

Moose Podcast #444

Moose Peterson Howdy, and welcome to Moose Podcast number 444. Coming home with a prize. How are you folks doing? It's been a little quiet out there. I know a lot's going on in the world, so... Sending things out to moose about photography probably isn't on the top of your list. I can understand. But, uh, keep in mind that, uh, photography is our own personal little sanctuary. We can, we can go and invest some time and passion and, and reap all sorts of rewards. So, In that process of digesting and processing all that is going on, remember that camera can be your best friend. Who knows? A good photographic frustration might take your mind off everything else. This week's podcast is being recorded using Adobe Beta Podcast with its AI voice correction. No, I'm not going to sound any better, but hopefully a little clearer and crisper so you can understand all the trivia that I have to share with you. You can find the information and some links there on the blog post for the podcast there on the website moosepeterson.com. Also at your favorite sources like Spotify where... You can leave a comment, ask a question about anything, be it that particular podcast or anything in general. So it's kind of a really nice way to, uh, Communicate. I would love for more folks to jump on that. But hey, it's there ready to go. So take advantage of it. I'm here to help any way I can. So there's been a little bit of news this past week. Nikon brought out the new Z5 II. Had a couple people already ask if I'm planning on getting one. At this point in time, it doesn't fit any particular niche that I have in my bag, uh, That needs to be filled with, uh, to solve any problems. I find myself with the, uh, the Z9, the Z8, the Z63, the Z50, And my little cool Pixay able to do all that I need at the moment. Excuse me. In fact, I don't even take all that gear with me at one time. That might be a podcast, but I'll have to think about that. But, um, the Z52... I have some good friends who shot with it and really, really thought it just was an incredible performer. Uh, it has a ton of features for These days, uh, a low price. So, check that out. The new Nikon Z5 II. I don't really have a book recommendation for you. I'm reading a very old one from the 1940s right now that's pretty, uh, It's about the first transcontinental flight. So that's a really esoteric kind of subject matter. So if you have a book that you want to recommend to me, Feel free to drop a note or a message there on Spotify or email. Always looking for good titles to read and you guys, you have some great, great insight. So please feel free to, uh, send them along. I want to thank my good friends at Bedford Camera, bedfords.com for sponsoring the Moose Podcast. Now, it's no longer valid, but there was a very special, I think it was a week ago. That they reached out to myself and I was able to reach out to folks through social that they had a special basically doubling the moose discount after you checked out. So they will do things like that every so often because, you know, they have the best inventory, the best prices, the best service, the best people. And they really like to help us photographers. And when they can, they have those savings they can pass along. Well, Boom. There you go. And then missed it. Moose discount. You know, that was a solid 10% off a week ago. So you get that tax refund. Burning a hole in your pocket. Need some equipment to solve that job. My friends at Bedford's Camera are the ones you want to reach out to for the help. And while you're there, thank them for all they do and for sponsoring the Moose Podcast. We all, we all, I think, I'm assuming we all, when we go out to take photographs, we kind of, hoping to come home with that prize. What is that prize? Well, you know, Let's be honest. It's that great photograph. We all want that great photograph and lots of them. It's quite a bit of pressure we

put on ourselves and our photography. But there are times where, hey, you know, you do come home with that brass ring. How do you determine if you actually did win, come home with a prize? How do you go out prepared to make the most of what's going on to get the prize? Well, I had a long flight down to Costa Rica and a long flight back thinking about both sides of that equation, which is why this week I'm talking about coming home with a prize. So a little backstory. I like birds. That's not new. But there is a, uh, internal competition. And I say internal because it's, it's only with myself. It's not with anybody else. And it has no relevance to, to photography fame or fortune or anything else. It's just that there are some very particular bird species that I want the photograph of. And I've already talked about what the is for, you know, so in a nutshell, it's the photograph that wraps up in my mind, all the romance, all the biology of, All the memories that I think I want to include with that particular critter in one photograph. So I went down to Costa Rica last year. About the same time in March. On the quest for the photograph of the snowcap. Now the snowcap is a hummingbird. It's the second smallest on the planet. If you exclude the tail, it is the smallest, smaller than the bee hummer there in Cuba. So you talk about a hummingbird that is basically the size of Of the last joint of your little finger. Yeah, that's really, really small. I forget the weight. Can't weight more than a couple feathers because that's all it got on its body. So last year I went down there and it was a challenge. First, there was no totally mature male snowcaps to be seen or photographed. Which means if they're not totally mature, you don't have all their incredible colors. And the colors are truly, um, psychedelic off the chart. Who made it up? They were a genius, gorgeous colors. So this year I went back and the first thing that was really on my mind, a big thing that I really wanted to come with a prize was that photo of the snow cap. And I'm here to tell you, uh, there's some great photos. I mean, the first day we're out there, Chuck nailed this gorgeous shot of the snow cap. And I'm like, oh my gosh. There's pressure. I don't have it myself. Chuck's got it. I would love for that photograph to be in my files. But if there, that wasn't enough. Now here's, here's, well, that internal competition. So my lovely sister-in-law, Sharon's sister, went down to the same lodge, Rancho Naturalista. If you haven't been there, it is It is paradise. It is paradise. This coming week, I'll have my shooting report posted. You'll see just a little slice of this paradise. Anyway, Sharon's sister went down there a couple weeks prior to us. And she and Sharon and some of the other relatives, the gals get together and they talk and they share their experiences and she sent via text a photograph that she'd taken with her Yes, iPhone. And Sharon, a couple days after the conversation, showed me the picture. And it's a really good shot of a green thorn tail. Believe it or not, that's actually, that is a hummingbird. That is not some insect that's going to kill you. It's called a green thorn tail. And I'm looking at this photograph and, and while I love my sister-in-law, photographers, she's not. That's okay. She loves what she's doing, has a big passion for it. So there I am, I'm going to Costa Rica thinking the snow cap was the true prize I was trying to go after and And then it comes the pressure of this really great shot taken of the green thorn tail by my sister-in-law with her smart device. Wow. Wow. How am I going to compete with those things? It's that's, that's the challenge, right? Because we, we go on these adventures with our cameras with very preconceived ideas. A lot of times we're looking for that shot, that Perhaps it's going to win the photo club contest for the week. Perhaps it's one that we need for a hole on the wall to finish off our art installation. It could be that one you're looking forward to enter that contest. That's deadlines coming up. You don't have just the right picture. Whatever it is, we tend to go

