

Photographing Birds



Presented by:



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Competition Gallery at FlagpolePhotographers.com

To: Whaling City Camera Club

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Download:
ccullens.com/birds

Photographing Birds in Your Yard and Beyond

A great way to practice your photography skills!

- Equipment and Settings
- Starting in Your Yard and Attracting Birds
- Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats
- Lighting, Background, Composition
- Post-Processing
- Practice, Patience and Perseverance
- Now what?



Red-bellied Woodpecker



Northern Gannet

Photographing birds can be a lifelong passion!

I started over 55 years ago with “Pecky” the Parakeet!



How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



Starting in Your Yard & Attracting Birds



Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats



Lighting, Background, Composition



Post-Processing



Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

Equipment

- Camera/cell phone – The best camera is the one you have with you!
- Lens – Bigger is better if you can't get close to your subject.
- Tripod/Monopod – Support and stability is the key!

Consider using a sturdy surface like a railing, rock or window ledge if you don't have a tripod. You can also brace the camera and lens against a tree or a wall edge.

Try to keep your camera and all electronics dry!



Camera – Cell phone



Juvenile Female Yellow-rumped Warbler

- Taken on my cell phone which had been in my pocket.
- Cell phones can work well if you can get really close to your subject.

Lens and Tripod/Monopod

Bigger might be better... but use what you have!



Tip: Be careful. The cheapest tripod might not be the best choice and could result in disaster if it fell over!

Longer Lenses Needed When Subjects Are Further Away

Cell phone vs. 500mm lens



Heron in tree across pond
taken with cell phone

Great Blue Heron



Same cell photo
cropped in



Same bird and location
with 500mm lens

Distance & Speed of Moving Subjects

Shorter lens for closer subjects, longer for further away.
Smaller birds will often get closer, but tend to fly faster so keep the speed up.



Atlantic Puffin
1/2500s, 100mm



Arctic Tern
1/2500s, 500mm

Longer Lens for Birds in Flight

Larger birds often have a slower and soaring flight, making it easier to keep them in the frame, but many times are further away. Longer lenses and fast shutter speeds help with these.



Turkey Vulture

1/6400s



Osprey

1/8000s



Bald Eagle

1/8000s

200mm lens on all

Fast Shutter Speeds Freezes Motion

- Small songbirds might get very close but can be very fast and erratic. They often have “bounding” flight patterns making them hard to keep in the frame.
- Need a very fast shutter speed for these birds that move quickly.



1/1000s – f/5.6, ISO 640

Shutter Speeds

“Fast” or “Slow” Speeds are Relative Terms



Female House Finch

1/400s – f/8.0, ISO 800

Plenty Fast When Perched

Too Slow for This Fast Flyer!

Slow Shutter Speeds

Works with birds sitting still or moving slowly



African Scops Owl

1/60s – f/5.0, ISO 640



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk

1/60s – f/8.0, ISO 500

Shutter Speeds

Slow down shutter speed to show motion



Herring Gull

1/200s



Juvenile Tufted Titmouse

1/640s



Juvenile Eastern Bluebird

1/640s

Aperture (Lens Opening)

Affects the depth in focus and how much light comes in

$f/2.8$ = Shallow depth. Small number, small amount in focus. Lets in more light.

$f/22$ = Deep depth. Large number, large amount in focus. Lets in less light.



Song Sparrow

$f/4.0$

Shallow Depth of Field:
Bird is in focus but
background blurred

Portrait vs.
Including Habitat

Sweet Spot for
image sharpness
is in between



White-throated Sparrow

$f/14.0$

Deep Depth of Field:
Bird and the background are
both more in focus

ISO – Sensitivity of the image sensor to light

Choose lowest possible ISO that still allows a fast enough shutter speed to reduce motion blur.



Crimson Rosella Parrot

1/250s, f/5.6, ISO 3200



After Topaz Photo AI
to reduce noise

Higher ISO: Less light is required so you can use faster shutter speeds, but photo has more noise or grain. Use in darker settings to keep speed up. (May be able to reduce some noise in post-processing.)

Lower ISO: Produces less noise and graininess, but more light is required. Tradeoffs are slower shutter speeds and/or aperture changes.

ISO – Sensitivity of the image sensor to light

Higher ISO: Often needed in wooded areas with limited light.

If birds are sitting fairly still, a moderate shutter speed may be used.

Small birds often have faster head movements even while perched, so may need faster shutter speeds.



Pine Warbler

1/320s, f/7.1, ISO 6400



Red-tailed Hawk

1/250s, f/7.1, ISO 2500

ISO – Sensitivity of the image sensor to light

Lower ISO: May be used in brightly lit areas.

Birds can be captured with a faster shutter speed if it is a bright day.

If you want slower shutter speeds on bright days to show motion, a neutral density filter may be used to reduce light.



Bald Eagle

1/3200s, f/7.1, ISO 250



Atlantic Puffin

1/2500s, f/7.1, ISO 200

JPEG vs. RAW

RAW provides more opportunities to bring out detail than JPEG files



JPEG



RAW

Tufted Titmouse

Autofocus – Single Area vs. Continuous Tracking



Female Yellow-rumped Warbler

Main Objective: Focus on the eye and keep it sharp!

- Single Area: Not moving or perched, use One-Shot AF for Canon or AF-S for Nikon.
- Continuous Tracking: Moving or in flight, use AI Servo for Canon or AF-C for Nikon. “Sports mode” on some cameras. Tracks motion and predicts where the subject will be, placing the focus at that predicted point.
- Consider using Back-Button Focus, AF-On or AF Lock, if you are switching back and forth.

Subject Detection or Eye-tracking Settings



Willet

500mm - 1/800s, f/7.1, ISO 400

If the bird is flying, or moving quickly, consider using the “subject detection” or “eye-tracking” setting if available on your camera to keep the bird in focus.



Least Tern

500mm - 1/5000s, f/7.1, ISO 640

Panning with Birds in Flight



Great Egret

Panning: Moving the camera to follow the subject in flight, typically horizontally.

Start with larger and slower birds a bit further away as they will be easier to focus on.

However, if they are too far away, a longer lens is needed.

Slow shutter speeds blur the background, but may be harder to get the bird in focus.

200mm – 1/640s, f/5.6, ISO 500

Panning with Birds in Flight

Small, fast birds up close can be even more challenging.

The pan movement must be even faster to keep up with them.

Faster panning and/or slower shutter speeds will blur background more.



Eastern Bluebird

200mm – 1/640s, f/8, ISO 100

High Speed Continuous, or Burst, Mode

- Takes several photos in quick succession by pressing the shutter button or holding it down.
- Increases the odds one turns out when your opportunity of capturing something is short.



