Southern Illinois Photographic Society

www.sipscameraclub.com

June 2010 Newsletter

Calendar of Events

June
Meeting: Jun. 2
Program: Show and Tell
15 Minutes of Fame: Linda Bundren
Contest: Bounty of Nature (1 year)
Outing: SIPS picnic, Ferne Clyffe, Jun. 12
Planning Meeting: Jun. 15

July
Meeting: Jul. 6
Program: TBD
15 Minutes of Fame: TBD
Contest: Insect World (60 day)
Outing: Richard and Susan Day's, Jul. 31
Planning Meeting: Jul. 20

August
Meeting: Aug. 3
Program: TBD
15 Minutes of Fame: TBD
Contest: Ravages of Time (1 year)
Outing: TBD
Planning Meeting: Aug. 17

Inside...

May Meeting

Our May meeting program was given by our own **Joe McFarland**. Joe writes for Outdoor Illinois magazine, but his passion is mushrooms. He didn't give away any of his closely-held mushroom hunting spots, but he did give us a lot of information on mushroom ecology, mushroom gastronomy, and of course mushroom photography.

To best photograph mushrooms, Joe advises getting down on the forest floor with them. Resist the temptation to tamper with the natural setting by arranging the elements; it often ends up looking artificial. A professional's eye can tell if two mushrooms that don't normally grow together have been artificially juxtaposed in an otherwise natural shot. Lighting in the shot can often be a problem, and the standard techniques such as a reflector work well.

Joe has, jointly with Gregory M. Mueller, recently had a book published: "Edible Wild Mushrooms of Illinois and Surrounding States" (University of Illinois Press, 2009). This book showcases some of Joe's best mushroom photographs, as well as offering details on how to find and prepare these wild delicacies. Joe also put in a plug for the Outdoor Illinois magazine photo contest. He impressed on us that the contest rules have been updated so that you retain ownership of your submitted images. The deadline is Aug. 6; see **dnr.state.il.us/oi** for more details.

Our featured member this month was **Bill Thomas**, who wowed us with a stunning travelogue of Switzerland, France, Spain, and Washington DC. I see that the Euro is currently at about a 3-year low relative to the dollar, so now might be a good opportunity to take some inspiration from Bill's presentation and get in a European vacation.

In other member news, **Linda Martin** has had a photo published in the National Audubon Magazine. **Dave Brewer** has had an image published in Outdoor Illinois Magazine. Congratulations to both! Also, **Dave Hammond** has an exhibit called "Momentary Skyscrapers" taking place at the Schmidt Art Center in Belleville, IL. Definitely stop by if you're heading up to St. Louis; it's off of I-64 at Exit 14, down Green Mt. Rd., on the SW Illinois College campus (**schmidtartcenter.com**).

Our annual club picnic is fast approaching; it will be held June 12 at Ferne Clyffe. Please let Dana know in advance if you will attend, as the club is providing steaks. Bring a side dish, dinnerware, and drinks yourself.

This month's contest was "Symmetry and Patterns." We had 14 entries, and the winners were:

1st place: Linda Martin, "Dandelion"
2nd place: Bill Thomas, "Sandstone"
3rd place: Mike Hicks, "Sactuary"

Congratulations on these outstanding photos. Next month, our contest is "Bounty of Nature."

Thanks to Nancy, who filled in for Jillian this month leading the meeting. We'd also like to welcome members to attend our monthly planning meeting, which takes place the third Tuesday of the month at 6:30pm at Debby J's restaurant in Herrin.

Photo Op

by Jim Osborn

Continuing with our discussion of technical categories for the 2010 Photographic Technical Excellence Contest, let's focus on items #7 & #8—Moving Object-Stop Action and Moving Object-Blurring Effect. In both cases, creating a successful image is dependent on one thing—shutter speed. To take a picture of a moving image and stop it "in its tracks" without being blurry requires a very fast shutter speed. To make moving water appear feathery or "soft" requires a very slow shutter speed. There are several ways to accomplish your goals:

Moving Object—Stop Action

How fast is fast enough for shutter speed? The answer varies depending on the

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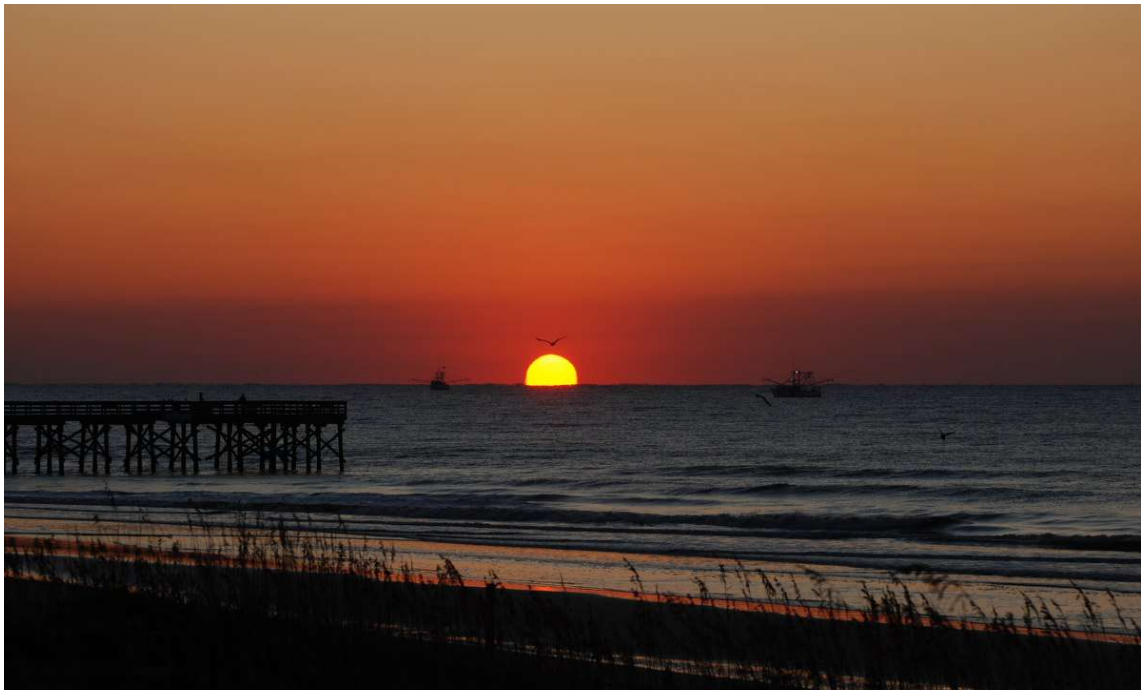
Have something for the newsletter? Contact SIPS at info@sipscameraclub.com.



Sunrise on Isle of Palms (photo: Christine Keeney)

The Adventure Behind the Photo

by Christine Keeney

I am not a morning person. A perfect day for me would start at 9:30 a.m. and end about 2:00 a.m. So the "golden" hours for me are quite obviously right around sunset (and I only get one set of "golden" hours a day). I do love sunsets; I enjoy sitting and waiting for sunsets, following sunsets, scheduling vacations around sunsets, and taking pictures of sunsets. Just over a year ago I took a mini vacation to S. Carolina...the east coast. The east coast and sunsets do not go hand in hand as you know. This was a lazy vacation of doing nothing but laying on the beach (I didn't even read! That's a big deal for someone who averages 33 books a month)and once in a while playing with my camera because I was wanting to learn to use my manual controls more. .

I know what I'm going to have to do on this vacation on the east coast, but I can still fight it. So the last day of my vacation I woke up for, gasp, a sunrise. The hotel has a patio for the guests to share that is about 200 feet from the shore, and a little way down the beach is a pier stretching out into the ocean. The sun will be coming up just past this pier. Time to set up; I have now purchased a tripod so things are looking up for this particular experiment. It's still dark so I start playing with settings to see what I can get with long exposures. Not much, but I at least I know what I want in the frame. Now it starts to get light, and I start snapping. And adjusting and tweaking, and playing, my favorite parts other than looking at the final results. I'm pretty sleepy, and pretty uncoordinated at this time of day, but I'll work with what I've got I guess.

Fortunately for me the shrimp boat owners are not night people, they are up and hard at work before the sun has risen, as I discover when the sun climbs further out of the ocean and lets me see my surroundings. Between these boats and their bird audience I was quite pleased with what I ended up with for my morning expedition. I took around 75 pictures while I was doing all of this learning, and I got a few that I was quite pleased with, but mainly this quantity keeps me content so I don't have to get up for another sunrise for a few years now. I'm going back to my sunsets!

Event Planning

The SIPS board is planning outings, and if there's an area that you think would be great for us to visit, please do let the board know, either at a meeting or by email. Your input helps make the club better!

Photo Op

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speed of the subject, the amount of available light, and the limitations of your camera. You may need to experiment. Creating a "stop action" image of someone riding by on bicycle is quite different from capturing a hummingbird in flight with its wings "frozen" in mid-air. Here are some options to try. First, many cameras have a mode on the main dial for "action shots." If you really don't want to try to mess too much with camera settings, try the action mode. Second, try setting the main dial to shutter priority (the Tv setting). Your camera will automatically adjust the depth of field, and in some cases the ISO, to give you the best setting for a stop-action shot. Third, you can set the main dial to aperture priority (Av). Then, to get the fastest speed you can, set the aperture to the lowest f-stop available to you. This will give you the largest amount of available light. Fourth, if the speed is still not fast enough for you in Av mode, you can increase the ISO. Most cameras now take excellent shots at 1600 ISO and some do very well at 3200 ISO. If you are taking pictures in low light, it might be necessary to crank up the ISO to the highest level with which you feel comfortable. Remember, though, the higher the ISO, the greater the risk of getting "digital noise" in your shot. Finally, a flash or strobe may help you achieve your goal as well, but that is a more technical discussion.

