

BT JOURNAL

The Biological and Technical Journal for Wildlife Photographers

B News - The Home of Oomingmak

I'm sitting on an Alaska flight, heading to the Arctic while reading *Ordeal by Hunger*, the story of the Donner Party, when it dawns on me the irony. I left snow at my home; I'm heading for snow, reading about people who perished in snow. But for me, I know I'm going to be guided by someone who has lived, worked, studied and photographed on the North Slope with great passion for nearly three decades. While with the wind chill it probably reached well below zero, I was in good hands! I was afraid our scheduled week of exploration would be too brief for the slope, as I was incredibly excited about fulfilling a lifetime dream of venturing to this land. I was not let down with the time I spent at the home of the Bearded Ones!

Back in 2001, my good friend David Neel, Jr. had invited me up to a very special place on the North Slope, about 80 miles south of the Arctic Ocean, to photograph Musk Ox. David knew of my keen interest for these amazing animals from the help he had previously provided me with in photographing the Musk Ox of Nome. He graciously invited me up and teased me with incredible emails for over six months prior to our departure of the grandeur we were going to explore. In a land thought of as a desert, totally white in the winter, cold and austere to the unloving eye, the beauty, wonder and life we discovered, explored and photographed during our week will always be etched forever in my heart and soul! The Arctic in the winter is simply, brutally beautiful!

cont. on pg.4

T News - Digital B&W Infrared

A little known fact about me, I started out as a black and white special effects photographer. As a matter of fact, I won many awards when I was in high school, city, state and national for my black and white work. So what happened to my love of black and white? Nothing, it just got impractical since it requires a darkroom, special equipment and a lot of time, none of which I have. One of the great blessings and benefits of digital is the ease of shooting black and white. This new technology has given life to an old love for me! Bet you're wondering how digital fits in with special effects black and white photography.

Digital has the great ability to change from ISO 200 to 3200, from tungsten to daylight balance or more to the point, from color to black and white capture with the push of a button. While the digital black and white doesn't capture the blackest of blacks like a good B&W film will capture, it sure is darn close and a whole lot easier! One of the first things I started to explore as soon as I got my D1 was black and white

digital photography. I've captured thousands of digital B&W images as I wean myself back into this very romantic and dramatic method of communicating. It was sometime into digital B&W I was made aware that infrared B&W was possible with digital. With that knowledge, I've been having tons of fun with it ever since. Here are the basics to this very easy photography so you too can enjoy this incredible fun.

cont. on pg.15



The young guys know the rules The old guys know the exceptions

Oliver Wendel Homes

The DP Battery Case



Are you tired of not having a case for your digital batteries? How about having a case for your F5 or 1N battery that protects and easily slips onto a strap or belt?

Well, we've got the answer for you! The latest in our DigitalPro line, the DP Battery Case is made from 1000 Cordura, has a slot for a Compact flash card and large flap for protection. For more info on this and our other products in our growing line, head to pg.24. You won't be sorry!

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Howdy!

As you can tell from the cover, I've been traveling again! April was a big month for me, adding over 10,000 images to my files! It's been a grand start to spring. I hope you've had as much fun with the new season.

One of my lifelong dreams to explore the Arctic came true in April. My visit was way too brief and only strengthened my quest to explore this incredible region for many years to come! Along with many broken personal records like the most images captured in an hour that occurred in the last 30 days, we're breaking another with the longest article with the most images ever in the Journal. This issue with my story of my adventure in the Home of Oomingmak is a heart felt special I couldn't wait to bring you! I hope the images and text sweep you up in the Arctic just as it has me.

My beginnings with photography as a means of communication go way back to high school days, like for many of you. You might not know that I started out and for a long time, did nothing but Black & White work. B&W special effects were my speciality, which with time yielded me many rewards. This long ago passion has been rekindled with the dawning of digital. T News this month is just the start of some of the things I'm doing now in B&W that I haven't done for years!

In this day and age with all the news pulling us this way or that, it is easy to forget to stay focused on the things that matter. Loved ones, photography and the environment need our constant attention and TLC now more than ever. Please make time every day to give all of these things your attention. A little bit can go a long way!

In the next issue of the Journal, you'll find a full user report on the new D100 digital SLR from Nikon. If you want to keep up with what I'm doing, or ask a question, head to a new forum started by David Cardinal at www.nikondigital.org. And watch for the release of our first eBook in late July!

Keep on Shooting!

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Moose Honored for years of dedication!

In an informal ceremony befitting the longtime association and friendship, Moose was honored as a Research Associate with the Endangered Species Recovery Program. The ceremony took place on the Elkhorn Plains, CA where Moose and his family have been a part of the Giant Kangaroo work for the past 15 years.

Moose's longtime friends, Dan Williams and Patrick Kelly were present and awarded him with the honor. The honor says in part: "Moose, Sharon, Brent and Jake have worked closely with Endangered Species Recovery Program staff in the field on many occasions, donating time and expertise in wildlife research and photography."

Upon accepting the award, Moose was heard to say, "....." nothing! It was one of the very rare occasions when Moose had nothing to say, he was speechless.

The Endangered Species Recovery Program is a government agency specializing in the study and recovery of the threatened and endangered wildlife and wildplaces of California's Central Valley.

You've seen many of the images Moose has cap-



tured while working with these dedicated biologists in the BT Journal over the years. Another example is the Doyen's Dune Weevil on pg.17. When Moose finally got his voice back he said, "this was the most meaningful and important honor he has ever received or could ever imagine in his career!"

Moose was also honored in May by Nikon USA as May's Legend Behind the Lens. This monthly showcase of a Nikon shooter is featured on the Nikon USA, Nikon Net website. By the time you receive this, you will have to look for the Archive link on the Legend link to find the text about Moose and the 45 images, many never before seen. One of its passages sums it up best:

"And all of it is in service to one purpose: preserve and protect endangered wildlife, particularly in his home state of California. So Moose sends all these things, not so much to promote his photography, but to let you know that his photography exists to support the cause."



photos by David Cardinal



B News - The Home of Oomingmak cont. from pg. 1

This B News is atypical as it's not about the biology of one critter, but about the biology, ecology and passion I have for what is perceived as a barren land. I am by no means an expert on the Arctic. I haven't even scratched the surface of this frontier and have a lifetime of plans racing through my head to get to know and photograph the Arctic better. Nor am I encouraging you to explore this region on your own, especially alone because it is a brutal place that can swallow up every trace of the novice. But rather, I want you to know the life and romance this region has to offer the wildlife photographer so if someday, you have the opportunity to be guided through this region of the north, you'll know to take advantage of it. There is a lot more to the Arctic coastal plain, North Slope, than oil and ANWR; there is a life of abundance, of seasons and hardships. This is the land of Oomingmak (the Bearded One).

Our adventure began without my presence. David and his life long friend Earl packed up near Anchorage and started the long drive up prior to my arrival in Fairbanks. When they arrived at the airport to pick me up, I understood David's emails much better in regards to prep time for the trip. The two pickups with two trailers in tow were packed with no less than 10 spare tires, 168 gallons of gas, sleeping bags and tents, food and supplies, snow machines and snow shoes, arctic clothing and camera gear. We were going to spend 24

hours on the Dalton Hwy, also known as the Haul Road, which has a very well earned reputation for eating up vehicles. So after buying food for the week (which was put into ice chests to prevent it from *freezing* on our drive) and my buying new arctic footwear (LaCrosse Ice Kings, great boots recommended to me by David and another good friend who lives in Fairbanks) off we went.

