

Meeting Minutes

Date: July 15, 2020

By: Jean Davids, Secretary

The meeting started just after 7:00 pm or so and was presided over by secretary, Jean Davids. We had 10 members, plus our speaker, John Pennoyer, and 1 guest making 12 total people in attendance. This was our first meeting since February 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was great to see everyone again.

Our presenter for the night was John Pennoyer speaking on the topic of “Shooting on the Fly”. John has his own photography business and his website is Impressions of Nature (<https://www.impressionsofnature.net/>). He talked for about an hour on the subject and it was excellent. I’ll leave my notes on the presentation at the end of this since it takes up a lot more space.

After John’s talk we shared our Assignment photos. The assignment was Equine or Animal Photos from last February’s topic. Three people shared their photos and great ones they were.

Other topics were our upcoming agenda items. Everyone has approved of the topics of panoramic and panoramic editing for the next two months. They also agreed on these topics for upcoming meetings:

- “Legalities of Photography” was suggested; i.e. consent forms, copyright, etc.
- Fine Art Flower Photography. This can include a group shoot that we can possibly arrange at Munsinger and Clemens Gardens in St. Cloud. Might need to approve this but if we don’t use tripods, it might be okay to do. If we use tripods, we definitely need prior authorization. We’ll get both of these topics arranged for sometime this summer.
- DSLR Movie Making.
- Mobile Device Movie Making. Jean will work with the agenda committee to get all of these arranged and scheduled.
- Bob Somerville has agreed to do a 15 minute talk on “abstract fireworks photos” at one of our upcoming meetings as well.

Another topic Jean talked about what how we want to handle dues for the year since we have missed 4 meetings this year (2 from last year’s dues and 2 from this year’s dues). Everyone attending the meeting agreed that we should just stick with the \$12 for the year and proceed. It’s just easier to do. And so, everyone owes dues ASAP because they would have been due by no later than the May meeting. Obviously, we’re giving everybody more than that to take care of it. Jean would like to see all dues paid by no later than the August meeting and will send out a note to that effect.

One last topic that was not on the agenda was that of our PO Box in Monticello. Jean said that it seems she has been elected as secretary for life so thought it might be easier to just change the club’s address to hers instead of paying for a PO Box that we don’t really need. Everyone at the meeting agreed with this idea. This would save the club \$42 a year. Jean said she would discuss it with the board members and see if they agree. We only had the PO box for use with the Photo Show anyway so now we just get junk mail for the most part and dues collections at that time of year. So, would still make it easier to deal with.

Katie Friedman mentioned WSCA which is the Western Saddle Club Association. Jean said she would put a link to their events in case anyone wants to practice action shots in relation to our assignment for next month. That is where she got all of the equine photos that she shared with us. Here's the link.

<http://www.wsca.org/WSCAOnDeckSite/pOnDeck.aspx>

Here are my notes from John Pennoyer's talk on "Shooting on the Fly"

Note: some of these notes may be cryptic but I tried my best.

John Pennoyer – Shooting on the Fly

Birds in flight have many challenges. They are one of the toughest things to shoot, especially when you take photos of Goldeneyes or Wood Ducks for example.

Art of shooting birds in flight:

- Photo equipment and setup (for action/sports)
- Knowledge of birds
- Photographic Technique

What makes a good Wildlife Camera?

- Pixels – frame rate, noise control
- Full frame vs cropped
- Focusing operations/settings

John uses these modes to shoot birds in flight or action.

Manual Exposure:

- Sets aperture and shutter speed
- Auto ISO
- Exposure compensation for corrections from EVO

Aperture Priority

- Set aperture priority/shutter speed follows
- Manual ISO
- Exposure compensation for corrections from EVO

Camera Setup

Higher end camera are better but don't let your equipment deter you from trying. You will always have misses so the more you shoot, the better your technique will get.

Focusing:

- AF-C priority
- AF-S priority
- Dynamic AF
- Focus Tracking
- AF Activation

- AF Point illumination
- Focus point wrap-around

Focus points - 15 point or 55 points (he uses 15)

Focus area – uses 9 focus areas as these are easier to adjust over more focus areas

Engaging Autofocus – AF-ON button (also called back button focus) – the advantage of using back button focus is that it doesn't engage the vibration reduction so it is easier to get to focus you want prior to actually taking the shot.

Does not ever use 3D Focus Tracking. Dynamic AF is better if the scenery is crowded/busy. With clean background it doesn't.

Continuous High Speed (CHS) or Continuous Low Speed (CLS) shooting is preferred for action. You are more likely to miss the action with Single Frame Rate shooting.

Practice, practice, practice!!

- Try shooting the family pet or larger birds (like swans) first to practice.
- Popular birding locations are:
 - Memorial Park in Shakopee (ducks)
 - Monticello Swan Park (swans, ducks)
 - Hudson WI (pigeons, gulls)
- Basketball

Be sure to try various settings in your camera setup. One practice technique he does with students is to roll a basketball to see how well people can track it.

