

SVNP NEWSLETTER, DECEMBER, 2024

INCLUDING MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 12 MEETING

There are currently opportunities to give presentations starting as soon as February, 2025. As usual, any suggestions you may have for programs - especially of a how-to nature - would be appreciated. Please email (wah@waynehallphotography.com) or call (978-443-9226) Wayne if you are willing to give a presentation yourself or if you know of someone to recommend.

This meeting was held in person at Newbury Court and over Zoom.

The Evening's Presentation - Hendrik & Mai-Lan Broekman

Hendrik & Mai-Lan Broekman traveled to Alaska for a small boat cruise from Juneau to Glacier Bay. As we have learned to expect from a presentation given by the couple, this latest one was a great mix of terrific photography, travelogue, and history/geography lesson. Their trip, which took place in June of 2024, began in Washington, where Hendrik captured images of a fox kit and a swallow. They then traveled to Juneau, where Hendrik commented on the absence of flat land; the mountains come right down to the sea. Before boarding their cruise they visited the Southeast Alaska Museum and the Alaska State Museum. Close to the latter and , there was an impressive sculpture of a breaching humpback whale, and a nearby view of five very large cruise ships in the harbor representing a combined passenger complement of, conservatively, 10,000.

Hendrik's and Mai-Lan's cruise was on a much smaller ship, the 75' "Catalyst" originally built nearly 100 years ago as a university research vessel, and sporting a crew of four and only six passengers on this voyage. That's half complement; the boat can accommodate 13 max! The voyage took them from Auke Bay (in the north of Juneau) to Swanson's Harbor, Fingers Bay (which included kayaking in a steady drizzle), the Margerie Glacier, the Grand Pacific Glacier at the head of the bay, Russell Cut, Gloomy Knob, Sandy Cove, Bartlett Cove, Marble Island, Dundas Bay (where only small boats can go), Couverdon Cove, and back to Juneau.

Included were many wildlife images, including humpbacks, sea otters, harbor porpoises, pigeon guillemots, bald eagles, oyster catchers, tufted and horned puffins, Steller sea lions, cormorants, and gulls. Flora images included lupines, northern starflowers, angelica, and others.

The presentation included several fascinating videos (shot in the greater part by Mai-Lan), most notably of humpback behavior such as flipper-slapping (rare and as yet unexplained), diving, and fluking. Unfortunately Zoom prevented the sharing of the audio that accompanied the videos.

Other points of interest along the way included the Glacier Bay National Park headquarters at Bartlett Cove, where some hiking produced a variety of wildflowers and interesting totem poles.

Other “by foot” excursions included an afternoon at the Mendenhall Glacier and Nugget Falls, located in the northern precincts of Juneau.

All in all, we were treated to a fascinating look at a part of the country that many of us will perhaps never get to experience!

Wayne Hall

Annual Exhibit

Our group’s annual exhibit has been mounted at Goodnow Library in Sudbury. There are thirty-three lovely images to savor. In lieu of an opening reception, the exhibitors have agreed to put on a celebratory get-together on Sunday, December 22 between 2:00pm and 4:00pm. Of course all members and their guests are welcome to share in the fun and view the show. So, come and join the exhibitors. Feel free to arrive with nibbles in hand—or not.

Member News

New member **Nancy Szostak Wright** will be displaying onsite at Tatnuck Booksellers in Westborough on the weekend of December 7-8 between the hours of 11am and 5pm. She will have her full inventory of gifts, etc. available.

<http://www.svnpweb.com/>

Book Review - The Invention of Nature

When better to review a book than once it has achieved a certain age (it was published in 2015), has already fallen out of general notice (currently #20,625 among books at Amazon) and is in danger of being entirely ignored by people that would be interested, if only they knew... This is my motivation for writing at this late date a little bit about *The Invention of Nature, Alexander von Humboldt's New World* by Andrea Wulf, Knopf, New York, 2015.

