

The New f-STOP

Quarterly Newsletter of the
Arkansas Outdoor
Photographers Club

DECEMBER 2021



AOPC MEETING

THURSDAY, JANUARY
20th, 2022 6:30 P.M.

We hope to have an in-person AOPC meeting, in Room 65 of **Little Rock's 2nd** Presbyterian Church, featuring longtime AOPC member Nick Dawson as our speaker. Further information to be sent closer to the January meeting date.

The President's Message

by

Ron Russ

Hard to believe we are almost near winter. The fall colors were quite nice this year. Hope some have had a chance to get out and get some nice images. The one attached to this column was taken during the week of Thanksgiving. I noticed it during one of my walks, so I didn't have my regular camera



continued on page 2

..... continued from page 1

with me at the time. But I learned a long time ago, your best camera is the one that you have on you. While this hasn't been a banner year for the club, we've done the best that we could. This is the first year that I can remember with no in-person meetings. We did have some Zoom meetings and some field trips, though. We were going to have a pot-luck, but few were interested, so we cancelled. **The future of the club depends on you, the member.** Nick, Cindy and I have kept the club going over the last three years, but we've been long-time members and this isn't our first rodeo. We need new people to step up and run the club for 2022, if we are going to continue. There has been talk of having quarterly meetings thereby making it easier for those planning programs and the like. While I hope we can go back to in-person meetings, I'm not going to make any guesses one way or another. It will really be up to you where we go from here. So, if you're interested in the open positions, AOPC President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, please let Cindy, Nick, or myself know. We're more than willing to help pass the torch. Anyway, I don't want to end on a down note, so here's to the holiday season and best wishes to you and yours.

HIGH PROFILE: KAREN AND PAUL CASTER

By Cindy Dawson

This profile article features one of the popular couples in the club, a couple who have been stalwart club members and excellent amateur photographers for a good many years. Karen and Paul Caster share not only an interest in photography, but they also share an occupation and workplace: they are both experienced zoo keepers at the Little Rock Zoo. Karen specializes in caring for primates and Paul cares for hoofstock, birds and anteaters. Growing up, Karen lived all over, since she was, as she says, "a military brat" while Paul is a local guy, having grown up in Levy in North Little Rock. Paul and Karen met in college at UALR and got married in August of 1992. (Happy 30th anniversary next year, you two!)

Paul and Karen joined AOPC in 2000, when the club was about 3 years old. They have enjoyed the camaraderie with other club members and the field trips. Karen says she always liked it when the field trip participants ate together somewhere after the photo shoot. Paul has also entertained and inspired the club with the occasional program of his great photos at one of our monthly meetings.

Considering Karen has never had any formal training or education in photography, she has produced wonderful photos of animals and she has made great use of her photography skills in her job. Karen's interest in photography began in high school or early in college. Her first serious camera was an early Canon EOS she bought in 1990, but it was a serious disappointment to her. She expected that with it she could learn a lot about photography, things such as aperture and exposure, but her camera turned out to be fully automatic. She has stuck with the Canon brand, however, and currently uses a Canon 7D Mark II, but she confesses that her favorite camera of all time was her Canon 40D. Her favorite lens is the Canon 100-400mm, although she has also purchased Sigma and Tamron lenses. She says she would enjoy having a macro lens with image stabilization.

Karen uses her photography skills to document "all things Zoo," in that the Little Rock Zoo uses her shots of the Zoo's animals for various publications, educational signage, social media, etc. Her images have made it

into other zoo-related newsletters and publications, onto several covers of the National Zoo Keeper Magazine and into a couple of books. Karen uses her photography to document things at the Zoo such as life milestones, visual issues with the animals, vet procedures, and positive interactions with the animals such as enrichment and training. Karen also uses photography to document aspects of Zoo exhibits, construction, special events, and press conferences, providing a valuable and reliable service to the Zoo, its varied residents, and Zoo administrators. Karen has a front-row seat and behind-the-scenes accessibility at the Zoo, of which she makes frequent and excellent use. Zoo photography has definitely become her specialty, particularly animal portraits. Karen does not use a tripod and keeps things simple, relying on her one camera body and two lenses, while keeping an extra battery and a couple flashcards in her pocket. She tends to shoot JPEGs, in Program mode and she adjusts the white balance and exposure, something that works well for her when shooting animals. Her tip is to take what you love and what draws your interest.

Paul's formal education in photography consists of one class he had at UALR on black & white photography, but he has had an interest in photography for his whole life and has learned about it through taking lots of photos over the years. His first serious camera was a Minolta XGM. He now has a Canon 7D Mark II with a 150-600mm Sigma Sports lens. He is also happy with the Sigma 18-300mm lens and pretty much sticks to those two lenses for his photos, although if money were no object, he would be interested in having a 600mm Canon f4 lens. He says Sigma does a great job for someone on a budget. Paul is happy to use his photography to just get out in nature. Wildlife is Paul's specialty, and his favorite subject for his wildlife photography—pika! Paul has a tripod, but he handholds his camera most of the time. He shoots in RAW, using Manual mode, and his f-stops, shutter speed and ISO vary depending on circumstances. Paul encourages other photographers to take lots of photos, and regarding outdoor photography, to learn your subject.

