

SOUTHBURY MAKERS SPOTLIGHT



Katie Slawitschek, photographer

By Kelly Keenan, SEDC Arts & Culture Subcommittee

Photos courtesy of the artist

Our June spotlight features the work of nature photographer Katie Slawitschek. You'll have an excellent opportunity to view her works in person when they are on display at the Southbury Public Library during the month of September.

Q: How long have you been in Southbury? What brought you here / keeps you here?

A: My husband and I moved to Southbury in November 1990, so it's been a little over 33 years. We have two grown children living in CT (and one living in Chicago), and our friends and my job keep us here in Southbury. It's a great community to live in.

Q: How did you get into photography, and how long have you been doing it?

A: I've always liked taking photos of my children growing up and taking photos of their sporting activities. When COVID hit in the Spring of 2020 I decided I had time on my hands and wanted to learn how to use a beginner DSLR camera that I had bought a few years back. I only used auto mode and wanted to learn more on how to use the manual modes. I've always loved animals and I learned about some fox kits that had been born. I took my camera to take pictures of them and I was hooked. I have been shooting wildlife ever since.

Q: Do you still shoot film, or exclusively digital? Do you have a favorite camera?

A: I started with the beginner DSLR camera, then bought a more professional DSLR camera soon after I started taking pictures. I then upgraded to a mirrorless camera and so far it is my favorite camera that I have owned. It is a Canon R5 and the lens I always use for wildlife is a 100-500mm. The mirrorless camera shoots at higher frame rates per second, at a very high resolution, and has eye tracking which makes taking pictures of moving birds and animals much easier to capture.

Q: Do you have a favorite subject matter or place to shoot?

A: Favorite subject matter is wild animals and birds of prey - owls are my favorite! I do take pictures of pretty much any animal or bird I can find. There is not one specific place but there are places I do frequent depending on what I am looking for. The Bent of the River is a nice area to explore and can provide some good wildlife opportunities plus I can get some exercise walking the trails.

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Q: What is your favorite part of the process? Least Favorite?

A: Being out in nature and finding wildlife to take pictures of. It's always an adventure and when I find a new animal or bird I've never seen that is the most exciting. Another favorite part for me is meeting and connecting with so many great people from all over the US who have the same photographic interests. Least favorite? I enjoy the editing process as it brings the raw image to life and I'm excited to see what I've captured, but it can be very time consuming and challenging at times.



Q: Is there a take-away from your work that you'd hope to leave the viewer with?

A: Make time to do what you love. Look around and see the beauty around you. It's never too late to find a new passion. I was 60 years old when I started my photography journey and will continue to do it as long as I can.



Q: Can you share a memorable experience or anecdote from when you were in the field?




A: There are so many memorable moments but one of my memorable experiences was when I was driving down a road passing through farm fields when I spotted a bobcat hunting in a snow covered field. I watched it for at least 20 minutes stalking and pouncing, trying to catch a vole. It made eye contact with me several times and that connection you get when you lock eyes with a wild animal is something special. I had no fear of it and it didn't fear me.



Q: Do you have any advice for creatives who are trying to find their voice?

A: Find and study other artists' work either through books or social media to find what styles and genre interest you. Join a club, take some classes or watch videos that will teach you more about your art. I have never taken a photography class but my first step was to learn my camera functions well and then watch videos on the best settings for what I am photographing. I joined a photography club that has program nights which teaches me how to do other types of photography other than wildlife. It's a lifetime learning process.



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