fare, check out the **High Plains Snow Goose Festival**, February 24-26. For more information, call (719) 336-4379 or go to <http://www.lamarchamber.com/goose/index.htm>

January Competition Results

Judge: Gordon Illg

Category: Slides

HoM Scenic - 1 entries

1st *Sunset in Monument Valley* Vasu
2nd

Digitally Enhanced Scenic - 1 entry

1st *Untitled* Len Lingo
2nd

Wildlife - 10 entries

1st *Mother and Cub* John Bykerk
2nd *Untitled* Donna Carr
3rd *Blast Off* Chris Loffredo
HM *Untitled* John Chapman
HM

HoM Wildlife - 4 entries

1st *Ployphemus On Twig* Russ Burden
2nd *Untitled* Chris Loffredo
3rd
HM
HM

Creative - 1 entry

1st *Totem Sunrise* Russ Burden
2nd
3rd

Scenic - 7 entries

1st *Yellowstone Sunrise* Russ Burden
2nd *Untitled* Ron Chapman
3rd

Competition Rules

SLIDE COMPETITION

Up to three slides may be entered in the Wildlife or Scenic categories with no more than two in either. Additionally you may submit one image into the Hand of Man or Creative categories.

WILDLIFE - Living wild animals whose normal, everyday movements are not controlled by man. No evidence of man permitted in the photo. Image as seen in wild (e.g. backlit subjects, smooth water) are permitted.

SCENIC - Nature photos of geological, botanical, meteorological subjects. Incidental presence of animal(s) is allowed as long as they are not the key elements of the composition and take up no more than 10% of the image area. Example: an insect on a flower wherein the flower takes up 90% or more of the image, an elk that resides in its environment wherein the environment is 90% or more of the image. If the animal or insect takes up more than 10% of the image area, the photograph must be placed in the wildlife category. The 10% guideline will be left to the judge's discretion as to whether or not the limitation is exceeded. No evidence of hand of man is allowed

HAND OF MAN - Two sub-categories: Animals & Scenic

WILDLIFE - photos of wild animals or wild hybrids that include evidence of man. Controlled animals are included in this category. No domesticated animals.

SCENICS – photos of scenic, botanical, meteorological subjects that show evidence of the hand of man. Included are photos of hybrid plants, but no domesticated ones. Evidence of hand of man may include trails or roads. Man made structures such as fence lines, barns, piers, boats, etc. may be included as long as the take up no more than 10% of the image area and are incidental to the composition. The 10% guideline will be left to the judge's discretion as to whether or not the limitation is exceeded.

CREATIVE - This category includes natural subjects in which a pictorial effect is portrayed or some sort of manipulation has been applied to the image. Examples include double exposures, slide sandwiches, digital manipulations, or effect altering means via slide duplication. Note: If you have questions about the placement of an image in a category, please see the competition chairman before entering the image.

DIGITALLY ENHANCED - Two sub-categories: Wildlife & Scenic

For both categories, the same rules apply. Digital touching up may be performed to images entered in this category to enhance the presentation. Examples include, but are not limited to, selective darkening or lightening, removing minor distractions, eliminating clutter, toning down hot spots, selective saturation adjustments. Major enhancements such as changing out a sky, cloning in extra primary subjects, or adding/deleting primary parts of the composition should be entered into the Creative category.

PRINT COMPETITION

Up to three prints may be entered in the Wildlife or Scenic categories with no more than two in either. Additionally you may submit one image into the Hand of Man, Creative or Digitally Enhanced categories. Maximum size for any image with matting is 16"x20". The smallest image size is 8"x10" if not matted. Prints may be black & white or color. Prints should be mounted, but not framed. Prints will be divided and judged based

on categories used for monthly slide competition. The size guideline will be left to the judge's discretion as to whether or not the limitation is exceeded.

ADDITIONAL SCHEDULED /ADHOC COMPETITIONS

In addition to the normal monthly competition outlined above, the following additional events will occur on a scheduled or ad-hoc basis. Specialty Subjects: 1) to be scheduled during gaps in programs where no presenter is available. Note: these subjects and the schedule will be in March. 2) Schedule will be decided by program coordinator and communicated to club in advance 3) Subject assignment decided by competition coordinator and program coordinator. Member suggestions are welcome. 4) Open Categories (e.g. wildlife/scenic/HOM competing and judged together)

JUDGING - Single judging provided by presenter. Evaluation scale will be 1-10. If the presenter is not judging, then 3 club members will judge and the scale will be 1-5.