Great Egret

High Speed Continuous – The one that turned out!



Great Egret

200mm - 1/400s, f/9, ISO 400

Tip: A steady camera = sharper photos

- Don't try to take a photo while walking.
- Tuck your elbows in.
- Squeeze rather than press shutter release.
- If no tripod, use something as a brace to keep your camera still. Lean against a tree or set camera on a rock or ledge.



Motion Blur



Steadier Camera

Red-shouldered Hawk

How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



Starting in Your Yard & Attracting Birds



Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats



Lighting, Background, Composition



Post-Processing



Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

Your own yard – A great place to start

- Convenience
- Control
- Create



Juvenile Eastern Bluebird



Chane's photo setup – From inside our home!



Black sheet with hole cut in it. Kitchen knives holding it into moulding. Flashes set up inside and on the deck.



Male and Female Northern Cardinals
370mm lens, 1/640s, f/6.3, ISO 800 with flash

*"Lovers. Sharing Food in The Rain." – By Chane Cullens
(Plastic bags put over outdoor flashes in the rain.)*

Rhonda's easy setup – Out our bedroom window!



1. Raise the “Bird Blinds”
2. Open window (screen already removed)
3. Take photos!

Even though I’m up higher looking down more, using a long lens further away still gives a “on the same level” feel.



Male Northern Cardinal Feeding Himself
300mm lens, 1/400s, f/8, ISO 540

Clean windows if photographing through glass

Tip: Only Spray window cleaner when temperatures are above freezing!



Use or Create a More Nature-like Background

Might be used in a “Nature” Category in Competitions



White-throated Sparrow

*Not a complete list. For more details see:

Photographic Society of America, <https://psa-photo.org/page/division-definitions#>

- Objects created by “the hand of man”, and evidence of human activity, are allowed in PSA Nature images only when they are a necessary part of the Nature story.
- No human-created hybrid plants, cultivated plants, feral animals, domestic animals or mounted animals.

Consider planting or hanging native plants to hide man-made objects. You have more control what is in your yard!

“Nature” Photography

Competition “Nature” Category

In General, Not Allowed:

- Evidence of the “hand of man.”



Great Horned Owl



Juvenile House Wren



American Robin



Cooper's Hawk



House Sparrow

“Nature” Photography

Allowed: “Scientific bands, scientific tags or radio collars on wild animals are permissible.”



White-throated Sparrow



Royal Tern



Inca Tern



Purple Swamphen



Common Loon



Cooper's Hawk

See for more: Photographic Society of America <https://psa-photo.org/index.php?nature-nature-definition>

How do I attract birds? – Meet their basic needs!

- **Food** – Birdseed, suet, etc. Trees/plants for fruits, nuts, seeds, nectar
- **Water** – For drinking & bathing
- **Shelter** – Nest boxes, trees, shrubs, ground cover, nesting materials



*Female Ruby-throated
Hummingbird*



American Crow

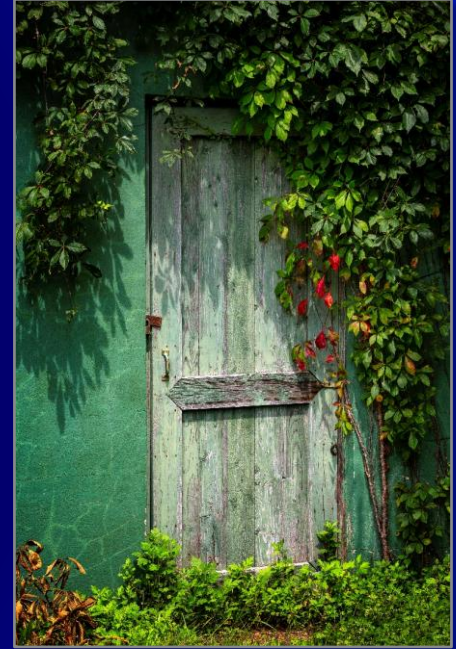


Plant Trees, Shrubs and Flowers for Birds



Examples:

- Wild Grape
- Coneflower
- Flowering Dogwood
- Sunflowers
- Virginia Creeper



If you feed them, they will come!



Blue Jay



Male House Finch



Mourning Dove

Birdseed served here daily!

They might even eat out of your hand!



Canadian Jay – AKA “Camp Robber”

And pose for photos too!

The resources available will attract different birds



Juvenile Male Scarlet Tanager



Male Pileated Woodpecker



Eastern Bluebird

Insects, wood-boring beetle larvae, grubs... Yum! Yum!

Everyone is looking for a free meal!



Indigo Bunting



Eastern Towhee



Scarlet Tanager



Eastern Phoebe



Eastern Wood-Pewee

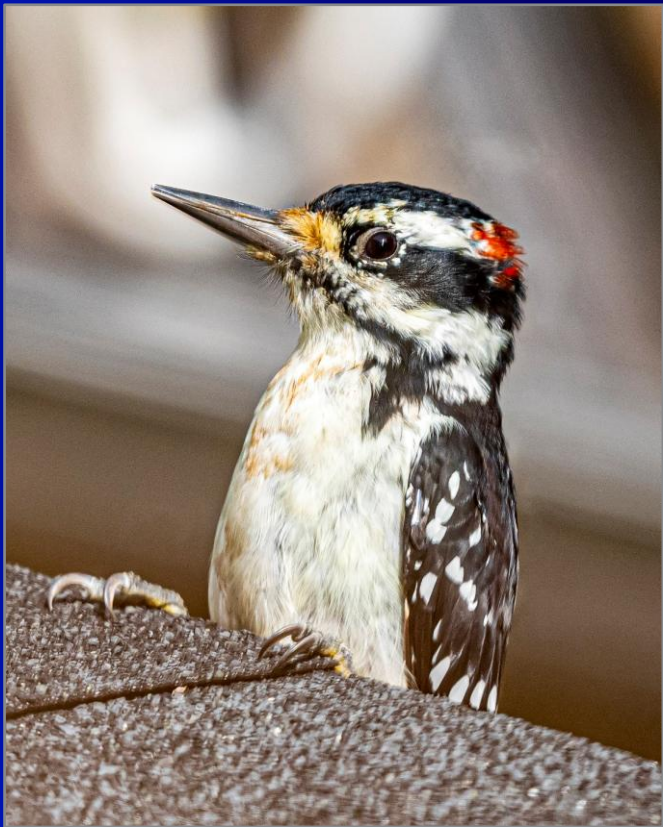
Encourage Healthy Eating

Photos before and after dessert... (Just kidding!)