Today, most people who know the name Humboldt do so by the geographic features and natural phenomena that were given his name (by others) at the time that gratitude for his influence was at its peak. One example of this is the Humboldt current along the west coast of South America. Another is Humboldt county which may be found variously in California, Nevada and Indiana, areas with which von Humboldt's researches were hardly closely associated either as a group or individually. The plethora of references to him should lead one to suspect that his influence, however obscured from general understanding it may currently be, is profound.

Indeed it is. Among those who became so-called Explorers, Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) stood out not only for his exertions (which were extensive) but for his even rarer capacity to synthesize his experiences into a novel and compelling explanation of how nature works as a web of interdependencies. This new understanding set a firm basis for ensuing work by others. Darwin, among others, set great store by von Humboldt's reasoning. Here in America we can thank von Humboldt for inspiring naturalist icons the likes of Henry David Thoreau and John Muir.

Von Humboldt's life was long and his influence broad and deep, a perfect subject for a perceptive biography, which is what we have here. Though sickly as a child growing up in the late eighteenth century, his explorations required incredible stamina, both physical and mental. As the years started to take their toll on his physique, he simply spent more time piecing together his experiences and those of his multitude of correspondents into a coherent world view of a decidedly rational and humanist bent. He demanded explanations

directly from the world rather than invoking unknown powers, always putting accepted wisdom to scrutiny.

Von Humboldt remained faithful to his self-imposed task of understanding the natural world and sharing that understanding as widely as he could. Throughout his life he displayed an almost negligent disregard for his security. As a young man he had to brave harsh and dangerous physical conditions in order to collect and observe where investigations had not yet been made. Later, when he was forced to curtail his physical exertions and was engaged in writing up and publishing his results, he often neglected his own financial well-being in furtherance of his project. He was given latitude in these matters in large part due to the reverence his circle had both for his abilities and his results.

Andrea Wulf paints a lively and sympathetic portrait of her subject. His early life reads like a novel. Von Humboldt lived to 90 so it should come as no surprise that the second half of his life, lived almost entirely in the mind and on paper, seems somehow less adventurous. But this was the boy getting the girl and settling down for forever after.

Wulf makes it clear that von Humboldt lived his whole life with an abiding sense of urgency for the fate of his project. He persevered and, by doing so, helped construct a solid foundation for our ecological understanding. It is we who are in his very great debt. We can only hope that our present and future generations will honor his memory by treating our natural home with the same urgency he experienced while researching it rather than the neglect he lavished on his own security. His legacy is certain. Ours?



January Preview - A Dominant Color

The theme for January's semi-annual member images night will be *A Dominant Color*. All members are welcome to participate with images that are each dominated by a single color. Of course, each image can feature a different color.

The usual rules will apply. Up to five images per participant, with before-and-after-post-processing views of an image counting as one. Be prepared to share with us a description of the location, why you created the image, any special challenges you encountered, any particular techniques employed, and anything else you'd like to share.

Upcoming SVNP Programs

January 9, 2025 Z

*Semi-annual Member Images
Night - Dominant Color*

February 13 TBA

*N=Live at Newbury Court Only; Z=Zoom Only; H=Hybrid

Please Note - All meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of the month, at 7:00 pm, either via Zoom or at our location (or both):

Great Room, Newbury Court
100 Newbury Court, Concord, MA

The decision to hold in-person meetings will be made on a month-to-month basis and communicated no less than a week before the meeting.

Updated directions to the Great Room and instructions for underground parking (to be available starting at 6:10pm on meeting evenings) may be found at the link immediately below.