Focusing and Frame Rate

Lenses

- Use 300-800 mm
- Fixed Focal length is preferred over zoom – wide open aperture – faster lens
- Use VR reduction – makes hand holding shots possible
- Avoid use of tele-converters – takes away 1 stop of light so won't be as fast

Single focus length lenses are fastest. Zoom has more glass in it to make it possible to zoom. Generally speaking, Manufacturer lenses are faster than 3rd party lenses due to the algorithms used to make them work between camera and lens.

Said to minimize your focal distance on your lens if possible using the Focus Range Scale of the lens. He does not use Full.

There are free downloads you can get to help learn more about focusing correctly.

- 1) Master your autofocus by Jared Lloyd - <https://journalofwildlifephotography.com/mastering-your-autofocus/>

- 2) Mastering Metering – 7 Simple and Powerful tips – by Tin Man Photography - <https://tinmanlee.com/10reasons-download-938472948/>
- 3) Tin Man’s Guide – Top 8 Mistakes of not getting super-sharp photos of fast-moving wildlife - <https://tinmanlee.com/sharp>

Locking on your subject is the most important thing to accomplish. Pick up on birds as soon as possible. Start with center focus point. It is the most sensitive area of focus on your camera. Eliminates camera “hunting” for the object you are trying to focus on. It is hardest to lock onto an object in fog or at long distances.

Why start with center focus? Try this exercise. From 40 or 50 feet away, put focus point dead center. Then manually turn it so it is a little out of focus. Make note of how quickly it locks on again. Then make it way out of focus and see the same thing. Then put focus point off to the side and try the same experiment.

Panning Technique – arms tight into body and move to body speed of bird or subject of photo. Fire in burst mode to be sure to capture the action.

Busy backgrounds are hard to focus. Focus works off contrast so fog is difficult. Focus speed is not only determined by the camera but by the lens as well.

Focus tracking with Lock On – on his Nikon uses Normal – 3.

Tripod gimbal head is best for large lenses. Ball head is next. For hand holding his camera he uses a Black Rapid shoulder strap. It relieves the neck strain of a normal camera strap.

Maintain Level – use reference points such as shorelines, etc.

Always be ready for flight photography. Do practice shoots. Keep these elements in mind.

- Knowledge of birds
- Leave room in the frame
- Story you are trying to tell
- Eye contact
- Background/foreground distractions
- Sharp head/eye
- Eye pleasing
- Critical wing position –wing up or down shows best detail
- 1/1000 shutter speed for big birds, 1/2500 for fast birds, somewhere in between for others
- It isn’t always necessary to STOP the motion.
- Angle of bird is critical
- Coming towards you – yes
- Parallel to you – yes
- Past or away from you – no – just get butt shots that way

Taking flight or landing are good times to get shots. Birds land and take off into the wind. Generally birds/ducks circle before landing.

Types of shots

- Single bird
- Small group of 2-4
- Flocks of birds – still pick 1 bird as your target to focus on
- Silhouettes – background set to -1 EV

Elements to a landscape - Action/behavior – look for their favorite perches.

Post Processing goal – make the best image you can out of it.

Baiting birds is controversial. He does it sometimes on private land like for pheasants but never for things like owls/eagles, etc.

Can see Sandhill Cranes at Crex Meadows where they roost closer to viewing areas than at the Sherburne Wildlife Refuge.

Trumpeter Swans and ducks can be found in Monticello at Swan Park.

Bald eagles can be found all along the Mississippi River.

Websites to look for include <https://www.crexmeadows.org>, <https://moumn.org> and <https://saxzim.org>.

Everyone will have OOPS moments. Practice the 3 Ps of patience, practice and persistence.

You can modify function keys on your camera to switch between single point autofocus and multi point.

VR setting – he uses “Normal” setting.

Lastly, he left us a copy of “My” custom function settings for Autofocus (using Nikon D500 & D850):

- A1: AF_C Priority = Release
- A2: AF-S Priority = Release (no focus tracking)
- A3: Focus Tracking with Lock On = 3 (middle)
- A4: 3D Track Face Detection = off
- A5: 3D tracking watch area = Normal
- A6: Number Focus Points = 15
- A7: Store by orientation = off
- A8: AF Activation = off (use AF On button)
- A9: Limit area mode selection = 9 point
- A10: AF Mode Restrictions = off
- A11: Warp Around = OFF (no wrap)
- A12: Focus point options = Illumination = auto, Manual Focus mode = ON, Dynamic area AF assist = on

2020 Upcoming Agenda

August 19

- Assignment: Shooting on the Fly
- Topic: Panoramic Photography - Presented by Anthony Hall? Or done via video

September 16

- Assignment: Summer or - Edited panoramic photo??
- Topic: Editing/Assembling Panoramic photos if needed Q&A/Demo??

October 21

- Assignment:
- Topic:

November 18

- Assignment:
- Topic:

December 16

- Assignment:
- Topic: