

Moose Podcast #443

Moose Peterson Howdy folks and welcome to Moose Podcast number 443, Lighting the Home. I trust you've had a great week. Just to be, uh, up front with everything. I'm actually pre-recording this a week early. I'm in... Costa Rica. I don't know what my internet connection would be like to be recording this down there. So I pre-recorded it just to make sure I had a podcast and And I could finish what I started last week when it comes to finding the home because we're going to do lighting the home this week. So there you go up front. Couple other things to be upfront. So I'm still using the Adobe beta podcast with the AI voice cleanup. So I'm not doing any of that. It creates the transcript which you would find on the blog post on my website for this podcast. Now, yes, you know that before, but I seem to be having some issues with Castos and syncing the, um, not only the podcast, but the transcript with other places like Spotify and And the other outlets that have it, hopefully by the time this gets posted, those issues, which I'm sure are on my end because it's always my fault, I'm used to that, will be Dealt with and you can find the transcripts and the podcast at your favorite locations. But if you can't, um, just understand, yeah, Moose probably pushed the wrong button somewhere again. And we will get that hopefully synced and fixed and up and going as soon as I can. Now it's not really new, but I just learned about this and I want to share it because well, it happens. And that is the date on our files. So you set the time and the date in your camera. That's if everything's going perfectly. Let's say, for example, though you send your camera in for service, a lot of times they will take and redo the firmware and that often Changes the time and date in your camera. So you're out there shooting and if, if you're like me. That date and time the camera embeds in the files is really important. I, I file that. I look back and use that information when I, Go back to do my homework to see where and when I wanted to shoot something and how it worked or didn't work. So, and then I also file, uh, by, uh, Chronological ascending order. So that date and time is kind of important. And when it gets goofed up, and I've had it goofed up more than once, it's like, man, how do you, it just throws me off. Maybe it throws you off. Well, Photo mechanic and bridge both have a means of changing the date so you can correct those issues. In your case, your raw files in Photo Mechanic or your finished files, they're in Bridge. Easy to look up. Photo Mechanic has a complete tutorial on it. And in bridge, it's no more than selecting the file, then click edit and then edit date capture and you're done. It, uh, you can do one or you could do hundreds. I've done hundreds at a time in bridge or photo mechanic. Fixes it all, cleans it up. You can change the course, the month, the date, and the year. So While probably been there longer than I was aware of, now you know that you can change those dates in photo mechanic and bridge. Pretty darn cool stuff. So I have a book to recommend. It came out in 2021. I did not get to meet the author personally, but Sharon and Jake did last year at the Montana Aviation Conference. And I gotta tell you, that conference, it just keeps on giving. I love that place. I love the people. Anyway, the author was there doing a book signing. The name of the book is Flying to Extremes. Memories of a Northern Bush Pilot by Dominic Pernet. Now, why am I telling you about a book about... Flying to extremes. Well, it is an absolute page burner. It's a great read. And the bush pilot, Dominic, uh, is the wife. The, um, huh. This is a guy that back in the late 60s and early 70s was flying up to the Arctic both in a single otter and Cessnas 180s and 185s. And he tells the stories of taking from prospectors to fishermen to biologists, researchers up into the extremes of the Arctic before there was

