

Moose Podcast #458

Moose Peterson Howdy, folks, and welcome to Moose Podcast number 458. The Jays. Greetings, folks. How you all doing? I trust you are really doing quite well right here in Montana. We've got a bit of a heat spell going on after the fourth and some thunderstorms. The thing that's kind of amazing to me is here at the old homestead. We've got it seems like a second round of nesting going on. We got some robins, uh, black chin hummers. And at the same time, we've got a bunch of fledglings. We even got a little fledgling coops. That's quite hilarious to watch as he tries to figure out what it is to be a Cooper's hawk. So it's really cool. And the, uh, white tailed deer twins and the one single fawn are spending a lot of time here and are just hilarious to watch. And I hope that you are having just as much fun watching the critters in your backyard, taking photographs, and of course, sharing them and their stories. This week's episode of the podcast is again being recorded with Adobe Podcast Beta, using their AI voice Cleaner upper. It's kind of cool, works for the well. And of course the transcript is still being generated and I'm using the one from Adobe Podcast, and you can find that transcript along with the podcast there on the website, the blog post for the podcast, along with the photograph that supports the podcast. And you can go to your favorite spots to listen to the podcast, which includes Spotify, which has the ability for us to have a conversations. Don't hesitate to reach out and do that. That's that's what this is all about. See if I can help you folks not reinvent the wheel that I've already reinvented many times over. So why go through that misery again? I've done it for all of us. Tap the resource folks. When it comes to news events. Something that I want to mention. It's coming up the first and 2nd of August. Uh, wow. Just less than a month away now. Wow. Time is flying. On the first, I'll be at Bozeman Camera doing a presentation on aviation photography. Aviation photography. Bull session. And that evening is going to be free. Anybody wants to attend, just come on. And then on the morning of the second just going to have ten shooters. We're going to do a early morning sunrise static shoot at the Three Forks Fly in hosted by the Montana Antique Aircraft Association. We've got some really cool planes lined up. My favorite is going to be the travel error. It's such a rare 6000 model. It's going to be just a lot of fun. Probably a bird, dog and ramp. Rumor is maybe even a P-51. So more information, head to Bozeman camera. That and I will have some of my stuff on social as well. Hope you can join us. Now. I'm still trying to get through Sea of Grass. I have just been crazy busy, but when it comes to books, especially for this week's podcast, I want to recommend an old one that's in my library. It's a great series, the Bent Life Histories of North American birds. This one in particular is the bent, bent, bent life histories of North American jays, crows, and titmice are. It's not easy to find. You can find it, uh, at times on Amazon. There are a number like AbeBooks has them. You're only going to find used copies, but it is a great resource of information and basically trivia. And that's trivia that you probably can use. I mean, hey, let's be honest, you're listening to the podcast, which is nothing but trivia, right? So here's trivia in a written form that you can take advantage of. So that's Bent Life Histories. They have a whole series. Uh, what is it? Well, it's a whole shelf, so at least a dozen different books. Check them out. I want to thank my good friends at Bedford's, Bedford's, and Bedford's camera. These are the just amazing folks that just keep knocking it out of the park. In fact, they've got it. Might be in a couple of days now. They're, uh, workshop at the ball game. I mean, they just they're so innovative and have such great things that they help photographers

move forward besides the old camera gear. Great inventory, great service, killer prices and the moose discount even that, uh, Nikon summer savings on mirrorless gear is going on till the 3rd of August. They got some great specials on some of my favorite lenses, like the 24 to 72 eight and the 7200 to 8 and the 402 80. What a beautiful lens. And the 51 two. It's another killer lens for aviation. So that's Bedford's. Whether you give them a phone call or you go to one of their many locations and what, three states, four states, or you go to the website. Bedford's dot com. Just make sure you use the discount code M. Get that 5% after you check out. That's Bedford's. Thanks Bedford for sponsoring the moose podcast. The Jays. They are an amazing group of birds, part of the corvids. So right off the bat, when you're lumped with crows and ravens, you got to know that they're smart birds. And that's really essential when it comes to photographing the jays. They have ah, they have great memories. They have uh, some anecdotal, very anecdotal evidence that they actually, ah, started using tools, which is really just another higher form. Just to give you an idea, just to start off, how smart Jays are. It's been shown and while it's still not, no one's really gone and done the research but anecdotal like hummingbird jays notice and recognize and remember the people. That's us two legged people who go out and fill the bird feeders and because they recognize you as a food source. Even if it's a brand new bird to you, you've never seen them before. They will, for lack of better terms, become accustomed or habituated to you almost as quickly as you can fill that bird feeder. Now, why would that be important? Well, with a bird as smart as a jay, if you want to get close physically, which you need to for birds, having something to break down that first set of walls, especially with a really bird species, really smart bird species. This is great information to know. Now having them eat out of your hand actually is not that difficult. It takes less than a week to get one that habituated and that can be really fun. But they're just unbelievably smart and you have to keep that in mind when you come to photograph them. Back in the day, I was part of a research project on the island. Scrub jay out there on Catalina Island. It was out there with Doctor Charles Collins who wrote the paper on him. And, uh, so we went out there many times. Great, great trips. But you have these kind of we had, uh, we needed a marked population. And that means that they had bands, they had a service band, and then Charlie had a combo of color bands. So we knew individuals so we could understand what they're doing. For example, we need to know the males and the females and a pair and a territory. And from that simple thing learned that the females tend to, um, uh. Badger. Uh. Uh, give crap to the males to get them to get out and like, find food or nesting material. And they often would kind of scold them if they were being lazy. Another interesting thing we learned from that study, it will always be in my head is we had these. We had to trap them in order to get bands on their legs, and they were way too smart to fly into your basic mist net that we use for for catching birds, for banding. Charlie had a special kind of a metal cage and you couldn't do a spring door. He found that out because he instantly figured out how to trip that spring door and get the peanut out. Had to have a door where we had a string of tied, and the string had to be basically covered up with leaf litter and stuff so they didn't see it. And because they learned how to trip the petal in the cage to pull out the peanuts, and he had sterilized whole peanuts in the shell. We ended up having to wire the peanuts to the inside of the dead center of the cage, so they couldn't go to the side or the end of the cage and pull that peanut out. So I had to go in, and that's how smart these guys are. But they're just so animated. They're just worth photographing. And then look at the varieties we have. We've got my favorites. One we, we

