CamNats Vision

Spring 2025

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Massachusetts Camera Naturalists

https://www.masscamnats.org

Message from CamNats Chair

Dear Mass CamNats members,

It is a pleasure to serve as your Chairperson, and I welcome our leadership team. Dave Young serving as Vice Chair, Susan Mosser as Treasurer and Pam Lintner as Secretary. The Steering Committee, composed of the four officers and Dennis Goulet, Shawn Carey, and Rick Cloran, rounds out the team. I would like to extend a big thank you to our elected officers and the members of the steering committee for their past support and future guidance over my term.

Though our Annual Meeting was a bit delayed, thanks to the Greater Lynn Photographic Association for allowing us the use of their facilities and for all the logistics involved, it was a huge success. A special thanks to Chris Germaine for arranging the food and refreshments.

As usual, we had a very successful business meeting and a showing of member and potential member images. As I am not sure if our newly inducted members from our fall meeting have been introduced, I would like to welcome Brenda Driscoll, Skip Hoyt, and Rajan Desai to Mass CamNats. I am also pleased to welcome Linda Coviello to our membership, effective the 2024 Annual Meeting. Welcome, and we all look forward to your active participation in our endeavors.

Ken Jordan and Fran McDonald are working towards a late May field trip to Damariscotta, Maine, to photograph the Osprey during the annual Alewife run.

Please mark your calendar:

- The 2025 Annual Meeting that will be held on December 6, 2025 at Greater Lynn.
- Our Spring Meeting is scheduled for May 3, at the Sachuest Point National Wildlife Refuge, 769 Sachuest Point Road, Middletown, RI 02842
- The Spring Field Trip to Damariscotta, Maine is planned for May 20-22, 2025.

Over the past year, our past chair Shawn Carey organized some wonderful Zoom and in-person sessions that were very well received and appreciated. I would like to continue with such events for this and future years. I would like to see if we can hold a Zoom session with two or three members presenting a 15- to 20- minute program on a topic of their choice. These can be educational, showcase, or experiences.

I would also like to see our members' work exhibited in various public venues. I look forward to a few volunteers who would like to plan and organize such events.

Thank you, Mary Doo, for you great work with the Newsletter. Thank you to all who have contributed with images and articles that make our Newsletter a pleasure to read. I encourage each and every one to share your photographic experiences, photo techniques, travel stories and your images. Please send these to our editor at CamNatsNews@Gmail.com.

Remember, this is your club. Get involved, make it an organization of learning, sharing, and most of all,w fun. If you have an idea that you feel will benefit the organization, please, share it with me so we can work to bring it to fruition.

Shiv Verma

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Grebes with Babies at Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge

A Seven-Year Quest Becomes a Reality!

By Sandy Selesky

For seven years, my friend Pat and I had been doing a lot of wishful thinking, along with periodic research into where we could finally go to photograph the babies of Western and Clark's Grebes riding on a parent's back. Back in 2017, we had taken a bird photography trip on our own to the San Diego area in Southern California. From our research, we knew that there was a resident population of these grebes at Lake Hodges in the middle of a very urban setting. Once there, we walked down a trail and soon found an opening that looked down on the grebes. We could not get down to the edge of the lake from this trail since it was steep and covered by thick vegetation, but we were able to spend several hours watching and

photographing them doing their strange and wonderful “rushing” behavior that is part of their mating display—something that had been on my bucket list ever since seeing it in a documentary about these grebes several years earlier. What a thrill! And even though the grebes were fairly distant, we were still able to get photographs that were good enough to crop and edit later on our computers. I used my Canon 7D MII with the Canon 100–400 IS II lens plus a 1.4 teleconverter and was able to get very decent images even at that distance. I kept my ISO setting high—between 800–1600 ISO—and that enabled my shutter speed, usually between 4000–6400, to capture the fast action

of the big yellow webbed feet of these grebes running along the surface of the water as if they were “walking on water.”

As much as photographing this unique behavior fulfilled our main goal for this trip and as thrilled as we were to see and capture it in memorable images, we still had a great desire to be there when the grebe babies hatched. Some of the grebes we saw were already sitting on nests, but we were not there late enough to see

any babies yet. We were there in late January and would have had to return by the end of February or early March.