Female Yellow-rumped Warbler

A few may want to get close to you...



Juvenile Hairy Woodpecker

*And others may
want to hide...*



Female Downy Woodpecker

Some may raise their families nearby



Northern Cardinal



Juvenile Northern Cardinal



Tufted Titmouse



Juvenile House Sparrow



Chipping Sparrow



Juvenile Eastern Bluebird

Some may grow up & start their own families!

A male Red-shouldered Hawk called and called for a mate. Finally, she arrived in a nearby tree, he flew over to her, checked out who was watching them, then snuck a kiss!

Two little love birds, sitting in a tree, K-I-S-S-I-N-G.



Red-shouldered Hawks

Some may grow up & start their own families!

After a quick check to make sure their "love nest" was in order, they found a beautiful tulip tree to consummate their relationship.

First comes love...



Red-shouldered Hawks

Don't put food by nests!
Other predators may find them and their babies



Tufted Titmouse

Warning: Feeding birds may also attract other animals...



Black-capped Chickadee



Female Eastern Gray Squirrel

Squirrels will come, but just photograph them too!



Eastern Gray Squirrel

And all their relatives...



Eastern Gray Squirrels

But seed is cheap, so let them eat!

Costco:
40-pound bags
(March 2017 price)



Inflation! But still cheap entertainment!

Costco:
40-pound bags
(March 2023 price)



Small birds and animals may attract bigger birds...



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk

**That hawk wasn't really posing for a photo.
He was waiting for his dinner hiding under
the BBQ...**

Squirrel waited for
the hawk to leave
and got away!



Eastern Gray Squirrel

Some squirrels aren't as smart, but sometimes get lucky if the hawk isn't hungry...



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk and Eastern Gray Squirrel

And others just aren't as lucky...



Cooper's Hawk and its prey

Tip: Put food out in the morning. Overnight food sources invite other “guests” too!



North American Raccoons



North American Black Bear

How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



Starting in Your Yard & Attracting Birds



Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats



Lighting, Background, Composition



Post-Processing



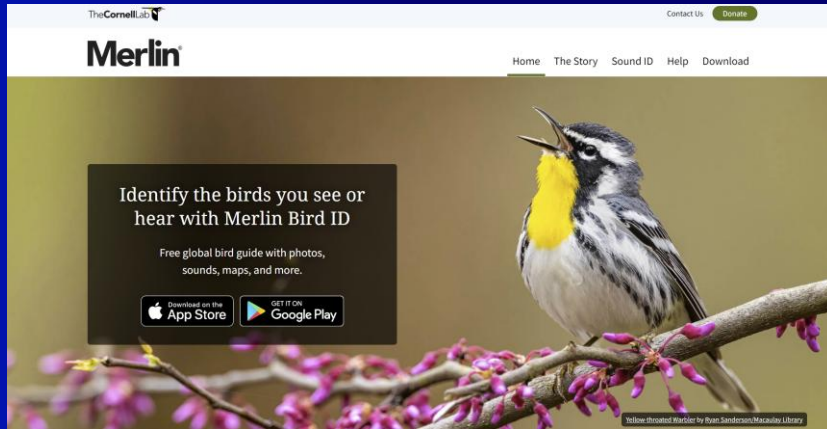
Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

Identifying Birds by Their Songs & Calls

Free phone app – Identify birds you hear outside
Use to call birds closer too!



<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>



Cedar Waxwing



Yellow Warbler

Identifying Birds by Their Photo on Your Phone

“Merlin” from The Cornell Lab

Take a photo of a bird, click on Photo ID, choose your bird photo, confirm the location and date, and it will give you the best matches it finds.



Yellow-billed Cuckoo



Saltmarsh Sparrow



Cape May Warbler



Common Yellowthroat

Identifying Birds Online

Try an online search using a detailed description. Include size, color of head, neck, breast etc. to narrow your search.

Examples: Small yellow bird, yellow/black head (crown), yellow/gray face, yellow/white breast, black on wings, yellow/white bars on wings, black/white eyes...



Nashville Warbler



Northern Parula



Male Hooded Warbler



Immature Chestnut-sided Warbler

Identifying Birds Resources

Facebook Groups – “What’s this Bird?” & “What bird is this?”

Post where and when photo was taken, and usually someone posts the bird’s identity right away.



Eastern Wood-Pewee



Eastern Phoebe

Identifying Birds – Take Lots of Photos

Capture all angles to get head, breast, wings, tail etc.



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk

Confirmed by “What bird is this?”
Facebook Group.

Can rule out red-tailed because no
belly band pattern and no dark
patagial on the leading edge of inner
under wing.

Google Images and Merlin listed both
Red-tailed and Red-shouldered



Identifying Birds – Confirm Answers

Sometimes sources differ



*Red-shouldered Hawk
Juvenile*



Not all birds are as easy to
ID as this *Red-tailed Hawk*!

Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk or Red-tailed Hawk?

Most agreed on *Red-shouldered Hawk*.

The tail can change with age of the bird.

Learn more about birds – www.birds.cornell.edu
AllAboutBirds.org



**Cornell Lab's All About Birds:
A Great Free Resource**

Observe & Learn Behaviors



White-breasted Nuthatch

Nuthatches are the only birds in North America that walk headfirst down trees.



Northern Flicker

Spends a lot of time on the ground eating ants and other insects. They also fly in an up-and-down path and glide between wing flaps.

What are their habits?

Do they always land on the same branch?



Tufted Titmouse



American Goldfinch



Black-capped Chickadee

See if they perch first before going in for the food. If so, try pre-focusing there.

Notice which birds perch longer than others
They are easier to photograph



Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk



Male Northern Cardinal, Dark-eyed Junco

Some birds don't stay in one place very long
Be ready with a fast shutter speed!



Blue-gray Gnatcatcher - 1/1,000 sec

Active in spring when mating and nesting

You might get treated to hearing a beautiful song!



And later, babies could follow too!



American Robin

Activity Near Nesting and Feeding Sites

Use longer lenses to keep your distance



Chipping Sparrows
300mm lens



Least Tern
500mm lens

Especially When Photographing Birds in the Wild

Keep Your Distance From Vulnerable or Protected Birds



Snowy Owl

500mm - 1/800s, f/9, ISO 400



Active in fall preparing for winter



Female Downy Woodpecker

“The tongue of a woodpecker, often covered with barbs or sticky saliva, can be extended a considerable distance in order to dislodge ants and insect larvae from deep crevices in wood and back. For storage, the tongue is curled around the back of the head between the skull and skin.” – Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Time of Year

Are they here for the winter or do they migrate?