GPS, before there was So much of the technology that we kind of take for granted today. And some of the, um, he calls them adventures. You could call them major mishaps. And he tells you the story, uh, landing on, uh, he was landing on a lake, frozen in the wintertime, and then, uh, the ice gives way and the plane sinks. Or the time, uh, when, uh, taking three folks up and he lands successfully on the water and he's going and getting the cabin ready for him and comes and all of a sudden, He's in the church getting a fire going and one of the people come back, doesn't say a thing to him. He goes back to the other two people to find that the floats, which had just been put on the Cessna for the summer season, Hadn't been thoroughly checked, there was a hole on the back of the plane that's sunk in the river and what he has to do to get it out. We're talking, it's called flying to extremes because he's working in twenty thirty and forty fifty below the Below zero temperatures Fahrenheit. Um, it's just, uh, fascinating to read his, his descriptions, his stories, uh, Motivates you to kind of get out, see some of the world, and to know that even when things go upside down, you can come back with some great stuff. So that's Flying to Extremes, Memories of a Northern Bush Pilot, Dominique Prenet. I want to thank my good friends at Bedford Camera, bedfords.com for taking care of the Moose Podcast and making, taking care of all of us photographers and our needs. Here we are getting into the spring season. They've got everything from spotting scopes and binoculars to flashes, cameras, everything in between. Even they have film for those people who want to shoot film still. They have it all. There's stores online. You know, you can call them up. You can, you can Google and talk to them. They are the, you can walk into the store. Bedford's is really the best. And one of the best things that if you say my name, you're going to see after you check out that 5% back. So they already got incredibly low prices and great deals. And with that, you're just saving money. And if, let's say, for example, you get something with a Nikon that's from Nikon on sale. Any other brand, you're going to get that sales price and still get that moose discount. Pretty amazing. So my good friends at Bedford's, Bedford's.com. Thanks for sponsoring the moose podcast. Lighting the home can seem scary and tricky and nerve-wracking. It, it, It can be that way and I'm going to help you try to avoid all those. So when you find that nest and you've done your homework like I talked about in the last podcast, You should have a couple roadmaps already laid out. One of the great things is to take a picture of that basic site, not of the up close of the nest, but step back, say seven, ten feet and take a shot of the overall scene because you need to plan your strategy. For how are you gonna get light into that nest? Now there's a couple, and I know they're out there still, kind of old, uh, street urban, uh, uh, street legends and myths that I want to kind of clear up. One of them is that Flash hurts, bothers, can kill birds. This is not the case. Flash itself, they don't understand flash. It's just like lightning. They don't understand that. It's just a burst of light. Now, if you take that light and you put on a rapid fire at full and you, you crank it at them, yeah, physiologically, there is a possibility that they could, uh, uh, go blind. I guess. I have no evidence because I've never grabbed a bird and shoved my flash in its face and done that. We're using very small amounts of light because we're physically close. Remember inverse square law. And then we're not taking the flash and like beating the top of the bird on the head with these things. They're just these small little objects. So that's really, the flash doesn't hurt. Or harm birds anyway. Next is the noise possibility. Now in the days of film and with DSLRs, the noise of the shutter, opening and closing, Could, sometimes, rarely, make the bird look at you. And if you're shooting flash, that's how the myth started. It was always assumed the flash

was causing them to be quote unquote startled. But it was the noise of that mirror going up and down. In the days of mirrorless, of course, you don't have that. There ain't no noise, which is such a nice thing. So the noise itself, even if you're shooting DSLR or film, It's not gonna harm them or scare them. You know, you gotta remember that no photograph is worth sacrificing the welfare of the subject. But if kind of follow the outline I have here and the rest of it's on the website, You'll have really no issues for the safety of those critters. So, how do we do this? Well, we kind of have to step back for a second and understand the goals we have. And then with those goals, we can kind of take a step forward and start implementing to meet and match and work with those goals. The end goal is They have that photograph of the parent and the kids in the nest. Parents even looking, you know, uh, like they're, they're taking care of their kids or they're feeding their kids, uh, whatever kind of, that's the end goal. But it has to be more than that. And it has to be, of course, about lighting. That's why I'm calling this Lighting the Home episode because if you have a room and it just has one of those boob lights in the ceiling, And then people sit down and talk. They all have shadows under their, their brows, right? Their eyes a little bit in shadow. They got a little bit of a dark eye. And there's a little shadow underneath the nose. It's not really dark. Warm, inviting, conversational, coming into my home and let's wrap kind of lighting. You want to avoid that in your photographs of the nesting birds. You want That, like, you've gone into the Library of Congress, and you've got those long rows of tables and those little lamps, and the person's across the way from you, and you look at them, you have that warm light, kind of wraps around you, you can see the The character of their face, it just got this, ah, this is just a calming, settling, invite you in kind of lighting. That's what we're looking for. And it's all very doable. But that's the end goal. How do we get there? Well, first thing is you're probably gonna start off with one flash. That's the norm. One flash, though, keep in mind, it's kind of like you're lighting a face with a flashlight. It's very directional. And that directional light might not be what you're looking for or what you need or what you want, but When you take that photograph of that nest, you can look at the shrubs, the possible obstacles you have to get that light into the nest. And right off the bat, that might dictate whether you can use one or two lights. You have to pre-plan and you have to practice on. Away from the nest. That's the one thing that's really important. I have all these little stuffed animals that are about the size of most things like cardinals and wrens and I go to nature centers often looking for Those little stuffed animals because those are going to be my practicing targets. Because I can take those. I can put them in a shrub. I'll get that photograph. And nowadays I just put the picture I took. I put it on my iPhone. And I look at the basic scenario where the branches and leaves are. And I kind of look for something that's similar to that. That's nowhere near that nest. And I put my little stuffed animal in that spot. Set on the branch and then now I've got a perfect testing facility to figure out my lighting. Because what you want to do is have it all figured out dialed in before you even go to the nest. So what does that require? First, you gotta be able to hold the flashes on the camera. So you might use like, for example, Platypod has clamps that go on the leg of your tripod and they have articulated arms. And you can figure out how to put that clamp and articulated arms on your legs, your tripod. So it holds your flash. You want your flash where? About the same as lens axis when it comes, you don't want them high, you don't want them low. You want them about the same as your lens axis in about forty-five degrees and that's the perfect world out from the end of the lens barrel. And I say that's the perfect world because you have a branch or a leaf that is either