have here at the ranch. And we had them at our home in the Sierras or Steller Jays. Gorgeous solid blue black crest. Great bird. Probably my next favorite. Next to them would be the Blue Jays. I love Blue jays. Had them once here. Can't get them back. Another really amazing amazing Jay is the green jay. Crazy. You maybe never heard of it. Yeah, it's in North America, mostly in Texas, along the border. Green jays are spectacular. Green and yellow jays just as smart. Just the same size. Really great birds. Then you have, you know, the Canada jay or what we used to call the the camp Robert J. Another gorgeous J. Um, the, uh, I mentioned the island scrub jay. There's the California scrub jay. Uh, you've got the Florida scrub jay, an endangered species, and all of these Jay's you can basically lump together in the same kind of biology technology kind of book when it comes to photographing them. Now they tend to be most active, like most cover days at the, uh, the hours of early morning and late evening in the afternoons when it's warmer, they kind of kind of chill and relax. And that early morning, they seem to be the most, um, I don't want to say obnoxious, but the most honoree. And when they're ornery, they have the best attitude. When they have the best attitude, they've got the best gesture, which of course gives you the best photographs. So how do you photograph a jay? Well, having them come to you is definitely the easiest because like I mentioned a few times already, they're smart, really smart, and they seem to know what we're up to now. The Jays here and the Jays that I had back in the Sierras, I would photograph them coming to the food, but not on the feeder itself. It's kind of, you know, the the golden perch. That whole scenario I've talked about many times came about photographing Steller jays because they want to bounce off some shrub tree onto a perch. And then from that perch they go to get their feed. And once they fed, they go directly back to wherever they want to go. So it's that perch is really kind of important. Is it easy just to photograph them just bouncing around? Not really. Unless like, you know, Canada Jays, you'll find them a lot of A campsites so they'll come. If you sit at a campsite table, they'll come to you without anything. But once they figure out you don't have anything, they're gone because they're smart. Scrub jays kind of the same way. We had one at our home in Santa Barbara that would. It took maybe two weeks of throwing out sterilized, shelled peanuts before he realized that I was the peanut guy. And I would just sit on the the steps of the porch and he would just come down and land and grab it and go. So you can get close to him. So that means you don't need a lot of glass. My preference is the Z 445. Small. It's light. It focuses close, it focuses fast. And since the Jays are big, right. They are what size of maybe three fists together. You know, including their tail. They're a big bird. Don't need a lot of glass, but you want to kind of get them to pop out from their backgrounds. So having that longer lens to move vertically left or right, up or down, little bits to improve the background can make a difference. The one suggestion I have for Jay's, if at all possible not a necessity, not a requirement, but they have really beautiful big dark eyes and if you have any sparkle to them, it kind of lights the imagination to that intelligence. That's that's just inherent in Jay's. We'd love to encourage you to go down and photograph the Florida scrub. Jay had a student long ago who did that and did really great stuff back in the days of film, shared his images, helped with that endangered species. And if you can tell a story of any Jay and its intelligence and share that, that just would really be a great thing. Because like a number of species, their numbers are actually have really kind of decrease faster than other species, um, their size, the territory they need, their intelligence. Um, so helping them out photographically and telling their story would serve all of us really well. I would love to hear and see your

stories. Just keep in mind that if you hadn't heard it already, they're really intelligent and you can use that to your benefit. Just get that Bentley book, just do a little research on their their habits, their their, you know, responses, their intelligence. You'll find you can put it to use and you too can make some great images. Because if you do, I guarantee you're going to fall in love with them as I have the Jays. You folks have a marvelous week. Get out there and shoot and remember to make every click your story.