

FOREWORD

By combining skill and knowledge with a unique quality of perception, an artist produces something interesting and pleasing. It may be a picture and, in fact, the word "artist" brings to mind that deft manipulator of brushes, the painter. However, the same visual artists work not with paints and brushes but with cameras, and their pictures are photographs, not watercolors or oil. Through using different media and techniques, photographers and painters have one thing in common, the ability to see as beautiful things that to others are ordinary and the desire to share this vision with those who do not have it.

In the pages that follow are photographs of birds, pictures of exquisite sensitivity that capture their subjects with wonderful immediacy. They are among the finest of their kind and the images - a dipper with a wriggling, neatly held water insect or a humming bird back-peddling from a nectar-dropping columbine blossom - remain in the mind's eye long after the book is closed.

The saddest duty of photographs is to record what has gone. Here, in the pictures of Isidor Jeklin and Donald Waite, they have a happier task; that of the showing us, evocatively and beautifully, what we have still.

As the unspoiled parts of the world shrink and ebb away, receding deeper into the Dreamtime of the past, photographs such as these become more important. They renew our pleasures in wild things and serve to remind us that our vital link with the earth and its values must remain unbroken.

Victoria, B.C.
October, 1983
J. Fenwick Lansdowne

941 Victoria Avenue
Victoria B.C.
V8S 4N6
January 10th, 1984

Dear Don,

Thank you for your letter and manuscript.

I am sending the letter back in case you need it for another time.

Certainly, use my little bit where and how you wish. I can see nothing in the text that I would presume to change. I'm looking forward to the book's appearance.

Yours sincerely,
Fenwick Lansdowne

THE EVOLUTION OF BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

FOREWORD

J. FENWICK LANSDOWNE

Greatest Bird Painter of the 21st Century

SIR JAMES BOND II: A MEMOIR

AN EARLY HISTORY OF BIRD PHOTOGRAPHY

BY DAMON S. CALDERWOOD

When Nicéphore Niépce invented the first camera in 1816, he could hardly have imagined the heights to which photography would soar 200 years later. Our fascination with art in its many forms has been well-documented through the centuries, and mankind's depictions of nature have been discovered dating back several thousand years. It is not surprising, then, that one of the most popular subjects of photography over the last 100 years has been wildlife, and in particular, birds. The famed poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley once wrote:

*Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from Heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.*

*Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.*

*In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.*

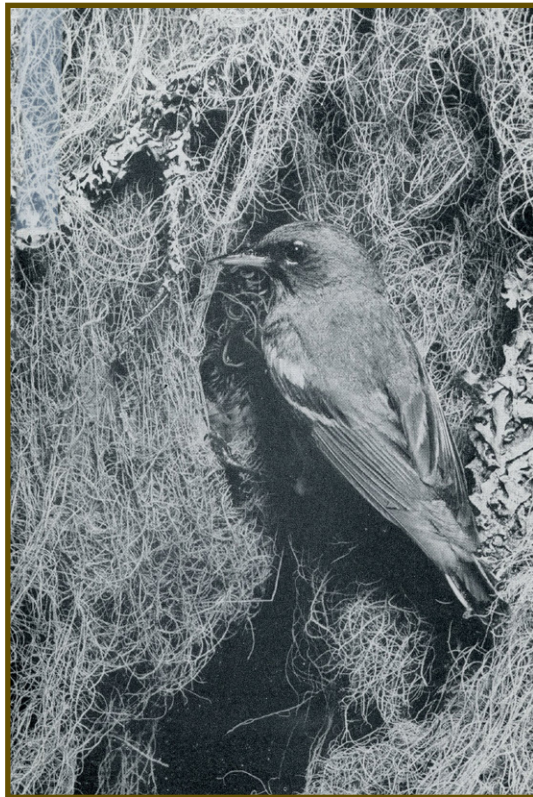


John James Audubon's painting of a
Roseate Spoonbill - *Platalea ajaja*
Courtesy of the John James Audubon Centre at
Mill Grove in Audubon, Pennsylvania;
the Montgomery County Audubon Collection;
and Zebra Publishing

It certainly isn't hard to see why birds have inspired every kind of artist from time immemorial. But when the art of photography began to evolve in the 20th century from black and white to colour and finally to a digital format, thousands of people turned their eyes to the sky in the hopes of preserving the beauty they saw on a daily basis, almost as if they realized in their collective subconscious that what they were trying to preserve was slowly disappearing.