out with preconceived notions and there's lots of different ones. And those do what? They kind of generate the ideas and Of where we're gonna go and when we're gonna go and what we're gonna go with when it comes to camera gear and hopefully what we're gonna come home with, you know, that prize. And that all gives us, you know, those goals that we have for ourselves and for our photography and for moving the ball down the road. And man, preconceived ideas and notions and goals. They're a great motivator, but boy, they can either, you know, put you over the moon or drag you to the bottom of the ocean. They're really hard. That's because we tend to be hard on ourselves being creatives. That's the first kind of hurdle that kind of got to somehow mellow out a little bit. Make it not quite so steep on going up or coming back down. So when we start getting those preconceived notions and we start making those lists of what we want to accomplish, one of the things we need to understand is not everything is in our control. For example, going down to Costa Rica. Ah, we had some serious rain. Uh, on a side note, those Nikon stabilized twelve by binoculars. Wow, do they work great. Even in the rain. I mean, water didn't faze them. Worked perfectly. Bright, clear, easy to use in the rain. I loved them. It was killer. Anyway. Going to Costa Rica, it got all this rain. Now, rain is a two-edged sword when it comes to photographing critters, hummingbirds in particular, Excuse me, for some places the rain can make the hummingbirds go into kind of a frenzy like the desert where rain is more, uh, uh, let's just say not common. Where you go to the rainforest, it's the rainforest. Rain is common. So the Humbers kind of like, uh, yeah, park and say, yep, okay, I'll wait for this big downpour. Then I'll go. I mean, they would park. And if you're trying to photograph Humbers, That could be a real challenge. So if you have a preconceived idea, And it's raining, woo, right? You have no control over the weather. He's like, if you do, moose at moosebrowsers.com, let me know, please. I need some control of weather. But, uh, you're, so there's that first thing. But the flip side is, Hummingbirds, especially in the springtime, their colors are ablaze. And when you have that beautiful saturated wraparound light of a rainforest, Rainstorm. It's just like this big 360 light that wraps around and reflects that color off every single barb of every single feather wrapping around their body and They become like these neon signs that are flying around at the speed of light. Oh God, they're gorgeous. So then you've got to deal with the rain, deal with the hummers being active, And in this process, thinking about your preconceived ideas. Because you want to get those photographs and they can really push and drive you. Now when it comes to the rain, keep in mind that uh, my basic Rule of thumb for myself is if I can stand the rain, my camera gear can stand the rain. I've got my white towel. I blot my gear dry. I don't wipe it dry. And I was down there shooting. I didn't have any, any problems. Vastory time was out photographing the snow cap. We're at this hedge. It's very unceremonious. It's just, you're going to look at this at the, at the, uh, in the shooting report video, and you're going to say, really? Really? These photographs came from this bush. Uh, yeah, it's, you know, the, Calories in, calories out. And this particular flower, I guess, is just packs the, it's nectar and pollen. It's just packed with all the, what the hummingbirds want. And that's where they were. And it was out in the open. There was no protection. There was, uh, you had to move quite a bit. Can't really plant. So my basic shooting gear was on the Benro Mammoth tripod and wildlife head. I had the Z600F4 with the Z2X attached and With a Z63 attached to that. Why was I shooting the Z63? The main reason was it's raining. It's dark. Uh, I mean dark. So I was shooting a lot of time at ISO 1600. Did you just feel the earth shake? Yeah, I was shooting a high ISO and there was no way