The Journey Begins

We left Fairbanks at 7am with the sun trying to break through the clouds. Despite knowing that I was in for a 12 hour drive, the anticipation of seeing all this new country made it seem so much longer! I had never been on the slope before; never driven the Haul Road but it had been a long time quest. Now, finally, I was living it. We had run into some friends of David's while buying our food and heard about recent critter road sightings. But you know how that goes, "you just missed" stories. When nearly right from the start of our adventure I saw a Northern Hawk Owl perched right where the pavement ends and the dirt road begins, I knew the myths were true. I was stoked!

The Dalton Hwy follows the Alaskan Pipeline for the most part, to me a marvel of engineering. It winds its way up and down hills, through valleys and eventually across the Arctic Plain. In some places you're right next to it, other places it's far off in the distance while other times it goes underground. When you start to get to know the Haul Road, time and distance is ticked off by the passing of the seven pump stations that heat the oil and keep it moving. This very graphic line is a reminder of the distance being traveled down this very bumpy road!





We weren't very far down the road when the stories began to flow about trips of the past. Sightings, adventures, mishaps and legends were told to me as the spruce trees slowly started to get shorter and then thinner as we traveled north. Along the road Ravens and Gray Jays were about. Here and there we would see a flash of red as a Pine Grosbeak went by. While the calendar might say it's spring, no one seemed to have clued in the Arctic. Because while the sun appeared at 05:00am and set at 10:30pm, there was still plenty of snow and cold temps to convince us otherwise!

About four hours into our journey, we came to Coldfoot (no, I didn't make up the name). A "truck" stop, it's the last fuel and food until you reach the Arctic Ocean and Deadhorse (no, I didn't make up that name either). You drive in a little ways off the road and are greeted by a sign that states, "On January 26th, a new record was established when -82F degrees was recorded." Knowing this was the last "civilization," I did a mental check one last time to make sure I was prepared for the cold to come! After filling up the gas tanks and ourselves, our merry band continued on up the road. (I should note that by this time, we had already acquired 3 of our total of 7 windshield rock strikes. This road really does in a vehicle!)

To say we stopped a few times on our travels is nothing short of an understatement. This was all new country to me and my

questions and desire to shoot would have driven the normal person nuts. It was a pleasure to ride with David whose love for the Arctic made it very easy for him to answer my questions and stop and look whenever I would holler. One of our stops was at the "Arctic Circle." No more than a pull off with a sign telling you that you were at the Arctic Circle, I was surprised to find spruce trees all around. We had to travel a ways before we would be in what most folks conjure up in their mind as the Arctic.

David was great at showing me all the "tourist" spots along the road (even though most "tourists" don't





make this drive). One such spot was the “The Northern Most Spruce Tree.” We stopped, stretched our legs and I went over to take a few shots of the “tree” (which David thinks was planted just for the sign). I was at the tree when Earl called out “Lynx!!” Sure enough, up the slope perhaps 50 yards out was a Lynx just out cruising. It stopped for a moment to check us out before venturing on its way. While we had seen the typical Alaskan wildlife like Moose, special glimpses of critters like Lynx was what I was so looking forward to on our adventure and was not disappointed!

We were now in the Brooks Range, a locale I’ve longed to see and explore. Shrouded in clouds most of the time we were there, I passed through yearning for more and asking even more questions. I could see this was a place just longing to be explored! I was amazed how deep the Brooks Range was as we drove. I didn’t realize that but I should have known that just like everything else in Alaska, the Brooks is one big ass piece of real estate. It wasn’t long after our Lynx sighting that we went up Atigun Pass, not a very friendly place for anyone who has never driven on snow.

While heading north, we could see the tops of the surrounding peaks. David told me of the Dall Sheep in the area and their summer habits in the pass, so I was on the look out. I didn’t see any heading north but on our southern trip out, I saw a couple up the slope in the fog. Their trail in the snow led my eye right up to them, deepening my amazement for these critters.

It was not too far after Atigun that the Arctic we all picture in our minds began to unfold before us. At first, low rolling, white covered hills spread out for what appears as far as the eye can see. It looks so barren at first, the eye latches onto every dark form in the white landscape, trying to make each rock a wolf, grizzly or caribou. Then as if someone opened up thousands of cages at once, the dark shapes begin to move and transform into caribou. At this time of year, the bulls don’t have any antlers, just the does. Driving along, some are way off in the distance while others are right

next to the road. While you watch them graze you can sense they are on a mission; spring is in the air and it has them thinking of migration.

We had spotted one or two Willow Ptarmigan here and there all along the road up to this point (along with Snowshoe Hares). They come to the road to pick up gravel mostly and being, well, rather stupid (the locals call them stupid chickens) they tend to wait until the last minute if not too late to get off the road. The truckers, and there are *a lot* of them driving back and forth on the Haul Road, don’t slow down for the stupid chickens. Seeing them dead by the road is common, so is seeing the scavengers grabbing this quick and easy meal. There was one locale that I’ll tell you about shortly where the ptarmigan

were flocked up in a group of at least 150 birds, it was stunning!

Once on the “flats” we traveled up the road in company of the pipeline. About thirty minutes after seeing our first caribou, we had gone past them all and it was back to checking out every black dot. Some snow had melted so there were many to look at. We passed pump station 5, then 4 and finally came up to the DOT station at Sag River. I had been looking forward to this point! Though the weather had started to close in on us (it changes seemingly at every bend in the road) I knew the one herd of Musk Ox, the point of our adventure, were around the DOT station. Sure enough, not too far down the road, there they were! We stopped of course



to look and photograph them, but not for a really long time, as we still had a little ways to travel and we had already been on the road for 11 hours. Our destination wasn't too much farther up the road.

Coming over a ridge, David said, "There's Happy Valley" where I knew their lodge was located. Up and over a couple of small rolling hills and we were pulling into the lodge. While the snow was falling, the generator was started, heaters turned on (it was below 20 degrees inside) and a path shoveled to and from the lodge to the vehicles. In very little time, we were warm and inside.

When folks think of an Alaskan Lodge, they conjure up beautiful log structures on the edge of a bluff, overlooking a glacier river. We were at such a lodge except...it was winter and the lodge is only running during the summer. This is for a very good reason! Little things like, no running water because the river is frozen solid (and while a beautiful river, it's not under a bluff) so there's no running water. (That outhouse is a *long walk* late at night, and oh, that seat!) We were warm and comfortable, but we weren't being waited on by a lodge staff nor had a hot shower to get warm in after shooting. With that, my first day's adventure in the Arctic came to a close.



The Purpose of Our Journey

The reason for our travels up to the Arctic at this time of the year was to coincide with the calving of the Musk Ox. Before I get to that and photographing them, let me tell you a little bit about Musk Ox.

The first thing that strikes folks when they see Musk Ox for the first time is how small they are! Probably slightly smaller than a Shetland pony, these "walking carpets" or Oomingmak, the Bearded Ones were historically natives of the Arctic. They were hunted to extinction in Alaska back in the 1860s. In the 1930s, they were reintroduced (all Alaskan Musk Ox of today come from a group of 34 relocated to Alaska), using Musk Ox from Greenland, which are the smaller of the two subspecies. The Musk Ox found in Alaska is the Greenland or "white face." A big bull might stand five feet tall and weight around 800 pounds. While they can run up to 20mph for short distances, they would rather not because even in the dead of winter, they can overheat with their incredible thick coat. They are ungulates, related more closely to goats and sheep and not ox or bison. Like cows, they have a four chamber stomach (just what I'm sure you always wanted to know).