For several years, we kept thinking about returning to Lake Hodges, but some local politics plus weather conditions interfered with our plans—frustrating water level management and droughts that prevented successful breeding seasons. We were therefore hesitant and unsure about the proper timetable to actually see the babies. However, in 2024, seven years after seeing the rushing behavior at Lake Hodges, we decided to try another area.

I had heard about from two former CamNats members a few years before—Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge in Box Elder County, about 50 miles north of Salt Lake City, Utah. They recommended late June for babies of grebes and other species. This refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System—a system of lands that is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It is designated as a globally important shorebird area. We never had to show a pass or pay a fee at Bear River.

Pat and I kept checking blogs and images posted on a Bear River Facebook page as our trip, scheduled for the last week in June 2024, came closer and closer. Pat emailed a few people who posted images, and we contacted a frequent blog writer, Jeff Strong, who lives in the area. Our basic question was: When can we hope to see the grebe babies riding on the parent's back? There were a few pictures, and some replies implied that we might actually be too late since breeding seemed to be earlier this year than usual. Also, it seemed that even if we saw grebes with babies, they would be far out along the lakes and canals, and we wouldn't be able to get close enough images to even make cropping work well.

Surprise, surprise!! We arrived at our hotel (Best Western Inn and Suites) in Brigham City late morning and by the afternoon we were already on the 12-mile auto loop at Bear River, less than 20 minutes from our hotel. When we got to our first open water stop, we immediately saw not only many White Pelicans but close grebes with one and two babies on mom's back. What an exciting moment for us! Over the next six days, we photographed many Western and Clark's Grebes with one, two, and three babies on and off mom's back—either relaxing or getting fed fish by one or both parents. There were also grebes catching fish for themselves and their mates as well as for the babies, plus grebes aggressively chasing and sometimes fighting with competitors. Aside from aggressive

attacks between grebes, we also witnessed American Avocets trying to chase off several White-faced Ibis—either because they were too close to their young, their mate, or intruding on their fishing areas.

As far as seeing and photographing other species of birds with babies, we were also there at the right time and in luck. Bugs were not as annoying as we had been warned. Most days, we got to the refuge around 9:00, slowly making stops along the auto loop and leaving around 1:30 or 2:00 to go back to the hotel for a short rest and a break from the heat and harsh sun. We would then return for another circuit on the loop around 5:00–6:00 and leave by 8:30 or 9 as the sun was about to set. Temperatures in late June were in the 80s and 90s, and the sun could get quite strong.

Very few people were at Bear River, and incredibly we saw only one other photographer the week we were there (June 25–July 2). That last week in June turned out to be perfect for babies on the back of Western and Clark's Grebes. We also had baby (and older) Black-necked Stilts, baby (and older) American Avocets, baby Coots (different ages), young Yellow-headed Blackbirds, hundreds of Cliff Swallows including fledglings, and one family of an adult and three young Pied-billed Grebes. There were also lots of White Pelicans, tons of Double-crested Cormorants, many White-faced Ibis, a few Wilson's Phalaropes, Forster's Terns, two Long-billed Curlews, a Virginia Rail with babies, and a surprise Long-tailed Weasel!

In addition to Bear River, we also went to Antelope Island (an hour north of Bear River on the Great Salt Lake) for one full day plus a half day (returning to Bear River later that afternoon). It cost $10/car to enter. The best part was the hundreds of Eared Grebes in full breeding plumage in the water along the causeway. While there, we also saw an adult and two fledged Great Horned Owls in a barn plus several Burrowing Owls. It was nice seeing a portion of the Great Salt Lake surrounding this island. We also saw one Pronghorn and a couple of Bison while there.

All in all, I took over 8,000 pictures in seven days, saved 4,000, and edited 200 for my website. Pat and I were so happy with our decision to finally take a chance on Bear River despite some last-minute doubts, and we certainly timed the trip perfectly. My photographs bring a huge smile to my face whenever I look at them, and one more item on my bucket list can now be crossed out! We feel we had the best week possible! Seeing and photographing so many different grebe pairs carrying (and feeding) their babies was such a joy that I will never forget the experience—and Pat and I can't stop telling ourselves how lucky we were with the timing of this trip.