In the ever-expanding field of bird photography there have been many pioneers. One of the earliest was William Lovell Finley (1876-1953), whose interest in conservation merged with his passion for photography. The results included dozens of photographs of birds interacting with their offspring as well as many shots of birds' nests in situ containing eggs or young. Finley's interest in the breeding biology of birds began to bring attention to his other causes, and helped to foster a greater public interest in the welfare and conservation of birds.

Many years later Hal Harrison finished in colour what Finley had started in black and white: a comprehensive guide to North American birds' nests. Arthur Allen brought his scientific studies of birds at Cornell University into the photographic arena, most famously documenting in stills and even filming one of the last pairs of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the wild in 1935. In addition, Allen was the first photographer to capture images of a Bristle-thighed Curlew nest, eggs and young in western Alaska in 1948.



Southern Parula Warbler - *Setophaga americana*
 Samuel A. Grimes (1906-1996)
 May 4, 1936, Duval County, Florida, USA
An adult poses at its nest entrance.



Black-and-White Warbler - *Mniotilta varia*
 Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996)
 15 June, 1936, Morristown, New Jersey, USA
An adult incubates a full clutch of eggs.



Northern Parula Warbler - *Setophaga americana*
 Eliot F. Porter (1901-1990)
 9 July, 1939, Farmington, Maine, USA
An adult sits on the lip of the nest entrance.



Louisiana Waterthrush - *Parkesia motacilla*
 Hal H. Harrison (1906-1999)
 19 June, 1943, Leechburg, Pennsylvania, USA
An adult brings food to its hungry babies.

Other photographic pioneers began to pursue a more artistic approach to their work, blending in elements of texture, colour, depth of field, and framing to further enhance the natural beauty of the birds they shot. In North America, Eliot Porter led the charge, using the latest lighting equipment to capture the colour of the birds and even freeze their wings in flight. Allan D. Cruickshank and Frederick Kent Truslow, contemporaries of Porter, also focused on portrait photography at birds' nests, realizing the contribution to science and conservation by doing so. And in Europe, Eric Hosking was revolutionizing bird photography in much the same way.

There are countless others who have built upon the foundation these pioneers set up. My mentor, Donald E. Waite, was inspired by Isidor Jeklin, a Canadian photographer whose work during the 1960's and 1970's was influenced greatly by Eliot Porter's careful compositions. When I first met Don in 1990, he had already co-authored a book with Isidor called *The Art of Photographing North American Birds*. Don must have sensed a great interest in bird photography in me, for he immediately took me under his wing (pun intended), and began to focus my efforts on portrait photography at nests.

It would be an impossible task to fully document every person of influence in the realm of bird photography as it has evolved. In this era of the internet at our fingertips, one doesn't have to go to the library anymore to see beautiful pictures of birds. I can simply type in anything bird related and a proliferation of fantastic pictures will appear. No doubt all these images can help keep us aware of the beauty of birds and the necessity to preserve their ever-shrinking habitats. Henry David Thoreau, an American naturalist and writer, said this: "In wildness is the preservation of the world." And many photographers have taken up his banner to share this wild world with us all. We will discuss a few whose techniques have been revolutionary.

The idea for this book is born out of the long relationship I have had with birds, photography, and my fellow photographers, most notably Donald E. Waite. In our countless conversations about the field, Don and I have mused about the many facets of this

Female and Male Long-eared Owls - *Asio otus*
 Eric Hosking
 1940, King's Lynn, Norfolk, England
A female brings a dead rat to feed her mate and young.

art form, including its scientific value, locating nests, aesthetics, capturing birds in flight, lighting, equipment, setting up, predation, responsibility,



and the law. We intend to discuss all of the above not

Cock Nightjar - *Asio otus*
 Eric Hosking
 1940, King's Lynn, Norfolk, England
*Hovering above its nest. The primaries of the farther wing are bent right forward.
 The large eye is typical of a nocturnal bird.*

Many bird photographers are going to glance through this collection and wonder why anyone would read about photography dating back 50 to 100 years. It's simple. We take time to learn about our past mistakes so as not to repeat them.