Dark-eyed Juncos



Cooper's Hawk



Male Northern Cardinal

Education: Attend a Bird of Prey Event



Red-tailed Hawk



Gyrfalcon



Falcon

A great way to learn more about the birds and their habits!

And you can practice photographing them up close! (This one sponsored by CAP)

**The closer the birds will get to you the better
Especially if you don't have a big lens!**



Snowy Owl

70mm lens, Flying about 25 feet overhead 1/1000s

Visit indoor and outdoor exhibits at the Zoo



Hyacinth Macaw



Pelican



Flamingo



Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill

Learn Habits by Observing Wherever You Go



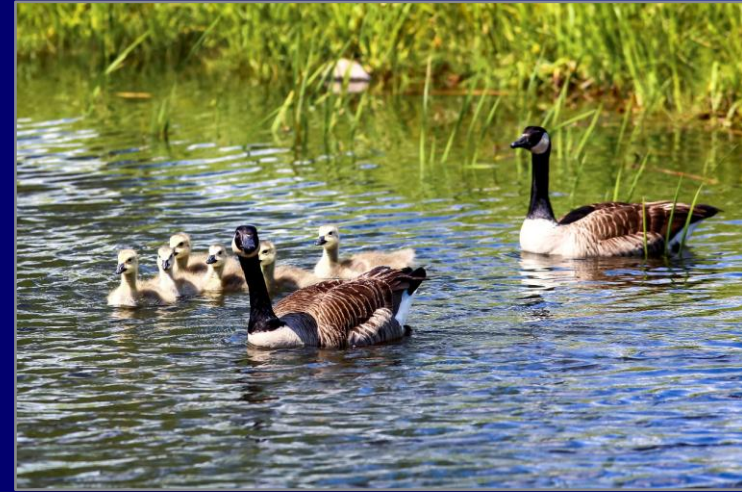
Sulfur-crested Cockatoo

Near the Opera House in
Sydney, Australia



Pigeon

Park in Dublin, Ireland



Canada Geese

Pond next to our Shopping Mall
In Danbury, Connecticut

Research Habitats Before Heading Out

Going to a specific location? Find out what types of birds are usually there.



Snowy Egrets and Great Egret on Cape Cod

Research the Bird's Preferred Type of Habitat

Looking for a specific type of bird?



Find out what type of habitat they like and where they can be found and when.

Great Egret

Visit nesting colonies of birds

Use bird blinds or observation areas provided at various locations



Atlantic Puffins



Machias Island, Maine

No guarantees, but ask someone

Ask a Park Ranger or local person where they might be currently.



Roseate Spoonbill

Safety First – Know what else is in their habitat

Be aware of your surroundings and watch behind you!



Great Blue Heron



American Alligator

Resources

- Review bird websites like birds.cornell.edu
- Look for bird events like the Audubon Society hosts
- Use “Ok Google,” Merlin, or other cellphone apps
- Ask others on Facebook forums, photography clubs etc.



Cormorant



Pink-backed Pelican – Found in Africa, Arabia, India,
or, the Ft. Worth Zoo!



Common Loon

Tips: Behaviors a bird often does just before it takes off to fly

May poop to “lighten the load.”
Especially larger birds.



Snowy Owl

- Stands very alert
- Turns its head in all directions
- Turns into the wind



American Crow

Tips: Photographing Birds in the Wild

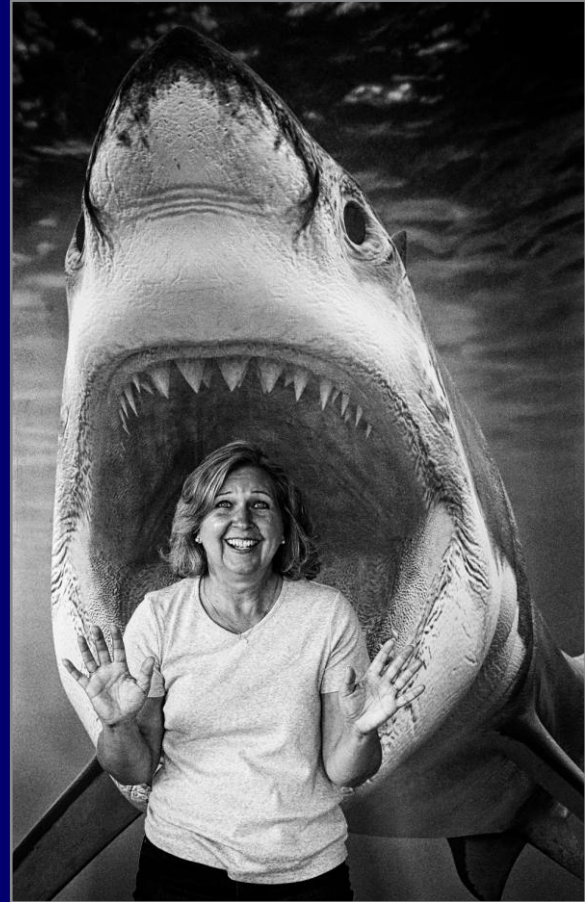
Try to “blend in” with the surroundings

- Wear muted clothing
- Don't wear reflective jewelry
- Turn off your cell phone ringer
- Don't use a shiny tripod
- Turn off beep sounds on camera
- Move slowly
- Stay low for ground/water birds
- Use a “bird blind” if you have one



Common Loon (The bird in the water not the photographer!)

**Basically:
Don't scare the birds away!**



How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



Starting in Your Yard & Attracting Birds



Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats



Lighting, Background, Composition



Post-Processing



Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

Golden Hours: Morning or late in the day



- The best light is found just after sunrise and just before sunset when the light is warmer and more subdued.
- It will bring out the color and texture in the birds' plumage.

Oystercatcher

Season: Leaves Change the Colors Being Reflected

Combine the Golden Hour with Fall Colors for some extra rich, warm reflections.



Hooded Merganser

Direct Sun, Shade, Partly Cloudy or Bright Overcast



Blue Jay

Direct Sun



Great Horned Owl

Shade



Male House Finch

Partly
Cloudy



Blue Jay

Bright
Overcast

Location of Light Source

Where does the sun fall between you and the bird?



Male House Finch

Sun is behind the camera slightly to the left and is higher in the sky.

Sun is directly behind the camera and lower in the sky.

*Note the location of the shadows the birds are casting and that both have a catch light in their eye.



