



THE

# LAST FRAME

November 2007

St. Albert Photo Club's Monthly Newsletter



Leslie Degner on location at Lake O'Hara in Yoho National Park, B.C.

## Mark and Leslie Degner

Mark and Leslie Degner of Sherwood Park, Alberta, spend much of their spare time chasing and photographing some of nature's most elusive moments.

In addition, like many aspiring

and advanced photographers, they will not deny themselves any opportunity for photographing wildlife.

Members of the St. Albert Photo Club were treated to a to an inspiring slide presentation this past

November where Mark and Leslie discussed some of their tips for photographing wildlife.

It was noted early their presentation that they are more "opportunistic" in their approach to wildlife

DECEMBER  
GUEST SPEAKER  
None

DECEMBER 12th  
CHRISTMAS  
BANQUET

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JANUARY  
GUEST SPEAKER  
TBA

JANUARY  
COMPETITION  
"Open"



photography, often photographing these subjects while in pursuit of other related objectives.

While self-marketing their own photography through their business Wilderness Light, they are also represented by two stock agencies, Corbis and Take Stock.

Their images have been published as posters, in calendars, and in magazines such as, Canadian Geographic (where they provided the photography for a recent article on Elk Island National Park), Canadian Wildlife, Gardening Life, Outdoor Photographer, and Photo Life.

Book credits include "The Canadian Rockies Access Guide". They also provide photographs for corporate clients in advertising and promotional projects.

Mark suggested there are three factors relevant to your success in photographing wildlife.

The first factor referred to pertains to your equipment.

You must know your equipment and know how to operate it, ...quickly!

A complete understanding of your camera's oper-

ation plus proper shooting technique is essential, as wildlife opportunities don't often repeat themselves.

He also stressed the importance of a tripod.

Over 90% of their wildlife images are photographed using a sturdy tripod.

It is very difficult to get sharp results with telephoto lenses while handholding both your camera and a long lens.

Combine camera shake, low ISO, and marginal light levels, when many species are most active, with subject movement, and you have just set yourself up for a failed image.

A look in most pros camera bags will often yield a fixed 300mm lens.

This focal length should enable you to cover most of the larger mammals.

For birds and subjects that may be difficult to get close to, a fast, long telephoto lens can be worth its weight in gold.

A medium-speed telephoto lens such as a 300mm f/4 is a good compromise between focal length and speed.

This optic can save you over \$3000 from its next



Mark Degner with his Bernese Mountain dogs.

fastest cousin, the legendary 300mm f/2.8.

If you don't mind the price and the weight, the 300mm f/2.8 is an amazing lens for most wildlife species.

The main advantage is the f/2.8 aperture: it lets you shoot in low light and gives you the fastest shutter speeds possible with slow-grained film or low digital ISO ratings.

Add a 1.4x and 2X teleconverter to your camera bag and you have a quality, reasonably fast 420mm f/4 and 600mm f/5.6 lens at your disposal. You are covered for almost any type of wildlife from

smaller birds to larger mammals.

After camera and lens considerations, the next factor Mark said that was important in conducting successful wildlife photography is knowing your subject.

He has a definite advantage over most of us in that he is a biologist by profession, teaching such at Edmonton's Grant McEwen Community College.

Knowing your subject is more important than the equipment you own. Understanding their behaviour will aid you in getting the images you

<p>St. Albert Photo Club</p> <hr/> <p>Vol:7 Issue:3 PUBLISHED MONTHLY September - June</p>	<p><b>President</b></p> <p>Derald Lobay </p>	<p><b>Treasurer</b></p> <p>Allen Skoreyko </p>	<p><b>Web Master</b></p> <p>Tracey Guzak </p>	<p><b>Club Contact</b></p> <p>Doug Poon 973-7035  dougpoon@shaw.ca</p>
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Sally Lightfoot crab photographed at Galapagos Islands.

desire.

Knowledge and research thus are the keys to successful wildlife photography.

These can be learned from magazines and books, both being great sources of ideas and suggestions.

Field guides are great for identifying less obvious birds and mammals.

Many well-respected natural history photographers actually began their careers as naturalists and/or interpreters with the provincial or national park services.

The third and final factor relevant to wildlife photography is patience.

Always have your camera ready to go with your favourite wildlife lens mounted on your camera body and affixed to your tripod head.

You could go as far pre-setting the shutter speed and aperture so all you have to do is aim, focus, and shoot!

Be patient, really patient, but be prepared to act quickly.

Move slowly and don't make any sudden movements as this may scare away your subject.

Things don't often happen on a set time schedule when seeking wildlife images.

Wait some, then wait some more and all of a sudden, a photographic opportunity materializes right before your eyes!

Unlike photographing a portrait of a person, in wildlife photography you have no control over the situation, compositionally or otherwise.

Very important to the success of a wildlife

image is the issue of the eye sharpness.

If the eye is not sharp, the image most often fails. Many times auto-focus is the culprit.

