



Photo by Bonnie Tate

Message from CamNats Chair



Hello CamNats members, I am writing this message to you today with my words of encouragement on several topics. First is to ask that more members consider participating in the clubs activities this year. It is my hope that more of you will attend the Spring and Fall meeting and share some of your photos, stories and advice with everyone. With that in mind I want everyone to know I will be working again this year to make the in person and virtual meetings as engaging as possible.

Second, if anyone has an idea or proposal for the club that aligns with our mission as a nature photography club, please feel free to contact me with your ideas or bring them to one of the meetings for discussion with fellow CamNats members.

Third, as a reminder this will be my final year as the Chair. As such I want to thank the Steering Committee for their support over the past year and a half since I took over as Chair. Also a special thanks to Sally Chisholm for taking on the role as the clubs Recording Secretary. Sally has done a fantastic job in this role and like me will be stepping down at the end of the year.

So, we will be looking for someone else to take on the role of Recording Secretary next year 2025. Additionally a big thanks to Shiv Verma for his role as Vice Chair and for stepping in to run the annual meeting this past January when I was away in Pennsylvania taking care of my father.



Last but not least thank you to Susan Mosser for stepping in to the role as Treasurer last year. Susan has been vital to me (and CamNats) in providing guidance on any number of matters as it proteins to CamNats.

We have a very unique camera club with many talented photographers and vast knowledge of the natural world. I am always impressed with how CamNats members

are so willing to openly share their thoughts, advice and suggestions on any number of topics related to photographing the natural world. This helps to make all of us much better photographers and in turn share our photos with friends, family and the greater communities we live in. The more we as a camera club devoted to the natural world can share our love of wildlife and wild places with everyone, then maybe to public at large will also embrace and be willing to help protect the natural world.

So, get out to your favorite place to see and photograph your species or topic of choice in the natural world and share it with your fellow CamNats members and the rest of the world.

Cheers!

Shawn Carey

March into Spring

~ By Deb Page ~



2024 continues to move on bringing about the month of March. It is in this month that you might celebrate St. Patrick's Day. "Top of the morning" everyone!

It is also the time of year when you may think of **Springtime**. This is also the time that you can learn and appreciate how wonderful nature is. As the seasons change, temperatures outside become warmer, and the daylight hours become longer. It is a time to awaken our senses and inspire us to venture outside and appreciate the growth, renewal and transformation of what nature has to offer.

Spring is a time of renewal for birds, animals, trees, plants, flowers, and other things in nature. Birds return from their winter migration and animals emerge from hibernation.

During this renewal period birds and animals instinctively exhibit behavior that can be developed by genetic and environmental influences. They begin with mating rituals, nest or den building and then nurturing, feeding, and protecting their young. There are species that share the responsibility, while another parent may be required to manage and conquer this on their own. It is an amazing time and a joy to observe.



I guess I could be known as a wanderer, because that is exactly what I do when I venture out. Sometimes there are exact destinations planned and other times it is time to explore different areas. Ninety percent of my travels remain in the New England area. I search for water in new areas by utilizing the car's GPS. Small ponds are best or marshes and breachways. Unbelievably, even puddles after a storm can lend itself to a new "bathtub" for some birds and wildlife. It all depends on the subject I am interested in seeing and photographing. There are factors that come into play as we all know. The time, tides, wind, sunshine, clouds, temperature and light and more, such as a "sleeping subject" can really change how your day goes.



The renewal period as previously mentioned is really something to observe and learn about. Become one with nature, meaning sit or get low and quietly wait. Observe their behavior and the dynamics of the scene. The subjects you see have a story of their own that prompts you to do further research and educate yourself as to what, why and how come. Photographing various aspects of the renewal period provides me with the ability to revisit wonderful moments and share my experiences with others. The photographs included in this article hopefully evoke an emotion and tell a story of nurturing and how remarkable nature really is.

The parents of all species ensure the growth and development of their youth. It is essential that they forage for food, teach their young nest building, hunting, and protecting themselves to survive. The parents of all species invest many hours searching for enough food to sustain them.

A species, like the pileated woodpecker returns to a nest and regurgitates the food they have just gathered. This not only nourishes their young, but also facilitates the bonding with them.