The Musk Ox doesn't venture much nor do a big migration like Caribou. Their incredible coats permit them to survive in the harsh Arctic climate and their small size permits them to live on the little grasses, lichens and forbs they dig from under the snow. Their fur is truly amazing, not only how long and how much they have, but also its insulating qualities. In the spring/early summer, they shed their "winter" fur (as much as 6 pounds!) called Qiviut. This is collected in many regions to be used in special clothing. The Qiviut sells for as much as \$90 a pound. When you see Musk Ox in a driving snow storm, the temperature way below zero and they're laying and rubbing in the snow, it's not hard to understand the insulating qualities of their fur! (It was amazing to me that the first day we saw the Musk Ox, none were shedding any Qiviut yet within a week, huge sheets were blowing off in the wind!)





Musk Ox are best known for their “circle” of defense behavior. This is where the Musk Ox form a circle and lock horns around most of the time new born calves to protect them from predators. While I was hoping to see wolves (which we never did) I was also hoping to see and photograph the Musk Ox protective circle. The problem is if they don’t perceive you as a threat, they don’t form a circle. They might bunch up a little, but with David’s expert guiding and our “no hurry” approach, the Musk Ox just went about their daily routine as if they are photographed every day. (David and I surmised that the Musk Ox figured that any critter willing to stand out in the cold, wind-driven, freezing snow must be too stupid to be a threat!)

Did we get to photograph any newborns? Regrettably, no (5 calves were born 3 days after we left). We were just days too early, which was a bummer on one hand, but on the other it gives me a great reason to go back, and I will! I found that no matter the age or sex, the Musk Ox have really great faces to photograph. Each and every one of the 25 in the herd that we photographed (typical herd size is less than 40 animals) was different. The combination of their age and gray hair (not related I think) gave each animal a distinct look. The horns grow differently between males and females and at different rates. When first born, they have no horns. They do not shed their horns; they just keep growing throughout their lives. As they grow older, the horns grow longer. If it’s the male, they start to grow by angling straight down to the ground whereas the female’s horns grow out from the head. As the males get older, the boss (big horn mass on top of the skull) grows closer together until there is no fur between the

two horns. After this, the male’s horns start to grow in bulk. And just like a hunter, I kept looking for and focusing in on the biggest bull for my photographic trophy!

Photographing Oomingmak

I photographed the Musk Ox five days in a row and each day had totally different weather and light. This is typical for Alaska and especially the Arctic. We heard the weather forecast a couple of times before and during our trip. Not one forecast, no matter the source was even close to what we experienced! When it comes to photographing the Musk Ox though, I couldn’t have asked for anything better because I wanted in my short time to experience as much as possible! In my five days of shooting, I captured and brought home over 3000 images of just Musk Ox!

Photographic gear was really simple. I shot the vast majority of the images with the 400f2.8AFS on the D1H. At times I shot with the TC-14e and 80-400VR or 28-70f2.8AFS. My settings were the normal ones I use for the D1H, capturing everything on my new Lexar 512 24x cards (really sweet cards, nice and fast, which considering I was photographing a slow subject, was important!).

Personal gear was simple as well. I had my new LaCrosse Ice King boots which were fantastic, never a hint of cold. Normal Carhartt pants, thermal shirt and t-shirt with Nomar jacket and at times, Balaclava and



Ice Climbing gloves. With all of this, photography was plain simple and fun!

Our first day of serious shooting found us in overcast and windy conditions. The wind was really nasty and cold, bringing the air temperature down to well below zero, which made shooting with a long lens a real challenge! Proper long lens technique was a must to dampen the wind's vibration. Shooting with lots of depth of field with a slow shutter speed with all that wind was basically a no win scenario. Even though I knew that, I had to try on some images anyways, yet most of which ended up being deleted later.



I always find getting to know a critter for the first time real exciting. While having read the books and had the help of someone who has worked with the critter before, actually seeing and learning for myself is exhilarating for me! When we first slowly approached the Musk Ox, they sort of bunched up, a sign that they were not comfortable with us. Sadly I thought, as they did this all too seldom because I had no sooner begun to photograph this behavior when they went on about their business and ignored us. They did have a distance they would let us approach before slowly moving a step or two, it was enough of a distance that I would have to add the TC-14e if I wanted a tight head shot. The majority of the time, we were no more than 20 yards from these beasts.

What *do* Musk Ox do with their day? Man....darn little! They basically do like little babies - eat, sleep and make pooh! Upon first observing them you might ask

yourself, just what am I going to photograph for five days? This quickly disappears as you train in and watch the dynamics of the herd, as there is a lot of social activity that goes on! It almost always centers on sex!

The herd is never really that spread out, as all the members seemingly are kept herded by the dominant male. Much of the activity we witnessed centered on the dominant and sub-dominant bull, nosing herd members around and the ripple effect caused by that. Intermingled with this were the activities of sleeping and eating, eating and sleeping. You could say that my first day with the Musk Ox was spent learning this trivia. (Keep in mind that what I'm passing along is "antidotal" information and not biological gospel).

There were at least two other younger bulls in the group. (I wasn't about to pull up their hair to check for sure.) These two seemed to feed off the anxiety of the dominant bull at times and pace about literally being a pain in the butt. We didn't ever know for sure what all the smelling of rears and lip curls were all about. We assumed it had to do with calving about to begin as the rut for Musk Ox is in fall.

This first full day with the Musk Ox found them in and amongst willows (mere bare branches this time of the year, perhaps six feet tall). Not very tall, not thick, just enough cover to make life difficult for clean shots. While some ate sparingly at the willows, the majority of their time was spent rubbing the Qiviut from their hides. In the big wind gusts, the Qiviut would leave the ox and fly for literally a couple hundred yards





before ever touching the ground. I found documenting the large strands of Qiviut blowing in the wind to be a challenge, especially to get it sharp. It is much lighter in color and seems to “float” to the top prior to being shed. When a huge clump would float off, I was often distracted by thinking about finding it until the thought of my lens being blown over in my absence snapped me back into shooting mode.

The wind was really my main subject that first day. The “shag” on the Musk Ox is four feet long or better, starting at the curve of their back and nearly reaching to the ground. (We rarely saw more than a hoof and only an inch or two at best.) This incredibly long hair is what permits the Musk Ox to survive the cold of the Arctic and in the wind, makes for amazing patterns as it blows about. The challenge is: shooting with enough depth of field to make it all sharp, at a shutter speed fast enough to freeze the motion while capturing the

patterns you see as fast as they appear and disappear. My first day then was all about hair and wind.

You’ll notice that Musk Ox have very light patches of fur across their backs. The color contrast between the dark surrounding fur and these light patches just fascinated me because at times, the graphic nature of these combinations was striking. I thankfully noticed this the first day and started to play with the graphic nature of Musk Ox. I’m so glad I shoot digital because as I was going through my images that night I could see what was working and what wasn’t. I’m not sure I ever really captured exactly what my mind and eyes were seeing, but I kept working at perfecting it over the week.

This contrast in the hair I also used to my best ability for backgrounds for other Musk Ox photography. I found it frustrating and David commented on this fact as well. It seemed to us that as soon we focused on just one ox, it would do something so we no longer saw its face. Of course this could have just been snow blindness affecting our minds, but this in combination with using the hair contrast for backgrounds, made composition hairsplitting quick! We either got the shot within seconds of seeing it or didn’t at all!

The next day of shooting was an even greater challenge! While the day before we had overcast skies and wind, this day we added driving snow! Now it’s true that I wanted shots of Musk Ox in a snowfall, but I didn’t ask for driving snow. (Keep in mind the weather forecast was for blue skies all week!) From shooting in my own backyard, I knew that to capture the “blowing snow” effect I needed to figure out the correct shutter speed in correlation to the speed of the snow fall. Normally in the Sierra, I need to drop down to 1/30 to capture the falling snow. On this day, I was at 1/125! The wind was blowing that hard. In fact, I had my first ever weather problem in twenty years because of the wind driven snow.

