



# Southern Illinois Photographic Society

www.sipscameraclub.com

May 2009 Newsletter

## May Meeting

This month our program featured Dan Overturf, Professor of Photography at SIU Carbondale. Dan is a native Illinoisan, who also went through SIU's program. After moving around a fair amount early in his career, he settled at SIU and has been there for the last 20 years. Dan teaches a range of courses, including documentary, beginning photography, and abstract.

The focus of Dan's presentation this evening was the content for his book, "A River Through Illinois," which he coauthored with Gary Marx. This book was eight years in the making, and came out just last year. Dan showed a variety of photos from the book, all taken along the Illinois River. Many of these were portraits, for which Dan typically selected a square format, using a wide angle lens to frame the subject with the background. Subjects were ordinary folks, including barge workers, restaurant owners, and even a couple dating on the sly (Dan seems to have a knack for putting people at ease). He also included pictures of bridges (including bascule bridges in Chicago, and the workings underneath), photos from the TARP project (which filters storm sewer water before it goes into the river), and various accent shots large and small.

Dan shoots on film, and almost exclusively from a tripod. One of the more unique kinds of shots he showed were 360-degree panoramas, taken with a rotating camera (he would walk around behind the camera as it traversed in order not to be in the picture himself).

Dan also showed pictures of mine and power plant workers, especially African-American, in Springfield, Lake of Egypt, DuQuoin, and Metropolis. Other photographs came from his travels around the country to places like Tupelo Mississippi, New Orleans, Nevada, and California. Other pictures he showed were from trips overseas. From Thailand, he had pictures of several festivals, folk art, tourist areas, and some night shots. In Great Britain he had pictures from Edinburgh,

Dundee, Glasgow, the Orkney Islands, Aberdeen, Belfast, and Applebee. These were again a mix of portraits (e.g. an artist in his studio in Edinburgh) and local features (e.g. a ring of stone monoliths on Orkney).

Dan's very rich presentation encouraged followup, which can be done with his book or at [danooverturf.com](http://danooverturf.com). We thank Dan very much for taking to time to visit SIPS!

We had 53 people present at this meeting, including new members Jim Young, Amy Dungan (and family), and Denise Ruffino, and visitors Kari Hammond (Dave's granddaughter), Heather Bicanich from Waltonville, Felicia Hamberg and Ronald Hamberg from Carbondale (father & daughter - he enjoys digital, she likes abstract), Valerie Simpson from West Frankfort (portraits & kids), and Jay Bruce from Marion (a graphic designer at SIU).

Our contest this month was on the subject of eggs.

1st place: Jim Osborne, "Egg Crate"

2nd place: Jonathan Springer, "Jewel in the Rough"

3rd place: Joanna Gray, "Eggnostic"

Next month's contest is on Macro photography. The subject of the Mystery Tour was also announced at this meeting, but please note that the route has since been amended. (The full route was sent out by member email, and is also available on the web site.) Mystery tour entries must be a portfolio of 10 pictures, no larger than 5x7 each, and may or may not have a theme. Entries are due at our July meeting.

## Photo Op

by Jim Osborn

**Quick Tips!!** While not all of my fellow photographers may agree with me on these 10 quick tips for getting the best shots, they are things that *I believe* will work for almost everyone.

1. **Take your camera with you whenever you travel.** Don't miss the shot



*cont'd on page 3 - Photo Op*

## Calendar of Events

### June

Meeting: June 2

Program: Composition, Nancy Smolak

Featured Member: Dana Tetzlaff

Contest: Macro (12 month)

Outing: Picnic, Giant City State Park, Jun. 13

Planning Meeting: Jun. 16

### July

Meeting: Jul. 7

Program: Critiquing, Jim Osborn

Featured Member: George Stone

Contest: Mystery Tour (60 day)

Outing: TBD

Planning Meeting: Jul. 21

### August

Meeting: Aug. 4

Program: TBD

Featured Member: Jillian Choate

Contest: Vacation (12 month)

Outing: Richard and Susan Day, Aug. 1

Planning Meeting: Aug. 18

## Inside...

Meeting and outing reports, member news, event announcements, and Photo Op.