Birding Costa Rica

By Bonnie Tate

I took an amazing trip with my husband, Jose, to the land of Pura Vida, Costa Rica, in January of 2024 for ten days of intensive birding with a group called Costa Rica Focus. We walked up to five miles a day through jungle paths to see the birds as we journeyed from San Jose to the Tirimbina Rainforest, then on to the Arenal Volcano and Monteverde Cloud Forest and, finally, down to the mouth of the Tarcoles River. Not much relaxing around the pool.

Costa Rica has an incredible 850 bird species, which is ten percent of the world's total avian population—in other words, twice as many bird species as the U.S. and Canada combined. My own eBird count was 245 species for this trip. I was pretty much thrilled to see any type of bird, especially lifers, but still focused on trying to see Trogons, Hummingbirds, and Kingfishers.

Over the course of the trip, I was able to see four species of Trogons. The actual word trogon means "nibbling" and refers to the fact that these birds excavate holes in trees to nest. The trees need to be soft or rotted, however, as their bill strength is quite poor compared to a bird like the woodpecker. They also have the lowest

Great Green Macaw

ratio of muscle to body weight of any known bird, and are, therefore, not the best flyers. No matter, as their plumage is gorgeous. I photographed the Black-headed Trogon, Black-throated Trogon, Slaty-tailed Trogon, and my favorite, the Gartered Trogon. Sadly, I dipped on the most desired and largest trogon of all, the Resplendent Quetzal.

Female Black-crested Coquette

Living in Massachusetts, I get to see one species of hummingbird during the spring and summer—the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. While I absolutely love these little birds and enjoy photographing them in my garden, I was blown away by the number of different types of hummingbirds that I saw among the flowers and feeders in Costa Rica. Apparently, there are over fifty different species in this country, and I was able to see at least fifteen of them. I often saw both the male and female as our trip brought us from the mountains and cloud forest down to sea level. While I loved and enjoyed seeing them all, clear favorites were the Black-crested Coquettes, the Magenta-throated Woodstars, and the little Thorntails. The latter were so enjoyable to watch as they defended their turf in the Verbena bushes at Arenal Lodge.

Magenta-throated Woodstar

The Belted Kingfisher is the only kingfisher found in Massachusetts or, in fact, New England. Jose and I were thrilled to see our Belted Kingfisher as well as four other species in this family. We saw an American Pygmy Kingfisher, which is the smallest in the Americas at a mere five inches, as well as a Ringed Kingfisher, which is the largest in the Americas at a whopping sixteen inches. For comparison, the Belted Kingfisher is around twelve inches.

Female Red-legged Honeycreeper

I also saw Motmots, Red and Green Macaws, Toucans and Toucanets, five different species of owls, seven different species of hawks and tanagers, and many other birds—at 245 species, way too many to include in this article. I was particularly happy to see the two Green Macaws, as they are critically endangered with only an estimated 500–1,000 left in the world. Many that I saw were lifers, but there were also familiar birds that were here escaping the cold winters of New England—just like we were.

The birds that I encountered had such amazing plumage and coloration, but one that stood out to me was the Red-legged Honeycreeper. The male and female of the same species in the bird world often have different coloration, with the male usually being the most colorful (there are always exceptions). He is trying to catch the eye of a potential mate, while she is trying to stay concealed and drab while on the nest. I don't think I have ever seen such beautiful color differences between the male and female as with this creeper. The bird's colors were so vibrant, with the male being a brilliant sapphire blue and the female an emerald green that blended right in with the rainforest.

Male Red-legged Honeycreeper

Although my focus was on birds, I also appreciated the different reptiles and mammals that I was able to see in Costa Rica. On our

first day, Jose and I were treated to a glimpse of Honduran White Bats, which are now endangered due to habitat loss. They roost under Heliconia leaves in the jungle and use their teeth to cut along the rib of the leaf, so it collapses into a tent-like structure. Honduran White Bats primarily eat figs, which is why their noses and ears are such a yellow color, as the figs contain lutein, a carotenoid pigment similar to what is contained in carrots. The leaf is upside down and low to the ground, so I was only allowed to use a cell phone, which also minimized any disturbance to the bats.