http://svnp.homestead.com/files/Directions_to_Newbury_Court_Great_Room.pdf

<http://www.svnpweb.com/>

SVNP EXHIBIT CALENDAR

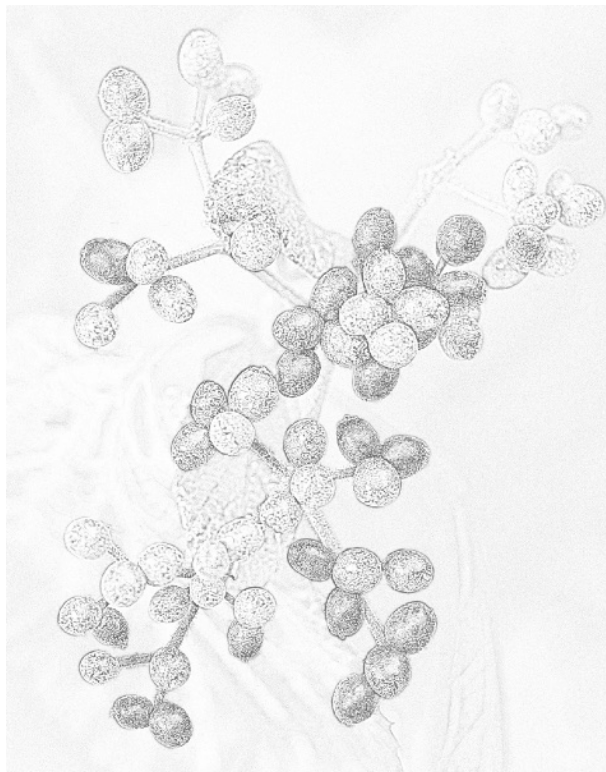
Group Exhibits

December, 2024	Goodnow Library, 21 Concord Rd., Sudbury MA
April, 2025	Betty Meyer Gallery, United Parish of Auburndale, 64 Hancock St., Auburndale(Newton), MA (Continuation of the show immediately above)

Individual Member Exhibits

SVNP members - please notify Wayne Hall (wah@waynehallphotography.com) of your upcoming individual exhibits for posting on the SVNP website.

Date	Member	Exhibit Location
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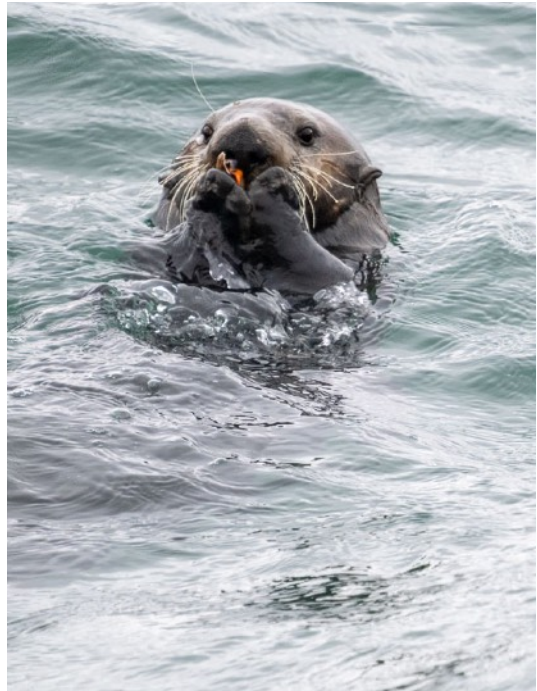
<http://www.svnpweb.com/>

An Invitation from your Editor

If having a meatier monthly read is of interest to you then, please, I invite you to send anything you may wish to contribute to future newsletters (a précis of an upcoming presentation, photos, personal news, reviews, neat tricks you find worth sharing, etc.) to me at henkbroekman@gmail.com. Please include SVNPNP in the subject line.

I especially invite presenters and members sharing images to select and submit files for illustrative purposes. I expect it would be possible to accommodate two images or so for main presenters and one each for after-presentation sharing. Generally, expect to see half-column layout along the lines of this example. If you have photos you may wish to share, please submit jpg files sized no smaller than 1200 px on the long side. Submission deadline will be 11:59 pm on the Monday following the meeting. Inclusion in any particular newsletter will be at my discretion based on newsletter length, distribution file weight, current workload, etc.

Hendrik Broekman



*Sea Otter, Icy Strait, Alaska;
photo, Hendrik Broekman*