I didn’t know it, but the wind was blowing so hard that it forced moisture behind the front filter of my 400f2.8AFS. I kept blotting the snow from my front element, nearly an every five minute task but it wasn’t enough. That night when I was tending to my gear I saw the condensation inside my lens, something that would plague me the next day!



When you have driving snow, you obviously need to point the lens in any direction except into the wind. Lucky for us, we could shoot at ninety degrees to the wind so we didn't have too much snow building up inside the lens shade, but had to hold the lens incredibly still to capture a sharp image. Man, was this ever fun! (And yes for those inquiring minds, if you were not dressed properly, you would be done in within minutes!).

The driving snow slowed down the Musk Ox, not moving about a whole lot this day. Even the dominant bull (not as big as they can get by the way) wasn't up to much. What really amazed me was that in this weather the Musk Ox could sleep! Now, I thought that with this driving snow the ox would turn their backs to the wind so as not to have it smashing into their faces as they slept. Wrong! The Musk Ox laid down seemingly wherever they felt like it (not doing any ground prep), flopping down like a big shaggy dog and facing right into the wind!

It was at these times that some snow would build up on their coats on the side facing the wind. I was amazed that while it did crust, it wasn't a blank coat. When they stood up they didn't make a big effort to shake off the accumulation of snow but rather, it kind of just disappeared by either falling or being rubbed off by a passing ox. To say these critters are adapted to their Arctic climate is nothing short of an understatement. I stood there in amazement, thinking about the evolution that had taken place to make it possible for these creatures to exist in their environment.

It was this day that we found the Musk Ox limit to our presence. We kept slowly moving closer as the day progressed until we saw the ox slowly move away from us. We were close, closer than normal David said. Like I said, we just figured that the ox must have assumed that anything stupid enough to be out in that weather wasn't something to be afraid of!



The third full day we found very dramatic light dotting the landscape on our travel to the herd. The wind had ceased and clouds dotted the sky, creating God beams all about. This dramatic light was to die for! Upon reaching the herd, I instantly set up the 400f2.8. Seeing the contrast of the dark furred beasts against the snow, I was puzzled to say the least when I looked through my lens. I kept going back and forth, looking at the scene and through my lens until I realized the "flat" image I was seeing in my viewfinder was from condensation in my lens! Eeegads....great light and my lens was messed up! It was a photographic challenge to say the least, thank goodness again I was shooting digital.

I was able to still function by thinking harder than normal. First, I changed Custom Setting 24 to High to deal with the "flat" light coming through the lens. Next, I learned where I could shoot so I would not to be really totally affected by my fogged lens. Snow can flare just like if you were





pointing somewhat towards the sun. Finally, when not shooting with the 400f2.8 and with another lens, I would point the 400mm towards the sun and remove the rear filter to let air move through the lens. I managed to keep shooting, but I sure didn't enjoy having my attention taken away from my subjects and onto technical things! (This was of course my own fault as I was the one shooting in the driving snow!)

With the warm sun, the Musk Ox were busy feeding and being Musk Ox. With the light, the challenge was to capture this activity at the same time the dramatic light lit it up. It was this day that my favorite cow, the one with the most character in the face really started to shed her Qiviut. This natural contrast in the fur was incredibly eye catching! She seemed to sense I was watching her because when light and subject lined up and I swung my lens on her, I would lose the shot nearly every time. I was always surprised that when I checked my watch that hours had ticked by when it felt like just minutes.

It was on this sunny day that the faces of last year's calves really struck me. While not as cute as the face of a spring calf, they are darn cute! They are really shy and often "hide" around a cow. They don't hold still but like to rock back and forth slightly where they stand. This just adds to the challenges of photographing Musk Ox. I was scanning the herd one time and noticed a year old calf at the back of one of the cows; it seemed to be burying its head in the cow's long fur. I stared at it for awhile until I realized it was trying to nurse. The cow soon shooed it away, but we took this as a sign that the cow was producing milk and perhaps a newborn would soon appear (which it never did while we were there).

The one aspect of the year olds that I liked were their horns. Mere nubs at this point, they are the same basic color as the fur on the top of their heads. The horns stick out and as such, look like the youngster is having a really bad hair day.

With the snow not stinging my eyes, I was able to watch the Musk Ox feed a little closer as well. Between an awkward kicking motion in which they try to paw at the ground and a nose shovel technique, they move the foot deep layer of snow. I had the opportunity this day to actually look at what it was they were digging for and eating. To me it looked like mere grass stubble and lichens so small I couldn't see them without bending over and getting really close.

Our fourth day was much like our first, weather wise. I was out a short time on the last day where I captured the last thing I had preset in my mind. The weather had changed again; the temperatures were dropping and with it we could see the breath of these mighty animals. Finding a dark background so their breath was obvious wasn't a problem. I have to admit that I was saddened when I had to pack up my gear on the last day and say goodbye to this herd; I had really come to enjoy being around and watching what it is to be a Musk Ox in the Arctic.

More to Photograph than Musk Ox

Like I've already mentioned, the Arctic in April is one vast, rolling white carpet as far as the eye can see. It takes little training or concentration to pick up any black dot on this carpet, not any luck to find a moving black dot. Finding other subjects that would cooperate photographically in the Arctic is just the same as anywhere else. Good examples of this are Willow Ptarmigan, Caribou and Red Fox.





trying to get out of the wind the best they could. They also stayed to the lee side of the willows, which photographically left a lot to be desired. It was a couple days later that we really struck ptarmigan gold!

On our great light day, we ventured south on the Haul Road to see what else we could put in the great light. We were coming up to the Brooks Range when we ran into the Caribou again. We were heading towards them when we came into a group of Ptarmigan on the road. Like the others, they wouldn't stick when we got out of the truck, so we proceeded on. We came back to the same spot about ten minutes later and stopped to get out and see if we could find the ptarmigan. We heard them all around

The Ptarmigan are a chicken sized bird, the state bird of Alaska. In the winter, they are pure white with only outer black tail feathers to separate them from the snowy background. I've photographed Willow Ptarmigan for over a decade, but never when there were pure white, so I was more than excited when we sighted our first ones. It wasn't until later the next day that I was able to photograph them.

My first photographs of them were of a smallish flock of perhaps 30+ birds not far from the Musk Ox herd. This group wouldn't permit me to approach on foot, so I had to photograph them from the truck. That was fine, as it gave me an opportunity to watch how they worked as a flock, socialized and foraged. It was a windy day so they were scrunched down most of the time,



us but it took a couple of minutes to visually acquire them. There were well over 150+ ptarmigan in this flock! They were everywhere once you found their little white heads, peering out over the snow covered tundra. It took my breath away!

With no provocation they took flight in one giant mass. It has to be one of the most impressive sights I've seen! All these white birds with black V tails, flying in mass over the snow, it was just gorgeous! Well, I had to photograph them so the stalk began. With 400f.8 / TC-14e, D1H in hand, I slowly started to walk down to where the ptarmigan had flown to. I could see and hear them as I slowly approached. I noticed that many of the birds were slowly walking up the slope to the road I was on (not the main Haul Road). I slowly approached,

caught up to them and then slowly moved just past the leaders of this walk. There I stopped and waited.

The ptarmigan slowly advanced, feeding off the partially exposed tundra as they went. It didn't take too long until the first birds had walked up close enough for me to photograph them. And in a short while, I was amongst 40+ birds as they approached, stopped and then walked past on their journey up the slope. I couldn't press the shutter release fast enough as this moving carpet of white approached. Keep in mind this is the same group that just minutes before wouldn't let us approach them. Now they were approaching us on their terms, whatever they were, and all things were just fine.

