



Mile High Wildlife Photography Club

August 2009

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Know Your Subject!

By Cathy & Gordon Ilg

Today wildlife photographers in the field find themselves in a similar position to that of Native Americans and mountain men a couple of centuries ago. The better we understand the wild things we're interested in, the more successful we're going to be. Granted, we can usually let our concentration and powers of observation go dormant as soon as we put the cameras away without worry about losing our scalps or going hungry. While we are peering through a viewfinder though, or even thinking about how to get a particular shot, it helps to know your subject in great detail.

Bears, especially grizzly bears, immediately come to mind as a subject the photographer had better know something about before attempting those frame-filling images. The first thing that comes to mind is the importance of recognizing an aggressive bear before it begins playing tug-of-war with parts of your body. If you are photographing with a small group though, your odds of being attacked go down drastically. There has never been a documented attack on a group larger than 3 people. So the problem then becomes how do you get close enough to photograph the bears without scaring them?



At locations like Brooks Falls in Katmai, the bears see so many people day in day out that it's hard to believe they would ever be afraid us. And I've never heard of a case where they were.

Where there are not so many people, the bears are usually considerably more cautious. At Silver Salmon Creek, because bears are so dependent on their sense of smell, we found that the wind direction played a big role in how tolerant the bears were. It didn't much matter what they were doing. If we approached from down wind, they would stare at us for a short while, then head for the forest. If we approached from up wind, the bears would usually pay no attention to us at all, which can present its own problems. Keeping the wind direction in mind though, we could often work a particular bear for long periods of time at close range.



Our next example comes from the California Coast. It was our first time photographing the wintering clusters of monarch butterflies, and we were a bit frustrated. It was first thing in the morning, and not a creature was stirring. Not a single butterfly had opened its wings, and all we could see was their drab underwings, which were hardly visible against the eucalyptus leaves they were clustering in. Where was the fantastic kaleidoscope of oranges and blacks?

As you can guess, the pre-trip research we did was very superficial, and while it was not disastrous (we did get the shots), we made it much more difficult than it should have been. It turns out that monarchs are not very active until the temperature rises to about 55

degrees F, and the morning we were there was a cold one. The butterflies did eventually put on a wonderful show, but we literally had hours of standing around waiting until that time. With proper research, we could have photographed sunrise on the beach, or at least enjoyed a good breakfast before working the butterflies.

Have you ever tried to photograph a black widow spider? It's a very difficult subject for a couple of reasons. First, they're nocturnal, and during the day they tend to hide in dark nooks and crannies. Second, in spite of their reputation, these spiders are very shy. When you do find one in the open, day or night, they tend to scurry for cover as soon as you come close enough to photograph them.



We had the perfect site picked out. The web was actually in a cactus rather than something manmade where these creatures often make their homes. Still, the spider would never come out while we were there. This is where a little knowledge about spiders came in handy. Dropping ants into the web worked like magic. As soon as an ant hit the web, the spider would race out, wrap it in silk, then drag it away. Cathy had only to pre-focus on the ant with a macro lens, and she got great action photos. I didn't feel too sorry for the ants because several of them had already stung me pretty good, with no more provocation than standing on their hole.

By the way, it helps to know your spiders and your prey species if you try this. We tried the same thing this past spring with a funnel web spider—different species of spider and different species of ant. The spider did indeed come charging out to get the ant, bit it a couple of times and very little happened, except that the ant got very upset and began attacking the spider, even though the spider was a great deal larger than the ant. We ended up having to rescue the spider from the ant—not exactly the shots we were hoping to get.

Many people have commented on some of our recent snake photos, wanting to know how we got such colorful images of snakes in flowers. Ever since I was a kid, I've been fascinated by reptiles. I've caught more snakes over the years than most people ever want to see. Any time you see a picture of a snake in the flowers, ours or anyone else's, suspect that there has been at least a minimal amount of animal or photo manipulation. Snakes are no exception to the general rule that animals have an aversion to flowers.



There's usually a lot more to it than catching and dumping a snake in a bunch of flowers. This will sometimes work with more aggressive snakes like rattlesnakes. However, most snakes will do their best to crawl for cover as fast as they can, and this can be surprisingly fast. Photographers will usually get one or two shots as the snake heads for the underbrush, and that will be the end of it. The trick is finding an assistant who is willing to hold the snake's tail.

Here's the small print. I do not handle poisonous snakes, nor do I advocate doing so. Also, anyone who handles snakes much at all, is going to get bit, and I've been bit quite a few times. Once you do have a hold of the snake's tail though, the snake does not consider the hand holding its tail a threat, and it pays no attention to that hand. This makes it relatively easy to guide the animal through the flowers or wherever you want to photograph it. Without this knowledge of snakes, we could never have obtained some of the images we've come home with.



