

Program Night, May 12

Don Johnson

Zoo Photography

Ira Adler

Don loves to take photos of animals, whether in the wild or at a zoo. However, taking photos of animals in the wild presents a host of problems for a photographer. Are the animals where you think they will likely be? What is the terrain like—can you reach them? Are the animals difficult to approach—do they scurry away when they see people? How much time do we have to photograph the animals? Are the animals likely available all day, or for just part of the day? While many of us have overcome these problems, it is obvious that the list of problems relating to photographing animals in the wild is long. One can take great animal photos in the wild, but it takes work and preparation.

A zoo is an excellent place to photograph animals. Let's think about it. Unlike in the wild, the animals are always there—when we go to a zoo we know that the animals will actually be there, no matter the time of day or the season of the year. They are also used to people, so they are not as skittish, and certainly cannot run off when they see a photographer. In many cases, the animals are also rather exotic. To produce an image of a lion in the wild, for example, we would have to travel to Africa—a

costly and time consuming endeavor. The local zoo can be much more affordable. And we can go back time, after time, after time again, to get the perfect image. And if a particular animal is not in a good position, or in poor lighting, we can simply move on to the next exhibit.

But not everything is so easy. A zoo environment still presents problems for a photographer. The animals may be asleep, or not very active. The lighting may not be good. The animals may be turned the wrong way, or simply will not look in our direction. But this is nothing new with animal photography. We also may be unable to use the images we produce for commercial purposes, unless we check with the zoo first. But if we are looking to produce wonderful images of animals, we should consider the zoo.

Believe it or not, Don has visited 45 different zoos across North America. He found some of them excellent, most of them wonderful, and some also rather depressing. But all have provided him with an opportunity to get “up close and personal” with a variety of local and exotic animals for photographic purposes.

In his presentation, Don will show examples of his zoo photography. He will provide tips describing how he took the images, including how to photograph through a fence or through glass. He will also discuss the equipment he uses. He will, additionally, tell some interesting stories of his experiences at various zoos. We can learn a lot by going to a zoo—both in terms of photography and in terms of animal behavior.

We have some excellent zoos in this area, and NBCC members should consider visiting them sometime in the near future. We may surprise ourselves and produce some outstanding images.



Program Night, May 26

Dan McDermott

History and Photos from Planning a Transcontinental RR Route

Don Martell

Dan McDermott, a Club member, taught geography and cartography at Montgomery College for thirty-four years. He is an avid photographer and has written and lectured extensively on historical geography.

Dan's presentation is based on a book, *Eye of the Explorer, Views of the Northern Pacific Railroad Survey, 1835-54*, he coauthored with Ronald Grim and Philip Mobley. Dan will tell the story of the survey party's adventures, struggles, and day-to-day activities. The survey, led by Major Isaac Stevens in the 1850's, was one of five government railroad surveys used to determine potential routes for a transcontinental railroad through the western frontier.

His team included numerous scientists and surveyors, as well as two artists: John Mix Stanley and Gustavus Sohon, who documented the survey with illustrations of the physical and cultural geography of the northern Great Plains and Pacific Northwest. Dan's presentation will include photos of the survey area as well as some of the lithographs and water-colors that were part of Steven's 1860 report to Congress. The illustration below is of the Great Falls on the Missouri River in Montana.



On a more local level, Dan co-authored, with Thomas Rabenhorst, *C&O Canal Map (with Canal Lingo)*, which is on sale at the Park's visitors centers. Look for it the next time you visit the Canal.