around it. If I wanted a decent shutter speed of 1,250th or higher, that was it and The Z63 is a high ISO monster, man. It just chews up the high ISO delivering great gorgeous images. So that was the standard kit, whether it was raining or shining. So I shot, shot all six days out there and, and uh, shot a lot of images. Came back with just hummingbirds over a terabyte. That's after, uh, deleting those that, uh, didn't match up to, uh, my quality standards. It's a lot of hummingbird shots. Now, just talking about the hummers, then, and Ratio naturalista, um, I saw, saw over sixty species, photographed over thirty and only ten of those were hummingbirds. So, back to it. Was going after the snow cap. Snow cap. We had at times for sure three adult males. And at least one female. But they're hummers, right? And they're buzzing around. They're going through this bush, which is a shrub, which is pretty dense. And doing that hummingbird thing, which sometimes drives me nuts, where they're chasing each other. And there was another one there called a rufous tail, which... For this particular shrub, the rufous tail was, uh, was the bully and they were driving away the other hummers. We had the black capped, um, coquette, crazy looking hummingbird, great bird, uh, great bird, uh, We also had the green thorn tail at this and we had the snow cap. So I was a little bit divided. I wanted to get that coquette because that's just a crazy, very rarely photographed hummingbird. Green thorn tail, same thing, not really common. Sister-in-law had a great shot, which I did come to learn she had taken her smartphone up to, uh, Harry's spotting scope to take the shot, which has solved a lot of answers because I was like, how did she get so close to get that shot? Then you had the snow caps. Shot, shot, shot, shot. Every night went through the images. Deleted the ones that weren't sharp. Deleted the ones that just didn't tell a story. Filed the rest. Came back home. Now it's time to look at and evaluate after the fact just how well I did. And that's really kind of, uh, the hard part. You know, people are always asking, uh, and I know they mean well. But especially the non-shooting public, they always like to say, well, did you get the shot? And it's like, well, yeah. I don't have to wait till I get back to my computer to know the answer. Yeah, I got the shot. But did I get the shot? Did I get the shot that I wanted? Am I coming home with the prize? So then you've got to look at the photographs and you kind of At least for myself, gotta park your emotions. You've gotta look at the photographs a bit on the objective side. For example, quick, simple, uh, easy scenario for you to, to picture in your head. You're photographing this Hummer that's busy feeding over the, you know, The bush, all of a sudden another one goes, and then they're gone, and you're like, and you come back, and you get locking focus and shooting, and watching the background as diligently as you should. Sometimes it's impossible. So then you're looking at pictures and there's this beautiful flight shot. The Hummer's coming in. Just a second away from putting their, their mandible in that flower. Lighting's great. Exposure's great. Then here's this dead stick going right through the cranium like it's a, it's being served up as a shish kebab. Yeah, that don't make it, right? Uh, you know, so you've got to, you've got to really kind of park yourself because when you see that perfect flying shot, tack sharp, great light, uh, It's hard to look at the whole scene and see that background for what it is. Not too friendly. So you got to evaluate those things. Then you got to think about sharpness. I was shooting wide open. So that means just the depth of focus because I am. So just so you know, when you manually focus with a Z body, you will have a distance scale show up. The manual distance scale, it'll show you. At what distance you've manually focused. So I know that a majority of the time at the hedge, I was fifteen to sixteen feet away. And that's really close for such a long lens, 1200

millimeters. Boy, you have to really just be patient with yourself as you swing that around to keep the subject in the viewfinder. But at that distance, fifteen feet, and you're trying to get the image size, There's a lot of things going on in there is one of them is the placement of the subject in the viewfinder in the frame that tells a story and then you got to get focus and then you got to look at those pictures and and decide that focus At that very close distance with the lens wide open, all the tail might not be sharp. Eye is sharp. The bill is sharp. The tail's not so sharp. Some people... That would bug them. To me, I don't worry about it. It shows that the bird is moving and buzzing and doing what a Hummer should be doing. Excuse me. So you have to kind of I guess you could say park everything and be your, I don't want to say critic, be your own best judge just how well you did. How well did you do? Well, look at my photographs from Costa Rica. The snow cap. I definitely improved my Well, I would say leaps and bounds from my shooting last year. Two factors. One, I had adults, full adult plumage. Two, I got flight shots I really liked. Last year I didn't get any flight shots. I just got perched. So that to me is, you know, a 200% improvement. But did I come home with a prize? Well, it turns out that the shot my sister-in-law got of the green thorn tail led me down a delightful path of trying to get a photograph of a Hummer that's Really not much bigger than a snow cap, but has this wicked, crazy tail, crazy wicked tail. And in that incredible saturated light, overcast in the rain, The green goes ballistic. Excuse me. It, um, it's this emerald green that's, that's crazy. Now, I knew about that Hummer just a couple weeks prior to going down to Costa Rica. And before that, never heard of it. I know I saw a picture of it, but I know its name didn't register. So, coming home with a prize wasn't just the photographs of those two species. But with photographs of other species like the Coquette, which wasn't even on the radar, wasn't even on the list, So coming home with a prize might not necessarily be a click or a dozen clicks or one species or one location or one subject. The prize, I think, and the best prize is It's knowing that you put your best foot forward and you came back with the best you possibly could. I think when you do that, it's pretty simple. And very satisfying coming home with a prize. You folks have a marvelous week. Spring is definitely here in Montana. We already have red-breasted nuts, red-breasted nuthatches in a box, which... For April 7th boggles my mind. So, early it is. Get out there, have fun, and remember to make every click your story.