If you have never been to Costa Rica, I highly recommend making the journey. I, myself, will certainly be back to add to my 245 Costa Rican species and to hopefully find that mega-tick, the Resplendent Quetzal.

Female Gartered Trogan

Male Gartered Trogan

American Pygmy Kingfisher

Thorn-tail

Ringed Kingfisher

Honduran White Bats

All photos are of birds in the wild, taken by the author with a Nikon D500 and a NIKKOR 500mm f/5.6 lens. No flash.

Delete That Photo!

By Shawn Carey

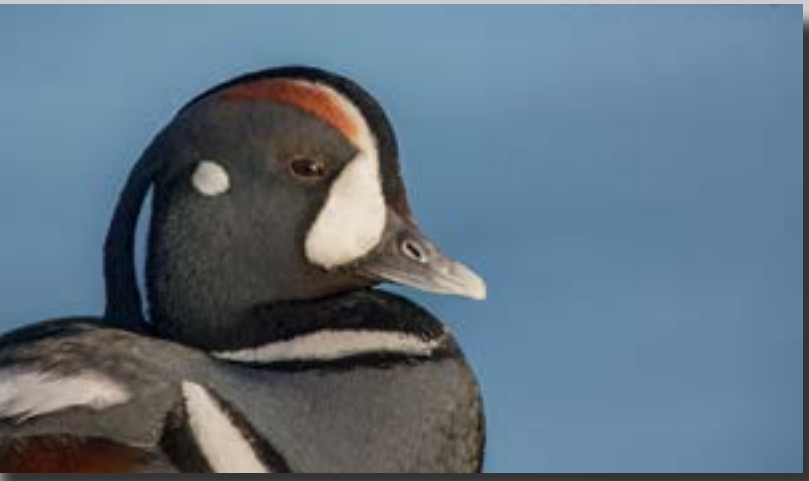
I began to photograph wildlife long before digital photography. This was a time when I, and most other serious photographers, shot 35mm slide film. One roll—36 shots per roll—then you had to reload. Many photographers, myself included, ran two camera bodies, so when camera A ran out, you could "quickly" detach that camera and slap on your second body. Wow! Sounds like the Stone Age now.

Plus, when I first started shooting, there was no autofocus—it simply did not exist and would arrive many years later.

Can you imagine photographing wildlife or birds without autofocus? Try it for one week and see how many photos are "keepers." The reason I bring this up is to help make a point about how I made the decision to keep photos back then and how I do so today in the digital era. In the film days, I learned to be as ruthless as much as possible during the culling process (deleting photos) so as not to end up with hundreds of unwanted photos. Remember, you had to have physical space to store your photos—in file pages containing each slide, then

placed in a file cabinet. You also had to have some kind of system that made sense so you could easily locate a specific photo. This was not easy when you had thousands of individual slides. So, to keep things manageable, you had to cull out—yes, throw away—photos that did not meet a certain standard (I tried to keep high standards). If not, you would be awash in photos you would never use or look at again. So early on, I adopted a workflow of being ruthless in the culling of unwanted photos.

Towards the end of my 35mm slide days, I was introduced to and became friends with Tom Vezo. He was a professional wildlife photographer who also specialized in birds. The



first time we met, we started talking about—of all things—file management. However, remember, we were still shooting 35mm slides, so we were talking about our approach and philosophy on what one does with thousands of slides. As it turned out, we had a very similar approach to this very task. There was one thing I would later adopt from Tom, and that was to be even more ruthless in culling photos. Yes, I was ruthless in the culling process—but Tom—he took it to another level! He instilled

in me the idea that unless you really had a good reason to keep a photo, you needed to throw it away. The exception would be those fuzzy, slightly out-of-focus photos of Bigfoot with Elvis. Those, I'd keep! Otherwise, take out your hatchet and start chopping away. Keep the good ones, for those are the only photos you will ever make a print of, sell, or show to the public. If you have a series of images and there are clearly one or two (maybe three) that are the best, and the other 15 to 20 images are second-rate, why are you keeping them? It's only the three best that, again, you will ever print, sell, or post to a web page. I cannot say it enough: BE RUTHLESS about your culling!