It is always interesting to hear what sources of photographic knowledge that photographers have particularly learned from, been inspired by, or that they recommend. For Karen, that inspiration and knowledge has come from reading a number of books on wildlife photography, including several by John Shaw. Art Wolfe is also an inspiration, and a newer one is Joel Sartore, who is compiling a photographic ark of as many animal species as possible since, as Karen states, "we are on the verge of losing so many." Paul gives great credit to fellow AOPC members Jason Crader and Ernie Decker, who he says helped his photography "100 percent" and who have inspired him to become a better photographer.

Not surprisingly, Karen's favorite photography location is the zoo, but after that, it would be places with waterfalls or the Smoky Mountains. Her dream location for photography, a place she has not yet been, is Madagascar, followed by Costa Rica. Paul's favorite locations for photos are Glacier National Park and anywhere in Arkansas. His current choices for a great photo location where he has yet to visit, are British Columbia and Africa, but he seems to have other places in mind also, since he tells us to "stay tuned."

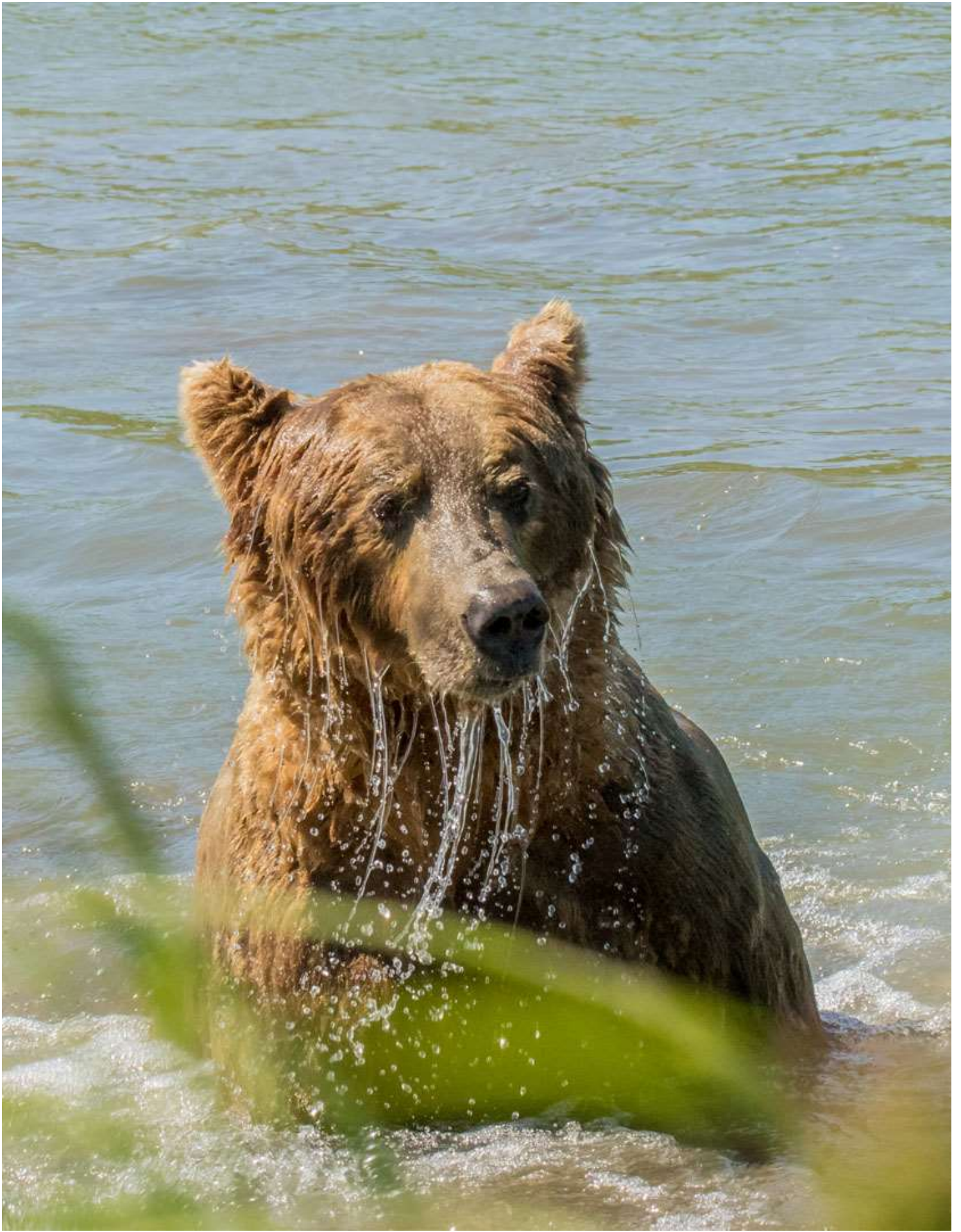
Karen does little processing of her photos on the computer, and says many other AOPC club members are much more qualified in that area than she is. Karen has learned that patience is a key to animal photography, and that learning animal behavior and animals' natural history are also quite useful. She mostly shares her photos on Facebook, which Paul does as well, but he also shares his on Flickr and at AOPC club meetings. Paul advises others to learn to use Lightroom if they can because it seems to be built for photographers, and he encourages amateur photographers to get out of their comfort zone and try new things: "It will surprise you what you can do." He also recommends that you shoot with others and ask questions, which will help you learn a lot that way. He also says to back up your photos.