We found this same kind of thing with the Caribou as well. No matter if they were right next to the road or 100 yards away, if we stopped the truck, off they would scamper. Get out of the truck and walk and stop and in a short time they would wonder up to us. It's that stupid factor I mentioned with the Musk Ox. Critters must figure if you're stupid enough to be out in that cold, you must not be too big of a threat! Nothing against the Caribou but since only the does had antlers and the bucks had little nubs, I wasn't really into photographing them up close, so I didn't spend that much time focusing in on them. (Get it, photography, focusing in on...?)

The Red Fox...there's a subject I wanted in my viewfinder whenever we could! But like any other critter, some stick and some don't. We came across a magnificent Cross Fox (a dark phase Red Fox) next to the road, it was stunning! It was busy digging up something but when we stopped, it left. Darn is not the word I said when it left!

On our beautiful light day when all the other wildlife was out and about, so were the foxes. After photographing the giant flock of ptarmigan I just described we came across the Red Fox along the side of the road. It had found a Caribou leg to gnaw on. As we pulled up to it, it didn't run away. That was the first good sign. I was on the opposite side of the truck from the fox so I could get out and set up and because it was

slightly down a slope, it couldn't even see my feet as I got ready to shoot. I came out to shoot over the hood and the fox looked up. It was momentary enough to stop my heart and make me think that it was going to run. But instead, it went back to its leg bone meal.

I started to shoot and was a good 40 yards away. This was way too far away! I started to approach the fox, watching its actions, stopping to shoot when it seemed to be reacting to my approach. After about fifteen minutes I was within ten yards of the fox, which was still gnawing away. After a few more minutes I was as close as I wanted to be, the fox still happy to just pull,

tug, gnaw and work on that frozen caribou leg. I kept shooting away as the fox kept eating away. After perhaps 30 minutes it had had its fill and started to clean its muzzle in the snow. Then the fox approached me!

If I didn't have a camera planted to my face, I'm sure the fox would have seen my jaw on the ground as it kept walking right up to me. It stopped just at my MFD long enough for me to capture some head shots before it walked past me and on up the slope to disappear in the white world it has come to survive in.

That's the Arctic! This is such a magical world where wildlife has adapted to live in what is to us a brutally beautiful yet harsh world. The magic I experienced was a life long quest, a dream I have had after reading such books as Arctic Dream or looking at the

images of other photographers who had come before me. You have to keep in mind that I live in a place where 25 feet of snow in the front yard is common, so you could correctly assume that I like the white stuff. Those who know me know I don't get cold either but when I sent a photo to my web mistress of myself bundled up and crusted with snow, she said, "it must be cold if you're wearing a jacket!" While the cold could be hazardous to the unprepared, the warmth I felt inside from being on the Arctic and seeing its magic for myself more than made up for any outside temperature! This was my first venture to the land at the edge of the continent, but I am already planning my next trip to the home of Oomingmak!



T News - Digital B&W Infrared cont. from pg.1

What's needed for B&W Infrared?

This is the killer part (just kidding)! You need a digital camera that can shoot B&W and you need a filter. That's all! Of course the price tag for this kind of photography directly correlates to you; for me, I'm now shooting with the Nikon D1H and Harrison & Harrison filters. Many pocket digital cameras have a B&W mode. You can buy a Kodak Wratten Gel filter for less than \$20. The bottom line is the price of doing infrared B&W is up to you!

I started with the Kodak Wratten Gel filter myself. I wanted to see if this thing worked before I dived into investing in "real" filters. The Gel works just fine photographically, but it's a real pain to use! If there is any breeze, if you have lenses with a filter size greater than 72mm or you need three hands, the Gel is not a great option. Once I was convinced that B&W IR worked and I wanted to explore it more, I invested in "real" filters.

You can order glass, screw-in IR filters from Harrison & Harrison. I purchased three: 87 (absorbs 730nm or below), 89-B (absorbs 670nm or below) and the 88A (absorbs 710nm or below). The 87 is the standard, the other two I have because I want to "bracket" my IR effect. You can do the homework and learn the science to know when you want to use one filter or the other, but I don't want to work that hard at having fun.

How do you take B&W IR photos?

This part is technically easy and esthetically a challenge. The technical part is, you set your digital camera to B&W capture, manually focus prior to attaching your IR filter, dial in compensation and shoot. You manually focus because the filters you're using are dark, dark, dark red, so dark you cannot see through them. You focus manually because the majority of the time, your AF will get confused. Because it's so dark, you have long shutter speeds. I highly recommend you start off by shooting on a tripod. I also recommend you shoot first color then B&W and then your IR capture.

You'll learn faster by seeing the progression later on your DigitalPro lighttable.

Compensation can range from none to +1.5 stops. This is one type of photography where I do bracket. Since we're dealing with the "unknown" in that we really never know how IR will render our scene (though with time you'll have a pretty darn good idea), I bracket the

exposure compensation to vary the outcome. When you do this, you'll see changes in the highlight and shadow detail. Depending on your subject and your tastes, you'll either want better highlights or better shadows, which you'll only get by changing your compensation. That's another one of the great benefits of digital, as you can see right on your LCD monitor how your subject reacts to IR and what if any compensation you need or want. (You'll find five examples on pg.16, which will provide you with some food for thought.) This is the extent of the technical part, it's really that simple. It's the esthetics that takes some time!



Your first B&W IR images will make you giddy! You can easily get lost in the novelty of the image and forget about the photography as a communication aspect. The only way I can think of explaining how you can use IR as a problem solving tool for communicating is by example.

Right now, the west is in its worst year of a three year drought. For much of California, green grasses and wildflower carpets never happened this spring. We went from winter to late summer in a matter of weeks. This makes some photography just not too appetizing! B&W IR is a way to still shoot this spring and not show the drought. How?

The example shots of the Bakersfield Cactus (an endangered species) are a good example. You can see the brown grass clearly in the color image, which doesn't make the beautiful blossom pop visually. With the B&W IR, the brown grass is obviously no longer brown and

The endangered Bakersfield Cactus made the perfect subject to shoot this series of B&W Infrared images. Use the color image in the center to judge the effect of the three different Harrison & Harrison IR filters. Look at the highlight detail (the blossom), look at the leaf (the “beavertail”) and look at the brown grass background.

The photo right below is a straight black and white image. You’ll see the biggest difference in the blossom. I think it’s interesting how in the color and black and white you can see the various detail of the blossom but in IR, they are all rendered with the same basic value.



This photo was taken with the 87 Harrison & Harrison filter. This is my preference in these three because it makes the blossom “glow” more than the other two. I also like the way the bud on the left has a glow about it.

You’ll notice the shadow on the lower right is more opened up than in the other two images. For this particular image, I didn’t want strong shadows. The lack of which gives the beavertail a slight “glow” look to it bringing life to the vertical.



This image was taken with the 89-B Harrison & Harrison filter. This has lower contrast than the 88a but more than the 87. The blossom comes across with more info than I wanted, but the shadow detail on the right and the “stem” have that glow I like in the 87 IR image. You might be wondering if this can be changed with exposure compensation. To some extent it can be. You start to sacrifice detail in the highlights and shadows when you try to make up for IR effects with exposure compensation. But since it is IR, who’s going to know?



The Photo above was taken with the 88a Harrison & Harrison filter. It’s the contrastiest of the three images for this particular subject. That contrast gives more detail to the individual petals of the blossom than I wanted. The added contrast also takes your eye to the busy grass background. Since I want that to disappear which is why I was shooting IR, making it appear with contrast was counter-productive.

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cont. on pg.21

Chimping - Is it Costing You Images?