Volunteers

Greeter(s): Kathy Nolasco

Snacks: No volunteers at press time

Drinks/Ice: We need your help

Workshops and Seminars

Cathy & Gordon Illg – Workshops:
Adventure Photography 303 237-7086
gordon@advenphoto.com
www.advenphoto.com

- Florida Adventure, February 26-March 3
 - Texas Birds, May 8-13
 - Wild Horses, May 31-June 4
 - Alpine Adventure, June 11-16
 - Glacier National Park, July 9-14
 - Rocky Mtn High, July 23-28
 - Colorado Color, September 24-29
 - Fall Wildlife & Photoshop, October 4-7
 - Texas Birds, October 10-15
 - Bryce & Zion, November 5-10
 - Arches & Canyonlands, November 12-17
 - Bosque del Apache (Full Moon), December 3-8
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Russ Burden's Photography Tours
Visit russburdenphotography.com. Contact Russ at
303 791-9997 or rburden@ecentral.com

Destinations include:

Apr 22-28 2006 Monument Valley / Slot
Canyons

May 13 - 19 2006 Arches National Park /
Monument Valley Trip includes five afternoons
of Photoshop instruction: 2 – 3 hours each

May 27-June 5 2006 Oregon Coast - 10 day trip

June 17 - 23 2006 Tetons / Yellowstone Natl.
Parks in Spring

Sept. 22-Oct. 1 2006 Tetons and Yellowstone
Natl. Parks in Fall -10 days

Oct. 7 - 13 2006 Vermont in Autumn

Oct. 21 - 26 2006 Hunts Mesa - in Monument
Valley and two days in Capital Reef.

Nov. 4 - 10 2006 Bryce Canyon and Zion
National Parks

Dec. 3 -10 2006 Bosque Del Apache / White
Sands Natl. Mon. with full moon

BORN FREE SAFARIS- Africa Trips 2006

Don Mammoser is leading two photo safari trips to
Africa for Born Free Safaris next year. More
information at www.bornfreesafaris.com

Tanzania, May 22, 2006. All-inclusive cost
(including airfare from Denver) for this 12 day
trip is \$6300.

Kenya, October 2, 2006. This 14 day trip is
\$6400, including airfare from Denver.

Space available on a boat in the Katmai Preserve for
Brown Bear photography in June and August.
Contact me at jbykerk@wispertel.net for details

Equipment for Sale

New Tamrac Velocity 7 Photo Sling Pack,
\$40.00. Contact Roger Kinney at 303-369-6120 or
RLKin@comcast.net. It is brand new and never
used.

Kodak RFS 3600 35mm Film Scanner. Slide or film.
3600 dpi, 3.6 dynamic range. \$400

Canon EOS 3. Eye controlled 45 point auto focus,
21 zone evaluative exposure metering. 17 custom
functions. \$450.00 (in original box with manuals)

Canon 2X II Tele-converter \$175.00 (in original box
with case)

Contact John jbykerk@wispertel.net, 303 567 2203
(home) or 303 921 0877 (cell).

Mile High Wildlife Photography Club

President: Ron Eberhart
720-635-6337

Vice-President: Chris Loffredo
720-200-0792

Secretary/Treasurer: Kathy Nolasco
303-690-3118

TEAM LEADERS

Monthly Programs: Chuck Winter 303- 972-2538
Special Programs/Field Trips: Chuck Winter 303- 972-
2538

Competition: Russ Burden

Competition Scoring: Chris Loffredo

Competition Entrees: Matt Schaeffer/Fred Stearns

Judging Coordinator: David Terbush 303-814-6969

Snacks/Greeters: Roger Kinney

303-369-6120 RLKin@comcast.net

Publicity: Buzz Soard 303-779-9933

Library: Lingo Family 303-733-9844

Newsletter: Frank Weston

720 981-8087 frank@frankweston.com

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Russ Burden * Tom Lentz *

Wayne Smith * Rita Summers * Rick Harner

February Meeting

Tuesday, February 7, 2006

7:00pm – 10:00pm

at

THE WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE

10035 South Peoria

Competition: Prints

December Attendance: 49

New Members