We will hopefully be seeing Paul and Karen at meetings when they resume and on some of those AOPC field trips. They can be counted on to be great company and ever-helpful to other photographers.

Paul's Portfolio

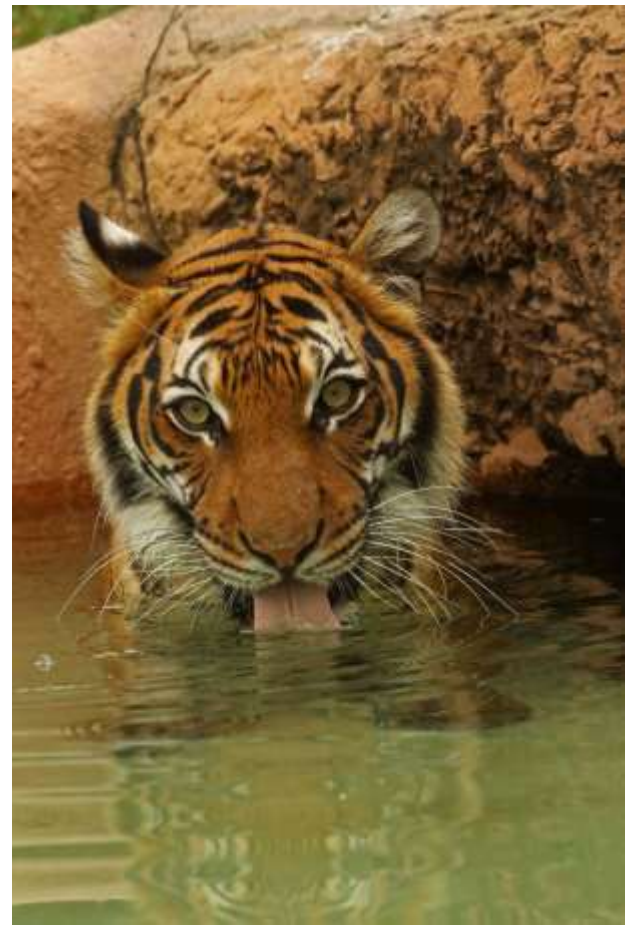






Karen's Portfolio





AOPC MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

By vote of AOPC officers, anyone paying dues for 2020 or 2021 will be considered to be a current AOPC member for 2022. This is to provide additional value to club members in recognition of the fact that the COVID-19 virus disrupted club activities for the past two years and that members have therefore received less value for their dues than they would receive in normal years. Hopefully, we can continue as a viable club with regular meetings beginning again in January 2022.

Dues cost \$20 for an individual membership and \$30 for a family membership. If you are not sure if your membership is current for 2020/2021(2022), please contact club treasurer Nick Dawson at nickdaw@sbcglobal.net. Dues can be paid either by mail to Nick Dawson, 8 Brodie Circle, Little Rock, AR 72211 or by paying online through our website www.aopc.info. Any mailed dues should be accompanied by your current email address.

PHOTO SHOWCASE

NOVEMBER 2021 FIELD TRIP TO PINNACLE MOUNTAIN STATE PARK'S KINGFISHER TRAIL

By Cindy Dawson

On Sunday, November 14, 2021, AOPC sponsored a field trip to Pinnacle Mountain State Park, and a hike around the Kingfisher Trail. Five AOPC members braved the large crowd enjoying the warm, clear, fall weather and parking was at a premium (the field trip attendance would have been slightly higher if more parking had been available). The walk was enjoyed by all and some lovely photos were captured of the fall leaf color which seemed to be at, or close to, its best that weekend.







(all Photo Showcase images taken by Nick and Cindy Dawson)

PHOTO EXPO IN THE ROCK 2022!



2021 AOPC OFFICERS

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- Vice-President – Cindy Dawson
- Secretary/Treasurer – Nick Dawson (501)221-9118 nickdaw@sbcglobal.net
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