A fox mom may return from hunting to provide nourishment to the kits. The kits sense her return, they run to her and begin to nurse. Moments later, she is off to hunt again, and the kits retreat to a safe place.

A least tern mom keeps her babies warm and blocks wind and sand. Dad is out looking for fish and should return soon with nourishment.

A female wood duck has her “hands full” keeping her ten babies safe. This pond has a large number of noticeably big snapping turtles. Sad to say there were eleven babies earlier in the day.



Osprey chicks are hungry and there is a huge fish to satisfy them. They all want to eat, but mom knows whose turn it is. One parent feeds the chicks, and the other is out looking for more fish.

Tree swallows can hover while they feed their babies a dragonfly. The babies then retreat into the hole and the parent is off to find more food. They will soon know when the parent returns and will peek out with their mouths wide open.

So, now is the time to plan new adventures and hopefully be able to observe some wonderful moments in nature. Enjoy, and be safe.



Deb Page

Deb is the former President of the Photographic Society of Rhode Island. Deb was also Field Trip Coordinator and currently is on the Program Committee and a member of the Board of Directors as a Member at Large. Deb is also a member of the Massachusetts Camera Naturalists (CamNats), a member of Photographic Society of America (PSA), and a member of Rhode Island and Massachusetts Audubon.

Deb has always had a strong interest in nature and what it has to offer. She also enjoys photography, and a camera has become a “buddy” when out on adventures.

Over the years, combining birding, landscapes and photography has provided year long enjoyment and sometimes surprises. Retirement has just made each day even better.



Deb has won awards in several different areas including NECCC, PSRI, Audubon, Glennie, past PSRI IOY, and first place in AA Nature last year. Deb has had the opportunity to judge Ocean State International, NECCC and Greater Lynn Photographic Association.

Deb has had several exhibits in fairs, Audubon, Camnats and Massachusetts Galleries.

Dealing With High ISO Images



Rick Cloran

HonPSA, GMPSA, Hon NEC

Many of us have come to rely on programs like Topaz Sharpen AI and Topaz Denoise AI for dealing with slight misses in sharpness and shooting at higher ISOs to secure the shutter speeds we need. Some may be using Topaz's Photo AI. It is a newer program, but from the testing I have done on images, it isn't as good as the older programs in many cases. I feel they have tried to do too many things in the program, putting in image resizing and up-res'ing rather than leaving it in Gigapixel and in putting in face recognition and other features which may make it a jack of all trades but master of none. I will give Topaz credit for a significant upgrade in Photo AI functionality and output in Version 2 (V2). Admittedly, this is a personal opinion.

While Topaz has not made a formal announcement, they have decided that Photo AI is the program of the future. As a result, they will no longer be updating either Sharpen AI or DeNoise AI. That can leave some of us in a bit of a quandary as our tools "age" out. There is a chance that Adobe may have provided a reasonable alternative for noise reduction. The new "enhance" feature called Denoise in Lightroom and Camera Raw (ACR) may be a viable option. It is very processor intensive, so if you have an older system or one without a good amount of dedicated graphics memory, expect a potentially significant lag in getting a result, particularly with large starting files. Also, the DNG (Digital Negative) files that it returns are massive. I have seen files five times the size of the source file and heard of ones even larger.

Rather than trying to explain its functioning in an article, I am providing links to two YouTube videos. If what you see there seems to be promising, give this new feature a try and see how it handles some of the images you have used those older tools on in the past.

[Lightroom Denoise Secrets: Make ISO 12,800 Look Like ISO 400! \(YouTube\)](#)

[AI Noise Reduction SHOWDOWN! UNBELIEVABLE RESULTS! | Are Topaz & DXO Still BEST? \(YouTube\)](#)

A Popular Tree in the Marsh

~ By Bonnie Tate ~



Bonnie Tate

Massachusetts boasts seven different types of Woodpeckers:

- Downy Woodpecker
- Hairy Woodpecker
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Red-headed Woodpecker
- Northern Flicker
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Pileated Woodpecker.

The Pileated Woodpecker is the largest of the woodpeckers in North America, and this past June 2023, I was privileged to follow a beautiful, mated pair as they raised their young in a protected marsh.