Instantaneous satisfaction, that's one phrase that is quite often associated with digital photography. I'd be the first one to admit that depressing that monitor button and seeing the magic that I just captured appear on the LCD is a huge thrill and ego boost! What amazes me and sadly disappoints me though is that this great learning tool is being wasted. What has become known as "chimping" by many digital "old timers" might end up in the psychological text books in the future.

Where did the term "chimping" originate? Many years ago when the first digital cameras were in the hands of shooters, some photographers at the U.S. Open were covering it with Kodak DCS520 cameras. These photographers were heard, making chimp-like sounds when they were previewing their images..."Ohhhh-ohhhh-ohhhh-Ahhh-ahhhh-ahhhh." Ever since, the constant previewing of images on digital LCD monitors has been referred to as chimping. (A friend of mine adds to this definition, "I've always likened it to "Monkey See Monkey Do" one photographer looks at his images, then another ...") What's the problem with this you ask? Isn't that what the LCD is for anyway?

In a three week period, I watched a total of 17 digital photographers who were all shooting digital, all expert chimperers. At the beginning of this three week period, as in the very first day, I noticed a photographer miss a great photo op because he was so busy chimping. He was so busy seeing if he "captured" the last photo event, he missed the next one which IMHO was even better. Knowing that I was going to be with a number of digital shooters over the next few weeks, I started to keep count of how many images were lost to chimping.



I was amazed when I looked at my little tally sheet at the end of each week and then the final tally after three weeks. Out of the 15 days of shooting, 17 shooters had missed a total of 17 great photo ops (that I was aware of, it could have been more). That turns out to be 1 great photo op for each photographer! In the days of film, missing images because you were reloading the camera was one thing. But you never missed an image because you were processing your film in the field to look at your results! With shooting time

and great opportunities so rare, missing one to see what you've already captured seems criminal to me.

What compounds this crime is that most folks haven't a clue at what they're looking at or seeing in that LCD image in the first place! How could that be you ask when the image you just captured is staring you in the face? If we're talking about the D1X & H, their monitor displays do not accurately display color or exposure. Seeing if the right exposure was captured seems to be one aspect of the digital capture that photographers want to check out instantly. When I educate digital photographers to this fact they seem amazed. Next, when I show them the "Blinkie" highlight feature of the D1/X/H, they are amazed. They are using the tool without know how to use the tool, missing images in the

process. Shameful!

Next, photographers love to check focus with the LCD monitor. With the D1X & H you can do so in a fashion by using the Func Button. The problem is, this is not an accurate tool to determine tack sharpness of a digital image (the best way for that is to use the Loupe Feature in our DigitalPro software). The best use of chimping IMHO is totally missed by 90% of the digital photographers out there, and that is for composition!

Out of the 17 shooters I shot with over those three weeks, none, not one composed remembering that the D1/X/H only display 96% of the image captured in the viewfinder. Now D1 users have an out here, because the D1's LCD Monitor doesn't display 100% of the



The Car Blind

Getting Close Physically!

image captured, but the D1X & H sure does! Yet, one of the key tools we have to being successful communicators, that of composition, is totally lost on chimpers! That extra space on the right and top (if it's a horizontal image) of the image whether it's filled with unwanted junk or space, is totally missed in the act of chimping. It's that instantaneous satisfaction thing, it messes with our minds!

Is there a time and place for chimping then? You're darn right there is! Whenever I arrive at a new location and a new scene and I can afford the time, I take a quick shot and view it on the LCD monitor. I look to make sure everything is working correctly. Did I do something stupid and leave exposure compensation dialed in from my last shoot and forget to dial it out? Did I shoot indoors using the Incandescent White Balance setting and forget to turn it back to Cloudy-3? What about my Tone setting, ISO or the other settings I mess with from time to time? Taking a quick shot and looking at the LCD to make sure I'm not shooting myself in the foot only makes sense.

Do I look at my monitor to see if I captured an image? You bet I do, I like seeing if I'm as fast and good as I should be. But I do this only when the action is gone, when I know the image isn't going to happen while I'm chimping! I already do enough stupid things to miss images, I don't need to compound it by this new toy!

No matter the medium, conventional or digital, the true rewards come from getting everything right each time the shutter release is depressed. Relying on or falling back on the computer to fix problems is not my definition of a successful photographer. (This should not be confused with taking images as part of a process in which computer manipulation is part of the art form.) All the key ingredients of photography apply to digital just like they do conventional. Chimping while it might sooth the ego can cause more problems than it solves. Save your battery power, learn to see with your mind and not the LCD monitor, understand light and the digital tools available to help you determine if you're doing it right, and you'll avoid making a monkey out of yourself!

Getting close physically has always been one of the main precepts of my photography for twenty years. There are times, be it location, subject, shelter or convenience that the best method of getting close is to use the car as a blind. This came to mind this past month when I topped my all time number of photos in an hour, capturing 1762 images while using a vehicle as a blind to photograph Greater Sage Grouse. Many of the images of mine you've enjoyed over the decades have been taken from the comfort of the driver's seat. Here's how simple it is to shoot from a vehicle.

My main concern is where the vehicle is parked. My first consideration is that where I park the vehicle makes no negative impact on the locale. Vehicles leave big footprints and can easily crush and kill habitat that can be just as fragile and special as the subject itself. With that consideration, I park the vehicle so I have the greatest amount of room to pan out the window with the best possible background. Since once you're parked you're parked, you need the greatest amount of shooting flexibility your vehicle window can provide.

This brings me to the vehicle itself. My personal preference is either my truck or an Explorer when I rent a vehicle. This is partially because I like the higher vantage point these vehicles provide. I also like the large windows and extra space in the front seat to spread out my gear. But most importantly, I like the stability these larger vehicles provide when I or anyone else in the vehicle might move about. One advantage of vans is their large side sliding door, something you might consider. I've used this to my advantage, photographing



Bald Eagles in flight. One advantage to trucks and how I have mine set up is with a shell. Shooting in the shell, I have two large side windows and one large rear door I can shoot through. This provides an incredible amount of vantage points from which to work with a moving subject.

There is one other method I've used in the past with some success. I often rent Ford Explorers or Expeditions for their rear hatch door. Shooting out the back hatch works incredibly well, especially when it's raining. I've done this photographing Moose, Bald Eagles and Bighorn Sheep with complete success. When I shoot this way, I set up as normal other than the tripod is slightly shorter so as not to jam the lens into the vehicle.

Why does the vehicle, something so large, work so well? That's because a vehicle once parked, doesn't have arms and legs busily moving about. Their shape is totally alien from that of any predator. Their interior hides all of our movements as well. And sadly for most wildlife, they have become all too accustomed to seeing vehicles. This combination makes the vehicle such a natural and perfect blind.

When it comes to keeping your gear steady, especially when shooting with a big lens, there are two methods I use. If I'm shooting out the driver's seat window, my most preferred method is using the Gitzo 1548 set up across my lap. Two legs of the tripod are flat up against the door and the third leg goes across my lap. While this sounds really restricting, in actuality it's quite simple to set up and shoot with. The other method which I use very rarely to support my big lens is the Kirk window pod. No matter which support system I use, I use the Arca Swiss B2 head. Its lower profile permits me to use a big lens like the 600f4AFS and not jam it into the window frame. It's with these basics I operate.



The end of April found me with a good friend near the Nevada / Idaho border. He's a Greater Sage Grouse lek volunteer observer for the Nevada Dept. of Fish & Game. He's been observing and studying the grouse at this lek for years and knows it and its participants like the back of his hand. I've been photographing sage grouse since 1989, but only in California. I ventured with John to see a lek in a different habitat and observe a slightly different sage grouse lek performance.