Moving Object—Blurring Effect

The most common use of this technique is with moving water. I'm sure most of you have seen pictures of streams or waterfalls where the water looks very smooth and wispy. To accomplish this, the first thing you need is a tripod. It is impossible to handhold a camera long

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photo: Jim Osborn

Chinese Cultural Days

Our outing this month was the Chinese Cultural Days, held at the Missouri Botanical Garden May 15 and 16. Unfortunately, Saturday, the day of our trip, was rainy, but several members did make the trip and saw some wonderful displays. If you attended, please let Linda Bundren know for member of the year credit.

Next month, our outing is the club picnic; see the meeting notes for details. For the month of July, our outing will be a trip to Richard and Susan Day's property in Alma, IL on July 31. There are just 15 slots for this event, with a fee of $50 payable to reserve your spot. At the time of this writing, we still have a few free slots, so contact Dana soon if you want to go.

photo: Linda Bundren

The Technical Side

by Jonathan Springer

Jim covers photography of moving objects in his column this month, both for stopping the action and for intentional blurring. Achieving good results often takes a certain amount of experience in knowing what will work and what won't. Particularly in the case of blurring, a lot of it is artistic sense, but in the case of stopping the action, there is an objective sense in which the shot was successful. It should be possible to calculate and predict whether a shot we want to take will be possible or not.

Assume for the moment that we have an element in the scene that is moving, and it is moving directly across the plane of focus. The key factors are going to be how fast it is moving, our shutter speed, our camera resolution and the width of our field of view. As an example, say we are shooting a scene where our field of view at the plane of focus is 10 meters across. A 10MP camera has about 4000 pixels of resolution horizontally, so each pixel is covering 2.5mm. For the picture to be tack sharp, we want to make sure that the subject doesn't move more than about 1 pixel, or 2.5mm, while the shutter is open. If we are able to use a 1/1000s shutter speed, this translates to a speed of 2.5m/s, which is a little over 5mph. Thus, anything moving across our field of view at more than a jogging pace will be blurred to some extent.

All of the above is for sharpness at the pixel level; in practice, a little more motion often still looks fine. Also, if we are viewing or printing at a lower resolution, we could get away with more motion in the scene and still have it look perfectly sharp. Of course, if you pan your camera to follow the movement, you can compensate for the relative speed to achieve sharpness as well.

The above is a lot of calculation to have to do on the fly. To make it easier, we can boil it down to a rule of thumb. Simply estimate the number of feet your field of view is wide (at the plane of focus), divide by 5, and that's the number of miles-per-hour you can tolerate at 1/1000s. All of the relationships are linear, so if you use a shutter speed twice as fast, your subject can go twice as fast; if you're only printing at half resolution, the subject can go twice as fast as well, etc.

Caveat: all of this is theoretical, and I've made some simplifying assumptions. While I hope it's useful information, it's always good to obtain a reality check before relying on it with your equipment. Also, as a related topic, check out my April article for some additional details on use of flash at high shutter speeds.

Photo Op

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enough to get the right kind of blurring effect you want. Handheld, you would surely get a blurry effect, but probably everything in the image would be blurry, not just the water. Again, you can set your camera to either shutter priority or aperture priority. In shutter priority you will probably want a speed no faster than ½ second, but more likely you will want a speed of 1-2 seconds. To accomplish that, the camera has to stop down on the aperture. Depending on the amount of available light you still might not be able to get a slow enough shutter speed. In aperture priority, set the aperture for the highest f-stop available (lowest amount of light). Again, the speed may still be too fast. In both cases you can also slow the ISO down to the lowest value possible—usually 100 ISO. However, in my experience, getting a speed of 1-3 seconds in good light requires something more. Choose the settings suggested above, but put either a neutral density filter or polarizing filter (or stack both) on your camera. That should do the trick. To get the blur of a bicycle rider passing by, while trying to keep the surroundings in focus, you should set the camera for a slow shutter speed, keep the camera stable, and snap a burst of shots as the rider passes by. Hopefully one or two of the images will be winners.

The fun of photography is learning how to do something with your camera you haven't done before. Just go out and experiment and see what you get. If you're shooting digital, the extra shots don't cost you an extra dime—so take the time.

photo: Jim Osborn