When bird nest hunter Glenn Ryder walked into my Maple Ridge camera store in the spring of 1974 looking for a long lens for his camera system, I had no way of knowing this chance meeting would result in a profound change in my life. He had been hired by the provincial government to assist in the production of a four volume set of books about the 'Birds of British Columbia' being planned by R. Wayne Campbell, the Curator of Birds and Mammals at the British Columbia Provincial Museum in Victoria. Glenn was leaving shortly for a few months of bird nest searching in the Okanagan Valley with a photographer who was not remotely aware of the challenges of bird nest photography. It was Glenn's job to find nests for the photographer. Glenn showed me several of the shooter's slides and I recall thinking, with a little practice, I should be able to do as well at bird photography. His images never made it into the book series simply because he knew so little about his subjects. He groomed nests by removing vegetation thereby exposing baby birds for long periods of time without proper shade from the sun.

About this time, an employee loaned me a copy of Eliot F. Porter's book, 'Birds of North America, A Personal Selection' and many a night I studied Eliot's beautiful bird portraits. His incredible images appeared in North America's two volume National Geographic's 'Songs and Garden Birds' and 'Water, Prey and Game Birds' in 1964. Eliot used high-speed strobes to capture flight photographs of parent birds coming in to brood, feed and do janitorial duties with their young. Elliot's photographs contributed half of the books' image content while Canada's Sir Allan C. Brooks, a much decorated sniper in the First World War, paintings made up the rest of the content for the two volumes. Allan's home had been in Vernon, a city in the Okanagan. It must have been providence that I met Arthur M. Peake at the local coffee shop and learned years earlier he had been an assistant to Brooks. Art used a shotgun to shoot the birds to be used as specimens for Allan to paint.

The following spring, I photographed some birds at nests but they almost always ended in failure due to my ignorance. In the beginning, my attempt to photograph several nests in a single day was sheer stupidity. Art gave me access to his many shelves of books on ornithology and I slowly began to understand the habits of my feathered friends and how to find nests. Eventually, I began to photograph a single family of birds over several days. After locating a nest with eggs or young, I'd always wait until the babies' eyes opened and then take photographs until the young fledged. The last day was always best because the parents and babies were used to my strobes, my blind and me. If the nest was exposed with the use of tiebacks, it was imperative to put everything back to normal and even add cover to further conceal the nest. Exposure to the sun is the biggest challenge to successful bird nest photography making it absolutely imperative to rig a shield to protect the nest from the sun.

When first beginning to photograph birds, I was far too impatient and my subjects suffered as a consequence. In most cases the entire session lasted only one day and the birds were not given the opportunity to adjust to my presence. As a novice bird photographer, I was unable to find anyone with whom to apprentice and authors of books on the subject, although all emphasized the welfare of the birds must be first and foremost, never went into any details about their mistakes and how to avoid them. All of them stressed any photography at a nest attracted predators such as rats, squirrels, weasels, snakes, hawks and owls. Predators have to eat meat to stay alive. It's the circle of life.



Tufted Puffin
Sir Allan Brooks (1869-1946)

By 1977, I was averaging 40 hours a week in the forest during the months of April through July. During this trial and error period, I met Stan Pavlov who said he could find more nests in a day for me to possibly photograph in a week. He was managing an estate of 160 acres nestled under the peaks of the Golden Ears Mountains north of Maple Ridge. Discovering the truth of his claim, we soon became good friends. Stan became my assistant and we began spending more and more time exploring his property in search of birds.