A, gonna block the light from the flash reaching the nest. Or B, it's not blocking the light, but it's closer to the flash than the nest. Knowing inverse square law, that leaf we'll get overexposed and you'll never see that subject as light goes to bright first. So with that practice, little bird in a bush, you start figuring this out. And one of the challenges you have, whatever system you use, be it the platypod, articulated arms, you can see my Hummer rig in the videos there on YouTube. That's the rig I typically use for nesting birds because it's flexible, but the main thing is you want to be able to lock things down in place so as you move to the actual nest to shoot, you're not having to reconfigure things. You might have to fine tune a little bit. But you don't want to have to take time to fine tune. You want to just basically go in, boom, hold still, and take your shots. Now, in this lighting the home, and since we're using flash, before you ask, ambient light won't do it. You can't just crank up the ISO because birds, the vast early times, the ones we're photographing, or in a nest cup somewhere back in and hidden a little bit from the world and predators where ambient light really probably won't be enough even you crank up the ISO to get the shot you want. So you got to use that auxiliary light. Flash, that's the way to go. Reflectors, yeah, they can't work because one, you have light has to reflect off them and two, they're really big and you can't just get those into small spots. Now, if you're lucky enough, and it does happen, hummingbirds, a great example, they make nests in the craziest places out in the open, and then you don't have to worry about all this. So we're talking about your basic passer in that's in a bush, a shrub, a tree, uh, not talking about barn owls in a barn or raptors up in a tree. We're talking about your basic, what you're going to find in your yard kind of bird scenario. Now, when you're practicing, you have to figure out the light that you want to hit that subject and what it's going to do. Now, whether you're using, for example, like the older SP 5000s or the Profoto A10s, keep in mind that there's resources on my website when it comes to dealing with the settings to make the technical side all work. So we're not gonna cover that right now. We're going through the aesthetics. And the basic aesthetics is not much different from Portraiture, other than it's going to be a whole lot less because you're so physically close. But you want a basic ratio between the two flash units. One to one, what happens if you do one to one and you have the equal amount of light on both sides, unless you have a flash that's physically further away from the subject than the other, you've got kind of flat lighting. You gotta remember these, the birds are round and soft. They're at their, they're, they're prettiest when it comes to their plumage. And they've got the greatest amount of feathers that they're gonna have all year. So they're kind of round and plump. And if you have flat lighting, your bird, the parent especially, is going to look what? It's going to look a little bit like it's cut out of cardboard. Not really the most motherly kind of look you're going to have to your photograph. So you've got to have ratios, which means maybe, you know, one to one and a half, you know, maybe a half to one. And that maybe part you're going to figure out. When you're not at the nest. Now you can fine tune it for sure. You can figure that out. We'll get to that in a minute. But you want to have your basics already dialed in. Now on the Profoto A10s, it's really simple. You just got a little dial in the back. You take a picture and you just look. And the beauty of digital is you can preview what you just did to fine tune it. The days of film, oh, man. I mean, I test, I take the film in, I see what the film looked like, I come back. Uh, yeah. So, God bless digital and especially mirrorless. All right, so we're gonna assume at this point that you have done everything I've talked about so far and you are, you're ready to go. Now you don't, I really highly recommend you just don't mess with the nests when there's eggs. The