Fast-forward a few years. After I met Tom, we both made the switch to digital within a week of each other. In fact, we purchased the exact same make and model of camera. A few months after that, we were on the phone, and Tom said something that—to this day—has stuck with me. I repeat this to every student who takes one of my workshops:

"Now we need to be even MORE ruthless in our culling. If not, we are just gathering virtual junk!"

I had to step back and think about what he had just said. As I let it sink in, I realized he was correct. I had to make sure I was being as honest as possible when I looked at my photos and made decisions as to whether I should keep this photo or delete it.

Now, some of you might be saying, "Wait a minute!" Hard drive space today is very cheap. Why not keep as many photos/files as I want? Besides, can you really have too many photos?

Maybe not, but I want to be as efficient as possible with my photos. For me, having photos I will never use or look at is simply not efficient—and I dare say, makes no sense.

As digital photographers, we create thousands of photos every year. Unless you are the world's greatest photographer, you have many files that should be deleted. There are several reasons to delete a photo; however, in the end, it's up to each of us to decide why we do not want a particular photo.

Some reasons I delete photos:

- The photo is out of focus
- The subject moved when I pressed the shutter
- A wing or body part is clipped
- Something got lost in the frame
- There is a problem with the background

I figure out why I do not want (or need) a photo, then I get rid of it—and in my opinion, so should you. Besides, if a photo is a little out of focus today, it will still be out of focus tomorrow, next week, and next year, so DELETE it. The exception would be those fuzzy, slightly out-of-focus photos of Bigfoot with Elvis we talked about earlier. In that case, keep each and every one because you may have hit the JACKPOT!

If you make it standard practice to cull your photos in an honest way, you will find:

- Your standards will improve
- You are gathering less "virtual junk"
- You are using—and by default showing—your best photos
- You become a better photographer
- You are using less hard drive space

I have yet to meet a photographer who says, "I wish to be an average or below-average photographer." Along with every other photographer, I strive to become better at my craft. That's why I read books, magazines, and online articles, attend workshops, and view videos on the web—all to improve my photography. One practice that leads to becoming a better photographer is the act of simply letting go. Letting go, in this case, is deleting photos we do not need to keep. So embrace it, accept it, and make it part of your workflow. In the end, you may find yourself saying, I wish I had started being more ruthless sooner.

Shawn Carey

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Rick Clorans's Tips & Tricks

One Possible Thought Process When Refining Images

When we process an image, one option for workflow is to consider what helps the subject stand out so that the viewer gains a true sense of the story we are trying to convey - even if that story is merely a portrait of the subject.

Here we have the basic capture of a Boat-Tailed Grackle perched on some vegetation. While reasonable, the subject doesn't fully separate in a way that causes the viewer to focus on it.

Boosting the exposure on the subject by about .30 stops and darkening the background by the same amount improves separation. Using mildly negative values for Clarity removes some of the contrast in the background, which further improves separation.

Looking at a relatively dark subject on a darker background also raises a common question on whether a lighter background may actually show the subject off more effectively.

Adjusting the background from the minus .30 stops to closer to a plus .5 stops gives us something to compare. While it can be said that the light background does allow the eye to move past the subject, in this instance the dark color and iridescence in the subject's feathers do seem to come forward more effectively than with the darker background.

With that decision made, we can then consider the extent to which the complexity of the background and surroundings may interfere with the viewer's interaction with the subject. We want to retain a sense of habitat while at the same time enhancing the separation we have achieved thus far.

Using the Depth Blur filter found under Neural Filters in Photoshop, we can achieve some added separation without losing a sense of the environment. Unfortunately, this filter is only available in Photoshop proper. The closest option in Lightroom or Camera Raw would be the Lens Blur function, which was added to the subscription versions in 2024.

