

Moose Peterson: Howdy. Howdy, folks. And welcome to Moose podcast number 394

Leaving the Sand in the Dust.

How are you folks doing? I trust you. You're having a grand week. I appreciate you stopping by. Taking a little time to listen. You know, the Moose podcast, you guys have cracked me up further and further. Not that I have any sites on any particular number, but the more folks that I could reach. The better. I think I got something to offer and I really appreciate you telling your friends to listen to the Moose podcast. Hey, you guys really lit up last week with my interview or conversation with Jamie, the eagle eyed girl. Yeah, she's such a spark. Love her and her dad and mom. They are just great people. And I am I am tickled pink. The response that she brought out. And you folks, great, great email. So thanks so much. One common question, though, why am I not doing more interviews? That's really a very valid question. And I guess in large part because I just have a hard time just retired, asking people to do me that favor. So I'm going to try to get past that, get some more to you. I appreciate the encouragement after last week gives me more fuel for the fire. In fact, I've got some more things coming out, so be watching that YouTube channel and my Instagram feed going to be doing some new things. I haven't seen other folks do them. Doesn't mean it's going to be the the thing but it's it's a simple goal help you folks as always make more of your time in the field and coming back with the images to tell your story. Well I think my good friends at Bedford Camara Bedford's dot com. That's right. Bedford dot com. Those folks you've got event coming up here shortly in Little Rock. You've got almost daily daily free classes at the Bedford stores because they have multiple stores. That's why it's called Bedford's. And inside those brick and mortar. You're going to find some of the finest folks in the industry. They're just they just can't help you enough. And that's what I love about Bedford's. They're going to get you that gear you want at the price that fits your budget. And they're going to help you make the most of that gear before, during and after the purchase. And when you head to the store, head to the website, and you use that old A.C. discount code, you're going to find the price dropping. And we after you check out and you're going to say, wow, that's really dinner. We had dinner. I just saved just a couple of pennies. That's a lot. So head to Bedford's dot com Tom iSentia where you have questions or gear that you want to buy, they are the best and in the process, thank them for sponsoring the Moose podcast. Leaving the sand in the dust. I. I wish I could take credit for that. This week's title. But it came from James, who saw my post a few days ago. He said, and I'm quoting here. You put \$20,000 in the sand. You are nuts with more exclamation points than I could count. Yeah, James, you could say I'm nuts because I've been doing that since the days of film. Back then, it was even. It was a real challenge because every 36 exposure, you had to make sure your hands were super clean, no salt residue, nothing on them, because you had to change your film. So that's the one big thing that really, you know, when it comes to leaving the sand in the dust is really important to do. You've got to make sure that, you know, that film had no sand in the film gate or else everything be scratched and all your efforts to be shot as in shot to hell, not as an expose, but a number of you and I appreciate your reaching out. Asked Just what is it that why do I, in so many words, risk so much money to go down low? And that's that is truly a really great question. But before I get to that answer, I need to set the stage first. I do the all the TV thing. I'm going to leave that the good part to the NCAA to listen in between. The only thing is I don't have commercials so. There are basically two facets to photographing birds or critters on the sand. Got down with tortoises. Rattlesnakes? Yeah. I didn't ever get down with them, but. But desert

sand, beach sand. It's. It's basically the same. And what you have happening are two things that you got to remember that if these two elements don't work for you and your style photography, then yeah, you can just click a stop on the podcast once I mention them because they don't fit your style photography. But the bottom line is you have I'm a pick on shorebirds, a group of birds that for the most part, especially in in us in the lower 48, when we see them, they're in their winter drab clothing, what many people call LBJ's little brown jobs. That's because basically the coloration in the winter is brown and gray. And when you put that on a background such as sand, which is also brown and gray, for the most part, they tend to blend in. The next thing that happens is that they all have the same relative size visually in the viewer on the in the final photograph, when you're photographing them from high level shooting down on them against that sand because they kind of blend in scale is kind of lost. So you've got that first natural camouflage, which is why they they molt their brilliantly gorgeous spring plumage. For the winter time when we see them, because in the summer time they're up in the Arctic and it's hard to believe, but that crazy plumage they have in the springtime, they totally blend into all the mosaic of colors that the tundra affords them for camel. So that's the first reason why I am going down low. The second reason again is the same. Word or issue is the background. But when you go down low and I'll get to how low here in a second, we get down low. Well, you're shooting at F eight, which is probably my most common F stop that I use when I'm doing beach panning or you go down to 16 or 22, whatever you know your lens goes down to. No matter how much you go down. When you're down flat on the sand, the sand behind that bird is gonzo. It's obliterated. It's just this wash of of color. There's no detail at all. So the first thing happens is you smack the viewer right between the eyes with your subject. And the next benefit of going down low is the fact that now we do have a little bit sense of scale. So it's a little hard to understand if you haven't done it, but if you go down low, you've got basically what I think of cotton balls on toothpicks running around in front of you. Right. We call them shorebirds, the little guys. And when you focus on the eye, right. Because that's where we have to photograph as wildlife photographers on the eye. And I'm at F8 because I want to get the I most, the head and the brass and a little bit of the wing and then the rest of the body can go out of focus. When you do that, when you look and you ignore the bird, but you look at where it's standing on the sand. You're going to see this little band of focus, this little band of focus, that your playing of focus, and you could increase your f stop to 16 or 22, but you'll see that band of focus barely changes as you increase the depth of focus. For two reasons. One, because you're so physically close to that subject. And to you're using a telephoto lens with that very narrow angle of use, that combination. You can't help but see the subject, but then you get a feeling for its size because you have all the little small reference points in that band of focus. The mind latches onto the seas, a seashell or a rock or some some vegetation. It might and says, Oh, it must be this big. So that's the huge advantage of going down low and, you know, basically leaving the sand in the dust. You're just you're eliminating that sand as a distraction, abstracting element of of one that's, you know, allowing the bird's user camouflage to. Fade into that sand. We're leaving that sand totally in the dust. It's and there's one side benefit to this whole thing that that it's hard to really describe until you actually do it. But damn, it's fun. I mean. I'm sure somebody's looking at this big old guy, you know, laying on the sand and it's wet and his clothes are soaking wet and the sand is sticking. And and it's like you you look at the person and I'm talking about myself, of course, you know, that beached whale looks really kind of stuck here. You go down, you