These parents produced two amazing chicks, a male and a female. In the photos shown, you can start to see the red coloration of the malar stripe on one of the chicks, which distinguishes the male from the female. The latter has a black malar stripe. As the chicks got older, they were quite vocal and endlessly demanding food. Even at this age, both chicks were fed by regurgitation from the parents, and I found it amazing that no injury occurred considering the size of that beak.

I had witnessed this beautiful spectacle of a growing Pileated Woodpecker family before, but this experience was quite different. The Pileated pair had excavated their hole in a dead tree in this popular marsh that is known for its heron rookery and, occasionally, Osprey and Great-Horned Owl nests. The marsh was filled with dead trees; however, this one lone tree seemed to be a favorite for many, causing a great deal of conflict.

There was a Common Grackle nest just above the Pileated hole, and the Common Grackle parents continuously harassed



the Pileated Woodpecker parents, making it difficult for them to feed their young. In fact, myself and other birders were treated to the Pileated Woodpeckers frequently landing only a few feet above us as they tried to escape the constant haranguing from the Grackles.

There were also two female Hooded Mergansers that had their eye on the hole, and at least one would enter the nest even when a Pileated parent and the young were in there. I originally thought that maybe the Merganser had a nest in there as well or everyone was getting along like one big happy family. My camera, however, captured Dad's expression when the Merganser left or was chased out of the nest. He was not happy with the intrusion, and the Merganser had lost some of its feathers.

Watching and photographing this Pileated Woodpecker family and their "neighbors" was an amazing encounter, and our two little chicks fledged four days after I took these photos. They will likely remain with their parents for another two months into the fall.

Pileated Woodpeckers mate for life, and they stay in the same territory year-round, but they go through this tough process of excavating a new nest every year to raise their young. I will be looking in this same area next year in hopes of seeing the male Pileated Woodpecker courting his mate and starting the process all over again. It will be interesting to see if their chosen spot once again becomes "the tree."

**** Photos are labelled and all were taken in Wrentham, MA, on June 2, 2023. All photographs by Bonnie Tate.***







Bonnie Tate

Bonnie is a member of the Hockomock Digital Photographers, the Massachusetts Camera Naturalists, the Plymouth Digital Photographers, and the South Shore and Brookline Bird Clubs.

A birder and photographer for over ten years, Bonnie has had her images displayed at the Plymouth Art Center, the Quincy Art Gallery, the Easton Cultural Center, and various local libraries, where she has won multiple awards. Telling the story of the birds she encounters through photographs and words is a particular passion. Bonnie has written articles for The Bird Observer and Mass Audubon, as well as for her South Shore Bird Club Newsletter. She recently wrote an article for the latter on her encounter and image captures of the Steller's Sea Eagle.

Bonnie teaches Avian Biology and Birding at Bridgewater State University and also maintains a blog, "Science Through the Lens," that she updates weekly (bonnietate.wixsite.com/website).

Photographing birds in Costa Rica is her next adventure as she travels there for the first time this January with her husband, Jose.

Editor's Note

I am continually amazed by the knowledge and talents of CamNats members, a sentiment that deepens with each story and image we share, and wonderfully echoed in Shawn's opening remarks. As the season changes from winter to spring, Deb Page's **March into Spring** encourages us to engage with the awakening world, capturing its stories with our unique perspectives. Bonnie Tate's **A Popular Tree in the Marsh** exemplifies the power of patience and passion in revealing the hidden stories of nature. Meanwhile, Rick Cloran's **Dealing with High ISO Settings** offers practical advice for handling technical issues that we often worry about.

Let's continue to grow, not just as photographers, but as storytellers of the natural world. Your experiences, knowledge, and creativity are what make our newsletter inspiring. I encourage you to share your journeys, discoveries and experiences with us.

Upcoming Events Reminder:

Osprey Photography Field Trip: If you would like to join Ken Jordan and other members to Damariscotta, Maine, on May 18, please email Ken at ken.j1@comcast.net.

Solar Eclipse on April 8, 2024:

Visit NASA's official page about this event that you may be excited about:

<https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/future-eclipses/eclipse-2024>

Mary Doo, editor

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