*SIPS members at the entrance to the Piney Creek Ravine trail, May 23*

## Piney Creek Ravine Outing

This month our outing took us deep into the backwoods of Jackson and Randolph counties, to Piney Creek Ravine State Natural Area. This trip was postponed from its originally-scheduled date due to the aftereffects of the storm the previous week, plus recent rains. Fortunately, our backup date proved to be a spectacular day, and the hardy souls that trekked out were treated to good weather, good scenery, and good companionship.

Attending this outing were Mike Hicks, Jillian Choate, Nancy Smolak, Dave and Lu Horning, Amy and John Dungan, Jo Dodd, and Jonathan Springer. We met for breakfast at Tippey's in Murphysboro, and a few also finished with a lunch at Brunzeez Cafe in Ava.

## Piney Creek Rock Art

The Piney Creek rockshelter contains the largest number of rock art designs discovered at a single Illinois location - over 150 carved and painted images. Most date from the Late Woodland (AD 450-900) and Mississippian (AD 950-1550) periods. The petroglyphs were carved by repeated striking and rubbing with harder rocks. Some of the paint was made by grinding a yellowish-red iron ore (Limonite) into powder, and then mixing it with animal fat. Other paintings used charcoal.

## Member News and Upcoming Events

This last weekend (May 30), the Marion Library had the grand opening for their newly renovated third floor space, and SIPS was invited to fill a display wall with member art. We had a great turnout for the first round of pictures for this space, with members meeting the previous Thursday evening to hang photos. The result looks great, so stop by to check it out if you haven't already. We expect to be doing a second round next month, depending on demand (date and

time to be determined).

At our regular meeting, Mike mentioned that habitual board meeting place Debby J's restaurant is looking for photos for a gallery in their restaurant.

Jim Osborn reminded us that the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR) is accepting photo submissions until early August for their annual contest in Illinois Outdoor Magazine.

Jillian gave information on the Paducah Summerfest '09 photo contest, which is being judged by SIU photography professor Anthony Martinez. Up to five photos may be submitted, with a deadline of June 17. Details are at [www.paducahphoto.com](http://www.paducahphoto.com).

The member directory has been updated and was distributed electronically this last month. Pictures are now included. If you would like to add a picture or change any contact info, please let Jonathan know. The directory will be updated periodically, and the latest version will be available at the download site.

Finally, we will be having our member picnic on Sat. June 13 at Giant City State Park. We plan to meet at the Group/Youth Campground (take the road past the softball diamond). We'll start gathering around 3pm and eat around 5 to 5:30. The club will provide steaks for those that give advance notice of attendance; other comestibles are members' responsibility. Family is welcome.



*In the ravine on the Piney Creek Ravine trail, May 23*

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## Photo Op

*cont'd from p. 1*

of lifetime because you left your camera at home (...and we all know that the best shots result from being in the right place at the right time WITH A CAMERA!!). Furthermore, don't miss the shot because your camera was in its bag in your backseat. Before I venture into the wildlife refuge I take my camera out of the bag, make sure the right lens is on the camera, check all the settings, take the lens cap off, and place the camera in the seat beside me.

**2. Set your camera to take photos in "Aperture Priority" mode.** I take about 95% of my photos in aperture priority. Set the aperture for the depth-of-field you want and, voila, the shutter speed takes care of itself. If you are still not getting the speed you need to photograph moving animals, speed up the ISO or increase aperture size until you get what you need.

**3. Use average white balance.** I have been doing this for some time now and have been very happy with the results. Plus, it's one less thing I have to worry about adjusting every time I shoot.

**4. Use the lowest ISOs you can.** Even though some of the newer DSLRs can shoot very high ISOs, under low light conditions the images may get grainy. Only shoot high (fast) ISOs as needed to get the shots you want.