don't have a lot of movement, like if you're standing on your feet. But when you get down there. The first thing you notice is the birds stop caring about you. You know, as you walk up, they're kind of like moving away. You walk a little bit closer. They move away. Once you get down there flat, I'm here to tell you more time. And then not. The birds are closer than your minimal focusing distance, which, as far as I'm concerned, is a good problem to have. Okay, so that fun factor is the third silent, huge benefit of leaving the sand in the dust. Now, what's the whole process behind it? So we start off with the gear. You have your telephoto lens or preference. Whatever happens to be mine is the 600 F F4 TSI. And I have Madonna. Most of the time a 1.4 tele or external one. So I'm shooting 840 when I'm on the sand. Because when you're on the sand. There is no way to. To. Add or subtract a tail converter, the sand itself. You just you just I used I don't take the chance of a getting into side the workings of the camera telegraph or anywhere. So I go down with that 1.4 external already attached. Then I have the ability of going and flipping and engaging the internal 1.4, which gets me at almost 1600 millimeters. I go from 8 to 840, almost 1600, and it's powerful. We talk about these little guys. You know, keep in mind that a hurling, which is probably the most common bird still on all the coasts, but their numbers are way down. But anyway, you talk about them, they are smaller than your fist. They're smaller than your fist. They're a little bit bigger than a tennis ball at best. And they get smaller now with Western Sandpipers, what have you. But you need all that horsepower and you want them physically close. So by going down, we get physically close, we get the image size, we get the left out background. So that's my basic rig and I'm shooting now the Z9 I've shot the Z9, the D6 Z6 too. I mean, every main body of views I've taken down to the sand level now. Am I nuts for doing this? There is always a risk, no matter what you do, whether it's beach panning or shooting snow, that your gear might take a hit. Knock on wood. I have never had that issue for a number of reasons. The first is that, well, engage the brain and if you've spent any time at the beach and I grew up, you know, surfing all the time, laying on the beach, that's what we did in Southern California. So, you know that sand sticks to you, sticks your clothing. So when you get up as invisibly, get up off the sand. You know that the sand because of gravity is going to do what it's going to go down and there's wind blowing. It's going to go with the wind. So one of the main things that you think about when you go down to do this is. Excuse me. What's your strategy to get back up? You make note of that sand. All right. Wind, I should say. Excuse me. Make note of that wind. So you're going to go down and if you look at the picture posted last week, you can see that there's a Frisbee and that Frisbee is there. So I can slide the the rig around in the sand very easily. You've got in that the visual echoes panning plait that's what's holding the Goodyear rig stable in the sand. And then personally I just have the so now a foot on the Z 600 and then I'm shooting that low. I want to be as low as possible. So first thing is when you get up and you're in that position, you don't use your hands, you don't use your hands to lower yourself into the sand. And most importantly, you don't use your hands to get up out of the sand. So I tell everybody, start practicing this at home in the carpet before you even get to the beach. Literally, it's not a normal way of doing things because you're going to be using your elbows, which means you have to have developed some arm strength, a little bit of stomach strength, because you're going to look at the way the wind is blowing. If it's blowing. So when you get up, it's going to blow anything on you, on your camera gear. You literally scoot back. You use use your knees and you do this reverse back, crawl on your elbows and knees and you go backwards six, eight feet. So when you stand up, the the real simple thing is that. The wind is blowing any sand off you under your gear.