John has the place he parks marked on his GPS. It

comes from years of observation, knowing the safest and best place to park. We arrived the night prior to the morning's performance. This is essential in protecting the grouse activities and not disturbing the grouse displaying on the lek. It's important to understand that this is a species in trouble; one species of sage grouse has already been listed as endangered, others are in line. Photographers have been the cause for a lot of problems on leks, scaring off grouse because of their over zealotness to capture them on film with total ignorance that their actions guarantee that the grouse won't return the following year! This is a sore subject with me, I'd best move on.

John has a truck with a great shell on it, so he was able to shoot from the front seat and I from the back shell window. The grouse are on the lek from before sunrise until just after the sun rises, so the

window for shooting is real brief (and they only perform on their leks for a couple of weeks). Almost on cue, the faint booming begins and the males perform their ancient ritual for attracting a mate. Lying in the back of the shell, the magic of the moment is not wasted on me. From inside this portable blind, I captured 1762 of my most prized images of Greater Sage Grouse!

Getting close physically is as close as the seat of your car, the magic as far as the subject right outside!

It's spring.... time to dust the flashes off!

It's spring, which means it's nesting time! That means it's time to get out the flashes (yes, that's plural) to get ready for some of the best bird photography around. If you need to brush up on your knowledge of nesting bird photography, be sure to head to www.moose395.net, the Photo How-to Tips, biology section to see how to deal with the biology end. When it comes to flash, I'm so pleased to be able to offer you information on new and better technology and techniques to accompany the biological aspects.

We're going to use two flashes to light our subject. One is the main light (that's attached to the camera) and a slave or secondary flash. This is so we can work in shaded conditions for the safety of the nest while having a beautiful light source. We want the flash rig to move when we move the lens for when the birds are coming into the nest. In order to maintain the same lighting pattern no matter where we point our lens, we need a flash bracket system that provides maneuverability along with stability. The best rig I've found for doing just this comes from Wimberley (Clay was a great help in making this all come together!).

What you need for the actual brackets for this system are two, Wimberley Combo 2, Macro Combos (which you can order direct from WRP). In addition, you need an extra long plate for the lens you're going to shoot with. This combo permits you to use two flash units by placing them where they're needed for the right light while providing you with the flexibility to move your camera to follow the subject. I have mine set up to work with the Nikon 300f4 AFS. It works better than any system I've had in the last 20 years for photographing nesting birds!

The photo shows the basic setup for the bracket and flash unit. This will change slightly, depending on the nest location, branches between the flash and the nest and the lighting pattern you desire. This is the basic starting point though. You have one flash directly over the lens axis, that's the main flash. The second flash is off to the side and is your slave or secondary flash unit. In order to make this all



work, you have to wire your system. This is my current setup with the new SB-80DX and SB-28DX. (Keep in mind I'm shooting strictly digital now.)

For you conventional Nikon folks you need the following cords and accessories to make this all work: 1 SC-17 cord, 1 SU-4, 1 SC-18. For you digital folks this is what you need: 1 SC-17 cord, 1 AS-10, 1 SC-18 (if shooting with just the SB-28DX, you can use the SU-4 in place of the SC-18/AS-10). In addition both mediums should have HV power supplies for each flash unit as well. Personally, I prefer the Nikon's SD-8a powered by PowerEx 1700mAh batteries (<http://www.thomas-distributing.com>).

The reason behind the external power supply is simply recycle time. You're going to want/need the fastest you can get for when the parents come back to the nest to feed the kids!

Flash Settings

Folks shooting film have a real advantage over folks shooting digital when it comes to setting adjustments on the flash. This is because they have use of true TTL and not OTL like digital folks. Because of this, I'm going to separate the two mediums here, so only read the section that PERTAINS to YOU so you don't confuse yourself!!!!

Conventional Folks: It's simple, set the flashes to TTL and shoot! Depending on the camera body you're using, you will want or not want the Matrix/sun-man symbol displayed next to the TTL symbol on the flashes' LCD. For the F5, F100, N80, you do not want the Matrix symbol showing. If you're shooting with the F4 or N90/s, you do want the man/sun symbol flashing. This is because we want to be in control of the exposure compensation. Make sure the zoom, f/stop and ISO of your second or slave flash is set the same as the main flash. This info is not transferred over from the main flash. You have to do this manually.

Digital Folks: This is the one time you'll probably wish you shot film! I know as an educator, I sure wish I didn't have to try to explain all of this. This is where digital flash settings are at.

SB-28DX: If your main flash, the flash that is directly talking with the hot shoe of your camera, is the SB-28DX, you want to set it to DTTL Matrix. If the second or slave unit is a SB-28DX, SB-28, SB-26 or SB-24 you first want to test with them set to TTL. If the flash does a complete dump, the ready light blinks a number of times after the exposure or the exposure is blown out (you can tell via the

Monitor), then set the second or slave flash to A, Automatic. There are undocumented issues with the SB-28DX which to this date, I don't have a handle on well enough to provide you with a formula for being correct right from the start. You'll need to test, that's the bottom line! Manually set the zoom, f/stop and ISO on the slave flash to match the master flash. Testing is also required with this setup to see if you can use the SU-4 or you need to hardwire the two flashes via the SC-18. Again, there are incongruities between SB-28DXs as well as SB-28 and other flash units.

SB-80DX: The latest digital flash makes shooting with multiple flash units even more difficult and a lot more complicated. With the SB-80DX as the main flash, the only flash I've tried as a second or slave flash unit is the SB-28DX. Why? I'm chicken and life is too short to figure out what Nikon has done to us again.

The setting for the SB-80DX can vary even with this setup. First, the second or slaved flash, in this case the SB-28DX **MUST** be hard wired to the SB-80DX, the SU-4 is not an option. With that accomplished, there are a couple of setting scenarios you'll have to try. For 90% of the time, you can set the SB-80DX to DTTL Matrix and it works just fine. There are times (I believe tied into the Pre-Monitor flash) where the SB-80DX freaks out. You'll know because all of a sudden the whole flash dumps its light when a second before it was just fine. You can actually hear the difference, there is an audible pop. When this happens, you have no option other than to switch to AA on the SB-80DX. (Another fun feature of the SB-80DX that is not documented is when it's powered by the SD-8a. The flash goes back and forth from Standby and the zoom makes noise. It doesn't seem to affect performance, it's just annoying.)

For the second or slave flash you have one of two options for settings when shooting with the SB-80DX as your main light. You can either select TTL or A, the one you select will provide us with some clue as to the "age" of your SB-28DX. Again, you'll need to test to see which set of settings work for your flash and camera (what a pain in the butt!)



And with this, you should be able to go out and concentrate on your photography and not the equipment. I can't emphasize enough the need to test prior to shooting at a nest! This is the perfect marriage of biology and technology. Enjoy!



now the blossom pops visually. This is just one example of how you can use B&W IR.

The before and after images of a pond at Custer State Park, SD is another example of how you can use B&W IR to "improve" an image. The problem for me with the color photo is the sky. Polarizer, split gradated neutral density filter, neither one improved the photo to make the fall color pop. More importantly, the wispy clouds were just too far beyond the range of the film to be recorded and because I could see them with my eyes and they were what drew me to the scene, I wanted them on film. By going to B&W IR I was able to capture the sky I wanted.

But what about the fall color, it's lost in B&W IR? Photography is a compromise and for me in this scene, the shape of the hills in the background and the wispy clouds were more important than the color of the foliage. That's why I opted for B&W IR. The more you shoot B&W IR, the more you'll know when a scene will work or not work and what elements in the scene will pop or disappear. Just like any other photography, the light and the subject will dictate just what you need to do to be a successful communicator!

Infrared photography, color or black and white is not for everybody. It's just another facet of photography that I'm exploring again now that digital has made it so simple and fun. In my ever growing quest to learn more from and about my vocation, this is just the latest that I wanted to share with you!