Knowing your subject is often the secret to getting those contest-winning images, and more importantly, knowing your subject makes it even more special to you (and less dangerous!). Have fun learning about the subjects you want to photograph.

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Hospitality for the August Meeting

Georgia Hart cookies/snacks

Lara Hardesty beverages

July Club Competition Results

Judge: Gordon Illg

Club Members: Wildlife



First Place

Egret
Lynn Bishop

Other Scenic Winners:

2nd	<i>Smart Object</i>	Jeremy Joseph
3rd	<i>Blanket Flowers</i>	Lynn Bishop

Other Wildlife Winners:

2nd	<i>Prairie Dog Hug</i>	Chuck Summers
3rd	<i>Juvenile Oriole</i>	Tammy Hammond
HM	<i>Brown With Salmon</i>	Peter Miller
HM	<i>Homer Eagle</i>	Peter Miller

Club Members: Scenic



First Place

Lightning
Jeremy Joseph

Club Members: Wildlife - Captive or Controlled



First Place

Lion Pose
Matt Schaefer

Other Wildlife Captive or Controlled Winners:

2nd	<i>Lesser Panda Portrait</i>	Matt Schaefer
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July Masters Competition Results

Judge: Gordon Illg

Masters: Wildlife



First Place

Swift Fox Kits Playing
Fi Rust

Other Wildlife Winners:

2nd	<i>Cheetah Running Down Kalahari Dune</i>	Rita Summers
3rd	<i>Testy Young Stallions</i>	Jan Forseth
HM	<i>Grey Heron on Mossy Rock</i>	Rita Summers

Masters: Scenic



First Place

Sand Dunes Panorama
Reb Babcock

Masters: Open



First Place

Orangutan Smile
Jan Forseth

At the Last Meeting

Our July meeting featured a presentation produced by Chuck Winter with input from a variety of club members – a slide show tour of many of Colorado's most photogenic locales. The program showed what a great state we live in as photographers, with outstanding landscape, flower, fall colors, and seasonal photography all around us. Some of the places pictured included:

- ◇ The Buttes area northwest of Fort Collins
- ◇ The Pawnee Buttes in Weld County
- ◇ Rocky Mountain National Park, including Longs Peaks and Chasm Falls
- ◇ Boulder Falls outside the City Of Boulder
- ◇ The Flatirons and Front Range near Boulder
- ◇ Garden of the Gods in Colorado Springs
- ◇ The Yampa River Basin
- ◇ Shrine Pass – a good locale for wildflowers
- ◇ The Indian Peaks Wilderness area, especially the Arapaho Pass Trail
- ◇ Peru Creek and Boreas Pass in Summit County
- ◇ Monarch Lakes
- ◇ The Aspen and Snowmass area, including the Maroon Bells and Castle Creek
- ◇ Crested Butte – an outstanding area for wildflowers
- ◇ Marble and Lead King Basin
- ◇ The road from Crested Butte to Gothic
- ◇ Washington Gulch
- ◇ Cottonwood, Keebler, and Ohio Passes
- ◇ Yankee Boy Basin and American Basin
- ◇ Ouray, Telluride, and Silverton
- ◇ Boulder Canyon and the Peak to Peak Highway
- ◇ McClure, Owl Creek, and Independence Passes

The above list was just some of the sites shown in the presentation. Those in attendance for July's meeting really got some great ideas and inspiration to get out and shoot some pictures! Prior to the presentation, announcements included information on an Antarctic cruise, member field trips and upcoming outings, and Russ Burden's upcoming photographic tour to Hunt's Mesa. During the break, we also got to see one of The Wildlife Experience's current exhibits.

Upcoming Programs

August

The August "program" will be a special guided tour of the new Wildlife Experience addition - *Globology*. A member of the staff from The Wildlife Experience will be giving us a personal, private tour of their new building and its exhibits.

September

Speaker: Frank Weston

Photographing Colorado

Join Frank Weston for a program developed from his new book *Photographing Colorado's State Parks and Primitive Areas*. This book was just published and featured in *The Denver Post* on June 14th. Join Frank and discover more of the fantastic photographic opportunities Colorado has to offer.

October

Speaker: Gordon and Cathy Illg

How to Photograph Nature

Presentation on the nuts and bolts of nature and wildlife photography

November

Speaker: Lisa Schneizer from the PSA.

Lisa will be presenting a program on the benefits of a Photographic Society of America membership.

December

Speaker and Program TBD

Mile High Travels and Tag Along Trips

A new, updated format replacing 'field trips'. Invite your fellow club members on your next photo excursion! All you need is to provide WHO – WHAT – WHERE – WHEN!

WHO HAS TRIPS PLANNED – WHERE ARE YOU GOING THIS SUMMER!!!!

