

# OUTDOORS

## Better equipment means better photos

IN ALL the years I've tried to give readers some tips on how to take better wildlife photos, to preserve some of the incredible sights they witness in the great outdoors, I've leaned on the cheap when it comes to equipment.

Being in the newspaper business, my cameras and lenses have always had to pass a balance test between quality and expense. As I've said before, my best zoom lenses look nothing like what you see on the side of a football field when the Packers are beating up some team.

On a recent trip to central Wisconsin for a niece's graduation party, I bumped into a brother-in-law who recently took up the hobby of wildlife photography.

Dave Austreng of Black Creek, who's been retired for a couple of years now, spent a lifetime as a very successful hunter and angler. His photo has been in this space before, and more often than not, holding a walleye or crappie.

When he got bit by the photography bug, he didn't go cheap. And the other day he showed me a full-format Sony camera equipped with a 200-600 zoom lens that was really impressive.

Even more impressive are some of the wildlife shots he's taken the past year, including pine marten, red fox, deer, owls and birds of all kinds. The clarity and color, and depth of field (what's all in focus), is amazing.

So if you believe some of the photos you see in this newspaper or column are good, know that there is even more help for the would-be wildlife photographer who can invest heavily into quality equipment.

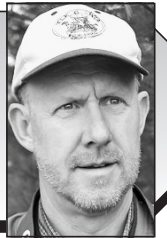
You especially want to spend that money on the best lenses with the highest quality glass available, because that's where you can excel in creating better images. Better glass provides better clarity and lets in more light, giving you high-quality images in low-light conditions.

You can spend thousands of dollars on these lenses as opposed to the \$350 the scribbler spent on

his last zoom lens purchase. And your results are likely to reflect that investment.

History should reflect that it's the digital world of photography that made all the difference for me and many like me. When those professional-style cameras became

**In the Outdoors**  
By  
Kurt Krueger



available for a reasonable price in 2004, it changed everything.

Film was great but it had many limitations for the newcomer. Learning was tough because you had to develop film hours or days after shooting photos to discover how you did. With digital equipment, you can apply the knowledge from failures immediately. Film was tough on shadow areas while digital lightens those areas automatically.

Failure is essential to learning most anything, and it's really true in photography. Every blurry photo, dark image, cut-off subject and missed opportunity is a learning experience. I've erased tens of thousands of images that were bad for one or more reasons.

**I'd love to tell you that my wildlife photography skills are so refined that nothing gets by me in the great outdoors, but that would be a lie.**

The first four fawns I saw this year presented zero opportunity for a decent shot, all of them skirting into heavy cover behind mom as soon as she took off.

The other day a loon came up so close to the boat that I could have touched it with a seven-foot fishing rod, and of course, the camera was snapped tightly into a nearby bag. Missed out on that one.

On one fishing outing I was fortunate enough to have an otter jump up on land right in front of me, and my camera was back in the



With today's digital equipment and improved lenses, there's never been a better time to capture great wildlife

images. Pictured here are a soaring bald eagle, a fawn, a common loon and an osprey. —Photos By The Author

truck. Forgot it.

Would-be photographers need to know the nature of the hobby, which is pretty unpredictable. You just have to put your time in and eventually, persistence will pay off.

Just like the sport of fishing, patience pays big dividends in the world of nature photography. Eventually that doe and fawn are going to stop in photo range, in a neat little clearing with sunlight filtering perfectly through the leaves. So you just keep working at it.

Nothing teaches more character and skill than failure. And the only real failure is accepting defeat instead of trying again.

Right now is the perfect time to be outdoors with a camera,

for late spring and early summer bring more opportunities than any other time of the year. New life is emerging and there are fawns, loon chicks, goslings, eaglets, ducklings, fox pups, bear cubs and all kinds of subjects to photograph.

Of all the wildlife we have in the North Woods for viewing and imaging, nothing is more exciting or more challenging than the fast-moving raptors — especially the bald eagles and ospreys.