With a blur applied, we may note that the color of the vegetation is also strong enough to potentially distract the viewer from staying with the subject. Applying an HSL layer masked to areas other than the subject and adding some white to the yellows and greens (moving the Luminosity slider to a positive value) while also dropping saturation by a small amount, we are able to temper the color tones in the foliage so they do not pull the eye quite as strongly. If we paint on the bottom of the mask with a gray brush, we can bring back much of the original color in the foliage where the subject is perched while still keeping it from competing with the subject.

A measured approach to refining an image often helps in the inevitable decision-making process as we try to refine the image to give our viewer the best possible way in which to interact with the image and appreciate the subject and story we are trying to convey. From a "starting point" such as this, we can then refine the image to its ultimate end. For example, if we intended to use the image in a competition run under PSA Nature rules, we could not remove the stalk in the lower left corner. However, if we were doing a social media posting or printing for an exhibit, that might be one additional action to remove a potential visual distraction for the viewer. I am sure you might find other refinements worthy of consideration. I covered the use of the Lens Blur function and the Depth Blur filter in other articles. Hopefully, you have had a chance to try those tools out.

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Hyena?

By Mary Doo

Like many, I love the sight of wild animals. I, too, love to photograph lions, cheetahs, and leopards.

Yet, I feel a fondness for hyenas. I've chosen to write about them now because they've endured unfair bad press for far too long, and I think it's about time someone spoke up on their behalf. 😉

They may not possess the "majesty" of a lion, the speed and sleekness of a cheetah, or the grace and elegance of a leopard. But is that a valid reason to treat them with contempt?

In popular culture - especially in children's stories and films, such as *The Lion King* - hyenas are almost always depicted as villains, scavengers, and generally unpleasant characters. This stereotypical portrayal doesn't reflect their complex nature.

Regrettably, some of these negative perceptions likely stem from their appearance, which some find "unattractive." A friend once remarked that a hyena wasn't cuddly - but I've seen rather adorable hyena cubs. Have you? Another noted that hyenas are born with a full set of teeth - extraordinary! But I wouldn't condemn them for that. Would you?

And yes, there's a general distaste for scavengers, especially when they act aggressively. I've seen a hyena scare away a group of vultures from a carcass. But lions, too, are known to scavenge when the opportunity arises, and that doesn't seem to tarnish their noble image.

During my last trip to Kenya, we were privileged to witness a hyena mother nursing her two cubs. The tenderness and attentiveness she showed were in no way inferior to the maternal care I've observed in lions and cheetahs. As another photographer and I were deeply engaged in capturing those touching moments, our group leader, Federico Veronesi, radioed from another vehicle. There was a certain Italian urgency - perhaps mixed with a sigh of exasperation 😉 - as he urged us to "[for heaven's sake], get off those hyenas!" He wanted us to join the others photographing lions at another location.

There is an irony - had these been lions, cheetahs, or leopards, anyone would have stayed with them much longer. On a previous occasion, Federico also mentioned that hyenas weren't his favorite animals - he considered the their way of handling prey "cruel." His view is understandable and, frankly, fairly common among seasoned photographers.

Note: *I admire Federico - not only is he an outstanding wildlife photographer, his love for the African wilderness is evident in all that he does. He has a great passion for elephants, and his images of them are just amazing. My mention of this moment is just a reflection of how ingrained the bias against hyenas can be - even among those who care deeply about wildlife.*

But I believe these perceptions are often based on incomplete information. Here's a more nuanced look at why hyenas are so often disliked:

Misconception 1: They're just scavengers.
For a long time, hyenas were viewed as animals that rely solely on the leftovers of others. But studies have shown that spotted hyenas actively hunt and kill the majority (sometimes up to 70-90%) of their food. They are skilled and strategic hunters capable of taking down prey much larger than themselves.

Misconception 2: Their feeding method is cruel.
Hyenas have incredibly strong jaws capable of crushing bones - they are born with built-in teeth, remember? When they bring down large prey, they often begin feeding while it's still alive - something many find brutal. However, this method allows them to eat quickly and avoid losing their meal to competitors. It actually leads to a faster death due to blood loss and shock.

And if this behavior is considered gruesome, we might ask the same of African wild dogs,

who feed in a largely similar manner. Yet wild dogs are highly sought-after by photographers - often simply because they're endangered.