**5. Set exposure compensation at -1/3.** I shoot almost everything at EVs of either -1/3 or -2/3. It is almost always better to slightly underexpose a photo than over-expose a photo. The underexposed shot can be fixed, the over-exposed shot can't. Also, colors seem to saturate a little better in a slightly under-exposed shot. If your camera has a histogram, check it occasionally to make sure you are shooting in the right range.

**6. Keep your lenses clean!** Use a microfiber cloth or something similar to clean your lenses and filters. Be cautious of use cleaning fluids on filters that are coated. Also, cover your lenses with their caps *as quickly as you can* when you change them. Ditto for caps on your camera.

**7. The less glass the better.** Although almost everyone shoots with filters at some time, the more glass you are shooting through the less sharp your

image may be.

**8. Find some way to steady your camera when shooting.** If it is not feasible to use a tripod, consider a window mount or bean bag, or even a remote trigger. If your camera is steady and your subject isn't moving much you can also use the camera's timer feature to snap that shot without worrying about your finger creating a slight camera shake.

**9. Try burst mode.** Wildlife moves quickly. Many cameras (digital AND film) will allow you to shoot multiple frames per second with a single push of the button. Ultimately you will probably find *at least* one shot that hits the mark.

**10. Always use Matrix metering.** Don't even mess with the other options.

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## From the Secretary

*by Jonathan Springer*

This month I thought I would tackle a subject that is all too often neglected: backups. I should apologize in advance to film shooters, for whom this discussion is mostly irrelevant, but there may be some useful insights even for them (scan!).

Everything digital shooters produce is ultimately stored as computer files, collections of binary data. In most people's workflow, this data gets copied off a flash memory card onto a hard disk in a computer. Then, the flash card is erased to make way for new pictures. Unless precautions are taken, the copy on the computer hard disk is the only copy, leaving it vulnerable to loss, either through physical loss (especially with a laptop) or digital corruption due to a software malfunction (or, dare I say, operator error?).

The primary way to ensure pictures are not lost is to "back up" the data - essentially making one or more copies so that if one is lost, the others remain. Backup strategy generally falls into two domains: short term and long term. Short term is the one most generally thought of, where you guard against losing your data to some catastrophic misfortune such as a hard disk crash. Long term is more subtle, and means protecting your data against the obsolescence of technology.

For short term backups, there are many strategies, but I tend to favor having at least 3 copies of all pictures. The first

copy is "on line"; this is accessed in day-to-day use. The second copy is "near line," fairly easily accessible but not regularly used. The third copy is "off line," in some safe location, preferably offsite from the other copies. Consider using a fire safe, or taking a copy when you visit relatives to leave at their house.

For backup media, again there are many options, but one of the most straightforward is to use external hard drives. These drives come in their own enclosure and attach to your computer via USB or Firewire. Common sizes are 500GB to 1TB, and they cost around \$100. There is software that can help synchronize folders and drives, but it's also possible to just copy things manually.

Another option to consider for your near-line or offline copies is an online service. While I would be careful about trusting my primary copies to a service, it may be a reasonable option for backup. The primary issues are cost and speed. For small photo libraries, it can work, but when you get up into the terabyte range (1000 GB), it becomes problematic. Not many services offer this much storage for a cheap price, and even over a typical broadband connection, it could take a couple months to upload a full 1 TB photo archive.

Other less common storage options include: flash cards, DVD-R or BD-R (Blu-Ray writable). Flash cards are simply too expensive for most people to consider. DVD-R and BD-R are a bit fiddly, requiring disk swapping, but more significant is that their reliability over time is not that good. Hard disk drives are fallible, but in my experience a well-cared-for hard drive offers better reliability than the alternatives.

Which brings us to long term backup. Technology has a habit of becoming obsolete, e.g. your carefully-preserved 5.25-inch floppy disk backups from 1978 may become useless simply from the lack of drives to read them. For this reason, and also to reduce the risk of failure that increases as hardware ages, it is important to replace your backup media periodically with newer technology as it becomes available. Also it should go without saying: if you have a backup media failure, immediately create a replacement backup from one of your other copies!