



Nature Photographers Network Sponsors Conservationists

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When Jim Deasy contacted me about two young college graduates he had met in Alaska, I became interested in what Jim was proposing. Working in Denali Park in a bird banding operation for the non-profit organization [Denali Institute](#), Tricia Rodriguez and Brad Ogle wish to learn more about photographically documenting their work.

Jim's proposal was an interesting one – he was already going to contribute a Nikon D70s DSLR and some basic accessories to help Brad and Trish get started. What if we got the Nature Photographers Network involved as a sponsor, with a series of articles by Brad and Trish documenting their work for publication on NPN? It didn't take long for us to decide that this would be a great thing to do.

An assortment of equipment has already been delivered or is on the way to Brad and Trish, including the Nikon D70s and a CF card, all to be used with their Quantaray Nikon-compatible lenses they already own for a Nikon film SLR. A Bogen 3221, Kirk BH-3 and Wimberley P5 camera plate sit beside me in my office, awaiting shipment to Alaska next week. Through a collaborative effort, we have been able to supply Brad and Trish the gear they need to document their work and easily generate digital files for publication.

But even with good camera gear in hand, we needed someone "on the ground" in Alaska to show Brad and Trish the finer points of nature photography. Enter Steve Freno, director of [Alaska Photo Tours, LLC](#). Based in Anchorage, Steve has volunteered to offer his services as a tutor to Brad and Trish to help them develop the skills required to capture great nature photos. Finally, as they start using their new gear, Brad and Trish will be looking for *your* input on their images, which they will be posting in the NPN forums. We hope to have their first article ready for publication in early 2006.

Don't you love it when a plan comes together?

Without further adieu, here is a short introduction to our newest members written by Trish.

Brad and I are home grown Georgia folk. Born and raised in the Atlanta area, we never ventured out of the Southeast until college. We haven't always known each other; come to find out we grew up only twenty miles from each other. Not until the crazy days of college did our paths cross.

We both attended the University of Georgia in Athens. Brad grew up hunting and camping and loving the outdoors, so it was a natural and easy choice to major in wildlife biology. I wanted to be a doctor from age twelve, but after two years of organic chemistry, hospital volunteer work, and too much time in the library, I realized I was miserable! After much soul-searching and looking for a major that would interest me, I chose ecology and never looked back. In our senior year, we both ended up in an ornithology class. We finally met on a fieldtrip to Tall Timbers, FL, looking for (and finding) the endangered Red-cockaded Woodpecker. When it was all said and done, we fell in love with birds in general, and each other.

We were both looking to travel and learn more about our environment, which had become paramount in our lives. Visions of wilderness and far away places danced in our heads - little did we know where our dreams would take us!



After receiving our diplomas in 2002, we loaded up the car and headed out West looking for adventure, and often finding it! The

road ended at the Klamath Bird Observatory in Ashland, Oregon where we were trained as bird banders for six months straight. There, we gained invaluable knowledge in scientific methods, avian biology, and conservation methods that would eventually take us to some of the most beautiful places on Earth. We've studied various aspects of avian biology and conservation from the swamps of Mississippi to Cape May, New Jersey - from southern Oregon and Northern California to Montana – and as far as the islands of Trinidad and Tobago.

Through all of our travels, Alaska was always the ultimate destination. It is often called "the last frontier" and we longed to see its vast wilderness of rugged mountains and open tundra. Even with all the dreaming and imagining, we were completely unprepared for the raw beauty of this land; there is a special magic here that pulls you in and makes you never want to leave. We felt extremely lucky to be in Alaska, and even luckier to have landed a job in Denali National Park. For the past two falls, we have worked for a non-profit organization called the Denali Institute; we were the senior bird banders for their migration station located on the property of Camp Denali/North Face Lodge, almost 90 miles into the park. As the senior bird banders, we operated the station and trained two interns in all aspects of banding.

Banding birds involves first catching wild birds (typically songbirds, though we did catch two Sharp-shinned Hawks this year), applying a serially numbered aluminum leg band issued by the USGS, recording vast amounts of data including age, sex, and a multitude of measurements, and then releasing them back into the wild completely unharmed. The 2005 season was a record year for the station, having captured 2,454 birds of 31 species. On our busiest day, we caught over 250 birds in less than 5 hours. Our short careers have allowed us to so far band over 6,000 birds.

In two short fall seasons here, we have fallen head over heels in love with Alaska! We just could not leave once the banding season was over...even though the harsh Alaskan winter was on its way. The allure of this place is so powerful that the thought of snow and cold and darkness did nothing to deter us. We not only wanted to stay for the winter, but we also wanted to truly *experience* it. Having visited the [Denali NP dog kennels](#) a few times and spoken with the folks who run the kennels, there was no question that this would be the ultimate way to spend the winter. We again felt like the luckiest people in the world when we were offered the job. We may be shifting our focus from birds to sled dogs for the time being, but conservation is still at the heart of what we do.

We set out looking for wilderness and adventure and excitement, and we have achieved it time and time again...but this winter will top them all! What better adventure for two Georgians than running sled dogs through the backcountry of Denali National Park in the dead of the long, dark, COLD winter!

Our thanks to the Nature Photographers Network for your sponsorship - we look forward to being a part of your organization!

Tricia Rodriguez - NPN 2177
Brad Ogle - NPN 2178

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If you would be interested in helping with the NPN sponsorship, please feel free to contact us at editor@naturephotographers.net. We are looking for donations of gear, a list of which we are now compiling.

Our sincere thanks to Jim Deasy and Steve Freno, who without their help and initiative, our sponsorship would have never happened.

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