Anyone interested in Mile High Travels or Tag-Along Trips can contact Chuck Winter.(303)972-2538, cwinter80127@gmail.com, or, cwinter@mii-rmcc.com. Future trips can also be submitted to the newsletter for inclusion in the next edition. For short-notice trips, consider posting a blog on the club website!

SHARE THE FUN—JOIN THE FUN—ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE

Library News from the Lamb's

Happy Summer from the Library!

Hi everyone. Joe and I hope that your summer is turning out to be a fun one – filled with many picture opportunities. We have had the opportunity to spend many week-ends at our condo in



Keystone, take flower pictures off of Shrine Pass and the Blue Lakes area, and travel to Lake City (flowers had passed their peak). We spent a few days in Pagosa Springs, and have visited several photographer's galleries. We hope that you have had many picture opportunities and look forward to seeing the photos you have taken on your travels. Stop by the library and check out some of our materials. We will be sorting out what we have during the winter months and look forward to updated materials in the library. If you have anything you'd like to donate, please stop by and talk with us. Also, come by and check something out. Remember, a small gift is awarded at each meeting to one person who has checked something out that night (an easy win for you). So far, we have not asked for any monies from the club for materials, gifts, etc. Make our job fun and informational - CHECK US OUT!!!!!!!!!!!!!! See you at the August meeting. We will be open before the meeting and are looking forward to the tour of the new exhibit at THE WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Digital Study Meeting

Our Digital Classroom meeting for July featured a partial tour of Photoshop CS4, led by Russ Burden and using Colin Smith's tutorial DVD. Colin Smith has produced an excellent product for those wanting to get the most out of CS4, and the additional input from members during the meeting added to what the DVD presentation provided. Topics covered including:

- ◇ How to set up a custom workspace and personalize the main screen
- ◇ How to download your photos directly into Bridge, with custom Metadata and automatic backup if desired
- ◇ Opening and working in Camera Raw from Bridge
- ◇ Using keywords, collections, and smart collections
- ◇ Working in and using the Review Mode
- ◇ Working with Metadata and customizing Metadata to include your photographer and copyright information

This meeting had lots of helpful information for Photoshop users, and we only got into a fraction of what is available on the tutorials. Future digital classroom meetings may explore additional modules in the series. For our August meeting, Matt Shaffer will give a presentation on using Microsoft Photostory 3 to create digital slide shows.

If you have not yet attended the digital group meetings you can hopefully see there's a lot to be learned from your fellow club members!

All paid members are encouraged to attend the digital study meetings. The meetings start at 7:15 PM on the 4th Wednesday of each month. Enter through the main entrance, not the doors used for accessing the theater. Bring a notebook and writing implement to take your notes. Also, feel free to volunteer to do a presentation. The more people who participate, the better!

Member Workshops and Seminars:

Cathy & Gordon Illg – Workshops:

Adventure Photography 303 237-7086

gordon@advenphoto.com

www.advenphoto.com

2009 Schedule:

- ◇ Colorado Color, September 27-October 2
- ◇ Fall Wildlife Models, October 5-8
- ◇ Polar Bears, October 30-November 5
- ◇ Alaska Eagles, November 15-21
- ◇ Arches & Canyonlands, November 30-December 5

Our 2010 schedule is also available. We are offering our NANPA discount to all club members also – \$50.00 discount on less than 5 day tours and \$75.00 discount on all other domestic tours.

Russ Burden's Photography Tours:

Visit www.russburdenphotography.com. Contact Russ at 303-791-9997, rburden@ecentral.com

Destinations include:.

- Sept. 23-Oct. 2, 2009 - Tetons and Yellowstone National Parks in Fall - 10 days
- Oct. 20 - 25, 2009 - Hunts Mesa
- Nov. 1 - 7, 2009 - Bryce Canyon and Zion National Parks
- Dec. 1 -7, 2009 - Bosque Del Apache & White Sands National Monument

Mile High Wildlife Photography Club

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TEAM LEADERS

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Special Programs/Field Trips: Chuck Winter

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Competition: Russ Burden

Competition Scoring: Chris Loffredo

Competition Entries/Judging Coordinator:

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Publicity: Buzz Soard 303-779-9933

Library: Betsy Lamb 303-841-2565

BOARD of DIRECTORS

Rita Summers • Russ Burden

Chuck Winter • Chris Loffredo • Frank Weston

August Meeting

Wednesday, August 12th

7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.

at

THE WILDLIFE EXPERIENCE

10035 South Peoria

Competition: Wildlife, Scenic, & Open

July Attendance: Approximately 50

August Digital Training Meeting

Wednesday, August 26nd

7:15 p.m. – 9:30 p.m.

Please send your articles and input to

newsletter@mhwpc.org.