Great Egret

Sun at Your Back vs. Backlighting



Sulfur-crested Cockatoos

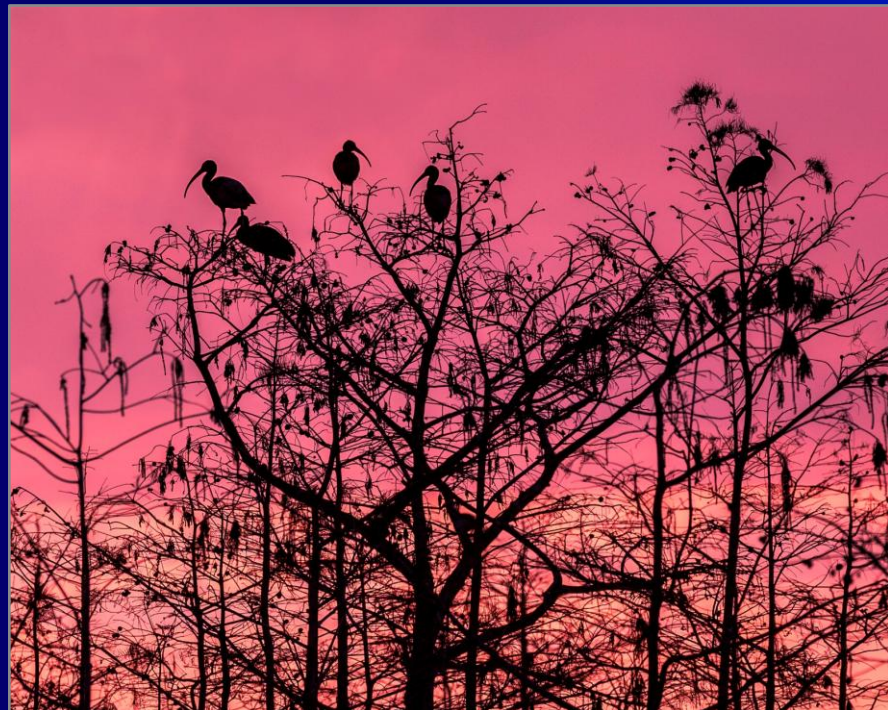


Dark-eyed Junco

Backlighting for Silhouettes



Original Lighting



ibis

Changed in Post-processing

Compensating in Bright or Snowy Conditions

Consider slightly underexposing to save details



Northern Cardinals



White-throated Sparrows

Does the background help tell the story?



Juvenile Little Blue Heron



Great Blue Heron

Backgrounds show the herons are wading birds who walk through shallow water looking for food.

If the background doesn't help tell the story, keep it simple and non-distracting



Great Blue Heron



Great Egret

Backgrounds show some of the surroundings
and habitat, but doesn't distract from the birds.

Background should compliment the bird

It should not draw attention away

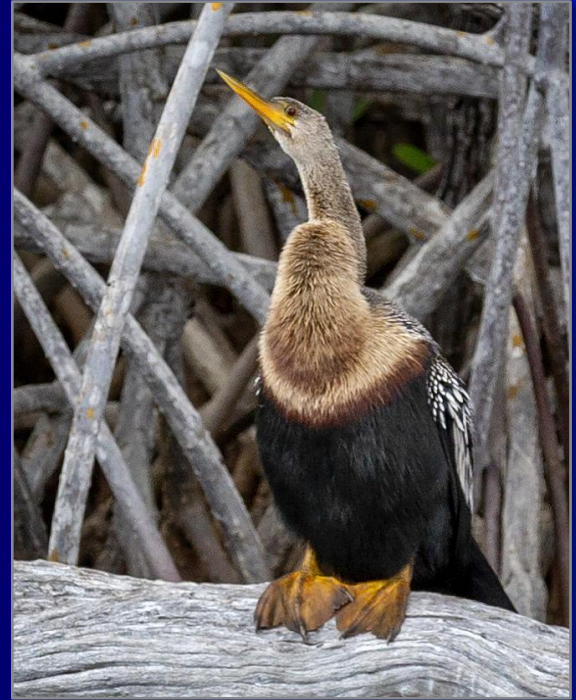


Female House Finch

Background is subtle
and keeps the focus
on the bird.

vs.

Background
is busy and
distracting.



Female Anhinga

Blending in with the background



Pacific Black Duck



Masked Lapwing



Tricolored Heron

Camouflage is better for the bird than for the photo.

Work the scene – Keep clicking
Don't give up too soon



Tricolored Heron

Same bird 11 seconds later with a different background and lighting

Backgrounds can change quickly as birds move

See which backgrounds work best



Horned Lark

All taken with 3 feet of each other

Selection of background

Even a blurred lawn will work



Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Separation of background - Distance

If background is further away, it is easier to blur.



Eurasian Eagle-owl
200mm f/6.3



Harris's hawk
175mm f/5.0

Lens Choice for Blurred Backgrounds



Black-capped Chickadee
300mm f/5.6

Longer lenses
increases the blur
further



Eastern Bluebird
500mm f/8.0

Background Choices

Change your position to create a different background



Ruby-crowned Kinglet

Avoid Mergers & Distractions

Change your position for a cleaner background &/or foreground angle.
I moved from my bedroom window to the other end of the house.



Red-shouldered Hawk

Choose a background color for bird to stand out



Gouldian Finch



Red-shouldered Hawk



Barn Owl

Background too Boring?



If not using the photo
for a nature competition,
consider adding clouds
or sky replacement in
post-processing!



Great-tailed Grackle

Tip: Trim branches to be minimal



Male House Finch

Break branches by hand or with no cuts showing.

Caution: Even a “broken” branch can be seen as a distraction.



Black-capped Chickadee

Start the Composition with a Clear Subject



Great Blue Heron



American White Ibis

The bird should be the clear subject and focus of the photograph.

Less May Be More

Instead of many birds, select one to highlight



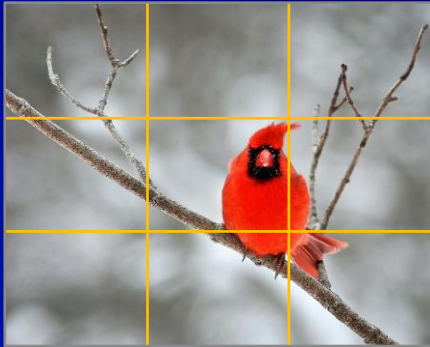
Gulls



Black-headed Gull

Rule of Thirds

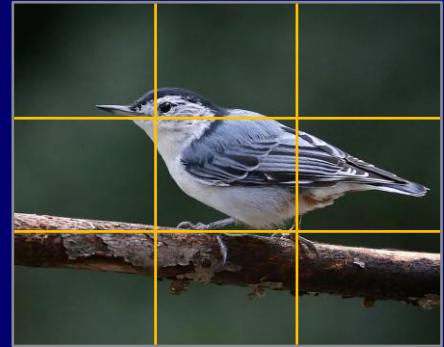
Divide the photo into 9 parts with an imaginary tic tac toe grid



Male Northern Cardinal

Put points of interest on lines or intersections.