That's really important. That's one of the big essential things that, you know, if you're going to take anything away from this, that's what you've got to do. Now, when you go to the the beach here or on the desert floor and you see your subject, you want to physically go down well outside that critter's comfort zone way past. You know, so let's just say imaginary. The crater is at, say, 30 feet. You know, at 30 feet, they start moving away from you. So that means that you don't go down to the surface of the sand any closer than 60 feet. And you go down and then you slowly do this funny shuffle on your knees, looking very carefully for any kind of seashell that's going to go into your knee. Some folks wear the Carhartt pants. They had the built in knee pads, which is a smart thing to do. And you do this slow, very slow approach to the point where you say, okay, now's the time where I want to go down flat. And if you some people have their camera rig higher from the sand than I do because I'm basically as low as you can get. If you have, you're up kind of high, then you can shoot from just your knees and your elbows. You don't have to go down completely prone position. But I still don't like that much depth of focus in the background. But you're going to slowly go. You can put your gear, your rig in front of you, in front of you, far enough. Again, looking at that wind. And the sand because the prices are going down. You can kick up sand, especially if there's any kind of breeze. The sand goes right to your gear. Then you go use your elbows. You don't use your hands and you go down in a prone position. Then you can either pull the camera back to you or you slide up to the camera whichever you want to do. Now you have to keep in mind that anything in your front pockets of your shirt, your pants. Going to get wet at the very least. So often I will have a small little fanny pack and my fanny pack will be things like my wallet, my car keys, because you don't want to lose those the caps for the tail converter just in case, you know, I want to stand up, do some hand holding and panning shots of birds and flight and then in my and the iPhone will be in that fanny pack as well. And then in my back pocket so I can easily access it is a clean, clean white towel that I can use because there are going to be times where even, you know, let's say you're shooting and you also turn the camera to go vertical and you've got your eye against that viewfinder as you do it. Well, at least for me, as I go vertical, one hand's going to be at the bottom of the camera, and I use my hand to protect the camera, keep it out of the sand. Which means if there's a little rise in that sand that my hand will have skid sand on, it's the first thing I do is I will wipe my majority of the sand off using the side of my sides of my torso. And then the shirt there. Then I use that white towel a clean up thoroughly so I don't get any sand on the gear. Now. And after that, you just have fun. You shoot, you shoot, you shoot. Have a ton of fun. Now, what happens if you get sand on your gear? You're going to use a clean white towel and you're going to wait. You got that sand sit there depending on how warm it is and how humid it is. But you can let the air do as much as count for transpiration to get rid of that stickiness, the sand. And then you don't wipe. Just like when you have moisture in your lens, you don't wipe when you have sand on your gear, you're going to kind of like do the old gym room, shower, snap the towel kind of thing and use that towel to kind of snap that sand off. You don't want to wipe it off. And that's that's that's basically it. So there should be no scariness in this for you. It's kind of simple. One thing I remind you, though, is when you get done with your shooting, you're going to go back and, of course, enjoy all those great images you shot. But you've got a couple of things to think about. Number of things like if I'm staying at a larger hotel or something, when I first walk in the door, I The camera bag goes off as far with the door as possible. And I say glue that front door, and that's where I take off my shoes and sandy clothes so the sand doesn't migrate

into the room with me because sand is just takes one one particle of sand to ruin your day with camera gear. So then I leave it all there. And I, if I, you know, if I go, if I made myself in sunblock, I might take a shower, get that stuff off, because you're supposed to keep it on guinea sand. That might be still stuck to my forearms or my knees or calves. I want all that sand off. Then I'm going to go in and and take the camera gear and I'm going to treat it just as if I'm coming in from a -40 snowy day. Am I let the get the gear out. I'm going to put a clean white towel on top of it, let it come to room temperature and then I'm thoroughly going to clean it because when you're down low, there is so much salt moisture that's collecting on every surface camera barrel elements, lens coat, you want that to thoroughly dry it. And most people a lot of time will crank up their air conditioner, make the room cooler. I recommend you do quite the opposite. You crank up the air conditioner and then put it to 72 or 74. It's going to dry out. That air in that room is as best as possible. And then once you get back home and you're all done shooting, I take the my gear and I spread out in the counter, take all the caps off front and rear caps, and I just let it sit out for 24 hours at least before I go and thoroughly clean it. All the contacts, all the surfaces of the bodies, the lenses with paint use go through the sensor and I thoroughly go through it and knock on wood. I have never had any issue in my gear doing this. But I've had one heck of a lot of fun. And the shooting is spectacular. So I'm hope, you know, at spring and summer encouraging you to get out there and. Hit the beaches, leaving the sand in the dust. You folks have a marvelous week, Dr. Chute. And remember to make every click. Your story.