When the eyes are not sharp it is usually because the auto-focus sensor may target the front of the nose of a mammal or the beak of a bird.

The result is that your depth-of-field may not be enough to extend back to your subject's eyes.

First and foremost, you must always focus on the animal's eyes as their eyes draw the viewer's attention into the photograph.

Once you have the eye(s) in focus, however, don't release your shutter just yet.

Wait until you can see a specular highlight, known as a catchlight, in the eye of your subject before

releasing your shutter.

This adds life to your subject. Often, it is simply a matter of waiting for just a slight rotation of the subject's head.

Subject placement, such as the rule of thirds or the golden mean is used more as a guideline than as a rule in wildlife photography.

You want to give your subject some "space" in the design of your the composition, space in the direction they are looking or moving, be it direct or implied.

Should you shoot horizontal compositions or ones that are vertical?

When possible, shoot both orientations. Due to the layout of most camera bodies, it is much easier to compose your images in the camera's native landscape format.

If you are interested in selling your wildlife photographs to magazine publishers, they require vertical compositions for their cover images.

If there is sufficient negative space surrounding your subject, advertising type can then be dropped in.

Horizontal images with negative space off to one side can be used as double-page spreads.

Instead of always trying to photograph that close-up headshot, try to include your subject in its habitat.

These story telling im-



Wolf near Golden, B.C.

ages often reveal more about your subject and its behaviour than tight, frame-filling photographs.

Including action and movement in your images also adds a sense of life to your photograph.

As Leslie said, including action and motion to your photographs requires you to anticipate what action(s) may be forthcoming.

When everything does come together, your final image will result in situations and fleeting moments that are unique.

Some techniques they suggest in photographing wildlife specimens include the following.

It must be noted, however, that you need to be extremely cautious when approaching some subjects, prey and predator species in particular.

Cute and innocent subjects can lash out quickly, without much provocation, inflicting possible injury to you as you attempt to approach and photograph them.

Since most wildlife is “wild” by nature, this is where knowledge and research is extremely critical.

If you prefer the stalking approach to coming in close, it is best that as you move in slowly, trying to get the best possible composition from each of your shooting distances whenever you pause.

As you approach your subject, you may want to employ the “lost wallet” technique; this involves not approaching your subjects directly in a straight line and making minimal eye contact with them as you close in.

If you prefer to shoot from photographic blinds, remember they are used solely to hide your movement and shape and not for staying invisible to your subjects.

Blinds allow you to get images otherwise you could not get.

Cars make excellent blinds and you can support and steady your camera rig by resting it on either

beanbags or pillows.

Columbia Ground squirrels love dandelions and they begin eating them from the stalk end towards the flowered end.

Photographing them at the end of their “meal” yields colourful wildlife images.

Photographing in zoos gives you photographic ideas and possibilities.

They are also great training grounds to practice techniques that you could use in the field.

Wildlife Rehabilitation Centers can get you good images of threatened species you may not be able to get otherwise.

For example, 90% of published cougar images are either wildlife models or are treed by hunting dogs; not images captured in the wild.

Photographing wildlife does not come without its own set of pitfalls and issues.

When photographing nests, be extremely wary of searching for and disturbing nests.

Ground nesters may have their eggs destroyed by natural predators following your scent to the nest.

Tree nesters may abandon their nests if their nests are disturbed or feel they may be threatened by your presence.

Thus an obvious cause for concern in nest photography is desertion by the parents due to the pho-

tographer’s presence.

A less obvious but very real danger is predation of the chicks by other bird species or mammals.

Many birds build their nests in dense vegetation for very good reasons: the cover hides the chicks as well as providing shade.

Recently, it was discovered by bear biologists working in Banff National Park that grizzly bears would watch biologists set bear traps and when one was snared, the grizzly would feast upon the trapped animal.

Taking some of the advice both Mark and Leslie offered will be certain to improve your wildlife images, may your subjects be garden species in your backyard or those encountered in last remaining wilds of our country.

For those wishing to view more of Mark and Leslie’s photography, please visit their website at [www.markandlesliedegner.com](http://www.markandlesliedegner.com).

Article-Derald Lobay

## Club Point Standings

### PRINTS

11 - Al Popil  
04 - Sandra Boser  
02 - Sieg Koslowski  
01 - Allen Skoreyko

### DIGITAL

06 - Al Popil  
06 - Allen Skoreyko  
03 - Sieg Koslowski  
02 - Mufty Mathewson  
01 - Andrew MacLeod

# THE LAST FRAME

CLUB MEMBERS WINNING MONTHLY PICTURES



## PRINTS



1st Place Print - Sandra Boser



2nd Place Print - Sieg Koslowski



3rd Place Print - Allen Skoreyko

## DIGITAL



1st Place Digital - Allen Skoreyko



2nd Place Digital - Sieg Koslowski



3rd Place Digital - Sieg Koslowski