My notebook for 16 May 1978 shows how little I knew about the length of time Varied Thrush young stayed in the nest, 'contained three week old young.' 15 April 1979, 'Found dipper nest under bridge over Blaney Creek at UBC (University of British Columbia) Research Forest. It was found within a yard of where Stan Jr. found one last year. Looked like a miniature-sized moss igloo and was built on top

of a rock.' 19 April, 'Up to UBC to photograph a dipper but the creek had come up two feet due to rains making the task difficult and dangerous.' 28 April, 'Checked chickadee nest. Bumblebees had taken over.' 11 June 1980: (Marsh Hawk) 'Left at 8:15. Coming home, I found the tide had come in and had to wade through water almost to my armpits. A beaver swam up behind me and hit the water with its tail causing me to genuflect the knees & take in water at both armpits. I could have drowned.' 16 June: 'No luck, drizzle turned into a downpour. Young (Nighthawks) became lethargic so I warmed them by cupping hands and breathing on them for 10 minutes. They recovered.' 10 June 1981: Saw crow clean out a robin's nest. Flew up into the nearest tree and literally beat the life out of the young bird with its powerful beak. 11 June: Spent entire day photographing crows. The adults regurgitated food for the young. They spent the day sleeping, preening, stretching, yawning and dumping. The ready to fledge babies would rise up out of the nest with pink mouths fully agape each time a parent came near the nest.' I was unknowledgeable about my subjects; my actions were unconscionable.

I read an article in a 'Photographic Society of America' (PSA) magazine about bird photographer Isidor Jeklin of Don Mills, Ontario. He specialized in the photography of birds at the nest with high-speed strobes. I wrote to Isidor and a short time later visited him in his Toronto apartment. One bedroom had been turned into a shrine for the displaying of his 300 medals from the PSA along with many enlarged prints. We talked and he agreed to work with me to publish a book. Upon leaving, he entrusted me with 50 of his best medium format transparencies. Our mission was to produce a book on bird photography. The die was cast.

In January, 1981, I flew to Edmonton to meet well-known bird photographer Thomas J. Webb. His razor-sharp competition prints made me realize I was not filling the frame tightly enough and my flash equipment was not capable of stopping the quick movements of birds resulting in blurred pictures and on returning home most of my pics went into a trash can. Tom suggested purchasing an extremely powerful high-speed custom strobe system to photograph birds in flight. Tom's unit was similar in many ways to the lighting system I used in my portrait and wedding studio utilizing front, side and back lighting. I contacted the manufacturer and ordered one of his flash units. Both Isidor and Tom were at the top of their game in winning first or second medals from the PSA for wildlife photography.



American Robin - *Turdus migratorius*
Stan Pavlov
June 15, 1983, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Veery - *Catharus fuscescens*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
May 15, 1981, Toronto, Ontario



Barn Swallow - *Hirundo rustica*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
June 15, 1981, Vaughan, Ontario



Tree Swallow - *Tachycineta bicolor*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
July 10, 1981, Oshawa, Ontario



Bewick's Wren - *Thyromanes bewickii*
Stan Pavlov
June 1, 1983, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Marsh Wren - *Cistothorus palustris*
Donald E. Waite
June 1, 1983, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Western Flycatcher - *Empidonax difficilis*
Donald E. Waite
May 29, 1978, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Willow Flycatcher - *Empidonax traillii*
Donald E. Waite
May 15, 1978, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Black-capped Chickadee - *Parus atricapillus*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
November 15, 1982, Goshen, Ontario



Red-breasted Nuthatch - *Sitta canadensis*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
June 1, 1981, Scarborough, Ontario



Least Flycatcher - *Empidonax minimus*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
March 15, 1976, Toronto, Ontario