possibility of you making a mistake and causing the parents to leave Are higher than worth the risk. And when there's eggs, all you're gonna get is a parent Snuggle down into the nest cup, keeping those eggs at the specific temperature required by that species for them to hatch. So after you take two pictures, you've done it all because they're not doing anything else. They're just sitting and looking at you. So you're gonna watch that nest. And when you see the first sign of them bringing food into that nest, that's your cue to go on and take the shots. So you're gonna watch that nest for a little while, fifteen twenty minutes. You'll start seeing the pattern. And when you catch them right when they hatch, that's probably the best time to work this all out. Because the parents are gone away from the nest the longest because the kids don't eat as much. As, as they get older, of course, they have to have more food more frequently. So when they first hatch, they don't get fed as frequently because you want to move in when there's no parent there. Now, if a parent shows up, don't freak out. Don't be upset. Okay. Take a deep breath and just hold still. And let them just adjust to the scenario. You'll find out real quickly if they're going to accept you or not. Okay. It's just, just take a deep breath. The little guys, when they first come out of the eggs, still have to be kept warm by the parents for the first few days. Remember to get that book about nestings and eggs. It's going to talk about this. So you have kind of a time clock going. You don't really want to keep any parent off the nest for more than twenty minutes. That's, that's, after twenty minutes, if the parents don't come back, Move out of there. Leave the camera rig. Come out of there. And then after another ten minutes or the parents don't come back, you know, you're done. And you can make that, of course, shorter. You have a bunch of scenarios you got to think about. If it's really cold out, it's going to be your time to be keeping the parents off. It's going to be shorter. If it's warm out, like you're in Southern California, the deserts, it can be a little bit longer. Look at the book, common sense. You'll figure it out. But then once you get in there, you got to make it work and kind of do kind of move a little slowly and smoothly, but quickly. Now one thing to pass along. So you get there with your rig and you got your flashes and all of a sudden there's a branch that's kind of between you and let's say the flash and the nest. It's going to cause a shadow or that bright leaf. Do not cut it. Do not break it. Don't do anything like that. What I recommend is you get the, I use the gear ties from night ease and they're a rubberized metal reusable twist tie. That you can make a little hook out of and you hook the branch that's in the way and then you with one end of that gear tie and you make a little hook up the other one and then you just slowly move that up out of the way. And then when you leave, you take that down. If you break or cut any of those branches, you know, the parents built their nests for a specific reason and that's what you're cutting is part of that specific reason and they think they need that for Protection or shield from the light part of the day, whatever it is, you can't mess with that. And then you put your flashes in there. Take your first shot. Look at them. Make a little tweak here and there. You know, maybe you're physically closer or further than the way that you calculated. Remember, you want to have that ambient light coming in a little bit in the background. You don't want a black, but you don't want it. You got to, you know, light that star on the stage. Think about that kind of a stage lighting and then just have some fun and shoot. Now a common question is how long would you stay at a nest and shoot? The longest I've ever done this at one nest is about forty minutes. And I know how long I can stay there because my knees start barking at me because most of the time you're sitting on your knees and Very, very few nests do I get to, uh, stand, which would be, you would be longer, but I

would never be at a nest more than, than, you know, half an hour, forty-five minutes. That's, and then I, I move out and you'll find in that period of time all the basic biology that you're gonna probably get to see and photograph will have unfolded in that period of time. Now you, how often do you go back to the nest? If I go back, uh, it's gonna be like every, depends on the species, but probably every three to four days. I don't go every day. I go kind of regularly. I never go in the rain. Overcast is fine. And I make sure as I walk to that nest, I'm not creating a path that's taking predators right to that nest, which is another reason not to go every day. I don't want to beat down that path. And with that, you come back after that first session, look at your photographs, make lots of notes. Uh, the iPhone is great to take I take notes over the flash position in the bush. I take photographs of the power settings and I come back, look at my pictures. Make the call what worked and what didn't work and plan my session for the couple days in advance. So, that's really it. Finding the home. Lighting the home. It's all within your wheelhouse. Just remember to do a little bit of practice. Remember that no photograph is worth sacrificing the welfare of the subject than have the time of your life. It is, it is absolutely just a marvelous way to spend some time with our great outdoors. You folks have a marvelous week. Take care and make every click your story.