During my trip to Zimbabwe with Federico, we endured a bumpy drive of more than two hours, jolting through rugged jungle terrain in search of wild dogs, then only to see them for a very short time in a rather cluttered area. Imagine!

Misconception 3: They aren't beautiful.
Hyenas don't fit the traditional image of a "majestic predator." Their posture, their gait, their bloodied faces - yes, it can be uncomfortable. But haven't we seen lions and cheetahs with equally bloodied faces after a kill?

People also mention their "laugh," which is often described as eerie. I have yet to hear it myself. But I have heard a cheetah "meow" like a house cat - that was surprising, but endearing to me.

Misconception 4: They aren't photographically interesting.
Hyenas offer a refreshing contrast to the more frequently photographed predators. They break

the mold of the "noble pose". Their facial expressions are very often intense - truthfully they usually look stressed out to me - or maybe they are!

Because hyenas are social animals, photographing their interactions within their greeting rituals, maternal care, mock fights - can yield some of the most emotionally resonant images. There's often more visible storytelling in a hyena clan than in a lone big cat. Capturing a hyena mother nursing her cubs, or gently grooming another clan member, reveals a side of them that challenge common perceptions of their nature.

Their coarse fur and muscular build can look interesting and reflective, especially in early morning or late afternoon light. Hyenas often appear in settings near dens or in dramatic standoffs with other scavengers. These scenes can offer story-telling potential. Their gait and unpredictable movements can also add variety to a safari portfolio that might otherwise be full of the usual poses and content.

On one safari, we saw a den with dozens of hyenas - some resting, others moving in and out of the burrow. Hyenas are highly social and intelligent animals. They live in complex matriarchal clans and exhibit sophisticated scocial interactions and communication.

In their role as scavengers, hyenas provide an invaluable ecosystem service - alongside vultures (which I may write about in a future issue, as they too are uniquely valuable in similar ways, and I've noticed their images

rarely win photo competitions. Yes, I'm looking at you - revered CamNats competition judges! 😉)

By cleaning up disease-ridden carcasses, hyenas act as nature's unsung ecological conservationists, playing a vital role in maintaining the health and balance of their ecosystems.

Ultimately, we must look at their behaviors in the context of survival and evolution, not through the lens of human emotion. It's important to resist the urge to impose our moral judgments onto animals that are simply fulfilling their role in nature.

A Final Thought: Hyenas challenge our ideas of beauty, behavior, and even morality within the animal kingdom. They don't fit neatly into our idealized view of the noble predator. But their role in nature is indispensable - and in some way, admirable.

Perhaps, just perhaps, our discomfort with hyenas reflects more about our own ingrained biases and limited perspectives than it does about these fascinating, ecologically vital creatures.

Editor's Note

Can you believe it, spring is here!

I'm delighted to share this new issue of CamNats Vision - a reflection of the passion and creativity within our CamNats community.

We begin with a thoughtful message from our Chair, Shiv Verma, who outlines exciting plans for the months ahead - from spring field trips and photo opportunities, to potential exhibits and Zoom presentations. His energy and vision set the tone for what promises to be an inspiring year.

In this issue, our contributors take us on a wide-ranging journey: Sandy Selesky's patient pursuit of grebe chicks pays off in an unforgettable encounter; Bonnie Tate takes us to the rich and colorful birdlife of Costa Rica; Shawn Carey invites us to reflect on our photographic process - especially what we choose to keep, and what we should let go, and Rick Cloran generously walks us through a step-by-step editing process, showing how subtle changes can elevate an image and clarify its visual story.

In this issue, I also added a piece of my own, hoping to shed light on a frequently misunderstood wildlife - the hyena. Researching and writing about it reminded me how easily our perceptions can be shaped by cultural biases and repetition of familiar views - and how photography can perhaps help and encourage us to take a closer look, see with fresh eyes with better understanding.

As always, I'm deeply grateful to all our contributors. This newsletter is a shared space, and I warmly invite each of you to take part. Whether you have a photo story, a field experience, a technique you'd like to share, or even just a surprising moment behind the lens - we would love to hear from you. Please don't hesitate to reach out and add your voice to our next issues.

Happy spring,

Mary Doo

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