The eye is a point of interest.



White-breasted Nuthatch

Show Birds in Action When Possible



Osprey



Great Egret



Black-headed Gulls



Snowy Egret



Song Sparrow

Birds in Action



Common Murre

Razorbill



Purple Gallinule



(Formerly called Common Moorhen)

Birds in Action



Great Blue Heron

Birds On A Stick



Sitting



*vs.
Doing Yoga!*

*vs.
Doing a Tail and Wing Check*



Snowy Owl

Birds On A Stick



Hairy Woodpecker



European Starlings



Black-capped Chickadee

Angle Position – Shooting Down, Level, or Up

What story are you trying to tell?



Atlantic Puffin

**Shooting from above down on the subject
can make a subject seem weaker and dominated**



Why are you looking
down on me?



Better to look me in the eye!

Red-shouldered Hawk

In some cases, shooting from below can make a subject seem more powerful or in charge



Greater Rhea



Bald Eagle



Northern Gannet

Usually try to get on their level to connect with the subject



Piping Plover



Southern White-faced Owl



Northern Cardinal



Purple Swamphen



Magpie Lark



Black and White Warbler



Black-throated Blue Warbler



Galah

Typically avoid “Butt Shots”



Piping Plover

Unless, they help tell the story!

“Get your butt over
here right now!”

**Don't forget to look behind you!
Or behind your subject!**



“There are two sides to every story!”



Indian Peacock

Allow for “Breathing Space” when taking photos

Get in close, but leave some room around the bird.

More space should be left on the side the bird is heading toward.



Red-shouldered Hawk



House Wren



White-throated Sparrow

Consider equal space if looking straight ahead.

Don't “cut the subject off at the ankles”!

At least crop down far enough allowing for where feet should be.



Piping Plover



Better yet, show a foot or two!

Don't “cut the subject off at the ankles”!
Unless there is a reason to and it helps tell the story!



Atlantic Puffin and Razorbills

“Let's go. He's always trying to make a splash!”

Fill the Frame

Make the subject a significant portion of the photo



300mm Lens

Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Move in close or use a bigger lens if possible. Or, crop in post-processing.

Tip: Eliminate Distractions Before Shooting

Remove items or change position



Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Remove garbage, camera bags, excess branches
etc. or reposition so they aren't in the photo.

Or, if not for "Nature," remove
in post-processing.

How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



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Post-Processing



Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

Eliminate distractions with Post-Processing



Original Photo



Crop with Adjustments



Crop “until it hurts”



Remove elements with editing

Female House Finch

**But don't crop too tight – They'll look “Boxed in”
Leave some space to move into!**



Sulfur-crested Cockatoo

You left room when you took the photo - don't spoil it in post-processing!

Reducing Background Noise



Background with Noise



After Noise Reduction

**Tip in Photoshop:
(No masking required)**

- Select: Subject
- Select: Inverse
(To get Background)
- Filter: Camera Raw Filter
- Detail: Noise Reduction
Slider (Move right as
needed)

Noise is removed from
background only, not bird.

Male Purple Finch (Eastern)

Reducing Background Noise



Red-shouldered Hawk

Background with Noise



After Topaz Photo AI

OR:

Use Topaz Photo AI or
other tools.

Desaturate the Background

Select Subject, Inverse, Camera Raw Filter, Color Mixer (Move the Aquas and Blues sliders to the left)



Chipping Sparrow
400mm f/5.6

Content Aware Fill and Clone Stamping

Get rid of unwanted items, including birdseed, etc.



Birdseed on log

Male Northern Cardinal



Birdseed removed

Sharpening

Bring back details and colors without over-sharpening



Male House Finch

Realistic



Female Northern Cardinal

Over-sharpened

Get creative! “Art in Flight!”



Original Photo



Drybrush Effect & Bricks Added

Herring Gull

Painterly Artwork

Google Photo Editing Plug-in: Nik Color Efex Pro used here

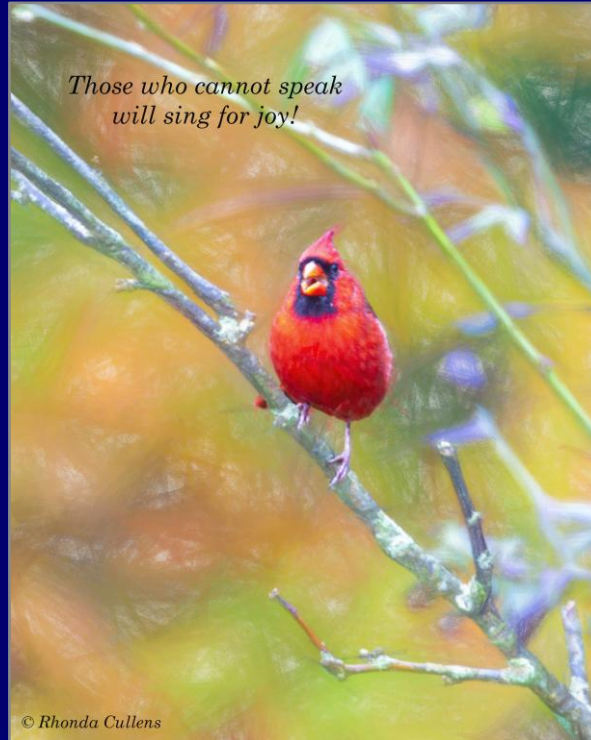


Herring Gulls



Painterly Artwork

Topaz Studio also does a great job



Male Northern Cardinal

Convert to Monochrome for Dramatic Effect



Monochrome Conversion

Great Egret



Original Photo

Creating a Composite

Starting Elements



Barking Owl

Original Photo



Background Photo



Branch Photo

Creating a Composite

Giving the bird a more “Natural Setting”



Barking Owl
Original Photo



Composite Photo

How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



Starting in Your Yard & Attracting Birds



Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats



Lighting, Background, Composition



Post-Processing



Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

**Practice in your backyard
Then go explore the world!**



Female Downy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Female House Finch, Male House Sparrow, Male House Finch

Make a stop at the Zoo

They have many exotic birds to practice on!