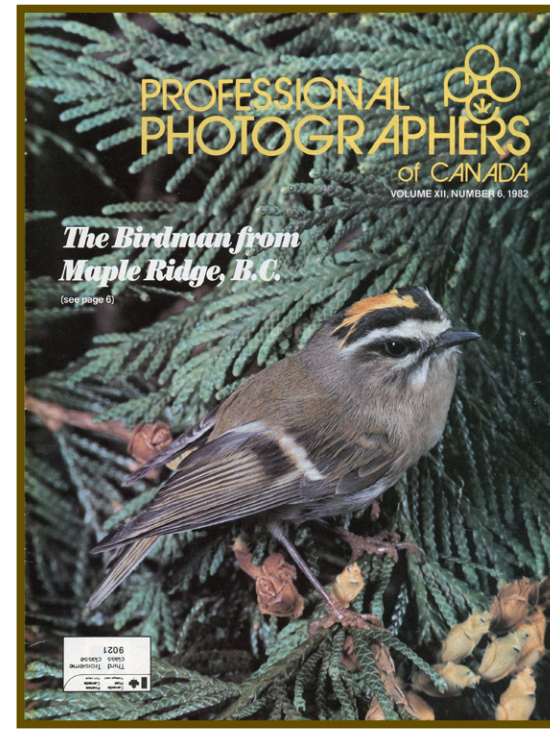
Ruby-throated Hummingbird - *Archilochus colubris*
Isidor Jeklin & Lawrence F. Parsons
April 14, 1981, Hamilton, Ontario



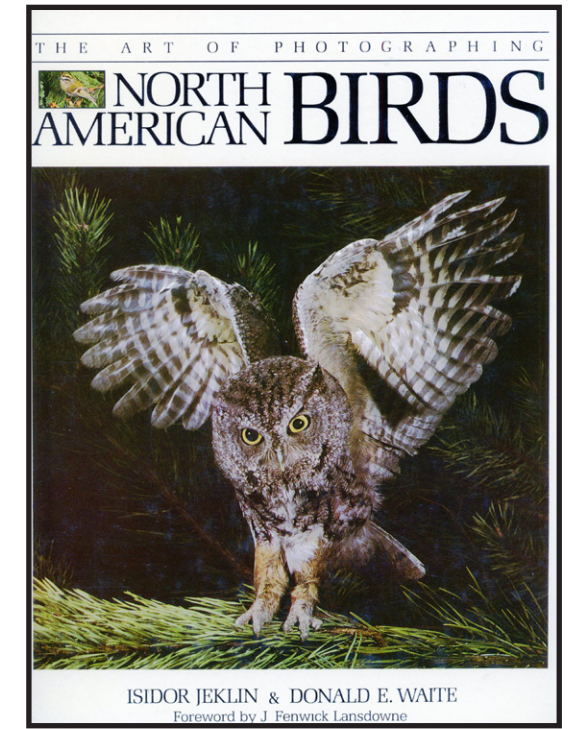
American Dipper - *Cinclus mexicanus*
Donald E. Waite
May 3, 1982, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Rufous Hummingbird - *Selasphorus rufus*
Donald E. Waite
August 17, 1983, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Male Golden-crowned Kinglet - *Regulus satrapa*
Donald E. Waite
June 1982, Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada



Eastern Screech Owl - *Otus asio*
Lawrence F. Parsons
May 5, 1977, Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Swainson's Thrush - *Catharus ustulatus*
Kevin S. Waite
May 4, 1982, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Varied Thrush - *Ixoreus naevius*
Donald E. Waite
June 3, 1983, Maple Ridge, British Columbia



Female Spotted Sandpiper - *Actitis macularius*
Donald E. Waite
July 14, 1986, Richmond, British Columbia, Canada



Female Long-eared Owl - *Asio otus*
Lawrence F. Parsons
February 25, 1990, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada



Male Eastern Bluebird - *Sialia sialia*
Isidor Jeklin and Lawrence F. Parsons
May 21, 1980, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada



Male Black-crowned Night Heron - *Nycticorax nycticorax*
Lawrence F. Parsons
May 21, 1983, Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Male Northern Goshawk - *Accipiter gentilis*
Lawrence F. Parsons
June 25, 1983, Gelert, Ontario, Canada



Male Baltimore Oriole - *Icterus galbula*
Lawrence F. Parsons
June 25, 1983, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada



Female Wilson's Snipe - *Charadrius gallinago*
Donald E. Waite
June 15, 1982, Maple Ridge, British Columbia, Canada



Male Pileated Woodpecker - *Dryocopus pileatus*
Lawrence F. Parsons
June 15, 1983, Newtonville, Ontario, Canada