A bird that can fall from the sky and snatch a fish from the water's surface with pinpoint precision may be the toughest to get, for it takes the right shutter speed, focus and lighting to create the perfect image. Nothing else moves that fast.

It's nesting season and the

raptor are hunting everywhere, looking for prey they can eat or bring back to the little ones in the nest.

Good nature photos are just part of this hobby's reward. More interesting are the stories behind some of the photos — the fabric of what makes the North Woods such a special place to live, work and play.

Like anything else you might try in life, you won't find success without work and persistence. As the old saying goes, the only place success comes before work is in the dictionary.

**It means spending as much time as possible in the great outdoors, which for me, makes it one of the best hobbies the world has ever known.**



First place winners of the PMTT pictured are, front row from left, Tim Willems and Nolan Sprengeler; and back row, Sam Stone and Austin Wiggerman, third place; and Mat Raley and Nate Osfar, second place. —Contributed Photo

## Fishing with the Guides

By George Langley



### Cold front, mayfly hatches not helping walleye action

Well, here we go with the weather roller coaster again. This has been a strange year for consistent weather of any kind. We'll get a few nice warm days and then, some more cold weather and then, cold again. This is having an effect on the fishing, as it seems to be causing the fish to move in and out of preferred habitat more often.

One day you'll get crappies in a spot, and the next, they're gone. Same with walleye; a weed bed will be productive one day and the next day, they're gone. Maybe it will settle down in July and become more predictable.

Until last weekend, the water temps were consistently rising. That changed with colder nights and now we have a slow drop in temps for a few days. Who knows what will happen now? There is a lot of pollen on the water after a calm night; those of us with dark cars are sick of it. Water levels have slowly dropped over the last two weeks, but swimming and the water sports are enjoyable with the warmer weather. Weed growth is excellent and providing nice cover for the fish.

Let's talk about the walleye situation right now. Two words to chill the heart of any walleye angler are coming now: mayfly hatch. There has been a massive hatch on the Chain in the last few days, enough to really slow down the feeding during the daytime. The walleye will gorge in the evenings and at night when these guys are hatching, so during the daytime afterward they're just not in a feeding mood. In the mornings, on some of the lakes there has been a veritable carpet of shells left by the hatching larvae and many dead ones. Smallies and largemouth will also feed on them, but not as much as walleyes. Your best bet if you see these carpets is to go muskie or crappie fishing.

Let's hope that we get some more consistent warm water to stabilize these fishing patterns. The only fish still on spawning beds are the bluegills. These fish provide nice action all summer, but especially now that they're on the shorelines. Worms or waxies are always best for them. We also could use a drop in the wind on many days.

Things will stabilize and get better for all anglers. Even the muskie fishing has been affected by the cold front and the mayfly hatch. Summer warmth will hopefully come sooner rather than later.

Good luck and good fishin'.

## Minnesota anglers catch 10 muskies to win Eagle River/Three Lakes PMTT

BY GARY RIDDERBUSCH  
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

Using multiple high-tech live imaging electronics in their boat, a pair of Minnesota anglers caught a record-tying 10 muskies to win the Professional Musky Tournament Trail (PMTT) qualifier on the

Eagle River and Three Lakes Chain of Lakes Saturday and Sunday.

First place in the PMTT went to Nolan Sprengeler of Plymouth, Minn., and Tim Willems of Mayer, Minn. They won the tournament by catching and releasing 10 muskies — 43.75, 43, 40.75, 40.5, 40.5, 38.25, 38, 38, 37 and 35.25 inches. The elec-

tronics were legal equipment for the PMTT tourney.

Their catch and release of 10 fish ties the PMTT record of most fish caught in one day (eight fish) and most fish caught for a tournament (10 fish). They also took home the highest payout in tournament history at \$23,880.

Fifty-four muskies of 30 inches or greater were reg-

istered on Saturday and 27 muskies were registered on Sunday, a total of 81 muskies caught and released in the two-day tournament. A 30-inch size limit is used in the tournament because all fish are released immediately from the boat and not transported.

"The Eagle River/Three

To PMTT, Pg. 12B

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