Green Aracari



Red-billed Leiothrix



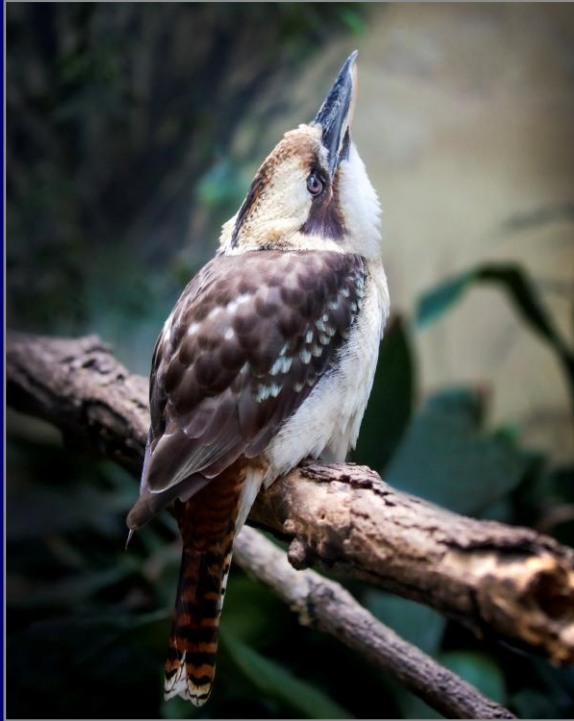
Great Blue Turaco



Toucan

At the Zoo

Think about doing a whole photo shoot on one bird!



Laughing Kookaburra

Practice in other areas of the Zoo

Some more common birds are outdoors!



Common Merganser



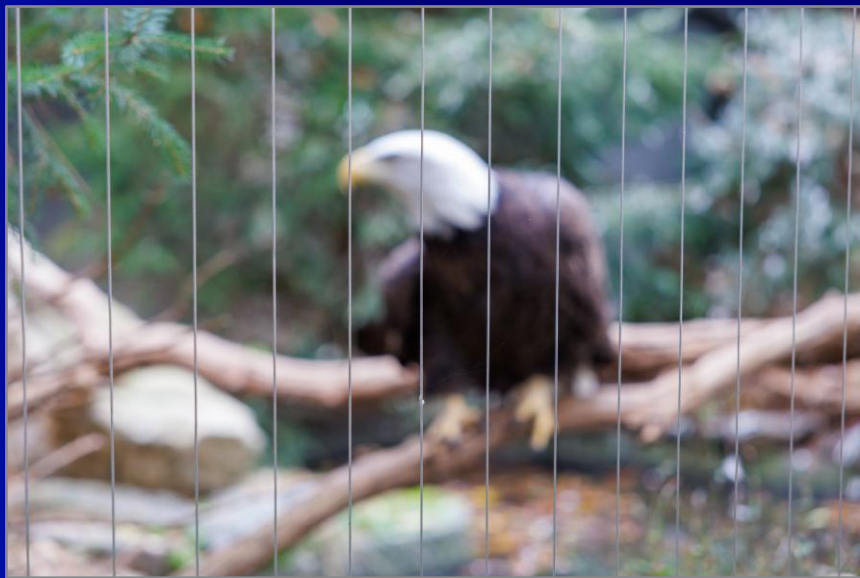
Wood Duck



Mallard Duck

Photographing Birds Behind Wire Zoo Cages

Tip: Use a very shallow f-stop and get close to the fence to make the cage or wire fencing “disappear”



Bald Eagle



f/3.2

In “the wild”, consider starting with
slower “friendly” birds you can get close to
Ducks, swans, and geese fit the “bill”!



Female Mallard Duck



Mute Swan



Black Swan



Canada goose

Practice capturing birds in flight after you get down photographing them when they are still



Gulls

**Gulls are friendly and slower in flight
making them easier to photograph**



Western Gull & Heermann's Gull

Find a place with plenty of birds
A good feeding ground will probably be nearby



Heermann's Gulls

Or, bring your own food with you!



Heermann's Gull

Select a good location and time of day
Watch for good lighting and a good background



**Enjoy the surroundings
while you're there!**

Western Gull

Be patient!

Wait for the birds, the light, and the background to come together

Or, find a place where
backgrounds are always
beautiful and birds wait in
trees to be photographed!

(Photo taken in the Dominican Republic)



Blue-and-yellow Macaw

Persevere!
Don't give up! Keep taking those photographs!



Sulfur-crested Cockatoos

No matter how many times you get knocked down!

How to get started photographing birds



Equipment and Settings



Starting in Your Yard & Attracting Birds



Identifying Birds, Habits and Habitats



Lighting, Background, Composition



Post-Processing



Practice, Patience, and Perseverance



Now what?

Now what?

Seek out, capture and share the beauty around us!



Juvenile Eastern Bluebird



Great Horned Owl



Senegal Parrot

Seek Out and Capture:

Be on the lookout wherever you go!



Eurasian Eagle-owl

Phoenix Zoo, Arizona



Greater Yellowlegs

Everglades, Florida



Wild Turkey

Our backyard, Connecticut

Share your photos with others!