Some folks might be wondering about color infrared digital photography. Because of the filters inherent in digital cameras to make them work, much of the IR information we need to do color IR photography never reaches the CCD. You can do color IR in PhotoShop relatively easily, but that's just not my thing. If you search the web on Infrared, you'll find lots of links with this info if you want to explore color IR photography.

Film shooters are probably saying, "what about us?" You can do color or B&W IR photography all you want. You just have to buy the right film, filter and pay for processing. Color is easier than B&W for film, but both are a lot more work than B&W IR digital capture. I've just begun in the last year to do more and more B&W IR. Its ease and fun keeps fueling my thoughts of new ways to try it. I hope if you're a digital photographer, you try shooting outside the visual spectrum soon!

Their Story

Because of a lack of space, not all images are captioned in this issue.



The face off. The dominant bull and one of his soon to be rivals "bump" heads many times during the day. No shoving or ramming like you might see in the fall, just a subtle, "I'm here and am still the boss" kind of push on the "boss." The word "boss" also means the big boney portion of the horns over the top of the head. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.



One of my favorite images from the week! The contrast in the white faces against the dark bodies instantly grabbed my attention. I spent all week trying to capture them when they all lined up just right! Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.

There they go again! These are two of the younger bulls, testing each other. It's really more of a stare down than anything else. I angled the camera to heighten the stare a little. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.



This is one of the cows I liked to watch and photograph whenever possible. While she looks like she was about to charge me, what she actually was doing was pawing the ground to expose some lichens to eat. Musk Ox seem quite awkward when they do this, but they do it alot so they're very good at it. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.



The home of Oomingmak. What appears to be a barren land is really not. This brutally beautiful landscape be it winter or summer is full of life. The Musk Ox are just one unique example of this life. Photo captured by D1H, 80-400VR on Lexar digital film.

The "twins" as I called them. They hung pretty tight with each other. Getting a clean shot of those cute faces though was quite a challenge. Not seeming real sure of their place in the herd, they constantly moved about looking for a cow side to lean up against. They sure are cute! Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.



Here's another cow with a yearling. Whether they are related is anyone's guess. The yearlings seemed to go back and forth between the cows, but since they all look pretty much alike, there was no way to tell if one particular yearling stayed with one particular cow. It was funny to note, the yearling always stayed on the lee side of the cow. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS on Lexar digital film.



Is anybody watching? This male Willow Ptarmigan in the foreground is looking to see if he can have this female to himself. He is starting to molt; she is in full winter plumage. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFSw/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.

This was as close as we got to the encircling that Musk Ox are so well known for. This occurred during our first time out with the ox and after what seemed like only minutes, they went back to their normal routine. Photo captured by D1H, 80-400VR on Lexar digital film.



Near the top of Atigun Pass, we found this group of Caribou. They stopped to look at us just long enough to take a few captures. Then they continued their walk up the hill. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS on Lexar digital film.



The Qiviut fascinated me photographically. The patterns were just to die for. Trying to capture a sharp image in the wind was also to die for. When they both came together, I was happy! Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.



I just love foxes and this one was like most, full of character. After the 30+ minutes he spent gnawing on this leg bone, he walked right past me on his way up the hill. Maybe he wanted to see his picture on the monitor! Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.

This is one of the younger bulls. He spent an awful lot of time going around and harassing the cows. Once, he even tried to mount a cow but was quickly rejected. We wondered if the cows about to give birth were giving off a scent, confusing this young, hopeful bull. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS on Lexar digital film.



The Doyen's Dune Weevil, only 4 existed when I took this photo. The week before there were 5, one lost to a spider. The photo of it in front of a finger gives you an idea how small they are. I relied on chimping for composition and lighting direction. There were no reshoots with this endangered species! Photo captured by D1H, 60f2.8, SB-80DX, SD-8a w/Wimberley bracket on Lexar digital film.



I found Cousin It! No one could tell with what I was wearing that I was laughing, but when I framed up this butt shot, I was wondering who was under there. Could this be what inspired Cousin It of the Adams Family? The long hair even in the strong winds didn't move much. This is not Qiviut, but rather the outer hair they depend on year round. Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 AFS on Lexar digital film.



The Greater Sage Grouse, a species I've been studying and photographing since 1989. This had to be my best year with them, setting my own record for most images captured in an hour, 1762 while taking this and other images at a spectacular lek in Nevada. Photo captured by D1H, 600f4AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.

A teenager? Perhaps, sure acted like one a lot. On the only evening (11pm) when we got a slight bit of color, we were with the herd. In an attempt to get some "romantic" sunset color with the ox, I used an enhancing filter but there was so little natural red, it didn't help much. Just another reason to go back! Photo captured by D1H, 80-400VR on Lexar digital film.



Spring is here and so are nesting birds. It's time to get out the flashes, test them and put 'em to use. This Mountain Bluebird is in total shade. The lighting comes entirely from two flash units positioned as pictured. Digital permits fine tuning of the flash position which can help when obstacles get between the flash and the subject. Photo captured by D1H, 300f4 AFS/TC-14e, SB-28DX & SB-28 on Lexar digital film.



No sooner than you'd think they were going to do battle, the bulls would settle down with each other. They were awfully hard to predict, even harder to understand. Getting a "clean" shot of any of them was a major challenge. I didn't come back with "the" bull shot. Kinda reminded me of my luck with bull moose! Photo captured by D1H, 400f2.8 on Lexar digital film.



No, the San Joaquin Antelope Squirrel is not eating corn. In fact, it's feeding on the only thing available during this drought. This endangered species like many other species in California are feeling the bite of no water and no new growth to feed on. Aren't they cute though! Photo captured by D1H, 600f4AFS w/TC-14e on Lexar digital film.

How do you Eat your corn?

At my mother-in-law's birthday party, we had the most interesting "discussion" after dinner about how each person ate their corn. The analysis was based on the leftover cob. The psychologist in the group looked at each cob and commented about each person based on the eating pattern on the cob.

Some ate their corn from right to left, others from left to right, regardless of being right or left handed. Some left kernels, while some made very obvious "eaten rows." One had the cob "surgically" shaved down to nothing while another ate around one half then the other. While some ate by rows of kernels, others went around and around. The humor in this whole look at ourselves didn't take into consideration the obvious such as physical bite, whether one liked corn or if the corn itself tasted good. But it got me to thinking.

The one thing everyone had in common at the table was an ear of corn. Obviously those who had an ear of corn liked to eat corn. And basically, everyone had the same corn (other than size, flavor and doneness). Yet with all of this in common, there was a different eating style for each person present!



Think about photography. We all have one thing in common, an affinity for photography just like those around the table had for corn. We might not all have the exact same camera body and lens, like those eating corn had different sizes and doneness. We might not all take photos the same way just like everyone had a different way of eating their corn. But we all have one thing in common in liking photography just like all those liking the corn they were eating.

If we all have this common liking that we enjoy in different ways and reach by different means, then couldn't it be said there is no one answer for every one of us even though we're enjoying the same thing? In the pursuit of the "perfect" image, we all eat from the same ear of corn, just that we actually eat or shoot a little bit differently. In the end though we should all be able to celebrate that naked cob and take pleasure and a laugh about the journey it took getting there.

Photography is very much like eating an ear of corn in so many ways. The joys of the sweetness of corn, the pain of a kernel stuck in between the teeth, the rich flavor of farm fresh butter, the squirt of juice in the eye, makes eating corn each and every time an adventure! Photography is exactly the same, I don't know though how many times I've had a roll of film stuck between my teeth! But once that's extracted and the final image obtained, I enjoy sharing that with others who have experienced the same. And isn't that what photography is truly all about?

So, how do you eat your corn?

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