Facebook Posts

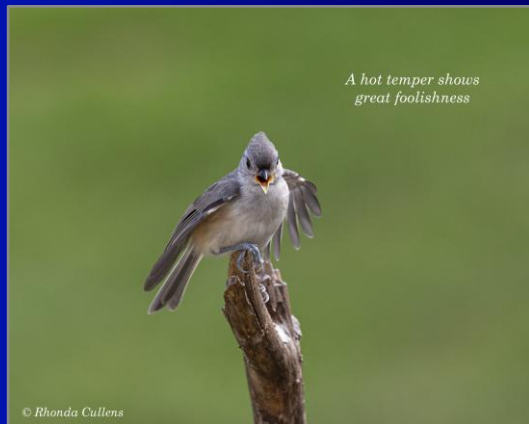


Juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk

Birds of the Eastern United States

Shared on my Facebook Page

Inspirational Posts



Juvenile Tufted Titmouse

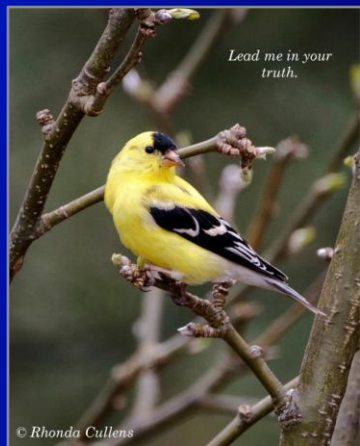


Male Northern Cardinal



House Wren

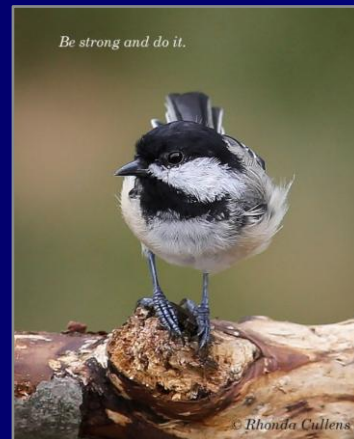
Inspirational Posts



American Goldfinch



Wild Turkey



Black-capped chickadee



Red-tailed Hawk



Canada Goose



Mourning Dove

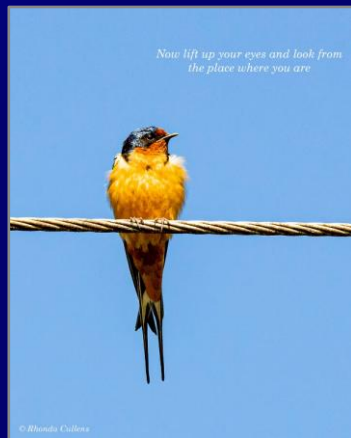


Male House Finch

Inspirational Posts



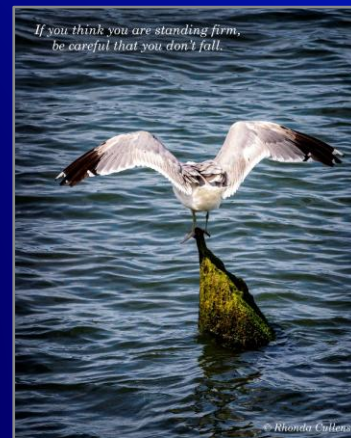
Pileated Woodpecker



Barn Swallow



Kestrel



Western Gull



Saffron Finch



Tawny Frogmouth



Long-tailed Finch

Exhibit in the community - “Pictures and Passages”



Walnut Hill Community Church - www.CCullens.com/WHCC

Exhibit - "Capturing Newtown and Our World"



Newtown Municipal Center - www.CCullens.com/Newtown

“Flagpole Photographers Newtown & Beyond Exhibit”



Newtown Municipal Center - www.FlagpolePhotographers.com

Contribute to Local Newspapers

MARCH 14, 2019 COUNTRY LIFE REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN 3E

callin'

COUNTRY GARDENS

Sweetness makes for fierce winged warriors

We think of the tiny hummingbirds that dart through our yards as helpless creatures that need protection from the rest of the world. In fact, ounce-for-ounce, they are one of the fiercest fighters on the face of the earth. Hummingbirds are so aggressive that Aztecs believed that a warrior cut down in battle was reincarnated as one of these diminutive creatures. Hummingbirds consume one-and-a-half to three times their own body weight daily, so it is natural that they defend their sources for nectar. In places where there is more than enough nectar for all, there aren't many hummingbird battles, but in places where there aren't, fights break out on a regular basis. If you decide to feed hummingbirds and use more than one feeder, The Audubon Society recommends placing them out of sight of one another. The Society also has a recipe for hummingbird nectar. Combine four parts water to one part white sugar, boil for one or two minutes, stirring to dissolve all the sugar, then let cool. Do not use red dye, instead, use a feeder with red at the feeding openings. It's a good idea to hang feeders in the shade so the nectar doesn't turn rancid as quickly as it will if the sun is on it. You can also place banana peels and fruit that has over ripened beneath or close to feeders so fruit flies and gnats, which are food for hummingbirds, will feed there and attract the birds.

Although hummingbird fights usually result in one of the birds just flying off, hummingbirds can use their sharp, long bills to impale their opponents. Hummingbirds have such a Napoleon complex that there is a witnessed account of a hummingbird attacking a golden eagle that was in the tiny bird's territory.

—Lois Barber

CONTRIBUTED

Authors and poets, Claddagh, and try on Saturday also get a chance rney cheese, and Space is limited, ls, registration: 12.

IS

ed at its 2007 ay opening as "a new musical" The play fo



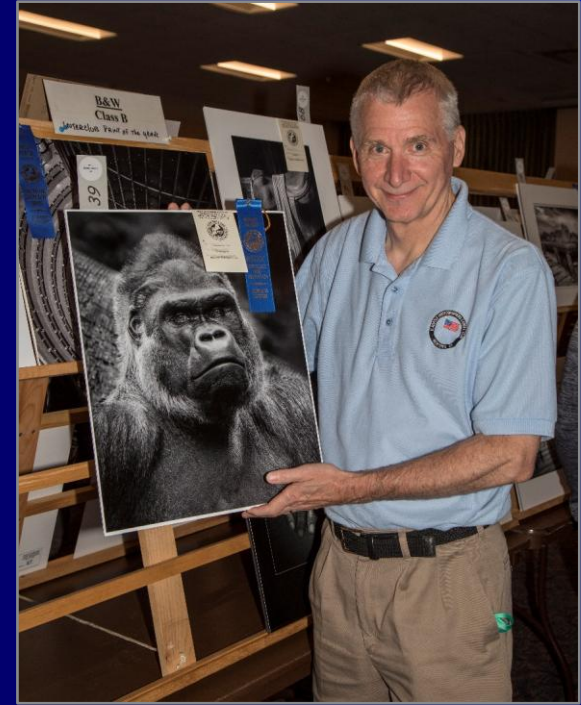
Female Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Local Camera Club Competitions



www.FlagpolePhotographers.com

NECCC Individual Print Competition



www.NECCC.org

NECCC Digital Competition



2019 Best Landscape Digital Pictorial Image for “*Sedona Reflections*”

www.NECCC.org

Thank you!

Presented by:

Rhonda Cullens, *MNEC, VP NECCC*



Carolina Wren

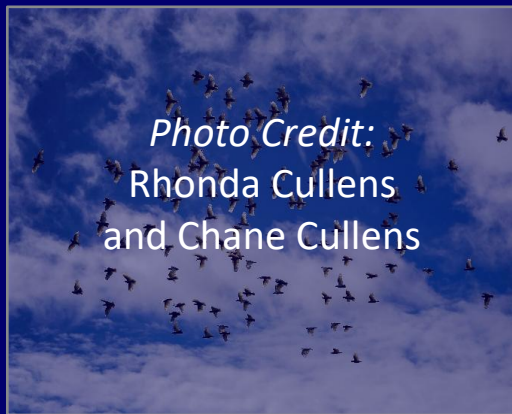


Photo Credit:
Rhonda Cullens
and Chane Cullens

Sulfur-crested Cockatoos



Northern Cardinal

CCullens.com - Rhonda@CCullens.com - Download: ccullens.com/birds

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